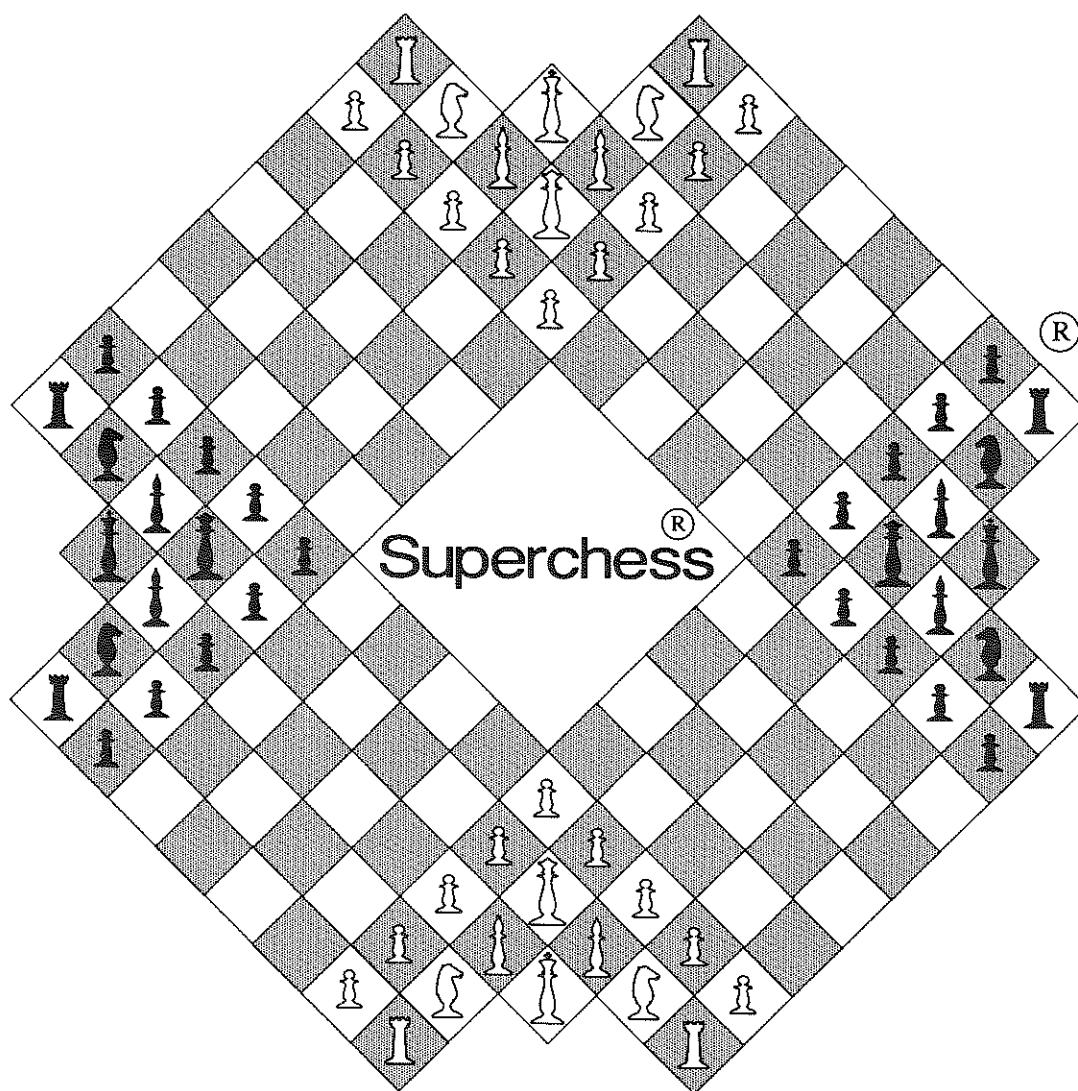


Superchess[®]

The Official Rules and Game Description



by Rolf W. Jacobson

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Preface

A preface for a rule book? Yes, because this is more than a rule book. It is also a fairly detailed description of the **Superchess** game. **For those who want to learn the essential rules and begin playing, you need only read a few pages: the *Introduction*, *Types of Play*, and *Primary Rules* sections.** More serious players and students of chess-variants will want to read further and explore the intricacies of the game.

Superchess represents a major breakthrough in four-way chess. The problems associated with other forms of four-way chess have been solved as a result of the unique board design. For instance, difficulties with pawn promotion, colliding pawns, and board congestion have been eliminated. **Superchess** is how four-way chess was meant to be played.

However, like any game, it is subject to improvements and modifications. Games are dynamic creatures and tend to evolve over time. I suspect that as this game evolves, certain variations and alternatives listed in this book will become the preferred methods of play. Only further play and comments from players will settle these matters. It will be interesting to see how **Superchess** evolves.

