Forty Billion Nodes Under The Tree
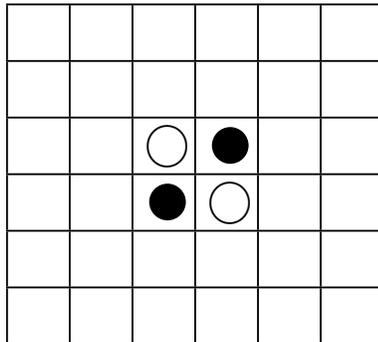
The Newsletter of the British Othello Federation

July 1993

Black to play, but White wins 20-16.

Contents.

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The Editor would like to take advantage of this space to thank all those who sent in articles so promptly. One or two items had to be held over to next time, but that's the way the Editor likes it!

Forthcoming Events.

This year's National Final will be held, as previously announced, on the weekend of August 21-22. However, not as previously announced, it will be held in the fair city of Sheffield. Many thanks to Robert Stanton for finding us a venue at short notice.

The venue is the Charnwood Hotel, 10 Sharrow Lane, Sheffield, just off London Road. The schedule is the same as in previous years, so the AGM will start at 1:00p.m. on Saturday 21st August, with the National Final starting at 3:30. Play will continue on Sunday 22nd, starting at 9:00a.m. As is becoming traditional, the climax of the event will be a Grand Final beginning at about 5:00p.m. The usual Challengers' event, open to all those not qualified for the Nationals, will be held alongside on the Sunday. Accomodation is available at the Charnwood hotel at a reduced rate of £25 per person per night, but Robert will also investigate cheaper alternatives. The phone number of the hotel is 0742 589411. Robert's phone number is 0742 855242 and he claims to be nearly always there just after 6:00p.m. His work number is 0742 824307.

Travel details will be available to the qualifiers and other interested parties at a later date.

The 1993 World Othello Championships will be held in Kensington, London, over the weekend of November 5-7. On the first two days (Friday and Saturday), there will be a Swiss-style tournament to decide the World Team Championship and to find the four semi-finalists. The semi-finals, final, and Victory Dinner take place on the Sunday.

We are still looking for more volunteers to act as table referees: thanks to everyone who has replied so far. Being a referee involves taking the score of a game, checking for flipping errors, watching for time defaults, and generally watching some top quality games. Meals will be provided. Anyone who thinks they might be interested should contact Graham Brightwell after August 9th. Don't worry that you're not a good enough player; all we need are people who have played a little. Further details will be available from Graham nearer the time, hopefully in the next issue of the Bulletin.

The remaining European Grand Prix tournaments are as follows.
Brussels — July 31-August 1; Paris — August 28-29. All the usual recommendations hold. Go. The Paris tournament this year will feature three top Japanese players: Takeshi Murakami, Mazaki Takizawa and Hideki Kitajima, not to mention the four top Russians.

Secretarial Snippets *by David Haigh.*

Some members have been perplexed to receive a membership renewal request a mere 6 months after shelling out £5 for their first year's membership. Here is how this can happen. Remember that a year's subscription pays for two newsletters. Say you join in early July, and are sent the July newsletter as the first newsletter paid for by your subscription. Your second newsletter will be sent to you in January, and since it is the last one you have paid for you will find a renewal slip with it. (In order to save postage costs we do not send out separate reminders.) You don't have to renew your membership straight away; so long as you do so before July, you will get the next newsletter. But we hope that most people will renew immediately, because it is so easy to forget to do so.

About Last Issue's Cover *by Karsten Sotherwitness.*

It was written in the last issue that a complete British 'B' team was enough to win the team World Championships. Maybe it should be stressed that the French team in Barcelona—Tastet, Juhem and Penloup—was also a complete 'B' team: the French 'A' team—Ralle, Piau and Puget—won the title in Stockholm in 1990.

Furthermore, someone pointed out to me that this French 'B' team had actually also won the team Championship in Barcelona! If you consider the final results, Feinstein is equal with Penloup, Handel is equal with Juhem, and Tastet is ahead of Shaman, so France is ahead of Britain, isn't it? [*No. – Ed.*]

Even better, as David Shaman is moving to France and will be eligible to play in the French team from 1994, even a French 'C' team composed of Shaman, Nicolet, and Caspard should be enough to win the team title in 1994. If you're not convinced, have a glance at the results of this year's Cambridge Open.

Notation.

a1	b1	c1	d	e	f	g	h1
a2							
a3							
4							
5							
6							
7						X	C
8						C	h8

The board is split into eight columns and eight rows. Each column is labelled with a letter, from 'a' for the left-hand column to 'h' for the right-hand column. Rows are numbered from '1' for the top row to '8' for the bottom. This is the opposite convention to that used in chess. Thus the top left corner is called 'a1', and the bottom right is 'h8'.

A square such as b2, one in diagonally from a corner, is known as an 'X-square', and a square such as h7 adjacent to a corner is a 'C-square'.

Compass directions are sometimes used when describing regions of the board, so for instance the area of the board near to h1 is called the North-East corner.

Proposed Rule Changes   *by Graham Brightwell.*

Your faithful committee met twice this year, once in December and once in June. In many ways, it's been a quiet year, but the Committee did get round to considering some minor changes in the Rules governing qualification from the Regionals to the Nationals. These will be put to the AGM, to be held on Saturday August 21st, just before the Nationals.

(1)   Phil Marson noted that, in the past, players qualifying for the Nationals had declined to take up their place in the tournament. The effect is that there are fewer players in the event than there might be, while players who are keen to play are excluded. Phil proposes that, in the event of a player (X) declining the invitation to play in the Nationals, the next highest player, not already qualified, in the tournament where X originally qualified, would be invited to play. The committee were a little concerned about a few possible consequences of this, and felt that it would only be workable if X declined, in writing, the formal invitation to play in the Nationals (which goes out after all the Regionals have been completed). Apart from this, the committee felt it was workable, and by and large had no strong feelings for or against the proposal. A formal motion will be put before the AGM, with no committee recommendation. According to our shiny new constitution, a simple majority at the AGM will suffice to implement the rule change. Of course, the rule will *not* operate in 1993.

(2)   On a couple of occasions in the past two seasons, a player has qualified from a Regional by virtue of scoring 0 points, but being among the top three non-qualifiers present. It seems that players are a little embarrassed by this, and would rather not have qualified under such circumstances. It was therefore proposed that, in order to qualify for the Nationals, a player must (a) be among the top three finishers at a Regional, among those players not already qualified, and (b) have scored at least half a point, not counting byes. I point out that the committee has the right to suspend the rules and allow others to qualify if the circumstances are unusual – this has happened once or twice in the past. I can envisage a case where only one player turns up at a Regional, hoping to qualify . . . . Again, the committee didn't have any very strong feelings for or against this proposal, and will not be making a recommendation to the AGM.

It's daft scenario time. At a Regional, there are four players not already qualified, two of whom do well. Player three scores one point by beating Bye. Player four scores half a point by drawing with A.N.Human. Which of them qualifies? If we adopt proposal (2) above, the answer is that neither qualifies. Player three falls foul of requirement (b), while player four hasn't satisifed condition (a). This anomaly was pointed out by Imre Leader. In practice, of course, players three and four will play each other, and this won't arise. But, when it does . . . .

Amenor Wins World 6x6 Championships!   *by Joel Feinstein.*

A great deal of excitement preceded the long awaited three game match between Amenor and Urakam, two players known to play almost perfectly. The match produced three games of exceptional quality.

Computer analysis reveals that Amenor made no errors, while Urakam's move 2 in game 1 and move 5 in game 2 cost him one disc each. In game three, play was perfect from move 2 onwards.

b2	c2	d2	e2	f2	g2
b3					
b4		○	●		
b5		●	○		
b6					
b7					

Notation.

In the following notes, the columns are labelled b to g, and the rows are labelled 2 to 7, so that the moves in standard openings have their usual names.

Colours are red and white, with red playing first.

Interest in 6×6 Othello is on the increase, because Peter Pan is planning to market the game, targetted at the 5-8 age range. It seems that the game is playable, and incorporates many, though not all, of the interesting features of the full game.

22	28	5	26	27	21
23	11	1	2	14	29
13	8	○	●	3	6
15	4	●	○	9	31
24	16	7	10	30	32
19	25	12	18	17	20

Game 1

Game 1. Red: Amenor 17, White: Urakam 19.

The first surprise of the match came with Urakam's choice of 2.e3, the parallel opening, commonly held to be inferior. At move 5, the usual move in eight by eight Othello is at f3, but this is an x-square, so instead Urakam initiates play on the North edge. White now has little choice but to grab the East edge. Many onlookers now liked the look of the move 7.f5, but computer analysis reveals that after the optimal moves 8.g5 c4 b4, Red has no good way to break the long flat White wall, and White wins 20-16. Amenor's choice of 7.d6 was more accurate. Play is then fairly natural until Amenor's brave diagonal grab at move 11. Urakam played the waiting move 12.d7, but after 13.b4 he was forced into an x-square of his own. 14.e2 would lose to 15.f6, while 14.f2 loses to the Stoner trap 15.e2. In the game, after 16.c6, Amenor allowed the Stoner trap on the South edge but ensured his own access to g2. The players then captured the four corners on consecutive moves. Unfortunately for Amenor, White's threats in the North are too strong. In the end Urakam was able to play both e2 and c2, and Amenor did not even gain parity, as the two regions in the East were linked. These regions did, however, play quite well for Amenor, and he was able to keep the loss to 17-19.

21	28	6	9	10	29
11	16	1	4	27	30
12	7	○	●	5	24
8	2	●	○	14	23
13	25	3	15	17	20
32	26	31	22	19	18

Game 2.

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

After 16.c3.

Game 2. Red: Urakam 15, White: Amenor 21.

In game two, the players played down the main line of the Rose opening up to move 5, but Amenor avoided the x-square 6.c6 in favour of the aggressive sequence 6.d2 c4 b5 e2 f2. Now 11.c3 looks natural, but Urakam chose not to sacrifice the b2 corner. At move 14, g4 looks strong, but Red could then play the sacrifice at c3. This turns out to be a 19-17 White win, but Amenor wanted more! After 14.f5 e6, Amenor grabbed the diagonal with 16.c3.

This diagonal grab is extremely strong, as it prevents Red's f3, and threatens c6. If Red tries 17.g5, he never gets on the diagonal after 18.e7! (White wins 26-10).

In desperation, Urakam tried 17.f6!, following the "principle of the opposite x-square". This huge sacrifice guarantees Red's access to b2. But Amenor cleverly denied Urakam access to c2, preventing him from working along the North edge until it was too late. Note that 22.g5 loses to 23.g4, gaining access to c2. After 25.c6, b7 and c7 are equally good, but c7 is more spectacular, with its follow-up 28.c2.

Ahead on disc-count, Amenor chose white for the deciding game.

Game 3. Red: Urakam 16, White: Amenor 20.

28	9	8	7	31	32
22	14	1	4	17	16
27	13	○	●	6	15
19	2	●	○	5	12
24	23	3	10	26	29
21	18	20	11	25	30

Game 3.

At move 5, Urakam chose a different variant of the Rose opening, and play proceeded down the most common line until move 9, when Urakam grabbed the North edge. After 10.e6 it looked as if he was in trouble, but the dramatic centre grab 11.e7 turned out to be quite strong. Both players were rather short of moves, and it was clear that an x-square was imminent. Amenor took the initiative with 14.c3! As often, this diagonal is very hard to cut. Urakam did not even try, and at move 17 he sacrificed at f3.

