

group of players who had met online. The OAS had the foresight to first promote the game at "grass root level" in schools and high-schools (the Inter-Junior College Othello Championships) to produce young motivated players who would eventually play in national and hopefully international tournaments. In 2002, after four years of developing and promoting the game in the country, the OAS finally felt ready to organise their first national tournament. I happened to be there for the occasion and a great occasion it was! They had local sponsors help them secure a great venue, over 30 players turned up, some very good games were played, and "guest star" Hang Lee-Juan, Singapore's WOC representative from 1985, handed over the trophies to the finalists. To this date Hang Lee-Juan is still the only Singaporean to have played at the WOC, and the OAS is unfortunately witnessing a decrease in activities. But I certainly hope we will finally see a full team for Singapore at the 2006 WOC in Mito.

Singapore's national champions: Gene Low (2002), Sky Chong (2003), Ong Sukait (2004), Anthony Liew (2005)

Meanwhile, in Hong Kong, with already a decent number of online players, the new HKOA were confident that a structure of regular tournaments would get the ball rolling. And it certainly did since they currently have around 300 players on their mailing list and have organised many tournaments over the past six years including the annual Hong Kong Othello Championships, the Othello Rookie King Championship and the Othello Blitz King Championship (last won by Velma Fu).

As in Singapore, Hong Kong tournaments often attract over 30 players. Hong Kong's national champions: Tsoi, Chun Yip (1999), Li, Chun Wan (2000), Ng, Ka Fu (2001), Wong, Ka Hang (Kevin) (2002), Fu, Jacky (2003), Wong, Ka Hang (2004, 05)

After the Singapore and Hong Kong players broke the ice in 1998, it was only natural that other Othello players in Asia would soon follow... And South Korea and China were next in line.

South Korea had benefited from the fact that in 1999 the Mind Sports Olympiads became a regular annual event in Seoul. So when in 2002 a group of Korean players decided to found the Korean Othello Association (KOA), most of them had already met over-the-board at the MSO. The presence of the MSO also meant that many Korean players were able to gain valuable international tournament experience early on as a number of strong Japanese players attended. In 2003, the KOA sent their very first WOC team to Sweden and finished in 7th position in the team standings (Tae Jun Jung, Kwan Soo Kim and Young Hwa Kwon). This year the South Korean team is selected from two national tournaments: the two finalists from the Korean Othello Championships (first started in 2004) and the winner of the

BOF National Championship Tournament September 2-3, 2006

Venue: The Holy Trinity School

Buckswood Drive

Gossops Green

Crawley

West Sussex

RH11 8JE

Contact: Yvette Campbell Campbellyvette@aol.com

The Annual General Meeting will begin at 1 PM; we expect Round 1 of the Tournament, which is open to all UK and UK-resident players, to begin at 3 PM, with the usual first three rounds of the Swiss on Saturday, the next six rounds of Swiss on Sunday starting at 9:30 AM followed by a one-game Final. Please tell Yvette whether you expect to attend, both so we have enough equipment and for luncheon arrangements (see below).

One of the purposes of the Nats is to choose the UK representatives for our World Othello Championship team, this year to be in Mito-shi, Japan, October 5-8 (see <http://www.woc2006.jp/main.html>); we get to send a three-person team of whatever sex ratio plus a female and we have been allotted four slots of subsidy (see <http://www.woc2006.jp/subsidy/>). Please, since the time between the Nats and the Worlds is short, decide before you come to the Nats whether you will be able to travel to Japan for the Worlds if you qualify so we can decide on our team as quickly as possible!

If you arrive early, Yvette says there is a coffee shop at the garden centre across the road (nearly) from the school that does meals. She is negotiating a special set menu for Sunday lunch for us there, since there are no pubs closer than 20 minutes' walk away; if you are coming to the Tournament but will not want this Sunday lunch, tell her this too!

Cambridge EGP *by Aubrey de Grey*

The Cambridge International in February was won by Matthias Berg, the first time a German has won. Imre Leader finished the Swiss in the lead, with 9 wins from 11, but Matthias won the final 39-25, 30-34, 40-24. Francesco Marconi beat Roel Hobo 35-29, 32-32, 31-33 to take third on disc count.

