Uzbekistan Chess Olympiad Reflections (5) 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.



September 1986 is a kind of an anniversary for me. You see dear reader; I started playing and studying chess seriously in September 1986. That is right - forty years ago! Do you have some time for me then I will tell you a bit about me! The next passage is taken from one of my fourteen books that I have written.

1. Introduction

It was for Christmas 1983, at the age of ten, that I received a chess set as part of my Christmas presents from my parents Winston and Ruby Bouah. In a picture taken on the day, one can see a racing track and the chess set standing next to it. I did not play much chess as I was an active youngster and attracted

to physical activity. At that stage, I was playing tennis, as my father was an avid tennis player. I was also playing football for a club called Stardrifts, which had their base about 100 metres from my house at Marock Road fields. So, in the meantime, the chess set was quietly packed away.



In 1986 I entered Bethelsdorp Senior Secondary School in Felcass Road, Salt Lake in the city then called Port Elizabeth and now called Gqerberha. On one of the days in September of that year, I had not done my homework, and, in the afternoon break, I needed to complete the outstanding materials. The only open classroom was the chess room, run by a teacher called John Ritchie. I asked his permission to do my homework at the back of the room. He graciously gave me permission. The next day however, I was back, because I had remembered that I could move the pieces a bit! So, there I was the next day playing in the back rows with the chess players that were there. The chess league had ended already, and Bethelsdorp Senior Secondary School had cleaned up, with the A and B teams winning their respective divisions.

I recalled that my uncle Lionel Hiles could play chess, and I spent many Sunday afternoons getting some lessons from him in 1986 and 1987. He also

introduced me to my first encounter with a chess computer, called the Kasparov computer which he had received at work as a gift for long service.

2. Mr John Ritchie

The chess club had a ladder system and every Wednesday one could challenge up to five places above your placement, as this would allow you to jump above that person if you beat him or her in a two-game match. The ladder was quite a long one as there were about 100 players at the school at any given time. I advanced reasonably quickly up the ladder as many of the players in the bottom were my level or below.

At the end of the school year, Mr Ritchie gave some of us books which he had personally typed. These books contained opening lines and endgames that he felt would be useful for us. I was, by this time, mesmerised by chess and during that December vacation (1986), I played through all the material that Mr Ritchie gave us. I made notes in the margin where the lines were incomplete or incorrect with its assessment (in my opinion) or if I picked up anything that looked strange. Upon my return to school in January 1987, I presented my notes to Mr Ritchie who was very surprised that I had played through every opening variation in the notes. Every opening was played through from the Albin Counter Gambit to the Sicilian.

One of the interesting aspects of chess at Bethelsdorp Senior Secondary School was the fact that chess was included in the inter-house competitions. The first quarter of the school year is normally dedicated to athletics. Each school normally has an inter-house in which athletes compete, and thereafter a school team is selected to compete in a zonal athletic meeting against other schools at Gelvandale Track, which was the local stadium that everyone used. The winners of that zonal championship then competed in a Champions of Champions athletic meeting at the end of March each year, before an Eastern Province athletics team was announced. It was unusual that chess was part of the inter-house events, which normally only consisted of athletic events, but because chess was so entrenched in the school, the sport was also made part of the inter-house competition.

One of the reasons that I decided to write this book is because I believe that it is important that history records for posterity the events that shaped us as

persons. The teachers that formed the backbone of the organisations played a seminal role in the development of sport, arts and culture and the struggle against Apartheid in general. In my case, Mr John Ritchie, was the standout teacher when it came to chess at Bethelsdorp. He invariably arrived at the school just before 7am every day and opened his classroom which was Room 29. Each day, before school, the chess team would gather to play blitz and watch the top players in action. The chess classroom was available every day from 7am in the morning, as well as during first and second break. We also practised after school on certain days of the week. This dedication certainly assisted the chess team and me to achieve the success we had as scholars.

The notes that Mr Ritchie had painstakingly typed out were for many years used by many players (adults and juniors) who copied them to use at their own schools. In this way, he contributed not only to the growth of chess at the school, but also to the upliftment of the standard of chess in the Eastern Cape. He gave unselfishly to us. One of our players, Shane Bassett, did not have a chess set at home and when Shane brought him money to buy a chess set, Mr Ritchie bought a new chess set and when Shane unpacked the chess set, the money was at the bottom of the set.

Mr Ritchie was an unsung hero of chess in the Eastern Cape. He never asked for much. I was later told that he refused the "toilet tax" given to white teachers who taught at black schools. Ewan Kromhout, many times Eastern Province Chess Champion and a teacher at Andrew Rabie High School, called Mr Ritchie in 1989 and asked if the two schools could play a match, as Andrew Rabie was the leading chess playing school amongst white schools in South Africa and Bethelsdorp was the leading non-racial chess school. Mr Ritchie simply replied, "Thank you for the telephone call but there can be no normal sport in an abnormal society!" I only learnt about this when Ewan and I travelled together to the Slovenia Olympiad in 2002.

