

Reflections by Dr Lyndon Bouah - PSS Rapid chess championships

This last weekend 22 and 23 April 2017, I competed in the PSS Rapid chess championships in Johannesburg. Of course last Easter weekend I played seven rounds of blitz and seven rounds of classical chess! So this weekend I flew to Johannesburg to compete in a grueling ten round rapid event.



GM Farrukh Antonov and Dr Bouah

This was the first Rapid event that I have competed in Johannesburg. I cannot even remember the last one in Cape Town. The event was a veritable who's who of the Gauteng chess scene. The top three seeds were GM Farrukh Antonov from Tajikistan, GM Sahaj Grover and GM Sriram Jha from India. Grandmaster Antonov is board one for his country and has a FIDE rating of 2610 and a Rapid rating of 2710. He stayed at the same hotel as we did in Baku at the Olympiad. Tajikistan was the first ever former Soviet country that South Africa ever beat at an Olympiad. He is now residing in St Petersburg for the last twenty years but still represents his former homeland at the Olympiad.

GM Grover has of course played in the Commonwealth chess Championships in 2011 at the Emperors Palace and was also the winner of the Durban Open in 2014. In April 2017 he won the Steinitz Open with 6.5 out of 7.



GM Sriram Jha and Dr Lyndon Bouah

GM Jha, of course, is no stranger to South Africa. He came third in the 2010 SA Open and has played in Gauteng on two other occasions. He has expressed an interest in coming to Cape Town.

The other players that I greeted upon arrival were IM Rodwell Makoto who beat GM Kenny Solomon in the Olympiad in 2016. I also spotted IM Johannes Mabusela, IM Ryan Van Rensburg who won the Zonals in April 2016, IM Daniel Jere from Zambia, FM Daniel Barrish, Kgaugelo Mosehle, FM Francois Oberholzer, FM Mateus Viagero from Mozambique and my friends Hans Steyn and Jaco Nelson. FM Ben Hercules was also there being dramatic as usual. The women were represented by top Zambian player WIM Epah Tembo and SA Champion WIM Denise Frick.

The event started rather surprising for me as I was paired against WIM Tsepang Tlale.

She did not pitch which of course again affected my Bucholtz score at the end. After ten minutes the arbiter asked me if I wanted to perhaps play a new opponent. The difficulty of course is that I actually prepared a little as the draw was done and I had mentally prepared to play my opponent. So what to do? I then decided not to play and went to make some coffee.

I was thereafter paired against Advocate Leon Perez. I tricked him to win a pawn and thereafter I brought the bacon home. After that I played against GM Jha who in turn tricked me into a transposition of moves. Grandmasters are very good at this. They play a different variation but get to their same winning position. I think I shall adapt this trick. A nice chap GM Jha and we conversed over the next few days.

I then won my next game and ended up playing against a young Mozambique player. I lost the game after being a pawn up but he played well and his pressure forced me to concede. My opponent however was involved in an incident when he lost to Ben Hercules. At the end of the game he simply pushed the pieces to the centre without shaking Ben's hand. Ben told me afterwards he was not impressed with his opponent. I firmly believe that one must shake your opponent's hand before and after the game. Even if you don't like your opponent, respect the game.

I ended the Saturday with a game against IM Daniel Jere. I probably outplayed him in the opening but succumbed in the endgame. GM Antonov told me afterwards that I played too fast and that I should slow down. I think I was still pretty cross with my earlier loss but well yeah I just don't know if seven rounds is good for one!!! So a good game with Jere but I must slow down!

On the Sunday morning I played against a young Keith Khumalo. The game had complications from the outset! At the end of the middle game I was a piece up but he continued to play on. I again wondered why he is playing on when he cannot win anymore! He is a good and talented player.

In round nine I played IM Rodwell Makoto. In Johannesburg they call him Kotov! I won a pawn early on and then offered him a draw which he accepted. The extra pawn was a double pawn. In the final round I was paired with Herman Manan from Ivory Coast. I decided to go all out in this game. My opponent saw all my threats and won a pawn in the ensuing complications. When we were both down to five minutes I offered a draw. He did not respond and I decided that since my offer was refused blood must flow (I do live on the Cape Flats you know!) either his or mine! I then started playing fearlessly and he then succumbed to a mating attack! So I was happy because I had scored 6.5 out of 10!!!



WIM Denise Frick won the women's section of the PSS Rapid

WIM Denise Frick won the Women's prize followed by WIM Epah Tembo. The final standings were:

1. GM Grover - 8
2. GM Antonov - 8
3. GM Jha - 7
- 4- 8 IM Johannes Mabusela - 6.5
 - IM Rodwell Makoto - 6.5
 - IM Daniel Jere - 6.5
 - CM Lyndon Bouah - 6.5

A lovely event. WP should consider hosting these rapid events as well. Perhaps do a seven or nine round event played over two days. To the law firm Phillips, Silver and Swartz well done on a lovely event and sponsorship.

Regards

Dr Lyndon Bouah