

# Checkers for the Novice

A Logical Step-by-Step Guide

*Richard Pask*



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אבי גבלר ספרים

Avi Gobbler Publishing  
Honolulu

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## Publisher's Introduction

You're new, or relatively so, to the game of checkers. You'd like to become a decent player, and maybe even start down the road to becoming an expert. You're willing to work toward that goal and you don't easily give up.

If this is you, then this is your book.

We're more than proud, and privileged beyond measure, to present another of Grandmaster Richard Pask's works on the great game of checkers. *Checkers for the Novice* is the stand-alone first volume of a series of instruction manuals intended to take the new player from complete novice to advanced expert, fully prepared for master-level studies.

We've decided to produce a print edition of *Checkers for the Novice* as there is an utter lack of in-print, modern books of instruction for the aspiring checker novice. Mr. Pask herein presents a series of lessons that are lucid, clear, and thorough. This is a primer that will stand the test of time and set the standard for checkers instruction.

While there won't be separate print editions of succeeding books in the *Logical Checkers* series, all of them will be available as no-cost ebooks, and, at the end of the series, we contemplate publication of a comprehensive, omnibus print edition.

*Checkers for the Novice* does not promise an "easy" or "magic" approach, and the student will get out of the book what he or she puts into it. But for those who truly wish to perform competently at the checkerboard, this book, combined with diligent application and practice, will ensure that such a worthy goal is reached.

*Bob Newell*

Editor and Publisher

Honolulu, Hawai'i

June, 2018



## Logical Checkers: Series Overview

Checkers is a splendid game, possibly *the* marvel of games of pure skill.—*Al Horowitz*<sup>1</sup>

Checkers is easy. Everybody knows that. Well it's easy to learn the rules at least: most people can pick them up in about 5 minutes. Unfortunately, for most people that's about as far as they get. Actually, there is a second game: the one hidden beneath the surface. This second game, the true game, has around 10 distinct levels of play. They look like this:

*Level 1:* Basic novice (90% of the playing population)

*Level 2:* Advanced novice (9% of the playing population)

*Level 3:* Expert 1

*Level 4:* Expert 2

*Level 5:* Expert 3

*Level 6:* Expert 4

*Level 7:* Master 1

*Level 8:* Master 2

*Level 9:* Grandmaster 1

*Level 10:* Grandmaster 2

And tipping into the next level we have the likes of Dr. Marion Tinsley and Chinook.

*Complete Checkers*, written by myself and published by Bob Newell, contains 2200 master and grandmaster games, and is aimed at the small minority of players in the top four levels. It is basically a work of reference rather than instruction.

*Logical Checkers* serves both as a stand-alone work for the player whose aspirations do not extend beyond the expert level, and as a prequel to *Complete Checkers* for those who wish to go further. Its focus is on *how* to play, and on how to play *well*.

---

<sup>1</sup>*The Personality of Chess*, I. A. Horowitz and P. L. Rothenberg.

Book 1 is purely for the novice, covering levels 1 and 2. Master its contents and you may consider yourself a fledgling expert, able to defeat 99% of the playing population. And this is where the real fun, challenge and fulfilment begins.

Books 2 through 5, pitched at levels 3 through 6, each contain sections on the opening, midgame and endgame. Broadly speaking, each time a section is revisited, the material becomes more difficult and/or specialized.

For the reader unfamiliar with the organized game, a brief word about opening conventions is in order. From 1756, when the first book in English on the game was published, until around 1900, checkers was entirely freestyle: the players having complete freedom of choice over their opening moves. This of course is how 99% of people still play today. In order to broaden the scope of the game for serious devotees<sup>2</sup>, between 1900 and 1930 the first two moves were randomly balloted, with both sides of the ballot being played in a sitting for fairness. From 1930 onwards this was extended to the first three moves, the so-called 3-move restriction (156 ballots), and is the system which is still pre-eminent.

Therefore, partly for convenience, and partly because it's the natural approach, I have labeled Books 2, 3, 4 and 5 as follows:

*Book 2:* Freestyle Expert

*Book 3:* 2-Move Expert

*Book 4:* 3-Move Expert (Balanced Ballots)

*Book 5:* 3-Move Expert (Unbalanced Ballots)

Thus the section on the opening in Book 2 contains play on those 3-move ballots which typically arose during the freestyle era, in Book 3 those from the 2-move era and in Books 4 and 5 from the 3-move era. Not only is a sound, practical repertoire outlined but, importantly, the reasoning behind the key moves

---

<sup>2</sup>This is not to in any way decry freestyle checkers: world championship matches played in the modern era have brought forth approximately the same percentage of wins at freestyle (18%) as at 3-move (22%).

is explained.

Don't believe the uninformed who wrongly claim checkers to be a game of memory. It is a game of immense skill: a perfect blend of strategy and tactics. Moreover, for practical purposes it has limitless scope. Most importantly, once you have developed a certain level of understanding<sup>3</sup>, you will see that it possesses immense beauty.

I leave the final word to the game's greatest ever exponent:

Checkers is fundamentally a test of what you can see,  
rather than what you can remember—*Dr. Marion*  
*Tinsley*

*Richard Pask*

Weymouth, Dorset, England

---

<sup>3</sup>When a lay person says, 'I can't see anything in checkers', they are simply speaking the literal truth. They can't. It doesn't mean however that there is nothing there to see.



# Introduction to Logical Checkers Book 1

This book has two purposes. First, to serve as a stand-alone guide for the novice. Secondly, to provide the foundation for Books 2, 3, 4 and 5.

It seems to me that any good introductory book should include a clear and thorough explanation of the following four elements: the standard system of notation, the rules, all-king endgames and the main tactical devices. Chapters 1 to 4 provide this.

Unfortunately, most books then leap from this elementary stage to a highly advanced one, with nothing to bridge the gap<sup>4</sup>. In this respect Chapter 5 is pivotal, as it summarizes the strategy underpinning the opening, early midgame, late midgame and endgame without bombarding the reader with unnecessary details. At the same time, a number of classic endgame situations are addressed: First Position [sic], Second Position [sic] and Payne's Single-Corner Draw<sup>5</sup>.

On the presumption that the reader will start by playing freestyle checkers, moving on to 2-move and 3-move only when ready, Chapter 6 has been written to provide a highly reliable and practical freestyle repertoire. The 22 opening and early midgame sequences represent an easy-to-learn way of handling both the black and white pieces and, crucially and unusually, are accompanied by a detailed commentary. Rounding things off, Chapter 7 addresses the key skills of elimination and visualization.

A question commonly asked is: Can anyone become a skilful checker player? My answer is that anyone of average intelligence who is willing to apply themselves should be able to master the contents of *Logical Checkers* Book 1. Combining this work with regular crossboard<sup>6</sup> play against a reasonable level of opposition,

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<sup>4</sup>Arthur Reisman's *Checkers Made Easy* is a glorious exception.

<sup>5</sup>A situation has certain defining features which may embrace several thousand different positions. A position is specific. This is very important when trying to understand what makes a given situation tick.

<sup>6</sup>The term 'crossboard' has two meanings. First, to play an opponent

be it human, computer or both,<sup>7</sup> will comfortably secure a spot in the top 1% of the playing population.

In closing, I would say:

- Adopt an intellectual approach to the game.
- Play hard.
- Play on the square.
- Enjoy yourself!

Win, lose or draw, checkers is a truly wonderful game.

*Richard Pask*

---

across the board (as opposed to in the now defunct correspondence form), and secondly, to play in an extemporized fashion rather than from memory.

<sup>7</sup>The following three websites are invaluable: the *American Checker Federation* (ACF); the *English Draughts Association* (EDA); the *Checker Maven* (Bob Newell).



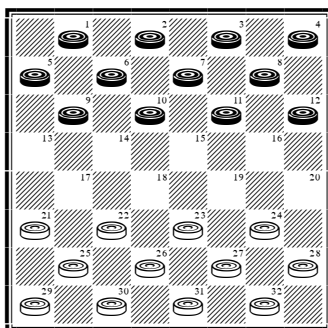
## Chapter 1

# Lesson 1: Notation

### Notation

As a first step, it is necessary to become familiar with the language of the game.

Diagram 1: The Starting Position



Black to Play

As you can see in Diagram 1, the board is numbered from 1 to 32, with the black men occupying squares 1 to 12 at the start and the white men squares 21 to 32. Although in practice the black squares are used, for greater clarity the pieces are shown on the white squares<sup>1</sup>, and throughout this work the

<sup>1</sup>Actually, at least five books have portrayed the pieces on the black

white pieces will be shown moving up the board.

The system used is simplicity itself:<sup>2</sup> a move is recorded by means of two numbers separated by a hyphen, the numbers representing the squares on which a particular piece starts and finishes. Once in a while, to avoid ambiguity, it is necessary to record three numbers. A semi-colon is given after each white move. Needless to say the numbers have no mathematical significance whatsoever.

Easily the best way to become fluent is to buy an inexpensive board and number each of the playing squares. In fact, it's a good idea to write each number twice, enabling easy recognition whether you are handling the black or white pieces.<sup>3</sup> The experience of thousands of players is that within a matter of weeks the numbers become second nature, at which point the numbered board can be handed on to a newcomer.

The final thing needed is a few annotation symbols:

! Good move.

!! Brilliant move.

? Bad move.

?? Blunder.

---

squares both clearly and attractively: *The Mysteries of Dama* (D'Orio), *Championship Chess and Checkers for All* (Evans and Wiswell), *Top-Notch Checkers* (Reinfeld), *The Compleat Draughts Player* (Chernev) and *How to Play Checkers* (Pask). Additionally, in the past games were often played on the white squares. (Sound economics: wear out the light squares first and then move on to the dark squares!) The critical point is that the bottom left-hand corner has to be a playing square.

<sup>2</sup>Edward Lasker, the renowned chess player and writer, expressed a dim view of the system, but I think he was mistaken. For example, the algebraic system which makes so much sense in chess, would here refer to 32 non-playing squares. Profligate indeed. Also, the diagonal system championed by Derek Oldbury in his *Move Over*, like the descriptive chess notation, has the disadvantage of a dual black and white perspective. Tellingly, no other system has ever caught on.

<sup>3</sup>Numbered boards are rarely used in official events.

! ? Interesting move.

? ! Dubious move.

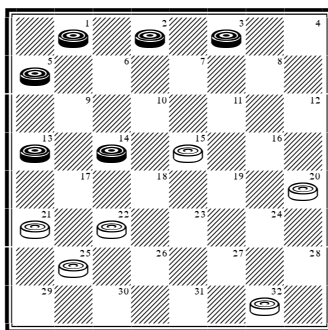
To check that all is clear, play through the following classic game. It's the one which clinched the man-machine world championship for Dr. Marion Tinsley in 1992, his opponent being the mighty computer program Chinook. Don't worry about the whys and wherefores at the moment: just make the moves on your numbered board.

*Black:* Dr. Marion Tinsley

*White:* Chinook.

10-14 22-18; 12-16 (At this critical stage of the match Dr. Tinsley was hoping for one of the quieter 3-move ballots, but wound up playing the weak side of one of the toughest!) 24-20; 16-19! 23-16; 14-23 26-19; 8-12 25-22; 6-10 29-25; 11-15 30-26; 15-24 28-19; 4-8 22-18; 8-11 18-15?; 11-18 26-22; 10-15 19-10; 12-19 22-15; 7-14 27-23?; 19-26 31-22; 9-13 and you should have arrived at the position in Diagram 2.

Diagram 2



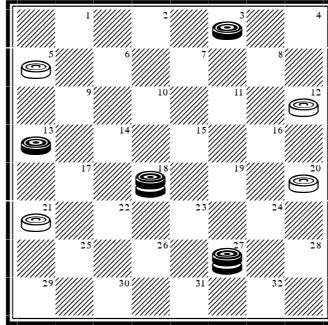
White to Play

Continue from Diagram 2: ... 20-16; 2-6 15-11; 6-10 32-27; 10-15 27-24; 14-18 16-12; 18-23 11-8; 23-27 8-4; 27-32 4-8; 1-6! 8-11;

6-10! 11-18; 10-14 18-9; 5-14 22-18; 14-23 25-22; 23-26 24-20;  
32-27 22-18; 27-23 18-14; 23-18 14-9; 26-31 9-5; 31-27. Black  
wins.<sup>4</sup>

If you have played through the game correctly, the final position  
will look like Diagram 3.

Diagram 3: The Final Position



Chinook, White, resigns!

## The Playing Equipment

Although this work follows tradition in referring to the players as ‘Black’ and ‘White’, in most official competitions a green and buff board is used in combination with red and white pieces. This is simply because it is much easier on the eyes. The official dimensions are also worth noting. The board features squares ranging between 1- $\frac{3}{4}$  (44mm) and 2 inches (51mm) and pieces ranging between 1- $\frac{1}{4}$  (32mm) and 1- $\frac{1}{2}$  (38mm) inches in diameter. In addition, it is essential that the pieces stack securely and are sufficiently thick to be picked up easily.

<sup>4</sup>In this work the term ‘Black/White wins’ serves two purposes: that Black/White has won the game because the opponent has no legal move remaining; that Black/White will win the game in due course assuming correct play.

A few general observations are worth noting:

- It is far more enjoyable playing with decent equipment than the shoddy variety and it also shows the game in a good light. In particular, the black and red monstrosities so popular with toy manufacturers should be avoided like the plague. Inexpensive, high-quality official boards and pieces can be purchased from the ACF website.
- Although the official colours are to be recommended, it must be conceded that they have no scientific basis and that many other combinations are visually equally attractive.
- Whatever set you purchase however, ensure that the colours don't induce eye strain and that the dimensions are correct. Pieces which are too small relative to the squares will appear 'lost', while those which are relatively too big will create an overcrowded appearance.



## Chapter 2

# Lesson 2: Rules

### Introduction

Knowing the rules thoroughly is of course essential in any sport or mind sport, but it is surprising how many players fail to take the trouble to do this. Make sure you are not one of them.

When the *EDA Handbook* was published in 1991, the centrepiece was an updated set of rules. Working independently on this project, Ken Lovell and I produced very similar first drafts.<sup>1</sup> In blending these together, I had four main objectives:

- To frame the rules in clear English.
- To ensure they were consistent.
- To keep them concise.
- To avoid introducing tournament regulations.

The finished product has barely been amended in the intervening years and may thus be considered a success. Three general points are worth making:

---

<sup>1</sup>Later it transpired that J Gillies had skilfully undertaken a similar task in *The New Draughts World* of 1937.

- The rules principally exist to enable the game to run smoothly on the assumption of reasonable compliance, not to address gamesmanship or cheating.
- The rules do not, and are not intended to, cover every possible eventuality, Rule 22 serving as a catch-all.
- In an official tournament, the referee, supported by a playing committee, is appointed to deal with disputes on the rare occasions when they arise, their decisions being final and binding.

## The Rules of Checkers

### Checker Board and Men

1. The checker board is square in shape and is divided into 64 squares of equal size, alternately light and dark in colour. (Technically called black and white.)
2. The board is arranged between the two players with a black square in the bottom left-hand corner.<sup>2</sup>
3. The game is played on the black squares, which for reference purposes are numbered from 1 to 32.
4. Each player starts with 12 discs, or ‘men’, all of equal size. One player has dark-coloured men (called Black) and the other has light-coloured men (called White). The colours of the men must make a distinct contrast with the colours of the squares of the board.
5. At the start of the game the black men occupy squares 1 to 12, and the white men squares 21 to 32.

---

<sup>2</sup>This is the same as in chess.



## Order of Play

6. Before the start of the first game there is a coin toss, the winner of the toss choosing colours. In subsequent games the players alternate colours.<sup>3</sup>
7. The first move in each game is played by the player with the black men. Thereafter, the moves are made by each player in turn.

## The Moves

8. There are four types of move: the ordinary move of a man, the ordinary move of a king, the jumping move of a man and the jumping move of a king.

### *Ordinary Move of a Man*

9. This is its transfer diagonally forward, left or right, from one square to an immediately neighbouring vacant square.
10. When a man reaches the farthest row forward (the king-row) it becomes a king, and the player's move terminates. The man is crowned by the opponent, who places a man of the same colour on top of it before making his<sup>4</sup> own move, borrowing a man from another set if necessary.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>This assumes that the style of play is freestyle. Under the 3-move restriction, because many of the ballots favour one colour over the other, a player who was Black in the first game would be White, White and Black in the second, third and fourth games respectively.

<sup>4</sup>Purely as a matter of convention, male pronouns are used throughout this book.

<sup>5</sup>A modern trend is for players to crown their own men—reaching across their opponent to do so. However, the rules are explicit on this point.

*Ordinary Move of a King*

11. This is its transfer diagonally forward or backward, left or right, from one square to an immediately neighbouring vacant square.

*Jumping Move of a Man*

12. This is its transfer from one square, over a diagonally adjacent and forward square occupied by an opponent's piece (man or king), on to a vacant square immediately beyond it. On completion of the jump, the jumped piece is removed from the board.

*Jumping Move of a King*

13. This is similar to that of a man, but may be in a forward or backward direction.

*Jumping in General*

14. If a jump creates an immediate further jumping opportunity, then the jumping move of a piece is continued until all the jumps are completed. The only exception is that if a man reaches the king-row by means of a jumping move it becomes a king, and the player's move terminates. At the end of the jumping sequence, all jumped pieces are removed from the board in the order in which they were jumped.
15. During a jumping sequence the same piece may only be jumped once.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup>This addresses the fear expressed by Charles Walker that a multiple jumping sequence which started and finished on the same square might never end!

16. All jumping moves are compulsory, whether offered actively or passively. If there are two or more ways to jump, a player may select any one he wishes, not necessarily that which gains the most pieces.<sup>7</sup>

### Touching the Pieces

17. Either player, on intimating his intention to his opponent, is entitled to adjust his own or his opponent's pieces properly on their squares at any time during the game.
18. Unless he has given an adjustment warning, if a player on his turn to move touches a movable piece he must move that piece.<sup>8</sup>
19. If any part of a movable piece is moved over a corner of the square on which it is stationed, the move must be completed in that direction.

### False, Improper or Illegal Moves

20. A player making a false, improper or illegal move shall be cautioned for the first offence, and the move immediately recalled. A second false, improper or illegal move during the course of the same game shall result in forfeiture. This applies if, for example,<sup>9</sup> a player:

---

<sup>7</sup>This rule is the one most misunderstood by the general public. Without this compulsion, the game becomes a total farce. It's also worth noting that even in the days of huffing, a player had the power to compel his opponent to jump if he so wished.

<sup>8</sup>It is a source of surprise to the uninitiated that 'touch and move' applies with the same force in draughts as in chess.

<sup>9</sup>Three points here. First, in serious play these occurrences are incredibly rare. Secondly, it is taken as read that all of them are *unintentional*. And finally, should one of these infringements be overlooked by the opponent and not discovered until later in the game, the offended party may insist that his opponent be cautioned for the offence and the game replayed from the point prior to the infringement.

- 20.1. Omits to jump or complete a multiple jump.
  - 20.2. On his turn to move, touches a piece which is not movable.
  - 20.3. At any point touches one of his opponent's pieces (other than crowning a king) without giving an adjustment warning.
  - 20.4. Moves a piece, either in an ordinary move or a jumping move, on to a wrong square.
  - 20.5. Moves a man backwards.
  - 20.6. When jumping, removes an opponent's piece or pieces which have not been jumped.
  - 20.7. When jumping, removes one or more of his own pieces.
  - 20.8. Continues a jumping move through the king-row with a man.
  - 20.9. Moves a piece when it is not his turn.
  - 20.10. Moves a piece before crowning an opponent's man.
- 21. If any of the pieces are accidentally displaced by the players, or through any cause outside their control, they are replaced without penalty and the game continued.
  - 22. A player who refuses to adhere to the rules shall immediately forfeit the game.

### **Result of the Game**

- 23. There are two states to define: the win and the draw.

#### *Definition of a Win*

- 24. The game is won by the player who makes the last move. That is, no move is available to the opponent when it is his turn, either because all his pieces have been jumped or his remaining pieces are all blocked.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup>In chess stalemate is a draw.

25. A player also wins if his opponent resigns at any point or forfeits the game by contravening the rules.

*Definition of a Draw*

26. The game is drawn if, at any stage, both players agree on such a result.
27. 40-move rule. The game shall be declared drawn if a player can demonstrate that both the following conditions hold: neither player has advanced a man towards the king-row during the previous 40 moves and no pieces have been removed from the board during the previous 40 moves.<sup>11</sup> (For the purposes of this rule, a move shall be said to consist of one black move and one white move.)
28. Repetition of position. A draw shall be declared if a player can demonstrate that with his next move he would create the same position for the third time during the game.

---

<sup>11</sup>I strongly disagree with the current rule, which originally stood at 50 moves, as it allows the winning side insufficient scope for probing the position or making minor inaccuracies. It also encourages players to continue in hopeless situations such as 3 kings against 4 rather than resigning gracefully. Granted that for practical purposes there has to be a numerical limit, even though it could deny a player a difficult technical win, I consider 50 moves rather than 40 to be the best compromise.



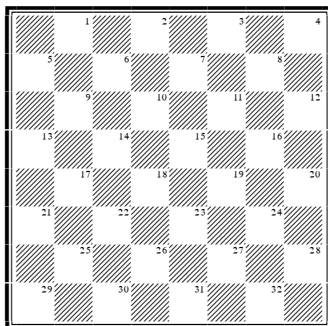
## Chapter 3

# Simple Endgames

### Lesson 3: 1 King v 1 King

Let's start in the simplest way possible by looking at an empty board, as its major diagonals play a significant strategic role.

Diagram 4



The Double-Corner and Single-Corner Diagonals

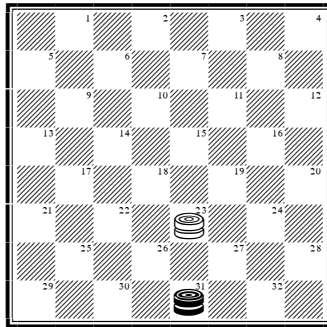
The two diagonals running from square 1 to square 28 and square 5 to square 32 respectively, are known as the double-corner diagonals. They connect Black's double-corner (squares 1, 5, 6 and 9) with White's double-corner (squares 24, 27, 28 and 32).

The long diagonal running from square 4 to square 29 is known

as the single-corner diagonal; squares 4, 8, 11 and 12 comprising Black's single-corner and squares 21, 22, 25 and 29 comprising White's single-corner.

Now look at Diagram 5. Black is pinned on the side of the board and just two moves away from oblivion.

Diagram 5

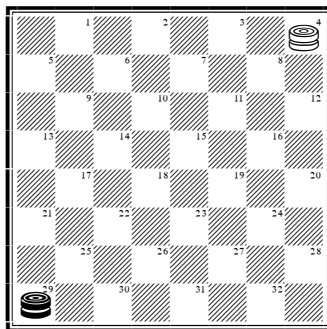


Black to Play, White Wins

Continue from Diagram 5: 31-27 (Or 31-26 23-30) 23-32. White wins.

This previous position might well have been derived from Diagram 6.

Diagram 6



White to Play and Win

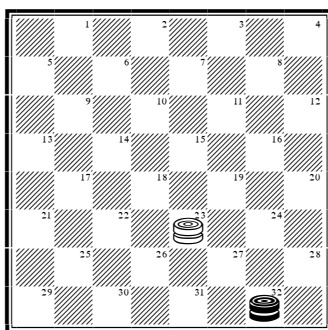


Continue from Diagram 6: ... 4-8; 29-25; 8-11!; 25-22 11-15!; 22-26 (Black is forced to give ground because White possesses what is known as the opposition. Note that 22-17 fares no better) 15-18; 26-31 (Or 26-30 18-22) 18-23. White wins.

Although Black lost, he employed the best available strategy: that of striving to reach the sanctuary of the double-corner diagonals. Naturally White prevented this, and if you examine the two moves with exclamation marks you will discover that they are essential: the other available moves permitting draws.

The reason why the double-corner diagonals, and in due course the double-corners themselves, provide this sanctuary is given in Diagram 7.

Diagram 7

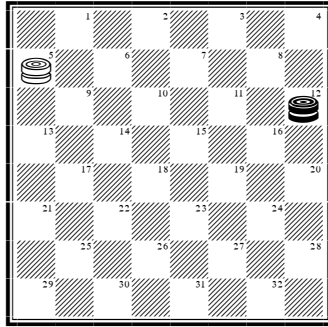


Black to Play and Draw

Continue from Diagram 7: 32-28, 23-27; 28-32 27-24 (Or 27-23 or 27-31); 32-28 24-27 etc ... A see-saw draw.

In passing, you will note that White again has the opposition, but that in this position it confers no advantage. Actually that's not strictly true, as in a 1 king v 1 king situation possession of the opposition means it's impossible to lose! The relevance of this is brought out in Diagram 8, a parent position, where Black has to employ care to secure the draw.

Diagram 8



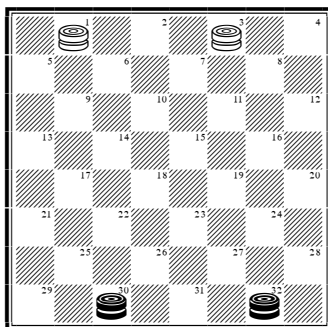
White to Play, Black Draws

Continue from Diagram 8: ... 5-9; 12-16! 9-14; 16-19 (16-20 is also okay, but both 16-11? and 16-12? lose) 14-18; 19-24! 18-23; 24-28! 23-27; 28-32 27-23 (Or 27-24 or 27-31) and we have reached Diagram 7. Drawn.

Simple as they may be, before proceeding it's well worth playing through Diagrams 6 and 8 several times, examining all the possible alternative moves, in order to firmly embed the underlying principles.

Incidentally, not only is the situation portrayed in Diagram 7 a dead draw, but so is that in Diagram 9.

