

Reflections SA Closed (2) by Dr Adv Lyndon Bouah

There is something magical about the SA Closed. When the best players in the country congregate to play you know it will be something special. Last night was the opening ceremony and of course many of the top players were there to participate in the draw. So let's look at the top match ups for round one.



Chessa President Winston Dalpat – Opening ceremony

1. The Open Section



The top of the table clash must be match between Van Den Heever and Kobese. Both are international Masters and have played against each other many times. Van Den Heever won the 2013 SA Closed Championship whereas Kobese won the SA Closed three times in the previous decade. They play for the same team, Manyanani, and recently combined to win the national club championship. Both players are ultra-aggressive and hold nothing back. So let's watch this one today.

The match between Klaasen and Mosehle will be a tightly contested affair. Klaasen who recently broke 2300 earlier lost to Mosehle at the Capablanca championship in Pretoria in April and will be keen to take revenge. Both of them know each other well having both made their SA Protea debut when they jointly contributed to win the zone 4.3 Team Championship in Mozambique in July 2008.

The two youngsters in the field, FM Barrish is playing FM Bhawoodien. On paper Barrish appears to be the favourite but Bhawoodien is a solid player who will be keen to play well at this event.

IM Johannes Mabusela is playing FM Charles De Villiers. De Villiers made his debut at SA Closed level in 1971 and will be keen to show that he can still compete at this level despite being 65. Charles has been playing well and has competed in most WP events this season. Mabusela, the new KZN shark, will try to wrestle this point because last time out he struggled to put together a win until late in the event.

Jacob Mnguni is making his debut in the event and is playing CM Denis Ovcina who is playing at this level after a long absence. Both players will be keen to get off to a good start so it may boil down to who wants it more.

Ryan Van Rensburg is playing his friend Ben Hercules. Both players still yearn to play for SA at the senior Olympiad. Van Rensburg started the last Closed with five zeroes and will be keen to start off positively this year.

2. Women Section



In the Women's section Defending champion WIM Frick plays against WCM Nina Marais. Marais is a debutant and I am sure will relish the battle against the champion.

Robyn Van Niekerk is playing Sonia Modi. Van Niekerk ended runner up in 2013 whilst Modi will be keen to play well as she too is making her debut at this level.

WFM Michelle Fisher will compete against Jacqui Grobbelaar. Fisher is on a good footing having come second at the Zone 4.3 held earlier this year. Grobbelaar is experienced so a good game is expected.

WFM Dantelle Joubert is playing Marni Oberholzer who is also making her debut in this event. Both players are playing in the A section for the first time. Both will want to start off well!

Megan van Niekerk is playing WIM Jesse February. February has been the outstanding player this year having attained her first WGM norm although two years ago she lost to Megan Van Niekerk who obtained her senior Protea colours in 2016. So a hard game here too.

The game that will be one for the watching will be WIM Laubscher versus WIM Charlize Van Zyl. Both players will want to wrestle the point away from their opponent. Laubscher is of course more experienced but Van Zyl has competed at this level before. So it will be quite a contest.

3. Senior Section



Mark Lewis plays his old team mate Deon Pick. Both players are very experienced and the question is who will be more wily on the day?

Gordon Lawrence plays against Alfred Pesa. Lawrence last played in a SA Closed in 1991. Lawrence will relish the chance to play Pesa who has been very active. Lawrence won the 1974 WP Open!

Andrew Southey versus Jannie Saffier will be an action packed affair. Who will complicate the game first? Will there be a sacrifice for compensation? Will Saffier who is well known for his actions during a game be able to resist the coffee Southey offers all his opponents before mating them with kindness?

Malcolm Fredericks is playing Cecil Ohlson. The latter has been very active on the club scene whereas Fredericks is very experienced having won the SA Open in 1990.

CM Anton Goosen is playing Roland Willenberg. Both campaigners will relish this encounter. Both players are fairly active so I shall keep an eye on developments here.

Edwin November is playing FM Bhawoodien in December. Bhawoodien will use all his strengths to try to achieve the goal of winning this section. November, a published poet, may use his own book of tricks to show Bhawoodien that chess in December can be dangerous when playing November.

4. B section



Sandile Mfundisi is playing favourite Alex Kromhout from Nelson Mandela Bay. Kromhout plays interesting chess and it will be a good match up.

Kenny Willenberg competes against Dumisa Nkosi. Both players are fairly seasoned campaigners and will be out to start with a flourish.

Betheul Gandhi plays against Micheal James. Gandhi is trying to improve last time when he debuted in 2013 whilst James will again try to win the section!

Warrick Erlank is playing Cavan Jacobs. I don't know Jacobs so will watch developments here.

Ashley Vermaak is playing Heinrich Basson. The two Eastern Cape players will certainly try to mix it up!

George Lawerlot from Eden plays Jacque Basson from the West Coast, last time they drew. Both players are fairly experienced with both having won medals recently!

Makhosonke Kuhlase plays Cherwin Kleinsmidt. I dont the former but the latter has been fairly active.

5. Under 23 Section



Seth Riley Adams against Luan De Jäger will be a good battle for the two youngsters. Mitchell's Plain versus Steinitz and of course both players have had tremendous years. A humdinger it will be!

Alexander van Der Merwe will be playing Heinco Du Plessis. van Der Merwe is amongst the lowest seeds but will give his all.

Craig Bornheim is playing Keith Khumalo (aka Keithonsky) so a tight affair and I am sure going to be following this encounter!

Stefanus Lubbe plays Stefan Du Toit. The former Stellenbosch student is very experienced so Lubbe will pull out all stops.

Jordan Verster versus Hishaam Essop is a matter of new talent versus existing talent. Essop played well at the National Club championship but didn't convert the wins whereas Jordan has been competing internationally. Close call.

Gluckman versus Kolver. Let's see as there are rumours that Kolver may not play.

Visit the venue at Curro, Durbanville. It's round one of a great event!

Regards

Dr Lyndon Bouah