

Variant Chess

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Progressive Chess

Losing Chess

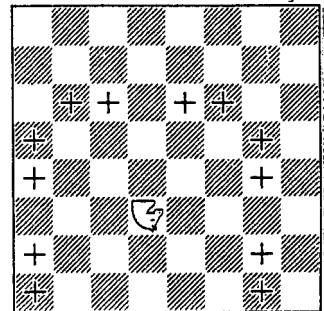
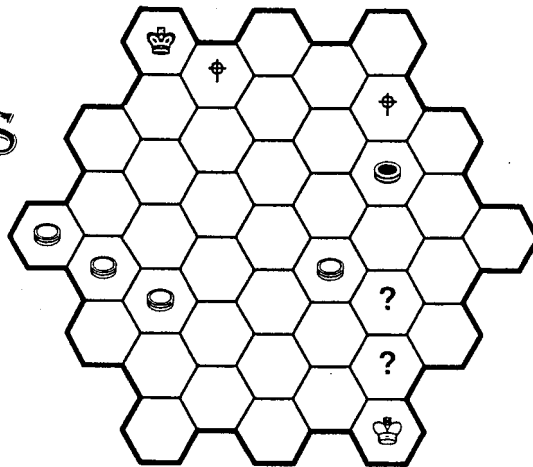
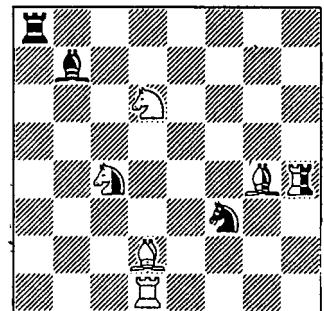
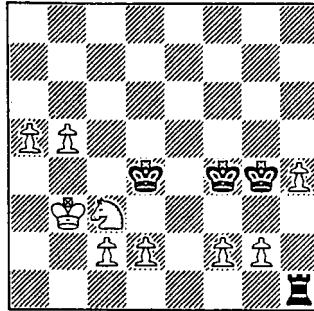
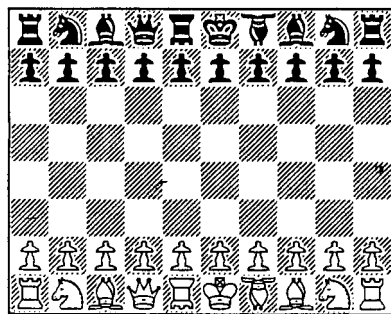
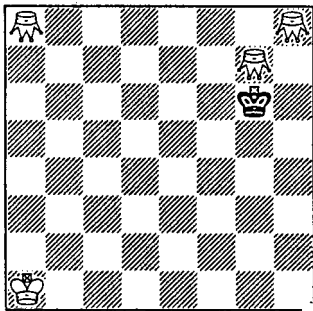
XIANGQI

Cluiche na Cogadh

Wide Shogi

Alice Chess

GOTHIC CHESS



Walnut Chess

Iceberg Chess

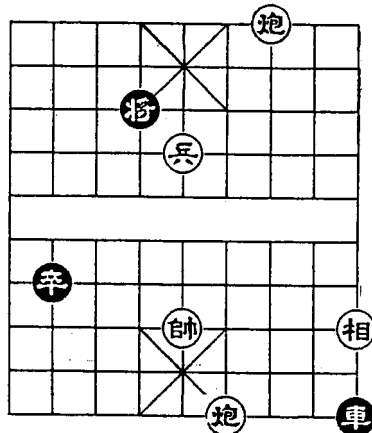
NUTTY KNIGHTS

AVALANCHE CHESS

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Doublet Leapers

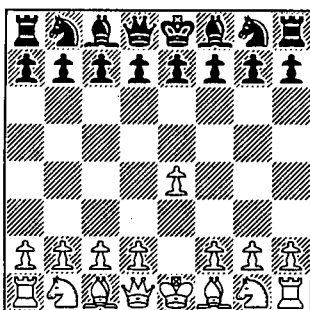
Three Ferses



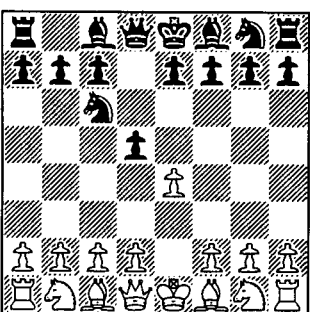
PROGRESSIVE CHESS : AVOIDING DISASTER

A property of sharp games such as Progressive Chess is that it is all too easy to lose by blundering in the opening. This can be very depressing to players new to the game, so I am asking the indulgence of our experts, and this time I shall highlight some of the traps in early play that players who have become good routinely avoid.

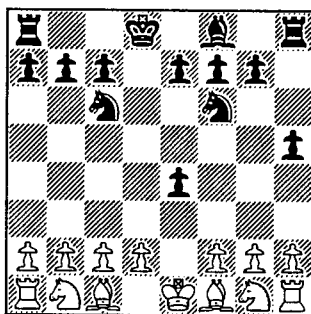
Scott Gordon - Noam Elkies, "First World Internet Progressive Chess Championship" 1996. 1 e4 :



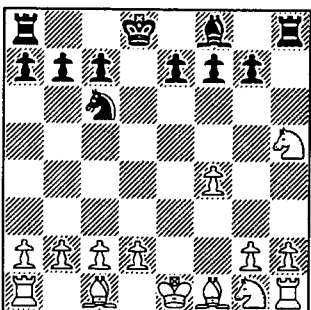
As in orthodox chess, this is the most aggressive opening, and in fact it threatens mate at once by sequences such as 3 Bc4 Qh5 Qxf7. Black's first priority is to block these, and the most natural way is by playing a pawn to e6 or d5. Black actually chose 2 d5 Nc6, an attacking line which became popular in the 1990s :



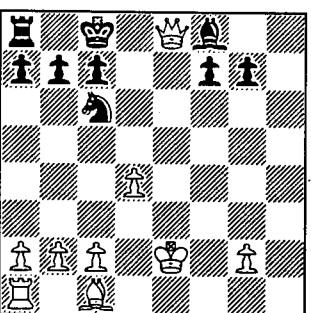
Black, with four moves to come at his next turn, has the same threat of mate (say 4 e5 Bc5 Qh4 Qxf2), and he also threatens 4 d4 d3 dxc2 cxd1Q+. So White took off Black's queen by 3 Qg4 Qxc8 Qxd8+ and made him spend a move getting out of check, but 4 Kxd8 dxe4 Nf6 h5 set up a host of threats :



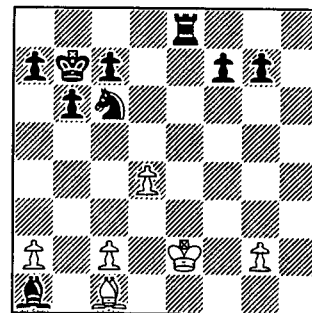
At the very least, there are mates in four by Nc3/Nc2, in five by Ng3/Qf1, and in six by Nd4/Qc1 and Nc3/Rd1. White resigned? No, he met all threats by 5 Nc3 Nxe4 Nxf6 Nxh5 f4 :



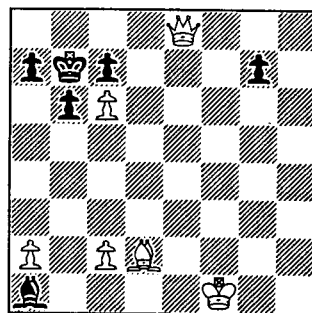
White has not merely survived, he threatens mates involving cxb7 and bxa8Q. We are now into the middle game, and the most urgent need is to prevent or meet enemy promotions. Black could find nothing better than 6 Kc8 (so that cxb7 would give check and end White's turn) Rxb5 Rxb2 Rxb1 Rxb1 Rxf1+, and White replied 7 Kxf1 f5 f6 fxe7 Ke2 d4 e8Q+ :



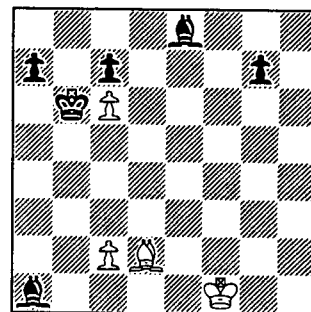
By promoting on e8, White forces Nd8 delaying capture of the queen (if exf8Q+ then Black has Kd7 and Rxf8), but his rook goes next turn and Noam subsequently suggested Rb1 "!" as a possible alternative to d4. The "natural and perhaps optimal" continuation went 8 Nd8 Ba3 Bb2 Bxa1 b6 Kb7 Nc6 Rxe8+ :



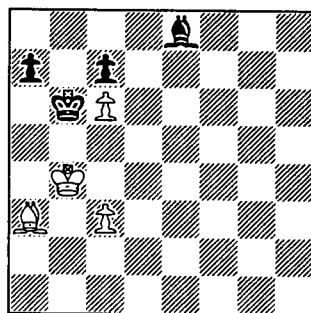
9 Kf1 g4 g5 g6 gxf7 fxe8Q d5 Bd2 dxc6+ :



10 Ka6 b5 b4 b3 b2 b1B Bxa2 Bf7 Bxe8 Kb6 :



This should have been drawn: "once White eliminates g7 and Ba1 he can hold with Kb2+Pc3 even without the dark-squared Bishop" (NDE). But White blundered by 11 Bc3 Bxg7 Bxa1 Ke2 Kc3 Kc4 c3 Kb4 Bb2 Bc1 Ba3?? and let Black steal a win :

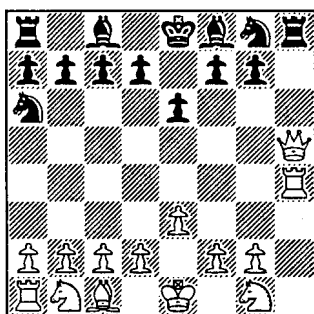


Answer on page 47.

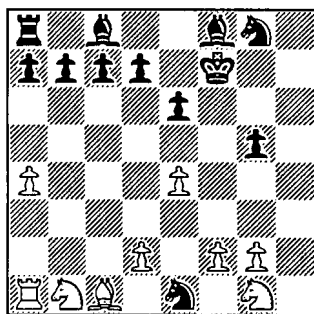
LOSING CHESS : WHAT IF ...

Here is another pair of games from the 2001 "First Unofficial Losing Chess World Championship", with analysis by Stan Goldovski's program *Giveaway Wizard*. Answers not given in the text are on page 47.

