

Presidents Report 2016 Annual Meeting

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I. Purpose

This report provides an overview of the status of the club and its activities for the preceding year. The President of the club, Mark Kaprielian, will present and discuss this report with the membership at the Annual meeting of the club to be held on Tuesday, January 19th, 2016. A summary is presented first with more discussion and details provided in the sections that follow.

II. Summary

The club is in good shape. Not the shape we would like it to be in but able to continue on in the fashion we've become accustomed to under these conditions.

We have seen a drop off of attendance in the Open and U1400 sections. The Open section is within the variance we can expect to see from time to time but the U1400 section is displaying an unusual trend.

My opinion is that the atmosphere of the club has been somewhat “diminished” due to the reduced time available for skittles. The ability for players to discuss their games and seek advice is a key component to the social and educational benefits that are derived from playing at our club.

Getting the Group Class program restarted will increase the social aspect of the club as well as serve as a draw for new players. It re-enforces the sense of community which is important for our club.

We are committed to relocating but we will remain where we are until a suitable location is found.

I ask the membership to please consider the time pressure the staff is under and listen to our prompting at the end of the evening. To please help by picking things up, putting away club sets and help us get things done quickly, calmly and very importantly for all of us, pleasantly.

There are many opportunities for people to assist in both very small and great ways. I encourage you to consider if you can provide time to assist the club either while at the club or away from the club.

III. Club relocation status

As reported during the year in the newsletter we came very close to leasing a space in Framingham that was to be built out to our specifications. The negotiations broke down in August with the final sticking point being the inability to assure us any minimum acceptable occupancy number once the space was completed. With a refusal by the lessor to agree to any number being placed in the agreement we could not accept the risk of the not having the capacity needed to support our ability to run the events necessary to pay the rent.

Prior to our engaging for the lease location in May we did an exhaustive search of locations primarily in Natick, Framingham and Wellesley to rent. While we narrowed the candidate list down to just a few viable choices, all of the locations had one or more serious flaws.

The current plan is to re-engage some area commercial brokers and continue our own online search for leasing opportunities. New rental opportunities are less likely to occur as it requires finding someplace we haven't been aware of before that can also meet our requirements for people capacity and parking.

We are committed to relocating but we will remain where we are until a suitable location is found.

IV. The past year

As reported in last year's President's Report, the club learned in Mid-January that it would need to exit the facility promptly by 10:00 pm each week. This resulted in all events becoming G/60 for as long as we were to remain at the Natick Community Center. This change would have an impact on the club in many aspects.

A. Attendance

While our January event started the year off strongly with 89 players, the club quickly found itself faced with two new challenges.

The first new challenge the club faced was the end of January presenting the area with massive amounts of snow that impacted people's everyday lives well into March. The February event saw the first sub-sixty player month in 7 years. It was a snowy December holiday season event. If you excluded that one event you would have to go back to 2001 (14 years) to find another sub-sixty player turn-out. By March attendance returned close to normal but the effect of the second new challenge started to impact the club.

The second new challenge was facing an indefinite shorter time control. It became clear from conversations that I had with members that some members simply did not like the fast pace of the shorter time control. Some players also indicated that they were going to wait and see if our hopes of relocating soon would come to pass. The end result was that we finished the year with the lowest average attendance since we first started averaging over 80 players in 2003, a twelve year stretch. Our average for 2015 was 73 players. While this might not seem like a large change, the effects could clearly be seen. Keep in mind this was the average. Only once after February did we have more than 80 players while we had several months in the 50s and 60s. These turn-outs sometimes caused very small sections to occur, especially the U1400 and Open sections. Many times the playing rooms felt very empty as many tables were unoccupied.

B. Time Impact – Start, End, Skittles and Exit impact

In this section I will describe the impact of our time constraints for both our members playing experience and our abilities to manage and run the event.

Delay clocks introduce variability into how long a game may last. For our events we use a delay of five seconds per move. Organizers can choose to reduce the time of the game to account for an estimated amount of time that will be added by time delay. This presents the club with two primary choices to offer our players:

- G/60; d5 – Where each player gets a full hour but the game will go longer than 2 hours
- G/50; d5 – Where each player gets 10 minutes less than an hour but the game is more likely to be done close to 2 hours.

