

SUFFOLK COUNTY CHESS ASSOCIATION

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Suffolk County Chess Association
held on Wednesday 19 June 2024
at the Ipswich Institute (home of Ipswich Chess Club) 7:30 pm**

In Attendance (18)

Stephen Lewis (Stowmarket)
Simon Wilks (Saxmundham)
John McAllister (Manningtree)
Sam Gaffney (Saxmundham and Woodbridge)
David Green (Stowmarket)
Bob Jones (Bury St Edmunds)
Steve Lovell (Bury St Edmunds)
Simon Riley (Ipswich)
Piotr Dolewka (Ipswich)
Hugo Brown (Saxmundham)
Ed Kirkham (Felixstowe)
Adrian Hall (Stowmarket)
Alonso Paez (Ipswich)
Ken Lunn (Ipswich)
Andrew Last (Sudbury)
James Irwin (Stowmarket)
Bethany Irwin (Stowmarket)
Anthony Taylor (Bury St Edmunds)

1. Apologies for absence.

John Lambert (Clacton)
Melvin Steel (Clacton)
Steve Ruthen (Bury St Edmunds)
John Feavours (Saxmundham)
Dave Robertson (Felixstowe)
Gary Hemsworth (Felixstowe)

2. Minutes of the last SCCA AGM held on 11th July 2023.

The minutes of the 2023 AGM were accepted without amendment.

3. Matters Arising.

None

4. Officers' reports.

4.1 President (Stephen Lewis)

Stephen had prepared a written report that he read out to the meeting:

As I reach the end of my fixed term, I wish to express my thanks to my colleagues on the committee. It is their hard work in the fulfilment of their roles which saw us navigate the first challenge during my term - the return of over the board chess after Covid - and continue with the SCCA's objective to organise, encourage and promote chess throughout Suffolk.

(at this point Stephen proposed a round of applause for the committee)

After we were able to put Covid behind us, my term as President has seen a continuation of the themes which past committees have attempted to address.

As you will no doubt hear from David, we have over the past three years run at a deficit. This is a situation which will need review by the new treasurer, although perhaps our costs will see a significant reduction if no County 1st Team captain can be found at this meeting and no team is entered into the competition next year.

Rules - particularly those around substitution and nomination - have continued to be a thorn in the side. I hope that all further debates and proposals on rules - including those tonight - can be practical and constructive.

Finally, I would like to issue a reminder that the committee are volunteers who give up their own time so that we can all play organised chess. I cannot complete my report without sharing my disappointment at the conduct of some clubs towards the committee when rulings have not gone in their favour, and some of the language used has not been acceptable.

With the open vacancies on the committee to be filled at this meeting, I invite all clubs to leave this meeting with some representation on the committee. There is no better way to gain an appreciation for the work that the committee conducts, and also to have influence over the direction and decision-making that the committee is involved in.

4.2 Vice-President (Simon Wilks)

Simon stated that without a specific port folio he had nothing specific to report, other than to say that having spent two years as VP he has been favourable impressed with the way the committee has operated.

4.3 Admin Secretary (John McAllister)

John reported it was business as usual, keeping the association's documentation up to date and available on our web site, with nothing out of the ordinary to report. He once again reminded the meeting that if anyone wished to be included on the circulation list for SCCA emails to give him their email address.

4.4 Treasurer (David Green)

David produced a written report, which he delivered to the meeting.

Another year has passed during which the funds held by the SCCA have continued to dwindle as predicted. Since I highlighted the deficit between incoming and outgoing cash the funds held in the current account have dropped

by nearly £400. Our current account is now £318, it was £704 when I took office. Our deposit account gained a small interest of £5.15 and currently stands at £1381.16.

Outstanding Income. No other income is due until the 2024/25 fees invoices are issued and paid by our clubs.

