

South African Sport Awards - Reflections by Dr Advocate Lyndon Bouah

On Sunday night 12 November 2017 I attended the South African Sport Awards at Emperors Palace in Johannesburg. The event is the culmination of quite a process. The National Sport and Recreation Plan (2011) enjoins us to acknowledge our sport heroes and heroines and to recognise the achievements of everyone involved in the sport and recreation sphere.



In the Western Cape I chair the Provincial Sports Awards Committee. We plan the awards and we await the winners from the District Sport Awards. Each of the six geopolitical districts host their district awards evening. The winners then all compete against each other at the Provincial level. The winners at the Western Cape level then compete against winners from the other provinces.

So on Sunday 12 November 2017 all the winners from the various provinces and national federations competed against each other. It is the coming together of the best South Africa has to offer. The categories vary in range from school level to sportsman and woman.

Today's Reflections will focus on two categories. The first category I wish to highlight was the best developing school award. This award was won by Hlangabeza Primary School. Vicky Magu informs me that the school is a township school situated in Khutsong between Gauteng and Northwest. The coach is Israel Tshabadira who is also a qualified arbiter.

Hlangabeza produced 2 of the Under 16 Olympiad players that will compete in India in December 2017 and one player received a Ministerial Bursary to continue his studies at a sport focus school in Gauteng. They are the current Gauteng School champions.

Their success has been warmly received. Roland Willenberg from Cape Town wrote to me and said that Israel is normally his rival at Top schools and that he is a very nice chap. Leon De Jager wrote to say he worked with Israel at the SRSA Winter Games in Durban as an arbiter and was also complimentary. Rudolf Willemsse wrote to me and said that the coach is an arbiter and won the nationals under 13 out of the blue one year. He further wrote that it was phenomenal work considering that they are in the West Rand which is struggling administratively. He said IZI is an amazing guy. Three guys can't be wrong!



Chess is one of the sixteen priority codes and it is truly a strong show of support to chess that the school and the code of chess have been acknowledged in this way. Well done to Hlangabeza Primary School for the hard work. You are now nationally known and we are proud of you.

The other award I wish to highlight is the Steve Tshwete Lifetime Achiever Award. The late Minister Steve Tshwete was our first sport minister in South Africa and this awards honours people who have given a lifetime of service to sport. One of the recipients was the late Mr. Raymond Uren.



Mr. Uren was the school principal of Bethelsdorp Senior Secondary School in Port Elizabeth. I, together with the current Chessa President, Mr Winston Dalpat, attended Bethelsdorp from 1986 to 1990. Those were difficult years in South Africa as South Africa had been in a state of emergency since 1985.



Bethelsdorp High school 1988. Nicholas Jantjies, Winston Dalpat, Shane Bassett, Conrad Blignault, Rashaad Ward and Lyndon Bouah with John Ritchie

Mr. Uren was the President of the Easter Province Senior Secondary Sport Union and also the President of the South African Senior Schools Sport Association. Both bodies were affiliated to the South African Council on Sport (SACOS) which was fiercely opposed to apartheid. The two bodies organised sport in a multi-coded manner. Chess, of which I was part, often travelled with gymnastics and cross country to the September events held across the country.

One has to appreciate that in the 1980's we never stayed in hotels when we went on tour. In 1988 we played at CJB High School in Johannesburg and I was fortunate to stay with my uncle James Bouah who was the principal of Riverlea High School. The rest of the team stayed with families in Riverlea. In 1989 the event was held at Klein Nederburg and I stayed with the Goosen family in Van Wyk Street in Wellington. In 1990 the event was held at St Thomas high school in Port Elizabeth and my parents hosted the WP team in our lounge. Upon reflection I admire the hard work the teachers put in to ensure school sport thrived and was active in the dark days of apartheid.

Bethelsdorp Senior Secondary School was well known for its top academic results and was known as the top coloured school in the Port Elizabeth - Uitenhage area. Mr Uren was a strict disciplinarian and a very principled individual. You did not easily cross him and get away with it. I was the top history student in my standard since standard seven as I loved reading. In Standard 8, the teachers under the leadership of Mr. Uren, identified a number of students that they would invite to meetings of the leadership of sport. I was one of those identified students and attended meetings at which I was requested to take notes and later discuss the meetings with the teachers. The teachers that used to fetch me up between standards 8 and 10 were Mr Johnson and Mr Bruinders.

I, of course, did not understand all the discussions as many of the conversations needed context which you could get only from experience and knowledge. I didn't realise it at the time that they were in fact mentoring me. By engaging me in conversations I was being exposed as a fifteen year old to political discussions that would influence my later thinking. I did not realise that I was being groomed as a third tier leader in the eventuality that the first two tiers of leadership were detained or imprisoned.

This eventuality was actually not as far-fetched as it seems. One Monday morning in 1989 we arrived at school and we found that four of our history teachers were being detained under the detention laws that allowed detention without trial. Later in 1989, Mr. Uren himself was detained and held at St Albans prison.

