

The Streets of Askelon

The Newsletter of the British Othello Federation

August 1994

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White to play and win

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○		●	●	●	●		○
	●	●	●	●	●		

Black to play and draw

See page 3

INFORMATION

Othello is manufactured and marketed by Peter Pan Playthings, Swindon. The British Othello Federation is an independent body. Annual subscription for British residents costs £5 for the first year's membership (including a copy of the instructional book *Othello: Brief & Basic*) and £3 thereafter. Ten years membership is available for £25. An overseas subscription costs £5 per year, or £45 for ten years. Cheques or postal orders payable to the *British Othello Federation* should be sent to David Haigh. The price of *Othello: Brief & Basic* for existing members is £5.

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Adverts *produced by Joel Feinstein.*

The French Othello program and database for PC, Thor, by Sylvain Quin is proving very popular! Thor has reached version 3.36, and has about 21,000 games in its database. As always, the latest version is available free of charge from Joel Feinstein if you send him a floppy disk.

Another excellent program available free is Icare, by Luc Rivière (with the assistance of Stéphane Nicolet, the author of Cassio for Macs). Icare offers you a choice of a thousands of “endgame solitaires”: you are faced with an endgame position from which there is only one winning/drawing line. Whichever move you choose, the computer plays a perfect reply. You have to find the winning sequence (you can take moves back as often as you like). It will tell you part of the solution if you find it’s too hard. You can vary the number of empty squares you start with. Be warned: it is hard to stop playing Icare once you start!

About The Cover *by Graham Brightwell.*

I endorse Joel’s recommendation of both THOR and Icare. The cover shows the kind of thing you’ll find on Icare. These are just two positions I made a note of while browsing. (To be honest, I’m not completely sure the first came from Icare, but if not then it could have done.)

The first puzzle is a fairly straightforward exercise, and experts shouldn’t take too long to get it right. It might take a little longer to work out the optimum score in your head. If you’re a non-expert, and want a hint, then the idea is to get all three moves in the north-east, with the last move turning plenty of discs.

The second position is from a game we’ve published before, namely Berner v. Kierulf from p.25 of *Feinstein A-Go-Go* – it’s from the 1989 Worlds. I’d always thought this was a really pretty white win, and was very suprised to see this on Icare as “Black to play and draw”. As a hint, the game actually finished 53a8 54b7 55g2 56h1 57g7 58h8 (P) 59g8 (P) 60g1, so you have to stop that somehow.

Answers to puzzles on p.37.

+ + +

Congratulations to former British Othello Champion Neil Stephenson for graduating from Nottingham with a first class degree in Mathematics. Obviously all that time spent not playing Othello went to good use. You might have thought that Joel Feinstein being a lecturer at Nottingham might have had some influence, but in fact Neil managed to avoid being taught by Joel throughout his final year.

Forthcoming Events

The 1994 National Final *by Imre Leader.*

This year the Nationals will be held on the weekend of September 24-25 in historic Cambridge, where they have not been held since 1990. However, the venue will not be the usual big-tournament-in-Cambridge venue of the University Centre. But don't worry, it isn't happening in the Wolfson Party Room or the Lecture Room Theatre either. Rather, we will have a new-to-Othello venue: the Lubbock Room, Peterhouse.

Peterhouse is on Trumpington Street, quite close to the University Centre in fact. When you get to the college, you can either follow the signs to the Lubbock Room or ask the porters who will be on duty at the main gate. Alternatively, you can phone Pete Bhagat on 0223-62323 for directions. He can also tell you where to park, send you a map, give you phone numbers of guest houses, and similar things. If you'd rather write to him, his address is 1 Parker St., Cambridge CB1 1JL.

The timetable is the usual one. On Saturday the 24th, the AGM will be held at 1pm. The National Final itself will start at 3.30pm – this should give time for a tea break in between. On Sunday 25th, play will continue at 9am. At the end of the Swiss system, the top two players will play a Grand Final, which should take place at around 5pm. Spectators are of course very welcome.

The Challengers' tournament (open to everyone who has not qualified for the Nationals) will also take place on the Sunday. It will probably start at around 9.30am. Remember that the winner receives an automatic place in next year's National Finals!

For both the Nationals and the Challengers', we shall charge the usual entry fee of £3 (£1 for juniors and unwaged) to help cover the costs of the venue.

The 1994 World Championships are scheduled for November 3-6 in Paris, for the top three finishers at the Nationals.

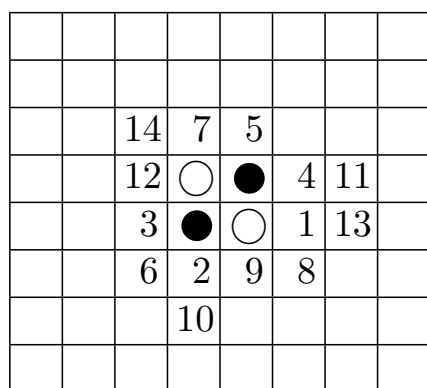
The Cambridge Christmas Tournament will probably take place in early December, most likely in Cambridge. Try ringing Peter Bhagat on 0223-62323 for further details.

Editor's Note. The second half of the 'Test Your Othello' article is held over until next time due to lack of space. More sets of suggested moves would be greatly appreciated: so far all the feedback I've had has been from Marc Tastet, explaining why THOR and Paul Ralle are better than I made out last time.

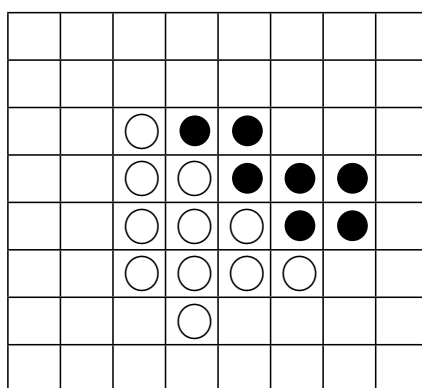
TECHNICAL ARTICLES – Openings

You Spin Me Right Round *by Graham Brightwell.*

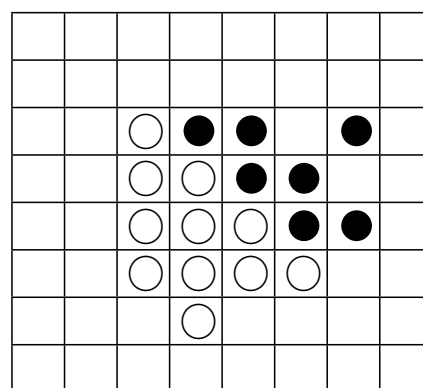
One of the harder things about writing this article has been deciding just where to begin. In the end, I have made the rather arbitrary decision to begin studying the Rotating Flat after move 14, in Diagram 2 below. Diagram 3 shows the Rotating Rose, which is obtained by Black playing 11g3 rather than 11g4. These aren't quite forced lines for White, but in practice Black can get these positions most of the time if he wants. In general, Black's position in Diagram 2 looks more compact, but there are a few cases where the disc at g3 rather than g4 comes in handy. So it's by no means clear which is the better line.



1. The Rotating Flat



2. Flat – after 14c3



3. Rose – after 14c3

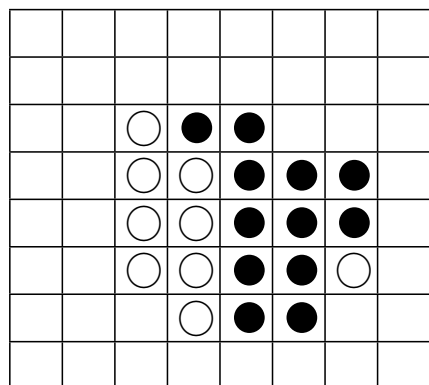
The standard line Rotating Flat/Rose line now is something like 15f7 16d2 17e7 18f2 19c8 20f3 21c7: presumably you can see why the openings are so named. As with all openings, one should ask who this is good for, and how the other player can avoid it. My suspicion is that both openings are good for White, just about, but that perhaps Black isn't the one anxious to avoid them. There's something frightening about a dangerous opponent wheeling out a Rotating Flat or Rose, capped by a little innovation in the move order in the late twenties, and White would be well advised to know a few alternatives just in case. Also, more of the key choices seem to be Black's, so these are openings where a small amount of deep preparation can pay dividends. Joel Feinstein has taken this to extremes in places, and his opening analysis goes all the way to move 60 (computer assisted,

of course) in some lines. Fortunately for the rest of us, most of these lines lead to a narrow loss for Black. Judge for yourself how many of Joel’s secrets are being given away here!

We’ll start by concentrating on the Flat, then come back and see how things change with the Rose at the end.

Ok, so 15f7 in Diagram 2 is hardly forced. 15b3 is an interesting and little tried idea, though I fancy 16c2 17b4 18e2 is one of several good lines for White. 15b4 is also far from out of the question, making it look just like the standard Rose. Then White can either try the main-line-Rose-like 16b3 17b5 18a5 19a4 20a3 21b6 22a6, which has hardly ever been played, or the Brightstein-like 16e2, when Black usually replies 17f3, with the idea that, after White plays to g6 in a move or two, the natural follow-up to h5 is poisoned by the g4 disc. I would still reckon that 16e2 has got to be good for White.

If Black doesn’t fancy either of these (and probably on balance he shouldn’t), then 15f7 it is. One possibility for White to avoid the main lines is 16g6 here. Black can usually relied upon to play 17e7, but now White has a few things to look at – see Diagram 4.



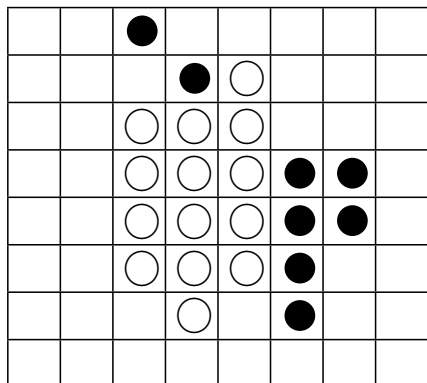
4. After 16g6 17e7

One possibility is 18d2, planning on following up with f2, f3 and so on. The extra disc at g6 must get in the way here, although it’s not clear exactly what Black should do – maybe 19c8 20f2 21e2 etc. is as good as anything, leaving the g6 disc alone and planning to finish with a move to b6. 18e2 is perhaps more interesting, but 19c8 (19e1 is also played) 20f2 21c7 22d8 23e8 24f3 25d2 seems to work out very well for Black. Incidentally, you’re not supposed to find that evaluation obvious just from playing the moves out and looking at the

position; you have to play on for a few moves and realise that White is actually in severe danger of running out of moves. That’s the big test of a Rotating Flat line: if White isn’t running short of moves, then Black will have to break through the white wall on the c-file, and White will be comfortably placed. Black is trying to get White to take edges, sacrifice, or something, and then engineer a relatively clean way through the wall.

