Date

Dear ,

Thank you for taking the time to review Margrites. Margrites is an abstract strategy game based on scoring, capture, and movement. Its gameplay evokes ancient battlefield tactics and involves meticulous traps, daring escapes, and desperate dashes to the finish.

The objective of Margrites is to score the most the points by the game's end. Each player has four moves per turn and can move up to four pieces per turn. Players score by advancing a piece across and off of the board. But each time a player scores, they have fewer pieces, and so each score both strengthens and weakens a player's position. Players can capture their opponent's pieces by outnumbering them. The game ends when one side has no pieces remaining on the board.

This packet contains a comprehensive overview of Margrites:

- **Section I: Gameboard and Pieces.** Section I contains prototypes of the gameboard—a 9x8 grid—and the pieces—generic flat marbles.
- **Section II: Rules and Illustrations.** Section II contains a short version of the rules, a detailed version of the rules, several diagrams to illustrate the rules, and several rule variations.
- **Section III: Basic Strategy.** Section III contains an explanation of the very basic strategy of the game, complete with illustrations of basic tactical and strategic concepts.
- **Section IV: Annotated Games.** Section IV contains transcripts of three real-life games. This section diagrams each turn and provides commentary on the players' strategic decisions. This section should familiarize the reader with the drama and strategy of a game of Margrites.
- **Section V: Origins and History.** Section V contains a one-page overview of the history and mythos of Margrites. I originally conceived Margrites as an in-world strategy game for a high-fantasy novel. But the game became popular among my friends and family in its own right. Although Margrites stands on its own, section V outlines its fictional origins and history.
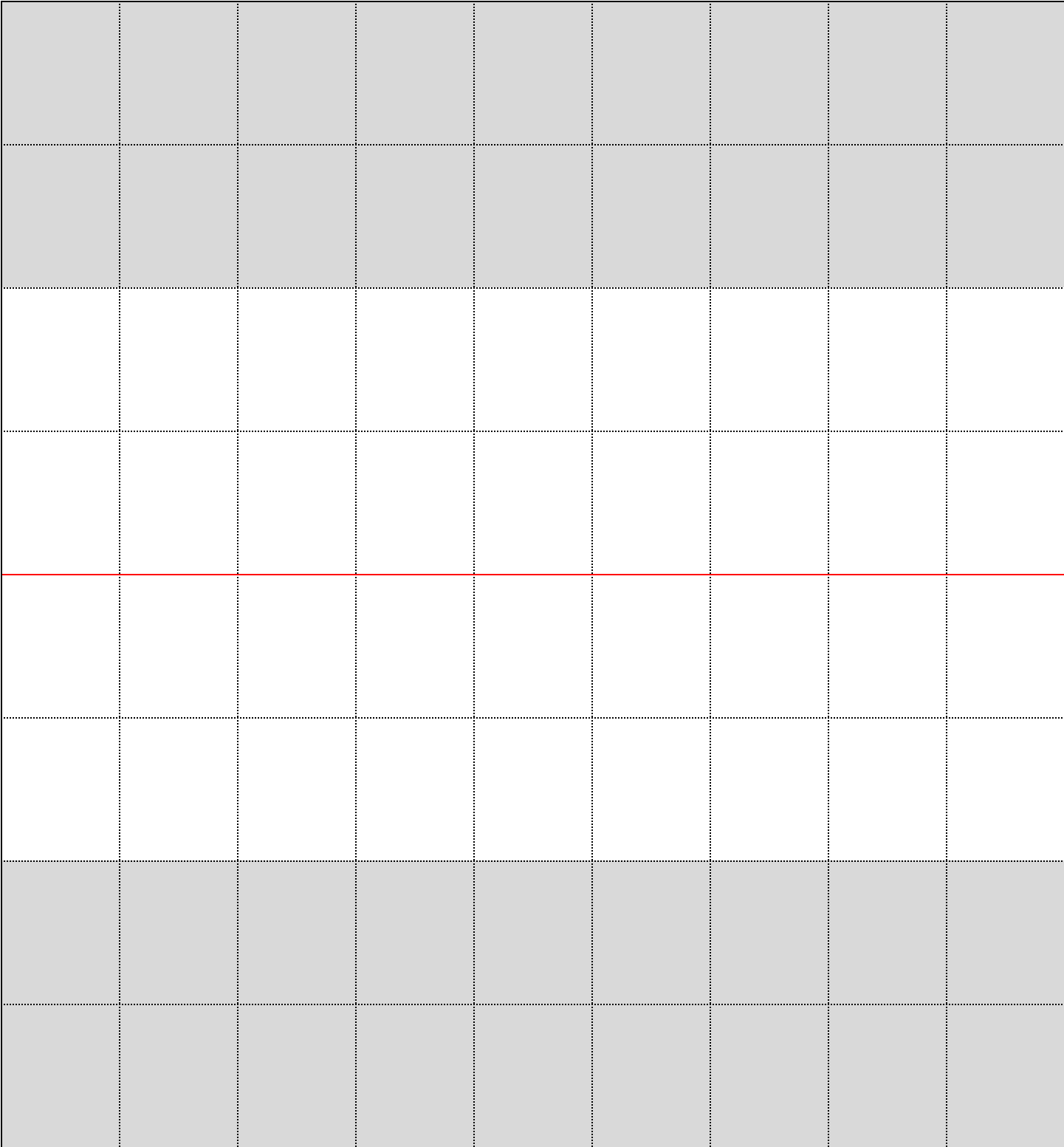
I hope you enjoy reviewing Margrites. I've certainly enjoyed designing and playing it. I look forward to working with you in the future.

Best,

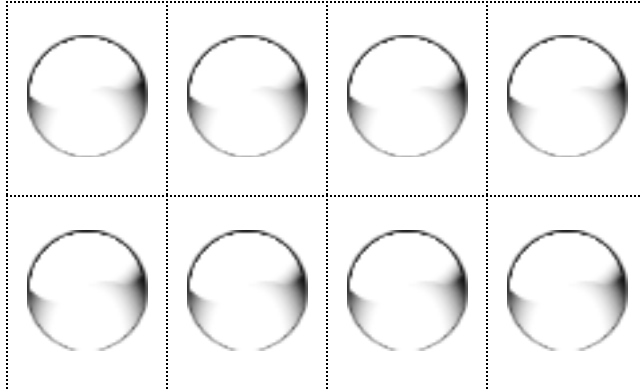R. Matthew Burke

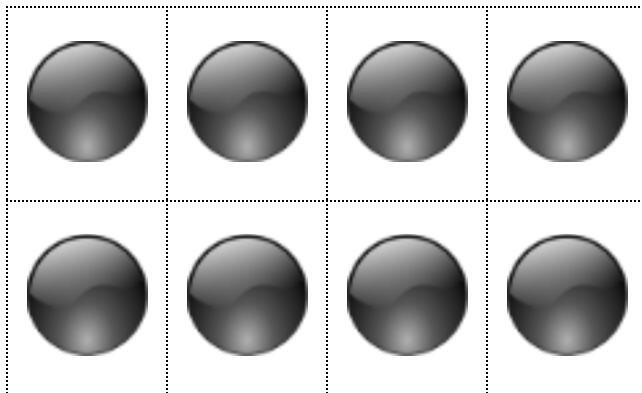# I. Gameboard and Pieces

A. Gameboard

Comments

- The gameboard is 9x8, with nine rows and eight columns.
- The two grey rows on each side of the board indicate the location in which a player may set pieces on setup.
- The side nearest to a player is that player's side. The side opposite a player is the opposing player's side.

B. Pieces

White

Black

Comments

- Each side plays with a team of eight pieces.
- Pieces consist of flat marbles, similar to those available in an arts and crafts store.

