



A board game for 1 to 3 players by **Ari Saastamoinen**

INTRODUCTION

Xoliba is a fast-paced, surprising and totally new abstract strategy game. It has no standard starting position. Instead, before each game a new starting position is created by placing game pieces on the board at random. As there are billions of possible starting positions, each game is different from the next. Because the starting position is randomized, it seldom offers equal opportunities for both players and you may well need luck to win. Sometimes you can find yourself much worse off from the very beginning; in such positions all what you can do is to minimize your loss. Do not get discouraged: xoliba is played in matches and the next game might well be yours.

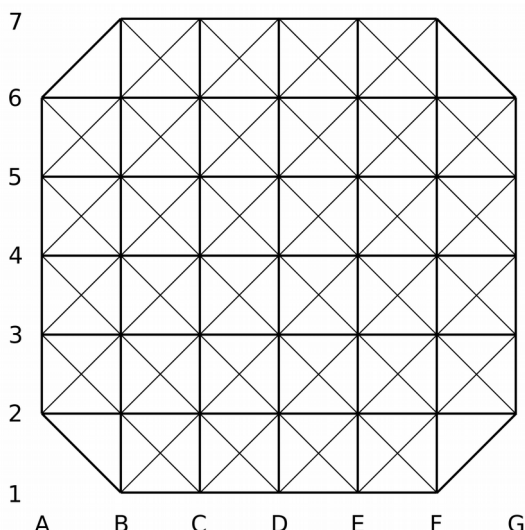
The objective of the game is to create triangles. The game is won by the player who has the biggest triangle on the board when the game ends. The winner gets points from the pieces that have been captured from his opponent. Moves are made by changing places of the player's own piece and a neutral white piece in such a manner that a new triangle is formed. If such a triangle contains player's own or opponent's pieces, they are captured. The game ends when no new triangles can be formed. After the game, points are counted. New games are played until the match is won by the player who is the first to reach 50 points.

Xoliba can be played by one, two, or three players. The rules for the two-player version are introduced first.

The basic set includes components for one- and two-player games. In order to play three-player game you need additional pieces (green).

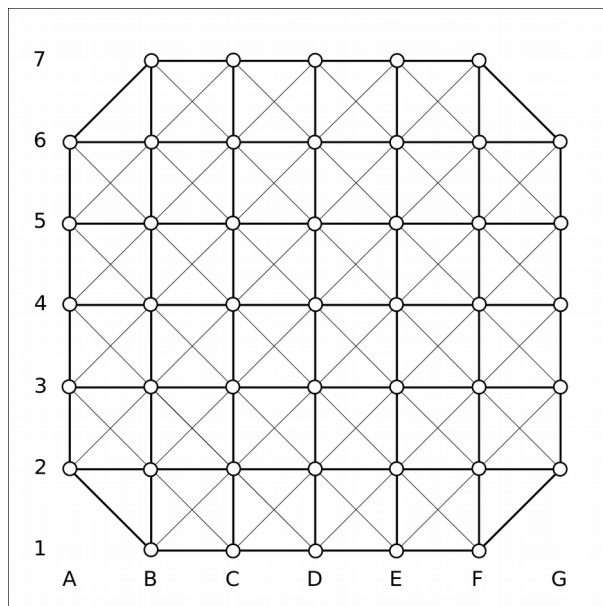
EQUIPMENT

Octagonal board with 45 intersections, points, where horizontal, oblique, and vertical lines cross each other. Game pieces are 57 discs. Each disc has a white side but the colour of the opposite side varies: in 17 discs it is red, in 17 discs it is blue, in 12 it is green and in 11 it is white. The board looks like this:

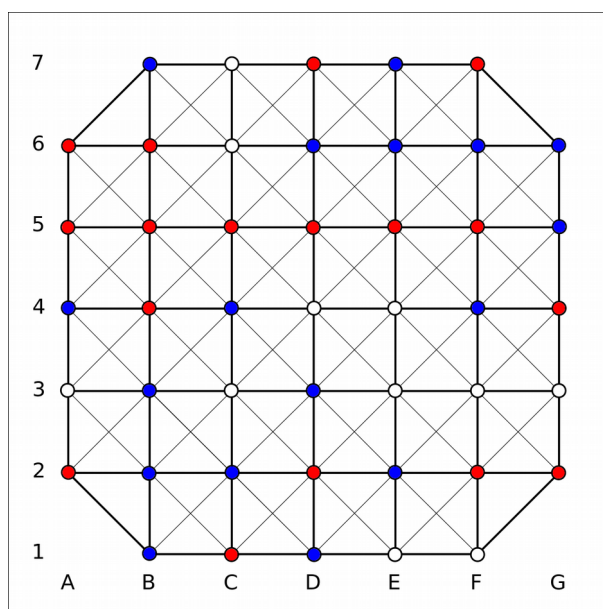


GAMEPLAY

To start the first game the players decide which colour they will play during the match. This decision can be based on mutual agreement or on chance (one player tries to guess the colour of the hidden piece in the other player's hand). For the two-player version 17 red pieces, 17 blue pieces and 11 white pieces are needed. They all are carefully mixed together. Then they are turned over and display now the white side. All pieces are mixed again and then placed on the intersections as follows:

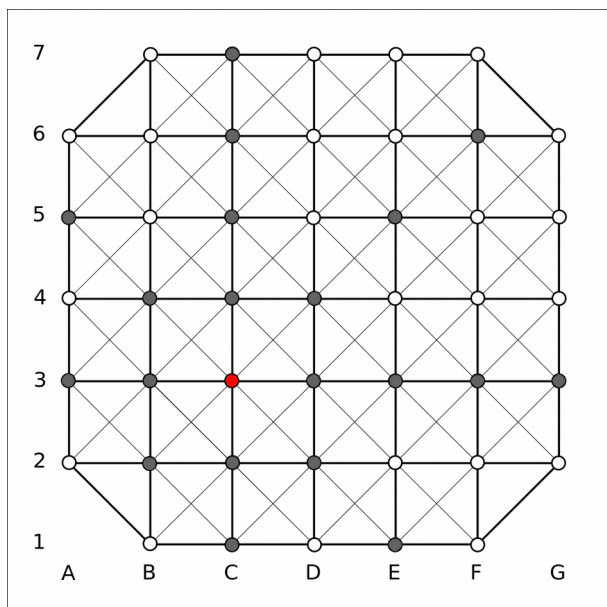


Then the pieces are turned over again. The result is a totally random starting position. One of them is shown below:



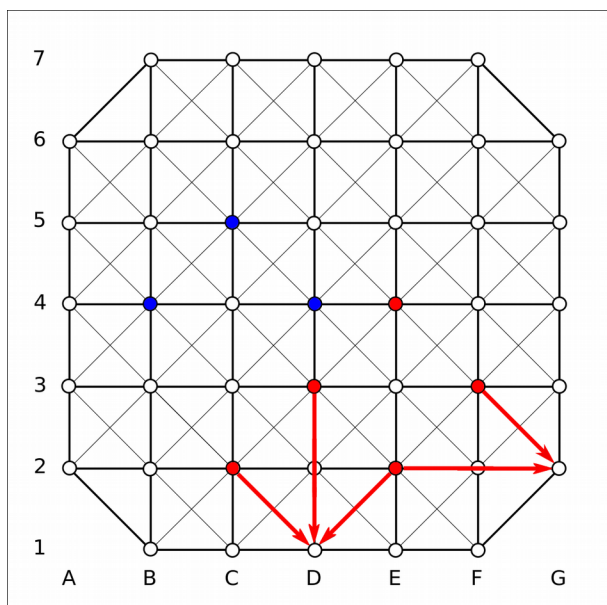
The first move in each game is made by the player who has fewer pieces on the corners of the board. In the position above, red has four pieces and blue has three pieces; thus, blue moves first and thereafter the moves are made by each player in turn. If the number of pieces on the corners of the board is equal, the first move is made by the player who has fewer pieces on the edges of the board. If the number of pieces on the edges of the board is equal, the players will draw to see who will start.

A move is made by switching places of the player's own piece and an adjacent white piece (white pieces are so-called neutral pieces that can be moved by both players). This changing can be always done in all directions, as long as pieces are adjacent. And, if the adjacent white piece has another white piece(s) adjacent to it, the changing can be done with such a white piece as long as the pieces are in a straight line (horizontal, vertical, or diagonal). In the situation below red has – in principle – the following options indicated by gray pieces:

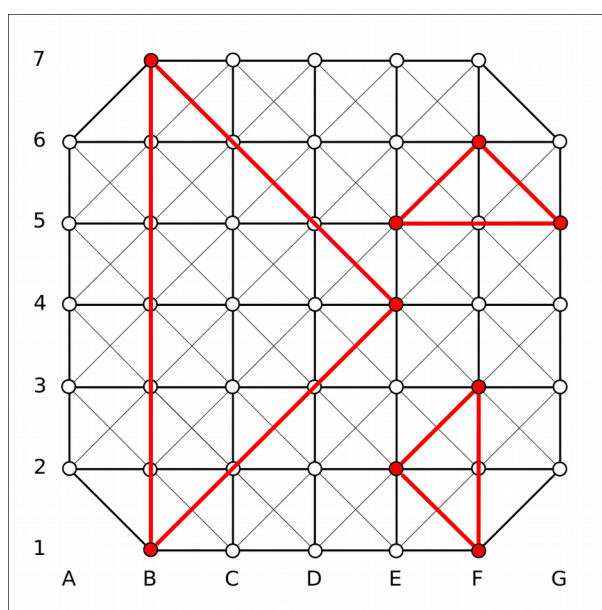
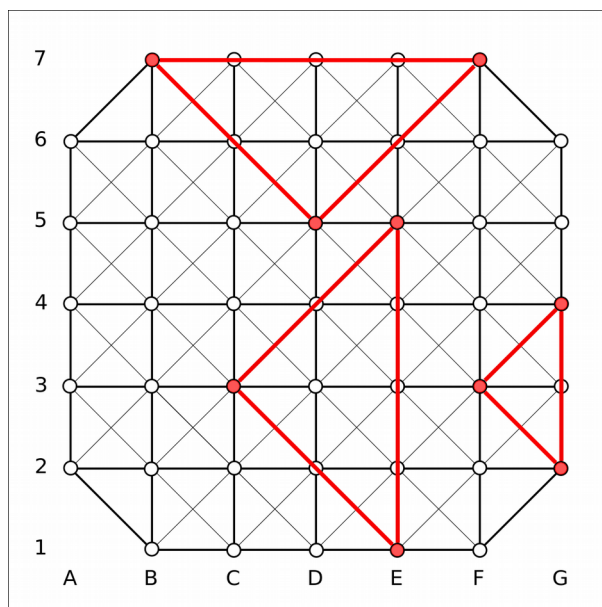


However, the move is legal only if a new triangle is formed as a result. In other words, your piece needs to be moved to the corner of a triangle in the two other corners of which there already are two of your pieces. Moreover, the shape of that triangle must be of the accepted type.

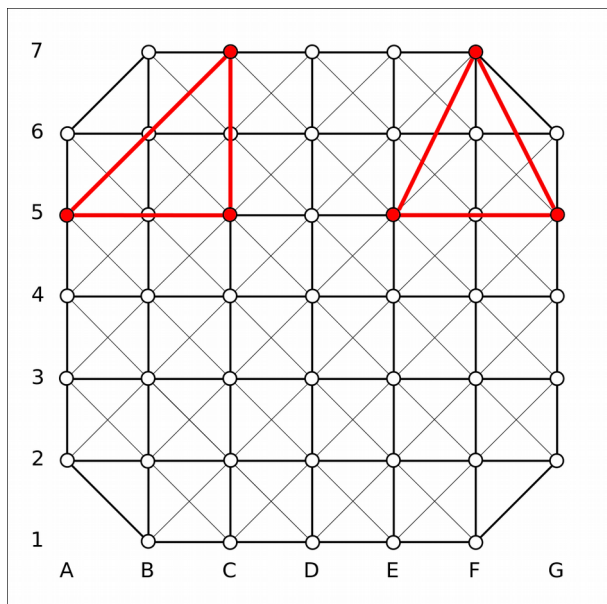
In the position below red has only five possible moves although there are numerous white pieces. Arrows leading from red pieces to white pieces indicate pieces that can exchange places with one another. Each of these moves create a new triangle and the shape of that triangle is of the accepted type.



The sizes of valid triangles may vary, but every one of them must have two shorter sides, legs, that are equal in length. The third side, hypotenuse, is always the longest. In the smallest triangle the length of the hypotenuse is three points and the triangle surrounds only one point, in the medium-sized the length of the hypotenuse is five points and the triangle surrounds six points, and in the largest triangle the length of the hypotenuse is seven points and the triangle surrounds 13 points, that is, nearly third of the board. The two diagrams below offer six examples of valid triangles.