The most common move from Diagram 4 is 18f8. What typically happens now is that Black plays 19h6, White plays to that edge, starting with either 20h5 or 20h3, and gets Black to take the five. Then White can afford to turn the d3 disc and unpoison d8, because he can sacrifice by playing g8, e8, and g7. But it still seems to me that White has most of the problems. In conclusion, I don’t think 16g6 is good, but maybe it merits a little more study.

And so on round: 16d2 it is. 17e7 always used to be an automatic response, but there has been a lot of interest over the past few years in 17c1, which is a completely different theme. 18f2 is probably not very good, as 19e2 20f3 21f1 seems to work out well for Black. Thus 18e2 is normal – Diagram 5.

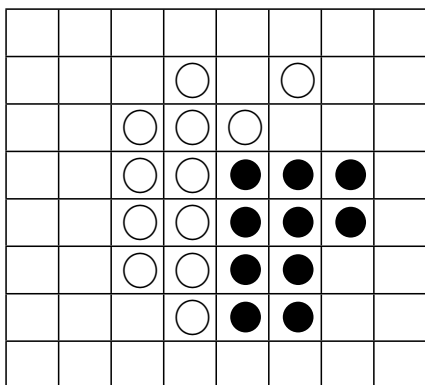


5. After 17c1 18e2

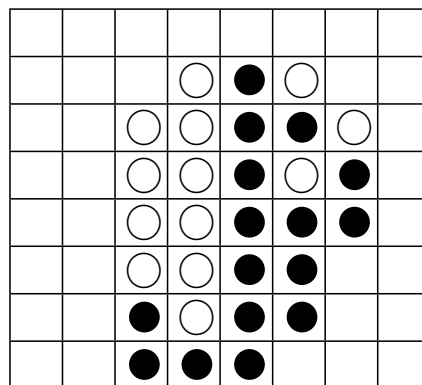
The original, rather bizarre, idea here was to follow up with 19f2 20f1 21c2 22d1 23e7, which may not be bad at all for Black. But 20h3, purely to take away Black's access to c2, strikes me as a big improvement, and 19f2 is hardly played any more.

But then someone somewhere noticed that 19b5 looks pretty sensible, gaining access to f3. An extra good point is that White's natural responses to b4 or b6 are always going to leave Black quiet moves at c2 and e7, so usually the left hand side of the board is left alone for a while: in other words Black has found an extremely clean way to break through the wall! The usual lines after 19b5 start with 20g3 21f3, and now White plays either 22h4 or 22h6, intending to either follow up with the other move or play 24f2. The illustrative game Leader-Tastet shows you most of the themes. For an assessment, I'll fall back on my old getout: there's a lot of things going on, all over the board, so White is ahead.

And so on round. 17e7 18f2, and now we're in the Rotating Flat proper – Diagram 6.



6. After 17e7 18f2

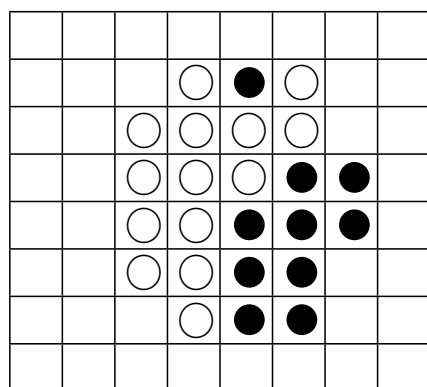


7. After 25e2

It's decision time: does Black play 19c8 immediately, or does he take the opportunity to play 19e2 while it only turns one disc? Both are tight. 19c8 leads almost inevitably to 20f3 21c7 22d8 23e8 24g3 25e2. This position is also featured on p.15 of *The Killer Bees*, and I refer the reader to that article. As a quick summary, White should play 26h4, not 26f1: then 26h4 27h5 28f1 is fine for White. Since that article, Phil Marson has kindly tried the line I suggested,

and Joel Feinstein has even more kindly played all the way down a known losing line, . . . , and (after a few minor inaccuracies in the endgame) lost. When things work out for Black, the sequence b6-b5-a5 gains a key tempo, so nowadays White usually prefers to meet b6 with a6. Anyway, this line has lost its surprise value these days, and just doesn't quite work. Probably.

So 19e2, and now it's White's turn to choose, with 20f1 and 20f3 being about equally popular. It does make a difference by the way: it's not simply a matter of playing both moves while Black plays c8. After 20f1, Black has had a lot of success with 21c8 22f3 23c1, threatening both g3 and d1/e1, but it seems to me that 24c2 25g3 26h3 27e1 28e8 is far from hopeless. An alternative for Black is 23c7 24d8 25e8 26g3, after which 27e1 28d1 29h3 gives a position which is very similar to the 19c8 line. Probably this means Black should avoid it and stick with 23c1.



8. After 20f3

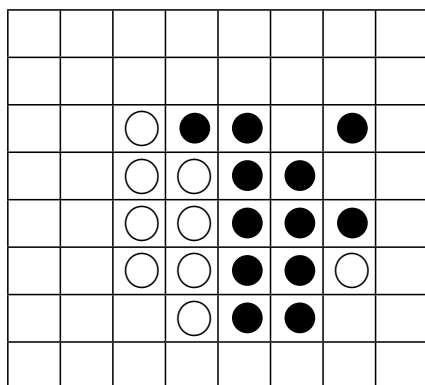
Which leaves 20f3. The idea is to get to g3 before Black does, but the down-side is that Black is likely to take both c1 and f1, as well as c8. There are about five closely related, but not identical, positions that can arise simply by Black taking these three moves in some order, while White plays g3 and then h4. I reckon these positions are all good for White, because he is then in a position to play whatever is necessary on the West edge (take a five, usually) and then Black has to break through. But it's not quite that simple, as

Black has a few alternative plans, most notably ones involving playing c2.

I think 21c1 is the best way to start, and now it seems logical for White to play 22g3, when one close-looking line is 23c2 (probably not 23f1 because of 24h3, taking away access to both c2 and c8) 24f1 25d1 26e1 27g1 28h6, when White seems to get out alive, so ahead. If White replies to 21c1 with 22f1, which looks tempting enough, then Black gets in 23g3, and I think he is then ahead, e.g., 24d1 25c8 26e8 27b3 28b4 or 24c2 25b1!?, which looks a bit daring but seems to be right.

That hardly exhausts all the possibilities from the last diagram, but maybe you get the general idea of the sequences that can happen. I think White can cope with everything Black tries, but it's all a bit fraught. Working slowly back, this means that I prefer 20f3 to 20f1. It also ought to mean that 19e2 doesn't work, and since I don't believe in 19c8 either then perhaps I should try to convince myself that 17c1 is playable.

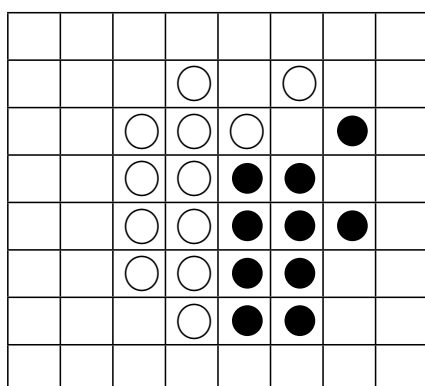
Or I could do what Joel did about 18 months ago, and switch to the Rotating Rose: 15f7 in Diagram 3.



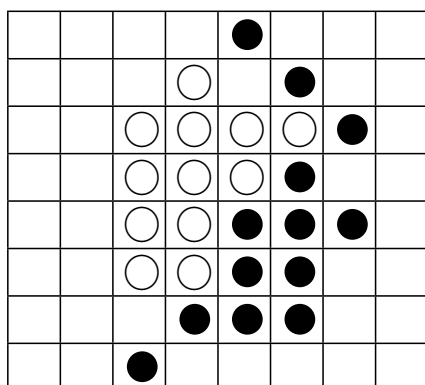
9. After 15f7 16g6 17e7

made possible by inserting the pair g6-e7: it almost constitutes a plan! However, Black has the disruptive 23f1 at the end of the line, which seems good.

And so on round with 16d2. 17c1 is a little less interesting now – I recommend 18e2 19b5 20g4 21f3 22h6, with a better position than in the corresponding Flat line. So on round with 17e7 18f2, reaching Diagram 10.



10. After 17e7 18f2



11. After 19e1 20f3 21c8

16g6 is more interesting here than in the Flat, firstly because of the likely line 17e7 (Diagram 9) 18f8 19h6 20h4, and now Black has to open a new front with 21b4. Or White could try, from Diagram 9, 18e2 19c8 20f2 21c7 22f3. Now we see one of the main differences between the Flat and the Rose: White has more rotating moves to come, starting with h3. We'll see later that Black would like to have used the g3 disc to play e1 and turn the f2 disc, but here that was ruled out by White playing e2 rather than d2. This in turn was

Left alone, White will play f3, h3, g4 and h6, exploiting the Black structure to the East. It cannot be right to deliberately play g3 rather than g4 and then allow this, so Black must do something else. So I reckon both 19c8 and 19e2 are pretty pointless: a typical line might be 19e2 20f1 21c8 22f3 23c7 24d8 25e8 26h3. One of the purposes of the d8-e8 pair, here and elsewhere, is to be able to reply to b6 with b5. So the only move of any real interest here is 19e1, followed almost invariably by 20f3 21c8. See Diagram 11.

White can try 22g4 here, as for instance in Feinstein-Leader, the final of last year's British Championship. See *Feinstein-A-Gain-Gain*, p.35-36, for that game and some comments.

The better move is 22h3. Now 23h4 24g4 25c7 and 23c7 24g4 25h4 transpose, and the common line after that is 26h5 27e2 28g6 29h6 30h7 31g2 32d1. Black has to take the North edge, after which he has sacrificed too much.

Joel Feinstein's key improvement is the line 23h4 24g4 25h2. Now 26e8 27d8 28b8 29e2 is not achieving anything much, so White is drawn into 26h6 27c7 28g6 29e2 30d1 31g2. As I understand it, Joel and MODOT have come to the conclusion that White

can win from here, but so far real players haven't truly proved this. Get out your copy of *Feinstein-A-Gain-Gain*, and choose between 32h1 (Feinstein-Plowman, p.34), 32f8 (Feinstein-Takizawa, p.38) or 32f1 (Feinstein-Juhem, p.41). Clearly this is an opening leading to close and publishable games.

