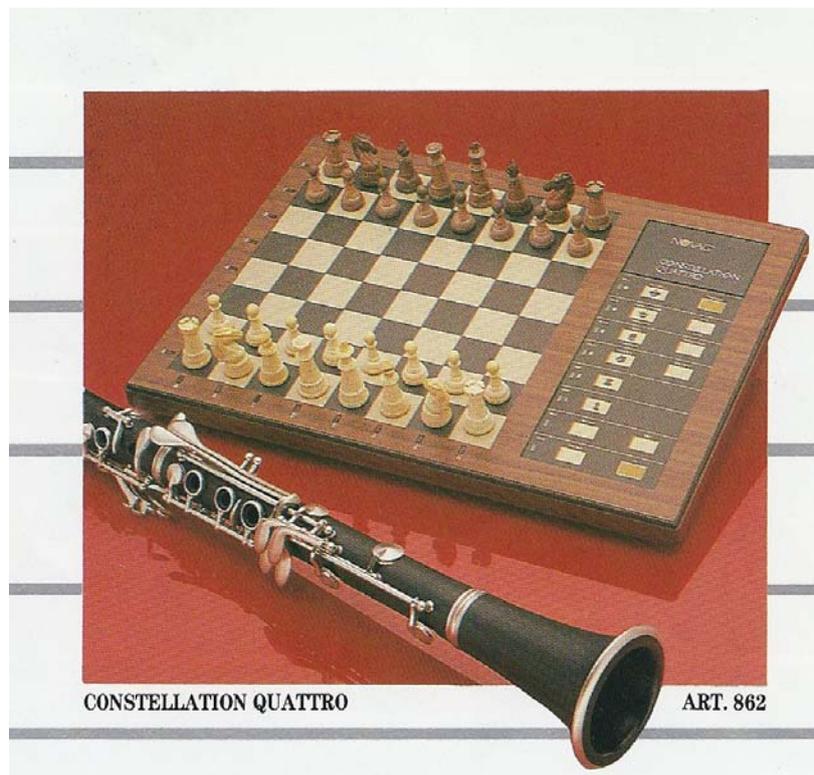


05-1986 [F-1251] Novag - Constellation Quattro

Novag Art. Nr. 862. Novag (1986): Ein Spitzenprodukt, das zu den stärksten Schachcomputern der Welt zählt. Mit seinem völlig neuem 16K-Programm und 16 Spielstufen ist er für Gelegenheits- und Vereinspieler der langgesuchte Schachpartner. Die Anspruchsvolle Ausstattung, formschönes Gehäuse, großes SENSOR-Spielfeld, Magnetfiguren und eine bestehende Leistungsfähigkeit sind die Merkmale dieser Neuentwicklung - und das zu diesem Preis.



(Bild: Novag 1986)

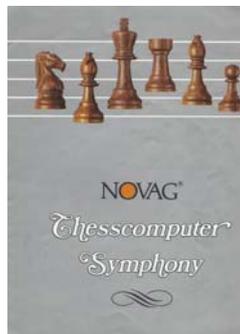
Players Chess News (1986) Constellation Quattro 4 MHz First class design

I have never been a lover of budget machines. I tend to quibble about poor type of sensor board, and I have come to loathe the sound of creaking plastic. Add to this the fact that the economics tend to be reflected within the actual program and perhaps you will understand why. However, Novag seems to understand those simple objections, because the Quattro is an improvement in most of the important areas. The design of the machine is first class. The size, 42,3 x 27,8 x 4,8 cm is to my mind ideal.

The machine can be played anywhere, and the board is large enough to be easy on the eye. The size prevents me from having to hunch over the board, acquiring large doses of eye strain. Also, I can quite clearly discern the different pieces from some distance away from the board, and this will certainly prevent me from developing a Quasimodotype bump.

Apart from the power switch, used to switch between batteries and or adaptor from its customary OFF position, the control are located within a sensor panel on the right hand side of the machine. These are well grouped, and sensibly laid out. They respond to a fairly light touch, being positive in operation. The audible beeps that accompany each key press are soft and pleasing. Logic prevails within the function keys, and therefore the machine is simple to use. Once you have played several games, and used the Set-up and Verify features a couple of times, you will hardly ever need to the instruction manual again.

