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RANK DISCRIMINATION

The only constant element in our Journal seems to be its inconstancy. One issue ago, we were proud to point out a convergence: *Deep Thought* had pruned down its search trees to the extent that they were slender enough, possibly, to be acceptable to human neurons, provided those neurons could keep up the frantic pace of better than half a million nodes per second.

Well, as we all know human beings can not, – at least not even the chess-world top can. What the chess-world top *can* do is simply take a position and analyse it thirty-five ply deep if need be, call it a stratagem and crush the opponent. Not such the computer's way: traditionally, it would moronically worm its way through variations until it was convinced it had the upper hand. Unfortunately, the human master countered this upper hand by a deep, goal-directed analysis, proving himself to be superior, time and time again, over a piece-greedy program.

This vision, beatifically true only some 10 years ago, no longer applies. It has been shown, repeatedly *ad nauseam*, that there is a point (or at least a minor area) in which the computer *will* outstrip a human, even the best human, even the champion of them all in chess.

Being a Journal of record, we should not sit in haughty judgement, but devote ourselves to the lowly but not unrewarding task of recording the moves within a highly moveable feast, such as computer chess is for now and for posterity. So recording our delights as well as our occasional doubts in this issue and the next of the Journal, we notice for all our readers' attention that

- the ranks of contributing international grandmasters, manifest in the previous issue by the comments of Gufeld, Keene and Larsen on computer games, have now been swelled by IGM Mednis dissecting yet another computer endgame;

- L. Stiller (cf. Vol. 11, No. 4, p. 164) has further extended the highly intricate domain of five-men endgames which, only a few years ago, would have seemed to be beyond reach, – however, massive parallelism came to his aid just in time to enable him to outChéron Chéron and even to outTroitzky Troitzky, all due to having not only 2^1 brainhalves, but by successive subdivisions, being able to engage 2^{15} (=32768) morons in the game of Kings and the King of games; a full publication will appear in the next issue; perfect knowledge about endgames is spreading fast and furiously; we have a confirmed rumor, hopefully to be recorded in the next issue too, that S.T. Dekker has now constructed a program for the construction of *any* endgame database, theoretically not even excluding the ultimate endgame of 32 pieces, had we but chips enough and time;
- commercial programs traditionally have had authors coy, if not altogether reticent, about the techniques they employ; a tip of the veil is now lifted by David Levy and his co-authors in this issue, revealing the evolution of what they have programmed into their chips; the contributors have been canny enough not to tell all; what they *do* tell is far more than disclosing SEX by well-meaning talks about the birds and the bees;
- finally, with all doubts, dubieties, reservations and epistemological hesitancies, we proudly record, as a landmark, that the Fredkin Intermediate Prize has been awarded, significantly earlier than most of us ever expected: you will recall that the prize was to be given to the program consistently scoring over 2500 USCF rating points in 25 consecutive games: *Deep Thought* gained it with a dash, a flourish and a vengeance; human chess-players, while far from overwhelmed, now, if realistic, will, even the topmost 500 of them, have to allow for the fact that silicon players exist, however silly a con they can appear to be.

Your Editors, committed to survey the computer-chess world for you, cannot but reiterate their conclusion of the last issue and of so many issues before: let us keep an open mind and record the evolutionary outcome of the struggle between LSI and DNA. No doubt, a human player may be rankled by silicon's successes – this is as little reason to discriminate against silicon as it would be to be biased against the new nations' competitors in the Olympic Games on the utterly spurious grounds that there weren't any in 1896, let alone in 776 B.C.

Similarly, the ranks of the Grandmasters have been swelled by new competitors. We must not discriminate against them. Self-preservation of a human coterie is not even at issue: please let us remember that even when LSI gains the upper hand, it was good old human DNA which was essential in programming it.

Bob Herschberg
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