

# Rules of the Oxfordshire Chess Association League

(As amended by the AGM held on 19 September 2019, including modifications made at EGM held on 27 August 2019)

## 1. Organisation of the OCA League

- 1.1 The composition of the League will be decided at the May Committee meeting to facilitate timely production of fixture lists before the next season. After the May Committee meeting, late adjustments may be made by the AGM or exceptionally by an Extraordinary General Meeting.
- 1.2 In normal circumstances promotion and relegation of teams will be mandatory. However, it may be necessary for other teams to be promoted or relegated in the interest of the League.
- 1.3 No club may have more than two teams in one division.
- 1.4 A club entering more than one team shall identify its teams as 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc. When a club has two teams in the same division, matches between them must be scheduled as the first match of the new season, and the first match of the new cycle after Christmas. Where the University has two teams in the same division, they should be allowed to postpone their October match until a later date before Christmas if the League Secretary agrees.
- 1.5 Each team competing will play return fixtures with every other team in its division.
- 1.6 There will be six players in each team and one game on each board in a match.
- 1.7 Matches will be decided by the number of game points scored after Rule 2.5 has been taken into account, with one point for a win, half a point for a draw and no points for a loss.
- 1.8 League match points will be awarded with two points for a win, one point for a draw and no points for a loss.
- 1.9 A team with more match points at the end of the season than any other in their division will hold the title of champion of that division. If two or more teams in a division are tied on match points at the end of the season, the tie-break procedure set out in Rule 1.10 may be applied to determine the teams' relative positions.
- 1.10 Where teams in any division are tied on match points at the end of the season, they shall be placed higher to lower by descending order of their game point difference over the league season. Teams remaining tied on game point difference shall be placed higher to lower by successively applying the following criteria as required until no tie remains:
  - the greater number of matches won
  - the number of individual games won
  - the greater number of match points in the matches between the tied teams
  - the highest game-point difference in the matches between the tied teams
  - the lowest number of defaulted games.Should a tie still exist it shall be broken by a drawing of lots, to be organised by the League Secretary.
- 1.11 A new team entering the League will normally enter the lowest division.
- 1.12 Fixture lists will be produced by the Fixtures Secretary and sent to all clubs as early as possible before the AGM. After the AGM, changes to the Fixture List may only be made by the Fixtures Secretary. (Information, including results and tables, will be published on the OCA website.)

## 2. Eligibility of Players

- 2.1 Except as permitted by 2.2 below, no player may play for more than one club in a season.

- 2.2 A player may transfer from one club to another in the course of the season, but only with the written consent of the former club duly notified to the League Secretary.
- 2.3 **Starred players**
- 2.3.1 Any club entering more than one team in the League must nominate or 'star' four players in each of its Division One teams and in any other teams (except its lowest). Starred players may not play for another team of that club either in the same or a lower division in the course of a season.
- 2.3.2 Each team required to 'star' players should notify the League Secretary of its nominations at the start of the season or as soon as possible thereafter. If such a team has not informed the League Secretary of its starred players by 1 November, the League Secretary will make the nominations. In this case the starred players will be those the League Secretary judges to be the four strongest players likely to play the required number of games for that team over the season. The League Secretary will publish on the OCA website the lists of starred players for all the relevant teams by 8 November.
- 2.3.3 If any player nominated by the club participates in fewer than four games for the team for which he is 'starred', then his/her club will be required to provide an explanation to the Committee. Any starred player not playing the required four league games may not be starred by that club the following season.
- 2.4 **Playing for more than one team**
- 2.4.1 Except as permitted below, a player who has played four games for a particular team ceases to be eligible to play for any other team of that club in the same or a lower division for the remainder of the season.
- 2.4.2 The restriction in 2.4.1 does not apply to players with an ECF standard-play grading (or an estimated grading) of 125 or below at the start of the season.
- 2.4.3 Moreover, (i) players with an ECF standard-play grading (or an estimated grading) between 126 and 140 at the start of the season may play in Divisions One and Two without affecting eligibility to play in lower divisions; and (ii) players with an ECF standard-play grading (or an estimated grading) between 141 and 150 at the start of the season may play in Division One without affecting eligibility to play in lower divisions.
- 2.4.4 For the purposes of 2.4.2 and 2.4.3, clubs registering new players without an ECF standard-play grading must supply an estimated grade together with any known current or historical grading information about the player. The estimate presented will be subject to the approval of the OCA Grader, who may, in the light of available evidence, overrule an estimate given by a club.
- 2.4.5 For the purposes of the grading boundaries relating to player eligibility in Rules 2.4.1 to 2.4.3, the FIDE rating of a player with no ECF grading may be converted according to the formula given on the ECF grading website, provided that FIDE rating includes at least ten FIDE-rated games in the year preceding the start of the current OCA League season. (Otherwise the question should be referred to the OCA Grader, who may assign an estimated grade for the player.) Accordingly, provided enough recent games are included in the FIDE rating:
- (i) A player with no ECF grading but a FIDE rating below 1638 may be regarded as though graded below 125.
- (ii) A player with no ECF grading but a FIDE rating between 1639 and 1750 may be regarded as though graded between 126 and 140.
- (iii) A player with no ECF grading but a FIDE rating between 1751 and 1825 may be regarded as though graded between 141 and 150.

