

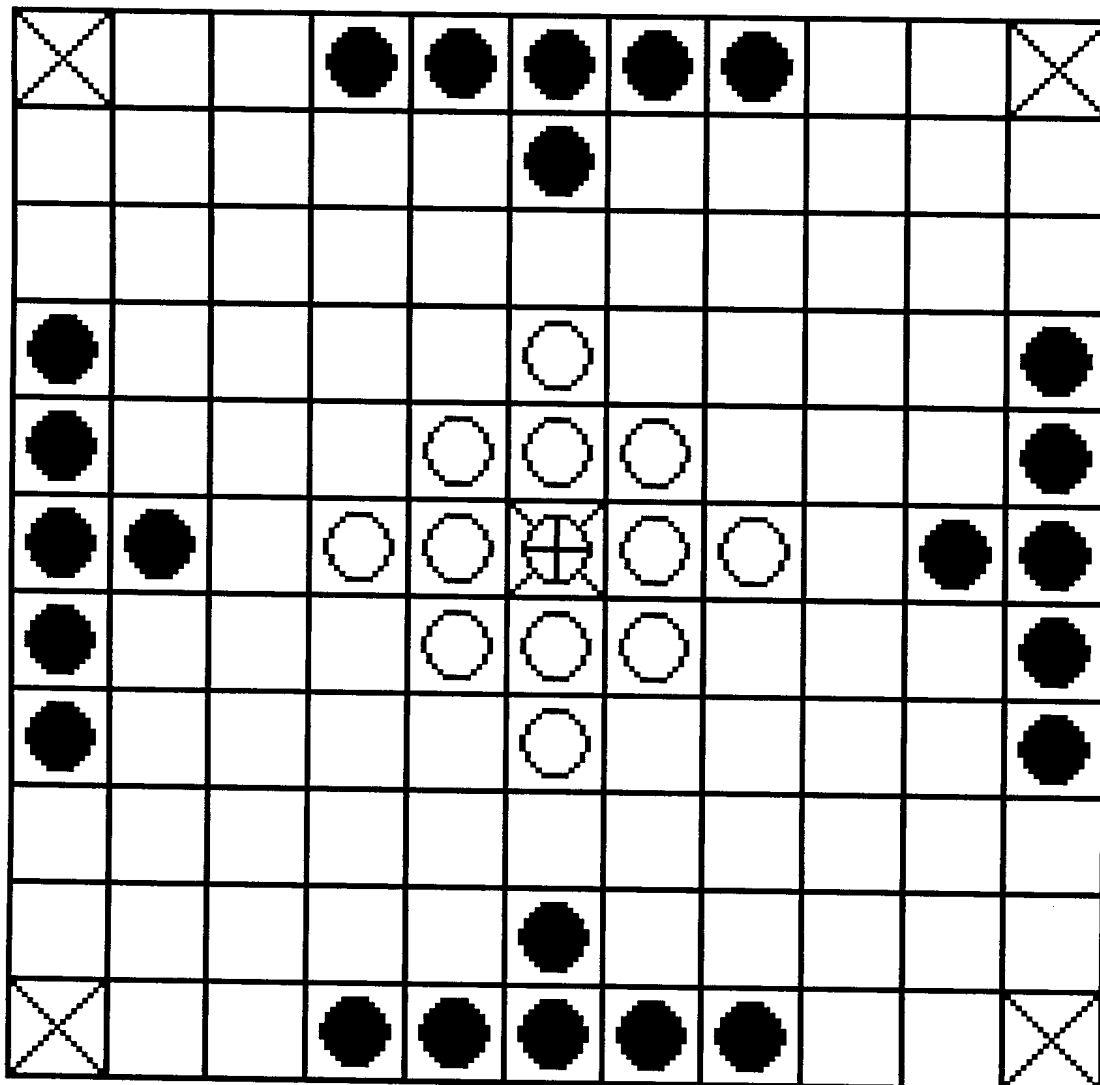
Variant Chess

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Hnefatafl in Shetland

Jump Chess

Hostage Chess

MILLER'S DAUGHTER CHESS

by Andrew Perkis

For the rules, see VC 58. - JDB

Opening Theory: a start

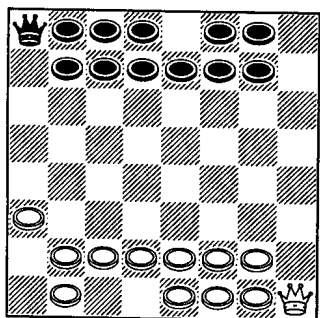
With the rules of MDC a bit more finely tuned, the time seemed ripe for a proper assault on opening theory. So far, all we have really discovered is what does not work, namely any attempt to hide a Miller's Daughter behind a barrier of Princes in the middle of the board. Either her immediate removal to h1 or a8, or early preparation for her retreat to one wing or the other, seems expedient.

I began my study with a look at the apparently straightforward opening

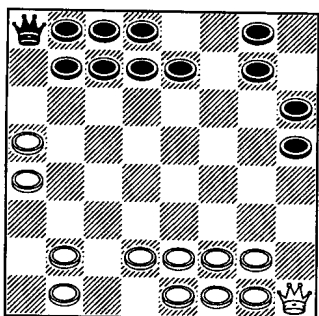
1 MD-f3-h1 MD-c6-a8.

With MDs on opposite sides of the board, White can go for an all-out attack with little danger to his own MD. This is best achieved by

2 c1-a3.



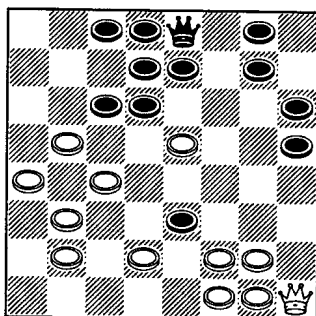
An attempt to replicate this attack against the White MD quickly gets Black into trouble. 2...f8-h6 3 c2-a2-a4 f7-h7-h5 4 a3-a5 and Black is already lost :



4...b8-b6 allows 5 a4-a6-c6xMD.

If 4...b8-d6 then 5 a5-b5, and there is no good answer to the threat of a4-c6xMD (eg. 5...c8-c6 6 b5-b6! and the Black MD can no longer escape).

4...MD-c6-e8 almost certainly allows White a winning attack, but a complete analysis is difficult. After 5 a5-b5 (threatening a4-c6xMD) new routes through to the Black MD seem to proliferate: eg. 5...b7-c6 6 b1-b3 (threat b2-b4-b6-d6-f8) b8-d6 7 e2-c2-a2-c4 c7-c5-c3-a3-c1-e3 (or 7...h6-h4 8 b3-d5) 8 e1-c3-c5-c7-e5 :



The double threat of g2-e2-e4-e6xMD and f2-d4-f6-h8-f8 is decisive. Black's best try is probably 8...c8-e6-e4, threatening ...d7-d5-f3xMD, but there is no answer to 9 b3-d5!

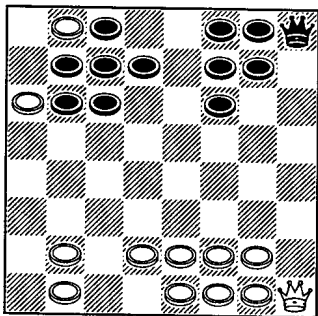
Careless development can also be fatal for Black. Black needs a plan, simply to survive, and what appears to be best is

2 ... b8-b6

3 c2-a2-a4 d8-d6

4 a3-a5 d6-c6

planning to switch over his MD to the other wing. If now 5 a4-a6 then 5...MD-b8 6 a5-a7 MD-d8-f6-h8 7 a7-b8 e7-f6 and Black has at least equality, probably the slightly better game :



The strong ...b7-d5 is threatened. White can hold this up with 8 b2-c3

(to answer ...b7-d5 with 9 e2-c2-c4-e6-g6), but 8...c8-e6 renews the threat.

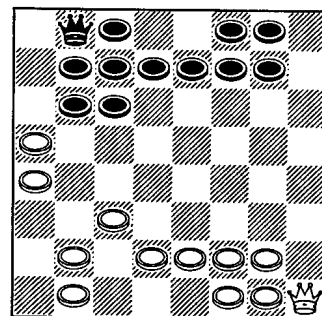
Of course, White does not need to press the attack along the a-file. A far better plan is to continue his development as aggressively as possible. In the following e-mail game, Dan Troyka and I decided to delve a bit further into this opening. Dan bravely took the Black pieces!

Continuing from Black's move 4 :

5 e1-c3

The benefits of this continuation quickly become evident.

5 ... MD-b8



6 b1-b3-d3-d1-f3

One of the advantages of White's last. The b1 Prince, which otherwise might have been left out of the game, moves to a key defensive post. The more aggressive 6 e2-c2-c4 would leave this Prince stranded for the time being. The move might be playable, but looks somewhat reckless. 6...d7-b5-d3 would be a good reply.

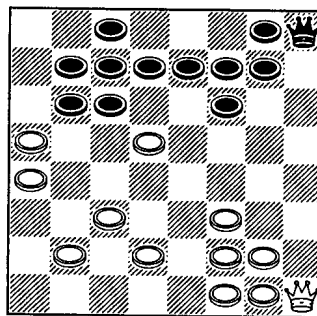
6 ... f8-f6

It's hard to find a better move than this. An immediate 6...MD-d8-f6-h8 allows 7 e2-g4 with a winning attack. 6...f8-f6 prepares to meet a future e2-g4 by ...e7-g5-g3, while keeping free a passage from b8 to h8.

7 e2-c2-c4!

MD-d6-f8-h8

8 c4-d5

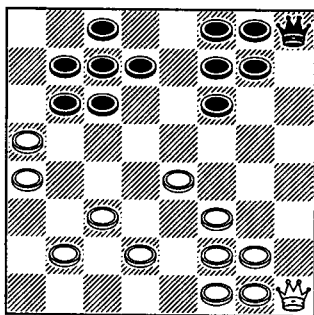


8 ... e7-f8

The most natural and probably the best defence. It prevents the further progress of White's b2 Prince (after b2-d4-d6), and as we shall see it discourages 9 d5-e6.

9 d5-e4

The most straightforward attempt to close in on the Black MD via f5. 9 d5-e5 allows 9...b6-d6-f4, and 9 d5-e6 allows 9 ...b7-d5 (which cannot be met with g2-g6, as that Prince's route is blocked by the Prince at e6). After 10 e6-f5, 10...g8-e6-g4 severely muddies the waters.



9 ... f8-e7

A clever reply. 10 e4-f5 now allows 10...g8-e6-g4, complicating. Without a Prince on f8, 11 f5-g6 merely threatens to chase the Black MD around, not to capture it, whereas after 11 g2-e4-g6-g8 MD-f8-d6-b8 it is unclear which MD is the more vulnerable.

