



Irish Chess Union Annual Report 2018-19



1. [Chairperson's Report](#)
2. [Secretary's Report](#)
3. [Treasurer's Report](#)
4. [Rating Officer's Report](#)
5. [Tournament Officer's Report](#)
6. [Junior Officer's Report](#)
7. [Development Officer's Report](#)
8. [FIDE & ECU Delegate's Report](#)
9. [Membership Officer's Report](#)
10. [PRO's Report](#)
11. [Women's Officer's Report](#)
12. [2017-18 Officers & Committees](#)
13. [ICU Sponsors](#)



1. Chairperson's Report – John McMorrow

Dear Friends,

My Chairperson's report is generally an account of where the ICU is at the end of a season – often through the lens of rose-tinted glasses – but mostly accurate. This year, however, I would instead like to draw a blueprint for the upcoming few years. Coming into the year, which I knew would be my last year as ICU Chairperson, I tried to take stock of the work we have done, where we were in 2015 and to look back to some of my goals from the time I took on the role. Broadly, I was happy with the improvement but, and there is always a but, we were not *there* yet, nor were we close. The challenge for the ICU is to not look at itself now or five years ago, or ten years ago, but to look at what it could be with either gradual or radical changes. The potential is boundless and the ICU should act accordingly and set seemingly unreachable goals in the hope of getting close, at least. Let me give an example of what the actual goal of the ICU should be:

The ICU should have at least five GMs by 2027.

What is the problem here? We only have one GM now and have not ever produced a home-grown GM. So what. We know broadly what should be done, so we should do that and hope for the outcomes we seek. We should run norm events every year, as without these, there are no norm opportunities on the island. We should run coaching seminars for our top players, as we haven't until recently, and our top juniors outgrow the junior coaching programme once they get to 1900 or so. We should also train our teachers/coaches to train at a higher level, we should train them to recognise talent and we should tell them where to send their students once they outgrow their current coach. Does this guarantee that we will achieve the desired outcome? Of course not, but it won't cost the world, it's the right thing to do and even partially getting to our goal is a huge achievement.



In 2018, we ran six events where norms were possible, which produced seven norms in all; six of which went to Irish players. We are unlikely to see such success every year we run these events but it shows that players can and will take advantage of these events when they are run. In 2019, we ran five (with the Easter IM and GM norm events replaced by the Irish International Open) and saw just two norms, both of which came in the Glorney Gilbert Norm event – which

itself replaced the Summer IM norm league of a year earlier. In that event, Vignir Vatnar Steffanson picked up his first IM norm and Trisha Kanyamarala added her second WIM norm of the year. The other Irish norm (IM) made in 2019 went to Conor Murphy, who produced a magnificent display to win the Hastings Masters. He was unlucky not to double his norm count in the Irish Championships; he achieved the required norm score against the required rating average but played one FM too few.

The next goal is less alluring than a GM-goal but still important for the future growth of the ICU:

The ICU should double the number of licenced arbiters in Ireland in the next five years.

Again, simple statement and simple plan. What will we do to achieve this? This January we will run a FIDE arbiter course in Dublin in the hope of procuring the next generation of Irish arbiters. I believe this process should be repeated every few years to ensure a consistent supply of arbiters for major events. I would like to thank Gerry Graham and Ted Jennings for running a National Arbiter course last year that saw several ICU members take the first steps toward FIDE qualification.

Although, I will be stepping down as Chairperson, I have offered to run these above projects for at least the next year. I think that being able to narrow my focus onto 4-5 projects per year will allow me to concentrate on these goals and how best to structure our programmes. As part of my duties this year, I published a [Development Plan](#) including both of the goals I mentioned above and what would be needed to achieve those goals. Some of the other projects include:

- Have clubs in each third level institution in the country.
- Raise the level of participation and the standard of chess at a national and local level with a fixed structure in place.
- Increase participation among the elderly.
- Increase cross-border integration projects as the Ulster Chess Union has recently re-joined the Irish Chess Union.
- Bring chess to more prisons in Ireland – with two clubs looking to participate internationally for Ireland from their prisons (online).
- Bring a major European/World event to Ireland.
- Use our charity wing “Moves For Life” to bring chess to even more underprivileged people and those with disabilities.
- Get corporations more involved in Irish Chess.
- Drastically increase the overall investment in chess, from both public and private sources.

