

RAINDROPS

by Luis Bolaños Mures

Introduction

Raindrops is a drawless **connection** game for two players: Black and White. It's played on the intersections (from now on points) of an even-sized square grid. The recommended size is between 8 and 12 points per side. At the start of the game, pieces are arranged in a checkered pattern, as in Figure 1. Luis Bolaños Mures designed Raindrops in November, 2011.

Definitions

In this rules, “adjacent” always means orthogonally adjacent. “Lines” can be horizontal or vertical.

A **unit** is a singleton or group. A **singleton** is a piece with no adjacencies to like-colored pieces. A **group** is a set of like-colored, adjacent pieces.

A unit is said to be **engaged** if it can join one or more friendly units or capture an enemy unit on a single turn, from the current board position.

Play

Starting with Black, players take turns moving units of their own color, one unit per turn. All moves are along a single line, and to points which are either empty or occupied by enemy pieces.

Singletons slide any number of unoccupied points, like chess rooks.

To move a **group**, you must take one of its pieces and place it on another point which is adjacent to the group, without splitting the group at any moment. You can keep re-arranging pieces from the group in this way as long as you want, but every moved piece must be placed adjacent to the previous one, in the same **line** and **direction**. The movement line must be one of the rows or columns already occupied by the group before the move. During the move, if you join another friendly unit which lies in the movement line, your turn ends. If you join a friendly unit which is not in the movement line, said unit can be rearranged along with the rest, always in the same line, while it is still your turn. (See examples below.)

When moving a unit, if you place a piece on a point occupied by an **enemy** piece, the entire enemy unit to which this piece belongs is removed from the board, and your turn ends.

If you move an **engaged** unit, that must reduce the total number of groups on the board. If you move an **unengaged** unit, you must engage it. Passing is not allowed.

End of the game

If, at the end of a turn, one of the players has only one unit on the board, that player wins. If both players have only one unit left, the last moving player wins.

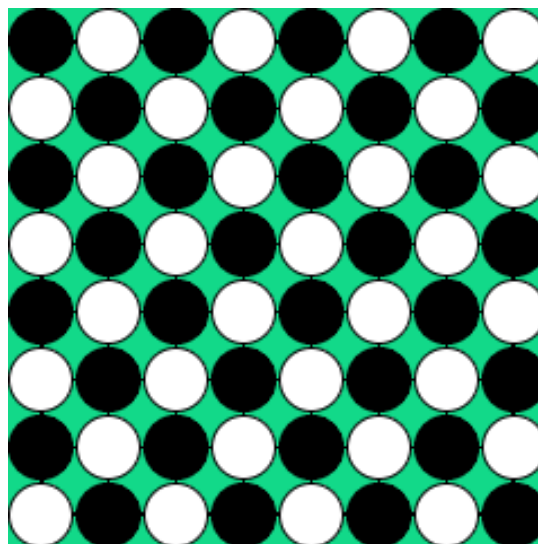


Figure 1

Examples

Normally, a Raindrops board will be larger than the ones shown here.

Singletons

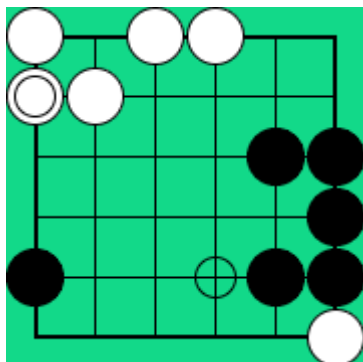


Figure 2.1

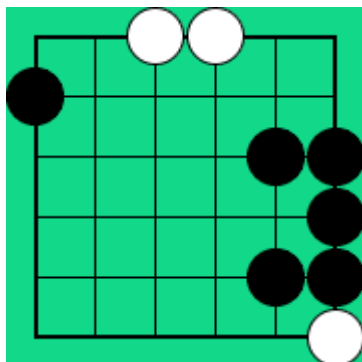


Figure 2.2

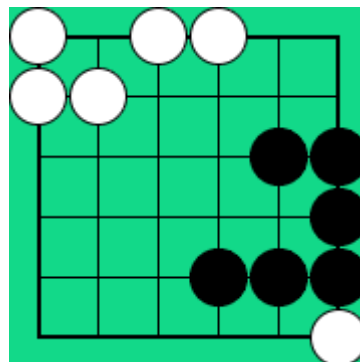


Figure 2.3

The marked points (Fig. 2.1) represent the only legal moves for Black's engaged singleton on the lower left. If it moves to the top, the entire White group is captured (Fig. 2.2). Instead, if it moves to the right (Fig. 2.3), Black wins, as he has only one unit on the board.