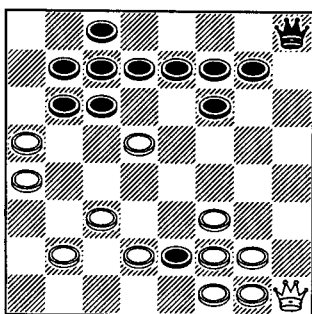
10 f3-d5

This wins without complications. It threatens immediate victory (b2-d4-d6-f8xMD). Black's g8 Prince can now only reach e2, simultaneously cutting the path to h8. Black's threats, however, are insufficient.

10 ... g8-e6-c4-c2-e2

10...e7-f8 is no better. After 11 e4-f5, White, with two advanced Princes, again wins quickly.

11 e4-f3

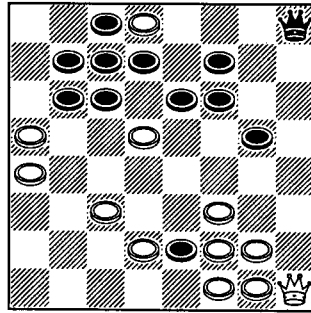


The same position as after 8 c4-d5, except that the g8 Prince is now at e2 (and White's Princes at f3 and d5 have swapped places!). However, the e2 Prince has little offensive potential, and Black's defence has been severely impoverished. The end is quick.

11 ... e7-e6

12 b2-d4-d6-d8

g7-e7-g5

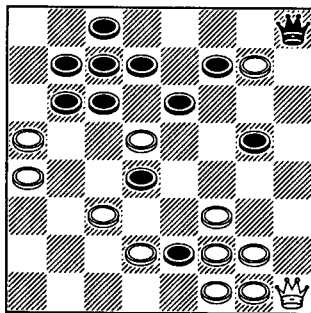


13 d8-e7

A final swindle would be 13 f2-f4-h6 f6-h4 14 h6-g7 MD-f6-f8-h6-f4-f2-h2! with a draw by alliance.

13 ... f6-d6-d4

14 e7-g7 Resigns



The MD will be captured next move (she can jump to f6 and onwards, say MD-f6-d6-b8, but White's Prince on f2 can reach f6 by f2-f4-h6-f8-f6, and will then continue its move along the same path and capture her).

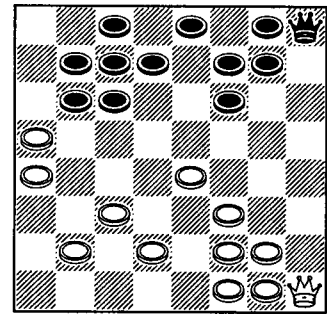
Some points concerning single Prince attacks

Several variations in this game would feature White attempting an attack with his one advanced Prince, and mostly achieving only a perpetual attack on Black's MD. An example: if Black had played

9 ... f8-e8

instead of 9...f8-e7, and had White continued as in the game, Black would

have had better chances. That, however, is another story.



White could also continue

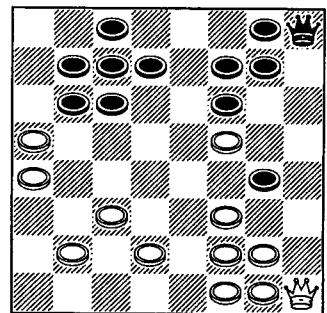
10 e4-f5.

Now 10...g8-e6-g4 fails to 11 g2-e4-g6-g8 MD-f8-d8-b8 12 g8-f8! (with the e8 Prince at e7 this would not be so effective) e8-d8 13 f5-e5 d7-d6 14 g1-e3-g3-g5-e7-c5-a7! and wins.

However,

10 ... e8-g6-e6-g4

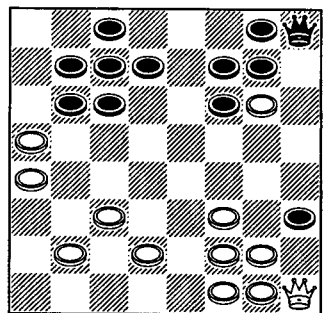
looks better.



Is it not correct that Black can now force a draw? After

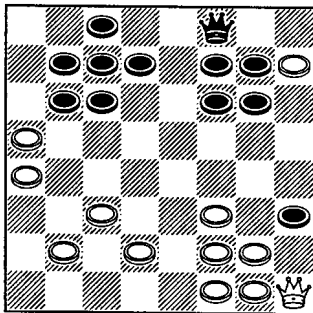
11 f5-g6 g4-h3

(not 11...g8-e6, when 12 g6-g8 MD-f8-h6 13 f3-h5 wins), it looks as if this might be the case :



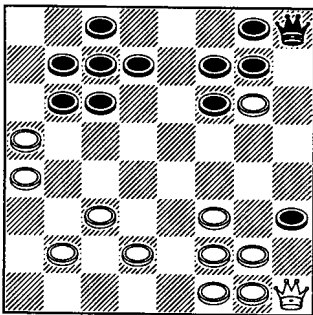
If 12 g6-h6 g8-g6 13 h6-h7 MD-h6-f8 it does indeed look like a draw. White cannot properly attack, only perpetually chase the MD with one Prince. Meanwhile, he has no defence against

...h3-h2 (this single Prince attack, if allowed, would succeed), so it looks as if he has to force a draw.



We can note how effective this set up is for Black: squares free for the MD at f8, h6 and h8 - and a Prince at g7. This survives against a single Prince attack. Whether there are friendly Princes at g6 and/or f6 is irrelevant.

So, is the position in the diagram



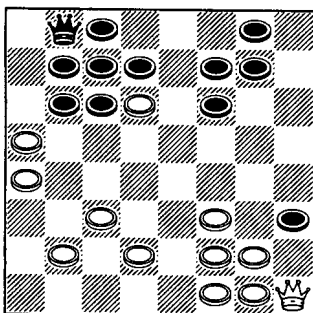
really a draw? The answer is no - because the Prince at g8 ruins this defensive set up. 12 g6-h6 merely gives it a convenient opportunity to get out of the way. 12 g6-h7, however, wins:

- 12 g6-h7 MD-f8
- 13 h7-h6! MD-e7
- 14 h6-f8 MD-d6
- 15 f8-e7 MD-b8

(other moves are just as bad)

- 16 e7-d6

and the single Prince wins the game with just a little help from his fellows.



Conclusion

Before this game I had the impression that 1 MDh1 MDa8 was a sound opening. After the game, while realizing that there may have been resources that we missed, the overwhelming impression is that, after 1...MDa8, Black is already lost.

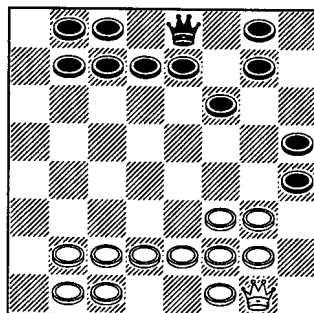
At least we have discovered a strong attacking line against an MD that has jumped immediately to a corner square.

One way openings could develop would be for each player to keep his MD central for a few moves at the start, keeping open the possibility of removing her to either wing. Each player would be feinting, probing, waiting for the other to present him with an attacking opportunity. This, to say the least, would be hair-raising - and it would likely take many many games before any sound opening lines could evolve.

For White at least, there is an alternative, 1 MDh1, that looks sound. A reversed version of the attack we have focussed on above (1...f8-h6) no longer gives the attacker an advantage, but nevertheless launches Black into the game in a satisfactory manner.

After

- 1 MD-f3-h1 f8-h6
- 2 g1-g3 f7-h7-h5
- 3 e1-e3 h6-h4
- 4 e3-f3 d8-f6
- 5 MD-g1



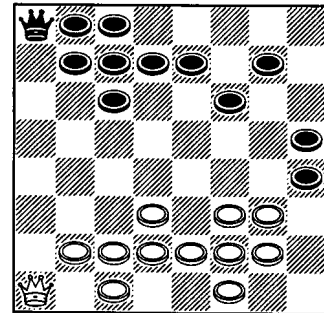
Black's problem is that his MD gets in the way of 5...g8-c6, and 5...d7-f7-f5 loses immediately. So...

- 5 ... MD-c6-a8
- 6 MD-e1-c3-a1 g8-g6-e6-e8-c6

In the equivalent position looked at

in the game (if Black had played 6...MD-d8-f6-h8) White would have had the move and won. Here White can nip Black's attacking chances in the bud, by forestalling d7-b5.

- 7 b1-d3



I think both players can be happy with what they have gained in this opening. White may have some advantage due to Black's slightly misplaced pieces on the h-file. White can easily lock these out of the game in the short term. However, Black's position is solid, and neither player has any attacking moves readily at hand that cannot be countered. In a roundabout way we may have discovered an opening that is satisfactory for both players. Amazing!

David Pritchard used to say that a new game needed to be subjected to at least 200 hours of serious play before its viability could be properly assessed. Despite all the efforts of Andrew and his friends, Miller's Daughter Chess can so far have had only a small fraction of this. I wonder, for example, whether immediate a-file or h-file attacks against a "castled" MD will eventually be looked on much as we now look on premature nineteenth-century attacking lines such as 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Bc4 Bc5 5 Ng5? (hoping for 5...Ne5? 6 Nxf7 Nxf7 7 Bxf7+ Kxf7 8 Qh5+ g6 9 Qxc5 with the win of a pawn to follow), which Morphy demolished by the simple developing move 5... Nh3.

Time will tell. This combination of halma and chess is proving to be a fruitful conception. Andrew is <andrew.equest@googlemail.com> and he very much hopes that readers will be tempted to join him in a tournament by e-mail. - JDB

JUMP CHESS

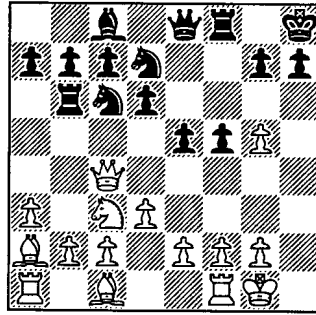
In VC 57, we mentioned Alain Dekker's "Jump Chess", in which a queen, rook, or bishop, when adjacent to another man whether friendly or enemy, may jump over that man to the square immediately beyond (in the initial array, Ra1 to a3, Bc1 to a3 or e3, Qd1 to b3, d3, or f3). A jump may capture, and may give check.

Alain plays and likes both Xiangqi and Western chess, and he tells me that his aim was to give Western chess a bit more of the flavour and tactical flair of Xiangqi while retaining its own strategic richness and "feel". He identifies three main differences between the two games.

- In Xiangqi, the pieces are able to move much more freely, with a lot of open lines right from the start.
- Western chess features locked pawn chains, which introduce much of the game's strategic complexity.
- The Xiangqi king is trapped in the centre of the board, making it much easier to attack and also harder to defend.

