

SUFFOLK COUNTY CHESS ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Suffolk County Chess Association
held on Tuesday 11 July 2023
at the Ipswich Institute (home of Ipswich Chess Club) 7:30 pm.

In Attendance (15)

Stephen Lewis (Stowmarket)
Simon Wilks (Saxmundham)
John McAllister (Manningtree)
David Green (Stowmarket)
Sam Gaffney (Saxmundham and Woodbridge)
Bob Jones (Bury St Edmunds)
Steven Lovell (Bury St Edmunds)
Piotr Dolewka (Ipswich)
Ed Kirkham (Felixstowe)
Ken Lunn (Ipswich)
Alonso Paez (Ipswich)
Peter Collicott (Saxmundham)
John Feavyour (Saxmundham)
Robert Sanders (Sudbury)
Martyn Colebrook (Ipswich)

1. Apologies for absence.

John Lambert (Clacton)
Melvin Steele (Clacton)
Steve Ruthen (Bury St Edmunds)

2. Minutes of the last SCCA AGM held on 12 July 2022.

Minutes of the 2022 AGM were accepted without amendment.

3. Matters Arising.

None.

4. Officers' reports.

4.1 President (Stephen Lewis)

Stephen welcomed the attendees and thanked the committee for their efforts throughout the season. With the exception of the Division Three rapid play final, which will be covered later, there were no major issues to report, the season was successfully completed.

4.2 Vice-President (Simon Wilks)

Simon had nothing to report as Vice-President, except that his name in the agenda does not have an 'e' in it.

4.3 Admin Secretary (John McAllister)

John repeated his request for anyone wishing to be included in general emails from the association to pass their email address to him and they will be added to the list.

Now that all currently contested competition trophies have been located and had their engraving brought up to date, and to avoid them going astray in the future, a record will be made in the minutes of who has received each trophy. That person will be expected to take care of the trophy and return it to the SCCA for engraving at the end of the season. Any person/club not wishing to take that responsibility may leave the trophy with the secretary for safe keeping.

4.4 Treasurer (David Green)

David reported that our current account balance has dropped from £514.46 to £346.96. This continues the downward trend of the SCCA finances – the year before that our balance stood at £732.

The association's deposit account is earning slightly more interest, but it is still relatively insignificant. Further details will be covered under item 6.2.

4.5 Competitions Secretary (Sam Gaffney)

Sam reported on a successful season, which included a team from HMP Warren Hill. However, matches with the prison proved difficult to arrange and he doubted that they will be a regular feature.

Monthly ratings did not cause any problems as was feared, although there were more disputes this season, most of them due to confusion over the substitution rules.

Unfortunately Ipswich had to withdraw from both the Divisional Rapid Play and the Norfolk/Suffolk Cup. Sam questioned whether we need to consider changing the format of the Suffolk section of the NS Cup as so few clubs enter it.

4.6 Divisional Rapid Play Organiser (Rob Sanders)

Rob reported that apart from the initial draw he didn't have much to do with the tournaments any more as the work was all done by the Competitions Secretary through the LMS.

A problem arose in the Division Three final between Saxmundham and Clacton due to the inaccessibility of the Ipswich venue to Mike Usher from Saxmundham. An alternative venue agreeable to both clubs was eventually found and apologies were given to Ken Lunn for the inconvenience caused.

Rob gave a brief history of the competition from a simple knock-out 'League Cup', to a Cup and Plate, and finally to the current Divisional Cup. Now that the competition was firmly established with every club taking part, he felt that there

was no need for the role of ‘Cup’ organiser and it was agreed to dissolve that role and leave the competition in the hands of the Competitions Secretary. Rob was congratulated on his achievements and given a round of applause.

4.7 First Team Captain (Steve Ruthen)

Steve was unable to attend the AGM in person and gave the following written report:

Suffolk topped the regional league table by the narrowest of margins with 3 counties (Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire) scoring 4 wins each and two losses. On tiebreak, which was the scores against each other, Suffolk came out on top and thus were awarded the Icenic cup.

The matches were played over 12 boards in recognition of the difficulties in fielding the normal 16 boards post Covid. Our top performer was Alan Merry with five points out of six games. It was wonderful having such a strong player at the top of our team.

Unfortunately, there was insufficient interest from our team members to risk proceeding to the national stage and so our place was taken by Norfolk. You may remember that in a previous year we had to default a match because of the distance we were required to travel. In the event both Cambridgeshire and Norfolk reached the national final and Cambridgeshire won on board count, the score being eight games all.