One possible evolutionary scenario would result in a high technology version of the game. Imagine a **Superchess** board with computer monitors built into the four sides of the game board. Partners, sitting across from one another, could communicate via the computer screens. This would allow complete communication of game strategies between partners without passing any of the information to the opposition. There would be no doubts of whether you were pursuing the same strategies as your partner. Partners would combine brain-power and play as truly unified teams in this version.

More to the point, you will find that playing **Superchess** improves your conventional chess game. This is because **Superchess**, with its numerous opening arrays, forces players to rely on their own instincts rather than on memorized openings. Also, the larger board and additional pieces makes for more possibilities and scenarios. Playing (and formulating strategies) beyond the first checkmate adds an intriguing twist to the game, as does playing with a third or fourth player. I hope you enjoy **Superchess**. It is a game which is both fun for the beginner and challenging for the master.

Whidbey Island, Washington
September 25, 1992

Introduction

Welcome to the exciting world of Superchess!

Superchess is a variation of standard chess. **If you know how to play chess you can easily learn to play Superchess.**

The primary difference between chess and **Superchess** is the **Superchess** board, as shown below:

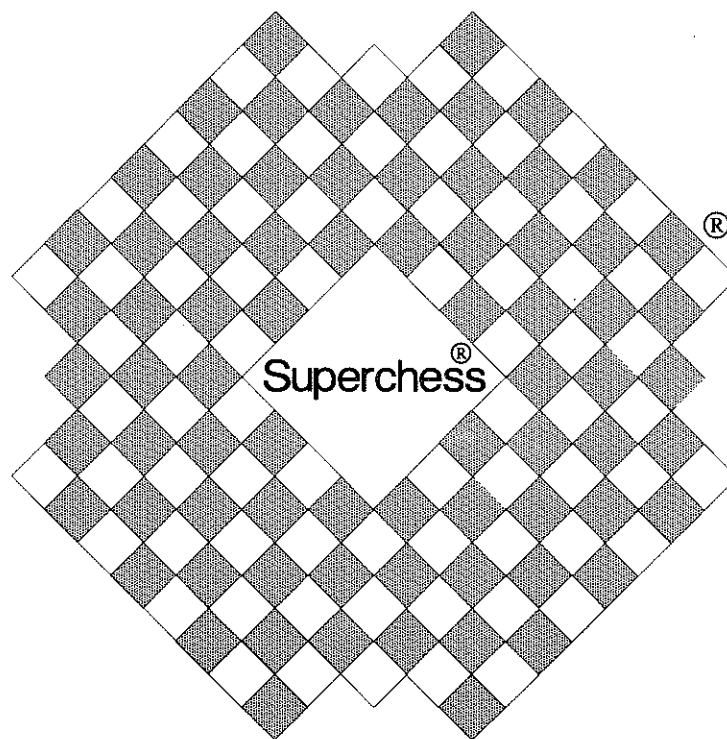
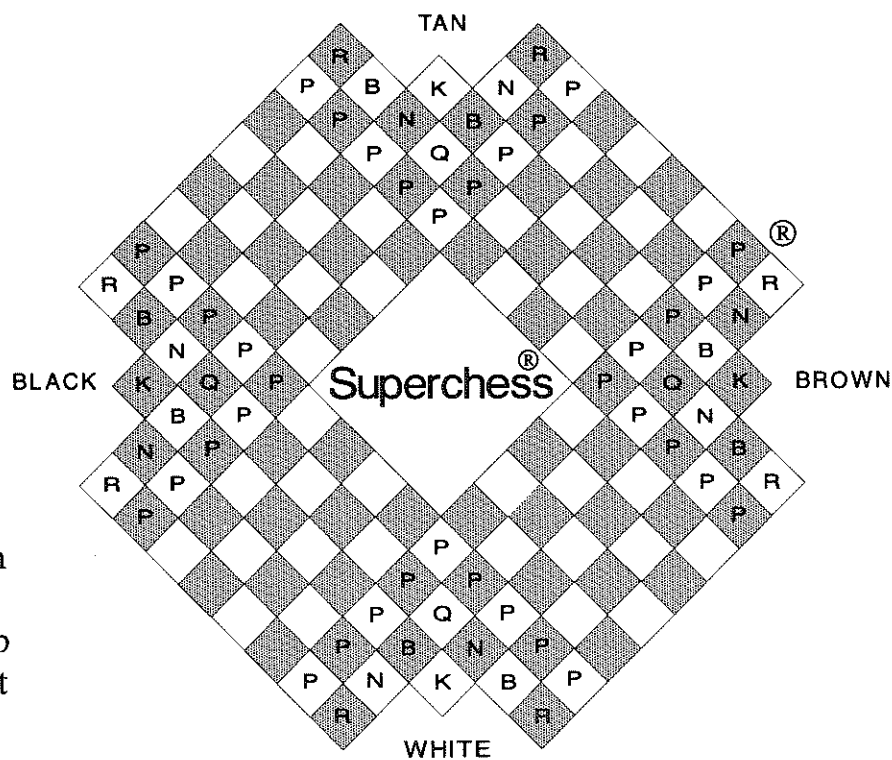


