

■ O'Kelly De Galway Albéric (17.05.1911 - 03.10.1980)



First native Belgian Grandmaster (1956), International Arbiter, author and journalist. O'Kelly started chess at twelve but only won his first major tournament at 26 and his first Belgian Championship at 27. He repeated the national title in 1938, 1942, 1943, 1944, 1946, 1947, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1956, 1957, and 1959. He improved his play, thanks to regular visits to the world class player Akiba Rubinstein (from Poland, later living in Belgium), who taught him the magic of chess.

A big success came when O'Kelly de Galway won the title of **ICCF (3rd) Correspondence Chess World Champion in 1962**.

First or equal first at Brussels Quadrangular 1937, **Beverwijk (Hoogovens) 1946** (ahead of Stolz), won the first European Zonal, played at **Hilversum 1947** (ahead of joint Pachman and Trifunovic; but did not play in the ITZ), **Teplice-Sanov 1947** (with Pirc), Rio de Janeiro 1948, **São Paulo 1948** (ahead of Eliskases, Rossetto, Engels, 14 players), Saarbrücken 1950, Berga 1951, **Dortmund 1951** (Prequel, 2nd-3rd Fuderer, Milic, on 7th place Bogoljubov), multiple winner at the Open Festival of **Bognor Regis**, in West Sussex on the south coast of England: **1954** (with Barden), **1956, 1960** (with Darga), **1961 and 1965**, Dublin 1954 & 1956, Cork 1955, **Ostende Invitation (6th) 1956** (ahead of Donner, Golombek, Lehmann, Bernstein, etc.), Ghent 1956, **Tarragona 1957** (ahead of Rossolimo), multiple (co-)winner at Paris (Caissa): 1959, 1962, 1963 (2x shared), 1965, **Zürich (Nimzowitsch Memorial) 1960** (ahead of surprising Swiss Dieter Keller, Fuderer, Gereben, Dückstein, Van den Berg, Paoli, Kieninger, etc.), Eastbourne 1960, **Terrassa 1960, Utrecht (PAM tournament) 1961** (ahead of Robatsch, Bisguier, Matanovic, Langeweg, Donner, etc.), thrice winner at the Costa del Sol series, played in Torremolinos or Malaga: **Costa del Sol (III.) 1963, Costa del Sol (VI.) 1966** (shared) & **Costa del Sol (VII.) 1967**, the inaugural edition of the classic **Palma de Mallorca in 1965** (shared with Pomar Salamanca and Darga), twice winner at **Olot, Spain 1967 & 1969** (ahead of joint runners-up Marovic, Ivkov, followed by Pomar Salamanca). In addition, O'Kelly finished three times in a row as clear *second at Beverwijk from 1951 to 1953*.

O'Kelly played eight Olympiads from 1950 till 1968 and was **13 times the Belgian Champion!**

Chief Arbiter in the two World Chess Championship matches between Petrosian and Spassky in 1966 and 1969 as well as in 1974, for the Candidates finals Karpov versus Korchnoi.

A talented speaker and polyglot: **Alberic O'Kelly de Galway spoke perfectly eight languages!** In 1958, the Belgian government awarded him the decoration of the Golden Palm of the Order of the Crown for his achievement in chess. O'Kelly died of leukemia at age of 70.

O'Kelly de Galway, Albéric vs. Euwe, Max, Hilversum NED (round 6), 1947, 1-0:
Replay in Chessgames: <http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1042645>

O'Kelly de Galway, Albéric vs. Pilnik, Herman, Mar del Plata Mar del Plata (round 9), 1948
1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c4 dxc4 4.e3 e6 5.Bxc4 a6 6.O-O b5 7.Bd3 c5 8.a4 b4 9.Nbd2 Bb7 10.Qe2 Be7 11.dxc5 O-O 12.e4 Nfd7 13.Nb3 Nc6 14.Be3 Na5 15.Nfd2 Ne5 16.Nxa5 Qxa5 17.Rfc1 Nxd3 18.Qxd3 Qc7 19.Nc4 Rfd8 20.Qc2 b3 21.Qb1 Rab8 22.Rc3 Bf6 23.e5 Be7 24.Nd6 Bd5 25. Bh6 gxh6 26.Rg3+ Bg5 27.h4 f6 28.hxg5 fxg5 29.Qc1 Rd7 30.Qe3 Rf8 31.Rc1 Rg7 32.c6 Rb8 33.Rc5 Rf8 34.a5 Kh8 35.Qe2 Qa7 36.Rgc3 Qc7 37.Qxa6 g4 38.Qb6 g3 39.Rxg3 Rxg3 40.fxg3 Qg7 41.Rxd5 **1-0**. Replay in Chessgames: <http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1583725>

He wrote several bestsellers like *34 Mal Schachlogik* (1965), *Petrosian World Champion* (1965), *The Sicilian Flank Game* (1969), or *Access Your Chess Fast* (1976).

The O'Kelly Variation in the Sicilian defence: 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 a6 is named after him.

According to SONAS, best historical ELO rating 2644 in January 1957, historical ranking peak 27 from December 1953 to March 1954, O'Kelly de Galway was a regular top fifty player of the world from the late 1940s on and during the 1950s, as well as a regular top hundred player in the 1960s.

Summary: Albéric O'Kelly de Galway (born in Brussels 1911, died of leukemia in Brussels in 1980) was a Belgium **Grandmaster of over-the-board (1956) and Grandmaster of correspondence chess (1962)**, a rare distinction!

O'Kelly won the national **Belgium championship 13 times** (1937, 1938, 1942, 1943, 1944, 1946, 1947, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1956, 1957, 1959).

Winner of the 3rd World Correspondence Championship 1959 - 1962. In world elite contests, O'Kelly he took first in the traditional series at **Beverwijk Hoogovens 1946, Dortmund 1951** (Prequel), **Ostende 1956** (last closed event), **Palma de Mallorca 1965** (inaugural edition, shared).



all photos: cnc

Pomar (white) vs. O'Kelly (black) at the Chess Olympiad in 1962



Sources and further readings:

Special page for O'Kelly: <http://users.skynet.be/a.okelly/Portret.htm>

<http://www.belgianchesshistory.be/player/okelly-de-galway-alberic/>

<http://www.schaaksite.nl/2012/10/01/de-o-is-van-alberic-okelly-de-galway/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alb%C3%A9ric_O'Kelly_de_Galway (Wikipedia)

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Championnat_de_Belgique_d%27%C3%A9checs (Wikipedia)

<http://www.thechesspedia.com/okelly-de-galway-alberic/> (Chesspedia)

<http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessplayer?pid=19252> (biography and games)