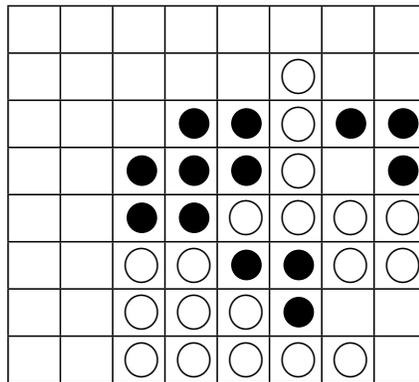


# The Daughter Of Pearl Cloud

The Newsletter of the British Othello Federation

August 2000



Black to play and draw

From the famous game Taniguchi vs. Ralle  
1984 World Championships, 2nd game of the Final

We reveal exclusively how Taniguchi could have survived

See pp.12-15

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## INFORMATION

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Mattel, the games company that has for many years owned the franchise for Othello in several European countries, took over the UK franchise late in 1998 and the US franchise at the beginning of 2000. They are mainly known as a toy manufacturer, but they are also experienced in selling strategy games, because some years ago they acquired Spears Games, the makers of Scrabble. We will continue to develop a close relationship between Mattel and the BOF in the hope that they will help us to promote Othello as a competitive game, not purely a children's game.

The British Othello Federation is an independent body. Annual subscription for British residents costs £6 (with the first year's membership including a copy of the instructional book *Othello: Brief & Basic*). Ten years membership is available for £55. An overseas subscription costs £8 per year, or £75 for ten years. Cheques or postal orders payable to the *British Othello Federation* should be sent to Aubrey de Grey. The price of *Othello: Brief & Basic* for existing members is £6.

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## **Editorial**     *by Graham Brightwell*

Yes, I'm back!

First of all, thanks are due to Phil Marson and Ian Turner for producing the newsletter over the past few years. I'm sure you'll all agree that they've done an excellent job.

Unfortunately, Ian now has more family commitments, caused primarily by his having more family, and Phil's new job doesn't fit in well with commissioning and writing articles, which of course is the difficult part of the job. So, Phil at least has resigned as newsletter editor. I agreed to produce one issue, for old times' sake, since I seemed to have the time to do it, this time. Thanks to all those who rallied round and produced articles at short notice. You will doubtless observe that all the excellent innovations Phil and Ian introduced have been totally ignored: apologies for this reversion.

The future of the newsletter will be discussed at the Federation's AGM, which as ever will take place just before the Nationals. It is not clear to me that the newsletter in its present form is viable: it requires a steady and reliable stream of articles, and someone willing to put the whole thing together, twice a year, every year. On the other hand, I think that we must have some way to announce our events, and for that matter we have commitments to supply some form of newsletter to our existing, paid-up membership. Please do come along to the AGM and make your views known.

### **Forthcoming Events**

The Nationals will take place on the weekend of September 23rd/24th, in Cambridge. The venue will be the Lubbock Room, Peterhouse, which is where the Cambridge International tournament has been held in recent years. As ever, we start with the AGM at 1:30 on the Saturday, with play due to start at 3:00.

There aren't any further details, but you are welcome to contact Aubrey de Grey (see below) anyway.

\* \* \* \* \*

The top two finishers in the Nationals, other than Grand Prix winner Graham Brightwell, qualify, along with Graham, to play in the UK team at the World Championships, which take place in Copenhagen, November 2nd-4th.

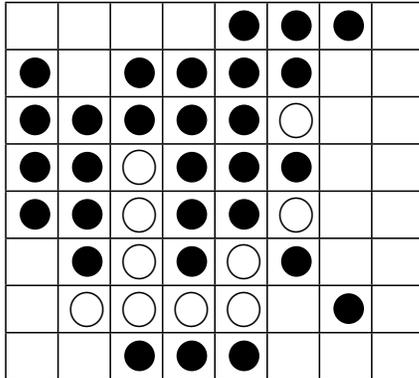
\* \* \* \* \*

The Cambridge Christmas tournament will take place at the usual venue (the Victoria Road Community Centre, St. Luke's Church, Victoria Road, Cambridge) on the characteristically un-Christmassy date of Saturday November 25th. Please contact the organiser, Aubrey de Grey, by email ([ag24@gen.cam.ac.uk](mailto:ag24@gen.cam.ac.uk)) or by telephone (01223 333963) for details of accommodation etc.

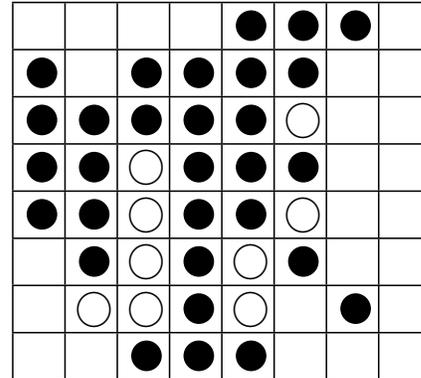
## Puzzles *by Graham Brightwell*

Here are some puzzles I wrote for the Decamentathlon at last year's Mind Sports Olympiad. These are intended for non-specialists, so I hope you'll find them quite easy. Answers are on p.18

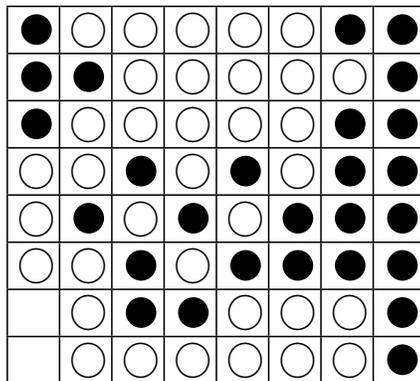
1. In the two diagrams below, find the move for White which guarantees that she will be able to play to a corner on her next turn.



(a) White to play



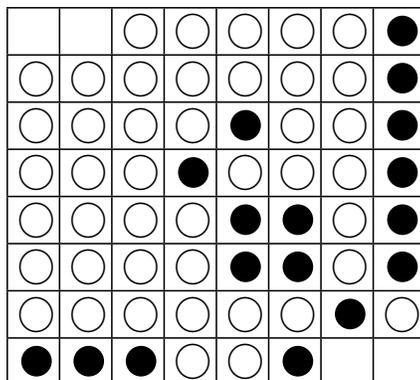
(b) White to play



Black to play

2. Black to play. How many discs does Black get after: (a) a8-a7 (i.e., a Black move to the corner a8, followed by a White move to a7), (b) a7-a8?

*You can set the position up on a board if you really want, but you're not allowed to flip any discs!*



Black to play

3. Black to play: what is the best move?

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## TOURNAMENT REPORTS

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### The 17th Cambridge International Tournament

*by Aubrey de Grey*

The long-running decline in numbers at the Cambridge International was splendidly reversed this year, with 19 players participating, including a refreshing number of newcomers. Two of these were from Belgium, two from the Netherlands and three from Italy: all countries that have not been represented for at least the previous three years. Well, unless you count Alex Cordy, which you can't, because the French control the database. This more than made up for the miserable British participation of just four – Graham Brightwell, Phil Marson, David Summers and myself. Well, unless you count Geoff Hubbard, an Australian who is based here for two years. The venue, as for the past several years, was the Lubbock Room of Peterhouse, otherwise known as the perturbing, poignantly pink room (copyright S. Nicolet 1997).