The No-FAT II*by Graham Brightwell and Chris Welty*

This may prove to be the final article in our seemingly endless series on (probably) perfectly played games in one particular opening line. We're looking at the No-FAT, defined by White's move 20g3, avoiding the FAT 20h5. Last time, we mentioned that 21h5 22h2 23d2 were 'forced', and we looked at some of the strange -- yet perfect -- games that continue with 24d8. This time, we'll look at the other possibility, 24c5. Our readers will doubtless expect more strange -- yet, naturally, perfect -- games, and we wouldn't want to disappoint them, now would we?

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The No-FAT, with 23d2 24c5

Although we spent a lot of time on the play after the alternative drawing move 24d8, there weren't all that many variations -- just three correct sequences from 25 to 32. There are rather more correct sequences 25-32 (14 of them, in fact) after 24c5, but we'll only be seeing a few of these.

After 24c5, the only drawing variation is 25c6 and then 26b4. Now the natural 27e3 is a draw, and so is 27b3, to the surprise of both Ntest and WZebra, who rate it as hopeless on deep midgame searches.

We can't hope to explain convincingly why they are wrong, but what we should be looking out for are tactical tricks for Black deep in key variations. After 27b3, 28b5 is obvious and correct, and then 29a3 (something like the 6th choice move of

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After 24c5

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After 26b4

Salisbury Regional*by Julian Richens*

The second Salisbury regional was held on the 17th of June in the same venue as last year because the folks who came last year seemed to find it ideal. George, Geoff, Joel, Iain, and I came to play; my wife joined in for the first round to avoid a bye with the intention of 'dropping out' if another player arrived. No other player turned up so Angela played the whole tournament. She enjoyed this her first tournament and came away motivated to learn how to improve.

After we had played a round robin, Geoff had won 4, George, Iain, and Joel had won 3 each. We had already decided to play two rounds of Swiss after the round robin. Three players were joint second so George, Iain, and Joel drew lots for who would play Geoff. Iain drew the short straw; he had just taken a game from Geoff in round 5 as Black but did not manage to repeat this in round 6 as White.

The new standings were Geoff 5, Joel 4, George, Iain, and I 3, and Angela 0. Lots were drawn for George or Iain to play Angela, since I had already played her twice. The final standings were Geoff and Joel 5, George and Iain 4, Julian 3, Angela 0; Joel had the higher BQ.

UK Grand Prix ratings maintained by Roy Arnold; no report. Should be on <http://www.britishothello.org.uk> but I don't see it; I do know Geoff Hubbard came in first.

(Continued from page 13)

tournament! Surely something had to be done, but little did we know, things were already starting to change.

The online Othello boom that gave birth to the "internet generation" of tournament players began in the mid-late '90s. The first wave of "internet players" reached the WOC in Athens in 1997. But if Greece was too far to travel for internet players from south-east Asia, many of them were starting to be noticed on various online game sites ("hksheep" from Hong Kong, "Nori" from South Korea, "dragon" from Singapore, to name just a few).

Then in 1998 came the real breakthrough when both the Othello Association of Singapore (OAS) and the Hong Kong Othello Association (HKOA) were born. Othello tournaments would finally be held on the Asian continent outside Japan, a very important step since it allowed internet players to discover the real world of competitive Othello.

Like most new Othello associations in Asia, the OAS was founded by a

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

Leader 23 Brightwell 41

although I must admit I didn't plan 46b1 at all, and I was pretty close to playing something else when I decided just to take one more look around ...

Look elsewhere in this newsletter for what I should have done at 36. It's strange, though: Imre's sequence 39h5-h6-f7 looks so natural, and completely convincing, but if White responds with the boring and uninspired sequence I found through 44, then Black has nothing better than the draw. Black's only win is 39b2, a move which hardly looks urgent. During the game, I was convinced I was booked for a defeat, but I kept playing the obvious moves in the hope that something would turn up. One time in maybe a hundred, it does. This was that time,

Many thanks to Aubrey de Grey for organising the event smoothly and to Adelaide Carpenter for organising the tournament ably.

London Regional 2006

by *Jeremy Dyer*

The George Public House on the Strand was last used as an Othello venue back in 2004. And with the resurrected London Regional attracting sixteen players, I'm sure it will become a regular fixture. The landlord of the pub had rung me a couple of days before the tournament to say he couldn't get there before 10:30am. I asked people not to turn up before this time -- or to meet up in the coffee shop next to the pub. As it happened, the landlord had changed his mind and was there much earlier; nevertheless, round 1 started some time after 11.

