

As a step towards bringing all chess computer claims into line with this standard, three identical off-the-shelf PAR EXCELLENCE computers (exactly as you can buy them) were entered into the very strong eleven-round Major Open section at the August 1986 British Championships in Southampton.

The results surprised and impressed the sceptics, and confirmed that this new PAR EXCELLENCE plays to strong club/county standard. It has also thereby qualified for an appropriate official British Chess Federation grading — which will be published with the new grading list for 1986-87. (Ring us for the latest update on this.)

THE MAJOR OPEN RESULTS

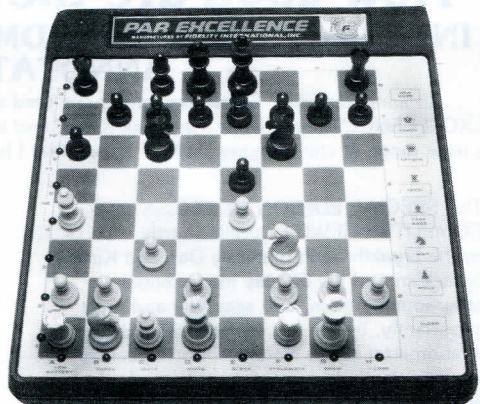
Playing on its 'tournament' level (averaging 2½ minutes a move), with the players playing to a time control of 40 moves in 2½ hours (average 3¾ minutes a move), the PAR EXCELLENCE scored a very impressive 11½ out of 33 (nine wins, five draws, and nineteen losses) against a range of strong players. All 33 games are published in this edition.

The results given below give the 1985-86 BCF grades for the players, although the new 1986-87 grades are expected to be higher in most cases. (Ring for latest update on this.) (To convert BCF to the equivalent ELO grading, first multiply by 8, then add 600):

The PAR EXCELLENCE: DREW with players graded 198, 194, 190, 175, 154; BEAT players graded 189, e187, 184, 162, 160, 155, 154, 141, 121; and LOST (in generally hard-fought games) to players graded 208, 201, 190, 190, 188, 185, 184, 181, 178, 178, 177, 175, e175, e175, 174, 164J, 172, 164, 155. No easy passage!

This performance verifies that the PAR EXCELLENCE is a significant improvement over earlier computers, a clear 'best-buy', and an invaluable and enjoyable chess companion, practice partner, opponent, and analysis aid for over 95% of players in the country, whether used for tournament practice, pleasure, blitz, correspondence, problem-solving, analysis, or for teaching.

The PAR EXCELLENCE has also been given new, separate, lower levels for beginners and upwards, making it the ideal computer also for learners and weaker players, while retaining the strong club/county player standard from the 5 seconds a move level upwards.



The new budget PAR EXCELLENCE 2100 (approx. 11 × 10 × 1½ inches / 28 × 26 × 3,5 cms).

Six Games Annotated by Grandmaster Jon Speelman

In annotating the six selected games I've tried to give an impartial account of both *Par Excellence*'s strengths and its weaknesses, and also to provide notes which will be of interest to a wide range of chessplaying abilities. I hope that I haven't failed too badly in either respect.

Jon Speelman

GAME ONE

Par Excellence v

R.Dicks (162) ♠8 ♘6

King's Indian, Four Pawns Attack

1	d4	♗f6
2	c4	g6
3	♗c3	♙g7
4	e4	d6

This, the King's Indian Defence, is quite a rational choice against a computer. Generally the centre will become blocked and a complex middlegame will arise in which, initially at least, strategic considerations will predominate. Thus one of the main lines goes 5 ♗f3 0-0 6 ♙e2 e5 7 0-0 ♗c6 8 d5 ♗e7, when Black's normal plan is to build up a kingside attack by preparing ... f5, while White hopes to attack on the queenside utilising his central space advantage. That sort of position would be much more congenial to man than machine, but ...

5 f4

Par Excellence is still in its opening book. This very slightly dubious move is much more overtly tactical than most King's Indian lines and hence is a very sensible

choice by the programmer.

