

4NCL Online Survey Results

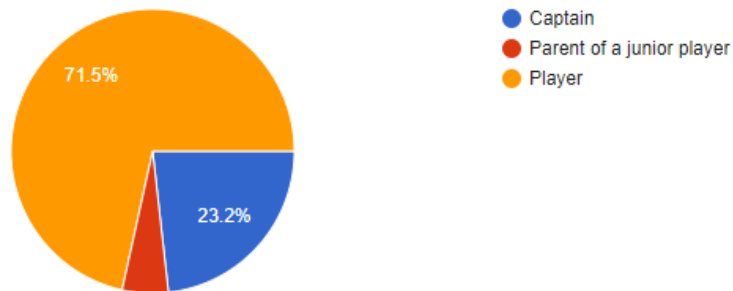
The responses below are reproduced verbatim, with some commentary. Some responses were filtered out:

- Spam responses
- People who anonymised their response

Section 1: Information About the Respondent

What is your role?

267 responses

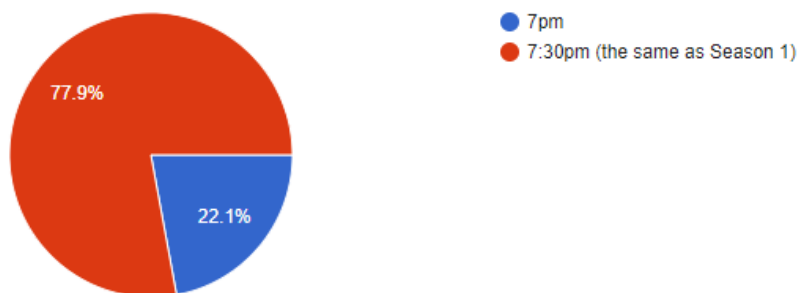


A good response!

Section 2: Individual Games on Match Nights

What is the right start time for league games?

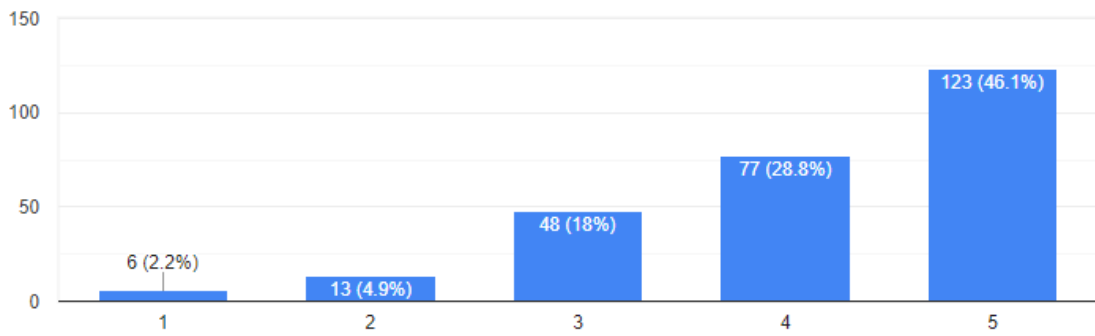
267 responses



There is no real difference between Players, Parents and Captains.

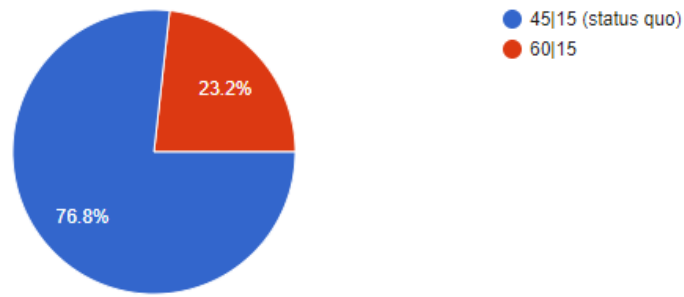
How satisfied are you with the time limit used for games in Season 1?

267 responses



What should the time limit be?

267 responses

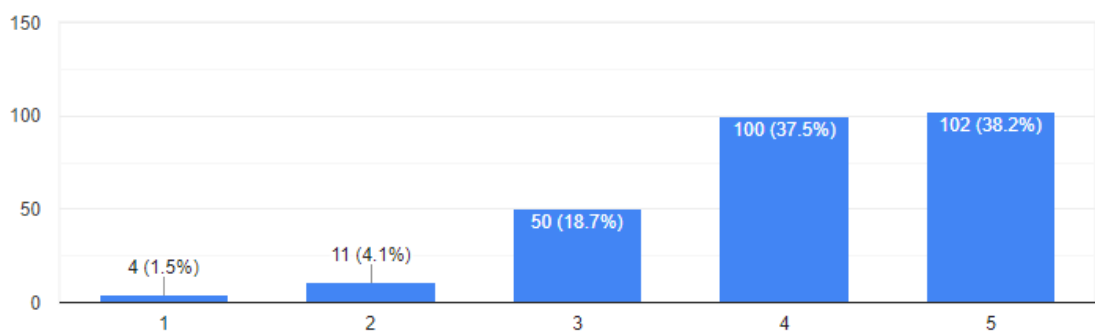


There is no real difference in these percentages and this opinion when broken down by category of response.

Section 3: Format of the Competition

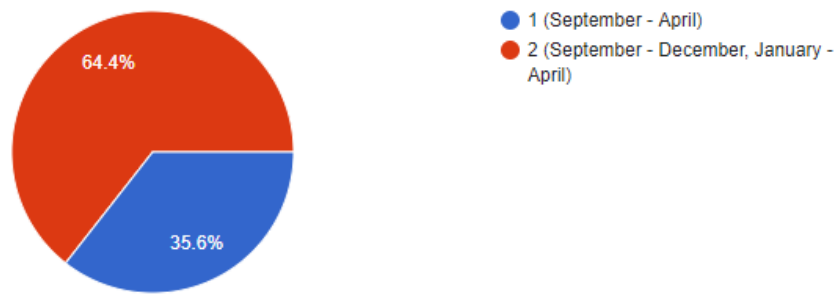
How satisfied are you with the format (i.e. number of rounds, playoffs) of Season 1?

267 responses



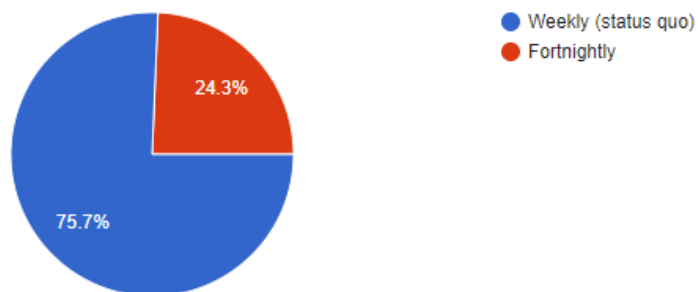
How many seasons of 4NCL Online should take place each year?

267 responses



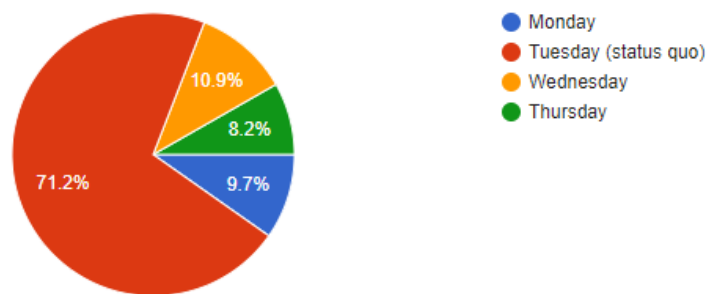
How frequently should rounds of 4NCL Online be played?

267 responses



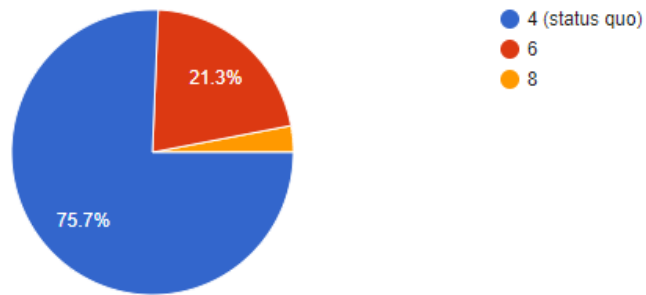
For practical reasons, it is necessary to hold 4NCL Online on one night of the week. Which night is best?

267 responses



How many players should be in a team?

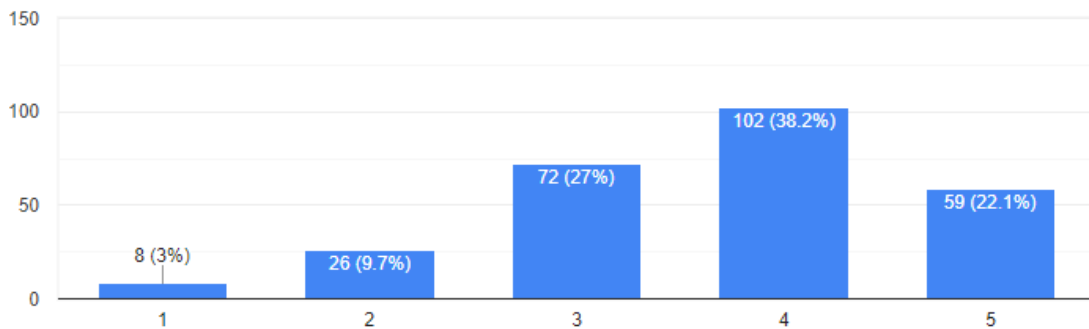
267 responses



Section 4: Fair Play

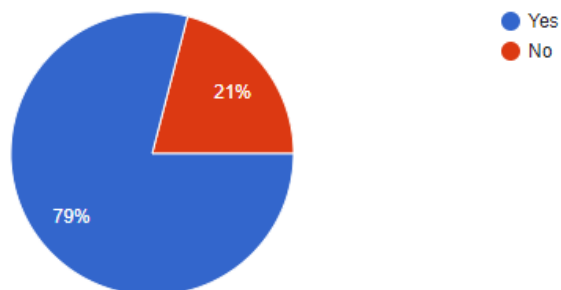
To what extent do you think the 4NCL's approach towards Fair Play issues was effective in Season 1?

267 responses



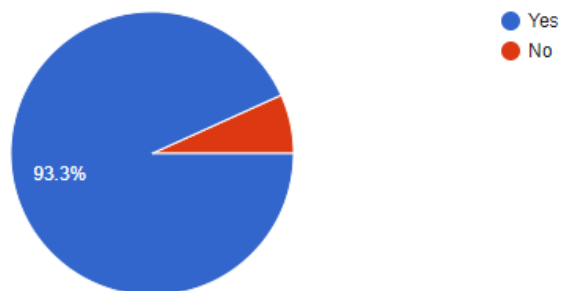
Should the 4NCL proactively inform captains that there are concerns about a player potentially using engine assistance in their squad, based on the data we have available from 4NCL Online games? This would have to be on the understanding that such a comment might be wrong, but it would give a captain the chance to warn their squad that we have suspicions one of their players.

267 responses



A draft of the 4NCL Fair Play Guidelines for Season 2 has been published on the 4NCL website. Do you think this policy is an improvement over the old policy?

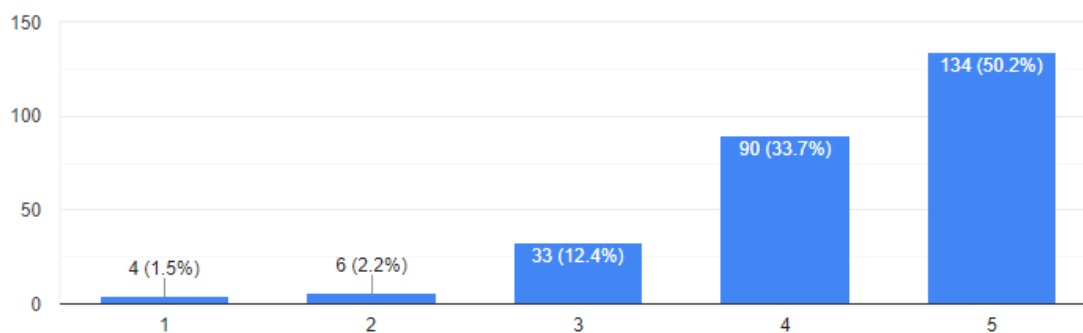
267 responses



Section 5: Lichess

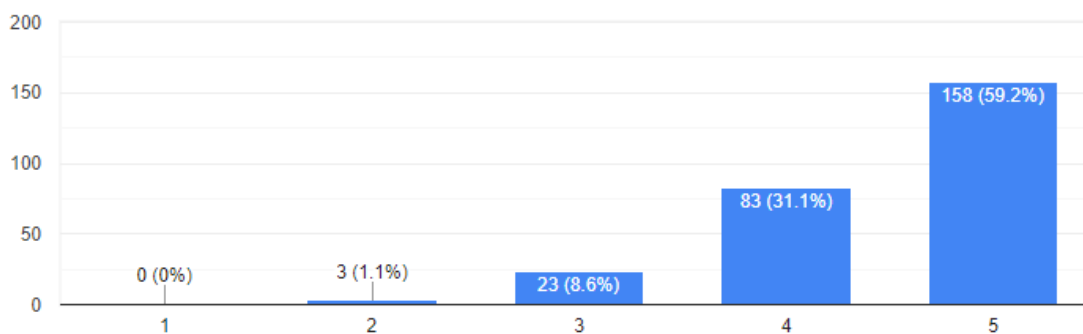
How user-friendly did you find the 4NCL user guides for issuing challenges on Lichess?

