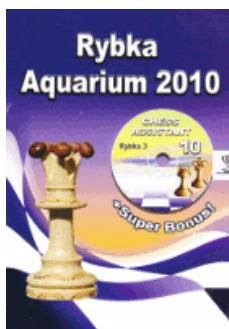




COLUMNISTS

ChessOK Cafe

Dadi Jonsson



CHESSTHEATRE

Play through and download the games from [ChessCafe.com](#) in the [DGT Game Viewer](#).

Free Shipping!

**On all Orders
More than \$75!**



UPS GROUND Only.

[ChessCafe.com](#) is pleased to invite readers to a game of chess at Convekta's ChessOK Playing Zone!



Click here for the [Flash](#)

Correspondence Chess with Aquarium 2010

A new version of Aquarium 2010 (version 4.0.3) will be released soon. It's a free update for current Aquarium 2010 users. One of the new features is a correspondence chess module that keeps track of correspondence games played on Xfcc compliant chess servers. The [Xfcc protocol](#) was designed by Martin Bennedik. Servers of this type include the International Correspondence Chess Federation (ICCF), SchemingMind.com, and myChess.de.

Correspondence chess has changed a lot in recent years; transitioning from snail-mail to email and now to server based play. Aquarium only supports server based play, which without doubt is the most convenient method of playing.

When playing correspondence chess, you must, of course, respect the rules regarding the use of chess engines. Some servers allow them (e.g., ICCF in most events), while their use is forbidden on other servers. Some servers allow the use of engines under special circumstances. As an example, SchemingMind only allows their use in "Advanced chess."

For the purposes of this column, I will assume that you have already registered and joined a tournament on one of the supported servers.

Aquarium for Correspondence Players

Correspondence players normally play several games at the same time and Aquarium supports simultaneous analysis of multiple games and positions using either traditional infinite analysis or the innovative [IDeA](#) (Interactive Deep Analysis) method that explores and expands critical lines automatically.

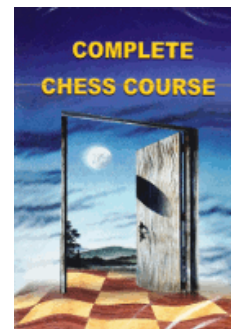


IDeA in action

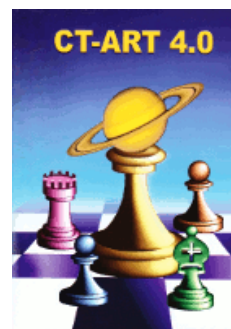
Many correspondence players already make extensive use of IDeA. The improvements in Aquarium 2010 were especially useful for them (multiple projects, positions and engine instances). Although IDeA can be used as a fully automatic tool, it really shines when the player takes advantage of its interactive features. IDeA records all its results in an "analysis tree." This is a valuable feature for correspondence players, as they can later access their stored analysis from any game where a previously analyzed position arises. If you find yourself playing the same opening again, you can expand your analysis tree, searching for interesting alternatives, novelties, etc.

The implementation of infinite analysis in Aquarium also has many convenient features (see [Infinite Analysis with Rybka Aquarium](#)) for

Purchases from our [shop](#) help keep [ChessCafe.com](#) freely accessible:



[Complete Chess Course](#)



[CT-ART 4.0](#)



[Chess Assistant 10](#)

version or here to download and install the [Full](#) version. Or play online against [Rybka](#).

correspondence players. Several engines can be used to analyze different games at the same time and analysis presets (see [Analysis Presets in Rybka Aquarium](#)) let you use more than one engine to analyze the same position and quickly switch between different engines and methods.

The image below shows an example of three games being analyzed with infinite analysis. One of the positions is displayed on the board with the analysis window below the board. This game is highlighted in the sidebar with a blue background.



Simultaneous analysis of three games

A red rectangle has been drawn around the three games. You can always see which games are being analyzed by the green rectangle next to the game in the sidebar as shown below.



Green rectangle indicates analysis

Many of you will notice that this is the same icon as is shown in the status bar for each active engine.

As mentioned above, both IdeA and infinite analysis support simultaneous analysis by multiple engines. In the case of IdeA, it would normally be multiple instances of the same engine. Both methods can also take advantage of analysis on networked computers as described in [Networked Computers with Aquarium 2010](#). This means that you can combine the analysis power of several computers.



