


[Home](#)
[News](#)
[Why Chess in Schools](#)
[Teaching Materials](#)
[Research](#)
[Commission](#)
[Documents and FAQ](#)
[History](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Conferences](#)
[Information & Resources](#)
[Reports](#)

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South Africa

Thursday, 01 December 2011 23:11



There are many countries where the work of getting chess into the schools is complicated. South Africa is a good example. The national federation has overall responsibility and works, following normal protocol, with both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Sport. Then there are other initiatives, notably Moves for Life, who now have the involvement of the Kasparov Chess Foundation and also cooperate with the David MacEnulty Chess Foundation. It is not easy to get all the initiatives working together in the same direction. In South Africa they seem to be close to agreeing a unified way forward, perhaps inspired by one of Nelson Mandela's most famous quotes "It always seems impossible until it's done."

Our thanks to Emelia Ellappen, President of the South African Chess Federation, to David MacEnulty and to Kelvin Kemm, Watu Kobese, Afrika Msimang and Marisa van der Merwe of Moves for Life. They have all, one way or another, provided some of the material that follows in this lengthy report.

The report is in three sections:

1. From the Dederation's web site.
2. David MacEnulty's report.
3. Moves for Life report on their developments.

From the Federation's web site:



On the week-end of 11– 14 November 2011 the 13th World Chess Champion, Grandmaster Garry Kasparov will be in Johannesburg as a guest of the Moves for Life chess initiative. This in itself is great news for the South African chess community and it is further likely that the event will attract considerable favourable publicity for our game within the broader South African community. As such, the event is welcomed by CHESSA even if, for reasons mentioned hereafter, CHESSA cannot officially endorse the event or participate therein.

CHESSA's position was set out in its letter of 28th October 2011 addressed to Mr M Scheepers of Moves for Life. CHESSA's position has unfortunately been misunderstood by individuals who are not fully alive to the issues of protocol and governance of chess which play a role in this instance.

Mr. M. Scheepers sent Mr. B Aitchison an email on 15th October 2011 informing him of GM Kasparov's visit to South Africa. Moves for Life also offered to arrange a meeting between CHESSA, GM Kasparov and the Minister of Sport.

CHESSA as the National Federation must at all time follow protocol. If CHESSA wants to meet the Minister of Sport, we must invite the Minister via the Department of Sport and Recreation South Africa. Similarly if CHESSA wants to invite the President of South Africa, Mr. Jacob Zuma to an event, the invite must be issued to him via the Minister of Sport's office. CHESSA must conform to prescribed regulations at all times. Moves for Life as a private initiative is not restricted by the same protocol as is the National Federation.

Apart from the mentioned invitation, Moves for Life organized the event without consultation with or reference to CHESSA. Members of CHESSA's Executive Board have not been invited to attend the event in their official capacity in spite of the fact that invitation was sent to the Presidents of all Chess Unions to attend the event and dinner in honour of GM Kasparov at the organisers' costs.

This is the 2nd time that Moves for Life have organized a major chess event without consulting with CHESSA. Last year President Zuma launched the Moves for Life program; CHESSA was only included in this event after it had already been organized by Moves for Life.

CHESSA is the controlling body and custodian of chess in South Africa. Whilst private initiatives like the programme of Moves for Life are applauded, due recognition must be given to CHESSA's role and function, which to CHESSA's regret, did not happen in the instant case.

On a positive note, a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between CHESSA and Moves for Life is still under negotiation and, once concluded, would hopefully avoid situations like the present. At the CHESSA Executive Board meeting on 28th August 2011, Mr. M. van Zyl and Adv. L. Bouah of CHESSA were mandated to finalise the MOU which is in progress and nearly completed.

On Saturday 5th November 2011, I attended the launch of the National Schools Sports Programme in Soweto. As from 2012 all S.A. learners will play sport on a Wednesday. In December 2012 the 1st Schools Olympics will be held.

On the 31st May 2011, CHESSA's Youth Director Mrs JM Steenkamp presented the Development Plan for Schools Chess to the Department of Sport & Recreation S.A. No other plans have been submitted. As presently advised, CHESSA is not about to put any other chess in schools programme in action. As government has the sole jurisdiction in regard to sport in schools, Moves for Life is not at liberty to make any announcements about the introduction of other schools chess programmes, such as the programme of the Kasparov Chess Foundation, without the necessary consultation.

We trust that the above clarifies the position and that it is now appreciated by all concerned that CHESSA did not seek to bar GM Kasparov from visiting South Africa. CHESS South Africa, on behalf of all chess lovers in South Africa, welcomes GM Kasparov to South Africa and wishes him an enjoyable and constructive visit.

Yours sincerely

Mrs E Ellappen
President Chess SA

And then:

Tuesday 15 November 2011
Günther van den Bergh

An excellent news report on YouTube re Garry Kasparov's visit to South Africa. Garry scored 29/30 (28 wins and 2 draws). Congratulations to Stephen Skosana for securing a well deserved draw against the "all time great".



