



IN MEMORIAM

Bengt Saltin

03.06.1935 – 12.09.2014

Honorary Doctor of the University of Tartu, the most renowned exercise physiologist in the world, member of the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, Professor Bengt Saltin has passed away on 12 September 2014 in Stockholm.

Bengt Saltin graduated from Karolinska Institute in Stockholm where he studied medicine and in 1964 also acquired his doctoral degree. He was first elected professor of physiology in Karolinska Institute but it was during being employed in the August Krogh Institute at the University of Copenhagen in 1973–1990 and 1994–2004 that he became the leading exercise physiologist in the world. Bengt Saltin was from 1994 to 2004 Director and intellectual leader of Copenhagen Muscle Research Centre, founded and financed by the Danish government. Bengt Saltin has published far more than 500 papers on physiology, yet his most essential and groundbreaking contribution lies in promoting scientific understanding on the importance and significance of movement and physical exercise in the context of human health and performance capacity. Bengt Saltin maintained scientific activity until advanced age. Last year, five articles that were compiled with his participation appeared in major research journals and he was the honorary keynote speaker at the Congress of the European College of Sport Science in Barcelona.

Already in the 70s and 80s of the last century Bengt Saltin invited several young researchers from the University of Tartu to work in the laboratories that he headed. Later he visited Tartu on many occasions and delivered lectures here. Bengt Saltin was elected Honorary Doctor of the University of Tartu in 1998. In May 2011, during his last visit to Estonia he made a memorable report at the annual conference of the Doctoral School of Behavioural, Social and Health Sciences that took place in Sagadi manor.

Bengt Saltin used his well-earned authority and renown as a scientist for promoting international cooperation in the area of exercise and sport sciences together with strengthening the respective organizational structures, and for contributing to the anti-doping fight in sport. When the association of European sport scientists, European College of Sport Science was founded in 1995 in Nice, Bengt Saltin was one of the main launchers of the corresponding idea and the first President of this organisation from 1995 to 1997. He was Chairman of the International Ski Federation Medical Committee in 2002–2006 and head of the anti-doping program mapping the blood values of cross-country skiers in 2001–2007.

The largest and most influential organisation in sports medicine and exercise and sport sciences in the world, American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) has awarded Bengt Saltin for his research achievements two of its highest prizes: ACSM Citation Award (1980) and ACSM Honor Award (1990). As a scientist, he has also received the highest acknowledgement by the International Olympic Committee – the Olympic Gold Medal in 2002. By consensus of his peers, at the World Scientific Congress for the Athens Olympics in 2004, he was introduced for his keynote address as the “Aristotle of Human Physiology”.

Together with the University of Tartu, eight European and American universities mourn their Honorary Doctor. Bengt Saltin is remembered as a great scientist, and an exceptionally friendly and helpful colleague.

Vahur Ööpik on behalf of Faculty of Exercise and Sport Sciences of the University of Tartu