

Aspiring chess masters go head to head in Soweto

Ikaneng Primary School in Diepkloof in Soweto hosted 120 learners from 10 local primary schools in a one-day Tsogo Sun Moves for Life Chess Tournament last week. The Tsogo Sun Moves for Life programme operating in Soweto and Mayfair is sponsored by Gold Reef City and has a total of 4 289 participating children.

Nationally, Tsogo Sun Moves for Life operates in 57 schools around the country, with 23 766 participating learners, 569 educators, and 22 tutors from the local communities. The programmes are sponsored by eight of Tsogo Sun's casinos, which also sponsor the annual chess tournaments for the schools in their catchments areas.

The participating schools in the Gold Reef City tournament were Thembu Primary, AB Xuma Primary, Mdelwa Hlongwane Primary, Ipolokeng Primary, Dumezweni Primary, TC Esterhuysen Primary, Bophelo Impilo Primary, Bree Primary, Paul Mosaka Primary, and Ikaneng. It was a Swiss tournament, which meant the player with the most points won his or her category, with a 60-minute time control per game.

The children played as individuals – and the winner in the Girls Section was Lerato Skhosana (Dumezweni Primary), with Kgetsi Tshiamo (Ikaneng Primary) coming second and Ntombaba Mbele (Dumezweni Primary) coming third. In the Boys Section, Kgothatso Moloi (Ikaneng Primary) won top place, with Thabo Skhosana (Dumezweni Primary) coming second and Kamogelo Maboela (Ikaneng Primary) coming third. The U/8 winner was Nosipho Chauke (Ikaneng Primary) and the U/10 winner was Sandile Ngcobo Chauke (Mdelwa Hlongwane).

"It was an excellent opportunity for the children to have a fun day out, and to reap the fruits of their hard work," says Shanda Paine, Tsogo Sun Group CSI Manager. "They went home having gained a lot of experience, learned new chess rules, practiced good sportsmanship, improved their powers of concentration, and learned how to be polite to their opponents, patience and good behaviour, among other skills. It was a great opportunity for them to interact with other children from neighbouring schools and to make new friends."

Paine says these Tsogo Sun Moves for Life chess tournaments for participating schools also create the platform for the learners to play in a rated tournament, which increases the number of tournaments that they have played throughout the year – and which might allow some of them to represent their region, while improving their competitive chess skills.

The aim of the Tsogo Sun Moves for Life programme is to use chess as a tool for education which helps improve children's mathematics, science and problem-solving skills. "The idea is to improve the cognitive and analytical abilities of youngsters by exposing them to the mental discipline provided by the game of chess," says Paine. "The programme intentionally links chess principles to life skills, mathematics, science and language – and it's working towards impacting the improvement of the educational performance of as many children as possible, by unlocking their full mental and social capabilities."

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