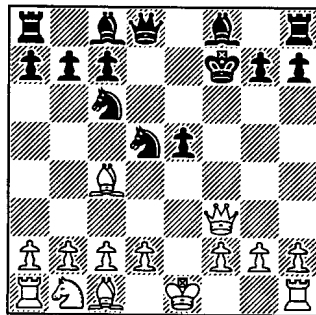
In Jump Chess, the jump move gives greater piece freedom of movement, addressing the first point, and makes the king easier to attack and harder to defend, thus addressing the third, while the second point is essentially unaffected. He therefore likes to think that he has made a variant of Western chess that has added some of the tactical flair of Xiangqi while keeping its own essential character, and he hopes readers will be encouraged to give it a try.

We'll come to the opening in a moment, but a position from one of the games (top of next column) shows how the jump move can help in an attack on the king. In ordinary chess, the move Qh4 would have little point; even if White could miraculously follow it by playing his rook to the h-file, Black has plenty of time to play ...g6 and then defend his h-pawn from



the side. In Jump Chess, White's Qh4 can be followed by R^h1 doubling on the file, and if Black still tries to defend by ...g6, intending to meet R^h1 by ...Qe7, White mates at once by Qh6.

Again, consider the "Fried Liver" attack 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 Ng5 d5 5 exd5 Nxd5 6 Nxf7 Kxf7 7 Qf3+ :

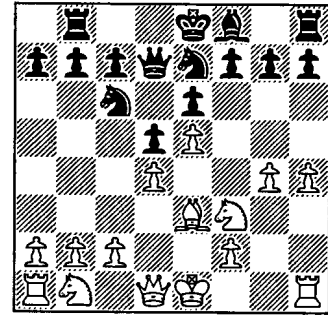


In ordinary chess, Black plays 7...Ke6 and may or may not be able to hold out. In Jump Chess, this move is illegal, and Black certainly loses.

In the game from which the position at the top of the column was taken, Black had (perhaps unwisely) played 1...f5, and White played B^d3, B^b1, Q^b3, a3, and Ba2 to put pressure on the diagonal a2-g8. Alain praised this and it could have turned out well, but I must confess I have my doubts. White has used five moves in pursuit of a very limited objective, while doing nothing about either the centre or his general development. Central control and development are as important in most variants as they are in ordinary chess, and where there is no immediate tactical gain it is usually best to keep ordinary-chess principles firmly in mind and to use the "new" moves only in support of them.

However, one "jump" move which does appear to have a clear role in the

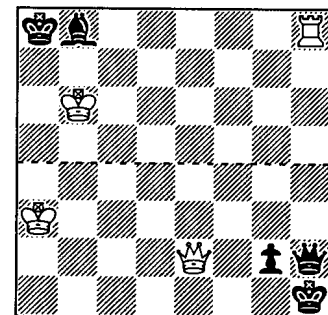
opening is the development of a bishop to the side file. This position occurred in the second game :



Black now played ...B^h6, freeing his game and putting pressure on White, and had White captured on h6 (he didn't) Black could have recaptured with the rook and avoided breaking up his pawns.

Indeed, I would go further: if White opens 1 d4 or 1 e4, is an immediate 1...Bh6 or 1...Ba6 a good reply?

There are also differences in the ending, quite possibly altering some of the basic results. The upper half of the diagram below shows a standard draw with B v R :



In Jump Chess, the rook has an immediate mate by Rc8.

The lower half of the diagram shows a standard draw by perpetual check; even if Black promotes to a second queen, his king cannot escape from the corner. The ending is still drawn in Jump Chess, but if White plays Qd1+ Black *must* interpose his existing queen; if he makes a new one, Qf3 will be mate.

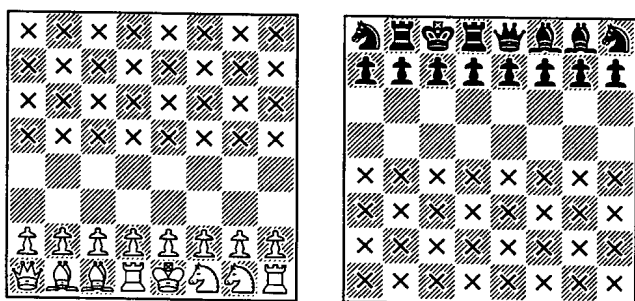
When I first saw the rules of Jump Chess, I thought them rather trivial. Alain has convinced me otherwise. He is <abdekker@gmail.com>, and would welcome opponents.

LAO TZU CHESS

John Kipling Lewis has sent me another Lao Tzu game score from the SchemingMind web site, where the tables were turned even more suddenly than in last time's game.

Lao Tzu Chess is a combination of Kriegspiel and Chessgi mediated by computer. A player can "see" only the squares he can legally move to; captured men become the captor's property as in Chessgi, but can only be dropped on squares which the player can see. Additionally, players are assigned starting positions at random, subject only to the constraints that the bishops be on squares of opposite colour and the king be somewhere between the rooks.

The game was played between "SpeedRacer" and "guiri1967", who were given the following starting arrays :



John gave no notes, and the commentary that follows is my own.

1 b2-b3

This is safe enough, because even if Black has a bishop on h8 and plays 1...g6 White will see it in time to do something about it.

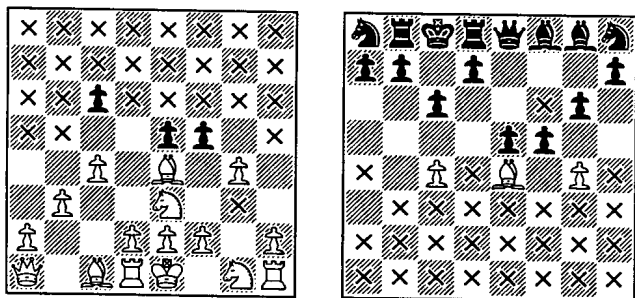
1 ... f7-f6
2 c2-c4 e7-e5
3 Bb1-e4

This, in contrast, strikes me as dubious. White's bishop was quite well placed at b1 and is not doing a great deal more at e4, where it may well provide Black's pawns with a useful target (as actually happens). If I were dealt this starting array, my instincts would be to play d4, e4, Nf3, Ng3, 0-0 (allowed in this variant), and Rfe1, hoping to gain ground in the centre in the usual way.

3 ... c7-c6

And gratuitously weakening the king's position in this way is surely doubtful. It would make some sort of sense if it were followed up by ...Nc7, but this never happens.

4 Nf1-e3 g7-g6
5 g2-g4 f6-f5



Black has undoubtedly been dealt an awkward layout, but I am not too convinced by his handling of it. In particular, to move the f-pawn twice so early in the game strikes me as surely wrong. My instincts with unfamiliar variants are to follow classical precepts (go for quick development and central control) until they are proved to be inappropriate. In most games, he who has the more moves at his disposal tends to have the better position, and Black's fourth and fifth moves have made little progress in this direction.

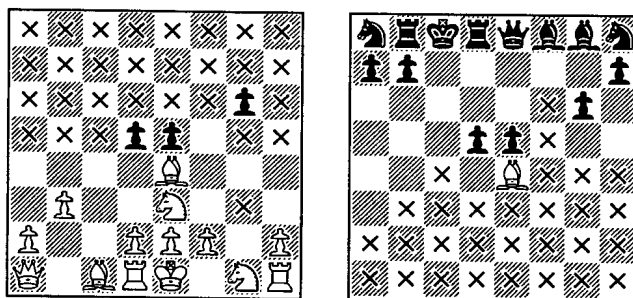
6 g4xf5 g6xf5
7 Be4xf5 P @ g6

Black wants to relieve the pin on his d-pawn, but this is a very passive use of a drop and I would be inclined to play 7...Be3 and solve the problem once and for all. In addition, 7...P@g6 blocks in Black's knight. The knight is in fact an awkward piece in this game, tending to be of more use to the opponent in hand than to its original owner on the board (it doesn't light up distant squares early in the play in the way that a bishop can), so there is a temptation to keep it out of danger. Black, given two knights in the far corners, solves the problem of what to do with them by never moving either. A radical solution indeed, but White's treatment of his g1 knight is just as cursory, and has the additional disadvantage of keeping his rook out of play.

8 Bf5-e4

With the whole board in view, Bh3 seems better. Whether this can be deduced from what White can see is another matter.

8 ... d7-d5
9 c4xd5 c6xd5



♠ ♠ ♠

♠

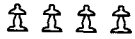
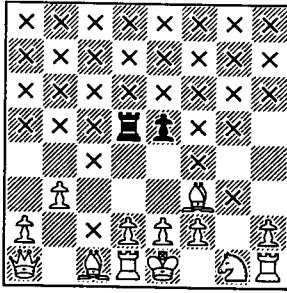
Black has much the better position in the centre, where his pawns are mobile and backed up by line-moving pieces whereas White's central pieces are merely targets. On the other hand, Black's king is already exposed, whereas White's is still well protected.

10 Be4xd5

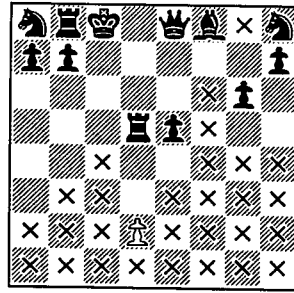
A rash move, or a miscalculation? White doesn't know how many defenders Black had bearing on d5 when he advanced his pawn, so in effect he is gambling on there having been no more than two (the c-pawn, which he now knows about, and one other). In the event, his luck is out.

10 ... Bg8xd5
11 Ne3xd5 Rd8xd5
12 B @ f3

White, already a piece down, decides to invest a drop in order to find out what has happened.



12 ... Rd5-d8
 13 Bc1-b2 Bf8-e7
 14 Rd1-c1+ P @ c6



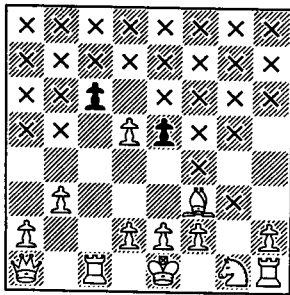
The announcement of "check" must have been very welcome to White. Presumably Black now fears that if he interposes his knight, White will sooner or later capture it, and will then drop it somewhere awkward.

15 P @ d5 B @ a3

Black guesses that the check came from c1 ...

16 Bb2xa3 Be7xa3

... and now he knows.



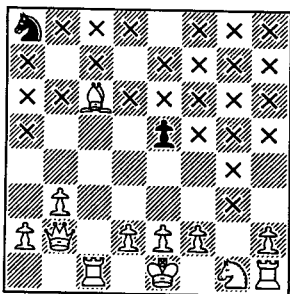
17 P @ b2 Ba3xb2
 18 Qa1xb2 Qe8-f8

The start of what seems like a desperation counter-attack ...