I think the ICU would be in terrific shape if it found a volunteer for each of these projects, or teams of volunteers depending on the scale of the project. This is why I mention it here, as the main resource we lack is volunteers. The ninth item on the above list is funding and in that regard, I must thank FIDE, the ECU and Failte Ireland who were incredibly generous to us this year with their support. I hope that we can match this in future years with corporate sponsorship, but the promise of FIDE continuing their support if we continue to work toward our goals is a fantastic incentive for us to really knuckle down over the next few years.

The final idea I will leave the ICU with is to strive to have a national system for promoting chess in schools. I think the best way to achieve this is a county-championship system or at least regional championship system. In an ideal world, we would have at least two schools in each county willing/wanting to play in a county final, and what better incentive for any aspiring junior than having the chance to play for your county title. What would be required?

- A lot of volunteers and/or teachers.
- A better distribution system for ICU equipment.
- A formal document to teach teachers/volunteers what they need to do.
- Terms for the event (which could vary from county to county as necessary)
- The additional carrot that the winners can play in a provincial and then national final – hosted by the provincial body and/or ICU.

It has been a huge honour to be the ICU Chairperson and I hope that the work done over the past few years can carry on unhindered without me.

With Kindest Regards,

John McMorrow

John McMorrow
ICU Chairperson
<http://www.icu.ie/>



2. Secretary's Report – Ciaran Mahon

My role as ICU Secretary began following the October 2016 AGM. There continues to be a significant learning curve for me and I once again acknowledge the unstinting support of the outgoing Chairperson John McMorrow. It is the principle reason that I am happy to present myself for another term. However, if elected, it is likely to be my last term, so plenty of notice for my successor.

Apart from again dealing with a stream, sometimes a torrent, of email correspondence from home and abroad, most time was taken up with activities relating to Executive Committee (EC) meetings or events related to the EC members.

There were four EC meetings held, somewhat below average. There was instead however, a good deal of activity among the EC members, regarding both on the national and international levels.

One event of note I would mention. As in the previous year, there was an incident, which resulted in the suspension of a member, on this occasion for 5 years. This incident was one of gross cheating, and occurred at the Irish International Open at Easter. The individual in question did not appeal the sanction. However, one of the outstanding items for the incoming Executive Committee relates to fallout from this event, i.e. raising awareness and clarifying sanctions.

3. Treasurer's Report – John McMorrow

The role of Treasurer was left vacant at the start of the 2018-19 season, which meant I took on the role again this year having done for most of the past four years. My apologies that the books will not be ready four weeks in advance of the AGM this year; I have a lot on my plate these days with a new job, chairperson duties and with many other personal commitments. However, I will give a preliminary report here before publishing the entire accounts in the next two weeks.

The ICU is in a very healthy financial state – with over 20,000 euro cash in hand and about 15,000 euro worth of equipment as well as other assets. The 15,000 euro mentioned in last year's accounts is still tied up for the near future.

One of the ICU's major expenditures this year was the Irish Championship, which cost significantly more this year given the loss of our sponsor but I would hope we can avoid that situation next year. However, the event still cost no more than the Irish Championship of 2016 which had far fewer places so I think the event is going in the right direction.

The Irish Open was another large expense and I would recommend a different format if we were to try it again. I had hoped that the large prize fund would attract more players from 2200-2400 and I had hoped for more entries from within Ireland. I do think there is a structure that could work within Ireland, but it would require a long-term sponsor and someone dedicated to running it year after year. I would suggest a prize fund of about 4,000-5,000 euro instead and using a hotel in future. However, my own preference would be to run an Easter Festival similar to 2018 than 2019 next year.

Recently, the ICU has doubled the number of events it runs (mostly new blitz events) but most of these events run at no additional cost to the ICU except the New Year events. Our contribution to the latter events was roughly €2,500 each.

Thanks to the support of the ECU and Failte Ireland, the Glorney Gilbert, which was expected to be the ICU's expected largest expenditure over the last 12 months; did not end up being overly expensive for the ICU. However, the single biggest financial contributor to the ICU this year was FIDE who we must thank. The 10,000 euro they provided us for development projects will be put to work over the next 12 months on a wide variety of projects I mentioned in my chairperson's address.

Given our position of financial strength, I think the ICU should look to investing in the future with more largescale projects for juniors, students and schools. These projects could pay dividends with future members but more importantly are simply the right thing to do; as they will get more and more people playing chess from younger ages.

John McMorrow

John McMorrow
ICU Chairperson
<http://www.icu.ie/>



4. Rating Officer's Report - David Murray

The role of Ratings Officer was left vacant at the start of the 2018-19 season, Andrew Kildea having stepped down after 4.5 years in the job. I agreed to take over his responsibilities on an interim basis and I now intend to continue in the role.

