

8x8 Ratings

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

Current British players' ratings after the 2004 Ashford Tournament

	games	rating		games	rating
1 Garry Edmead	318	1922	19 Tony Wilkinson	8	1261
2 Michael Handel	461	1836	20 Julian Richens	90	1259
3 Graham Brightwell	835	1831	21 Martin Fancy	23	1250
4 Imre Leader	602	1805	22 Andy Aspden	34	1241
5 Ian Turner	531	1599	23 Iain Forsyth	465	1225
6 Geoff Hubbard	309	1588	24 Jeremy Dyer	72	1224
7 Guy Plowman	412	1577	25 Julian Bache	10	1193
8 Jeremy Das	292	1553	26 Yvette Campbell	22	1143
9 Iain Barrass	528	1540	27 Richard Brand	30	1132
10 Phil Marson	743	1445	28 Chin Lee Lim	10	1125
11 Mark Wormley	532	1429	29 Alexander Baron	38	1109
12 Aubrey de Grey	701	1400	30 Mac Bannister	37	1087
13 Martin Hamer	8	1379	31 David Haigh	512	1083
14 Matthew Selby	246	1376	Len Waite	4	1083
15 Chris Welty	24	1365	33 Neil Jerzynek	8	1074
16 Ben Pridmore	131	1358	34 Adelaide Carpenter	211	1003
17 Roy Arnold	893	1311	35 Gareth Morinan	5	1000
18 Stephen Rowe	134	1286	36 Alex Wilkinson	8	945

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

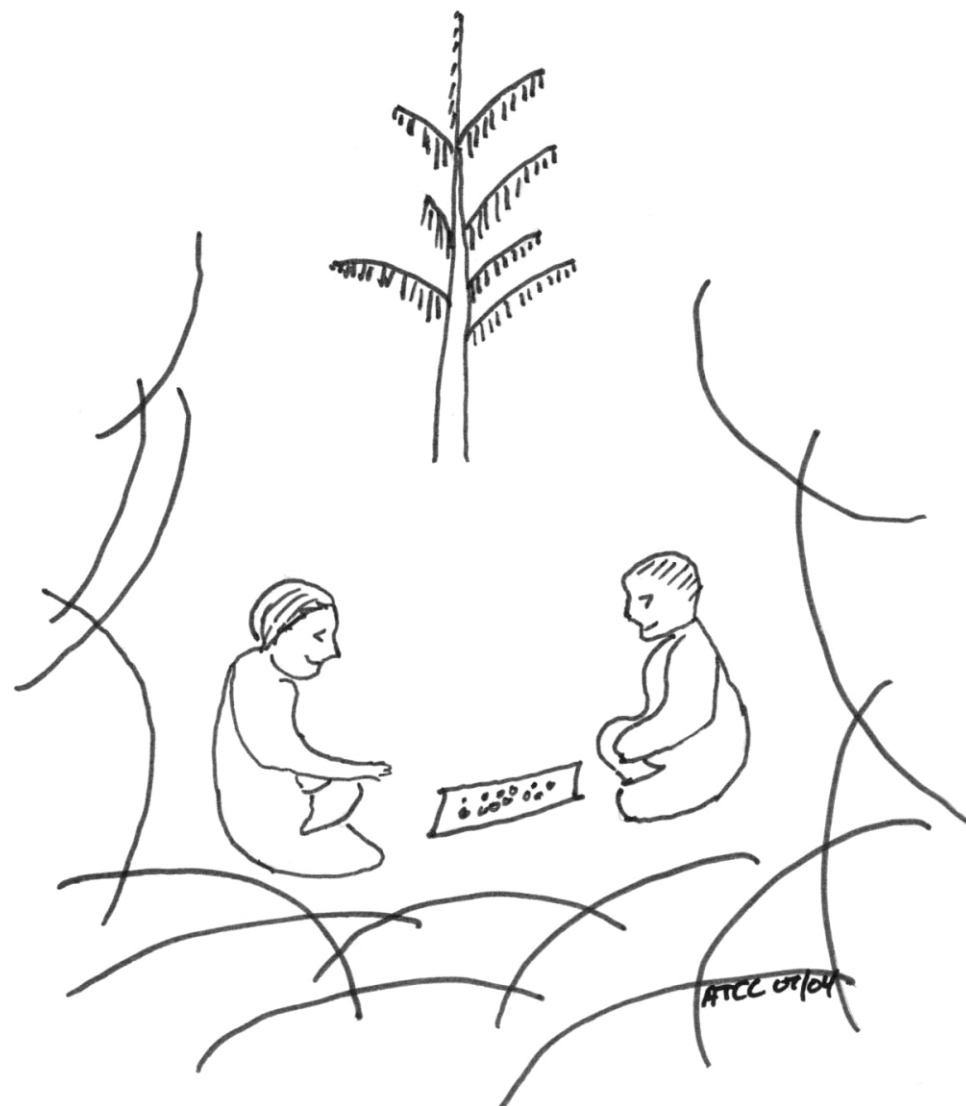
Current foreign players' ratings after the 2004 Cambridge International Tournament

1 Marc Tastet	1983	9 A. Cordy	1626	18 Robin Tomei	1356
2 E. Caspard	1939	10 T. Kashiwabara	1564	19 Solrun Stokke	1339
3 E. Lazard	1829	11 F. Auzende	1550	20 Tomas Ohlsson	1318
4 S. Nicolet	1810	12 B. Andriani	1538	21 C. van Brunschot	1317
5 D. Shaman	1759	13 E. Vecchi	1526	22 J. Aagaard-Hansen	1278
6 Martin Eng	1726	14 J. de Graaf	1458	23 Erik Kroon	1162
7 A. Hoehne	1702	15 J. Berner	1438	24 C. Gardebrink	1094
8 S. Barre	1686	16 V. Stenberg	1393	25 M.-C. Torri	833
		17 C. Dauba	1389		

"If We All Play Carefully --

The Newsletter of the British Othello Federation

July 2004



INFORMATION

Aubrey says: The new distributor of Othello in the UK, Character Games, is proving to be every bit as much of an improvement over Mattel as we had hoped. Sets are now available in Toys 'R' Us and a number of other stores and I am working with Character to get them into specialist games shops soon. Also, as a result of Character's good work and enthusiasm, the 2004 World Othello Championship will be in London (see details on page 3).

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

Contents:	Upcoming tournaments	pages 3-4
	In memoriam	4
	Tournament results	5-11
	Game analyses	12-26, 29-30
	Puzzles	26-28, 30-31
	Answers	31-35
	Rating lists	36

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Solutions to puzzles on page 31, Answer for position 1):

The line that was played, 55g1 c1 h2 h1 g2 pass g8, looks sensible: Black gets parity, playing out the regions in the North and getting the last move in the single square in the south. Unfortunately, it loses 31-33.

The first thing to do as Black is accept that you are going to lose the North edge no matter what. Once you've done that you can work out the best way to give it away -- which turns out to be playing 55c1 yourself, gaining 2 valuable disks at c2 and c3 and securing d2. The rest of the moves play out as before but this time you win by 2, 33-31.

(For those of you who answered h2, it draws, but it's an even more complicated line.)

This was a hard position... Sometimes you just have to count.

Answer for position 2): (Answers for 3-6 promised next NL)

These can be tricky positions; White has done a good job of minimisation but is running out of time to get enough discs to win.

The move that was played, b7, looks clever enough, playing into a 5 (a good parity region for White) and taking the b7-g2 diagonal. Unfortunately it also allows Black to play a6 to save the disks along the West edge. The line played, 52b7 a6 b8 g1 a8 a7 h1 h7 h8, is a 33-31 win for Black!

The key to this position is the 5 empty squares in the South-West corner; Black cannot play into this region, so White has full control over when and how it is played.

This is the sort of position you want to know how to play before you get to it; you don't want to be sitting there trying to work out all the complicated combinations while your clock is ticking.

So let me save you some time and tell you how this corner should go: B8 b7 A8 a7 A6. White gets the bottom edge, the corner, the main diagonal and the last move in the region. And also, since a2 is white, most of the West edge!

There are still lots of ways it can go wrong, due to not having disks on the relevant diagonals (or sometimes too many!). But this position is a perfect example of how it can go right.

So what we do here at 52 is: Make sure we're going to have access on the diagonals when we need it: 52h1 g1. Make sure we can play along the South edge safely, so take the SE corner: 54h8 h7. Then we just play out our SW region the way we prepared earlier: 56b8 b7 a8 a7 a6 and White wins 29-35.

The nice thing about this line is that White is totally in control the whole way; there is nothing Black can do to throw a spanner in the works. There are other lines that lead to the same score, but it's best to keep it simple lest you confuse yourself!

3) Black h7 seems promising because g8 and h5 are both disastrous for White: if White plays one then Black plays the other, ensuring control of the h1-a8 diagonal and leaving White with no access to the South West and North East. However, once the importance of the h1-a8 diagonal becomes clear, White a4 in reply to h7 becomes an obvious candidate because it provides the only means of cutting the diagonal. The sequence A8, g8 follows naturally from this, after which Black's inability to cut the a1-h8 diagonal is troubling. Eliminate h7.

