

Kāpiti Chess Club

Club Captain & Secretary Report 2020

David Scott, February 2021

This report covers those activities done in both my roles as Secretary and Club Captain in 2020.

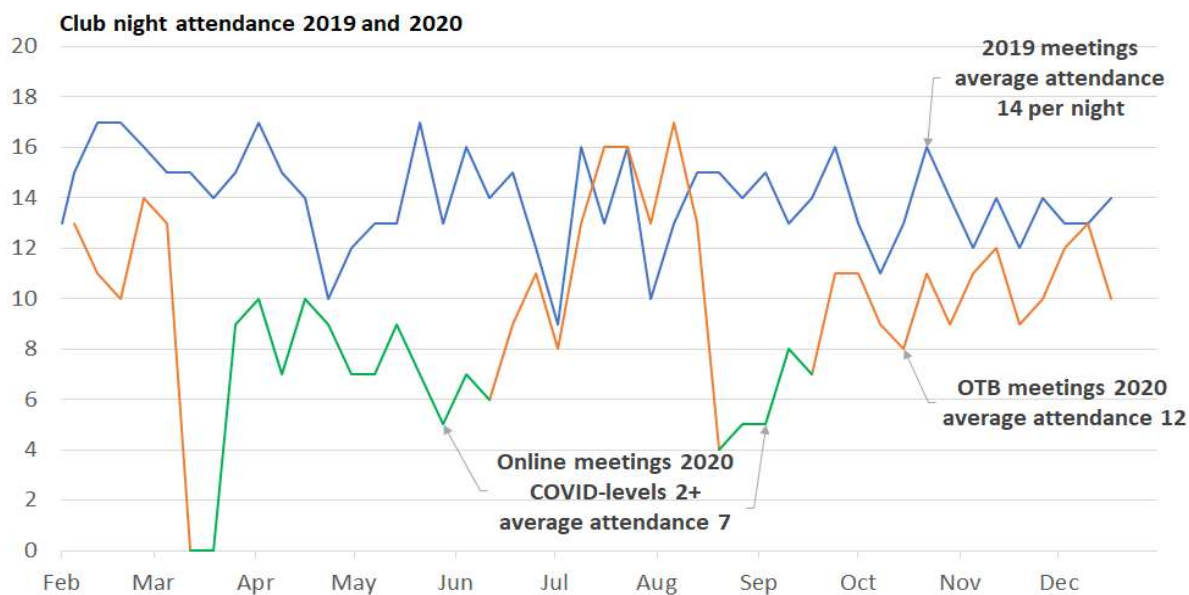
SUMMARY

- A year significantly impacted by COVID-19.
 - Over the Board physical meetings reduced by 40% (by 17 weeks).
 - But a new online Club successfully set up and run while OTB meetings suspended.
 - 2020 membership at 18, down 1 from 2019.
 - Active attendance also down, in particular amongst juniors. On average, 12 people per night for physical meetings, and 7 for online meetings, down from 14 in 2019.
 - But despite COVID impacts, all tournaments, apart from the Kingston Memorial, were successfully run.
 - Including the very well-attended and well-run Kāpiti Rapid, and Kāpiti Junior (Schools) tournaments.
 - Vega tournament software successfully adopted to replace the ageing Swiss Perfect software, with all results now published on our website using Vega-generated web pages.
 - A new improved system for running the Club's Grand Prix competition implemented.
 - 33 News posts published on our website and on Facebook in 2020, along with 22 annotated games. A record number of website visitors in 2020, nearly 18,000, up 39%.
 - Heaps of new content added to website. Old photo albums, press clippings, and NZ Chess Magazine articles on the Club scanned and added. A history of the Kāpiti Rapid tournament, including past winners, tournament details, reports and photos back to the first event in 1991. A new governance table on Club Officers back to 1987. And more.
 - A provisional calendar of events for 2021 proposes a shift towards more rapid time format games aimed at providing a wider appeal and improving attendance and membership.
 - Ideas for a reduced and more flexible fees structure - also aimed at boosting attendance and membership – while preserving Club economic viability.
 - A Junior Club idea aimed at promoting Chess for young players is discussed.
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MEETINGS

2020 was obviously an exceptional year, with 17 weeks where the Club was not able to meet physically due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Club did meet online during most of this period, via a new online Kāpiti Chess Club successfully set up and run on Lichess under the initiative of the Club President.

