

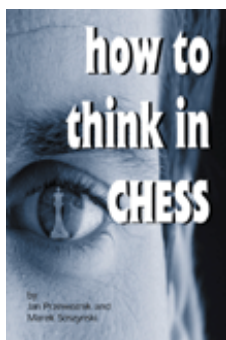


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Chess to Study

Hanon W. Russell

Endgame Studies 2.0, CD-ROM, 2000 Chess Assistant \$26.00

It is no secret that we have in general liked the software produced by Chess Assistant. Reviews of *Chess Assistant 6*, *CT Art Tactics* and *Chess School for Beginners* have been very positive. *CT Art Tactics* in particular caught the fancy of chessplayers worldwide. Chess Assistant software has proven to be simple and intuitive to use as well as very instructional. This week we take a look at another offering, *Endgame Studies 2.0*.



As was the case with other Chess Assistant software, *Endgame Studies 2.0* installed quickly and easily. The system requirements are minimal: IBM-compatible PC with Pentium 75 CPU, 12MB RAM (24MB recommended) 4MB free space on your hard disk, VGA Graphics, Windows 95/98 or NT 4.0, CD-ROM drive and Microsoft-compatible mouse. WindowsME users should note that there is a patch available at the Chess Assistant web site that should allow the program to run correctly. Mac users, sorry, you are still out of luck - CA only produces programs for PCs.

Proficiency in the endgame has long been recognized as one of the pillars of success for any successful chessplayer. Indeed, there are many strong players and instructors who believe that more points can be won and saved with a good practical knowledge of the endgame than by any other means. How many times have you seen a game where a supposedly weaker player has made it through the opening and middlegame more or less on equal terms with a stronger player, only to be outplayed in the endgame?

An endgame study, by the way, for those of you who may not be completely sure, is a composed position, where every piece and pawn plays a role. Unless specifically stated otherwise, it is always "White to move and win." Occasionally you will see a study with the stipulation "White to move and draw." It is rare, but not unheard of, to have a study where it is "Black to move and win." Unlike "Problems", endgame studies are designed to resemble positions that could easily arise in actual games. Also in contrast to problems, there is no set move limit within which the solution must fall. In other words, your task in solving an endgame study is simply to reach a theoretically won position; problems will typically state "White to move and mate in 'x' moves." Finally, the only restriction for composed problems is that the position must be legal; and positions that would not be considered to have arisen in actual play rarely occur in problems.

We are told that the program contains over 1,000 studies. In fact, we were able to tally over 1,300. By going to the section entitled "Various grades by difficulty", we put together the following tally:

- Elo rating less than 1900 = 69
- Elo rating 1900-2000 = 225
- Elo rating 2000-2200 = 627
- Elo rating 2200-2300 = 333

ELO less than 1900

ELO from 1900 to 2000.

ELO from 2000 to 2200.

ELO from 2200 to 2300.

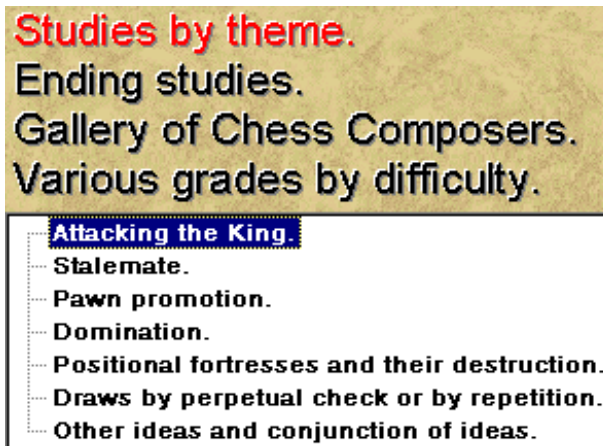
ELO greater than 2300.

- Elo rating 2300+ = 127

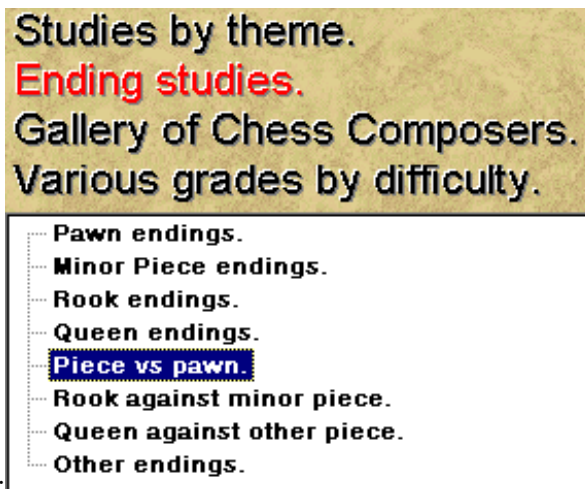


Chess Assistant indicates that this program is designed for chessplayers with ratings 1800 and above. From what we have seen, this appears to be true, at least from an instructional perspective. Players rated below 1800 will have a difficult time benefiting from *Endgame Studies 2.0*; regardless of your rating, however, there should be no diminution of your enjoyment of the beauty of these masterpieces.

