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Abstract Games

. . . for the competitive thinker

- Checkers variants
- A new perspective on Octagons
- Competition winner: Breakthrough
- Latrunculi – Ancient Roman Game

Front Cover

It is difficult to uncover information about the history of Trippples. (Yes, there are three p's!) The Luding Game Database (http://sunsite.informatik.rwth-aachen.de/luding/) lists it as invented by William T. Powers and originally published by Aladdin Games in 1974. That would be the plastic edition of the game that many people are familiar with. However, the image on the front cover shows a wooden version of the game published by Benassi Enterprises of Illinois, USA in 1972. I expect this would be the first edition.

The objective of Trippples is to move one's clear plastic piece from one corner of the board to the opposite corner. The key point is that a piece can only be moved in the directions indicated by the space occupied by the *opponent's* piece. Benassi describes Trippples as a "feedback strategy game." An even earlier game utilizing this concept is Quandary, published by Spear's Games in 1970. A similar idea is present in Larry Wheeler's game Capriccio, mentioned in *AG1* and described fully at http://home.flash.net/~markthom/html/capriccio.html.

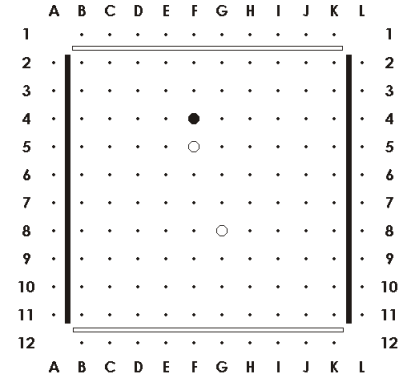
The wooden tiles out of which the game board is built consist of all 56 possible combinations of directions with three arrows, as well as the start and finish squares, and four blank tiles placed in the center. The players are supposed to split the direction tiles between them before building the board. However, I think this relatively uninteresting phase of the game can profitably be shortened by simply allowing the players to build the board from a common pool of tiles. Once the board is finished the main phase of the game can begin: the race for the opposite corners.

There is some strategy involved in the tile placement. For example, the players will try to position tiles close to the opposing goal that have direction arrows facing their own goal—when your opponent is close to winning, you should then get a boost in the right direction. The race phase of the game is almost entirely tactical as it is too difficult to see far enough ahead in the game to make strategic planning possible.

Trippples provides an interesting footnote in the history of games because of its movement mechanism. It remains to be seen if a game with more strategic depth can be devised that utilizes the same principle. – KH

TWIXT PUZZLE

by David Bush



Black to move and win. Solution on page 29.

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A Note on Gender
Pronouns "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

Every composition in this issue is quite short; there is no "flagship" article, although the group of articles on checkers variants is loosely connected. It seems that this issue is dominated by short pieces on chess and checkers variants.

A special class of chess variant seeks to extend Orthodox Chess into other realms, whether of board geometry, size, or dimension. Another group of chess variants, which I think of as the "classic" variants, utilizes the Orthodox Chess board and pieces for alternative chess-type games. Hostage Chess is an example of this type of game. It seems to be the case that Orthodox Chess players seeking to extend their horizons will first investigate games from one or both of these genres, either because they can use skills previously honed in the traditional game, or because they can thereby remain in a certain comfort zone.

This issue contains the last of the Hostage Chess articles; next issue we will be continuing coverage of classic chess variants, with the first of a series on Alice Chess. Concerning the other class of variant, we already cover Grand Chess, of course, and we are actively seeking someone to write about Hexagonal Chess.

The chess-type games have a certain psychological appeal, with their single-minded hunt-and-destroy objective. Nevertheless, the checkers class of games is a venerable genre that readily lends itself to scintillating combinations. We will be starting a regular column on checkers variants in *AG8*.

In *AG8* also we will return to connection games, which are reduced in this issue to a Twixt puzzle and a short article on Octagons. Other games in *AG8* will include Salta, Chase, and probably a few more games from the 8x8 Game Design Competition. Note that none of these games are chess or checkers variants!

In addition, I am looking for articles that will provide a change of pace from the analytical material that tends to be prevalent in this magazine. Many people, of course, appreciate the analysis, but I think the articles we had of a less technical nature in *AG7* were a welcome addition. I am working on some ideas, including historical material as well as articles about the people involved in games.

Overleaf there are a couple more letters about the definition of abstract game. My view is that any board game can be considered to be an abstract game because every game has a certain underlying abstract structure once any thematic trappings are stripped away. It is this underlying structure that primarily interests me—the mechanisms of the game and the resulting strategy and tactics. In some cases, I think the thematic fleshing out of a game is a distraction, so my preference tends towards games that lack a heavy thematic overlay. However, I have no objection to playing games that are supposed to represent real-world events, providing the games' abstract structure is good and interesting. An example of this is Ta Yü, reviewed in this issue. Nevertheless, it seems to me that a game generally only needs something extra if its abstract structure is not good enough to sustain interest; therefore, I tend to subscribe to the second of David Pritchard's definitions, that 'a thematic game is a failed abstract game.' The large German games market demonstrates an exceptional circumstance in which public demand is for thematic games, so that many good abstract games acquire a theme. Sometimes I wonder if the marketing gurus are not in part creating this demand themselves rather than simply responding to it.

P.S. Because of the response to her "Shogi Widow" story in *AG6*, Connie is considering forming a support group (!).

Notation

A standardized notation is used for all games when possible. In diagrams, squares are named using an algebraic system. Starting from the bottom left of the diagram, columns are identified by the letters a, b, c ... and rows by the numbers 1, 2, 3 .... A colon ":" is used to indicate captures. A threat to win, or check, is indicated by a "+" sign after the move.

Moves in Chess variants are indicated by the initial letters of the name of the piece moving together with the destination square. ("N" is used for knights, and sometimes the "P" for pawn is omitted.) Sometimes the start square is indicated to avoid ambiguity. Captures are noted with "x."

With Shogi variants we will follow the traditional Japanese way of identifying squares. From the top right, *rows* are a, b, c ... , *columns* are 1, 2, 3 .... If the value of a piece changes at the end of a move, we will use "=" and the new value; a plain "=" at the end of a move indicates a piece choosing not to promote. "+" is used for promotion in the Shogi variants (and Checkers variants). "x" indicates capture, and "x!" capture by *igui* in Chu Shogi.

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.*

What *is* an abstract game, anyway?

Stephen Tavener says he does not have a good definition of an abstract game. Perhaps there isn't one. I tend to define an abstract game in either or both of two ways, neither of which, admittedly, is watertight: (1) An abstract game is any game that lacks a theme; i.e., is not a thematic game. A thematic game I describe as a game that simulates any aspect of life, including artificial life (i.e., fantasy, space, etc.), and (2) An abstract game is any game to which you cannot give a meaningful title.

Stephen is right in saying that some games are a blend of both. Commercially, abstract games are not easy to market and a thematic touch can work wonders. Look at the deserved success of Lost Cities, basically an abstract game with an appealing theme. There are a couple of old sayings: 'an abstract game is a failed thematic game' and 'a thematic game is a failed abstract game.' Take your pick.

David Pritchard, England

In a letter published in *AG6* Stephen Tavener poses the age-old question: What exactly is an abstract game? Philosophers have been arguing for millenia over whether an all-purpose definition of chair can be constructed, without any success. I doubt that a satisfactory definition of 'abstract game' that covers all marginal cases would be easier to concoct. That said, a good starting point, as Tavener suggests, is an ideal definition such as 'two-player game of perfect information,' to which I would add that the pieces, boards and board connections must be finite and exactly defined, the win-conditions unambiguous, and the game in principle susceptible to an exact solution given unlimited computing power.

But this would only be a point of departure. Few would argue that a game such as Plateau would be appropriately discussed in this magazine, even though it involves hidden information. For cases at the margins, I would propose a pragmatic approach. If the game 'feels' like an abstract game, depends primarily on skill, and is not part of another established game tradition (e.g., card games, casino games, role-playing games), I would welcome it in these pages. I add the last criterion because I am constantly amazed at the number of forums devoted to role-playing games, etc. It's nice to have a place devoted strictly to abstract games, whatever they are.

Dan Troyka, USA

Jetan

I just got *AG6* in the mail, and my wife wanted to let you know that there are other games besides Jetan given in fiction with complete rules. One she immediately came up with is Sebacc, a gambling card game from the Star Wars universe. It plays loosely along the lines of Baccarat or Blackjack, and the rules can be pieced together from the *Han Solo* series. It's certainly not an abstract game, by any means. I would wager that most games found in fiction are gambling games.

Clark D. Rodeffer, USA

I recently received *AG6*. Getting the magazine has become a real high point for me—I eagerly look forward to each issue.

It is very rare that I am able to quibble with someone in this area, but in the Jetan article you mention that it "may be unique in that it is the only game in fiction for which the complete rules are given." After doing a little digging I came across a game called Jikaida that apparently comes from a book titled *A Sword for Kregen* by Kenneth Bulmer.

Matthew Burke, USA

I read with interest your and L. Lynn Smith's intriguing rules for gambling at Martian Chess with a stake on each piece, and for using Chained/Free, Civil/Wild distinctions to create varying armies. Seeking to learn how accurately your proposals reflected the actual customs of Barsoom, I conducted certain mystic rituals whereby I have made contact with John Carter, Warlord of Mars, who explained to me the rules of the most modern form of Jetan—which the Barsoomians call "Contract Jetan."

Many details of Contract Jetan are negotiated between the players and differ from game to game, but equal players would usually start each game of a series with full armies as your rules specify, all the pieces being Free and Wild. The piece values in this case are Panthan, 10; Warrior, 20; Padwar, 20; Thoat, 30; Dwar, 40; Flier, 40; Chief, 100; Princess: 0. If a player uses a Chained or Civil piece, its value is decreased by one-fifth (two-fifths if it is both Chained and Civil). From a "bank" of chips, each player adds the value of the pieces in his army to a dish set beside the board, called the "payoff dish," and one player adds another 50 points to pay for the first move. As pieces are captured, the capturing player removes their value from the dish; the winner receives what is left in the dish at the end of the game. In case of a draw, the dish's contents ride till the next game. The first player to reach an agreed-upon total, say 5000 points, wins the series.

So far this is all according to your rules (with minor differences in scoring). But since the "contract" between the players is negotiated, players might settle on something different; for example, a stronger player might entice a weaker by agreeing to Chain some of his pieces while still paying the price for Free pieces; or he might allow the weaker player the first move for a lesser-than-usual consideration. Since the Barsoomians would scorn the idea of gambling for chips of no value, normally the "bank" would consist of a heap of precious objects put up by the players themselves. The first player to reach the winning point total wins the remainder of the bank, and so one element of the contract might be that the stronger player consents to put up more than half, in his confident hope of winning it back with additions at the end.

But Contract Jetan goes beyond handicapping. At some point in the game one player finds himself facing a probable loss. On Barsoom, as on Earth, that's life, and Chess. But in Contract Jetan such a player has the option of renegotiating the contract during the game. (In the case of the first mover, who has a higher stake in the game, even a probable draw may be grounds for seeking renegotiation.) Besides the payoff dish between the players, each player has a similar dish at hand, called his "proffer dish." On a player's turn, before making his move, he may place some chips from the bank into his proffer dish, push it next to the payoff dish, and propose a modification to the contract that will make his opponent's game more difficult. For instance, the player might say, "You shall win in no more than 15 moves," or "Your Dwar is Chained," or "My Thoat is invulnerable to capture," etc. The player offering this change is called the proposer, and his army is called the inferior army; the other player is the reviewer, and his army, the superior army.

The reviewer considers the altered contract and the value of the proffered chips. He replies either by emptying the proffer dish into the payoff dish, thereby accepting the challenge, or by pushing it

back to the other player, refusing. If he accepts the new contract, he continues the game with the imposed restraint, but also for the added stake; if he loses, and so fails to make the contract, the contents of the payoff dish, including the added stake, belong to his opponent.

If a contract is refused, the proposer can continue the game by emptying the proffer dish back into the bank and making his move; or, he can *buy out the contract*. The value of the original contract is taken to be the value of the inferior army's Chief, plus the excess of the superior army's total value over that of the inferior army. If the proffer exceeds this amount, the proposer may give that sum to his opponent from the proffer dish, empty the additional chips into the payoff dish, and rotate the board one-half turn. Then it is the reviewer's turn, who now plays with the inferior army. The proposer will play with the superior army, which is now burdened by the handicap he had set, and the game continues for the increased stake.

A player therefore proposes a new contract either in hope of enticing his opponent to take a chance on a too-dangerous dare, or of intimidating his opponent into refusing an achievable contract, which he can then take over. He would buy out a contract if he feels that his game is unwinnable under the original one, and therefore his original stake already forfeit, or if for any other reason his chance of winning the additional stake with his opponent's army, even handicapped by the new contract, seems better than what he could hope to win in the original game. Offering and evaluating a new contract therefore requires subtle judgment; if the proffer outweighs the difficulty, the reviewer may accept it, and the proposer will end up worse off. But if the reviewer overestimates the difficulty, the proposer stands to gain by buying out the contract.

The system of valuing the original contract at the inferior army's Chief plus the difference in value of the two armies is clearly designed to forestall abuse. If the price of buying out a contract were lower, a dishonorable player might offer a "frivolous" contract: a small payoff in exchange for severely shackling the superior army so that it could not win; such a player would expect refusal, but would then buy out the contract, draw the game, and the stake would ride to the next game, which he might have a better chance of winning. In any case, the present game would end unsatisfactorily. But the valuation assigned to the original contract ensures that the proposer would hardly come out ahead on this deal.

Since the payoff to the winner of a game is the value of the pieces still on the board at the end, a player in a superior position captures enemy pieces strategically, to achieve victory rather than for point value; on the other hand, he defends his own pieces to preserve their value in the payoff, rather than because he needs them to reach checkmate. For the player in the inferior position the reverse is true: he captures enemy pieces for their points and defends his own—if at all—only to delay defeat. In distinction from Earthly Chess, an even exchange is the *weaker* player's friend.

Now, the proposer of a frivolous contract who intends to buy the contract once it is refused must pay the difference in value of the two armies plus that of his own Chief to his opponent. Had he instead played on, making even exchanges until at last he lost his Chief, the payoff for the reviewer would have been precisely what he made instead by selling the contract. And after the sale, the reviewer plays with the inferior army against a hobbled superior army, and can still profit further from even exchanges.

I observe that these rules should greatly increase the drama of the game, and could equally be used for a "Contract" variant on usual chess—another game that is becoming drawish, at least at the highest levels.

I was glad of the excuse to renew my acquaintance with John Carter, whose speaking style has thankfully grown less verbose with his increasing years. He even pointed out one sentence in Lynn's article that could have been shortened—"All players of Jetan should read the Barsoomian novels of Edgar Rice Burroughs." The Warlord observed that the second, third, and fourth words could be omitted without detracting from its truth, expressing a sentiment with which I heartily concurred.

J. Mark Thompson, USA

I am enjoying reading *AG6*, which arrived this morning. I have a question about the Gonnect problem on page 21. The answer is given as Black C5. It seems to me that after Black C5 White F1, White must win.

Nick Wedd, England

Thanks for pointing that out, Nick. Yes, the problem is flawed as it stands. – Ed.

I have read your review of *Winning Ways* Vol. 1, and I would like to correct a statement you made. Go, Chess and Hex can all be considered games in which the object of winning is to make the last move. You just have to define carefully the conditions under which the game ends.

(1) Hex. Neither player is allowed to make a move if there exists a continuous chain of pieces of the relevant color from one side of the board to the opposite side. Therefore, completing such a chain is the last move of the game, and wins.

(2) Chess. The game ends when one King is in checkmate. The mating move is the last move of the game. (Of course draws will be a problem for this.)

(3) Go. Simply play out the game. Neither player is allowed to pass. Therefore, you have to fill intersections inside your own territory. Eventually one player (the player with the least territory) will be forced to fill in one of his eyes, therefore losing the group. This situation will continue until there is only one group, with only single-intersection eyes free. At this point the player with the least territory will not have a legal move, and so has lost. This is equivalent to a game of Go played with Chinese rules and a ¼ (½ in Japanese counting) point *komi*.

Colin Adams, England

Game Notes

by Kerry Handscomb

Mind Sports Organisation

The Mind Sports Organisation Worldwide Ltd. was dissolved in May and its intellectual property rights purchased by an unnamed Swiss company. A new Mind Sports Organisation has been formed under the leadership, once again, of David Levy. Apparently, money was left owing by the old MSO for website services and salaries. Hopefully these recent MSO troubles will not adversely affect investor confidence. The main Olympiad was initially set this year for Prague, but a London event has been added.

HexGo

Greg Van Patten has an improved version of his game HexGo (see *AG6*) at http://www.rpi.edu/~vanpag/HexGo_II.html. Included on this page is an interesting comparison with Anchor. (See also Greg's game Freeze on page 9.)

Corrections from *AG6*

1. Stephen Tavener's name was misspelled in several locations. Our apologies to Stephen.
2. On page 14 the first line at the top of the second column should read, "2. Set up the head-on position...."

Game Reviews

Gygès

Designed by Claude Leroy

Gygès is one of those attractive, eye-catching games that you can leave out on your coffee table. The board is made of chipboard, with a playing area of 6x6 circles carved into it. On opposite sides of the playing area there is an extra circle that forms a goal for each of the players, respectively. The brown board goes well with the 12 playing pieces that are of natural light wood. The pieces are not distinguished by color because they are not owned by the players. The pieces are rings that come as singles, doubles and triples.

Each player takes six rings at the start of the game—two of each type. South starts the game and places all his rings in any order on the line closest to him. North does likewise with his rings on the line closest to him. The aim of the game is to get one of the twelve rings to your goal, which is on the other side of the board. The goal is linked to every space on the last line of the playing area.

An important feature of this game is that there is no real ownership of pieces. Each player is only allowed to move a ring that is on the line closest to him. At the beginning the pieces on your first line must be moved. But if your first line is empty, you can only move pieces that are on your second line, and so on. In the very rare case that all your closest rings are blocked you can, as an exception, play a ring from the next line. This never occurred in any of the numerous games I have played so far.

There are three concepts for movement: *moving*, *bouncing* and *shifting*. The pieces *move* exactly as many spaces as they contain rings, orthogonally, in any direction. So a double-ring piece moves two squares. Pieces are not allowed to move over other pieces, but they may change direction during their move. The other two ways of movement can be much more effective.

If a ring arrives at a space that is already occupied by another ring, the player can choose to *bounce* off it. When bouncing a ring, it has to be moved in the manner of the ring it bounces off. So if you bounce off a triple ring, you have to move three squares from there regardless of the piece moving. A ring may bounce several times in succession, thus gaining a very important long-range influence. It is normally only possible to reach the goal through bouncing. During one move sequence it is not allowed for a ring to pass over the border between any two spaces twice. However a ring may pass over the same square twice. This restricts the movement considerably in close middle game positions, and thus allows for better defense.

Instead of bouncing off a ring during a move a player may choose to land on that square with his ring, thereby displacing the other ring, *shifting* it to any empty space in the playing area. However, a shifted ring may not be relocated beyond the opponent's playing line—the line of closest pieces. A move that does not change the position is not allowed.

