

Reflections on Capablanca by Dr Lyndon Bouah

This week I registered for the Capablanca event that will be starting at 09:00am on 27 April. I am very excited to be part of this great event.

I have played many events in the Gauteng area. One of my first national events was the South African Senior Schools Sports Association chess event in Johannesburg in 1988. Mr Winston Dalpat won this event with the bronze medal going to myself.

I later returned to Gauteng to play in the national University Championship in Soshanguve in 1991. In 1993 I played national trials to go to the African Junior championships. I won that one ahead of Kenny Solomon.

In 1997 I played in the Standard Bank Open in Johannesburg at Wits. The event was held at the Wits Great Hall and was organised by Mr. Arthur Kobese. It was a great event and my chess club Alekhine Chess club from Nelson Mandela Bay hired a combi to travel up to the event. We had 12 excited players all travelling which included Jannie Saffier and others. I won a brilliant game against Ewan Kromhout who was my big rival in Nelson Mandela Bay at the time. Mr Kobese at the conclusion of the event invited us to his home in Soweto and I fondly remember him sharing some liquid refreshments with us before departing for Nelson Mandela Bay.

In 1998 I was part of the Eastern Province team that competed in the Interprovincial held in Pretoria. It was held at Moreleta Park. I greatly enjoyed it although my friends in Cape Town did not enjoy the fact that in round one EP beat WP 5-1. I played a lovely game against Dr Shabier Bhawoodien who was playing for Gauteng at the time and won a lovely game.

In 1998 Elize Steenkamp organised the SA Open in Wierda Park in Pretoria. This was the event where now GM Amon Simutowe announced himself. I enjoyed the event as it was professionally run and strong. I lost only one game to Russian Dmitri Kholin. Does he still play?

In 1998 the SA Closed was held at Bruma Lake. The hotel there hosted the event and it was quite a strong event. One of my fondest memories was playing the Trompowsky against Kenny Solomon which didn't help my cause. My favourite memory from this event however was the emergency meeting called by Chief Arbiter and organiser Eddie Price after the third round. The emergency related to the fact that some players were having three, yes three! Cappuccinos from the free coffee machine and this caused consternation as players were only supposed to have two! So there we were, the country's brightest chess minds, debating the merits of two or three cappuccinos! I confess that I enjoyed and still enjoy cappuccinos particularly if you waiting for your lift!

In 2000 the SA Open was held at Alberton. A lovely venue. I drove up with my red Ford Tracer accompanied by two friends, Ashley Schuller and Eugene Cloete and a student. Ashley Schuller played in the B section and still today he regales us with the story how he beat now IM Heinrich Stander who was very young while Ashley was under the influence of the god Bacchus! You need to hear this story accompanied by the necessary refreshments. I had a good run in this event. Again Simutowe was unstoppable -10.5 /11 and he started with 10 wins with only now GM Solomon stopping a Fischer like 11/11.

In the period 2000-2002 I travelled up to Pretoria to play in the Speskom events. The Speskom events were the flagship event outside the SA Closed and SA Open. The late Chessa President Eldo Smart travelled up with me to these events. We felt that the events were so important and significant that we should participate. I enjoyed the Speskom events immensely. In 2002 I had my best Speskom. I played seven players who either won the SA championship then, before or afterwards. I lost to Amon

Simotowe , then beat the late Ronnie Van Tonder, lost to Kenny Solomon, then beat Nick Van Der Nat, and then lost to Watu Kobese. So it was quite an event!

In 2003 I contested the SA Closed championship in Kempton Park. We played off Pomona road and it was quite a contest. My highlights were my victories against IM George Michelakis and Yuri Aronov. Unfortunately those were my main highlights!

Between 2003 and 2005 I competed in the Vaal or Sedibeng Opens. I enjoyed them quite a lot as it allowed us to play hard. In those days we played three games a day! I won two of those Vaal Opens.

In the early years of the previous decade Elsie Steenkamp organised the Centurion Open. Centurion chess club was the first club to win the national club championship in 2003. Steinitz won the event in 2004. So in 2004 I travelled to Centurion. The Swartkops golf course provided the venue and it was a great event. I played in the Open section as I couldn't get off work to play in the Prestige section. I won the Centurion BIS Open and was rewarded with prize money and black tie as well! I recently found my recording book of this event and will play through those games!

In 2009 we played the interprovincial championship in Pretoria at the school close to Loftus Versveld. I cannot remember name of the school but I do recall having many draws!

In 2010 I played in the blitz section of the SA Open that was held in September 2010. There were some young players from Johannesburg who were very upset when they lost to me until Jackie Ngubeni told them that I could also play a little! Thanks Jacky!

In 2011 I competed in the Commonwealth/ SA Open event that was held at Emperors palace. A really brilliant event! I stayed at Birchwood and travelled every day. I lost to GM Pablo Fuentes from Argentina and now GM Nicholas Huchenbeth. I scored seven win and three draws. I was joint best SA player with Watu and Nicholas. ! Ah the good old days. 8.5/ 11! Hats off to those organisers.

In 2017 I competed again for the first time in the Rapid and Blitz event held in April last year. A lovely event, very strong as well!

Over the last few years I have not had the opportunity to travel to Gauteng to compete often given my work schedule. So this year I have decided to throw my ring in the hat and compete again at this level. I've seen the lineup for the GM section and it reads like a champions league event! So I am looking forward to seeing these great players in action in the grandmaster section! <http://chess-results.com/tnr346374.aspx?lan=1>



GM Grover vs CM Bouah at Steinitz Festival in April 2017

Gauteng you have always been one of the leading provinces in chess. May this tradition continue with the Capablanca event. If time allows I may reflect!

Regards
Dr Lyndon Bouah