



Dear Club Members,

2015 has been an exceptionally strong year for our club.

My opening move is to thank the current committee for their selfless contributions. From last year's executive group we retained our long suffering and popular Treasurer Pearl Yung, Secretary and Junior Club Organiser and Coach (aka 'backbone of the club') Ian Birchall, whilst Richard Goldsmith and myself continued our merciless wrestle for power where we wax between omnipotent President and impotent VP. We also saw two new people elected in landslide victories as general committee members, Tanya Kolak (who is on almost every chess club committee in Australia) and Chris Najim, who also has a daughter in Junior Club and coaches there, whilst still finding time to be the allegedly fittest person at the club.

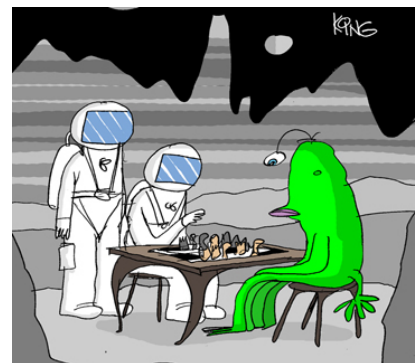
In addition, last year's retiring committee members Garry Lycett and Jean Watson continue to be valuable contributors around the club, with Garry doing great things coaching and organising in Junior Club and Jean, amongst other things, designing the fliers for our signature Croydon Chess Classic. Jaclyn Wong was kind enough to reprise her role of honorary Auditor and since Pearl is still here and not on a beach in South America somewhere we can only assume Jaclyn is doing a good job.

The club is also indebted to Cameron Yung for his great work at Junior Club as coach and mentor, and to David Lacey for also pitching in at Junior Club where his kids are starting to carry the family banner. Others who regularly lend a hand setting up tables, etc, are Lindsay Newsome, John Vergunst and Greg Dingfelder. Many thanks to all aforementioned individuals for their part in making Croydon Chess Club the successful and growing club that it is.

It's no accident that I have already made several mentions of Junior Club. Thanks to the wonderful efforts of Ian Birchall and his cohort of coaches and helpers in Garry, Cameron, Chris and David, Junior Club has exploded in numbers from last year to now have 59 registered members. Croydon Chess Club has 67 juniors in total, comprising 74% of club members.

Bemused senior players arriving early are greeted by a scene of happy pandemonium that wouldn't be out of place in a Theodor Suess Geisel book. Just last week I saw several small creatures trying to balance rooks on their ears while another lot sang, "I like eating bishops in the morning" and a coach tried vainly to explain why you can't or shouldn't take your own King. Out of the corner of my eye I even spotted two of them playing a game that vaguely resembled chess.

In all seriousness, this boom in Junior Club will have a great regenerative effect on the club as a whole and we already see a number of kids from Junior Club making the transition to senior level. We are now quite a decent sized club with 91 financial members and entitlement to four delegates at the Chess Victoria AGM, although we mostly keep out of chess politics and only sent Tanya this year to keep them honest. A very big 'Well Done' is due to all involved with Junior Club and that includes parents who have helped out in various ways throughout the year.



"Tell earth that we've discovered extraterrestrial life, and judging by their chess skills, they're highly intelligent."

There are too many Junior Club Awards to list them in in this report, but they are contained in Ian Birchall's Junior Club Report and all will be revealed at our annual prizegiving dinner on Thursday December 3rd. You will also be able to find all the prizewinners on our club website. A special mention though to Chloe Chan, our Junior Club Champion, who had an amazing year with several tournament victories, two of them after moving up from B to A division. She also contested the Victorian Junior Championship and finished 4th in the Girls U/8 section.

Senior Club has also seen another successful year. As usual we have gained a few members and lost a few. We were delighted to regain founding member Ion Kloprogge who returned after serious illness, but unfortunately now Jan Southon and Mike Degendorfer are battling illness. We wish them both well and hope to see them both again soon. Good to see Chris Potter playing at the club again and from all members may I echo Richard Goldsmith's words, "Welcome back, Potter."

Wearing my Senior Coach's hat, I am happy to report that the standard of play at the club continues to improve. I'd like to thank the committed band of regulars for attending my sessions and having a bit of fun at (mostly) our own expense.

