Report on European Club 2024

27th October 2024

This year's event took place in Vrnjacka Banja, Serbia. The format was a seven round team swiss event. Teams were allowed six players and a squad of eight. To maximise norm opportunities we settled for a squad of six meaning all players would play seven games and have a chance of a seven round norm.

The Wood Green team comprised IMs Svyatoslav Bazakutsa, Matthew Wadsworth & Jonah Willow, FMs Borna Derakhshani & David Haydon as well as WFM Meri Grigoryan.

There was outstanding communication prior to the event. In particular, the organisers were extremely helpful with Borna's visa application and liaising with the Serbian embassy to speed up the process. An added bonus was the apparent lack of food poisoning which impacted many teams in last year's event held in Albania.

In round Wood Green had a comfortable 6-0 victory.

In round 2 we were on the live boards facing a team of six GMs. The team managed three draws Svyatoslav drew on top board, Borna had the better of a draw on board 4 and David held on board 5.

In round 3 Wood Green again scored highly with wins on boards 2-6.

In round 4 Wood Green faced another strong Israel club. This one had 2 GMs and 4 IMs and were able to complete a textbook win with white, draw with black performance. Svyatoslav had an exciting draw on board 1 where a piece sacrifice from a position of strength led to a perpetual check Jonah looked to have a winning attack but had to settle for a perpetual. David drew against a higher rated opponent in a position where he had an extra pawn but black had some activity to compensate. The black games were very tough and we weren't able to score anything.

In round 5 Wood Green again beat lower rated opposition. There were wins for Svyatoslav, Jonah & Borna and draws for Matthew & Meri. Meri's was frustrating for her as she was winning in the final position.

In round 6 Wood Green suffered groundhog day with another defeat to a club from Israel. This match was, at least, closer as it ended 2.5-3.5 and both Jonah & David won, the latter against a higher rated IM. Matthew drew but it wasn't enough to save the match.

In round seven Wood Green completed their yo-yo tournament and, surprisingly to me, finished as the highest scoring English team after a 4-2 win. Svyatoslav, Jonah & Borna all won whilst David & Meri drew.

Svyatoslav completed his third win with black on top board as he beat GM Johann Hjartarson. Going into the tournament I know that Svy was desperate to play on board 1 in the hope that he, like Ravi last year, might get to play Magnus Carlsen. Whilst he

did play three GMs he will be a little disappointed that none were rated above 2527. He can be happy with his result though.

By his own very high standards Matthew didn't have his best result but he also faced his three toughest opponents with black and his will to win which is often a real strength may have slightly impacted on his final result.

Jonah won his last three games to finish with 5.5/7 and a rating performance of 2501 to round off a very good month after his first GM norm in Fagernes.

Borna finished with 4.5/7 which was a pleasing result after an anxious wait to get a visa before the tournament.

David also had a good tournament, especially with the added responsibility of captaining the team with me unable to travel due to family health issues.

But for a mental block in round 5 Meri would have finished on 50% and the option to claim the CM title. She gained rating though and can also be satisfied with her result, especially facing three strong titled players with black.

No report is complete without thanking all those who helped make participation possible. It is no exaggeration to say that without the support of the organisations listed below that I wouldn't have been able to send a team. Along with other organisers I am incredibly grateful for any contribution that these and similar organisations are able to provide.

The Chess Trust was established in 2015 helped by a significant bequest from Richard Haddrell. It has the support of the English Chess Federation and aims to provide support to amateur chess in England both in terms of playing and teaching. They again gave generously to help the Wood Green open team.

The International Director Malcolm Pein's paid for the English team's entry fees. DCMS funding for 2024-25 also enabled financial help for Matthew, Jonah & Borna.

The English Chess Federation Women's Director, Aga Milewska, has continued her fine work in her third year as director. This time, she provided funds to help Meri participate in the tournament.

Wood Green results:
https://chess-results.com/tnr989841.aspx?lan=1&art=20&turdet=YES&snr=32