We decided to go with the first option as we felt that that the trade-off of giving more time to play but less time available for after the game would be the better choice for our members.

For a delay of 5 seconds per move where each player uses those 5 seconds for every move, starting our round at 7:30 pm presents us with the following:

Moves	Delay Minutes	Round End
40	7	9:37
50	8	9:38
60	10	9:40
70	12	9:42
80	13	9:43
90	15	9:45

As we must be physically out of the building promptly by 10:00 PM. we strongly prompt members to pack up their belongings by 9:50 pm stopping any other activity at that time and insisting that they exit at 9:55 pm.

Once the last result is reported we must do a final update to the computer files so that we can provide projected pairings to the membership. We must then shut down and pack away all our TD (Tournament Director) materials. This time, even when well supported by sufficient staffing, can take between 5 to 10 minutes to complete. In addition to packing the materials away staff must keep the members to the exit time table, clean up and store away anything unexpected left behind. In summary we have:

9:45	TDs must start shutting down if last game is done
9:50	All players must stop all activities and pack their belongings
9:55	All players must be walking out the door
9:58	TDs walking out the door

From the description and time tables shown above the following conditions arise:

- There is not much time for skittles if your game ends “late”
- Starting the round even Five minutes late can have a serious impact for after the round
- Shutting down for the evening can reduce the time or ability for providing necessary services to our members, e.g. paying out or accepting payments, signing up or cancelling byes which impact projected pairings, discussing rules questions, etc.

Due to the huge impact of a round starting late, the following were impacted:

- Policies and procedures have been put in place regarding how we run our G/60 event that allow us to shorten the time control of the round as necessary to have the round end at the normally projected times. What this means is that if necessary we can instruct all the sections to reduce their clocks to as little as G/30 if necessary. There are a number of rules and options associated with this policy.
- Less ability to correct mistakes that impact individual players. Mistakes made in the pairings due to miss-communications of entry, byes and other factors, even though recognized as a mistake, will generally result in adjustments, if any can be made, that do not require the delay of an entire section, e.g. Repairing the section. In the past we could afford the time caused by a repairing but under our current conditions we cannot. While the repairing in the computer is generally a relatively quick operation, having players

relocate is not. Also it is very disruptive to the other sections as we cannot tell them to stop their clocks while the disturbances are occurring.

The bullet above has led to situations that have become uncomfortable for both players and staff. We have to make the choice of remedy for mistakes in the best interest of the entire club and this can be at the expense of an individual. Some examples that have or may occur are:

- Someone misses the registration deadline by just a few minutes and we are less able to accommodate them under our present circumstances.
- Someone who is present should have been paired is not paired.
- Someone who is called in with a very reasonable expectation of having been paired is not paired. E.g. They have 1.5 points and cancelled a bye by phone then travelled to the club fully expecting they would be paired
- Player entered into an incorrect section, does not get a game in their section and no side game available

We are always working hard to avoid mistakes but they do sometimes occur. It has been clear to me this past year that our ability to remedy mistakes has been greatly reduced because of our severe time constraints.

The overall pressure placed on the TD staff to get the round started on time each week is much greater and the amount of “nagging” that has to occur by them to get players to conform to the time table to exit at the end of the evening makes the staff less comfortable and most likely presents them in a less friendly light.

C. **DGT boards /Game Archive / Live Broadcast**

The program was put on hold because it became clear very quickly that we could support the program with the people already volunteering as we also used some TDs to assist.

In the preceding years the club acquired additional DGT boards and established a live broadcast of the games to our web site. Our published games became material for articles and enjoyed what appeared to be a nice following.

Setting up the boards is more time consuming than putting them away. With a few dedicated volunteers, getting the set up would continue to be not much of an issue.

Putting the boards away is problematic. The connectivity of the boards cannot be removed without disturbing other players and thus would have to wait till the last board is done. Packing the boards up and storing them takes about ten minutes with 2 or 3 people working the task. The TD staff is not available due to other constraints so this task would have to be done by a dedicated DTG volunteers. The requirements for these volunteers would be:

- Make themselves available as soon as their game is over for DGT board put-away
- Put boards away without disturbing the players in the room
- Be present every week or make sure someone covers for them
- A pool of four people with a commitment that two of them would always be present or to have two people cover for them

V. Observations

A. From last year

Last year we projected some possible side effects of going to G/60. Here I will revisit them to comment on what we observed.

