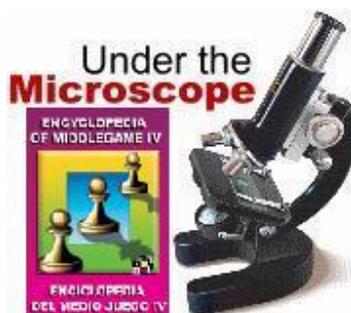


UNDER THE MICROSCOPE: CONVEKTA "Encyclopedia of Middlegame IV"



review updated on 25.12.2005

Convekta "**Encyclopedia of Middlegame IV**" english **CD review**

© 25.12.2005 Jovan Petronic. International Master. FIDE Senior Trainer.

<http://www.jovanpetronic.com>

Test Machine:

Intel® Pentium® 4 CPU, 3.00 GHz, 448 MB RAM, Windows XP SP2.

The CD comes wrapped up in a colorful box, with the installation CD, a 32-page instruction booklet and another 32-page Training Courses info booklet. 288 megabytes of CD data include the latest Convekta's Catalogue and Demo versions of nine Convekta's products, in Russian, Spanish and English language.

Highlights:

1. Easy installation. The installation process is automated, takes below a minute, and does not require a restart. The optional online registration makes you eligible for announcements about new versions or upgrades.



Remark:

Convekta essential requirements for this CD are: IBM-compatible PC with Pentium CPU, 16 MB memory (RAM), Hard disk (20 mb of free disk space for the program), VGA graphics, Windows 95/98/NT/ME/XP, CD-ROM drive, Microsoft compatible mouse. These requirements are quite enough for the program to work flawlessly.

Full installation of the program is around 40 megabytes only.

2. Three languages are supported!

Remark: Convekta offers three languages here: English, Spanish and Russian. Hopefully, more languages will be supported in the future.

3. Help. As usual, Convekta products come with an extensive built-in help file, offering immediate support for a novice user. Below is an example of help on the "Solving an exercise" function.

Solving an Exercise

The program can reply to a move entered by a user in different ways.

- a) The program makes a reply-move thus offering the user to enter his next move.
- b) The program gives a message **Your solution is correct. But let's consider a similar move.** Press **Enter**, and the move proposed by the program will be played on the board, then you can continue solving.
- c) When a line is over, the program shows the rest of moves and gives one of the following messages:
 - c1) **End of variation. Press button to return to the main line.**
 - c2) **End of exercise.**

Once you have received **End of exercise**, you can go for the next exercise.

If the user has entered a wrong move, the program takes his move back, punishes him with a penalty and gives him a hint.

The first hint includes markers and the theme name. The markers disappear after user's correct move or after selecting the **Hide markers** command in the [local menu of the board](#).

The second possible hint is blinking of a piece which is to move.

If these hints are of no use, the program itself makes the correct move instead of the user.

Sometimes, when the user makes a didactic mistake, the program gives a message: **You have made a mistake. Press button to look at the refutation!** The refutation is demonstrated in a special window.