3. Eastern Province Senior Secondary Sport Union

During my high school years (1986 to 1990) the fixtures for the respective codes would be made available at the end of March each year. The schools in the northern areas of Port Elizabeth and Humansdorp all belonged to the Eastern Province Senior Schools Sports Union (EPSSSU). The President was

Raymond Uren, who was the principal of Bethelsdorp. The EPSSSU promoted non- racial sport at school level and was a member of the South African Senior Schools Sport Association (SASSSA) who in turn was an affiliate of the South African Council on Sport (SACOS). The EPSSSU organised sport at school level in a variety of codes, numbering about fifteen, for many years.

SACOS was formed in 1973 and one of their aims was: "*to foster a spirit of goodwill, equality and fraternity among all people without any discrimination whatsoever on the grounds of race, colour or creed and further carry out the provisions of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and other international bodies controlling world sport and also to prevent racial, colour, religious, or political discrimination among sportsmen."*

I only appreciated the fact that the league fixtures came out with regularity decades later when I understood the immense difficulties the teachers and organisations were placed under by the state. The fixtures were played on a home and away basis, and we travelled between Uitenhage, Arcadia, Humansdorp, Schauderville, West End, Booysens Park, Gelvandale and elsewhere. I personally participated in the EPSSSU League for four years and can attest to the fact that the league fixtures were adhered to each year.

The political situation in the country was a volatile one. A State of Emergency had been declared in South Africa since 20 July 1985 and effectively lasted until June 1990. The teacher organisations continued to organise sport amidst the banning, detention, imprisonment and torture of many of the teacher leaders under the State of Emergency.

Most pupils at many of the schools were working class students whose parents worked in factories in Port Elizabeth. This meant that when it came to raising money for travelling and competitions, the teachers had to cross-subsidise from different sporting codes. Any sponsorship for rugby, football and athletics would be used to cross-subsidise other sporting codes.

The students at Bethelsdorp during this period came from all segments of society in Port Elizabeth. The Bethelsdorp academic record was held in high regard, and parents enrolled their children from afar. Scholars from Gelvandale, Malabar, Salt Lake, Gelvan Park, West End, Salsoneville, Booysens

Park, Sanctor, Parkside and Bloemendal, all gravitated towards the school. This allowed a great mixture of influences to be brought to bear on the school.

The chess league was one of the many leagues that were organised by the EPSSSU. The league was organised under the trying economic, social and political circumstances prevailing at the time. It is a huge credit to the teachers and organisation, for organising the league under these conditions. Typically, the league, which consisted of one round of fixtures, was either played home or away. The matches generally took place on a Wednesday afternoon. In 1988, the fixture list for the Bethelsdorp chess team consisted of the following matches against the following schools, with my opponents' names given in brackets:

20 April	-	Bethelsdorp versus Arcadia High School (A. Peterson)
27 April	-	Bethelsdorp versus Gelvandale (H. Serfontein)
4 May	-	Bethelsdorp versus Paterson (D. Petersen)
12 May	-	Bethelsdorp versus St Thomas (U. Beaton)
18 May	-	Bethelsdorp versus David Livingstone (P. Quantoi)
10 August	-	Bethelsdorp versus John Walton (N. Cunningham)
17 August	-	Bethelsdorp versus Paterson (D. Petersen)
24 August	-	Bethelsdorp versus Arcadia (A. Chapman)

This was a typical league with finals, as the final games were against schools that we had played before. The league allowed the schools to compete and build social cohesion and be part of the broader sport movement.

Bethelsdorp won the EPSSSU League in all four of the years that I played for the team. In 1988, I was made captain of the team at the age of 14 and was asked to lead the school's chess team. After this I took the interests of the players and my own play seriously. One of the nicest things Mr Ritchie introduced for the players on board one was the privilege of playing with the wooden pieces. The wooden pieces came out of the storeroom whenever Bethelsdorp had a home match. Everyone else would be playing with the hard plastic Staunton sets but board one always played with the wooden pieces. It is

said that the wooden pieces never lost a home match! I can proudly confirm that during the three years that I played board one for Bethelsdorp Senior Secondary School, I maintained the proud home record of the wooden set.

The players at Bethelsdorp that I recalled as my teammates were the following: Alvin Petersen, Donovan Kuscus, Shane Norkie, Winston Dalpat, Rashaad Ward, Shane Bassett, Conrad Blignaut, Carlos Costa, Fazlur Abdulla, Andre Botha, Rupert Fortune, Nicholas Jantjies, Tyrone Ferndale, Candida Ferndale, Valmon de Bruyn, Herschel Maasdorp, Marthinus Nortje, Deidre Jacobs, Spencer Reid, Noel Blignaut, Lance Joel, Lionel Terblanche, Jacob Booysen, and others.

