Women & Girls' Classical Congress 2026



The club's inaugural FIDE/ECF Classical Congress event brought together 26 female players, alongside supporters, spanning diverse ages, backgrounds, and playing strengths to compete in a professional atmosphere.
Proudly supported by The Chess Trust and Chess.com.

Grounded in Research: Bridging the Gender Gap

The momentum behind this tournament comes from our mission to bridge the gender gap in competitive chess. Recent analysis by LWCC member Anna (Women in Chess Analysis) shows that the gender performance gap is statistical, not biological — meaning parity at the top simply requires attracting and retaining more female players.

Building on this evidence, and on the club's 2025 ECF Award for Contribution to Women's Chess, the Congress was designed to support developing players and counter the drop-off that often occurs as girls progress through the chess pathway.

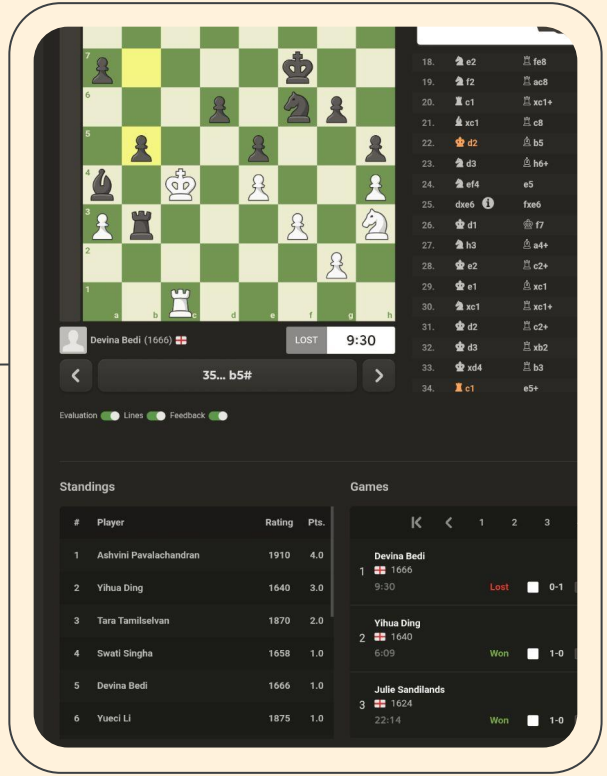
A data Story: https://anp-exe.github.io/women-in-chess-analysis/



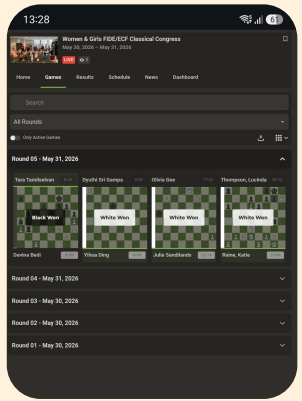
Broadcast Initiative

To directly confront the player retention challenge, we launched the London Women's Broadcast Initiative.

Backed by a grant from The Chess Trust, the club deployed its own brand-new DGT e-boards, official FIDE pieces, and championship clocks. By broadcasting top games live on major global platforms like Chess.com, we allowed friends, family, and the wider chess community to follow the action in real time from home, elevating a local grassroots event into a broader digital showcase.







“See it to be it!”

London Women's Broadcast Initiative

Our professional DGT e-board and live broadcasting setup transformed the playing hall into a premium stage to compete.

By streaming the top boards, we maximised visibility and showcased relatable role models so aspiring players could "see it to be it."

Critically, this digital transmission also guaranteed absolute fair-play integrity, proving that grassroots women's events can meet top-tier professional standards.

Deep Community Roots

The Congress found its perfect home at Pancras Square Library.

This venue forms the heartbeat of our weekly free Sunday chess socials. Hosting the event at our home base successfully bridged casual community and rated competition.

Crucially, it demystified the tournament world for our regular social crowd— prompting casual players to drop by, watch the action, and see firsthand what competitive chess is like.



Collaborative Support

Organisers extend their warmest thanks to:

Adam at Hammersmith Chess Club, who generously provided his time to guide us through the set up and operation of the new equipment.

Judit Sztaray and the Chess.com team, who worked behind the scenes to sync the live stream.

The British Armed Forces Chess Association, kindly lent additional equipment.

We were also delighted to welcome JC, Non-Executive Director ECF, whose visit meant a great deal.

A Lasting Legacy for Women's’ Chess

The equipment funded through this grant will power an expanded calendar of future tournaments, ensuring long-term value, continued opportunities, and a lasting pathway for women and girls to thrive in competitive chess.

A Wonderful Weekend of Chess



We welcomed 26 female participants across three competitive sections: Open (8), Major U1700 (6), and Minor U1500 (12).

The event attracted a broad mix of players, from young juniors to women in their forties, demonstrating the strength of our multi-generational engagement.

For several players, this was their first ever tournament. Newcomer Poppy, who only began learning chess seven months ago, delivered an outstanding performance and earned a prize — a wonderful example of how our events support and inspire new female talent.

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Different clubs were represented.

Players joined us from Hammersmith, Ealing, Richmond Juniors, Barnet Knights, Chelmsford Juniors, Coulsdon, Kent Juniors, Hatch End, Dame Alice Owens/SPTW, Leam Lane, Desert Penguins, as well our own London Women.

55%

Of entrants were juniors

1910

Highest FIDE rating

Median rating: around the mid-1400s

1682

Highest rating of a junior player.

Strong junior performance: several juniors rated 1500–1700+

Wide rating spread: unrated beginners → 1900-strength competitors



Why This Matters

Gathering so many women and girls together is still a rare and meaningful moment in UK chess. Events like this give female players a space where they feel represented, supported, and part of a genuine community. Juniors meet role models, adults connect across clubs, and everyone benefits from being in an environment built for them. It's this sense of belonging that keeps women and girls engaged and strengthens the wider chess community.



Player Feedback

"I would really like to [thank] Zoya for bringing in all women chess players together and encouraging young girls in chess.
This is a great platform for all women interested in chess."
— **Soumya G.V. (Minor Section)**



"Fantastic event. Everyone had a great time."
— **Leila (Minor Section)**

100%

of respondents expressed a desire to join future LWCC Women's events.

71%

of players voted Classical as the format they would be most excited to see at future tournaments.

100%

of surveyed players stated that they felt completely safe, welcomed, and supported throughout the entire event.

"Lovely friendly atmosphere. Definitely a great introduction to the world of chess tournaments."
— **Katie Raine (Minor Section)**





Congratulations to all participants. The standard of play, sportsmanship and enthusiasm throughout the weekend was fantastic.

A special congratulations to all prize winners, who all played excellent games and should be very proud of their achievements.

Section	Place	Winner
Open Section	1st Place	Ashvini Pavalachandran
	2nd Place	Tara Tamilselvan
Major Section	1st Place	Tiara Khanna
	2nd Place	Lara De Boer
Minor Section	1st Place	Katie Raine
	2nd Place	Poppy Schneider

Further Information

londonwomenchess.org.uk

Every event helps us create more opportunities for women and girls to enjoy, learn and thrive through chess.

We look forward to expanding our calendar of women's classical events and continuing to build a welcoming, competitive pathway for female players.



Questions?
Please reach out to:
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Thank you!