Why should 5 f4 be a little dubious? Well, because White is neglecting his development to set up a huge centre which can be sniped at later by Black. However, even if the target is a bit too large, this can only be demonstrated tactically, which is right up the machine's street!

5	...	0-0
6	♗f3	c5
7	dc	

The sharpest move is 7 d5. However, open positions are more to the programme's taste, hence this decision by the compiler of the opening book.

7	...	♙a5
8	♙d3	♙xc5
9	♙e2	♗c6
10	♙e3	♙b4?!

Here 10 ... ♙a5 and 10 ... ♙h5 are more normal, since the queen is somewhat exposed on b4. After this move we are definitely out of the opening book.

11 a3

Immediately putting the question to the black queen. Should she go to b3, and very possibly get trapped, or run to a5? Against a machine

especially, the choice obviously has to be the latter.

11 ... ♖a5

So Black has lost a tempo, but the significance of this isn't clear, since the plan which the machine adopted after

12 0-0 ♘g4

of

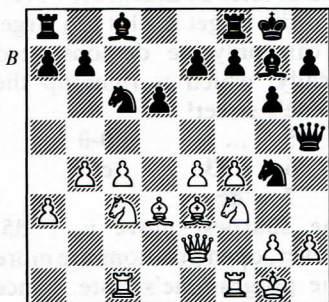
13 b4!?

isn't necessarily good. White gains space on the queenside but weakens the black squares and softens the g7-a1 diagonal.

Instead 13 ♔d2! would be better, maintaining White's black-squared bishop. If then 13 ... ♖b6+ 14 ♘h1 ♖xb2? 15 ♜fb1 traps the queen at once.

13 ... ♖h5

14 ♜c1



14 ... ♘d4?!

Here Black starts to push his luck. After simply 14 ... ♘xe3 15 ♖xe3 ♔g4 he would have a very satisfactory position, but in going for more he creates a tactical m le.

15 ♔xd4

Of course, not 15 ♘xd4?? ♖xh2 mate.

15 ... ♔xd4+

16 ♘h1 ♔e3

This is consequent. If now 17 ♜ moves - e.g. 17 ♜cd1 - then after 17 ... ♔xf4 Black would win

a pawn and with it the game, since the black squares would be totally under his fiat. But *Par Excellence* reacted correctly with the only move . . .

17 ♘d5! ♔xc1

18 ♘xe7+ ♘h8

Normally 18 ... ♘g7 would be more natural, but here Black is worried about the queen on h5, and so wishes to leave it a bolt-hole on g7.

19 ♜xc1

So White has lost the exchange for a pawn. However, he has kept his position "intact" and so has very reasonable chances, especially considering that Black's position, in contrast, has been "fractured" somewhat by the loss of his e-pawn and the resulting deterioration of both his pawn structure and king position.

19 ... ♔d7

20 c5!?

Whilst this allows Black to exchange off the potentially weak isolated d-pawn, it does open up the c-file and further weaken Black's hold on those black squares.

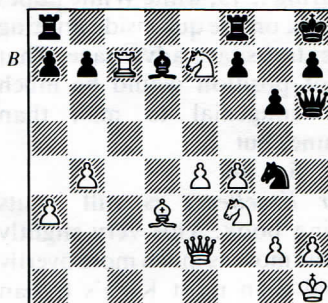
20 ... dc

20 ... ♖h6 at once is more natural.

21 ♜xc5 ♖h6

22 ♜c7

22 ♘d5 ♖g7 is also very complex.



This is wrong since it allows White later to remove the bishop with tempo, destroying Black's pawn structure and getting one of White's slightly loose pieces (the knight on e7) off prise.

The right move was 22 ... ♖ad8:
 a) If then 23 ♖xb7? ♖b5! 24 ♖xb5 (24 ♖xb5? ♖d1+!) 24 ... ♖xd3 gives Black the advantage. As a human player I can make this *assessment* fairly confidently, since Black's pieces are co-ordinating in this position whilst White's aren't. However, a computer would of course *analyse* such a position if it were within its search capacity, starting say from the position after 22 ... ♖ad8, and therein lies one of the main differences between humans and machines in playing chess.

