

League Secretary's Report 2026

Let me start by mentioning several additional difficulties imposed this season. The Executive Meeting's agenda did not include a report by the League Secretary outlining his proposals for the upcoming season, which is a break with tradition. Indeed most of the discussion concerning the leagues was taken up debating two proposals to alter the rating requirements of the Minor and Intermediate leagues. Rule 17 states that changes to the rules may only be made at the AGM.

At the Executive Meeting it was declared that there would be no Minor League for the forthcoming season, unless Chippenham could muster a team, for which they would have the answer in a few days following the meeting and would let myself know whether they could enter a team or not. I was informed that Chippenham **could** enter a team, but not with the rating restrictions the Executive Meeting was trying to impose. As the league rules state that the League Secretary is authorized to adjust the rating restrictions, to assist with the operation of the leagues, and as Chippenham could enter a team, I informed the team captains that the Minor League could go ahead with a slight raising of the eligibility rating on board one and with all other boards unchanged and asked for their agreement. Instead of receiving replies I was told by the Secretary in response to a question about the Minor League entries, which I was not copied in on, that I would not be allowed to run the Minor League. This appears to defy the principal Wiltshire league rule, namely that the League Secretary has responsibility for running the leagues and resolving issues that may arise, Surely the reason for electing a League Secretary or any WCCA officer is to carry out the duties appertaining to that role without interference or hindrance and that any question relating to the leagues should be directed to the League Secretary and **not** to any other elected officer or officers of the WCCA who have nothing to do with the leagues.

Things were not much better with the Major League. At the meeting it was agreed it could go ahead with just the three teams proposed, which later turned out to be only two, and that is insufficient, so no Major League either.

The Intermediate League fared better with seven teams being entered at the Executive Meeting, which turned out to be six. So only the Intermediate League ran this season with six teams playing each other home and away giving each team ten matches.

As a result of the large amount of time spent at the Executive Meeting on what rating limits should apply to the Minor League, for which my presence at the meeting seemed unnecessary, I did not have all the contact details for the team captains and did not have the full list of teams entering **any** of the leagues. I only received this information five weeks later, which is why the season start date and fixture list distribution were both five weeks later than usual. So determining the league restrictions and sorting out the league teams by committee, rather than letting the League Secretary get on with it, was a failure. I would suggest the Executive Meeting is used to allow the League Secretary to outline his proposals for the new season, including any minor amendments to the rating restrictions he believes beneficial, and only then for the attendants including club representatives to express their preferences for changes to the rating limits, which they would request the League Secretary to consider, rather than instructing him on what he can or cannot do.

Whilst arranging the fixtures and awaiting contact information I was still unhappy that there were no interclub matches for the top players, so I contacted the Major League team captains and proposed a regional competition to try out. It would be north versus south, no rating restrictions, no trophy, played over six boards and consisting of four matches. I had hoped that two matches would be played at Swindon, one at Chippenham and one at Trowbridge, but Chippenham's club commitments could not accommodate that, so it would be two matches at Swindon and two at Trowbridge. This was accepted, so I made haste to set up the contest before there was no space left in the fixtures' schedule.

The Intermediate League would take place with the rating limit raised to 1820 maximum, played over a total of 120 boards. The North v South would be played over 24 boards, so 144 boards overall. Not as many as the 184 of last year, but not too far short of that. However, a further 30 extra boards were also played to make 174 in the end.

All matches were played in both events. The North V South finished first with only one board defaulted. North prevailed, but didn't have it all its own way. The final table ended as below:-

	TEAM	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	For	Against	Points
1st	North	4	3	0	1	17	7	6
2nd	South	4	1	0	3	7	17	2

The Intermediate League finished on schedule, also with just one board defaulted. All teams played their final matches in the last week with much still to play for. Two teams were capable of winning the league, with three other teams in a very close fight for third place. The final table ended as below with Swindon A first, from Trowbridge A second and Devizes third. Chippenham was fourth by virtue of rule 14d, fewest penalty points imposed.

	TEAM	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	For	Against	Penalty Pts	Points
1st	Swindon A	10	6	3	1	25½	14½	0	15
2nd	Trowbridge A	10	5	4	1	24½	15½	0	14
3rd	Devizes	10	4	2	4	21	19	0	10
4th	Chippenham	10	4	1	5	19	21	0	9
5th	Swindon B	10	3	3	4	19	21	5	9
6th	Trowbridge B	10	1	1	8	11	29	0	3

I am always amazed and delighted when there are one, or even several, tough battles between the opposing teams that go right to the wire, either for position or avoiding the wooden spoon and this season didn't disappoint. However, I have to admit that often when I arrange the fixtures I deliberately leave a couple of key match-ups to the last week or two in order to maintain the tension and interest in the final outcome of the leagues as long as possible. Since I was selected for this position by the Wiltshire Leagues over 31 years ago and then continued as League Secretary when the Leagues and WCCA amalgamated, there have been many very close and exciting finishes to the various leagues, but this season has produced one of the best. I would like to thank the team captains and all the participants in the matches that make the leagues possible. Without them, there would be little interclub chess and not much opportunity to meet and get to know players from other clubs. Finally, if anyone wants to know, I shall not be standing for re-election.