

ChessBase Complete



CHESS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Jon R. Edwards

ChessBase Complete

CHESS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Jon R. Edwards

Foreword by Karsten Müller



2014

Russell Enterprises, Inc.
Milford, CT USA

ChessBase Complete
Chess in the Digital Age
by Jon R. Edwards

Foreword by Karsten Müller

ISBN: 978-1-936490-54-7

© Copyright 2014
Jon R. Edwards

All Rights Reserved

No part of this book may be used, reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any manner or form whatsoever or by any means, electronic, electrostatic, magnetic tape, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the express written permission from the publisher except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

“ChessBase” and the ChessBase Logo are proprietary brand names and trademarks of ChessBase GmbH, Hamburg, Germany, and are used herein by permission of ChessBase GmbH.

Published by:
Russell Enterprises, Inc.
P.O. Box 3131
Milford, CT 06460 USA

<http://www.russell-enterprises.com>
info@russell-enterprises.com

Layout and cover design by Fierce Ponies Enterprises, Brooklyn, New York
Cover photo by Winterberg | Dreamstime Stock Photos

Printed in the United States of America



Foreword

Discover the Digital Dimensions of Chess

For software programs like ChessBase, there seems to be a golden guideline: 90% of the users use just 10% of the functions. Once you get started, you learn first how to enter your games into a database and then you play bullet on the Playchess server. Content, you can easily stop looking deeper into the many faces of ChessBase. And that is a real pity, because the program offers so much more. The author, Jon Edwards, is not only a real power-user and computer expert, but also an experienced chess teacher who uses the program regularly in his classes. He is very qualified and succeeds wonderfully in explaining all aspects with great clarity, using many ChessBase graphics to illustrate his points.

He not only shows you how to begin with the program and get access to the Playchess server, he also reveals tips and tricks for advanced users. For example, on a basic level, do you know what you can do with the X and Y keys in engine analysis? Or how to publish content with ChessBase?

And on a more advanced level, Jon also discusses topics such as how to prepare for an opponent, how to create an opening repertoire, how to use “Let’s Check” and the engine cloud, the various Tablebases, how to read books with the help of the program, how to coach students and many, many more. You will be amazed at the many fascinating possibilities you may have overlooked.

Edwards points out that he is independent of ChessBase and only in the distant past worked with ChessBase USA. This of course cannot be said about me. In the interest of transparency, I have recorded a series of 14 FritzTrainer DVDs on the endgame from 2006-2013, I write the endgame section of *ChessBase Magazine* and have the feature *Endgame Magic* on the playchess server, to mention but a few of my ChessBase projects. In addition, almost all my other publishing projects – like the book *Fundamental Chess Endings* that I wrote with Frank Lamprecht – simply would not have been possible without the ChessBase program. That said, I highly recommend Edwards’ work and I wish you a lot of fun as you dive into the deep ocean of chess in the digital age.

GM Dr Karsten Müller
Hamburg
March 2014

Introduction

Perhaps you are curious how a very young Norwegian conquered chess so early in life. Carlsen's handlers insist that early on, he put in only an hour and a half a day. The not-so-well kept secret? That time was spent with ChessBase.

Any master will tell you that to get good at chess, you must play in tournaments, you must review the games of great players, and you must also subject your games to scrutiny. ChessBase helps with all of that with such efficiency that its users gain the opportunity to become very good, very quickly. You can play there all day long, you can easily review thousands and thousands of carefully annotated games, and the software permits you to locate your errors, to fashion an effective opening repertoire, and to hone your tactical and endgame skills much more quickly than previous chess generations could imagine.

We have arrived at a significant generational split among chess players. My "older" generation, a funny word to use because many "seniors" continue to seek out the latest and greatest toys, grew up on books. We poured over the modern classics, Fischer's *60 Memorable Games*, *Vukovic's Art of Attack in Chess*, David Bronstein's book on Zurich 1953, *The Second Piatigorsky Cup* edited by Kashdan, and Tal's 1960 book on his match for the World Championship. If you have not yet read these books, please do!

We readers came to rely upon the published sources, many hundreds of opening tomes and encyclopedias, biographies of great players, hundreds of books about great tournaments, Informants and magazines for recent games, and Averbach, Fine, and Smyslov for Endgames. Many of us built up large libraries. Through the 1980's, it was not uncommon for a young, maturing player to put in five or many more hours a day on preparation. We enjoyed it without having any sense of our inefficiencies or even the hours as they sped by. Life was good.

