

THE MIDDLE GAME

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FUTURE OF THE NEWSLETTER

This is likely to be the last issue of the Middle Game produced by me. Recent events have suggested that it is not being widely read. It does take rather more than 5 minutes to put together & very few people actually contribute any items, indeed getting information about what has happened with local events, can be like trying to get blood out of a stone. As a result I do not feel inclined to continue expending time and energy putting something together if it is not being read by a significant number of people.

If anyone else out there is interested in having a go instead please contact me.

Obituary

Roy Woodcock

(17 May 1930 – 18 February 2007)

Roy Woodcock, President of the MCCU and an Honorary Life Vice President of ECF, died in the early hours of 18 February 2007, in George Eliot Hospital, Nuneaton.

The town was very dear to his heart, not only in chess terms, for this was not his sole interest. As a lover of the Arts he became a trustee of the Nuneaton Arts Centre, and played a leading role in turning a practically derelict site into a thriving arts centre, a legacy of which Nuneaton can be proud.

His interest in two very different spheres highlights the fact that Roy was far from being the sort of one-dimensional person with only one consuming passion that you sometimes meet. Indeed he also had a keen interest in other sports, and in politics in general, as opposed to within the chess world.

Whilst it would be easy to imagine Roy as a keen schoolboy chess-player, he was in fact a latecomer to the game, learning to play in his twenties. He was a founder member of Nuneaton Chess Club in 1958. It wasn't long before he took on administrative responsibilities, first as Club Secretary and then as Competitions Secretary. He continued to hold official positions with the club until shortly before his death. Whilst he would not claim it himself, he was largely responsible for the club becoming one of the largest and most successful clubs in the history of the Coventry League.

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MCCU AGM

The AGM will be held on Sunday 24th June at Erdington Conservative Club starting at 2.30pm. If anyone has any motions for the agenda the deadline is 4 weeks before the meeting. I would like to see at least 1 delegate from each county present. There are likely to be motions relating to the County Team events and the future direction of the MCCU so PLEASE, PLEASE, IF YOU ARE A DELEGATE COME TO THE MEETING, OR SEND SOMEONE ALONG IN YOUR STEAD.

Once the agenda has been finalised I will ask for it to be posted on the website. If you are not a delegate but have some views to contribute to the meeting, get in touch with your delegate, or failing that with me. I am quite willing to make views known, irrespective of whether I agree with them or not.

Unfortunately the sad loss of Roy Woodcock means we are in need of a new President. In addition the posts relating to Publicity and Grading have no current volunteers. It has been suggested that the grading job become an officer post, the view being that a volunteer may be more forthcoming if the post had no MCCU Board responsibility. The AGM will need to consider this. Graham Humphries, our Junior Director has had problems with his own and his wife's health, and as last year would be happy for someone younger & more mobile to take on the job.

Although not an elected post, Neil Beasley retires as the County Championship Controller after many years of sterling service, for which we owe him a great debt of gratitude. Unfortunately no "new blood" has come forward to take on the job, despite Neil giving 12 months notice and offering the opportunity for a replacement to "shadow" him. Fortunately the former ECF counties controller is prepared to take on the task, so we will have a County team event next year.

His activities as a chess organiser soon expanded outside normal day to day club activities and into organising the successful annual Coventry Chess Congresses of the period 1960 to 1965. This was essentially before weekend congresses and one-day rapidplay tournaments became popular. The Nuneaton Chess Tournaments/Congresses organised by Roy totalled 45 over the years and had a national impact, with many of Britain's leading chess grandmasters taking part. The last of these was organised in 2005, despite his failing health. He also organised annual chess simultaneous displays as part of the Coventry Carnival over a period of 25 years.

The Coventry League recognised his excellent administrative abilities appointing him Chairman in 1967, a position he held for almost 30 years, though the title changed to President during that time. His county then also saw his value and elected him Chairman of Warwickshire Chess Association, a post he held for around 20 years, they also made sure he was actively involved with its' county teams. He became only the 3rd recipient of the Association Life Vice Presidency

A real highlight for Roy was securing the British Chess Championship at Warwick University in Coventry in 1970, to coincide with the Coventry Chess League's Jubilee. This was remarkable considering the event was traditionally held in a "seaside resort" location.

