

**“ SCARBOROUGH COMMUNITY OF TORONTO
CHESS TALK ”**

Newsletter of / Le Journal de

Scarborough Chess Club

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“ FRIENDLY Chess Since 1960 ”

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO BOTH MEMBERS & NON-MEMBERS
ISSUE # 16 – April 15, 2001

DO YOU KNOW ? / SAVEZ-VOUS ?

Dutton Chess Loses Prime Toronto Tournament Location !

Background

Since March 1999, when Dutton Chess began organizing monthly weekend tournaments in Toronto, the Best Western Primrose Hotel has been synonymous with “ chess “. Nearly all DC tournaments have been held there. It is right in downtown Toronto at Carlton and Jarvis, only steps from the Yonge subway line College Street subway station. Mark Dutton has always maintained that chess tournaments should provide good playing conditions, and should be played in somewhat classy surroundings, to project a positive and successful image of our sport. In contracting with the Primrose, DC successfully managed to achieve this goal. The rooms were large; there was enough room between tables to easily get up from the board, and wander around the other tables, checking out other games in progress. There was a raised area for the first two boards, which nicely gave them prominence. Lighting was good. A skittles area was provided, though, when in the playing hall, the failure of those using it to whisper was a source of aggravation to those playing, and Mark’s best efforts to muzzle them were often unsuccessful (a separate room was not always available, depending on which room DC was using). GTA players (and those from beyond) became accustomed to these playing conditions, and it seemed that DC was absorbing the tournament costs, including rental, and still making money as a for-profit business (though Mark often said that earnings were certainly low, usually only paying, after prizes and expenses, minimum wage to him and Christine for the hours spent per tournament).

The Sponsorship Factor

The key to DC 's financial success in organizing tournaments was the truly amazing relationship DC had with the Primrose Hotel. Although the hotel did not formally sponsor DC as we normally think of it, it did expressly support the efforts of DC by granting DC substantially favourable terms of rental. Mark and Christine knew the contact person for the hotel personally, and he was most willing to provide DC with rates that could not be found elsewhere in the traditional market. The extent of the benefit to DC is explored below.

The Termination of the Rental Contract

Unfortunately, negotiations are going on for the sale of the hotel to a new owner, Radisson Hotels. The Primrose had been doing renovations in anticipation of this (the main floor bar/restaurant). And more renovations of the ballrooms/conference rooms (used by DC) is planned to start May 1. So the anticipated large room space was going to decrease, and thus would be more in demand. All of this caused the Primrose to meet with Mark to review their contract in the light of the new situation. The improvements, along with the more upscale nature of the Radisson Hotels, meant that their rental rates would become, not only higher than DC was paying, but even higher than average market rental (a large room will be renting for 8 hrs. for \$ 2000). It would likely not be exaggerating to say that when this new review team for the hotel learned of the terms granted to DC, they were shocked. They made clear that there was no way they would continue such terms. And there was equally no way DC could even consider the new rates the hotel was discussing. The result was that the contract was terminated, with the Toronto Open '01 being the last DC tournament at the Primrose.

A Major Casualty – The Toronto Summer International '01

DC ran the very successful August /00 5 day TSI at the Primrose. Under the rental contract, DC was going to run it this August, again for 5 days. But the tournament was only financially successful because of the sponsorship rental rate. The tournament took 3 large rooms, 1 medium room, and a few small rooms. At the then normal rate of \$ 1,500 for a large/medium room per day, the cost would have been at least \$ 6,000/day. So for 5 days, the cost should have been at least \$ 30,000. What did DC pay for this whole package ? The fantastically subsidized cost of \$ 2,000 !!

This tremendous deal DC had, though, is now the stumbling block. For normal market rent is too high to make the tournament financially feasible. Mark inquired of the Toronto Board of Education re an air-conditioned large cafeteria for August for 5 days consecutive. He was quoted a price of \$ 1000 rental + \$ 140 caretaker cost / day, for a total cost of \$ 5,700, almost 200% higher than he paid in 2000. And this would assume all aspects could be held in the one large room (all sections, skittles, TD area, pamphlets' tables, Chess 'N Math books/supplies sale table, etc.). An enquiry was made at another Toronto hotel, and a lower than market rate was offered, but only on condition that the hotel could cancel up to one week before the tournament, if they found a customer willing to pay market rent. Obviously no organizer could work on this basis.

