

MEPHISTO

The Board of the ICCA

For more than a year, there has been speculation concerning the future of Hegener + Glaser AG (Munich). During January 1994, any doubt still existing could be laid to rest when it became known that the company had been taken over by Saitek (Hong Kong). As we read it, the continuity of the Hegener + Glaser products has been ensured thereby.

The Board wishes to express their great appreciation to Hegener + Glaser for their substantial support given over many years to the ICCA in particular and to the chess community in general. Hegener + Glaser AG sponsored several ICCA Awards, computer-chess tournaments, and a number of "human" tournaments in which man and machine were able to participate on an equal footing. It is largely due to their efforts that, particularly in Germany, it is now commonplace to see the strongest commercially available chess computers taking part in tournaments with strong human masters and Grandmasters. The publicity so created contributes to human chess no less, we feel, than to computer chess.

Now that Hegener + Glaser AG have relinquished to some extent their corporate identity, this is the time to offer their founder members, Manfred Hegener and Florian Glaser, our sincere best wishes for their future endeavours.

Following this take-over, Saitek is now dominant in the chess-computer market. We have every reason to hope that, for the ICCA, the future will hold a successful collaboration with Saitek, a hope we base on their record of support of the ICCA in the past.

THE BEST ANNOTATION AWARD

The Editors

In the interests of stimulating wider use of chess-playing computers, the International Computer Chess Association has created a new prize to be awarded annually for the best computer-generated annotation of a chess game (cf. *ICCA Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 4, pp. 235-236). Each competing program will be given the same game (or the same short suite of games) to annotate. The program's output will be examined by a panel of independent experts (these will be internationally-known chess-players) who will assess the analysis based not only on the correctness and depth of the variations proposed, but also on the quality of the accompanying written comments. Authors have full freedom with their **output**, but it should be reminiscent of that appearing in newspaper chess columns. Authors are encouraged to include up to a maximum of three chess diagrams in their annotation of a game. Notation will be algebraic, with English letters as standard in this Journal or with figurines. Letters will stand for pieces as follows:
P = Pawn (optional), Q = Queen, K = King, R = Rook, B = Bishop, N = Knight.

The syntax of a move is:

[<Piece>] [<FromSquare>] <ToSquare>[=<PromotionPiece>] where <Piece> is one of the letters P, Q, K, R, B or N and <PromotionPiece> is one of Q, R, B or N. The <FromSquare> and <ToSquare> are the normal algebraic coordinates of a square, for example, e2 or e4.

To eliminate the possibility of operator interference, the programs should be capable of reading an ASCII file of a full game and should generate an output file that will be given to the review panel for examination. For **input** the programs will receive the full score of a game, in simple algebraic form, consisting of lines of input as follows:

<DigitString>. <WhiteMove> <BlackMove>

The following nonsense game illustrates castling on moves 5 and 7, *en passant* captures on moves 6 and 9 and capturing promotions on moves 10 and 11. You are NOT asked to analyze this game, but it could serve as a *test input*.

1. e2e4 d7d5 2. e4e5 d5d4 3. g1f3 b8c6 4. f1b5 c8g4 5. e1g1 d8d7 6. c2c4 d4c3 7. f1e1 e8c8 8. h2h3 f7f5
9. e5f6 c3b2 10. f6g7 b2a1=Q 11. g7h8=B

Deadline for the 1994 Best Annotation Award

Authors should submit by 31 December 1994 a diskette containing an executable version of their program to one of the following:

Tony Marsland
ICCA President
Computing Science Department
University of Alberta
Edmonton
Canada T6G 2H1
Phone: +1-403-492-3971
Fax: +1-403-492-1071
email: tony@cs.ualberta.ca

David Levy
ICCA Vice-President
89 Constantine Road
London
NW3 2LP
England
Phone: +44-71-485-9146
Fax: +44-71-482-0672

For the 1993 Best Annotation Award, the ICCA has received two entries: M_Chess Pro and Chessmaster 4000 Turbo. The evaluation of these two programs currently is in progress. The winner will be announced in the next issue.

GAMES: PLANNING AND LEARNING

A Summary of Papers Presented at the AAAI Fall Symposium

Raleigh, North Carolina, October 22-24, 1993

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Every year the American Association for Artificial Intelligence holds a series of spring and fall symposiums on a variety of AI topics. In 1988, Hans Berliner organized a session on computer game playing (AAAI, 1988). After a hiatus of 5 years, games were again part of the AAAI agenda when Susan Epstein and Robert Levinson organized a session titled *Games: Planning and Learning* for the fall 1993 symposium. More than 40 people attended the session to hear 21 paper presentations and the invited keynote speaker, Donald Michie.

The papers covered a wide range of topics applied to a large number of games (including go-moku, war games, backgammon, chess, checkers, bridge, tic-tac-toe, team games, scrabble, othello, metagames and single-agent games). This article contains a summary of the papers likely to be of most interest to readers of the *ICCA Journal*. All the papers presented at this conference are interesting and worth reading. Perhaps surprisingly, there was not a single paper devoted to chess; some papers mentioned chess and several papers developed techniques that were applicable to chess. If this conference was any indication, it appears that the game-playing research community is concentrating its efforts on games with imperfect information.

Stephen Smith and Dana Nau present a model of forward pruning in their paper *Toward an Analysis of Forward Pruning*. They apply their model to two classes of game trees and for each compute the error in the minimax value that results from introducing forward pruning to the search. Their conclusion is that the higher the correlation among the minimax values of sibling nodes in a search tree, the more successful forward pruning is likely to be.

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