

## DABLO – A SÁMI GAME

by Peter Michaelsen

Dablo is a game of the Sámit from Lapland – those we previously called “Lapps” – nomadic reindeer herders of northern Scandinavia and the Kola peninsula. The word ‘dablo’ is probably an archaic loan from Scandinavian languages. Like the related northern Germanic ‘tafl’, ‘dablo’ is ultimately derived from the Latin ‘tabula’.

All these words had the wider meaning: “board game”, and it seems that ‘dablo’ (also pronounced ‘tablo’, ‘tablu’ and ‘dabla’) was used of at least three types of board games: 1) the old Viking game ‘hnefatafl’, described in earlier issues of this magazine, 2) hunt games, or asymmetric blockade games with jump capture – a well-known example of this type is named ‘fox-and-geese’ in English, 3) war games with jump capture, a variant of which was known in Medieval Spain as ‘alquerque de doze’. ‘Alquerque’ is often used as a generic name of this type of games.

The game referred to as ‘hnefatafl’ in medieval Icelandic literature, survived among the Sámit long after it had disappeared elsewhere. It was first described by a non-Sámi observer in 1732 when Carl von Linné (Linnaeus) recorded the rules of play in his diary while on a botanical excursion in Swedish Lapland. Linné described this game as ‘tablut’, a verbal form meaning “to play tablu”.

The earliest short notes about Sámi hunt games derive likewise from the 18th century (Högström 1747, p.158; Leem 1767, p.389). These games were still played in the early 20th century, but it seems that nobody recorded their rules. In the 18th century the Sámit in Finnmark, northern Norway, used a cross-shaped board, one fox and 13 geese for their game (Leem), while the Lule Sámit in Sweden in the early 20th century used game boards with 5x5 or 9x5 points for their ‘rävtablo’ or ‘vargtablo’ (fox or wolf tablo, Manker 1947, p.226,

Manker 1963), played with one fox or two wolves against people or reindeer. In Frostviken, northern Jämtland, Sweden, a board with 41 points was used for both a war game and for a hunt game. In the latter case one of the kings served as a fox (Wiklund 1892).

It is generally assumed that Linné’s account from 1732 is the latest description of a surviving hnefatafl game. In 1884, more than 150 years after Linné’s journey, a book about Sámi legends, folklore and traditions was published in Stockholm. In this book (Lindholm 1884, p.82) it is mentioned, “it may happen that a few men sit down and play a sort of chess, where the pieces are called Russians and Swedes, and try to defeat each other. Here intense battles are fought, which easily can be observed on the players, who sometimes are so absorbed that they cannot see or hear anything else”. This passage could refer to the game described by Linné, but it could just as well refer to a war game, with jump capture, which was certainly played among the Sámit in the 19th century.

The most detailed account of the rules of this game was published in a 1921 article by Nils Keyland: “Dablot prejjesne och dablot duoljesne”.

‘Dablot duoljesne’ means ‘To play dablo on a fur’. In this game, mostly played by children and young people, the two players flick a small round stick with their fingers on a reindeer fur in order to make the opponent’s pieces fall over.

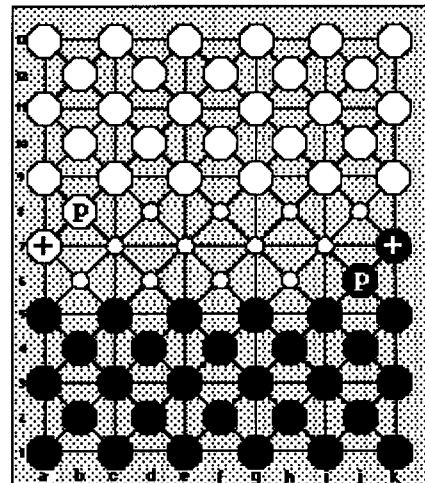
‘Dablot prejjesne’ means ‘To play dablo on a board’.

The board seen by Keyland in Frostviken was a fir-plank 20 inches long, 12 inches wide and one inch thick, the marked-out playing area being 12 inches by 10 inches and divided into 30 squares with their diagonals, creating 72 points. The contestants in this game are a tribe of nomadic Sámit and settled people farming the land.

The pieces were of carved wood. One player had 28 Sámit, painted yellow and standing about one inch high, with pointed tops. In addition he had a Sámi Prince, slightly larger than the soldiers and marked with two rings, and a Sámi King, larger still and

with three rings. The Sámi King and his son were uncoloured.

The other player had 28 Peasants an inch high, painted red and with two small points in the top. The larger Peasant Prince was distinguished by two bands and his father the Peasant King was larger still and was marked with three bands. The Peasant King and his son were coloured brown except for their tops and rings which were picked out in red.



The diagram above shows the opening position, with the Sámi Soldiers on rows 1-5, the Sámi prince on j6, and the Sámi King on k7. The Peasants are on rows 13-9, with the Peasant Prince on b8 and the Peasant King on a7.

### Rules for Dablot Prejjesne

1. Every piece may move to the nearest unoccupied point, orthogonally or diagonally, forwards or backwards. A short leap may be made over an enemy piece to a vacant point beyond. The piece jumped over is removed from the board.

2. Players are not compelled to make a capture, nor to complete the maximum number of captures possible in one turn of play.

3. Peasant Soldiers and Sámi Soldiers are of equal power and may capture each other, but not one of the major pieces.

4. The Sámi Prince may capture the Peasant Prince, or vice versa; they can both capture minor pieces, but cannot attack the Sámi King or the Peasant King.

5. The Sámi King and the Peasant King can capture each other, and any other piece on the board. Their powers of movement, however, are the same as the other pieces – one vacant point in any direction, or a short leap over an enemy piece onto an empty point beyond.

6. The game ends when one player is defenceless and resigns.

7. If one player has only a major piece left, and the other has several minor pieces, the latter can win the game by surrounding the former and depriving him of the power to move. This is winning by immobilization.

8. If the players are left with only one piece each of equal power, either a Sámi Soldier and a Peasant or the Sámi Prince and the Peasant Prince, one of the players can call for a single combat, when the pieces are moved towards each other in direct confrontation when one piece with the move will capture the other. This avoids a draw through an endless and futile chase.

9. If only the Sámi King and the Peasant King are left on the board the game is declared drawn.

Nils Keyland gives several examples of play in order to illustrate the rules. Concerning the strategy and tactics of this game, he writes that the unrestricted movement of the pieces, their right to retreat, should not be misused in such a way that the development of the game is hampered. Cautious, defensive tactics would be against the spirit of the game.

This is exactly the weak point in the rules of this variant of Sámi dablo. It shares the following rules with a lot of other games of the alquerque type: 1) captures are not mandatory, 2) pieces can move in all directions, 3) you must remove all enemy pieces to win, and 4) there is no promotion of pieces.

When these rules are combined, they result in a very tedious game that will normally last for several hundreds of moves.

Rule 8, according to which players are expected to move straight forwards with their pieces, and the player wins who is lucky enough to arrive at a position where he has the

right to capture, is not a satisfactory solution to the problem of endless, futile moves.

Other sources about North Scandinavian dablo games are few, short, and more or less incomplete. These sources, some of which are mentioned by Keyland, reveal that several variants existed.

In Åsele Lappmark, the combatants were Sámit vs. Russians/Karelians (Jonas Nensén, according to Drake 1918, p.291), and in Lycksele Lappmark they were Swedes vs. Russians (Gustaf Hallström, according to Keyland 1921, p.40).

In Frostviken smaller and larger boards were used. Karl Bernhard Wiklund describes in a note from 1892 a variant with 2x18 pieces including kings and princes, played on a board with 5x5 lines. The board pattern was identical with that used in the game described by Keyland, resulting in 41 crossing points. He adds that this game could also be played on a 7x7 board, that is a board with 85 crossing points, with 2x39 pieces.

Finally he mentions that after agreement between the two players the following rule can be used: the player, whose king has been captured by the other king, loses the game.

Thus the capture of a king was sufficient for a win.

Two other sources describe variants in which pieces could not move backwards, and probably only forwards, straight or diagonally.

In 1935 Olof Petter Pettersson completed a manuscript in which he described daily life among Swedish settlers in Dåres, Vilhelmina, Åsele Lappmark, around the middle of the 19th century (Pettersson 1999). In this manuscript he included a description of 'tavelspel', also named 'kloterspel'. The pieces used in this game had a shape similar to the shape of the pieces used for dablo in Frostviken and Lycksele Lappmark, but in this game there were no princes. Each player had one king, longer and thicker than the two sets of warriors.

The pieces of each player are placed in two rows along opposite

ends of the board. They move forwards on the lines from one crossing point to another adjacent point, and capture by the short leap. The board, 'tavla', has 144 'rutor' (fields or squares). In 1998 Sten Helmfrid (author of an excellent internet article on hnefatafl, Helmfrid 2005) proposed a reconstruction of the rules of the 'tavelspel' as a game played on the lines of a 12x12 board (13x13 points) with 2x26 pieces. He thought that it was a game with orthogonal moves and captures, similar to Turkish draughts. In an old version of the Turkish game the players were only allowed to have one 'padishah' (king) at a time. This reconstructed game does not function very well, however. Furthermore, the 144 fields or squares could just as well be interpreted as triangles. The largest 7x7 dablo board from Frostviken had exactly this number. O. P. Pettersson does not mention that this game, played by Swedish-speaking settlers in an area with many Sámi inhabitants, was also a popular Sámi game.

It is evident, however, that both the Sámit and their Swedish neighbours shared the same game.

From Åsele Lappmark another researcher, Jonas Nensén, recorded a few words about a 'tablo' game played by local Sámi people in the first half of the 19th century (Drake 1918, p.291). In this game each player had one king 'konges(a)', and 18 'tabloh', game pieces. The board is not described, but the 5x5 board with 41 points, the smallest board size used in Frostviken, would fit perfectly for this number of pieces.

From Jokkmokk, Lule Lappmark, we have another incomplete description of a 'tablo' game by Anta Pirak (Pirak 1933, p.17f.). This game is apparently played on a board consisting of 7x7 lines, and it seems that all pieces have the same rank. Only the central line of the board is empty at the beginning of the play. Pieces move forwards or "tvärt över" (sideways, or perhaps better: diagonally forwards) after the lines, to an adjacent point. They capture by the short leap. This game could be interpreted as a game with orthogonal

moves and captures, but in the light of what we know about Sámi game boards from Lule Lappmark, which had the board pattern known from alquerque de doze (5x5 or 9x5), I imagine that this 7x7 board had the same pattern, that is 49 points, and thus 2x21 pieces.

The Sea Sámit of Kvænangen, Troms, northern Norway, used to play 'tsukkalavde' with 2x12 pieces on the 5x5 board with this pattern (Larsen 1950, p.31f.). No kings or promotion are mentioned, and it seems that the pieces moved and captured in all directions. A 'tabla' game with 2x10 pieces from Tännäs, Härjedalen, northern Sweden (Lagercrantz 1939), might very well have been played on such a board.

In 1975 a 13th century or perhaps 16th century board of this type was found during excavations in Trondheim, Norway (Michaelsen 1998, p.36). It seems that, like hnefatafl, this medieval game survived among the Sámit long after it had fallen into oblivion elsewhere.

This overview of North Scandinavian dablo games seems to be exhaustive. A recent article by Rolf Kjellström (Kjellström 1992, see also Kjellström 2000) does not add any new information, and one might assume that these games are no longer played among the Sámit.

On basis of these scraps of information I have made a reconstruction of the 'tavelspel' from Dåres, or 'dablo' ('tablo') as the Sámit of this area named the game.

This reconstruction is also a sort of reconstruction of the 'dablot prejjesne' played in Frostviken. I do not doubt that Nils Keyland got precise information about this game from his source Anders Nilsson, but, based upon the sources mentioned above, I imagine that some Sámi players preferred a shorter, more dramatic game.

The only important difference between the dablo variants played in Frostviken and Lycksele Lappmark and those played in Åsele Lappmark, including Dåres, seems to be that in the former each player had a king and a prince, while in the latter they had

only a king. I suppose that as in the Frostviken game, the king could only be captured by another king, and that, after agreement of both players, a king capture was sufficient for a win. The rule that soldiers only moved forwards (but captured in all directions) is my interpretation of the information given by Pettersson and Pirak, and makes also the Frostviken variants shorter and more interesting. In order to make combinations possible, I have also introduced the rule that for the soldiers, capture is mandatory. I admit that this rule is not found in any historical sources. On the contrary, it seems that the Sámit did not even know the "huff" rule, popular among Scandinavian draughts players: that your opponent has the right to remove one of your pieces, if you refuse to make a capture. Even if probably not historically correct, obligatory capture greatly improves the Sámi dablo games.

To these rules Mats Winther has added two rules: 1) for the king, and for the king and prince in the game with both pieces, capture is optional, 2) if a player has lost all his pieces and only his king remains, he has lost the game. This 'bare king' rule is known from Shatranj and Medieval Chess, and certainly reduces the number of drawn games.

Mats Winther has implemented several of the Sámi dablo games using the Zillions-of-Games program.

With his 'Dablo Daares' one can play on the 7x7 board with 85 points with 2-4 rows of pieces per player (13-33 pieces). As a variant he has implemented 'Dablo Aasele', played on the 5x5 board with 41 points and 2x19 pieces, including the kings.

He explains the rules of 'Dablo Daares' in the following manner:

"Goal is either to capture the enemy king or reduce his forces so that only the king remains. All pieces move by single steps and can capture, by the short leap, in all directions. The soldier can only step in the three forward directions. Promotion does not occur. For the soldier, capture is mandatory. For the king, capture is optional. *The king can only be captured by the enemy king.*

"A piece moves to an empty adjacent point. If an adjacent point is occupied by an enemy piece, of the same rank or lower, and the point directly behind is vacant, then one may jump over it and capture it, as in checkers. Several pieces may be captured like this in a single turn."

With his 'Dablot prejjesne' ('Dablo') one can play on the 6x7 board with 72 points, using 2x30 pieces. As a variant Mats Winther has also implemented 'Dablo Frostviken', played on the 5x5 board with 41 points, using 2x18 pieces in total.

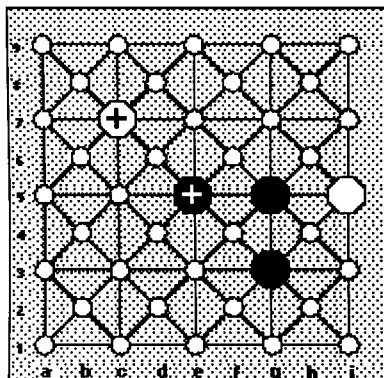
In these games each player has also a prince, which moves and captures like the king. For the prince, capture is optional, and one can only capture a piece of the same rank or lower. Pieces are ranked in this order: king, prince, and soldier.

Mats Winther has also suggested and implemented a variant with promotion. In this variant soldiers promote to prince when they reach the farthest rank. However, capture takes precedence over promotion.

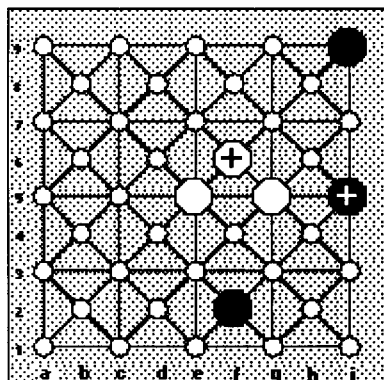
This rule seems quite logical, and the promotion to a major piece, but not to the all-important royal piece, is analogous to pawn promotion in Chess.

Concerning the strategy and tactics of these games Mats Winther writes that "as capture is mandatory for the soldier, it is sometimes possible to sacrifice one or more soldiers to enemy soldiers, thus to create a situation where the enemy king/king and prince can be captured. But it is not always adequate to make such combinations, if it leaves the opponent with a clear majority of soldiers, together with his remaining king. It is necessary to hunt enemy soldiers with the royal pieces, although this exposes them to combinations. A shortage of soldiers can lead to a lost game as it allows the opponent to continue exchanging soldiers until he wins according to the lone (bare) king rule."

Here follow two examples of simple combinations given by Mats Winther.

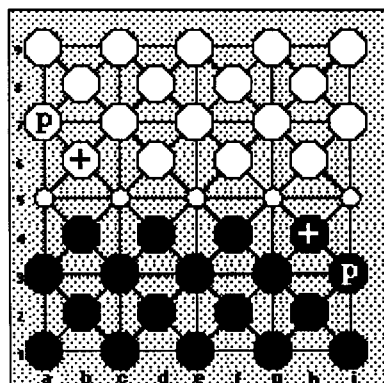


“Here black can win by moving the king to the left. This forces red to capture the soldier, which leaves the king en prise.”



“Another typical combination. Black moves the soldier to northwest, forcing the red soldier to capture. Thus, black can capture the enemy king in two consecutive jumps.”

With the help of these programs I am able to show a well-played sample game (Zillions vs. Zillions, expert level, 3 min. per move). In this reconstruction of ‘Dablo Frostviken’ the black prince is placed on i3, black king on h4, red king on b6, red prince on a7, with an empty line between the two armies.



- 1 Kh4-g5 Kb6-c5
- 2 Pi3-h4 Sd6-e5
- 3 Sf4xd6 Sc7xe5
- 4 Sh2-i3 Sh6-i5
- 5 Sb4-a5 Kc5-d6
- 6 Kg5-f4 Sb8-c7
- 7 Ph4-g5 Sc7-c5
- 8 Sd4xb6 Pa7xc5
- 9 Sa5-a7 Sa9xa5
- 10 Sa3xa7 Pc5-a5
- 11 Sa7-a9 Pa5-a3
- 12 Sc3-d4 Se5xc3
- 13 Sd2xb4 Pa3-c3
- 14 Si1-h2 Si5xi1
- 15 Se3-e5 Se7xi3
- 16 Sh2-g3 Si3xe3
- 17 Se1xe5 Si1xg3
- 18 Kf4-e3 Sf6xd4
- 19 Ke3xe7

and black captures the red king.

