

Dear all

Many thanks to all those clubs and individuals that came back with comments regarding our thoughts of chess for next season. We've tried to consider all of your responses to come up with a system that we hope will work as best as possible for everyone. To that end there are some changes from our original proposals. I'll try to sum up where we are with chess for next season and what we know for definite.

Firstly, next season is going to be a unique season and so we think that it will require a higher level of flexibility and communication than previously.

We can confirm that, as proposed, the league next season will comprise 2 divisions.

Division 1

Our hope is that division 1 will be for 8 teams each playing each other twice during the season - once at home and once away. At the moment we don't have exact numbers of how many teams would like to take part in division 1. I am in correspondence with those teams who are unsure. Once we have the information we will make a decision on the make-up of the division.

Division 2

Again, we can confirm that there will only be one other division - division 2. We can also confirm that division 2 will be for teams of 4 players - that seems to be the preference of the clubs. Division 2 will not be all-play-all but pairings will take place using the Swiss pairing system. There have been some comments that not knowing pairings in advance causes problems for captains. To help with this we have decided that we can provide pairings ahead of time. At the start of the season we will give every team their first two pairings. Then once we have the results of round 1 we will give everyone the pairings for round 3. Once we have the results of round 2 we will then announce the pairings for round 4 and so on. Hopefully this will be a reasonable compromise. This should give captains 3 weeks notice of any match.

Originally the thought was that all matches would be played in the same week and that we would have plenty of spare weeks. But on reflection we feel it best that to begin with we will arrange fixtures such that division 1 plays one week and division 2 the next. Once we are up and running we may feel that we can create spare weeks by having both divisions playing in the same week - as with everything this season we will have to constantly review how things are going.

So far two clubs have informed us that their venue needs to know dates of home matches in advance. We think that we are able to accommodate this.

The other big issue has been around the issue of playing up and down. Our original thought was that any one player could only play one match in a given gameweek. This does go against the way we have run the league for many years and has caused some consternation at the lack of

flexibility. As a result we are concerned that this may mean that some clubs are only able to enter one team into the league when they really wish to add two. Our over-riding thought whilst trying to set up chess for the coming season is that we want to allow chess for as many people who want to play as possible and that this season was always going to have to entail a level of flexibility. So, we have decided that for this coming season there will be no playing up/down restrictions. Instead, we will be reliant on clubs to play within the spirit of the playing up/down rules. Everyone knows why we have the rules that we do and so everyone should understand the spirit of them. Basically, the rules are there to prevent us having defaults in our matches - they are not there to allow teams to be artificially strengthened. So please by all means allow players to play up or down but first of all look to weaker players in your club to fill vacancies. It would be very disappointing to learn that some players are playing two matches in a week when there are available players in a club not playing a game at all. And please bear in mind that the first playing up/down rule is that they don't permit strong players to play down to a lower team. Above all, just be sensible.

When you come to decide how many teams you wish to enter into division 2 bear in mind that there are no playing up/down restrictions but also that the very nature of division 2 means that we cannot guarantee that your A/B or B/C teams are not playing on the same night. It's not ideal but this will be a unique season. We will do our best to avoid clashes but cannot guarantee them.

There have been many comments regarding any COVID restrictions during matches. Our view is that it is not the responsibility of the league to dictate what restrictions that there should or should not be. It will be up to the individual venues to follow government guidance and it will be up to individual clubs to follow any guidance that their venue may have. Having said that there are a few points that as a league we feel we can state :-

- 1 - Every venue should provide hand sanitising gel
- 2 - As chess players we are very keen to gather around boards to watch proceedings, especially towards the end of a match. This is very much to be discouraged - having your board surrounded by players in the present circumstances will be very unnerving.
- 3 - The wearing of masks. This could be a very emotive issue. Our view is that we have to follow the rules of the venue. It is unlikely that any venue will insist on the wearing of masks and so we cannot insist on it. Should a venue insist on wearing masks then that club should inform their opponents beforehand. Conversely there may be players who are only willing to play chess if their opponent is wearing a mask. Again, this is nothing that we can insist on. But, a quick e-mail/telephone conversation between captains beforehand should establish if there is someone willing to help out

Timescales

1. We will endeavour to finalise division 1 by the middle of next week and confirm it to those clubs involved. We will then prepare a set of fixtures for division 1
2. We want to give division 2 teams as much notice as possible of their first two rounds. We ask that teams are entered for division 2 by Fri 20th August - this gives us chance to make the draw for the first two rounds and gives clubs 3 weeks notice of their first

matches. The beauty of a Swiss pairing system is that we can make late pairings. So, any teams that enter after that date will be paired against each other as best as possible.

3. Our intention is to play the first round of division 1 matches w/c Mon 6th Sep and the division 2 matches w/c Mon 13th Sep
- 4.

I hope that all of this is clear. Apologies if I've missed anything but please contact me if I've not been clear on any subject.

Please contact me with confirmation of the teams that you wish to enter in the league this year and please can you provide contact details of the team captains. I think that the two most important things for this rather strange season will be flexibility and communication. If you don't know captains details yet then we will cope but, the sooner that we have contact details then the easier it will be for all of us. The intention is to provide all captains with contact details of all other captains. We will also put captains e-mail addresses onto the Chessit web-site. Should any captain not want their e-mail address published on Chessit then please let me know when you provide their details.

Many thanks

Stuart