

Issue 14 Summer 2003
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Abstract Games

... for the competitive thinker

~ Havannah

~ Akron ~ Hi-Jack

~ Sleeping Beauty Draughts

~ Simultaneous Movement
Game Design Competition



Front Cover

Tantrix is a very attractive path-making game invented by Mike McManaway of New Zealand. The first version of Tantrix, known as "Mind Game," was produced in 1987. It had 64 cardboard tiles, with paths in only two colors. Tantrix was issued in its current form, with four colors on 56 black Bakelite tiles, in 1991.

Tantrix can be played by two to four players. Each player chooses a color. At the start of the game the players receive a random selection of six tiles. Players take turns to play a tile so that it abuts one or more tiles already played to the table. The colors of connected paths must match. When a potential tile space is surrounded on three sides by tiles already played, then a player is forced to play in that space, if possible. A player may have to make a number of forced plays, but he always gets one free play per turn. Placement of tiles in certain locations is prohibited because it would result in holes in the position that no tile would match. As tiles are placed, a player draws more tiles to restore his hand to six. When all tiles have been played to the board, the game is over. One point is scored for each tile in the longest line of a player's color; two points is scored for each tile in the largest loop in a player's color. Only the highest scoring formation, either loop or line, is counted.

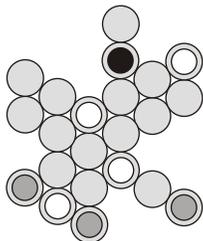
The many similarities with Trax are obvious. Even the loop-line objective is similar, as is the concept of forced moves. Since these two tile-placing games, moreover, share the same country of origin, and Trax dates back to 1980, it is almost certain that Trax was the inspiration for Tantrix. Even the names are similar! On the other hand, Tantrix has an element of chance, and its rules, while not complicated, lack the stark simplicity of the older game. There is a great wealth of puzzles available for Tantrix, and it is probably the better solitaire game for that reason. –KH

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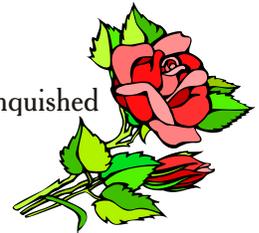


Problem by L. Lynn Smith



Standard game. Player 1 has 3 Black balls. Player 2 has 1 White, 1 Gray, and 2 Blacks. Player 1 to move and win in two turns.

(See page 10 for solution.)



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A Note on GenderPronouns "he," "him," etc. have been used in
many non-gender-specific situations. We
realize that women play games, too, and this
is merely to avoid awkward constructions
such as "he/she."

Editorial

This issue contains the rules for more new games than usual. There is a new Checkers variant in which draws are impossible, a connection game, a territorial game, a Mancala game, several 3D Chess games, and four games of simultaneous movement from the competition. I doubt whether many readers will have the time to try all of these before the next issue. However, there is enough variety that you can choose the type of game that suits you best. There are also articles on Camelot, Grand Chess, and Jetan, old favorites that we have covered a number of times before.

The next issue will have a different focus. For example, there will be an article on different ways to construct your own sets to play games for which equipment is not commercially available. We may also have a piece on abstract games for more than two players, and why, in many cases, they are not as effective as two-player games.

Readers may remember that we have run e-mail tournaments in Kyoto Shogi and Onyx. A tournament on Croda was planned, but it did not happen because we decided after all that we had better maintain our concentration on the magazine itself—there are plenty of venues on the Internet already for playing games. Our apologies to the Croda players.

Perhaps we should make an exception and run a tournament for Sid Sackson's game Focus. Sid Sackson's passing was noted in the last editorial, and there is a response in the letters of this issue. As far as I can tell from Internet searches, there is no activity at all in Focus currently. That is a shame. I propose a "Sid Sackson Memorial Focus Tournament." Interested readers should contact me before the end of May. If Focus can be included on one or two e-mail game servers, such as Richard's Server or Ludoteka, so much the better, as it would make the tournament easier to organize.

I discovered a new game shop in Vancouver recently, called Drexoll Games. I have always found game shops to be magical places. When I was growing up in England, I made frequent visits to The Games' Centre in London, traveling to the capital on the train to make a day of it, and including a visit to a specialist science fiction bookshop. Sadly, both shops no longer exist, and in our trips back to

London from Vancouver these days I have to content myself with a lesser pilgrimage, to Just Games.

Entering Drexoll Games for the first time I got that familiar, comfortable glow. I could browse for hours, reading the backs of game boxes. Nowadays, of course, most of the games on sale are the German thematic games, half of which are by Reiner Knizia, it seems.

Drexoll has a games evening every Friday, and I have joined in several times already. Mostly I have had to play the German theme games, but at least one other abstract game fan attends these evenings, and so I have managed to play a few games of Pagoda (or more correctly "Pagode"—see page 3 in this issue).

On the other hand, I did wind up buying a copy of Bruno Faiduti's Citadels after playing it at Drexoll. It has become a favorite with Connie and me, and we are looking forward to introducing it to some friends. I'm considering picking up a copy of Elfenlands, and maybe I should give Settlers of Catan another try . . .

One of my correspondents, to whom I made this confession, comforted me with, "You shouldn't feel guilty about playing non-abstract games. My wife and I play many non-abstract games, too!"

I suppose the point is that many of the German theme games are really pure abstract games dressed up with a theme to make them more palatable for the general public. Nevertheless, there can be something austere and beautiful in an abstract game. I think game publishers are underestimating the general public, as we have discussed in this magazine before.

Themes don't always work. One game we played had the board spaces distorted from a basically regular tessellation in order to represent tribal territories and accommodate the thinnest veneer of a theme. I felt this detracted from the game, as the connectivity of the spaces was difficult to determine at a glance.

One example of a game with a theme that adds to the playing experience is Nibelungenlied. If you play no other new game in this issue, I really urge you to give Nibelungenlied a try—ideally while listening to Wagner!

Letters



Abstract Games welcomes your views. We wish to reflect accurately the concerns and interests of the readership. Letters may be subject to editing for clarity and brevity.

I enjoyed, as always, *Abstract Games*. I particularly enjoyed the article on Go variants in *AG13*. I thought I was well informed about Go variants, but the variants in the article are all new to me, and better than the ones I knew.

I have one question and one quibble, both about Progressive Atari Go. The question is: “When an *atari* occurs, the sequence stops.” Does this refer only to an *atari* of an opponent’s group, or does it include self-*atari*?

The quibble is about the sentence at the top of p. 12, column 2. In fact, White can *still* create a two-eyed group inside Black’s area, for example, by playing G9 H9 J9 F8 H8 K8 F7 H7 J7 K7 F6 H6 G6.

In the Domain problem on page 28 of *AG12*, I agree that the answer given wins by a margin of one point. This answer is said to be unique. However, I think that if Blue plays his Angle at a3-a2-b2, he will win by at least five points.

Nick Wedd, England

Larry Back agrees with the correction to the Domain puzzle. Below is the reply from Bill Taylor on the Go variants. –Ed.

Thank you for your kind words. Regarding stopping at self-*atari*, don’t the rules of Go forbid suicide? If they do, then one could argue that reducing an own group to one liberty is not *atari*, as it could not be captured on the next move. However, that is quibbling, and certainly the wording should make it clear.

Regarding the position you mention, it’s very likely we overlooked such a possibility somewhere! Certainly the coordinates you give make a living group, so I presume your comment is correct.

Bill Taylor, New Zealand

I just read the article on Go variants in *AG13*. It seems to me that “Progressive HexGo” is actually “Progressive Hexago.” HexGo was invented by Gregory K. van Patten in 2000, and groups are alive if they are connected to certain board sides. Hexago was invented by Stephen Wynn (correct name?) in 1972 and is Go played on a hexagonal grid; groups are unconditionally alive if they have the

potential to form two eyes without the opponent ever being able to prevent that (except in a *ko* fight).

I played Martian Chess several times. It’s a very unusual idea to determine the ownership of a piece by its position—very nice. The rules, however, (I looked them up on the web) need to be improved. The rule “If a player moves a piece across the canal, the opponent cannot simply move it back to its original square” does not really address the actual problem that often occurs in endgames. There are many other positions in which a repetition of moves can happen in the two-player games.

Take the position Qb1, Qc8, Pd2, Pa7, for example. If no player wants to end the game (because he wouldn’t win), the Queens could alternately be moved back and forth across the channel. Even the position Qb1, Pd2, Pa7 could result in a repetition of moves without breaking the rule—just don’t move the Queen back to the same square across the channel, for example Qb2 instead. A much better rule would be not to permit any repetition of an earlier board position.

Also, a player could extend a game forever if he would otherwise lose. This is possible in the following position: Db2, Qb8. South is leading by one point. He wants to end the game, but needs two moves to do that. South is to move. If Db2-d2, then Qb8-d8, and so on. This example shows that it would be a much better rule if the player who ends a game (by moving all his pieces to the other side) wins all the remaining pieces.

Ralf Gering, Germany

Has anyone experimented with Go on a board or field where each point can only be connected to 3 others? The standard game allows for capture by surrounding 2,3 or most often 4 adjacent points. A uniform field could be obtained by mapping the standard 19x19 board onto a torus, thereby losing the edges and corners. I’d be curious to know if a uniform 3-valent field has ever been tried—is it even playable?

Bob Underwood, USA

I enjoyed the articles on Trax. I bought this game many years ago and thought that it was lightweight, and as a result, boring. I obviously didn’t investigate enough. I suspect that it could be proven mathematically that a game of unrestricted size must end in a win for one player or the other—eventually a loop must close, or a line must reach from one side of the board to the other. I note also that the rule has changed for placing a tile that produces a

winning situation for both sides—in the rules I have (which I think are the original), the game is a draw, but in the rules that you published, the game is won by the player who places the tile.

I am intrigued by the competing notions—that a game is either won or lost but is never drawn, or that a game can be drawn. I think this is a cultural thing—Americans seem to hate having a draw. (If basketball or baseball scores are level, they play extra time.) Australians, on the contrary, play cricket, where games are often drawn, because time runs out, or weather conditions curtail play. Very rarely, games are “tied,” where the scores are identical at the end of two innings—and these games are the most exciting of the lot! Even in Australian rules football draws are allowed. (The only exception here is in the final series, where a draw would impact the rest of the series. In this case, extra time is played.) I have no problem with games of strategy being drawn—provided there are enough wins to keep things interesting.

Neil Bloomfield, Australia

Minimal wins in the original Havannah board with eight hexagons on a side are Ring 6, Bridge 8, and Fork 10, matching the minimal sizes for Go groups at corner, side, and center, respectively. I imagined some esoteric match between the two games. The larger Havannah board leaves Rings alone, but raises the other two numbers by 2. Does that mean an effective technique for the game consists of feints toward Rings, drawing fruitless opposing defensive moves, while actually sneaking up on one of the other shapes?

Paul Yearout, USA

In *AG6*, p. 2 Ralf Gering had some very interesting remarks on Pentagonia (see *AG2*, p.4 and *AG3*, p.2). He writes that this game is like Fünfeck-Mühle and Armenian Morris mixed together. (I can add that the Armenian Morris board with diagonal lines connecting the corners is also quite common elsewhere). Pentagonal Morris has been played in Switzerland for decades. In the nice little book *So gewinnt man Mühle* by Hans Schürmann and Manfred Nüscheler (Ravensburg, 1980) Fünfeck-Mühle, played with 2x11 pieces on a board with five lines connecting the inner and outer pentagons, is described with sample games. It is not mentioned if this is an old, traditional Swiss game, or if it is a newer invention.

In Mongolia, however, there is a

traditional Morris game, played on exactly the same game board as Pentagonia. This is named “Tavan Tal” (meaning, *five sides*) and is played with 2x14 pieces, while Pentagonia is played with 2x15. This Mongolian game is described in an article by Assia Popova: “Analyse formelle et classification des jeux de calculs Mongols,” *Etudes Mongoles, Cahier 5, Paris, 1974, p.32.*

One must agree with Kerry Handscomb and the inventor Jacob Zunti that this “is not a very original game.” The rule that the jump phase starts when a player is reduced to five pieces is probably the only original feature of this game.

Peter Michaelsen, Denmark

I just received the last issue of *Abstract Games* . . . another wonderful job. I really look forward to every issue. As a side note, do you know anything about the game Pagoda by Milton Bradley, 1984? It’s not the same game as described in *AG13*, which was actually called “Pagode,” by FX Schmid. The Milton Bradley version appears to have been marketed in Germany only and seems to be a Go-Moku/Pente-type two-player game played on a 17x17 board with 40 stones apiece. I have instructions in German only and cannot find anything on the Internet about the game. Someday I’ll get around to attempting to translate the rules.

Stephen Fishman, USA

The correct name of the game in AG13 is indeed Pagode. If anyone knows about Pagoda, I will pass the information to Stephen. –Ed.

Countless visitors to New York are attracted to that great city by one US icon or another. My wife Colleen and I have made a pilgrimage there on two occasions from far away New Zealand. The icon we went to see was Sid Sackson, whose recent death we have just read about in *AG13*.

I first became aware of Sid when he began to write great reviews of my game Trax in *Games* magazine and elsewhere. On our first visit to Sid’s home in the Bronx, we were stunned by what we saw—a grand old two-story house and huge basement packed full of over 15,000 different games that Sid had collected from around the world. This diminutive, unassuming and rather shy man proceeded to take us on the “tour” of room after room full of some of the most interesting and rare games one could ever hope to see.

We were told how Sid never traveled to Germany or other places, usually to

accept honors bestowed on him, without taking a couple of empty suitcases to bring back new items for his collection. Often he reluctantly would leave the boxes behind in hotel rooms to enable him to bring back more games in their essential form. We were told how he would hear of a rare game that had showed up in a second-hand store in Pennsylvania or elsewhere—excitedly Sid would make the long return car trip there that weekend to be sure of adding this gem to a collection that was taking over every spare inch of his home.

Soon after we arrived, Sid took us into a room wrapped around by games on floor-to-ceiling shelves, with a small table in the middle. There he brought down the game Pysche-Paths (since renamed Kaliko), which he said was the only game to his knowledge remotely like Trax that had a prior publication date. And, since he had two copies, he very generously gave me one to take home.

Then there was his den, where he maintained an enormous collection of filing cabinets and card systems cataloguing every game he owned and many he was still trying to find. Every entry was carefully and laboriously handwritten, as were his letters and, to my knowledge, he never resorted to new-fangled computers as a means of dealing with these records

Naturally the collection included the over 50 games that Sid had personally invented and had published, some reprinted many times over in European countries, where he was revered for his unique achievements.

Although Acquire and Focus were what he regarded as two of his best games, a game called “Can’t Stop” was the one that was his biggest commercial success and “paid the bills for several years.” That was not easy for Sid, who gave up a successful engineering career in mid-life to concentrate on his great love of games.

As is often the case, behind Sid stood a lady who deserves special mention for the support she gave him throughout his unusual life, and that is his charming wife Bernice. She it was who became the sounding board for his many ideas and assignments and who cooked the many splendid meals for visitors to their home.

There deserves to be a monument to Sid Sackson in America, a country where his extraordinary contribution to the games industry seems not to have been appreciated as well as it might have been. And there is already! It is that amazing collection. At one stage one of the three great Boston universities agreed to acquire

it, but Sid’s becoming resident custodian was a condition he could not agree to—he loved New York too much to be able to make that sacrifice. My hope is that close friends and family, who will be working hard at finding a new and permanent home for what is believed to be the greatest single private collection of games on earth, are successful in those endeavors. It will be a most appropriate memorial to an extraordinary New Yorker.

David Smith, New Zealand

Very sadly, Sid Sackson’s game collection was split up and sold off at auction. –Ed.

We were sitting up in bed, reading, when my husband (Andrew Perkis) handed me *AG12*, saying he could neither make head nor tail of Connie’s article at the back. Could I work it out?

“What’s so funny about putting ‘tidying his desk’ on a list? Some things are so obvious that they don’t need to be on lists. Some things will never get done so they don’t need to be there either. And what was Kerry doing out in the car?”

I had to admit that I wasn’t sure, but I had my suspicions. Perhaps he was ‘thinking’?

Andrew thinks: generally about something no-one else in the family is interested in while disregarding the real matter in hand—supper or the children falling over a cliff—that sort of thing. At other times, he gives *too much* thought to the real world. A specific example:

We were helping friends shift their year-old manure heap down to their vegetable garden. (They keep cows and pigs.) We had nearly finished and were down to the liquid at the bottom when I slipped and fell into a corner. My wheelbarrow tipped towards me, and I was pinned by its handles against the concrete sides of the pit. Its contents began to slide in my direction. I called to Andrew and asked him urgently to push the barrow down at the wheel end. “Why?”

“So I can get up.” He came round to my end and assessed the situation.

“How will pushing the other end help?”

“If that end goes down, the handles will go up.” Liquid manure was soaking through my clothes. After more contemplation, he righted the wheelbarrow and I was released. At last!

Careful analysis of a problem is an over-rated activity. Impulsive action is sometimes needed—like when I need rescuing, for instance.

Susan Harwood, England

Game Review



Cross Over

Designed by Steve and Cathy Berden

It took a while for us to get around to testing Cross Over. The first set of rules was very difficult to interpret, and even the second version had to be clarified with several e-mails. I think we have it now, and hopefully the next rewrite of the rules will be clear and unambiguous. I know from long experience how difficult it is to write a good set of instructions for a game. Explaining rules to friends or family by demonstrating is a world away from writing something down so that a stranger who has never seen the game before can pick it up and play it.

I wanted to persevere with Cross Over since the playing equipment is so attractive. The board is a block of polished oak about 20 cm by 15 cm. Two arrays of holes are drilled into the board, separated by a gap of about 4 cm. Each array consists of 10 x 6 holes. The playing pieces are brass pegs that fit nicely in the holes. To start, 20 pegs are placed in the *start lines*, the two rows of holes on far opposite sides of the board. There are two spare pegs. The players each control one half of the board and the pegs that start there. The playing equipment is completed with a regular die. The objective is to get rid of all the pegs on your side of the board, either by removing them from play completely, or by moving them to the opponent's side of the board.

The players take turns moving according to the roll of a die. A roll of 2, 3, or 4 allows a player to move the pegs on his side of the board the corresponding number of vacant spaces. All moves must be orthogonal, either forwards, or backwards, or sideways, and the movement may be split between more than one peg. A roll of 5 is similar, except that now the move may be split between the player's own pegs as well as pegs on the opponent's side of the board.

A player's *cross-over line* is that row of ten holes closest to the opponent's half of the board. On a roll of 6, provided the player has a peg on the cross-over line, and provided the opponent's hole immediately opposite is vacant, the player may cross a peg over to the opponent's hole opposite and then move it straight back to the opponent's start line, or the closest vacant hole to it, jumping over opposing pegs on the way. If a player does not have a peg on the cross-over line with a vacant hole immediately opposite, then the roll of 6 is wasted.

A roll of 1 is the most exciting throw in Cross Over. There are three options: A player may (a) remove exactly two pegs from his own side of the board, or (b) add one peg to the opponent's side of the board, in any vacant hole, or (c) move up to three of the opponent's pegs straight back to the start line, or the closest vacant hole to it, jumping over any other pegs on the way.

Presumably option (b) cannot be taken if all 22 pegs are already on the board. It is important to note that option (a) specifies exactly two pegs must be removed—this option cannot be selected if a player only has one peg left, which proves to be a very important factor in end game strategy.

There are a couple of other minor rules. If you are unable to move all the spaces specified by a roll, then the turn is forfeited. Lastly, if all your pegs are already on the cross-over line, then you

can move opponent's pegs rather than being forced to move your own pegs off the cross-over line.

Cross Over is a race game, with its basic concept similar to Backgammon, in that the objective is to "bear off" all your pegs. Chance plays a big part, probably more so than in games like Backgammon or Chebache. Often there are no apparent criteria for choosing to move one peg over another, as long as your pegs are advancing toward the cross-over line. For example, on an initial roll of 2, which peg do you start with? This, I think, is a minor flaw from the game-design point of view, although it does not affect the actual play.

