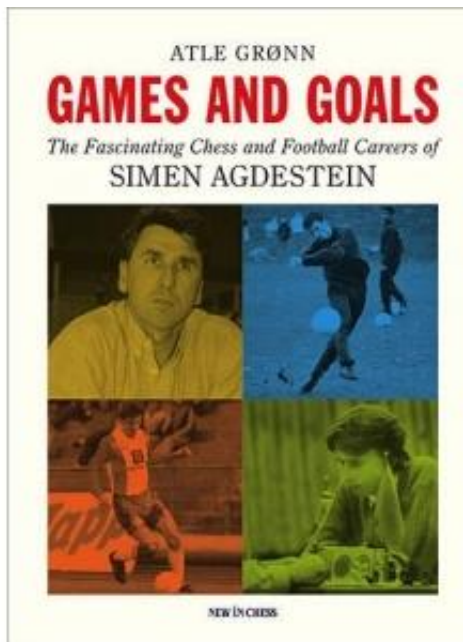


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Games and Goals. The Fascinating Chess and Football Careers of Simen Agdestein by Atle Groenn

Cena	123,00 zł
Numer katalogowy	9789083347981
Kod EAN	9789083347981
Producent	Wydawnictwo New in Chess

Opis produktu

Wersja językowa angielska. Miękka okładka. 272 strony.

Simen Agdestein was awarded the title of chess grandmaster at the age of eighteen, the youngest in the world at the time. Two years later he wrote in his diary that he believed he could become the best in the world.

But chess wasn't his only passion. He also excelled at football and was selected nine times for the Norwegian national team. Foreign clubs wanted to sign him as a professional.

Simen Agdestein's combined careers are unique and amazing. 'I can't choose between my left and my right arm', he once said of the choice between chess and football.

His international football career was cut short when he refused to play for Norway in a World Cup qualifier against Scotland. He opted instead to play Garry Kasparov in a chess tournament in Belgrade. A few years later, a knee injury put an end to his footballing dreams.

These days Agdestein is a coach and teacher at the Norwegian College for Top Athletes, a fertile breeding ground where his most successful pupil, Magnus Carlsen, also attended. Agdestein continues to compete in chess. In 2023 he won the Norwegian Championship for the ninth time, 41 years after his first successful bid.

Games and Goals is a gripping biography of a unique double talent, revealing his insecurities and ambitions, his doubts and dreams. The author had access to Agdestein's private letters and diaries and conducted numerous interviews with relatives, friends and Agdestein himself.

Atle Grønn (1971) is Professor of Slavic linguistics at the University of Oslo, an International Chess Master and a prolific writer on the game of chess. His books *Sjakken eller Livet* (Chess or Life, 2016) and *Sjakkgeniene* (Chess Geniuses, 2018), co-authored with Olav Lahlum, were bestsellers. With his appearances as a chess expert in live broadcasts of chess competitions on NRK and VGTV, he has become a television personality in Norway.

Reviews

GM Matthew Sadler (New In Chess magazine)

“Perhaps the most shocking part of the book was to read about the profound effect of the football injuries – that eventually ended his football career – on his life and how difficult he found things in the aftermath. I was vaguely aware at the time that he had been forced to stop with football but remembered blithely thinking that he would simply play chess instead, since he was lucky enough to be so good at both!”

[\(full review\)](#)

IM Gary Lane (Australian Chess)

“A compelling story of a wonderkid who had it all, lost most of it and then discovered Magnus Carlsen.”

[\(full review\)](#)

IM John Donaldson (Oklahoma Chess Magazine)

“Grønn does an excellent job portraying what it was like growing up in a small country with a modest chess tradition long before the emergence of Magnus Carlsen. *Games and Goals* is a book that adult chess players will find a fascinating read.”