



Cork Congress 2008

Summary report by

Michael Bradley
Tournament Director

The 16th annual Cork chess congress was held at the Gresham Metropole Hotel over the weekend of the 28th to the 30th of March. Numbers were slightly up on 2007 with 170 players ready to battle, blunder and boast over their games in the traditional three section tournament. The masters section this year was renamed to honour Cork player, Finbarr Allison, who sadly passed away unexpectedly in January 2007. Team members from CCYMS approached Cork chess in November with the idea of running a rapid play tournament as a tribute to their team mate. Cork chess decided to rename the masters section in his honour. City hall provided substantial support and CCYMS commissioned a unique perpetual trophy based on the Cork emblem. Generous support for the tournament was also received from the Irish Chess Union (Thank you Eamon Keogh !) and Pepsi (Nice one Barry Foran). Over the whole weekend players enjoyed refreshments in the form of juice and bottled water.

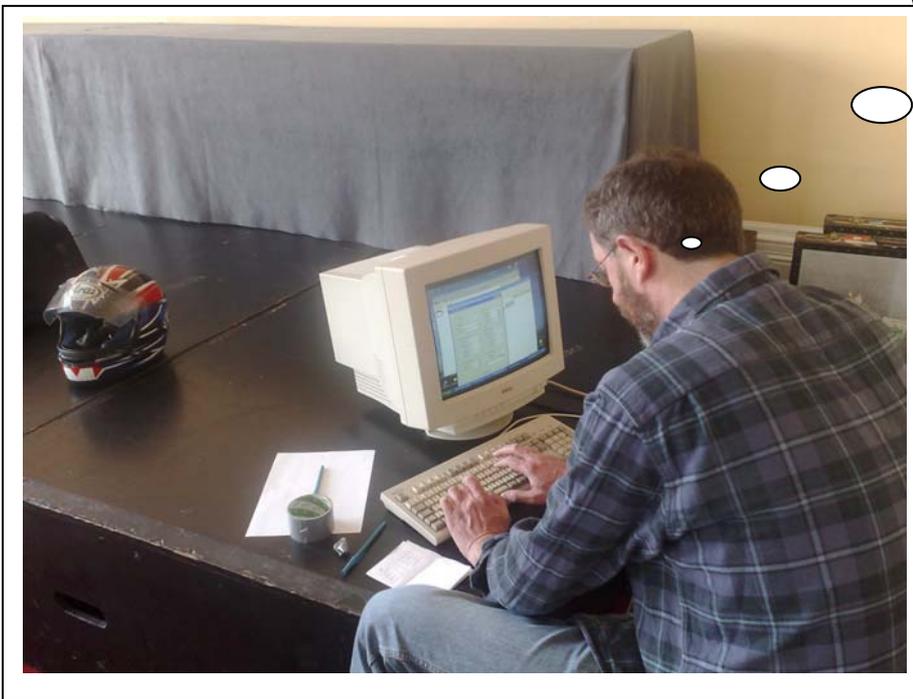


The Lord Mayor opened proceedings on Friday night and during his speech welcomed the number of players to Cork from Croatia, Georgia, Latvia, Spain and the UK as well as from all parts of Ireland. The Lord Mayor paid tribute to Finbarr Allison who worked at a senior level at city hall. Finally, the Lord Mayor extended sympathies to the family and friends of Philip Hogarty on behalf of the people of Cork. He then asked all present to stand for a minutes silence as a mark of respect for both Finbarr Allison and Philip Hogarty.

Play got underway later than planned but no less intensely. For 2008 we had a new departure with the broadcasting of the top four boards live on the internet. Thanks to Gerry Graham for the provision of two boards that were added to the clubs own. Also thanks to John McKenna (Ballinasloe) that had a spare board in case.

Our main technology guru, Stephen Short had everything running during the day yet owing to the later start we had to forgo running them on Friday evening. Alas he was a bit brain frazzled when play began and gave GM Viesturs Meijers a slightly earlier finish than expected. Despite taking a travelling bye last year, I know exactly how Steve felt...and performed !

...well... at least if
the internet crashes I
have me helmet.....



However, over the entire weekend the success of the live boards was very evident with thousands of hits to the website during broadcast. This translated to an excess of 1,000 people logging on regularly over the weekend to view the games. It does not take too much to work out what we will be doing again in 2009.

Well done to Steve as it was worth all the expletives! (Most of them were probably mine though...)

In the run up to the tournament there was keen interest in GMs across Europe interested in a weekend in Cork. This included the likes of Epishin, Korneev and Tiviakov. Cork was able to welcome back GM Stuart Conquest and Alex Baburin with Bogdan Lalic, Viesturs Meijers, and Mark Hebden ensuring this was going to be a good challenge for all Irish contenders. Irish titled players involved were 2007 joint winner Alex Lopez FM, former Irish champion Philip Short FM and Eamon Keogh NM. There was keen and increased interest in the masters section to support the tribute to Finbarr Allison with over 60 players sitting down to mix it with these well established players.

In keeping with the idea of leaving the ambitious player near to the mark play up, a number of younger players took the opportunity to play up to the majors and masters. This was a popular feature last year and the trend continued. The guideline threshold was 1100 for the minors and 1500 for the masters. With ratings changing upwards quickly in the lower ranks (1000-1200), there was greater flexibility. This was justified when all players performed well, with David McCann (1039!) leading the way with a very respectable top ten finish on 4/6. All those allowed to play up to the masters held their own and finished in line with seeding.

