

ChessBase 9.0

The new database browser

It has taken quite a while to finish, mainly because the program has been completely rewritten to modularise it and integrate it seamlessly into our software range. But now at last ChessBase Version 9.0 is out and available for purchase. For users of the previous versions we bring a list of all the new features and facilities the new program has to offer.

Installing Chess Base 9 is a simple matter of inserting the program disk into the drive and choosing the install option. However a few things have to be said. For one the program is delivered on a DVD, not a CD.

This means you will have to have a DVD drive on your computer in order to install the new program. DVD drives have become standard these days, so if you do not have an older system there should be no problems. The advantage of the DVD is that everything you need for productive work with the program is installed in one session: the program itself, a big database of 2.6 million games, openings keys, the players encyclopaedia, etc.

When you first start the program you will, as a user of Chess Base 8, feel immediately at home. Not much seems to have changed. The layout is very similar to what you have been working with so far, but there are a few things you might notice immediately. One is the Playchess.com button at the bottom left of the screen. This takes you straight to the Playchess server for a quick game, or when you want to follow a lecture or some live event. The other is the “Game History” folder in the navigation window on the left. This is the place where you can find any material you recently looked at.

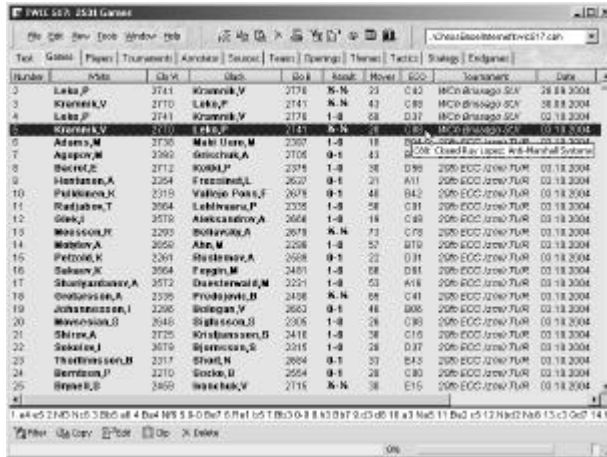


A familiar friend: Chess Base 9.0 main window

Once you start delving deeper you will find that although everything looks very familiar, there are countless enhancements that make its operation simpler and more efficient. And very much faster. Searching, sorting, classifying – operations that used to require a considerable amount of computing power and time, are no problem for the new program. We will look at some of the new functions in this article, although the space will only allow us to do so somewhat cursorily. In future editions of Chess Base Magazine we will describe individual functions and operations in greater detail. You can also visit our website, www.chessbase.com, where we regularly publish tutorials and support articles on our software.

The list windows

Chess Base 9.0 has a completely new and very powerful list window format. Each list is freely configurable, and the tabs at the top of the window allow you to switch very easily between different lists. The information contained in each can be sorted by clicking on the column headers with the mouse.



A powerful enhancement: the new list windows

One useful feature is the *tool-tips* in formation. If you move your mouse cursor onto any entry (and leave it there for a second or two) you will get more specific information on it. For instance moving it onto an ECO code will produce the full name of the opening in plain language.

Here are some of the things you can do in the Chess Base 9.0 lists:

- Drag a column header to the left or right to change the order of the columns in the list window.
- You can also right-click a column header to configure the list. A menu appears in which you can hide or show individual columns (see picture below right).
- Right-click the game list to select predefined list for mats, fonts and other format options.
- Left-click a column header to sort the list by the contents of this column. Click it again to reverse the sort order. For instance: clicking the column “Elo W” will immediately bring the strongest white players

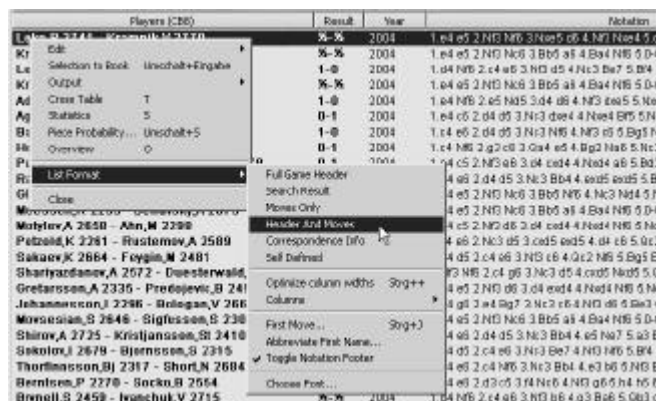
to the top of the list. A red marking tells you which column was used for sorting.

