

The British 8x8 Rating List *maintained by David Haigh*

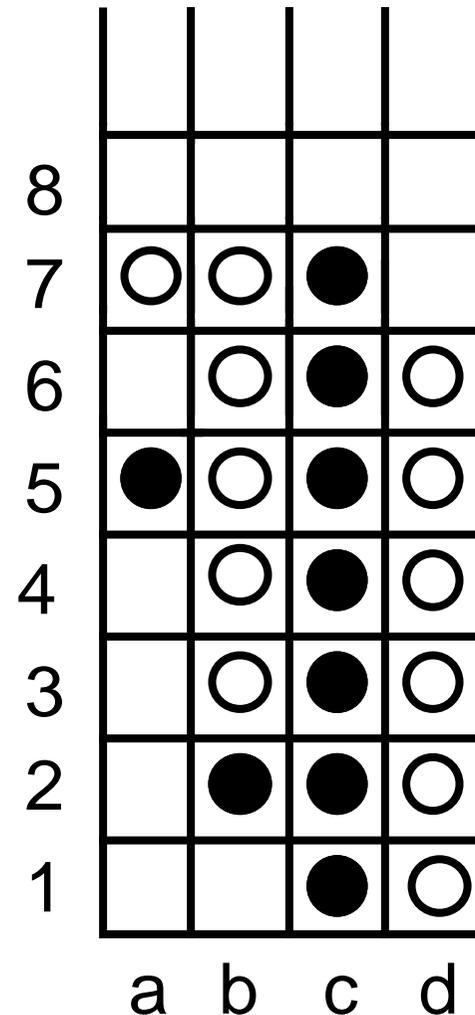
Active British players' ratings after the 2010 Cambridge pre-Christmas Tournament (rating order).

	games	rating		games	rating
1 Imre Leader	847	1953	22 Helen Starkey	55	1182
2 Michael Handel	579	1829	23 Steve Hall	7	1107
3 Graham Brightwell	963	1823	24 Yvette Campbell	102	1089
4 David Hand	82	1784	25 David Haigh	584	1020
5 David Beck	166	1681	26 Tom Grover	9	1008
6 Geoff Hubbard	648	1626	27 Alison Turner	204	1006
7 Iain Barrass	712	1602	28 Marie Lightman	30	942
8 Pierluigi Stanzione	65	1537	29 Adelaide Carpenter	256	936
9 Ian Turner	698	1534	30 Phil Wallis	6	920
10 Ben Pridmore	454	1479	31 Robert Butler	22	833
11 Steven Robinson	21	1454	32 Richard Ratcliffe	7	766
12 Jeremy Dyer	290	1412	33 Steve Lancaster	2	723
13 Phil Marson	952	1401	34 Robert Calladine	42	671
14 Stephen Spencer	22	1391	35 Emma Bowers	6	629
15 Steve MacGuire	42	1370	36 Kali Turner	135	573
16 Aidan Robison	127	1363	37 Tanith Turner	100	491
17 Julian Richens	149	1362	38 Gerry Beldon	7	385
18 Roy Arnold	1222	1308	39 Hayley James	9	325
19 Andrew Burgess	116	1252	Paul Robinson	9	325
20 Robert Stanton	200	1237	Freddy Lightman	3	325
21 Stephen Rowe	318	1213			

It Ain't Over 'Til it's Over

The Newsletter of the British Othello Federation

January 2011



White to play and wipe out

INFORMATION

The British Othello Federation is an independent body. With paper version of the Newsletter, an annual subscription for a British resident costs £6 (with the first year's membership including a copy of the instructional book *Othello: Brief and Basic*) or ten years for £55; an overseas subscription costs £8 per year or £75 for ten years. If you would prefer to receive *only* electronic copies of the Newsletter the cost is £5/£45 for national/international. Cheques or postal orders payable to the *British Othello Federation* should be sent to Adelaide Carpenter (address below) or you can pay by credit card at <http://www.britishothello.org.uk/> the BOF web site. The price of *Othello: Brief and Basic* on its own is £6. Additional players living in the same household can become members for only £1 per year (with only one copy of the Newsletter).

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2011 Regionals*compiled by Roy Arnold*

LEICESTER (OADBY): March 12th. Start time: 10:00 AM
 Venue: Oadby Baptist Church, Leicester Road, Oadby, Leicester
 Web: <http://www.britishothello.org.uk/oadbyregional.html>
 [www.britishothello.org.uk]
 Organiser: Steve Rowe, immac.oadby@virgin.net

CAMBRIDGE: April 30th. Start time: 10:00 AM
 Venue: Trinity College, Cambridge: Whewell's Court. Part of the Cambridge MSO; room to be decided on the day.
 Web: <http://www.britishothello.org.uk/cambridgeregional.html>
 Contact: Adelaide Carpenter, atc12@mole.bio.cam.ac.uk

NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE (possibly Whitley Bay): 14th or 21st May
 Contacts: Gerry Beldon, gerry@beldons.co.uk; Marie Lightman, marielouisebrooks@hotmail.co.uk

SHEFFIELD: 4th June. Start time: 9:30 AM
 Venue: Hillsborough Hotel, 54-58 Langsett Road, Hillsborough, Sheffield
 Web: <http://www.britishothello.org.uk/sheffieldregional.html>
 Contact: Roy Arnold, roy.arnold@romseyassoc.com

FARNBOROUGH (HANTS): June 18th. Start time: 9:30 AM
 Venue: Romsey Associates, Elles House, 4b Invincible Road, Farnborough, Hampshire
 Web: <http://www.britishothello.org.uk/farnboroughregional.html>
 Organiser: Ian Turner, ian.turner@romseyassoc.com

In addition, a sixth Regional is hoped for in London, likely to be in July or August and hence posted in the July 2011 NL.