4. South African Senior Schools Sport Association (SASSSA 1988)

As we were members of the EPSSSU, every year an Eastern Province Schools chess team was chosen that would participate in a national school's championship. The Western Province Senior Secondary Schools chess team dominated these school championships and would normally win both the individual and team titles.

In 1987, the EPSSSU chess trials were held on what is known as a Swiss basis. In this event I lost unexpectedly and did not make the district team. I was very disappointed because I made the senior Eastern Province "B" team earlier in the year. And now I did not make the EPSSSU chess team! However, no SASSSA Championship took place though in 1987. In 1988, the system changed when it was decided to have a Swiss event first to determine the top finishers and then have a round robin. In 1988, I again did not win the Swiss but went on to score 15/15 in the round robin which was held in the June vacation. This then set the trend for the next few years as we then proceeded to convene Swiss events and then a round robin. In 1989, I won the Swiss trials and the round robin. I again achieved a perfect score; this time it was 11/11. In 1990, I repeated the tournament victories although not with a perfect score.

The matches were hard fought by all the players, as only six players would be chosen to represent the Eastern Province Senior Schools Sport Union (EPSSSU) team at the South African Senior Schools Sports Association (SASSSA) tournament that would be held in September, at the annual Spring Tournament. The SASSSA national chess events started in 1981, with the last

preceding one being held in 1986 in Oudtshoorn which was won by Nazeem Mustapha from Western Province. In 1986, Alvin Petersen and Winston Dalpat from Bethelsdorp and Eastern Province made the SASSSA team.

In 1988, I was appointed captain of the Eastern Province team that travelled to Johannesburg to compete in the SASSSA Chess Championship. We stayed in Riverlea, where my uncle James Bouah was the principal at the local high school. He was previously from Schauderville in Port Elizabeth and had moved to Johannesburg many decades before.

I had only one previous experience of a national youth event when I competed in Cape Town in December 1987. We had played in Silvertown, Athlone, and that event was won by Ravi Naidoo from Natal. I had scored 4/5, including a good win against one of the senior players from WP, Hilton Netta. I won the princely sum of R10 for finishing in the top three in that event.

In the SASSSA event in Johannesburg, in September 1988, I started well with a good win against a player from Boland who would become my good friend, Lourenzo van Niekerk. I continued to play well in the event and in the final round, I was on 5/5 and then tried to play for the gallery when I sacrificed my queen unsoundly and lost to Wilfred Nelson from Cape Town. Winston Dalpat, my teammate and schoolmate then beat Nelson in the blitz play-off to clinch the individual title, and Eastern Province, for the first time in their history, clinched the team title as well. We were over the moon with our performance. I was happy that we had won as a team and happy for Winston. I was initially crying in the bathroom when I lost the game against Wilfred Nelson but later regained my composure and congratulated Winston on keeping our flag flying high.

The players that made the SASSSA team in Johannesburg 1988 were:

1. Winston Dalpat (EP)

2. Wilfred Nelson (WP)

3. Lyndon Bouah (WP)

4. Conrad Blignaut (EP)

5. Shane Bassett (EP)

6. Lourenzo van Niekerk (Boland)

7. Rodney Williams (WP)

8. Allistair Chapman (EP)

9. Ashley Schüller (WP)

10. Rajendra Moodley (Natal)

11. Naresh Bharajh (Natal)

12. Adeeb Abrahams (WP)

The managers for the 1988 trip to Johannesburg were Hiran Peterson and Henry Uithaler. Both men would later become presidents of Chess Eastern Province and would play key roles in the unity process that would commence a few years later.

The successful SASSSA trip meant a great deal for Bethelsdorp Senior Secondary School and Eastern Province. Five out of the six EP players were all from Bethelsdorp and four out of those five players had made the squad. Only Rashaad Ward had not made the team. However, this would not be the last we would hear from Rashaad. When we came back to Port Elizabeth, we were called to the front at the school assembly and congratulated by the principal, Mr Raymond Uren. At the annual award evening I was awarded the Best Sportsperson trophy for the year 1988. It was the first time in the history of the school that a chess player was honoured in this fashion.

The CAPSA Newslines of September 1988 reported on the SASSSA event and stated the following:

> "*This prestigious event is held biennially in conjunction with other scholar sport activities. This year the hosts were the Transvaal Senior Schools Sports Association, the venue being the ST. Barnard College, Johannesburg. Of SASSSA's 13 provincial Units, 8 teams of 6 players per team had the privilege of meeting each other. The format being an Individual/Teams Six Round Swiss with FIDE 1 Hour per player Rapid Chess Rules. Having hinted all year long and equipping themselves with the necessary chess equipment for practising chess,*

the Boys from Eastern Province did what they came to do; they took what Western Province claimed to be "Their Title" from them.