In fact, we enjoyed playing Cross Over. The endgame is exciting, and there are often fine strategic choices to be made on a roll of 1. The brass pegs and oak board are, of course, great to handle. Moreover, Cross Over would make an excellent traveling game—it is small, the pegs are firmly secured in place, at 15 - 20 minutes per game it is short, and the relatively light nature of the game can stand interruptions. We will definitely be taking Cross Over on our next trip. It is a charming little game. —KH

SJB Products L.L.C., 15720 Shaner Ave, Cedar Springs, Michigan 49319, USA. Web site: <http://www.crossovergame.com/>. E-mail: sjb@crossovergame.com. US\$29.95 + S&H.

Bin'Fa

The Tao of War

Designed by Ken Hodkinson

Bin'Fa is another game we have taken a long time to review. This time the rules were quite adequate, despite the fact that it is quite a complex game. We tried it several times, both with two players and three, although it is playable with up to six. But there is a heavy element of luck, and the Chinese presentation, with its sprinkling of quotes from Sun Tzu's *Art of War*, seemed to be a little overdone.

Then I was sent a second copy of the game, presumably because there was a new marketing person unaware of that fact that I had already received Bin'Fa. Along with it was a staggeringly positive review from Mitchell Thomashow, a game expert whose opinion I value, so we took another look at the game.

Bin'Fa has been around since 1978, although it was updated with improved rules in 1998. The board is a hexagonal array of equilateral triangles, with four triangles on each side. Heavier lines divide the board into six segments, each of which is home territory to one color. There are six colors, corresponding to these segments, allowing the game to be played, as mentioned, by up to six players. Around the board is a track of circles in the six colors, which is used for acquiring supply units. The other equipment consists of a set of 12 discs for each of the six colors, one supply marker for each of the six colors, six black triangles to represent terrain, three white triangles to represent "vortexes," a large collection of plain wooden discs representing supplies, and two regular dice. All of this equipment is made of wood and it is solid and bulky, but the vinyl board rolls up and the whole lot fits quite compactly into a cardboard tube.

The rule book is 12 pages long, but learning the game is facilitated by the fact that different features are introduced in stages, so that it gradually increases in complexity until you can play the full game. In the first stage the supplies, terrain and vortexes are not used. At the start, players place the 12 pieces of their color on the triangles of their sector. As many pieces as you

like can be stacked on a single triangle. To move, a player rolls both dice, and the *difference* between the dice is the number of spaces moved. Whole or part of a stack moves from one triangle into an adjacent triangle for each move. A player can continue rolling the dice and moving until he throws a double, when his turn ends. According to the inventor, this feature simulates a cavalry charge.

Enemy units are captured if they are surrounded on all three sides. If a unit is up against the edge of the board only two sides have to be covered. The next most advanced form of the game adds the black terrain triangles, which are off limits for movement, and which count the same as the edge of the board for capturing.

Instead of rolling the dice to move pieces, a player can choose to roll the dice to dislodge enemy units his pieces are next to. A roll of 6 forces the enemy units back into another triangle, and this is an important way of backing enemy units up against the edge of the board or a terrain marker so that they can be captured.

In the third stage, the game is played with supplies. Each roll of the dice for movement costs one supply counter. On his turn a player has the choice to go for supplies or move in the regular fashion. Going for supplies means that the supply marker is moved around the outside track according to the throw of the dice. If it lands on the player's color, or the color of a sector in which the player has friendly units stationed, the player receives a number of supply counters equal to the number of spaces moved.

At the final level of complexity the white vortex triangles are introduced. Units entering a vortex can jump across the board to one of the other vortexes. Provided the player does not roll a double next turn, these units may exit the vortex. However, if a double is rolled, the player misses a turn, and the units in the vortex are lost. We found this fantastic element introduced into the *milieu* of an ancient Chinese war game to be a little incongruous.

We played the game again. It is quite workable. I would want to jump to the full game as soon as possible, and experienced gamers could probably handle the vortexes right from the outset. The element of luck is very great for this kind of pseudo-simulation war game. Whether you miss your turn or whether you can charge all the way across the board is completely dependent on the dice, as is dislodging enemy units and gaining more supplies. Nevertheless, Bin'Fa is big and colorful, and there are always interesting strategic choices to be made, even if they are often foiled by the dice. I want to play it again soon. Perhaps some of Mitchell's excitement has rubbed off on me, but maybe, just maybe, there is something to this unusual game after all. – KH

Kenterprises, 190 Hall Road, Barrington, NH 03825, USA. Web site: <http://www.binfa.com/index.cfm>. US\$40 + S&H.

Thud[®]

Designed by Trevor Truran

Thud is a two-player strategy game based on Terry Pratchett's Discworld, the fantasy land that features in his many books. The board is octagonal and is made up of 165 squares. The central square is apparently a rock, which cannot be occupied or crossed by any piece. Otherwise, rather surprisingly in view of the strong story line, the only thematic feature of the game is the pieces. One player controls the dwarfs, which number 32; the other player controls the trolls, of which there are eight. The trolls start off around the central rock, whereas the dwarfs are evenly distributed around the board on the squares at the edge.

The aim of both sides is to annihilate the other, but the game usually ends when the players agree that no more captures are possible. The dwarfs move like Chess queens; the trolls move like Chess kings. Here the similarity with Chess ends, for both pieces have unique methods of capture.

A troll captures by moving to a square next to its victim(s). A troll at the head of an unbroken line of trolls can move up to the number of squares equal to the number of trolls (including itself) in the line. Thus a troll at the end of a line of four can move up to four squares in the same direction, but only to capture. A troll propelled in this manner could in theory capture up to seven dwarfs in a single move! Dwarfs capture by displacement, as in Chess. A single dwarf can only capture a troll adjacent to it. An unbroken line of dwarfs can propel the front dwarf the number of squares that there are dwarfs in the line in order to effect a capture. Thus, for example, a dwarf at the end of a line of three could move a maximum of three squares in order to capture. Notice the different methods of capture: the troll moves adjacent to its victim(s), the dwarf moves to the square occupied by its victim. Captures by both trolls and dwarfs can be made diagonally as well as orthogonally.

A Thud contest is in two parts, with the players reversing roles in the second game. Scoring is based on the number of pieces remaining on the board at the end of a game, which usually finishes by mutual agreement. Each dwarf remaining on the board counts 1 point and each troll counts 4 points. The aggregate scores over the two games determine the winner.

Already there is a considerable body of research into strategy and tactics for both sides. There are a good number of enthusiastic players, and tournaments have been held in the UK. The two factors that in my view detract slightly from what appears to be a highly skillful game is its abstract nature, bearing in mind its highly thematic origins and the rather vague method of concluding the game.

Thud[®] is an official Discworld™ game and as such is protected by a worldwide copyright and (I quote) by men with big sticks.

– David Pritchard

The Cunning Artificer, 41 The Hugh Street, Wincanton, Somerset BA9 9JU, UK. Website: <http://www.thudgame.com>. Prices range from £30 to £399(!) + S&H.

Skirrid

A game of tiles and scoring from the 1970's

Designed by Mark Eliot and Brian Taylor

Skirrid is an abstract game of skill for two players. (The manufacturer claimed 2-6 players, no doubt with sales in mind.) The game was invented by Mark Eliot and Brian Taylor (who claims it was conceived overnight) and marketed by Skirrid International in the person of Ronnie Sansom. Ronnie had previously been involved with Mastermind when he was with Invicta.

Skirrid is played on a board of 19x19 squares. Each player has a set of 18 pieces, three each of six different shapes. These six shapes cover from one to six board squares. Of each three identical shapes, one is plain, one has a 2 (double) on it, and one a 3 (treble). The pieces are made of transparent plastic, one set clear for one player, and the other smoky for the second player. On the multi-squared pieces, the multipliers are one square only, not on the whole piece. Serious players have names for the individual

pieces and are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each.

The board is divided into white and black squares. The central diamond section (180 squares) is white, with the four corner areas, each of 45 squares, black. The central square, which must be covered by the first player, is also black. Every alternate square is marked with a number between 1 and 25. The biggest number in the white sector is 10; the highest numbers are in the black sectors.

The game starts with the board empty. After the first player has covered the central square together with up to five squares around it, depending on the piece he elects to play, every subsequent placement must abut at least one square of a piece already on the board. A player scores the number(s) covered by "his piece; a number is doubled if directly under a 2 and tripled if directly under a 3. The black sectors may not be entered by a player until he has scored at least 75 points. You are also allowed to play a piece upside-down as a blocking tactic; your opponent is then prohibited from playing adjacent to it on his next turn. However, you pay for this privilege by having the score for your move halved. The player with the highest score when all 36 pieces have been placed is the winner. An average score is about 360 points in a quick game, higher in a slower game.

The first (and only) British Championship took place in London in 1979 following regional heats. The 18 finalists consisted of six qualifiers, six nominated by *Games & Puzzles* magazine, and six from Mensa, the high-I.Q. society. The event was a six-round tournament played at a 40 seconds-a-move time limit. Opponents scored the difference (plus or minus) between their final scores. The first prize of £1,000 (a lot of money in those days) was won by Brian Yare of Mensa. If this gives you the impression that Mensa members are super-brains, four of the other five Mensa entries filled four of the last five places! Trevor Truran, the puzzles editor of *Games & Puzzles*, who finished third, was the only undefeated player.

One can play Skirrid offensively, aiming at big scores, or defensively to keep down your opponent's score. Offensive play, heading for the high-scoring squares in the black sectors, will inevitably allow your opponent also to score heavily as he can play adjacent to your pieces. This was well illustrated in the British Championship, where one player scored massively—over 460 points in every round and a tournament top score of 549—but still lost half his games. Defensive play largely involves staying in the central white sector, effectively daring your opponent to advance into the black squares

Skirrid is a difficult game on which to offer advice. So much depends on the board situation and the players' remaining pieces. (Incidentally, pieces must at all times be kept in full view of the other player.) One maxim however stands out: do not allow your opponent to get so far ahead as to be able to enter the black squares (minimum 75 points, remember) two or three moves before you can as he will then score heavily without interference.

Skirrid's popularity declined rapidly for no obvious reason. True, the transparent pieces were certainly a mistake. It is difficult, even under very bright light, to see clearly which squares are covered and whether a piece is upside-down (blocking) or not. If the pieces had been made opaque and in contrasting colors, with the reverse sides also distinguished, play would have been made clearer, and I think the game would in consequence have been more popular.

— David Pritchard

Although Skirrid has been out of print for many years, sets often come up for sale on eBay. — Ed.

Book Review



Shall We Play Fisherrandom Chess?

Svetozar Gligoric (Batsford — 144 pages, flexi-cover; £12.99)

The answer to this question posed by the title of the book is, I think, "No!" Fisherrandom Chess was invented by Bobby Fisher "after years of work" according to the author. Years of work? Chess variants that are at least as good as Fisherrandom have frequently been invented in minutes! To refresh your memory, Fisherrandom is just another of those Chess games, sometimes called Baseline or Randomized Chess, in which the pieces are initially placed at random on the rear ranks so as to negate opening knowledge, thereby ensuring that the players meet on level terms. Fisherrandom differs from other very similar games in that the two Rooks must be positioned on either side of the King in order to permit a bastardized form of castling that is the hallmark of Fisherrandom.

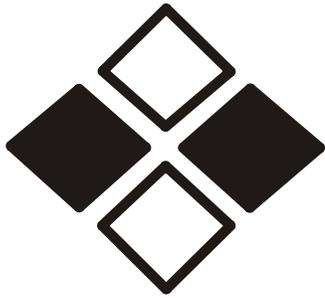
A planned launch of the game in Buenos Aires in 1996 for a substantial purse fell through because the Argentine champion fell ill and one of the sponsors apparently withdrew financial support. Subsequent attempts at launching the game were attended by further disasters, principally it appears because there was confusion over the rules.

Who plays Fisherrandom Chess? Certainly not variant *aficionados*: in the past five years the game has not earned a single mention in *Variant Chess*, the journal of the British Chess Variants Society, nor is it among the non-Chess games conducted by the NOST. I have yet to come across a single club player who has expressed the least interest in Fisherrandom. The answer to the question is that a few (and I emphasize few) of the world's Chess masters and grandmasters have been experimenting with Fisherrandom as a possible escape from the tyranny of databases that are threatening, it is claimed, to reduce Chess at the top level to little more than a memory game.

The book includes a brief history of Chess, describes some previous forms of Baseline, the rules of Fisherrandom, and a number of annotated games of no special merit (admittedly, the author had few to choose from) and which by definition have absolutely no theoretical value—there are 960 possible starting positions.

Gligoric argues that Baseline Chess carries the "practical disadvantage of requiring some little time and manual work before each game in order to decide on a starting position," an extraordinary observation. The time involved can be measured in minutes and anyway preparation is an integral and often entertaining part of a randomized game. Gligoric then goes on to laud another Fisher invention—the Electronic Piece Shuffler, designed to overcome the perceived disadvantage. Hardly novel: Max Lawrence was publishing computer-generated starting positions before Fisherrandom existed. Your average Chess player will continue to enjoy his game at home or at the club supremely indifferent to databases, state-of-the-art computers and Fisherrandom Chess. This book has done nothing, alas to enhance the reputation of Bobby Fisher, the author, or the publisher.

— David Pritchard



Simultaneous Movement Game Design Competition

by Kerry Handscomb

There were 50 entries to the Simultaneous Movement Game Design competition, a high proportion of which proved to be interesting and playable. It has been a very difficult competition to judge. By the time this magazine is distributed the first phase of the judging will be over, and we will be looking more closely at the seven finalists. In the meantime, the four games presented here should give the reader a glimpse of the variety of original ideas that the contestants came up with. We will be describing a number of other games from the competition in succeeding issues.

It quickly became apparent that there is more than one possible interpretation of the phrase “simultaneous movement.” The most obvious meaning is that the players record in some way their intended moves, and then these moves are made on the board at the same time, with some mechanism for resolving conflicts. Some designers, on the other hand, divided each turn into two phases. The first phase involves a kind of competition, with a simultaneous element, to determine who would make the first move in the second phase; in the second phase the players take turns to make their moves.

It could be argued, quite persuasively, that the multiphase system is not really simultaneous movement. However, the competition rules were not absolutely clear on this point, and everybody involved in judging the competition will have their own personal criteria for evaluating a game. I am inclined to accept some games of this type, particularly if the first, simultaneous phase involves an element of skill and determines what moves can be made in the second phase. Obviously a game in which the players simply throw a die to determine who moves first in the next round is not acceptable. King of Pearls, described below, is one game of the multistage type that I think should qualify. In any case, who would want to disqualify a game with such a great name!

I used several other criteria for making an initial evaluation of a game. For example, if a game is simply a simultaneous variant of an existing, turn-based game I think it should be disqualified. Several games were jettisoned on this basis. A related question is whether a game presented as a simultaneous game would actually not be better as a turn-based game. In many cases, this is difficult to answer.

A very important consideration for simultaneous movement games is playability. With some games, for example, we found ourselves becoming bogged down in excessive paperwork. This was particularly true of games in which there are several things to do in each turn, all of which must be recorded. Playability can also be affected by something simple like board size. It is far more distracting, for example, trying to record the coordinates of an arbitrary point on a Go board than it is on a Chess board. Some designers used ingenious methods to reduce or even eliminate the paperwork, and this was a really positive feature for me. Lanza and Nebelungenlied, below, are

games with original mechanisms that avoid paperwork.

Most games of simultaneous movement involve psychological elements such as bluff. This is as expected. It makes such games interesting for different reasons than turn-based games, and it was our reason for choosing simultaneous movement games in the first place. It is interesting to speculate, however, how much actual depth simultaneous movement games can have. Perhaps they can be deep, but in a different way, depending on the interplay between two particular contestants. The fourth game presented here, Frames, does seem to have interesting strategy (as well as very concise rules).

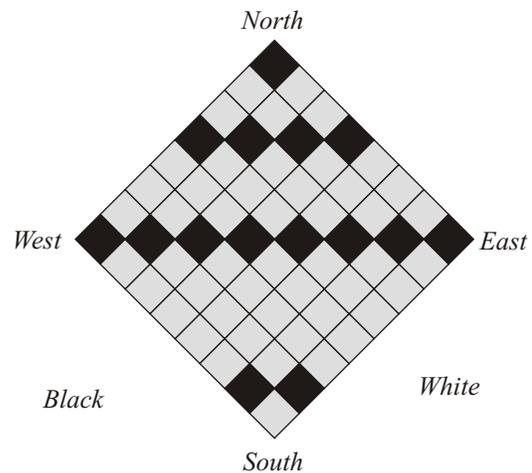
Lastly, I suppose I should emphasize that these meandering comments are my personal point of view, and the other judges may have completely different criteria. There is no reason to believe that one of the three games presented here should win the competition, especially since I haven't managed to spot the winning game yet!

King of Pearls

King of Pearls is a game by Heinrich Glumpler of Germany. It is played on an 8x8 board, with 52 black pieces and 52 white pieces. We found an Othello set to be particularly convenient since you only need enough pieces to cover the board, and the Othello pieces can be turned as required.

The players should sit side by side and place the board at an angle between them. The corner of the board pointing between the players is south; the corner pointing away is north. The player on the southwest side of the board is Black; the player on the southeast side is White. The players control the pieces of their color.

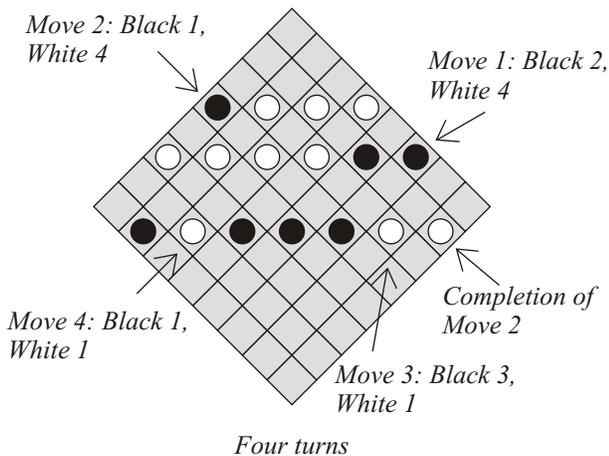
A *line* is defined as a straight line of squares running diagonally from East to West and touching two sides of the board. The longest line consists of eight squares between the East and West corners; the shortest line is the single square at either the North or South corner.



Arrangement of board and four lines.

A turn consists of two phases. In the first phase each player secretly chooses a number between one and four and then hides this number of pieces in his hand. The concealed pieces are revealed simultaneously. The player who chose the lesser number of pieces will move first in the second phase. If both players reveal the same number of pieces, then the player who went first in the last turn goes first in the second phase. If both players reveal the same number of pieces and it is the first turn, then Black goes first. Taking turns now in the second phase, the players each put on the board the number of pieces that they chose. The first phase therefore determines the order of play in the second phase and how many pieces each person plays.

The board is filled up in lines. One line must be completed before the next is started. At the start of the game, when there are no pieces on the board, the first player to move may choose any of the 15 lines to start. He does this by placing a piece on any edge square of the board. The line in play at any given time is called the *current line*. Thereafter, if the current line is not filled, the player must place the next piece in the current line, adjacent to the last piece played in the current line. If the current line is filled, a player may place the next piece on any vacant square on the edge of the board, thereby starting a new current line. The first player to move will place all his pieces, then the second player will place all his pieces, and the turn is over.



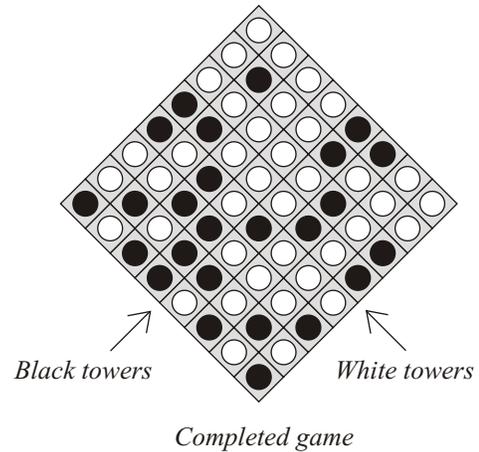
Scoring is dependent on towers. A *tower* is an unbroken orthogonal sequence of one or more pieces of the same color. Black towers run in the direction from the southwest to the northeast; White towers run in the direction from the southeast to the northwest. The number of pieces in a tower is its *height*. The height of a tower may range from 1 to 8.

