

Creating a Deployable Human-Like Chess Engine to Enhance the Learning Experience

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Agenda

1. Introduction & Motivation
2. Methodology
3. Experiments
4. Conclusions & Future Work

Introduction - Problem Definition

Maia Problems

- Traditional chess engines maximize the chances of winning
- Predicting a move a human would play does not mean finding the best move
- **Goal**: Replicate human play

Rylee Problems

- Maia requires **large GPUs** to run and train
- Maia can only run on high end machines
- Maia was not trained to play chess openings
- **Goal**: Make a **practical & deployable** version of Maia

Introduction - Motivation

Why human aligned AI matters

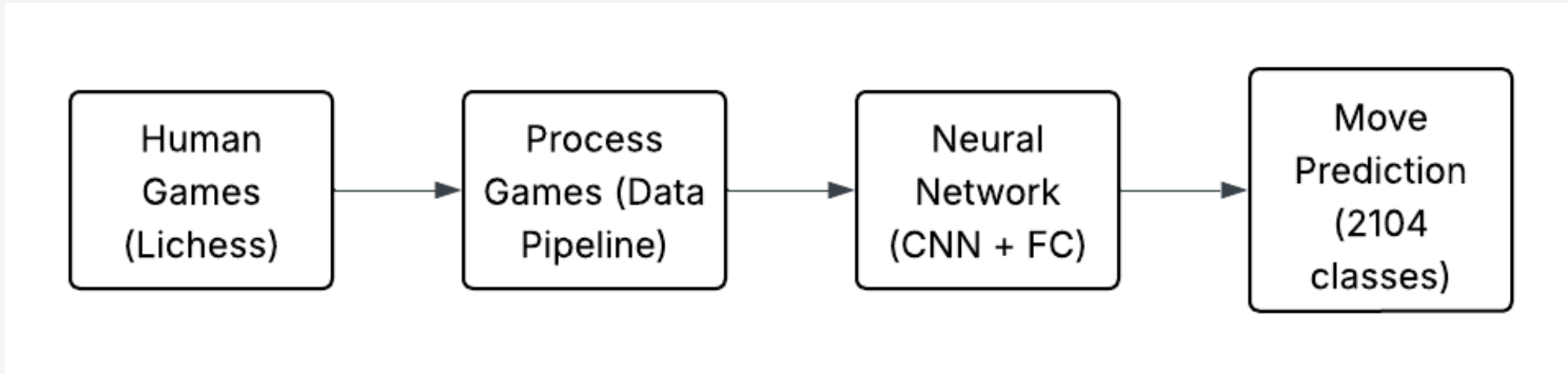
- Traditional engines play chess differently making it difficult for humans to learn from
- Attenuating does not **mimic human play**
- Human aligned engines creates more realistic **training partners**
- Example: Chess students can practice with Rylee on their school chromebook to advance their chess skills
- Broader applications: Collaborative decision-making, Education, etc

How Rylee extends Maia

- **Edge deployment** Raspberry Pi, Chromebooks
- **Includes openings** first 10 moves
- **No game filtering** include all game types (classical, blitz, etc)
- **Unified model with a higher range** 700-2500 ELO