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

de Grey 28 Lazard 36

28 he played the sort of X-square that I absolutely *never* see coming and it was all downhill from there . . . .

Meanwhile the usual suspects were doing well. Graham and Emmanuel led the field on 3/3, with Stéphane Nicolet half a point behind along with the new-but-precocious French player Frédéric Auzende (with whom he had drawn in Round 2). Draws were plentiful that morning, in fact – Dominique Scherno managed two!

After lunch at the University Centre cafeteria around the corner, we played four more rounds on the Saturday afternoon. Graham survived undefeated for the whole day, except for the minor detail of losing on time in round 6 to Lazard.

Dinner on the Saturday night is traditionally at the Eraina, a Greek restaurant in the centre of Cambridge surrounded by very agreeable pubs. This year,

With 11 rounds of Swiss, all but eight players received a bye. I got the bye in round 1, and the benefit of an extra hour sleep-equivalent showed in round 2 as I succeeded in fending off Geoff. That set me up for a round 3 encounter with Emmanuel Lazard, the most frequent foreign participant at Cambridge (I think he has come every year since about 1990). I played a move 7 that was originated by David Shaman but has been out of fashion for some time; I thought Manu was getting into a lot of trouble by move 27, but at

however, some of the French would not be staying for the Sunday evening when we traditionally eat Indian (a cuisine that is apparently almost unobtainable in Paris), so at their instigation we ate at a new Indian restaurant which was recommended in a French guide book. And an excellent choice it certainly was.

The Swiss portion of the tournament was completed on the Sunday morning with four more rounds. I played appallingly and ended on 5/11, having at one stage been second in the tournament on 4/5. Dominique notched up *another* draw, this time against Graham. All the top three “seeds” – Graham, Emmanuel and Stéphane – had surprise losses during the last two rounds: Graham to Alberto Viviani, Emmanuel to Alex Cordy and Steph to François Robin. This left Graham sharing top spot with Stéphane on 8 1/2 points, Emmanuel third with 8, and Alex just pipping Frédéric to the fourth playoff spot on tie-break after winning all four games of the morning. The full results table after 11 rounds of Swiss was as follows:

Graham Brightwell	8.5/11 (BQ 869)	François Robin	6
Stéphane Nicolet	8.5 (BQ 842)	Giorgio Castellano	6
Emmanuel Lazard	8	Jan de Graaf	6
Alexandre Cordy	7.5 (BQ 826)	Dominique Scherno	5.5
Frédéric Auzende	7.5 (BQ 814)	Aubrey de Grey	5
Alberto Viviani	6.5	David Summers	5
Takuji Kashiwabara	6	Josbert van de Zande	3
Beppi Menozzi	6	Olivier Herbeuval	2
Geoff Hubbard	6	Joost Decupere	1
Phil Marson	6		

After lunch we reconvened for the final and 3rd/4th playoffs, which are both best-of-three matches. In the 3rd/4th, Alex was pitted against Manu, whom he had beaten in round 10; he was unable to repeat the feat, however, and lost the first game. Emmanuel managed to lose the second game on time but still had choice of colours for the decider, which he duly won to take third place for the second successive year.

The final, between Graham and Stéphane, was something of a thriller. Graham chose White for game 1, but Stéphane pulled off a 39-25 win. Graham fought back in the second game to win 34-30. There is a long history of Black wins in Grand Prix playoffs – after Cambridge ’99 there was a longer unbroken run of them in finals than of Grand Prix tournament wins by Emmanuel Caspard, which was eight at that time – and, indeed, Black had just won both games in this year’s 3rd/4th as well in the final. Nonetheless, Stéphane chose White for the decider. Well ...I was so sure in the early endgame that Graham had it won that I stopped paying attention; luckily Graham was paying attention and an analysis appears elsewhere in this newsletter. Stéphane somehow amassed 33

discs, stayed just long enough to receive his customary paper trophy, and even (I gather) got across town fast enough to catch his train home. The French thus took first, third, fourth and fifth places this year – but we'll be back! Also, this year the Anglophones succeeded in getting their revenge when we beat the remaining Francophones at pool after the second successive excellent Indian dinner.

The 18th Cambridge International will take place this coming February, almost certainly at the same venue; the exact date will be announced in the next newsletter and in the usual online places. We look forward to continuing the increase in participation; please contact me by email (ag24@gen.cam.ac.uk) or by telephone (01223 333963) for details of accommodation etc. See you there!

## UK Grand Prix 2000

The results of this season's regional tournaments, which comprise the UK Grand Prix, were compiled by Roy Arnold – see his excellent website at <http://homepages.shu.ac.uk/~rcarnold/othello.html>. The commentary is by Graham Brightwell.

### Edwinstowe, March 25th

1. Graham Brightwell 6.5
2. Mark Wormley 5.5
3. Geoff Hubbard 4.0
4. Roy Arnold 3.0
- =. Jeremy Das 3.0
- =. Iain Forsyth 3.0
- =. Phil Marson 3.0
8. Eileen Forsyth 0.0

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

Wormley 32 Brightwell 32

Eight players gathered chez Marson for an excellent event – many thanks to Phil for putting up with us all. I (Graham) had a thrilling game with Mark Wormley in Round 3 (see transcript). I thought I was ahead out of the opening, but didn't make the best of my chances: perhaps 28f1 is too clever and 28e1-f1-g4 is better. I've no idea why I was so anxious to play 50a3, letting him play second into the region, but it's a game-loser (50e7 or g7 wins, with the intention of meeting a Black move to a7 with b7). At 53, Mark could have had one more disc starting with f6.

**Wellingborough, April 8th**

1. Guy Plowman 6.0/7
2. Geoff Hubbard 5.0/7
- =. Phil Marson 5.0/7
4. Adelaide Carpenter 2.0/7
5. Margaret Plowman 1.0/5

After this event, Geoff Hubbard was leading the Grand Prix. As he was intending to go to all the tournaments, he was clearly a contender. Thanks, as ever, to Margaret Plowman for running the event.

**Cambridge, May 13th**

1. Graham Brightwell 6.0/6
2. Aubrey de Grey 3.0/6
- =. Phil Marson 3.0/6
- =. Mark Wormley 3.0/6
5. Geoff Hubbard 2.0/6
6. Jeremy Das 1.0/6

The format was all-play-all followed by one more round of Swiss. Mark Wormley, who was having an excellent season, wasn't helped by this system. Graham Brightwell went back in front in the Grand Prix. Aubrey and Adelaide get the thanks for organising.

