HOW TO USE ECTOOL

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ECTool is a specialised e-mail client that allows chess players to send and receive their moves via e-mail. ECTool is quite friendly and easy to use. This step-by-step guide is for novice users who want to get started quickly. Please note that if you install ECTool 2.0 over version 1.7, the program will fill in certain fields, import the address book, etc. However we shall assume here that you are installing ECTool *for the first time*. Just bear in mind that if you upgrade, ECTool may already have at its disposal some of the info that is mentioned below.

REGISTRATION

The fist thing you see when you open ECTool is a welcome screen that invites you to register. I can see no good reason why you wouldn't. This screen will disappear after registration, and as a bonus you'll have good karma and a clear conscience, which is unanimously considered *absolutely priceless.* Click OK and remember to send Andres Valverde his due.

SETTINGS

The first time you load ECTool, you'll be presented with a config menu. You'll have to enter your personal details as a chess player and e-mail user, in order to allow ECTool to send and retrieve your mail. You can skip that screen by pressing OK, and come back to it later by clicking 'File' and 'Config', but let's assume to want to do things the right way and complete this formality before going on. It's all pretty obvious:

User name: It can be either your real name (e.g. Giancarlo Schmidt) or any *nom de guerre* of your liking, like *Chess King*, *Pawn Slayer*, *Alexander the Great*, etc.

Signature file: As with any email client, you can choose to send a signature at the end of your message. A signature is a short text file that includes your name and any information that you think is relevant — for example your e-mail address, fax number, etc. Some people also like to include a short quotation. You can create your signature with any text editor (or with a specialized program like Esig or Taglines.) Note that if you click 'Tools' and then 'Edit signature', ECTool will call up Notepad, which is very convenient. You'll enter the path of you signature text file in this box.

IECG key: If you play at IECG, you'll need to enter your key.

Your email address: The one your service provider assigned to you.

SMTP server: the name of your mail server — typically mail@xxx.zzz

POP3 server: usually the same as the SMTP server. (Note that Demon Internet does not offer POP3 unless you pay extra.)

POP3 user name: it's usually the first part of your e-mail address, i.e. anything that comes before the @.

POP3 password: Since your server doesn't discriminate between chess mail and other sorts of messages, the password should be the same as the one you use with your usual e-mail client. If you use a different one, you won't be able to retrieve any mail.

Finally you may want to adjust the contrast of the squares and pieces. ECTool allows you to customise the colours of the diagram, as you would with any Windows program.

THE MAIN SCREEN

When you are finished with the config, you jump to the main screen, with some icons on top, plus the chessboard and some more boxes in which to fill in the details of the game you want to start playing.

Main: This is the default dialog which is activated when you start ECTool. Note that you can insert your name in the boxes labelled 'White' and 'Black' just by double-clicking. It's nice and easy. The rest is obvious, and the flyover help will guide you through that. (See also the *Address book* item below.)

Time/date: We'll discuss this one when we come to entering the moves of an actual e-mail chess game.

Options: The most important thing is to select the language you wish to use in your chess notation. For instance, if you are a Frenchman and play with another Frenchman, you'll prefer to use the abbreviations RDTFC, instead of their English equivalent KQRBN. In that case, check 'French'. (Note that ECTool doesn't offer yet the international numeric notation, but its inventor is working on it.)

There are some more choices you can make:

- *Send game attached:* This is a clever feature, and it can make your life easier provided your opponent also uses ECTool. Remember that each game you play is stored in a game file with the extension *.ect, which is placed in the 'Games' subdirectory. This *.ect file is updated every time you change it. When the 'Send game attached' option is checked, a copy of the game file is attached to the message. When EC Tool retrieves the message, it will automatically put that file in the games directory (and keep a backup copy of the old file). It saves you a lot of trouble, since you won't have to enter your opponent's move manually and his time details. Try it! (For more details, please refer to the *Send/retrieve* and *Send game* sections below.)

- *Send PGN (i.e. Portable Game Notation):* PGN is a standard way of recording games and game headers (names, tournament, date, etc.) in ASCII format. It is neat and intelligible. Most popular chess programs (ChessBase, Fritz, etc.) can read PGN, which makes it easy to exchange data between different programs. Besides, play-by-mail organisations usually ask you to use the PGN format when you send in your completed games. I recommend that you leave this box checked at all times.

- *Send diagram:* You can choose to send you opponent a sketchy diagram made up with ASCII characters. Not absolutely necessary, but it can come in handy sometimes.

- *Send signature:* Here you chose whether you want a signature (cf. above) to accompany your message.

The top buttons: Now, on top of the screen are seven buttons labelled 'Load game', 'Save game', 'Reload', 'Mailboxes', 'Message editor', 'Send/retrieve' and 'Exit':

- *Load game*: Gives you a list of all saved games.

