



thello

No.3

May 1997

Newsletter of the Australian Othello Federation

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

Masaki TAKIZAWA - Tetsuya NAKAJIMA
1997 'Meijin' Title Match, Niigata, Japan

White to play and win

EDITORIAL

"Merry Christmas and Happy New Year" might have been a good way to start this issue of OZthello had it been released on schedule, last December. Instead I will start with a much needed explanation to this incredible delay.

I actually announced my resignation as editor of OZthello to the rest of the AOF committee at our AGM last October in Canberra. However as nobody seemed to be prepared to take over I felt it was my duty to let everyone know what was going on. Creating and editing OZthello has been fun but I simply no longer have the time (or the energy) to continue. If someone would like to take over as editor please let me know either by mail (at the address indicated below) or by e-mail at froggy@blitzen.canberra.edu.au

If there are no volunteers to take over the editorship, I'm afraid this will be the final issue of OZthello. In any case you'll be able to find out information about the "Nationals" from our web page (<http://blitzen.canberra.edu.au/othello/>).

Finally I cannot hide my disappointment at how slowly the AOF has evolved in terms of membership since its creation in 1995. Lack of sponsorship is of course a major problem but also a problem was the fact that no one really had the amount of free time required to promote the game and recruit new members. This is a pity, as there are more and more Australians being introduced to Othello through its growing popularity on the Internet.

To finish on a brighter note, I'd like to congratulate Takeshi Murakami of Japan for a well deserved win at the XXth Othello World Championships in Tokyo last November. Takeshi has been playing the game since the early eighties and has won many tournaments in both Europe and Japan, but this was the first time he won the world title and it couldn't have happened at a better time for him, in front of a home crowd.

Congratulations also to the British team (Joel Feinstein, Garry Edmead and Guy Plowman) for winning the team prize in brilliant fashion.

Well this is it... my last editorial. I hope these newsletters have brought you an interesting insight into the game of Othello, and I also hope to see more of you at this year's national championships in Adelaide.

*George ORTIZ
AOF Secretary*

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All articles or material to be submitted for possible use in this newsletter should be sent to OZthello, L.P.O. Box 5075, University of Canberra, Bruce ACT 2617, Australia.

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Cover Puzzle :

Tetsuya Nakajima is the new Meijin!

The position represented on the cover occurred in the second game of a four game match between challenger Tetsuya Nakajima and the 1996 Meijin Masaki Takizawa played last April (the Meijin ('Masters') is one of the most prestigious Othello tournaments in Japan, played every year between the winner of a 'Challenger' tournament and the Meijin title-holder).

Nakajima took an early control of the game straight out of the opening but Takizawa made sure the endgame would not be simple. At move 48, Nakajima has only one winning move. He found it and both players played perfectly till the end and Nakajima won 37-27.

See if you can find that winning move!

Solution on page 7

Australian Othello Federation, PO Box 6, Stirling, SA 5152, Australia

The AOF is a non-profit organisation, dedicated to promote the game of Othello in Australia. Membership to the AOF is available to Australian residents for A\$10 per year (A\$6 per year for students) and A\$12 per year for non-residents. First year membership includes a free copy of *Othello: Brief & Basic* by Ted Landau (only applies for Australian residents). Directors of the federation are Simon Jones (President), Roslyn Michaels (Vice-president), George Ortiz (Secretary), Geoff Hubbard (Treasurer).

Email : sjones@hal9000.net.au

Web page: <http://blitzen.canberra.edu.au/othello/home.html>

Internet News

The Internet Gaming Zone

by Colin Springer

A new way to play Othello over the internet was recently introduced -- the Internet Gaming Zone (IGZ). This game server, recently acquired by Microsoft, features a number of games including Reversi (identical to Othello, except that their implementation has white moving first). Special software is needed to play on IGZ, and is currently available only for PC (Windows) or Mac based systems. This free software is very pleasing to use -- at the start of your session, you see a number of huts on a field with signs indicating the game. Clicking on the Reversi hut, you see a number of tables and people sitting at them. To play a game, you just click on an empty chair!