267 responses



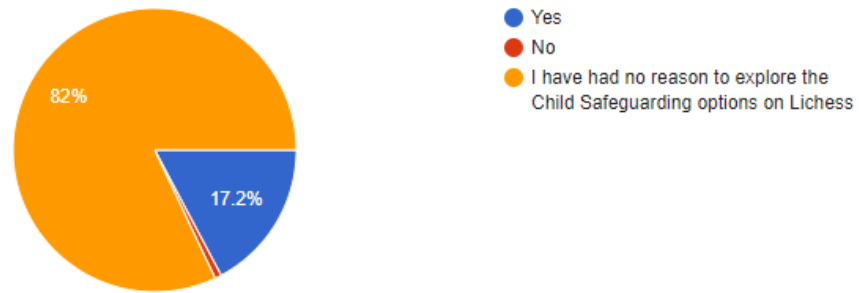
How user-friendly did you find the Lichess website?

267 responses



Are you satisfied with the Child Safeguarding options available to you on Lichess?

267 responses

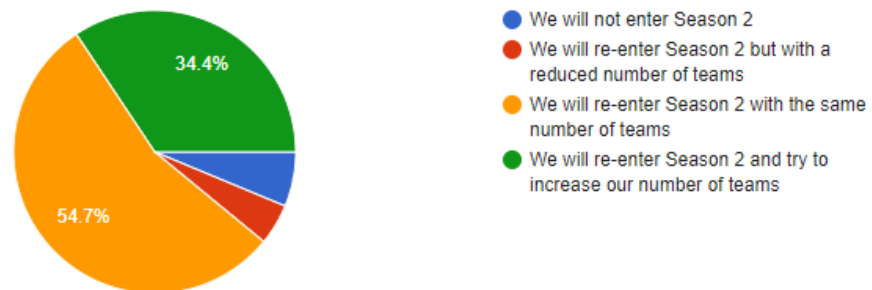


The parents who responded to the Safeguarding point were 11 yes, 1 no, 2 no reason to explore.

Section 6: Season 2 Plans (Captains)

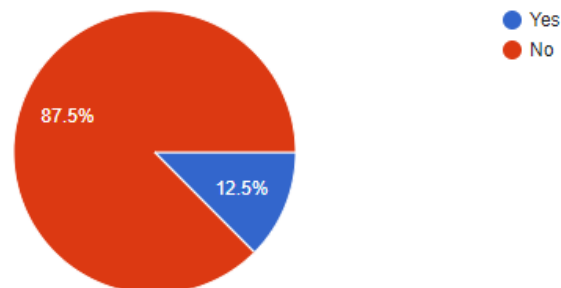
Which of these best summarises your intentions for Season 2, assuming it will start in approximately August?

64 responses



Would an entry fee of £10 per team (to cover the cost of trophies and administration), assuming the competition has a broadly similar format to Season 1, make you decide not to enter Season 2?

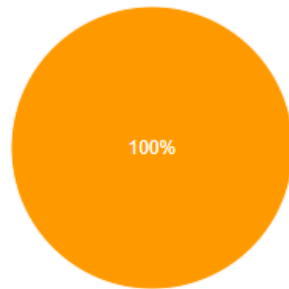
64 responses



Section 7: Season 2 Plans (Parents)

Which of these best summarises your intentions for Season 2, assuming it will start in approximately August?

13 responses

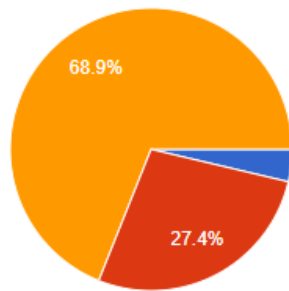


- I will not let my child play in Season 2
- I would like my child to play in Season 2, but not in every round
- I would like my child to play in Season 2 in as many rounds as the team captain invites my child to play in

Section 8: Season 2 Plans (Players)

Which of these best summarises your intentions for Season 2, assuming it will start in approximately August?

190 responses

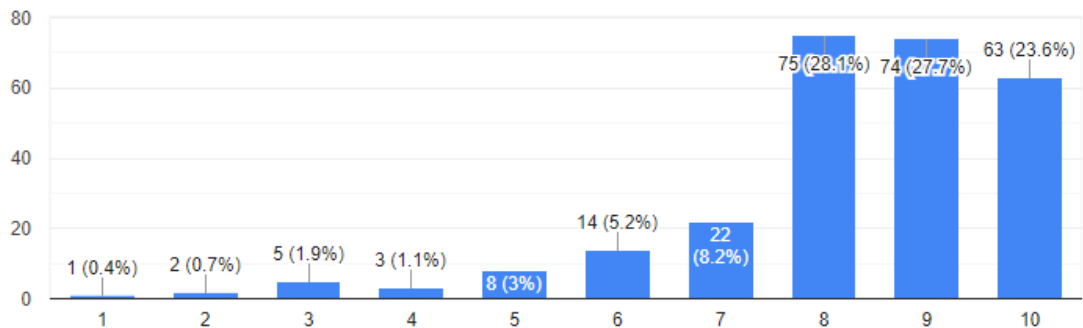


- I will not play in Season 2
- I would like to play in Season 2, but not in every round
- I would like to play in Season 2 in as many rounds as my captain wants me to play

Section 9: General Comments

Overall, what mark out of 10 would you give 4NCL Online Season 1?

267 responses



This is an average score of 8.26/10.

Appendix – General Comments for each section

Section 2: Individual Games on Match Nights

All seems to be working well
The season would be better between May and August avoiding clashes with OTB chess
Clubs should be allowed to have nights where they can request to avoid playing due to clashes with evening leagues. e.g. Bradford is Tuesday nights so would be impossible for most players to play in the winter.
The format is ok, and would suggest leaving it unchanged rather than confusing people by changing it.
Thanks
My answers re. format is assuming that over-the-board play will resume by Sept / Oct. If there is no competition from OTB then online chess could become more frequent.
Teams of 4 are too small, if one player defaults then the team is crippled (needs to win 3-0 on other boards to win match, or 2.5-0.5 to draw). Also, with larger teams it's possible for weaker players to get a game with less risk to the overall team result.
We have plans to enter a second team in the next season. Our local league is weekly on Sunday evenings, so please avoid Mondays!
When in lockdown the demand was very high, need to check that this remains sufficiently high once life is back to "normal".
I think the format of playing some teams in other groups was made with the best intentions but is demonstrably unfair. For instance, in group 4 div 3 the bottom team is playing teams that scored 26 match points altogether which is twice the number of most other teams. This is unfairness is because the initial pairings were not accurate - partly as some teams rotated their squads whilst other always tried to put their best team out and partly because the ratings used didn't translate that well to online play. I think a better format would be to have bigger groups and play a swiss or round robin.
We would prefer the season runs around the same time next year as this year because we may struggle to raise a team when also running teams in our local league.
No
I think it will be difficult during chess season to get regular players fitting into 1 evening. Thus, teams shouldn't be expanded. I feel this competition works best whilst NOT alongside the normal chess season - I.E Perhaps 8ish rounds Pre summer holidays. Some element of seeding was slightly weak (I.E Wood Green 3 are far stronger than any Div.2 team, and half of Div.1 teams.) But aside from that it's worked well.
Think maybe 10 rounds is a bit long (perhaps 8 is better), and things might need to change when going back to work (involving travel) and OTB matches (eventually) start to reappear. However, with a 4-man team, it's usually possible to provide substitutes if the schedule is too much for some.
None. I am enjoying it.
No
In the event of a player becoming unavailable on the night to have the option of a first and second reserve who can be put into the team.
I think it works really well.
No
Regarding the format, I would just remove the playoffs unless one is needed due to teams finishing on identical score, game point difference etc. I always see the 4NCL being a league so don't see the point in playoffs. I'd just follow the normal format of the

top team in the league being crowned the winner. As there are far more teams online than in the normal 4ncl I'd seriously considering having more than 11 rounds per season, can't see any harm in that.

I also think the size of teams should be increased. Four players per team creates more teams but the matches aren't as exciting as 6 or 8 boards, so the standard 4ncl format

It's perfect. Leave it as it is.

I think it has worked well. Ultimately, it is just a game of chess so various formats don't make much difference to me!

4 player teams I think is necessary. Not completely convinced by the NFL style fixtures for the last 3 weeks of the regular season. I don't think there's a particular need to make the season 10 weeks long (especially if there are 2 leagues per year), so I quite like the same system as we currently have but just having the 7 regular season games + playoffs (presumably teams in the middle can have fixtures against the teams in the other pools regardless of if they have any meaning in terms of league standing

As a captain of 4 teams, weekly matches barely give me time to arrange a full team for the next round (and it will be even worse when lockdown ends).

Generally, very happy with it. If/when things get back to normality, regular league matches will probably mean we won't be able to continue online (our league games are usually midweek), but it definitely fills a gap for now.

We may have an extra team or 2 for the next iteration - presume we would start in the bottom division? Only other option is to redraw the leagues from scratch again. One would lead to an uneven div 5 in particular, the other would make promotion/relegation redundant this year. Neither entirely ideal of course.

Suggest scoring based on game points rather than match points? Means every game is equally important - no dead games (at 2½-½) or games with everything riding on them (at 1½-1½). Appreciate match points traditionally used in 4NCL though.

But overall, very enjoyable - credit and thanks to Alex et al for the work organising!

Playoffs in Div. 5 would have been nice

Tuesdays are Rugeley's club night. I may be able to get more players if we could avoid Tuesdays when things return to normal.

Seeding should be based on ECF rating alone, especially in a format where the final 3 games are based on that seeding. As it is, teams are mismatched and badly seeded due to the usage of dual ratings.

You say September to April above. If OTB chess resumes before the end, this will be too much from my perspective.

The answers I've given are based on COVID related lockdowns, and the limit on OTB chess. I'd opt for less often if there was a return to regular OTB chess.

no

The seeding structure provides a competitive advantage/disadvantage to teams based upon their initial seeding. The team seeded 4th out of 32 teams, for example, has to play against all others in the top 5. Many other teams will face only one top-5 opponent.

This means that top teams may well lose out from their non-group games and miss out on playoffs/promotion. For future seasons, teams might well 'game' this system if the rules are not changed. Two changes would help:

1. Non-group matches should be against an average strength of opposition
2. Non-group matches should take place earlier in the season, so that teams are competing directly against their own group for the last few matches when the

playoff/knockout matches are being decided, decreasing the number of 'dead rubber' matches.
6 players on a team would also be fine. Has been pretty intense, which for a first season is fine, but if this becomes a regular event beyond COVID, don't overdo it
بخیرم
Play through summer not winter
The pairings are not really fair, some teams play much stronger opponents than others so the teams getting relegated are not the weakest. Better to have a normal Swiss or like normal 4NCL groups.
No other comments
I've ticked for two seasons a year, weekly and Tuesday - but once lockdown's over and we can play over the board then.... who knows?
Actually, I would suggest ~April-September as the best time for a season, to avoid placing it in direct competition with OTB club chess - otherwise a quarter of the playing population is ruled out by choosing a regular night of the week. I think there is more of a niche for a relatively relaxed summer league competition (hence 4 players for lower barrier to entry).
Plenty! Even in lockdown 13 rounds seems far too long. In particular the pairings in rounds 8-10 are heavily weighted against the teams who were most honest with their initial registrations.
Generally positive. Just need a longer time limit and earlier start.
Consider rapidplay.
Very impressed with the way the 1st season of 4NCL Online was organized and thank you for this event during depressing moments in confinement and the crisis of corona virus.
Rounds 8-10 make for an unfair test for group standings because opponents are different.
For as long as social distancing continues - as much online chess as possible. If we get back to some normality; maybe games once a fortnight and one season per year but at the moment my teams want as many games/seasons as possible.
Due to size of division 5, the new season should start slightly afresh with the newer higher graded teams being moved up into their likewise division. Lots of new teams joined and potentially more will do next season, these new ones should be treated no different from teams who started season late in 5th Div.
Although I have indicated 4 in a team, I am equally happy with 5 or even 6, I can see the advantages and disadvantages with each.
There are a lot of chess players out there who consider they are not good enough to play in the 4NCL so I think it would be a good idea to have a bottom division with players limited to a certain ELO say 100 or 110. This proved very popular attracting players to such a section in our congress. Another alternative would be to limit the teams in the bottom division to an ELO limit say 450 - 500 or the equivalent FIDE rating.
Format used is very satisfactory - during the lockdown. As lockdown eases, would suggest a fortnightly or monthly schedule.
No
Really enjoyed it.
I don't understand the logic of playing against teams in the parallel divisions. The higher your original seeding the harder the game you get, which seems a little unfair. I would prefer just to play games against teams in the same division.

Under the current circumstances (no over the board chess) I like the weekly frequency. If continuing when OTB chess is back to normal I'd propose reduce that, perhaps to fortnightly.

I think the four-team format makes it a bit funnier and more unpredictable as teams that won't have been expected to do as well can cause upset as a win can change things drastically in a team with only four players.

Our team was placed in too high a division

The playoff provisions are obscure. I'm still not sure how they work. Need simplifying and clarifying

Possibly rounds 8-10 instead of fixtures against same seeds from other groups, maybe the teams finishing positions, e.g. 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 grouped together, having a kind of play off competition for overall positions e.g. 9-16, 17-24, 25-32.

No it's been great thank you.