- 2.5 Any game played by an ineligible player will be deemed lost for the purposes of the match result— though the actual result of the game as played will stand for purposes of grading if the ineligibility of the player is not discovered until after the game has started. In addition, one match point will normally be deducted from the offending team.

However, if a listed member of a team fails to turn up and there is no available substitute before the 30-minute default time other than a player who, under the provisions of Rule 2.4, is not eligible to play for the team, then, provided that both players and both captains consent, that player may replace the absent player and play a graded game without the team losing the additional match point. This graded game will still be deemed lost for the purposes of the match result. In such a case, the team captains should notify the League Secretary of this agreement as soon as possible after the match. Such a game shall not count as a league game.

- 2.6 'Visiting players' are defined as players who are able to play for a short period of time only, such as university students able to play in vacation time only.

Visiting players with either an ECF grading of 180 or above or a FIDE rating of 2050 or above may only play in Division One, or a club's first team or its equal.

Visiting Players with either an ECF grading of 165 or above or a FIDE rating of 1938 or above may only play in Division Two or above, or a club's second team or its equal or above.

Visiting Players with an ECF grading below 165 may play in any division for any team.

### **3. Postponements**

- 3.1 Teams wishing to postpone a match must seek the approval of the League Secretary.
- 3.2 Postponements that are agreed by both teams will normally be approved, provided that a match scheduled in the first cycle of fixtures is not postponed into the second cycle. Requests for postponements by one team will only be approved for serious reasons, such as extreme weather conditions, the unavailability of a venue, widespread illness in the squad, etc. The inability to field the strongest team (or even a strong team) is not acceptable as a reason for postponement, but the inability to field a full team may be an acceptable reason if serious efforts have been made to use other available players in the club to assemble a full complement.
- 3.3 The responsibility for the rearrangement of a postponed match belongs to the League Secretary, who may either approve a date the two captains have agreed is mutually acceptable or choose to set a new date if it seems necessary in the interests of the competition.

### **4. Defaults**

- 4.1 Any team failing to keep an engagement without giving a satisfactory explanation will be deemed to have lost the match 6-0, with all six games lost by default.
- 4.2 Any team defaulting more than one match in this way will be reported to the Committee and may be subject to disciplinary action (including having its record expunged and/or automatic demotion) at the Committee's discretion.
- 4.3 For every four games defaulted by a team in the league, that team will have one match point deducted from its total, unless a satisfactory explanation is offered.
- 4.4 If two teams (with the consent of the League Secretary) agree not to play a match, the match will be recorded as a 0-0 double default, with neither side scoring a match point but neither incurring defaults on the individual boards.
- 4.5 A team captain who is aware before the start of a match of being unable to field a full team may not name a missing player on the match card; any game or games defaulted must be from the bottom board upwards. In such a case the opposing captain should be informed as early as possible. A captain who learns only at the venue immediately before the match that the opposing team is

incomplete may adjust board order to take account of which players would otherwise be left without a game.

## **5. Disputes and Sanctions**

- 5.1 Any claim or report relating to a dispute must be addressed to the League Secretary by email or in writing by either the team captain or the club secretary, with copies being sent to the secretaries and relevant team captains of all the clubs involved.
- 5.2 The League Secretary (or another officer or group of officers appointed to do so by the AGM) shall be authorised to settle a dispute.
- 5.3 In the event of either party in a dispute being unhappy with the decision, the matter will be referred to the Committee. All clubs involved in a dispute, or who are liable to disciplinary action, have a right to be represented at the Committee Meeting, whose decision will be binding.
- 5.4 If the Chairman and League Secretary have reason to believe that there have been serious or persistent offences against the League rules or the spirit of fair play, they should call for an explanation from the captain of the appropriate team or teams. If they do not receive an explanation they consider satisfactory and the situation remains unresolved, they may refer the situation to the Committee to consider whether disciplinary sanctions might be appropriate. Any club or individual thus liable to disciplinary action has the right to be represented at the Committee Meeting, where the Committee's decision will be binding.