Networked analysis with thirty-four engines

There are many other Aquarium features that are useful for correspondence players. Browsing the [ChessOK Cafe archives](#) should give you insight into some of them. For a quick overview of various smaller features see [Aquarium's Hidden Treasures, Part One](#) and [Aquarium's Hidden Treasures, Part Two](#).

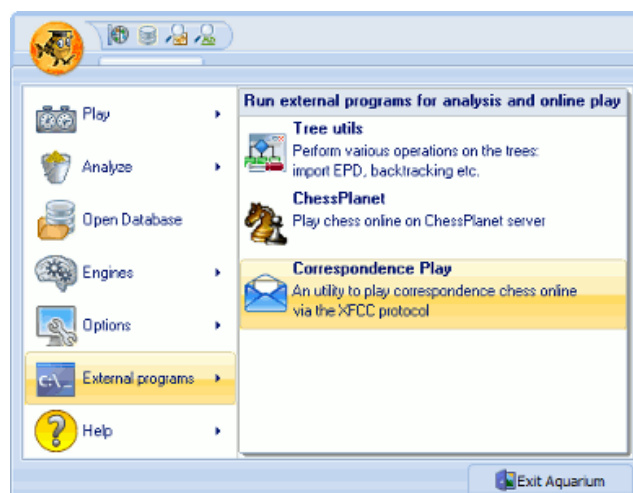
The only thing that has been missing for playing correspondence chess in Aquarium is a tool for live updates of games (sending and receiving moves from the server). This may seem like a minor issue that can be solved by copy/paste to and from the server. Technically that is correct. However, correspondence players must perform this action thousands of times a year, and they need to take great care not to make a "technical" mistake, as it can

easily lead to the loss of a game. It's frustrating to see hours or days of analysis go down the drain due to such a mistake.

The Aquarium correspondence play module is designed to minimize manual intervention and thereby the chance of mistakes. It accepts moves automatically from the server. When a game is saved, all previous analysis is preserved, the game is activated and you can instantly start analyzing the position.

Getting Started

Click the Aquarium Button in the upper left corner, select "External programs" and then "Correspondence Play" from the right pane to start the module.



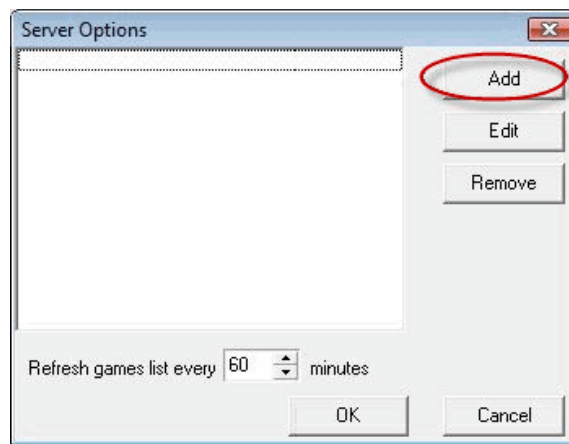
Starting the correspondence chess module

The Correspondence Play module will appear on the screen as shown below.



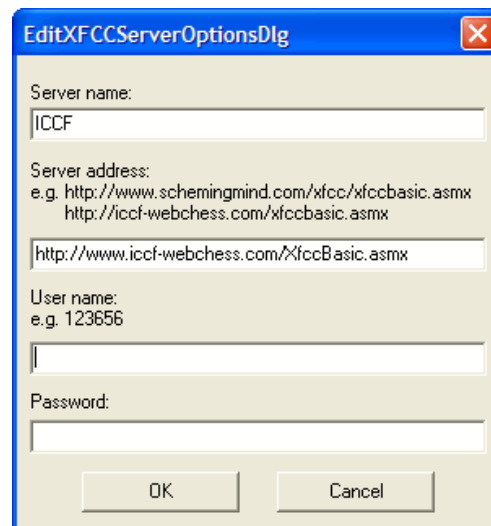
The correspondence chess module

The first step is to tell the program which correspondence chess server(s) you want to use. Click the "Server options" button and the corresponding dialog box will be displayed.



