



SINGAPORE CHESS FEDERATION

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Fédération Internationale des Échecs (FIDE)

Singapore National Olympic Council (SNOC)

Sport Singapore (Sport SG)

CEO's 2024 Welcome Letter

Dear Singapore Chess Community,

A very happy new year to all of you! This year shall be the SCF's Diamond Jubilee and as we welcome 2024, I thought it would be appropriate for us to share our reflections and what we can expect in the months to come. I genuinely believe that the SCF team has put in our best efforts to support the local chess community. It is also true that we have made some mistakes along the way and I am appreciative of the patience that our stakeholders have given us. In this (warning, long!) letter, I hope to share some highlights of the last year, the thought processes behind some of our decisions and also provide clarity over our plans and challenges in the new year.

Training and Development:

In April 2023, we launched the NTP U10 and U14 squads, where we welcome our most promising and committed young talents to train regularly at the Federation. Training sessions were held 3 times a week, with coaching sessions on a weekday and on a Sunday, and training games on Saturday afternoons. Trainees were also welcome to visit the SCF on other dates for extra coaching.

The idea of setting training squads for young players is not just to enhance their chess skills, but also to guide them in terms of other useful life skills, such as the ability to train independently, time management, working as a team, and even presentation skills. Most importantly, we focused a lot on the importance of responsibility - that as a young athlete, he/she is expected to find the right balance between studies, chess and family time. Chess parents can be assured that our coaching team and I have stated and will continue to reiterate that our young talents are required to maintain their high standards in their studies while training with us.



The National Training Program



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I am pleased to have Grandmaster Andrey Kvon officially joining us in May 2023. I am also delighted that Woman Grandmaster Aleksandra Obolentseva will be working with us on a full-time basis this year. Aleksandra brings with her a wealth of playing experience at the youth level, winning the World Youth Under-10 Championships and finishing on the podium on other uncountable occasions. With them coming on board, we will be able to expand our NTP infrastructure, which I hope to share via a series of webinars before the end of this month. **Please watch out as we announce the dates and times for these webinars!**



GM Andrey Kvon



WGM Aleksandra Obolentseva

For our NJS squads (the HP, HPI and NJDS squads), one of our key issues is the wide disparity of playing strength of the players within each squad. We recognise that this is mainly due to the grouping of players from different age group categories and we hope to address this issue with a couple of, what I believe would be welcome changes, to the qualification criteria for each squad. **Similarly, we will also share these changes via a webinar before the end of this month. Please keep a look out and register early!**

Mass Scholastic Events:

In March 2023, we organised a record-breaking NSI in partnership with Overseas Family School, with just over 1400 participants. At the start of the event, there were organisational issues most specifically concerning crowd management that we certainly could have planned better for. There was also a shortage of arbiters, which led to considerable stress at the backend while the team tried to publish results and pairings on time. In the end, we were not able to give away the zone prizes on the final day which led to many disappointed faces.

We have since instituted an arbiters commission with the main purpose of growing a pool of young and hungry local arbiters. I am grateful to the efforts of our Hon Gen Sec Mr. Lau Yan Han for initiating this project on a voluntary basis. At the same time, this is a long-term process and we do not expect significant growth in the pool this quickly in 2024. What we do intend to do is to begin recruitment sooner and with better experience, allocate our resources more efficiently as compared to last year.



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This year, the NSI shall be held on the 16th and 17th of March, at Senja-Cashew Community Centre. **We will publish the regulations within the next 2 weeks but you can mark your dates and start your preparation now.** We commit, in the meantime, to plan better and be able to give away all the prizes on the final day of the tournament and also address the issues we faced last year and hopefully, give everyone an even better experience.



NSI 2023

In September 2023, we partnered with Rulang Primary School to hold the NST and I congratulate Northland Primary School and Raffles Institution for being the best Primary School and Secondary School respectively. I find it impossible not to specially mention Mr. Chang Cheng Hwee, who for so many years, has painstakingly built and sustained an incredible chess culture at Northland Primary. **We are in preliminary talks to tie up the schedules and venue as early as we can, ideally before the end of Q1. You can expect this event to take place during the September holidays.**



NST 2023

In December 2023, we completed the NAG with a turnout of around 550 players including 50 foreign participants. This tournament included a few new perks, such as qualification for the National Championships finals, NM norms awarded to the U20 winners and also partnerships with chess platforms Chesskid and Chessmood. We are grateful to Tampines West CSN and Our Tampines Hub and **I am glad that we are already in talks to continue our partnership and finalise the dates for this year's event. Once again, we hope to announce this before the end of Q1.**



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One common question we received pertains to the decision to combine girls and boys in the same category. While we acknowledge the concerns expressed by some of our chess parents, the coaching team and I believe that the increased exposure to other players, as opposed to only playing among the same opposition each year, will in the long run build healthy competition and playing strength. As such, we intend to keep this format in 2024 across all scholastic tournaments as well as the Singapore National Championships.



NAG 2023

SGChessFestival:

Jurong Spring Community Club was our generous host for the week-long festival held in June 2023. The initial hope was to have the main Open event a tournament that is eligible for norm purposes but it soon transpired that even with accelerated pairings, the uneven playing field made it mathematically impossible to try and make a norm performance.

This year's SGChessFestival shall be held concurrently with the NAG, very likely during the late November and early December period. One key change we shall implement is to mandate a rating floor for the Masters Event, and to add a challengers group for players below that rating floor. More details to be announced soon!