Diagram 1

Superchess is a form of “double chess” or “four-handed chess.” There are four “armies” of chess pieces. Two, three or four players can participate because of this feature. The array of chess pieces for the beginning of the game is shown on Diagram 2:

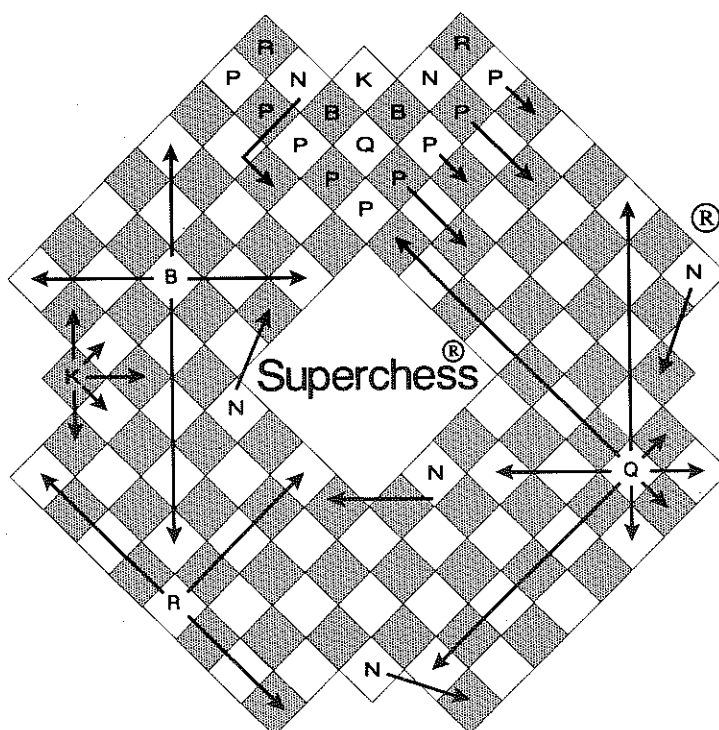
Diagram 2



K = King
 Q = Queen
 R = Rook
 B = Bishop
 N = Knight
 P = Pawn

As you can see, the chessmen used in **Superchess** are the same as in orthodox chess. **The individual chess pieces move and capture just as they do in standard chess.** The arrows on the diagram below help clarify their movement:

Diagram 3



The “center zone” (the area in the middle of the board without checkered squares) is not a play area. Pieces cannot cross over the center zone except for Knights moving over corners.

The object of the game is the same as in regular chess: to checkmate the opposing King; or in the case of **Superchess**, the opposing Kings.

Regardless of your chess playing ability, you will find Superchess to be the most engaging chess-variant you have ever played! This is because the **Superchess** board, with its squares shifted at 45 degree angles, requires the opposing forces to play one another head to head, something lacking in other forms of four-way chess.

Early in the game, battles between the chess pieces are primarily fought on four “frontiers” rather than just one. Later in the match, after pieces have been exchanged and the board begins to open up, powerful cross-board moves begin to occur. Dramatic moves of Queens, Rooks and Bishops during end-game play makes for exciting finales!

Superchess is a fun, challenging game of strategy for players of all ages and abilities!

Types of Play

2-Person Play:

One person controls the light-colored forces, the other player controls the dark-colored forces. Play proceeds in an alternating order (light, dark, light...). On a given turn, a player may move any of his pieces provided the move is legal.

4-Person Play:

Teams of two players each vie for **Superchess** victory. One team controls the light-colored forces, the other team controls the dark-colored forces. Partners sit across from each other. Each player controls one quadrant or ‘army’ and may only move his army’s pieces on his turn. The order of play proceeds clockwise around the board.

3-Person Play:

One player controls two armies of chessmen against a team of two players who work together as partners. Each member of the two-player team controls one army of pieces. As in the 4-person game, the order of play proceeds clockwise around the board one color at a time.