19 d5xc6 b7xc6

20 Bf3xc6 B @ b6

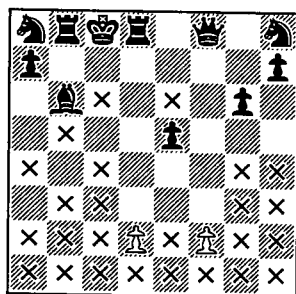
... and its natural continuation.



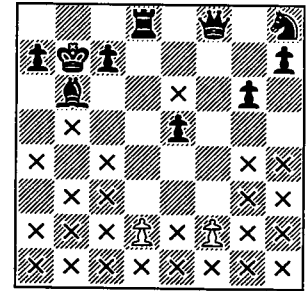
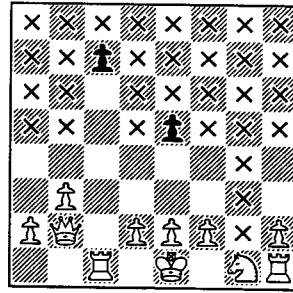
21 Bc6xa8+

Notwithstanding Black's caution at move 14, White has gained a knight to drop.

21 ... P @ c7



22 B @ b7+ Rb8xb7
 23 Ba8xb7+ Kc8xb7



Can anyone see a guaranteed win for White here? I cannot.

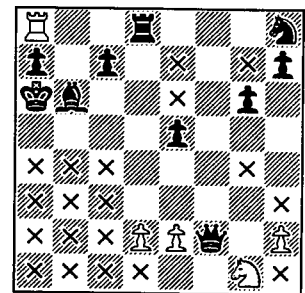
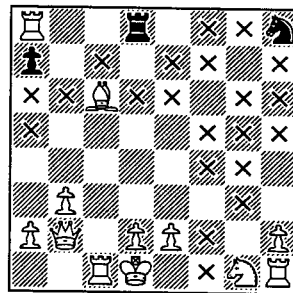
24 B @ c6+ Kb7-a6

25 R @ a8

This would have won had Black played to b8 or c8.

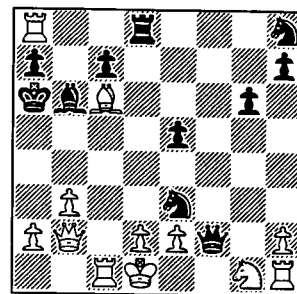
25 ... Qf8xf2+

26 Ke1-d1



Black knows that White's king must have moved to d1 and can work out that his rook is still on c1, so a knight drop on e3 will be mate unless a hidden man guards this square.

26 ... N @ e3 mate.



His luck is in.

There was an unfortunate error in the presentation of last time's game. I criticized Black's 20th move for allowing a mating drop on d5, and of course it allowed no such thing; White could not "see" d5, and so he could not drop there even though he knew it to be empty. He could have mated in two by dropping on c4, but this isn't quite the same.

HNEFATAFL IN SHETLAND

material from Peter Kelly

Further to last time's back-page item, Peter Kelly has sent me some notes from Fetlar which I think readers will find of interest. I have edited slightly but I hope fairly.

"We set up the Fetlar Hnefatafl Panel to popularise the game, to standardise the rules, to have an annual competition for a world champion and to have fun. The tournament on Fetlar was fun and the world champion is Wendy Sutherland of East Yorkshire. She received a carved board and set and a T-shirt.

"We discovered that Hnefatafl, although we think it has more similarities to draughts, was ousted by chess after the return of the Crusaders. Until recently we thought that it was played in Iceland in the Middle Ages as the last bastion of Viking defiance to chess. It turns out that a variation was played in Finland by the Saami. This is on a smaller board than our 11 squares by 11 squares and we are led to believe that it is a more difficult game than on the larger board. The Lapps were seen playing this game in 1732 and again in around 1850. On both occasions the person who saw the game could not speak the Saami language and so did not get the rules of play.

"We understand the game was derived from a Roman game Ludus Latrunculorum and that this could have come from an ancient Greek game Pettia. There is another ancient Greek game that also has a claim to being a forerunner of Hnefatafl.

"In Somalia and Egypt nowadays they play a game with similar rules of taking but there is a procedure for getting pieces on to the board to begin with.

"The Vikings took the game to Ireland, where it was called Ficheal and Fichneal. It then went to Wales where it had a name with many spellings - Tawlbwrdd. This was translated literally as 'throw board'

and the assumption was made that dice were used. We disagree.

"Hnefatafl translates literally as 'fist board' but is normally translated as 'kings board'. The word 'nev' is a Shetland word for fist.

"Chess was known as Skaktafl.

"As the pieces move in straight lines, like the rook in chess, and the aim of the king is to get diagonally from the centre of the board to a corner, we see a similarity to draughts, where the pieces move diagonally one square at a time but the aim is to cross the board from one end to the other.

"We had read that assumptions were made that the smaller Hnefatafl boards were used for training, and the sagas mention teaching children to swim and to play Hnefatafl. On the Viking Unst Project, practical experience shows that a smaller board is not necessarily easier.

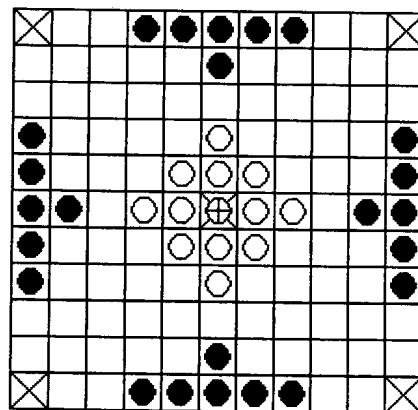
"There are variations in the rules and we do not play exactly as they do on Unst. This is partly because one of their rules appears to be based upon another assumption or deduction about how the game was played inferred from the wording of a Viking riddle. We don't agree with this conclusion.

"We will be trying slight changes to the rules this year but will not necessarily adopt them. They will only be adopted if they give the attackers a slightly better game than they get at present. The current game, we feel, favours the defender.

"It is possible to play Hnefatafl on the net but there are rule variations and we prefer to have one set of rules so that when people come they use the agreed rules."

A browse around the web quickly discloses that there are indeed rule variations, some of them quite significant. Peter tells me that the rules currently used on Fetlar are as follows.

- The game is played on the 11x11 board shown at the top of the next column.
- White ("the defender") has a king and 12 men, Black ("the attacker") has 24 men. There is no Black king.
- Black moves first.



- All pieces move as rooks, men and king alike.
- Black's objective is to capture the White king, White's is to escape by playing his king to one of the corner squares.
- Only the king can move to a corner square, or may occupy or pass across the centre square.
- A player captures an opposing man by sandwiching it between two of his own men, or between one of his own men and a corner square. Two or even three men may be captured by a single move.
- To capture the king it must be sandwiched on all four axes. An opposing piece must be placed on each adjacent square. The corner squares may not be utilised.
- A man may move to a position where it is sandwiched.

I have to say I am always suspicious of references to Ludus Latrunculorum and other classical games. I read R. G. Austin's articles on Roman board games in *Greece and Rome* 4, 24-34, 76-82 (1934-5) many years ago, and formed the distinct impression that we didn't really know very much about them. Peter acknowledges that there is a lot of suspicion about the matter, but he tells me that the method of taking is the reason for making Ludus Latrunculorum the culprit. "As the Vikings adopted other things they discovered and liked I've nothing against the idea."

However, this is detail. What is undoubtedly true is that the pictures on the web site of *The Shetland News* show the carved wooden boards now used on Fetlar to be remarkably attractive. May they thrive.

MORE GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

John Kipling Lewis's articles on Lao Tzu Chess have introduced me to the SchemingMind web site

<www.schemingmind.com>

which offers chess variant play by e-mail. A visit to the site in September listed the following variants as available. I am describing them with reference to *ECV 2* wherever possible, but as when discussing the BrainKing site in *VC 57* I do not claim to have checked the dotting of every "i" and the crossing of every "t".

Chess960 is Fischer Random chess, the arrays being assigned by the computer. The list on the site puts this game first, presumably because several other games are offered with a "960" option.

Alice Chess is offered in two forms, the second differing in that the Black pieces start on Board B. This simple idea was not thought worthy of mention by David Pritchard, at least not in isolation, though it is one of several elements to be found in Jed Stone's Duo Chess.

All Queens replaces all rooks, bishops, and knights by queens.

Atomic Chess appears to be the game on *ECV 2* page 42. **Atomic960** is also offered.

Benedict Chess (W. D. Troyka) has no capturing. Instead, after a man has moved, all the opposing men attacked by it change colour, and become the property of the side which has just attacked them. The object of play is to attack the opposing king. If a player has no legal move, the game is drawn. Castling is permitted, but for the purpose of attacking the opposition only the king is regarded as having moved. **Benedict960** is also offered.

Capture Chess appears to be basically V. R. Parton's Scacia (*ECV 2* page 83) with a normal array, and with an additional rule that if one side is unable to move the game is won by the side with more material. Capturing is compulsory (but with freedom of choice if more than one capture is available), the king is an ordinary man, and the objective is to wipe out all the opponent's men.

Chess480 is Chess960 with a different castling rule. We may come back to this another time.

Chicken Chess "was invented at lunch one day in late 2005 by the scheming minds of racy and surfinsuds". It is essentially a blend of **Suicide Chess** (Losing Chess) and **Benedict Chess** as described above. When a piece is moved, it changes the colour of all the opposing men attacked by it, but capturing is permitted and indeed compulsory, and the objective is to lose all your men. The king is an ordinary man. **Chicken960** is also offered.

CrazyHouse is Chessgi (*ECV 2* pages 52-53). **CrazyHouse960** is also offered.

Dark Chess is offered in two forms. We have already seen the essentials in Lao Tzu Chess, where it is combined with CrazyHouse and Double Fischer Random. In one form, the objective is checkmate, and the fact that the opponent has delivered check is disclosed; in the other form, this is not done, and the game is won by capturing the opponent's king.

Dark CrazyHouse is also offered in two forms. Both employ the "checkmate" form of Dark Chess, but in one form a captured man may be dropped anywhere whereas in the second form it may be dropped only on a square the player can "see".

Dark Suicide is also offered.

Double Fischer Random is Fischer Random with the two sides being assigned independently.

Extinction Chess is as in *ECV 2*.

Fianchetto Chess has the rooks and bishops interchanged in the initial array. This is in *ECV 2* as Rooks and Bishops (page 71), and dates back at least to 1857.

Full House is also an ancient idea, though there may be differences of detail. It is a variant of the placement games (*ECV 2* pages 76-80), apparently with the kings being set in their normal positions and the other men added one by one as the players choose, the only rule being that a player may not place a man so as to check his opponent's king.