As President of the Midland Counties Chess Union he made a contribution at a Midlands regional level and represented the MCCU at BCF Board meetings on several occasions. He could be relied upon to provide sage advice, and to argue his corner vigorously, but he would never hold it against anyone simply because they disagreed with his point of view.

In 1994, he was one of the sponsors of the Midland Monarchs' Team that went on to win the First Division Championship of the 4 Nations' Chess League.

These are but a few of Roys' contributions to chess. It was no surprise when he received the BCF President's Award for Chess in 1992. He was also made an Honorary Life Vice-President of the English Chess Federation in 2005/6.

Despite being so heavily engaged in chess admin Roy was an active player, playing games in the

Birmingham and Leamington & Coventry Leagues, in the same season.

Yes, Roy loved chess, but he also loved life and was determined to cling onto it for as long as possible and as fully as possible. No matter the medical opinion that he had 6 months at most, a defiant Roy was still with us over 2 years after this pronouncement, with his indomitable spirit still intact, still offering whatever help and advice he could.

Since his passing I have gone to pick up the phone on more than one occasion, about to dial his number and ask for his thoughts, before remembering that he is no longer with us in body, though his spirit and legacy will surely linger on for many years.

Peter Gibbs wrote:

I am sad to report the death of Roy Woodcock who passed away on 18th February 2007, aged 76, at the George Eliot Hospital, Nuneaton. All his working life was spent at the GEC in Coventry.

I knew Roy for over 40 years and we were good friends. In regard to chess he enjoyed the cut and thrust of attacking play, but it was as a chess organiser that he found his *mé tier* both at national and Midland level. The popular Nuneaton Club Congresses were his brainchild and more recently he assisted the late John Robinson at the two Coventry International Congresses. His work for the Nuneaton Club has been incalculable. In fact I have never known him refuse help or advice to anyone planning to hold a congress.

He was also a safe pair of hands at meetings both nationally and in the Midlands. He could have trenchant views but was always willing to listen to a contrary opinion. At the date of his death he was the Honorary Life Vice-President of the Warwickshire Chess Association and President of the Midland Counties Chess Union. Some years ago he received the British Chess Federation's prestigious President's Award for Services to Chess about which I know he was delighted. More recently he received the rare distinction of becoming a Honorary Life Vice-President of the English Chess Federation which meant so much to him.

Within the last few weeks when he was very ill he remarked that he and I had never disagreed on any matter, chess or otherwise. That is indeed true but I was touched.

I would not want anyone to think that his interests were solely confined to chess. He was a person with wide interests. He was a friendly man who-loved people, good company and was a gourmet, especially after a chess competition. He loved his garden. He was interested in all forms of sport and we spent many happy hours discussing it, but especially the nuances of cricket. On television he watched tennis at Wimbledon avidly and we watched international football together during the last World Cup competition.

His passing will leave a void in the chess community.

ECF FINANCE COUNCIL

The ECF Council meeting took place on 28th April at the Ibis Hotel in Birmingham. As with several such meetings over recent years, the room was not exactly packed.

The President Gerry Walsh was unable to attend the meeting due to a prior commitment (which was already known when the date of the meeting was set). By agreement of those present the CEO Martin Regan took the chair in his absence.

4 new Honorary Life Vice Presidents were elected John Dunleavy, Roy Hepinstall, Cyril Johnson & John Philpott. A motion to provide some form of momento for such awards was endorsed.

The AGM had asked for the matter of location of meetings to be looked at, both from logistical and cost perspectives. Currently meetings rotate around the Unions, but the AGM had suggested that central locations might be considered. Based on the attendance of recent meetings, delegates from SCCU & MCCU are in the majority by some distance. It was therefore suggested that logistically Birmingham & London provided the best locations. Some felt that alternating between the 2 would create issues, all AGMs or all Finance Council in the same location year after year. The current MCCU practice between East & West was commended to Council.

