

Checkers

by John Reade

1. Description of the Game Checkers is the form of draughts played by the English speaking nations. It is the simplest and the oldest form of the game. It is played on a 64 square board with 12 men each side. Men move forwards and take forwards. Kings move forwards and backwards, but only one square at a time. Kings take forwards and backwards, but with simple jumps only. There is no majority take rule.

The standard notation in checkers is numerical. The operative squares are numbered 1 to 32 starting from the Black side as shown in Diagram 1. The single corner is on the left, and the double corner is on the right. Black moves first.

Diagram 1

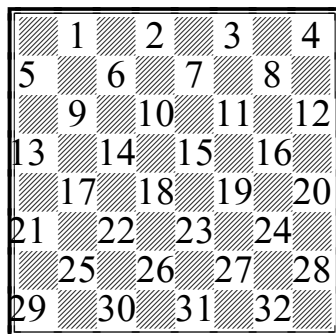
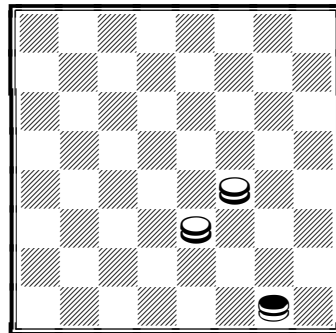


Diagram 2



2. Strategy Two kings beat one king at checkers. Starting from the position in Diagram 2, White wins as follows. (Read the moves down the columns.)

19-24	32-27	15-18
32-28	28-32	26-31
23-19	27-31	18-22
28-32	19-15	
24-28	31-26	

It follows that 3 kings beat 2 kings, 4 kings beat 3 kings, and so on, since as soon as one side is a piece up the win can be forced by successive one for one exchanges. An advantage of one piece at any point in the game is usually sufficient for a win. Sacrificing a man to get a king is not recommended in checkers unless you can see a way to get the man back fairly quickly.

3. Single Corner The opening 11-15 22 18 15 22 25 18 is the most popular in checkers, and is called the Single Corner. Well over half of all checkers games have been played on this opening. Whole books have been devoted to it. It is essential knowledge for the aspiring checkers player.

The game below is taken from the earliest known book on checkers by William Payne, published in 1756.

Game 1

W. Payne v W. Payne (1756)

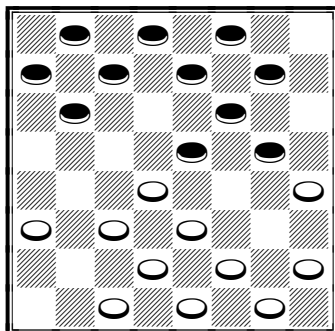
11-15	10-15	15-24	1-10
22-18	21-17 A	28-19	22-13
15-22	7-10	14-17	14-18
25-18	27-24	32-27	23-14
8-11	8-12	10-14	16-30
29-25	17-13	27-24	25-21
4-8	9-14	3-7	10-17
25-22	18-9	30-25 B	21-14 C
12-16	5-14	6-9	Black win
24-20	24-19	13-6	

A. 27-24 loses to 16-19 23 16 15 19 24 15 9-14 18 9 11-25. This combination is known as the Goose Walk. (See Diagram 3.)

B. Loses. 22-18 draws.

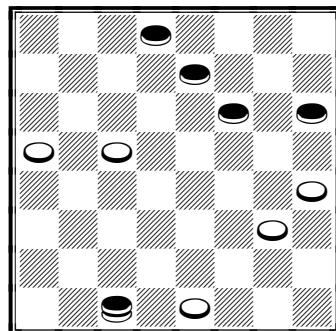
C. Given as a draw by Payne, but is actually a Black win. (See Diagram 4.) The winning line is 30 25 14 9 25-22 9-6 2-9 13-6 22-18 6-2 18-23 2-6 11-15 6-2 7-11. Black now takes the man on 15 through for a king, and brings this king back to 22. The other Black king can then go round the back of the White man on 24.

