NORWAY : CAPTAIN’S LOG (3) BY CM LYNDON BOUAH

Norway, as everyone in the chess world knows, is the home of world champion Magnus Carlsen. His photo dominated the headlines this morning. So what do South Africans know about the relationship between Norway and South Africa?

Norway was, during the years in the fight against apartheid, one of the strongest allies of the opposition. Norway provided funds for legal defences for persons on trial and also provided bursaries for students at Universities. My alma mater, the University of the Western Cape, has a good relationship with Norway. It was not uncommon in the 1990’s to find Norway funding a building in the University. Today, the wonderful Life Sciences building, which can be seen from Robert Sobukwe Drive in Bellville, is a fantastic monument to the partnership. It was very recently built with a R500 million contribution from Norway.

UWC has an agreement with the University of Tromso and I shall be meeting lecturers and students on Monday the 11th of August for a discussion. I am looking forward to that, as I am currently completing my Doctorate in Sport. Norway has, throughout the world, funded education and sport projects.

In 1996 I was introduced to GM Simeon Agdestein, when I attended the Olympiad in Armenia. GM Agdestein had a unique feature in that he played for Norway in both football and chess. One would never think that this was possible, as many chess players do not like exercising. By the way, we have agreed to daily walks led by Denise and David. David, however, prefers daily runs.

In 2002, I again met GM Simeon at the Olympiad in Bled. We chatted and, after a few coffees (there may have been a beer or two also), we agreed that he should bring a chess team from the school where he was teaching to South Africa the following year. It was thus fantastic when Simeon arrived with 8 of his students and his son. They started their tour in, what is now known as, Nelson Mandela Bay at the Easter Open. The GM won the event but the locals enjoyed the opportunity to cross swords with new players.

We then proceeded to Oudtshoorn where we did the traditional ostrich riding and enjoyed ostrich burgers. When we arrived in Cape Town, they played against various junior teams and also clubs. GM Agdestein also gave a simul at Claremont Chess Club, which was well attended.
Following this, they then flew to Gauteng where they competed against top Gauteng juniors. They enjoyed their visit so much that, in the following years, players from Waterkloof and other places were invited to events in Norway. It really was good to host the Norwegians and that cemented our relationships and ties with them. Thanks again to everyone who made their stay possible, as the Norwegians stayed with South African families and all parties enjoyed themselves.

South Africa also has a unique relationship with the Nobel Prize. The Nobel Prize is awarded in various categories, ranging from Literature to Science, Economics, Medicine and Peace. The various categories are awarded in Sweden but the Peace prize is awarded in Oslo. The first South African Nobel prize winner for Peace was Chief Albert Luthuli, who won the award in 1958. The second Nobel Peace prize winner was Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who won the award in 1984. In 1993, former South African Presidents FW De Klerk and Nelson Mandela were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace prize.

South Africa can thus boast of four peace prize laureates. Nadine Gordimer, who recently passed away, was awarded a Nobel prize for Literature. Cape Town will be hosting a summit of all Nobel Laureates in the next two (2) months. I often marvel at the sculptures of the Nobel prize winners at the Waterfront. It is truly inspiring to know that our South Africans have also been recognised.

It is our second day in Norway today. The people are very friendly and, according to unconfirmed reports, some of the Norwegian folk are very pleasant on the eye!

Enjoy the day further.

Regards,

Captain Lyndon Bouah

Reporting live from Tromso. Norway

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