

## **StrategiChess™ – The first truly *multi-player and multi-board* Chess Team Game in 1500 years!**

### **StrategiChess™ – Introduction**

*Note: The author Alan Cartwright lives in north Devon in the UK and developed StrategiChess™ in 2003 in conjunction with his son, Ali (Alastair) Taft, when this introduction was originally written.*

I taught myself to play Chess from a book, studied whilst I was ill in bed as a child at the age of 10. At school I went on to play in the school Chess team. It has always been a recurring interest of mine in the years since then and a great pleasure to see my son developing his own Chess skills. A little while ago, when playing against him, I began to wonder why I had played so infrequently in the years since school. I guess I always had the feeling when contemplating my opening move on the Chess board that I had played every possible opening sequence plus the lingering perception that perhaps Chess had become just a little boring. It had also occurred to me that with the advent of increasingly vivid, graphical and absorbing (often noisy) computer games, the ‘old fashioned’ board games, including Chess, were becoming less and less appealing to prospective new (young) players. Of course Chess is not a game of excitement in the sense that modern computer games often are, but a game of intellectual stimulation, a complex problem seeking a complicated resolution against an opponent usually of equivalent determination and similar skill.

If Chess could be said to have one significant drawback as a board game, it is its limitation of just two players. Where is the Chess equivalent of the family favourite board games such as ‘*Monopoly*’? Despite playing in the school Chess team many years ago, Chess in reality does not afford the opportunity to play as a genuine team game in the sense of many players participating in the *same* game.

Putting my creative and problem-solving faculties to work, I contemplated the design of a new form of Chess; one which would substantially increase the range of strategies available by virtue of a larger board (14x14 squares) with many more pieces, and thereby correspondingly increase the interest and appeal of the game, plus, significantly, provide mechanisms and rules so that the game could, optionally, be played with more than 2 players as a team game.

In contemplating how the game could be made to work as a *multi-player* team game, I returned in my thoughts to the origins of Chess. It might be said that Chess was in fact the very first board wargame. But those eight Pawns out at the front never seemed to me to be much of an army! Certainly not too appealing to wargamers with aspirations of armies with hundreds of units on the board!

I began thinking in terms of the great battles of the Napoleonic era and the American Civil War; huge set piece actions with bodies of troops formed up with left and right wings on the battlefield, each with separate commanders. Perhaps here was a clue to making the game a genuine multi-player team game?

Many of these huge set piece battles had terrain and other obstacles for the opposing armies to deal with on the battlefield: influential factors which could be exploited by the commanders.

The intensely defended farmsteads of La Haye Sainte and Hougomont in the midst of the Waterloo battlefield presented critical obstacles to Napoleon's prospects of success throughout most of that fateful June day in 1815. Perhaps the greatest blow to Napoleon was the complete absence of his detached right wing under Marshal Grouchy, fully one third of his army that never appeared on the battlefield. Conversely, the decisive factor for the Duke of Wellington was the eventual arrival of Marshall Blucher's Prussians, appearing on Wellington's left wing to completely outmanoeuvre Napoleon and roll up his flank when his final reserve, the Imperial Guard, had been expended and had failed to budge Wellington's Guards from their positions held at such bloody cost and under heavy artillery bombardment all day.

It seemed to me to be highly desirable to incorporate something of the sense of scale of these battles into the new game and to introduce some elements representative of both the strategic nature of the battlefield and the flow and movement of the opposing armies, with the potential for the central body and the wings of each army to be under the control of different commanders (game players) but also with the ability to interact. Yet, I did not wish to totally depart from the universally popular familiarity of the traditional Chess game, i.e. the abstract board and the accepted pieces. This began to seem quite a challenge – Chess, but Chess on a different scale.

Much of the game came to mind in a semi-awake state between sleep and wakefulness one morning; I defined the board design, I resolved to retain exactly the same pieces as regular Chess to make the game easy for existing Chess players to grasp; I incorporated some very minor move changes and quickly it was there – in my mind.

After breakfast I retrieved some large cardboard sheets from my office and set about making a prototype board, quickly accomplished with pencil and ruler. A rapid visit to the shops later that day procured eight end-of-range discounted Chess sets very cheaply, for the pieces. The prototype was soon ready for testing.

My son and I were quickly regarding a veritable horde of an army sweeping across the whole of the surface of our dining table! We had assembled the game initially in its team form, three boards, each 14x14 squares, placed alongside each other, making a board of 588 squares (42 wide x 14 deep) with 84 Chess pieces in two ranks on each side! Well, it certainly looked quite breathtaking – here indeed was Chess excitement again! We each had a central “division”, a left flank and a right flank. In fact, this was rather more than we were capable of controlling with any great depth of thought for future moves. As we quickly discovered, even just one board presented a far greater range and complexity of potential moves than regular Chess, so much so that the game could easily be criticised for diminishing the cerebral skill inherent in regular Chess in favour of a more light hearted approach to the game. However, a true team game had been created and in subsequent testing this proved to be highly enjoyable and even amusing due to the problematical difficulties any single board player could find themselves in when attacked by several opposing players acting in concert!

