Gopher for AG

Gopher is an extremely simple game. Place a checker next to one enemy checker and no friendly checkers. Last player to place a checker wins. BOOM, that’s all. A game can’t get much simpler than that. I’m as thrilled with Gopher as I’ve ever been with any of my games. My ceiling is dimpled from popped champagne corks. To top it off, the pie rule isn’t needed in Gopher. Keep the Moët coming.

Gopher, in comparison with Zola, is light and whimsical. But there’s something compelling about Gopher. Maybe it’s the misconception that it should be easy to win at such a simple game. After you get conked over the head ten times in a row by an AI program, you realize it isn’t. But by that time you’re hooked. Gopher is my daily go-to. I only have the capacity for one game at a time, and right now it’s Gopher.

Placing a checker one cell in from a corner is not advisable. Your opponent can then place in the corner and not provide you with any new placements. See Figure 1.

You want to have the last free placement in a cordoned off area. Blue has a good placement in Figure 2. If this were the last playable area, Blue would win. Otherwise, if most of the other cordoned off areas will break in Blue’s favor (being Red’s turn), Blue wins. The larger the cordoned off area, the less clear it is who owns it. With advancing skill you can more accurately evaluate larger areas. Gopher is scalable, so if evaluating areas ever becomes easy, you can change up to a size 8 board. That should hold you for a while.