**Inter-Club Competitions**

At the sixth Annual General Meeting of the Association held on October 5th 1895 the first arrangements for team competitions were made, the following instructions being given to the committee:-

1. To open a subscription list for the purpose of providing a Trophy to be completed annually amongst the clubs of the County.
2. To prepare a scheme under which that Trophy shall be played for, such scheme to be so framed that the clubs in the smaller teams shall be able to complete on as nearly equal terms as possible with those of the larger teams.
3. To commence the first Annual Competition for the Trophy not later that February 1896 and complete it by May 1896.

These instructions were duly carried out, and the resulting competition became known as the “Hampshire Trophy Competition”. It remained virtually the same until 1928, when the basis of team competitions in the County were altered.

It is therefore proposed to deal with the development of the competitions up to 1928 first, and it can conveniently be done under the three headings of the original instruction.

1. **Provision of Trophy**

The subscription service was opened, and left open until the end of 1896. The Trophy was purchased in 1897 and is described in the accounts as:-

*“One of the finest Ivory Chessman, No 1 full club size, Staunton Pattern. One County board No 1 to match, Holly and Rosewood squares (2¾). Board edged with Satinwood solid Rosewood frame, Italian Walnut panels French Polished.”*

The full subscription list is recorded in the financial accounts.

1. **First Competition**

This can conveniently be discussed of next, a knockout competition was duly held, and was won by the Portsmouth Chess Club.

1. **To propose a scheme for the competition**

The original instruction was for some form of handicap competition, and in the first season this was accomplished by insisting on the Southampton chess club entering two teams of equal strength. Handicapping in some form or other remained until 1928.

The league rules are not recorded, accept certain amendments as they were proposed at annual meetings, but reference to these amendments and the written results shows that with the exception of 1903-04 a system of points handicapping was only done by the larger clubs entering two or more teams. In 1903-04 a system of points handicapping was introduced, but no further mention is made of it. The Southampton and Portsmouth clubs are the only ones who have ever been handicapped, in some years both clubs were able to enter as many as four teams.

The normal members of players to a team has been six, although it started at seven, and in one or two years was reduced to five.

A knockout competition was organised for the first two seasons, but it was then decided that for each team to play each other would make for more matches and greater interest, and that method has been adopted ever since. In some cases it has been necessary to play in two divisions, and for the divisions to play a final.

**The Junior or Hampshire League Competition**

In 1928 a junior competition was inaugurated, mainly to attract new and smaller clubs. Southampton entered two teams, and new entries were received from Eastleigh, Romsey, Hartley University and a second team from Andover. Two competitions were played, and then the war caused a break until the 1920-21 season.

The early rules governing the competition are not available, but from 1920 onwards a system of combined Trophy and League teams was used. When a team entered both competitions the top three players were barred from playing in league matches. When opposing teams both played in both competitions a match of nine boards a side would be played, the top six boards counting in the Trophy competition, whilst the bottom six counted in the League. Had all teams completed in both competitions this system could have worked much more smoothly, but as it was the players who were eligible for both leagues had too many matches.

Nevertheless, the League competition did a very great deal of good in providing match play for many.

**The Hampshire League 1928 – 1940**

At the 1928 Annual General Meeting it was decided to discontinue the old competition, and to institute one competition to be known as the “Hampshire Chess League”. This competition to be run in two or more divisions, according to the entries and their strength. The principle of promotion and relegation to be adopted. Clubs entering two or more teams to enter definite first and second teams according to strength.

Rules were draw up, which remain substantially unchanged, and are recorded as in operation in 1940. The main change being that promotion and relegation is not automatic, as with the limited number of clubs and the big strength differences it was found that the method did not work satisfactory. The main point of the present scheme is that it is definitely a club championship.

**The clubs in the Competition**

Portsmouth, Southampton, Andover and Gosport were the clubs in the first competition. Of these Gosport have since dropped out, but the others have remained in the whole time, and have formed the backbone of the competition. Bournemouth, although always a strong club numerically, have rarely entered, mainly owing to travelling difficulties.

Other fairly regular entrants have been University College, Southampton (earlier known as Hartley College), Winchester and Basingstoke, also since their formation in 1921 and 1925 respectively the Taunton’s School and Old Tauntonian’s (Southampton) clubs have entered every year.

**Analysis of Winners of Competitions**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Hampshire Trophy - League Division I | |
| Portsmouth | 14 ½ times |
| Southampton | 13 ½ |
| University College | 6 |
| Old Tauntonians | 3 |
| Basingstoke | 2 |
| Winchester | 2 |
| Bournemouth | 2 |
| Andover | 2 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Hampshire League - League Division II | |
| Andover | 5 times |
| Portsmouth | 3 |
| Southampton | 2 |
| Basingstoke | 2 |
| Taunton’s School | 2 |
| Old Tauntonian’s | 2 |
| Winchester | 2 |
| Winchester | 2 |
| Bournemouth | 1 |
| Broughton | 1 |
| Vectis (Ryde IOW) | 1 |

The results of all matches that are recorded are given after the rules.

**Hampshire League Rules (1939)**

1. The league is open to all affiliated clubs.
2. Teams shall be elected by the Council to a division.
3. Teams shall consist of five players.
4. The top four players of a club competing in two divisions shall be nominated at the beginning of the season, and they shall be ineligible to play in the second team. Further, it a second team player be called to play in more than two first team matches during a season he shall thereafter be ineligible to play in the second team
5. Where a club enters a team in more than one division their matches for the two teams shall be arranged for the same day.
6. No player shall play for more than one club during any season.
7. All matches to be played arranged by the secretary, or upon such date mutually agreed by the club secretaries, of which date the league secretary shall be notified.
8. All matches shall allow for at least three hours play.
9. Clocks shall be used in all Division I matches, and whenever possible in other Divisions. The rate of play shall be thirty moves in seventy-five minutes and six moves in each succeeding fifteen minutes.
10. Visiting teams shall have the choice of 1st move in the top board, the moves remaining boards alternating.
11. The score in all matches shall be sent to the honorary secretary within 24 hours of the match. All games not finished to be marked “A” on the score, and a diagram record of such games, stating the result claimed, and with a fee of 2/6 per game, shall be sent to honorary secretary within 7 days. Where the claim is upheld, this fee is to be returned.

Note: Both clubs to send the score and adjudications, and unless claims for adjudication are properly sent, an opponent’s claim may be given without adjudication.

1. Any disputes shall be referred to the Council, whose decision shall be final.