

A NOTE RECEIVED
from Martin Bryant
as reported by T.A. Marsland

A note outlining the performance of "White Knight Mark 11" in finding errors in books of chess problems has been received. The author, Martin Bryant, observes that one can expect some 5% of these problems to be in error. While it is recognized that "to err is human", nevertheless human analysis is all too readily accepted. One might keep these flawed problems in mind whenever experts in other fields are questioned. Programmers should be encouraged too, since a computer-based expert system could be a valuable assistant in the future.

"White Knight" found that the commonest flaw in the problems was a lack of uniqueness. For example, one supposed mate in 4 had 5 solutions! Other readers may wish to test their own program on a more difficult problem, that of refuting the proposed mate in 4 (beginning cla3) in the following problem by William Meredith (1875). They might also confirm that there are only two mates in 5 (beware, it required a 2MHz 6502 some 6 hours for this task!).

Overall the program seems to be quite quick, but no comparison with the standard set of problems analysed previously by László Lindner [ICCA Journal, August 1983] was offered. Mr. Bryant laments the fact that there are few published details about the workings of chess programs, while acknowledging that freelance programmers like himself are unlikely to be very forthcoming with new ideas. This contradiction aside, "White Knight" is available for the BBC microcomputer and both plays chess and solves problems. In the latter case, the chess knowledge is disabled and a pure brute-force approach is followed. This choice is quite reasonable since most problem themes are quite anti-chess.