The nicknames should be published alongside real names so more aligned to 4NCL proper

If we play to the same system new additions to the player registrations should be stopped after Round Eight. I see no reason to just hold two on-line tournaments over the year whilst there are no OTB events I expected the next tournament to start in July. The play-offs seem a waste of time except in Division One - the sole purpose in Divisions Two-Five is to gain promotion or avoid relegation. There needs to be some thought to a "new teams" division - new teams starting now would have to enter Division Five and it would take them four seasons to reach Division One if they were of that standard. Most new teams will be of Division Five capability but there needs to be some sort of fast-tracking for strong teams whilst not disadvantaging those teams already in the League. The team registration list has not been properly updated since the start of the League; indeed, some squads don't appear at all - this needs urgently addressing. If OTB chess does get underway a possible move to fortnightly rather than weekly games.

status quo seemed ok to me

Online chess is only an addition to OTB. Happy for anything to be organised

the last 3 rounds should be arranged differently as in a division you will not all have played the same teams meaning that it doesn't create a fair ranking. something closer to the format used for current over the board 4ncl would be better or something resembling an 11 team all play all but with many more divisions

No

I don't understand the format. I don't understand who is doing well, what they might win and who they are competing against.

No

The 4NCL Online should continue until the lockdown is sufficiently lifted for OTB chess to be resumed. When that happens, the current 4NCL Online season should be completed but the competition should then be brought to an end. There are many other interesting online competitions to take part in, which is why I believe a reduction from weekly to fortnightly matches should take place, in order to avoid a logjam of fixtures.

No

The tie breaker does not seem to be obvious. Even team captains don't really understand it.

No

I'd prefer an odd number for team make up, such as 5 as it will lead to more wins/losses than drawn matches.

Current format is good as encourages smaller teams to participate

I'd prefer fewer Divisions and a Swiss type format. Even all 180 teams in one big Swiss seems fine to me if we have 10 rounds!
It is more or less perfect imo.
No
Don't think the playing the other 3 same ranked seeds is fair. We are playing 2200-2250 opposition, whereas our promotion rivals are mainly playing GMs and IMS. Clubs could manipulate it to register strong players only when seedings had been decided to get lower seedings/easier later games. Monday is the regular OTB club night for many as there may be cheap accommodation due to low demand that evening.
No
six players would be OK too
9 rounds swiss system would be great and we can have more teams and less divisions/leagues
The current format seems quite viable, though perhaps it makes sense to scrap promotion/relegation, and just sort by average rating every season to ensure fair matches? I think at this point people really just want to play some slow chess.
It's well organised.
All teams should play against the same teams. (At the moment some teams play weaker teams than others due to the system with four groups of 8 teams in each division)
Format is good and the communication excellent
The current setup appears to give too much of an advantage to teams seeded top of a band of four.
In my experience, OTB chess seasons take place between Sept-May. I would prefer the online offering to run May-Sept to offer some weeknight chess when OTB is generally quieter.
no
No
Look at shortening the time control and making a more exciting format (e.g. all players face off against all members of the opposing team). This would increase the team aspect and make 4NCL truly stand out. At the moment it feels no different from a standard club match. When over-the-board chess returns, 4NCL will need a reason stand out otherwise players might desert the league.
Format is fine for COVID, might need reconsidering after COVID, probably less frequent - but I love it so would like to continue after COVID. Many thanks for organising!
Maybe look at team averages, for teams with a weak tail giving those players a game had meant being out rated by 200-300 ELO points.
you could sent up a Blitz League as there players out there who will play but people are scared of protected their grade and at the end of the day, it not really a OTB grade and the elite don't understand it and also maybe all play all in your group of 8-10 weeks and let it roll till a vaccine is found
I think there should be one season of 4NCL online per year, but why make the season so long between Sept - April? I think starting the 4NCL online soon after the main 4NCL season ends, thus taking place during the summer months, is ideal (like this season). When there is OTB chess (main 4NCL, London League etc.) I think the attraction to play online will be far less, so the league should take place when the main leagues have finished.
very good effort, well done. Could it be held June to Sept once over the board resumes to avoid clash with regular season?

I think it worked well during lockdown. But I think it would work better as a late spring/summer completion to avoid club nights.
No other comment.
No
no
Really like the format, go for 3 seasons a year!
No
Not sure why don't just do mini all play all and then to knockout - rather than play teams from other mini leagues
The current way of deciding the pairings for weeks 8-10 has resulted in easier pairings for teams in some groups. Maybe the pairings for weeks 8-10 should be decided after the conclusion of week 7.
The penalty for a default in a 4 board is pretty harsh
The extra 3 rounds (playing "equivalent seeds" from other sections within the division) felt unnecessary, and a bit random. In general, I think that fewer rounds and more seasons would make more sense. So that teams can get promoted/demoted as their strength changes from initial setup
why not 3 'seasons' / teams from same club should not be drawn against each other. / need sub divisions in div 5
Very well organised. Very professional and impressive. Answers to queries always dealt with, and help given. My only concern is about cheating. If the captains could be informed if someone is under suspicion it might prevent further difficulties? I think in Div three, and Div four, at least, there maybe should be a grading threshold. I.M's in Div three, doesn't seem right somehow?
Smaller team actually makes super easy to organise teams even remotely and on week by week basis
The last 3 rounds can skew the group tables, because each team in say, Group A, plays teams in Groups B, C and D that the other teams in Group A do not play. Perhaps each group should have 10 teams and each team plays 9 matches - 1 against each of the other teams in the group.
Extend the lower divisions. Too many teams in Div 5 and no playoffs
No.
Whichever night you choose, will cause problems for some over-the-board clubs. Need to know what's happening soon. My preference is for 5 players per team. Match results would be less random.
I am ok with the current status but wouldn't mind changes on the subjects above.
Your answers above are too restrictive. I don't care what evening the matches take place. Any except Sunday. And the frequency depends on length of season and number of teams per division. BTW, the last three matches in the first stage of this year's competition were irrelevant and potentially distorting. The Qtr finalists should be determined from the group all play all and not with extra random matches thrown in. Crazy system.
I would prefer slightly more rounds, e.g. 12
I didn't really understand the purpose of having a group or league and then having additional fixtures in the last three rounds with teams outside of the group. Seems to me it would make more sense to have an eight-team group followed by a round of 64, 32, 16 etc instead.
In normal times, the 4NCL Online should take place in June to September, outside the period of the 4NCL proper. This option was not offered above.

none
I think 10 weeks would have been enough
No
If both players agree on a given board, they should be allowed to switch to Fischer Random.
It is very difficult to answer with respect to the future. Season 1 was fantastic and we're keen to play again asap, however the extent to which our players will want to play is likely to depend upon when over the board chess resumes. I think there would be a lot of enthusiasm for an immediate season 2, but if a normal chess season were to begin in the Autumn then I could imagine many players then saying they have sufficient chess...
As we come out of lock down it may all change if we are allowed to travel in cars again to play away matches. And then most of our players won't be interested anymore. But in the meantime, why not start playing again soon?
No
I don't see the point of the playoffs at all. The 4 groups should be merged into one table to find the promotion/demotion places. We finished 3rd in our group and teams (who we beat) with fewer points than us got promotion. The initial seedings and R8-10 were done to make things equal, so why the playoffs?
no

Section 3: Format of the Competition

All seems to be working well
The season would be better between May and August avoiding clashes with OTB chess Clubs should be allowed to have nights where they can request to avoid playing due to clashes with evening leagues e.g. Bradford is Tuesday nights so would be impossible for most players to play in the winter.
The format is ok, and would suggest leaving it unchanged rather than confusing people by changing it.
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Teams of 4 are too small, if one player defaults then the team is crippled (needs to win 3-0 on other boards to win match, or 2.5-0.5 to draw). Also, with larger teams it's possible for weaker players to get a game with less risk to the overall team result.
We have plans to enter a second team in the next season. Our local league is weekly on Sunday evenings, so please avoid Mondays!
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I think the format of playing some teams in other groups was made with the best intentions but is demonstrably unfair. For instance, in group 4 div 3 the bottom team is playing teams that scored 26 match points altogether which is twice the number of most other teams. This is unfairness is because the initial pairings were not accurate - partly as some teams rotated their squads whilst other always tried to put their best team out and partly because the ratings used didn't translate that well to online play. I think a better format would be to have bigger groups and play a swiss or round robin.

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None. I am enjoying it.
No
In the event of a player becoming unavailable on the night to have the option of a first and second reserve who can be put into the team.
I think it works really well.
No
Regarding the format, I would just remove the playoffs unless one is needed due to teams finishing on identical score, game point difference etc. I always see the 4NCL being a league so don't see the point in playoffs. I'd just follow the normal format of the top team in the league being crowned the winner. As there are far more teams online than in the normal 4ncl I'd seriously considering having more than 11 rounds per season, can't see any harm in that.
I also think the size of teams should be increased. Four players per team creates more teams but the matches aren't as exciting as 6 or 8 boards, so the standard 4ncl format
It's perfect. Leave it as it is.
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As a captain of 4 teams, weekly matches barely give me time to arrange a full team for the next round (and it will be even worse when lockdown ends).
Generally, very happy with it. If/when things get back to normality, regular league matches will probably mean we won't be able to continue online (our league games are usually midweek), but it definitely fills a gap for now.
We may have an extra team or 2 for the next iteration - presume we would start in the bottom division? Only other option is to redraw the leagues from scratch again. One would lead to an uneven div 5 in particular, the other would make promotion/relegation redundant this year. Neither entirely ideal of course.
Suggest scoring based on game points rather than match points? Means every game is equally important - no dead games (at 2½-½) or games with everything riding on them (at 1½-1½). Appreciate match points traditionally used in 4NCL though.
But overall, very enjoyable - credit and thanks to Alex et al for the work organising!

Playoffs in Div 5 would have been nice
Tuesdays are Rugeley's club night. I may be able to get more players if we could avoid Tuesdays when things return to normal.
Seeding should be based on ECF rating alone, especially in a format where the final 3 games are based on that seeding. As it is, teams are mismatched and badly seeded due to the usage of dual ratings.
You say September to April above. If OTB chess resumes before the end, this will be too much from my perspective.
The answers I've given are based on COVID related lockdowns, and the limit on OTB chess. I'd opt for less often if there was a return to regular OTB chess
no
The seeding structure provides a competitive advantage/disadvantage to teams based upon their initial seeding. The team seeded 4th out of 32 teams, for example, has to play against all others in the top 5. Many other teams will face only one top-5 opponent.
This means that top teams may well lose out from their non-group games and miss out on playoffs/promotion. For future seasons, teams might well 'game' this system if the rules are not changed. Two changes would help:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Non-group matches should be against an average strength of opposition 2. Non-group matches should take place earlier in the season, so that teams are competing directly against their own group for the last few matches when the playoff/knockout matches are being decided, decreasing the number of 'dead rubber' matches.
6 players on a team would also be fine. Has been pretty intense, which for a first season is fine, but if this becomes a regular event beyond COVID, don't overdo it
بخیرم
Play through summer not winter
The pairings are not really fair, some teams play much stronger opponents than others so the teams getting relegated are not the weakest. Better to have a normal Swiss or like normal 4NCL groups.
No other comments
I've ticked for two seasons a year, weekly and Tuesday - but once lockdown's over and we can play over the board then.... who knows?
Actually, I would suggest ~April-September as the best time for a season, to avoid placing it in direct competition with OTB club chess - otherwise a quarter of the playing population is ruled out by choosing a regular night of the week. I think there is more of a niche for a relatively relaxed summer league competition (hence 4 players for lower barrier to entry).
Plenty! Even in lockdown 13 rounds seems far too long. In particular the pairings in rounds 8-10 are heavily weighted against the teams who were most honest with their initial registrations.
Generally positive. Just need a longer time limit and earlier start.
Consider rapidplay.
Very impressed with the way the 1st season of 4NCL Online was organized and thank you for ths event during depressing moments in confinement and the crisis of corona virus.
Rounds 8-10 make for an unfair test for group standings because opponents are different.

For as long as social distancing continues - as much online chess as possible. If we get back to some normality; maybe games once a fortnight and one season per year but at the moment my teams want as many games/seasons as possible.

Due to size of division 5, the new season should start slightly afresh with the newer higher graded teams being moved up into there likewise division.
Lots of new teams joined and potentially more will do next season, these new ones should be treated no different from teams who started season late in 5th Div.

Although I have indicated 4 in a team, I am equally happy with 5 or even 6, I can see the advantages and disadvantages with each.

There are a lot of chess players out there who consider they are not good enough to play in the 4NCL so I think it would be a good idea to have a bottom division with players limited to a certain ELO say 100 or 110. This proved very popular attracting players to such a section in our congress. Another alternative would be to limit the teams in the bottom division to an ELO limit say 450 - 500 or the equivalent FIDE rating.

Format used is very satisfactory - during the lockdown. As lockdown eases, would suggest a fortnightly or monthly schedule.

No

Really enjoyed it.

I don't understand the logic of playing against teams in the parallel divisions. The higher your original seeding the harder the game you get, which seems a little unfair. I would prefer just to play games against teams in the same division.

Under the current circumstances (no over the board chess) I like the weekly frequency. If continuing when OTB chess is back to normal I'd propose reduce that, perhaps to fortnightly.

I think the four team format makes it a bit funner and more unpredictable as teams that won't have been expected to do as well can cause upset as a win can change things drastically in a team with only four players.

Our team was placed in too high a division

The playoff provisions are obscure. I'm still not sure how they work. Need simplifying and clarifying

Possibly rounds 8-10 instead of fixtures against same seeds from other groups, maybe the teams finishing positions. eg 3-4 , 5-6, 7-8 grouped together, having a kind of play off competition for overall positions eg 9-16, 17-24, 25-32.