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

After 17.f3

The position was now extremely tight. Neither side could cut the other's diagonal in a satisfactory way. After Red's waiting move to a5, Amenor played the surprisng 20.d7. After 21.b7 b3, the point is not that Amenor was on the diagonal, but that Urakam could not cut the other diagonal, and also that Amenor was certain to keep parity in at least three of the four regions. Note that this time the opposite x-square 25.f6 would be no help after 26.g7. Amenor had enough for a 20-16 win, giving him the championship. Congratulations to him.

In case you are wondering, the characters Urakam and Amenor are fictional, but the computer analysis is genuine. The six by six version of my program MODOT, running on the Nottingham Mathematics department's Silicon Graphics crimson chip, took about two weeks cpu time to show that the sequence in game three above is optimal. It had to look at about forty billion positions. Previously, the win, loss or draw calculation had taken about 1.5 weeks and thirty billion nodes to show that White was winning at move 2. The program used short mid-game searches to order the moves for its endgame calculation to look at. Usually this was sensible, but some of the corner sacrifices looked at were daft. On the other hand, the optimal lines do include a lot of early x-squares. I would not recommend an x-square at move 2, though! The diagonal opening is an easy win for Red.

The following opening tree is enough to guarantee that White is winning after three moves each. I do not claim that White's moves are optimal. Also, the win after d3 c5 b6 e3 d6 c4 b5 is very hard to find! (This line is *not* optimal for White).

```
d3  c5  b6  e3  f5  e6                      f5  f4
                f4  d2                      f3  e2
                d6  c4          e6  d2  c2  b2
                f2  d2                      c3  e3
                f6  d2                      c4  b5
                f3  d2                      b5  f4
        c6  e3  b5  d2                      c6  f4
                c4  b5          f6  d2  c4  b5
                f5  d2          f6  d2  c4  b5
                f3  f4                      c3  f5
        d6  e3  b4  d2                      c6  f5
                f4  d2                      c2  b2
                b5  d2                      b5  f4
```

Further information: if after 2.c5 Red tries 3.e6, White can win by more than 4 by playing the ganglion, 4.d2. But if White plays 4.f5 instead, Red must play the Italian 5.c4, and it's a draw: perfect play is then 6.e3 f4 g5 g4 g3 f6! d6 b5 g7 e7 c6! b7 d2 d7 f7! g6 f3 g2 c7 f2 e2 c3 b6 c2 b2 b3 b4 18-18.

I have credited empty squares to the winner, as in tournaments. It is possible that there is a line where Red can hold the loss to 16-17. I do not intend to use another 2 weeks cpu time to find this out!

The 1993 Regional Tournaments

The results of all the Regionals are as below, followed by some reports. Thanks to all those who sent us reports: I hope none got lost this year. While we're on the subject, I can exclusively reveal that the report of the 1992 Edinburgh Regional has now been found, but sadly not in time for it to make this newsletter. We plan to feature this in the next issue of the popular *British Othello Bulletin*.

Ties are officially broken, and I believe that I have the finishing order correct in all cases. There were some errors in this respect in the results as in the Bulletin: I would like to apologise for the distress that this has apparently caused in some places. Joel Feinstein and Neil Stephenson had already qualified by winning the Nationals and the Challengers' respectively last year. So we have 29 qualifiers so far, with a possible three more from the Doncaster Regional.

	London – 13/3		Pts		*Wellingborough – 3/4*		Pts
1.	Peter Bhagat	(Q)	5/6	1.	David Shaman	(Q)	7/7
2.	Joel Feinstein		5	2.	Graham Brightwell	(Q)	6
3.	Michael Trent	(Q)	4	3.	Aubrey de Grey	(Q)	5
4.	Iain Barrass	(Q)	4	4.	John Lysons		4
5.	Ian Turner		3	5.	Iain Barrass		4
6.	Phil Marson		3	6.	Joel Feinstein		4
7.	Mark Atkinson		3	7.	Martin Fancy		4
8.	Neil Cuthbertson		3	8.	Guy Plowman		3
9.	John Bass		3	9.	Phil Marson		3
10.	Aiden O'Reilly (IRE)		2	10.	Roy Arnold		3
11.	Liam Stephens		1	11.	Margaret Plowman		3
12.	Steven Verhaegen (IRE)		0	12.	Adelaide Carpenter		2
				13.	Nigel Barthorpe		1

	Eastbourne – 17/4		Pts		*Worksop – 24/4*		Pts
1.	Guy Plowman	(Q)	7/7	1.	Joel Feinstein		7/7
2.	Phil Marson	(Q)	6	2.	Iain Barrass	(Q)	5
3.	Ian Turner	(Q)	5	3.	Iain Forsyth		5
4.	Graham Chappell		4	4.	Phil Marson		4
5.	Roy Arnold		4	5.	David Haigh	(Q)	3
6.	Alison Turner		3	6.	Mark Wormley	(Q)	2
7.	Richard Brend		3	7.	Colin Hands		2
8.	Ashley Hammond		2	8.	Eileen Forsyth		0
9.	Rodney Hammond		1				
10.	Gareth Taplin		0				

	Nottingham – 8/5		Pts
1.	Mike Handel	(Q)	6/6
2.	Joel Feinstein		4
3.	Graham Brightwell		4
4.	Guy Plowman		4
5.	Iain Barrass		4
6.	Jeremy Das	(Q)	3.5
7.	Ken Stephenson	(Q)	3
8.	Mark Wormley		3
9.	Roy Arnold		3
10.	Daniel Olivares		3
11.	Phil Marson		2.5
12.	Colin Hands		2
13.	Iain Forsyth		2
14.	David Haigh		2
15.	John Simpson		2
16.	Eileen Forsyth		0

	Cambridge – 19/6		Pts
1.	Imre Leader		5.5/7
2.	Garry Edmead	(Q)	5.5
3.	Guy Plowman		5
4.	Graham Brightwell		5
5.	Aubrey de Grey		4.5
6.	Peter Bhagat		4
7.	Phil Marson		4
8.	Ian Turner		4
9.	David Haigh		4
10.	Iain Barrass		3.5
11.	Jeremy Das		3
12.	Roy Arnold		3
13.	Matthew Selby	(Q)	3
14.	Jeremy Rickard	(Q)	3
15.	Adelaide Carpenter		3
16.	Graham Chappell		2
17.	Gareth Thomas		1
18.	Simon Nickson		0/3

	Winchester – 22/5		Pts
1.	Imre Leader	(Q)	7/7
2.	Guy Plowman		5
3.	Aubrey de Grey		5
4.	Ian Turner		4
5.	Mark Atkinson	(Q)	3
6.	Roy Arnold	(Q)	2
7.	Adelaide Carpenter		1
8.	Phil Marson		1

	Manchester – 5/6		Pts
1.	Jeremy Das		5/6
2.	Mark Wormley		4
3.	Ken Stephenson		4
4.	Phil Marson		4
5.	Jim Brewer	(Q)	4
6.	Phil Brewer	(Q)	3
7.	Iain Barrass		3
8.	Roy Arnold		2
9.	Colin Hands	(Q)	1

	Portsmouth – 12/6		Pts
1.	Graham Brightwell		7/7
2.	Ian Turner		6
3.	Aubrey de Grey		5
4.	Phil Marson		4
5.	Ali Turner	(Q)	3
6.	Roy Arnold		2
7.	Neil Cuthbertson	(Q)	1
8.	Adelaide Carpenter	(Q)	0

The remaining Regional will be held on July 24th, in Doncaster. Will Phil Marson play all 10 events? Will someone break 300 rated games?

London Regional   *by Graham Brightwell.*

Oldcomer Mark Atkinson returned: he now lives and works in London. Two trundled over from the Emerald Isle, wherever that is. Aiden O'Reilly was disappointing, but Steven Verhaegen did quite well considering he'd only been playing for six weeks. He would have won his first round game against Liam Stephens if he'd flipped all the available discs at move 59. A more impressive debut was had by Michael Trent: in fact, has there been a more impressive debut in recent years? He is apparently one of Britain's top Shogi players, which undoubtedly helps, and he has played a number of correspondence games. His first human OTB victim may well have been, er, me, when he turned up at the Grotto Club the month before. This tournament saw him start with a 63-1 win over Neil Cuthbertson, then lose steadily to Pete, then lose to Aiden, beat somebody, beat Ian Turner (!) and then beat Phil Marson in a key last round game. Basically the winner took the final qualifying place: Phil was winning going into the ending, and I think both 57 and 59 were half-game-losing errors. 33-31 to Michael. At the top of the tournament, Joel lost to Phil Marson, but beat Pete. That's it. I refereed smoothly and ably.

Wellingborough Regional   *by Bye.*

I wish to register a complaint. I turned up on time for the abovementioned regional, along with 12 other players, five Othello sets, a so-called Reversi set from Russia, and a quorum of clocks. Play commenced with me paired against the absent Graham Brightwell. I was hardly able to contain my excitement as I was poised to gain 32 rating points. But then I was shattered to learn that, in his absence, he had been awarded a point, whereas I, through absolutely no fault of my own, scored 0. Now, I am used to defeat, even against the weakest of players, but I feel that the organisers here inflicted a gross humiliation on me. In the rest of the tournament, I laboured under the extra pressure, and sadly failed to score. Then, in the last round, fresh hope arose. I found myself paired against Joel Feinstein, whom I had just seen dashing off to catch a train. But once again my hard-earned point was cruelly stripped from me by harsh organiser Margaret Plowman. The result was that I finished an undeserved last. This experience ruined what should have been my greatest ever sporting day, when the racehorse I own romped in first in the Grand National.

I didn't notice much about the rest of the tournament. David Shaman seemed to be playing well. I saw Aubrey de Grey beat Joel Feinstein. The rumoured return of Garry Edmead turned out to be just that. David, Graham and Aubrey qualified. Margaret Plowman refereed smoothly and ably, apart from her cruel treatment of my good self.

Eastbourne Regional   *by Rodney Hammond.*

Another fine day at the seaside as Guy Plowman, Richard Brend, Roy Arnold and Phil Marson crossed the North/South divide to join Ian and Alison Turner, Rodney Hammond and his son Ashley, newcomer Gareth Taplin and, fresh out of retirement, Graham Chappell.

The first round went to form with wins for Guy, Ian, Phil and Roy. Graham impressed by losing just 31-33 to Ian Turner in his first competitive game for five years. Rounds 2 and 3 progressed, with Guy and Phil the only unbeaten players. In round 4 they met, with Guy winning 36-28 after a close game.

No surprise results meant that Guy (7 wins), Phil (6) and Ian (5) were the three qualifiers.

Worksop Regional   *by Joel Feinstein.*

This was run very efficiently by Roy Arnold. There were 8 players, so we played a seven round round-robin tournament. I should have lost to David Haigh, but then he should have lost to Colin Hands. The three qualifiers were Iain Forsyth, David Haigh and Mark Wormley (on tie-break). The two Iain's did well. Phil Marson recovered well from losing his first three games.

Nottingham Regional   *by Phil Marson.*

The 1993 Nottingham Regional attracted a record 15 players. OK!! Last year's competition was the first regional to be held in Nottingham so there wasn't much to beat; nevertheless, 15 was a great turnout and made for an interesting tournament.

