

09-1981 [B-5421] SciSys - Chess Champion Super System MK IV

The Chess Champion Super System MK IV is a very remarkable and rare vintage computer that raises more questions than answers! It is clear that this chess computer was very short available at the time, because the development of its successor, the SciSys Chess Champion MK V, ran completely parallel (!) and finally managed to win the micro-World Championship in Travemünde.



**Hein Veldhuis: What appeals to me so much is the very nice ergonomic design!
If you're talking about a vintage chess computer, this is the ultimate example!**

(photo by Rob van Son) (photo copyright © by <http://www.schaakcomputers.nl/>)

A prototype of the MK IV competed for the first time during the Paris microcomputer tournament in May 1981. The games from this tournament can be replayed via a link I give you at the end of this item. Remarkable is that this prototype was stolen just before the last round! The commercial version of the MK IV was presented for the first time during the 'Berliner Funkausstellung' early September 1981. See the text below.

Rochade, February 1982, Hans-Peter Ketterling:

... At the Berlin Funkausstellung at the beginning of September 1981 a series of new chess computers was presented to the general public, some of which shortly afterwards took part in the 2nd Micro Chess Computer World Championship in Travemünde ...

... Although the Chess Champion MK IV has been given a new design, it cannot deny its descent from the Chess Champion Super System III, and the program is also very similar. A test game played with 30 seconds computing time could be reproduced almost completely with CCSS III A, CCSS III B and Intelligent Chess. After all, the device has an opening repertoire and above all the program is exchangeable and the connection of additional devices is also possible. Some small improvements have been made, so you can now query the timings of this device in contrast to the CCSS III. So far, however, none of these products have been sold to any noteworthy numbers, and the inexpensive and more user-friendly sensor devices of the middle class are obviously more popular with consumers...

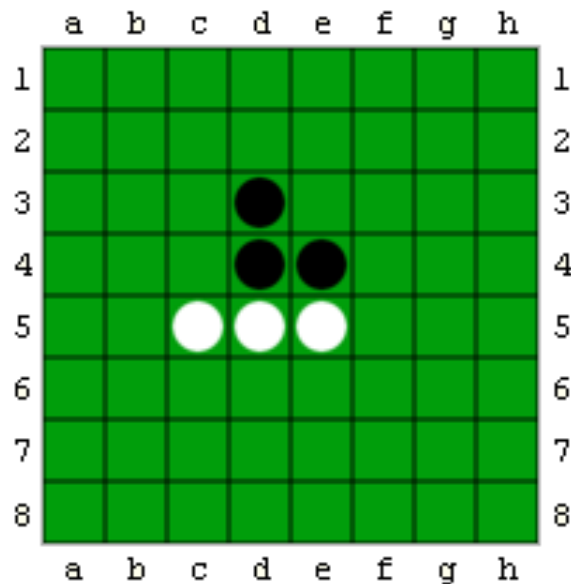
Because of the above text there have been some discussions over the years... Hein Veldhuis: What are the differences between the new and old design? Karsten Bauermeister - 11.01.2005: That is a really good question. Alwin Gruber mentioned it to me a few weeks ago, but I did not go into the subject in depth. But he also said that there were two versions! Hein Veldhuis: I think H.-P. Ketterling chose his text a bit unfortunate, because he speaks of a 'new design' for the MK IV. I don't think he means the housing, but only the chess program which has been slightly improved!

Othello / Reversi program module for the Super System MK IV?

Next I would like to return to the issue about the Othello or Reversi-module called 'The Moor', which would have appeared for the Chess Champion Super System MK IV. SciSys made this known on the packaging, the manual and even in brochures. This module would have been programmed by chess master Michael Stean. I asked Karsten Bauermeister in 2005 for clarification about this, but he was not interested in the history of this module. The company SciSys, later renamed Saitek, cannot be asked because it no longer exists. Maybe someone could ask Michael Stean himself? For me, this little mystery remains historically appealing to the imagination. Personally I think that this Othello program was written, but in the end did not appear as a module for the Super System MK IV. The company Gabriel Industries, Inc. had (in the summer of 1981) the trading rights. It was probably too great a commercial risk to make it available to the Super System MK IV at the last minute.

