

Grandmaster Bassem Amin visits South Africa

Report by host Jackie Ngubeni

The people's Champ.



(Arriving at O.R.Tambo airport, Johannesburg for the 2nd 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 29th 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	World Rank	
	Federation	Egypt	World (all players):	241
	FIDE title	Grand Master	World (active players):	228
	Rating:	2596	National Rank EGY	
	B-Year	1988	National (all players):	2
	Sex	Male	National (active players):	2
			Continent Rank Africa	
			Rank (all players):	2
			Rank (active players):	2
			FIDE Titles (year)	
			Grand Master (GM)	2006
			International Master (IM)	2004
			FIDE Master (FM)	1999

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 *(Record here courtesy of Fide.com)*

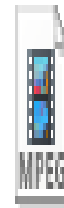
Grandmaster Bassem became titled at the tender age of 17 years. This is a phenomenal achievement at even world-wide standard (The fearsome and most dominant chess player of all time, one Garry Kasparov, achieved this feat at 18 years old!). Bassem won the Africa Junior twice. He may be the reason why 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!)