

Chapter 3

Unorthodox ways of capturing

[In normal chess, capture is by displacement (a piece captures by moving to its victim's square, and any man can capture any other regardless of rank). This chapter considers various other ways of capturing or immobilizing men. Some further ways of removing men from the board will be found in the chapter on transporting and in the miscellaneous chapter, while the reintroduction of captured men is considered in the chapter on introducing men during play.]

3.1 Capture by attacking

Rifle Chess, also known as **Shoot Chess** and **Shooting Chess** (W. B. Seabrook, 1921, though the *Oxford Companion to Chess* reports that similar capturing methods had been tried early in the 19th century in an Italian version of Kriegsspiel). Seabrook observed that when chess was invented in imitation of warfare, hand-to-hand fighting was the norm. With the introduction of firearms, warfare underwent a radical change: the opponent was now hit from a distance, the striker remaining stationary. Rifle Chess reflects this change. Displacement capture is dispensed with. Instead, where such a capture is legal, the attacker 'shoots' the victim but does not itself move (the king can be said to be assassinated rather than mated). The game is usually played with the additional rule that captures are obligatory with the player free to choose between alternatives. The reason for this rule is that the line pieces (and particularly the queen) are too powerful without it. F. J. Marshall found Rifle Chess problems 'remarkable' (*Fairy Chess Review*, August 1947). The variant was a favourite of another master, C. H. O'D. Alexander, who gave the following example of opening play: 1 e4 e5 2 b3 Nf6 3 Bb5 xe4 (compulsory) 4 xd7+ Ke7 5 Ba3+ Ke6 6 xf8 xd2 7 xd8 and White's position is overwhelming. An instant disaster for White would be 1 d4 e5! 2 xe5 Bb4+ and now White must give up the Q to let the K escape to d1. Traditionalists may find comfort in the fact that Seabrook wrote a book based on his personal experiences called *Asylum*.

There have been several extensions of Rifle Chess. In **Missile Chess** (R. Wayne

Schmittberger, date unclear) a man can only fire once. A counter or draughtsman is placed under each man to represent a missile, and instead of moving the man can fire its missile to a square to which it could otherwise move. Once a missile has been fired the counter is forfeited and that man cannot fire again. Men may also move and capture normally whether or not they have used their missiles, thus one tactic is to exchange men without missiles for those with missiles. The inventor proposes a number of variations: vary the number of missiles by type of piece; allow each player to allocate missiles as he sees fit (there would have to be restrictions on the queen); and give pieces both missiles and shields. A shield negates a missile attack but is destroyed by it (personal communication including a cutting from an unidentified source). In **Machine-Gun Chess** (J. E. H. Creed, 1941), every man attacked on both sides is removed simultaneously; thus pieces under mutual attack are both removed. The king is taken like any other piece. Screened pieces are not affected. Once a clearance has been made, further attacks may be revealed when these too are resolved, and so on. The object is to annihilate the opposition. Created as a problem theme (*Fairy Chess Review*, December 1941) but play is possible. John Bosley fostered a progressive version of the game. In **Authorifle Chess** (Ralph Betza after Bill Rawlings, 1977) there is no obligation to capture, but if a capture is made all possible captures must be made with that piece (*Nostalgia* 211). The player can decide in which direction to shoot first, but must then continue to shoot along that line as

long as there are targets before changing direction of fire. Both pieces are removed in the event of a mutual attack. K, N, P have additional powers: they may continue to shoot along the same line provided there is no gap in it. In order not to give immediate advantage to White, there is an initial rule that the first capture of a game must be orthodox. In **Rapid-Fire Chess** (Tony Paletta, 1980) captures are not mandatory, but if a capture is made it is compulsory to capture all men attacked by the capturing piece. Only the first man in a line is captured, any behind it are considered screened. Kings have no royal powers: aim is to annihilate the opponent's men (*Chess Spectrum Newsletter*).

