

## Grandmaster Bassem Amin visits South Africa

*Report by host Jackie Ngubeni*

### *The people's Champ.*



*(Arriving at O.R.Tambo airport, Johannesburg for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time)*

The current Africa Chess Champion, the hugely talented young GM. Bassem Amin of Tanta in Egypt recently made a goodwill tour of South Africa. He slipped into O.R.Tambo International airport with his country topically in the news. Dr. Bassem as he is affectionately known trekked down south to fulfill his long held promise and belief that the crown bonds him with every single African, thus he will love to celebrate the achievement with the people of the continent at large. However, due to his grueling self-imposed two pronged ambition of pursuing Chess and Medicine, little time is left to sort of take a lap-dance criss-crossing the continent. This time around, a chance presented itself; the Tanta medical university is suspended due to the determined young comrades of this ancient country to see the end of one-man-rule in their generation. The youth there are fighting tooth

and nail for a new order that will usher in democratic changes that will directly benefit even GM.Bassem's chess career ( as he privately intimated to me!).

### *Hello Africa, hello Watu kobese*

"Hello mister Jackie" was a sweet soft spoken voice that greeted me at the airport from behind. I had missed his walk through by a whisker to grab my mobile from the car park. I was back glued to and searching for his "baby-face" in amongst the multitudes of tourists streaming into South Africa in huge numbers from all over the world! The super GM had landed and checked himself into the country. This was the culmination of my invitation, his acceptance, and then the Chess federation endorsement. Next, was the ministerial permission, followed by the military permission? Not to mention the University time-off grant (fortunately he skipped this as attendance was suspended). Then there is the dealing with South Africa embassy in Cairo that has its own sets of criteria to tick box before they gave the nod. By the way, just to mention; the GM was in Morocco when the unrest exploded on the heels of the Tunisia's uprising! He was literally trapped for a while there because no airline was flying too soon to Cairo, at least from where he found himself at the time. Finally he did succeed! Now you understand how excited I felt when I heard that simple greeting!

As soon as we had him connected within ubiquitous mobile network in South Africa, he called back home to give assurance that his second visit to RSA was off to a good start cause he was in good hands, and that he was never going to be in a nightmare! The next hello was to the so beloved Lion of South African chess International Master Watu Kobese. The first time these two maestros dueled was

2002 in Cairo. It was a DAVID and GOLIATH tussle.



\*Picture acknowledgement: Downloaded from an internet site

During the game the toddler Bassem (David) slanged a stone sacrifice against the mammoth Kobese (*15...Bxh3 in Kobese-Bassem. A Ruy Lopez Def. ECO C83, instead of the thematic 15...Bd6*). Kobese used his colossal experience to regain composure and the story had it that Goliath prevailed (1-0). That encounter led Watu to heap praise onto the courageous boy-wonder and declared that he will become a strong GM. This has since ringed true as matters of Elo stands now in real-time, GM. Bassem is over 2600! Kobese, in the conversation on our way from the airport to his lux apartment accommodation, Watu fondly gave Bassem a warm welcome and wowed much respect by being cordial.

South Africa is the 29<sup>th</sup> country Bassem visits in his young illustrious chess career! This motivated many scholars as many want to travel and see the world.



10601457	Amin, Bassem
Federation	Egypt
FIDE title	Grand Master
Rating:	2596
B-Year	1988
Sex	Male

World Rank	
World (all players):	<b>241</b>
World (active players):	<b>228</b>
National Rank EGY	
National (all players):	<b>2</b>
National (active players):	<b>2</b>
Continent Rank Africa	
Rank (all players):	<b>2</b>
Rank (active players):	<b>2</b>
FIDE Titles (year)	
Grand Master (GM)	<b>2006</b>
International Master (IM)	<b>2004</b>
FIDE Master (FM)	<b>1999</b>

 [Profile](#)

 [Rating Progress](#)

 [Game Statistics](#)



*(Record here courtesy of Fide.com)*

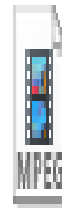
Grandmaster Bassem became titled at the tender age of 17 years. This is a phenomenal achievement at even world-wide standard (The fearsome and most dominant chess player of all time, one Garry Kasparov, achieved this feat at 18 years old!). Bassem won the Africa Junior twice. He may be the reason why IM. (Elect) Farai Mandizha (Zim) and later, IM. Mwali chitumbo(Zam), were delayed to become IM's. Bassem and his countryman GM. Adley, simply dominated the Africa junior helm for almost a decade. IM. Chitumbo in the past also paid SA a visit to celebrate with Mzansi his junior's conquest.

