

England v Slovenia - A Day out at the London Chess Classic

It all began as a non-eventful Friday and a call out of the blue from ECF Director Lawrence Cooper for available U11s to play for England. A few emails later and our Saturday was booked as Kiran Shiatis was selected for the England team in a two round tie against Slovenia. This would be Kiran's first England cap.

With mixed feelings of anticipation and trepidation we arrived at Kensington Olympia - home of the London Chess Classic - very excited about the day ahead.



We were warmly welcomed by the Slovenian team and against a back drop of some of the best GMs in the world battling it out for the London Chess Classic Championship, the games were soon underway.

The first round went well with England establishing a solid 5.5 - 1.5 lead. Colours were reversed for the second round and all seven England boards battled hard to secure a 6 - 1 result and an overall 11.5 - 2.5 win.



The fun and games were not yet over. With many of the Super 16 GMs wandering the floors, we bumped into Mikey Adams GM (England no 1) in the lift, who congratulated Kiran on England's fine win, followed then by Keith Arkell GM who was due to play the number 1 seed in the Open FIDE that afternoon. The children then spent some time watching Nigel Short GM, Hikaru Nakamura GM, Boris Gelfand GM and Fabiano Caruano GM and listening to some of the scintillating commentary by Danny King GM and KJCA's very own Chris Ward GM.



Kiran then noticed Gawain Jones GM inviting all passers-by to play a 5 minute blitz game against him for charity. Kiran rose to the challenge and commenced his game in a surreal moment just as his older sister Vishal sat down to play opposite Judit Polgar GM only several feet away. Although it ended Shiat's Family 0, GMs 2, Kiran was hooked

He quickly managed to secure a game against David Howell GM, closely followed by Alexander Baburin GM. Rohan also managed to get a game against Gawain. The Shiat's Family put up a good fight, reputations were on the line, but unsurprisingly we were finally beaten 5 - 0 by the GMs.



It was a truly amazing day, meeting and making new friends, one that all three of our children will never forget, especially Kiran who was proud to have represented his country and secure his first win for England.

Thank you to all the friendly GMs for their willingness to play, to Malcolm Pein IM and his team for putting the Classic together, a superb advertisement for Chess. We can strongly recommend making a visit there to all chess playing children and parents - if not this year, then definitely for the next.

Many thanks also to the Slovenian chess team, their parents and organisers, in particular Darja Kaps WGM who invited us for a return match in Slovenia. Above all, many thanks also to Lawrence Cooper ECF Junior Director for organising team England and for kick starting such a memorable day.