I remember the day he was released. The school called a special assembly and we knew it was special because the assembly was called for the inner quad which was unusual as we normally met in the big quad area. On this day however, the pupils sat on the roofs of the staircases and were hanging from the rafters. A huge roar and applause went out when Mr. Uren strode forth from the Office block to address us right at the edge of the quad. He had just been released from St Albans Prison and had come to tell us to take heart and that he was back.

One of the strengths of the school was the ability to allow us as students to debate matters and also to expose us to different perspectives. My chess teacher was Mr. John Ritchie. Mr Ritchie was a white teacher who came to teach science at the schools in our areas. He started at Gelvandale high school in 1982 and moved to Bethelsdorp in 1985. In 1986 when I arrived the chess club was established. Mr Ritchie never discussed politics with us as he was more interested in science and chess.

In 2002 Ewan Kromhout told me an interesting story. He was at the time a teacher at Andrew Rabie high school in Port Elizabeth and was the top white chess school in South Africa. He called Bethelsdorp and requested to speak to Mr. Ritchie and asked if the two schools could play a match. Mr. Ritchie replied that there would be no chess match as a match would not be possible as no normal sport could be played in an abnormal society! The influence of Mr. Uren in an understated manner influenced even Mr Ritchie who gave the correct response.

At our school we had over 150 chess players in a school of 1000 pupils. We played every day before class and during break and twice after a week after school. You could challenge the next guy to get onto the list but only the top twelve played for the school team. The school team was the backbone of the Eastern Province chess team which dethroned Western Province and from 1988 the school produced the following individual SA Champions -

1988 - Mr. Winston Dalpat
1989 - Dr. Lyndon Bouah
1990 - Dr. Lyndon Bouah
1991 - Mr. Shane Bassett
1992 - Mr. Lionel Gallant



Mr Shane Bassett, Mr Winston Dalpat and Dr Lyndon Bouah

So for five consecutive years one school, Bethelsdorp Senior Secondary school, situated in Felcass Road, Salt Lake, Port Elizabeth produced four national school champions and was unbeaten from 1985 for a period of about 8 years. It's A team never lost a single match. One of my favourite memories was playing board one for the school team and when we played home matches the much coveted wooden pieces made its appearance. It was rumoured that the wooden pieces never lost and at Bethelsdorp Senior Secondary in the period I was part of the chess team (1987- 1990) it never lost. I was proud to be captain. In 1989 our Bethelsdorp senior secondary board two Rashaad Ward won the National Chess Championship of the People of South Africa (Capsa) SA Senior Championship in Durban as well. So, in one year (1989) we held the national senior title, the national individual schools title as well as contributing five members to the Eastern Province that retained the national team championships in Paarl won in 1988 in Johannesburg at CJB high school.

Chess was a source of great pride for the school. Every Monday morning at the school assembly all results of the Wednesday school sport afternoon would be read out and chess was always up there as they didn't lose their matches and the school team could always be depended upon to deliver. In 1988 the school recognised chess and its achievements and awarded me the prestigious Bethelsdorp Senior Secondary Sportsman of the year ahead of the football and other guys. In 1992 I represented South Africa at the Chess Olympiad in Manila, Philippines and later again in Moscow in 1994. Both Winston Dalpat and I have captained the national chess team and have also both acted as national chess presidents of Chess South Africa.



In 1989 the National Sport Council (the NSC) was formed. This body would be an opposition body to SACOS and challenged the existing political thought of SACOS at the time. Our school Bethelsdorp was divided as there were new teachers such as Barry Hendricks (now SASCOC Vice President) at the school who were advocating that the school join the new body. This reflection cannot do justice to the debate between the two bodies save to say that it divided non-racial sport. In true democratic fashion in 1990, Mr. Uren allowed a vote by the general student body and we voted in favour in staying with SACOS.

One of the other examples of democratic leadership espoused by Mr. Uren was the election of the Student Representative Council and prefects. In both he allowed time for elections to take place and

allowed us as students to choose our leadership. In 1990 I was chosen as secretary of the Student Representative council and also chosen as a prefect. He believed that students must have a vote and a say on matters affecting them.

At the time in South Africa, a huge debate raged along the lines of liberation before education or education before liberation. He firmly believed in education before liberation. When anyone bunked classes your name would be read out over the intercom to the whole school. The name and shaming had its effect as my name was mentioned once and I thought never again!

The motto of the school was Laboremus Futura. Labour for the future. That's what we were doing. They teachers inculcated in us the necessary values that would allow many of the students to study further and become pillars of South African society.

Mr. Uren after unity talks was involved in Cricket and served in various capacities in the cricket fraternity. He was also involved in many social projects and I am proud to say that he was one of my mentors. I was really privileged to hear my former classmate, Megan Uren, (Mr. Uren's daughter) read out the acceptance speech at the SA Sports Awards on behalf of the Uren family. Thank you Mr. Uren for the role that you have played in my life and the many thousands you have touched as well.

Regards

Dr Lyndon Bouah