Some illustrative games, featuring a lot of Imre Leader. Three of the games have been shunted on to p.51. Six more games appear on p.15-17 of *The Killer Bees*, as well as those games from *Feinstein-A-Gain-Gain* cited above. There are also hundreds more in the THOR database, and I would like to thank Sylvain Quin and everyone else involved for providing this invaluable tool. This is the first of my opening articles that I've written with the aid of the database, and also with THOR on call to help me assess some of the lines I'm advocating. It's been fun, and good for my own understanding of the openings, at least.

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

Leader – Bhagat
Cambridge Open 1990

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

Leader – Piau
Cambridge Open 1986

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

Leader – Tastet
Cambridge Open 1994

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

Feinstein – Marson
London Regional 1993

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

Shaman –Stepanov
Worlds 1991

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

Ralle –Tastet
Pérenchies 1989

So, our opening analysis has reached move 32. It might be as well to point out that this is about the deepest opening line there is. The number of choices for both sides is relatively small, so it's possible to push the analysis to (and occasionally over) the brink of what computers can deal with using their endgame routines. With the ever-increasing speed of computers, it won't be too many decades before we know whether Black is dead or alive.

The Return Of Count Salvador Rockinghorse

Editor's Note. See Feinstein A-Go-Go for the first appearance of Salvador Rockinghorse and Magnus Maestro in this journal.

An Evening with the Count *by Magnus Maestro.*

I confess that I was surprised to receive the invitation. Count Rockinghorse and I were not, frankly, on the best of terms. I saw him as a fraud, and had made myself perhaps rather too clear in this respect in the august pages of this newsletter. He regarded me, I fear, as an uncultured person whose opinion in no way interested him. So, the stiff card bearing the unmistakable crest of the Lithuanian imperial-court-in-exile was, indeed, something of a shock.

“His Excellency, Count Salvador Diogenes Rockinghorse, Chancellor to the Court of Henry, Emperor of Lithuania (and her subject kingdoms), bestows upon Magnus Maestro, of London town, the honour of an invitation to dine at Mandlebury’s Gentlemen’s Club, Soho, at 8p.m. sharp on the evening of the 17th.”

I do not, I should point out, approve of ‘Gentlemen’s Clubs’. They are, in my opinion, archaic residues of an older society off without whose shackles we are better. Yet an invitation to dine at such an institution intrigued me: I imagined the place filled with decrepit old men, mourning the death of Empire, and I wanted to see whether it was so. Thus I accepted the Count’s invitation, hired myself a dinner suit, and presented myself at Mandlebury’s at the appointed hour.

The Count himself, ostentatiously examining his pocket-watch, greeted me in the doorway. “Ah, Maestro,” he boomed. “So glad you are on time.” He guided me past the doorkeeper, who seemed about to take exception to the cut of my suit until he caught sight of my host. “You will agree,” said the Count, confidently, “that tonight I have excelled myself. After dinner, I guarantee a few surprises.”

He hustled me inside, down a long corridor, up two flights of stairs, and into a small room, bare except for a table and two chairs. The table was set for dinner, and indeed the soup was already served. We sat down and ate. I am sorry to report that the soup was frankly cold.

“I took this private room,” said the Count, “because I knew you would want the honour of a few games of Othello with my fine self. Some of the more ignorant and intolerant members, I am sorry to say, disapprove of games being played during dinner. Naturally I am above such petty conceits, but I find myself unable to bring one such as yourself into the club dining room.” With a flourish,

he produced an old and battered plastic travelling Othello set from one of his many pockets, and indicated that we should play.

For those of you who have not had the ‘pleasure’ of meeting Count Rockinghorse, I should explain that he really was trying his best to flatter me, and he did honestly think that he was paying me a great compliment by treating me as a puppy rather than as an insect. I reflected that he was, after all, my host, and that I should fall in with his wishes. So we began to play. I detected a gleam in the Count’s eye, and it came as no surprise when he announced: “I fear, my dear Maestro, that you are quite lost. My new system has utterly defeated you.” It had become clear to me that my host’s sole object in inviting me to his club was to test this new “system” of his on a real opponent, so as to be spared the embarrassment of losing games in public if, as perhaps he subconsciously guessed, the system was flawed.

The position on the board at the time was as below, and it did not seem to me that I was at all “quite lost”.

	○	○	○	○			
		○	○	●	●		○
●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
●	●	○	○	○	○	●	○
●	●	●	○	●	●	○	○
●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○
		●	●	●	●		
		●	●	●	●		

White (Maestro) to play.

“I have discovered,” announced the Count, portentously, “that not all edges are equal.” Some edges, such as the edges I have here, and here” (he proudly indicated the South and West edges) “are inherently strong, whereas others” (he waved a disdainful hand in the general direction of the North and East edges) “are weak. Indeed some have termed them ‘unbalanced’, because of their unpleasing lack of symmetry. By occupying the ‘C’-squares, as they are called,” (he dabbed a finger at my discs at b1 and h2) “you have allowed me to sacrifice against the edges, and thence to occupy the adjacent corners.”

I made no attempt to reply, but played to b7, turning only the c6 disc. The Count was positively gleeful. “Yes, yes, I take the corner, and you wedge,” he crowed, “but because I have taken ‘fours’ and not ‘fives’, you can’t take the edges afterwards.” He smiled pityingly at me, and then turned to see exactly what he would do next.

There is some truth in what my ‘friend’ was saying, but, as always, he was not thinking enough about the game as a whole. There is no ‘Key to Othello’, no one simple principle to follow which leads to an inevitable win. It is perhaps true, on the whole, that having a balanced edge with four discs is usually preferable to having a five, but so much depends on what else is going on. Here, for instance, much the most important feature of my move to b7 was that it did not turn either the c7 or b6 discs. If His Excellency played to a8 immediately, I would be able to get both the a7 and b8 moves, wedging on both edges and, more importantly,

getting three of the four moves in the region. Alternatively, if he left the region alone, I could play again in the region, say to b8, and would still get three of the four moves, although admittedly only one wedge. Count Rockinghorse should have tried to avoid making both the b-file and the 7th rank all black: the SW corner region is disastrously bad for him.

Meanwhile, the Count had evidently seen that a8 was out of the question. He played g7, sacrificing against my five on the East edge. “You see,” he went on, perhaps a little less confidently, “you cannot take the corner without allowing me to play here (h7) and then here (h1), winning the entire edge and with it of course the game.”

	○	○	○	○			
		○	○	●	●		○
●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
●	●	○	○	○	○	●	○
●	●	●	○	●	●	●	○
●	●	○	●	●	●	●	○
	○	●	●	●	●	●	
		●	●	●	●		

After 1.b7 2.g7

be threatening to play there and secure two of the three remaining moves in the region, so White would be under pressure to play h8-h7-g8 immediately, allowing Black to take the East edge at his leisure.

There are many ways for White to win here. 3.h8 immediately is certainly good enough, especially since, once Black has reached h1, he cannot march further round the board and win the North edge. But that possibility wasn't about to go away. Alternatively, I could play 3.f1 4.g2 5.a7 6.a8 7.h7, but that didn't appeal. After all, I didn't really want to play h7 quietly, as then I'd have to make the next move into that region, and Black would get the last move.

I played 3.a7. It is rarely right to be greedy and hope for both wedges in a region like this: if it is left for too long Black may even feel able to play to a7 or b8, giving up the corner in exchange for two of the three moves.

The Count was now in a mess, but he continued to bluster. “Desperation, I see!” he gloated. But he was the desperate one. 4.b2 would be met by 5.a2 6.a8 7.a1, so he had to play 4.a8.

Hardly “of course”! In truth, the g7 sacrifice is not so appetising for Black. True, there is a good chance that he will end up wedging, and winning the East edge. But the East edge is only worth so much, and White can secure a lot of discs in the South-East either now or later by playing h8-h7-g8. Black has created an ‘odd region’ (namely the three-square region h7, h8, g8) where he cannot play, which is almost always a Bad Thing. It would be rather better for Black if he were to have access to g8, as then he would

	○	○	○	○			
		○	○	●	●		○
●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
●	●	○	○	●	○	●	○
●	●	○	●	●	●	●	○
●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○
●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
●		●	●	●	●		

After 3.a7 4.a8

he knew by now that he was losing? The solitary empty square at b8 assured me of total control and a large number of discs in the South, and he was excited by one measly edge. He wasn't even going to get the North edge with it. Indeed, the North edge had never been a real weakness, as he was never able to attack it.

	○	○	○	○			●
		○	○	●	●		●
●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●
●	●	○	○	●	○	○	●
●	●	○	○	○	●	○	●
●	○	●	●	○	○	○	●
●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●
●		●	●	●	●	○	○

After 5.h8 6.h7 7.g8 8.h1

the game ended 11.a1 12.a2 13.g1, with a 38-26 win to me.

One of many games in which the game wasn't as close as the score suggests. I was always in complete control, but had to give up a few edges to keep it that way. Needless to say, the Count didn't see it quite like that. I shall refrain from repeating his description of my ancestors, but I think it fair to summarise by saying that he felt I was a little lucky to win.

By now, we had finished our meal, which was frankly inferior to that served even at the average restaurant. An unfortunate waiter chose to enter the room just as the Count's diatribe reached its height, and the enraged nobleman greeted him by flinging the offending Othello set at the wall, mere inches from the servant's ear. That waiter was a credit to his employers, merely raising an eyebrow and asking whether we would like to join the other members in the lounge for port. My host immediately brightened, jumped to his feet, and beckoned me to follow him.

To be continued ...

Did I want two of the three moves in the North-West? No, as after 5.b2 6.a1 7.a2 8.f1, the North-East would play well for him. Did I want the swindle with 5.h7 now? After that, play would go 6.b2 (Black will have to play this sooner or later, so better sooner, rather than play off the North-East and concede all the discs there to White.) 7.h8, and I would win very comfortably.

I decided to play 5.h8, just to show the Count how unimportant his edge was. He played 6.h7 7.g8 8.h1, the latter with a cry of triumph. Surely

A quick look round convinced me that 9.b8 was correct, since the Lithuanian had no access in the NE region. After the forced 10.b2, I had another look. The right sequence in the NE appeared to be g2-f1-g1, but shouldn't I play off a1-a2 first? In fact, it is better technique to play 9.g2 10.f1, and *then* think about playing a1. This is simply because it is easier to count with three empty squares than it is with five, and it might well have been better to play g1-a1-a2, getting the last move in the NW. In fact it wasn't, and the

GAME ANALYSES

In the Final *by David Shaman.*

The World Championships has always been a tournament surrounded by ceremony. Those expected extra details – welcoming packets, banquets, lunches, table judges, the mere presence of players from so many countries competing for three days – make it the unquestioned highlight of each season’s Othello play. This is not to say that the format or atmosphere has become entirely tradition bound. Obviously the most significant change in World Championship rules was the 1987 decision to invite three players per country instead of just one. However, I believe it is the progressive use of technology that has made recent tournaments truly enjoyable for players and spectators alike.