Outgoings. Room hire for the AGM and the Rapidplay final are outstanding amounting to another £30. I have recently paid out £91.20 for web site fees, something that we all considered essential but that we made no provision to fund. The cost of trophy purchase and engraving this year was £99.75. I await the ECF invoice for non-members of the ECF who have exceeded the free allowance for rated games in SCCA competitions. This cost will be paid by the SCCA and claimed back from the clubs involved and so will not affect the SCCA's bank balance in the long term.

The EACU costs continue to devour about 70% of SCCA total income leaving just 30% to cover all other costs. This is insufficient to cover those costs and is the cause of the dwindling funds in the bank. If the SCCA continues to choose to go slowly broke then at least I will not be the Treasurer who stands by and watches that happen. Hopefully the extra team or teams from Ipswich Sports Club who will be joining the SCCA league this season will help with some of the deficit.

I believe we have a volunteer for Treasurer to replace me and I will be making arrangements with him for an in-depth handover probably involving generating the 2024/25 team fees invoices and getting the Bank accounts online and use the BACS system from the start of his tenure as treasurer.

I hand over the accounts with fully operational online access and a neatly filed set of accounts for my time as Treasurer. Should someone be found who will to audit the accounts for free then by all means go ahead and arrange an audit but otherwise the accounts will remain unaudited because the SCCA cannot afford to pay an auditor. Quotes range from £150 to £200.

After David's report, Simon Wilks stated that his wife is a chartered accountant who may be able to help.

4.5 Competitions Secretary (Sam Gaffney)

Sam reported that we have had a record number of teams since Covid and summarised the various competition results, saying that most ran quite smoothly.

The exception however was the U1650 Cup. There were six entrants, the same size as division three, yet we charge £3 (note: it's actually £6) for a team in the U1650 in comparison to £25 in division three. There were multiple defaults, probably due to geographical issues, and due to other factors some fixtures were not completed until May, which is not desirable. Sam suggested that perhaps this competition needs a review.

The Rapid play handicap went quite well, although some of the rules needed clarifying.

The Rapid Play Cup went from strength to strength, except for a 4-0 default in division one, which is unacceptable. Division three has been particularly successful. In 2022/23 there were eight teams, this year there were ten, in

2024/25 there will be thirteen teams. We have Rob Sanders to thank for that. Unfortunately there were a number of disputes and appeals this year, which consumed an inordinate amount of committee time.

Sam praised the functionality of the LMS, but there is one function he would like to remove, which is the ability to leave comments. If anyone is not satisfied with the outcome of a match there is a process in rules (9.1 - 9.3), it is not the LMS. We were very close this year to having one club complaining under article 7 of the constitution. No one wants that situation, so please be very careful about what you write in the comments section of the LMS. Preferably nothing, unless it's to praise the quality of the biscuits at Stowmarket or Manningtree.

David Green asked if it was possible to have a moderator, Sam was not sure but said he would look into it. David also mentioned that the very low entry fee for the U1650 was deliberate to attract entries, which seems to have worked.

4.6 First Team Captain (Steve Ruthen)

Without a report from Steve Ruthen, Stephen Lewis provided a brief summary. For the first time in a long time the county first team didn't finish in the top two and so did not progress to the knockout stages, and therefore didn't need to concede the first knockout match because we couldn't raise a team to travel the distances.

4.7 U1850 Captain (Bob Jones)

Bob reported that the U1850 team had won the EACU championship, which was determined with the last game of the last match in which the Suffolk player was losing but his opponent unexpectedly got himself mated. In the Nationals we were knocked out in the first round by a Lincolnshire side that were, on paper, no stronger than we were.

4.8 Internet Officer (Steve Lovell)

Steve had nothing particular to report, but stated that he is always happy to receive suggestions for content to put up on the site. He reported that the link to the LMS was broken for a while, but apart from that he had nothing more to report.

5. Election of Officers.

Stephen Lewis proposed those member of the committee that had expressed a willingness to continue in post be elected en bloc. These were; John McAllister (Secretary), Sam Gaffney (Competitions Secretary), Bob Jones (U1850 Team Captain) and Steve Lovel (Internet Officer). Before seeking a seconder for this he asked the floor if there were any other candidates for any of these roles. There being none, the proposal was seconded by Simon Wilkes and passed nem con.