4) White's natural reply to Black a4 is a1, after which every Black move introduces some weakness. Eliminate a4.

5) White's replies to Black g1 are all obviously bad apart from a4 (compare this with 3) above). If Black replies with g8 then White can play h8, gaining access to a1, denying Black access to b7 and threatening h5. Eliminate g1.

6) If Black plays g2? It looks confusing but perhaps we should try White a4 yet again. If Black plays a8 next then White g8 is natural and, in the light of 3) and 5), it is easy to convince myself to eliminate g2. [Besides, I checked the answer beforehand. Oops!]

7) Finally: Black b2. If White replies with a1 then Black's natural reply is to wedge at a4. In view of all the above, this line suddenly seems easier than it did before. We know how powerful White a4 has been in several lines but now White has no chance to play it. Instead, Black is currently denying White access to g8, threatening to win a useful temporary tempo if not parity.

Whatever White plays now, all Black needs to do is to bear in mind denial of White access to g8 and control of the a8-h1 diagonal.

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

However, the best reply to Black b2 is not a1 but c1. After this, Black's moves are surprisingly straightforward: (From the start) B2, c1, A1, g8, H7, h5, A4, g2, A8, b7, H1, g1.

Solution to Supplementary puzzle 05A:

The tactic I forgot to consider was diagonalisation. White cannot now play h5 because it flips f3, allowing Black to control the h1-a8 diagonal by playing g2. Whatever happens after that, Black gets b7 and White cannot get h1:

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

A4, h5, A1, b7, B2, h1, G2.

Meeting Announcements by Aubrey de Grey

Date and location of the BOF Nationals

The 2004 British National Championship will take place in Cambridge on September 18th and 19th, and as usual it is an open tournament -- anyone and everyone is welcome to play. The venue will be Trinity Junior Parlour, which is in Whewell's Court, Trinity College, Trinity Street. If you need directions, email me at ag24@gen.cam.ac.uk. For the most part the format of the weekend will be as normal -- the Annual General Meeting will be at 1:30 PM on the Saturday, play will begin at 3 PM with three rounds of Swiss, and six more rounds of Swiss will be played starting at 9:30 AM on the Sunday. The one-game final, however, will be played a few days later in London as the centrepiece of a big PR event staged by Character Games to promote the World Championships, about which more below. Details of this event are still to be determined and I will be in touch electronically when I know more. What -- you aren't on the British_Othello mailing list? Get thee hence (send empty email to British_Othello-subscribe@yahoogroups.com) to keep up to date more than the twice a year this Newsletter affords!

Four players from the Nationals (3 guaranteed plus 1 host-country space should the number otherwise be odd) will attend the Worlds, so come to the Nationals and play your best!

Date of the World Championship

For the first time since 1993, the World Othello Championships will be held in Britain this year. The venue is nearly-but-not-quite chosen, but it will be in central London. The dates are November 12th to 15th, with the usual format -- Welcome reception on the evening of the 12th, 13 rounds of Swiss on the 13th and 14th, and best-of-three semifinals and finals on the 15th followed by the Victory Dinner. The days of the week are an innovation, at the instigation of the PR company who are advising Character Games, but we think it will be good for players too since it should reduce the number of days that they need to take off work.

PLEASE NOTE: If you want to attend the Worlds, you can do so, at no charge at all, including the Welcome Reception and Victory Dinner (both of which are always decidedly lavish) -- and you only need to do **one thing** in return, which is to be a table referee on the 13th and 14th. All games in the Worlds are played with table referees -- none of this uncivilised taking of one's own transcripts that they do in top-flight chess events -- so we need to

assemble at least 25 of you. If you're interested, email Aubrey de Grey at ag24@gen.cam.ac.uk to say so. A prior knowledge of the rules of Othello is an advantage, but even that is not essential because the job is quite straightforward and we will give thorough instructions before play begins; the only real qualification is attentiveness. So if your other half won't let you come, bring them along too!

Please also note that spectators are welcome throughout the event -- though the third day's play is secluded and even other competitors can only watch by video link. So, feel free to come along even if you're not willing to be a table referee. You won't get the free meals then though!

The MSO

The Mind Sports Olympiad will take place in the same place as last year (the first time this has ever occurred!) -- the Manchester Conference Centre at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST), just 100 yards from Manchester's main train station. It starts on Thursday August 19th, but I think most events are on the normal ten-day interval ending on the August Bank Holiday, *i.e.* between Saturday August 21st and Monday August 30th. We have the usual wide range of Othello tournaments scheduled. See the MSO website

<http://www.msoworld.com/> for more details.

IN MEMORIAM

EILEEN MARY FORSYTH

The British Othello Federation regrets to announce the death of long-standing member Eileen Forsyth, who passed away peacefully on Friday 18th June, aged 74 years. Eileen was involved with the game of Othello for many years. Her contributions to the game include being a founder of the Doncaster club and close involvement with the Doncaster Regional as well as being an active player. The highlight of her playing career was back-to-back victories against her husband Iain and David Haigh in the 1995 Dewsbury Regional. Outside the game Eileen was a long-standing member of St Mary's Church, Wheatley, and was deeply loved and appreciated by the whole local community there. Eileen, who also leaves behind one son and one daughter, will be sadly missed by all those who knew her.

contributed by Roy Arnold

Solutions to puzzles on pages 26, 28, and 30:

Solution to Puzzle 02

1. The only winning move is B2. Sometimes there's no substitute for checking all lines until you find the right one...
2. There are two perfect play lines: B2, a1, A2, d1 and B2, d1, a1, A2.
3. The final score is 33-31 to Black.

Solution to Puzzle 03

1. "Parity" and "swindling". The key to finding the solution is to notice that (a) White currently has no access to the South-West region. Since this region is odd, if the rest of the board is filled without White gaining access to the South-West then Black will gain parity and (b) White can only gain access to the South West by playing c1, which flips b2, thus threatening b6.
2. G2; 3. G2, h1, C1, g8, F8, B7, a7, A8, B8, B6 -- a huge swindle in which Black plays four of the five moves in the South West!

Solution to Puzzle 04

This is not the only drawing line but it is the only one (as far as I know) where Black wins parity (as opposed to happening to end up with parity which happens in another line), so it should be the easiest line to find: H8, h7, A1, b2, G8, b7, h2, H1.

Solution to Puzzle 05

My attempt at finding the best first move. (I should add that the apparent "misdirection" below, leading to the answer turning out to be easier to find than I had thought, is entirely unintentional -- it just reflects how spending more time on the problem made my thoughts about it slightly less confused). Having failed to spot a reason to favour any particular move, the only approach I could think of was to eliminate those moves that seemed the least likely candidates.

- 1) Black b7 poisons a4. White a4 then forces Black a8, which forces White g8. After this, White has obvious replies to whatever Black does.

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

- Eliminate b7.
- 2) Black g8 seems strikingly bad because White can reply with h7 (cutting the a8-h1 diagonal) and threatening to play h5. Eliminate g8...

[In fact, g8 turns out not to be as bad as this suggests: **Supplementary puzzle 05A:** White to play and win from the position after G8, h7, C1, g1, A8

What Othello tactic did I forget to consider when I thought g8 was strikingly bad?]

black, c2 white, and d3 black.

Therefore, after c1 is played, White plays to either f5 or g6, flipping d3 to white, and then Black plays to g6 or h7, flipping both c2 and d3 to black. If h7 remains empty, then these two moves are to f5 and g6, and so all of f5, g6 and h7 are empty at the point when White plays c1.

While f5, g6 and h7 are empty, there is no way for either player to gain access to any of: d1, f1, h1, h3, h5. (This is very much like what happens when you play an Othello game starting with only three of the four central discs: one quarter of the squares stay empty.) But Black has played to d1 before White goes to c1, so this is impossible, which means that h7 must be occupied.

It could be that h7 is one of the two moves that flip d3 late on, or, as we shall see, it could be that the h7 disc gives access to the awkward set of squares.

(2) Mr. Enormous's challenge.

All the previous analysis is still valid. But now we see that h7 is White, and it can never have been flipped. So it must be that the two moves flipping d3 are a White move to f5 followed by a Black move to g6. Therefore f5 and g6 remain empty until after White gets to c1, and access to d1 is arranged starting from h7.

The first of d1, f1, h1, h3 and h5 to be reached is h5, and it must be played by White, using the white h7 disc to flip a black disc at h6. The next of these squares to be reached is h3, and again it must be White who plays there, since Black can never establish a disc on the h-file.

Moreover, it is White who plays to f1, getting access either directly from h3 or possibly via h1. So, in order for Black to play to d1, White must also play to e1, and Black must play to g1 or h1. But Black never has access to h1 either vertically or diagonally, so it is g1 that Black plays for access to d1.

	25	32	31	26	30	29	
	5	18			23	24	
		2	1			8	28
	19	14	○	●	4	7	21
			●	○	34	20	22
			12	3	11	35	15
			17	6	9	10	16
			27		13	33	

Finally, after Black plays to d1, all of d1-g1 are black, and c1 is still empty. So, if White plays h1, either before or after c1, then the d1 disc will be flipped to White. Therefore White doesn't play to h1, and neither does Black as he never has access.