First, transcripts of games are made available to contestants almost immediately. The amount of work required to type in 15-20 games and have them printed in about an hour is not insignificant. Whoever takes on this task each year deserves everyone’s gratitude. In fact, ‘instant transcripts’ originally appeared at the 1982 Stockholm World Championship. However, at that time it meant somebody had to neatly copy all the games by hand.

Second, video cameras are now used to allow spectators to watch the semi-finals and finals while the players are safely sequestered. Before 1987, world championship crowds were smaller and the need for such measures less pressing. Still, even in Athens 1985, the finalists were placed up on a stage while everyone else watched the proceedings from below on a giant screen. Since 1987 there has been a consistent attempt to allow the finalists some privacy. The stage and screen method was repeated in Milan 1987. Spectators have watched from a distance on computer monitors (Paris 1988, Warsaw 1989) and television screens (New York 1991). In all of these instances, though, people were allowed in the same room as the finalists. More recently, the games of the third day have actually been played in an isolated room (Stockholm 1990, Barcelona 1992, London 1993).

This seems to work best. The spectators generally include the 30 to 40 expert players who had been competing a day earlier. In addition, there are 15 to 20 table judges among whom can be found many of the host country’s other top players. This audience may discuss and argue the games without fear of being overheard by the finalists.

I first witnessed ‘finals commentary’ at the US championship in 1982. At the time, the USOA just had a large board (maybe twice as large as the FFO’s board now used at the stage). I was playing in the final and my younger brother, 13 years old at the time, served as a runner, bringing the latest moves from the

playing room out to the audience room. Although I was thrilled to be competing in the finals of my country's national championship, I actually also felt frustrated about missing out on the discussions taking place outside.

Even today, I often have mixed emotions at the World Championships regarding this matter. I desperately want to qualify to play on the final day. At the same time I always feel cheated out of hearing what everyone has to say during the games. Of course, you can't have it both ways. Maybe one year someone will take a video tape of the audience and show it to the players.

I've been told that watching the games on video link can even offer some insights into the players thoughts and moods. Apparently this was the case in Barcelona 1992 with respect to Marc Tastet and myself. The television screen showed only the board position and our hands. Marc could be seen constantly rearranging spare discs on his side of the table into various elegant geometric patterns. I sat there perfectly still. Sometimes it was as if I had turned to stone: my hands remained frozen for minutes on end. Interpret that as you wish, Dr Freud.

Isolating the players has also allowed the use of endgame analysis programs during the games. Personally, I would prefer not to know perfect-play sequences and scores until after the games are over. In my opinion it is more enjoyable to discuss a position on the basis of strategy and without complete certainty. Of course, it is inevitable that someone will want to, if possible, know exactly what is happening in a given position. This desire is particularly strong if a fellow countrymen is one of the competitors. As long as there remains no risk of the players themselves discovering any information, I see nothing wrong with checking for optimal sequences.

I would just like to comment that I do think this habit should be discouraged if the audience is in the same room as the players (as is typically the case at European Grand Prix finals). Clues can be very subtle. First, every single person who views the perfect score must completely restrain their reactions. Even still, the amount of typing required to enter a mistake and find the new position's value is often greater than that needed after a disc-optimal move. At the Cambridge International this year I was able to ascertain that Stéphane Nicolet had made an error on a particular move in his final against Mike Handel even though I was standing across the room from the people performing the endgame analysis.

The most interesting aspect of audience analysis is how often the consensus opinions of a large group of top players are so radically different from the thoughts of the finalists themselves. Sometimes this manifests itself in choice of moves. The audience argues over two or three possibilities. Then, after several minutes, the finalist plays a move that nobody had even mentioned. Sometimes this is just a matter of the way in which the players think about a position. A particular

tactical or strategic feature is considered vital by the actual competitors while dismissed as unimportant by everyone else. I believe, to a large degree, this is simply because it is impossible for anyone other than the two players to get quite so intently involved in the position on the board. Very often I can look at my past tournament games (provided I was in practice and playing well) and I am completely unable to understand precisely how or why I chose particular moves. Usually I am only left with the sense that I had had clear justification for my choices at the time.

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

I suppose I should include a little bit of actual game analysis in this article. The first game of the World Championship final between Emmanuel Caspard and me in London (diagram 1) is an interesting example. I played white. We chose a fairly classical variation of the Comp'oth line (11f7, 14b4). In doing so, Emmanuel avoided the lines starting with 11d7 which he and I had practiced together the month before in Paris.

1. Caspard 29 Shaman 35

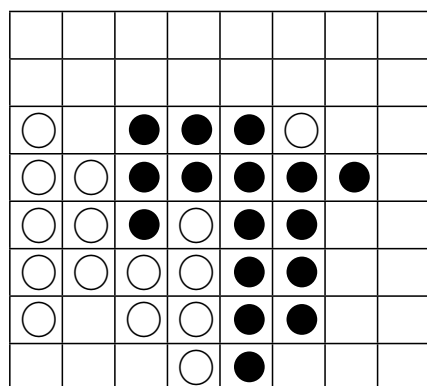
Soon after move 30 it became clear that black was winning. I was forced to examine some very long sequences in the hope of finding any chance at all of a win. The audience was able to watch as my desperate attempts to complicate the position (34f8, 38d1, 40g2) succeeded in providing Emmanuel with just enough rope to hang himself.

Much of the initial reaction had been that my moves 30h4 and 34f8 were bad and that Emmanuel's move 43c2 was the fatal error. This last conclusion is technically correct: the value of the position after 43c2 is a draw. However, the obvious choice, 43e1, yields a score of only 33-31, and the optimal move, 43c8, wins by only 37-27. (See article in FForum 31.) Somehow, even by 42, I had managed to fight my way back from a seriously dead position.

In fact, as many people recognized, Emmanuel's move 41g6 leaves a lot to be desired as well. It's only attribute is that it sets up access to c2 – and it is rather unclear whether this is actually of any immediate importance to black. My sense now is that e1, g5 and c8 are all probably better moves.

After my move 44e1, the computer-aided audience knew about the draw. In addition, the perfect sequence clearly was not easy for black. The position seemed to be one where black would confront many difficult choices while white would have just a few options to be delicately weighed at each turn. Emmanuel was bound to lose a disc or two. The question was merely how well I would negotiate the endgame. In fact, I was able to play fairly sensible parity and reflex-response moves from 46 to 52 and then, at 54, simply use the time left on my clock to count a definite win.

I find interesting how radically different my own thought patterns during the game were from the analysis described above. In addition, it is amazing to me that, although I heard many disparaging comments about my choices at 30 and 34, not a single person questioned me regarding the move I now consider to be my worst blunder of the entire third day’s play: 28f2.



2. After 27g4.

I completely misjudged the position after 27g4 (diagram 2). White is probably winning. It is at the very least close. I thought I was somehow already losing. I had been trying to keep black short of moves. This attempt was working and the move I should have played to keep at it is 28d2. I didn’t even really consider this. I was simply afraid to turn discs in two directions, create a large number of new black options, and give Emmanuel access to b2. I was worried that if black had in reserve the option to sacrifice against

my unbalanced edge, then I would have to open up the east as well and my disc count would grow out of control.

I had known a white quiet move to f8 would be strong. I failed to realize that Emmanuel could not, under any circumstances, turn the entire f column black and that a move to e2 (not just f2 or g3) would do this. In short, I did not realize how limited his options already were.

For example, after a move 29c8, it is hard to see black winning. White would have a strong sacrifice at b7 in reserve. Black cannot gain anything by sacrificing the north with a move to b2 if white is already prepared to surrender the west edge for an extra tempo. Besides, white has another tempo immediately available at b3.

29c1, 30e1 is just a pair. 29b2 is met with 30b3. While there are some clever sequences to follow these options which force white to play to f2, black really cannot afford to take the north edge before the east is played.

Perhaps 29c2 is black’s strongest response. Even then, white can respond with 30b3! Black then either goes for the quick sacrifice (for example – 31b2 d1 b1 e2 c1 e1 f1 f2 g3 – it is now white’s turn at move 40; he has control and parity) or actually allows white to take f8 in the hope of improving a later sacrifice at b2 (for example – 31c1 e1 f2 d1 f1 f8 b1 e2 b2 – similar position; white’s turn again; taking the corner to a1 is now a greater sacrifice; there’s a white free move to g8, but it could cause parity problems).

After my actual move 28f2, I am left playing the midgame without any coherent long-term strategy. I realized this almost immediately. I was already regretting move 28 while considering my choices at 30. I had not noticed 28d2

after the fact, but I did feel strongly that there must have been something better than what I'd played. I was losing and the only thing I could see to do was to complicate the position. At 34 I chose f8 because I felt the sequence 34g5 g6 36f8 would be useless. Instead of playing the obvious line which fills up a region, it is better to leave some open space for later mistakes.

I started planning the "fatal sequence" at move 38. I knew Emmanuel was not forced to go down a line that ended with me taking everything in sight at move 44, but I thought there were some very good reasons he might do so. In particular, the temptation of setting up a diagonal cut at move 41, discussed above, would be strong.

Although it is now known that 44e1 is not losing, it should be remembered that I was not aware of this at the time. In fact, although it was my planned choice, I was not really sure I wanted to be forced into playing such a radical move. I could not see how the game would continue, but I was still fairly certain I was going to lose horribly. Emotionally, I kept jumping back and forth between hoping he would play 43c2 and wishing he would play anything but 43c2. From my perspective, there was no point in even analyzing the line while Emmanuel considered move 43. I spent most of the time looking at 43e1. I planned to play 44g7 in order to deny black access to c2. I thought just maybe I could cause black some serious parity problems with a well-timed move into the empty a1 region.

		●	○	○			
		●	○	○	○	○	
○	○	○	●	○	○	○	●
○	○	○	○	○	●	○	●
○	○	○	○	○	●	○	●
○	○	○	○	○	○	●	●
○		○	○	○	○		
			○	○	○		

3. After 44e1.

Emmanuel spent a long time considering move 45 (diagram 3 – after 44). The only two reasonable choices are b8 and c8. I had seen the b7 response to b8. I was convinced that if he played 45b8 I would win and that if he played 45c8 I would still be losing quiet badly. I thought a mistake at 45 would cost him about 20 discs and the game. I suppose I was half right. 45b8 was game losing, but it only lost one disc; 45c8 was just a draw.

