

OCA Junior Report 2016–17

Andrew Varney, September 2017

Schools League

- U9 – ungraded Rapid Play, teams of 6.
9 teams entered, split into 2 ‘zones’ (geographically-based pools).
Zones dominated by St Josephs A & B, MCS and SS Mary & John respectively. Overall winner MCS.
- U11 – ECF graded Rapid Play, teams of 6.
15 teams, split into 2 zones Some defaults in northern zone, won by St Josephs A. Clear winners in southern zone were MCS A, but hard-fought for second place. Final won by St Josephs A.
- U13 – ECF graded Rapid Play, teams of 6.
4 teams entered. 5 matches played. MCS winners in final vs Cherwell.
- U18 – ECF graded Standard Play, teams of 4.
5 teams entered. 7 matches played. Final not played – St Clares A and Cherwell A declared joint winners (equal match points).

A full break-down of results of all matches can be found on the OCA website:

<http://www.oxfordfusion.com/oca/GetClosedLeagues.cfm?Year=2016&Org=1>

The effect on the Schools League of the draconian changes in membership requirements for grading of league games coming into force this season remains to be seen. The Oxon Junior Chess / Schools League AGM has been held much earlier this season to allow more matches to be played earlier in the season, so minimizing the effect of defaults as the end of season deadline approaches.

EPSCA Inter-Association Competitions

- U9 – Despite not even qualifying for the final last year, Oxfordshire won the strong South Zone ahead of Sussex after already taking second place in an inter-county friendly ‘warm-up’ tournament a month beforehand. In the final, we were narrowly beaten to third place by Warwickshire, while Kent were the runaway winners.
- U11 – The U11 team had previously won trophies for 2 inter-county friendly tournaments – first place in a 4-county event in Rugby in November and second place in one in Maidenhead in February. Oxfordshire then took third place in EPSCA Zone South, qualifying for the final. We hired a coach to take the team to the final in Oldham, fortunately strength in depth allowing us to field a team despite many missing due to SATs the following week. On the day the team was placed 9th out of 15.
- U11 Girls –Oxfordshire managed to raise a team for the final, but were missing several of our better players due to clashes with girls’ football fixtures amongst others. Oxfordshire are due to host the final in March 2018 and we are planning some warm-up friendlies.

Full results can be found at <http://www.oxfordfusion.com/epsca/#results>

SCCU U14/U130

Oxon withdrew from the league competition due to being allocated to a section with Sussex and others which would have required unmanageable travel arrangements. We did field a team, however, in the Minor section of the U14 jamboree, which we won. This new season (2017-18) the arrangements are more favourable again, so Oxfordshire has re-joined the league/zonal competition.

ECF U13/U18

Once again this year it was not possible to raise any suitable U18 teams this year for the various junior county tournaments.

Delancey UK Chess Challenge

The UK Chess Challenge, having been declared bankrupt, was taken over from Mike Basman by Sarah (née Hegarty) and Alex Longson, and given a new lease of life. Some rule changes were controversial, but the modernisation of the tournament was considered well overdue by most of those involved.

The 2017 Oxfordshire Megafinal was held at Cokethorpe School, Witney, on Saturday 29 April. The number of entries was down about 10% from the previous year, despite boundary changes (Oxfordshire now includes Botley and Cumnor!) and direct entries being allowed from secondary-school aged children. About 230 children took part and there were 20 adults in the team of volunteer helpers. I (AV) am standing down from the role of organising the Oxfordshire Megafinal so for 2018 a new volunteer for this significant task will be required.

The titles were awarded to:

U18 Supremo - Donald Proko (Cheney); Suprema - Anna Wang (OHS)
U17 Supremo - N/A; Suprema - Stephi Bourliakas (Bartholomew)
U16 Supremo - Daniel Varney (D'Overbroecks); Suprema - Aysu Ismayilova (Cowley)
U15 Supremo - Vijay Keshav (MCS); Suprema - Elizaveta Sheremetyeva (OHS)
U14 Supremo - Muhammad Ismayilov (Cherwell); Suprema - Imogen Young (Didcot GS)
U13 Supremo - Ross Tselos (CCCS); Suprema - Eva Wang (OHS)
U12 Supremo - Hari Selvaraj (SS Mary & John); Suprema - Leonora Ives (SS Helen & Catherine)
U11 Supremo - Hugo Rayner (William Fletcher); Suprema - Sana Kasey (OHS/Ojays)
U10 Supremo - David Balbus (MCS); Suprema - Frida Ives (Appleton/Ojays)
U9 Supremo - Dimitrios Zakarian (Ojays); Suprema - Andrea Antoniadou (Headington)
U8 Supremo - Royce Zeng (St Josephs); Suprema - Cecilia Kendall (Headington)
U7 Supremo - Alex Hertog (SS Phil & Jim); Suprema - Rhianne Terrado (St Josephs)

Of the Oxfordshire juniors who qualified for the next Gigafinal stage (and did not have holidays booked for those dates), a handful qualified for the last stage 2-day Standard Play 'Terafinal' tournament. It was notable, however, how many Oxfordshire players there were at the Gigafinals and how close many more came to qualifying for the final stage. Three Oxon juniors were in the Terafinal prizewinners list: in the main Terafinal Anna Wang and Dimitrios Zakarian and winning one of the Challengers sections, Zoe Varney.