Personally, I prefer the shorter 41-point variants, but readers who prefer the larger chess variants may differ.

Mats Winther’s implementations can be downloaded from <http://www.zillions-of-games.com/> and from his own home page <http://hem.passagen.se/melki9/>.

On these pages you can also find alquerque and draughts variants with interesting features similar to some of those found in dablo.

The capture rules of ‘Dablot prejjesne’ with three ranks of pieces are reminiscent of those found in the South Italian draughts variant ‘Damone’, and the ortho-diagonal captures can be found in another interesting draughts variant ‘Frisian checkers’. The notion of forward moving soldiers that do not promote, but can capture in all directions, is known from a Caucasian game, ‘Ossetian Checkers’. Alquerque games with kings and promotion are known from northern Africa, where ‘Zamma’ is a very prominent example of this type. The smaller, but not less interesting ‘Kharbaga’ from Mauritania has the same type of pattern as most of the ‘Dablo’ games. This pattern can also be found in games from other parts of Europe, in Indian games, and in games played by North American Indians. Another good alquerque game with promotion is the Indonesian ‘Permainan-Tabal’.

Mats Winther has also implemented ‘Medieval Alquerque’, medieval European variants played with short or long kings, according to rule reconstructions proposed by Arie van der Stoep.

Interested readers are welcome to contact me ([pmi@km.dk](mailto:pmi@km.dk)).

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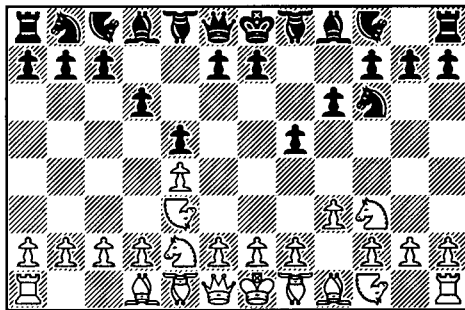
# MODERN COURIER CHESS

by Paul Byway

Fers (inverted B in diagrams) moves one square diagonally, Courier (inverted N) leaps two squares orthogonally or diagonally. Unmoved K or F can make a double move, but not to capture nor through check. - JDB

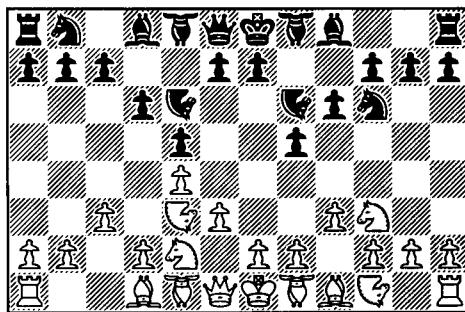
White Roy Talbot, Black Paul Byway; from our recent correspondence tournament.

- |   |          |        |
|---|----------|--------|
| 1 | e2-e4    | e7-e5  |
| 2 | Nk1-j3   | Nk8-j6 |
| 3 | Nb1-c3   | h7-h5  |
| 4 | i2-i3    | i7-i6  |
| 5 | Cc1-e3   | d7-d6  |
| 6 | Nc3-e2!? |        |



An interesting pawn sacrifice; can I accept? The weakness of j7 counts against it and I will lose two clear tempi. The move gives white the choice of d4, f4 and Ng3 as well as a promising plan: f3,c3,d4,Bb3. I decided against Bxe4 and followed my experimental choice for this tournament – developing courier before fers at e6,h6.

- |   |       |        |
|---|-------|--------|
| 6 | ...   | Cc8-e6 |
| 7 | f2-f3 | Cj8-h6 |
| 8 | c2-c3 |        |

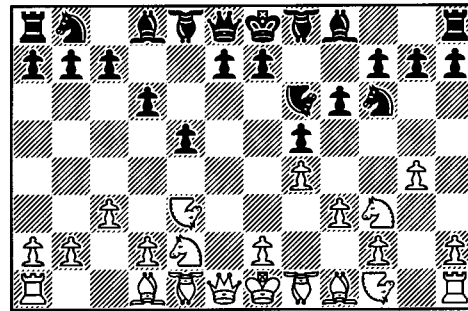


- |   |       |        |
|---|-------|--------|
| 8 | ...   | Ce6xe4 |
| 9 | f3xe4 | Bi8xe4 |

It turns out that I don't know what to do with a courier when I develop it early, so I give it up for two pawns. I think this would be a fairly level trade if I didn't have to waste a tempo retreating the bishop to i8. The natural 8...Nc6 could be answered by d4,d5, which is annoying. White's next is an interesting, perhaps very good,

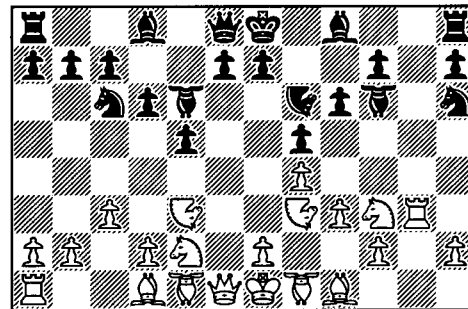
possibility which is usually available to both colours on both wings. I don't think it has been played before.

- |    |       |        |
|----|-------|--------|
| 10 | k2-k4 | Be4-i8 |
| 11 | h2-h4 |        |



My position is very poor; development is retarded and I don't see a decent continuation, but I can make a little progress on the kingside and negate White's gain of space.

- |    |        |        |
|----|--------|--------|
| 11 | ...    | Nj6xk4 |
| 12 | Rl1-k1 | Nk4-l6 |
| 13 | Rk1xk7 | Fh8-j6 |
| 14 | Rk7-k3 | Nb8-c6 |
| 15 | Cj1-h3 | Fe8-e6 |



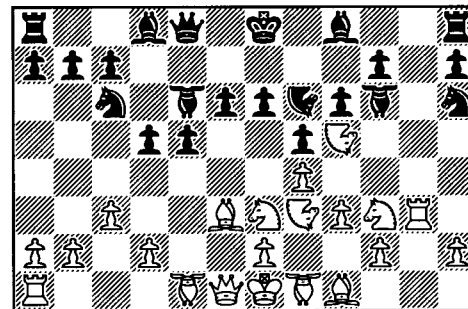
- |    |        |       |
|----|--------|-------|
| 16 | Ne2-g3 | g7-g6 |
|----|--------|-------|

Keeping minor pieces out of f5 while defending h5 against sacrificial attack.

- |    |        |        |
|----|--------|--------|
| 17 | Bd1-f3 | Qf8-e8 |
|----|--------|--------|

Qb5 was an awkward threat. I must bolster the white squares with the queen, which highlights the defensive value of the sacrificed courier even on its original square.

- |    |        |       |
|----|--------|-------|
| 18 | Ce3-g5 | f7-f6 |
| 19 | Cg5-i5 | d6-d5 |



The dark-squared courier still covers i7, the natural refuge of the Black king; on the other hand it now lives at my

pleasure. Meanwhile I must attempt to relieve pressure on the queenside and develop my pieces there.

20 Qf1-b5 Qe8-d7

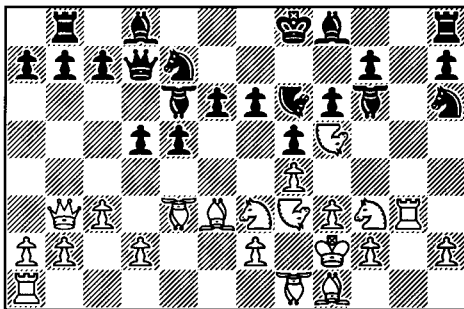
After 20...Rb8 the undefended queen remains in danger, but now 21 Qxb7 Rb8 22 Qa6 Rxb2 would be a bonus.

21 Fe1-e3 Ra8-b8

22 Kg1-i2 Nc6-e7

23 Qb5-b3 Kg8-h8

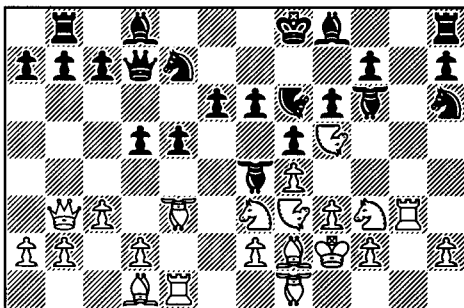
Disentangling the queenside is a slow business and I thought White might find something more pressing than 22 Ki2; perhaps d3 with the idea c4. 23...Kh8 takes the king off the queen's diagonal (Ki7 is the move I would like to play) and I want to play ...c6, but I'm acutely aware of the threat of Bi1 to Rb8.



24 Ra1-e1 Fe6-f5

25 Bi1-h2 Ff5-g4

26 Bf3-d1



26 ... Fg4xh3+?

How could I play such an awful move? The fers is ideally placed for defence and attack yet I give it up for half a pawn. I believe I had fantasies of ...Nj5 and ...somethingxh4 with attack – but it's all a delusion.

27 g2xh3 Nl6-j5

28 Rk3-k2

A surprise; I had only considered Rl3 with an attack on the l-pawn. It now dawns on me that he planned to double rooks on the k-file some time ago, explaining some small move oddities; my position suddenly looks highly insecure. I intended my queen's knight to move forward, but must now change direction.

28 ... Ne7-g8

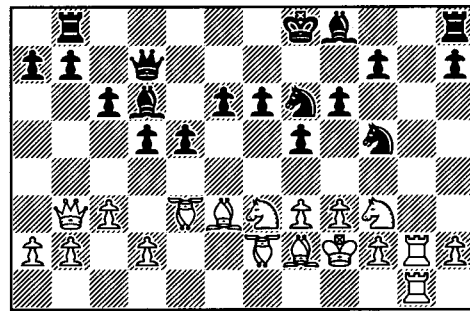
29 Fh1-g2 Fj6xi5

30 h4xi5 Bd8-e7

31 i5xh6 Ng8xh6

32 Bd1-f3 c7-c6

33 Re1-k1 Be7-d6



The last few moves have gone according to plan. The material balance (2F v 3P) is equal and I have a coherent and (I believe) defensible position. But I have overlooked something. The fourth rank is open and my dark squares are weak. If White's queen comes to the kingside and he can play i4 or Bg3 I will be in serious trouble.

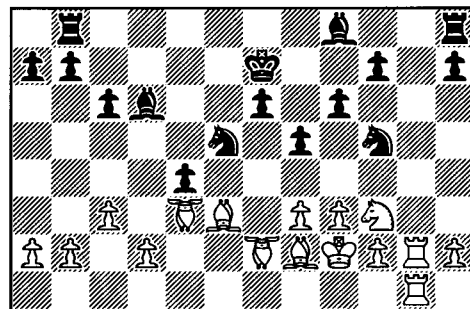
34 Qb3-a4 e5-e4!

35 Ng3xe4 d5xe4

36 Qa4-d4 Nh6-f5

37 Qd4xf6+ Qd7-g7

38 Qf6xg7+ Kh8xg7



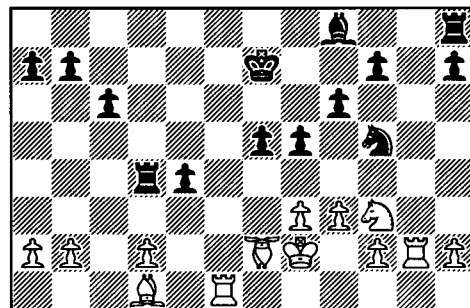
39 Bf3-d1 Bd6xh2

40 Ki2xh2 g6-g5

41 Fe3-d4 Nf5xd4

42 c3xd4 Rb8-d8

43 Rk1-f1 Rd8xd4



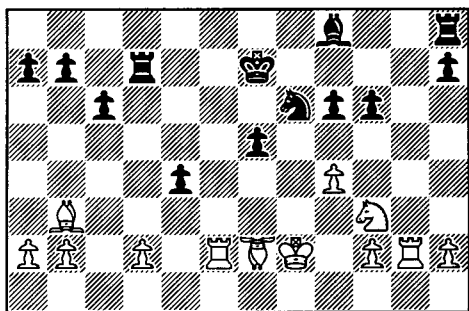
I'm happy to see off the queens and dark-square bishops and 2P v F is a slight plus, but it becomes clear that I'm still under pressure. If I were to lose my weak but advanced pawn I would stand rather worse.

44 Bd1-b3 Rd4-d7

45 Rf1-f2 j7-j6

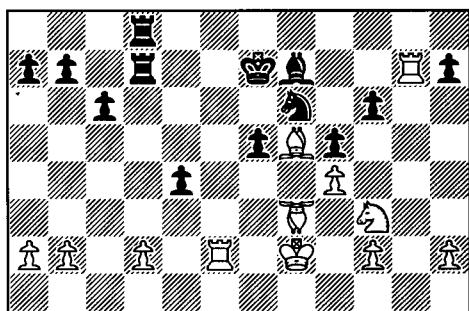
To open up the seventh rank is horribly risky, but I must keep his knight quiet.

46 i3-i4 h5xi4  
47 h3xi4 Nj5-h6



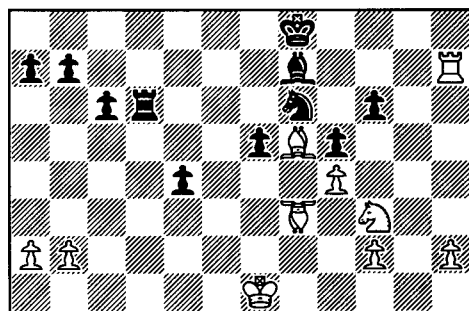
The idea is to meet 48 Rk7+ with 48...Bh7 49 Fh3 Rld8 50 i5 Rxd2 51 ixh6 Kxh6.

48 Fg2-h3 i6-i5  
49 Rk2-k1 Bi8-g6  
50 Rk1-k7+ Bg6-h7  
51 Bb3-c2 Rd7-e7  
52 Bc2-d1 Rl8-d8  
53 Bd1-h5 Re7-d7



I was threatening 53. ...e3 so the bishop had to move, but 53 Bi6 saves a tempo in some lines; the game is on a knife-edge and I feel I must keep pressing or lose. Now if 54 Rx17 Rxd2 55 Rxd2 Rxd2+ 56 Ki3 Kh8 57 l4 e3 58 l5 g4 59 Ni1 Rf2 and I win the race.

54 Kh2-g1 Kg7-h8  
55 Rk7x17 Rd7xd2  
56 Rf2-f6 Rd2-d6  
57 Rf6xd6 Rd8xd6



58 Fh3-g2 e4-e3!  
59 Rl7-18+ Bh7-i8

60 Rl8-17 Nh6xi4!

Thanks to the possibility of 61.Bxi4 Rd1+ 62.Ff1 e2.

61 Rl7xb7 Bi8-g6

Taking advantage of the loose knight and an ever-present threat to queen the e-pawn.

62 Bh5-g4 Ni4-h6

63 Bg4-e2 Bg6xj3

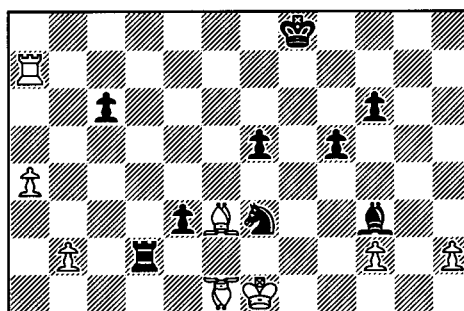
64 Rb7xa7 Rd6-d2

65 Fg2-f1 Nh6-f5

There is some danger that if rooks and bishops are exchanged I could fail to stop both a- and l-pawns; perhaps this is another subtle mine laid by my opponent. I am forced to continue the central attack. Fighting against my instincts, I have abandoned the defence of Pj6 and rejected ...Rxb2.

66 a2-a4 Nf5-g3

67 Be2-f3?



The right square was g4, when there is still work to do. With

67 ... Ng3-i2+

I announced mate as follows:-

68 Kh1 Nj4+

69 Ki1 (69 Kg1 Nh3#) Ri2+

70 Kh1 (70 Kj1 Bk2+ 71 Kk1 Ri1#) Rf2+

71 Ki1 (71 Kg1 Nh3#) Nh3+

72 Kj1 Rxf1+

73 Bh1 Rxh1 mate.

A very hard struggle in which I never felt comfortable.

Here are the lessons I draw from this game and from others in this tournament that have appeared in the pages of VC.

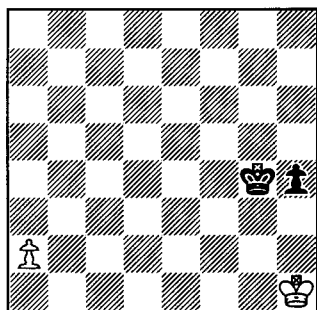
(1) The exchange of courier for two pawns is reasonable, but loss of time, retreating a capturing bishop for instance, will tip the balance against. Let me assert once again that the bishop should be considered, like the rook, to be a major piece and will rarely equate to a knight or courier.

(2) In my hands the development of couriers to e3(6),h3(6) was not successful; the ferses belong there. Control is important in the chess struggle and more difficult on a wide board. Unmoved R+C and Nc6/j6 is an efficient defence of the wing in the early stages and I will stick with it.