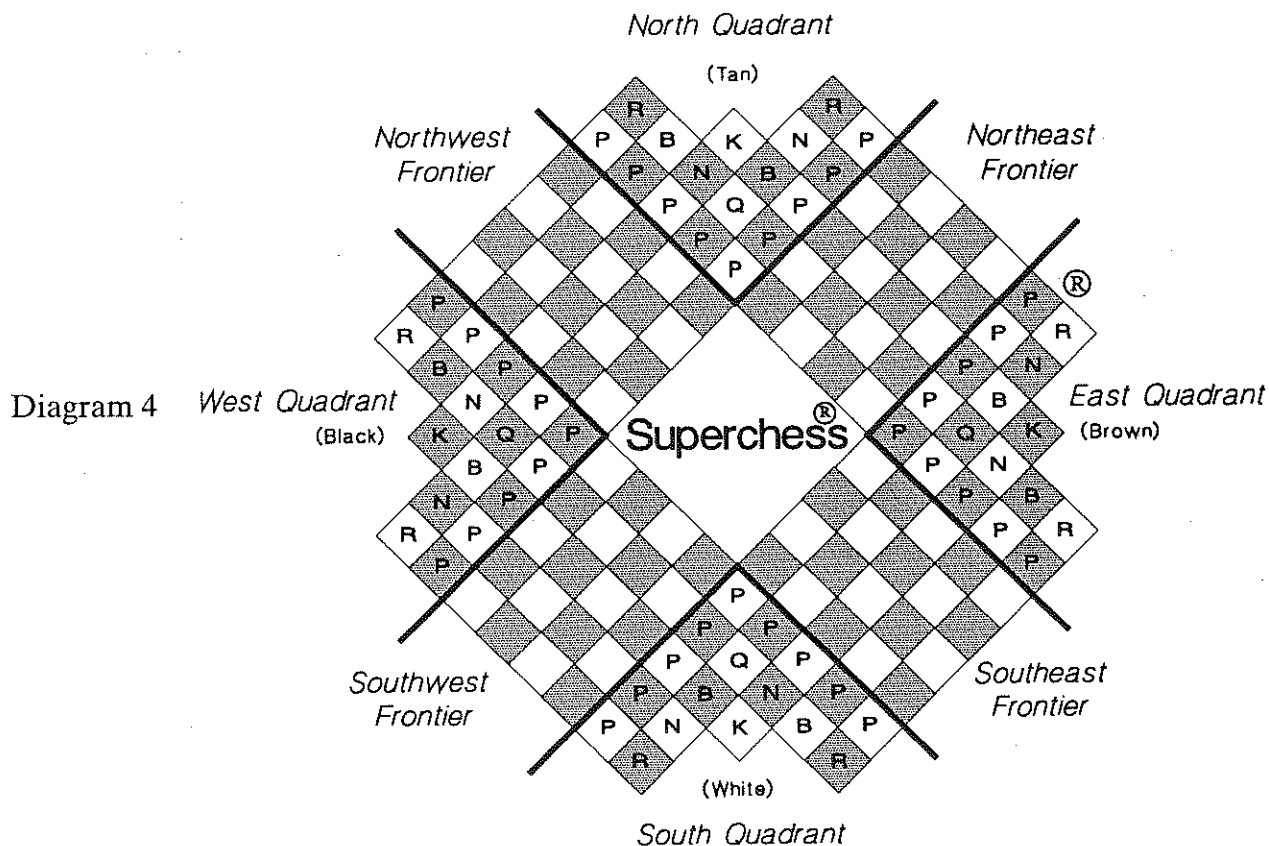
Primary Rules

All of the official rules of orthodox chess apply unless otherwise noted herein.

Opening Array and Piece Movement:

The pieces move just as they do in orthodox chess. (See Diagram 3 on page 2, or see *Appendix 1: Chess Piece Movement Review* on page 16.)

To begin the game, place the pieces in the opening game array shown below in Diagram 4. (For alternative opening arrays see the *Alternative Arrays* section beginning on page 11.)

