

Croydon Chess Club – 2017 Activities Report

Life of a King

Recently, I saw a TED talk by Eugene Brown about the lessons he learned from chess that helped him dramatically change his life. Eugene had spent 18 years in “correctional institutions” in the USA before being tutored in chess by a fellow inmate. There were a few maxims that he took to heart to help redirect his life. “You are the King on the chess board of your life”. “Live by the rules.” “Always keep an eye on the endgame.” In other words, take responsibility for your life, don't blame anyone else for what happens to you, plan and work hard towards where you want be.

When he left prison, he started a chess club for inner-city kids which proved to be successful both in developing chess talent and in directing kids away from destructive activities. The motto for the school became “Think before you move” (Think b4u move) which was applied equally to play on the chessboard and to choices in life. A highly fictionalised account of the creation of the chess club can be seen in the 2013 film “Life of a King”(rated M).

I guess all this comes back to why we, as a chess club, promote chess as a great activity for kids. Fortunately, we don't have the problems faced by Eugene and his community, but we do hope some of the lessons learned across the chessboard can be applied in other aspects of our lives.

Growing Pains

After a rapid increase in recent years, it appears that our club membership may have begun to stabilise at around 100-110 with about 85 juniors. We have long-since stopped promoting the club in the local community, because we struggle to cater for the number of juniors that we have. Fortunately, the space issue was resolved when we approached Swinburne at mid-year and they were willing to offer us the use of their facilities.

However, greater retention of juniors throughout the year means that our classes have grown significantly larger than we would like and the Committee has been examining options to deal with this.

New Equipment

Our junior membership growth and our service to the local community has been recognised through the provision of funding for new equipment. Maroondah Council awarded us a grant to replace our ageing and temperamental printer. Chess Victoria provided funds on a dollar for dollar basis for new clocks in the junior club and also chess workbooks that we hope to make use of next year.

Transition (U800 section)

One of our achievements this year has been to provide a way for our juniors to move from the hustle and bustle of the junior club to the classic tournament conditions of the senior club. These were the transition or U800 section tournaments. The shorter classic time control conditions suited parents who wanted their children home at a reasonable time. The tournaments provided the juniors with their first proper score sheets to help analyse their play.

Outstanding Performances

Juniors

Our junior program welcomes all-comers, from absolute beginners, through those who like to just play once a week, to those who are keen on improving and competing at a higher level. At our Presentation Night we celebrated many of their successes at the club and a list of those has been published on our website. However, increasingly, our keener juniors are exploring beyond Thursday club events. A number have now joined weekend chess clubs or have participated in state and national events. I haven't been able to keep track of all their successes, but here are a few:

2017 Australian Junior Championships (Jan):

- Chloe Fan is the 2017 Australian Under 10 Girls Champion
- Gavyn Sanusi-Goh came 3rd in the Under 10 Open section

2017 Vic Age Group Rapid Championships (Mar)

- Chloe Fan 3rd U10 girls, Gavyn 1st U10 Boys, while Chengyun, Tiger, Lucas and Ernest all performed well .

2017 Vic Junior Championships (May):

- Gavyn 1st U10 Open, Chloe 2nd U10 Girls. Another 8 of our juniors also participated and gained greatly from the experience.

Unfortunately, for us, Chloe's family have moved house and so Chloe, and her brother Max, have now changed chess clubs. Best wishes to them and I'm sure that we will see them in future events.

Of course, Gavyn, our Junior Club Champion, is a member of a number of clubs and often appears towards the top of the most active player list every quarter. He was selected for a number of Australian honours this year including the Australian Junior Training Squad and a place in an Australian school team competing in China.

More recently, Chengyun Xu (3rd U10) and Tiger Zhao (1st U8) did well in the Noble Park CC Knight's Cup event for juniors in October. They have also joined Box Hill CC and have been increasingly participating tournaments there.

Seniors

Firstly, congratulations to our A-division coach, Kyle Gibson, on passing the FIDE Arbiter exam this year. He still needs to officiate in a few FIDE tournaments before he gets the title, but it is always great to have new people who are prepared to take on administrative & coaching roles in chess.