GDPR efforts

The European GDPR legislation came into force in May 2018. It was an urgent priority to understand how this affected the ICU: what data we should keep and what are our responsibilities with this data. Several courses of action were suggested and partially implemented: notably an "out of sight, or of mind" approach where access to some data was moved behind a login barrier on the website, and a proposal that we should discontinue the rating system altogether.

I researched this further and determined that it was possible for us to continue operating the rating system, while taking additional steps to safeguard personal information like addresses and dates of birth. Our approach is explained in more detail in the Data Policy document available on the website.

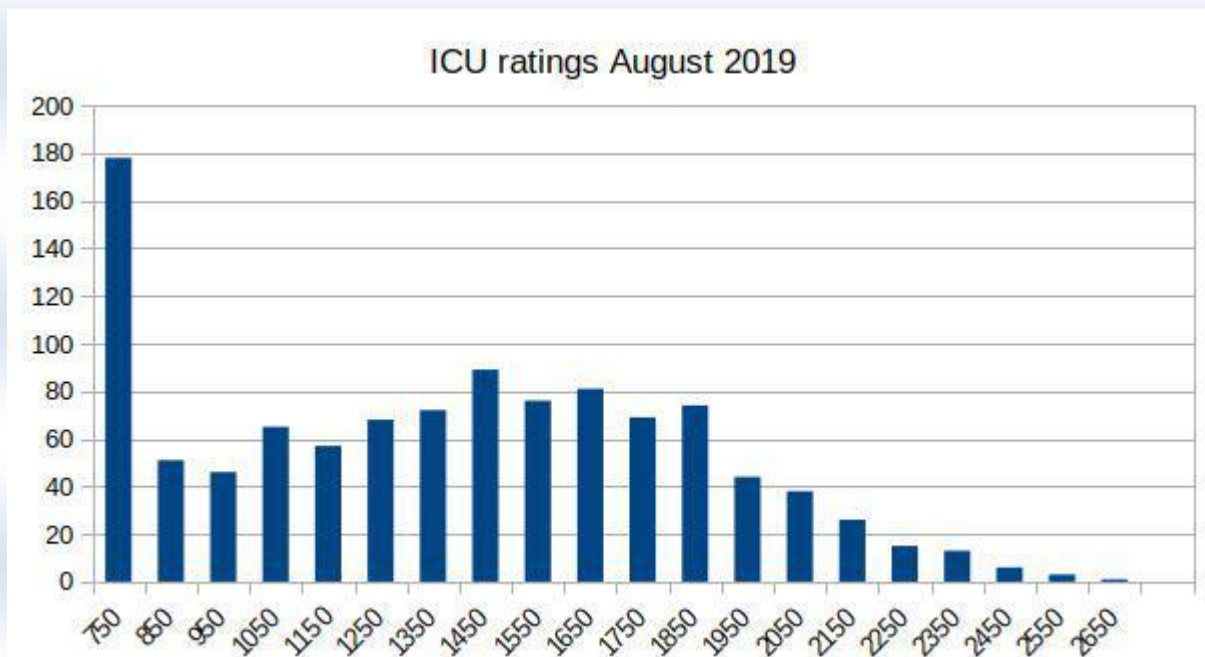
This is a work in progress and we intend to take more steps to make sure people can easily access their data and are informed about exactly what data we keep. However, we are satisfied that our current approach is acceptable.

One former member requested that his or her personal data be deleted. We complied with this request in accordance with the GDPR's "right to be forgotten."