Stephen asked if there were any candidates for President before proposing Simon Wilks for the role. There were none, Stephen's proposal was seconded by David Green and was passed nem con. The Chair of the meeting was then passed to Simon.

As there were not as yet any candidates for vice-President, Simon pointed out that while it has become customary for the VP to succeed the President after three years, it is not written in the constitution, and therefore does not have to be the case. He urged in particular those clubs without representation on the committee to see if they could find a suitable candidate. Bob Jones said that he knew of a potential candidate, although it would not be ideal as he too is from Bury St Edmunds. There was no volunteer for this post, which therefore remained vacant. Simon asked Bob if he would approach this possible candidate but would prefer if it came from another club.

Simon Wilks proposed Anthony Taylor from Bury St Edmunds for the role of Treasurer. This was seconded by David Green and passed nem con.

There were no candidates for the captaincy of the County first team. It was pointed out that this does not of necessity have to be one of the first team players, some counties operate with a non-playing captain, besides which, the bottom board is quite often a weaker player. After a brief discussion of the options, Simon Wilks said that he would write to all clubs regarding this role, and that if nobody comes forward we would be unable to enter a team next season. The question of a deadline for entry was discussed, but no one was sure when that would be. John McAllister would be attending the EACU AGM in ten days and would find out from the other county delegates.

6. Proposals for Changes to the Competition Rules.

The following proposals were not all dealt with in the order in which they appeared on the agenda. However, to avoid confusion the order of the agenda item numbers has been preserved here.

6.1 Rule 4.1

The committee proposed adding the following to the end of the existing rule;

“A player can qualify to play in a rating limited competition on the basis of an estimated rating. However, if their first (non-P) ECF rating is greater than the rating limit, then they can no longer play in the competition.”

David Green sought confirmation that the games already played by a player no longer eligible would still stand, and that was confirmed. The proposal was seconded by Piotr Dolewka and passed nem con.

6.2 Rule 5.1

The committee proposed delete the last sentence “All nominated players must have ECF Membership by the end of October.” and replace it with;

“Nominated players must have ECF membership by the end of October and they must continue their membership throughout the season.”

Sam Gaffney gave a brief explanation of why this proposal was necessary as the existing rule would allow clubs to nominate a layer whose membership would lapse in November. This was seconded by Piotr Dolewka and passed nem con.

6.3 Rule 5.2

The committee proposed adding the following to the end of Rule 5.2;

"If, as a result of a re-nomination, a player, having a 'main team', acquires a new 'main team' then any earlier appearances for their previous main team will be treated as substitutions and governed by Rule 5.4."

Sam Gaffney explained the reason for this proposal, citing the case of a strong player in one team being renominated for another team in the same division, thus both team benefiting from his appearance without any consequences. Several questions were raised seeking clarification, after further discussion this proposal was seconded by Piotr Dolewka and passed by 4 votes to 2.

6.4 New Rule 5.3

The committee proposed the following new rule'

"A player must not play on a board if their rating would exceed, by more than 80 points, the rating of the nominated player for that board."

This was seconded by Andrew Last and passed by 10 votes to 1.

6.5 Table 1

The committee proposed changing the first condition in Table 1 from *"Division 3"* to *"the lowest division"*.

This was seconded by Piotr Dolewka and passed nem con.

6.6 Rule 6

The committee proposed replace the existing rule 6 with the following;

"PENALTIES"

6.1 When resolving a dispute about a league game, the following penalty may be applied: for league purposes, deeming the game to be lost by the offending player and won by their opponent.

6.2 In general, the result of a game penalised according to rule 6.1 will still be submitted for rating. However, if it is ruled that a player violated the Laws of Chess then a different result, or indeed no result, may be submitted instead.

6.3 In particular, a player will be penalised according to rule 6.1 if:

(a) He breaks a rule in section 5

(b) He has neither a published ECF standard rating, nor an agreed estimated rating.

