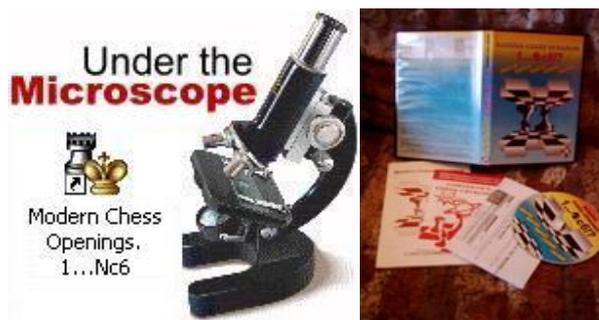


UNDER THE MICROSCOPE: CONVEKTA "Modern Chess Openings. 1... Nc6!?"



review updated on 28.11.2005

Convekta "Modern Chess Openings 1... Nc6!?" english CD review

© 28.11.2005 Jovan Petronic. International Master. FIDE Senior Trainer.

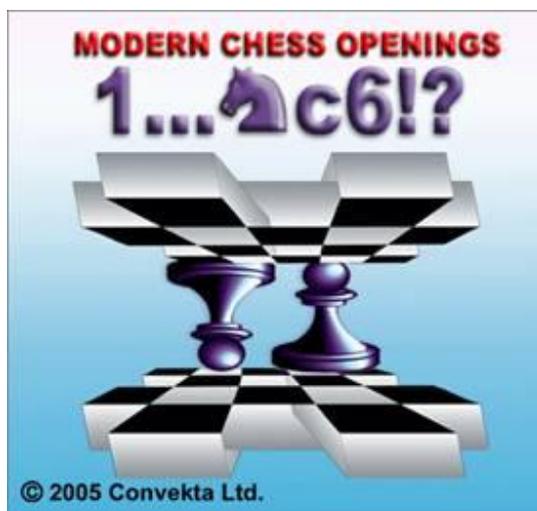
<http://www.jovanpetronic.com>

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 and a 39-page instruction booklet, along with Convekta's latest Chess Catalogue. A slightly over burned 717 megabyte CD contains a lot of extra data, with demo versions of many previous Convekta products and Internet Club support.

Highlights:

1. Easy installation and online registration. The installation process takes only a few minutes, and does not require a restart. The optional online registration makes you eligible for announcements about new versions or upgrades.



Remark:

The online registration also asks for a serial number of the product, which I was unable to find. Upon registration you instantly receive a confirmation that the product has been successfully registered and a special code number, for which I am still unsure what it is for. The requirements for this CD seem to be pretty high, with a recommended 256 MB RAM, 1 GB of free disk space and a 1GHz CPU. I do not advise installing the program on weaker machines, although Convekta's essential requirements are far below the recommended ones.

I enjoy sacrifices in chess, not that much in HD space. The program, however, did not take up that much. 332 megabytes seems OK, having in mind that the CAP data took up nearly 76% (250 mb) of the installation, not to mention the 25 mb Internet Club support. If your "System Restore" is on, you can expect another 300 mb decrease in free space.

2. Six languages are supported!

Remark:

The CD box title mentions "only" five available languages: English, German, French, Spanish and Italian. Russian, although supported, seems to be missing from the cover.

3. CAP (Computer Analysis Project) data is included as a free and optional add-on.

Remark:

When inserted into the CD drive, an automatic launch offers installation of the program and an optional installation of CAP data (6.200.000 analyzed positions). In the booklet manual, however, the CAP data is said to have 15.000.000 positions analyzed!

The CAP data project is a revolutionary one, in my opinion, opening new frontiers in computer position analysis.

Nevertheless, it can be a major distraction for reviewing the more important issue of studying the 1... Nc6!? games and annotations. Additionally, using CAP data, you can venture into variations outside of the 1... Nc6!? ones, such as, for example 1.e4 e5 2.d4 Qg5, when the CAP evaluation gives White a +15, which can be pretty confusing. A similar Queen blunder in an early stage gives a +156 result, too!?