Othello / Reversi

De huidige speelsterkte van othellospelers kan men op de volgende website goed bekijken:
<https://www.worldothello.org/ratings>



Tim Harding, The chess computer book (uit 1982) p. 40: A very strong program for the game of Othello/Reversi, namely 'The Moor' programmed by chess grandmaster Michael Stean is also available with this (MK IV) computer.

Rob van Son to Steve Blincoe (16.12.2004): I read in the Mark IV manual that there were at the time other games available like The Moor, the program that beat the human Othello World Champion. Do you know if The Moor module actually came on the market in 1980/1981? Do you have such a module for the MK IV in your possession or do you have any other information about it?

Steve Blincoe to Rob van Son (16.12.2004): I do not think any modules were ever released for the Mark IV even though the manual mentions it. I of course do not have any modules for it. This is not uncommon. For the **MK III** (Novag/SciSys Chess Champion MK III) I actually have a photo of a clock attachment from a brochure which was never released as well. Only the printer and LCD attachments as you well know for the Mark IV. I also have a catalogue showing a photo of a printer and LCD attachment but these also were never released.

GENERAL

Introduction

The CHESS CHAMPION MK IV and its ACCESSORIES

Features

- A. Endorsed by FIDE, the World Chess Federation
- B. Modular
 - Chess Program in interchangeable module
 - Never out of date
 - Other games available (eg 'The Moor' - the program that beat the human Othello World Champion)
- C. Balanced and Powerful Chess Program
 - Rich library of openings (see below)
 - Convincingly strong program in all phases of the game
 - The improved successor of the top-scoring production program in the 1980 North American Micro-Computer Chess Championship
- D. Comprehensive features for the true chess player
 - Knows all the rules (including all draw rules)
 - Full and accurate notation including piece, capture, check and move count.
 - Timed responses by built-in quartz clock
 - Easy to use
- E. The problem addict's dream :
 - Finds any mate including mate-in-5 ---- every time
 - Tests for alternative solutions
 - Watches out for all devious tricks such as underpromotions
 - Times how long it took to find the key move.
- F. A rugged, heavy-duty piece of electronics built to withstanding years of use.
- G.- Free Chess set included

Openings - a partial list

Latvian	Goring
King's Gambit	Francosic
French	Scandinavian
Sicilian	Caro Kann
Englund	Nimzovitch
King's Indian	Dutch
Bird	English
Reti	

**Features B: Other games available (eg 'The Moor'
- the program that beat the human Othello World Champion)**

Computerschaak (1982)

Jan Louwman

SciSys Chess Champion Super System MK IV

De Chess Champion Super System MK IV is een verbeterde versie van de **Chess Champion Super System MK III**. Evenals deze laatste computer leverbaar met een los LCD-schaakbord en een printer. Het LCD-schaakbord en de printer van de MK III zijn via een adapter ook aan te sluiten op de MK IV. De MK IV speelt helaas nauwelijks sterker dan zijn voorganger. Wel is het apparaat uitgerust met een beperkte openingsbibliotheek (van 660 halfzetten) in tegenstelling tot de **Super System MK III**. Deze schaakcomputer werkt via het countdown principe. Elke bedenktijd per zet is te programmeren. De **Super System MK IV** is wel een goede schaakprobleemplosser tot en met mat in 4 en met minorpromotie.



SciSys Chess Champion MK IV chess module in close-up

(photo by Rob van Son) (photo copyright © by <http://www.schaakcomputers.nl/>)

De computer is fraai uitgevoerd maar speelt voor zijn prijs (anno 1982) te zwak. Hij onderzoekt buitengewoon mager de alternatieve voortzettingen. Toen drie jaar geleden de **Super System MK III** op de markt kwam was dat qua speelkracht een alleszins aanvaardbare schaakcomputer. Deze **Super System MK IV**, is nauwelijks sterker dan de **Super System MK III** en schiet voor de huidige eisen te kort. O'Connell en Levy zijn er niet in geslaagd deze nieuwe **Super System MK IV** een surplus aan speelsterkte mee te geven. Voor een prijs van NLG 679,- geen aantrekkelijke aanbieding. Voor bezitters van de **Super System MK III** alleen interessant als zij ook het **LCD-bord** en de **Printer** reeds bezitten. Importeur: Electronics BV te Amsterdam.

