

Margaret Prince, an icon of Barbados Chess, passes on

The local Chess community has over the past week mourned the passing of an icon of Barbados Chess, five times Barbados Ladies Chess Champion Margaret Diana Prince.

Prince, born March 15th 1951, passed away on Friday August 15th 2008 at the young age of 57.

In an interview with Lisa Farnum back in August 1991, Prince related how, not being born into a family of chess, she had picked up the game in 1977 by watching some friends playing. Intrigued by what was happening, she took a fancy to the game and thus started playing at a relatively late age, by today's standards, in her early twenties.

This simple beginning would launch a playing career that would take Prince to five Barbados Women's Titles, a Caribbean Team Championship Title and two World Chess Olympiads.

A vocal advocate for Women's Chess, Prince single handedly by many times being the only woman to compete in tournaments against men, push for the establishment of a Women's Championships.

Thus in 1981, with the establishment of the Barbados Chess Federation, of which she was a founding member, she created history by winning 555 sponsored 1ST Barbados Ladies Chess Championship and becoming the first Barbados Women's Chess Champion.

Prince would go on to win the title four other times, 1982, 1983, 1992 and 1997, and when not winning it be the player to beat to become champion.

One of her greatest achievements came in 1988 when Barbados fielded its first Women's Chess Team to the 28th World Chess Olympiad in Thessaloniki, Greece. For Prince, this signaled the coming of age of Barbadian Women's Chess which she hard worked so hard for over the preceding 10 years.

With little or no international experience to their credit, no coach and no reserve player, the 1988 Barbados Women's Olympiad Team of Amanda Tudor, Judy Harewood and Margaret Prince, each playing all fourteen matches in the Olympiad, showed what they were made of by equaling the Men's Team in terms of matches won and placing 51st 16 ½ points.



Margaret Prince playing Board 2 in the Round 9 Barbados vs Seychelles at the 28th World Chess Olympiad, Thessaloniki, Greece

In 1991, Prince then teamed up with Dr. Philip Corbin, Terry Farley and then FIDE Master Kevin Denny to successfully defend the English Speaking Caribbean Chess Team title in Kingston, Jamaica.

Now a veteran of local chess, Prince responded to a call at short notice from the Barbados Chess Federation to join the Barbados Women's Olympiad Team as a reserve for the 35th World Chess Olympiad in Bled Slovenia in 2002.

Again, representing Barbados on the World stage was an honour she cherished dearly, especially given the fact that this would only

be the second occasion Barbados fielded a Women's Team at the Olympiad.



Barbados Women's Chess Team at 35th World Chess Olympiad, Bled, Slovenia, front row Nathalie Greenidge, Rashida Corbin, Rashaana Blenman, Margaret Prince, back row Coach International Master Richard Pert and Manager Allan Herbert

And what a performance the Barbados Team of Nathalie Greenidge, Rashida Corbin, Rashaana Blenman and Margaret Prince would return. Placing 68th overall from 92 countries, the Barbados Women scored 19 points bettering the 1988 performance by 2 ½ points and matching the Men's Team performance in all departments with 5 wins, 3 draws and 6 losses. As the icing on top the cake, they also out placed Jamaica, the only other English Speaking Caribbean Team in the Olympiad, who scored 18 points to end 78th in the standings.

Prince was an avid sports enthusiast, playing Draughts and Dominoes competitively. She created history in 1986 when she became the "Go As You Please" Barbados Women's Chess Champion and the only person, male or female, to be Barbados Champion in both sports, a feat that not even the greats like Ronald "Suki" King and Kevin Denny can claim.

A regular on the Dominoes circuit she represented the BUT Cavaliers with long time partner Ian Forde where together they took the club's Captains Domino Plaque and Top Player Award three consecutive years between 2002-2004.

Off the board, Prince made an invaluable contribution to the development of Chess in

Barbados. Serving many times on the Executive Management Committee of the Barbados Chess Federation, which she helped found, she was a former Vice-President, Manager of the Barbados Under-12 Junior Squad, Tournament Director, Chess Coach, Team Captain, Assistant Junior Team Manager and Chaperone to many of the island top junior female players at overseas competitions.

Prince was a founding member of the Barbados Ladies Chess Association, serving as its Treasurer, and the Barbados Organization for Women in Sport.

There was hardly a local chess competition in the last 30 years which Margaret Diana Prince did not play a role, whether as a competitor, tournament director, coach or at the concession bar serving up hot dogs and drinks.

A player, coach, administrator and friend, Barbados Chess has lost one of its greatest Champions.

The funeral service for Margaret Prince will be held on Monday August 25th, 2008, 2:30 p.m. at the Christian Union Church in Hindsbury Road where for the first time in the history of the sport the current and all previous Barbados Women Chess Champions will be in attendance to pay tribute to this fine daughter of Barbados.