Kriegspiel is offered, but there is no "Any?" or equivalent rule relating to the availability of pawn captures and the player has to try each possibility in turn.

Lao Tzu Chess is described elsewhere in *VC 58/59*.

Loser's Chess appears to be essentially the same as one of the varieties of Les Echecs Battu-Battant listed by Boyer in 1951 (*ECV 2* page 86). You must either get checkmated or lose all your pieces, and capturing, when legal, is compulsory. **Loser's 960** is also offered.

Racing Kings is Parton's game (*ECV 2* page 85).

Shatranj is also as in *ECV 2*.

Stanley Random Chess is complete and utter hooley (there are references to April 1 and to an official handbook consisting of 175 volumes "which have to be transported to tournaments by articulated lorry"). It is however richly entertaining hooley, and well worth exploration.

Suicide Chess is Losing Chess. **Suicide960** is also offered.

Sun Tzu Chess appears to be Lao Tzu Chess without the restriction that pieces can only be dropped on squares which the player can see.

Symmetrical Fischer Random Chess is a restricted form of Fischer Random with RR on a1/h1, BB on b1/c1, b1/g1, c1/f1, or f1/g1, QK on d1/e1 or vice versa, and NN on the two remaining squares, Black mirroring White on the file. The normal game array is excluded.

Tiszta Bolondokháza means "crazier than ever house" in Hungarian, and is exactly that: it is CrazyHouse with a Double Fischer Random starting position.

Upside Down Chess is ordinary chess with a reversed starting position: the White pieces start on rank 8, his pawns on rank 7, and similarly for Black.

Finally, **Unrated Standard Chess** appears to offer a way of playing a normal game of chess with a friend without having the result held against you.

The site is run by Austin Lockwood in Bolton, England (despite the fact that some of the rules use the word "color" with its American spelling), and appears to be a lively one. All right, some of its games aren't quite as original as their inventors thought they were, but this always happens.

HOSTAGE CHESS

by John Leslie

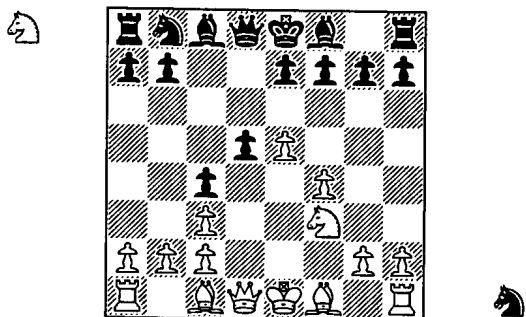
We haven't had any Hostage Chess since VC 54, so a quick reminder of the rules. Each player has a prison to his right and an airfield to his left. A man, when captured, is put in prison, and when its owner has a man of equal or higher value in his own prison ($Q > R > B = N > P$) he can make an exchange and recover it. The man recovered must be dropped back into play at once; the man given in exchange goes to its owner's airfield, and can be parachuted into play when its owner wishes. - JDB

Somebody (sorry, I am not allowed to give more details yet) is developing a Hostage computer program. Tentatively it is named "SWAT" (well, it does have a tendency to flatten those who challenge it). In the struggle that I'll discuss a chess professional, very keen on Hostage, seems to be beating the computer nicely. Then he finds he has lost his way, and his game. The Hostage Chess forests are so thick that chess professionals can all too easily get lost in them. Rank beginners can themselves often ambush experts. Having the attack is so vital that you have to rush boldly into the forests. Yet woe betide the player whose attack has failed, which is the fate of our professional!

He then realizes he has pushed too far forward. In Hostage, "having a space advantage" is often just another way of saying "leaving your men exposed to hostile drops".

White was H. Bond, Black was SWAT.

- | | | |
|---|--------|--------|
| 1 | e2-e4 | c7-c5 |
| 2 | f2-f4 | Ng8-f6 |
| 3 | Nb1-c3 | d7-d5 |
| 4 | e4-e5 | Nf6-e4 |
| 5 | Ng1-f3 | Ne4xc3 |
| 6 | d2xc3 | c5-c4 |



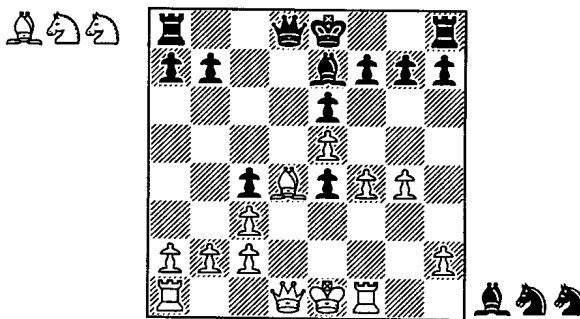
SWAT says it would have played 7 Qxd5 here. When the black queen captures the white one, it gets forked by the hostage exchange and drop (N~N)N@c7+. This stops Black castling and wins a pawn, albeit at the price of putting a knight on the enemy airfield where it could be worth as much as a rook on the board.

- | | | |
|---|--------|--------|
| 7 | Nf3-d4 | Nb8-c6 |
| 8 | Bc1-e3 | |

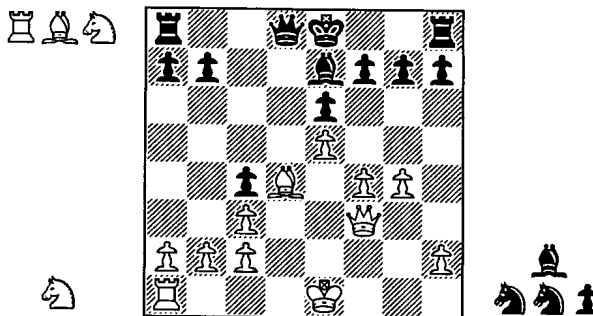
SWAT prefers Nb5, with the threat of (N~N)N@c7+.

- | | | |
|----|--------|--------|
| 8 | ... | Nc6xd4 |
| 9 | Be3xd4 | Bc8-f5 |
| 10 | Bf1-e2 | e7-e6 |
| 11 | g2-g4 | Bf5-e4 |
| 12 | Be2-f3 | Bf8-e7 |
| 13 | Bf3xe4 | d5xe4 |
| 14 | Rh1-f1 | |

White feared a bishop drop on f3.

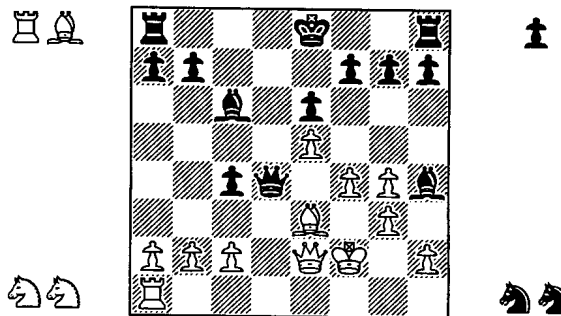


- | | | |
|----|--------|------------|
| 14 | ... | (N~N)N@f3+ |
| 15 | Rf1xf3 | e4xf3 |
| 16 | Qd1xf3 | |



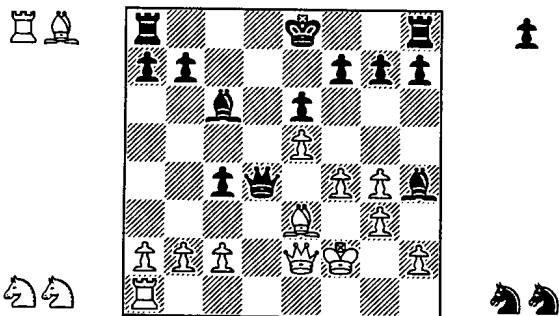
White has lost rook for knight, but picking up the pawn and having a knight sent to his airfield can seem plenty of compensation.

- | | | |
|----|-----------|-----------|
| 16 | ... | (N~B)B@d5 |
| 17 | (N~B)B@e4 | Bd5xe4 |
| 18 | Qf3xe4 | (B~B)B@c6 |
| 19 | Qe4-e2 | N @ f3+ |
| 20 | Ke1-f2 | Nf3xd4 |
| 21 | c3xd4 | Qd8xd4+ |
| 22 | B @ e3 | Be7-h4+ |
| 23 | (P~P)P@g3 | |

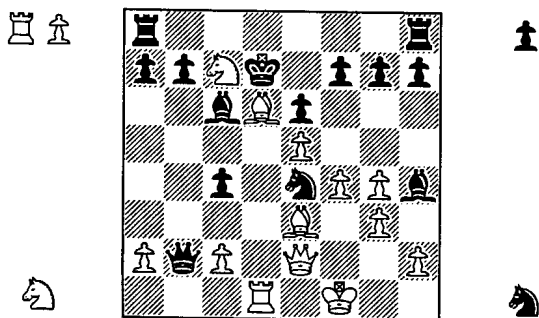


This move puts a pawn on the black airfield; because of all

the spots where it can parachute, an airfield pawn can be worth two on the board; but all the same, mayn't the black bishop now be so poorly placed that it ought to have stayed where it was? Well, having the bishop near the enemy king could prove useful. Also, if the bishop is captured then SWAT will have a bishop it could ransom, whereas at present it can ransom knights only.



- 23 . . . (B~N) N@e4+
- 24 Kf2-f1 Qd4xb2
- 25 N @ c7+ Ke8-e7
- 26 B @ d6+ Ke7-d7
- 27 Ra1-d1



White threatens a discovered check which wins the black queen. Although of course not blind to the threat, SWAT is such an aggressive player that instead of looking for ways to save its queen it is about to attack the white one! This can seem very risky, for the subsequent exchange of queens will give White the first chance to make a queen drop. Silly machine? We'll see.

- 27 . . . Ne4-c3
- 28 Bd6-a3+ Kd7xc7
- 29 Ba3xb2 Nc3xe2
- 30 (N~P) P@d6+

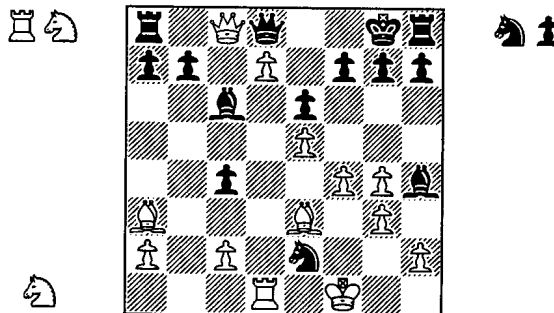
Keeping up the attack, which might look correct. Still, putting the knight on the enemy airfield in order to ransom the pawn has increased White's disadvantage in material, whereas Kxe2 would have decreased it. Now, in Hostage—although much less than in orthodox chess—being behind in material can be rather important. White's attack had better work, or else!

- 30 . . . Kc7-d7
- 31 (Q~Q) Q*c7+

So White did indeed make the first queen drop.