II. Rules and Illustrations
A. Rules
1. **Setup**
   - ➢ Each player places **eight pieces** in **any position** on that player's first two (grey) rows. Play begins when players **consent** to their opponent's position. If players cannot agree to begin, players set their pieces alternating in turn.
2. **Gameplay**
   a. **Turns**
      - ➢ Players **move in turn**. Each turn player has **four moves per turn**. If a player has a legal move, the player must move. Black moves first.
      - ➢ A player's turn ends when the player has **no legal moves**, either because the player **has moved four times**, or, if the player has moved fewer than four times, because the player's **remaining moves are illegal**. It is possible for all four of a player's moves to be illegal, in this case the player's turn is **forfeit**.
   b. **Movement**
      - ➢ Players can move **up to four pieces per turn** (moving for example four pieces one square each, two pieces two squares each, one piece four squares, or any other combination). Players can **move in any direction**, including diagonal. Two pieces cannot occupy the same square.
      - ➢ A piece cannot move a piece into the square in which that piece began the turn.
      - ➢ A piece cannot move a piece into a square in which *the moving piece* would be captured. *Note, however,* that this does not preclude a moving piece from causing an allied piece to be captured.
   c. **Capture**
      - ➢ A piece is captured if, at any point, **the ratio of opposing pieces to allied pieces touching the piece is at least 2:1 in favor of the opposing pieces**. Capture occurs immediately upon movement. Both pieces of the moving player and the non-moving player may be captured.
   d. **Scoring**
      - ➢ Scoring occurs when a piece advances off of the board on the opposing player's side. Scored pieces may not return.
3. **Endgame**
   - ➢ The game ends when one player has **no remaining pieces** on the board, because all of that player's pieces have been scored or captured.
   - ➢ The game may also end with a player's resignation.
4. **Winning**
   - ➢ The player who has the **most points at the end of the game** wins. If players' are tied in points, then the player **with the most captures breaks the tie** and wins.

B. Illustrated Rules
   1. Setup
   a. Each player begins with eight pieces.
   b. Setup occurs by players placing all eight pieces in their first two, grey rows.
   c. Black places in rows 1 and 2. White places in rows 7 and 8.
   d. Players may place their pieces in any configuration in their first two rows. This configuration is the player's **starting position**. See ill. 1.
   e. Setup occurs simultaneously, not in turns, and any player can reconfigure their starting position before play begins.
   f. Play begins when players consent to their opponents starting position. A game that begins with both players consenting to their opponent's starting position is known as a **gentleman's game**.
   g. If players cannot consent to their opponent's starting position, setup occurs as above, except that rule 1.d does not apply, and players set their pieces alternating in turn. This is known as a **hostile game**. In a hostile game, play begins when both players have set their pieces

Illustration 1. Starting positions

Comments
Both black and white have **legal** starting positions.

Comments
White's starting position is **illegal** because it has one piece (b6) outside of its first two rows. Black's starting position is **illegal** because it has only set seven pieces.

2. Turns

   a. Players move **in turn**.
   b. Players have up to four **moves** per turn.
   c. A turn ends when the player has no more legal moves, either because the player has **used up** all four moves or because the player's remaining moves have been **trapped**.
   d. Black moves first.

3. Movement

   a. Players have up to four **moves** per **turn**. A player who has moved four moves in a turn has **used up** their moves.
   b. Players may move up to **four pieces** per turn. For example, a player may move four pieces on move each, one piece four moves, or any other combination thereof. See ill. 2.

Illustration 2. Basic Movement

Comments
Black legally moved one piece four moves.
1. d2>d3; d3>d4; d4>d5; d5>d6.

Comments
Black legally moved two pieces two moves each.
1. d2>d3; d3>d4; e2>e3; e3>e4.

Comments

Black legally moved one piece one move and another piece three moves
1. d2>d3; e2>e3; e3>e4; e4>e5.

3. Movement contd.

      c. Players may take their moves **in any direction**. See ill. 3.a.
      d. Pieces need not move in the most efficient route between locations. See ill. 3.b.

Illustration 3. Basic Directional Movement

Ill. 3.a. Range of Possible Movement

Comments

Black (e4) may legally move into any of the shaded green squares (d3, e3, f3, d4, f4, d5, e5 or f5).

Ill. 3.b. Inefficient Routes are Legal

Comments

Black (e5) began its on the lightest shaded blue square (e4)and moved:
1. e4>e3; e3>f4; f4>f5; f5>e5.

This move is legal. Black need not take the most efficient route (e4>e5).

Inefficient routes are occasionally useful to satisfy the rule requiring full movement without jeopardizing a position. Other times an inefficient route is necessary to progress pieces while avoiding the rule against martyrdom:

The most efficient path (e5>d6; d6>d7) is illegal. Black would be captured at d6, which violates the rule against martyrdom. Instead black takes an inefficient path to its destination (e5>f6; f6>f7; f7>d8; d8>c7). Note that black could also take e5>d4; d4>c5; c5>b6; b6>c7. The choice of path often has strategic implications.

3. Movement contd.

e. Piece movement is subject to **three restrictions**:

    i. Two pieces may not occupy the same square.

    ii. A moving piece may not begin and end its turn in the same location. This does not preclude the formation ending identical to its beginning. This is known as **the rule against stalling**. See ill. 4.

    iii. A piece may neither move into or through a square where the moving piece would be captured. This is known as **the rule against martyrdom**. See ill. 5.a. *Note, however,* that the rule against martyrdom does not preclude a moving piece from causing an allied piece to be captured. See ill. 5.b.

Illustration 4. The Rule Against Stalling

Comments

Black (f4) began its turn on the square shaded red (e4), moving through the squares shaded blue e4>e5; e5>f5; f5>f4; ... .

Black has one move remaining. Black may move to any of the green squares (e3, f3, g3, g4, or g5), but black **may not** move to the red square, because black began its movement from the red square.

Comments

The rule against stalling does not require black to move. It prevents black from both moving *and* returning a piece to the location where it began its turn.

Ill.4. contd.

"Dancing" Pieces

Comments

The rule against stalling does not prevent a player's *position* from remaining identical at the beginning and the end of the turn. Here:

1. d4>d5; e4>d4; d5>e5; e5>e4.

The piece beginning at d4 moved to e4, taking three moves. The piece beginning at e4 moved to d4, taking one move. Black's position remains identical, but its pieces have swapped.

Illustration 5. The Rule Against Martyrdom

Ill. 5.a.

Comments

Black (c4) may move to any of the green squares but not to the red square, where black would be captured.

Ill. 5.b.

Comments

Black at c4 may move to both any of the yellow squares or green squares.

Note, however, that due to the capture rule, if black at c4 moves to any of the yellow squares, black at c4 causes black at d5 to be captured. This is **legal**. The rule against martyrdom only prevents the *moving* piece from moving *into* capture; it does not prevent the moving piece from *causing* the capture of an allied piece.

3. Movement contd.

f. If a player has a legal move, the player must move. This is known as **the rule requiring full movement.**

g. If a player does not have a legal move, the player may not move, even if the player has moved fewer than four times. This is known as **trapping moves**. See ill. 6.

Illustration 6. Trapping Moves

Comments

Black (i4) has no legal moves. Any move (i4>i3, i4>h3, i4>i5, or i4>h5) would result in i4's capture and thus violate the rule against martyrdom.

Accordingly, black forfeits its turn to white.

4. Capture

   a. A piece is captured when the ratio of **opposing pieces** to **allied pieces** is at least 2:1 in favor of the opposing pieces at the **piece under contest**. See generally ill. 7.
   b. Opposing pieces total the number of pieces touching the piece under contest. See ill. 7.b.1-.2.
   c. Allied pieces total the number of pieces touching the piece under contest in addition to the piece under contest. See ill. 7.b.1-.2.
   d. Capture occurs **instantaneously upon movement**. Both moving and non-moving player may be captured upon movement. See ill.7.c.
   e. Captured pieces are removed from play and may not return.
   f. The rule against martyrdom precludes simultaneous capture and martyrdom. See ill. 7.d.

Illustration 7. Capture

Ill. 7.a. Capture Generally

Comments

White captures each black except black at f4.
Two whites (b4 & a5) capture black at b5.
Two whites (d7 & d8) capture black at d8.
Two whites (c1 & e1) capture black at d1.
Four whites (g5, h5, h4 & h3) capture black at g4.

Note that although e1 & c1 are not touching, they are both opposed to d1, and thus white captures d1.

Ill. 7.b.1. Allied Pieces 1: No Capture

Comments

Black at g4 is under contest with one piece allied to it (f4). Note that e3 is not allied to g4 because e3 is not touching g4. (Note, that f4 has two pieces allied to it, g4 and e3.)

Black at g4 has three white pieces opposing it, h4, h5 & g5. The ratio of opposing (3) to allied (2) at g4 is 3:2. No capture results.

Ill. 7.b.2. Allied Pieces 2: Capture.