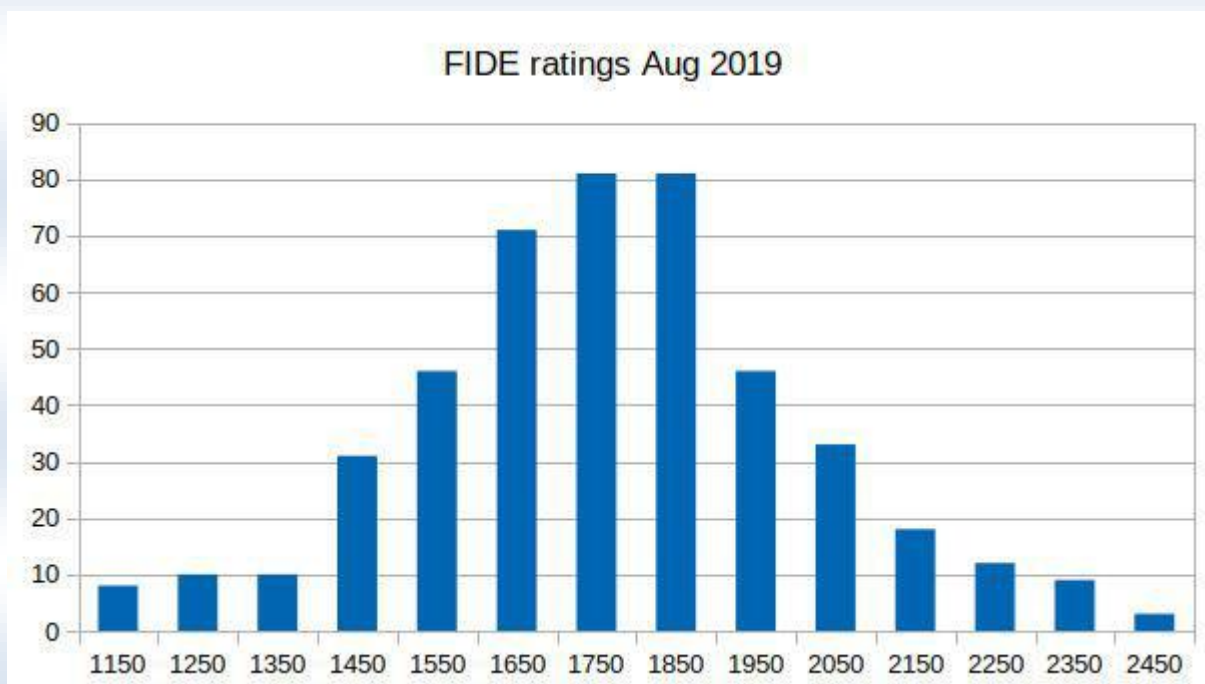
Statistics

As of August 2019, 1072 ICU members have an ICU rating, of whom 252 have a provisional rating, substantially unchanged from last year's numbers of 1067 and 239.

There are 459 active players on the August FIDE list whose federation is Ireland, up from 431 last year.



The distribution of the ICU and FIDE ratings is shown in the graphs. Note that not all of the ICU members are from Ireland, and not all of the FIDE players are ICU members.



From October 2018 through August 2019, there were 141 ICU-rated Irish events and a total of 12,525 games in the rating system. There were 77 FIDE-rated events held in Ireland.

The number of members asking for foreign tournaments to be rated has risen notably. There were approximately 80 foreign performances rated in 37 foreign events, including

representative international events held overseas. Many members find the process of submitting games for ICU rating difficult. We intend to develop some tools to make this easier.

John Loughran volunteered to investigate the difference between ICU and FIDE ratings, and how this has changed over time.

Liaison with FIDE

As the main point of contact for FIDE for administrative tasks, I dealt with:

- registration and reporting of tournaments for FIDE rating
- several applications to change federation (some denied)
- norm registrations
- Title applications

FIDE requested feedback on a number of issues, notably:

- reducing fees for change of federation for amateur players
- Allowing shorter games to be included in the classical rating system

We are broadly in favour of both proposals.

Allow me to take this opportunity to remind tournament organisers that FIDE-rated tournaments need to be registered at least one week in advance and supervised by a FIDE-licensed arbiter. Your arbiter can advise you of additional requirements.

Challenges

The ratings software has had a reduced level of technical support since the departure of Mark Orr in 2014. While the software is generally excellent and stable, we have been slower than we would like to add new features as the ICU's needs evolve.

Jonathan O'Connor was able to advise and help me make some minor changes, and I have been working on becoming proficient in the technology stack that powers the rating system (principally Ruby on Rails). Some future software projects are included below. I am interested in feedback from players and arbiters about other potential improvements.

Plans for the future

We intend to:

- Inform members of the data policy and their options when they renew membership. This is complicated by the fact that many members have their membership paid by someone else such as a parent or club secretary.
- Develop a web-based interface for members to report foreign tournaments for rating.
- Integrate UCU players who are not ICU members into the rating system.
- Have a more accurate initial rating for FIDE-rated players who join the ICU.
- Integrate better with the Swiss-Manager tournament pairing software by allowing tournament results to be reported with FIDE IDs instead of ICU IDs.

To respond to one other proposal I hear occasionally: we do not intend on introducing an ICU rating system for rapid or blitz games at this time. The FIDE system meets our needs.

David Murray

Ratings Officer

August 2019

5. Tournament Officer's Report – Ivan Baburin

The 2018-2019 season was a busy one for Irish chess tournaments, with many events held throughout the year. Of particular note were the New Year norm events, International Open, Glorney Gilbert and Irish Championship.