In our first games we did not even see most of the hidden threats that consisted of multiple moves and were surprised when one of us actually reached the goal. To help players get used to the movement mechanism, the rule leaflet suggests allowing taking moves back or playing some quick games initially. In this first phase of acquaintance with Gygès games are lost rather than won because one player does not see his opponent's winning sequence. After you manage to visualize the movement patterns better and set up double threats and defend against them, strategic considerations become more important. This game appears to be more tactical at first, but it allows also for some strategic ideas. Nearly every move sets up a threat or a double threat. This way you can try to reduce the flexibility and choices of your opponent step by step, so that he finally will not be able to defend.

"Gygès" is not just a made up name that sounds nice—it was inspired by the Greek legend of the King of Lydia (circa 685-652 BCE). In the legend a ring that grants invisibility plays an important role. The story has been interpreted in plays by Herodotus, Gide, and Hebbel.

The nice appearance of the game and the tricky bounces make Gygès fun to play. It is quite an extraordinary game because of the lack of ownership of pieces and the original movement mechanism.

Jochen Drechsler

Gygès is published by Swissgames, Place du Temple 2, 1227 Carouge, Switzerland; Swissgames@swissonline.ch

Ta Yü

Designed by Niek Neuwahl

Ta Yü is the legendary Chinese hero who saved China from a flood by diverting the water into a network of channels. This is the thematic veneer overlaid on an essentially abstract connection game. Nevertheless, the theme is unobtrusive, and it provides a motif for the attractive design of the board.

The board consists of a 19x19 grid of squares. The pieces consist of 112 tiles, which each covers three squares. On one side of each tile is a pattern of water channels that has three exits. There are 28 different possible patterns, the whole set consisting of four of each pattern. The patterns are classified into those having the three exits all on different sides and those having the three exits on one or two sides. Tiles having the three exits on different sides are distinguished on the back with a pattern of rings. The tiles are initially arranged face down into a block in such a way that a player always has the choice to draw one of two tiles. The players can see which tiles have rings on the back, so they can often influence the types of tiles they draw.

The tiles are heavy and pleasant to handle, although I would have preferred the rings on the backs to be more pronounced. Another small complaint I have with the production is that it was a little difficult to get the board to lie flat.

Although the game can be played by two, three, or four players, and indeed is surprisingly good for three, the main game is for two. One player is trying to make connections to the North/South sides of the board; the other, to the East/West sides. The game starts off with a tile in the center of the board. The players take turns drawing a tile and placing it on the board so that it matches existing connections. As soon as a tile is drawn that cannot be placed because the board is too congested, the game ends. A player scores one point for every connection onto his sides of the board. Some specially marked squares are worth two points rather than one. A player's total score is equal to the *product* of the scores on his two sides.

With three players there is first a round of bidding. The highest bidder is the spoiler. She wins if neither of the other two players scores more than his bid amount. Otherwise the highest

scorer wins the game, as usual. This system seemed to work really well—there is a twisted pleasure in playing the spoiler!

Actually, all our games were played in a good spirit. Most of the time we were suggesting to each other places to put our tiles, and everybody looked together when the game was coming to an end and each tile was difficult to fit onto the board. Playing became almost a cooperative venture with us. Ta Yü is a gentle game. We enjoyed it a lot.

Kerry Handscomb

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Book Review

First Theories of Hexagonal Chess

Wladyslaw Glinski, Hexagonal Chess Publications, London, 1974

I have a soft spot for Glinski's Hexagonal Chess. It was one of the games I played regularly as a student in the early 1980's with a particular Chess-playing friend. I have fond memories of beery evenings spent engrossed in the game.

It was only recently that I acquired Glinski's book about his game. It has been out of print for a long time, but I decided to review it here anyway because I think it has a special place in game literature. I managed to find my copy through http://www.abebooks.com, although various other book-search facilities, online or otherwise, may yield some extra copies.

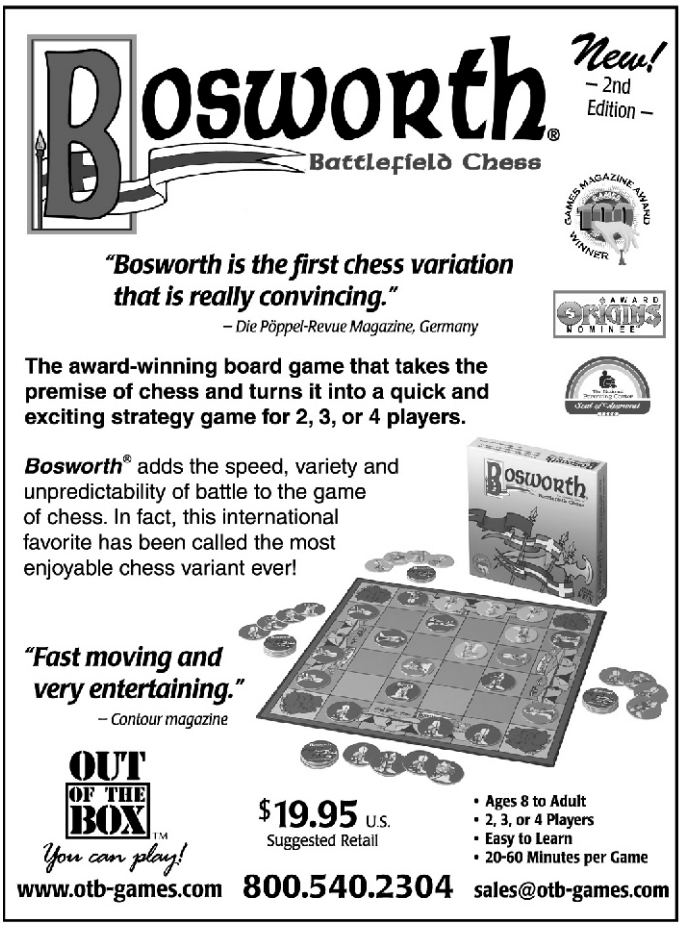
Hexagonal Chess was first conceived by Wladyslaw Glinski in 1938 while he was still at school in his native Poland. In 1946 Glinski moved to Britain, where he made his home. Hexagonal Chess had basically reached its final form by 1953, and thereafter the only change was an alteration to the tournament scoring rules for stalemates, in 1972. In the 1970's the game was aggressively promoted, and as result received plenty of media attention.

Hexagonal Chess spread throughout the 1970's and 1980's; the International Hexagonal Chess Foundation (IHCF) was formed in 1980. National championships were organized in Britain and various Eastern European countries and various international championships were held, culminating in the First World Championship, in Beijing at the end of 1990.

Unfortunately, this event was predated by the death of Glinski in February 1990. Without Glinski's driving force behind it the Hexagonal Chess movement collapsed remarkably quickly. It languished until the IHCF was reorganized in 1996. A Second World Championship match was held in Poland in 1999 between Marek Mackowiak of Poland and Laszlo Rudolf of Hungary, the same two players who tied the First World Championship. Mackowiak emerged the winner.

By all accounts the IHCF should be alive and well as there are reputedly up to half a million players still active, mostly in Eastern Europe. However, over the past few months I have made several attempts to contact officers of the IHCF and have yet to receive a reply. If any readers have further information, please let me know.

Glinski was not the first person to devise a translation of



Chess onto a hexagonal grid, and he was certainly not the last. In 1929 Lord Baskerville proposed a form of hexagonal chess played on a "square" board composed of 83 hexagons. Another early version was created by I.G. Shafran in 1938. The game was registered in 1956 and received some attention for a brief period. It is played on an elongated hexagonal board of 70 hexagons, and it has many similarities with Glinski's game. In fact, there appears to be only one logical way to transfer the moves of knight, bishop, rook, queen and king into the hexagonal environment, and this is the system utilized in nearly all hexagonal chess variants. The hexagonal grid is naturally "checkered" with three colors rather than two, giving rise to three bishops, one for each color.

Shafran's pawns differ from Glinski's in that they capture "diagonally" forward, conserving the Orthodox Chess feature of pawns capturing as the bishop moves. In the hexagonal environment, however, this means that pawn chains can be penetrated by the rooks as well as the bishops; in Orthodox Chess, on the other hand, only bishops can get through. It seems that Glinski's solution, with pawns capturing to the adjacent squares immediately to the forward left and forward right, is the better system, as then the pawn chains remain permeable only to the bishops.

A hexagonal chess game was created by Dave McCooey in 1978-79, apparently without knowledge of Glinski's game. Underlining the logicality of Glinski's creation, McCooey's version is almost identical in that it utilizes the same pieces on the same board of 91 hexagons in a hexagonal shape. However, the starting setup is somewhat different, and McCooey has the same "diagonal" pawn captures of Shafran.

It seems to me that Glinski's Hexagonal Chess, besides being the most widely popularized transferal of chess to a hexagonal setting, is also the most clearly and logically developed version of the game. In addition, the game had already undergone substantial development and experimentation by the time *First Theories of Hexagonal Chess* was published.

The book begins with the logical development of Hexagonal Chess. It leads on from the rules, through some openings and middle-game theory, to the endgame. Although some of the ideas are no more than sketches of possibilities due to the relative newness of the game when the book was written, it is nevertheless material that adventurous players of Orthodox Chess ought to find fascinating. There is clearly enormous potential for the creative development of Hexagonal Chess theory.

Glinski has a chapter comparing Hexagonal Chess to Orthodox Chess. It is clear that most pieces gain in relative mobility when transferred to the hexagonal environment. The bishops and pawns are the exceptions, with the bishops, of which there are now three, becoming somewhat weaker than the knights. The relative weakness of the pawns is an additional argument for maintaining the solidity of the pawn chain by means of Glinski's form of pawn capture. It is interesting to note that the total mobility of an army on the hexagonal board is 182, exactly twice the number of hexagons comprising the board, although I doubt this fact has any real significance. Comparing the square and hexagonal games, Glinski writes, "While the tactical elements in square and hexagonal chess are largely the same, the strategy of the hexagonal game is entirely different." Presumably Glinski means that tactical ideas such as pin, fork, skewer, and so on are just as important in Hexagonal Chess, although the strategic development of the game, as epitomized by opening theory, is completely different. However, as David Pritchard writes in *Brain Games* (Penguin Books, 1982), "The old dicta are valid: strive for development, space, time. Seek command of the centre and keep your King protected." Thus many of the strategic motifs of Orthodox Chess are equally applicable to Hexagonal Chess.

Glinski finishes his book with a chapter entitled, "Tomorrow's Chess World." Although it is obvious that in some ways Glinski sees Hexagonal Chess as an advance over Orthodox Chess, he is very careful to avoid setting up Hexagonal Chess in direct competition with the traditional game. It is clear that he has encountered some hostility when trying to introduce his game to players of Orthodox Chess: "[I]t was in many cases misunderstood, as if I was asking them to abandon the old square board altogether. Without much examination Hexagonal Chess was often dismissed by many as 'just another freak.'" In order to forestall any conflict, Glinski makes two points clear in his proposed constitution for Hexagonal Chess organizations: "Never discourage other players from studying or playing orthodox chess.... Never solicit or propagate Hexagonal Chess in any orthodox chess club unless specifically invited to do so."

Glinski proposes setting up a Hexagonal Chess organization analogous to FIDE and parallel to it. He envisages the two organizations growing in tandem and cooperating to the extent of holding joint olympiads. In retrospect, perhaps this ambition was a little naive, although it is unfair to condemn Glinski for an idealism that was in many ways very admirable.

Glinski makes the point that both Orthodox Chess and Hexagonal Chess have great educational value, and that they deserve to be supported by government subsidy if sufficient support is not forthcoming from the private sector. Wherever the support comes from, Glinski is very optimistic about the future of Hexagonal Chess: "Almost without exception every new idea or invention has to pass through a time of rejection no matter how useful it may be, before it finally becomes universally accepted…. Progress cannot be halted as long as life on earth continues. From now on I confidently expect that Hexagonal Chess will develop at an ever increasing rate, benefitting from the present and future accelerating speed of communication."

Glinski, of course, was not to know about the collapse of the organization after his death. However, his remarks about the "accelerating speed of communication" could easily apply to the Internet, and it may well be the case that this medium will be instrumental in reviving and popularizing his game. As Glinski writes, "The hexagonal game is compatible with the aims and intellectual development of the twentieth century (probably also the twenty-first). *Any game can only reflect the state of ideas in the culture of its time*" (my italics). What a remarkable idea! This is more than a book about a game—it is a ringing manifesto from perhaps the twentieth century's greatest game idealist. It is high time this book was updated and reissued.

Kerry Handscomb

The hexagonal chess variants mentioned above, as well as dozens of others, are described at http://www.chessvariants.com/ihex.html. Glinski's Hexagonal Chess is a special kind of chess variant in that it seeks not so much to innovate on Chess itself but rather to extend Orthodox Chess into another realm. Grand Chess also belongs to this category: whereas Glinski's game shifts Orthodox Chess into an alternate board geometry, Grand Chess does the same for board size. The question remains, what is the best extension of Orthodox Chess into the third dimension? The first consideration is board size: 8x8x8 seems too big, whereas 4x4x4, which has the same number of spaces as the traditional game, appears not to give the long-range pieces sufficient scope. 5x5x5 or 4x8x4 seems to be about right. We will return to this subject in a future issue. – Ed.

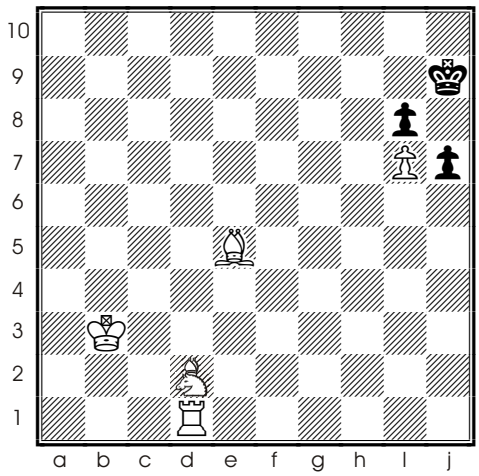
The Grand Chess Corner

by Tony Gardner

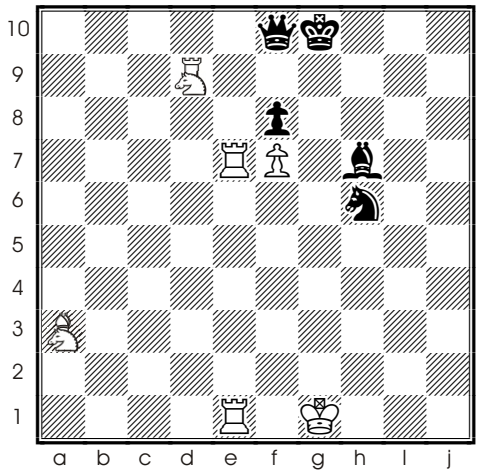
Is positional play in this game really effective? Or, is it merely a substitute, or precursor, for lack of available tactics? Graham Allen writes, "The Queen may be the most versatile piece, but the Marshal may be more effective in attack." Some food for thought; compare this with the commentary in *AG4*. While our readers ponder that, here is a game for review. Late last year, our esteemed Editor challenged me to a game (his first). It was not particularly well played, but does offer some interesting bits for instruction.

T.Gardner-K.Handscomb, 2000-2001:
1.d5 d6, 2.Nh4 Nc7 *(Perhaps White's opening is slightly awkward. Black intends to attack d5, and to defend it I must temporarily block the development of either my QB or QN.)* 3.g4 g7, 4.c4 Nh7, 5.Nf5 Bf6!? *(An interesting choice. Black's most solid line is probably 5....e7, but the text demonstrates that it does not take long for a fascinating position to present itself!)* 6.Nxd6 Bxb2 *(Kerry said he could not resist taking the bait, though unsure where it would lead.)* 7.Bxh7! Cxh7 *(Black would, of course, be very inferior following 7....Bxa1, 8.Bxf9 Kxf9, 9.Rxa1.)* 8.Qxb2 e7, 9.Ne4 *(The plan of Nf5-d4-c6 can be foiled by one move, so I set my sights on c5. Besides, I was not in any hurry to move my KP.)* 9....f6, 10.f5 *(I gave some serious consideration to10.b5, but opted for the text to contain Black's Cardinal.)* 10....Bf7, 11.Nc5 Bxj3 *(As in Chess, grabbing a Rook Pawn can be perilous. The strength of Black's defense is about to be sharply tested.)* 12.Bxc7+ bxc7, 13.Na6 Qd6 *(This was surprising; I had expected 13....Rjb10, 14.Nxc7 Qc10.)* 14.Ci1! *(I was not ready to be expeditious just yet, as 14.Rxj3 Qxa6 affords Black some play.)* 14....Bf7 *(Did my opponent consider taking the Cardinal? However, he is obviously doomed after 14....Qxa6, 15.Cxc7+.)* 15.Nxc7 j7 *(Black's position is quickly deteriorating, though this move seems to be of little value other than to free the Rook and Cardinal from the defense of a pawn. Again, we must put Black's eleventh move under scrutiny. 15....Qb6 would be countered by 16.Ne6 so, here as well, 15....Qxi1 may be worth a shot.)* 16.Cxd6 exd6, 17.Me4+ Kf10 *(Trying to defend the d-pawn via 17....Kd8 would be risky: 18.Ne6+ Kd7, 19.c5 or 18.Ne6+ Bxe6, 19.Mxe6+ Kd7, 20.c5.)* 18.Mxd6 Cg5, 19.h4 Ch3, 20.Kf3 *(Here is an example of how pitiful an unaided Cardinal can become. The White Monarch is able to single-handedly fend it off! Also, I began to envision the entrapment line of Rj4, followed by Rh1.)* 20....Me7 *(This is a productive move, yet perhaps too late to save Black's game.)* 21.Qc3 Kf9 *(Black would get into even deeper trouble by 21....Me5+, 22.Qxe5 fxe5, 23.Mxf7+, and he would be at a tremendous disadvantage after 21....Mxc7?, 22.Qa5. I cannot take the intruder at h3 lightly, but if he moves to i4, then Rah1 holds the fort.)* 22.Ne6 Bh5 *(Black's play is enterprising, even if lacking in focus. He hopes for 23.gxh5 Ci4, 24.Kg4? Ch2+ or 24.Nf4 Me5+.)* 23.Md8+ Kg9, 24.Mb9+ Kg8 *(Black apparently does not see the mating trap, yet he would continue to slide after 24....Kh10, 25.gxh5. I also considered 25.Qb4, though I would have to dodge some checks before slaying the Marshal. Another possible finish is 24....Kg10, 25.Nf8+ Kh10, 26.Mh9+ Ki10, 27.Mg9+ Kh10, 28.Mxi8#.)* 25.Mi9+ Kf7, 26.Mg9#

The response to the problem contest has been very positive. I apologize for omitting the mate indicators from the initial set. The first was mate-in-one, and the second mate-in-two. Luckily, they were not hard to discern. The keys are #1–Cc8 and #2–Bh4. Other readers are encouraged to join the contest. Here are the next two problems, hopefully a bit more challenging:



PROBLEM #3 Mate-in-2



PROBLEM #4 Mate-in-3

8x8 Game Design Competition

The Winning Game: Breakthrough

...and two other favorites

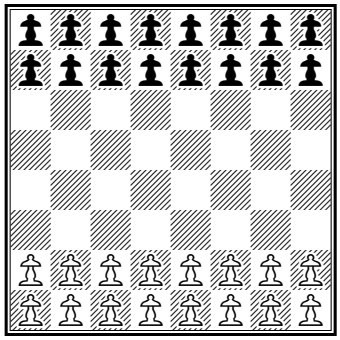
by Kerry Handsomb

By the end of March the six judges of the first 8x8 Game Design Competition had individually sifted through the 56 entries to each nominate seven games. Many of the games were good, and each of the judges had individual preferences, meaning that no clear winner emerged quickly. Keeper of the data, Erik Arneson, had to work hard to produce a winner using the complex system devised by the Strategy Gaming Society. Finally, by the middle of May, we knew which game it was: Breakthrough. The runner up was Magneton, which, although it owes a lot to Magnetic Chess, is certainly a very good game. Both games are described below, along with Freeze, one of my personal favorites.

