

New Zealand Chess Federation Congress

2-12 January 2022

Congress Organiser Tournament Report by IA Craig Hall

Format and Time Controls

6 Tournaments:

NZ Championship – 9 Round Swiss paired with Vega, 1 round per day starting at 2pm, open entry but aimed at players with NZCF or FIDE ratings of 2000 and over. 40 moves in 90 minutes plus 30 minutes for the rest of the game with an increment of 30 seconds per move from move 1.

Major Open – same format and time control as NZ Championship but restricted to players with NZCF or FIDE ratings below 2100.

NZ Junior Championship – 7 Round Swiss paired with Vega, 1 round per day starting at 9am, restricted to juniors (under 20). 60 minutes plus a 30 second increment per move.

Canterbury Open – planned to be the same format as NZ Junior Championship, but low numbers (6 entries) meant a change in format from Swiss to a round robin. Still 1 round per day starting at 9am but 5 rounds/days instead of 7. 60 minutes plus a 30 second increment per move.

NZ Lightning Championship – 9 Round Swiss paired with Vega, approx. 2.5 hours starting at 9am. 3 minutes plus a 2 second increment per move.

NZ Rapid Championship – 9 Round Swiss paired with Vega, approx. 1.5 days starting at 1pm day 1, 9am day 2. 25 minutes plus a 5 second increment per move.

Entries

Tournament	Budget	Actual
NZ Championship	24	24
Major Open	36	41
NZ Junior Championship	40	32
Canterbury Open	12	6
NZ Lightning Championship	40	51
NZ Rapid Championship	40	53
Total	192	207

In total, 88 players entered the 6 tournaments, with 23 from Canterbury and 65 travelling from as far as Auckland and Invercargill.

8 players withdrew from various events due to Covid (including 4 players based in Australia once there was no option for MIQ-free travel), and an additional 4 players advised that they did not enter due to the Covid requirements (3 because of vaccine passes, 1 because of not requiring masks). Without Covid, no doubt there would have been more entries.

Venue

Riccarton Park Function Centre at Riccarton Racecourse. The playing room was the Nightmarch Room (270m²) and the analysis/waiting room was the Phar Lap Room (180m²). Using FIDE's guide of 2m² per player, we could have seated over 100 players if necessary, but the actual numbers meant a very pleasant, spacious playing experience. The natural light was very popular, although did mean some direct sunlight on the lower boards in the late afternoon/evening. Affected players were offered the option to move if necessary, but nobody took up the offer, suggesting it was not a major issue.

Playing Area Layout

Tables were laid out singly, being 1.83m trestle tables owned by the Club (tables and chairs were included in the venue hire, but their tables were unsuitable), with one board on the first four tables of the NZ Championship, and otherwise two boards per table. The NZ Championship comprised one column (vertical) of eight tables to allow easy wiring for the DGT boards, and the Major Open comprised one long column of seven tables (one gap to allow easy access for the NZ Championship boards) and the remaining tables in a smaller area to the side. The playing room could have held more tables if necessary.

Arbiters' tables were placed near the main entrance to the room, and also one table alongside the NZ Championship tables to hold the laptop that the DGT boards were connected to.

A reception area was placed in the foyer by the main entrance to the building on the first day of the NZ Championship and again for the NZ Junior Championship to check vaccine passes and hand out lanyards (see below).

Analysis Room Layout

The second room was set out with tables and sufficient chairs for around 60 people but could have been expanded if necessary.

Website

The NZCF Calendar page held Vega links, general info and the entry form with all information including all the tournament regulations (including Covid-specific regulations). There was also a page on the Canterbury Chess Club website with general Congress information and additional accommodation options. As a trial for this Congress Trybooking (an Australasian ticketing and payment website) was used to allow credit card payments. Trybooking charges processing fees of 3% and 30c per ticket (entry), which was passed onto the entrants. 30 tournament entries from 18 players were received with \$2,890 paid. With Covid withdrawals, the final result was 19 tournament entries received from 12 players, and \$1,735 paid (see report below – a ticket is an entry into one tournament, refunds show as 0 because they didn't purchase any tickets effectively speaking).