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An update report and pictures will follow soon. In the mean time, [check out the video clip!](#)

David MacEnulty's report on his foundation's work.



I am pleased to report on our first ten months of activity in South Africa. Our initiative there is centered on the work of Jerald Times, a National Master from Harlem, New York.

Our goals in bringing Jerald to South Africa were to:

- teach and coach children in a township or squatter camp school;
- train other chess coaches in advanced coaching techniques;
- train other chess players to raise the general level of play in South Africa.

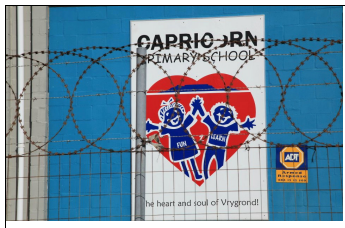
Jerald was chosen for this task based on his impressive credentials as a player, teacher, and coach. Since his arrival in Cape Town, he has established himself as one of the elite in the country in all three of these categories.

Let me briefly recount our major activities to date.

Capricorn Primary, a squatter camp school

Background

Capricorn Primary is a school located in Vrygrond, a poverty-stricken, drug-infested, crime-riddled and abusive squatter camp in the Cape Town area. The school is brilliantly led by a caring and dedicated principal, Mrs. Hassen, and has a staff of knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers, especially the chess coordinator, Tracey Lee Bester. We would like to make this school a centerpiece of our activities, demonstrating to all that the children in these areas are capable of extraordinary achievement if given the resources.



Activities

Jerald has written the curriculum and teaches at Capricorn three times a week, reaching several hundred students at this school. In August of this year I brought three chess players from the US to augment Jerald's work at Capricorn: Justus Williams, the youngest African-American chess master in the US, Jonathan Corbblah, originally from Ghana but raised in the US and currently the coach at The Trinity School in New York, and Ben Altman-DeSole, a senior at The Browning School in New York. For four days, the five of us taught, played and encouraged the young learners at this school, to the utter delight of all. My sister, a professional writer, also accompanied us; her article on this trip, *More than Just a Game*, can be found on our website.

This trip was possible through special funding from Norman Weinstein and Barbara Poole, and Colin and Jeannie Rust, and the donation of air miles from John Ehrenkranz, George Zachar and Adam Zoia. And a special thanks to Christine Wasserstein, Michael and Julie Waldorf, Greg Lee and Gina Sohn, and John and Serena Moon. THANK YOU ALL!!!

We have also, in cooperation with Think Like a King™, donated software for their computer lab, and given them books and puzzles to accelerate their learning.

Very soon, in cooperation with The Dalton School in New York, we will begin regular online chess matches with the young learners at Capricorn.

Our hope is that within three years, children at this school will be challenging for top places in South African scholastic chess.

Training Chess Coaches

Background

Although there are many strong and dedicated coaches in South Africa, with few exceptions they have not had the benefit of working outside the country, where they could come into contact with the many training methods that have been developed in the United States, Russia and Europe. Jerald Times has studied with and competed against some of the finest trainers and coaches in the world from Russia, Europe and America. This broad background of knowledge, methodologies and approaches has prepared him well for the task of training others in the art and techniques of chess coaching.

Activity

Jerald has been actively training chess coaches who are working with disadvantaged children in other schools and community centers. Among those he has been working with in the Cape Town area are George Daniels, Malcolm Fredricks, and Benjamin Bosch. Jerald meets with these teachers on a weekly basis to guide them in their classroom management and teaching skills, as well as to help them become stronger players themselves.

Each of these teachers has reported a tremendous increase in their skills both in managing their classrooms and in coaching their young learners.

Activity

Once a month Jerald flies to Durban to train Zulu chess teachers in cooperation with the Victor Daitz Foundation and the Durban Metro Chess Academy.

As with the teachers in Cape Town, those in Durban, and their supervisors at the Durban Metro Chess Academy report significant improvements in their classroom performance.

Combining Jerald's direct work and the work of the teachers Jerald trains in Cape Town and Durban, we reach thousands of students each week; the multiplier effect of Jerald's presence is quite impressive.

Raising the Level of Play

Background

Jerald's final task has been to coach and train top players at all levels. The idea behind this is that raising the level of play throughout the country will have an impact on those teaching and coaching the young learners in South Africa. This is indeed a case of a rising tide lifting all boats.

Activity

Since his arrival in Cape Town, his skills at teaching and coaching have been instantly recognized. He was:

- coach of the Cape Town Junior Chess Team at the Closed Tournament in Johannesburg;
- coach of Settler's High School, the top high school chess team in Cape Town;
- head coach of the South African Women's Team for the All African Games in Mozambique;
- private tutor to Tiffany Agaulus, the top girl under 16 in the Commonwealth Games;
- private tutor to Denise Frick, who placed third in the African Women's Championship;

Further, under his leadership, the South African Men's and Women's teams won more medals (10) at the All African Games than ever before.