The primary advantage to playing on IGZ is the vast number of players who use it. It's not at all uncommon to find 50 players in the Reversi room (some of the other games draw hundreds of players at a time). Finding an opponent never takes more than a few seconds. Another reason to play on IGZ is the variety of playing strengths of players there. There are a number of good players who play there, and some of the weaker players are getting stronger -- but the vast pool of inexperienced players makes IGZ fun for players of all abilities.

For more information on IGZ, or to download the software, point your web browser to <http://www.zone.com>. I hope to see you there!

Internet Grand Prix 1997 mid-season report

by Willy Wombat

The IGP is now already in its 3rd season. Time just flies doesn't it...

For those who don't remember or were not around, the first Internet Grand Prix was started in 1995 by Colin Springer and was won by newly-crowned Meijin, Tetsuya Nakajima. Then in 1996 another Japanese player, Tomohiro Fukami, won the event. This year however for the first time a non-japanese player is leading half-way through the season as Ola Mikael Hansson of Sweden takes a comfortable lead. Hugo Calendar (now living in California) sticks with tradition and remains close behind the leader after winning the very first tournament of the year.

1997 Internet Grand Prix standings (top 10)

Rank.	Name	(Country)	Jan	Mar	May	Jul	Sep	Nov	TOTAL
1.	Ola Hansson	(SWE)	82	170	170	---	---	---	422
2.	Hugo Calendar	(USA)	200	55	---	---	---	---	255
=3.	Michael Handel	(GB)	---	---	170	---	---	---	170
=3.	Marc Tastet	(FRA)	170	---	---	---	---	---	260
5.	Stephen Swolley	(USA)	30	55	40	---	---	---	125
=6.	Geoff Hubbard	(AUS)	82	---	---	---	---	---	82
=6.	Yi Liang	(FRA)	82	---	---	---	---	---	82
=6.	Markku Poysti	(FIN)	82	---	---	---	---	---	82
=9.	Ryan Matreyek	(USA)	20	---	40	---	---	---	60
=9.	Leonid Shifman	(ISR)	---	20	40	---	---	---	60

The Othello Match of the Year: Takeshi Murakami vs. **Logistello**

Dear Othello Friends,

It is my pleasure to announce a six-game match between the current Othello world champion Takeshi Murakami (Japan) and Logistello. This event --- which would be the first multi-game match ever between one of the strongest human Othello players and one of the best Othello programs --- is sponsored by the Nec Research Institute of Princeton and will take place in Princeton (NJ) - at the address given below - along with a small scientific workshop on game-tree search from August 4th through 7th this year. The tournament director will be David Parsons of New York City.

We plan to report the long timed games (2h per player) live on the Internet Othello Server (telnet external.nj.nec.com 5000) and to prepare a room for spectators. However, because the seating is limited, we must ask for an advance registration. Please let me know, if you are interested in coming to Princeton for watching the games and/or attending the workshop.

The latest information about this event is available on the following web-page:

<http://www.neci.nj.nec.com/homepages/mic/event.html>

I am looking forward to seeing you in Princeton.

Best regards,

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Michael Buro first started writing his Othello program 'Logistello' about five years ago as an investigation for his PhD thesis on methods for the evaluation of game positions at the University of Paderborn in Germany. It is written in C and is based on novel evaluation-, learning- and game-tree search techniques. During the last five years it has been improved in various ways and placed first 17 times and second five times in the 23 international Othello tournaments it has played so far. It is generally accepted that Logistello is the best Othello computer program ever written.

Does Takeshi Murakami stand a chance against the might of state of the art technology and perfect endgame solving? One would think that the odds are very much in favour of Logistello. However one thing is for sure, we will be witnessing a fascinating battle! See you on IOS on the 4th of August!