Name	Transaction	Tickets Sold	Sales	Refunds
Archer, Ollie	8 August 2021	1	70.00	0.00
Buciu, Aurel John	15 November 2021	0	325.00	(325.00)
Carlyle, Mathieson	8 December 2021	1	120.00	0.00
Cooper, Nigel	1 December 2021	1	120.00	0.00
de Maupeou, Alexandre	31 December 2021	1	100.00	0.00
Hou, Aihua	8 August 2021	2	130.00	0.00
Langford, Joshua	17 July 2021	2	270.00	0.00
Li, Bill	15 December 2021	1	70.00	0.00
Lovejoy, David	1 November 2021	0	60.00	(60.00)
Punsalan, Marivic	19 December 2021	2	270.00	0.00
Rasoulipour, Sahand	2 January 2022	1	75.00	0.00
Reilly, Timothy	27 October 2021	0	200.00	(200.00)
Si, William	21 December 2021	2	95.00	0.00
Sunathvanichkul, Tawan	19 December 2021	1	120.00	0.00
Wells, Clinton	18 December 2021	3	195.00	0.00
Xue, Didi	1 January 2022	1	100.00	0.00
Zara, Baraa	30 July 2021	0	285.00	(285.00)
Zara, Anas	30 July 2021	0	285.00	(285.00)
Total		19	2,890.00	(1,155.00)

Sponsorship/Grants/Donations

As the venue had one hotel in easy walking distance (Racecourse Hotel and Motor Lodge), that was the obvious option to ask, and they provided discounted rate and some meal vouchers (given to volunteers). Christchurch City Council also supported the event with an \$800 grant from a contestable events fund. The major sponsorship was in the form of a grant from Kiwi Gaming Foundation which covered the venue hire in full and also some new tables and chairs for the Canterbury Chess Club clubrooms (the tables were also used for Congress). We also received very welcome sponsorship from Chessventures (reduced arbiter fee and books for prizes for the NZ Juniors), Bo.Systems NZ (cash) and Respectrum Insurance Brokers (free insurance). NZCF also waived levies and received a large donation to pass on, and some players also made donations with their entry fees.

Given the tight budgets of these events normally, these were all very welcome.

A 2.4m x 1.2m banner (landscape) was produced with the help of volunteers/club members Clinton and Jessica Rains, as Jess designed the banner at no charge, and Clint was able to get it made at short notice. The venue's hooks weren't strong enough to hold the banner up, but electrical tape (used for

taping DGT board cables to the floor to minimize the trip hazard) was easily strong enough.

Prior to the Event

An email was sent to all entries requesting vaccine passes and reminding them to arrive in time to sign in by 1:00pm on the first day and to collect their lanyards (including for any spectators accompanying the players e.g. family). This also allowed name tags to be personalized for most of the spectators and made registration much smoother.

Trophies were requested from players and administrators and all but one were available, but the NZ Junior Championship trophy will need to be retrieved once the school year begins. Miniature trophies for all official titles (6 in total) were purchased beforehand for \$38.90 ea including engraving the tournament name and given to the winners, and the actual trophies were used for the prizegiving and photos, and are with the engraver, after which they will be returned to NZCF. As there was a tie for NZ Junior and NZ Schoolpupil Champion, two additional miniature trophies are also being prepared.

Health and Safety, and Covid

A health and safety plan was produced for the event close to the dates of the event itself due to Covid. There was a First Aider among the volunteers and an evacuation plan noted.

However, the predominant risk/concern was Covid, and the venue advised that they had moved to being CVC-compliant i.e. vaccine passes required for all attendees unless exempt (under 12 years, 3 months of age, or temporary exemption from the Ministry of Health). This aligned with NZCF Council's decision, but was welcome in terms of not having to worry about the compliance or otherwise of other events at the same venue.

As the arbiters did not know all the players by sight, and phones are required to be off during play, a decision was made to use lanyards with a name tag as evidence of vaccine pass compliance for all players and spectators. These were personalized where possible, with a few generic Spectator passes as spares (and some local spectators did visit including IM Vernon Small). This also provided a good opportunity to put sponsor logos on the backs. This is familiar to any players in FIDE events where accreditation is used e.g. Olympiads, but was new territory for most of the players. However, there were no issues with the measures, and players generally wore them around the venue (they were permitted to leave them on their tables while seated).