Add the servers to which you want to connect

Here you can add, edit, and remove servers. Note that you can connect to more than one server. Near the bottom you can specify how often the program checks for new information on the servers (once every sixty minutes in this case). Click the "Add" button to add a new server.



Specify a new server

Here you enter information that is required to connect to the server and retrieve information about your games.

Server name is a name you choose to identify the server; e.g., ICCF for the ICCF server. You can use any name you like.

Server address is the URL used for Xfcc communication with the server. You will usually find the address to use in the help file or the FAQ of the server. The correct addresses for SchemingMind.com and ICCF are given as examples in the dialog box. For your convenience, here are the addresses for the three servers mentioned at the beginning of the column. You can copy the address of the server you want to connect to and paste it into the server address field:

- ICCF: <http://www.iccf-webchess.com/XfccBasic.asmx>
- SchemingMind.com: <http://www.schemingmind.com/xfcc/xfccbasic.asmx>
- myChess.de: <http://www.myChess.de/xfcc/xfccbasic.php4>

User name is your username on the server. As mentioned earlier, you need to register on the server through their website.

Password is the password you use when logging onto the server.

After filling out these fields, click OK and a list of your games will be fetched from the server and displayed on the screen as shown in the screen-shot below.



Connected to the server

If you select a game from the list, it is displayed at the top of the screen and the current position is shown on the board.

#	Col	Opponent	Event	Your time	Opp. time	Status	Comment
214655		Ograsels, Gregor	8th European Team-Ch	20d 24h	20d 32h 45m	4b... Ne5	
214668		Kalinoskas, Justas	8th European Team-Ch			Whitekings	
256837		Wichter, Finn A.	Alpert Memorial Cup	156d 18h 32m	143d 24h	22... Re8	
256842		Kolodetzki, Haron	Alpert Memorial Cup, Pr	156d 24h	136d 13h 22m	27... Rg6	
256847		Zhak, Oksana M	Alpert Memorial Cup	175d 4h 39m	156d 24h	22... Be5	
256848		Veito Ribelles, A	Alpert Memorial Cup	100d 7h 54m	89d 24h	16. Bd3	
256849		Grego, Luis José G.	Alpert Memorial Cup, Pr	156d 24h	140d 6h 41m	28. Bg5	
256850		Wishusen, Horst	Alpert Memorial Cup, Pr	100d 24h	90d 18h 30m	15... Nxb2	
259576		Chiruta, Ing. Mari	Champions League 2011	99d 24h	91d 19h 52m	20. Bc3	
259587		Zalicki, Václav	Champions League 2011	97d 24h	90d 14h 32m	11... b5	
259597		Moreira, José Amér	Champions League 2011	250d 24h	237d 21h 33m	41. Kf2	
259606		Hoffmann, Frank	Champions League 2011	100d 24h	85d 20h 56m	12... fxe6	
259614		Hasarik, Drahos	Champions League	96d 13h 33m	90d 24h	16... e4	
259627		Wilhelm, Dirk	Champions League 2011	84d 24h	100d 15h 7m	11. Nxc6	
259632		Kasperek, Ryszard	Champions League 2011	50d 24h	34d 21h 8m	6... Be6	
259637		Vosselman, Jan	Champions League	49d 21h 3m	39d 24h	7... O-O	

The game list

If a game in the list is shown in bold (such as the first line in the list), it's your turn to move. When a new move arrives, the corresponding game is shown in red type until you select the game; after that it's shown in bold. The list above shows two red games.

The list itself consists of the following columns:

The leftmost column (#) shows the identification (game number) that the server has assigned to this game.

Col shows your color in the game. Yellow means that you have white and brown means that you have the black pieces.

Opponent is your opponent's name.

Event shows the name of the event or tournament. It is assigned by the server when the event starts.

Your time shows how much time you have remaining until the next time control.

Opp. time shows how much time your opponent has left until the next time control.

Status shows the current status of the game. When a game is in progress it shows the current move. When a game is finished it shows the result.

Comment allows you to keep notes about the game. They are your private notes and are not sent to your opponent. This is very useful for correspondence players with many games. They can use the notes to get a

quick overview of the games. The notes can be used for your evaluation of the position, what needs to be checked, how you intend to analyze, etc. The Comment column is not shown in the image, but here is an example of how it can be used.

