

## *Chess – A Case for Olympian Principles -*

By Dr. Lyndon Bouah



### **INTRODUCTION**

I have decided to review our participation at the Chess Olympics as 2022 celebrates 30 years since we are back in the Olympic fold. I have decided to review our Olympiad participation as I believe we should celebrate Olympism within the Chess family.

1. One of the fundamental principles which appear at the beginning of the Olympic Charter states:

Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal ethical principles. (Olympic Education Toolkit, 2007, a publication by the International Olympic Committee).

2. It is said that the French Chess Federation wished to organize an Olympiad alongside the Olympic Games which would be held in Paris in 1924. According to Arpad Foldeak (Chess Olympiads 1927-1968, Dover Publications, 1979, p8) the standing of the Chess Olympic Games is a matter of dispute as the majority of nations taking part were fewer than four players and the players from the same country competed against each other. The Federation

Internationale Des Echecs (FIDE) was established at this event by the participants present.

3. Fordeak (p9) records that 1927 can be seen as the official start of the Chess Olympiads. 16 countries competed. The competition itself though only became known as the Chess Olympiads in 1952. Gens Una Sumus (we are one family) was the motto adopted by FIDE. Nowadays over 185 countries send their players every two years to the Olympiad to compete. Fordeak correctly records (p10) that almost all World Champions and contenders for the world title have competed at the Olympiads.
4. South Africa joined FIDE in 1954 and entered into first Olympiad in 1958. Fordeak notes that the 1958 Munich Olympiad coincided with the 800th anniversary of the founding of Munich. Tunisia also made its debut and these two countries became the first two African countries to compete at the Olympiads.
5. South Africa was represented by the following players followed by their respective stats: (Springboks at Munich by Dreyer Kirby, Heidenfeld, published by the SA Chess Player, 1959).

BOARD	NAME	P	W	D	L	P	%
Board 1	W Heidenfeld	16	3	9	4	7.5	46.8
Board 2	K Dreyer	15	3	8	4	7	46.6
Board 3	K Kirby	14	3	6	5	6	42.9
Board 4	K Grivainis	15	8	3	4	9.5	63.3
Board 5	D Isaacson	15	6	5	4	8.5	56.7
Board 6	M Stern	1	0	0	1	0	0

6. The event was split into Preliminaries and then Finals. A quick glance at the various match scores reveals some interesting wins. SA beat Finland 2.5-1.5; SA beat Portugal 3-1; SA beat Ireland 4-0; SA beat Tunisia 3.5 to 0.5 and SA beat Lebanon 2.5 -1.5.
7. Dreyer in the prologue (p3) to the abovementioned booklet opines.  
 "Has it been worth it to send a South Africa team to the 13<sup>th</sup> Chess Olympiad in Munich? My answer is a resounding yes. We have proved to the world and ourselves that our small country with its small chess federation has produced a top class of players who do not have to be ashamed of entering the

international arena, who have obtained in this outing a place far from the bottom and who moreover, have a good chance of doing better next time, whenever and wherever that may be."

8. South African chess thus joined the world chess Olympiads in 1958. South Africa at the time was cementing apartheid throughout society. South Africa however was still competing in world events and it is interesting to observe its interaction with the rest of the world.
9. FIDE was of course, not oblivious to the political situation in South Africa. I will examine this role and how the principle of *Gens Una Sumus* finally manifested itself.
10. For posterity I will end off with the selection of games the authors of the 1958 booklet felt worthy of publication.

### **GRIVAINIS, K - THORBERGSSON [C02]**

1958 Olympiad, Munich

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 Nc6 5.Nf3 Qb6 6.a3 cxd4 7.cxd4 Nge7 8.Nc3 Nf5 9.Na4 Qd8 10.b4 Be7 11.Bb2 f6 12.Bd3 fxe5 13.dxe5 0-0 14.0-0 b6 15.Nc3 Bd7 16.Qd2 Kh8 17.Ne2 Qe8 18.Rac1 a6 19.Rc2 b5 20.Rfc1 Rc8 21.Bd4 Qf7 22.Bc5 Nh4 23.Ned4 Bxc5 24.Rxc5 Nxf3+ 25.Nxf3 Qh5 26.Qe3 Qg4 27.h3 Qh5 28.Bb1 Qe8 29.Ng5 g6 30. h4 Qe7 31.f4 a5 32.h5 h6 33.Nf3 gxh5 34.bxa5 Qg7 35.Nh4 Rfd8 36.f5 exf5 37.e6 Be8 38.Nxf5 Qf6 39.e7 Nxe7 40.Nxe7 Rxc5 41.Qxc5 1-0

