

8x8 Ratings

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

The Newsletter of the British Othello Federation

Current British players' ratings after the 2001 Doncaster Regional Tournament
(rating order)

July 2001

	games	rating		games	rating
1 Garry Edmead	274	1866	34 ?? Horlock	6	1193
2 Imre Leader	504	1809	35 Josiah Lutton	30	1191
3 Michael Handel	359	1804	36 Simon Turner	102	1176
4 Graham Brightwell	672	1783	37 Ben Pridmore	20	1165
5 Joel Feinstein	447	1693	38 Brett Frendo	5	1164
6 Guy Plowman	381	1604	39 David Haigh	494	1156
7 Aubrey de Grey	614	1594	40 Gareth Thomas	24	1151
8 Phil Marson	692	1585	41 Carolyn Lysons	26	1141
9 Iain Barrass	471	1535	42 Margaret Plowman	29	1118
10 Christopher Swaby	6	1531	43 Josef Kollar	24	1106
11 Louis Mitchell	24	1519	44 Stephen Rowe	46	1088
12 Ian Turner	500	1511	Scott Frendo	11	1088
13 Demis Hassabis	5	1497	46 Alexander Baron	23	1081
14 E. Leung	6	1478	47 Mark Stretch	14	1060
15 Geoff Hubbard	118	1466	48 Mac Bannister	26	1039
16 David Summers	46	1427	49 Adelaide Carpenter	187	1035
17 Mark Wormley	502	1408	50 John Horton	9	1029
18 Mark Richards	6	1404	51 Sean Haffey	6	986
19 ?? Holloway	6	1396	52 Rajit Gholap	28	981
20 Jeremy Das	273	1390	?? Somekh	6	981
21 Matthew Selby	240	1382	54 George Lane	12	954
22 Chris Welty	7	1371	55 ?? Twitchell	6	952
23 Ken Stephenson	217	1369	56 Roger Peck	6	880
24 ?? Tuddenham	6	1326	57 John Rickard	7	877
25 Beng Tan	7	1317	58 Andrew Havery	11	867
26 Mark McCready	6	1314	59 ?? Luksan	5	857
27 M. Isaac	6	1306	60 Harold Lee	5	848
28 Roy Arnold	777	1292	61 Leanne Lysons	20	796
29 Anthony Lees	10	1250	62 Justin Millette	7	787
30 Darren Bartlett	12	1242	63 Bharat	5	697
31 Iain Forsyth	450	1225	64 Eileen Forsyth	263	663
32 David Kotin	22	1220	65 Ben Player	8	479
33 Julian Richens	29	1205	66 Kali Turner	5	175



INFORMATION

Othello is manufactured and marketed by Spears Games, a subsidiary of Mattel, Inc. See <http://www.mattelothello.com/> for more information.

The British Othello Federation is an independent body. 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*). A ten year membership is available for £55. An overseas subscription costs £8 per year or £75 for ten years. Cheques or postal orders payable to the *British Othello Federation* should be sent to Aubrey de Grey (address below). The price of *Othello: Brief and Basic* for existing members is £6.

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Contributors: Aubrey de Grey, Dylan Boggler, Magnus Maestro, Graham Brightwell, George Ortiz, Margaret Plowman, Geoff Hubbard, Roy Arnold, David Haigh

Addresses of Officers

Chairman: Aubrey de Grey, 1 Beaconsfield Terrace, Victoria Road, Cambridge CB4 3BP. Phone 01223-366197 home, 01223-333963 work, email ag24@gen.cam.ac.uk

Secretary: David Haigh, 62 Romsey Road, Winchester, Hants. SO22 5PH. Phone 01962-853826

Treasurer: Mark Wormley, Flat 45, Rowntree Wharf, Navigation Road, York YO1 2XA. Phone 01904-656205

Newsletter editor: Adelaide Carpenter, 1 Beaconsfield Terrace, Victoria Road, Cambridge CB4 3BP. Phone 01223-366197 home, 01223-333961 work, fax 01223-333992, email atc12@mole.bio.cam.ac.uk

European Grand Prix Standings after 4 events via Roy Arnold

	Name and Country	CAM	NAP	COP	AMS	Total
1	Takuji Kashiwabara (France)		140	200	140	480
2	Stéphane Nicolet (France)	140			200	340
3	Alexandre Cordy (Belgium)	200		25	3	228
4	Donato Barnaba (Italy)		200			200
5	Geoff Hubbard (Australia)	50	15	60	45	170
6	Karsten Feldborg (Denmark)			140		140
7	Henrik Vallund (Denmark)		90	3		93
8	Michael Handel (Great Britain)	90				90
=	Benedetto Romano (Italy)		90			90
=	David Shaman (Netherlands)				90	90
11	Andreas Hoehne (Germany)				60	60
=	Emmanuel Lazard (France)	60				60
=	Pierluigi Stanzione (Italy)		60			60
14	Francesco Marconi (Italy)		50			50
15	Emmanuel Caspard (France)				45	45
=	Per Horn (Denmark)			45		45
=	Albert Kortendijk (Netherlands)			45		45
18	Louis Mitchell (Great Britain)	40				40
19	Phil Marson (Great Britain)	25				25
=	Ian Turner (Great Britain)	25				25
=	Torben Vallund (Denmark)			25		25
22	Johan Berner (Sweden)				20	20
=	Jan De Graaf (Netherlands)				20	20
=	Romy Hidayat (Indonesia)				20	20
25	Giorgio Castellano (Italy)		15			15
=	Alice Delisi (Italy)		15			15
=	Luigi Lamberti (Italy)		15			15
=	Davide Lucchess (Italy)		15			15
=	Maria Vecchi (Italy)		15			15
=	Fabrizio Venerato (Italy)		15			15
31	Pierre de Lit (Belgium)	8		4		12
32	Aubrey de Grey (Great Britain)	8				8
33	Palle Badsted (Denmark)			4		4
=	Jobert van de Zande (Netherlands)		4		4	4
=	Sune Vuorela (Denmark)			4		4

opponents' ratings. This is done to all the opponents, not just the established opponents.