So it is the green wire that must be cut.

Here is one possible game showing that the configuration is legal.

The 2004 Cambridge Open by Graham Brightwell

Overall attendance at the Cambridge Open was a rather disappointing 18, but this included a very strong top end of the field. Once the tournament got going, it became apparent that not everyone had brought their A game, with Imre Leader, Stéphane Nicolet and (especially) David Shaman off form. I lost to Emmanuel Lazard as usual, but then Lazard lost to Emmanuel Caspard, and Caspard lost to me. At the end of day one, the two Emmanuels and I each had just the one defeat, and we were clear of the field.

Round 9 was not a good one for Emmanuels: Michael Handel overcame Caspard, while Leader held Lazard to a draw (or perhaps Lazard held Leader to a draw). Meanwhile, I was managing to persuade all my opponents to err at key moments, and so it all came down to the last round. Caspard won his game, so needed one of the other two to slip up. I survived my game, so it all came down to Lazard vs. Ben Pridmore. Ben had been having a very solid tournament, but all the same it was a surprise to see him in a stone cold winning position. It was equally surprising to see him mess it up and allow a decisive swindle. However, the final surprise was that Emmanuel didn't have enough time on his clock to execute said swindle.

Emmanuel Lazard recovered to beat Michael Handel for third. Meanwhile, I won the first game of the final, and began to dream of my first European Grand Prix win since 1997. Normal service was resumed in the next two games, and I had to settle for my eighth Grand Prix second place since 1997. Congratulations to Emmanuel Caspard on a well-deserved victory. Emmanuel wrote an article featuring all the games in Fforum, so if you want to know more I refer you there. Here is the tight second game.

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

Caspard 33 Brightwell 31

I've played this opening a few times and have found the plan of feeding Black the North edge and sacrificing at b2 irresistible. I am learning slowly that it usually doesn't quite work, and that there are better plans for White. 30d8 is the last game-loser: I should play to f1 for tempo in the North, and I don't know why I didn't. 41g2 is an excellent move, but at 46 I'm still afloat. Black has a number of ways to collect lots of stable discs, but it's hard to figure out which of them might let White back into the game. WZebra recommends 47h7-g7-a7, picking up discs in the South-

East and keeping the North-West region in reserve. There's nothing wrong with the moves Emmanuel chooses, although 51b1 (51a3 is +14) illustrates how it is possible for Black to lose ... without actually losing.

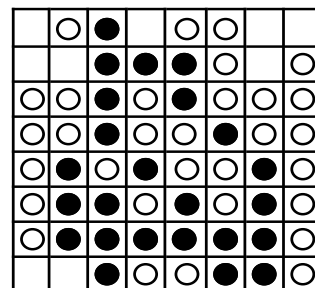
- Results of the Swiss: 1: 10 pts [884] BRIGHTWELL Graham {GB};
 2: 9 pts [877] CASPARD Emmanuel {F}
 3: 8.5 pts [833] LAZARD Emmanuel {F}
 4: 8 pts [857] HANDEL Michael {GB}
 5: 7 pts [802] NICOLET Stéphane {F}
 6: 6 pts [787] LEADER Imre {GB}
 [769] HOEHNE Andreas {D},
 [748] BARRE Sebastien {F},
 [635] PRIDMORE Ben {GB}
 10: 5.5 pts [720] HUBBARD Geoff {AUS};
 11: 5 pts [715] ANDRIANI Bintsa {F},
 [694] SHAMAN David {USA},
 [633] DE GRAAF Jan C. {NL}
 14: 4 pts [705] AUZENDE Frederic {F}
 15: 3 pts [617] DE GREY Aubrey {GB},
 [570] ASPDEN Andy {GB}
 17: 1 pt [564] MARSON Phil {GB},
 [460] DYER Jeremy {GB}

3rd/4th: Lazard 38-26 Handel

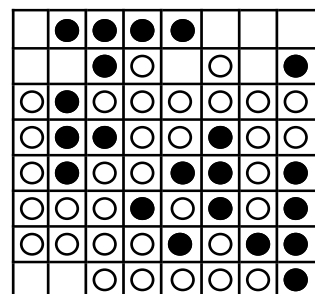
Final: Brightwell 40-24 Caspard, C 33-31 B, B 23-41 C

Oadby Regional by Stephen Rowe

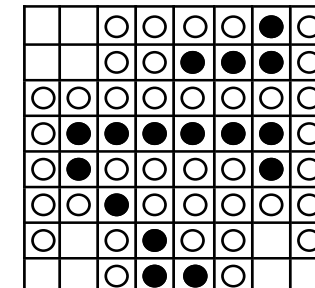
Since I had previously created some interest in Othello at my Church, I thought it would be good to try a Beginner's tournament. Unfortunately only two turned up, Len Waite and his son David. In round one of the main tournament Graham beat Roy 50-14 and Geoff beat me 49-15. In the beginner's David beat his father 33-31, but he had to leave after round one. Len then decided to play in the main tournament. In round two I lost to Graham 20-44 and Roy beat Len 56-8. Round three saw Graham beat Len 63-1 and Geoff beat Roy 53-11. At the end of the morning session Graham and Geoff were on 3 wins and Roy, Len and I had one each. After lunch in round 4 Roy lost to me in the closest game of the tournament (29-35) and Geoff wiped out Len. In round 5 I beat Len 54-10 and Geoff beat Graham 42-22 Final Score: Geoff Hubbard 5/5, Graham Brightwell 4, Steve Rowe 3, Roy Arnold 2, Len Waite 1.



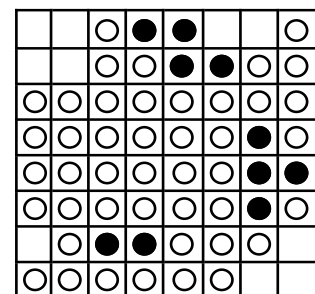
3) White to play at 52



5) Black to play at 51



4) Black to play at 51



6) Black to play at 51

Answers to puzzles on pages 27-28:

(1) The ego-terrorists' puzzle.

Since c1 is white, it must have been played after both a black move to b1 (flipping c2) and a black move to d1 (flipping horizontally from the right).

White's move to c1 flips c2 to white, so c2 must be flipped to black later. The only possibility is that it is flipped by a move on the b1-h7 diagonal, away from the b1 disc. This move must be at f5 or further away, since d3 is in place when Black plays to b1, and e4 is occupied at the start of the game.

After Black's move to b1, d3 is black, and afterwards it too can only be flipped by moves on the b1-h7 diagonal, away from b1 or c2. But both b1 and c2 are black until White's move to c1, so after that move we have: b1

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

WZebra. I don't really get it myself -- I'm no expert on strategy, but my automatic feeling is that if I'd played 28 b8 as Zebra wants me to, I would have collapsed and lost quite spectacularly. I can see why maybe Black should play g8 at move 27, if only because I don't really like any of the other options all that much, but I still can't see myself playing that as Black and winning. If someone could explain the logic behind it (words of one syllable would be best), I'd be much obliged!

20/20 Hindsight: Endgames from the Nationals, part 1 by Geoff Hubbard

Of course now there is no pressure. The clock is not ticking rapidly towards timeout, you don't have a group of players crowding around watching the final moves and you're not wondering how you managed to squander what appeared to be a clearly game winning position. Now you may still be wondering what you are going to have for lunch, but with a clear head can you now work out what should have happened in the following positions? And why?

Here are 6 positions from the 2003 nationals that were lost within the last 10 moves. (Names have been omitted to protect the guilty.) Answers for the first two are on page 35; answers for the last four will appear in the next issue.

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

1) Black to play at 55

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

2) White to play at 52

London Regional 2004 by Graham Brightwell

Seven of us gathered outside the George Public House for the London Regional at 11:00 on Easter Saturday: an awkward number given the late start. Adelaide Carpenter expressed her willingness not to play in such strong terms that I withdrew my own offer.

The main upset was Ben Pridmore's win over Geoff Hubbard, and this meant that three of us were still in contention for the tournament win when I played Geoff in the last round.

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

Brightwell 34 Hubbard 30

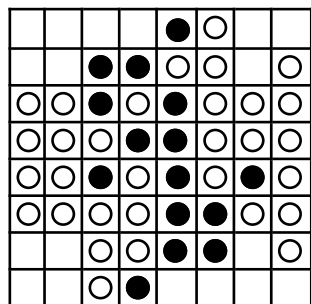
It had taken ages for Geoff to register his first win against me, but he'd recently beaten me in Oadby, and now he is threatening to make a habit of it. So this was a game I was keen to win, and it turned out to be something of an ordeal.

I suspect Geoff's sequence through 24 is book, and indeed WZebra confirms that it wins 33-31 for White. My move 29 costs a disc, and 33 costs a couple more. So here's the position at 37, with me losing.