The first of these was held in the recently refurbished Talbot Stillorgan hotel, and was run in parallel with an over 50s/65s event, along with 3 round robin groups. Featuring a number of overseas international masters and Grandmasters, this was one of the strongest events of the year.

The International Open was held in Gonzaga College, and attracted players from over a dozen different federations. Almost 100 players took part in this tournament, which was a new format for the ICU. It featured a 22 titled players, including 8 Grandmasters, with GM Robert Ruck emerging victorious.

Besides the main event, a blitz and rapid were also run as part of the tournament.

Ireland this year hosted the Glorney Gilbert in Dundalk, and with the dedicated effort and work of Junior Officer Desmond Beatty it was a resounding success, enjoyed by all who attended.

The Irish Championship this year was arguably the strongest and largest it's ever been, and featured all of the boards going out live from round one. After an impressive performance featuring five straight wins at the end of the event, FM Conor Murphy emerged victorious and was the Irish Champion for 2019. The Irish Championships were rounded out by two weekenders, and a blitz and rapid competition.

I'd like to thank all of the membership for their commitment to playing in tournaments throughout the year, and would also like to express gratitude once again for the outstanding work done by the outgoing chairman, John McMorrow.

Ivan Baburin

Tournament Director

Irish Chess Union

6. Junior Officer's Report - Desmond Beatty

Report to come in the next week.

7. Development Officer's Report- Conor Barrett

8. FIDE & ECU Delegate's Report- Kevin O'Connell

FIDE Congress, Batumi 2018

As usual in an election year, little or no work was done aside from rubber-stamping most of the reports that were submitted by the Commissions.

The Presidential election bore certain similarities to the previous one in Tromso 2014. The Kirsan team was present in full force, except that this time there was no Kirsan! However, for the first time since 1978 (Olafsson in Buenos Aires) we voted for the winner!



President Arkady Dvorkovich (who defeated Georgios Makropoulos 103-78) promised a shake-up of FIDE and much of what he promised has already been implemented, most notably the huge budget increase and the appearance, even if only in a small way, of major league sponsors such as Coca-Cola. The Planning and Development Commission is now functioning (see below for details affecting us) and will have a full year budget of €3,000,000.

The main FIDE web site is at fide.com

FIDE Commissions

Unusually, the composition of the new Commissions was not announced during the Congress, not even the new Commission Chairmen. It is probably not a bad idea to take time to try to get the right make-up, rather than just rewarding representatives of federations who supported the incoming

President (even if this still seemed to be apparent in the end). However, this resulted in a limbo period from the end of mandate for the outgoing Commissions and the announcement of the new ones. This is something that should be addressed for the future, perhaps by leaving the 'old' Commissions in place until the end of the year and starting the new ones on January 1. I certainly found it strange that the Commission budgets ran to the end of the calendar year, beyond the Commission's mandate.

Although it was not announced in Batumi, when my term as Chairman of the Chess in Schools Commission ended, I knew that Smbat Lputian would be taking over as Chairman of the renamed Chess in Education Commission and that was announced in November. When the details of the Commission were finally announced (January), I was appointed as Honorary Chairman and Secretary.

FIDE Financial Support

It seems that we are now eligible for financial support from FIDE of up to US\$20,000.

Being in Development Level 2, we have never before been eligible for anything (except Olympiad accomodation and travel contribution). Now eligible are: 'Federations which are in Development level 2 who have proposed specific projects that promote and develop chess.'

This will apply for 2020 and beyond and will be handled by FIDE's Planning and Development Commission. You can find a lot of detail on the Commission's web site: pdc.fide.com.

Federations that receive funding and meet certain performance targets are eligible for additional support in subsequent years up to US\$30,000.

In the meantime, at a meeting in Dublin between ICU Chair, Vice Chair and FIDE Executive Director Victor Bologan, initial FIDE support of €10,000 was agreed.

The Irish Development Plan, drawn up this summer, will be very useful as justification for further financial support.

ECU

The ECU becomes ever more active under the vibrant leadership of Zurab Azmaiparashvili (President) and Theodoros Tsorbatzoglou (Secretary General).

Activities can be followed on the web site <http://www.europechess.org/>

I was delighted to be successful in supporting Alice O'Gorman's candidature for the ECU Women's Commission. She is now one of the five female members (the Chairman is indeed a man!).

