

Any reflection on the 1990s must be preceded by setting the scene from the 1980s. The 1980s was a tough one in South Africa and was characterised by strife in all communities around South Africa. I started playing chess in September 1986 with my first official game being played in 1987. I was at the Bethelsdorp Senior Secondary School in Port Elizabeth. Chess was split between the establishment SA chess federation and the black South African Chess Association.

All of us knew that to become strong at chess you needed to beat the players from Cape Town and Western Province because the strength of chess was in Cape Town. The first time I qualified for the EP Senior team (b) was in 1987 and I was selected to play in East London. At this event Mr Andre Van Reenen changed the name of the South African Chess Association to Capsa which stood for Chess Association of the People of South Africa.

I spent the month of March 1987 preparing for this event with Dr Cornelius Thomas, Mr. Jannie Saffier and Mr Samuel Gertse. We used some opening books and analysed a few games. Concern was expressed at what opening to play against a certain Shabier Bhawoodien who was considered a menace on the circuit! I played and in round one I met a player called Andrew Martin from a certain well known chess club called Steinitz Chess Club. Against my Sicilian he essayed the Morra Gambit and on move 23 I had to resign as his pieces were overwhelming. So not a great debut. I then went on to beat Ashley Schuller and lose to Rodney Williams who became the WP Senior champion in 2001.

Over the next three years I competed in the Capsa Open which was held in 1988 (won by Deon Solomons) , 1989 won by Rashaad Ward in Durban and Malcolm Fredericks in 1990. He beat me on board one in the final round.

At the school level things were at revolutionary level. WP schools had won the national championships since inception. The first recorded black schools championship was 1982 with the following winners.

1982 : Shaun Willenberg (WP) and Nazeem Samie (EP)

1984 : Dr Deon Solomons (WP)

1986 : Dr Nazeem Mustapha (WP)

1988 : Mr Winston Dalpat (EP)

1989 : Dr Lyndon Bouah (EP)

1990 : Dr Lyndon Bouah (EP)

1991 : Shane Bassett (EP)

1992 : Lionel Gallant (EP)

The SA Schools championship in 1988 in Johannesburg represented a new turn of events when the team from Eastern Province (which consisted of five players from Bethelsdorp Senior Secondary and Allistair Chapman from Arcadia) beat the powerful Western Province contingent. This surprised many players in Cape Town and many years later Roland Willenberg told me that they all were shocked when they received the news that Western Province schools had lost their mantle as national champions and that Eastern Province had captured the coveted Individual title as well.



Bethelsdorp High School Team 1989

In 1989 the EP juggernaut continued and was becoming unstoppable with us capturing the national championship in Paarl with myself beating my fellow EP player Conrad Bignaut in the process. In 1990 we continued to defend our title in Port Elizabeth and I retained my National Schools title. In 1991 Shane Bassett continued the winning of the individual championship! Lionel Gallant from Port Elizabeth won in 1992. So this meant that the national individuals schools title was

held by the same school, Bethelsdorp Senior Secondary school for five years!!! Interestingly Winston, Shane and Lionel all resided in an area called Salt Lake in Port Elizabeth.

I joined the University of the Western Cape in 1991 as a law student. When I arrived there I found that the UWC chess club had ceased to exist. The club had played in Worcester in 1989 under the banner of Satisco (South African tertiary Institutions Sports Council) and had in fact won the individual championship that year through David Hartzberg. I knew many of the chess players that joined UWC and I soon took the lead in setting up the Tuesday meetings of the chess club.

In my first week at UWC, I met Berte Van Wyk again after I had met him for the first time in 1989 when he organised the Capsa Closed that was held at Bellville South Library. Berte was the person that changed the chess landscape in South Africa. In the 1989 Capsa Closed Dr Deon Solomons won and I ended second. In February 1991, I participated in my second Capsa Closed and again ended second with Mr. Gordon Lawrence. (Incidentally it took me 25 years to play Gordon again and this time I beat him with the Kings Indian Defence, albeit a difficult game).

