



Annual Report to Scott County – 2024-B

The Scott County Chess Club strives to promote the game of Chess in Scott County and Mississippi – providing opportunities for persons of all ages and skill levels to learn and play the game. We began publishing annual reports in 2022 to the community on our progress.

The decision was made in December 2024 to change from a fiscal year of July 1 to June 30 to a fiscal year matching the calendar year. Since an annual report was published in June 2024, this report will finish out in 2024. Beginning in 2025, future annual reports will include activities between January and December. There will be an overlap in that the first half of 2024 will also be included here.

On the issue of the club newsletter, the volume count will also be adjusted accordingly to the new fiscal year. Whereas volumes ran from February to the following January for the 12-month cycle, Volume 3 will end with just 11 issues in December 2024 and volume 4 will start in January 2025. This will allow future issues to align with the calendar year. The lookback and forward will still reside with the January issues.

We begin by expressing our sincere appreciation and gratitude to the people of Scott County, and others outside the county, who have supported us since our inception. We could not have come this far without the support we have received.

We continue to use social media and a website for online publicity. *The Scott County Times* and *The Spirit of Morton* newspapers have remained generous in publishing stories. We have also had a story published in the *Newton County Appeal*. I send monthly email blasts to members and others. A club newsletter is produced and distributed monthly via email for members and others interested in our activities. We attend events and use display boards as well as distribute flyers for additional publicity.

We have a subscription to Constant Contacts for purposes of newsletter and email distribution, but we scaled back the subscription temporarily to save money while reviewing how the program best fits our operations. That review is nearly completed, and we hope to have a decision on whether to continue with Constant Contacts soon.

We have received continued support from the business community in supporting our tournaments through sponsorships. We have 10 businesses in Scott County who have helped to fund our events. Donations are first applied toward the prize money for winners. After that, donations are applied toward the trophies and medals. Registrations have been covering remaining expenses. Remaining funds are kept for use toward the next tournament and any operating expenses.

In April, we hosted the third annual Bienville Chess Classic and again saw a record turnout at Roosevelt State Park with 58 players from across the state and continued support from our sponsoring businesses. Participation included individual players. A change was made in the options of sections offered. Starting with this tournament and going forward, the spring and fall events will include the following sections: Open, U1200, U800, U400. This will help players compete on a more level playing field.

On May 27, I received my recertification exam to renew my tournament director license with the U.S. Chess Federation. The deadline for returning the completed exam was July 25. I completed the exam and passed to earn another 3-year license as a club level tournament director.

On May 30, I returned as a guest on "Good Things" with Rebecca Turner on the statewide radio network of SuperTalk Mississippi. This time, I was accompanied by Douglas Stewart - a fellow MCA board member, former 4-time state champion and participant at national tournaments. Discussion included history of chess in Mississippi, current trends and growth, with plans noted.

On June 11, I met with the superintendents of the two public school districts in Forest and Scott County in separate meetings. We discussed opportunities and plans for potential chess participation in their districts and ways that the game may be promoted, and students participate. It was a great starting point to hopefully increase chess activity among students.

On July 4, the SC Chess Club participated in the Independence Day celebrations at Roosevelt State Park hosted by the park staff and Friends of the park group. We had a lot of attention paid to our booth with kids and adults stopping to play the game and asked questions about the club. Two players had an intense game that carried over into the darkness.

On July 13, Malcolm Johnson, a resident of Newton who commutes to Forest to play with our club, became the first club member to win a divisional championship in a tournament. Malcolm joined the US Chess Federation earlier this year and became active in area tournaments. He won the U600 division in the J'Kennethon Memorial Tournament in Pearl. *He was given special induction into the SC Chess Hall of Champions.*

On July 20, I served as the chief tournament director for the Mississippi Chess Association's team tournament at Jackson Prep. I also loaned our boards and other equipment for the tournament's use. It was a great learning experience and opportunity to serve.

In August, we launched our third tournament series called "Forest Chess Challenge" which features Quick and Blitz games, also known as "speed chess." The event was held at Penn's restaurant in Forest and attracted 15 players from across Mississippi. The Swiss format tournament included five Quick rounds with time control of 15 minutes with 3 second increments in the morning. The afternoon session included six rounds of 5 minutes with 3 second increments. Both sessions included two sections: Open and U1000. Cash prizes were awarded to first and second place.

