

That was Guillermito!



Guillermito left a wave of sympathy that made him the most charismatic chess player in Cuba.
most charismatic chess player in Cuba. Photo: Vanguardia

By Osvaldo Rojas Garay

It is difficult for me to overlook an anniversary related to Guillermito Garcia Gonzalez (1953-1990), the first Grandmaster of the central province of Villa Clara and one of the five most outstanding trebejistas of all time in Cuba.

The quintet is headed by José Raúl Capablanca y Graupera, third world chess champion recognized by FIDE, International Chess Federation, Leinier Domínguez Pérez, Lázaro Bruzón Batista and Jesús Nogueira Santiago.

Rather than talking about his brilliant career, I would like to dwell on the human side of the outstanding exponent of the so-called mind-sport on the 32nd anniversary of the fatal accident that took his life on October 26, 1990.

Guille left behind a wave of sympathy that turned him into the most charismatic chess player in the largest Antillean Island. Proof of that is that in 1985 he was the most popular chess player in Cuba in a survey conducted by the now non-existent Opina magazine.

I remember that at his funeral, Jesús Nogueira, his great adversary in the 80's, told this editor:
"Guillermito is one of those people who leave many friends behind when they go away from life. For his

humility, for his charisma, for the gift he had of always having a smile for everyone".

In the 1984 Olympiad held in Thessaloniki, he was designated to defend the first board of the Cuban team, but he resigned from the main chair, giving that position to Nogueira.

Then, in 1985, he helped the native of the city of Remedios in the preparation for the Interzonal in Taxco, Mexico, where his compatriot reached the ticket for the Candidates Tournament for the world crown.

During his fleeting visit, last May, to Santa Clara, a city 268 kilometers east of Havana, I had the opportunity to interview Leontxo Garcia, one of the most prestigious people in the world of chess journalism.

When I asked him if he had met Guillermito, he confessed: "I met him on several occasions, especially between 1982 and 1988. I was one of those who were in the New York Open, in which he made a great performance, finishing in second place, and he was deprived of the 10,000 dollars that corresponded to him".

Then he added: "Guillermito was a very good, charismatic person. He was a symbiosis of talent with the Cuban chess school, he was a genius. His death moved me very much".

An anecdote that I have told several times, and it is impossible to exclude when talking about the human side of Guille, is his gesture with IM, International Master, Luis Sieiro, in the 1982 Cauto International Tournament, which took place in the municipality of Palma Soriano, in the eastern province of Santiago de Cuba.

The best chess player of the city of Placetás (Villa Clara) told me that the game with the first Grandmaster from Villa Clara in the mentioned tournament has a great sentimental value for him.

The day before the last round, while we were having lunch, Guillermito asked me: "What do you need to achieve the International Master standard? At that moment we were tied for first place Nogueira and I, with Guille half a point behind in third.

"My answer was that I was half a point short. He immediately said to me: 'Well, you already made the norm because we are going to make a draw!' I replied: 'If you draw with me you lose the chance of winning the tournament'. He quickly retorted, 'Your norm is more important to me than winning first place'. That was Guillermito!".

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