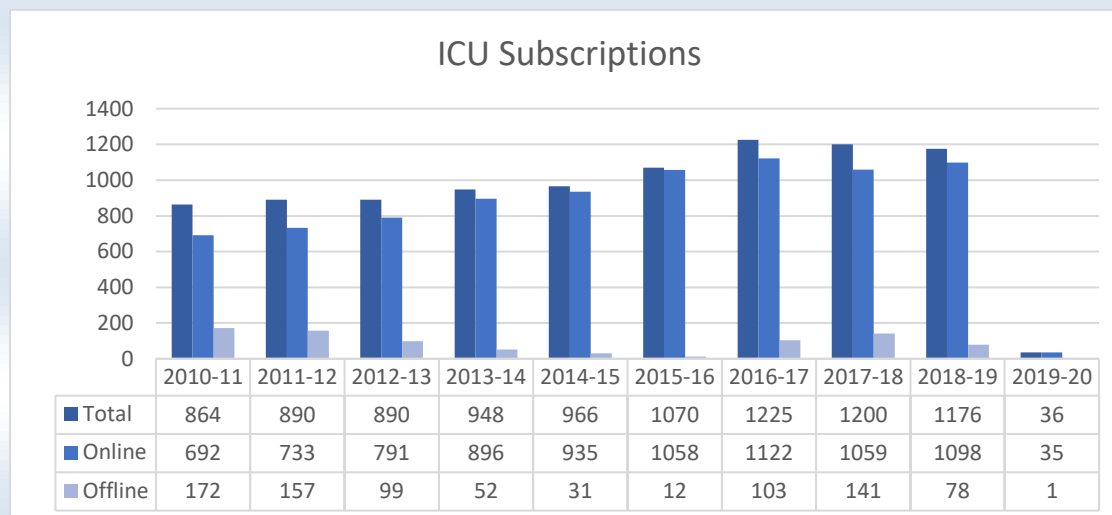
Kevin O'Connell, Le Grand Mas, 12330 Mouret, France. 2019 0830.

9. Membership Officer's Report – Sam O'Neill

In total we had 1176 subscribed members, down 24 from last season's 1200, and 49 less than the most recent peak of 2016-17 of 1225.

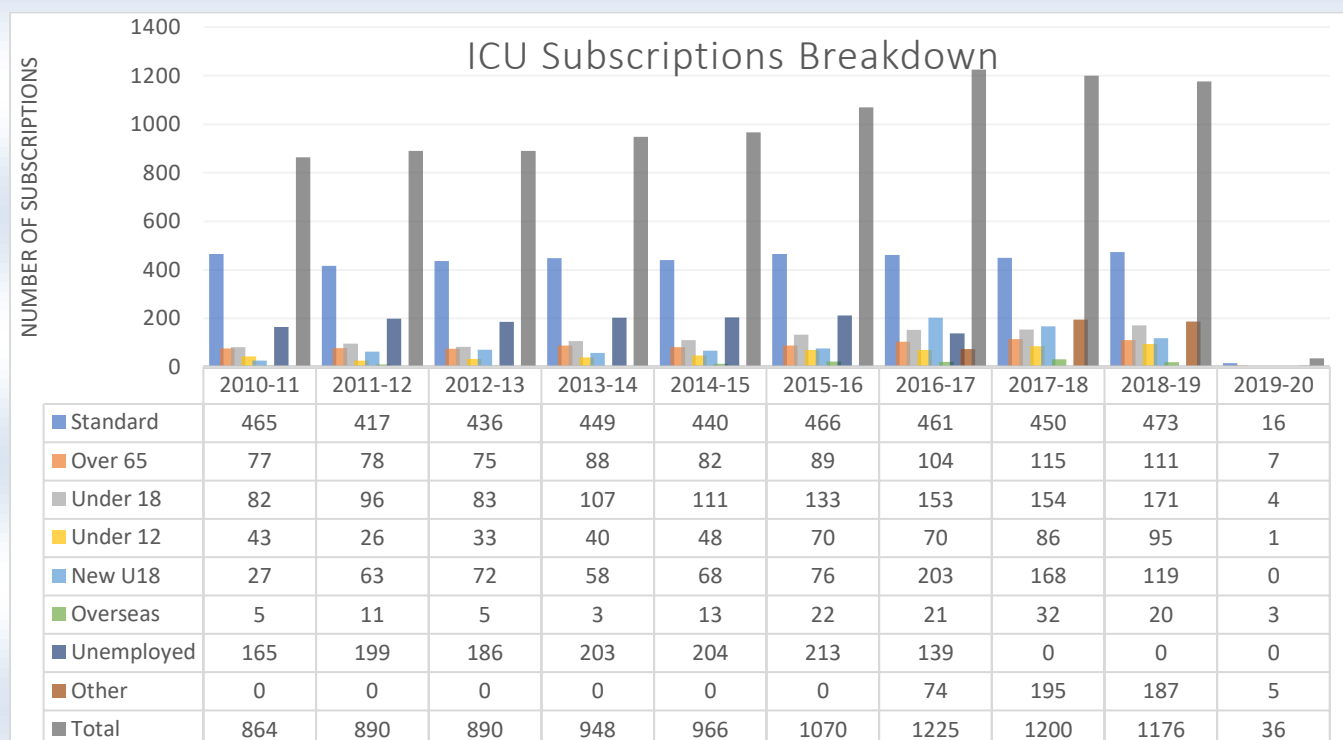
Last season saw an increase in the number of online subscriptions, rising 39 from 1059 to 1098.

