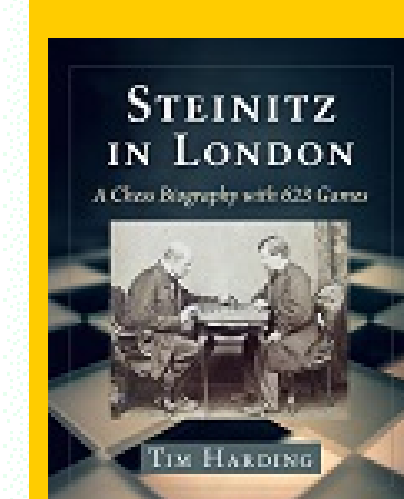


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102nd Irish Championships: Kavin takes sole lead

The national championships are well under way at the usual venue, the Talbot Hotel, Stillorgan, Dublin.

After the third round of the 9-round main event, the 102nd championship, was played this afternoon, 15-year-old Kavin Venkatesan is the only player on a 100 per cent score.

His early victories have brought his live rating above 2300 so he can now claim the FIDE Master title. (He was at 2298 before the start.)

Today he out-calculated FM Colm Daly, a multiple winner of this championship in the past, who played the King's Indian Defence. Kavin scored a nice attacking win that could have been even quicker had he found 23 Rxf8+ which forces mate in 10 moves at most. The line White chose, however, was convincing enough. Tomorrow he will face another former champion, top seed GM Alex Baburin, with the Black pieces.

The other two top games today were drawn: FM Conor O'Donnell v Baburin and FM Zalan Nemeth (1.5) v CM Jacob Flynn (2). On the fourthnboard Jonathan O'Connor beat Ben Sheahan to join the chasing group on two and a half points.

In some of the games on lower boards there was, to be frank, some rank bad play which probably made some of us watching at home wish we were playing. The game on board 15 was over in 13 moves as White, trying to grab a pawn, got his queen trapped.

The top pairings for round 4 will be: Baburin (2.5) v Venkatesan (3); CM Jacob Flynn v FM Conor O'Donnell (both 2.5), Daly (2) v O'Connor (2.5). Seven other players have 2/3 so there is still a long way to go.

The top results in round 2 yesterday were as follows (White names first): GM Alexander Baburin beat Oisín O Cuilleain; Muhtarim-ul Haque lost to Kavin Venkatesan; Conor O'Donnell beat John Kennedy; Adam Collins drew with Zalan Nemeth; Colm Daly beat Brendan Lyons; Jason Liu drew with Jonathan O'Connor and Jacob Flynn beat Rafael Ninan Renji.

There were very few surprises in the first round. The exception was 14-year-old Renji's win against the very experienced Gerard O'Connell who was rated almost 200 points higher. Only one of the 15 games ended in a draw.

Live games were made available [at Lichess](#). Play starts at 2.30pm but because of an anti-cheating delay in transmissiomm, it is best to start watching at 3pm. If this link doesn't work on subsequent days, then check back with the Irish Chess Union website.

The [pairings and results page](#) shows ththe full pairings and results so far. Eamon Keogh, who had a 1-point bye yesterday, is perhaps the oldest player to compete in the championship; can anyone verify?

There are no title norm possibilities this year since the only two IMs and one WIM who had entered (defending champion, Tarun Kanyamarala, his sister, and IM Mark Quinn) withdrew in recent days.

Since the new champion is (we believe) still entitled to an automatic place on the Irish team at the 2024 chess olympiad in Budapest, we are puzzled that several players one would expect would like to be on that team have not entered, but two or three may be confident of being selected on rating, or they may have different ambitions and priorities nowadays.

Other absent recent champions include Mark Heidenfeld, Conor Murphy and Tom O'Gorman. Remarkably nobody in the field has won the Irish championship since 2013 when FM Colm Daly (now rated 2181) last won it.

The top seed is GM Alexander Baburin (FIDE rating 2379) who last won in 2008. The only other competitors starting with an August FIDE rating above 2200 are Venkatesan, Conor O'Donnell (2291) and 21-year-old Zalan Nemeth (2240).

The large group of strong juniors and a few strong seniors will certainly not make it easy for the top three but we would be surprised if the winner is not one of those rated over 2200. Indeed this looks like Conor O'Donnell's big chance to win his first title.

As usual, there are several other tournaments taking place over the 10-period. The rating-restricted weekenders were played last weekend (4-6 August).

There was an Open rapid tournament yesterday Sunday evening, but it was hardly satisfactory having only six rounds. Three players went into the final round on 5/5 and while Ivan Maravic and Jacob Flynn drew their game, 1998-rated Sam Walker (England) beat Tarun Kanyamarala (who had been half a point behind) with Black to take first prize.

A 5-round weekday open starts this morning with 45 competitors. The festival will end with an open weekender from 11-13 August and a final blitz on the evening of Sunday 13 August.

This month's tournaments are the first of any significance for several weeks. We have had cause to complain about the summer doldrums before and believe this is something the next Irish Chess Union committee should give serious thought to solving.

The Irish Women's Championship will be played later (18-20 August). There are few entries for that as yet but there is plenty of time for women and girls to put their names down. Last year we had a record entry of 16 with a wide range of strengths.

We met 2022 champion IM Tarun Kanyamarala and his sister WIM Tisha Kanyamarala at East Midlands Airport last Sunday, when we were returning from the British Championships at Leicester. Tarun scored 5.5/9 and Trisha made 4.5/9, which was enough for the under-18 prize and second women's prize. Tarun lost two games and was disappointbted not to have had the opportunity to play GM Michael Adams who became British Champion yet again, undefeated as usual.

They had already more or less decided to withdraw their entries for the Irish championship because they felt tired and unprepared after sitting the school Leaving certificate this summer. They are planning to play in the World Juniors which start in Mexico City on 20 September.

Tarun may start a university course after that, while TRisha (who is a year younger) is likely to take a gap year and target the WGM title. She already has one norm towards it.

It is now also possible to pay your 2023/2024 membership on the ICU website but your 2022/23 membership is still valid for events in August.

Attempts are being made to arrange Irish 50+ and 65+ teams for the [World Senior Team Championships](#), to be held in North Macedonia in September. Anyone eligible and interested needs to get moving on this soon. Please see our [seniors news page](#) for more information about tournaments for the over-50s.

Also, chess officials please read our page for [chess arbiters](#).

For further information on Irish chess, including ratings, how to join, a tournament calendar and a list of officials, please see the [Irish Chess Union website](#).

Some other Irish websites:

[Irish chess history and news site](#)

[Chess discussions on boards.ie](#)

[Irish Correspondence Chess Association](#)

[Bunratty Chess Festival](#)