- 31 . . . Kd7-e8
- 32 d6-d7+ Ke8-f8

- 33 Bb2-a3+ Kf8-g8
- 34 Qc7-c8+ Q @ d8



Here 34...Rxc8 wouldn't have solved SWAT's problem, for the white pawn would just have recaptured and promoted to queen. SWAT's actual move, which both blocks the check and stops White's pawn from advancing, has solved the problem with an "X-ray": the black queen and rook protect each other "through" the white queen.

- 35 Qc8xd8+ Ra8xd8
- 36 (Q~Q) Q@e8+ N @ f8

Not 36...Rxe8, which leads into 37 dxe8Q+ Bxe8 38 (R~R)R@f8 mate. Now White tries

- 37 g3xh4

which involves swift disaster:

- 37 . . . Ne2-g3+

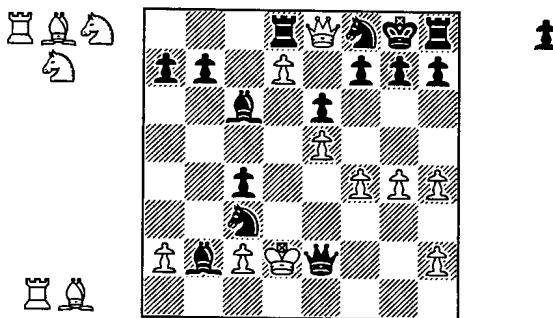
Why give the human this knight to add to his prisoners?

- 38 h2xg3 Q @ g2+

- 39 Kf1-e1 (R~N)N@f3 mate

Return of the knight by air, that's why!

White then takes back his last moves and tries again, achieving at least a delayed defeat: 37 Kxe2 Q@f3+ 38 Kd2 (N~N)N@e4+ 39 Kc1 Qxe3+ 40 N@d2 Qxa3+ 41 N@b2 Nxd2 42 gxh4 (hoping for mate by a knight drop on e7 if the computer grows careless?) (B~B)B@c3 (sorry, my captured bishop returns straight away) 43 Rxd2 Bxb2+ 44 Kd1 (if to b1 instead, then (B~N)N@c3 mate) Qf3+ 45 Re2 (R~N)N@c3+ 46 Kd2 Qxe2 mate:



45 Ke1 would have delayed the defeat still further. White's position may have looked hopeless but Hostage is so full of tricks that you should fight on for as long as you can, virtually never resigning.

Readers may like to compare Hostage Chess with the other "drop" games in this issue: Lao Tzu Chess (pages 78-9) and Chessgi (immediately following). - JDB

IN THE LIBRARY : CHESSGI (2)

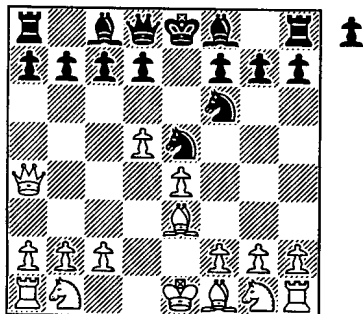
Here is the second of a pair of games played by John McCallion in the Chessgi tournaments of NOST (the Knights of the Square Table, an American postal chess and games club which thrived for many years) and reported in the NOST bulletin *Nost-algia*. David Pritchard had an almost complete run of this from issue 142 onwards, which was passed on to us by Elaine and Wanda.

Chessgi is chess played with shogi drops (a captured man changes sides and becomes the property of its captor, who can drop it on any vacant square instead of a playing a normal move). John considered this game against Paul Yearout the best he had ever played. Notes are by John, who was White, and I am standardizing notation even within quotations. The game was played around 1984-86.

- 1 e2-e4 e7-e5
- 2 d2-d4 e5xd4

"My favourite Chessgi opening, which I praised so highly in annotating the game against Philip Cohen. The result of this game does not change my opinion, but it might delight the reader who has tired of my dogmatism." The game against Philip Cohen appeared in *VC* 58.

- 3 Qd1xd4 Nb8-c6
- 4 Qd4-a4 Ng8-f6
- 5 P @ d5 Nc6-e5
- 6 Bc1-e3



"My ambitions do have their limits: 6 f4 seemed to be exposing White's position just too much."

- 6 ... Bf8-d6

"Blocking the d-pawn may look strange, but I could not fault this

move, both provocative and preparing to castle, e.g., if 7 h3, then 7...0-0 8 f4 Ng6 and 9 e5 does not seem possible."

- 7 Nb1-d2 Ne5-g4

"Hmm..."

- 8 Ng1-f3

"I was as usual unsure if I would castle queen's-side or king's-side."

- 8 ... 0-0

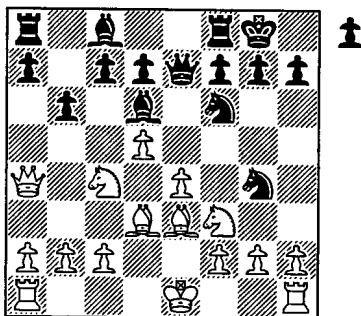
- 9 Bf1-d3 b7-b6

"The same interesting fianchetto used by P. Cohen..."

- 10 Nd2-c4

"I decided to forget about castling, which I had later to regret, in the hope of sacrificing a pawn for attack."

- 10 ... Qd8-e7



- 11 e4-e5!?

"Beginning the middle game. Black is given two pawns in hand, but I did not think they could stand against my attacking formation."

- 11 ... Ng4xe5

- 12 Nc4xe5 Bd6xe5

- 13 Nf3xe5 Qe7xe5

- 14 B @ c3

"Three bishops beautifully aligned, bearing down on the Black king's-side."

- 14 ... Qe5-e7

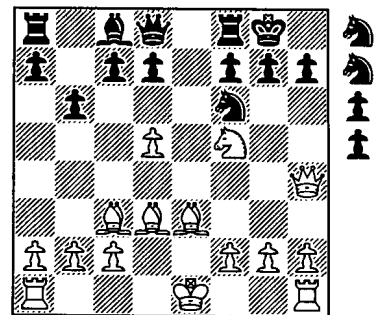
- 15 N @ f5

"I did not mind having to use both pieces in hand, as I felt Black was on the run."

- 15 ... Qe7-d8

- 16 Qa4-h4

"Making this move felt like running one's finger all the way across a piano keyboard. The queen glides effortlessly from an obscure outpost on one side to another on the other flank where it bears down on the enemy king. My game seemed to be flowing like a beautiful melody and I was blissfully happy, until Paul's reply reached me..."



- 16 ... N @ f3+!!

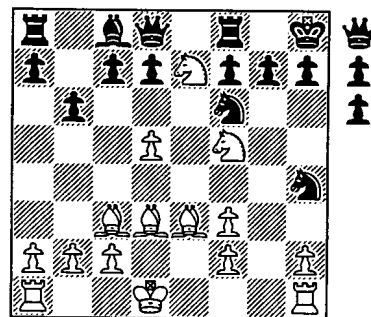
"The first part of a beautiful two-knight drop. Despite my regular lofty paens to Art and Beauty before result, it is just as well that I am a bachelor; I might have been very unpleasant to live with for the next few weeks!"

- 17 g2xf3 N @ g2+!

"I had no choice but to accept Paul's conditional continuation. With his fiendish cruelty still scurrying grouchily through my being, and the memory of the 1984 US Presidential election still fresh, I thought it would only be a case of making a few more fruitless moves as a chessic tribute to Walter Mondale, but how wrong I was! I completely underestimated my power to initiate a fierce counter-attack, a sequence of moves that would leave us both breathless and, still to this moment, bewildered!"

- 18 Ke1-d1 Ng2xh4

- 19 N @ e7+ Kg8-h8



- 20 Be3-h6

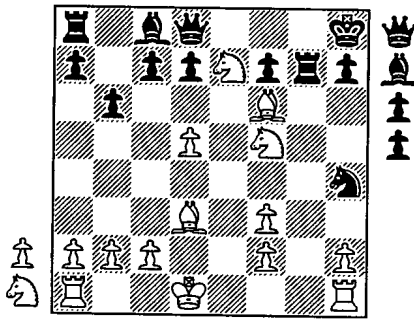
"The beginning of the fireworks. 20...gxh6 of course allows 21 Bxf6+ followed by mate."

- 20 ... Rf8-g8

"On 20...Nxf5, I was prepared to play 21 Bxg7+!? whereupon 21...Nxg7 is best, which is answered by 22 Bxf6 and over to you, dear reader."

- 21 Bh6xg7+ Rg8xg7

- 22 Bc3xf6



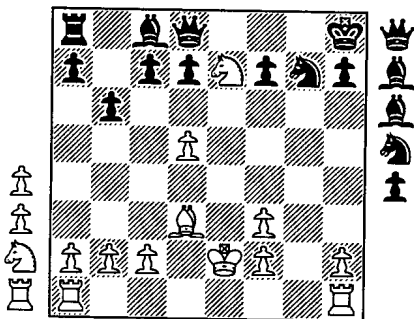
22 ... P @ e2+
 "Paul, with his usual modesty, believes that this was a simple oversight. I prefer to see it as a superb interposition with the intention of drawing the White king to an unfavourable square for later variations. In any event, I was now so fascinated by the position that I wanted nothing but perfection for both sides. Nevertheless, it must have been a terrible chore for Paul to have to defend after such a seemingly successful attack,"

23 Kd1xe2 Nh4xf5
 24 Bf6xg7+

"24 Ng6+ also came into consideration."

24 ... Nf5xg7

"The reader is welcome to take a look at 24...Kxg7 25 Nxf5+..."



25 R @ g8+
 "Regains a queen, but Black is left with a fierce array of pieces in hand."

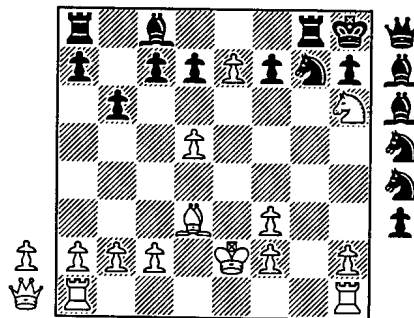
25 ... Qd8xg8
 26 Ne7xg8 R @ e8+
 27 P @ e7!

"The doomed knight still performs a useful defensive function! It looks as if the impetus has gone from White's counter-attack, but things are far from simple."

27 ... Re8xg8
 28 N @ h6!

"Probably the best move at this stage, which I decided upon after much

thought: the simple threat is Nxf7 smothered mate." Smothered mates are quite common in drop games.