(c) He is not a member of a club affiliated to the SCCA."

Sam Gaffney explained that while many rules may be quite clear, it is not always clear what the penalty should be. This proposal clarifies what currently happens in practice. After a short discussion it was decided to change the wording of 6.3 a little by replacing *"In particular"* to *"For example"* and changing *"He"* to *"They"*.

This was seconded by Piotr Dolewka and passed nem con.

6.7 Rule 9.3

The committee proposed inserting the following between the two sentences of the existing rule;

“A refundable deposit of £20 will be required for such an appeal. If the appeal is successful the deposit will be returned.”

Piotr Dolewka stated that he felt it was unreasonable. Stephen Lewis said that the reason for this proposal was because the committee had to deal with three appeals this year, all of which had already been addressed by competition secretary, all of which were then appealed to the President, and then to the whole committee. The purpose was to deter frivolous claims, not legitimate ones.

There was no seconder for this proposal, it was therefore defeated without a vote.

6.8 Rule A1.2

The committee proposed adding the following to the end of the existing rule;

“Extra teams over and above those automatically entered are permitted.”

This was seconded by Andrew Last and passed nem con.

6.9 Rule A1.3

The committee proposed adding the following sentence to the end of this rule;

“Where a club or team does not have an entry in the league the Rapid Play Cup team must be nominated in the same way as all League teams.”

This was seconded by Piotr Dolewka and passed nem con.

6.10 Rule A1.4

The committee proposed adding the following sentence to the end of this rule;

“Changes to board order between rounds is not permitted.”

Piotr Dolewka asked what should happen if a team realises after the first round has been completed that there was a board order violation. Should they continue the second round with the violation, or change the board order? It was agreed that the board order should be changed, therefore the proposal was amended to read:

“Changes to board order between rounds is not permitted unless it is to correct a board order violation discovered in the first round.”

This was seconded by Adrian Hall and passed nem con.

6.11 Rule A1.6

The committee proposed replacing the existing rule with;

“Rapid play ratings excluding those with suffix P should be used to determine board order. If a player does not have a rapid play rating, then their current standard play rating should be used. If no standard rating exists then an estimated rating must be used.”

This was seconded by Piotr Dolewka and passed nem con.

6.12 Rule A1.8

The committee proposed replacing the existing rule with;

“In the event of a tie, the match will be decided by a blitz game for which the time control will be 3m+2s (setting 15 on DGT2010). Each team captain will select a team member, who took part in the match, to play. Colours will be determined by coin toss. The result of the game will be submitted to the ECF for rating. If the game is drawn, the match will be decided by the toss of a coin.”

Sam Gaffney explained that the reason for this proposal was because of the number of 4-4 draws in the competition this season, and the current tie break was considered somewhat arbitrary.

Andrew Last said that if we are to implement this, Sudbury would want it played over all four boards. Sam argued that it is unlikely everyone would be able to stay back for the extra game, therefore just one was suggested.

Piotr Dolewka asked what would happen if the draw resulted from an adjusted result following a penalty due to a rule violation. This generated considerable discussion, much of it confused by misunderstandings.

Ed Kirkham proposed a simple solution - if a violation occurs in a rapid play knockout match that results in a drawn match, the offending team loses the match, not just the board. This was seconded by Sam Gaffney, but was defeated 8 votes to 6.

Piotr Dolewka proposed amending the original proposal by adding the following;

“If a match is later declared drawn due to the application of a penalty imposed for a rule violation, the match will be decided by:

- (a) Elimination of the lower boards, one by one, until a result is obtained;*
- (b) Selecting the team with the lower aggregate rating;*
- (c) The toss of a coin.”*

This was seconded by Stephen Lewis and passed nem con.

6.13 Rule A1.11

The committee proposed replacing the existing rule with;

“In all other matters including ineligibility penalties this competition defaults to the SCCA league and general rules.”

This was seconded by Ed Kirkham and passed nem con.