The team results were:

Team	***Score***
Eastern Province	*27/36*
Western Province	*24.5*
Natal	*20*
Boland	*17.5*
Border	*15.5*
South Cape	*14*
Transvaal	*11*
Karoo	*2.5*

Winston Dalpat from Bethelsdorp was crowned the "best player" of the tournament. The twelve players will represent SASSSA in the match against CAPSA senior players at the CAPSA Closed Championship Tournament in December in East London. Border Chess Association will host the event."

5. SASSSA Brochure 1988

The brochure for the 1988 SASSSA event set out the Presidential Message from Mr Raymond Uren and I quote from this message, as it sets out the social and political situation of the day:

"*On behalf of SASSSA, it is my pleasure to welcome all participants and officials to the second Annual Spring Tournament, which is being hosted by Transvaal High Schools Sports Association.*

This tournament is being held under much the same conditions as the tournaments of the past few years. A State of Emergency, intensified

to a severe degree, preventing the continuance of a variety of legitimate activities in the community, still persists. Several community organisations have had their activities restricted to such an extent, that they have virtually ceased to exist. Fortunately, sport remains as a rallying point for the community, and for students in particular.

SASSSA's national tournament brings together pupils from all over the country, where they can share ideas and start permanent relationships and friendships. Not only is the standard of performance in the particular codes enhanced, but the participants develop an understanding of the problem that beset the cause of non-racial sport.

I wish to draw the attention of our participants to the Declaration contained in the Tournament Brochure, particularly to the paragraph which states that SASSSA has been established to pursue, inter alia, the following aim: 'To teach us that all the people who live in our country are equal in human dignity and worth and that through sport I am given the opportunity of making friends so that I am able to show by my actions that I believe in the equality of all people.'

I express our thanks to the parents of Johannesburg who are acting as hosts for our participants, and to Transvaal High Schools Sports Association for organising the tournaments.

I trust that the tournament will take place in a fraternal spirit, worthy of the lofty standards aspired to by the South African Senior Schools Sports Association."

6. SASSSA Declaration 1988

The brochure also contained the Declaration that was always read out by one of the athletes. The Declaration epitomised the feelings of the day. The Declaration read:

"I am fully aware of the honour which has been bestowed on me when I was chosen as the representative of all the schools in my area. I also know that certain things are expected of me to show that I deserve that honour.

I know that the South African Seniors Schools Sports Association is the body which is responsible for organising these tournaments and that the association has been established for the following reasons:

- *To promote sport among all the pupils of secondary schools in the country;*

- *To give pupils the opportunity to visit different parts of our country so that we may increase our knowledge of our country and all the people who live in it;*

- *To teach us that all the people who live in our country are equal in human dignity and worth and that through sport I am given the opportunity of making friends so that I am able to show by my actions that I believe in the equality of all people.*

  On my part as a sportperson I believe:

- *That I must behave like a true sportsperson and respect my opponent at all times;*

- *That I must be fair to my opponents while I support my own team;*

- *That I must be modest in victory and ask myself whether our victory has been gained by fair means;*

- *That I must accept a defeat with good grace and give my opponents the praise due to them for gaining victory;*

- *That I must use sport not only for my own benefit and advantage but also to live out and demonstrate my sincere interest in and concern for my fellow South Africans who all form part of one nation and who are entitled to fair, just and equal treatment and opportunities in the land of their birth."*

The Declaration above is what has moulded me as a sportsperson and human being. I have played in hundreds of competitions and events throughout the country, continent and the world and I have accepted the ethos as set out in the Declaration above. One of the interesting features of the brochure was a story written by a pupil from CJB (Chris Jan Botha Secondary School in

Bosmont, Johannesburg) who wrote the following story which touched me greatly:

