

Resumption of League Activities

Discussion Paper from the Executive

Summer 2020

The Government has instigated a gradual process of relieving the lock down with emphasis on outdoor activities, retail and some returns to school. In all such activities, there has to be attention to hygiene and social distancing to reduce the risk of corona virus transmission. The BACL Executive has been in contact with the ECF and there are no current strategies for configuring over the board chess competitions so that they can take place. A number of competitions have been moved on line including the 4NCL. Generally, these have been configured with somewhat faster time limits to avoid players sitting at keyboards for very long times. There have been some problems with allegations of players cheating by using apps etc. Of course, it is not quite the same game over the net and doubtless some players are not interested in playing online.

There is I think almost no prospect of over the board play before the autumn and there is a substantial possibility that it will be later than that. As time passes it will ultimately become meaningless to complete the 2019-20 season.

The Executive is interested in input from the clubs. Below are some ideas that have already been debated amongst the Executive but we are prepared to consider other attractive ideas proposed. We would like to get some input from the clubs in preparation for preparing papers for an AGM when the situation is sufficiently developed in terms of relieving the lock down that there is the prospect of a resumption of play. We do not believe there will be an AGM before August currently. This input will be gained via a forum between now and June 15th on the BACL website.

Options for Completion of the 2019-2020 Season

Social Distancing

Do the clubs envision any way given the venues they play in that they could configure with social distancing for over the board play (at least 2 metre separation between players – something like a game with a blind opponent can be imagined though with the required separation capacity, would be reduced and time scrambles messy)? If you can see a solution, what it is and do you think your players would want to play with the constraints required? Even if such a solution can be configured for all the clubs, there may still be a time issue. For instance, if we were not able to re-start until September 2021. I suspect it would be preferable to start with a new competition rather than one that hadn't played for more than a year. This begs the question of what is the cut-off date for restarting? If we were able to play over the board from Autumn 2020 then, this could either be a new 20-21 season (with the 2019-20 season either having been completed on line or according to the results pre-suspension as below) or the completion of 2019-2020 followed by a truncated 2020-21 season, perhaps with teams playing each other once.

Completion On Line

If over the board completion is not feasible, do you favour completing the season with an online competition? This really only makes sense if nearly all players want to do it so that the teams that finish the league are substantially similar to the teams that have been competing. The question is not so much opinions on online chess as whether the clubs favour for this in comparison to other options for bringing the 2019-20 season to a close. If there is no way to start over the Board competition, would the clubs like to run the 2020-21 BAFL competitions on-line.

Alternative Completions

Declare the league results as of suspension the final results. Or adjust those results for numbers of matches played? In the case of such truncated completions, what should happen about promotions and relegations?

Feedback from Forum of Club Representatives

1. We only received formal feedback from Ely, Bury and Linton
2. Separately, Paul received a photo from Norman Hutchinson showing over the board chess resumption in Holland using two boards with players separated by a screen - somewhat similar to the suggestion made by Ely (see photo below)
3. In general none of the participants were confident about resumption of over the board chess even in the Autumn
4. Bury had no enthusiasm to complete the 2019-20 season and would be happy either with cancellation and starting afresh or some finish based on current position or an extrapolation of the season.
5. Ely mentioned not liking the idea of playing in masks to the extent of being doubtful whether they could field teams if masks were required preferring a screens type solution
6. Linton would prefer finishing the season based on current position plus 2-2 results for remaining matches or voiding the season if that is not favoured.
7. No interest in online solutions from any contributors