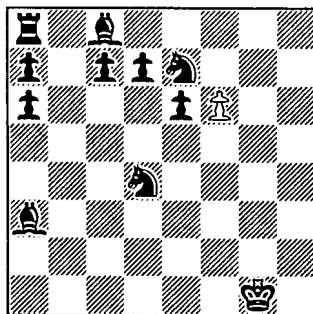
From Round 3, Lenny Taelman - Johan Snuverink. 1 e3 e6 2 Ba6 Nxa6 3 h4 Qxh4 4 Rxh4 h5 and 5 Qxh5 would have allowed a forced win :



Put the queen back on d1, substitute 5 Rxh5, and continue 5...Rxh5 6 Qxh5 g5 7 Qxf7 Kxf7 8 b4 Nxb4 (8...Bxb4 loses off-hand) 9 a4 Nxc2 10 e4 and 10...Nxe1 would have allowed an instructive win :



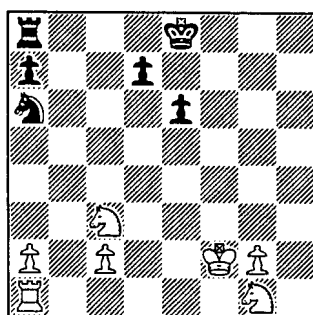
Reinstate the White king on e1, substitute 10...Nxa1, and continue 11 f4 gxf4 12 g3 fxf3 13 Kf2 (the simplest - *Wizard* calculates that 13 a5 would have won slightly more quickly, each of Black's 25 legal replies being a losing one, but only a computer can be expected to find moves like this) gxf2 14 Na3 fxf1K (14...fxg1N leads to similar play, and all other moves lose quickly) 15 Nc2 Nxc2 16 d4 Nxd4 17 Ba3 Bxa3 18 a5 Ne7 (nothing else is better) 19 a6 bxa6 20 e5 Kf6 21 exf6 :



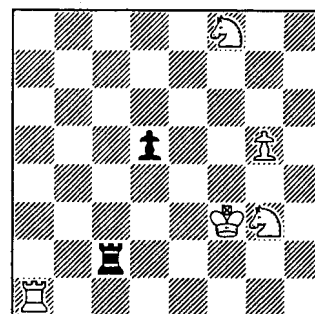
Whatever Black does now, White will promote to a rook and then give it away. Play actually continued 21...d6 22 fxe7, and Black resigned.

Looking back, all this appears to be a demonstration that 6...g5 was a losing move.

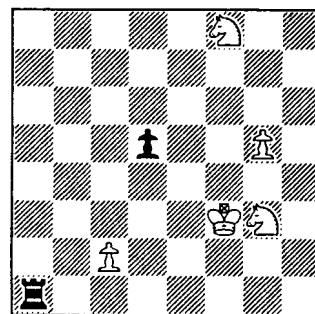
The only players with 100% records at the start of Round 4 were Tim Rimmel and Fabrice Liardet, and the game between them was subsequently declared one of the tournament's two best games. The opening was fiercely complicated, 1 e3 e6 2 b4 Bxb4 3 Qg4 Bxd2 4 Qxg7 Bxe3 5 Bxe3 c5 6 Bxc5 b6 7 Bxb6 Qxb6 8 Qxh7 Rxh7 9 Nc3 Qxf2 10 Kxf2 Rxh2 11 Rxh2 Nh6 12 Rxh6 Ba6 13 Bxa6 Nxa6 14 Rxe6 fxe6, and at last we can sit back and take stock :



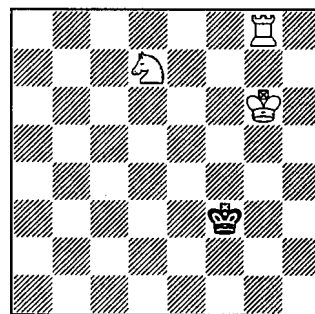
White may have a slight plus due to his extra knight, but Black's pawns will give him more space in the centre and any advantage is marginal. Play continued 15 Na4 Kf7 16 Nb2 Kf6 17 g4 Nc7 18 Ne2 a5 19 Kf3 d5 20 Ng3 Ke7 21 g5 Na6 22 Nh5 Kf8 23 Ng3 and 23...Ke7 would have offered to settle for a draw, but Black went for a win by 23...a4. There followed 24 Nxa4 Nc5 25 Nxc5 Rxa2 26 Nxe6, and does 26...Rxc2 win or lose? White will have to play 27 Nxf8, and the resulting position appears at the top of the next column.



Black actually chose 26...Rxa1, and 27 Nxf8 gave this position :



Now 27...Rf1 leads to 28 Nxf1 d4 29 c3 dxc3 30 Ne6 c2 31 Nd2 c1K 32 Nd4 Kxd2 33 Ke3 Kxe3 34 g6 Kxd4 35 g7 and White will win with rook against king, but 27...Rh1 is harder. Play continued 28 Nxh1 d4 29 c3 dxc3 30 g6 c2 31 Nd7 c1K (only chance) 32 Kg4 Kd2 33 g7 Ke3 (Black will draw if he can get down to K v 2N, K v K+N, K v K+R, or K v N+R) 34 Nf2 Kxf2 35 Kf5 Kg2 36 Kg6 Kf3 37 g8R and White has king, rook, and knight against king :

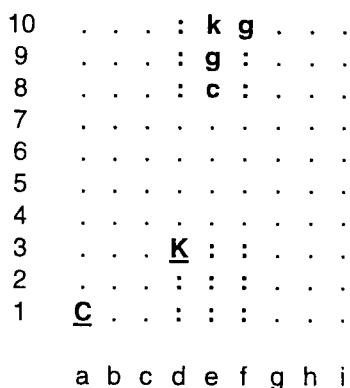


The web site mentioned in VC 41 was inaccessible when I was writing this, but most of us would expect White to press Black back and eventually win, and so it proved. The final moves can be found in VC 39.

So, with hindsight, it seems that Black's attempt to win at move 23 was mistaken. On this hung the title.

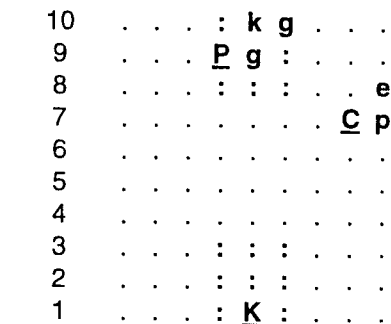
CANNON PLAY IN XIANGQI

My reward for taking part in the "Shunde Cup" in Watford last autumn was a copy of a very attractive book *Basic Xiangqi Checkmate Methods* by Zhu Baowei. This contained over 300 positions from elementary to distinctly advanced, and I went first to the examples with a cannon. Other XiangQi pieces have recognizable equivalents in our own chess, but the cannon is quite different; it moves like a rook, but can capture only if there is one man between it and its objective.

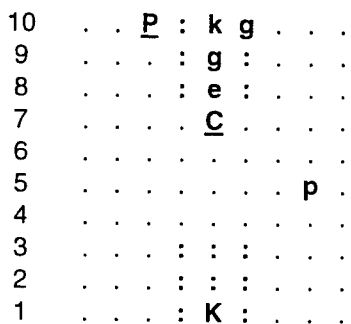


This is an elementary example from the opening chapter. The king moves one step horizontally or vertically (not diagonally), and is confined to the "palace" (the 3x3 region marked with colons); the guard moves one step diagonally, and is confined to the palace; the kings cannot face each other on a file unless there is at least one man in between. So Red (men in capitals, underlined) plays **1 Ca1-e1**, stopping Black's cannon and guard from moving off the e-file, and Black is almost completely tied up. He can only move his cannon down the file, and he holds out longest by playing **1...Ce8-e2**. Red replies **2 Kd3-d2** waiting, and Black is forced to retreat, say **2...Ce2-e3**; Red plays **3 Ce1-e2**, Black has to retreat again, and so on to **7...Ce7-e8** **8 Ce6-e7**. Black is now stalemated, which at XiangQi is a win.

My next example is more advanced. The pawn moves one step forward within its own half of the board, one step forwards or sideways in its opponent's half, and captures with its

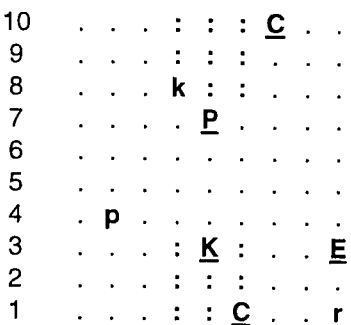
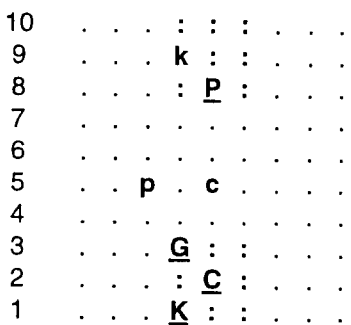
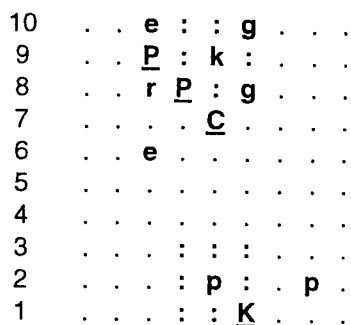
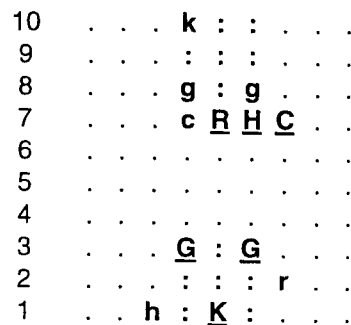


normal move; the elephant moves two steps diagonally but only within its own half of the board, and cannot jump. Red can win both Black guards by **1 Ch10+ Eg10** (forced) **2 Pxe9+ Kd10** **3 Cxf10**, but he cannot then convert his material advantage into a win. But **1 Ch7-h9** prevents **1...Eg10** and forces **1...Pi7-i6** (**1...Eg6** would allow **2 Ch10** mate, and a move by the guard on e9 would leave the kings facing each other), and **2 Pd9-c9** prepares the next stage in the attack. Black has nothing better than **2...Pi6-i5** (**2...Eg6** still allows mate, and if **2...Kd10** Red plays **3 Pc10+**, safe because the king cannot leave the palace, and meets **3...Ke10** by **4 Ch7** as in the main line), and Red plays the surprising **3 Pc9-c10**. A pawn move to the last rank is normally bad because it can never move back, but here it is the key to victory. Black tries **3...Pi5-h5** (his pawn can now move sideways, and if it can reach the e-file the guard on e9 will be able to move), and **4 Ch9-h7** threatens mate by **Ca7** and **Ca10**. Black must try **4...Ei8-g10** **5 Ch7-a7 Eg10-e8** freeing **Ge9** so that **6 Ca10+** can be met by **6...Gd10**, and Red pounces by **6 Ca7-e7**:



This is the "iron bolt", pinning **Ge9** and **Ee8** and so blocking **Gf10**. Black is completely paralysed; he can only move his pawn, and Red will mate by **7 Ke1-d1** and **8 Pc10-d10**.