Here in any case are a couple of variations:

a1) 25 h3? ♖d1+ 26 ♘g1 ♖xf4! 27 ♖xg4 (27 hg ♖h6+ - or even 27 ... ♖c1 - 28 ♖h5 ♖xg1+!) 27 ... ♖f1.

a2) 25 g3? ♖xf3.

a3) 25 ♘g1. This is best. Now 25 ... ♖xf4 26 ♖xd3 ♖c1+ 27 ♖f1 ♖e3+ 28 ♘h1 ♘f2+ 29 ♘g1 ♘xe4+ 30 ♘h1 ♘f2+ 31 ♘g1 ♘g4+ 32 ♘h1 ♖xe7 isn't clear. Perhaps 25 ... ♖e3 26 ♖b2+ ♖g7! is best, when Black is better.

b) 23 h3 ♖e6! attacks f4 and also threatens 24 ... ♖xd3 (but not 23 ... ♖xf4? 24 ♘d5 ♖h6 25 ♘g1 ♖c8 26 ♖b2+ f6 27 hg ♖xc7 28 g5!). Again my judgement says that this is good for Black, though (e.g.) 24 ♖c3 defends against both threats.

c) 23 g3 is probably best, defending f4, but again Black chooses 23 ... ♖e6!, preparing to expel the white rook after, e.g., 24 ♖c2 (to stop 24 ... ♖xd3) 24 ... ♖d7.

23 g3! ♖ad8

24 ♘xc6 bc

Black would like to play 24 ... ♖xd3 but after 25 ♘ce5! he would lose material in view of the later threat of ♘xf7+.

25 ♖c4 ♖h3!?

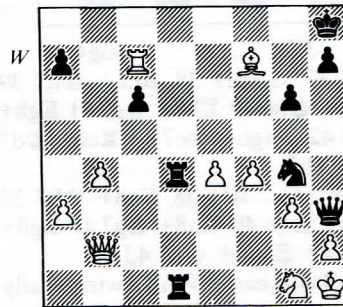
Passive defence by 25 ... ♖g7 or 25 ... f6 was utterly dire, but this loses by force.

26 ♖xf7! ♖d1+

27 ♘g1 ♖fd8

If 27 ... ♖xf7 28 ♖xf7 ♘g8 29 ♖xa7 (not 29 ♖d7? ♘f2+! 30 ♖xf2 ♖xd7) 29 ... ♘f8 (else 30 ♖c4+ or 30 ♖a2+) 30 ♖b2 and wins.

28 ♖b2+ ♖8d4



29 ♖xd4+! ♖xd4

30 ♘xh3 ♖d1+

31 ♘g1 ♖d2

32 ♘f3 ♖f2

33 ♘d4 ♘e3

34 h4

Black's threat of 34 ... ♖f1 mate is easily parried.

34 ... ♖f1+

35 ♘h2 ♖f2+

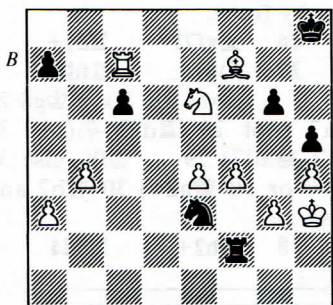
36 ♘h3 h5!

Trying to set up a mating net.

37 ♘e6!?

A very interesting moment. A human player would certainly play 37 ♖xg6 here (especially if he was in time trouble). For then if 37 ...

♟g4 38 ♙xh5 is completely harmless, and if 37 ... ♚f1 38 ♟g4! White easily avoids the checks. However, *Par Excellence* has presumably calculated several moves ahead (since everything is happening either with check, capture or threat of mate) and therefore chooses this equally good (but very "unhuman") continuation.



37 ... ♟g4

If 37 ... ♚f1 38 ♚c8+ ♜h7 39 ♜g5+ ♜h6 40 ♚h8+ ♜g7 41 ♚g8+ ♜f6 42 ♚xg6+ ♜e7 43 ♚e6+ ♜d7 44 ♙xh5.

