

ChessBase Cafe

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The Fritz Fairy Analyzes and Annotates While You Sleep

First off, thanks to everyone who sent in questions and kind words on the column. It turns out that not all of the questions were about the Latin phrase I employed in the beginning. (*“Meum est propositum in taberna mori”* is from a medieval drinking song by Mapes and means roughly, “I mean to die in a pub.” I told you it wasn’t relevant!)

Many questions that came in were similar and many had to do with using Fritz to annotate your games automatically, our topic today. The “auto-annotate” feature of Fritz – again using the name “Fritz” for all the programs under the Fritz 8 interface – is called “anno-Fritzing” by some. The basic idea is select a game or games and turn Fritz on like a blunder-sniffing dog.

There are two tools for annotating entire games automatically. If you’ve only been using your engine to analyze a single position by turning on infinite analysis and letting it sit for a while you’ve really been missing out. The best thing is that these tools can automatically go through an entire database of games.

The first is the “Blundercheck” option under the Analysis menu. This will run through the entire game move by move adding alternative variations to the score that are superior, in Fritz’s opinion, to the move game move. The best thing about this is that you can set it to look for small errors or only major blunders by adjusting the “threshold” setting.

The Blundercheck doesn’t teach, other than teaching you that you blunder a lot, but it’s a fast way to find tactical mistakes. If you’ve just finished a few dozen blitz games (or a few hundred if you are an addict like me), you should set Fritz to look at them overnight before you go pass out. The sun is coming up, you’re out of the caffeinated drink of your choice, and your mouse hand looks like an eagle claw. You’re in no shape to do your own analysis!

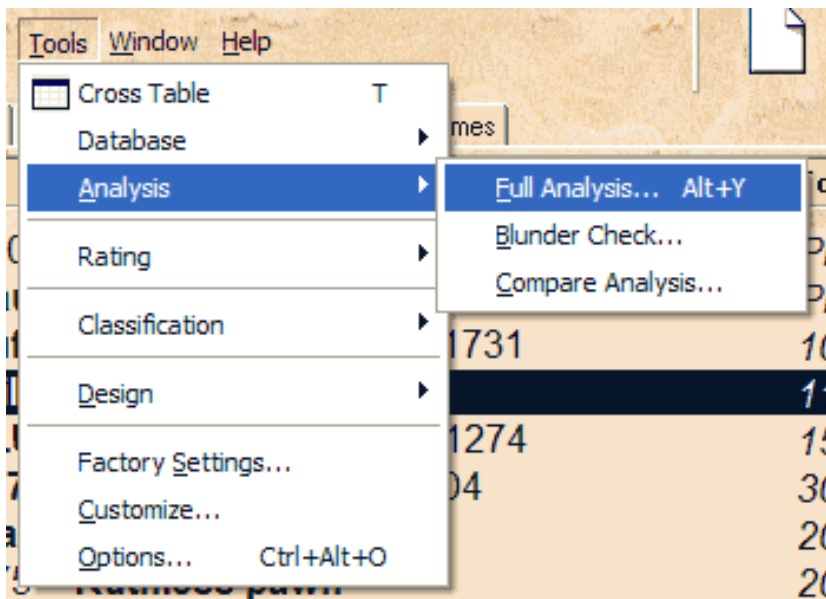
If you want friendlier analysis with more explanation you can chose Full Analysis option also under the Analysis menu. This will find blunders but it will also check the openings against a database and add text comments and special annotations to the game score. It will also add lines that aren't better but are interesting. E.g. "32.Bxh2 would be bad because..."

These text tips include things like "demolition of pawn structure," "White is still in the lead," "the last chance for counterplay," and "Black is playing like a retarded hamster." It will insert entire variations that it considers worthy alternatives and add evaluations in Informant symbols (+- means "White is winning," etc.) You can set it to add special graphical annotations to show attacks and other such things with colored arrows and squares.

