

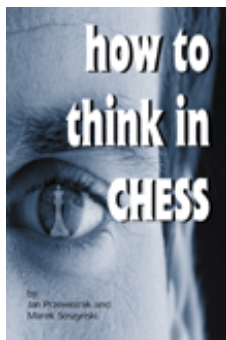


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## Power Tools

### Hanon W. Russell

Chess Assistant 6.0, 2001 Convekta Ltd., CD-ROM, \$129.00

When Bobby Fischer was preparing to meet Boris Spassky for the world title, it was reported that one of the things he did was go through the collection of Spassky's games published in the *Weltgeschichte des Schachs* series. For those of you unfamiliar with this series, it was the pre-PC version of game collection databases. These red-covered hardbound books pulled together every known game of a particular player and presented the games chronologically, with a diagram every five moves. The WdS book on Spassky may have helped Fischer with special opening preparation as manifested, for example, in game six of the 1972 match.



Nowadays, we mere mortals may not have the same raw talent as Bobby, but we certainly have him beaten hands down when it comes to accessing game collections and manipulation of the data in those games. Ironically, at least from Bobby's point of view, it is a program created and developed in Russia that now allows us to do things that he could not dream of.

**ChessCafe.com** readers have already given their stamp of approval on several programs produced by Convekta, Ltd., most notably Chess Tactics Art 3.0, which was swept off dealers' shelves across North America as a result of an article and then a review here. Chess Assistant 6.0, by Convekta, Ltd., is in fact the mother of CT-Art, as well as many other instructional programs.

The minimum requirements for CA6 are an IBM-compatible PC with a Pentium 75MZ CPU; 32 MB of RAM; 50 MB of free space on a hard disk; Super VGA Graphics with 800x600 screen mode; Windows 95/98/NT/2000/ME; CD-ROM drive; and a Microsoft compatible mouse. A 400MZ CPU is recommended, with 64 MB of RAM and, if you want to install the databases on your hard disk, 750 MB of free disk space.

The program installed easily and quickly on our PC. Two manuals were provided: One for CA5 that discussed the program in all respects; and one for the new features specific for CA6. They were both approximately 100 pages long. Our initial annoyance notwithstanding - we would have preferred one integrated, comprehensive manual - no real problems were encountered as a result of the this double-down approach.

A simple screen appears when the program is opened. The default toolbar looks like this:



The keys for the toolbar icons are:

Open Base	Open List	Replace List with View in Same Window	Replace Current Game from Base	Search	Previous Game	Next Game	Play Against Engine
Show Panel with Opened Bases	View Game	Add New Game	Save Current Game	Tree	Internet Chess Club	Monitor	Classifiers



As its predecessor, the core functions of CA6 relate to a huge games database and the use and management of the data therein. The question, particularly from those who are not familiar with this kind of program, may arise: What is 'data management'? Data management is basically computer-speak for the ability to access and extract specific information from a database. In the case of CA6, this basically means accessing a 1.5 million game database (current, by the way, through the end of December 2000), a couple of opening databases, not to mention the ability to create and customize databases of your own. Opening the "HugeBase" database brings up this on your screen.



Game	White	Black	Result	ECO	Date	Site
131654	Smyslov V.	Hartoch R.	1.0	A22	1989	Hastings (Engl)
131655	Smyslov V.	Kotnauer C.	1.0	E60	1989	Hastings (Engl)
131656	Smyslov V.	Persitz R.	1.0	A23	1989	Hastings (Engl)
131657	Tukmakov V.	Clarke P.	½½	A14	1989	Hastings (Engl)
131658	Tukmakov V.	Gilgoric S.	½½	C93	1989	Hastings (Engl)
131659	Tukmakov V.	Hartoch R.	1.0	A25	1989	Hastings (Engl)
131660	Tukmakov V.	Kotnauer C.	1.0	B99	1989	Hastings (Engl)
131661	Tukmakov V.	Smyslov V.	½½	C69	1989	Hastings (Engl)
131662	Tukmakov V.	Wright D.	½½	A25	1989	Hastings (Engl)
131663	Wright D.	Clarke P.	½½	A11	1989	Hastings (Engl)
131664	Wright D.	Fuller M.	1.0	A41	1989	Hastings (Engl)
131665	Wright D.	Huebner R.	0.1	A13	1989	Hastings (Engl)



You may manipulate, sort, reorganize and do most anything else you can reasonably think of. And yes, even just play through a game...