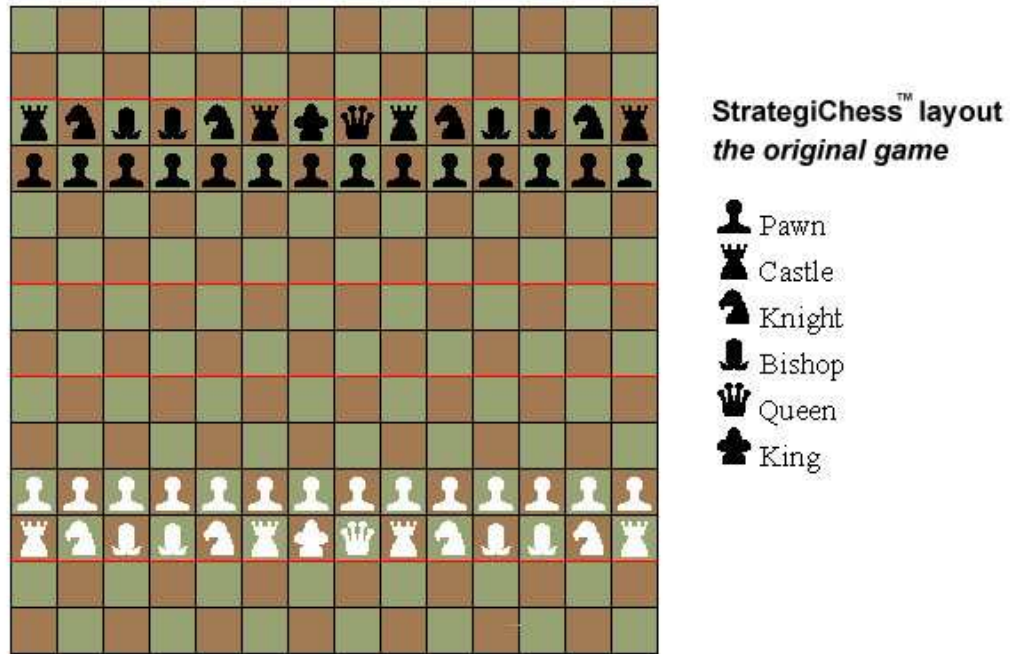
Here then is **StrategiChess™**, a game which I am sure most regular Chess players will enjoy, whether playing on their own against a single opponent on a single board or with fellow team members against other Chess clubs in a multi-board game. It also provides for the first time ever a very real opportunity for a family Chess game.

## StrategiChess™ - the Board

The 14x14 squares board has four horizontal lines engraved on it. These divide the two horizontal rows at each base of the board ( as perceived by the players ), and the two central horizontal rows, from the rest of the board. These double rows are the equivalent of “roads” on the battlefield and they enable Pawns to make a horizontal move when placed on these six rows of the board.

## StrategiChess™ - the Pieces

Regular Chess pieces are used – there are no new pieces.



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The pieces are placed on the two rows immediately in front of the board base “road”, i.e. on rows 3 and 4 and rows 11 and 12. Rows 1 and 2, and rows 13 and 14 are left empty.

As in regular Chess, the front row comprises entirely of Pawns. Also as in regular Chess, the King and Queen are placed on the centre two squares of the rear rank of pieces. The extreme edge pieces are Castles, next to which are Knights, then Bishops. The next three squares inbound from the edge are the same three pieces in reverse order – Bishop, Knight, Castle.

## **StrategiChess™ - the Rules ( single board )**

Regular (F.I.D.E.) Chess rules apply excepting that:-

Pawns may move one, two or three squares forward on their first move (and thereafter only one square) and may also move backwards *one* square on their first move (if the piece behind has been shifted previously).

There is no *en-passant* Pawn move.

Pawns may move backwards as well as forwards. (*the infantry can always retreat!*)

Pawns may move one square sideways whenever they are on the three “roads” delimited by the horizontal lines on the board (rows 1&2, 7&8, and 13&14).

Pawns reaching the opposite side of the board cannot be ‘promoted’ for better pieces.

There is no castling move.

## **StrategiChess™ - the Rules ( multi-board )**

When two or more boards are placed alongside each other, additional multi-board, multi-player, rules apply as follows:-

Play on each board proceeds at its’ own speed. That is to say that an adjoining game may be played at a faster move rate ( *the similarity is drawn with real battles where events on the left wing might be developing much faster than on the right wing, for example* ).

Pieces (except the King) may be moved from one board to an adjoining board – however, they may only (initially) move on to the first available square on the neighbouring (destination) board, where their move terminates. For all pieces except the Knight, this means that they halt on the edge row. The Knight may make its conventional move (1&2 or 2&1) from an edge row on the departure board and halt one or two squares into the destination board.

