

Chapter 36

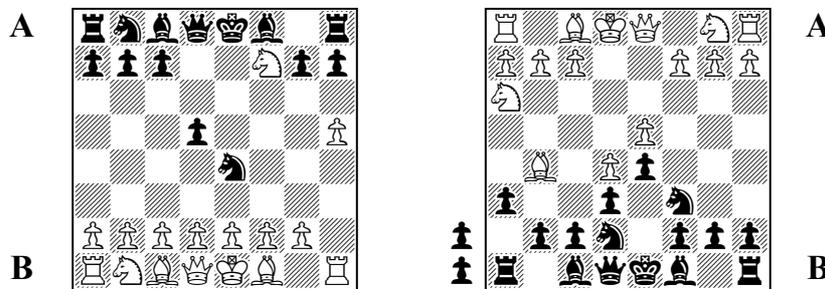
Games using more than one board

[In the games so far, all the play has taken place on a single board. In the present chapter, each pair of players plays what is superficially an ordinary game of chess on its own board, but these games interact in various ways.]

36.1 Four players, two boards

Bughouse, also known as **New England Double Bughouse**, **Pass-On Chess**, and **Tandem Put-Back**. Origins unknown (probably early 1960s). Teams of two. Partners sit adjacent to each other on two boards, one player White, the other Black. When a capture is made, the captured man is passed to the player's partner, who may enter

it on his board on any vacant square at any subsequent turn of play. A drop counts as a move. A dropped man may give check or mate. Pawns may not be dropped on 1st or 8th ranks, and a promoted piece, if captured, reverts to a P. The game is played with clocks, always to a fast time limit, and first mate or flag-fall decides.



The reason for a fast time limit is shown by a situation that occurs quite often (the present example is due to Chris Ferrante). Suppose that the upper team A is to play on both boards, and that Black A sees that his partner White A has more time in hand than his opponent White B (clocks must be visible to all players, and the game features much squinting to see who is ahead). He therefore plays ...Qf6 threatening mate, yells 'Sit!' and sets his opponent's clock going. White A now sits without playing (his side cannot lose on time because White B's flag will fall first), and sooner or later White B must play his pawn to f3 or f4 to stop the mate. White A now comes to life and plays Bxh6, passing the captured pawn for his partner to drop on f2 (he couldn't do this earlier because Black B would have recaptured on h6 and passed the bishop for his partner to drop on f3, removing the

need for the weakening pawn move). White A will sit and wait whether White B has two minutes left on his clock or two hours, so nothing is gained by playing at slow time limits and in practice five minutes is customary.

Bughouse is a popular diversion at U.S. chess events, where it has been played by many masters including Joel Benjamin, Yasser Seirawan and Andy Soltis. Tournaments are spreading: one U.S. club claimed to have held 75(!). There are sites on the web, and in recent years an annual weekend in Geneva has attracted the best European players. There is a *Bughouse Newsletter* (founded 1992) in the U.S. published by Jeremy Graham, who has proposed standardized rules. In these, players may discuss the game and advise each other. The rules in force in Geneva state that all forms of communication between partners are

permitted, the noisier the better. (*Nost-algia* 174, *Variant Chess* 32/33/36/39)

[Text revised. Had David been to any of the Geneva weekends himself, he would certainly have included **Outdoor Bughouse**, which is played with the giant men in the park and involves much dashing to and fro to hit the clock (the normal five-minute time allowance is usually extended to seven). As originally practised, captured men were thrown across to the other board, juggling ability being thus added to the skills required, but this was discontinued after a thunderstorm filled some of the men with water and one of the pawns was seen to be coming apart under the strain.