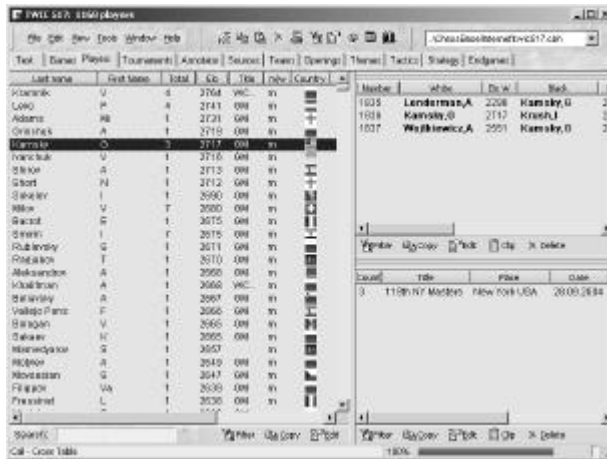
- Drag one or several games with the mouse to another position in the list. In this way you can manually reorder the entries in the list. This is useful if you want to change the order in which a batch of games is printed or merged.
- Use *Tools – Fix Sort Order* to make the current list order permanent.
- Drag a game notation (from a board window) into a list to save the game there.

In summary: you can reorganise lists, add new columns, remove the ones you don’t need, sort the lists, automatically by clicking on column headers, or manually by dragging entries around, and then make the new sorting permanent if you wish.

Player, Tournament, Annotators, Source

When you click on one of the tabs labelled Players, Tournament, Annotator, Source, etc. you get an index of that category. For instance clicking on “Players” produces an alphabetical list of all the players in the database.





Faster, better, more informative: the players in dex

On the left there is a list that can be configured and sorted (like the games list described above). There is also a search function at the bottom: typing in a few letters of a player's name causes the program to jump to that player.



On the right are two windows with the games of the highlighted player and the tournaments in which they were played (double-click a tournament for a full cross table). Once again all the list functions like sorting, filters and tooltips are available.

If you right-click a player on the left you can restrict the display to only his white or black games. You can also call up an ID card, get statistics and generate a "player dossier" (a full report derived from the reference database on the player's games, career highlights, openings repertoire, best and worst lines, etc.).

There is also a special "Filter" at the bottom of the windows which allows you to restrict the entries in many different ways. For instance you can display only certain players, only those with a certain minimum/maximum rating, with a certain title, from a certain country, of a certain age, male or female, etc. In tournaments it is particularly useful to be able to search for any set of characters, e.g. to locate "Corus Wijk aan Zee" by simply searching for "wijk" or "zee".

An improved index format with two additional files makes these lists much faster. The information is displayed without searches in the database, as was the case in ChessBase 6, 7, and 8.

New opening key layout

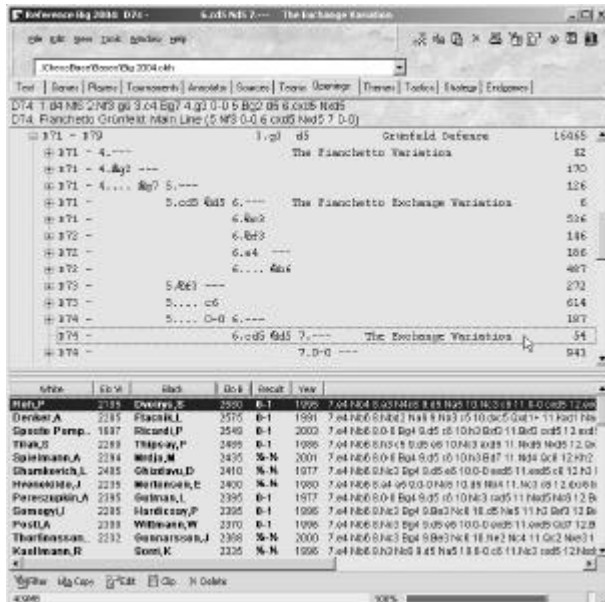
This displays a list of opening keys, based on the Informator ECO codes (there is also a smaller descriptive key included with the program).

The opening keys in ChessBase 9 are displayed in the style of the Windows Explorer, with "directories" which you can open and close to display or hide entire sections of the keys. When you move your cursor onto a key the games are displayed in the window below, with the continuations from the branching point of the key given. Naturally you can sort this list like any other, e.g. according to the strength of the players or the continuations that were played.

Note that the moves leading to the classification position are shown at the top of the opening key list, together with the ECO classification code and the traditional descriptive name of the opening.

Automatic Opening Reference

This is a new function which allows you to perform a fast background check in the reference database. With a position of inter



Chess Base openings key in Explorer style

est on the board you can click the “Reference” tab at the top of the notation.

ChessBase 9 generates an overview of all moves and all games played in the current position (in the games of the reference database). The number of games, score, date of the latest games, highest Elo and the players are displayed. At the bottom are the games, which once again can be sorted, e.g. according to rating, at a click of the mouse.

Click on a move in the reference window to execute on the board. You can use the mouse or the cursor keys up/down to move between alternate lines, and left/right to move forward or backwards in variations.