**Frimley Green, June 10th**

1. Graham Brightwell 6.0/6
2. Ian Turner 4.0/6
3. Geoff Hubbard 1.0/6
- =. Julian Richens 1.0/6

A newcomer! Julian Richens had promised to come to an earlier tournament, but this was his debut, and he scored a good win against Geoff Hubbard to mark it. Thanks to Ian Turner for his hospitality.

**Doncaster, July 15th**

1. Graham Brightwell 7.0/7
2. Mark Wormley 6.0/7
3. Iain Barrass 4.0/7
- =. Geoff Hubbard 4.0/7
- =. Phil Marson 4.0/7
6. Iain Forsyth 2.0/7
7. David Haigh 1.0/7
8. Eileen Forsyth 0.0/7

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

Barrass 9 Brightwell 55

The traditional finale to the Regional season, and I had to go to protect myself against Geoff finishing first or second. This was another good tournament for Mark Wormley (but a better one for me). I almost lost my unbeaten record in the very last round against Iain Barrass (see transcript). I demonstrated a lack of knowledge about this opening, and found a bad way to play it. Still, I got

myself into the game, and he went wrong in the 30s: 33b4 is much better (c8 can wait, and the sequences don't play well for me. His last win was at 35 (c1-b1, getting access to b6), and his last draw at 39 (c1-b1 again, this time with access to a5). In the end he collapsed; 47b7 is not a good idea. Thanks to Sue Barrass for running the event smoothly and efficiently.

**Final British Grand Prix Standings:**

1. Graham Brightwell	800	9. Aubrey de Grey	127
2. Geoff Hubbard	550	10. Julian Richens	110
3. Mark Wormley	447	11. Iain Barrass	100
4. Phil Marson	437	=. Adelaide Carpenter	100
5. Guy Plowman	200	13. Margaret Plowman	80
6. Ian Turner	160	14. Roy Arnold	70
7. Jeremy Das	130	15. David Haigh	40
=. Iain Forsyth	130	=. Eileen Forsyth	40

Graham Brightwell therefore qualifies to represent the UK in the forthcoming World Championships, to be held in Copenhagen, November 2–4. The other two team members will be decided at the Nationals.

**European Grand Prix**

After Stéphane Nicolet's win in Cambridge, the circus moved on to Copenhagen in April. Fifteen played, including no less than nine Danes. (It's coming to something when there are far more Danes taking part in Copenhagen than there are British players in Cambridge!)

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

Feldborg 32 Shaman 32

David Shaman (USA/Netherlands) scored 8.5/11 in the Swiss, which must surely be the lowest winning score in an EGP Swiss? Behind him there were four players on 8: Karsten Feldborg (Denmark, old guard) was the lucky man to play in the Final, and Per Horn (Denmark, new guard) the unlucky one to miss out completely. In a one-game playoff, Alexander Cordy (Belgium/France) beat Torben Vallund (by now an old Dane) for third. Shaman won the first game of the Final 37–27, and Feldborg the second 44–20. It is customary to remark that a draw would be enough for Feldborg to win the tournament, but it is not customary to actually play out a draw, as they did (see transcript).

And so to the Milan Open, played this year in Turin. (Ah, it's good to be back!) With a third and a fourth already, Alex Cordy was having the best season of his career, but nothing had suggested that he might actually win a Grand Prix tournament. Win he did, ahead of Tastet, Sperandio and Stanzione.

That propelled Cordy into the lead of the Grand Prix, but that all changed in Brussels, where Stéphane Nicolet won ahead of Emmanuel Caspard (France), Romy Hidayat (Indonesia) and Per Horn (Denmark, new guard).

With just Paris to go (weekend of September 2–3; go!), Nicolet has 400 from two tournaments and Cordy 350 from three, with nobody else in touch. Cordy will actually need to come second in Paris to have any chance at all of winning the Grand Prix.

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

Murakami 33 Kitajima 31

Meanwhile, Nicolet's exploits leave him qualified for the Worlds. The Japanese team is also known: Sakaguchi (winner of both the Meijin and the Japanese Championship), Murakami (second in Japanese Championship, and winner of a play-off match against Kitajima) and Yamanaka (Ladies' Champion). A strong team . . . . Here is the second game of the Murakami-Kitajima match: Murakami had lost the first game, and here he finds himself having to make one enormous, and successful, sacrifice!

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## OPENINGS

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### An Opening Tree *by Adelaide T.C. Carpenter*

Years ago, when I was first struggling to make it out of the opening alive, Aubrey de Grey drew up for me a flow chart of the more-or-less standard opening moves that I found a very helpful device for remembering the relationships between the different opening alternatives. Maybe someone else will find it useful too, so I've typed it out in somewhat tidier form. The codes are: black's moves are in bold face and Aubrey's then-preferred moves, as either black or white, are underlined. You don't have to agree with his preferences – indeed, he no longer agrees with all of them himself – but if you are still trying to develop your own style of opening you may find his useful for comparison.

In this flow chart, alternate lines that have the same first moves have them presented only once: all games begin with (1) **e6**, for example, which is followed by each of the three possible white moves as separate arrays.



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## GAME ANALYSES

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### Taniguchi–Ralle Revisited *by Imre Leader*

*(with thanks to Ingo Althofer and David Parsons for computer analysis)*

One of the most famous games of Othello ever played is the second game of the Final of the 1984 World Championships, when France’s Paul Ralle defeated Japan’s Ryoichi Taniguchi. The game is famous primarily because of the way in which Ralle ran Taniguchi out of moves (see transcript).

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

Taniguchi 15 Ralle 48

The aim of this article is to give an interesting new slant on the game. First, a brief commentary. Move 8 to c6 has never been very popular, the more usual being (even back in 1984) the Rose move 8f6. But Ralle was the champion of this move 8. He played it 4 times in this tournament, although this was the only game in which he was successful with it.

The modern reply to 8c6 is 9d7 straightaway. There is not much point in putting in the pair 9f5 10g6, especially as it turns out that White will want to pull to the South and East, so that 9f5 is rather passive. (After 8c6 9d7 10d3 11f6, the best move is probably the remarkable 12c3 – keeping a tight formation and gaining access to f5!).

In the actual game, after move 18, Black is definitely too passive in not taking back the edge. He relaxes, thinking he is so far ahead that he can afford to give White two moves on the South edge. But this puts him in great danger (as we will see). Much better would be 19b8. Indeed, after 19b8 Black is threatening a move to f7, but if White plays 20f7 to prevent this then Black not only has a free move at g8 but also can extract the White discs on the 7th row (d7 and e7), leaving White close to collapse.

Move 22 to g3 is the right way to start an edge-grab. By move 27 Black is having to think very hard to avoid death. After his good move 27h3, and White’s reply of 28f2, Black played into the hole with 29g4. White took back the edge with 30h2, and now Black played the natural-looking 31e2. But this move is a disaster, for White plays 32d1 and Black is completely finished.

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

After 28f2.

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

After 30h2.