Not to be outdone by the juniors, one of our long term members and a highly regarded coach, NY Wong, came out of retirement to finish =6th in the Asian Seniors (over 50's) tournament in October held in New Zealand. NY is an inspiration to us all.

We have greatly missed Jean Watson at our senior club for most of this year. However, she has obviously not put away the chess pieces for good. She made a comeback in the Club Championship and created havoc among the top seeds. In Round 1, she defeated International Master Guy West (top seed), in round 3 she drew with 3rd seed Kyle Gibson and in R7 she drew with 2nd seed Ian

Birchall. We can only hope to see more of her in our tournaments. Go Jean!

Of course, it is always a great challenge for us, mere club players, to face International Master Guy West across the chessboard. He has nothing to prove having represented Australian on numerous occasions and been an Australian Champion, so we always appreciate his participation in our tournaments and his coaching in Senior Club. Congratulations to him on once again being the Club Champion!

Thanks

Thanks to our sponsors – Bendigo Community Bank who again provided 5 x \$50 bank accounts as awards. Northern Star Chess, run by the inimitable Pearl, is a long term supporter of the club and has provided us with sets, workbooks and fill-in coaches, along with a cash donation. Thanks to Maroondah Council and Chess Victoria for their equipment funding. Thanks to Swinburne Uni for letting us use their facilities for free.

Most small not-for profit organisations wouldn't exist without the continuing support of a small group of people who regularly put time and effort into making things happen.

So, thanks to our committee for their contributions this year. I think they all must dread getting another email from the secretary regarding another issue that needs to be resolved.

Lastly, but far from least, I have to thank my fellow volunteer coaches and assistants.

Our senior members have been very fortunate to have International Master Guy West and FIDE Trainer NY Wong take our senior coaching nights. It's hard to think of two better coaches and presenters of chess who would volunteer their services to a club such as ours.

Richard Goldsmith has ably taken on the beginners group this year. He keeps them actively involved and keen to learn. A true Renaissance man, I don't know how he finds the time for everything he is involved in. Many thanks for your efforts this year.

Full-time University student, Kyle Gibson, took over from Cameron Yung coaching the top group of juniors this year. He has had to deal with the increasing number of juniors that I send his way. He has proven to be an extremely reliable and dedicated coach, regularly trawling through the juniors' game score sheets, to glean the coaching points for the next class. He has had the toughest workload of the coaches and deserves our great respect and appreciation.

There are also a number of people who help out in the junior club and stop us from going nuts. Thanks to Pearl, Teddy and Cameron Yung; Ion Kloprogge, Chris Najim, Penny and Noah Low, Hatti Zhao, Nima Bekloo, Lindsay Newsome and John Vergunst. My apologies to anyone I have forgotten.

In summary

In many respects, it has been a successful year for the club. We have record membership, are in sound position financially, have increased junior participation in our senior club events and have expanded into a second venue.

However, it has not been without challenges. We cut our flag-ship tournament the Croydon Classic in order to focus our limited resources on the junior club. Our junior classes are becoming too large and we will need to find a solution to that problem in 2018.

What do we need? Well, like most not-for-profits, we need support to continue what we do. If anyone thinks that they have something to offer the club either in assisting with coaching, being on the committee, or ideas for sponsorship then please let me know.

I hope to see you all again in 2018!

Ian Birchall (Secretary)

Your Committee: Chris Najim (Vice President), Pearl Yung, (Treasurer), Ian Birchall (Secretary), Ion Klorogge, Tanya Kolak, Kyle Gibson, Cam Yung, Richard Goldsmith, Lindsay Newsome.

2018 Resumption:

1 st Feb	7:30pm	Annual General Meeting at the RSL – All welcome! (Note: no Junior or Youth Club this week)
8 th Feb	6:30pm – 7:30pm 7:40pm	Junior Club at Swinburne & Youth club at RSL Senior Club - Croydon Open R1