Or 37 ... ♚f1 38 ♚c8+ ♜h7 39 ♜g5+ ♜h6 40 ♚h8+ ♜g7 41 ♚g8+ ♜f6 42 ♚xg6+ ♜e7 43 ♟g4.

In both cases White wins easily since the black threats soon peter out.

38 ♚c8+ ♜h7

39 ♜g5+ ♜g7

40 ♚g8+ ♜f6

41 ♚xg6+

And Black resigned, since after 41 ... ♜e7 42 ♚e6+ and 43 ♙xh5 wins easily.

GAME TWO

2072. K.I.Escott (184) v

Par Excellence

King's Gambit

1 e4 e5

2 f4

Not a very sensible choice of opening since the King's Gambit tends to lead to extremely tactical positions where a computer will show itself at its very best.

2 ... ♙h4+!?

An extremely interesting decision by the opening book compiler. This very unusual move sidesteps the reams of theory which exist on other King's Gambit lines and would normally leave the opponent practically on his own at this very early stage.

3 ♟g3 ♙e7

4 fe

4 ♜c3 is a sharper alternative here.

4 ... d6

5 ♟b3!?

If 5 ed ♙xe4+ 6 ♙e2 ♙xe2+ 7 ♜xe2 ♙xd6 8 ♙g2 ♜c6 the endgame is very comfortable for Black. 5 ♜f3 and 5 ♜c3 are both sensible alternatives.

With the text move White will clearly remove the programme from its opening book, but at the cost of playing something perhaps slightly inferior.

5 ... ♜c6

6 ♟d4!?

This is extremely ambitious. 6 ♜c3 would have been much more sensible.

6 ... de

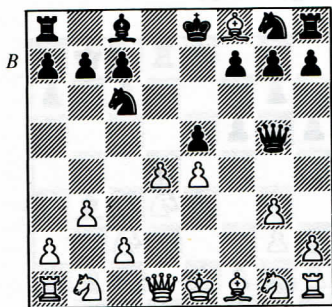
7 ♙a3

If 7 d5 ♙b4+ 8 ♜d2 ♙c3!.

7 ... ♙g5

8 ♙xf8 ♜xd4!!

A fine *intermezzo*, or intermediate move. There is a strong psychological tendency for the human player to make automatic recaptures. Presumably this is also built into programmes to some extent, but a sufficient search can sometimes negate the effect.



First I should mention that the simple 8 ... ♖xf8 is sufficient to draw, since if 9 d5 ♖e3+! 10 ♖e2 ♖c1+ 11 ♖d1 ♖e3+! and White's best is to accept the repetition with 12 ♖e2 etc.

This means that 8 ... ♘xd4 will have to be at least equal for it to be objectively a good move. In fact I believe that this is so – but even if it were not, it is wonderful to see that computers are now capable of such things!

9 ♙c5

9 ♙xg7 is a fascinating alternative:

a) 9 ... ♗xg7! 10 c3 ♘e6 (10 ... ♙g4?! 11 ♖d3!) is quite playable for Black. This, in conjunction with the fact that 9 ♙c5 is fine for Black, is sufficient to show that 8 ... ♘xd4! is objectively good. In fact I spent some considerable time trying to ascertain whether Black can do even better. For any specialist chessplayers interested, here are a couple of very difficult variations without notes (I advise other readers to ignore them):

b) 9 ... ♖e3+?!/? 10 ♙e2 ♖xe4 11 ♘f2!, and if 11 ... ♖xh1 then 12 ♘f3 ♖xd1 13 ♙xd1 is good for White.

c) 9 ... ♙g4 (idea 10 ♖d2 ♗xg7!, when the white queen would be better on d3) 10 ♖d3 0-0-0?! (10 ...

♖c1+? 11 ♘f2 0-0-0 12 ♘e2!) 11 ♙xh8 is “unclear” but seems good for White.

