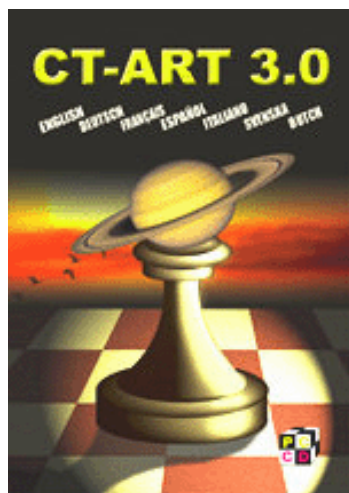




COLUMNISTS

ChessOK Cafe

Dadi Jonsson



ChessCafe.com is pleased to welcome Dadi Jonsson as its latest columnist. He has been very active in all facets of chess in his native Iceland for many years. Dadi was the chess columnist for Iceland's largest newspaper, *Morgunbladid*, for almost a decade. His association with the Icelandic Chess Federation has included website design, a member of the rating committee as well as a member of the ICF's board of directors, a position he has also held with the Hellir and Reykjavik Chess Clubs. He designed and implemented the Icelandic Chess Federation's rating system (based on the Elo system) and has worked in the software industry for many years.

Dadi's new monthly column will feature a discussion and use of Chess Assistant software. Readers are encouraged to send their questions to him - [Yes, I have a question for Dadi!](#) We hope you enjoy the *ChessOK Cafe*...

Tactics Training with CT-ART Part 1

There are more books written about chess than all other games combined, and the publication of new books hasn't been slowed by the rapidly increasing use of computers by chess players. Still, it is interesting that out of all that is written about chess, very little of it is dedicated to the use of software for chess training and improvement. This new column, *The ChessOK Cafe*, will focus on enhancing the user's experience with the chess software developed by Convekta Ltd. ChessOK is a brand name for Convekta, which is probably best known for its [Chess Assistant](#) database program and training software, and, more recently, its involvement in the development and marketing of [Rybka](#), the world's strongest chess engine.

Tactics and Modern Training Methods

There is little doubt that the ever-increasing number of very young players among the world's elite grandmasters is due in large part to modern, software-based training. Moreover, as most experienced chess players know, chess training techniques were highly developed in the Soviet Union, so it is not surprising that Russian trainers were among the first to realize the advantages of software-based training and to design lessons utilizing this new technology. Convekta has played a key part in this transition. The company has worked closely with several chess schools and experienced trainers to develop its software. One of the most successful products of this cooperation is [CT-ART](#), a program that was specifically created to increase the tactical ability of its users.

CT-ART

CT-ART is based on training material developed by Maxim Blokh, an experienced coach and ICCF grandmaster. It is geared towards players who have already mastered basic tactics. If you need help with basic tactics, I would first recommend [*Chess Tactics for Beginners*](#). *CT-ART* is popular among chess schools and trainers because the program can keep a separate profile of the performance and test results of each student.



It provides a system of training that can take you from an intermediate player to an international master. This has actually been demonstrated by WGM Irina Mikhailova, who was a pioneer in implementing software-based training courses at the Petrosian Chess Club in Moscow, where *CT-ART* is used for tactical training. She has described her training methods in a couple of very interesting articles that are available [online](#). As far as I know, this is the only publicly available description of a comprehensive chess course based on training software.

Organization and Basic Concepts

In order to get the most out of *CT-ART*, it is important to have a good understanding of the overall structure of the program. One of the strong points of *CT-ART* is that the organization and classification of exercises serves as an outline for the training regimen by breaking it down into manageable sections and providing a framework in which tactics can be easily understood. The exercises are categorized according to the following criteria:

- Tactical methods
- Combinational motifs
- Grades of Difficulty

CT-ART allows you to select and view the training material based on difficulty, motif (undefended piece, weak back rank, etc.), tactical method (removal of the guard, deflection, decoy, etc.), exercise number, the side you are playing and so on. You can take advantage of these possibilities by adjusting the selection of exercises to those areas that need the most improvement.

I'll explain the differences between a “combinational motif” and a “tactical method” with an example:

mate in four moves, starting with 1.Qxa8+!