Life is better than ever. Know simply that a single software package, ChessBase 12, and its polished data now permit savvy chess players to accomplish more in an hour than I ever did as a chess youngster in ten. At its heart is a simple fact. With ChessBase, players have instantaneous access to all of the data they need. If chess were an academic discipline, and there is good reason to think of it that way, we would refer to ChessBase as a scholar's environment, a place harboring all relevant information as well as the sophisticated tools required to make sense of it all.

With the latest version of this chess software, we can quickly generate a detailed book about any move, or variation, we can locate combinations, as well as middlegame and endgame positions similar to our own, we can instantly see the results of thousands of computer engines as they survey openings and all grandmaster games, and we can rent powerful computer engines right out of the cloud.

Of course, not all of us are tech savvy. There's a general recognition among serious chess players that ChessBase is important for improvement, perhaps necessary, but many in my older generation and even some younger players are intimidated by the software, and not without reason.

A few scoff viscerally at the thought of using computers and software. Some are afraid of change, or are simply aware of their technical limitations. Many take the plunge only to discover that the software is tough to install correctly, and even if they get past that point, they really have no intuitive sense of what to do next. And of course, some dismiss the modern approach without ever understanding what it is or what it can do for them.

I am writing this book because I have come to know, as a chess player, as a chess teacher, and as a chess author, that ChessBase is instrumental to every aspect of chess. One of the main purposes here is to explain how the software can help you too, to improve your play, your learning, your teaching, your writing, or simply your love of and enthusiasm for the game. As you read this introduction, you may not yet know what the program can do for you, the creative possibilities at your command. But at least you are curious! I explain here all that you will need to know with concrete examples and simple instructions. After that, how strong a chess player, how good a chess teacher, how good a chess author you become is truly up to you.

This book is not a ChessBase manual. ChessBase includes a comprehensive help facility within the program and provides a free online manual which you can locate quickly with an internet search. I do discuss all of the program's main functions. For those who become desperate to find the answer to a specific ChessBase question, I have added an index that mirrors the language in ChessBase's free online manual. That way, you can see what they have done easily and quickly find my treatment of that topic. I am confident that, between their Help facility, their online manual, and this book, you will find your answers.

Rather than write another help facility or manual, I have created real life scenarios that focus upon why the software is so important for chess players of every class. These descriptions should intrigue that portion of the chess community that believes that ChessBase is only there to help you locate and then play through chess games.

With ChessBase...

- Reading chess books becomes MUCH easier and MUCH more fun
- Opening preparation is quick, comprehensive, fully-up-to-date, and effective.
- You can compete at any time of the day or night.
- You can prepare quickly and effectively for an opponent, viewing their opening preferences and their attacking style.
- You can quickly locate and review important games in every opening, middlegame type, and endgame.
- You can quickly review the games from recent international events and review the games of your favorite players.
- You can instantly see what worldwide engines think about most opening and many middlegame positions.
- You can use your own computer engine to participate in a worldwide effort to expand opening knowledge.
- You can use engines right out of the cloud, or place your own engine there for your own use while you travel.

- You can instantly see where you and your opponents erred.
- You can reliably prepare chess books for publication in print or on the web.
- You can send relevant games to students for their review.

Not all of these scenarios will resonate with every chess player, but there is surely much here for everyone.

I have strong technical credentials, but I think of myself today primarily as a full time chess coach and author.

While reading this book, I hope that you think of me simply as a guide on the side, as a chess player talking to another chess player explaining how the software can help you to improve your play, to assist your access to current grandmaster games, to improve your opening research, to sharpen your tactics or endgame play, to improve your coaching, or whatever else you are interested in doing within the world of chess.

A bit of background will help.

I learned how to play chess when I was six, but I only began to take the game seriously when I got sick for six months when I was nine. My parents asked what might help to pass the time in bed. "Chess books," I replied. I still remember my first chess book, *Great Moments in Modern Chess*, as well as the look on my father's face two days later when, having consumed Reuben Fine's wonderful book, I asked for another.

As I mentioned, I grew up in the age of books. Now, with our two sons out of the house, my wife and I are looking now to sell our home. But the houses we've looked at have no books and no place to put them. That's a problem when you own three thousand chess books.

