**INFORMATION FOR AND ADVICE TO TEAM CAPTAINS**

**IN THE MANCHESTER CHESS LEAGUE**

**These notes have been prepared to be of particular help to captains newly in their role, yet to be useful also to long-serving captains in preventing or dealing with some of the awkward situations that sometimes arise.**

**Before the match**

Ensure that all the players who might be needed to play and who are eligible to play for your team are provided with a list of all known fixtures.

Ensure that you have contact details (email addresses, home and mobile phone numbers) for all the likely players.

Select your team from board 1 downwards. Try to give at least a week’s notice (two weeks would be better). Some captains find it useful to arrange for at least one reserve to be on standby – most players find this acceptable if it is explained to them.

It is sometimes possible to make all the arrangements by email but some players do not check their email regularly; if in any doubt, it is better – and often much quicker – to use the telephone.

Know your players – some will be more reliable or forgetful than others, so issuing a reminder closer to the match day can be advisable.

If you know in advance that your team will have to default on one or more boards, you should try to inform the opposing captain with as much notice as possible.

***For an away match***

* make the necessary transport arrangements. (Over the course of the season transport should be shared out as fairly as possible, but individual circumstances will need to be taken into account);
* beforehand you should make sure that anyone travelling separately knows where the venue is and how to get there; give that person your mobile number in case of emergency;
* The MCF Club Directory gives postcodes, useful for any driver using a sat nav.;
* Take your mobile and the telephone number of the venue (or the mobile number of the opposing captain), in case you are delayed during your journey;
* It is the good practice of a number of captains when going away to a fixture to ring their opposite numbers a few days before to confirm the time and place of the match. This is recommended, particularly when the fixture is a cup match or has been re-arranged.
* Find out what rate of play the home club uses and inform your players accordingly (see under Clocks below).

***For a home match*:**

* Ensure that the venue is available on the night in question and make any necessary arrangements for opening and locking up.
* The playing conditionsshould be the best that you can manage, well lit, ventilated, clean, quiet and comfortable. Tables and chairs should be spaced to allow easy access. It is taken for granted that there is no smoking in the building.
* Set up the equipment etc, *before* the official starting time (19.30 p.m.)..
* There should be sufficient sets, boards, clocks of appropriate design, score sheets and pens or pencils. Ensure that spare clocks are available in case any used should prove faulty.
* You are not obliged to provide refreshments, but this is always appreciated, and at least tap water and glasses or cups should be available.

**Clocks**

As home captain you will need to check the clocks and set them.

All boards in a match must be played using the same time limit. Traditionally MCF matches have been played using a quickplay finishes which must be at least an additional 15 minutes per player. Typically, such matches are played at 30 moves in 75 minutes each, then a 20 minutes quick-play finish.

**From the start of the 2019-20 season, incremental time limits are the default.**

In this case, matches typically would be played under a time control of all moves in 1 hour 20 minutes with a 15 second increment per move starting at move 1 (G80’ + 15”).

By agreement between the captains the match may be played at a faster rate of play than the norm for MCF matches, but the total playing session must be at least 2 hours (required for standard-play grading).

**Arranging your team’s board order**

Write down the names of the players on your team, in board order (see the example template at the end of this document). You have some flexibility in this, enabling you to take into account factors such as team tactics and players’ form. Note that MCF Rule 4b.1 states:

*A team’s players do not have to play in strict grading order, but where there is a difference of more than 20 ECF points between two players, the lower-graded player must play on a lower board than the higher-graded player, except when coming in as a reserve after clocks have been started; in which case an explanatory note shall be included when reporting the result. The latest ECF Grading list available at the start of the season shall be used throughout the season.*

**Talking to the opposing captain**

Before the starting time the captains should each - separately - write down the names of the players, in descending board order. (If a team captain is not present, any team members present should nominate an acting captain). Then the captains should:

a) exchange team lists and pair the players accordingly; when a team knows it is going to default, it must do so from the bottom board upward;

b) in the light of MCF Rule 4b.1 (see above) it will be useful also to write down the grades of the players, which can be found online at <http://www.manchesterchess.org.uk>. It is advisable for any query about the opposing team’s board order to be settled as quickly as possible *before* the start of the match (although as the rules stand this does not preclude the matter being referred for dispute settlement later);  
c) toss for colour, with the winner having the choice of taking White on either the odd- or even- numbered boards;

d) clarify the time control to be used and announce this to the players.

**At the official starting time:**  
a) MCF matches start at 19:30, unless an earlier time was agreed in advance;

b) If a captain is not present at the official or agreed starting time, the opposing captain has the choice of colours (i.e. white or black on the odd- or even- numbered boards);

c) If neither captain is present at the official or agreed starting time, the first one to appear has this choice;  
d) The captain(s) present shall start the clocks. Any delay in starting the match should be subtracted from the clocks of the team responsible for the delay;

e) *An away team arriving late should not expect the home team to have delayed starting the clocks.* Delay in starting the clocks is not recommended, as it tends to lead to a later finishing time, which will be inconvenient for many players, such as juniors and their parents or drivers, or adults who need to get up early for work. This should be regarded as an issue of practicality, rather than (misplaced) sportsmanship;

f) in the case of a genuine emergency, such as the away team being held up for a considerable length of time in traffic, it would be appropriate to ring the opposing team captain. If the delay in the away team arriving is likely to be considerable, and is due to *force majeure*, the best course might be to abandon the match and ask the Fixtures Secretary to rearrange it.

