

## Conqueror ~ A Professional Chess Variant

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Ok, let's cut a long story short ~ I think... I've done it. That is to say, I'm pretty sure... I've done it.

What have I done exactly? Well... I've... CONQUERED.

Anyone following my various Chess blogs and discussions over the years would know how often I have explained that both a new Chess piece and a new Chess board will not solve the paradox that is... the next evolution of Chess.

Well in a way, I will admit I was wrong... but ONLY because I believe the solution to the paradox... is yet another paradox.

Fight fire... with fire. Or in this case, conquests... with conkers.

### Jump to the Rules...

To summarise what new readers will need some background to, I have long said that a 10x10 board proves too big in practise, a 9x9 creates an imbalance in the opening piece array and a 10x8 board does not follow suit with the Classical rounded logic and sacred artistry of the game.

Hence I have always proclaimed the Classical 8x8 to be the only existing framework upon which we could found any next evolution of the game.

Furthermore, any "new piece" invented for any bigger board will have to feature an invented movement not naturally provided for by the characteristics of the board and thus will not be welcomed by all players.

For example, the diagonal naturally provides for the Bishop, the orthogonal provides for the Rook, both of these provide for the King, Queen and Pawns... and the only easily identifiable "special move", the "L" shape, provides for the Knight.

Any other "invented movement" for a new piece is only going to reflect the desires of its inventor and will therefore not harbour a "naturally provided" character embraceable by all players.

So here one has to ask, if it has been 100 years since the world champion José Capablanca proposed his own Chess variant and yet the world has still not evolved the game into any new species... then what is the paradox we need to solve?

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### Solving A Paradox

Theoretically it is true, the 10x10 board is the most logical step forward unto the next evolution of Chess, but most people will not play on such a board for various reasons.

1. Due to the extra squares and increased distance between armies, vast spaces are created around pieces in play, particularly the Pawns, reducing their ability to form defensive communities.
2. Due again to the increased distance between armies, fast punching hand to hand combat is practically non-existent during the Opening stages, resulting in a more recumbent and passive kind of warfare.
3. Shorter range pieces such as the Knight become greatly weakened on a larger board, whereas infinite range pieces such as the Bishop become much, much stronger. This, whence on the Classical 64sq board, they were once equal comrades.

Aye, in a moment I will explain how I believe I have remedied these problems with the 100sq board, but first let us look at the problems with the 64sq board and the reasons why we must evolve to the larger arena.

You will often hear people exclaim how there are uncountable Opening strategies and defences, right from the very first move of the game. This in reality is not only an overstatement, but irritatingly far from the truth.

You only have to look at the Knight to realise there is in fact only ONE practically useful square for it to move to, in the vast majority of cases ~ and that is even less than a Pawn!

Granted there are a total of 20 possible first moves alone... and well, you can do the maths. But in reality only a handful of these are actually worth one's time and sanity to pursue.

Herewith, if the only way to enjoy the creative essence of the game, is to obtain a PHD in mathematics and study a handful of Openings at the atomic level, then we may as well put away the Chess board right now.

There are many ailments and problems with the 64sq board and I will now list a number of them.



1. Restricted creativity for club players.
2. A compromised Knight from move one.
3. Lack of flank Openings.
4. Berlin Defence Queen exchange.
5. Blocked in or "bad" Bishops.
6. Opposing fianchettoes.
7. Frequency of draws amongst masters.

I expect some of these were in the back of your mind already, but it wasn't until you read them here that you realised how the true fault of your own game's depression is not so much your own intellect, since you are perhaps a very intelligent person, but rather it is an inherent fault of the game itself.

It is for the lack of a more accurate word... boring.

What the success fuelled professional Chess communities forget to remember, is that the purpose of an over the board Chess game, is to enjoy the adventure of each other's creative company.

The game is meant to be fun.

Whilst the average club player will never reach international stardom, that is not the wholehearted reason he or she plays. One plays Chess to enjoy the adventure of a recreationally creative pursuit.

So as I said before, if the only way to enjoy the creative essence of the game, is to obtain a PHD in mathematics and study a handful of Openings at the atomic level, then we may as well put away the Chess board right now.