Diagram 9



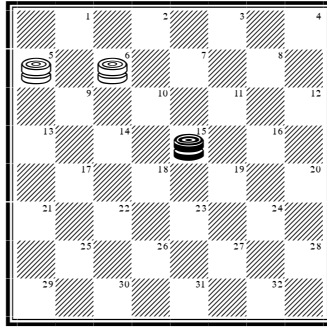
Either Side to Play and Offer a Draw

I must first point out that there is no significance in the specific location of the kings here. Diagram 9 is simply representative of any open all-king endgame situation where the forces are equal, and could apply equally to 3 kings v 3 kings, 4 kings v 4 kings or 5 kings v 5 kings. What matters is that from a scientific viewpoint the position is ‘dead’: there is no play remaining and no point in continuing. Ironically, it was in precisely such a situation that Edgar Allan Poe, in his famous discourse on the game in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, claimed that a win might be obtained through ‘a strong exertion of the intellect.’ I’m afraid not.

#### Lesson 4: 2 Kings v 1 King

However, in an open all-king situation where there is a material imbalance, the side with the king majority has a forced win at hand. In the case of 2 kings v 1, the strategy employed is as follows: the lone king strives to access one of the double-corners; the two kings pursue it there, force it out and pin it on the side of the board. Diagram 10 is representative.

Diagram 10

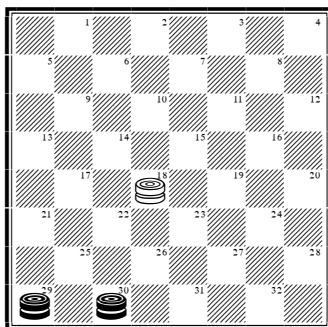


White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 10: ... 5-9; 15-19 (15-18 comes to the same thing, while 15-11 just hastens the end) 6-10; 19-24 (The same comments apply to 19-23 and 19-16) 10-15 (There is no need to memorize specific moves, just the general strategy); 24-28 (Once again, 24-27 is essentially the same; 24-20 loses quickly) 15-19; 28-32 9-14; 32-28 14-18; 28-32 18-23; 32-28 23-27; 28-32 19-23!; 32-28 27-32! (Entering the double-corner and forcing Black out); 28-24 32-28; 24-20 23-18!; 20-16 18-15; 16-20 15-11! White wins.

Of course in specific, atypical positions, generalized statements don't apply, Diagram 11 being one of them. Here, the inherent restrictiveness of the single-corner zone allows 1 king to draw against 2.

Diagram 11



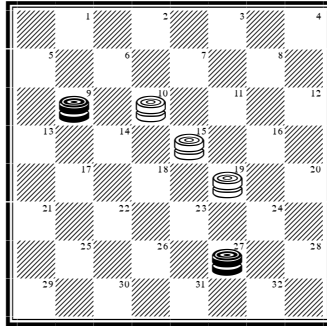
White to Play and Draw

Continue from Diagram 11: ... 18-22!; 30-25 22-26 (Or 22-17); 25-30 (Note that 25-22 26-17; 29-25 has no real merit as White can escape to the double-corner) 26-22 etc ... Drawn by a see-saw operation.

### Lesson 5: 3 Kings v 2 Kings (Double-Corner Focus)

Because two kings are needed to oust and corral a single king when it occupies one of the double-corners, many beginners are under the impression that the situation portrayed in Diagram 12 is a draw. Actually, by constantly threatening and eventually forcing a simple exchange (a one for one), the situation can be easily reduced to that of Diagram 10. Easy when you know how that is! Naturally the correct strategy for the losing side is to make this as difficult as possible, and against a player unfamiliar with the winning technique a draw may well be obtained under Rule 27.

Diagram 12

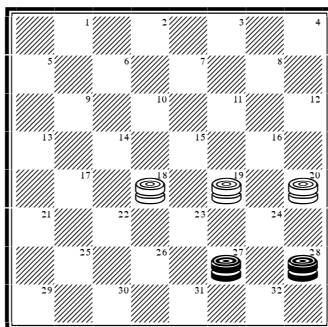


White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 12: ... 15-18; 9-5 (The situation being symmetrical, the reader will observe that 27-32 is in effect the same. Of course 9-13 loses quickly by 10-6; 27-32 (5-1 would allow a simple exchange with 18-15) 19-23 (This threatens the 6-9 exchange); 5-1 (Or else!) 6-9; 32-28 (Against 1-5 White replies with 9-14 with the threat of two simple exchanges on his next move) 23-27 (This line-up, rather than the individual moves, is what you need to commit to memory); 1-5 (Or 28-32) 27-23; 5-14 18-9. White wins.

When defending an endgame, it is generally good policy, where possible, to keep your kings together. Separated, the tactical possibilities are very limited, together there are many. Black has achieved this goal in Diagram 13, and is therefore able to put up the stoutest defence, but naturally still loses against the best play.

Diagram 13

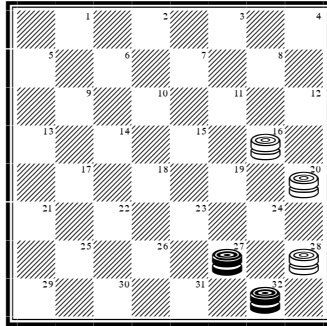


White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 13: ... 19-23! (Widely criticized in many beginner's books, 18-15 being the usual approach, but is actually simplest and best); 28-32 (27-32 is suicidal, while 27-31 allows White to exchange with 23-27) 20-16!; 27-31 (Against 27-24 White replies with 18-15! After this, he effects an exchange with 16-11 against 24-27, does the same with 23-18 against 24-20 and confiscates the black king on square 24 with 16-20 should Black play 32-28) 16-11!; 32-28 (If 31-27 White exchanges with 18-15) 11-15!; 28-32 23-26; 31-22 18-25. White wins.

Two other smart ways of bringing matters to a winning conclusion are shown in Diagrams 14 and 15.

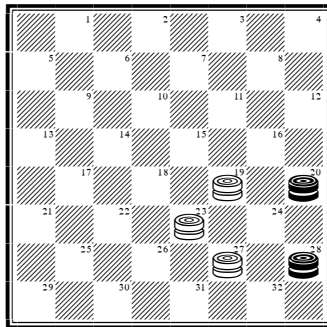
Diagram 14



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 14: ... 16-19! (Offering Black what is known as a 2 for 1); 27-31 (27-24 20-27; 32-16 28-24 and White wins with the opposition) 20-24!; 32-27 (Against 31-26 White exchanges with 19-23) 28-32! (24-20?? permits a draw with 27-24); 27-20 19-24; 20-27 32-23. White wins.

Diagram 15



White to Play and Win

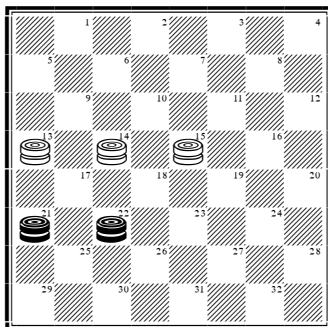
Continue from Diagram 15: ... 23-26!; (Getting ready) 28-32 27-24! (Throwing a piece like this is called a pitch); 20-27 26-31! (Trapping the black king). White wins.



**Lesson 6: 3 Kings v 2 Kings (Single-Corner Focus)**

In Diagram 16 Black has again succeeded in coordinating his kings, but this time in the single-corner zone. Just when he thinks he's safe, a neat pitch clinches matters for White.

Diagram 16

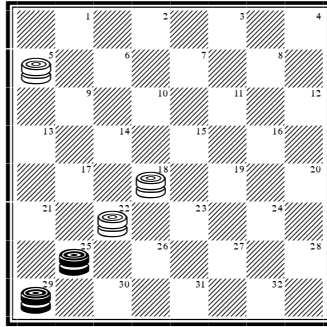


White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 16: ... 15-10; 21-25 14-17; 22-26 17-21; 25-22 10-14; 26-23 14-17; 23-26 (22-18 allows White to win with both 17-14 and 17-22) 21-25!; 22-29 17-22; 26-17 13-22. White wins.

Diagrams 17 and 18 feature two quick finishes which are worth being aware of.

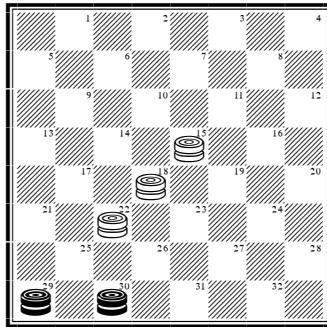
Diagram 17



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 17: ... 18-14! (Of course. Remember, having obtained a winning position the goal is to win as efficiently as possible); 25-9 5-14; 29-25 14-18. White wins.

Diagram 18

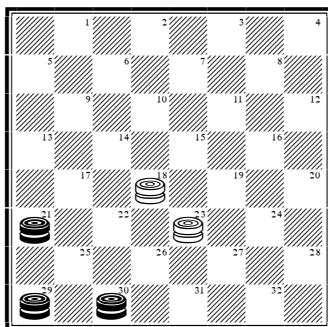


White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 18: ... 15-11! (Getting into position); 30-25 18-15; 25-18 15-22. White wins.

To conclude this lesson, let's look at two positions in which 2 kings can draw against 3. They both represent an extension of Diagram 11.

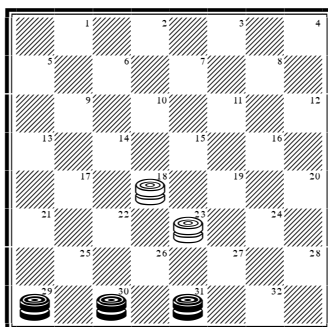
Diagram 19



White to Play and Draw

Continue from Diagram 19: ... 18-22; 30-25 23-18; 25-30 (21-17 22-13; 25-22 18-25; 29-22 achieves nothing) 18-23 ... Drawn.

Diagram 20



White to Play and Draw

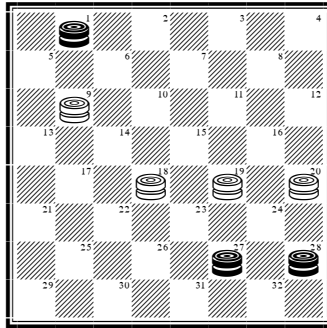
Continue from Diagram 20: ... 18-22; 30-25 23-18; 25-30 18-23; 30-25 23-18; 31-27 (Trying something different) 22-26; 25-21 26-22; 27-32 18-23; 32-28 23-27. Drawn.

### Lesson 7: 4 Kings v 3 Kings

Here there are a number of possible configurations, but the two major ones are where two of the defending kings are in one

double-corner while one is in the other (Diagram 21); and where the three defending kings are combined (Diagram 22).

Diagram 21

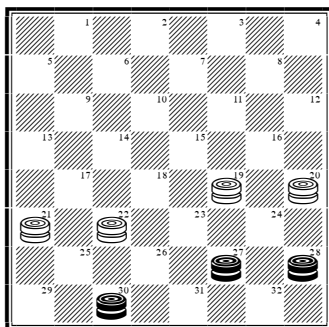


White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 21: ... 18-15 (Threatening to exchange with 9-6); 1-5 (Moving out of the way) 9-6; 28-32 15-10; 32-28 (5-1 would permit the exchange with 10-15) 6-1; 28-32 (Against 5-9 White retorts with 19-23!; 27-18 10-14 – an imaginative way of cutting down the pieces) 10-14 (Locking the king up completely); 32-28 20-16 (All of White's moves are now directed at forcing a simple exchange, and there is nothing Black can do to prevent it); 27-24 19-15; 24-27 16-11; 27-23 15-10; 28-24 11-7; 23-27 14-9; 5-14 10-17 and the situation has been reduced to 3 kings against 2. White wins.

In Diagram 22 the attacker, here White, employs the normal strategy of forcing the defending kings to the edge of the board where they have least mobility, then forcing an exchange to reduce the situation to a simpler state. This applies with equal force in a 5 kings v 4 kings situation or even a 6 kings v 5 kings situation (Heaven help us!). Better still however, would be to not let your opponent get so many kings in the first place. So be ultra-alert when such a situation is in the offing, and take every measure to minimize counterplay.

Diagram 22

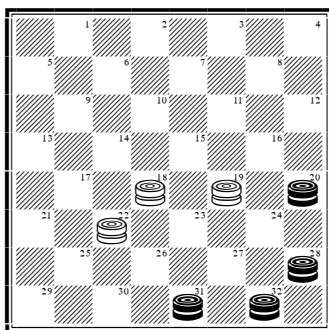


White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 22: ... 21-17 (Leaving the king on square 22 where it has a key role to play); 27-31 (28-32 19-24; 27-31 24-28 loses more quickly) 20-24; 28-32 24-28; 31-27 19-16; 27-31 16-20; 31-27 22-26! (A classic pitch); 30-23 28-24!; 27-31 24-27 31-24 20-18. White wins.

By this stage you won't be surprised to learn that there are certain unusual positions in which 3 kings can draw against 4. Diagrams 23 and 24 portray two of these. Naturally when you have the 3 kings you will seek these refuges; when you have the 4 kings you try to avoid them.

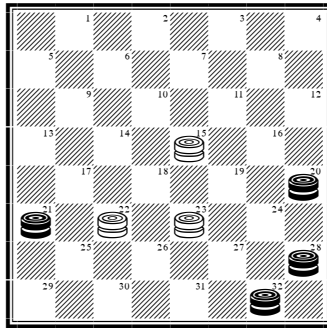
Diagram 23



White to Play and Draw

Continue from Diagram 23: ... 18-23; 20-24 19-15; 31-27 22-18;  
24-20 15-19 ... Drawn.

Diagram 24



White to Play and Draw

Continue from Diagram 24: ... 15-19; 20-24 19-15; 24-27 23-19;  
27-31 19-23; 28-24 23-19; 24-27 15-11! (You should work out  
why 15-18?? is a disaster); 32-28 11-15; 27-24 19-23; 24-20 15-  
19; 28-32 23-18; 31-27 18-15; 32-28 15-18; 27-32 18-23. Drawn.

## Chapter 4

# Basic Tactics

In a free and open position, the gain of a single piece is enough to ensure a won game.—*Derek Oldbury*

### Introduction

The eight devices featured in this chapter represent the basic tricks of the trade. When an expert faces a novice he typically employs one or more of these to get a piece or two ahead, and then executes a series of judicious exchanges to quickly reduce matters to one of the endgames dealt with in Chapter 3.

Of course between experts simple tactics play a different role, though still an important one. Here, through a combination of direct threats ('Do something about this or else') and indirect threats ('You can't go there because') they serve to force the play along desired paths. There is no expectation of a coup.

The advanced tactical devices featured in Books 2 through 5 are a different matter entirely however, being underpinned by their own principles and requiring separate treatment. Their subtlety and complexity has baffled even the greatest players for, unlike here where the coup is typically preceded by a blunder, the losing move is often deeply appealing. In other words, they are bona fide traps!

For now it's sufficient to know that, although at the higher levels tactics are generally subservient to strategy, they are al-

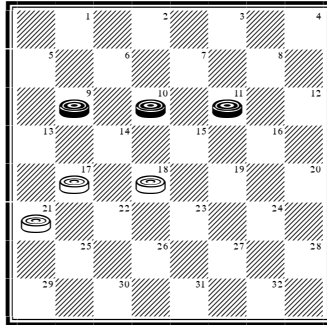
ways there ready to bite! They keep a player honest and single-handedly preclude the application of any 'system' to defeat the game.

The examples which follow are just a tiny selection from billions of possibilities. Try devising your own settings, This is an excellent way to fix the ideas in your mind.

### Lesson 8: 2 For 1

You give up one man (The word 'sacrifice' is inappropriate here as the return is immediate) and get two back.

Diagram 25

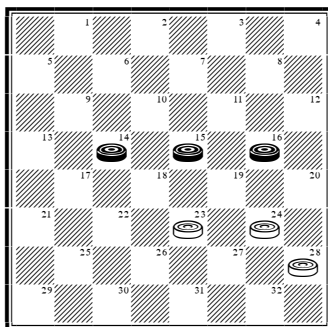


White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 25: ... 17-14!; 10-17 21-5. White wins.



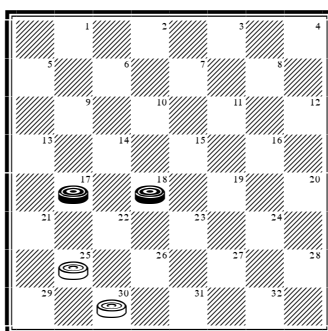
Diagram 26



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 26: ... 24-19!; 15-24 28-12. White wins.

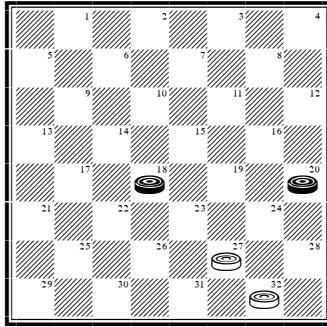
Diagram 27



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 27: ... 25-22!; 18-25 (Or 17-26) 30-14. White wins.

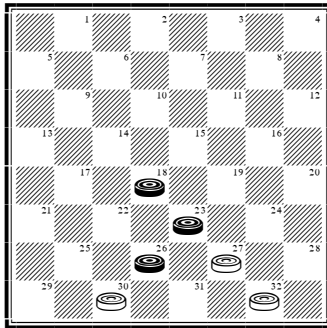
Diagram 28



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 28: ... 27-24!; 20-27 32-14. White wins.

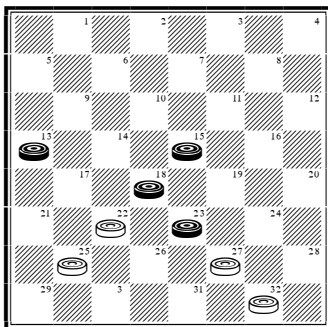
Diagram 29



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 29: ... 32-28!; 23-32 30-14. White wins.

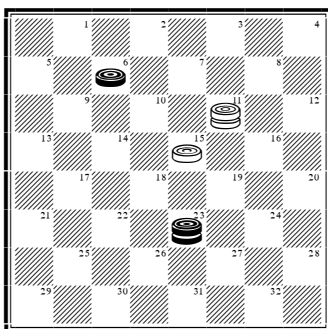
Diagram 30



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 30: ... 25-21!; 18-25 27-11. White wins.

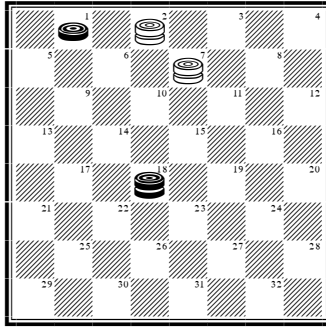
Diagram 31



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 31: ... 15-10!; 6-15 11-27. White wins.

Diagram 32



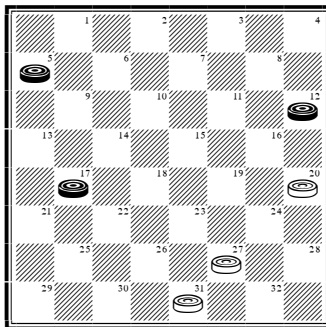
White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 32: ... 2-6!; 1-10 7-23. White wins.

**Lesson 9: 2 For 2**

These examples show that, when the conditions are right, you can win on position by giving up two pieces to gain two. Sometimes the two pieces are given up together, sometimes separately.

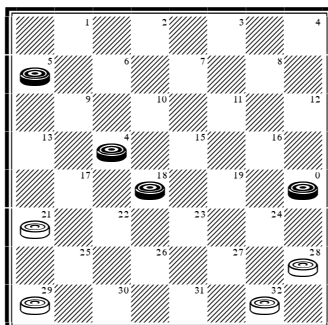
Diagram 33



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 33: ... 20-16!; 12-19 27-23; 19-26 31-13. White wins.

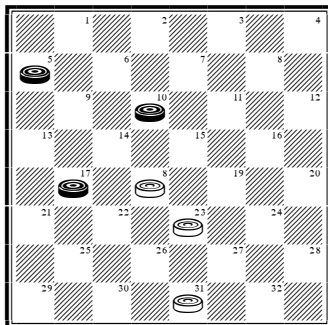
Diagram 34



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 34: ... 21-17!; 14-21 28-24; 20-27 32-14.  
White wins.

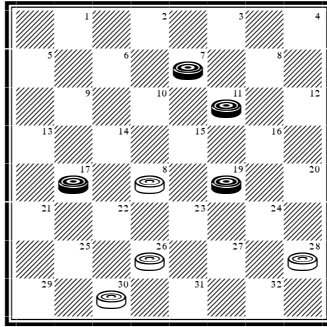
Diagram 35



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 35: ... 18-15!; 10-26 31-13. White wins.

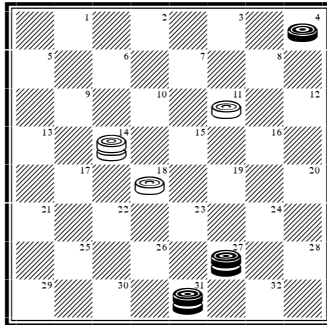
Diagram 36



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 36: ... 26-22!; 17-26 30-16; 11-20 18-15. White wins.

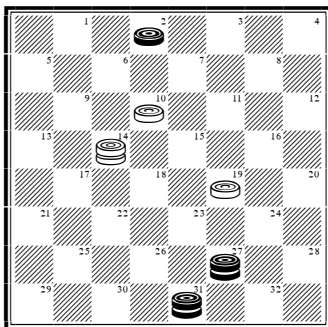
Diagram 37



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 37: ... 11-8!; 4-11 18-15 (It would be superfluous assigning an exclamation mark here: the first move of the combination is the one requiring the foresight); 11-18 14-32. White wins.

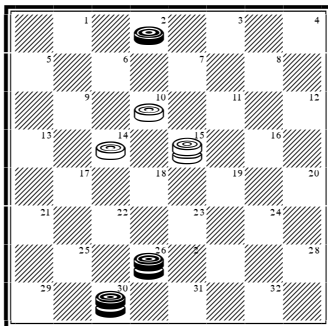
Diagram 38



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 38: ... 10-7!; 2-11 19-15; 11-18 14-32. White wins.

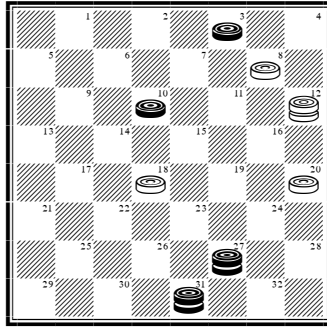
Diagram 39



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 39: ... 10-6!; 2-18 15-31. White wins.

Diagram 40



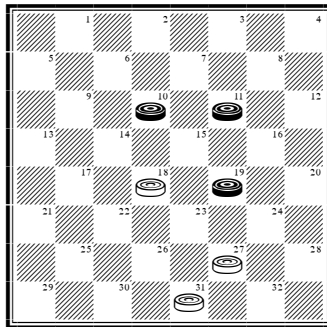
White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 40: ... 18-15! (Highly imaginative); 10-19 12-16; 3-12 16-32. White wins.

**Lesson 10: 3 For 2**

Two pieces are given up and three gained in return. Here, as elsewhere, under the old rules a player might conveniently ‘overlook’ the final jump, with the hope of being huffed, because he didn’t like the consequences! Nowadays there is no possible cause for confusion.

Diagram 41

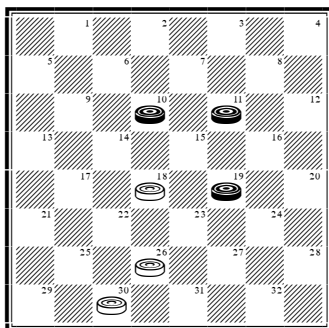


White to Play and Win



Continue from Diagram 41: ... 18-15!; 11-18 27-23; 18-27 (Or 19-26) 31-6. White wins.

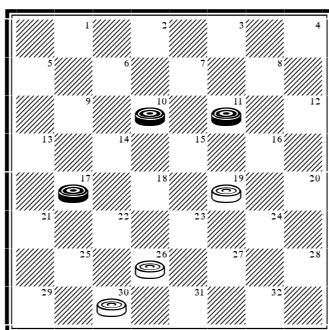
Diagram 42



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 42: ... 18-14!; 10-17 26-22; 17-26 30-7. White wins.

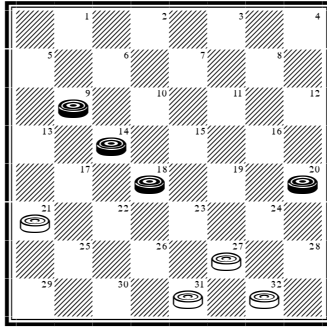
Diagram 43



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 43: ... 19-15!; 10-19 (Or 11-18) 26-22; 17-26 30-7. White wins.

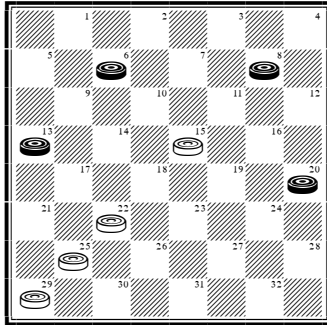
Diagram 44



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 44: ... 21-17! (Creating a hole); 14-21 27-24; 20-27 32-5. White wins.

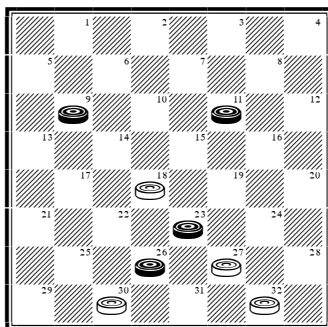
Diagram 45



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 45: ... 15-10! (Creating the desired pattern); 6-15 22-17; 13-22 25-4. White wins.

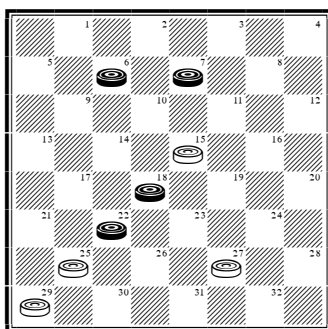
Diagram 46



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 46: ... 18-15!; 11-18 32-28; 23-32 30-5. White wins. A comparison with Diagram 29 will show that this is simply an extension of the idea shown there.