Comments

As in ill. 7.b.1, g4 is under attack and has one piece allied to it, f4. Unlike ill. 7.b.1, four white pieces are opposing g4 (h3, h4, h5 & g5). The ratio of opposing (4) to allied (2) pieces at g4 is 4:2 (or 2:1). White captures g4.

Ill 7.c. Instantaneous Capture

Comments

White has just moved f6>f5. Both black pieces (g4 & f4) are under attack, and each has only the other allied to it.

At g4, the ratio of attacking (4) to allied (2) results in a capture.

However, instantaneously upon g4's capture the board becomes:

F4 lost its ally (g4). Now the ratio of attacking pieces (2: g5 & f5) to allied pieces (1: f4) is 2:1, and white captures f4.

Note that both captures happened sequentially and instantaneously on white's move from f5>f4. White has three moves remaining.

Ill. 7.c. contd.

Thus:
1. f6>f5(xg4, xf4); ... .
White may move the three remaining turns; white at f5 need not remain at f5 as the capture is already complete.

For example:
1. f6>f5(xg4, xf4); f5>f4; f4>f3; h4>g3.

Ill.7.d. The Rule Against Martyrdom Precludes Simultaneous Capture and Martyrdom.

Comments
In this peculiar scenario, the rule against martyrdom precludes the move d3>d4. Although d3>d4 would result in a capture on black at e5, it would simultaneously result on white at d4 (all captures occur instantaneously upon a move, even though, if e5 were captured first, black could not capture d4). Still the rule against martyrdom precludes a piece from moving into capture.

5. Scoring
   a. Scoring occurs when a piece advances off of the board **on the opposing player's side**. Black advances off row 8. White advances off row 1.
   b. Advancing from the last row off of the board takes one move. See ill. 8.
   c. When a piece scores, it is removed from play and may not return.

Illustration 8. Scoring

Comments
Black (e5) can score in one turn (four moves).
1. e5>e6; e6>e7; e7>e8; e8>B++.

Comments
Black (e8) can score in one move.
1. e8>B++; ... .

6. End game
   a. The game ends when one player has no pieces remaining on the board. This occurs when all of the players pieces are captured, scored, or some combination of both.
   b. Players may end the game by resignation.

7. Winning
   a. The winner is the player with the most points at the end of the game.
   b. The total number of captured pieces breaks a tie of points.

C. Variations
1. **Two for Three**
   - ➢ In this game variation, opponents play two consecutive games. Players each take a turn as black and as white. The winner of each game receives a point. The player that capture the most pieces at the end of the game receives the third point. The winner of the series wins at least two of the three points. Unlike in normal play, this variation can end in a tie.
2. **Full Hostile Game**
   - ➢ In general, a "hostile game" (as opposed to a "gentleman's game") only refers to the setup. But this variation contains two additional modifications on the hostile game rule.
     - i. In normal play, players may test various positions without committing to any. In a hostile game, a touched piece must be moved, and a placed piece must stay, unless the move is illegal.
     - ii. In normal play, players may dance their pieces as long as such dancing does not violate the rule against stalling. In a hostile game, if neither player alters their position for two consecutive turns (that is, if both players 'dance' their pieces to preserve an identical position), then the player who danced first must alter their position.
3. **Returning Scored Pieces**
   - ➢ In a normal game, scored pieces exit play and may not return. In this variation, scored pieces may return. In this variation, when a player scores, it declares the location (ex. a8) from which it exited the board. Thereafter, the player may use one move to turn the piece to the location from which it exited. The player who elects to return a scored piece into play loses the point that the returned piece originally scored.
4. **Variations Offsetting First Turn Advantage**
   - ➢ Any first turn advantage on the part of black can be overcome by strategic play on the part of white. However, two variations can also assist white. (These variations are especially useful when black is a superior player to white.):
     - i. **Black's Handicap:** Black's first turn consists of two rather than four moves.
     - ii. **White's Rebuttal:** If the game ends on black's turn, white may move twice after the game ends as rebuttal.

III. Basic Strategy

A. Center Line
The board is nine squares wide and eight squares long. Accordingly, once a piece has crossed the center line, it is a threat to score in one turn.

Illustration 10. Center line.

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5					●				
4								○	
3									
2									
1									

Comments
Black (e5) can score in one turn.
1. e5>e6; e6>e7; e7>e8; e8>B++.

But white can also score in one turn.
2. h4>h3; h3>h2; h2>h1; h1>W++.

B. Formations

One way of moving pieces (but not the only way) is in formation. Single pieces are always vulnerable to capture. Formations of two are somewhat vulnerable to capture as it takes four pieces to capture a group of two. Formations of two are useful toward the end of the game and away from the main battle. They are more mobile than larger groups.

Formations of three are the most useful formation. It takes six pieces to capture a formation of three. Formations of three commonly take an L shape. See ill. 11.

Ill. 11. Formations of Three.

Comments

Each black piece is has two allies and itself. Thus, white needs six piece opposing a black piece to capture.

Comments

White has captured c5. The ratio of opposing pieces (6: d4, c4, c5, c6, d6 & e6) to allied pieces (3: c5, e5 & e4) is 2:1 at that location.

This capture is rare. White must attack the formation of three with the majority of its pieces, compromising white's advance down the board.

Formations of four are invulnerable. Eight squares do not touch any single location in a formation of four. See ill. 12. However, formations of four progress slowly, sacrificing position for safety.

Illustration 12. Formations of Four

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6			3	4	5				
5			2	●	●				
4			1	●	●				
3									
2									
1									

Comments
Only five locations could possibly attack d5, but eight opposing pieces are required to capture. D5 is currently invulnerable.

C. Walls

As much as strong formations, the tactical deployment of walls is an essential component of strategy. Walls prevent forward movement of pieces, and in some case, may trap them.

Illustration 13. Walls

Comments

Black is in a slightly stronger position than white. Both sides have attempted to obstruct their opponent's progress.

However,
1. g4>h5; h5>i6; i6>i7; i7>i8. Causing the board to appear:

And now white must decide whether to break its wall to capture black at i8 or to allow black to score and progress its own formation.

Another powerful use of walls is to trap opposing pieces. But, with proper support, trapped pieces may jailbreak a wall.

Illustration 14. Trapping and Jailbreaking

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7		●							
6		●							
5	▯	▯	●			▯			
4	▯	●							
3	●								
2									
1									

Comments
Black has trapped three of white's pieces.
Ill. 14. Contd.

However, white still has options.
1. f5>e4; e4>d3; c5>c4; c4>c3. Causing the board to appear:

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7		●							
6		●							
5	▯		●						
4	▯	●							
3	●		▯	▯					
2									
1									

Now white has escaped black's trap and threatens to score. It is black's turn, but black does not have sufficient position to capture white's formation of two at c3 & d3.

D. Sacrificing Pieces to End a Game

Although the rule against martyrdom prevents a moving piece from moving into a location in which it would be captured, it does not prevent a piece from moving away from an allied piece, causing the allied piece's capture.

Illustration 15. Sacrificing Piece to End a Game

0(2)-0(6)

Comments

In this scenario, the score is tied, 0(2)-0(6). Neither black nor white has scored. Black has two captures. White has six. It is black's turn.

1. d5>d6; d6>d7(xed); d7>d8; d8>B++. Black wins 1(2)-0(6).