Four more examples appear below. The rook moves as our rook; the horse is like our knight but without the ability to jump (it moves one step horizontally or vertically, then one diagonally). Answers on page 47.



XiangQi is an long-established game with a vast literature (see the UKCCA web site <www.ukcca.org> for some pointers), and we can supply a leaflet explaining the notation used in it.

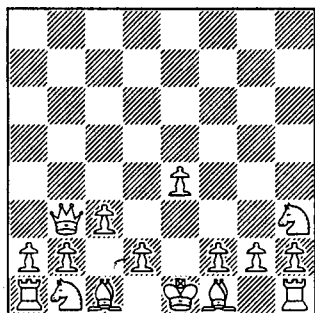
IN THE LIBRARY

Scotch Kriegspiel (pamphlet by Fred Galvin, 1962)

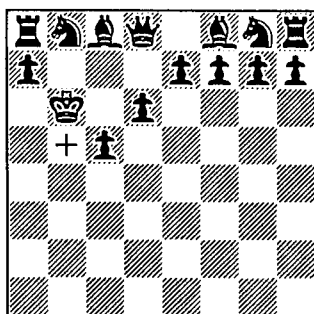
'At the Feb. 10, 1962, meeting of the Twin Cities Branch of the World Kriegspiel Federation, Don Neff, Jim Seifert, and I invented a new chess variant, which we are going to call Scotch Kriegspiel, until we can find out what the Gaelic translation of "Kriegspiel" is...' Thus starts this unassuming little pamphlet, and we can address the linguistic question straight away. Ronald Turnbull's best surmise, having consulted his dictionary, is "cluiche na cogadh", pronounced "cliech na coggy" (Scottish "ch" as in "loch"), which would be "game of war", though he suspects that any native Gaelic players, "supposing there are some", probably call it "crèigspuill" (long e).

Be this as it may, the game is a simple and amusing one. It is "Scottish" (Progressive) Chess played as Kriegspiel, and I infer from the statement that the umpire announces "captures, checks, and the possibility of a capture by a pawn" that he does this automatically (as we do at Messigny) and does not wait for the question "Any?" which was originally required.

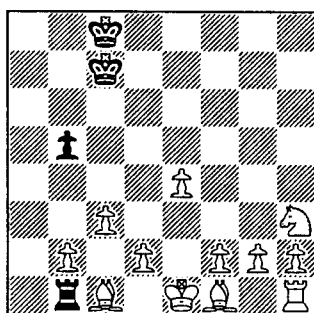
There are two illustrative games in the pamphlet, doubtless among the first few that were played. Only the more interesting illegal tries are given. Galvin - Neff: 1 e4 2 d6 Kd7 3 Nh3 c3 Qb3 4 c5 Kc7 b5 Kb6 and this is what White can see :



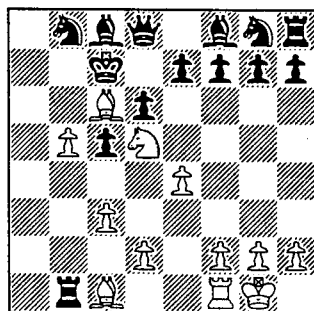
5 "Qb7?" (no) "Qb6?" (no) Qxb5+ ("White has moved, capture on b5, check on the file, White's turn terminates") :



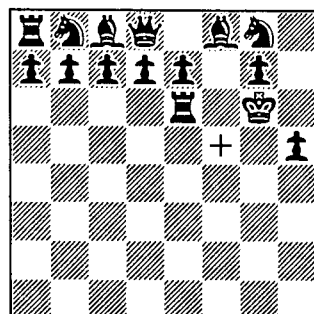
6 Kc7 a6 ("capture by pawn possible") axb5 ("Black has captured on b5") Rxa2 ("and on a2") Rxa1 ("and on a1") Rxb1 ("and on b1") :



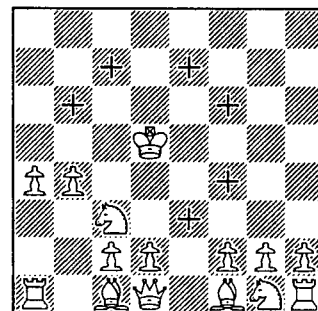
The Black king probably escaped to c7 or c8; which? White takes a view, and it comes off: 7 Bxb5 b4 Bc6 b5 Nf4 0-0 Nd5 and it's mate :



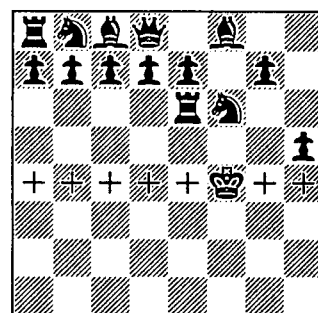
Galvin - Seifert: 1 e4 2 h5 Rh6 3 Ke2 Ke3 Kd4 (this surely risks more than it is likely to gain) 4 f5 Re6 Kf7 Kg6 5 Kd5 Nc3 a4 b4 exf5+ ("capture on f5, check on the long diagonal") :



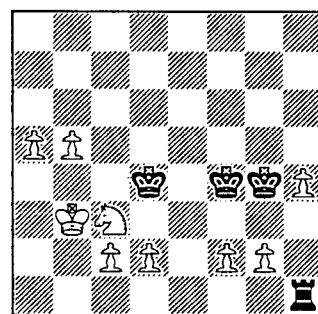
6 Kxf5 Kf4 Nf6+ ("check from a knight, Black's turn terminates") :



7 Kc5 Kc4 Kb3 a5 b5 h4 "h5?" (no) Ra4+ ("check on the rank") :



8 Re4 Rxa4 Ra1 Rxc1 Rxd1 Rxf1 Rxc1 Rxb1 :



White now deduced from his opponent's numerous captures that he had left his king on the fourth rank, so he tried 9 a6 ("capture by pawn possible") axb7 (ditto) bxa8Q Qd5 (no announcement, so the king isn't on d4) Qg5 and duly gave mate. Greed deservedly punished, he felt; had his opponent omitted the last capture and made a quiet move with his king, nothing could have been deduced with confidence.

The author claims that the game "avoids some of the less desirable features of its antecedents, and presents distinctive possibilities of its own". I agree; it looks good fun.

WIDE SHOGI

by Alex Kraaijeveld

Shogi, or Japanese chess, is among the three most commonly played forms of chess. Compared to Western (or FIDE) chess, it has a king, pawns, rooks and knights (although the latter two can only move forwards). Instead of bishops and queens, Shogi has Silver and Gold Generals. These two pieces have rather limited moves compared to their Western counterparts. In addition, the starting array of modern Shogi contains two more pieces, which move exactly like the Western bishop and rook.

Two traits which make modern Shogi unique among chess variants are almost universal promotions and 'drops'. Rather than just the pawns promoting on reaching the opponent's end of the board, most pieces in modern Shogi can promote and they do this on entering the 'promotion zone', the last three ranks of the board. When a piece is captured, it doesn't disappear from play, but becomes part of the capturer's army and can be 'dropped' almost anywhere on the board as a future move.

Through the centuries, increasingly larger Shogi variants have been invented. The largest of which we know at least something, TaiKyoku Shogi, was played on a 36x36 board with 402 pieces for each side. There is considerable debate as to whether these very large Shogi were really played or just invented 'for the fun of it'. For many years (most recently on page 55 of VC 44) I have seen brief mentions of a variant referred to as 'Ko Shogi', 'Wide Shogi' or 'Wide XiangQi'. However, it is always dismissed as a XiangQi variant when Shogi is discussed and as a Shogi variant in a discussion on XiangQi. The end result is an increasingly tantalising question: what does this enigmatic chess variant actually look like? The answer was to be found in a Japanese book, "Sekai no Shogi", and I want to thank George Hodges for making the information from the book available to me. As the book is in Japanese and I don't read or speak a word of that language, I would not have been able to write this article without Larry Smith, who deserves full credit for the translation of the piece names and their moves.

If you look at the initial array of Wide Shogi/XiangQi, two things strike you. First of all, play is on the lines of a 19x19 go board, so not on the squares. Second, even if you are quite familiar with the names of the pieces of even the largest Shogi variants, you're really struggling to find something familiar among the 90 pieces of Wide Shogi/XiangQi; the diagram gives the starting array.

G = General; Sc = Scribe; SP = Secret Plan;
 AC = Aide-de-Camp; W = Wrestler; Sv = Servant;
 Gh = Guesthouse; CS = Chief-of-Staff; En = Engineer;
 SM = Spiritual Monk; T = Tollbridge;
 FD = Forward Defense

MA = Middle Army; D = Drum; B = Banner;
 Se = Sentry; DU = Dry Unit; Q = Quartermaster;
 FH = Full Hundred; R = Rearguard

FW = French Wolf Table; El = Elephant;
 Sb = Shortbow; Lb = Longbow; Ca = Cannon

HS = Horse Soldier; Cv = Cavalry

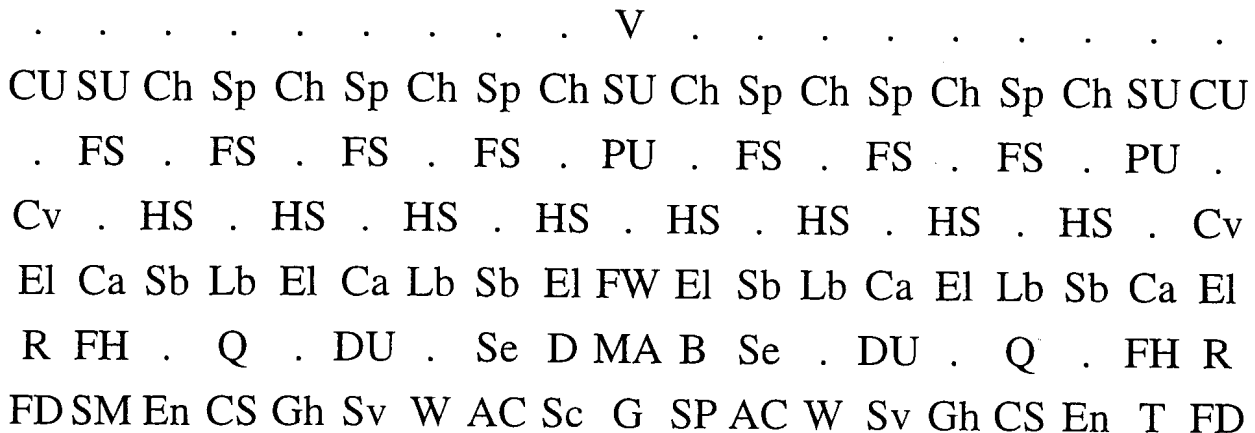
PU = Patrol Unit; FS = Foot Soldier

SU = Signpost Unit; Ch = Chariot; Sp = Signpost;
 CU = Chariot Unit

V = Vanguard

The object of the game is to capture the opponent's General. However, if the General is captured and the Middle Army and Banner are still on the board, the game continues and the Middle Army basically replaces the General. Most pieces can promote and do so when entering the promotion zone, which consists of the furthest 6 ranks of the board. As in all of the larger Shogi variants, 'drops' are not allowed and captured pieces disappear from play permanently.

