

Guernsey perform well in Malta Chess Tournament

Guernsey Chess Team completed their best ever result in the European Small Nations Team Chess Tournament played in Malta recently finishing 6th out of 10 teams. Seeded 9th before the tournament this was a significant achievement when competing against larger and stronger chess nations. The team won 3 matches, drew 1, and lost 5.

The Guernsey team consisted of, Board 1 - Peter Kirby, Board 2 – Fred Hamperl, Board 3 – Andy Hale, and Board 4 – Gerda Nevska.

In the key match against Jersey, Boards 1 and 2 ended in quick draws but decisive results on the lower Boards turned the match in Guernsey's favour. On Board 4 Nevska converted a promising attacking position into a win to give Guernsey a 2-1 lead. However, on Board 3 Hale was struggling and a win for Jersey appeared likely to tie the match 2-2. However, there was a dramatic turnaround when the Jersey player blundered under time pressure in a complicated position and Hale went on to win the game and with it the match 3-1.

Guernsey followed up the success against Jersey with wins against Liechtenstein 3-1 and the ESNA Women's Team 3-1. In each of these matches Hamperl and Nevska won their games and Kirby and Hale drew their games.

Guernsey's best result was a 2-2 draw with Cyprus who had won their previous 3 matches and were expected to make it 4 consecutive match wins. Guernsey had other ideas and after quick draws on Boards 3 and 4 there was all to play for on the top Boards. Despite being under pressure on Board 2 Hamperl was able to achieve a draw through sound defensive play. On Board 1 Kirby held out for the draw in a long game after his Cypriot opponent made an error after nearly 5 ½ hours play.

The Faroe Islands team were decisive winners of the tournament dropping only 1 match point in a 2-2 draw with Cyprus. Andorra finished 2nd just ahead of Monaco 3rd on tie break, with Cyprus 4th and Luxembourg 5th. Guernsey finished 6th ahead of Malta, Jersey, Liechtenstein and the Small Nations women's team.

After little or no competitive chess this tournament was a very welcome return for the Guernsey players. Looking ahead to next year Guernsey will expect to be represented at the Moscow Chess Olympiad and the very popular Guernsey International Chess Festival will be making a welcome return in October after a 2 year absence.

Gerda Nevska (below) top scored for Guernsey with 4 ½ points from 9 games