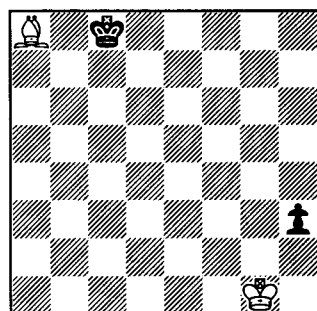
(3) The wing thrust with a knight's pawn is not used nearly enough. It is an additional and major strategic possibility which should become a normal means of engaging the opponent on the wing of choice. The structure of MCC lends itself to the idea, which would not usually be a sacrifice. Either the move gains space or a rook ends up on b7(k7) attacking the weak square c7(j7).

## ACHÈRES CHESS

The 1993 French problemists' meeting was held in Achères, and a new variant, invented by Jean Roche, was used for the blitz tourney. The object is to put your king in contact with the enemy king, and you may not give check by any other man nor expose your own king to a check by any other man (*diagrammes* 106, page 2362). No game from the tourney was recorded (at least not by me), but my attention was recently drawn to an Achères Chess study published in *phénix* in 2001 by Vlaicu Crişan.

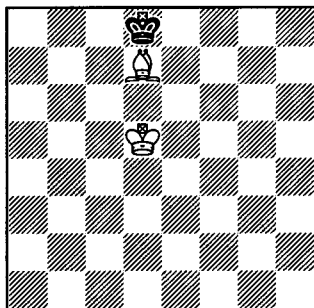


White, who is trying to win, starts **1 a4** (else Black's king will catch White's pawn), and Black sets a minor problem by playing **1...h3**. This threatens **2...Kf3** followed by **3...Kg2** winning, and White cannot play **3 Kg2** himself because he would be putting his king in check from the pawn on h3. Hence **2 Kg1** so that **2...Kf3** can be met by **3 Kf2**, and now Black does go for the pawn: **2...Kf5**. There follows **3 a5 Ke6 4 a6 Kd7 5 a7 Kc8**, after which **6 a8Q/R** is illegal and **6 a8N** is met by **6...Kb7**. This leaves only **6 a8B**, which would be hopeless at ordinary chess; how can it possibly lead to a win at Achères?



In fact the win is straightforward.

Given as a specimen line is **6...Kb8 7 Be4 Kc7 8 Kh2 Kd6 9 Kxh3 Ke5 10 Kg2 Ke6 11 Kf3 Kd6 12 Bd5 Kd7 13 Ke4 Ke7 14 Be6 Ke8 15 Kd5 Kd8 16 Bd7**, when we have



and Black will have to move his king off the back rank and allow **17 Kd6**. A little examination shows that White's advance has been irresistible, and that **K + B v K** is a general win.

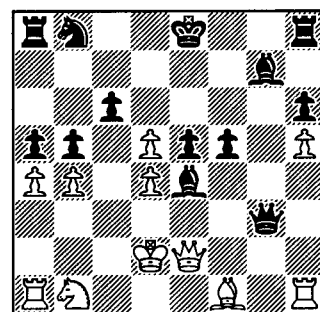
This was Vlaicu's contribution to a book *A study apiece* recently produced by Gerhard Josten, in which each of sixty contributors wrote about one of his endgame studies. The unwritten implication was that these be in ordinary chess, but I took the opportunity to present the study in *Optional Replacement Chess* which I quoted in *VC* 12, and Vlaicu Crişan presented the study quoted here. I ended my own contribution by observing that "endgame studies" in ordinary chess were getting ever heavier and more complex, and that studies in variant forms of chess offered a path back to the lightness and elegance which had first attracted me to the field. I am glad the editor allowed us to include these variant studies in what was conceived as a wholly orthodox book, and I hope they may have encouraged others to investigate. There must be a vast amount waiting to be discovered.

## AVALANCHE AT MESSIGNY

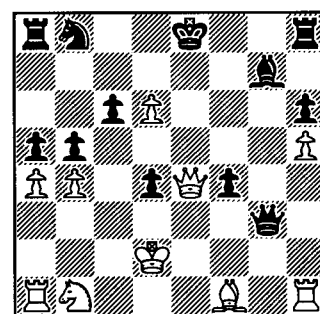
The annual meeting of French chess problemists, held for many years at Messigny near Dijon, traditionally includes a variant chess blitz tourney, and this year the variant chosen was **Balanced Avalanche Chess** (White's

first move is normal, but at every subsequent turn the player follows his move by pulling an opposing pawn one square forward if one is available to be pulled). Putting one's own king in check is prohibited, and a pawn pulled to the promotion square promotes to a piece of its owner's choice. Marco Bonavoglio and Thierry le Gleuher shared first place with 4/6, and Marco won the play-off. Everybody won at least one game, and everybody lost at least two. In the original formulation of *Avalanche Chess*, White also had a pull on his first move, but it was found that this gave him too great an advantage and the balanced form has been suggested as an improvement.

The meeting report included the two games between the leaders. Being five-minute games, these lacked the quality of the correspondence games which we saw in *VC* 61/62, and I see no point in reproducing them in full. However, one of them threw up an interesting position. Thierry had White.



Black was a piece up and **13...cxd5** would surely have won easily, but for some reason he played **13...exd4/d6??** White duly pounced, **14 Qxe4/f4+**,



and the question is, could Black have avoided being mated next move?

Answer on page 241.



# FIRDAWSI'S NARD & "LATRUNCULI CHESS"

by Andrew Perkis

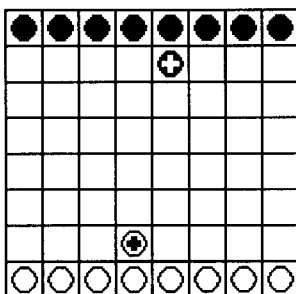
A final millennial reference to the Indian origin of Chess comes from the *Shanama (Book of Kings)* the national epic of Persia [...] completed by Firdawsi in 1011 [...] It includes a different version of the *Chatrang-namuk* story about an Indian King's challenge to Nushirwan to deduce the game of Chess from the equipment alone. Again, the problem is solved for him by the sage Buzurjmihir [...] who goes on to return the compliment by inventing the game of Nard. In this version, however, Nard is not Backgammon but apparently a Chess variant.

David Parlett, *The Oxford History of Board Games*, 1999

Firdawsi is here re-telling a story first told in the *Chatrang-namuk*, which dates from just before the Islamic conquest. The whole point of the original version of the story is that the invention of one of world's great games – Chess – is matched by the invention of another – Backgammon, so it is unclear why Firdawsi chose to make this substitution. The later game, which has come to be known as Firdawsi's Nard, is apparently (according to what has come to be the accepted reconstruction) a variant of *Latrunculi*, yet influenced by Chess – played on an 8x8 board and incorporating 'kings'.

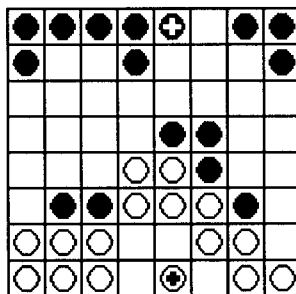
These kings do not seem to have been chess kings, however, but rather special men which were invulnerable to capture. The game presumably evolved in Persia under the dual influence of Chess and *Latrunculi*, although we cannot tell whether it was still a living game in the 11th century. It is even possible, though unlikely, that it was *never* a living game. Firdawsi may simply have needed a game which would match Chess by including royal men, thus following the main thrust of the *Shanama* by hearkening back to the pre-Islamic Sasanian Dynasty. Here are the rules

of the game, according to Jeffrey De Luca (based on H. J. R. Murray's reconstruction). "Interception" is yet another term for custodianship.



The opening position is shown above. "All pieces had the move of the rook and captured by interception. The kings were immune from capture. The players contended until one king had lost all his men or his army was so blockaded that it could not move."

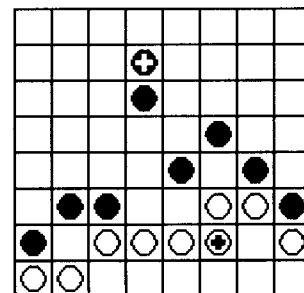
My interest in this curious game was rekindled shortly after I had started work on Hnefichess. This, in the first and most obvious form I investigated, used a standard chessboard and the opening array of Orthochess – with one king and fifteen soldiers per side. All men have the move of the rook, and soldiers capture soldiers by custodianship with a win being either by enclosing the enemy king or by reaching a safe haven on the far rank with one's own. This game does not work well, however, as all sorts of fortress and blocking problems arise. If a player so wishes, a fortress can swiftly be set up such as White has achieved in the diagram below. White is now able to stop the game dead by moving his king back and forth inside the fortress.



When I first started working on a "Double Take" version of Hnefichess as described below, I also did a little tinkering with Firdawsi's Nard. It struck me that it would be a short step

from invulnerable kings to kings that are just that bit more difficult to capture than soldiers. If this were by enclosure, and the king's capture then became the *objective*, we would have an early version of what I have called "Hnefichess" (if a second objective of reaching the far rank with one's king were allowed) or "Latrunculi Chess" (if the second win were not included). The game would also be a variant of the one suggested above, though seemingly with a better chance of being playable, since there are fewer pieces for fortress building and the kings are initially somewhat exposed.

However, even when I exaggerated the initially exposed position of the kings, by allowing the capture of an enemy king by *immobilizing* it, it emerged that the game could still be swiftly spoilt if a player were intent on building a fortress, such as the one shown below, within which the White King can again move back and forth at will. The manoeuvres required to get the king back behind the soldiers are not that difficult and the fortress option turns out to be only one symptom of a wider tendency for impasses to develop. An additional feature of this fortress is that the enemy king is blocked from reaching one's home row.



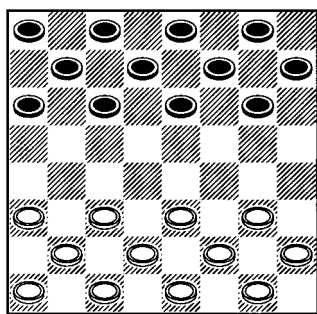
This tendency for play to lead to an impasse is very similar to that which occurs in *Latrunculi* itself, at least with the basic rule set which has been handed down. Various authors have suggested additional rules to remedy this, but applying such a 'fix' to my CV version of Firdawsi's Nard was not a tempting task. At this point all I wanted to do was to come up with a blend of Chess and Hnefetafl, and the other road I was following seemed more likely to lead to this goal relatively swiftly.

### “Double Take” and Hnefichess

In order to come up with a Hnefichess in time for *VC* 64, I decided to circumvent the problem of fortresses entirely – by using my attainment game “Double Take” as a starting point. This is played on an 8x10 board with twin red and green grids. For the complete rules see

<<http://www.zillions-of-games.com/cgi-bin/zilligames/submissions.cgi?do=show;id=319>>

but a version played on a chess board, and using a set of draughts pieces, can be swiftly described.



Set up men as shown in the diagram. White men stay on black squares, Black men stay on white squares. Moves are either to the next square diagonally forward or to the next appropriately coloured square directly forward (a low leap). Capture is by custodianship and capturing moves to adjoining diagonal squares or by low leap can be made in any direction. The object is to get four men to the far rank. The twin grid system used in this game solves the impasse problem that can occur so easily in games which use custodian capture. It does not solve the other major problem, the difficulty of “mopping up” pieces at the end of a game – although in Double Take itself, this is made irrelevant by the attainment objective.

It doesn't take a great imaginative leap to simply add a king per side and convert Double Take to a modern 'Hnefichess'. Although this idea first crossed my mind several years ago, two off-putting problems put the idea on the back burner until recently. One is that a king cannot be captured by enclosure unless special rules govern its movement whenever it is contact with enemy men. The other is that

even when this is dealt with, and despite the lack of opportunities for fortress building, the king, at least given a 'natural' home rank starting position, is still protected from early attack to such an extent that for a large portion of a game, play is hardly affected by the presence of the kings. Firdawsi's Nard gave me a new perspective on how to deal with this problem by positioning the king in front of the soldiers (and exaggerating this, by having the king-making take place as battle commences, fed back into my reworking of Firdawsi's game when I returned to it a few weeks later).

### Firdawsi's Nard and Latrunculi Chess

By the time I had completed the article on Hnefichess, I had developed a theory that some form of 'Latrunculi Chess' (an equivalent to my Hnefichess but not necessarily including the attainment objective) could have played a role in the evolution of Tafl games. However, “reconstructing” a variant of Firdawsi's Nard which fitted this description still looked as if it might prove as tricky as the reconstruction of Latrunculi itself. In the end, this task was facilitated by adopting a new version of a fix which has sometimes been applied to Latrunculi – and slightly altering the starting position as given by Murray et al . . .

Latrunculi – or *Ludus Latrunculorum* (the game of soldiers) was, according to games historian Ulrich Schaedler, “Perhaps the most sophisticated game of strategy played by the Romans [...] According to ancient sources Latrunculi must have been a game of strategy at which it was possible to acquire considerable skill”. It was played on boards of several sizes, though all with an even number of cells, and all men moved orthogonally (probably as a rook, though possibly one square per turn) and captured by custodianship. The main objective was material capture, although at least a couple of alternative wins have been suggested. One of these is to blockade the opponent so that he is unable to move

– a very unlikely achievement in my opinion. The other is to award the win to a player with a material advantage when such a blockade occurs.

Beyond this, we have nothing definite to add to a rule set, although more is clearly needed, for, utilizing the basic Latrunculi idea (pieces moving as rooks and capturing by custodianship) does not easily lead to a game that is fully playable. Chief among the difficulties is the option a player has to set up a blockade equivalent to the fortress we have already encountered. In this case the mobile piece – or pieces – within the fortress will be ordinary men, but the effect, putting a halt to the game, is the same (and adopting the rule that a player with a material advantage wins in such cases is neither easily made workable, nor likely to be deemed fair if it results in a win for purely defensive, unadventurous play). These difficulties, if not countered by the literary evidence, would probably be sufficient to suggest that Latrunculi was unlikely to be a have been wholly satisfactory game.

It is worth mentioning here the game of Hasami Shogi, which in Japan is regarded solely as a children's game. The origin of Hasami Shogi (which employs the basic rules of Latrunculi only and is played on a Shogi board) is unknown, but according to the Japanese games researcher Kuromiya Kimihiko, the game probably dates from the late 18th century. “In this period [...] normal citizens as well as nobility started to enjoy playing Shogi – they came to have the time and money to do so. Children must have often seen adults having a good time playing Shogi, but unfortunately it was too difficult for them, then they would have to invent some easier game using the board and pieces.” Due to its role as a children's game, the impasse problems of Hasami Shogi have not been addressed.

In marked contrast to this approach, however, has been the variety of measures that have been tried (and sometimes tested!) in the hope of demonstrating that Latrunculi was clearly not such a trivial game. One of these ideas, which was first

suggested in the 19th century by French author Becq de Fouquière, and which was subsequently picked up by R. C. Bell and others in the 20th century, was that some pieces may have increased power, specifically a 'leader piece' which could jump over enemy pieces – an orthogonal draughts jump, but without a capture. This idea – intended to solve a specific problem that makes the reconstruction of Latrunculi difficult – may have been inspired by Firdawsi's Nard, even though the kings of that game have a different additional power. At any rate, a piece with the aforementioned jumping power, usually called the Dux, has been utilized with the intention of enabling a player to sabotage the building of an enemy wall. Although it is not properly effective against a determined spoiler, it has been employed a number of times, most recently (as far as I am aware) by Oxford Games in their 1996 *Ludus Romanus* version of Latrunculi. As in other suggested rule sets, so here: one Dux per side helps, but is not enough to stop a player intent on doing so bringing the game to a halt. However, while continuing to play around with Firdawsi's Nard, it struck me that the dux idea could be helpful – if applied to more pieces. (Interestingly a second version of Hasami Shogi allows this jump to all its pieces. However, this version is an alignment game, almost unknown in Japan itself, and is most probably a post-19th century western invention.)

I discovered that a king hunting version of Firdawsi's Nard works pretty well if, instead of giving the jump power to the kings, it is given only to the other men, particularly if the kings have the opportunity to start in a more advanced position, enabled by the first move for each player being to place his king on any vacant square in his own half of the board. (This is not even necessarily at variance with the vague description in the Shanama itself: "the two kings advanced upon the field of battle...") The rules for this proposed version, with the second win of 'Hnefichess' added – as it makes the game considerably more interesting – are as follows.

**Rules of Firdawsi's Nard (King Hunting Version)**

The game starts with eight soldiers occupying each player's home row. White plays first. The first move for each player is to place his king on any vacant square on the second, third or fourth rank. Thereafter turns of play alternate. All pieces may move as rooks. In addition, a soldier may make an orthogonal leap over either a friendly or enemy soldier (but not a king) to a vacant square immediately beyond. Multiple leaps of this nature may not be made on a single turn of play, and men leaped over are not removed from the board.

Soldiers are captured by custodianship, and the usual rule applies that a soldier may move between opposing men with impunity. The validity of a capture is not affected by the manner of the move (rook's move or leap). However, only soldiers can take part in such captures, not kings (although a king may take part in immobilizing the enemy king). A king is captured if it is left with no move on his player's turn of play. The capturing player wins. A player also wins if he manages to place his king on any square of his opponent's home row. A player may not move his king so as to threaten the latter win if this repeats a position which has already occurred, and must play again if the other player draws his attention to his having done so.

A player may not make a move immobilizing his own king unless it simultaneously immobilizes the enemy king (thus winning the game).

Draws may occur by repetition or agreement.