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

After 32d1.

Whatever he does, he will be taken off the a8-h1 diagonal. Indeed, f1 is met by g2 and b6 is met by b7 (the game actually continued 33b6 34b7 35f1 36g2, with Black utterly dead). And e1 is met by f1. So White, despite having two fives, is completely dominant! The position after move 36 has appeared countless times in Othello magazines, as an example of diagonal control and pulling to the edge

In an article in Othello Quarterly, M.C. Player and Dietrich Oppenkommer suggested that a better move 31 would have been to g7 – getting a move in there while it was still legal (in other words, before the Black disc at g4 was extracted). But then in the next OQ Jonathan Cerf pointed out that 31g7 allows 32b3, extracting the f7 disc and thus guaranteeing for White both of h8 and h7.

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

Variation: 31g7 32b3.

And there the matter rested. Until this year, when Ingo Althofer, a German who has done lots of work on computer games (both on the theoretical side and some fascinating experiments in computer chess), was looking for a ‘well-known’ Othello position to illustrate an article he was writing. He picked the most well-known of all, namely that position after move 36, but decided, just for fun, to get computer analysis of the whole game. And he discovered that in fact 31g7 is not so bad after all!

How can this be? What happens after 32b3? Doesn’t White just follow up with h8, and then h7 whenever he wants? Well, here is what happens. Suppose for example we have 33f1 34h8. Then Black *can* get access to h7, by sacrificing the a8 corner with 35b7! The point is that almost no price is too high for Black to pay to get to h7 before White does. And no trickery like 36a7 can remove Black’s access to h7 now.

If one plays through it a few times, casually, it is quite easy for Black to play to a win. In fact, it seems quite hard for White to prevent it. For example,

the program WZebra, running on depth 12 (12 ply lookahead) and playing both sides, plays the position after 31g7 out to a draw! We urge the reader to have a look and decide what to do before reading further.

The solution to White's problem is actually quite simple. There is no point in playing to h8 and seeing if he can somehow outsmart Black around the a8 corner, or force Black to sacrifice so much around a8 that even Black getting to h7 is not enough. No, much better is to not be rushed. By all means reply to 31g7 with 32b3, but then there is no hurry at all to take the corner! White should calmly play on until he has got certain access to h7 after h8, and only then grab the corner. It doesn't matter how long it takes.

Of course, White does need to be sure about the access to h7. So, for example, after 33e2 34e1 (to flip the e4 disc) 35d2 White must not play 36h8, because of 37b7! And there are many similar traps an unwary White can fall into.

Not too surprisingly, perfect play does allow White to get safely to h8 and h7. And in so doing, it hardly matters what else White has given up, as the sheer weight of stable discs around h8 will be enormous. In fact, perfect play after 31g7 is 32b3 33e2 34e1 35d2 (as above), and then the loud 36c3. And now it is hard for White to lose, even though Black can get control. The perfect line continues 37d1 38h8 39b6 40f1, with White waiting for the most useful time to play h7 and winning 40-24.

Returning to the actual game, the alternative at move 31 (apart from the move actually played, 31e2) is 31f1. This is a much better way of playing to the North than 31e2, because, quite apart from any tactical considerations, it is much less passive (it is not allowing White to gain any moves on the North edge, for example). This time, the key is for White to play to e2 immediately, extracting the g4 disc and thus taking away g7 for ever. The perfect play line continues 33d2 and then 34b5, another vicious pull, with 35b6 followed by 36a5. Black has 37a7, but then White can simply play 38c1, with the huge threat of c2 to come. This leads to a 37-27 win for White.

Going back one more move, can we improve upon 29g4? The answer is that we can. The point is that 29g4 30h2 has not left Black with nice ways to play the North region. So what about playing to e1 at move 29 (before access is taken away), and saving g4 for an evil later move? This really does make the North play better. For example, if White plays to h2 straightaway, with 30h2, then 31g4 32e2 is met by 33d1 or 33f1.

In fact, the best thing for White to do after 29e1 is 'just play on'. So after 30f1 31g1 he should play 32b3. This is now looking complicated. Black can play 33h7 34g4 35b4, but now both sides have weaknesses. White will get parity, but his South edge is hurting him. The actual value of the game after 29e1 is a draw

(starting as above), but the perfect play line involves some hard-to-find moves for both sides!

If one has to draw a moral from this story, apart from the pathetic ‘Othello is full of surprises’, it is probably this: if you set up a clever swindle, allowing you to get both of a pair of moves, do look ahead to make sure you really do get both of them – after one of them, it is not enough that your opponent does not have access to the other, as *you* need access there as well!

## Brightwell vs. Nicolet by Graham Brightwell

This is an analysis of the third game of the final of this year’s Cambridge Open, written with substantial help from ZEBRA (Gunnar Andersson and Lars Iversson) and ISAAC (Luigi Lamberti). The end of the game – one move in particular – is my own creative contribution to the current French domination of Grand Prix tournaments. Other British players are sticking to the tried-and-tested “not turning up” ploy.

I was playing Stéphane Nicolet, and naturally the score was 1–1. Regular readers will know my general opinion regarding the quality of Game 3s; this one was relatively well-played, with only a sprinkling of crass moves and stupid blunders.

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

Brightwell 31 Nicolet 33

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

After 10h6

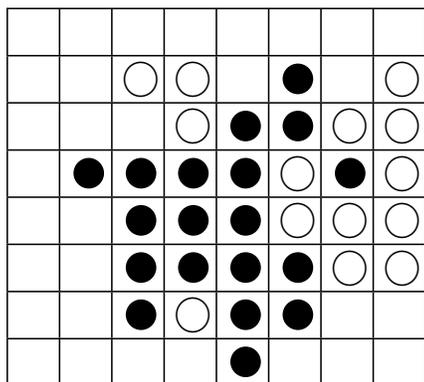
							○
			●	●	●	○	○
			○	●	○	○	
		○	○	○	○	○	
		●	○	○	○	○	○
				●	●		
				●			

After 20c5

One big plus when playing Stéphane in a match: there’s no point in spending the lunch break worrying what to play, as he can be relied upon to try something unusual. Here, for instance, I know very little about this sequence with 8d6 and 10h6 (see above). The main idea is that 11h4 is met by 12h5 gaining access to d7. The problem with my chosen sequence of 11e3-f3-d3 is that after 14g6 my reply at d6 is poisoned. (There are several similar positions where the “quiet” move to e3 turns out to poison all the moves without gaining very much – perhaps 11c6 is better.) As it is, I have little choice but to play out to the East, letting him take the “split five” and then look for something else to do (see above).

It turns out that this is known to ZEBRA until move 20, and it reckons White is ahead. It knows 21d7, but this is destroyed by 22g8, after which Black dies rapidly. Although playing the pair 21h4-h5 ruins any immediate chances I might have of sacrificing at g7, it does get me access to c7. I reckoned that I would need to play this pair soon in any case, before f2 is available for White; notice that I can now meet f2 with e2, whereas if I omit or delay the pair then I won't have any access. But there's no doubt that I'm losing hereabouts, and I'm struggling to find sensible moves.