Below is an example from the main screen, from the 1.e4 Nc6!? Line, with the interesting CAP data information:



The screenshot shows the 'Modern Chess Openings' software interface. The main window displays a chessboard with the position after 1.e4 Nc6. The board shows White pawns on e4 and d4, and Black knights on c6 and b6. The interface includes a menu bar (Base, Edit, Dataset, Engines, Search, Advanced, Tools, Window, Help), a toolbar, and a tree view on the left showing the opening structure. The right pane displays a list of moves with CAP data:

Move	Q-ty	%	YEAR	ELO	CAP	BGA	Compute	Annotati
3...f5 ±/+	893	51%	2004	2625	+0.37			
3...f6 ±	104	55%	2004	2470	+0.52			
3...e6	29	40%	2003	2365	+0.72			
3...h5	12	54%	2003	2375	+0.76			
3...a6	4	37%	2003	2115	+0.52			
3...g6	3	0%	1999	2120	+0.60			
3.f5	2	25%	1996	2105	+0.52			
3...d7	1	100%	1984		+0.60			
3...d6	1	100%	2003	2190	+0.80			
Other moves								
3...e6	0				+0.72			
3...h6	0				+0.60			
3...b6	0				+0.76			
Total	1049	51%						

Interestingly enough, although computer evaluations favor White in all the variations above, the human over-the-board results show a remarkable percentage in many lines for Black, ensuring forever interesting games to be played!

4. The interface is a database management system named "Modern Chess Openings". It is an abridged version of the spectacular Chess Assistant 7.

Remark: As an abridged version, with a lot of options to explore, many features are unavailable for the user. In the manual, Convekta recommends to it's users to obtain the Chess Assistant program, if wishing to use these. I do not have a definite opinion on - if the unavailable options should be removed from the program, or remain as they are.

5. Playing engines Crafty and Dragon are included.

Remark: These engines are more than strong enough for the average user, yet a professional player or trainer may wish to challenge Convekta's evaluations with a more powerful one, within the program itself.

6. The Theory database covers White's main opening moves 1.e4 and 1.d4, and challenges them with the recommended 1... Nc6!? The introduction contains 40 pretty well annotated games, with text comments, too. It is followed by 238 sample annotated games from well chosen master practice, from the 1.e4 Nc6! order of moves, and another 93 annotated games from the 1.d4 Nc6! move order. Obviously, a lot of (good) work has been put into these.



Remark: Some annotations contain merged (often annotated and always evaluated!) master and other games, which lack an integration of the players FIDE elo, assuming the users are familiar with the names and the strength of the players.

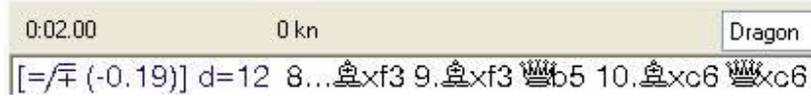
7. The Practice database includes 50 test positions "illustrating typical features, methods and principles of play".



Can you find the best move for Black?

Remark: I chose the example above randomly, and decided to check out the given solution, using the program's built-in analysis engine Dragon (sounds stronger than Crafty!?), additionally boosted by manually increasing the Hash size from 8 (after installation) to 300 megabytes.

After 2 minutes (not recommended for complicated positions such as the one above) of "thinking", the engine did not seem to agree with what Black played as his first move of the combination.



In another 2 minutes the Dragon did not seem to agree with White's move #10, judging the position as better for White:

[...] 8...e5! 9.hxg4 ♗xg4 10. ♗h4 f5 11. ♗xg4 fxg4 12.g3 exd4 13. ♗c1 g5 14. ♗g2 ♗c5 → 15. ♚d3 ♗hf8 16. ♗e1 ♗d6 17. ♗a3 ♗h6 18. ♗h4 ♗hf6 —+



Nevertheless, I enjoyed the game, as it was a demonstration of two (strong) humans, not two computers striving for the perfect draw in 1000 moves.

8. A sample games database is included as well, featuring 5113 full games.

Remark: Of around 13.000 games available with the 1... Nc6 response, this selection seems OK, with the last game being more than a year old, though.

9. The standard Convekta database with Master Evaluations is included as well. It is of invaluable help in determining position evaluations, when uncertain.

