

**MetroWest Chess Club
Proposal
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NOTE: The link to the Dell Quote was originally done in September 2004 and is no longer active. A correct link will be provided in time for pre-meeting review

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I. Proposal

To approve \$700 for the purchase a Notebook Computer for cross functional use at the club.

II. Terminology

Primary Computer - the newer of the two Notebook computers we own and is the machine used to do pairings and update files at the club.

Backup Computer – the older of the two Notebook computers we own

III. General Discussion

The primary reason behind the desire to purchase a new computer is to allow us to have computer resources available for two distinct purposes. One is to provide TD functions, namely doing pairings an updating of records associated with the event. The other is to allow a diverse range of functions, such as in house marketing to promote sense of community, self serve game entry and analysis and an in-house resource for the Group Class projector.

The current backup computer can essentially do only one function for us, that of doing pairings using SwissSys. Even this single function it does poorly. Running Win95 it has, for some reason, difficulty booting. It runs very slow which would result in about half an hour to get the USCF database up to date as well as the pairing software. Yes, it could be kept at the ready by making this effort each month prior to any emergency need. This is time and effort by someone, thus increasing work load or the need to co-ordinate and watch over the process of a volunteer to do this.

There is no USB port and is not capable of being adapted to have one. This would require us to do weekly backups, which is a well established necessary function, using floppy disks. This adds time for the TDs at the end of what is usually a long night. Also there has been a history of random floppy failures.

IV. Background

A. TD Considerations

To replace the existing “backup” computer to do computer pairings in the event of a failure of the primary computer.

The current backup computer is not capable of being adapted to have USB ports. Current process requires at least two, preferably three people to take home a copy of all the current events files so they may be sent to the Web team for posting. This used to be done by zipping all the files and then copying it onto floppy for each person. In addition, one backup copy to be left at the club must be made in the event that the primary computer is dead at the start of next round. As the event progresses, the zip file gets larger and the time to write to a floppy significantly increases. As a significant time saving measure for all the people waiting to take the file home and leave the club, USB memory devices have been used. This practice currently puts us at risk because there is no way to use the USB devices with the current back up computer.

By using USB for data storage, the on site staff is saved about 10 minutes. Occasionally an error or detail that needs correcting is discovered prior to the conclusion of the backup process and the entire backup process must start again. While a restart should not occur, it in fact does.

There have been a number of floppy failures through the years where the data was not readable at home. USB provides a more reliable method of transport of the data.

While the above stated reasons do not perhaps make a very strong case on their own merit, conveniences provided for our small staff of volunteers is an important factor not to be dismissed

lightly. When it is 12:20 and you are waiting around an extra 10 minutes for a backup, especially if it is a second time around, it can be frustrating.

B. Group Class Considerations

A club owned machine available for group lessons for use with the clubs LCD projector

The current primary computer is capable of being used with the LCD project and has ChessBase and Fritz installed. Using it for this purpose would require that the Backup computer be used for pairing. The backup computer is significantly slower and has no USB capability. It is considered very undesirable by the TD staff to use this machine for pairing purposes. Note also, there is very little space left on the primary computer.

For the last two years the only computer used with the club's projector has been the personal property of the long time instructor. If our longtime instructor is not present the club has no machine available for running the projector.

The occasional guest lecturer has generally not had their own computer.

Active recruiting of additional instructors is underway. The restoration of a backlog of ready to go lessons is being pursued. In the past we had to have copies of pre-made lessons on hand which suffered due to logistical issues and some last minute substitute teachers did not feel comfortable guiding the class through the material on a demo board.

With a computer for the group class available consistently, not only can the pre-made lessons be stored at the ready but the entire archive of past lessons and the club game archive will be available on demand.

In summary, a computer loaded with all the materials for conducting a group class and available for use with the projector, no matter who may be instructing would eliminate the clubs dependency on someone having a computer available for use. It also makes sense that our ability to use our projector whenever we want, which at the time was the largest single item expense in ten years, seems to make sense.