We can look back on our regional performance with pride and know that we can compete with the best nationally. It is possible that the regional competition next season will be over 16 boards and that will add to the logistical challenge of fielding good teams but I think it is a step in the right direction.

4.8 U1850 Captain (Bob Jones)

Bob reported that the U1850 team tied on points with Norfolk and Herts for first place, but were eliminated on the tie break. Full results were as follows;

County	Played	Won	Drew	Lost	For	Agst	Points
Norfolk	6	4	0	2	41	31	8
Hertfordshire	6	4	0	2	39½	32½	8
Suffolk	6	4	0	2	37	35	8
Cambridgeshire	6	0	0	6	26½	45½	0

	9 Oct		9 Dec		5 Mar		Played	Points
Andrew Donnelly	½	0	0	1	1	1	6	3½
Alan Watkins	1	½	0	½	1	½	6	3½
Nathan Barnes	1	1	0	½	1	0	6	3½
Bob Jones	½	0	½	1	1	½	6	3½
James Irwin	½	½	½	1	0	0	6	2½
Simon Riley	0	½	½	½	0	1	6	2½
Daniel Pugh	1	0	1	1			4	3
Ed Kirkham			0	1	½	1	4	2½

Steve Ruthen			½	0	1	½	4	2
James Pack			1	1	0	0	4	2
John McAllister	½	0	0	0			4	½
Steve Lovell	1	½					2	1½
Tim Wesson					1	½	2	1½
Bob Stephens					½	1	2	1½
Rowan Kent	½	1					2	1½
Laurie Pott					½	½	2	1
Graeme Jones	0	½					2	½
Laureano Garcia			0	½			2	½
Harry Hartshorn	0	0					2	0
							72	37

4.9 Internet Officer (Steve Lovell)

Steve reminded the meeting that the correct address for the SCCA website was suffolkchess.org, not suffolkchess.org.uk, which is completely unrelated to the SCCA.

5. Election of Officers.

All incumbent officers were available for re-election. All were unanimously elected en-bloc with the exception of the now redundant post of divisional rapid play organiser.

6. Proposals for Changes to the Competition Rules.

The SCCA Committee proposes the following;

6.1 The Introduction of a New Rapid Play Division

It was proposed that the SCCA introduce a new league competition, "The Handicap Rapid Play Competition". This will be based on the proposal outlined in the Appendix to the agenda.

Sam Gaffney outlined that the driving rational for the competition, which was to increase the opportunity for rapid play games in the SCCA and thus improve the accuracy of rapid play ratings. Ed Kirkham pointed out a contradiction in the proposed rules, which Sam acknowledged and would rectify, along with correcting the number of boards to four.

Bury St Edmunds stated that they do not currently have the capacity for more matches in the calendar and would not therefore be able to enter a team. Sam pointed out that the U1800/U1650 tournaments could be run as knock-outs, which would free up some weeks, although this idea was not favourably received.

Sam had received positive interest from four clubs, which would be sufficient to go ahead with the competition for this season and review its success or otherwise at the end of the season. The competition Secretary would be left to determine the format according to entry.

The proposal was carried 10-1.

6.2 Increase League Fees

It is proposed that SCCA fees be increased from their current £21 per team to £25 per team. This is necessary in order to continue funding our county teams.

As the treasurer had already reported on the state of the SCCA finances, the President proposed to take the proposal straight to a vote.

The proposal was carried nem con.

David Green stressed that this increase would still leave the SCCA with a likely deficit of about £120 for the coming year based on expected entries for next season. The SCCA may need to draw on funds from the deposit account in the future, or increase fees again. David also pointed out that the SCCA does not currently have any provision for replacing aging equipment.

It was agreed not to charge an entry fee for the rapid play handicap competition for its first year. Bob Jones suggested an SCCA affiliation fee – this was moved to AOB.

6.3 Sudbury Chess Club has proposed the following amendment to Competition Rule 5.1;

Add the following at the end of Rule 5.1, “All nominated players must have up-to-date ECF Membership.”

Rob Sanders explained the reason for this proposal was to reduce the likelihood of clubs nominating players they know will not play. Bob Jones suggested a slight amendment that would place a time allowance on ECF membership, thus the proposal was amended to;

“All nominated players must have ECF Membership by the end of October.”

The proposal was carried 14-1.