Other Oxon Tournaments/Events

Witney Junior Rapid Play is happening this coming weekend (24 September). As of 21/9 there were a healthy 30 entries for the Junior Major tournament and 19 for the inexperienced-level Junior Minor.

Oxfordshire Junior Chess tournament for secondary school age groups was reinstated as a 2-day Standard Play tournament. It was held in January over a weekend alongside the U9 and U11 county team trials (one each day). The U9 and U11 trials beat all records, with 52 entries in the U9s and 64 in the U11s.

The 2016-17 season champions were:

Under 18	Zoe Varney
Under 15	Elizaveta Sheremetyeva
Under 13	Bill Read
Under 11	Ben Aubury & Dimitrios Zakarian (equal on tie-breaks)
Under 9	Ivan Chetverikov

Under 18 School	Cherwell
Under 11 School	St Joseph's* (on tie-break)

* clock prize awarded to MCS as St Joseph's were winners previous season.

In April, Wantage Chess Club held their annual tournament for players from primary schools in their locality, with prizes provided by Wantage Rotary Club. There was a healthy number of entrants (31) with some of the stronger players entering and performing well in the Oxon Megafinal a few weeks later. I am keen to try to involve more juniors from the south of the county in Oxon Junior Chess events in order to give them further chances to develop as chess players as well as to strengthen the county teams further.

School and Club Teams

St Joseph's school's U11 A team, in addition to winning the Oxon Schools League trophy, made it through to the semi-finals of the EPSCA Schools tournament and the finals of the ECF Schools. In the latter they took 7th place out of 14, the highest placed state school in the tournament. St Joseph's were also told that they achieved the all-time highest score at the schools tournament held as part of the CSC school chess days at the London Chess Classic, only losing any game points at all due to some of their pupils having to play each other.

Other teams playing in the various national U9 and U11 tournaments included MCS, SS Mary & John and William Fletcher Primary School. Two MCS U9 teams won Gold Awards Bristol EPSCA national semi-finals. MCS teams also won the U11, U12 and U13 team tournaments at Aldro School in Surrey and an MCS U13 team were the ECF U13 Junior Team Champions in the regional section, finishing 5th/12 teams in the national finals at Hertford College.

A team of 3 girls from Bartholomew School entered the ECF U19 Girls semi-finals for fun and experience, and ended up qualifying for the final!

Junior participation in the OCA League continues to be significant. The regular junior teams of MCS/Blackbirds, Abingdon School/City, Cumnor, Witney and Cowley all continued to play, with junior players also in some of the other teams such as Bicester.

Separate junior chess clubs are held at Bicester and Wantage. There is a proposal to start another junior club meeting weekly at St Giles, Oxford.

The Oxfordshire Junior Squad club (“Ojays”) continued to meet weekly during term time, with professional coaching most weeks. Although it is by invitation only, since it is intended only for county-level players, membership grew once again during the year, with a regular attendance of between 10 to 20, mostly aged between 6 and 11 years’ old. An extended session for secondary school ages was instigated later on alternate Tuesday evenings, known as “Ojays+” with a small but loyal attendance. However, so far this (2017-18) season it looks as if this may become at least as popular in terms of numbers as the main section for the younger age group.

<http://www.oxon-junior-chess-squad.org.uk/>

4NCL

As in previous years, Oxfordshire juniors featured in the three Oxford teams in the league as well as in several other teams. Amongst them, Pavel Asenov and Zoe Varney played in first division Oxford 1, while Ross Tselos and Dimitrios Zakarian were regulars in Oxford 3.

Two ‘Ojays’ (Oxfordshire Juniors) teams and an all-Oxon-girls ‘Beethoven’s Fifth’ team played in one of the Junior 4NCL weekends, and at least two teams are planned again for this season.

Individuals – International and British Chess Championships

England representation among Oxfordshire juniors was more limited this season, at least partly due to many of the regulars being in GCSE year. I acted as head of delegation and team manager for an England team in the very strong (mostly titled players) European Youth U18 Team Championships in Poland, with Zoe Varney playing on board 4. The team came in at 14th place from a seeding of 17th out of 21 teams, and on average gained rating points. Zoe’s intended participation in the European Youth Chess Championships was cancelled due to illness.

There were no Oxon juniors playing in the main British Championships this year.