10. An Opening Encyclopedia © Chess Assistant ends the major highlights. It is divided into two large subsections, depending on White's first move, 1.e4 or 1.d4. Here is a sneak peak of one of the featured CAOE screens:

Move	Q-ty	%
2.d4 ±	3180	50%
2. ♗f3 ±	1446	58%
Other moves		
2. ♗c3 ±	0	
Total	4626	52%

2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	Eval
d4	♗c3	♗f3	e5	♗e2	♗g3	exf6	♗d3 ±	±
d5	e6	♗f6	♗e4	f6	♗e7	♗xf6	▲	
...	e5	c3	♗e2	♗g3	♗b5	▲	...	±/=
...	♗f5	e6	f6	fxe5	e4 ±/=	...	...
...	exd5	♗f3	♗e2	♗e3	c4	♗d2	d5 ±/=	±/=
...	♗xd5	♗g4	O-O-O	e5	♗a5	♗b4	▲	
...	♗f3	♗c3	♗e2	d5	exd5	♗xf3	♗e2 ±	±
d6	♗f6	♗g4	e6	exd5	♗xf3	♗e5	▲	
...	d5	♗c3	♗e3	♗ge2	a3	♗d3	g3 ±/±	±/±
e5	♗c67	♗g6	♗b4	d6	♗a5	♗b6	▲	
♗f3	d4 ±	...	...	...	...	...	...	±
d6	♗	...	...	...	...	...	...
...	exd5	♗c3	♗b5	O-O	♗c4	h3	g4 ±	±
d5	♗xd5	♗a5	♗d7	a6	♗g4	♗h5	▲	
♗c3	d4	a3	bxc3	f4	♗f3	♗d3	O-O ±	±
e6	♗b4	♗xc3	d6	♗ge7	O-O	♗e6	▲	

A new feature enables the user to modify the material on the CD!?

Remark: This standardized Chess Openings presentation is a must for an easier grasp of new theory. It remains unclear from the example above, how should Black proceed after 1.e4 Nc6!? 2.d4. Three choices are offered, 2... d5, 2... d6 and 2... e5, the last one being evaluated as the theoretically weakest response. The usual approach is that the strongest line is the last one, but in this and other examples, this is not the case.

Conclusion:

Convekta offers the "resurrection" of a seemingly forgotten defense. Browsing through the CD games database, one is astonished to learn that 1... Nc6!? has been (successfully) played by none other than: Nimzowitsch, Korchnoi, Larsen, Petrosian, Portisch, Morozevich, Miles, Benjamin, Geller, Gligoric, Dzindzihashvili, Svidler, Seirawan, Khalifman, Ponomarev, Leko, Azmaiparashvili, Speelman, Taimanov, Anand, etc!

A six language support is exceptional, offering to educate chess players and trainers world-wide. In the "old days", Bobby Fischer had to study the Russian language, to be able to read their advanced chess teachings.

Another interesting piece of statistics, when queering the updated Convekta's HugeBase (not included in this CD), is that 1... Nc6!? firmly holds 9th place as a reply to both 1.e4 and 1.d4. Top ten is acceptable in any sport, I believe. Moreover, one might end up surprised that White's main response after 1.e4 Nc6!? is not the obvious 2.d4, but 2.Nf3!? admitting the value of the somewhat premature development of the Queen's Knight.

Can 1... Nc6!? be refuted? No! All are welcome to try! In the long history of chess, I can remind that not any opening invented has been actually refuted. All are still in great tournament shape.

The title of the CD suggests a preparation for a defense with Black pieces, but offers data for both sides, whether in Theory or Practice. An ideal approach for the next version may be to concentrate only on Black, with recommended single lines for all White responses, as to minimize preparation time. Offering various choices on how to continue with Black is appreciated, yet impractical for a modern chess trainer/player, in constant lack of adequate study time for the game we all love.

Two White starting moves are covered, yet 1... Nc6 may be even more powerful against almost all other White's opening move choices, such as 1.c4, 1.g3, 1.Nf3, 1.f4, etc.

I enjoyed reviewing this CD.

To summarize, after approximately 5 hours of research (typing included) - I can recommend Convekta's "Modern Chess Openings. 1...Nc6!?" CD to - chess trainers: FIDE instructors & FIDE Trainers and to - players FIDE rated 1600 or more and/or above 12 years of age.

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

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