Bron: Computerschaak, februari 1982 p. 10, Jan Louwman: Vier schaakcomputers getest.

NB: Jan schrijft: "Het LCD-schaakbord en de printer van de **MK III** zijn via een adapter ook aan te sluiten op de MK IV." Via een adapter? Intrigerend is deze constructie wel! Zou iemand dit weleens hebben uitprobeerde? NLG 679,- = ca. EUR 308,-.

Top collector Steve Blincoe (USA)
Site: Kurt Kispert
28.02.2004



Does anyone know if the following items were ever actually released?

- Clock attachment to the SciSys Chess Champion Mark III
- LCD and Printer attachment's to the SciSys Mark IV
 - Printer attachment to the SciSys Mark V

I have advertisements (prospekt) showing photo's of these items.

Attached Regards
Steveb

Top collector Karsten Bauermeister (Germany)
Site: Kurt Kispert
28.02.2004

As I know quite sure, none of these items are ever released.

Ciao
Karsten

Chess Champion Super System IV.



A sophisticated AC-powered chess computer with a 12K Memory and Infinity x 4 Levels of Play, it operates on a time basis (user set), depending on the level of play difficulty desired. An LCD Readout shows game progress in the standard coordinate system of chess notation. Its special chess problem-solving mode recognizes all chess rules, including the *Draws-By-Threelfold Repetition* and the

50-Move Rule. Accessories include the *System IV LCD Chessboard*, which displays the chess pieces on a large built-in display; a *System IV Printer*, which automatically records the progress of the game for retention and/or analysis; and *System IV Plug-in Modules* to play "Othello"^{**} (*Reversi*). The System IV Solves Mate in 5, and is the next best thing to Mark V.



 **SciSys** ₄

**OTHELLO™ is a registered trademark of Gabriel Industries, Inc.

SciSys Chess Champion Super System IV
Chess Champion Super System IV LCD Chessboard
Chess Champion Super System IV Printer & Mark IV Othello Module
(photo copyright © by <http://www.schaakcomputers.nl/>) (600 dpi)

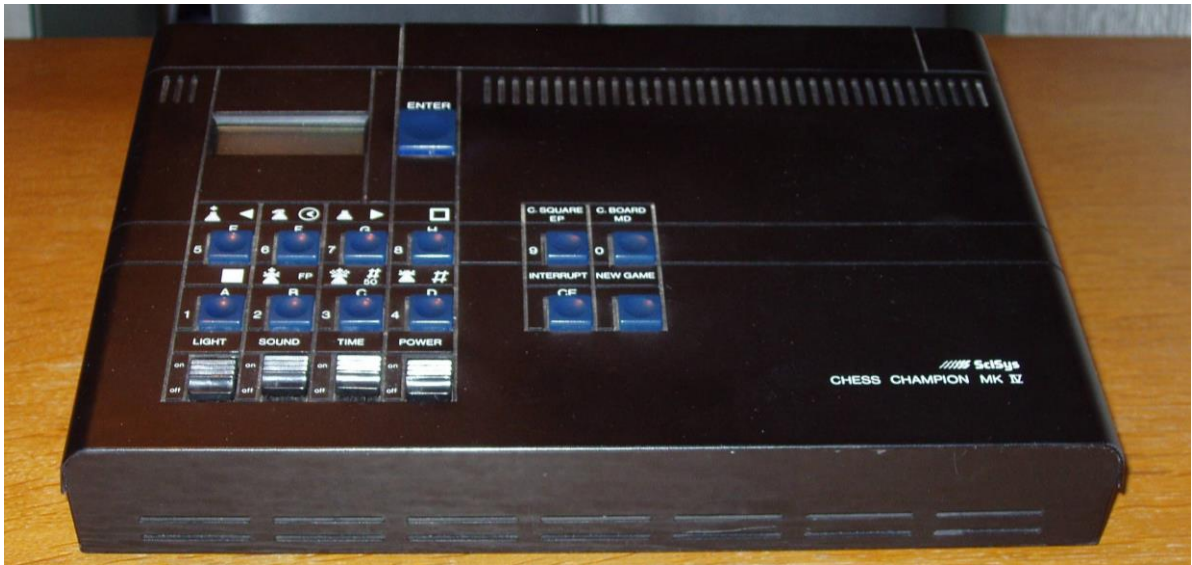
DM bewertet Schach-Computer nach bedienungscomfort - schachtechnischer Ausstattung - Spielverständnis und Spielstärke