Status	Comment
... Ne5	Decisive advantage. Only quick IA needed for blunder checking
White Wins	1-0. Opponent wants to discuss novelty
2... Re8	Unclear. Wide-tree IDeA finished. Some chances of a serious advantage.
7... Rg6	IDEA shows advantage (-1.00)! Aiming for a decisive advantage.
2... Bxb5	The attack has been stopped. Draw is likely soon.
6. Bd3	Extensive analysis needed here!

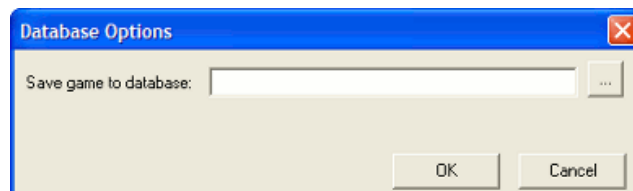
Private comments about the games

The text wraps automatically, but you can also press Ctrl+Enter to force a new line.

Saving Games to a Database

You can enter moves and variations directly on the board in the correspondence chess module and then send your move to the server without using Aquarium at all. However, a serious player will always save his games to the database and do his analysis there. Even while playing the first few moves, he needs to research the opening repertoire of his opponent and look up the latest games in the opening variation that is being played. So, after connecting to the server and getting a list of your games, the next step is to save the server games to a local database.

First, you need to create the database. Click the "Base options" button. The "Database Options" dialog box will appear.



Create/select a database for the games

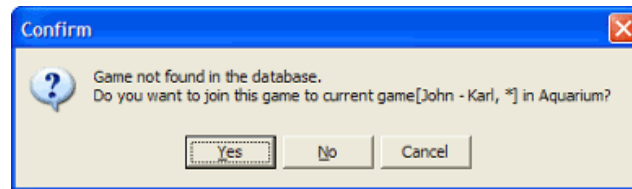
Here you should click the ellipsis button to the right of the "Save game to database" field. It opens up a standard Windows dialog for choosing a database name and a directory for storing it. After selecting a directory and choosing a name for the database, click the OK button. Your database will be created and you can start saving your games.

There are two scenarios to think about when you save new games from the server.

If you don't have any previous analysis of the game or you don't want to merge the game with existing analysis, just select the game from the list (by clicking it) and then click the "Save" button. The game will be appended to the database as a new game. Note that when you save the game, it will automatically be opened in Aquarium where you have full access to it and all other games in the database.

This was simple enough, but if you just started to use the correspondence chess module and already have a lot of analysis for the games, you can choose to merge the server game into an existing game. This is a convenient way of taking advantage of your previous analytical work. In this case, do the following (note that this is only required the *first time* you save the game):

1. Open Aquarium (if it isn't already running)
2. Open the database that you defined above.
3. Open the game containing the existing analysis. You will merge your server game with this game.
4. Switch back to the correspondence chess module and select the game you want to save
5. Press "Save." The following dialog box will appear.



Merge game with existing game analysis?

If you select "Yes," the server game will be merged with the game you opened in Aquarium. If you select "No," the server game will be appended to the database as a new game.

If you change your mind and don't want to save the game, click "Cancel."

Remember that this process is only needed the *first time* that you save this game to the database. Once you have done that, simply press "Save" when you want to update the game in the database after a new move has been made.

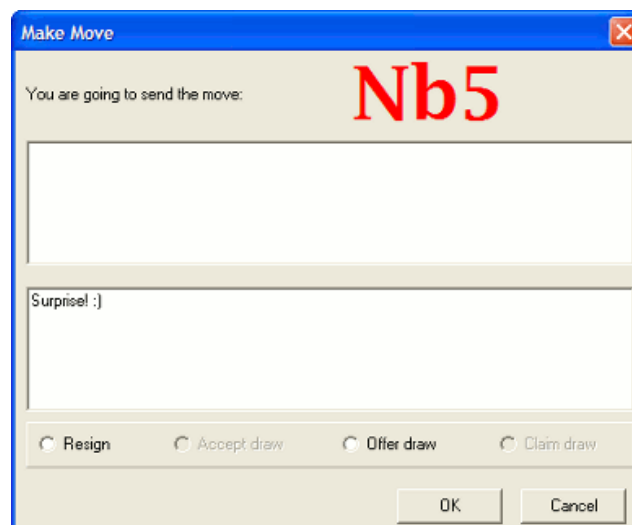
Note that your analysis of the games in Aquarium will stay private, so there is no need to keep one copy of the game with your analysis and another "clean" copy without annotations. If you need to see the bare game score, you can always do so in the correspondence chess module.