## **6. Trophies**

- 6.1 All the divisional trophies and the Frank Wood Shield are the property of the League.
- 6.2 All these trophies and the Shield must be returned to the Treasurer not later than 30 April each season for engraving.
- 6.3 Trophies will be presented at the AGM or as otherwise specified by the Committee.
- 6.4 An individual trophy named the Arthur Mushens Trophy will be awarded to the player who scores the best game points percentage in Division One.
- 6.5 An individual trophy named the Bernard C Wyatt Memorial Trophy will be awarded to the player who scores the best game points percentage in Division Two.
- 6.6 An individual trophy named the David Del Nevo Trophy will be awarded to the player who scores the best game points percentage in Division Three.
- 6.7 An individual trophy named the Sam Phipps Trophy will be awarded to the player who scores the best game points percentage in Division Four.
- 6.8 An individual trophy named the Lester Millin Memorial Trophy will be awarded to the junior (under 18 on 1 September of the year in which the season starts) who scores the best game points percentage in any one Division of the League.
- 6.9 A player must compete (wins by default do not count) in more than 50% of the League Matches for a team in the relevant divisions in order to receive an individual trophy.

## **7. Match Rules - All Divisions**

- 7.1 The home club is responsible for the venue and all match arrangements. In particular, the home club is to take account of the ECF's Guidelines on treatment of disabled chess players (<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/guidelines-on-treatment-of-chess-players-with-impairments/>) and make every reasonable effort to implement those of the guidelines that are applicable in the League.
- 7.2 Home clubs are expected to provide scoresheets, clocks, and sets and boards of a uniform, recognised pattern.

- 7.3 The use of clocks is compulsory. Digital clocks are to be used where enough are available for every board in a match.
- 7.4 Arrangements will be made for a minimum of three hours' play, except that, for Division Four, the playing session is 2½ hours.
- 7.5 **Time Limits**
- 7.5.1 In Division One digital clocks will be used for all matches, with a time allowance of 80 minutes plus 10 seconds per move from move 1.
- 7.5.2 In Division Two a time limit of all moves in 90 minutes will be used.
- 7.5.3 In Division Three a time limit of all moves in 90 minutes will also normally be played. However, a team which regularly includes one or more players aged under 16 on 1 September in the year in which the season starts may stipulate before the start of the season that its matches be played at a time limit of all moves in 75 minutes. A club secretary or team captain/manager may do this by emailing the League Secretary and the Fixtures Secretary. In such a case, the time limit will be published in the preliminary matter at the top of the authorized Fixtures List.
- 7.5.4 The time limit in Division Four will be all moves in 75 minutes.
- 7.6 As the OCA League is not an event supervised by an arbiter, whenever a non-incremental time limit is used, all games will follow the procedure laid down in Article III.6 of the *Guidelines* attached to the *FIDE Laws of Chess* covering *Games without increment including Quickplay Finishes*, for a draw claim by a player having the move and less than two minutes on the clock. For more detail about applying this procedure, see the *OCA's Guidance for Clubs & Captains*, which can be found on the *Admin documents* page of the OCA website.
- 7.7 All matches will commence at 7.30 pm, except for Division Four and school teams, which may at the start of the season unilaterally specify an earlier start time for their home matches, provided that this is not earlier than 7.15 pm. Any other change to the start time must be agreed between the captains of the teams involved in the fixture.
- 7.8 Clocks must be started promptly at the specified starting time and any time that is lost because the home club is not ready shall be deducted from that club's clocks before play begins.
- 7.9 The visiting team will have white on the odd boards.
- 7.10 Teams must be arranged at least approximately in descending order of playing strength. In particular, if the grading difference between any two players with current A-E ECF gradings at the time of a match is greater than ten points, the higher-graded player must play on a higher board. (For example, a player graded 136 may play below a player graded 126, but not below one graded 125.)
- 7.10.1 For the purposes of ordering players in a team in a way corresponding to the above example, if a player who has no current A-E ECF grade has a FIDE or (failing that) national rating that includes at least ten rated games in the year preceding the start of the current OCA League season, that rating is to be converted to its ECF equivalent in accordance with the standard formula. For FIDE grades this is  $(\text{FIDE} - 700) / 7.5 = \text{ECF}$ .
- 7.10.2 If a player has neither a current A-E ECF grade nor a FIDE or national rating as described in 7.10.1, but has an estimated grade assigned by the Grader for the purpose of the Frank Wood Shield, that estimate will be used as a basis for the purpose of this rule.
- 7.10.3 For players without any of the above specifications of playing strength, a captain should use a recent standard-play grade, or an official rapidplay grade. In the absence of all these, a captain should use his or her own best judgement as to a player's strength relative to the other players in the team.
- 7.10.4 If, when team lists are exchanged before the match in accordance with rule 7.11 but before play starts, a team captain notices that the opposing team is in breach of this rule, that