At this point, I could not bear to watch. I got up at move 43 and went to the corner of the room where I waited impatiently for several minutes until Emmanuel played his move. He chose b8 and suddenly my whole attitude about the game changed. I sat down, gathered myself mentally, played the b7 move without really checking anything, and got ready to plan an endgame sequence.

All in all, it was a pleasant rollercoaster ride. It would have been far less emotionally draining for me if I had known all along that I was already back in the game before 45.

Das v. Handel *by John Lysons.*

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

Das 21 Handel 42

		●	●	●	○		
		○	○	○	○		
	●	○	○	●	●	○	●
●	●	○	●	●	●	●	○
●	○	○	○	○	○	○	
●	●	○	○	○	○		

After 32c2

After Jeremy’s inventive opening (25h3 is an interesting new idea), it is not clear now whether he will have to break through at the bottom. The move 33g1 comes into question here. If white replies with 34b2 then black plays 33h5 and he has an important reserve move in h2. If, on the other hand, white replies to 33g1 with 34h2, then black has the remarkable sequence 35h5! 36h6 37b1, when white has no access to g6 and so is forced to play 38a2; after this black can give white the left hand edge and gain a reasonable amount of control.

		●	●	●	○		
		○	○	○	○		○
	●	○	○	●	●	○	○
●	●	○	●	●	●	●	○
●	○	○	○	○	○	●	
●	●	○	○	○	○		●

After 34h2

	○	○	○	○	○		
●		○	○	○	○		○
●	●	○	○	●	●	○	○
●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○
●	●	●	●	○	●	●	
●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●
		○	●	●			

After 41e7

Jeremy chose another strong-looking move in 33h6, and Mike Handel replied 34h2. It is now clear that black will shortly have to break through at the bottom. If black plays 35g1, then white replies with 36b2. If black plays 35g2, then white doesn’t bother to go into the corner; he plays 36b1. Jeremy realises this, and breaks through straight away with 35d7, but this is probably an error, as at least 35g1 36b2 37f7 would have lumbered white with an X-square, as well as being less drastic.

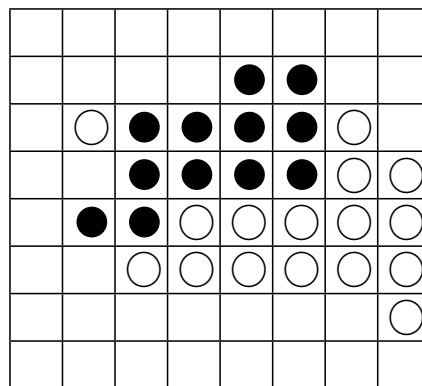
At move 42, Mike played the X-square at g2, showing great ability by working out a long sequence which gives him a definite win. Note how, in the subsequent play, black doesn’t get access to g1. Jeremy probably shouldn’t have allowed 42g2, with 41c8 or even 41g2 himself giving more chances.

Six Ways To Beat Me *by Joel Feinstein.*

For a change I thought I might annotate several of my recent losses. But just so that no-one takes them seriously, all of these games were played on the Internet Othello Server at Paderborn (see *Othello and the Net*). There are a lot of strong humans and some very strong computer programs. Some of the strong humans do not play in tournaments at all: one of these is “rkl” who is based in Liverpool and is 3-0 up against me so far. (I include the most exciting of my games against him below). Another player who always beats me is the retired French player “jcw”.

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

Joel 23 rkl 41



After 24.h7

The first game is a 15 minutes each rated friendly game against rkl. In a previous game against the same opening I had tried 9.b5, but his reply 10.d2! was rather strong. So I consulted the Thor database and tried 9.f5 instead. Warning: I can't make this non-standard move 6 work against anyone else. But it's been good against me so far! After 18. h4 I had hopes of playing most of the moves h6 f2 h2 and h7, and expected white to collapse. Maybe I should have thought harder! After 19.h6, rkl's 20.b3 is annoyingly good. White will have h5 to come, and if I try h2, then h3 is annoying. White also has the possibility of b4. So in the end I just replied with 21.c3, allowing 22.h5. I took my move at f2, and the rkl grabbed the unbalanced 4 with 24.h7 – see Diagram.

Now it looks like I am in trouble, because I am going to get pulled through White's wall, and there isn't anything nice. I delayed the inevitable with the sequence 25. h2 a5 a3 b4, and then had to break. 29 d7 looked nice, but poisoned a4, so maybe f7 was the move. White's wall vanished, and after 34.c2 white looks to be coasting to a comfortable win. After the edge grab 37.a6 I expected to die horribly after 38.d8, but this is not quite clear. I was surprised when rkl chose 38.c1 instead, but after 39 f8, rkl's g7 was very strong. The rest of the endgame is a good try from me, but not quite good enough. White's move 44 is not perfect: apparently c8 is better. After 44.d1 White is winning 36-28. Play is perfect from 45 to the end except for a dreadful time-trouble blunder by me at 55 when I

needed to take the a1 corner (my problem is usually the other way round!). I certainly didn't see how strong 50.d8 was going to be in advance, though. Well played rkl!

Next, here is an IOS tournament game against Igor Durdanovic's program REV (called kitty these days). Igor set up the Othello server in the first place, probably just to give himself a chance to show off his program. It usually beats me easily, but this time I gave it a real run for its virtual money.

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

Feinstein 29 REV 35

the sort of move I usually look at, but does make 22.b6 sensible. 24.d8 doesn't look right to me. However I could not see anything better than 25.g6, which unpoisons a move for white at f3 which he takes at move 28. Igor blames 26.d7 on the "horizon effect". After 28.f3, I initiate play quietly on the West edge with a3. After 30.a4 a5 REV thought it was behind. But in retrospect maybe 31. g3 is better. 34.e8 is a bit annoying because I don't have the access I deserve, but I still have 35.g3. After 36.d1, though, I had to think for 5 minutes. I eventually decided that I could not survive with the North edge as well and played c8. Apparently this is perfect, and loses 31-33. REV knew that it was winning at move 38, and play was perfect except for my minor errors at 45 and 55 (yes, 42.f8 is perfect!). Well played REV!

The opening is the Rose with the "flat" move 11. At move 12 white has the option of rotating with 12.e6, but chooses the older move at f2. At 15 the move used to be b4, but I have always believed 15.d2 to be good after the dreadful positions I have had as White against it. Now I am not so sure. The reply 16.e1 seems to be very sensible (though Alex Selby never managed to make it work against me). I had prepared against this line, and reluctantly abandoned 17.b3 in favour of 17.b4. Anyone have any suggestions? 20.f6 is not

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

Masten 34 Joel 30

Also in the first IOS open, here is my round 3 loss to Mark Masten.

Here we played down a fairly standard line of the tiger. Mark certainly knew this opening well. For some reason I felt confident throughout the opening and middlegame even though I was taking some risky edges. I am not sure about much of the timing in this game. I had assumed that if Mark played g2 then I would get some sort of swindle in the East, but after 37.g2 I realised that I was running out of moves. I tried to complicate

things, and in the end the score line was much closer than I deserved. I can claim to have played perfectly from 46 onwards, while Mark gave me quite a few discs with (non-obvious) errors at 47 and 51. Otherwise play is correct from 45 to the end, much good it did me!

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

Joel 4 bigal 60

Moving on to the second IOS open (which has not yet finished), here is a huge loss against “bigal”. It was very annoying for me not to be able to refute this highly non-standard move 8 against the Inoue move 7. Any ideas, anyone? I don’t want to say too much about the game! I realised that I was in trouble during the midgame, and coming into the endgame tried the huge sacrifice 39 h5. Surprisingly, this move is perfect and leads to a respectable loss. Unfortunately I did not achieve respectability.

After this demoralising loss I had to play “colin”, who is in fact the top Canadian player Colin Springer and is very used to beating the English. Unlike some of my IOS bogeymen I do occasionally beat colin. This was not one of those occasions.

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

colin 40 Joel 24

This time we went down a line of the tiger with which I have been having close games against the strong computer programs. I always thought that White was supposed to be ahead after 14.b4, but I am having trouble staying alive these days. Note that Black does not care that his move 21 flips d7 too, since he plans to suck White into the South of the board anyway. I didn’t fight this plan because I have never found a good way to play out the West edge for White. Although I just about survived to the endgame, colin had enough control and skill to put me away in the late 30s and early 40s.

Finally, here is my most recent loss to jcw. I usually die in the opening against him, but this time it looked as if I was clearly winning until I was unable to find a sensible plan in the 30s.

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

jcw 36 Joel 28

		●			●	●	
			●	●	●		
		○	○	●	○	○	
	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
		●	○	○	●	●	●
		●	●	●	○	●	●
			●	○	○		
		●		○	○	○	

After 33.g1

I have seen a lot of lines in the Heath chimney, but this strange move 9.e7 is a new one on me! Apparently it worked against REV, but I think I came out of the opening well. I thought that 21.h6, unpoisoning 22.e2, was a mistake but my computer program disagrees. After 23.b4 I avoided c7 because I was afraid of 25.b8. Black appeared to be collapsing in the late 20s. Unfortunately I was not careful enough. I could certainly have arranged to have access to h3, for example. Paderborn computer analysis suggests that I was ahead until 34.b3, and then behind. I can confirm that I was always losing from 24 empty onwards, although after 49 a1 I could have kept the loss to 31-33 (correct was 49 a2! winning 43-21). However, I did miss a draw at 36: 36d8! h8 h3 c7 c2 b1 a4 b6 a7 a3 b7 a6 a8 a5 a2 b8 e1 d1 g2 h1 h2 b2 a1 g7 h7. From then on, I was lost.

In the middle of writing this article I took time off to play my IOS open game against Michael Buro, the programmer of LOGISTELLO (“possibly the strongest Othello playing entity in the world”). Some of his program’s skill has clearly rubbed off on “mic”: I was extremely dead in the late midgame. Fortunately I was allowed to escape. Otherwise this article would be even longer! Anyway, I hope that you will agree that there are some surprisingly strong players out there playing on the IOS.

Answers to Cover Puzzles *by Icare.*

1. 54h1 (P) 55b1 (P) 56a8 57a7/b8 58b8/a7 (P) 59a1 (P) 60b2. 31–33/30–34
The key is to play b1 before putting a piece on the c2-h7 diagonal. Still, it’s very close, but playing the SE region starting with a8 ensures that b2 at the end will turn just enough discs.

2. 53g7 54h8 55a8 and now 56b7 would turn along the 7th rank. Even then, 56g8 looks great, except that Black passes and White has to move again, with 57b7 58g2 59g1 60h1 32–32 being (just) the least damaging.

