

Every Chess Master was once a beginner



Written by Natalie Thyse

Edited by Lizaan Snyman

The North-West University (NWU), Potchefstroom campus Chess club is about influencing people to enjoy the game of kings and queens.

One of the best chess players from the NWU Potchefstroom campus is Marcques Hansen. Hansen competed in 12 South African Junior Chess Championships and five South African Junior Closed Championships. The NWU Potchefstroom campus Chess team also competed in the 2019 University Sports South African (USSA) competition where Hansen achieved 9th place. As second-year BEd Intermediate phase student, Hansen, believes that the best part about competing is the challenge of each game, the people you meet and the ultimate thrill of the results after a complicated position in the game. "What matters is the knowledge you gain from every game, does not matter if you win or lose," Hansen said.

He started playing chess at the age of four and continued making moves on the board. "I used to practice with my 86-year-old uncle, Bill Riesner, and we would practice for about three hours once a week," he said. Hansen's long term goals in chess are to achieve the title of Grand Master, but he would also like to take chess to school because of the benefits it has on children's cognitive and mental development.

Neo Brian Moganetsi is also a member of the NWU chess club and he describes the team as being very versatile. "Everyone is welcome as the sport is very much inclusive to everyone. We would like to emphasise on the fact that it's not a sport where we stereotype based on sex or one's cognitive ability. Our values are based around respect, discipline and inclusiveness," Moganetsi said.

The team is keeping themselves fit during the nationwide lockdown as they moved to an online platform called Lichess. "This platform allows us to train and compete on a regular basis, keeping our skills sharp," Moganetsi said.

A tip Hansen gives to chess players of any ability is, before making that very first move to consider your opponent's options and decide whether it is a threat and requires attention. Then you also have to consider various options on your side and take into account your weaknesses and strengths as well as your opponent's.