Contact: Roy Arnold, roy.arnold@romseyassoc.com

Cambridge International Tournament: Saturday 19 February and Sunday Feb 20. **NOTE: New Venue! Junior Parlour, Trinity College.** Play begins at 10 AM on Saturday and at 9 AM on Sunday. Contact person: Adelaide Carpenter atc12@mole.bio.cam.ac.uk
 Someone else, possibly Aubrey, will be in charge.

edge was the right thing to do, but Zebra tells me H8 is -8 but A6 is +12; what is wrong with taking the edge here?' 2) Send the email to the BOF list. Someone will respond with helpful feedback. 3) Don't be shy!

CAVEATS

1) Zebra is only a very good program; it is not perfect. 2) But it's better than any humans. 3) If you used a low level the scores might be a little wrong. But it's not going to be WAY off. 4) Sometimes you'll be the upper side of the graph and sometimes you'll be the lower.

QUESTIONS

- 1) What to do about flipping errors?
 - a) Don't make them in the first place.
 - b) If you can work out what the flipping error was, you can use the 'Game' menu 'Setup Board' option to set the position up after the flipping error occurred; from there you should be able to analyse the rest of the game.
- 2) Why does the graph go past move 60?

Zebra counts a pass as a move, so there can be more than 60 moves in a game (but this does mean that odd numbered moves are always Black moves and even numbered moves are always White moves).
- 3) What is the difference between the red dots and the pink dots in the graph?

Red dots are estimates; Pink dots are exact scores.
- 4) Why doesn't it let me make another move?

Sometimes Zebra gets stuck in 'calculating' mode; try pressing the red 'stop sign' button on the right hand end of the toolbar.

A Quote from the Chairman

by Geoff Hubbard

"It is no great art to say something briefly when, like Tacitus, one has something to say; when one has nothing to say, however, and none the less writes a whole book and makes truth into a liar -- that I call an achievement." Lichtenberg, Georg C. (1742-99)

Since both the British and European Grand Prix prizes were already sewn up before the July 2010 Newsletter, I don't have a lot to say this time.

So what has happened since the last newsletter?

Helen Starkey organised us a great National Championship Tournament in Leamington Spa in September. A great venue, great B&Bs literally just across the road, great restaurant, great tournament. Everything about it was great -- So thanks, Helen!

The week prior I'd managed to win the Danish Championship and was hoping that my good form might continue; however, I was no match for Imre who had maintained his EGP winning form and won the Nationals, defeating Michael Handel in the final.

The World Championship was held in Rome in November, and the British team contained all the 'first picks' with Imre, Michael, Iain Barrass (Grand Prix winner) and Helen. Imre made the finals of the WOC and finished 4th, which is the best British finish since Graham Brightwell finished 2nd in 1997.

So all in all a good year for Imre, I'm sure due as much to hard work and preparation as natural talent and experience. He capped it off by winning the Cambridge Christmas Tournament in its increasingly more traditional late November date.

In world Othello news, Benkt Steentoft, with great regret, has decided to resign his position as WOF president because of family difficulties. And I have resigned my position as WOF treasurer/secretary; I feel that I need to take a breather after 15 straight years of playing a lot of Othello, and it is better to let someone with more current enthusiasm fill the role.

Let me know if you're interested in either job. Currently the only nominations are: Randy Fang (USA) for President and Tor Birger Skogen (Norway) for Treasurer, so hopefully things will go through smoothly. If elections are needed for our replacements I'll let you know via the mailing list.

As always, make sure you're signed up to the mailing list[1] to get up-to-date notifications about what is going on.

Hope we all have a good 2011!

geoff@instihost.com.

[1] The BOF Mailing list on yahoo groups:
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/British_Othello

The 2010 Nationals Final*by Imre Leader*

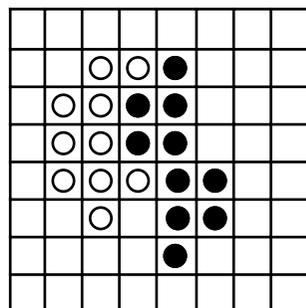
This is an analysis of the 2010 Nationals Final between Michael Handel and me. This was a repeat of the 2009 Final, won by Michael, so I was hoping for revenge.

I chose White, and Michael played down the FAT. At move 13, he chose b4. This was common decades ago, but it fell out of fashion in favour of the more aggressive c1 or e1. But it is now coming back: as well as both my games against Michael at this tournament, I had also recently encountered it against Matthias Berg and Albert Kortendijk.

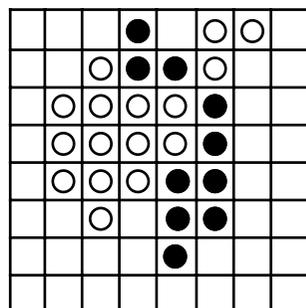
After 14c2 15e7 (an alternative is 15d7), the usual move is 16f1. But at a recent tournament I had been in despair about what to play against Matthias when chatting with Jan de Graaf, and he had said, 'Why not try 16b5?' It had worked well then, so I gave it another try now. This kind of move near the edge can often be sensible: there is a risk that Black will gain some moves on the West edge, but hopefully such moves will wreck his position by poisoning his play to the South. I should add that Michael was completely unsurprised by my move: afterwards he said, 'Oh yes, the Garry Edmead-type move!'

Black played 17d1 in order to keep his d6 move for later. Now 18f4 forces 19f3 (since otherwise White will play there himself), and then after 20f1 Black played 21f2 to avoid letting White play there. Note that letting White play to f2 is fairly fatal, even if White has to take another edge. For example, if 21d6 then 22f2 23e1 24c1, and now 25b6 would be met by 26c7, with d7 to come.

At move 22, I played g1, to threaten c1 while Black would have no access to e1. So my plan was 22g1 and then 24c1 25b1, with nice sacrifice chances for me around the h1 corner later in the game. The only way for Black to have access to e1 (after a move to c1 by White) would be if he played 23a3, and this looked suicidal to me, because it would poison so much of the West and the South. But Michael did play 23a3. This is a really wonderful move. The point is that I do get a nice move to a4, and he is indeed poisoned, but (after 24a4 25c1) it is my move. And almost every sequence that I want to play to the East results in row 5 becoming all



After 16b5



After 22g1

LOOKING AT OTHER MOVES

Sometimes you find a position where one of the moves you were thinking about during the game is not already shown. If you press the yellow lightbulb button it will start evaluating all moves, so you can see what Zebra thinks of the other moves as well.