No its been great thank you.

The nicknames should be published alongside real names so more aligned to 4NCL proper

If we play to the same system new additions to the player registrations should be stopped after Round Eight. I see no reason to just hold two on-line tournaments over the year whilst there are no OTB events I expected the next tournament to start in July. The play-offs seem a waste of time except in Division One - the sole purpose in Divisions Two-Five is to gain promotion or avoid relegation. There needs to be some thought to a "new teams" division - new teams starting now would have to enter Division Five and it would take them four seasons to reach Division One if they were of that standard. Most new teams will be of Division Five capability but there needs to be some sort of fast-tracking for strong teams whilst not disadvantaging those teams already in the League. The team registration list has not been properly updated since the start of the League; indeed some squads don't appear at all - this needs urgently addressing. If OTB chess does get underway a possible move to fortnightly rather than weekly games.

status quo seemed ok to me

Online chess is only an addition to OTB. Happy for anything to be organised
the last 3 rounds should be arranged differently as in a division you will not all have played the same teams meaning that it doesn't create a fair ranking. something closer to the format used for current over the board 4ncl would be better or something resembling an 11 team all play all but with many more divisions
No
I don't understand the format. I don't understand who is doing well, what they might win and who they are competing against.
No
The 4NCL Online should continue until the lockdown is sufficiently lifted for OTB chess to be resumed. When that happens, the current 4NCL Online season should be completed but the competition should then be brought to an end. There are many other interesting online competitions to take part in, which is why I believe a reduction from weekly to fortnightly matches should take place, in order to avoid a logjam of fixtures.
No
The tie breaker does not seem to be obvious. Even team captains don't really understand it.
No
I'd prefer an odd number for team make up, such as 5 as it will lead to more wins/losses than drawn matches.
Current format is good as encourages smaller teams to participate
I'd prefer fewer Divisions and a Swiss type format. Even all 180 teams in one big Swiss seems fine to me if we have 10 rounds !
It is more or less perfect imo
No
Don't think the playing the other 3 same ranked seeds is fair. We are playing 2200-2250 opposition, whereas our promotion rivals are mainly playing GMs and IMS. Clubs could manipulate it to register strong players only when seedings had been decided to get lower seedings/easier later games. Monday is the regular OTB club night for many as there may be cheap accomodation due to low demand that evening.
No
six players would be OK too
9 rounds swiss system would be great and we can have more teams and less divisions/leagues
The current format seems quite viable, though perhaps it makes sense to scrap promotion/relegation, and just sort by average rating every season to ensure fair matches? I think at this point people really just want to play some slow chess.
It's well organised.
All teams should play against the same teams. (At the moment some teams play weaker teams than others due to the system with four groups of 8 teams in each division)
Format is good and the communication excellent
The current setup appears to give too much of an advantage to teams seeded top of a band of four.
In my experience, OTB chess seasons take place between Sept-May. I would prefer the online offering to run May-Sept to offer some weeknight chess when OTB is generally more quiet.
no

No
Look at shortening the time control and making a more exciting format (e.g. all players face off against all members of the opposing team). This would increase the team aspect and make 4NCL truly stand out. At the moment it feels no different from a standard club match. When over-the-board chess returns, 4NCL will need a reason stand out otherwise players might desert the league.
Format is fine for covid, might need reconsidering after covid, probably less frequent - but I love it so would like to continue after covid. Many thanks for organising!
Maybe look at team averages, for teams with a weak tail giving those players a game had meant being outrated bt 200-300 elo points.
you could sent up a Blitz League as there players out there who will play but people are scared of protected their grade and at the end of the day, it not really a OTB grade and the elite don't understand it and also maybe all play all in your group of 8-10 weeks and let it roll till a vaccine is found
I think there should be one season of 4NCL online per year, but why make the season so long between Sept - April? I think starting the 4NCL online soon after the main 4NCL season ends, thus taking place during the summer months, is ideal (like this season). When there is otb chess (main 4NCL, London League etc.) I think the attraction to play online will be far less, so the league should take place when the main leagues have finished.
very good effort, well done. Could it be held June to Sept once over the board resumes to avoid clash with regular season?
I think it worked well duing lockdown. But, I think it would work better as a late spring/summer competion to avoid club nights.
No other comment.
No
no
Really like the format, go for 3 seasons a year!
No
Not sure why don't just do mini all play all and then to knockout - rather than play teams from other mini leagues
The current way of deciding the pairings for weeks 8-10 has resulted in easier pairings for teams in some groups. Maybe the pairings for weeks 8-10 should be decided after the conclusion of week 7.
The penalty for a default in a 4 board is pretty harsh
The extra 3 rounds (playing "equivalent seeds" from other sections within the division) felt unnecessary, and a bit random. In general I think that fewer rounds and more seasons would make more sense. So that teams can get promoted/demoted as their strength changes from initial setup
why not 3 'seasons' / teams from same club should not be drawn against each other. / need sub divisions in div 5
Very well organised..Very professional and impressive. Answers to queries always dealt with, and help given. My only concern is about cheating.. If the captains could be informed if someone is under suspicion it might prevent further difficulties ?. I think in Div three, snd Div four, at least, there maybe should be a grading threshold. I.M's in Div three, doesn't seem right somehow ?
Smaller team actually makes super easy to organise teams even remotely and on week by week basis
The last 3 rounds can skew the group tables, because each team in say, Group A, plays teams in Groups B, C and D that the other teams in Group A do not play. Perhaps each

group should have 10 teams and each team plays 9 matches - 1 against each of the other teams in the group.
Extend the lower divisions. Too many teams in Div 5 and no playoffs
No.
Whichever night you choose, will cause problems for some over-the-board clubs. Need to know what's happening soon. My preference is for 5 players per team. Match results would be less random.
I am ok with the current status but wouldn't mind changes on the subjects above.
Your answers above are too restrictive. I don't care what evening the matches take place. Any except Sunday. And the frequency depends on length of season and number of teams per division. BTW, the last three matches in the first stage of this year's competition were irrelevant and potentially distorting. The Qtr finalists should be determined from the group all play all and not with extra random matches thrown in. Crazy system.
I would prefer slightly more rounds, e.g. 12
I didn't really understand the purpose of having a group or league and then having additional fixtures in the last three rounds with teams outside of the group. Seems to me it would make more sense to have an eight-team group followed by a round of 64, 32, 16 etc instead.
In normal times, the 4NCL Online should take place in June to September, outside the period of the 4NCL proper. This option was not offered above.
none
I think 10 weeks would have been enough
No
If both players agree on a given board, they should be allowed to switch to Fischer Random.
It is very difficult to answer with respect to the future. Season 1 was fantastic and we're keen to play again asap, however the extent to which our players will want to play is likely to depend upon when over the board chess resumes. I think there would be a lot of enthusiasm for an immediate season 2, but if a normal chess season were to begin in the Autumn then I could imagine many players then saying they have sufficient chess...
As we come out of lock down it may all change if we are allowed to travel in cars again to play away matches. And then most of our players won't be interested anymore. But in the meantime, why not start playing again soon?
No
I don't see the point of the playoffs at all. The 4 groups should be merged into one table to find the promotion/demotion places. We finished 3rd in our group and teams (who we beat) with fewer points than us got promotion. The initial seedings and R8-10 were done to make things equal, so why the playoffs?
no

Section 4: Fair Play

No comment
Don't know
Require positive agreement from each player.
I think its fine.

Can't think of any
None
Random players required to play on video link.
Consider publishing all players Z-scores. Consider making having webcams switched on compulsory (possibly only viewable by arbiters rather than the opposition. Or just for recording purposes and not viewed by anyone unless there is a suspicion that the player has used computer assistance).
N/A
Perhaps a webcam so you can watch your opponent?
NA
None
It's already pretty good
A fee system is unfair
-
Mandatory use of cameras, 1 pointing at the player and 1 pointing at the screen.
n/a
I would be cautious about imposing too many stringent requirements. The vast majority of participants only want to play chess. I found the FIDE anti-cheating measures at the WSTCC in Prague bordering on the unacceptably intrusive. For professional events it may be necessary to adopt measures, but for amateurs I think you can be a bit more relaxed.
Ok as is
I can't think of any, but I can't leave this blank!
Use of cameras
There must always be the right to investigate, respond and appeal by both a player and their captain.
n/a
I cannot really comment on this section as I have only played one game and had no involvement with the Fair Play Guidelines
Generally OK, other than too many lives for my liking. No-one should be cheating with any regularity - I'd allow 1 'life' - Any repeat should be excluded. (Obviously subject to appeal processes for both.)
I don't have a lot to go on, but it seems to work fine. I had no concerns in my games. I answered no to the question about proactively informing captains about suspicions that may be wrong, as I think this might create unnecessary distrust.
Cheating will happen, that it's reasonably low in this competition was a good thing (perhaps because of the players being less tech savvy and likely older than other online competitions - OTB players forced online). Even cameras wouldn't help because a player might disappear elsewhere during a game or have notes or people behind the camera, they try to hide by looking like they are thinking. However, I suppose if suspect moves occur at this time, there is additional evidence to help prove or disprove a claim. However, recording and data protecting it, policing it, ensuring all players have webcams, and making sure all players are presentable (and happy to present) (including their surroundings and others who might appear in the background) probably isn't worth it as stated. Lack of (significant?) financial gains make cheating less likely and cheating for ego is perhaps mitigated against the risks of being outed to your teammates so a team event is probably less likely to attract a cheat.

Cannot think of any.
Don't know its current effectiveness, maybe anonymised results of allegations / results
Don't know
Difficult to day at the moment. They seem adequate. Needs testing.
The policy reads as justly fair and will hopefully prevent any major transgressions during the season.
I really don't know what else you can do. You've put a lot of thought and energy into this.
Don't warn captains if someone is cheating they just get banned and lose rating and forfeit the rounds played
I'm not entirely sure on this question but in regards to potentially informing a captain that one of their player's in under suspicion, I'm just not convinced by that. If such an action was carried out and then the captain had a chat to the player in question, that could completely derail their season if they're innocent as well as alienate them from this competition, online chess, Lichess and chess in general. Conversely, if a player under suspicion is cheating then why should they be given a warning? At the end of the day we don't want cheats in our game so anyone that does so ideally will be caught and removed from the competition, plus the relevant individuals will have that certain player flagged for potential future offences
Looks good to me.
New wording is better because it's more draconian and shorter = less loopholes. I don't think letting the captains know first is a good idea because the captains may be complicit. Last Friday, you showed us that normal distribution graph with the extra lump of approx. 20 cheats on the right-hand side. If anyone is in that lump, just kick them out of the tournament. There will be 1 or 2 false positives in that lump, but so be it. Or just kick out the ones furthest on the right-hand side as a compromise. Kicking out people should be a good deterrent. It's about weighing up the probability of cheating. In a court of law you'd need to be dead certain, but in a friendly tournament like this, just kick people out if there are in the lump on the right hand side of the graph.
Greater possibility for the 4NCL to judge marginal calls based on other evidence such as looking at specific moves / time usage and any other factors not taken into account my Ken Regan's model. My ideal scenario would be there be a panel of strong players/ people with a good understanding of the mechanisms of anti-cheating measures (similar to the currently proposed appeal panel) who would determine whether a ban should be instigated/ upheld.
Didn't have any interaction with the Fair Play over the season, so the above answers can be discarded really. I'd have voted for "I don't know/mind" given the chance
Ideally, have players on camera as used in some Chess.com events. Realise this may not be possible for everyone playing though.
I'm sorry, you have asked me a Yes/No question, forced me to answer & then sent me off to a multi-page document. I can't evaluate that in the time available to me.
Informing captains over potential concerns at an early stage would be helpful, so that any bans do not come as a complete surprise to players.
I'm also slightly concerned about the implication in the proposed guidelines that appeals could include some form of reversal of the burden of proof: that players would actively be required to demonstrate innocence, which in practical terms could be virtually impossible to do.
just relying on Lichess' algorithms is dangerous when players "dilute" their long play games with non-cheating 'other' games. Especially when you've chosen not to find out their process - so how can you have confidence in it? Whilst it's probably good at catching blitz cheaters, long play do we know it's good? If you have Dr Regan's

software, use it and be proactive. Whilst I appreciate some openness on the process, I don't believe there's enough transparency - also reversing previous game scores is necessary for cheaters. Clearly, you've been given legal advice on not publishing the players that have been caught cheating, but when suspicions have been raised & scores not reversed, but the player subsequently doesn't play, I question what decision has been made and how 4ncl are dealing with queries. I'm not one for witch hunting, but clearly cheating is occurring in the event, and it feels like not enough is being done.

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If persistent cheating of an individual player he should be warned 2 then band.

?

Only ban people if 100% sure they are cheating. The problem with sites like Lichess is they think their anti-cheating algorithms are perfect when they are not

I am doubtful that there is any way to make it effective in this competition. Few players will have a statistically significant number of games in the Classical pool and cheats are unlikely to be naive enough to play perfect games. Either you will have false positives, unfairly banning/shaming people who did not cheat, or you will fail to detect the majority of cheats. It's not a big issue for me or my team because we are playing for fun and have no chance of doing well in the competition. My only advice is to make sure there is never any kind of prize that could incentivise people to cheat, and possibly to shorten the time control. People are less likely to play flawlessly in Rapid, and are more likely to have played games in that rating pool already.

