

## EVERY BIT A CHAMPION

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What a horror even to contemplate such an advert plastered all over the world. It is suggested, no less, that you can have all the services of the reigning chess World Champion for peanuts (no more than just a few ounces of them if inflation continues at the present rate). It is also stated, none too subtly, that the human chess élite has succumbed.

The Editors accept no wagers as to the date of the advert, but they are sure something much like it will appear in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Not, to be sure, in print, but on your personal network service. It will be broadcast to all who have indicated even a cursory interest in chess in their personal profile, however low on the scale. But together, globally, you will number in the many millions and the offer is real.

It is no more elitist to be interested in chess than, say, in Shakespeare, and it is no greater trouble to give you access to ChamPion than to provide you with the complete works of the Bard, text, comment and five stagings at least for each of the plays.

Extrapolate just slightly and, like your Editors, you will become convinced that it can be done. "My granddaddy is still telling me about Deep Thought, with a few measly million nodes a second. Why, it is billions now and it comes for free on the public channel ... My granny tells me about six-men databases; she went into a tizzy at a Terabyte of memory. I bet she never even knew what an Exabyte was." If you cannot conceive of such simple statements, your imagination fails in the same way as that of respectable academics proving, even in the 1930s, that no rocket could make a satellite achieve an orbit around Earth.

Let us not fall into this trap. Your present-day laptop is more powerful than our mainframes were twenty years ago, or was it fifteen? One innocuous musical CD literally has more bits of memory than was available on the most Brobdingnagian of maxis ten years ago. So let us please extrapolate a little and assume that computer power will not only be cheap but, by that very token, be widespread, that storage will be counted in Terabytes at the cost of perhaps a peanut for each Gigabyte, and that it will be universally available to all who desire it. Not in Utopia, rather as an almost unconsidered byproduct of an entertainment industry dealing massively in information. To your children, a Petabyte may just be a petty cache.

What would this mean to our readers? Well, see our advert. Is it going to be the end of the world? Of course not: all games will continue to be played by many, even though a computer outdoes them. Endgame databases can be built and be as many as convenient. Yet human beings will continue to delight in the intricacies of endgames, not so much oblivious of the fact that the database knows best, but rather stimulated by its silly, pretentious and unimaginative omniscience.

The future of games is not in jeopardy. It is to be welcomed for the added spice it gains from added power and added knowledge. The horrible advert at the top of this Editorial will be approved by the Better Business Bureau or be within the Trade Descriptions Act before you can count up to a billion (allow a heartbeat for a count). So what?

Bob Herschberg  
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