The sensor board deserves special praise. It is VERY sensitive and an utter joy to use. Simply press lightly on the piece and the move is instantly registered. No more fooling around tilting the piece, or trying to gingerly locate the sensor with the base of the piece. For once I can report that a sensor board is truly hassle free. Cosmetically, the board is surrounded by imitation wood which is effective, giving the machine a slightly more expensive look. I find the design pleasing, and when I consider the lowly price of this computer, I end up getting the impression that Novag has produced exceptional value for money in the Quattro.



(Bild: Novag Brochure aus 1986)

There are numerous features including: Set-up of positions for analysis and mate problems (up to mate 12), verification of pieces and positions, the take-back of moves, comprehensive hint and show-moves systems, depth of search which is indicated to you in simple ease to read binary code, training levels which the user can call upon to limit the computer's depth of search at different time settings, the chance for two morals to use the board with the machine hinting book moves if required (and checking the legality of your play. The sound can be turned ON and OFF as required), and lastly, but not least, the computer can be set to play on best-move or random, and this is indeed effective. The LEDs are bright and extremely functional, perfectly coordinated to each function selected by the user. The end result in an easy-to-use, well specified machine.

What about the program? The program is said to be 16K, running at 4 Mhz. I have heard that it is an updated version of the Constellation 3.6, but this I feel to be incorrect. Certainly at blitz levels the machine plays similar chess, but at tournament levels there is considerable improvement. The extra running speed is marginal, and I would now expect most machine of this type to be up and running at 4/5 MHz. But the depth of search in the middlegame is far above the ply level of the 3.6, and is respectively healthy. The Super Constellation goes deeper, but only just, and in real terms it is only a couple of pawns up in terms of playing advantage. Games between the two have lased well over sixty moves, right up to classic ninety-move encounters. Almost always the difference has amounted to one or two pawns, and that says much for the playing qualities of the Quattro.

Against the standard Fidelity Excellence, there was little in it. Over six games I have them even. However, I prefer the design of the Quattro and more importantly the style of play. The opening book is modest, though comprehensive all the same. The main lines are sound with the more usual variations included. Unless you really are a dedicated book player, the Quattro's repertoire will be more than adequate. It is listed at 4.000 half moves (excluding minor variations), but in use the book seems larger. Whatever, the opening library is varied enough to keep the interest of most enthusiastic players. How many hobby players, including enthusiasts, have an opening repertoire of 4.000 half moves? Enough said.

The middle game is excellent. I have often been a minor piece up, only to go through the galling experience of having the Quattro ingeniously grab it back. In some quite complex positions, where one is tempted to play quietly, the Quattro has found some clever and devastating continuations (Never play too cautiously against a computer – the thrive on passive opposition). In the middlegame it will hold its own against far more expensive machines at times, and its style of play is positional and attractive. The depth of search is damn good in a machine of this price, damn good indeed. Overall, I was pleased with the middle game play of this computer, considering the market position it will enter.

The endgame is reasonable, but good club players I feel will have the advantage. This is the weakest area of the machine, but to be fair to the Quattro, it can be said to be the weakest area of nearly all the machines available to the consumer. However, unless you are a good club player, you will find that the Quattro has a mean endgame, becoming a tough opponent for the enthusiast.



Problem-and-mate-solving are frankly brilliant in a machine of such lowly pretensions. The analysis proved to be very good indeed. I constantly use the Quattro for problem-solving, and if you further need to delve into just how good the Quattro is at handling problems, I would refer you to some recent testing carried out by Graham White. The Quattro solves the "Saavedra" position on its Level 1. There is much more of interest in the testing, but I am not about to steal Graham White's evaluations from under his nose. Suffice to say that Graham has proven the machine to be excellent in this fascinating area.

To sum up, the Quattro is priced at around 149 Pounds. So just what market will it serve? I would like to put forward the idea that the Quattro will hold a new and unique place among budget chess computers. The Quattro is the ideal machine for the hobbyist, or enthusiast. It is THE machine for use in the home at this price. To my mind, there are no other likely contenders. As a problemsolving machine, it will also likely worm its way into the affections of many a club player. I like the Quattro, and it is a winner on three counts: First of all it is sensibly designed, secondly it is sensibly price, and thirdly, but most importantly, it plays sensibly chess. All in all, I would be inclined to say that Novag has recognized an important target area, and with the Quattro they have managed to smack that target fairly and squarely in the eye. If you form any part of that target area, the Quattro is the machine that you will buy with confidence, and without regret.