In 1991 I joined Bellville South Chess Club in addition to UWC. This meant that every Tuesday evening I travelled to the library to play chess there after a lunchtime of chess with UWC. At the time the negotiations between the African National Congress and the National Party government was continuing at various levels. The ANC then made a request that sport bodies should start talking to their counterparts. Berte who was a committed comrade then initiated discussions with our establishment counterparts. Various meetings were held and I remember travelling to Tokai to meet with Nick Barnett and others.

The discussions took many twists and turns and I was surprised when I found out that the President of the SA Chess Federation Professor Nick Pretorius was actually working in the Hellenic Greek department in the B block building of UWC. In those first three months at UWC many discussions took place that would shape chess and myself.

In April 1991 the Western Province league commenced at Modderdam High School in Bonteheuwel. At this league event Mr Andre Van Reenen publicly chastised Mr Berte Van Wyk and banned UWC and Bellville South from further participation in the WP League. This banning then resulted in the unity talks receiving a new impetus. In June 1991 Berte convened a meeting at Bellville South Library at which various chess figures from the White establishment body was present with ourselves who had in the meantime formed ourselves into the South African Chess Congress (Saccon).

Immediately after being banned from participating in WP we proceeded with development throughout the Western Cape and the country. Mr. Henry Uithaler from Eastern Province agreed to become part of the Saccon and various overtures were made by Boland and other figures. Mr Virgil Fritz who was a third year student at UWC and I then proceeded with development work. We travelled to Elsie River, Kraaifontein, the Athlone School for the Blind, Kuils River and various other places to promote chess. This was very rewarding work and this was where I made the acquaintance of many chess players and administrators. Berte handled the negotiations and on occasion I would assist where necessary.

One of the outcomes of the June summit was that a friendly match would be organised between Cape Town chess club and a Bellville South - UWC team. The date agreed upon was 28 August 1991. The scene was set for the very first meeting between two chess bodies. On that day the following results were tallied: Cape Town chess club on the left and Bellville- South/ UWC on the right.

1. Charles De Villiers 0 vs Lyndon Bouah 1 2. Howard Goldberg 1 vs Virgil Fritz 0 3. Nick Barnett 1 vs Edwin November 0 4. Andrew Mendelson 1 vs Samuel Leenderts 0 5. Frans Vergeest 1 vs Gavin Blaauw 0 6. Nathan Geffen 1 vs Gabriel Campher 0 7. Bennie Levin 1 vs Berte Van Wyk 0 8. Graeme West 1 vs Rucien Kuhn 0 9. Konrad Van Zyl Smit 0.5 vs Franky Stevens 0.5 10. Ulrich Bosenberg 1 vs Christo Loff 11. Jerome Poggenpoel 1 vs Selwyn Watkins 0 12. Eustace Moses 0 vs Saleem Dawood 1 13. Louis Van Zyl 1 vs F. Adams 0

Final score. Cape Town 10.5 vs Bellville South / UWC 2.5. The newspapers carried the headline the next few days that the SA Chess Champion had suffered a surprise upset.

As I was from Port Elizabeth (now Nelson Mandela Bay) Berte requested that I organise a similar match against Port Elizabeth chess club upon my return home from university. Henry Uithaler and I agreed to this and following discussions at the home of John Preece a date was agreed upon. At this historic meeting I again played board one and this time I drew with Ewan Kromhout who was leading his troops. To the surprise of many Port Elizabeth chess club members, Alekhine chess club from the Northern areas of Port Elizabeth easily defeated their more illustrious opponents. I was thus privileged to have been part of the first two unity matches in this country in 1991.

In December 1991 the first Unity Chess Tournament was held with players coming from all over South Africa. David Gluckman, Deon Solomons and Jonathan Gluckman ended joint first.