It is also possible to play down these other lines to see what might have happened if you had played one of the other moves. Zebra will 'branch' the current game and the new moves will appear in red in the right hand transcript box. Once you have seen enough you can use the blue 'Take back' (left) arrow button to take you back to the main game. Once you get back to the 'real' game the blue 'Step forward' (right) arrow will become available again.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Make sure you remember what colour you were! When reviewing your games Zebra will also show you the evaluations for your opponent's moves, so remember which colour you were and try initially to worry only about your own moves.

1) A position in which only one score is shown on the board means that you chose the best move. (This is good!)

2) Look for big jumps in the graph or big differences between the evaluations displayed on the board. (This means the move was probably bad!)

3) Look for places where the graph crosses the 0 axis. The blue number on the board will be positive and the yellow number negative. This was a game-losing move. (It's possible for there to be several game-losing moves in a game as each player makes errors that hand the win to the other.)

Once you get to about move 40, Zebra will say 'Win,' 'Loss,' or 'Draw' on the board. This means that Zebra has reached its endgame mode and is sure that the moves are Wins/Losses/Draws but has not looked deeply enough yet to give an exact score.

A few moves later it will show exact scores. You can tell these are exact scores because the numbers in the 'played move/preferred move' boxes on the right are whole.

WHY IS THIS MOVE RIGHT/WRONG?

Unfortunately, Zebra can't always tell us everything we need to know, and sometimes it's necessary to do a bit of thinking yourself. If you've thought about it for a while and still cannot work out an answer you can seek help from the BOF mailing list.

1) In the box on the right hand side that lists the moves of the games, Right click, and select 'copy to clipboard'. Paste this move list into an email. Add some explanation about the game, what you were thinking and what your question is. E. g., 'At Move 41, I thought taking the corner and stabilising the

your 'best' move(s) will be shown in blue and the other moves will be yellow.

When you are done entering the game:

LET THE COMPUTER ANALYSE THE GAME

1) Select the 'Game' menu; 2) Choose 'Retrograde analyse game'; 3) Select 'Yes' when it asks you if you want to 'Start retrograde analysis'.

It will play backwards through the game analysing as it goes. A graph window will pop up.

READING THE GRAPH

Positive scores are good for Black. This can be tricky to get used to. If you were Black, you want the graph to be going up; if you were White you want the graph to be going down.

X (horizontal) axis is the move number of the game. Y (vertical) axis is the score difference. This is (Black score minus White score) so +10 means that Black wins 37 to 27.

SAVE THE GAME

Once the analysis has finished, the board will return to the final position and the WZebra controls will become active again. At this point save the game. This means that you can send the game to the person collecting the transcripts for the tournament. This will save them a lot of time having to duplicate your work (and will also allow you to reload the analysis if you accidentally hit the 'Break Replay' button later on.)

1) Select the 'File' menu; 2) Choose 'Save game.'

Give it a sensible name so you can find it again; I try to include as much information as I can, listing the tournament, the round and the players with scores (always listing the Black player first), e. g., 'WOC2010 - Round 5 - Geoff Hubbard 32 - 32 Jacky Fu.'

REVIEWING THE GAME

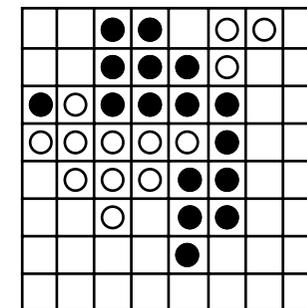
1) Select the 'Game' menu; 2) Choose 'Replay game'.

Use the blue 'Step Forward' (right) and 'Take back' (left) arrow buttons in the toolbar, either side of the yellow lightbulb button, to navigate through the game.

The board will show the current position and the evaluation of one or two of the valid moves. The evaluation of the 'best' move will be in blue. If you didn't choose the best move, the chosen move will be shown with its evaluation in orange. (This information is also displayed on the right hand side in the 'Played move' and 'Preferred move' boxes.)

White -- which would give him a quiet move to a5 and a huge advantage. So in fact I am very constrained. This farsighted move 23 was one of the best moves played against me in the entire tournament.

Adding to my woes was the fact that, if I end up getting to d6 but in the process make row 6 all White, then Black will have a great move to b6. But I just could not prevent one of these two scenarios (row 5 or row 6 becoming White) happening. I played 26g6 27g5 28d6, he played



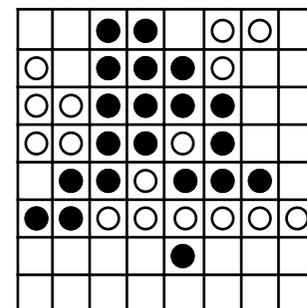
After 25c1

his excellent 29b6, and now I played 30a2 to prevent him getting a5 (with a free move to a2).

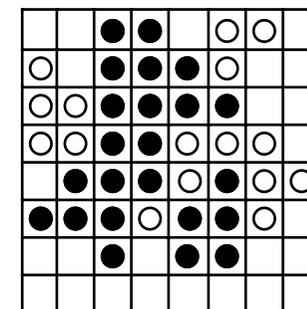
With 31a6, the game is starting to turn decisively in favour of Black. Note that this move is far preferable to 31a5 because, while 31a5 gives me an unbalanced edge, 31a6 is gaining a tempo. In addition, 31a6 means that later diagonal control may be very hard for me, because he will always have the pair a5 a7 to play whenever he wants. If we add to this the fact that at some point Black will probably have access to e1 (from the East),

and so will have the pair e1 b1 whenever he wants as well, we see that White's edges really are a huge liability.