In all his young life of 22 years old, Bassem found time to win the Arab Championships twice. This is an event that arguably give the Egyptians (and all Arab countries under Fide demarcations) a bread buttered on both sides. Meaning a player with dual assumed Identities could play as an African and double that up as an Arab. Here is the unspoken truth, not all Africans are Arabs and not all Arabs are Africans, but some are both and Bassem is one. To this end, the young man cannot be begrudged for greed. It was his right and he did the

right thing clocking points unavailable to Africa absolute. The story and the talent of the young Maestro does not end here. He participated and won tournaments in the Arab Middle-East, Africa, and the wide world, not to mention the internet where his rating is beyond 3000 Elo. Only when he spoke, from his lips to receptive ears does it click; my goodness, this man is a chess freak show! Only when he utters a never ending list of top players he has conquered do you realize the man's pure talent.

Well, if only we could celebrate this pride as Africa-Arab and Africa by seeing the Africa Champion tour the continent after the crowning. In fact, this will help unearth new talent and make us realize a world championship contender out of Africa. This is possible when considering the abundant talent of the likes of Bassem. Plus his countryman won the World Junior Champion( GM. Ahemd Adley).

Touring RSA, GM. Bassem got to learn a new skill; blowing the world renowned Vuvuzela! Check out also the video clip and the rest of the report.



GM. Bassem Visits RSA 099.MPG

***( GM. Bassem Vuvuzela Elo is below 800! Here seen with School Chairman Molebatsi a chess enthusiast!)***

### *A true South African welcome*

The culture of South Africa is a melting pot of all nations from all corners of the globe. The best way to indulge it is to taste the food and beverages. One thing about the African Ubuntu is that from saying hello in isi-Zulu perspective, you are acknowledged. Sawubona means “I see you”. This is you have come into my territory and I see you and will not shoot you for instance. The next matter at hand you must eat without fear of being poisoned. This give me a chance to eliminate you there and then or embrace you through-out your stay in my presence. The Hollywood block-buster movie the Avatar’s creators played with this initial cultures collision concept. So, taking the Egyptian maestro to a Zulu middle income family whose children do Academic chess development with my Academy for a scrumptious dinner was a welcome experience and somewhat fulfilling. He sure was acknowledged upon arrival. The true African way would have elicited a praise singer who would orate his achievements including the GM title and continental crowns. All along his entry root the young Ntombi’s(Girls) would be ululating and throwing Rose pedal along his walk path. Hell no! This is not how it went down. Our original cultures have evolved, they have in some instances been consumed by the modern life-style we have assumed. Thus, the GM was treated to a western kind of evening. But the meal was unmistakably prepared the African way. Mr. Khumalo is a traditional Zulu man. His family lives a carefully chosen western life when it proves best. Any excuse for him and his family to embrace his roots is clearly very welcome. This is reflected in every aspect of his family-life, and in his thought provoking editorials in the Review section of the biggest Sunday newspaper ([www.thetimes.co.za](http://www.thetimes.co.za)) in South Africa. Reading these articles will paint’s a picture of the RSA environment. The articles does it in a way that if you landed on earth from outer space for the first time, you will somewhat know what is cooking in this part of the world. I strongly recommend the read.





*(Dinner time!)*

GM. Bassem is a modern young man who is easy going. Either I misunderstood what a chess grandmaster is from all the writings about viciousness and crushing opponents mercilessly. This top chess player is kind hearted to a fault. Before the dinner was served he was already embroiled in a chess struggle with the Khumalo kids. The focus was for a while lost in chess. He elaborately told fascinating stories of his upbringing in a spell-bounding manner. The youngest challenged him to a chess game to which the GM chose to handicap himself as blindfolded. Now this shocked, of course with delight, the adults in the room. Something that had us all stunned was when master Bassem was demonstrating his IQ and cognitive abilities, recalling the entire game blindfolded and naming the location of the pieces at any interval, the young Khumalo (Opponent) exclaimed that he could also do the same. We all witnessed an amazing sudden feat; the Six year old

recalled the game with a few hints and recalled several piece positions at requested intervals! The GM was really impressed as well. He heaped praise to the young man and wished him well!



