

Scarborough Community of Toronto Chess News & Views

Newsletter of / Le Journal de
Scarborough Chess Club

“ FRIENDLY Chess Since 1960 ”

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO BOTH MEMBERS & NON-MEMBERS

Issue # 8 – December 15, 2002

Merry Christmas / Holiday Season & a Happy New Year !!

GTCL Meeting Grapples With Future of Toronto Chess

Report on Greater Toronto Chess League meeting
2002.12.09 8pm
Dutton Chess Club, 1681 Bayview Avenue, Toronto

By David Cohen, President

Over 50 people attended the meeting, coming from as far away as Burlington, Brampton, Oshawa and Montreal.

GTCL Executive in attendance:

David Cohen (President); Cesar Posylek (Vice-President); Bryan Lamb (Treasurer); Mark Dutton (Communications Director); David Gebhardt (Club Coordinator)

GTCL Board members in attendance:

Maurice Smith (CFC Executive); Bob Armstrong (Scarboro CC); Kerry Liles (Burlington CC); Jim Ferrier (Brampton CC); Anthony (Tony) Cheron (Peel CC); Slava Sviridovitch (Alekhin Chess School); Larry Bevand (Chess'n Math Association); Peter Boross-Harmer (Toronto High Schools).

Former GTCL Board members in attendance:

Wilf Ferner, Martin Jaeger

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Stan Wadlow Park Clubhouse, 373 Cedarvale Ave.

(one block east of Woodbine Ave./Cosburn Ave. intersection, in former East York)

[Highlights Only – Ed.]

Agenda

A. Matters arising from Executive items

(numbering follows Executive agenda item numbers)

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6. Bids for 2003 events

No bids have been received. Toronto Closed: Martin Jaeger volunteered to direct half of the tournament for a small honorarium, if a free site can be obtained. Larry Bevand agreed to offer the CMA site for weekday evenings when it would otherwise not be in use for 11 rounds (12 player Round Robin) for \$500 (a discount off his regular price of \$75/evening).

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10. Scholarship Fund

Around \$700. Bryan Lamb had asked for a refund of the \$300 he donated. Mr. Lamb persuaded to withdraw his request and to work out a format with Larry Bevand for the disbursement of the money. Peter Boross-Harmer suggested a FIDE rated Round Robin for juniors.

12. Secretary

We are still looking for a Secretary for the Executive. I will be stepping down from the Presidency and from the Board no later than the 2003 AGM. So, we are looking for new people to come forward to volunteer to help promote organized chess in Toronto.

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16. Fundraiser

I announced that the Sick Kids Hospital Foundation had approved the GTCL to run a fundraiser for them. The problem is to locate a master who would volunteer his or her time for a simultaneous exhibition, so that the entry fees collected would go to the hospital.

18. GM Joel Lautier

I announced that Grandmaster Joel Lautier, born in Scarborough, is interested to visit Toronto to give a chess lecture or exhibition. His fee is \$1,100 plus expenses. We are looking for a sponsor. David Gebhardt is trying to obtain the Scarborough Civic Centre as a site for the 2003 Ontario Open. I suggested to him to try to arrange a visit in conjunction with this event.

19. Todd Southam Memorial

I announced that the Southam family is open to the naming of a junior open tournament in memory of their son Todd. We are looking for a suitable format, sponsor, and organizer.

21. Olympiad

I announced that the Belzbergs are interested in bringing the Olympiad to Canada, probably in 2008, not necessarily to Toronto.

22. Chess Corner

The Chess Corner on Gould Street corner of Yonge Street will be torn down for unavoidable reasons. Martin Jaeger has been actively seeking a replacement, and has tentatively arranged to have it relocated to Nathan Phillips Square at the corner of Bay and Queen Streets. With his own contribution and others that he has sought and obtained, Mr. Jaeger has raised \$1,000 for the site. He will attempt to obtain additional money from the CFC, possibly from the former Building Fund money now held by the Chess Foundation of Canada.

B. New business

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3. Discussion of future of Toronto clubs and tournaments

From 8:30pm-10:30pm, David Cohen chaired an open discussion on the problems of organized chess in Toronto. The impending closing of the Dutton Chess Club on the CMA site spurred the huge attendance at the meeting and the interest shown by the participants.

