

Return of the king, as Koelle makes comeback

By Kim Stephens

THE air of excitement was unmistakable at Ballarat Chess Club last week, as members anxiously awaited the return of a legend to the fold.

Arthur Koelle, 56, remains the club's greatest success story, more than 40 years after he became the youngest person ever to win the Victorian Junior Chess championship in 1968 when he was aged 14.

Three years later he went on to win the Australian junior title.

Mr Koelle relocated to Germany in 1981.

So when he returned to

Ballarat for the holiday period and mentioned to former club mate and present member Kevin Perrin that he would like a few games, Mr Perrin hastily arranged a lightning round for club members.

For most, it was their first chance to meet Mr Koelle.

"He would be the strongest Ballarat player ever born," Mr Perrin said.

"He mentioned he would like to have a few games of chess while he was back here and I said, 'rather than beat me, why don't you have a go with some of the others?'"

Club president Patrick

Cook said members jumped at the chance to participate.

"His reputation precedes him. It's not often you get to play such a top-rated chess player," Mr Cook said.

Mr Koelle, who works as a geophysicist in Hanover, competed in the first division of the renowned German Bundesliga club competition throughout the 1990s, but said he rarely plays competitively these days due to work commitments.

"I'll just play against a few people and see what happens," he said.



WATCHING EVERY MOVE: Ballarat Chess Club president Patrick Cook, left, and former chess rival and friend Kevin Perrin check out Arthur Koelle's moves before the chess games begin. Picture: **Zhenshi van der Klooster**