Although this exact game may not have existed in the eleventh century, I have tried to show how such a game was plausible. Now for how it plays! From a minimal amount of testing I would guess that this game would produce a fairly high percentage of draws when played at a high level, although losing errors would not be too hard to make either. Here is a game that does end in a draw – but the play is, I think, of some interest, and does not even come close to getting

bogged down in the inevitability of a stand off – such as is the norm with Latrunculi itself.

**Andrew Perkis vs Martyn Hamer.**

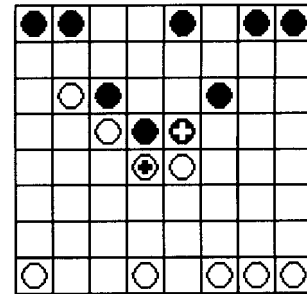
1 Kd4 Ke5

A natural start, though the relative merits of the various options are not yet particularly clear.

2 e1-e4 f8-f6

3 c1-c5 d8-d5

4 b1-b6 c8-c6



5 a1-a6

If I had played 5 b6^d6?! here, Martin would probably have responded with 5...b8-b7 threatening ...b7-d7xd6, but not 5...e8-e6xd6?? 6 f1-f5 winning.

5 ... b8-b7

6 d1-b1 g8-g3

7 f1-f3 g3^e3

It wasn't immediately clear whether this intruder is a strength or a weakness. In the event it helps give Martin good counterplay.

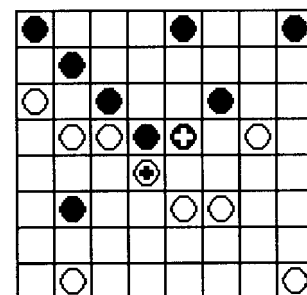
8 g1-g5 e3-d3

9 e4-e3

To keep the king's options open.

9 ... d3-b3

10 b6-b5



10 ... h8-h5

If, instead, 10...b3-c3, threatening the c5 soldier, White can play 11 c5^a5.

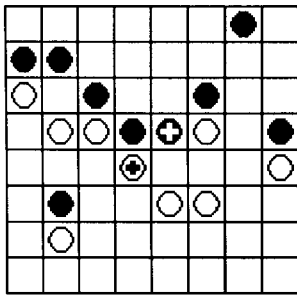
11 g5-f5 e8-g8

We were both very keen to keep each other's kings well contained.

12 h1-h4 a8-a7

Probably intending ...a7^a5, after which ...b3-c3 is a real threat.

13 b1-b2



13 ... b3-c3

Not 13...a7^a5, when 14 b5-b4xb3 a5-b5xc5 (14...b7-b5xc5 15 b4-a4xa5) 15 a6-b6xb5 wins a soldier since 15...d5-b5xb6 lets the WK through.

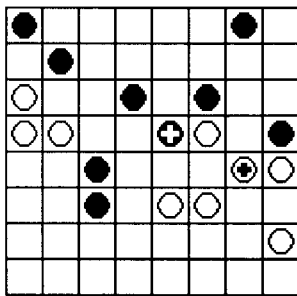
14 c5^a5 a7-a8

To prevent a6^a8.

15 b2-h2 c6-c4

16 Ke4 d5-d6

17 Kg4



17 ... g8-g5

At a glance, 17...c4-f4xf5 looks better, but after 18 Kg7 f6-f7 19 h4^h6 (threatening h2-h4xh5) it's hard to see White losing. If 19...h5-g5, then 20.h2-h5 is strong. We both avoided chances to gain small apparent advantages if the upshot would be very open positions – in which case we both feared a draw as an inevitable result.

18 f5-f4 b7-e7

19 f4-d4

Containing the BK for now.

19 ... c4-c6

20 b5-d5 a8-b8

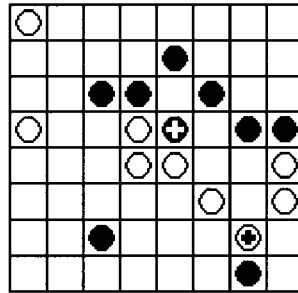
21 e3-e4 b8-b1

22 a6-a8 b1-h1

23 h2-h3 h1-g1

24 Kg2 c3-c2

We have both attempted to construct the equivalent of a mating net, while paying the minimum necessary attention to our own king-security. More cautious play would probably lead to very long games.



25 a8-e8 f6-f7

I was prepared for 25...c2-f2, when 26 f3-f4 gives White better chances.

26 f3-f5 Ke6

27 e8-h8 Kh6

28 e4-e5 c6-c3

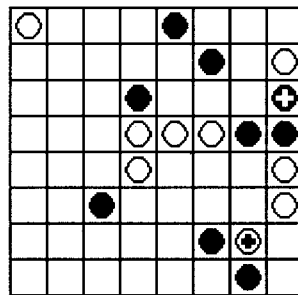
29 a5-a8

Both King hunts continue!

29 ... c2-f2

30 h8-h7 e7-e8

Allowing 31 a8-g8 would be too dangerous. 30...d6-d8 also looks dangerous after 31 d4^d6!



At this point we both agreed that Martin had allowed his King position to become a bit more compromised than mine. Although we were playing by e-mail, we were playing very fast by now in order to finish on time. If there is a win here I couldn't see it. Perhaps 31 a8-d8 (intending d8-f8, and then to answer ...g5-g8xf8? with Kg6 winning) was a candidate.

31 d4-g4?! c3-g3xg4

32 d5-d3

I decided against 32 h4-g4 since after 32...Kg6 (not 32...h5-h4 33 f5^h5xh4) 33 f5-f3xg3 f7-f4xf3 34 e5-e4xf4 d6^d4!! leaves Black better.

32 ... g3-f3

33 Kg4

and a draw was agreed. Neither of us felt we had a better option than 33...f2^f4 34 Kg2 f4^f2, repeating, though after 34...f7-f6xf5 35 Kc2 f4-c4 36 e5-e6 Kg6 37 h7-h6xh5, chances are even.

An interesting rather than a dull draw! Although it's far too early to guess how typical a game this might have been, it was enjoyable enough to indicate that more research might be worthwhile.

### Latrunculi chess – a bridge to Tafl?

Researchers into the origin of Latrunculi have suggested that Tafl emerged in a Latrunculi playing community.

Other than Firdawsi's Nard, as presented in the Shanama, there is no evidence that Latrunculi (or a modified version thereof) was played in 11th-century Persia. There is, however, evidence that games related to Latrunculi were played in medieval Celtic and Scandinavian countries. When these games come into view [Ficheall in Ireland; Tawlbwrdd in Wales; Hnefatafl in Norway; Tablut in Lapland] it seems that the transition to Tafl (with the possible exception of Ficheall) has already taken place. Assuming that Tafl did evolve from Latrunculi, we can reasonably assume (even though there is insufficient evidence left to demonstrate it) that Latrunculi or Latrunculi related games subsisted in these playing communities, right through the dark ages and up to the transition to Tafl. However, the likelihood of this would depend, to some extent, on the nature of Latrunculi itself.

There are several alternatives. The basic mechanics of play and the problems this gives rise to, suggests that Latrunculi was a trivial game. If, however, it was a game of greater depth and inherent interest there are, it seems to me, three main options. The complete set of rules (now lost) may have successfully transformed the game, although I suggest this is unlikely, since, in this case, one would expect some scrap of evidence (either literary or within games, such as Seega, descended from Latrunculi) to have been picked up. Alternatively there may have been a "fix of honour", such as an unwritten rule against passively building a barrier instead of playing to win. This seems plausible (especially as the game's high regard was due, in part, to its

being a simulation of battle) and could have worked well if the objective was to capture most (eg all but four) of the opponent's men rather than all of them.

Finally, there may have been a number of solutions, some perhaps working better than others, to the problems thrown up by the basic rule set of Latrunculi. In this case, Latrunculi would have been a "package" of games, played like this here, like that there, different communities or individuals having wider or narrower repertoires. Within such a package of games, there may have been those, which include, as Firdawsi's Nard seems to have done, the use invulnerable pieces, known as kings. If so, I suggest that such games may have been a bridge to Tafl, and could well have evolved through interim forms, which, like my King hunting Firdawsi's Nard, were true Chess Variants.

Such a game or games could have been of considerable interest and challenge, although perhaps only until a certain level of skill were reached, after which drawn games may have been the norm. Tafl may well have been attractive in such a playing-community, not because of its novelty, but because it solved the problem of excessive draws in its parent game.

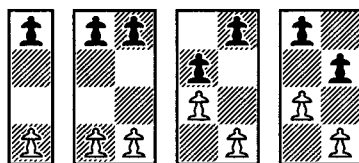
After devising and testing this game, I revisited Ulrich Schaedler's own reconstruction of Latrunculi, published in 2001, which allows the dux jump to all men. This would seem to be a key component needed in a totally successful "Modern Latrunculi". Unfortunately his version is still subject to blocked positions which can easily mar the flow and enjoyment of games. So, although Schaedler's version points the way ahead, it would seem that designing an enjoyable Chess Variant which uses the basics of Latrunculi, but adds kings, is probably an easier task than "reconstructing" Latrunculi itself.

*Quite apart from the historical aspects, which I am not competent to judge, I find this a most interesting glimpse into the mind of a game designer. Thank you, Andrew. - JDB*

## QUADRIPAWNS

One of Martin Gardner's books includes a chapter based on a game called **Hexapawn**, in which two lines of pawns face each other on a 3 x 3 board and the object is either to force a pawn to his back row or to leave him without a move. This game is of course very easily analysed, and the object of the chapter was not to talk about it as such but to use it as a vehicle for an elementary discussion on artificial intelligence (a robot was postulated, which selected from the available moves at random and adjusted the probabilities with which it chose each move in the light of experience). But the idea can be generalized, and David Pritchard had or knew of a book *Brain Muscle Builders* by Marco Meirovitz and Paul Jacobs which described 4 x 4 and 5 x 5 versions. I haven't seen this, but many years ago I looked briefly at the four-row game on a board of arbitrary width and found it not without interest. It is not claimed that anything which follows is new.

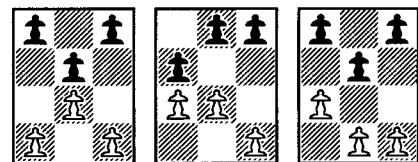
The rules are as above. Board  $n \times 4$  with pawns along each player's back row; normal pawn moves, with no pawn-two; the object is either to reach his back row, or to leave him without a move by capturing or blocking all his men.



The 1 x 4 game (outer left) is a trivial win for the second player. The 2 x 4 game (inner left) is likewise won for the second player (Black can answer 1 a2 by 1...a3, see inner right, and force White to sacrifice both his men), but what if he plays 1...b3 instead (outer right)? This loses. White exchanges, 2 axb3 axb3, and then plays 3 b2; by exchanging, he comes down to a single-file position in which he has the advantage.

This illustrates an important general rule. The game has a property, which we shall call "the potential last word",

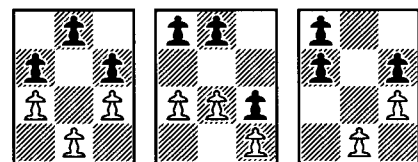
which corresponds to "the move" at checkers, and as at checkers it is transferred to the opponent by a simple exchange. If, when all the pawns are facing each other in pairs, the total number of empty squares between them is odd, we say that the player to move has "the potential last word", and if he can avoid further captures he will win by blocking his opponent; if the total number of squares between the pawns is even, his opponent has the potential last word. The total number of squares between the pawns at the start being even, Black starts with the potential last word, so White will try to generate an odd number of exchanges, whereas Black will try to avoid all exchanges or to generate an even number. This general strategy applies however wide the board may be.



The 3 x 4 game is clearly lost for White if he advances his centre pawn (1 b2 is met by 1...b3, left), so let us suppose that he moves a side pawn, 1 a2. Black has three replies.

If 1...a3, White continues 2 b2 (centre) threatening to exchange and gain the potential last word, and what is Black to do? 2...axb2 allows 3 cxb2, and White will play 4 a3 and score at a4 (Black can play to reach c1, but it is the first move to the far row that wins). 2...b3 loses at once, and 2...c3 allows White his exchange.

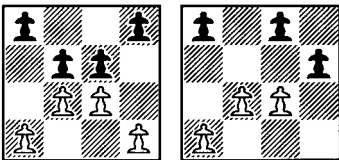
If 1...b3 (right), White can exchange at once, 2 axb3, and 3 b2 will win whichever way Black recaptures.



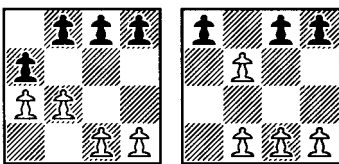
Two down, one to go. However, for Black it is third time lucky, because 1...c3 gives him a win. 2 c2 a3 is clearly hopeless (left). 2 b2, perhaps? No, Black avoids the exchange by playing 2...c2 (centre), and he can

meet 3 a3 by 3...b3 and 3 b3 by 3...a3. This leaves 2 a3 intending 2...bxa3 3 c2 (right), but it doesn't work because Black can give the man back by 3...a2 and win after 4 bxa2 a3 (this time the exchange of pawn for pawn has not transferred the potential last word because the capture and recapture squares were on different rows). Black can also win by 2...b3, declining the gambit.

So the 3 x 4 game is another win for Black.

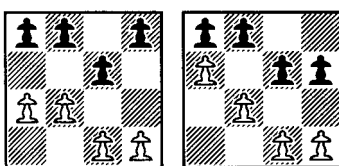


At 4 x 4, we have a change. The advance of a centre pawn still loses; 1 b2 can be met by 1...b3, after which 2 a2 loses at once, 2 d2 d3 loses almost as quickly, and 2 c2 can be met either by 2...c3 (left), when White will soon have to concede (3 bxc3 dxc3 4 cxb3 axb3 etc), or by Noam Elkies's quicker 2...bxc2 3 dxc2 d3 scoring at d1 (right). However, the side pawn advance 1 a2 is another matter. Black has four replies, but none of them is good.



As on a 3 x 4 board, 1...a3 can be met by 2 b2 (see left).

1...b3 allows 2 axb3 (see right), after which 2...cxb3 is met by 3 b2 winning easily and 2...axb3 is met by 2 d2 transposing into the second-player win on the bcd files. Once again, we notice how a simple exchange has transferred the potential last word.

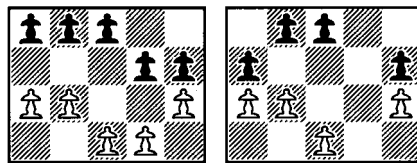


1...c3 can be met by 2 b2 (see left) again threatening an exchange gaining

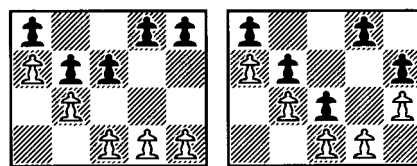
the potential last word, and once more Black has no good reply. If he tries 2...d3, not only does the threatened exchange 3 bxc3 win but White has the attractive alternative 3 a3 attacking b4 and forcing a pawn through to the back row (see right), since either 3...bxa3 or 3...b3 will allow 4 bxc3. This little tactical trick, which gives a win by force irrespective of who has the potential last word, seems to arise quite often.

Finally, 1...d3 can be met by 2 b3, after which Black will have to allow an exchange gaining the potential last word.

I think the 5 x 4 game is a win for Black (1 a2 can be met by 1...e3, 1 b2 by 1...d3, 1 c2 by 1...c3), but instead of a full analysis let me present a couple of tactical tricks which turned up in the course of it and may help in the analysis of wider boards.



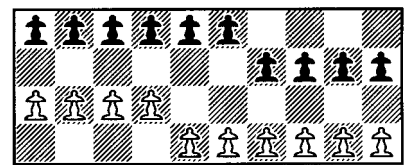
1 a2 e3 2 b2 d3 3 e2 (see left). White wants to force an exchange gaining the potential last word, and he seems to have done so; he threatens 4 b3 attacking the pawn on c4 and winning by force (it is the same trick as we saw in the last 4 x 4 diagram), if Black plays 3...d2 he will reply 4 cxd2 exd2 5 e3 and score at e4, and if Black tries 3...b3 he will reply 4 a3 and Black will be faced with the same dilemma. But Black can concede the potential last word straight away by 3...dxe2 4 dxe2 and then play 4...a3 to get it back (see right), and what can White do? 4 bxa3 gives the unwanted second exchange, 4 b3 cxb3 5 axb3 allows Black to score at a1, and 4 c2 loses at once.



1 a2 b3? (Black hopes for the exchange 2 axb3 axb3, when he will

have a winning game on the bcde files) 2 a3! c3 3 b2 (see left) e3 (3...cxb3 will transfer the potential last word to White with an easy win, so Black temporizes) 4 e2 (so does White) c2 (no choice now, see right) 5 dxc2 bxc2 6 b3 and scores at a4.

And we may note that on a wide board, if White starts by advancing on one wing Black must make at least one early countering move on that wing. Consider a 10 x 4 board, and suppose that Black allows White to play 1 a3, 2 b3, 3 c3, 4 d3 while he noodles around elsewhere :



White can now win by the standard breakthrough 5 b3 (5...axb3 6 c3 dxc3 7 dxc3 bxc3 8 a3, or 5...cxb3 6 a3).

The game needs a name if only for the index, so let us call it **Quadripawns**. I haven't investigated it further, and do not know whether the White win on a 4 x 4 board is an aberrant feature or one that will recur. Perhaps some of our mathematical readers may care to have a go. In his book, Martin Gardner cites a paper "Extendapawn – an inductive analysis" by John R. Brown in *Mathematics Magazine*, Volume 38 (November 1965), pages 286-99, which was apparently inspired by the original description of Hexapawn in one of his *Scientific American* columns. This paper presents a complete analysis of the  $n \times 3$  game with the same rules, and shows that best play for both sides leads to a win for White if and only if  $n$  leaves a remainder of 1, 4, 5, 7, or 8 on division by 10. It is tempting to conjecture that the best-play result in the four-row game might also be given by a simple periodic discriminant of this kind, perhaps with a few exceptional results for small values of  $n$ , but the game with only three rows has some simplifying properties which appear not to exist once we have four rows or more, and I shall be surprised if the analysis proves to be at all easy.

