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Honouring Yuri Averbakh



Eugenia Taimanova

Yuri Averbakh with Imperial and Royal Order of St. Stanislav II Class, 2019

On 8 February 1922, our senior member and oldest living Grandmaster, Yuri Averbakh was born in Kaluga near Moscow. He steadily rose in the ranks of Soviet Chess, became a GM in 1952 and participated in the legendary Zurich 1953 candidates tournament (won by Smyslov). In 1954, he won the Soviet championship and almost qualified for the next candidates tournament in the Interzonal of Portoroz. In 1962, he quit competitive chess and concentrated on chess journalism and politics. His role at the helm of the Soviet Chess organisation is aptly summarized in his unique [Centre-Stage and Behind the Scenes](#) (New in Chess, 2011).

Given his high reputation and recognized integrity, Yuri was also chosen as chief arbiter for three world championship matches, namely Kasparov-Karpov (1984), Kasparov-Short (1993) and Kasparov-Kramnik (2000).

While these milestones in his career are already impressive on their own, they do not tell the complete biography, though. Asked in an interview for Chess.com ([Yuri Averbakh, The Oldest Living Grandmaster](#),

[Turns 100](#)) about his biggest achievement, Averbakh, confessed that neither his performances in competitive chess nor in chess bureaucracy or as arbiter could qualify. Rather, he pointed to his acclaimed book on chess history! Indeed, the monograph [A History of Chess – From Chaturanga to the Present Day](#) finished in 2012 (at the age of 90!) established itself quickly as a “must-have” for chess historians. Averbakh went deep into the origins of “Chaturanga”, took account of archeological findings around the globe and showed an intimate knowledge about the main literary milestones on the game. As he observed himself: “I have been gathering material for this book all my life”.

The Chess History and Literature Society wishes to honor Yuri Averbakh for his life-long commitment to the game and his outstanding contribution as chess historian! May he enjoy many more years to come.

Prof. Frank Hoffmeister,
President ad interim as of February 2022

More photos:

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Siegfried Schönle
Yuri Averbakh giving a lecture in Hamburg, 1999

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Impression of the exhibition in the Central Chess Club Moscow in honor of Yuri Averbakh

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Eugenia Taimanova
 Decoration from the Imperial family

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Averbakh is holder of 4 high awards of the Romanov family

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The Clergyman (right) is the confessor of the family, and Averbakh's former pupil in chess

See also:

- Central Chess Club Moscow: [Exhibition Dedicated to Yuri Averbakh's Centenary Anniversary](#)
- [Homage to Yuri Averbakh](#)