



A short history of NATO Chess

Chess, or the “royal game,” is popular in the military environment among North Atlantic Treaty Organization members. Within the Alliance, the NATO Chess Championships (NCC) have been organized each year with the exception of 1993. Additionally, twelve so-called NATO Tournaments were conducted from 1978 to 1988 as well as in 1993.

The sporting rivalry is very intense, especially the team competition in the classical tournament. Players from local military clubs are invited to the blitz tournament. Individual NATO champions from the past have been Grandmasters such as Simen Agdestein (former coach of World Chess Champion Magnus Carlsen) or Jan Gustafsson (Carlsen second and a well-known commentator). Other strong players such as WGM Elisabeth Paetz (first board of German national women’s team) and one of the world’s leading authorities on endgames, Karsten Mueller (FM at the time), also participated in the NCC.

The opening ceremony consists of chess players and also dignitaries such as Ministers or Vice Ministers of Defence, Generals, Officers and representatives of national Chess Federations.

Each of the 29 NATO members has the right to have six players on the national team and two players on the NATO Team. The four highest results from the national team count towards the team’s ranking. Players sharing the same nationality do not play against each other (unless required by pairing rules).

Poland has coordinated the undertakings of International Military Chess Committee (IMCC), with Col Tomasz Malinowski as Chairman and myself as Secretary since 2012, taking over the responsibilities from the Netherlands, respectively Brig. Gen. Hendrik Steffers and Captain RNLN Harm-Theo Wagenaar.



NATO Chess Tournaments

- 1978 - Nørresundby, Denmark
- 1979 - Airbase Aalborg, Denmark
- 1980 - Airbase Aalborg, Denmark
- 1981 - Nørresundby, Denmark
- 1982 - Nørresundby, Denmark
- 1983 - Nørresundby, Denmark
- 1984 - Nørresundby, Denmark
- 1985 - Sonderborg, Denmark
- 1986 - Nørresundby, Denmark
- 1987 - Airbase Aalborg, Denmark
- 1988 - Nørresundby, Denmark
- 1993 - Breda, The Netherlands

NATO Chess Championships

- 1989 – Hammelburg, Germany
- 1990 – Oslo, Norway
- 1991 – Cranwell, United Kingdom
- 1992 – Muenster, Germany
- 1994 – Breda, The Netherlands
- 1995 – Gausdal, Norway
- 1996 – Viborg, Denmark
- 1997 – Apt, France
- 1998 – Portsmouth, England
- 1999 – Stetten am kalten Markt, Germany
- 2000 – Leopoldsburg, Belgium
- 2001 – San Remo, Italy
- 2002 – Brest, France
- 2003 – Hovelte, Denmark
- 2004 – The Hague, The Netherlands
- 2005 – Kolobrzeg, Poland
- 2006 – Berkshire, United Kingdom
- 2007 – Ankara, Turkey
- 2008 – Brussels, Belgium
- 2009 – Hammelburg, Germany
- 2010 – Koge, Denmark
- 2011 – Kaunas, Lithuania
- 2012 – Brest, France
- 2013 – Warsaw, Poland
- 2014 – Quebec, Canada
- 2015 – Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- 2016 – Shrivenham, United Kingdom
- 2017 – Budapest, Hungary
- 2018 – Lubbock, USA
- 2019 – Berlin, Germany



The main challenge trophy is a statue of King Canute (pictured above), sponsored by Denmark. As a reminder, Canute was King of England (1016–35), of Denmark (1019–35), and of Norway (1028–35). He was the grandson of the Polish ruler Mieszko I and most probably Dobrawa on his mother’s side (Sygryda Storrada).

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