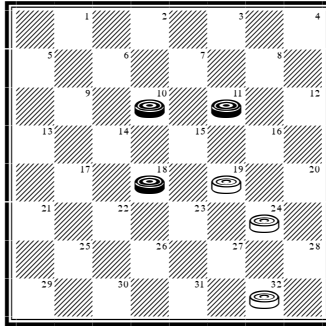
Diagram 47



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 47: ... 15-10!; 6-15 (Or 7-14) 27-23; 18-27 25-2. White wins.

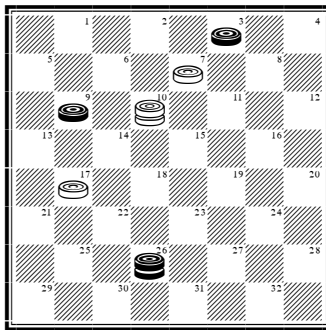
Diagram 48



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 48: ... 19-16!; 11-27 32-7. White wins.

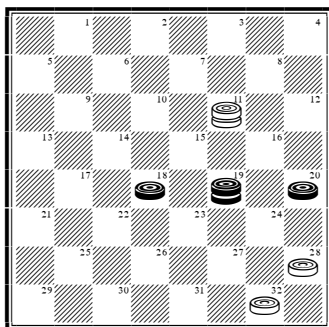
Diagram 49



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 49: ... 17-14!; 9-18 10-6; 3-10 6-31. White wins.

Diagram 50



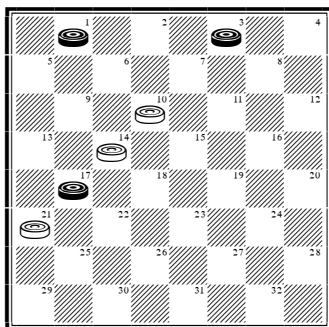
White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 50: ... 11-15! (A ‘blind’ shot like this is often overlooked); 19-10 28-24; 20-27 32-7. White wins.

**Lesson 11: Rebound**

This is a double-action device in which one of the opponent’s pieces is used as a backstop.

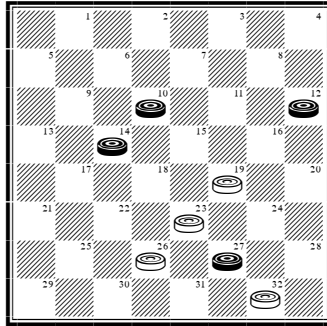
Diagram 51



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 51: ... 10-6!; 1-10 14-7; 3-10 21-7. White wins.

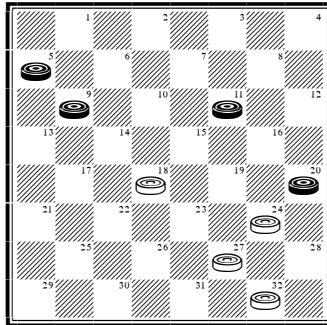
Diagram 52



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 52: ... 19-15!; 10-19 23-16; 12-19 32-16. White wins.

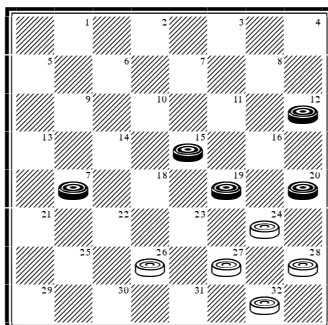
Diagram 53



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 53: ... 27-23!; 20-27 18-15; 11-18 23-14; 9-18 32-14. White wins.

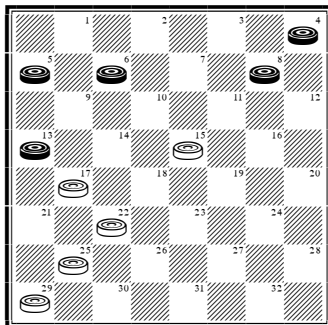
Diagram 54



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 54: ... 27-23!; 20-27 23-16; 12-19 32-16. White wins.

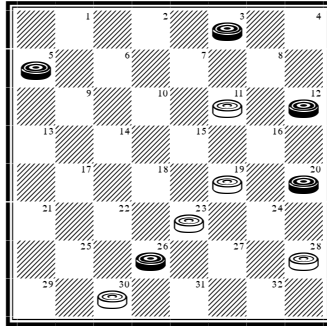
Diagram 55



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 55: ... 22-18!; 13-22 15-10; 6-15 18-11; 8-15 25-11; 5-9 29-25; 9-14 25-22. White wins.

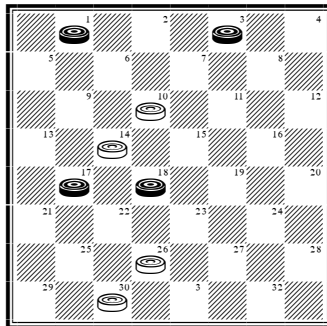
Diagram 56



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 56: ... 11-7!; 3-10 19-15; 10-19 23-16; 12-19 30-16; 5-9 16-11 (White has the opposition and here it proves crucial); 9-14 11-7; 14-18 7-2; 18-23 2-7; 23-27 7-11; 27-31 11-15; 31-27 15-18; 27-32 (Or 27-31) 18-23. White wins. You will notice that the presence of the man on square 28 effectively turned White's double-corner into a single-corner.

Diagram 57

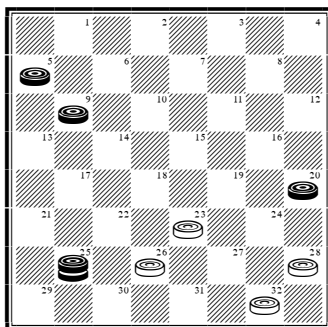


White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 57 ... 10-6!; 1-10 14-7; 3-10 26-22; 17-26 (Or 18-25) 30-7. White wins. Note that this is an extension of the idea given in Diagram 43.



Diagram 58



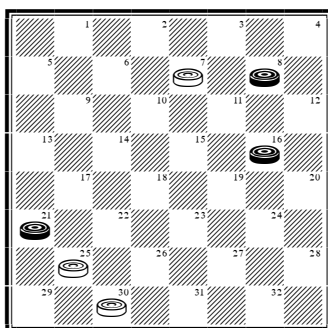
White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 58: ... 28-24! (Imagine how hard this would be to find if you had never been exposed to the idea); 20-27 26-22; 25-18 23-14; 9-18 32-14. White wins.

**Lesson 12: In-and-Out or Back Shot**

A player's move terminates when one of his men jumps or moves into the king-row. This grants the opponent an extra tempo.

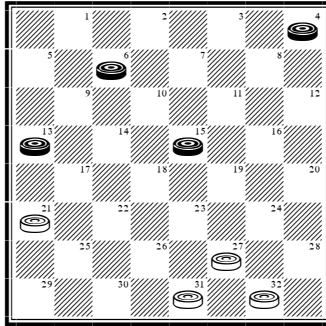
Diagram 59



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 59: ... 30-26!; 21-30 (Black must wait before jumping again) 7-3; 30-23 3-26. White wins.

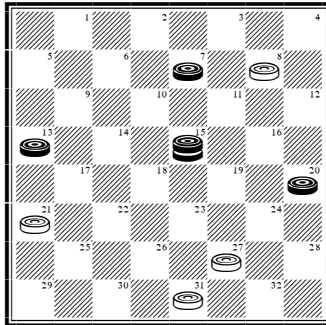
Diagram 60



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 60: ... 21-17!; 13-22 31-26; 22-31 32-28;  
31-24 28-1. White wins.

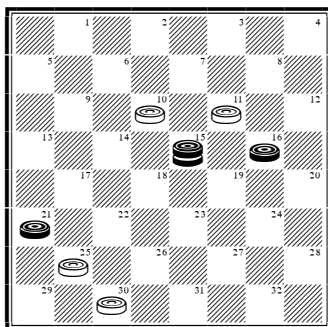
Diagram 61



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 61: ... 21-17!; 13-22 31-26; 22-31 8-3;  
31-24 3-28. White wins.

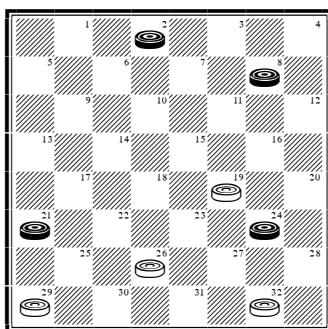
Diagram 62



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 62: ... 10-7!; 15-8 30-26; 21-30 7-3; 30-23 3-26. White wins. The similarity with Diagram 59 will be readily apparent.

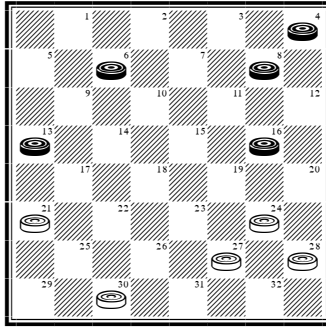
Diagram 63



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 63: ... 29-25!; 21-30 32-28; 30-16 28-3. White wins.

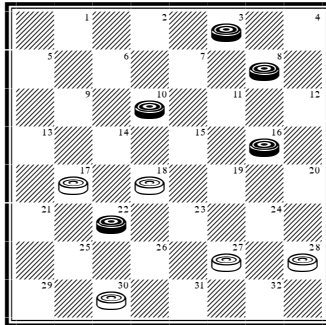
Diagram 64



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 64: ... 21-17!; 13-22 30-26; 22-31 24-20;  
31-24 20-11!; 8-15 28-1. White wins.

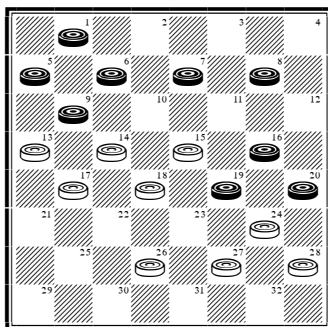
Diagram 65



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 65: ... 30-26!; 22-31 18-14; 31-24 14-7!;  
3-10 28-3. White wins.

Diagram 66



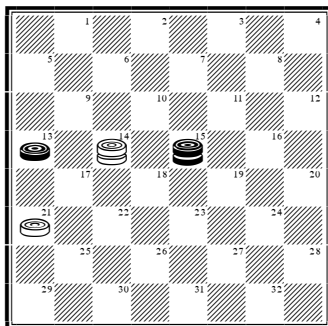
White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 66: ... 15-10!! (A definite case of mind over matter. Dream the impossible dream!); 6-31 13-6; 1-10 24-6; 31-24 28-3. White wins.

**Lesson 13: Breeches**

Here a king is placed between two of the opponent's pieces. Because they can't both move out of the way at once, one of them is gained on the next move.

Diagram 67

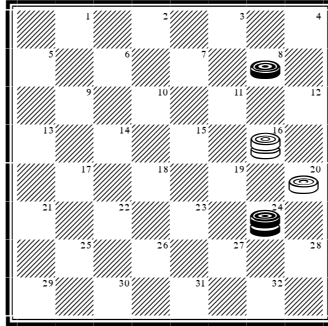


White to Play and Draw

Continue from Diagram 67: ... 21-17! (The only way out. In-

stead, 14-9? eventually loses by First Position, a classic end-game discussed in Chapter 5); 13-22 14-18. Drawn.

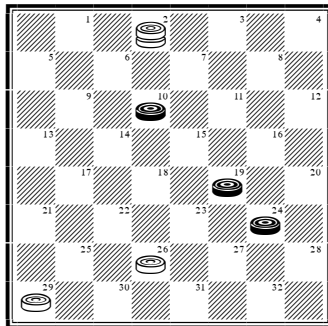
Diagram 68



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 68: ... 16-12 (Nudging Black into position); 8-11 12-16!; 11-15 16-19. White wins.

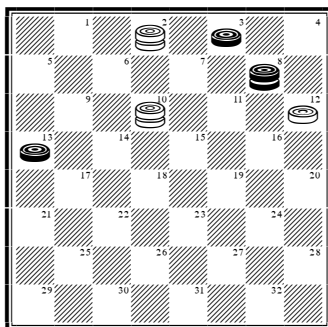
Diagram 69



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 69: ... 2-7!; 10-15 (10-14 loses to 26-22! 7-11!; 15-18 11-16!; 18-23 16-20; 23-30 20-27; 30-26 (No choice) 27-23. White wins. I won this against Brian Lucas in 1998: like Diagram 68, a nice example of the 'slow-motion' concept.

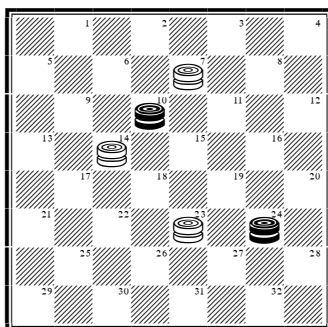
Diagram 70



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 70: ... 2-7!; 13-17 (Against 8-4 the 10-6 exchange wins quickly) 10-14!; 3-10 12-3. White wins.

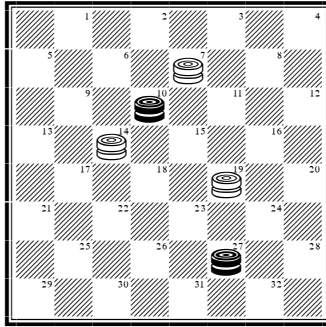
Diagram 71



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 71: ... 23-19! (With 2 kings against 3, Black thought he'd found a way out with the breeches, but checkers is full of hidden resources); 24-15 14-18 (7-11 also wins); 15-22 (10-3 also loses) 7-14. White wins.

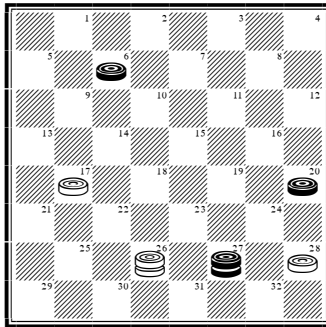
Diagram 72



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 72: ... 19-23! (Again Black wrongly thought he had secured a draw); 27-9 (10-3 or 10-17 is just a slow death) 7-5. White wins.

Diagram 73

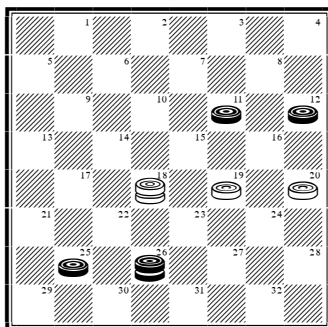


White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 73: ... 17-14; 20-24 (Against 27-31 or 27-32 White wins quickly with 26-23) 28-19; 27-23 (Apparently escaping with a draw) 14-10! (Not to be); 6-24 26-28. White wins.



Diagram 74



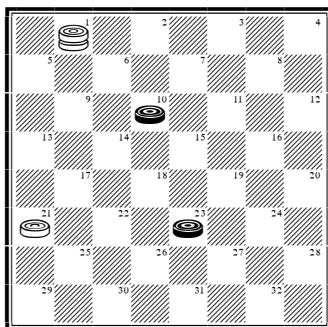
White to Play and Draw

Continue from Diagram 74: ... 19-16!; 12-19 18-23. Drawn. This is an example of the rarely seen double breeches. A triple breeches is also possible.

#### Lesson 14: Fork

A press is when a king attacks a man from behind. A squeeze is when a man is attacked from the front, using another man or the edge of the board. When a king presses two men simultaneously, gaining one of them on the next move, it is called a fork.

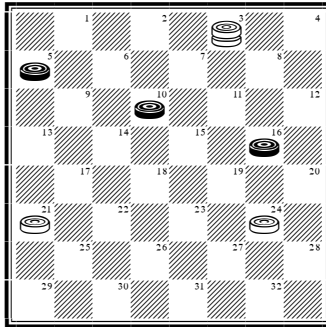
Diagram 75



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 75: ... 1-6! (Press); 10-15 (10-14 loses similarly) 6-10 (Press); 15-19 (15-18 loses similarly) 10-15 (Press); 19-24 15-19 (Fork). White wins.

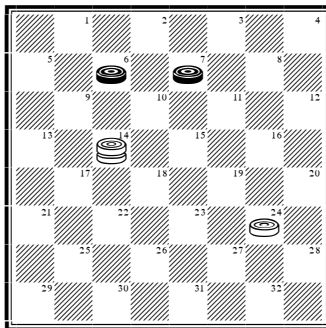
Diagram 76



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 76: ... 24-20! (Squeeze); 16-19 3-7 (Press); 10-14 (10-15 loses to both 7-10 and 7-11) 7-10 (Press); 14-18 10-15 (Fork). White wins.

Diagram 77

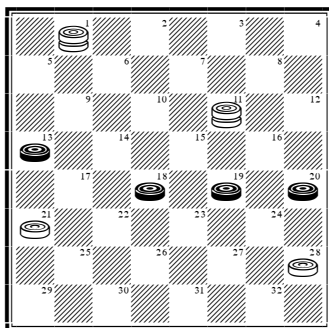


White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 77: ... 24-19!; 6-10 (Against 7-11 the 19-15 exchange wins immediately) 14-9!; 7-11 9-6; 11-15 (10-14

leads to the loss of the man on square 11 after 6-2 and 2-7) 19-16; 10-14 6-10 (Fork). White wins.

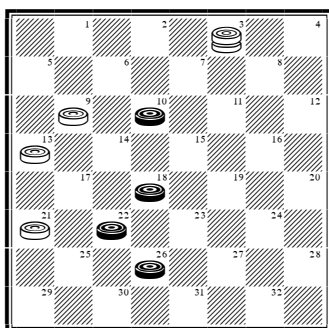
Diagram 78



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 78: ... 11-16! (Press); 19-23 16-19 (Press); 23-26 19-15 (Press); 18-22 15-18 (Press); 22-25 18-22 (Fork). White wins. The great Willie Ryan defeated the legendary Samuel Gonotsky with this.

Diagram 79

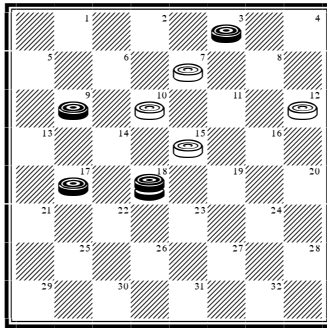


White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 79: ... 3-7! (Press); 10-15 7-10 (Press); 15-19 10-14 (Press); 19-23 14-17!; 23-27 17-14 (Press); 18-23

14-18 (Press); 22-25 18-22 (Fork). White wins. And Gonotsky himself scored with this against Jesse Hanson, the ‘man of mystery’.

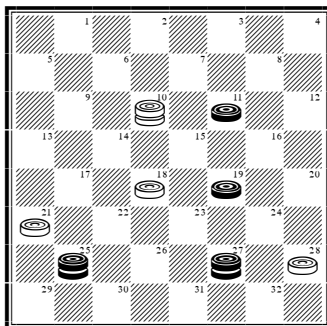
Diagram 80



White to Play and Draw

Continue from Diagram 80: ... 7-2!; 18-11 10-7; 3-10 2-6 (Double fork!). Drawn. To conclude this lesson, here are two more examples of this rarefied type.

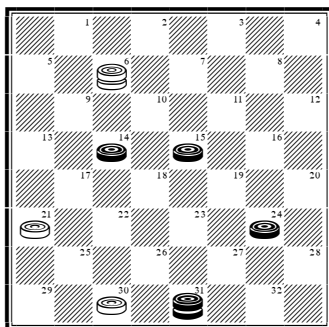
Diagram 81



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 81: ... 18-15!; 11-18 10-15 (Double fork). White wins.

Diagram 82



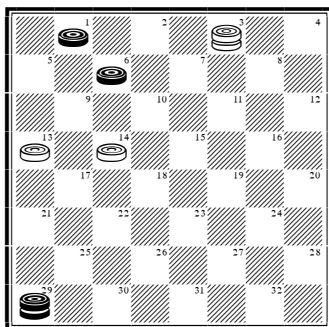
White to Play and Draw

Continue from Diagram 82: ... 30-26! (6-10? loses quickly. Can you see how?); 31-22 6-10 (Double fork). Drawn.

**Lesson 15: Double-Corner Coup**

This device is based upon various configurations of pieces in the double-corner zone.

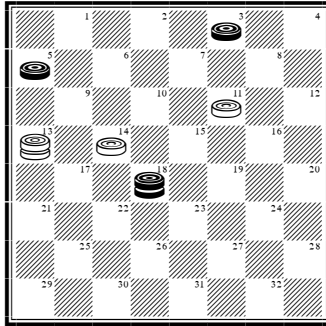
Diagram 83



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 83: ... 3-7! (Threatening to play 7-2); 6-10 13-9; 10-17 9-6; 1-10 7-21. White wins.

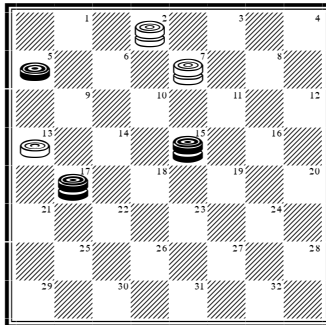
Diagram 84



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 84: ... 11-7!; 3-17 (Or 18-9 13-6; 3-10 6-15 to a loss) 13-15. White wins.

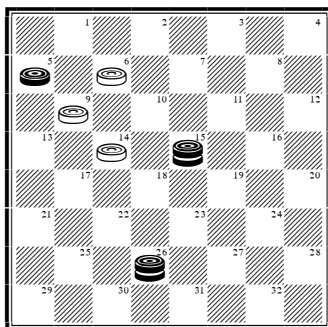
Diagram 85



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 85: ... 13-9!; 5-14 7-10; 15-6 2-18. White wins.

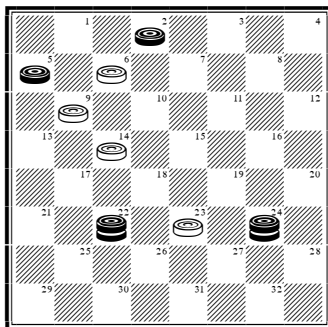
Diagram 86



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 86: ... 14-10!; 5-14 6-2! (6-1? would only draw); 15-6 2-18. White wins.

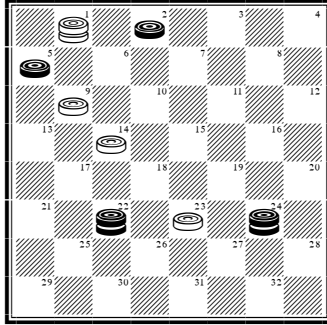
Diagram 87



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 87: ... 23-19!; 24-15 14-10; 5-14 6-1; 15-6 1-26. White wins.

Diagram 88



White to Play and Win

Continue from Diagram 88: ... 14-10!; 5-14 23-19; 24-6 1-26.  
White wins.

Two questions. First, can you see the similarity between these two examples? Secondly, are they not positions which you would previously have considered as hopeless? Such is the magic appeal of checkers.



## Chapter 5

# Basic Strategy

### Introduction

The ambitious goal of this chapter is to summarize the overarching principles which apply to the four different phases of the game: the opening, the early midgame, the late midgame and the endgame. For simplicity, things are viewed from White's viewpoint: obviously the same principles (but the mirror-image squares) apply when playing Black.

Curiously enough, the general public appear to be in complete agreement over this matter! Their received understanding of these principles is as follows:

- Bad Strategy #1: move your men to the side for safety.
- Bad Strategy #2: never voluntarily exchange a piece.
- Bad Strategy #3: retain your king-row men for as long as possible.

Unfortunately each of these is a disaster in its own right: in combination they are absolutely catastrophic! This revelation may come as a real shock, but I can assure you that in order to make any progress in the game you will need to set them aside.

## Opening and Early Midgame

As a preliminary step, and keeping in mind a certain artificiality inherent in these divisions, we need a couple of definitions:

*Opening:* a series of moves, of varying length, played at the start of the game, where both sides are either beginning to create a distinctive midgame formation (of which there are eight) or seeking to counteract one being set up by the opponent.

*Early Midgame:* involves the completion and maintenance of the formations initiated in the opening, culminating in a climactic point which signifies the start of the late midgame.

### Lesson 16: Centre and Side Moves

Because a man in the centre has greater mobility than one at the side, being able to move in two directions rather than one, you should generally move and jump towards the centre. As you would expect, the centre itself (squares 14, 15, 18 and 19) plays a key role and should therefore always be fiercely contested. Its control often means control of the whole board, which is why the passivity of Bad Strategy #1 is to be avoided.

One approach to centre control is to simply move into one or more of these squares. Alternatively, where the opponent has a man on square 15, occupation may be accomplished with the 22-18; 15-22 25-18 exchange or the 24-19; 15-24 28-19 exchange. Alternatively, where the man is on square 14, the 23-18; 14-23 27-18 trade could be made (23-18; 14-23 26-19 is rare), although for reasons which will be explained in Lesson 17 this should not be undertaken lightly. A complete refusal to exchange, Bad Strategy #2, is again totally passive.

Another method is to leave the central squares vacant and contest their control by means of men posted on squares 17, 22, 23 and 24.

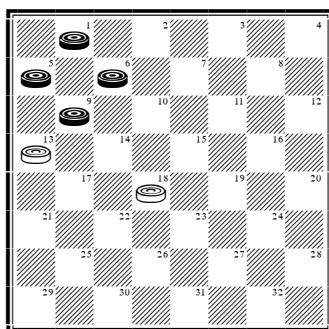
A third way is to allow the opponent free rein in the centre, encouraging overcrowding, with a view to gripping his forces with a pincer movement. In the hands of an expert this can be

very effective, but is not to be undertaken lightly as it requires fine judgement.

None of the foregoing means that side moves are invariably weak: far from it. First, a man on the side cannot be jumped. Secondly, it only takes two men at the side to effect an exchange, rather than three in the centre. And finally, a man on square 13 or 20 often has a vital cramping or supporting part to play.

In Diagram 89 all superfluous men have been blanked out, and it can be seen that the man on square 13, in conjunction with that on 18, is imposing a severe cramp (restriction of mobility) on Black's double-corner. Incidentally, where the black man on square 2 has actually been moved, this often proves to be a significant liability. In addition, a man on square 13 may provide invaluable support for one which has infiltrated the opponent's territory on square 9.

