Uzbekistan Chess Olympiad Reflections (8) by Dr Lyndon Bouah

Greetings family, friends, colleagues and the broader chess community from Uzbekistan.

The 2026 Chess Olympiad is being held in Samarkand in Uzbekistan. 200 countries from across the world have gathered to play in this prestigious event. Uzbekistan is in Central Asia, in the heart of the ancient Silk Road region.



Being a captain of a team comes with many responsibilities. I have leant many things over the years about the art of captaincy. Allow me to share some of them.

Lessons learnt from the art of captaincy

1. Be humble. Captaining a team is a privilege and honour that is not bestowed on everyone.

2. Respect every player. Every player contributes to the team. Every point counts the same.

3. Praise publicly and criticize in private. When someone has done great work, praise them in front of others, when you need to have strong words, do it in private.

4. Understand that everyone has a different context in their life. Their context may affect their game. Understand the context and work with what you have.

5. Understand your role as captain. In the last few years, I understood my role as captain of my local chess club was to ensure the team victory and not necessarily individual honours. Individual honours will follow team victories.

6. Speak to players well beforehand if you intend dropping them for key games. Players do not want to find out on the team sheet. Explain to the affected player what your reasoning is. He or she may not agree with you, but at least they will understand the rationale.

7. Ensure that you understand that when you are a non-playing captain that you are there to serve the team and the country. Ensure that players know where the coffee and soft drinks are. Check regularly on the water supply and be visible and present where the match is being played. Even if the match is the last one to finish, the captain stays with that player.

8. The captain must understand that he does not need to be the best player in the team. The captain must enable the best team to play on the day even if it means substituting himself or herself. In 2018, I had a bad season on the top board for my club. The following season I dropped myself to board three to allow others an opportunity to play ahead of me. I could still contribute to the overall success of the team.

9. The captain must motivate and encourage each player. Different players need different energy. Sometimes a player just needs a little motivational talk while, others may need to be reminded of incentives etc. Understand each player and work to his/ her strengths.

10. The captain must be humble in victory and gracious in defeat. Any team may have a bad day. In any competition, there may be losses and there will be wins. Accept both and thank the opposing captain for the match and wish them well.

At the Chess Olympiad the captain is non-playing. This allows the captain to be the selector of the team and be the person that must lead the team into the venue and ensure that the score sheets and team sheets are signed off in the venue. The captain must also fill out the team sheet in the morning to ensure that the correct team is filled.

As Alex la Guma continues his journey in Uzbekistan, he quotes,

“Open the gate, O watchman of the night!

Ho, travellers, I open. For what land

Leave you the dim moon of delight?

We take the Golden Road to Samarkand.

Sweet to ride forth at evening from the wells,

Where shadows pass gigantic on the sand,

and softly through the silence of the bells

Along the Golden Road to Samarkand”.

These lines and the previous lines are drawn from the Golden Journey to Samarkand (1913) and the verse drama Hassan: The Story of Hassan of Baghdad and How He Came to Make the Journey to Samarkand both James Elroy Flecker.

An Olympiad is a great place to meet old friends. I bumped into Abd Hamid Bi Abd Majid. He is an experienced arbiter from Malaysia and was the chief arbiter at the Gukesh-Ding Liren match. In 1994 he brought a team to Cape Town to play in the Sheikh Yusuf 300th anniversary event. He is now on the top boards. incidentally Ewan Kromhout brilliantly won that event held in Cape Town.

Then I saw the grandmasters that played in the Steinitz GM Norm event in 2014. Playing board four for Bangladesh was GM Niaz Murshed, captaining Barbados was GM Sergey Kasparov, captaining Guyana was GM Aleksa Strikovic who won the event, and GM Kenny Solomon is captain of the SA women’s team.

By the way Steinitz will be staging its fiftieth anniversary event from 19 to 22 March 2027. Do save the date.

Grenada played Senegal in the Open section. The Grenada Open team lost 2.5 to 1.5 against Senegal. Senegal featured a grandmaster from the Basque country who gave a master class in his game against the Grenada board one. On Board three Omario Pope picked up the first point after an hour and 18 moves when he won one piece and was about to win a second as well. On board two Gennard Robert's played well but fell to a direct attack against his higher rated opponent. On board four Jaedyn Pierre saved a half point when he was in severe time trouble.

Bo.	135	Senegal (SEN)	Rtg	-	198	Grenada (GRN)	Rtg	2½:1½
		(c) Amadou Lamine Cisse				(c) Lyndon Bouah		
84.1	GM	□ Izeta Txabarri, Felix	2452	-		■ Renniel, Gilbert	1848	1 - 0
84.2		■ El, Hadji Saidou Nourou BA	1957	-		□ Roberts, Gennard	1564	1 - 0
84.3		□ Deme, Cheikh Sidy Mohamed	1864	-		■ Pope, Omario	1431	0 - 1
84.4		■ Mlik, Omar	1618	-		□ Jaedyn, C	0	½ - ½

In Round 8 Grenada Women won 3 -1 when they beat Sierra Leone. This is now the second victory of the team in this competition. The team is in good spirits.

Bo.	172	Grenada (GRN)	Rtg	-	187	Sierra Leone (SLE)	Rtg	3 : 1
		(c) Denise Bouah				(c) Abdul Rahman Toronka		
91.1		□ Rhonda, J Lambert	1577	-		■ Beckley, Jerelyn Adeshola Mary	0	1 - 0
91.2		■ Achazia, N.A.Lewis	0	-		□ Boyle, Sonia	0	0 - 1
91.3		□ Senthilkumar, Abiramy	0	-		■ Farmer, Mary Salamatu	0	1 - 0
91.4		■ Tehalyani, Kenishka	0	-		□ Kamara, Sarah	0	1 - 0

The SA Open Team played Puerto Rico.

Bo.	77	South Africa (RSA)	Rtg	-	118	Puerto Rico (PUR)	Rtg	3 : 1
		(c) Henry Robert Steel				(c) Yusnel Bacallao Alonso		
50.1	IM	□ Karsten, Jan	2386	-	FM	■ Almedina Ortiz, Edgardo J.	2200	1 - 0
50.2	IM	■ Levitan, Caleb Levi	2316	-	FM	□ Rodriguez Santiago, Jaime	2069	½ - ½
50.3	FM	□ Mhango, Banele	2354	-	FM	■ Toro Cruz, Sebastian J.	2143	1 - 0
50.4		■ Dinham, James	2124	-	CM	□ Zilleruelo Irizarry, Diego	2061	½ - ½

The SA Women's team played Estonia.

Bo.	86	South Africa (RSA)	Rtg	-	41	Estonia (EST)	Rtg	0 : 4
		(c) Kenneth Terence Solomon				(c) Kaido Kulaots		
22.1	WFM	□ Badenhorst, Chloe	1997	-	IM	■ Narva, Mai	2411	0 - 1
22.2	WIM	■ Laubscher, Anzel	1817	-	WFM	□ Blokhin, Sofia	2046	0 - 1
22.3	WCM	□ Nel, Hayley	1864	-	WCM	■ Olde, Grete	2002	0 - 1
22.4		■ Masango, Sizakele	1880	-	WIM	□ Tsiganova, Monika	2014	0 - 1

Regards

Dr Lyndon Bouah

Reporting live from Uzbekistan