A lover of books, I still built a bridge to technology. I was Senior Editor for Reviews at BYTE Magazine, I was Assistant VP for Computing at Princeton University for 15 years, and later their Coordinator of IT Institutional Communication for 10 more. Along the way, I won the APCT Championship four times, the 10th US Correspondence Chess Championship, and the 8th North American Invitational Correspondence Chess Championship. For those later triumphs, I used ChessBase. I cannot imagine winning those titles or playing meaningfully today without the program. Grandmasters can rely upon dozens of examples to reinforce their understanding of chessboard themes. Early on and after, I had ChessBase.

At work for 25 years, I relied upon Microsoft's Office Suite for 8 hours a day. Now in "retirement," I use ChessBase every day for at least that long. The result is that I have developed some fluency with the software.

Please note that I do not today work for ChessBase. Twenty years ago when ChessBase version 4.0 was released, I worked for a time for ChessBase USA to turn out a few volumes of the ChessBase University series. Those royalties ended more than 15 years ago with the result that I have no meaningful monetary affiliation left. I am writing this book because the product is essential for chess players. In my experience, many potential users don't have a clear sense of what the software actually does, while many users appear not to know how to make the most of it.

I will indeed guide you through both the easy and challenging uses of the program. I hope that even a casual reading of a chapter or two will convince you that ChessBase really can help you to accelerate your chess improvement and that you're never too old to try something cool.

Three important notes before we get started:

- (1) ChessBase requires a PC, preferably a PC with a fast processor. If you have a Mac, know that I love them too, but don't try to run ChessBase in its PC emulator.
- (2) Some will want me to begin by delving into technical aspects of the program, especially its installation. I have placed those details in the first appendix, and you can turn there now if you have just purchased the application.

Installation of the ChessBase software is indeed challenging, especially for those who refuse to read the instructions. Many users remain unaware that they never completed their installation.

To work properly, the software must be activated (From the Database View → FILE → Activation → Activate).

You must also update the software! Many long time users experience application crashes precisely because they have failed to update the program. From the Database View: → FILE → Activation → Update Program.

- (3) As might be true for any program on its 12th version, ChessBase has introduced numerous, modern features that significantly enhance the program and improve the functionality of various legacy approaches. In most cases, those new approaches are significant improvements and are prioritized within this book, although I have also explained how to use those legacy functions.

A brief technical note:

I have Chessbase 12 installed on a Dell XPS-8300 with an Intel Core i7-2600 CPU @ 3.40 GHz, 16 GB of RAM, and a 16-bit Operating System.

The new ChessBase 13 will be available near the end of 2014. ChessBase assures us that the program features and interface described within this book are not expected to change. The new version will provide some new storage capabilities as well as new mobile functions.

Jon Edwards
Pennington, 2014

Table of Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction	4
Table of Contents	8
SCENARIO 1 The Future of Chess Books (<i>And some very simple searching</i>)	9
SCENARIO 2 Maintaining Quality Data (<i>Garbage in, Garbage out</i>)	24
SCENARIO 3 Working well with ChessBase (<i>Organizing and viewing your chess information</i>)	31
SCENARIO 4 Preparing for an opponent (<i>Because they're preparing for you</i>)	64
SCENARIO 5 Playing (<i>At any time of the day or night</i>)	76
SCENARIO 6 Playchess Tournaments (<i>Competing for fun and profit</i>)	93
SCENARIO 7 Preserving and annotating your games (<i>Because you must</i>)	102
SCENARIO 8 Honed opening preparation (<i>No more surprises</i>)	111
SCENARIO 9 Engines and Kibitzers (<i>Subjecting your games to unbiased scrutiny</i>)	141
SCENARIO 10 A Grandmaster by your Side (<i>Complex searching made easy</i>)	180
SCENARIO 11 Watching Grandmaster Chess (<i>It's better than baseball</i>)	199
SCENARIO 12 Training and Teaching (<i>Lighting up the board</i>)	208
SCENARIO 13 Competing at Correspondence Chess (<i>It's not dead yet</i>)	232
SCENARIO 14 Writing about Chess (<i>With tips on printing</i>)	241
APPENDIX 1 Installing and Activating ChessBase and Playchess	268
APPENDIX 2 The User Interface	271
APPENDIX 3 Setting program options	306
APPENDIX 4 Tech Talk (<i>Luddites stay away</i>)	322
APPENDIX 5 Keyboard Shortcuts	326
About the author	337
Index	338

TIP: In his famous series of web articles about ChessBase, Steve Lopez suggested the use of naming conventions for Repertoire Database, using the text fields and even the use of the Medals to distinguish lines and their significance. All that mattered when Repertoire Databases were the main act in town.