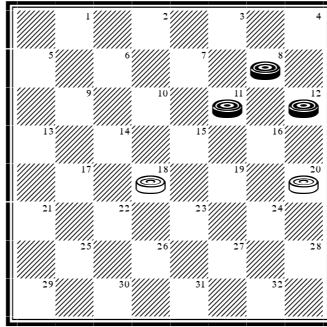
Diagram 89



Double-Corner Cramp

Likewise, a white man on square 20 can either be used to support a man which has invaded on square 16 or, in conjunction with one on square 18, may impose a severe cramp on Black's single-corner. This is illustrated forcibly in Diagram 90: again all of the other men have been blanked out.

Diagram 90

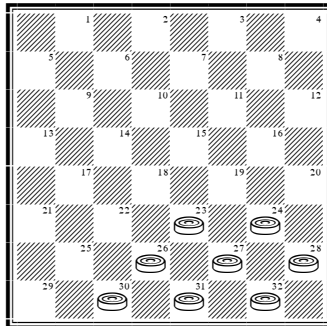


Single-Corner Cramp

**Lesson 17: Single-Corner and Double-Corner**

The relative vulnerability of the single-corner and the double-corner can easily be demonstrated by removing the four men which comprise each one. First, the single-corner men (Diagram 91).

Diagram 91



Removing White's Single-Corner Men

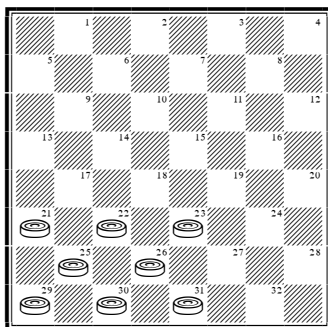
With just one entry square to the king-row, it can be seen that the single-corner zone is not very vulnerable to attack. It is for this reason that the men on squares 21, 22, 25 and 29 tend to be developed early in the game. In particular, the sequence 21-17

and 17-13 is often seen: two good developing moves which leave the body of White's forces intact while imposing a slight cramp on Black's double-corner.

Contrast this with Diagram 92, which demonstrates the impact of removing White's four double-corner men: you can see how easy it is to enter the king-row! It is for this reason that you should retain as much strength as possible in this area of the board. Incidentally, this explains the relative merit and frequency of the exchanges discussed in Lesson 16. Namely, 22-18; 15-22 25-18 only affects the single-corner and is frequently taken; 24-19; 15-24 28-19 affects the double-corner and is slightly rarer; as the man on square 27 is of greater import than that on 28, 23-18; 14-23 27-18 is rarest and only adopted with a definite objective in mind.

For similar reasons, when trading off a man on square 18, 25-22; 18-25 29-22 is generally preferred to 27-23; 18-27 32-23. In the case of a man on square 19, the disruptive effect of an early 26-23; 19-26 30-23 (Or 31-22) exchange is so great that it is virtually unseen in expert company.

Diagram 92



Removing White's Double-Corner Men

**Lesson 18: King-Row**

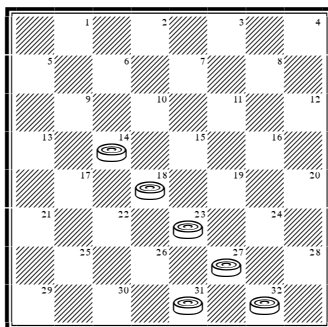
There are two powerful reasons why Bad Strategy #3 is futile. First, against an expert who retains just two king-row men, which is broadly typical, you will be left with just 8 men in the outfield to fight against 10, and will be overwhelmed. Secondly, expert checkers rests upon the construction of sound formations, with different formations requiring different configurations of king-row pieces. Rare exceptions aside, you simply can't develop soundly if you keep all four king-row men back.

The best general advice which can be given is the following. Be completely flexible when it comes to moving your king-row men: experiment! Certainly don't make a policy of trying to retain all four of them. Normally, the man on square 29 is moved early on, in line with the policy of developing the single-corner, and that on square 31 retained in order to avoid structural weakness.

In short, if you don't choose to move some of your king-row men at an appropriate time, a skilled opponent will force you to so at an inappropriate time.

Of the eight formations alluded to earlier, the two most important are the long dyke formation and the triangle formation, each of which makes its own demands upon the king-row men. In portraying them, the superfluous men have been screened out (Diagram 93).

Diagram 93

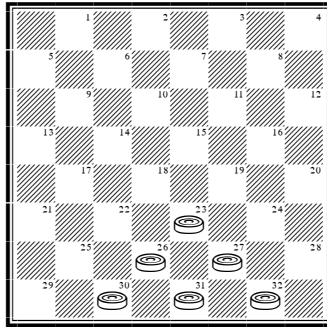


Fully Developed Long Dyke Formation

This aggressive formation has as its premise an attack upon the opponent's double-corner, typically initiated by the occupation of square 14. Here the men on squares 31 and 32 play a vital role: if the man on 31 is absent, Black can far more easily infiltrate and undermine White's position; if that on 32 is absent, the formation has nothing to rest on.

The triangle formation featured in Diagram 94 was a great favourite of Julius D'Orio and featured heavily in his highly entertaining book, *Mysteries of Dama*. In contrast with the long dyke, this formation is basically defensive, requires no setting up and may be employed by both players simultaneously. The idea is to keep the triangle in place for as long as possible, activating only the other six men, including the king-row man on square 29. It is indeed a very sturdy structure, but the fly in the ointment is that checkers is not static and the triangle must be broken at some stage – something which D'Orio reluctantly acknowledged in the second edition of his book! At this point, the idea is to reduce the triangle to a smaller one, consisting of men on squares 26 (the apex man), 30 and 31, allowing for the trading off of a man crowning on square 32, and finally to just the single man on square 31.

Diagram 94



Triangle Formation

### Lesson 19: Development

Regarding your own king-row as the first rank and your opponent's king-row as the eighth, it can readily be seen that at the start of the game each player has four men on the first rank, four on the second rank and four on the third rank. In this way, at any stage it is possible to arithmetically assess the relative state of development of the opposing forces. The key thing to realize is that, unless you have ready access to your opponent's king-row, in the opening and early midgame it is an advantage to be *less well developed* than your opponent. This is because it affords you a greater reserve of waiting moves, and prevents formations which you may have painstakingly set up from collapsing in upon themselves. Of course the development factor is only one among many, and rather than expend needless time and energy in myriad calculations, what matters is to understand the effect that different types of exchange will have before they are undertaken. Four examples will amply make the point. From the start of the game make the following moves:

Example 1. 11-15 24-19; 15-24 28-19. A black man is removed from the 4<sup>th</sup> rank and a white man from the 2<sup>nd</sup> rank. Hence White gains two moves in development.

Example 2. 11-15 22-18; 15-22 25-18. Again, a black man is



removed from the 4<sup>th</sup> rank and a white man from the 2<sup>nd</sup> rank. White gains two moves in development.

Example 3. 11-16 22-18; 8-11 18-14; 9-18 23-14; 10-17 21-14. Two black men are removed from the 3<sup>rd</sup> rank and two white men are removed from the third rank. Hence there is no change in development.

Example 4. 11-15 23-18; 12-16 18-11; 8-15 24-20; 9-14 20-11; 7-16. In the first exchange a white man was removed from the 4<sup>th</sup> rank and a black man from the 2<sup>nd</sup> rank. Black gained two moves. In the second exchange this operation was repeated. Hence overall Black gained four moves in development: a significant disadvantage.

Do not become obsessed with development (time has many other facets which will be considered in due course), but do keep it in mind as it explains many moves which would otherwise be puzzling.

### **Late Midgame**

Again, a broad definition is helpful, though approximate.

*Late midgame:* runs from the climactic point of the early midgame, where the structures which have been erected begin to melt away as the forces are reduced, to the start of the endgame (if there is one).

In general it may be stated that in the late midgame the importance of individual squares comes into its own. And thus the priority of the exchanges described in Lesson 16, for example, becomes less significant.

### **Lesson 20: Avoiding Loose Ends**

There are three major things to keep in mind:

- The avoidance of backward men.
- The need to break through the opponent's king-row.
- The knowledge of certain classic late midgame positions.

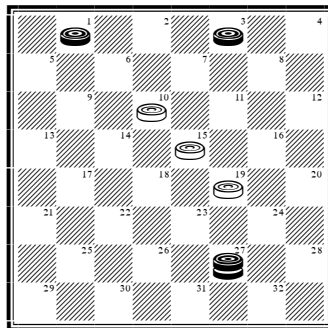
## Backward Men

In Lesson 19 I made the point that in the opening and early midgame it was a disadvantage to be ahead in development. However, in the endgame the opposite is the case. This is because in this phase, for reasons to be explained in Lesson 22, it is an advantage to be able to crown all of your own men while preventing your opponent from doing the same. This change occurs during the late midgame, and for this reason you should seek those exchanges which speed your development and, by definition, slow down that of your opponent. Also, there commonly arises a critical point at which a backward man must ‘run the gauntlet’, and whether handling the weaker or the stronger position you need to be alert to this. Finally, when crowning several kings, you need to work out a plan which does this without wasting any moves. As Fred Reinfeld so eloquently expressed it: skilful checkers embodies an ‘exquisite economy of force’.

## Breaking Through the Opponent’s King-Row

In many well played games of checkers one side is just in time to make a clearance: breaking up the opponent’s king-row before being attacked by a king. Diagram 95 is typical.

Diagram 95



White to Play and Draw

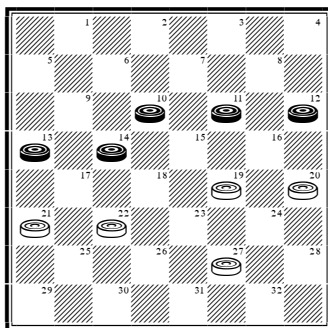
Continue from Diagram 95: ... 10-6!; 1-10 15-6. Drawn.

Two points are worth noting. First, in this specific position any other white move would lose. (If instead, you place the three white men on squares 10, 14 and 17, with the black king on square 25, several white moves would draw, but any expert would play 10-7; 3-10 14-7 without hesitation. The reason: checkers is hard enough already without making it unnecessarily difficult!) Secondly, and critically, with Black to move he would win. Therefore, when seeking to visualize a clearance like this, it's important to be spot-on with your timing. One move out is not good enough: just a pretty picture which loses.

### Fifth Position

There are many classic late midgame positions, about a dozen of which are worth committing to memory (See Books 3, 4 and 5). Of these Fifth Position is undoubtedly the most important, and a detailed grasp of its finer points, combined with the ability to recognize it in embryo, will enable you to turn many an apparent loss into a draw.

Diagram 96



White to Play and Draw

Continue from Diagram 96: ... 20-16! (A key pitch as Black was threatening to play 11-15); 11-20 27-23; 20-24 22-18; 24-27 18-9; 10-14 (Against 27-31 White escapes with 23-18; 10-14 18-15; 31-

27 15-11; 27-23 19-15; 23-19 15-10 as the black man on square 13 provides unwilling support!) 9-6; 27-31 6-2; 31-27 2-6; 27-18 6-9; 13-17 19-15!; 18-11 9-18; 17-22 18-25; 11-15 25-22! Drawn. Note that at the last move 21-17? would lose to 15-18!

## Endgame

*Endgame*: a game ending in which both sides have achieved a king, or at least have gained a clear run to the king-row.

## Lesson 21: The Opposition

This term was introduced in Chapter 3, but now requires expansion. Suffice to say that more nonsense has been written about the opposition than any other aspect of the game, so I will try to make things crystal clear.

Opposition: in any position where the forces are equal, a player is said to possess this factor if, *in the context of pairing up each of his pieces with those of his opponent*, treating the board as empty each time, he has the last move.

Since this makes no allowance for the relative disposition of the forces, the proper response to such an abstract definition is: So what? And indeed, possession of the opposition per se, has no significance whatsoever. When then is it important?

Boiling things down, the opposition may be disregarded as irrelevant in the opening and midgame, and only worthy of consideration in endgame situations.

Boiling things down further, in these situations the opposition has two major applications.

First, when the forces are equal, *and other necessary conditions are in place*, possession of the opposition may be the deciding factor which enables a win to be scored. Two classic examples are given in Lessons 23 and 24.

Secondly, when one side is a piece down, *and other necessary conditions, including holding a man immobile on a vertical edge of the board, are in place*, possession of the opposition – the immobile man is ignored during the pairing-off – may be the

deciding factor in enabling a draw to be registered. Two classic examples are given in Lesson 26.

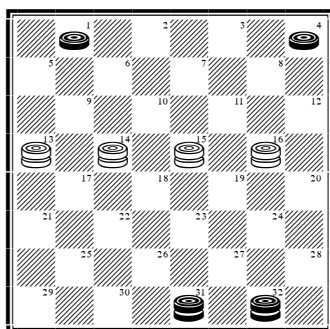
It's also important to be aware that the opposition *may* be changed through an exchange of pieces or when a man enters the 'dog hole' (squares 5 and 28); the latter being because here a piece holds an opposing man even though they are on adjoining squares. Countless rules have been formulated in this regard, but all of them are confusing and unnecessary. Instead, you should analyze each position on its own merits, using the pairing-off method to ascertain the effect of any available continuation on the opposition.

### Lesson 22: Playing Against Backward Men

We have already seen from Diagram 9 that any open all-king endgame where the forces are equal should be given up as a draw as there is nothing left to play for.

However, in a situation where one side can crown all of his pieces and the other side is unable to, things are very different. This applies with particular force when there are two backward men as in Diagram 97.

Diagram 97



Either Side to Play, White Wins

Although the forces are equal, White clearly has a considerable advantage. Namely, he has crowned all of his pieces and they

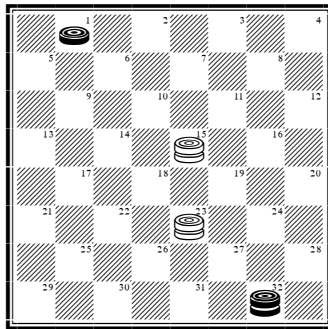
are both centralized and connected. By contrast, while Black's two kings are connected, his two men are completely undeveloped, and it should come as no surprise that, with or without the opposition, White can force a win.

White's plan, which is the one to be generally applied in these cases, consists of the following three steps:

First, attacking Black's kings and rendering them immobile or threatened with the same. Secondly, forcing one or both men to move into more vulnerable positions. Finally, repeating steps 1 and 2 until Black's pieces interfere irreparably with each other.

The situation represented in Diagram 98 crops up frequently, both in play and analysis, and illustrates a point which is so fundamental that experts take it for granted.

Diagram 98



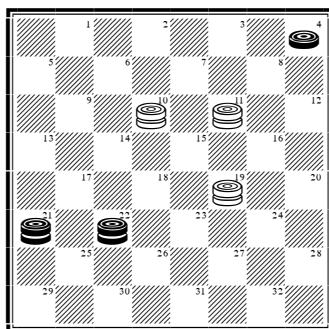
White to Play, Black Draws

By pairing off the white king on square 23 with the black king on 32 and mentally moving 15-10, you can see that White possesses the opposition. However, when White follows the plan outlined above, his two kings confronting Black's king in the double-corner, Black's backward man is able to slink down to the king-row without any interference because it is on the opposite side of the board. (Of course, with Black to play it is also a draw.)

This principle also applies in Diagram 99, and indicates the ap-

proach which should be undertaken when you are the defending side.

Diagram 99



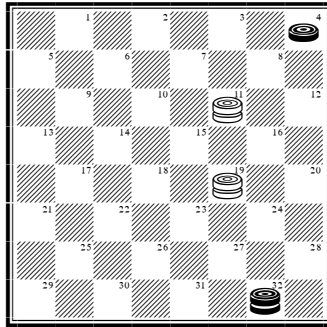
Either Side to Play, Black Draws

Because of his backward man on square 4, Black has taken the wise step of positioning his two kings on the opposite side of the board. Now, irrespective of who has the opposition, he is able to secure a draw. Naturally this can be extended to cover three kings and a man versus four kings, or even four kings and a man versus five kings. That said, the defender must still employ care and, unless facing an expert, the attacker is fully justified in playing these endgames out.

### Lesson 23: First Position

The situation portrayed in Diagram 100 is of quite a different order to that in Diagram 98, and represents easily the most important endgame there is.

Diagram 100



White to Play and Win

The key features are as follows:

First, the attacker possesses the opposition; otherwise the scientific result would be a draw. To confirm this, pair off the white king on 11 with the black man on 4 and then mentally play 19-23: White has the 'last move'. Secondly, at least one of Black's pieces is a single-man. Thirdly, White has, or can develop, two kings while keeping Black's single-man confined to the right-hand side of the board. And finally, the Black king can be prevented from reaching the other double-corner.

In the following skeletal continuation, White follows the generic strategy outlined in Lesson 22, while Black plays his part by delaying the advance of his man for as long as possible. A far more detailed treatment is given in Book 2.

Continue from Diagram 100: ... 11-15; 32-28 15-18; 28-32 18-23; 32-28 23-27; 28-32 19-23; 32-28 27-32 (The king is attacked relentlessly); 28-24 32-28; 24-20 23-19! (23-18? allows the black king to reach the haven of the 'triple-corner' created by the man on 4, and a draw results); 20-24 19-15; 24-27 15-18; 4-8 (Must advance now) 18-15; 27-23 28-32; 8-12 (And again) 32-28; 23-27 15-18; 12-16 (And again) 28-32; 27-24 18-15; 24-28 15-11! (15-18?, which has been played by more than one master player, allows Black to get through with 16-19! 32-27; 19-23!); 16-19

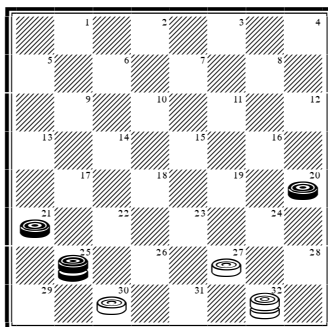


32-27; 28-32 27-31; 19-23 11-15; 32-28 15-19! White wins.

### Lesson 24: Second Position

Another classic endgame situation which must be known is Second Position: this is given in greater detail in Book 3.

Diagram 101



White to Play and Win

It is again worth emphasizing the difference between a situation and a position. Second Position, so called, is actually a situation with certain defining features. Within these confines, there are thousands of possible positions. The above position, which is typically given, is simply the one which best brings out the key points.

In this situation the attacker possesses the opposition; otherwise the scientific result would be a draw. To confirm this, pair off the pieces on 21 and 30 and those on 20 and 27. Now mentally play 32-27 (Remember the board is being treated as empty); 25-22 27-23 and you can see that White has the 'last move'. Additionally, one of the black men is held on 21 while the other is held on the opposite side of the board. And lastly, the third black piece is, or can become, a king, although its scope is severely limited.

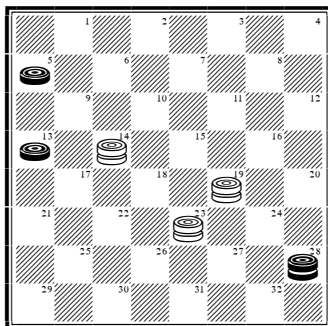
The winning procedure is lengthy but mechanical, and will be explained as we go along.

Continue from Diagram 101: ... 32-28; 25-22 28-24; 22-18 24-19; 18-22 (Against 18-14 27-23! is the best way to force the win) 19-15; 22-17 15-18; 17-13 18-22 (Now that the white king is holding the black man on 21, his own man on 30 can be released to become a king); 13-9 30-26; 9-6 26-23; 6-10 23-18; 10-6 18-14; 6-1 14-9; 1-5 9-6; 5-1 6-2; 1-5 2-6; 5-1 6-10; 1-5 10-15; 5-9 15-19 (Now that the white king is holding the black man on 20, his own man on 27 can be released to become a king); 9-14 27-23; 14-10 23-18; 10-6 18-14; 6-1 14-9; 1-5 9-6; 5-1 6-2; 1-5 2-6; 5-1 6-10 (This king has to be brought back to square 27 to effect the win. If instead White prematurely carries out the two exchanges given in this solution, the black king escapes to the double-corner and safety); 1-5 10-14; 5-1 14-18; 1-6 18-23; 6-10 23-27 (Now the exchanges can take place); 10-14 19-23; 14-9 23-18; 9-6 18-14; 6-1 14-9; 1-5 22-17! (This exchange alters the opposition. However, it is hardly a cause for celebration for Black, as the confining nature of the situation means that White can regain it with another exchange); 5-14 17-10; 21-25 10-15; 25-30 15-19; 30-26 (Black is striving to reach the opposite double-corner) 27-32; 26-22 (Still trying) 19-24! (Regains the opposition and is just in time to cut Black off); 20-27 32-23; 22-17 23-18; 17-13 18-14. White wins. At last!

### **Lesson 25: One v Two Holds**

There are 11 ways in which one king can hold two opposing pieces on the left or right-hand side of the board. On its own, this hold will allow the piece-down side to score a draw (7 cases) or even a win (4 cases). Where the forces are equal, and such a hold can be obtained as part of a larger set up, it is almost always something to be sought and may be the telling factor in obtaining a win. Diagram 102 represents this situation in a stark form.

Diagram 102



Either Side to Play, White Wins

Here the white king on square 14 holds the two black men on squares 5 and 13, while the two white kings carry out the rout of the lone black king. In effect White is a piece up. If you now refer back to Diagram 3, where Tinsley crushed Chinook, you can see that in due course a black king on square 11 is set to hold the two white men on squares 12 and 20. That is why Chinook resigned.

Here are the 11 holds in isolation. In each case it is Black to play.

Hold 1: Black men on 5 and 13; white king on 14. White wins.

Hold 2: Black man on 5, black king on 13; white king on 14. Drawn.

Hold 3: Black men on 13 and 21; white king on 22. White wins.

Hold 4: Black man on 13, black king on 21; white king on 22. Drawn.

Hold 5: Black man on 13, black king on 29; white king on 21 or 22. White wins.

Hold 6: Black man on 21, black king on 29; white king on 13 or 14 or 22 or 23 or 30 or 31. Drawn.

Hold 7: Black men on 4 and 12; white king on 11. Drawn.

Hold 8: Black man on 4, black king on 12; white king on 11. Drawn.

Hold 9: Black men on 12 and 20; white king on 19. Drawn.

Hold 10: Black man on 12, black king on 20; white king on 19. Drawn.

Hold 11: Black man on 28, black king on 32; white king on 23. White wins.

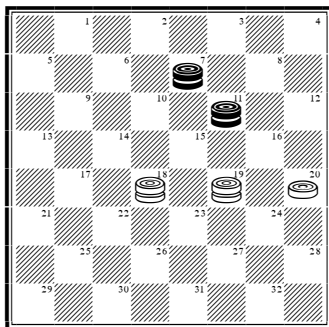
### **Lesson 26: Piece-Down Situations**

Playing against an expert, it is considered good sportsmanship to resign the losing all-king endgames covered in Chapter 3, rather than play them out to the bitter end. Until all of your opponent's men have been crowned however, there may yet be hope.

In order to obtain a draw in these situations, the defending side seeks to hold one of the opponent's men immobile on a vertical edge of the board: the pivot man. If, through attacking one of the defending kings and by rendering it immobile, the other defending king or kings are forced to relinquish their hold on the pivot man, then the attacking side will win. Otherwise, a draw will result.

Book 4 deals with a number of these man-down draws, but for the moment we will focus on Payne's Single-Corner Draw: the most famous of them all.

Diagram 103



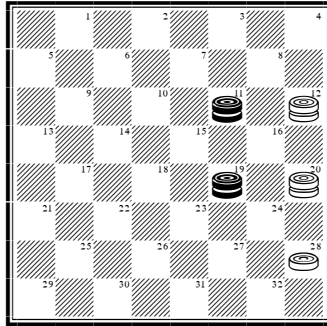
Black to Play and Draw

In Diagram 103, by ignoring the pivot man on 20, pairing off the black king on 11 with the white king on 19 and mentally playing 7-10, you can readily see that Black possesses the opposition. Several authorities have pointed out that if the attacking side tries too hard to ‘win this draw’, he often ends up losing instead!

Continue from Diagram 103: 7-10 19-16; 10-7 18-23; 11-8 (Asking for 23-19?; 8-12 and a black win) 16-12; 8-11 23-19; 7-3 (7-10? loses in a similar fashion to Diagram 16) 12-16; 3-7 19-24; 11-15 24-28; 15-11 16-19; 7-3 28-32; 3-7 (3-8? loses to 20-16!; 11-20 19-24; 20-27 32-23). Drawn.

Third Position, given in Diagram 104, is closely related to the situation above, but with a different outcome. Its fine details are beyond the scope of this chapter (See Book 4), but it is mentioned here in order to make an important point about the opposition.

Diagram 104



White to Play and Win

When you ignore the white man on 28 and pair up the white kings on 12 and 20 with the black kings on 11 and 19, you can see that Black has the opposition. Crucially, although White can force a win with super-fine play, this fact allows Black to put up a tremendous fight, with the ever-present possibility of the situation drifting into that of Diagram 103. Lacking the opposition, Black loses with barely a whimper.

### Lesson 27: Bridge Endgames

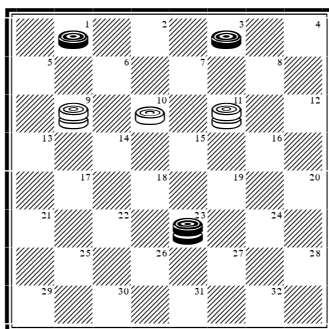
Referring back to Diagram 95, you will see that Black has retained king-row men on 1 and 3. As stated there, if possible it is almost always best to break up this configuration, either using the simple method discussed or by means of several more subtle approaches addressed in Book 5. Failing this, in order to crown White would either need to post a man on 12 and enter the restrictive single-corner via 11-8, or post one on 10, the keystone, forming a bridge, and enter via 9-6 or 11-7.

Some authorities seem to think that the side forming a bridge is necessarily weak, and that the one holding the bridge is necessarily strong. For this reason they advocate that players should make a policy of retaining two king-row men on 1 and 3 (for Black) or 30 and 32 (for White). However, this advice is faulty for three reasons. First, as mentioned in Lesson 18, there are

several serious structural weaknesses which commonly attend the early movement of the man on 2 (or 31). Secondly, even when its movement is sound, the resultant bridge endgames are often exceptionally hard to evaluate. And thirdly, bridges can sometimes be strong for the forming side.

