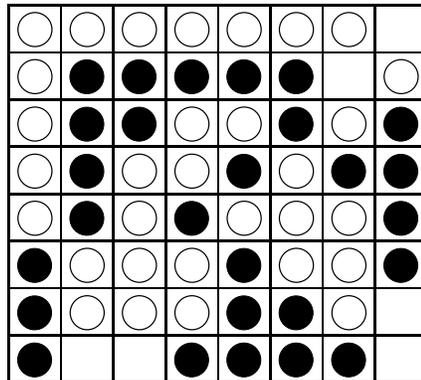


OFFICIAL BEGINNERS' SECTION

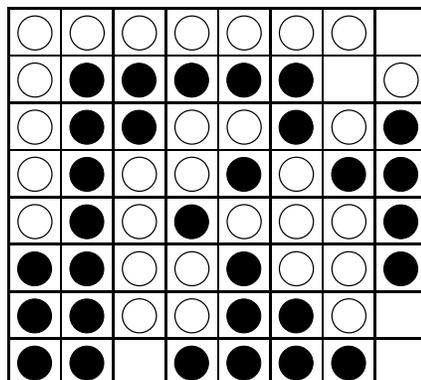


Black to play

In this issue of the Official Beginners' Section of the British Othello Federation's newsletter we have the solution to last issue's Broken Othello Board puzzle, and some swindling puzzles by Joel Feinstein.

Puzzles, articles, letters, cartoons etc. should be sent to the Section editor:
 Joel Feinstein, 324 Queens Road West, Beeston, Nottingham NG9 1GS.

Phone: 0115-9251120
 email: jff@maths.nott.ac.uk



Black gets c8 too!

In the original position, all of Black's other moves lose. Try them and see!

Notation.

| | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|---|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | ○ | ● | | | |
| | | | ● | ○ | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |

The start position

| | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| a1 | b1 | c1 | d1 | e1 | f1 | g1 | h1 |
| a2 | b2 | c2 | d2 | e2 | f2 | g2 | h2 |
| a3 | b3 | c3 | d3 | e3 | f3 | g3 | h3 |
| a4 | b4 | c4 | d4 | e4 | f4 | g4 | h4 |
| a5 | b5 | c5 | d5 | e5 | f5 | g5 | h5 |
| a6 | b6 | c6 | d6 | e6 | f6 | g6 | h6 |
| a7 | b7 | c7 | d7 | e7 | f7 | g7 | h7 |
| a8 | b8 | c8 | d8 | e8 | f8 | g8 | h8 |

The names of squares

| | | | | | | | |
|----|---|--|--|--|--|---|----|
| a1 | C | | | | | C | h1 |
| C | X | | | | | X | C |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| C | X | | | | | X | C |
| a8 | C | | | | | C | h8 |

Special squares

The board is split into eight columns and eight rows. We label each column with a letter, from ‘a’ for the left-hand column to ‘h’ for the right-hand column. We number the rows from ‘1’ for the top row to ‘8’ for the bottom. This is the opposite convention to that used in chess. So, as shown above, the top left corner is called ‘a1’, and the bottom right is ‘h8’. The pieces used in the game are called ‘discs’.

Some of the squares on the board are especially important. The four corner squares (a1, h1, a8 and h8) are very useful to have, since they can never be taken away from you. As a consequence, it can be dangerous to play to a square next to an empty corner too early in the game (your opponent might be able to use your disc to play a move in the corner). The squares b2, g2, b7 and g7 (one diagonally in from a corner) are known as ‘X-squares’. The other squares one away from a corner are called ‘C-squares’. These are shown in the third diagram above.

We sometimes use compass directions when describing regions of the board, so for instance the area of the board near to h1 is called the North-East corner.

IS IT A SWINDLE? *by Joel Feinstein.*

In each of the positions that follow there are just two empty squares left, and it is Black to play. Under ordinary circumstances, Black would play in one square, and White would then play in the other. This is often good for White, and Black would usually prefer to be able to play both of the remaining moves if possible. In some of the following positions, Black can “swindle” White by playing both moves.

For each position there are two questions:

- (i) Can Black swindle White and play both of the last two moves of the game?
- (ii) Can Black win the game?

Remember, it is Black to move in all cases! You should be able to answer these questions easily by setting up the positions shown and trying both moves. But you should try to solve them in your head first. Solutions are on page 11.

