

Rydal Penrhos Preparatory School at the Junior 4NCL.

The progress made by Rydal Penrhos Preparatory School (RPPS) in recent years has been fantastic. We have sent pupils to the last stages of the UKCC for two consecutive years. We have performed well in EPSCA tournaments as well as winning many County awards in Cheshire and North Wales events. Several of our children have been given places in the Under 9 and Under 11 County sides and one in particular, Imogen Turvey-Cross has excelled by being a two-time British Champion, UKCC Ultima, has been selected for an Under 14 County match (where she remained unbeaten after her three matches) and has even represented 'Poisoned Pawns' at the 4NCL.

Always on the lookout for new challenges and ways in which to test our skills further, RPPS entered this year's Junior 4NCL for the first time. Five children and their families travelled to Oxford on the afternoon of November 12th and rose the next morning for their first team meeting over breakfast. The children were all proudly wearing their school jumpers as a mark of recognition and once they had been informed of the tournament rules and structure, they were eager to get started.



Rydal Penrhos Knights at their team meeting

Round One saw us up against G Kensington and Croydon and within about forty-five minutes, we had secured our first win. Wins for Imogen, Ethan Hill, Solomon Dickens and Kaleem Ahmed gave us a 4-0 scoreline whilst Rafeez Mortuza generously sat out of the first game and took advantage of some extra coaching.

<p>[Event "Junior 4NCL"] [Date "2010.11.13"] [Round "1"] [White "Nawaz, Sarah"] [Black "Dickens, Solomon"] [Result "0-1"] [ECO "A00"]</p> <p>1. e3 e5 2. Qh5 Nf6 3. Qxe5+ Qe7 4. d4 Ng4 5. Be2 Nxe5 6. dxe5 Qxe5 7. Bc4 Qe4 8. Nf3 Qxc4 9. Nd4 Bc5 10. b3 Qb4+ 11. c3 Qb6 12. b4 Bxd4 13. exd4 Qe6+ 14. Be3 O-O 15. Na3 Re8 16. Nb5 Qc6 17. a4 a6 18. Na3 Qxa4 19. Kf1 Qb3 20. c4 Qb2 21. Rb1 Qxa3 22. Bc1 Qa2 23. Rb2 Qa1 24. Kg1 Qxc1# 0-1</p>	<p>[Event "Junior 4NCL"] [Date "2010.11.13"] [Round "1"] [White "Turvey-Cross, Imogen"] [Black "Hargreaves, Eleanor"] [Result "1-0"] [ECO "C42"]</p> <p>1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Bb4 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. Nxe5 d5 5. a3 Bg4 6. Nxc4 Nxc4 7. Qxc4 Nc6 8. axb4 g6 9. exd5 Ne5 10. Qe4 f6 11. Bb5+ c6 12. dxc6 Qe7 13. cxb7+ Nc6 14. bxa8=Q+ Kf7 15. Qxe7+ Nxe7 16. Qxh8 a6 17. Bc4+ Nd5 18. Bxd5+ Ke7 19. Rxa6 Kd7 20. Qxh7+ Kc8 21. Ra8# 1-0</p>
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Round Two was tougher as we were paired with Basingstoke Under 11 'A'. The matches were tough and long and after wins for Rafeez and Solomon and a defeat for Ethan, we were 2-1 up with just Imogen to finish on Board 1. Using her experience from her appearance in the Senior 4NCL, she looked at the scoreline, examined her position where she was slightly up on the board and offered a draw. This was accepted and we enjoyed a final score of 2.5 – 1.5. When asked why she'd offered a draw, Imogen answered, 'It was for the team.'

Round Three saw us paired with the dauntingly named 'Chess Kings'. These proved to be a strong young team and the matches were well-fought and long. Wins for Imogen, Ethan and Kaleem was us come away with a 3-1 win and suddenly we were one of two unbeaten teams at the top of the table – the other of course Andrew Martin's formidable Yateley Manor U11 'A' side.



Rydal Penrhos Knights ready to play

And so inevitably, in Round Four we were paired with Yateley and as expected it proved to be a very challenging match. Yateley Manor is a side with quality throughout the boards and their children have a solid and sound understanding of tactics and strategy. Boards 2, 3 and 4 all went to Yateley and it was left to Imogen on Board 1 to dig deep and find our only win of the match. This left us in second place at the end of Day One and we celebrated with an outing into Oxford for a meal and a chance to unwind.

Waking up knowing we were in second place was a good feeling and we felt with two more games to go this weekend and with two further weekends to go, that we would grow stronger and be in a good position by the end of the season. So, it was with a little disappointment that we were given the news when the children were already sitting down for the fifth matches that a decision had been taken to make this weekend's matches part of a single tournament and that the league standings would not be carried forward to the second weekend in February. I feel that any decisions to change tournament rules or structure in the middle of a tournament is not completely fair to the competitors and at the very least, a notice should have been placed on the board in the lobby or managers should have been informed in a meeting prior to the children going to the boards. This though is just one minor criticism of what was ultimately a superb weekend.

Round Five saw RPPS paired with 'The Individuals' another strong team with a very shrewd captain who was keeping an eye on all his team's matches. This proved to be a very competitive fixture and could have easily gone either way. Wins for Solomon and Rafeez meant that it is probably right therefore that the match finished 2-2 meaning that we were now in third place with one match to go in the re-structured tournament.

Round Six and a weary group of kids went to the board for the final time needing to beat Surrey Sharks to pip them for second place. Sadly it was not to be as we went down 4-0 to another fantastic team of talented juniors.

So, the weekend finished with three wins, one draw and two losses. We are very proud of our first journey into the 4NCL and are definitely looking forward to February when we all meet again. A quick survey of the families that accompanied my team shows that they too are impressed and have enjoyed being part of the event. Indeed one young sibling aged seven, Savanna Dickens played nine games as a reserve, filling in for teams that did not have their full compliment and she won all nine! She is now expecting to play for the team next time.

My own personal thanks must go to Claire who demonstrated great coolness in the face of dozens of rowdy under 9s and to all those who helped put on this excellent event. If you are a junior coach or a teacher reading this, you could do a lot worse than to have a go in February at the next Junior 4NCL weekend.

Andrew R. Camp

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