7. Proposals for Changes to the Constitution.

The SCCA Committee has proposed the following amendment to the Constitution:

7.1 New Clause 12

Disability Access to Club Venues.

All new venues for playing SCCA controlled competitions must provide adequate disabled access to both the playing area and toilets. The League will have the power to change a match venue should it be necessary to accommodate a disabled player.

The President summarised the reason for this proposal, while balancing our existing situation with any new future venues.

The proposal was carried nem con.

8. Presentation of Trophies:

Division 1 – Manningtree A – collected by John McAllister

Division 2 – Saxmundham A – collected by John Feavour

Division 3 – Saxmundham B – collected by Peter Collicott

U1800 Cup – Bury St Edmunds – collected by Steve Lovell

U1650 Cup – Bury St Edmunds – collected by Steve Lovell

Division One Rapid Play – Felixstowe A – collected by Ed Kirkham

Division Two Rapid Play – Ipswich B – collected by Alonso Paez

Division Three Rapid Play – Saxmundham B – collected by Peter Collicott

Iceni Cup – SCCU First Team - collected by Bob Jones

Norfolk & Suffolk Cup – Bury St Edmunds - collected by Bob Jones

It was pointed out that the final of the Norfolk & Suffolk Cup between Bury St Edmunds and Norfolk and Norwich has not been sent for rating yet as neither the SCCA nor the NCCA have made provision for it on the respective LMS pages. Sam Gaffney will investigate the issue.

A misunderstanding regarding the trophies for the player of the year meant they were not available for the AGM. Bob Jones agreed to acquire them for later delivery to:

Division 1 POTY – Phil Hutchings (Manningtree)

Division 2 POTY – Sam Gaffney (Saxmundham)

Division 3 POTY – Mike Usher (Saxmundham)

John Feavour gave a moving tribute to Mike Usher, who sadly died from MND earlier this year after having won the Division Three POTY. Mike had been an active member of Saxmundham for many years and remained active right up to the end, even increasing his rating from 1712 to 1802 from a wheelchair. Bravely battling the progress of his condition, Mike remained forever courteous and always helpful. He will be greatly missed not just by Saxmundham but the whole of the SCCA. His trophy will be appropriately engraved and presented to his wife.

9. Teams for next season

With Woodbridge requesting demotion from division one and Bury St Edmunds requesting a new team (Bury E) be admitted directly into division two, Sam Gaffney laid out the divisional structure as it stood.

Division One

Bury St Edmunds A
Felixstowe A
Manningtree A
Saxmundham A

Division Two

Bury St Edmunds B
Bury St Edmunds E
Ipswich A
Manningtree B
Saxmundham B
Stowmarket
Sudbury
Woodbridge A

Division Three

Bury St Edmunds C
Bury St Edmunds D
Felixstowe B
Ipswich B
Ipswich C
Woodbridge B
Manningtree C (possible)

Sam acknowledged that this was undesirable and is seeking agreement from division two clubs to for at least one of them to take a place in division one.

10. Any other business

Following a suggestion by Bob Jones to consider an affiliation fee of £15 for membership of the SCCA, the matter was discussed at some length. While this was seen as desirable for clubs that do not enter any of the League Divisions (which attract the primary entry fees) it was also seen as a charge that would disproportionately affect smaller clubs.

The proposal was defeated 5-6.

Alonso Paez expressed his concern that so much of our chess history in our region is in danger of being lost, and wanted to urge everyone in the SCCA to drive a 'chess revival', with a particular focus on schools. Perhaps the SCCA should form a chess revival committee to draft a plan with different working groups under SCCA control. All clubs are to be encouraged to delve into their history and submit material to Steve Lovell for inclusion on the club web site.

The Suffolk Individual Championship has not been run for some time. Sam Gaffney will investigate the possibility of reviving it.

Ken Lunn notified the league that Ipswich will be moving their match nights from Tuesday to Wednesday.

Rob Sanders notified the league that Sudbury would likely be moving their match nights from Wednesday to Tuesday.

Rob Sanders asked if the action point from the previous SCCA committee meeting regarding clarification of the substitution rules had been completed. The President told the meeting that he had had little response to the proposals that he and Sam Gaffney had drawn up, with the general feeling that little or no change was needed. This action has therefore been parked for the time being.

Bob Jones requested clarification of the Rule 4.2 in relation to rated limited competitions. Sam Gaffney confirmed that when a K-rating (or above) replaces an estimated rating then the new rating will be applied to rated limited competitions.