

ERIC HALLSWORTH
FLAT 1, DOL HENDRE
FORDD DYFED
TYWYN
GWYNEDD LL36 OST
November 1985

CHESS COMPUTERS - NEWS SHEET No. 2

Dear Friends,

My thanks first of all to all who replied to my 1st. News Sheet - apart from 1 letter everyone was most helpful, appreciative and encouraging. It is obvious that many consumers as well as some distributors are concerned about the sometimes wild claims made about new Chess Computers, and it is clearly felt that there is a real need for independent testing/analysis of results.

THIS NEWS SHEET contains some up-date on one or two Machines, especially the new ones; Ratings from a couple of Tournaments (including the 1985 World Micro in Amsterdam!); an up-date of my suggested Rating List based now on the Results of over 180 Matches and Tournaments which I have; and (IF there's room) maybe a Game or two of actual Chess (!) and some positions for you to try out on your own Computer.

Novag CONSTELLATION EXPERT. This is the official name of the Machine previously expected under the name Novag MONSTER. It is not a 5mhz up-date of the Super Constellation as I mistakenly indicated in NS1, but is designed rather to compete at 'quality' level with boards and machines such as the CONCHESS range, Fidelity's ELITE and ELEGANCE, and the top MEPHISTOs. The programme is 64K with wooden playing surface nearly 15"x15" and a full range of facilities. Based on a comparison of results by the Constellation EXPERT and the SUPER Constellation in Blitz matches against the SUPER ENTERPRISE, Eureka suggested in a letter to me that a rating of around 2100ELO. This was admitted to be "very crude" and I believe that it is optimistic. Results at lower levels tend to be slightly enlarged if anything (i.e. a Machine winning 6-4 at Tournament Level against another Machine may do slightly better, viz 6½-3½ or even 7-3, at Speed Levels), and Blitz Levels especially can throw up Result variations over small tests. I am not trying to invalidate the Test which would be quite wrong of me, but I am trying to put it into correct perspective. (The Results are included in my 'RESULTS SECTION'). In the 1985 World Micro Championship the best placed of the Novag EXPERTS obtained an ELO performance not too far below the hoped-for Rating, but another of their 3 entries came last and will cause some concern.

Fidelity EXCELLENCE. Very impressive claims continue to come in from some US sources, one of which apparently estimates the Excellence at 2173 as a result of its play in the USCF Chess Computer Championship 1985. However I have been told verbally that in some of its US appearances the Excellence was running at 8mhz (+135ELO approx) and results from all but one British source have the Excellence performing a good bit below this. Estimates from various British retailers who sell both Fidelity and other make Chess Computers are mostly in the 1850 - 1900 range. Fidelity told me on the 'phone that the programme in the commercial model that we buy is the ELITE C/ELEGANCE, but running at 3mhz instead of 4 and 3.6 respectively. Also programme size has been cut which affects the Opening Book. However I am told that this has had an unexpected effect in causing the Excellence to avoid some lines in which results had not been so successful and it thereby plays better in some lines. Nevertheless its result in the 'Doska All-Stars Championship' was disappointing and, in view of all the evidence, I have reduced my original suggested Rating though, at around £150, it must still be good value for money.

MEPHISTO AMSTERDAM. The World Championship Result speaks for itself to a large degree though I believe the comments I have made in the 'Results Section' are valid and help us keep our feet on the ground. US Retail sources have estimated the commercial version of Mephisto AMSTERDAM at 2200ELO and you may by now have seen adverts for it costing from £750 - £920 complete depending on which Board version you buy. When you look at the World Championship Table, a quick glance may seem to indicate that the 2200 figure is on the low side, but I think it needs to be emphasised that AMSTERDAM was running at nearly

double the speed of the commercial version. This involves a Rating increase of not more than 100ELO (cp. CONCHESS 4 and CONCHESS 2 which is a double-speed situation; or Novag's CONSTELLATION 3.6 which is 1.8* the CONSTELLATION 2 - ELO Rating increases in both cases are just under 100). I know of one or two people who are buying this 'as soon as possible' and I am eagerly awaiting first reports of Results against other Machines which they own such as Super Constellation and Excellence.