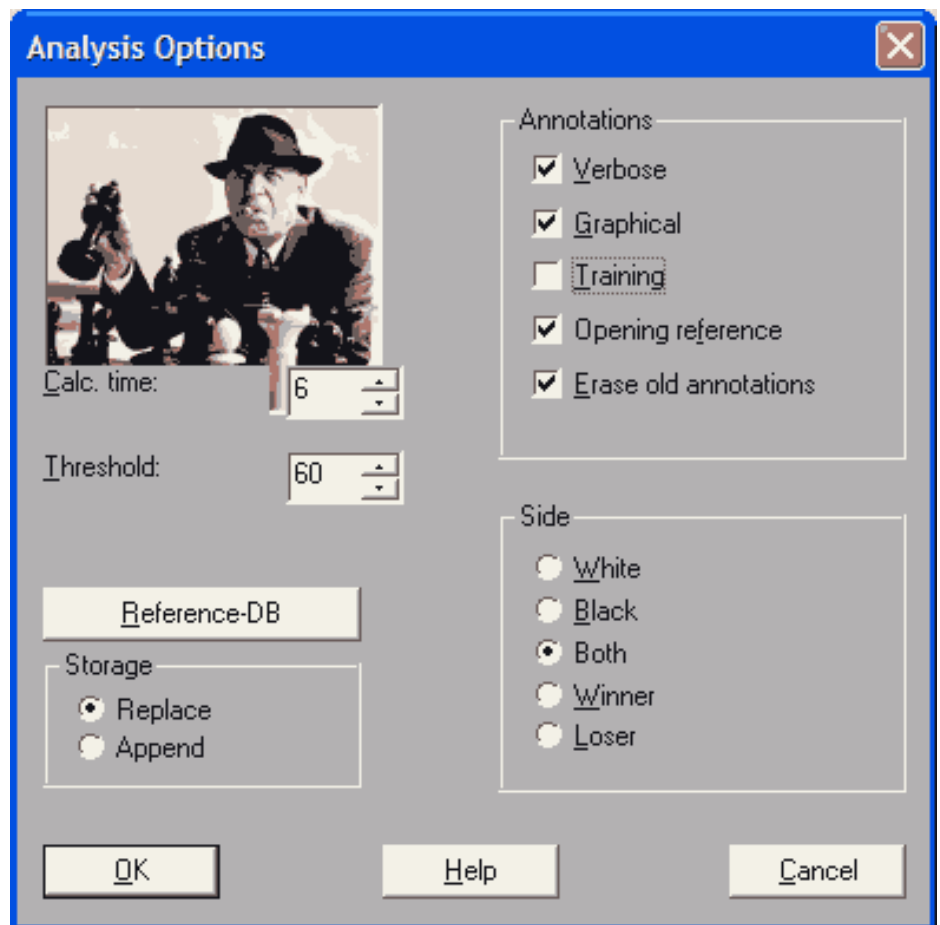
When you wake up in the morning and your hand has recovered you will have a nice file of freshly annotated games to review. It will add games that had similar openings as variations, very good for your repertoire. If you have a big database like the MegaBase this is even more effective. You can tell it to use any database you like as reference. This way you will see what others played in that opening and also what the first new move of the game was, at least compared to the games in the database you selected. (Fritz will mark it with an "N" for novelty.) This first new move is quite often a mistake and it's great to be able to see what the normal moves are in that position.

Let's go through a Full Analysis example step by step. Note that these game analyzers work backwards because Fritz has to first evaluate the move made before going on to analyze what it would play.

First open the database that contains the games you want to annotate. If you only want to analyze the game you already have open, skip that step. Now select the game or games you want to have Fritz analyze. You can select multiple games by holding down the control key (Ctrl) and clicking them with your mouse. Ctrl+a will select all the games in the list.



After you have selected the games, go to the Tools menu, click Analysis and then Full Analysis. This opens the Analysis Options dialogue box.



The Help file for this box explains each of the options well so we won't do that here. For our example we selected two games from a database. We have selected everything except "Training." That would turn parts of the games into a quiz, where it doesn't show the moves

and instead asks you to guess what the next move is. That way you can create your own tactical training from a database of games. But that's the subject of another column and we want to analyze our own games today.

Check Append if you want new, annotated versions of the games to be added at the end of the database. If you chose Replace the new annotated games will overwrite the originals.

We've set the calculation time for just eight seconds per move. It's not going to give you Kasparov quality at that level but for our example it will be enough when looking at games between beginners. We set the threshold at 60, meaning it will only annotate a move when its suggestion is evaluated as at least 0.6 pawns better or worse than the move in the game. If you set this higher, like 200, it will only be annotating blunders. Raising this number is another way to speed things up. But if you are going to let it run for a long time, leave it at the default of 30 so you have more analysis to work with when it's done.

Click OK and you can choose which engine you want to use and configure it. One tip here is not to have too high a value for the hashtable size if your selected calculation time is less than ten seconds. Using hundreds of megabytes of hashtables will actually slow the engine down in that case and should be used only for long thinks.