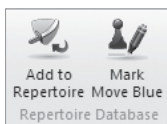
Here's what the game will look like in the Repertoire Database:



Black's fourth move is highlighted in blue, ChessBase's indicator of a critical opening position. ChessBase automatically saved the game with this color designation.

TIP: You can so designate any move in any game as a Critical Opening Position. Right-click on the move ⇒ Special annotation ⇒ Critical Opening Position.

TIP: As the Repertoire develops, you can merge new positions with existing ones.



Or highlight the move ⇒ Report ⇒ Mark Move Blue

You can then move that game into the Repertoire database... or simply right-click on the move in that game and add it to your repertoire.

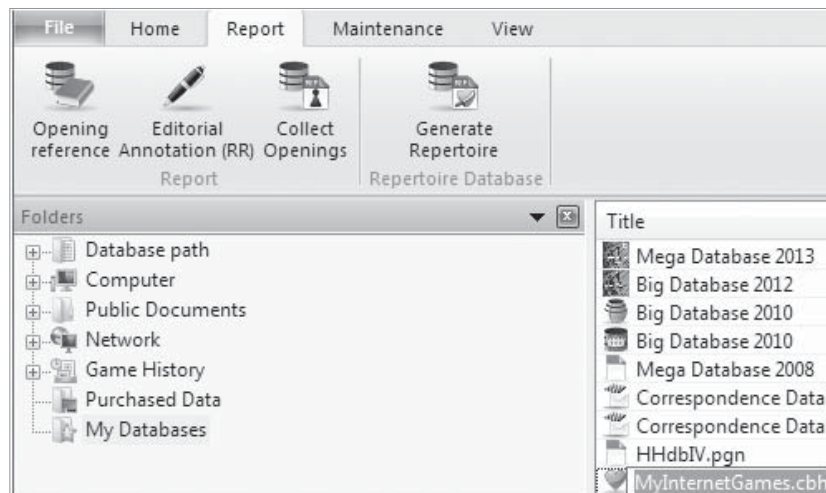
TIP: When adding games or positions to the Repertoire database, be sure to right-click on the move that you want to designate as the critical opening position. Leaving that decision to ChessBase may result in it selecting a different position. In any event, be sure to double check your Repertoire Database to make sure that the correct move has been designated.

TIP: To delete a critical position marker, right-click on it and then ⇒ Special Annotation ⇒ Delete Critical Position.

It took only a couple of minutes to generate seven different variations in the Scandinavian after 3.Nf3.

Using the Repertoire Database

In the Database Window, click on any database. In this case, I am selecting my internet games. Select the Report tab ⇒ Generate Repertoire.



ChessBase will generate a report that finds all of the games in that database that use the lines specified within your Repertoire Database!

6. Scandinavian (Defence)



All games (12)

[Jedwards - Rare-earths 1-0](#)

[Jedwards - Rare-earths 1-0](#)

[jedwards - Codeyellow 1-0](#)

[Jedwards - Guest207942 0-1](#)

[Jedwards - Guest1933865 1-0](#)

[Jedwards - Guest2510289 1-0](#)

[Jedwards - Guest4214713 1-0](#)

[Jedwards - Guest2707901 1-0](#)

[Jedwards - Guest1914053 0-1](#)



TIP: Of course, you can search any database in this way. Select a player's games and see his contributions within your Repertoire, or run it against a large database



TIP: You can also see if a position in a game exists within your Repertoire.

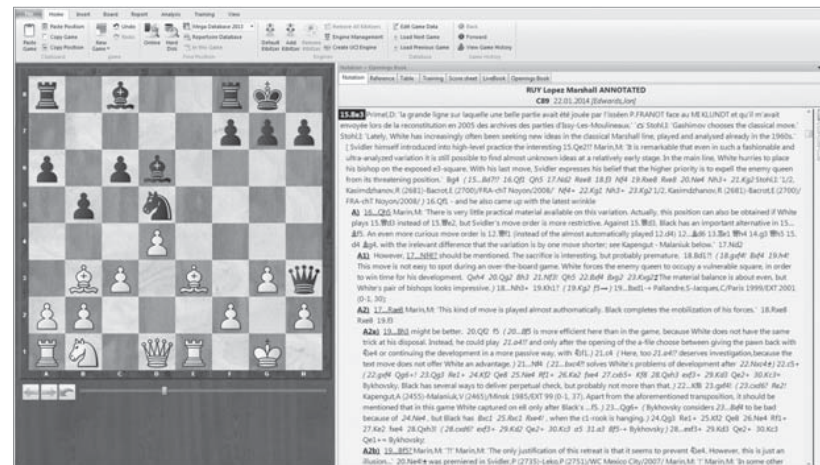
As with the opening keys, that's potentially quite a bit of work to get to the information I crave. I could just as easily have generated an opening report for that database (Highlight the name of the Database ⇒ Report Tab ⇒ Opening Reference) and scrolled down to that information, and indeed, much more. But I know from experience that some players will indeed want to generate complex keys and repertoires if only to spur their thorough analysis of their favorite lines.