The King may not move on to another board.

Whenever pieces arrive on a neighbouring board they are then available to (i.e. *controlled by*) the player controlling the neighbouring (i.e. arrival) board and are no longer available to the originating player (*this is akin to reinforcements arriving in a battle*).

The receiving player may, of course, move them back if not required, at the time of his turn to play.

The ‘donating’ player however, does not exercise any further control over the pieces sent as reinforcements, unless they are subsequently returned to his own board.

*The reinforcement concept does allow very powerful attacks to be developed very quickly, necessitating each player to carefully monitor neighbouring boards!*

## **StrategiChess™ - the Winner (single board)**

As in regular Chess games, the winner in single board **StrategiChess™** games is the player that has succeeded in checkmating his opponents King. Alternatively a player may resign. The regular Chess rules concerning stalemate (including fifty moves without any pieces being taken) also apply.

## **StrategiChess™ - the Winner (multi-board)**

In multi-board games, Kings may be taken just as any other piece is, i.e. removed from the board. This is done in the same fashion as any other piece being taken i.e. captured by the attacking piece being moved to the King's square. However, the player who has lost his King may continue to play on. This is because of the inter-dependencies of all boards and players within each team. It is undesirable in the game, as it would be in a real battle, for a particular board (*division*) to simply halt.

The player who has lost his King *must* play on. He may continue trying to take his opponents King. Alternatively he may choose to gradually, move by move, shift his pieces to reinforce a neighbouring board and team player.

The player who has succeeded in taking his opponents King may *not* move his King to a neighbouring board (*remember*) and must therefore ensure he maintains protection for his own King against attacks from his opponent on the same board or from other boards.

The winner is the team which has succeeded in taking all of the opposing teams Kings except for the last one, which is checkmated as in regular Chess.

Alternatively if, due to time constraints, the game has to end prematurely, the winning team is the one with the most Kings left on their boards.

Note that with the linking together of boards, a piece may only exert "check" (as it may similarly only *move*) one square into the neighbouring board (or two squares in the case of the Knight).

## **StrategiChess™ - maximum size (multi-board)**

There is no maximum size! Teams of any number can participate in one multi-board game. Interestingly, this enables the team reinforcement of the weaker (or losing) players from pieces shifted from the stronger (or winning) players within each team (*as would be the case in a real battle situation*). The "road concept", particularly the road behind the opening positions, enables a swift build up of very powerful resources (*again per a real military scenario*), which could be concentrated to force a rapid decision on one specific board of the game.

Teams may develop their own tactics to exploit this powerful facility; however, as in regular Chess, no advice may be given nor any discussion between team players may be entered into, excepting that the overall team captain may direct his team as specified below.

## **StrategiChess™ - the team Captain (multi-board)**

The Captain may or may not actually be playing on one of the team boards. A stronger team Captain will be a non-player able to scrutinise developments across all of his team boards without having to concentrate on his own game.

The Captain may only (silently) pass *written* instructions to his team members to reinforce other players. These instructions must be worded strictly in the following format:-

Team Player “A” send (specified pieces, or “reinforcements”) to Team Player “B”.

A player receiving instructions from his Captain may choose to disregard such instructions at his sole discretion.

No other instructions of any nature may be given, either verbally or in writing. Written instructions must be retained for scrutiny by the opposing team Captain at the end of the game. Should any player depart from this rule their team shall be deemed to have lost the game.

## **StrategiChess™ - notes.**

The rapid publication and dissemination of information provided in recent years by the web enabled me to research and discover, just *after* defining **StrategiChess™**, that a very substantial number and variety of alternative Chess games already existed – in fact there are many hundreds! These *Chess variants* include both ancient and recent variations on the Chess theme, and include games defined with a 14x14 squares board, although without the essential unique elements of **StrategiChess™**.

Yet, there seems to be little or no general awareness of this very rich reservoir of Chess interest and extremely few of these games are commercially available. Many of those variants that *are* commercially available generally contain non-standard pieces or rather different boards, sometimes quite bizarre elements which, in my opinion (in May 2003), make these games less familiar or appealing to regular Chess players. I myself had never been aware of Chess variants before my **StrategiChess™** inspiration. Little did I know, the wheel had already been invented! However, none of the variants that I have found, as far as I could ascertain, provided a genuine Chess multi-player *and* multi-board team game. In this sense **StrategiChess™** is truly unique. I feel sure that Chess aficionados of all ages and skills will enjoy it!

## **StrategiChess™ - further information.**

For further information about **StrategiChess™** and other forthcoming variant Chess games from newChessGames Ltd, please contact the author via email at [strategichess@gmail.com](mailto:strategichess@gmail.com)

Boxed **StrategiChess™** games are available from the authors with all the pieces and a folding board in an attractive box. The authors are also happy to sign the inside box lid with a personal dedication.