Pairings were done by Graham with PAPP. Although we started much later than planned, and had a large number of players, this certainly helped us get the scheduled seven rounds completed in good time. Iain and Geoff both finished with 6 points; Iain's disk count was 13 higher than Geoff's. Iain's only loss was to Geoff, while Geoff's single reverse was to Phil. Graham's two losses were to Iain and Geoff.

Final scores: Iain Barrass 6/7, Geoff Hubbard 6, Graham Brightwell and Phil Marson 5, Joel Blackmur, George Ortiz, and Steve MacGuire 4, Jeremy Dyer, Roy Arnold, Ian Turner, Ben Pridmore, Julian Richens, and Robert Stanton 3, Stephen Rowe and Aidan Robison 2, Kali Turner 0.

the machines) is the draw. Now White can play 30e2 (which we'll come back to) or 30e8, or 30a4 as in the game below.

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

(A) All about access

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After 43g2!

Black's 43a6 is also a draw, but 43g2! is much more glamorous. The point is that White will have trouble cutting the diagonal, and if she doesn't manage that then Black is ready to play g8, gaining tempo or -- if White takes h8 -- winning the race to h1. White can try 44b6 45c7 46b7 47a8 48a6, or 44c7 45b6 46b7 47a8 48a6, but it's all far too expensive. (After the latter sequence, one fun line is 49d8-h1-b8-b2-a7-b1-a1-(P)-a5-(P)-g8 and the game ends with three empty squares, Black winning 35-29.) But what else can White try?

The extremely strange solution is for White to play 44g8!, although it takes quite a while to see what this achieves. Black is more-or-less forced to reply 45d8 (in the sense that the alternative 45a5 is one disc worse), and now both 46c7 and 46b6 draw. To see what the pair g8-d8 has achieved, look at 46c7-b6?-b7-a8?-b8 (or 46b6-c7?-b7-a8?-b8): White gets to h1 while preserving a wedge on the South edge, which is enough to win relatively comfortably. In this line, Black should prefer 49h8, after which he can play b8 and then a8, but he can't get parity or quite enough discs.

After 46c7 (46b6 is more complicated), Black has to play 47b7 48b6 49a6, and now after 50a5 (not 50a7-a8-b8-g7!), White is going to get on the diagonal. 51h8 is best, and after 52a7 we reach the position on the next page.

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Black gets a swindle?

The swindle with 53b8 screams out to be played, but Black needs to look beyond it. After 53b8-h1-h7-g7, Black would have to play a8, but then White will do very well out of her two moves in the North-West. However, if Black plays 53a8!-b8 instead, giving up one of the moves in the South-West, then it is he who gets two of the three moves in the North-West, which – once you see it – is clearly better for him. Black keeps the second rank, the seventh rank, and the g-file, and of course it's a draw.

Alternative draws: 48a6 (the only drawing line goes a6-h8-b6-a5-h1-a1-b1-b2-a7-a8-b8-g7-(P)-h7; Black gets a swindle but only 32 discs), 46b6, 43a6,

the transposition 35c1-e8-c2, and 31a6.

Let's turn, as promised, to 30e2, which programmes reckon is massively favourable to White.

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

(B) All about a diagonal

The first move to discuss is 32b6. (This is one of four drawing moves, the others being 32a4, 32c8 and 32c1.) You wouldn't have thought that White would be eager to flip the f6 disc so readily, practically inviting Black to sacrifice at g8 and g7. One point is that, if White leaves the f6 disc alone with 32c8-d8-b6, Black can play 35f1, threatening to get f2 in and forcing 36f2. After that, astonishingly, 37a5 wins for Black! The best explanation we can offer is that there is never a good way for White to open up the apparently favourable North-West region, while the odd region in the North-

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After 31e3

White dead then? After 45a7, 46b1 gives up the swindle 47a2, and neither 46d8 47g7 nor 46c8 47d8 seems to achieve anything for White: Black still has the two odd regions in the North to work with. Meanwhile, 45b1 sacrifices just too much and gives up the possibility of doing really well out of the North-East three; indeed, after 46a1 47a2 48g7, Black has to use up the odd region with 49h2 or 49g2, each of which gets 31 discs in the unlikely event of perfect play. Slightly better is 45a2, but the problem there is that White plays 46c8, flipping the f5 disc and threatening the swindle at a1, so forcing 47a7 48d8 49b8 (otherwise White continues with b7) and White gets 32 discs starting with 50a1. It might seem a little surprising in these lines that White can get so many discs; the problem is that White starts with a large mass, and Black can turn only so many of the discs.