Canberra 96 – Othello National Championship

by Sebastian Kopec

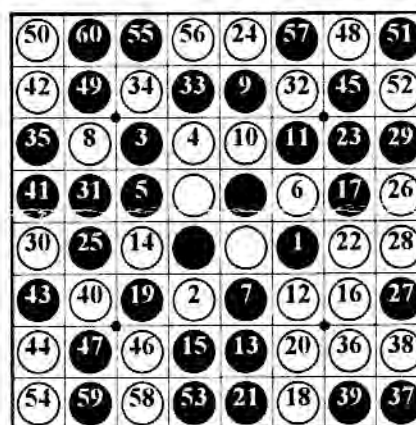
The 1996 Australian Othello national championship was held at the University House near Lake Burley-Griffin in Canberra on Saturday October 5th. Only seven participants took place in the event : Simon Jones and his wife Gabriele who drove all the way from Adelaide, the Hubbard brothers (Geoff and Paul) from Melbourne and three local players including George Ortiz.

The first round was a bad start for the Jones family as Gabriele lost to Sebastian and George narrowly defeated Simon 33-31. In round 2, Geoff defeated Sebastian to take the lead in the tournament. In round 3, George and Geoff both undefeated finally met. George won 37-27 assuring himself a spot in the finals. After lunch everyone agreed to reduce the scheduled 5 rounds to 4 to allow more time for the finals as the room was only booked till 5pm (perhaps this year's event should take place over two days). In round 4, which was now the final round, Geoff and Simon were paired off, the winner would be playing George in the finals. Simon came out of the opening with the better position, but Geoff slowly came back into the game. Then when Simon missed a winning move late in the endgame, Geoff cruised to victory (39-25).

In the match for third place Simon had no trouble against Paul Hubbard and won 57-7.

In the first game of the finals George played his beloved Leader Tiger and the game was fairly even throughout the opening. At move 36, Geoff makes an adventurous but correct X-square move to g7. The endgame was very tight and George makes the last mistake at move 55 missing the win (55.d1 wins by two whereas 55.c1 draws).

In Game 2, Geoff decides to play the modern lines of the Tiger but makes a fairly poor move 15 and his position slowly goes downhill. George playing white won by 32 discs.



Game 1: G.Ortiz 32 – 32 G.Hubbard

In Game 3, Geoff is again playing black, and choses to open with the lines of the rotating flat. Both players cruise through this over-played opening all the way to move 27. Although the game always looked to be in white's favour, Geoff had one last chance to win at move 45 with the X-square move b7 (wins by 12). But after making a couple endgame blunders Geoff lost by 42 discs and George Ortiz became the 1996 Australian champion.

Final Standings:

- | | | |
|----|-----------------|--------------|
| 1. | George Ortiz | 4/4 (+2.5/3) |
| 2. | Geoff Hubbard | 3/4 (+0.5/3) |
| 3. | Simon Jones | 2/4 (+1/1) |
| 4. | Paul Hubbard | 1/4 (+0/1) |
| 5. | Sebastian Kopec | 1/4 |
| 6. | G. Ganeshkumar | 1/4 |
| 7. | Gabriele Jones | 0/4 |

XXth World Championships in Tokyo

Japan - Land of the rising Brits

by Guy Plowman & Garry Edmead

The inner metropolitan area of Tokyo has a population of over 8.3 million. Everywhere you go you can see businessmen with their briefcases and umbrellas (they've all got them) on their way to play 'pachinko' (a Japanese cross between pinball and bagatelle). You can see young children with their cellular phones (they've all got them) on their way to school. On November 10th, in the middle of the night, sleeping on the floor of a flat in Shibaura, you could also see three Britons with their trophies (they've all got them).

