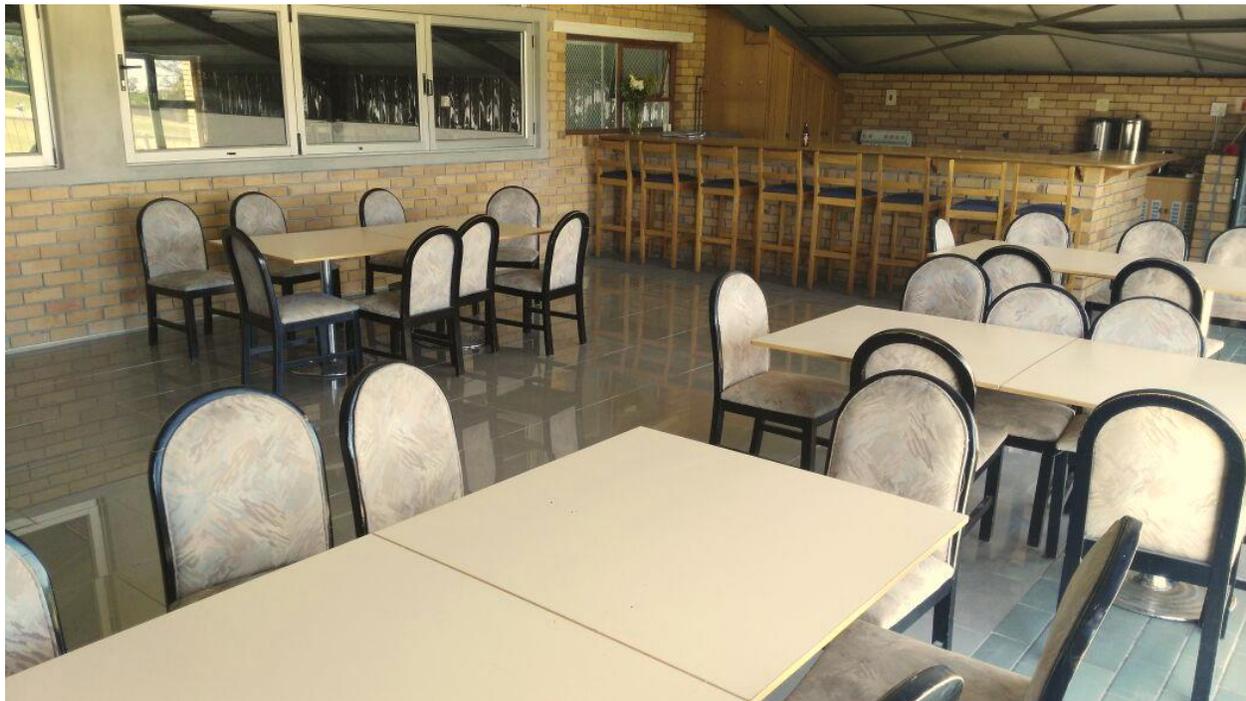


Reflections 7: 2018 – Steinitz Chess Club by Dr Advocate Lyndon Bouah

1. introduction

The National Sport and Recreation Plan (2011) defines a club as " A structured, constituted base for participation in sport and recreation in sport and serves as a vehicle for long term participant development as well as mentorship programmes to cater for high performance." (Page 37)

Steinitz chess club has been an agent of change in Cape Town, the Western Cape Province and South Africa. The club started from humble beginnings in Bonteheuwel and has grown to be possibly the most decorated club in chess history in South Africa. The club is structured and meets every Thursday in Bellville between seven pm and 9:30pm at the Bellville Technical High school.



Steinitz Chess Club venue at Bellville Technical High school

2. The early years

Steinitz chess club was formed by a group of young men from the Cape Flats township of Bonteheuwel on the 29th of April 1977. This group of young men included Nazeem Majiet, Mark Lewis, Roland Willenberg, Jeremy Lewis, Andrew Talmarkes, Norman McQueen and Shaun Willenberg.

They were school friends who decided that since they were playing together every day in any event then perhaps they should form a club. After much debate they called themselves Steinitz chess club named after the first Chess World Champion.

The players affiliated to the Western Province Chess Association (WPCA). The WPCA had recently broken away from the Western Province Chess Union to form a non-racial chess body after instances of racism and to oppose the apartheid regime. The players went on to play in the WPCA league from 1979 and their first match was against Elsie's River Chess club. The club had no one with a vehicle in those days and according to testimony from club members at the time they simply walked over ten kilometres to the other chess clubs to fulfill their league fixtures. Dedication of the highest order.

The players grew in strength and from the mid-1980s started to assert themselves. They won the WPCA

league in the 1980s.

3. The early Unity years

In the early 1990s the political situation was very fluid in the sport movement. The club observed the first Unity tournament in 1991 and did not participate in it. In 1992 the club decided to assist in the formation of a unified Chess body in Western Province. The union was established and in 1992 the first unified league was played.

This was a very historical time because it was the first time in nearly two decades that organised chess matches were played between white and black chess clubs. In 1993 in the second year of unity in Cape Town, Steinitz chess club won the unified league for the first time. For the chess club from Bonetheuwel this represented a new high. The club was featured in various newspapers including the Argus and the South Newspaper which was an anti-government newspaper which followed the fortunes of the people of the Cape Flats. This heralded a new high for the club as it went on a recruiting drive which grew the club exponentially.

4. Transformation

The Transformation Charter in the National Sport and Recreation Plan is defined as a process describing the establishment of a sport system focused on the principles of :

Human capital development

Equitable resource distribution

elimination of all inequalities

Increased access to participation opportunities

Skill and capability development at all levels in all areas of activity

Greater community involvement the rough new sport infrastructure development

Empowerment of the individual

Respect for each other

Fair and just behaviour

Innovation to give South Africa a competitive edge in world sport

Good governance

Steinitz chess club has been at the forefront of the transformation within chess. In the late 1990s Roland Willenberg adopted youngsters from Gugulethu who came to spend weekends with him at his then home in Belhar. These youngsters included Vuzumzi April, Thando and Kwando Kaso. They later made the Wp junior teams and Kwanda Kaso also won the 1997 WP Open.

As the years developed the club started to attract players from all communities. Today Steinitz is proud of its non-racial character with players residing from Durbanville to Bellville and to various other parts of Cape Town.

Steinitz has always focused on developing its players and does not mind having younger players on the top boards. These players tend to develop faster when they are exposed to stronger competition even at the cost of a league point or two.

The club participates in every WP, Western Cape and Chessa event. Its members travel and traverse South Africa to participate and compete in events.

5. Successes as a club.

The Steinitz Chess Club has had phenomenal success within WP chess. It has won the WP league in 1993, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2006, 2009, 2011, 2013 and 2014 within the unified period since 1992. The nine league victories are a tremendous success for the club and it is tremendously proud of these victories. In 2013 in one of its finest hours Steinitz won the A division, the B and C divisions!!!!

In the Western Cape Steinitz has won the Western Cape Club Championships every time it has been played since 2012. This is an incredible 5 in a row!!!

On the national scene Steinitz has won the national club chess championship seven times in the following years in the following years 2004, 2005, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013.

Steinitz has been a club that has won the WP Team Blitz championships in the following years 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015. This is a phenomenal record!!!!!!



Steinitz Senior and Junior Teams in 2015 SA Club Champs in Durban

In my next article I will concentrate on the individual members through the years!

The club will celebrate its 41st anniversary this year and is organising a tournament to celebrate. Come share the moments. <https://www.steinitzchessclub.co.za/festival2018.php>

Regards

Dr Advocate Lyndon Bouah