Archimedes Chess (Philip Cohen after Scott Marley, 1979). No displacement capture. Instead a man that is attacked by two or more enemy men is removed from the board (captured) if it is the attacker's move. The removal may expose further men to attack and removal in the same turn. The object is to

3.2 Squares with known or hidden dangers

Minefield Chess, also known as **Sea-Warfare Chess** (originator unknown, time of World War II). Each player secretly records on paper two squares in his own half of the board. These are 'mined', and if during the course of the game an enemy piece lands on one of them, the mine may be 'detonated' and the piece (which can include the king, which loses

3.3 Destruction of men on nearby squares

Capricorn Chess (V. R. Parton, 1970). The rooks are Capricorns, which move as rooks but instead of capturing normally they butt their victims off the board by landing on an adjacent square. Suppose White Ce1, Black men d5, d6, e7, f5; if White plays Ce6, he eliminates all four Black men. A king is in check if a hostile capricorn can move adjacent to it. Other pieces (knights, bishops, queens) can be designated butters instead of the rooks, though Parton suggests that queens and bishops are perhaps less suitable than rooks and knights, and in **Butters** (Parton, 1970) all men capture by butting (according to Parton, irregular initial formations are likely to give

capture (remove) the K. No check or e.p. capture. (*Nost-algia* 227)

All-Mate Chess, also known as **Generalized Chess [Tylor]** (Chris Tylor, 1979). Displacement capture is replaced by mate: a pawn or piece is captured when it is attacked and the player can neither capture the attacking piece, interpose a man, nor move the attacked man to a safe square. A move that escapes the mate is called a nullifying move: it prevents the capture but is not actually played. Check is abolished but the aim of the game remains the capture (checkmate) of the opponent's king. More than one man may be mated by a single move. In this event, the mating player can decide in which order the mated men are removed from the board. Removal may result in further mates, all of which are executed. Notice that a move may result in one or more of the player's own men getting mated. If a player overlooks a mate, the opponent has the option of leaving or removing the man. (*Eterosacco* 54)

at once) removed from play. A player may elect to wait until a more valuable piece arrives on the square before setting off the mine. The idea of the game, allegedly played on occasion by 'first-class masters', was to entice the enemy king forward in the end-game in support of an advancing pawn. (*Chess*, June 1942 and July 1943)

more interesting games). **Poloschach** (Hans Klüver, 1986), at which tournaments have been played, specifies explicitly that castling is illegal over threatened squares (Parton does not mention this) but otherwise would appear to be identical in everything except terminology. (*Cheshire Cat Playeth Looking Glass Chessys*, also Murkisch, *Hans Klüver: ein Schachporträt*)

Plague Chess (Ralph Betza after S. Walker, 1977). All men that move are carriers of the plague. On completion of a move, all squares adjacent to the arrival square of the man moved are infected and all men of either

colour on them ‘die’ before the same side moves again. However, capturing the plague-carrier prevents infection and a man attacked by the plague escapes infection if it moves away immediately. Dead men are removed from play. Infection persists for one move of each side. If a man moves to an infected square it dies at once but simultaneously infects adjacent squares. Check and checkmate take precedence over the plague and kings are immune from infection from men of their own colour. There are two offshoots of Plague Chess: in **Biological Warfare Chess**, the plague only attacks the opponent’s men; in **Immunity [Betza]**, a man that survives the plague is henceforth immune. (*Nost-algia* 213)

Atomic Chess (at least the second game to have carried this title, originator of this

version unclear). When a capture is made, the capturer, victim and all pieces (not pawns) on adjacent squares are removed. Kings cannot capture. Checkmate or destroy enemy K to win. Considerable opening research was done in 1996/7 on the first few moves of each side by Jonas Hoffmann and Peter Schaefer and later by Michael Uhl. Their findings pointed to 1 Nf3 and 1 Nh3 as the best opening moves for White, with 1 d4 and 1 e4 quite playable. Opening moves condemned for White are b3, e3, f3, g3, c4. Black’s replies get two exclamation marks for 1...f6 against 1 Nf3 (White follows with 2 Nd4!) and one for 1...Nf6 against 1 Nh3 and 1...d5 against 1 e4. It is perhaps axiomatic to observe that this is an explosive game, frequently brief and violent. (Personal communication forwarding material from the Internet)

3.4 Capture by moving as the target man

Moss Chess, also known as **Odious Chess**, **Tag Chess**, and **Zen Chess** (Moe Moss, 1970). Movement is normal but men capture with the action of the man being captured. A pawn can capture anything when moving forwards, and anything other than a pawn when moving backwards, even to the first rank. A pawn can be captured by anything but only by a single-square forward diagonal move. Pawns promote normally. The pawns are exceptionally strong. Suppose 1 a3. If Black naïvely replies 1...e5? then 2 axf8(N) and one bishop has gone, and if 2...dxf8 then 3 h3 forces Black to block the line by 3...f5 or 3...Nd7 (or even 3...Kd7) if the other bishop is not to go as well. If instead 2...hxf8? then 3 h3h8(Q) takes the rook, though after 3...N3h8 or 3...g3h8 it is White’s turn to block the line (4 Nh3) if he is not to lose his own rook. The rules were first described in the