Space does not allow me to describe all the pieces and their moves here (but see the last two sentences of this article), so I'll just pick out a few of the more exotic ones. For instance, several pieces, including the Wrestler, the Cavalry and a handful of promoted pieces, have moves consisting of two parts, the second part being optional. The



The starting array (seven lowest rows of 19)

Poison Fire (promoted Engineer) captures all enemy pieces adjacent to the point it moves to. This is similar to the Fire Demon in Tenjiku Shogi. The Summoning Tremble (promoted Banner) moves up to five points orthogonal, but captures all enemy pieces in its path. Several pieces, including the Tollbridge, French Wolf Table, Longbow, Shortbow and Cannon have the ability to 'shoot' enemy pieces: from the point they end their move on, they can capture one or more enemy pieces from a distance (i.e. without making a further move). There are often restrictions as to which pieces can not be 'shot' by which other pieces. Captures and promotions may have additional ramifications. The Foot Soldiers (i.e. the pawns) can no longer move after the Drum is captured. The Thundering Lightning (promoted Drum) is demoted again when the Tollbridge is captured. When the Scribe promotes to Master-at-Arms, the Forward Defense promotes automatically to Heavenly Net and the opponent's Poison Fire is removed from the board.

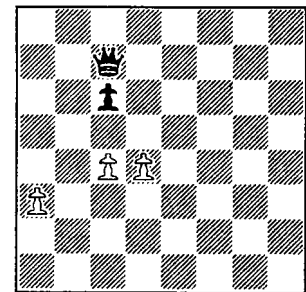
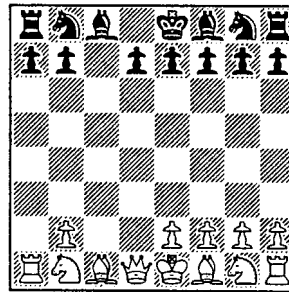
So is this game Wide Shogi or Wide XiangQi? There is nothing really to suggest it is a XiangQi variant. There are only superficial similarities, such as play on the lines rather than the squares. The whole set of almost universal promotions and intricate moves has all the hallmarks of a large Shogi variant. Also, look at the moves of the Servant and the Guesthouse: they move exactly like the Gold and Silver General in modern Shogi and the Engineer moves as the Copper General is many of the larger Shogi variants. All three of these pieces are also part of the back row in the initial set-up, which is where you would expect them. That is not to say XiangQi may not have had some influence on Ko Shogi, which might have been by introduction of the Chariot, Elephant and Cannon, even though the moves of these pieces differ from their equivalents in XiangQi. Further confirmation of Ko Shogi really being a Shogi variant at heart comes from further phylogenetic research, along the lines of that done on Shogi variants (see VC 32, pages 56-58). Analyses including many more variants and aimed at reconstructing the ancestor of all chess variants, are in progress at the moment. These analyses do not place Ko Shogi close to XiangQi, but firmly among Shogi variants, though not closely related to any of them in particular.

The book "Sekai no Shogi" was published in 1997 and it is not clear what original sources the description of Ko Shogi was based on. Further research will no doubt show how historically accurate the book is on this game (for instance, is the odd asymmetrical 5th row, with 7 Foot Soldiers and 2 Patrol Units, real or a mistake in the drawing of the initial set-up in "Sekai no Shogi"?). Larry Smith's translations of the piece names and interpretations of their moves are discussed on the shogivar discussion forum <<http://games/groups.yahoo.com/group/shogivar>>. Based on Larry Smith's initial translations and these discussions, I have created a pdf-file (561 kb) containing the initial set-up, the Japanese characters of all the pieces and descriptions of their moves, illustrated by diagrams. If anyone is interested in a copy of this pdf-file, just e-mail me at <a.kraayeveld@imperial.ac.uk>.

ALICE CHESS

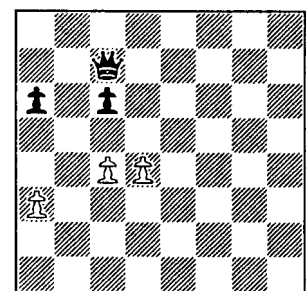
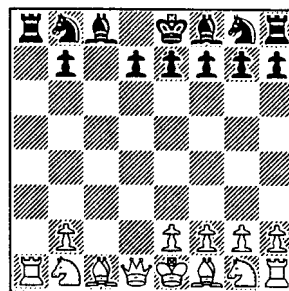
material from Peter Coast and Paul Yearout

In Alice Chess, a man which has moved passes "through the looking glass" to the same square on a second board, which must be empty. The following questions were asked last time. After 1 c4>B c6>B 2 d4>B Qc7>B threatening 3...Qa5>A mate, suppose White tries 3 a3>B, allowing the rook through to guard the mating square :

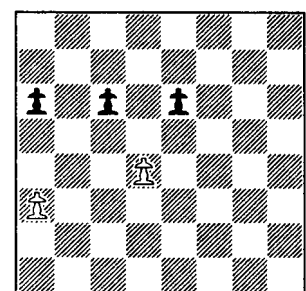
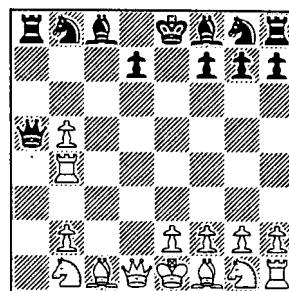


Questions: (a) how can Black now win (PC), and (b) is 3 a4>B any better (PY)?

The answer to (a) is by the remarkable move 3...a6>B :



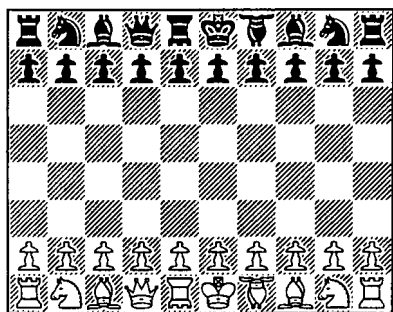
Normally, such a move is absurd, because it lets White capture the Black rook, but the capture takes White's rook to the other board and here this lets Black's mate back in. However, Black *does* threaten RxR, and Peter thinks that White loses a rook in all lines, the longest being 4 Ra4>B b5>B! and if 5 cxb5>A then 5...Qa5>A+ 6 Rb4>A e6>B (diagram below) with ...Bxb4>B+ to come (check from the queen); alternatively, 5 Rb4>A c5>A 6 Rb3>B Qa5>A+ 7 Rc3>A Qxc3>B and the queen escapes.



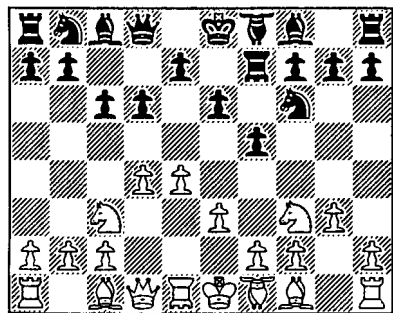
And is 3 a4>B better? Yes. White can now meet 3...a6>B by 4 a5>A, blocking this square on A and preventing 4...RxR without letting in 4...Qa5>A!

GOthic CHess

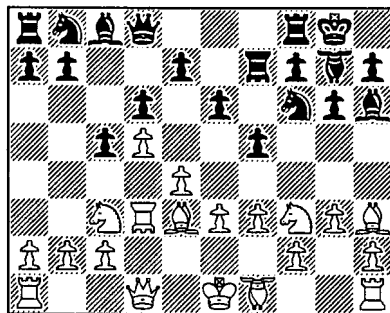
Among the papers passed on by Paul Byway was a file on Gothic Chess. This is perhaps the simplest of the many variants in which the usual men are supplemented by a "chancellor" (R+N) and an "archbishop" (B+N). In Gothic Chess, the board is 10x8, the starting array is as shown below (inverted R/B for chancellor and archbishop), and castling is one move longer than usual (wK goes from f1 to c1 or i1). The material came from the web site <www.gothicchess.com>.



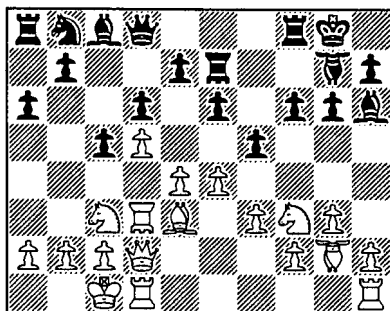
As example, we give a 30-minute game won by Ed Trice. 1 e2-e4 (the most usual opening appears to be 1 d4 attacking the corner and putting Black under immediate pressure, but this time White goes for space in the centre) d7-d6 2 Nb1-c3 Ni8-h6 3 Ni1-h3 c7-c6 4 d2-d4 f7-f6 (I feel Black is being altogether too passive) 5 f2-f3 (and why not f4 straight away, since Black is doing nothing to prevent it?) g7-g5 6 i2-i3 Ce8-g7 :



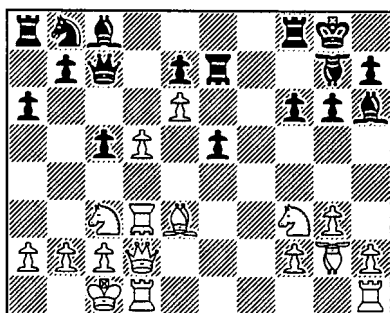
Far from taking Black's development forward, this move blocks his bishop and hinders it. It might seem that he is intending to play ...g4, but he doesn't follow this up. 7 d4-d5 i7-i6 8 Bc1-e3 Bh8-j6 9 Ce1-d3 c6-c5 10 g2-g3 Ag8-i7 11 Bh1-j3 0-0 :



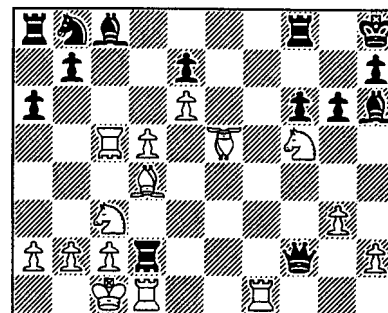
Black's king's side is now developed, at the cost of an awkwardly placed bishop on j6, but his queen's side remains backward. 12 Ag1-i2 (12 Bi2 would seem more natural) a7-a6 13 Qd1-d2 Nh6-f7 14 f3-f4 h7-h6 15 Bj3xf7 (Paul thinks "bishop for knight" a poor swap on the 12x8 board of Modern Courier Chess, the bishop being better than the knight on the larger board, and I suspect that the same is true here) Cg7xf7 16 0-0-0 and the contrast in development is marked :



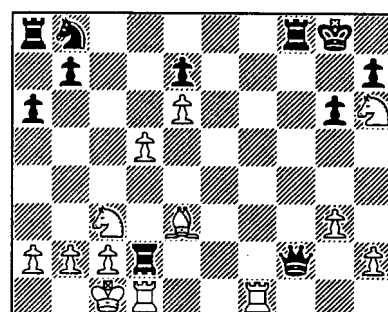
16...g5xf4 17 g3xf4 f6-f5 18 e4-e5 d6xe5 19 f4xe5 Qd8-c7 20 e5-e6 and Black's queen's side is dead :



20...Cf7-e5 21 Cd3xc5 (first blood) Qc7-d6 22 "Rg1" (I have assumed that the rook from j1 is meant) Ai7-h5 23 Be3-d4 (now the tactics start, and White holds all the cards) Cd5-f3 24 Nh3-j4 Cf3xd2 25 Ai2xf5+ Ki8-j8 26 Nj4xh5 Qd6xh2 :



27 Af5xh6+ Rh8xh6 28 Cc5xc8+ Bi6-h8 (28...Rh8 29 Be3+ etc) 29 Cc8xh8+ Rh6xh8 30 Bd4-e3+ Kj8-i8 (30...Rh6 31 Rg8 mate) 31 Nh5-j6 mate :



White had a won game anyway, but the finish is nice.