C. Enhancement of the Skittles room game analysis experience

To enhance the after game experience for our players, the computer would be left would be left operating in the skittles room. We would advertise that are free to enter their games for further analysis by Fritz via the ChessBase analysis engine.

D. Game Archive and GAP.

Players as well as volunteers will be encouraged to enter their game into ChessBase for inclusion in the club games archive and to facilitate them asking for advice via the Games Advice Program(GAP). The GAP program as well as club's game archiving effort suffer, to some degree from the same root cause, games not being entered electronically. Many players will not bother submitting to the GAP program because they have gone over their game with their opponent immediately after and do not bother to enter them into a program at home. Ninety percent of the games going into the Game Archive are being entered by a small number of volunteers and then, usually with the Open section games given priority. There are efforts and attempts to improve this situation but these topics are not the focus here. By having the computer available, on site, it will give us more opportunities to get people involved in a way that is beneficial to the club.

E. Internal Marketing and enhancement of sense of Club Community

The club has a large archive of materials that are currently available on the website. In the past, hard copies of things such as the club face book and the current years Photos from the game

room have been prepared for presentation at the club. This is both time consuming and has costs in materials. Storage and then making it available again for viewing has been problematical as it continues to fall on the TDs as they are the only reliable volunteers available to make sure it happens each week or at all. It would be desirable to have a computer available that can run current day applications (the backup computer has failed to run presentations) to have such things as displaying the most recent photos repeatedly or other event announcements.

It is anticipated that marketing displays be the default mode of display for the computer, at least starting at the beginning of the round and continuing until heavy use in the skittles room needs it for game entry or analysis.

F. Historical Event Demographics project.

This is a short term, limited duration use of the computer. Efforts to complete this project has been blocked for approximately three months due to not being able to make a machine available that is capable of running the custom application developed for entering the first ten years of the clubs Crosstables. It is anticipated that this effort will require about 30 hours of effort to complete by the person we have retained for the effort.

G. Requirements for new Computer

Our main requirements are:

1. Windows XP (or 2000)
2. USB support (for transfer of SwissSys files among TDs with USB keys)
3. PCMCIA card (for wireless 802.11g network card)
4. CD/DVD reader (much ChessBase software is on DVD now)
5. Large disk space for CB Megabase (580MB), endgame tablebases ~20GB, etc.

V. Quotes

A. Dell

\$693.00 to buy a new laptop computer.

The proposed quote with configuration information can be viewed at:

<http://ecomm.dell.com/dellstore/basket.aspx?c=us&cs=04&itemtype=CFG&l=en&s=bsd&~tab=detailViewTab>

In summary:

Dell Inspiron 1000
2.2GHz Intel Celeron processor
14.1 inch XGA screen
30GB hard disk
256MB memory
CD-RW/DVD combo drive (can read & write CD's and read DVD's)
1 Year mail-in warranty

Note: All web page links are active at the time of writing. They are not guaranteed to remain so. The cheapest used machines were at least \$500 and failed to meet our requirements.

B. BuyCSN

Similar used machines were close in pricing, but significantly less powerful and with limited warranty. For example at <http://www.buycsn.com>, \$699 gets:

- IBM Thinkpad
- 1.2GHz Pentium III processor
- 14.1 inch SVGA screen
- 30GB hard disk
- 265MB memory
- CD-ROM/DVD Combo (only reads both CD's and DVD's)
- 6 month warranty

C. Second Wind PCs

And <http://www.secondwindpcs.com> has at \$674.95:

- Toshiba Satellite Pro 4600
- 1.0GHz Pentium III processor
- 14.1 inch XGA screen
- 30GB hard disk
- 256MB memory
- CD-RW/DVD combo drive (can read & write CD's and read DVD's)
- 30 day warranty

VI. Current Computers

A. Primary

Our current laptop doesn't have a DVD reader, or enough disk space (~6GB total)

Dell, Intel Celeron, 400 MHz, 128Mb Ram, WinNT, USB

B. Backup

1.2 GB, 24 Mb of Ram, Win95, no USB