

Proposals Resulting from the Lincolnshire League Survey

I would firstly like to thank Keith Noons, Denis Georgiou, Paul Chaplin, Ian Scott, Peter Sherlock, Andrew Watson, Chris Cumbers and Richard Coats for contributing the survey.

The results have produced the following proposals.

1. Structure of Division 2 North and South
 - a. Merge Division 2 North and South and play long distance matches at neutral venues. (Grantham)
 - b. Split on an east west basis rather than a north south basis. (Skegness)
 - c. Remain the same.
2. Time Controls in the Lincolnshire League
 - a. 80 minutes with 10 seconds per move (Fischer timing) (Grantham)
 - b. 70 minutes with 15 seconds per move (Fischer timing) (Spalding)
 - c. Remain the same
3. Use the ECF LMS for the reporting of results in conjunction with the system already in place. (Spalding, Barton & Appleby Frodingham)
4. Home teams should have white in both divisions. (Grimsby)
5. The creation of a working group to consider ways of revitalising the leagues. (Appleby Frodingham)
6. Publication of the results of the survey on the Lincs Chess Website. (Secretary)

Following John Grashams' recent questionnaire about the league I would like to propose the creation of a working group to consider ways of revitalising the leagues. I have some ideas, which I did consider putting forward as voting proposals to the AGM. I decided against this as they are a significant change from what we do now and I felt that, with the AGM on 8 September, there was insufficient time for serious consideration. I will give the essence of my thoughts that could be considered by the working group so that people can have an idea of the working would do. I am not suggesting that these should be its only agenda. There should be an open discussion as wide-ranging as people want it to be.

The two main areas in my thoughts are: -

1. League Structure.
2. Move rate.

LEAGUE STRUCTURE

The purpose of my proposals is to address the following concerns.

- Division 1 and Division 2 North have only 4 teams. These are too small. We play each other twice and there is little variety of opposition.
- Often the leagues are not competitive in the sense that there is often one team that dominates with many easy games. I believe, maybe wrongly, that the purpose of league chess is to provide teams that are equally matched, resulting in a closely contested struggle, and that most players prefer a close contest.
- Currently, the same players can play in Division 1, Division 2 North, and Division 2 South so there is little "team spirit".
- The stronger clubs have top boards of about equal strength. The boards 2's (and 3's) are forever playing second fiddle to their stronger board 1's. Personally, I like playing stronger opposition (OK, not everyone does); maybe the board 2's would like to lead a team.

The essence of my suggestions are : --

1. Abandon Division 2 North and South and have a single Division 2. Travelling would be a problem. Distant teams would play at a "half-way" venue (Lincoln or Louth), or at a weekend. [This could give a division 2 with Scunthorpe, Lincoln, Grimsby, Louth, Spalding, Skegness].
2. Reduce Division 1 to teams of 4 (same as Division 2).
3. Have a grading limit on ALL teams (Division 1 & 2). I thought 160 average across the board but certainly open to discussion and maybe different limits for Division 1 and 2. [These last 2 suggestions could expand Division 1 to Scunthorpe, Grimsby (maybe 2?), Louth, Lincoln (maybe 2?), and Gratham. This could give more closely contested matches].
4. "Tie" players to teams across Division 1 and 2. That is, a player cannot play in both divisions. Have promotion and relegation between the 2 divisions; that could be 2 up & 2 down if there were, say, 6 teams in each. ["Tying" could engender a "team spirit"].

MOVE RATE

The purpose of this is to introduce Fischer incremental move rates to the league. This is becoming more popular at congresses (the majority?) and is used at the national stages of the county games. I'm concerned that we are not getting the necessary experience using Fischer timings. I believe that the big advantage of using increments is that it removes the need to have the "2 minute rule", which is vague, judgmental, and difficult to implement. As I see it, the biggest problem with increments is determining when play stops. Most venues have a closing time and most people (apart from those silver-haired retirees, such as myself) have to get home, get some sleep, and go to work the next day.

One option I've considered is: --

- 75 minutes on the clock and 10 seconds added for each move from the start.
- Stop playing after 3 hrs and adjudicate.

This gives at least 90 moves that have to be played, which should cover most games. It does mean that for the longer games it gives a faster average move rate than currently used (75 minutes then 15 minutes allegro finish). Adjudication was abandoned many year ago, but that was after 36 moves for Division 1 and, risibly, 30 moves in Division 2. Now, with computers, I don't think that adjudication will be a problem, and with 90 moves this should not occur very often.