In conversation, Paul has made an interesting observation. In most variants where men are added to the normal set, the new men are more powerful than those already existing. This makes the play faster and more complicated, but it does not alter the game's basic strategy. In developing Modern Courier Chess, Paul took the opposite approach, adding pieces which were *weaker* than those in the ordinary game, and this turns out to be a much more fundamental change. In ordinary chess, the disparity in strength between even the weakest piece and a pawn means that "a piece for two pawns" is almost never a good swap, and so coherent pawn formations can be attacked only by other pawns. The same is inevitably true of games in which the added pieces are stronger still. However, if we add weaker pieces, "a weak piece for two pawns" becomes a much more realistic proposition, and this adds a new dimension to the play. The game may be slower, but it is likely to be strategically richer and more fluid.

WALNUT CHESS

Last year, I sent all readers of *VC* a set of "Walnut Chess" material: the rules, a note on tactics, an illustrative game, and a board. (Copies are still available and there is no charge, so if you have joined us since, or have mislaid the copy originally sent, please tell me.) There won't be a review in *VC*, because an editor cannot ask someone to write a review of his own work for publication in his own journal. However, Jed Stone has suggested that the game might be suited to postal play, "thus nullifying the requirement for Walnuts", and he has put it forward for consideration in this month's "Castles in the Air". So perhaps a brief outline is appropriate.

Most games evolve by splicing ideas on to an existing game, but Walnut Chess was consciously a greenfield development, created from scratch to have certain properties:

- "camouflage" - the identities of the men other than the king would be initially hidden, and would become apparent only as play proceeded;
- capture would be by application of superior force and not by simple displacement;
- there would be a "gun" piece which could destroy at a distance.

In addition, apart from the king, which would be weak in all respects, each of the men would have its own strengths and weaknesses; a man strong in one respect would be weak in another.

With these objectives in mind, the main features of the game slotted into place quite quickly.

- Apart from the king and the gun, there would be an "infantryman" who could move one step in any direction and would have value 1 in combat, a "heavy cavalryman" who could move two steps (not necessarily in a straight line) and would have combat value 2, and a "light cavalryman" who could move three steps in a straight line and would have combat value 1.
- Infantrymen could be grouped up to three in a cell, thus increasing their combat value. Groups would move together, and could be combined or divided at will.

- Combat would be by attacking a unit on an adjacent square, and the board lattice would be hexagonal, each square away from the edge having six neighbours.

- The gun would have a range of three cells, but it could not move and fire in the same turn, and its value when attacked would be zero. So three infantrymen could rush an unprotected gun from out of range and destroy it at the cost of two of themselves (as in the example alongside), two heavy cavalrymen could do so at the cost of one of themselves, and a light cavalryman could destroy it at no cost.

- In combat, any camouflaged units involved would be unmasked, and the units of the weaker side would be removed from the board (in the case of equality, all units would stay). However, a camouflaged unit hit by a gun would be removed without its identity being disclosed.

- There was to be a handicap decided by "you nominate the handicap, I'll choose my side" to compensate for the disadvantage of moving second. Thus the light cavalryman was weak but could move fast, the heavy cavalryman was stronger but less fast, the infantryman weak and slow but two or three could be grouped together. The gun could destroy at a distance, but it moved ponderously, it was helpless when attacked, and when an attacker used a gun to fire on a camouflaged target he was left guessing as to what he had hit.

As regards the numbers of men, the ability of a light cavalryman to knock out a gun meant that there had to be more guns than light cavalrymen, but apart from this the numbers chosen were arbitrary. The same was true of the board size and of the figures "up to six moves, up to six attacks" at each turn (though it will be noticed that the number of permitted attacks determines how near the first player can post his guns to the front line). But all these can be altered by the players if they wish. All that is needed is a photocopier if a larger board is desired, some extra matchsticks or whatever to make the extra men, and some extra walnuts to cover them.

A couple of examples. The players are denoted by Up and Down, Up's men being Underlined>. On files a-d, we show three infantrymen attacking a gun. They advance to b8/c7/d6 and the gun knocks one of them out. The survivors move forward to c9/d8, the gun knocks another out, and the final survivor moves to d10 and attacks.

13			K	-	-	-	-	-	-
12				G	-	-	-	-	-
11								G	
10									
9								I	
8									
7	I								
6		I				I			
5			I					(-)	
4									
3								(H)	
2									
1								K	
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i

Files f-g show a common dilemma. Up's men at g5 and g3 are still camouflaged, but Down knows that one must be a heavy cavalryman and the other a dummy (camouflage with nothing beneath it). He wants to clear the man from g5 and he *thinks* it is the dummy, but does play safe and fire on it anyway, or back his judgement, move his infantryman to g7 to attack and expose it, and fire his gun at f6? As things are, the latter will work, but if Up has been brave and exposed his cavalryman to fire, it is Down's infantryman that will be removed, and the cavalryman will then advance over the now vacant cell g7 and knock out Down's gun.

Experiment suggests that the game is eminently playable. It is quite brisk, lasting typically from 10 to 12 turns by each side, and it is tactically rich (a sacrifice of even a cavalryman for two or three tempi may be well worth while). The guns may be thought a little too powerful during the early and middle game, but if this is true it can easily be remedied: most simply by making the board larger, so that a gun commands less of it, and restricting the arc of fire to 120° (directly forwards, and up to 60° to either side).

I have not copyrighted any of this, and if anyone wishes to produce and market a game derived from it he may do so with my good will.

PROOF GAMES

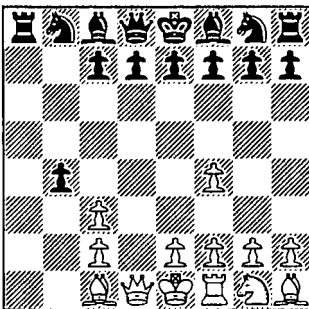
by Peter Fayers

This time I'll introduce another long-established technique for composing variant problems: cheating. In no other field of endeavour is cheating not only allowed, but encouraged and sometimes rewarded. Anywhere else, you break the rules, you get found out, and you get penalised or even disqualified. Here, if you don't like the rules, just change them. As long as you tell the referee what rules you're actually using, you're in the clear.

Consider 11. (Augsburg: Units may combine, and move as one unit. Components may split off at will). This was published in 1996, and the solvers effectively demolished it, finding several cooks.

11 - PF

The Problemist, 1996



After Black's tenth. Game score?
Augsburg (sic) Chess

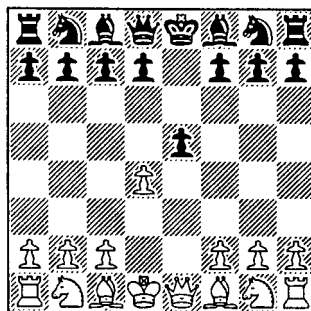
What had happened is that I had misunderstood the rules - Pawns are allowed to combine as well as officers. Moreover, my assumptions regards promotion (to any fairy unit created during play) were unfounded; Augsburg has normal promotions only. Pretty disastrous, you might think? Not a bit of it; I just changed the rules and created Iceberg, my interpretation of what Augsburg should be. (See VC 25).

(Solving hint: W has made three P-captures, but only one B pawn is missing. To provide cannon-fodder, this must have promoted to a triple unit, such as R+B+N. To legalise this promotion, W must first create one).

A couple of years ago Mark Ridley announced his MAR40 formal tourney for problems using Marine pieces. The rules as set out didn't allow me to show the effect I wanted, so I revamped them, creating a new subvariant which I called Ultramarine Chess, and sent in my entry. Nobody batted an eyelid.

In both of these cases, not only did I get away with changing the rules, but actually won something! I wasn't so lucky recently when I tried the same thing in the Stafettenschach (Baton Chess) tourney in the German magazine *Problemkiste*. The rules are (1) A player may continue moving the same piece as many times as he likes, but once a different unit is moved, the first loses all further powers of movement (think of a relay race - once a runner hands over the baton, he takes no further part). Exception: (2) If a player is in check, and cannot escape by moving the current batonholder, or handing it over to an as-yet unmoved piece, he may move a previously-expired piece to relieve check. This new piece then has the baton.

12 - Peter Rösler
Problemkiste 2003



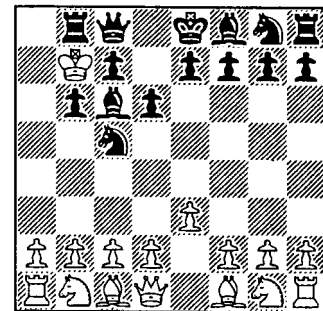
After Black's fifth. Game score?
Stafettenschach

12 is an example of the second rule in action. For the white royalty to switch places, one must have moved out, the consort moved over, and the first piece moved back. So, a piece has run two separate legs of the relay, which can only happen if Black has delivered check. Take it from there.

I sent off a version 13 as an entry to the tournament, and only later discovered there is a rule (3): Checks

are normal, an expired unit retains the power to check. So, my position is somewhat illegal in Stafettenschach. Bring on the cheating - I just invented "Strict Stafettenschach" - only rule (1) applies. When a unit has handed over the baton, it loses all powers for the remainder of the game. The problem was disqualified, but only because the version I sent in was cooked!

13 - PF (Original)



After Black's eighth. Game score?
Strict Stafettenschach

Now it's your turn. Announcing a

Composing Competition

open to members of the BCVS who have not previously had a proof game problem published. A copy of David Pritchard's *Popular Chess Variants*, or an extra year's subscription to VC if preferred, is offered to whoever submits the best proof game in a variant recently seen in VC, or in any other variant old or new that catches the judges' fancy.