I considered all of d8, e8 and f8 at move 32. But I felt that these would just lead to me taking the South edge and then having to initiate play to the East while being poisoned from the South. So I played to the East straight away, with 32h5. Michael responded with 33f7 in order not to open play up. One of my hopes with 32h5 had been that, if 33f7, then I should get both of g4 and g3, so I played 34g4. But Michael just responded with 35c7. This clever move gives me an utterly miserable choice. If I do not play to g3 then Michael will just play there himself. But if I do play 36g3, then 37d7 is an absolute killer! It is worth mentioning that one option for White, at any time, is to sacrifice with a5 a1 and so 'get the bad edge out of the way'. But at no point was it ever viable; it never even gained a tempo, and even worse once Black has got to h1 he can probably, via the East, get to e1 and so win the North edge as well. All in all, contemplating



After 31a6

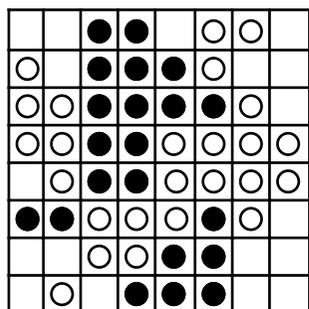


After 35c7

my choices at move 36 was highly depressing.

Having decided that a5 did not work and that g3 really lost horribly to d7, I played 36d7. Of course, this flips the c6 disc, making Stoner traps a real threat for later. Michael played 37g3, as planned, and I replied 38h4 to keep him out of e1 for the moment.

At move 39, where should Black play? There is a real opportunity to gain access to e1 by playing h3 h2. Indeed, the sequence 39h3 40h2 41e1 42b1 gives Black a very nice 43d8 and what appears to be a very good position. However, if then 44e8 45f8 46b8, how is Black to proceed? He can play off pairs like a5 a7 and c8 g8, but then what? For this reason, Black decided not to play this sequence, preferring instead to leave the North edge as a horrible White liability until near the end. This makes good sense, since on general grounds when Black is so clearly ahead there is no need for him to start cashing in the White edges.



After 42b8

So instead Black played to d8. After 40e8 41f8 42b8, it is Black to play. What should he do? Note that on each of the four edges White has a horrible structure -- but how should Black attack them?

One very obvious way to proceed rests on the fact that the pair of a5 a7 will give Black parity, thanks to the a8 corner region. Since White has no control at all, loss of parity will be fatal. So a Black move to a5 will have to be met by a White move other than a7 -- for example b1, for parity in the a1 corner region. But this is giving up a lot of

discs. Before this, though, Black played 43h6. The point of this is that the obvious recapture of 44h7 dies quickly to 45h2 -- White's only real try is 46g7, and then White does get the East edge but Black gets everything else (for example, with the simple 47h8 48h3 49g8).

Given that 44h7 was no good, I played 44g2. This at least keeps parity. The problem with it is that, after 45a5, I cannot play 46a7, as explained above. So I have to play 46b1, and that is giving up a vast number of stable discs. In particular, I am not getting any wedge at e1 (as one might ordinarily hope that a move like g2 would lead to). So, after this 46b1, we had 47h1 48e1 49a1 50b2. I was already mentally congratulating Michael on his win and feeling miserable that I'd lost the Final two years in a row.

After 51h3, I sat and thought about my move. I knew I could play a 'feed' if I wanted, which was probably the right thing to do in terms of number of discs: 52b7 53a8 54a7 55c8 would give up a lot of discs, especially with the c8 move, but at least then I could play 56g8 and have a feed. The idea of the feed, a classic way for White to get the last move in a region of 4 where Black

How to Analyse your Games with Zebra *by Geoff Hubbard*

INTRODUCTION

WZebra (or just Zebra) is an Othello program for PCs running Windows. In this article I'll describe how you can use Zebra to analyse your own Othello games easily in order to improve your play.

After each tournament I analyse my games with Zebra. This allows me to see where I'm going right and where I'm going wrong in my games. It helps me find the 2 or 3 most important moves in the game easily without having to manually analyse every move of the game. This means that by spending only 5-10 minutes reviewing each game I make sure that I keep improving.

GETTING ZEBRA

Get Zebra from the 'downloads' link on the BOF website or go to: <http://www.radagast.se/othello/download.html> You want the file wz424.exe

Download and Run it to install WZebra.

SETTING UP FOR ANALYSIS

1) Open Zebra; 2) Select the 'Zebra Settings' Menu; 3) Choose 'Search depth'; 4) Select '16 Moves + last 20 Perfect'.

A Note about Search Depth: If you have a faster computer or are prepared to wait longer choose a higher number. If you have a slower computer or just want faster results select a lower number. The higher the number you choose the more exact your results will be. Choosing 'Solving (exact)' might seem like a good idea, but it will take a *very* long time (millions of years). I find 16/20 a good compromise on my 5-year-old computer.

5) Select the 'Options' Menu.

Make sure the following options are ticked: a) View scores, b) Show principal variation, c) Display evaluations on board, d) Display a graph summarising analysis.

It's not a problem if other options are also ticked, but these are the most useful ones we're going to need for now.

ENTERING YOUR GAME

Select the 'Game' menu and choose 'New practice session.' You should now see a board at the starting position with +0 showing in each square of Black's 4 valid moves.

Play through the game from your transcript. On the right hand side there is a box which shows you the move number and co-ordinates of the moves so far.

As you go it will show you on the board some analysis of all the valid moves. Positive numbers are good, negative ones are bad. The evaluation of

move 50 I played, I had checked that I would not be swindled on the a8-f3 diagonal: if 55h7 then I can play 56b2 (a swindle of my own), while if 55b2 then I play to g2 while I can and only after that go to a1. But in fact Ruben could have swindled me on the *other* diagonal! If he plays 55h1 then I must reply 56a1 (for discs), and then 57g2 removes my access to b2. I can play 58h7, but then 59g2 removes my access again! But this is pretty hard to spot.