	SciSys Chess Champion Mark IV	Novag Industries Super Sensor IV
● gehört zu Standardausstattung		
○ ist nicht vorhanden		
Allgemeines		
Preis ca. in Mark	500 (€ 250)	500 (€ 250)
Abmessungen in Zentimetern	28 x 21 x 9,5	24 x 24 x 3,5
Gewicht in Gramm	1000	1000
Verfügt über ein Sensorbrett	○	●
Anschluß über		
Netz	●	●
Batterie	○	●
Akku	○	○
Batteriekosten (10 Stunden Betriebsdauer)	entfällt	3
Anzeige, wann Batterien schwach werden	entfällt	○
Bedienungscomfort		
Anschluß von Zusatzgeräten möglich	●	●
Spielstellung ist speicherbar	○	●
Speichert mehrere Partien	○	○
Verfügt über eine Schachuhr	○	Aufpreis
Zählt die Zahl der Züge	○	○
Schachtechnische Ausstattung		
Programmodule sind austauschbar	●	●
Läßt sich Eröffnungen vorgeben	●	●
Prüft, ob die Stellung regelrecht ist	○	○
Nimmt Züge zurück	○	bis 16 Halbzüge
Besitzt einen Zufallsgenerator	○	●
Zufallsgenerator kann abgeschaltet werden	○	○
Rechnet, auch wenn der Gegner am Zug ist	○	●
Gibt dem Gegner Tips für den nächsten Zug	●	●
Kann gegen sich selber spielen	●	●
Signalisiert Züge, die er erwägt	●	○
Zeigt an, wieviel Halbzüge er berechnet	○	○
Kann den Denkvorgang vorzeitig abbrechen	●	●
Spielverständnis		
Kündigt Matt an	○	●
Gibt vor dem Matt auf	○	○
Erkennt ein Patt	●	●
Beherrscht alle Remisregeln	●	●
Wendet die Rochade an	●	●
Spielstärke		
Eröffnungsprogramm	mäßig	variabel
Mittelspieltest – von 15 Aufgaben gelöst	5	7
Setzt Matt mit		
König und Dame	●	●
König und Turm	○	●
König und 2 Läufern	○	●
König, Läufer und Springer	○	○
König und Bauern	○	○
Löst folgende Schachprobleme (nicht alle)	Vierzüger	Vierzüger

Gesamturteil für SciSys Chess Champion Mark IV: Nachfolgemodell des Chess Champion Mark III verfügt zwar über keine besondere Stärke im Mittelspiel (nur 5 von 15 Aufgaben gelöst), bewältigt aber – beachtlich – vierzügige Schachprobleme. Drucker und LCD-Brett werden gegen Aufpreis geliefert.

Gesamturteil für Novag Industries Super Sensor IV: Sehr gut ausgestatteter Computer der Mittelklasse. Ist in der Lage, mit König und Läufern ein Matt zu erzielen. Die Leistungen im Mittelspiel sind eher mittelmäßig. Bei den Schachproblemen war das Testgerät nicht immer zugsicher.

Quelle: DM-Vergleichstest (1981), Ivan Kühnmund: Schach-Computer Champion matt gesetzt.



SciSys Chess Champion Super System MK IV

(photos by Rob van Son) (photo copyright © by <http://www.schaakcomputers.nl/>)



This is a real chess collectors item. Its predecessor was **Chess Champion Super System III** (1979), and many people saw the **Chess Champion Mark V** successors (1981), and the **Chess Champion Mark VI** (module from 1982). But not many folk have seen the **Chess Champion Mark IV**! What are the differences with its predecessor, the **Chess Champion Super System III**? The design is, of course, very different, that's obvious. The playing strength has not improved much, despite the fact that the programme has been extended from 8K ROM to 12K ROM and a small opening book of 660 half moves has been added.