As a player, Jerald has been no less outstanding, having beaten or drawn the top players in South Africa. To emphasize this point, he plays board one for the Steinitz team, one of the top teams in all South Africa.

There can be no question that our Foundation is providing a major service to the chess community of South Africa, and that we are having a significant impact on how and to whom chess is taught.



There can also be no doubt that Jerald was the right man for the job. To see him interacting with everyone from children to chess teachers and top players is to watch a master at work on every level. He is that rare breed that can communicate accurately and comfortably with everyone from total beginner to high performer. (2011 1105)

Here's the report from September 17 – beautifully illustrated and a joy to read:

<http://www.macenultychess.org/our-blog/in-south-africa/>

If you keep on down that page, there are three articles from last year.

And this is what the chess co-ordinator at one of those schools (Capricorn Primary) had to say about the project:

<http://www.macenultychess.org/2011/07/23/letter-from-capricorn-primary-school-south-africa/>

and his take on the background to Moves for Life:

Moves for Life, an NGO with headquarters in Pretoria/Johannesburg, is dedicated to bringing chess to the many neglected rural areas of South Africa. Headed by Mickey Scheepers, Kelvin Klem, Watu Kobese, Afrika Msimang and Marisa van der Merwe, Moves for Life has garnered the support of President Jacob Zuma and will soon be partnering with the Garry Kasparov Chess Foundation.

Activity

Moves for Life is using my book, *Chess, An Adult Beginner's Guide*, to help teachers and others who may find themselves in charge of chess programs at schools but know little or nothing about the game themselves. As an indication of the importance of this venture to South Africa, President Jacob Zuma wrote the forward for the book. On my twice-yearly visits to South Africa, I will be working with MFL as a trainer and speaker. Finally, I have just begun preliminary discussions with Mr. Kasparov regarding how our organizations might work together for the betterment of chess in South Africa.

No one does it alone. We are very grateful to the many donors who have made these many successes possible.

Plans for the Future

An obvious plan for the future is to continue with the brilliant work Jerald Times has so successfully begun. This will necessitate raising a further sixty thousand dollars beginning immediately.

I would also like to implement a two-phase approach to forwarding the goals of improving the teaching and coaching skills and raising the general level of play in South Africa.

The first is to hold a week-long Grandmaster Training Camp for the strongest players. I would like to bring down three top grandmaster-trainers to hold seminars for the elite South African players, those whose ratings are above 2000. At the same time, as there are many teachers and coaches whose playing level is from 1400 to 2000, we would have a second tier camp for them, led by masters and international masters. The cost of the Grandmaster Training Camp is estimated to be forty thousand dollars.

Following this training camp we would hold a four-day tournament with the GMs, IMs and masters all playing with those who participated in the training camp.

The second phase of this program would be a follow-up seminar in coaching and teaching techniques. It is one thing to be a strong player; it is another set of skills entirely to organize knowledge into teachable chunks and to manage a classroom. This second seminar is essential to improving the level of coaching throughout the country. Jerald would then meet regularly with the participants to assist them in their coaching activities. The cost of the coaching seminar is estimated to be fifteen thousand dollars.

A major weakness of many training programs is failure to continue training with significant oversight and follow-through. Monthly meetings with the trainers would be an important component of the on-going training provided by the Foundation.

And here's what Moves For Life themselves had to say recently.



We are continuing to expand into schools. So far this year we are now teaching chess to 6300 children per week, we have trained 200 teachers and have opened in 47 new schools. Some schools are smart up-market city schools, others are small rural schools far out in the bush where nobody had ever hear the term 'chess' (see attached pictures). The response has been fantastic in these rural schools and people come from far to chess tournaments. People will easily travel 50 miles (sometimes on foot) to attend. They regularly walk anything up to 5 miles just to get to school.

We have more data and I can get it for you. We have a lady who had just started PhD studies on the academic performance of our chess children.

We have many interesting developments, and I will keep you informed. See attached news cutting from yesterday.

The Commonwealth Games took place in Johannesburg a couple of months ago, and we brought 150 of our chess children from all over the country to play in the open area in the hotel next to the Games hall. Our children played their own tournament with much enthusiasm, and met Grand Masters from around the Commonwealth. The SA Air Force provided military accommodation and food which made it financially viable for us. The trade off was that the Air Force set up a careers recruiting stand, because they said that we are attracting exactly the quality of children that they are interested in.

We also recently launched a book written by David MacEnulty. David is the inspiration for the Hollywood film "Knights of the South Bronx." We were fortunate that South African president, President Jacob Zuma wrote the forward to the book. I have attached it, you may reproduce it if you wish.

Marisa van der Merwe marisa@minichess.co.za

Our Moves for Life site is www.movesforlife.co.za

Regards

Dr Kelvin Kemm

The latest development is that the Kasparov Chess Foundation is now working with MFL:

http://www.movesforlife.co.za/news_content.php?content_id=33





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