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This version of Chess Assistant has a tremendous number of features. It has no less than five strong playing programs - Chess Tiger 13.0, Tiger Gambit, Tiger 12.0, Crafty 18.3, Dragon - that can be used independently or in tandem at any point. Other features also include:

- Improved analysis mode
- New features in *Tree* mode
- More convenient access to the libraries of players, places etc.
- Automatic and manual resorting datasets
- Calculation of ratings and international title norms
- Multimedia support

- Adjustable sound effects
- New optional chessboard colors, backgrounds, and 3D-like pieces
- Chess fonts and piece sets from other sources
- DGT-board support

However, there are two features in particular that caught our attention. First, it seems that CA6 has been approved to be used with the Internet Chess Club. From Section 2 of the CA6 manual: "Possibilities such as trying out moves and variations on the board before sending them, accessing the main database's tree to see all the statistics on the moves being played, and of course, turn on the engine, having it play automatically or only suggesting lines while you make the decisions." Of course.

Quite frankly, we have some mixed feeling about this. While the advantages of having a talented analytical tool at your beck and call to advise and suggest are certainly appealing, this may simply be too tempting for some people to resist. The going can get rough enough in the online arena of cutthroat play. Do we really need this option? Well, in any event you don't need us to preach to you. It's there, it's available and we'll get over it.

The second feature, however, is truly impressive. CA6 has the ability to carry out several kinds of positional and material searches. The "Search for Maneuvers" allows you to search for specific piece movements and maneuvers, including mirror images (i.e., Bxh7+ for White, and the black equivalent, Bxh2+) if you want. What does this mean? Let's follow the example in Section 3.2 of the manual...

Say you play the hedgehog system with Black, and in particular you like an aggressive setup involving Kh8, Rg8 and g7-g5 followed by a kingside attack. You would like to find some model games. Open the HugeBase and call the **Search | Position** command in the main menu. Fill the chessboard with doubled question marks, set up the typical hedgehog structure on the board, then put the black King on h8, the Rook on g8 and the pawn on g5.



Click on **Search** and the program will find 30 games.

Each one of these games will have the characteristic maneuver, played by either Black or White (even though the maneuver sought was only input from the black side). Perhaps we are revealing our naivete, but we think this is really remarkable.

One of the games that this searched turned up: *Yermolinsky A.(2568) - DeFirmian N.(2598), Parsippany 1996 Ch USA* 1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nc6 5. Nb5 d6 6. c4 Nf6 7. N1c3 a6 8. Na3 Be7 9. Be2 O-O 10. O-O b6 11. Be3 Bb7 12. Qb3 Nd7 13. Rfd1 Rb8 14. f3 Kh8 15. Rd2 g5 16. Qd1 Rg8 (voilà)



17. Nc2 Nce5 18. Bd4 Qc7 19. Ne3 Nf6 20. Rc1 Bf8 21. b4 Bg7 22. h3 Nh5 23. Na4 Ba8 24. a3 Nf4 25. Bf1 Rgf8 26. Ng4 Nxc4 27. hxg4 Bxd4 28. Rxd4 Rfd8 29. g3 Ng6 30. Kg2 Rbc8 31. Qd1 e5 32. Rd3 b5 33. Nb2 h6 34. Rdc3 Qe7 35. Nd1 Qe8 36. Ne3 Ne7 37. cxb5 Rxc3 38. Rxc3 axb5 39. Rd3 Qc6 40. Nd5 Nxd5 41. Rxd5 Qa6 42. Rxe5 Qxa3 43. Rxb5 Qa1 44. Ra5 Qg7 45. Qa2 Bb7 46. Ra7 f6 47. Ba6 Rd7 48. Qe6 Bc6 49. Rxd7 Bxd7 50. Qxd6 Qf7 51. Qd5 Be6 52. Qd4 Bxg4 53. Be2 Bd7 54. b5 Qe6 55. Kf2 Kg7 56. g4 Qe7 57. Bc4 Be6 58. Bd5 Qd6 59. Kg2 h5 60.

gxh5 Bd7 61. b6 Qf4 62. b7 g4 63. Qf2 Kh6 64. e5 g3 65. Qxg3 Qd2 66. Kh1 1-0

This possibilities are endless. Of course, you can look for the stereotypical sacrifices on f2/f7 or h2/h7, but think, for example, about using it to generate endgame databases for personal study and practice. Want to look at some B+3P vs. B+2P endgames? The main database will not disappoint. We ran that through and found that there are 6,891 such endings waiting for you. And there is a neat historical twist to all this. Since the findings are presented in list form in chronological order, we discover that the first game in the database to have this ending was Morphy-Löwenthal, London 1859. Was this the first master game ever to have a B+3P vs. B+2P ending? Probably not. But this fascinating aspect cannot be ignored either.

Everything of course is never peaches and cream. Although clearly a lot of effort has been put into the manuals, they could have presented somewhat clearer examples. When we wanted to search a database, the program kept defaulting to the ICC database?! Fortunately, working through these things can be done for the most part intuitively.

This is a powerful program with much to offer. It is priced right, relatively user-friendly and - perish the thought - just plain fun to use. Convekta has produced a world class power tool that is ready to help you jump start your approach to this ancient game.

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