Absender
SciSys Computer
Reesmarkt 15
6 Frankfurt 1

Ihre Bestellung vom

Ihre Bestell-Nr./-Abtlig.

Empfänger

Versandart

Frei/Unfrei

G. Piel

Gepackt am von

Trenknerweg 41

Kontrolle

2 Hamburg 52

Lieferschein nr. 267-81 Datum 16.09.81

1 MK IV

inkl. Netzgerät
u. Beschreibung

Vermerke des Absenders (bitte nicht durchschreiben)

Die gelieferte Ware bleibt bis zur vollständigen Bezahlung Eigentum des Lieferanten

Tester, author and collector Gerhard Piel was often one of the first people at the time to own a new model. I think the delivery date indicates 16.09.1981, which means that he made this purchase just after the introduction at the Berliner Funkausstellung!



SciSys Werbung...

Der vielseitige Schachpartner für den lernbegierigen Schachspieler. Dieser Schachcomputer ist der ideale Partner für den ehrgeizigen seriösen Schachfreund. Er zeigt Ihnen die Züge, die er erwägt, bringt Vorschläge für Ihre eigenen Züge, verfügt über eine reichhaltige Eröffnungsbibliothek, ist besonders schlagfertig in Blitzpartien und ein unübertrefflicher Problemlöser (bis Matt in 5 Zügen). Das Schachmodul ist auswechselbar: Super System MK IV kann daher mit allen neuen Entwicklungen Schritt halten. Mit speziellen Modulen können auch andere Brettspiele gespielt werden.

PLAY THE WINNING GAME

SKAT CHAMPION
SKAT — the national card game of Germany. Can play either one or two hands. The SKAT Champion PARTNER Unit (not shown) allows two people to play against the computer.



CHESS CHAMPION SUPER SYSTEM IV
Unique among chess computers. Peripherals include the World's first LCD chess board and electronic printer. Plug-in modules to play other board games also available.



CHESS TRAVELER
Exercise your brain power anytime, any place. Battery operated.



CHESS PARTNER 2000
Uses latest "Sense" technology. Eight levels of play — even plays against itself.



JACOBY ELECTRONIC BRIDGE TUTOR
Sharpen your Bridge expertise under the guidance of Oswald Jacoby — former Bridge World Champion. Plays anywhere. Battery operated.



INTELLIGENT CHESS
An ideal teaching aid using your own TV. Inbuilt cassette either for recording your own game or playing back games by Fischer, Karpov and other Grand Masters.



To improve every chess or card player's game a computer opponent is invaluable.

That's why SciSys has pioneered the development of microprocessor technology in the field of "intelligent" computer games.

Across the board from the World's first LCD chess board, the world's first SKAT computer, the World's first LCD electronic Bridge Tutor, to the best-selling hand-held chess computer, and more.

Using the most advanced scientific "State-of-the-Art" systems yet devised.

With versatile skill levels for novices to experts.

Player or not, you can use this micro-knowledge to be two moves ahead of the market.

It's one game you'll always win.

For further information contact SciSys.



Computer games challenge the world
SciSys Inc
 One World Trade Center-Suite 7967
 New York, NY 10048
 (212) 432-8529

See us at BOOTH 3000 ROTUNDA

**Intelligent Chess – Chess Champion Super System MK IV – Chess Traveler
 Chess Partner 2000 – Skat Champion – Jacoby Electronic Bridge Tutor**