Against Takuji, we played an opening that is traditional in games between us. Note moves 25 and 28: each is quite unexpected at first glance but makes good sense upon a closer look. For most of the midgame it was very hard to tell who was ahead; we both felt that the lead changed hands quite a few times here. When I played move 46 I felt quite confident, since I would probably get either rows 1 and 2 or else row 1 and the b-column -- this looked like it would be enough to win. But at move 52 I must be careful, because the attractive g7 gets me swindled; 52g7 53e8 54f8 55h8 56g8 and now 57h7 does not give me access to h6! (A similar swindle awaits the equally-appealing 52g8: 53f8 54e8 55h8 56g7 57h7!) So instead I played 52e8, and now after 53h6 there is again a swindle threatened; if I take back with 54h7 then we have 55h1 56g1 and 57g8, gaining parity in the h8 corner region. This is a swindle that the French call the 'ruse de T.' Anyway, fortunately my alternative of 54g7 avoided all these swindles, and although it does give Black some discs the game is White's.

46	48	42	47	37	33	58	57
21	49	10	32	41	26	50	40
20	9	3	4	23	30	29	39
19	8	5	○	●	6	31	38
15	14	7	●	○	1	35	36
17	16	12	2	13	22	18	53
44	28	25	11	24	27	54	56
43	45	34	51	52	60	59	55

Kashiwabara 31 Leader 33

●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
●	○	○	●	○	○	●	○
●	○	○	○	○	●	●	●
●	●	●	○	○	●	○	●
●	●	○	○	○	●	●	●
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

After 51h3

23 before move 60 and so easily enough to win.

This shows the awesome power of a feed. Here everything just worked out perfectly for it, including the White disc at a7 which gave me the whole of row 7 at move 60. Of course, with hindsight one can see all this coming, but in the game I did not. I knew that a feed would be coming, but until I actually counted it out (at move 52) I had not the slightest belief that I could be winning.

Going back, perhaps Michael's only bad move was move 43. By playing to h6, and allowing me to play g2, he has made the h1 corner region play out very well for me. I'm sure that if he had realised that his plan (with a5 next move) did not work out then he'd have done something else, like a5 right there at move 43 (when it is much more dangerous for me to play b1, for example

49	46	25	17	48	20	22	47
30	50	14	10	11	21	44	58
23	12	7	9	2	19	37	51
24	13	1	○	●	18	34	38
45	16	6	●	○	5	27	32
31	29	8	28	4	3	26	43
54	52	35	36	15	33	59	60
53	42	55	39	40	41	56	57

Handel 28 Leader 36

has no access, is that (here) White plays g8 and then plays h2, while Black takes his moves to h8 and g7 in some order, and then gets a nice last move to h7. It looked as though I would get a disc-count in the high 20s, so I began to count it out. And it gradually dawned on me that this line gave me rather more than high 20s. The feed worked so magically beautifully well that, even though I'd have only 16 discs after move 55, I would have

●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
●	○	○	●	○	○	●	○
●	○	○	○	○	●	●	●
●	○	●	○	○	●	●	●
●	○	●	○	○	●	●	●
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

After 55c8

because c8 g8 h2 gives him evil access to e1 as well as the even more evil control of the c3-f6 diagonal). But, at the time, it did feel to both players that the a5 b1 pair, as played at moves 45 and 46 in the game, was never going to be enough for White.

There are many other plans for Black at move 43. For example, he can play out the South edge to gain access to a tempo at h2: 43c8 44g8 45h2. Note that a White diagonal control of 46h3 47h6 48g7 does not work, because of a diagonal-control of Black's own: 49e1 50b1 51g2.

Alternatively, Black could use his a5 a7 pair at that point: 49a5 50a7 51h8 52h7 53a8: this leads to a narrow win for Black. But these kinds of sequences are hard to find at move 43 when one

thinks that one has a clear parity-gaining (or stable-disc-gaining) win instead.

British Nationals 2010: final standings after the 9-round tournament and 1-game Final:

1. Imre Leader 9/9 + 1; 2. Michael Handel 8 + 0; 3. Geoff Hubbard 7; 4= Iain Barrass, Robert Stanton, Helen Starkey, Ian Turner all on 5; 8= Roy Arnold, Andrew Burgess, Robert Butler, Tom Grover, Marie Lightman, Ali Turner all on 4; 14. David Haigh 3; 15. Tani Turner 1; 16. Kali Turner 0

Nationals Notes *by Michael Handel*

No David Hand, Steve Robinson, David Beck.
No Graham Brightwell, Joel Feinstein, Garry Edmead, Guy Plowman.
No Jeremy Das, Phil Marson.
No Ben Pridmore and no Mark Wormley.
You were all missed; there are many others I could mention.

The tournament was *still* a spectacular success! I thoroughly enjoyed myself. Many thanks to the incredibly organised Helen. Additional thanks to Adelaide and Roy :) Here's hoping for higher attendance next year.

MORE NOTES ON THE FINAL

22g1. A terrified reaction? Works well against beaming Rottweilers, sometimes. Once territory is marked... a proper kill... always feels like labouring the point.

23a3 happens straight away: d6 remains key for Black, and a3 doesn't change this. For example, White cannot survive 26g3 27d6. Having said that... idiot computer wants 23b1. Mutter.

From 23 onwards I feared a White g2. It seemed to me that this was always available and always good: poisoning my h2, and how is Black accessing e1, exactly? My plans were hazy... but g2 kept not happening... and I got confused...

31a5 32a6 33f7 34h5 is a fluky drawn game, at best.

43h6 is not the British champion's move -- My feeble defence: if White had played 40g2 as he was supposed to, Black's best reply is... h6

I'm sure we all prefer to win with beautiful moves... when it does not happen, it can feel unjust.

Points to stress:

- i) Imre did everything he *had* to do, *when* he had to do it. Twice.
- ii) Imre is such a class act, he makes it too easy to forget the intense, unrelenting pressure I subjected him to.

Continued on page 14

The World Championships 2010

by Imre Leader

This is a very brief report on the World Championships which took place in November in Rome. We'll ignore the excellent food and drink components (wonderful coffee available all the time, bar snacks put out 'for Othello players only' every evening, fabulous victory dinner, *etc.*), and we'll ignore Michael Handel's remarkable taxi exploits.