- Attendance of club regulars may drop off due to players not liking the time control
 - We have small collection of about 5 players who have let us know that they are not attending due to the shorter time control.
- We may attract some new to the club players who like faster time controls
 - We did NOT pick up regular attendees due to faster time controls. A few players who explicitly played due to the faster time control only played in one or two events.
- Some players may start to prefer the shorter time control for play
 - A small number of players have expressed that they “don’t mind” the faster time control anymore. Only one or two have told me they now prefer it.
- Many players will likely enjoy being able to be home earlier
 - Many players have said they like getting home earlier
 - Only a few have said that it will be tough getting home so late again once we move
- We may attract scholastic players whose parents will feel the 10 pm out the door time will be ok for their children to participate.
 - We have not seen an uptick in young players explicitly because of shorter games
 - Existing parents like the shorter games, mostly as it ends their evening of waiting sooner

B. New Observations

- Open Section – Trending smaller
 - This year the US Chess League presented scheduling conflicts for at least six masters who regularly play the club.
- U1400 Section – Trending smaller
 - Weather has probably played an impact in the early part of the year
 - We just don’t have as many young players as we normally have. I don’t believe the shorter time control has had an impact. Several parents told me that they simply weren’t going to be able to bring their one or more players for a month or two.
 - We have had a slow trickle of new adult players during the year with a pick-up of more people at the end of the year than earlier or during.
 - A larger percentage of players who could play in the U1400 section are playing up than in the past two years. This might be accounted for as being a normal progression but it appearing magnified because of lower numbers attending the section in general.

VI. New Projects

A. Registration accuracy and speed improvements

To eliminate typing errors, typing delay and corrections of and selections of the wrong player when registering a player from the registration card, we have QR codes into our process.

Player’s stickers now include a QR code representing their USCF number. Using this QR code we are able to scan a player’s ID number into the pairing software and direct it to look up the player’s information from the USCF database and insert the player into the event.

VII. The Future

A. Relocation

Our path forward on relocation is to continue to search for a leasing opportunity. This is a slow process and can be time consuming.

B. Attendance

The February event will mark the start of our second year under our current conditions at G/60. In examining the data from 2015 we see a drop from our 12 year running average of 84 players to this year's average of 73 players. We have seen a drop off of attendance in the Open and U1400 sections. The Open section is within the variance we can expect to see from time to time but the U1400 section is displaying an unusual trend.

The U1400 section is essentially part of a "feeder" program that drives the two sections above it.

As noted earlier a higher percentage of players in the U1400 are playing up then in the past two years but at the same time the overall number of players is going down. I suspect that it is the lack of adding players in the section that is the central issue and not the natural occurrence of players moving up over time.

The shorter time control did not result in the section being more popular for youth to attend.

I feel the following activities may help us recover the turn-out for the U1400 section:

- Reach out to the missing youth players to understand why they are not attending
- Reach out to area coaches to encourage their students to play
- Create outreach/advertising to encourage over-the-board play by "newbies" in the area.
 - Our newbie adults walk in after deciding to search online for someplace to play. We could increase our presence online in the area making it more likely.
 - In the early years of the club I put club information in local book stores and libraries. This brought in players.
- Restarting the Group Class which will encourage players of the bottom two sections to attend more regularly

I feel we should not do these activities at this time:

- Create special offers or conditions to attract existing USCF youth players to the club.
 - Many disruptive reasons can be given for this but the biggest problem would be success, if the flood gate opened we would not have capacity. The total club capacity for all players is approximately 92 players if we were able to rent the other room again which we may not be able to.

If the number of players in the section becomes extremely small we will have to combine it with the U1700 for the month. This would be undesirable for both sections players.

C. Group Class

We have been having trouble getting this program restarted. The goal is to have at least one class a month, ideally two and if possible three.

There are two elements needed to make this program work:

- Having instructors with material to present
- Having a program manager to co-ordinate and follow up with Instructors to see that the classes happen.

We generally do not have difficulty in finding Instructors. The difficulty we have is finding a volunteer to run the program. I can provide additional information to anyone who would like to consider volunteering to manage the program.