Summary:

Ideas were discussed regarding possible causes for the closing of the club; and possible uses for the facilities. Many volunteered to help run a possible future club or future Toronto chess tournaments; they will need training.

The GTCL will formally ask the CFC to return the money from the Building Fund to Toronto by turning it over to the GTCL.

Details:

David Cohen thanked Mark Dutton for his efforts over the past 3.5 years promoting organized chess in Toronto by running the Dutton Chess Club, and Mr. Dutton received a round of applause from all in attendance.

Highlights of comments made at the meeting:

Mark Dutton: Club membership recently declined rapidly from 200 members to 60 members. Similarly, tournament attendance has recently rapidly declined, and is now at half capacity. Players are not renewing their CFC memberships. Meanwhile, the club is squeezed financially

because of escalating rent. Possible cause: juniors and seniors play; others have moved to playing on the internet.

Martin Jaeger: Hold 4 tournament/year for internet players to gauge their progress in public. (e.g., Toronto Open Ch, Toronto Class Ch, Victoria Day, Labour Day). Organize on volunteer basis. With the increase in quality of 'En Passant' magazine, people will find this reason enough to join the CFC. Bryan Lamb offered to investigate whether or not the Macedonian Hall would be available for a few additional large events on holidays (besides Labour Day).

Fred Henderson: Problem is not solely the internet. I like the club and it's social aspects.

David Gebhardt: Decline of the chess club is universal. Need more people active in organizing. Need people to get players they know to come out to a club for the first time. David Cohen suggested we take advantage of Toronto's multi-cultural make-up by reaching out to ethnic communities from countries where chess is more popular (e.g., Russia, European nations).

Bob Armstrong: City owned sites are best used once per month. Difficult to make arrangements for more frequent meetings.

DCC member: 70% of entry fees returned as prizes is too much, Dutton can keep more.

A show of hands was taken, and the resulting conclusion was that non-masters will play for trophies or small prizes; they don't need a large prize. Martin Jaeger disagreed, suggesting that large class prizes were necessary.

Anthony Cheron: Introduced the idea that the chess club of the 21st century is a combination of the club we know and the internet: a Local Area Network (LAN)! You would enter a room of computers and everyone would play chess at their computer terminal. David Cohen suggested we could test this out with a club night at a local internet store or cafe (many have appeared recently in Toronto).

Maurice Smith: There was always one organizer at a time, and each in turn burned out. Better if each club (with a different organizer) pitches in.

Bryan Lamb: I see the club as the young player's introduction to the game he or she already enjoys - in an environment that is friendly. Wants club tradition to continue, so this environment will exist for juniors to continue playing.

Peter Boross-Harmer: Use the money from the former Building Fund to kick start a club. Run it on a non-profit basis, i.e., generate enough funds to replenish the initial amount.

The meeting was polled on its desire to return the money from the former Building Fund to Toronto. The meeting was unanimously in favour of this. Disagreement ensued on how much to return (full amount; full amount less founders' contributions; or special project only, e.g., chess corner).

Moved Cohen/Boross-Harmer that the Greater Toronto Chess League ask the Chess Federation of Canada to return to Toronto the money from the former Building Fund (now held by the Chess Foundation of Canada) by turning it over to the GTCL. The GTCL Executive will work out the exact wording of the request to the CFC. Martin Jaeger was opposed. Kerry

Liles said that there should be a definite use for the money. Motion passed 8-2 (Smith, Liles opposed).

Larry Bevand: Wants a chess club in Toronto, on the CMA site. Toronto players should do it themselves, without help from the CFC. CMA has been in Toronto for almost a decade. CMA is willing to partner with people (like Dutton) who know what they are doing and who will do a good job.

The meeting was polled, and most DCC members indicated that they were former SCC members, and would return there after DCC closed. SCC has the capacity for just under 100 members at the site it rents from the city.