Last year four players generated feedback, one of them twice.

Before this year each opponent received an equal share of the feedback amount, but this year, acting at long last on a suggestion from a previous chairman, I have introduced a variable apportionment system, whereby those opponents whose rating was more affected by their game with the feedbacker get a bigger share than those whose rating was not so greatly affected.

I must confess that the above is a simplified description of how the feedback is shared out. I won't bore you with the details of this apportionment now, because this article is already long enough, and because this will give me something to talk about in another article, should Adelaide ever get that desperate. (Potential contributors, it's up to you to make sure that this never happens!)

Oh, one last detail. Feedback is applied before loss limiting.

Covers by Adelaide

Apologies for the quality of the cover drawing's reproduction for this issue; we can't figure out what we are doing wrong. Also apologies for the January issue; I should have drawn the Othello pieces in the Cookie Monster's hands larger -- and I should have saved it for an issue titled "Me Not Yet Make Decision!"

Answers to puzzle on p. 6:

Black must not play either:

(a) 1a2? 2a3 3a6 4g7,

(b) 1a6? 2b7! (2a7? is great if Black continues 3a2? 4a3! 5a8 6g7, ending the game, but not if Black plays instead 3a3, as in the winning line) 3a8 (3a3 is met by 4g2) 4a7 and now either 5a3 6a2! 7a1 8g2! 9g7, when White is bound to keep enough discs, or 5a2 6a3 7b2 8g2 9b8 10a1 11h8 12g7 13h2 (P) 14h1, 31-33.

Instead Black should play:

1a3 2a2 3a6 4a7. (Nothing else is any use for White.) Now Black passes, and White has to play either 5b2 or 5g7, both losing horribly.

Answer to puzzle on page 16:

e7, ensuring that I can play both a1 and a3.

Time, place, invitation to British Nationals by *Aubrey de Grey*

The 2001 British National Championship will take place in Newcastle on September 29th and 30th, in conjunction with the Northumberland Chess Congress (great publicity!). The venue is The Parks Leisure Centre, Howdon Road, North Shields, Tyne & Wear NE29 6TL. The tournament will have the usual format -- nine rounds Swiss followed by a one-game final -- with the first three rounds played on the Saturday starting at 3pm and the remaining rounds on Sunday starting at 9:30. As usual the tournament will be preceded by the BOF annual general meeting, starting at 1:30, which everyone is urged to attend. The National Championship is open to all UK players, irrespective of calibre -- don't be shy! Moreover, as with all other BOF-organised events, if it is your first over-the-board tournament you will not be charged the registration fee (which is 5 pounds, or 2 pounds for unwaged). You should arrange your own accommodation. There is a list of 51 pubs and hotels at <http://www.theinnkeeper.co.uk/tyne/899t.html> with links to the fabulous "multimap", which makes finding one within easy walking distance of the venue very easy. If you're net-challenged, telephone Whitley Bay Tourist Information on 0191 200 8535.

Other up-coming tournaments

28th-29th July: Brussels Grand Prix, see <http://www.othello.nl>
Contact Alexandre Cordy, email acordy@hotmail.com

18th-27th August: Mind Sports Olympiad 5, British half (see below)
Contact Aubrey de Grey, email ag24@gen.cam.ac.uk
or see the MSO web site <http://www.msoworld.com/Olympiad/index.html>

1st-2nd September: Paris Grand Prix
Contact Emmanuel Lazard, email Emmanuel.lazard@dauphine.fr

2001 Mind Sports Olympiad via Aubrey

As in most previous years, preparations for the 2001 MSO have been beset by financial uncertainty. This year it's been worse than ever, with the event briefly being cancelled and the recent MSO in Prague being given the title "MSO 5". Now the London event is back in business, however, so that the Prague event was officially "MSO 5, Czech half".... Anyway, the MSO 5 (British half) will take place on the dates that were originally planned, namely August 18th-27th. The schedule of Othello events will be the same as last year:

18/8 am, 19/8 am: 10x10 Quick-play (25 min/player, 6 rounds)
18/8 pm, 22/8 pm, 25/8 pm, 27/8 am: 8x8 Beginners (4 events) (15, 6)
19/8 pm: 8x8 Blitz World Championship (5, 9)
20/8 pm, 21/8 pm, 22/8 pm: 10x10 World Championship (50, 6)
23/8 pm, 24/8 pm: 8x8 Quick-play (15, 10)
25/8 am+pm, 26/8 am+pm, 27/8 am: 8x8 European Championship
(30, 12+playoff)

The venue will be South Bank University, Borough Road, London SE1. This is under 1/4 mile from Waterloo station (where Eurostar arrives) as well as close to several Underground stations, the closest being Elephant and Castle. For those with net access, a map of the area is at <http://www.sbu.ac.uk/sbucomm/information/s.html>.

The information on accommodation at the MSO site has not been updated since last year, but I expect that most of it is still valid.

If you need any more information, email me at ag24@gen.cam.ac.uk or see the MSO web site <http://www.msoworld.com/Olympiad/index.html>

A few useful web sites:

Thanks to a prodigious amount of work by Phil Marson, for which we all owe him much gratitude, the BOF now has a really impressive web site. The home page is:

<http://www.ugateways.com/bofmain.html>

It contains everything you might expect -- tournament results, upcoming tournament details, ratings, links to other countries' Federation sites, description of the rules and strategy, and details on how to join. Phil has even arranged for people to be able to join the Federation online by credit card. Congratulations and thanks to Phil, and please consult the site for up-to-date information on all BOF activities.