I wonder if someone is found cheating then the team should be docked at least one match point as well as having the current sanctions imposed on the player cheating. This will discourage players from cheating to some extent.

More detail on the Regan system, which seems to be hand-waved away as The Truth in places. The reference to captains having the right to ask if there are "concerns" about their squad sounds murky - how far apart are concerns and enforcing a blacklist? Some understanding of what happens when Lichess and 4NCL's assessments of a player diverge.

Organisers have done an incredible job, particularly during this period and I'm thankful for all the free time they have put into it. But I have noticed on the whole the strength of play online is significantly higher than over the board. This is not necessarily anything the organisers can address as software/ lichess can't determine if people are using books or Chessbase in opening phases. The policies are as good as they can be made but I do strongly disagree with the sanctions. A 5-game penalty is far too light (Should be an automatic ban) and given results aren't changed (and I understand why) there is little deterrent to using assistance or phone computers during games.

Process is not transparent. There are all sorts of rumours as to who has been potentially caught cheating, but scant information. Policy should be that the 4NCL publishes all potential violations and following investigation, the outcomes. That would do away with the rumours - I suspect it would also lead to a drastic reduction in the number of future cases.

I believe to remove most of the doubts, it will be necessary to play with webcam and audio.

Shorter time controls and web cams

Captain to arrange zoom call with team and video to be made available to arbiters after the round with captains to self-police during rounds. Or captain of opposition to watch your players and vice versa.

Players on zoom calls while playing

Harsher bans for cheating.... e.g. an adult in div 1 knows what they are doing, so a 5 round ban feels lenient. Should at least be a full season.

Don't know, you will know more about than I ever will. I believe you have the best interests of fair play chess at heart and so will support whatever policy you produce. I

support the current no cheating policy you have as I consider it to be very important. I am however okay with the idea to give a player a warning where the no cheating software indicates a player may have been using engine assistance.

It is important to stop players who are cheating but it is in my opinion more important to ensure that no one is wrongly convicted of cheating as in this competition this would damage their OTB reputation (if they want to play OTB in future as I think most do). It is wrong in my opinion that those convicted of cheating are not given some information about the evidence against them. We are told we must trust the reliability of the methods chess servers use but how can we do that when the information is secret? I am a little worried of being convicted of cheating if any of my Lichess ratings go too far above my FIDE standard play rating. My concerns might be unfounded but they will not be allayed without further knowledge about the cheating detection process.

I cannot think of an easy solution but warning the captains in advance about concerns would at least allow captains to look through their players' games and discuss matters further with any of their players with suspicious games or with the 4NCL.

As per FIDE guidance, it needs to accept that statistical evidence for cheating (such as can be provided by Lichess or from the Prof Regan tool) is not necessarily definitive. The appeal process needs to be open to looking at the games (as opposed to just looking at stats & metrics) and deciding whether the player accused might actually have played such moves.)

I play on chess.com and they seem to know if some players are cheating.

I understand the issues with regard to identifying juniors but it seems completely wrong that someone can win several games by cheating and the results are not reversed. It is a difficult balance but it seems to me that there is too much concern for protecting the rights of the guilty and not enough for the victims of cheating.

The 5 game ban for cheating is nowhere near long enough and sends out the message that using computer assistance isn't a big deal. It should be at least 6 months.

1. Include advice on how players should act if they believe an opponent had cheated. 2. Correct the typo of "De Ken Regen" to "Dr Ken Regan"

Compared to the original policy, it's got a lot longer and doesn't provide you with much additional cover. I appreciate that it's somewhat unsatisfactory to outsource everything to Lichess, but you may be creating additional problems for yourselves here.

I feel you might find it quite difficult to refuse any appeal, as there'll always be a significant element of doubt. I speculate that the small sample-size of 4NCL online moves so far makes it difficult to draw any strong conclusions from the Regan analysis. It should also be made clear to everyone that a Lichess engine mark cannot (alone) be considered compelling evidence of cheating, doesn't mean the account cheated in any particular game, and that false positives can and do occasionally occur, particularly with strong players. This should help to assuage any reputational concerns around account marking.

A simple condition of entry that each player must maintain a single Lichess account in good standing for the whole season, would probably have the same effect. Given the uncertainty about Lichess' methods and standards of proof, perhaps players should automatically be eligible to return in subsequent seasons on a new account if their first one was marked, unless there's a pattern of repeated account marks, or other compelling evidence. This means there would essentially be no 4NCL sanction for the majority of 'first offences', and therefore nothing which could be subject to an expensive and time-consuming appeal. Ineligibility for the remainder of the season would simply flow from the fact that marked accounts cannot play rated games.

I think a webcam system would be effective in order to make sure that cheating doesn't occur as otherwise if someone's having a good event or is producing stronger performances online than over the board, people can start saying they're cheating very easily but a webcam system makes sure this is not the case and is just a step in

making sure there are no false accusations or if someone has been cheating, they can be detected
It's not clear to me from reading the guidelines whether setting up the position on a "real" set is a breach of fair play or not. I would assume it is, but perhaps this should be made explicit.
Too hard for me
Perhaps an email to individual players if suspicions are strong or consistent, maybe comment on example, put in a very friendly and possibly a apologetic approach, also saying this stays in house and maybe ask for thoughts of moves or just wish them well for the rest of the season.
I think the new players grades will right themself within time on Lichess.
Striking a balance between making players aware beforehand that they shouldn't casually flick between tabs to check on other team matches or whatever (blurring) so that suspicion isn't aroused and on the other hand not going into detail on anti-cheating detective methods used so that the unscrupulous cheaters can't hone their methods to avoid detection. We also make clear that we believe the vast majority of games are 'clean' and not under suspicion so that a toxic atmosphere is avoided. However, suspected cheaters should be dealt with more harshly. Current sanctions I think are too lenient. A little naming and shaming (using Lichess research to avoid 4NCL being sued) would surely deter others.
A short general report after every Round which can be circulated to players by captains. Everyone should have read the policy and be signed up to it. Sending reports to captains about unnamed players just means that suspicion falls on all team members and is detrimental to team spirit. I have no idea what Tim Wall expected us all to do after withdrawing his teams. Junior 4NCL team members would have had no interest in the points raised.
no real opinion - I just play my game, if my opponent needs to cheat so be it
I think the season 2 regulations are an improvement as they are much more succinct then the previous regulations however i think that any banning should be done solely on the basis of Prof Regan's and 4ncl analysis of games played and not on the basis of Lichess's software as this 4ncl season has shown that Lichess are not transparent about the methods they employ and as therefore to ensure a fair appeals process in which people can see the evidence against them it should be based on the 4ncl's and Prof Regan's own analysis which i am sure are robust enough to detect cheating
I have no ideas on this
No-one should be banned on the basis of one game without corroboration.
Not Sure
Don't know as it is not clear to me about how Lichess identifies potential cheaters. It must be very difficult to accurately predict this when houses have multiple devices and there are multiple engines. It would only take a look at one position on another device to impact a game and those cheaters will never be caught. So, in essence it must be only the very stupid ones get caught! We need to be very careful as well with the stigma which I know the 4NCL are trying to manage. All in all, it is very difficult but I would recommend trialling zoom for div 1 and 2 matches so there is face to face interaction. That way players are more than likely to go through the game afterwards and the event could be more social than it already is.
I have issues with only 2 aspects of this: - Section 2 Staying Connected Paragraph 3 "...with a win for their opponent where they have disconnected and not been able to reconnect in time." This is unfair, as people's computers can disconnect through no fault of their own. I have won 2 games because of this, and my own computer disconnected before a game once. Thankfully, my opponent was very understanding and waited for me to reconnect (as I did in just a few minutes). I propose that the wording should be amended to:"...with a win for their

opponent where they have disconnected and not been able to reconnect in time, unless both the player's captain and the controller have been informed within this time". "Players should avoid disconnecting in a lost position and should make use of the resignation button if they wish to concede a game." As such, that is well and good. However, I have never found resigning so difficult as it is on lichess.org. On one occasion, I resigned and logged out, only to learn the following day that the Lichess website had not acknowledged my resignation and I had lost on time instead - so I apologised to my opponent. Just last week I had to make 12 attempts to resign before the Lichess website acknowledged it. This MUST be improved. On the other hand, there is a full and clear appeals procedure, which is very good, and hopefully will avoid a repetition of the situation in Season 1 where one of the strongest teams withdrew. Ideally, in order to prove cheating has happened, one would have to use webcams - but this is expensive and difficult and, in your own words, the benefits are marginal. Hopefully, your appeals procedure should cut the margin for error down very low indeed.

Consider playing 'on camera'. I realise there are issues though.

The basis of decision/finding and appeals procedure are unfair. The burden is on the player accused to disprove the decision, on the basis of computer-generated data, which contravenes the rules of natural justice.

I would recommend doing what was done for Sitges Online and for the Hampstead Congress: live camera. It focuses players more (especially juniors), gives a semblance of OTB and slightly reduces cheating risks.

No additional comments

No clue

More transparency/regular updates on numbers of players caught cheating etc. - if a player is accused, they should be given the chance to appeal before a verdict is made

To make anti-cheating more effective there has to be greater human analysis, not just more automatic computation. The systems can flag up 'likely' cheating but then there have to be humans looking more closely, interviewing captains and players etc. Early warning without full suspension is definitely good as well.

You need more human intervention and analysis of high-performing players. It is patently obvious that it is insufficient to rely on Lichess and Ken's graphs. I have advised of 7 players (3 banned so far) who are cheating (though I have a list of over 20). Matt's last response to me is that there are many more deserving cases ahead of them. I don't doubt this but they are cheating nevertheless. I sympathise with your plight, especially as I understand your problems of both resources and the lack of statistical 'proof' but, nevertheless, I expect that are many dozens cheating - predominantly in Divs 2-5.

Having been a player who has been accused of breaching the fair play rules this season i have to say the system is completely flawed. I totally deny the allegations against me. At no point has anyone from 4ncl online contacted me about this or given me an opportunity to defend myself. My captain was just informed that i had been suspended for the last two matches. In any form of justice to reach a decision without given the person an opportunity to defend themselves. I have been accused of using a computer despite the fact i do not even have a computer engine on the computer i play on. I presume u have reached a conclusion that my standard of play has been too high based on my grade. However, you haven't taken into account that my current national rating is over 100 rating points higher than my fide rating and the fact that for the last year i have been working with a Bulgarian grandmaster on a weekly basis. It is reasonable to assume that would clearly help me to play at a higher standard than i have played at previously.

You should not be making these allegations without firm evidence or at least be giving that person the opportunity to defend themselves before they are stopped from playing.

If u want to have strict anti-cheating procedures for me u have to introduce web cams so that individuals observe each other during matches so that they can see if anyone is doing anything, they shouldn't be.

It is far too generous to potential cheaters to effectively give them three chances at cheating. There should be no second chances in online chess, just as there should be no second chances in OTB chess - only a permanent ban constitutes an effective deterrent. It should also be a condition of the T&C's of playing in the Online 4NCL that players agree to being named publicly if they are banned by Lichess. Again, as it is so easy to cheat online, the presence of effective deterrent is essential. The lack of such a deterrent is precisely why I have refused to participate in the Online 4NCL to date - why would any reasonable person want to potentially waste 2 hours of their life playing in a futile contest? Whist I know you have many participants who don't feel this way, you also need to understand that there are many people who feel the same way that I do and won't enter your tournaments until this issue is rectified. Since the one type of player that definitely won't be discouraged by your lax attitude to cheating is cheats themselves, it is a straightforward fact that until you implement measures to encourage players of my mindset to play, you will simply be running a tournament that has a higher incidence of cheating than is strictly necessary. If that's what you're aiming for, then good luck to you.

Concerned the warning may encourage some to cheat in the belief they would be warned that they were under suspicion and so then would stop it without consequences. Appreciate not clear cut and the warning from their captain may be embarrassing enough to deter cheating.

The staying connected guide needs to be updated. It assumes that people only disconnect unintentionally, does not state any limit to the number of disconnects. It still seems to be acceptable now as it was then that someone can disconnect 8 times - only happening in their thinking time and for a few minutes at a time to do whatever they like (such as looking at a computer), not knowing what they are doing during that time 'away from the board'. Especially when they reconnect and play the top computer move immediately upon their return, without any pause for reconsidering their thoughts. or being flustered at being disconnected.

I have no useful knowledge that lets me answer this or the first question so I chose the middle 3 for the first one and failed to answer this one!

I'm not sure but there appears to have been a high level of concern about the accuracy of claims made that some players were cheating when, allegedly, they were not. It is imperative that any accusation made must be evidence based to a level that is beyond reasonable doubt.

I like it as it is

Sorry, I don't know. One may gain experiences with this and then scrutinise the policy.

All games have to be reviewed for the player concerned and a decision to ban him/her or not should be based on what they have done in the 4NCL/J4NCL games. If Lichess suspects any foul play they MUST provide proof. Without proof such allegations are completely baseless. And those accused suffer great humiliation as well as being banned from playing.

Why do you force survey respondents to compare your two fair play documents? Do you realise that this boring task will cause many players to abandon the survey immediately?

I'm not familiar enough with this to comment.

It is ok

how about turning on videos? using any software?