No, no, no... *a, b, c, d, e... f, g, h, i, j...* ...these are the squares we will now play.

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## The Great Rules Of Conqueror Chess

Conqueror Chess is played on a 10x10 board and features two new pieces, the Wizard and the Conker.

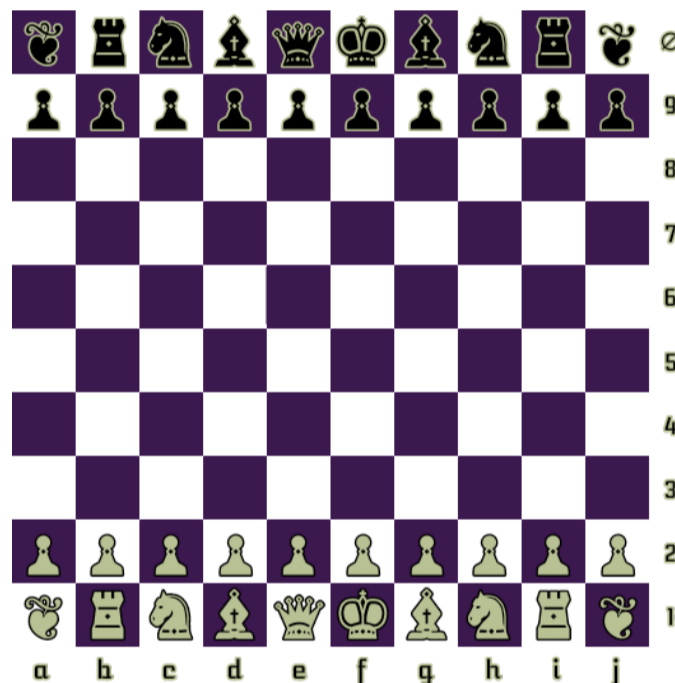
The playing board arena is labelled a-j and 1-Ø. The use of "Ø" instead of "10" is wise to ensure quick and accurate notation, as per all other single digit/character cells. The "Ø" symbol effectively portrays both the digits "1" & "0" as a singular combined symbol.

Each player has TWO Wizards each in addition to the regular pieces and ONE Conker.

A player's two Wizards are positioned on the far corner squares (a/j) at the start of any game, followed by the Rooks, Knights and Bishops in accordance with the Classical array.

The Conker does not assume any square amongst the initial opening array, but remains OFF the board until it is 'placed' onto a square within the player's own side of the board.

A Conker MAY NOT make the first move of the game.



- The **WIZARD** moves and captures like an elongated Knight, 3\_1 as opposed to 2\_1 and also ONE square diagonally. A Wizard MAY NOT capture an opponent's Conker, only regular pieces or another Conker may capture a Conker.
  - I have always loved the Wizard, ever since I first heard of its invention by the great Daniel MacDonald, for his own good variant **Omega Chess** and, whilst its movement is not a natural suggestion of the board, it is the ONLY piece which could in time claim the modern variant for itself. However, whilst this fantastic piece has been embraced and adopted by many Chess variant enthusiasts since, I have personally never felt its depiction by a Crescent Moon to be on par with the artistic balance of the historical Classical piece depictions. Conqueror Chess herewith depicts the Wizard with a Floral Heart, portraying the magically eccentric soul of the piece at hand.
- The **CONKER** moves and captures to the NEAREST like-coloured square. Thus: ONE square diagonally and LEAPS to the SECOND square orthogonally. The Conker also has a very special move: OR, if the opponent moves his King, THENCE like a WIZARD. A Conker CANNOT be captured by a Wizard, it can ONLY be captured by regular pieces or another Conker.
  - (••) The Conker remains OFF the board at the start of play and is 'placed' onto any square within the player's own side of the board, at any time of choosing. However a player MUST ENTER his Conker BEFORE ALL four Wizards have entered play, or before all uncaptured Wizards have entered play. Entering the Conker counts as one whole complete move. A Conker MAY NOT make the first move of the game. White places the Conker *knotted side up* whilst Black places the Conker *knotted side down*, thus distinguishing them apart.
    - The Conker is purely my own invention and is designed not only as a companion to the Wizard but, as I will explain shortly, it is this intriguing "piece" which solves the problems of the 100sq board. To be concise, a 10x10 board actually requires more than its mere additional fleet of pieces to fulfil the transposition of Classically dynamic Chess dialogue into the augmented arena. Thus the Conker is an additional piece especially designed to serve a most sacred duty.
- The **KNIGHT** may move like a WIZARD on its FIRST move, or normally like a regular Classical Knight.
  - This attribute is given to the Knight for a very good reason. Knights become a weaker piece whence transposed onto a 100sq board and so giving the piece a longer stride on its first move helps get the piece into the game. Also, whilst not as much an issue on the 100sq board, this ability nevertheless provides the Knight with many more options for Opening repertoire.
- The **PAWN** may move 1, 2 or THREE squares forward on its FIRST move, but only ONE square forward at a time thereafter. Pawns capture as in Classical Chess, one square diagonally forward. *En passant* is legal whence a Pawn advancing 2 or more squares lands horizontally adjacent to the opponent Pawn.