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

Black to play at 37

I turn down the option of playing e8, not so much out of fear of a particular variation but because it would kill off the South region entirely for me, while there is no obvious reason that I would run him out of moves in the North, and I would be the one having to look out for diagonalisations. I play 37c2 instead, and now Geoff's winning moves are all in the North, with 38c1 being the best. But he misjudges the position and leaps into 38c8, which looks attractive, since I will never have any access to e8, so it is apparently a gain of tempo. But this is a superficial reading. As and when I do need to play to the South, I can do so with b8, or b7, or even g7 into the odd region. Indeed, I can aim to play all three of these, getting six of the nine moves.



Black to play at 43

After the (correct) continuation 39d2 40e2 41e1 42f1, I decide to play 43g7 purely for parity, hoping to take advantage of the odd region in the North-East. This is still winning, but there is a better plan, namely 43b7. The point is that after this I could hardly fail to get three of the four moves into this region, since I would be able to play b8, unless White were to take the edge, when I could play a7. Parity would work its magic, with the outcome of White ending up forced ruinously into g7.

Geoff's 44d1 is slightly inaccurate, so that 45b7 is equally lovely on the next move, but I again miss this and play 45b8 instead. This messes up the tempo gain in the South-West, and after 46e8 47f8 it's delicate. Both 48b2 and 48b7 would force me to tread carefully, but Geoff's actual choice of 48h8 49g8 50a8 fits nicely in with my intentions: I still have the parity region, and White is already fed into the South-West. 51b1 52c1 53g1 moves the parity region, and after 54b7 I count 55b2 (moving the parity region again) to a win and play it, though actually 55a7 is one disc better.

Final scores: Graham Brightwell 5/5, Ben Pridmore 4, Geoff Hubbard 3, Aubrey de Grey 2, Roy Arnold 1, Jeremy Dyer 0.

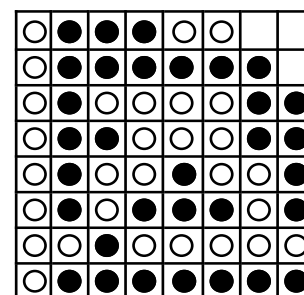
A tournament in a pub might not seem like the best of ideas, but the function room was very quiet, and the availability of beer didn't seem to affect the standard of play too much! A good time was had by all, and I expect we'll be back to this venue again.

Cambridge Regional by Aubrey de Grey

As for the past few years, the Cambridge Regional took place as part of the Cambridge Mind Sports Olympiad, a slightly scaled-down version of the ten-day games festival that is held in Manchester each August (and about which information is given on page 4). Well, OK, more than slightly scaled down -- in fact this year it was only two days instead of three. But we made up for it in the number of games, which was at least a third as many as at the MSO proper.

But I digress. Othello happened. I even played, because more of my fellow co-organisers of the overall Cambridge MSO were around than I had expected. Well, "played" is actually putting it a bit politely; I think this is the fifth tournament in a row in which my rating has fallen. Results:

White to Play and Win in the Most Annoying Way Possible by Ben Pridmore



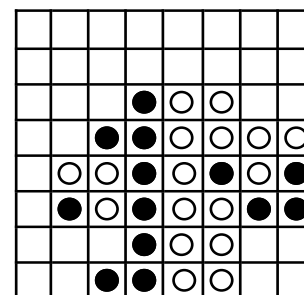
White to play at 58

I don't win many games of Othello, certainly not against the really good players, and even though I only "won" this one on a technicality, I'm still pretty happy with the game in general. It's the last round of the Cambridge International earlier this year, and I'm playing White against Emmanuel Lazard. I have about five minutes left on my clock, and Manu about ten seconds, so the sensible thing for me to do here would be to take a minute or two to examine all three possible moves, and either find the best winning line or at

least just make sure I pick a move that wins.

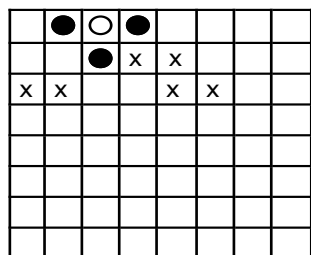
Not being sensible, and having been caught up in the breakneck pace at which my opponent had been forced to play his last couple of moves, I gave move 58 about two seconds' thought, which went a bit like this: "Hmm, if I play h2, it will flip g2 and make that diagonal entirely white." Bypassing the part of my brain responsible for pointing out that this would be a BAD thing, I played h2.

I can only assume that I forgot h8 was black -- if it had been white, h2 would have been a really great move. As it was, it left Manu to make the last two moves, flipping a lot of discs (with a plaster on his finger not making it any easier), and he duly lost on time fractionally before being able to seal a 37-27 win. Which I did feel bad about, especially because this result kept him from reaching the final, but it did leave me on 6/11 (including another completely undeserved win on time against Aubrey the day before), which I think is the first time I've won more than I've lost in a tournament.



After move 26 (f8)

Back in the game, we were in this position after my move 26. Looking at it on the computer afterwards, I noticed that WZebra urges one or the other of us to take the South edge as soon as possible. In fact, it spends the next twelve moves imploring us to do so, until Manu finally did with move 39. I think that qualifies as the longest period of nobody playing Zebra's recommended move that I've seen in a tournament game I've looked at. In fact, pretty much all of our moves in this period are game-losers, according to

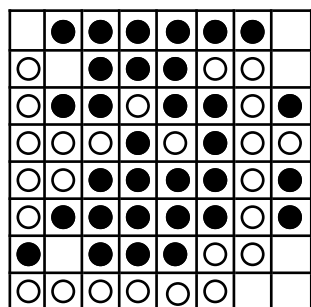


Do you have what it takes to be an elite counter-intelligence operative? Can you deflate the ego-terrorists by showing that h7 has to be occupied in the position to the left? And, in the previous diagram, which wire should the agent cut to foil Mr. Enormous's dastardly plot?

* Footnote: It is important to point out that no-one -- especially not anyone who coinci-dentally might bear a resemblance to a real person, living or dead -- was killed in the incident. Rather, the entirety of Manchester was translated on to a paradise universe, one to the left. Neither history nor the author record how the inhabitants of this universe reacted to the sudden intrusion of Manchester, or how many of them entered the Beginners' Tournament.

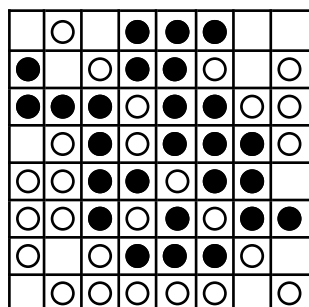
Author's Note: Well, as far as I know there was no interest whatsoever in the previous puzzle, from which I choose to conclude that it was too hard. These are supposed to be easier! Which is not the same as easy.

More End-Game Puzzles by Jeremy Das



Puzzle 04; Black to play and draw

04 Hint: parity.
05: This position is extremely difficult (which is my way of saying I couldn't possibly solve it) so you may prefer to think simply in terms of finding a plausible argument for which first move is the winning move.



Puzzle 05; Black to play and win

However, I hope endgame experts will enjoy actually solving it.
Clue for those trying to solve it: In the best line, after the first move, only White's moves are tricky: experienced players should find Black's moves obvious.

1 Geoff Hubbard 6/7, 2 Steve Rowe 5, 3 Aubrey de Grey 4 (209 discs), Ben Pridmore 4 (208 discs), Roy Arnold 4 (169 discs), 6 Jeremy Dyer 3, 7 Andy Aspden 2

Congratulations to Geoff, the Michael Schumacher (well, nearly) of this year's British Othello grand Prix.

Ashford Regional by Jeremy Dyer

This was the first Ashford Regional; it was held in the appropriately named (for Othello) Ashford Centrepiece church. I arrived bang on 9:30 with the 5 boards, 4 sets of disks and 3 clocks. Roy Arnold, Stephen Rowe, Julian Richens, and his wife Angela were all standing outside when I got there, but as it was bright sunshine I guess that was the best place to be. Geoff Hubbard arrived about 15 minutes later, making us almost ready for Round One apart from Ben Pridmore who still hadn't turned up.

Ben had sent me an email from London in the morning saying he would be late but it hadn't arrived by the time I left home so I didn't see it. Meanwhile I suggested that Angela play, therefore giving Ben a bye in Round One. This idea didn't really take off since Angela was intending to take down the transcripts of Julian's games. Round One started at 10:30 without Ben, who I was slated to play. It wasn't until 10:40 that I started the clock in our game, after Geoff suggested this was the right thing to do.

Round One saw Stephen score a great 53-11 win over Geoff and Roy saw off Julian. Roy's contention before Round One that marriage does not help your Othello may be true for his game (*hasn't fazed Imre Leader, David Shaman, Emmanuel Lazard et al., Ed.*), but it certainly didn't help me in my game against Julian later on when I lost by the same score, 35-29, that Roy had beaten Julian. Ben arrived at 11 with less than five minutes left on his clock. I won.

Next time, if people want another Regional down here (it suits me fine), I will give out my mobile number and have it with me in case anyone is late. Whether we did the right thing starting the clock this time, I don't know.

There was something of a reversal of fortunes in Round Two when I lost, Stephen lost, and Geoff and Julian won. After Round Two four players had 1 point, Ben had yet to get off the ground, and Roy was leading with two wins. We squeezed Round Three in before lunch leaving Geoff, Roy and

Julian on 2 points at the break, and the rest on 1.

