

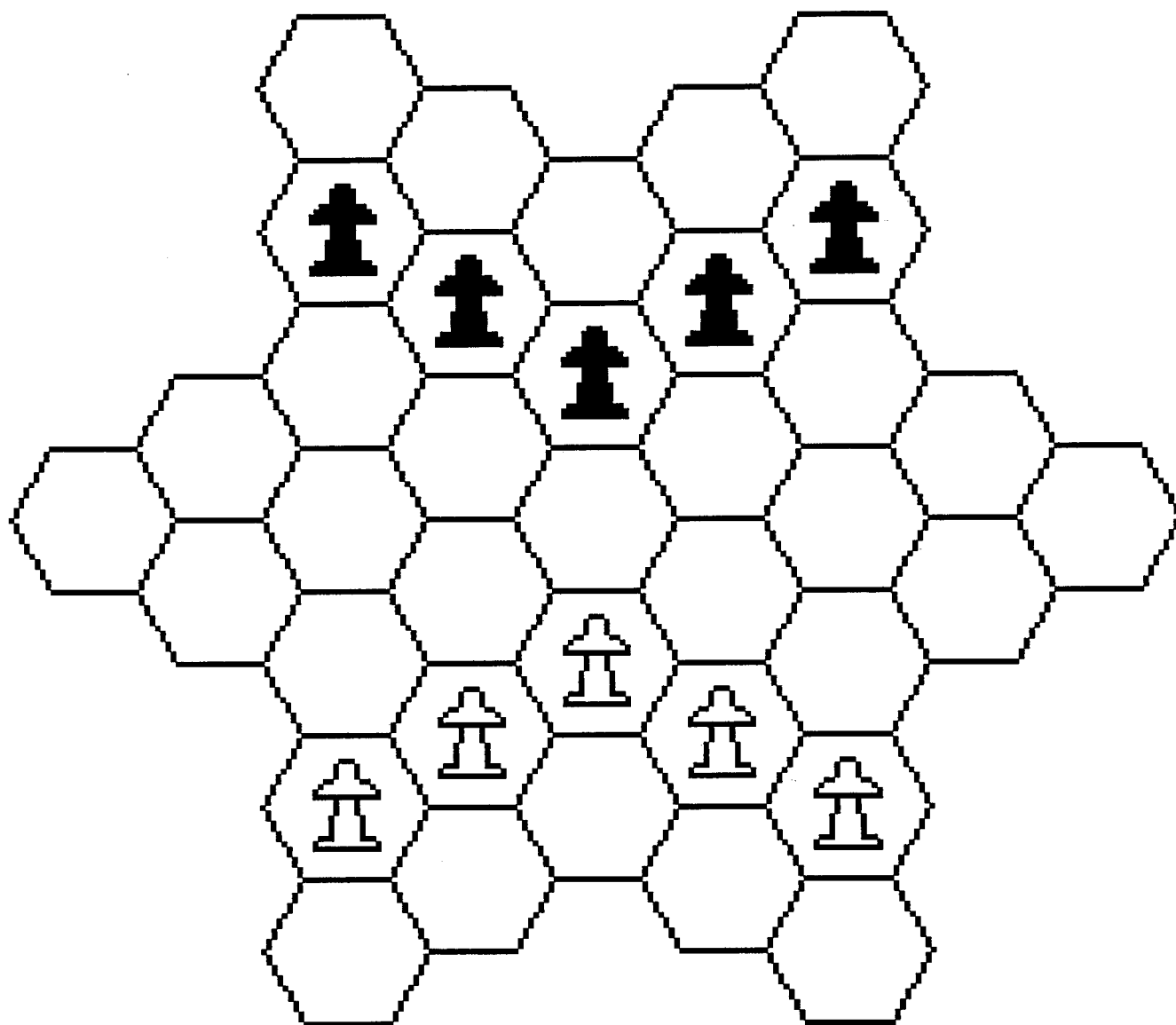
Variant Chess

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Polgar Superstar Chess

Nam Dinh Chess

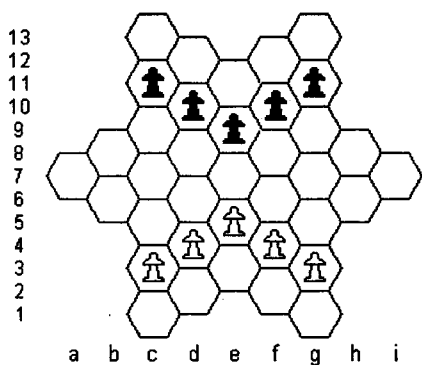
Grasshopper tours

POLGAR SUPERSTAR CHESS

material from Árpád Ruzs

Árpád Ruzs has alerted me to **Polgar Superstar Chess**, a recent invention of László Polgár. It is a small-board hex variant, and whereas most variants complicate the game, this one appears consciously to simplify it.

The board and initial configuration are as shown below :



In addition, each player has one each of king, queen, rook, bishop, and knight. These are placed on c1-e3-g1 and c13-e11-g13, one at a time and alternately, as the players wish.

King moves one cell in any direction (so a king away from the edge has six moves).

Rook moves as a normal rook, but vertically only. There is no castling.

Bishop moves similarly, but along the lines angled at 60 degrees to the vertical. A bishop can reach any cell on the board, and is much more powerful than a rook (K + B can force mate against a bare K, K + R cannot).

Queen moves as rook and bishop combined.

Knight moves two cells in any direction and one cell at 60 degrees, or vice versa, and may jump. A knight on the central cell e7 commands 12 cells (f12, g11, h8, and so on round).

Pawn moves one cell forward, captures at 60 degrees. An initial pawn-two is permitted, but there is no *en passant* capture. Promotion is on the far edge, c13-e11-g13 for White, and a pawn which captures its way on to the b or h file must capture back towards the centre if it is to promote.

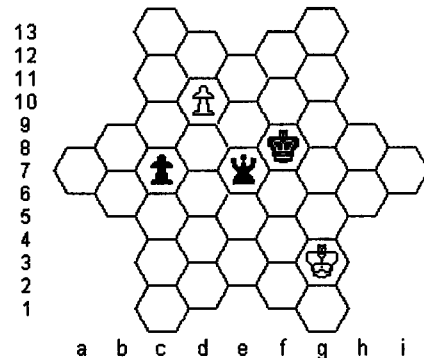
In general, I approve of simple variants using simple men, but I do wonder if the restriction of the rook to a single file has not carried things a little too far. However, a World Championship is due to take place in Pardubice later this month (see

<<http://polgarstarchess.blogspot.com>>

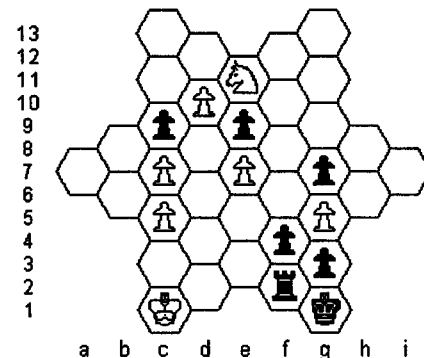
for further details), and I have asked Árpád to send me some game scores for possible publication. In the meantime, here are some endgame studies (all by Árpád himself except for 5, by him and Csaba Schenkerik) to illustrate some tactical nuances. I have slightly simplified study 4.

- In 1, d12Q will be met by ...Qc6+.
- In 2, White must start by releasing the stalemate.
- In 3, only White's bishop is free to move.
- In 4, Black threatens ...Nf8 mate.
- In 5, Black threatens mate in two by ...Ne7 and ...Ng11.
- In 6, Ke11, Kg11, or Kg13?

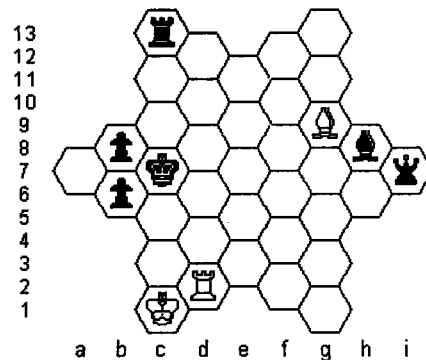
Answers on page 119.



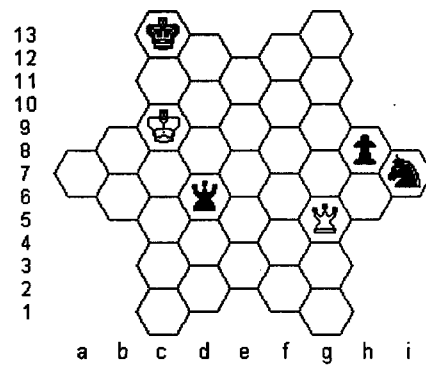
1 - White to play and hold the draw



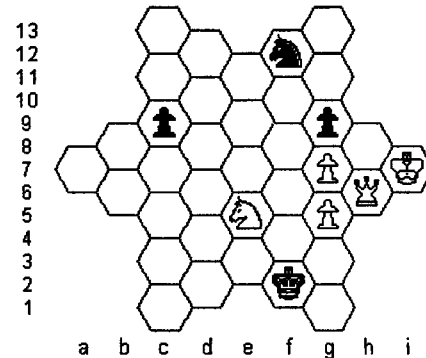
2 - White to play and win



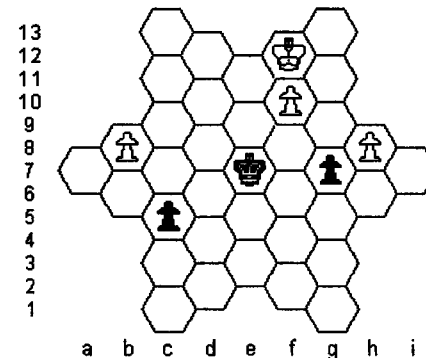
3 - White to play and hold the draw



4 - White to play and hold the draw



5 - White to play and hold the draw



6 - White to play and win

NAM DINH CHESS

One of the books formerly owned by David Pritchard which is now in our possession is Miloš Zapletal's *Velká kniha deskových her*, which might be translated as "The Big Book of Board Games". It is a large-format popular book, published in Praha (Prague) in 1991 in an edition of 65,000 copies, and as with most books for the popular market its coverage is patchy and nearly everything in it can be found with more direct authority elsewhere. However, it devotes nearly thirty of its 184 pages to variant forms of chess (three times as many as it devotes to chess itself), and I was delighted to see that these included "Šachový Mlýn" by our own Peter Fayers ("Chessboard Morris" in our money, see *ECV 2*, page 305). Truly, the prophet is not without honour.