IM David Gluckman, Dr Deon Solomons and Jonathan Gluckman

University chess

From 1991 a new organisation called the South African Tertiary Institution Sports Union (Satisu) was established and started having events across the country from July 1991. We travelled to Medunsa in Soshanguve , the second one was in Durban was in 1992 and Durban 1993. UWC dominated all the events as we had a strong team consisting of talented players from all over the country and of course many top players from across the Western Cape. The University sector had not yet unified and in April 1994 I represented UWC at a meeting in Port Elizabeth where the university sector unified. Ussa was formed in April and in 1994 Matthew Cherschish of Wits became the first champion when I had to travel to Moscow to compete in the Olympiad there and could not play. In 1995 I easily retained my title and UWC was once again university champions having won straight from 1991 to 1995 with me winning the four championships that I contested.



1991 WPSATISU Team to Medunsa

One of my personal highlights was the annual sportsperson award held at the university. In 1992 I became the first Chessplayer to become the University of the Western Cape sportsperson of the year. (Incidentally I had won the 1988 and 1989 Bethelsdorp Senior Secondary School sportsperson of the year award). In subsequent years at UWC, Kenny and Shane Willenberg would also win this coveted title. Have a look at the next photo and you will see two Chessa presidents in the photo!



UWC Chess Team 1995 – B Losper, D Simons, K Van Breda, E Smart and L Bouah

The university scene was a vibrant one with players becoming firm friends on and off the board. Many players became Protea players and the Ussa events became very popular. I am glad to see that these days universities are sending teams to African and FIDE events.



<https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/heritage>

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Travelling by bus to Durban 1992



The 1993 WPSATISU Team

One highlight in the early 1990s was the visit by former World Champion Grandmaster Anatoly Karpov to the University of the Western Cape. Karpov was a guest of the History department of the UWC and I was very pleased to meet him. He was at that stage the strongest player to have ever visited Cape Town and South Africa. I was very privileged to receive a scholarship from him to study chess for a few months in Sweden in 1996.



GM Anatoly Karpav visiting UWC 1993

Club Chess

The club scene was a very vibrant one in Cape Town. As soon as unity was announced in 1992 it was agreed that a unified league would be formed. The University of Cape Town won the first league organised by Chess Western Province. I competed and enjoyed playing in the league that year.

It was fantastic to see the league receive a new impetus when Steinitz won the league in 1993 in what would later become a string of victories. The league was contested in the South and Northern parts of Cape Town. In those days Roland Willenberg was the league organiser and one of my favourite memories was when we called him to report UWC had beaten False Bay 4-1. He asked us to repeat the score because False Bay had Dieter Morschel and a few other strong players but the combined efforts of a young UWC side beat them in False Bay at the tennis club. So before emails we called Roland at his home in Belhar and whoever answered would diligently take the score! The league has come a long way now that www.chess-results assists us. The league I believe is a highlight and I sincerely hope that one day we could have that honours board that will highlight the league champions.

Chessa and FIDE

The undoubted highlight of the early 1990s was the readmission of South African chess to FIDE in 1992. This happened on 22 June 1992 and this June will be the 25th year back in international chess.

In February 1992 FIDE sent a four person delegation to South Africa to determine how ready South Africa was for unity. After hearing the views of a range of organisations the Commission on South Africa proposed that South Africa be allowed back into international chess. So on 2 June 1992 a team consisting of Deon Solomons, David Gluckman, Charles De Villiers, Lyndon Bouah, Maxwell Solomon with Captain Mark Levitt and President Berte Van Wyk travelled to the Philippines via Hong Kong. Watu Kobese had been chosen but did not make Manila. We stayed a few days in Hong Kong because at that stage there was no Philippines embassy in South Africa. We had to apply for our visas in Hong Kong. It was heady times and we were very happy to arrive in Manila. In round one we were paired against Argentina led by Grandmaster Daniel Campora. I played against the guy who would become the world junior champion, Pable Zarnicki, and had him against the ropes but could not defeat him. He later beat me in time scramble. I scored fifty percent and qualified for a candidate master title which was awarded to me years later. So I was the first South African to qualify for a title but not to get it. I was awarded the

Candidate Master title years later. The first player was to the best of my knowledge was David Gluckman who became an international master when he won the zonals in Botswana in 1993. Caroline Bijoux became the first Women International in 1993.