Breakthrough

Breakthrough, invented by Dan Troyka, is a worthy winner of the competition. It can be argued that an ideal abstract game combines simplicity and elegance of its rules with deep strategy and interesting tactics. Breakthrough certainly seems to satisfy these criteria.

The board is set up as shown in the diagram. The two players, White and Black, take turns to move, with White moving first. Each turn a player must move one of her pieces. It is not permitted to pass. Pieces may move one space forward into an empty square, or one space diagonally forward either into an empty square or into a square occupied by an enemy piece. In the latter case the enemy piece is captured and removed from the board to take no further part in the game. A piece may never move into a square occupied by a friendly piece, nor directly forward into a square occupied by an enemy piece. A player wins when she moves a piece into a square on the row furthest from the starting rows of her own pieces.



Breakthrough starting position

Dan had the following comments to make about his game:

"The title Breakthrough itself is not original. In 1983 Stephen Addison published a game with the name Breakthrough in 100 Other Games To Play On A Chessboard*. That game, naturally, is a chess variant with differentiated pieces. As in my game, the goal of Addison's game is to place a piece on the far rank. It is otherwise dissimilar. The 3M Company published a game with the name Breakthru in 1965. It is a game of unequal forces, similar in concept to Tafl. Game titles, in my opinion, can fairly be recycled, at least where the title is generic and the game no longer has a following. Breakthrough is a particularly useful title for games of attainment, and I have no doubt that it will be used again.*

"Substantively, the game closest in rules to (my) Breakthrough is Lincolnshire Chess, released by Bob Wade and Ted Nottingham in 1989. This is an instructional chess variant in which only Pawns are included in the initial array and the goal is to move a Pawn to the eighth rank. Although very little separates this game from Breakthrough—just an additional row of pieces and the power to move diagonally forward without capturing—the games play entirely differently. Play in Lincolnshire Chess is driven by forced moves that result when Pawns are immobilized. In Breakthrough pieces are never immobilized.

"Breakthrough's chief virtue is its simplicity. Its rule set rivals Hex in brevity, and it is difficult to think of any other game of motion with as few rules. Draws are impossible, and the forward orientation of the pieces ensures rapid engagement.

"The question remains whether the game has depth. It is a new game, and the jury is still out, but my initial investigations have been promising. Several tactical elements of the game stand out. The progress of a piece cannot be thwarted by a single defender. It will always be possible either to move entirely around the range of the defender or to move to the square immediately in front (which is immune from capture) and then 'skirt' diagonally around. A proper defense requires that pieces work in tandem. Skirting is not possible, for example, when two defenders are front-to-back or side-to-side. Diagonal formations are easy to infiltrate and should be used cautiously. Basic strategy consists of occupying the center, where pieces have maximum coverage, and keeping some defenders far enough back so that they can guard multiple attack routes. As pieces progress, defensive coverage diminishes and the player becomes vulnerable to flanking maneuvers.

"Offensively, you want to force enemy defenders to move forward in response to threats from one direction, thereby opening up attacks from another direction. It is useful to have multiple forward pieces ('runners') within striking distance of the far rank. Loosely speaking, a runner is a piece that has progressed across the board as far as any enemy piece has. If defensive positions collapse, and the game becomes a simple race, a runner will win the game if it takes the first step.

"A common formation is a column of friendly pieces. The forward piece can serve as a runner, the rear piece offers wide defensive coverage, and the entire formation cannot be skirted. A column may prove overwhelming when aimed at a depleted portion of the enemy side. Phalanxes, pieces arranged side-to-side, are also common and are present in the initial array. Phalanxes cannot be skirted, and if one piece moves straight ahead, it will land on a guarded square. Pieces arranged in columns or phalanxes do not

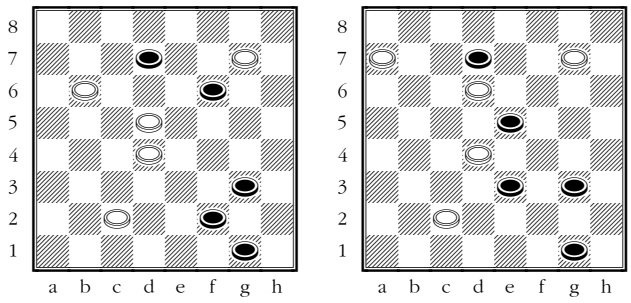
protect one another. This points to a fundamental tension in the game. Pieces protect one another only along diagonals, but diagonal formations are the easiest to penetrate. In many cases, a player is better off leaving pieces unguarded.

"Breakthrough is ultimately an offensive game. Defensive positions will collapse as pieces move forward (as they must), and at some point a weakness, perhaps previously unidentified, will be exploited by a runner. As with many games, working backwards from a loss to figure out the last point at which it could have been avoided is a good way to learn."

Magneton

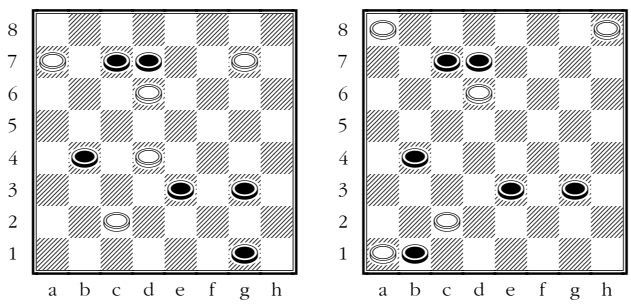
Magneton is an alignment game devised by Luca Cerrato. The game is played on an 8x8 board, of course. There are two players, Black and White, who have 12 black pieces and 12 white pieces, respectively. Initially the board is empty. White moves first, and thereafter the players take turns to make a move. It is not permitted to pass a turn. The players strive to be the first to create a straight line of four pieces in their color, either orthogonally or diagonally.

A move consists of dropping a piece of your color onto any vacant square on the board, and then moving any pieces already on the board according to the *magnetic effect* of the piece just placed. Any piece of either color that is line with the dropped piece, either orthogonally or diagonally, with no intervening pieces, will be acted on by the dropped piece's magnetic effect. Pieces of opposite color to the dropped piece will be *attracted* to it. In other words, these pieces will be moved in a straight line until they reach a square adjacent to the dropped piece. Pieces of the same color will be *repelled*. In other words, they are moved away from the dropped piece in a straight line until they reach another piece or the edge of the board.



If the piece has just been dropped at d4 on the left, its magnetic effect will result in the diagram to the right.

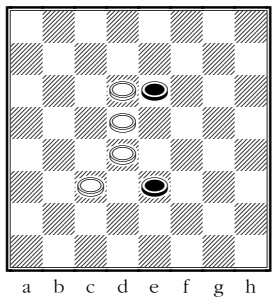
When a player has no more pieces to drop, she must move a piece of her color already on the board. This piece must be moved as if it were being attracted or repelled by the magnetic effect of another piece already on the board. After the piece is moved it acts on the other pieces with the magnetic effect as if it were dropped there.



The piece on d4 to the left can be moved to a1, d1, or c4. If it moves to a1, its magnetic effect will result in the position to the right.

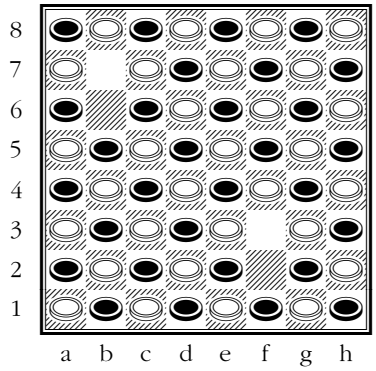
On a turn, either a piece is dropped on the board, or a piece already on the board is moved: in either case, a winning line of four must be created by the magnetic effect of this piece. A line of four created by simply dropping a piece is not valid; neither is a line of four valid that is created by the initial movement of a piece already on the board when a player has no more pieces to drop (even though this piece itself is moved by the magnetic effect of another piece already on the board).

If a white piece is dropped on b3 the victory is valid. The line of four is not valid if a piece is dropped on d3 or the piece is moved c3d3.



Freeze

Freeze is another game by Greg Van Patten. (See HexGo in *AG6*.) As usual, it is a game for two players, Black and White, played on an 8x8 board.



Opening position in Freeze

The players each have 30 pieces of their color, which are initially arranged as shown. The first thing to note is that the Freeze board is actually toroidal. Thus a1 is contiguous with a8; b1, with b8; and so on. Also, a1 is contiguous with h1; a2, with h2; and so on. The two pairs of squares left vacant in the opening setup are chosen to be exactly opposite each other on the resulting torus.

Black moves first, and thereafter the players take turns to move. It is not compulsory to move on your turn, but it is always advantageous to do so. On her turn a player picks one of her own pieces and then jumps with it over one or a series of opponent's pieces. These jumps are made orthogonally, not diagonally. Only one piece may be jumped over at a time, and the space immediately beyond the piece jumped over must be vacant. The piece jumped over is immediately captured and removed from the board. The jumping piece may (but is not required to) continue its move with another jump, if this is possible, after which the jumped piece is captured, and so on. On the first move, for example, Black may make the jump b1:b7, capturing the white piece on b8.

Once the series of jumps is finished, the moving player must now put the pieces she has captured back on the board. Each captured enemy piece is placed on top of a single enemy piece already on the board to make a two-piece *king*. A king can never move, but can be captured. A captured king supplies *two* pieces, which are used to convert *two* enemy singletons into kings.

As the game progresses, there will be a growing number of immobile kings of both colors on the board. The loser is the first player not able to make a move on her turn—she is frozen! ■

LATRUNCULI

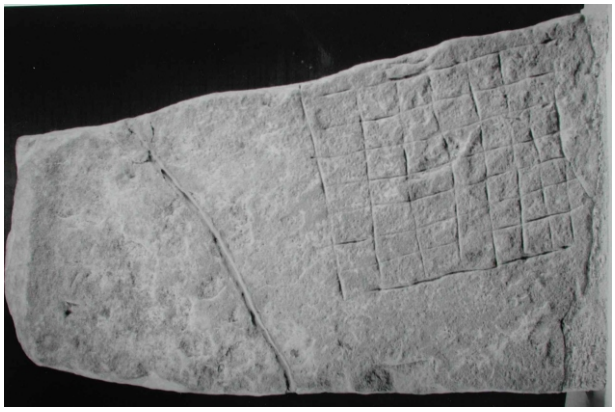
A FORGOTTEN ROMAN GAME OF STRATEGY RECONSTRUCTED

by Ulrich Schädler

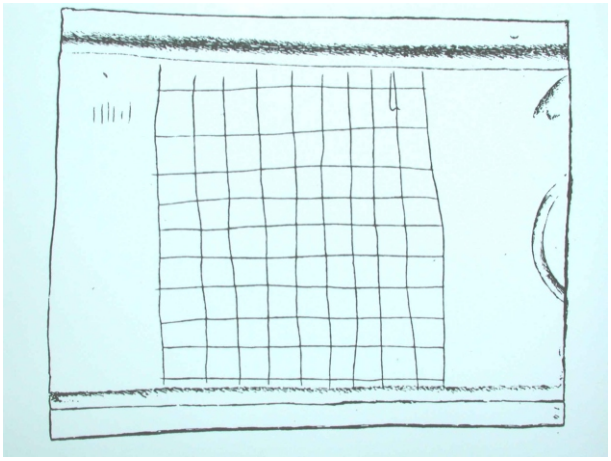
Perhaps the most sophisticated game of strategy played by the Romans was *Ludus Latrunculorum*, the game of little soldiers. *Latruncul*i, unfortunately, did not survive the end of the Roman Empire. Several attempts have been made to reconstruct its rules based on mentions of it by ancient authors, and often with the help of presumed analogies with other board games like Chess, Draughts, Go, or Seega. The results have been varied. Some of these attempts have indeed been published as games. In 1977 TSR Games came out with *Cohorts – The Game of Roman Checkers* based on the rules reconstructed by E. Falkener in 1892. In Germany a version of the *Ludus Latrunculorum* was conceived and designed by U. Harsch and G. Eger, and has been available since 1988. A few years ago two collections of ancient Roman games, including a version of *Latrunculi*, were put on the German market, one by Anita Rieche (*Römische Spiele. So spielten die Alten Römer*), and the other by the Museumspädagogisches Zentrum Munich (*Antike Spiele*).

According to ancient sources *Latrunculi* must have been a game of strategy at which it was possible to acquire considerable skill. This is indicated by the fact that many people came to watch the play of the Roman senator Cnaeus Calpurnius Piso. From Varro (116-27 BC), who is the earliest reference to the game, we learn that it was played on a board marked by orthogonally intersecting lines in which the figures were moved on the squares between these lines. Several gaming boards of this kind have come to light from the ancient world. Some of them have been found in Roman sites in Britain: boards of 7 x 7, 8 x 8 and 9 x 10 squares are preserved in the museum in Chesters, and a board with 7 x 8 squares has been found in Corbridge. On three fragments of similar boards from Richborough we can discern 7 x 10, 7 x 6 and 8 x 5 squares. In Dover a stone block with 9 x 10 squares has been excavated. An 8 x 8 board comes from Chedworth, and boards with an identical number of squares can be seen on the steps of the Parthenon in Athens and in the Basilica Iulia in Rome. A roof tile from Exeter also exhibits 8 x 8 squares, while one scratched in a roof tile in Mainz has 9 x 9 squares. We can conclude, therefore, that the number of squares was not definitely determined, although boards of 8 x 8 squares seem to have been normal. Consequently, the number of pieces must have varied, too.

More about the game can be traced from several verses by Ovid, from Martial's epigrams, and from *Laus Pisonis*, a poem by an unknown author dedicated to the above-mentioned Piso. All these date from the first century AD. These authorities tell us that each of the two players had different colored pieces, black and white, for example. We never hear of distinct types of pieces, either with different modes of movement or with inferior or superior powers. Different names for the pieces, such as *miles*, *latro*, *bellator*, and so on, are due to the poets' attempts to avoid repetitions of the same word. This is confirmed by archaeological evidence. Thousands of hemispherical or flat



Latrunculi *board scratched into the surface of a stone slab, found in Chesters (UK), now in the Chesters Museum*



Latrunculi *board scratched into a roof tile found in Mainz (Germany), now in the Landesmuseum, Mainz*

gaming counters made of glass, bone, ceramic, and other material have hitherto been found at archaeological sites all over the Roman world. They do not indicate that there existed any distinction between the pieces in any Roman board game. The pieces moved forward and backward, and I suppose sideways, too, for otherwise it would not make a playable game. The pieces were captured by surrounding one enemy piece by two pieces in rank or file. In contrast to Reversi, only single pieces could be captured, while two or more stones in a row were safe: "One piece falls before a double foe," says Ovid (Art of Love III 358, translated by J H Mozley).

We can draw further conclusions concerning the beginning of the game, the movement of the pieces, and the method of capture. The author of the *Laus Pisonis* describes the beginning of the game with the following words: "Cunningly the pieces are disposed on the open board, and battles are fought with soldiery of glass, so that now

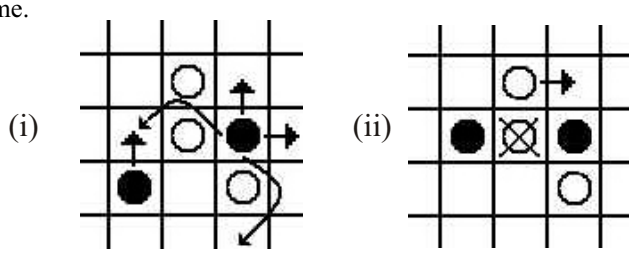
white captures black, now black captures white" (translated by R G Austin). As in most of the other sources referring to *Latrunculi*, the game is described using military terminology comparing the game to a battle. Surprisingly, the author of the poem does not indicate any formation of the troops, although it was a constant and most important part of Greek and Roman military tactics to arrange the legions and auxiliary troops before the battle started. This can be seen in ancient works such as Arrian's report about Alexander's campaigns, Caesar's *De bello gallico*, and Frontinus' book on strategy. Concerning the beginning of the game, we can conclude, therefore, that there was no initial order of the pieces as it is known in Chess or Draughts. Obviously the pieces were placed on "the open board" on any vacant square, and the game proper started when all the pieces had been placed, just as R C Bell analogously supposed for the North African game of Seega, or Kharbga.

Both Ovid and the author of the *Laus Pisonis* describe the difficult maneuver of bringing back a piece that had been moved forward too far. Ovid reports "how the different coloured soldier marches forth in a straight line, when a piece caught between two adversaries is imperilled, how one advancing may be skilful to attack and rescue a piece moved forward, and retreating may move safely not uncovered" (Tristia II 477-480, after the translation by S G Owen). Two conclusions can be made from the efforts required to rescue an isolated piece standing far from the others. Firstly, the pieces could probably not be moved more than one square at a time, for it would be relatively easy to draw a piece back, if the rook's move was allowed. Secondly, the maneuver described consists of advancing a second piece to rescue the first moved too far forward by retreating together. This is a surprising method. Does the second piece not block the first on its way back? It seems perfectly clear that this move works only if the two pieces could leap over one another because only in this way do they not stand in each other's way and never loose contact.

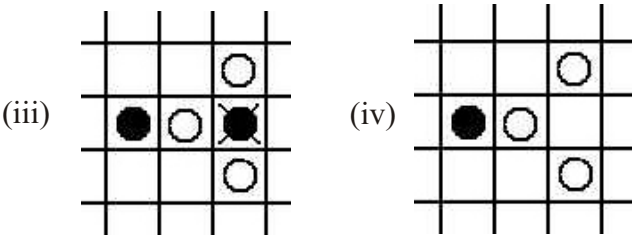
Captured pieces were taken off the board: in the *Laus Pisonis* it is said, that Piso's "hands rattle with the crowd of pieces." Their number must therefore have been considerable, perhaps twice or three times the number of squares that made the width of the board, i.e., for each player, 16 – 24 pieces on an 8 x 8 or 8 x 9 board, and 14 – 21 on a 7 x 7 or 7 x 8 board, or about ½ or ¾ the number of squares on the board, respectively. But the captured enemies were not immediately taken off! As the Roman philosopher Seneca (Letters 117,30; 1st century AD) states, it was possible to determine "how the surrounded stone could go out." What else can this mean, other than the capturing position was set up first, but not before the next turn was one allowed to remove the piece from the board, instead of moving another piece? Thus capturing an enemy stone was always connected with the loss of a turn. Maybe this is the meaning of the phrase in the *Laus Pisonis*, "Another courts blockade on either flank, and, under feint of being blocked, himself blocks two men." This delay gave the opponent the possibility to look for a way out. But how? One possibility could have been to blockade one of the two surrounding pieces, provided there was a rule that a piece surrounded by two enemies could no longer form part of a blockade itself. In addition, in similar games of strategy you generally try to threaten one of the opponent's pieces in another part of the board, so that he has to decide whether to capture your piece and loose one of his own in turn, or whether to defend and rescue his own piece. We do not know whether suicide was allowed, but probably it was not.