The Croydon Open this year saw a breakthrough senior result for teenager Kyle Gibson, winning ahead of International Master me. Youngsters Cameron Yung and Phil Drew tied for 3rd to 4th and George Meilicke won the U/1600 prize. Worth noting is that the Biggest Upset prize was won by junior player Stafford Lee, whose opponent was hugely upset.

Kyle Gibson continued his winning ways by taking out the President's Cup, which should by rights be won by the President, but I neglected to play (Jean and I were playing in the Thailand Open). Garry Lycett came in second and Tanya Kolak had a great result, tying with Carl Dingfelder for 3rd to 4th.

This year we replaced the Fixed Openings tournament with our inaugural FischerRandom tournament, a variant of chess where the pieces are mixed up on the back rows by a computer program in order to eliminate opening theory and preparation. It can therefore be assumed that it should favour the laziest player and Ian Birchall duly scorched the field with an impressive picket fence victory. The lack of preparation also saw Jean Watson excel and spectacularly tie for 2nd to 3rd with her husband, (also known as me.)

Our showpiece event of each year is our Open weekender, the Croydon Chess Classic, a Grand Prix registered event. It is a highly popular event which despite clashing with a big South Australian tournament, attracted 42 players, including International Master Ilias Kourkounakis of Greece who was flown out to coach the national Johns-Putra Elite Training Squad. The main organiser, Ian Birchall, did a fantastic job, helped by various club members and a favourite arbiter of ours, Peter Tsai. I was very happy to tie for first with John Nemeth this year, with Ilias Kourkounakis, Michael Hornung, Kai Jensen and Miodrag Milojevic tying for equal 3rd to 6th. Croydon members performed well, taking out several rating prizes.

In the depths of winter the Frost Winter Warmer saw the heaters turned up full blast, with Yours Truly winning from second placed Garry Lycett. Kyle Gibson, Ian Birchall, Tanya Kolak and, excitingly Stafford Lee, tied for 3rd to 6th.

Our Allegro tournament is a measure of who is good at faster time limit chess and Ian Birchall, who is well used to time trouble, took the bacon ahead of John Davenport, with Tanya Kolak again on the podium in third.

Finally we contested our Club Championship and your eternally modest President was fortunate enough to win it (for the 7th consecutive time.) Ian Birchall concluded an excellent year by taking outright 2nd and Kim Tan, Kyle Gibson, Sasha Mygovich and Carl Dingfelder tied for 3rd to 6th. Stanley Ang scored a great result to snaffle the U/1000 prize.

I would be remiss in not mentioning our sponsors, who greatly assist our club with their financial support. Bendigo Bank once again generously provided \$50 savings accounts to 5 of our most deserving junior players. Perennial sponsors Maroondah Council and Pearl Yung's Northern Star Chess did not need to be called on this year, but we appreciate their long history of support for the club. I would also like to record our appreciation to the Croydon RSL for the ongoing use of their premises.

Richard Goldsmith once again liaised admirably with the local community, rubbing shoulders with politicians, businesses and community groups to promote the club. He reports that the chess boards he organised at the library community day recently were once again a big hit and the library staff were very pleased with the number of locals who used them for a game. Richard is also the mastermind behind the onslaught of pizzas at the prizegiving and will no doubt assist Ian again with handing out the loot.

In finishing I would like to reserve a special thank you for the club member who does by far the lion's share of the work and remains the heart and soul of the club, Ian Birchall. He's the first to the club and the last to leave, he plans the calendar, he sends reminders, he coaches, he plays, he keeps tabs on all the little things that need to be done. He was also instrumental in setting up the rapidly developing library of books and DVDs for use by club members.

We definitely need more people to step up, as Ian may not always be able to gift this level of commitment to the club. I would encourage anyone who has considered helping out to approach a committee member or attend the AGM on January 28th 2016 and nominate for the committee. There are very few meetings and we decide most matters by e-mail consensus. Even if you don't want to be on the committee, there are plenty of other ways to assist the club.

Have a happy Christmas and I hope to see you all back at our great club next year.

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