There were 64 players from a total of 24 countries. As always at the Worlds, the standard was incredibly high; even when one lost a game one did not get an easy next round. So pretty much every win was something to be proud of.

At the end of the 13-round Swiss, I was equal 2nd on 10 points. Michael Handel was equal 18th on 7 1/2 points, Iain Barrass was equal 37th on 6 points, and Helen Starkey was equal 59th on 4 points. Oh, and our Australian chairman Geoff Hubbard was equal 30th, on 6 1/2 points.

I'm sorry to report that I did not have a great 3rd day: I lost 2-0 to Michele Borassi of Italy in the Semifinals and then I lost to Piyanat Aunchulee of Thailand in the 3rd-4th playoff. Meanwhile, Yusuke Takashi of Japan beat Michele 2-1 in the Final to repeat his triumph of 2009.

Usually at the Worlds I have a lot of exciting endgames, but this time strangely of my 16 games only 2 were really close -- all the others were over by move 50. I think this was just a random effect, since other players I asked did not report the same. Anyway, those 2 games are below. The first was against Ruben Saiz of Spain in Round 5 and the second was against Takuji Kashiwabara of France in Round 13. I should point out that I am absolutely terrified of playing Takuji in the last round of the Swiss part of a tournament, because all four times that it has happened in a European Grand Prix, when I need only to win to get into the Final, each time I've lost or drawn and hence missed out on that Final's place -- and here I did need to beat him to secure my place in the Semifinals.

Against Ruben, the midgame was very exciting. Note Ruben's excellent move 29, threatening both f1 and a6. I was proud of my 34, and Ruben correctly did not take back the edge. The ending is full of threats of swindles by both players. My move 50 was because I wanted to be sure that I would not lose access to g2, but a simpler (and better) plan would have been just to play 50g7, with 51h8 52a7 53g6 to be followed by 54a1 55b2 56g2. With the

58	32	15	30	47	33	48	57
29	55	14	13	22	39	56	42
11	12	3	4	17	18	40	41
48	8	5	○	●	6	35	38
45	16	7	●	○	1	43	51
31	23	9	2	10	19	54	50
52	46	28	21	20	37	59	60
49	26	25	24	34	27	36	53

Saiz 30 Leader 34

A new low and the second biggest drop! And despite Imre's best efforts.

A possible cause is the extreme dearth of feedback and loss-limiting points this year; Helen Starkey provided 16 feedback points and Roy Arnold 5 loss-limiting points. That's all. Compare this total of a mere 21 to last year's 136.

People playing routinely true to form, thereby generating few feedback and loss-limiting points, is of course something I have no control over. So even if I figure out a better way of measuring inflation/deflation, I also need to figure out a better way of controlling it.

The spaceman has landed on the night side of Icarus, but disaster (a very appropriate word, given its etymology) approaches over the horizon. Will he come to his senses in time?

Continued from page 8

The fact that i) and ii) do not stretch Imre's abilities is quite beside the point. To sum up: of course I'm disappointed, but clearly the best man won on the day. Congratulations, again, to Imre. A true champion!

Cambridge Christmas Tournament *by Adelaide Carpenter*

Five players (Imre, Roy, Ben, Steve, and me) were there by the time the first round should start, so we played the first round of a round robin which Aubrey set up (he couldn't stay at the venue for more than an hour), with me as the first Bye; however, when Pierluigi arrived just before the second round, we plugged him into Bye's position for the remaining four round rounds and then played the last two games using ranking for pairings in the Swiss manner. Final results:

1) Imre Leader 5 1/2 out of 7; 2) Ben Pridmore 4 1/2; 3) Pierluigi Stanzone 3 out of 6; 4) Roy Arnold 3; 5) Steve Hall 2; 6) Adelaide Carpenter 1 (the Bye)

Four by Infinity: The Denouement

by Aubrey de Grey

Those of us (and I say 'us' rather than 'you', because I have no evidence that a single reader actually got through the whole of what I wrote) who were left in suspense by the analysis of four-by-infinity Othello that I wrote in the January 2010 newsletter may be interested to learn whether I ever succeeded in completing the investigation. To recap:

1) The starting position is as shown, with the board extending upwards to infinity

...				
5				
4				
3		○	●	
2		●	○	
1				
	a	b	c	d

Starting position
for the world's
most interesting
idiotic Othello
variant

2) 1c1 and 1d2 lose boringly within at most 13 moves

3) 1a3 and 1b4 win within at most 26 moves, but less boringly, in that there are lines in which the best achievable margin of victory seems to be only one disc

4) After 1c1 or 1d2, White's ability to force a wipeout is very, **very** hard to determine.

Well, the bad news is that I'm afraid item 3 above is rather boring after all. All the lines that I thought led to only a one-disc victory begin a3 a4 b4 c4 d3 d2 d4 d5 d1 a1 a5, but unfortunately it turns out that 3b4 is not best: 3a5 leads to more choices for White, but they are all quite comfortable for Black, only 4d3 even avoiding a wipeout.

But the rest of my news is good, at least for fans of exhaustive analysis of idiotic Othello variants. As I feel sure you will recall, the interesting sequences begin c1 d1 d2 (or equivalently d2 d1 c1) d3 c4; all other choices are easily seen to lead rapidly to either a White wipeout or a Black stable disc.

So to the first question that I left open a year ago: what is the situation at move 6? White clearly cannot take a2 or b1, but all of b4, b5 and d5 seem worthy of investigation. 6d5 does indeed fail, to c5, with 8b5 b4 or 8b4 d4 giving Black the a1 corner in fairly short order. The longest line appears to be 1c1 d1 d2 d3 c4 d5 c5 b4 d4 d6 a5 a3 b6 b5 c6 d7 a6 a4 a2 b7 a7 b1 a1.