Try to play *Latrunculi* with the following rules. Use a normal checkerboard with 8 x 8 squares. The two players agree about the number of pieces, at least 16, but not more than 24, for each player. If the board is larger, the number of pieces increases, too. Use counters in which the sides are differentiated, such as coins or hemispheres.

1. The players take turns to place one piece on any vacant square. According to Bishop Isidore of Sevilla (Origines, chapter 64; 7th century AD) these pieces were called *vagi*. In this phase no captures are made.
2. When all the pieces have been placed, the players take turns to move pieces on the board. The pieces can be moved orthogonally to any adjacent square. Isidore called these pieces *ordinarii*. A piece can leap over any single piece of either color, if the square behind is unoccupied. Several leaps in one turn are possible (as in draughts).
3. If a player can trap an enemy piece between two friendly pieces, the enemy piece is blocked and cannot be moved. Such a piece is called *alligatus* or, according to Isidore, *incitus*. To make it clear that a piece is an *alligatus*, it is turned upside down.
4. In his next turn, instead of moving a piece, the player can capture the trapped piece by removing it from the board, provided his own two surrounding pieces are still free. A trapped piece is immediately free if one of its two enemies is itself surrounded.
5. A player can move a piece between two enemies ("suicide") only if by this move one of the two is trapped.
6. A player reduced to only one piece left on the board has lost the game.



(*i) The white piece is in danger of being trapped if the black piece on the left moves one step forward. Indicated are also the possible moves of the black piece on the right. (ii) White traps the black piece on the right, so his own piece, which was trapped in Black's previous move, will be free again.*

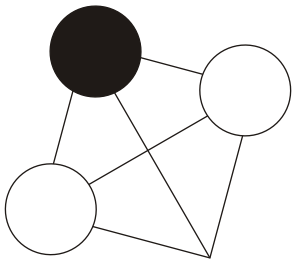


(iii) Black has enclosed the white piece in the middle, but by trapping the black piece on the right White has set his piece free again. (iv) In his next turn White captures the black piece by removing it from the board.

The author is interested in feedback concerning readers' experiences with these rules. Write to Dr. Ulrich Schädler, Marsstraße 44, D-46509 Xanten, Germany; e-mail: UUSchaedler@t-online.de.

Reference: Ulrich Schädler, Latrunculi ein verlorenes strategisches Brettspiel der Römer, in: Homo Ludens. Der spielende Mensch IV, 1994, 47-66; English summary on p. 67. ■

Dr. Schädler has a doctorate in Greek and Roman Archaeology. He has been involved in many archeological excavations and has published numerous articles on ancient and modern board games, both in the German game magazine Spielbox *and various academic publications. He is co-editor of the magazine* Board Games Studies. *– Ed.*



OCTAGONS

Another perspective on this unusual connection game

by Kerry Handscomb

Octagons is a connection game invented by R. Wayne Schmittberger and described by him in his book *New Rules for Classic Games* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1992) and then again in his article on connection games in the June 2000 issue of *Games* magazine.

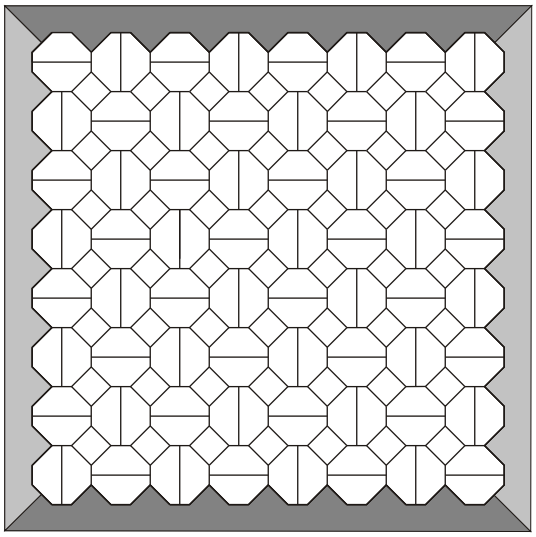


Diagram 1 – Original Octagons Board

Play takes place on the spaces of the board, of which there are two types: half-octagons and squares. The game is for two players, who are called Red and Blue in the original presentation. The board starts off unmarked. Red moves first. The players take turns to color in either *one* half-octagon or *two* squares with their colors. Two spaces sharing a common side that are marked with the same color are *connected*. Red's objective is to join the red-colored North and South sides of the board with an unbroken chain of connected red spaces. Blue must similarly join the blue-colored East and West sides of the board with a chain of blue spaces. A corner space connects to both sides that meet at that corner. As with Hex, Onyx, and other connection games of this type, the swap rule is in effect. In other words, after Red has colored the first space, Blue has the option either to remain Blue and make his first move as Blue or to switch colors and allow his opponent to make the next move also, this time as Blue.

Octagons falls clearly into the category of pure, Hex-like connection games, along with Hex itself, Twixt and Onyx. As with Hex, drawn, deadlocked positions cannot occur—one player must win. (This is a consequence of the fact that, except on the edges, it is always the case that three spaces meet where the lines of the board intersect.)

When I first read about this game, I was interested in the tactical potential of the double move. I felt it was a little awkward coloring in the spaces; nevertheless, I could see that round, homogeneous pieces like Go stones would be inappropriate because of the disparity between the sizes of the half-octagons and the squares and the difficulty of visualizing the connections.

Then one day Larry Back, inventor of Onyx, mentioned to me the amazing fact that the Octagons board and the Onyx board were equivalent except that the sides of the Octagons board were oriented differently. I checked this out by drawing up an equivalent Octagons board in which play is to take place on the points rather than on the spaces, connections between points being marked by lines on the board.

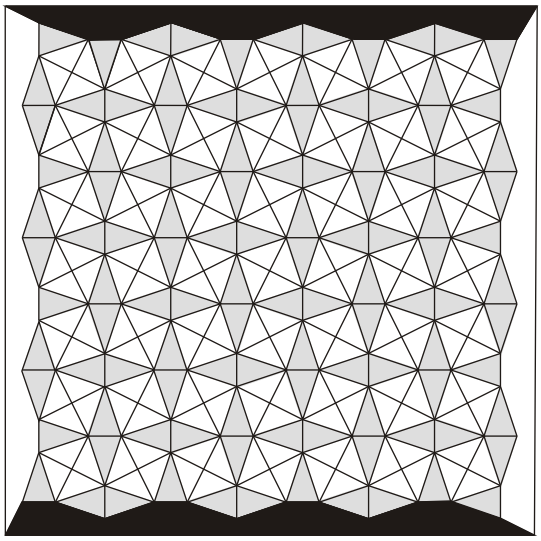


Diagram 2 – Octagons played on points rather than spaces

The resulting grid is topologically identical to an Onyx grid rotated through an angle of 45° with respect to the sides of the board. The only difference in this particular representation is that Onyx's equilateral triangles have now become isosceles triangles. The shaded triangles mark out an 8x8 grid of pairs of points that correspond to the old half-octagons. The original Octagons squares now correspond to the centers of the unshaded squares.

Black moves first with this new board. Each turn, a player now has the option to take either a vertex of one of the shaded triangles or two square centers. Black must connect North and South; White aims to connect East and West. The swap rule is still in effect.

The new board makes Octagons more convenient to play in the traditional way with Go stones or similar pieces, and I believe it makes the web of connections much easier to visualize. Also, the new board is a very attractive tiling: in addition to a tessellation of irregular pentagons, there are interlocking hexagonal lozenges, and even an interlaced teardrop pattern. It seemed fortuitous that

such a good game could be played on this beautiful pattern. Although there are no longer any octagons to be seen, we still refer to the game by its old name.

With regard to strategy, Octagons seems to share much in common with other games of this type. However, the tactics appropriate to Octagons are quite different from other connection games because of the double move.

The first thing to be aware of is that a move to the center of a square is an extremely inefficient way of extending your connections across the board. If connecting two adjacent vertices of a square, a move to the square center is clearly a wasted move. If connecting across the diagonal of a square, a move to the square center is likewise superfluous since there already exists a double connection across the square that cannot be broken. For the same reason it is pointless to move to the center of a square to try to break an enemy connection across the diagonal.

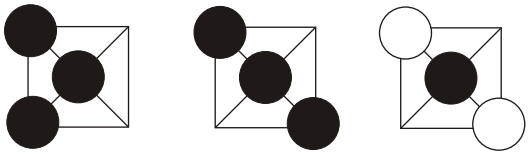


Diagram 3 – A move to the square center is a wasted move

The situation to the left of Diagram 4 is a special case because of the characteristic double move of Octagons. Even though there appears to be a double connection between the two white stones, either through the center of the square or through a vertex of the square, it is possible for Black to split the white stones. Assume this local position is repeated elsewhere on the board. If Black uses the double move to take the center of both squares simultaneously, as shown to the right of Diagram 4, then White can only complete his connection in one of them. Black may then take the fourth corner point in the other square, breaking the connection.

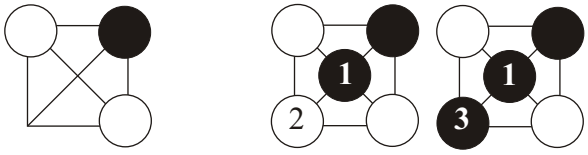


Diagram 4 – The Semi-Square Connection and How to Break It

In order to break the connection to the left of Diagram 4, it is not necessary for the other local position to be identical; all that matters is that the second move, to another square center, must be answered. I like to think of this as "spending a threat" in one part of the board to get a double move of a square center and a second point in another part of the board.

Because the two white pieces in Diagram 4 can be disconnected by "spending a threat" in another part of the board, I refer to them as *semi-connected*; the position is a *semi-square*. Without the presence of the black piece the two white pieces could not be disconnected, even by spending a threat in another part of the board; they can be referred to as *fully connected*. Diagram 5 shows the possible positions where two pieces separated by one point are fully connected. The terminology borrows largely from the Onyx article in *AG6*.

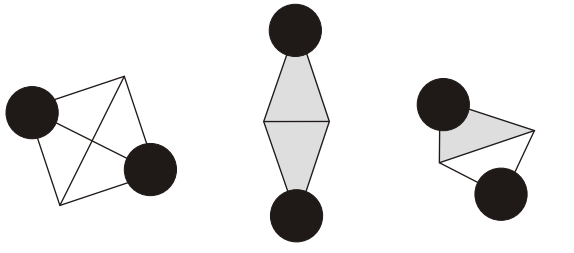


Diagram 5 – Fully-Connected Positions

The most important semi-connections are the semi-square, described above, and what I call the *dog's leg*. There are two types of dog's legs, both of which convert to semi-squares, as shown in Diagram 6.

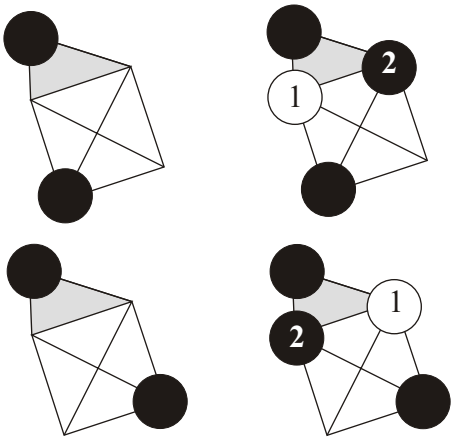


Diagram 6 – Semi-Connected Dog's Legs Convert to Semi-Squares

The addition of an extra black piece converts the semi-connected dog's leg into a fully-connected *house*, shown to the left of Diagram 7. Lastly, to the right of Diagram 7 is a position that I tentatively refer to as an *angle*. The two lower black pieces are semi-connected.

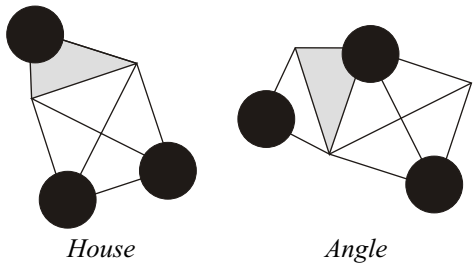


Diagram 7 – Fully-Connected House, Semi-Connected Angle

So far we have only looked at the use of the double move in order to break a semi-connection, but it has other tactical possibilities. In addition to threatening to break an opposing semi-connection, one may also move to the center of a square to solidify a friendly semi-connection. Thus two friendly semi-connections may be solidified, or one friendly semi-connection solidified and one enemy semi-connection threatened.

There are doubtless other tactical applications of the double move. All of these possibilities seem to depend on accomplishing specific tactical goals. It is usually pointless to take square centers early in the game, before such positions have had a chance to develop.

So ends this brief investigation of Octagons. Clearly it has some very interesting possibilities. I think Octagons deserves comparison with the classic connection games Hex and Twixt and the newer game Onyx. These four games all share a similar strategy, but are characterized by radically different tactics. ■

Chu Shogi
...the game of lions

by R. Wayne Schmittberger

The topic of this month's column is "step movers"—the pieces (other than the king and pawns) that move only one square at a time. In Chu Shogi these pieces play a vital strategic role, similar to that of pawns in Western Chess.

When I play Western Chess, Grand Chess, or other games that have orthodox pawns, my primary strategic focus is on pawn structure: keeping mine sound, while trying to weaken my opponent's. When I play Chu Shogi, in which pawn structure in the Chess sense does not exist, I concentrate instead on the efficient deployment of my step movers.

Being so much weaker than the ranging pieces of Chu, step movers logically belong in the front lines, just behind the pawns. Yet in the opening position, the copper, silver, and gold generals, as well as the ferocious leopards, are relegated to the first rank. Why? Because of a good decision by the game's designer(s).

If a general or leopard started on the third rank, its sphere of action—barring a foolish time-losing retreat—would mainly be limited to the V-shaped set of squares in front of it. A copper starting on 8c, for example, would not be able to participate in a defense of a potentially important promotion square on the flank such as 12d or 11d. A copper starting on 10a, on the other hand, can reach any third-rank square from 12c through 8c.

A well-designed game maximizes players' strategic choices. If step movers started on the third rank, Chu would require a bit less patience to play, but strategically it would be a far less interesting game.

So how do you get your step movers past the ranging pieces that are in their way at the start of the game? I recommend following three principles. First, plan ahead—rearranging your pieces in the cramped opening position is like solving a sliding block problem, and one wrong move can cost you more than one tempo. Second, to minimize loss of time, make as few moves as possible with your ranging pieces. Third, always try to make the least committal move possible—that is, choose the move you are the most certain you will play eventually. It is important to appreciate that a decision to advance a step mover toward the left, center, or right side of the board has long-term implications for your position. Although not quite irrevocable like a pawn move, a step mover advance is impractical to undo because of the loss of time involved.

There is something else to keep in mind when advancing your step movers. If you spend eight moves to advance your silver and end up exchanging it for an opponent's silver that has only moved three times, you have just lost five tempi. That is obviously very bad, unless you get compensation such as being able to promote a piece because the defending silver is out of the way. So the purpose of advancing step movers on a wing where you hope to attack is not to exchange them off for defending pieces; it is to secure space and build up a strong position in which you will gain solid material benefits when the position finally opens up. Ideally, you want to have at least one more step mover in the area of attack than the opponent has defending, so that even if all possible pairs of pawns and pieces are exchanged, you will still have at least one step mover left in the area. This extra piece will not only promote but also establish a beachhead that will facilitate further incursions into the promotion zone with your ranging pieces. If you do not end up having this extra piece, then your breakthrough was premature, and you should have brought up another step mover—even a gold general or blind tiger, if necessary—before opening up the position.

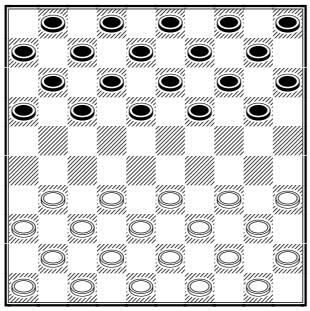
Conversely, when your opponent is preparing a breakthrough on your side of the board, you want to have at least as many step movers in the area as your opponent does. Each time you manage to trade a third- or fourth-rank step mover for an opposing step mover, you will have gained several tempi.

When choosing which step mover to advance early in the game, you need to imagine how the game will develop and ask yourself which step movers will be needed for defense, which ones will be needed for attack, and in which area of the board each one should be deployed. As the game unfolds, and your opponent's plans become clearer, you should continually reexamine these questions and adjust your plans as necessary.

Here is the start of a correspondence game played a few years ago between me (Black) and Victor Contoski (White), with whom I have played many games of Chu and other Shogi variants. The game was never finished, but it is a good illustration of what happens when both players concentrate on advancing their step movers according to the principles given above.

1.Ln-6h P-8e *(This is completely safe, since Ln-7f is met by P-5e. Because White chooses to delay the development of his lion, Black does not yet have any reason to advance his lion to the next rank.)* 2.P-8h P-5e, 3.P-5h P-10e, 4.P-10h P-3e, 5.P-3h P-12e, 6.Ph-8i SM-12d, 7.P-1h P-1e *(Assuming that Black will eventually attack on this wing, as suggested by his lion position and the usual way that Chu games develop, would it be better for White to keep this pawn and side mover back, saving two tempi and forcing Black's pawns to advance an extra rank before making contact with White? I have had some success with that approach, but overall I think it is better for the defense to advance the pawn and side mover, as my opponent does here. This gives White much more room to maneuver on this flank; also, it can be useful to have the side mover covering the promotion rank.)* 8.SM-1i SM-1d, 9.P-7h S-9b *(This is the most natural developing move for this piece, which usually heads for the good square 8d after a move such as DH-11e. The move also vacates 9a for the possible maneuver Ph-5d, BT-7b, FK-9a.)* 10.C-9k *(This is the most natural first move for this piece, which still has the option of heading toward 10i or 11i, but most likely will proceed to 8j and 7i. There it will guard key center squares in front of the king, while retaining the option of advancing toward either wing later in the game.)* 10....C-11b *(White plans to expand quickly on this wing.*

(Continued on page 22.)



A Beautiful Move in International Checkers

by Fred Kok

It seems that every country has its own variant of checkers. The most popular versions are Anglo-American Checkers (in the English-speaking countries) and International Checkers (in Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Africa and Russia), but we also have Italian Checkers, Spanish Checkers, Turkish Checkers, Pool Checkers, Frisian Checkers, Canadian Checkers, and many others, including Hexdame, which is played on a hexagonal board. In this article we will focus on International Checkers, and particularly on one beautiful combination known as the "Coup Royal." Firstly, we need to present the rules for those unfamiliar with the game.

Rules

International Checkers is played on a 10 x 10 checkered board, with 20 men on each, side arranged as shown in the diagram at the top left of this page. We will assume that readers are familiar with the basic concepts of at least one of the checkers variants so that it is not necessary to go into too much detail about features that are common to most of the checkers family of games.

White moves first. The objective is to leave your opponent without a valid move, either by capturing all his pieces or by blocking them so they cannot move. Unpromoted men move diagonally forward, one square at a time. However, an unpromoted man may capture diagonally *backwards* as well as diagonally *forwards* by the "short leap," jumping over an adjacent enemy piece into an empty square immediately beyond it. When a man finishes its move on the last rank, it is promoted to a king, which is usually signified by doubling up one piece on top of another. Kings move like Chess bishops, any number of unobstructed squares diagonally in a straight line, forwards or backwards. The kings capture by the "long leap." In other words, a king may jump over and capture an enemy piece with any number of vacant squares both before and after the enemy piece.