To avoid a bye, I decided to play. Considering the pressure involved in organising a tournament, doing the pairings for each round *and* playing, I shall certainly never do that again. [*Editor's Note: the fact that Phil managed thereby to play in all the Regionals this year is irrelevant.*]

My thanks to all those who made the effort to travel such great distances to be with us. Players arrived from London, Winchester, Cambridge (of course), Newton Aycliffe and Doncaster. However, first prize (if there had been one) must go to Daniel Olivares, who made his way from Buenos Aires especially for this tournament! (Other, more cynical, people may say he was visiting relatives in Europe; that he had heard about the competition whilst staying in France and,

since he would be visiting England and staying nearby, decided he would like to play; but I'm sure you know whom to believe.) Anyway, Daniel told me there are about four players in the whole of Argentina so he doesn't get too much practice. However, he acquitted himself well and appears to be a competent player. [*Editor's Note: someone is exaggerating. I am often sent results of Argentine tournaments, and there must be at least eight players.*]

There were plenty of non-qualifiers competing for the three National places, but in the end they went to Mike Handel, Jeremy Das and Ken Stephenson. Congratulations to Mike, who won all of his games against a strong field, and took the first prize of a cuddly dog in a fireman's helmet, and thanks to all those who took part.

Winchester Regional   *by David Haigh.*

For the second year running eight players attended the Winchester Regional. The difference this year was that more than three of them had not yet qualified, so at last the tournament had some point to it, apart from the fun of playing Othello. Those seeking qualification were Roy Arnold, Mark Atkinson, Adelaide Carpenter and Imre Leader. Supporting them in this endeavour were Aubrey de Grey, Phil Marson, Guy Plowman and Ian Turner.

The surprises in the pre-lunch play were Adelaide's 33-31 win against Ian Turner in round 1, and Aubrey very nearly beating Imre in round 3. Two more discs would have been enough. Also in this round Adelaide did well to come within three discs of beating Phil. At the lunch break the scores were: Imre 3/3, Aubrey, Guy and Ian 2, Adelaide and Phil 1, Mark and Roy 0.

Imre was delighted to learn that lunch would be taken at the Jolly Farmer, the pub which had given him much gastronomic delight on previous occasions. Imagine my concern when I saw from the huge array of pump handles and casks behind the bar that the place had clearly been converted from a dessert-eater's to a beer-drinker's pub. However, this could not have been too upsetting for Imre because he went on to win all his remaining four games and the tournament.

Roy provided two post-lunch surprises with his 39-25 defeat of Phil in round 4 and in the 7th and last round by only just losing to Mark in the third 31-33 game of the day.

Using Sonneborn-Berger to split the ties, the results were: Imre 7/7, Guy 5 (12), Aubrey 5 (11), Ian 4, Mark 3, Roy 2, Adelaide 1 (4), Phil 1 (1). Imre, Mark and Roy therefore qualified for the Final.

[*Sadly, we have no report of the Manchester Regional, probably because we forgot to ask for one. Apologies to all those who did well, and expected to see their feats reported. Rumours filtered through that Jim Brewer was in this category, and Jeremy Das's victory should not go unremarked.*]

Portsmouth Regional   *by Ian Turner.*

Preparation for the tournament started on the Friday night: I drove around Portsmouth picking up first chess clocks, kindly loaned by Portsmouth Chess Club, and then Aubrey de Grey, Adelaide Carpenter and Roy Arnold, who had contrived to arrive in the same place at the same time. The next morning we were joined at the venue by Neil Cuthbertson, Phil Marson and Graham Brightwell.

Starting out as favourite, any ideas that Graham had about this being an easy tournament were quickly dispelled when he was pushed almost to the endgame by Alison, who started the tournament as the lowest rated player. Wins by Aubrey, Phil and myself set the pattern of the day's play.

By round four we began to see a tournament of two halves, with Graham and myself (4/4), and Aubrey and Phil (3/4) being well clear of the field. In round five, Graham beat Phil, and then came round six with the critical game between Graham and myself. Graham won 63-1, but with Aubrey beating Phil, and Alison jubilant after beating Roy for the first time, the tournament was ready for a nail biting final round, as Graham was just one point ahead of Aubrey and myself, and his final game was against Aubrey.

I finished the tournament with a win and when I went over to watch Graham and Aubrey it looked like a three-way tie was the most likely result. However, under the watchful gaze of the rest of the competitors, Graham "Houdini" Brightwell, ably assisted by Aubrey, managed not only to escape but even to record a 50-14 win, taking the tournament with an unbeaten record.

No-one sent us a report of the Cambridge Regional either. Obviously the inexperienced organiser couldn't be expected to realise that we'd like one. Fortunately the Editor went to that tournament himself, and has a dim recollection of being paired against Imre Leader in Round 1 (losing), losing to Phil Marson in Round 2, but then bouncing back to finish with a crushing victory over the inexperienced organiser (Britain's eighth best player).

Garry Edmead's comeback featured an ignominious first-round loss against Aubrey de Grey, then later a pulsating draw with Imre Leader. Curiously, this was one of the few Regionals not preceded by rumours of an Edmead comeback. Leader lost to Plowman, but won the tournament anyway. Further down the gratifyingly large field, Gareth Thomas returned after an even longer absence than Garry's.

Thanks are due to the aforementioned organiser, and indeed to all those who organised or helped with any of the Regionals this year. Thanks are also due to those who played: the turnouts at Nottingham and Cambridge in particular were higher than we've seen for a couple of years, and this does make for a more entertaining tournament for all concerned.

I think the next two reports speak for themselves – Ed.

Winchester Beginners' Tournament   *by David Haigh.*

Despite indications from several new members that they intended to participate in the first Winchester Beginners' tournament, none of them managed to make it and the only potential participants (apart from me) were Ali Turner and an unrated packet of biscuits.

Ali made a start at demolishing the packet of biscuits, but this did not manage to respond and lost on time (thereby saving itself from being completely wiped-out). Ali was therefore declared the winner of the tournament, and wins a year's membership of the BOF.

The expert on hand was Ian Turner, and he too gets a year's membership for his trouble, and for the excellent advice he gave Ali on the opening technique to use against the biscuits.

Nottingham Junior Tournament

Phil Marson had a bright idea for the Nottingham Junior Tournament: get an article in the local paper, and offer a year's free membership of the Federation for the first 16 people to reply. Dismally, the paper reported this as "There will be a tournament sometime in the next year", with no mention of the exciting offer.

On the day, Phil and "on-hand expert" Joel Feinstein were joined by Colin Hands and his brother Jonathan, and the ubiquitous Roy Arnold. At least that was enough to hold a sensible round-robin tournament, which they duly did. Phil reports that "The results were irrelevant." Joel reports that Joel won it with 4/4, Phil scored 3, Roy 2, Colin 1 and Jonathan 0. Perhaps Phil was right. Our legal department is still sorting out who, if anyone, wins a year's free membership.

* * * * * * * * * *

Mini-tournament, February 6th, Doncaster,   *by Eileen Forsyth.*

Joel came, he saw, he won.

Eight of us played in the four-round tournament, with Sue Barrass doing the pairings. Most of our usual Thursday players were there, with the exception of Maurice Kent and John Beacock, who were playing chess.

Round 1 was uneventful. Round 2 featured Phil Marson beating Iain Barrass 34-30, and Mark Wormley producing a healthy 28-36 loss against Joel. This score was echoed in the final round by Iain Barrass, again against Joel.

Final results. 1. Joel Feinstein 4, 2. Phil Marson 3, 3. Mark Wormley 2 (10), 4. Iain Barrass 2 (9), 5. Roy Arnold 2 (7), 6. Iain Forsyth 2 (6), 7. Colin Hands 1, 8. Eileen Forsyth 0.

Endgames from the Nationals   *by Graham Brightwell.*

A welcome innovation at last year's National Championships was that the transcripts were collected at the end, and packaged together. Participants at the Nationals should receive the transcript collection with this newsletter, if they haven't already. Credit for this goes to David Shaman, who typed all the games in, and also to someone in France who shifted them into the now-standard GTHOR format.

Anyway, I got to look through more games than just my own, and I thought I'd go through the transcripts, find an instructively badly played one, and annotate it. But I didn't find one: almost all the midgame moves in almost all the games were sensible, thought-out moves. Not always good, but usually hard to criticise. But, an agonisingly large number of games featured a number of endgame errors, ranging from the elementary to the bizarrely complex. Of course, many of these will have been due to time trouble blunders, and all I can say is that, if you're prone to these, then leave more time for the ending. (Easier said than done, I know.) So, to repeat, all of the positions below are the outcomes of well-played midgames, but disaster is about to strike.

Marson v. Haigh

First off, here is David Haigh, who had a good tournament overall, but here he falls victim to two careless moves. It's worth getting to know about how to play out the three-square region in the SE here. The rule of thumb is that you play whichever of g7 and h7 does not permit h8: if both do, it's often best to start with h8. Here, then White should be starting with h7. Should he play 56b8 57g1 first? Give it a moment's thought. Does it make any difference which order White's move to b8 and Black's to g1 come in? Yes, it does: if Black moves first, then b8 turns the whole b-column. So White should play 56h7. Which is Black's better response? The answer is that he should play g7 first, to keep the d4 disc. Check this: it's a help to be able to calculate this little detail quickly. Here it makes no great difference, but another time it could cost you the game.

For the record, the unfortunate David Haigh, no doubt in the throes of time trouble, played 56b8 57g1, and then compounded his error with 58h8 (P) 59h7 60g7 33-31 rather than 58h7 59g7 60h8 29-35. The difference is that, in the first line, Black gets the last move, and the four discs between d4 and g7, whereas White gets these with the last move in the second line. White-Black-White almost always works out better than White-White-Black.

Haigh v. Wormley

David Haigh again, to play at 45. Black, I would say, is winning this easily enough. He's obviously worried about the c6-f3 diagonal, and White's threat of g2. Should he be? Well, Black is hardly in danger of running out of moves in any case, so you might even say that g2 will merely lose parity for White. E.g., 45g6 46g2 47d1 48b1 49b2 50h7 51g7, and Black would be winning even without the swindle coming his way in the SW. I think it's a good idea to play g6 before doing anything else, otherwise White is going to play there. You should have in mind the sacrifice g6-h7-g7. Suppose the game goes 45g6 46h7 47g7 48a2. Now play 49d1 50b1 51b7 and the game will be over. It may not be easy to calculate these lines, but Black's advantages ought to be clear: in fact, all the regions on the board play well for him. So this is not the time to panic. Our beloved Secretary chose this moment to play 45b7. This is superficially very attractive, as it seems that White will have to sacrifice to cut the diagonal. Furthermore, 46g6 47a7 is quite hopeless, so White has to play 46a2, met by 47g6, and now White is tremendously short of moves. This is in a way a nice tactical shot, and it would be entirely in order to try something like this from a bad position, but here it is a big risk.

White to play

What should White do now? Again, this is not the time for panic. What White did do was see a way on to the diagonal, and take it. 48g8? But after 49h8, White discovered that being on the diagonal wasn't all that much good, as taking a8 would allow Black to wedge. Nevertheless, this line (e.g., 50a8 51a7 52b2 53d1 54b1 55a1 etc.) is definitely still a better chance than 50d1, as played, which guarantees Black both h1 and g2 at his leisure. Black won easily.