Montreal Star (16 January 1971). [Text partly editorial]

Spite Chess, also known as **Tag Chess** (David Silverman, 1973). Movement is normal but there is no displacement capture. Instead, a man that moves to a vacant square captures any of the opponent’s men that attack the square at the time of the move. This includes e.p. captures. For example, suppose White Pb2, Black Qf8, Be7, Pa4; now 1 b4 (xa4, xBe7) Qc5 (xb4). There is no check or mate; the object is to capture the king. Any hostile man played adjacent to the king wins outright, so it is necessary to cocoon the king. Games are short and favour White but it is often difficult to tell who is winning. Knights are preferred to rooks. (*Nost-algia* 181) [The repetition of ‘Tag Chess’ is not an error; both Moss Chess and Spite Chess are so known.]

3.5 Other forms of capture

Scaci Partonici (V. R. Parton, 1950s and later). A sequence of variants in which displacement capture is replaced by the custodian capture, common in ancient games, and its antithesis. The aim is to take more men than the opponent. Kings have no special powers. There are two forms of capture:

(1) A man moves so as to trap one or more opposing men between it and another friendly man in a line, orthogonally or diagonally, there being no vacant squares between any of the men involved.

(2) The reverse of the above, where a man moves so as to create a line in which one or

more friendly men are flanked by opposing men. Both flanking men are captured.

For example, suppose White Kd4, Ra1, Bd8, Na7, Black Qb6, Pc7. White to play can capture the Q with Kc5 or both black men with Ra5; Black to play can capture K and N with c5. Multiple captures, involving one or both of these forms, are possible.

Parton was clear on the method of capture but less clear on the form the game should take. Initially he proposed the 8x8 board on which the men are arranged in the usual order except that the pawns are on the back rank with the pieces in front of them. All pieces move forward only (no sideways movement). A pawn or piece reaching the end rank is immobilized. Later he allowed pieces reaching the end rank to regain their usual powers, with pawns promoting normally. He then introduced the game on the 10x10 board with 14 men a side, later modifying this to 20 men a side: four pawns plus all the pieces doubled in number. Array, 2nd/3rd and 8th/9th ranks, PRNBQKBNRP, with the further option of placing six more pawns in the middle of the back ranks. All men move forward only. The aim is again to capture more men than the opponent. The game is stopped when the pieces are so reduced that likelihood of further captures is negligible. A tilt towards orthodoxy is seen in **Royal Scaci Partonici**, which is identical except the object is to capture the opposing king. (*Chess - Curiouser and Curiouser, Chesshyre Cat Playeth Looking Glass Chessys, 100 Squares for Chess and Diamante*)

Bingo Chess [Gutzwiller] (James Gutzwiller, 1970). If a player's move completes a fully occupied rank, file, or diagonal (presumably of any length), he calls 'Bingo!' and removes all his opponent's men in the line. A king may be mated or bingomated. Presumably no displacement captures? (*Nost-algia* 278/9)

Cassandra Chess [Betza] (Ralph Betza, 1974). After every n moves, where n is a number agreed by the players, each player predicts where an opposing man of specific rank will be in n moves time. This is announced. Thus Black could predict that there will be a white rook on a1. If the prediction proves correct, the piece is removed

from the board. The game is won either by checkmate or by removing the opposing king by prediction. (*Nost-algia* 168)

Blood-Brother Chess (Philip Cohen and R. Wayne Schmittberger, 1980). Pieces (not pawns) guard identical pieces, including any promoted pieces, at all times. Kings guard queens. If a piece is captured, a blood-brother recapture must be immediate (passion cools quickly) but not if the piece is defended normally. Favours attacking players. (*Nost-algia* 247/350)

Crushed Chess (quoted by C. Pickover, 1992). After every ten moves, the perimeter squares and all men on them are removed from play. A game cannot therefore last longer than 30 moves. The winner is the player whose king survives the longest. (*Mazes for the Mind*)

En Passant Chess, otherwise known as **All-In En Passant** (origins unknown). All pieces are subject to e.p. capture if crossing a square attacked by an enemy piece. The knight is considered to cross the square orthogonally adjacent to it. Less radically, Ekstrom, the Swedish master, and several others, would allow a piece to take a pawn en passant, other captures remaining as usual. (*Nost-algia* 217) [I haven't traced a specific reference for the Ekstrom statement, but I am sure that the idea has been suggested many times.]

