

Tournament report

128th Scottish Chess Open Championship 7th- 9th July 2023

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2023 saw the 128th Scottish Chess Open, held at the Carnegie Conference Centre in Dunfermline, after some last-minute cancellations as well as change of format. It was decided at the Management Board meeting at the beginning of the year that due to increased venue costs, combined with searching for a venue at that late stage, it was only feasible to hold a weekend congress at such short notice. I agreed to be Tournament Director one more time with Alex McFarlane doubling up his Presidential role with that of Chief Arbiter.

First item On the Scottish Open Championship agenda was to secure the venue and the Carnegie Centre proved to be the front runner due to the regular SNCL events hosted there. Other venues were checked out but proved unusable due to lack of resources, cost or both.

Contracts were quickly agreed and we were off!

Second item on the agenda was to create a working team and this consisted of myself, Alex as Chief Arbiter, David Clayton to manage the live boards, Alistair Maxwell as senior arbiter, Thor Saemundsson and Karen Howie as Fair Play Officers and floor walkers with Thor doubling up as deputy Tournament Director and Karen doubling up as Entries Secretary. Douglas Bryson also dealt with designing the entry form/ championship website and spent hours tweaking it for our use. We had two able volunteers with Glynis Grant and Alistair Campbell who entered the non-live board games with Glynis doubling up as liaison to the Conference centre. Finally, Andy Howie came along to assist in setting up the live boards for Dave Clayton with Ian Robertson helped set up the tables with the staff.

Under the standing order for Chess Scotland events (i.e. no loss making) the prize money was agreed. Also due to the decreased number of rounds and therefore no norm chances it was agreed not to offer terms apart from free entry to GM's and IM's.

Once the organisation was in place it was a matter of admin and communication until the weekend. Everybody knew what had to be done and any few hiccups were quickly overcome. I don't feel to comment on the event itself as I feels others can do that. All the winners have agreed to comment on both their games and on their experience of the event. I even got to play my first championship game as a "filler" which was a seventy-four-move marathon with

forty queen checks by me one after the other, eventually I won after the game finished at 11.00 pm after a gruelling Friday evening! My game isn't in the player database although maybe that's a good thing!

As mentioned previously I certainly had an experience to say the least, which will be my last for the Scottish. We now have a Home Director in Thor who will oversee 2024 unless a Championship Director is found.

I would suggest lessons should be learned from this, the main one being that planning for 2024 should start now. If we didn't have a weekend congress there would have been little appetite for the same format as last year and again cost would have prevented a norm tournament.

We did have an excellent tournament last year at Edinburgh Chess Club but that was a success despite the issue of us all emerging from a pandemic. There was a strong preference for a weekender this year and this was reflected in the strong number of entries. There will be a post championships committee meeting to assess where we can go forward

Player feedback was absolutely fantastic, both face to face and with follow up comments after the event. We must repeat this success with a similar format although a nine-day event could be added on for title and norm purposes.

David Deary states that a handsome profit was attained this year and he will produce a profit and loss report for Chess Scotland. I suggest the money gained this year is ploughed into next year's tournament but a major sponsor must be persuaded to support this flagship event otherwise we will be forced to muddle through as we always do.

I suggest a discussion be heard as soon as possible, maybe at a Council Meeting, to explore the various options for a Scottish event next year. I fear, after the experience this year, that waiting until the AGM is too far away. The immediate problem is finance with lack of forward planning thrown in. Thankfully we have a Home Director who can assume Championship Director duties if need be. Having two AGMs in one year didn't help as most directors, including myself, were up for re-election so there was little wiggle room here. Perhaps the Championship Director should be an appointment not an elected official, and/or a director should assume the responsibility should a championship director not be in place. Cost of venues is a paramount problem. Carnegie is keen to quote for both a weekender and a nine-day event.

I must thank all those who supported us this year, both the sponsors and the volunteers. Special thanks also go to Carnegie and their staff for their support, even though they were prepared to keep the venue open to midnight on the Friday (I thought my own game was going to last that long!)

I will always be grateful for the words of support I received over the course over the event which really meant everything to me. There were a few detractors of the event but these were overwhelmingly swamped by the kindness of the vast majority of those who took time and effort to make sure we knew we were onto a winner with the format.

Results

Ed Spencer is the 2023 Scottish Champion, winning on tie-break against IM Andrew Muir and IM Andrew Greet.



Ed Spencer - Scottish Champion 2023

FM Aaravamudhan Balaji is the Scottish Open Winner



FM Aaravamudhan Balaji - Scottish Open Winner 2023

Derek Adair won the Reserve section



Derek Adair - Reserve Winner receiving congratulations from Tournament Director Ian Brownlee

Overall Prizegiving

Scottish Chess Open Championship

First Place (& Open) - **Aaravamudhan Balaji** 5/5

Joint Second - **Edwin Spencer** (winning title on TPR), **Andrew Greet**, **Andrew Muir** 4/5

Grading Prize 1 (U1890) - **Kritan Boggarapu**, **Jacob Watson** 3.5/5

Grading Prize 2 (U1690) - **Aryan Munshi** 3.5/5

Reserve

First Place - **Derek Adair** 4.5/5

Joint Second - **William Harkins**, **Mink Muskens**, **Gordon Greig**, **Musiri Balaji** 4/5

Grading Prize 1 (U1440) - **Chrysa Mitraka** 3.5/5

Grading Prize 2 (U1027) - **Devesh Sharma** 3/5

Ian Brownlee

Tournament Director

24th July 2023