captain may insist that the opposing team's board order is adjusted so as to comply with the rule.

- 7.10.5 If a listed team member fails to turn up and the grading of the only available replacement before the 30-minute default time would breach the requirements of this board-order rule by having too high a grading, those requirements may be waived only with the consent of the opposing team's captain. In such a case, the team captains are to make a note of this agreement when entering the result on the website.
- 7.11 Prior to the start of play, team lists will be exchanged. These lists will give the names and gradings of the players. For players without an A-E ECF grading, their actual or estimated grade should be given in accordance with Rules 7.10.1 to 7.10.3.
- 7.12 All games will be conducted in accordance with the FIDE Laws of Chess except as indicated here:
  - 7.12.1 A player wins the game by default if he or she does not have an opponent within 30 minutes of the start of a match. (The place of an absent player may be taken by a substitute at any time within 30 minutes of the start of the match.)
  - 7.12.2 Players may bring mobile phones into the playing area, provided that they are switched off for the duration of the playing session. Captains should ensure that a reminder to switch phones off is issued immediately before the start of the match. Should a mobile phone make a sound during the match, the captains will issue a warning to the player to switch it off. Should the player's device make a further sound, the captains will enforce loss of the game by the player.
  - 7.12.3 Players may record the moves of their games either in a recognized form of algebraic notation or in English descriptive notation.
  - 7.12.4 The Association encourages but does not require players to record draw offers on the scoresheet.
  - 7.12.5 For a first and a second illegal move of any kind by a player two minutes extra time will be added to the opponent's clock. A third illegal move of any kind by the same player loses the game, unless the position is such that no possible sequence of legal moves can lead to the checkmating of that player's king.
  - 7.12.6 The Association, in its capacity as the organizing body of the League, makes no claim to ownership of whatever scoresheets are used for recording games. Nor does it require the players to sign both scoresheets at the end of the game.
  - 7.12.7 Since the FIDE Laws in general presuppose the presence of an authorized person acting as arbiter, and many of them refer to actions the arbiter may take, certain articles of the Laws cannot be followed to the strict letter in the OCA League. In the absence of arbiters, team captains are expected to take on those aspects of an arbiter's function which circumstances make it practical for them to perform, in cooperation or (where appropriate) individually. To help them carry out their responsibilities in this regard, captains should familiarize themselves with any relevant guidance issued by the Committee.

## **8. Results**

- 8.1 The matches will be decided as stated in Rule 1.7.
- 8.2 Match results should be posted on the OCA website by either captain and confirmed by the other as soon as possible after the match. At the match venue, match cards should be filled in and signed by both captains and retained as evidence in case a dispute arises over the result as posted on the website. (If a captain does not have internet access, another team captain of that club or the club secretary may post the result. If this is not possible, the captain should post his copy of the match card to the League Secretary within three days of the match.)

- 8.3 The match card should show the following information: date, division, names of players and their scores. The match card should be signed by both team captains.
- 8.4 A home club which fails within seven days of the match to send the match result to the League Secretary or to submit it on the league website may lose the match by default.

## **9. Frank Wood Shield Rules**

League rules for Division One apply except where amended hereunder.

- 9.1 The Frank Wood Shield will be a knockout competition using a handicap system based on the difference between the average grades of the two teams playing a match.

- 9.2 The first round of the competition will take place before the end of the University Michaelmas Term.

### **9.3 Teams**

- 9.3.1 A club may enter for the Frank Wood Shield any number of teams not exceeding the number of teams it has in the League.

- 9.3.2 Each team entering the competition shall have a distinctive name. Entries shall be made by informing the League Secretary of the team's name and the contact details of its captain/manager no later than the date specified by the League Secretary or the AGM.