Kidnapping Chess (H. Clifford Garner, c. 1950). After Black's 6th move, White kidnaps (removes) a black knight, then black kidnaps a white knight. After move 12, bishops are similarly removed, rooks after the 18th and queens after the 24th. Thereafter play is normal. A piece may not be removed that exposes a king to check. A side that does not have the appropriate piece for kidnapping suffers no penalty, putting a premium on sacrificial play. These removals do not count as a move; thus if Black delivers check just prior to a kidnapping, White must get out of check immediately after the pieces are taken off. **Removal Blitz Chess** (E. H. Ratcliffe, 1952) is Lightning Chess with the same rule. (*Nouveaux Jeux d'Echecs Non-orthodoxes*, also *Chess*, May 1952)

Kamikaze Chess [Laws], also known as **Hara-Kiri Chess** (from an idea originally by B. G. Laws, 1928). A piece making a capture is removed from the board together with the captured man. It follows that a king cannot defend himself by capturing an attacker. Captures are not compulsory. The game lends itself to progressive play. Here is a stark example: 1 e3 2 f6, g6?? 3 Bd3, Bxg6, Qh5. Another version of the game allows no checks, the object being to get a pawn to the 8th rank. The kamikaze piece was originally a problem theme, and was not named until 1965. (*Oxford Companion to Chess*, also *Eterosacco* 51)

[This provides an example of how a small modification to an apparently artificial problemistic idea can yield a playable game. It was tried in its original form at a meeting of problemists in France, and found quite unplayable. Yet Progressive Kamikaze appears to be entirely practicable.]

Arithmetical Chess (C. G. Lewin, 1973). Based on Rhythmomachia but using a standard board and men, Arithmetical Chess differs from orthochess only in the method of capture. An orthodox capture can only be made between like men; for example, NxN. The alternative method of capture is based on the numerical values of the pieces which are: Pawn-1, Knight-2, Bishop-3, Rook-4, Queen-6, King-8. Each man is deemed to have lines of fire radiating orthogonally and diagonally from the square on which it stands (coinciding exactly with the move of a queen). A man may be captured if its numerical value is equal to the number obtained by adding, multiplying, subtracting or dividing the values of two or more opposing men in whose unimpeded line of fire it stands. Signs may not be mixed in an equation; thus three pawns and a bishop

3.6 Immobilization

Madras Chess (Abdul Karwatkar, 1979). Like men of opposite colours observing one another are paralysed and can neither move nor give check. A paralysed man however retains the power to paralyse: thus after 1 e4 d5 2 c4, all three pawns are inert. A pinned man can paralyse. Kings are unaffected. The status of two pawns in an e.p. situation has been debated: it can be argued that both are

could capture a queen ($1+1+1+3=6$) but a rook, bishop and pawn could not ($4+3-1=6$). The captured man is replaced by any one of the men making the capture, at the capturer's choice. Two or more pawns may not capture an opposing pawn by multiplication or division but otherwise pawns may capture and be captured in the same way as other men. Capturing is not compulsory. A pawn may be promoted in the normal way or at the end of any subsequent move. A pawn which is not promoted immediately cannot move. The aim of the game is to capture the enemy king which may be taken by any man if in check, or by an arithmetical capture.

