

ChessBase Cafe

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How the Pros Do It

Chess software has been around for so long that even those old enough to remember what it was like before it came on the scene have trouble imagining what it would be like to live without it now. Garry Kasparov, who you might have noticed has been in the news a little lately, was at the forefront of the ChessBase revolution long before he started trying to begin a new Russian revolution.

We are taking a break from our regular diet of instructional material and new products to talk with Garry Kasparov about how computers changed chess and how he used them (past tense now!) to change the game forever. The newly retired Kasparov has been in New York City all week for a flurry of interviews and to work on his upcoming book *How Life Imitates Chess*. We sat down with him in front of the world's most powerful laptop computer. No, not because of the processor, which is relatively humble, but the databases it contains.



Much has been made over the years about Kasparov's legendary preparation and the tens of thousands of lines and megabytes of analysis he carries around. The decades of accumulated and constantly updated and refined analysis includes work done for eight world championship matches and his more recent cancelled matches. When Kasparov announced his retirement, the jokes immediately began about what he would do with all this stuff. Publish it? Put it on Ebay?



There is still no answer, although Kasparov has talked about using it for training the next generation of talented players. Today I got a glimpse of The Garrybase in action as Kasparov looked over the games from the Melody Amber tournament underway in Monaco. At one point, in the game Kramnik-Shirov, Kasparov pronounced the position “dead lost” for Black; it certainly did look bad, but he wasn’t analyzing, he had seen the position before. A few clicks in ChessBase brought up the exact middlegame position and a page of analysis around it. Kasparov shook his head as he continued through the rapid game from Monaco and Kramnik let Shirov escape. Hmm, retired?

The Garrybase is made up lines and variations, not games. When something new occurs in one of the 16,729 lines, it is updated and labeled with a “\$” symbol. Then it is added to his master database at home. When we looked at the screen, there was a long list of “\$” thanks to his work during Linares. When a game is played in one of the lines, he adds the game to the line, not visa-versa. So instead of player names for white and black, there are moves to indicate which line it is.

Getting back to the Monaco games, he admired Ivanchuk’s win over Kramnik in the incredibly topical Sveshnikov Sicilian, before reminding himself he was retired. “He just kept increasing the pressure. It’s an interesting position... for someone else to analyze!” Aww.



Kasparov waxed nostalgic about the days when he had notebooks and index cards full of analysis. All the books you had were treasures, and each new piece of analysis was guarded carefully. “Now the playing field is practically level, everyone has access to the same tools, the same databases. You have to work much harder to get smaller advantages. But you have no choice. There are many sharp lines today that unless you are prepared you can lose without moving a piece. It’s not about the quality of your opponent’s analysis, it’s the machine. If he’s been there and you haven’t there’s no hope, you’re dead.”

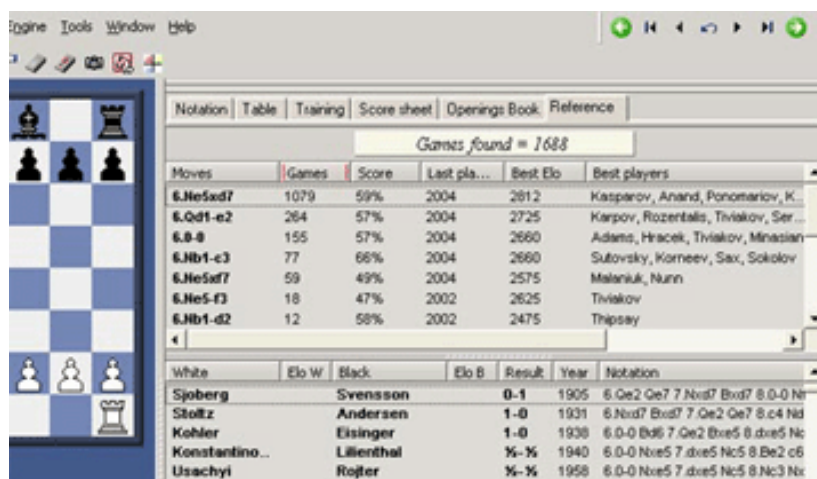
Yikes! I’m not sure ChessBase would want to use that as an endorsement for their products. “Buy ChessBase or Die!” might not win hearts and minds. A better endorsement came when Kasparov talked about his explosive Linares win over FIDE champ Rustam Kasimdzhanov. The speculative exchange sacrifice he played was prepared several years ago for a very important event, his 2003 match against Deep Junior!

Kasparov explained that he had been looking at the Meran and he and his second, GM Yuri Dokhoian, were investigating this line while keeping an eye on their own version of Junior’s evaluation. They were surprised to see that Junior was giving up the exchange, and at first thought that this might be a weakness to exploit. The silly machine was giving up a rook and the position looked good for White. But when they really started looking at it they came around to agree with Junior that Black had excellent compensation, and they scratched that line off their list of things to play with white.

But to play it with black, that was another story. Kasparov got his chance to play the exchange sac idea and it worked to perfection. He went on to crush Kasimdzhanov in a spectacular game. You have to wonder if Junior should get co-author credit if this game comes up on the Informant list for best novelty.

Speaking of opening prep, one new ChessBase 9 feature, which never fails to impress grandmasters who ask me why they should bother to upgrade, is the reference tab on the game screen. It’s on the notation pane, and serves as a

combination opening book and database search of the position on the board.



Instead of using the tab, I recommend going to Window – Panes – Reference Search, which will open it in its own separate pane so you can see the notation and the reference search info at the same time. It shows all the moves made in your reference database from the position on the board and the scores of each move, the players who use it often and well. Very cool. Below that it gives you the list of games that reached the board position. You can drag and drop these into the notation pane to add them as a variation.

It's also very handy that you can click on moves other than the one played in the game you are looking at and they are added as variations automatically. (Another reason to open it in a separate pane.) The only drawback to the reference search is that it's a bit slow if you're using the Megabase or any equally huge collection. It has to search for the position and then calculate the statistics every time you make a move. (I don't know why it doesn't cache the results for the next move in the game notation.) I have a very fast PC and it still takes 5-10 seconds to generate its information after each move. It's faster after you use it for a minute because the database is more in memory, but it's not instant.

Still, it saves a lot of separate position searching when you are analyzing games. You can get an entire opening course at a glance. While you are replaying a game you know at all times what has been played in that position, how often, by whom, and with what score, and when the game leaves theory. If you have Fritz running in another pane at the same time it's almost chess information overload. That is, heaven!

All the ChessBase software described by Mig in this column, as well as many more ChessBase programs, are available in the [ChessCafe Online Catalog](#).

Mig wants your questions!! Send it along and perhaps it

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