At the end of the day, if individuals are going to cheat then they will do so regardless of the warnings. I think 4NCL/Lichess are doing what they can to dissuade individuals from using engines. Punishment needs to act as a deterrent and therefore banning

<p>players from Lichess/4NCL is the presumably the only way. Whilst publicly naming cases would presumably be a good method, I imagine that the ramifications could land the 4NCL in hot water.</p> <p>The case of the Northumbria player who believes they were wrongly sanctioned is a difficult one. I have no doubt over Tim Wall's reputation and he would not stand for a cheat to play in his teams so I'm inclined to trust his judgement on that one.</p> <p>I think clubs have a part to play - we are only using players who are known to us - either our existing OTB members or, in one case, a foreign based friend of a member who is titled and has played for us when visiting England. The greater the influx of 'unknown' players the greater the potential for cheating to occur.</p>
<p>I think Pete Heaven has some good ideas.</p>
<p>I think the policy needs alignment with the ECF one. Having two different policies (even if the overall feel is the same) is just confusing</p>
<p>Definitely not an easy matter, suggest not to rely too much on Lichess algorithms. Rather leave it to a designated independent 4NCL person.</p>
<p>Need to be clear on how many games any decision is based. It is possible for players to have a seemingly low score if opponent makes an early blunder due to the way centipawn loss is calculated. Is more of a problem for accounts where there are limited number of games.</p>
<p>I think the 4NCL should name players, but it all down to players Creditable, if Lichess has spotting something then the ECF should have a Name and shame like a DRA list that the PDC has in place etc. I do think some chess players are chasing title etc like Storey did vs D'Costa but you never going to get 100% sure of a player cheating unless you do a webcam on the player?</p>
<p>Webcam</p>
<p>Inform the accuser of what has been found</p>
<p>I don't cheat, so I don't feel I can comment!</p>
<p>None</p>
<p>No more comment.</p>
<p>none</p>
<p>Continue to use standardised checks</p>
<p>None</p>
<p>Cheating needs to be cut out - that's the priority.</p>
<p>Too lenient. I would ban permanently on second offence. I would have a separate, more lenient policy for juniors.</p>
<p>Not strictly a fair play issue but one small concern of mine is the ability of a team to strengthen during a tournament. I understand the need for flexibility but we have a situation in division 4 where one of the teams would now not be out of place in division 2</p>
<p>Nothing really, it is a shame that players used engines</p>
<p>not sure, don't know enough about Lichess detection methods. do not understand how you can stop somebody doing a small amount of cheating, think a lot has to be on trust. I answered the previous 2 questions because the system forced me, I did not wish to answer them as I do not know enough to answer them</p>
<p>(1) Sharing the aggregate analysis from Ken Regan's "screening" which showed that about 30+ players were playing well above expectations. It gives a "scale" to the problem and hopefully discourages anyone from breaking the rules (2) Could we also have clarification about using a separate board to move pieces, and about "using notes". Also using a phone to send teammates results, answering e-mails in general, switching windows, having a parent follow a game on a separate device</p>

<p>from the same IP address? In general, some sort of "do's and don'ts" in this area to avoid falling foul of Lichess. I know Mike Truran suggested it to Theo from Lichess but we might need to draft something and ask them to edit it rather than wait for them</p>
<p>ban comments / chat by outsiders</p>
<p>Not sure - complex issue</p>
<p>eye to eye contact with camera involvement is the only way forward to reduce the cheating issue</p>
<p>I think a cheat's games 'may' be amended to a loss is too vague. There should be no doubt.</p>
<p>I don't like the final appeal going to an arbiter and 2 players. I think it should be anti-cheating experts who have the final say.</p>
<p>Webcams</p>
<p>Don't know</p>
<p>Without camera surveillance is difficult to assure 100% fair play. Anyway, the toughest the sanctions, the better. Cheating is absolutely unacceptable and there should be no tolerance to that behaviour.</p>
<p>I doubt that cheating can be discovered AND proved. Just regard online chess as a particular type of chess and don't mix up the results with those from OTB</p>
<p>May have to consider using webcams</p>
<p>I think you have done a wonderful job. Keep up the good work!</p>
<p>Some general points: 1) it's not clear whether the rules are exactly the same as for OTB. As an example, it would seem to me quite reasonable for a player to make an audio recording of his thought processes to refer to after the game for training purposes. Would this be allowed? Or indeed a player talking to himself during the game, which is not going to *distract* anyone; 2) another way of approaching this would be to start with the idea that games are played on Lichess and so people cannot play if there is more than a certain measured probability that they may not be following the rules of Lichess--that is, make it objective rather than referring to cheating; 3) another approach would be to make it the responsibility of captains to know their players and ensure they do not act unethically; 4) if the matches were held over more boards, then each player might feel under less pressure to record a good result and hence cheat; 5) or other ways of making the experience more like fun and less like competition--for instance, having one board of Chess 960; 6) I think if players provided pictures and some kind of bios to the opposing team so that the opponents felt they knew who they were playing that might make cheating less likely.</p>
<p>I have followed the debate about this on the ECforum with some interest. As a background about me, I discovered online chess in 2011 and started playing OTB in 2017. I have been involved in the 4545 Lichess League (which I understand this league has taken inspiration from) for around two years or so. As a result of this, I have built up a lot of faith in a chess website's ability to detect cheats and ban them. I went into the season with my normal view that there is no smoke without fire and if Lichess has banned someone it must be for a good reason.</p>
<p>However, from reading the debate on the ECforum, I gather that there are situations where people are being falsely accused of cheating as a result of either: a) their computer illiteracy, b) their playing strength not matching their online or OTB rating (more common for rapidly improving juniors) or c) the fact they are switching tabs during a game to do something innocuous such as read an email (which apparently sets off the cheat-detection algorithms). Further, after being falsely accused and having their accounts banned or shadow-banned, there is a somewhat Kafkaesque appeal process through Lichess where one has to prove their innocence. I find this very concerning and am wondering what can be done to place a greater reliance on the</p>

4NCL's other anti-cheating methods which may be less likely to create false positives.
I gather from the forum that one option is to have games played on Lichess as 'casual' instead of 'rated' as that apparently does not heavily engage Lichess's cheat detection algorithms. I gather also the new policy attempts to address the issues regarding cheating and false accusations and hopefully that may be enough. It certainly is not an easy problem to solve satisfactorily!
As a minor additional point, if games are to remain rated, please can the league implement a rule that all players should have a non-provisional classical rating on Lichess (i.e. they have played over 10 or 15 games of 30+0 chess). As someone who has played online chess for years it is deeply irritating to play against strong players who have ratings along the lines of 1427?
All teams should have to pay a deposit at outset, say £100 per team. Any team that withdraws would forfeit this. Surbiton might have acted less irresponsibly had their actual behaviour cost them £300.
If caught cheating by any means a player should be banned from the tournament, no process about it. Just ban the player and adjust results so that all of his/her games were lost
Don't know sorry
It would be useful for my players to know how many players in the tournament were banned.
N/A
4NCL should support the establishment of a global online chess ombudsman
Clearly a very difficult problem to deal with. I think all you can do is be transparent
improve the algorithms to stop all the false cheating allegations
Captains need to understand that if a player is flagged as using unfair means they don't necessarily need to withdraw all their teams from the competition
Automatic permanent ban if proved.

Section 5: Lichess

Seems brilliant and free, pay per use ones are in trouble
Great site!
Very good software, easy to follow.
Lichess is great.
It seems a lot easier to use than chess.com
Like it
Haven't used it much apart from 4NCL, but all seems very straightforward. (Unlike chess.com where I had a lot of problems registering, possibly due to using Windows 7 / old browser)
I have found it surprising easy to use and the best of all of the online formats. EXCEPT awarding wins to a player with insufficient material to mate eg K&N only. Please stop that.
It works OK - Had a few issues with challenging (Not enough games played issue.) Aside from that it seems to work.
I quite like it. There are no ads popping up, and no problems with any reasonably good internet connection. It compares favourably with chess.com, for live games.

<p>Its success is ease of getting a game via a web page, but the menus and layout and moving between tasks (e.g. finding the result of a teammates game) is quite clunky. Perhaps the best that could be expected though, chess.com has its issues and a few bugs, and command-line based ICC/FICS is more difficult for many.</p>
<p>Good site.</p>
<p>Sometimes on my phone the opponents time is going down and when i refresh after a few minutes its actually my time being used and they have already moved</p>
<p>Very good</p>
<p>I prefer it as a playing platform to chess.com & chess24</p>
<p>No issues during 4NCL but a club tournament on it had to be abandoned due to hacks</p>
<p>A good online chess website</p>
<p>There could do with being a general button which would allow for new players to find the user guide on their main page.</p>
<p>It's been brilliant. Thank you.</p>
<p>Good site rarely crashes</p>
<p>A very smooth program and seems more professional than chess.com. Of course, each chess site has its perks and weaknesses but in terms of being able to watch multiple games on Lichess, especially concerning the match you're either involved with or have an invested interest in, then that's excellent. Chess.com doesn't allow you to open multiple tabs i.e. playing your game and having other tabs open watching other matches</p>
<p>Wasn't clear to me whether kid mode on Lichess meant nobody would be able to issue a challenge to you.</p>
<p>It's loads better than the advert and cash ridden chess.com. Thanks for using Lichess.</p>
<p>Seems like a well-run website: one issue compared to playing live, is there is currently no punishment for turning up late. I am not really sure what the best way around this is</p>
<p>Inability to invite people to your team is annoying (you have to wait for them to request an invite and then accept).</p>
<p>It is a superb site for this time of competition</p>
<p>A great user-friendly site</p>
<p>Absolutely fantastic. The best chess platform ever created; we are blessed to have it. Clear graphics, NO ADVERTS, free.</p>
<p>When issuing a challenge, i still don't understand whether I am taking White or offering it!</p>
<p>One of the nicest and easiest to use online chess platforms</p>
<p>It's a really nice, easy to use platform</p>
<p>Pretty plain website, simple to navigate and fine for this event. Would be good if it had a team feature to easily see the score from the other games</p>
<p>Much easier to use than chess.com and free</p>
<p>There is a problem when their website crashes which they seem uninterested in. When the server loses connection, the clocks do not pause and this can lead to a loss on time. This is not acceptable.</p>
<p>Why do you use a site that has no team match functionality? It's a lot of effort doing everything manually and it makes it hard to see your team-mates' results so you don't know if you should take a draw. It would be much better to use chess.com which actually has team match functionality.</p>
<p>Best chess website for this format</p>

<p>It is my preferred website because it is cleanly designed, fast and does not want my money. Note also that chess.com has its own club league, so holding 4NCL away from chess.com helps to differentiate the competition and give it its own feel.</p>
<p>I think it is a very good platform for chess playing</p>
<p>Seems very good for free</p>
<p>It's a very good free software platform. First time I have used it and been impressed</p>
<p>I'm not sure that they are repeatable here and I would be very reluctant to recommend their website to junior players for fear of wrongful accusations of using computer assistance and subsequent refusal to communicate.</p>
<p>Easy to use and good analysis features.</p>
<p>Lichess is by far the best platform and we should definitely stick to this.</p>
<p>Easy to use</p>
<p>Lichess looks like a convenient chess platform to play in.</p>
<p>Excellent platform</p>
<p>It would be more convenient if there was an option to set up team matches as in chess.com so that it's easier to check the status of the other games of your teammates</p>
<p>Best chess server around</p>
<p>I believe Li Chess is the best online place to play chess and so am glad you have chosen to use them. They are much better than chess.com which I therefore rarely use.</p>
<p>The 4NCL guidelines on issuing challenges were fine. However, one problem arose when my opponent's Lichess settings meant he didn't accept my challenge. Another problem arose when an opponent was a few minutes late. (In OTB chess I would have gained a few minutes on the clock but on Lichess I had to wait a few minutes for him to arrive.) It would be desirable if the technology on Lichess allowed team matches to take place with automatic pairings and start times rather than players having to manually issue challenges. (This would also save the captains some time I think.)</p>
<p>Excellent platform - in general. Appeal process (e.g. against charges of "engine assistance") is non-existent.</p>
<p>Sometimes if you are making a move unless you actually jab your finger on the piece you want to move and press on the square you want it to go to sometimes the piece stops on the wrong square. This has happened to me three times but only once in a 4ncl game. This takes a bit of getting used to. I play on two other sites and it never happens on them.</p>
<p>I'm a big fan of the website and feel that it compares very favourably to the main alternatives.</p>
<p>Lichess is a great place to play and it's been excellent to be able to have a glance at my teammate's boards, and even games in other divisions, while my game is ongoing.</p>
<p>Regarding the challenge process. I advise looking into the Lichess API for future seasons. The process of sending challenges could be made much smoother and more automatic than now. With a little work, you could provide a button which would set up and send a properly-configured challenge to the right opponent. It'd also be possible to automatically check if a user's privacy settings are set up to allow challenges (this has caused delays a couple of times this season)</p>
<p>Having tried chess.com and chess24 (where I'm a member), I prefer to play on Lichess. The design is very clear.</p>
<p>Their grading estimates seem to be entirely random! Presumably they improve if you play a lot</p>
<p>Good uncluttered site, still not worked out how to make board large size.</p>

Thank you again.
Really excellent. It would be nice however, for the non-participants, or players who have finished their games on 4NCL night to be able to browse any of the games live by having an Online 4NCL tournament grouping.
works ok for me
It's the right platform for online team events
Brilliant! Well done.
It's easy to use. The anti-cheating policy cannot be solely technologically driven.
Seems a good service
Only that you can already set up live team matches in Chess.com which is handy. Can you do that in Lichess?
It's better than chess.com!
Seems a bit easier than Chess.com and no adverts.
No
Great
Great site
Technical problem with resignation (didn't work- had to lose on time or by mate)
Good
I'd like the Lichess usernames to remain next to the player's name as is the case before the round starts. Currently they are removed once an individual's game ends, which makes it difficult to find their game online until the 4ncl publish the PGN.
Good choice - would be good to fully utilise platform and have a 4NCL team that all players can join; also allowing opportunity to create blitz arena or swiss tournaments.
Menus and descriptions assume that everyone is a computer whiz kid. Not helpful!
Very good
As per my comment in the J4NCL it is much better than chess.com. I was also very impressed with Theo.
None
An astonishing chess resource - very impressive
Like the interface and the ethos of the site. I do find it annoying that my activity outside the 4NCL may be used in opening preparation against me and would welcome a separate account to play these games and one where I could play other Lichess stuff (think you can only have one account though).
No
Very impressive and a wonderful resource for keeping the chess community together
No
It is absolutely great!
It's a very good chess server.
Lichess is a free platform which is great. But if it suspects anyone of cheating especially children, they must send a warning to the parent first so that we can investigate. Following that if they have to flag an account, they MUST provide proof. Otherwise it is hugely damaging to the child and completely irresponsible and unacceptable.
It is great that we all have such an amazing free website available to us.