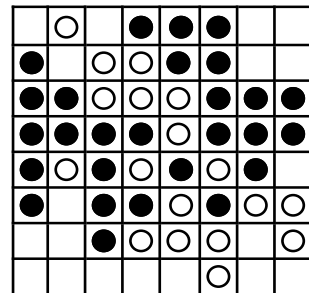
Stephen's 53-11 win against Geoff deserves further investigation and I will do that here, with a little help from WZebra. I have not beaten Geoff yet, and I think I'm right in saying this was the first time Stephen beat Geoff. Playing the Comp'Oth opening things are pretty even with Geoff, as White, having a small lead of about +5 at move 25. By move 38 things have changed somewhat and Stephen is now +12 ahead but a mistake on move 39 sends his lead down to +2.

Move 42 offers a -2 choice for Geoff but this is missed and he instead plays a -14 move signalling the start of White's collapse.

In the diagram the best move for White is g7 at -2 but Geoff takes b6 at -14 which after 43a7 leaves White in trouble. Move 46 sees Stephen's lead

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

Rowe 53 Hubbard 11



White to play at 42

increase significantly when Geoff avoids the best move b7 at -14, instead taking a balanced North edge move to g1 at -32. Black follows with the best move, the b7 X-square, leaving Geoff a selection of awful moves which all give up (good) corners. Stephen does not allow his lead to be dented and at White's move 54 the lead is further increased when Geoff takes the inferior of two moves, b2 at -42, rather than the -32 choice b8. Black has no access to b2 and with perfect play it should be White's last move. Instead Black gets the last move at 59b8 and a8 is left empty.

Back at the tournament, lunch brought its own problems. I was not given a key to the venue and it transpired that the other people who were there in the morning would not be back in the afternoon. So if we went to lunch we couldn't get back in. Luckily someone agreed to come back and let us in after lunch so we were saved. So when we left at the end of the day we had to make sure we didn't leave anything since we couldn't get back in once

Crisis In That Other Universe by *Graham Brightwell*

The mushroom cloud hung over what used to be Manchester. We all stood on the platform and watched, fascinated and appalled.

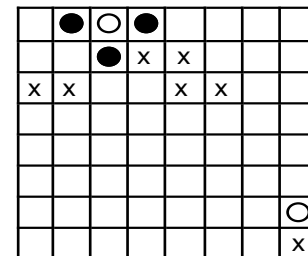
Several of my fellow passengers were getting the latest news via their mobiles. "It's serious," said one. "They're saying the Home Secretary will have to resign." Another was hearing a different rumour: apparently the Leader of the Opposition had made the best speech of her career and a Public Inquiry was virtually inevitable.

It seemed that they hadn't yet realised the worst. Almost all the World's top Othello players had been at the Mind Sports Olympics, which Manchester had spent millions successfully bidding for. As of ten minutes ago, the world was virtually defenceless against would-be evil dictators and supercriminals.*

Virtually defenceless ... by sheer luck I had been on a train that had broken down just outside Crewe. I wasn't surprised when a jet black helicopter landed, and a man in a jet black suit beckoned me on board. Reflecting on the fate of Manchester would have to wait: I could see I was going to be busy.

We were barely in the air when my companion thrust a partial Othello position in front of me. "This wasn't news to Mr Enormous," he said. "He's already issued his challenge: a fiendish device will turn all the world's oil reserves into jelly unless we can defuse it."

"And our agent has to choose which one of three wires to cut?" I guessed. "Of course. And the wires are white, black and green. The right wire corresponds to the colour of h1 in the diagram below."



In accordance with the Greve Convention, x's mark squares that are known to be empty, while unmarked squares could be empty or could contain discs of either colour. By law, the configuration had to be reachable from the conventional starting position, by playing legal Othello moves.

I breathed a sigh of relief. This would surely have taken a novice far too long to figure out, but I had seen something similar before: a few years ago, I had been taken hostage by Swedish ego-terrorists, but I had forced them to release me by proving that, in the position on the next page, h7 was occupied.

- 1 Find your present disc count.
- 2 Mentally play through the first sequence. After each of your moves add to your disc-count those discs you placed or flipped on that move that will not be flipped by future moves. You will probably have to play through the sequence several times to determine these.
- 3 Mentally play through the sequence. After each of your opponent's moves subtract from your disc-count those of your real discs that were flipped by that move and will not be flipped again.
- 4 At the end, add half the number of empty squares. A total of 32 is a draw, more than 32 is a win.

Advantage: Easier to count than the move-by-move approach.

Disadvantage: Needs more visualisation.

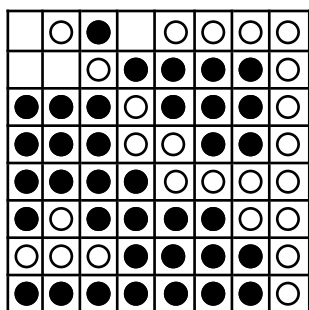
Technique for Incomplete Sequences:

E. Stable Disc Grab

This is for use when you are leading and (for whatever reason) just want to find a win rather than the best win.

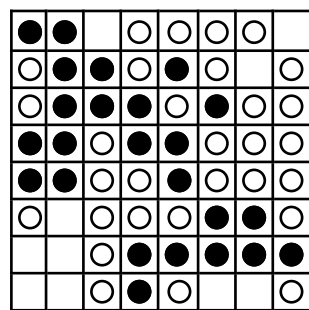
- 1 Count only your existing stable discs.
- 2 For each move in the sequence, add only your new stable discs. [Note that your opponent's moves can give you new stable discs by denying access to some squares.]
- 3 If your stable disc count reaches 33 or more you can safely play your sequence, knowing it will lead to a win.

Endgame Puzzles by *Jeremy Das*



For 02: 1. Only one of Black's three available moves wins. Which is it? 2. How many perfect play lines are there? 3. What is the score after a perfect play line?

Puzzle 02; Black to play and win



For 03: 1. Which two Othello concepts are of particular

Puzzle 03; Black to play and win

relevance in finding the solution? 2. Which one of the available moves leads, with perfect play, to a Black win? 3. What is the perfect play sequence? (If you're stuck then the solution to puzzle 02 may help).

the self-locking door shut. In the event the only thing forgotten was a few rating points for some players.

Geoff was the only player to win both his games after lunch, Julian lost his two, and the others won one and lost one each.

Final scores: Geoff Hubbard 4/5, Roy Arnold 3, Jeremy Dyer, Stephen Rowe, Ben Pridmore and Julian Richens 2.

Doncaster Regional by *Roy Arnold*

With newly-crowned British Grand Prix Champion Geoff Hubbard absent due to illness, pre-tournament favourite Iain Barrass finished top of the pile but he did not have it all his own way. Early on, Stephen Rowe, Ben Pridmore and I were vying for second place, but Mark Wormley got it in the end on tie break. The day started with a minute's silence out of respect for the late Eileen Forsyth. Maurice Kent returned as both referee and player, since there were an odd number of players. All games in the first round went to form but in the second I beat Barrass 35-29. The final round saw Barrass take the tournament decider against Wormley 39-25, Rowe beat Pridmore, and Kent almost broke his run of consecutive 64-0 defeats. Results: 1 Iain Barrass 4/5; 2= Roy Arnold, Mark Wormley (both 3 1/2 -- Wormley finished ahead on tie break); 4= Ben Pridmore, Stephen Rowe (both 2); 6 Maurice Kent 0.

Grand Prix Results: 1 Geoff Hubbard (720), 2 Roy Arnold (580), 3 Stephen Rowe (460), 4 Ben Pridmore (440), 5 Graham Brightwell (360), 6 Jeremy Dyer (210), 7 Iain Barrass (200), 8 Aubrey de Grey (200), 9 Mark Wormley (140), 10 Julian Richens (90), 11 Len Waite (80), 12 Maurice Kent (60), 13 Andy Aspden (40)

Nottingham Challenge Tournament by *Joel Feinstein*

Each year in Nottingham, former British Othello Champion Joel Feinstein challenges 6th-formers to play against him in a series of simultaneous Othello displays. This Othello Challenge is part of the University of Nottingham Open Day. There is a prize for the best result by a challenger.

For some photos from the 2004 Othello Challenge, see <http://www.maths.nottingham.ac.uk/personal/pmzclp/penday-2004/othello-photo-album/index.htm>

(PS no-one has beaten Joel yet at one of these events, but he has found himself in some tricky situations in the past. Maybe next year?)

Black and White to Play and Draw (Part I) by Graham Brightwell
and Chris Welty

Many readers will know that there is an ongoing project to "prove", with increasing levels of conviction, that Othello is a draw. This is a report on the state of the art in one particular opening, the Comp'Oth. Along the way, we'll have a glance at just a few of the many games of Othello that are supposed to be free of errors. We've made a lot of use of WZebra and also of Chris's program Ntest.

Ntest is a strong Othello program, strong enough that it is undefeated in tournament matches in standard Othello (as opposed to the many variants available online). It is optimised for standard Othello and has a very large opening book. Ntest is available from the internet at www.btinternet.com/~chris.welty. Ntest's full opening book is secret, but by the time this newsletter comes out a small book focused on the Comp'Oth opening should be available as well.

