Motivation

What is Chess Forge and how does it help you study chess openings? The idea for this software arose when we realized that no existing tools or web sites were offering the exact kind of experience that we wanted.

ChessBase software, chess.com, chessable.com and, of course, lichess.com have provided us with hours of enjoyment using their rich functionality but one specific kind of a workflow was missing.

We wanted to be able to constantly verify our understanding of the variations we were learning and how well we were memorizing them. We wanted to smoothly switch from manual review and verification to a game against the computer supported by engine analysis.

Before Source Forge, we would use lichess.com to open or upload a PGN file of interest… let’s get a tiny sample study created specifically for this video here…

We can now browse through the variations … turn the engine analysis on...

Now, to verify our feel for a particular critical position, we would copy it into the analysis board and play against the computer. Afterwards you can go back and analyze the game.

This is a rather clunky, slow workflow that does not scale well, though.

Let’s see how Source Forge streamlines the whole process. Here, we will skip Source Forge’s rich browsing and editing features and will focus on just the basics of the training process…

Let’s open the same PGN as before, except that now this is with Source Forge running on a Windows machine.

Assuming, we have already studied the variations, let’s check our understanding of the positions arising after exchanges on e4 (by the way, this French Rubinstein studied from the Black’s perspective).

The position that you are now seeing on the screen is evaluated as equal in the books and the engines wholeheartedly agree.

In ChessForge you would create a bookmark here and then start a training session… Ok, my move… I think I’ve seen f5 played in similar structures …

No? well Sources Forge tells me that f5 is not in my workbook and immediately rolls out Stockfish to play against me from here. I can click above, go back a move, and try again but, hey, what do they know…

Qh4, eh? Ok. …

All right … … …

Ahh Rd3, well, I guess I’m losing here. Hmm… just 2 moves from a position that was supposedly equal.

If we go back to the Workbook, we see that the move there was Rfd8. If we ask the engine, it will suggest the same. F5 was not losing however, I could still stay in the game…. Like so …

This quick, smooth session taught me very quickly a couple of things that I didn’t explicitly get from reading the book or from browsing variations.

First, before playing f5 in this structure, make sure you counter the white rook on the d-file to prevent its uplift to the king side. Rfd8 was, therefore, the right move, maintaining equality.

And second, failing that, defend against the mating threats by protecting the e6 pawn thus preparing f6 as a response to Ng5.

That was just a trivial example, but that kind of a process has worked for us to a great effect in more advanced cases too.

You will find more details on Source Forge in this channel’s other videos.