It's an excellent platform
A very good site.
Good platform
I cannot find community-->teams' option from mobile app. can this be improved?
Great free platform We now use for online club championship
I think the lichess platform appears to work well - I link all our games to the team forum and my members (playing / non-playing) often follow the teams games. It makes for an enjoyable 'virtual' match experience.
it seems a good site
Easy to use, clear graphics
Great site. Perfect for events like this.
Good platform, but not so good for discovering cheating.
I think it is a better site to use than chess.com, the interface is a lot easier.
it is a lot better than Chess.com and maybe the ECF should have followed and used Lichess as I'm a believer of Lichess
Best chess platform by far. Big fan of using it over chess.com or other sites.
i think it is a brilliant website
It's a great website, simple and easy to use.
I'd like to see it compatible with my DGT board..... it currently isn't!
No.
It is great for practice
no
Good site.
Draw offer symbol never seemed to work in my games. In one game I had to agree with my opponent to repeat moves so neither of us lost on time!
Excellent server - please don't be tempted to switch to chess.com!
Very impressed and pleased to play on this site
Suspensions for aborting games (whether deliberate or accidental) are too harsh, especially bearing in mind domestic needs which can occur unexpectedly during lockdown etc 😊
Sometimes a little clunky
Would be great to be able to "see the whole team" rather than relying on links from the 4ncl site, switching between them. Still doesn't quite feel like a team event, although it is better than ECF's online county matches on chess.com
too touchy / WIFI blinks cause too many 'fail' moves
I am very impressed with the professionalism, and fairness of rules. Maybe a default point should be mandatory after 30mins late. I think the late player should have their clock ticking from the start of play, as per over the board chess?
I have enjoyed exploring its functions and have been impressed
I am satisfied that Lichess is extremely good at detecting cheats and we shouldn't be giving those caught any leniency.
Excellent platform!

No.
Seems a bit buggy. I certainly had occasion where 1. it stopped responding 2. it failed to give me board on first move - so I just timed out 3. Where it doesn't seem to pass on draw offers.
No complains. It's a good website.
There should be a fee per team payable to Lichess (perhaps with a small percentage to the ECF) as these events use Lichess resources which cost money
Lichess is very impressive, especially the post-game computer analysis feature.
It's bloody good!
I think it's the best site for online games, definitely more reliable than chess.com with regards to the connection issues
It's much better than chess.com and am glad to see we didn't have any of the shocking issues that the online county teams experienced.
It is far superior to Chess.com for players new to Online chess.
Its good, gets the job done
Good site
I have not played chess myself with Lichess, but I found it easy to set up an account for my husband, and he has enjoyed playing casual games with friends, so I know it is user friendly. I appreciated the ease with which I could check connections of players in my team, and look at their games.
No
My preferred chess server, by a long way.
Very clean interface. My preferred online platform.
Very easy to use
very good

Section 9: General Comments

Huge kudos to your 4ncl team
Given this was the first online season and the speed it was introduced any criticism would be wholly inappropriate, we are grateful for the opportunity to play.
No
Really good idea. Some teething issues but overall, great start for a new initiative.
Can't fault it at all - great job!
Really enjoyed it!
Great job
Many thanks for organising!!
I think you have done a superb job in setting up something of this size and complexity so quickly and with minimal teething problems.
Thanks for all the hard work.
Excellently run competitions!
This has been a wonderful addition to my weekly calendar!

Thank you very much to Alex and others who have done a great job in organising this competition.

I have only played one game

I have enjoyed it - I've generally had opponents around my strength, and decent games throughout.

A little let down by the supporting tech, particularly in the first round, though team selection and results entry was easy. The navigation on the 4NCL website for common tasks (get the team's position, pairings) could be a little better thought out.

The deadline for entering a team is a little bit concerning because it's necessary to do a roll call on Monday to check none of the players have got ill or suddenly occupied. By the time that all responses are in (mid-afternoon) it would be easy to miss the deadline, particularly if work was happening as well. Proto-teams (that get confirmed automatically if a captain doesn't update even based on last week's team), automation of roll-calls and ease for players to find out which team they are playing, opponents position etc without having to find out would be useful, but probably too much work.

Pairings probably should be up soon after the deadline, not an hour before the event. Providing names of opponents gives a one-hour window to prepare which favours those who are free at that time, and not those who have other commitments. Either the prepare period should be longer as other competitions or names shouldn't be available (if names aren't available though, handles will be which still allows some degree of prep if there are Lichess games available in the user's history). Another way would be to keep the team secret and have the matches started automatically so you only find out your opponent at 7:30, but that would likely require some development from Lichess. No prepare lead time though might encourage people to cheat because of anxiety they are not prepared. Pairings available from midnight, subject to change (due to illness etc) is my preferred option since that allows prep during commutes, before/after work, lunchtime etc so everyone gets at least some time.

Splendid effort chaps!

No

I think there should be set procedures for starting the game in case of disconnection. I.e captains liaising before the match in case they need to sort connectivity issues.

Superb organisation and rapid responses to any issues

Enjoyed it but if OTB chess returns how will it work with that?

Despite the restrictions put on us due to this pandemic Lichess have overcome these with remarkable efficiency and my fellow players have all enjoyed the first season and look forward to the next

Well done to all involved 🍷

Very effective and has been a good challenge to play against players from different parts of the country rather than just in the local leagues.

I'd give the 4NCL 5/10 purely because the time control is ridiculously long. One reason for that is because I don't feel any sort of competitive atmosphere to any of the games I've played unlike with over the board chess.

I also mentioned I won't play next season, that's not a given so would have ticked the box for "maybe" playing. The issues are time controls, other things in life one is busy with and whether such an online competition would just lose all its appeal once over the board chess resumes. For example, players always have a set idea of how many evenings a week they can commit to chess games. I very much doubt players will choose to play the online 4ncl over any over the board match/competition or playing in it to replace one of their free evenings that most intend to keep free from chess

Thanks very much for organising it.

The cash question just now was difficultly worded with a double negative. You may find your answers to this question unreliable.

Just a thanks for setting this all up

I feel everything has gone really smoothly start to finish (I expected nothing less) and it's only the pace of the season that's been a struggle at times.

Just the time limits - I prefer times without increments

Thank you for organising it

A very well organised league set up very quickly. Well done!

We did suffer from giving you the grades for our strongest possible team. Everyone else seems to have given names & then mysteriously found lots of stars.

It's very difficult to plan for August onwards. Players may be less interested in playing once society has returned to normal. At this stage, we'd intend to run the same number of teams but there's a risk of reduction in interest.

Thank you for setting up this last-minute event in tough times. Whilst I've performed well, definitely improvements can be made. I'm dissatisfied by you just relying on Lichess' anti-cheating systems despite knowing cheating is going on because the results don't look "normal". As you probably know (if AH is reading this), I work for a statistical company that has done work on match fixing in sport, and I personally would be happy to do some extra work on this, because it's so important and I don't believe enough is done specifically for the event

بيق

If playing and away an over the board club match can we only default

I know the ECF has only just realised that online chess is a thing, but it is obvious that you still don't really know what you are doing.

The organisation has been very good - but I do find classical chess on the internet a struggle - and wouldn't be surprised to see a lot of people play at big differences to their normal grades.

Thank you for organising the competition, which has been a welcome distraction in difficult times.

My games on the website have all gone well with no breakdown from the computer systems

I am unsure of the time format; more time might allow for better games. I am uncomfortable playing 'Classical', chess matches in 2 hours.

A good first season despite most of us learning on the job. I wonder how much it will be supported once lockdown is over and we get back to normal OTB chess.

6.5/10 if I had the option. Given the timeframe it was an impressive logistical feat to get it off the ground at all, and it's interesting to see the difference in take up over OTB 4NCL albeit with a temporary monopoly. But the mid-season anti-cheating furore could probably have been foreseen, generated a lot of negativity, and wasn't seized by the throat in advance. The numbers on the most recent fair play update suggest very different attitudes to online play.

I only played one game as a late substitute, and even before Viking-gate it was the most unsettling I've ever had - not just because of the automatic paranoia when you cannot see your opponent ('should I bother preparing this long forcing line when he can just get the book off his shelf?') but because I got that preparation in, my opponent trivially blundered a piece and I won in 19 moves. I've never found myself worrying that a win won't be 'permitted' before. After various controversies in recent months I am pessimistic about hosting serious events online, at least without oppressive surveillance that I think would be worse the disease. That, as well as my clubs running events on Mondays and Wednesdays, is why I haven't played since.

On the whole, an interesting experiment and slickly run for the most part, but I'm doubtful that it is the sort of springboard that the early questions in this survey seem to imagine, especially once OTB chess returns.

I have been a non-playing captain. Only 1 issue of problem starting a game has arisen in 9 rounds. Our team has enjoyed the experience, despite being out graded in almost every board/match. We have approx. 50% of our members graded around 100 or lower and would like 4NCL to consider a division with a maximum grade per player of approx. 100 to allow more members to participate. I would expect a reduction in numbers participating in an online league once OTB chess returns after the Covid-19 forced suspension of leagues. I really appreciate the efforts of the 4NCL team in providing this opportunity for our club to be involved. Regards - David Hulme (Crewe CC)

Would just like to thank the organisers again. As for the re-entry question there was no not sure answer as I'll need to check the intent of the rest of the team.

Whilst being very appreciative of the time and effort that Alex puts into organising this and other events, by his own admission with very little help from 4ncl management, my experience this year has been very upsetting. I have had two young players banned for alleged use of computer assistance, one after one/two rounds (with no evidence or even hint of foul play in the games) resulting in an eleven-match ban and the other in a six-match ban. Enforcing longer bans for players accused earlier in the event seems completely flawed. Lichess refuse to communicate with captains and offer any evidence or advice. Alex has pointed out that they are run by volunteers and so we can't expect the same level of service as professionally run sites but it remains very unsatisfactory. Team registrations are not updated on a regular basis so the first-time additional registrations are viewed are when board pairings are published (e.g. last night Gawain Jones name appeared on the board pairings before the registration list). The pairings in round 8-10 are quite scandalous and completed weighted against the teams that were most honest with their initial registrations. For all the talk of a level playing field in the play-offs it is a shame that that was not applied in the earlier part of the tournament. One final word: Surbiton.

Thanks for organising it!

(1) Consider rapidplay (2) Be more open on cheating investigations (3) Check what Division teams are entered into. As a Throw in the Tal player it felt like we were in the wrong Division and I wonder if there might have been a way to check if we were entered in the right competition. (I'm very much assuming we will play in Div 3 next time.)

Thanks for all the work that made it happen

My answers about future seasons are based on the assumption that something like normal OTB play will resume in September 2020 or not too long afterwards. Even so, my answers about my club's participation are provisional, depending on any changes in the league format and the attitude of our members to combining OTB and online competitions.

Thank you very much for organizing such an event!

Is it possible that the number of divisions could increase or decrease based on numbers of teams?

Thanks for organising but more controls need to be put in place.

Thanks to all the organisers - amazing work to get it all arranged. Some functionality to make it easier for captains to view all their players at once would be great but obviously between the 4ncl and Lichess. Commentators on games would also be great and I'd be happy to help to try to source them on a weekly basis. Probably can't afford high-end players but we can work with a budget of zero and see how it goes.