Programmers consider a position to be a "proven" draw when a computer search checks all legal moves and verifies that the best leads to another proven draw. This is a proof in the mathematical sense, but current computers are not powerful enough to prove the value of openings. Instead Ntest uses the concept of a "solid" draw: a computer search checks all *reasonable* moves and verifies that the best leads to another solid draw. This narrows the search down enough that current computers can check openings. The fuzzy bit is the definition of a "reasonable" move -- statistically, it's one where Ntest thinks it has at least a 1% chance of winning.

According to Ntest, the starting position is a solid draw with a multitude of solid drawing lines. There are also many additional lines which appear to be draws but which haven't been checked enough to be considered solid. You can see some of these in the forthcoming online book.

WZebra won't tell you so, but the Comp'Oth opening is a solid draw, so it is currently believed to be a draw with perfect play. This is the opening defined by 1f5 2d6 3c3 4d3 5c4 6f4 7f6 8f3. The move 8f3 seems to have been first played seriously by the program Comp'Oth, which was one of the first programs to pass the level of the top humans. The continuation 9e6 10e7 has always been the most popular, and then there are a number of possible move 11s. Ntest claims that 11d7 draws while other moves such as 11f7 lose.

White's usual response to 11d7 has always been 12g6, and this is a solid draw. Now, the most popular 20th century continuation was 13g5 14f7 15e8 (15e2 is another move that gets played a lot); this might well be a draw, but White can play 14c5 instead, which is a solid win. At 13, a line

B. Move by Move Counting (non-sequential).

- 1 Find your present disc-count.
- 2 Mentally play through the first sequence:
 - 2.1 After each of your moves add the number of discs flipped + 1 (for the disc placed) to your disc-count.
- 3 Mentally play through this sequence again:
 - 3.1 After each of your opponent's moves subtract the number of your discs he flipped.
- 4 At the end, add half the number of any empty squares. A total of 32 is a draw, more than 32 is a win.

Advantages over sequential version: Repeated addition followed by repeated subtraction is probably easier than successive additions and subtractions. Also, with the problem divided into two parts, if one part goes wrong you may not have to start from the beginning again.

C. Final Position Counting.

I have never heard of anyone else using this technique, so I hope it's new to everyone. I intended to practise this technique before telling anyone about it (just in case it proved impractical) but I have not used it more than a handful of times since I devised it, so I cannot vouch for its usefulness. I suspect, though, that it will end up as my default technique.

- 1 Divide the board into regions small enough for you to visualise -- e.g., four 4 x 4 squares.
- 2 For each such region:
 - 2.1 Mentally play through the first sequence repeatedly until you are certain of the final position in that region.
 - 2.2 For that regional position, subtract your opponent's disc-count from your own,
- 3 Add up the results for all four regions. 0 is a draw, more than 0 is a win.

Advantages: An initial disc-count is not needed; fewer calculations are needed; you can ignore empty squares; there are only four terms to count, so it is easier to remember them.

Disadvantage: You need to be able to see the final position for each region, which is difficult in cases where these are not reached until very near the end.

D. Gained Discs Minus Lost Discs Counting.

Definitions: Real position = the position before the start of the sequence to be counted; Real disc = a disc that is part of the real position.

And so for the first time in the history of the WOCs the Japanese champion had been defeated. With such a boost in confidence it was only natural that Cerf would go on to win the second game as White to become the first American (and non-Japanese) world champion!

That was to be Cerf's last appearance at the WOCs (he had also been to Rome in 1979 where he finished second). By 1983 Cerf had suddenly retired from the game, claiming later in an interview that he just couldn't afford the time required to keep up with the new generation of players. In 1984 he was invited to Australia as tournament director of the XVIIIth World Othello Championships in Melbourne.

If you would like to read a more complete analysis of this first game of the London 1980 finals, Jonathan Cerf himself wrote a great article which featured in the Winter 1980 issue of "Othello Quarterly." Back issues are available from the USOA: <<http://www.usothello.com/>>

Counting Techniques by Jeremy Das

Anyone who knows how bad I am at endgame counting will be surprised to see an article on the subject by me. I usually don't try to count at all, and when I do I tend get it wrong. However, this deficiency is what prompted me, two years ago, to think about how to make counting easier, resulting in my devising some new (to me) counting techniques. I am sure most of these are already well-known to some players but the fact that I only knew the traditional move-by-move technique is a sign that they are not as well-known as they might be -- hence this article.

First, techniques for complete sequences (*i.e.*, sequences whose last moves are the last move of the game).

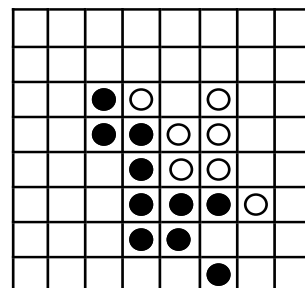
A. Move by Move Counting (sequential).

- 1 Find your present disc-count.
- 2 Mentally play through the first sequence:
 - 2.1 After each of your moves add the number of discs flipped + 1 (for the disc placed) to your disc-count;
 - 2.2 After each of your opponent's moves subtract the number of your discs he flipped.
- 3 At the end, add half the number of any empty squares. A total of 32 is a draw, more than 32 is a win.

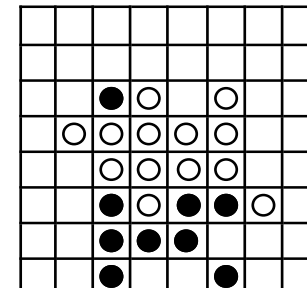
Advantage: this is particularly good for sequences whose outcomes are difficult to follow.

Disadvantage: it involves repeated addition and subtraction, which is difficult to get right if you're as arithmetically challenged as I am.

that was fashionable for many years was 13d8, followed by something like 14c5 15c6 16c7 17c8 18f7 19g8, but that's not it either. No, the one that actually works is 13f8.



After 13f8

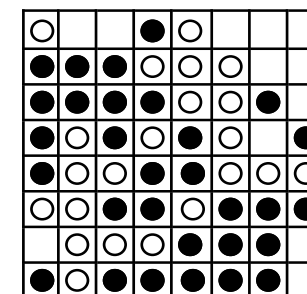


14c5-c6-c7-c8-b4

Now there are two moves for White that apparently lead to draws. One is 14c5 15c6 16c7 17c8 18b4: the effect of putting the c7-c8 pair in is that the move to b4 does turn the c5 disc, which isn't usually a good thing but here takes away access to g5 and causes Black a little inconvenience. (By the way, it's also a solid draw to play the moves in the order 12c5 13c6 14g6 15f8 *etc.*) But still Black has a choice of two lines that are solid draws. Here they are, with perfect play continuations to the end of the game.

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

(A) Solidly played game



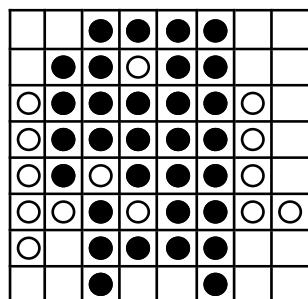
Black to play and draw

In game (A) above, it's a proven draw after 26a6. At a glance, Black seems to be winning the ending, since his sacrifice in the North-West gains

tempo, while White's sacrifice in the South-West loses parity. But at 49, it's actually Black who is in trouble: if 49f1, White plays 50h8 51h7 52g4, and Black has no access to the odd region, while if 49g4 50g2 51f1 52h2, then the only way to keep parity is 53h3, and that costs far too many discs because White sets up a lucrative move to g1. Hence the bizarre-looking 49g2. From 51 onwards, there are many branches in the draw-tree, but they all amount to White getting good first moves into all the pairs, with the parity just good enough to draw for Black.

All the moves between 42 and 50 are the only drawing moves, but before that there are plenty of alternative draws: 41g4, 37b1, 36e8 (essentially a transposition), 34e8, 34c1, 32e8, 31g8, 30d8. Apart from this one, all these lead to utterly different lines with utterly different themes, traps, and manoeuvres, but all draws.

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

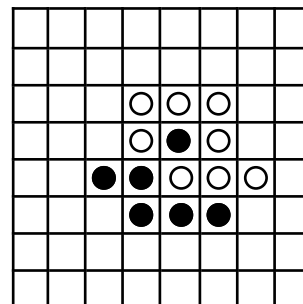


After 41b2

(B) Absolutely flawless

In game (B), there are many interesting twists and turns. It all looks like a normal game until move 34: the (unique) drawing move 34b6 looks completely weird to us, and for that matter to WZebra's midgame analyser: why would you hand over access to the enticing move at f7, just to play first to the West? The best we can offer is to say that Black is threatening to play a6, and later b6, and if White allows that then Black does end up getting an extra move in the West in the key line, and it turns out that this move is "worth more" than the f7 move. Still, it's not something any human should expect to get right.