> "*I came, I saw and I was conquered.*
>
> *Yes, I was conquered by the simplicity, the poverty and, most of all, the warmth I received from this family in Graaf-Reinet while on tournament. I come from a middle class family with all the comforts – hot and cold water, electricity-and all the things that I take for granted. These things are and have to be there. I didn't stop to think how parents worked so hard to get them; they just had to be there.*
>
> *On my arrival at Graaf-Reinet our bus was driving through this "lokasie" (Location in English, a township). The Lokasie is a very poor section of tin shacks where these poor people live. There is no electricity in the homes-no taps with hot and cold water. Toilet facilities are in the yard. The water is heated on a primus stove, and meals are prepared in the same manner. It so happens that four girls in our team were taken in by this family in the Lokasie. Their home comprised of two bedrooms, a dining room and a kitchen. The family was a fairly large one, yet they gave up one room for us! This gesture touched me most and made me think long and hard. We have large homes, but how often are we prepared to share our homes? In the mornings we were served coffee and homemade biscuits, painstakingly prepared. At night one person would hold the candle over the stove while another prepared the supper. I would stand and watch in fascination and my heart just filled with love for these wonderful people.*
>
> *When supper was served-it was delicious. Foods I did not want to eat at home I ate there, and it was wonderful. As we thanked them after each meal and said how we enjoyed it, their faces would light up so happily that we were happy. I was very excited to be chosen to represent Transvaal. I was just happy to go on tour. I did not know or anticipate how much one week would open my eyes, to learn so much, to realise just how fortunate we are, to appreciate what we*

have, and above all to be tolerant and to love all people. All I know is that I left home poor and came back Rich in Knowledge."
Natasha Artman (C.J.B)

7. SASSSA 1989

In 1989, the same format was followed. The SASSSA Chess Championship was held in Paarl at Klein Nederburg. Here the games were hard-fought, as WP attempted to wrestle the championship back from Eastern Province. It was not to be, as Eastern Province ended with two players in the play-offs, Conrad Blignaut and me. We had both ended on 5.5/6 and now had to compete in a play-off. We contested two blitz games and I won both games. I was then crowned champion of the South African Senior Schools Sport Association and was very proud of this achievement. I was crowned best player of the tournament and made captain of the National SASSSA Chess team. Back at my high school I was again awarded the trophy for Best Sportsperson of the Year.

The players that made the SASSSA team in 1989 in Paarl were:

1. Lyndon Bouah (EP)

2. Conrad Blignaut (EP)

3. Winston Dalpat (EP)

4. Shane Bassett (EP)

5. Allistair Chapman (EP)

6. Valmon de Bruyn (EP)

7. Ashley Schüller (WP)

8. Athon Willenberg (WP)

9. Cedric Abrahams (WP)

10. Adeeb Abrahams (WP)

11. Graham Solomon (WP)

12. J. Johnson (Boland)

The interesting aspect to note is that in 1989, all six Eastern Province players made the South African Senior Schools Sports Association team, with 5 players being from Bethelsdorp, and Allistair Chapman from Arcadia Senior Secondary School.

In Paarl, I stayed in Wellington in Russell Street with a lovely family who opened their home to me. As in the previous year, we travelled with the gymnasts and the cross-country athletes, so our journey by bus was with the two other codes in both years. By having the Spring Tournament in this fashion, the organisation saved money as one mode of transport could transport all the codes and similarly the organising could be more streamlined.

8. History of SASSSA

In 1989, a pamphlet was published by EPSSSU that gave a bit of history about SASSSA. It read:

> *"On Wednesday 5 April 1961, the South African Senior Schools Sports Association (SASSSA) held its inaugural in Johannesburg. At the time, Western Province, Transvaal, and Natal were the only provincial affiliates. Today (1989), SASSSA has grown to include fourteen affiliates across the country and beyond. Units that have joined in the last two years include the Southeastern Senior Schools Sport Union, the Namibian SSSU, and the Free State SSSA. We also boast a total of fifteen different codes of sport. SASSSA was established at a time when people were challenging the status quo in both politics and sport. Instrumental organisations in this challenge were non-racial sports bodies like the SA Table Tennis Board, and the SA Weightlifting Federation.*
>
> *These sports bodies, under the banner of the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC), also challenged the membership of apartheid South Africa on the International Olympic Committee. These developments share their place in history with the Sharpeville and Langa massacres.*
>
> *It is therefore not surprising that SASSSA regards its belief in non-racialism in sport as the feature that distinguishes it from other*

school sport organisation in South Africa. In promoting the ethic of non-racialism, SASSSA has been working hard at breaking down the racial barriers created by the myriads of apartheid laws in control of every aspect of our lives. Despite harassment by the authorities, more and more schools under the Department of Education and Training (DET) have been joining the ranks of SASSSA. Compared to other regions, the Eastern Cape has been more and more successful in this regard.

Over the past two years, SASSSA has also made inroads in the rural areas. Some of our winter code meetings in 1987 and 1988 were held in Queenstown and Graaf-Reinet respectively. This year (1989) some of our winter code meetings will be held in Upington.

On the first Monday in March each year we celebrate SASSSA Day. On this occasion we try to make students at our affiliate schools aware of what we stand for, what our roles are, and inform them of what we have achieved. We also ask students for a small contribution so that our less fortunate units also have the opportunity to attend our tournaments."