So is 45a7 the only winning move? Turns out there's just one tiny problem. I did play one, just one, good move in this tournament. Imre didn't see it coming: with all this fanfare, can you do better?

Even though he lost this game, 5.5/7 turned out to be a winning score for Imre: congratulations! Jeremy Dyer and I each scored 5, partly by dint of avoiding having to play each other. Then came Elisabetta with 4.5, followed by the other players, in the order listed at:

<http://www.britishothello.org.uk/cambridgeregional2006result.html>

Oh yes, that tiny problem. Well, if Black plays 45a7, as Imre did, then White might hit upon 46b1! 47a2 48g7, grabbing the diagonal.

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After 48g7

The real point is that, if Black cuts with 49h2 50h1, then he can't very well play 51g2, because that turns b2, so that lovely North-East region becomes a disaster zone. Alternatively, if Black tries 49h7 50h8 51g8, then White plays 52b7, turning the g7 disc once more, and Black has no way onto the diagonal other than with h2. Imre missed that last point when he played 47a2: if he'd spotted it, he would have played 47a1 instead. That would indeed have been better, but not much, as the South-West region plays much better for White than

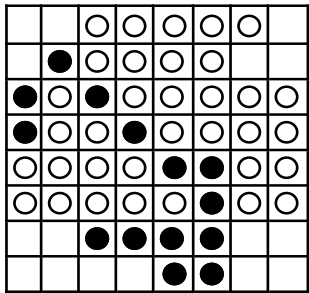
the North-East for Black: control of the c6-f3 line is crucial for White.

The bottom line is that 45a7 loses to 46b1, and actually it isn't close, so -- astonishingly -- all Black has is the draw with 45a2.

The whole game is on the next page.

The Tao of Queen Edith

by *Graham Brightwell*



Black to play at 45

This position is from Imre Leader vs. Graham Brightwell at this year's Cambridge MSO Regional. Can you find the right move for Imre? To be fair, I can't expect you to do that with any confidence, but can you at least avoid the mistake Imre made?

There was a turnout of 12 for the tournament, including our old and new resident Australians, Geoff Hubbard and George Ortiz, and Elisabetta Vecchi, our resident Italian. The tournament opened with Imre drawing against Phil Marson, and me losing to Elisabetta. Your editor suggested I

might show you that game, but I told her it wasn't very interesting. I think, and I might be wrong, because this really isn't something I've paid close attention to, that, in all my long and eventful tournament career, this is the first game I've lost to a female player. But apart from that, it really wasn't very interesting, honest.

Back to the problem; here are some options. You could play 45b1; play will then go 46a1 47a2. That's a fairly big sacrifice; is it worth it? Do you have control now? Or you could play 45a2, expecting to win if play goes 46a1 47b1. But is there any chance White can get a swindle in the a1-b1 region? Your other choice is 45a7, but can White then take advantage of the odd region in the North-West?

I lost to Geoff Hubbard, a new and annoying habit of mine. This was a good game though: Geoff played one truly imaginative and totally correct X-square (40b2!), although there were some mistakes after that; excellent stuff and well-deserved.

Then I should have lost to Stephen Rowe, but he let me off the hook one move away from the clear win. Next I squeaked past Joel Blackmur 33-31, to find myself paired against Imre, who by that point had taken the lead.