Back to the diagram. White's best move is the simple 48a7, challenging Black to find something to do. All there is is 49g2, and *now* White would really like to be on the diagonal, so 50g8!, with White winning easily now.

Wormley v. Selby

Matthew Selby (White) has just played to b2, and Mark Wormley (Black) has responded by taking the a1 corner (this was in fact a mistake). Now, how is White to win this? This is quite a tough problem, requiring some accurate analysis. Matthew played the routine sequence 52a2 53b1 54a8, and now Mark won with 55b7, but even better would have been 55g7! 56g2 57b7 (P) 58h1 59g1 60h8 42-22. So here is the question: how is White to stop Black gaining parity with g7 at the key moment? Playing 52g7 himself sacrifices too much, but here are two other thoughts: (1) organise matters so that White plays one of the a2-b1 pair, and the response doesn't reflip b2—then g7 is not a diagonalisation; (2) try to play to b7 so that Black can't reply with a8, pulling the same stunt that Black is planning in reverse.

Is 52b7 the way to accomplish these aims? No, since unfortunately Black can reply 53g2 (the "Principle of the Opposite X-square"), and White is now dead. We are thus led to try 52g2. This works beautifully. If 53g7, then 54b7, so Black does better to play 53b7 himself, met by 54a8. Now 55g7 can be met by 56b1 (or indeed by 56g1), but Black can avoid this too by playing 55g1 56h1 57g7. Unfortunately for Black, these contortions to gain parity cost too much, and 58a2 59b1 (P) is 29-34.

Brewer v. Haigh

Black has, reasonably enough, played to reach this position. It looks an easy win, but let me start by telling you that, without doing anything outrageous, Phil Brewer lost from here. I would strongly recommend the following line: start with 49b1 50a1 51c1 52d1 53c2 54d2 55e1 56f1 57e2 (P) 58g1 59h1 60g2, then stop and count up. That is a classic example of an "interior sweep": Black progressively gives White the top edge, meanwhile taking all the discs in a huge triangle just below it. Another advantage of the sequence is that it costs no time on the clock. (Marginally 'better', in fact, is 55e2 56e1 57g2 etc., but who cares? For the real Ebeneezers among you, the line from the diagram guaranteeing the most discs starts 49c1 50a1 51f1.)

Of course, there are other ways to win, but, especially when you're Black, the game won't win itself. The general principle I'd like to state is that, no matter how won the position looks, you should always have a plan, and always be trying to achieve something.

Selby v. Brewer

Black (Matthew Selby) has gradually leaked away his advantage, and White (Phil Brewer, to move) is in a position to win. How? Phil played 54b2?, and now Black has a neat win with 55g7 56h8 57h7 58b1 59a1 60a2. In fact, Matthew played 55a1?, after which White could have won with 56h8 57h7 58a2 59b1 60g7. Instead, Phil played 56b1?, after which Matthew had a win with 57g7 58h8 59h7 (P) 60a2. In fact, Matthew played 57h7, which also won. But this isn't OQ, so I'll give you an explanation of all this. In a word: parity! Whoever plays first into the SE region gets two of the three moves. True, White can get three of the four in the NW in the meantime, but only by unwedging and giving Black the North edge (as well as the a1-h8 diagonal). So, Black ought to play g7 a.s.a.p., and White similarly with h8. No surprises, then, for spotting that 54h8 is the winning move.

After 54h8, 55g7 doesn't work. White plays, for instance, 56h7 (P) 57b2 58a2 59b1 60a1 29-35. So Black plays 55h7, which not only takes the h-file, but also puts a piece on the second rank ready to sweep across. This is now difficult again.

White to play and win.

The usual way to treat a position with a one and a four square region, with the opponent having access to neither, is to play into the four-square region, letting your opponent take the next two moves in that region, meanwhile taking the single square, and finishing with a great last move. This technique, called 'feeding', is sort-of illustrated by 56b1 57a1 58g7 59b2 60a2. But here the last move is not at all so great, and Black enjoys a substantial victory. The other try for a feed is 56b2, but then Black sweeps up with 57a2, taking the row and destroying the feed. Alternatively, we can think of playing g7 first and then sorting out the four: something like 56g7 (P) 57a2 58a1 59b2 60b1. That sequence makes sense, but reaps only 26 discs. In desperation, we are drawn to playing 56a2! This looks unthinkable, as it gives Black access to the hole, but so what? If Black does play 57g7 (best, indeed), then we get three out of four in the other region: 58b2 59b1 60a1 31-33. Meanwhile, 57a1 58g7 59b2 60b1 shows you how a feed is supposed to work.

A Really Hard and REALLY Pointless Othello Puzzle
by Aubrey de Grey.

There was a period of about six months last year, during which I had beaten Imre Leader and David Shaman exactly once each in tournaments. The games had little in common for the most part, but they shared the feature that the killing move which secured me the game was one that grabbed a main diagonal by moving to a C-square and flipping an X-square. I had (and indeed have) overlooked moves of this sort several times in other games, and I think it probably takes many people some time to get used to looking seriously at such moves, but they're surprisingly often worthwhile.

So, rather than artificially introduce a genuine article about Othello with some totally absurd and questionably relevant anecdote, I can now do the opposite and artificially introduce an article utterly unrelated to good Othello play with a questionably relevant anecdote that might in fact be of some use to the reader. (If the previous paragraph led you to hope for some instruction as to when such moves are good, well, sorry.) The actual subject of this article is:

> *What's the maximum number of times that a given X-square*
> *can be flipped in the course of a game of Othello?*

You might like to try your hand at this yourself before playing through the following game, as many of the considerations that are involved will reveal themselves better by experiment than by a single example.

If you managed 14 or more, you did better than a certain current world champion who shall remain nameless; however, it is possible to get to 16. In the following game, the moves with a star next to them are the ones that flip G7 (so you'll know quickly if you make a flipping error, which is unusually easy when there's as much going on as there is here).

E6 F6 G6 G7 *G8 H6 F5 *H8 H7 G5
*G4 *F8 *F7 *G3 D3 E8 *E7 *C3 H4 F4
F2 D8 *D7 D6 F3 D2 H5 F1 E1 *G2
*C7 C8 C6 B8 C5 B4 E2 C4 H2 *G1
*B7 A8 D1 C1 C2 *B2 A2 H1 E3 B6
A6 B5 A4 B3 A5 A3 *A7 H3 B1 *A1

OK, so 16 flips of the X square can be done. It's quite easy to determine a theoretical maximum number of flips for any square, as follows:
(1) For edge squares, all the discs involved in any previous flip (including the disc placed and the one at the other end) must be flipped by the next flip. This gives a maximum of 0 for corners, 1 for C-squares, 2 for A-squares and 3 for B-squares.

(2)   For other squares, the maximum is the number of squares at which placing a disc could theoretically flip the target square. This is the number of squares on lines through the target square, minus four (the initial piece on each line), minus any centre square on such a line that is not adjacent to the target square.

   This gives the theoretical maximum values shown below:

0	1	2	3	3	2	1	0
1	17	18	17	17	18	17	1
2	18	20	20	20	20	18	2
3	17	20	23	23	20	17	3
3	17	20	23	23	20	17	3
2	18	20	20	20	20	18	2
1	17	18	17	17	18	17	1
0	1	2	3	3	2	1	0

Theoretical Upper Bounds

The fascinating fact is that, for any square other than the X-squares, one can very easily construct a game in which the square is flipped the number of times shown above. The edges and the central squares are the easiest of all, but even the squares labelled "18" should take you only a few attempts. In fact, I'm told that a central square was flipped 23 times in a genuine game! If you try this, you need only keep in mind that all moves to squares on lines through the target piece must flip it, unless it's the first disk on the line (not counting the target square itself). This implies that the first move on any such line must be to one of the two squares adjacent to the target square.

   Which leaves the question: can an X-square be flipped 17 times? At first I thought I might be able to prove that this was impossible, by analysis of the moves to neighbouring squares: for example, the 16-flip game above capitulates on the possibility of 17 at move ten, which doesn't flip G7. But soon I found ways around such problems, and eventually achieved a way to get through most of the game with the possibility of 17 still alive. Here's the best I've been able to manage, with moves that flip G7 marked by stars:

E6 F6 F5 F4 G7 *H8 G6 F7 *G8 H6
E3 D3 C5 D2 F3 *C3 *G5 D6 C6 *F8
*H7 *G4 H5 C4 *E7 *G3 C1 E8 *D7 C8
C2 B4 H3 F2 B5 *G2 *C7 B1 H4 *B2
H1 B6 H2 D8 A6 B3 *B7 *G1 E2 A4
A5 A3 A2 F1 E1 B8 *A7

at which point we are defeated by a single disk, F6, which if it were black would allow *A1.

White to play.

Suitably infuriated, I have tried quite hard to find a way round this, but without success. Accordingly I hereby offer the traditional year's free membership to anyone who can find a 17-flip game or a proof that none exists.

Advertising Thor!   *by Joel Feinstein.*

Do you have access to any kind of PC? Do you want to know what the World's top players have been playing recently? Do you need a strong opponent to practise against regularly? Do you need a tool to analyse your endgames for you and tell you what you should have played? The French program, Thor, written by Sylvain Quin, does all this and more.

As far as I know, Thor will run on any kind of PC, using any kind of graphics available (or text only, if necessary), and a mouse if there is one. The Thor database is regularly updated, and currently includes about 16,000 top games from the last twelve years. You can select from the database using many different criteria. For example, you might want to look at games played between David Shaman and Imre Leader in 1992. Or you might want to look at all games following some particular variant of the Rose in the last five years, or some combination of such criteria.

Once you have selected a collection of games, you can play back and forward through them, and swap between them, or look at statistics showing you which moves were played most often, what percentage of games were won by each colour, and what percentage of games *should* have been won by each colour (according to perfect computer analysis with seventeen empty squares remaining).

If you want to play against Thor yourself, there are many levels of play available. Even its lowest level is a tough opponent, however. Thor will give you advice on which move to play if you wish. You can save any particularly interesting games, and see what would have happened if you had tried other moves. You can also swap sides!

If you wish to analyse one of your games, you can enter the position you are interested in, or alternatively play moves for both sides to reach the desired position. Then give Thor some time to think, and let it analyse the endgame for you. If you want some suggestions for moves in the midgame, a feature is available which will suggest which three moves are the most interesting.

Thor is an extremely useful tool for improving your play, and I recommend it highly. The program is available free of charge: just send a blank PC disc to me,

Joel Feinstein, Mathematics Department, University of Nottingham, University Park, Nottingham NG7 2RD,

or to David Haigh. The program comes with detailed documentation in English.

Bat out of Hell   *by Graham Brightwell.*

Editor's Note: The article "Could Frame Thy", which many readers will have been expecting, is held over due to the existence of a more suitable title.

The latest in my series of articles on popular openings concerns the Bat. It's about time I did a Diagonal variation, and this is one that's been causing me some concern, due to the sudden popularity of a line that looks rather good for Black. Having had a closer look, I'm now happy that (a) this line is good for Black, and (b) there are plenty of alternatives. More of this later. Perhaps the reader should be warned that I've spent less time on this article than I'd have liked, and I've made no attempt to consult other experts.
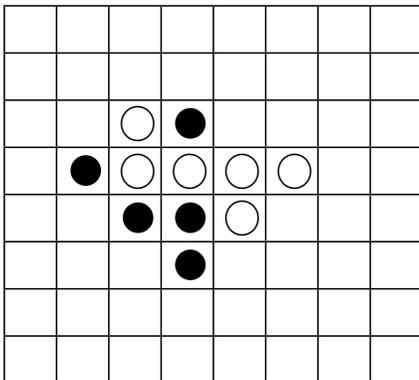
The Bat.