9. SASSSA 1990

In 1990, the SASSSA Championship was held at St Thomas High School in Port Elizabeth. This was a great touch because it meant we could defend our title that we had won both individually and as a team, at home. We did it in fine style, by winning the team event and me defending the individual championship and winning with 6.5/7 after a draw with teammate Winston Dalpat. My teammates and I made the SA Senior Schools Sport Association team again. This time, no play-off was required and I was very happy that we had won, and that I could defend my South African Schools title successfully.

The 1990 SASSSA team members were:

1. Lyndon Bouah (EP)

2. Winston Dalpat (EP)

3. Shane Bassett (EP)

4. Conrad Blignaut (EP)

5. Samuel Leenderts (WP)

6. Athon Willenberg (WP)

7. Willie van den Heever (Namaqualand)

8. Yashen Maharaj (Natal)

9. R. Singh (Natal)

10. P. Naidoo (Natal)

At the prize-giving, an interesting exchange took place between our chess teacher Mr John Ritchie and the President of SASSSA, Mr Raymond Uren. Mr Ritchie, in his speech as the chess convenor of the event, remarked that we were playing at a very high standard, and in his opinion, we were playing at international level already. Mr Uren, in his closing remarks at the ceremony, then said that it may be so, but that we were very far away from playing international chess, given the circumstances in the country, as we did not have political freedom. Mr Uren was not to know that I would be in the first unified South African team two years later, when South Africa returned to the international scene in June 1992.

I did not at the time understand that exchange, but the President's Message to the Fourth Spring Tournament by Mr R.P. Uren gave context to the exchange. The brochure published in September 1990 and handed to each team read and I quote:

> "*On behalf of the South African Senior Schools Sports Association I should like to extend a warm welcome to all officials and participants in the Fourth Spring tournament which comprises of the Seventh Chess, the Tenth Cross-Country and the Fourth Gymnastics Tournament.*
>
> *We must thank our hosts EPSSSU for making this tournament possible despite recent civil upheaval, severe division in non-racial sport and problems in accommodating officials. We are nevertheless*

confident that the normal high standard organisation and competition of SASSSA tournaments will be very much in evidence.

The Press, both Establishment and Alternative, have been attempting to sideline SACOS and SASSSA and to create euphoric expectations of a return to international competition because of short-sighted and ill-considered unity talks. The recent ICAAS (International Conference Against Apartheid Sport) Conference in Stockholm at which SACOS was represented has completely vindicated SACOS position on non-alignment and the moratorium. The Conference concluded that 'only the eradication of apartheid and the establishment of majority rule... can achieve the effective ending of racism in sport. It called on "all concerned to tighten and maintain the boycott of apartheid sports until genuine representatives of the people judge that the process of transition is both profound and irreversible.'

It is hoped that officials will not concentrate on the sport alone but find time to discuss this and other burning issues affecting the course of non-racial sport in this country.

It is our sincere wish that everyone concerned will have an enjoyable and memorable tournament."

So, the message from the President of SASSSA was clear. Unity talks could only take place when the conditions were conducive. We will, in the following chapters, return to these conditions.

10. Stewart Reuben-International Correspondence

In 1986 and 1987, I very quickly devoured all the chess books at the West End Library. The local librarian decided to refer me to the Port Elizabeth Central Library. I had always driven past the library but never entered. With another intrepid chess player, Conrad Blignaut, I took the requisite taxi to the library. This was of course an adventure on its own. As my high school, Bethelsdorp, was next to the Windvogel taxi rank, we took a taxi to Norwich, which was the central bus and taxi depot. The procedure stayed the same for many a week. After disembarking we first went to eat at Lilwells. Next to the pie shop was

Fogarty's Books, which was a veritable treasure trove of books, where we then checked all the latest books.

Then we were off to the library. An imposing building, it had prime space in the centre of town. A statue of Queen Victoria greeted us upon arrival. The entrance was on the side, but sometimes the front door was open. We would immediately head for the chess section. We then discovered that they had about 50 new books that we had not read before, but another discovery intrigued us even more. The library subscribed to the British Chess Magazine (BCM). As the authors of the various articles invited readers to write to them, we seized the opportunity and wrote to one author called Stewart Reuben. The correspondence from us was well received and this started a lifetime of friendship. I met Stewart for the first time in 1992, after corresponding for five years!

Stewart Reuben was very surprised when a group of chess players which included Ashley Schüller from Cape Town, Shane Bassett, Conrad Blignaut and I started writing to him. We shared the details of our lives, and he in turn told us about life in England and in Europe. I was the most conscientious and wrote to Stewart with analysis of my games. He then would play through the games and propose different ideas and moves and comment on our positions. He sent video tapes and some books and other material that I absorbed. These comments assisted me greatly, and decades later it dawned on me that he was my international chess coach.