I've selected Junior 8 as my engine and clicked OK. The game window launches and maximizes, taking over the screen and it begins to annotated the first game. You can't perform any other tasks in Fritz while the analysis procedure is running. When it's done with the first one it will automatically launch the next game.

A game of 30-40 moves can take longer than you think and you should not give in to the temptation to set the calculation time very low to speed things up. The Full Analysis needs time to do a good job. The speed of your computer is also a factor here, of course.

Okay, the cookies are ready to come out of the oven. While I was writing the Q&A section below the Junior 8 engine annotated our games, identified the openings, and washed the dishes. (Not really, but when I have GMs over to do some analysis they don't wash the dishes either.)

Since we selected multiple games Fritz has replaced them in the database with the new annotated versions. Let's take a look at what we have.

buf (1493) - Alfie (1457) [B32]

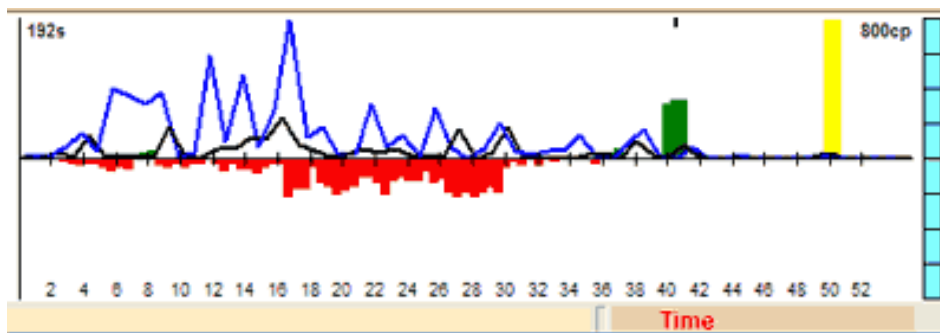
10m + 7s, rated
14.05.2003[*Junior 8 (8s)*]

B32: Sicilian: Löwenthal and Kalashnikov Variations **1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 d5 5.exd5** [5.Nxc6 bxc6 6.exd5 Qxd5 7.Nc3 Qxd1+ 8.Nxd1 e5 9.Ne3 f5 10.Nc4 e4 11.Bf4 Nf6 12.0-0-0 Bc5 13.Nd6+ Ke7 14.Bc4 Rd8 15.Nxc8+ Raxc8 16.Rhf1 Rxd1+ 17.Kxd1 Rd8+ 18.Ke2 h6 19.a4 g5 Short,N-Polgar,Z/Monte Carlo 1993/CBM 34 ext/½-½ (56)] **5...Qxd5 6.Be3 e5** [6...e6 7.Nc3 Bb4 8.Ndb5 Qe5 9.a3 Bxc3+ 10.Nxc3 Nf6 11.Bd3 0-0 12.Qf3 Qh5 13.Qxh5 Nxh5 14.0-0-0 Nf6 15.Bg5 Ng4 16.Rhf1 f6 17.Bf4 Nge5 18.Bb5 a6 19.Ba4 Ng6 20.Be3 b5 21.Bb3 Sipos,I-Roberts,P/Budapest 2001/CBM 81 ext/1-0 (34)] **7.Nc3N** [7.Nb5 Qxd1+ 8.Kxd1 Kd8 9.Bc4 Bg4+ 10.Kc1 Bh5 11.f3 Nf6 12.g4 Bg6 13.h4 h5 14.g5 Nd7 15.Rd1 a6 16.Nd6 Bxd6 17.Rxd6 Kc7 18.Rd1 Nb6 19.Nd2 Rad8 20.c3 Nxc4 21.Nxc4 Rxd1+ Rogers,I-Armas,J/Wijk aan Zee 1996/CBM 55 ext/1-0 (42)] **7...Qd8 8.Nxc6 Qxd1+ 9.Rxd1 bxc6 10.Bc4 Bb4 11.0-0 Bxc3 12.bxc3 Nf6 13.Bc5 a5 14.Rfe1 Nd7 15.Bd6 f6 16.f4 Ba6 17.Bb3 Bb5??** but even a better move would not have saved the game [17...0-0-0+] **18.a4 Ba6 19.fxe5 Nxe5** [19...fxe5 no good, but what else? 20.Bxe5 Kd8+-] **20.Bxe5 fxe5 21.Rxe5+ Kf8 22.Rd7 h6 23.Rf7+ Kg8 24.Ree7 Rh7 25.Ra7** [25.Rxg7+! Kf8 26.Ref7+ Ke8 27.Rg8#] **25...Rxa7+- 26.Rxa7+** [26.Rf5+ and White has triumphed 26...Rf7 27.Bxf7+ Kf8 28.Bg6+ Ke7 29.Bxh7 Bc4 30.Rxa5 Kd6+-] **26...Kf8 27.Rxa6 g5 28.Rxa5 Rd7 29.Rf5+ Kg7** [29...Ke7 does not help much 30.Rf7+ Kd6 31.Rf6+ Ke5 32.Rxc6 Rd1+ 33.Kf2+-] **30.Rc5** [30.Rf7+! and White has prevailed 30...Rxf7 31.Bxf7+-] **30...Rd1+ 31.Kf2 Rd2+ 32.Ke1** [32.Kg3 nails it down 32...Rd1+-] **32...Rxb2 33.Rxc6 Rxh2 34.a5 Rh1+ 35.Kf2 Ra1 36.a6 h5 37.Rc7+ Kf6 38.a7** [38.Bc4 might be the shorter path 38...Ke5 39.Rd7 h4+-] **38...h4** [38...h4 39.Bd5 g4+- ; 38...Ke5 cannot change destiny 39.Rd7 Ra3 40.Bc4+-] **0-1**

