

Structure of the Galway Congress 2023

We are adopting a new structure, which aims to combine the advantages of dividing the players into sections based on ratings, as we have done in the past, with the flexibility of an open tournament without sections, as we tried last year. We think that something like this is appropriate now, when ratings are still somewhat unreliable after the covid break. It can be thought of as a tournament with porous sections, rather than rigid ones.

The system will work as follows. Players will be divided into sections, based on ratings. Sections will contain approximately the same number of players, so the division between sections cannot be determined in advance: it will be decided by the profile of the entries. There will be four sections, or more if we have a large number of entries, so that the sections do not have more than 24 players. In round one, everybody will play somebody in their section, as normal. In round two, the winners in the top section will play other winners in that section; the same applies to players who draw. But the *losers* in the top section will play the winners in the second section; the losers in the second section will play the winners in the third section, and so on. The losers in the bottom section will play against each other.

This system will carry on like that, with players who continue to win against opponents in a higher section continuing to float up to get higher-rated opponents, in rounds 3 and 4. Then, in rounds 5 and 6, players will revert to playing in their sections, so that a section winner is obtained.

The technical details (for those who can be bothered)

The entrants will be ranked as if the tournament is an Open with just one section. For doing the draw, the Swiss computer programme we use allows us to divide the field into as many sections as we wish, of whatever sizes we wish, with players in each section awarded “pairing bonus” points.

The number and size of the sections will be determined as follows. The number and size of the sections cannot be determined in advance; it will depend on the number of entries. If there are fewer than 100 entries (excluding players taking first-round byes) there will be four sections; if there are between 100 and 124 entries there will be five sections; and if there are 125 entries or more there will be six sections. All sections except the lowest will have an even number of players, up to and including 24. The lowest section will contain the remainder, which will be the smallest number that is the same or larger than the size of the other sections.

Pairings will be done as follows. Let us suppose that there are four sections, called A to D. Each player in section A will get a pairing bonus of 3 points, each in section B will get 2, in C 1, and players in D will get nothing. The pairings will then

be done in the normal way, so that in round 1 players in group A will be paired against each other (they will all have 3 notional points), B (with two notional points) will play against each other, and so on.

Round Two. First round winners in group A will now have 4 (1+3) notional points (hereafter n-points) and so will be the top pairing-group. Players in group A who drew in round 1 will have $3\frac{1}{2}$ n-points, and so will be the second pairing group, and will play against each other. Losers in group A *and* winners in group B will have 3 n-points and will be the third pairing group; they will play against each other. If there are the same number of losers in A and winners in B, then all the winners in B will play against losers in A. If there are more winners in B than losers in A – because there were fewer draws in round 1 in Section B than Section A - then not all winners in B will be able to float up to play someone from A; but the higher-rated players in B will certainly be able to do so assuming that at least *some* games in Section A are decisive. Those who drew in group B will have $2\frac{1}{2}$ n-points and so will be the next pairing group. And so on.

Round Three. Players in group A with 2 points will now have 5 n-points, and be the top pairing group. Those with $1\frac{1}{2}$ points in A will have $4\frac{1}{2}$ n-points and be the second pairing group. Those with 1 point in A and 2 points in B will have 4 n-points, and since there will almost certainly be more 1-pointers in A than 2-pointers in B, all the Bs will float up, whilst some of the As will play each other. The $3\frac{1}{2}$ n-point pairing group will consist of those in A with $\frac{1}{2}$ a point and in B with $1\frac{1}{2}$. The next group, on 3 n-points, will be interesting: it will contain As with 0 points, Bs with 1 point, and Cs with 2 points. A pairing of A v C is then possible, but unlikely.

Round 4. The same principles apply. It will now be logically possible for a player from D who has 3 points to play one from A who has 0 – but in practice that is almost certain not to occur.

Rounds 5 & 6. We will now revert to playing solely within sections, as in round 1. This will allow the excitement of having a winner in the lower sections determined by head-to-head games, rather than by results against those in other sections.