When the board is full, the game is over. The players each remove the towers of their color from the board (or they can count them on the board if they find it easier). The players score the maximum they can by combining their towers. The scoring combinations are as follows, where TH means "Tower Height."

- TH 1 + TH 2 + TH 3 + TH 4 = 16 points
- TH 1 + TH 2 + TH 3 = 9 points
- TH 1 + TH 2 = 4 points
- TH 1 = 1 point

A tower of height 4 is not usable unless it can be placed in a combination with a tower of height 3, a tower of height 2, and a tower of height 1. Likewise, a tower of height 3 is not usable unless it is in a combination with a tower of height 2 and a tower of height 1. Lastly, a tower of height 2 is not usable except with a

tower of height 1. Towers of height 5 to 8 are never unusable. A player loses 1 point for every piece in unusable towers. The following completed game will illustrate the scoring.



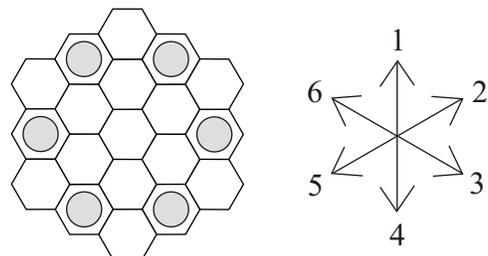
Black's towers: 12 x TH 1, 5 x TH 2, 1 x TH 3
 Black's score: 1 x (TH 1 + TH 2 + TH 3) = 1 x 9 = 9
 4 x (TH 1 + TH 2) = 4 x 4 = 16
 7 x (TH 1) = 7 x 1 = 7
 Total = 32

White's towers: 12 x TH 1, 3 x TH 2, 4 x TH 3, 1 x TH 4, 1 x TH 5
 White's score: 1 x (TH 1 + TH 2 + TH 3 + TH 4) = 1 x 16 = 16
 2 x (TH 1 + TH 2 + TH 3) = 2 x 9 = 18
 9 x (TH 1) = 9 x 1 = 9
 1 x TH 5 = -5
 1 x TH 3 = -3
 Total = 35

Lanza

Lanza was designed by Michail Antonow of Germany. It is a game for two to four players. I will describe the two-player game first, and afterwards give the adaptations necessary for three or four players.

Lanza is played on a hexagonal board with three hexagons on each side. The players each have three pieces. The pieces should all be the same color. The playing pieces of one player are marked with a Jack, Queen, and King of one suit from a regular deck of cards; the playing pieces of the other player are marked with a Jack, Queen, and King of another suit. The players each take a Jack, Queen, King, and the six cards numbered from 1 (Ace) to 6 in their suit from a regular deck of cards. This set of nine cards held by each player will be used for the simultaneous determination of piece movement. The court cards represent the piece to be moved, and the six numbered cards represent the six directions on the hexagonal board.



Board and starting positions

The diagram shows the board with the starting positions. It is a good idea to have the six “compass points” marked beside the board to clarify movement directions at all times. At the start of the game the pieces are all shuffled face down and placed randomly on the starting positions before being turned face up. In most cases this will produce an asymmetrical starting position.

Each turn every piece is moved. Players place their three court cards face up in front of them and then secretly choose a direction card to place face down on each court card. The direction cards are revealed simultaneously. All movement is made simultaneously, and any conflicts are resolved.

A piece moves one space in the direction indicated by its movement card. However, if the movement card directs a piece into the edge of the board, the piece will “bounce off” and move in a direction opposite to that indicated by the movement card, exactly as in billiards. A piece in a corner hexagon, for example, can be bounced off the edge in three different directions.

The following piece strengths are used to resolve movement conflicts and decide whether or not pieces are captured: King defeats Queen; Queen defeats Jack; Jack defeats King. The inventor recommends that pieces are moved partway into their destination hexagons first in order to aid the resolution of conflicts. The following procedure should be followed:

1. Resolve conflicts where two pieces in adjacent hexagons are ordered to switch places and move into each other’s hexagons. If the pieces are of equal strength, neither moves. If one piece is stronger, it moves into the space of the weaker piece, which is captured and removed from the board. The victor moves into this newly vacated space. The space from which the victor moved is now free for occupation by another piece.

2. Resolve conflicts where pieces of the same strength are ordered to move to the same hexagon. Pieces of equal strength will neutralize each other and neither will move. After pieces of equal strength are neutralized, a piece of different strength, either higher or lower, is free to move into the disputed space.

3. Resolve conflicts where pieces of different strength are ordered to move to the same hexagon. A stronger piece will defeat a weaker piece and move into the space. The weaker piece is captured and removed from the board. In the case where a Jack, Queen, and King are all ordered into the same space, there is a standoff and none of them moves.

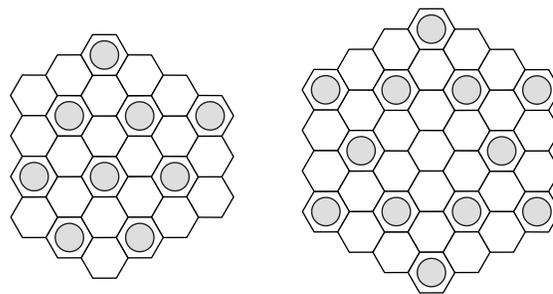
4. After all conflicts are resolved, the remaining moves to empty hexagons are executed.

At the end of a move a player receives one point for every piece that he captured. Note that pieces belonging to the same player are indeed capable of capturing each other, but the capture of one of one’s own pieces does not earn a point.

Before the next turn captured pieces are placed back on the board. Any defeated pieces are placed face down, shuffled and arranged in a line. They are turned up one by one. When a piece is turned up, the player owning the piece may place it back on any vacant hexagon around the edge of the board.

The players then take up their number cards, and the next turn is played. The game is won by the first player to get three points. If two players achieve three points in the same turn, the game continues until there is a clear winner.

It can be seen that the method of orders and conflict resolution is reminiscent of Diplomacy. The game with three or four players may be even more so since now the players are free to negotiate and make deals. With three or four players, the game proceeds in exactly the same way, except that now cards from three or four suits are used, respectively. The main difference is the board size and starting positions. These are shown below.

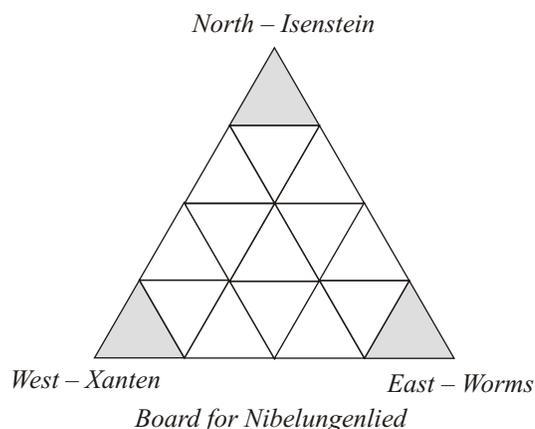


Boards and starting positions for three and four players

Nibelungenlied

This unusual two-player game was devised by Richard Vickery of Australia. Not only does it have simultaneous movement, but it is also a game of unequal forces in the sense of last year’s game design competition because the players have different objectives. Nibelungenlied has a unique flavor because of the legend that forms the game’s theme.

The board is shown in the diagram below. The three shaded triangles are, respectively, the “castles” of Isenstein (Iceland), Xanten (The Netherlands), and Worms (Burgundy). Play takes place on the intersections of the lines rather than on the triangles themselves. Thus, each castle consists of three intersections.



In addition, a Chess set is needed and a screen of some kind for each player. There are five characters in the game, Gunther, Kriemhild, Hagen, Siegfried, and Brunhild. The following table shows how these characters are used.

Character	Board Piece	Player Pieces	Sequence	Start
Gunther	white king	white rook	1	N Worms
Kriemhild	white queen	white bishop	2	E Worms
Hagen	white knight	white pawn	3	W Worms
Siegfried	black king	black rook	4	N Xanten
Brunhild	black queen	black bishop	5	W Isenstein

The board pieces representing the characters are set up in the start positions shown. Each player takes a set of player pieces representing the characters. One player plays the force of Tragic Destiny; the other player is the force of Natural Order. The two opposing forces have different objectives.

Natural Order wins if Siegfried marries Brunhild or Kriemhild. This occurs if Siegfried is alone with either queen in a castle. In other words, these two pieces occupy two of the vertices of a castle, while the third is vacant.

Tragic Destiny wins if (a) Gunther marries Brunhild, which occurs if Siegfried, Gunther, and Brunhild occupy the three

vertices of a castle; or if (b) Gunther and Hagen kill Siegfried, which occurs when they occupy the three vertices of a triangle such that no vertex of this triangle is part of a castle (i.e., one of the four central triangles).

The players each place their set of five player pieces behind their screens. Each turn a player will secretly select two player pieces behind his screen. The players reveal their choices simultaneously. Once two from the five have been selected, these two are left in front of the screen, and the next selection will be two from three. For the following turn the four pieces are placed back behind the screen and the player again makes a selection from five. This rotation continues until the game is over. In order to put the players “out of phase” in the rotation of piece selection, before the first turn Tragic Destiny selects two of his pieces to put in front of his screen. In the first turn, therefore, Tragic Destiny will be selecting from three, whereas Natural Order will be selecting from five. It will always be the case that one player selects from three and the other selects from five. The person selecting from five may choose one of the pieces that his opponent already has in front of the screen, but not both.

When the players have both made their selections, the movement phase begins. There are three possibilities, depending on how many pieces match in the two selections:

- *No pieces match.* Each piece selected may move one space on the board.
- *One piece matches.* The matching piece is not moved, but the non-matching pieces may move up to two spaces on the board.
- *Both pieces match.* No board piece is moved.

The pieces are moved on the board by the players that selected them, according to the sequence in the table above. Pieces move to vacant points; for a two-space move, both spaces must be vacant. A player can choose not to move a piece or may move a piece only one space when it could move two. As soon as a winning condition is achieved the game is over, no matter at what stage of the turn this occurs.

Nibelungenlied has an unusual and interesting play mechanism. As far as we can tell, it is both balanced and conclusive. It also has an unusual theme. The inventor had the following comments to make about it:

“The Nibelungenlied is an epic poem written in Germany about 1200 C.E., though its sources are far older. It tells how the peerless prince Siegfried from Xanten in the Netherlands comes to Worms to court the beautiful Kriemhild. However, King Gunther and his two brothers jealously guard their sister Kriemhild. Gunther wishes to win the hand of Brunhild of Iceland, but she will only marry the man who can win three contests against her mighty strength. Gunther and Siegfried strike a pact, whereby Siegfried will help Gunther win Brunhild’s hand, and in return he may marry Kriemhild. Siegfried uses his magic cloak secretly to assist Gunther to defeat Brunhild, both on the field and in the bedchamber. Unfortunately, Siegfried keeps Brunhild’s ring and girdle, and ultimately bestows them on his wife Kriemhild. A small grievance leads the queens to fight, the ring and girdle are produced, and Brunhild is humiliated. She enlists Hagen, the chief vassal of Gunther, to help her get vengeance, and Gunther and Hagen murder Siegfried while out hunting. Kriemhild swears to exact revenge, marries the recently widowed King Etzel (Attila the Hun) and finally invites Hagen and her brothers to Attila’s court, where in a crescendo of battle and blood, everyone dies in honor and is redeemed.

“Siegfried and Brunhild are clearly destined for each other, and in older versions of the story he is betrothed to her, but is bewitched away by Kriemhild. The Natural Order would be that

Brunhild is won fairly and that Siegfried may marry any woman he chooses. The forces of Tragic Destiny twist the Natural Order so that Brunhild is tricked by Gunther and Siegfried, or that Hagen and Gunther murder Siegfried to obtain his magic cloak.”

Frames

Frames is a two-player game invented by Marcos Donnantuoni of Argentina. It is played with a Go set with a few extra pieces of some type to use as neutral stones. One player plays the black stones, the other plays the white stones.

Each turn the players secretly write down the coordinates of a vacant point on the Go board. These moves are revealed simultaneously, and each player places a stone of his color on the intersection he chose. If both players chose the same point, a neutral stone is placed on this intersection instead.

Generally, the two stones placed will define a rectangle on the Go board—the two stones will be at opposite corners of this rectangle. Of course, if a neutral stone is placed, or if the two stones are on the same horizontal or vertical line, no rectangle will be formed. The player with more pieces of his *inside* the rectangle (i.e., not on its borders) wins a point. The first player to earn ten points wins the game.

Since the stones do not move once placed, Frames can be played just as well with paper and colored pens. If Frames is played on a board with 20x20 intersections, the paperwork can be eliminated by issuing each player with a pair of differently colored icosahedral dice. A smaller game can be played on a 12x12 board with dodecahedral dice, but then the players may wish to reduce the winning condition to, say, 5 points.

Frames has an interesting strategy. It is probably a good idea to form a concentration in the center before moving toward the edges. The far edges of the board, however, should be avoided, because stones right on the edge cannot be used to help in scoring. Avoid placing a piece in the same horizontal or vertical line as your own pieces already placed, since such pieces will be no help for scoring that turn. On the other hand, *do* place pieces in the same horizontal or vertical lines as opponent’s pieces.

I have had a report that Frames is a forced draw, but I do not quite see how that would work. Any clarification on this point would be most welcome, as would a suggestion for fixing the game if indeed it is a draw. ■

Problem Solutions

Ot-tjin

1.9! (8?/3 would result in an easy win for North)

/8/8/1/5/4/4/6/2/3/6/2/5/5/4/4/3/3/7/7/6/6/5/5/

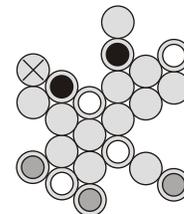
4/4/8!/2/7/1/6/3/5/2/8!/8/2/7/1/6/3/5/2/4/4/3/3/8/7/7/6/6/5/5/4/4

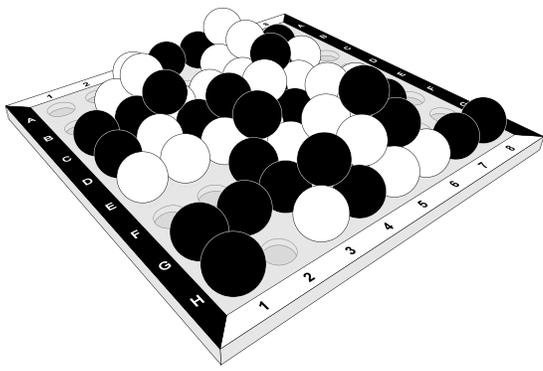
No result. The game has to be replayed!

Surakarta

1.e5:b2 (the crucial point) 1...d5:b2 (White is still two pieces ahead, but has a bad position) 2.b5:b2 b1c2, 3.b6:c2 (any capture would be good) 3....a2:b2, 4.c2:b2 a1a2 (of course, a1b2 is just as hopeless) 5.b2:a2. Black wins by one point. If 1.e5:d5? b2:d5, 2.b6c5 d6:c5, 3.b5:c5 b1c2, 4.c5:c2 a2:c2. White wins by two points. 1.e5:b2 is thus worth three points.

Zèrtz





Akron

Connections in a higher dimension

by Cameron Browne

1. Introduction

Akron is a new connection game played with marbles on a square grid. Most games in this family, such as the classics Hex and Y, tend to be hexagonal in nature to avoid problems with deadlocks in the plane. Connect (*AG 6*) is a rare exception on the square grid that uses Go-like captures to get around this problem elegantly. Akron takes a different route—upwards. Players resolve deadlocks by stacking pieces to *step over* enemy blocks.

Two players, Black and White, strive to connect their edges of the board with pieces of their colors. The board is an 8x8 square grid of holes, and each player starts with a pile of 32 balls of his color. (1" marbles make ideal playing pieces.)

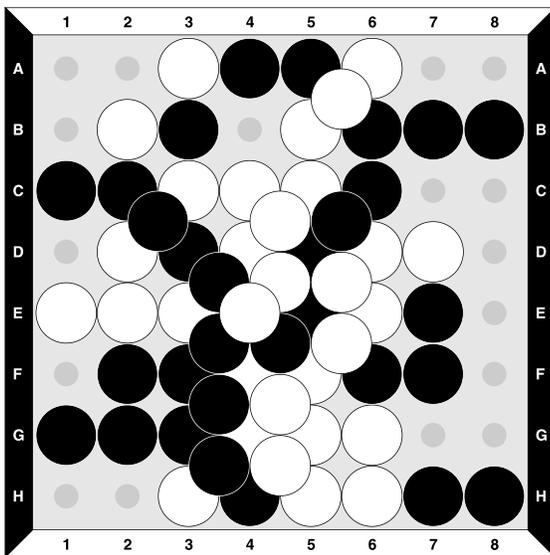


Figure 1. A game won by White

2. Rules

Two pieces *touch* if they are orthogonally adjacent or one is stacked directly upon the other. Two pieces are *connected* if one can be reached from the other through a series of touching same-colored pieces. If a connection crosses over an opponent's connection at any point then *the uppermost connection prevails*; the lower connection is cut until the upper one is removed. This is the *over/under rule*.

Start. The board is initially empty. The first player starts by placing a piece from his pile on any board hole. The second player then has the choice of either accepting this move and continuing with the other color, or swapping colors to steal the first move.

Play. Players then alternate taking turns. Each turn the current player must either:

- Add a piece from his pile to the board, or
- Move one of his pieces already on the board.

The current player may *add* a piece from his pile (if there are any left) to any vacant board hole. Note that pieces added from the pile *must* be placed directly on the board and not stacked on existing pieces.

Alternatively, a piece may be *moved* to any valid empty point that touches a connected same-colored piece (excluding the moving piece itself). An empty point is valid if it is either on the board surface or supported by a flat stable square formed by four touching pieces before, during, *and* after the move.

A *support piece* (a piece with at least one other piece resting directly upon it) can be moved only if it supports a single piece on the level above. The upper piece is dislodged and drops down to fill the gap. There will be a cascade effect if the dropping piece supports a piece above itself, etc. The moving piece may step up or down one or more levels per move, but it may *not* take the place of a dropping piece or use a piece that has dropped this turn as a support piece.

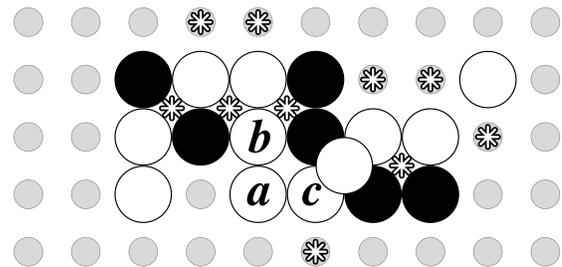


Figure 2. Valid moves for piece *a* are marked *

Figure 2 shows all possible moves for White piece *a*. Note that all valid moves are connected to at least one of the touching White neighbors *b* and *c* both before *and* after the move. Four of the moves are steps up to level 1.

A drop is shown in Figure 3, where piece *a* initially supports a single piece *b* (left). When *a* is moved (middle), *b* drops down to fill the gap (right). This mechanism is one of the attractive features of Akron; the marbles give a nice solid *clunk* as they drop.

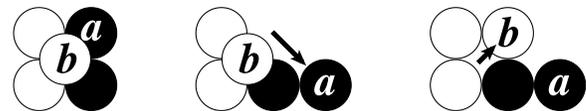


Figure 3. Moving support piece *a* causes piece *b* to drop

As an aside, the Akron board should be constructed so that balls physically touch their adjacent neighbors if possible. This has the double benefit of visually emphasizing adjacent connections and minimizing the chance of balls balancing precariously before they drop.

Aim. A player wins by completing a connected chain of his pieces between his two sides of the board. In addition, a player wins if the opponent has no legal move on his turn. Either player may call a draw if the board state cycles to repeat a previous state for the second time (one repetition is allowed).

3. Game Mechanics

As mentioned above, deadlocks are resolved by players stacking pieces to push their connection over enemy blocks. Figure 4 shows a local deadlock on the left, where two White groups and two Black meet at a common interstitial point but do not connect. However, if White moves his free piece *a* up a level to the common interstitial point (right), then the White connection is completed.