In Diagram 105 White has crowned two men under a bridge, and got his kings back out before Black is in a position to restrict their movement.

Diagram 105

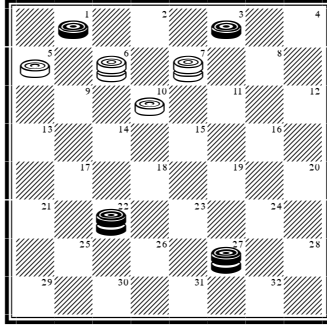


White to Play and Win

Since White has the opposition and Black has two backward men, it should not come as too much of a surprise that White can force a win from this position.

By contrast, in Diagram 106 Black has the opposition and has succeeded in crowning two kings, while White is tied down to protecting the keystone which is open to attack from four possible directions. In this instance, the forming side is indeed fatally weak.

Diagram 106



Black to Play and Win

In short, bridges are very tricky: both from the standpoint of holding them and forming them. Of course, a firm understanding of the key ones is vital, for which see Book 5, but in general I would advocate their avoidance.



## Chapter 6

# Freestyle Repertoire

### Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a short, manageable repertoire for the freestyle player. By providing the reasons for the moves, you will find it easy to commit them to memory. Rest assured all of the recommendations are rock solid and guaranteed to get you off to a good start: and in many cases a winning one! Incidentally, to follow the play with ease, it would be best to have two boards at hand: one to keep track of the line under discussion and one to follow the notes. In addition to the points made in Lessons 16 through 19, in the opening the following observation is crucial.

The strength or weakness of an opening move is measured in terms of the strongest *immediate* reply.—  
*Maurice Chamblee*

With all of this in mind, let's start by considering a good rejoinder to Black's strongest opening move, 11-15.

### **As White: Responding to 11-15**

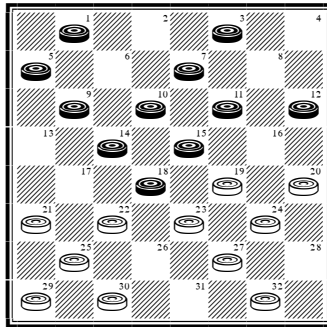
Because it is best, 11-15 more or less defines freestyle play as undertaken by the masters and grandmasters. To be frank it is the least likely move to be played by the fellow novices you will

face first, but that is by the way: the other six opening moves will be covered in Lessons 37 to 42.

### Lesson 28: Trunk (Main line of play)

11-15(A) 23-19(B); 8-11(C) (V6) 22-17(D); 4-8(E) (V1) 17-13(F); 15-18(G) 24-20(H); 9-14(I) 28-24(J); 11-15(K) 26-23(L); 8-11(M) 31-26(N); 6-9(O) 13-6; 2-9 26-22(P) [Diagram 107]; 1-6(Q) ... even position

Diagram 107: *Old 14th*



Black to Play

A: The strongest move because it exits from the single-corner towards the centre. It retains the initiative conferred by virtue of having the first move, and guarantees Black a theoretical edge irrespective of White's immediate reply.

B: All seven of White's possible replies are sound and have their followers. This flanking move gets my recommendation because it prevents Black from occupying square 19 and does not put White ahead in development as would be the case with the 22-18 and 24-19 exchanges.

C: Developing naturally along the single-corner diagonal. Other moves are covered in Variations 6, 7 and 8.

D: Working in tandem with 23-19, this and White's next move is part of a plan to invite Black to overcrowd the centre.

E: At this stage Black has six good options and you must be prepared to meet them all. The text is the most natural choice as it continues with Black's policy of single-corner development.

F: A natural developing move which keeps White's position intact and imposes a slight cramp on Black's double-corner. A good alternative, much favoured, is the unlikely-looking 25-22. This would appear to permit a powerful single-corner cramp with 9-13, but long standing analysis has shown that after 27-23; 6-9 23-18; 9-14 18-9; 5-14 26-23 White's position is sound, with tricks available for both sides.

G: Easily best, but by no means always taken. It forms what is known as the *Old 14<sup>th</sup>*, although it originally arose by a different order of moves: 11-15 22-17; 8-11 17-13; 4-8 23-19; 15-18 same. Instead, 9-14, though natural in appearance, invariably leads to trouble for Black, and a knowledge of the best continuation for White will win many games for you. Continue: 9-14 25-22 and Black has two plausible moves. 1) 15-18 22-15; 11-18 29-25; 14-17 (After 10-15 19-10; 6-15 White is often able to grip Black's central men to advantage with 26-23; 8-11 30-26; 2-6 26-22. Also, 5-9? loses after 26-23; 1-5 30-26 and 7-11? loses after 26-23; 2-7 24-20; 11-15 28-24; 8-11 30-26; 5-9 26-22; 1-5 31-26: a beautiful tie-up) 21-14; 10-17 24-20; 17-21 26-23; 6-10 23-14; 10-17 27-24 and White is powerful. 2) 14-18 (Unless there is an immediate tactical follow-up, a plunging move like this is rarely good. Even worse is 5-9? 26-23!; 1-5 22-17: a 12-move win I have scored on the Internet on around 50 occasions!) 29-25; 5-9? (11-16 draws narrowly after 21-17; 16-23 26-19; Black being forced to play a man down with 5-9 17-14; 10-26 30-5) 26-23; 9-14 22-17; 1-5 30-26; 5-9 26-22. White wins. Black overcrowded the centre and was punished with a crushing pincer attack.

H: Cramping Black's single-corner.

I: Sometimes in checkers the order of moves is critical, sometimes of no consequence. 11-15 28-24; 9-14 26-23 comes into the latter category.

J: In checkers, transpositions (arriving at the same position via

different routes) have an important role to play. Although not strictly relevant to our current discussion, this position also arises soundly from 11-15 24-20; 8-11 28-24; 4-8 23-19; 9-14 22-17; 15-18 17-13 same.

K: The 10-15 exchange is also popular, after which 26-23; 15-19 (12-16? looks good, but loses to an advanced tactical device. Among aficionados these are known as shots or strokes. See if you can find the winning combination after the initial 23-19!) 24-15; 5-9 13-6; 1-26 31-15; 11-18 25-22; 18-25 29-22 is dead even.

L: 25-22; 18-25 29-22; 8-11 27-23 is also sound and preferred by many. It should be kept in mind that any given position may permit several logical, sound moves. It may also allow for illogical, sound moves! On the flip-side there are obviously innumerable illogical, unsound moves. Of particular importance are logical, natural moves which are unsound. It is necessarily these which have had the greatest effect on the game's development.

M: 6-9 13-6; 2-9 31-26; 8-11 is another inconsequential interchange of moves.

N: Based on the advice given in Lesson 18 the reader, reluctant to move the man on 31, might reject to the text in favour of the solid-looking 30-26. However, this loses after 6-9! 13-6; 2-9 26-22; 9-13 31-26; 5-9 32-28; 1-5 19-16; 12-19 23-16; 14-17 21-14; 10-17 25-21; 18-25 29-22; 15-19! 24-8; 3-19 21-14; 9-25. Black wins. Two points need to be made here. First, I also made the point that flexibility is crucial: the game would not have continued to enthrall and challenge the finest minds if it were completely susceptible to fixed 'rules'. And secondly, in addition to making static evaluations, the aspiring player needs to develop his powers of visualization in combination with the technique of elimination (for which see Chapter 7). Although 24 moves deep, the winning line given is well within the reach of an expert playing 'crossboard' (extemporizing).

O: 5-9 looks like a blunder, but draws after 21-17 (Declining the offer gives Black the advantage); 14-21 23-5; 15-18 26-23; 18-22

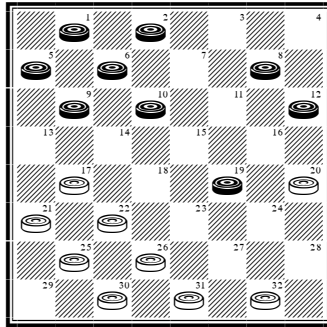
25-18; 10-15 19-10; 6-22 23-18 7-10 and Black is able to draw though a man down. This is in large part due to the zombie-like status of the white man on square 5 (For Black, square 28): the so-called dog hole.

P: Easily White's best move, and sets Black up for perhaps the most famous shot in the entire game.

Q: If not told of the presence of a shot, a player would need x-ray vision to see through the fatal flaw in 9-13? Known as the Big Shot in the *Old 14<sup>th</sup>*, the blue touch-paper is lit with 20-16! and 22-17! (played in either order). After 1-6, play continues with 22-17; 18-22 25-18; 15-22 23-18! (As mentioned in Lesson 17, this type of exchange should only be adopted for a specific purpose. Here White seeks to gain control of the centre. Instead, the feeble 17-13? loses after the 14-17 double-exchange); 14-23 27-18 to an ancient draw. Instead of 1-6, 3-8 demands the opposite approach. Namely, 22-17; 18-22 25-18; 15-22 and now the 23-18 exchange is bad, as Black has the 9-14 exchange available in reply, whereas 17-13!; 1-6 23-18; 14-23 27-18 draws. For obvious reasons the 1-6/3-8 duo are known as 'twisters'.

### **Lesson 29: Variation 1 (Off Trunk)**

11-16(A) (V2) 24-20(B); 16-23(C); 27-11; 7-16 20-11; 3-7(D) 28-24(E); 7-16 24-20(F); 16-19(G) 25-22(H); 4-8(H) 29-25(H) [Diagram 108]; 10-15(I) ... Black has the edge

Diagram 108: *Glasgow*

Black to Play

A: Known as the *Glasgow*, Black temporarily gives up a man in order to rapidly develop his single-corner while attacking White's double-corner. This idea arises from several ballots.

B: Easily best.

C: 15-24 20-11; 7-16 27-11 comes to the same thing.

D: By far the best way to regain the man. Instead, 3-8 allows White to significantly disrupt Black's king-row with 11-7; 2-11, removing both central men. Tenable but not desirable.

E: This is the favoured approach. Instead, 25-22; 7-16 22-18 is also logical and sound, as is 11-8; 4-11. The latter has an interesting history. Appealing naturally to the beginner because it removes a second king-row man, this was frowned upon by experts for many years aware that this was actually of no disadvantage to Black and in fact assisted him in the formation of a strong long dyke. However, largely due to excellent analysis by Jack Cox, 11-8 is currently held to be both sound and an ideal choice for the adventurous player.

F: Applying some pressure to Black's single-corner.

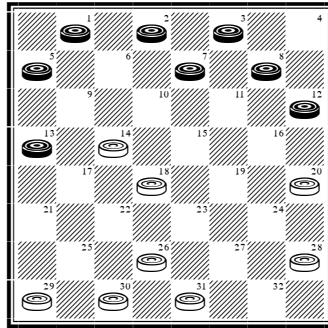
G: Positions such as this, which can arise from a number of different routes are known as landings. In *Complete Checkers I* identified 26 Key Landings, this being #12.

H: Natural developing moves along the single-corner diagonal.

I: This is where the action really begins in the *Glasgow*: an opening which the late, great Tom Wiswell advocated for players of all levels. Surveying the scene, you can see that Black's double-corner is intact while White's is shattered. In compensation, White is slightly cramping Black's single-corner and has a couple more moves in hand. After 10-15 play typically continues with 17-13; 2-7! (Reluctantly forced to move this man because the natural 9-14 loses to 20-16!; 2-7 and 22-18!) 21-17 and now both 7-10 and 8-11 are good. Instead of 10-15, 9-14 is effectively met with 22-18!; 14-23 17-14; 10-17 21-14; 2-7 31-27: simplifying the position and eventually regaining the sacrificed man. Likewise, the aggressive 19-24 is cleverly countered with the 17-14!; 9-18 22-15; 10-19 32-28 sacrifice. It will come as no surprise to learn that both sacrifices are the result of detailed analysis, and not the moves which were originally played: their purpose being to reduce Black's attacking scope. At the same time they limit White's winning chances, so whether they are 'best' or not is a matter for the reader. Incidentally, instead of 10-15, 9-14 and 19-24, take a look at 8-11?? Believe it or not this was once played in a top-level match!

### **Lesson 30: Variation 2 (Off Variation 1)**

9-13(A) (V3) 17-14(B); 10-17 21-14; 15-18(C) 24-20(D); 4-8(E) 27-23(F); 18-27 32-23; 11-15(G) 19-10; 6-15 23-18(H); 15-22 25-18 [Diagram 109] ... even position

Diagram 109: *Mixed*

Black to Play

A: Known as the *Mixed*, this opening is noted for its fearsome complications.

B: Lesson 28, Note F, featured an unnatural-looking 25-22 move, permitting a single-corner cramp, which was nonetheless sound. Here it is fatal because Black has not committed 4-8 and thus has a move in hand for cramping purposes. In any case, the text, which exchanges onto square 14, is clearly the logical choice.

C: The natural rejoinder. The rarely seen and inferior 4-8 19-10; 6-15 is met with 24-19; 15-24 28-19 while 6-9? 19-10; 9-18 allows White to break up Black's position with 26-22; 7-14 22-8; 4-11. Not only has the heart been ripped out of Black's centre, with the absence of men on squares 6 and 7, but he is also significantly ahead in development. By contrast, the white position is marvellously intact.

D: The complications mentioned in Note A arise from 19-15 or 26-23 at this point. The text, which cramps Black's single-corner, was designed to keep the position under control.

E: Natural single-corner development. Against 6-10 White reduces the forces with 27-24; 10-17 26-22; 17-26 31-8; 4-11 19-16; 12-19 24-8; 3-12 25-22. A series of waiting moves leads to a similar clear out against 6-9. Namely, 28-24; 1-6 19-15; 4-8 32-28; 12-16 26-23 followed by the 18-22 shot. Finally, the aggressive



3-8, which is more pro-active than 4-8, is countered with 19-15; 6-10 15-6; 1-17 25-22; 18-25 30-14.

F: This type of radical exchange, mentioned in Lesson 17, is quite unusual. There are two good reasons for it. First, in this position the 25-22 exchange doesn't work out. And secondly, it anticipates Black's 11-15 exchange and the return 23-18 exchange.

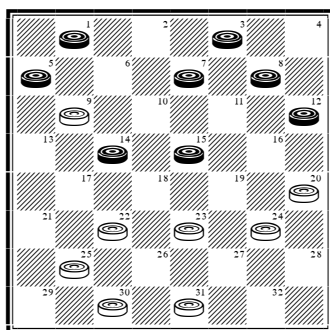
G: A logical move which seeks to control the centre.

H: Returning the compliment. With a mini-triangle of men on squares 26, 30 and 31 and natural developing moves available in 29-25 and 28-24, White has nothing to fear.

**Lesson 31: Variation 3 (Off Variation 2)**

9-14(A) (V4) 25-22(B); 6-9(C) 17-13(D); 2-6(E) 29-25(F); 4-8(F) 24-20(G); 15-24 28-19; 11-15(H) 27-24(I); 14-17(J); 21-14; 9-18 26-23(K); 18-27 32-23; 10-14(L) 19-10; 6-15 13-9(M) [Diagram 110]; 14-17(N) ... even position

Diagram 110: *Souter*



Black to Play

A: A natural move towards the centre which keeps Black's options open. A move never seen in top-level play, but worthy of a brief mention, is 10-14? After the double-exchange you will note that Black has gained 4 moves in development (undesir-

able), and created a huge hole on squares 6 and 7. Watchful waiting by White will see Black crumble in due course.

B: Natural single-corner development.

C: A critical branching point. Black can choose from six plausible moves: 4-8, 5-9, 14-18, 3-8, 11-16 and the text. Against 4-8, 17-13 transposes into Lesson 28, Note G, and is inferior for Black. The continuation against 5-9 is instructive: 17-13 (White cannot permit the fatal single-corner grip with 9-13); 3-8? (At this point 11-16 is best, although White gains a distinct advantage after 24-20, but 1-5? falls almost instantly to the binding 22-17!) 22-17! (26-23?; 11-16 transposes into a sound *Whilter* formation given shortly, whereas this gains a crucial move in the attack on Black's double-corner. Time and timing is a critical factor in checkers and this is a beautiful example); 11-16 29-25; 16-23 26-19! (Maintaining the bind); 7-11 27-23; 11-16 24-20; 15-24 28-19! (Wonderful play. By leaving the man on 16 'hanging', it forces Black to move the man on 1); 1-5 20-11; 8-24 25-22! (Again perfect timing. Instead, 32-28? allows Black to secure a draw with 24-27 31-24; and 2-7) ... White wins. Thirdly, 14-18 is akin to Lesson 28, Note G, but in this case is even worse! Continue: ... 29-25!; 11-16 26-23; 6-9 23-14; 9-18 17-13; 16-23 24-19; 15-24 22-6; 1-10 28-19; 4-8 27-18; 8-11 18-14; 10-17 21-14; 11-16 14-9; 5-14 31-27; 16-23 27-9. White wins. A sound option for Black is as follows: 3-8 26-23; 5-9 17-13; 11-16 forming the *Whilter*. With 9-14 already committed, 11-16 24-20 forms the *Glasgow* opening but with less scope than in Lesson 29. Finally, there is the text move which leads to a development which is loved and loathed in equal measure.

D: White cannot permit the 9-13 grip.

E: Forced and forms the *Souter*. Permitting the exchange would wreck Black's formation, while 1-6? loses instantly to 22-17! as mentioned in Note C.

F: Watchful waiting.

G: The most natural move here is 22-17, and for this reason

it was worked on first. Although it draws, it has fallen out of use because it is known to lead into complications favouring Black. The odd-looking text move was tried out through necessity rather than conviction, and has been shown through analysis to be both sound and to contain winning chances. Finally, there is 26-23, which allows Black to break up the position with either 14-17 or 14-18. To the venturesome player 26-23 may be 'best'; for the studious type it may be 24-20; for the risk-taker, 22-17.

H: Natural and best. The 14-18 exchange has been shown by analysis to lose to the odd-looking 32-28 waiting move.

I: Forced and creates an ugly-looking double-corner.

J: But look what happens against the natural 8-11 here! Continue: 8-11? 32-27!; 3-8 22-17; 15-18 26-23; 11-15 30-26; 8-11 26-22. White wins. Bottled up or what?

K: Best by test.

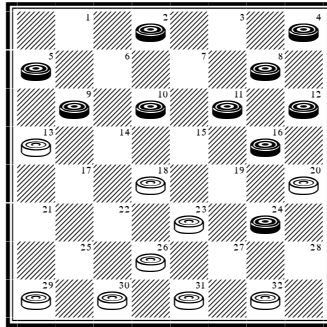
L: This is natural and best. However, 5-9 will draw.

M: 23-19?? is a howler, being met with 14-18!

N: In addition to the text, Black has options in 14-18 23-14; 7-10 and 14-18 23-14; 7-11 and 14-18 23-14; 8-11 and 14-18 23-14; 15-19 and 7-10 and 7-11 and 8-11.

### **Lesson 32: Variation 4 (Off Variation 3)**

3-8(A) (V5) 25-22(B); 11-16(C) 27-23(D); 7-11(E) 24-20!(F); 15-24 28-19; 10-14(G) 17-10; 6-24 22-18(H); 1-6(I) 21-17(J); 6-10(K) 17-13 [Diagram 111] 24-27(L) ... even position

Diagram 111: *Alma*

Black to Play

A: Forms the *Alma*: a favourite among several master players but rightly shunned by the rank and file because of the difficulties it presents.

B: Natural and best.

C: Applying pressure to White's double-corner. Instead, 9-14 transposes into the *Whilter*, as mentioned in Lesson 31, Note C.

D: Preparing for the surprising sacrifice which follows. Two points arise. First, this is a definite instance where knowledge is power. Secondly, not only is this the most aggressive move it is also arguably the safest move. A popular saying, attributed to Alfred Jordan, is 'Keep the draw in sight'. This is actually not nearly as negative as it sounds, and is simply counselling the student to resist 'attacking' until a weakness has been created in the opponent's position. Granted such an opportunity, the only safe policy is to play for a win: in checkers, timid or inaccurate play in these circumstances often results in a loss.

E: 16-20 32-27; 8-11 19-16; 12-19 23-16 favours White.

F: A remarkable move, which at first sight looks like a blunder, but is justified because of Black's strangulated single-corner.

G: Forced: if Black doesn't accept the sacrifice, it leaves White

with all of the advantages and none of the disadvantages!

H: 32-28 is hopeless, losing to both 9-14 and 1-6. However, White is hardly likely to instigate the sacrifice at Note F without knowing the proper continuation.

I: Against 9-13 White secures the draw with 32-28; against the 9-14 exchange with 26-22 and against 24-28 with 29-25; 1-6 25-22; 6-10. The last-named continuation is highly involved and often leads to delicate endgames for Black.

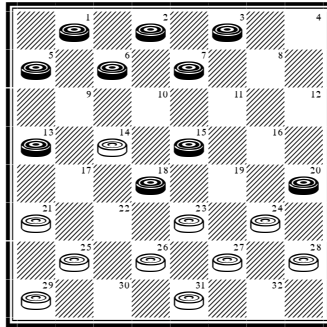
J: 29-25 also draws, but this is more forceful.

K: This leads to a clear-cut finish. A subtle alternative is 2-7! This is not played with the *expectation* of White playing 18-15? (It loses after 11-27 20-2; 12-16 32-23; 9-13 2-9; 13-22 26-17; 5-21. Black wins), but rather in the knowledge that White *can't* play it. Having thus occupied square 7, Black is then able to force the 16-19 exchange, seemingly giving him a comparatively free game with a man to the good. Checkers affords many opportunities for such tempo-gaining finesses. The trick is to be alert to them. Of course, being the remarkable game it is, there is always more than meets the eye. Continue after 2-7: ... 32-28! (A superior move order to the original 17-14; 16-19 23-16; 12-19 32-28; 9-13 29-25 and yet another example of proper timing); 16-19 23-16; 12-19 29-25; 9-13 25-21! (Avoiding 17-14 which transposes back into the original play); 13-22 26-17 and White is strongly situated even though a man down.

L: After the text move, proper timing is again critical, with 13-6; 2-9 31-24; 10-15 26-22 being proper and the careless 31-24?? losing to 10-15.

### Lesson 33: Variation 5 (Off Variation 4)

15-18(A) 19-15(B); 10-19 24-8; 4-11 17-14(C); 11-15(D) 28-24(E); 12-16(F) 26-23(G); 16-20(H) 30-26(I); 9-13(J) 32-28(K) [Diagram 112] ... even position

Diagram 112: *Centre*

Black to Play

A: Forms the *Centre*. Permitting a great deal of variety for both sides, and being very evenly balanced, it is something of a mystery why it is not adopted more often.

B: This 2 for 2 is natural and best, and is the first move an expert would consider. White might take the 17-14 exchange, with a view to transposing into the *Mixed* opening after 9-13 in reply. However, although 17-14 is sound, Black would be more likely to reply with 11-16, and White would be thrown onto his own resources. In other words, every proposed transposition has to be checked move-for-move. Otherwise, to quote Marion Tinsley, 'You'll get knocked down while crossing the road.'

C: Natural, although there is enormous scope here.

D: To the centre and best.

E: Again towards the centre and best. Incidentally, it is almost always better to play 28-24 rather than 27-24 when playing routine developing moves (5-9 rather than 6-9 for Black), as the man on 27 (6 for Black) occupies a more central and important position.

F: Attacking White's double-corner and destined for square 20, this is in line with the policy of rapid single-corner development. A good alternative is 7-11, lining up three men on 11, 15 and

18 directed against White's single-corner. A safe continuation runs: ... 26-23; 9-13 23-19; 6-10 14-7; 3-10 25-22; 18-25 29-22; 5-9 27-23; 9-14 32-28 with a completely even position.

G: It suits White to help Black on his way.

H: Consistent with Note F.

I: 31-26 looks and is inferior, being strongly met with 7-11; text is natural.

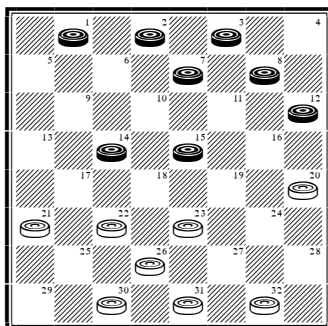
J: But now 7-11 is well met with the solid 32-28.

K: Works beautifully in tandem with 30-26 and prepares for the 24-19 exchange.

### Lesson 34: Variation 6 (Off Trunk)

9-14(A) (7) 27-23(B); 8-11(C) 22-18(D); 15-22 25-9; 5-14(E) 29-25(F); 11-15(G) 25-22(H); 4-8(I) 24-20(J); 15-24 28-19; 10-15(K) 19-10; 6-15 [Diagram 113] ... even position

Diagram 113: *Defiance*



White to Play

A: Towards the centre from the double-corner: not quite as strong as 8-11, but logical and good.

B: Forms the *Defiance*, a restrictive defence so named because it defies Black other opening developments which afford more

scope for attack. The only decent alternative is 22-17. This is addressed from the black standpoint in Lesson 48.

C: Easily best. Black's three alternatives are as follows. First, 7-11, which is covered in Lesson 35. Secondly, 5-9, which is met with 22-18; 15-22 25-18; 7-11 (Against 8-11 19-15; 10-19 24-8; 4-11 28-24; 7-10 29-25 is easy) 26-22; 11-15 18-11; 8-15 24-20; 15-24 28-19; 4-8 22-18; 8-11 30-26; 2-7 32-28! to a draw. And thirdly, 6-9 (Transposes into 10-14 24-19; 6-10 27-24; 11-15 same and, as we learnt in Lesson 33, Note E, is going to be weaker than playing 5-9) 22-18; 15-22 25-18; 8-11 19-15 (Natural); 10-19 24-8; 4-11 28-24; 7-10 29-25; 9-13 18-9; 5-14 25-22 and White has the edge.

D: Natural and best to develop White's single-corner. Sometimes waiting moves are necessary, but here to wait with 32-27? allows Black to gain a valuable tempo with 6-9!, and is both unnecessary and decidedly inferior.