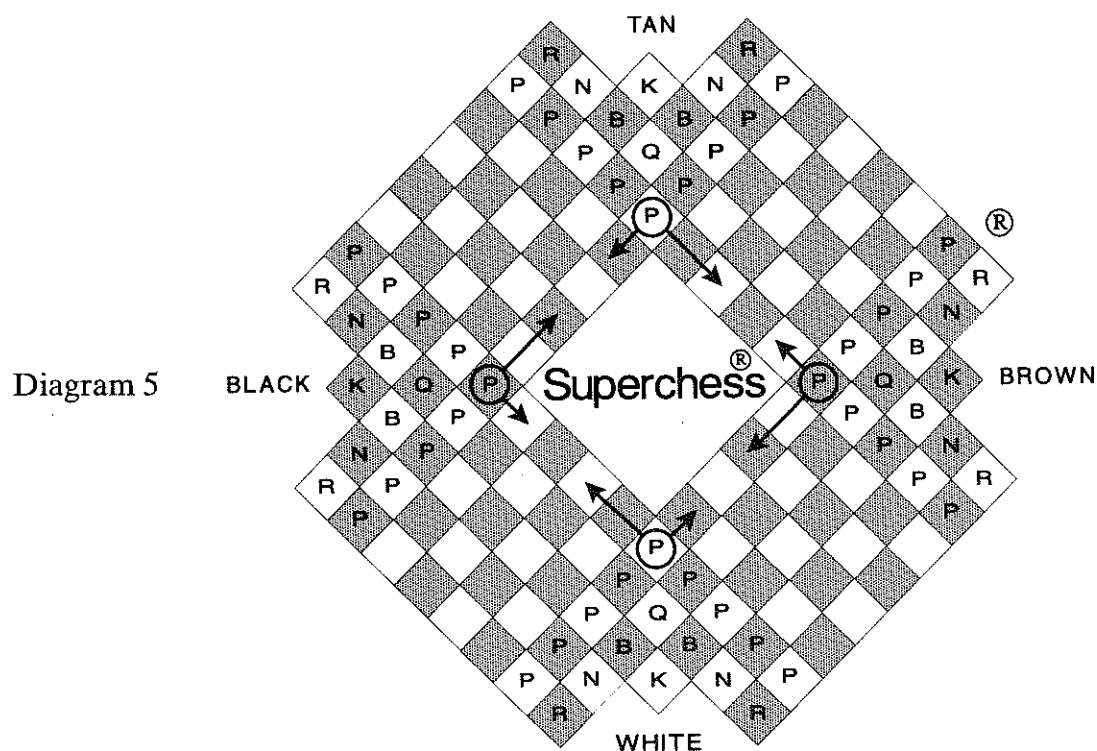


The player controlling the “south quadrant” (white pieces) makes the first move of the game.

Pawn Movement:

A pawn may advance either one or two squares the first time it moves. On subsequent moves, the pawn may advance one square forward. Pawns capture other pieces with a forward diagonal move. Pawns can only move and capture toward the opposing forces immediately opposite them unless they are "point pawns."

"Point pawns" are located at the corners of the "center zone" when play begins. Unlike other pawns, point pawns have the option of moving towards either enemy array from the beginning position. Once a point pawn moves (or makes a capture) in one direction, it is committed to continue in that direction. Pawns cannot reverse course. Pawns circled in the diagram below are the point pawns.



Pawn Promotion:

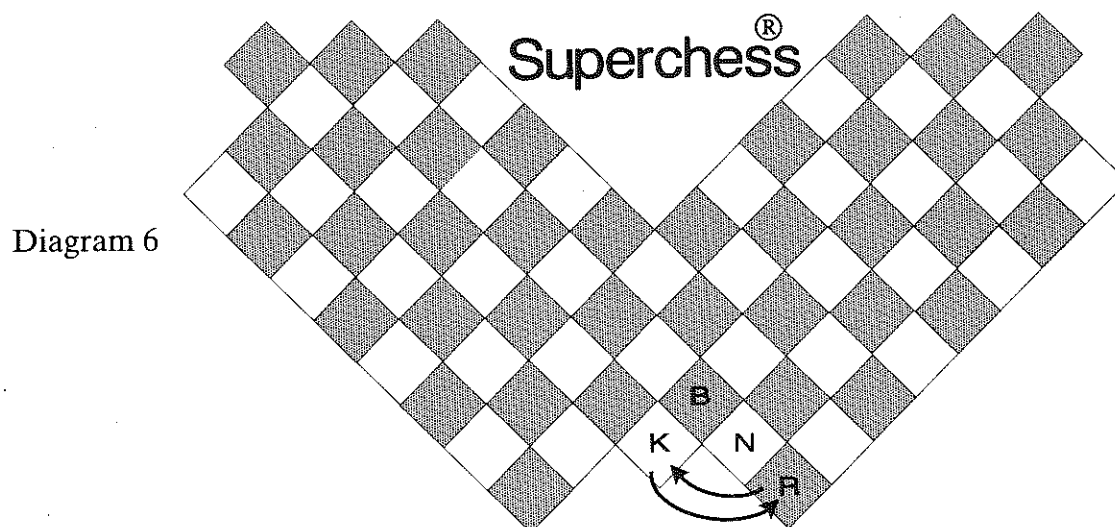
Once a pawn has moved to the other side of the board where it can no longer move forward, it is promoted and may become a Queen. (See *Secondary Rules* for more detailed information.)

Capturing:

Captures are carried out as in standard chess. Captured pieces are removed from the board. You may not capture your own pieces or your partner's pieces.

Castling:

To carry out the castling move, simply exchange the location of your King with a Rook in the same quadrant. You may not castle if you are in check, or if castling would put you in check, or if your King or Rook have already moved.



As shown in the above diagram, the Knight and Bishop need not be moved prior to castling. If adjacent squares (e.g. the Bishop and Knight squares shown above) are threatened by an opposing piece you may still castle.

Check:

Whenever you move one of your pieces so your opponent's King is in the line of attack, the King is 'in check.' It is customary to announce this to your opponent by saying "check." If your King is in check it must be taken out of check on your next move. This can be accomplished by moving the King out of check, blocking the line of attack with another piece, or capturing the piece which is checking the King. You may not move your King into check or move a piece that would put yourself or your partner in check.

If your partner's King is put in check, you are obliged—but not required—to alleviate the check on your move.