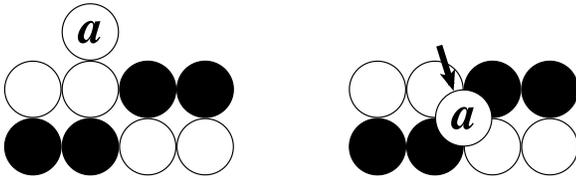


Figure 4. Deadlock resolution using up one freedom

Such a piece connected to a group that can be moved without breaking the group's connection is called a *freedom* of that group (not to be confused with the similar Go term). Piece *a* in Figure 4 initially constitutes a freedom for White, but is no longer a freedom once played since moving it would break the new connection. Freedoms are pieces that can be moved without penalty and are the key to moving pieces to higher levels.

Stacking can also be used to cut dangerous enemy connections due to the over/under rule, as shown in Figure 5. Black moves piece *a* to connect his two groups and cut White's threatening connection. This is a necessary move for Black, but by no means a brilliant one. Black's group has no freedoms; each piece is temporarily pinned if the connection is to be maintained, and White now can play a higher-level cut.

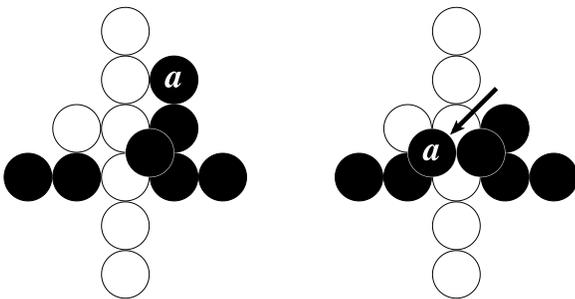


Figure 5. Black cuts White's connection

Figure 6 shows the same group a few moves later. White moves piece *n* to cut Black's previous cut and restore the strong White connection. It is unlikely that Black will be able to move enough pieces into position to make a further cut at the next level up.

Ties are not possible in Akron; the game ends as soon as a winning connection exists. If the moving player removes an overpass to reveal an opponent's winning connection, then the game is awarded to the opponent as soon as the piece is picked up, regardless of whether the move would also have resulted in a winning connection.

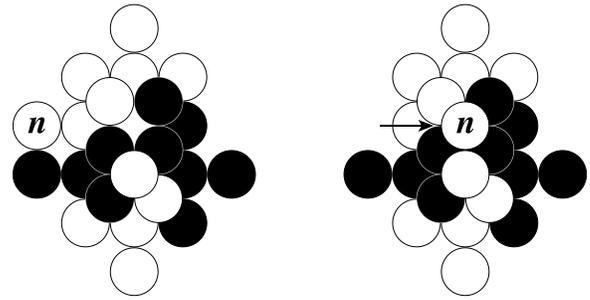


Figure 6. White cuts Black's cut

4. Strategy and Tactics

Basic connection tactics such as forks, forced moves and ladders apply in Akron; however, these are largely overshadowed by piece stacking/dropping considerations particular to the game.

In addition to developing as many strong connections as possible, the deployment of freedoms is a critical aspect of the game. Forced moves (such as intrusions into virtual connections) are a good way of entering pieces onto the board and creating freedoms at negligible cost.

The following rule of thumb is good to keep in mind: *larger groups provide greater choice of movement.* Once a group is cut into two subgroups, the freedoms contained in each half are now restricted to the range of their respective subgroups rather than the group as a whole.

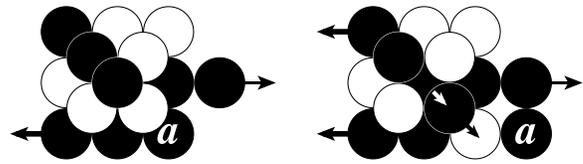


Figure 7. Piece *a* is a freedom despite appearances

Note that a piece's status as a "freedom" may depend on the state of its neighbors and is not always obvious. For instance, piece *a* in Figure 7 is a freedom; its removal temporarily breaks the group's connection, but the Black piece above drops down to reestablish it.

This *cascading* double drop is actually quite a good move. Black not only maintains the connection but another forking connection is revealed to the left, and the White group is cut as an additional bonus. The only drawback is that the top point of the stack is now vacant and open to attack by White.

This example demonstrates how a player may indirectly move opponent's pieces under certain circumstances. This is an interesting aspect of Akron that does not happen regularly, but can occasionally be exploited to good advantage.

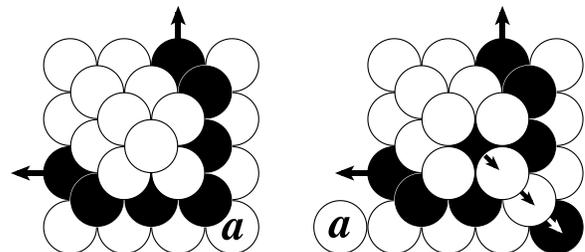


Figure 8. Dropping an opponent's piece to advantage

Imagine that the Black group in Figure 8 threatens to connect with other groups above and to the left, and that White must cut this

group to survive. Moving support piece *a* causes a triple cascade (right); Black's connection is broken and will require at least two moves to reestablish. Note that piece *a* could not be moved to the newly vacated top of the stack because this point is neither empty nor connected to a same-colored neighbor until *after* the move, and not before it.

Now consider the system shown on the left of Figure 9, in which the Black group is cut by an over-passing White connection. To break this cut, Black moves piece *a* to its only valid destination (middle) and lets the White piece *b* drop, splitting the White connection in two.

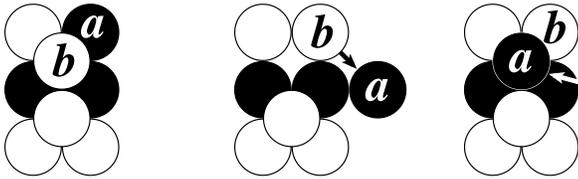


Figure 9. A break-and-block cycle by Black

If White had a freedom associated with either subgroup, White would be able to reinstate the cut next turn by playing back at the interstitial point, and this time the cut would be more permanent; Black would have no more supporting pieces to pull out.

However, White has no freedoms in this case and must move elsewhere. Black is free to promote piece *a* up to the interstitial point next turn and temporarily block White from further cuts (right). The plays shown in Figures 7, 8, and 9 demonstrate the danger of relying on enemy support pieces. Do not trust enemy foundations.

There appears to be a first move advantage in Akron, although this has not been established beyond doubt, as there is also some merit in moving second and using the opponent's extra pieces as stepping stones to higher levels.

Once a player runs out of pieces his game enters a closed stage. He has no more resources to draw from, and all future moves much be scavenged from pieces already available on the board. This phase of the game requires special care; every move involves either a freedom or a broken connection.

5. History

Akron was originally envisaged as a stacking game on the hexagonal grid, which would have allowed the most efficient sphere packing possible. However it soon became clear that the square grid with its resulting pyramidal stacking was preferable for a number of reasons.

Phase Problems. Figure 10 shows three touching pieces *a*, *b* and *c* stacked together upon a tightly packed hexagonal base (left). However, if the piece *d* is packed *out of phase* with piece *a* (middle), then these two pieces can never connect except via higher or lower levels, and the four adjoining interstitial points can not be used. This leads to awkward developments in play, and any attempt to dismiss this behavior as just another feature of the game would be unsatisfactory.

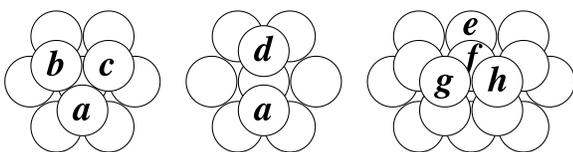


Figure 10. Bad packings within a level and bad drops between levels on the hexagonal grid

There are also phase problems *between* levels on the hexagonal grid (right). Observe that the three levels, although tightly packed and consistent within themselves, are inconsistent as a whole. This breaks the drop mechanism; removing support piece *e* leads to trouble even though *e* only supports a single piece *f* on the level above. Piece *f* drops to fill the gap left by *e*, but then pieces *g* and *h* compete for the gap left by *f*. This introduces a random element that is anathema to games of pure strategy. This problem does not occur on the square grid, where at most one piece will drop to fill each gap, even during a cascade. (See Figures 7 and 8.)

These hexagonal stacking problems cannot be resolved without substantially changing the basic nature of the game, or introducing superficial rules that would compromise its elegance.

Interstitial Space. The efficiency of the hexagonal packing implies a minimum of wasted interstitial space. However this is actually a *bad* thing in Akron, where players need to insert their fingers into the gaps to pick up pieces surrounded on all sides, such as pieces *a* and *b* in Figure 11. This can be done easily with 1" marbles on the square grid, but is extremely difficult on the hexagonal grid.

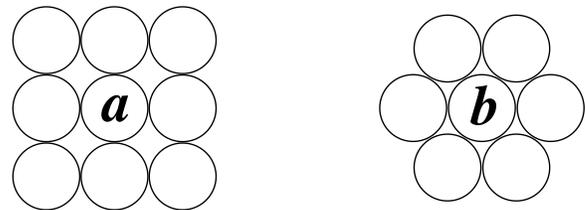


Figure 11. The square packing offers greater interstitial space

In addition, stacked pieces settle more securely in the larger interstitial gaps of the square grid. This makes the game more robust to accidental bumps from players and means that dropping balls settle with more authority. These minor points actually have a major impact on the attractiveness and playability of the game.

Many thanks to Steven Meyers for fruitful discussions during Akron's development. Steven encouraged the use of designated player directions (as opposed to players connecting in either direction) and suggested that the movement constraint be relaxed from points *touching* a same-colored neighbor to points *connected to* a same-colored neighbor. This promoted a freer, more interesting style of piece movement that captures the connective spirit of the game nicely.

Another important contribution by Steven was pointing out the benefits of the over/under rule in lieu of hidden underlying connections. This was originally intended as a solution to the problem of tied games but has since proven to add strategic depth and encourage an upwards movement of pieces, realizing the full potential of the game's three dimensional nature.

The last fine-tuning to be made to the rules was the official board size and number of pieces. $n^2/2$ balls per player (enough to cover the board surface) are recommended for an $n \times n$ board. A complete pyramidal stacking, as per the non-connection stacking game Pylos, was never intended. An 8x8 board with 32 x 1" marbles per player was found to be a good compromise between size/weight and strategic depth, although a 10x10 board with 50 marbles per player is recommended for advanced players seeking a deeper game.

6. Conclusion

Akron adds a new dimension to traditional connection games by taking play out of the plane. Move mechanics involving the

stacking and dropping of marbles complement these underlying themes to make Akron an interesting game to play, with rich new strategies.

A computer Akron player is available free for download at: <http://members.optusnet.com.au/cyberite/akron/akron-1.htm>.

Acknowledgments

Thanks again to Steven Meyers for valuable suggestions and play testing. Also thanks to Paul van Wamelen for play testing.

Akron rules copyright © Cameron Browne 2002.

akron (Greek): highest extreme.

"I never heard Harvey say a word against Akron." – James Stewart in Harvey by Mary Chase.

Note to players: Readers interested in constructing their own Akron set can purchase 1" or 25mm marbles from most large toy stores. These are cheap in bulk, but will still add up to a few dollars. Alternatively, two Abalone sets will provide each player with 28 marbles, close to the 32 recommended for an 8x8 game.

Akron boards may be made from any material with a square grid of depressions spaced 1" apart. The set used while writing this article was made from a \$5 sheet of rubber matting. Such material may be found at matting or carpet stores. Alternatively, corrugated plastic sheeting (such as the reinforced bottoms of plastic cartons) may be found at plastic or container stores.

Unfortunately, Lego is an awkward size for constructing Akron boards. Lego's 8mm stud-to-stud spacing is a fraction too small for 1" marbles, and other marble sizes (such as 16mm, 24mm, and 32mm) are less than optimal for various reasons. ■

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Introducing Havannah

by Christian Freeling

I introduced Havannah at Twente University's mathematics center in 1976, where huge coffee breaks were usually filled with Chess and Bridge. It immediately attracted a lot of attention. We used the board with 169 cells, some twenty players in a highly intelligent community of abstract thinkers, and there alone close to a thousand games must have been played in the first year—and all in a strategic twilight.

Very early games did not even resemble Havannah as it is understood now. What kept the game going were its fairly immediate goals—not as immediate as five-in-a-row, but a lot less evasive for absolute beginners than, for instance, the concept of territory in Go. So pretty soon basic tactics emerged and the fun that came with them. We never saw a draw.

A glossary emerged, which was a sure sign things were going the right way: *frame, anchor, block, cup, trap, split, mill, kite, magnet, jumping, dropping, running game*. Other terms were borrowed from Go: *sente, gote, miai, snapback*. Tactics were blooming, and strategic insight was growing—to a degree.

Roelof Moll, a student and a strong Chess player, joined in. I had never seen him play. He opened right in the center. Some of us were amused—it was almost like opening Go in the center. We had developed a Go-like strategic approach, playing for initiative along the edges first. But you do not win or lose *locally* in Havannah, you just win or lose, and he did win. I got an uncanny feeling: there is no such thing as beginner's luck in a strategy game. And I was only too right. It was not luck, nor was he a

beginner. He proceeded to beat us all, black or white. He would always open in the center and that is where it eventually would come down. It was a rude awakening for all of us—I finally saw the "spider strategy" revealed.

Roelof did not elaborate on strategy, but he had, like all of us, noted that a drawn position, though possible, would in actual play be something like a black tulip. Of all games that *can* end in a draw, Go included, Havannah must have the smallest margin. *So a good defense would at some point inevitably turn into an attack!* He was never in a hurry and cleverly exploited our hunger for initiative. He knew it would eventually all come down to the center, where he would have dominance. He had us swimming like fish into a bow-net. He introduced a whole new style of play: the best attack is a good defense!

This concept is not uncommon in connection games, and we were not completely unaware of it, but we were simply too focused on local initiative. Roelof had shifted the strategic horizon.

Of course we had to adapt. A synthesis emerged between the original hunger for initiative and the patient strangulation Roelof had subjected us to, and the extremes were coined "spider strategy" and "snake strategy." Modern players are all only too aware of the safety-speed dilemma they represent.

How then do I introduce a game that requires such a deep and evasive strategic understanding to be *fully* appreciated? I have decided to make it narrow and deep, rather than wide and shallow, by discussing *one game only* in three subsequent issues. It all revolves around the question whether an initial black group can be killed. This provides an overall focus in a game that features almost everything you can find in Havannah, both tactically and strategically.

To appreciate the article, some tools in turn are needed. They are called "basic tactics," and I will introduce them in two subsequent issues, starting next issue.

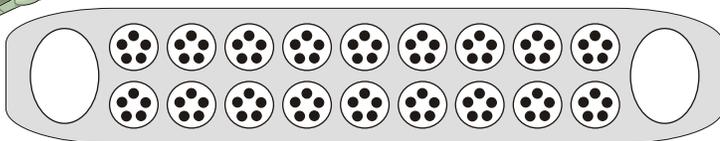
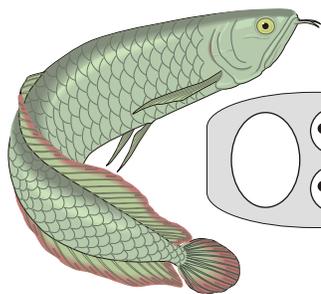
In the meantime, you can learn to play Havannah at <http://www.mindsports.net/Arena/Havannah/>. ■

Readers will be familiar with Christian's challenge that he will pay €1000 to anyone able to write a Havannah program by 2012 that can beat him in just one out of a series of ten games. In the meantime, Prof. Johannes Waldemann of the Institute for Computer Science at Leipzig University is running a Havannah programming competition from April to July this year. He writes:

"Primarily, this is a vehicle to get my students interested in abstract games—and in applications of graph theory, data structures, algorithms, client/server communication etc. But of course the contest is open—so anyone (and anyone's program) can take part. Some prizes will be awarded. (Possibly there will be 'closed finals'—only for my students, and 'open finals'—for all).

"Details can be obtained from the web site <http://www.informatik.uni-leipzig.de/~joe/wettbewerb/havannah/>. Contestants should subscribe to the mailing list <http://theopc.informatik.uni-leipzig.de/mailman/listinfo/havannah>. Humans that want to play Havannah against a simplistic program should check <http://theo1.informatik.uni-leipzig.de/havannah/applet/>. Computer programs play via a socket connection to theo1.informatik.uni-leipzig.de:1962 or :1964. There you will find a standard opponent against which the contestants can play test games. Details of the protocol will be made available on the web site. For now, documentation is mainly in German, but we will (at least partially) switch to English as soon as this is requested."

Whether or not this competition can produce a worthy opponent for Christian remains to be seen!—Ed.

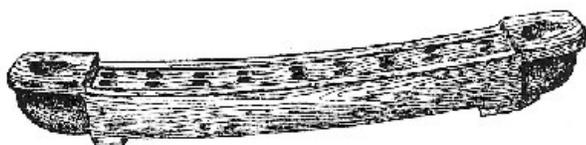


Ot-tjin

Trying to make fish

by Ralf Gering

Challenging games exist even in some of the remotest areas of the world. The rain forests on both banks of the Mahakam River in Central Borneo are the ancestral homeland of the Penihings, an isolated tribe that preserved its unique culture well into the 20th century. They were visited by Carl Sophus Lumholtz, an adventurous Norwegian geographer and botanist, who traveled between the years 1913 and 1917 in the land of head hunters. *Through Central Borneo*, the thrilling account of his ethnological research, was published in 1920 in New York (Lumholtz, 1920). Volume II contains a description of Ot-jin, which is short for Aw-li On-nam Ot-tjin, meaning: “play on-nam fish.” The game is played on an oblong block of heavy wood with two parallel rows of nine shallow holes and a large single hole at each end. With the Penihings the board is called *tu-tung ot-tjin*. The seeds put into the holes are usually the stones of a small fruit, but sometimes small pebbles are used instead.

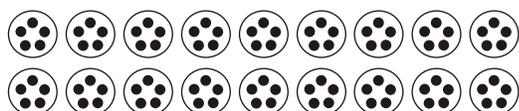


A traditional Tu-tung Ot-tjin

According to Lumholtz the game is often played for a stake, which “may be ten or twenty wristlets, or perhaps a fowl, or the black rings that are tied about the upper calf of the leg, but not money, because usually there is none about.” The game is played by men only, in the evenings. In Western African agricultural societies Mancala variants are loaded with the symbolism of sowing and harvesting. The Penihings, however, support themselves with fishing, which explains why they use a board which looks like the miniature replica of a dugout canoe and why they associate the game with putting out bait and catching fish. The beautifully carved and painted fish-shaped Mancala boards that are known from India may hint at a similar cultural meaning.

Rules

As shown in the historical drawing from Lumholtz, the board consists of two rows of nine holes and also a large single hole at each end. Each player controls the nine holes on one side, which are used for playing, plus one of the large holes for collecting captured seeds. At the start of the game two to five seeds are put into each hole, three being the most common, five the most challenging variant.



A possible Ot-tjin starting position

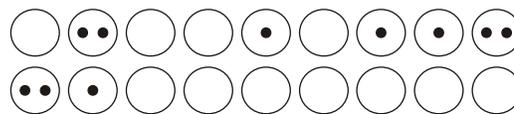
Each player, at his turn, picks up the contents of one of his holes and distributes the seeds, one by one, in a clockwise direction. This differs from Russ (2000), but when Lumholtz stated “from right to left,” he obviously meant *as watched from each player’s point of view at his respective turn*. Another strong hint that a clockwise distribution might be correct is that captured seeds are stored in the large single hole on the player’s left whereas in anti-clockwise games known from other parts of South Eastern Asia such as Sungka and Dakon the store is always on the player’s right.

If the last seed is dropped into an occupied hole, its contents are lifted and distributed in a new lap, and so on until the last seed is dropped into an empty hole or a hole then containing as many seeds as each hole had at the start of the game. If the last seed is put into an empty hole, the move ends and nothing is captured. This is called *gok*. If five seeds were originally placed in each hole, then the players try to drop their last seed into a hole that already contains four seeds. This is called *ára ot-tjin* (“to make fish”). The “fish” (in this case five seeds) is put into the player’s store on his left and the move ends. Only one fish can be caught per move, which can be done on either side of the board.