E: The side jump with 6-13?! is a case of swimming against the tide, although on the plus side it opens up new territory, and no doubt draws after 29-25; 5-9 23-18 and the 11-15 2 for 2.

F: Again natural and best, forming Key Landing #6. One of the strong points of this defence is that many of the moves pick themselves. Purely out of interest, it's worth noting that the once-defunct 26-22, which is not as good although it draws, is now making something of a revival, as it transposes with colours reversed into one of the ballots recently added to the 3-move deck.

G: 6-9 25-22; 9-13 24-20; 11-15 32-27!; 15-24 28-19 transposes into Note I.

H: Natural and best. Instead, the immediate 24-20 exchange allows Black to follow up with 10-15 19-10; 6-15 25-22; 15-19 23-16; 12-19: still okay for a draw, but requiring a little bit of care in the endgame.

I: 7-11 is shown in Lesson 35 and forms another position which can arise from several different ballots: Key Landing #8. Alter-



natively, Black has 6-9 24-20; 15-24 28-19; 9-13 32-27 (This fits in well now) forming Key Landing #7. A typical continuation runs 4-8 22-18; 1-5 18-9; 5-14 26-22 to a draw.

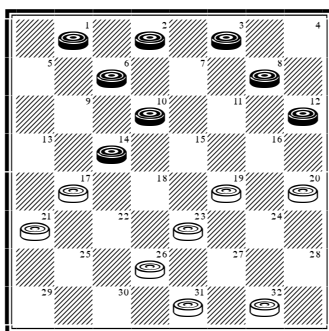
J: The best time for this exchange.

K: More dynamic than 8-11, which is well met with 22-17; 11-15 32-28; 15-24 28-19; 7-11 and 19-16 to a draw. After the text White counters with the 22-18 2 for 2 and then 31-27 with a view to exchanging onto square 18.

**Lesson 35: Variation 7 (Off Variation 6)**

7-11(A) (V8) 27-23(B); 9-14(C) 22-18(D); 15-22 25-9; 5-14 29-25(E); 11-15(F) 25-22(G); 8-11(H) 22-18(I); 15-22 26-17; 11-15(J) 24-20(K); 15-24 28-19; 4-8(L) 30-26(M) [Diagram 114] ... even position

Diagram 114: *7-11 Defiance*



Black to Play

A: The apex men, on square 7 for Black and square 26 for White, are so named for the following reason. They are at the apex of the two small triangles - consisting of men on squares 2, 3 and 7, and 26, 30 and 31 – mentioned in Lesson 18. Some authorities have counselled against moving these men early in the game, but there are so many exceptions to this guidance that it can scarcely qualify as general advice—the text being a case in point. Of more relevance is the typical character of 7-11

(For White 26-22) in contrast with that of the more usual 8-11 (For White 25-22). See Lesson 38 (26-22) and Lesson 48 (7-11) for an outline of the two main points. Of passing interest is the fact that 10-15 23-19; 7-10 forms the same position as 11-15 23-19; 7-11. However, although the latter is far more natural, it is the former which is listed in the 3-move deck.

B: White has five playable moves at this stage: the 22-18 exchange, 27-23, 26-23, 22-17 and 21-17. The text is an ideal choice for the student because it is both safe and restrictive, linking naturally with Lesson 34. Also, whereas 26-23, 22-17 and 21-17 might be said to accentuate the strength of Black's 7-11 move, 27-23 harnesses its limitations. After 22-17, for example, Black continues with 9-14 (11-16 26-23; 8-11 is also strong) 25-22; 11-16 26-23; 5-9 17-13; 3-7 and the *Whilter* opening mentioned under Lesson 31, Note C and Lesson 32, Note C. It is also covered in Lesson 48.

C: 3-7 is comfortably met with the 22-18; 15-22 25-18 exchange and 9-13 with the centre-controlling 23-18. This just leaves 11-16, which applies pressure to White's double-corner. A logical continuation runs: ... 22-18; 15-22 25-18; 10-14 29-25; 16-20 32-27 (A natural fill-in); 8-11 19-16 (A standard 2 for 2 in this type of position); 12-19 24-8; 4-11 28-24; 6-10 24-19 and White is comfortable. After 9-14, which forms the *7-11 Defiance*, the absence of the man on square 7 means that Black's options are limited in comparison with Lesson 34.

D: Logical and best.

E: Ditto: 24-20 could be played immediately, but it's natural to develop the single-corner man.

F: Ditto. For example, 11-16 is easily met with either 25-22 or 24-20 (My preference).

G: The immediate 24-20 exchange may be taken in order to break with 19-16 against 8-11, but again the single-corner development is natural.

H: Forms Key Landing #8. With the man off of square 7, 6-9

here favours White slightly, in contrast with Note I of Lesson 34.

I: The 24-20 exchange is sound but affords Black far more scope, and a number of important wins have been scored for the first side. By contrast, the text is exceptionally easy to handle.

J: 4-8 24-20; 11-15 30-26; 15-24 28-19 is an interchange of no consequence.

K: Part of a plan to meet Black's 4-8, 8-11 development.

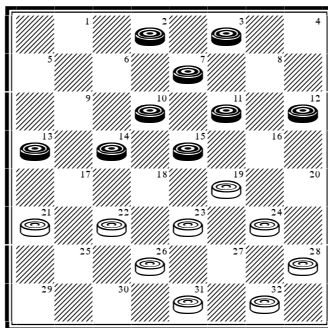
L: Natural and best.

M: A standard alignment of three men on squares 19, 23 and 26 (For Black squares 7, 10 and 14), designed to meet an advance to square 11 with the 19-16 break-up. After 12-19 23-7; 2-11, White continues with 26-23, gripping Black's 'elbow' of men on squares 1, 6, 10 and 14 with those on squares 17, 21 and 23. Edward Lasker wrongly considered elbows to be a source of strength: in fact, they generally have to be carefully nursed.

### Lesson 36: Variation 8 (Off Variation 7)

9-13(A) 22-18(B); 15-22 25-18; 10-14(C) 18-9; 5-14 27-23(D); 8-11(E) 26-22(F); 6-10(G) 22-18(H); 1-5(I) 18-9; 5-14 29-25(J); 11-15(K) 25-22(L); 4-8(M) 30-26(N); 8-11 [Diagram 115] ... even position.

Diagram 115: *Will O' The Wisp*



White to Play

A: Forms the *Will-O'-The Wisp*: a completely even opening. Incidentally, Black has one other playable option in the radical 10-14 exchange. Known as the *Virginia*, this was by no means unheard of in the freestyle era, but White's favoured reply was different then from now. After 19-10; 6-15 Continue: ... 22-18 (The practice of grandmasters such as Asa Long and Marion Tinsley has shown that apparently innocent *open* formations can still prove lethal. Instead, the heavier 22-17 was the old-time favourite, being correctly met with 14-18! rather than the natural 7-10? fill-in which loses); 15-22 26-10; 7-14 25-22; 8-11 24-19 and White is best. In Derek Oldbury's opinion, given sufficient winning incentives the game would have evolved naturally, without the need for enforced balloting. It's an interesting thought.

B: Natural and best, White of course jumping back towards the centre.

C: For once, let's look at every possible black move. There are 8 of them. 1) 12-16?? is ridiculous and loses at once. 2) 6-9?! allows White to break up Black's double-corner with 19-16; 12-19 24-6; 1-10. Both 12-16 and 6-9 would be dismissed automatically by an expert. 3) 5-9 is an ineffective waiting move, though sound, which allows White to gain a tempo and consolidate his position with 27-23. Incidentally, this transposes into another ballot: 9-13 23-19; 5-9 27-23; 11-15 22-18; 15-22 25-18 same. 4) 8-11 is natural and sound, but gives White a slight edge after the characteristic 19-15 2 for 2. 5) The 10-15 2 for 2 is a good option for the skilful crossboard player, opening up a wealth of options for both sides after 18-11 (The *Glasgow* idea with 19-10 also draws, but this is better); 7-23 (8-15 is weaker but sound) and 27-18 (26-19? horribly unbalances White's position). 6) The 13-17 exchange most gives rise to the elusive qualities suggested by the name of the opening. Continue: ... 21-14; 10-17 (A man on square 17 is particularly effective when there is no man on 25 available to force it into the dust hole: square 21 for Black and square 12 for White. When there is a man on 25, the occupation of 17 may still be sound if Black can support it

with one on 13) 29-25; 5-9 25-22; 9-13 27-23 (White adopts the correct policy of operating on the opposite wing and seeking to out-wait Black); 8-11 32-27; 4-8 24-20; 1-5 27-24; 6-9 31-27; 2-6 and a very involved midgame. 7) 7-11 (This invites complications arising from the 19-15 exchange) 27-23 (A nice finesse: if Black doesn't take the break up which is being offered, White can consolidate his position with 26-22); 10-15 19-10; 6-22 26-17; 13-22 30-26 (The *Glasgow* idea once more); 5-9 26-17; 9-13 17-14; 11-15 24-19; 15-24 28-19 and an even position. 8) And finally the text move, which is the model of calmness, allowing both sides to develop naturally. Hopefully this extended note will give the reader some idea of the thoughts which occupy an experienced player's mind. It's also of relevance that of the 8 possible moves, 7 of them are sound.

D: Part of a plan to squeeze the man on square 14.

E: Note the move order: 6-10 first would allow the 19-16 2 for 2.

F: A continuation of the plan initiated at Note D. The natural 29-25 is of course sound.

G: 11-16 and 7-10 are also good, but this natural move is the most favoured one.

H: Logical and best: when you can get to the centre first, it is almost always correct to do so.

I: This is natural and simplest, but the 14-17 exchange is good for the reasons explained in Note C, and requires careful handling. Continue: ... 21-14; 10-17 18-14; 1-5 29-25; 2-6 31-26; 17-21 25-22; 6-10 and White has to be prepared to play a man down with 24-20; 10-17 32-27 ... an involved draw.

J: Natural and best.

K: Ditto, although 4-8 25-22; 11-15 comes to the same thing.

L: White could deny Black the possibility of a break-up by playing 30-26; 4-8 and then 25-22, but this would cut out a winning opportunity. This is yet another example of the role of time/timing in the game: giving your opponent enough rope

with which to hang himself!

M: Current analysis holds that 14-17 draws while 14-18? loses. Certainly White has nothing to fear from either, so the text may be considered best.

N: In this instance 31-26 is also okay, but I prefer the text because it allows for the future 22-17 exchange.

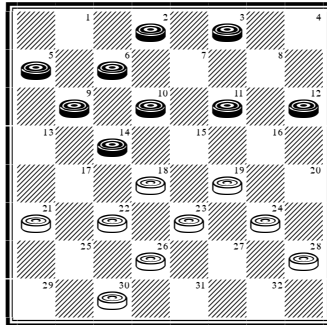
### As White: Responding to Other Initial Moves

In order of strength, these rank as follows: 9-14, 11-16, 10-15, 10-14, 12-16 and 9-13. The next six lessons provide the reader with a good rejoinder to each one.

### Lesson 37: White Reply to 9-14

9-14(A) 22-18(B); 5-9(C) 24-19(D); 11-15(E) 18-11 8-24 28-19;  
4-8(F) 25-22(G); 8-11(H) 22-18(I); 11-16(J) 29-25(K); 7-11(L)  
25-22(M); 1-5(N) 27-24(O); 16-20(P) 32-28(Q); 20-27 31-24 [Di-  
agram 116] ... even position

Diagram 116: Reply to 9-14



Black to Play

A: Moving towards the centre, but exiting from the more vulnerable double-corner, this allows White to equalize assuming the best immediate response.

B: Apart from 23-18 (and 21-17?? of course!), there is little to choose between White's possible replies. However, the text,

which is the mirror-image of 11-15, is certainly the most logical move and, from the student's standpoint, best. First, it enables White to get to the centre before Black does, and secondly, it 'puts the question' to the man on square 14.

C: Unquestionably best. Permitting the exchange with 11-15, 11-16 or 10-15 grants White a definite advantage, to varying degrees: partly because it puts Black ahead in development and partly because of the disruption it causes. The fourth exchange, with 14-17 21-14; 10-17, which may also arise from 9-13 22-18; 13-17?, has been shown by analysis to be a loss for Black and is therefore excluded from the 3-move deck. (Although it may still be played freestyle!) The details of this are not relevant to the present discussion, but the first few moves are. Continue: ... 25-21! (Developing White's single-corner while further weakening Black's double-corner); 6-10 21-14; 10-17 29-25!; 1-6 (Or Black could voluntarily enter square 21) 25-22! (Better than 25-21 on principle, because after 6-10 21-14; 10-17 the man on 17 could only be removed with the generally-disruptive 26-22 exchange); 17-21 24-19 ... White wins. Entering square 21, for Black, or 12, for White, the dust holes mentioned under Lesson 36, Note C, early in the game is generally disadvantageous because of the very limited mobility of these men. You will also note that 12-16? is too horrible to contemplate after 18-9; 6-13 (5-14?? allows a 2 for 1) 24-20! (or 23-18!) and with a damaged double-corner and a cramped single-corner, it is not surprising that this ballot is also barred. And finally, there is the 6-9 fill-in. Although this is sound, it follows from our general principles (Moving the more central man on 6 rather than that on 5) that this is weaker for Black. Continue: ... 25-22; 11-15 18-11; 8-15 and the clever waiting move with 29-25! throws Black's position out of kilter. Referring back to Lesson 36, Note C, you will see that here there are 7 possible black moves, of which 5 draw and 2 lose only as a result of detailed analysis: very little wastage. To quote the legendary Tinsley once more: '[This] surely reflects the unique character of checkers – the seemingly endless resources that can be conjured from the flimsiest structure.'

D: Logical: to the centre and very forceful. However, White has other good moves here and these are examined in Lessons 43 and 45.

E: Logical and easily best. However, the accomplished expert sometimes plays 11-16, partly because it is more complicated and partly because it may also be utilized from another ballot. Continue: ... 26-22! (Preferable to 25-22, which in Lesson 43 is already committed. This grips Black's double-corner and prevents the *Glasgow* idea shown there); 7-11 (Replying in kind. 8-11 is also okay) 22-17; 16-20 17-13! (Not 30-26? which loses to a double-action shot after 20-24!) and White is best. You will also note that 10-15 19-10; 6-22 26-10; 7-14 25-22 is inferior because it rips a hole in Black's position, helps to develop White's single-corner and gets nothing in return. Lastly, the 1-5 waiting move, although sound, is basically a wasted move, serving only to grant White a free tempo. Continue: ... 25-22; 11-15 18-11; 8-24 28-19; 4-8 25-22; 8-11 27-24; 9-13 18-9; 5-14 24-20 and White has the edge.

F: 7-11 is also played, in order to get a quicker squeeze on the man on 19, but 9-13 is inferior because it again loses a tempo.

G: My preference, but 26-22 is also popular.

H: 9-13 is again inferior, for the reason given in F. However, this didn't stop it being a favourite with Willie Ryan, one of the all-time greats. What is appropriate for a grandmaster is not necessarily appropriate for a beginner.

I: Of course: nothing else is worthy of consideration. For example, the 23-18 exchange rips open White's double-corner (holes on both 27 and 28) without compensation.

J: Easily best. For example, 1-5 again loses a tempo, while the 10-15 break-up, although better than in Note E, gives White the edge.

K: 26-22 is again okay, but this is consistent with Note G.

L: 1-5 25-22; 7-11 comes to the same thing, but without permit-



ting the 18-15 dissolution. Since this favours Black anyway, to prevent it would be akin to Note L of Lesson 36.

M: Although 18-15; 11-18 21-17; 14-21 23-5; 16-23 26-19 (Opens up the double-corner less than 27-18) lands a white man in the dog hole (5), the fact that there is a black men in the dust hole (21) and the forces are considerably reduced, means that Black's advantage is quite small. It also gains for White a somewhat freer game. In its favour, the text offers White several winning possibilities if Black is incautious. Of course, 27-24?? would be awful after 10-15!

N: The 10-15 exchange and 3-8 are also good, being met with 27-24 in both cases. Against 16-20, White breaks up Black's position to good effect with 19-15. In addition, 3-7? loses to 32-28!; 16-20 and the subtle shot with 21-17!; 14-21 19-15; 10-19 23-16; 12-19 27-24; 20-27 31-8. And finally, 2-7? loses to 32-28!; 16-20 28-24 (A move like this, voluntarily cramping one's own position, is normally horrible, but here, because of the magic of timing, it wins); 11-16 (The key point is that the 10-15 exchange loses to 22-17 in return. Try it out!) 22-17; 3-8 26-22; 1-5 30-25; 8-11 31-26. White wins. A glorious tie-up reminiscent of Lesson 31, Note J.

O: Forcing Black into square 20. Notice that 22-17? cannot be played here, because the 9-13 series of exchanges wins a man.

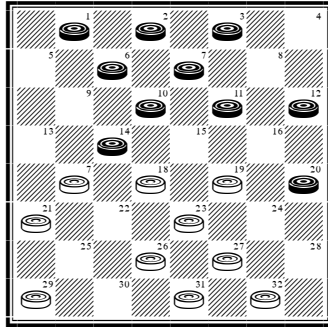
P: No player worth his salt would consider anything else.

Q: 30-25 is okay, but 31-27? allows an horrific cramp with 11-16 30-25; 3-7 (Making preparations) 32-28; 9-13 18-9; 5-14 22-18; 13-17 18-9; 6-13 21-14; 10-17 and there is no way White's log jam of men can escape the clutches of Black's upcoming king. After the text move, White still has some tricky shoals to negotiate, a typical continuation being 9-13 (11-16 is also fine, but not as sustaining) 18-9; 5-14 24-20! (22-18? is a blunder after 11-16! 18-9; 16-20); 2-7 to a draw.

**Lesson 38: White Reply to 11-16**

11-16(A) 24-19(B); 8-11(C) 22-18(D); 4-8(E) 26-22(F); 16-20(G)  
 22-17(H); 9-14(I) 18-9; 5-14(J) 25-22(K); 11-15(L) 30-26(M); 15-  
 24 28-19; 8-11(N) 22-18(O) [Diagram 117] ... even position

Diagram 117: Reply to 11-16



Black to Play

A: Moving from the centre, but directed towards the side, this allows White to take the initiative.

B: Both 22-18 (The mirror-image of 11-15 remember) and 23-18 are fractionally stronger, but the text is also good and well suited to the beginner.

C: To the centre from the single-corner and best.

D: Parried effectively.

E: Of the 8 moves Black has at his command, only the ludicrous 11-15? loses: such is the scope of the game. Aside from the text, which is a super-solid waiting move, two of these are particularly pertinent. The 9-14 exchange would seem natural, but after 18-9; 5-14 25-22; 11-15 29-25! (White holds the man on 22 in readiness); 15-24 28-19; 4-8 22-18 White holds a definite advantage. Should Black continue with 14-17 (8-11 is best) 21-14; 10-17 then 25-22!; 17-21 (Into the dust hole) 18-14! may even prove to be a forced win. Against the flanking 10-14, my

preferred reply is the early movement of the apex man with 26-22. To understand its benefits, it is first necessary to look at 25-22, which is of course also very good. Continue: ... 25-22; 16-20 (7-10! first cuts out the *Glasgow* idea because 22-17?; 9-13 18-9; 13-22 26-17; 6-22 30-26; 5-9 26-17; 9-13 17-14; 10-17 21-14 allows Black to infiltrate to deadly effect with 13-17! However, the 16-20 move is forced from another ballot) 22-17; 9-13 18-9; 13-22 26-17; 6-22 30-26; 5-9 26-17; 9-13 17-14 and White has the edge. Back to 26-22. Continue: ... 26-22; 16-20 (7-10! is arguably again best, after which White boldly continues with 22-17!; 10-15 19-10; 6-22 25-18; 2-6 17-10; 6-22 and secures an advantage with the clever 28-24!; 3-7 30-25; 22-26 31-22; 16-20 22-18; 7-10) 22-17; 7-10 (It is best for Black to fill in with this, forming Key Landing #9, as against other moves White can now jump back towards the centre with 25-18: Point 1) 30-26 (There are strong alternatives in 17-13 and 28-24); 11-16 26-22! (25-22?; is hopeless after 9-13! 18-9; 5-14 as the release with 22-18 is impossible since it would lose a man); 9-13 18-9; 5-14 22-18! (But with 26-22 played, this is fine: Point 2); 13-22 18-9; 6-13 25-18 and White holds the advantage.

F: The natural 25-22 is also good. Another option is to dyke with 18-14; 9-18 23-14; 10-17 21-14; 16-23 27-18. So far as one can generalize with safety, the strength of a dyke formation can be assessed according to the number of men remaining on the board after its formation: 11-man and 10-man dykes, particularly when the double-corner remains intact, are strong; 9-man dykes are even; 8-man dykes are usually unfavourable to the dyking player. Thus this particular dyke may be assessed as even. For one thing, by referring back to Diagram 93 you will see that it is impossible for White to construct the ideal formation given there.

G: Natural and best, although other moves are playable. Against the premature 9-14 exchange, White squeezes strongly with 22-18.

H: This is consistent with the previous move.

I: Natural and best. Instead, 9-13 is well met with the 30-26 exchange (Jack Cox Landing): the 17-14 exchange would be premature, allowing Black to infiltrate with 13-17!

J: This keeps Black's position intact, forming Key Landing #5, whereas 6-22 disrupts it.

K: Natural, but 30-26 is a good twister, tempting 11-16? (11-15 25-22 returns to the main line) and the win covered in the next note with 26-22!

L: Natural and best. While 11-16? may be open to criticism on the grounds of failing to take the centre when available, one would hardly expect it to be a losing move. Continue: ... 30-25!; 8-11 22-18; 1-5 18-9; 5-14 (6-22 25-18; 10-14 18-9; 5-14 is a good try, but loses to 29-25; 7-10 25-22; 11-15 23-18!) 25-22; 11-15 29-25; 15-24 28-19; 7-11 17-13; 11-15 22-17; 15-24 23-19; 16-23 27-9 and Black is deep in the throes of 'Dunne's Loss' (Or 'Dunne's Win', according to your outlook!).

M: But played here, 30-25? may even lose, allowing Black to continue powerfully with 15-24 28-19; 8-11 22-18; 1-5 18-9; 5-14 25-22; and 11-15! The text readies White for the later 22-18 thrust.

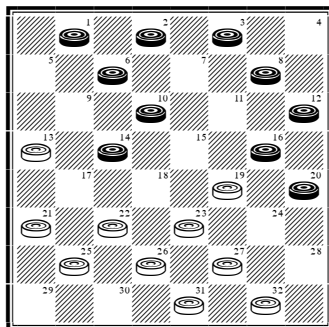
N: Natural and clearly best.

O: Declining the centre would be illogical and almost certainly a loss. It deserves to be! After the text Black has sound continuations in 11-16, 11-15 and 1-5.

### **Lesson 39: White Reply to 10-15**

10-15(A) 21-17(B); 11-16(C) 17-13(D); 16-20(E) 23-18(F); 8-11(G) 26-23(H); 7-10(I) 25-21(J); 9-14(K) 18-9; 5-14 29-25(L); 4-8(M) 30-26(N); 11-16(O) 24-19(P); 15-24 28-19 [Diagram 118]  
... White has the edge

Diagram 118: Reply to 10-15



Black to Play

A: On the plus side this is towards the centre; on the debit side it exits from the double-corner and opens up a hole on square 10.

B: The best reply as it is directed towards the hole in question.

C: Of Black's 8 possible moves, two can be eliminated immediately because they lose a man: 15-19?? and 12-16?? (via the 24-19 2 for 1). The 9-14 exchange disrupts Black's centre and on looks is hardly choice. That it is actually an analytical loss after the flanking attack with 25-21; 6-10 24-20; 3-7 28-24; 5-9 22-17 is simply one of the mysteries of the mystical squares: attempting to 'explain' this in generalized terms would be dishonest. Although sound, 6-10 and 7-10 are both weak, inviting an attack with 17-14! Note that 17-14! is also a powerful response to 9-13?, one of the tougher 3-movers, which is a misguided attempt to cramp White's single-corner. This leaves 15-18 and 11-16. Rarely played in the 2-move era, analysis under 3-move has revealed 15-18 to be quite a good choice for the skilful player, as it sets up a complicated position with enormous scope for both sides. Technical advances such as this have also affected how freestyle matches are conducted in the modern era. Given that all 7 initial moves have long been established as sound, one might expect today's players to display

more variety. In practice, they stick even more closely to 11-15 than before, in the knowledge that their opponents *know* how to achieve at least equality against the other 6 moves if they wish. After 15-18 22-15; 11-18 23-14; 9-18 one good plan for White is to surround the outpost man with 24-19— a possible continuation being given under Lesson 40, Note C. Finally, we have the text: a strong favourite in the 2-move era, since it keeps Black's double-corner intact and avoids posting a man in enemy territory.

D: My preference: a natural developing move which imposes a slight cramp on Black's double-corner. That said, this ballot possesses enormous scope, and valid cases may be made for numerous alternatives.

E: The 16-19 exchange is logical and sound, but after the 22-18; 15-22 24-15 exchange, White forces the pace. The text is the counterpart of 17-13 and keeps all options open.

F: My choice among many: the 22-18 and 24-19 exchanges are excellent, for example, and lead to entirely different midgames.

G: A natural fill-in.

H: Keeps White's position intact; 25-21; 7-10 26-23 is an innocent interchange of moves. The text might be said to set a trap!

I: Black is thinking along the same lines. Note that the 9-14 exchange would be premature, permitting a 2 for 1 in reply with 22-18 and a damaged black position after regaining the man with 1-5. Also, 12-16?? is unthinkable!

J: Natural, but White has other choices.

K: The best time to exchange towards the centre: 4-8 29-25 (Not forced); 9-14 18-9 5-14 comes to the same thing.