Checkmate:

If a King is in check and cannot be freed by a move, block, or capture, the King is “checkmated.” Once checkmated, the King must be removed from the board by the checkmated player on his turn; no other pieces may be moved. **Removing the checkmated King counts as a move. Pieces of the same color as the checkmated King remain on the board and continue to be played by the same player**

For example, if the brown King is checkmated, the player controlling the brown army moves the King off the board on his turn. On subsequent turns, he continues to play the brown pieces which remain on the board. These remaining brown pieces have allegiance to the black King, the fallen brown King's ‘brother.’

Resignation Rule:

Should a player decide to resign a King it shall be counted as a move. To resign, the player announces during his turn that he is resigning and moves the resigned King off the board; no other pieces may be moved. Following the resignation, play proceeds by having the next player take his turn. **Pieces of the same color as the resigned King remain on the board and continue to be played by the same player**

Object of the Game:

To win you must be the first to achieve two checkmates. For example, in order for the dark-colored forces to win, they must checkmate (and/or force the resignation of) both light-colored Kings.

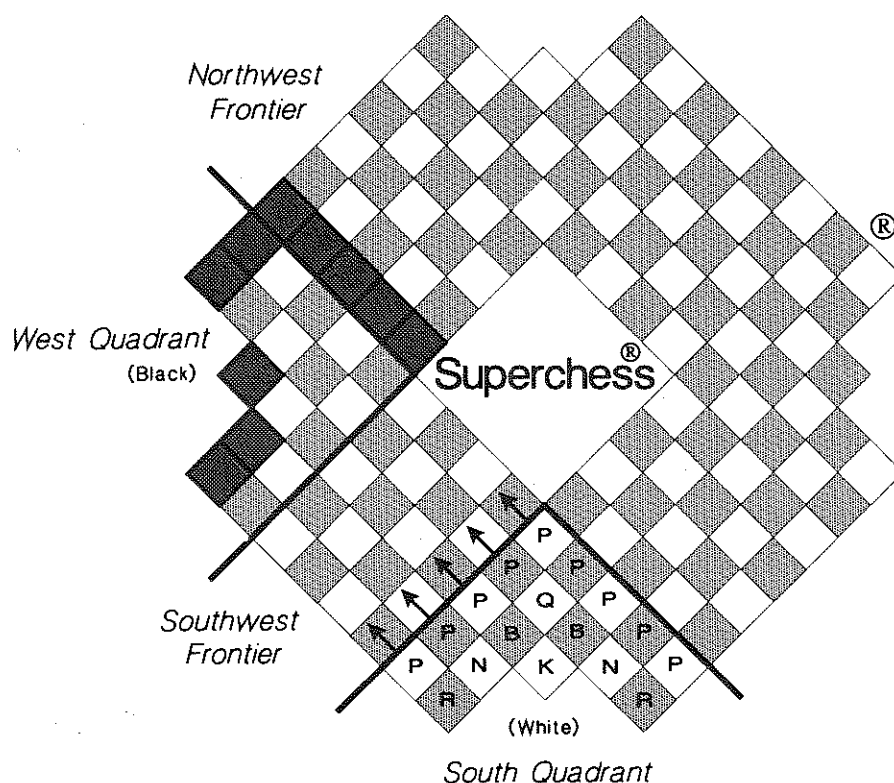
Secondary Rules

More on Pawn Promotion:

Once a pawn has moved to the other side of the board where it can no longer move forward, it is promoted and becomes any piece except a King.

Alternatively, if a pawn makes a capture which results in the pawn entering a new frontier, the pawn is promoted. A “frontier” is any playing area not covered by pieces at the beginning of the game. Please see Diagram 7 on the following page for clarification.

Diagram 7



In the above diagram, the shaded squares show where pawn promotion would occur for a south quadrant pawn which is moving towards the west quadrant. For example, a pawn which began in the south quadrant is promoted once it reaches the end of a file of squares. If a pawn makes a capture and enters the northwest frontier it is also promoted.

Players may promote their pawns into pieces for their partners. For example, a promoted black pawn could become a brown Queen.

Stalemates and Passing Turns:

A player is "stalemated" when it is his turn, his King is not in check and he cannot make a legal move. In 2-person play a draw is declared once a player is stalemated. In 3 and 4-person play, the stalemated player must either pass or resign on his turn. If the stalemated player who passes on his turn(s) can be freed from the stalemate at any time by his partner, he may continue to play.

Similarly, if all of a quadrant's pieces have been removed from the board in 3 or 4-person play, the player must pass on his turn since he has no legal move. (If a player has a legal move he may not pass.)

Draws:

A draw occurs when all players agree to a draw; when a player is stalemated in 2-person

play; when both quadrants of a team are stalemated in 3-person or 4-person play; or when neither side can checkmate both opposing Kings.

Double Check:

“Double check” occurs when a move puts both opposing Kings in check. Double check may result in one, two or no checkmates depending on the subsequent moves.

For example, when double check occurs in 2-person play, it results in at least one checkmate unless the threatening piece can be captured. This is because even if one King can be freed from check, the other cannot and is therefore checkmated and removed from the board on the same turn. This may or may not be the case in 3 or 4-person play since the checkmated team would have two moves (one per quadrant) to alleviate the double check.

