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SCHACH AM PC

Dieter Steinwender and Frederic A. Friedel

With a preface by Garry Kasparov
Markt & Technik
Buch-und-Software-Verlag GmbH, 1995
pp. 510 (in German)
ISBN 3-87791-522-1
Price: DM 69

Reviewed by Bob Herschberg¹ and Jaap van den Herik²

This solid volume (around 500 pages) combines the obvious and elementary with the fairly advanced. Kasparov's preface is worth reading; we quote "if I should ever seriously be challenged by a computer for a match for the World Championship, I shall certainly prepare for that event systematically and intensively – of course, with a computer."

After the Introduction, there are five parts to the book. Part 1, *Fundamentals*, after a description of the first chess machines, gives an overview on how chess programs think. It covers matters up to opening books, hash tables, the enterprise DEEP THOUGHT, and the conquering offensive of the PC programs.

Part 2, *Chess with PCs*, concentrates on what is available to the owner of a reasonably advanced PC and has a sixty-page review of the major programs. This is supplemented by 25 pages of itemized chess software in the public domain.

Part 3, *Man and Computer*, compares the playing strengths of man and machines and has a chapter on computer chess for professionals, where endgame databases are dealt with at reasonable depth.

Part 4, *Creative Computer Chess*, invites the reader to write his own chess program, encouraging him by stating that only grandmasters are incapable of it. Hash tables are dealt with under the motto of being carnal wolves in sheep's clothing. Full minimax is exhibited in BASIC.

The final part is a dictionary of computer chess, comprising 42 pages. As is not unusual nowadays, a CD ROM is included, with demo versions of commercial programs, and 19 shareware items. For good measure, 700 games have been added.

The book may be elementary, but it gives a reasonably complete coverage of the theme, hardly assuming any prior special knowledge on behalf of the reader. Best of all, it is not without occasional touches of wit, such as the last of the ten commandments for playing anti-computer chess: "never be pressed for time unless you opt for a certain death against the computer, even when you are a grandmaster".

Highly-recommended for all those reading German.

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