You can right-click a game and use “Copy to notation” to insert it as a reference in the current game.

Game history

The folder “Drives” in the left navigation allows you to browse all the drives of your computer, including CDROMs and DVDs. Clicking any directory will display the chess databases it contains.

There is one new function there: “Game History” stores all recently loaded games. If you recently saw a combination or openings variation you do not need to search for it in a million-game database, but can check the ones you loaded on specific days. There is a search function at the bottom of the window that allows you to search (for a game, player, position, etc.) in the games you loaded on a certain day, week, month or year.

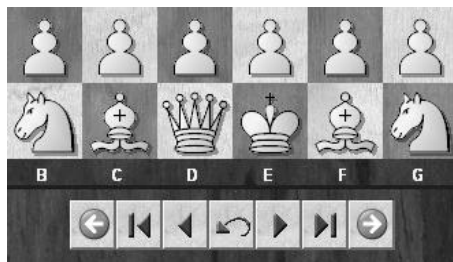
The Game History function works by storing the games you have looked at, day by day, month by month, year by year – in a special folder, at a rate of one database per day. Even while you are entering games, these are stored automatically in the history database every ten minutes, as automatic version backup.



Another powerful new tool: the Openings Reference

A note for strong players with professional interests: you should delete the contents of the directory \My documents\Chess-Base\History before you allow other people to use your computer, otherwise they will be able to see what kind of work you have been doing in recent weeks and months.

You can also switch off the History function altogether in the *Tools – Options – Misc* menu for general security reasons, especially when you are doing sensitive work.



For the current session there are a couple of History buttons below the board. These are the green arrows on the left and right ends of the replay controls below the board. Clicking the left arrow jumps to the previous game you loaded or entered, the right arrow takes you to the next game you were looking at. This is very much like Internet Browsers, where you have buttons to take you to previous pages and return to the newer ones.

A new Heumas

The *Heuristic Move Assistant*, which helps with intelligent suggestions during move entry and which has been in Chess-Base for a long time now, was completely rewritten for Chess Base 9. It now speeds up move input even more. If you click on a square, the most plausible move to or from this square is displayed, and executed if you release the mouse button.

Heumas now has a full-fledged chess engine and openings book to drive it. It will also consult the openings book which is attached to the current board window. We have measured the average hit rate for move suggestions if you click only the target squares when entering a grandmaster game.

Heumas gets over 97% of the moves right with a single click.

Threat Animation

The board window also has a built-in chess engine, which is used to show you threats and plans in the current position. Pale orange arrows are used to display what one side is actually threatening, and blue arrows to show the move that would create the strongest threat. The latter is not necessarily the strongest move, but highlights possible tactics that can be used in a more conventional fashion. Here are two examples.



In the above position the program is displaying in orange what White is threatening in the current position (it is Black to move): Nd5 forks the queen and king, which it is possible to overlook since the black e-pawn is pinned. In our second example the program is drawing attention to the fact that Black could play ...Ng4 and create a double threat (...Nxe3 and ...Qxa5) to win a piece.





Fast, photo-realistic 3D graphics in Chess Base 9

Fast real 3D board

ChessBase 9.0 now has an ultra fast DirectX based 3D board which can support all the Fritz8 3D piece sets. The built-in set *Modern* (picture above) is a simple but aesthetic piece de sign and has been optimized for speed, contrast and thus for optimal visualization during practical chess work. The initialization of the 3D chess board takes less than a second on modern graphics cards.

The following are the best settings for 3D boards: *Settings – 3D Effects – Shadows – Rendered Shadow* for fast but realistic shadow effects. Experiment with *Settings – 3D Effects – Animation* to get smooth move animation.

Fritz users will know that you can tilt the board to any angle and zoom in and out. To do this you right-click the board and then tilt it, Ctrl + right-click to change the point of view; and Ctlr + mouse wheel to zoom in or out.

Scoresheet notation

Chess Base 9 can handle long and short algebraic, descriptive and correspondence notation, with piece names in any language or

with figurines. It can also display the moves of a game in score sheet for mat, which some people might prefer.

Extended Drag & Drop

At many points in the program ChessBase 9 allows you to do things with simple Drag & Drop operations that took a fair amount of clicking and typing in earlier versions. For instance you can simply drag a database file directly from the Windows Explorer onto the main ChessBase window register it there. You can also simply drag a game, e.g. one you have just entered, from the board window into a games list or a database icon. No need to go through the Windows file manager for that.

You can also use Ctrl-C – Ctrl-V copy-and-paste to move games into lists or database icons.

Chess Media System

Chess Base 9 contains the full functionality of our new Chess Media System, which allows you to play Windows Media files in very high quality from within the program. The point is that these WMV files contain instructions that Chess Base can execute on the board, so that the pieces move in sync with the speaker in the video.