In the September 1990 issue of the British Chess Magazine, on page 446 in his monthly column, Stewart Reuben wrote the following about our correspondence:

> *"About two years ago several South African schoolboys started writing to me. They did so after seeing one of my articles in this magazine about how to improve your results without increasing your actual chess ability. The boys asked me to comment on their games. However weak I may be, their access to formal instruction is extremely limited. One told me he had a published rating of 1382 (if*

Elo, about 100 BCF). I was quickly able to disabuse him of this idea. Relatively speaking in South Africa that might be accurate but internationally his games were more of a 2000 strength player. In fact, I was able to send one of his combinations to Leonard Barden for consideration for publication in the London Evening Standard, where it duly appeared. Remembering my own pleasure at a similar age at having a position published in a national journal, it gives me a warm glow that I was able to achieve this for the 14-year old so far away. (The player in question was Conrad Blignaut, and the position was from Blignaut vs. Errol Ruiters, EP Prestige 1988 - the author.)

It started out with two correspondents and then suddenly it was four. I was gripped by a sudden fear. Were my days going to be filled by letters to and from teenagers intensely interested in politics, chess and music of which I have never heard - still less actually listened to? However, I needn't have worried. In the main, they lost interest before me and their letters tailed off, so now I am in regular correspondence with only one of their number, Lyndon Bouah, who is probably the strongest player. Perhaps the others realised I just wasn't good enough to make constructive comments on a handful of games.

Normally the colour, race or religion of a fellow chess player isn't central to a relationship. In these cases, if nothing else, I was curious. In due course photographs answered the question. All four are 'coloured'. What a terrible term and how much worse a political system which makes the matter important.

SA has two chess organisations. The South African Chess Federation is accused of being white-dominated and racist. The youngsters play under the banner of the SA Council on Sport which considers itself non-racist and is affiliated to FIDE. My reservation is that I doubt they have many white members. SACOS does not believe SA should be represented internationally as they consider it impossible to have normal sport in an abnormal society. Thus, they do not want FIDE to

permit SA to play in the Olympiads. All the boys were careful when they first wrote to impress on me the strength of their political feelings and how anti-apartheid, they were. They feared that I would refuse to reply but I believe all youngsters are entitled to their youth and cannot be blamed for the political actions of their elders. But how can you expect a teenager not to be involved in such burning issues.

I hear the editor calling: what about the title and have you forgotten that this is a chess magazine? Naturally the players are isolated. They cannot afford subscriptions to foreign magazines. Opportunities to play against strong players are extremely limited. There aren't many around and the cost of travel and accommodation is prohibitive. The common problem is alleviated by chess publications such as this one. It may not do the profitability of the BCM much good to know that it is stocked in a South African public library, but at least it is serving a useful social function...

The schoolteacher of these lads in SA has done an excellent job encouraging chess but this has had the effect that there are no school teams around that can give them a decent match...

My young correspondents teach chess to players weaker than themselves. You always learn a great deal when teaching. I don't do much chess tuition, so I haven't the full experience of helping somebody become a stronger player than me. Chess being so competitive, I wonder how people feel about that. The youngsters intend producing a chess magazine. They have been at it a year now and presumably have discovered that it is not as easy as it seems. Nonetheless this stimulates concrete analysis, and it is better to have a definite objective when working at chess than just the airy-fairy idea that perhaps one day you make use of some study. I find it extremely hard to work at chess. It is far easier to do so as part of a cooperative. But even this has its negative side if members of your group are the only ones you compete against.

In the end, I doubt it is possible to sustain interest in the game if there is no prospect whatsoever of international contact. A player can only go so far before he hungers for opposition which will test him to the full."

11. Bethelsdorp mentoring

The teachers at Bethelsdorp have all played a significant role in my life. I remember being fetched at home in 1989 and 1990 by teachers to attend EPSSSU meetings, where I had to take minutes. I did not realise that I was being groomed for leadership in life. The rides back home would be filled with questions and insightful comments and I only later in life understood that the teachers were mentoring me. I can only say thank you, to those teachers, many of them departed now, including the late Mr Abe Bruinders, the late Mr "Boots" Johnson, Mr Barry Hendricks, Mr Alan Zinn, the late Mrs Udemans, the late Mr Raymond Uren and others.