Time Constraints:

The standard time allowance for **Superchess** is 90 minutes per team when using tournament chess clocks. In casual play, any time allowance (for example, one minute per move) may be imposed provided all players agree to the time constraint prior to the match.

Communication Between Partners:

In tournament play, communication of any sort is prohibited between partners. This rule is optional for casual play.

Superchess Variations

There are many variations of the rules which may be employed provided all players agree to the variation(s) prior to the beginning of the game.

First Checkmate Wins:

In this **Superchess** variant, the first player/team to achieve a checkmate wins the game.

Free for All:

Three or four players can play independently, each person for herself or himself. The player who achieves the first checkmate wins; or alternatively, the player with the last King left on the board wins.

Piece Removal Variation:

When a King is checkmated, the King and all pieces of the same color are removed from the board. Play then continues with the remaining pieces and players.

New Allegiance Variation:

In this variation, when you checkmate a King, all of the pieces associated with that King have a "new allegiance" to your King(s). For example, if you checkmate the south quadrant (white) King, all of the white pieces on the board become yours to control.

Capture the King Variation:

Rather than merely checkmating Kings, actual captures of Kings are carried out in order to remove them from the board.

Variations on 2-Person Play:

Normal 2-person play proceeds in the alternating order of light, dark, light. Another option is to proceed one quadrant at a time in a white, black, tan, brown rotation (i.e. a south, west, north, east quadrant rotation). This adds an intriguing twist to the game because a player may only move certain pieces on a given turn.

Another variation for two players is to remove two armies from the board and play one army vs. another on the large **Superchess** board. For instance, south quadrant white could play west quadrant black or south quadrant white could play against north quadrant tan.

Another variation is to play Alternative Array No. 7 (see the *Alternative Arrays* section, page 14).

Variations on 4-Person Play:

Rather than following the one-quadrant-at-a-time rotation of a normal 4-person game, players can opt to employ a rotation where they may move their partner's pieces as well as their own on a given turn. For example, when it is white's turn he can move his south quadrant pieces or his partner's tan pieces in the north quadrant. When using this variation the order of play proceeds clockwise (as usual) but each player may move any of his team's pieces when it is his turn.

Another 4-person variation is to use the normal one-quadrant-at-a-time rotation of play until the first checkmate of the game has been achieved. After the first checkmate, all players switch to a rotation where they are free to play their partner's pieces as well as their own on a given turn.

Yet another variation on 4-person play is to use Alternative Array No. 6 (see page 14). Each player controls a smaller contingent of pieces in this array (5 Pawns, 1 Knight, 1 Bishop, 1 Rook, 1 Queen and 1 King).

Alternative Arrays

There are several other opening arrays which can be used as alternatives to the preferred array which was shown on page 2 (Diagram 2). Six of the seven alternative arrays can be used for 2, 3 or 4-person play. Alternative Array No. 7 is a special array designed for 2-person play only.