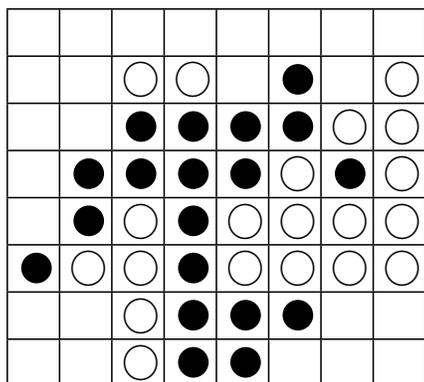
ZEBRA claims that 26f8 or 26b5 would be an improvement for him: certainly 26c2 seemed to leave me some more play, starting with a very convenient 27c4. On the other hand, ZEBRA prefers 29c3, and I'm sure it's right there too. The point is that my choice of 29f2 (see below) can be met by 30e2-c3-e1, and I am running very short of moves again.



After 29f2

Instead, Stéphane opted for 30b6, which surprised me at the time, and still seems to be a significant error, opening up a new region of the board while letting me play again to the North. Instead of me being under pressure, there is suddenly play all over the board, and the five on the East edge looks like a weakness again. ZEBRA lists 30b6 as the 6th best move, turning a plus score into a minus, but it may well be wrong for once, as Black's next two moves look to be correct, but still leave White in a winning position.

After 33, White has to do something about the Black move to a5. One option is to play out 34a3-a4-a5-a2-b3-a7, and another is what Stéphane played, namely to put in the pair 34c8-d8, poisoning the a5 move. As it happens, the former wins 33-31 and the latter only draws.



After 35d8

What do you play here? You can mark time with 36a3-a4 if you like, but after that you need to make some decisions. The South-East is looking urgent, since Black might well play into the five-square region with g7 some time soon, but if you play f8, then you can be sure you'll have to deal with g8-h8-h7-g7-h1 soon after. It turns out that this is the best approach: 36a3-a4-f8-g8-h7-g7 leads to a draw. Stéphane's choice of 36g2 looks wild at first sight, and I daresay that Stéphane was deliberately complicating a position that seemed to be slipping away, but it's far from illogical: the h1 corner is almost

certain to be lost anyway, and it’s often good to get the X-square played early in such circumstances. Another good point is that it’s not so easy for me to cut the diagonal: e2-f1 definitely doesn’t help. But what I can do is simply play normally on the rest of the board, and wait for the moment when I have a nice way to cut on.

In fact, my best move is 37b8, reviving the idea of playing to a5, but my choice of 37d1 is also winning. The idea is that any move he makes in the North allows me to cut, and that I can continue with 39c1, and he still has no “safe” reply (see below).

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

After 39c1

Let’s have a look at the North East region, which is currently odd. At the moment I have effectively no move there, since e2 is met by f1. But notice that if b5 or c4 turns white, then I can play e2 and meet f1 with e1. On the other hand, if he wants to gain a tempo in the region, he would have to let me on the diagonal, e.g., with 40f1-e2-e1-h1-g1, which is fine in that region, but to preserve the tempo-gain he’d have to be willing to meet a White move to h7 with g7-h8-g8-b8.

This approach looks out of the question at first, second and third glances, but actually it’s perfect play, and an obvious sequence thereafter gets 31 discs for White. Stéphane reasonably preferred 40a3. Had I now chosen 41a5, then he probably should launch off with 42f1, after which I would have to get the timing spot on to win.

Instead I went with 41a4, and this allowed Stéphane an alternative plan, namely 42b2 into the odd region in the North West. After my 43b3, he could continue with 44b1-a1-a2-e2-f1 and then I would have to sacrifice with 49g8; still winning narrowly and delicately, as in all these lines.

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

After 43b3

So far, this has been quite a decent game, and we’ve managed to reach a tight and interesting position without any outrageous blunders along the way. But don’t forget this is Game 3 of a Final. What happened next is that Stéphane went astray with 44a5, turning b5 white, which is something that I’d been waiting for! I seized my chance with 45e2 46f1 (turning the e2 disc) 47e1, gaining that supposedly key tempo in the North East region. And there went my main opportunity!

I’d misunderstood *why* a5-e2-f1 was such a big blunder. The point is that

44a5 is only playable since 45a1 can be met with 46a2, getting to b1 as well. Once the pair e2-f1 has been put in, that no longer works, and I can take 47a1 with an easy and big win. Meanwhile, after 47e1 he of course has 48b1, and I've neither gained a tempo nor cut the h1-a8 diagonal.

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

After 48b1

bad idea; it just happens to be two discs worse than a 33–31 win. The rest of the game was not hard; I got the discs I was entitled to, and he played parity and took home the “trophy”.

In retrospect, the g7 plan does look better; Black usually has to achieve something to win, and my line didn't really do that. Still, I can forgive myself that error, if not the one before.

## Answers to Puzzles on p.4

- (a) A White move to d1 attacks both the h1 and h8 corners.

(b) This is a classic *Stoner trap*: White plays to a6 threatening a1, and a Black reply to a7 allows White to take a8. Note that this doesn't work in (a), as the move to a7 doesn't turn the b7 disc. Also note that, in (b), any White move turning c3, d4, e5 or f6 can be met by a move that takes White off the diagonal again.
- (a) 32, (b) 33. As you can see, it's important to play the right move! In (a), for instance, Black starts with 27 discs, and after a8 he has 35 (27, plus the disc played, plus 1+6 discs flipped); then White's move to a7 turns back the three discs at b7, c7 and d7, leaving Black with 32.
- Black should play 1.g8! White has to respond with 2.h8, and then Black gets both the last two moves with 3.a1 and 4.b1 – a swindle – winning 35–29. All other moves lose.

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## MISCELLANY

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### **Syncopated Cerebration**     *by Sid Cox*

Back in the dark ages of Othello, before there were ratings, win averages had to be used to compare players . . .

The Northern Othello team captain is trying to decide which of two players, Ray Almond or Bill Marzipan, to include in his team for the forthcoming North/South match. In the first tournament of the season Marzipan had won 2 games out of 7. Almond left after playing 4 games, winning just 1 of them. Therefore Marzipan's average, 0.29, was better than Almond's 0.25, so the captain was thinking of choosing him. However, there wasn't much to choose between them so he was hoping that the second tournament, the last before the match, would confirm that Marzipan was the better player.

In the second tournament Almond won 5 games out of 7, and this time it was Marzipan who had to leave after 4 games, of which he won 3. So in this tournament Marzipan's average was 0.75 and Almond's was 0.71, and this reassured the captain that Marzipan was the player to choose for the match. The captain announced his team which included Marzipan and not Almond.

Hearing of this, an angry Almond confronted the captain. "What do you mean by choosing Marzipan instead of me, when my average is better than his?"