### **9.4 Players' Eligibility**

- 9.4.1 A player is eligible to play for a team entered by a club in the Frank Wood Shield once he or she has legally played two games for that club in the league during the season.

- 9.4.2 No player may play for more than one team during the competition, except as permitted by Rule 9.4.3.

- 9.4.3 A player with a grade of 80 or under at the time of a Frank Wood Shield match (i.e., an A-E grade published in the ECF grading list current at the time of the match or, otherwise, the estimated grade currently assigned to the player by the OCA Grader for the competition) may play for any team of his or her club.

- 9.4.4 A team that fields an ineligible player in a Frank Wood Shield match loses that match.

- 9.5 Should a match (or a board) be defaulted by a team, the opponents must declare the team (or player) that would have played, and Rule 9.4.2 above will apply.

### **9.6 Grades**

- 9.6.1 If a player has an ECF A-E grade, this will be used.

- 9.6.2 If a player does not have an ECF A-E grade, the club or team captain wishing to play that player must contact the OCA Grader at least a week before the player's first match in the competition, asking for an estimated grade to be assigned to the player for the purposes of the competition and providing the Grader with any available evidence of the player's strength.

- 9.6.3 If the Grader feels unable to assign an estimated grade, the player will be treated as though graded 100.

- 9.6.4 The Grader may give or alter an estimated grade at any later stage of the competition in the light of further information about a player's strength.

- 9.6.5 A player who has an ECF A-E grade of below 50 will be treated as though graded 50.

### **9.7 Results**

- 9.7.1 A team with an average grade at least 80 points higher than that of the opposing team must score 6-0 to win the match.

- 9.7.2 A team with an average grade at least 50 points higher but less than 80 points higher than that of the opposing team must score at least 5.5-0.5 to win the match.
- 9.7.3 A team with an average grade at least 35 points higher but less than 50 points higher than that of the opposing team must score at least 5-1 to win the match.
- 9.7.4 A team with an average grade at least 25 points higher but less than 35 points higher than that of the opposing team must score at least 4.5-1.5 to win the match.
- 9.7.5 A team with an average grade at least 15 points higher but less than 25 points higher than that of the opposing team must score at least 4-2 to win the match.
- 9.7.6 A team with an average grade at least 5 points higher but less than 15 points higher than that of the opposing team need only score 3.5-2.5 to win the match.
- 9.7.7 In all these cases, if the team with the higher average grade fails to reach the specified winning score, the team with the lower average grade wins the match.
- 9.7.8 In matches between teams differing in average grade by less than 5 points, a team scoring at least 3.5 points is the winner of the match. Should such a match be tied 3-3, board count will be used to decide the result. If the match is still tied, the result will be decided by eliminating the bottom board, then (if necessary) the fifth, etc. Should all the games in the match be drawn, the team with the lower average grade will win. If the average grades of the teams are identical, the away team will win.

## 9.8 Match Rules

- 9.8.1 Teams must be arranged at least approximately in descending order of current playing strength. In particular, team order must follow ECF A-E grades (or the grades assigned for the competition by the OCA Grader) within ten points. (For example, a player graded 136 may play below a player graded 126, but not below one graded 125.)
- 9.8.2 Team captains are to have their team order, each team member's (actual or estimated) grade, and the average grade of their team ready to exchange as soon as both captains are present. The home team must show this first to the away team. The captains will then work out the match handicap and announce it to both teams before play starts. If a default subsequently requires a change in the match handicap in accordance with Rule 9.8.4 (ii) below, the procedure laid down there will be followed.
- 9.8.3 Captains will toss for colours at each match after the exchange of teams.
- 9.8.4 (i) A team captain who, at the time when team details are exchanged with the opposing captain, is aware of being unable to field a full team may not name a missing player on the match card; any game or games defaulted must be from the bottom board upwards.  
 (ii) If, at the time when team details are exchanged with the opposing captain, a player is expected by his or her captain to be coming and is listed on the match card but fails to turn up and loses by default after 30 minutes, that team's average grade will then be determined by whichever measure yields the higher average: the original average grade as stated on the match card before the match starts and agreed by the captains, or the average grade of the players who actually play. In such a case, the captain of the incomplete team is responsible for correctly recalculating the average grade and (if necessary) the changed handicap as soon as possible after the default is confirmed and presenting it to the opposing captain. If a change in the handicap is required, the captains may ask players to pause or stop their clocks for the few seconds required to announce the new handicap.

- 9.9 Matches in the Frank Wood Shield will be played with a time limit of all moves in 90 minutes.