<http://www.maths.nott.ac.uk/othello/othello.html>

<http://homepages.shu.ac.uk/~rcarnold/othello.html>

<http://www.msoworld.com/>

Letter to the Editor Received Wed, 31 Jan 2001 10:24:17 *via email:*

Dylan Boggler would like to point out that Graham Brightwell was ludicrously modest in the last newsletter. In his article on the World Championships, Graham wrote: "The Swiss part of the tournament was dominated by Brian Rose, who dropped only one draw and one last-round defeat." But he neglected to mention that the defeat was at the hands of Graham himself!

Ratings -- a few minor details by *David Haigh*

In the article on the 10 x 10 ratings in the previous newsletter there were a few minor details I didn't mention, so I thought it would be a good idea to cover them now, while the subject is still fresh in your minds.

We all have bad Othello days from time to time. Maybe we didn't sleep well the night before. Maybe we've had a row with someone. Maybe we had a lousy breakfast and we can't stop thinking about lunch. Whatever. Anyway, we find ourselves making silly mistakes and being beaten by people whom we usually beat without too much trouble. And all this is made worse by thinking of the terrible effect it will have on our rating. Fear not! The rating system is not so cruel, thanks to "loss limiting".

Recognising that anyone can have a bad day, there is a limit to how much an established player's rating can fall in a tournament. This is no more than 8 times the number of games played in the tournament, whatever the other calculations produce (which in an extreme worst case could in theory be 32 times the number of games). Sorry, provisionally rated players, this does not apply to you; your rating may be expected to and is allowed to fluctuate widely on its way to becoming established.

Last year four players benefited from loss limiting.

I hope that we all have good Othello days too. My best one was when I beat both the British and the Madagascan champions in the same tournament. (Don't ask me how I did it, it must have had something to do with the Othello equivalent of monkeys and typewriters!) So we can have established players whose rating rises considerably in a tournament. I would expect this to become more common nowadays, with people getting lots of practice between tournaments, on the net or with computers, which means that they start their next tournament a significantly better player than they finished their previous one. Because of this, we don't have "rise limiting"; we let an established player's rating rise as much as the calculations say. Instead, we have "feedback".

The ratings of this rising star's opponents have suffered as a result of playing him/her. Their ratings are based on the star's rating at the start of the tournament, which no longer reflects his/her new ability. They are more likely to lose their games with the star than the rating differences indicate. And they do lose them, because this star is winning more games than expected. As a result their ratings will fall by more than if the star had had a higher rating. So feedback is used to provide a measure of compensation to them.

If an established player's rating rises by more than 8 times the number of games played in a tournament, rating points totalling the amount by which his/her new rating exceeds this threshold are shared out and added to his/her

Othellists Number 12 or so *by Graham Brightwell* **11/11 in European Grand Prix Tournaments**

Most of the European Grand Prix tournaments since about 1988 have been 11-round Swiss tournaments, followed by a 3-game final. In the 59 tournaments following this format for which I have records (the latest is Amsterdam 2001; my information on the early Italian events is patchy), there have been five scores of 11/11.

Takeshi Murakami	Copenhagen	1989	Won final	2-0
Stéphane Nicolet	Rome	1995	Lost final	1-2
Graham Brightwell	Brussels	1996	Lost final	1-2
David Shaman	Brussels	1997	Lost final	0-2
Makoto Suekuni	Paris	2000	Won final	2-0

There have been just two scores of 10.5/11 -- Takeshi Murakami at Paris 1995 (he won the final 2-0) and Karsten Feldborg in Copenhagen 2001 (he lost 2-0). 10/11 is fairly common; I found 21 instances. There have been six finals between two players each scoring at least 10/11.

As for the lowest score to finish first in an EGP Swiss, that seems to be (contrary to a suggestion in a recent newsletter) 8/11, which has been done four times. In Brussels 1995, Emmanuel Caspard was the only player to reach that score; on each of the other occasions there have been at least two players tied on 8. I believe that the only player to reach a final with 7/11 has been Dominique Penlou in Rome 1995. See above for the result.

The British Grand Prix 2001 *by Roy Arnold*

The opening round in Wellingborough saw Michael Handel share honours with Garry Edmead. Cambridge saw the MSO roll into town and Imre Leader shone on the day, but Aubrey de Grey's runner-up spot catapulted him temporarily to the top of the tree. The low turnout in Hartlepool saw Phil Marson's hopes of regaining the title improved. An absence of Phil (and clocks) in Frimley saw Michael climb to the top of the tree and the title race was blown wide open; pre-Doncaster eight players ranked high enough to have a chance at the title. However, Michael not only played Doncaster but also won it and the Grand Prix, handily.

Final Standings: Michael Handel 560; Phil Marson 490; Roy Arnold 314; Aubrey de Grey 280; Iain Barrass 250; Mark Wormley 230; Imre Leader 200; Louis Mitchell 190; Graham Brightwell and Garry Edmead 180; Geoff Hubbard 177; Simon Turner 110; Guy Plowman 87; Ian Turner 80; Beng Tan and Chris Welty 70; Julian Richens 67; Stephen Rowe 65; Ken Stephenson 60; Mac Bannister 45; Iain Forsyth and David Haigh 24; Adelaide Carpenter, Justin Millette, and John Rickard 5

Interview with an Othello Player *by Magnus Maestro*

Everything about the room was an extravagance: there was wealth here, and no reluctance to show it. And yet something was strange. The shadows shifted ceaselessly, and there was a certain stuffiness. It was night in the room, yet outside it was the middle of an ordinary summer afternoon. The middle-aged woman with her large brightly-coloured bag did not belong in that room. She felt it too; she drew a comb from her bag, rose from the couch and looked about her, but then smiled and sat down, before jumping up again as she realised that she was no longer alone.