"What do you mean, your average is better than Marzipan's?", said the indignant captain. "In both tournaments his average was better than yours, by 0.04 each time."

"I can see then that you have not bothered to work out our overall averages" sneered Almond. "In total I have won 6 games out of 11, but he has won only 5 out of 11. My average, 0.55, is better than his, 0.45. You should have chosen me."

We will leave the puzzled captain scratching his head, wondering how this can be . . .

### **Othello Memories**     *of Jeremy Das*

This is the story of how I came to be interested in Othello, and of why I remain interested in Othello. I was prompted to write it by the need to help fill up a newsletter whose submission deadline had been and gone without anyone submitting anything. In other circumstances, I might have been tempted to scrap this and use the best bits as asides in future articles.

Soon after starting secondary school, I decided to join the chess club. This took some courage because, although I had been one of the best players at my junior school, I feared that the older boys would be good enough to make me look stupid. I knew what would happen when I played one of them. The game would seem to be going well for a while, then I would make a dreadful blunder and not realise it until I saw my opponent exchanging knowing glances with his friends. Weeks later, I imagined, whenever they saw me they would nudge each other before collapsing, helpless with laughter.

Luckily, my first opponent was from my own year, which may have explained why I felt uncharacteristically confident about the game. I would try my very best, beat him and make a good impression on the older boys. Perhaps, if they knew I was one of the best in my year, they might not be quite as scathing about my games as I feared. As the perceptive reader will have guessed by now, things did not go according to plan. The game seemed to be going well for a while, then I realised that I had made a dreadful blunder – namely learning to play chess. Within ten moves the game was essentially over. I like to think I resigned, but I probably played on to the bitter end, just to see how it was done. (NB for those readers who are not chess players: although resigning a game of Othello is still seen by some as a mild breach of etiquette, failing to resign a lost game of chess is usually seen as unpardonable.)

Being a stoical eleven year old, capable of applying myself to any task that I chose, I was spurred on by this defeat to make a serious study of chess. I worked determinedly and methodically; studying opening theory, strategy and tactics, and this enabled me to reach my opponent's standard by the end of our first year. Ummm. Er. No – that is not quite right. This is how the story really goes:

Being a somewhat dreamy eleven year old, who expected be able to succeed at anything without the slightest effort, I was so shocked by this defeat that I decided I had no talent for chess. Instead, I resolved never to go to chess club again. Eventually I tried Scrabble club, but the main point of this seemed to be to allow lonely Scrabble sets to exchange Scrabble DNA so that you ended up with a collection of tiles in several different shades of white, cream and yellow.

The story now jumps about two years to a beautiful summer's day. Or maybe it was a chilly winter's day. Or perhaps a nondescript day at an unspecified time of year. I was standing at a notice board, reading about some highly uninteresting sports fixtures, when suddenly a sixth former emerged from chess club, blinked as if awakening from a deep sleep, approached me and asked rather sternly if I could play chess. When I admitted that I could, he more or less dragged me into chess club for a game. I knew something was amiss – because a lot of people seemed interested in and amused by my arrival – but I was not at all sure what it was. My fear that it would turn out to be a rather mean joke at my expense

was not allayed when someone laughingly asked the sixth-former, “Who’ve you dragged in now?”

In fact the joke was on my opponent. He was tired of losing all the time, and had dragged in a randomly selected youngster in the hope of being able to beat him. I won easily, and my opponent left, never to return – or at least not until a week or two later. After the game, I had been about to leave when it occurred to me (I sometimes get these flashes of insight) that sitting indoors playing chess was probably more fun than wandering around aimlessly as I had been doing lately, so I joined chess club and started going regularly. Eventually, I ended up on the school team, although I was neither a strong player nor an enthusiast. Chess was just something to make my drab, boring schooldays a little less drab and boring.

I knew I wanted to play something, but I did not know what. The game had to be simpler than chess yet strategically and tactically involving; less monotonous than draughts but with greater depth than Master Mind.

One day, a year or so after I had re-joined chess-club, I arrived at the club early, and found that none of the few people who were already there was playing chess. Everyone was crowded around a table where a mysterious package was being opened. When I asked what was happening, the master who supervised chess club explained that the manufacturers of a new board game had sent our club two free sets. Had this had been a good shaggy dog story, the slogan on the game’s box would have been something like this: “*MegaChess*, the fabulous strategy board game that’s rather like chess but infinitely more complex. Prepare to be a frustrated beginner for the rest your life.” – only worse. Luckily, this is not a shaggy dog story, and the slogan on the boxes was, just as you were expecting, “A minute to learn. A lifetime to master.”

I was astounded. Could this *Othello* really be the game that I had dreamt of? The box illustration certainly didn’t give that impression, for it appeared to have been inspired by an advertisement for *Turkish Delight* chocolate bars. Nevertheless, the game itself did seem to be as “Full of Eastern promise” as the chocolate bar. It did not take us long to see that edges and corners were important, and someone noticed fairly quickly that minimisation was a good idea. But, to me, it all seemed too good to be true. I watched the first few games with a growing sense that *Othello* must be deeply flawed. Ever pessimistic, I managed to convince myself that one side or the other could force a wipeout after twenty or thirty moves. After all, if it were not so then *Othello* would be fun, and that would never do! Consequently I spent my first twenty games trying to find early wipeouts, and lost all of them. After this, I reluctantly concluded that *Othello*, was indeed the wonderful game I had been looking for. So I adopted a minimisation strategy and instantly became one of the best four or five players at chess club.

At first sight, the strategy we used may seem like present-day strategy, for we knew that minimisation/mobility and diagonal control were important, we exploited unbalanced edges, made corner sacrifices – and someone found what is now called a “Stoner Trap”! However, our games were profoundly influenced by ideas that would be considered quite wrong today. We attached great importance to the inner 4 by 4 zone of the board and many of our opening moves were intended to make the opponent play outside the  $4 \times 4$  zone. There was some debate about whether it was better to take an unbalanced edge rather than give up the edge, but it was generally thought to be a “good thing” to take edges, and the purpose of minimisation was to facilitate the capture of edges. I am ashamed to say that my idea that it was important to take adjacent corners of the  $4 \times 4$  zone – and to avoid taking diagonally opposite corners – also gained some popularity without there being a much justification for it. Consequently, our games would seem very strange today – starting off quite differently from modern games, but becoming more and more like them as play progressed.

The first opening I devised was based on our erroneous ideas. For obvious reasons, I called it the yin-yang. For equally obvious reasons, nobody (to the best of my knowledge) has played it since 1977:

		7	10	9	12		
		11	○	●	6		
		8	●	○	1		
		3	2	5	4		

Yin-Yang Opening

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

The resulting position

Something that puzzled all of us was the leaflet of example games that came with chess club’s Othello sets. Six games from the previous year’s All Japan Championship were given, and many of their moves seemed to make no sense at all. Most people lost interest in them, but I became convinced that they involved some subtle ideas that we had not yet understood. If you expect me to say that I now realise that these games were played using ultra modern strategy and tactics then you will be disappointed – for the games seem almost as strange now as they did then. Their ideas, our ideas and present day ideas seem, in some vague hand-wavy sense, to be equidistant from each other. Nevertheless, it was my feeling that somehow our strategy was far from perfect that led me to keep trying out new ideas in the hope that one of them would work.