The ECF bye-laws require amendment before changes to meeting locations can be made. The meeting agreed that proposals be put forward at the AGM to enact should a change.

The issue of Grading "drift" was raised last year. The Director of Home Chess hopes that the matter will be resolved for the Autumn 2008 grading list.

This was not the only grading issue on the agenda. Proposals were also made that standard play gradings be published on a 6 monthly frequency (as has recently happened with rapidplay). Whilst a survey had indicated players wanted more

frequently updated grades, delegates did not echo that view. A number indicated that their own leagues felt that a mid-season list would create problems. Chris Majer indicated that some flexibility would be operated in accepting grading data for a league season, where a league felt unable to submit 2 sets of data. All well and good, but that would result in some players effectively still having an annual grading change. It was also pointed out that for Winter leagues you would be likely to get data for only the first couple of months (because of the time lag between matches being played and results getting to the grader).

The case for more frequent gradings for youngsters, who are often improving rapidly, was put. Whilst this was recognised, it was felt that the benefits for juniors were outweighed by the overall problems. As a result the motion for 6 monthly lists was lost.

At the AGM those areas currently preferring game fee, SCCU, WECA & London League, had expressed concern that they were not receiving equitable treatment compared with Membership Organisations. The Board promised to look at this and respond.

Their conclusion is that MO's with a mandatory membership policy are currently paying a little more than Game Fee areas. The call for the same 10% & 5% prompt settlement discounts in place for MOs to be applied to Game Fee did not find favour with the Board, rather they question whether the MO discounts are set at the right level. The upshot of deliberations was a proposal that new MO's should be required to commit to paying as much as they would have done under game fee. (Current MO's would be given notice next year and if they were to continue would have to sign up to the revised agreement). The motion was passed by a large majority, but one has to wonder how many organisations will be prepared to consider operating an MO under these conditions.

A related motion sought to address the issue of

reluctance on the part of some paying the ECF membership fee to sign the "white form". The need for this form is linked to the Ltd Company status of the ECF, the way it is structured and to FIDE rules stating that a player must be a member of their national chess body in order to have a FIDE rating. A new category of Registered Player would allow those who did not sign the form the same benefits as members, except that they would not have the right to a FIDE rating, or to elect Direct Members' Representatives. This approach had been suggested before, but had not been thought to be possible to adopt. The motion was carried.

The SGM last year had seen a recommendation that Game fee be waived for all classes of member, instead of just for members of MOs. The AGM then had second thoughts about this and asked for the cost of this to be investigated further. The current Board feel that the cost of such a waiver is too high and warned that if Council approved such a waiver, the Budget being presented could not be sustained without an increase of 4p in game fee, rather than the 1p being suggested. The motion to allow game fee waiver for all members was lost.

The Board recommendation of a 1p increase in game fee therefore stood and was endorsed by delegates. A few voted for no increase, a few for a 2p increase, and an even smaller number for a larger increase. In addition the proposal that Direct Members subs remain unchanged except for a £1 increase for Basic Juniors was agreed.

The Minimum Membership fee for organisations was held at £50 & the budget was adopted.

The future of the ECF Grand Prix was again considered. No new sponsor had been found. The proposal was made that it ceases at the conclusion of the current event, until new sponsorship is found. A number of delegates pointed out that entry forms for congresses had been printed on the basis that the Grand Prix would be running. Some felt that congresses had no right to make assumptions about the Grand Prix running, others

that the ECF had an obligation to give due notice of cessation. The existing motion was amended to allow the continuance of the event for 2007/8, but with no prize money, & effectively give notice that there would be no 2008/9 event without sponsorship.