## COMPLEMENTARY FIVE-LEAPER (AND OTHER) TOURS WITH ROTATIONAL SYMMETRY

The move of the **Five-leaper**, a composite 5,0 and 4,3 leaper, takes it a distance of five units in any direction, and on an 8x8 board it has precisely four possible moves wherever it may be. In VC 62, I recounted Tom Marlow's discovery of the first pair of complementary five-leaper tours, one tour using the two moves from each square that the other tour didn't, and suggested that powerful modern computers would be able to find many more. No reader having taken up the challenge, I have had a go myself.

Tom's procedure was to look for tours which were "rotationally anti-symmetric" in the sense that whenever a move was in the tour, the diametrically opposite move and its reverse were not. A complementary tour could then be obtained by rotating the original tour through 180 degrees. My original plan was to try and obtain all possible tours of this kind, and then to examine them and see if any had some additional property of interest. However, it soon became clear that while such tours existed in abundance, the property of "rotational anti-symmetry" seemed likely to exclude any other property of great interest, and that it might be more interesting to look for rotationally *symmetric* tours in which a 90-degree turn gave the complementary pattern (in other words, rotating the tour through 90 degrees gave a complementary tour, rotating it through 180 degrees gave the first tour again).

At this point, I ask experienced readers to bear with me while I spell out a few results on symmetric tours which are so fundamental that they tend to be taken for granted. No closed tour on a square board larger than 2x2 can be symmetric about a diagonal (any two points at which it meets this diagonal must be half way round from each other, so there can only be two of them). If a closed tour on a square board of even side is laterally symmetric and each move brings the touring man to a square of different colour, the tour must include two and only two moves which are perpendicular to the axis of symmetry and bisected by it, and again these must be half way round from each other (so a tour by a five-leaper may be laterally symmetric, but such a tour cannot be part of a complementary pair because the complementary tour will have to include the six remaining moves perpendicular to the axis of symmetry and bisected by it, and since it will itself be laterally symmetric it cannot do this). If the board side is a multiple of four and each move brings the touring man to a square of different colour, a tour with four-fold rotational symmetry is not possible, though a tour with two-fold rotational symmetry may be.

It follows that while five-leaper tours with both two-fold rotational symmetry and lateral symmetry may (and do) exist, tours forming part of a complementary pair cannot have more than two-fold rotational symmetry.

The first step was to find all the rotationally symmetric

five-leaper tours. There turned out to be 125,217 of these, 373 also being laterally symmetric. (These figures should be regarded as provisional until they have been confirmed by an independent worker, since if a programming error caused me to miss a batch there will have been nothing to tell me, but the calculation took less than twenty minutes on a machine now ten years old, using a program written for simplicity rather than speed, and so is easily repeated.) The very first tour found by the computer proved to be part of a complementary pair, and there were 224 tours where the complementary tour could be obtained by a 90-degree rotation of the original tour. Among the more striking was

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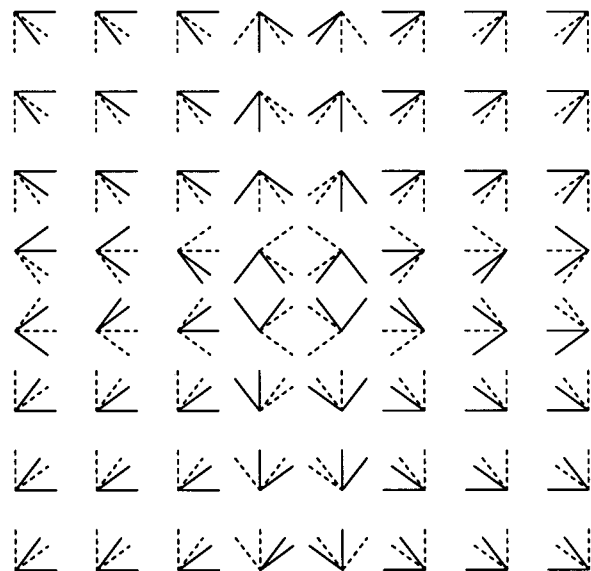
1  4  7 50 45 64 3  6
48 9 30 53 20 47 10 29
27 56 23 60 17 26 57 22
44 63 40 37 34 43 14 51
19 46 11  2  5  8 31 12
54 25 58 49 28 55 24 59
61 42 15 52 21 62 41 16
38 35 32 13 18 39 36 33
    
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with its opening Vs and its total of 20 horizontal moves. If we rotate this through 90 degrees we get

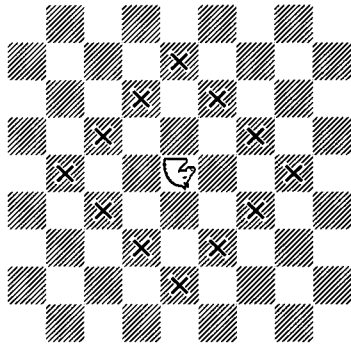
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6 29 22 51 12 59 16 33
3 10 57 14 31 24 41 36
64 47 26 43  8 55 62 39
45 20 17 34  5 28 21 18
50 53 60 37  2 49 52 13
7 30 23 40 11 58 15 32
4  9 56 63 46 25 42 35
1 48 27 44 19 54 61 38
    