Mark has advised that with the other expenses associated with an International event, paying such a rental expense will put the tournament in the red. He says that he has had no other choice but to CANCEL it for 2001. This will be a tremendous loss to Toronto and Canadian chess, since it has been one of the premier Canadian tournaments.

The Impact on DC Weekend Tournaments

In terms of weekend tournaments, DC was also given extremely favourable rates. Under normal rental, a large room at \$ 1,500 per day for 3 days would cost \$4,500. What did DC pay ? The minimal cost of \$ 500 for all 3 days. So the new proposed rate by the Primrose of \$ 2,000 / day is a financial disaster.

Even a school gymnasium or cafeteria under the new amalgamated permit system would lead to a rental cost that would run the weekend tournament at a loss. Having to leave the Primrose, and having no other currently cost-efficient substitute location, DC has resorted to holding its future weekend tournaments at the Dutton Chess Club premises. It has held tournaments there in July and August last year, but these summer month weekenders draw a substantially smaller crowd than the normal tournament. At maximum (and a bit tight), the club premises can accommodate about 80 players. But tournaments have been averaging close to 100 players, and sometimes over this figure. DC may have to go to a system of first registration until the maximum is reached, and then entries will have to be closed off.

The “ Chess & \$\$ “ Crisis

Unfortunately, the Toronto situation is reflective of the \$ crisis in chess both nationally and internationally. The FIDE World Chess Championship was foundering for lack of funds, until its multi-millionaire President offered to guarantee the prize funds with his own personal wealth, and rescued the situation (though there were some serious glitches along the way). This financial pressure on chess led FIDE to contract out the money-making potential of chess, referred to as the “ Commercial Rights “. In Nov. 1999, it effectively sold this right to a private corporation, FIDE Commercial International (despite the name, FIDE has no ownership interest in this private corporation). This company has now contracted with a major international sports promotion company, Octagon Marketing, to find ways to promote chess to private sponsors and the public, and to turn chess into a money-generating sport, like many other international sports.

The problem of chess and \$\$ has long been a chronic one, and even international in nature, and there is a desperate search for new ways to do things to try to attack this problem. So our wrestling with the \$ problem and chess in Toronto is far from an isolated instance.

The Future of Toronto Chess Tournaments

All in all, DC has found a practical solution to its problem, and a way for it to continue to organize tournaments in Toronto. But it has its drawbacks, and it will certainly be better if DC can come up with a larger, financially feasible location.

Toronto has become the chess capital of Canada – we have, each month, a regular-rated weekend tournament, and 2 Saturday Active tournaments (one run by Scarborough CC, and the other by DC); we are home to the 2 largest Canadian chess clubs; we have about a dozen active clubs in the GTA. Organizers have been striving to give players the good playing conditions they deserve, generally without private sponsorship, except for the Primrose.

So what does the future hold ? When we now look into the future of tournament chess in Toronto, what issues arise ?

Do You Have Comments/Suggestions ??

Here are some questions which may be relevant. Can DC find, as a for-profit business, a non-sponsored market rental location, at a price that will allow it to operate at a modest reasonable profit ? Or is it the case that without private sponsorship (as DC effectively had from the Primrose), tournaments cannot be run decently on a for-profit basis? How does the City of Toronto's long and honoured history of volunteer, non-profit tournament organizing now fit into the equation (though such organizing has generally been in eclipse over the last 2 years) ? The two standardly-quoted advantages community non-profits have are : 1) they often have access to government-subsidized rental space, not available to for-profit businesses; 2) they can operate on lower revenue because they do not have to build in the \$ profit factor. Are these facts relevant today ?

What do you think about Toronto's ability to provide good tournaments with good playing conditions and location ? WRITE and let us know your thoughts !! We'll try and publish some in a future Issue.