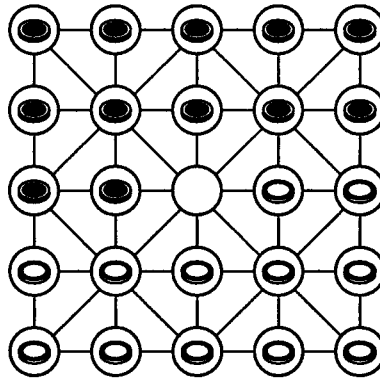
And the book does claim at least one game not to be found elsewhere. Under a heading "Vietnamese Chess" is a game, included on the authority of one Z. Hartmann who reported having seen it in play on several occasions, which is described as wholly unknown in Europe and whose rules are prefaced by a heading in large displayed italics:

Here are the rules of this game, which have never before been written down in the European games literature

Hartmann wrote that his informants came from "Nam-Dinh", which my atlas shows as a city on the Red River some 85-90 kilometres downstream from Hanoi, and since we already have at least one "Vietnamese Chess" in the literature I am going to call this variant **Nam Dinh Chess**. It is not in *ECV 2* and there appears to be no reference to it in David's files, but I don't think Czech was one of his languages, and it could be that he passed over it without realising that it was rather different from the derivative material featured in the rest of the book. I missed it myself the first time I went through the book.

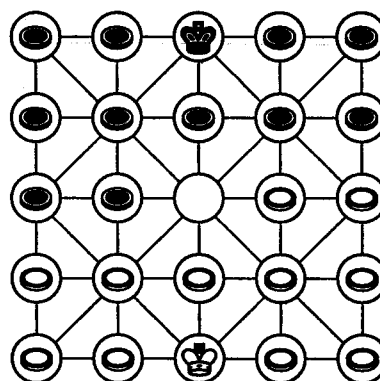
Nam Dinh Chess appears to be a combination of chess and the ancient

game of *Alquerque*, which dates back at least to the 13th century (Murray, *A History of Chess*, page 615). This is a 12-against-12 draughts (checkers) game played on a 5x5 board:



Men move one step at a time along the given lines (in either direction) into an empty space, and capture an enemy man by jumping over it into an empty space immediately beyond; capturing is compulsory, and more than one man may be taken in a turn. The objective is to capture all the opponent's men, or to block his remaining men so that he is unable to move.

(I don't know whether *Alquerque* is still played, but when our son was travelling through India and south-east Asia in 1988-90 he sent home a game which he had found in a market, consisting of a brass board to this design plus a box containing twenty little metal goats and four tigers. No accompanying rules, alas.)



Nam Dinh Chess converts this into a chess game by replacing the men on c1 and c5 by kings (the board in the book is shown rotated through 180 degrees, but I am using our normal orientation) and making some radical alterations to the rules.

Men move as before, but may not capture.

Kings move as men, but capture by jumping over one of their own men and landing on an enemy man immediately beyond (so, in the game array, White can play Kc1xa3 – or at least he would be able to do so if the move did not put his own king in check).

Victory is by giving mate or stalemate, and a player also loses if he continuously repeats the same few moves.

According to Hartmann, ordinary draughtsmen are used for the men and chess pawns for the kings, which suggests to me that this is a modern invention using Western equipment, quite possibly having purely local currency, rather than an indigenous survival. My first thought was that the rules created nonsense, because d2-c3 gave an immediate stalemate, but of course it is not so: now that the man on d2 has moved, White's king no longer guards e3, and Black's king can take it. Hartmann in fact says that the opening stages are relatively clumsy, the middle game demands a lot of thought, and he has seen very few drawn endings.

How playable is the game? *Alquerque* itself appears to be a win for White, though I am not aware of a definitive computer evaluation (the game is computationally less demanding than checkers, so one could certainly be done). Nam Dinh Chess is likewise within the scope of modern computer analysis. In the ending, king and one man against king is only a draw, but some last-minute analysis suggests that king and two men can force a win (king and three men certainly can). However, the longest win appears to take over twenty moves and the rest of the magazine is already full, so we'll have to come back to this next time.

So, a modest little game, probably played only within a limited area and certainly amenable to definitive analysis; but it has some novel features, it appears to offer a last-stage endgame win which is more subtle than most, and I thought it was well worth one of our pages.

BENEDICT CHESS : YOUR MOVE OR MINE?

by Andrew Perkis

Benedict Chess games currently in progress on the Scheming Mind website should help clarify whether White has a forced win. As this will almost certainly prove to be the case, I decided it might be worth trying out one of the fixes suggested by Dan Troyka. This is the use of the Swap Option, which is commonly used when playing Connection Games. In most of these games the first player has an advantage so huge that only an inferior first move will enable the game to be reasonably well balanced.

This rule always seemed a bit of a cop out to me, but I think applying it to Benedict may be a means to launch the game into opening scenarios that have a lot more play in them. It works very straightforwardly. White moves, and then the second player elects whether to be Black (and reply to White's move) or to change colours (adopting the given move as White).

After playing a handful of games using this rule, it is still not clear how good a fix it might be. Benedict lends itself to early Queen dominance by one player, and finding a neutral first move might not be as easy as one might think. For the time being, I can at least give some hints as to the problems involved in attempting to find that neutral first move.

Here is the most interesting swap-option game I've played so far. Unfortunately, it is no less short, and ultimately one sided, than are most Benedict games using standard rules. It was played across the board and Alain Dekker was Black.

1 b2-b4

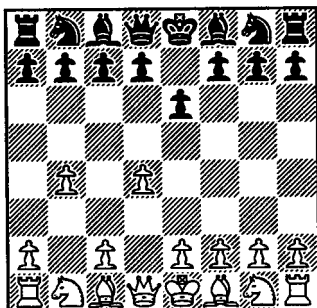
Black accepted this and played

1 ... e7-e6

2 d2-d4

(see diagram at top of next column)

This has become rather similar to the opening 1 Nc3 e6 2 d4, which gives White a winning advantage. With the Pb4 (instead of the Nc3) acting as a



shield against Bb4+, Black does get some counterplay on the Queen's wing, but, on the evidence of this game, it seems unlikely that this is enough to prevent the success of White's strategy, which is to use his dark square B to limit the Black Queen.

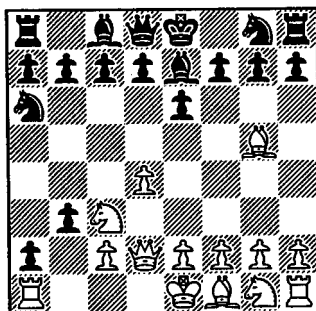
2 ... Nb8-a6 (b4)

3 Nb1-c3 b4-b3 (a2, c2)

4 Bc1-g5 (d8)

Bf8-e7 (d8, g5)

5 Qd1-d2 (c2, g5)

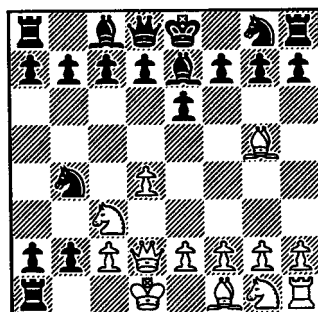


5 ... Na6-b4 (c2)

If Black plays 5...b2(a1) immediately, then 6 Qc1(a1,b2). 6...Nb4(c2) now fails to Nd5(b4,c7,e7), playable here (as it is not in the game) because the WQc1 prevents the Pc2 promoting with check.

6 Ke1-d1 (c2)

b3-b2 (a1)



7 Nc3-b1!

After 7 Qc1(a1,b2) Nd3(b2,c1,f2),

Black is winning. Now the Nb1 puts a complete stop to Black's attack, while the freedom of the White Queen (as compared to Black's) rapidly decides the game in White's favour.

7 ... f7-f6 (g5)

This loses quickly, but after 7...f5 immediately, 8 Bh4(e7), with the threat of Qg5, decides at least as quickly.

8 Qd2-d3 (h7)

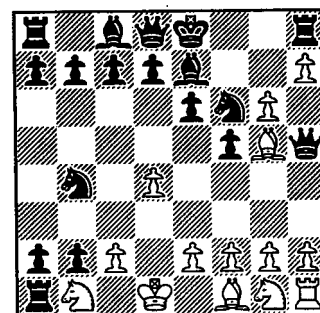
f6-f5

9 Qd3-h3 (f5)

g7-g6 (f5)

10 Qh3-h5 (g5, g6)

Ng8-f6 (h5)



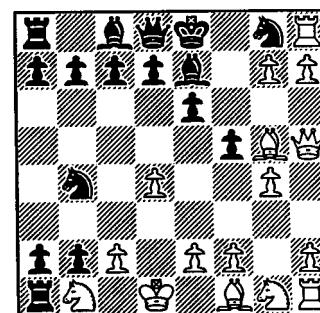
11 g6-g7 (h8)

Nf6-g8

Forced.

12 g2-g4 (h5)

Resigns



An amusing symmetry. Black has been forced to adopt exactly the same defence as White. The difference is that the Nb1, unlike the Ng8, is not in demand elsewhere.

In a later email game against Dan Troyka, I tried 1...d6 in reply to 1 b4, and was duly crushed after 2 Nc3 Qd7 3 e3. Only later still did I realize that Black's only chance here is to mobilize his Queen really quickly. Unfortunately, however, this looks likely to be too effective. 1 b4 c5(b4)

already seems to create the circumstance for a dominant Black Queen. If 2 e3, then 2...Qb6 cuts the White Queen out of the game. (This is also the case after 2 d4(c5) Qb6.)

So, although at first I thought 1 b4 was unplayable because it was too strong (and Black could simply adopt it), it now looks as though it's unplayable because it's too weak!

The only other opening we tried was 1 d3. At first it seemed that 1...e6 gave Black a better game. Eventually we discovered that 2 Qd2 is an adequate response. However the disadvantage is that, with best play, the game then seems to fizzle out in a quick draw: 2...Qg5(d2,g2) 3 Nf3(d2,g5) g1Q(f1,f2,g5,h1,h2) and both players are condemned to a perpetual re-flipping of g5. So here's another difficulty in finding the right first move to give a balanced game. We want a balanced game, yes, but not an immediate draw. Finding an opening that gets us there is a difficult task, even when using the swap option. Hopefully it's not a wild goose chase!

