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Obituary of Jørn Erik Nielsen



Michael Negele
Jørn Erik Nielsen, 2013

Jørn Erik Nielsen

*** 12-05-1948 † 03-08-2018**

Our friend Jørn Erik is dead after a long cancer illness. He was not a very strong player himself, but he left his mark on Danish chess through his untiring work in teaching and history research.

Jørn Erik was educated as a teacher and worked for many years at the Brundlund school in his home town of Aabenraa in southern Jutland. Of course it was important to him that the pupils also became acquainted with chess, and thanks to his engagement. Brundlund won the Danish schools' team tournament in 1994 and went to Iceland to represent Denmark in the Nordic championship. This peak performance was documented by Jørn Erik in a booklet containing games, pictures, Icelandic history and geography – undoubtedly the trip was a memory for life for all participants! The teaching material Jørn Erik created for his pupils is still in use in school clubs all over Denmark.



Michael Negele

Jørn Erik Nielsen and Per Skoldager during the Nimzowitsch book presentation in Brunswick in June 2013

His thoroughness was legendary. When he became interested in a subject or a player, countless hours would be spent in libraries, checking newspaper columns and magazines for information, and all would be kept and organized with great care. Together with Per Skjoldager, Jørn Erik authored Aron Nimzowitsch: On the Road to Chess Mastery, 1886-1924 (2012), the first proper biography of the great Latvian/Danish grandmaster, a meticulously researched work born out of indignation with the shallow and anecdotal treatment the master had been subjected to by previous writers.

Jørn Erik's greatest interest however was Danish grandmaster Bent Larsen. He collected everything – literally – that had been written by or about Larsen, in newspapers and magazines in all languages, and organized this ever-growing material chronologically in folders that took up the greater part of his study. He was always very happy if a visitor could supply an unknown simultaneous game or an anecdote he had not heard before. Modest and soft-spoken, curious and open-minded, Jørn Erik cultivated many other interests apart from chess. When, after hours in the chess haven, he sensed that his visitor was satiated, we would retire to the music room and listen to a Bruckner symphony, generally leading to a discussion of which conductor best expounded the composer's intentions. Or maybe a friendly, mischievous exchange of stanzas from the Hávamál, the poem of Viking wisdom.

Cattle die, kinsmen die,
In the end one dies oneself
One thing I know that never dies:
The memory of dead man's deed

Goodbye friend. We shall remember you with joy.

Claes Lofgren