Black scored its piece at d5. When black advanced from d6 to d7, it left e5 with no allies, and white captured e5. When black scored, it ended the game, as black had no pieces remaining on the board. Thus, although white had an overall better board position and had captured more of black's pieces, black was able to use self sacrifice to win the game. Thus:

1(2)-0(6). Black wins.
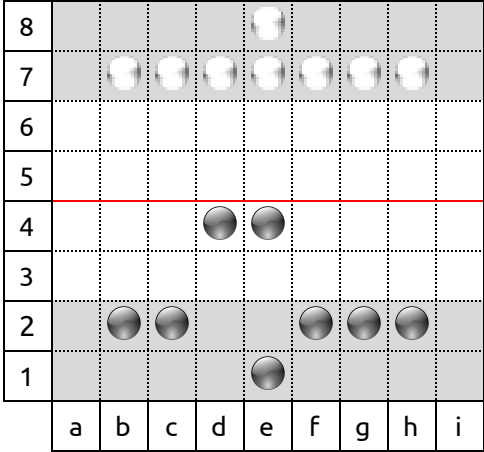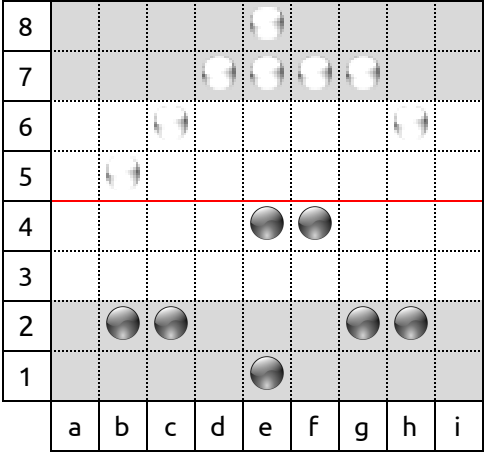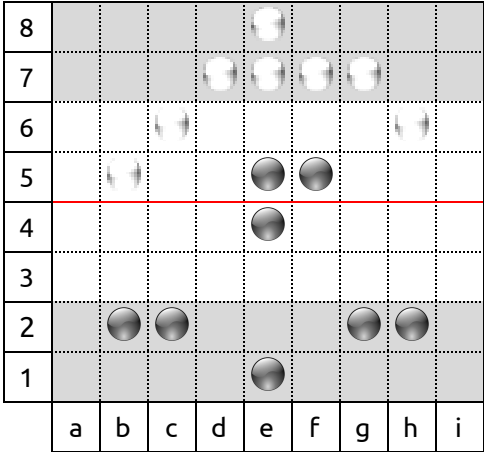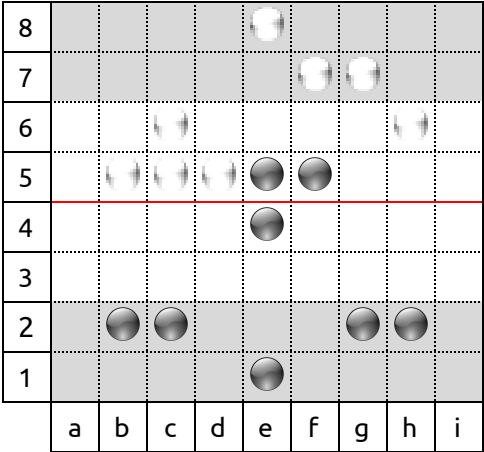
IV. Annotated Games

A. White Outflanks Black

In this game, white outflanks black at a critical juncture. Black had had white trapped. But black's conservative play allows white the opening it needs to retake momentum and emerge victorious.

Black Move	White Move

0(0)-0(0)

1. d2>d3; d3>d4; e2>e3; e3>e4.

Comments
Black begins by taking a strong stance in the middle.

0(0)-0(0)

2. c7>c6; b7>b6; b6>b5; h7>h6.

Comments
White begins defensively, attempting to establish a wall.

0(0)-0(0)

3. e4>e5; f4>f5; f2>e3; e3>e4.

Comments
Black strengthens its position by building a formation of three with two pieces in white's territory.

0(0)-0(0)

4. d7>d6; d6>c5; e7>d6; d6>d5.

Comments
White responds by building its own formation, which it can use either offensively by progressing it forward, or defensively by connecting it with the pieces now at e8, f7, g7, and h6 to build a defensive wall. Either way, white has established a strong foothold in the west of the board.

0(0)-0(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8					○				
7						○	○		
6			○					○	
5		○	○	○	●	●			
4			●	●	●				
3									
2							●	●	
1					●				

5. b2>c3; c2>d3; c3>c4; d3>d4.

Comments
Black reacts defensively.

0(0)-0(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6				○	○	○	○		
5		○	○	○	●	●			
4			●	●	●				
3									
2							●	●	
1					●				

6. e8>e7; e7>e6; f7>f6; g7>g6.

Comments
White follows suit.

0(0)-0(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6			○		○	○	○	○	
5			○	○	●	●			
4	●	●	●	●					
3							●		
2								●	
1									

7. e1>d2; d2>c3; c3>b4; g2>g3.

Comments
Black remains defensive but also advances its position by bringing the piece at e1 to the battle with a strong diagonal.

0(0)-0(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6					○	○	○		
5		○	○	○	●	●	○	○	
4	○	○	●	●	●				
3							●		
2								●	
1									

8. b5>a4; c6>b5; g6>g5; h6>h5.

Comments
White maximizes its diagonal moves by pushing b5 to a4 and c6 to b5 (rather than c6>b6; b6>a5; a5>a4). With its remaining moves, white strengthens its position in the east. A4 is now a threat to score.

0(0)-0(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5									
4									
3									
2									
1									
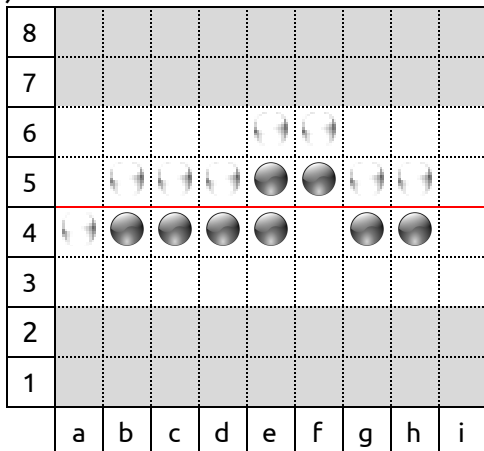
9. g3>g4; h2>i3; i3>i4; i4>h4.

Comments
Black meets white in the east, moving the piece at h2 inefficiently to h4 to avoid compromising position. Black ignores the threat at a4, worried that attacking it will compromise black's position.

0(0)-1(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5									
4									
3									
2									
1									
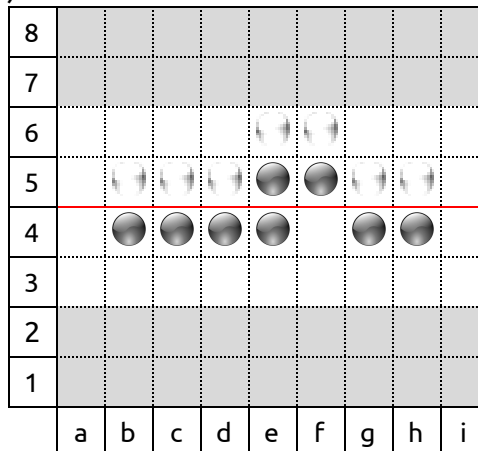
10. a4>a3; a3>a2; a2>a1: W++

Comments
Seeing opportunity, white scores.

0(0)-1(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5									
4									
3									
2									
1									
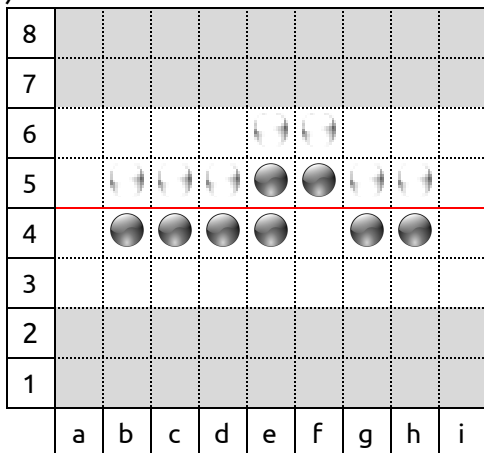
11. e4>d3; d4>e4; d3>c3; c3>d4.

Comments
Unwilling to break formation, given its strong position and two pieces in opponent territory, black makes a legal stalling move by 'dancing' the pieces at d4 and e4. This move avoids the rule against stalling because the piece that started at e4 ended at d4, and the piece that started at d4 ended at e4. Often, inefficient movement has long term repercussions, and, occasionally, players position their pieces to prevent their opponent from dancing.

0(0)-1(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5									
4									
3									
2									
1									
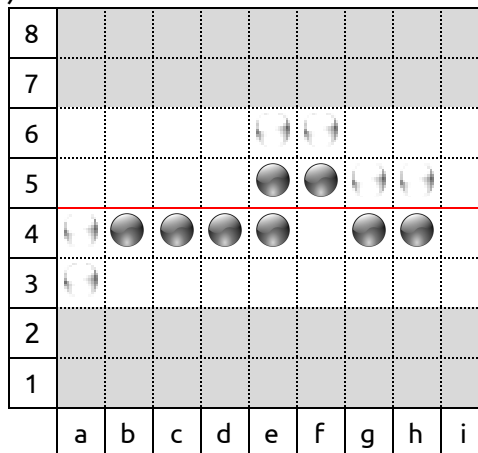
12. b5>a4; a4>a3; c5>b5(xd5); b5>a4.