MEPHISTO MM2. This is another new programme just brought out by Mephisto - though somewhat cheaper at £275 - £435 complete, again depending on the Board containing the Module. This is intended as an up-date on the Mephisto BLITZ programme, but there seems to be a Manufacturer's disagreement concerning the Programmes real ability and the results I have thus far are not sufficient to draw definite conclusions - to make sure I don't get into trouble I should perhaps refer to my efforts as 'suggested conclusions'! CONCHESS Distributors advise me that the MM2 is exactly the same as the Conchess PLYMATE and that they (Conchess) are not convinced at all that it is better than the PRINCESS Range, pointing to the 1985 World Micro Champ. result in which CONCHESS 6 came higher than the best of the PLYMATE/MM2 entries. On the other hand usually reliable US Retailers have estimated 2060ELO for MM2/PLYMATE against 2035 for BLITZ. The BLITZ itself is the PRINCESS Programme, but running at 3.7mhz which should make it about 5ELO below CONCHESS 4. Some say that it isn't altered at all from PrinChess; other sources say there are minor improvements in the Openings and Endings - I haven't got both so I just can't tell you. Even small variations in suggested ELO Rating figures don't guarantee that one is better, so the US 2035 for BLITZ against, say, my 1990 for CONCHESS 4 is not 'foolproof'.

To give an example of big Rating variations which occur, let me give you a brief preview of my latest ICCA Journal which arrived 15 minutes ago. The majority of its information will have to wait till another time so that I can 'dissect' it all, but the latest Swedish Rating List is included and reads as follows for the top few:-

1-Private Line 1935*. 2-Turbostar 1915. 3-Super Constellation 1898. 4-Elegance 1891. 5-Conchess 4 1871. 6-Mephisto Exclusive S 1830. 7-Conchess 2 1811. 8-Prestige 1807.

It is immediately obvious that these figures are from 80 - 120 below those to which we are used.

*Private Line - Machine contents 'uncertain' - probably an Elegance or Excellence but running at 4mhz.

On a later page in the Magazine there is a further Rating List from the same folk, but this time based on results against human opposition instead of Machine v Machine.

1-Elegance 2064 (!!!?). 2-Super Constellation 1813 (!??). 3-Constellation 3.6 1740. 4-Elite B 1726. 5-Turbostar 432 1703 (!). 6-Constellation 2 1689.

I quote here from the Magazine - "The rating of Elegance seems absurdly high and is likely to fall after more Games against human opponents. Similarly the rating for Turbostar is likely to increase after meeting more people. There is clearly wide discrepancy between the countries. For example, Super Constellation in the U.S.A achieved a Rating of 2018 after 40 games against human opponents while in Sweden we find 1813 after 37 games!"

Small sample variation is discussed in the new Magazine 'COMPUTER CHESS TODAY' from Contemporary Chess Computers. In a very interesting and honest article they point out how, to use their example with apologies to Stoke fans, Stoke City might beat Liverpool in a single League Match whilst, at the end of the season, Liverpool will be at or near the top and Stoke... well, we'll say no more! In a Blitz Tournament they quote how the CONCHESS 4 beat CONCHESS 6 by 3-1 in their own series of Games whereas in a series of, say, 30 Games, the Conchess 6 could be expected to have clearly asserted itself. On the subject of this new Magazine, whilst it is obviously pro-CONCHESS there is other information and articles of interest; a nicely presented Magazine with Games to play through and positions to try out on your own Chess Computer (how easy it is to spend too much time discussing the Machine abilities instead of actually using them and playing Chess!). Anyway, COMPUTER CHESS TODAY can't be all that bad as they have written most favourably of my own work in connection with Chess Computers and referred specifically to my Article for POPULAR CHESS which sparked off the issue of these (free!) News Sheets!

