

# EURO CITY YOUTH GO LEAGUE

The third edition of the Euro City Youth Go League started on 10<sup>th</sup> October. So far two rounds have been completed, there are three more rounds and a final still to go. There are 28 teams from 7 countries, arranged in 3 divisions. Games are played by default on a Tuesday evening at 18:00 CET. Full information is on the competition website at <https://ecygl.eurogofed.org/2023/>

We hope that the tournament will become a regular feature in the calendar. Hopefully it will be possible to learn from what goes well and badly this time round to improve the design further in future. We will try to get feedback from as many people who were involved as possible

## OBJECTIVES

The main aims in running the competition were:

- Having a youth competition which was as inclusive as possible to all levels of junior players in Europe, so that novice players as well as stronger ones could join in
- Giving all local clubs/communities the chance to organise their own teams
- Helping young players to get started in playing competitively, so they would feel more confident in moving on to other youth tournaments
- Providing a competition that geographically isolated clubs could take part in

In order to make the competition successful we wanted to make sure:

- Organisation of matches was as easy as possible for captains
- The competition had a competitive element, but as far as possible all players would get to play some close and meaningful games rather than mismatches
- We used a server/platform that was as child-friendly as possible
- The matches could easily fit into a relatively small time slot, so that we could have several rounds without putting too much of a commitment on relatively inexperienced players

Many of these objectives were already achieved in the first two editions, successfully organised by Marc Rieger. Having teams play one even and one handicap 13x13 game meant that the matches were quick, all players had some games where they had a chance to win, and yet it was likely the strongest teams would be the overall winners.

## DESIGN OF THE ECYGL THIRD EDITION

The main innovations we tried in the third edition were:

- More advertising to try to get more teams/countries involved
- Having a fixed default time for games on a weekday evening, in the hope that fewer games would have to be scheduled manually
- Trying out a new server to see if it was easier for children to use (using OGS before had been reasonably successful but some children/parents had struggled with it at first)
- Web pages with more information about the competition to try to keep everyone informed
- A WhatsApp group for captains to help with communication

So far it seems these have been mostly successful. We wrote individually to all national representatives and managed to get 28 teams from 7 countries (up from 15 teams from 3 countries in the second edition)

## **PLAYSTRATEGY.ORG SERVER**

This server seemed an appealing one to use because:

- It is based on a clone of lichess.org which is a very popular chess server which is known to be used successfully by a large user base, including many children and schools
- It has a kid mode where chat can be restricted for children (whereas we knew that some schools would not use OGS because there wasn't a way of stopping users from using chat)
- It has a wide range of built-in tournaments including arena tournaments which can provide fast and fun competitions for young players
- The developers were very friendly and helpful, and it appeared they could often respond quickly to requests for fixes and enhancements

The playstrategy.org Go platform was not live when we first started the project, and this was a risk but with the help of the developers and some volunteers to test the system everything was ready in time for the start of the ECYGL

## **SUCCESES**

- We have over 100 youth players taking part in the event, including less experienced ones. There are 22 players weaker than 20k, 55 players in the range 11-20k, and 36 players who are 10k or stronger (including some dan players)
- All players selected on teams managed to play games on the server successfully
- The handicap system appears to work well, with quite a lot of close games
- Most games were played on time in the first two rounds, with very few defaults. In round 1, out of 84 games there were 71 played by the end of the default playing time, and only 5 were not played at all
- Two server bugs reported before the first round were quickly fixed and no server issues/bugs have been reported since the tournament started
- There were very few disputes/queries about results, all were quickly sorted by the referee

## **PROBLEMS**

- We hoped to have entries from more than 7 countries but in the end this wasn't possible
- A reasonable proportion of games were played with wrong komi or time settings. Fortunately in most cases this didn't affect the result or stop the game finishing on time.
- Sometimes it proved necessary to reschedule games and it wasn't always easy!
- There is some disparity between grades between different countries, especially below 20k
- We didn't anticipate that in October the clocks didn't change in Kyrgyzstan or Turkey but they did in other countries and this made the time difference greater

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thanks are due to many people, especially:

- Sofia Malatesta, Ying Cheng, Dave de Vos (referee) and Marc Rieger on the organising team
- Lorenz Trippel who sorted out all the web pages for us
- All the captains who arranged teams in the league, especially those with multiple teams
- James Heppell and Matt Tucker from playstrategy.org
- Matt Marsh and Edmund Smith who did testing on the server and Jean-Louis Tu who reported some important bugs