

## **Chairman's message to all members of Wanstead & Woodford Chess Club**

We are faced with an unprecedented situation with the Covid-19 pandemic. We have to be guided by Government advice and take note of the position taken by the various chess organisations - the Leagues - in whose competitions we participate.

While the majority of people who contract the virus will suffer only a mild illness, in a responsible society, we have to respond to the advice of health experts with regard to high risk categories, i.e. those in the 70+ category and those with underlying health issues. There are a number of members of Wanstead & Woodford Chess Club in either or both of these high-risk categories.

Your Committee has been deliberating how the Club should respond to what is a fast-developing situation, taking into account the Prime Minister's Press Conference on Monday evening in which it was stated that:

- everyone in the UK is now being advised to avoid "non-essential" contact with others and "unnecessary" travel;
- people are also being asked to work from home "where they possibly can", and avoid pubs, clubs, theatres and social venues

and has decided that we must cease to meet as a Club.

The **London League** has notified the cessation of fixtures at least until Easter, when a review of the situation will be undertaken.

The **Essex League** has announced that *"Until further notice, any match may be postponed by either side; please give as much notice as possible, but I appreciate that a club might suddenly be told that its venue is closed. It is probably best to postpone all matches in the next three weeks, as advised by the ECF, unless clubs are confident that a match can take place. Please bear in mind that a significant number of players will fall into at-risk groups."*

The **North Circular Chess League** has announced cessation of all activities until further notice.

Some of these developments were announced during and after the Committee's deliberations on Monday night.

The Committee reached the following decision:

**The Club will close until further notice after Tuesday's Club Championship Round 7 session** and that in addition to cancelled U120 training sessions already announced:

- a) Round 7 becomes the last round if the Club championship;
- b) The Handicap Blitz Grand Prix (7<sup>th</sup> April) is suspended;
- c) The Lawrance Cup Final (WW1 v 2) will not be played on 4<sup>th</sup> April;
- d) The Rapid Championship (18<sup>th</sup> April) is postponed;
- e) Postpone now all Essex League matches.

Consequently, **the Club will not meet and will not participate in any matches until at least after the Easter holidays**. The Committee will review over Easter our next steps taking into account any further developments in the Leagues. Present indications suggest that our closure may well continue after Easter.

We have now notified the Essex League and all Essex League Clubs that we are postponing all remaining Essex League fixtures. *Yet this already has been overtaken, as today the Essex League have formally declared all fixtures postponed until further notice.*

The North Circular League announcement overtakes the above measures, so that all North Circular League fixtures are also postponed.

Our Junior Coaching Club is also suspended, following the closure of Redbridge Schools from Friday 20th March. Ben and Mark are keeping this under review (see the Juniors page on the Club website for updates in due course).

Closure of the Club is not actually unprecedented. In the days before all year activity, the Club was regularly not in session between the AGM in June and the start of the next season in September. However, it is unprecedented to close the Club during a League season still in progress. But then a new virus, against which no-one has any natural immunity, is an unprecedented event. Chess is just a game, however, much we enjoy it; other matters when they are as compelling as the world health issues which threaten us at the present time must be faced with the appropriate response.

A while ago, I started reading Winston Churchill's six volume work on the Second World War. I have reached the part where war has been declared, with Europe in a mess and the Country facing another catastrophic conflict. I find it difficult to separate the dreadful situation that Churchill is describing in 1939 from the issues we are currently facing. A Churchillian quote comes to mind: "When you are going through hell, keep going".

Keep in touch via the links below. I wish you all well and that we come through this unscathed.

Ian Hunnable  
Chairman  
18 March 2020

### **Some Links**

[World Health Organisation](#)

[UK Government response](#)

[BBC](#)

[English Chess Federation](#)

[Wanstead & Woodford Chess Club](#)

[Essex Chess Association \(Essex League\)](#)

[London Chess League](#)

[North Circular Chess League \(Results\)](#)