The venue provided plenty of sanitizer, and during the event, disinfectant spray was used between rounds with a spray bottle which sprayed a fine mist over the equipment and was then left to settle and air dry (this is a common method in food preparation e.g. fast food). The active ingredient was propyl alcohol which can be purchased in large quantities from hardware stores e.g. Bunnings and mixed with water to dilute. For Covid disinfection, this should follow Ministry of Health guidelines which at time of writing is a minimum of 70% alcohol (our disinfectant ratio was 500mL alcohol to 100 mL water, but was a commercial

product provided by a volunteer from work, but is not available to the general public, so these instructions are provided as an option for clubs). Note to anyone purchasing these types of products to follow the safety instructions!

The entry form also had a number of regulations due to Covid including refunds in the case of withdrawals or tournament cancellations, dealing with players with Covid symptoms, handshakes not being required and small entry contingencies.

Running the Event

The event generally ran smoothly with no serious issues and minimal issues overall because the planning successfully identified the main issues in advance so we could mitigate them the extent possible. The feedback received after the event has all been very positive. The rounds generally started on time. There were a small number of illegal moves and two mobile phone losses despite reminders at the start of each round.

Discussion points and recommendations

With Congress hopefully getting bigger as chess popularity expands, and health and safety continuing to be a focus, including Covid, there are some challenges for future organisers and NZCF, but also some opportunities.

Health and safety plans: Health and safety is essential in the modern environment, not least to minimize liability. Better to have a plan and not need it than to not have one and require it. This also includes knowing the evacuation plan for the venue and who the wardens are, and ideally having at least one First Aider available. Note that DGT board cables are trip hazards, so should be taped to the floor.

Covid: It is essential for the organizer to know the legal requirements well (the organizer is potentially liable for any failures). Our plan for any diagnoses of Covid among participants/spectators was to call Healthline and take their instructions, and we also had good refund policies if tournaments were cancelled. Lanyards in line with FIDE Accreditation also help control the playing venue and area if required. NZCF, Canterbury CC and the venue all made decisions on CVC-compliance (vaccine passes) being required. As masks are not legally required, these were recommended of attendees rather than required. Disinfectant spray (min. 70% alcohol per Ministry of Health guidelines) is the easiest way to disinfect/sanitise equipment between rounds. The entry form or website should also have good regulations.

Public and Statutory Liability insurance: As with health and safety, insurance is essential. Better to have insurance and not need it, than to not have insurance, and require it. Canterbury CC has insurance for \$2,000,000 as it is a requirement of booking Christchurch City Council venues and also receiving grants from them.

Registration/check-in on the first day: To avoid pairing players who are unable to attend the first round (or at all) e.g. missed their flight, or flight was delayed/cancelled etc., getting players to register is highly recommended. This does not have to be in person and could be by text message (for example), but

offering both as options is suggested. Allowing a reasonable amount of time to update pairing software for round one is essential – at least two hours if possible to allow for lunch between registration and the players meeting/opening ceremony. As not all tournaments start on the same day, registration before each tournament may also be advisable.

Arbiters: With the current format including the NZ Junior in the morning, reasonably large fields and DGT boards, 3 arbiters is a minimum as that allows some breaks during rounds, norms, and arbiters able to rotate breaks in the morning tournaments. The current format also typically requires 9-10 hours to cover the tournaments where there are two in a day, while generally not paying minimum wage for those hours.

Equipment: NZCF provided all sets, boards, DGT boards and clocks, but associated costs e.g. transport/courier costs will need to be built into budgets and items sent in good time to arrive. DGT boards require a specialist to manage them (who may be an arbiter but doesn't have to be). The NZCF laptops were substandard when they were purchased in 2018 (only 4GB RAM).