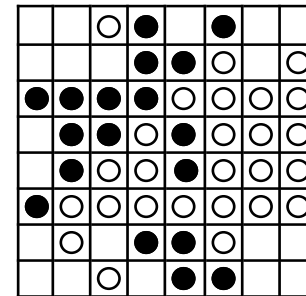
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| 41 | 42 | 39 | 46 | 47 | 58 | 55 | 56 |
| 50 | 40 | 36 | 37 | 43 | 38 | 44 | 57 |
| 49 | 48 | 3 | 4 | 27 | 8 | 45 | 19 |
| 35 | 23 | 5 | ○ | ● | 6 | 18 | 17 |
| 32 | 26 | 22 | ● | ○ | 1 | 15 | 20 |
| 31 | 34 | 30 | 2 | 9 | 7 | 12 | 16 |
| 53 | 51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

Brightwell 29 Hubbard 35

How about that problem now? If you've just glanced at the three options, my guess is that your initial preference is for 45a7, as Imre's was. Isn't

East, into which Black can play at will with g1, is much more damaging to White than is apparent at first sight. One sample line after 37a5 is: 38a4-c7-a6-a7-c1-d1-b8-a8-b7-g8-e1-b1-c2-b2-e8-g1-a1-a2-h1-g7-h8-h7-(P)-g2, 35-29. But why is the game line much different? Watch and see!

The next few moves are reasonably natural, and each is the only drawing move: 33c7 loses to 34f2, 34a4 loses to 35c7-f2-g8, and 37d8 loses to 38d1. (None of that is supposed to be obvious.) At the end of the sequence, doesn't it look much better for Black to have managed to play a6 rather than a5? Probably so, except for one very unusual tactico-strategic feature.



After 40b7!

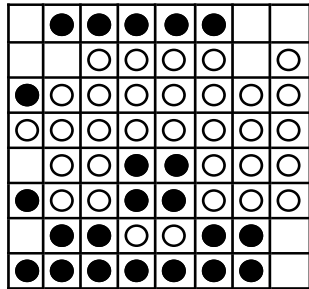
The key move for White is 40b7!, and the key theme is that Black is kept off the a7-g1 diagonal, so in particular there is no danger of Black playing a8 and then a7. The following lines all fail for Black:

- (a) 41a8? 42d8! 43b8? 44c7, and still Black has no way to get to a7 or g1, so he has to play something like 45g8-e1-b1-a5-a4-g7!-h8-h7-h1-a7-g2, which looks like a lot of discs, but White mops up with 56g1-(P)-a1-(P)-a2-b2-c2 and wins comfortably;
- (b) 41a8? 42d8! 43g7 44c7 45g8, when White plays 46e1-b1-c2 with a narrow win -- we'll come back to this line;
- (c) 41c7? 42a4 43a5 44d8, which turns the b7 move into a normal and convincing sacrifice;
- (d) 41c7? 42a4 43g1 (while he can) 44b2!, a Stoner trap, although it's complicated after that.

The move that draws is 41g8!. It looks like White ought to be Stonering here too with 42d8, although of course Black is happy to give up the h8 corner. What's the difference between 42d8?-g7-e1-b1-c2 and 42e1!-b1-c2-g7-d8? The answer is that, in the first line, the f6 disc is Black, allowing Black to play 47b2!-a5-c7, obliging White to take the h8 corner, which she can't afford to do. In the second, correct, line, of course 47b2 is refuted instantly by 48a1, so Black has nothing but 47a8.

After 47a8, White can't afford to play either 48b8 or 48h8, since Black can meet either with 49c7, when White runs out of moves and doesn't get close. So White has to get 48c7 in herself, allowing Black the South edge. Isn't this the same as the position at the end of line (b) above? Almost, but again the colour of the f6 disc is different. Let's keep an eye on what difference that makes.

The game continues 49b8 50a4. Now what?



After 50a4

Black still hasn't managed to get access to a7 or g1, and now he has to find something extravagant. The routine plan of 51a5-a7-b2 loses to 54a1-a2-g1, perhaps rather unfortunately. 51a2 is met by 52a7-a5-a1-b2-g1 with a similar effect.

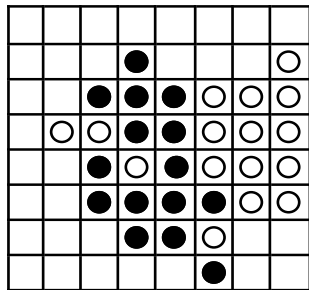
No, Black has to have the imagination to find 51h7!-h8-g2!. What's good about that? Well, for one thing it gains access to a7, so forces White to play off 54a7-a5 immediately. Then, after 56h1, Black doesn't lazily respond with 57g1, but plays into the more important odd region with 57b2, and

ends up holding on to the a-file as well as most of the 2nd rank.