### **RANTANEN - KIRBY [D34]**

1958 Olympiad, Munich

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nf3 Nc6 6.g3 Nf6 7.Bg2 Be7 8.0-0 0-0 9.Bg5 Be6 10.dxc5 d4 11.Na4 Qd7 12.b3 Rad8 13.Rc1 Bd5 14.Nb2 Qf5 15.Bf4 Ne4 16.Na4 Bf6 17.Qd3 Rfe8 18.Nd2 Nb4 19.Qb1 d3 20.Bxe4 Bxe4 21.Nxe4 Rxe4 22.Rc4 dxe2 23.Rxe4 exf1 Q+ 24.Kxf1 Qd5 25.Qe1 g5 26.Bxg5 Bxg5 27.Qxb4 f5 28.Nc3 Qc6 29.Qc4+ Kf8 30.h4 Bh6 31.Rd4 Qh1+ 32.Ke2 Re8+ 33.Ne4Rxe4+ 34.Rxe4 Qxe4+ 35.Qxe4 fxe4 0-1

11. One of the fundamental principles which appear at the beginning of the Olympic Charter states:

The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity. (*Olympic Education Toolkit*, 2007, a publication by the International Olympic Committee).

12. The next Olympiad South Africa competed in was Tel Aviv 1964. Of particular interest here to historians is the fact that South Africa played against the Soviet Union in a match which SA duly lost 4-0. An interesting article which recently surfaced in the New in Chess records that the Soviet team debated whether they should play against South Africa or not. After a stand-off Mikhail Botvinnik simply walked to the board and sat down. The other members of the Soviet team then walked to their respective boards as well. The full Soviet team was Botvinnik, Petrosian, Smyslov, Keres, Stein and Spassky.
13. This incident reflected the politics of the day. The Cold War was at its height and the Soviet Union had links with most of the liberation movements in Africa. It later also provided military training to Umkhonto we Sizwe soldiers. The Communist countries opposed the apartheid policies and this incident was a forerunner to what was to come in 1974.
14. South Africa was represented by the following players followed by their respective stats (Foldeak p 344):

BOARD	NAME	P	W	D	L	P	%
Board 1	K Dreyer	9	3	1	5	3.5	38.9
Board 2	K F Kirby	8	2	1	5	2.5	31.3
Board 3	A N Rubinstein	7	1	2	4	2	28.6
Board four	D Friedgood	12	9	2	1	10	83.3
Board five	J Wolpert	6	1	1	4	1.5	25
Board six:	D Isaacson	10	4	3	3	5.5	55

15. In the preliminaries of the event S. Africa scored the following results (out of 4).

0 vs Soviet Union  
1 vs Spain  
1.5 vs Philippines  
1.5 vs Chile  
1.5 vs Switzerland  
1.5 vs Venezuela

16. In the Finals of the event South Africa came second to Australia in the Section D finals. The results in this part of the event were considerably better than the first Section.

2 vs Australia  
1.5 vs Bolivia  
3 vs Uruguay  
2.5 vs Portugal  
2.5 vs Luxembourg  
2.5 vs Dominica  
4 vs Cyprus

17. When I reflect on these results, it appears that SA was competitive in the first Olympiads. Nowadays the gap is of course much wider with most of the countries listed above having secured grandmasters whilst we were out in the cold because of apartheid.

18. It is of course necessary to appreciate the year 1964. Mr. Nelson Mandela had just started his 27-year sentence when the Olympiad took place. The Rivonia trial had come to end and the leading opponents of apartheid were jailed for lengthy periods.

19. At this trial Mr. Mandela echoed the principles of *Gens Una Sumus* in a passionate statement from the dock. He stated (Long walk to Freedom, 1994, (p 354):

*"During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal I am prepared to die."*

20. The international community was not oblivious to the happenings in South Africa. International tours were still made to South Africa but anti-apartheid activists were gaining ground. The speech of Mr. Nelson Mandela reflected the principle of *Gens Una Sumus*. He was striving for a society in which all persons should live happily together.