We had a brief correspondence after Andrew had sent me this, in which Andrew mentioned that Benedict Chess was an interesting curio, fascinating to play, but that on Scheming Mind the better players have tended to drift off after a while, having become convinced that with correct play the game is a White win. Whether the "swap option", possibly after sequences of two or more moves rather than just a single move, will rescue the game remains to be seen, but even if it eventually becomes just another fully analysed curiosity it will have had its moment.

Andrew also mentioned that the game's originator Dan Troyka had said that it "should be thought of as more for fun than serious play". Well, maybe, but the same was surely said by the now unknown originator of Losing Chess, and look at the deep and subtle endgames which have come to characterize that variant; and these will remain as things of beauty, to be admired long after computers have discovered the "best play" result from the normal opening array. - JDB

TAMING THE SLIPPERY KING

A fundamental difficulty in multi-dimensional chess is that of confining and mating the king. Joe Joyce's four-dimensional **Hyperchess [Joyce]** uses a method which appears to be novel.

The first reference in the literature to four-dimensional chess appears to have been in a paper by Dawson in the December 1926 issue of the *Chess Amateur*. This presented three problems, one on a 3x3x3x3 board and the other two on a 4x4x4x4, and employed the natural analogues of two-dimensional rules: the rook moved in one dimension, the bishop simultaneously in two, a "unicorn" in three, and a "balloon" in four. The queen moved as R+Bi+U+Ba, the king similarly but one step only. No initial array was specified and the variant seems never to have become more than a vehicle for these three problems, but in principle it would appear to have been playable. In particular, K + Q v K was a win, so there was a reasonable chance of converting a modest middle-game advantage into a win by playing for the ending and promoting a pawn.

(If king and queen are allowed to move in any number of dimensions simultaneously, K + Q v K is a win on a board of size up to 5x5x5x... in any number of dimensions. The stronger side simply moves its king to the central cell, and lets the queen do the rest. However, mating a king other than by pushing it to a side face and plonking a guarded queen directly in front of it is almost impossible.)

Parton, in his *Sphinx Chess (Chessical Cubism, 1971)*, adopted a different approach. He set up a 3x3 array of 4x4 boards, and a piece was allowed to move either within a board or to the same square on another board. So, supposing the boards to be numbered from A1 to C3, a bishop on square c4 on board A1 could move to squares b3-a2 and d3 on board A1, and to square c4 on boards B2 and C3 (always supposing any intermediate squares to be empty). This gave a more restricted bishop, queen, and

king than the 1926 rules, while there was no analogue of the unicorn and balloon at all. The knight was replaced by a "centaura" which moved like a knight on a board and like a queen between them. But it was now impossible for K + Q to force mate against a bare king, and even Parton's suggested restriction of the kings to boards B1 and B3 didn't help. Presumably in compensation, Parton stated that perpetual check could be claimed as a win.

Joe Joyce's approach is basically that of Parton, though with a 4x4 array of boards and many differences of detail. "Diagonals are evil," he writes. "The only way to make the game playable was to dump most of them." It has to be said that an unfortunate error in the 1926 paper bears him out, one of the problems being meaningless because the Black king is already standing in check from a unicorn. Not only was this overlooked by Dawson, but Anthony Dickins appears not to have noticed it when quoting the problem in *A Guide to Fairy Chess (1967/69)*.

To control the king and make mate possible, Joe introduces the idea of a "held king": when a player moves his king to the same 4x4 board as is already occupied by his opponent's king, his opponent's king (though not his own) is "held" and cannot leave that board. If his own king leaves the board and his opponent's king follows it to its new board, it is now his own king which is "held".

There are many other differences from Parton's game and indeed from what happens in normal chess, and although these differences may seem rather arbitrary they were apparently inspired by practical experience. In particular, the bishop can make a one-step rook move to change colour, the knight slides two-and-one without jumping, and the pawn is allowed a sideways move and captures with its normal move. The full rules can be found on the Chess Variants web site

<www.chessvariants.org>

and there is a Zillions implementation. For those who prefer playing against people, Joe is

<mjjoyce3@verizon.net>

and would welcome opponents.

HOSTAGE CHESS

material from Paul Yearout

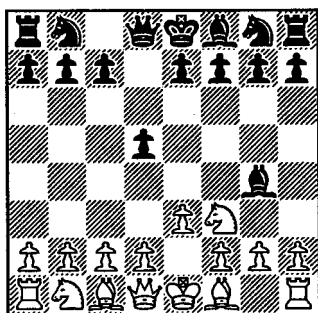
Paul Yearout, who is a competent and experienced Hostage Chess player in a way that I am not, wasn't too impressed with the game I printed in VC 59, and I should have made it clear that the computer was playing at its default time limit of ten seconds per move and that its human opponent was deliberately restricting himself to a minute or so per move in consequence. In particular, Paul criticized the way in which both players vacated squares adjacent to or a knight's move away from their kings, thereby facilitating "drop" attacks by their opponents. He has sent me a game of his own against the computer, which strikes me as being of a distinctly higher standard. Paul was playing Black.

A brief 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.

1 Ng1-f3 d7-d5
2 e2-e3

I would not expect this line to feature in a normal openings book, and infer that the program did not have access to such a book. Even so, I am surprised that the program's position evaluator should have identified this as White's best move. It does nothing to contest the centre, and blocks in White's QB.

2 ... Bc8-g4

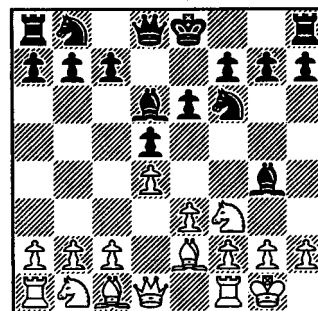


I am irresistibly reminded of the famous Morphy game at the Paris Opera, when Black played the same move after 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 and lost in spectacular fashion. But there, White was exerting pressure, and Black needed to play carefully. Here, White has already ceded the initiative, and Black promptly takes over.

3 Bf1-e2

If this is indeed White's best move, his opening has gone badly astray.

3 ... e7-e6
4 d2-d4 Bf8-d6
5 0-0 Ng8-f6



6 Bc1-d2

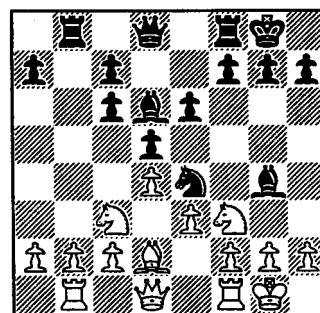
The position is reminiscent of those which arise in a typical orthodox Queen's Gambit Declined (1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5) with colours reversed. In this line of the QGD, Black normally plays ...Nbd7 to support his knight on f6, and has great difficulty in developing his QB. Here, White gets his Q-side pieces off the back rank by using d2 for his bishop and c3 for his knight, but while this provides at least a superficial solution to his development problem it does nothing to strengthen his K-side against the coming storm.

6 ... Nb8-c6
7 Be2-b5

This and the next move strike me as a crass positional misjudgement. The bishop was doing a useful if unglamorous job on e2; why move it away?

The answer can only be that the program attaches too much importance to the breaking-up of Black's pawn formation after ...Bxc6. In fact Black has no vulnerable targets in this part of the board, and even if he had White is in no position to exploit them. All he is doing, apart from wasting time and weakening his K-side, is presenting Black with an open file for his QR.

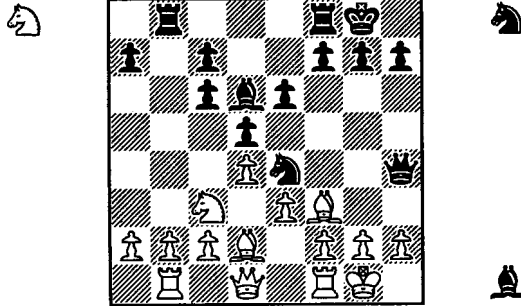
7 ... 0-0
8 Bb5xc6 b7xc6
9 Nb1-c3 Ra8-b8
10 Ra1-b1 Nf6-e4



11 (N~B) B@e2

Black was threatening 11...Nxd2 12 Qxd2 Bxf3 ripping open White's king's position, but when a player in a passive position with level material has to ransom a piece for a purely defensive drop he might as well resign and retreat to the bar. White's only chance now is a Black blunder, and Black is not so kind as to oblige.

11 ... Bg4xf3
12 Be2xf3 Qd8-h4



13 g2-g3

The alternatives are (a) 13 h3 (N~B)B@h2+ 14 Kh1 Nxf2+ 15 Rxf2 Qxf2, when the threat of 16...N@g3+ 17 Kxh2 Nf1++ 18 Kh1 (R~N)N@g3 mate is extremely unpleasant, and (b) ransoming White's knight and dropping it on say g3, when at the very least Black has 13...f5 and all his pieces will be in play or droppable. But I must confess that if I had been White, I would have expected this move 13 g3, with Bg2 to follow, to hold things at least for the moment.

13 ... Ne4xg3!

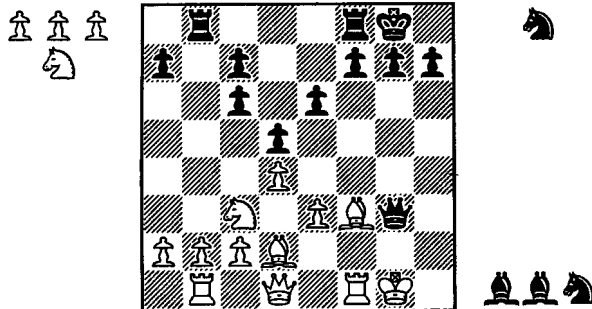
Ouch!

14 h2xg3

With hindsight, 14 fxg3, intending to meet 14...Bxg3 with 15 Qe2 defending h2, might have been better, but the simple 15...Bd6 would leave White's king wide open.

14 ... Bd6xg3

15 f2xg3 Qh4xg3+

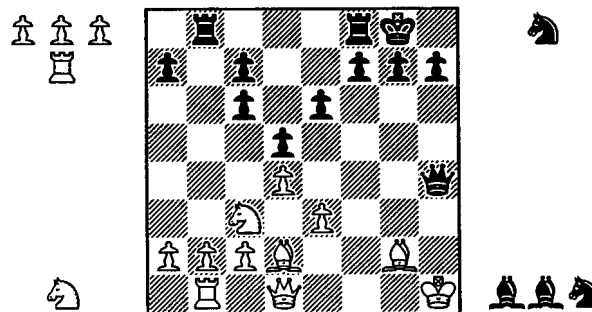


The natural move is now 16 Bg2, but it allows mate in five: 16...(N~N)N@h3+ 17 Kh1 N@f2+ 18 Rxf2 Nxf2+ 19 Kg1 Nh3+ and either 20 Kh1 (R~N)N@f2# or 20 Kf1 Qf2#. The computer presumably spotted this.

