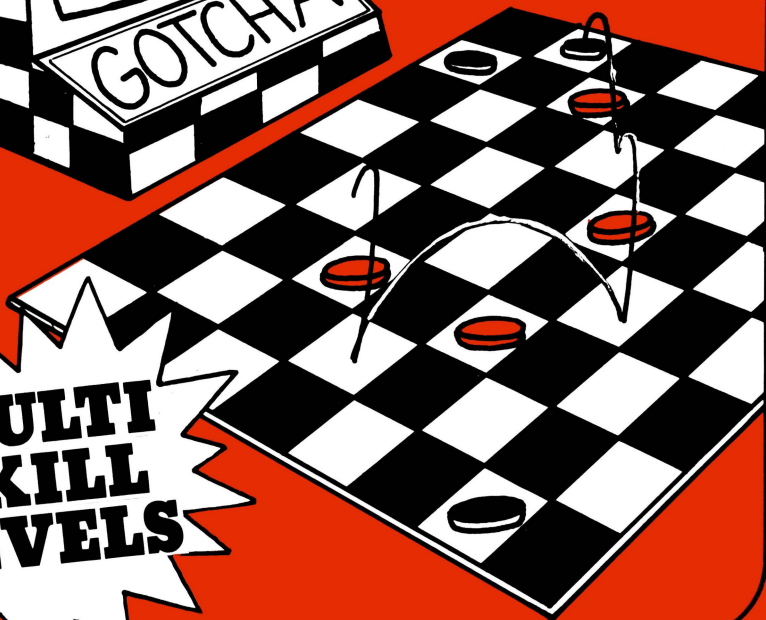


TRS-80™

THE MEAN CHECKERS MACHINE



**MULTI
SKILL
LEVELS**



BY LANCE MICKLUS

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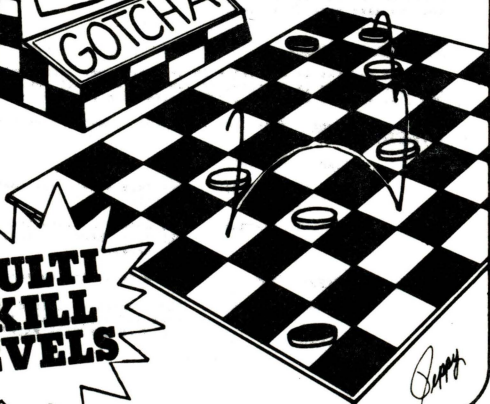
Supper

INSTRUCTIONS

THE MEAN CHECKERS MACHINE



**MULTI
SKILL
LEVELS**



THE MEAN CHECKERS MACHINE

Written by Lance Micklus

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INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to the world of Checkers, a game the whole family can play. Your opponent is THE MEAN CHECKERS MACHINE. He is the product of one of the oldest and most powerful programming languages, FORTRAN. You can beat the computer, but only if you're careful.

The game is played just like regulation Checkers. All moves are checked for legality. To win, you must eliminate all of your opponent's pieces from the checker board. You must be careful not to place your opponent in the position where he cannot make any legal moves. This is a stalemate, and the game ends in a draw.

LOADING THE PROGRAM:

The program is available in two versions: disk and tape. The tape version is designed to run on a Level II 16K machine. The disk version requires a 32K system with one disk drive.

Tape Systems: Enter the following commands from the keyboard:

SYSTEM	(ENTER)	
CHKRS	(ENTER)	The tape should now load into memory.
/	(ENTER)	You should now see the name THE MEAN CHECKERS MACHINE on the screen.

Disk Systems: From DOS, type the following command:

CHECKERS	(ENTER)	The program will load in from disk and display the title THE MEAN CHECKERS MACHINE.
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PLAYING THE GAME:

After the title of the program appears on the screen for approximately 8 seconds, the screen will clear and the checker board will now appear.

Each square is lettered horizontally from A to H, and vertically from 1 to 8. The upper left square is A1, and the lower right square is H8.

Your pieces are O's, and the computer's pieces are X's. Whenever it is your turn, the computer prompts with YOUR MOVE. To make a move, you must tell the computer the current location of the checker that is to be moved, followed by a dash, then the position it is to move to. The computer will now display the checker board with your piece moved per your instructions. The computer will then take its turn.

If the move is illegal, the computer will display the words **INPUT ERROR**, and again prompt you for a move. An example of an illegal move is A6-A4. This will cause an **INPUT ERROR** because such a move is illegal. A good move to start with at the beginning of a game might be B6-A5.

MAKING A JUMP:

To make a jump on your turn, enter the move the same way you would for a regular move. For example: C5-A3. To enter an additional jump, if any, you type only the location to move to. The computer already knows the "from" position. Thus, a second jump to the above example might be just C1 -- meaning a jump from A3 to C1.

THE MEAN CHECKERS MACHINE can play either regulation Checkers in which all jumps must be taken (JUMP FORCED mode), or a variation of Checkers in which jumps are taken at the discretion of each player (JUMP OPTIONAL mode). The computer begins the game playing in JUMP FORCED mode.