April 2001 FIDE Rating List

FIDE previously published its list only twice yearly, but now issues it quarterly. FIDE has relented, and the Brain Games Network " Unofficial " World Championship 2000 has now been rated in this list. Gary Kasparov (Russia) is still # 1 at 2827. But Vladimir Kramnik (Russia), #2, has now become the 2nd player ever to break the 2800 barrier, and stands at 2802. The 2000 FIDE World Champion, Viswanathan Anand (India) is only 6 pts. shy of 2800, being in the #3 spot at 2794. The runner-up in the 2000 FIDE World Championship, Alexei Shirov (Spain), is # 8, at 2723. There are 7 other grandmasters in the 2700's. In the #13 spot is former FIDE World Champion, Anatoly Karpov (Russia), at 2693. #16 is the 1999 FIDE World Champion, Alexander Khalifman (Russia), at 2690. The strongest woman player ever, Judit Polgar (Hungary), is # 19, at 2679. The 100th rated player is 2595. The top Canadian FIDE-rated player is Alexandre Lesiege at 2582. (Note : there has now been a revision to the April list incorporating the Linares tournament, which results in some minor changes).

Scarborough Shamrock Active '01

This 22 player event was played March 17 at the McGregor Park Recreation Centre, and the tournament organizer was Scarborough Chess Club, and the TD was club

President, Bryan Lamb. It was won by former SCC member Andrei Moffat, who scored 5/6. This was the 5th tournament in the Scarborough Active Series 2000/01.

The next Active in the series, # 6, will be the Scarborough April Showers Active '01, to be held Saturday, April 28 (registration starts at 1:15 pm, with Round 1 at 2:00 pm).

SCC Y2K+1 (Sun.) Swiss '01

This 23 player event concluded on March 18. The Open winner was Bryan LAMB (4.5/6). Tied for second over-all at 3.5/6 were Jim PATERSON and Frank J. TEBBS Jr.. Class winners were : A – Ismail IBRAHIM and Jack TRIEFELDT (3/6); B – Joe BELLOMO and Gaja SRINIVASAN (3/6); C – Murt RAMZI (2.5/6); D & Under/Unr. – Ben HARRIGAN (2/6).

SCC Spring #1 (Thurs.) Round Robin '01

This tournament consisted of 5 groups of 6 players each, and ended April 5. The Group winners were : I – Bryan LAMB (4.5/5); II – Jim PATERSON (4/5); III – Andre ROLAVS (4.5/5); IV – Ted TERMEER (4/5); V – Shiyamalen THAVANDIRAN (4/5).

SCC Spring #2 (Sun.) Round Robin '01

On March 25, this new multi-week tournament saw 18 players come out to form 3 Groups of 6 players each (5 rounds). The class breakdown of the players is : Expert – 1; A – 5; B – 5; C – 4; D & Under/Unr. – 3. This tournament finishes April 29.

GTCL Cup 2001 Update

The two semi-final matches were played at the start of this month, and the City of Toronto is shut out of the GTA finals. On April 2, Polonia A (Mississauga) defeated Dutton CC A (3.5 : .5), and will go to the finals. Joining them will be Brampton CC, who defeated Scarborough CC A on April 3 (3.5 : .5 – LAMB [L]; HENTSCHEL [L]; PICANA [D]; IBRAHIM [L]). The date for the cup finals has yet to be set.

GTCL Club Team League Update

On March 20, Scarborough CC A defeated Macedonia CC (2.5 : 1.5 – LAMB [W]; CAI [L]; PICANA [D]; IBRAHIM [W]). This puts Scarborough CC A alone in 2nd place with 10 pts. Polonia A leads with 14 pts. Scarborough CC B is last with 5 pts.

NOTE :

A – Members/ non-members may contact Bob Armstrong, ed. , directly, or through SCC e-mail, to :

1. be added to the e-mail list; 2. submit content (fact, opinion, criticism - recommendations help!).

B – An item in any language may be submitted for publication, if accompanied by an English translation.

C – The opinions expressed here are those of the editor, and not necessarily those of the Scarborough CC.