George Renko - The great ABC of Tactics English CD review

© 23.9.2006 Jovan Petronic. FIDE Senior Trainer. International Master.
http://www.jovanpetronic.com

George Renko - **The great ABC of Tactics**

System requirements:
Pentium-PC, 32 MB RAM, Windows XP, 2000,ME, 98 SE, CD-ROM drive, mouse.

CD contents:
Chessbase 9 Reader with pdf manuals in English and German, both with an accompanying *readme* file.
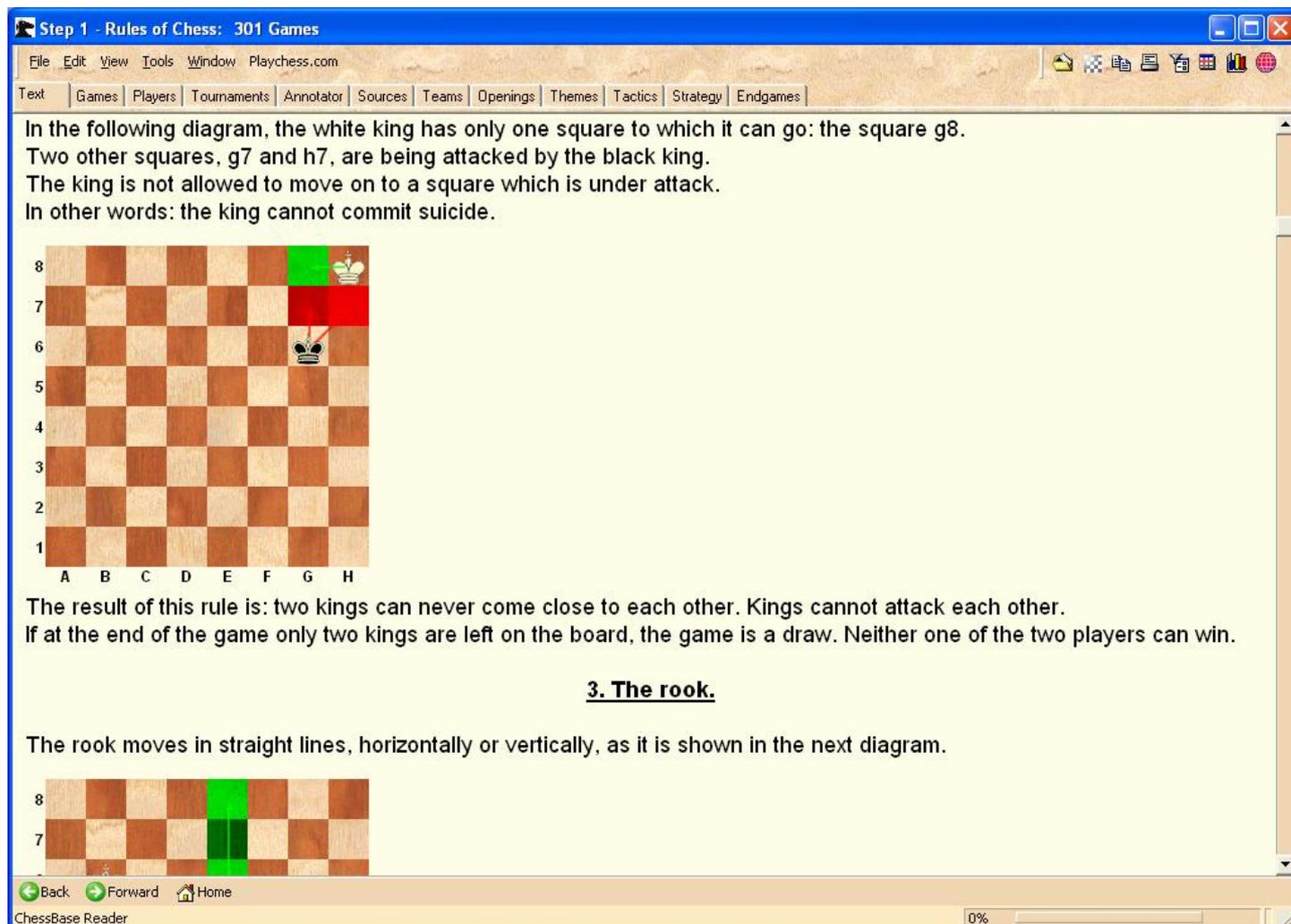Seven Chessbase databases:

- Step 1 - Rules of Chess
- Step 2 - Beginner Tactics
- Step 3 - Games
- Step 4 - Intermediate Tactics
- Step 5 - Games
- Step 6 - Advanced Tactics
- Step 7 - Games

Total CD size: approximately 24 megabytes.