The teachers at primary school, particularly Mr Lony King (his favourite saying was pasted on the wall and read: Learn to listen and listen to learn!) and Mr Rodney Stowman, played important developmental roles in my life. At Bethelsdorp many teachers played different roles and my English teachers Mrs Rodney, Mrs Coopoo and Mrs Maart continued to encourage a love for English that my late mother, Ruby Bouah, had instilled in me. Mrs Udemans and Mr Zinn were my history teachers, and because of them my love for history has been developed. Thank you, Mr Zinn. Mr Leon Arendse, who later became principal, was also an influential teacher and I enjoyed our interactions decades later as well. We underestimate the influence of teachers on our lives. I remember with fondness that Mrs June Udemans would tell us not to be satisfied with passing with low grades because that would amount to an acceptance of "gutter education." In 1989, Mrs Udemans gave me a book with the following inscription, "*to Lyndon Bouah for excellent progress in history, standards 8 and 9, 1988-1989 (bicentenary year of the Great French Revolution). Hope this little book on the French Revolution encourages you to become a real, analytical student of history, so that you learn to understand the whole world, of which our beloved country is but a part. "Men will be what*

they ought to be, when each will be able to say; the world is my country, the world is my own native land (p68).”

So dear readers that is how my chess started at schoolboy level forty years ago and now I find myself here in Uzbekistan with the Grenada National Chess Team!

Today the Grenada Open team played Antigua and Barbuda. The Grenada Open team played well but lost 4 nil to a strong Antigua and Barbuda team! I had always heard about Antigua from cricket but had never known that there was another island called Barbuda as well. Famous cricketers from Antigua include Sir Viv Richards, Sir Curtly Ambrose, Sir Richie Richardson and Sir Andy Robert the first Antiguan to play test cricket for the West Indies.

Bo.	198	Grenada (GRN)	Rtg -	165	Antigua and Barbuda (ANT)	Rtg	0 : 4
		(c) Lyndon Bouah			(c) Julian Andrew June Piper		
91.1	□	Renniel, Gilbert	1848 -	FM	■ Queipo Caballero, Guillermo	2218	0 - 1
91.2	■	Roberts, Gennard	1564 -	CM	□ Farquhar, Abner	1759	0 - 1
91.3	□	Pope, Omario	1431 -		■ Charles, Vendiz	1701	0 - 1
91.4	■	Jaedyn, C	0 -		□ Solomon, Joshua	1565	0 - 1



Figure 1: Sir Vivian Richards



Figure 2: Sir Curtly Ambrose



Figure 3: Sir Richie Richardson



Figure 4: Sir Andy Robert

The Grenada women's team played the Comores Islands. The Women got their first match points when they drew 2-2 with Comores. This is a great for the team as three members have now scored wins thus far in the event. We are so happy for them!! Well-done to our board two and three ladies!

Bo.	172	Grenada (GRN)	Rtg -	181	Comoros Islands (COM)	Rtg	2 : 2
		(c) Denise Bouah			(c) Abdourakib Said Hassani		
92.1		☐ Achazia, N.A.Lewis	0 -		■ Fahima, Ali Mohamed Mohamed	0	0 - 1
92.2		■ Naziyah, S.A.James	0 -		☐ Nasra, Kamal Ibrahim	0	1 - 0
92.3		☐ Senthilkumar, Abiramy	0 -		■ Bambaouma, Maissane	0	1 - 0
92.4		■ Tehalyani, Kenishka	0 -		☐ Ahmed, Houmairaou	0	0 - 1

The SA Open team played its neighbours Zimbabwe. This is a traditional clash at the Olympiad. Both teams would want to win!

Bo.	77	South Africa (RSA)	Rtg -	114	Zimbabwe (ZIM)	Rtg	3 : 1
		(c) Henry Robert Steel			(c) Kudakwashe Sibanda		
45.1	IM	☐ Karsten, Jan	2386 -	FM	■ Mwadzura, Roy	2211	1 - 0
45.2	FM	■ Mhango, Banele	2354 -		☐ Jele, Tapiwa	2204	½ - ½
45.3		☐ Mnyasta, Charlton	2236 -		■ Mushore, Emarald Takudzwa	2139	1 - 0
45.4		■ Dinham, James	2124 -		☐ Mapuranga, Vitalis	2058	½ - ½

The SA Women's team played Cyprus.

Bo.	125	Cyprus (CYP)	Rtg -	86	South Africa (RSA)	Rtg	2 : 2
		(c) Mark Bryan			(c) Kenneth Terence Solomon		
55.1	WCM	☐ Paunescu, Aida	1691 -	WFM	■ Badenhorst, Chloe	1997	1 - 0
55.2		■ Sarkisian, Aikaterina	1612 -	WIM	☐ Laubscher, Anzel	1817	0 - 1
55.3	WCM	☐ Sokolova, Victoria	1711 -	WCM	■ Nel, Hayley	1864	½ - ½
55.4	WCM	■ Sokolova, Larisa	1690 -		☐ Masango, Sizakele	1880	½ - ½



Figure 5: Mr. Ferguson, Captain Dr. Denise Bouah, and Grenada Women Team



Figure 6: Grenada Women Team

Regards

Dr Lyndon Bouah

Reporting live from Uzbekistan