Her companion did belong in the room, or rather the room belonged around him. How could he enter so quietly? His voice was powerful, commanding, and utterly without feeling.

"You do know what I am, lady, do you not?"

"To be honest, I wasn't completely sure, but there were, er, certain indications. And when I saw this room ..." Her voice trembled.

He smiled, and his fangs sparkled in the candlelight. "Yet you came to me, with no garlic, no cross, no wooden stake? Just your gaming board, and your strange plastic circles? Perhaps you have skills in the martial arts?"

A smile crossed her lips, and the idea was indeed laughable. "As if any of that could trouble you! No, your Excellency, you have nothing to fear from me. It is just that I had a notion to show you something. A new game. It is written that you appreciate such things."

He was wary, for he took care that such writings were not kept where the casual searcher might find them. "A new game? I would value that, lady, for it is many years since I was brought anything truly new. But I warn you. I have dined with pharaohs. I beat Caesar at chess before I killed him and drained him dry. I whispered in the ear of the sage who invented Go, then slew him when he bored me. Little is new to me."

So old: her heart raced. She had hoped ... she opened her bag, and pulled out a board and two bags of pieces. It was one of the boards with ridges between the squares, and the pieces were perhaps more substantial than usual. "This is a game, invented by Hasegawa-san, of Tokyo," she explained. "He calls it Othello: it is said that it takes a minute to learn, but a lifetime to master."

"One lifetime only? A puny game." His head fell back, and his laugh was a dreadful thing. "But my dear lady, I mastered this game a lifetime ago! I was introduced to it by a Victorian doctor whose tastes brought him to my attention. There are some slight differences, but no matter. There is nothing new under the moon, I fear. And now ..." His tongue flicked around his fangs, and they shone more brightly still.

"I had no idea." She hung her head as if submitting to him, but then raised it again defiantly. "But, if you would permit me one last chance, I have a puzzle for you. If it defeats you, maybe you would be so generous as to spare my life."

"Maybe", he shrugged, although how she thought him capable of generosity was difficult to comprehend. "But if I solve the puzzle your torment will be long and most enjoyable. You would have done better not to bargain." Her hands were already in motion, and she thrust the board in his direction. "Black to play and win," she stated.

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

Within seconds he laughed again. "Ridiculous: a trifle. I had expected something more worthy of my talents. For wasting my time in such a manner, your pain will be well earned."

"Show me," she insisted, and passed him some discs. He played six moves in all, quickly and contemptuously. "There! Now it is over."

But then, with a cry of triumph she picked up the board and made him look again. With a look of horror he stepped back. As she advanced on him, he let out a cry of anguish such as no human throat could muster, and shrunk back against the wall. Finally, when he could withdraw no further, he clutched at his chest and slumped to the floor. Before her eyes his body rotted away, then crumbled into dust.

It is written that not even the greatest of fiends can stand before that sign, fashioned with his own hands.

Answers to this puzzle are on page 22.

Final: Alexandre Cordy beat Stéphane Nicolet 34-30, 47-17, 16-48
3rd/4th Place Play-off: Michael Handel beat Emmanuel Lazard (default)

Transcripts of Finals:

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

Cordy -- Nicolet: 34-30

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

Nicolet -- Cordy: 47-17

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

Nicolet -- Cordy: 16-48

Thanks go to Phil Marson, who was kind enough to enter the transcripts from the tournament and make them available from the website <http://www.ugateways.com/cagp2001results.html>

where a complete listing of who played who when can also be found.

(Footnote: the how-to-cope-with-pairings decision actually took place in the pub before dinner, though certainly that didn't halt the discussion! Dinner itself was enlivened considerably when Pete Bhagat chose to go under the table rather than making the six people between where he was sitting and freedom move, tipping a full pint of beer into my lap. The restaurant people were very nice about the resulting mess -- Ed.)

Other re-pairings that occurred were Michael Handel vs. Phil Marson, which Michael managed to win, and Pierre de Lit vs. Louis Mitchell, where Louis had the last laugh. In all the rounds in which re-pairings occurred, a player who had not won in the last game between those two players won. (That would have been easier to explain if Phil had beaten Michael and not drawn the first time they played!)

Then Emmanuel Lazard left before playing his last round; since I was scheduled to play him I therefore picked up an easy win and Michael was awarded third place without a playoff.

Alex, Stéphane and Michael all won four games out of four on Sunday, but Michael had been half a point behind on the first day, so it was to be Alex and Stéphane in the final. They were all tough games; Alex squeaked through in the first game (34-30), lost the second (47-17), and then tried a different variation on the opening from the second game for the third game and managed to win (16-48).

So Alex took home the first "real" trophy, a lovely perpetual shield with the names of most of the past winners engraved on it; unfortunately for him he will need to bring it back next year.

Many thanks go to Adelaide Carpenter for doing all those little organisational tasks that means a competition runs smoothly. Like keeping the kettle filled, making sure the game scores get reported, and reminding us to come back from lunch....

Full Results:

1	Alexandre Cordy (Belgium)	9.0/11	+2/3
2	Stéphane Nicolet (France)	9.0	+1/3
3	Michael Handel (Great Britain)	8.5	
4	Emmanuel Lazard (France)	7.0	
5	Geoff Hubbard (Australia)	6.0	
6	Louis Mitchell (Great Britain)	5.5	
7	Phil Marson (Great Britain)	4.5	
=	Ian Turner (Great Britain)	4.5	
9	Aubrey de Grey (Great Britain)	4.0*	
=	Pierre de Lit (Belgium)	4.0	
11	Anthony Lees (Great Britain)	3.0	
12	Darren Bartlett (Great Britain)	2.0*	
13	Steven Rowe (Great Britain)	2.0*	

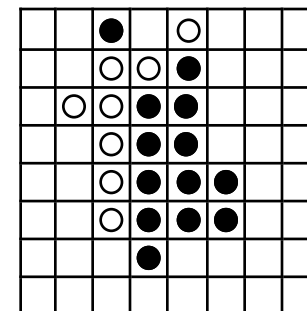
* Did not play on Sunday (Rounds 8-11)

Choices by Graham Brightwell

Here's a game from the Cambridge Open, where both players were faced with some interesting choices, some of which they even got right! Black is Alexandre Cordy and White is Phil Marson.