SUPER ENTERPRISE and ADVANCED STAR CHESS. Again these certainly seem good value for money, but the Manufacturer's printed claim of 2100ELO seems very optimistic! One Retailer has commented that 'the Middle Game play may approach 2100 but, if it does, the End Game approaches 1500'! As further Results have come in my suggested Rating has continued to come down and I have it at around 1850ELO as I write this. Nevertheless the price and the variety in styles of play possible by choice are good compensation and owners who have written me have obviously found the Machine very interesting. I had hoped to include a small Blitz Game between SUPER ENTERPRISE and CONSTELLATION EXPERT which Eureka kindly sent me, but I'm not sure that space will permit after my page 2 diversions following receipt of my ICCA Journal.

BRITISH CHESS MAGAZINE kindly published a small portion from NS1 so I am hopeful for some useful response from that. Their 'main British competitor' advised me of the advertisement prices which are a bit beyond the means of publishers of free News Sheets!

Now to a couple of TOURNAMENT TABLES and then an up-dated RATING LIST (suggested!). As I said in my last letter, if my figures don't agree with results you have, don't just write telling me what a rotter I am - enclose the results which you have and I will be only too glad to include all those which are new to me. The reliability and value of the Ratings will relate directly to the number and accuracy of the information sent to me.

MATCHES (at BLITZ Level).

N/Super Constellation - Super Enterprise 7-3 (2015-1828)
 N/Const Expert - Super Enterprise 8½-1½ (2133-1763)

DOSKA 'ALL-STARS' TOURNAMENT.

		Elo
1 N/Super Constellation	4½/6	Perf. 2132
2 S/Turbostar 432	3½	2000
3 F/Excellence	2½	1873
4 Super Enterprise	1½	1778

1985 WORLD MICRO CHAMPIONSHIP, Amsterdam.

		Opps	Elo	
		Scrs	Perf	
1 Mephisto Amsterdam 1	8 /8	58	2378	(-100 = 2278)
2 Mephisto Amsterdam 2	7	49	2292	(-100 = 2192) adjustments for commercial
3 Mephisto Amsterdam 3	7	48½	2288	(-100 = 2188) Rating approximation.
4 Conchess 6	4½	25	2077	
5 N/Const Expert Y	4	28	2061	I have referred earlier to the effect of the enhanced speed of MEPHISTO AMSTERDAM compared with the commercial version which will run at about 55% speed, or about 100ELO max less.
6 Plymate/MM2 Y	4	21	2029	
7 Plymate/MM2 Z	3½	23	2012	
8 Orwell X	3½	23	2012	
9 Orwell Y	3½	21½	2005	
10 S/Turbostar 440 K	3½	18½	1993	I must also mention the fact that, under the TOURNAMENT RULES, no Computer is allowed to meet another of its OWN TEAM ENTRANTS. This would never happen in a 'proper' (forgive me) Tournament, for Organisers would ensure that all the Leaders met each other whereas here none of the MEPHISTO AMSTERDAMS met. The effect of this SHOULD BE NOTED. If they meet each other, then 1 point is lost by them in EACH meeting, whether the result be a 1-0 or ½-½.
11 Orwell Z	3	25½	1997	
12 N/Const Expert C	3	19	1963	
13 S/Turbostar 440	3	15	1947	
14 Plymate/MM2 X	3	14	1943	
15 S/Turbostar 440 G	2½	15	1921	
16 N/Const Expert X	1	7	1797	

Thus if we imagine a normal Tournament and the Mephisto Machines meeting each other once each and, say, drawing, then they would have ended the Tournament with 7, 6 and 6 respectively. Still a clear win, but not quite so great. This would also have the effect of allowing other Machines to meet each other (the 'poorer' opposition more often and gain from this a little. For example, four Machines had to play a full 3 Games against the deadly Mephisto trio and would surely have had a good chance of scoring an extra ½ point or more if they had been freed from even 1 of these meetings. The 'unlucky 4' were CONCHESS 6, ORWELL Z, PLYMATE/MM2 X and PLYMATE/MM2 Z. Before I leave this matter however, it would be wrong of me to belittle the MEPHISTO AMSTERDAM performance.