```

and this does indeed use the moves that the tour as given does not. The matter is illustrated in graphical form below, full lines showing the moves used in the tour as first given and dashed lines those used in the rotation :



The property of having exactly four moves from every square of a board is not confined to the five-leaper. If we consider a composite of the knight and the 3,0 leaper

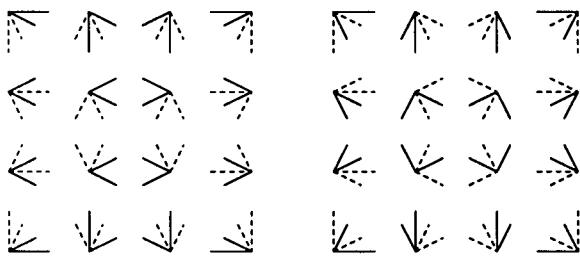


we see that it has exactly four moves on a 4x4 board whichever square it is on. On this board, does it yield complementary pairs of rotationally symmetric tours?

Indeed it does, and in a sense even more elegantly than a five-leaper does on an 8x8 board. It will be recalled that no pair of laterally symmetric tours on an 8x8 board can be complementary, because such a tour uses only two of the eight moves which are laterally bisected by the axis of symmetry. On a 4x4 board, this is no longer a problem, because there are only four such moves and the tours can use two each. There are in fact fourteen rotationally symmetric tours, four being also laterally symmetric, and each of these laterally symmetric tours also has the property that if we rotate it through 90 degrees, we get a tour complementary to the original. Two of these tours are

1 6 13 2	1 6 13 2
12 3 16 7	4 11 8 15
15 8 11 4	7 16 3 12
10 5 14 9	10 5 14 9

and if we put each and its 90-degree rotation in graphical form we have the patterns below :



The other two are obtained by interchanging the corners of these, 1 with 9 and 2 with 10.

There is more. In VC 57, we looked at a magic knight's tour discovered by C. F. Jaenisch in 1859, which, as well as being rotationally symmetric and having each row and column summing to 260, had the property that the long odd diagonal and each of the three parallel broken odd diagonals summed to 256, and the long even diagonal and each parallel broken even diagonal to 264. Here, if we renumber the first tour to start from square 6 and the

second to start from square 2, we get

12 1 8 13	16 5 12 1
7 14 11 2	3 10 7 14
10 3 6 15	6 15 2 11
5 16 9 4	9 4 13 8

which are reflections of two of the magic composite-leaper tours noted by George Jelliss on page 119 of *Chessics 26*. In these two tours, not only does each row and column sum to 34, but *all* the odd diagonals, the long diagonal and each of the broken odd diagonals in *both* directions, sum to 32, and *all* the even diagonals sum to 36.

I therefore wondered whether it might be possible to find a magic five-leaper tour with similar properties, but alas it proved otherwise. In 1990, Tom Marlow reported finding 58 magic five-leaper tours, 42 being closed and 34 being rotationally symmetric (see George Jelliss's "Knight's Tour Notes" web site). My analysis of rotationally symmetric tours confirmed his 34 tours, and verified that there were no others. It did note that the tours

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

and

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

had long odd and even diagonals summing to 256 and 264 respectively, but this is the best that we can do.

As far as rotationally symmetric tours are concerned, therefore, Tom's method of search in 1990 (to set up two facing 32-step paths, so ensuring that the columns summed to 260, and then to juggle things so that the rows also summed) found all the magic five-leaper tours that exist.

There are of course other leapers which have exactly four moves from any square of a board. The two examples considered here are part of the general family consisting of composite  $x,0$  and  $x-1,x-2$  leapers on boards of side  $2x-2$ , and George Jelliss has drawn my attention to the "toral" leapers typified by 1,0/7,0 on an 8x8. I leave the search for complementary tours using these leapers to others.



## ISOLATED PAWNS

**Cambodian Chess** (*VC* 55 pages 4-5, *VC* 60 page 104). Kuromiya Kimihiko, a Japanese games researcher, has sent Peter Michaelsen some information concerning the Cambodian chess variant described in detail in *VC* 55.

He asked some questions of Okano Shin, author of *Chess Games of the World* and *The Traditional Chess Variants of the East Asia*. Okano Shin told him that the co-author of the first book, Umabayashi Isao, once visited Cambodia, and bought a book on Cambodian Chess there. He was not able to get much information from people, because in those days Cambodia was politically unstable, and people were more interested in staying alive than in playing chess. After coming back to Japan he tried to read the book with the help of dictionaries, and managed to figure out how to play the game. He published the rules in the first edition of his *Sekai-no Shogi* (1997).

Kuromiya Kimihiko also explained why the piece names differ in various descriptions of Cambodian Chess: "This is partly because Umabayashi doesn't know Cambodian very well, though he did his best, consulting many dictionaries and books. And partly because it is impossible in the first place to represent Cambodian pronunciation exactly with Latin letters: you cannot avoid making some slight differences. Talking about 'Shatrong' or 'Chatrong', the correct pronunciation is neither of them, but their intermediate, and Umabayashi decided to adopt the former."

Peter is sure that many chess variant researchers might want to know more about this very rare Cambodian book. He tried to get in contact with Umabayashi Isao, but received no reply. Until more information appears, it is almost impossible to say anything about the game's origin. Is it an old, traditional variant, which was at some time replaced by 'Ouk Chatrang' in most parts of Cambodia, or is it a newer game, which has borrowed some features from Burmese and Chinese Chess? Okano Shin seems to think that in Cambodia Chinese Chess was played in earlier times. Then people came to know Thai and Burmese Chess, and invented this special Cambodian game. However, games researchers like Thierry Depaulis and Jean-Louis Cazaux do not agree. They believe that Mak-ruk first developed in the Khmer area. Later, the Thai invaded and conquered most of the Khmer kingdom, and were durably influenced by Khmer civilization in their turn. Chinese Chess had spread to northern Vietnam in the Middle Ages, where it became popular as 'Co Tuong', but we do not know if it reached the Khmer kingdom. Let us hope that future research will throw more light upon these historical questions, and on this mysterious game which looks like a hybrid between Chinese-Vietnamese and Thai-Burmese-Laotian-Cambodian Chess.

(The matter will have to be pursued other than in the pages of *VC*, but it would be interesting even to know the date of the book bought by Umabayashi Isao. Was it perhaps the source of the information given to P. A. Hill in 1969, or do it and the information given to Hill represent different strands of the same tradition?)

**Gala** (*ECV* 2 pages 245-6). Peter Michaelsen tells me that the earliest known description of this game is in *Brettspiele* by Arbeiter and Ruhnke, Potsdam 1937. Attempts to find earlier references have been unsuccessful, and he fears it may be a 1930s invention presented for some reason as a traditional folk game (a practice sadly not unknown). He tells me that Jean-Louis Cazaux will be discussing both this game and Cambodian Chess in a forthcoming book.

**Nam Dinh Chess**. Mats Winther tells me that those interested can download his Zillions implementation

<<http://hem.passagen.se/melki9/NamDinhChess.zip>> and experiment for themselves. Given that the endgame stage makes excellent sense as shown in *VC* 62, it would be a great pity if the earlier stages could not be persuaded to make sense also.

Jacques Maes and Jed Stone have been trying a version of **Infinite Plane Chess** (*ECV* 2 page 220), where the normal board is extended in all directions and supplemented by four squares "at infinity" in the N-S, NE-SW, E-W, and NW-SE directions. A piece "at infinity" can come back from either direction along any empty line, but a bishop going to infinity remains "light" or "dark".

Sadly, they found the game of little interest, and gave up after half a dozen moves. To quote from Jed's summary: "Chess is a forward facing game. The Infinite set up allows for an attack on the rear where there are no defences. You are, in effect, fighting a battle on two fronts. Without adding a set of pawns in the Infinite plane or rearranging the initial set up and therefore, creating a totally new game, there is no way to develop an effective defence and an attack. Neither of us had any wish to move in that direction. The Infinite squares on their own present a threat to the rear but are, until the opposing long-range pieces are removed, of little practical value. [...] Our conclusion was that Infinite Chess is impractical as a game."

This surprised me, since Boyer had described the game as "Ce jeu de plus haut intérêt", and I immediately looked at Boyer's two example games. Oh dear. In the first, White threw a knight at move 7. In the second, White played his queen to c0, Black made a nondescript reply, and White moved a rook to the E-W infinity square. A mass exchange of rooks left White's queen on this square, and a move by Black's Ng8 left his Bf8 pinned. White now moved his dark bishop to infinity as well, and mated at move 12.

Infinite Plane Chess was invented for use in problems, and Boyer's examples in game form appear to have hinged on elementary blunders. Jacques and Jed were playing by correspondence, and I see no reason to challenge their assessment that when competently played as a game it has nothing to offer.

**Polgar Superstar Chess** (see also page 193). In *VC* 62 (page 124) I wondered whether Black might not be able to kill the game from the outset by playing his pawns to c9-d10-e9-f10-g9 and stonewalling. Árpád Ruzs thinks this a very risky strategy and has sent me a game where White successfully overcomes it, but more analysis is needed.

Vladimír Pribylínec has been revising the rules of his **Passion Chess** (see *VC* 63 page 162), and I have gained the impression that he has yet decided on their final form. However, he tells me that he will be copying the latest version of the associated program from his home page to the Brothersoft site

<www.brothersoft.com>

in due course. This site also offers some other games developed by him.

**Hostage Chess** (see also pages 206-7). John Leslie has written a book on the game (I have seen a copy of the manuscript) and hopes it will be in print before the end of the year. Its publication will be announced on the web site <www.hostagechess.com>.

#### Did the gaming term *Alea* always imply the use of dice?

Just before *VC* 64 was due to go to press, Andrew Perki's friend Roly Cobbett sent me an article challenging my statement in *VC* 63 (page 162, top of second column) that "alea" always implied the use of dice. There is not enough space left to print his article in full, but his arguments strike me as cogent and I will do my best to summarize.

On page 409 of his 1913 *A History of Chess*, Murray does indeed state that the Latin word *Alea*, a term including both dice games and board games played with the assistance of dice (such as backgammon), always implies the use of dice. However, he is here discussing a 1061 letter from Cardinal Damiani to Pope Alexander in which chess is included amongst *Alea* games, games which were forbidden to the clergy, and so he suggests that Chess at this time must sometimes have been played with the help of dice. He cites several examples in support of this, including one from King Alfonso's Book of Games of 1283.

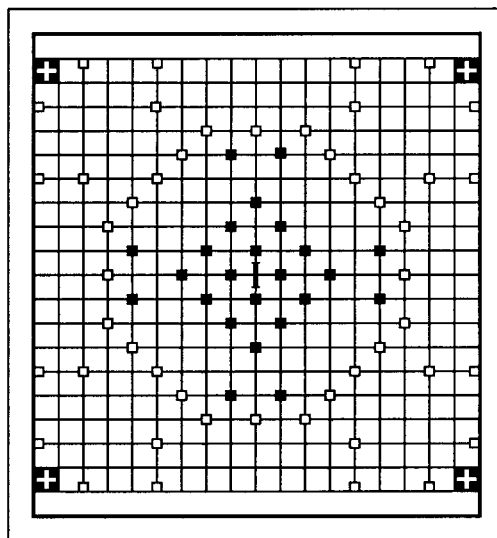
However, the game discussed in *VC* 63 is specifically *Alea Evangelii*, and in 1913 Murray was probably unaware of this game [it is certainly absent from his index]. It is known from a manuscript written in the 11th century about events from the reign of Athelstan early in the 10th century, and was to appear in print in 1923 in a book *The Times of St. Dunstan* by J. Armitage Robinson.

Murray realised, as did others, that this game was a part of the Hnefatafl family, in which one army besieges another and tries to capture its King. Had he known about it in 1913, maybe he would not have been so categorical in saying that dicing was always used where the term *Alea* is found, as none of the Hnefatafl games require the use of dice. Nowhere in his 1952 *A History of Board Games other than Chess* does he state or imply that dice were used in this game, or in any of the other Hnefatafl-type games. On pages 63-4 he outlines two surviving sets of rules for the games, one by Robert ap Ifan (1587), who gives the rules for the Welsh game Tawlbwrdd in a Peniarth manuscript, and another by Carl Linnaeus (1732), who saw another Hnefatafl-type game Tablut being played in Lapland and wrote the rules down. Neither of them ever mentions dice as being used, and the consensus seems to be that Hnefatafl games were games entirely of skill (I. Payne, *Antiquaries Journal*, vol 86, 2006, p. 336).

So how did this change in the meaning of *Alea* come about? In Roman times *Alea* seems to have meant either dice or the game of *Alea*, ancestor of backgammon, that used dice. But post-Roman use of the word is more complicated, and Murray (1952) discusses the matter on pages 56-7. Ancient glossaries, or old dictionaries, translate *Alea* as *zabel* (Old High German 10th century glossaries), *teblas* (Epinal Glossary, pre-800), *tefil* (Erfurt Glossary, pre-800), and *taefel* (Aelfric's Vocabulary, circa 1000).

So *Alea*, then, seems to mean *Tafl*, which was a word adopted by the Germanic peoples from the Latin word *Tabula*. It seems to have been used especially for the *Hnefa-tafl* games, but often refers generally to the gaming board and to games played on it. Nevertheless, the Church's own meaning of *Alea* seems more akin to the old Roman meaning, as in Cardinal Damiani's letter to the Pope, where *Alea* meant dicing and games involving dice, which were frowned upon and at times forbidden.

So the two words *Alea* and *Evangelii* seem inherently to contradict each other: how could the gospels, the *Evangelium* or "Good News", be linked in any way to the term *Alea*, a word which then had been so closely linked with gambling and the roll of the dice?



But in fact the *Alea Evangelii* board illustrated in the manuscript (simplified above) is not really being used as a game at all, but as a religious allegory, with the central and corner positions and the 72 men on it representing the Trinity, the four Evangelists, and the Gospels (Robinson, 1923). This was by no means unusual at the time.

This has been only a summary, and Roly includes many references. Let me finish by quoting his conclusion in full.

"While the word *Alea* continued to be connected to the use of dice and to have lingering connotations of gambling and ill repute well into the Middle Ages, especially as far as the Church was concerned, it seems to have also simply meant a game or game-board; and so, in the case of *Alea Evangelii*, the Game of the Gospel, both because it was based on a *Hnefatafl*-type game, and also because it is here being used as a religious allegory, it seems most unlikely that dice were used."

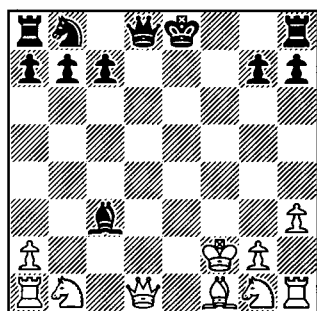
This makes excellent sense to me. Thank you, Roly.

# PROOF GAMES

by Peter Fayers

Since the news that Variant Chess is to cease publication, I have had many e-mails of thanks and support from the retro community, particularly from Bernd Gräfrath, who dedicated this original problem to me for my work in the field of Variant Proof Games over the years. This one is extremely difficult; it took Bernd's computer nearly a week to solve, and my mere protoplasmic brain nearer a fortnight.

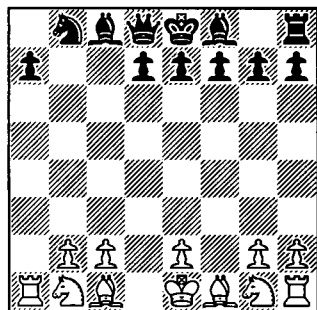
101 - Bernd Gräfrath, Original  
Dedicated to PMF



After White's 11th, Losing Chess

Bernd has also sent two much easier ones, below. In Single Combat, a player must move the same piece he moved last time if he is legally able to do so.

102 - Bernd Gräfrath, Original

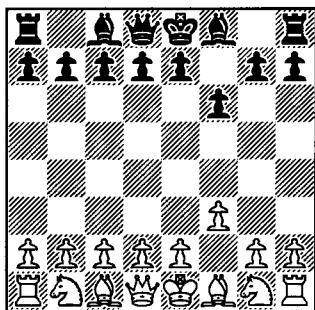


After White's 9th, Single Combat

In Norsk Sjakk (Norwegian Chess), pieces may only take pieces of their own kind (ie BxP is illegal). Further, each time a Rook moves it morphs into a Bishop and vice-versa, and

