

can play against the computer or with a friend. The computer will even play itself, a feature that can be used to demonstrate the game to a beginner or as a way to test new evaluation routines that you may write and insert. (I'll show you how in a minute.) Nine levels of play are possible and the computer will require from one to two seconds to as long as 15 minutes to figure its next move! At the highest level, the program looks eight moves ahead and is a very tough customer to beat. When you play with your Cosmac, you may let the computer go first, and if you are stumped during any part of the game, you may ask the computer to recommend a move for you!

When you flip the run switch up after loading 14 (E) pages from tape, the computer will soon ask you to enter a number from 0-F. Pressing Key 0 will select the lowest level of difficulty. About 2 seconds are needed for VIP-FLOP to figure its next move at this level -- a speed achieved by extensive use of machine language subroutines for the look-ahead. While level 0 is not difficult to beat, not one of the unsuspecting victims I've coaxed as guinea pigs to my hex pad were able to beat it the first time. If you are new to the game as were most of my subjects, level 0 will provide a good introduction to VIP-FLOP. As your play progresses,