Paul Hales, July 1986

Source: PCN (International Players Chess News), from November 1986

NOVAG Chess Computer in Comparison	PRELUDE	PICCOLO	ALLEGRO	CONSTELLATION JUNIOR	CONSTELLATION QUATTRO	CONSTELLATION FORTE	CONSTELLATION EXPERT
Micro Processor	Single Chip	Single Chip	Single Chip	Single Chip	6502 (8 Bit)	6502 (8 Bit)	6502 (8 Bit)
Program Capacity	2 KByte	2 KByte	2 KByte	4 KByte	16 KByte	64 KByte	64 KByte
Clock speed	6 Mhz	6 Mhz	6 Mhz	1 Mhz	4 Mhz	4 Mhz	4 Mhz
Move Input	Key Board	Sensor Board	Sensor Board	Sensor Board	Sensor Board	Sensor Board	Magnetic Sensor Board
Move Display	LCD-Display	16 LEDs	16 LEDs	16 LEDs	16 LEDs	16 LEDs	64 LEDs
Playing Levels	8	8	8	8	16	29	29
Tournament Levels			1	2	5	14	14
Training Levels					8	14	14
Analytic Levels					1	1	1
Blitz Levels					2	2	2
Opening Book	under 100 variations	under 100 variations	under 100 variations	under 100 variations	4000 half moves	over 20.000 half moves	over 22.000 half moves
Programable/selectable Opening Book						2000 half moves	Gambit/Turnier
Take back	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Board Verification	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Solve Mate up to max.	mate-in-3	mate-in-2	mate-in-2	mate-in-3	mate-in-12	mate-in-14	mate-in-14
Random Selector	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Memory				X		X	X
Autoplay					X	X	X
Early checkmate announcement					X	X	X
Depth Search					16 half moves	27 half moves	27 half moves
Max. Depth Search					16 half moves	20 half moves	20 half moves
Endgame capabilities					X	X	X
Resigns automatically					X	X	X
Player/Player					X	X	X
Hint					X	X	X
Game replay						X	X
Game evaluation						X	X
LCD-Display	X					X	
Chess Clock connection						X	X
Printer connection						X	X
PC connection						X	X
Operation	Battery	Battery	Adaptor/Battery	Adaptor/Battery	Adaptor/Battery	Adaptor/Battery	Adaptor
Approx. measurements	18.5 × 13.5 × 3 cm	18.5 × 13.5 × 3 cm	26 × 24.3 × 2.3 cm	26 × 24.3 × 2.3 cm	42.3 × 27.8 × 4.8 cm	42.3 × 27.8 × 4.8 cm	47.5 × 40 × 5.5 cm
Suitable for:							
Masters/Tournament Players					X	X	X
Strong-/Club Players				X	X	X	X
Advanced Players			X	X	X	X	X
Novices	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Exclusive Agents and Distributors:

Australia: Englander Imports, 632 Bourke Street, Melbourne 3000, Victoria
Great Britain: Eureka Electronics Ltd., 26 Castle Street, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 2HD England
Netherlands: Electronics Nederland BV, Tjiumuiden 15-19-1046 AK, Postbus 61053 — 1005 HB, Amsterdam - Holland
Denmark: Nova Corporation Ltd., Gl. Kongevej 3, 1610 Copenhagen V
Singapore: Anthony Chng Enterprises, 100 Eu Tong Seh Street, # 02-11 Pearl's Centre, Singapore 0105
Hong Kong: Maxpro Int'l (H.K.) Ltd., Block 2, Unit No. V15/FL, S.T.T.L. 65-66, Kinho Ind. Bldg., Shatin.
USA: Institutional Computer Development, 2951, Merrick Road, Bellmore, N.Y., 11710, The Players, 1710 Silver Lake Blvd., Los Angeles, Cal. 90026
U.S. Chess Federation, 186 Route 9W, New Windsor, NY 12550,
Canada: Knight Moves, 507 Elmira Road, Guelph, Ontario N1K 1C2
Cervo 2000, 370 East, Jean-Talon Suite 2000, Montreal, Quebec H2R 1T3
Japan: Japan Chess Association, Kamata 2-17-7, Tokyo 144
New Zealand: New Zealand Chess Supplies, P.O. Box 42090, Homedale, Wainuiomate



