

AYU

by Luis Bolaños Mures

Introduction

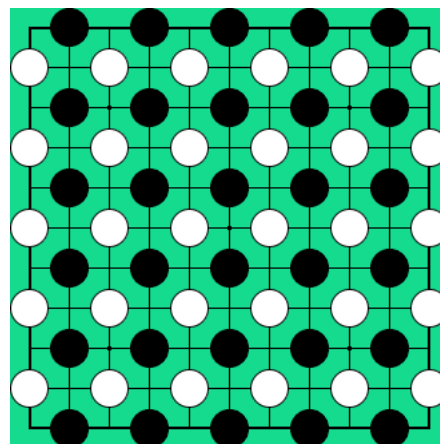
Ayu is a drawless **connection** game for two players: Black and White. It's played on the intersections (points) of an odd-sized square board. The suggested sizes are 11x11 for experienced players and 9x9 for beginners. At the start of the game, Black and White pieces are arranged in an interspersed pattern, as shown in the picture.

Luis Bolaños Mures designed Ayu in December, 2011.

Definitions

In this rules, “adjacent” always means “orthogonally adjacent”.

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.



Starting position

Play

Black plays first, then turns alternate. On each turn, players must do one of the following actions:

- Move a friendly singleton to an adjacent empty point.
- Take a piece from a friendly group and place it on a different empty point adjacent to the same group. All pieces which were joined in a single group before the move must remain joined after the move.

Every move must reduce the distance between the moved unit and the closest friendly unit. The **distance** between two units is the shortest path of adjacent empty points between them, i.e. the number of consecutive moves one would need to join them.

If a player can't make a move on his turn, he *wins*. This usually occurs when said player has joined all his pieces in a single group. Draws and cycles are not possible.

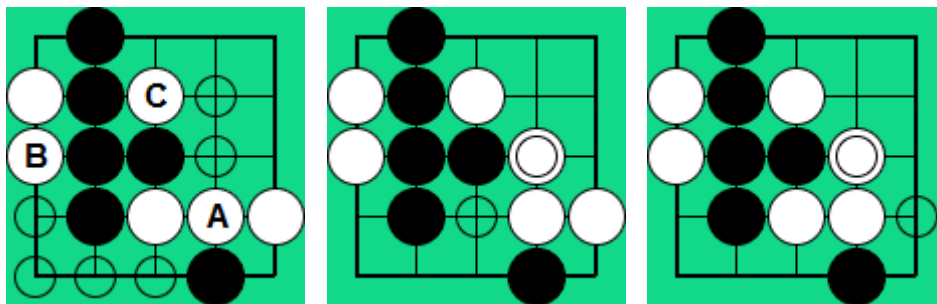
Pie rule

Players may agree to use the **pie rule** in order to balance the game. If that is the case, White will have the option, after Black's first move only, to change sides instead of making a regular move.

Examples

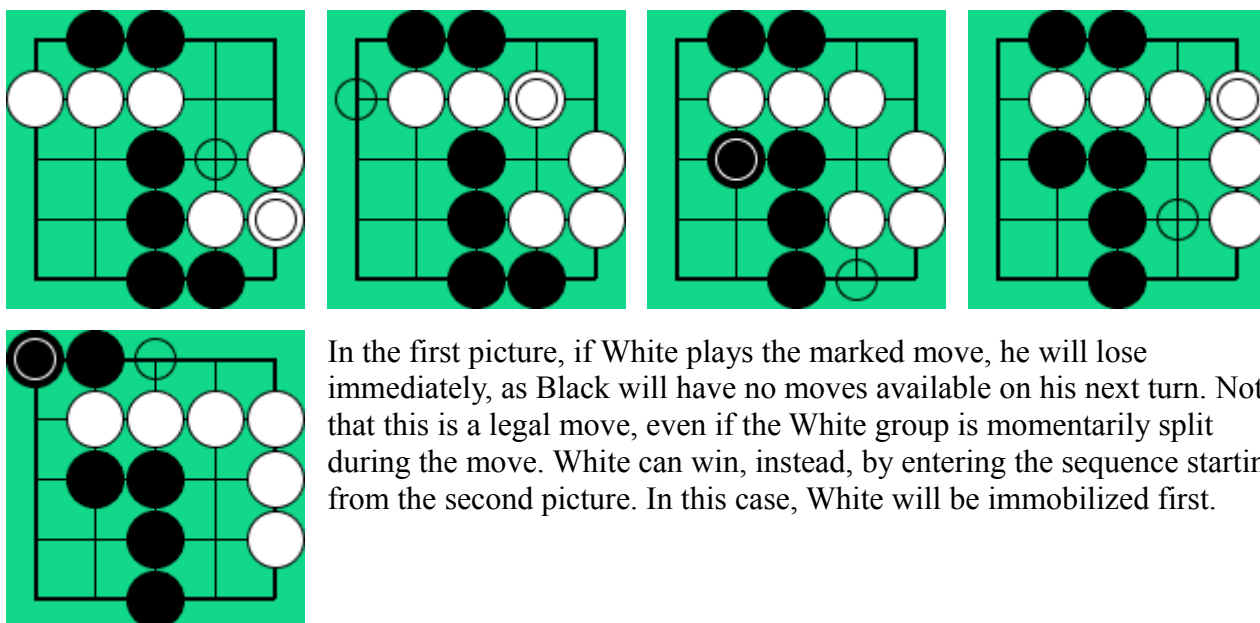
Normally, an Ayu board will be much larger than the tiny ones shown here.

The distance rule



The picture on the left shows the relative distances between every pair of White units. Four moves are needed to join A and B, while C and A are only two moves away from each other. Therefore, if A is moved, it must get closer to C. The next two pictures show the only moves available to that group in its current position. Note that the center piece in it can't be moved, as the group would be left split after the move.

Immobilization



In the first picture, if White plays the marked move, he will lose immediately, as Black will have no moves available on his next turn. Note that this is a legal move, even if the White group is momentarily split during the move. White can win, instead, by entering the sequence starting from the second picture. In this case, White will be immobilized first.

Author's notes

An essential part of the strategy lies in building long walls between enemy units, thus forcing the opponent to spend many more turns connecting them. Also, playing from the outside inwards is more efficient, as it helps you not to leave any units behind. The distance rule has some interesting tactical effects: sometimes, in order to move a unit (A) in the desired direction, you'll have to first move away the unit (B) which is closest to it so that A isn't "engaged" to B anymore.

Ayu is arguably the quintessential game of *approach moves*. The rules have been kept to a minimum so as to let the featured mechanism unfold by itself. The result is a very organic and innovative game with great strategic potential.

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