

The 1992 World Championships

by David Shaman

Although my path to Barcelona was somewhat circuitous, I ended up attending the 1992 World Championships last November as a member of the British team. My teammates were national champion Joel Feinstein and runner-up Mike Handel.

I had moved to England in late 1991 and, thanks to the British Othello Federation's "183-day" rule, was allowed to participate in the 1992 National Championship. After five years of rather straightforward qualifying for the United States' three-person team, I knew that getting to the World Championship in 1992 would be a somewhat more difficult proposition. In fact, I finished fifth at the British Nationals. However, after several days of lamenting about failure and what-might-have-been, I learned that both Peter Bhagat and Graham Brightwell had declined their offers to positions on the British team. I was next in the queue.

Six weeks, two practice tournaments, and many hours of studying later, it was time to leave for Barcelona. Joel, Mike, and I were all travelling separately. In my case this meant a seven a.m. flight from Heathrow the morning of the welcoming banquet. Unfortunately, this also meant leaving Cambridge by coach at around 3:30 in the morning. Still, a few hours sleep the night before, a quick nap on the coach, and another in my hotel room upon arrival, and I'd have no problems. Or so I thought.

There's a spot between Cambridge and London, not too far from Luton, which is, by any reasonable reckoning, the middle of nowhere. (My apologies to residents of the Luton area.) It was at this spot, halfway up a long and fairly steep hill, that my chosen means of transportation decided it could take no more. There was a sudden banging noise, followed by a gradual deceleration, followed by stillness. It was five o'clock. It was dark. We weren't going anywhere.

I could detail the panic and frustration of the next couple of hours. However, suffice it to say that the situation was made significantly worse by the attitude of our driver. His initial response was to suggest we wait for the next coach in two hours. When several passengers (there were only four of us altogether) pointed out that we would all miss our planes, he then reluctantly radioed headquarters. Their response was that a repair vehicle could get to us in something more than an hour. The driver hung up, completely satisfied. After being told that this was still not acceptable, and after some desperate persuasion, he radioed the depot again and announced that "the passengers are causing problems". After all, he was stuck out there too and we didn't see him complaining. We may be about to miss planes to Athens and Dallas (and Barcelona!!), but he had to ring his wife, have his quitting-time pint, and get home for his breakfast.

Eventually a taxi-van arrived from Luton and, speeding all the way, got us to Heathrow just in time. Actually, we got there just in time to join a check-in queue caused by broken down computer equipment. If the plane had been on time, we might have missed it.

I arrived in Barcelona without further mishap. Mike and Joel (although he was fashionably late for the welcome dinner) did as well. Two days later we had won 27 games and captured Britain's third world championship.

There were 30 players from 13 different countries. The full tournament results were as follows:

1.	Great Britain	27	8.	Switzerland	10.5
2.	France	24.5	9.	Belgium	7
3.	Italy	24	10.	Canada	6.5
4.	Sweden	22.5		Russia	6.5
5.	Denmark	22	12.	Madagascar	6
6.	USA	18.5	13.	Spain	5.5
7.	Japan	14.5			

1.	M. Tastet	(France)	9.5	Semi-final 1:	
2.	D. Shaman	(Great Britain)	12	Shaman 2.5-Berner	.5
3.	F. Marconi	(Italy)	9		
4.	N. Berner	(Sweden)	9	Semi-final 2:	
5.	A. Brusca	(Italy)	8	Tastet 2-Marconi	1
	M. Handel	(Great Britain)	8		
	E. Jensen	(Denmark)	8	FINAL:	
	P. Juhem	(France)	8	Tastet 2-Shaman	0
9.	S. Alard	(Belgium)	7		
	D. Barnaba	(Italy)	7		
	J. Feinstein	(Great Britain)	7		
	K. Feldborg	(Denmark)	7		
	N. Johansen	(Sweden)	7		
	A. Kierulf	(USA)	7		
	D. Penloup	(France)	7		
	K. Sakaguchi	(Japan)	7		
	H. Vallund	(Denmark)	7		
18.	L. Back	(Canada)	6.5		
	O. Stepanov	(Russia)	6.5		
	I. Syrén	(Sweden)	6.5		
	S. Waser	(Switzerland)	6.5		
	A. Watanabe	(Japan)	6.5		
23.	B. Andriani	(Madagascar)	6		
	P. Stanton	(USA)	6		
25.	G. Johnson	(USA)	5.5		
26.	T. Marraffa	(Switzerland)	4		
27.	O. Martinez	(Spain)	2		
	G. Muntané	(Spain)	2		
29.	B. Tous	(Spain)	1.5		
30.	K. Hirakura	(Japan)	1		

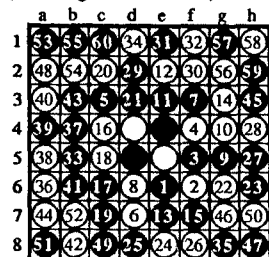
The tournament was well organised, the quality of play was high, and there were certainly some exciting moments along the way--
 Round 11: The French were leading the tournament by half a point but we went 3-0 and they went 0-3 (with Joel beating Juhem and Mike beating Tastet) to give us our final margin of victory.
 Rounds 4-7: Sakaguchi lost four games in a row and suddenly it no longer appeared there would be a Japanese player in the semi-finals.

