

## Emil Zatopek - Reflection by Dr Advocate Lyndon Bouah

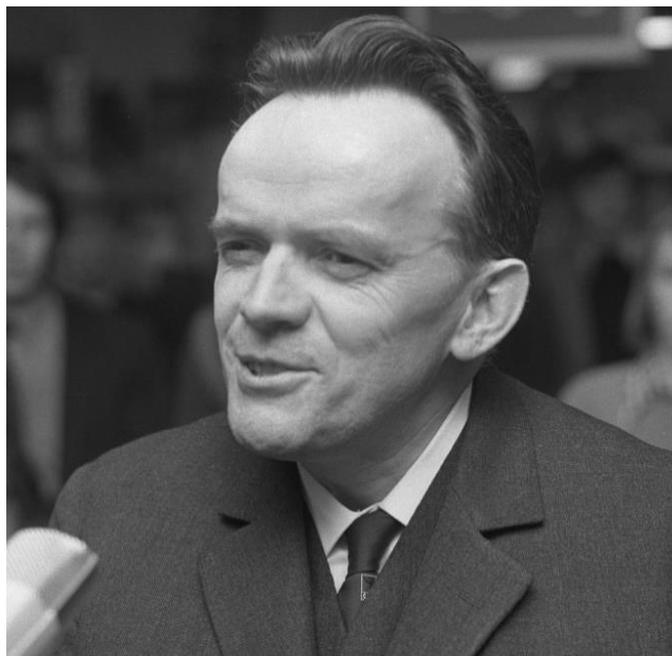
As many of you know I am involved in all sporting codes in the Western Cape. I am the Chief Director for Sport and Recreation in the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport in the Western Cape Provincial Government. I have a deep love for many sport codes and attend many different activities on a weekly basis. This week I am attending the finals of the Badminton championships here in Cape Town.

Wayde Van Niekerk recently competed in the Czech town of Ostrava. I was immediately intrigued by this as I had recently completed a book entitled the Rise and Fall of Emil Zatopek Olympic Legend with the subtitle Today we die a little by Richard Askwith. So was Emil Zatopek you are asking??

The book cover states and I quote “no runner has generated myth like Emil Zatopek, the Czechoslovakian soldier who revolutionised distance running after World War Two. The minutiae of his victories and training methods, the poignant details of his generosity and downfall- all have been endlessly repeated , but the full truth never told. Zatopek won five Olympic medals, set 18 World records and went undefeated in the 10 000metres for 6 years. He redefined the boundaries of endurance, training in his army boots, in snow, in darkness and in sand.

His triumphs put his country on the map, yet when Soviet troops moved in to crush Czechoslovakia’s new freedoms in 1968; Zatopek paid a heavy price for his brave stance as a champion of socialism with a humble face.”

So there I was merrily reading about the trials and tribulations of this four time gold Olympic champion and one silver when the name Ludek Pachman suddenly appeared in the book. On page 266 the author introduces Ludek Pachman who recalled that on the night of the 1968 Soviet invasion into Prague that Emil was the dominant figure. The next fifty pages of the book chronicle the relationship between Zatopek and Grandmaster Ludek Pachman. The relationship stretched from friendship to enmity.



*Grandmaster Ludek Pachman*

Grandmaster Ludek Pachman according to Wikipedia became a grandmaster in 1954 and won fifteen international tournaments and the Czech championship seven between 1946 and 1966. He played in 9 consecutive Olympiads between 1952 and 1966. In 1968 after winning an event in Prague in Athens he returned home and was arrested and served two years in prison. According to reports he was also tortured. Pachman was released and wrote 80 chess books of which the most known was Modern Chess Strategy and his four volume opus Theory of Modern chess.

*In 1989 GM Pachman participated in various SA chess events and he also participated in the 1989 SA Closed championship which was won by Charles De Villiers. On seeing the emerging talent of Watu Kobese invited the young Sowetan to train at his chess school in Germany, an experience according to Mark Rubery in the Star dated 6 May 2015 that no doubt invaluable to our many time national champion. Pachman was later banned by Fide.*

So an interesting connection between Zatopek and Pachman and of course South Africa. In November 2016 I addressed the committee on Education of the International Olympic Committee in Lausanne, Switzerland. And it was there that I took the following photo with Emil Zatopek. For me his greatest sporting triumph was 1952 when he won the 5000, 10 000 and the marathon. I don't know if there is a modern athlete that would be able to do that today.



*Dr Bouah with statue of Emil Zatopek in Lausanne, Switzerland*

According to Larkin (2015 website article) three secrets of success from Zatopek are:

1. He was not afraid to take chances. He didn't fear failure. This is something that we as chess players must also overcome.
2. Connect with the community. He always took the time to get to know his competitors. If you finish near the front of the pack, take some time to cheer for those who cross the line behind you. We sometimes see everyone as our competitors without taking a moment to celebrate the achievements of others.
3. Train like a madman. Zatopek's approach to training was quite simple. In order to run a fast race, you have to practice fast running in training. You can't expect miracles to happen on the starting lines without putting the work ahead of time. Chessplayers expect good results to happen without training. Modern technology has allowed everyone an opportunity to train and know what to expect on the board. You need to put in the hours as well!