Thank you for taking the time to organise :)

Are the 4NCL grades updated?
If so when as not sure on this

<p>Hopefully this tournament can attract some players who only normally play online to join a club and participate, our club have had such a couple of players who hopefully will play OTB chess with our club when it eventually returns.</p>
<p>I would also like to send a big thanks to the organisers of this 4NCL online tournament for all their hard work. I have really enjoyed it (though not all my results!) and consider it one of the best things to come out of this lockdown, I hope you can do it again sometime.</p>
<p>I am happy to play in the competition for as long as we don't have OTB chess in England. Once OTB chess returns I probably wouldn't play.</p>
<p>Very close to an outstanding performance from all concerned at 4NCL. Congratulations!</p>
<p>In general, an excellent tournament, organization & website. Good choice of schedule & format. Rounds started on time, website was helpful, informative and regularly kept up to date. Control team was communicative, helpful and responsive.</p>
<p>(The only negative point was the handling of the "engine-assistance" allegations, and the appeals process - which led to at least a couple of players getting unfairly banned from the competition.)</p>
<p>Assuming OTB Chess is up and running by September, I would still like to play Competitive Online Chess. If there is no OTB Chess, then once a week would be good.</p>
<p>Thank you to everyone who has put this event together at short notice and given us the chance to continue to play some competitive chess.</p>
<p>There were always going to be some issues in the first season online, especially as cheating is clearly more common and I imagine many players were not used to playing online at all. I expected it to be far bumpier than it was! Running 3 teams I've only encountered a few issues. The seminar with Ken Regan was very helpful and (I think) answered a lot of questions people had about the measures in place.</p>
<p>Thank you for organising this - I've enjoyed playing in it so far and it makes sure that it allows me to keep in touch with chess by preparing, doing tactics etc. which otherwise may not be done if there was not a tournament. It'd be great if we could have more tournaments arranged by the ECF online too and also when the situation gets better if we could have more FIDE events especially for juniors who are trying to seek norms Thank you and I look forward to the rest of the season!</p>
<p>I have found the transition to online chess quite difficult. I am playing about 30-40 ECF points below my strength (c.180 ECF). I am not sure if this is mainly because the time limit is shorter than the London League (75m +15) and the Summer Chess league (60m+30sec).</p>
<p>I would perhaps prefer a competition with two rapidplay games played against the opponent.</p>
<p>it's just you never truly know who or what you are playing.</p>
<p>Thanks again</p>
<p>Publish real names so that live games can be watched via 4NCL website or if technically possible, translate the nicknames into real names (as per 4NCL broadcasting) so that players who want to keep their privacy, can do so. Personally, I prefer transparency.</p>
<p>Overall, I think it has been a real success. If cheating can be eradicated as much as possible so that there is credibility in performances then I think it would be wonderful to award online GM/IM/FM title norms and titles for players who have earned them. From my own club Koby Kalavannan has beaten several GMs and IMs and I think it would be a good recognition. If we don't want to upset FIDE we could issue National Master/Regional Master titles or some other name to denote rank equivalent of the FIDE titles. Just an idea....</p>
<p>Online chess is not a substitute for OTB, but it is a good addition</p>

<p>I understand that online chess will not compare to over the board chess but i feel as if the tournament has failed to live up to expectations</p>
<p>As above: brilliant.</p>
<p>No.</p>
<p>Some answers would be clearer if we knew whether OTB would be back and on which night we will be playing</p>
<p>Great effort for getting started. I would like to enter a junior team next year!</p>
<p>4NCL online Season 1 has been a good/very good competition - with a few minor changes, some of which you have already proposed to make, it could be outstandingly good. Keep up the good work!</p>
<p>I think a longer time limit would be better.</p>
<p>No</p>
<p>The grading system is not fit for purpose and creates severe distortions. 4NCL allows to use either Fide or ECF conversion on a whim. Especially at junior level, this causes severe distortions, and some juniors can play on higher/lower boards than their real levels based on a single decision by the Captains.</p>
<p>Not converting sandbags, the player strength, and converting provides harder but more interesting games. I would not mind either, but I would like some consistency, especially when the rules prevent Captains to change the order of the players outside a certain range. My son can be either 1350 or 1700 roughly depending on the decision the Captain makes at the beginning of the season, which may or may not be fair to other teams. A 350-point difference in board order is not something immaterial, especially when rules limit swapping capabilities.</p>
<p>I would recommend ignoring Fide for all junior players and using only conversion as the ECF grade is strangely more representative than Fide for this age group. It will slightly overestimate their strength, but ensure consistent playing field, while also helping them develop (which is a good thing for English chess). Using Fide only means they'll be sharks on the lower boards.</p>
<p>Well done to run this competition at short notice in difficult times</p>
<p>A very welcome option during lockdown</p>
<p>Time control to slow for online would serve better as rapid</p>
<p>I can't play 4ncl face-to-face due to family constraints. Having an online league has had a fantastic impact on my enthusiasm for chess. I've quit correspondence chess to concentrate on the league and it was a great choice! Thank you for organising it.</p>
<p>Great admin work behind the scenes, keep it up</p>
<p>Brilliant - organised so rapidly, and very good!</p>
<p>No</p>
<p>I am sad that one issue blights the entire event which, otherwise, is brilliant. Congratulations to you all for your efforts and the remarkable speed you put it together. The ECF should give you some award - team of the year probably. I will continue to play but will drop myself - as per this season - when we play against clear cheats. Other people in my squad have already dropped out altogether. If you can get buy in for a rapid alternative, I think it will be far cleaner. Thanks again.</p>
<p>Improve your anti-cheating measures! I've read the update and they are woefully inadequate.</p>
<p>Surprised what a good substitute it has been for over the board chess. There have been cheating issues but impressed with the measures that have gone towards stopping</p>

<p>these. Imagine over time these will lessen and although the league might suffer from a resumption in over the board chess, believe it will be a useful complement.</p>
<p>It would be appreciated if emails sent to the person in charge are acknowledged instead of being ignored, and that a player's concerns are respectfully acknowledged on cheating concerns and not waved away immediately and viewed as a complete waste of time from the outset. Especially when Lichess has later banned one of the players I raised concerns against, proving me to be right. Following on whether I would play in Season 2, if its on a Tuesday, its clearly much more fun to play in Titled Tuesday on chess.com than playing one game with a later proven cheat, wasting my time and taking the fun out of the whole experience - and therefore not really interested in the whole exercise. If you were a titled player, which would you pick? Hard choice....</p>
<p>Keep it going!</p>
<p>I feel that most of the questions in this survey should have included a 'not sure' or 'n/a' option.</p>
<p>It is a great platform. I only found it difficult to communicate with the opponent as I did not know where to type a response!</p>
<p>[Advert deleted]</p>
<p>I don't think the 4NCL online is a rich experience. It is not any different from any other tournament.</p>
<p>This is a great event in the COVID lockdown environment. I think there should be competitions running continuously throughout the year, as it is so easy to play the matches.</p>
<p>I only learnt about 4NCL Online Chess by accident two days before registration closed.</p>
<p>Great to have competitive chess in these dark days of COVID</p>
<p>I think the efforts put into the creation and running of the 4NCL is fantastic - I can't speak highly enough of people giving up their time to run such a task - and impressively well.</p>
<p>A £10 charge would not put me off entering our 3 teams - I'm not sure there is a need for trophies, but I certainly wouldn't begrudge the organisers taking a goodwill share of funds generated.</p>
<p>Essentially the system works well, but one obvious sign of cheating would be an exceptionally good success rate for no good reason.</p>
<p>Considering this was created from scratch in a very short time, I think it was an incredible success. Well done to all involved. How it will fair when we get OTB chess back I'm not sure - particularly when whatever night you choose there are going to be regular clashes with OTB games. An issue with promotion and relegation from divisions is going to be keeping the same teams together.</p>
<p>It would be useful if the Lichess usernames were made more readily available to help with preparing against opponents in advance. I had to keep taking screen prints of the names published at 6.30pm.</p>
<p>Great for a first effort. And fantastic work from all the organisers (and everyone involved with the event...captains, players, etc). Many thanks to all of you. However, I just hope that this online league will never detract from/replace the 4NCL proper. Too many downsides (especially the cheating aspect, which will never fully go away with such long time controls).</p>
<p>Well done organising, much appreciated, and well done. The only serious difficulty is dealing with cheating appropriately. Ian Wallis might not want to play 4NCL for the rest of his life.</p>
<p>Most of the players have agreed that they have found the format enjoyable, for many it is the first time at playing online chess regularly.</p>
<p>My team suffered 2 defaults. I think -1 game point is too severe a penalty in a 4-board match</p>

the 4ncl step in when there was a need and it was a little big rush, but great what Alex and the team did with this, you never going to please everyone but you might get more teams in and also I think you have to be a ECF supporter to play in the next event as you don't know if people will be ECF gold or silver or bronze members next season as how can you pay the ECF for no OTB chess and as one half of the silver members rep, I don't know how the members would wanted me to vote?

Thanks for organising this season's 4NCL online. The anti-cheating talk was very interesting too.

well done for setting this up so effectively - we're all learning as we go along with online and I believe you've done all you could re: cheating at this stage

I enjoyed it during lockdown!

Thank you very much for the huge effort to make this fantastic online chess league. This is the best ever league we had attended.

no

Excellent. I particularly like the opportunity to play against players and teams from different regions of the country. Only online can enable that for the average club player.

It was very well-organised and enjoyable.

A good effort by organisers

The accept challenge procedure, is a fast finger exercise!

Keep it up!

Not sure how to follow team games live on match nights, I think you can follow more than i game but unsure how to do this. Would appreciate if Lichess make this easier to do.

I think that the organisation of the event has been a huge success and congratulations must go to all those involved. To set something up so quickly and so effectively was incredibly impressive. I take my hat off to all those involved - you have provided an invaluable service during these difficult times.

However, it is something that suits the current unprecedented circumstances.

Our decision as to whether or not to enter next time will, I suspect, be based largely on when we think we will be able to resume league chess. Personally, I see on-line chess as a replacement for OTB chess rather than as something to go alongside it. For me, I struggle to take a chess match on a computer anywhere nearly as seriously as one where I am facing the opponent across the board. Once league chess is able to resume then there would be inevitable clashes with league matches (I speak as both a captain and as the secretary of the Bristol league). I suspect that I would need a squad of 8 to deal with likely absences and I only have 5 this time round - 5 has worked well with the lockdown restrictions but not when/if we get back to normal. If I can get a big enough squad (and I'll be happy to be part of that squad) then we'll give it a go.

At the moment I think that everyone has taken the tournament at face value due to the circumstances and everyone believes that everyone is playing with the best of intentions. When we get back to normal then people will be much more suspicious of players cheating. No matter how effective the anti-cheating measures are there will always be a large number of players who simply don't want to play competitive on-line chess because of the cheating uncertainties.

I hope that these thoughts are useful

Thanks for all of your hard work - it really has been appreciated.

Thanks a lot to the organisers for organising

Thank you for running it, it has been very enjoyable and it's nice to play with a more varied group of players in my club who are not usually in the same team as me.

You put together a good competition under great pressure. I enjoyed it

Cheating is the major issue

A welcome diversion, so many thanks to all involved in making it happen. I can't wait for season 2!
more seasons /sessions please. with lockdown this is our only chance to play competitive chess as part of a team.
I think a £10 cost to enter is very fair, and a bargain!
Overall, I have been very impressed
It was a bit of chaos in initial rounds on everyone's side :) but it really improved and became very enjoyable event!
It is unjust to let the results of those caught cheating stand. To merely not unrate those games is not enough. Chaos comes about when you treat cheats in a wishy washy and inconsistent way. When a soccer player receives a red card that is that. They are off. No argument can be made. Chess players declared to be cheats should be treated in the same way. On the extremely rare (Once every 30 years, per player, I read somewhere) occasions when a mistake is made it should be treated in the same way as when a ref makes a mistake. IE tough ****
No
Maybe pairings should be done via Round Robin if possible. We were in 3rd division and were playing stronger opposition every week. If we would have been paired with a more leveled system maybe the season would have been more enjoyable.
Wim 1st team were clearly in wrong division in season 1, hopefully this will be refined in season 2
You are going slightly crazy over online chess and seem to regard it as a perfect substitute for OTB chess. It is not. It is antisocial and will tend to keep people in their homes glued to their screens for far too long. It is unhealthy. You are also proposing to start the next season in August. This is still summer. People need to be encouraged to be more active in the lighter and warmer months. Did you consult members about the start date? I don't think so. The ECF is generally too high-handed. You seem to cater for the semi-professional rather than the ordinary chess player for whom chess is one hobby amongst many.
I don't think online will ever replace OTB. OTB is a superior form of chess
The 4NCL Online season 1 was a godsend for chess players of all strengths during lockdown. I expect the popularity of 4NCL online chess will remain long after the pandemic is over.
I would explore options of making positive use of the fact that it's not just the same as OTB, rather than just worrying about cheating. (For instance, having some boards play variants as I said earlier.)
I wish there were more rounds so that the format could be each team plays every team in the division, and I also think that teams could consist of more players if possible
I would like the tie break rule changed from lower board count to just board count. I'm completely biased in requesting this as we drew against a higher-rated team and were knocked out in the quarter-finals on this rule. Not sure I can face that anguish again.
Would like to say thank you to all those who organised this. It is easy to be critical where things go wrong or are not optimal but I thought a great job was done and I enjoyed the season.
appreciate the anti-cheating seminar arranged
The 10 round regular format needs to be addressed, so that is fair(er).
I am disappointed that only captains, players were allowed to participate. I would have liked to make some comments about the Junior 4NCL Online.
I would like to thank everyone who helped with the competition.

I was cheated against in the Div 3 quarter final in a match that would decide the result and his account has been banned, but the result not overturned. An ungraded player was able to get away with 6 blatant cheated games in the tournament and his team didn't receive any penalty, in essence wasting all of The Rookies time in bothering to play the quarter finals.

The majority of the players in my squad really enjoyed the opportunity to play some serious chess, and most feedback from them to me has been positive. I think it was great how it was all arranged so quickly after over the board chess was cancelled. Minor hiccups were sorted swiftly, and I always found Alex to be approachable, helpful and good humoured.

The ongoing controversy about cheating has prevented me giving higher marks

No

Great to be able to have a glass of wine, eat, sit outside, stay in touch with teammates by WhatsApp during a game.

Well done! It was really excellent work to get it set up and run so smoothly. During lockdown it has been the highlight of the week for many of us.

team ratings for for 2nd and 3rd teams are apocryphal. Celtic Tiger Cubs in division 4 are vastly under-rated and should of been at the top of division 3. ask teams to name their players and then restrict the upper team average.

Thank you !!

Well done guys.. much appreciated!

Stop the playoffs and you get a 10 from me.