Not exactly poetry but much nicer than just variations and evaluation numbers. Fritz is too polite to make comments like, “Black was down a full piece for the final dozen moves and should have resigned.”

Make it your project this week to put together a selection of your own games and let Fritz go over them. Remember to give it enough calculation time to do a good job. Don't forget the Blundercheck tool if you just want to look at missed tactics.

A final quick tip is to set the Blundercheck threshold to zero so it gives an evaluation of every move. This creates an Evaluation Profile of the game, a very cool way of looking at the flow of the game from Fritz's perspective. When it's done, open the Evaluation Profile pane under the Window menu and you'll see something like this.



Red means Black was better, green means White was better. The further from the center line the bigger the advantage. The yellow spike means the manure has hit the oscillating ventilation device, i.e., checkmate announced! We can see that Black had the advantage for most of the game, then it was even, then White was winning briefly and then it was a draw. Then Black blundered into forced mate (the yellow). You can click anywhere on the Profile to jump to that part of the game. The blue and black lines are the amount of time used per move, if available. (Fritz and Playchess.com automatically include this.)

The E-mailbag

Please specify which program you are using when you submit a question. Also, even if you don't play at Playchess.com it is a good idea to log in to see if there is an internet update available for your Fritz program. (Under Help --> Query Upgrade after you enter the playing server.) Various improvements and bug fixes have been made to the interface and Playchess.com since the original came out.

Several people wrote in to point out that the Fritz 7 and 8 interfaces **can** publish JavaScript replay board HTML pages like those produced by ChessBase 8. This is true, in a way. The File --> Print --> Publish Game command is designed to show games live on the internet and can also create single-game HTML JavaScript replay pages. (CB 8 can put as many games as you like on the page.) You can have it save the files locally and it will create them even if you don't input the required server upload information. Warning: if you don't give the server information it will probably crash the program, but you will get the files!

As much as I would love to include all your compliments and comments, questions may be edited for length and clarity.

Question *You didn't mention exporting in PGN format. – Ron Fenton*

Answer In Fritz 8 programs PGN can be exported using the output method described in last month's column. (Select the games in a database list, right-click, output, selection to text file.) Instead of

HTML, select PGN and choose a file name. Or you can create a new PGN database from the file menu, open the source database, select and copy the games you want in PGN, open the new PGN database you created, and paste the games into it.

Question *I have purchased Fritz 8 from ChessCafe. How do you easily convert a PGN game score (and diagram if possible) to Microsoft Word format and vice versa?* Emil Melnichenko

Answer Method (1) Open a *.pgn file from within Fritz in the file menu. Then follow the output instructions in last month's column to create an RTF file (instead of HTML), which can be opened in Word with full formatting and font diagrams. Method (2) Select and copy a single PGN score to the Windows clipboard. Open a new game window in Fritz (ctrl+n) and then paste (ctrl+v). Now add whatever annotations or diagrams you want, copy (ctrl+c), and paste into Word.