Website/Entry Form: Other than an entry on the Calendar page, this was effectively hosted on the Canterbury CC website. A Facebook event was also created and co-hosted by NZCF and Canterbury CC – this is a good model for future years, and also allows advertising, which we did for \$100 which got us 11,838 views and 129 people opening the entry form. Being a co-hosted Facebook event, both hosts got the benefits (views and people liking/following the pages) of the advertising.

The entry form was reworked completely from previous NZCF entry forms, and a front page designed by a graphic designer (free by a friend of a friend) that could double as a flier/poster. The tournament regulations were also carefully written to deal with potential Covid issues.

Funding: The main sources of funding are entry fees, sponsorship, grants and NZCF contributions (which may include grants from donors, patrons and overseas chess sources).

There are some natural sponsors e.g. rental car agencies, accommodation, travel agents, airlines etc., and because around 100 participants and accompanying adults/spectators attend, the event should be quite attractive as a minor sponsorship opportunity e.g. club members who own a business. A hotel conference venue may also be convinced to reduce or waive venue hire on the basis of likely room bookings (including any travelling arbiters and GMs), the banquet, restaurant/bar/café sales etc.

Grants to cover costs are another good option e.g. gaming machine trusts such as Lion Foundation. The biggest and therefore most obvious cost to cover is the venue hire. One potential difficulty is grant applications may require two quotes and will only pay for future costs, so there is no ability to pay a deposit until after the process is completed and money paid.

Councils often have event and tourism funds – because Congress will involve at least one night's stay for travelling players, and many players will opt to travel

the day before, the events will usually meet tourism-based criteria e.g. minimum 150 nights spent in the council area.

NZCF can provide funding either directly as a cash grant or indirectly in equipment, fee waivers and other assistance for NZCF tournaments, with Congress being the easiest to raise money for e.g. Kasparov Chess Foundation pre-Covid.

See below for some statistics which may be useful for applying for grants etc.

Budgets: The main income is entry fees which will be around \$20,000 based on 20 entries to NZ Championship and 40 to each of the other tournaments (more in Auckland). Costs will be around \$1,000/day for the venue = \$11,000, \$10,000 for prizes, \$4-5,000 for arbiters plus travel and accommodation costs if required, \$1,000 for NZCF tournament levies (NZCF covers FIDE levies for NZCF tournaments), \$1-2,000 for other costs (banquet dinner, banner, stationery, any other advertising, contingencies) and if conditions are being offered, \$2-3,000 per player (flights and shared accommodation). From this, the additional funding required is approx. \$10,000 outside Auckland, more if there are a lot of players being offered conditions, less if there are more entries and/or reduced prizes.

Statistics: Total participants across all events - 88 players and 3 arbiters.

Local players: 23

Out of town players: 65

Female/Total breakdown by event:

Junior - $7/32 = 21.9\%$

NZ Championship - $3/24 = 12.5\%$

Major Open - $6/41 = 14.6\%$

Lightning - $5/51 = 9.8\%$

Rapid - $6/53 = 11.3\%$

Canterbury Open - $0/6 = 0\%$

Overall - $10/88 = 11.3\%$ (of these 10, 8 are juniors)

Local arbiters: 1

Out of town arbiters: 2

Total nights of out of town participants: 702 + an unknown number of additional nights added on by participants for holidays etc. (this was calculated as number of days per travelling player per tournament, excluding concurrent tournaments, +1 as most players arrived early or stayed later)

Total games: 874

Recommendations:

1. Provide formal guidance on organizing NZCF tournaments which includes a bid document, a template budget spreadsheet, template entry form, template banner document, Covid and H&S guidance, a timeline, an equipment and stationery list, a venue checklist and anything else obvious

2. Provide a specific Congress page on the NZCF website or create a website specifically for NZCF tournaments which includes an online entry form
3. Apply annually for funding for assistance for Congress/NZCF Tournaments e.g. scoresheets, stationery, miniature trophies, engraving, shipping (both directions) of trophies and equipment
4. Apply for a grant for special padded transport case(s) for the NZCF trophies, replacement NZCF laptops, a tournament box i.e. one or more large plastic tubs or similar with all the little things required for Congress. This could then be shipped to Congress with the trophies.