Diagram 3



White to move

Diagram 4



Black to move

4. Martins' Rest The game below was played 21 times in a 40 game match between James Wyllie and Robert Martins in 1863. It led to the introduction of The Two Move Restriction in Scotland 1890, followed by the Three Move Restriction in the USA in 1934. These measures were designed to prevent excessive repetition of games by forcing players to play unfamiliar openings.

Game 2

J. Wyllie v R. Martins (1863)

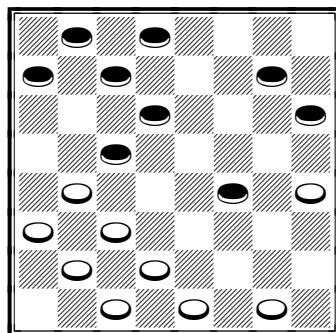
11-15	3-7	14-23	1-6	22-26
23-19	28-24	17-14	21-14	18-14
8-11	7-16	10-17	6-10	26-30
22-17	24-20	21-14	30-25	15-10
11-16 A	16-19	2-7 C	10-17	5-9
24-20	25-22	31-27	25-21	14-5
16-23	4-8	6-10	19-23	7-14
27-11	29-25	27-18	26-19	Draw
7-16	9-14	10-17	17-22	
20-11	22-18 B	25-21	19-15	

A. Forms the so-called Glasgow. Another popular opening in checkers.

B. The Martins sacrifice. (See Diagram 5.)

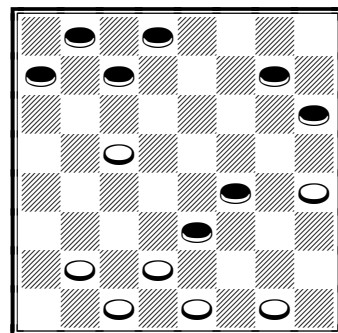
C. The Wyllie reply. (See Diagram 6.) Another possibility is 6-9 14-10 9-14 25 22 5-9 20-16 9-13 31 27 1-5 27-9 5-14 to a draw.

Diagram 5



White to move

Diagram 6



Black to move

5. First Position This is the classic endgame at checkers. (See Diagram 7.) White wins as follows.

27-32	19-16	28-32	23-27
28-24	18-15	16-19	28-32
23-18 A	16-20	32-28	27-31
24-19	15-11	19-23	15-19
32-28	12-16 B	11-15	

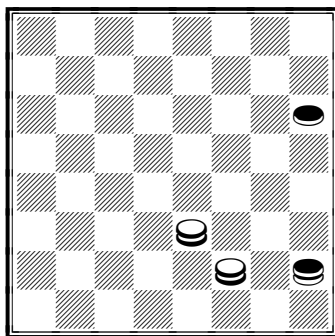
- A. Not 32-28, since Black then draws with 24-19 23 16 12 19.
- B. Black's strategy is not to move the man unless he has to.

6. American Position Also known as Second Position in Italian draughts. (See Diagram 8.) White wins as follows.

If White goes first, then 27-23 25 29 26 30 29 25 23 18 25 29 18 22.

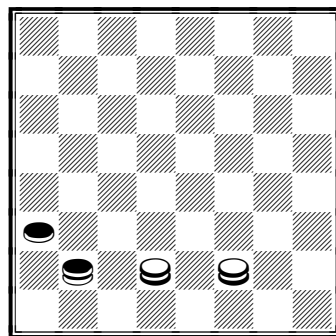
If Black goes first, then 25-29 27 23 29 25 23 18 25 29 18 22 24 25 26 30.

Diagram 7



White to move and win

Diagram 8



Either to move, White to win

The Unity of Draughts The above article is one of a collection of articles on various forms of draughts planned to be published by the FMJD later this year under the title of The Unity of Draughts.