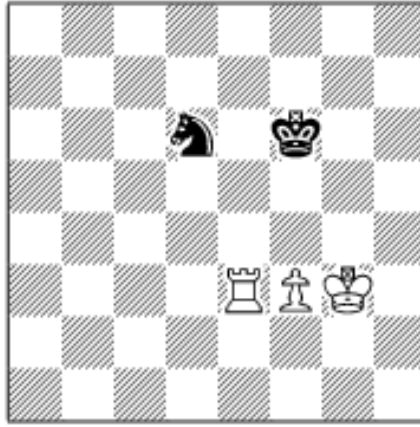
Question *Is there a correlation between the number of ply and the quality of the Fritz analysis? For example is 13 ply 2100 strength while 17 ply is 2800 strength for a middlegame position? Is there a better measure of the quality of the analysis other than ply?*

Does the endgame database improve the quality of the analysis and evaluation of the position if there are more than 6 pieces on the board? – Mark Goodwin

Answer Ply does correspond to playing strength for each program but there is no simple conversion from ply to Elo. (Although relative strength can be estimated after extensive testing.) By “for each program” I mean it isn't relevant to compare ply depth between programs and assume a corresponding strength difference. A fast program might look 20 ply deep but completely miscalculate the position.

Fritz looking 12 moves deep will dominate Fritz looking ahead 10. The more ply, the more accurate the analysis, with very few exceptions. So if you are setting up a Fritz program to auto-annotate a game give it as much time, or ply, as you can.

Endgame databases (called tablebases) dramatically increase the accuracy of program endgame evaluations and therefore playing and analytical strength in endgames. Of course this is only true on two conditions: 1) the specific tablebases needed are installed and 2) the position is close enough to a tablebase position to reach it in the search.



For example, in this position, without tablebases installed, Fritz 8 plays 1.Rc3 after 30 seconds and gives it a +3.75 evaluation. It would probably win this eventually. But with tablebases for this material balance installed, Fritz plays 1.Kf4 instantly and announces checkmate in 22 moves!

Even with a few dozen gigabytes of tablebases and a world champion engine like Fritz, Junior, or Shredder, many endgames with six or seven pieces are very tough for computers and humans alike. (See the Kasparov-Anand rook+pawn endgame from Linares 2003 for a good example.) The “magic oracle” effect, when computers play flawless endgames, only comes when the material on the board is completely within the tablebases or such a position can be forced by the engine. But there is little doubt that tablebases, a contribution of the legendary Ken Thompson, were the greatest advance in chess programming since the minimax algorithm.

Question *Games in electronic form written in French, Italian or German (using L for B, D for Q) etc., how can I convert them fast into English? Can we do it with Excel and how?*

Answer PGN (“portable game notation”) is the standard ASCII format and it’s in English. Games in text notation other than English are hard to deal with. There is no simple mass conversion tool but ChessBase 8 has a great trick. Go to Tools --> Options --> Notation. You can change the letters for the pieces to those used in any language and after you click Apply or OK, ChessBase 8 will then understand and use notation in that language! You can then copy-paste a game in that notation into a new board window and save the game into a PGN or ChessBase database. You can go back to KQNBPR or figurine notation by using the buttons on the notation tab.

If you want to convert pages of games in a non-English text format to English (or visa-versa) you can do a Search-Replace All in a word processor (or Excel). You can even record this conversion process as a macro to do it in one click next time.

Lastly, there are many free and shareware utilities for working with PGN. <http://pgn.freeservers.com/> has a good list, including PGN-Extract, which can import games in German and Dutch text notation. Many of these programs are command-line (DOS) programs that might not be not easy for beginners to use.

Question *I would love to have ANY of the chessbase software you just mentioned, but I don't see any offered for the Mac. Where would I get Fritz and all the other swell software for Mac (or any similar product)? – James R Bean*

Answer I have some good news and some bad news. The bad news is that ChessBase no longer offers any products for the Macintosh. Long ago a band of Mac addicts convinced the boys in Hamburg to make ChessBase for Mac. After many months of hard work they produced ChessBase for the Mac, sold around 80 copies, lost a lot of money, and vowed to never again drink tequila with a group of Macintosh owners. There might still be some copies floating around.

You can try the links at

http://www.reference.com/Dir/Games/Board_Games/Chess/Software/Macintosh/ although many of them are obsolete. The

ExaChess Mac chess database seems to still exist here:

<http://www.exachess.com/>. Or go to this Mac game site and search for chess: <http://www.gamedb.com/>

That's the bad news. The good news is that your computer is a cool blue color and looks like a lamp.

Mig wants your questions!! Send it along and perhaps it will be answered in an upcoming column. Please include your name and country of residence.
[Yes, I have a question for Mig!](#)



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