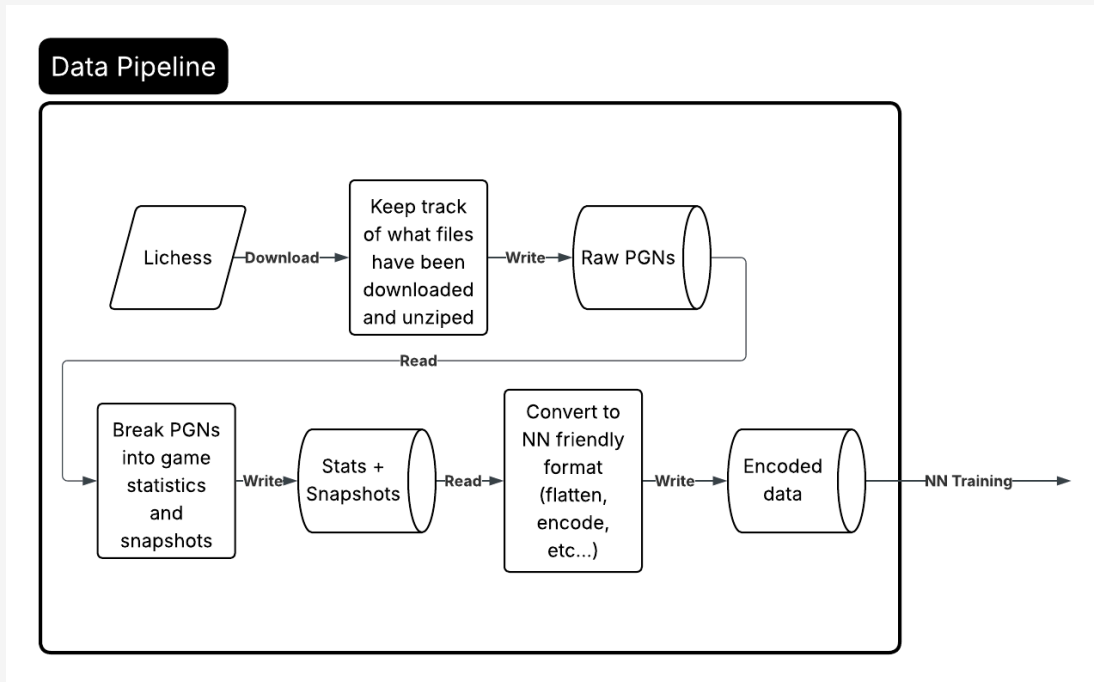
Methodology - Proposed Solution

We believe we can still maintain similar performance, and add features to the Maia model while significantly reducing model size.



1. Pull data from Lichess
2. Preprocess games
3. Feed data into NN
4. Predict moves

Methodology - Data Pipeline



- **Download** .zst files from Lichess
- **Extract** PGNs
- **Split** into individual games
- **Convert** to board snapshots
- **Extract** ELO and result metadata
- **Encode** board as 8x8x12 tensors

Methodology - Theories

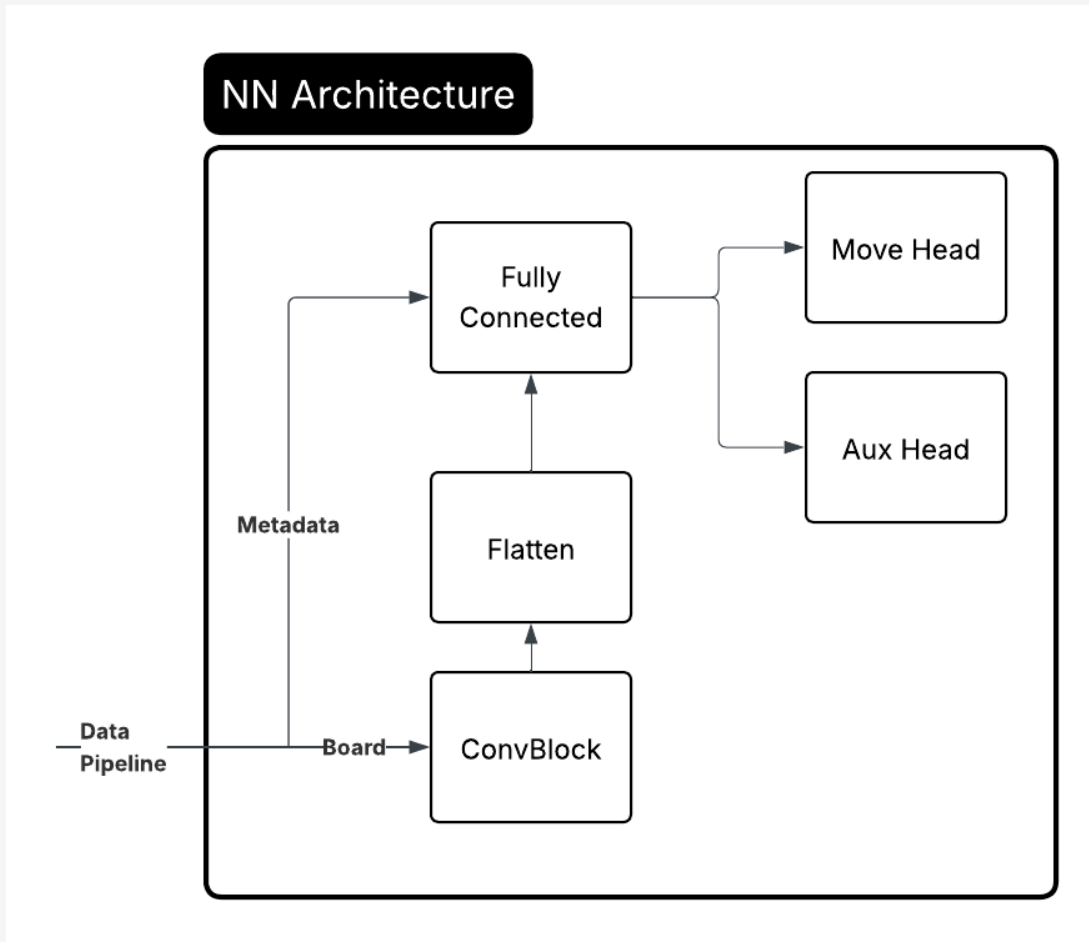
Why CNNs work well for chess

- Chess boards are **spatially related** (knight is better if its in the middle)
- Humans evaluate through pattern recognition
- CNNs excel at **spatial pattern recognition**