**Reserves and defaults**

A player who does not arrive within one hour of the official starting time defaults the game. A reserve may be substituted for an absent player up to one hour after the official starting time, but the clock cannot be reset.

**Postponements**

1) The Manchester League fixtures calendar is always very crowded and postponements and re-arrangements need to be kept to an absolute minimum, since the knock-on effects can be very disruptive. The league rules therefore state:

*A club may request the postponement of a fixture by giving at least ten days’ notice to the Fixtures Secretary and providing justification. If the Fixtures Secretary allows the postponement, the Fixtures Secretary shall arrange the date and venue of the match, in consultation with the two clubs involved. (Note that consultation does not necessarily mean agreement.) The new date shall be binding on both clubs and no further postponement of the same fixture shall be permitted. No fixture shall be postponed at less than ten days’ notice except in an emergency.*

By "emergency" is meant an "act of God", such as the club room suddenly becoming unavailable, or severe weather (or an official warning of such) making travel hazardous, etc.

The MCF Fixtures Memorandum also advises:

*Clubs are asked to do their best to fulfil all their fixtures.  Not being able to field one's best team is not a valid reason for postponing or defaulting a match.  When a team is unable to fulfil a fixture, or is unable to field a full team, it is courteous to inform and apologise to the opposing club with as much notice as possible.*

**Notification of results**

How to report Manchester Chess League and Cup results:

1. Go to [http://www.manchesterchess.org.uk](http://www.manchesterchess.org.uk/)

2. When on the new page first go to the box in the bottom right of the webpage and click Login.

3. In the next window enter your email address and password. (most browsers will store these for you). Make sure you log in with the same email address that you have given to the MCF – if in doubt check in the official MCF Club Directory.

4. Your password should have been issued to you by the webmaster, John Upham.

5. When successfully logged in, you might need to choose whether you wish to report a league match or cup match..

6. Click on “Continue” OR “My admin panel” on the right of the screen.

7. To enter a match result, select “Report ………… match card”

8. Select the fixture.

9. Complete the form by selecting players, results and colour of board 1.

10. Check your selections and when happy submit the match to the results system.

**The FIDE Laws of Chess and the MCF Rules**

Games must be played in accordance with the FIDE Laws of Chess, unless modified by the MCF League rules.

In brief, the FIDE rules that apply in the match situation to the captain and his players say that:

* a player may not speak about his game while it is in progress;
* a captain is entitled to advise a player on his team whether to make or accept an offer of a draw or to resign a game; the captain must confine himself only to brief information, based solely on the match situation. For example, if asked by a player on his team whether he should accept an offer of a draw, the captain should answer “yes”, “no”, or delegate the decision to the player himself. The captain may show the player the match card, indicating the score so far in the match, but shall give no information or opinion concerning the position on the chess board and/or the clock times, nor consult any other person and/or electronic device as to the state of the game;
* a player must have the final say over the conduct of his own game. Although the advice of the captain should weigh heavily with the player, the player is not compelled to accept that advice. Likewise, the captain cannot act on behalf of a player and his game without the knowledge and consent of the player.

**The FIDE Laws of Chess are revised from time to time.**

**See http://rules.fide.com/laws-of-chess.html**

**Mobile phones**

In MCF matches mobile phones are allowed in the playing area. **However, they must be switched off for the duration of play**.

\*\*\* The captains should remind players of this requirement

immediately before the commencement of play. \*\*\*

If a player's phone rings audibly during his game then he automatically forfeits the game. If the opponent cannot win the game by any series of legal moves, it will be declared drawn. In the hopefully rare case of a genuine need to use a mobile phone occurring while a match is still in progress, the two team captains should be jointly consulted and their prior agreement obtained. Otherwise, in the event of a dispute arising, the MCF is likely to take the view that FIDE Rule 12.8 has been breached: *“Unless authorised by the arbiter, it is forbidden for anybody to use a mobile phone or any kind of communication device in the playing venue or any contiguous area designated by the arbiter.”*

**Disputes**

All disputes in MCF matches should be reported to the secretary of the Disputes Committee and will then be referred to this committee for an independent decision. A fee of £5.00 shall accompany each dispute. The fee will be returned to the successful claimant. (For the full disputes procedure, consult the MCF Rules, available at

https://www.manchesterchess.com/league-and-match-rules)

**Finishing**

Clubs’ paying sessions are often subject to, and limited by, the regulations in force in their venue; if so, a club should state the time that home matches need to finish in the club directory. As noted earlier, by agreement between the captains a match may be played at a faster rate of play than the norm for MCF matches, but the total playing session must be at least 2 hours (required for standard-play grading).