On September 28, we hosted our information booth at the Wing Dang Doodle Festival and saw a good number of visitors who expressed an interest in the game. We were unable to participate in the Sebastopolooza festival in Sebastopol this year due to a schedule conflict.

On October 12, the club partnered with the Forest Library again to host the 2nd annual Randy Richardson Memorial Chess Camp for youth in the community. The camp was initially created with assistance from a \$1,000 donation from Michael Hawkins, a Forest native, which was granted to the library for chess development. The camp, aimed at grade school students, included a morning of chess instruction and lessons while the afternoon was spent playing the game in a mock tournament format. The camp included 13 participants in age range from seven to 17. Trophies and medals were awarded as prizes. We appreciated the assistance of club member Malcolm Johnson and learned ways to improve the camp for next year.

On October 13, the club partnered with the Mississippi Chess Association in planning and participating in a display at the Mississippi State Fair in Jackson. Information was available about the game and there was a good response as many people stopped at the display where they had the opportunity to play the game. It was great exposure for the game. This year, we included a small blitz tournament, and winners received complimentary Chess Federation memberships and free entry to the MCA state tournament. The display was great exposure to the game.

On October 20, I was re-elected without opposition to the Board of Directors for the Mississippi Chess Association and retained my position as vice-president. I also handle secretarial duties for the MCA. The MCA is the official affiliate governing body for chess in Mississippi on behalf of the US Chess Federation.

On November 9, we hosted the fourth annual Roosevelt Chess Classic and again saw a tremendous turnout at Roosevelt State Park. We set a record with 75 players from across Mississippi and two other states and continued support from our sponsoring businesses. Participation included individual and team players.

Of note, in addition to a player from Alabama, we were blessed with the participation of International Master Justin Sarkar who flew from New York City to play in our tournament. It was a tremendous honor. He had a goal of playing a tournament in each state and decided on our tournament to represent Mississippi for his 47th visit. Sarkar was only able to play three of the four rounds, due to his flight leaving at a time when he couldn't play the final round. Receiving a half point bye for that round and winning all his other games, he won the open section with a 3.5 score.

In addition to Malcolm Johnson who participated as a local club member, we had a second local player to join the USCF and participate. This is an achievement to build upon trying to attract more local participants to our events.

On November 16, I served as an assistant tournament director for the St. Augustine fall chess tournament and loaned some of our boards and equipment for their event. I followed this up on November 19 by doing the same for the DeSoto County Schools chess tournament that included 600+ players that included schools in Southaven, Hernando, Olive Branch, and Horn Lake.

Unfortunately, due to my work schedule, I was unable to represent the club in participating in the annual Forest Christmas Parade. I hope to return to that practice in 2025 and possibly do the same for the other towns' parades in Scott County.

The Scott County Chess Club attended a retirement reception on December 14 for Dianne McLaurin who stepped down as branch manager of the Forest Public Library. She was instrumental from the beginning of this club's establishment in providing support for our club's activities. She will be sorely missed and is much appreciated.

Also in December, McLaurin's retirement inspired the creation of the Scott County Chess Hall of Fame to recognize and honor individuals who have gone above and beyond in direct support of our organization and/or contributed significantly to the continuation of chess development in Scott County.

The initial inductees included McLaurin; Lt. Col. (ret.) Michael Hawkins, for \$1,000 donation in memory of Randy Richardson for chess development; Beth Thrasher, for assistance during tournaments and contribution of materials; late Beverly Jo Bracken Rhodes, in memory, for teaching chess to students enrolled in gifted program at Forest schools; Deanne McKown, for teaching Aaron Baker the game of chess as a member of the gifted program at Forest Elementary School. He in turn taught his father and together they started the Scott County Chess Club to share the game with others.

This concludes the club's general annual report for FY 2024.

More information can be found on our website at scottcountychessclub.org.

Sincerely,

Chris Allen Baker

Club co-founder and Coordinator
Tournament Director