21. One of the fundamental principles which appear at the beginning of the Olympic Charter states:

The Olympic Movement is the concerted, organized, universal and permanent action, carried out under the supreme authority of the IOC, of all individuals and entities who are inspired by the values of Olympism. It covers the five continents. It reaches its peak with the bringing together of the world's athletes at the great sport festival, the Olympic Games. Its symbol is five interlaced rings.

22. South Africa attended the Olympiad held in Havana, Cuba in 1966. Fordeak in chapter 18 of his book says the following:

*"Those who observed the preparations for the 17<sup>th</sup> Olympiad from afar were well aware that Capablanca's homeland spared no efforts to fulfil its task as thoroughly and conscientiously as possible. At this moment the whole country is one mighty chessboard, wrote a Cuban newspaper on the day the representatives arrived on the island".*

23. South Africa was represented by the following players followed by their respective stats (Foldeak p 371):

<b>Board</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>%</b>
Board one	Kurt Dreyer	12	3	6	3	6	50
Board two	Piet Kroon	12	7	2	3	9	66.7
Board three	Anton Heyns	13	6	1	6	6.5	50
Board four	Pieter Hangelbroek	10	4		6	4	40
Board five	Eddie Price	9	6	1	2	6.5	72.2
Board six:	Leon Wilken	4	3	0	1	3	75

24. The team was accompanied by Leonard Reitstein as manager. David Friedgood was selected to play but sadly, could not obtain permission from Wits University to defer his supplementary period in February. The late Eddie Price informed me that an interesting reunion of sorts took place 36 years later in the World Seniors Team Championship in the Isle of Man when Heyns, Hangelbroek, Price and Goldstein participated. Kroon could not be there and Dreyer and Wilken were by then, playing their chess in that great chequer board in the sky.

25. South Africa had a hard pairing in the group stages. South Africa scored the following results in Group 4. (Results out of four)

25.1            0 vs Argentina

25.2            0 vs Denmark

25.3            1.5 vs England

25.4            1.5 vs France

25.5            2.5 vs Ireland

25.6            0.5 vs Chile

26. In the Finals held thereafter South Africa finished top of the Section D group. South Africa scored an impressive 28 points out of 36 which is a fantastic score. South Africa scored the following (out of 4).

26.1	2.5 vs Mexico
26.2	3 vs Bolivia
26.3	3 vs Monaco
26.4	4 vs Morocco
26.5	2 vs Nicaragua
26.6	2.5 vs Panama
26.7	4 vs Lebanon
26.8	4 vs Cyprus
26.9	3 vs Hong Kong

27. A cursory analysis of the results reveals the following interesting facts.

The late Eddie Price who was well known to modern players as an arbiter scored 72.2 percent at the Olympiad. Nine played and six wins to boot.

28. The high number of wins (7) by the late Piet Kroon is also remarkable given that he played board two for the team. Kroon played his last league matches for Bellville in 1996 and competed in the SA Open in 2015.

29. Pieter Hangelbroek who played in this Olympiad still competed in the 2011 SA Closed B section. What a remarkable achievement.

30. An interesting aside for me is the fact that when South Africa was readmitted in 1992 we also competed against Argentina in round one, and also played against Morocco, Hong Kong and Ireland.

31. Cuba and Africa also have a very interesting history. In the book Fidel Castro My Life with Ignacio Ramonet (Penguin Books 2008, pages 308-334) Castro recalls with fondness the support Cuba gave to the people of Africa. I quote

*"In 1961 a Cuban ship took weapons to the Algerian patriots who were fighting France. And on its return to Cuba, it brought back about 100 children who'd been orphaned and wounded in the war. This story of rescued children would be repeated many years later, in 1978, when the survivors of the Kassinga massacre arrived, the great majority of whom were children." Castro goes on to recount with fondness the various countries Che Guevera and other Cuban revolutionaries travelled to in Africa to assist in the various liberation struggles."*



Fidel Castro meeting the SA Chess Team at the Olympiad. In the picture is Mr. Leonard Reitstein and others. The photo is from Mr Reitstein's personal collection.

