

Checkmates for 20 years

By Mikayla van Loon

What began as a father establishing a chess club for his passionate son has grown into two decades worth of friendly competition and learning.

Preparing to celebrate 20 years of Croydon's Chess Club on 22 August, vice president Richard Goldsmith said with every age group represented, it keeps the game thriving.

"We meet multiple nights a week with beginners, juniors, youth, intermediate and senior clubs," he said.

"So we've always got one club but multiple tiers to cater for multiple levels of chess standards."

As one of the only surviving clubs in the Outer East, particularly after the pandemic, Mr Goldsmith said it is not uncommon for people to travel distances to play each week or to use Croydon's model to start building their own competition in their own community.

"We've had people that come out from deep in the Valley to come and play chess, and they've now subsequently built their own chess club after modelling it off us," he said.

Because of the lack of venues and competitions locally in the early 2000s, father and keen chess player Stephen Frost went about establishing Croydon's very own, giving his son Jared the opportunity to improve and play competitively.

Growing within years, Mr Goldsmith said the club quickly outgrew venues, which landed them at Croydon RSL as a co-tenant around 2008 or 2009. It has been the club's home ever since.

As a universal sport that translates across languages and cultures, Mr Goldsmith said in his eyes it's one of the only games or sports that can achieve that kind of cohesion.

"It's probably the one sport where many cultures, and particularly cultures who don't want to pick up a football, netball, or some of the staple sports, but they can play chess, or use chess as the main sport they learn," he said.

"That brings the strong Indian and strong Chinese cultures as well as the Australian cultures together in a very good, family, friendly, safe environment."

With so much undiscovered about chess, Mr Goldsmith said "more books have been written about the sport of chess than any other game" as people try to understand and perfect moves.



Croydon Chess Club vice president Richard Goldsmith said everyone is welcome to celebrate 20 years of chess in Croydon. (Stewart Chambers: 424127)

That's also what makes the complex game so popular, not only is it competitive but strategic, making it a sport that players can continue to improve and conquer the next level.

But with advancements in technology, the human mind is starting to be overtaken by artificial intelligence (AI).

"The elements at this stage have not been fully explored. If you use compounding interest over the board, for instance, I give you a piece of rice, and you double that piece of rice for every square that's on the board, there's only 64 squares," Mr Goldsmith said.

"By the time we got to the last square, the amount of rice I would owe you would cover the

surface space of England, the entire UK, three feet deep in rice.

"That is the probability of the game application. So the game has a very high level of application and can be manipulated in many ways. So much so that the human mind's gone to a certain level, and AI is being integrated now.

"The AI is pushing how far the human mind can calculate the game, and the AI is demonstrating it can go even further. So the super computers are starting to teach the best players on the planet how to play the game even more differently."

Well before the introduction of AI however, Croydon Chess Club welcomed one of the best players in Australia and the world as a senior club

coach, enhancing the next generation of players.

"We've got an international master down at the club called Guy West, and in the chess world, he's been five or six times the Australian champion," Mr Goldsmith said.

Croydon Chess Club will host an open tournament style celebration on 22 August, welcoming everyone to join in the fun, whether a past player, a new prospect player or someone looking for a new hobby in retirement.

For more information about the club and its week night sessions, go to croydonchess.com

Please contact Ian Birchall secretary@croydonchess.com.au to see if any of the 42 seats are available to play.