

The ECU Prize Competition: original class exercise involving collaboration

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### **'Partner Chess'**

#### **Aims:**

This exercise enables collaboration between weaker and stronger players, such that:

- The weaker players learn from the stronger players
- The stronger players learn how to express ideas in a clear way to influence others, in turn improving their own communication skills.
- The stronger players learn to be selective about the moves they want to change – a good coaching point to learn.

#### **The exercise:**

Split the juniors into pairs comprising one stronger player and one weaker player.

Each pair is a team and is matched against another team to play a game of chess.

The weaker player in each team is given 3 counters at the start of the game.

Play commences with the weaker players in each team (W1 and W2) playing each other. The first weaker player (W1) plays a move. If this is not challenged by his partner (S1) he finishes his turn by passing a counter to his partner. The second weaker player (W2) makes his move in the same way. If the weaker players run out of counters play continues as normal between the weaker players until a stronger player challenges a move.

If the stronger player in the pair does not like his partner's move, he may say 'I suggest a different move.....' My reason is '.....'. He may only make an alternative suggestion provided he holds at least one counter. When making a suggestion he must pass a counter to the weaker player. He may only give one reason, for example: 'my move stops the rook being captured', or 'my move sets up a checkmate combination' etc. The weaker player must decide whether to play his own original move or to play the alternative suggested. If he stays with his own move the stronger player takes back the offered counter.

Play continues in this way until one team wins the game.

The use of counters is important as it stops the stronger player from challenging every move the weaker player makes. He can only challenge if he is still holding at least one counter. So he will need to be selective about which moves he thinks it worthwhile to challenge. By working collaboratively – one by listening to advice, one by choosing when and how to make that advice – the pairs have a greater chance of winning.

#### **Variant:**

The chess tutor selects an end game position where one side is a little ahead but needs to know how to use the advantage to win the game. The aim is for the pairs to learn more about how to win from such a position by playing the position twice (or more times) so that the weaker player in each pair learns from his partner's challenges. This variant enables pairs to work on particular endgame problems, replaying the same problem until a pair can confidently find the strategy for converting the advantage into a win.

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