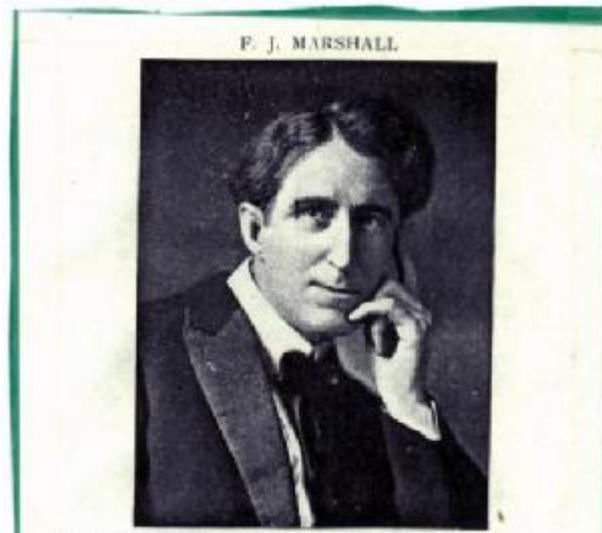
Rather than being presented with the full Business Plan, delegates had previously indicated that they would prefer a summary of changes. These were presented, amended slightly and approved. This included the addition a summary of targets as an appendix.

An MCCU motion to amend the number of players in a county team for U 175 and below from 16 to 12 had caused a good deal of discussion prior to the meeting. There were complaints from various quarters that the report on the MCCU GM and consultation item in the November 2006 Newsletter had not been seen, noted and discussed. There were calls at the 11th hour from some to withdraw the motion, but the majority of MCCU Board felt that it should stand. This was on the basis that views received prior to the motion being put supported the reduction, any other body that would have put the motion had the MCCU not done so, would not be disadvantaged, and any MCCU County not in support of the idea was free to vote against it at Council.

As I suspected the SCCU was in general against the motion, although some accepted that there was an argument for change. As I pointed out at the meeting, the current draw (see Events Section for details) shows that there are no preliminary rounds in any section for the first time in years, and more byes at quarter final stage than ever before.

I was not surprised when the motion was lost, but there were rather more votes in favour than I had expected. The motion did elicit an acknowledgement from the Home Chess Director that, as the event had not changed for some time; a review was in order.

CHESS CHAMPIONS



FRANK MARSHALL

Frank James Marshall was born on the west side of Manhattan on August 10, 1877. He was taken to Montreal when he was 8 years old and lived there for 11 years. It was his father Alfred who first introduced him to chess at about the age of 10. In 1890 he joined the Montreal Chess Club and became a leading chess player there. On November 13, 1893 he played world chess champion Steinitz when Steinitz was giving a simultaneous exhibition in Montreal. Marshall lost, but the game was published in a Montreal magazine and brought him to the fore. It was perhaps no surprise that he won the championship of the Montreal Chess Club the following year.

1896 saw him return to New York and become a professional chess player. He immediately joined the Manhattan & the Brooklyn Chess Clubs. His rise continued as he became the junior champion of New York in 1897 and 2 years later the champion of the Brooklyn Chess Club. Following this he decided that further progress required him to set sail for Europe to play chess. He began his European excursion winning the minor tournament in London that year. He tied for 3rd in Paris in 1900, behind Lasker and Pillsbury, having defeated both players in the process.

In 1904 he was the winner of Cambridge Springs with 11 wins and 4 draws. A tournament was then arranged in St Louis for all the top players in the country. Marshall won it and was given the title of US Champion. But Marshall did not accept this title because US Champion Pillsbury did not play (he was suffering from syphilis). On January 6, 1905 Frank Marshall married Caroline. The next day they were both on a ship to Paris for a chess tournament.

At the end of 1905 Frank Jr was born and the following year Marshall took 1st place at Nuremberg. In 1906 Pillsbury died and Marshall was acknowledged as the US champion. Marshall continued to refuse the title until 1909 when he played a match for the title with Showalter. Before this arose he played Lasker for the world championship and lost 8 games, winning none and drawing 7. They played their match in New York, Philadelphia, Washington, DC, Baltimore, Chicago, and Memphis from January 26 to April 1907.

In 1909 he played Capablanca in a match and won 1 game, lost 8, and drew 14, this was considered to be a rather ignominious defeat at the time as Capablanca was an unknown. The meteoric rise of Capablanca soon put the match into context. In fact it was Marshall himself who was responsible for insisting the Cuban be invited to play in the international tournament at San Sebastian in 1911. San Sebastian was an exclusive tournament; designed to be one of the strongest ever held, inviting only masters who had proven themselves by winning lesser tournaments. Capablanca was allowed to play, largely on Marshall's insistence, and repaid Marshall's endorsement by not only avoiding being thrashed, but indeed winning the tournament.