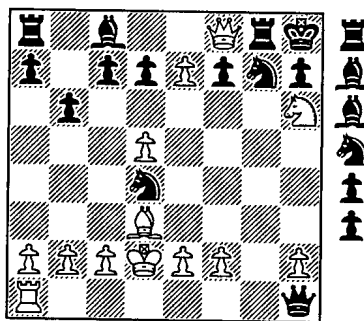
28 ... N @ d4+
 29 Ke2-d1

"The only move, I think. The tension was nearly killing me by now, but as it turned out I did not have long to wait."

29 ... Q @ f6
 30 Q @ f8

"Yippeeeeeee! Not only having another look at the f-pawn, but also threatening Qxg8 mate. The queen is of course immune from capture."

30 ... Qf6xf3+
 31 P @ e2 Qf3xh1+
 32 Kd1-d2



"The critical position. I could see no ultimate profit [for Black] in a check by dropping a knight, and noticed that 32...B@b4+ 33 c3 Rxf8 34 exf8Q+ Bxf8 35 R@g8 mate allows a blast on the trumpets and the thunderous applause of an appreciative chess world. I do not know why, but Paul's reply did not cross my mind."

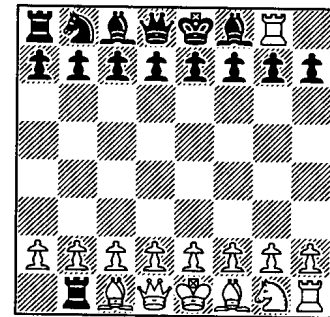
32 ... B @ g5+!!
 33 Resigns!!

"Both moves deserve at least two exclamations. 33 e3 leads to mate after 33...N@f3+ and 33 Kc3 loses to 33...B@d2+. I do not regret the result - only that the wonderful game did not last longer!"

PROOF GAMES

Peter Fayers has taken up Peter Coast's **Magnetic Chess** challenge (VC 58 page 69). *The Problemist* should appear before we do, but in any case Stephen Emmerson, who edits the relevant column, has kindly given us permission to quote.

63 - Peter Fayers, after Peter Coast
The Problemist, January 2009



After Black's 8th, Magnetic Chess

Alain Brobecker has been looking at George Jelliss's **Guardian Chess** (ECV 2 page 72), which is based on the unique array NQRBBRKN which leaves all men guarded in the initial position (Black mirrors White on the file as usual). He programmed a computer to find unique games with various properties, and offers us three original problems: find the unique games ending in 3...Qd4 mate (64), in a rook mate on White's fourth move (65), and in 4...Qxg1 mate (66).

Noam Elkies used the problem-solving program Popeye to find all the Fool's Mates in **Einstein Chess** (pieces mutate Q to R to B to N to P on moving normally and P to N to B to R to Q on capturing), and confirms that last time's five are the only ones. He also found a delightfully unique game ending in mate by e.p. capture on Black's fourth move, which I accepted as our 67 only to discover that Alain Brobecker had already found it and sent it to *The Problemist*, where it will appear in January. Once again, Stephen Emmerson has kindly given us permission to quote.

Answers on page 87.

THE END IS NIGH !

by Paul Byway

Solutions to competition 34

#215 6 Kc7 axb4 Rxa3 Rd3 Nd4 Nc2 mate.

#216 10 Be2 b5 b4 Bb5 bxa3 axb2 a3 b1R Rd1 Ba4 mate.

#217 8 Ke6 g5 g4 g3 gxf2 f1Q Nf6 Ne4 mate. I must apologise for a missing White rook (h1) in this diagram. Fortunately it had no effect on the play and solution.

#218 8 Bd7 Nxf2 Nd3 Kd6 Ke5 Kf4 Ke3 Ba4 mate.

#219 6 Bd7 Nxe5 Ng4 Rc8 Rxc3 Rc1 mate.

#220 7 e4 exd5 d6 Nf3 Nxe5 Bb5 Nxf7 mate.

#221 1 Ch10 Ee8 2 Ce10 Eg6 3 Ke1 Ei8 4 Cb10 Eg6 5 Cb8 and wins, showing how to round up an elephant.

#222 1 Kf2 Ke9 2 Pd7 Ke10 3 Pd7 Ke9 (if 3...Kd10 4 Cd3+ Ke10 5 Pd9) 4 Ce3 Ea8 5 Ce1 Ec6 6 Kf3 Ke10 7 Pd9 Ea8 10 Ee3+ Ee8 9 Cxe8 wins.

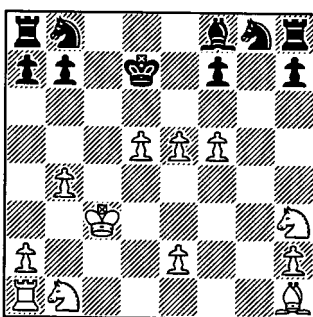
John has sent me a copy of Alain Dekker's comments on Xiangqi (see page 77 - JDB) with which I broadly agree. Are the openings simpler than Chess? I think our lack of deep knowledge may account for that. Certainly XQ is more of a skirmish while Chess can sometimes be a siege. I find it curious that a good balance of forces was achieved in XQ by a process of general weakening. In Chess it was quite otherwise.

The current scores:-

FG 160, IR 135, JB 68, RC 59, PW 35, CL 24, RT 19.

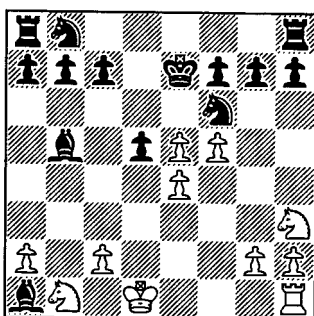
Competition 35 in this issue contains an Italian mate, but the "Scottish" solution is also quite crisp. (Most of Paul's material comes from AISE tournaments, where the "Italian rule" was in force and a move giving premature check was illegal, but even under the "Scottish" rule, where such a move merely terminates the series, there would normally have been an ordinary mate next turn. - JDB)

#223 Fontana - Simoncini (1987)



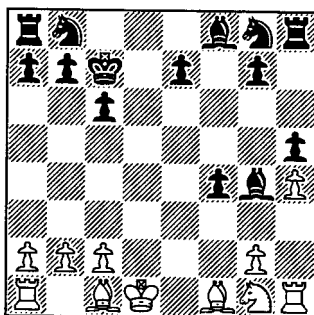
Black wins (series 8)

#224 Fontana - Albrizio (1987)



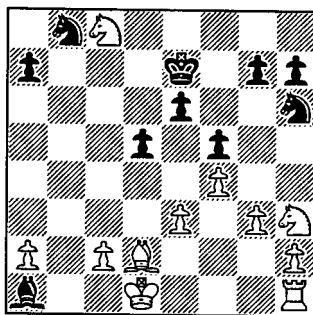
White wins (series 7)

#225 Litigio - Fraczek (1991)



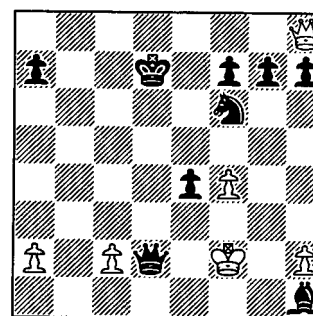
White wins (series 7)

#226 Gallozzi - Sarale (1984)



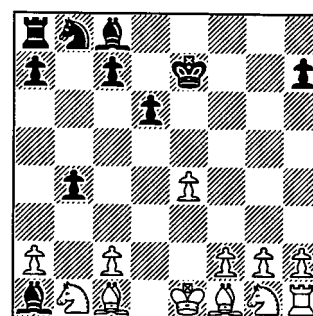
Black wins (series 8)

#227 Fontana - Guerrini (1986)



White wins (series 9)

#228 Davide - Brusca (1987)



White wins (series 7)

#229 Cannon + Pawn #22

10	.	.	.	:	:	:	.	.	.
9	.	.	.	:	:	:	.	.	.
8	.	.	k	:	:	:	.	.	.
7	.	.	P	:	:	:	.	.	.
6	.	.	.	:	:	:	.	.	.
5	.	.	c	:	:	:	.	.	.
4	.	.	.	:	:	:	.	.	.
3	.	.	C	:	:	:	.	.	.
2	.	.	.	:	:	K	.	.	.
1	.	.	.	:	:	:	.	.	.

Red to play and win

#230 Cannon + Pawn #23

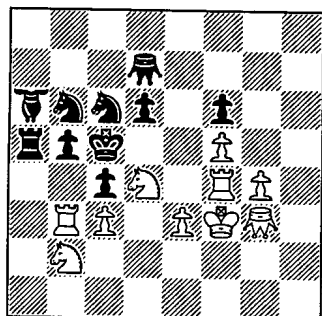
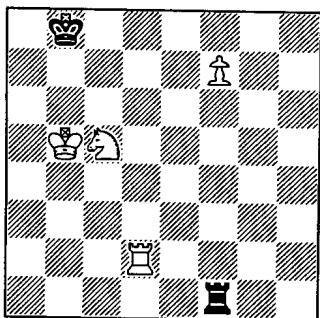
10	.	.	.	:	:	c	.	.	.
9	.	.	.	:	:	:	.	.	.
8	.	.	.	:	:	k	.	.	.
7	.	.	.	:	:	P	.	.	.
6	.	.	.	:	:	:	.	.	.
5	.	.	.	:	:	:	.	.	.
4	.	.	.	:	:	:	.	.	.
3	.	.	K	:	:	E	.	.	.
2	.	.	.	:	:	:	.	.	.
1	.	.	.	:	:	C	.	.	.

Red to play and win

BOOK REVIEW

Scachia Ludus is a handsomely produced 617-page book containing a selection of papers on the history of chess edited by Hans Holländer and Ulrich Schädler. Unfortunately nine of the book's thirteen papers are in German, and my appeal last time for a German speaker to help me review it has borne no fruit. Even so, let me do what I can.

One paper in English that is of relevance to us is Yuri Averbakh's *The History of Shatranj*. This extends over 58 pages and contains 142 examples, 37 of which are not given by Murray. Averbakh has done work himself in this field, both in solving the famous ending of as-Suli (he credits some computer work by myself, but while this did indeed dot the final "i" Averbakh had already rediscovered everything that mattered) and in studying the manuscript of Abu'l-Fath. This was not known to Murray and I was surprised to see some of the examples from it given Murray page numbers, but these were positions which had been repeated in other manuscripts.



Two positions from the paper are shown above. The first is given as from a game Rabrab - Abu'n-Na'am,

where Black played 1...Rxf7 and White forced an elegant win by "bare king". The second, which is from the manuscript by Abu'l-Fath and is not given by Murray, is a composition by Abu'n-Na'an, and is a brilliant piece of work in the "blood and thunder" style (fers on d7 and g3, alfil on a6). Solutions at the bottom on the right.