If a player cannot move, his opponent captures all remaining seeds. The player who has caught more fish wins.

Lumholtz also mentioned that “if stones are left on either side, but not enough to proceed, then there is an impasse, and the game must be played over again.” This rule refers to a repeating pattern in which the seeds continue to circulate around the board with no captures being made. Contrary to Oware, the remaining seeds are not divided between the players, but the game is considered to end without result and replayed. It is not considered a draw. This compares with the Japanese rules of Go dealing with exotic patterns such as Triple Ko and Jun Kan Ko and with the tournament rules of Gipf in regard to repetition of moves.

Endgame Problem



So far each player has caught eight fishes (1 fish = 5 seeds). South to move! (See page 10 for the solution.) ■

References

Lumholtz, C. (1920). *Through Central Borneo: an account of two years’ travel in the land of the head-hunters between the years 1913-1917*. Charles Scribner’s Sons: New York.
 Russ, L. (2000). *The complete mancala games book: how to play the world’s oldest board games*. Marlowe & Company: New York.



HI-JACK

A NEW KIND OF TERRITORIAL GAME

by Barrie Evans

Hi-Jack is a creative territorial game. A playing piece does not move after being placed. It exercises a strength over surrounding territory, the extent of its strength depending on the number of pieces on the square it occupies.

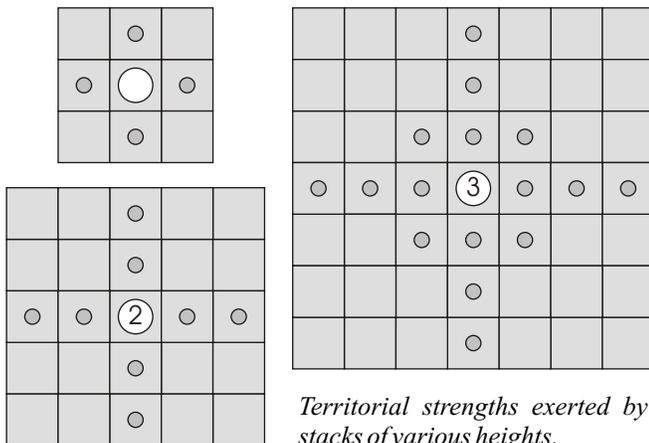
Players score points for the amount of territory they control at the end of the game, and for the number of opponent's pieces they have hi-jacked.

Rules

Hi-Jack is a game for two players. (It can be played by more than two, although two is probably the optimal number.) An 8x8 board is suggested, although other sizes can be used. A sufficient number of stackable black and white pieces is needed, perhaps 50 of each, although most games will not require so many. The players need to decide in some way who plays which color and who moves first. It does not matter whether Black or White moves first. The board starts off empty, and the players take turns to place a piece on a square. It is permitted to pass a turn, and the game ends when both players have passed consecutively.

Several pieces piled up on a square are called a *stack*. (A single piece on a square can be thought of as a 1-high stack.) Stacks of pieces exert *territorial strength* over areas of the board. This strength is exerted for the benefit of the player controlling the top piece of a stack. The extent of this territorial strength depends on the number of pieces in a stack, no matter which color they are.

Territorial strength exerted by stacks of various sizes is shown below. The dots in the diagram indicate the stack exerts a strength of one on those squares. Note that in this article the size of stacks with two or more pieces will be indicated simply by a number. Although this does not show the composition of stacks, which could be relevant, it keeps the diagrams simple.

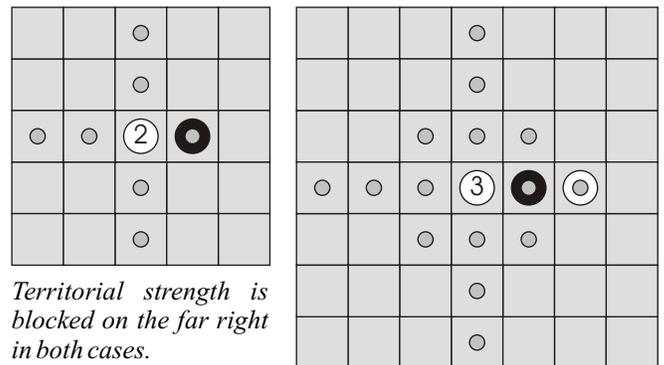


Territorial strengths exerted by stacks of various heights.

It can be seen that 1- and 2-high stacks exert a strength in orthogonal directions only. Stacks that are 3 high and higher exert a strength in orthogonal and diagonal directions. A 4-high stack

would exert strength up to four squares orthogonally and two squares diagonally. The same pattern continues for even higher stacks, although these are unlikely in practice.

A stack exerts no strength on the furthest orthogonal square over which it would normally exercise a strength if *all* the intervening squares are occupied. This is shown below.



Territorial strength is blocked on the far right in both cases.

The *territorial strength* of a player at a square is the sum of the strengths exerted on that square by his stacks.

A piece may be placed on an unoccupied square provided the player's territorial strength at that square (before the piece is laid) is at least equal to the territorial strength of the other player.

A piece may be placed on a square occupied by the other player if the attacker's territorial strength at that square (before the piece is laid) is at least equal to the height of the stack being attacked plus the territorial strength of the defender at that square. The composition of the attacked stack does not matter, just the number of pieces in it. A square is occupied by the player who last played on it. If a 2-high or higher stack is successfully attacked, the resulting stack is called a *hi-jack*.

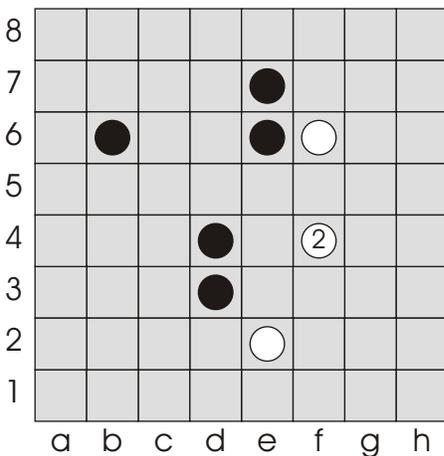
A player may place a second piece on a square occupied by *one* of his pieces, regardless of territorial strength on that square. In addition, during a subsequent turn you may place one more piece on a stack that you have attacked and occupied, again regardless of territorial strength on that square.

At the end of the game the players total up the points they have scored. A player scores one point for every unoccupied square over which he exerts greater territorial strength than his opponent. A player also scores one point for each stack that he has hi-jacked and still occupies. The player with the higher score wins the game.

Lastly, it is possible for one player simply to mimic the play of the other and create a symmetrical, drawn game. In order to overcome this, the following rule is used: if a symmetrical board situation exists at any time after each of the players has made three moves, the player whose turn it is may require the two players to switch the order of play just for the next pair of moves. Thus, the order of play in the game may be BWBWBWBWBWBW...

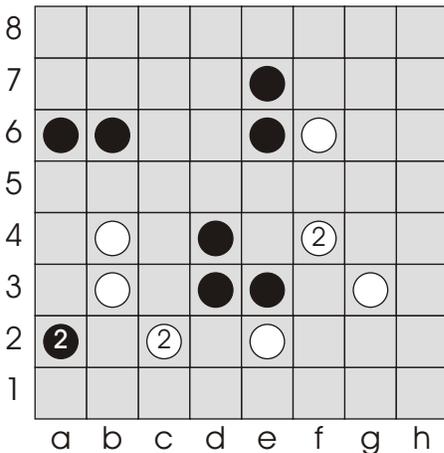
Sample Game 1

(Black moves first.) 1.d4 f4, 2.e6 (knight's move) 2....f4, 3.d3 f6 (attacks again) 4.e7 e2 (probing knight's move) 5.b6 (territory creation—see diagram)



Position after 5.b6

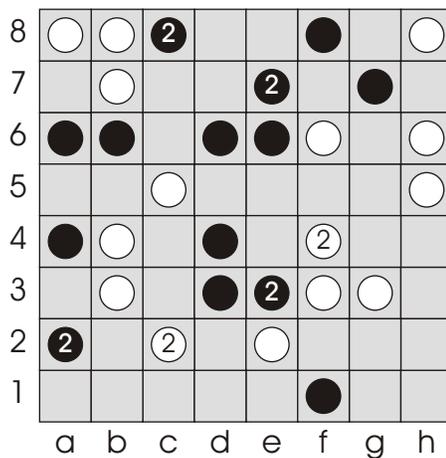
This was arguably a weak move since it allows a double attack to be set up at b4, which White takes full advantage of. **5....b4, 6.a6 (Black forestalls the double attack) 6....c2 (knight's move, connecting to e2) 7.a2 (Black moves into potential White territory) 7....b3 (White threatens to surround d3 by playing at e3) 8.e3 (Black protects and attacks) 8....c2 (White protects and attacks, keeping initiative) 9.a2 (Black defends and sets up potential connection to a6 at a4) 9....g3 (territory creation—see diagram)**



Position after 9....g3

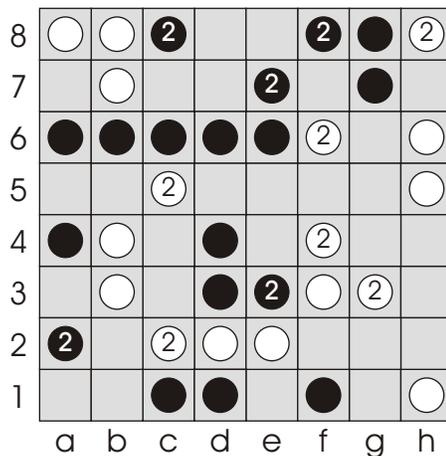
This was a key play, given how White developed his game at h1 and h5. **10.f1 (Black moves into potential White territory—g1 would have resulted in a double attack from g3) 10....f3 (White attacks e3) 11.e3 (Black defends) 11....h5 (White extends territory) 12.g7 (Black counters with his own territory extension and threatens a surrounding play at g6) 12....h6 (White blocks a further move into his territory) 13.c8 (territory creation) 13....c5 (White probes Black territory) 14.d6 (Black blocks extension into his territory) 14....a8 (White move into potential Black territory) 15.f8 h8 (Black can attack f6 and h8 by playing a second piece on f8, but White can defend both with a second piece at h6) 16.a4 (Black joins his territory along the edge. 16....b8 (White attacks and extends his invasion of Black's territory. 17.c8 (Black defends without reducing his territory.) 17....b7 (White extends his invasion, creating point space) 18.e7 (Black blocks further**

extension by White—see diagram)



Position after 18.e7

18....h1 (White decisively extends his territory) 19.d1 (Black 'monkey-jumps' to create point space and threaten a connection to d3, which would surround White e2 and result in it being captured) 19....d2 (White defends by connecting) 20.c1 (Black extends further into unclaimed territory to create territory contiguous with a2) 20....g3 (White secures g1 and g5) 21.pass c5 (White neutralizes c7 to allow his pieces to extend and threaten b-c8 and a connection to c5, which would in turn threaten b6) 22.c6 (Black blocks White's strength from c5, giving up a point) 22....f6 (attacks f8) 23.f8 (defends, attacking h8) 23....h8 (White defends, threatens to hi-jack f8, forcing Black to give up another point) 24.g8 (Black defends and blocks, giving up a point—diagram)



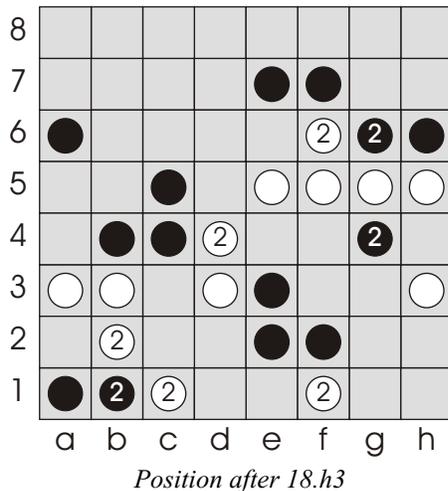
Final position, after 24.g8

This is not quite the end of the game; Black b6 and e4 can attack White b4, forcing White to fill in either b5 or c4. White can neutralize Black's point at b1 by playing a second piece on b3; however, a Black response at b1 would in turn neutralize White's point at b2. It would seem that Black f1 is isolated and vulnerable, but it can be protected by e1, even if White f3 and h1 combine to attack it. If White fills in f2 and g1 as well to attack, the blocking rule results in White gaining no increase in attacking strength; instead White would lose points. White wins by 15 to 13.

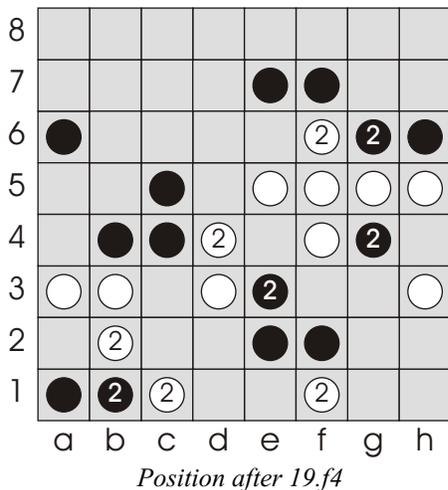
I should elaborate on the 'knight's move.' A knight's move can be invaded, but when followed up with a third or fourth move, as at White g3-h5-h1, including f6 and f4, and protected, as at h6 and f3, it is a strong territory-making play. (The second piece at g3 protects against a Black invasion from g7 at g5.)

Sample Game 2

The second game involves a hi-jack and so contrasts with the first game. I pick the game up at the point where the hi-jack occurs. (White moves first.) 1.e5 c5, 2.d4 c4, 3.d4 e7, 4.f6 f7, 5.f6 e3, 6.d3 e2, 7.b3 b4 8.a3 a6, 9.c1 a1, 10.c1 b1, 11.b2 b1, 12.f1 f2, 13.f1 g4, 14.b2 g4, 15.h5 g6, 16.f5 h6, 17.g5 g6, 18.h3 (diagram)

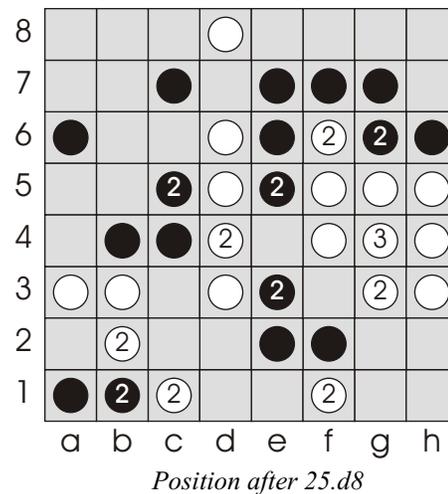


At this point Black needed to attack, but satisfies himself with a defensive play. 18....e3 (Unfortunately it is not sufficient to protect g3; White can surround at f4 also. Black needed to attack by playing at g3. White will continue the attack.) 19.f4 (In a hi-jack situation it is important to pay close attention to what is going on in other parts of the board. The hi-jacker may not notice threatening moves in other parts of the board if he becomes too occupied with pressing home the advantages of the hi-jack – diagram.)

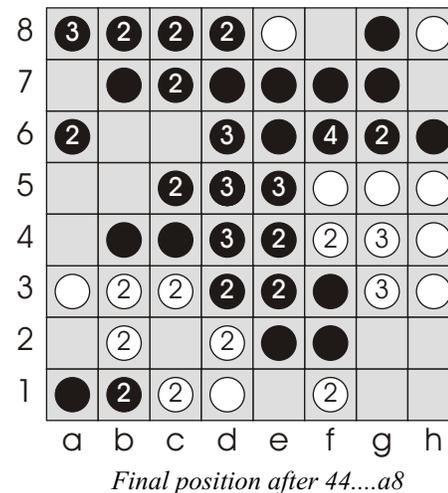


19....g3 (Black temporarily defends g4 and attacks h3. With this play he may also defend other pieces below the hi-jack, depending on how the game develops.) 20.h4 (White defends and presses the hi-jack.) 20....c5 (Black attacks e5) White now completes the hi-jack. 21.g4 (The territorial strength of the hi-jacked stack reaches g6. Black now protects.) 21....g7 (White develops the hi-jack, but has ignored e5 to his peril) 22.g3 e5 (In spite of the hi-jack against him, Black still has large territory potential in the upper left quadrant) 23.d6 (Not exactly clear what White is attempting to do!) 23....e6 (Black connects. White and Black can both develop the situation to surround and hi-jack each other. White controls e4 and f3 because of his hi-jack. Careful reading needed!) 24.d5 (White connects) 24....c7 (Black traps White's ability to reach the

safety of the edge of the board) 25.d8 (It will not work! – diagram.)



25....d7 (Black connects. White is hopelessly surrounded.) 26.c8 d6, 27.a8 c7, 28.a8 d6, 29.e8 f6 (Black hi-jack) 30.h8 g8, 31.g3 f6 (Black's territorial strength from f6 now extends to f3 and f2) 32.f4 f3, 33.d2 d5, 34.e4 e5, 35.b3 a6, 36.pass d4 (Black hi-jack) 37.pass e4 38.c3 d5, 39.d1.d3, 40.d2.d8, 41.pass c8, 42.b8 b7, 43.c3 b8, 44.pass a8 (Black hi-jack – diagram)



The game was abandoned. White has completely lost the advantage of the hi-jack and Black has won. The players were left debating (arguing!) whether, with enough pieces, Black could eventually retake the initial White hi-jack!

Clearly this game resulted from mistakes or misreading by the contestants—players who have played hundreds of games over more than a year. I include it because it shows the situations that develop from a hi-jack, and also that a hi-jack by one player does not necessarily spell defeat for the other player. ■

Barrie Evans is British, married to an American, Nancy, and they have three grown up children: two daughters and a son. Barrie's son helped him develop Hi-Jack. Barrie's first thoughts of designing a game came in 1981-2. Over the next three years he took a degree in linguistics at Michigan State University, and after that went to work in West Africa. Hi-Jack was developed after 1996, when they came back from Africa. Barrie gained a doctorate in Event Semantics from University College London in 1998, and he currently working as a translation consultant. – Ed.



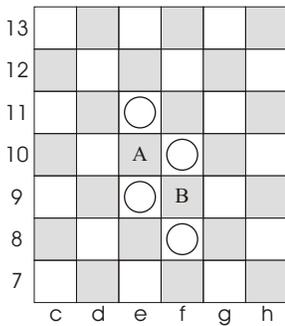
Camelogistics

Image from cover of 1931 rule book.

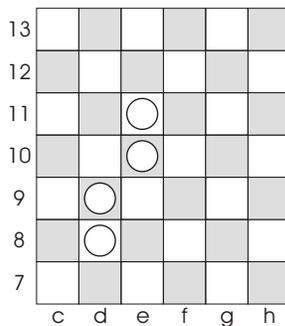
by Paul Yearout

In the initial look at Camelot end play (AG7), the two-can-travel-faster-than-one principle was mentioned. Positions in the current World Camelot Federation tournament suggest elaborations of that principle for efficient troop movements.

In Zig-zag March 1 the four indicated pieces can advance four rows *en masse*, repeating a double canter of the rearmost pieces: f8d10f12, e9g11e11, and onward.



Zig-zag March 1



Zig-zag March 2

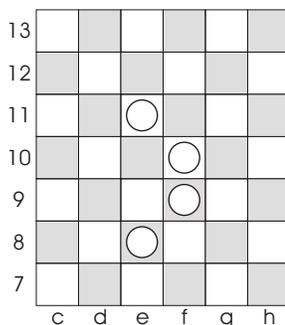
A piece at A or B can be carried along, too, the platoon advancing four rows in five or six moves.

Zig-zag March 2 uses the same double canter (d8d10f12, d9f11f13), again in four moves advancing four rows, but diagonally rather than orthogonally. Shifting d8, d9 to f8, f9 provides diagonal movement leftward instead of rightward.

