

Chess was teacher's passion

Candidate master known for strategic moves

Mosaddeque Ali
Born October 4, 1971;
Died December 6, 2011

It was Raymond Chandler who said that chess was as elaborate a waste of human intelligence as an advertising agency. But to the greatest American exponent of the game, Bobby Fischer, chess was the most sophisticated representation of war and, much like art, an arena where the self found beauty and expression.

Mosaddeque Ali found his greatest artistic expression in the game of chess right to the end and died in his sleep after taking a quick nap to prepare his energies for another night of chess in a suburban Canberra competition.

As with his Bangladeshi nickname, Biddut, which translates as lightning, his life ended dramatically and suddenly. He was born in a ramshackle Bangladeshi hospital in Dhaka in 1971, during the civil war that split Pakistan and created Bangladesh.

His parents were both mathematics graduates and his father headed the 1970s version of the computer department for what was then the world's biggest jute mill. The family arrived in Australia in 1979 and settled in the eastern suburbs of Sydney, before moving to Canberra several years later.



GENEROUS EXPERT: Mosaddeque Ali mentored students in tournaments.

Mosaddeque's life threatened to take a different trajectory after he suffered his first epileptic fit in his early 20s and was placed on high doses of medication.

Thereafter, for many years, he often appeared distant and sometimes drowsy, for several years, often suffering the side effects of the strong medication.

Mosaddeque was known for being softly spoken to the extent that he appeared somnolent at times. He was easily underestimated. Behind his quiet, unimposing but strong, physical presence was a fierce intellect that was consumed

by the pursuit of excellence in chess and mathematics.

After completing an economics degree at the Australian National University he studied to become a teacher. Once he was stabilised medically, he thrived amid opportunities aplenty. However, in spite of receiving attractive job offers as a teacher in Melbourne, he eschewed the individualism of his age and accepted a plea from his father to stay in the Canberra family home to better tend to his ageing parents.

As the first-born son, this was a culturally accepted obligation to which he submitted willingly. He was accompanied by his wife Yasmin, with whom he had three children.

He was highly regarded on the national chess circuit and reached the level of a candidate master, collecting a bookcase full of trophies along the way. He was president of the ACT chess body for several years and a passionate, generous teacher of the game to younger people.

He was known as an innovative and sometimes offbeat player and famous for playing the Bird opening and the French defence. One of his techniques, known as lines, was profiled in a prestigious international chess publication after he defeated a top-ranked international player. He could be seen teaching these

techniques to his chess brethren during all hours of the night in Gus's cafe in the city centre of Canberra.

Within high schools he often set up and led chess clubs and mentored students to significant awards in tournaments.

As a school teacher, he was known for establishing an easy rapport with students and interested in the minutiae of what made quality teaching in mathematics. He was greatly valued in the several schools at which he worked. In his final role at Narrabundah College, the school added a role of information technology teaching in order that his continued employment could be approved by administration, such was their eagerness to maintain his services.

He was also known among his teaching colleagues for drinking up to 10 cups of coffee a day, his signature cup being a quadruple shot cappuccino.

In spite of his sometimes unhealthy obsession with chess, he was a devoted family man and known to rush home from work to be with his wife and children, showering them with affection and gifts. He was also a devout Muslim who was forthright about his beliefs and steadfast in his faith.

He is survived by his wife and three children, Aaryan, Aisha and Aneisa.

Dr Tanveer Ahmed