I'm not at all sure the transcript of the endgame is correct, but according to the BOF website White lost on time anyway.

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

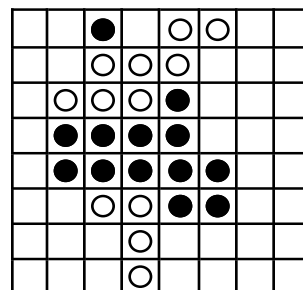


Is 18d8 a good move?

We join the game with Britain's own Phil Marson to play at move 18.

Cordy vs. Marson

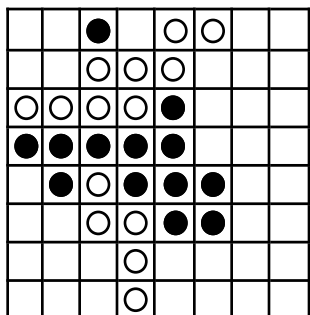
What do you think of his choice of 18d8? It looks extravagant to me; a more natural option is 18f1, leaving Black without a good follow-up; he'd have to play either 19b6 or 19b5, both met by 20f3. Alternatively, White can try 18f3, which works out quite well tactically since f4 is poisoned for Black. Either of these moves leaves White a little ahead. The problem with 18d8 is that it unpoisons Black's moves to the West, in particular allowing 19b4 followed by 21b5. Maybe White was hoping to get in f1, f2 and f4 (for instance) untroubled, but that's very optimistic.



White to play:
what now?

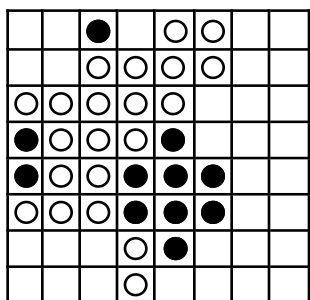
After 19b4-f1-b5, White is in a bad position, and it's important to play the right move. The normal way to respond to a centre-punch like this is to play either 22a4 or 22a5, but here Black could reply to either with 23e7 (another disadvantage of the 18d8 move: Black had the opportunity to get access here). After something like 22a5-e7-a4, Black can play to b6, or d1-b1-f2, and White's position is liable to collapse. Phil Marson finds the much better shot of 22a3. Black's natural reply of 23a4, which is the only way to try to get access to e7, poisons his d1 move.

Black, despite being the best Belgian player, went wrong now. He really should avoid 23a4, with either 23c7 (staying central, keeping everything poisoned) or 23d1-b1-a4 being much better. After Cordy's inaccuracy, Marson has a good move available.



What is White's best move?

After a few more moves, Black is clearly ahead, but how should he proceed?



29b1 or 29b2?

White is clearly losing. After 29b1, White can (and should) reply 30d1, and Black has to either play out the whole region with 31b2-a1-a2 or accept the North edge with 31g1. Once White delays playing d1, it turns out that Black does best to go there himself. That's a little obscure though, so let's drift on a few moves.

There's nothing really wrong with 24a6, it just maintains White's weak position. But there's a move that poses Black a real problem, namely 24f2. Note that, if Black had inserted the d1-b1 pair then this would be comfortably met by f3. But here that's not possible, and there is also the feature that 25e7 would be met by 26a5, not turning along the rank and so gaining tempo. After 24f2, Black would have had to play this anyway, or commit himself with 25a2 or 25b1.

We're in the realm of computer verity here, so I can tell you that 29b2 is +10 (i.e., wins 37-27 with perfect play) while 29b1 is +6. I'm surprised it's that close; the X-square always looks so inviting when both the interior lines are all white like this, and I don't see why Cordy went for b1 instead. After 29b2, White has to cut the diagonal, since otherwise Black can play 31d1 followed in due course by a2, getting four of the five moves in the region. But after cutting with (29b2) 30f4, White isn't threatening to do anything with the region, and Black can simply play 31c8-b8-c7, after which

Cambridge International March 17/18 2001 by Geoff Hubbard

Useless Statistic: For the last 2 years, the Cambridge International winner has stayed at my house.

This year's Cambridge International tournament was played later in the year than usual because the Lubbock Room in Peterhouse, where it is held, was undergoing some refurbishment. The room did not appear to me to be any different from last year, and it was certainly no less pink.

The first day of competition saw 13 players. The international contingent, 2 French and 2 Belgians (and an Australian if I don't count as enough of a regular yet!), was down from last year, with the strength of the pound being the excuse; it was quite an expensive weekend journey from mainland Europe.

The end of the first day saw Emmanuel Lazard in the lead on 6 wins having played the other 3 of the top 4; Alex Cordy tied on 5 with Stéphane Nicolet (who had come to defend his title from the previous year); and Michael Handel on 4.5, after a draw with Phil Marson (3.5) in round 6. (Emmanuel's loss was to Ian Turner in the first round.)

Steven Rowe (2), Darren Bartlett (2) and Anthony Lees (3) managed to form one of those odd little triangles, where Darren defeated Anthony, Anthony defeated Steven and Steven defeated Darren (they also all had a bye). Anthony also managed to defeat Pierre de Lit (3), which was quite good for someone in his first tournament, though Anthony had been learning from Michael Handel -- a fairly good place to start.