Now let's look at 6b4. 7d4 is the only option: 7a2 struggles on for a while but it's ultimately easy for White. After 7d4, on the other hand, Black is in the ascendancy. Of White's two choices, 8d5 looks fragile and it indeed is, failing to 9a3 a4 a5 b5 c6. What about 8b5? It leaves Black with two promising moves, a3 or c5, and a3 is very even, especially after 10d5 a5 a4 c5 c6 c7 d7 b6.

But you know what? I'm not going to tell you who comes out on top after 9a3, because I haven't bothered to analyse it any further. We can avoid the need to do so, by noting that Black's other move 9, to c5, gives the same

position as after White's remaining move 6, namely 6b5, so long as the latter proceeds 6b5 c5 b4 d4.

'So what?' I hear you cry. And yes, that transposition only obviates the analysis of 6b4 d4 b5 a3 under two additional conditions: if White can secure the wipeout in response to (a) any move other than 7c5 after 6b5 and also (b) any move other than 9d4 after 6b5 c5 b4. Condition (a) is indeed quite easy to show: 7b4 is clearly the only choice and it fails quite quickly. At move nine, however, Black has five choices on the a-file -- and two of them, 9a4 and especially 9a3, do not go down without a serious fight, as I mentioned a year ago. But down they do eventually go, often to a prodigious sequence in which White takes b1 flipping b2 (though, in contrast to many sequences after 6d5, without giving Black a1), blithely lets Black control the a-file, but then gets the a-file back by making Black relinquish it. (A representative line, with an entertaining number of Black passes and only one Black choice, is 9a3 a5 a6 d4 a4 b1 d6 d5 c6 d7 d8 b7 c8 a8 b9 d9 b8 b10 b6 c7 a10 c9 a9 a7 a2 d10 c10 c11 b11 b12.) Thus, 6b4 d4 b5 a3 cannot be uniquely perfect play, because if Black survives it then White can pre-empt it by playing 6b5 instead and thereby end up after move 9 in no worse a position than after 6b4 d4 b5 c5, whereas if White prevails then Black can simply play 9c5. In other words, the overall question of whether Black can avoid a wipeout after 1c1 or 1d2 can be determined without knowing what happens after 6b4 d4 b5 a3.

With me so far? I felt sure you would be. OK, so we're left with 1c1 d1 d2 d3 c4 b5 c5 b4 d4, following which only 10d6 merits more than a moment's thought.

There are masses of choices for Black at 11, and four of them are non-trivial for White. 11c6 and 11a6 are not monstrously hard, though, so that leaves 11a3 and 11a5. A year ago I admitted to a pang of doubt whether 11a3 was functionally forced, and I was right to do so, because my analysis of 11a5 turns out to have been faulty. But let's check out 11a3 first.

Well, my provisional analysis here was faulty too: I allowed the possibility that 12d5 might be of interest, but I preferred 12a4. Several lines are hard work for White after 12a4, but only one survived my onslaught a year ago: 12a4 a5 d5 b6 b7 c6 c7 c8 a6 a7. And survive it continued to do, until finally I despaired sufficiently to reconsider 12d5.

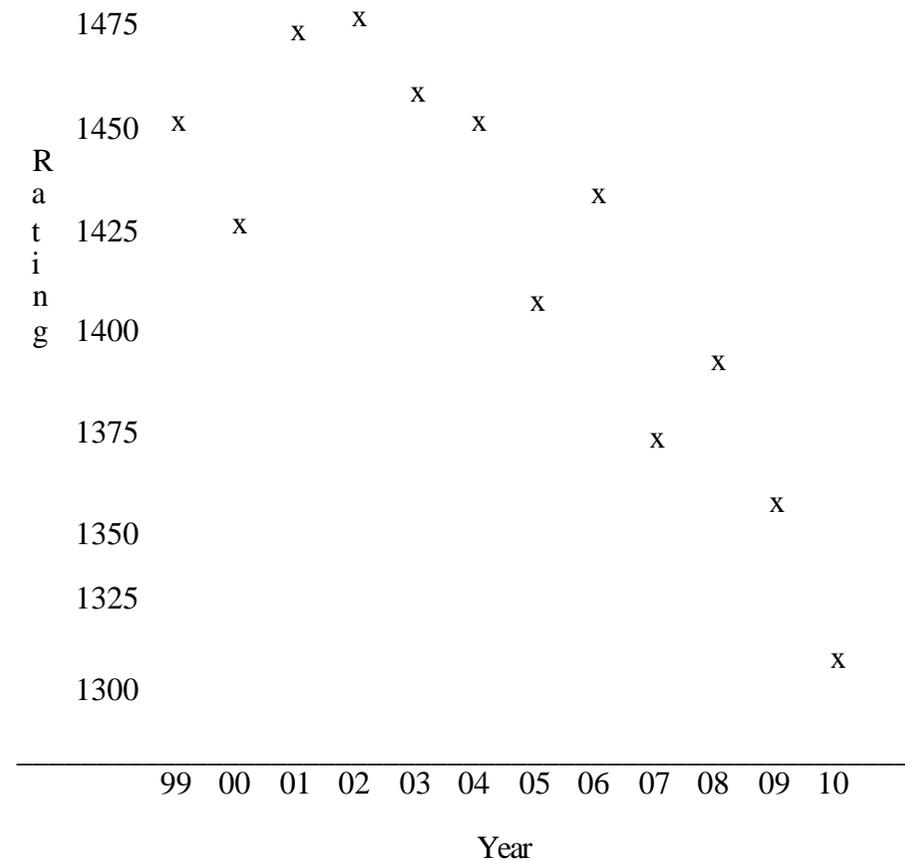
By contrast, as it turns out, 12d5 does indeed work for White. 13c6 and 13a6 are non-trivial (13a6 being particularly branchy), but the real action begins after 13a4. The most elusive line is arguably 13a4 a5 a6 b6 c7 a7 c6 a2 b1 a1. (It is by no means the longest, though -- see if you can shorten 13a4 a5 a6 b6 c7 a7 a8 d8 c6 b7 d7 b1 d9 c8 b8 d10 c9 b9 b10 a11 b11 b12 c10 a9 a12 a13 b13 b14 a10 a2 c11. I bet you can't.) So, mercifully, 12a4 can be ignored, and 11a3 can thus be declared to allow a wipeout for White whatever Black may do.