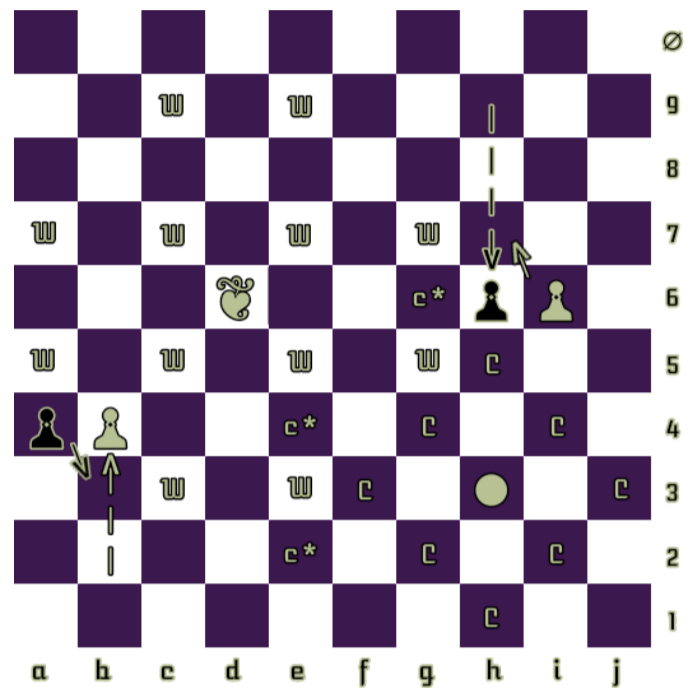
- o Unlike in Omega Chess where *En passant* is legal even if the Pawn advances past the opponent Pawn, in Conqueror Chess the two Pawns must be horizontally adjacent for the *En passant* capture to be legal. Pawns of course are the soul of any Chess game and so their conversation with the 100sq arena is inevitably of a different character. Indeed, so much so in fact that if we do not preserve their depth of participation, then any 100sq variant will certainly fail. Increasing the frequency of Pawn capture through more instances of *En passant* is therefore actually detrimental to the conversational depth of the game. Furthermore, on a 100sq board Pawns find it much harder to get into the game and so increasing the likelihood of 1st move captures is merely frustrating and counter productive to the logical balance. Conqueror Chess retains the Classical depth of conversation by mediating the ratio of *En passant* occurrences and thus maintaining a good population of Pawns in dialogue. Whilst somewhat more passively combative in the early stages, **Conqueror** successfully replenishes the loss of early hand to hand combat by implementing the Conker as an offensive outpost and territorial guard, all whilst the Wizard keeps a firm watch from the sky.