Saturday night was the traditional Indian curry dinner, where Pete Bhagat joined us and we squeezed around a table for N-1. During dinner we wondered what we were going to do about the pairings for the next day, when we knew there were going to be some players missing. (See footnote, Ed.) Aubrey de Grey, Steven Rowe, and Darren Bartlett all had excuses why they could not play on Sunday which meant we would be down to 10 players.

13 players to 10 causes all kinds of problems; you cannot change to a round robin tournament and the bye disappears since there are now an even number of players. In the end it was decided to allow the pairing program pair people again who had already played, if it was necessary.

On Sunday morning we did actually have 10 players, with no more people disappearing in the night (fortunately). Round 8 happened, and the pairing program managed to find someone new for everyone to play, which was good. Round 9 saw the first re-pairing and allowed Alex Cordy to extract revenge from Emmanuel Lazard for his loss in round 6 the previous day. Fair enough, but then in round 10 Emmanuel was re-paired again, this time against Stéphane, who also proceeded to get his revenge.

and everything about the Cambridge event can be found at:
<http://www.msoworld.com/cambridge/index.html>

The Othello tournament itself was a success in all the important ways:

- four new players turned up
- one player returned from several years' retirement
- Guy played an opening that I'd destroyed over a decade ago and I actually remembered how to destroy it again
- Imre played almost the same opening and I missed the kill but he gave me half a point anyway by a catastrophic blunder at move 54
- some of the participants actually agreed to have lunch in the bar
- I made no horrible errors with the pairings

Final results were as follows:

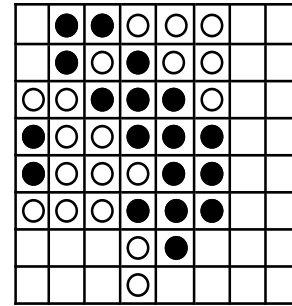
- 1 Imre Leader 6.5/7
- 2 Aubrey de Grey 5.5
- 3= Phil Marson and Iain Barrass 5
- 5= Chris Welty and Beng Tan 4
- 7= Mark Wormley and Stephen Rowe 3.5
- 9= Geoff Hubbard, Guy Plowman and Julian Richens 3
- 12 Mac Bannister 2
- 13 John Rickard 1
- 14 Justin Millette 0

Congratulations and thanks to everyone who helped to make the event such a success, especially Paul Smith who did most of the real work. Finally, here's the ridiculous Leader--de Grey draw:

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

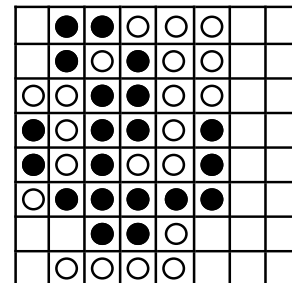
What should I have played at 34 to put the game beyond doubt?

Answer to this puzzle is on page 22.



Should White play 34a1?

35a2? Since a2 is forced, you really should have an answer to that before playing a1! At first glance e8 seems attractive, as at the moment Black has no access to the obvious reply at f7. But you should see that there is a problem: after 34a1-a2-e8, Black does have access to f7 after all. The idea of playing e8 is a good one, but it can't be combined with playing out a1-a2. You have to choose between the strategic move (34a1) and the tactical move (34e8). Othello is a very tactical game, and Marson made the right choice.



White to play

the opposite X-square"), followed by 40h1-g1-g3-g5, when Black will soon cut the diagonal, although White is still narrowly ahead. Instead Cordy plays 39g3, and Marson has the courage to play 40g2. (Marson is a dangerous opponent for all the World's top players precisely because he does have the courage to do this kind of sequence when necessary.)

Why might you (White) want to play a1 now? Surely it's not going away! Well, suppose you leave the pair alone and, in a few moves time, Black plays to g1; probably you will have no trouble cutting the diagonal, and taking a1 followed by h1, but in the process you will be cutting yourself off from a single-square region at a2, which is highly undesirable. However, if you play a1 right now, then Black has to respond at a2 and this threat-scheme has gone away. So, have I convinced you that 34a1 is correct? I hope not! There's nothing wrong with the argument from a strategic point of view, but what are you going to do after 34a1

Here White has a dream move, and he played it. The X-square 38b7 would probably be the right thing to do even without control of the diagonal, as it takes away Black's possible move to f7, and plays neatly into the odd region in the South-West. With the diagonal control, it looks devastating. What has happened in the game is that White has somehow managed to play out the West without ever quite having to break down Black's wall (notice that the discs at f5 and f6 have been untouched since they were placed there at moves 3 and 5!). Black's best response is 39g2 (Joel Feinstein's "principle of

Black now has to give up the h1 corner in a horrible fashion to get to a8. Cordy sensibly plays out 41f8-g8 first, so that the a8 corner is worth more when he gets there. Then he plays 43h2, and Marson has one last test.

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

White to play and lose

a8-a7-h8-h1-a2, and now White is in control and can build out from the h1 corner to win reasonably comfortably. The diagonalisation has already done its job in forcing Black to h2; White was left with an option to "go ahead and win", but (presumably deep in time-trouble) didn't take it.

G. Hubbard vs. H. Vallund -- A Snapshot Analysis by *George Ortiz, via Geoff Hubbard*

Like Mark Viduka, Kylie Minogue and Dame Edna, our latest Aussie expatriate Geoff Hubbard is proving that Australia can export more than just good cricket and rugby players. It was good for the AOF to see an Aussie name in the playoffs of a European Grand Prix tournament, and I thought it was also a good opportunity to write an analysis of the game for our own mailing list. Geoff then suggested I send the article to be published in the BOF newsletter to reach a wider audience.