We are looking for lightweight clear-cut examples that demonstrate the particular features of the chosen variant(s). Difficulty will not be regarded as a merit; elegance and entertainment value certainly will be. All entries that are published will earn their composer a free issue, over and above any prize they may subsequently obtain. The tourney will be judged jointly by myself and JDB, with input from solvers' comments.

Entries to me by 30th June.

Answers to last time's 10 on page 47; 11/12/13 next time.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN MEN

by David Pritchard

Chess, together with most variants, has a standard initial array. Amongst traditional games, only Burmese chess (sittuyin) does not conform, with the initial deployment of pieces at the whim of the players, subject only to minor restrictions.

Prominent amongst variants that enjoy freedom or partial freedom of the initial arrangement of pieces, are the various forms of Baseline / Displacement / Randomized Chess (your choice of name). Free Chess was a popular title for different versions of this: thus G. Capellen (1915), E. Brunner (1921), P. Felisch (1926), E. Csaszar (1934) and E. Slater (1950s). Prominent among other versions are Transcendental Chess (Maxwell Lawrence 1978) and Pre-Chess (1978), the latter attracting several chess grandmasters. Games that involve hidden deployment include Screen and Barrier Chess. In recent years of course we have seen the egocentric Fischerandom. All these variants can claim to have one thing in common: the composition of the two sides remains the orthodox chessmen. An advantage claimed for these games (or disadvantage, according to your point of view) is that memory plays no part as opening theory is discounted.

There is another type of randomized chess in which, though the squares to be occupied at the start of a game may be predetermined, the pieces, and sometimes the boards, are not. This is a brief survey of a few variants that belong to this class. The first two are more fully described in the *ECV*.

Betza's Chess (1980)

The inventor's conception was to form Simple Armies as he called them, equal in strength to the conventional chess array and hence also equal to one another. The idea was that any army could play any other army or the conventional chess array, on approximately equal terms. He itemized eight armies with the standard pieces (but not the pawns) assuming different roles in each army.

Free Choice Chess (1984)

Bruce Gilson's experimental game uses a 10x16 board with the players deploying within their first three ranks (hence a 10x10 central area). The pieces available are individually valued on a scale of points, each player being allocated 200 points with a limit on the number of pieces (20). As an example, the orthochess queen is rated 38 points. Gilson offers 17 different pieces but suggests that up to 200 could be made available, their values assessed by computer. There are no restrictions on placement within the development zone. A serious weakness in the original concept was that there were no pawns. It was suggested that this could easily be overcome by introducing a line of pawns on the 3rd and 8th ranks.

Flexichess and Varichess (1980s onwards)

These variants, described as a 'system', were developed by Roy Keene (sic!) starting in the late '80s. There is a choice of boards, with both fixed and random starting positions on two or three ranks. Familiar variant pieces are introduced: archbishop (B+N), chancellor (R+N) and empress (Q+N), but others are suggested. The idea of equal armies (see Betza) is also mooted.

Superchess (1993)

The inventor, H. van Haeringen, argues that although chess offers a balanced game of infinite variety, there exists no good reason for this arrangement, and some other pieces and boards might work equally well. Superchess offers a huge range of new pieces as well as a choice of board. The idea is that experimenting with these may lead to the ideal game. For an extended review, see VC 41.

Chess with Different Armies (2003)

This is a submission from the 2003 Multivariant Tournament of the Chess Variant Pages on the World Wide Web. It is in effect an extension of Betza's Chess (above) and is by the same inventor with the same idea of offering diverse armies of approximately equal strength to that of orthochess. Board 8x8, king and pawns normal. Three armies are offered: The Colorbound Clobberers, The Nutty Knights and The Remarkable Rookies.

The Colorbound Clobberers

Bede moves like bishop or dabbaba (0,2 leaper)
Waffle moves like wazir (0,1 leaper) or alfil (2,2 leaper)
Fad moves like fers (1,1 leaper), alfil or dabbaba
Cardinal moves like B or N

Array (a1-h1/a8-h8): BWFKFWB.

The Nutty Knights

Charging Rook like R forwards or sideways,
 like K backwards
Fibnif like N for its two longest forward/backward moves
 or fers
Charging Knight like R forwards or sideways
 or N forwards or K

Colonel like R forwards or sideways or N forwards or K

Array (a1-h1/a8-h8): RFNCKNFR.

The Remarkable Rookies

Short Rook like R but up to four squares only
Woody Rook like dabbab or wazir
Half-Duck like dabbaba or fers
 or three squares orthogonally leaping second square

Chancellor like R or N

Array (a1-h1/a8-h8): SRHCKHWS.

A number of other armies are mentioned: The Meticulous Mashers, The Fighting Fizzies, The Cylindrical Cinders, and similar cringe-inducing titles. Where different armies are matched, the players would be faced with memorizing the moves of eight different pieces, hardly conducive to forward-thinking one would have thought, even for correspondence play.

CASTLES IN THE AIR

by Jed Stone

The start of a New Year is traditionally a time to tie up old loose ends and start to unravel new strings and set new beginnings. It's an ideal time to 'spring clean' the vaults of the castle and give some new ideas an airing. Things are still moving slowly in through the Castle gates, and there are some old ventures that need clearing away. First we will look at the situation in the Ladder Leagues.

Three further games have been completed in the Hostage Ladder. John Leslie's win over Jed Stone takes him to the top with 1115 pts. Peter Coast's win over Ivan Dirmeik takes him into an exceptionally close second place with 1114 pts which pushes Paul Yearout down to third with 1091 pts despite taking a further game from Jed.

In the Alice Ladder wins for Ivan Dermeik over both Paul and Jed leapfrog him to the top of the Ladder forcing Jed, who has held the prime spot for some time, down into second place.

New for the Castle is the Chess Challenge ladder. The rules it is to be run under are simple.

Players may register any postal or email game provided that:-

a) The games played are variants that are played on a standard board with standard pieces.

b) Games already in use as 'Ladders' cannot be registered.

c) Fast flow games such as Progressive or Losing Chess are not allowed.

This ladder has been on the drawing board for some time and finally got under way with two games of Avalanche chess between Paul and Jed. Paul was quick to notch up the first victory by beating Jed in 5 moves. The second game is still underway and the third game - Dynamo Chess - between Ivan and Jed is just starting.

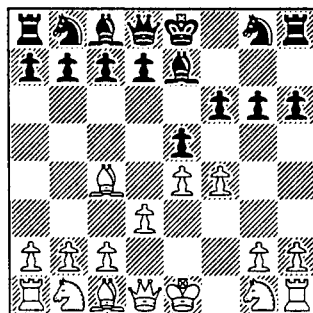
On the Tourney front a third MCC Tourney between Robert Reynolds, John Beasley and Paul Byway has been set up and is under way.

All our other Tourneys have been completed or have ground to a halt. Peter Coast took the Hostage Tourney with little problem while the Alice Tourney was won by Ivan Dermeik. The Hexagonal event has, unfortunately, ground to a halt and may well have to be abandoned.

On a happier note, there has been interest shown in another Alice Tourney so the waiting list is open and active. I have received interest from two other players and when they have confirmed their interest the Tourney will start. If anyone else would like to sign up please do so as soon as possible. I'm always open to any new ideas for competitions you may have and the new Chess Challenge Ladder has an open invitation for anyone who wishes to take it up.

Finally a passing thought on 'Walnut Chess'. John sent out the details of 'Walnut' last year. It appears to have great potential and if played in the Kriegspiel fashion with an Umpire receiving the initial positions and checking the final game for legality it could easily be played by post in the same manner as Tripod Chess ie with three players each acting as umpire in one game and playing in a further two. I'm interested in giving it a try if there are a couple of others willing to join me we'll have a go. Incidentally it took just forty-five minutes to create a 'Walnut' board in Word and create 'pieces' out of clip art pictures. Simple but effective computerisation! Bye for now. JS

Avalanche Game (a player concludes each turn by pulling an opposing pawn one square forward) - Chess Challenge Ladder - PY v JS. 1 e4/f6 e5/f3 2 Bc4/g6 Be7/d3 3 f4/h6 :



3...exf4/b3?? (Black overlooks the

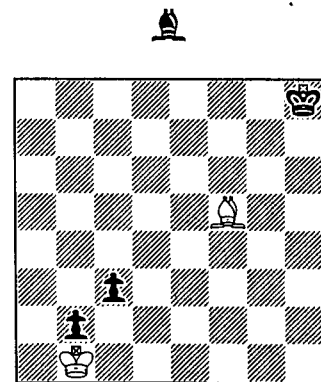
threat) 4 Qh5/g5+ Kf8/g3 5 Qf7/a6 mate - a good example of how not to play Avalanche Chess!

RECYCLE CHESS

by David Pritchard

This attractive variant was invented by Robert Huber in 1999. It is known in German as Robertschach. There is one simple rule: you may capture your own pieces (king excepted) and drop them back later. No pawn drop allowed on the eighth, but permitted, curiously, on the first rank. Pawns on the second rank, however they arrived there, are granted the two-square option. Fabrice Liardet points out that the game has two advantages over the likes of Chessgi and Hostage Chess: the forces are constantly reduced in play, and there is a bonus for the defence in that the king can create flight squares by capturing friendly pieces. Here is a study that illustrates the variant:

R. Huber and F. Liardet
Quadrature #53



White to play and win

Solution: 1 P*d7 B*b6 2 Bxd7 and now the pawn can be dropped where promotion cannot be prevented. Notice that if White dropped the pawn elsewhere on the seventh, Black would drop the bishop to control the promotion square. Note also that if White had not the pawn in hand, Black could turn the tables with cxb2.

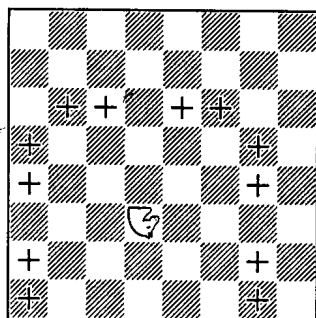
MATING WITH DOUBLET LEAPERS

material from Marc Bourzutschky, Noam Elkies, and JDB

An x,y leaper is a man which jumps x squares in one direction and y squares in the other, irrespective of whether any intervening squares are occupied. The orthodox knight is a 2,1 leaper. In this article, we look at "doublet leapers", which combine the powers of an x_1,y_1 leaper and an x_2,y_2 leaper. The orthodox king is an example, being a 1,0/1,1 doublet (we say "leap" even though the squares are adjacent). A little experiment suggests that two pieces moving as kings, the second being an ordinary man not vulnerable to check, can force mate against a bare king, and it occurred to us to wonder which other doublets, if accompanied by a standard king, could force mate against a bare opposing king. Marc did the computing, and we all contributed ideas and analysis.