The Conker is designed to perform two primary tasks:

1. Occupy and barricade tactical routes of infiltration and protect the King against enemy Wizard attacks.
  - o Since its exchange value for any other purpose but to fend off Wizards is quite low, and yet since it remains nevertheless a prospectively stronger piece in waiting, any Conker defended by at least one piece can prove a most frustrating obstacle for any orchestrated attack.
2. Serve as a board diminisher, or semi permanent object which denies movement about weak spaces, effectively reducing the size of the board.
  - o As explained earlier, 100sq boards create vast spaces around pieces in play, particularly the Pawns, reducing their ability to form defensive communities. The Conker remedies this phenomena by occupying space as an offensive territorial outpost with a positionally dynamic prowess.

Whilst for the most part a relatively weak piece, the Conker secretly works in collaboration with other pieces who would invoke the enemy King to move, thus empowering the Conker with the Wizard's own powerful leap.

Thus when a covert discovered attack is employed and in tandem with its own surprise Wizard's leap... then the Conker truly CONQUERS.



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### Castling

Castling is very much the same as it is in Classical Chess except for the additional feature of **Rook Cornering**.

When a Wizard vacates its corner square for the first time, the adjacent Rook may assume the vacated corner square in the same move. For example this could be notated *1. Wi4/R*.

• *Note; if either the Rook or Wizard have already moved, then Rook Cornering is forbidden.*

Now, because the Rook has been reassigned a new square, the King will have further to travel in order to Castle with the Rook.

Yet nevertheless the notation for Castling remains exactly the same!

This is because the phrases "O-O" and "O-O-O" refer to the number of squares the ROOK has to travel, either Kingside or Queenside, in order to be placed beside the King, during a Castling manoeuvre.

The King always travels TWO squares with standard Rook placement. Thus if the Rook has been reassigned to the Wizard's corner square, the King needs to travel THREE squares.

In the example position, we can see that White has 'Cornered' both his Rooks upon moving his Wizard and thus Castled his King 3 squares Kingside. Black has not Cornered either Rook and is instead preparing to Castle his King 2 squares Kingside. Dangerous however, for if Black Castles his King in this position, White's Conker can capture Black's Wizard! This position also shows how a Knight may move like a Wizard on its first move. White moved Queen's Knight 'Nc1 to d4' and Black moved Queen's Knight 'Nc8 to b9'.

Yet the number of squares the Rook travels does not change.

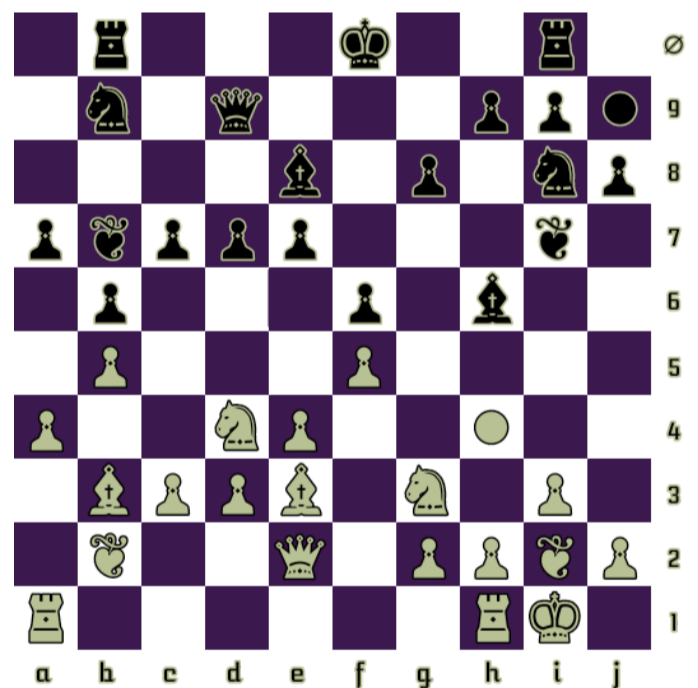
So, whilst the King has ONE square further to travel, the Rook nevertheless only travels TWO squares when Castling Kingside and THREE squares when Castling Queenside.

Herewith, there is no additional notation to learn, but there is the requirement to record the 'Rook Cornering' and to remember to move the King ONE square further when performing the Castling manoeuvre.