Installation of the Chessbase Reader, necessary for viewing Chessbase databases, starts automatically. After a minute, the installation is complete, and you're prompted to restart your computer. This product comes in a colorful DVD-like box. The system requirements are minimal.

Overview:

Step 1 - Rules of Chess. This section starts with a brief introduction to the Rules of Chess, followed by an illustrated tutorial. "…*Millions of people all over the world like to play chess. Some of the strong players are professional chess players. They devote their whole life to this magnificent game.*" They certainly do, as I did. It is useful to add that not only players choose chess as a profession nowadays. Trainers, arbiters, organizers, etc, do, too! The "Introduction" is in Chessbase text format and cross linked with the other six tutorials.

This tutorial is done relatively well. An expert opinion on this article may come from an (International) Chess Arbiter only. Rules of Chess are described slightly differently in many sources, none close to perfection yet, the closest one, naturally, written by the World Chess Federation (FIDE), which I can recommend. Here, for example, I have a remark on the 'jumping pieces': "*…The rook (and all other pieces, except the knight) cannot jump over other pieces and pawns…***"**, later is slightly contradicted when describing castling: "*..The king makes a long move over one square to the side (i.e. it moves two squares to one side) and the rook jumps over the king…*". So, can the Rook jump or not? These and similar interpretations of the official Laws of Chess should go towards "unification" in the future. Nevertheless, I can imagine that a newcomer can successfully learn the game here.

The learning phase ends with a link towards an included game database, with the purpose of learning "*some tactical tricks*"

"Some" seems to be pretty modest, as there are around three hundred entries! All the examples are "colored" and with evaluations, replacing words as much as possible. Where the author thought necessary, variations are provided as well. Motif names are quoted in the examples. Various position evaluation symbols have not been explained previously, though. If you're resourceful, you can find their meanings experimenting with Chessbase Reader's "Annotation Pallete".

The many examples have been chosen very nicely and should be instructive for the user.