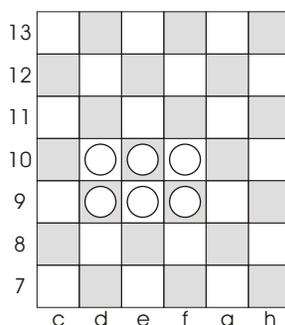
The Lambeth Walk uses a triple canter (e8g10e10e12, f9f11d11f13), yielding a vertical reflection in two moves and restoring the original configuration in four. (The name shows a fancied resemblance of the move pattern to the Hebrew letter lambeth, a cognate of Greek lambda, influenced by an irrelevant pun on the Lambeth Walk, a 1930's dance fad.)

This arrangement has additional versatility in that Zig-zag 2 shows up after the first move, so it is possible to alternate diagonal and orthogonal advances, as appropriate.

A knight or two in the company increases its strength, but the open spacing of the three shapes makes them vulnerable to an opposing knight's charge. Against opposing forces, a phalanx of four or six pieces cedes speed to power while still able to advance.■



Lambeth Walk



Phalanx cedes speed for power

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Report from the 2002-2003 Camelot World Championship Tournament

The 2002-2003 WCF Camelot World Championship began on May 10, 2002, with twelve participants. The championship format includes four three-player round robins with two games against each opponent, followed by the four round-robin winners playing each other in two best-two-out-of-three semi-final knockouts, concluding with the two knockout winners facing off in a best-three-out-of-five match for the Camelot World Championship. So far, Dan Troyka, Michael Nolan, and Andrew Perkis have won their group round-robins. Dan Troyka has won the first semi-final match over Andrew Perkis by a score of 2-1, and awaits the winner of the other semi-final match between Michael Nolan and the winner of the fourth round-robin (still being contested). Here is a game from the tournament:

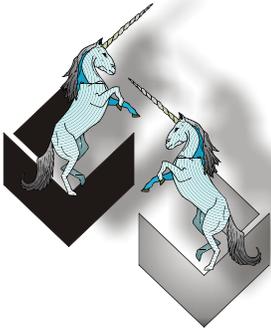
M. Nolan vs. P. Yearout

1.e6g8 h11h9, 2.e7f8 (Trying something new) 2....j11h11, 3.h6h8 h9i8, 4.h8:j8 (Not 4.h7:j9 h11h9:h7:j7:j5:h7:f9 or 4.i7:i9 h11j11h9:j9) 4....h11j9:j7:j5, 5.i7i5:k5 e11e9 (Threatening c11e11g9:e7:c5:c7:e7:g5) 6.f7e7 i10h11 (Threatening h11f9:f7:h9) 7.g8f7 c11e11, 8.k5j6 d11f9, 9.j6h6 i11g9, 10.i6g8 f11d9, 11.g8e8 h11f11, 12.e8:c10 e11e9:c11, 13.g6e8 h10f12, 14.f8:h10 g11:i9 (Not g10:i10 because of e8:g10:e12:g12:g10. Better was f11h9:h11, with an even game. The text loses a piece.) 15.h6h8:j10 d10f8:h6:h8 (This loses outright to the text reply) 16.f6f8 (All other moves allow equality) 16....e9:g7, 17.f7:h7:h9 (Now if g10:i8, then e8:g10:e12:g12, or if f11d9:f7, then h9:f11:d9. Resignation follows quickly.)

— Michael Nolan, WCF President

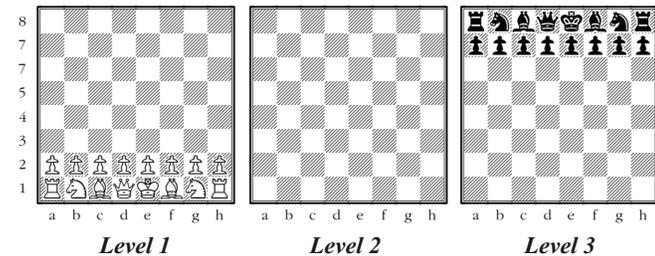
The History of 3D Chess Part Five

Space Chess for the Millennium



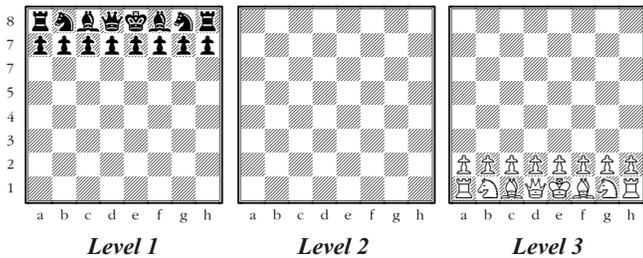
by L. Lynn Smith

The 8x8x3 playing field has been one of the most commercially popular versions of 3D Chess. Since its introduction in the 1960's, it has seen several reincarnations, and there have been a myriad of rules proposed for this particular layout. It consists of standard 8x8 Chess boards arrayed one directly above the other in three levels. The pieces usually provided for this game are the standard Chess pieces for each player: eight Pawns, two Knights, two Bishops, two Rooks, a Queen, and a King. Practically all the developers of rules for this field have attempted to maintain the use of only these pieces.



Hageman's arrangement

One of the first to develop rules for this field was Wally Hageman in the early 1960's. The pieces were arrayed White on the top level and Black on the bottom level. Pawns moved up or down, with two-step option and en passant. They promoted upon reaching the cells initially occupied by the opponent. The King, Queen, Rook, and Knight moved like their counterparts in Raumschach. The Bishop moved as Kogbetliantz' Archbishop.

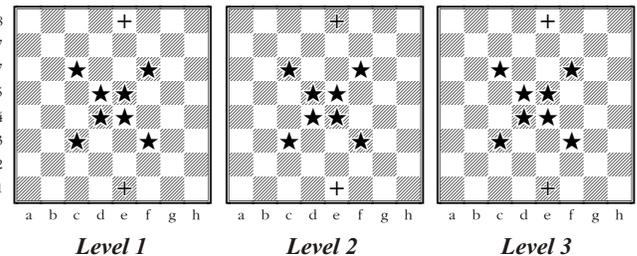


Johnson's arrangement

In 1966, Rick Johnson tackled this field. White this time was arrayed on the bottom level and Black on the top level. Movement of the pieces was described rather vaguely as standard with vertical ability.

In 1969, Pacific Games Company issued this playing field under the title "Space Chess," with rules developed by Larry Evans. Each board was marked with eight stars, on the center four cells and the four adjacent diagonals. Crown symbols were located on each board on the first and last cell of the King's file. Pieces had standard movement and changed levels only by marked

cells. All pieces could use the Stars, but only the King could use the Crown. Level change only involved movement up or down in addition to the standard move. The initial setup was the same as in Johnson's, above. I received one of these as a birthday present. It played very similarly to Alice Chess.



Space Chess board

In the 1970's there were several more attempts at this playing field, "Chess Cubed" by Classic Games Company, "Chess in the Third Dimension" by Skor Mor, and "Strato Chess" by the John Hansen Company. Each had its own set of rules, but none seemed to fully satisfy the 3D Chess player.

In 1999 Yeshiah Zalman published the rules for "Nardeshir." There were two variants, Traditional and Malka, the difference being the movement of the Pawns and Queen. In both, the pieces are arrayed according to Johnson's game, above. The Rook slides orthogonally upon the level and slides orthogonally and diagonally to change levels. The Bishop slides diagonally upon the level and slides triagonally to change levels. The King and Knight have the classic 3D moves. Standard castling rules apply.

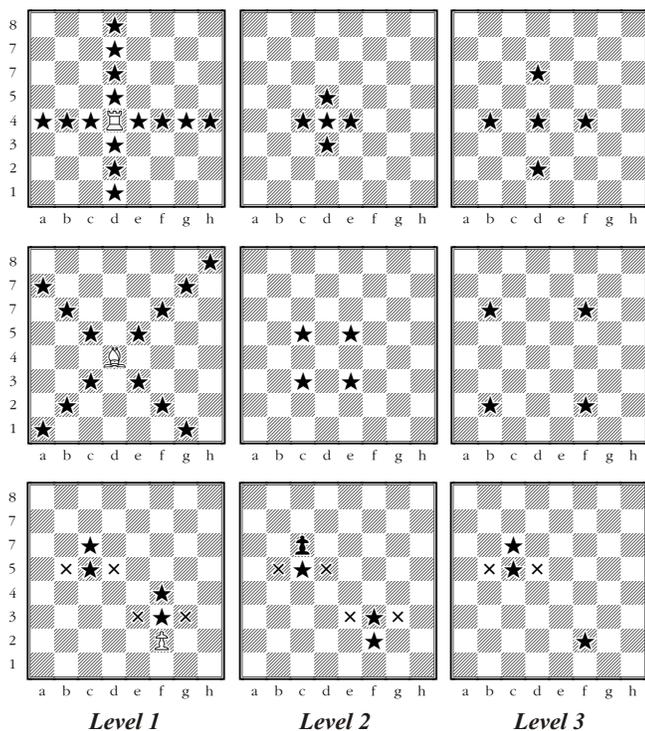
The Queen in the Traditional variant slides orthogonally, diagonally, or triagonally. In the Malka variant the Queen merely steps orthogonally, diagonally, or triagonally.

In the Traditional variant, the Pawn steps to a vacant forward orthogonal cell on the level and steps orthogonally or forward diagonally to change level. It captures one forward diagonally upon its level or one forward triagonally changing levels. It is allowed the two-step on its first move, with en passant. In the Malka variant, the Pawn is denied the initial two-step move.

In 2001, after several decades of development, William D'Agostino published the rules for "Millennium 3D Chess™." The pieces are arrayed either as in Hageman's or Johnson's games, above, at Black's choice. The rules are similar to Nardeshir, although the games were developed independently.

The Rook slides orthogonally upon the level and slides orthogonally or diagonally when changing levels. The Bishop slides diagonally upon the level, and slides triagonally when changing levels. The Queen can move either like a Rook or like a Bishop. The King steps one square like a Rook or Bishop. The Knight performs its classic 3D move, described in the first article in this series. The Pawn steps one vacant cell forward on the level,

or steps one up or one down either orthogonally or diagonally forward when changing levels. It captures one forward diagonally on the level or one forward triagonally when changing levels. It may perform two steps on its first move, either forward on the level or by changing two levels orthogonally. The Pawn freely promotes upon reaching the farthest rank of the opponent's starting level.



Moves of pieces in Millennium 3D Chess™: ★ move, × capture

The standard rules of castling and *en passant* apply.

The following is an e-mail game between William D'Agostino and James Trimm. The commentary is by James Trimm.

Millennium 3D Chess™ 01 July 2001 - 27 October 2001

White: William D'Agostino. Black: James Trimm

1.B2b2 Q2e7, 2.R2a1 R2b8, 3.N2d1 R2h7 (White opens with the D'Agostino opening. These three moves immediately develop all three of White's King's pieces into strong protected positions on Level 2. Black opens in a riskier manner by immediately dropping all three heavy pieces (both Rooks and the Queen) to Level 2, thus grabbing control of a large segment of Level 2. The opening also has the unforeseen effect of potentially preventing White from developing the same three pieces in the same way on the King's side.) **4.Q2c2 Q2f7, 5.B2a3 Q2c7, 6.B3h3 B2b7, 7.R2c1 Q2d7, 8.B2g4 Q1c7, 9.B1f5 B1c8, 10.B2e4 R2c7, 11.1c3 3a5, 12.Rx2c7 Qx2c7** (In the next eight moves we dance around each other and then in the 12th move we exchange Rooks.) **13.R3h3 3b5, 14.Rx3h7 3b4, 15.B3b2 Q2e7, 16.R3h8 Q2g7, 17.R3h4 3g5, 18.R3c4 R2c8, 19.N1f3 N2b6, 20.N1g5 Q2f7, 21.3a4 Q2b3** (In move 21 Black creates a fork, threatening White's Bishop and White's Queen [as well as two unprotected Pawns] at the same time. Any good player knows that the best way out of a fork is to move one threatened piece into a position where it protects the other threatened piece, if you can. In this case the predictable move for White is Q3e2, which looks like the best move because it moves White's queen out of jeopardy and into a position to protect

the threatened Bishop. This is exactly what White does.) **22.Q3e2 B3a6** (But in executing this move White only succeeds in falling into a trap set by Black. White has been lured into placing two heavy pieces, a Rook and Queen, in a single diagonal line together, where they can easily be pinned by Black's Bishop. Black responds by moving a Bishop up from Level 1, which now has White's Rook pinned against the White Queen. There is now no way to save White's Rook, although White can force a trade of Queens.) **23.Q3c2 Bx3c4** (White moves the Queen into a position that will allow White to force a trade of Queens if Black takes the White Rook.) **24.Qx2b3 Bx2b3** (White presses a trade of Queens. The real solution for White was back at move 22, where White's best move was actually to let the Bishop be taken by Black and to move the Queen out of the area entirely. The apparent "best move" only served to set up White's Rook to be pinned and taken. The moral to this is that in general terms the basic strategies of Chess do carry over in a more complex three-dimensional form in Millennium 3D Chess in a way that is proving itself to be very playable, challenging, and enjoyable.) **25.2a5 N1b8, 26.2a6 N3a8, 27.B2b7 R3b8, 28.B3d4 N3b6, 29.Bx3b6 cx3b6, 30.2a7 R3d8, 31.3e4 B3c2, 32.2f3 3d5, 33.ex3d5 3e6, 34.dx3e6 fx3e6, 35.N1e6 B3b3, 36.B3c6+ K2e7, 37.N2c6+ K2d6, 38.N1c8 Kx3c6, 39.Nx3d8+ K2b7** (This surprise move by Black neutralizes White's promotion, despite a noble effort on the part of White to protect the Pawn and guarantee its promotion.) **40.3a8=Q+ Kx3a8, 41.N3f7 B3e7, 42.N3d3 B3c2, 43.Nd3e5 3a4, 44.N3c6 B3c5, 45.Nx3g5 N2g6, 46.K2d2 3b3, 47.N2a6+ K2b7, 48.Nx3a4 2b2, 49.N3b2 B1e4** (This is a monumentally stupid move by Black, and from this point forward the game goes downhill for Black. In a game this challenging, one stupid move can be critical.) **50.fx1e4 N1e6, 51.Nx3e6 N2c6, 52.Nx3c5 bx3c5** (Black attempts to sacrifice material hoping to achieve a position where the Pawn at 2b2 can still achieve promotion despite the loss of material in move 49. Instead, Black only digs his grave deeper.) **53.K1c2 3b1, 54.2b2 3c4, 55.1d4 N1c4, 56.K2b1 N3c3, 57.Nx3c4 N2e3, 58.Kx3b1 Nx1c3, 59.bx1c3 K2b6, 60.2e5 K2b5, 61.N3d6 K2c6, 62.K2c2 K2d5, 63.K2d3 K2e6, 64.K2d4 K2f5, 65.2c4 K2e6, 66.2d5+ K2f5, 67.2c5 K2f4, 68.2c6 K2f5, 69.2c7 K2f4, 70.3c8=Q K2f5, 71.Q3f5+ K1g6, 72.2d6 K1g5, 73.2d7 K1g4, 74.3d8=Q K1g5, 75.Qd3g5+ K1g4, 76.Qf2g5#** White earns a well deserved victory in a very challenging game. ■

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- Special thanks to Dan Troyka and William D'Agostino, who tracked down a lot of this information for this article.



The Grand Chess Corner

by John Vehre

This issue's featured game again returns to the theme of pawn play in Grand Chess. One of the points that I made in the previous article is that one of the big differences between Grand Chess and the ordinary game of Chess is that the Pawns need not cross the entire board to promote; they can become officers as soon as they cross the 8th rank. This does have a profound effect on play, and not solely in endgame play. The ability to promote quickly can have quite a few tactical ramifications in middle game play as well. As we saw in Schmittberger-Antonas, the White Pawn roller was so threatening that Black spent almost all his efforts trying to neutralize it, and at a decisive point even over-concentrated his forces against the remaining stragglers. In the end those maneuvers left his King defenseless and easy prey to a final combinative attack.

My game below has a slightly different theme. In both classical Chess and Grand Chess you will often use your Pawns as battering rams to open lines for your attacking pieces. In classical Chess a single open line can have decisive significance in a battle, as can an advanced Pawn nesting in some hole on the 6th rank near a castled position. In Grand Chess that nesting Pawn would this time be on the 7th rank, and in addition to supporting the mating attack would also be threatening to promote, adding an important reinforcement to the attack. This threat to promote is so great in the game below that White in fact resigns before the little guy gets to show his stuff!

2001 Grand Chess Cyber World Championship Final

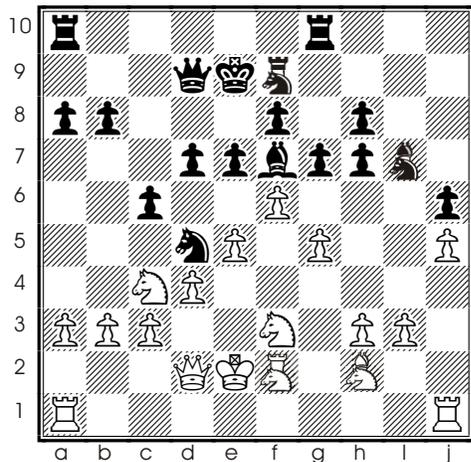
White: R. Wayne Schmittberger

Black: John Vehre

1.e5 c6 (I like the Sicilian Defense in classical Chess and this "Pseudo Sicilian" variation, as I like to call it, has been my favorite defense in the Grand Chess competitions as well. It has many virtues, but in particular I think its biggest advantage is that it defers the battle in the center until Black has time to move his King away to a more secure location. The structure also is very flexible and can be used against a variety of White opening moves. The following opening fragment played against the Zillions 2.0 Engine on a Pentium IV processor perhaps is not a sparkling example of White opening strategy, but does illustrate this flexibility and many of the ideas behind the defense: 1.Nc4 c6, 2.Nh4 Nc7, 3.d4 Nh7, 4.g4 [White at his leisure can play e5 and f5, returning to a more "standard" setup.] 4....d7, 5.Kf1?! [Giving away your King's intentions for safety too early is not a good idea in Grand Chess.] 5....g7, 6.Ni6 [This is rather pointless, and one wonders what the engine was "thinking" about. Computers are notoriously bad in the opening phase if their opening books are disconnected, and Zillions, is no exception here.] 6....j7, 7.Nh4 f6, 8.Ng6 e7, 9.f5 Bf7, 10.h4 Rae10, 11.e5 Nd5, 12.Re1 Kd10, 13.ef6 gf6, 14.Mf3? Nf8, 15.h5 Nh7, 16.Cj5 i6!?, 17.hi6 Ng5, 18.Mf2 ji6. Black, with his active Knights in the center, better center control, and a developing initiative, can be quite satisfied with the outcome

of the opening.) **2.f5 d7, 3.Nc4** (3.g5 would be the most uncompromising way of treating the position, aiming to build a powerful Pawn center. Of course, big centers can be a double-edged sword, and whether they are a powerful mass or just an overextended weakness can often hinge on just one tempo. In the Grand Chess competitions my White opponents have all avoided this way of playing, and it does have an obvious drawback. After 3....i7 the Bishop check on j7 leaves White the somewhat unpleasant choice of either disconnecting his Rooks early in the game or committing the a1 Rook past the f-file sooner than he might be comfortable. Despite this drawback play can be interesting, and I will throw out a couple of lines of play that do demonstrate how sharp opening play can be even on the larger, sparsely settled Grand Chess board. Against 3....i7 White can try to expand his center with 4.Nj4 [4.Ng3 with the same idea loses a Pawn after 4....Bj7+, 5.h5 Cf7. He cannot defend both e5 and g5. When erecting big Pawn centers in Grand Chess, always be careful and take into consideration these early surprise sorties that both the Cardinal and Marshall can execute with their Knight moves during the opening phase!] 4....Bj7+, 5.h5 h6!?, 6.gxh6!? [6.g6 Bg5, 7.Bf4 Bxf4, 8.Cxf4 Nc7, 9.c4 f7 is another, safer way to play.] 6....ixh6, 7.Qxh6 Ci7, 8.Qxi7!? jxi7, 9.Bf4, and after the passive 9....Mh9 White has a good chance to obtain compensation for his slight material deficit because of the weakness of the Pawn straggling on i7. More interesting is 9....Nh7 and if 10.Bxi7, Black can induce further interesting complications with 10....Bxi3, 11.Cxi3 Rai10, 12.Bg5 Rxi3, 13.Bxi3 e7, when I think he is even better. This advantage is not so much his slight material advantage, but rather White's Pawns on this right flank have become weak and isolated during the opening fight. The blowh6 is also useful in other variations. If White chooses 4.Kd1, play would still continue with 4....Bj7+, when the White center again comes under attack after 5.Kc1 h6!) **3....Nc7, 4.d4 Nh7, 5.Nh4 g7, 6.g4 Bg5** (This is a key move in Black's plans. The threats against White's heavy pieces in the middle of the board allow Black to occupy the central points d5 and g5 while gaining time. White should agree to the following Bishop trade since after 7.Qe1 Nd5 the requirement of defending the Pawn on c3 disrupts the cohesion of his entire army. 7.Qd3 also has its drawbacks, and in addition to blocking the c2 Bishop, Black's second harassing Bishop move, 7....Bd5, forces the Cardinal to move into rather poor squares on the first rank.) **7.Bf4 Bxf4, 8.Cxf4 Nd5, 9.Cg3 Cf7** (The Cardinal takes up where the Bishop left off and together with the Knight on d5 probes those sensitive Black squares in front of White's King.) **10. Nf3** (White wants to block the c1-j8 diagonal with a Pawn.) **10....Ch6** (With this move we move from the realm of Philidor to that of Nimzowitsch! In true hypermodern style Black lures the White center pawns forward so he can later attack and break them up from the flanks.) **11.g5 Ci7, 12.j5 j6, 13.f6?** (Making a virtue of necessity, the Pawns press on. If White had instead tried to hold onto his Pawn chain with 13.h4, then Black would have counterattacked it immediately with 13....f6. This is tactically justified by the fact that Black only temporarily sacrifices a pawn after 14.exf6 gxf6, 15.Cxb8 since after 15....Qd8 the Cardinal must retreat, and the Pawn on g5 falls. Of course, White does not have to take the poisoned Pawn and can instead play 14.Ci4. Black may still stand a little better after 14....Qd8, 15.Rjg1 ffg5, 16.hxg5 [Or 16.Nxg5 Nxg5, 17.hxg5 Bf7] 16....Ni5, and the threat ofBf7 maintains the initiative for Black. In the above lines of play White continues to be under pressure, but is able to hold the center. 13.f6 does stop Black from playing this move himself, but the advanced White Pawns can be attacked from other directions.) **13....Rjg10, 14.Ci4?** (This hands Black a

