

Hertfordshire U160 Team 2017 - 18

2018 will probably be remembered more for the disruption to chess, than for the chess that was played. The season started in early January with a double booking of the Turner Hall in Newmarket. Fortunately an alternative venue was found nearby, and after the chaotic start, Herts settled down to beat Cambs 9-7, followed by a draw with Norfolk in the afternoon. The good start was rather undone by February defeats to Suffolk and Cambs. March brought further disruption as the snow returned with a vengeance to cause postponement of the final round of fixtures. With the deadline for ECF nominations due, a compromise was reached whereby Herts were rather generously given the second ECF place behind Suffolk. The consequence of those decisions was to make the rearranged final round of fixtures in April something of a damp squib that there was little appetite for, and Herts were not alone in struggling to field a full team. Herts duly lost both matches to Norfolk and Suffolk, and in the final table scraped into third place ahead of Norfolk by one game point.

For our ECF quarter-final, we again travelled north to Sharnford in Leicestershire to meet Yorkshire for the second year running, who lined up with a staggering average grade of 155. As last year, Herts put up a commendable fight, and with four boards left in play, were leading 6.5-5.5, before being overhauled. Not surprisingly with such a strong team, Yorkshire went on to win the U160 final.

With five points from seven matches for Herts U160, Jon Barnes is a deserved winner of this season's Tom Wright Trophy, beating Michael Flatt by half a point. Jon Barnes, Michael Flatt and James Aldred have all qualified for county awards from their performances this season (if they have not previously received the award). Five players were present for all seven matches, and 29 different players were used in all.

I only played in one match this season, and I would like to record my gratitude to Mark Heffer for his captaincy of the side. With the chaos of the venue in January, to the snow driven postponements of March and the subsequent April rearrangements, it was not the easiest of seasons. We hope for an easier ride in 2018/19.

Mike Price