Before we get to the action, I'd like to make the purpose and the limitations of this article clear. First of all, this is not a full game analysis but rather the analysis of just a particular position which I believe was one of the important turning points in the game. Secondly, to avoid this article being too long, I haven't considered all the possible moves for Black and in particular I didn't look at the one that Geoff actually chose in the game (25c5). I suppose the main purpose of this article is to illustrate some of the basic strategic and tactical considerations that take place in the midgame in Othello.

The only way to maintain control of the diagonal is to play 44h3, so Phil plays that. The only problem is that it doesn't work; the game sequence shows that White eventually runs out of moves and has to let Black cut on. Maybe that's not at all obvious, but what is obvious is that 44h3 gambles everything on the diagonal control. What else though? Well, the sad truth is that almost everything wins for White. The clearest sequence (which also happens to get the most discs) is to take advantage of the pair at g1 and h1: 44a1-g4-g1-

The 2001 Cambridge Regional: a regional with a difference by *Aubrey de Grey*

As in recent years, the Cambridge Regional Othello tournament took place in (believe it or not) Cambridge in early May. This time, though, there was a difference. Several differences, in fact. As Graham wrote:

- "(a) the everybody-gets-at-least-5-points rule came into play
 - (b) the BOF has a decent website
 - (c) Imre managed not to have to play anyone by the name of %random-other
 - (d) Guy came nowhere much
 - (e) Phil's loss to %random-other is on the website for all to laugh at
- None of this would ever have happened while I was Chairman.
Wish I'd been there."

For those who are confused by (a) -- as I was, for a while -- the "everybody-gets-at-least-5-points rule" refers to points awarded in the British Grand Prix standings. This rule comes into play only when a tournament has over ten players; Cambridge mustered 14, more than any regional for years.

The high attendance was partly because the tournament was arranged as part of the Cambridge Mind Sports Olympiad. This event was originally conceived by one-time Othello player Paul Smith, now a top Go player, about 18 months ago, with the intention of holding it in May 2000. Local representatives of several board games got together to organise it, but it was too short notice to secure a suitable venue, so plans were deferred for a year. It is a particularly good time of year to organise such an event in Cambridge, because not only Othello but also Go and Shogi have tournaments in Cambridge every May. Accordingly, we scheduled those three events all to take place during the weekend of May 5-6, and tournaments in chess and Scrabble were also arranged to occur simultaneously. Additionally there were small tournaments in four other games: Fanorona, Renju, Omweso and Xiangqi (Chinese chess). All events were held in the University Centre on Mill Lane, occupying an entire floor of the building. Total participation in all events was 110, and plans are already being made to hold a similar, probably somewhat larger, event in May 2002. We received sponsorship in the form of prizes from local computer games company Purple Software and extensive and welcome publicity from the central Mind Sports Olympiad organisation, including very impressive coverage on their web site thanks to their webmaster Chris Dickson. The main MSO web address is:

<http://www.msoworld.com/Olympiad/index.html>

East Midland Regional by Margaret Plowman

There were 10 participants in the East Midland Regional -- double the number for 2000 -- and I didn't have to play this year to make up numbers. Those attending were Roy Arnold, Phil Marson, Geoff Hubbard, Guy and Garry, Aubrey and Adelaide, and it was good to welcome Steve Rowe to Wellingborough for the first time, Michael Handel (home from Canada) to his first UK tournament for 3 years and Louis Mitchell to his first tournament ever. Louis had played on the internet and was able to meet his online acquaintances in the flesh.

Michael's absence from the UK had not dulled his game, quite the reverse. He proceeded to beat Roy, Garry, Guy, Aubrey, Phil and Geoff. Louis was also doing well in his first tournament, having beaten Roy, Adelaide and Steve and losing to Aubrey, Garry and Guy. Michael and Louis met in round 7. It was nearly time to finish the tournament and all the other games finished quickly with predictable results. Michael and Louis played on with the group of onlookers growing as their games finished. Time was running out, particularly for Michael, but the result of the game was that Louis, at his first tournament, had beaten the player who had beaten everyone else!

Michael had to settle for 6/7 games, along with Garry, although Michael just pipped him to first place. Aubrey finished on 5/7 games, Geoff, Louis and Guy 4/7 games, Phil 3/7, Roy 2/7, Steve 1/7 and Adelaide 0/7.

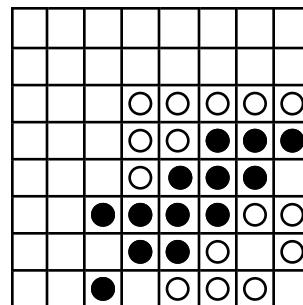
Thank you to everyone for making the journey.

Cambridge Regional and International see pages 15-19

Hartlepool Regional 19th May -- Results from the BOF web page
Phil Marson 5.5/6, Roy Arnold 2.5, Mark Wormley 2, Simon Turner 2

Frimley Green Regional 16th June -- Results from the BOF web page
Michael Handel 6/7, Graham Brightwell 6, Roy Arnold 5, Louis Mitchell 5, Ian Turner 3, Julian Richens 2, Mac Bannister 1, Stephen Rowe 0

Doncaster Regional 14 July -- Results from Roy Arnold's web page
Michael Handel 7/7, Iain Barrass and Phil Marson 5, Geoff Hubbard and Mark Wormley 4, Ken Stephenson 3, Roy Arnold, Iain Forsyth, and David Haigh 2, Stephen Rowe 1



Black to play

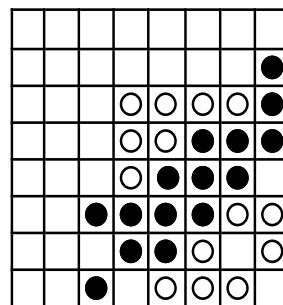
This is a snapshot of the 3rd place playoff at the recent Copenhagen Open between Geoff Hubbard (Black) and Henrik Vallund (White). I thought Geoff came out of the opening (which was the Heath-Chimney) very well. We reach the above position after move 24. Without even knowing who must play next, just from the position you can see that Black is looking very good. Black's position is nice and central and has very few frontier discs. However, it's Black's turn to play.....what should he play to make sure he keeps the advantage?