When the program is opened, the following menu appears (Please note that to assure quick loading of this review page, in most instances only a portion of the entire screen is depicted in the graphics displayed in this review):



The studies are grouped by seven major themes. The somewhat inartful heading "Ending studies" is actually a list of the studies by pieces involved



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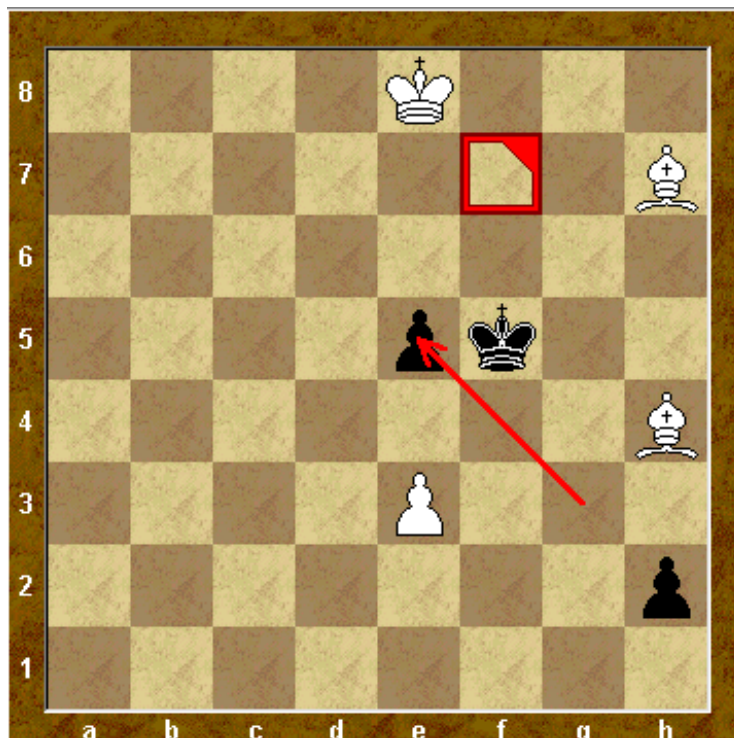
Kubbel
 Kasparyan
 Troitzky
 Rinck
 Platov M. and V.
 Nadareishvili
 Prokesh
 Chekhover
 Grigoryev
 Mattison
 Pogosyants
 Seleznyov
 Kaminer
 Gurvich
 Reti
 Duras

The "Gallery of Chess Composers" is an index of the studies by composer and the last section, as noted above, is an index of the studies grouped by difficulty.



We went to the "Piece vs pawn" section (highlighted above) and then to the study shown at the left. At this point it should be mentioned that all the commands and options available in the other Chess Assistant specialized programs are also available here. You can practice or run through a more formalized timed testing procedure; there are hints and annotated solutions available at any point.

As most other studies, this is "White to play and win." We quickly played 1 Bh7+ and the following message was immediately displayed: "You have made a mistake. Press button 'Show variation' to look at the refutation!" When that was done, we saw the following diagram:



Again, those of you who are familiar with the Chess Assistant software, or who have read our previous reviews of CA products, will recognize the hinting arrows and

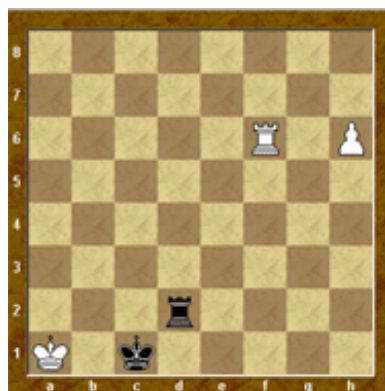
highlighted squares. Three unsuccessful attempts to find the correct moves will result in the full (annotated) solution being displayed:

```
[...] 1. ♖d5
  [ 1. ♖h7+? ♔g4 2. ♖e4 ♔xh4=]
e4 2. ♔f7 h1=♔ 3. ♖e6+ ♔e5 4. ♖g3# Rinck, 1918
```

We have always had a soft spot in our heart for endgame studies. Often called the poetry of chess, they can be stunning in their beauty and simplicity. And they can also be instructive. However, without the guiding hand of a competent instructor, much of the instructive value may be lost. Such is the case here. Do not be under any misconceptions: if you are looking for something to teach you when your rook should drop behind your opponent's king in a R+P ending, or what the proper drawing strategy should be in a bishops of opposite color endgame, *Endgame Studies 2.0* is probably not for you. In that event, consider one of the very helpful books by successful instructors such as Lev Alburt.

On the other hand, if you would like a super collection of endgame studies by some of the world's best composers, past and present, this just may be the thing for you. You can sit back and take in the brilliance and beauty, replete with notes to help you appreciate their depth, or you can roll up your sleeves and decide to extract as much instructive value as possible. This of course will take some work but should ultimately pay handsome dividends.

Let's wrap this up with a look at three of studies from the program. Solutions are at the end. Each is "White to move and win." The first is taken from the "Under 1900" section, the second from the "1900-2000" section, and the third from the "2000-2200" section.



(1) Troitzky 1924.

White to move and win.



(2) Pogogyants 1964.

White to move and win.



(3) Yakimchik 1958.

White to move and win.

Solutions:

(1) (Under 1900) 1 h7 Rd8 (1...Rh2 2 Rf1+ Kd2 3 Rf2+ Rxf2 4 h8Q and wins) **2 Rc6+ Kd2 3 Rd6+ Rxd6 4 h8Q** and wins.

(2) (1900-2000) 1 Nf6 Bg6 2 Nd7 Bxd3 (2...Bf5 3 c3 mate) **3 c3+!** (3 cxd3?=
3...Ke4 4 Nc5+ Ke5 5 Kxd3 and wins.

(3) (2000-2200) 1 Ne7! (1 Nf4? Bd1 2 Nd5 Be2+ 3 Ka5 Kc6) **1...Bd1** (1...Bc2 2 Nd5! Bd3+ 3 Ka5 Kc6 4 Nb4+ and wins) **2 Nf5+! Kd7 3 Nd4 Bg4** (3...Kc8 4 Ka6 Ba4 5 Ka7) **4 Ka6 Kd8 5 Nc6+** (5 b7? Bc8 6 Ne6+ Kd7=) **5...Kd7 6 b7** and wins.

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