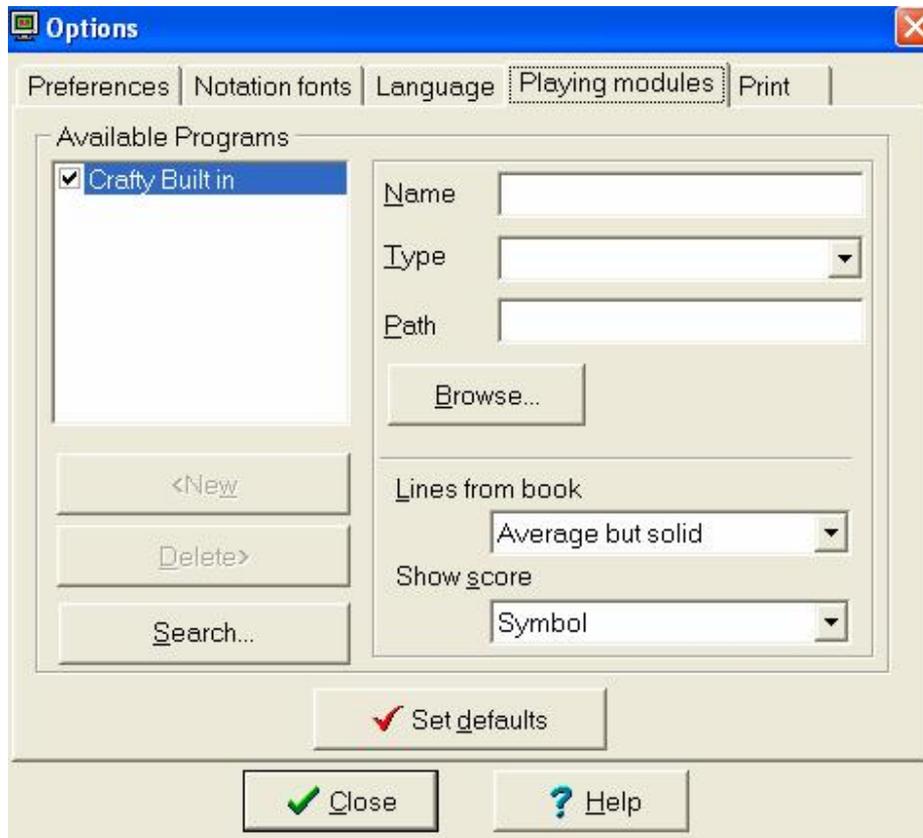
4. The interface is identical to Convekta's previous releases and offers essential and additional tasks.



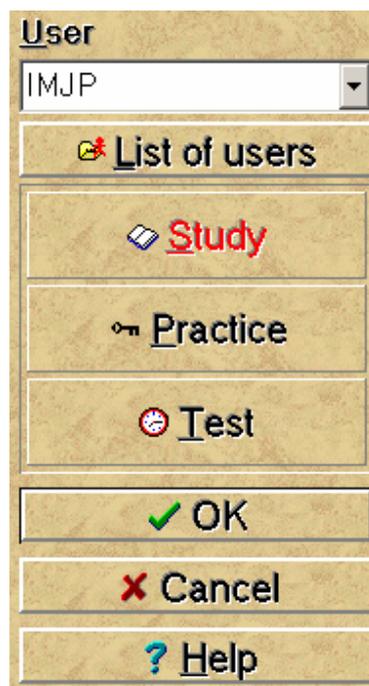
Remark: When in doubt of an evaluation given, or wishing to continue analysis, the program offers the user a possibility to play on. You can play the current, typical or custom positions. I find this option, an extremely useful add-on.

5. Playing engine Crafty is included.

Remark: Crafty may prove strong enough as an analysis engine. For more advanced analysis, I would recommend using another professional engine. The program offers optional installation of other engines:



6. This CD offers Study, Practice & Test sections, in the tradition of it's software predecessors. Multiple users is a very useful option.



What is there to Study, Practice and Test? Below is a screenshot summary of material covered in version IV:

- [-] Ruy Lopez
 - [-] Ruy Lopez. Jaenisch gambit
 - [-] Ruy Lopez. Arkhangelsk variation
- [-] Two Knights Game
 - [-] 4. g5
 - [-] 4. d4
- [-] French defense
 - [-] French defense 3. e5
 - [-] Classic variation 3.  
 - [-] 4. e5
 - [-] Variation 4.   5. e5  6. h4
 - [-] Variation 5.   6. f4
 - [-] MacCutcheon variation
 - [-] Rubinstein variation
- [-] Sicilian defense. Richter - Rauser variation
 - [-] 6. ... e6 7.  
 - [-] 7. ... h6
 - [-] 7. ... a6
- [-] Caro-Kann defense. Advance variation
- [-] King's Indian defense
 - [-] Saemisch system
 - [-] Plan with 6. ... e5
 - [-] Plan with 6. ... c5
 - [-] Plan with 6. ... 
 - [-] Classical system
 - [-] 9. 
 - [-] 9. 
 - [-] 9. b4
 - [-] Fianchetto variation
 - [-] 6. ...  7.  e5 8. e4
 - [-] Yugoslavian variation
 - [-] Averbakh system
 - [-] 6. ...  7.  e5
 - [-] 6. ... c5 7. d5
 - [-] 6. ... h6
 - [-] 6. ... 
- [-] Nimzo-Indian defense. Rubinstein system
 - [-] 4. ... b6
 - [-] 4. ... c5
- [-] Slav defense
 - [-] 4. ... dxc4
 - [-] 5. e4 b5 6. e5  7. a4
 - [-] 5. e3 b5 6. a4
 - [-] 5. a4  6. 
 - [-] 5. a4  6. e3
 - [-] Chebanenko variation 4...a7-a6.
 - [-] 5. e3 b5 6. b3 
 - [-] 5. 
 - [-] 5. c5
- [-] Tartakower - Bondarevsky system.
- [-] English Opening
 - [-] 4. ... e5 5.  d5 6. cxd5 
 - [-] 4. ... e6 5. g3 d5 6.  e5 7.  d4
- [-] The Hanham set-up against 1.d4
 - [-] Development the bishop on e2
 - [-] Development the bishop on g2