The position opposite arises after 1.d3 2.c3 3.c4 4.c5 5.d6 6.f4 7.b4. (Regular readers will wonder why I've departed from my usual orientation. Good for them.) The opening has also been called the Cambridge, but that has now fallen into disuse. It bears more than a passing similarity to the Heath Bat, 5.b4 6.d2 7.d6, leading to the same configuration of discs, but in a different position on the board. The lines in the two openings are, naturally, similar for a few moves, but the assessments are different, and the reader is not encouraged to think that the right move in the Bat will work in the Heath Bat, or vice versa. Most strikingly, the most common move in the Bat is 8.b6, whereas the analogous move (which also happens to be 8.b6) in the Heath Bat is not regarded as viable.

White has quite a lot of choice at move 8, with (in increasing order of popularity) b5, e3, e6, c6 and b6 all possible. I won't be giving any strong recommendations, but the overall conclusion will be that several lines are fine for White. Of course, if you don't intend to play the Bat yourself, all you need to know is one line which you're happy with.

To start with, 8.b5 is not good. A typical continuation is 9.b3 10.d2 11.c6 12.b6 13.e2, with Black more than comfortable. Alternatively, White can try 10.e2 11.c6 12.b6 13.e6, which is not obviously better.

A more interesting try is 8.e3. Now after the inevitable 9.b3, White can play either 10.b5 or 10.c6. After 10.b5 11.e6 (11.d2 is also possible, but is less tempting than after 10.c6), we reach the position on the left below. The position on the right is from the Heath Bat, after the continuation 8.e3 9.e6 10.b5 11.b3. That line is generally regarded as good for Black, with the conclusion that 8.e3 is wrong in the Heath Bat.
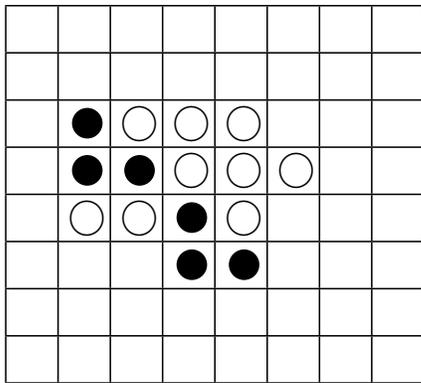
The Bat.
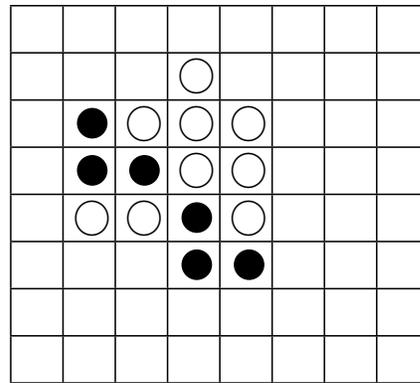
The Heath Bat.

Here, to remind you, is the Heath Bat analysis (from the diagram on the right above): if 12.c6, then 13.a6 is good, so White plays 12.a4, met by 13.a3 14.a2 (lines like 14.a5 15.a6 16.b6 17.c6 are regarded as good for Black, who has a nice move to c2 in reserve) 15.a5 16.a6 17.f5, and Black should survive.

Now, what difference does it make moving the d2 disc to f4? It still seems to be true that 12.c6 13.a6 is fine for Black. So 12.a4, and now 13.a3 14.a2 15.c2: this was not advisable previously because the d2 disc gave White access to a5. After 16.c6 17.a6, White's position is already looking untenable. However, White can again try 14.a5 15.a6 16.b6 17.c6 (this sequence, rather than some similar ones, to keep a white disc at b4). Now, after 18.f7, White's position is a lot more viable than in the Heath Bat, because a move to c2 meets with a response to the (here, empty) d2 square.

If 10.c6, rather than 10.b5, 11.e6 12.b5 is far less appealing, so Black usually shakes the position up with 11.d2. After 12.e2, there have been quite a few games continuing 13.f3 14.a3 15.a5. Now I'd recommend 16.c1 17.f2 18.c2, but White usually finds something more imaginative, e.g., 16.c2. On balance, I think 13.b5, as in the Piau-Ralle illustrative game below, is better. I presume the idea was to meet 14.b6 with 15.c7, leaving White with nothing clear-cut to do. Overall, this looks fairly even to me.
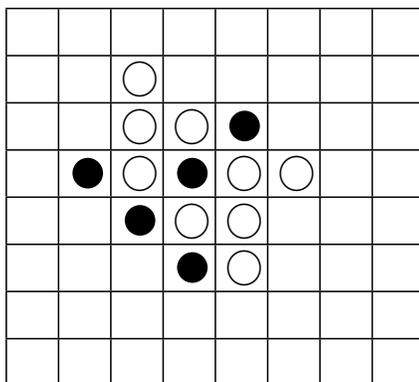

8.e6 9.e3 10.c2.

Another not-so-popular line is 8.e6. This is analogous to a Heath Bat line I recommended a year or so ago, which immediately went out of fashion. As in the Heath Bat, the theme here is that 9.e3 looks like an ideal response, but then White has the ungainly 10.c2 and none of Black's moves seem to work very well (see opposite). To be brief, 11.b3 has to be met by 12.d2, which doesn't deserve to work, but seems to. It ought to be the case that Black organises access to b5 and/or c6, plays there, and is ahead. But there

isn't any simple way to get this access. 11.d2 can and probably should be met by 12.d1, with similar themes. 11.f5 is perhaps best, intending something like 12.d7 13.c7 (gaining access to f6) 14.c6 15.b5 16.b6 17.f7. This is not all that decisive, but Black may have a slight edge.

Perhaps 9.e3 is not, after all the best, but the alternatives are relatively untried. Typical lines might be 9b3 10d2 11e3 12c2 or 9b5 10e3 11c2 12d7.

The two most common eighth moves are 8.c6 and 8.b6. Let's start by comparing the positions after (a) 8.c6 9.b5 10.b3 and (b) 8.b6 9.b5 10.c6.
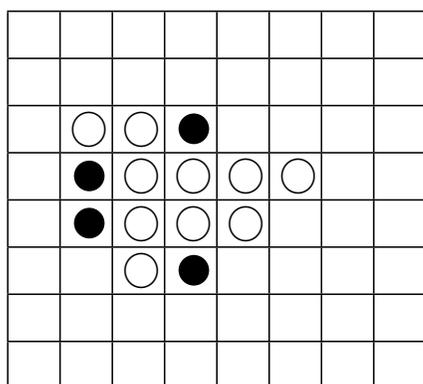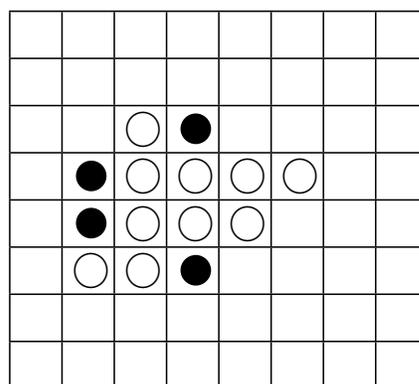

(a) c6-b5-b3.　　　　　　　　(b) b6-b5-c6.

There are two ways to think about the difference between these two. You could say that White has a disc either at b3 or b6; but you could just as well say that White has a disc either at f4 or, after a reflection in the horizontal axis, at f5. Again, the two positions really are similar, and play can look just the same for a few moves, but you are not advised to conclude that what's good in one line is good in the other.

For instance, the following line has proved devastating from position (b): 11.f5 12.e3 13.d7 14.a4 15.a3 16.a6 17.a5 18.a2 19.b3 20.c2 21.f2. Experience suggests that Black is not now under that much pressure, that he will eventually be forced to flip the f4 disc, but that a subsequent white move to c7 can be met by a sacrifice against the West edge. The reader is invited to look for plausible alternatives for White; you might try 18.b3 19.a7 20.e6, but I don't think it works – Black can just play 21.f6, potter around in the South for a bit, then take the a2 move with a lot of pressure (alternatively, he can go for an extraction, i.e, try to flip the b4 and b5 discs as well as play to a2, leaving almost no white discs buried in the black mass). Another possibility is 12.f3 13.e3 14.e6 15.g4 16.d2 17.c2; this doesn't look like anything to worry about, but it turns out to be astonishingly difficult for White to find anything to do. To be frank, I don't know what to do as White against this opening, and my advice (which I intend to follow) is to play a different move 8 and let someone else find a good way of coping with this.

So, is 11.f5 any good in position (a)? I suspect not. Part of the point

after 12.e3 in (b) is that Black is getting a move to b3 one day, but here that square is occupied. Black should probably continue 13.b6, but White doesn't have anything to worry about here.
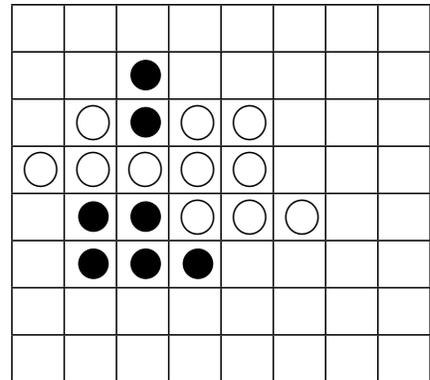
Apart from the possibility of 11.f5, the main lines from (a) and (b) are just reflections: from (a), play goes 11.b6 12.e3 (White doesn't want Black playing there) 13.c2 14.a4 (14.a5 is just about possible, but not recommended). From (b), we get 11.b3 12.e6 13.c7 14.a5. See below.
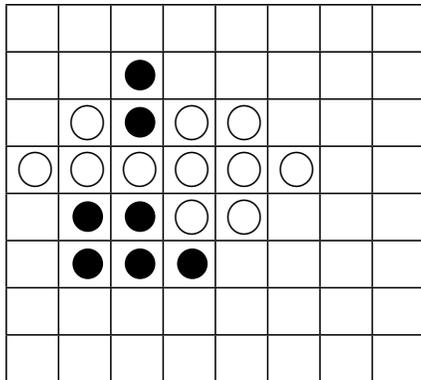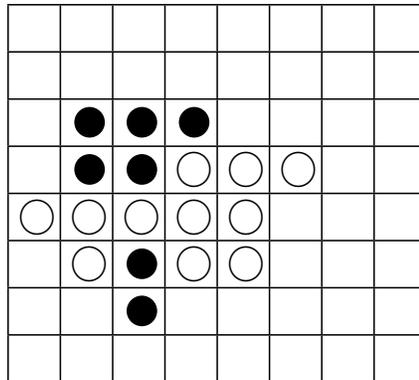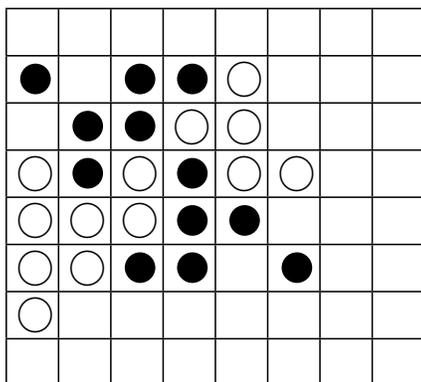

Line (a).   Line (b).   Line (b), reflected.

