



ONLINE 2020 COUNTIES CHAMPIONSHIP

Dear all,

I am writing to you as County secretaries (or other designated Officer for your association's correspondence) to let you know that the English Chess Federation are planning to organise an ECF Online English Counties Championships for 2020 on the chess.com platform starting in June and running over 3 months or so during the coming Summer. Depending on preferences as to frequency of matches the competition maybe extended into September.

This is a new competition and is part of the ECF's drive to increase its online events for its members and supporters, all of which contribute to the separate ECF online ratings that are now up and running in 4-digit format.

This competition will be open to all English Counties with players needing to be ECF members or supporters to participate, and the matches will be ECF online rated. The format will be along the following lines:

- Group stage divided into groups of say 6 counties - probably on a regional basis - with the matches per group in an all play all format.
- Single division unless county interest allows for a minor or grade limited competitions in addition to an open competition.
- Matches based on chess.com team matches at (G45/15) or maybe longer (G100/15) with 12 boards per match (more by agreement between counties, with the first 12 boards counting for tie-break purposes involving more than 2 teams)
- Group stage would be a match a week with gap weeks if the schedule permits - possibly on a Saturday afternoon or evening - over a couple of months (June/July)
- chess.com team matches (for simplicity) with only the first game played - second agreed as a draw - chess.com rapid grades for board order with 3 previous games minimum for players to compete in their first team match (see further below).
- Qualifying teams (eg 2 per group) go through to the final stage
- Final stage organised on a knockout basis (Quarters, Semis and Final(s)) - over the following month (August).
- Final stage played with individual challenge matches and set board order
- A player's "County" eligibility and board order for the knockout stages is likely to follow the over-the-board Counties Championship Rules for 2019/20.
- ECF publicity and streaming commentary for the semis and the final

We will be using the ECF English Counties Club on chess.com to manage the events as detailed here: <https://www.chess.com/club/ecf-online-english-county-championships>

This has been setup by the UK and Ireland County Championships Controller Matthew Perry (<https://www.chess.com/club/county-championship-council-uk-and-ireland>), who has kindly agreed to run the competition as Online County Championship controller on behalf of the ECF and myself. A list of counties who have teams in this online event appears at the end of this letter, though these may not necessarily be those of a county association.

Could I ask all county association leads to please reply to this email, to me at controller.counties@englishchess.org.uk, to confirm whether you are interested in submitting a team or indeed will be entering a team or teams, with some idea of playing strength in the event we need to go for more than one division, open and minor or perhaps with grading limits (say U2000 and U1600), depending on the interest within your county.

Your feedback on these options and above format would also be appreciated.

If you could also look at existing online clubs for your county on chess.com and let us know what club you are already using or will be using for your other online activity that would be very helpful. To ease the administration for your captains in this competition, Matthew will be setting up bespoke ECF county clubs for your Association for this competition on chess.com, should you wish to enter. There will be one County Association player list covering all of your players regardless of team (grouping from that list for specific teams is also possible). A player can only play for one county. Matthew or I will be in touch in due course to discuss the online arrangements with participating counties in more detail.

Competition information and administration will be run through the ECF LMS. If you would like to see an illustration of the chess.com platform and the ECF LMS working together take a look at:

<https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/59701/tables>

<https://www.chess.com/club/west-midlands-area-league>

Board orders for the knockout stages (no new registrations permitted) are likely to be determined by ECF online ratings (by then your players should have a reasonable body of ECF rated results). As chess.com develops its platform we hope to be able to introduce this across the board in due course.

In the event of rating limited sections these will be by reference to the January ECF standard grading list (with the standard conversion of $700 + (\text{Grade} \times 7.5)$ in the first instance.

I know that a number of counties are putting in place online arrangements and some county captains are already exploring with their team members online capabilities.

The ECF online competition may fill some of the void left by the suspended national stages of this season's Counties Championship, which is most unlikely to be resumed in the coming summer months. Participating team captains will receive plenty of notice if and when resumption is possible thereafter.

In the meantime, this new competition may be a good way of keeping your squads together for those who have qualified and an additional event for those players who missed out on qualifying or felt unable to accept their Union's nomination.

To facilitate your players obtaining a chess.com rating based on the prescribed minimum number of games the ECF intends to run online next month promotional competitions through ECF members and Open clubs. This will of course be an opportunity for us all to promote county chess generally to a wider audience.

I look forward to hearing from you shortly with your feedback and your thoughts as to entries. I will be announcing a formal deadline for entries with outline schedule early next month.

Many thanks,

Mark Murrell
ECF Counties Championships Controller
controller.counties@englishchess.org.uk

CCCUKI county teams by Division:

*Dorset, Hampshire, Gloucestershire, Somerset, Staffordshire, Sussex, Yorkshire
Devon, Herefordshire, Kent, Lancashire, Norfolk, Suffolk
Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Cheshire, Essex, Surrey*