

President's Report 2023.

I want to begin by thanking everyone here for another thoroughly enjoyable and competitive Chess season. I am sure we have all enjoyed the positive experience of the return to Over the Board Chess.

Many Congratulations to Maddocks A team for winning the Treble of the Classical League, the Rapid Play League and the Cox trophy. One significant feature about Maddocks' success this season is the resilience they have shown to recover from the loss of experienced players from last year's champions. We have all impressed with the strength of their squad and their consistently high standards.

Maddocks dominated the Classical League again this year. The Rapid Play League in contrast was a very tight competition and everything came down to the last couple of rounds played at Telford. In the end, Maddocks were the strongest team under pressure.

Maddocks completed the treble by winning the Cox Trophy. A great future of this competition were the giantkillers, Telepost B, who defeated both Oswestry and Telepost A in their cup run and who pushed Maddocks very close in the final. Dan Hilditch-Love was their star performer and demonstrated great potential as one of the most talented young players in our region. Many Thanks to Tony Preece for stepping in as League Controller and doing an outstanding job along his role as General Secretary. We all very much appreciate this

Newport A were winners of the Summer One Day Rapid Cup, defeating Telepost in the final. Well done to Toby Neal for organising this competition. We all thoroughly enjoyed it. Thank you as well to Dan and Phil Love for their hard work supporting Toby.

Congratulations to Telford A for winning Division 2 with a 100% score.

Congratulations to Telepost B for winning Rapid Play Division 2. This competition for players with Rapid Play grades below 1640 proved very popular. Many Thanks to Chris for organising the Rapid Play Leagues.

Congratulations to Oswestry B for winning Online Line Division 1 and to Telford for winning Online Division 2. Many Thanks to Charles Higgle for organising both these leagues. I also want to thank Charles for all his hard work organising the Shropshire 4NCL over the board and online teams and to congratulate him and Rudy Van Kemenade for their strong performances for the Welsh Team in the recent European Seniors Championships in Poland.

Moving on to the Individual Competitions, congratulations to Nat Paul for winning the County Championship for the second time with a score of 6/7 and on becoming the highest rated player in the county for the first time. Many Congratulations to both James Holyhead and Robert Green who both scored 6/7 in the Minor Individual. I understand they are going to play a further playoff to decide the winner. I want to thank Nick Rutter for his hard work organising the County Championship and as grading officer. With grades being updated every month, this is a lot of hard work for Nick and he continues to be as efficient and accurate as ever.

2022-3 has been a fantastic season for Shropshire Junior Chess and I want to thank Chris for all his hard work. For example, Chris provided outstanding leadership when organising the recent Junior Megafinals with his typical eye for detail. Chris creates a relaxed and purposeful atmosphere, which is engaging for young players. At each turn Chris has involved the Parents and worked with them effectively. Chris recently organised a Junior Chess Challenge where Shropshire Juniors played the Staffordshire Juniors. This was another successful and enjoyable event. Chris has continued to organise regular training sessions at the Nerdy Café with help from Francis, Dan and Kate. This has led to a number of young players joining Shropshire Chess Clubs, playing for club teams and playing some outstanding Chess.

Looking back to January, another highlight of the year was the Shropshire Chess Congress, which was held at the Wrekin Housing Trust Headquarters building in Telford. It was the first time the tournament had been held since 2019. In total, 146 players from across the country entered across the four sections. Sam Hollands was one of the stars of the event, coming in equal first place in the Minor Section in his first ever weekend tournament. Nat Paul won

the prize for the best performer from Shropshire in the Open Section. Many Thanks again to Chris, Dan and Phil for their superb organisation of this event.

I want now to pass on our thanks to some of the heroes of the Shropshire Chess Association. I want to thank Peter Kitchen for everything he has done as Publicity Officer. There has been plenty of good news this year and Peter has ensured that we have all been well informed about Chess events in Shropshire. Many Thanks as well to Nick Holmes for all his hard work on the website. Nick has been brilliant at organising the website efficiently and quickly. This makes a huge difference to helping us gain new members and making everyone feel involved.

I would also like to thank to Phil Love for all his hard work operating the live boards, so that Shropshire Chess Association members can follow games online.

I want to update everyone on the development of Shropshire Chess Association as a Charity. The Shropshire Chess Association officially converted to a charity on 05.05.23.

The EGM passed a new constitution on the 10th March 2023.

The charity's objects are:

(1) The advancement of amateur sport by promoting the study and practice of chess in all its forms, principally, but not exclusively, for the benefit of the residents of Shropshire.

(2) The advancement of education by promoting the development of young people through the teaching and practice of chess.

The trustees agreed to promote junior chess in Shropshire via our funding for schools and junior clubs.

In 2 tranches we purchased over £2,000 of equipment and achieved a favourable discount from Chess & Bridge of 20% on all purchases. The association has helped set up clubs in 2 schools (Highley School and Childe Lacon School, chess clubs at Market Drayton Library and Ludlow Library and

additional clubs on the campuses at Shrewsbury Colleges.). Details of these actions have been published on the website.

We still hold stock of 52 boards and 6 clocks and so continue to promote our offer to other schools and junior clubs. We are in contact with a couple more schools who may place an order next year.

The Shropshire Chess Association now has four trustees: Tony Preece, Chris Lewis, Jonathan Smith and myself. We are looking to recruit more trustees to broaden representation.

I want to finish by paying tribute to our dear friend Francis Best, my predecessor as Shropshire Chess Association President, as he is moving away from Shropshire soon. Francis was Shropshire Chess Association President from 2011-2019, following on from Iain Wilson. Francis provided trusted and wise leadership in this position, and he was instrumental in encouraging many of us to become more involved in the association. Whenever I've faced challenging situations, I try to think "What would Francis do?" Before 2011, Francis was Treasure of the Association for many years

Alongside Steve Rooney, Francis relaunched the Shropshire Chess Congress in Jan 2012. Francis pioneered the Wrekin Housing Trust as the new venue for the Congress and for many other Shropshire Chess events, such as decisive League matches and Cox Trophy and Minor Knockout Finals. The Shropshire Chess Congress established a strong reputation in the congress calendar and received sponsorship to invite grandmasters on several occasions. Francis and Steve pioneered the use of live boards and reinvested surpluses from the event into new equipment.

Francis has been one of the strongest and most popular players in the County throughout his time in Shropshire and was instrumental to Shrewsbury's League wins in 2004 and 2011. Mark Smith reports that Francis Best has been a mainstay at Shrewsbury Chess Club since he moved to the area. He has been secretary of the club as well as A team captain for many years. He has also been a stalwart at club nights, happily playing anyone and everyone.

Steve Rooney recalls his experience of working with Francis as junior organisers for many years with great fondness. Originally, they helped with Alan Shaw's Dothill chess club, helping to develop a number of talented junior players, including our own Chris Lewis. Francis' calm demeanour and authority meant

he was always great with young players. Francis also organised grandmaster simulms by Nigel Short and Michael Adams. Over the board, Francis has always been a strong and sporting opponent and all of us, who have played him regularly have relished the experience.

Please could we honour Francis's service to the Association with a round of applause.