As we've said, to choose between these positions, look at, say, the first one, and decide whether you want a white disc at f4 or f5. To be definite, let's work with (a). Black has two real options (15.e2 16.d2 appears to be fine for White).

After 21f6.

First, there is 15.a5 16.a6 (it's quiet, yes, but so what?) 17.d2 18.a7 19.a2 20.e2 (note White's move order: e2-a2-a7 instead leaves Black an easy move to f1) 21.f6, reaching the position opposite. Now White is currently short of good moves; one possibility is 22.c1, leaving Black the long term problem that he won't be able to sacrifice with b2, since he's unlikely to have access to a3 after White takes a1. It's probably close.

Now shunt the f4 disc to f5: much better for White, since he now has 22.c7. This is then a plus for 8.b6 over 8.c6.

* * * * * * * * *

Ian Turner, along with almost everyone else, has so far failed to come up with an Othello Theorem. However, he has come up with a Hypothesis: "Reversi was developed from an earlier gambling game involving turning over coins trapped by the one played. The thoughts behind this are: (1) Coins are two-sided, similar to Othello pieces, (2) Reversi has the strange rule not allowing pieces to be passed to the opponent when he has run out."

Alternatively, from the leftmost of the three diagrams above, Black can play 15.d2 immediately. Comparison with the previous line suggests that 16.e2 17.a5 is going to be good for Black, but White has the interesting shot of 16.a6: see opposite. The simple idea is that White is not going to lose a tempo on this edge: indeed Black should delay the move to a5, to make it as awkward as possible for White to subsequently get access to a3. So Black should chip away at the White formation to the East. How well this works depends on what that formation actually is. So, do you want a White disc at f4 or at f5?

Line (a): 15d2 16a6.

Before 11.f5 came along, the consensus was that White wanted the disc at f5, so that 8.b6 was a better move than 8.c6. But right now I can't reconstruct this reasoning. From the diagram, play usually goes 17.f2 18.f3 19.a5 20.d7 (loud, but clearly worthwhile), and now Black chooses between c7 and g3. It's close.

Shunt the f4 disc to f5 again. What's so bad about playing to f2 here? In practice, Black almost always goes to f6, unpoisoning the c7 move for White. On the other hand, maybe White would prefer the c7 move to turn the disc at d6, to ensure access to a3 after a Black response to a5? Anyway, the sequence from line (b) is long and well-travelled: the Tamenori-Rose illustrative game is very standard, and there are at least two other major tournament games following the same line to move 38. I believe Black is winning at that point, but I don't believe that proves anything. The standard belief is that this line is good for White.

Conclusions? Well, I won't play 8.b6 for a while because I'm scared of the 11.f5 line, but I don't see why I shouldn't play 8.c6. (Or 8.e6, or 8.e3.) If you are going to play 8.c6, you also need to be aware of 9.b3: see the Marconi-Murakami game for a typical continuation.

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

Piau - Ralle
Worlds 1990, Semi-Final

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

Brightwell - Feldborg
Karsten Unrated 1988

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

Svirskiy-Senchev
Leningrad 1991

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

Marconi-Jensen
Worlds 1990

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

Tamenori-Rose
Worlds 1990

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

Murakami-Marconi
Paris Open 1991

The Art of Sacrificing Four Corners   *by Joel Feinstein.*

This article is intended to be a beginners guide to some strong ways to sacrifice corners against players who take a lot of pieces and a lot of edges (certain poor Othello programs, for example). But many of the ideas can be used in ordinary positions also.

The first example we shall consider is the one I usually use to demonstrate that having lots of pieces and lots of edges is not a good thing.

Black to play

In this fairly extreme example, White has a position which may seem ideal to many beginners. He has 44 pieces to Black's 4, he has the beginner's favourite edge structure on each edge (a balanced four), and it even looks fairly certain that Black will lose all four corners. But, this position is a very easy win for Black. Black has a particularly strong type of sacrifice available. Black's best line begins with an x-square, e.g. 45.b7. White now has the choice of taking the corner, or giving it to Black (by playing a7 or b8). The latter choice is, at least in this case, clearly suicidal, as Black can then proceed to win all the corners and edges. So let us assume that White takes the corner with 46.a8. Black can now play both the moves a7 and b8, and should do so. This gives Black wedges in two edges, more than enough compensation for his corner. The feature that made this sacrifice so good was that all of the pieces in the b column and the 7th row were white. Note that this sacrifice can be used in the midgame in order to play three out of four moves near a corner, and force White to find two moves elsewhere. In this endgame, however, White simply passes, and there is more work to do.

After 47.a7 pass 48.b8 pass, Black plays 49.g7. This time the pieces on the

seventh row are not White, but after 50.h8, Black has access to g8 along the bottom edge, and so we have 51.g8 pass and black can save h7 for later. After 52.b2 a1 a2 pass Black has two excellent moves saved up: he only needs one to make the last region play the way he wants. In order to get the last move in the North-East region, Black "feeds" White with some self-destructive moves. 55.g1 h1 h7 g2 b1 pass h2 completes the perfect play line. Black has sacrificed all four corners and won 46-18.

Black to move.

Let us see another example. This time three of the x-squares available to Black are inferior to the fourth. Since the pieces in the g column and the seventh row are all White, the best first move for Black is 45.g7. Now, as before, perfect play continues with 46.h8 g8 pass, but this time Black will need to save his available move at h7, and feed White immediately in one of the other regions. Best is 48.b1 a1 h7 b2. Note this has made all the second row White, and so g2 now becomes available as a good sacrifice. After 52.g2, White should consider h2, but 53.h1 h2 pass g1 pass is better for White. Note Black still has his move at a2 saved up, and so he can feed White in the last region. Surprizingly, the best way is to unwedge with 56.b8, giving White the fourth corner, and the whole South edge. But after 57.a8 a2 b7 a7 Black wins 43-21.

When there are no obvious strong x-square sacrifices, the wins in this type of position are hard to find, if they are even there. I would suggest that you should try to avoid ending up in the following kind of position, either by making sure the opponent's edges are worse than this, or by taking an edge yourself at some point.

Black to move.

I will admit that when I typed this position into my computer, I thought it was a win for White! But it turns out that Black can win 33-31. The perfect play line begins 45.b1 a1 a2 b2 b7 b8. Here White turns down the corner in order to cut across Black's plans. But Black simply continues with 51.a8 a7 g8 g7 h8 h7 h2 g2 g1 h1, and wins, barely, 33-31. What happens if White grabs corners instead? After 50.a8, Black sacrifices with 51.h7 and perfect play is then 52.b8 g8 h8 g7 g1 (feeding time again) h1 a7 g2 h2 34-30. If instead 52.h8, then 53.g8 g7 b8 pass g1 h1 a7 g2 h2 is 35-29 to Black.

I would not like to have to find that over the board.

Now, for a change, let us look at a real position from a serious game.

This position is from Bhagat-Feinstein in the 1987 Cambridge international tournament. I wouldn't really want this position for either side! Pete had outplayed me in the mid-game, and in desperation I had walled myself off from both regions in the East, after making sure that he had no good x-square sacrifices. We had now arrived in the endgame with Black to play. Pete tried 45.b2, (this is indeed a 33-31 win). But after 46.a1 Pete played the natural 47.b1 and after 48.a5 I was winning all the way. Black urgently needs a plan from the start, and it is very difficult to find one.

Bhagat (Black) to move.

The perfect play line is 45.b1 a1 a5 b2 g1 g2 b7 a8 a7 e8 h1 h2 h7 g7 g8 h8 37-27, but the question is: what happens if White plays 50.h1 instead? Well, it's very sneaky. Black plays 51.b7 a8 e8 a7 and Black gets both of g2 and h2. Play finishes 55.g2 pass h7 (feed) h8 h2 g7 g8 and Black wins 38-26. If you saw all of that, you are an endgame expert!

Finally, a tricky little exercise for you. Would you be able to find a win for Black in the following position? Black can win 33-31.

(Warning: after 45.b1 a1 a2 b2 b7 b8 White gets a draw. So you need another plan).

A solution (well, clearly there is more than one!) can be found on p.44.

Black to move.

Rome International Tournament.

Marc Tastet reports that he has lost another Grand Prix Final, his third this year. [*Editor's Note: presumably this puts him out of contention to defend his World title?*] Marc lost 2-0 to Francesco Marconi, while Stéphane Nicolet beat Dominique Penloup 2-0 for third place. The final result, claims Marc, is very similar to that in Cambridge! Donato Barnaba, Enrico Colanguiolo and Andrea Silvola were tied for fifth.

Last year, it has been pointed out that Graham Brightwell established a hard-to-beat record of won games within the same year in the finals of European Grand Prix tournaments (6.5). Marc suggests that he (Marc) has already established a record of lost games with 6, and 2 tournaments still to come!

The 1993 Cambridge Open   *by Karsten Switness.*

A good turnout of 26 for the latest in this series of prestigious tournaments. It was particularly good to see three Polish players: Pawel Pietruszkiewicz has been their top player for ever, it seems, but he was a little out of form in this event. The French sent, as usual, a strong contingent, headed by World Champion Marc Tastet. Erik Jensen played the key role of tournament Dane, and distinguished himself by falling for an 18-move wipeout against Bintsa Andriani.

The first round saw no British player lose to a foreign player, with Ian Turner and Phil Marson scoring particularly good wins over Stéphane Nicolet and Dominique Penloup (two of the top French players) respectively. The French came back strongly however.

Imre Leader led overnight with 6/7, half a point ahead of David Shaman, but slumped badly on the second morning. Going into the last round, Shaman was a half point in front of Tastet and Nicolet. Tastet is well known for always having a good tiebreak, so it looked like a Shaman v. Tastet final. But then Tastet lost to Emmanuel Caspard, leaving the door open for others. Nicolet could have made it with a win over Brightwell, but he lost. Leader presumably had a decent tiebreaker, and might just have made it with a win over Bhagat, but he lost too. So, Shaman v. Tastet it was, a repeat of last year's World Final. The difference is that British players can't win World Finals (Shaman, indeed, didn't), whereas French players can't win Grand Prix tournaments (Tastet, indeed, didn't). [*Editor's Note: This explains Shaman's recent decision to become French, one supposes.*]

	Name	Pts		GP			Name	Pts
1.	David Shaman	$9\frac{1}{2}$	+2	200	13.	Serge Alard (B)		5
2.	Marc Tastet (F)	8	+0	140		Joel Feinstein		5
3.	Stéphane Nicolet (F)	8	+2	90		Erik Jensen (DK)		5
4.	Emmanuel Caspard (F)	$7\frac{1}{2}$	+0	60		Dominique Penloup (F)		5
5.	Graham Brightwell	7		35		Piotr Pietruszkiewicz (PL)		5
	Imre Leader	7		35		Guy Plowman		5
7.	Peter Bhagat	$6\frac{1}{2}$		20		Matthew Selby		5
8.	Bintsa Andriani (MAD)	6		6		Ian Turner		5
	Iain Barrass	6		6	21.	Aubrey de Grey		$4\frac{1}{2}$
	Alexandre Cordy (F)	6		6	22.	Roy Arnold		4
	Mike Handel	6		6		Phil Marson		4
	Pawel Pietruszkiewicz (PL)	6		6		Witold Postrach (PL)		4
					25.	Colin Hands		2
					26.	Simon Nickson		1

Two Bees with One Stone   *by Marc Tastet.*

Here are some comments on two games I played in a row, rounds 6 and 7, on the first day of the '92 World Championships in Barcelona. These games illustrate how two of the so called "killer bees" where killed themselves using the same opening, which might explain the title. [*The Handel-Tastet game doesn't fit in with this picture of reality, and hence is not mentioned. The author seems somehow to have got the impression that this is normal practice. – Ed.*]

Let's start with the Tastet-Feinstein game from round 6.