The 1996 World Championships were staged at the magnificent Imperial Palace Hotel in Tokyo on the 8th - 10th November. The 22 players from 10 countries, including for the first time Hungary, first gathered there on the evening of Thursday 7th November for the reception and welcome party. Traditional food and drink were in abundance; buta-no-shoga-yaki (ginger fried pork), tofu (bean curd), chimaki (rice cakes wrapped in bamboo leaves) and for the connoisseurs with taste buds affectionate for the finer side of international cuisine, there was chicken and chips with ice-cream for pudding.

At the reception, each player received a booklet with the tournament rules in. One of the more unusual rules was that the colour of each player in each game (for the swiss part of the tournament) would be decided by the flip of a disc. Needless to say this caused a great deal of consternation on the part of some of the competitors (no names will be mentioned to protect the innocent). After an objection had been made the rule was upheld.

On to the tournament itself. With the quality of the players present it was inevitable that there would be some difficult to predict first round pairings, including Tastet v Plowman, Shaman v Feinstein and Penloup v Rose, with Plowman, Feinstein and Rose all getting their first victories.

After five rounds the leader board was beginning to take shape with Murakami setting the pace with 5/5. Edmead was hot on his tail with 4.5, Nicolet had 4, Plowman 3.5 and Tastet had played Black in the first round followed by four rounds as white, was this why the rule had been put in place ???

Round six saw the top three pull away from the rest of the field by a point as Nicolet beat Plowman and Edmead had an excellent win over the previously unbeaten Murakami.

At the end of the first day the positions were Murakami and Nicolet on 6/7, Edmead 5.5 and Plowman, Shaman and Feldborg on 4.5. Feinstein was back on 4 points and had started planning his sightseeing for the final day.

The second day saw Feinstein on mightily impressive form winning 6/6, with wins over Murakami, Edmead, Nicolet and Tastet, to come storming through to the semi-final placings. Murakami continued his steady progress at the top (beating anybody who wasn't British) and Nicolet and Edmead took the two final berths in the semi-finals, with Marc Tastet taking top marks for disc flipping with 11 games as white. Marc has been quoted as saying "That if you drop a slice of toast which is buttered on one side...".

Before the tournament Garry Edmead had a reputation of being one of the most feared players of the 'peasant' (1.c4, 2.c3, 3.d3, 4.c5, 5.b3 ...) [Ed: also known as the 'snake' in the US]. He had already beaten Murakami, his semi-final opponent, in the swiss part of the tournament with it. For this reason the Murakami - Edmead semi-final generated a great deal of interest and it appeared that the tension of being the only Japanese representative in the semi-finals was taking its toll on Murakami when Garry took the first game with an opening prepared the night before with the help of Brian Rose's local knowledge.

Edmead also got ahead in the second game with his beloved peasant however he hadn't counted on the tenacity of his opponents defence, and the game drifted away from him. Murakami chose white for the third game, thus, given that he always plays the diagonal, subjected himself to Edmead's normally lethal peasant once again. All three games were good hard fought battles but the home player came through in the third game to win 2-1. It is interesting to look through the three Edmead – Murakami peasant games, in the early stages particularly, and try to guess what each player was thinking. The second semi-final saw Nicolet beat Feinstein, also 2-1, with fortunes fluctuating throughout the match.

Takeshi Murakami, finally won his first world crown by beating Nicolet in the final, without getting into too much trouble. Stephane Nicolet, although he had seemed partly resigned to defeat before the final started, had a superb tournament and well deserved his second place. Garry Edmead beat Joel Feinstein to take third place. Everyone agrees that the world title, this year, has gone to one of the most respected Othello players in the world, respected that is, not only for the quality of his play over the past years but also as a great ambassador for the game the world over.

The prize giving dinner was also a grand affair, with good food and drink. Murakami, who had been laying down between rounds all day could only, unfortunately stay for a short while as he was feeling ill. So what many had thought was ancient Japanese meditation had in fact turned out to be modern 'help me please' medication (the blanket and ice-pack should have given it away). Marc Tastet also starred with a rendition of Oh Bla Di Oh Bla Da at a post victory dinner karaoke escapade.