In two of the three years from 1977 to 1979 I went to my first two Othello tournaments, which were held at a hotel in Birmingham. Readers who are used to today's poor attendance (which reached its nadir when Ali Turner won a beginners' tournament by vanquishing a packet of biscuits) will be amazed to learn that both times there were around a hundred entrants! Not only that, but Birmingham was just one of six or seven equally popular regional qualifying events for the national championship. Conversely, anyone who has not entered a tournament since those early days might well be surprised by the absence of the women who, dressed in black and white chequered outfits, probably performed some vital role in running the tournament – although I cannot quite remember what it was. I think I came eighth in one of these tournaments, but I cannot be sure. Although I enjoyed both tournaments, I only learned two things from them. First, that the best players were a lot better than I – which hardly surprised me. Secondly, that staying within the 4x4 zone was of minimal importance to the top players. I probably heard the word “parity” at some point, but if I did, I had no idea what it meant.

The next memorable Othello event was one year when the regional Othello tournaments were replaced by a competition in which, as far as I can remember, entrants had to choose the best move in each of three positions. The final score in each game was given as a clue but, after spending hours working on each problem, I got a different score for at least one of them - possibly all three. Eventually, I decided that whoever had set the competition must have made some mistakes. I was able to find the given scores by assuming that, in each case, the only mistake was made on the first move. So I sent off my answers with high hopes that I would be rewarded for my efforts. I never heard anything more about the competition, but the exercise of studying some positions in depth for the first time proved very useful, resulting in a great improvement in my endgame play. My only regret now is that I didn't keep the original questions. It would have been interesting to see if I was right.

For two or three years I played very little Othello, and was beginning to lose interest in the game. But on joining (or rejoining) the British Othello Federation, and playing through some of the experts' games that appeared in the newsletter, my enthusiasm was rekindled. Othello theory seemed to have moved into a new dimension, opening up undreamed of possibilities in the game . . .

The first tournament where I had a chance of putting these new ideas into practice was in Cambridge. In those days, Cambridge was the focus of British Othello because several of the top British players were undergraduates there. Not surprisingly, most of these players were at the tournament – including Imre Leader, David Sharman (not to be confused with David Shaman), Peter Bhagat, Joel Feinstein and Paul Smith. I had some exciting games and came third,

winning my first (and probably only) cash prize for an Othello tournament – a cheque for about £2.75!

From then on, for the next few years, I tried to attend at least one tournament per year, but these tournament games were often the only Othello I played all year. I played a bit more in the early nineties, and then went into an Othello decline for most of the second half of the decade.

Things changed dramatically in 1999 when I got Internet access. I first tried Microsoft's "Internet Gaming Zone" – generally known as "IGZ" or just the "Zone". Being fairly rusty, I decided to play my first few games in the "Grotto" – the room where unrated games are played. I made a bad start by over-evaporating in my first game, and being wiped out! I improved quickly, but still a lot worse than I had in previous years. Consequently I tried really hard when playing good players for fear that they would not want to play again if I did not give them a good enough game. Unfortunately, several of the most highly rated players were more interested in winning than having a good game, and refused to play me again if the game was at all close. Worse was the fact that the place was full of arrogant teenagers who believed that anyone who dared beat them could only have done so by using a program. And there was a subgroup of players who tended to ask me if I was a good player. My reply was usually something like, "Well, I'm not a beginner" or "I'm not a bad player." These players almost invariably turned out to be poor players, who were desperate to find someone they could beat, and who became furious when they realised they had been (as they saw it) "tricked into playing a good player". To add insult to injury, many of my opponents in the rated room complained quite rudely about how slowly I played . . . .

I temporarily solved these problem by using a new nickname, playing only frantic blitz games (beating some of the players who had previously refused to play me again), and trying to speak more like an arrogant teenager – albeit without the foul language. Now, if anyone asked me if I was good, I would tell them earnestly that I was very good and would probably beat them. When I lost a game, I would magnanimously "explain" that although I was good, my opponent was better. As far as I could tell, this caused amusement rather than hostility – which was interesting. It was certainly fun for a week or two.

When I discovered that VOG Othello was temporarily free I was happy to move to a game site whose social environment did not remind me quite as vividly of what it was like to be a third former – it was bad enough the first time. Also, the average player at VOG was much better than at the Zone, and the facilities were better – with timed games, an archive containing all rated games played at VOG and regular tournaments. I found tournaments with two minute and three minute time limits quite exciting, although I was little disappointed that I never

achieved better than third place – until I realised that many of my opponents were world class players – some of whom qualified for the 1999 World Championship!

By the end of my first year on-line, I had played more than two thousand five hundred games at VOG and the Zone, and had therefore played the vast majority my lifetime’s Othello on-line. Not surprisingly, there were times in that year when I was sick of Othello – especially when I seemed to have stopped improving – or even to be getting worse. However, unlike my chess-playing former self, instead of being discouraged by my inability to even approach the top players’ consistency I am more fascinated by Othello than ever before. It may sound like a dreadful cliché (which is probably because it *is* a dreadful cliché) but the more I learn about Othello, the more I learn how much there is to learn.

## A Glimpse Into The Future? *by Magnus Maestro*

My new util looked good, but caution demanded I test it somewhere out of sight. So I exited my Home, and changed my appearance as I hotkeyed rapidly away. For this trip, only one Face would do, and here in Reality it was as good a disguise as any. I entered the Room wearing my true form and bearing my true name, hoping that one or the other would be recognised . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

It had been a quiet night in the Othello Room. The Octopus was in his usual booths, relieving tourists of a few credits, and some of the other regulars were playing through blitz games. A group of us had tired of this, and were about to leave when a human figure entered through the Door. He looked to me like just another klutz, out of his way and out of his depth. But something about him made Felipe pause in mid-sentence, and check out the stranger’s Name.

“Do you know who that is?” he tightbanded to the rest of us. Neither the Face nor the Name meant anything to us. “I don’t remember finding him in Reality before,” continued Felipe, “but he played in some of the old over-the-board tournaments. He was one of the best.”

I hadn’t figured Felipe for a nostalgic, but I checked the base and he was right. Someone of this name had played many games back in the 20th century, winning much more often than not. I was a teeny bit impressed, until the base showed me all the errors in his games. Sad really. Maybe he had been one of the great players of his day (the base confirmed this with a list of his tournament victories), but the game had moved on since then. There was credit to be gained here, and I clicked in fast to challenge the newcomer to a game.

I called up a booth, and we assembled opposite each other. “I used to play this game a lot when I was younger” he said. “But back then we had real boards and discs, and most of my opponents looked human.”