Notation just like in a chess tournament

The recording is done in Chess Base as well. One can film a commentator or chess teacher, who moves the pieces on the board while he or she is speaking, drawing arrows and colouring squares. Replaying the recording in ChessBase 9.0 faithfully reproduces what went on during the recording session. All this is possible with plain audio files as well. Due to the excellent compression huge amounts of data can be stored on a simple CD.

Garry Kasparov has recorded chess lessons in the Chess Media System format, which will be available on DVDs later this year. These products will run in Chess Base 9, Fritz 8, with a special reader or on your TV set if it is connected to a DVD player.

Summary of ChessBase 9 improvements

- Chess Media System (teaching videos with synchronized chess boards) integrated. *Menu File – Open – Chess Media System.*
- Load a single annotated game as an opening book. *Right-click in game list – Select to tree.*
- Delete and replace games in PGN Databases. *Hit Del.*
- Full integration of the DGT sensor board.
- New notation “Score Sheet” including print functions.
- Reordering variations during annotation. *Ctrl-Arrow-Up/Down in the variation choice dialog to move a variation.*
- Integrated client for access to chess server Playchess.com.
- Classification of database in opening keys speeded up.



High-grain videos: Garry Kasparov lecturing on the Queen's Gambit in the Chess Media System

- Mirror board in position setup on both axes (to create “new” tactical puzzles).
- Configure Windows Clipboard (e.g. Text or PGN, type of PGN for mat): *Menu Options – Clipboard.*
- Drag&Drop from and to all lists.
- Optional display of final material in all game lists. *Menu Tools – Classification – Final Material* in the database browser window generates this information.
- Save Games using Drag & Drop or Edit/Copy-Paste from a game notation to a database list. *Hit Ctrl-C, then change to database list (or to database preview in main window), hit Ctrl-V to save.*
- Forfeit/win by default as additional game result.
- ToolTips explain notation symbols.
- Text annotation entry dialog resizable, last position and size retained.
- Cleanup variations.
- Spoken notation.
- Board sounds.
- User-defined keyboard shortcuts for all menu entries.

- Changing of tournament, source, annotator, team for multiple game selections: *Right-click selection – Edit – More*.
- Reset Elo numbers for multiple games. Example: *Open tournament index, click on the tournament, click in the game list, hit Ctrl-A, Right-Click – Edit – More – Reset Elo numbers*.
- Improved handling of training questions, including new multiple choice training.
- Improved presentation of game overview in multiple diagrams.
- Shows Archives (CBV-file) in database explorer window and file selector.
- Correspondence notation (“1.5254 5755”) supported also for keyboard entering.
- Correspondence management information visible in game lists.
- Tournament template with correspondence chess options like time control.
- Improved correspondence chess management in printing, emailing, holiday, etc.
- Improved match recognition in tournament cross tables.
- Supports huge database with over 4 Gbyte file size.
- UCI Engine interface.
- Engine parameters can be saved as individual files.
- Improved table base directory configuration
- Multivariation analysis shows which lines have been verified at current search depth.
- Improved graphics, like transparent arrows on the board.
- New size-optimized GIFs for JavaScript games. *Right-click on game selection – Output – HTML + JavaScript*
- Supports Windows ClearType font management in game lists and notation.
- Improved cooperation with Outlook for emailing games.
- Create a new database with Right-Click “New Chess Base Database” in Windows Explorer.
- All file types registered in Windows.
- 42. Reacts without fuss to removal of a CD, database windows are closed automatically.
- Evaluation column in repertoire print function. *Menu Print – Repertoire for heavily annotated opening analysis*

Improved Search

- Full text search in game headers
- Negated game header search (“Not”).
- Search for number of pieces on the board (“6-men end games”).
- Search for wins of a player.
- Improved entry on “or” and “not” board in position search.

System requirements

Minimum: Windows 98 (not Win95 or NT 3), 64 MB RAM, 300 MHz, DVD drive.

Recommended: Windows XP or better, 256 MB RAM, 1 GHz or better. Modern graphics adapter for fast 3D display, Windows Media Player 9 for video lectures.

Prices

Starter Package (with Big Database 2004*): €154.90 incl. VAT, €133.53 without VAT*, US \$158.91 without VAT**.

Mega Package (with Mega Database 2004*, Chess Base Magazine subscription), players encyclopedia with 20,000 photos and 180,000 players, Correspondence database 2004, Endgame Turbo with five DVDs: €359.90 incl. VAT, €310.26 without VAT*, US \$369.21 without VAT**.

Upgrade: only from CB8/CB7 (send in your CB7/8 registration number) to CB9 on DVD, incl. 2.6 million games and players encyclopedia: €99.90 incl. 16% VAT.

* Free upgrade (with voucher) to Big 2005 or Mega 2005 ** Only for Customers outside the European Union