Not that the defeat to Capablanca was the end of Marshall, far from it, in 1913 he took 1st place at Havana.

At St. Petersburg the following year, he became one of the 5 original "grandmasters" of chess. The other four were Lasker, Capablanca, Alekhine, and Tarrasch.

1915 saw him open the famous Marshall Chess Club (Marshall's Chess Divan at Keene's Chop House). His chess success continued, with wife Caroline acting in a supporting role running the club. In 1920 he won the American Chess Congress. In 1922 the Marshall Chess Club was incorporated. That year he played 155 games simultaneously in Canada, a world record. He scored 126 wins, 21 draws, and 8 losses in just over 7 hours.

He defended his US championship title, once, in 1923. He beat Edward Lasker. In 1924 he took 4th at the great New York 1924 International, behind Lasker, Capablanca, and Alekhine. In 1936 he relinquished his US championship title to Sam Reshevsky who won a tournament for the US championship, sponsored by the National Chess Federation, and held in New York. The Marshall Chess Club donated the trophy. Marshall had held the US title for 29 years.

In the 1930s, Marshall captained the US team at the Chess Olympiads, and inspired them to four gold medals from four Olympiads. After one of the rounds,

he returned to the board and found that his comrades had agreed to three draws. After he finished his own game, he gave each of them a stern talk individually on how draws don't win games or matches. They got the message. Never again has the US team repeated the great successes of Marshall's teams.

Marshall was best known for his great tactical skill. One aspect of this was the "Marshall swindle", where a trick would turn a lost game around. Not so well known now, but appreciated in his day, was his endgame skill. He has a number of chess opening variations named after him. Remarkably for a player who died over 60 years ago, two gambit variations that are still theoretically important today are named after him. One is the Marshall Attack in the Ruy Lopez (1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.O-O Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 O-O 8.c3 d5 in algebraic notation). Marshall's first well-known game with this opening was against José Raúl Capablanca in 1918, although Marshall had previously played it in other games that did not gain widespread attention. Even though Capablanca won in a game widely regarded as a typical example of Capa's defensive genius, Marshall's opening idea became quite popular. Black gets good attacking chances and scores close to 50% with the Marshall, an excellent result. The Marshall Attack is so well respected that many top players, including Garry Kasparov, chose to avoid it with "Anti-Marshall" variations such as 8.a4. An important gambit in the Semi-Slav Defense is also named after Marshall. That "Marshall Gambit" begins 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 e6 4.e4!? Now the main line runs 4...dxc4 5.Nxe4 Bb4+ 6.Bd2 (6.Nc3 saves the pawn but is not considered dangerous) Qxd4 7.Bxb4 Qxe4+ 8.Be2 with sharp and unclear play.

In 1942 he published *My Fifty Years of Chess*, ghosted by Fred Reinfeld & was still playing chess in 1944, including correspondence chess during World War II. On November 9, 1944 he was walking to a friend's house around 7:30 PM when he collapsed and died in the street of a heart attack. He was 67. For 57 years he played chess almost every day. He took a pocket chess set to bed with him at night so that he might record a game or position from his dreams. His wife, Caroline, continued to run the Marshall Chess Club until her death in 1971.

Frank Marshall's fighting style and sense of fair play made his games exciting to watch. He was a product of his time and of an America infused with optimism. He continued the legacy of Morphy and acted as an inspiration for future American chess greats. If there were ever a "John Wayne" of American chess, it would be Frank Marshall.