SciSys Chess Champion Super System MK IV

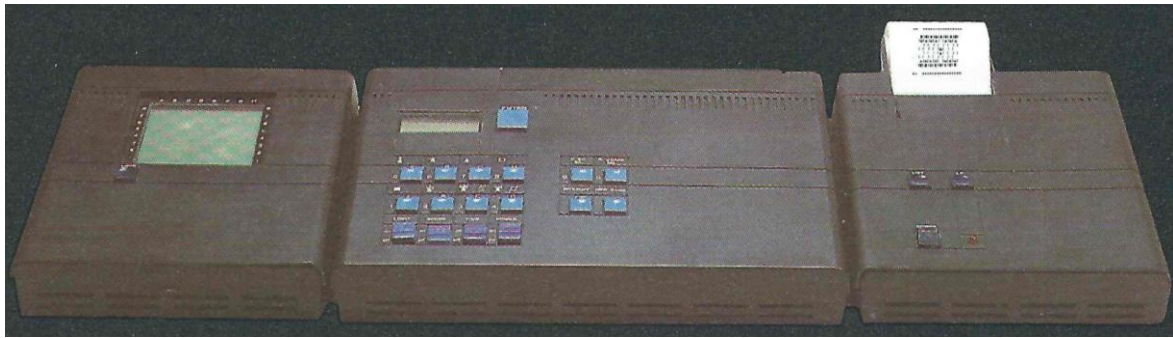
(photos by Rob van Son) (photo copyright © by <http://www.schaakcomputers.nl/>)





Nog een paar kleine wetenswaardigheden...

- Controle toon is uitschakelbaar.
- Computer is alleen via een adapter te gebruiken.
- Een openingsvariant of een matprobleem is in te voeren.
 - Take back: 1 zet (2 ply).
- Een openingsrepertoire van 660 ply is aanwezig.
- Zettijdmeting is via de LCD-display af te lezen.
 - Het interne bord leegmaken is mogelijk.
 - Speelt met wit en zwart.
- Van kleur (of niveau) wisselen tijdens de partij is mogelijk.
 - Kan tegen zichzelf spelen.
- Tijdens een analyse is een zet af te dwingen.
 - Laat geen illegale zetten toe.
 - Speelt rokade en en passant zet
 - Kent de 3x remiseregels en 50 zetten regel.
 - Kan de partij bij zeer slechte stand opgeven.
- Kent minorpromotie en speelt dit ook automatisch.
 - Een toevalsgenerator is aanwezig.
- Geen permanent brain - denkt dus niet na in de tijd van de tegenstander.
 - Een berekende variant is maar beperkt te bekijken.
 - Kan matzetten met één dame.
 - Speelstijl: agressief!



We would like to draw your attention once more to the image above. Just like its predecessor (**Super System MK III**), the **Chess Champion Super System MK IV** has a modular construction! The **System IV LCD Chessboard**, which displays the chess pieces on a built-in display (left accessory) and the **System IV Printer** (right accessory) **are never released!** It is probably possible to connect the **System III LCD Chessboard** and the **System III Printer** to the **Super System MK IV!!** Who is going to try it out? That seems like a cool experiment to me! Who is the first person who is going to try this out to prove that it is very easy to do?

Programmierer / Programmer

- Programmierer: Mike Johnson + David Levy

Baujahr / Release

- Erste Einführung: September 1981 auf der Berliner Funkausstellung

Technische Daten / Technical specifications

- Mikroprozessor: 6502A
- Taktfrequenz: 2 MHz
- Programmspeicher: 12 KB ROM
- Arbeitsspeicher: 1 KB RAM

Spielstärke / Playing strength

- Spielstärke (DWZ/ELO): ca. 1330
- Bewertung: Am besten geeignet für Einsteiger und Amateure

Verwandt / Related

- Novag/SciSys Chess Champion Super System III (A)
- Novag/SciSys Chess Champion Super System III (B)
- SciSys Intelligent Chess
- Unimex Sensor Mark IV (?)

Verwandte Weblinks / Related weblinks

http://www.chesscomputeruk.com/html/chess_champion_super_system_iv.html

<http://tluif.home.xs4all.nl/chescom/ScsCCMk4.html>

http://www.schaakcomputers.nl/hein_veldhuis/database/files/01-0000%20SciSvs%20brochure%201980-1981.pdf

http://www.schaakcomputers.nl/hein_veldhuis/database/files/02-0000%20SciSys%20Prospekt%201980-1981.pdf

http://www.schaakcomputers.nl/hein_veldhuis/database/files/05-1981,%201.%20Weltturnier%20fur%20Mikro-Schachcomputer%20in%20Paris.pdf