After line (b) above, with the f6 disc landing black, the same sequence is a win for White, simply because White's move to h8 at move 52 flips the e5 disc. Not something you can expect to appreciate at move 41!

All the moves from 39 onwards are the only draw. At 38, there are three choices. Other than the featured 38c1, play can go 38e1-d1-b7-g8-c1-b1-c2, or 38b7-g8-e1-d1-etc., transposing into our game. (We'll leave you to explore why the likes of 38b7-g8-c1, 38c1-d1-e1-b1-b7, and 38e1-d1-c1-b1-b7 don't quite work.) Apart from those transpositions, there are no other draws after 32b6.

Now, finally, let's turn our attention to what must be regarded as the "main line" of the No-FAT, (24c5-c6-b4)-e3.



After 27e3

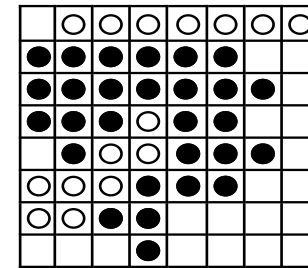
Even though we didn't find anything truly spectacular here, we hope you'll enjoy the two games we've selected -- especially for you. White has three drawing moves, 28c8, 28c2 (coming soon), and this one, 28b5.

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

(C) Sorry it's so tedious

The Oadby Regional *by Stephen Rowe*

This year's tournament went smoothly. I even remembered the transcript sheets! There were an even number of players: Geoff Hubbard, Iain Barrass, Joel Blackmur, Aidan Robison, Roy Arnold, Phil Marson and myself. In round one Aidan beat me in a game that I should have won.



In the diagram there are many ways to win; just building on the NE corner is the simplest. C8 A8 A5 was another. However I managed to find a defeat. C8 A8 B8!! Quite what made me think that the wedge in the South was stronger than the one in the West I really don't know. Aidan gets the West edge; I get nothing in return. I soon realised that B8 and C8 were poisoning my moves so I tried E8 hoping for F8, but Aidan was not falling for it.

The rest of the tournament went well for me. Aidan and Joel did particularly well with Joel losing only to Iain and Aidan losing to Iain and Joel. Final scores: Joel 5/6, Aidan and me 4, Iain, Geoff, and Phil 3 and Roy 2.

Sheffield Regional, organised by Robert Stanton: no report so far, see <http://www.britishothello.org.uk/sheffieldregional2006result.html>

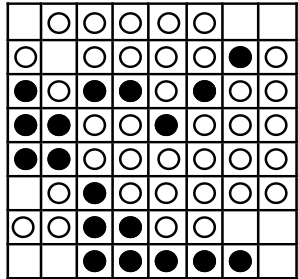
Othello in Asia *by George Ortiz*

There are currently some very strong Asian Othello players from the "mainland", suggesting that the rest of Asia is starting to catch up with the mighty Japanese. Hardly anyone would have predicted that a South Korean would reach the final at last year's World Othello Championships in Reykjavik. And with this year's 30th WOC to be held in Mito, I expect some more surprises from Japan's Asian neighbours.

Despite Othello's huge popularity in Japan for the past three decades, there were no Othello associations in the rest of Asia until 1998. I always found this to be rather odd since Othello developed rapidly in Europe back in the eighties, much further away from the game's "homeland". When, in 1996, Japan organised the 20th World Othello Championships, the host nation were the only representatives of the Asian continent in the

(Continued on page 17)

50a6? 51b8 52a2 53g7 is disastrous, and 50b8? 51a8 52a6 53b2 loses parity. So White needs to start by playing into her other odd region, with 50a2. After that, if Black just plays out the Western region, then White is bound to get access to h8 along the edge, with parity and a win.



After 50a2; can Black steal parity?

There's just one thing left for Black to try. Can he play g7 and then b2, leaving a1 as the odd region? After 51g7, 52a6 is the only sensible move, but now 53b2 is met by the swindle 54g1. We've seen that sort of thing before in this article, and by now we know what to do about that! Black must play 53g1 54h1 and only then 55b2. And of course it's the same old story: a big sacrifice, and Black's strategic success is only good enough for a draw.

