

# IM Henry Steel wins inaugural Graham Solomon Memorial

by WFM Lauren Shante Willenberg

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What a way to start off the festive season!



*The Solomon Family at the trophy table*

On the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2018, the life of the late Graham Solomon was celebrated with the *Graham Solomon Memorial*.



*Graham Solomon*

Graham Solomon was a great chess player, well known for his humility and philosophical thinking. He enjoyed the beauty of chess and also the lifelong friendships

that came along with it. One of those lifelong friends was Lourenzo van Niekerk, who together with his wife, Chantal van Niekerk, organised and hosted this event in his honour.



*Graham Solomon Memorial at the Cape Pillars Boutique*

It was a two day event that took place at the *Cape Pillars Boutique in Durbanville, Cape Town*. The format used to shape this event was the system used at the *Sinquefield Cup*. This means taking the combined score of both the rapid and blitz sections to determine a winner. The Bronstein time control was implemented with 20mins 10secs delay and 5mins 3secs delay.

The points system was as follows: Rapid – Win = 2points

Draw = 1point

Loss = 0 points

Blitz – Win = 1 point

Draw = 0,5 points

Loss = 0 points

The time control and tournament format took some getting used to, but that did not put any of the top players off. In fact, it encouraged new dynamics on and off the board. Far too often players would find their own way after a game, but this was not the case. There seemed to be excitement and true camaraderie amongst the players. The sportsmanship was amazing, with players showing respect for one another regardless of the time scrambles. One incident that got the attention of the organisers was when Justin Lynch promoted his pawn to a queen but accidentally picked his king up to put on the queening square. One could easily claim that as illegal, but his opponent, Michael James, accepted his defeat and respectfully shook Justin's hand and resigned.



Not enough emphasis could be put on the atmosphere at this event. It felt like a CHESS PARTY! From having coffee together before the games to enjoying some storytelling by IM Watu Kobese during the rounds. Everyone sat around the table during lunch, filling the venue up with laughter. It was not only about winning or losing, but the beauty of friendship that shone through in honour of Graham Solomon.

*"Chess is life"*





However, there were winners. In 4<sup>th</sup> place, separated only on the tiebreak of most wins was, Stephen Wagner. IM Watu Kobese took 3<sup>rd</sup> place and left us teary after his heartfelt speech. In his speech IM Kobese recalled how Graham Solomon would listen attentively to his views and unlike most people never tried to convince him of his own views.



*IM Watu Kobese*

Flying in all the way from Italy to honour his brother and also taking 2<sup>nd</sup> place is the brother of Graham Solomon, GM Kenny Solomon. He too left us teary and also in laughter as he shared some special memories of his brother. GM Kenny Solomon also

recounted how two key moments with his late brother had a far-reaching impact on him achieving his chess goals.



*GM Kenny Solomon*

IM Mohammed Henry Steel snatched 1<sup>st</sup> place and expressed great appreciation to the organisers and also shared some memories he had of Graham Solomon. In his victory speech IM Mohammed Henry Steel said that Graham Solomon was a strong player and a humble person.



*IM Mohammed Henry Steel*

In his closing speech Maxwell Solomon gave a special word of thanks to the Van Niekerk family for organising the tournament in honour of Graham Solomon, and he went on to read the moving poem “Cocooned Love” dedicated to his brother Graham Solomon. (The full text of my opening speech as well as the poem “Cocooned Love” can be accessed on the website [www.loosesketchings.co.za](http://www.loosesketchings.co.za))



*1<sup>st</sup> prize: IM Mohammed Henry Steel*



*2<sup>nd</sup> prize: GM Kenny Solomon*



*3<sup>d</sup> prize: IM Watu Kobese*



*4<sup>th</sup> prize: Stephen Wagner*



*The winners together with the Solomon family*

The tournament was a huge success and it was definitely a memorable event to honour the late Graham Solomon.