16 Kg1-h1 (N~N)N@f2+

17 Rf1xf2 Qg3xf2

18 Bf3-g2 Qf2-h4+



19 Kh1-g1

This allows a forced mate in six, and while alternatives such as 19 N@h3 N@f2+ certainly lose I don't think they allow mate in six. I infer that the computer could see five moves ahead (see note to Black's 15th move) but not six.

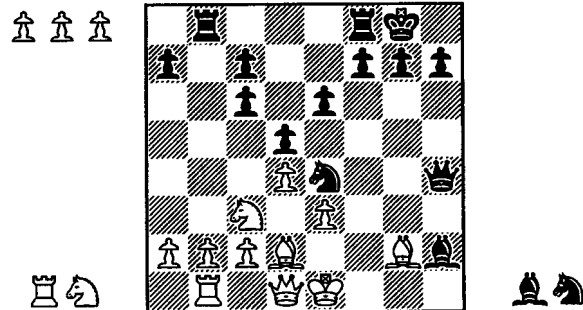
19 ... (R~B)B@h2+

20 Kg1-f1 N@g3+

21 Kf1-e1

21 Kf2 intending 21...Ne4++ 22 Kf3 is no better: 22...Qf2+ 23 Kg4 Qg3+ 24 Kh5 Qg5#.

21 ... Ng3-e4+



22 Ke1-e2

It might seem that a spite drop on g3 would drag things out one move longer, but not so: for example, 22 N@g3 Qxg3+ 23 Ke2 Qf2+ 24 Kd3 and either 24...(N~N)N@b4# or 24...(N~B)B@c4#.

22 ... Qh4-f2+

23 Ke2-d3 Qf2xd2+

24 Qd1xd2 (B~B)B@c4 mate.

To my inexpert eye, this was an excellently played game by Paul, but these days we don't expect a human opponent to smash a computer in 24 moves; how did it happen?

Obviously the absence of an openings book was unfortunate, as was the program's lack of positional sense, but orthochess programs also suffer from the latter (if to a lesser degree because the game is better understood) and they make up for it in tactical power. Here, the program appeared to be seeing only five moves or so ahead (see the note to White's 19th), and this really wasn't far enough. I understand that the program was running on a 3.6GHz Pentium 4 with a time limit of ten seconds a move; how much difference might a longer time limit have made?

In a typical orthochess middlegame position, a player not in check has perhaps forty legal moves, and a player in check has only one or two. In Hostage, once there are men awaiting ransom and dropping, the first figure may be two hundred or more, and even the second may be six or eight (see the diagrams after Black's 15th and 18th). This vastly increases the work that the computer has to do at each level of its look-ahead, and greatly reduces its horizon. Had the program been given an hour a move, it could have looked six moves ahead instead of five, but the positions at moves 2 and 7 would still have been beyond its calculating ability and it would still have had to make positional judgements.

So, in the short term, it would seem that computers won't be beating expert human opponents at Hostage.

SOME BACKGROUND TO THE BEGINNING OF "VARIANT CHESS"

a personal story by Ian Richardson

Earlier in the year, Ian asked me if I thought readers would be interested in some reminiscences about the early days of VC. Very much so, I said. - JDB

In 1988 I was 58 years old and had not encountered any variant chess. The British Championship was in Swansea that year, quite near my home in Cardigan, and I decided to enter one of the tournaments. While there, a young man called Chris introduced me to Chinese Chess. I was fascinated, and when soon afterwards I read an article by Michael Basman on Xiangqi in *Chess*, with an offer of board and booklet, and information on where to buy pieces, I took up the offer enthusiastically.

Early in 1989, Malcolm Horne put an ad in *Chess* for a "Deviant Chess Week" in Poole at Easter. This was to include Chinese Chess, so I applied. Malcolm reported that he had had a reasonable response and had booked a suitable house. I went by car, collecting Malcolm in Bridgend en route. The others arrived soon after us, by train or bus. We made for the kitchen of course. Malcolm is a vegan, so I joined him in a vegetarian meal. The others made chips! They were: Patrick Donovan, Paul Novak, and Ray Brooks (on leave from the army). After supper we had a meeting in the spacious lounge to make plans for the week. We decided to have a Xiangqi tournament in the mornings, free afternoons, and a miscellany of variants in the evening.

I found the situation so inspiring that I invented a couple of games, which we tried out. David Pritchard called in one day and encouraged me to send him my games for an Encyclopedia he was preparing (published in 1994). The variants we played most were Italian Progressive (very popular in those years before the computer ruined it) and Progressive Circe. We also played Chessgi, Avalanche, and Refusal, and on the last day Paul played three games of orthodox chess blindfold – he won two. They were all pretty strong players, but Patrick stood out: he won the Xiangqi tournament and lots of the other variants. Of course we enjoyed our free time in Poole. Some went to Brownsea Island. On the last night, I took the meat-eaters to a steak-house, and we had the sort of meal where you have to loosen your trousers round the waist!

I have no knowledge of what happened in the months following that Easter Week in 1989, but the first issue of *Variant Chess* appeared in January 1990, edited jointly by Malcolm Horne and George Jelliss. Prominent in articles and games were four out of the five members of the Poole week. George included a page of problems in a selection of variants, which I enjoyed.

At Easter 1990, issue 2 appeared, with George as sole editor, and again including contributions by Malcolm,

Patrick, and Paul. Also that Easter, Malcolm organised another variants week, this time in his home town of Exmouth. This was an international congress, including two Germans, two Finns, an Italian, a Chinese student living in Norway, Allan Brown and the excellent computer he had made, Mike Pennell, Patrick Donovan, and of course Malcolm and myself. Also present were two non-playing visitors: C. K. Lai, famous for promoting Xiangqi, and my wife, Peggy.

We were housed in two places this time. My contingent included Peggy, the Germans, the Italian, and Mike Pennell. The men, especially the Italian Carlo, thought that Peggy would be looking after the meals. She soon disabused them of this arrogant assumption: we each bought and cooked our own food, except me of course! The meetings were held in a hall in the centre of town, arranged as at Poole: Xiangqi tournament in the mornings (including Allan's computer), free afternoons, and other variants in the evening. The tournament was won, not surprisingly, by the Chinese student. C. K. Lai took the opportunity to recruit for a Chinese Chess Society (I joined, and my membership number was 007!). After the week, links were maintained. I corresponded with Mike, Patrick, Malcolm, and Raimo. I introduced Raimo to my idea of Progressive Chinese, and he used it very successfully in Finland to launch new Xiangqi clubs.

That Easter ended a very exciting year for me. At the age of 60 a new interest had come into my life, and after retirement it played a dominant role. I'm sure the appearance of *Variant Chess* served others in a similar way. Right from the start it was an excellent magazine, catering for a variety of "deviants"!

The first issue of VC named George as "Publisher and Problem Editor" and Malcolm as "Games Editor". Subsequent issues named George as "Publisher and Editor" and Malcolm as "Games Consultant", and this continued until the end of 1992 (issue 8). Peter Wood then took over and produced issues 9-20 (1993-96), after which the BCVS was formed and the present arrangements were instituted. George himself was editor of the first eight issues (issues 21-28, 1996-98) produced under them.

There had of course been predecessors, both in Britain and abroad. George Jelliss had produced Chessics, a generalised chess problem magazine, which ran to 30 issues between 1976 and 1987, while The Problemist, the journal of the British Chess Problem Society, has devoted a section to "Fairy Chess" (to us, "variant chess") problems since 1968. It had also been accompanied by a "Fairy Chess Supplement" between 1930 and 1936. This was funded by C. M. Fox and edited by T. R. Dawson, and after Fox's death it became Dawson's legendary Fairy Chess Review, which appeared regularly until his last illness in 1951 and then continued until 1958 in other hands. In its turn, the "Fairy Chess Supplement" had been created to fill the gap left when Dawson's "Fairy Chess" column in the Chess Amateur ceased with the termination of that magazine in 1930. Truly, chess variant magazines and columns in Britain have a long history. - JDB

ISOLATED PAWNS

Castling. Last time's remarks have produced an interesting response from Ian Richardson.

'A friend and I play chess at home once a week, and our idea of castling is similar to yours. We set out the white pieces in genuine random formation – I am in the lounge with the board, my friend Alun is in the kitchen making coffee. I select a piece and he calls out the file. The black pieces are matched by file. We look at the position and decide on castling. If the king is in or near the corner, no castling. If the king is on the c, d, e, or f files then we allow castling, regardless of the position of the rooks. The king moves two squares, and a rook is then placed next to it, towards the centre, as in normal castling. This method satisfies the basic idea of moving the king away from the centre.

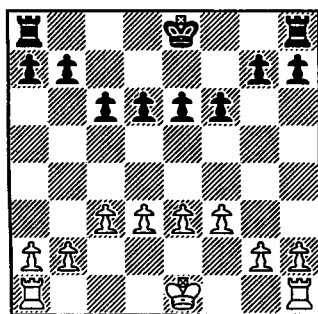
'As far as other variants are concerned, shogi is worth considering. The "king" starts in the middle, and the early moves are concerned with moving him towards a corner, and setting up a fortress to protect him.'

Other variants. Ian added some more general comments.

'You may be interested in other games we play.

'(1) A favourite is standard layout except for the reversal of K and Q on one side (as in Thai Chess). This always gives an interesting game. I've heard others say that this is the best form of "random".

'(2) My own version of modern Burmese Chess. Layout :-



'The other pieces are placed (alternately) wherever the player chooses, behind the pawns.

'This format prevents any doubling of long-range pieces directed at the opposing king. This was a problem in Burmese Chess where a decision had to be made whether to allow a certain position. I thought it best to avoid the ambiguity.

'Castling is normal in both these variants.

'My friend refuses to play any variant with new pieces or altered moves, so that sums up our choices – but there's plenty of variety in Random alone.'

Hostage Chess. Paul Yearout has responded to last time's comments at some length. I am quoting selectively from two separate letters.