similarly Knights and Queens. Thus an opening move 1 Nc3 by White would leave a Queen, not a Knight, on c3.

103 - Bernd Gräfrath, Original

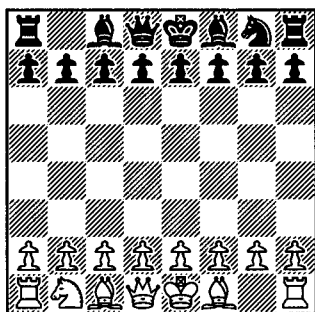


After White's 5th, Norsk Sjakk

Researching Norwegian Chess in *ECV*, I found it is an extension of Blockade Chess, which just had the "only capture your own kind" rule. The Q<>S and R<>B swaps were added to this later. So Norwegian Chess is in fact a combination of two variants, one limiting captures (Blockade Chess) and one transmuting officers (which does not officially exist as a separate variant). What if they had been invented the other way round?

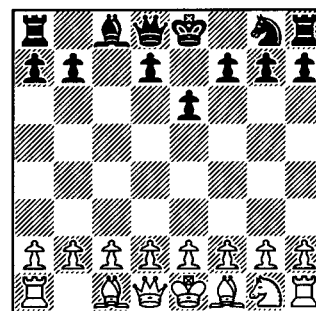
Thinking further, I realised that this non-existent variant, where officers change identity every move but there is no restriction on captures, has a lot of potential in proof games. Here are some examples. In order to provide something to go in the next edition of *ECV*, I have called this variant NorskACA (ACA = All Captures Allowed). But it doesn't really exist, OK?

104 - PMF, Original



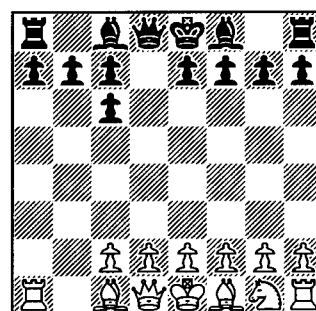
After Black's 3rd, NorskACA

105 - PMF, Original



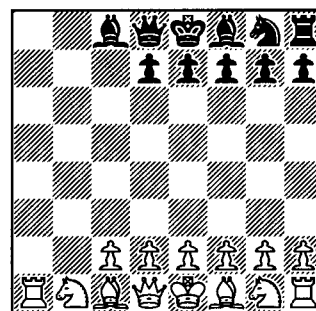
After Black's 4th, NorskACA

106 - PMF, Original



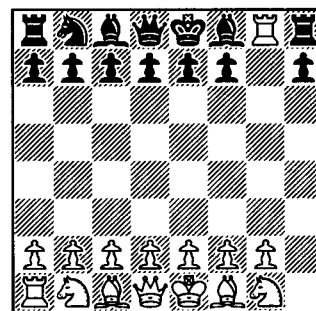
After White's 6th, NorskACA

107 - JDB, Original



After White's 6th, NorskACA

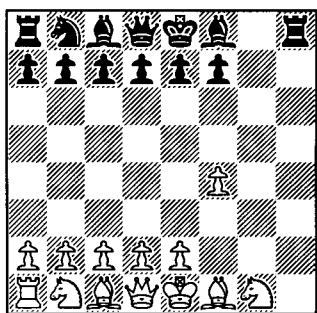
108 - JDB, Original



After Black's 6th, NorskACA

The next one is very difficult to solve; I think I've covered the tracks pretty well. So I will take the opportunity to get my own back – sorry, return the compliment – and thank Bernd for the support he's given this column recently. (And for giving me the idea of Norwegian Chess proof games in the first place.) We can't hold the solution over until the next issue, as there won't be one, so Bernd: you are on your honour not to look at the back pages until you've solved it!

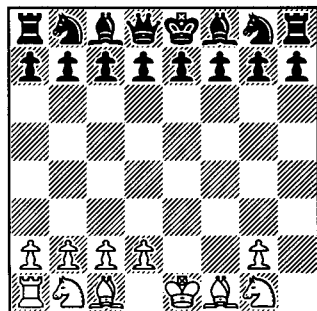
109 - PMF, Original  
Dedicated to Bernd Gräfrath



After Black's 7th, NorskACA

In the last issue I commented how KnightMate proof games were very similar to Losing Chess ones, and to prove it here Andrew Buchanan has sent an example of a losing game that uses exactly the same mechanism – a King walkabout to get out of the way of a Knight – as my KnightMate game last time. With the added bonus of being an all-remaining-pieces-in-game-array-positions diagram, which I tried (but failed) to do with my problem.

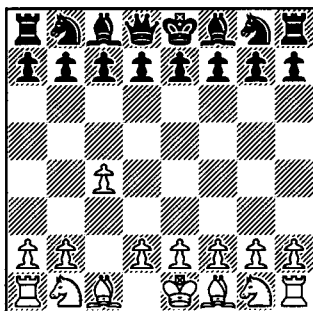
110 - Andrew Buchanan  
Original



After White's 9th, Losing Chess

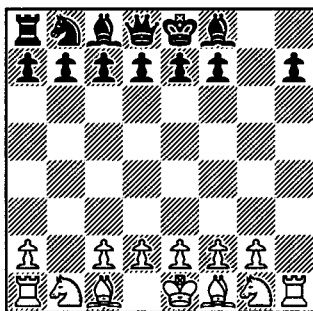
In the same vein, I have just come across another variant that gives very similar proof games to a more familiar one. I had a preview of "Towards ECV 3", and Chameleon Chess (page 181) caught my eye. These next two bear a marked similarity to some of the NorskACA ideas explored above:

111 - PMF, Original



After Black's 4th, Chameleon Chess

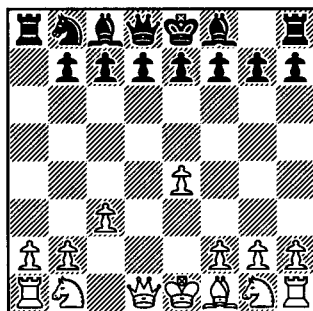
112 - PMF, Original



After White's 6th, Chameleon Chess

And how could I resist Gutzwiller Bishops (page 184)? How did I miss this first time round? One glance should tell you the theme; solving should be straightforward from there.

113 - PMF, Original

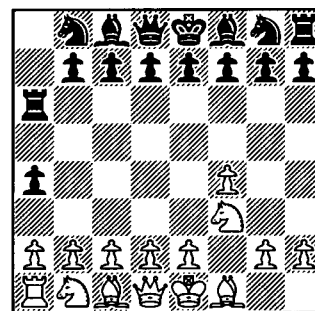


After White's 5th, Gutzwiller Bishops

I am told we have lots of space to fill this issue, so can tackle just about anything and everything. How about Transportation Chess (page 175)? After several attempts, I came to the golden rule of TC proof games – if the first two moves are made by Knights the problem is probably cooked. Consider the game that starts 1 Nc3 (Bc1->X) Nf6 (Bf8->Y). This same position can be reached by 1 Nc3 (Bc1->c6) Nf6 (Bc6->X, Bf8->Y).

Back at the drawing board, we managed to come up with a few problems we think are sound. 114 is an easy starter. All three Black moves are visible, as are two of White's, so you only have to find one more. And work out where Rh1 got to ...

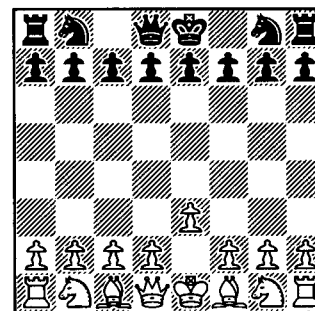
114 - PMF, Original



After Black's 3rd,  
Transportation Chess

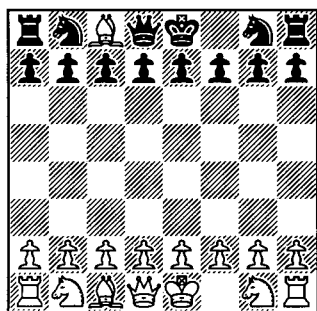
The other two are not so easy. 115 carries on the theme of disappearing pieces, while 116 adds in the Houdini effect – how did wB escape from behind one chain to get imprisoned behind another?

115 - PMF, Original



After Black's 3rd,  
Transportation Chess

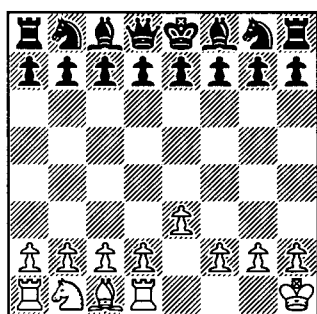
116 - JDB &amp; PMF, Original



After Black's 3rd,  
Transportation Chess

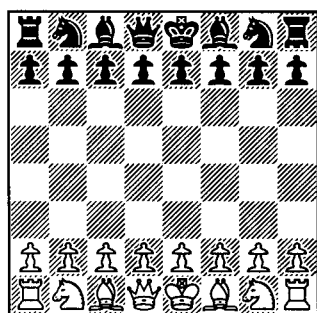
I missed Seirawan Chess (pages 194-9) when it appeared in *VC* 55. The longer one is first as I think it the easier. Men still in hand are not shown.

117 - PMF, Original



After White's 6th, Seirawan Chess

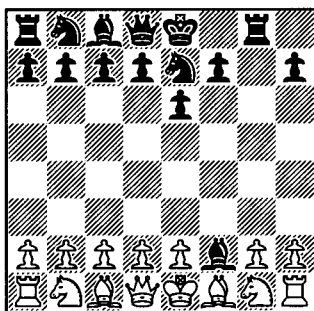
118 - PMF &amp; JDB, Original



After White's 5th, Seirawan Chess

Alain Brobecker (author of the Tic-Tac-Toe proof games, remember?) has sent a much shorter and easier version of Joost de Heer's Extinction Chess proof games I quoted in *VC* 62. In Extinction Proof Games, all checks (attacks on the last surviving member of any species) have to be parried.

119 - Alain Brobecker, Original



After Black's 5th, Extinction Chess

This accomplishes the Schnoebelen theme (a pawn promotes, and the promoted piece is captured on the promotion square, with the identity of the piece being proved by the play and the stipulation) in apparently the minimum number of moves (a pawn takes 5 moves to promote, and the promoted piece is captured immediately). But more of this anon.

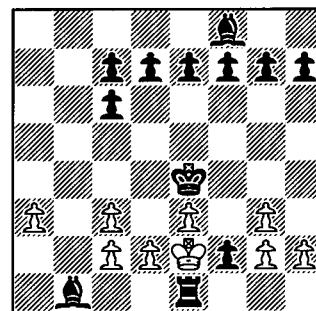
And another original 120 from Alain Brobecker and his computer: In Paul Byway's Logical Progressive Chess (neither pawn-two nor castling permitted, see *VC* 18 page 179), find games ending (a) 4 Qxg4#, (b) 4 ? , ? , Ng6-f4#, (c) 4 ? , ? , Qh2xRg3#.

That just about uses up my stock of Variant Proof Games. If you enjoy these "how did we get here?" type of problems, and want to delve more deeply into them, then a book I highly recommend is *The Chess Mysteries of Sherlock Holmes* by Raymond Smullyan. It deals mainly with orthodox chess, however there are a few Monochrome problems (but no other variants appear, alas).

It presents all types of retro-analysis problems, dressed up as investigations by the great detective (and narrated, as in the Conan Doyle originals, by his pedantic and somewhat dense sidekick, Doctor Watson). To give a flavour of the book, consider the following problem: I shall try to write the style of narrative that would accompany it. (With apologies to Doctor Smullyan. If you ever read this, it is sincere flattery, I have recommended your book, and please don't sue me.)

121 - Alain Brobecker, *phénix*, 2008  
Dedicated to Pascal Wassong

Yesterday Holmes and I strolled down to the chess club, where we came across an abandoned board with the pieces in the following position:



Holmes studied the board for a few minutes, and muttered "Hmmm. Interesting. Very interesting."

"What's interesting?" I asked. "White plays King takes Pawn, there is no other legal move. Then Black has three pieces to none, and should win easily. It looks very dull to me."

"No, Watson!" the great detective chided. "I'm not talking about the future of the game – that, indeed, is rather banal. I'm talking about the past! It is what has happened in this game that interests me!"

I studied the board for a moment. "Well, they've swapped Queens," I remarked, helpfully.

"Yes, Watson!" he replied. "Both Queens have indeed been captured. But where? – that is the interesting point. But no matter, we shall never know, as we don't know what game was being played."

I was confused at this. "Well, chess, obviously," I stammered, but received a steely glint from Holmes' eyes.

Just then the two players returned from the bar, and resumed their seats at the table. The White player did indeed play King takes Pawn. "Told you so," I thought, but decided not to say it out loud.

"Gentlemen," Holmes asked the players, "May I enquire what chess variant you are playing?"

"We're not playing any variant," replied one of them, "this is a normal game of chess, according to the rules in Mr Staunton's *Handbook*."

This surprised Holmes. After a brief

pause he told them, "Then I am afraid one of you has made an illegal move! This position is impossible to arrive at in ordinary chess."

The player was indignant. "I assure you, sir, that we have played according to the rules; every move has been perfectly legal!"

Holmes was getting really confused now. "You mean there has been nothing unusual about this game whatsoever?" he enquired.

"Only that, as much the stronger player, I gave odds of a piece."

"Ah!", mused Holmes, "That explains it."

"Which piece?" I blurted out.

The player didn't reply immediately, but studied my companion for a moment, then said "Well, as you are Sherlock Holmes, the great Chess Detective, surely you should be able to deduce which piece?"

"Well, Holmes?" I added. "Can you?"

He turned and smiled at me. "Elementary, my dear Watson," he replied.

Which, you have to admit, is slightly more interesting than the original stipulation:

Handicap Game. Which piece was given as odds?

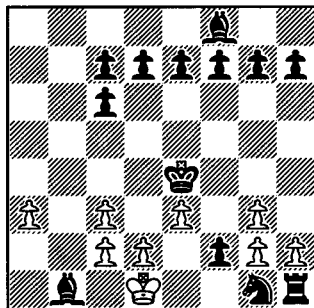
In the first half of the book, Smullyan then carried on with Holmes explaining to Watson his deduction, but for the more difficult problems in the second half he gave the solutions in the usual manner. As this definitely falls into the "more difficult" class, I shall leave Holmes and Watson in the chess club, and explain it myself.

First note that Black has made 6 pawn captures. This accounts for all missing White men (remembering that one was given as odds). So the last move was Re1+, without capture. Take that back (to somewhere along the back rank) and what was White's move before that? Not with the King (coming off the back rank it would have been in check from the Rook, with no way the Rook could delivered it). It couldn't have been Pa2-a3, as then bBb1 couldn't have got there (all 8 black Pawns are still on the board). It couldn't have been Pb2xc3, or else

the original wBc1 could never have escaped to be taken by a Pawn.

So was Bc1 the handicap piece? No. (If it was that easy, Alain would never had published it, let alone dedicated it to one of France's top problem composers.) What about wPe3/bPf2 – how are we going to untie that, even after the white King has retreated out of the way? If Bc1 was given as odds, we cannot retract Pe2-e3 until Bf1 is at home. But before Bf1 gets home Rh1 has to get home, but before that it has to be uncaptured, so bPf2 has to have started retreating down the a7-f2 diagonal. But before that, Pe3 has to retract to e2 ...

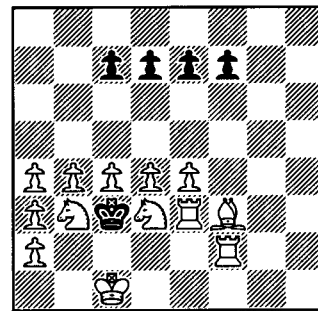
We're in a loop, so we go back to find the flaw in our logic. It is in the phrase "with no way the Rook could have delivered it". No, not the Rook, but a Knight could have discovered check, with the last moves Rh1-e1+ preceded by Kd1xNe2 and Ng1-e2+. So, 3 half-moves ago the position was:



The addition of this Knight is important, as it means that White's pawn captures were of a Knight and the Queen (Rh8 never escaped the NE corner). So before retracting Pb7xc6, we have to get the black Queen home, as well as the King and Bishop. See if you can take it from there.

Our editor was intrigued by this problem, and sent his own creation. Whereas I managed to solve Alain's problem in an hour or so, John's completely flummoxed me. Eventually I had to peek at the solution. Hmm, I'm still flummoxed. It is definitely bending the rules a bit, but I suppose I have taken similar liberties myself in the past, so am obliged to publish it. But be warned: this problem should be subtitled "Yet Another Flight of Chess Fancy by John Beasley".

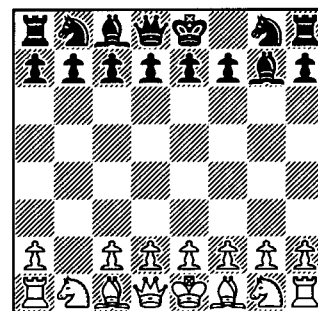
122 - JDB, Original



Handicap Game. Which piece was given as odds?

Well, if John is going to go out with something preposterous, so shall I. I refer back to Alain's Extinction Chess game, and ask is it the shortest game that shows a Schnoebelen? Not any more: the following problem is a new World Record in this field, which I guarantee will never be beaten!

123 - PMF, Original



After Black's 1st, Game score? Superpawns, Glasgow Chess White Must Check

Superpawns – move any distance forward until blocked, capture over any distance diagonally forward. Glasgow Chess – Pawns promote on the 7th Rank. White Must Check if possible, else moves normally.

On that note I leave you. Thanks for all the support over the years – I have enjoyed writing this column, and I hope you have enjoyed reading it.

For more VPGs, and other retroanalysis problems of all types, visit the Retrograde Analysis Corner at <www.janko.at/Retros/index.htm>.

# THE END IS NIGH !

by Paul Byway

## Solutions to competition 39

#255 8 Bg7 Bxe5 Nc6 Nxd4 Rg8 Rg1 Rel Nf3 mate.

#256 9 Ne2 Nf4 Ne6 a4 a5 a6 a7 a8N Nac7 mate.

#257 7 Kf2 g3 gxf4 f5 Nc3 Bh6 Nd5 mate. Most find instead 7 Kf3 Bxf4 Bh6 Ne2 Nf4 Nc3 Nd5.

#258 8 Bc3 h5 h4 h3 hxg2 Rh3 Rg3 gxh1N mate. This caused great difficulty. FG and IR found an Italian mate instead: 8 Ke7 Ke6 Kf5 Kf4 Nh6 Rd8 Rd1 Bd4+.

#259 9 g4 g5 g6 gxf7 f8Q b4 Nf3 Ng5 Qc5 mate. The popular choice was 9 b4 b5 b6 b7 b8Q Qb6 Kb3 Ne2 Nc3.

#260 8 Nxc6 Na5 Ne7 Ng6 Rb8 Rb1 Nc4 Nf4 mate.

#261 1 Rc8 Kd10 2 Cg9 Rf9 3 Rc10+ Kd9 4 Rc9+ Kd8 5 Rxc4 wins.

#262 1 Ke1 Pd2 2 Rd7+ Ke10 3 Rxd2 Pe2+ 4 Rxe2+ Pxe2+ 5 Kf1 draws.

The current scores: FG 197, IR 169, JB 101, RC 83, PW 35, CL 24, RT 19.

**Competition 40** is alongside. In this the last issue I have chosen no solution shorter than series 9. The XQ positions are from 'Subtleties in Practical Endgames'. #270 is difficult, but as the solutions this time are on page 242 you have the chance to appreciate some deep play.

My thanks to all correspondents for their interest and support over the years. I sign off with four recent studies in MCC from my notebooks.

**A** White Kg4, Bi2, Black Kf1, Nf7, Pe3, White to play and draw.

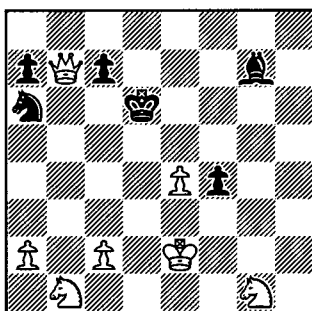
**B** White Ki6, Fi5, Pj4, Black Kg6, Pa5/f5/g5/l5, White to play and win.

**C** White Kf3, Bd8, Cg3, Pb2, Black Ka2, Bl8, White to play and win.

**D** White Kc5, Bl1, Pc2/e2, Black Kb8, Ng5, Pc7/g4, White to play and draw.

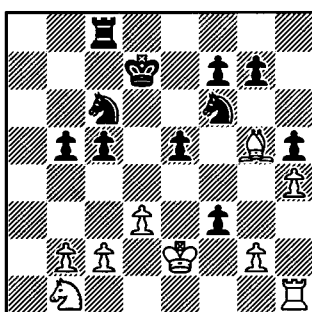
Diagrams opposite. - JDB

#263 Minasso - Dulcich (1985)



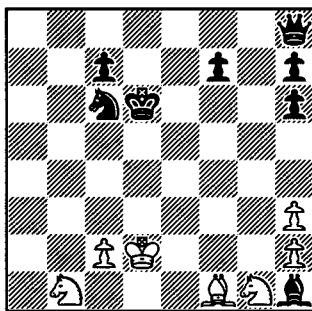
Black wins (series 10)

#264 Stefanelli - Viola (1989)



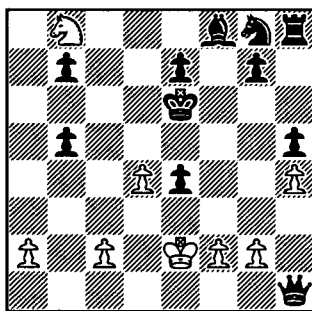
White wins (series 9)

#265 Dipilato - Sciam (1979)



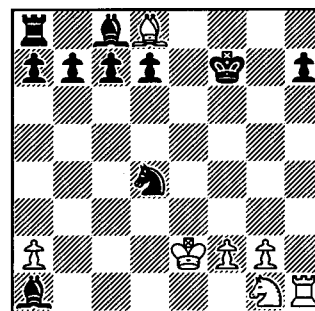
White wins (series 9)

#266 Prokopenko - Gadzinskij (1993)



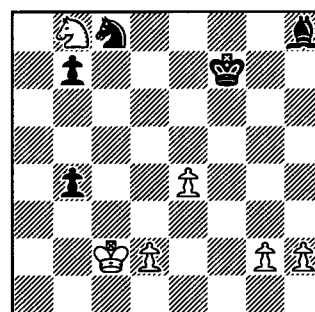
White wins (series 9)

#267 Zima - Sarale (1988)



White wins (series 9)

#268 Sarale - Rallo (1987)



Black wins (series 10)

#269 'Subtleties' P123

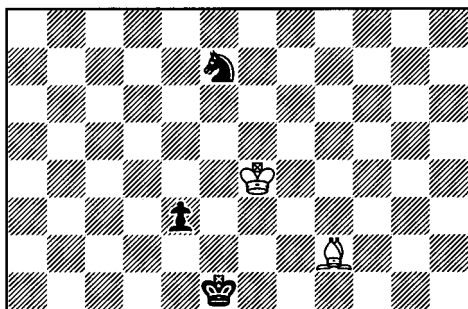
10	.	.	:	:	:	.	.	c
9	.	H	.	:	:	k	.	C
8	.	.	:	:	:	.	.	.
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4	.	.	:	:	:	h	.	.
3	.	.	:	:	E	:	.	.
2	.	.	:	:	:	:	.	.
1	.	.	:	:	K	:	.	.

Red to play and win

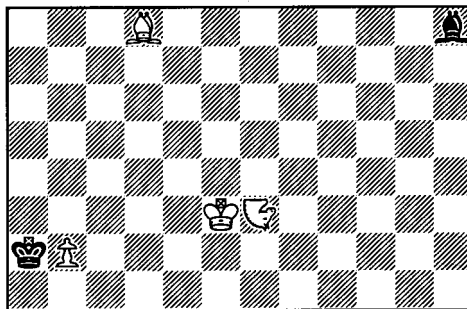
#270 'Subtleties' P110

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

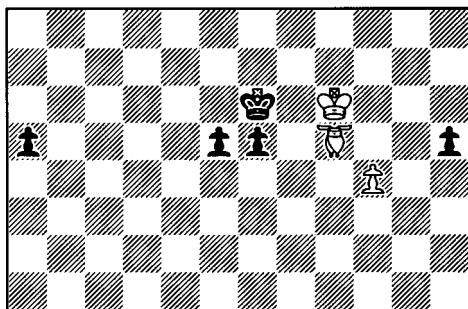
Red to play and win



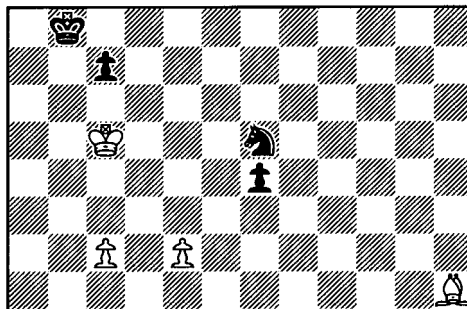
MCC A : White to play and draw



MCC C : White to play and win



MCC B : White to play and win



MCC D : White to play and draw

## SOLUTIONS

### Avalanche (page 225).

On the face of it, no. 14...Be5/d7 is illegal self-check. 14...Kd8/d7 which was the move actually played, allowed 15 Qe7/c5 mate, the natural 15...Kxe7/d8Q being illegal self-check (it is the owner of the pawn who decides to which piece it promotes), as is 15...Kc7/d8Q. If 14...Kf8/d7 or 14...Kf7/d7 then 15 Qe7/c5 is mate similarly, and if 14...Kd7/- then 15 Qe7/d3 is another similar mate...

No, it isn't: 15...Kxe7/d7! and the queen is safely taken.

Had Black thought to play 14...Kd7, would White, in a five-minute game, have played the normally instinctive 15 Qe7+ and thrown his queen away?