Checkmate

*** 1.f8♘# ▪

Done - Load Previous Game
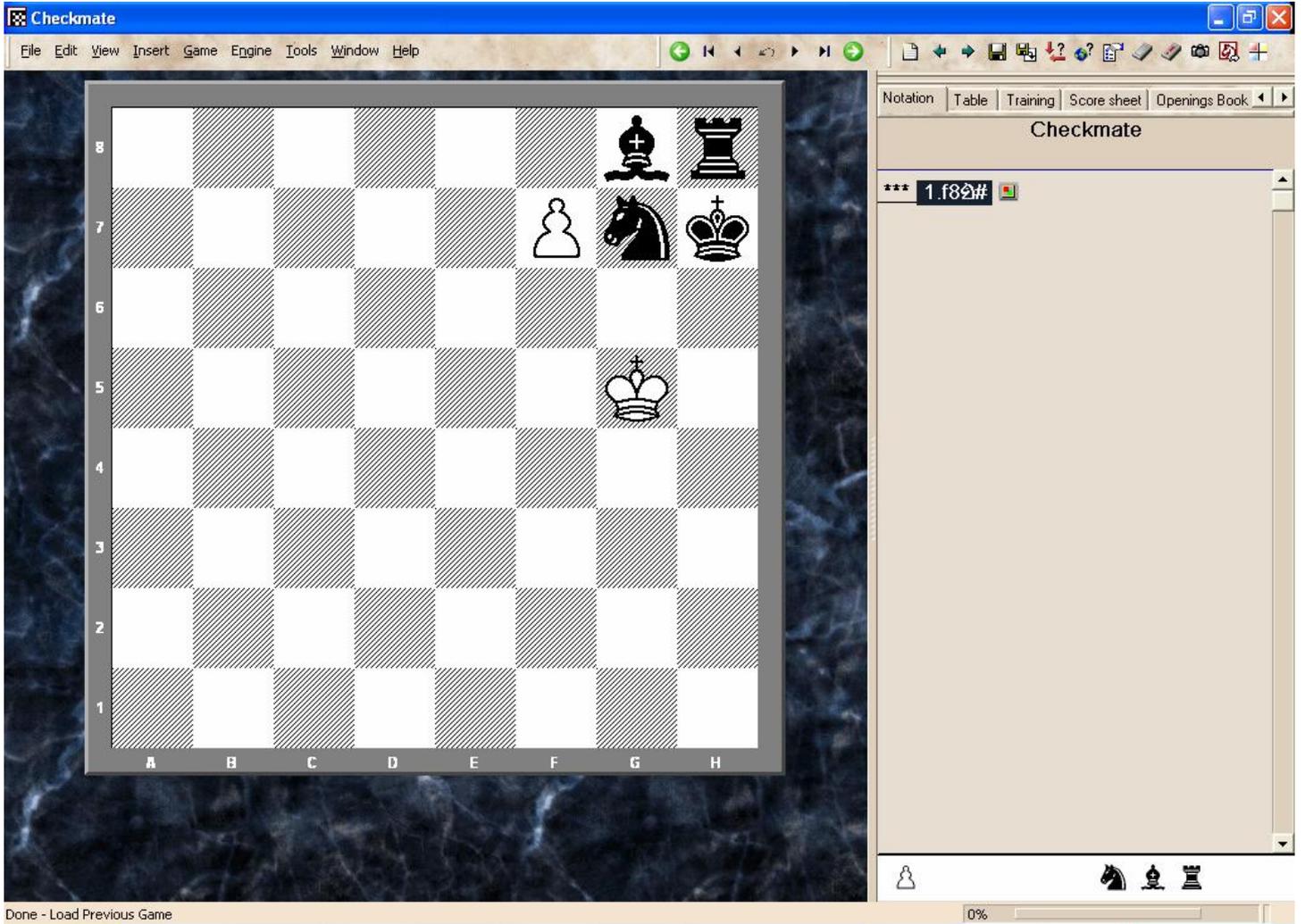
Step 2 - Beginner Tactics This section has no introductory text and comes with a database with 1860 (!!) entries from practical games and studies ranging from 1792-2002. The well prepared examples seem to be in no special order.