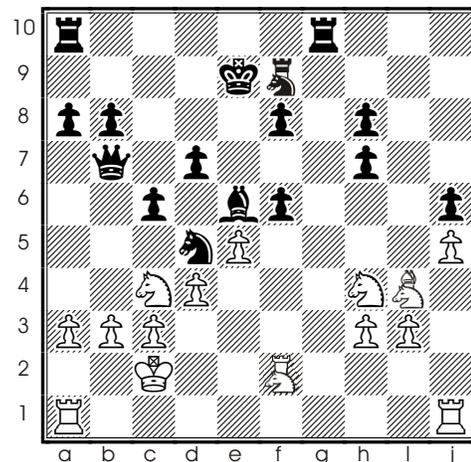
couple of useful tempos, and White's position now really becomes critical. White may have hoped to prevent a Black ...e7, a move which threatens to put even more stress on his center. However, in striving to hold the center he overlooks a tactical possibility available to Black. 14. Ce4 was a better way of supporting g5, while at the same time removing the Cardinal from the nasty gaze of Black's Rook on g10. Note that the natural support move 14.h4 was impossible because of the tactical shot 14....g6, 15.exf6 Nhx6. Pins are as useful in Grand Chess as in classical Chess!) 14...Bf7 (Perhaps White had now expected to be able to answer this with 15.g6 Cxd2, 16.Kxd2, when he would have had a Cardinal and a Knight for his Queen. Unfortunately for White, Black does not have to take the Queen and can instead check with his Knight on f4, when he wins a Pawn for nothing.) 15.Bxh7 (Regrettably, the Bishop has to go sooner or later. If 15.Ch2 immediately, then 15....gxf6 would have forced this exchange, as otherwise Black would win the Pawn on g5. Even worse than losing the Pawn is the fact that without the g5 Pawn White's position in the center would soon collapse, taking along the rest of his game in the process. Making the capture immediately also removes the interesting option 15....Nxc5, 16.Qxc5 Cxc5, 17.Nxc5 Bh5+, 18.Kd2 gf5, when Black would have a Queen and a couple of nasty center Pawns for the Cardinal and Knight.) 15....ixh7, 16.Ch2 e7 (diagram)



Position after 16...e7

(Black's strategy of undermining the center is almost complete. To complete the process he only needs to play ...h6! White is well aware of his difficulties now and attempts to complicate things by sacrificing his Queen for that bothersome Cardinal on i7.) 17.Nh4 (From a poor lot of choices this is White's best chance. White's other major option, giving up the center with 17.fxe7, has its own drawbacks. If 17.fxe7 fxe7, 18.h4. [If instead 18.Ke1, then 18....Bh5 looks strong and the threat of ...Nf4 among other things is likely to win at least a Pawn.] 18....Bd6 [The Bishop pin 18....Bh5 only looks bad. White can play 19.i4 Bxi4, 20.Rai1, completely turning the tables on Black.] 19.Rj3 Ch5, 20.i4 Cf4+, 21.Cxf4 Mxf4+, 22.Ke1 Raf10 looks nearly lost for White. He probably should offer the j5 pawn with 19.Rjf1, although Black could ignore it and still obtain nice pressure in the center with 19....Ch5, and both 20.i4 Cf4+, 21.Cxf4 Mxf4+, 22.Ke1 Bh3 and 20.Ke1 Rag10, 21.Ng1 Mi9, 22.Mg2 Rxf1+, 23.Kxf1 Rf10+, 24.Ke1 Qf7 lead to material losses.) 17....gxf6, 18.gxf6 Cxd2, 19.Kxd2 Qb7 (This move is not bad, but is the beginning of a poor plan that throws away a great deal of Black's advantage. I had wanted to play 19....Rg5, but was justifiably afraid of the

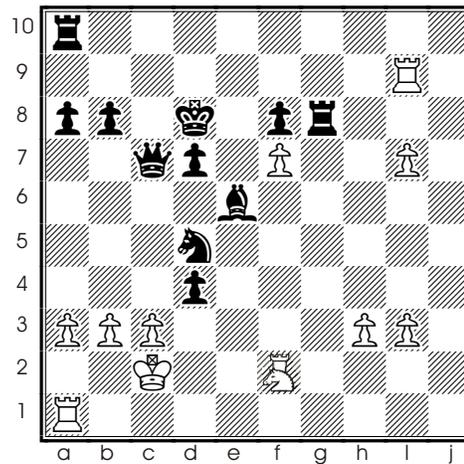
consequences of 20.fxe7 fxe7, 21.Raf1 Rag10, 22.e6. As the above variation indicates, Black still has to be careful, even with his relatively big material advantage. 19....Qc8 looks safer than the option Black chose, and if 20.fxe7 fxe7, 21.Raf1, Black too can build up on the f-file with Raf10. Of course, White does not need to release the tension so quickly and can play 21.Raf1 immediately, intending on meeting 21....Raf10 with 22.Rjg1, when it is awkward for Black to maintain his presence on the g-file. White has some compensation for his material deficit here, but whether it is enough is hard to say.) 20.Kc2 Be6? (Black was at a loss for a good plan, and this move, which allows White to activate his dormant Cardinal, is very poor. Instead, it was tempting to play for the trap 20....Nb6, 21.Ne3? Bxb3+, 22.Kxb3 Na4+, 23.Kc2 [23.Kxa4 Qb5 mate! or 23.Ka2 Nxc3 mate are not good alternatives!] Qb2+, when Black would have ended up winning the Marshall. Unfortunately, this trap is easily sidestepped with 21.Nd2, when Black's previous Knight and Queen moves both look silly. Consequently, Black would lose a lot of time and must spend two additional moves to return the errant pieces to useful spots. 20....Rg5 makes more sense now that the Black Queen protects b8. If 21.Raf1 Black can ignore the threat of fxe7 with 21....Rag10 because of the weakness of White's 2nd rank. For example, after 22.fxe7 fxe7, 23.Mxf7+ [The tricky 23.Ci4 can be met by 23....Bg6+, 24.Nxc6 Mxf2+, 25.Rxf2 R(10)xc6, which only leads to simplifications that have helped Black's game. 23.e6 still deserves attention, when Black should avoid 23....de6?, 24.Ne5 Be8, 25.Mxf9+ Bxf9, 26.Ne7+! Instead, 23....Be8 immediately is better, although White is not without his chances with 24.Ne5 or 24.Mxf9+ Bxf9, 25.Ci3, both of which show how weak the f7 square has become. These last two lines show that White was more than justified in sacrificing his Queen for the Cardinal!] 23....Mxf7, 24.Rxf7 Rg2+, 25.Nxc2 Rxc2+, and Black picks up the loose Cardinal on h2.) 21.Ci4 exf6!? (diagram)



Position after 21...exf6!?

(This invites further complications, and allowing the c4 Knight to jump into the fray is not a decision one takes lightly. But at this point I was no longer totally happy with my position and could not bring myself to play a meek move like 21....Rj10.) 22.Nd6 (One of the points to Black's play was that the j-Pawn is now dangerous to capture. If 22.Cxj6, then Black obtains a powerful attack after 22....Rg3, 23.Me2 R(a)g10, 24.Nd6 [24.Cxh7 Rxc3+, 25.Mxc3 Nxc3, 26.Cxf9 Kxf9, 27.Kxc3 Rg3+ is not very pleasant either.] 24....Qxb3+, 25.Kxb3 Nxc3+, 26.Kb2 Nxe2, 27.Cxh7 Rb3+, 28.Kc2 Nxd4+, 29.Ke1 Mg7. The text move is logical, bringing the Knight into the attack with tempo, but it commits White to one

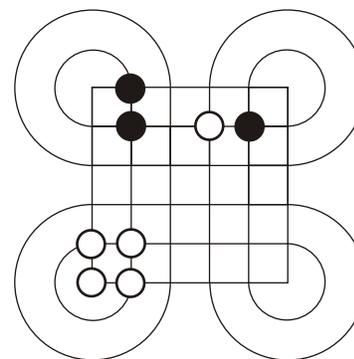
forcing line of play, which in the end is not able to overcome Black's defenses. I think 22.exf6 posed Black more problems since White would have had a better chance to exploit Black's Pawn weaknesses on the left flank that are not likely to disappear quickly. Still, White cannot play too leisurely since after 22....Qc7, 23 Ne5 Black already has strong counter play with 23....c5. 23.Rhg1 is better than 23.Ne5, and Black too must be careful. The rambunctious 23....Nf4 can turn out badly if Black is too greedy. After 24.Ne5 Nxf3?, 25.Mxf3! Bxf3, 26.Cf7+ Kf10, 27.Ce8+ White can even force a draw. Black, of course, should not be so impatient, and 23....c5 is a better option again, but White is not without his chances.) 22....Qc7, 23.Nf7+ Kf10, 24.Nxh8!? (This move came as a bolt from the blue; I had only expected White to play one of his Rooks to the g-file, when I had intended to reply with the Rook liftRg7. The Knight sacrifice is interesting, although in choosing this way of conducting an all out attack White essentially burns his bridges behind him.) 24....Mxh8, 25.Cxj6 Rg8, 26.Ni6 (More fuel for the fire! Black can defend against 26.Cxh8+ and should even win if White just attempts to push his Pawns through after 26....Rhx8, 27.j6 Kf9, 28.j7 c4!? [28....Rj10, 29.g5 c5, 30.dxc5 Qxc5, 31.Me2 fxe5, 32.g6 hxg6, 33.Nxg6 Rxb3, 34.j8(Q) Rxj8, 35.Rxj8 Qxc3+!, 36.Mxc3 Rxc3+, 37.Kd2 e4 also would win.] 29.j8(Q) Rxj8, 30.Rxj8 cxd4, 31.c4 Ne3+, 32.Kb2 Qxe5, 33.Ka2 Nxc4, 34.Rd1 [Black was threatening 34....d3 (M), 35.Mxd3 Qe2+] 34...Na5, 35.Rd3 Bxb3+, 36.Kb2 [36.Rxb3 Nxb3, 37.Kxb3 Qe3+ is also hopeless] 36....Rc10. Black is now threateningRc3, and White can not defend all those threats around his King. White's only other plan is to force the Marshall down the g-file, but Black always seems to be able to meet this idea withKf9 and Rg8. Since these two direct attempts fail, I think White is just lost, but there are a few tricks left in the position.) 26....hxi6, 27.jxi6 Kf9, 28.Cxh8+ (28.i7 is not dangerous. Black can even ignore the promoting threat and play 28....Mxh3 since 29.Mxh3 Bxh3, 30.i8(Q) loses to 30....Bf5+, 31.Qxf5 Ne3+. Pragmatic players might feel that Black should not indulge in such tricks, and with two pieces to the good should simply play 28....Mi10.) 28....Rhx8, 29.i7 Rg8 (Rooks really like open files, and I felt now was the time to launch a direct counterattack.) 30.Rj9+ (30.c4 now or on the next move was a major alternative, hoping to drive away the Black Knight so that the Marshall could capture on f6 and coordinate with the j-file Rook to attack Black's King. Unfortunately for White, Black can ignore the threat and simply play 30....c5, and White loses after 31.cxd5 cxd4+, when his King has no good moves: 1) 32.Kd3 Qc3+, 33.Ke2 Qe3+, and now if Kf1, Black promotes to a Cardinal with check, and if 34.Kd1, promotes to a Marshall with an equally lethal check; 2) 32.Kb2 Qxe5!, 33.Ka2 [33.Rae1 d3(M)++] 33....d3(M), 34.Mxd3 Rg2+, 35.Kb1 Bf5 wins; 3) 32.Kd1 Qxe5!, 33.Rj9+ Ke8, 34.i8(Q) Rg1+, 35.Kc2 Rc10+, perhaps best, illustrates the hopelessness of White's position. Black in many variations can simply ignore White's newly promoted officers!) 30....Ke8, 31.Ri9 c5, 32.exf6 (Another pretty winning line for Black is 32.dxc5 Qxc5, 33.Me2 Rg2!, 34.Mxg2 Qxc3+, 35.Kd1 Ne3+, 36.Mxe3 Qxe3, 37.i8(Q) Bxb3+, 38.Qc2 Qd3+.) 32....cxd4, 33.f7+ Kd8, 34.Resign (Black's King flees from the danger zone and this is as good a time as any for White to throw in the towel. The most thematic end to the game would have been 34.fxg8(Q) Qxc3+, 35.Kd1 [Against 35.Kb1 Black would promote to a Cardinal with 35....d3(C)+ and quickly mate after 36.Mxd3 Qxd3+, 37.Kb2 Qd2+, 38.Kb1 Nc3#.] 35....d3(M)+, 36.Mxd3 Qxd3+, 37.Ke1 Qe3+, 38.Kg1 [38.Kd1 Nc3+, 39.Kc2 Bf5+ also leads to a quick mate] 38....Bxb3+, 39.Qg2 Qf3+, 40.Kel Re10+, 41. Kd2 Qc3+, 42.Kd1 Re1#. Promoting the other Pawn with 34.i8(Q) loses even more quickly.



Final position after 33....Kd8, 34.Resign

With the e8 Rook living to assist in the attack White is not long for this world and is soon mated after 34....Qxc3+, 35.Kd1 [No better is 35.Kb1 Rg1+, 36.Ka2 Nb4+, 37.ab4 Qxb3#] 36.Rg1+ Ke2, 37.Qe3#. Finally White might try 34.c4, but after 34....Ne3+, 35.Kd3 [35.Kb2 Rg2, 36.Mxg2 d3(M)+, the d-Pawn's promotion again spells doom for White.] 35....Bxc4+, 36.Kxd4 Qb6+, 37.Kc3 Qxb3+, 38.Kd4 Nf5+!, 39.Ke5 [39.Mxf5 Qd3+, 40.Kc5 Rc10+, 41.Kb4 Qb3+, 42.Ka5 b6#] 39....Qe3+, 40.Kxf5 Rg5+, 41.Kg6 Qe5#finally hunts the elusive monarch down! ■

SURAKARTA PROBLEM



Black to move! Capturing appears to be natural, but which stone? How many points is the correct move worth?

Note

According to a German game book (E. Glonnegger, *Das Spielebuch*, Ravensburg, 1988) the real name of this game in Java is "Permainan," which means "the game" in Bahasa Indonesia. It was first published in France as recently as 1970 as "Surakarta." In Indonesia the pieces are shells and pebbles and the board is drawn in the sand. R. C. Bell adds in *Discovering Old Board Games* (1973), "At the end of the game the winner's pieces remaining on board are counted and recorded as points towards an agreed total for victory."

— Ralf Gering

The first person giving a correct solution accompanied with another Surakarta problem will receive a signed copy of R. Wayne Schmittberger's book *New Rules for Classic Games*. — Ed.



Sleeping Beauty Draughts

The curse of the Checkers draw is vanquished

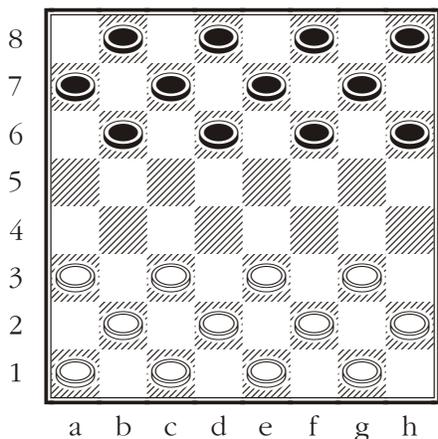
by Ralf Gering

Sleeping Beauty is a wonderful fairy-tale which is well known in many parts of Europe, including Germany and Russia. It was included in Grimm's famous collection of fairy tales (*Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, Göttingen, 1812-1822), and Wilhelm and Jakob Grimm were among the first scholars who acknowledged the value of German folk literature for the education of children. In 1890 Tchaikovsky wrote the ballet "Sleeping Beauty," and in 1902 the German composer Engelbert Humperdinck, who was influenced by Richard Wagner, used the tale in a popular opera. The story of Sleeping Beauty means that love conquers not only evil, but also even death itself. It is about the old human hope of rebirth after the sleep of death.

I invented Sleeping Beauty Draughts in 1986 in Tübingen, Southern Germany. The German name of the game, *Dornröschendame*, was coined by Jürgen Winkler, a friend who was, like me, an enthusiastic Go player. The game was influenced by Anglo-American Checkers (henceforth, just "Checkers"). However, unlike this great game, it cannot end in a draw.

Rules

The game is played on the 32 dark squares of a Chess board. The bottom side of each piece is covered with green felt. The initial position is shown below.



Sleeping Beauty Draughts initial position

White moves first. The men move one square at a time diagonally forward into vacant squares, as in most traditional Checkers variants. They capture adjacent enemy men by the short leap forwards, but adjacent enemy *ladies* (the equivalent of kings in Checkers) by the short leap *backwards*. It is permitted to capture several pieces in one move. If there are several options, one must take the greatest number (as in International Checkers).

If a man reaches the opponent's back rank, he is promoted to a lady (by stacking another piece of the same color on top), provided the player does not have already a lady; otherwise, the

man is promoted only to a *sleeping beauty* (and turned upside down). A player can never have two or more ladies at the same time. Promotion always ends the move.

A lady moves one square at a time diagonally forward or backward into vacant squares, as the king in Checkers. A lady may either capture in the Chess way by replacement (so that she moves like the Ferz in Shatranj), or by jumping over opponent's pieces by the short leap forward or backward (exactly as the king in Checkers). A lady may only capture one piece by replacement per move, but may capture several pieces by jumping over them in a sequence, just as multiple captures are made in Checkers. It is *not* allowed to combine both ways of capturing in one move. Capturing by replacement is not compulsory, whereas capturing by jumping is. Consequently, jumping always takes precedence over replacement, *unless* a lady can capture the opponent's lady. Then the lady that captures has the choice between both ways of capturing, which is called *Royal Privilege*. However, if a lady can capture more than one piece, she must capture the greatest number possible.

