

## Reflections on the WP Open 2017

After many years of not participating I mustered up the courage to play in the WP Open this past weekend. The chess scene has certainly changed from my days of being a four time WP Closed Champion and also a two time WP Open champion! In round one when I went to get a clock from the organisers, the lady handling the clock looked at me in earnest and enquired whether I am playing in the C Section! So there I was floored before I had moved a single pawn in anger. A multiple champion and Olympiad player being asked whether I am playing in the C section!!!! I gently indicated that I am playing in the Elite and made my way slowly to the Elite section.



Upon checking I saw I was playing WIM Anzel Laubscher, the Olympiad board two for the women's team who has been playing something like four international events this year already. We played in the SA Open last year and I secured a good win but I know she has improved tremendously. So on move one she essayed pawn to to e4. Mmmmmh shall I play my beloved Alekhine's Defence ? I thought not and replied with the Sicilian. Without so much as a by your leave there appeared pawn to d4. And I thought this can't be happening. I am a reasonable Chess player seeded fifth in the Elite! and here is my opponent playing the Morra Gambit against me

in open combat. The last time I played (and lost!) against the Morra was in March 1987 in East London against Andrew Martin from Steinitz chess club. I took the pawn and when she played c3 to offer a second pawn I said no thank you and pushed the pawn further to d3. In the modern age one must avoid losing to these gambits because my name and game would go viral on Facebook so one must be extra careful. (My friend IM Johannes Mabusela last year sent me a smiley face when I lost to Paul Gluckman in round one of a rapid last year. I sent him a smiley face back when I won the rapid!) We then played hard and I won the game when my two bishops proved dominant and I won with a lovely tactical finish.



So the scene was set now for a good event. Gosh and then I saw the excitement gathering on table one. Micheal James all of 1943 was busy beating the defending champion IM Watu Kobese on board one. Micheal was seeing all the moves (although according to some players Micheal didn't play a single good move!) Micheal then proceeded to mate Watu although Watu tried every trick in his arsenal even stalemate but Micheal was having none of it. So a memorable first round ended at 23:00pm with the champion defeated.



Meanwhile back on the lower boards Keegan Agulhas was showing his mettle by beating Mohamed Bhawoodien. So the young pretenders were having a battle royal but Keegan prevailed. And who should I spot but the WP president FM Deon Solomons doing battle against WIM Sabrina la Treche otherwise known as Mrs Steel. Sabrina was playing a piece down but Deon was struggling and Sabrina nearly pulled it off but alas for Sabrina, the stars didn't align and Deon escaped with a draw.

The other games in the Elite Section were also very memorable as Dr Southey, a trained vet played Dr Bhawoodien the dentist. Unfortunately for Dr Southey the root canal treatment prevailed!!



There were altogether 270 players in the hall with different sections, I enjoyed watching the games of the lower section (remember according to the clock lady I was supposed to play there!). There were many returning faces. I spotted Rebeccah Selkirk playing in the Prestige and upon enquiry she informed me that she wants to play enough games to be

eligible for the SA Closed set for 2017! I noted that the section also contained Dantelle Joubert, Megan and Robyn Van Niekerk.



One of the funny incidents occurred in the fifth round played on the Sunday morning. The arbiter Andrew Talmarkes recalls the following: Section leader Cherwin Kleinsmidt on four points was playing against Jerome Louw on 3 points. Cherwin entered the hall before the start of the round wearing dark shades which he continued wearing without removing it once. Jerome entered the hall, but after checking the draw he decided to play the game with his silver (Mark Condor style) shades plus a cap to add to the intimidating and psychological warfare. Cherwin triumphed in the end! Check the photos!

One of the games my eye caught was an interesting battle between Emil Scnabel and Gavin Blaauw. The two players one being fifty and one being eleven played the first twenty moves of a Marshall Gambit. Very impressive stuff. And they played the line correctly too!

In the Elite Section FM Calvin Klaasen continued his impressive form by holding down board one for the rest of the event. Once he got there in round two he never let go and defeated in fine style myself and a few others and then drew with Amini Daud , Micheal James and Mohammed Bhawoodien. He won his other games to end on 4.5 out of 6. Micheal James joined him in ending joint first also on 4.5 with Micheal securing joint first but second on tie break. Amini also impressed when in round four he beat Watu in round four in a bruising battle. I came third on tiebreak with Amini Daud and Mohammed Bhawoodien all scoring 4/6. Keegan beat Dr Shabs in a finally played game as well to claim both Bhawoodien scalps. Apparantly Keegan may be offered the freedom of Bishops court soon!

So the WP Open came to an end on Sunday late afternoon. The prize giving had to wait for an hour when a game in the C section continued even though one player was playing a complete piece down with no compensation. Where is the ethics in that?

It was good seeing all the girls in the lower sections as well. Everyone came to play which was refreshing to see! Enjoy the photos. In the last round we even had all four boards in the B section next to each other with all the female competitors of that section. I also noticed that they final match in the elite section had WIM Laubscher sparring against WIM La Treche. Laubscher won. We need our other ladies to play also. I am worried

about their match fitness.

I enjoyed my first senior event in many a year. We played the event at the Western Cape Sport School in Kuils River. The hall was used in 1995 for the Sajcc and what was interesting was that both WIM Denise Frick played her first junior nationals there and GM Kenny Solomon won his first nationals there as well! So a historical playing hall! Now both of them are playing on board one in the Olympiad team!

I hope to see all of you at the Steinitz Open over the Easter weekend! Well done to Calvin Klaasen and Micheal who both scored 4.5 and who have now won the event twice each. Calvin now holds the WP Open and WP Closed titles. Will he go for the record and try to win the Closed again this year and perhaps the Mackie? Who knows but in a SA Closed year his form is impressive!



Enjoy the read!

Regards

Dr Lyndon Bouah