Here is an example from the study section:



[...] 9...g5!? This new continuation deserves the most serious attention. Black does not exchange the white h3-knight but restricts his mobility instead. At the same time Black hampers the f2- f4 advance as much as possible. 10.d3 ♖g7 11.♟c3 O-O 12.♟g1 ♟b7 Both opponents are bringing back into play their knights that were stuck on the rim of the board. 13.♟f3 ♟d5 14.O-O ♟d6 15.♟e4 f5! In this case, the black g5- pawn facilitates Black's typical strategy of advancing the pawn phalanx in the center. 16.♟xd6 ♜xd6 17.♟d2 g4 18.♞e1 ♟a6 19.♟f1 ♜g6 20.g3 ♞ad8 White's position is becoming alarming because all of his pieces are confined to the first three ranks, while Black threatens with a pawn storm on the kingside. 21.c4 White tries to break free desperately. ♟b4 22.d4 ♞xd4 23.♜a4 c5 24.♟b3 ♟c2 25.♟xd4 ♟xd4! The weakness of the light squares around the white king's position decides the issue. 26.♟g2 f4 27.♟d5+ ♟h8 28.♟e4 ♟f3+ 29.♟xf3 gf 30.♟d2 ♜g4 31.♟h1 fg 32.♜xa6 ♜h3 0- 1, Grischuk Alexander - Malaniuk Vladimir P, Tomsk 2001 Ch Russia (club)

All examples are textually annotated (I chose one that can fit the screen well, there are many deeply annotated ones as well), bringing the user a big step closer to understanding the position. In a recent interview of GM Nigel Short I just read, he values understanding the position more than other elements in chess. Convekta's annotations are obviously a step in this direction.

... and an example from the Practice section:



I had just made an intentional mistake, trying for Nc6xd4? A light bulb, along with critical squares started flashing, better luck next time... Anyway, the King's Indian Defense was never a big specialty of mine, maybe it will become now!?

The Test section offers exercises for all, from novice to (super)grandmasters!?



Remark: According to Convekta, there are over 560 annotated games, illustrating typical plans and methods in the openings and variations as shown in the screenshot above. Another 530+ exercises, with already standard refutations implemented, will keep the user busy for a pretty long while. 380+ positions are prepared for challenging the built-in analysis engine, too. Printing options are included, giving opportunities to practice and study Middlegame IV examples even without a PC! A lot of statistical information is available, useful especially for trainers to follow their students work.

The examples are taken from the best available (grand)master practice, making the data offered practically impossible to criticize in any way.

Conclusion:

As a professional trainer, I must give this CD a higher value than "only a player" may do.

It is simply another small masterpiece in this ongoing series. A lot of work has been done here, the master annotations, enhancing the otherwise excellent game examples, are easily recognizable.

The analyzed and annotated variations chosen, of course, do not cover all. They seem to be targeted at the most modern continuations, practiced by today's leading grandmasters and thus make very useful study, practice and – reminder material.

Most of the annotations are aimed at the middlegame, however, opening and even endgame ideas are far from scarce.

After approximately 4 hours of browsing (typing included) - I can recommend this CD for FIDE instructors, FIDE Trainers and players FIDE rated 1600 and above and/or above 11 years of age, in the average. For better understanding, adequate chess literary skills are necessary for junior users.

Product link: https://secure.chessassistant.com/Soft_Jovan_Petronic.htm

Secure Chess Web Store: https://secure.chessassistant.com/Jovan_Petronic.htm