For the more technically minded, the link between your correspondence game and the game in the database is maintained in Config/xfccBasesList.xml. If you delete an entry in that file (you can find the game by its id), then that link is broken and you can re-link it.

Making a Move

You can make your move either directly in the correspondence chess module or start by selecting the move in Aquarium itself. Both methods are described below.

Making a move in the correspondence chess module is very simple. Just make your move on the board and click the "Make move" button. You will be presented with the following window.



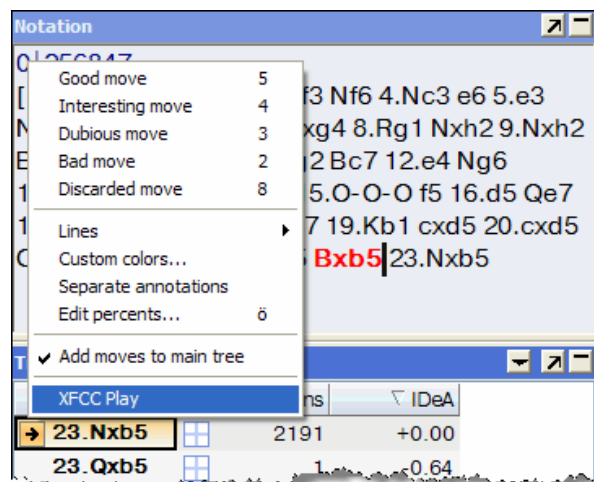
Sending a move to the server

The move you are going to send is shown in large, red type at the top of the window. There are two text areas below the move. The one at the top shows

your opponent's comments for his previous move (if any). You can write a message to your opponent in the lower text area and it will be delivered with the move.

There are four radio buttons below the text areas. In this example, two of them are active and you can use them to resign or offer a draw. "Accept draw" is inactive unless your opponent has offered a draw, in which case you would select it to accept the draw. "Claim draw" is only active when you can claim a draw according to the laws of chess. That's all there is to it when you make your move using the correspondence chess module.

You can also start by selecting your move in Aquarium if you have previously saved the game to the database as described above. Start by opening the game in Aquarium. Go to the current position in the game. Move the mouse pointer to the tree window, right-click the move you want to make (23.Nxb5 in this example) and select "XFCC Play" from the menu as shown in the next image.



Sending a move from Aquarium

The correspondence chess module will be opened and the selected move will be played on the board. Now you can submit it by clicking "Make move" as described above.

It would be interesting to receive feedback from users about this method of selecting the move from the tree window. It does have the advantage that it practically forces you to look at its evaluation before you submit it (assuming engine analysis is allowed). In the image above, 23.Nxb5 has the best score (+0.00), but you would probably hesitate and recheck everything if you saw another move with a better score. If you have a better suggestion, I'm sure that the developers would like to hear about it.

Conclusion

The new Aquarium correspondence chess module gives you a unified method of playing your games on Xfcc compliant servers. You get a quick overview of all your games in a single list, even if you have games in progress on all these servers. The list has a very useful comment field for each game, where you can enter your private notes. When you make your moves, many of the possible sources of error are eliminated. Games can be saved directly in an Aquarium database where you can check opening statistics, look up the position in endgame tablebases or use Aquarium's analysis tools. The combination of Aquarium's powerful analysis features and the new correspondence chess module makes Aquarium a one stop solution for correspondence players.

Do you have a question about a Chess Assistant product? Send it along and perhaps it will be answered in an upcoming column. Please include your name and country of residence.

Comment on this month's column via our [Contact Page](#)! Pertinent responses will be posted below daily.

Many of the Chess Assistant programs described by Dadi in this column are available in the [ChessCafe.com Online Catalog](#).



[\[ChessCafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Review\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)
[\[Endgame Study\]](#) [\[The Skittles Room\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)
[\[Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About ChessCafe.com\]](#) [\[Contact Us\]](#)

© 2010 BrainGamz, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
"ChessCafe.com®" is a registered trademark of BrainGamz, Inc.