Although Marshall had a negative record against

Capablanca, he was one of a few players who beat him with black pieces. The game was played in Havana in 1913

:
1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. Nxe5 d6 4. Nf3 Nxe4 5. d4 d5 6. Bd3 Bg4 7. O-O Nc6 8. c3 Be7 9. Nbd2 Nxd2 10. Bxd2 O-O 11. h3 Bh5 12. Re1 Qd7 13. Bb5 Bd6 14. Ne5 Bxe5 15. Qxh5 Bf6 16. Bf4 Rae8 17. Re3 Rxe3 18. fxe3 a6 19. Ba4 b5 20. Bc2 g6 21. Qf3 Bg7 22. Bb3 Ne7 23. e4 dxe4 24. Qxe4 c6 25. Re1 Nd5 26. Bxd5 cxd5 27. Qe7 Qc8 28. Bd6 h6 29. Rf1 f6 30. Re1 Rd8 31. Bc5 Kh7 32. Qf7 Qf5 33. Be7 Qd7 34. Kf1 Rf8 35. Qe6 Qxe6 36. Rxe6 Re8 37. Re2 Kg8 38. b3 Kf7 39. Bc5 Rxe2 40. Kxe2 f5 41. Kd3 Ke6 42. c4 bxc4+ 43. bxc4 g5 44. g4 f4 45. Bb4 Bf6 46. Bf8 dxc4+ 47. Kxc4 f3 48. d5+ Ke5 49. Kd3 Kf4 50. Bd6+ Be5 51. Bc5 Kg3 52. Ke4 Bf4 53. d6 f2 0-1

It should be noted that Capablanca rarely lost in the endgame.

Congratulations to the Juniors representing England at this year's World and European Championships:

World Youth Championships

Under 8 - Anna Wang, Matthew Wadsworth

Under 10 - Adam Taylor

Under 12 - Radha Jain, Maria Wang, Daniel Hunt

Under 14 - Sheila Dines, Yang-Fan Zhou

Under 16 - Selina Khoo, Ankush Khandelwal

Under 18 - Chantal Siresina, David Howell

European Youth Championships

Under 10 - Roy Zhang

Under 12 - Craig Whitfield, Peter Williams

Under 14 - Anjali Lakhani, Subin Sen

Under 16 - Amisha Parmar, Callum Kilpatrick

Under 18 - Katie Martin, Peter Roberson

The selection committee would like to highly commend the following candidates:

Peter Andreev

Kavitha Appulingam

James Bowler

Henry Broadley

Brandon Clarke

Eugene Daley

Ravi Haria

Dana Hawrami

Jude Lenier

George O'Toole

Otto Pyper

Jessica Thilaganathan

Li Wu

British Chess Championships, Great Yarmouth 2007

There are several important changes to the Championships this year and some new policies.

This is the first event for a decade that has not been supported by a major sponsor. Smith & Williamson have withdrawn having supported the event for several years.

Funds specifically earmarked in John Robinson's bequest will contribute significantly to the event and there are reserves that have been built up over the past 3 years so that the budgeted expenditure for 2007 is in line with 2006.

The main significant change to the way the money is spent will be a reduction in the prize fund of the British Championship itself and a return to appearance fees for the top British players.

Rates of play in some events will change to provide a proper lunch break. More and more venues consist of a single large playing hall and it is impossible to provide good playing conditions during the period 1.30pm to 2.15pm in the main playing hall.

The 4 Graded Championships will be restricted to adults. A non-Championship Junior event will operate instead, in which a player will play 2 games a day against the same opponent at a rate of 1 hour for all moves in each game.

In Championship Events other than the British Championship itself, the residential qualification has been reduced from 3 years to 1 year. This reflects the more dynamic nature of twenty-first century life.

There are two innovations that will represent increases to the budget –

Firstly, an anonymous donor has generously given a sum of money to be used towards English prizes in the British Championship itself. The sum of £1500 will go as an additional prize to the highest placed English player in the British Championship and the sum of £500 will go as an additional prize to the highest placed English female player. These two players will be recognised as English Champion and English Lady Champion.

Secondly, the Robinson Junior Trust has agreed to donate a considerable sum for the provision of coaches to assist the players in the Junior Championships.

Neville Belinfante is Congress Secretary this year and will be taking the entries. He is most easily contacted by e-mail (congress.secretary@englishchess.org.uk) if you have a query which cannot be answered by reading the Entry Form and the website.