Groups

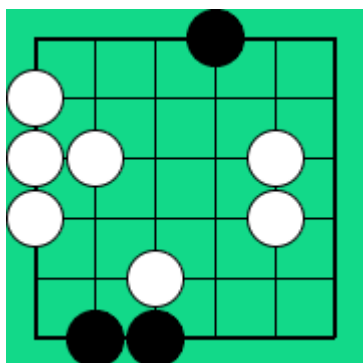


Figure 3.1

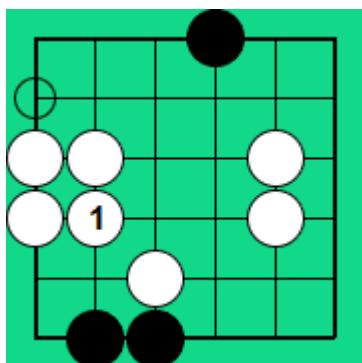


Figure 3.2

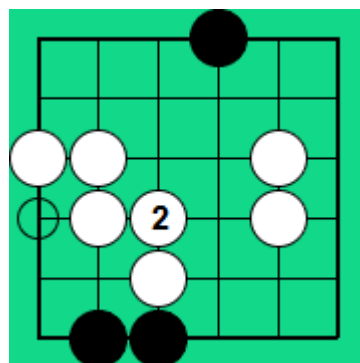


Figure 3.3

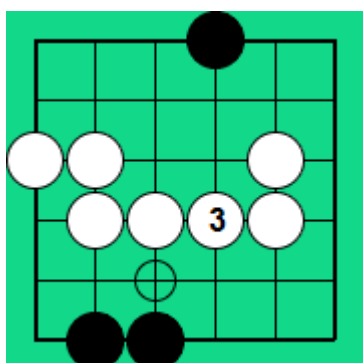


Figure 3.4

White's group on the left (Fig. 3.1) occupies 3 rows and 2 columns, so there are 5 different lines on which it can be rearranged. Figures 3.2 to 3.4 show a possible way of moving the group using the 3rd row as the line of movement. Note that the group isn't split at any stage, and also that the singleton in the center is rearranged in the same turn once it's joined to the moving group. White 3 ends the turn automatically, as it joins another White group in the movement line. The player could have also ended the turn voluntarily after White 2, as the number of groups had already been reduced.

Engagement

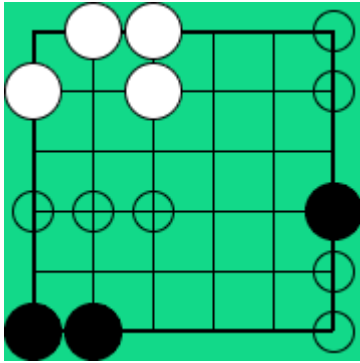


Figure 4.1

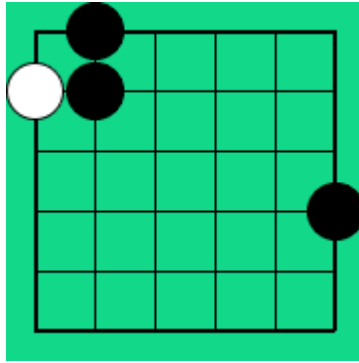


Figure 4.2

Black's singleton on the right is unengaged, as it can't join or capture any unit on a single turn. It can move to any of the marked points to become engaged. Meanwhile, Black's group on the lower left is already engaged. Figure 4.2 shows one of the two legal moves for that group.

FAQ

- *When moving a group, can I place the rearranged pieces at both ends of the movement line?* No, you can't, as all the pieces must be placed adjacent to each other. You can't move a group in two opposite directions on the same turn.
- *Can I rearrange the same piece in a group more than once on a single turn?* Yes, you can. Figure 4.2 is an example.
- *After rearranging one piece in a group, it occupies one more row than before. Can I use this extra row as the movement line?* No, you can't. Only the lines already occupied by the group at the start of a turn are valid movement lines. In Figure 3.1, for example, White can't move his group along the 2nd or 6th rows.
- *Can I play Raindrops on an odd-sized board for a change?* Yes, you can, if you use the starting layout shown in Figure 5.

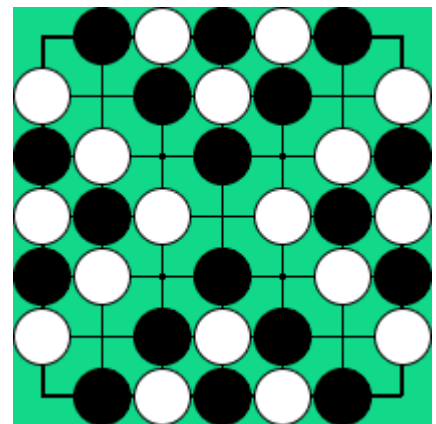


Figure 5

Last update: 29th November 2011.