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

Tastet 44-20 Feinstein

1e6 to 10g4: The 8f6 move is the Rose opening, a very classical one after which moves 9 and 10 are almost always played this way.

11g5: This move is the Greenberg variation, after the name of an American player who used it in 1983 to defeat Brian Rose. This variation was a bit out of fashion because it was considered as a losing opening for Black. It made a spectacular come-back at the '92 World Championships because both the Italian player Francesco Marconi and I independently decided to play it again.

12g3 to 16h3: Very classical continuation after the Greenberg. You can reach the same position after move 15 by switching moves 12 and 14.

After 16h3.

17h2: Here is the novelty, the standard move being 17g6. I learned this move when Vladimir Polyakov (whose name I had never heard before) played it against me and beat me in last summer's Chelyabinsk Open. (By the way, if you have the opportunity to travel to Russia one year, don't miss it! You can get details from Imre Leader, who was there with me. We both very much enjoyed our stay there.) In Barcelona, Marconi played 17d7 which might also be an interesting variation. Maybe the Greenberg had been buried too quickly?

18b5: This is one of the two standard replies, the other one being h5.

19f2 to 21g6: Playing the pair f2 f1 before playing g6 has the advantage of installing a white disc at f4 so that if White answers 22h6, he also flips g5 and loses access to h5, which wouldn't have happened had Black played 17g6 or 19g6.

22d7 and 23f7: Very natural moves. We had reached the same position in the Polyakov-Tastet game from Chelyabinsk and we'll reach it again in the next game.

After 23f7.

24f8 and 25e7: White threatens to play h7 followed by h5 and Black prevents it.

26d7: In Chelyabinsk, I had played 26e2 but I was completely dead out of the opening; Joel's move is probably better.

27b4 to 31c7: Black needs to win a tempo somewhere. I was very happy to find the elegant sequence from 27 to 31 achieving this aim. The key move of this sequence is 31c7 which gives White access to b6 but simultaneously poisons this move because now it would also flip c5, d4 and e3.

32c3 to 36c2: Move 32 is a bit surprising, but is consistent with Imre Leader's flat wall theory. Anyway, it's not easy to find moves for White.

After 36c2.

37g2: This move didn't surprise Joel. Of course, it would be stupid to try to surprise Joel playing an X-square! If you want him surprised, *don't* play an X-square because this is the first move he expects!

38b6 and 39h5: One of the aims of 37g2 was to get access to h5. So, maybe at 38 White should have played h5 himself!

40c8 to 44h6: At first sight, White's play doesn't look very consistent, because first he doesn't want to take the h1 corner at 40 and then he sets a Stoner trap to get it! However, there is a big difference: if White takes the corner at 40, he loses access to g1 and might lose parity there because Black can wait to play in the hole. After 41b7, Black controls the diagonal and White won't flip g2 when he plays h1, forcing Black to reply with g1.

45a2: This move is not risky because b6 is white, so that when White plays a8, he won't have access to a7.

46b2: White has only two sensible moves, h1 and b2 but he chose the wrong one; 46h1 loses only 39-25.

47a7 to 50a8: Black chooses a sequence which semi-forces white moves (and happens to be the best one). Black is in full control of the game.

51a1: This move *did* surprise Joel because he missed the fact that my move 49 had flipped the disc at d4 and he thought I had no access to the corner. Though he had only one legal move at 52, he spent about half a minute before playing it because he was trying to understand how he missed that and then convinced himself that 46 was a mistake.

After 52b1.

53h8 and 54g8: Both moves are non-optimal, (at least if the objective is to have the greatest number of discs at the end). In this sense, 53c1 and 54h7 were better. 53h8 is wrong because it allows White to keep discs on the b1-h7 diagonal and 54g8 is wrong because it gives back the same discs to Black!

55e8 to 60h7: Perfect endgame. White has no choice and Black plays so as to have all the c column black in case it's better to play 58d1 instead of c1 but it isn't.

Now it's round 7 and I have to play David Shaman, who has won all his games so far. I'm second alone with only one defeat (vs Sakaguchi) and several players have 4 points out of 6.

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

Tastet 41-23 Shaman

I'm Black again, and as it worked well with Joel, I play the same opening and the game plays the same way to move 23, so you can start from the diagram above after move 23.

24g8: This is a trendy move (see Glossary in New York, New York). It looks bad at first glance because White might lose the h8 corner after this move. But actually, it isn't that surprising: Black has potentially a five on the eastern edge because White can play h5 when he wants and Black must reply h6 or lose the h1 corner. If Black threatens to take h8, White can give Black the five and then he'll be able to wedge at h7 if Black takes the corner anyway. However, it turns out that 24g8 is a bad move after all.

25e7 to 28d7: So, I don't try to take the h8 corner, but I leave White without a move on the southern edge and with a weak position there.

29b4 to 33c7: At this point, I realise that the position is very similar to what it was in the previous game at move 26. Actually, the only difference is that there are two extra discs: a black one at d8 and a white one at g8. But they don't really change the position and I can solve my problem (win a tempo) in exactly the same way. So I play exactly the same sequence.

After 33c7.

34h6: David doesn't want to open the northern part of the board. 34b8 would be met by 35b6, so White finally plays 34h6, probably a bit reluctantly.

35g2: This is a thematic move, given the position on the eastern edge: if 36h1, 37h5 and Black has won a tempo (and maybe also parity with g1 being an odd hole where White cannot play). It's very important that White has no access to h5, otherwise he could play there before taking the h1 corner and Black would have lost everything: he couldn't wedge on the eastern edge. It's a classic mistake that might cost you a game some day (if it hasn't done already), if you don't take care.

36c3: This move takes advantage of the fact that 35 flipped f3 which was poisoning c3. However, it leaves Black an easy reply.

37e8: I'm preparing a nasty surprise for White at move 40. I must admit I hadn't seen it coming when I played 35g2 and certainly David hadn't either, since otherwise he wouldn't have played 36c3. You can try and guess what the surprise is.

38h1: This move is nearly forced if White doesn't want to play c8 and close all the south-west region. On any move other than these two, Black can just take h8.

39h5: It's much better to wedge than to take h8 corner. Can you see the surprise now?

After 39h5.

40c8: White probably wanted to play 40g7, winning a much needed tempo and keeping parity in the south-east region, but 41h8 would leave him without access to h7! Moreover, 40h7 41h8 leaves him without access to g7! As he cannot play in the south-east region, White is forced to play c8, otherwise I take the h8 corner and it's even worse. Finally at move 40 we discover that move 24 was bad, but of course it was impossible to foresee. Let's say that 24g8 was a Shaman move (see again Glossary in New York, New York).

41g7: makes the win safer by winning a tempo in the south-east region and preventing White from doing it himself.

42h8 and 43h7: I didn't think White would be in a hurry to play this pair out and give me definitely the eastern edge. He could have waited, hoping that parity would force me to play h7 and give him the edge, though this is not very likely as

White has lost control of the game. However, in the best sequence, found with a computer, White does play the last move in the south-east region, but it's Black h8 followed by White h7. So, 42c2 loses 41-23 after g1 e2 a5 a7 b6 b7 a8 b8 h8 h7 d1 e1 a2 c1 d2 b2 a1 b1, White keeping parity everywhere.

44c2: Semi-forced: it's the only move that flips only one of the two discs in the North.

46d2: e2 saved two more discs (43-21) after playing a sequence very similar to what happened in the game.

48a7: b6 kept parity for White and saved two more discs (45-19) after 49a2 b2 a1 b1 c1 d1 b7 a7 e2 e1 a8 b8.

After 50b7.

51e1: This choice might look surprising at first glance: why does Black, being wedged with g1, choose to lose his wedge? It's to win parity! After 52d1 and 53e2, White passes and there is an odd hole in the north-west where Black will play the last move. After 51e1, the endgame is perfect: White has no more choice and Black wins 41-23. Actually this move 51 is not that good for two reasons. The first one is that Black can have as many discs without parity playing 51e2 e1 a8 b8 a2 b2 57a1 b1 c1 d1 also winning 41-23! Notice, however, that as Black didn't have parity he couldn't use his wedge at g1 to get discs on the northern edge. The second reason is that Black can improve the previous sequence so as to win parity: instead of 57a1, he can take advantage of the b column which is all white and play 57b1! White answers with one of c1 or d1, it doesn't matter, Black takes the a1 corner, White passes and Black plays the last move of the game, winning 47-17. This way, Black got the whole northern edge (except of course h1) thanks to parity and his wedge at g1. This is very classical: such a wedge is useful only when you have parity.

This was to be David's only loss in the 13 rounds of the Swiss system.

* * * * * * * * *

In the European Grand Prix, Tastet leads with 420 (140+140+140), followed by Shaman 290 (200+90) and Feinstein and Marconi 200. Nicolet has 180 and Penloup 100. Only the best three scores count, so in some sense Shaman's position is better. If he wins either Brussels or Paris, then he wins the Grand Prix; if he manages only a second place, then Tastet needs to win one of the two events to take the coveted title. A win in Brussels for Feinstein, or Marconi, or Nicolet, would make things even more exciting.

Syncopated Cerebrations   *by Sid Cox.*

At last, a theorem. Alas, neither I nor the author can see any relevance in it to actual Othello play. So I have decided to wait until the end of the year, and if it has no rivals by then, the prize is yours, Phil.

What about this then. Do you think it might be true? Here, with apologies to Arthur C. Clarke, is Sid's First Conjecture:

"Any sufficiently advanced Reversi game is indistinguishable from Othello".

By this I mean that, starting from the non-Othello initial position of the four discs in Reversi, a situation will always eventually be reached which can also be reached from the true Othello starting position. Ignore the Reversi rule about unplayed disc ownership if you like.

Actually, those of you who read the OQ and the Scientific American may know a counter-example which disproves this conjecture, so an additional condition must be imposed. This is: "Games ending with empty squares do not count".

How soon can you get a Reversi game and an Othello game to converge?

$$+ + +$$

Meanwhile, Aubrey the Achiever has produced a number of curious facts about Othello. Apart from his work on the maximum possible number of moves, shortest non-wipeout games, shortest draws and the maximum number of times a piece can be flipped (see his own article), he told me that he had played a game with Colin Hands in which one of the players made eleven successive passes. Can any of you beat this record? This leads nicely on to the next topic.

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From time to time questions are asked about handicapping Othello games, something which does not happen in BOF tournaments, but which might be useful for private games. Several ways of doing this have been proposed.

Handicapping by giving 1, 2, 3 or 4 corners to the weaker opponent is suggested by the instructions provided with some Othello sets, but has the disadvantage of changing somewhat the character of the game. The corners are just too crucial to be used as handicaps, except perhaps between players of very different abilities.