Do you take h2 to avoid letting White gain a tempo or do you play elsewhere and let White take the edge? This is the kind of tough decision that makes Othello such an interesting game.

I think move 25 is crucial in this game. It's the sort of move that will decide the entire theme of the midgame. So let's have a closer look at the options.

If Black doesn't play h2 straight away then White can play h5 and the opportunity is gone. So the decision either to take h2 or not must be made now. The choice is either to play "aggressive" with h2 and put extra pressure on White but risking perhaps a slightly vulnerable position because of White's possible sacrifice in g7 or d8 (and insert in h5 if Black takes h8) or to play a "maintenance" move like c3, c4, or c5 which maintains Black's nice central position but also tends to open up new possibilities for White. This dilemma between an aggressive strategy and simply maintaining the current position often occurs in Othello. When it does it's often good to have a really good think about both choices and the consequences.

Let's first look at the "aggressive" move h2; this tempted me initially but I wasn't too sure...



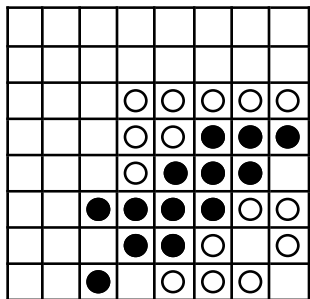
After 25h2

The obvious advantage of h2 is that it offers absolutely no extra safe moves to White. A White move to b6 or c5 would only give Black the simple response of c7, so White is better off making the sacrifice of h8 now to get h1. Exchanging h8 and the South edge for h1 and the East edge doesn't seem like a bad deal for Black. When making an exchange it's always crucial to try to visualise the resulting position to see if you get a good deal. According to Wzebra at 20 moves ahead the best move for White in this

position is 26d8 which forces the sacrifice in h8 (forcing Black to take it). After Black takes the corner, White of course plays into h5, Black obviously then plays in the hole at g7 and we have the following position:

White can now play h1 any time (either straight away or after 30b6). Now, as we anticipated, Black seems to have gotten the better deal out of the corner and edge exchange because he seems to have more stable discs. However, that's an illusion since as soon as Black plays c7 White can play b7 and the entire 7th row will be white. It's very difficult to say who is winning here but my guess is that White is winning by a very small margin. The advantage of this line (the 25h2 line), though, is that it leads to an easier game. The position above is fairly simple and so is Black's objective in this position: try to get the a8 corner to start stabilising discs in the South-West. To summarise the strategy behind "aggressive" moves like 25h2: If you are not absolutely sure that the move will lead to a winning position it might be best to avoid playing it and play a "maintenance" move instead which is less of a "no return" strategy. However, if you're playing someone who you know is a much better player than you in the midgame then it might be worth taking a shortcut to the endgame as we did here with the 25h2 line.

Now let's go back to move 25 and look at the option of playing a "maintenance" move like c5, c4 or c3.

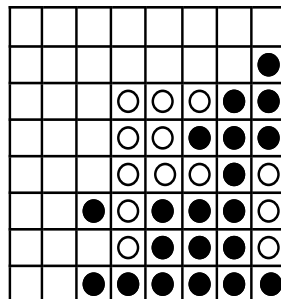


Back to move 25

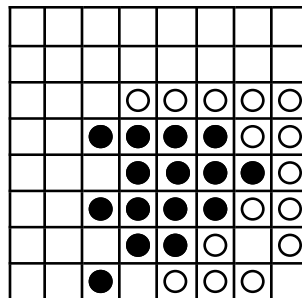
As I said before, if we don't play h2 then we have to accept that White will take the Western edge with h5. This shouldn't be too much of a concern since Black still has many possible moves. However, once Black starts playing to the West (which is desirable since you want to avoid breaking the Northern white wall because that is White's main problem in this position) then any move later on to the North will start flipping discs in more than one direction (which is not desirable when you wish to economise your moves). We say that the Western black discs will start "poisoning" the

moves to the North (although I prefer the less dramatic French term "influence," *i.e.*, "the North will be influenced by the Western discs"). This means that we need to find a sequence that will guarantee that Black keeps the game to the West and

avoids playing to the North. This is actually a crucial aspect of the current position, because Black's current mobility advantage is almost entirely due to the existence of that Northern white wall. If that wall were to disappear, the game would be even again and White could use his natural parity advantage to coast to victory.



After 25h2, 26d8, 27h8, 28h5, 29g7



After 25c4, 26h5

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

The possible maintenance moves are c3, c4 or c5. Wzebra reckons the strongest of the three is c4; although it is a "loud" move (flips quite a few discs and frontier ones too), it has the advantage that it doesn't offer any easy response for White except to take the Eastern edge with h5.

After this sequence Black is left with a move to c2 and we reach a position which is often referred to as a "double-wall": each player's discs are on opposite sides of the board. Although it may seem that Black is running out of moves and will need to break the Northern wall, actually White will have to break into the black C column first, providing new possible moves for Black and most probably a winning position.

So, in conclusion, I think Geoff had the right idea by avoiding 25h2 but probably chose the wrong move with 25c5 rather than 25c4, although this is difficult to prove (without letting the computer run for a week). When playing Black one should always be aware that a distinctive advantage in the opening is not enough to reach a winning position in the endgame since White always has the natural parity advantage to tip the scales in his favour. Black therefore always has to work a lot harder in the midgame. Human players cannot of course be expected to play perfect games so all we can do is try to recognise crucial moments in the game, spend a bit more time on these positions to figure out the real objective, and play accordingly. Just like chess, you should always play a move with a clear plan or objective in mind.