Round 13: Berner beat Sakaguchi to secure a position in the semi-finals and avoid a six-way tie for fourth place (much to chief referee Emmanuel Lazard's relief).

Round 19+:: Karsten "trouble" Feldborg tossed his Danish pastries all over the streets of Barcelona (and cars, and trees, and Roger Becker's shoes) after several Rapidos too many at the victory dinner and subsequent bar crawl.

The following is a collection of games from the tournament with some analysis of the openings that were played. (Note: This is based on the Thor database— 180 of the 204 games from Barcelona. The absent games had incorrect or missing transcripts.) This survey takes a look at only those games starting with the Diagonal opening (f5, f6). Games involving variations of the Perpendicular opening (f5, d6) will be discussed next time.

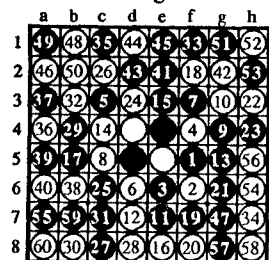
Buffalo (f5, f6, e6, f4, c3): There were nine games with the Buffalo. Marconi (white against Shaman) chose 6d7.



Shaman 44-20 Marconi

12e2 is less typical than either 12g6 or 12g3 (old move). 13e7 is probably the only decent response. There are many choices at 14. Perhaps 14d3 is slightly better than Marconi's move 14g3. After 19c7 black is safely ahead.

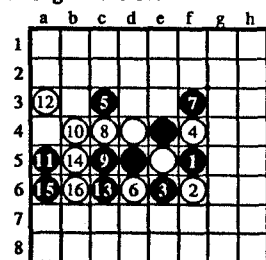
6d6 was played in all eight other Buffalo games. Feldborg (white against Stepanov) chose 8c5. The line is standard through 13.



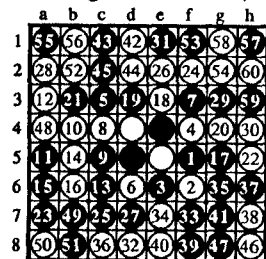
Stepanov 34-30 Feldborg

Move 14c4 is not the most common choice, but it is the favourite of Imre Leader. Stepanov's move 15e3 is unusual (15d3 is typical here).

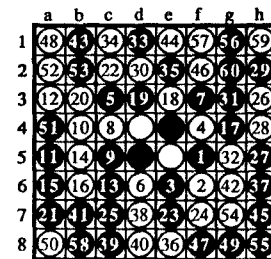
Four games went down a classic line through move 16.



Two players chose 17g5 (the classic line). Two players chose 17g4 (an interesting recent variation).

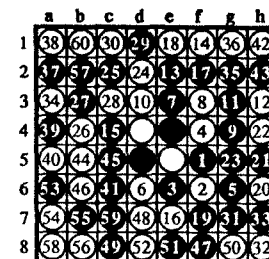


Stepanov 30-34 Sakaguchi



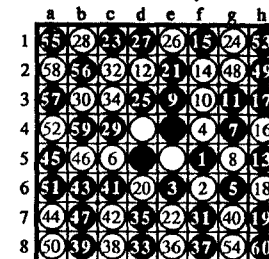
Shaman 47-17 Sakaguchi

Peasant (Snake) (f5, f6, e6, f4, g6): There were six games with this opening. Move 6d6 was played three times. Feldborg's move 12h3 is a new (and successful) variation to a fairly common line.



Marconi 25-39 Feldborg

Move 6c5 was also chosen three times. Marconi played 9e3 (less common than 9f3) and tried a fairly innovative 11g3

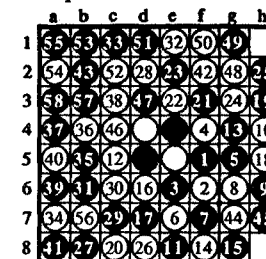


Marconi 44-20 Jensen

against Jensen's standard move 10f3.