“I can look human if you want” I offered, and adopted a form that I thought would please him. He smiled. “Thank you;” he said, “that is less, er, intimidating. In most ways.”

I smiled back, and raised the issue of the stakes. “Oh, whatever you like,” he said, “I haven’t got the hang of this credit system yet, but I’m sure I can afford to play a game.” Hacking into his account was embarrassingly easy, and wow he was right! I named a sum far above what I could afford, but then there was no chance of me losing. He shrugged agreement, and we prepared to begin.

The whole Room was watching; some wanted to see if this guy could still play a little, and others just clocked the size of the stake. There had been games for higher stakes, but everyone knew in advance that these would be p-p-draws. This was different: I was cyborged with the base, of course, and ready to play out a p-p-draw if that’s what he had in mind. But it didn’t appear that he was plugged into anything at all. Amazingly, he didn’t seem to suspect that I was packing a little extra brainpower, or even that I was tightbanding to my friends while we chose colours and haggled over the time-limit.

We zipped through a few moves of a tiger opening, and then he played a move 7 I’d never seen before. “Game-loser!” exclaimed the Octopus, and the base agreed: this opening had gone out with the PC, and now I was going to win 34-30. I decided to let just a little of my excitement show on my Face, and my opponent smiled at me. “This was out of fashion even in my day,” he said. “I’m hoping everyone’s forgotten about it.”

“I’ve never seen it before,” I agreed, as I played one of the two p-p-ms. His next two moves were p-p, but the one after was another one-disc error. I played another p-p-m, and he looked up at me. “Interesting;” he said “Shaman always played the other one.” (I didn’t get the reference, but the base did.) He fell into thought for the first time in the game, and I looked down a few of the p-p variations: nothing spectacular. Then suddenly I got a jolt, and the base wasn’t there any more!

“Not funny!” I exclaimed, but it seemed that the others were as shocked as I was. Felipe tried hooking us into the back-up, but that was somehow gone too, and none of us could access the archive. Ki-Yan exited to Virtual, and the Octopus searched his Home for a copy, but meanwhile it was clear that I was going to have to make a few moves bare-brain.

I could do this, I was sure. It was only for a move or two, after all. I spotted a couple of moves that looked normal, and tried to guess what he might do against them. It took some getting used to that the sequences weren’t labelled with scores, but hey, I knew what a good position looked like, and one of the two moves seemed to me to be better than the other one. That was enough, and I dared to play it. This got a response I hadn’t even considered, and already it was

my turn again. Whew!

Ki-Yan re-entered with a whirlwind of grey-green light and a cloak of red velvet, but no base. The Octopus did come up with what he said was an old stand-alone program, but it wasn't working. They were coming up with all sorts of bizarre theories about what was wrong, but I didn't have time for that; it was my move, and I was going to have to play faster.

I played a couple more moves that seemed OK, and I couldn't see too much wrong with my position. Then I played another one just because it looked right, but the old guy's expression told me it probably wasn't. He seemed to me oblivious to the commotion around us, but then my Face didn't show anything either: it all seemed too convenient, but how had he done it? What had he done? What would happen if I took the edge?

\* \* \* \* \*

My little toy seemed to be working as I'd been told it would, and my pretty opponent's precious base was yanked, in all its formats, out of Reality. Her friend with the extra arms dredged up another program from his private archive, but I disposed of that too. To her credit, she didn't try to quit the game, and she was actually doing OK until the rest of the crew started suggesting moves. As for me, I was a few decades out of practice, and I almost let her back into it. A little after move 40, I restored the base, and let her play perfectly: the ending was boring and easy for me, even though I gathered I was missing a few bigger wins. In the end it was 38-26.

"Good game", I said. "I thought you had me there for a moment." But she seem disinclined to chat, and I figured it best just to exit and leave them to it.

\* \* \* \* \*

I was feeling the strain, and just about out of time, when the base was suddenly there again. It was even worse than I'd feared, and I was down 45-19. How had I done so badly, despite all the brainwork? Was there more to this game than I'd realised? What was worse, I'd blown it against someone who couldn't even p-p an endgame! In fact, he was shipping discs so fast that I thought I might even have a chance, but then he stopped making mistakes. At the end, I wasn't concentrating on the game so much as the megacredits I was about to owe. But our mystery man exited fast (very fast!) without upping the game, and everyone was willing to turn blind-eye while I hacked it into a p-p-draw – winning did not seem an attractive option.

I was still shaking inside when Felipe dropped into my booth. I was also still wearing the stupid human Face, but I guess he liked it, since he took on one to match, and called up a screen. I knew what he had in mind, and gave a brief nod of agreement . . .

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## Ratings

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### The Rating List *maintained by David Haigh.*

This rating list is accurate as of the end of the 2000 Cambridge International tournament: this season's regionals will be incorporated as soon as David gets the results he is missing.

The list has been swelled by a large number of players who competed at last year's MSO, especially in the Beginners' Tournament. If anyone can supply any of the missing first names, we would be much obliged!

1 Garry Edmead	269	1863	27 Mark McCready	6	1314
2 Imre Leader	480	1830	28 Roy Arnold	728	1309
3 Graham Brightwell	610	1749	29 M. Isaac	6	1306
4 Joel Feinstein	438	1732	30 David Kotin	13	1256
5 Guy Plowman	361	1699	31 Michael Schmidt	9	1208
6 Jan Haugland	107	1631	32 Iain Forsyth	420	1193
7 Iain Barrass	441	1600	?? Horlock	6	1193
8 Ian Turner	452	1583	34 Josiah Lutton	30	1191
9 Christopher Swaby	6	1531	35 Brett Frendo	5	1164
10 Demis Hassabis	5	1497	36 Robert Stanton	143	1163
11 Aubrey de Grey	572	1489	37 Simon Turner	96	1150
12 Phil Marson	605	1487	38 Ben Pridmore	11	1147
13 E. Leung	6	1478	39 Margaret Plowman	25	1135
14 David Summers	46	1427	40 David Haigh	465	1122
15 Carolyn Lysons	6	1416	41 Josef Kollar	24	1106
16 ?? Thomas	6	1406	42 Scott Frendo	11	1088
17 Mark Richards	6	1404	43 Andrew Baron	5	1062
18 ?? Holloway	6	1396	44 Adelaide Carpenter	174	1053
19 Mark Wormley	453	1391	45 Rajit Gholap	19	1013
20 Alexander Boe	18	1390	46 ?? Haffey	6	986
21 Sophie Collay	15	1387	47 ?? Somekh	6	981
22 Fred Collay	9	1384	48 George Lane	6	957
23 Matthew Selby	240	1382	49 ?? Twitchell	6	952
24 Shanker Menon	3	1347	50 ?? Luksan	5	857
25 ?? Tuddenham	6	1326	51 Eileen Forsyth	249	666
26 Jeremy Das	238	1315	52 Leanne Lysons	5	455