TOURNAMENT REPORTS

The 1994 Regional Tournaments *compiled by Graham Brightwell.*

Here are the results of all this year's Regional tournaments.

<i>London – 5/3</i>	Pts	<i>Eastbourne – 9/4</i>	Pts
1. Mike Handel (Q)	5/6	1. Graham Brightwell (Q)	7/7
2. John Lysons (Q)	5	2. Guy Plowman (Q)	6
3. Ian Turner (Q)	5	3. Ian Turner	5
4. Graham Chappell	4	4. Roy Arnold (Q)	4
5. Matthew Selby	3	5. Phil Marson	4
6. John Bass	3	6. Richard Brand	3
7. Michael Trent	2	7. Graham Chappell	3
8. Neil Cuthbertson	2	8. Rodney Hammond	2
9. Richard Brand	1	9. Ashley Hammond	1

<i>Wellingborough – 16/4</i>	Pts	<i>Worksop – 23/4</i>	Pts
1. Imre Leader (Q)	6/7	1. Jeremy Das (Q)	6/7
2. Graham Brightwell	6	2. Mike Handel	5 $\frac{1}{2}$
3. Garry Edmead (Q)	5	3. Roy Arnold	4 $\frac{1}{2}$
4. Mike Handel	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	4. Iain Barrass	4
5. Joel Feinstein	4	5. Colin Hands (Q)	4
6. Iain Barrass (Q)	3 $\frac{1}{2}$	6. Iain Forsyth (Q)	3
7. Guy Plowman	3	7. Phil Marson	3
8. Phil Marson	3	8. Mark Wormley	3
9. Jeremy Das	2	9. Myles Harvey	2
10. Roy Arnold	2	10. Eileen Forsyth	0
11. Bruce Kyte	2		
12. Myles Harvey	1		

<i>Nottingham – 8/5</i>	Pts		Pts
1. Mike Handel	5/6	9. Mark Wormley	3
2. Guy Plowman	5	10. Bruce Kyte	3
3. Aubrey de Grey (Q)	4	11. Roy Arnold	3
4. Ken Stephenson (Q)	4	12. Iain Forsyth	2 $\frac{1}{2}$
5. Iain Barrass	4	13. Colin Hands	2
6. Joel Feinstein	4	14. Robert Stanton	2
7. Jeremy Das	3 $\frac{1}{2}$	15. Myles Harvey	1 $\frac{1}{2}$
8. Phil Marson (Q)	3 $\frac{1}{2}$	16. Eileen Forsyth	0
		17. James Preen	0/2

<i>Manchester – 14/5</i>		Pts	<i>Cambridge – 11/6</i>		Pts
1.	Mike Handel	6/6	1.	Graham Brightwell	6/7
2.	Bruce Kyte (Q)	4	2.	Guy Plowman	5½
3.	Roy Arnold	4	3.	Peter Bhagat (Q)	5
4.	Jeremy Das	3	4.	Mike Handel	4
5.	Phil Marson	3	5.	Joel Feinstein	4
6.	Ken Stephenson	3	6.	Imre Leader	4
7.	Colin Hands	3	7.	Aubrey de Grey	3½
8.	Myles Harvey	2	8.	Ian Turner	3
9.	Mark Wormley (Q)	2	9.	Matthew Selby (Q)	2½
10.	Simon Nickson (Q)	0	10.	Roy Arnold	2
			11.	Phil Marson	2
			12.	Myles Harvey	½
<i>Portsmouth – 18/6</i>		Pts	<i>Doncaster – 23/7</i>		Pts
1.	Guy Plowman	6/7	1.	Ken Stephenson	6/7
2.	Ian Turner	5	2.	Mike Handel	6
3.	Phil Marson	5	3.	Iain Barrass	5
4.	Phil Brewer (Q)	4½	4.	Phil Marson	4
5.	Simon Turner (Q)	3	5.	Bruce Kyte	4
6.	Jim Brewer (Q)	2	6.	Colin Hands	3½
7.	Trevor Fenton	1½	7.	Mark Wormley	3
8.	Graham Chappell	1	8.	Chris Wakelin (Q)	3
			9.	David Haigh (Q)	3
			10.	Iain Forsyth	2½
			11.	Roy Arnold	2
			12.	Eileen Forsyth (Q)	0

Only 38 people played in a Regional this year, although the total attendance was 99. All but 10 of the 38 qualified for the National Final. (Graham Chappell was particularly unlucky, hitting his best form, and only just missing out, early in the season when qualifying was hardest.) Phil Marson played eight of the nine regionals, which is a bit of a let-down after his ten out of ten the year before. Roy Arnold and Mike Handel both managed a creditable seven out of nine.

There follow some reports on Regional tournaments. Our coverage is a little patchy, I'm afraid. If, in future, you want to write a report on a regional you play in, then please do! The organiser is bound to be relieved to be relieved of the responsibility. If I get two or more reports from the same tournament, I'll use both.

Eastbourne – *Rodney Hammond reports.*

The results of this Regional were somewhat predictable, with all matches running to form. Graham Brightwell won the event with a perfect 7/7, and the other placings were as shown above. Roy Arnold secured the third qualifying place due to a very slightly better SOS.

The day was fun, although probably the coldest April day for years, with snowfalls throughout Sussex. The competition ran with abundant good humour, which was just as well as all matches were untimed, due to a failure in the clock supply.

Wellingborough – *Graham Brightwell half-recollects.*

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

Plowman 27 Brightwell 37

ably quickly to avoid the ire of the wedding reception party who were waiting to use the room to celebrate in. All was good-natured, and a good time was had by all, thanks largely to organiser Margaret Plowman.

In place of a full report, here's a moderately exciting game from the tournament. Strangely, 49c7 would have drawn, but then 48d8 was a win.

Imre Leader beat me, but lost to someone else. The tournament ended with the two of us watching two of the players from down the field finish the last game, with the result of the tournament depending on it. The player who Imre had earlier beaten beat the player I had earlier beaten, so he was the deserved winner. That having been settled, we all had to clear up exception-

Nottingham – *Adelaide Carpenter reports.*

The Nottingham Regional was scheduled to start at 10am because the organisers, Joel Feinstein and Phil Marson, feared that people might have difficulty finding the venue (the faculty club of the University of Nottingham); their fears were justified – only 11 of the 16 players known to be coming were present by ten o'clock, so the start was delayed until the known lost found themselves. This didn't happen until 10:30, so it was decided to have only six rounds rather than the usual seven.

Adelaide Carpenter refereed, being even more out of practice than usual, permitting Joel to play; she anticipated an easy first four rounds of pairings if everybody would just play to their rating standard. This pious hope was blighted near the end of the first round, when the 17th unknown lost player (Robert Stanton) finally arrived, throwing a Bye into the works, and shattered at the end

of the first round as Iain Forsyth triumphed over Joel. Granted, Joel had been distracted by the duties of Host before play started, and even more distracted as play started by an urgent telephone call from his father, who wanted his car keys back immediately (it was never explained why Joel, who does not drive, had his father's car keys in the first place), but still: well done Iain!

The upsets continued, with Aubrey de Grey losing to Ken Stephenson in round 2, and Mike Handel losing to Jeremy Das in round 3. This left Jeremy and Guy Plowman on 3/3; Guy won their game, and seemed destined to shoot the moon when he won against Joel in round 5. However, Mike succeeded in keeping 33 discs against him in round 6, and moreover had an SOS of $23\frac{1}{2}$ against 23, so winning the tournament.

The venue was deemed comfortable, the food good and the beer inexpensive; doubtless those who found it will remember next year – and lead others!

Manchester – *John Lysons reports.*

Neither glorious weather nor the F.A. Cup final kept ten keen Othello players from attending the Manchester regional tournament (although Roy Arnold did keep in touch with the cup final on his radio).

There were some organisation difficulties to start with, causing a major re-shuffle in round 2 (doesn't usually happen until round 6), and the morning session going behind schedule, leaving a short lunch break. I could put this down to the fact that I bumped my head on the tailgate while putting the kettle into the car.

After two rounds, Mike Handel, Jeremy Das and Bruce Kyte had all won two games, and in the third round Bruce Kyte beat Roy Arnold, while Mike Handel played well to beat Jeremy Das – this game appears elsewhere in this newsletter.

After the short lunch it was Mike Handel against Bruce Kyte. Mike showed he was on form, winning 37–27. Indeed, he went on to win the last two rounds as well, keeping the Manchester tradition that one player wins all his games.

Bruce Kyte played well above his grading, losing only to Mike Handel and Mark Wormley, and came second. Roy Arnold also played well, beating Jeremy Das in the last round to finish third.

It was a great day for Manchester.

Cambridge – *Graham Brightwell sort of vaguely remembers.*

This tournament saw the notorious Wolfson Party Room at its most salubrious, with fresh air, great lighting, and excellent organisation. Adelaide Carpenter refereed, allowing Peter Bhagat to get on with the job of qualifying for the Final, which he did with some style.

I lost to Imre Leader, as usual, but managed to scrape home against everybody else. Meanwhile everybody else – I forget exactly who – was driving Imre's

reputation, his amazing record in Cambridge Regionals, and most importantly his rating, into the dirt. Guy Plowman was certainly one of the Leader-beaters, and he would have been in the tie-break for the win (and losing it), but for a last-round draw with Aubrey de Grey.

The star of the tournament was undoubtedly Kali Turner, making her debut appearance at the age of four months. She was well-behaved throughout during my moves, but others claimed to have heard the odd noise from her when their clock was running. Obviously one to look out for in the future.

Portsmouth – *Ian Turner reports.*

This year's Portsmouth Regional was once again played in the Havelock Community Centre on a beautiful day. Seven players arrived for the start, with one more joining at lunchtime to make a total of eight. These included Simon Turner, who had made the trip all the way from Cumbria to resume his Othello playing after a two year break.

The first round of the tournament brought Phil Marson into a tough game against Phil Brewer, which Phil B won 35–29. Round 2 passed uneventfully, but in round 3 Phil Marson convincingly beat me by playing an opening which in all my years of Othello playing I had never previously had to face.

After lunch at the pub next door, we were joined by newcomer Treveor Fenton, who opened his tournament career with a good draw against Phil Brewer. Round 5 saw the biggest upset of the day with my loss to Phil Brewer; a big sacrifice to gain parity following a Rotating Flat ended with me failing to gain enough pieces. At the end of the round, Guy Plowman had 5/5, followed by Phil Marson on 4 and Phil Brewer on $3\frac{1}{2}$.

Round 6 saw Guy against Phil Marson in the crunch game. The game was tight all the way through, but Guy as white held parity and the upper hand, eventually running out the winner 38–26. This round also saw the move of the tournament in the game between Phil Brewer, who was trying to keep alive his slim hopes of catching Guy, and Simon Turner. The game was tight, with Simon, who was trying to run Phil out of moves, just at the point of collapse when he played an extremely dangerous-looking X-square – with devastating consequences and a 57–7 victory.