Final standings :

1.	T.Murakami	(JAP)	11/13	(+2/3)	(+2/2)
2.	S.Nicolet	(FRA)	9.5	(+2/3)	(+0/2)
3.	G.Edmead	(GBR)	9.5	(+2/3)	(+1/1)
4.	J.Feinstein	(GBR)	10	(+1/3)	(+0/1)
5.	G.Plowman	(GBR)	8		
	R.Sperandio	(ITA)	8		
7.	K.Feldborg	(DEN)	7.5		
	T.Mine	(USA)	7.5		
	D.Shaman	(BEL)	7.5		
	D.Parsons	(USA)	7.5		
11.	B.Rose	(USA)	7		
	D.Penloup	(FRA)	7		
13.	M.Tastet	(FRA)	6		
	T.Nishimura	(JAP)	6		
	E.Jensen	(DEN)	6		
16.	B.Andriani	(MAD)	5		
	M.Ohyanagi	(JAP)	5		
	S.Alard	(BEL)	5		
19.	E.Vecchi	(ITA)	4		
	H.Calendar	(SWE)	4		
21.	A.Daix	(BEL)	1		
	G.Molnar-Saska	(HUN)	1		

Team Championships :

1.	Great Britain	27.5
2.	France	22.5
3.	Japan	22
	USA	22
5.	Denmark	13.5
	Belgium	13.5
7.	Italy	12
8.	Madagascar	5
9.	Sweden	4
10.	Hungary	1

Answer to cover puzzle on page 2 :

The only winning move is g8. Perfect play follows 48.g8, 49.f8, 50.h8, 51.h7, 52.g2, 53.b7, 54.b2, 55.h1, 56.h2, 57.b8, 58.a8, 59.a3, 60.a1 and White wins 37-27.

Game Analysis : Jones vs Ortiz

by George Ortiz

At last year's national championship I was "thrown into the deep end" straight from round one as I faced Simon Jones, the 1995 Australian champion. Simon and I always play interesting games which often end in exciting endgames and close final scores. This was no exception.

50	51	47	28	42	46	60	59
41	48	24	13	11	45	52	56
49	35	8	1	4	17	44	23
38	36	9			5	16	20
39	10	2			7	18	19
37	27	6	3	12	14	22	21
40	58	33	25	15	26	53	29
57	34	30	31	32	55	43	54

Jones 31-33 Ortiz

After playing out the Rose opening (moves 1 to 10), Simon played the "flat" variation with move 11.e2. We then followed with the standard continuation until Simon moved away from the lines of the popular "rotating flat" (11.e2, e6, d2, f6, b3,...) with 15.e6 which was played quite often in the mid-eighties. After my response to 16.f4 (the Brightstein variation), we were now both "out of book" and the real mid-game battle begins.

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

After Black's 33.c7

After move 33, I was quite satisfied with the overall position. I felt White had a slight mobility advantage due to the fact that my position was better connected than Black's. However I wished it was still Black's turn to play as none of my options seemed very attractive. I decided not to play the "natural" move to b4 since after a Black response to a5, I would have gained very little and Black would have reconnected his position.

So instead I played 34.b8 forming a weak "Stoner edge" but forcing Black to initiate play to the West first.

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

After Black's 37.a6

After making sure I had total control of the c3-f6 diagonal to avoid the threat of a Stoner trap at g7 we reached the following position after 37.a6.

I didn't want to initiate play in the North-East region since Black had no current access there, so I had to play on the West edge. 38.a3 seemed to be a waste since it would be followed by 39.a4. So I played 38.a4 (??) thinking that it flipped only the disk at b3. I then realised too late that I also flipped b5 and c6! After Simon's excellent move 39.a5, and my semi-forced response 40.a7, I was now in a scary situation with two adjacent Stoner edges and I was also "sealed off" from the a8-b7 pair.