The first task is to set up a mating position. Suppose the Black king is on a1, the White on c2, and the doublet on a nondescript square such as d3; this will be mate only if the doublet has a 3,2 leap to control a1, and also a 3,1 leap to control a2. We therefore have our first result: mate can be given only if the doublet is of the form $x,y_1/x,y_2$ where $y_2 = y_1 + 1$.

There now turn out to be two cases, depending on whether or not $y_1 = 0$. Suppose first that it does not. In this case, the doublet can never guard more than two adjacent squares in line (the diagram below shows the squares commanded by a 3,1/3,2 doublet), and mate can only be given in the corner.



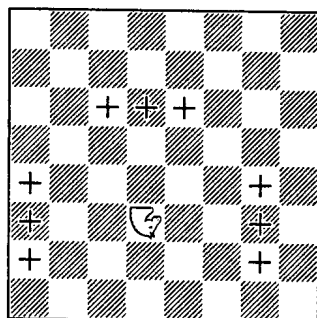
So: Black king on a1, White king on say c2, mate by the doublet attacking a1 and guarding a2. What was Black's last move? It can only have been a2-a1, and why didn't he move to a3 instead? Clearly, because the doublet was guarding this square, so we have a second constraint on the doublet: not only must it be able to guard a1 and a2 in the mate, it must also have been able to guard a3 the move before. If we now write down the various cases and solve the equations for x and y_1 , we find there are only nine possibilities:

- 0,1/0,2 mate by c3/a5-a3
- 0,2/0,3 mate by a6-a4
- 1,1/1,2 mate by c4-b3
- 1,3/1,4 mate by e4-b5
- 2,1/2,2 mate by b1/b5-c3
- 2,3/2,4 mate by e1-c5
- 2,4/2,5 mate by e1-c6
- 3,1/3,2 mate by b6/c6-d3
- 4,1/4,2 mate by c7-e3.

No other doublet with $y_1 > 0$ has any chance of forcing a win.

There remain the doublets where $y_1 = 0$, i.e. doublets of form $x,0/x,1$. The diagram below shows the squares commanded by a 3,0/3,1 doublet, and we see that such a doublet can guard three squares in line and so can give mate away from the corner. This gives us a general last-stage mating procedure with an $x,0/x,1$ doublet against a cornered king, provided that x is at least 3: suppose the kings at a1 and c2 as before and a 5,0/5,1 doublet D within reach of a3, play Da3, wait for Black's Ka2, and mate by Df2. This doesn't work for $x = 1$ or $x = 2$, but in these cases we have corner mates equivalent to those above:

- 1,0/1,1 mate by b3-b2
- 2,0/2,1 mate by c3-c1.



It is time to enrol the computer. In order to form a complete picture, we must tell it to examine the nine cases with $y_1 > 0$, and sufficient cases with $y_1 = 0$ to satisfy ourselves that we need go no further. Marc did this on square boards of various sizes, and found the following general wins:

Doublet	General win up to $N \times N$	Longest win on $N \times N$	Longest win on 8×8
0,1/0,2	10x10	52	29
1,1/1,2	16x16	100	22
1,3/1,4	15x15	88	26
2,1/2,2	11x11	78	35
2,3/2,4	12x12	98	37
3,1/3,2	15x15	104	27
1,0/1,1	14x14	62	18
2,0/2,1	14x14	92	31
3,0/3,1	13x13	67	26

Doublets 0,2/0,3, 2,4/2,5, and 4,1/4,2 do not give a general win on any square board, nor do doublets $x,0/x,1$ where $x > 3$. The words "general win" exclude positions where the lone king can capture the doublet, and also boards so small that the mobility of the doublet is impaired.

Even where there is no general win, there are wins where the defending king is already near a corner, and the longest are not without interest.

In the cases 0,2/0,3 and 2,4/2,5, set wKd3, Db3, bKa1, and mate in 5 by 1 Kc2 Ka2 2 Dd3\Df5 Ka1 3 Da3 Ka2 4 Da6\De1 Ka1 5 Da4\Dc6.

In the case 4,1/4,2, set wKd3, De2, bKb1, and there is a mate in 17 on a sufficiently large board (10x10 will do). We leave this as a challenge to the reader; answer on page 47.

In the case 4,0/4,1, set for example wKc7, De8, bKa6 and play 1 Kc6 Ka5 2 Da8 Ka6 3 De7+ Ka5, moving the position one rank down the board. This elegant procedure yields wins whose length increases linearly with the board size.

In the case 5,0/5,1, there is nothing longer than the mate in four with wKc1, Db3, bKa1, play 1 Db8 Ka2 2 Kc2 Ka1 3 Da3 Ka2 4 Df2, and the same appears to be true for all higher doublets $x,0/x,1$.

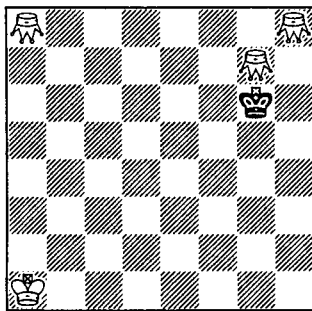
Now to look at triplet leapers...

THE END IS NIGH!

by Paul Byway

Thai Chess. I have some information on hand from John Beasley. René Gralla of Hamburg asserted that king and four ferses were sufficient to force mate against a bare king in Thai Chess (see VC 45). John wondered if three would do and Marc Bourzutschky's computer program confirmed that they would. René then remarked on a curiosity: in Thai Chess there is a special rule covering bare king against 3 ferses - the number of moves allowed to mate is reduced and so it appears that 3 won't in general be enough after all. Very odd! Here are Marc's results.

If Black can't win one of the ferses he is eventually driven to a corner and mated. King and ferses can cover 8 squares so this will also apply to MCC with a promoted fers. The danger that a lone fers will be cut off is a real one because it can't outrun the Black king. Here is a longest win on the 8x8 board :



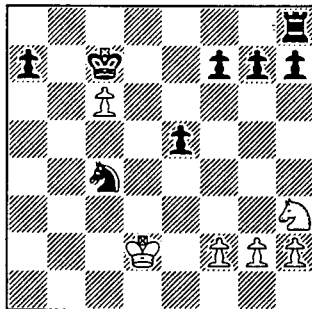
1 Fb7, Ka2 or Kb2 (only) will win in 40 moves

1 Fb7 Kf7 2 Fc6 Kg8 (Ke6; Kb2 Kd6; Fb5 Kc5; Fa4 Kb4; Fb3) 3 Kb1 Kh7 4 Ka2 Kg8 5 Kb3 Kh7 6 Kc4 Kg8 7 Kd5 Kh7 8 Ke6 Kg8 9 Ke7 Kh7 10 Kf8 Kg6 11 Kg8 Kf5 12 Kf7 Ke5 13 Ke7 Ke4 (tempo play) 14 Ke6 Kd4 15 Fd5 Kd3 16 Ke5 Kc3 17 Ff6 Kb4 18 Ke4 Kb5 19 Fhg7 Ka4 20 Fe7 Kb3 21 Ke3 Kb4 22 Fd6 Ka5 23 Ff8 Ka6 24 Ffe7 Ka7 25 Kd4 Kb6 26 Fd8 Kb5 27 Kc3 Ka5 28 Kb3 Ka6 29 Ka4 Ka7 30 Fe6 Ka8 31 Fd7 Ka7 32 Kb5 Ka8 33 Kc6 Ka7 34 Fc5 Kb8 35 Fb4 Ka7 36 Fc8 Kb8 37 Fb7 (thanks to

symmetry "the move" is no longer relevant) Ka7 38 Fc5 Kb8 39 Fc7+ Ka7 40 F(5)b6 mate.

The **Progressive Chess** line given in the last issue has been thoroughly examined by Fred Galvin. Instead of playing to the second position he prefers 8 d4 Ng4 Nxe3 Kc7 Rb8 Rb1 Rxa1 Rd1 mate.

We now move on to the more difficult line:- 7 Kd2 e4 exd5 dxc6 Bc4 Nh3 Rxa1 8 Kc7 Nf5 Nxd4 Nxc2 Nxa1 Nc2 Nxa3 Nxc4+ :



I thought I was OK here, but Fred seems to show that I was too optimistic. Promoting the f-pawn seems to do the trick.. He gives two lines.

(1) 9 Ke1 f4 f5 f6 fxg7 gxh8Q Qxh7 Qe4 Qxc4 10 f5 f4 f3 fxg2 g1N Nxh3 Ng5 Nf7 Nd6 Nxc4 and now White cleans up.

(2) 9 Ke2 f4 f5 f6 fxg7 gxh8Q Qxh7 Qe4 Qxc4 10 Kd8 a5 a4 a3 a2 a1Q Qc3 Qxh3 Qc3 Qxc4+ 11 Ke3 g4 g5 g6 gx7 f8N Ng6 Nxe5 Nxc4 Ne5 Kf4 and wins easily.

Solutions to competition 22

#131 8 Nf6 Nxe4 Nd2 e4 Bd4 Bf2 e3 Bxf3 mate

#132 9 Rxf1 b4 Nb6 Kf3 Kf4 Kf5 Rf4 Re4 Re6 mate

#133 9 Kf3 Nc7 Ne6 g4 Ne2 Nf4 Re1 Re5 Rxf5 mate

There appears to be only one solution for #131; and the order is unique - as was pointed out by several solvers. #132 also caused considerable difficulty. FG gave six solutions for #133:- (a) 9 Ke3 Ne2 Nf4 Nc7 Nce6 g4 Rb1 Rb5 Rxf5 mate. (b) 9 Ke3 Ne2 Nf4 Nc7 Nce6 d4 Rb1 Rb8 Rf8 mate. (c) 9 Kd1 d4 d5 Nf3 Re1 Rxe7

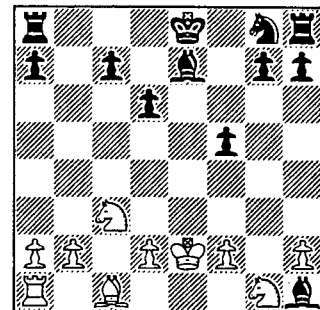
Ne5 f4 Rf7 mate (d) 9 Ke1 d4 d5 d6 d7 d8Q Qxg8 Nb6 Nd7 mate (e) 9 Kd1 Nc7 Ne2 Ng3 Re1 Rxe7 Rg7 d4 Nh5 mate (f) 9 Kf3 Nc7 Ne2 Nd4 Re1 Rxe7 Rg7 Kf4 Ne8 mate.

But after all that, it turns out that there is a mate in 8 which was found by DBP and IR:- (g) 9 Ke3 f4 Nf3 Ng5 h4 h5 Nc7 Ne8 mate.

The current scores:- FG 72, IR 65, DP 46, CL 24, PW 22, RT 19, JB 16, NE 2, SB 2.