Masters Review:

You would normally expect nothing really to stand out in the early rounds with eight titled players involved. However in round two GM Alex Baburin was held to a draw Jan Heinrich, Bartosz Piasta had a very strong position against GM Meijers but seemed to self implode and in round three GM Mark Hebden lost to German player Felix Fehr. Also in round three GM Stuart Conquest was held right to the wire by one of Irelands leading young talents Karl McPhilips but in a time scramble made an error and resigned. Irelands Philip Short went down to GM Bogdan Lalic, with GM Viesturs Meijers beating Cork player Paul O Donovan. In round four GM Conquest took sole lead with a win over FM Alex Lopez, GM Baburin was held to another draw by Paul Walsh (Limerick). A quick draw was agreed with Meijers & Lalic, with GM Hebden making a good return with a win over Garreth Annesley. In round five GM Meijers was held to a draw by Felix Fehr with an agreed draw between Conquest & Lalic. Going into the final round, GM Conquest could win the tournament outright with a win but managed to get a draw with GM Hebden in a slight worse position (so he said !). GM Lalic had a win over Rory Quinn (Ennis) to tie in first place with GM Conquest the winner on tie break. Seven players were on joint third.

Majors Review:

There were a number of players on the lower side of 1200 allowed to play up and this was proven to be a good decision. So often younger players will jump 100 points or more between ratings and quickly find themselves above the 1200 mark anyway. Fifty players sat down for the competition with a few ear marked as possible contenders being over 1500. Games generally went with seeding for the first three rounds. After round four, Denis O Connell took sole lead with a win over James Vaughan , while other seasoned contender Michael Burniston was held to a draw by Ronan Sweeney . David Cormican put himself back into contention with a win over Emily Alfred so round five was going to be interesting.

David Cormican continued his progress with a win over James Vaughan and Michael Burniston beat leader Denis O Connell to set up a very curious final round with a number of players still in the running for the honours. In the end a draw between top contenders Michael Burniston & David Cormican opened the door for a three way tie. James Vaughan & Stephen Forde drew, but with a win over David McCann, Denis O Connell did arrive across the line with mssrs Cormican and Burniston for a share of the spoils.



Joint winners Michael Burniston & Denis O Connell in the middle of their round 5 game.

Minors Review:

The minors was a closely contested affair with over fifty people of all ages sitting down for battle. As noted above, this section will produce some upsets as the ratings of the very younger players will quickly rise with each rating being published. However, this was one up for the adults as the number of the parents and newcomers to chess were providing the main entertainment. Alas one of the contenders in the shake up did themselves no favours (and shall remain nameless) by forgetting to switch off their mobile. An interesting one for John McKenna was that (parenting duties calling !) he was considering pulling out on Saturday night but we persuaded him to play on Sunday.

Overall the finish was shared by John McKenna, Daniel Hurley, Pat Coleman and Philip Maguire.



.. a study in concentration.....



a table of joint winners...



...so what will I show you GM Hebden sir...?!



..a view of the minors section..

Prize giving:

In wrapping up the tournament, our thanks were given to those who made it happen. Cork chess owe a great deal of thanks to Cork City Hall for their very generous sponsorship, the ICU and Pepsi for their support and to the Gresham Metropole Hotel for their excellent facilities over the weekend. Our thanks to the Examiner and Evening Echo for their extensive coverage and kind permission to reproduce some of the pictures that appeared in editions during the week.

Thanks to our club members Barry Foran, Peter Doyle, Joe Browne and Stephen Short in all areas of their help. Also to John Alfred, controller, for his important part.

A list of the players, grading prizes etc are on the last page.

Cross tables are here: <http://www.corkchess.com/Congress/2008/Results.aspx>

Two special prizes were included amongst these. As part of supporting women's chess, we included a prize for best performance in the tournament by a lady. This was won by Nicola Benson.

The second prize was in honour of Philip Hogarty who we sadly lost at the beginning of this year. One of the most frequent things being said about Philip as a chess player was his rising star status within the game. Our gesture to pay tribute to his memory was a *Rising Star* prize to a young player in the tournament that shows great potential for the game. A very bright future is ahead for young Ronan Magee, who received the award. Only aged nine, as Ronan continues to learn, enjoy and become a more experienced chess player, I am confident he will become one of Irelands leading chess talent in the near future.

I hope that our gesture in remembering Philip was well received and indeed to hear that Mrs Hogarty was delighted in Cork's gesture for him, was great to know.

Our biggest thanks are to you the players. The increased support of the tournament was wonderful to see for an inaugural masters section renamed and in the other sections also. After speaking with the players of CCYMS and Mrs Allison when over, all were delighted at the success of the tournament in honouring a very popular player. This is the biggest thanks from our perspective as you the reader can appreciate.

I hope you enjoyed this read and look forward to seeing you all in 2009,

All the best

Michael Bradley
Tournament Director

Chairman Cork Chess



GM Stuart Conquest gives a few words of thanks in the presence of Mrs. Katherine Allison & children, CCYMS team mates, Joint winner GM Bogdan Lalic, Cork Chess life president Joe Browne andme !



..Pat ORiordain, Joe Browne (Life president) and Tadhg O Leary (CCYMS) at the press release..



...Ronan Magee – Rising Star award



GM Stuart Conquest with Brian Galligan on the Monday



Pat O' Riordain, Tom Hickey, Noel Ahern, Me ! and Brian Galligan