Postscript. Later, when looking at this game with International Master George Botterill, we realised that there is a third idea: 9 c3. The main point is that after 9 ... ♖e3+ 10 ♙e2 ♘xe2?! 11 ♘xe2 Black cannot take on f8 – 11 ... ♘xf8?? 12 ♖d8 mate; and if 11 ... ♖xe4 12 ♖f1! (but not 12 0-0 ♙h3) is good for White.

However, there are various very complex alternatives, e.g. 10 ... ♖xe4 11 ♙xg7 ♖xh1 12 cxd4 ♖xg1+ 13 ♙f1 ♙h3 14 ♘d2!. And even if 9 c3 really is good for White then this doesn't greatly affect the merit of 8 ... ♘xd4 (see the comment above).

9 ... ♖e3+
10 ♙e2

Not 10 ♘e2?? ♘f3 mate! And if 10 ♖e2? ♖c1+! 11 ♖d1 ♘xc2+ 12 ♘e2 ♙g4+ wins – but not here 10 ... ♘xe2?? 11 ♙xe3 and it is White who wins.

10 ... ♖xe4
11 ♙xd4 ♖xh1
12 ♙f2 ♘f6

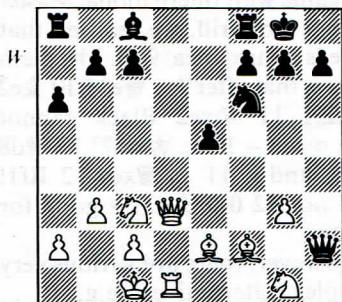
Much of the smoke has cleared. Black has won a rook and two pawns for two minor pieces – quite a good bargain in this position, especially as there is a third pawn to follow ...

13 ♘c3 ♖xh2
14 ♖d3 a6
15 0-0-0 0-0

And not 15 ... ♖xf2?? 16 ♖d8 mate!

Although he is material down White has vague tactical counter-chances with the black queen off-side and some prospects of a later kingside attack. However, that is just the sort of thing that a computer

is best equipped to deal with, and in what follows White loses further material through thrashing around.



16 ♖c5?! ♜e8

17 ♘f3 ♙xg3

A fourth pawn goes. Objectively White should not have moved the bishop from f2, but defending it there would have been rather passive.

18 ♜g1 ♙h3

19 ♖f1 ♙h6+

20 ♖e3 ♙h5

21 ♘g5

By chasing the black queen White has gained time to mount a king-side demonstration, but with no target in sight this really can't work.

21 ... ♙g4

22 ♖g2

22 ♘ge4 would have been better, to keep the g-file open. After 22 ... ♘xe4 23 ♙xe4 ♖f3 24 ♙c4 White is obviously lost, but his pieces have attained some temporary co-ordination.

22 ... ♜ad8

23 ♙c4 c6

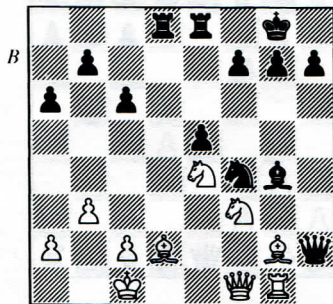
24 ♘ce4 ♘d5!

24 ... ♘xe4 25 ♖xe4 h6 26 ♘xf7! would have given White hope again.

25 ♖d2 ♙h2

26 ♙f1 ♘f4

27 ♘f3



27 ... ♘e2+!

A nice little combination to simplify the position and even win further material. Since the main line is only five half-moves this is well within *Par Excellence*'s capacity at this rate of play (40 moves in two hours).

28 ♙xe2 ♖xf3

29 ♙f2?

If either piece recaptures on f3 then 29 ... ♙xg1+ comes. However, he should really have tried 29 ♙e3 ♖xg2 30 ♙f2.

29 ... ♖xe4

White resigned

GAME THREE

Par Excellence v

Newton (198) 2184.

French Defence, Advance Variation

1 d4 e6

2 e4 d5

Reaching a French Defence, though normally this arises via 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5. Interestingly, the slight transposition seems to have taken *Par Excellence* out of its book. Usually it replied 3 ed to reach the more open positions of the Exchange Variation, but here, "on its own", it chose to gain space with