In addition, we will be entering into discussions with Jurong Spring Community Club to organise its first **Jurong Spring Chess Festival** during the June school holidays. This may include a Classical tournament (with no rating floor) as its main event, a team tournament, a rapid and a blitz tournament. Obviously, a lot of stars have to be aligned to make this happen but I am optimistic that we will soon be able to add another signature event to the Singapore Chess Calendar.



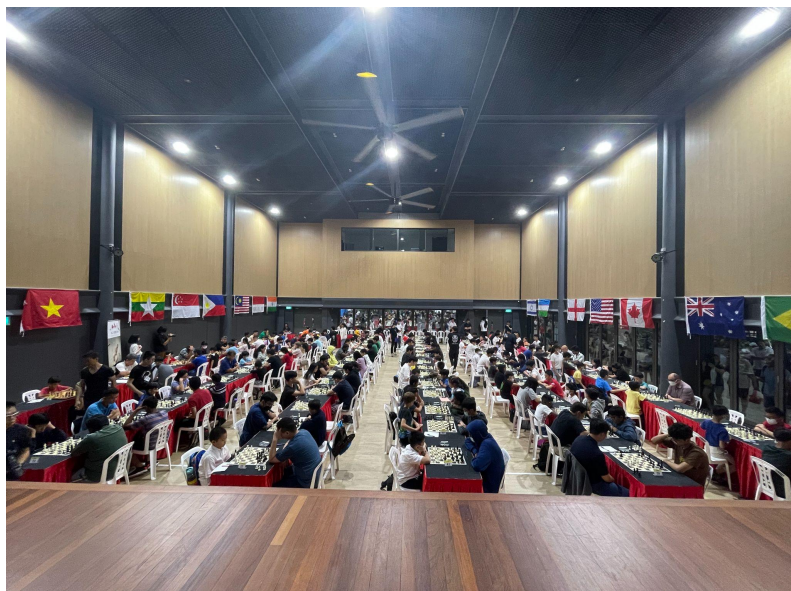
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SGChessFestival 2023

Chess for the Community:

ParaChess

In February 2023, we began to push for more Persons with Disabilities to join our weekly, fully-funded training session at the SCF. Coach Enrique Paciencia and Thomas Luther are the chief trainers for this initiative. All SCF tournaments have special provisions for PWDs, such as free entry fees and special assistance to players who have difficulties in completing their moves. **Studies have shown that Chess can bring lots of benefits to PWDs and we hope to continue this effort and increase our outreach to more institutions.**



Para Chess Training



Playing in SGChessFestival, led by coach GM Thomas Luther

ChessForFreedom

In November 2023, we completed our 8-week-long pilot program with the Singapore Prison Service where I taught Chess at Institution B1, Changi Prisons's maximum security facility. The program was a tremendous success, as the SPS officers provided feedback that many of the participants demonstrated clear improvements in conduct, attitude and teamwork. **As a result, I**



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have agreed to continue the program and also help SPS's Prison School launch a chess club in February 2024. The long-term goal of SPS and the SCF is to build a viral chess community within Prisons and in the long term, provide statistical evidence of the benefits that chess can bring to inmates, and further reduce the already impressive low recidivism rates in Singapore.



Simultaneous exhibition in the first session



GM Kevin Goh teaching a lesson

Chess@Central

In December, the SCF did a pilot beginner workshop at Kampong Glam Community Centre, as part of a long-term and larger initiative to bring Chess to the Central Districts. This workshop was heavily subsidised by the SCF and saw over 70 young children from the age of 7-16 in attendance. **We are grateful to Mayor Denise Phua's support and recognition of Chess as a meaningful tool that can bring lots of educational benefits to young children and we look forward to expanding this project in 2024.**



Chess @ Central - The Kampong Glam Edition

PR and media awareness

For as long as I can remember, the SCF has often been mired with controversies that have unfortunately required settlement in the courts of Singapore. In the past 2 years, my team and I have worked tirelessly to build a positive image of Singapore chess and we now have a strong



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relationship with the media, not just locally but also globally, with most of our news being reports of strong performances from our athletes. We keep these articles on our website which you can visit here (<https://singaporechess.org.sg/media/>). The one recent "not so positive" that you might have read was that of a defamation lawsuit that was filed in 2015. Thankfully, that case has finally concluded and we hope to move forward with more positive coverage of our work and the results from our local athletes.



Media coverage on the SCF's National Training Program and our trainees.

The Year Ahead:

2024 is the Diamond Jubilee of the SCF. It will also be a challenging year, particularly for fundraising given the current global instability. The SCF will be open to sponsorship arrangements that include naming rights or brand endorsements and of course donations, where well-wishers will enjoy a 250% tax deduction of the donation amount from your chargeable income.

Apart from the above local tournaments, the main events that our National Athletes will be competing in are the Commonwealth Chess Championships in February, the World Chess Olympiad in September, and the Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games in November. There will also be the regional and global youth tournaments which we hope our trainees will be able to participate in and do our National Colors proud.

To end off this rather lengthy note, please reach out to me at kevin@singaporechess.org.sg, or my mobile number +65 9766 7712 if you have any specific feedback or thoughts. My team and I have so far made an effort to respond to every single feedback promptly (of course, the serious, non-anonymous ones only). We cannot promise an error-free year, I frankly do not think anyone could! But what I can promise is that every decision we execute shall be done in good faith, and every slip we make, with honesty and without malicious intent.

Thank you, and I wish you many good moves in 2024.

Kevin Goh Wei Ming
CEO, Singapore Chess Federation
Chess Grandmaster