The dinner was delicious! Soup for starters. Main course was al carte; beef Oxtail, chicken, lamb and several others on buffet to choose. Veggies so fresh if not harvested they'd still be growing! Cooking is cooking, but eating what's cooked the African way makes food extra delicious. It is your usual menu, but man after a few bites you forget what the menu was and you taste Africa! This beats eating at a restaurant if you know what I mean.

More Pics.....



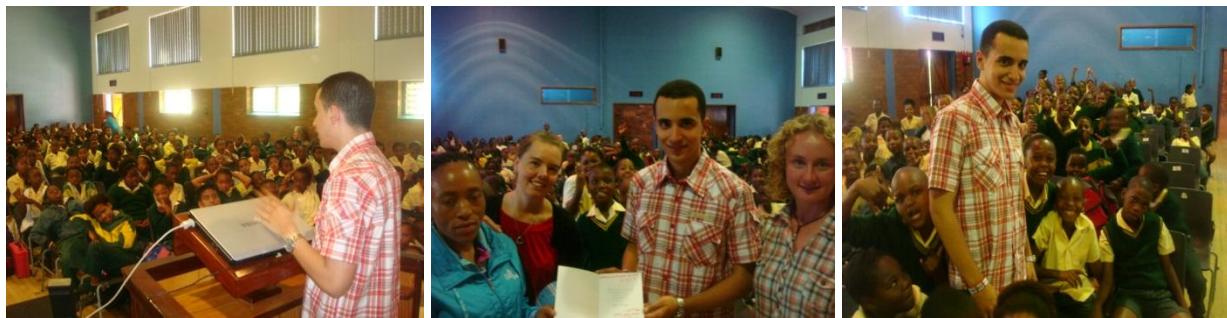
*( GM. Bassem with the Khumalo clan, the three lovely kids, Mama Khumalo and Papa Khumalo!)*



### Labour of love

Grandmaster Bassem is one of the nicest young-man with a pleasant personality. Straight from the airport he hit the road running by opting to join our Academy's presentation at a school's parent meeting. He even stood and spoke eloquently for the merits of chess in schools citing personal experience. Next was a face to face encounter with some budding young players who asked questions ranging from politics to how they can follow in his foot-steps. The GM had them mesmerized with some blind-fold exhibition. Parents of some children were in attendance as well. The GM seemed to love this type of work.

The learners of the school Jozua Naude' were treated to a motivational lecture in fluent English, a cognitive brain demonstration showing exquisite Memory and Logic. They asked question plus were handed a memorable "well wish" card written in Arabic!



*(GM. Bassem squared off with almost 1 000 learner, the entire teachers corps and several parents on this day)*

The day ended with a hands-on practical workshop between the educators the Chess Academy were GM. Bassem demonstrated cognitive acumen inherent with what made him travel regularly on chess tours, missing school attendance. Regardlessly coming back to easily catch-up and overtake all within the learning curve. The blind-fold chess demonstration startled many. One teacher believed that since it was guessing within 64 squares, winning the lottery is clearly something Grandmaster can easily achieve!

The school authorities then showered GM. Bassem with presents (Cricket T-shirt, Mandela's Book and a Vuvuzela).

More Pics.....



The above visit was repeated in several other schools during the GM stay in South Africa. He woke-up every day with enthusiasm and zeal, looking forward to each and every visit. He even started comparing RSA schools with Egypt and predicted that with my Academy program, the Egyptian chess dominance is soon going to be a thing of the past.