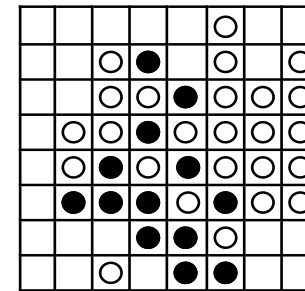
Alternative draws: 42e2, 42b5, 36c8, 33g8, 31a3.

Here is a draw-tree for this variation, expanded to the first branch at or beyond move 34.

20g3 h5 h2 d2 and now:

```

24c5 c6 b4 e3 c8 b5 e8 f2 c7 g8 e2 f1/d8
                e8 e2 e1 b6 c2 f1 a3/a4
                b5 b6 c2 f2 c8 e8 f1 a4/g7/a3
                c2 b3 a4 f2 d8 g8 c8 g7 e8 c7 b5/g2
                                c1 f1 g8 c8/e8
                                a3 d8 d1 b2 g8 e8 c8 f2/a5
                                e8 d8 b5/b6
                b3 b5 a3 e2 e3 a4 f1 e8 d8 c8 b8 c7 a5
                                e1/a6/c2
                                c8 d8 a4 e1/f1
                                e8 b6 f1 c7/f2
                                b6 f1 c8 a6 f2 e8 e1/c1/b7
                                c1 a6 c2/e8
                a4 e3 d1 f2 c8 c2/c1
                a6 a5 b6 c2/b7/c8/e8/d1
                e8 d8 b6 e3 c2 f2 c8/a5
                a5 b6 d8 a4/c7
    
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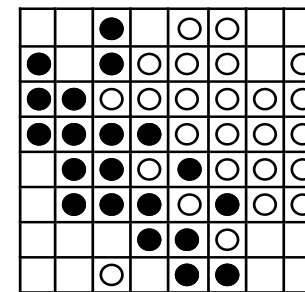
After 34f1

All of 27-33 are normal good-looking moves, such as we ourselves might play on a good day. Isn't it reassuring to see that these can be the right moves too?

The structure that emerges in the North-West will be familiar to players of the Rose opening. As long as the d2 and b6 discs remain in place, there's no good way for Black to come through White's mini-wall. That's the point of 34f1; White makes the big concession of creating an odd region where he has no access, but now Black must find his least unattractive sequence through the wall.

Although in fact he doesn't. Besides our featured move 35a4, Black has another plan good enough to draw, namely to play 35g7 (or 35a3-a4-g7). This is a truly awful way to approach the South-East region, and White will be able to garner a mass of discs in the South with a well-timed move to h8. But the compensation, in the traditional form of a wedge at h7 and the opportunity to start play in the North by taking h1, is equally great. Well worth a look, but we'll stay with 35a4.

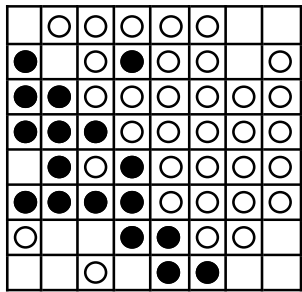
After 35a4, 36b3?-e2-c1-a3 turns out to win for Black, so the move is 36e1. Then 37e2 loses to, for instance, 38b3-a3-d1. So it's 37b3-e2-c1. White plays 40a3, but after 41a2 it's not clear how she can proceed.



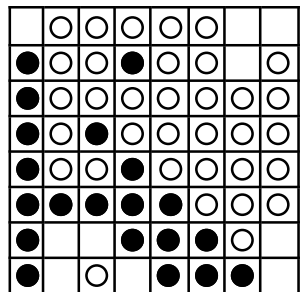
Tedious so far, but now?

Any plan based on White playing a6 or c7 is hopeless: Black has a tempo at g8 to take, and he can play d1 at any convenient moment. A better shot is 42b7. To beat that, Black has to hit the very precise sequence 43b2-a5-c7-a6-g8-a1-b1-d1-a8-d8-b8-a7-g7-h8-h7-(P)-h1-(P)-g2-g1 for 33-31. In this line, Black doesn't do too much other than take advantage of the odd region.

So, if not that, then what? The drawing move is 42g7!. That doesn't look promising at first glance; Black has g8 if he wants, and can't he cut the diagonal with d1? Yes, and indeed 43d1 is correct, but White insists on the diagonal with 44a7. Black naturally plays 45a6, and White takes the edge with 46b1.



A bit less tedious now?



Not tedious after all

(a) 54c7? misses the point: Black doesn't need a disc on the a1-h8 diagonal, nor does he particularly need control of the a8-h1 diagonal. All he has to do is play out the South region starting with 55d8 and take the parity win due to the single-square odd region at a1.

