

2016 Intervarsity Report

The 2016 Irish Chess Intervarsity took place on Saturday 2 April, in the beautiful setting of the Aula Maxima in UCC, Cork. The venue has been described on more than one occasion as Hogwarts-like, something I think you will appreciate if you're ever visiting UCC.

The event went very well, with 24 players from 5 different colleges. There were 9 from UCC, 5 from UCD, 5 from Maynooth (NUIM), 4 from Trinity (TCD), and 1 from CIT, although he did go on to win the tournament. 24 was a good number considering the competition was organised in a bit of a rush, and ended up being quite close to exams.

Over half the field was unrated, and the top seeds were Hugh Doyle (CIT), Kieran O'Riordan (UCC), Oisín Benson (TCD), and myself (UCC). The first round went mostly according to seeding, although there was one major upset on board 3. After a mix-up, eighth seed and UCC Chess Club captain, John O'Dowd, ended up playing Oisín Benson. Oisín, however was still the overwhelming favourite, outrating John by 800 points. In a rare, but sharp line, Oisín didn't find the best line, but John immediately blundered a piece and Oisín was winning. Eventually, after going into an endgame, a backrank tactic allowed John to win his piece back. There were equal pawns in a rook ending, but John's strong connected central passers decided the game in his favour. He was rewarded with a round 2 clash against Hugh, which he would go on to lose.



Round 2 : John O'Dowd vs Hugh Doyle

After 2 rounds there were 5 on 2/2; Hugh, Kieran, Robert Murtagh (TCD), Edvinas Jablonskis (UCC), and myself. I was paired against Hugh on board one, and in what was a far from perfect, but nice game, I managed to generate enough play against Hugh's king to secure a perpetual. I have annotated the game. Kieran won on board 2 and Rigoberto Lopez Reyes (TCD) which left Kieran in clear first at the halfway stage on 3/3.

The halfway point saw the arrival of 8 large pizzas, as well as some wedges and soft drinks, all of which were happily devoured in record time!

Round 4 saw Kieran against Hugh on the top board, and I was paired with the unrated Rigoberto Lopez Reyes who was having a fine tournament and was the third player (along with myself and Hugh) on 2.5/3. I won my game after Rigoberto blundered a piece. Kieran and Hugh reached an interesting knight endgame with equal material, but Hugh has a passed d pawn and a strong king which seemed to give him a clear, possibly winning advantage. However, perhaps things weren't so clear, as when Hugh made progress in advancing his pawn, Kieran had a chance to give up his knight for it and run with his king to the queenside to support the passed pawn he had created in the meantime. Kieran told me afterwards that that line was in fact winning for him, as Hugh's knight couldn't get back in time to stop the pawn. However, Kieran didn't sac his knight for the pawn and was simply lost after that, as he didn't get another chance to stop it.

In round 5 Hugh beat Robert Murtagh on board 1, I beat fellow organiser Danny Cashin (UCC) on board 2, and Kieran beat Oisín Benson who had worked his way back up the standings to reach 3/4 after his first round loss.

The pairings for the final round looked like this:

1. Keegan O'Mahoney (4.5) Kieran O'Riordan (4)
2. Rigoberto Lopez Reyes(3.5) Hugh Doyle (4.5)
3. Oisín Benson (3) Emmanuel Ekoi (UCD) (3.5)

After I initially thought I'd reached a position where I had a slight advantage with good attacking chances in an IQP position, Kieran later told me that it was still theory. I then made a bit of a mistake, attempting a rook lift but missing that it let Kieran trade off a pair of knights, and more importantly my strong light squared bishop. After that, my attacking chances were greatly diminished and my pawn structure had been transformed to hanging pawns. I was probably a bit worse, but Kieran offered me a draw, being happy with third place. While I would have liked to play for a win, given the board position I decided to accept. And so while Kieran was rooting for Hugh (to secure clear third for him) , I wanted him to lose! (or if not, then draw) Alas, Hugh won and secured first place for himself on 5.5/6. Oisín won as well, so Kieran got clear third. David Moloney (UCC) beat Ritik Verma (UCD) to reach 4/6 and pip Roberto to the best unrated prize. Sarah Jane Hearne (TCD) drew to Rory Holohan (UCC) in the last round to reach 3/6 and secured the best female prize.

Unusually, there was actually a clear first, clear second and clear third.

The prize winners are listed below:

1. Hugh Doyle (CIT) 5.5/6
2. Keegan O'Mahoney (UCC) 5/6
3. Kieran O'Riordan (UCC) 4.5/6

Best Unrated: David Moloney (UCC) 4/6

Best Female: Sarah Jane Hearne (TCD) /6

After the main event, over half of us headed to the Franciscan Well, loaded with 2 for 1 drink vouchers. The Franciscan Well is a lovely spot which brews all their own beers/ales (very nice!) and highly recommended if you're ever in Cork. It also meant one thing... more pizza, as they also do delicious stone baked pizzas. We came equipped with 5 chess sets and clocks, and blitz and swap chess (bughouse) was the theme of a great night.

On the Sunday morning, a few of us from met up for yet more blitz, but mostly swap chess.

Overall the event was very enjoyable, and a pleasure to host. Big thanks to everyone who played, especially those who travelled far for it, and also a special mention to awardandgifts.ie who sponsored the very nice trophies. Hopefully next year's intervarsity will be just as successful as this year's, if not even more so.



Best Unrated: David Moloney



Best Female: Sarah Jane Hearne



Third: Kieran O'Riordan



Second: Yours truly



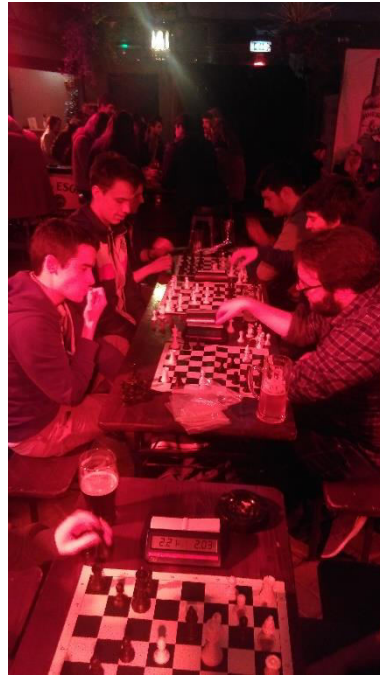
Champion: Hugh Doyle



All prize winners (We eventually got Hugh to smile! :D)



*Organisers: John O'Dowd, Keegan
O'Mahoney, Danny Cashin*



Chess and pints in the Franciscan Well!