Comments
With a lead established, white focuses on progressing its pieces. White is willing to sacrifice a piece to this end. The sacrificed piece may also help white control when the game ends.

0(1)-1(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6					○	○			
5				●	●	○	○	○	
4	○	●			●		●	●	
3	○	●							
2		●							
1									
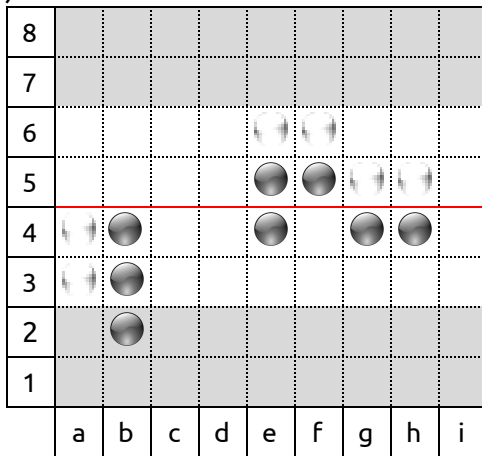
13. c4>b3; d4>d3; d3>c2; c2>b2.

Comments
Black responds aggressively by partially trapping white against the side. White cannot advance a3 without violating the rule against martyrdom, and white cannot escape a4>a5 without sacrificing a3.

0(1)-1(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5			○	○	●	●	○	○	
4	○	●			●		●	●	
3	○	●							
2		●							
1									
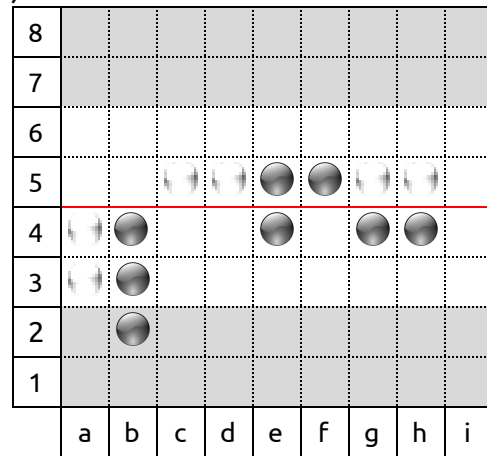
14. e6>d6; f6>e6; d6>c5; e6>d5.

Comments
White attempts to send help but disastrously splits formation.

0(3)-1(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5				○	○	●			
4	○	●		●	●		●	●	
3	○	●							
2		●							
1									
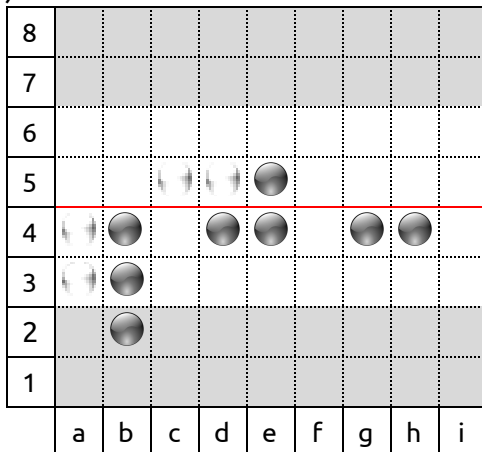
15. e5>f4(xg5, xh5); e4>d4; f4>e4; f5>e5.

Comments
Black responds, capturing white's pieces at g5 & h5. After, black attempts to build a partial wall around white's remaining pieces. It may not look it, but black has left open a crucial weakness at b4 …

0(3)-1(3)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5					●				
4	○		○	●	●		●	●	
3	○	○							
2									
1									
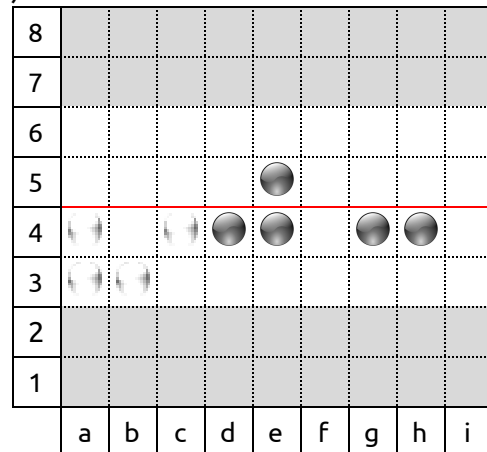
16. d5>c4; c5>b5(xb4); b5>b4(xb3); b4>b3(xb2).

Comments
White spots the weakness in black's position and outflanks black. White surrounds black's vertical formation and, working downward, white captures each piece. White now controls the west with all of its remaining pieces in black's territory. Black is strong in the center, but black's easterly formation of two is too far away to help the central formation of three stop white.

1(3)-1(3)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5									
4					●	●		●	●
3									
2									
1									

17. e5>e6; e6>e7; e7>e8; e8>B++.

Comments
Panicked, black scores, drawing the game to a tie of points and captures. But white retains vastly superior position.

1(3)-2(3)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5									
4				●	●		●	●	
3									
2									
1									

18. c4>c3; c3>c2; c2>c1; c1>W++.

Comments
White scores.

R1(3)-2(3): White wins.

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5									
4				●	●		●	●	
3									
2									
1									

19. R1(3)-2(3).

Comments
 Black realizes that it can only score once in the next three turns, while white can score three times in the next three turns. Black is out of position and has insufficient numbers to prevent white from scoring. Black resigns. White wins.

End comments
Black lost on turn 15. More creative play would have found:
15. b4>c4; f5>f6 (xd5); e4>f4; e5>f5 (xg5, xh5). Causing the board to appear:

0(4)-1(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6					●				
5			⇵			●			
4	⇵		●			●	●	●	
3	⇵	●							
2		●							
1									
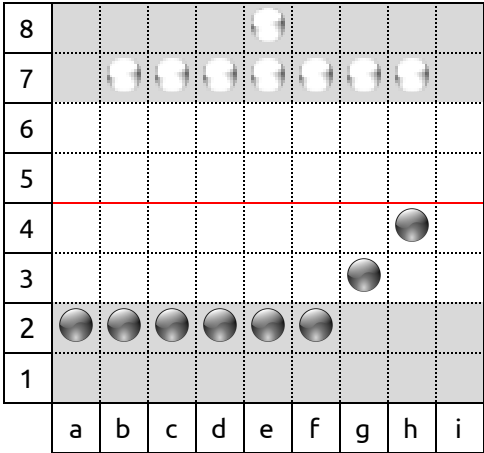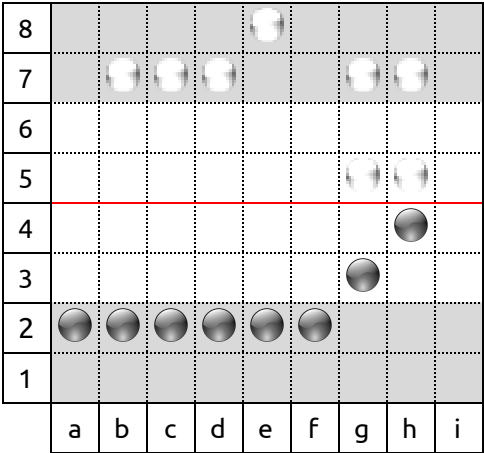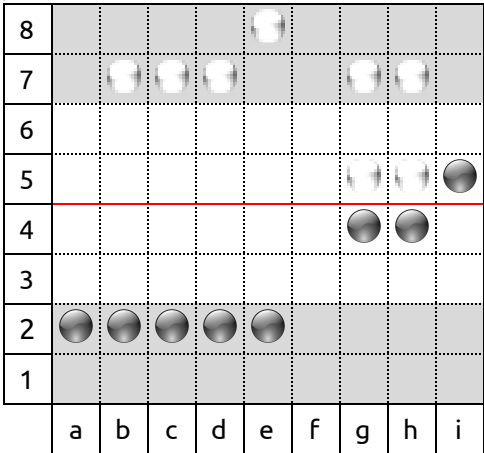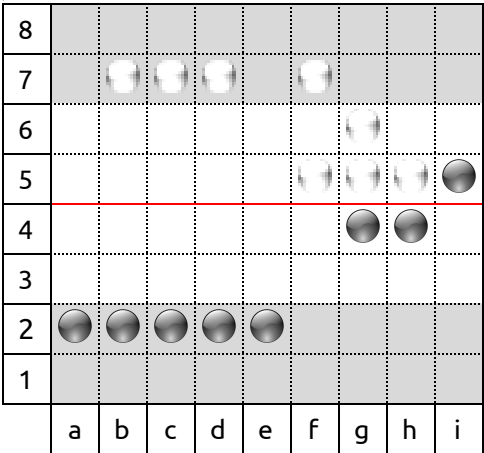
This turn would have destroyed white's ability to counter attack, blocked white's ability to progress, advanced black to white's third file, and crippled white's ability to attack formations of two.

