

Two Damp Days in Manchester

A report on the NJCA at the UK Chess Challenge Manchester Gigafinal, July 6th and 7th, 2008

I had not intended going to the Manchester Gigafinal this year - as a Yorkshireman I don't go to the wrong side of the Pennines if I can help it. And as the weekend came at the start of the RGS Summer holidays I knew that many of the boys and two of the girls who had qualified would not be going. However, I had won an unexpected prize in the Hartlepool Congress a week before and so could afford a couple of days at the Gigafinal. Organiser Mike Basman expected some 500 children to turn up on each day.

On the Saturday

Saturday was all about the under-10s and younger. There was one Boys Section at U-7, two at Under-8, three at Under-9 and at Under-10. At each age-group there was a separate girls section.

Aidan Byrne (St.Teresa's - Under-7) was expected to do well and did so. He won his first 5 games but lost a disputed game in Round 6 - tears from Aidan but he had still done better than anybody else from Northumberland. "2nd" place qualifies him for the Sheffield Challengers but sadly he'll be away in France so won't be able to take his place. Ella Helmsley (St.John's, Alnwick), in the U-7 Girls managed 2 wins out her six games.

Daksh Sharma (RGS), scoring 4/6, did best of our Under-8s. Parth Mannikar (RGS) and Daniel Bell (St.Teresa's) each managed 3/6, half marks. Disappointment though for Amadeus Biernat (Christchurch) and for Louis McBride (Tynemouth) each with 2/6

At Under-9 both Arjun Anilkumar (RGS) and Andrew Gatenby (Red Rose) won rosettes for 4/6 as did Abhishek Kamath (RGS) on 3½. Naman Garg (RGS) and Samuel Lord (NPS) each scored 3/6. Only just below half marks, Jack Hughes (St Teresa's) and Rahim Neal-Yakoob (NPS) each scored 2½/6.

Edward Williams and Rahul Bhagwat (both RGS) scored 3½/6 in different sections a Under-10. Eddie must be one of the most improved players at RGS this year. I had always assumed Rahul (who is in Year 6) to be an under-11. I was surprised to see him at u-10. Urban Coningham (RGS) must have been disappointed to score only 3/6. Also on 3/6 were Mark Rowden (St.Mary's), Philip Christian (Gosforth) and Ayende Diop-West (NPS). Vignesh Pradham (NPS) scored 2, but Charlie Gray (NPS) and Ibrahim Nasser (RGS) only 1. Ibrahim waited till the very last round to make his point.

On the Sunday

All the older ones - Under-11 and above. 4 sections at U-11, 2 each at U-12 and U-13. After that smaller sections and in some cases boys and girls played in the same tournament. If the standard of play on the Saturday had been good, things on the Sunday were much, much harder. Any of our children who scored half-marks or more had done really well.

At U-11 John Abraham (RGS) scored 4½/5 and had he not lost his final game would have qualified for Sheffield. George Wyatt (RGS) made 4/5, also losing his final round. Adam Clark (RGS) who had qualified for Sheffield last year, was disappointed with 3/6 this time. William Fraser (NPS) scored only 1. I was pleased to see so many children from NPS at Manchester. They will do better when they have had more competition practice (at our NJCA tournaments!). In the Under-11 Girls section Sophie Gatenby (Red Rose) made half marks with 3/6.

Tom Cleminson and James Schofield (both RGS) scored 2/6 at U-12; Matthew Bullock (St.Michaels, Durham) just 1/6. Matthew Oliver (Berwick) scored 2½ at U-13; Vladimir Vankov (Gosforth) scored 2 and Antonio Gagliasso (John Spence) just 1 in the same section.

Chris Johnson (Belmont) and Daniel White (Framwellgate Moor) both play at the Durham City Club and both finished on 2/6 at U-14; Shaun Clayton (St Michael's) scored 1/6. Fatheha Essa (RGS) just lost out by ½ a point to Aine Beldon (St.Thomas More) in our Megafinal. Here she reversed the positions, scoring 3 to Aine's 2½ in the U-14 Girls.

Ismail Essa (RGS) was our sole representative at U-15. He scored 2½/6. Nobody at U-16.

Thomas Glover (RGS) finished 3rd with 4/6 at U-17. He qualifies for the Challengers at Sheffield! William Morris (Tynemouth) did well to score 3/6 in an immensely strong U-18 Section