At the end of round 6, Guy was in an uncatchable position, but further down the order there was still a lot to play for. Graham Chappell and Jim Brewer were fighting it out for the last qualifying place – unfortunately for Graham he had to get a win in the last game against Phil Marson, and didn't quite manage it.

Many thanks are due, as ever, to everyone who helped with the organisation of Regional tournaments this year.

The North-South Match *by Joel Feinstein.*

11 players turned up for the North vs South match on July 9th in Nottingham University Staff Club. Unfortunately only three of these players lived South of the North's team captain, Joel Feinstein. Joel was declared (by himself) to be an Honorary Northerner and the other Nottingham players played for the South. Imre Leader could not attend, so Mike Handel assumed the identity of Captain South. Eileen Forsyth kindly agreed not to play in order to leave an even number of players.

The teams (in no particular order):

North: Joel Feinstein (captain), Iain Forsyth, Iain Barrass, Roy Arnold, Colin Hands.

South: Mike Handel (captain), Myles Harvey, Matthew Selby, Chris Wakelin, Phil Marson.

Each player played all players from the other team. The North had black on all boards in round 1, and we then alternated for the first four rounds. In the last round we flipped for colour, which led to a curious incident when Myles, playing Joel, called "down", but the disc bounced, span and stayed on its edge. Chris Wakelin suggested that we should change colours half way through the game (which might make an interesting variant). Myles may wish that we had carried this suggestion out. However he did beat Joel at snooker immediately after the game.

Back to the match! For three rounds it was neck and neck, the South having a slender lead of 8-7. But the North came through in the last two rounds winning both 4-1, and winning the match 15-10. Mike Handel, however, was the man on form, beating the whole Northern team.

Points Scored

North		South	
Joel Feinstein	4	Mike Handel	5
Iain Forsyth	3	Myles Harvey	0
Iain Barrass	4	Matthew Selby	2
Roy Arnold	2	Chris Wakelin	1
Colin Hands	2	Phil Marson	2

Thanks to everyone who came. I hope we can repeat this match next year.

The Rome International Tournament *by Graham Brightwell.*

Through no fault of my own, I found myself in Italy the week before the Rome Open, so felt obliged to go along. Others had shown even more commitment, with players arriving from all over Europe. There were 36 players in all, comprised of me, three Europe-based Americans, five French, including Tastet, Penloup and Nicolet, two Danes – Feldborg and Jensen, and 25 Italians including Marconi, Barnaba, Perotti and Antonelli. Pretty strong: there were eight previous winners of Grand Prix tournaments present, which may or may not be a record.

After one day, Marconi and I had 6/7, followed by Perotti 5.5 having played only Shaman out of the top players (and beaten him), and a bunch on 5 looking something like Feldborg, Shaman, Tastet, Penloup, and maybe Tardia (who also beat Shaman). Nicolet and Jensen never figured in the leading group. I had beaten Marconi, but lost to Shaman. Sadly I started the second day with losses to Feldborg and Tastet. (Imre Leader finds it hard to imagine why people lose to Feldborg, since he's never managed this himself – rest assured that Feldborg is equally aware of this statistic – but I can assure him that it's quite straightforward, indeed I was on a long run of losses to him). Marconi and Tastet both went 4-0 on the second morning, to reach the final. Top finishers were: Marconi 10/11, Tastet 9, Brightwell, Feldborg, Penloup 8 (in that tie-break order), Shaman, Nicolet 7, Jensen, Johnson, Silvola 6.5. The top five lost only amongst each other and to Shaman. Tastet beat Marconi 2-0 for his second ever Grand Prix tournament victory, putting him in great shape for a Grand Prix repeat. Meanwhile, I achieved the excellent result of losing only 2-1 to Feldborg. A good time was had by all.

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

Tastet 35 Marconi 29

Here's the second game of the Final. Tastet's 33g7 is very brave, and undoubtedly correct, as he has to do something about the threat of h6 followed by h5. His later play comes under the category of "taking the safe win": 45h3 in particular is completely the right thing to do, even though one can be pretty sure it won't garner the maximum possible number of discs.

Francesco Marconi was clearly the strongest Italian by some way, but there were a lot of other potentially dangerous up-and-coming home players in the field. I recommend this event as a tournament with lots of good competition at all levels: perhaps we can get a full-size party down there one year. No British player has ever one a tournament in Italy

From Overevaporation to ... Much-needed Evaporation

by Aubrey de Grey.

The fourth Brussels Open took place over the last two days of July and was every bit as splendid fun as usual. Massive thanks to our host and organiser, Serge Alard, without whose sterling efforts we would all have one fewer excuse for an annual good time. It all began in the traditional way, with the purchase of Viz (*A magazine well-known for its tasteless humour – Ed.*) in Stansted airport; this proved more useful than ever, as will be seen below.

Six Britons arrived in Brussels airport at various times during Friday evening, and five of them played. (This allowed Graham Brightwell to come up with one of his daft historical statements, namely that this was the first ever Othello tournament held outside the UK in which there were more players from the UK than from any other nation.)

The tournament was held, and all the non-Belgian participants stayed, in the same place as usual: a sports club cum youth hostel on the edge of the city. There were twenty players in all. We weren't sure of the exact number until Saturday morning, because one of the French players, Stéphane Nicolet, didn't make it: he missed his train connection. It turned out he could have got the next train and arrived in Brussels in the middle of Friday night, or the next one after that and only missed the first round, but inexplicably his commitment deserted him and he stayed in Paris. I duly gave Marc Tastet an appropriate message to relay to Stephane on his return, which I hesitate to repeat in this forum; but thanks to Viz I can make do with "Fitbin". His absence was well compensated, however, by the return of Didier Piau after an absence of almost four years while he was doing his doctorate.

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

de Grey v. Feinstein

though, between me and Joel.

I think 18 and 20 are both wrong, but it's pretty clear that I had to take b2 at move 27 – extracting d2 so deaccessing Joel from g5 – or else I am losing rather badly. After that it is tight but fairly even, until I blundered away a tempo or

The tournament began with an unprecedented event for me. I played an opening I knew well, found I'd forgotten it, got behind, and actually fought back to win. What can this mean? Other than that the day was uneventful – the pairing program worked, no one lost on time in a won position (*Editor's Note: Actually Joel did, but he made very little fuss about it!*), the room was still getting hotter when we finished play at 7:30, they ran out of the best bottled beer at lunchtime, and Graham ended in the lead. Here's a nice game

two at 43, when I must take e7 instead. It turns out that perfect play thereafter goes:

43e7 a3 a4 f7 h5 h1 h4 a6 g7 g1 h2 g8 h8 h7 b7 b8 a8 jpassj a7 29-35.

However Joel said at the time that he would have played 44f7: then Black gets 30 discs by 45h2 a6 h4 h5 g7 h1 g1 h8 b8 a8 a3 a4 a7 b7 h7 g8. I said at lunch that I thought perfect play after 43e7 would have given both players at least 30, and Graham offered to bet on this despite having no knowledge whatever of the game! I didn't take him up on it ...

Brussels has now followed in the Paris tradition of adopting a pet restaurant for the Saturday night. There is no chocolate mousse at this one, but there is some extremely good Chinese food and a seating area in the back garden which we occupied both last year and this. Its only drawback is that public transport in that area ceases at about 11:30. That's not much of a problem though, since it's only about half an hour's walk back to the hostel. Unless ...

As is common on days that are still getting hotter at 7:30, there was a firework display during dinner. We were especially lucky, as our outdoor table allowed us full view of the lightning but it didn't actually rain on us at all. Just as we were finishing our meal it began to spit slightly, but not so much as to concern us. By the time we'd paid and left it was a bit stronger, but the wind was such that we could keep virtually dry by walking very close to the buildings. It was only when we were about half way home that the real rain began. Well, at least there was no alternative but to keep going We got back to the hostel completely soaked. Graham and Iain Barrass had walked the fastest and had got out of sight; unfortunately they then took a wrong turning and got back some time later than us. Luckily it was still quite warm enough overnight that no one suffered unduly. Unluckily, most of our rooms were on the top floor with skylight-style windows, and some of these had been left open in such a way that the room was flooded in the storm. Even that was tolerable though, as the warmth was enough to dry everything out by the following morning.

So to day two. The only major disaster of last year's tournament was not repeated: breakfast, and in particular coffee, were on hand when we got up. Graham maintained his form. The standings at the end of the Swiss rounds were:

1. Brightwell 9.5/11, 2. Berner 9, 3. Piau 8, 4. Penloup 7 (802), 5. Feinstein 7 (801), 6. Tastet 7 (796), 7. Handel 6, 8. Cordy 5.5, 9. de Grey 5.5, 10. Feldborg 5, 11. Jensen 5, 12. Vallund T. 5, 13. Vallund H. 5, 14. Rignell 5, 15. Alard 4.5, 16. Barrass 4.5, 17. Johnson 4.5, 18. Andriani 4, 19. Daix 2, 20. Cagley 1, which meant that I got three times as many Grand Prix points as all the Danes put together. Hey, I write the article, I get to think up the silly statistics. I did actually beat one Dane in a game too Unluckiest at the death was

Joel, whose last-round game (against Marc Tastet) was the last to finish; in the last meaningful choice of the game he took quite obviously the worst of three possibilities and thus missed out on a 3/4 playoff by just one Brightwell point.

The games in the final and 3/4 playoff were rather substandard: two dull parity wins in the first games and an early death for Nils Berner in the second. (I refereed the second game of the 3/4 so I can't remember much about it, but Piau won.) So Marc is virtually sure to retain the Grand Prix championship. He can fail only if either Stéphane Nicolet or Erik Jensen win Paris – at which the opposition will include at least 14 Japanese, including the top two in the Japanese championship which took place over the same weekend. Will it also include you? 27th and 28th of August.

The Cambridge Open *by Graham Brightwell.*

<i>Name</i>	Pts	EGP	<i>Name</i>	Pts
1. Stéphane Nicolet	8	+2 200	12. Emmanuel Lazard	5½
2. Mike Handel	8½	+0 140	13. Aubrey de Grey	5
3. Marc Tastet	7½	+2 90	14. Serge Alard	4½
4. Garry Edmead	7	+0 60	15. Phil Marson	4
5. Dominique Penloup	6½	30	16. Matthew Selby	3½
Emmanuel Caspard	6½	30	17. Chris Wakelin	3
Graham Brightwell	6½	30	18. Roy Arnold	2
8. David Shaman	6	8	19. Pablo Coll	1
Imre Leader	6	8		
Guy Plowman	6	8		
Joel Feinstein	6	8		

Somebody (I do remember who) promised me a report on this tournament, but sadly it never materialised. Anyway, here are the two games of the final, featuring Stéphane Nicolet on impressive form, plus one of the many good Handel wins to redress the balance.