The result?

16. 0(4)-R1(0).

B. Black's Daring Escape

In this game, black mounts a daring escape out of white's trap. The escape succeeds because, rather than attacking the joints of white's trap, black breaks out through white's back door, using the piece white least expected - a piece white expected black to score.

Black Move	White Move

0(0)-0(0)

1. g1>h2; h2>h3; h3>h4; g2>g3.

Comments
Black's starting formation is puzzling. Had black started at h2 rather than g1, it could have established the same position in three moves rather than four.

0(0)-0(0)

2. e7>f6; f6>g5; f7>g5; g6>h5.

Comments
Rather than taking the center, white opts to meet black's advance.

0(0)-0(0)

3. h4>h5; g3>g4; f2>g3; g3>g4.

Comments
Black threatens white's formation of two

0(0)-0(0)

4. h7>g6; g7>f6; f6>f5; e8>f7.

Comments
White reinforces. By reinforcing, white allows i5 to become a threat to score.

0(0)-0(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7		○	○	○		○			
6						○			
5					○	○		○	●
4					●	●	●	●	
3									
2	●	●	●						
1									

5. e2>f3; f3>f4; d2>d3; d3>d4.

Comments
Black reinforces.

0(0)-0(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7		○	○	○					
6						○			
5					○		○	○	●
4				○	●	●	●	●	
3									
2	●	●	●						
1									

6. f7>e6; e6>d5; d5>d4; f5>e5.

Comments
White looks to create space in black's defense by sending a formation of two to the underdeveloped center. But white risks capture (g4>f5; c2>c3; c3>c4; c4>d5(xe5, xd4)).

0(0)-0(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7		○	○	○					
6						○			
5					○		○	○	●
4		●		○	●	●	●	●	
3			●	●					
2									
1									

7. c2>d3; b2>c3; a2>a3; a3>b4.

Comments
Rather than capture, black blocks white. But the threat of capture remains.

0(0)-0(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7			○						
6		○					○		
5				○	○		○	○	●
4		●		○	●	●	●	●	
3			●	●					
2									
1									

8. d7>d6; d6>d5; b7>b6; g6>h6.

Comments
White reinforces the formation at d4 & e5, creating a formation of three. White also blocks black's threat to score at i5.

0(0)-0(0)
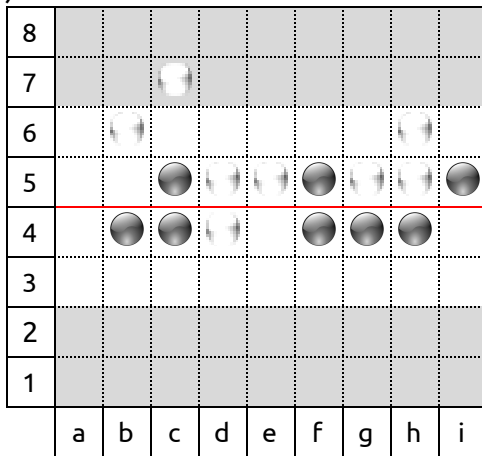
9. e4>e5; d3>c4; c4>c5; c3>c5.

Comments
Black advances its position forward, using the piece at b4 to support its pieces through white's defenses.

0(0)-0(0)
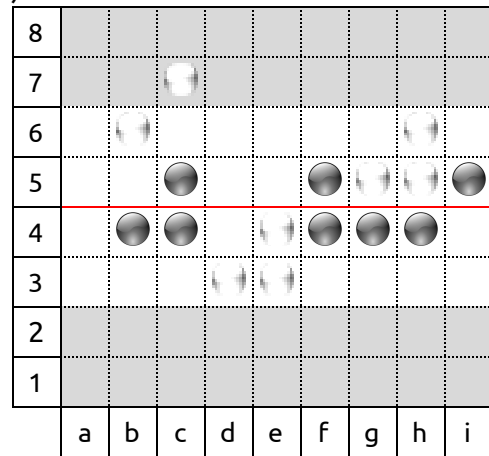
10. e5>e4; e4>e3; d4>e4; d4>e3.

Comments
White cuts through the middle of black's formation and into black's territory. Black is safe and strong with an L-shaped formation of three.

0(0)-0(0)
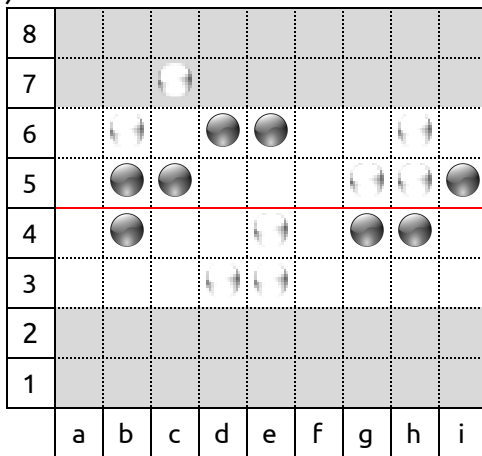
11. f4>e5; e5>d6; f5>e6; c4>b5.

Comments
Black's move accomplishes two things at once. First, it advances past the majority of white's piece. To capture, white would have to sacrifice position. Second, black now threatens white's rearmost formation of two with capture, or, worse, trap.

0(0)-0(1)
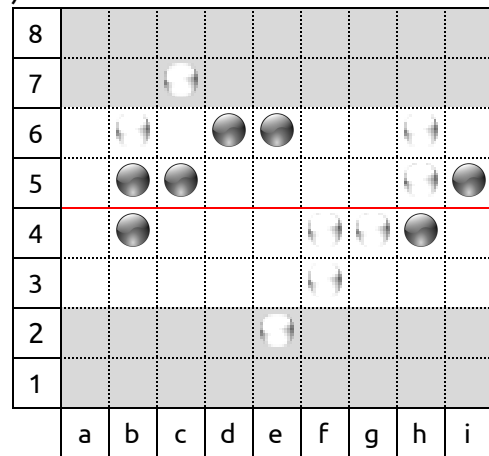
12. e4>f4; e3>f3(xg4); g5>g4; d3>e2.

Comments
White responds in kind, capturing black and threatening black's remain pieces with capture or trap. Black's potential trap, however, ignores a critical weakness at g5 (e6>f6; h4>h5(xi5) and black is free).

0(0)-0(1)
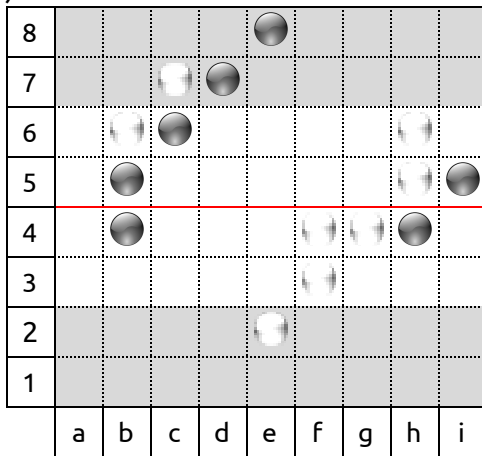
13. c5>c6; d6>d7; e6>e7; e7>e8.

Comments

Rather than jailbreak its pieces, black presses its advantage while preserving its own trap.