***GM. Bassem for Bafana-Bafana soccer national team!***

This is a visit that clearly ranked tops. The school is situated a stone throw from Mr. Mandela's home in Houghton. The children of this school are amongst the most underprivileged in the South African schooling system. Most learners travel long distances to attend what is perceived to be a "good school". This migration in the morning and in the afternoon adds to the gridlock the roads are bulking under. But it's with the children who wake in ungodly hours to arrive back home way after dark that the school is amongst the lowest performing primary age

school in the country. Learners travel from Soweto, Tembisa and Katlehong!



A new young Principal, a rejuvenated team of educators and a “chess in schools” project, seem to be the kind of combination that promised a tactical winning formula. The Grandmaster and the Africa chess champion visit sky-rocketed the hope for the school. Hope that the Mathematics average at the highest grade will improve from the low twenties percentage.

During the question and answer session Bassem revealed how his farther, who is a Medical doctor, taught him chess under no formal program. The fact that the learners have an academy working to formally institute the game is a huge advantage.





*(Pupils and their Master! – Keeping hope alive!)*

Grandmaster Bassem's visit had an almost immediate impact on the day. Asked what he does on his spare time, does he watch TV led to a motivational discussion that revealed how much he would not succeed if he spent one moment glued onto such frivolities? Learners vowed to turn-off the TV and do their home-work because they rather travel the world for real than watch it on TV go by!

At the end of the visit the school presented Grandmaster Bassem with a soccer T-shirt of Bafana-bafana as a token of appreciation. It was imprinted with the name GM. Bassem at the back. This was interesting because the two countries are slated to clash at the FNB Stadium. Bassem had earlier visited the site of this imminent collision!



Quizzed on who he will blow the Vuvuzela support, the chess grand maestro played it safe, true to his style of chess by saying his head will be for Bafana and his heart for the Pharos! He felt it was a pity that he will be back in Egypt watching the clash on TV instead of being inside the stadium!

More Pics....





## In the Shadow of NELSON MANDELA

The trip of Bassem to South Africa was divided in two parts. He worked hard in Johannesburg and relaxed in Cape Town, one week each. While in Johannesburg, we made time that he visits Mr. Mandela, especially in the light of one school giving him Mandela Book as a present. Bassem knew that there was no chance the book can be autographed because it is the giant bronze statue that we were visiting. This is situated in the posh Sandton Square aptly named Nelson Mandela Square.



*(Grandmaster Bassem meets Nelson Mandela's bust!)*

### *From lower Class to upper Class*

The afternoon visiting the Nelson Mandela square quickly turned into a work visit as nearby, my daughters go to the upmarket school known as Crawford Schools. The school is attended by A-list parent's children. There can never be a startling class contrast in the SA school system than this. It can be the building appearance to the air-conditioned environments, even the rolling design deco gardens. This school boasts an Italian restaurant on campus while the normal school can do with a Tuck shop.

The learners of this school clearly receive a better education from the best qualified teachers in the best environment in South Africa. The cost of education is not chicken feed either! Mind you the school is listed in the stock-exchange!



( Here's Bassem mimicking Magnus Carlsen as he tries modeling with the prestigious Crawford in the backdrop)



(The Head Mistress/Principal Reece took time off to welcome the Africa champion, Nice!!!)



(Some game position analysis)





(Time odds were incredibly One to Five Minutes! Be warned: GM. Bassem is 3200 Elo on Internet- Bullet!)





(It was an eye opener for the visiting Grandmaster!)

### Chess in the Park

In most major cities of the world there is an urban culture of chess in some park. In Johannesburg there is a park known as Joubert Park. Here the main activity was always chess until the Soccer world cup 2010 in South Africa left a little legacy of an out-door television locked on a soccer channel. However still, chess is played on the Giant chess set board and several break-away like table on normal sizes Staunton sets. To find a friendly game will be difficult because money (Gambling) is the reason.

This is where many chess players from many African countries hang-out. Funny enough every time I bring a stranger player these regulars do not hesitate to challenge for a bet. I guess they have gotten used to the fact that after using the



“unknown” top player to collect all their daily earning, I give it back and announce who the master really is. I did this with Watu Kobese, who strangely was unknown and no one could recognize him and he played a simultaneous blind fold to the shock of all. Then there was the young Gwaze who mesmerized. Mandizha, Simutowe, Chumfwa and Chitumbo! You will bet the park regulars have learned from the past? No! They refused to believe that GM. Bassem is here in person. Then they challenged to teach him a lesson! After a score of something like 42-0 later. All were competing on who lost the worst!