32. The massacre at Kassinga took place on 4 May 1978 when the South African Armed forces bombed a Namibian refugee camp in the Southern Angolan province of Cunene, killing over 600 people mostly women, children and old people. My alma mater, the University of the Western Cape (UWC), in remembrance of this, named its first female hostel Kassinga.
33. In modern times (after the events in Angola when South African and Cuban forces clashed) South Africa and Cuba have concluded a number of agreements. South African students can now go to Cuba for medical training and sport studies whilst Cuba has sent engineers and doctors to South Africa to assist in the rural areas of South Africa.
34. It was very significant that South Africa competed in Cuba. The politics of the two countries were vastly different. And the fact that South Africa and Cuba actively fought later is an interesting historical footnote. The battle of Cuito Cuanavale is often seen as a turning point in the history of Southern Africa.
35. The participation in Cuba by a South African team (and indeed an American team led by Bobby Fischer) shows the value sport has in bringing people together. The chess world under the banner of Gens Una Sumus indeed gathered on the shores of Cuba and celebrated Olympism.
36. In 1992 South Africa made its debut in the Philippines and today those players are still competing.
37. Dr. Deon Solomons, FM Charles de Villiers, IM Watu Kobese, Dr. Lyndon Bouah and Advocate Maxwell Solomon still actively compete for their respective clubs when their time allows.

38. At the 2016 Olympiad, Grandmaster Kenny Solomon and International Master Watu Kobese both entered the ranks of South African sport legends when both of them achieved over 100 Olympiad games. This is an achievement of the highest order and must be celebrated.
39. IM Kobese made his debut in 1994 and 28 years later is still competing at the Olympiad.
40. The Women's team made its debut in Kalmykia in 1998 and is this year celebrating 24 years of Olympism. WIM Denise Bouah made her debut in 2000 and is competing in this Olympiad twenty years later.
41. The definition of the core values of Olympism:
  - Excellence – excellence means doing the best we can be, on the field of play or in our professional life. The important thing is not winning but taking part, making progress and enjoying the healthy combination of body, will and mind.
  - Respect - this includes respect for yourself and your body, for other people, for rules and regulations, for sport and for the environment; and
  - Friendship – Friendship is at the heart of the Olympic Movement. It encourages us to see sport as an instrument for mutual understanding between individuals and between people all over the world.
42. Five Olympic educational themes need to be highlighted. These themes are:
  - Joy of effort – Young people develop and practise physical, behavioural and intellectual skills by challenging themselves and each other in physical activities, movement, games and sport.
  - Fair play – Fair play was originally a concept developed in sport, but it has since also been applied in many different ways and contexts beyond the field of play. Learning fair play behaviour in sport can lead to the development and reinforcement of similar behaviours in one's everyday life.
  - Respect for others – when young people who live in a multicultural world learn to accept and respect diversity and practise personal peaceful behaviours, they promote peace and international understanding.
  - Pursuit of excellent - a focus on excellence can help young people to make positive, healthy choices, and strive to become the best that they can be in whatever they do
  - Balance between body, will and mind – Learning takes place in the whole body, not just in the mind and physical literacy and learning through movement contribute to the development of both moral and intellectual learning.

In today's Round 3, the SA ladies lost 4-0 to Argentina. On board one WIM Jesse February tried an exchange sacrifice in her opponent's time trouble but her opponent gave the exchange back with a winning position. WIM Charlize Van Zyl defended an endgame, but her opponent brought the point home. On Board 3 WFM Rebecca Selkirk played a pawn sacrifice on move 8 which didn't give her much. On board Four WIM Denise Bouah played hard, but her opponent placed her under constant pressure. The queenside pawns of her opponent proved too much.



In the Open section South Africa played Haiti and comfortably brought the win home. On board four IM Watu Kobese conceded a draw when there were very little pieces left in the game. On Board three FM Banele Mhango secured his second point. It wasn't easy going though as his opponent had a huge Nd5 but his opponent misplayed it.

On Board two Daniel Barrish I thought easily brought the point home. GM Kenny Solomon had to grind out the endgame and found some deft touches in the endgame to bring home to the point! So, a nice 3.5-0.5 victory should settle everyone.

Thank you for your attention.

Dr. L Bouah

Olympian 1992, 1994 and Captain of the 2002, 2004, 2014, 2016, 2018 SA Olympiad team.