On the cosmetic issue of using a single holding area as opposed to a separate prison and airfield, Paul says that in over-the-board play he does just this: 'I simply pile up pieces in front of me, being able to choose among them by color.' However, 'Postal play differs because I record all pieces in pencil, so two designated spaces are helpful.' My own experience, as an editor with a regular requirement to summarize the rules as briefly and simply as possible, is that the use of a single holding area would make the task easier, but Paul's point about postal play is a fair one.

On the more fundamental issue of whether a player should be allowed to promote to a piece currently on his airfield, instead of only to one in his opponent's prison, Paul questions why anyone would want to: 'An airfield piece can be vastly more powerful than a piece on the board, if only that it has greatly enhanced range in the number of spaces to which it can "move".' Which is of course perfectly true, but sometimes it is the mere fact of being able to promote at all that is crucial. We saw an example in VC 46, where White, to Black's surprise, was able to castle through an apparent check from a pawn because Black had no piece in prison for it to promote to, a bishop on his airfield being for this purpose useless.

Partly as a result of this example, I have come to regard the existing rule as a bad one, but Paul tells me of another occasion when something

similar happened. John Leslie, playing against Paul, had dropped a pawn to give check ('which may even have been mate') and Paul was able to exchange his sole prisoner for a knight and drop this in turn for mate.

Paul also questions my use of terms such as "illogical" and "bad". Game rules, he says, are a mathematical axiomization, each game being its own justification and independent of other games, and unless rules are mutually inconsistent (which here they are not) they cannot be illogical; and I should not be using words such as "bad", with their moralistic overtones, in a context without morality. Hostage Chess is what its inventor has defined it to be, so what I am proposing is really a Hostage variant, and whether it is "better" than the original is merely my personal opinion.

I sent Paul a proof of what I had written in response to his first letter, but I modified my text as a result of his second letter and there has not been time for him to check a new proof and reply. I hope he will think my treatment of his points a fair one.

Excel Chess is the latest invention of Vladimir Pribylinec. Unlike his various forms of Cubic Chess, this is played with a standard board and men. There are two special rules: all men, pieces and pawns alike, promote to queens on reaching any square on the seventh or eighth ranks, and there is no *en passant* capture. He supplies a computer program with eight demonstration games, but on my own machine it appears to act merely as a passive board, faithfully recording the moves I give it (or playing through one of the demonstration games) but not offering anything of its own volition.

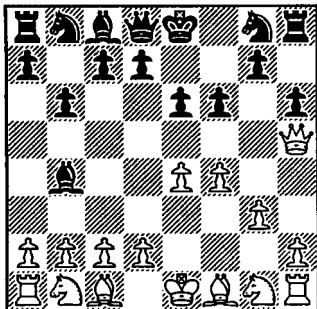
The changes have a drastic effect on the endgame (in particular, bishops become much more powerful than knights), and this influence inevitably filters back into the earlier play. But in general, adding more strong pieces tends to make chess less subtle rather than more, and I fear this variant will prove no exception. Unfortunately the demonstration games strike me as not being of sufficient quality to justify reproduction here.

AVALANCHE CHESS

In 1994/95, *Nost-algia* printed three Avalanche Chess games won by Paul Yearout, each with the compliment of being quoted in a column edited by the loser. Here is the first of them.

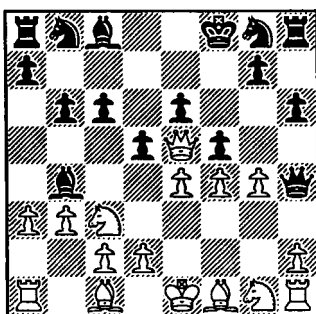
The Avalanche rule is that after a player has moved, he pulls one of his opponent's pawns one square forward (there is no penalty if no mobile pawn is available). A pawn pulled to its last rank promotes to a piece of its owner's choice. A player forced to give check to his own king loses, even if he gives an ordinary mate on the same move. Avalanche was eventually found to give a definite advantage to White and it is now sometimes played in "balanced" form with no pull on White's first move, but here Paul wins in spite of being Black.

- 1 e2-e4/f6 e7-e6/f3
- 2 f3-f4/h6 Bf8-b4/g3
- 3 Qd1-h5/b6+



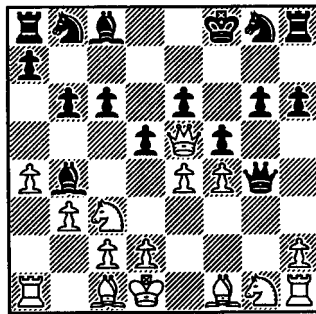
It may seem that Black can win the queen by 3...g6/d3+, but 4 Bd2/g5+ parries both attacks.

- 3 ... Ke8-f8/g4
- 4 Nb1-c3/c6 d7-d5/b3
- 5 Qh5-e5/f5 Qd8-h4/a3+



Black takes advantage of the check to pull his opponent's a-pawn across and beyond a3.

6 Ke1-d1/g6 Qh4xg4/a4+



7 Nc3-e2/c5

At first sight a curious choice, but Be2 lets the Black queen in at g2, and in a position like this releasing the c-pawn may be more important than developing the Ng1. Black's pawn front already seems slightly menacing.

7 ... f5xe4/f5

Black judges that his advancing pawns will be worth more than a rook.

8 Qe5xh8/h5 Qg4xf5/c3

Black uses the attack on f1 to pull the c-pawn across the danger square c3 - or does he?

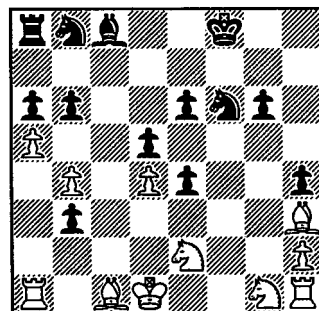
9 Bf1-h3/c4

No, because this saves the Bf1 and prevents a further pull of the c-pawn. However...

9 ... Qf5-f6/a5

10 Qh8xf6/a6 Ng8xf6/d3

11 c3xb4/h4 c4xb3/d4



Black has given up rook and bishop for a pawn position that at first sight is not exceptionally threatening. The result will show that he knows what he is doing.

12 Bc1-h6/g5+ Kf8-f7/b5

13 Bh6xg5/e3

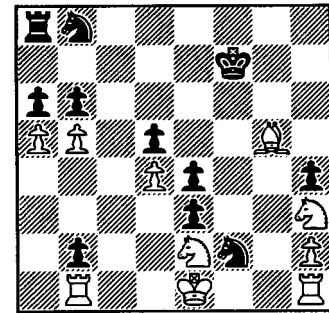
Remarkably, this is the first pawn that Black has lost.

13 ... Nf6-e4/--

14 Ra1-b1/e5 Ne4-f2/--+

15 Kd1-e1/e4 Bc8xh3/--

16 Ng1xh3/b2



16 ... Nf2-d3/--+

Black judges that it is better to defend the pawn on b2, with a tempo-gaining check allowing him to follow with ...b6xa5, than to grab the rook.

17 Ke1-f1/-- b6xa5/b6

18 Bg5-e7/a4

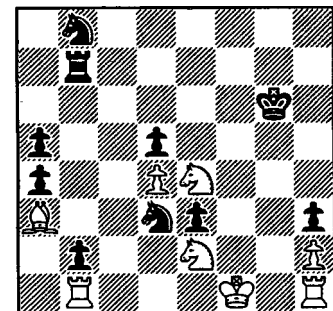
White must stop the flying a-pawn, and this move is playable because 18...KxB will pull the White b-pawn to b7 and allow 19 bxa8Q.

18 ... Ra8-a7/b7

19 Be7-a3/a5 Ra7xb7/--

20 Nh3-g5/h3+ Kf7-g6/--

21 Ng5xe4/--



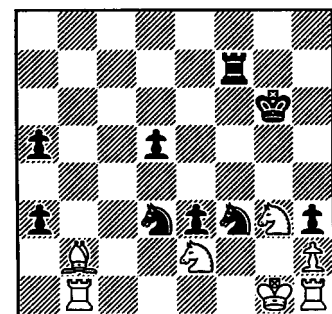
21 ... Rb7-f7/--+

Black ignores the bait, and goes for the jugular.

22 Kf1-g1/-- Nb8-c6/--

23 Ne4-g3/-- Nc6xd4/--

24 Ba3xb2/a3 Nd4-f3/--+



and mate will follow in a few moves (25 Kf1/any Nd2/--++ 26 Kg1/any Rf2/-- and mate on f3 or g2).

GRASSHOPPER TOURS

material from Václav Kotěšovec

The Grasshopper moves along queen lines, but must jump one man (the "hurdle") and land on the square immediately beyond (so a G on an empty board cannot move). The hurdle may be of either colour.

The idea of a grasshopper tour seems first to have been broached by T. R. Dawson in the January 1927 issue of the *Chess Amateur*. He set the task of placing the fewest possible number of hurdles on the board so that a grasshopper could tour the remaining squares, visiting each square once and once only and using each of the hurdles at least once. He called it a "formidable exercise" and gave no solution in the *Chess Amateur*, but he came back to it in *Fairy Chess Review* in August 1950 and gave a 39-move open tour over 24 hurdles. This has proved to be a long way short of the maximum possible. With the aid of a computer, Václav Kotěšovec has found a 52-move open tour over 11 hurdles,

```

9 48 * 10 34 16 47 19
3 * 4 28 2 * 29 *
45 49 36 * 37 17 33 20
12 * 13 11 5 15 * 14
35 50 46 27 39 21 30 18
1 52 7 44 * 8 32 43
23 * 24 22 38 26 * 25
6 51 0 41 * 42 31 40
    
```

and a 52-move closed tour over 12 hurdles :

```

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

Both are proven maxima. I number open tours from 0, closed tours from 1, so that the highest number always gives the number of moves in the tour.

The idea of a grasshopper tour over a single movable hurdle appears first to have been broached by S. H. Hall in *Fairy Chess Review* in February 1938. He used a knight, the knight and grasshopper moving alternately, but we'll come back to this later because his solution wasn't quite optimal and there has been progress since. It prompted Dawson to try the task using a rook (April 1938), which gave a very elegant solution :

```

50 48 53 47 55 36 49 34
1 26 8 28 11 30 10 32
52 46 51 45 54 35 56 37
7 27 6 25 9 29 12 31
63 44 61 41 57 38 59 39
5 24 3 22 13 19 14 20
64 42 62 43 60 40 58 33
2 17 4 23 15 21 16 18
    