Nevertheless, COVID did have a noticeable impact, in particular for junior members. Altogether, the Club held 42 meetings in 2020, down 3 from 2019. 35% (or 15) of these meetings (from March to June, and in August and September) were online meetings. Average attendance for Over the Board nights was 12 - down from 14 in 2019 - and for online nights (while initially high) fell away to average around 7 per night.



MEMBERS

The Club had 18 paid members at the end of the year, one less than in 2019. We lost 6 members from 2019 and gained 5 new members. Of our 8 junior members from 2019, 5 renewed their membership in 2020, and 3 were active at the end of the year. We had no active junior members below secondary school age at the end of the year.

Membership numbers	Total	Adults	Juniors
Number of members in 2019	19	11	8
Number who renewed membership in 2020	13	8	5
Number who did not renew membership	6	3	3
New members in 2020	5	4	1
Number of members in 2020	18	12	6
Active (i.e. still attending)	12	9	3
Non-active (i.e. who stopped attending)	8	3	3

VISITORS

In addition to returning and new members, there were 15 visitors to the Club during 2020, similar to the number of visitors in 2019. Half were juniors, half adults. Half of visitors to our Club attended one night only. Some ideas for encouraging visitors to stay on and become members are discussed later.

	2020	2019
Total number of visitors	15	14
Who attended 1 night only	8	7
Who attended only 2 or 3 nights	4	6
Who attended more than 3 nights (and didn't join)	3	1

EVENTS

Despite not being able to meet physically for 40% of the year, the Club was able to complete all but one of its scheduled over the board events. Most Club tournaments were played with a reduced number of series and rounds, with the Kingston Memorial the only tournament abandoned completely. The proposed Fischer-Random night was also lost due to COVID-19. We also held our annual Kāpiti Rapid and ran the second year of our new Kāpiti Junior (Schools) championship. Both were well organised and run by the Club President, and very successful in terms of attendance, promotion and finances.

My impression as Club Captain was that shorter format minute games (10, 15 and 25 minutes) have a broader appeal than the longer standard time formats (75 or 90 minutes). In particular, for juniors, and those visitors looking for more socially-oriented chess. It suits those wanting to play more than one game per night. Blitz formats and Standard-time formats still have their place, but for the 2021 Calendar it is proposed that the Winter Cup be converted to a rapid time format (25m+5s). It is also proposed to extend the Freebird (10m +5s) competition with another series of 8 rounds over two nights, and to add a new Spring Cup tournament, 6 rounds of 15m+5s games played over 3 nights. Further ideas for events for juniors are discussed below.

VEGA

A significant development over the year was the introduction of Vega tournament software to replace Swiss Perfect. While Swiss Perfect has served the Club faithfully and effectively for over a decade, it is ageing and no longer being supported. Its pairing system is one that is not supported by FIDE, one of the requirements if we were wanting to run a FIDE-rated tournament in the future. One nice feature of Vega is its ability to produce web-ready HTML pages for direct publishing to websites. Its grade groupings feature is also something used to good effect in for both the Kāpiti Rapid and Junior Schools tournaments. All Club tournament results for 2020 – including players, pairings, standings and cross-tables – are now published on our website using Vega-generated web pages.

GRAND PRIX

The Glenys Mills Memorial Trophy is the Club's Grand Prix event that recognises consistently best performance and participation over the whole year. A new method for determining this was introduced this year, to replace the previous method generated from the Swiss Perfect system. The system was trialled in parallel with Swiss Perfect system for 2018, 2019 and 2020 years. While the new system requires more manual excel maintenance than the old system, its results were found to be conclusively better and fairer. It is recommended to continue with this new method going forward.

RATINGS

Despite a significant reduction in rateable games played due to COVID-19, around 275 games (133 standard time format and 142 rapid time format) were submitted to the NZCF for rating during 2020. The average NZCF ratings of rated Club members were:

	Standard	Rapid
At start of year	1448	1506
At end of year	1537	1528

WEBSITE

Posts

- 33 website News posts in 2020 (45 in 2019, 29 in 2018, 39 in 2017).
- 22 games added in 2020 (the most for any single year, bringing the total games on website to around 130).

Facebook

- All website news posts also automatically posted on Facebook.
- Each Facebook post reaching on average reached between 35 and 40 people at the end of the year, up from between 20 and 25 people at start of year. Number of followers also increased noticeably in 2020 up to 188.