Model size vs performance

- Increasing model size has exponentially diminishing returns
- We are hoping we can decrease the size of the Maia model while still keeping high accuracy

Methodology - Neural Network

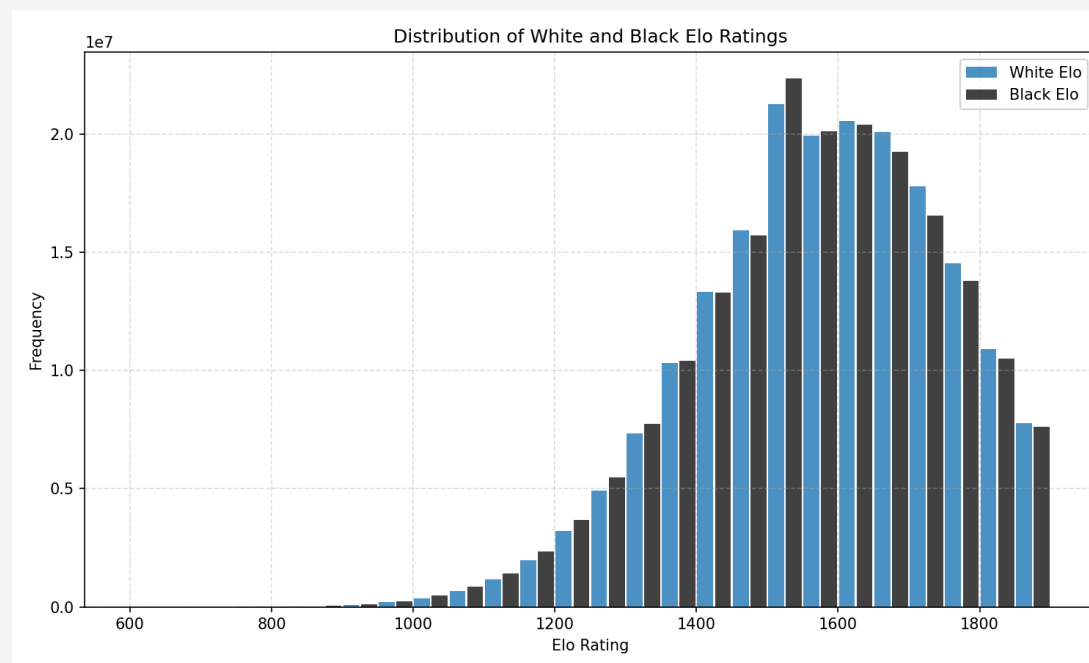


- **Input:** Board(8x8x12) + Metadata(4)
- **Conv Layers:** 6 64x8x8 filters, ReLU
- **Fully Connected:** 4100 -> 512 -> 32
- **Output Heads:** Move (2104) + Auxiliary (2104)
 - 2104 is the number of legal moves
- **Loss:** CrossEntropy (moves) + BCE (valid moves)
- **Optimizer:** Adam
- **Hyperparameter Search:** Random search

Experiments - Dataset

- **Source:** Lichess Open Database
- **Games:** 15,167 human-rated games
- **Snapshots:** 1 million board states
 - including openings
 - including all game types
- **Action Space:** 2,104 legal move classes
- **Time Span:** January 2013

Split	Percentage	Snapshots
Training	80%	800,000
Validation	10%	100,000
Test	10%	100,000



Experiments - Baselines

Baseline Model	Description
Random	Random legal move selection
Random Forest	Nothing that simple should work that well - Ethan Gee
Stockfish 15	Traditional chess engine
Leela 4200	Neural chess engine
Maia-1 1500	Human aligned prediction model

Experiments - Architecture

Small Fully Connected Model

A Small model that had a similar architecture to StockFish

- 8 fully connected layers of 32 neurons

Convolutional Model

- Combination of Convolution and fully connected to mirror human cognition

Convolution with Auxillary Head

- Added an auxillary head that determines legal moves to instill better game understanding

Experiments - Evaluation Metrics

- **Top-1 Accuracy**: Predicted move matches actual human move
- **Top-5 Accuracy**: Actual move in top 5 predictions. This is a good for a more generalized alignment.