Capturing, whether by uncrowned men or kings, is compulsory. If a piece completes a capture and is now in a position to effect another capture, it must do so. Thus multiple captures may be made in the same turn. When a multiple capture is being made, the captured pieces are only removed at the end of the turn, and it is not permitted to jump over the same piece twice in that turn, although empty squares may be passed over more than once. If a player has a choice of capturing options, he must choose that option which results in the greatest number of pieces being captured (kings and unpromoted men counting equally). When a capturing king has an option of destination squares, it must choose that square which maximizes the capturing sequence. If two options result in an equal number of captures, the player is free to choose whichever sequence. Since a man is only crowned upon completing its turn on the last rank, it may have to jump on and off the last rank without promoting in order to continue capturing.

The game is drawn if both players agree that neither can force a win. The game is drawn by repetition if the same position occurs three times in a row (i.e. after three moves by each player). A game resulting in three kings against one is drawn if the player with three kings does not win within 15 moves, or within five moves if the lone king is on the single long diagonal.

Coup Royal

International Checkers has some very interesting tactical combinations. One of them is known as the "Coup Royal." In my games I always try to set up this maneuver. Sometimes someone falls into the trap, but sometimes I fall into the trap myself! Diagram 1 shows the basic form of the Coup Royal.

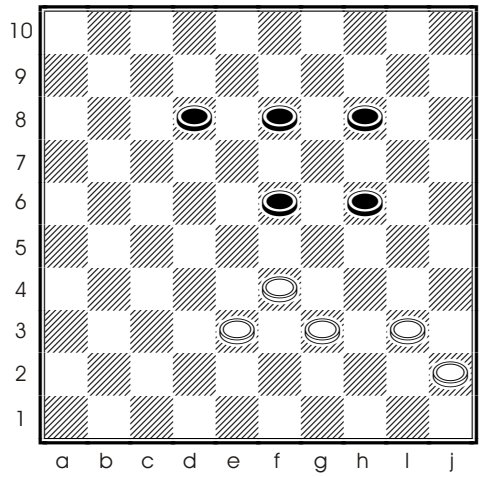


Diagram 1

White plays f4e5. Black has to capture three pieces: f6:d4:f2:h4. Then White takes i3:g5:i7:g9:e7:c9! The White piece on i3 is the key capturing piece.

The situation in Diagram 2 is a little more difficult.

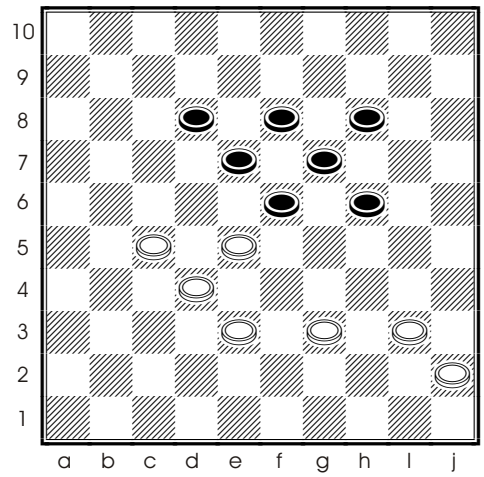


Diagram 2

White first plays c5d6. Black captures e7:c5. White captures d4:b6. Now Black has to capture three pieces, as in the previous diagram, f6:d4:f2:h4, and White wins with i3:g5:i7:g9:e7:c9

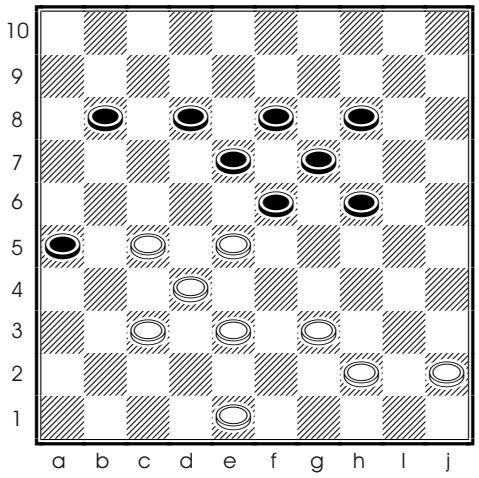


Diagram 3

The position in Diagram 3 is difficult because the capturing piece on i3 is not yet in position. White has to make a tempo-winning move. Firstly, White plays c5d6. Black has to capture e7:c5. White captures d4:b6. Black captures f6:d4:f2:h4, as before. (Note that Black is obliged to make the move that captures the greatest number of pieces.) White now plays the tempo-winning move h2i3. Black has to capture a5:c7, and now White has i3:g5:i7:g9:e7:c9:a7.

In Diagram 4 White has a piece on h4which has to be got rid of to make the Coup Royal work. White has to sacrifice a lot, but there is gold at the end of the rainbow. The composition is by Damme, from the book *Sjaski na stokletotsnoj doskje* by Koeperman.

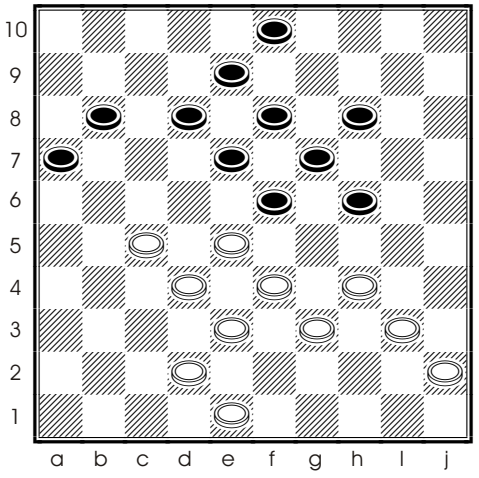


Diagram 4

1.c5d6! e7:c5, 2.d4:b6 f6:d4:f2, 3.d2c3 a7:c5, 4.c3d4 c5:e3:g5, 5.h4:f6 g7:e5, 6.e1d2! f2:h4, 7.i3:g5:i7:g9:e7:c9:a7, as before!

There have been many articles and even some books written about the Coup Royal. The book of books of this type is *Monografie van de Coup Royal* by H. de Jongh. As you can see, International Checkers is not a child's game as some think, but a very deep and rich game, full of opportunities. I hope you will enjoy the game and this combination!

To end this article, I will give you a "Reverse Coup Royal." This combination is possible on the left side of the board. It is very hard, and probably too much for beginners, but because of its depth I decided to present it to you. The position is given in Diagram 5.

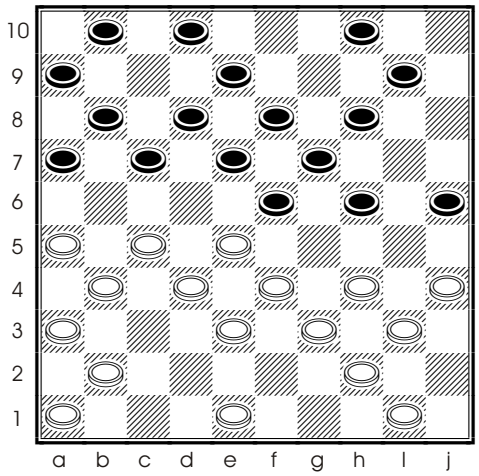


Diagram 5

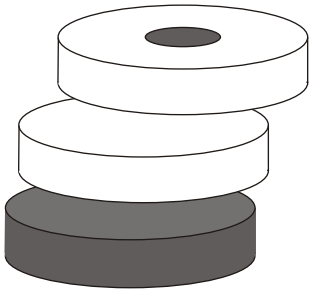
1.c5b6 a7:c5, 2.b4:d6 e7:c5, 3.d4:b6 f6:d4:f2, 4.h4i5 f2:h4:j2, 5.b6a7 (winning a tempo as Black has to capture once more) j6:h4, 6.a7:c9:e7:g9:i7:g5:i3 j2:h4.

The score seems to be even now, but White wins a piece by 7.i1j2! Black tries to save his piece with 7....h4g3, but then 8.h2i3 g3:e5, 9.a5b6 c7:a5, 10.a3b4 a5:c3, 11.b2:d4:f6:h8:j10+. ■

Fred Kok lives with his wife, Lisette, in Beverwijk, Netherlands. He works as an advisor in Youth, Health and Educational Affairs for the City of Beverwijk. Fred was a Chess addict. Then one day in the early 1990's he became tired of Chess theory. He won a game in the national competition by a spectacular double-knight sacrifice in the French Defense. While the other members of the team congratulated him, he started to have a funny feeling about the game. At home it became clear that he had inadvertently replayed a game he had studied a few weeks earlier! From that moment he widened his game horizons to other games, including many of the checkers variants. He won the LOA World Championship at the Mind Sports Olympiad in 1997 and 1999.

International Checkers, originally known as Polish Checkers, is the most widely played of the larger checkers variants. It originated in France in the 1720's. The game subsequently spread throughout Europe, and beyond, becoming the main checkers variant played outside the English-speaking countries. The rules were codified by the Fédération Mondial du Jeu de Dames (http://www.fmjd.nl/) in 1947.

The three games that follow, Bashne, Camelot and Zèrtz, were devised around 1870, 1930 and 2000, respectively. Aside from International Checkers and Bashne they all have different objectives, and they are played on very different boards—in fact, it is debatable whether Zèrtz uses a board at all in the conventional sense. However, all four games have two important features in common: (1) capture is by jumping, and (2) capture is compulsory. Capture by jumping comes, of course, from Alquerque, the ancient ancestor of the checkers games. Compulsory capture was not standard until the 1500's, when it became widely applied in France. Forced capture transforms the game, greatly increasing the possibilities for exciting combinations. It could be argued that these two features alone effectively characterize the checkers family of games. –Ed.



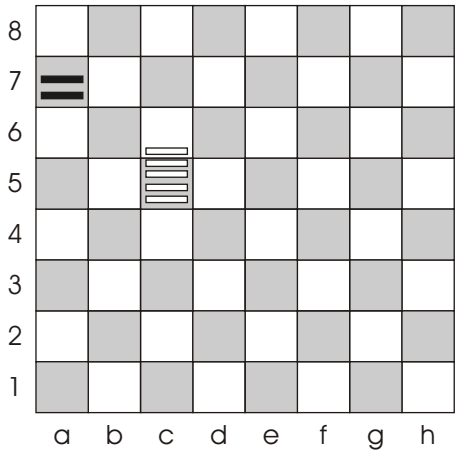
BASHNE

Basic Tactical Methods

by Alexander Borovikov, Michael Rotchin and Sergey Ivanov

Although Bashne is a game of pure logic, calculation is difficult. Columns are more powerful than single men and may give rise to wonderful combinations. Let us consider some miniatures that illustrate the basic tactical methods of Bashne.

A large column can capture single men and other, smaller columns. Diagram 1 shows such a position, in which the white column can capture the black column.



\Diagram 1

The black column is captured in three moves:1.c5b6 a7:c5, 2.b6:d4 c5:e3, 3.d4:f2

The next two positions show how a column can force through to promotion by sacrificing men. In the position in Diagram 2, White can win only if he makes the boldest move: 1.f6g7! f8:h6, 2.g7f8+, etc.

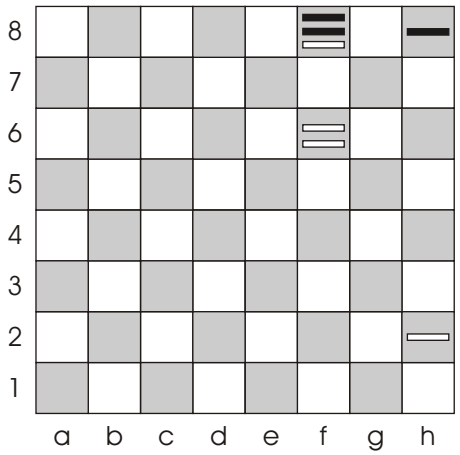


Diagram 2

If White makes the cautious move 1.h2g3, Black can win easily: 1....f8g7, 2.f6e7 g7f6, 3.e7:g5 f6:h4:f2, etc.

Sometimes it requires a series of sacrifices to get through the defenders. One such raid is shown in Diagram 3.

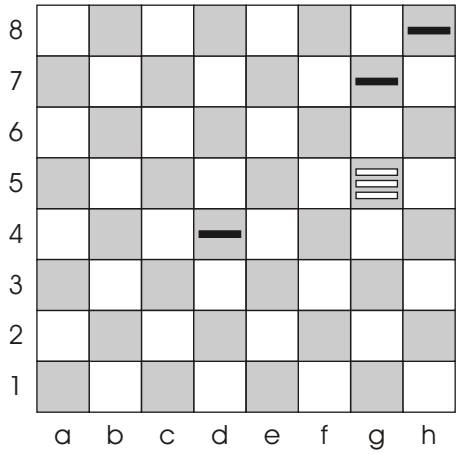


Diagram 3

The white column can reach the back row by sacrificing two men: 1.g5f6 g7:e5, 2.f6g7 h8:f6, 3.g7f8+

The next three positions show different techniques for trapping, or blocking, enemy columns. In the miniature “Circus Strong Man” in Diagram 4, the white column seems to fling the black column out to b4 and then catches it coming down: 1.d2e3 f4:d2, 2.e3d4 e5:c3, 3.d4:b2 d2:b4, 4.b2c3 b4:d2, 5.c3:e1

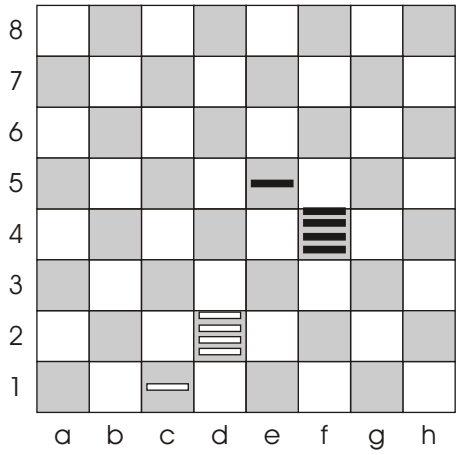


Diagram 4

In the “Terminator,” in Diagram 5, a single white column proves to be stronger than a group of black columns. White has a win even though his situation looks hopeless: 1.e5d6 e7:c5, 2.d6c7 d8:b6, 3.c7:a5:c3 c5:a7, 4.c3d4 e3:c5, 5.d4:b6

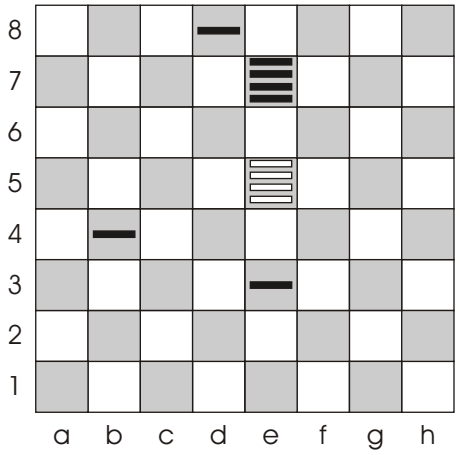


Diagram 5

In Diagram 6 two white doubles and a triple demonstrate the very important strategic motif of sacrificing a column to gain tempo: 1.c1b2 c3:a1+, 2.b2c3 d4:b2, 3.g1f2! *(White lets Black get another king, but gains a tempo with this decoy.)* e3:g1+, 4.e1d2 g1:e3:c1, 5.f2e3

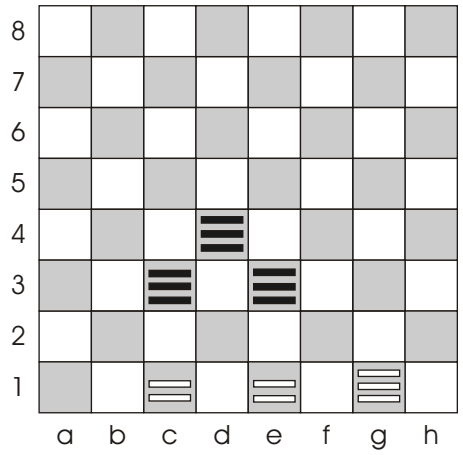


Diagram 6

In some cases it is possible to gain a lot of time and restrict the opponent's columns to a certain area of the board by sacrificing a large column. This is a common tactic, enabling a player to seize the initiative and conduct a powerful attack. *(See* AG3*, p. 16, for a good example of this technique. – Ed.)*

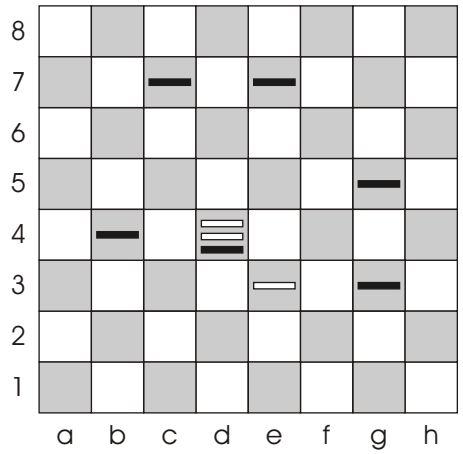


Diagram 7

From the position in Diagram 7 there is another example of a sacrifice to gain a tempo, this time followed by a "roundabout" capture: 1.d4c5 *(This move will gain a tempo and liberate the black man.)* b4:d6, 2.e3d4 *(Using this tempo, White positions his man for the final jump.)* d6:b4, 3.d4:b6:d8+:f6:h4:e1:a5

The "Crazy Columns" position of Diagram 8 leads to an endless repetition: 1.c3d4 g7:e5:c3, 2.d4:b2 f6e5, 3.b2:d4:f6 e5:g7, 4.c3d4, etc.

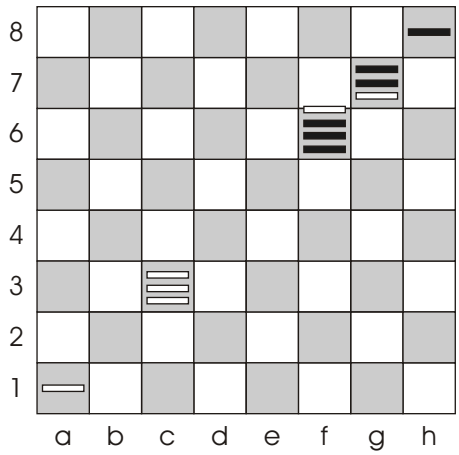


Diagram 8

Black wants to liberate his men, but White has the same goal. White and Black each in turn have the opportunity to break this sequence. "Crazy Columns" can occur in actual games. *(Such games should be considered drawn. – Ed.)*

Blocking is encountered far more frequently in Bashne than in regular Checkers. In the position in Diagram 9 the black column on e7 represents a serious threat for White. White's only chance is to block this column.

