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CHESS

Zambian With Little Training Stands Poised to Make History

By DYLAN LOEB McCLAIN

Amon Simutowe, 25, of Zambia, is on the verge of becoming the first black grandmaster from the sub-Saharan region, and he could soon contend for the world championship.

Last week, Simutowe won the Euwe Stimulans tournament in the Netherlands, the final result needed for the grandmaster title. He must still raise his world ranking, but in a telephone interview from Namibia, where he is playing in the African Championship, he expressed confidence that he would soon have the title.

And he might qualify for the World Cup, whose winner will play a match for the right to vie for the world championship.

Simutowe learned to play chess when he was 10. He had no chess books or trainer, but when his brother, Solomon, went to England for college, he started sending Simutowe chess magazines. He learned quickly, winning Zambia's national championship at 14 and becoming an international master by 16.

In December, he graduated from the **University of Texas at Dallas**, one of the few universities that offer chess scholarships.

Simutowe says he wants to earn a graduate degree in business, but he also wants to promote chess, which is wildly popular in Zambia. "Sometimes I am the headlines for sport in my country," he said. "Any contribution I can make, I am happy."

Simutowe's triumph in the Euwe Stimulans was a surprise. The field included three legends: Nona Gaprindashvili of Georgia, a former women's world champion; Oscar Panno of Argentina, the first great player from South America; and Fridrik Olafsson of Iceland, a former candidate for the world championship.

Simutowe tends to grind his opponents down, particularly in the endgame. In Round 2, that is what he did to Gaprindashvili.

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The opening was a Nimzo-Indian Defense and followed a known path until White played 8 Ba3.

After the series of exchanges on moves 17 to 20, the interlocked pawn chain in the center meant that Black's knights were no worse than White's bishops.

White should not have played 25 Bc5, giving up her better bishop and giving Black a natural outpost for his knight on d6.

Trading rooks with 44 Rf8 Kf8 accentuated White's problems, leaving her with an ineffective bishop against a useful knight.

In the end, Gaprindashvili resigned as she faced 58 ... a2, 59 ... Nc3, 60 ... Kc5, 61 Kd4, when Black would force through a pawn to queen.

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