6.14 Rule A3.8

The committee proposed replacing the existing rule with;

“If the competition is played as an all-play-all league, then the following tie-break rules apply. In the event of a two-way tie, the competition will be decided by using the league tiebreak rule in section 7.1. In the event of a three-way tie, the competition will be decided in favour of the team with the lowest aggregate rating over both matches, excluding defaults on any board.”

Sam summarised the need for this rule change. The existing rules only provide a tie break in an all-play-all format, not a knockout format. This and the following proposal rectify that. This was seconded by Piotr Dolewka and passed nem con.

6.15 Rule A3.9

The committee proposed replacing the existing rule with;

“If the competition is played as a knock-out, tied matches will be decided by applying the following methods until a result is obtained: (a) board count; (b) by elimination of the lower boards, one by one, until a result is obtained; (c) selecting the team with the lower aggregate rating; (d) by the toss of a coin.”

Sam explained that this proposal is based on the rules governing the Norfolk and Suffolk Cup final, and that it makes sense to use them for the earlier rounds as well. This was seconded by Piotr Dolewka and passed nem con.

6.16 Appendix 4

The committee proposed adding the rules governing the rapid play handicap competition as set out in the document “2024 Rapid Play Handicap Rules.pdf” to the Competition Rules as Appendix 4.

This was seconded by Piotr Dolewka and passed nem con.

6.17 New Rule 1.9

Ipswich chess club proposed the following new rule;

“All teams should be subject to the same rules. If any rule cannot be applied for a team, all teams in the same competition should also be excluded from applying the rule.”

Piotr Dolewka explained that as rules had not always been applied consistently to different teams in all cases, that his rule was necessary. This generated considerable discussion, some of it heated at times.

Bob Jones expressed the view common to almost everyone that this was a given. David Green declared that the whole purpose of the substitution rules was to penalise big clubs. Simon Wilks disagreed with this assessment, but regardless of the purpose of a rule, all teams are subject to the same rules. Steve Lovell added that while he agrees with it, it is not necessary.

This was seconded by Ken Lunn and defeated by 2 votes to 10.

6.18 New Rule 1.10

Ipswich chess club proposed the following new rule;

“Any player designated to play in one match cannot participate in another match simultaneously.”

While it was not immediately obvious how this could happen Piotr Dolewka explained the case where a player was entered on the score sheet of one match taking a default, and then played in a match at the same time as a substitute. Sam Gaffney argued that this does not give any team an unfair advantage. Ed Kirkham argued that this would not be possible if captains declare their team **before** the match starts. However it was pointed out that defaults are generally known in advance, and players can be inserted as substitutes for non-appearances after the match has started.

While it was accepted that it was good for a player whose opponent has defaulted to play in another match instead, and that it was likewise detrimental to that player's original team to have him removed from the score sheet, some

saw the appearance of a player on two score sheets at the same time to be wrong in principle.

The proposal was seconded by Ken Lunn and defeated by 4 votes to 7.

6.19 New Rule 5.3

This proposal was withdrawn by Ipswich chess club.

6.20 New Rule 5.6(b)

Ipswich chess club proposed deleting the existing rule (5.4(b)) and replacing it with;

“Any player selected to play for a team, beyond their nominated team, shall be subject to substitution regulations only.”

Piotr Dolewka explained that the concept of a ‘Main Team’ was both confusing and unnecessary. Players should be nominated for a team, and any player not nominated for a team can act as a substitute for that team, and no other rules other than those for substitution rules are necessary. Bob Jones disagreed and explained how they approached the subject in Bury St Edmunds. Having an un-nominated player available for an unlimited number of games for a team is necessary.

The proposal was seconded by Ken Lunn and defeated by 2 votes to 5.

6.21 New Rule 5.6(f)

This proposal was withdrawn by Ipswich chess club.

6.22 New Rule 5.8

Ipswich chess club proposed the following new rule;

“All nominated players should play for the team at least 3 times during the season.”