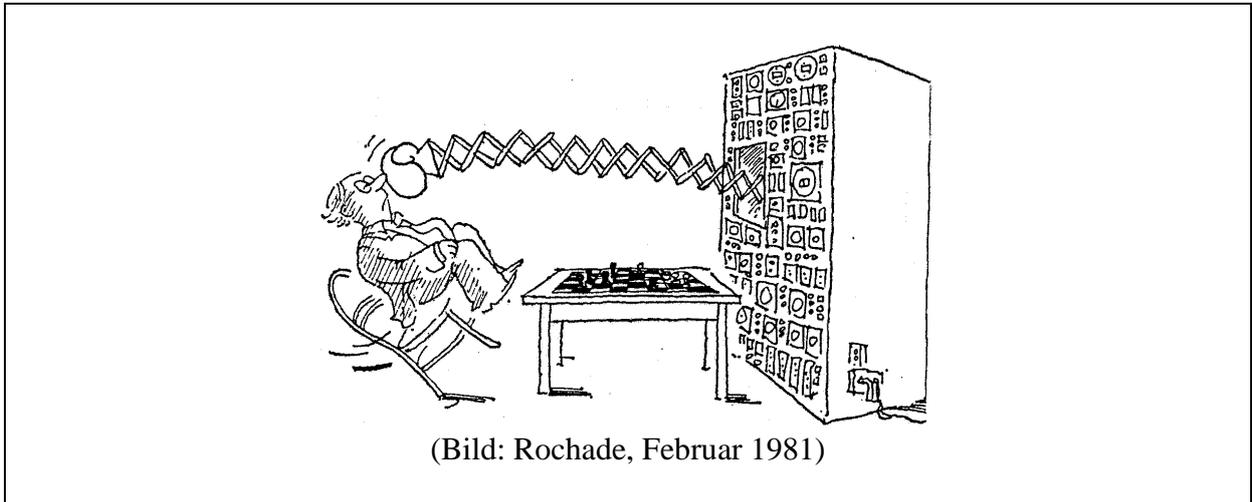
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(Bild: Novag Brochure aus 1986)

Literaturhinweise / References / Literatuuroverzicht

- 03-1986, Europa-Rochade, Nr. 3, S. 32-33, Hans-Peter Ketterling: In Nürnberg nicht viel Neues!? ... Der giftige Constellation 3.6 wird etwa Mai durch den Nachfolger Constellation Quattro abgelöst, der DM 548,00 kosten wird und ein mit 4 MHz laufendes und 16 kByte umfassendes Programm mit 16 Spielstufen und ein Eröffnungsrepertoire von 4000 Halbzügen enthält jedoch nicht so aggressiv wie der Vorgänger spielt. Immerhin soll er in Turniereinstellung Rechentiefe von bis zu 16 Halbzügen erreichen können. Auch dieses Gerät wird im Holz-Look neuen Linie mit Druck-Sensorbett und Magnetfiguren geliefert.
- 04-1986, CSS 2/86, S. 7-11, Frederic Friedel: Neuheiten bei SciSys und Novag.
- 12-1986, CSS 6/86, S. 17-19: Frederic Friedel: Schachcomputer-Neuheiten Weihnachten 1986 (Markt-übersicht).
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- 04-1987, CSS 2/87, S. 32-33: Gut Holz - Der Quattro aus dem Hause Novag.
- 05-1987, DM-Verbrauchermagazine, S. 55-59, Hans-Peter Ketterling: Die Zug-kräftigen. 14 Schachcomputer im Test: Große Leistung auf kleinen Brettern. HV: Uitgebreide informatie en specificaties in tabelvorm.



Programmierer / Programmer

- David Kittinger

Baujahr / Release

- Erste Einführung: Mai 1986

Technische Daten / Technical specifications

- Mikroprozessor: 65C02
- Taktfrequenz: 4 MHz
- Programmspeicher: 16 KB ROM
- Arbeitsspeicher: 2 KB RAM

Spielstärke / Playing strength

- Spielstärke (DWZ/Elo): ca. 1700