There was some discussion of the possible use for the CMA site where DCC operated. Mr. Bevand offered it for use at \$650/month or \$150/day on weekends or \$75/evening on weekdays. Martin Jaeger indicated that he paid \$13/night for bridge, and Kerry Liles indicated that this format was used at the Burlington CC. Mark Dutton stated that chess players had not been willing to pay a visitor fee to get into his club.

Mr. Jaeger suggested that a free site be obtained. Jaco Uwland suggested that the renter (sponsor) needs an interest. David Cohen pointed out the problem with approaching potential sponsors was that chess players - over the course of many years - had consistently behaved poorly.

Dan Catona: Players should take a "pay cut" for the next year to play a little rather than not at all. People care, now that they know DCC will be gone. By slowly building back up, try to revive to where we were a year ago.

Matt Blakely: Underswell of support does exist. Buy memberships and play for trophies.

Fred Henderson suggested a scaled back setup at the CMA site.

Bob Armstrong: Suggested 2 committees: one for a new Toronto Chess Club, using the former Building Fund money; one for training and organizing volunteers to run tournaments

Maurice Smith: DCC was a success for over 3 years. But what action can we take now?

Mark Dutton: Chess cannot be marketed to the masses, but we need more players and more participation. People are coming from all over the Greater Toronto Area to attend the DCC.

David Gebhardt suggested different formats be tried, e.g., Pro-Am, about 6 tournaments per year. We should get ideas from others with similar problems, e.g., Kitchener-Waterloo, BCF.

Wilf Ferner: A workshop should be held for prospective organizers.

A list of volunteers was recorded. Mr. Boross-Harmer suggested that he and David Lawless would work towards creating a club and running weekend tournaments.

The meeting concluded with informal talks.

Concrete proposals are welcomed and should be sent to the GTCL Executive members, who

can then contact those who volunteered.

David Cohen
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Editorial Comment :

What Do Toronto Chess Players Want ?

We'd like to make an attempt to look at the outline of the proposal being put forward by Peter Boross-Harmer (former GTCL President) and David Lawless (former SCC member):

Peter Boross-Harmer: Use the money [\$ 23,000 – Ed.] from the former Building Fund to kick start a club. Run it on a non-profit basis, i.e., generate enough funds to replenish the initial amount.

The details presented to date have necessarily been limited, as the development of this proposal is a work-in-progress. But some shape has been given to an initial plan. We are going to have to guess at a few details that seem to be implied though not expressly stated yet. We'll also offer some analysis of our own.

One thing that is clearly being said by the majority, is that the existing clubs in Toronto do not satisfy the need Toronto players have for a central playing center of some kind (Scarborough CC was discussed at the meeting, and its ability to take on new members was made clear, but it is clear that something more is desired). The proposal is for a new non-profit Toronto chess club, but perhaps something even more than that. At times the proposal has elements of the old “ Toronto Chess House “ idea, which had been the centerpiece of the Toronto Building Fund (more about that later). Peter mentioned that some people are looking for cheaper space to carry out group teaching of chess, or some smaller chess schools. Could the new Toronto Chess Space (TCS – we'll call it that for now for convenience) lease the space and then sublease it to different chess interests, at a cost which covers their rental, but is a good deal for other Toronto chess players/coaches/etc. needing cheap space from time to time ? Could the space be rented out reasonably to organizers wanting to hold tournaments – actives, weekend, etc.? At the moment, the space being focused on is the CMA leased space on the 2nd floor of 1681 Bayview, where DCC has been located. This would mean that there would have to be a maximum capacity of 84 players, but compromises will have to be made if something new is to arise. CMA owns all the equipment that DCC was using (clocks, sets, tables, etc.), and it appears from what Larry Bevand said at the meeting, that he would consider including them in a rental arrangement to the TCS. This would take care of the equipment problem, since a new entity could not, at least initially, afford the investment in the equipment and furniture that would be required. They could in turn be rented out to organizers who wanted to rent the premises, if the organizer wanted to supply everything to the players.

