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Report of MCCU Director of Junior Chess – 15th June 2011

When I took on this important role I was already overloaded with chess work, but I have a passion to put back into chess some of the joy it has given me over the last 60 years or so. For some time now my conviction has been that we have to actively encourage juniors, as without a constant throughput of juniors into clubs our great game will die.

My initial approach was to offer my services as a successful coach to help all, or at least some, of the counties in the MCCU. Consequently Ray Collett published my offer on our website and I soon found myself drowning in a tsunami of apathy!! Apart from a meeting with Cyril, who agreed with my approach, and a few emails from Alex Holoczak, I heard the square root of nothing from everybody.

Since then I have been busy with my work with Nottingham juniors and EPSCA while dealing with some big personal problems too. The one good thing that came out of all this was at the National Under 11 county finals Staffs agreed to my coaching their under 11s next season.

Over the last several years Notts has been the only county to regularly challenge the hegemony of the southeast. This year we were obliged to field our youngest side ever and could only finish 5th. However, in 2008 Notts finished equal 2nd with Wey Valley(Surrey); in 2009 we were first, ahead of Kent and in 2010 we finished first again. Our success is not luck. Notts has a very well organised coaching set-up with a well thought out syllabus, including tests – Grade 1 up to Grade 10 – that the youngsters can take. The thrill for them and their parents when they receive their Grade 1 certificate is magical!

In September Notts will be starting a course for would-be junior coaches. All are welcome. We already have a number of adults prepared to enrol and some interest from outside the county. If anyone from an MCCU county is interested please get in touch with me via my email address (david@chesscoach.co.uk). Do not think that you have to be a strong player to coach – it is far more important to have a rapport with kids and be able to teach and inspire! In my experience, the most important coaching of all is done with absolute beginners, kids of 5 or 6 years of age. If that's done right the job for coaches further up the chain is much easier, but get that wrong.....

David Levens – MCCU Director of Junior Chess