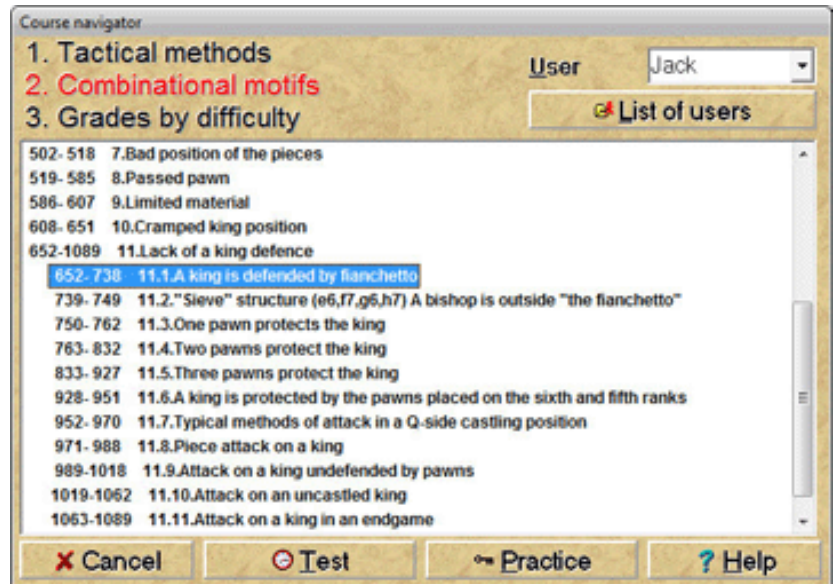
Most players will use *CT-ART* to solve challenging exercises that teach them something new, but you can also use it for tactical speed training by choosing exercises that are relatively easy. Plus, studying and solving tactical exercises will enhance your ability to calculate variations. WGM Mikhailova provides her students with the helpful guideline to first look at checks, captures and threats before moving on to less forcing moves. Obviously, her advice would have worked quite nicely in the example above!

CT-ART offers over 1,200 exercises, with more than 1,000 supplementary examples. The exercises vary widely in difficulty, with the easiest suitable for those rated around 1500, and the hardest able to pose a challenge to an international master. It is important that you objectively estimate your own strength, so that you begin at an appropriate level. This will increase the likelihood that your training will be successful and that it will become a regular activity – just as it needs to be.

The course navigator is the control center for *CT-ART*. It is displayed when you launch the program, but it can also be accessed from the toolbar. The image below shows the toolbar buttons that allow you to select and browse the exercises, practice, take a test or examine alternatives with the help of a built-in chess engine.



Clicking on “Navigator” opens the course navigator (shown below), which allows you to categorize the training exercises by tactical method, combinational motif or grades of difficulty. As you can see “Combinational motifs” has been selected and the further classification is very detailed.



The “User” drop-down box, at the top right of the screen, allows you to select a user, and below that the “List of users” button presents a dialog box that allows you to select, create, remove or rename users. This feature is most useful to trainers who use *CT-ART* to keep track of multiple students.

The “Test” and “Practice” buttons at the bottom of the dialog box correspond to the same buttons on the toolbar. The only difference is that the course navigator allows you to select the categorization and gives a detailed overview of the exercises.

“Practice” is the default mode in *CT-ART*. When you are in practice mode the text on the toolbar button is highlighted in red, as is the case in the image at the beginning of this section. When you select a category from the course navigator it becomes the starting category for the following practice session. In the image above, subsection 11.1, “A king is defended by fianchetto,” is selected, which comprises exercises 652-738. After you click the “Practice” button, the following dialog box is displayed:

The screenshot shows a software window titled 'ChessOK Cafe'. It has a parchment-like background. At the top, under the heading 'Today', it displays statistics: 'Solved: 0', 'Time: 0.0', 'Score: 0 from 0', and 'Success: 0%'. Below this is a section titled 'Theme' with the text '11.Lack of a king defence (11.1.A king is defended by fianchetto)'. Further down, it shows 'Exercises: 652 - 738' and overall statistics: 'Solved: 0 from 87' and 'Success: 0%'. At the bottom, there is a text input field labeled 'You choose exercise number' with the value '652' entered. Below the input field is a button with a green checkmark and the text 'Ok'.

At the top you are shown your results for today, then a description of the theme or section you chose, and below that your overall results for this theme. At the bottom there is a text box displaying the number of the first exercise in the section you selected. You can either leave it as is or type in a different number. This will be the first exercise for the practice session. When you have solved an exercise, you can start the next one by clicking on the blue arrow below the diagram or by using the F4 function key. You will also be alerted as you finish one section and the next one is introduced.

In the next article, I will look at test mode as well as some of the other features of *CT-ART* that illustrate the advantages of software-based training. I will also demonstrate how to track your progress and illustrate how the activity and performance statistics offered by *CT-ART* are of interest to both individual players and trainers.

All the Chess Assistant software described by Dadi in this column, as well as many more Chess Assistant programs, are available in the [USCFSales Online Catalog](#).

Dadi wants your questions!! Send it along and perhaps it will be answered in an upcoming column. Please include your name and country of residence. [Yes, I have a question for Dadi!](#)



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