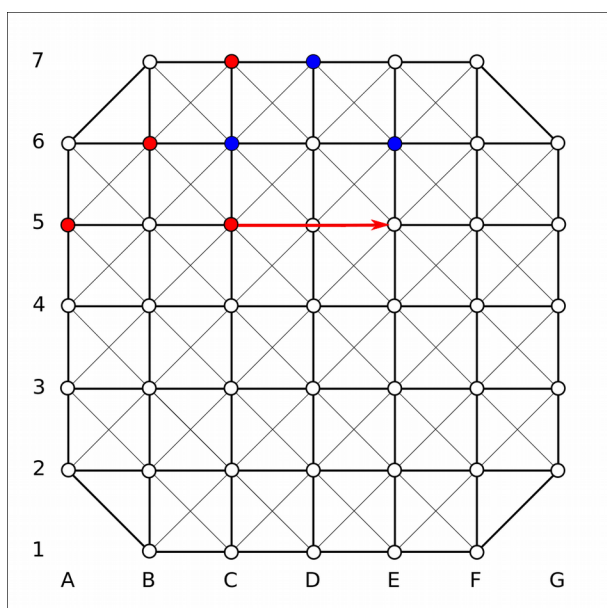
There are two kinds of forbidden shapes. First, forbidden are triangles whose longest side (so-called hypotenuse) follows oblique lines; in other words, their two shorter sides (so-called legs) follow horizontal and vertical lines. Second, forbidden are triangles whose side(s) do not follow lines of the board. The diagram below offers an example of both forbidden shapes.



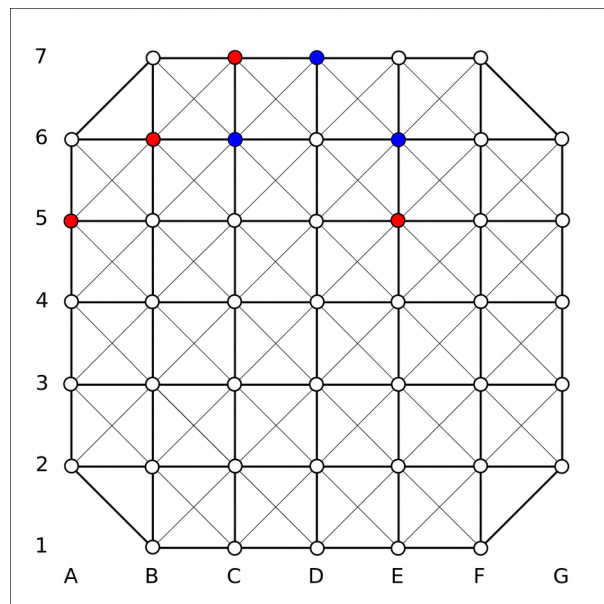
If a player cannot form a triangle, play passes back to the other player. On the other hand, if a move can be made, the player cannot pass. However, this move does not have to be a capture, if there are other options.

If a triangle formed by a player contains only neutral pieces, nothing happens (this kind of a triangle is called empty). But if a triangle formed by a player contains player's or opponent's piece(s), they all are immediately captured.

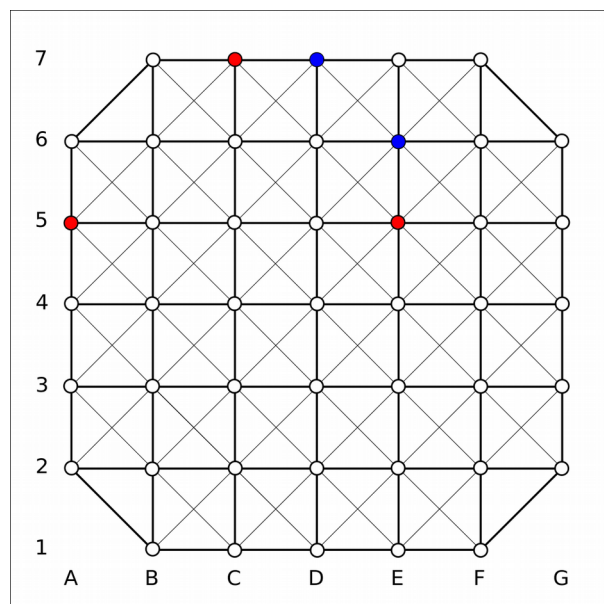
In the diagram below it is red's turn to move. The intended move is indicated by the red arrow.



In the diagram below red has moved his piece. A new triangle has been formed and inside that triangle there are two pieces: one red and one blue piece.



In the diagram below red has captured both his own and the opponent's piece by turning them over. Red has now completed his move and it is blue's turn.



If a player's move has created more than one triangle, the player can select the triangle inside which pieces are captured. Of course, capturing is not obligatory, if at least one of those created triangles is empty.

The positions above showed how capturing is done; note, however, that capturing one's own pieces is usually to be avoided as the opponent gets points from them.

The game can end in many ways. The most common cause for ending is that one of the players cannot make a move by forming a triangle.

If the number of the pieces of either player has been reduced below three, the game ends immediately, because forming of a triangle is of course impossible.