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### The Strategy

When transposing pieces to a bigger board their relative values change. For example Knights become weaker because they have only a finite stride whereas Bishops become stronger because they have an infinite stride.



The Conker is similar to a Knight but cannot leap as far or change its square colour. However the Conker is superior in two senses; one since it cannot be captured by a Wizard and two since it may on occasion leap like a Wizard. Thus in turn it is actually at least an equal to the Knight, yet its prowess is strongly dependent on material and position.

The Wizard is similar to a Bishop since it has a long colour-bound stride, but this stride is only finite. However the Wizard is superior in the sense that it has a fantastic leaping ability and is not subject to becoming trapped behind other pieces. Thus in turn it is actually an equal to the Bishop.

Conqueror Chess values the Conker equal to a Knight at **3.0** and the Wizard piece equal to a Bishop at **4.0**.

King =  $\infty$   
Pawn = 1.0  
Conker = 3.0/var  
Knight = 3.0  
Bishop = 4.0  
Wizard = 4.0  
Rook = 6.0  
Queen = 9.0

Psychologically the Conker can be most frustrating and not merely due to its invulnerability from Wizard attacks. For whilst it sits there appearing worthy only of 3.0 points, the player knows that this value is merely positional and may increase dramatically. Thus the question this piece presents is: *Would exchanging your Knight for a Conker be worthwhile?*

The Conker actually increases in value towards the Endgame and this is because as more and more pieces are taken, the chances of the opponent moving his King increases.

As such an Endgame between a King and Conker is the same as an Endgame between a King and Wizard. Whilst a Wizard cannot force Mate, even with the assistance of its own King, it only needs one other piece, or Pawn, to seal the enemy's fate.

However, if your King is well defended, then come the Endgame it may hardly ever find it needs to move and thus your opponent's Conker will just sit there or roll about lazily, not really posing much of a threat to you at all...

... or... will it...?

You see, I think we all would agree, **Conqueror Chess** is absolutely CONKERS!

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### Evolution Of A Piece

You may recall my mentioning at the beginning, how the next evolution of Chess could only possibly arise if the newly proclaimed 'piece' to take its place on the 100sq board likewise features a character of movement only naturally suggested by the board itself.

Otherwise, any "new piece" invented for any bigger board will have to feature an invented movement not naturally provided for by the characteristics of the board and thus will not be welcomed by all players.

To reiterate for example, the diagonal naturally provides for the Bishop, the orthogonal provides for the Rook, both of these provide for the King, Queen and Pawns... and the only easily identifiable "special move", the "L" shape, provides for the Knight.

Any other "invented movement" for a new piece is only going to reflect the desires of its inventor and will therefore not harbour a "naturally provided" character embraceable by all players.

Yet for many, many years there is one piece which regardless of this commonly agreed principle, has prevailed to make its presence known in the larger Chess variant arena.

Aye, the **Wizard** is indeed a magical piece, not though for any actual sorcery in the third dimension, but for its seemingly irresistible charm as a Chess piece.

And now I realise why.

If a real Wizard ever introduced himself to you, it is likely you would not consider him at first to be of a natural personality. But perhaps... he is.

The Wizard piece and the Chess board do actually share the mutually necessary ingredients to work together.

Looking at the board we see the Classical array of pieces is already imbalanced, it is overweighted by sliding pieces of both long and short range and yet ONLY ONE leaping piece, the Knight, to escape a stale barricade.

Likewise and vice versa, we see another imbalance, it is underweighted by colour-bound pieces, simply featuring the Bishop in this role, whereby the entire remaining array can pick and choose any colour square they wish.

Thus a new leaping piece is required AND a new colour bound piece. The WIZARD fulfils both of these criteria.

As for its "naturally provided" movement, it is commonly considered a given that the most easily identifiable "special move", the Knight's "L" shape, unanimously fulfils the final corner stone of the Chess set, in turn deeming any other "invented movement" to be just beyond the realms of "Classical" acceptability.