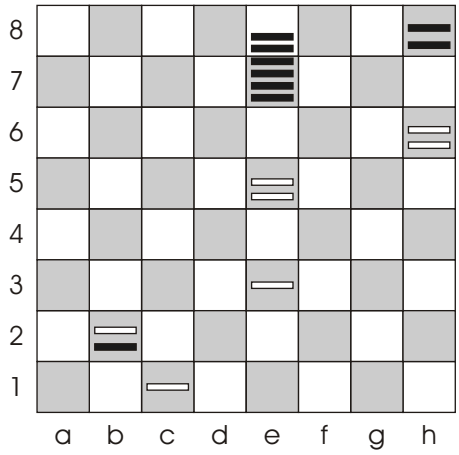


Diagram 9

1.e5d6 e7:c5, 2.d6:b4 c5:a3 *(The black column is blocked, but Black could free it with the man on b4, so White takes measures to maintain the block.)* 3.e3d4! *(Now Black cannot free the column.)* b4c3, 4.d4e5 c3:a1, 5.e5f6.

The final position, Diagram 10, illustrates another typical method of blocking: 1.e1f2 g3:e1+:c3:a1, 2.b2c3 d4:b2, 3.a3b4 c5:a3, 4.d2e3!

Although the game has lacked popularity in recent times, Bashne evidently fascinated Emanuel Lasker and others in its day. Perhaps the readers can now appreciate some of the reasons for this fascination. ■

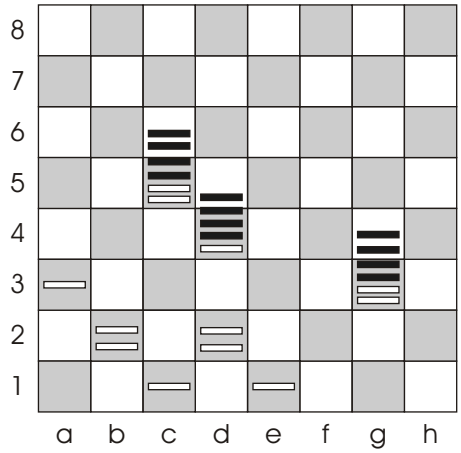


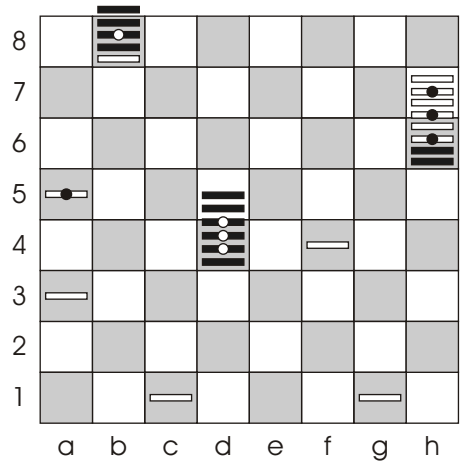
Diagram 10

In March 2001, for the second year in a row, Sergey Ivanov won the St. Petersburg Open Bashne Championship. – Ed.

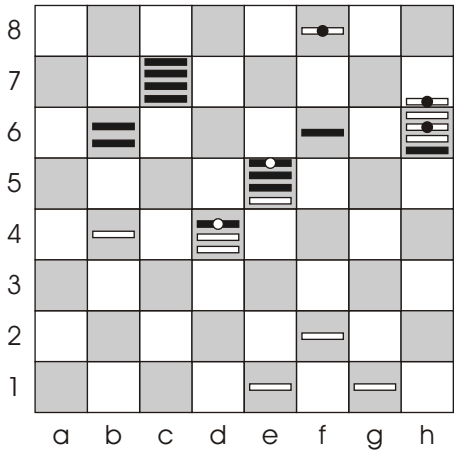
Bashne Problems

by Anatholy Zbarj

In the following two problems White is to play and win by blocking the black pieces. Solutions are given on page 29.



Problem 1



Problem 2

Image from cover of 1931 rule book.

First Thoughts on Camelot End-Play

by Paul Yearout

When a piece has an unobstructed path toward the opposing castle, counting squares shows the number of moves needed to reach the goal. If each side has two such pieces, the game becomes a race, with counting, rather than moving, determining the winner.

Modifying the count is the two-can-travel-faster-than-one principle. Consider the position in Figure 1.

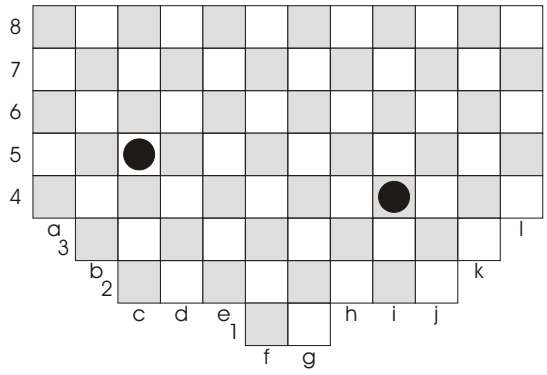


Figure 1

Seven moves are needed to castle both pieces. But shifting i4 to the symmetrical d4 reduces the number of moves to four. For two pieces traveling together, the most efficient lines are the two central files and the diagonals a7-g1 and l7-f1. Compared to the c5, d4 pair, pieces at d5, e4 or b5, c4 require five moves, and an a5, b4 pair uses up seven. So one should aim towards one of those four lines as early as possible. Pieces at e7 and c5, moving singly, require ten moves to castle. Moving c5 to d4 and e7 to e3 cuts that total to eight. But moving e7 to d4, by one of several paths, makes a further one move reduction.

Further modifying the count is the presence of opposing forces, even when they appear to be far outpaced by the attackers. Consider the position in Figure 2.

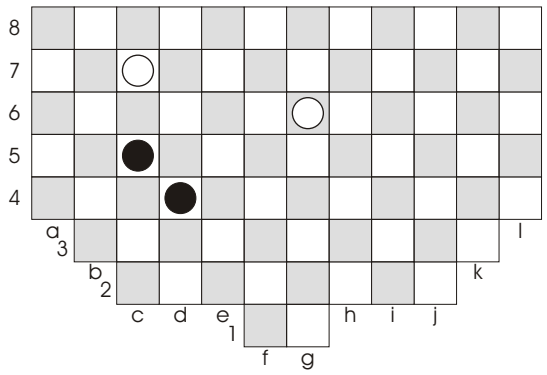


Figure 2

1....c5e3 is followed by 2.g6f5. Blithely continuing 2....d4f2 allows 3.f5e4 e3:e5, 4.c7d6 e5:c7, adding four moves to the attacker's total. That might well be enough to convert the apparent win into a loss.

Turning to defense of the castle, consider Figure 3.

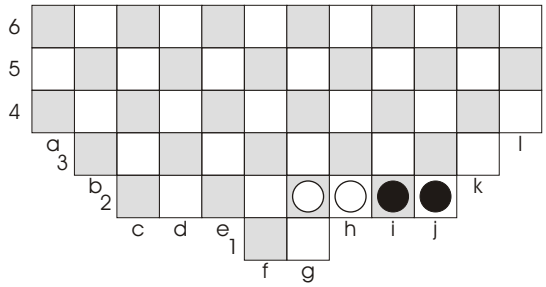


Figure 3

With the attacker to move, 1....i2j3, followed by 2.g2i2 allows a trade for a certain draw or further retreat. If the defender must move, 1.h2f2 j2h2 produces the same configuration, one space closer to the castle. Choosing 1.h2g3 j2h2, 2.g3f2, the pieces occupy the same squares, but the attacker must move. 2....h2j2, 3.f2h2 places the attacker at the disadvantage previously mentioned, while 2....h2i3, 3.f2h2 i3j2 produces a cycle of moves. The position is a draw.

If the four men are replaced by four knights, the side to move first loses. Any move by the attacker loses at least one piece, after which the erstwhile defender cannot be prevented from a triumphal march to the opposite end of the board. The defender's only choice is 1.h2f2 j2h2, 2.g2e2 i2g2, 3.f2d2, g2f1, with victory on the next move.

Intermediate mixtures of men and knights have various outcomes, depending both on the material and position. Consider the position in Figure 4.

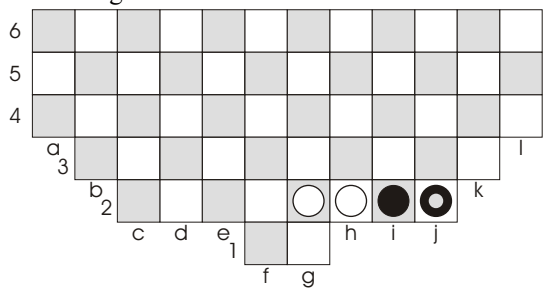


Figure 4

The only defensive move is now 1.h2f2. After 1...j2h2, 2.g2f3 i2g2, 3.f3e2 g2f1 the attack has succeeded. There is the desperation move 4.f2g3 h2:f4, 5.e2f2. If there had been no provision for castle moves, the defense could maintain opposition for a draw. But 5....f1g1 forces the defense to clear a path for f4 to reach the castle. Other possibilities, such as interchanging knight and man, are left to the reader.

Already a few middle-game questions can be asked: How early should one begin watching for certain material combinations? Before getting to end-play will there be stalling moves to provide the initiative later? Can unfavorable circumstances be reversed?

Observations about the castle-move rule

Consider the position in Figure 5, in which each player has used both castle moves.

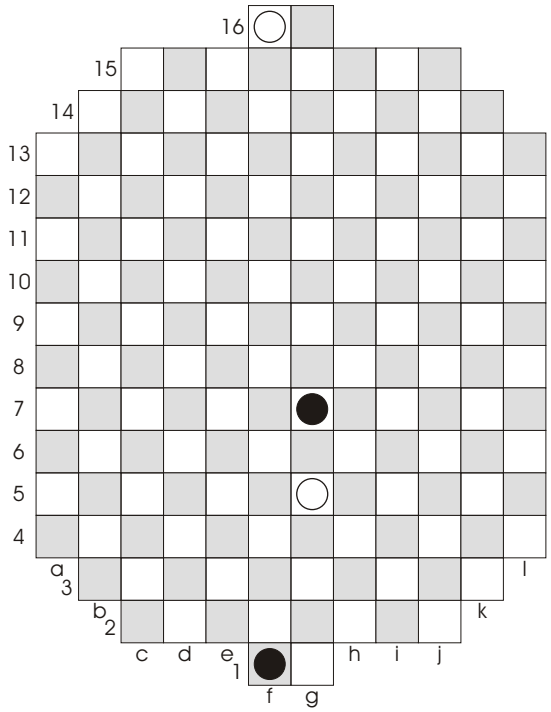


Figure 5

The position is reminiscent of *opposition* at Chess, but these are not Chess kings. In Camelot the attacker has the advantage, whoever has the move. The pairs of moves 1.g5f5 g7h6, or 1.g5h5 g7f6 allow the attacker to advance, with other moves by the defense being even worse.

The attacker on the move marches to the edge of the board, say to k7, with the defender following along to k5. But then 5....k7l6 has gained one rank on the board. There follows 6.k5k4 l6l5, 7.k4l4 (or 6.k5l4 l6k6, 7.l4k4 k6l5, 8.k4l4, resulting in the same position either way). Now, 7....l5l6 has reversed the opposition. The attacker guides the position back to the center of the board, choosing the right time to advance toward the castle as indicated above.

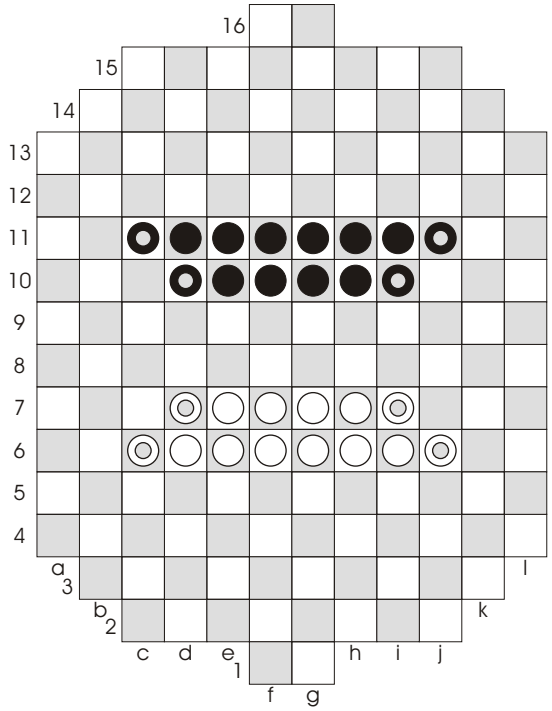
This position is extremely artificial, but it illustrates clearly the perceptiveness of the game's creator in limiting the number of castle moves. Without such a limit, whether 2 (as stated), 30, or 100, either side could use a castle move as a stalling technique, and positions which can now be won would become draws. ■

Paul Yearout claims to have been around for 76 years, married for 51 of them, and playing board games for most of them. He taught university mathematics, mostly undergraduates, for about 35 years. He was in the army air corps for three years during WWII. His other interests include science fiction and fantasy, religion, ballroom and folk dance, choral singing, and cooking. –Ed.

Rules of Camelot

The rules given here are based on the traditional rules included in editions of the game up to 1931. Recent additions by the World Camelot Federation (WCF) are shown in *italics*.

Camelot is a game for two players, White and Black (although many commercial sets used Red and Green). Each player controls an army of his color consisting of four knights and ten men. The term 'pieces' will refer to both knights and men. The board consists of 160 checkered squares in the configuration shown in the diagram. To start the game, the players position their pieces as shown. (The knights are distinguished from the men by being marked with a shaded spot.)



Camelot board with opening position

Movement

White moves first, and thereafter the players move alternately. Each turn, a player moves just one of his pieces. There are four types of moves:

1. The Plain Move

A piece may move one square in any direction (orthogonally or diagonally) to any adjoining unoccupied square.

2. The Canter

A piece may leap in any direction (orthogonally or diagonally) over a friendly piece that occupies an adjoining square, provided there is an unoccupied square immediately beyond it in a direct line onto which the canter may be made. Pieces cantered over are not removed from the board. A player may canter over more than one piece during the same move. The direction of the canter may be varied after each move, but a piece may not make a "circular canter" that ends on the same square from which it began. A player is never compelled to canter, nor when cantering is he compelled to canter as far as possible. If the canter of a knight brings it next to an enemy piece that can be jumped, it must do so by means of a knight's charge, unless by a different route later in that same move it captures one or more enemy pieces elsewhere.

3. The Jump

A piece may jump in any direction (orthogonally or diagonally) over an opposing piece that occupies an adjoining square, provided there

is an unoccupied square immediately beyond it in a direct line onto which the jump may be made. A player may jump over more than one opposing piece during the same move. The direction of the move may be varied after each jump. Each enemy piece jumped over is captured and immediately removed from the board. A player is obliged to jump if any one of his pieces is next to an exposed enemy piece. If there is more than one way in which an opposing piece can be captured, the player may take his choice. If there is more than one opposing piece that can be captured, the player may take his choice. After a piece has jumped over one enemy piece, the jumping must continue as a part of that same move if the player's piece reaches a square next to an exposed enemy piece. When compelled to jump, a player may capture by a knight's charge instead.

4. The Knight's Charge

A knight (only) may combine a canter and a jump in a single move. The knight's charge begins with a regular canter move by a knight to reach a square next to an exposed enemy piece. The knight then continues by making a regular jump move. A knight is not obliged to make a knight's charge.

Object

The game is won by the player who first gets any two of his pieces onto his opponent's two castle squares. White's castle squares are f1 and g1; Black's castle squares are f16 and g16. *The game is also won if a player captures all of his opponent's pieces and has two or more of his own pieces left. The game is also won if a player prevents his opponent from being able to make a legal move.*

Drawn game

The game is drawn if (a) both players have no more than one piece left, or (b) the draw is claimed by either player with the same position having just appeared for at least the third time, the same player being on move each time, or (c) the draw is claimed by either player with the last 50 consecutive moves having been made by each side without any capture or movement of a piece onto an opponent's castle square.

Castle squares

A player may not plain move or canter one of his own pieces onto one of his own castle squares. But, if an enemy piece reaches a square adjacent to one of a player's own castle squares, the player may jump over this opponent's piece onto one of his own castle squares. If an enemy piece reaches a square adjacent to one of a player's own castle squares, the player may make the jumping portion of a knight's charge over this opponent's piece onto one of his own castle squares. *If a player jumps over an opponent's piece onto one of the player's own castle squares, and the player's piece is next to an exposed enemy piece, the jumping must continue (out of his own castle) as a part of that same move.*

A player who has jumped one of his own pieces over an opponent's piece onto one of his own castle squares must, on his next turn, immediately move that piece out from his castle square, with no exception. A player moving one of his own pieces out from one of his own castle squares must jump or make a knight's charge out, if possible, instead of plain-moving or cantering out.

A piece that has entered the opponent's castle cannot come out, but is allowed to move from one castle square to the other (designated a "castle move"). *A player may make unlimited castle moves during the course of a game.* [This is in contrast to the traditional rule, explained in Paul Yearout's article above, that a player is limited to only two castle moves during the whole of a game.]

–Kerry Handscomb

(Continued from page 14)

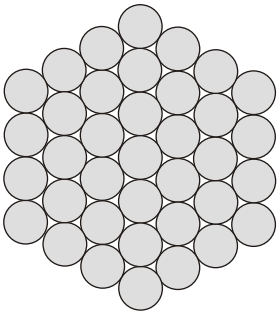
Once White is committed to sending this copper to the front lines, he correctly continues moving it as far as he can before deciding what to do with any of his other step movers.) 11.S-4k C-12c, 12.DK-6k *(Black finally moves a ranging piece, providing a path for the silver. An alternative is DK-7j followed by C-8j-7i, retaining the option of moving either DK to 6k.)* 12....P-11e *(In an attempt to save time, White forgoes the common development DH-11e. How the S9b will now find a path to advance will be seen at move 23.)* 13.P-12h C-11d, 14.SM-12i VM-11b *(A common early maneuver is to switch the initial positions of a vertical mover and bishop in order to strengthen central control.)* 15.S-5j B-11c, 16.S-5i *(Just in time to defend against GB-9f, which otherwise would have forced P-7g, placing the 7 pawn at risk to the White lion.)* 16....P-2e, 17.P-11h FL-2b, 18.C-4k GB-9f, 19.Ln-6g P-10f, 20.DK8j-7j C-10e, 21.C-8j FL-1c, 22.FL-2k VM-2a, 23.S-9k R-10a, 24.P-6h FL-2d *(This innocuous-looking move signals a major decision by White—namely, a willingness to sacrifice his side mover for a reverse chariot. On this flank White cannot safely advance his pawns any further without losing them to Black's lion; therefore, this move indefinitely confines the side mover to the edge. White could have avoided this by playing SM-3d before FL-2d, but he did not wish to invest the extra tempo. After all, giving up a side mover for a reverse chariot is not a serious loss, and at this point it is still only a distant possibility.)* 25.P-2h S-10c, 26.FL-11k S-11d, 27.FL-1j P-11f, 28.FL-12j S-11e, 29.C-7i C-2b, 30.C-5j C-2c, 31.VM-2k *(C-6i, cutting off the lion's only retreat, would be too risky.)* 31....C-3d, 32.GB-4g P-8f, 33.P-3g Ln-8e *(diagram)*

Position after 33....Ln-8e

The battle lines become clearer as White's lion moves for the first time in the game. In the next column, we will see how the game proceeded from this point, and we will have more to say about step movers, including the role of gold generals, blind tigers, and drunk elephants. ■

"I learned about dreams of Go. Sometimes, I was told, a player discovers a brilliant play in his sleep. Sometimes he remembers a part of the configuration after he awakens."