The Toronto Building Fund

The big question of course is : Who is going to pay for all this ?? Well, the main plank of the proposal at the moment seems to be the GTCL. But how will it do it ? The answer lies in the much maligned Toronto Building Fund (now defunct). The history of this briefly is that an idea was originally floated a while ago that the GTCL, or a foundation related to the GTCL, BUY a property in Toronto, and turn it into a Chess House. In retrospect, it was an overly ambitious and perhaps unrealistic idea. But nonetheless, donations were accepted by the building fund from Toronto benefactors, and money was donated from Toronto tournaments, and the fund grew to \$ 23, 000. The fund, to keep GTCL politics out of it, was formed with an independent Board of Trustees, and they had sole authority. The fund languished over recent years. The Board saw no hope for a Toronto Chess House. And it could not come up with a plan as to how the money could be used to benefit Toronto chess players. Some feel that they didn't consult widely enough; we are also not aware what final notice was given to the GTCL of their final disposition intention, to give the GTCL a final input before they acted. Anyway, in line with their constitution, they had a way out – give the money to the CFC (apparently this is clear right in their mandate, though I think that was news to most at the meeting). So the Board exited from the dilemma, giving a donation of the full fund to the CFC's Chess Foundation.

The meeting was clear that this decision was not supported by Toronto chess players, since only a small indirect benefit would come to Toronto chess players by this disposition of the fund. A motion passed that the GTCL now ask the CFC to return the \$23,000 to the GTCL, to be used for Toronto chess players, from whom it was originally raised. It is to be noted that Maurice Smith, former CFC President, and former member of the Building Fund Board of Trustees, gave the opinion that there was little likelihood the money would be handed over now. Nevertheless, the meeting authorized that the GTCL try. This is critical, because at the moment, the Boross-Harmer/Lawless proposal seems to hinge directly on the availability of those monies to the new TCS.

The Finances of a New Toronto Chess Space

What are these monies, if returned to the GTCL, to be used for ? The answer is the obvious one of covering the expenses of the new TCS. But it is not simply seen as a use-it-up-'til-it's-gone proposal. The fund is to be replenished, and thus is to act as a cushion when funds are short, but to be increased when times are good and money is being raised. So how will the fund be replenished ? Well, one way would seem to be donations from Toronto chess players. Perhaps corporate donations could be obtained, once there was a clear entity operating which could be presented to the potential donor. Another thing proposed by Peter was that 20 % of a tournament's fees could be donated to the fund. The mathematics is interesting. If the TCS held monthly tournaments, and got 50 players (the new DC average lately), and charged \$60 (the DC registration fee), then fees would total \$ 3,000. 20% = \$600. The DCC paid CMA \$650 / mo for their space three times per week. So a monthly tournament would almost pay for the monthly rental of the space !! The kicker is whether Toronto players will come out and play for reduced prize funds, a nagging question that is always raising its head – do we play for \$, or for the love of the game ? As someone said though, if it's not playing at all, or playing for reduced prizes, maybe Toronto players would rather play than not play at all. Only

carrying out the experiment will find out the answer. Don't forget that not only will 20 % disappear, but the fees still have to pay other tournament expenses, and an organizer/director's fee as well (there is a strong movement that directors should not have to volunteer, but should get a modest hourly wage for their work). So the prior practice of 70% of fees going to prizes will no longer be able to be met (and there are many who felt 70% was not enough !). A final possibility for replenishing the fund is chess club memberships. If the new club offered a similar tournament schedule for club members as was done by DCC, a reasonable annual membership fee could be set up. Currently the SCC non-profit annual fee is \$ 100. The DCC for – profit annual fee was \$ 150. There is here a potential as well for getting donation support from Toronto chess players. If Toronto chess players want the fund to be replenished, and maybe even grow, and want the TCS to thrive, then they can show their support by taking out an annual membership, even if they don't intend to actually use it. Since DCC was a for – profit club, this was a harder sell to players, even when it became clear Mark was in fatal crisis. And Mark himself has said he was not looking for handouts – he wanted the businesses to survive on their own merits. If the new TCS is non-profit, then there is higher likelihood of generating a greater membership base, and having it be on a sustaining annual renewal basis. If Toronto chess players are not willing to do this , then chances are high that the new TCS will eat heavily into the fund each year, and it's days will be numbered.