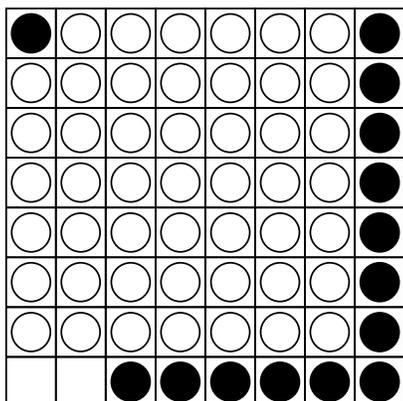


Diagram 1

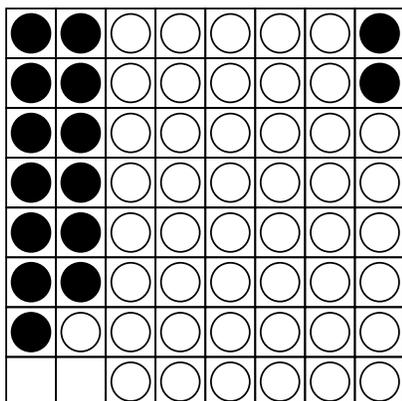


Diagram 2

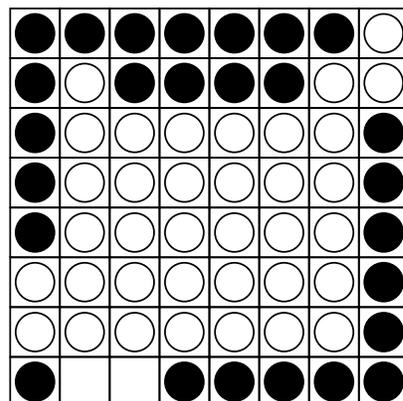


Diagram 3

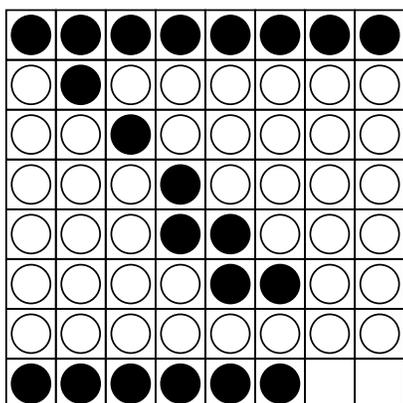


Diagram 4

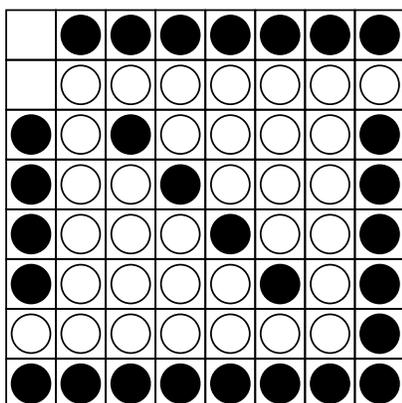


Diagram 5

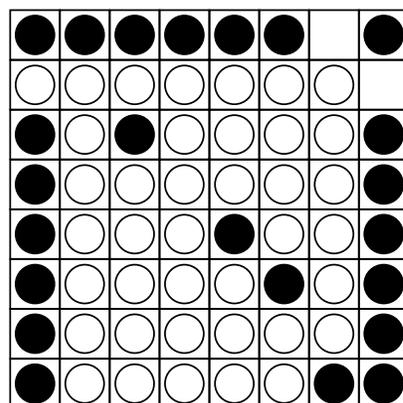


Diagram 6

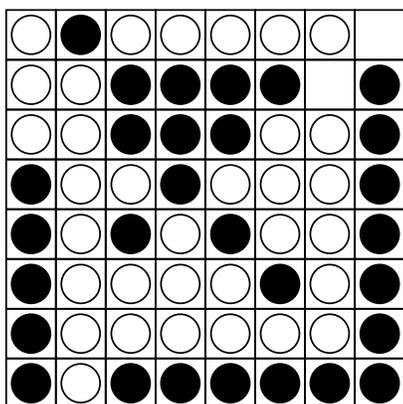


Diagram 7

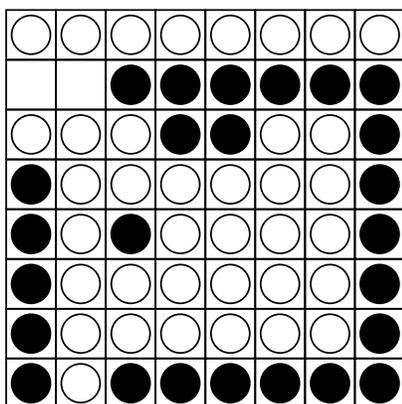


Diagram 8

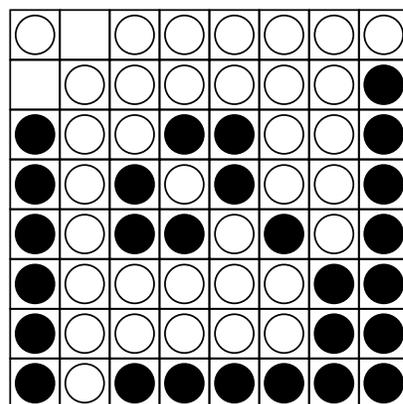
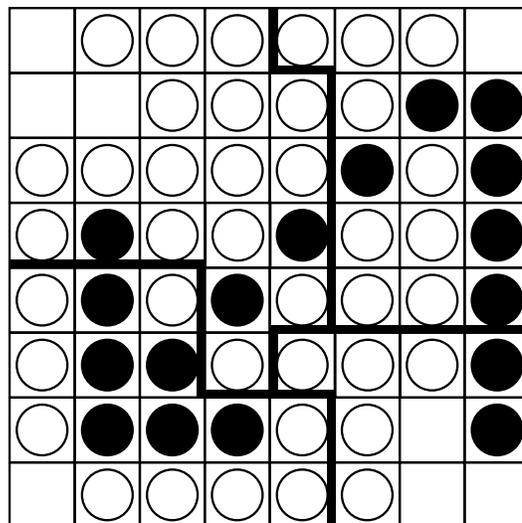


Diagram 9

A MENDED OTHELLO BOARD *by Joel Feinstein.*



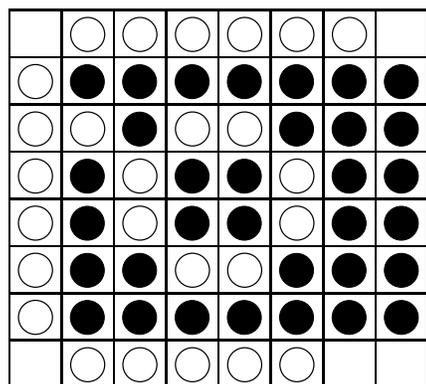
Black to play

I'm sure that you had no problem mending my broken Othello board! You probably guessed correctly that the corner squares were still empty. But did you decide which of Black's moves win? I will assume that you have arranged your board fragments as above.

Black has only one winning move: 53.g7! A perfect play line is then 54.h8 g8 h1 a8 pass b2 a1 a2 and Black wins 36-28.

53.a2 instead is a 31-33 loss: perfect play is then 54.a1 b2 pass g7 h8 g8 h1 a8 and White has just enough.

53.g8 is a total disaster, losing 18-46: perfect play is 54.h8 g7 h1 b2 a1 a2 a8.



After b2 a2 g7

53.b2 is the most interesting loser. 54.a1 would be no good, because then Black would win easily with 55.a2 pass a8 pass g8 g7 h8 43-20. So instead the perfect play line after 53.b2 goes 54.a2 g7, giving Black total control of both main diagonals, as shown in the diagram. It looks as if White is in trouble, because the only move now is 56.g8, flipping both g2 and g7 and appearing to give up both the corners h1 and h8. But this is not as bad as it looks: Black can only take one of the corners, White can take whichever of a1 and a8 is still available, and the game ends: White wins 39-23 either way.

WAS IT A SWINDLE?

Here are the solutions to the puzzles on page 9.