The game is indeed thriving, and a book *Bughouse Chess*, edited by Georg von Zimmermann, appeared late in 2006. This covers all aspects of the game, with particular reference to play on the Internet. Bughouse is well suited to control by computer, since there is no longer any argument about whose flag

36.2 Four players, four boards

Phase Chess (John McCallion, 1995). Experimental four-player partnership game using four boards. Each player plays two opponents, having the same colour in both, and must make the same move in each game; if a move would be illegal in one game, it cannot be played in the other. The weakness of the pawns is a drawback (a pawn cannot attack on one board unless it can attack on both, which is easily avoided). (Inventor's document 'Phase Chess, an experimental

36.3 More than four players

Multiple Bughouse can be played between teams of any even number (at least eight a side has been tried and found practicable). Half the players in a team take White, half take Black; captured men are made available to any player within the team. Victory goes to the first team to win half the games. Even more frenetic than ordinary bughouse. (*Variant Chess* 36) [Text editorial. For some real-life communication difficulties, see the book *Bughouse Chess* mentioned above.]

Sociable Chess, also known as **Social Chess** [**Cambridge**] ('A Cambridge man', 1865).

fell first, and with such control a three-minute time limit now appears to be the norm.]

Minichess [**Bughouse**] (Hamburger Schachjugendbund, date not recorded). Bughouse using a 3x7 board. Each player has 1 x K, R, B, and 3 x P. Ps move one square; no promotion. (Manuscript notes presumably deriving from personal communication)

Stupid House (1999). Bughouse variant in which partners have the same colours. On a capture, the captured man is passed to the partner who must place it on a vacant square of his board on his next turn instead of moving. (*Variant Chess* 33)

Kriegspiel Bughouse (1976) combines Bughouse with Kriegspiel. Players sit as for Bughouse but moves are in sequence board A W/B, board B W/B. An umpire is needed to approve moves. (*Neue Chess* 10)

game') [Text editorial. Given the experimental nature of the game, it is by no means certain that David would have retained it in his final selection, but the idea seems worth recording even though it would be better suited to games where every man captures with its ordinary move.]

Enochian Chess [**Barr and Eschner**] is described with other Enochian Chess games in chapter 38.

Team game involving any even number of players. The inventor expressed his conviction that 'chess would be a more popular game than it is if ... a large number of persons might engage in one contest', adding 'a sufficient number (of sets and boards) might be collected for a large party, by friends lending to each other for the occasion'. Team leaders are appointed. When a game is finished, the leader of the winner is entitled to distribute the winner's remaining men amongst his team as he thinks fit. Men are placed on starting squares provided these are vacant. The only limitation is that no board may have its force

increased beyond its original strength. The team winning most games is the victor. (*Chess Player's Magazine*, January 1866, also *Chess World*, October 1866)

Multiple Chess (J. W. Jeffery, 1943). Teams of any size; one player on each side appointed C-in-C. Sets arranged in a row, one side having Black, the other White. Players move in rotation. The C-in-C may offer advice to a player, having announced his intention one move before. The C-in-C may direct transfer of material from one board to another; the player thus forced to surrender material forfeits the move on his own board, and the piece is placed on the nearest file (a or h) of the new board. When a game ends, the winner's men, K excepted, may be transferred one at a time to the next board, but only after three moves have elapsed. The C-in-C may take over the last board. (*Chess*, September 1943)

Caterpillar Chess (E. H. Ratcliffe, 1952). Team game requiring two sides of any even number, a timekeeper, an umpire, and as many

sets and boards as there are players. The boards are set up in a circle, alternating black and white. Every player starts with the white pieces so there is only one player at each board. The timekeeper calls 'White', when everyone plays and then moves clockwise to the next board when, after an agreed lapse (say, 15 seconds) the timekeeper calls 'Black' and everyone moves with the black pieces. There are no resignations. A player who delivers mate or stalemate calls 'Stop', when the umpire checks and records the result and resets the men, and the game is restarted. The team which registers most mates in a given time is the winner. As a variation, one team moves clockwise and the other anti-clockwise. (*Chess*, May 1952)

Chain-Letter Chess (NOST, 1974). Correspondence chess with two teams of indeterminate size. No player moves more than once in a game. (*Nost-algia* 173) [I haven't seen the source, but I take this to mean 'players move in rotation, nobody moving twice until everyone has moved once, and no consultation'.]