A sleeping beauty (marked with a star in our diagrams) may not move or capture, nor may she be captured.

To clarify some important points: a capturing sequence must be completed before any pieces are taken from the board; a piece may not be jumped over more than once in a capturing sequence, but a vacant square can be crossed several times; capturing by jumping is compulsory, and majority capture always take precedence, the types of pieces captured being irrelevant.

A player must wake a sleeping beauty (if he has one) when he has lost his lady in his opponent's last move. She then becomes the lady. This does not count as a move. If the player moves his new lady immediately after she has been woken up, she is permitted to make a *jump of joy*, and move two squares diagonally in a straight line. However, a jump of joy is only permitted if the square crossed over is (1) vacant and (2) not "threatened" (or "guarded" in Chess terminology) by the opponent. A lady may not capture by replacement while making a jump of joy. The only time a lady may make a jump of joy is immediately after being woken up. The jump of joy was inspired by the *Kurierspiel* (i.e., "The Courier Game"), an old German Chess variant that has a similar rule.

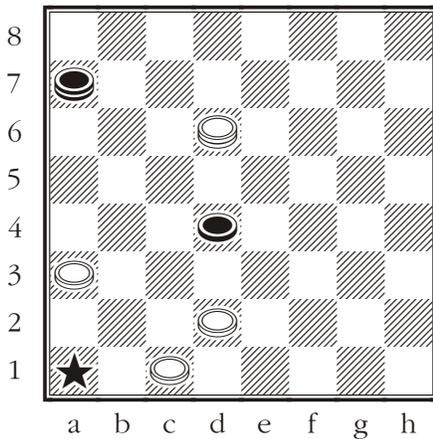
In a continuous sequence of moves in which only ladies are moved, a particular lady is not permitted to move onto the same square twice after the full board position has been repeated once (even if the lady occupied this square before the position was repeated). This rule is only important in exotic board positions that in real play almost never occur.

The object of the game is to leave the opponent without a valid move, either by capturing all his pieces, or by blocking them completely. A draw is not possible.

There is a point scoring system in Sleeping Beauty Draughts. The winner gets as many points as there are still pieces on the board at the end of the game (men, ladies, and sleeping beauties of

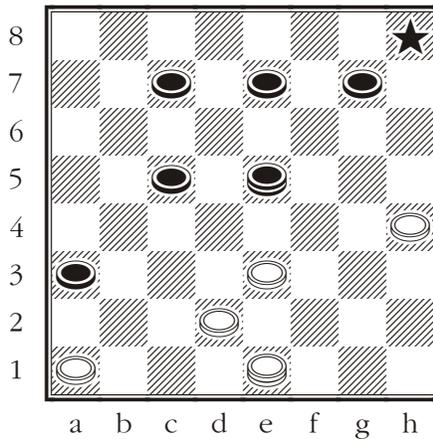
both colors all counting equally). The loser gets zero points, even if he has still pieces left (in the case of a blockade).

Problem 1:



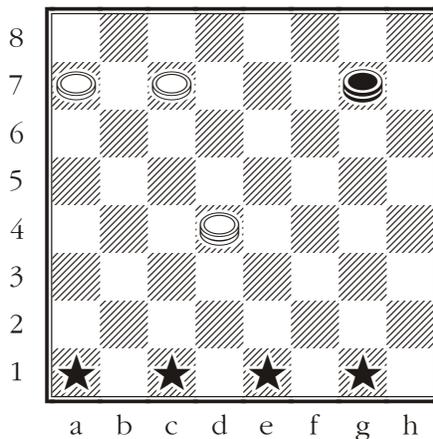
White to move and to win by five points! (R. Gering, 1988)

Problem 2:



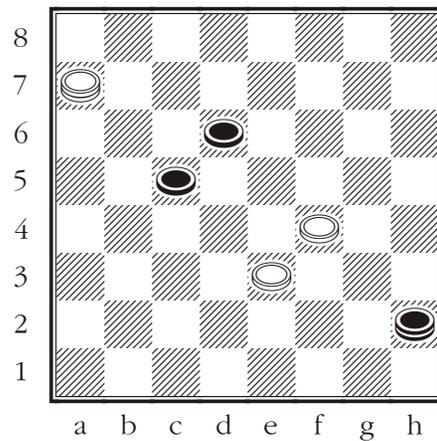
White to move and to win by one point! (R. Gering, 2002)

Problem 3:



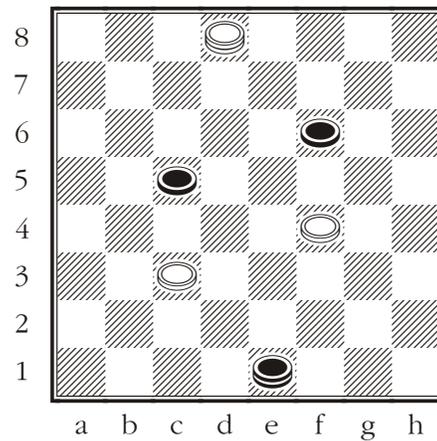
“Gundi’s Position.” The white lady and two men are stronger than five black pieces: one lady and four sleeping beauties. White to move and to win by one point! (R. Gering, 2002)

Problem 4:



This is the “Dungeon Position”. White has just moved f2e3. What will happen? (R.Gering, 1988)

Problem 5:



This is the “Castle Position”. White has just moved g3f4. What will happen? (R. Gering, 1988) ■

Solutions

Awakening a sleeping beauty is indicated with a ‘*’. Promotion to a sleeping beauty is indicated by ‘sb.’

Problem 1: 1.d2c3! d4:b2 2.d6c7 a7b8 (or a7b6), 3.c7:b8 (or c7:b6, respectively). Black cannot move.

Problem 2: 1.a1b2 a3:c1sb, 2.e3f4 e5:g3, 3.h4:f2 c1*:e3:g1, 4.e1f2 g1:e3, 5.h8*:f6:d8:b6:d4:f2.

Problem 3: 1.d4e5 g7h8, 2.e5f6 h8g7, 3.f6:g7 a1*c3, 4.g7f6 c3d4, 5.a7b8sb d4c3, 6.f6e5 c3b2, 7.e5d4 b2a1, 8.d4c3 a1b2, 9.c3:a1 g1*e3, 10.c7d8sb e3d4, 11.a1b2 d4e5, 12.b2c3 e5f6, 13.c3d4 f6g7, 14.d4e5 g7h8, 15.e5f6 h8g7, 16.f6:g7 e1*c3, 17.g7f6 c3b4, 18.f6e5 b4a5, 19.e5d4 a5b6, 20.d4c5 b6:c5, 21.b8*c7 c5d4, 22.c7d6 d4e3, 23.d6e5 e3f2, 24.e5f4 f2g1, 25.f4g3 g1h2, 26.g3:h2 c1*d2, 27.h2g3 d2c3, 28.g3f4 c3b4, 29.f4e5 b4a5, 30.e5d4! a5b6, 31.d4c5 b6:c5, 32.d8*c7 c5d4, 33.c7d6 d4e3, 34.d6e5 e3f2, 35.e5f4 f2g1, 36.f4g3 g1h2, 37.g3:h2 wins.

Problem 4: 1....h2g1, 2.a7b8 g1h2, 3.b8a7 (First full-board repetition, Black h2g1 is no longer permitted.) 3....c5b4 (Black must lose a tempo.) 4.a7b6 (White breaks out and wins the game.)

Problem 5: 1....e1f2, 2.d8c7 f2g1, 3.c7b8 g1h2, 4.b8a7 h2g1, 5.a7b8 (First full-board repetition.) 5....g1f2, 6.b8a7 f2e1, 7.a7b8 (Black has no good move left as e1f2 is not permitted.)

The Wager of



by L. Lynn Smith

Most game players on first acquaintance with the rules of Jetan in Edgar Rice Burroughs' *The Chessmen of Mars* would consider it merely another Chess variant. It plays well, but seems to be spoiled by those frequent draws. It was during a second reading of the book that I came to realize that Burroughs wanted the game to be played with wagers. This changes everything. Those drawn games now become a viable factor. So, how to wager? Burroughs stated that there were many ways. We will discuss three possibilities: Ransom, Dueling, and Pay-to-move.

Before we begin with the effect of wagering on the game, we must establish some form of value system for the pieces. This can be derived by the formula $P(A/T)$. Where P is the total number of possible moves for the piece at a turn, A is the total number of available spaces on the board for the piece, and T is the total number of board spaces.

For example, a Chained Panthan has a maximum total of 5 possible spaces at a turn, 90 available spaces on board, and a total of 100 spaces on the board. This gives $5(90/100)=4.5$. A Free Panthan has a maximum total of seven spaces at a turn, and the entire board is available for movement. This gives $7(100/100)=7$. We can see that there is a quantifiable difference between these two interpretations of the Panthan, and a player would be justified in demanding a greater value being placed upon the stronger piece. Here is table of piece values:

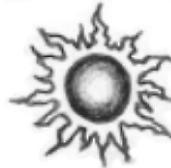
Chained Panthan	5(90/100)	4.5
Free Panthan	7(100/100)	7
Chained Warrior	8(50/100)	4
Free Warrior	12(100/100)	12
Chained Civil	12(50/100)	6
Warrior	24(100/100)	24
Chained Wild	16(100/100)	16
Warrior	24(100/100)	24
Free Civil Warrior	8(25/100)	2
Free Wild Warrior	12(50/100)	6
Chained Padwar	12(100/100)	12
Free Padwar	12(100/100)	12
Chained Thoat	12(100/100)	12
Free Thoat	16(100/100)	16
Wild Thoat	24(100/100)	24
Chained Dwar	16(50/100)	8
Free Dwar	24(50/100)	12
Chained Flier/Odwar	8(12/100)	0.96
Free Flier/Odwar	24(100/100)	24
Chained Chief	32(100/100)	32
Free Chief	48(100/100)	48
Chained Civil Chief	40(100/100)	40

Obviously this is not the only consideration in the evaluation of each piece. Move characteristics, such as jumping, would affect the behavior and therefore the value of the piece. Also, the value of a piece may change as the game progresses. For example, at the start of the game the Chained Panthan has a

potential of 4.5, but as it advances to each rank, its value declines by 0.5, ending on the final rank with a value of 0.2.

The Princess was not included in the above listing. She has the same standard move potential as the Chief, but she can jump, she cannot capture, and she has a ten-space escape move. These factors definitely affect her behavior on the board. Also, the capture of this piece is decisive, so she may be considered priceless. For the sake of wagering, I have given this piece the value of 0. There should be no further reward for defeating an unarmed piece than winning the game.

We can now assign values to the pieces for a game with wagers. I have established a simple value system that I use. The reader is not obligated to follow it.



Panthan(PN)	1
Warrior(WA)	2
Padwar(PW)	2
Thoat(TH)	3
Dwar(DW)	4
Flier(FL)	4
Chief(CH)	10
Princess(PR)	0

The gradual progression of value among the lower pieces seems reasonable, but the assignment of the value of 10 to the Chief needs explanation. This is where the different endgame scenarios come into play. By placing a high price on the Chief, a player will not be reluctant to capture this piece, even though it may result in a Draw. In a 10-game tournament this has a nice effect on strategy.

Before Jetan players begin a game with wagers, there must be established a starting level of funds or points to risk. This can be any amount that the two players agree upon. But understand that the higher the starting level, the less consideration will be given to the loss of pieces. In other words, if a player has a million points, what will be the concern for the loss of a few hundred?

A simple way to determine the number of points each player should start with is to total the values of all the pieces. Using the above values, each new player would start a tournament with 96 points, and we can round it up, and call it 100 points. With these stated values let us see their effect with several types of wagers.

Ransom

Ransoming captured pieces makes for a generous challenge within each game. With the value assigned to each piece, the players are compelled to consider each capture or loss. A player will often protect highly valued pieces and risk the capture of lesser-valued pieces. There are two types of ransom games: *pay-to-field* and *pay-to-return*.

Pay-to-field involves placing the entire cost of your forces into a common purse. The player withdraws from this purse the value of any captures. The purse is allowed to accumulate from drawn games and is claimed by the winner or equally divided between the players at the end of the tournament. Of course, if a player is unable to afford the entire cost of fielding a complete force, a truncated force may be played. So, one of the strategies is to reduce the opponent's source of funds as the tournament progresses and force the fielding of such a truncated force. This will give the player an obvious advantage and increase the likelihood of a win.

Pay-to-return involves playing the game then paying the value for each piece that is captured by the opponent to obtain them for the subsequent games of the tournament. Since there is no common purse, each player controls his winnings. Although, for common courtesy, the opponent is obligated to offer each captured

piece for ransom, the owner of the piece does not have to pay the ransom. This creates a nice strategic element: by refusing to buy back a piece at certain juncture of the 10-game tournament, a player might actually reduce the opponent's source of funds, placing the opponent at a disadvantage.

There is a strategic difference between pay-to-field and pay-to-return. With the pay-to-field a dwindling source of points has a serious effect on a player. There will be times within a 10-game tournament when a player is unable to field an entire force and must choose which pieces to play without. With each capture of the Chief, this will become more apparent. A win within a 10-game tournament could force the losing player to forfeit the remaining games. With the pay-to-return game, aggressive play will occur in order to obtain the funds necessary for the ransom of lost pieces.

In both types of ransom games a player with a truncated force is more vulnerable to the possible win scenarios. It must be stated here that a player should field at least the Chief, the Princess, and two other pieces. This allows for at least a token show of resistance.

Dueling

Dueling is the area of wagering which offers the most variety. When a player places a piece upon a square occupied by the opponent, rather than his making a direct capture, both players then vie for occupation of that square.

This contest can take several forms but it usually involves the use of random number generators, such as dice. (Of course, players may also resolve the occupation of a contested square by a quick round of Rock-Paper-Scissors!)

Since the players are risking a particular piece for occupation of a square, it is generally accepted that each player must wager the appropriate number of points and ante the value of his piece. Because of this pre-duel ante, a player will carefully consider which piece is being used for the possible capture. A player who does not have the necessary points to risk a power piece will be forced to forgo the possible capture or use a piece of lesser value.

Once the pre-duel ante has been made, there are a myriad of ways to resolve this type of play. We will concentrate on the simple dice throw. Both players will roll a die and add the result to the value of their piece. The player with the higher total will prevail. For example, a player attacks a Panthan with a Dwar. With the above stated values, we have a piece with the value of 4 attacking a piece with the value of 1. Already the attacker has a 3-point advantage. If the players are using a standard six-sided die for their random number generator, the player with the Panthan must throw at least a 4 to have any possibility of defending. While the chance of the Panthan defending its position is remote, it could still win the encounter.

This form of wager encourages the use of higher valued pieces in the attack on lower valued pieces. As the game progresses, the field will be primarily populated by the stronger (or luckier!).

By placing the value of 10 on the Chief, the opponent is discouraged from attacking this piece arbitrarily. The use of a single standard six-sided die forces the two Chiefs into direct confrontation since no other piece may defeat them. Thus the possibility of a drawn game is reduced. This should make a few Jetan newcomers happy!

With its element of chance, this form of wager satisfies those players who are less strategically inclined. The player can risk moves not for some future advantage, but for an immediate gain. A lucky capture could effectively cripple an opponent's strategy.

When two players decide to utilize the dueling form of wager, they must clearly define the parameters. This includes the possibility of a tie. A tie can be resolved with continuation of the duel or retreat of the attacker, effectively a passing move.

Pay-to-move

Often a single game of Jetan can exceed over one hundred moves. Some players find this length of game tedious. The pay-to-move form of wager solves this problem. By risking points to move a piece the player will consider the value of each move. Evaluation of a move can take two forms: simple move or piece-type move.

With the simple move, a set price is placed on the movement of any piece regardless of its value. With the piece-type move, each piece has an assigned value that must be the ante for its movement. These antes are placed in a common purse to be awarded to the winner or divided at the end of a drawn game.

Allowing the ability to pass can create a nice strategy in the pay-to-move game, especially during the opening. Of course, restricting the ability to pass is necessary; one way is to create a set number of passes to be used during the game; another way is the requirement that a player must move after a passing turn.

Of course, establishing a baseline of points to risk will determine the length of the game. With the ante according to piece type in particular, a situation may arise where a player exceeds his allotted funds. This can be mitigated by allowing free capture moves.

Afterword

The reader can now visualize the use of wagering within the game of Jetan. Creating a personal form can be challenging and a source of enjoyment for the players. Mixing the various types of wagers can enliven the game. Combining the pay-to-return ransom with some form of dueling wager can add another level to each player's strategy. Combining dueling with pay-to-move can make for a fast and furious game. I encourage players to experiment with Jetan wagers and devise their own forms.

Lastly, let me say that I do not advocate the actual use of real currency while wagering with Jetan. I suggest the use of tokens, beads, chips or matchsticks. ■



Barsoomian Warrior on Throat – Artwork by Daniel Bauer

Everything's Fine, Everyone's Nice

We say My Beloved is soft-spoken. That is, when he speaks at all, for he is not one of whom it could ever be said has the Gift of the Gab. In other words, he doesn't say very much a lot of the time. "Do you like it?" –Yes. "How was your day today?" –Fine. "What was that person like?" –Nice. "What was the event like?" –It was Nice. "So, what do you think about it?" –Huh? Oh, it's great. "How was your meeting today?" –Oh, it was all right. "How's your dinner?" –It's good. (This is said with much emphasis, and exaggerated nods when it is really, really good!).

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On their own, these singular responses mean virtually nothing. Our communication interchanges therefore routinely consist of my asking a series of questions so that I obtain enough monosyllabic data to compile a coherent whole description for myself of . . . something. My practiced ear has learned that, just like the man himself, there are depths to be explored. I can differentiate the subtle nuances of his voice inflections, so that even a single word can be an enormous clue that there is much more than that is not being said. For instance, I concentrate intensely when I hear him use the word "Interesting." This variant in his speech pattern means that, with some patient (or persistent) prodding and the right encouragement, I am likely to hear something very worthwhile knowing, if frustration doesn't win out first.

Extracting extra information from someone whose oral descriptive vocabulary hovers on extinction, however, can often be self-defeating. Ordinary conversation opens won't necessarily work, since this unusual man also has some uncommon interests which preclude general sharing, verbal or otherwise: "What is that book you're reading, Sweetheart?" –Oh, it's a book on ancient mathematics. I scurry back to my familiar corner.

I will not interrupt his intense concentration of origami folding, nor intrude when he is diligently writing, or studying cellular automata. At those times, I will receive no acknowledgment I was even heard, let alone get a reply, although I must admit a window of opportunity exists for me currently—he has set aside his Esperanto and Elvish readings for the moment.

It is not easy to bring forth a lengthy response from this quiet man, it is true. If you really do want to hear a modest cascade of expression, ask him what he likes about a particular board game. That'll do it!

~ Connie Handscomb

One of these days I'm going to invoke the editor's prerogative of getting the last word! –Ed.

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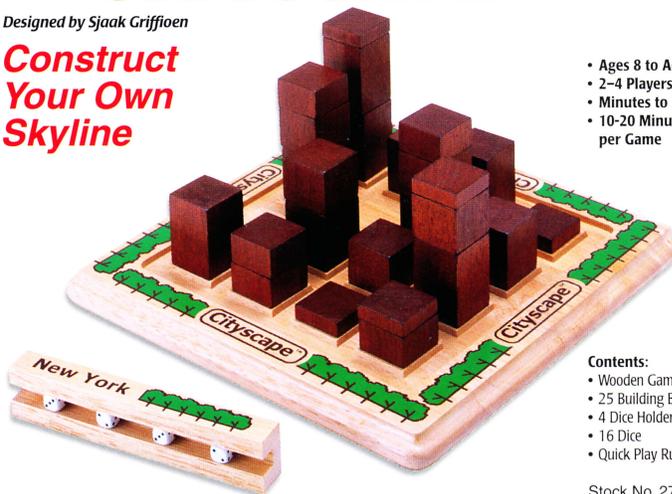
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