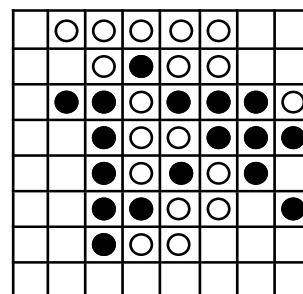
It doesn't look like 41b2 should work: can't White cut on with 42d8, and if 43g7 then simply 44e8 and it's Black's move? No good, because after 42d8 43e8 44a1, White has no access to a2, so Black will get the last move in that region as well as a good wedge: for instance 45b8 46b1 47a2 48g1



After 10f3

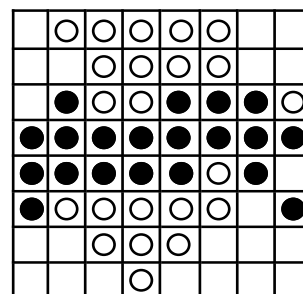
7e6, 8g5, 9f6, 10f3. Both players then go on to play out the same sequence they had played in their first encounter. In that game Cerf had played 11d2 and quickly found himself in trouble. Obviously he had studied the opening before the final and played the slightly better move 11g4. According to WZebra the best move in this position for Black is 11c4, but the benefits of that move are not at all obvious without looking far ahead.

Mimura took a slight advantage out of the opening but Cerf did well to keep the game tight and things started to even out as they approached the midgame. We rejoin the action after Cerf's move 3c7.



After 31c7

White has a nice central position but it's his turn to play and any move he makes is going to open up new moves for Black. This is one of the turning points in the game since Mimura played a losing move with 32b4. Mimura probably chose 32b4 to "extract" the disk in d2 giving him what he probably thought was an unattackable unbalanced edge in the North. However the move simply opened up too many new options for black. The winning sequence was 32a3, 33b4, 34a4, which restricts Black's mobility.



After 38d8

A couple moves later and Cerf is now in a winning position but needs to find the "kill". Before reading the following text, see if you can find it! Here's a hint: how can Black attack White's unbalanced edge?

Well the answer is Cerf's brilliant move: 39h2!!! It takes a lot of guts to play something like that in the final of a WOC! The idea behind this move is that White will eventually be forced to play h5 which flips f3 giving Black access to g2 which attacks the North edge and also wins

local parity! And that's exactly what happened and after a fairly well played endgame Jonathan Cerf won the game 44-20!

Cerf versus Mimura, London '80 Revisited by George Ortiz

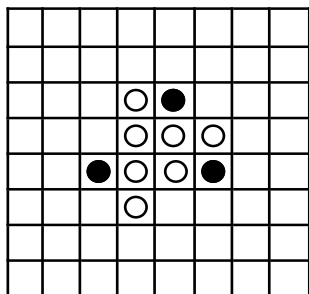
In November this year the World Othello Championships will return to London for the third time. I thought this would be a good occasion to revisit the first London WOC in 1980 in which Jonathan Cerf of the USA became the first player outside Japan to become world champion.

This is a brief analysis of the first game of the London finals between Jonathan Cerf and Takuya Mimura. This game is all the more special since it was the first time a "gaijin" (foreigner) defeated a Japanese champion in an official tournament. Takuya Mimura had gone undefeated in the preliminary rounds, having as White defeated Cerf by the convincing score of 21-43. The two met again in the finals and Mimura had the choice of colour for the first game. Of course he chose White.

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

J. Cerf 44-20 T. Mimura

Moves 1 to 5 (f5, d6, c5, f4, e3) are known in Japan as the Rabbit (with a bit of imagination you might be able to see the silhouette of a bunny). In Japan all the basic openings (first five moves) were named in the 70s after the twelve signs of Chinese astrology (rabbit, tiger, snake, horse, etc.). Many of those names are also used outside Japan but the Rabbit tends to be wrongly called the Rose since Brian Rose's opening starts with the same five moves.



After 6d3

6d3: the Mimura Opening.

The most common move 6 after the Rabbit is 6c6 (as played in the Rose opening); however, the move to d3 is a speciality of Takuya Mimura. He had already played the same opening against Cerf during the preliminaries with success so naturally why wouldn't he try it again? The Mimura is one of those openings which has long been abandoned since it has been found to be better for Black. A good defence for it is 7f3, 8e2, 9c6 and White is then in a very difficult position.

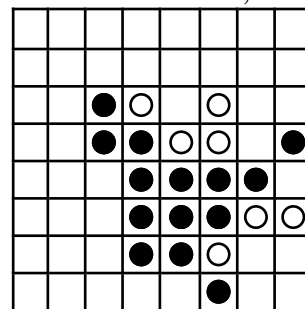
and now any reasonable move works, and 49h7 controlling the diagonal works spectacularly well. However, after the correct 42a2, 43b1 is indeed met by 44d8. So Black has to take the West edge and give up the b-file.

Surely almost all humans would go wrong at move 49. The move to h2 looks too inviting to pass up, for the discs along the second row, for control of the a1-h8 diagonal, and to prevent White getting both of b7 and b8. But this loses 31-33. Compare the perfect-play sequence with the sequence after 49h2: 50h3 51h5 52h4 53h7 54g7 55h8 56g8 57e8 58d8 59b8 60b7. Only one disc difference, but at least it's possible to see why all the supposed advantages of 49h2 are not so decisive: (i) the discs on the second row are coming Black's way anyway, but if he grabs them immediately then White's reply to h3 turns the third row in reply, so for the discs it's better to wait until f3 is flipped white (after 49h4, both 50b7 and 50h5 flip this disc); (ii) Black only controls the diagonal for one move; (iii) the two moves at b7 and b8 aren't worth all that much, since they don't flip vast numbers of discs and Black gets two moves somewhere else to compensate, while if the pair is left then White is getting the latter of the two moves anyway.

The end is delicate: at 54 it turns out that h7 only gets 31 discs, so White has to start the Eastern file with h3, but it's essential to play off e8-d8 first, simply because that way the move to h3 flips and keeps the f5 disc.

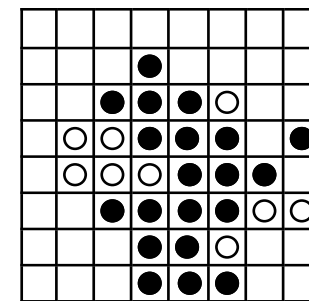
This time the draw tree is fairly narrow, but there are alternative drawing lines starting from 31a3, 37g7, 39b2 and 51h5. It's proven to be a draw after 27g5, at the latest. One interesting point is that all these are alternatives for Black, so this game is the solution to a "solitaire" for White starting from the position after 27g5 and quite probably even further back. Might it even be a solitaire starting from the position after 12c5 13c6?

So far we haven't seen anything too exotic; both of the games above look mostly like normal well-played games, including only a few unusual choices. However, there are some monsters on the draw tree too, as we'll see shortly.



After 14f7 15g5
16h6 17h4

The other solid draw available at move 14 is 14f7 15g5 16h6 17h4. Now White has two solid draws, neither of which is the move everyone plays, namely 18g4, which probably is a draw, but Black has a deviation



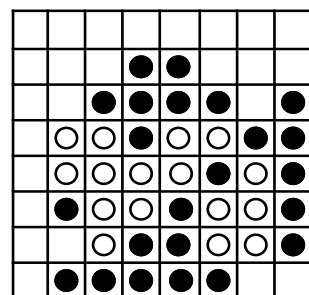
After 25e3
at -2.00

rather than the -2.50 used here as the "solid" threshold.

There isn't the space in this issue to look at all the options, so for now we'll focus on 18e8. This is an attractive move, since it regains access to c5 without compromising the position on the East edge and also sets up a move to h5, after which Black will have to take the East edge as well as the South. The tactics seem to work out well for White over the next few moves, 18e8 19d8 20c5 21c6 22b4 23d2 24b5, but Black's 25e3 takes more of the centre and keeps the pressure on White.

At this point, White has some choices. The most critical line is to give Black the East edge immediately. Something like this.

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



After 35e2

(C) Both players can be proud

The theme, not only here but in a lot of similar lines, is that White runs short of moves and has to work hard to survive. Here White plays out the sequence 30-32 while Black has no immediate access to g8, and when 33h3 turns the g4 disc, White gets to sacrifice with 34g7. But, as is often the case, after the sacrifice White has work to do to avoid the g8 swindle. In the position shown above, for instance, an innocent sequence like 36f2 37g3 38c1 39a6 leaves White pretty much dead: she can never play g2 because of the swindle, while Black has the threat of b7 looming large after a few more moves are played out in the North-West. Indeed the X-square 36g2, basically getting this move in before it is poisoned, is the only draw. Black could get to h1 readily enough, but White would get either the West or the South edge in compensation.

If 41b3, then White has the forcing sequence 42g1 43a6 44b7, after which Black can take several corners, but has no good move in the North-East, so White gains control and can win 33-31. But after 41a6 42b3 43c2, the b7 sacrifice is just too expensive and White has to break to the North.

since the c5 disc is black here. This is to White's advantage; for instance 30h5-h7-g4-h3-g3-h2-c8-b8-g7-e1-c2 works out much better, and indeed wins for White, whereas the same continuation loses after 26b6 27c7 28f2 29e2. So Black mustn't play 29c7, but he can still draw with the rather anti-thematic 29h5, giving White the edge and depriving her of access to c7. Here is one of the relatively few ways it can go.