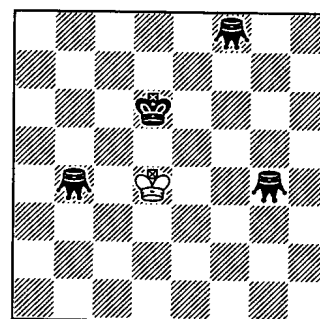
Of the papers in German, one of obvious relevance to us is *Antike Brettspiele und frühe Schachvarianten* by Ulrich Schädler. This extends over 48 pages and concludes with a section "Zitierte Literatur" listing 145 items, five-sixths of which postdate Murray. The first seven illustrations show games which are mentioned in *ECV 2* (the sixth only in passing), though there are differences of detail in relation to the "Grande Acedrex" of the Alfonso manuscript and there may be differences elsewhere as well. The last four illustrations are captioned "Ouranomachia" or "Metromachia", and may refer to games related to Rhythmomachia. If any reader can write about this paper with proper authority, or can identify material relevant to us elsewhere in the book, I shall be very happy to publish a supplementary review in a future *VC*.

The book is published by Editions feenschach-phénix in Aachen (bernd ellinghoven, Königstraße 3, D-52064 Aachen, be.fee@t-online.de, English spoken), and is seen as Book 1 of a series on chess history. The price is 64 euros, or 164 euros for a limited "de luxe" edition bound in morocco and signed by the editors, and payment is possible via Paypal to the e-mail address above.

ISOLATED PAWNS

Ecila (*VC* 54 pages 152-5). A recent browse through *Abstract Games* reminded me of its photograph of Parton's original design, copied from *The Birmingham Post* of 9 September 1957 (*AG* 8 page 10). It shows a framework of four horizontal boards, each with a hollow centre and a 2x2 playing area in each corner, grouped in two pairs, thus neatly giving a 2x2x2 array of 2x2x2 cubes. The *Post* reporter did not find the game easy.

King and ferses against king. Noam Elkies has proved the result, to me most surprising, that a king which is accompanied by just *two* ferses can force stalemate against a bare king (more about this next time). A detail of the analysis alerted him to yet another kind of positional draw with K v 3F (see *VC* 58 page 61):



Here 1 **Ke4** forces 1...**Ke6** else Fg4 falls, then 2 **Kd4** forces 2...**Kd6** else Fb4 falls, and we are back where we started.

SOLUTIONS

Proof Games (page 85). **63** (Fayers after Coast): solution held over until it has appeared in *The Problemist*.

64 (Brobecker): 1 f3 c5 2 Kf2 Qd6 3 Ke3 Qd4.

65 (Brobecker): 1 f4 Ng6 2 f5 Kh8 3 fxc6 fxc6 4 Rxf8.

66 (Brobecker): 1 f3 c6 2 Kf2 Qxh2 3 Rg1 Bb6+ 4 Kf1 Qxg1. Although they were discovered by computer, these (and **67**) are within the capacity of a human solver.

67 (Brobecker): solution held over.

Shatranj (alongside). First position, after 1...Rxf7: 2 Rd8+ Kc7 (else 3 Rd7+) 3 Ne6+ (but now 3 Rd7+ Rxd7 4 Nxd7 is only drawn because Black can immediately bare White's king in return by 4...Kxd7) Kb7 4 Rf8! Re7/Rh7 (best) 5 Rf7! Rxf7 6 Nd8+.

Second position: 1 Rxb5+ Rxb5 2 Ne6+ Fxe6 (if 2...Kd5 then 3 Nc7+ Kc5 4 Rxc4+ with mate after 4...Nxc4 5 Na4 and 4...Axc4 5 Nd3) 3 Rxc4+ Nxc4 (3...Axc4 4 Nd3+ etc) 4 Na4+ Kd5 5 e4+ Ke5 6 Ff4 mate. I suspect that 1 Rb4 may also win, but it certainly doesn't force mate in six.

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There are several contributions from readers this time, and my intended survey of Václav Kotěšovec's researches into variant chess endings has had to be postponed. However, one thing that must be reported straight away is that the **win with rook against bishop on a 6x6 board**, which I credited last time to Václav, had been reported back in 2004 by **Marc Bourzutschky**. Marc had told me about this at the time, but it had failed to register, and I had forgotten about it until Noam Elkies recently reminded me. My apologies.

Mark reported that the ending was won on a 6x6, 6x7, or 6x8 board, but only drawn on a 6x9 or 7x7 (the latter regardless of which set of squares the bishop ran on). Marc sent maximal lines on the 6x6 and 6x8, counting to capture, with the comment that he had not attempted to understand them. Having spent a fortnight last year trying to solve a relatively easy case, I have every sympathy. The lines will be found alongside.

VC 60 is scheduled for April, and copy date is **March 1**.

BCVS NOTICES

AGM 2009. Members are reminded that nominations for office, and any resolutions for the AGM, should reach me as secretary by **March 1**. As far as I know, the existing officers are willing to continue, but if anyone else would like to join the team we shall be delighted to explain what is involved.

George Jelliss has moved (real and 'e'), and **Sue** has e-moved. See below.

David's Encyclopedia files. If any reader is taking a car to Switzerland, and would be willing to take David's *Encyclopedia* files to the Musée du Jeu, would he or she please get in touch? The Musée is at La Tour-de-Peilz, on the lake side between Vevey and Montreux, and is well worth a visit both for itself and for its lovely setting. The files are in five boxes roughly the size of 12-bottle wine cases, and weigh around 70kg in total. They are now in Harpenden, 40km north of London near M1 and A1(M).

Kb1/Rc1 v Kb3/Bd3 on 6x6, win in 42 by 1 Ka1 Bc4 2 Re1 Bd3 3 Re5 Kc3 4 Ka2 Kd4 5 Re1 Kc3 6 Ka3 Bf5 7 Re5 Bd3 8 Rc5+ Kd4 9 Kb4 Be4 10 Rc1 Kd3 11 Rd1+ Kc2 12 Rd4 Bd3 13 Rd6 Bf1 14 Re6 Bd3 15 Re5 Bf1 16 Ra5 Kd3 17 Kb3 Kd4 18 Ra4+ Kd3 19 Ra6 Kd4 20 Rd6+ Kc5 21 Rf6 Be2 22 Rf4 Kd5 23 Kc3 Ke5 24 Rb4 Kd5 25 Ra4 Bf1 26 Rd4+ Ke5 27 Rd1 Bb5 28 Kb4 Bc6 29 Kc4 Be4 30 Re1 Kf5 31 Kd4 Bc2 32 Rf1+ Ke6 33 Rc1 Bb3 34 Rb1 Bc2 35 Rb5 Kf6 36 Kd5 Bd1 37 Rb2 Bf3+ 38 Kd4 Ke6 39 Rb1 Kd6 40 Rb6+ Bc6 41 Ra6 Ke6 42 Rxc6+.

EVENTS

15 entrants at **Guildford** in December played Extinction, Rifle, Pocket Knight, Jump, Avalanche, Static, Three-Check, and Progressive. Mike Smart 7/8, Ian Deswarte 6, Trevor Jones, Alain Dekker, Julien Shepley 5.

Hastings on New Year's Eve had 12 competitors, 6 spectators: Pocket Knight, Extinction, Static, Avalanche, Rifle, Three-Check, Losing. Julien Shepley 6/7, Jens Nebel 5, Nigel Donovan, Nigel Dennis, Ian Deswarte, Ian Parsonage, Thomas Senior 4.

Gela Guraspashvili's **Free Chess** site
<www.freechess.ge>

now appears to be accessible again.

Kb1/Rc1 v Kb3/Bd3 on 6x8, win in 110 by 1 Ka1 Bc4 2 Rh1 Bd5 3 Rh5 Be4 4 Rh3+ Kc2 5 Ka2 Bf5 6 Re3 Bd3 7 Rg3 Kc3 8 Ka3 Kd4 9 Kb2 Be2 10 Kc2 Bb5 11 Kd2 Ke4 12 Rb3 Bf1 13 Rb1 Ba6 14 Kc3 Be2 15 Re1 Ke3 16 Kc2 Kf2 17 Kd2 Bg4 18 Re5 Kf3 19 Kd3 Kf4 20 Re1 Bh5 21 Rg1 Bg4 22 Rh1 Be6 23 Rf1+ Ke5 24 Ke3 Kd5 25 Rd1+ Kc4 26 Ke4 Kc3 27 Rd3+ Kb4 28 Kd4 Ba2 29 Rg3 Bb1 30 Rh3 Ba2 31 Rh1 Kb3 32 Kd3 Kb4 33 Kc2 Be6 34 Rh4+ Kc5 35 Kd2 Kd5 36 Kc3 Kc5 37 Rh6 Ba2 38 Kd3 Bb1+ 39 Kc3 Kd5 40 Rh5+ Ke4 41 Rh1 Ba2 42 Re1+ Kf4 43 Kd4 Kf3 44 Rf1+ Ke2 45 Rh1 Be6 46 Ke4 Kd2 47 Rh6 Bb3 48 Kd4 Bc2 49 Rh2+ Kd1 50 Kc3 Bb1 51 Rd2+ Kc1 52 Ke2 Bg6 53 Rd6 Be4 54 Ra6 Kc2 55 Ke3 Bd5 56 Ra5 Be6 57 Rc5+ Kd1 58 Kd3 Bb3 59 Rc6 Ba4 60 Rd6 Bb5+ 61 Ke3+ Kc2 62 Rd5 Bf1 63 Rc5+ Kd1 64 Rc6 Bh3 65 Rf6 Kc2 66 Kd4 Bg4 67 Rf2+ Kb3 68 Kd3 Be6 69 Rf4 Ba5 70 Kd4 Bc6 71 Rf5 Ba4 72 Rc5 Kb2 73 Rc4 Kb3 74 Kc5 Bc6 75 Rg4 Bh1 76 Kd4 Kc2 77 Rg3 Kd2 78 Rh3 Bc6 79 Rh2+ Kc1 80 Kc3 Kd1 81 Rd2+ Ke1 82 Kd3 Kf1 83 Ke3 Kgl 84 Rf2 Bd5 85 Ke2 Bc6 86 Ke1 Be4 87 Rf4 Bc6 88 Rf6 Be4 89 Ke2 Kg2 90 Ke3 Bd5 91 Rg6+ Kh3 92 Rd6 Bg2 93 Rh6+ Kg3 94 Rg6+ Kh3 95 Kf4 Bd5 96 Rd6 Bc4 97 Kf3 Kh2 98 Rd2+ Kh3 99 Rd1 Kh2 100 Rd6 Kgl 101 Rd2 Bb3 102 Rf2 Bd1+ 103 Kg3 Bh5 104 Rf5 Bg6 105 Rg5 Bd3 106 Rd5 Be2 107 Rc5 Ba6 108 Rc1+ Bf1 109 Re1 Kh1 110 Rxf1 mate.

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