The Master of Go, Yasunari Kawabata



ZÈRTZ®

Strategy Guide Part 2

by Stephen Tavener

Ball Control

The first step to successful Zèrtz play is to realize just how much control you have over the balls in play. In this section we are going to look at what you can do with a single ball in play, with the help of your opponent.

Imagine in the left of Diagram 1 you have a black ball as shown, but your plans require a grey ball at position A.

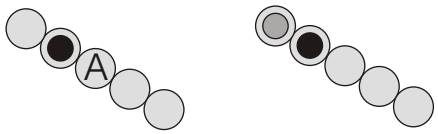


Diagram 1

All you have to do is place a ball as shown on the right. Your opponent must capture, leaving a grey ball just where you want it, *and* you get to move again.

In the position on the left of Diagram 2 the situation is slightly more complex. Here you want a black ball at position B instead.

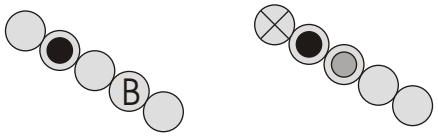
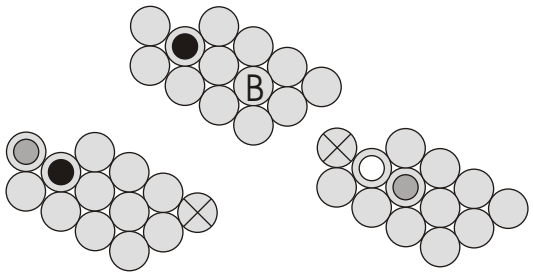


Diagram 2

Again, we can do it with a little help from our opponent. This time, as shown on the right, we place a ball (of whatever color) and remove the disc marked. Now our opponent must place the black ball where we want it. Note that if we do not remove the right disc, our opponent can choose to capture in the opposite direction. It is better to leave the opponent no choice at all because he is unlikely to cooperate.

Of course, we really wanted a white ball at position B shown at the top of Diagram 3. This requires the sacrifice of two balls, but we can still do it with a little help, as shown in Steps 1 and 2.



Step 1 Step 2

Diagram 3

These basic steps show that you can—indeed, must—make use of your opponent's turn to control the board and balls. In general, if you are willing to pay the cost, you can rearrange the balls however you like; the exceptions are where the balls are stuck in corners, or too close together.

Three-Ball Combinations

With three balls on the board you should be looking to capture two white balls; to do this, you can give your opponent five balls and still be in a strong position. These opportunities are often available in the opening stages of the game, but if you let your opponent get too close to winning, you could lose before you regain the initiative. As a rule of thumb, look to leave your opponent at least two balls away from winning, so two grey and three black is the most you should pay.

So, how do you capture two white balls with only three balls on the board? Well, you are looking to make a double capture of two whites. This is where the trigger pattern comes in handy. Look at the two patterns in Diagram 4.

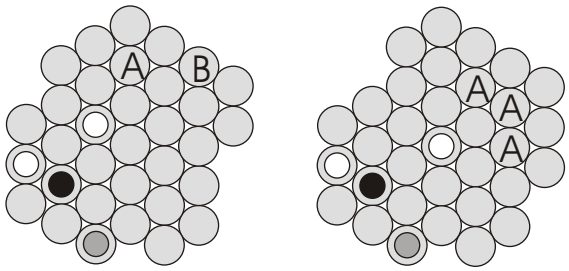


Diagram 4

In each case, you are looking at the trigger position, with an extra white ball positioned for capture after the first jump. In both these positions, your opponent will capture one black ball, after which you capture two white balls. Note that with more balls on the board you could potentially capture three or more white balls from the positions above—imagine white balls in the spaces marked A and B in the diagram on the left, or in any of the spaces marked A in the diagram on the right.

With three balls on the board there are a very large number of possible positions (approximately 300 million near the start of the game). However, the principles we discussed in the section on simple exchanges are still valid. You know the positions you are aiming to achieve—you just have to force your opponent to make the moves required to put the balls in the right places. You can sacrifice five balls, so you have a lot of flexibility. If necessary, you can force your opponent to move each of the balls in play.

Look at the position at the top of Diagram 5 (taken from an actual game). From here, it only takes four balls to set up a double capture. Note that all of these moves should be familiar to you from the section on simple exchanges. Nothing new is required, except

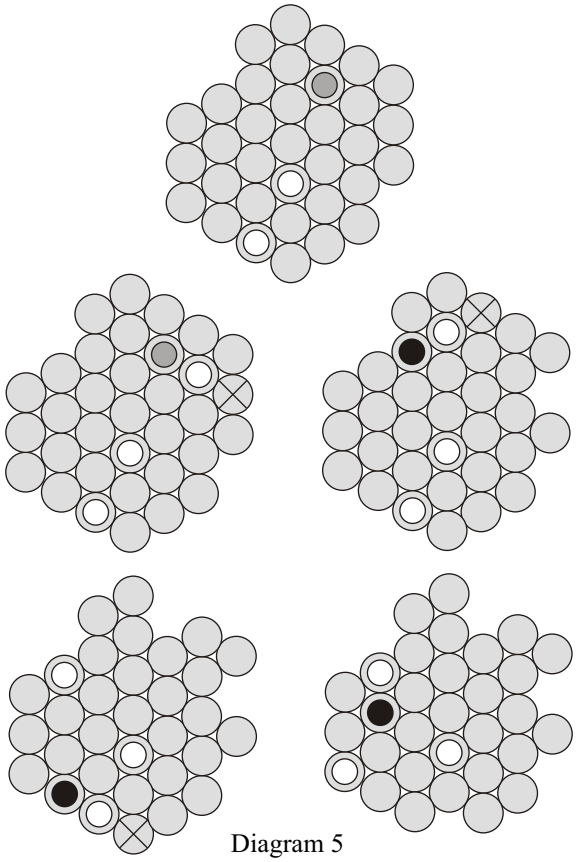


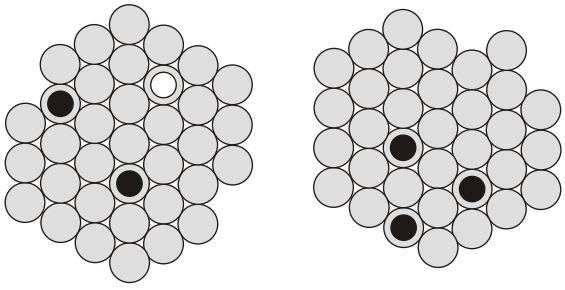
Diagram 5

the ability to look a little further ahead. With so many possibilities I find the easiest way to do this is what I call "applied wishful thinking"—first imagine the board and balls as you want them to be, then figure out a sequence of moves which will create that pattern.

It is not always possible to exchange five balls for two whites, but you should look hard for such an exchange. If you cannot find a good sequence of moves, you must add another ball to the board; now your opponent may be able to win by exchanging eight balls for three whites in a single sequence.

Puzzles

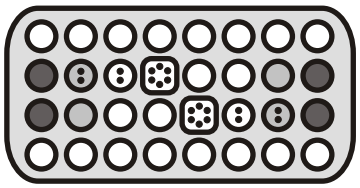
In the following puzzles you are aiming to get two white balls. Give the minimum number of balls to your opponent to achieve this, without exceeding two grey and three black. Good luck! See page 29 for solutions. ■



Puzzle 1 Puzzle 2

When not actually playing games, Stephen Tavener can be found reviewing abstract games for Games, Games, Games *magazine; trading used games over the Internet; or practicing Tai Chi Chuan... at which he expects to become competent in another 30 years or so. – Ed.*

Strategy in Bao



– the beauty is in complexity

by Alex de Voogt

Once a player has understood the complexities of capturing in Bao, the main strategy would seem to be to find the most effective capture. Although this will take much practice and will challenge one's knowledge of the capturing rules, it appears that moving without capturing, or *takasa*, is more daunting.

A situation in which a player has few options is beneficial for the beginner. Each option takes thinking time, and if there are many options, it may be beyond the calculating skills or stamina of the pupil. A situation in which one cannot capture is commonly more complex. The complexity is due to the number of possible moves, since if one cannot capture one can choose any occupied hole from the front row and sew this in either direction. A maximum of 16 choices, although rare, may occur, but even eight choices would be too much for the inexperienced player. Frequently, a player will give up and play a move he was able to calculate and that seems all right, without looking further for the best move on the board.

Apart from the many options for a *takasa* move, the rules for *takasa* appear problematic as well. The joy of capturing is frequent, and the infrequent *takasa* moves give one scarce opportunity to practice the proper hierarchy of rules. In the *namua* stage, where seeds are still being entered into the game, the rules are as follows:

●*Choose any occupied hole containing more than one seed from the front row, and sew the seeds in either direction until the last seed falls into an empty hole.* But here it comes:

●*Unless the house is still in place, in which case you can choose holes containing one seed only (singletons) as well.*

●*Unless there are no holes with more than one seed, in which case you may also choose a singleton.*

●*Unless the house is the only remaining occupied hole, in which case you play the house as a singleton, meaning you enter with one seed and you spread two seeds in either direction.*

It is usually necessary to add the following:

●*Unless you can capture, in which case you must capture.*

●*Unless there are no seeds left in the front row, in which case you have lost the game.*

Rules for the second part of the game, called the *mtaji* stage, are not much different. By definition there is no house—the house becomes an ordinary hole with no special rules. Also, in the second part of the game the back row can be played. These factors change the rules as follows:

●Takasa, *as above.*

●*Unless there are only singletons in the front row, in which case you play a hole with more than one seed from the back row.*

This is an obvious rule since singletons can never be played in the second part of the game. We may add:

●*Unless there are only singletons in both front and back row, in which case the game is lost.*

It is possible that there is only one occupied hole in the front row and that this hole is a *kichwa*, at the far end of the row. In either stage of the game is it not allowed to move the seeds of this hole towards the back row and leave the front empty. This is not allowed even if the move would return to the front row so that it was only

temporarily vacated.

A lost game is now defined in a number of ways. The game is lost if the front row is empty or if it is even temporarily empty. The game is also lost if a player has only singletons left in both front and back rows in the second stage of the game.

These rules are difficult to understand if one regards them as an unconnected list. However, Bao rules are structured according to a hierarchy, which explains why the exceptions always list the same things in the same order: singletons, the house and the front row. (This last item may come as a surprise, but remember that the front row must be played first in case of *takasa*.) In the case of capturing this hierarchy is partly lost. In sum, the *takasa* rules read as follows: empty a hole with more than one seed; if this is not possible play a singleton; if there is no other way play from the house; and in the second, or *mtaji*, stage you may try the back row.

A championship rule concerning lost seeds displays this same hierarchy. It sometimes occurs that the player who started runs out of stock first in the *namua* stage. This irregularity may have been caused by an incorrect division of the seeds initially or by some other kind of fumble. In order to correct this error, the starting player gives a seed from his stock to his opponent. If he has no stock left, he gives him a seed from his back row, if possible a singleton from the back row, otherwise a seed from a bigger hole. If his back row is empty, he gives him a singleton from the front row, or else a seed from another hole if there are no singletons. Although these are not rules for general application, they illustrate the wider application of the hierarchy.

Derived, linguistically and otherwise, from *takasa* is *takasia*. This may be translated as 'to *takasa* someone.' The reader should be aware that this rule is practiced by experienced players only since most beginning players will either miss or misinterpret this situation when it comes along. The situation of *takasia* is rare, but it can prevent a player from 'spoiling the game.'

When a player plays *takasa* in such a way that his opponent cannot capture *and* that the player will be able to capture in his following move, then the *takasia* rule obliges the opponent to leave this hole to be captured in the next move. Reading the rule carefully, we can see that this situation can only occur in the second stage of the game. If a player can capture in the first stage, then by definition his opponent can capture, too, and the rule does not apply.

The *takasia* rule helps players to gain an advantage in the second stage if they master the art of *takasa*. A player can move in such a way that his opponent cannot capture either, and then the player will be able to make a capture on his next move. As soon as this situation occurs, the opponent cannot empty the *takasia* hole, and has to allow the capture to take place, except in special cases:

- *Unless he can capture.* (This is obvious, but frequently forgotten by beginners.)
- *Unless it is a singleton.* (Since singletons may never be moved anyway, *takasia* rules cannot apply to them.)
- *Unless it is the only hole in the front row that is not a singleton.*
- *Unless it is the only occupied hole in the front row.*
- *Unless it is the house.*

This all makes sense apart from the last exception. Before we discuss the house, however, there is another problem. What happens if a player duly plays another occupied hole in his front row, but during the spreading ends up in the *takasia* hole? This situation is easily resolved by analogy to the rules of the house. The move simply stops at the *takasia* hole, so it does not get emptied. In other words, only the size of capture changes.

The last exception speaks of the house, while a *takasia* move may only occur in the second stage of the game. In the second stage of the game the house should be gone. Well, this is true, but the situation is a trifle more subtle. The full story of the Bao rules shows convincingly that the rules of Bao have not simply been invented, but have been agreed upon and refined after much experience at the master level. For a player who cannot even calculate his next capture, there is no gain in the application of this rule, except when it gives him the occasional lucky break. Only masters insist on this way of playing since it allows the best player to win, instead of the player who, often beyond anyone's calculation, finds out that fortuitously he can *takasia* his opponent's house. Therefore, the rule excludes the house.

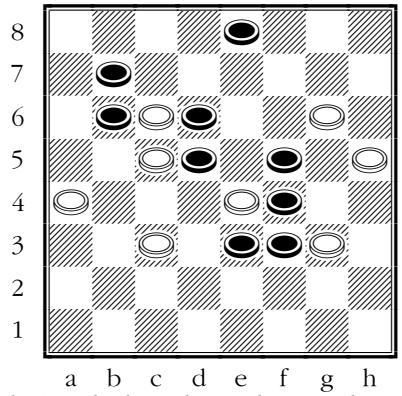
What house? Well, the house is considered to continue existing at the start of the second stage of the game until a capturing move is made. In other words, if the first moves of the second stage only involve *takasa* or *takasia*, then the house is still in place and protected from *takasia*.

For once in games, the beauty is in complexity. ■

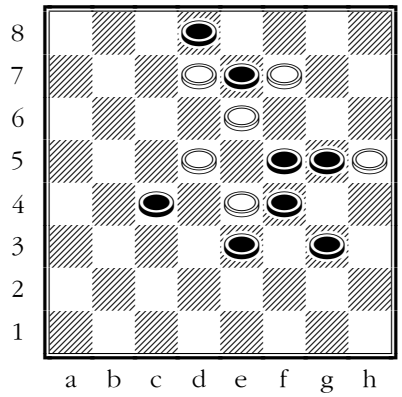
Thus does Alex de Voogt's Bao series come to a close. If you have followed the Bao story through AG4 *and* AG5 *up to now, you should be able to play Bao, the King of Mancalas, according to full championship rules—or you may simply marvel at the game's complexity and sophistication. Another great four-rank mancala is Mweso, and it has much simpler rules. Sometime in the next couple of issues we are planning to present the official rules of Mweso as played in Ugandan championships. – Ed.*

Lines of Action Puzzles

by Jorge Gomez Arraussi

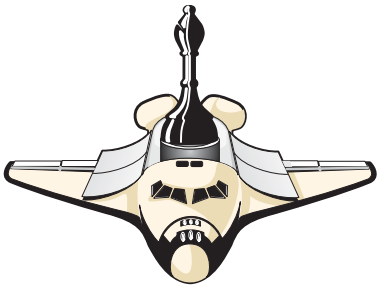


Puzzle 1 – Black to play and win in three moves.



Answers on p. 29.

Puzzle 2 – White to play and win in three moves.



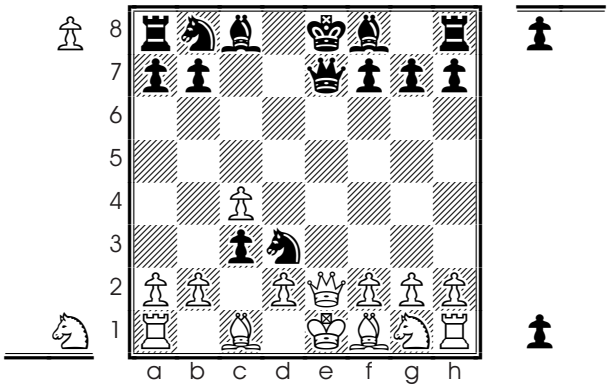
HOSTAGE CHESS

Part 3 — Five Last Games

by John Leslie

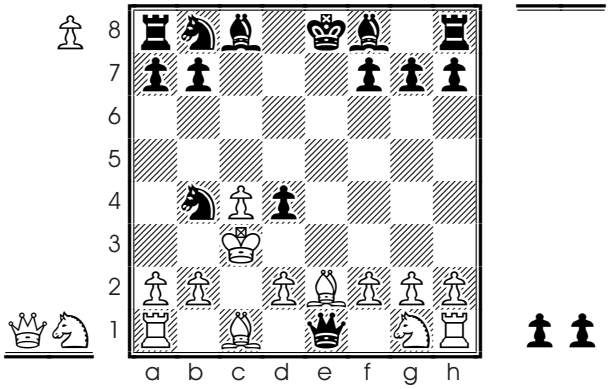
In this conclusion to the Hostage Chess series, here are five more exciting games. So please get out your chessboard, plus saucers for the airfields, and away we go!

The first game is another of my battles with Roger Smook. Despite his grading (strong expert) in ordinary Chess, I do quite often defeat him. Particularly for the weaker player, games of Hostage can be delightful for their sudden swings of fortune. *White* **J.L.** *Black* **R.S.** 1.e4 d5, 2.exd5 Nf6, 3.c4 c6, 4.Nc3 cxd5, 5.(P–P)*e5 d4, 6.exf6 dxc3, 7.fxe7 Qxe7+, 8.Qe2 (N–N)N*d3+ (diagram)



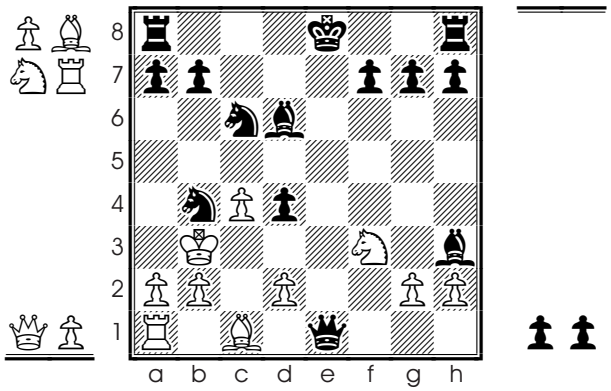
*Position after 8....(N-N)N*d3+*

Black is attacking viciously, but White could defend by dropping not only a knight from his airfield but also a pawn (after exchanging the black "hostage" pawn in his prison for the white one in Black's prison). 9.Kd1 Qxe2, 10.Bxe2 [with hostage queens now exchangeable, the position is explosive] (Q–Q)Q*e1+ [start of explosion!] 11.Kc2 Nb4+, 12.Kxc3 *d4+ (diagram). The pawn drop is a typical Hostage Chess sacrifice to make an enemy king dangerously exposed.