Zvi - Bronstein, 1-0

Notation | Table | Training | Score sheet | Op

Zvi - Bronstein 1-0
1991

*** 1.罝c6+-
1-0

Done - Load Next Game   0%

Step 3 – Games. 1154 games are available for studying here. Don't forget the possibility to enable the "Training" button in the "Options" menu, so you can enjoy solving critical game positions! After successfully completing the task, it would be useful to "rewind" the actual game and play out the moves.
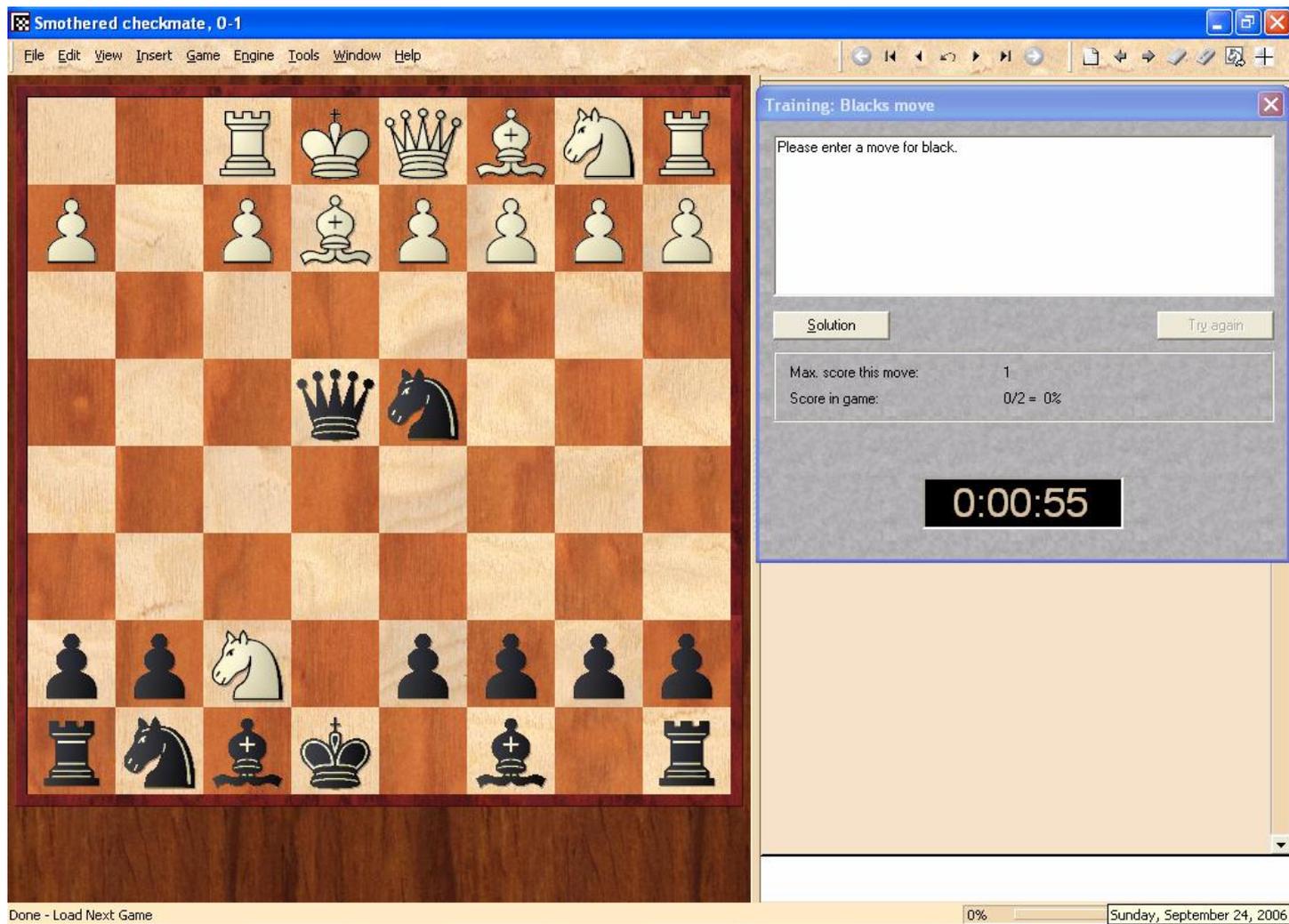
The exercises conveniently show the board from the attackers view.

Step 4 - Intermediate Tactics. 2665 (!!) tougher exercises from master practice await you in here. Forced checkmates and winning combinations for hours and hours of study.

Step 5 – Games. 372 annotated training games complement well the previous section.

Step 6 - Advanced Tactics. 546 examples from actual games and studies. Beautiful examples lack sorting by tactical motifs. The FIDE elo range of the players involved, spans from unrated to 2782 (Anand)!

Step 7 – Games. 223 examples, played by 436 players, are prepared mainly for computer training purposes and end the contents of this CD.

Conclusion:

The CD provides a wealth of material, not organized in a usual manner, yet instructive enough to maintain and raise the level of chess tactics of all its intended users. It is obviously a product with a lot of effort placed into it. I couldn't help noticing that none of former World Chess Champion (Gary) Kasparov's combinations are included in the Advanced Tactics section, yet thirty five are - in the Beginner's one! This points to one conclusion that, even though this software is designed for beginners onwards, you cannot hope of becoming a chess master, without learning the ABC first. The CD can prove to be a valuable training resource not only for players, but for Club and School chess instructors as well. As a player, you will not master the theory of Tactics here, instead you'll be exposed to a tough tactics training process, and are essentially expected to recognize the patterns yourself. Only time and player/trainer feedback can tell how successful this CD actually is. I can recommend trying it out, especially if you are planning to become a new member of our growing chess family!