Experiments - Comparisons

Method	Top-1 Accuracy
Random	6%
Random Forest	13%
Stockfish 15	40%
Leela 4200	44%
Maia1 1500	51%
Rylee FC	3.5%
Rylee Conv	23.5%
Rylee Conv with Aux	25%

- Rylee has 800,000 parameters vs Maia's 25 Million
- No filtering by game type (classical, blitz, etc) to capture broader human play patterns
- We include games with mixed skill levels to better reflect general human behavior
- 15,000 games vs. Maia's 169 million games
- Maia was Trained on two A100 80Gb GPUs vs Rylee being trained on a Edge Device

Experiments - Deployment



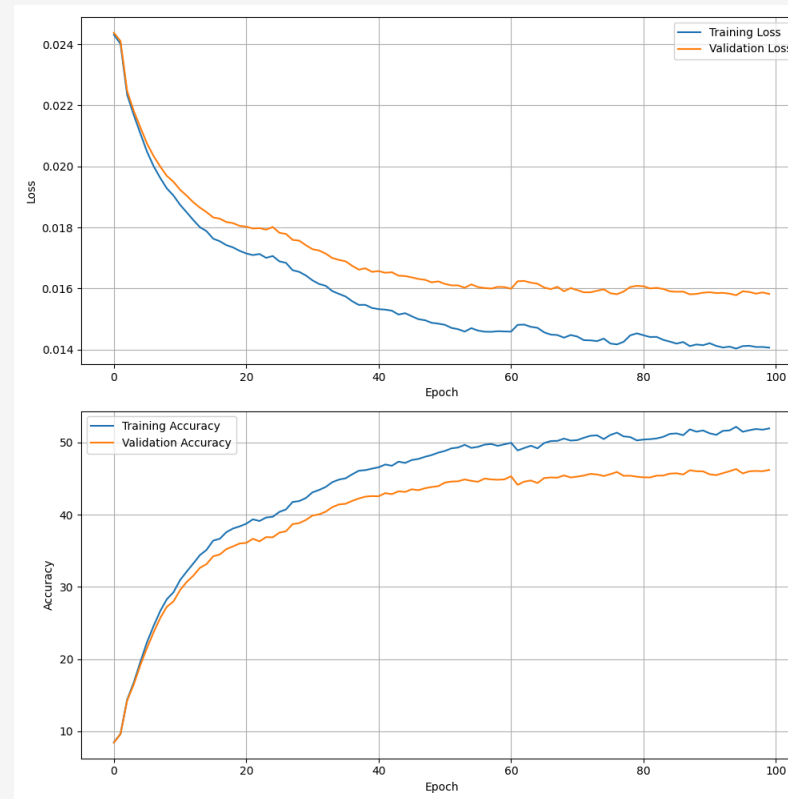
We have a tkinter gui. Here is it running on a crappy laptop. Black is Rylee and White is Stockfish.

Conclusions - Discussions

Metric	Training	Validation
Loss	0.0152	0.0164
Top-1 Accuracy	28%	25%
Top-5 Accuracy	53%	51%

- Strong generalization between training and validation metrics
- Model captures key human decision-making patterns
- Rylee required around 1.5 hours of preprocessing and 2-3 days of training

- Maia required 8 days of preprocessing and 3-4 weeks of training



Conclusions - Future Work

Model Improvements

- Add data augmentation (board flips and rotations) to improve robustness
- Time parameter to better address time based decision making

Additional Features

- **ELO Prediction:** Estimate player rating from move patterns to quickly adapt to player skill
- **Human vs Bot Discriminator:** Detect engine-like play
- **Blunder Detection:** Identify major mistakes for analysis

References

Primary Works

- McIlroy-Young et al. (2020). "Aligning Superhuman AI with Human Behavior: Chess as a Model System." KDD 2020.
- Tang et al. (2024). "Maia-2: A Unified Model for Human-AI Alignment in Chess." NeurIPS 2024.
- McIlroy-Young et al. (2021). "Detecting Individual Decision-Making Style: Exploring Behavioral Stylometry in Chess." NeurIPS 2021.

Data & Tools

- Lichess Open Database: <https://database.lichess.org/>
- Stockfish Chess Engine: <https://stockfishchess.org/>
- Leela Chess Zero: <https://lczero.org/>
- Maia Chess Project: <https://maiachess.com/>
- PyTorch (Paszke et al., 2019): <https://pytorch.org/>
- python-chess library (Moskopp, 2014): <https://github.com/niklasf/python-chess>

Questions?

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