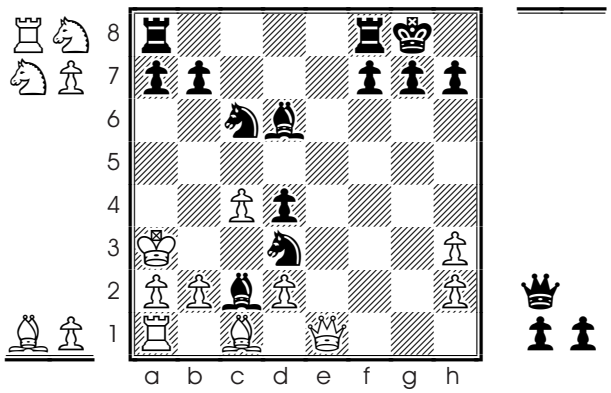
*Position after 12....*d4+*

13.Kxd4 N(8)c6+, 14.Kc3 Bd6, 15.N*f3 Qxf2, 16.Nh3 Bxh3, 17.Rf1 (P–P)*d4+, 18.Kb3 Qxe2, 19.Re1 Qxe1 (diagram)



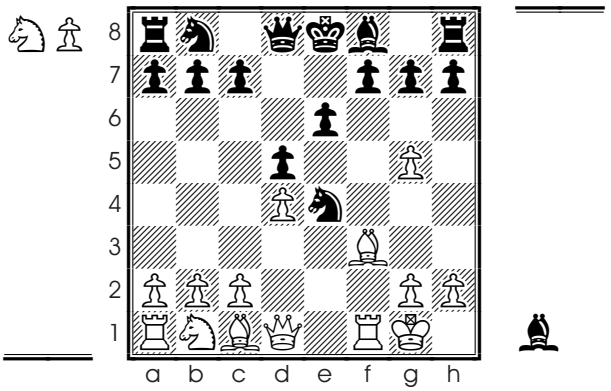
Position after 19....Qxe1

20.Nxe1 O-O [Although he had just sacrificed queen for rook to keep up the attack, Black felt so threatened by the queen on White's airfield that he took time off to castle.] 21.gxh3 (B–B)B*d1+ [In Hostage you have to think twice before capturing anything. White's capture of the bishop has meant only that it has come parachuting back at him.] 22.*c2 (P–P)*f2, 23.Q*f1 fxe1=Q [the pawn changes places with the imprisoned black queen] 24.Qxe1 Bxc2+, 25.Ka3 Nd3+ (diagram), 26.Resigns. The black bishop would capture whatever White dropped to block the check.



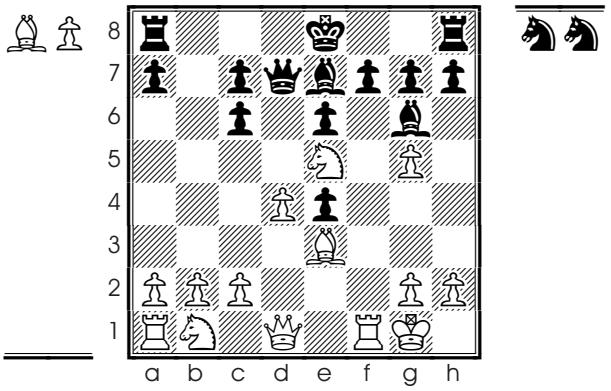
Position after 25....Nd3+

In the next example I was luckier, but determination to keep attacking contributed crucially. Without it, you cannot defeat stronger players at this game. *White* **R.S.** *Black* **J.L.** 1.d4 d5, 2.e4 dxe4, 3.f3 exf3, 4.Nxf3 Bg4, 5.Bc4 (P–P)*d5 [dropping onto e5 instead would be answered by Nxe5, threatening mate] 6.Be2 Bxf3, 7.Bxf3 Nf6, 8.O-O e6, 9.*g5 Ne4 (diagram)



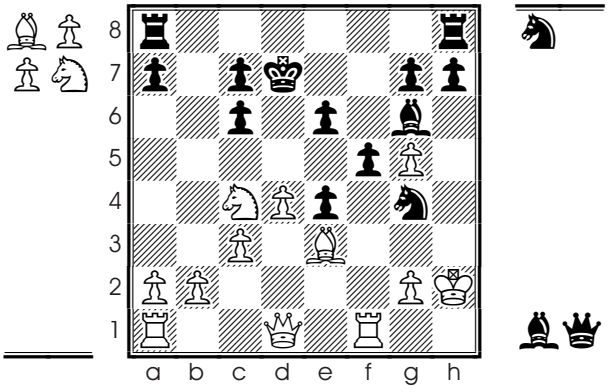
Position after 9....Ne4

Black's active position suggests that his pawn drop at move 5 was enough to take the sting out of the King's Gambit, leaving White with little compensation for the sacrificed pawn. 10.Bxe4 dxe4, 11.(B–N)N*e5 B*g6, 12.Be3 Nc6, 13.Nxc6 bxc6, 14.(N–N)N*e5 Be7, 15.(N–B)B*d7+ Qxd7 (diagram).



Position after 15....Qxd7

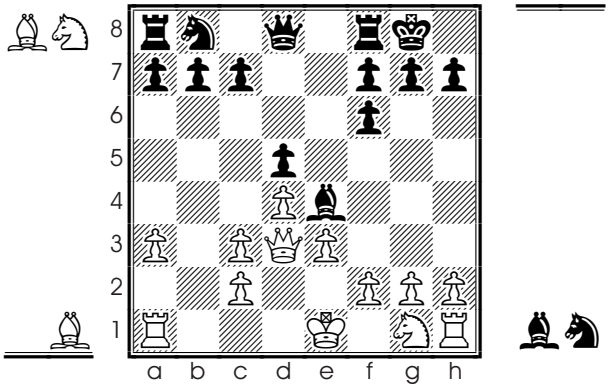
Perhaps the Gambit is working after all? 16.Nxd7 Kxd7, 17.Nd2 f5, 18.Nc4 Bd6, 19.c3 Bxh2. After losing his queen for only a bishop and a knight can Black afford to sacrifice his remaining bishop? Well, the two knights on his airfield might be worth two rooks on the board and, even to help ward off an attack, White will be reluctant to exchange the queen in his prison for a mere knight or bishop. 20.Kxh2 N*g4+ (diagram)



*Position after 20....N*g4+*

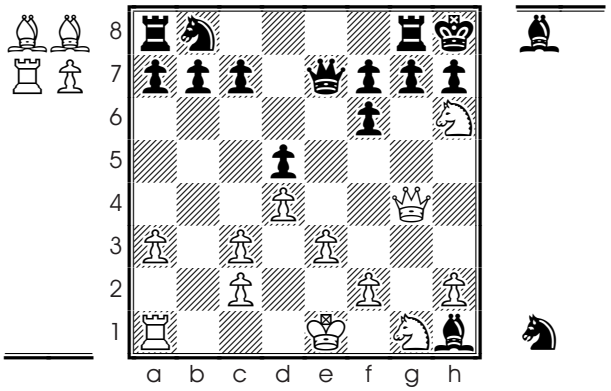
21.Kg1 [Black is about to prove this is disastrous. If faced by Kh3 instead, Black would play Nf2+, and if his knight were then captured, he would continue with (B–B)B*g4+, and White's queen would die. However, Kg3 seems viable.] 21....(B–B)B*h2+, 22.Kh1 N*g3 mate.

Let me give another victory over Roger. (After all, he did publish an article on what he called "happy memories": victories over me.) *White* **J.L.** *Black* **R.S.** 1.d4 Nf6, 2.Nc3 d5, 3.Bg5 Bf5, 4.Bxf6 exf6, 5.e3 Bb4, 6.a3 Bxc3, 7.bxc3 O-O, 8.Bd3 Bxd3, 9.Qxd3 (B–B)B*e4 (diagram).



*Position after 9....(B–B)B*e4*

10.Qe2 Bxg2, 11.Qg4 Bxh1, [Black seems to be well ahead] 12.(B–N)N*h6 Kh8+ [suddenly Black's prospects seem less rosy] 13.Nf5 Rg8, 14.B*e7 Qd2, 15.Nh6 Qxe7 (diagram).

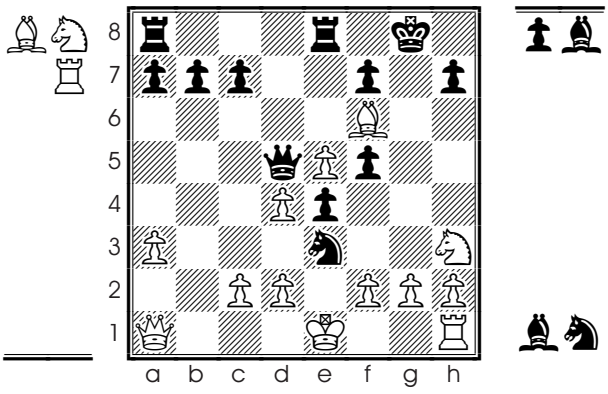


Position after 15....Qxe7

16.Nxg8 Kxg8 [a blunder, as the knight returns] 17.(N–N)N*h6+ Kf1, 18.(R–R)R*g8 mate.

Here's another game of mine—playing against a weaker opponent than Roger, but one who still defeats me as often as not. *White* **J.L.** *Black* **T.L.** (my son, Tom) 1.e4 Nf6, 2.Nc3 d5, 3.e5 Ne4, 4.d4 Bf5, 5.Bd3 e6, 6.Bxe4 dxe4, 7.(N–B)B*g4 Nc6, 8.Be3 Bb4, 9.Bxf5 exf5, 10.a3 Bxc3, 11.bxc3 O-O, 12.(B–N)N*h6+ gxh6, 13.(B–B)B*f6 Qd5, 14.Bxh6 Re8 [White's knight sacrifice to break up Black's castle seems to be working] 15.Nh3 Nxd4, 16.cxd4 B*c3+ [we come to see the point of Black's own knight sacrifice] 17.(P–P)*d2 Bxa1, 18.Qxa1 N*g4, 19.Be3 Nxe3 (diagram)

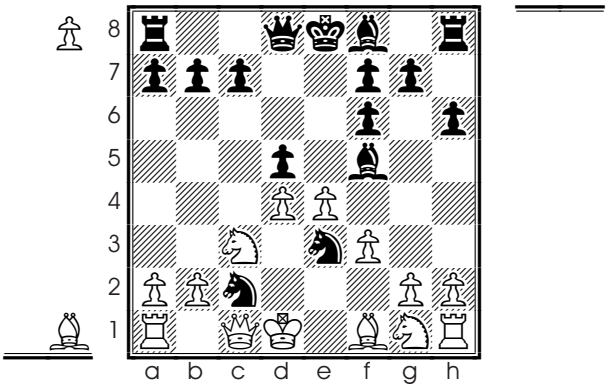
"Changes of rules do not destroy a game; they act as a tonic to a sick game and restore it to health."
A History of Board Games Other Than Chess, H.J.R Murray



Position after 19....Nxe3

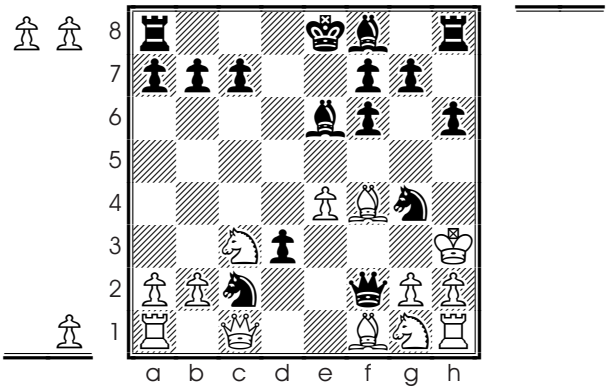
Unfortunately for Black, his last move means that White now has two parachutable pieces — the hostage knight and bishop. They are used like this: 20.(B–N)N*h6+ Kf1, 21.(N–B)B*g7 mate.

Lastly, here is a game between players **A.N.** and **O.N.** 1.d4 Nf6, 2.Nc3 d5, 3.Bg5 Bf5, 4.f3 N(b)d7, 5.Bxf6 Nxf6, 6.(N–B)B*g5 h6, 7.Bxf6 N*e3, 8.Qc1 Nxc2+, 9.Kd1 exf6, 10.e4 (B–N)N*e3+ (diagram)



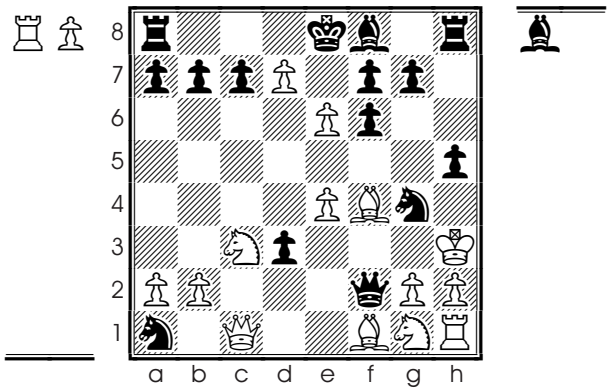
*Position after 10....(B–N)N*e3+*

Now that two Black knights have been parachuted into his vicinity, White's king seems in grave danger. 11.Ke2 dxe4, 12.fxe4 (P–P)*d3+ [trying to entice the king forwards] 13.Kf2 Qxd4, 14.B*f4 Ng4+, 15.Kg3 Qf2+, 16.Kh3 Be6 (diagram).



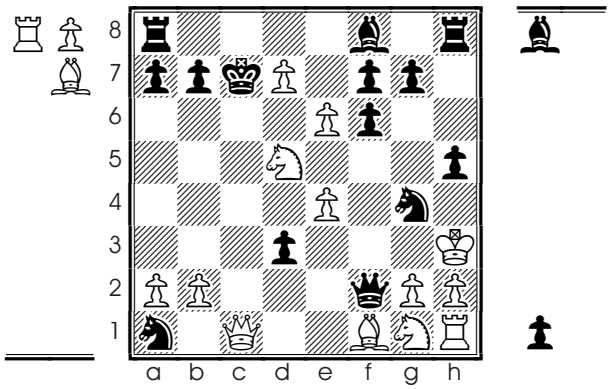
Position after 16....Be6

It is strange that Black should be reduced to withdrawing his bishop tamely, after kicking White's king around so violently! 17.*f5 Nxa1, 18.fxe6 h5, 19.(B–P)d7+ (diagram)



Position after 19.(B–P)d7+

It can be very satisfying to get an advantage by exchanging a powerful hostage for a weaker one, as White has just done. (Sometimes, remember, you can get a winning attack by exchanging queen for pawn.) Now Black is in real trouble. 19....Kd8, 20.Bxc7+ Kxc7, 21.Nd5+ (diagram)



Position after 21.Nd5+

21....Resigns. Wherever the Black king moves, White plays Qc7 mate. This shows that in Hostage you should hardly ever abandon hope. A little earlier, White looked utterly beaten.

Why play this game, not real Chess? Well, Shogi displaced a game that used to be "real chess" to the Japanese. With its grand new device, *parachuting*, Shogi soon became Japan's national chess game because it was so much livelier. Western Chess, which livened up in the 15th century when the queen became more powerful, is of course superb. Still, if you want battles that are more or less guaranteed to be tremendous fun—dazzling tactical fireworks, no games drawn through attrition of forces, and enough unpredictability to give even beginners a chance—then try introducing your friends to Hostage Chess. ■

"Shea had just beaten me at chess, as usual, and, also as usual, I had gleaned what questionable satisfaction I might by twitting him with this indication of failing mentality by calling his attention for the *n*th time to that theory, propounded by certain scientists, which is based upon the assertion that phenomenal chess players are always found to be from the ranks of children under twelve, adults over seventy-two or the mentally defective."

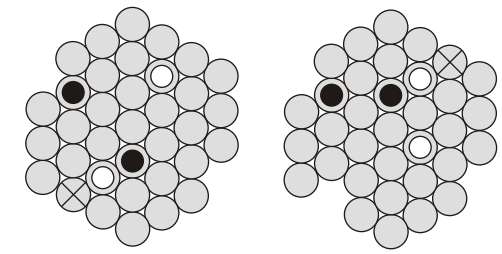
The Chessmen of Mars, Edgar Rice Burroughs

Passion With a Vengeance

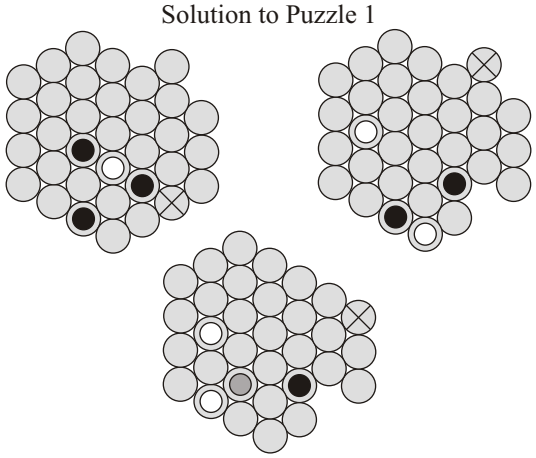
by Connie Handscomb

First it was just a little shelf that he required: I don't need much space, he said. Just a little cupboard in which to keep my games. I quietly relinquished my treasures to another corner of our world. Unfortunately, however, this space proved all too quickly to be much too small—the games were too plentiful. We filtered them into storage as one cupboard quickly became two, then three. A larger bookshelf was brought in to support the games book library. It was crowded and overflowing the moment it was filled. Since we are avid readers and collectors, and already had several large units, making room for such copious quantities was becoming ever more challenging. Also, especially when filled to capacity, these items are extremely heavy and virtually impossible to move. Damage control measures were taken as material was quickly funneled into assorted containers and tucked into corners, while more cabinets were commissioned to be built. An emergency order was placed for an enormous chest to store the games stacked on the chairs in our living space. Surely you jest, I said the first time I stepped around a game set up on the floor. It was in all likelihood the last flat surface available since all others had already been deployed for playing functions. Another small table was purchased to accompany the others already in use as play boards. Still more shelves were installed into closets to harbor games inventory. And still they keep coming. Throughout, we have had our own "game" going. He stoically resets the position each time I accidentally jostle the pieces when I reach over a game in progress. Yes, he certainly has an ongoing passion. And we are constantly Making More Space. But, "vengeance" may be mine: I have ■

Solutions to Zèrtz Puzzles



Solution to Puzzle 1



Solution to Puzzle 2

Solution to Twixt Puzzle

1.G6* G7*, 2.H8* D4*, 3.F9* B9, 4.D8* C7*, 5.B4 threatening D3** or C6**. Wrong first moves: 1.E6* H4* 2.F8* I7*, or 1.F8 E7**

Solutions to Bashne Problems

Problem 1: 1.f4e5 d4:f6, 2.a5c7 b8:d6, 3.h6g7 f6:h8, 4.g7e5 d6:f4, 5.e5:g3 f4:h2, 6.g3h4 h8g7, 7.h4f6 g7:e5, 8.f6:d4 e5:c3, 9.d4:b2 c3:a1, 10.a3b4 wins.

Problem 2: 1.f2g3 e5:h2, 2.g1f2 d4:g1, 3.b4c5 b6:d4, 4.f8d6 c7:e5, 5.h6f4 e5:g3, 6.f4g5 f6:h4, 7.g5e3 d4:f2, 8.e3d4 wins.

Solutions to Lines of Action Puzzles

Puzzle 1: 1.e8e5++ c3:e5, 2.d5e6++ c5c7, 3.e3c5#

Puzzle 2: 1....h5h6++, 2.g5:d5 e6g6++!, and White cannot be stopped.

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