To our good fortune upon arrival at the park, one of the regulars there International Kudzanai mamombe was in attendance. His chess has taken a dip and he never sit to compete, he just come to watch!



Grandmaster Bassem sat down and took amazing time odds against all (2 to 5 Minutes).



What followed was a chess lesson that many will not forget. While many claim to win against IM. Mamombe, the African champion proved that a master is to be respected! Bassem it seemed, was able to humiliate the opponent using chess pieces. Players who sat across him proclaiming they are going to beat him, playing



to the spectators, were beaten handsomely. In fact it was becoming clear to the on-lookers as captured beautifully in this man's expression together with the fans reactions! Let's face it!



The GM enjoyed every moment!

More pictures.....







The end was very sweet. 100% Wins! Many bid Grandmaster Bassem a warm farewell and a wish that he defends his title. Then come back to the park to test his skills again!

### *African Junior; who is the best of them all?*

The Africa junior event is the springboard for aspiring and budding players of the continent to reach for the top. It was the path that Bassem charted to get to where he is, winning the event twice. While he was visiting word came that the event has been shifted away from the North to the South Africa. The Angolan delegation was at hand and needed my Academy's assistance as usual. They also needed yours truly to prepare the juniors for the event.



Realistically, our Academy approach works best when there is a training relationship with the student. In the case of the Angolans delegation only Erickson Soares Roberto has been training with our Academy and using the [www.chessok.com](http://www.chessok.com) programs. A prep tactical plan was put on an overdrive to simply win the event. Before long we found out that he prevailed and he was the newest IM from our region. We snapped exclusive pictures where the reigning African chess champion standing with the junior!



*(Africa Chess Champion meets newly Crowned Africa Junior Champion!)*



## More Pics....



*(Pictures described top to bottom clockwise: 1. Congratulations from the big brother to the small brother Champions 2. Mr. Jackie joins the pack 3. Mr. Abraao do Reis: Secretary General FAX gets in focus 4. Ladies' man! Bassem with Angola love smitten junior girls 5. Mr. Haleluja President of the Namibia Chess Province in Angola)*

## Living in the city

GM. Bassem stayed in a privately arranged luxury apartment. In raising the sponsorship in kind to bring the Grand master over, many hotels in Johannesburg offered complimentary accommodation. He wisely however opted for the apartment set-up. Personally I was worried because I imagined how he could up-keep the dwelling, given the fact that the planned schedule I had for him was grueling. I was pleasantly surprised that the young man is schooled well by his mom on domestic chores. He acquired the skills because as he put it, the family

consists of only him and his elder brother. This means they had to take turns to do the domestic chores. Here is the GM checkmating dirty dishes!



Then relaxing watching his favorite TV channel on soccer!



Here is Bassem with his apartment sponsor; we thank him because it gave the GM the freedom to stay the way he pleased!





The Grandmaster made many friends young and old; some with four legs. Here he had to baby-sit my youngest daughter (Una) and her poodle.



So, it turns out it was not such a lot of hard work anyway! It was part work and part relaxation! Well after all this, the Grandmaster jetted to Cape Town for a secret holiday!

*Cape Town like you never saw it before*

Wait a minute!!! The next pictures are of Bassem & Melisa!



I know what you are thinking! So, Bassem went to Cape Town to get married secretly? WRONG!!!



He was invited for a prom evening by a "close" friend! Close? Yes because they stand close to each other in the pictures!

*Folks! This is where I rest my pen, I have a feeling these last pictures are going break hearts!*

I take this opportunity to thank those who made Bassem's trip to RSA a great success it has become. We the people of South Africa thank the Africa Champion for this goodwill tour! Ooh, GM. Bassem I am sorry to reveal the last pictures my man, I just loved them! So what's good is a beautiful thing if it remains hidden! Ohh... one more matter before I end; Melisa, our beloved WGM, you look stunning, if he proposes I stand ready negotiate the LOBOLA! (lobola is a thank you grant by the groom to the bride usually in cattle form- nit a bribe!)