L: A good waiting move, although the rare 30-25 has its merits. Another one of Alfred Jordan's dictums was, 'When in doubt move 4-8 (29-25)'. Of course he was well aware that checkers is not that simple. For one thing, the choice between 3-8 and 4-8

may be dictated by pressing issues of single-corner cramping, examples of which are given in Lesson 41 and 42. For another, when there is a white man on square 20, and three black men on 3, 4 and 12, 3-8 may be preferred to 4-8 as a means of discouraging a white advance with 22-18 because of the 12-16 20-11; 8-22 threat. Overall, I would say that just as 7-11 (For White, 26-22) may be viewed as more dynamic than 8-11 (25-22), so may 3-8 (30-25) be viewed in relation to 4-8 (29-25).

M: Black follows suit.

N: Consolidates White's position and forms Key Landing #2. Flanking with 22-17 is another good move, but so many white wins have been registered after the text that it remains a firm favourite.

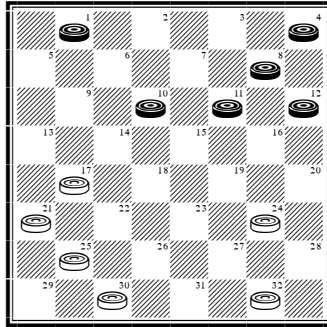
O: Against the 15-18 22-15; 11-18 exchange, White replies strongly with 24-19. Apart from this and the text, other moves have been shown to be either losses or very narrow draws.

P: White has very little room for manoeuvre, but having one strong move available is far better than having a choice of 8 bad ones! After the exchange, Black's best reply is the logical 3-7! rather than the lazy, but popular 8-11? which invites trouble with 22-18! When you become thoroughly familiar with this landing, you will seek it again and again.

#### **Lesson 40: White Reply to 10-14**

10-14(A) 24-19(B); 6-10(C) 22-17(D); 9-13(E) 28-24(F); 13-22 25-9; 5-14 26-22(G); 11-15(H) 29-25(I); 7-11(J) 23-18(K); 14-23 27-18; 11-16(L) 18-11; 8-15(M) 31-27; 16-23 27-11; 3-8(N) 11-7(O); 2-11 22-17(P) [Diagram 119] ... White has the advantage.

Diagram 119: Reply to 10-14



Black to Play

- A: A flanking move which allows White several strong replies.
- B: Best, although 22-18 and 22-17 are also favoured.
- C: A quick survey shows that there are 8 possible black moves, of which two, 14-17?? and 12-16??. can be dismissed immediately. Rather like 10-15 21-17; 9-14 discussed in the previous lesson, the 11-15 exchange looks very questionable because of the hole it creates, and after White applies pressure against Black's double-corner with 22-17; 7-10 17-13; 1-6 25-22; 3-7 22-17 it has indeed been shown to be a loss. (This of course does not mean that if someone were to play it he would necessarily lose!) Against the premature 9-13, White replies with the natural 22-18 and gets a strong game. Both 7-10 and 11-16 seek to transpose into Key Landing #9 shown under Lesson 38, Note E. To remind you, this arose from 11-16 24-19; 8-11 22-18; 10-14 26-22; 16-20 22-17; 7-10. However, with careful play White can deny this, and in so doing gain a strong advantage. This leaves 6-10 and 14-18. The former was an almost universal favourite in the 2-move era, but 14-18 is now recognized to be almost as good. After 14-18 22-15; 11-18 23-14; 9-18 21-17 Black has to proceed with caution: 8-11 17-13 (White plays a series of waiting moves, and in response Black times his moves carefully to support the man on 18 while avoiding overcrowding); 7-10



25-21; 10-14 29-25; 4-8 26-23; 3-7 28-24; 6-10 24-20; 11-15 32-28; 15-24 28-19; 1-6 and another Key Landing (#20).

D: There are other good moves in 22-18, 27-24 and 28-24, but this is best as it is directed towards the hole created on square 6.

E: This and 11-15 are the two major defences. The disadvantage with 9-13 is that it results in a hole on squares 5 and 6: its advantage is that it allows for a more natural, thematic defence with the moves 11-15, 7-11 and 11-16 against all of White's attacks. By contrast, 11-15 originally found favour because it was thought to lead to better-defined draws. However, further analysis has revealed that the early removal of the man on square 2 leads to a spindly position which is highly susceptible to attack. A good attack against 11-15 runs as follows: ... 26-22 (17-13; 15-24 13-6; 2-9 28-19; 8-11 25-22; 11-15 19-16; 12-19 23-16 is also strong for White); 15-24 28-19; 7-11! (To dissuade 22-18. Note that 9-13? would allow White to break up Black's position with 22-18!) 30-26 (Building up the pressure against Black's double-corner); 11-15 (9-13? here would be an outright loss) 17-13 (32-28 is also good); 15-24 13-6; 2-9 27-20; 8-11 22-18 and White has many winning chances. Also worth a mention is the rarely seen 1-6 defence. Its attraction is that it fills in the hole on 6: one danger is the elbow of men it creates on squares 6, 10 and 14. Continue: ... 25-22; 11-15?? 30-25!; 15-24 28-19. White wins. R. Scobbie v J. Ferrie 1928.

F: The natural move and, in line with other examples which have been given, is stronger than 27-24 at this point.

G: The quickest way to apply pressure to the man on square 14. However, 29-25 is an excellent alternative. Note that the inferior 24-20 is met strongly with the natural 11-15 advance, while 32-28 allows Black to apply pressure to White's elbow of men on 19, 23 and 27 with 11-16.

H: The obvious move to parry a 22-18 thrust.

I: My preference, but 22-17 is also strong.

J: 8-11 is also sound, though less thematic and more involved. Continue: ... 22-17; 3-8 25-22; 1-6 32-28 and White is best. Also, the 14-18 break is all in favour of White. Over time, the student will gradually become aware of the different gradations of 'draw' which exist within the game: a theoretical draw is not necessarily a practical proposition!

K: A radical exchange, but one which is justified by its bid to grip the centre.

L: 1-5 21-17 and then the break-up with 11-16 may be okay, but everything else is hopeless.

M: Jumping 16-23 first comes to the same thing.

N: Forced, or Black would remain a man down.

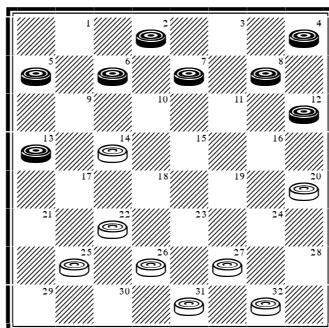
O: Other moves let Black off too lightly.

P: This sets Black a problem to solve. My reason for giving the best continuation is to bring out two key points: 10-15! (In combination with Black's next move, this is played as part of a long term combination to break through White's king-row, as discussed in Lesson 20) 17-14; 11-16 24-20; 15-19 20-11; 8-15 14-10; 19-23 10-7; 12-16 7-3; 15-19 3-7 23-26 (Point 1: notice how Black is just in time to effect this) 30-23; 19-26 7-11; 16-19 25-22; 26-31 (Point 2: not the careless 26-30? which loses to 32-27! Keep concentrating until the end) 22-18; 31-26 18-14; 26-22 14-10; 19-23 10-7; 1-5 to a draw.

### **Lesson 41: White Reply to 12-16**

12-16(A) 24-20(B); 8-12(C) 28-24(D); 3-8(E) 23-18(F); 9-13(G) 18-14(H); 10-17 21-14; 6-10(I) 25-21(J); 10-17 21-14; 16-19(K) 24-15; 11-25 29-22; 1-6(L) 30-25(M) [Diagram 120] ... White has the edge

Diagram 120: Reply to 12-16



Black to Play

A: This ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in strength purely because of White's rejoinder.

B: Cramping Black's single-corner. Other replies are soft in comparison.

C: Making preparations to break the cramp and best. However, 10-15, which is a recent addition to the 3-move deck, is also sound and only slightly weaker. Of a completely different nature but perfectly playable, is the 11-15 exchange. This breaks the cramp immediately at the cost of damaging Black's single-corner and putting him ahead in development. However, to gain a point you must give a point. Lastly, 9-13? which blissfully ignores the issue at hand!, gifts White a tempo and eventually loses after 28-24; 8-12 24-19 etc ...

D: Continuing to cramp and my preference.

E: Logical and best. However, both 9-14 and 10-15 will draw. Note that 4-8? (Playing by rote) falls to a beautiful thematic attack after 24-19!; 10-15 19-10; 6-15 23-18!; 9-14 18-9; 5-14 22-18!; 14-23 27-18!; 15-22 25-18! and the single-corner cramp is crippling.

F: Against 24-19 Black is now a position to make the break with 11-15, jumping out all of the men and virtually equalizing.

Although 22-18 leads to a more sustained advantage, the text move is also justly popular and possesses many winning chances.

G: The only good move at Black's command. Against the 9-14 18-8; 5-14 exchange, White gains complete control of the centre with 24-19; 16-23 27-9; 6-13 22-18; 11-16 20-11; 8-22 25-18; 4-8 29-25; 8-11 25-22; 12-16 18-14; 10-17 while the 16-19 exchange is well met with the 18-15 exchange, leaving White with a working advantage in a complicated position. Finally, 10-15 is weak on account of the 22-17 exchange which retains the cramp; 10-14 gets hopelessly suffocated after 26-23; and the 11-15 double-exchange loses a man after 24-19 in return.

H: Logical to occupy square 14, although White has several other playable moves.

I: Seeking to reduce the forces and gain some breathing space.

J: Falling in with Black's plans, but good. White has incredible scope at this stage. For example, he has the lively 14-9; 5-14 24-19; 16-23 27-9 or the sacrificial lines with 22-17; 13-22 25-18; 10-17 29-25 or 22-18; 10-17 26-23 or 22-18; 10-17 25-22 or 22-18; 10-17 25-21: in each case giving up a man to amplify the cramp.

K: The follow-up to Note I.

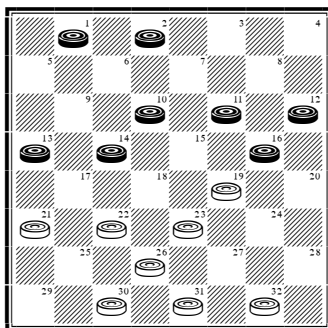
L: Applying pressure to the man on square 14 and setting a little trap in the process.

M: Correct, as the hasty 27-23?? loses to 6-9!

### **Lesson 42: White Reply to 9-13**

9-13(A) 22-18(B); 12-16(C) 24-20(D); 8-12(E) 27-24(F); 3-8(G) 24-19(H); 11-15(I) 18-11; 8-24 28-19(J); 10-14(K) 20-11; 7-16 25-22(L); 4-8(M) 22-18(M); 6-10(M) 18-9; 5-14 29-25(M); 8-11(M) 25-22(M) [Diagram 121] ... White has a definite advantage

Diagram 121: Reply to 9-13



Black to Play

A: Exiting from the double-corner to the side, this is easily Black's weakest opener. However, it finds favour with 99% of the general public, who regard it as safe!

B: Taking the centre of the board: logical and strong.

C: As if often the case in the early stages, there are 8 possible moves to consider. The 13-17 exchange loses and was discussed under Lesson 37, Note C. Also, 5-9?? falls immediately to 18-15! There are many good ways to meet 6-9 (Considered the logical follow-up by the man-in-the-street!), dyking with 18-14 being one of them. The dyke idea also works well against 11-16. Continue: ... 18-14; 10-17 21-14; 16-20 23-18! and White is very powerful. Against 11-15 18-11; 8-15 21-17; 13-22 25-11; 7-16 24-20 is very good, while 26-22 is an effective way of meeting the 10-14 exchange. This leaves 10-15 and the text: the two moves which were preferred in the 2-move era. A good attack against 10-15 runs 25-22; 6-10 (Of course 12-16?? is dire) 23-19 and Black must allow the break-up with 11-16 18-11; 16-23 27-18; 8-15 18-11; 7-16 22-18 or suffer the consequences. For example, 5-9? (Instead of 11-16) 26-23; 1-5 30-25; 11-16 18-11; 8-15 22-17; 13-22 25-11; 16-20 31-26; 7-16 19-15; 10-19 24-15 is a lost cause. Although 12-16 permits the single-corner cramp, if White wishes, analysis has shown it to resolve into clearer

endgames than 10-15. Note once more that, even in this weak debut, 6 out of 8 of the black moves draw.

D: The cramp mentioned in Note C. White has several other good options.

E: Hastening to break the cramp: Black must not tarry!

F: My preference. 25-22 is also strong, as is 28-24. Against the latter, 4-8! is essential, meeting the fearsome looking 24-19 with 10-15! 19-10; 6-22 25-18; 16-19 23-16; 12-19, with 3-8? losing to 24-19 because the 11-15 break-up loses a man.

G: But here the opposite is the case, as 4-8?? loses to 18-15! In some positions you may eventually develop the ability to visualize 20 or even 30 moves ahead, but in all positions you should endeavour to look one move ahead!

H: Cramping to the nth degree: White also has 25-22, 18-14 and 32-27 to choose from.

I: Black has to find release.

J: A clever move which leaves the man on square 16 hanging and forces Black to find a suitable waiting move. Instead, 20-11; 7-16 28-19 allows Black to develop naturally with 4-8.

K: The best there is.

L: 26-22 and 19-15 are other good moves.

M: Natural developing moves.

### **As Black: Opening with 9-14**

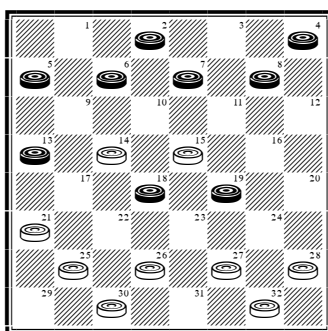
The theoretical strength of this opening move, assuming the best immediate response from White, is beyond dispute: it's 50-50. The extent to which its merits are appreciated however, varies widely! William Call, author of several individual and highly attractive books on the game, regarded it simply as 'safe': no more, no less. Grandmaster Derek Oldbury considered it to be 'weak', having few winning chances. By contrast, Kenneth Grover, a highly creative crossboard player, frequently opened with 9-14 in his simultaneous exhibitions and scored hundreds of

wins with it. There are several reasons why I am advocating its adoption. First, although second in strength to 11-15, it's more restrictive and thus easier for a newcomer to gain a working knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses; secondly, excepting a slight cramp in the double-corner, it presents no basic formational difficulties; thirdly, against players whose knowledge of it is shaky, it does possess many winning chances.

**Lesson 43: Trunk (Main line of play)**

9-14(A) 22-18(B) (V3); 5-9(C) 25-22(D) (V1); 11-16(E) 18-15(F); 10-19 24-15; 7-10(G) 27-24; 10-19 24-15; 16-19(H) 23-16; 12-19 22-17; 14-18 17-14(I); 9-13(J) 29-25(K); 3-7(L) 31-27(M); 1-5(N) [Diagram 122] ... even position

Diagram 122



White to Play

A: Principally serving to forestall active play by White, this move delights or infuriates according to your temperament.

B: This, 24-20 and 22-17, which allows more room for manoeuvre, are on a par.

C: From a freestyle standpoint, the only move worth considering.

D: In this position White has 7 possible moves. The big 3, 25-22, 24-19 and 24-20, are covered in Lessons 43, 44 and 45

respectively. In response to the early movement of the apex man with 26-22, Black has 10-15 24-19; 15-24 28-19; 7-10 27-24; 11-16 22-17; 16-20 31-27 and the surprising 3-7! to gain the upper hand. Willie Ryan's 'Bronx Express' with 18-15?! (21-17?! first comes to the same thing); 11-18 21-17; 14-21 23-5, has never caught on, being aptly described as 'hazardous' by Richard Fortman. Granted, the white man in the dog hole is partly offset by the black man in the dust hole, but analysis has shown that by operating on the opposite wing with 12-16 25-22; 8-11 24-20; 4-8 Black obtains a strong position. Finally, there is the never seen 23-19?!; 14-23 27-18 after which Black applies enormous pressure to White's double-corner with 11-16 26-23; 16-20 32-27 and 10-14. The text move, 25-22, develops the single-corner and often leads to complications.

E: An excellent flanking move which invites White to overcrowd the centre.

F: A good move which establishes a well-protected outpost on square 15. Instead, the natural 29-25 is well met with 8-11, while 24-19 is tricky for both sides. Continue after 24-19: 8-11 28-24 (The immediate 22-17 and the *Glasgow* idea with 9-13 is fine, but better delayed with this); 16-20 (Of course, 24-20 must not be permitted) 22-17 (Black is looking for the hasty 29-25? after which he ties things up with 11-16 18-15; 4-8 22-18; 7-11 26-22; 1-5 31-26; 3-7 32-28; 9-13 18-9; 11-18 22-15; 5-14 and it's a black win!); 9-13 (The familiar break-up) 18-9; 13-22 26-17; 6-22 30-26; 11-16 (This, in combination with Black's next move, grips the white position most effectively) 26-17; 10-14 17-10; 7-14 29-25 (The only move, but good enough!); 3-7! (Incredibly, 4-8? leads to defeat by virtue of a classic late midgame position given in Book 5. It must be said however that 3-7 is more logical, as part of a plan to set up a standard defensive line of 3 men on squares 7, 10 and 14 without a loss of tempo) 25-22; 7-10! 31-26; 2-7! to a draw.

G: Playing 16-19 immediately is also popular. Squeezing a man in this particular way so as to reduce the forces generally takes



about the same out of both sides. Repeatedly doing so is known as a run-off, the merits of which depend on the strength of the outpost.

H: 2-7 (Not 3-7?? of course!) is also playable, but this a natural way to contest control of the centre.

I: 17-13; 9-14 29-25; 8-12 is another logical and common approach.

J: The *Mixed*, as well as being the name of a particular opening (Lesson 30), also refers to a type of midgame formation: one characterized by the kind of jumbled-up position given here. For players with a liking for shots and strokes, the mixed formation is a godsend.

K: A natural waiting move.

L: Following suit. To play 3-7 and 1-5 out of order would not do!

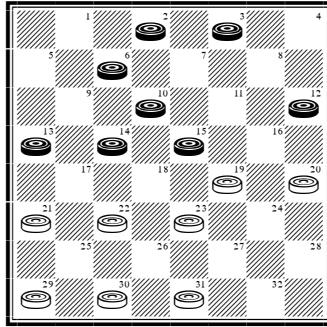
M: 32-27 would also be met with 1-5.

N: The culmination of all the waiting manoeuvres, after which a definite course of action has to be undertaken.

#### **Lesson 44: Variation 1 (Off Trunk)**

... 24-19(V2); 11-15 18-11; 8-24 28-19; 4-8 26-22(A); 8-11 27-24(B); 1-5(C) 22-18; 9-13 18-9; 5-14 25-22; 11-15(D) 32-28(E); 7-11 24-20(F); 15-24 28-19; 11-15(G) [Diagram 123] ... White draws with care

Diagram 123



White to Play

A: Mentioned in Lesson 37, Note G, this is popular with many strong players because of its restrictive qualities.

B: This works in tandem with the previous move to restrict Black's options.

C: Best to play this before 9-13. If 9-13 first, White has the option of the 22-17 double-exchange, rather the desired 22-18; 1-5 18-9; 5-14.

D: Better than the 14-17 2 for 2 in this instance.

E: Both 30-25 and 31-26 are well met with 15-18 (Or 12-16 first) 22-15; 12-16 19-12; 10-28 and an easy draw: Black is more than compensated for his man on 28 by the white man on 12, the fact that the forces have been significantly reduced and by his sturdy king-row.

F: Played now however, 30-25? is a loser, Black winning after 6-9 22-18; 15-22 25-18; 13-17 24-20; 17-22 31-27; 22-26 18-15; 11-18 21-17; 14-21 23-5; 26-31 27-24; 10-14 5-1; 31-26 1-5; 21-25 29-22; 26-17 19-15; 14-18 15-11; 17-14 etc ...

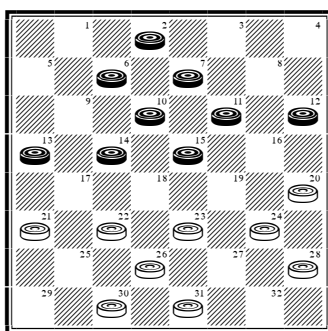
G: From a practical standpoint one is tempted to say that finding the draw from here is your opponent's problem, but the correct continuation is so beautiful that it demands to be shown. Continue: ... 22-18!; 15-22 (Strongest) 30-25; 22-26! 31-22; 13-

17! 22-13; 2-7 20-16; 3-8 25-22; 14-17 21-14; 10-26 (Providing a backstop for White!) 19-15; 10-19 23-16; 26-30 16-12; 7-10 12-3; 10-19 3-7. Drawn. Derek Oldbury v Marion Tinsley in their 1958 match for the world championship.

**Lesson 45: Variation 2 (Off Variation 1)**

... 24-20(A); 11-16(B) 20-11; 8-22 25-18; 4-8(C) 28-24(D); 8-11 29-25(E); 10-15(F) 25-22; 7-10(F) 24-20; 3-7(F) 27-24; 1-5(F) 32-28(G); 9-13 18-9; 5-14(H) [Diagram 124] ... even position

Diagram 124



White to Play

A: This is of the same order of strength as 24-19 but permits more room for manoeuvre if Black wishes.

B: 10-15 might be termed the more aggressive move, as it allows White to open up the position with 28-24; 15-22 26-10; 7-14 25-22. The text is more conservative, keeping the position intact and restricting the options available.

C: 12-16 is perfectly logical and sound, but favours White after 28-24; 16-20 24-19; 4-8 29-25; 8-12 25-22; 1-5 and the 19-16 double-exchange.

D: Although 27-24 is not quite as strong, for reasons we have discussed, here it is very tricky. Continue: ... 27-24; 8-11 24-19; 11-16 29-25; 7-11 25-22 and Black must now exercise caution.

For one thing, 3-7? 32-27! transposes into the loss given in Lesson 37, Note N. For another, 1-5? falls foul of 19-15!; 10-19 22-17; 6-10 and the 18-15 3 for 2. Instead, Black should continue with 3-8 28-24 (Also transposing into the aforementioned note); 16-20 32-28; 20-27 31-24; 11-16 24-20? (Loses: 19-15 is the draw); 8-11 28-24; 1-5 30-25; 9-13 18-9; 5-14 22-18; 6-9 26-22; 2-6 and another pretty tie-up. Black wins.

E: 24-19 transposes into Lesson 37 at the 12<sup>th</sup> move (22-18).

F: A forceful and restrictive combination of moves.

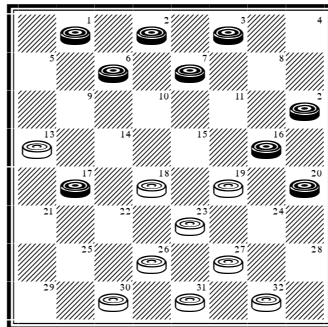
G: This is best, although both 32-27 and the unusual 23-19!; 14-23 32-28 will draw.

H: White typically replies with 24-19; 15-24 28-19 after which Black presses on with 11-15 19-16; 12-19 23-16; 14-18 22-17; 13-22 26-17; 7-11 16-7; 2-11 to a draw.

#### Lesson 46: Variation 3 (Off Trunk)

... 22-17(A) (V4); 11-15(B) 25-22(C); 8-11(D) 17-13(E); 11-16(F) 24-19(G) 15-24 28-19(H); 4-8(I) 22-18(J); 8-11(K) 18-9; 5-14 29-25(L); 16-20(M) 25-22(N); 11-16(O) 22-18(P); 14-17(Q) 21-14; 10-17 [Diagram 125] ... even position

Diagram 125: *Pioneer*



White to Play

A: A good reply which imposes a slight cramp on Black's double-

corner. Derek Oldbury favoured it over 22-18 because of the increased scope it affords.

B: Natural and best. Edward Lasker writes, 'It is hard to tell whether this move or 11-16 or 5-9 is the best.' I'm afraid this is nonsense. Moving to the side with 11-16 gives White the edge as he is able to get to the centre first. Continue: ... 25-22; 8-11 (16-19, the *Double-Corner Dyke*, is more punchy but also favours White slightly) and now 22-18!; 16-20 18-9; 5-14 is Key Landing #1. Contrast this with the main line where control of the centre is shared equally. Also, the unnatural 5-9 creates an issue in Black's double-corner and is a handicap move typically only encountered under the 3-move ballot.

C: Again the natural development. Instead, 23-19 transposes into freestyle openings arising from 11-15 23-19; 9-14 22-17 and is addressed in Lesson 48.

D: The *Double-Corner Dyke*, mentioned in Note B, can also be formed here with 15-19. Some players take virtually every opportunity to dyke, some only doing so when forced. The advantage of dyking is that it sets in motion a highly defined, active formation; the disadvantage is that the dyking player reveals his hand. By contrast, the text, which leads to a development known as the *Pioneer*, is passive and preserves the triangles of both sides. It's all a matter of style. In passing, note that a mistaken attempt to transpose into Lesson 31 with 6-9?! 17-13; 2-6?? is crushed by the 3 for 1 with 23-18! Stranger things have happened!

E: This is restrictive and typical of the 2-move era. Instead, 23-19 transposes into Lesson 31 as does 29-25; 4-8 23-19; 6-9 17-13; 2-6 but at a later stage.

F: Played to gain some freedom of movement. Instead, 3-8 is quite good, but 4-8 is inferior after 23-19 in reply, transposing into Lesson 28, Note G.

G: Against 24-20 Black replies with the key 3-8 20-11; 7-16 after which 29-25; 16-19 23-16; 12-19 22-17; 8-12 27-24; 4-8 32-

27 is about equal. In addition, 29-25 can lead to an exciting man-down line after 16-20 24-19; 15-24 28-19; 4-8 22-17 (22-18 reverts to the main line); 14-18! (Who would play this on a first try?) 23-14; 8-11 26-23; 11-15 32-28; 15-24 28-19; 5-9! 14-5; 10-14 17-10; 6-24 and it is White who must carefully plot a drawing continuation. Note that the ‘daring’ 14-18! sacrifice is also the safest continuation for Black.

H: No doubt 27-11 will draw, but the text is invariably played as it keeps White’s position intact.

I: Clearly best.