0(0)-1(1)
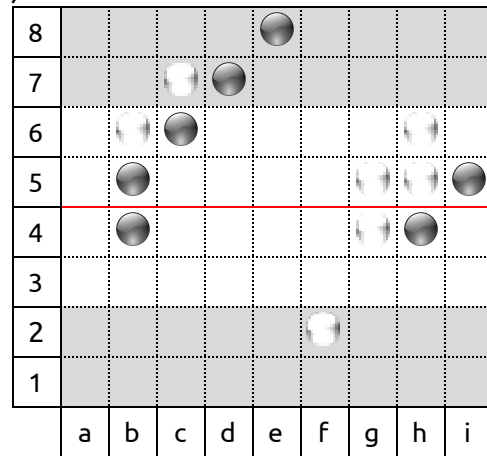
14. f3>f2; f2>f1; f1>W++; f4>f5.

Comments

White scores. It also attempts to reinforce its trap's weakness at g5, but it misses a less obvious weakness …

0(0)-1(2)
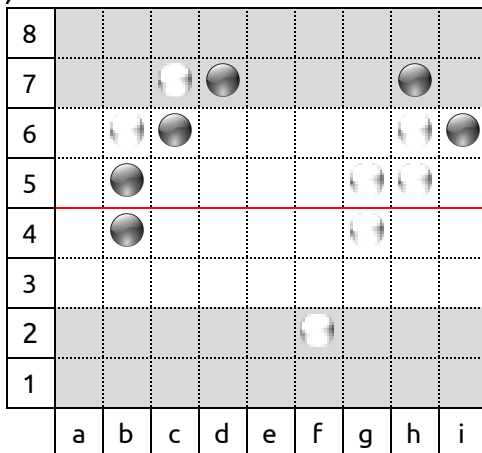
15. e8>f7; f7>g7; g7>h7; i5>i6(xh4).

Comments

In a classic move, black uses its frontmost piece (e8) to mount a daring rescue attempt for i5. In the process, black sacrifices h4. But black gains almost complete control of the game. Black has a strong trap on b6 & c7. White cannot attack black without losing position. And all but one of black's pieces are in white's territory. White's lead is confined to the score. Black's daring escape has nearly won the day.

0(1)-1(2)
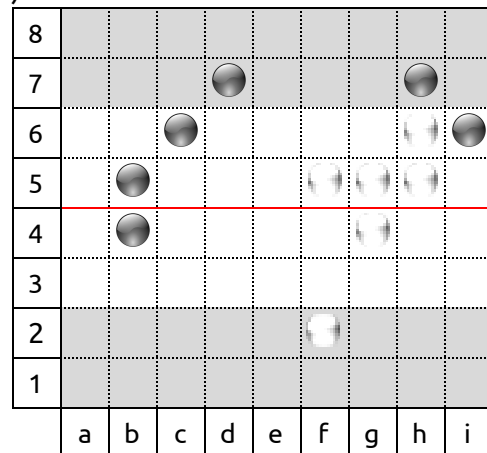
16. c7>d8(xb6) ; d8>e7; e7>f6; f6>f5.

Comments

Desperate to prevent a trap on its pieces, white runs c7 to safety, in the process sacrificing b6. White has a one point lead. If white can sacrifice several pieces while advancing its position, it still has a chance of winning.

2(1)-1(3)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6			●					○	
5		●				○	○	○	○
4		●					○		
3									
2						○			
1									

16. d7>d8; d8>B++; h7>h8(xi6); h8>B++.

Comments
Black scores.

2(1)-2(3)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6			●					○	
5		●				○	○	○	
4		●						○	
3							○		
2									
1									

17. f2>f1; f1>W++; g4>g3; h5>h4.

Comments
Briefly, the two sides race. White scores and advances its position.

3(1)-2(3)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6								○	
5	●	●				○	○		
4							○		
3						○			
2									
1									

17. d6>d7; d7>d8; d8>B++; b4>a5.

Comments
Black scores and advances its position.

3(1)-R2(3): Black wins.

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6								○	
5	●	●				○	○	○	
4							○		
3						○			
2									
1									

18. 3(1)-R2(3).

Comments
White resigns. White only match black's score each turn. But black will end the game in two turns, scoring one point each turn and ending one point ahead.

Ending comments
White lost the game on tu1rn 1. On that turn, white employed a conservative counter trap. But white could have played more aggressively. Had white jailbreaked its formation of two, it could have established its own trap, while avoiding being trapped itself.

11. c7>c6; c6>d5(xb6); d5>e5; e5>f4. Causing the board to appear:

0(1)-0(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6				●	●			⬚	
5		●	●				⬚	⬚	●
4		●			⬚	⬚	●	●	
3				⬚	⬚				
2									
1									

Now white is free from black's trap and threatens to capture or trap black. Black must lose position to respond to white.

C. Black Downsizes

In this game, black suffers a critical early loss, crippling its ability to contest white. In response, black shifts its strategy. Black scores quickly and sacrifices a piece. Its lead in points and its small number of pieces on the board allows black to determine when the game will end and forces white to respond to black.

Black Move	White Move

0(0)-0(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5									
4									
3									
2									
1									
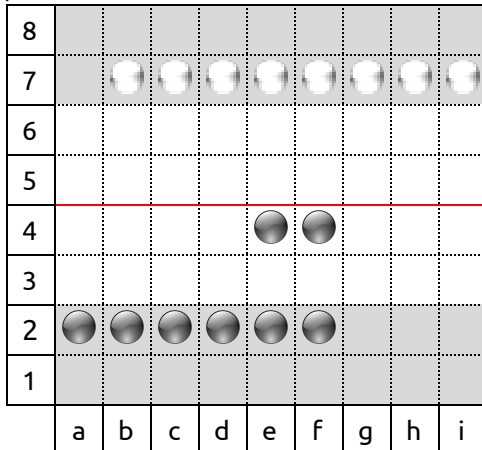
1. h2>g3; g3>f4; g2>f3; f3>f4.

Comments
Black begins by establishing a footing in the middle. By progressing the g & h file pieces toward the center, black opens the eastern side of the board, implicitly ceding the eastern side to white.

0(0)-0(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5									
4									
3									
2									
1									
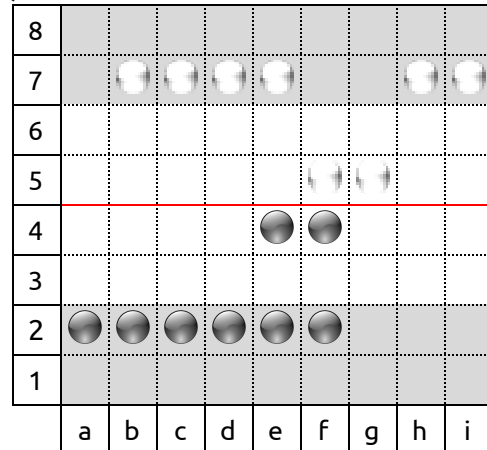
2. g7>g6; g6>g5; f7>ef6; f6>f5.

Comments
White meets black and accepts black's gambit, establishing itself along the eastern side of the board

0(0)-0(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5									
4									
3									
2									
1									
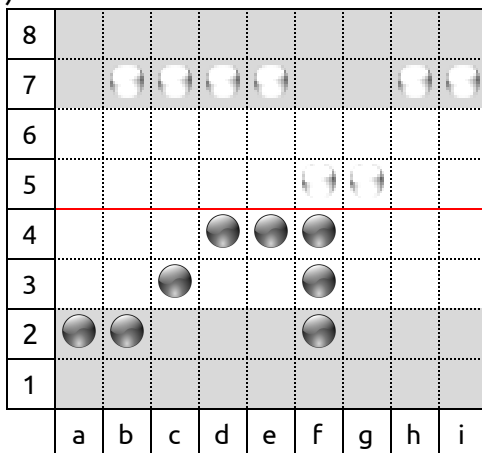
3. d2>d3; d3>d4; c2>c3; e2>f3.

Comments
Black builds a strong position in the center and seals the western portion of the board off from white.