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

After White's 44.g3

Surprisingly, after playing out a sequence of natural moves I still have a winning move with 44.g3 (which wins by two discs). I found it without too much difficulty as it was the only attractive move I had.

Indeed it regains control over the c3-f6 diagonal without giving Black access to h2.

In this position Black's best move is 45.c1 which flips the disk at f4 to set-up a move to h2.

However Simon blundered with 45.f2 (??) which loses by 20 discs! The problem with f2 is that it flips the disk at g3, leaving Black with a weak unbalanced edge and also gives White an easy response to f1.

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

After Black's 47.c1

A few moves later our clocks were coming down to the last few minutes and it was my turn to make a huge blunder.

The obvious natural move to b1 gives White a win by 2 discs. However I rejected 48.b1 because I was scared of Black's possible response 49.g7 taking control over the diagonal (but in fact 50.f8 would then still give White the win by 2).

So to defend the a1-h8 diagonal (which had been my main mission in the mid-game) I played 48.b2 (???) instead which loses by 18 discs!

After that we both played out all our moves in the North-West region fairly quickly to save ourselves a bit of time to solve the end-game.

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

After White's 52.g2

At move 52 I played the only feasible option I had, the "X-square" at g2, taking advantage of Black's unbalanced Eastern edge.

I had anticipated 53.h1, 54.h2, 55.g1, and so on. I didn't have time to count the outcome of that line but I guessed that I would lose by a few discs. In fact the optimal sequence is 53.h1, h2, g1, h8, b7!, f8, g7 and gives Black a comfortable win by 11 discs.

But Simon played 53.g7 which is an elegant way of guaranteeing Black's access to f8 after White takes the corner at h8, to ensure access to the a8 corner and the extra free move at b7. Unfortunately for Simon though, that sequence loses by two discs.

The main problem with 53.g7 is that it sacrifices the entire a1-h8 diagonal but it also lets White play first in the odd-numbered North-East region (gaining local *parity*) with 56.h2 guaranteeing the last move in that region, which is just enough to win the game.

In retrospect, I'm not sure if I deserved to win this game; but as they say, to win at Othello you just have to avoid making the last blunder of the game.

The Bulletin Board

Updates

- January - Hugo Calendar wins the first IGP tournament of 1997.
February - Graham Brightwell (UK) wins the Cambridge International.
March - Tetsuya Nakajima wins the Challengers and then the Meijin tournament.
April - Marc Tastet (France) wins the Copenhagen International.
May - Ola Mikael Hansson (Sweden) takes the lead in IGP 1997.

Upcoming Tournaments

Australian Othello National Championships – Adelaide, South Australia.
The tournament will most probably take place in September or October. More details will be posted on the AOF web page as they become available (or e-mail Simon Jones at sjones@hal9000.net.au).

Other Othello publications

Othello Quarterly is the official journal of the United States Othello Association (USOA). It contains information on all important Othello events in the US as well as periodic updates on international events. David Parsons writes a regular column called "World Championship Blunders" which is very educational.

Contact address : USOA, 920 Northgate Av., Waynesboro, VA 22980-3425, USA.

Email : c.hewlett1@genie.geis.com

The **British Othello Newsletter** (whose name changes every publication) is published twice a year by the British Othello Federation. Despite its modest appearance, the 32 page newsletter regularly includes excellent articles on strategy written by some of the best British players (such as Graham Brightwell, Joel Feinstein, Garry Edmead...).

Contact address : David Haigh, 62, Romsey Road, Winchester, Hants SO22 5PH, England.

Email : IAN.P.TURNER@GECM.COM

FFORUM is the quarterly newsletter of the French Othello Federation. Obviously it is entirely written in French. But even if your knowledge of French is limited you would probably benefit from some of the excellent regular features appearing in what I believe is the best non-japanese Othello publication around. Some of those features include game commentaries by the best French players and regular columns on the latest openings.

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