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

Nicolet 40 Handel 24

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

Handel 20 Nicolet 44

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

Leader 31 Handel 33

MISCELLANY – Club News

News from Doncaster *by Eileen Forsyth.*

Congratulations to Iain Barrass on becoming St. John Ambulance ‘Cadet of the Year’. Also high praise to Iain for showing mastery and confidence in winning four games out of four in the January mini-tournament. Mark Wormley came second, losing only to Iain, and then came Iain Forsyth (3), Phil Marson (2), Roy Arnold (2), Bruce Kyte (1), Colin Hands (1), and myself (evening up the numbers). Many thanks to Sue Barrass for doing the pairings.

At our February meeting, Phil came first, with Roy second and Bruce third. In March, we were pleased to see Joel Feinstein who, of course, won all his games. Phil came second with the two Iains third equal, all winning two out of three.

Due to social commitments and holidays, we didn’t hold a meeting in either April or May. Resuming in June, ten players came, with Iain the younger and Joel both winning all their games. Due to looming GCSEs, there was no opportunity for a decider. Roy, Bruce and Phil all scored two wins. The surprise of the evening was that I came eighth rather than tenth. 33-31!

Othello and The Net *by Joel Feinstein.*

For all you computer users out there: give the Internet Othello Server at Paderborn a try! You can log in (giving any username you like) and then play online against people from all over the world, as well as some very strong computer programs.

To log in to the server, you need to be able to choose your port to be 5000. On most machines this can be done by

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telnet 131.234.28.29 5000
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(or telnet faust.uni-paderborn.de 5000).

If this doesn’t work, ask your local expert.

Once you are in you can talk to people, challenge them to matches, watch other people’s games etcetera (the help command is quite useful). You get a text display if you log in as above, but there is a program called olios you can get with decent graphics if you have an X-terminal.

If you can access the World Wide Web, there are some BOF Othello articles available at Nottingham (address <http://www.maths.nott.ac.uk>). As far as I know, the only other othello articles available on world wide web are in Canada. If any of you out there have written such articles please let me know: we can put in links to each other.

Syncopated Cerebrations by Sid Cox.

I must start by apologising for mis-quoting Aubrey in last issue's Addlepatented Adaptations. He found a way to make Reversi and Othello converge after four moves, not five. I can also announce that solving this in your head is quite feasible after all, because Stéphane Nicolet did just that between rounds at this year's Cambridge International. His solution is not the same as Aubrey's, so now there are at least two people who can provide a solution.

+ + +

It seems that no-one is very interested in how to calculate the rating of a packet of biscuits, or maybe the prize wasn't big enough, for no-one has won it. I think it was done like this. P O Biscuits lost its sole game against Ali Turner. When an unrated player loses all his/her games, his/her rating is 400 less than the average of his/her opponents' ratings. Ali's rating was 1039 (see *Nodes*), therefore P O Biscuits' rating was 639. Q.E.D.

Actually, there is a slight flaw in the above reasoning, and the prize will now go to the Beginner/Junior who can point this out. Additionally, for a whole year's membership, Beginners/Juniors may like to explain why P O Biscuits' rating has fallen to 362 in *A-Gain-Gain*.

Editor's Note. If you're still confused, a quick glance at p.15 of Forty Billion Nodes Under The Tree might help a little. The Ratings Supremo's reconstruction of the number 639 is of course quite correct, but I'm impressed that he can reproduce my thoughts in arriving at 362. Packet of Biscuits has now sadly fallen off the rating list due to inactivity (which was also a drawback during its brief playing career).

+ + +

Some years ago in OQ there was a craze for variants on Othello, and one that has stuck in my mind is the idea of playing on an enormous board, effectively with no edges. I have just skimmed through all my back issues of OQ but didn't manage to spot the letter where this was described, so I'm sorry I can't give the individual who had this novel idea his/her due acknowledgement. Anyway, what I would like to know is just how big the board might have to be to play Othello like this. Assume you start with the normal four central discs, and there are 60 more to play with. The game ends when all these have been used up (or if neither player can go). What this puzzle amounts to is finding the most economical way of constructing a ladder from the centre outwards.

Whoever can get the furthest by the next issue's deadline will be awarded one year's membership, and the runner-up will get half a year's membership. I

am offering two prizes this time in the hope that someone in addition to Aubrey will have a go.

Editor's Note. Of course, Othello Quarterly (our US cousin – write to Graham Brightwell or to David Haigh for details of how to subscribe) was completely the wrong place to look. See p.25 of our very own Marriage of the Eel for a letter from Jon Marc Hornstein enthusing about this variant. If you don't have this classic 1989 issue, or indeed you have missed out on any of the others over the years, then back issues are available from David Haigh at about £3 a time.

Review

CDi Review *by Phil Marson.*

Othello programs should just play Othello! That was my view before seeing the new Othello program for the Phillips CDi. The scale of this piece of software is truly awesome, from the real live action of your opponents to the wealth of information about Othello.

The game is introduced by Leonardo da Vinci, who briefly explains the rules. You are then presented with a menu screen (selection throughout the game is by icon) where you can choose from three boards (official, marble or pebbles in the sand) and one of two opponents (Leonardo da Vinci or Einstein). Your choice of opponent makes no difference to the level of play, this being selected by you from Beginner to Grand Master (?), but merely acts as an entertainment during the game. Einstein is by far the calmer, making few comments as he play against you on a blackboard. Leonardo on the other hand is downright irritating. He drops the pieces under the table, gets them tangled in his beard, fiddles with a variety of objects, and if you take too long to move he berates you in Italian. This is quite amusing (if you don't want a serious game) and it is worth not moving at all just to see him go through his routine. (Incidentally, Leonardo is a bad loser, and positively gloats if he wins.)

Included in this piece of software is a short documentary on the history of Othello, a tutorial giving very sensible advice on all aspects of the game, a set of puzzles (black plays and wins 33-31, white plays and wins a corner in 3 moves, etc.), the option of four languages (English, French, German or Dutch), contact addresses of organizations throughout the world, and a bibliography (thankfully containing only *Brief & Basic*. Game options include playing against the computer (seven levels of play) or a 2-player game, a timer (5 minutes to 60 minutes per person), take back, set up a position for analysis, save game, ask for a hint, or view a game from any previous move.

So is it perfect? Well there are two quibbles and one bug. There is no option to change sides in the middle of a game (something I find useful, especially when I know I’m losing); and, short of making a copy of the position and using the ‘set-up game’ option, there is no way of going back to a position more than one move ago and playing on from that point, a useful option if you want to know what would have happened had you played some other move at a particular point.

And the bug? If you draw 32-32, white wins. The program announces “Hard luck – you lose” if you’re black or “Well done – you win” if you’re white.

Now we come to the question all serious Othello players have probably been asking since the start of this article. How well does it play? On the lower levels its strategy seems to be to take as many pieces as possible, even if this means giving up a corner. This is not necessarily a bad thing, since beginners will at least be able to win, and at the same time see quite clearly why the computer’s strategy is faulty.

As you go up through the levels however its play becomes more and more sensible. At the highest level (Grand Master), its thinking time is about 25 minutes and I would put its rating tentatively at about 1200. If you give it the maximum thinking time of 60 minutes it obviously plays a little better, especially in the endgame; but no-one with a rating above 1350 should be troubled too much. However, it appears to have a reasonable opening book, and as a teaching aid it is almost perfect.

Rating. Presentation $9\frac{1}{2}/10$ ($-\frac{1}{2}$ because of the bug). Playing ability 7/10.

+ + +

Three more illustrative games for the opening article. More Leader, and some good wholesome Japanese fare.

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

Melnikov – Leader
Russia 1992

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

Sakaguchi – Kaneda
Japan 1989

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

M.Takizawa – Tamenori
Japan 1989

Ratings

The Rating List *maintained by David Haigh.*

Joel Feinstein makes his seasonal plunge down, to previously untravelled depths (well, for a while anyway). Mike Handel, Garry Edmead and Guy Plowman all continue to move up, but the real startling events are elsewhere. The (temporary, we hope) departure of Neil and David Stephenson from the ratings left an inviting gap in the top ten. Ian Turner was a strong favourite to fill it, but a late run from Britain's next superstar Iain Barrass saw him creep in. Roy Arnold takes charge of the number-of-rated-games-played category, and also moves up nicely in the real thing. Bruce Kyte is a big improver, and Trevor Fenton is a high new entry. But, in the totally unbiased opinion of the Editor, the best news of all for British Othello is the long-awaited change at number one.

1	Graham Brightwell	337	1829		26 Simon Turner	74	1206
2	Imre Leader	354	1784		27 Robert Stanton	132	1233
3	Michael Handel	261	1733		28 Bruce Kyte	34	1186
4	Garry Edmead	134	1729		29 David Haigh	314	1169
5	Guy Plowman	216	1708		30 John Bass	82	1164
6	Peter Bhagat	295	1674		31 Colin Hands	93	1157
7	Joel Feinstein	323	1648		32 Jonathan Simpson	12	1127
8	John Lysons	177	1585		33 Margaret Plowman	19	1117
9	Aubrey de Grey	335	1565		34 Graham Chappell	41	1087
10	Iain Barrass	223	1477		35 Gareth Thomas	18	1066
11	Ian Turner	179	1473		36 Jim Brewer	77	1052
12	Ken Stephenson	188	1469		37 Richard Brand	18	1034
13	Jeremy Das	202	1461		38 Neil Cuthbertson	59	1022
14	Jeremy Rickard	68	1430		39 Simon Nickson	22	1018
15	Phil Brewer	92	1353		40 Adelaide Carpenter	81	1016
16	Mark Atkinson	84	1349		41 Rodney Hammond	52	1004
17	Trevor Fenton	4	1339		42 Myles Harvey	44	1002
18	Michael Trent	11	1333		43 Ali Turner	90	997
19	Matthew Selby	169	1313		44 Liam Stephens	13	894
20	Phil Marson	251	1307		45 James Preen	2	848
21	Martin Fancy	18	1260		46 Ashley Hammond	32	836
22	Chris Wakelin	30	1251		47 Nigel Barforth	6	813
23	Iain Forsyth	266	1220		48 Gareth Taplin	7	733
24	Mark Wormley	283	1218		49 Eileen Forsyth	161	665
25	Roy Arnold	366	1210		50 Joan Stephenson	6	484