

HCA Events Programme 2021-22

Objectives

- To provide a similar level of OTB chess opportunities as a “normal” season
- To build in a degree of resilience to season interruptions, should there be any

Proposals

- **Knock out matches.** To start at the beginning of October 2021 and finish in first week of November 2021. Grading limits will be the old ones, converted to 4-digit grades (i.e. U120 = U1600, U140 = U1750, U160 = U1900).
- **League.** Based on feedback received from clubs to date, we estimate that there might be about 30 teams of 5 players.
 - a. Divisions will comprise 8 teams, in 2 groups (A & B) of 4 teams each. The bottom Division will comprise the remaining teams that cannot be fitted within this structure.
 - b. Each team in group A or B will play the other 3 teams twice (home and away).
 - c. The top two teams in groups A and B will then be merged into 4 teams in group C; likewise the bottom two teams in groups A and B will merge into 4 teams in group D.
 - d. Teams will carry forward into group C or D the results from the team they already played as part of group A or B. They will not play this team again, thus each team in group C or D will play the other 2 teams that they have not already played, home & away.
 - e. The winner of group C will be the winner of the Division.
 - f. The bottom Division will be all-play-all, playing each team home and away if feasible.
 - g. If the season is interrupted, we will endeavour to complete the group stages A and B as planned, but maybe adopt a different method to determine the overall Division winner, e.g. a knockout featuring the top 2 teams from each of groups A and B.
 - h. All being well, we would envisage the group A/B stage to run from the second week in November 2021 to the end of February or early March 2022. The group C/D stages would then run until the end of May, or early June.
 - i. Clubs **MUST** declare how many teams they will run, and nominate players for these teams, no later than mid-October. This will give the League Secretary sufficient time to allocate teams to Divisions (on the basis of e.g. average rating) and produce the fixture list.
 - j. Most of the match rules will remain unchanged; however in order to adhere to the timetable all games **MUST** be played to a finish on the night, with no adjournment or adjudication.

- **U1600 league** (replacing the old U120 League). The format will be decided based on how many teams wish to enter; clubs may enter more than one team (though players are limited to playing for one team only). This will run concurrently with the main league.
- **Herts Chess online.** We are not sure whether the demand will still exist (at the same level as before), so any continuation (and decisions of appropriate format) remains to be confirmed.

Miscellaneous

- HCA will not seek to impose restrictions on any players in its competitions.
- However, some club venues may impose restrictions, e.g. limiting the number of people present, wearing masks, vaccine passports etc. If this is the case then the League Secretary **MUST** be informed at the earliest possible opportunity, in order for this information to be disseminated to visiting teams.
- If a club venue's restrictions are considered to be excessive then (a) the club itself may vote with its feet, or (b) the club might be required to play all its matches "away" or at some other acceptable venue.
- Before any restrictions are considered "excessive" they would need to be discussed at an EGM of the HCA.
- Players who have Covid or flu-like symptoms (e.g. coughing, sneezing) should be strongly discouraged from playing while these symptoms persist. If these result in last-minute defaults, other teams are requested to be understanding and sympathetic.

Commentary

By having the KO competitions at the start of the season, there is a reasonable likelihood we can finish them before the winter Covid / flu season starts in earnest and possible restrictions on socialising get reimposed.

By delaying the start of the league season, clubs have a bit longer to sort out their player nominations. This may be useful if some players are wavering about whether to return to OTB chess; a few more weeks may help them decide one way or another.

The old league structure, teams etc was unsustainable since it seems that a relatively large number (about 25-30%) of players will not be returning immediately. The likely number of teams drops by a similar proportion.

The league structure borrows ideas from the 4NCL (OTB) and allows more flexibility in the event of interruptions to the season. For example the second part could be replaced by a knockout which could be played out in a few weeks rather than the 3 months allocated.

At present it is envisaged that the league structure, rules etc would only apply for the 2021-22 season. The situation would be reviewed before the 2022-23 season (hopefully in time for the 2022 AGM).