0(0)-0(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5									
4									
3									
2									
1									
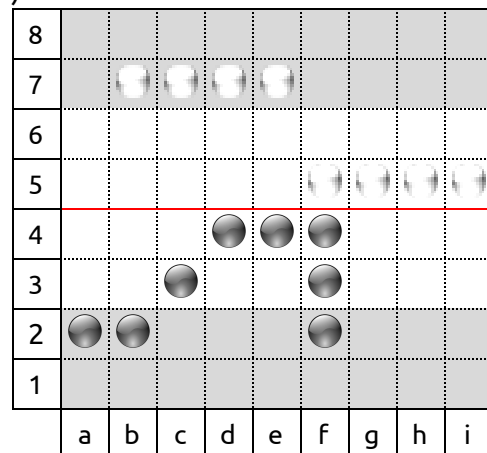
4. h7>h6; h6>h5; i7>i6; i6>i5.

Comments
White consolidates its power in the east.

0(0)-0(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5									
4									
3									
2									
1									

5. f2>g3; g3>h3; f3>g3; g3>h4.

Comments

Black attempts to block white's easterly progress but leaves open a critical weakness at g4.

0(0)-0(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5									
4									
3									
2									
1									

6. g5>g4; e7>e6; e6>e5; d7>e6.

Comments

White abstains from capturing black's formation from two at h3 & h4. Instead, white separates black's easterly formation of two from black's main force. White also solidifies its control over the east by building a wall formation from the e through i files.

0(0)-0(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5									
4									
3									
2									
1									

7. d4>d5; c3>c4; b2>b3; a2>a3.

Comments

Rather than protecting its easterly formation of two, black press its western advantage.

0(0)-0(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5									
4									
3									
2									
1									

8. c7>d6; b7>c7; c7>c6; c6>c5.

Comments

White establishes a future scoring threat at i4 to complement the future scoring threat at g4. White also builds a strong defensive position in the center.

0(0)-0(0)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5		●		●					
4		●	●		●	●		●	
3								●	
2									
1									

9. b3>b4; a3>a4; a4>a5; a5>b5.

Comments

Black opts for a one move inefficiency (a4>a5; a5>b5 rather than a4>b5) to build a position with a scoring threat at b5 and a capture threat on c5. But black's easterly weakness remains …

0(0)-0(3)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5		●		●					
4		●	●		●				
3									
2									
1									

10. f5>g5(xh4, xh3); h5>g6; g6>f5(xf4); c5>d4.

Comments

White cripples black, finally exploiting the weak formation of two at h3 & h4. White has passed black's defenses and threatens capture on black's central pieces. Black must shift strategies as it can no longer hope to defeat white at the center.

1(0)-0(4)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5		●							
4		●	●						
3									
2									
1									

11. d5>c6(xe4); c6>c7; c7>c8; c8>B++.

Comments

Black shifts its strategy. By scoring (which gives black the lead) and sacrificing e4, black attempts to gain control of the game's momentum. With only three pieces on the board, black will likely determine when the game ends by scoring and sacrificing. White should try to trap.

1(0)-1(4)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6									
5		●							
4		●	●						
3									
2									
1									

12. d4>d3; d3>d2; d2>d1; d1>W++.

Comments

Instead of trying to trap black, white scores.

2(0)-1(4)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6				W	W				
5					W	W	W	W	
4		B	B				W		W
3									
2									
1									

13. b5>b6; b6>b7; b7>b8; b8>B++.

Comments
Black races off the board, hoping to end the game with a point lead. White can still trap.

2(0)-2(4)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6				W	W				
5					W	W	W	W	
4		B	B				W		
3									
2									
1									

14. i4>i3; i3>i2; i2>i1; i1>W++.

Comments
Rather than trapping, white scores.

2(0)-2(4)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7									
6	B	B		W	W	W			
5					W	W	W	W	
4							W		
3									
2									
1									

15. c4>b5; b5>b6; b4>a5; a5>a6.

Comments
Black positions its remaining pieces to score. Now it is too late for white to trap

2(0)-2(4)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8		W	W						
7									
6	B	B							
5					W	W	W	W	
4							W		
3									
2									
1									

16. d6>c7; c7>b8; e6>d7; d7>c8.

Comments
White attempts to block black from scoring.

3(0)-2(5): Black wins.

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8		●	●						
7									
6									
5					●	●	●		
4							●		
3									
2									
1									

17. a6>a7; b6>b7; a7>a8; a8>B++(xb7).

Comments
White's block is unsuccessful. Black walks (b6>b7) into a potential capture, then walks one piece away from it (a7>a8; a8>B++(xb7)), scoring a8 and sacrificing b7 to end the game. Despite white's early and decisive victory, black won the game because it took a lead in points and reduced its pieces on the board to allow it to determine when the game ended.

Ending comments
White lost the game with turn 12. On turn 12, white responded to black's score by scoring d4. This was a mistake. Instead, white should have slowly trapped black. Black, extremely weakened, had just three pieces. If black had played formations of two, they would have been immune to capture and easy to deploy. A wiser response would have been:

12. d4>c5: c5>b6; b6>b7; d6>c6. Causing the board to appear:

1(0)-0(4)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8									
7		●							
6			●		●				
5		⬤				●	●	●	
4		⬤	⬤				●		●
3									
2									
1									

Still, black could play:

13. b5>c6; c6>c7; c7>c8; c8>B++.

Making the score 2(0)-0(4). But white could respond:

14. e6>d7; d7>c8; c8>c9; f5>f4. Causing the board to appear:

2(0)-0(4)

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
8		♟							
7		♟							
6			♟						
5					♟	♟			
4		⚫	⚫			♟	♟		♟
3									
2									
1									

Trapping black. All that remains for white is to advance its position while maintaining its trap until it can safely score and capture.

V. Origins and History

I originally conceived Mᴀʀɢʀɪᴛᴇs as an in-world strategy game for a high-fantasy novel I was writing. Although the game stands alone, it has a rich fictional history that I've outlined below. This history gives the game conceptual depth and richness and could inform marketing strategies. Further detail is available upon request.

- **Brief Overview.**
  - Mᴀʀɢʀɪᴛᴇs is a popular strategy game in the Godjen kingdom. The Godjen kingdom is a high-fantasy kingdom, set in a medieval era with light magical elements.

- **Origins and History.**
  - The earliest version of Mᴀʀɢʀɪᴛᴇs was a game called *ngaw-groy*, played by the Jonquion people. The Jonquion people were a culture of coastal fishermen. In *ngaw-groy*, Jonquion players took turns casting four pearls into a ring and capturing one another's pearls based on the way the pearls landed. The contemporary Mᴀʀɢʀɪᴛᴇs capture mechanism derives from this early gameplay.
  - The Vladith, a land locked people, conquered the Jonquion and assimilated their game. The Vladith called the game "Maugroi." Maugroi dramatically transformed *ngaw-groy*. Pieces were placed rather thrown. A board and grid replaced *ngaw-groy's* ring. And Maugroi came to closely resemble contemporary Mᴀʀɢʀɪᴛᴇs.
  - The Vladith derived their military power from a strong cavalry, and, for the Vladith, Maugroi symbolized horse-mounted warfare. The pieces and their formations represented units of cavalry; the opposing sides of the board represented warring cities; and scoring, by crossing off the board and onto the opponent's side, represented sacking an enemy city.
  - Among the peoples the Vladith conquered were the Godjen. The Vladith Occupation lasted for nearly fifty years until the Godjen Restoration, when, under the leadership of the near-mythic heroine Vyanya (known today as Diana) the Godjen repelled the Vladith occupation.
  - After repelling the Vladith occupation, the Godjen further standardized Maugroi to create today's Mᴀʀɢʀɪᴛᴇs. Standardization included the current 9x8 board, the two teams of eight pieces, and various formalization of the rules.
  - Mᴀʀɢʀɪᴛᴇs enjoys massive popularity among the Godjen. According to lore, Vyanya was a prolific Maugroi player. And Mᴀʀɢʀɪᴛᴇs features prominently in the five hundred years of Godjen history following the Godjen restoration.

- **Etymology.**
  - From Vladith *maugroi* "pearl," from Jonquion *ngaw-groy* "ring for competitions." *Ngaw-groy* referred to a Mᴀʀɢʀɪᴛᴇs proto-game similar to today's

marbles, which involved pearls cast into a circle drawn onto the earth. The Vladith misunderstood the name as in reference to the pearls that formed the game pieces, rather than the circle that formed its area of play. This was the Vladith's first exposure to pearls, from whence emerged the Vladith *maugroi* meaning "pearl." Transmitted to the Godjen during the Vladith occupation, the word is now understood only in reference to the game.