Piotr Dolewka first stated that he wished to drop the number of appearance to two instead of three and then explained that the reason for this proposal was to prevent clubs nominating players they have no intention of fielding in order to gain an advantage from those players’ higher ratings. There were a number of objections raised against this proposal, the principle one being that unless it is accompanied with a specific penalty, it is unenforceable.

The proposal was seconded by Ken Lunn and defeated by 2 votes to 9.

6.23 Rule 7.1

Ipswich chess club proposed deleting the first sentence and replacing it with;

“For all league-type competitions, it is recommended to implement point allocation as follows (instead of counting small games points):

2 points for a winning match

1 point for a draw

0 for a loss

Where teams are equal on match points, game points will determine league positions.”

Piotr Dolewka explained the reason for this was because defaulted matches 4-0 had a disproportionate impact on league positions.

David Green questioned whether we should address the issue of defaults rather than treat the symptoms of it. He argued that teams should be penalised for defaulting matches, to the point of ejecting them from the competition.

Steve Lovell suggested that as this is such a radical change perhaps we should limit this proposal to the U1800 and U1650 Cups only. This was then proposed as an amendment.

This was seconded by Sam Gaffney and passed by 10 votes to 1.

7. Proposals for Changes to the Constitution.

Ipswich Chess Club has proposed the following amendments to the Constitution:

7.1 Article 4

Ipswich chess club proposed adding the following article to the constitution;

“Create an "Appeal Committee" composed of one representative from every club. The Appeal Committee would be a body that considers any appeal.”

Piotr Dolewka explained that such a committee would engage all clubs, and in particular it would spread an increase in the understanding of the rules among players in general. He declared that the current system is not wide enough.

A number of objections were raised. David Green stated that it couldn't happen because you could not force every club to provide such a representative. Bob Jones claimed it was unnecessary because we already have an appeals committee. Sam Gaffney pointed out that if a situation arose in which the existing appeals committee was too small due to conflicts of interest, other individuals could always be co-opted onto a committee.

The proposal was seconded by Ken Lunn and defeated by 2 votes to 6.

8. Presentation of Trophies:

Division 1 – Bury St Edmunds A - collected by Bob Jones

Division 2 – Woodbridge - collected by Sam Gaffney

Division 3 – Ipswich B - collected by Alonso Paez

Division 1 POTY – Andrew Lewis (Manningtree)

Division 2 POTY – Rob Sanders (Sudbury)

Robert Kent (Sudbury)

Peter Coleman (Sudbury)

James Irwin (Stowmarket)

Division 3 POTY – Alonso Paez (Ipswich)

Les Jones (Ipswich)

U1800 Cup – Ipswich - collected by Alonso Paez

U1650 Cup – Ipswich - collected by Bob Jones for engraving correction
Division One Rapid Play – Manningtree A - collected by John McAllister
Division Two Rapid Play – Woodbridge - collected by Sam Gaffney
Division Three Rapid Play – Clacton - collected by John McAllister

9. Teams for next season

Sam Gaffney produced a draft for next season's league structure, but added that it has a number of dependences. He stated that he would prefer to even out the divisions by promoting teams from divisions two and three. Bob Jones stated that while Bury St Edmunds could accept promoting one of their division three teams to division two, they no longer had the strength in depth to support two teams in division one.

Division One	Division Two	Division Three
Bury St Edmunds A	Bury St Edmunds B	Bury St Edmunds C
Ipswich A	Felixstowe A	Bury St Edmunds B
Ipswich Sports Club	Ipswich B	Felixstowe B
Manningtree A	Manningtree B	Ipswich C
Saxmundham A	Stowmarket	Ipswich D
Woodbridge A	Sudbury	Ipswich E
		Manningtree C
		Saxmundham B
		Woodbridge B

10. Any other business

Alonso Paez announced that there is currently a project under way to bring next year's British Championships to Ipswich. Simon Wilks requested being kept in the loop, and if there was anything the SCCA could do to help promote this, the SCCA would do all that they could.