Meanwhile, Back on Icarus, ...

by David Haigh

... the spaceman has crash-landed and lies unconscious in his pod. For all the thought I've managed to put into devising a better way of measuring inflation/deflation in our ratings, I might have been in the same state. Therefore for the want of anything better I here simply present the usual (dubious) statistics.

There were 23 non-foreign people (now including de-foreignised Pierluigi Stanzone) who played this year, whose ratings were already established at the beginning of the year, and who therefore contributed to the 2010 rating average. Here then is the chart showing a plot of average established ratings, including the new point for 2010.



Deep breath..... what about 11a5?

Well, first of all it's worth mentioning how I messed up in my analysis of this line a year ago. It was pretty bad. First of all, after 11a5 a3 I didn't generate d5. The genius of 13d5 is the control of the c-file, which forces White to give Black either a1 or the b1-c1 wedge almost instantly. But that wasn't the worst of it: I also thought that 11a5 12d5 worked easily, because I prematurely gave White the decision after 13b6 b7 c7 a7 c6 a1. Looks totally done and dusted, doesn't it? See the diagram.

9				
8				
7	○	○	●	
6		○	●	○
5	●	○	●	○
4		○	●	○
3		○	○	○
2		○	●	○
1	○		●	○
	a	b	c	d

It's Black to move, with abundant choice, but White can always play b1 next, and then it's just a matter of mopping up, right? Well, no. (And before you ask: yes, I looked very hard at all prior options: Black and White can definitely both force the above position starting from 12d5.)

Here's the problem. After most of Black's moves to the a-file, in particular 19a6, White must play b1 at once (or Black will), but after 19a6 b1 Black can play 21a8! This ugly-looking move gives Black no control in the 'North' but no need for any, because it decisively pulls White in that direction. 22c8 leaves White seriously under the Black cosh after 23d8 b8 d9 c9 b10, with or without the a4 a3 pair after d8 -- I'm pretty sure (and yes, I guess you can anticipate the end of this article from my lack of concern about this uncertainty) that Black can extend the game indefinitely (by a repeating, hence provably infinite, sequence) thereafter, which is a perfectly good way of

avoiding a wipeout. If so, White's only option is 22b8. At 23, Black must not fill in the a-file hole voluntarily (though in fact 23a4 leaves White some work to do). 23c8, 23c9 and (with somewhat more of a fight) 23d8 also succumb, all to 24d7. But 23d7 is a different matter.

Remember the problem for White here: Black can avoid the wipeout not only by seizing a1 or wedging at b1-c1 but also either by forcing a repeating infinite sequence or by forcing the game to end when there are still black discs on the board, specifically on the a-file. There are actually quite a few tempting sequences for White in other lines that fail for that last reason but none quite so problematic as here. In this position, both the infinite-sequence option and the forced-end option loom large.

First consider 24d8. What can White do after 25b9? In a nutshell, the answer is 'Black's bidding'. And Black's bidding is in control indefinitely. It starts with 26b10 c10 d10 d11 d12 a10 b11 ... see it yet? ... a12 b12 c12 b13 d13 d14 see it now? a14 b14 c14 b15 and so on. 26a9 also exists,

but with the same fate just two rows higher: 26a9 a10 b10 b11 b12 c12 d12 d13 d14 a12 b13 [a14 b14 c14 b15 d15 d16] a16 etc.

So it has to be 24c8. Can that possibly work? Well, to cut a long (and I mean long) story short, it works against 25c9, d8, d9 and b9 without too much effort. The surprising hold-out is 25a4, which has been strengthened relative to earlier stages by White's flipping of c4. But White eventually gets there.

So we're finally done. White can, at the end of the day, force a wipeout in this ridiculous Othello variant if Black's move 1 is to c1 or d2. And there is very little (other than simple stuff like Stoner traps) that you will ever need to know about swindles in normal 8 x 8 Othello but that you will not learn from traversing the relevant game tree. So there -- this was not a useless pair of articles after all. I am reminded of a sentence from yesteryear: 'So, rather than artificially introduce a genuine article about Othello with some totally absurd and questionably relevant anecdote, I can now do the opposite and artificially introduce an article utterly unrelated to good Othello play with a questionably relevant anecdote that might in fact be of some use to the reader.'

(If you can name the puzzle in relation to which I wrote this, you earn my undying love. I sweated even more blood on that puzzle than on this one.)

Epilogue: at least half of the work I put into this puzzle since the original article is not discussed above. That's because, once I realised my mistake concerning 1c1 d1 d2 d3 c4 b5 c5 b4 d4 d6 a5 d5 b6 b7 c7 a7 c6 a1, I took a look at the alternatives to 14b7, and 14a7 happens to lead to a monumental battle. I believe the game can in fact last until move 65 before Black finally forces a conclusion: the sequence in question is 1c1 d1 d2 d3 c4 b5 c5 b4 d4 d6 a5 d5 b6 a7 a3 a4 b7 c6 c7 c8 c9 a8 b8 a6 a9 b9 d7 d8 b10 c10 d11 a10 a2 c11 a11 b11 b12 b13 d12 d10 c13 a13 d9 d13 c12 a12 a14 b14 b15 b16 c16 d16 d17 d18 a16 b17 d14 c14 d15 c15 a15 c17 a17, finally forcing 64a1 b1 or b1 a1. Whew! Shorten that if you can, but I bet you can't. And the worst of it, of course, was that since it is Black who prevails after 14a7 (as well as after all the other alternatives to 14b7), I had to go back to 14b7 anyway. Well, at least 14b7 finally turned out to work for White, otherwise I would additionally have had to go back to 6b4 d4 b5 a3 (see above).

Whew. If you've made it to here, you win a surprise prize. But how will I know that you didn't skip anything?