Yet and thus, if we were merely to adopt this "L" shape and elongate its footprint for a greater range, in cooperation with the larger board... then we would not in truth be breaking any rules. Aye, the WIZARD fulfils this criteria AND furthermore, its colour-bound footprint portrays not only the shape of a crescent moon, but in its stride a pointed star.



Herewith, I truly believe the Wizard to be the destiny of Chess. Yet, as I am about to explain, it is **Conqueror Chess** which will finally gift unto the Wizard its most profoundest belonging unto the game.

Aye, the **Conker** is indeed a magical piece also, for its intimate relationship with the Wizard and the Chess board exclaims in itself an infinitely wonderous realm of tactics and strategies, not ever before preceivable on the mere 64sq board.

The Conker is purely my own invention and is designed not only as a companion to the Wizard but, it is actually this intriguing "piece" which solves the problems of the 100sq board. To be concise, a 10x10 board actually requires more than its mere additional fleet of pieces to fulfil the transposition of Classically dynamic Chess dialogue into the augmented arena.



Thus the Conker is an additional piece especially designed to serve a most sacred duty.

Tactically, the Conker further replenishes the balance of leaping pieces in hand with sliding pieces, for even with the addition of the Wizard, there still remains a minute variable in the harmony of interacting pieces and so herewith, it is the Conker which truly fulfils the balance of the game.

Yet the Conker is not merely just another colour-bound leaper.

For if you look closely you will see how the Conker's footprint and character of movement is purely an inherant element and sacred part of the Wizard itself. They are both complimentary unto each other.

Conkers have long been regarded as somewhat magical, perhaps employed by not just Wizards but Witches too and indeed sometimes mentioned in earthen dialogue as a kind of "independent spirit" of nature, harbouring their own philosophical aura.

They have of course always been employed for recreational pursuit and they forever radiate an undying spiritual warmth, reaching out from within their spikey armour to embrace us whatever the season... whatever the time... and whatever the place.

Poisonous if eaten, Conkers have also been said to scare away spiders. Aye, some say so, some say no, but I am keen to believe the truth in this legend depends equally on the spider. Not all spiders harbour the same traits.

Thus, if what I have said is true, that only a natural element can empower the Chess board to evolve with a new enlightenment, then it is not merely a new piece which is required, but a blossoming of a genetic belonging unto the earth.

The wooden Chess board and all its wooden men are a part of the given earth. Wizards, in truth, are also a part of the given earth.

And a Conker... is a Wizard's most favoured treasure.

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## Get A Set

**Conqueror** is played on a larger 100 square checkered board featuring two Wizard pieces and two extra Pawns. A traditional Chess set features a board of only 64 squares and there are no Wizard pieces or extra Pawns.

Thus in order to play Conqueror one will have to acquire suitable equipment.

Luckily for us, a Wizard figurine does not have to actually feature a "Crescent Moon" in its physical design, for a Wizard may appear however a Wizard desires.



There are many Chess manufacturers selling "fairy" Chess pieces or sets, such as **House Of Staunton**, any of these can be used as a Wizard.

A good search of House Of Staunton website, for terms such as "variant" or "musketeer" often returns interesting results.

However, if you are looking for something more exquisitely crafted, you can't afford not to browse **Masters Games** website, to see their beautiful **Jester Chess** sets.

MG's Jester Chess is a different game, but features the same piece inventory.

These beautiful burnt wood Jester pieces are my all time favourite Wizard set and will always remain so.

With regards to checkered playing boards, of course 100 square checkered boards are not easy to find, but a good dedicated search of the interweb will often return at least some fruitful results.

Once again, our friends at Masters Games often have something suitable in that respect, **such as this good selection** and also various independent online artisans sometimes have such items for sale.

If you feel up to the challenge, design and make a Chess set yourself... even painted potatoes would serve their duty!

Of course a Chess board is much easier to make than actual Chess pieces, so why not make one to match? You do not need to be a carpenter to apply a bit of dye to some marked out squares... so give it a try!

Good luck with your Chess hunting and if you know of a good source yourself, then feel free to post S.IMON a link.

Thank you for reading.

[Blog posts in Chess.](#)

SIMON / DAN IM  
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