```

The grasshopper starts at a7, the rook at a2, and we play Ga1, Rb2, Gc3, Rc2, Gc1, Rb2, Ga3, and so on. At the end, with the grasshopper on a4, we play Ra3, Ga2, Ra6, Ga7, Ra2, and round we go again. I have renumbered to highlight the pattern (Dawson started from Ga1/Rb2). We start by visiting the dark squares on the odd files, starting at a7 and ending at g1. From there, we go to b1 and visit the light squares on the even files, and so on round. Numbers in diametrically opposite squares always differ by 32.

In *Chessics* 5 (July 1978), C. M. B. Tylor looked at the task with a king, and found a solution with a similar four-fold symmetry :

```

62 52 61 50 42 48 41 46
57 55 59 56 37 35 39 36
64 51 63 49 44 47 43 45
58 53 60 54 38 33 40 34
2 8 1 6 22 28 21 26
13 11 15 12 17 31 19 32
4 7 3 5 24 27 23 25
14 9 16 10 18 29 20 30
    
```

This time we work round the board quarter by quarter, starting with Gc4 and Kb4, visiting each square in the lower left quarter finishing at c1, then moving to e3 and visiting each square in the lower right quarter, and so on.

Now to the knight. Hall, working by hand, found a 60-move open tour :

```

55 - 49 16 54 19 48 15
1 25 44 59 24 36 43 58
50 13 53 30 47 14 29 22
8 41 18 56 42 57 17 35
51 26 45 12 27 20 60 11
2 40 6 31 23 37 5 34
- - 52 9 46 10 28 21
7 32 3 39 4 33 0 38
    
```

Nobody else, not even Dawson, did better than 57. This remained the target until T. H. Willcocks produced a 63-move open tour (*Chessics* 23, Autumn 1985) :

```

13 44 9 53 10 52 1 56
34 47 5 15 58 48 4 23
8 54 12 43 0 55 11 51
41 18 33 62 19 22 61 30
14 45 6 3 46 49 2 57
35 27 39 16 59 28 38 24
7 20 32 42 31 21 63 50
40 17 36 26 37 25 60 29
    
```

Additionally, the tour from 1 round to 62 is cyclic.

Willcocks, like Hall, appears to have worked by hand. Václav has now found a 64-move closed tour by computer :

```

31 34 26 41 32 35 25 40
44 55 62 20 45 9 2 19
27 23 30 49 24 39 48 36
61 17 43 54 33 18 42 8
28 50 14 21 46 51 13 37
60 56 63 4 57 10 3 7
15 22 29 53 16 38 47 52
1 5 59 12 64 6 58 11
    
