

NEWBURY CHESS CLUB

Newsletter – Christmas 2007



Welcome to this newsletter, which will be produced on an occasional (termly?) basis. We aim to keep existing and potential club members up to date with the latest news from the club. In this edition, we give news of our regular (social) club evenings, the successes (or otherwise!) of our two teams in the Berkshire league, and some other chess tidbits.

David Skyrme, Editor.

Club Welcomes Newcomers

This term we welcomed several new social members, including Ben, Rena and two Steves. So, rather than the odd occasion in the summer when Keith opened up the club and after half an hour packed up with no-one to play, club evenings in the run up to Christmas have regularly seen three or four boards being played. This should mean that we no longer struggle to find enough players to field our B team for away games, while giving opportunities for newcomers to play.

The club always welcomes newcomers who can practice in a style that suits their preference. This can be with 'loose' rules, e.g. an opponent suggesting: "did you really mean to move there" (where I can fork your queen and rook with my knight) right through to 5-minute Blitz chess with clocks. See panel top right for meeting details.

Berkshire Chess League

The club enters two teams in this league which has three divisions. There are 13 clubs in the league, with Reading the largest fielding five teams, while this year Telecom field none. Two college teams are now in the league – Wellington started last year, and Eton College (who the B team played) this year.

Although called the 'Berkshire' league there are teams in four other counties – Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Surrey and Hampshire! (Henley, Bourne End, Camberley and Basingstoke respectively). Some of the more easterly teams also play in the (Surrey) Borders League.



The club meets every Thursday evening from 7.30pm at Mary Hare Grammar School (room 16 in the main teaching block). If you need directions and a map, visit our website or contact David Skyrme (david@skyrme.com).

Christmas break – the last meeting this term will be 20th December. The club re-opens on Thursday 10th January 2008.

We wish all our members (and prospective members) a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year (and successful chess in 2008).



The league's website is a useful source of information for local chess players. It includes fixtures, match results, league tables, team captains contact details and – perhaps the most useful for team players – details and location maps of playing venues. The website address is:

<http://www.berkshirechess.com/main.php>

First Team Starts Season Well

The first team (Newbury A) plays in the Berkshire League first division. It started the 2007-8 season in fine fashion with a 4½-1½ victory over Sandhurst who fielded **two** grand-masters*, Nick Pert (who played board 3 in the England team in the recent European Championships) and Simon Williams. Pert beat Mike Marlow easily, but Williams got lost on the M4, which helped!

This was followed by a 3½ - 2½ win against Bourne End, another strong team. We lost the top two boards, but our strength in

* A grand-master is "the highest title a chess player can attain". He/she must have achieved (at some time) a FIDO (ELO) rating of at least 2,500. See the article on ratings for what this means!

depth (Clive Walley, Martin Bush and Keith Savoy) won through.

Scenting a rare season in the top half, we strengthened our team at the top for the Maidenhead match. Ben Purton (former UK Land Challenge winner) beat 200 rated Paul Cooksey, but James Foster lost to Neil Dickinson. In the end we lost just 2½-3½.

Bracknell postponed, unable to raise a team. With more tough matches to come, we are still confident, with 16-year old Lewis Martin playing well and some strong new players arriving.

Mike Marlow, Club Chairman

Second Team is .. 2nd from bottom

This season there are more teams (9 in total) so we play each only once. Having finished 5th last season (it sounds better than 3rd from bottom) and with new blood (Ben Dyer) we started our season optimistically. Our optimism was short lived.

For our first match against newcomer Eton College, we could only field four players. As we drove through rural countryside to this unfamiliar venue and saw high on the horizon a lit-up ferris wheel (is it the London Eye we wondered, but actually it's at Legoland), our ambitions rose with it. However, although a few of us put up something of a fight, the end result was a 6-0 whitewash to the home side.

We fared better in our next two games at home. In the first, against Reading D, Brian Medhurst on board 1 and Paul Cope on board 3 scored draws. Our best result was Ben Dyer's win. Everyone played against players with higher grades, so very commendable was Paul's (rated 59) draw against Ray Brown (117) and Ben's (unrated) win against Gerald Blight (116).

We upped the ante a bit more against Maidenhead B, with another commendable win by Ben. With 3 draws and a loss, all depended on the last game (running late due to the opponent losing his way to Mary Hare). David, a pawn down, was losing, but kept offering his opponent (very short of time) a draw. Since this was declined, it all became a bit fast and furious (David missing capturing the opponent's pawned queen in the excitement), so it did turn out a draw, meaning the result was a draw and the team is the proud possessor of a half point in the league table.

David Skyrme – 'B' Team Captain



The Mystery of Ratings

Ever wondered why when you win convincingly your ratings hardly change, or why when you lose to much stronger opponents (as is often the case for the 'B' team) they still go down?

Unlike *Strictly Come Dancing* where there is a subjective panel, the chess ratings system is all mathematical (objective?). In the ECF (English Chess Federation) grading system, your grade is determined by an average score from your last 30 games (less if you haven't played that many in the last 3 years).

For a win you score your opponent's grade +50 points; a loss, their grade -50. A draw you score their grade. However, if the difference is more than 40 it is assumed to be 40. So if you lose against a much stronger opponent, your score is only 10 points less than your grade.

ELO and other systems work slightly differently. To convert ECF (for grades less than 216) to ELO, the formula is:

$$\text{ELO} = 1,250 + 5 \times \text{ECF}$$

This helps inflate grades of lower players vs. the 'standard' formula (for international class players) of $600 + 8 \times \text{ECF}$. Thus an ECF of 80 is ELO 1650, 120 = 1850 and 160 = 2050. Grades in our 'A' team range from around 120 to 180, while for those rated in the 'B' team it is from 59 to 120.

You can check your own rating online at:

<http://grading.bcfservices.org.uk/index.php>

Fancy More Practice

RapidPlay (5-6 games in a day, 30 minutes per player) are a good way to do this. Also 2-day regular (75 mins per player) tournaments. David recently competed in the Oxford University RapidPlay. A good standard play tournament coming up is the 31st Kidlington Tournament on 2nd and 3rd February. For details of this and similar events see:

www.englishchess.org.uk/calendar/

SUBSCRIPTIONS 2007-8

To cover the cost of entering leagues – and getting ratings – the subscription is £10 for team players and £5 for social players. Please pay Mike Marlow, Hon. Treasurer. Cheques should be made payable to 'Newbury Chess Club'.