On the other hand, if a player does have three pieces or more but is still unable to form a triangle in his turn, he must pass. After opponent's move the player must be able

to form a triangle in order to continue the game. If this is not possible, the game ends, because one is not allowed to pass two times consecutively. But if the player can now form a triangle, the game continues normally.

Although a game usually ends when one of the players cannot make a move, there are three other alternatives as well. First, the game ends when the same position is repeated three times consecutively (the player who wants to end the game by threefold repetition must count the moves when the position starts to repeat). Second, the game ends when thirty moves are played without capturing any piece (the player who wants to end the game for this reason must keep count on the moves). Third, the game can end if both players mutually agree to end the game.

When the game is over, points are counted and scores are marked down. The game is won by the player who has the biggest triangle on the board when the game ends. If the biggest triangle on the board is of the smallest type, the winner scores one point from each enemy piece that has been captured. If the biggest triangle is medium-sized, each captured enemy piece yields two points. If the biggest triangle is of the largest type, each captured enemy piece yields three points.

Note that each captured enemy piece yields points irrespective of who captured it, you or the opponent himself.

The maximum score is 51 points. However, if both players' biggest triangle has an equal size, the result is a tie, and neither scores any points.

After this first game, new games are played in a similar manner until the match is won by the player who is the first to reach or exceed 50 points. Of course, it is not obligatory to play up to 50 points. If the players so wish, they can also play shorter or longer matches, for example, up to 35 points.

XOLIBA VERSION FOR THREE PLAYERS

Xoliba can also be played by three players. For this version 12 red pieces, 12 blue pieces, 12 green pieces, and 9 white pieces are needed. To start the first game the players decide which colour they will play during the match. The pieces are then placed on the board in the same way as in the two-player version and the first move is made by the player who has fewest pieces on the corners of the board. He is followed by the player with the second-largest number of pieces on the corners of the board. The player with the largest number of pieces on the corners of the board will move last. If two or three players have an equal number of pieces on the corners of the board, the first move is made by the player who has fewer pieces on the edges of the board. If the number of pieces on the edges of the board is equal, the players will draw to determine the order of play. When the round is over the player who started the game will move again and so on.

The three-player version ends similarly to the two-player version, i.e. when there is only one player left who can make a move.

If the number of the pieces of one of the players has been reduced below three, his game ends immediately and his remaining pieces are turned over so that they display the white side (those pieces are not counted as captured and they do not yield any points to other players).

By contrast, if one of the players has three pieces or more but is nonetheless unable to form a triangle in his turn, he must pass. After opponents' moves this player must be able to form a triangle in order to continue his game. If this is not possible, his game ends, because one is not allowed to pass two times consecutively. His remaining pieces are turned over so that they show the white side (those pieces are not counted as captured and they do not yield any points to other players). But if the player can now form a triangle, his game continues normally.

When one of the players has ended his game the two remaining players continue playing until there is just one player left. As in the two-player version, the game can also end by the three-fold repetition of the position, by the thirty-move rule or by mutual agreement.

When the game is over, scores are marked down (during the game each player must keep count of his points). Unlike in the two-player version, each player always scores one point from each enemy piece he has captured; the player's own pieces that he has captured himself do not yield any points to other players.

The game is won by the player who has scored more points than his opponents; the maximum score is 24 points. This victory has no practical value, because the match is won by scoring points and not by winning separate games. Besides, the game can also end in a draw (that is the case if all three players have the same score).

Unlike the two-player version, the three-player version is played only up to 25 points and the match is won by the player who is first to score 25 points or over. If two or three players have the same score, new games must be played until the winner is determined.

XOLIBA VERSION FOR ONE PLAYER

Xoliba can also be played by a single player, as a patience game. The pieces are placed on the board in the same way as in the two-player game except that eight white pieces are placed in the corners (in other words, the pieces are placed in the following points: b7, f7, a6, g6, a2, g2, b1, f1). The single player always uses the red pieces and tries to capture all the blue pieces.

The capturing differs from the other versions: after each capture the player always loses three of his own pieces, that is, those pieces that were placed in the corners of the triangle that captured pieces. As in the other versions, if that same triangle contains other red pieces, they are also captured.

In the one-player version, the game is not won by scoring points. Instead, the player wins if he can capture all the blue pieces. If he does not, he loses.

RESIGNATION

If both players so wish, a so-called resignation rule can apply. According to this rule, either player can resign having seen the opening position. Resignation must be announced before any moves have been made. After the player has resigned his opponent automatically gets forty percent of the points needed for victory (in other words, if the score limit is 50 points, the opponent gets 20 points). Resigning ends the game and a new one is started by mixing up the pieces again. This rule can only apply to the two-players version.