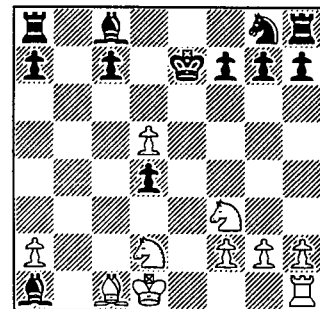
Competition 23

#134 Wojnar - Lantillo (1991)



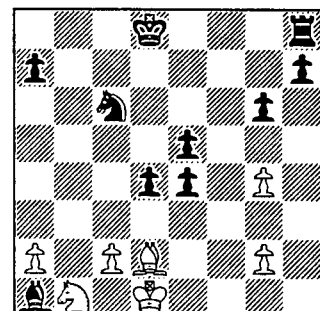
White wins (series 7)

#135 Gatto - Mori (1989)



White wins (series 7)

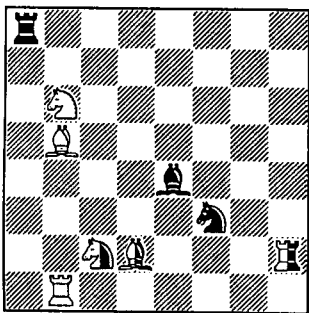
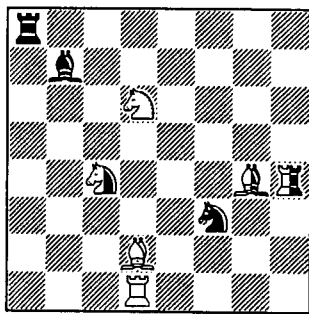
#136 Biagini - Manzini (1989)



White wins (series 9)

SOLUTIONS

Three colours, three men (VC 46). Black, White, and Piebald each had a rook, a bishop, and a knight. It was required to place these nine men in nine straight lines on an 8x8 board so that (a) each line contained one rook, one bishop, and one knight, (b) either the three men on a line were all of the same colour or there was one man of each colour, and (c) no two lines were parallel. I think there are two geometrically distinct solutions:



The underlying mathematical theorem (due I believe to Pappus) is that if $A'B'C'$ and $A''B''C''$ are two straight lines and ABC are the points of intersection of $B'C'$ and $B''C''$, $C'A'$ and $C''A''$, and $A'B'$ and $A''B''$ respectively, then ABC are collinear.

Progressive Chess (see page 34). The simplest way to win is by playing 12 Kxc6 Kd6 Bf7 a5+, when White must play 13 Ka4+/Kxa5+/Kb5+ and leave his c-pawn unguarded. Black can now play Kxc3, K away, and c1Q, with more than sufficient moves in hand to give mate. Black actually played his bishop to a4 instead of f7, allowing 13 Kc4+ holding on to the c-pawn, but this didn't help White: 14 c5 Bd1 a4 Bc2 mate. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that White had

worked out that he was lost anyway, and deliberately chose to allow the pretty finish.

Losing Chess (see page 35).

Taelman - Snuverink, what if 5 Qxh5? 5...Rhx5 6 Rxh5 b5 7 Rxb5 g5 (simplest) 8 Rxg5 Kd8 9 Rxg8 e5 10 Rxf8 d5 11 Rxf7 (or 11 Rxd8 Bd7) Ke7 12 Rxe7 Nb8, and White's rook is helpless in all lines.

Same game, what if 10...Nxe1? There is no mass giveaway to the knight, but its commitment to ...Nxg2 is all that White needs; he can play 11 a5 Nxg2 12 a6 bxa6 13 Rxa6, and give Black a rampant bishop.

Rommel - Liardet, what if 26...Rxc2 27 Nxf8? Black loses. He must get rid of his rook or it will become rampant, and White will then win against his last pawn. A typical line is 27...Re2 28 Kxe2 d4 29 Kf2 d3 30 Ra3 d2 31 Ne2, after which White can cope with any promotion.

XiangQi (see page 37). **First diagram.** 1 Re7-e10+ (the rook is merely in the way, and the first two moves get rid of it) Kd10-d9 2 Re10-d10+ Kd9xd10 3 Cg7xd7+ Gd8-e9 4 Hf7-d8 mate, the "horse and cannon" mate. The horse not merely provides the necessary hurdle for the cannon, but also guards e10 :

10	. . . .	<u>k</u>	: :
9	: : : :	
8	. . . .	<u>H</u>	: :
7	. . . .	<u>C</u>	. . . . .

Second diagram. Black cannot check but threatens mate in two, so Red can afford one non-checking move but not two. 1 Pc9-d9+ Ke9-f9 (if instead 1...Ke10 then 2 Pe8+ G10e9 3 Pexe9+ Kf10 4 Pd10 and there is no answer to Pde10 mate) 2 Pd8-e8 Rc8xe8 (other moves are no better, because Red can still play Pde9+) 3 Pd9-e9+ Gf10xe9 (or 3...Rxe9) 4 Ce7-f7, the "cannon smothered" checkmate exploiting an immobile enemy guard :

10	. . . .	: : : : . . . .
9	. . . .	: : <u>g k</u>
8	. . . .	: : <u>g</u>
7	. . . .	. . . . <u>C</u>

Third diagram. 1 Ce2-d2+ Ce5-d5 (1...Pd5 lets Red play 2 Cxd5 without forfeiting his cannon, and the rest is easy) 2 Cd2xd5 Pc5xd5 3 Gd3-e2 :

10	. . . .	: : : : . . . .
9	. . . .	<u>k</u> : :
8	. . . .	: : <u>P</u> : :
7	. . . .	: : : : . . . .
6	. . . .	: : : : . . . .
5	. . . .	<u>p</u>
4	. . . .	: : : : . . . .
3	. . . .	: : : : . . . .
2	. . . .	: : <u>G</u> : :
1	. . . .	<u>K</u> : :

Black's pawn is now confined to the d-file, and he must commit suicide: say 3...Pd5-d4 4 Kd1-d2 Kd9-d10 5 Pe8-e9 Pd4-d3 6 Ge2xd3 stalemate.

Fourth diagram. This came without solution in a Christmas card from C. K. Lai, but he tells me I have worked it out correctly. 1 Pe7-d7+ Kd8-d9 2 Ei3-g1 (threat 3 Cd1+ and much as below) R1xg1 3 Cg10-g2! (threat 4 Cd2+) Rg1xg2 4 Cf1-d1+ Rg2-d2 (nothing else is better) 5 Pd7-d8+ Kd9-d10 6 Pd8-d9 mate :

10	<u>k</u>	: :
9	<u>P</u>	: :
8	: : : :	
7	: : : :	
6	: : : :	
5	: : : :	
4	. . . .	<u>P</u>
3	. . . .	: : <u>K</u> : :
2	. . . .	: : <u>r</u> : :
1	. . . .	<u>C</u> : :

Proof games (see page 42). **10** (from VC 46, PF original, Avalanche, wPb2 off, c2/d2 to c3/d3, bQ off, bBf8 to a5, bPa7/c7 off, f7/g7/h7 to f6/g6/h6): 1 b4/c6 a5/b5 2 bxc6/g6 Bg7/c7 3 cxd7B/h6 Bc6/e6 4 Bxa5/f6 Bxa5/d3+, a typical PF sequence.

Doublet leapers (see page 45). 1 Dd6! Kc1 (1...Ka2 2 Kc3 and as below) 2 Ke2! Kb1 3 Kd2 Ka2 4 Kc3! Kb1 5 Kc4 Kc1 6 Kd3! Kd1 7 Dh7 Ke1 8 Dj3! Kd1 9 Df5+ Kc1 10 Kc3! Kb1 11 Dg9 Ka2 12 Kc2 Ka3 13 Dc8! Ka2 14 De4+ Ka1 15 Da3 Ka2 16 Dc7 Ka1 17 De3 mate. "!" indicates a unique winning move.

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Once again, we are able to feature a dozen and more different games, and perhaps we can draw attention to two particularly impressive examples of actual play: that featured under "Progressive Chess", and the second of the two which appears under "Losing Chess". The standard of play in chess variants tends to vary from distinctly modest to highly expert, and these are right at the top end of the scale. Progressive and Losing are the most widely played of the variants which use ordinary chess equipment, and leading players have developed a quite remarkable level of expertise. Yes, these games are great fun and that is why they are played, but they are also vehicles for the display of skill well beyond the ordinary.

Calendar continued. This year's **Circular Chess** World Championship (see VC 46) will be held in Lincoln on **August 20**, and will be a "special" to celebrate the tenth incarnation of the event. More next time.

BCVS NOTICES

AGM 2005. Members are reminded that any **nominations for office or resolutions for the AGM** should be in my hands as secretary by **1 March 2005**. To the best of my knowledge, all the existing officers are willing to continue, but if anyone else wishes to join the team we shall be delighted to tell him or her what is involved.

Membership of the BCVS is an automatic consequence of payment of a VC subscription. So the magazine is technically your own, and if you wish to become involved in its production, or to help with its administration, there is a mechanism by which you can seek to do so.

ECV, 2ND EDITION

David Pritchard (address below) has started work on a **second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Chess Variants***, and will be pleased to receive corrections and recommendations for inclusion. He gently stresses that it is necessary for a new variant to have been published, and to have received a measure of support outside the inventor's circle of family and friends. He does not require notification of anything that has appeared in VC or the Chess Variant Pages, except that he would like to be alerted to good examples of actual play, particularly those that well illustrate the distinctive features of the variant being played.

The ECV has been our main source of information ever since it appeared in 1994, and we are more than happy to endorse this request. We hope readers will be able to contribute.

CALENDAR

The **8th International Colloquium on Board Games Studies** will be held in Oxford on **Wednesday-Saturday April 27-30**. Further details can be found on the organizers' web site <www.boardgamesstudies.org>. I am hoping to be there, and George Bell and I have offered a paper on some recent discoveries in Peg Solitaire.

Messigny. I have received no details as yet, but I presume that the annual French problemists' meeting will be held as usual at Messigny (near Dijon) over Whitsun (May 13-16), and that the Sunday afternoon will feature the usual blitz variant tournament (see for example VC 45 page 7). There may also be some informal Kriegspiel Madras (like-moving pieces paralyse each other), which is even more hilarious than ordinary Kriegspiel.

Bughouse. Fabrice Liardet's web site <www.pion.ch> has a report on an international Bughouse gathering in Genève last year, the most recent of several such, and he tells me that there will be another over the weekend of **August 19-22**. Bughouse tournaments are becoming increasingly popular. There was an extremely high-powered one at the international problemists' meeting at Halkidiki last year (the web site which hosted the results seems to have vanished, but I remember it as being won by Noam Elkies and Ram Soffer ahead of Jonathan Mestel and Colin McNab, with John Nunn and David Friedgood also in the field).

Notices for VC 48 should be in my hands by **March 15**, though notices received later will be fitted in if it is at all practicable.

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