Handicapping by awarding disc points to the weaker player has also been suggested, and would allow finer control of the handicap, but suffers from the disadvantage that disc differential is not a very good indicator of the relative strengths of the players. The effect of this sort of handicap would not be consistent from one game to another; it would be difficult to know what handicap to use between players of very different ability. Also, like the corner handicapping method, it doesn't teach the weaker player anything.

The best handicap I have heard of is to give the weaker player the option of passing once, or twice ... or N times during a game. This does not alter the character of the game, and has the advantage of emphasising to the weaker player the importance of not running out of good moves. (Think of the number of times you have said to yourself when in a bad position "if only I didn't have to move now"!) Making the strong opponent move twice is a better compensation for the bad position the weaker player has got him/herself into, because it usually results in the position being improved for him/her. Also, learning when to use the free pass teaches the weaker player to recognise crucial stages in the game.

At this point I cannot resist claiming the kudos for being the first to publish the shortest possible handicapped game. It is:

F5, pass; C4.

Right now I do not know what advantage being allowed a free pass confers upon a player. Is one free pass equivalent to 200 rating points? It must depend on the ability of the player; in the hands of an expert one free pass could be devastating, even against a grand master; in the hands of a novice several free passes (inappropriately used) may have little effect, or even (as above) the wrong effect. So the best advice I can give is to start with one free pass, play a few games, and if the weaker player still loses consistently increase the number of free passes. You just regulate the number of free passes so as to keep your games relatively even as the weaker player improves.

It would be nice if writers of Othello programs could include the ability to do handicapping like this. People would learn to play better Othello if the handicapping was done in this way, rather than (or in addition to) the present method of making the computers play more stupidly.

Can any of you think of any snags with this handicapping method? Is there any problem with allowing the handicapped player to use two or more free passes in succession if he/she wants to?

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Othello Programs.

You can still get three good Othello programs for the PC for free by sending me a formatted diskette (either size) and a SAE to David Haigh.

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Solution to puzzle on p.36.   Here is an optimal sequence: g8 h8 b7 a8 g1 h1 h2 b8 (if g2 then h7!. White is fortunate that Black has no access to g2) a7 (Swindle coming!) g2 h7 pass a2 (big feeding sacrifice) a1 g7 b2 b1 (just!) 33-31.

Correspondence   *edited by Graham.*

I thought my article on Qualification Systems would raise some hackles, but nary a murmur. So either everybody accepts my descriptions as accurate, or I'm beneath comtempt.

I did get a number of favourable comments about the endgame challenge running through the last newsletter. These will happen again, sometime when the deadline is not so tight. Unfortunately, I also received the following letter from Wayne Clarke of Hartlepool (lightly edited).

I enjoyed your "endgame" puzzle – this would make an excellent regular feature. However, I want to question your comment on page 35 that White's 52c2 followed by Black's 53g7 "loses horribly". It seems to me that 54b4 is still a winning line for White, and produces a bigger win than your preferred line which leads to a 34-30 win.

Black's best response to 54b4 is 55h8, which is followed by 56c4 57b2 58a2 59a1 60b1: White wins 35-29. If Black plays 57b1 then 58a1 59b2 60a2: White wins 37-27. If Black doesn't play the pair to the h8 corner and plays 55c4, then play goes 56h8 57b2 58b1 59a1 60b1: White wins 39-25.

Something else I discovered is that if 52c2 is countered with 53h8, then although this seems not so good for Black as 53g7, it works out to the same result – the best line seems to be 54g7 55c4 56b4 57b2 58a2 59a1 60b1: White wins 35-29.

I know I am a mere "beginner" but 52c2 does seem to work for White, and I think you dismiss it too quickly.

By the way, does anyone know how the Othello Game Boy Cartridge plays? I'd love to get an opinion I trust before considering buying it. I had a pleasant surprise with the Reversi program that comes free with "Windows" – it's quite strong and is worth taking on.

I believe that others have a lower opinion of the quality of Windows Reversi. Apart from that, I can't raise even a quibble. It still seems strange to me that taking three moves in a row into the big region can possibly be enough compensation for giving up both h8 and g7, but definitely it is. I must have been so convinced that this was hopeless that I didn't even bother letting a program look at the initial position, which is, erm, careless. Interestingly, nobody else seems to have spotted this. Do you all trust me? (My track record is not good!) Oh well. *Noises off. Brick wall colliding with Editor's head. Cries of anguish. Cackling ex-Brightwell fans moving in for the kill.*

To Rate or Not to Rate?   *by David Haigh.*

Which tournaments are rated? The committee has recently decided that if a tournament is going to be rated by the BOF it must fulfil the following four conditions:

(1) It is played in the UK.

(2) British players are eligible to play in it or to qualify to play in it.

(3) It is played with clocks, with at least 20 minutes per game for each player.

(4) The players know that the tournament will be rated. This is assumed to have been the case for Regional, Final and International tournaments in the past, and notice is hereby given that in future these tournaments will be rated.

Conditions 1 and 2 ensure that the tournament is within the jurisdiction of the BOF. Conditions 3 and 4 ensure that the tournament is taken reasonably seriously. "Friendly" tournaments such as those held in Cambridge and Doncaster are sometimes rated and sometimes not, according to the wishes of the players and the organiser. Interestingly, the 1993 World Championships will satisfy at least (1)–(3).

Some tournament games are not rated. These include bye games and games won by default, for example where the opponent does not turn up. Very occasionally there is a game whose outcome is in doubt, and when I am aware of this doubt I have not rated such games either.

The first such occasion was in the 1988 Cambridge International, in a game between Joel Feinstein and Marc Tastet where Joel managed to destroy the board position in his haste to flip the discs. It was thought that Joel had won on the board, but there must have been a flipping error as the remembered position could not be re-created. Joel probably should have lost as a penalty for messing up the position, or because he would have lost on time if he had been made to restore the board position. Marc generously offered a draw. In the face of such confusion the outcome of the game seems indeterminate and I judged it best to pretend that the game had not taken place. The poor referee does not have the luxury of ignoring a game and in this case accepted Marc's offer and declared the game a draw.

Now it is extremely unlikely that the real outcome would have been a draw, and to have used a draw in the ratings would almost certainly have distorted them. In my view Joel should have lost, and his rating should reflect his difficulty in controlling his discs, but to have rated the game in this way would have been arrogant and irresponsible. I therefore decided that the best course was to ignore this game.

The second occasion was a game in another Cambridge International, between Peter Bhagat and Phil Marson this year. Here, both players ran out of time and no-one knew (or admitted to knowing!) whose flag had fallen first. For

the lack of any laid-down procedure for handling this situation this game was also (rightly, in my opinion) declared a draw, which again it almost certainly wasn't. This was an even clearer case of genuinely not knowing the real outcome of a game, and I decided not to rate this game either.

Fortunately for me, the third and most recent example shows that I am completely impartial in making these judgements. The scene is again Cambridge, in this year's regional when I played Iain Barrass. It had been a good, exciting game (i.e., I had survived into the endgame) but I had not done well enough to prevent Iain having parity, and he got the last move in the last three regions. "Ah well", I thought, "I nearly won that time". I checked the disc count (I always count the smaller number) and said to Iain "31?". "31" he replied, and went off to tell referee Pete Bhagat the result, while I recorded my loss on my transcript sheet.

When Pete was announcing the results at the end of the tournament I was amazed to hear him say that I had won four games, when I thought that I had won only three. It turned out that Iain thought that he, not I, had lost our game, and this was what had been recorded as the official result! When I got home I played the game over from my transcript using GTHOR. There must have been a flipping error, because amazingly the outcome of my transcript was 32-32! So no-one knows what the result really was, and I have therefore decided not to rate this game either.

To sum up, games whose outcome, whether decided by disc count, timeout, resignation, or penalty, is not in doubt will be rated. If the outcome is in doubt, or if a more appropriate outcome clearly differs from what the referee actually decided, then the game is a candidate for being ignored. I hope that this is sufficient reassurance that I will not arbitrarily decide not to rate one of your games, and I hope that tournament organisers will continue to tell me about any games whose real outcome was in doubt.

[*Editor's Note. Not everyone agrees with this policy. If you want to write to me with a dissenting view, please do.*]

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Friendly Rivalry.

We are led to believe that Phil Marson and Iain Barrass watch the ratings very carefully. Phil attained a rating of 1300 before Iain, but Iain has just made it to 1400, with Phil still a little way off. Presumably the race is now on for 1500.

The Rating List *maintained by David Haigh.*

This list includes tournaments up to and including the Cambridge Regional, but not the Manchester Regional. Among those dropping off through inactivity are: Alex Selby, Paul Smith, Helena Verrill, Alec Edgington, Tim Williamson, Colin Graham and Robert Stanton. Some, we hope, will be back.

Meanwhile, an exciting new face has reached the top in NumberOfRatedGamesPlayed. But who will reach the magic 300 first? In the actual rating list, Mike Handel continued his steady rise to the top, Michael Trent leapt in, Iain Barrass went up markedly, and Annemarie Moore acquired status.

1	David Shaman	105	1930	32	Lee Evans	32	1235
2	Imre Leader	295	1831	33	Roy Arnold	274	1208
3	Graham Brightwell	296	1780	34	David Haigh	291	1194
4	Neil Stephenson	110	1770	35	Martin Mulvaney	6	1176
5	Michael Handel	188	1718	36	John Bass	77	1163
6	Joel Feinstein	250	1685	37	Hamilton Abreu	6	1152
7	Garry Edmead	105	1671	38	Annemarie Moore	37	1127
8	Peter Bhagat	288	1651		Jonathan Simpson	12	1127
9	Guy Plowman	155	1631	40	Margaret Plowman	19	1117
10	Aubrey de Grey	295	1580	41	Colin Hands	32	1094
11	David Stephenson	126	1541	42	Neil Cuthbertson	47	1082
12	John Lysons	141	1533	43	Simon Nickson	17	1079
13	Ian Turner	144	1493	44	Iain Gray	15	1077
14	Michael Trent	6	1492	45	Graham Chappell	24	1074
15	Marcus Moore	85	1487	46	Gareth Thomas	18	1068
16	Jeremy Das	162	1444	47	Maurice Kent	30	1064
17	Ken Stephenson	147	1438	48	Richard Hemingway	5	1051
18	Jeremy Rickard	68	1430	49	Ali Turner	81	1039
19	William Hunter	82	1414	50	Rodney Hammond	46	1017
20	Iain Barrass	160	1401	51	Adelaide Carpenter	81	1016
21	Jeremy Benjamin	109	1383	52	Richard Brend	7	1011
22	Mark Atkinson	75	1345	53	Jim Brewer	57	1004
23	Phil Marson	153	1334	54	Finton Stephens	7	955
24	Phil Brewer	70	1329	55	Liam Stephens	13	894
25	Matthew Selby	126	1326	56	Ashley Hammond	26	849
26	John Beacock	71	1289	57	Tom Landry	19	832
27	Simon John	6	1280	58	Nigel Barforth	6	813
28	Mark Wormley	224	1265	59	Steven Verhaegen	6	792
29	Martin Fancy	18	1260	60	Gareth Taplin	7	733
30	Aiden O'Reilly	12	1245	61	Eileen Forsyth	131	691
31	Iain Forsyth	221	1243	62	Packet Of Biscuits	1	639