**­Team captains are joint arbiters**

**-** and have all the duties and responsibilities of arbiters under the Laws, unless those duties and responsibilities clash with their role as team captain. For example, they must call flag falls but they cannot, except by agreement, declare a position drawn in a quick-play finish.

However, as a playing captain, rather than continually hopping up and down to see what is happening on the other boards, the best thing you can do for your team will usually be to focus on your own game!

**Looking after inexperienced match players and juniors**

If you know you have in your team players who are new to competitive chess, they might need advice and help. Some of the things about which you might have to remind them are:

A game of chess should be played in a sporting manner and, to avoid unnecessary incidents, players should become conversant with the FIDE Laws of Chess. The rules most commonly violated are:

**Touch and move**

If a player touches a piece with the intention of moving it he *must* move it, if he can do so legally. When he takes his hand off the piece he is committed to the move and cannot retract it if the move is legal, even though he may not yet have stopped his clock.

A player who studies the position before removing his hand from the piece is considered by most people to have "poor chess manners", but this is not strictly illegal.

**Adjusting the pieces**

FIDE Article 4.2.1 states:

*Only the player having the move may adjust one or more pieces on their squares,*

*provided that he first expresses his intention (for example by saying “j’adoube” or “I adjust”)*

**Castling**

When castling, the king must be moved first. This is because a movement of the king two spaces to one side is unambiguous and commits the player to completing the full castling move. If the rook is touched first the opponent may insist that a simple rook move be made under the "touch and move" rule.

**Clocks**

A player must remember to stop the clock only *after* making a move and never to stop it *before* making a move, no matter how short of time. The clock must be operated with the hand which moves the chess piece. Article 6.2.c of the Laws states: *The players must handle the chess clock properly. It is forbidden to press it forcibly, to pick it up, to press the clock before moving or to knock it over*.

**Recording moves.** Each player is required to record his own moves and those of his opponent.

*Note that it is forbidden to write down a move in advance of playing it.*

Under the Laws of Chess a player does not need to keep score once they have less than 5 minutes left to reach a time control if:

1. the game is played without increment;
2. the game is played with an increment per move of less than 30 seconds.

Nevertheless, the MCF recommends that you keep recording at all times. If you do not keep score you cannot claim a draw under the 50-move rule, or by repetition etc and the game may last an excessive time.

**Offering a draw.**

FIDE Law 9.1.b. states:

*1) A player wishing to offer a draw shall do so after having made a move on the chessboard and before pressing his clock. An offer at any other time during play is still valid but Article 11.5 must be considered. No conditions can be attached to the offer. (...)*

*2) The offer of a draw shall be noted by each player on his scoresheet with the symbol (=).*

Note that the offer cannot be withdrawn and remains valid until the opponent accepts it or rejects it, whether verbally or by moving (although it is considered more sporting to reply verbally, politely).

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| 11.5 | *It is forbidden to distract or annoy the opponent in any manner whatsoever. This includes unreasonable claims, unreasonable offers of a draw or the introduction of a source of noise into the playing area*. |

To comply with this Law, as a rule of thumb, if a draw offer has been declined, the player should not make a second offer until and unless the position on the board (or on the clocks) has changed significantly.

It is worth reminding your players that, while playing individual games, they are also playing for a team and should therefore consult their captain regarding the match situation before agreeing to any result which might affect the outcome of the match.

**Draw by repetition.**

A claim of a draw by repetition is based on *the same position* occurring 3 times, with the same player to move on each occurrence of the position. To make such a claim the player should inform his opponent of his claim and then stop both clocks.

The latest FIDE rules state: *9.2 The game is drawn, upon a correct claim by a player having the move, when the same position for at least the third time (not necessarily by a repetition of moves):*

*- is about to appear, if he first writes his move, which cannot be changed, on his score sheet and declares to the arbiter his intention to make this move, or*

*- has just appeared, and the player claiming the draw has the move.*

*Positions are considered the same if and only if the same player has the move, pieces of the same kind and colour occupy the same squares and the possible moves of all the pieces of both players are the same.*

Note that a) that the sequence of moves causing a repetition in position is of no significance. Costly surprises can occur if repeating moves are counted instead of repeating positions, and

b) the intended move must be written down but not made on the board – that invalidates the claim.

The same procedure also applies to a draw claim based on Rule 9.3.2: *the last 50 moves by each player have been completed without the movement of any pawn and without any capture*

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If you need to know more, e. g. MCF Rules, Club Directory etc. visit [**http://www.manchesterchess.co.uk/**](http://www.manchesterchess.co.uk/)

For the current official FIDE Laws of Chess, *visit* [***http://rules.fide.com/laws-of-chess.html***](http://rules.fide.com/laws-of-chess.html)

For a version of the FIDE Laws of Chess with useful comments and interpretations by the Chief Arbiters’ Association, see

<https://www.dorsetchess.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Laws2018.pdf>

*See next page for sample match template.*

Original document by Bert Thomas.

Revisions September 2013, Sept 2014, Nov 2015, Sept 2016 and Sept 2018 by Phil Adams, October 2019 by Reg Clucas, Mick Norris, Matthew Pollard and Phil Adams.

**Division Date**

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