J: Declining the centre with 22-17 (Or 29-25; 8-11 22-17) is sound, but predictably gives Black the edge. Continue: ... 22-17; 8-11 29-25; 11-15 25-22; 15-24 27-11; 7-16 23-19; 16-23 26-19 (A similar grip, but with the colours reversed was demonstrated in Lesson 43, Note F); 2-7! (3-8 will also draw but is very delicate, running into a classic late midgame position given in Book 3) and now White needs to avoid 31-27?? and play 30-26 instead to draw. Can you see why?

K: Natural and best. In a must-win situation the 14-17 exchange would be worth a try, but the 5-9 fill-in cramps Black’s position horribly and should lose.

L: Clearly best.

M: 11-15, taking the centre, leads to a quicker resolution after 25-22; 15-24 27-11; 7-16 and 22-18 whereas the text invites more involved play.

N: The 19-16 exchange is good here, as the man on 16 cannot be forced into the dust hole. Continue: 11-15 25-22; 15-19 and the position is even with winning chances for both sides. The text forms Key Landing #3. Despite its ‘boring’ appearance—both triangles are intact—hundreds of wins, with both sides, have been scored from this point!

O: 11-15 is equally good, but this is my preference.

P: This is natural and the most popular move. On White’s

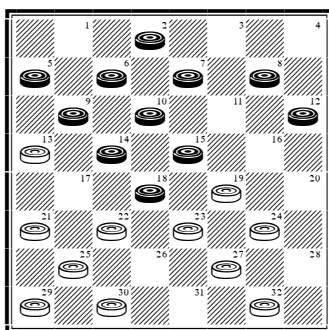
two main options. First, 22-17 gives Black the advantage after 7-11 26-22; 11-15 23-18; 14-23 (15-24 is more complex and also good) 27-11; 16-23 and now 31-27 is essential to draw, with 11-8? eventually losing to 10-15! Secondly, the odd-looking 30-25 leads to equality after 14-17 21-14; 10-17 13-9!; 6-13 25-21; 2-6 21-14 and 1-5.

Q: The 1-5 exchange also draws; this is more aggressive. In reply, 18-14 is best, whereas the 26-22 exchange is inferior for White after 7-10 22-17; and 2-7!

**Lesson 47: Variation 4 (Off Variation 3)**

... 24-20(A) (V5); 5-9(B) 28-24(C); 11-15(D) 23-19(E); 7-11(F) 22-17(G); 3-7(H) 26-23(I); 1-5(J) 17-13(K); 15-18(L) 31-26(M); 11-16(N) 20-11; 8-15 26-22(O); 4-8(P) [Diagram 126] ... Black has the edge.

Diagram 126: *3-8 Ayrshire Lassie*



White to Play

A: Less forceful than 22-18 but equal in strength.

B: Both 11-15 and 11-16 are decent alternatives, but this conservative move is best.

C: White has 8 possible moves. As usual, we'll look at all of them, using the process of elimination to home in on the better ones. Clearly both 21-17?? and 20-16?? are ridiculous: these

will never be played in a serious game under any circumstances. The 23-18 exchange significantly disrupts White's position and gets nothing in return, although both 23-18; 14-23 27-18 and 23-18; 14-23 26-19 could be adopted in a do-or-die situation. Moving on, 23-19 and 27-24 can be considered together, and run into play previously studied. Continue: ... 23-19 (27-24; 11-15 24-19 is the same thing); 11-15 27-23; 15-24 28-19; 8-11 22-18; 11-16! 20-11; 7-16 and it has transposed into Lesson 40, Note I but with the colours reversed! If you have a second board handy, set it up and play 10-14 24-19; 6-10 22-17; 9-13 28-24; 13-22 25-9; 5-14 26-22; 11-15 22-17 and you'll see what I mean. After the 11-16 20-11; 7-16 exchange, White could either play 25-22; 4-8 30-25; 8-11 32-27; 1-5 and the play of Lesson 40, Note J with the colours reversed, or 26-22; 4-8 22-17; 16-20 31-27 and 8-11. In both cases Black is best. Of course, White can always play 22-18 and transpose into Lesson 45. Indeed, this is what most players do. This leaves the text move, which cedes the centre to Black, and 22-17. Again, these two moves can be considered together as they invariably run into the same play. Continue: ... 22-17 (Allowing Black to take the centre); 11-15! 17-13; 1-5! (Black is now ready to meet 25-22?! with 14-18!) 28-24; 8-11 23-19; 15-18 26-23 (25-22??; 18-25 29-22 would be catastrophic after 14-17! 21-14; 9-25 30-21 and the 11-16 3 for 1); 3-8 and back into the main line at the 13<sup>th</sup> move.

D: Naturally!

E: 'Covering up': a natural flanking move.

F: The natural 8-11 is fine too, but this is more restrictive as it effectively prevents White from playing 27-23.

G: This works in tandem with White's previous move: flanking on the other side of the board.

H: Consolidates Black's position by filling in the hole on square 7. In freestyle play this arose as follows: 11-15 24-20; 8-11 28-24; 3-8 23-19; 9-14 22-17; 5-9 – the *3-8 Ayrshire Lassie*.

I: 17-13; 1-5 26-23 (25-22 is well met with the 14-17 double-



exchange) comes to the same thing.

J: An excellent waiting move. The 11-16 exchange is another good option, but the immediate 9-13 loses. This is because it allows White to gain a tempo with 30-26; 13-22 25-9; 6-13 26-22, after which the 11-16 exchange is unavailable on account of the 23-18 3 for 2 in return and 1-5 falls to 23-18; 5-9 and 27-23.

K: Should White play 30-26 now however (32-28; 9-13 30-26 comes to the same thing), Black can safely continue with 9-13 (Drawing out the man on 32) 32-28; 13-22 25-9; 6-13 (Slightly better than 5-14) 19-16 (26-22? now loses to 5-9!); 12-19 23-16; 8-12 27-23; 12-19 23-16; 15-18 16-12; 18-23 26-19; 11-16 20-11; 7-23 24-19; 5-9 after which White has to exercise some care.

L: 14-18 23-14; 9-18 is another good option .

M: 30-26? is met with the overpowering 14-17 double-exchange.

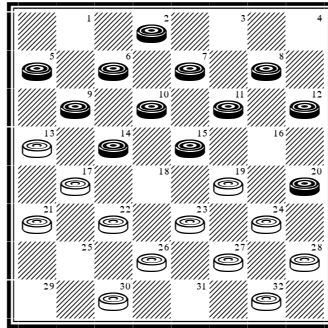
N: A case of knowledge being power: the natural 11-15 loses to 26-22!; 8-11 30-26!; 11-16 20-11; 7-16 21-17!; 14-30 23-7; 30-23 19-1; 2-11 27-18; 9-14 18-9; 5-14 13-9 and Black can resign.

O: The only move.

P: Ditto and forms Key Landing #14. After this, White may continue with 21-17 or 22-17 but must exercise caution.

#### **Lesson 48: Variation 5 (Off Variation 4)**

... 23-19(A) (V6); 11-15(B) 22-17(C); 7-11(D) 25-22(E); 11-16(F) 26-23(G); 5-9(H) 17-13(I); 3-7(J) 29-25(K); 1-5(L) 22-17(M); 8-11(N) 31-26(O); 4-8(P) 25-22(Q); 16-20(R) [Diagram 127] ... slight edge to Black

Diagram 127: *Whilter*

White to Play

A: Quite a good move inasmuch as there are no really strong replies and a few weak ones.

B: Logical and best, this transposes into Lesson 34.

C: 27-23 is safest; this is less restrictive but is also good. No other moves are worthy of consideration.

D: Although I mentioned the *Whilter* in earlier lessons, this move forms the opening at the earliest possible point. This dynamic 7-11 move should be compared with its white counterpart, 26-22, as featured in Lesson 38. Of course 8-11 is also good and was covered in Lesson 31.

E: Natural and best: White doesn't need to commit 17-13 yet.

F: Applying pressure to White's double-corner.

G: The best move, although 27-23 is perfectly sound and may be met with 5-9 17-13; 8-11 29-25; 3-8 31-27 (32-27!? is interesting); 16-20 19-16; 12-19 23-7; 2-11 26-23 and an even game with opportunities for endgame complications. The reader will note that, with 7-11 played instead of 8-11, Black is in a position to jump back towards the centre should White play the inferior 24-20; 16-23 27-11 or 29-25; 16-23 27-11 or 17-13; 16-23 27-11: Point 1.

H: A good move which forces White's reply. Instead of 5-9,

16-20 is also strong and requires all-star play from White if he is to survive. Continue: ... 30-26!; 2-7 and 23-18! to a draw: very unlikely to be found on a first try. To be avoided is the premature 3-7? which loses to 22-18!; 15-22 and 19-15.

I: Compulsory: the 23-18 break-up looks quite promising, but analysis has shown that it loses.

J: Best and forms Key Landing #11. Instead, 16-20 played at this point is inferior when met with 30-26!

K: White has 3 plausible alternatives. Both 22-17; 8-11 31-26; 4-8 29-25; 1-5 and 31-26; 8-11 22-17; 4-8 29-25; 1-5 return to the main line, while 24-20; 15-24 20-11; 8-15 28-19; 15-24 27-20; 4-8 gives Black the playing edge.

L: An effective waiting move. Black also has 7-11 24-20 (31-26 transposes into Note G); 15-24 28-19 after which he can command the centre with the 11-15 break-up: Point 2. Note that 8-11? would not have the same effect, White applying a fatal cramp with 24-20!; 15-24 28-19; 1-5 (Black cannot play 11-15 now) 22-18!

M: 31-26; 8-11 22-17 comes to the same thing, while the 24-20 break-up is inferior now that Black has consolidated his double-corner with 1-5.

N: The only good move, but a strong one!

O: The only move to draw: 24-20?; 15-24 28-19 loses to 14-18! 23-14; 9-18.

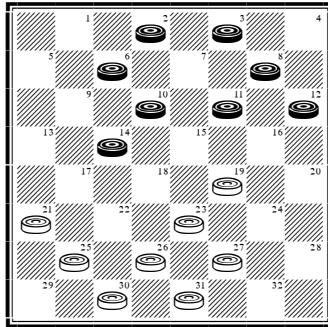
P: 16-20 is also good, but more complicated. This is extremely forceful.

Q: The only one.

R: Ditto. After 16-20, White replies with the forced 23-18, removing 6 men at a sweep, after which a typical continuation runs: 11-16 17-14; 10-17 21-14; 16-20 19-15; 7-11 23-19!; 20-24 14-10 and 24-27 to a draw.

**Lesson 49: Variation 6 (Off Variation 5)**

... 24-19(A); 11-15(B) 22-18(C); 15-24(D) 18-9; 5-14 28-19; 8-11(E) 25-22(F); 11-15(G) 32-28(H); 15-24 28-19; 7-11(I) 22-18(J); 1-5(K) 18-9; 5-14 29-25(L); 4-8(M) [Diagram 128] ... Black has a slight edge

Diagram 128: *9-14 Second Double-Corner*

White to Play

A: Duplicating Black's initial move and typically leading to very evenly balanced games. For the sake of completeness, I must also make brief mention of the radical 23-18 exchange here. After 14-23 27-18 (26-19? has been shown by analysis to lose after the 11-16 squeeze), the White double-corner is severely damaged. A common continuation runs as follows: 12-16 (Attacking the double-corner) 18-14 (Essential); 10-17 21-14; 6-9 (Forceful) 14-10 (32-27 is equally hard); 7-14 22-18; 14-23 26-12 and White has a very hard road ahead.

B: Black is slightly better by virtue of getting to the centre first: clearly the best move available.

C: White has 7 possible moves: 3 of them played regularly and 4 of them hardly ever used. Let's see why. Obviously 21-17?? can be rejected out of hand. Secondly, 22-17; 15-24 28-19 allows Black to play 8-11 25-22; 11-15 with a clear advantage. Thirdly, 23-18; 14-23 27-11 and now both 8-24 and 7-23 disrupt White's

position considerably while leaving Black's substantially intact. Finally, there is the 19-16; 12-19 23-16 exchange. If you refer back to Lesson 37, Note C, you will see that this is the same as 9-14 22-18; 14-17? 21-14; 10-17 but with the colours reversed and with a move in hand. As such, one holds out little hope for White after 8-12 27-23; 12-19 23-16; 4-8 32-27; 8-11 16-12 and 11-16 (Building on White's dust hole man). Moving on to White's 3 decent options, we first encounter 27-24. This transposes into the *Defiance* and was covered in Lesson 34. Next, there is 28-24 after which Black gains the edge with 8-11 22-18 (22-17 is quite good after 11-16 24-20; 15-24 20-11; 7-16 27-11; 3-7 25-22; 7-16 23-19!; 16-23 26-19: a restrictive defence which more commonly arises from the *Glasgow*. See also Lesson 46, Note J) 15-22 25-9; 5-14 29-25; 11-15 25-22 and 6-9 forming Key Landing #25. Finally, there is the text move: in keeping with the counterpart theme and permitting only the tiniest advantage for Black.

D: Better than 15-22 25-9; 5-14 after which White may play 26-22; 8-11 22-18 and take the centre himself.

E: Logical and best: the only advantage Black has in this counterpart position is that he can get to the centre first. This forms a position which arose in freestyle days from 11-15 24-19; 15-24 28-19; 8-11 22-18; 9-14 (11-16 is stronger) 18-9; 5-14 same.

F: 26-22 also draws after 11-15 22-18; 15-24 18-9; 6-13 27-20; 4-8 23-18! (If not forced, then certainly best); 8-11 18-14; 10-17 21-14; 12-16 25-22 and 16-19.

G: Of course!

H: White has other moves which draw, but this is the logical choice.

I: My preference, but 4-8 is also good. Instead, the 10-15 exchange virtually forces matters to a drawn conclusion after the 22-18 2 for 2 in reply.

J: Naturally.

K: The cover up with 6-9 26-22; 3-8 27-24; 1-5 30-25 is also playable.

L: Universally played, although 26-22 will also draw.

M: 11-15 25-22; 15-24 27-20; 4-8 22-18; 6-9 26-22; 8-11 is also good, but this unexpected waiting move has proved to be effective on many occasions. Continue: ... 25-22; 11-15 22-18; 15-22 26-17; 8-11 30-26; 6-9 and now the natural 17-13? loses.

## Summary

### *When Playing White*

#### **Trunk**

11-15(V9) 23-19; 8-11(V6) 22-17; 4-8(V1) 17-13; 15-18 24-20;  
9-14 28-24; 11-15 26-23; 8-11 31-26; 6-9 13-6; 2-9 26-22; 1-6 ...

#### **Variation 1** (Off Trunk)

11-16(V2) 24-20; 16-23; 27-11; 7-16 20-11; 3-7 28-24; 7-16 24-20;  
16-19 25-22; 4-8 29-25; 10-15 ...

#### **Variation 2** (Off Variation 1)

9-13(V3) 17-14; 10-17 21-14; 15-18 24-20; 4-8 27-23; 18-27 32-23;  
11-15 19-10; 6-15 23-18; 15-22 25-18 ...

#### **Variation 3** (Off Variation 2)

9-14(V4) 25-22; 6-9 17-13; 2-6 29-25; 4-8 24-20; 15-24 28-19;  
11-15 27-24; 14-17; 21-14; 9-18 26-23; 18-27 32-23; 10-14 19-10;  
6-15 13-9; 14-17 ...

#### **Variation 4** (Off Variation 3)

3-8(V5) 25-22; 11-16 27-23; 7-11 24-20!; 15-24 28-19; 10-14 17-  
10; 6-24 22-18; 1-6 21-17; 6-10 17-13; 24-27 ...

#### **Variation 5** (Off Variation 4)

15-18 19-15; 10-19 24-8; 4-11 17-14; 11-15 28-24; 12-16 26-23;  
16-20 30-26; 9-13 32-28 ...

#### **Variation 6** (Off Trunk)

9-14(V7) 27-23; 8-11 22-18; 15-22 25-9; 5-14 29-25; 11-15 25-22;  
4-8 24-20; 15-24 28-19; 10-15 19-10; 6-15 ...

#### **Variation 7** (Off Variation 6)

7-11(V8) 27-23; 9-14 22-18; 15-22 25-9; 5-14 29-25; 11-15 25-22;  
8-11 22-18; 15-22 26-17; 11-15 24-20; 15-24 28-19; 4-8 30-26 ...

**Variation 8** (Off Variation 7)

9-13 22-18; 15-22 25-18; 10-14 18-9; 5-14 27-23; 8-11 26-22; 6-10 22-18; 1-5 18-9; 5-14 29-25; 11-15 25-22; 4-8 30-26; 8-11 ...

**Variation 9** (Off Trunk)

9-14(V10) 22-18; 5-9 24-19; 11-15 18-11 8-24 28-19; 4-8 25-22; 8-11 22-18; 11-16 29-25; 7-11 25-22; 1-5 27-24; 16-20 32-28; 20-27 31-24 ...

**Variation 10** (Off Variation 9)

11-16(V11) 24-19; 8-11 22-18; 4-8 26-22; 16-20 22-17; 9-14 18-9; 5-14 25-22; 11-15 30-26; 15-24 28-19; 8-11 22-18 ...

**Variation 11** (Off Variation 10)

10-15(V12) 21-17; 11-16 17-13; 16-20 23-18; 8-11 26-23; 7-10 25-21; 9-14 18-9; 5-14 29-25; 4-8 30-26; 11-16 24-19; 15-24 28-19 ...

**Variation 12** (Off Variation 11)

10-14(V13) 24-19; 6-10 22-17; 9-13 28-24; 13-22 25-9; 5-14 26-22; 11-15 29-25; 7-11 23-18; 14-23 27-18; 11-16 18-11; 8-15 31-27; 16-23 27-11; 3-8 11-7; 2-11 22-17 ...

**Variation 13** (Off Variation 12)

12-16(V14) 24-20; 8-12 28-24; 3-8 23-18; 9-13 18-14; 10-17 21-14; 6-10 25-21; 10-17 21-14; 16-19 24-15; 11-25 29-22; 1-6 30-25 ...

**Variation 14** (Off Variation 13)

9-13 22-18; 12-16 24-20; 8-12 27-24; 3-8 24-19; 11-15 18-11; 8-24 28-19; 10-14 20-11; 7-16 25-22; 4-8 22-18; 6-10 18-9; 5-14 29-25; 8-11 25-22 ...

*When Playing Black*

**Trunk**

9-14 22-18(V3); 5-9 25-22(V1); 11-16 18-15; 10-19 24-15; 7-10 27-24; 10-19 24-15; 16-19 23-16; 12-19 22-17; 14-18 17-14; 9-13 29-25; 3-7 31-27; 1-5 ...



**Variation 1** (Off Trunk)

... 24-19(V2); 11-15 18-11; 8-24 28-19; 4-8 26-22; 8-11 27-24; 1-5 22-18; 9-13 18-9; 5-14 25-22; 11-15 32-28; 7-11 24-20; 15-24 28-19; 11-15 ...

**Variation 2** (Off Variation 1)

... 24-20; 11-16 20-11; 8-22 25-18; 4-8 28-24; 8-11 29-25; 10-15 25-22; 7-10 24-20; 3-7 27-24; 1-5 32-28; 9-13 18-9; 5-14 ...

**Variation 3** (Off Trunk)

... 22-17(V4); 11-15 25-22; 8-11 17-13; 11-16 24-19 15-24 28-19; 4-8 22-18; 8-11 18-9; 5-14 29-25; 16-20 25-22; 11-16 22-18; 14-17 21-14; 10-17 ...

**Variation 4** (Off Variation 3)

... 24-20(V5); 5-9 28-24; 11-15 23-19; 7-11 22-17; 3-7 26-23; 1-5 17-13; 15-18 31-26; 11-16 20-11; 8-15 26-22; 4-8 ...

**Variation 5** (Off Variation 4)

... 23-19(V6); 11-15 22-17; 7-11 25-22; 11-16 26-23; 5-9 17-13; 3-7 29-25; 1-5 22-17; 8-11 31-26; 4-8 25-22; 16-20 ...

**Variation 6** (Off Variation 5)

... 24-19; 11-15 22-18; 15-24 18-9; 5-14 28-19; 8-11 25-22; 11-15 32-28; 15-24 28-19; 7-11 22-18; 1-5 18-9; 5-14 29-25; 4-8 ...



## Lesson 50: Elimination & Visualization

### Elimination

As mentioned on several occasions in Chapter 6, in the opening and early midgame in particular, experts make such efficient use of elimination that they are barely even aware of it. First, they eliminate moves which lead to the immediate loss of material without compensation (quite easy to do). Secondly, they eliminate those which are strategically awful (harder). Thirdly, from the remaining moves they identify those which are in keeping with the needs of the position (requires good judgement). And finally, from these candidate moves, they use their powers of visualization in combination with static evaluations to choose the actual move to be played.

Two specific uses of the process are worthy of note. First, when defending a weak or losing position, it is sensible to first eliminate clear-cut losing moves: better to play a move which *might* lose (can't tell) than one which *does* lose. And secondly, when in a strong or winning position, it is sensible to first eliminate moves which permit your opponent clear-cut draws: better to play a move which *might* win (can't tell) than one which *doesn't* win. Quite clearly, this approach is not foolproof. However, used in a very disciplined way, it is extremely powerful.

## Visualization

As the late, great Derek Oldbury once pointed out, some players develop exceptional powers of visualization, but never reap the benefit because they don't understand the needs of the position and are looking in the wrong direction! In other words it is a technical skill which needs to be supported by understanding. Granted this understanding however, and the right type of position, it may be possible for a skilful practitioner to look 30 or more moves ahead. Then again, when a position possesses vast scope for both sides, it may be impractical for anyone to look more than 3 or 4 moves ahead.

Certainly in quiescent positions, where the number of contact points between opposing pieces is limited, tactical opportunities will be limited; whereas in the mixed formation of which Lesson 43 is an example, there are many contact points and tactical considerations will run high. Working through the advanced tactical devices featured in Books 2 through 5 will prove invaluable in these positions: developing both the armoury required and the associated visualization skills.

In the meantime, to enhance your visualization powers, keep in mind the following:

- Try to picture only the 32 playing squares rather than the entire board.
- Half close your eyes to allow partial retention of the current position while 'looking' at new ones. (This is much favoured by grandmaster Richard Hallett.)
- Use the notation system to aid in recalling where particular pieces are during your analysis.
- Use a simple scoring system to ensure any tactical exchanges are equitable. For example, let's look at the *Glasgow* opening, with you playing Black. 11-15 23-19; 8-11 22-17; 11-16 24-20; 16-23 (1-0) 27-11 (1-2); 7-16 (2-2); 20-11 (2-3); 3-7 28-24; 7-16 (3-3): all square. Trust

me, accurate counting is important: in the 1985 Scottish Open Championship, I lost a game which I should have won when I threw away an 'extra' man which I didn't have! This cost me the title.

- Rather than carrying out extended jumps in your head, with experience you'll find it simpler to just 'move' the pieces into their new positions.
- Once you've developed a working repertoire of ideas, try to solve draughts problems in your head.
- Finally, when you feel you've looked as far ahead as you can, force yourself to look just one move further!



## About the Author

**Richard Pask, BSc (Hons), PGCE, NPQH, MA**

*Draughts Grandmaster since 1989*

English Match Champion: 1995-2006 (40-0 & 34 draws)

British Open Championship: 2<sup>nd</sup> in 1984, 1986 and 1990  
(23-2 & 35 draws)

Board 1 for England: 1984 and 1988 Home Internationals  
(6-0 & 26 draws)

UK and Ireland v USA: 1983 and 1989 (2-3 & 35 draws)

County Championships (Avon): 1984-1997 (10-1 & 33  
draws)

Avon Open Champion: 1987-1989 (35-2 & 25 draws)

Total score between 1984 and 2002: 161 wins, 13 losses  
and 334 draws (65%)

Books written on the game: 35

Mr. Pask was born in Weymouth, on the south coast of England, on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1961, and apart from spells at Bath University and the University of the West of England in Bristol, has lived there all of his life.

Coming from a musical family, but one with no background in checkers, his interest in the game was only sparked when, at the age of 11, he stumbled across books by Willie Ryan and Tom Wiswell in his local library. However, it was not until he was 17, when he joined the EDA (English Draughts Association) and ACF (American Checker Federation), that he began to study the game seriously. Benefitting from regular practice with local expert Harry Gibson, and helpful advice received from Tom Wiswell, with whom he carried on extended correspondence for

many years, Mr. Pask made steady progress, and in 1983 became the youngest player ever to compete in the UK & Ireland v USA international series.

Following this great match, he began corresponding with Richard Fortman (over 200 letters during their friendship) and visiting Derek Oldbury (around 30 times in 11 years). These associations assisted in enabling him to establish himself as a seasoned player during the years from 1983-1991. Although he lost his 1990 match for the British Championship with Mr. Oldbury by the score of 0-3 and 13 draws, he was not at all discouraged, and believes that subsequent matches might well have turned out differently.

Becoming a full-time teacher in 1993 largely crimped Mr. Pask's crossboard ambitions, although he successfully competed for the English Match Championship five times between 1995 and 2006, and forced him to concentrate on his book writing activities. For a year he wrote a weekly series of beginner's articles in his local paper, and in 2001 and 2013 was successful in reaching a worldwide audience with *Starting Out in Checkers/Draughts* and *How to Play Checkers/Draughts*. He is most grateful to Bob Newell for making many more of his productions available to the general public through his excellent *Checker Maven* website.

Given that hundreds of thousands of checkers sets are sold throughout the world every year, and that only a tiny percentage of people are aware of the skilful game which 'lies beneath,' the vast majority not even knowing the correct rules, Mr. Pask contends that checkers may legitimately lay claim to being the world's most underrated game.

Mr. Pask is married to Kathy, a flautist and retired primary school teacher, and has a son, Robert, born in 1994, a trumpeter, who is just completing a history degree. Outside of the game, Mr. Pask loves singing, having studied under local professional James Davis for 12 years, classic films and, with his son, watching football (soccer), boxing and darts. He also follows



chess closely and has played hundreds of games of backgammon against the excellent GNU Backgammon program. Having narrowly avoided death on three occasions, he is ever grateful for the opportunity to give something back to the game which he loves.



*Photo of Richard Pask by Kathy Pask*