Developments to the website in 2020 included:

- All results - players, pairings, standings and cross-tables for all tournaments played in 2020 now published using Vega-generated web pages.
- Top menu redesigned and streamlined. Old results and calendar pages combined into a revamped Events and Results page.
- New page for Kāpiti Rapid tournament including winners, tournament details, reports and photos back to the first one in 1991.
- Expanded historical content, a number of old photo albums scanned and added to site, Old press clippings and NZ Chess Magazine articles related to the Club also added to site. A new table on Club Officers back to 1987 added.

Website stats

- There were nearly 18,000 visitors (and over 43,000 hits) to the website in 2020, up 39% from 2019. No doubt in part due to the effects of COVID-19.

Year	Website hits	Unique visitors	Annual growth in hits	Annual growth in visitors
2020	43,186	17,869	16%	39%
2019	37,127	12,880	17%	5%
2018	31,654	12,211	20%	0%
2017	26,270	12,236	45%	161%
2016	18,166	4,684	-	-

Most popular website pages

1	Home Page (News)
2	Games
3	Photos
4	Links
5	Events and Results
6	How to use top game viewer*
7	Contacts
8	Sitemap
9	About the Club
10	Calendar

Top 10 visitor countries

China	30%
Hong Kong	26%
US	9%
New Zealand	8%
Ukraine	6%
France	5%
Germany	3%
Russia	3%
Canada	2%
Other countries	8%

* Interestingly – this page has is not particularly accessible directly, and no longer relevant for viewing posted games, yet still attracts lots of hits.

FEES

As discussed last year, we have one of the highest annual fees in the country. This is principally due to the fixed costs of our hall rental which need to be supported by a small membership base. Current fee settings and membership levels ensure the Club does not run at a deficit. However, an analysis of current Club costs and membership levels suggests that a smaller adult fee could still probably be supported without reducing our operating surplus to a deficit. As one of the tools available to us to grow membership, I would support a reduction of between \$20 and \$30 for adult subs. This could be offset by a small increase in junior fees.

For example: An adult fee of \$140 or \$150 (instead of \$170), coupled with a junior and unwaged fee of \$100, should still be sufficient to maintain a reduced but still workable operating surplus on current membership numbers. An increase of just 2 or 3 extra members would be sufficient to offset the otherwise lost fee income.

Another idea could be a *pay as you go* fee option. This option would appeal to those who aren't sure if they want to continue after 2 or 3 visits, so stop attending before having to commit the full annual fee. Club membership is secured for \$10, with \$10 paid per week attended. Casual fees as they exist currently, would be removed. The average number of nights attended per member in 2019 was over 30, and even in 2020 it was around 20. So, for most members paying an annual sub would still be more economical. But for some prospective members, pay as you go would suit better.

The hoped-for benefits of this are increased attendance and membership. But it would also significantly simplify submission of Club results for rating. Just an initial \$10 secures membership to the Club, along with registration with the NZCF and eligibility for rating. Currently every game involving casual visitors not becoming members needs to be removed for rating purposes from tournament results. This can be a slightly fiddly process technically, and visitors' membership intentions are not always clear. The big downside of this option, of course, is the significantly increased money handling. A pay as you go method, I understand, was something that has operated at the Club in the past but was found to be too unwieldy to manage. But if this is something that boosts attendance and membership, then it may be worth the costs and hassle of increased handling. The idea could be trialled for a year and abandoned if it doesn't work.

JUNIOR CLUB

Two years ago, we introduced a junior training session to start 45 minutes before the main event. While initially popular, COVID-19 this year has had a disproportionate impact on juniors, and interest has fallen away. For young juniors playing main Club events, there is not much appeal to be beaten quickly by a higher-rated adult in a single long format game per night – in an environment where they are discouraged from making too much noise. A 7:45pm start for some young juniors also means that the time available before they have to go is often short, and many often miss out on points from the later rounds of multi-round per night events.

A different model has been suggested – to create a Junior Club - whereby, the previous junior session is extended to run as a separate Junior Club. It would start earlier (say 6 pm) to cater for younger ages. It would still include a lesson section, but there would be also be a decent amount of time for fun, faster format games and events amongst kids of a similar age. It could include more use of variants. Juniors who wanted to, are free to stay on and play in the main Club night events starting at 7:45pm.