David Gluckman, Lyndon Bouah, Deon Solomons, Maxwell Solomon and Charles de Villiers - Manila 1992

The Olympiad was an overwhelming experience and it is something to be cherished by all players. It is a special place and I made friends with many people. The current FIDE CEO Nigel Freeman took us for dinner in 1992 in Hong Kong. I met Malcolm Pein and Stewart Reuben in 1992 and of course we met other famous players such as Grandmaster Gulko, Seirawan, Gulfelf, Shirov and others. It is of course very interesting that Charles De Villiers was in the last Olympiad team in 1974 and of course he was now 18 years later again in the team. Charles went on to represent South Africa again in 1994 and 1998.

Of course the team to the Olympiad was not without criticism. Some people from a certain section of the chess community questioned why people such as Lyndon Bouah and Maxwell Solomon were in the team. They believed that we were not

strong enough to be in the team. The principles of unity and representation were not clearly understood by these critics of transformation.

In 1993 the SA Closed was held in Cape Town and Maxwell and I came last in the event. This of course fuelled the views of these doubting Thomas's but in 1994 we played trials to be in the 1994 Olympiad team. The top fourteen players in the country were invited and I was very pleased when Maxwell and I qualified with him in fifth position and me in fourth. I scored 6 wins, 6 draws and one loss. This time the critics were silenced and never again did we hear from them.

The Olympiad in 1994 was a tough one for me. I scored badly as I simply didn't prepare well because of my exams. I felt I had let the team down but I felt worse for Charles who just missed an outright international master title when one of his opponents didn't pitch in one of the matches.



Moscow 1994

Watu Kobese, Deon Solomons, Maxwell Solomon and Lyndon Bouch



Watu Kobese, Charles de Villiers and Lyndon Bouah

An interesting aside that many South Africans don't know is that chess was the second code to play internationally. The first one was cricket which competed in March 1992 in the World Cup which South Africa lost in the semi finals when they had to score 22 off one ball. South African chess then became the second code. By the way, Mr. Eldo Smart, those players from 1992 and 1994 still have not been awarded their blazers promised by Chessa. Maybe we can in this 25th year of readmission and

seeing that next year will be the 60th year of Olympiad participation remedy this oversight.

There is of course much to debate about the first five years of the unity discussions. Many players boycotted the first Unity tournament held at Bishops in 1991 because they didn't believe that we should be playing with our white counterparts without first having the vote. We however believed differently and wanted to normalise society. I travelled with my Eastern Province players to the event and we also for good measure brought two of our white colleagues with us in the combi. One of them was Dr Lloyd Hill who plays for Stellenbosch.

Dr Omar Esau will later this year also present a lecture on schools unity because of course there were many discussions on the schools front with the first unified schools event taking place at Bellville College in 1995. Interesting to note was the fact that Grandmaster Kenny Solomon won his first national event (the under 16) event in 1995.

In 1993 Kenny Solomon and I travelled to Johannesburg together to compete in the trials for the African Junior Championships. Anthony Levy and I won the event and qualified to play in Kenya. Kenny did not make the cut but was very pleased that we flew back (with Comair) rather than take the bus that we took coming back. We stayed with my uncle in Riverlea who took us to Highgate shopping centre. And in this huge Johannesburg who should we bump into but Dr Shabier Bhawoodien. He of course invited himself to my uncles house in Riverlea where we played chess till the late evening!

In December that year I came second in the African junior championship in Kenya. This was my first sojourn in Africa and I quite enjoyed travelling.

There is many of course many tales to tell which I will in a later lecture tell but for tonight I think I have whetted the appetite of the audience. I wish to thank Cape Town chess club for making this lecture possible.

I am available for questions.

Regards.

Dr Lyndon Bouch

Candidate Master



Adv Maxwell Solomon, Dr Lyndon Bouch, IM David Gluckman, FM Charles de Villiers, Dr Deon Solomons the 1992 SA Olympiad team in board order with Dr Deon Solomons on board one.