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

(H) A game from WZebra's book

Here it is White who has the edge and a free move to come, so it is Black who has to be careful to avoid running out of moves. For instance, after 37e1 38c2 Black has nothing, whereas after 37b1 38c2 he has 39a5. After the better shot of 38h7, Black has to find something aggressive. 39e1-a1-c2 is one disc shy of working, but after 39c7 40c2 41g7 it is White who is in trouble. If she plays c8, then Black's sacrifice at g7 is "vindicated", since the wedge is coming on the South edge, whereas any sequence on the West that cuts the diagonal is met by Black going to b2. So White has to toss in g2 at the right moment to gain a tempo. Now Black can't maintain the diagonalisation, so White gets the h8 corner, the South edge, and then the West edge, but Black has parity and comes back in the end.

Other draws in this line: 59g1, 50b7, 33c7.

Next time, we'll have a look at White's other options at 18.

Some useful web sites:

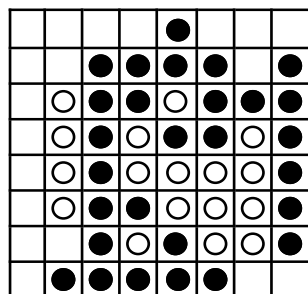
- <http://www.britishothello.org.uk/>
- <http://www.feinst.demon.co.uk/Othello/>
- <http://www.msoworld.com/>
- <http://www.msocambridge.org.uk/>

Covers: The title was one of my Mother's aphorisms; she coined it to refer to playing poker but it applies to Othello as well. Until, of course, best play is proven to be a draw for all lines! No, I don't see any connection with the cover drawing either. *Ed.*

another move to c8, or he gets to play the sequence shown and keep one of the South or East edges. Of course, Black has to watch out for swindles, e.g., 49d1 50f1 51b1 52e1 and White will end up getting both h8 and g8. 49e1 seems to scupper that plan, but as the game shows he still has to watch the diagonal: Black mustn't play 55a1. There are many different drawing sequences from move 50, but all of 35-49 are unique draws.

Back to the position after 25e3. White doesn't have to commit herself to h5-h7 just yet, since 26b6 and 26f2 are alternative proven draws. Here is one continuation after 26b6.

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



After 41e1

(G) Captions fail us

As you can see, it's not that different, since perfect play still has White giving up the East edge and then working to get g7 in at an advantageous moment. After 41e1, White is in danger of running out of moves. The most obvious try is 42c1-d1-f1, but this allows 45a6-b1-a5-a4-b7, and White's weak North edge is more harmful than anything Black has been forced into. But even without delicate calculation, the X-square 42b2 should look more appealing; after Black breaks the fragile wall, he is able to take the corner, but White has total control.

What to do with that control? Not 46a2-a5, after which White would have to give up the entire Northern region before getting something back in the South. But she can play out the odd region in the South-West, force Black to play off h8-g8, then see what can be done with the North. All the moves have to be played in just the right order to get White the last move in the North-West, but even then she only emerges with 32 discs.

Other drawing variations start from 28e2, from 32c8, and from 37g8, but in this game every move from 38 onwards is forced!

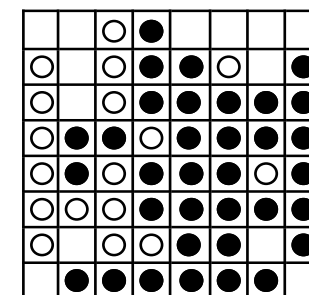
After 26f2 27e2 28b6, 29c7 does not just transpose to the previous line,

Both 44d1 and 44e1 draw: there are many complex continuations, but all have the common feature that White cannot afford to play b7 and has to find an acceptable way to sort out the North-East. The idea of White sacrificing the a1 corner by playing to b1 seems to be thematic. In the line shown, for instance, after 48b1, 49a1 would be a mistake because of 50h2 and now either 51h8-g8-b7-a8-a7-g3 or 51g1-f1-g3-h8-b7-a8, with a White parity win either way. After the correct 49f1, White pushes Black into sacrificing at b7, but Black gets to keep the West edge. The final subtlety is at 58: playing first into the corner region costs the g7 disc, but delaying the move to h2 gains discs at c7, d6 and e5.

Alternative draws: 56g8 (transposes), 51a1 (transposes), 47f1, 44d1, 35a3, 33a3, 33a6.

This 33a6 option is interesting, since it doesn't allow White to play 34g7, and so gives Black the chance to play to g8. This makes for an even more tense position, and even more hair-raising sequences. This one, for instance.

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



After 47e2

(D) Othello is the winner

In the position above, Black is threatening to play to b7, and White won't be able to cut on the diagonal: this destroys 48b3 and 48e1. 48g2 doesn't work, because after 49b3 50f1 (50e1 51b2) 51e1 it's White's move. 48f1 49e1 doesn't help, so that leaves 48g7, which has the immediate effect of poisoning b7. The only way for Black to get on the diagonal is to play 49b2 immediately; this guarantees access to h8 and b7, securing nearly all of the South-East half of the board. Back comes White with 50b3 51h8 52e1, threatening to get a1 and b1, which would secure even more nearly all of the North-West half of the board. (Note that White wouldn't have this resource if he'd played off 48f1-e1 before hitting on g7.) Black's only chance is 53b7 right now to keep the b-file, but White has the other swindle with 54b1.

55f1 comes out one disc better than 55g2, and, lo and behold, it's a draw.

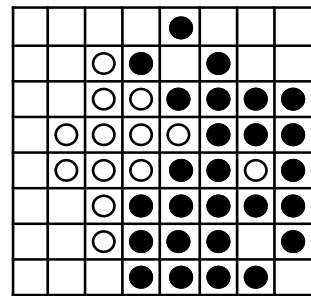
Each move from 42 to 55 is the unique drawing move. 41f1 is also a draw: in that line too, White plays g7, loses the h8 corner, but gets lots of moves at the end. 39a3 transposes back into our game, while 39e1 draws too; there are a few lines, one of which is again a game where White plays g7, etc. We don't suggest that this is typically how you should play such positions; it's more that, once Black has cut himself off from g7 and h8, this is almost the only way the game can end up being close. Other draws start from 35h3, and then either 36g7-g3-b3-b7 or 36a5-a3-g7-a7-b2.

Running back, 30c2 is a draw too -- Black plays 31h3 32g3 33e2 to keep White out of c8, but White just plays 34d1 and then Black can choose: 35g8 draws in a very obscure fashion, while 35f2 and 35h5 are less dramatic but both equally effective.

Ever backwards, 29h3 is a draw. White can either transpose back into the 29b6 30c2 line by playing (29h3) 30g3 31e2 32c2 33b6 or go with the more natural move 30f2, met by 31g3. This turns out to be one of the broader branches of the perfect-play tree, with hundreds of different ways of playing the game perfectly from here, each with their own moments of crisis and drama. Here are just a couple of samples for your amusement.

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

(E) Perfect and dramatic



White to play at 36

32c2 is perhaps the most challenging of the three drawing moves (the others are 32e2 and 32g7). If Black doesn't respond to g8, playing say 33b6, then 34g7 is good enough for White, so here we go again. After 33g8 34c7 (e1 draws too) 35e1, White has two ways to go. The one we're not featuring is 36d1-c1-g1, and now Black can't afford to let White take any more moves into the North-East, so 39b2-b3-a5, and we'll leave it to you to figure out why White has to play 42h2 now. Back in game (E), after 36g2, routine sequences are again going to leave White with enough moves in the

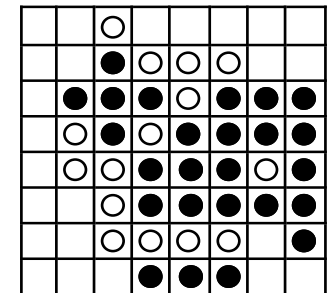
North-East to force Black through the wall, but Black can launch a swindle with 37b3, ensuring both h1 and h2. However, this isn't decisive, since White manages to get all the other moves in the region. Still, after 45b6, White has to give up the North edge for access to b8. At move 50, there are different choices for White, but they all involve doing whatever it takes to get h8 and g7.

In most of these games, if you let WZebra's midgame analyser loose, you'll see it giving White some large plus scores, sometimes +4 or even greater, to moves that actually lose. It's not often you see WZebra this far out (which is a testament to how good the program is, of course).

The two most common WZebra midgame failures are low mobility positions (it generally underrates creeping along edges) and block corners, e.g., the last couple of diagrams. In these positions, Black has two weak edges (very bad, according to computer programs) but they can't be attacked. Meanwhile White is in danger of eventually either running out of moves or having to take greater weaknesses on the other edges, but for the moment there's a large region to play out. As far as we know all computers get this wrong.

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

(F) Another beast on the tree



Black to play and draw

If 37b7! leaps to your eye in the position above, then you've got a very talented eye. But once you see it, the advantages do come into view. White would very much like to get to b6 or a8, but both 38a2 and 38g7 are 31-33 after the inevitable complications: after all, once White has got to the a8 corner there's no immediate way to proceed. So 38g2, and then Black has to play another very clever move in 39b8 (though again the less clever alternatives are just one disc worse): the idea is that either Black gets