Conversely, this also led to a reduction in offline subscriptions, falling 63 from 141 to 78.

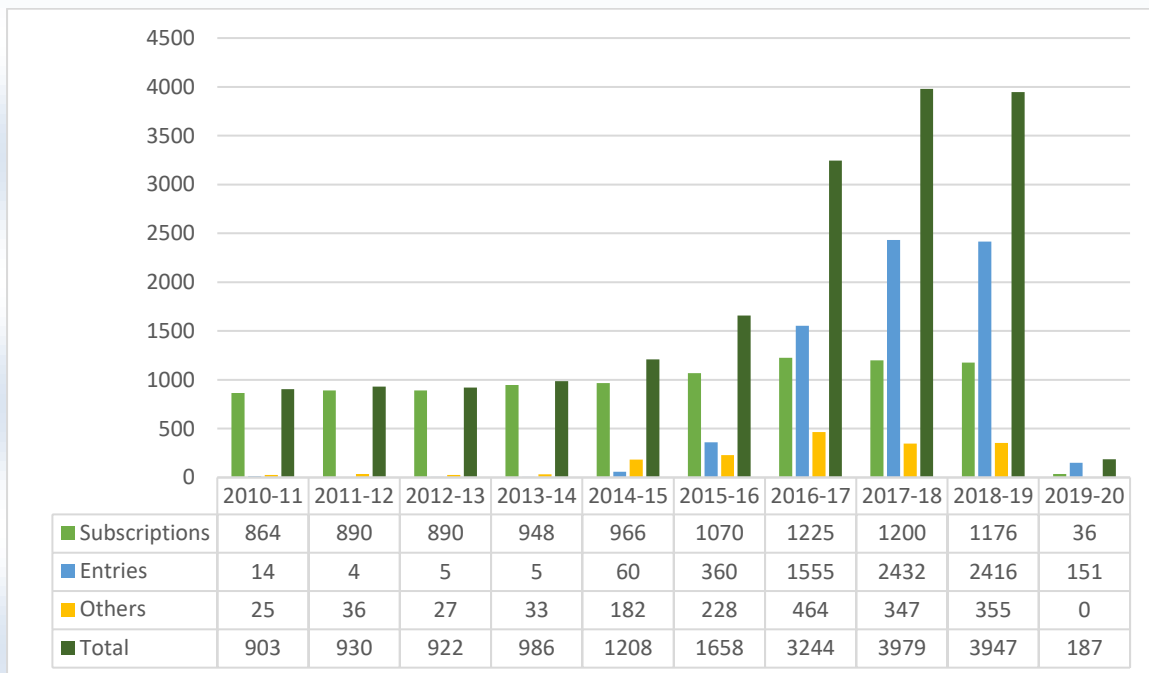


The last 3 seasons, although declining slightly, have yielded the highest number of paid members in the last 10 years at least.

Standard subscriptions have remained constant, but both the over 65 and the under 18 age groups have seen steady increase in the last few years.