The kitchen sink approach

Rather than using the merge function lightly, you can embrace it. One of my students likes to make all of the annotated games in his favorite opening and merge them all together into one huge game. He finds that he benefits from having all of the material in one place, with everyone's notes running together. His strength increased rapidly with this method and so, there may be much to it for some learners.

To assemble the files, he opened a board, entered a favorite variation, brought up his Mega Database with the Reference Tab, sorted the games list by the VCS (Annotations) column, highlighted all of the annotated games, right-clicked on the highlighted games, and then selected Merge Selected Games (or press the Enter key).

That operation may take considerable time depending upon the number of games involved and the computational capabilities of your computer, so don't expect a quick result. Here's a screen shot of the result for the Marshall Gambit in the Ruy Lopez.



This approach is not for everyone and indeed, ChessBase developers and many players looking at this screen will cringe. Annotators' comments are competing, attribution is unclear, and there are just hundreds of lines running together. But some learners adore having everything in one place, with the ability quickly to promote or demote a line, to see instantly why some moves fail, and be able to play through many hundreds of games in just an hour or less.

I confess that I have used this method myself for correspondence games in the late opening stage, simply merging in all available material into my game score.

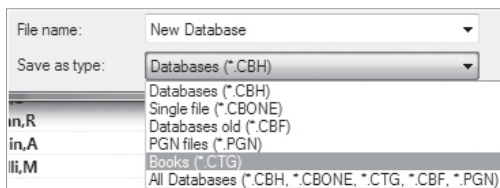
Opening Book

Not every learner will appreciate the kitchen sink approach in the last section. Young learners and relative beginners may prefer the simplicity of having an opening book to follow. In my mind, the Online Database and the Reference Database perform this function very well indeed, but they are programmed to provide you with access to real games and will not pick up transpositions to known positions unless those moves were actually played.

Frequently, when playing through the Online Database and these Opening Books, the number of results slowly peter out and then suddenly mushroom, because the move selected suddenly transposes to a much more frequently occurring position. On some occasions, there will be no results at all when indeed, a single move that had never been previously played will return you to a commonly played variation.

In years past, another software product, Book-Up, revealed such transpositions and so, ChessBase integrated this capability into its Opening Books.

To create an opening book, enter the Database window ➔ NEW ➔ select Opening book as the file type:



Once created, drag and then drop (or cut and paste) a few or a great many games into this database. Typically, players create such opening books for specific openings (eg, The Two Knights' Defense) or for an ECO line or range (A56-59).

Here's a sample opening book that I created for the Two Knights' Defense. Once created, the performance is exceptionally quick. And if you miss having access to games, know that you can have the Online Database open at the same time!



TIP: By scrolling quickly through lines with the up and down arrow, you will see graphically at the bottom how well the various lines are faring. Using that method, a player would likely select the Fritz or Ulvestad with 5...Nd4 or 5...b5.



TIP: You can create a small or large opening book very quickly. Simply highlight the games, and then ➔ Selection to Book (or Shift-Enter). In that way, I created an opening book for more than 13,000 Hedgehogs in just three seconds.



TIP: The disadvantage of the opening books is that they do not provide access to complete games. You can easily overcome that deficiency by also opening up the Online Database.



TIP FOR ADVANCED USERS: You can import these opening books for use by many chess programs and chess engines. Armed with such opening books, these programs will follow the opening book analysis, giving you an opportunity to hone your skills against the very openings you are preparing.

Opening Book for the Reference Database

ChessBase no longer delivers an opening book for its large databases, but you can create one very quickly indeed. Begin by creating an opening book, and then drag the icon for your reference database on top of the icon for the new opening book. As you might imagine, this action may take quite a long time, and so consider doing so as your last action before bedtime.

After you have successfully created the opening book, right-click on its icon and select Properties.

Declare this new opening book as the default. The subsequent creation of new opening books will not thereafter swap out this book for the new, undoubtedly much smaller one.