

SECUNDA – POOL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Have you ever attended an 8-ball Pool championship competition?

With 54 pool tables in one big room? The word 'electrifying' does not describe it enough!

One of Hein's (my hubby) team members, Mourits Muller, was due to play in the SA 8-ball Championships at Graceland Hotel, Casino & Country Club, Secunda, Mpumalanga. About 1 ½ hours' drive from Gauteng. Graceland sponsored the whole event from 12 – 18 October 2008.



We arranged to stay with my cousin, Anton and his wife, Erika, and 3 lovely daughters, to watch Mourits play singles from Thursday to Saturday: 16 – 18 October 2008.

We had in mind to leave Randburg the Thursday morning. But what good is a mind if you can't change it???

Wednesday afternoon, 15 October, just after 3pm, Hein asked: 'Why don't we sleep over tonight?' We looked for a dam close to Secunda and found one called 'Grootdraaidam', (a real tongue-twister) outside Standerton.

Went to my trusted friend, Google, and searched for 'Grootdraaidam Standerton Accommodation'. A site popped up advertising stone chalets right on the dam's edge. When I phoned to enquire about availability and rates, the lady informed me that the small chalet was only finished the previous day, but was available at R500/night for the chalet.

We packed in a flash. I have 4 pack lists now: 1 for self-catering in a chalet for a period of time, 1 for camping, 1 for picnics and the latest: self-catering for 1 night.

We left Randburg at 5pm, struggled through the traffic and arrived in Standerton around 7.30pm. Driving through the town, another 30 kms, part gravel road and we arrived. It was already dark, so we couldn't see the dam.

Johan, the owner, showed us our chalet. It is cosy and very close to the dam. Built with lovely stone walls, 2 en-suite bedrooms, open-plan lounge/kitchen and smallish patio with no roof. We heard the waves in the dark.



After a quick unpacking, Hein lit the fire and we had barbecued chicken thighs, coleslaw and egg-and-mayo salad. (Compliments of the Spar.)

Both bedrooms and the living area have sliding doors and look out onto the dam.

We awoke with the sound of a fish eagle (they nest on the island), made coffee and lit the fire just after 6. For boerewors (sausage) rolls, of course. Also, we had to be in Secunda at 9 to watch Mourits play.

Johan arrived and told us his vision for the Grootdraaidam.

*There are also 2 other chalets, bigger spaces with 2 bedrooms. This dam is part of the Vaal River and his development is the first. The farm is registered as a company. Interested parties buy a stand and become a shareholder in the company. For more information, contact Johan at (**Johan – 083 309 7373** johan@standerton.co.za). If you're interested in a chalet on a game farm between Vrede and Memel (Free State) – or a flat on the beachfront of the South Coast, don't hesitate to contact Johan for further information.*

There are plentiful fish in the dam and with only 1 ½ hours' drive from Johannesburg, an ideal weekend home.



We arrived in Secunda just before 9, wished Mourits (left) good luck and sat down to watch his game.

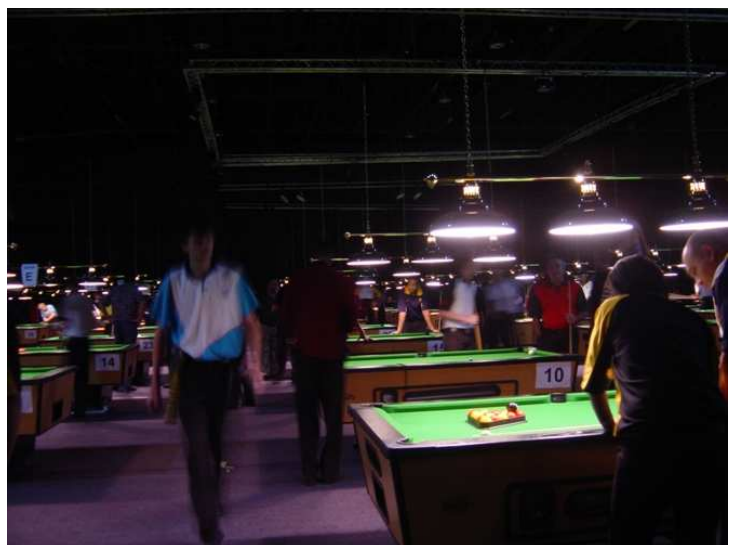
54 Pool tables in 1 big room – awesome! The players are soooo good!

Mourits won his 1st game. We celebrated with a hearty breakfast and coffee. His next game was around noon. He won again.

We went shopping and then went to Anton & Erica’s home to relax for a few minutes, refreshed with a bath and went back to the casino for the Mourits’s last game of the day – at 5pm.

We were riveted – nearly chew our nails and had a long celebratory drink when he won.

Mourits is now in the top 32 of this particular competition.





For dinner we went to Secunda's waterfront. We opted for the Ocean Basket and had wonderful sushi as a starter. Then I had a seafood platter for 1 (divine) and Hein had fish & chips.

Right next to the restaurant is a volleyball 'sand' court. We watched the kids play in the sand and thought about all that sand in the parents' car.

We went back to Anton & Erika's home, had a cup of tea and went to bed. Pool-watching is exhausting!!!

Friday, 9am. Mourits knows his first opponent and said he's good.

There are a lot less people – it's serious stuff now.

The players are varied – Afrikaans, English, Black, Indian, Coloured, Women, Old and Young - as young as 14-years! Her dad is one of the best and she's following in his footsteps.

We found a spot close to Mourits's table and the game started. But alas – this guy is seriously good. Best out of 9 games. A few times, the opponent opened – and closed. Mourits had his play cut out for him.

After a nerve-racking few games, the opponent won.

To be 20-something and in the top 32 of this particular competition, is definitely something to be proud of.

We had an awesome time, learned a few things about pool and Secunda.

That evening we had a lovely braai with Anton, Erika & daughters. Before 8am Saturday morning, we left for home. We had another braai at noon ...

Such is life for Hein and me...