(b) 54g1? at least resolves the parity. Black has to play 55a1-d8-h1, but that's enough to win. If White is planning to play g1 and not h1, she really needs to turn discs on the g-file.

(c) 54b7? is the move that looks right if you focus only on the Southern region, since 55c7? is met by 56d8. So Black meets 54b7 with 55a1 followed by b8 and g1, and gets 33 discs.

(d) 54d8! is, by a narrow margin, the best move. Black can keep parity with 55c7, and then White takes the available discs with 56g1-a1 (before the e5 disc vanishes)-b8, and Black takes the last two moves for a draw. 55a1 gives up parity but draws as well.

Alternatives: just the ones we've mentioned, namely 55a1, 48b7, 47b2,

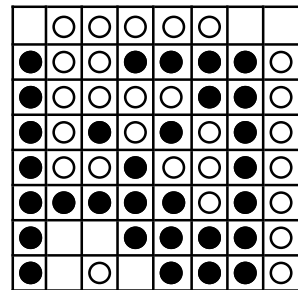
There are a number of ways Black can approach this. Adequate is 47a8 48a5 49b2 (to prevent White taking both b2 and a1) 50a1 51g8. Then White can only succeed by avoiding having access to h8: 52d8-b8-b7-c7-(P)-g1-h1-h8-g2-h7. 47b2-a1-a8-a5 is equivalent.

But we'll look at the more obvious try of 47g8. Just as at the end of the previous sequence, Black won't be keen on playing g1 for access to h8, because that gives up too much in the North-East. But what does White do now?

One solution is 48b7, which is complicated. The prettier answer is 48a5-a8-b2.

51g1-h1-g2-h7 is no good, and nor (quite) is 51g2-h7-a1-d8-b8-h8 with a parity finish. Black's plan has to be g2, but he can't afford the swindle at h7 and h8, so he needs to play 51h7!-h8-g2.

Which of White's plausible moves works now?



Several things to try

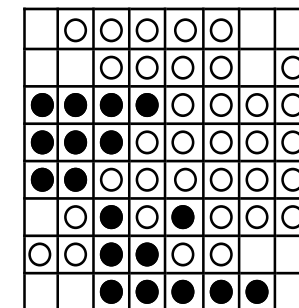
47a8, 35a3, 35g7, and the deviations at 28, one of which is shown in our final game.

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

(D) Some familiar themes

White has a free move coming at e2, but she needs to play out the South-West a little before taking it. She has two drawing options. The one not featured is also a pretty line: 44b5 45c7 46e2 47a8 48b6 49g7 50b8 51a7 (it's a swindle: White can't play to a6) 52h8 (ah, maybe she will after all!) 53h7 54a6, and now just taking h1 doesn't get particularly close, but Black has the pretty finish 55g1! 56h1 57b2 58a1 59a2 (P) 60g2. All forced after 44b5.

The other possibility is 44c7. Black plays 45b5, and now White has no sensible move into the South-West so has to take 46e2. After 47b6 48a7, White seems to have won the battle since Black can't get two of the three moves into the region unless he gives up the corner, which is too costly.

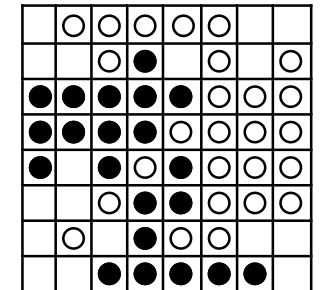


After 48a7, who has the parity?

Each side has two odd regions; unless something happens, Black will play first into the two Eastern regions, White into the two Western regions, and White will win on parity. For instance, 49g7 50a6 51g1 52b2 leads to 31-33. So Black starts with 49g2.

This poses a problem, because White's moves into the South-West run into trouble:

Some of the play here ought to remind you of other games we've seen. 28c2 looks compelling once you realise that the only response is 29b3 and that the d-file is then all black and d8 is available for White. After some shilly-shallying, the sequence in the South plays out exactly the way it did way back in Game (A) of the previous article. We join the game at the last point when either player has a drawing alternative.



After 43a5