By use of the Opponents' Scores and a sub-routine in my ELO RATING PROGRAMME I am able to make some allowance to correct for the standard of opposition met by each Entry. For example, if the Mephisto Amsterdam 1 had obtained its B/B score against the 2nd to 9th Machines inclusive, its Opponents Score column would have read 74 and it would have obtained a higher score. These adjustments explain why other Machines, although scoring the same points, have differing Performance Ratings in some cases - it is due to an evaluation of the opposition which they met. I think then that it is fair to claim that my ELO PERFORMANCE figure in the final column is a fair representation of each Machines efforts.

COMPUTER TOURNAMENT FORMULA. Like me, you may at first wonder why arrangements are made to stop certain Machines meeting each other. However a good reason was provided in Vol 8 Issue 3 of the ICCA Journal where it is claimed that the Fidelity Avant Garde operator resigned in a winning Bishop and extra Pawn position to the Fidelity Excellence which eventually won the Tournament 'with a little help from its friends'! Perhaps Tournaments should be organised so that 'Stable-Mates' meet in the first 2 rounds when owners will not find it so easy to know which of their Machines to favour. Alternatively totally independent Operators should be used in all such meetings, though another incident recorded in ICCA suggests that this may not always be the answer. Anyway more next time perhaps.

Suggested RATING TABLE, Nov. 1985 by ERIC HALLSWORTH.

This is for your information, but I claim no authority for it and the Ratings are based on Results sent to me and gathered from various sources, and therefore can only be as accurate as same. At the same time I am independent, honest (I know, they all say that) and doing the very best I can to make sure that my findings are as reliable as possible.

1	Mephisto Amsterdam	2199	19	F/Elite B	1906
	Belle	2175		Sargon 3	1888
	Advance 3	2047	20	N/Constellation 3.6	1881
2=	Conchess Plymate	2029		Sargon 4	1876
2=	Mephisto MM2	2029	21	F/Sensory 12	1871
4	N/Const Expert	2028	22	Colossus 2	1858
5	Mephisto Blitz	2022	23	Psion QL	1850
3=	Conchess 6	2018	24	White Knight 12	1848
5=	F/Elite C 4mhz	2018	25	Super Enterprise	1847
	Orwell 85	2015	26	F/Elite old	1835
8	N/Super Constellation	1993		Philidor I.S/2	1822
9	Conchess 4	1992	27	N/Constellation 2	1818
10	F/Private Line	1989		La Regence/L'empereur	1810
11	F/Elegance	1985	28	F/Sensory 9B/2mhz	1793
12	S/Turbostar 440	1978	29	Conchess A0	1752
13	S/Turbostar 432	1976	30	Mephisto 3A Modular	1748
14	F/Excellence	1946	31	Mephisto 2A	1746
15	F/Prestige	1931	32	White Knight 11	1740
16	F/Elite A	1930	33	Chess 2001	1732
17	Conchess 2	1912	34	S/Superstar	1728
18	Mephisto Exclusive S	1909	35	S/C.C Mark 6	1725

Of course, with a new ICCA Journal and another batch of results from various Matches and additions to the Test Results from Sweden there is more work to be done as none of that latest information is included here apart from the World Micro Table (of which much had already been kindly sent me by Doska). So I expect there'll be more changes to come!

Sorry, no room for actual Chess again! I really will try to put this right next time but trust you will appreciate that 4 pages is a fair limit for post-weight and Gestetner costs. I'd rather stay 'free' cost-wise and then I can just issue when convenient rather than having deadlines to meet and unhappy subscribers.

That's it then - keep reporting back and don't stop sending me your various Games and positions just because they never get published.... I enjoy them!



Eric Hallsworth