```

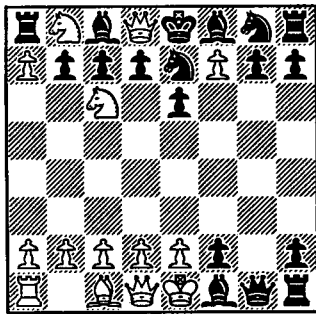
Although closed, this is not cyclic (we end with the knight on b1, and cannot go round again). Václav tells me that the existence of a cyclic 64-move tour, although not yet proved impossible, appears unlikely.

All this, and much more, is in a book "Dual-free Leaper and Hopper Tours" recently produced by Václav in Praha (Prague). It is in Czech, but notes in English highlight what is going on, and the tables and diagrams are self-explanatory.

PROOF GAMES

by Peter Fayers

Whenever a new variant is described in *VC*, my first instinct is to see if it is suitable for proof game composition. The cover diagram of *VC* 60 looked intriguing, so I read the rules of Benedict Chess with interest. At first glance, however, it seemed there was a drawback – too much happened every move, so any proof game composition was likely to be unsolvable; a vanity trip on the part of the composer, but of no entertainment value to the solver.



There was one way to find out, to “solve” one. Having seen that the game leading to the cover diagram was after Black’s fifth, (but avoiding reading any of the actual moves), I closed the magazine, and tried to “solve” it – was it possible to reconstruct a game leading to that position?

Surprisingly, this started off far more easily than I expected. Count the moves: the Knights have made a minimum of six moves between them, Pe7-e6 and Pg2-g1Q account for two more, and there are only two left in which to turn Pg2 black, so there must have been a Q switchback d8-g5-d8.

This is all ten half-moves accounted for, so we can put the following “strings” into place: Nb1-c3-d5-e7, Nf3-d4/e5-c6, and Pe6-Qg5-(g1Q and Qd8 in either order). Further, both P and both Q moves must have been by Black, so White moved only Knights, and Black has made a single N move.

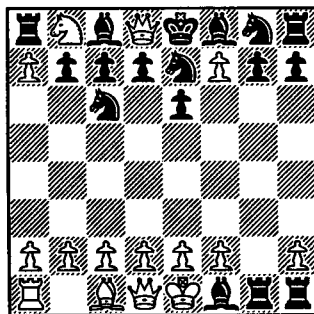
Simple, now just a bit of trial and error to reach the diagram. But I couldn’t. Whatever I tried, the solution eluded me. So I used a different tack: what was the last

move? It couldn’t have been Nd5-e7, or Nc6 would have been turned black, so last move was g1Q. But then what was White’s move before that? Nc6 is the only candidate, but it couldn’t have been, or Ne7 would have changed colour. In desperation, I turned back to the article and played through the game, which is when I discovered the misprint in the diagram – Nc6 should indeed be black.

With this correction, the solution fell into place, and – wonder of wonders – it is unique. Those precise moves must have happened, in exactly that order, to reach the diagram. Indeed, the game score shows such well-known composing techniques that it appears to have been meant as a proof game. (The need to turn Nb1 Black at some stage dictates which order the white Knights are deployed, also the potential ambiguity above – the sequence of g1Q and Qd8 – is avoided by turning one of the units White at the time the move has to be made.) A good problem: serendipity rules OK!

The only thing I would have changed had I created it would be to promote to R rather than Q; this leaves Pf2/h2 white, and enhances the “units trapped in the enemy camp” flavour of the diagram.

77 - Andrew Perkis and “Rondatero” (version by PF) Original

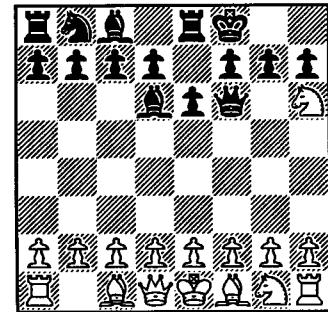


After Black’s 5th, Benedict

The article on various castling rules reminded me of a variant invented for the proof-game composing tourney at the French meeting in Messigny in 1999, Rokagogo, (from Roquer, to castle). The rules for this are that castling is permitted any time K and R face each other across at least 2

empty squares on the same rank or file, however far they are apart, and irrespective of whether either has previously moved. A simple example:

78 - PF Original

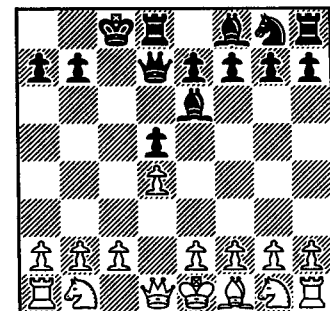


After Black’s 5th, Rokagogo

Here Black is almost in a “just castled” position, and he has only one spare move to get both R and K one square to the left. With Rokagogo this is arranged by moving K to d8 first, then 0-0 leaves the two units in the diagram position. This need to move the K to d8 is another “ambiguity avoidance” technique, forcing which order bQ and bB were moved.

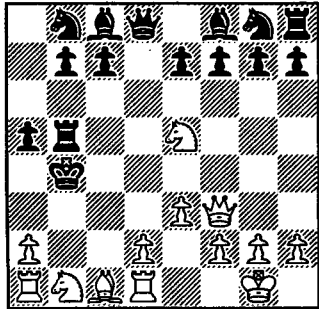
Here are some Rokagogo problems for you to enjoy. In 79, Black’s 0-0-0 looks normal, but it isn’t – what captured Bc1? In 80, Black has castled twice, one on a rank and once on a file, while 81 is a Tour de Force from Thierry: the black K has castled three times, while White’s castling is normal – if we ignore the fact that the Rook has just come back from a foray behind enemy lines! Finally, Michel’s 82 shows castling three times, by the same two pieces.

79 - Jérôme Auclair, Pascal Wassong Commend, Messigny 1999



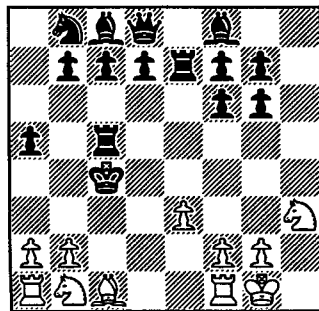
After Black’s 5th, Rokagogo

80 - Bruno Kampmann
Messigny 1999



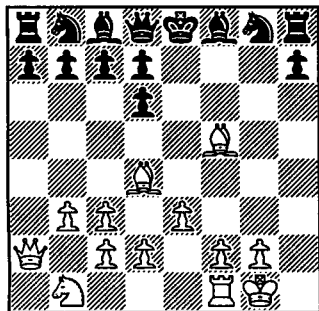
After Black's 8th, Rokagogo

81 - Thierry le Gleuher
Phénix 2001



After White's 12th, Rokagogo

82 - Michel Caillaud
2nd Prize, Messigny 1999



After White's 19th, Rokagogo

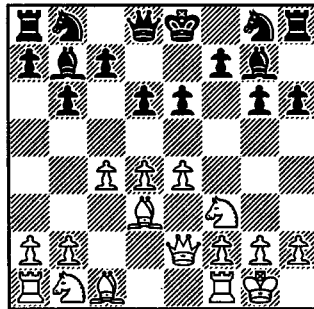
Answers on page 119.

The knight on c6 offers abject apologies to Peter and to readers for the faulty diagram last time. He tells me that he obtained his mount from a dealer who described it as "a fine young black horse, warranted sound in all respects, one careful lady owner", but all the colour ran out in the rain. - JDB

EXTINCTION CHESS

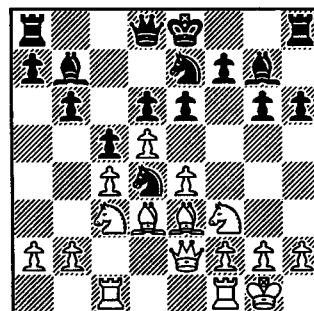
Some time ago, Fabrice Liardet sent me a selection of games played on the BrainKing site. One was an Extinction Chess game won by "Crying Loser" against "rtv". In Extinction Chess, the king is an ordinary man, and you win by depriving your opponent of all his men of a certain kind: king, queen, both rooks, both bishops, both knights, or (in theory) all eight pawns.

- | | | |
|---|--------|--------|
| 1 | c2-c4 | b7-b6 |
| 2 | d2-d4 | e7-e6 |
| 3 | e2-e4 | Bc8-b7 |
| 4 | Bf1-d3 | h7-h6 |
| 5 | Ng1-f3 | g7-g6 |
| 6 | Qd1-e2 | d7-d6 |
| 7 | 0-0 | Bf8-g7 |



In my old-fashioned way, I would much prefer to be White here.

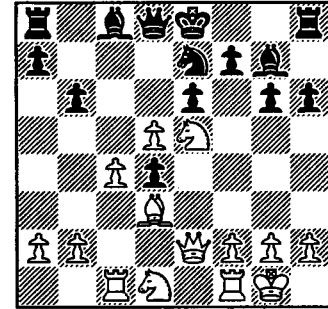
- | | | |
|----|--------|--------|
| 8 | Bc1-e3 | Ng8-e7 |
| 9 | Nb1-c3 | c7-c5 |
| 10 | Ra1-c1 | Nb8-c6 |
| 11 | d4-d5 | Nc6-d4 |



This offer of knight for bishop is surely a mistake, even though White's Nc3 gets pushed back to d1. White's remaining bishop will be hard to get at, while Black will always have to watch for the safety of his remaining knight.

- | | | |
|----|--------|--------|
| 12 | Be3xd4 | c5xd4 |
| 13 | Nc3-d1 | Bb7-c8 |

- | | | |
|----|--------|-------|
| 14 | e4-e5 | d6xe5 |
| 15 | Nf3xe5 | |

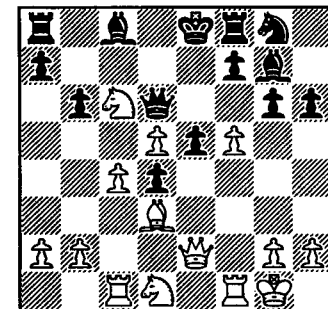


Black's knight is already a target. The fork Nc6 is threatened, and 15...Bxe5 16 Qxe5 R~ loses to 17 Qf6.

- | | | |
|----|-------|--------|
| 15 | ... | Qd8-d6 |
| 16 | f2-f4 | Rh8-f8 |

If 16...Bxe5, I think 17 fxe5 wins in all lines.

- | | | |
|----|--------|--------|
| 17 | Ne5-c6 | Ne7-g8 |
| 18 | f4-f5 | e6-e5 |



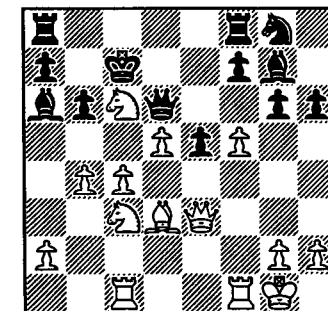
- | | | |
|----|--------|--|
| 19 | Nc6xd4 | |
|----|--------|--|

White will now be able to bring his Nd1 back into play. In the game, the pin by ...Qc5 proves to be short-lived.

- | | | |
|----|--------|--------|
| 19 | ... | Qd6-c5 |
| 20 | Qe2-e3 | Ke8-d8 |

Is 20...e4 21 Qxe4 a win in all lines?

- | | | |
|----|--------|--------|
| 21 | b2-b4 | Qc5-d6 |
| 22 | Nd4-c6 | Kd8-c7 |
| 23 | Nd1-c3 | Bc8-a6 |



White now won in four moves (answer on page 119).

THE END IS NIGH !

by Paul Byway

Solutions to competition 36

#231 7 Kc1 Nge2 Nxd4 Nc6 Be2 Rd1 Rxd8 mate. One mate here but the method is variable. FG gives the simplest of all, namely 7 Nf3 Nxe5 Nc6 e5 e6 e7 exd8+Q mate.

#232 7 Nd4 Kc4 f4 Nd2 N2b3 Nc5 Nf5 mate. Again the method is variable, and FG also gives two versions of the mate in six moves. Here is one:- 7 Kd4 Ne5 Nc3 Na4 Nb6 Nc8 mate.

#233 7 f4 fx5 Be2 Bxh5 Rf1 Rf8 Re8 mate. Everyone found the same single, straightforward solution.

#234 7 Kc1 Bxd6 Bc5 Be2 Rd1 Rxd4 Bb5 mate. Another variable geometry mate, but in two versions; it isn't necessary to call on the rook, e.g. 7 Kc1 Bxd6 Ng1 Nf3 Nxd4 Ne6 Bb5 mate (RC).

#235 10 Kd6 Kc5 Kd4 Ke3 Kf2 Kxg2 Ng3 f6 g5 h5 mate. Everyone's favourite (including me). There is an Italian mate with h6 and f5, and FG points out that in Scottish Progressive this line leads to 11 exf5+ 12 Kf2 Ne4 Nd6 Nxb7 Nd6 Ne4 Kg2 Nf6 mate. After a detour to b7 the position is rebuilt with an added self-block by the guilty pawn.

#236 9 Nf3 Nxe5 Nd7 g3 Bh3 e5 e6 exf7 f8Q mate. Some variability again, but all are versions of the mate with a queen at f8.

