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Eight Bells: Paul Elvstrom

Published on December 7th, 2016

Legendary Danish yachtsman Paul Elvstrøm died in his sleep at the age of 88 years on December 7, 2016. He died at his birthplace in Hellerup surrounded by his family.

Elvstrøm, considered one of the greatest sailing athletes in the history of sailing, won four consecutive Olympic gold medals, beginning with the Firefly at 1948 London and then with the Finn at 1952 Helsinki, 1956 Melbourne, and 1960 Rome.

After being a reserve on the Danish team in 1964, he then competed in 1968 (Star) and 1972 (Soling) without winning a medal. Elvstrøm also competed in 1984 and 1988 when his daughter, Trine, crewed for him in the Tornado, making them the only father/daughter combo to have competed together at the Olympics.



Paul Elvstrom

Trine and Paul Elvstrøm were European champions in the Tornado class in 1983-84. In total, Elvstrøm won 11 world championships in the 505 (2), Finn (2), Snipe (1), Flying Dutchman (1), 5.5 meter (1), Star (2), and Soling (2).

In addition to his sailing accolades, Elvstrøm also made a significant impact on the world of sailing off the water including his invention of the self-bailing bailer, and the original Elvstrøm-swim vest. He has also contributed to several books on the rules of racing, and is famously quoted to have said, "You haven't won the race if in winning the race you have lost the respect of your competitors."

In 1954, Elvstrøm established his own business – Elvstrøm Dinghy Sails. He designed the distinctive red crown logo himself, which today remains the hallmark logo of the company. Today, the company is called Elvstrøm Sails and has evolved into Europe's largest sail loft. The distinctive crown logo is still stamped onto every Elvstrøm sail product.

Elvstrøm is survived by four daughters, nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Correction: It was previously stated in this report that no other Olympic athlete had won more than four consecutive gold medals. Actually, two have: Hungarian Aladar Gerevich in Fencing and Sir Steve Redgrave in Rowing.

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