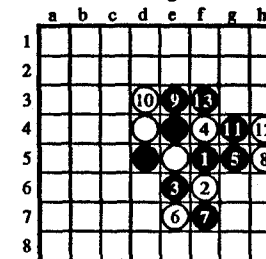
Heath (f5, f6, e6, f4, g5): The Standard Heath (6e7, 7f7) was played 15 times. Marconi tried 8g6 against

Tastet in the semi-finals. Tastet had a recently prepared and devastating line of response.



Tastet 60-4 Marconi

Three games went down the following classic line through move 13--



Stanton chose 14d6, Johnson chose 14g6, and Sakaguchi chose 14f2. Sakaguchi's move is probably best. The typical sequence is 15e2, 16g3. Back responded to 14f2 with the unusual move 15f1 instead.

In three games, black replied to 8h5 by playing 9g4. 10g6 is the typical response. (10h4 is considered weak, but this is far from settled and, unless you know the position as black, it is difficult to exploit the h4 move.) Jensen played the uncommon 11h4 against Feldborg's move 10g6 and found himself a bit short of moves. Sakaguchi's move 12f8 against Tastet is less typical than 12f3, but the line is worth study.

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

Tastet 18-46 Sakaguchi

Black is under a lot of pressure to avoid running out of moves. Tastet's 13e8 is unusual (13g3 standard), although he did play it against Leader at the 1992 Cambridge International.

Heath Bat (f5, f6, e6, f4, g5, e7, e3): There are a number of move 8's that get played in this position. However, 8g4 was clearly the move of choice at this tournament. In fact, 10 games went down the following sequence through move 14:

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h
1								
2	1							
3			9	7	12		13	
4		14	●	●	4	8		
5		10	●	●	1	5		
6			3	2	11			
7			6					
8								

Juhem played 15f7 three times with varying success. The best response is probably 16f2, but only Marconi chose that move. (Stanton played 16h5 and Handel played 16h6.)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h
1	46	48	49	32	27	25	11	40
2	45	37	31	28	26	16	33	22
3	44	36	23	9	7	12	17	15
4	58	34	14	●	●	4	8	21
5	57	31	10	●	●	1	5	18
6	52	45	50	24	3	2	11	20
7	55	53	39	30	6	15	49	39
8	54	56	35	19	42	38	47	60

Juhem 22-42 Marconi

Vallund took consistency several steps further. He played the identical line through move 23 three times. The sequence has been fairly well analysed. However, the resulting position is complicated. If you play this line you must be prepared for early corner sacrifices, lots of wedges, and the likelihood of a fairly close final score.

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h
1	58	45	46	42	39	40	30	47
2	52	55	20	22	24	25	34	54
3	43	45	47	9	7	12	15	15
4	36	38	14	●	●	4	8	18
5	41	29	10	●	●	1	5	16
6	50	51	47	21	3	2	11	17
7	60	53	48	23	6	19	26	32
8	56	57	44	39	49	33	28	41

Vallund 21-43 Marconi

There are a number of variations in the late teens and early twenties that offer the advantage of being somewhat less known. However, the corner-sacrificing theme almost always appears. Sakaguchi tried 20f2 against Penloup with exciting results.

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

Penloup 33-31 Sakaguchi

Bat (f5, f6, e6, f4, e3, c5, g5): The bat was played 12 times. Five games involved move 8f3. Feinstein played an unusual sequence starting with the checkerboarding move 11c4. After Marconi's 12d6, move 13e2 took this game into uncharted territory.

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

Feinstein 46-18 Marconi

In fact, Feinstein's moves are thematically strong, but they are more common when white starts with 8g3. The sequence through move 17 in the Feinstein-Shaman game was popularised over the last few years by Didier Piau. (In fact, this is not quite an accurate transcript- but that's another story.)

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

Feinstein 30-34 Shaman

Johansen and Brusca played down a classic Japanese line starting with 8g3.

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

Johansen 24-40 Brusca

Johansen's move 19h5 is the first deviation. It is probably not as strong as 19b5.

Tanida (f5, f6, e6, f4, e3, c5, c4, e7): The Tanida seemed out of fashion among most of the players at this World Championship. In fact, the

Aircraft (9g4) did not appear even once. The Tanida is very well explored. However, there are many similar looking lines. The Syrén-Johnson game is an interesting example.

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

Syrén 28-36 Johnson

Although move 14d3 is less common than 14g4, the above game follows a fairly standard line through 18. Move 19g6 is weak. 19c1 would be much better.

The two games from the final (neither of which involve the diagonal opening) are listed below.

Congratulations, Marc!

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

Shaman 29-35 Tastet

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

Tastet 35-29 Shaman