### Proof Games (pages 236-9).

101 1 f4 d5 2 Kf2 Bg4 3 e3 Bxd1 4 c3 e6 5 h3 Bc5 6 f5 Bxe3 7 fxe6 Bxd2 8 exf7 Bxc1 9 fxc8Q Bxb2 10 Qxd5 Bxc3 11 Qxd1.

102 1 a3! Nf6 2 a4 Ne4 3 a5 Nxd2 4 a6 Ne4 5 axb7 Nxf2 6 bxa8N Nxd1 7 Nxc7+ Qxc7 8 Kxd1 Qd8 9 Ke1.

103 1 Nf3Q Nc6Q 2 Qxc6N Nf6Q 3 f3 Qd4N 4 Nxd4Q f6 5 Qg1N.

104 1 Nh3Q Na6Q 2 Qe6N Qc6N 3 Nxd8Q+ Nxd8Q.

105 1 Nc3Q c6 2 Qxc6N e6 3 Nxb8Q Bc5R 4 Nxc8Q Rxc8B.

106 1 Nc3Q Na6Q 2 Qc6N Qxa2N 3 Rxa2B Nf6Q 4 Bb3R Qxb2N 5 Rxb2B dxc6 6 Ba1R.

107 1 b4 a5 2 bxa5 b6 3 axb6 Rxa2B 4 bxc7 Bb3R! 5 cxb8Q Rxb1B 6 Qxb1N.

108 1 h4 g5 2 hxg5 Nh6Q 3 Rxh6B Bxh6R 4 g6 Rf8B 5 g7 Rf6B 6 g8R Bh8R.

109 1 f4 Nh6Q 2 f5 Qxh2N 3 f6 Nf3Q 4 fxg7 Bxg7R 5 Rxh7 gRxh7B 6 gxh3 Bg8R 7 f4 Rf8B.

110 1 e4 Nf6 2 Ke2 Nxe4 3 Kd3 Nxf2 4 h4 Nxh1 5 h5 Nf2 6 Qg4 Nxg4 7 h6 Nxh6 8 Ke2 Ng8 9 Ke1.

111 1 c3! Na6R 2 Qb3 Rb8N 3 Qb6 Rxb6N 4 c4 Na8R.

112 1 h4 Nf6B 2 h5 Bxb2N 3 h6 Nxd1 4 hxg7 Nc3B 5 gxh8B Bxa1R 6 Bxa1R.

113 1 c3 Nf6 2 Bd3 Ne4 3 Bxa7 Nxd2 4 e4 Nxf1 5 Bxf1.

114 1 f4 a5 2 Nf3 (Bf1-g5) a4 3 Bh6 (Rh1-a6) Rxa6.

115 1 e3 Nc6 (Bc8-a6) 2 Bxa6 (Ra1-b6, Nc6-b8) Nf6 (Rb6-a1, Bf8-f1) 3 Bxf1 Ng8.

116 1 Nf3 (Bf1-a6) b6 2 Bxc8 Nf6

(Bf8-g1, Pb6-b7) 3 Nxg1 Nxg8.

117 1 e3 Nc6H 2 Ba6 Hxa6 3 Ne2 Nb8 4 0-0 Hxe2+ 5 Ke1 Hxd1 6 Rxd1.

118 1 Nf3E Nf6H 2 Eh3 Hh6 3 Exh6 Rg8E 4 Exg8 Nxg8 5 Ng1.

119 1 f4 e6 2 f5 Bc5 3 f6 Ne7 4 fxg7 Bxf2+ 5 g8K Rxg8+.

120 a) 1 e3 2 d6 Qd7 3 Qg4 Ke2 Kf3 4 Qxg4; b) 1 f3 2 e6 Ne7 3 Kf2 Kg3 Kh3 4 Ng6 Qg5 Nf4; c) 1 a3 2 e6 Bxa3 3 Rxa3 Rg3 f3 4 Qh4 Qxh2 Qxg3.

121 Bf1 was given as odds, so we can retract Pe2-e1 straight away. We may note that the laws given in Mr Staunton's *Handbook* do indeed allow for play at odds, unlike the modern FIDE laws, which don't.

122 Ra1. Last move must have been "odds 0-0-0" (Ke1-c1), which releases the position. (I did warn you - PMF). (I plead "not guilty". Mr Staunton's *Handbook* appears to be silent on the matter, but I have always understood that the giver of rook odds can still castle on that side unless one player or the other has occupied what would have been the rook's home square in the course of play. - JDB)

123 You're not seriously looking this one up, are you?

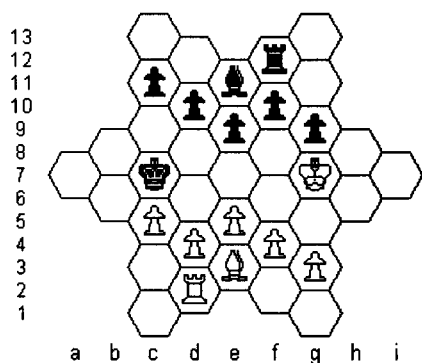


# SOLUTIONS CONTINUED

**Polgar Superstar Chess** (page 193). The pieces on c7 and g7 cannot both be knights, since then the kings would have to be on d2/e3 and e11/f12, and both kings would be in check.

So suppose that g7 is not a knight. Then it must be another piece which has escaped from behind White's pawn line, and White's moves must have included "d4xc5, one or more pieces out, c3xd4". One capture might have been of the Black knight, but the other must have been of some other piece, and so Black's moves must have included "f10xg9, one or more pieces out, g11xf10".

The pieces captured on c5/d4 and g9/f10 cannot have included a bishop (which could not have got out from behind the pawn line) nor a rook (which could, but could not then have moved off its initial file). So they were queens and knights, and the rooks and bishops must still be behind the pawn lines. Furthermore, a rook on the e-file could never have moved, so a king or queen on f2/g1 or c13/d12 could never have got out. So the bishops must be on e3/e11, the rooks on d2/f12, and the kings on g7/c7 :



A similar argument follows if we start by assuming that c7 is not a knight.

**The End Is Nigh!** (page 240).

#263 10 Nb4 Nxc2 Ne3 c5 c4 c3 c2 Bc3 cxb1Q Qf1mate.

#264 9 Kxf3 Bxf6 Bd8 Na3 Nxb5 Nc7 Re1 Rxe5 Rd5 mate. In fact, the solution given for this position was the following Italian mate: 9 gxf3 Bxf6 Bd8 d4 dxc5 Na3 Nxb5 Nc7 Rd1.

#265 9 h4 Kd3 Kc4 Ne2 Nf4 Ng6 Bh3 Na3 Nb5 mate. In the original position Ph3 was at h4, and the solution started with the time-wasting h4-h5.

#266 9 Nd7 Nb6 g4 gxh5 h6 hxg7 gxf8Q Qf4 d5 mate.

#267 9 Kd3 Be7 f4 f5 Ne2 Nc3 Ne4 Nf6 Rxh7 mate.

#268 10 Ke6 Ke5 Kd4 Kc4 Bb2 Ba3 Na7 Nb5 Nc3 b3 mate.

#269 1 Hd8+ Kf10 (1...Kf8 2 He10+ K~ 3 Hg9+, 1...Ke9 2 Hf7+ K~ 3 Hg9+) 2 Kf1! Ch10 3 Ch9 Cg10 4 Cg9 Ch10 5 He6 Kf9 6 Cg10 wins a piece and the game.

#270 A difficult solution containing some instructive play. 1 Hg8! Cg9 2 Cc7! Gd8 3 Cc9!! Cg10 4 Hh10 Pg6 5 Ei3 Pa1 6 Ea3 Pb1 7 Cc3 Hd9 8 Cg3 and wins, first the cannon, then the game.

**Modern Courier Chess** (page 241, text by Paul Byway). For the sake of brevity, notes to the solutions have been omitted.

**A** I like Chinese painting - two or three strokes provide a sparrow or stem of bamboo with leaf. So here: a small clockwork. Enjoy briefly and pass on. This is not for solvers, but for me. 1 Kf3 e2 2 Bh3+ Ke1 3 Ke3 Ne5 4 Be6 Kd1 5 Bb3+ Ke1 6 Be6 Kf1 7 Bh3+ Ke1 8 Be6 draw (zz).

**B** An idea of I. Aliev, 2007 (EG 179 supplement). My version extends it to quadruple Q-win by skewers.

(a) 1-5 j8Q l1Q 6 Qe8+ K~ 7 Qx11.

(b) 1-5 j8Q g1Q 6 Qg8+ K~ 7 Qxg1.

(c) 1-5 j8Q f1Q 6 Qg8+ Kf5/Kf6 7 Qf8+ K~ 8 Qxf1.

(d) 1-5 j8Q a1Q 6 Qe8+ Kg7 7 Fh6+ Kf6 8 Qh8+ K~ 9 Qxa1.

**C** This is a correct setting of #254 (Gurgenidze 1977) in 'Secrets of Minor Piece Endings' by Nunn. 1 b4 Kb3 2 b5 Kc4 3 b6 Kb5 4 b7 Bxg3 5 Kxg3 Ka6 6 b8R wins.

**D** This is after Kubbel (2nd Prize Niva, 1909). N+P lock K+P into place, after which a bishop with the freedom of the long diagonal cannot escape capture. An attempt to give the doomed bishop even more freedom led to reorganisation and the discovery of a tempo battle between pawns. 1 Kd4 g3 2 Ke3 c6 3 Be8 Kc7 4 c3 Kd6 5 c4 Kc7 6 c5 draw (zz).

# INDEX TO VOLUME 8

007 Chess	155
15-Out	96
Abagoren Chess	5, 29
Achères Chess	225
Alea Evangelii	145-6, 162, 235
Alice Chess	81
All Queens	81
All-In Castling	175
Alquerque	107
Ambiguous Chess	2, 6-7, 19, 174
An-nan Chess	23, 34, 38, 176
Anne Watson's Chess	71
Anti Chess	45
Anti-Gravity Chess	135
Archbishop (B+N)	99, 103
Avalanche Chess	114, 137, 174, 225, 241
Balanced Marseillais Chess	157
Balbo's Game	2, 175
Banana Skin Chess	135, 136, 139
Behemoth Chess	45
Benedict Chess	81, 90-1, 108-9, 116, 119
Bi-Place Chess	159
Bichrome Chess	164, 171
Bicolour Chess	154-5, 158
Bidding Chess	42-4, 55, 71
Billiard Chess	156
Blind Shogi	3, 177
Boards, various	71, 88, 98-9, 100, 103
Bolyar Chess	4-5, 29
Buczko's Game	2, 175
Bug For Two	7
Bughouse	7
Cambodian Chess	3, 4, 29, 104, 177-8, 234
Cannon Chess	175-6
Cannon Shogi	3, 177
Capablanca Random Chess	45
Capapranka	120
Capture Chess	81
Castling	95, 113
Centennial Chess	176
Chameleon Chess	237, 241
Chancellor (R+N)	99, 103
Changgi	3, 176
Check, Castles, Capture	164, 171
Checkers (Draughts)	12-15, 19, 28, 34-5, 38-9
Chess and points	163
Chess for One	24
Chess with Reserves	157
Chess480	81
Chess960	49, 81, 95
Chessapeak Challenge	178
Chessball [Kamzolov]	3, 178
Chessgi	68-9, 84-5, 97
Chicken Chess	81
Circuits, The Game of	160-1
Co-Chess	175
Co-Tuong	3, 176-7
Composite pieces, general	100, 103
Compromise Chess	158
Corner Chess [BrainKing]	45
Courier-Spiel	22, 175
Crazy Screen Chess [BrainKing]	45

Dablo	218-21	Jump Chess	56, 69, 71, 77	Progressive Circe	201
Dark Chess	81	Jungle Game	3, 178	Progressive Put-Back Chess	20, 25
Dark CrazyHouse	81	Knight Relay Chess	48-9, 55	Push Chess	174-5
Dark Suicide	81	Knight's Tours	8, 32, 38, 40, 50-3, 60, 72, 165-9	Quadripawns	230-1
Dawson's Chess	97	Knightmate	126-7, 164, 171	Racing Kings	160
De Vasa'a Hexagonal Chess	161	Koopa Chess	2, 174	Radha-Madhava	3, 177
Deca-Chess [Coby]	9	Korean Chess	3, 176	Ratushny's Game	178
Degraded Chess	158	Kriegspiel	2, 174	Reciprocal Chess	174
Dice Chess [BrainKing]	45	Lao Tzu Chess	58-60, 78-9	Recycle Chess [BrainKing]	45
Double Fischer Random	81	Laotian Chess	4, 177	Reformschach	11
Double Take	227	Latrunculi Chess	226-30	Refusal Chess	158
Double-Move Chess [Galvin]	158	Leapers, various	99-100	Regional and historical games	2, 176
Dragonfly [Hex]	22, 176	Leo	100	Reinforcement Chess	2, 174
Early chessmen	11	Lion	100	Replacement Chess	25, 174
Ecila	87, 104, 176	Lion Chess [Boyer]	159	Rettah Chess	160
Einstein Chess	69, 71, 85, 119	Loch Ness Chess	36, 38, 49, 55	Reversed King and Queen	113
Embassy Chess	45	Logical Progressive Chess	238, 241	Richmond Exchange Chess	7
Emperor King Chess	154	Looking Glass Chess	11	Rockagogo	116-7, 119, 175
Emperor's Game	22, 175	Loop Chess	45	Rose Board games	163
En Passant Chess	16-17, 19, 40, 174	Loser's Chess	81	Royal Bishop Chess	23, 178
English Progressive Chess	149, 171, 174	Losing Chess	33, 49, 66-7, 101, 103, 136, 139, 150-1, 164, 171, 172, 175, 236, 237, 241, 244	Rugby Chess	162
Equidistant Marseillais Chess	157	Ludus Latrunculorum	80, 227-30	Scaci Partonici	2, 160, 174
Excel Chess	113	Magnetic Chess	69, 71, 85, 87, 119, 128-30, 139	Screen Chess [BrainKing]	45
Extendapawn	231	Maharajah (Q+N)	99, 103	Seirawan-Chess	9, 19, 29, 40, 194-9, 238, 241
Extinction Chess	117, 119, 136, 139, 238, 241	Mak Fuk	4	Shatra	3, 178
Fers	61, 71, 87, 92-4, 171, 214-7	Makruk (Thai Chess)	3, 22, 26-7, 61, 95, 177, 217	Shatranj	87, 95
Fianchetto Chess	81	Marineschach	11	Shogi	3, 177
Firdaws'i's Nard	226-9	Marseillais Chess	34, 38	Shrink Chess	160, 175
Fischerandom Chess	49, 81, 95	Mate the Knight	126-7	Shuuro	133
Five-Leaper Tours	131, 140, 232-3	Medieval Chess	95	Single Combat	236, 241
Fool's Chess	101, 103	Messigny Chess	17, 19	Small Shogi	3, 177
Fortress Chess [BrainKing]	45	Miller's Daughter Chess	62-3, 74-6	Sniper Chess	23, 178
Four Seasons, Game of the	22, 178	Mini-Checkers	28, 38-9	Southern Chess	23, 34, 38, 176
Free Chess [Slater]	157	Modern Courier Chess	10-11, 46-7, 64-5, 132-3, 152-3, 222-4, 240-1, 242	Sphinx Chess	109, 157
Free Programme Chess	104, 175	Modern Burmese Chess [Richardson]	113	Sputnik Chess	158-9
Freischach	11	Move It or Lose It	96	Stanley Random Chess	81
Full House	81	Musical Chess	96	Star Chess	175
Gala	176, 234	Mysterious Royal Chess	23, 178	Sting	127, 139
Ghosts!	200-1	Nam Dinh Chess	107, 122, 162, 234	Strozewski's Hexagonal Chess	28
Glasgow Chess	239, 241	Neu-Schach [Merckenschlager]	23, 178	Substitution Chess	2, 174
Goats and Tigers	107, 135	New Chess	176	Sun Tzu Chess	81
Gorgon Chess	11	Nightrider	159	Super Chess [Fort]	176
Gorgona Chess	11	Ninerider Chess	2, 175	Superpawns [fast]	239, 241
Grand Chess	142-4	No-Retreat Chess	159, 174	Superpawns [Voss]	156
Grande Acedrex	22, 176	Norsk Sjakk	236, 241	Switching Chess	11, 29
Grasshopper	100, 157, 170, 171	NorskACA	236-7, 241	Symmetrical Fischer Random Chess	81
Grasshopper Tours	115	Noughts and Crosses	35, 38	Taxi Chess [Betza]	23, 178
Gravitational Chess	134-5	Odds, Games at	238-9, 241	Tempête sur L'échiquier	163
Greyber's Spherical Chess	159, 176	Optional Replacement Chess	25	Tenjiku Shogi	3, 177
Grid Chess	156	Orthochess	2, 34, 35, 38, 44, 55, 69, 71, 81, 176	Thai Chess	3, 22, 26-7, 61, 95, 177
Guardian Chess	85, 87	Othello	11	Tiszta Bolondokháza	81
Gutzwiller Bishops	237, 241	Panzyk's Four-Handed Chess	3, 178	Transmuting Kings	127, 139
Handbag Pieces	35	Pao	100	Transportation Chess	175, 208-9, 237-8, 241
Handicap Game	238-9, 241	Passion Chess	162, 235	Triplet leapers	210-3
Hexapawn	178, 230	Permutation Chess	157	U-Chess	157
Highcastle Chess	120, 136-7, 139	Petty Chess	97	Upside Down Chess	81
Hnefatafl	80, 145-7, 162	Polgar Superstar Chess	106, 119, 123-5, 148-9, 171, 193, 234, 242	Van der Linde's Games	22, 175
Hnefichess	202-5, 226-7	Political Chess	135	Van Zuylen's Games	22, 175
Hostage Chess	82-3, 97, 110-1, 113, 206-7, 235	Polyactive Transportation Chess	175	Vao	100
Human, Animal, Pawn	17, 19, 34, 38	Progressive Chess	18, 34, 35, 37, 38, 54, 70, 86, 102, 118, 138, 170, 240, 242	Vietnamese Chess	3, 176-7
Hunter (Falcon-Hunter) Chess	156			Wa Shogi	3, 177
Hyper-Chess [Coby]	9			White Must Check	239, 241
Hyperchess [Joyce]	109			Wolf Chess	156
Ice Age Chess	45			X-Ray Chess	175
Ice Chess	36			Xiangqi	18, 37, 38, 54, 56, 70, 86, 102, 118, 138, 139, 170, 190-2, 240, 242
Indian Chess	3, 177				
Infinite Plane Chess	234				

Items in sections 3 and 4 of "Towards ECV 3" (pages 179-189) have not been indexed.

**CONTENTS**

Towards <i>ECV 3</i>	174
XiangQi	190
Polgar Superstar Chess	193
Adventures in CapablancaLand	194
Ghosts!	200
Progressive Circe	201
Hnefichess	202
HostageMaster	206
Transportation Chess	208
Mating with triplet leapers	210
116 reciprocal zugzwangs	214
A Makruk ending	217
Dablo	218
Modern Courier Chess	222
Achères Chess	225
Avalanche at Messigny	225
Fidawasi's Nard	226
Quadripawns	230
Complementary five-leaper tours	232
Isolated Pawns	234
Proof Games	236
The End Is Nigh!	240
Solutions	241
Index to Volume 8	242

My apologies for the late appearance of this issue. No new editor has come forward, so *VC 64* has had to be large enough to use up the remaining funds. Peter Fayers having found a printer whose prices are markedly less than I would have had to pay in Harpenden, this has involved the preparation of no fewer than 72 pages, and some delay in completion has been inevitable. However, the delay has allowed the receipt of some pleasantly varied contributions, and I hope readers will think the result has justified the wait. I have also thought it appropriate to devote some of these 72 pages to a collation of material from *VC* for the benefit of whoever produces *ECV 3*.

And my thanks to Peter for this final issue's front page.

**BCVS NOTICES**

The Annual General Meeting will be held at Flat 1, 4 Magdalen Road, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex TN37 6EG at 1130 on Saturday September 25, and there will be a Variants Tournament at Hastings Chess Club in the afternoon. UK members will find a formal notice of the meeting with this issue of *VC*, and I will send a copy to members abroad on request.

Because no new officers have come forward, we cannot continue as a society, and the AGM will receive resolutions authorising the disposal of our remaining assets and winding us up. Our constitution states that in the event of dissolution, any assets remaining to us "shall be passed to another organization with similar or overlapping objectives". The money won't be a problem, because after the bills for *VC 64* have been paid there won't be any left. As regards the library, it has been agreed with Elaine and Wanda that the books and magazines of David Pritchard's which Peter Fayers and I collected in 2007 will be forwarded to the Musée Suisse du Jeu with David's *Encyclopedia* files (many of them were source material for the files), and we intend to offer everything else to the British Chess Problem Society (which is interested in anything relating to problems that its own library does not already possess) and then to the National Chess Library. If you wish us to proceed otherwise, please say so.

**If you have lent material to the Library, or have donated material and now wish to reconsider that donation, please reclaim it at the AGM, or contact George Jelliss or myself beforehand.**

**NOTICES CONTINUED**

We intend to put a complete run of *VC* on the BCVS web site in PDF form. If you think that anything in the magazine is incorrect and would like to see it accompanied by a correction or clarification, please contact Sue or myself. We understand that the British Library is offering to archive sites for the benefit of future generations, and we intend to put ours forward as a suitable candidate.

**Readers are asked to note** that a recently formed body calling itself "Variant Chess", with ambitious plans including registration as a charity, has no connection with ourselves.

George Jelliss has written an attractive problem booklet *Exact Echoes* which can be downloaded free of charge from <[www.mayhematics.com/p/p.htm](http://www.mayhematics.com/p/p.htm)>.

In this year's **Circular Chess World Championship**, six-times champion Francis Bowers recovered from an early reverse to win again with 10/11, Mike Clark and newcomer Steven Turvey sharing second place with 9.

**Losing Chess.** Klaas Steenhuis tells me that Stan Goldovski's program *Giveaway Wizard* has two handicaps over and above its assumption of a different stalemate rule as described last time: it has a bug causing it to lose unnecessarily on time, and it does not know that repeating moves leads to a draw. Stan knew about both issues, but had no time to resolve them.

The existence of these bugs makes its performance even more impressive. Without them, Klaus estimates that it would be 100+ rating points stronger.

Indeed well done, Stan.

**Variant Chess** has been the journal of the **British Chess Variants Society**

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