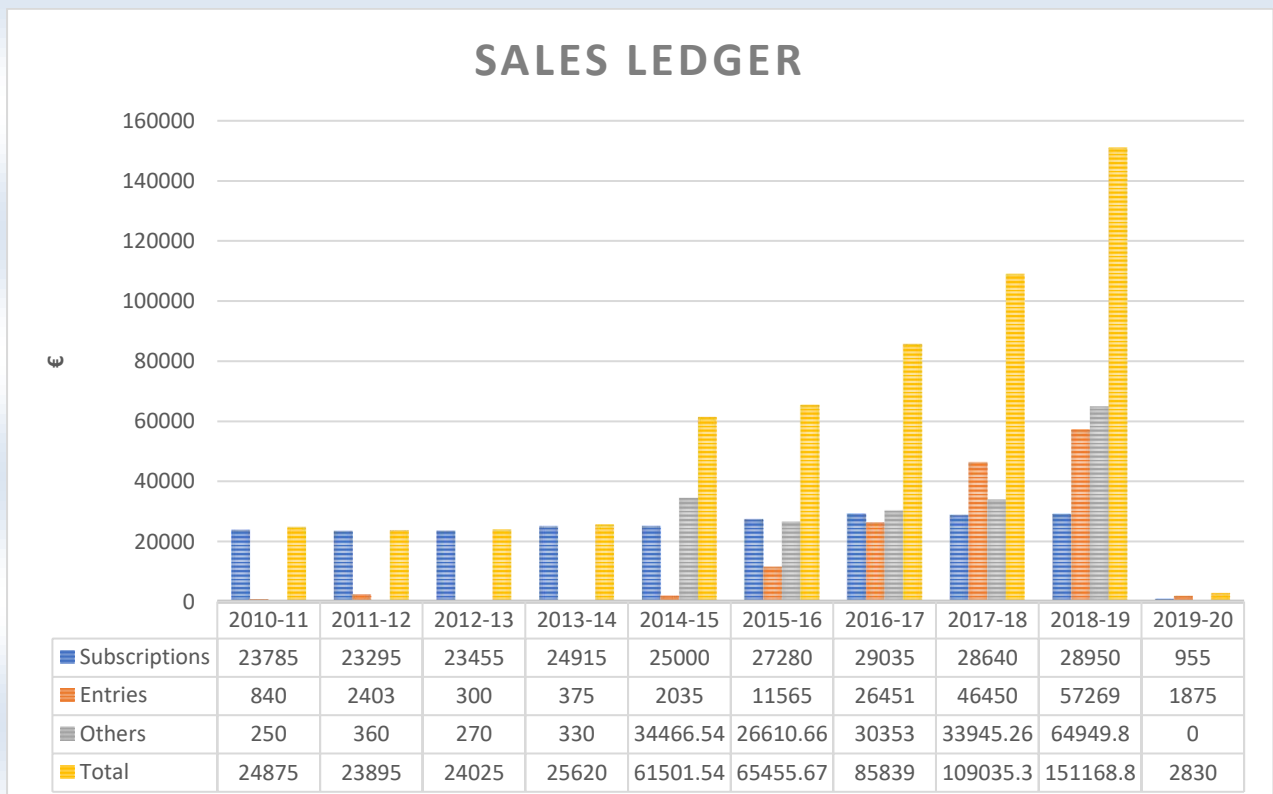


Including Subscriptions, Entries, and Other, our total numbers have yielded a sharp increase in the last 3 years, only slightly less in 2018-19 (3947) than in 2017-18 (3979).



The resulting sales are shown below, indicating huge increases in Total because of large increases in entries and others in the last few years.

Subscription totals have remained largely consistent.



10. Public Relation Officer's Report - Luke Scott

11. Women Officer's Report - Mariana Verdes

12. 2018-19 Officers and Committees

| Officer | Name |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Chairperson | John McMorrow |
| Vice Chairperson | Alexander Baburin |
| Secretary | Ciaran Mahon |
| Treasurer | John McMorrow |
| Rating Officer | David Murray |
| Tournament Officer | Ivan Baburin |
| Junior Officer | Desmond Beatty |
| Development Officer | Conor Barrett |
| Women's Officer | Mariana Verdes |
| Membership Officer | Sam O'Neill |
| Public Relations Officer | Luke Scott |
| Munster Delegate | John Cassidy |
| Connaught Delegate | Colm O'Muireagain |
| Leinster Delegate | Sam Murray |
| Munster Delegate | John Cassidy |
| Gameskeeper* | Sean Coffey |
| Arbitration Officer* | Herbert Scarry |
| Webmaster* | Jonathan O'Connor |
| FIDE & ECU Delegate* | Kevin J. O'Connell |

| Constitution Committee |
|------------------------|
| Herbert Scarry |
| Eoghan Casey |
| Charlie Talbot |

| Women's Committee |
|------------------------|
| Hannah Lowry-O'Reilly |
| Gearoidin Ui Laighleis |
| Mariana Verdes |

| Web Committee |
|-------------------|
| Jonathan O'Connor |
| Dave O'Connell |
| Desmond Beatty |

| Communications |
|----------------|
| John McMorrow |
| Luke Scott |
| Sam O'Neill |
| Sam Murray |

13. ICU Sponsors