- *Save game*: Saves your game as a file with an *.ect extension. (That file will be shared between the two players and go back and forth in the mail, provided you use the *Send game attached* option discussed above.) The first time White saves a game, ECTool suggests a name in a specific formal — for example KN-AP001.ECT (this stands for: game No 001 between Koos Niemand and Albert Personne). Black can use the same name in order to avoid duplicate files.

- *Reload:* You can use this button to discard the last changes and reload the same game.

- *Mailboxes:* Clicking on 'Mailboxes' causes the mail viewer to pop up. There you can manage your messages. Please note that you can drag-and-drop messages between the 'New' and 'Read' folders, as well as between the 'Send' and 'Queue' folders. You can also print and delete messages, and access the message editor via 'Reply" (to reply to a message) or 'New message' (to send a new message.) 'Headers' will show you the message headers, and 'Reindex' should be used only if you have a problem with the indexing of your messages.

- *Message Editor:* This will be discussed in the next section.

- *Send/retrieve:* ECTool can be used as an e-mail client with which you can send and receive normal e-mails (not only chess messages.) However you may prefer to use your normal e-mail client (for example Pegasus, Eudora or Internet Mail) for ordinary mail, and ECTool for chess-related mail, in order to make full use of the clever 'Send game attached' option described above. But all your messages arrive on your server... How then can you decide what to download with your usual e-mail client, and what to

download with ECTool? Very simple. *ECTool allows you to view what is on your server before you start downloading anything.* Go to the e-mail client (by clicking the box labelled 'Send/retrieve', or the 'Mail' menu) and click 'Update info'. ECTool will give you a list of all the messages waiting for you on the server. You can choose which ones to retrieve, send or delete. This way you can download only chess-related messages, and retrieve the rest with your favourite client. You also have the option to delete the messages from the server after they've been retrieved. Very cool!

- **Exit:** This will cause your hard disk to crash and your screen to explode, which can be detrimental to your physical integrity... You've got exactly ten seconds to grab your things and exit the room. That's why this button is called 'Exit'... (Just a silly joke.)

AN ACTUAL GAME

Now we may start a game.

- Make sure you've filled in all the relevant fields in the 'Main' dialog, including your opponent's name and e-mail address. You can also use the address book (see below).

- Put your mouse cursor on a piece and drag it onto a legal square.

- If you play with a time limit, go to 'Date/time', check 'Send date register', click on the '?' next to 'Sent'. This will display the calendar. If you agree with the date, click 'OK'. Since you have spent no time over that move, you can leave the other settings unchanged. But in future, you'll have to enter your reflection time as well as your opponent's.

- Go to the 'Options' dialog, and check that everything there is the way you want it to be.

- Click on the icon labelled 'Message Editor'. You'll see what your opponent will receive. If you wish to, you can add a message, as you would with any e-mail client. For instance you can introduce yourself briefly (which is good etiquette), offer him some conditional moves, etc. (Please note that in order to compose a message unrelated to a current chess game, you have to click on 'Mail' and 'Compose message' in the main window.)

- Next you put the message in the queue by clicking 'Queue'. You can queue several messages and send them all at once when you're connected to your server. Clicking on 'Mail' and 'Mailboxes' in the main screen will show you which messages are in the queue, with the option to modify them in case you change your mind before sending them.

- Once you are connected to your service provider, you can click 'Send/Retrieve' to send and/or retrieve your mail. There are some pretty cool features there. See the *Send/retrieve* section above!

- Now, your opponent has received your move and has sent you his reply. If you want to make full use of ECTool as an email client, and retrieve your mail with ECTool, connect to your server, click on 'Send/retrieve' (either from the box at the top of the screen or in the 'Mail' menu) and work from there (see the *Send/retrieve* section above.) If you retrieve your opponent's move with another client, go to 'Load game' and select the game by double clicking on it, or by highlighting it and pressing OK. Enter his move and, if necessary, his time details. Then play your move, enter your time details if necessary, and send the move back as usual.

- In case you are playing two or more games against an opponent, you can merge two games into one message only. While in the Message Editor, click on 'Merge'. The rest is obvious.

THE ADDRESS BOOK

You can maintain an address book with all the particulars concerning your regular opponents. To do this, go to 'Utilities' > 'Address book'. If you've got a *.bmp picture of your opponent, ECTool will display it provided you enter its path in the 'Photo' field. The rest is obvious: you can add, delete, edit, sort and insert addresses, as you would with your usual e-mail client.

CONCLUSION

ECTool is a friendly program and you shouldn't have any difficulties using it. Remember that the flyover help (the yellow boxes that appear when you leave your mouse over an icon or button) can also help you as you navigate in the different menus and dialog boxes. This file is not a manual, just a quick-start aid. If you feel something should be added or explained in more detail, please give an e-shout.