

Dear chess colleagues around,

I just want to inform you that in this week I have published the book "Sjakkmesteren Svein Johannessen", in Norwegian language and written by myself.

This is a book on the Norwegian chess master Svein Johannessen (17.10.1937 - 27.11.2007) who was the strongest chess player of his country before Simen Agdestein and Magnus Carlsen.

Johannessen was the first Norwegian player who faced most of the top players of his time, including exciting games with the world champions Smyslov, Tal, Petrosjan, Spassky and Fischer. In his first tournament abroad, the World Junior championship of 1955, he was awarded a brilliancy prize for his game against Schweber of Argentine. Old Tartakower called this possibly the most beautiful game of recent years. In the Moscow olympiad of 1956 Johannessen's game against IM Muhring (NL) was given high praise from Petrosian and Flohr, who annotated it in Sovjetskij Sport and the tournament book respectively.

The book also contains the game Johannessen - Tal from the friendly match played in Oslo of April 1956 between the Soviets Kotov, Tal and Korchnoi and six Norwegian players to prepare for the Moscow olympiad. This game is given in none of the databases I know, and not in the collections of Tal's games. The game was a draw after 67 moves, when Johannessen missed the win a couple of times.

In 1959 Johannessen was the first Norwegian to become the Nordic champion, when he won the championship held in Örebro, ahead of Ståhlberg. Neither this tournament nor the Stockholm new year tournament 1959-60 (1-2 Kotov and Martin Johansson 7, Keres 6 1/2, Johannessen 6, Ståhlberg 4 1/2 etc) are covered by the well-known databases.

Later Johannessen played first board for Norway in the six consecutive chess olympiads 1960 - 70. He was in IM in 1961 after the zonal tournament of Marianske Lazne (1 Olafsson, 2 Filip, 3 Uhlmann, 4 Johannessen), and both on this occasion and in Beverwijk 1965 he missed some chances to become a Grandmaster.

He never really became the world star as was expected from his early play and results. His ambitions were probably not high enough, and during the 50s and 60s chess opportunities in Norway were very modest. Svein Johannessen was important for the development of a higher chess level in Norway during the next decades, and he was admired for his always exemplary sportsmanship at the chess board.

The book is bound, with 264 pages, and it is probably the most complete Nordic chess biography published. It contains 162 all annotated games of which 70 are not given in the main databases, and 8-10 of them are published for the first time. Also some cross tables and lists of

results are fresh new.

The front page picture is from the Stockholm tournament 1959-60: Johannessen playing the King's gambit 3 Nc3 against Bengt Hörberg, with Kotov and Keres as spectators. The variation was probably played as a tribute to his great hero Keres, who played this variation himself in a few early correspondence games. The game and the story... in the book.

Sjakkmesteren Svein Johannessen  
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In the same format and series of chess historic books I earlier published "Sjakkens Holmenkollen, Gausdalsjakk 1970-1996" (1997) and "Nordisk sjakk i 100 år" (1999).

Best regards  
Øystein Brekke

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