

## Report on 2017 Midland Championship Congress

In February 2017, Ray Dolan contacted me to inform me that due to ill-health, he felt unable to organise this year's Congress. Ray consulted others to see if they knew anyone willing to organise it, and my name was suggested. I would like to thank Ray firstly for reviving this event after many years, but also importantly for recognising when there was a need to pass it on. Other congresses have fallen by the wayside due to individuals who have not recognised this, and it is a credit to Ray that he realised this with enough time to enable alternative arrangements to be made for this year's tournament.

I have made various changes to this year's Congress, which I hope are improvements:

- I have moved the event to the Park Inn Hotel, in West Bromwich. The venue is more expensive than last year's venue, but by holding it in a hotel, I think this will encourage players to travel from further afield to play in it.
- I have altered the format from 0/3/2 to 1/2/2, i.e. introducing a Friday night round. This has in turn enabled the playing session to be lengthened to four hours, using the Game/90 + 30' time limit. I think that a longer playing session for this event, which determines the MCCU Champion, is desirable.
- The Open and Under 160 sections will be FIDE-rated. I think this is a desirable change for an event as prestigious as this, and it will enable the Open to be part of the new British Championship Qualifying Grand Prix.
- I have created an online entry facility, using Google Forms. It enables players to enter online, and pay for their entry fee via Paypal. This necessitated the creation of an MCCU Paypal account, which I created after consultation with Andrew Leadbetter. I have sent him the relevant credentials.

I hope all of these changes will improve upon the foundations laid by the 2016 event. I have put the event on the ECF calendar, and it has been registered for rating with FIDE. I have had various calls for entry forms to be sent to other Congresses, and the marketing for that is in progress. I will contact various local websites in the forthcoming weeks to advertise the Congress there.

I still need to liaise with Ray Collett as to how to get a list of entries online, but this will be of more importance once entries start to arrive en masse.

I would be grateful if MCCU counties are able to advertise this Congress to their memberships, which will hopefully ensure a well-attended event that the Union can be proud of.

Alex Holowczak  
16<sup>th</sup> June, 2017