#237 1 Pxe8+ Kf9 2 Ch9 Ge9 3 Pxe9+ Ke8 4 Ke3 Hf9 5 Cg9 and wins by stalemate. If instead 3...Ke10 then 4 Ke3 Hf9 5 Kf3 stalemate.

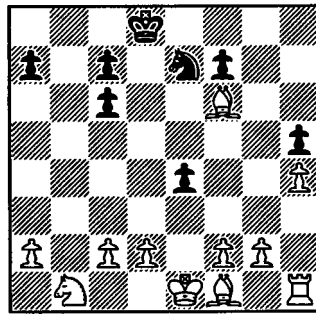
#238 1 Cb10 (threat Pc9 mate) Gd10 2 Ke1 (ditto) G8e9 3 Ge2 Gf8 4 Gd3 Pc6 5 Pc9+ Kd8 6 Cb2 Pc4 7 Cd2+ and wins.

IR mastered these, but wants a change. So, we have two problems from 'The Five Dances of Huashan' by Shu Ming Li and C. K. Lai.

The current scores:- FG 175, IR 149, JB 79, RC 71, PW 35, CL 24, RT 19.

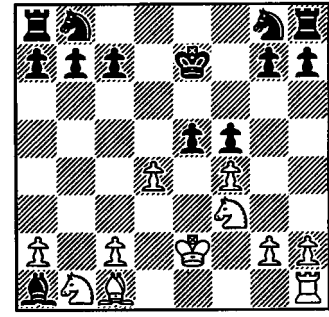
Competition 37 is alongside.

#239 Salvadori - Castelli (1978)



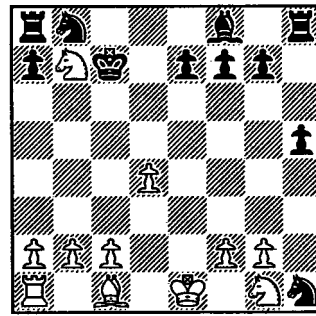
Black wins (series 8)

#243 Magari - Bonavoglia (1979)



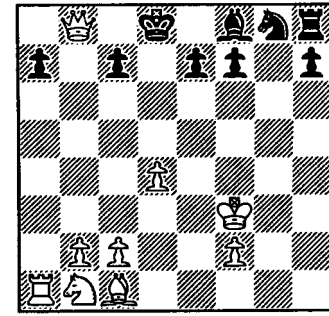
White wins (series 7)

#240 Cesaro - Dipilato (1989)



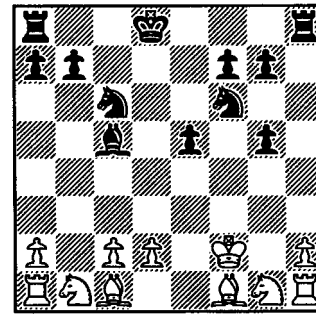
White wins (series 7)

#244 Monti - Gravina (1978)



Black wins (series 8)

#241 Pompili - Galimberti (1976)



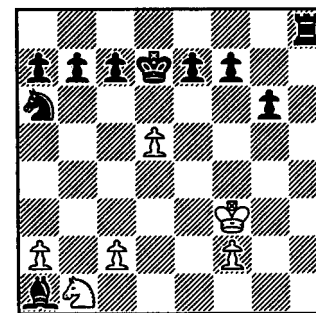
White wins (series 7)

#245 'Five Dances' #91

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

Red to play and win

#242 Leoncini - Cheli (1979)



White wins (series 9)

#246 'Five Dances' #93

10	.	.	.	:	k	g	.	.	.
9	.	.	.	:	R	g	R	.	.
8	.	.	.	:	:	:	.	.	.
7	.	.	.	:	.	:	.	.	.
6	.	.	.	:	.	:	.	.	.
5	.	.	.	:	.	:	.	.	.
4	.	.	.	:	.	:	.	.	.
3	.	.	.	:	:	p	.	.	.
2	.	.	.	:	p	:	.	.	.
1	.	.	p	:	K

Red to play and draw

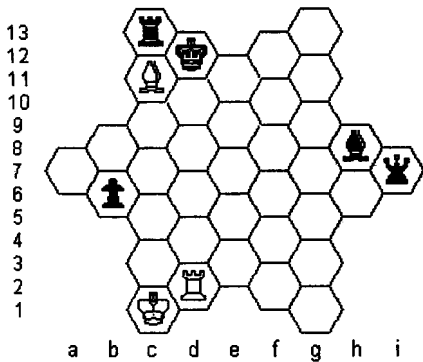
SOLUTIONS

Polgar Superstar Chess (page 106).

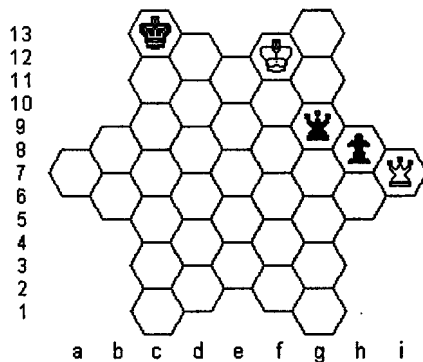
1 (Rusz) 1 d12N+, with 1...Kf6 2 Ng11+ (NxQ loses) Ke5 3 Nh6+ Kd6 4 Nf2+ Kd8 5 Nc3+ Ke9 6 Nb8+ Kf8 7 Nd12+ and we have driven Black's king right round his queen, or 1...Ke9 2 Nb8+ etc driving him round the other way.

2 (Rusz) 1 Nf6+ gxf6 2 d12N (the first replacement knight) fxc5 3 Nb8 cxb8 4 c9 b6 5 c11 bxc5 6 c13N (and a second) c3 7 Nd8 exd8 8 e9 d6 9 e11N (and a third) d4 10 Nf6 mate.

3 (Rusz) 1 Bd6+ Kd8+ (if 1...Kc9 then 2 Bf4 wins the queen, because 2...QxB will be stalemate) 2 Bc7++ Kc9 (2...K~ stalemate) 3 Bd8+ Kd10+ 4 Bc9++ Kc11 5 Bd10+ Kd12+ 6 Bc11++ and this time the stalemate is unavoidable :



4 (Rusz, simplified) 1 QxN, with 1...PxQ stalemate, or 1...Qc5+ 2 Kb8 Qd6+ 3 Kc10 repeating, or 1...Qe7+ 2 Kd10 Qf8+ 3 Ke11 Qg9+ 4 Kf12 :

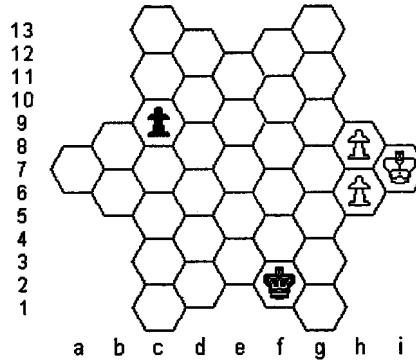


By perpetually putting himself in stalemate, the White king never gives Black time to capture the queen.

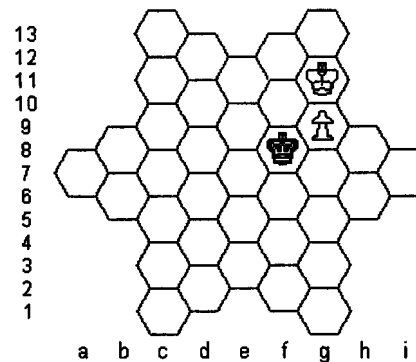
Árpád's setting has the White king on d10, his queen on e3, and Black's queen on f8, with a similar solution

plus a try 1 Qc1+ Qc11 2 Qxc11+. I thought this was in fact a cook, because K + N v K is only a draw and the pawn cannot promote, but the pawn can advance to h6, guarding g5, and this is enough to tip the balance. However, the win is extremely difficult (Árpád likens it to the win with 2N v P in ordinary chess, and having played through some of the lines he sent me I fully agree with him), and I thought it would be too complicated for present purposes. I have therefore taken the liberty of presenting a simplified version in which the question does not arise.

5 (Rusz and Schenkerik) 1 Qh8 gxf8+ 2 gxf8 Ne7 (again threatening mate on g11) 3 Nh6+ Nxh6 4 gxf6 and the stalemate is unreleasable :



6 (Rusz) 1 Kg13! c3 2 f12Q c1Q 3 Qc9+ (1 Ke11 would have obstructed this move) Qxc9 4 bxc9 (one "dead" pawn brought back into play) g5 5 c11 g3 6 c13Q g1Q 7 Qg9+ Qxg9 8 hxg9 (second "dead" pawn recovered) Kf8 9 Kg11! and Black is in zugzwang :



Had White played 1 Kg11, Black's 8th move would have given this same position with the White king already on g11, and it is White who would have been in zugzwang.

The web site also contains some "basic endgames" with kings and pawns, all instructive and some distinctly subtle, but I have given the present selection here because king-and-pawn play will already be familiar to readers who play hex games with a similar pawn move. Árpád tells me that they were all published in a five-volume book about starchess endgame theory which appeared in 2008-09 (László Polgár, Árpád Rusz, Csaba Schenkerik, *Pawn / Rook / Knight / Bishop / Queen Endgames*).

I may say that I heartily approve of variant designers who pay proper attention to the endgame. All too many do not.

Proof Games (pages 116-117, also *VC* 59 page 85). 63 (Fayers after Coast) 1 Na3 (Pa7-a4) Nh6 (Ph2-h5) 2 Rb1 (Pb2-b6) Rg8 (Pg7-g3) 3 Rb5 Rg4 4 Rg5 Rb4 (Pb6-b5) 5 Rg6 (Pg3-g5) Rb3 (Pb5-b4) 6 Rxh6 (Ph5-h2) Rxa3 (Pa4-a7) 7 Rg6 Rb3 8 Rg8 (Pg5-g7) Rb1(Pb4-b2).

67 (Brobecker) 1 d3 a5 2 Be3N a4 3 Kd2 Ra5B+ 4 b4 axb3N.

78 (Fayers) 1 Nc3 e6 2 Nd5 Qf6 3 Ne7 Kd8 4 Nxg8 Bd6 5 Nh6 0-0-0.

79 (Auclair and Wassong) 1 d3 d5 2 Bf4 Be6 3 Bxc7 Qd7 4 Bxb8 Rxb8 5 d4 0-0.

80 (Kampmann) 1 e3 a5 2 Bb5 Ra6 3 Bxd7+ Kxd7 4 Nf3 Kd6 5 0-0 0-0 6 Ne5 Rxc2 7 Qf3 Rxb2 8 Rd1 0-0-0.

81 (Le Gleuher) 1 e3 a5 2 Bd3 Ra6 3 Bg6 hxg6 4 h4 Rxh4 5 Qf3 Re4 6 Qf6 exf6 7 Rh8 0-0-0 8 Rxg8 0-0-0 9 Rh8 Rxd2 10 Rh1 Rxc2 11 Nh3 0-0-0 12 0-0.

82 (Caillaud) 1 e3 f5 2 Bd3 f4 3 Ne2 f3 4 0-0 fxe2 5 Bf5 e1N 6 Qe2 Nd3 7 Rd1 Nc5 8 0-0 Nb3 9 axb3 g5 10 Ra6 g4 11 Rd6 exd6 12 Qa6 Qf6 13 Qa2 Qc3 14 bxc3 g3 15 Ba3 gxh2 16 Bc5 h1Q 17 Bd4 Qh4 18 Rh1 Qd8 19 0-0.

Extinction Chess (page 117). 24 Ne4 Qd7 25 Ne7 forces Black to capture, and whether he takes with the queen or with the knight White will have a fork by 26 d6 (the game actually finished 25...Qxe7 26 d6 Qxd6 27 Nxd6). On this occasion at least, the two knights proved much more useful than the two bishops.

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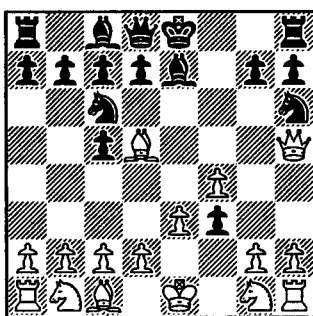
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VC 62 is scheduled for October. Copy date for contributions is **September 1**, but early receipt is always helpful.

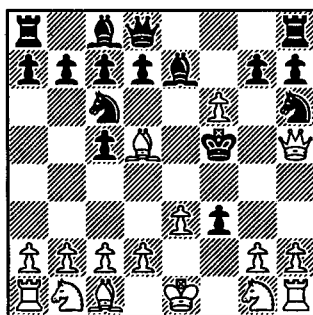
A shortage of news material leaves me space for a game of **Highcastle Chess** (*ECV 2*, page 65), in which a player may castle any man with any other (of either side) on the same line, orthogonal or diagonal, by moving two squares towards the distant man and jumping it back over the man moved. A player may castle out of or through check, and he may castle his opponent's king into check. The game is from one of the issues of *Nost-algia* passed on to us by David Pritchard's family. White was John McCallion, to whose notes I am indebted.

1 e3 e5 2 Bb5 (White now threatens d2~d7+, the White pawn going to d4 and the Black to d3) Nc6 3 Bb5~e5 (the bishop goes to d5, Black's pawn to c5) Be7 (John awards two question marks, much preferring the simple 3...Nf6) 4 Qh5 Nh6 (4...g6 would have been answered by 5 c2~g6) 5 f2~f7+ and we have the diagram at the top of the next column :

The third of my little chess vanity-books, **51 Flights of Chess Fancy**, is in press as I write, and a copy will be sent with my compliments to all VC subscribers. Please tell me if your copy fails to arrive within a reasonable time. The largest chapter of the book is devoted to orthodox chess endgame studies, but there is a substantial amount of less orthodox material.



5...Kf8 (John points out that Black missed 5...Nh6~c6, which leaves nothing better than 6 Qxf3) 6 f4~f8+ :



6...Kxf6 7 Nxf3 Bf8 8 Nf3~f6+ (clearer than 8 Qg5+, when Black has 8...Nc6~f6) and **Black resigned** (8...Ke5 9 h2~e5+ followed by mate).

EVENTS

Last-minute reminder: the **World Quickplay Hnefatafl Tournament** will be played in the **Community Hall on Fetlar (Shetland)** on **Saturday 1 August**. E-mail <theaglebe1@btinternet.com> for details and a copy of the rules.

At their meeting this year, the French problemists played **Capapranka** (see *ECV 2* page 48). In this game, after the first move by each side, either player, instead of moving normally, may place a cap over any man other than a king, or over an empty square, and this temporarily removes this square and any occupant from play: no move may be made to or across it. Subsequently, the player on move may move the cap to another square, but a "cap" move must always be followed by an ordinary move, and the same player may not move the cap on two consecutive turns. A player may not parry a check by moving the cap.

Capapranka was apparently found very amusing at the time of its invention, and the French appear to concur. Eric Pichouron won with 6½/7, ahead of Antti Parkinen 6 and Jörg Kuhlmann 4½.

This year's **Circular Chess World Championship** resulted in a three-way tie between Chris Russell and previous winners Rob Stevens and Michael Jones, all with 4/5. A three-way playoff being impractical in the time available, the prize money was divided equally, but Chris Russell was awarded the title on count-back. Sadly, none of the games I kibitzed proved worthy of reproduction.

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