Diagram 1 Black can swindle White and win 33-31 by playing b8 pass a8. This is possible because all of the discs in the b column are white.

Diagram 2 Yes, Black has a swindle by playing a8 pass b8. This works because all of the discs between b1 and b6 are Black, which prevents White from gaining access to b8 vertically. Unfortunately it isn't enough for Black to save the game! White has too many pieces for Black to catch up (In fact White wins 36-28).

Diagram 3 There is no swindle! It looks a bit like the position on page 7. But this time White has a disc on a6: if Black tries b8, then White has access to c8 diagonally (and it's a draw). Black can win just by grabbing enough pieces with c8 instead.

Diagram 4 Black wins 36-28 with the swindle g8 pass h8.

Diagram 5 There is no swindle, and this time Black loses. White is safely wedged in at a7, so that whether Black tries a1 or a2, White can turn all along the West edge.

Diagram 6 Yes there is a swindle: Black can play h2 pass g1, winning 33-31.

Diagram 7 Black has a huge winning swindle with g2 pass h1. It would be a criminal blunder for Black to play h1 instead of g2.

Diagram 8 Black has the winning swindle b2 pass a2.

Diagram 9 This is almost the same as Diagram 6, but there is a catch! Black has a swindle with b1 pass a2, but it is only a draw. Black can win by playing a2 b1 instead. This is very unusual! With two empty squares left, if you have a swindle available it is almost always correct. But in this position, after a1, b1 only turns vertically. The moral? If in doubt, count!

So, now you have had plenty of practise at spotting swindles with two empty squares left. The next thing you should try to do is to predict swindles in advance. Often the result of the game will depend on whether you can arrange (or avoid) a swindle. You may have to think hard quite a long way before the end of the game.

Happy swindling!