Administration of a New Toronto Chess Space

One item on which a lot of work will have to be done is the details of administration on the new Toronto Chess Space. Mark and Christine carried out a lot of administrative duties in running a chess club 3x/wk. Who will be the new manager ? Will there be a team of managers, dividing up the times ? Will they be volunteers ? Will there be an honorarium arrangement (right now SCC gives Bryan an honorarium of \$ 1000/year for his " club manager " services , though he has donated it to the club I believe over the last year or so, as the club was shrinking). Or will we have a " professional manager " who will be paid on a part-time job, market basis ? What if any concession stand might there be in the space – will TCS run it, or will it be contracted out to some private interest to run (unlikely the \$ would make this option worthwhile). Will the TCS have an Executive Committee to make decisions on running the space ? If so, what, if any, will be their accountability to the GTCL which holds the " TCS Fund " ?

Need for New Toronto Organizers

Finally, there are currently a lack of organizers in the city, given that DC pretty much held a monopoly in the running of Toronto tournaments over the last four years. An idea was floated that the GTCL run a training school for organizers out of the new TCS, and try to generate a new generation of organizers. Without organizers, there will be no tournaments. GTCL-related organizers may be able to run a tournament or two, but if we don't generate some new ones, the old ones will simply burn out, and we'll be back to square one.

The Sticking Point

We hope this idea will fly – but it's biggest problem is that it hinges on getting back the \$ 23,000. The likelihood of this happening is very uncertain. This is especially

so if the Building Fund Trustees continue to take the position that what they did was legal, and the best option at that time. If the money doesn't come back, then we Toronto chess players will have to bear some of the fault, since we obviously didn't have our act together, and somehow communication broke down between the Building Fund and the GTCL.

The Other Alternative

If the GTCL can't get the money returned, then we're back to trying to find a way to make a new club/space self-sufficient, such as the SCC is at the moment. Not an impossible task, but we have had our own diminishing membership problems (though we may have now bottomed out for a while – we now have 25 players in our current club championship on Thursday nights), and the diminishing membership is one major factor in DCC going under. I guess we can only take it a step at a time, and see what new ideas and new energy, which showed itself at the GTCL meeting, can achieve !!

Successful 1st 2002 Toronto Senior (50+) Active Championship – Nov. 17

Fourteen seniors braved Toronto's early snowstorm to participate in this inaugural event. The event was held in the beautiful Upper Canada room provided for the tournament compliments of Bradgate Arms senior home/hotel.

Vojin Vujosevic took top honours with a perfect score of 5/5, one point ahead of Chris Takov with 4; Barry Thorvardson and Thomas Carleton shared the U2000 class prize with 3. In the U1900 group, Smilja Vujosevic won with 3; while Ted Termeer and Bryan Wood split the U1500 class prize with 2.

Organizer: Wilf Ferner

Tournament Director: Martin Jaeger

SCC Moves Weekend Meeting Day In New Year

Round 2 of the Sunday swiss was played Dec. 8. The club now closes on Sundays for the holidays. But in the New Year, SCC is changing its weekend meeting day to 1:30 pm SATURDAYS. The tournament will run to 6:00 pm. The year will start on Sat., January 11, 2003, with Rd. 3 of the current tournament.

SCC Starts New Tournament on Thursdays in New Year

The Club Championship (top group – round robin; lower group – Swiss) is continuing with 25 players entered. Round 6 will be played Thurs., Dec. 19 (we're playing the third Thurs. in December). Then the club closes on Thursdays for the holidays. The club will reopen on Thursdays, on January 9, 2003, with Round 7.

Also on January 9, SCC will, depending on new members attending, start a brand new swiss tournament to run concurrently on Thursdays with the existing club championship. This is in the light of the Dutton CC closing Dec. 21, and SCC wants to

try to accommodate those DCC members who may want to continue weekly rated chess tournaments in the New Year at SCC on Thursdays. We hope this will be convenient for DCC members (some former SCC members) looking to join/re-join SCC.

A - Members/ non-members may contact Bob Armstrong, ed. , directly, at bobarm@sympatico.ca or through SCC e-mail, to :

8. Be added to the free e-mail list; 2. Submit content (fact, opinion, criticism, recommendations!).
B – An item in any language may be submitted for publication, if accompanied by an English translation.
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