

Cavendish Chess Club – First Team Report 2009/10

London League

The first team finished in third place in the first division with 8 match points and 74½ game points behind Wood Green (10½, 100½) and Drunken Knights (9½, 88). After a disappointing early loss to Hackney we bounced back with strong wins over near rivals Streatham, Athenaeum, and King's Head I to finish the season at the front of the chasing pack. The wins over the latter two of these were particularly hard-fought, Cavendish emerging the winner by the narrowest possible margin in each match.

Eastman Cup

Cavendish entered, and won the Eastman Cup for the first time in seven years! I understand the frustration some people at the club feel about the rules regarding player-eligibility for EC matches (whereby a player can play for one team in the Eastman Cup and a different team in the league). However, those rules are clearly stated and, after talking to various other captains about the matter, it seems there is little chance of changing them. In any case, we showed this season that we can stick with a team of bona fide Cavendish players and still win the competition! All three matches were extremely close, Cavendish winning 5½-4½ each time and a total of 21 players turned out for the club – truly a team effort.

Individual performance

The 1st team Player of the Year award can only go to Jon Parker. Not only did he play in every single league match (only Peter Taylor was close to this with 10 appearances) but also his percentage score was among the highest with 8½/11. Looking at things another way, Natasha Regan and Simon Roe both significantly exceeded their expected scores against the opposition they faced. I am relieved to report that I wasn't quite the worst performer on this measure of achievement (you know who you are!). Finally we relied heavily on second team regulars to bolster the first team and this year's undoubted *super sub* is Caius Turner with 3½/4 and a performance grading of above 230.

Next season

As a club we have some difficult decisions to make before the start of next season. The first team played roughly to their expected strength and scraped third place in the league by a very narrow margin. If the results of two individual games had been reversed we could have finished in 6th place. There is now an appreciable gap between our first team and Drunken Knights, and obviously a further jump to Wood Green.

This season several of our nominated players have left the club or played no league matches for us and will not be eligible to be nominated players again next season. In fact, of our twelve nominated players last season, only seven (Parker, Watson, Cox, Ferguson, Piper, Taylor and

Regan) can be nominated again. We may have two additions to the team (Terry Chapman has provisionally agreed to play for us and Lorin d'Costa is a hopeful if and when he moves to London). However, even in this best-case scenario, three players who have played regularly for the second team last season will need to be nominated as first team players and therefore will not be eligible for second team matches. Both as a club, and individually, we need to decide whether we want our very strongest 12 players in the first team or whether we keep some of these players as second team nominees and rotate them through the first team as required? To truly challenge for the top places in the first division I think we need the former (although even then success would hardly be guaranteed). To get two teams back in the first division, and to maintain them there (as so nearly happened this year) it's the latter.

Geoff Hollis and Ron Harman both acted as captain when I was unavailable. Barry Green and Barry Fraser were both very helpful in providing players when we were running short towards the end of the season. 29 players played for the first team in some guise or other over the season – many thanks to all of you. I am very happy to continue as team captain next year but will equally happily step aside if anybody else would like a go!

Matt Piper

7th June 2010