In JUMP FORCED mode, the computer will always prompt for additional jump moves if they can be taken. If no more jumps are possible on your turn, the computer will automatically take its turn.

In JUMP OPTIONAL mode, the computer always assumes that when the first move was a jump, then additional jumps are possible. If you do not want to take the extra jumps, or none are possible, type the word PASS to let the computer take its

turn. The game is set up this way so the computer doesn't tip you off to an extra jump you might have missed.

SAVE COMMAND:

If you want to save a game, do the following:

Tape Systems: Load a tape into cassette recorder # 1. Press the Record buttons. Make sure you aren't going to record on the leader. Then type the word SAVE in place of your move. The computer will record the current checkerboard on the tape, and then prompt for your move.

Disk Systems: Type the word SAVE instead of entering a move. Checkers will now prompt for a filespec. Enter a valid TRSDOS file name, then press (ENTER). Checkers will now store the current checkerboard out on disk, and then prompt for another move.

LOAD COMMAND:

You can restore a previously saved game as follows:

Tape Systems: Get the tape ready to be read by the computer; be sure you have your volume level set correctly. Type the word LOAD instead of your move. Checkers will load the tape into memory and restore the previously saved game. If the tape did not read in correctly, the words **INPUT ERROR** will appear and the checkerboard will remain unchanged.

Disk Systems: Type the word LOAD instead of your move. Checkers will now prompt for a filespec. Enter the file name of the disk file which contains the game you wish to restore. Press (ENTER). Checkers will now read the file and restore the old game. If there are any disk I/O errors, Checkers will display the words **INPUT ERROR** and not restore the game. NO OTHER ERROR MESSAGES WILL APPEAR, such as ILLEGAL ACCESS TO A PROTECTED FILE, for example.

OTHER COMMANDS:

The computer normally plays at an IQ of 2. To change the IQ, in place of your move, type IQ=3, to change to an IQ of 3, for example. You may play at an IQ of from 1 to 4. You can change the IQ anytime it is your turn. The IQ level is the number displayed in the upper right corner of the screen.

Normally, the computer lets you go first at the beginning of the game. If you would like the computer to go first, type UMOV instead of entering a move. The computer will now take its turn. The UMOV command works at any time during the game; however, it is only legal at the beginning of a game. The computer assumes you are an honest player.

When you are ready to give up, type QUIT instead of your move. The computer will automatically start a new game--you go first.

When you want to do something else besides playing Checkers, press the (BREAK) key. Checkers will return you to either BASIC (tape version), or DOS (disk version).

The computer initially starts the game in the FORCED JUMP mode. You may also enjoy playing with the rules changed so that all jumps are optional, i.e., you don't have to make a jump if you don't want to. Anytime it is your turn to enter a move, just type JO to enter JUMP OPTIONAL mode. To play regulation Checkers, the command is JF for JUMP FORCED mode. The current mode is always displayed in the upper right side of the screen as either an F or O letter, followed by the IQ level.

Besides JUMP FORCED mode, the game offers still another interesting variation. Instead of typing QUIT, type the word KING. You will now be able to play the game of KINGS in either FORCED or OPTIONAL jump mode.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS:

At the beginning of the computer's turn, the computer begins by searching through the checkers board for every possible move. When a legal move is found, the computer makes the move on an internal board, and then looks at the board to see if the move looks promising.

If the IQ is 2, the computer sets up a second checkerboard, and searches for all of your moves. If it finds an interesting move you might take, it sets up a third checkerboard (if the IQ is 3), to see what the computer's best reply is to that. And at an IQ of 4, it will then look at your best reply. Thus, the computer can look not only at its current move, but up to three moves ahead.

This action can be seen on the blinking numbers in the upper left corner of the screen during the computer's move. When the number 2 is blinking, it means the computer found an interesting move, and is now looking to see what your best reply to that move might be.

At an IQ of 1, the computer plays a novice level game. It is easy to beat, unless you are 6 years old and just starting out. Let your kids play at IQ 1. Children like to win. Average move time is about 5 seconds.

At an IQ of 2, the computer plays an average game. You can beat the computer if you're careful. This is a good playing strength because the game is challenging, yet the computer takes only 40 seconds to come up with a move.

When the IQ is 3, the computer will now take from 2 to 4 minutes to find its move. You must be very careful. The computer is clever and will lay down traps. Be especially cautious about what seems to be a poor move by the computer. Often, these moves turn out to be traps. At this level of play, the entire family can gang up against the computer.

Finally, you can set the IQ to 4. The computer will now take from 10 to 20 minutes to find a move. This is the computer's championship level, and the computer is almost impossible to beat if pitted against anybody but an expert player. The SAVE and LOAD features make games at this level of play practical.

You will find, as you play the game, that the computer is not afraid to go after you. Toward the end of the game, it has been programmed to attack. Thus, it was named

THE MEAN CHECKERS MACHINE !

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Box 3435, Longwood, FL 32750.

THE MEAN CHECKERS MACHINE

One of the best checker opponents you will ever play! BE WARNED - Skill Level #4 is a real lesson in humility. Multi-skill levels and includes a force jump option too!

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