

COVID-19 IS NO MATCH FOR THE UK'S INTREPID JUNIOR CHESS PLAYERS AS THE 25TH DELANCEY UK SCHOOLS' CHESS CHALLENGE REACHES ITS GRAND FINALE

2 SEPTEMBER 2020



- **With children spending more time at home, online chess has seen a boom during lockdown with virtual platforms such as Lichess reporting a huge increase in their traditional daily usage**

This weekend (5 and 6 September), the Delancey UK Schools' Chess Challenge's final stage of competition 'The Terafinal' is taking place, hosting 250 of the best junior chess players from across the UK. After months of hard work surviving the first three gruelling preliminary stages and beating 40,000 other competitors, the top players will be competing for £3,500 of monetary prizes and dazzling trophies.

With schools and venues forced to close due to COVID-19, this year's challenge has had to adapt. Instead of being hosted in its customary venue, the competition will take place online, through Zoom and 'Lichess', the free online chess platform.

Sarah Longson, Tournament Director, and 2013 British Ladies Chess Champion, said: *"It has been really inspiring seeing the chess community come together to organise large online events such as this. Things have certainly changed a lot since I was playing in the competition myself in the late 90's and the emergence of the strong chess computer engines only seems to be accelerating young player's development".*

For further information, please contact:

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The Terafinal takes place over two days and is broken down into five age groups– under 8s, under 10s, under 12s, under 14s and under 18s. On Saturday, the tournament will follow a traditional 7 round competition where the top 4 players in each age section will be determined. In total 20 children will progress through to the following day known as “Knock Out Sunday”, where the final ‘best of four’ matches are played to reveal the winning players. The games are limited to 10 minutes and will be fast and furious with parents following the games anxiously online.

Many of the top players are already regular competitors for their respective national teams so the standard is sure to be high. Many children have been using the lockdown period to hone their chess skills, taking part in a myriad of online training events put on by the Delancey UK Chess Challenge including training sessions with top England internationals such as Grandmaster David Howell, a three time British Champion and former World top 40 player.

Some big names to look out for include:

- FIDE Master James Moreby (RGS Newcastle, U18)
- 2020 Blitz Champion and 2019 U8 runner up Soham Kumar (Maidenhead, U9)
- 2019 U8 Champion Aayush Dewangan (Berkshire, U9)
- Elis Dicen (Coventry Chess Club, U10)
- 2019 U10 Champion Denis Dupuis (Battersea Chess Club, U11)
- Eugenia Karas (NLCS, U11)
- “Variant Chess” expert Kenneth Hobson (Oxfordshire, U11)
- UKCC Streamer Aron Saunders (Bristol, U14)

The Delancey UK Schools Chess Challenge is now in its 25th year after beginning in 1996 and becoming an immediate success with 700 schools entering. This year’s competition started in January with 1000 schools participating across 50 counties in the UK. The second stage of competition ‘The Megafinals’ took place over the summer in June.

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Sarah Longson
Tournament Director
UK Schools’ Chess Challenge

Founder and CEO of Delancey, Jamie Ritblat commented: *“Delancey was delighted that we were able to continue being the Headline Sponsor of the 25th UK Schools’ Chess Challenge. In this especially challenging year, with schools being closed due to COVID-19, the competition and the competitors have obviously had to alter the way that things usually operate. Despite that, we hope and believe that The Challenge has continued to have a positive educational impact on the very many young aspiring UK students who have entered the competition. We would like to thank Sarah and her team for all their diligent work in ensuring the Chess Challenge and The Terafinal have been able to continue so successfully on the new virtual platform. We wish all the 250 young people who are playing the very best of luck!”*

The action this weekend is being covered live on the UK Chess Challenge twitch channel which you can be watched here: <https://www.twitch.tv/chessstarsacademy>.



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Jamie Ritblat
Founder and CEO
Delancey

Notes to Editors

UK Schools Chess Challenge

The UK Chess Challenge began in 1996 and was an immediate success, with 700 schools entering, involving approximately 23,000 children. By 2006 numbers competing had more than trebled to 74,000. The structure of the tournament is simple, allowing the most inexperienced players to compete in the early stages, yet testing the mettle of the finest at the end.

Teachers and parents comment on the enormous enthusiasm amongst the children for their badges, gold spots and mascots. Junior chess clubs are springing up all over the country, both in schools and outside; numbers in existing clubs have mushroomed. All this shows that chess is one of the most enjoyable and exciting ways for children to learn how to think.

www.delanceyukschoolschesschallenge.com



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