A fast-moving game, with pawn promotion common since an arithmetical capture may allow a pawn to move immediately to replace a captured man on the 7th or 8th ranks. The king is surprisingly vulnerable, making for short games. (*Games and Puzzles* 16)

Goliath Chess (Gianluca Vecchi, 1994). Orthochess except that after making a capture a piece may make a second capture without moving (as in Rifle Chess). Shooting at the K is forbidden. Here is a brevity won by Aldo Kustrin against the inventor: 1 d4 e6 2 Nf3 Qf6 3 Nbd2 Nc6 4 Nb3 Qg6 5 Qd3 Qxg2xf1 6 Qxh7xh8 Qxh1xf3+ 7 Resigns (White, two pieces down, now loses his Q!). (*Eterosacco* 74)

Divide and Conquer (Ian Richardson, 2000). Each side has K, Q, 8xP (10 men only); White Ke1, Qd1, Ps 3rd rank, Black Kd8, Qe8, Ps 6th rank. A turn consists of moving K, Q, P in any order. Capture is by moving between two enemy men (both captured), blank squares not counting. (Manuscript notes presumably derived from personal communication)

inert or only the pawn able to capture e.p. is inert. Madras Chess is a popular problem theme. Played as a game it introduces some interesting strategies. A brief example: after 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5, White could try 4 Nxe5? d6 5 d4 (if 5 Bxf7+, Kxf7 is legal; or 5 Qh5 Be6 is playable) Bxd4 6 Qxd4? dxe5 and the WQ is lost. (*Eterosacco* 7, *Nost-algia* 288)

[Two related games which have been played at meetings of problemists in France are **Kriegspiel Madrasi**, which is hilarious, and **Isardam**, in which a move which would cause a Madrasi paralysis is illegal. Fool's Mate in Isardam is 1 e3 f6 2 Bd3 h6 3 Bg6; not the normal 1 f3 e5 2 g4 Qh4, because 3...QxK would leave the queens paralysing each other and so would not be permitted. This might seem an artificial problemistic notion with no relevance to real life, but it was tried in a nine-player all-play-all tournament and was found surprisingly practicable.]

Koopa Chess (inventor unknown, 1990). Variant based on the Mario Brothers series of video games. Men are either active (normal) or stunned. When an active piece is 'captured' it is stunned for two moves (known as the Duration). A stunned piece does not move. The capturing piece bounces on to the next square in the same direction. If this square is off the board, the capturing piece is out of the game. If the square is unoccupied, the move ends there. If it is occupied by an active man of either colour, this also is stunned and the capturing piece moves on. If it is occupied by

a stunned piece of either colour, this can be kicked; the kicker occupies the square, and the kicked piece moves off the board (and out of the game) in the same direction, carrying with it all men in its path. Stunning the enemy king does not win; it must be kicked off the board (a threat to do so is check). No e.p.; a pawn bouncing to the 8th rank promotes. It is permitted to stun one's own pieces (but not until one piece of the opposite colour has been stunned) and to kick them. Many variations have been tried. (Unprovenanced rules pamphlet)

Shock Chess (Alessandro Castelli, 1992) When a player attacks an opponent's man (or men) that man 'suffers shock' and may not move on the next turn. A man cannot be shocked by the same piece twice in succession. Kings are not affected. (*Eteroscacco* 58)

Fossil Chess (quoted by C. Pickover, 1992). After its first move a pawn becomes a fossil and cannot move again. A piece capturing it is also fossilized. A recipe for gridlock? (*Mazes for the Mind*)

3.7 Capture of own men

Reform Chess [Tabi], also known as **Free-Capture Chess** (L. Tabi, 1971). Either side may capture its own men as well as the opponent's. A problem theme but perfectly playable. In **Suicide Chess [piece removal]**

(origins unknown, and not to be confused with Losing Chess), a player may remove one of his own men from the board instead of moving. (*Feenschach*, May 1971, also Berloquin, *100 Jeux de Table*)

3.8 Checking of own king

Bicolour Chess (Gabriel Authier, 1958). Kings are subject to check and checkmate by own as well as opponent's pieces. The Q and QN are interchanged in the array; castling illegal. Games are short and oversights come easily, as witness this example from actual play: 1 e4 c5 2 Ne3 Qe5 (centralizing the Q is usually a good idea) 3 f3 e6 4 Kf2 (unpinning the back-rank pieces) d5? (typical bicolour blindness) 5 Nxd5 and the recapture by 5...exd5 would leave Black in check from his own Q.

Chris Tylor has suggested the orthochess array with a rule that self-check does not apply until the king or the potentially offending piece has moved, and Mark Ridley modifies this to permit castling. **Bicapture Chess** (Roméo Bédoni, 1958) restores the original rules and array but a player may capture his own men, a privilege which mitigates some of the parent's excesses. Boyer organized an international correspondence tournament in 1961. (*Nost-algia* 169, *Eteroscacco* 54, *Nouveaux Jeux d'Echecs Intéressants*)