Alternative Array No. 1

Diagram 8

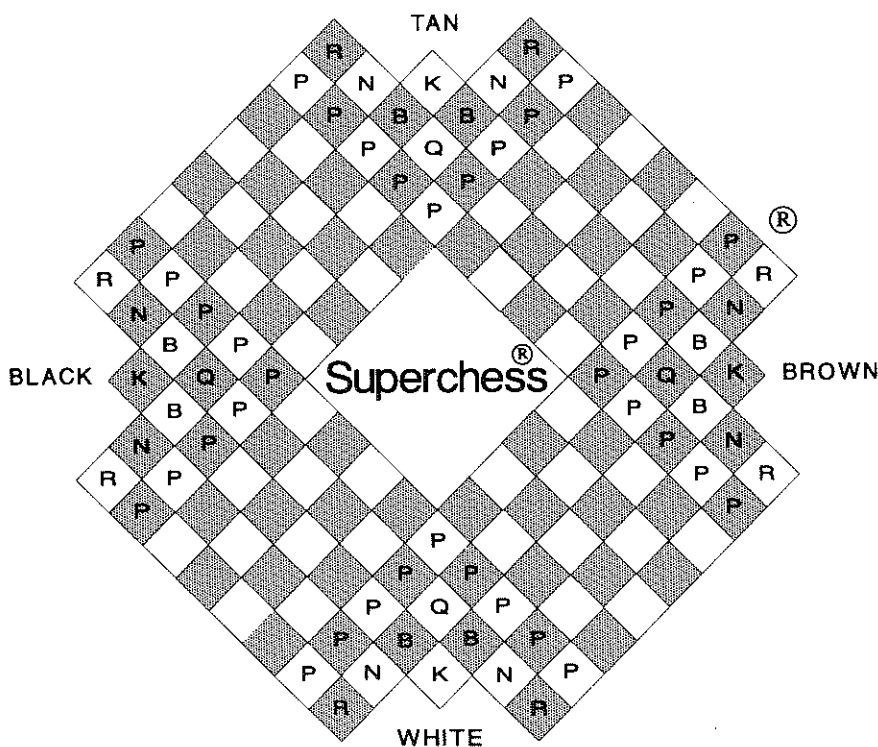


Diagram 9

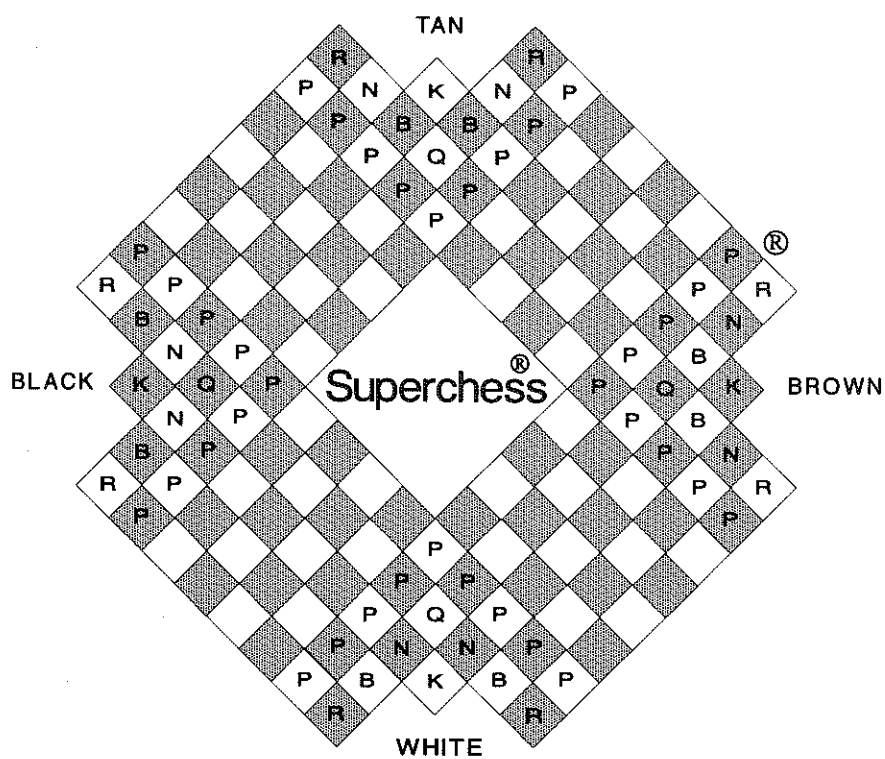


Diagram 10

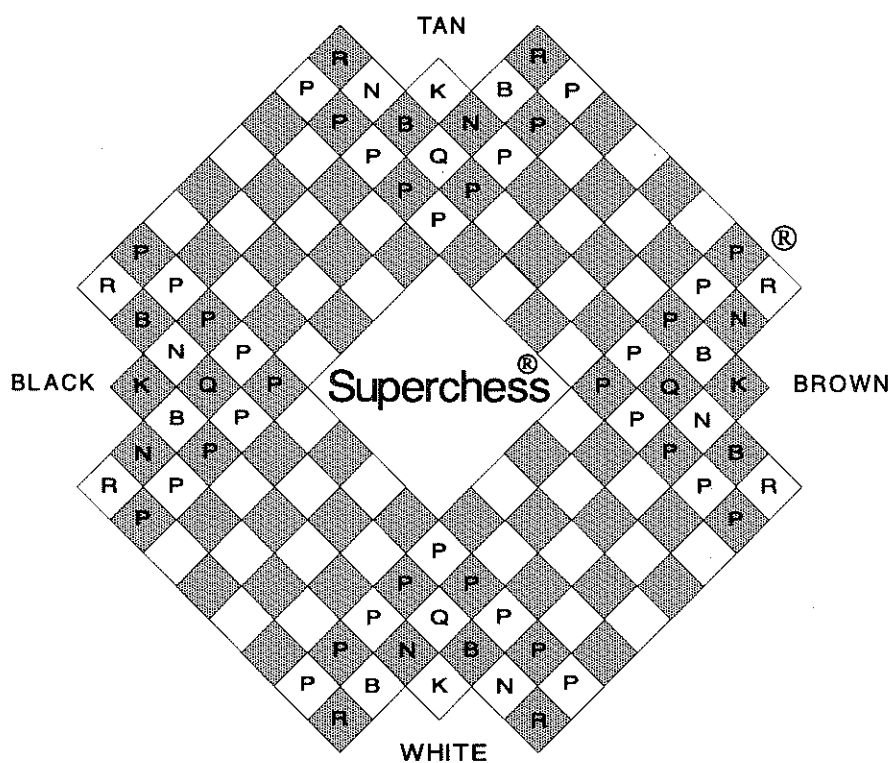


Diagram 11

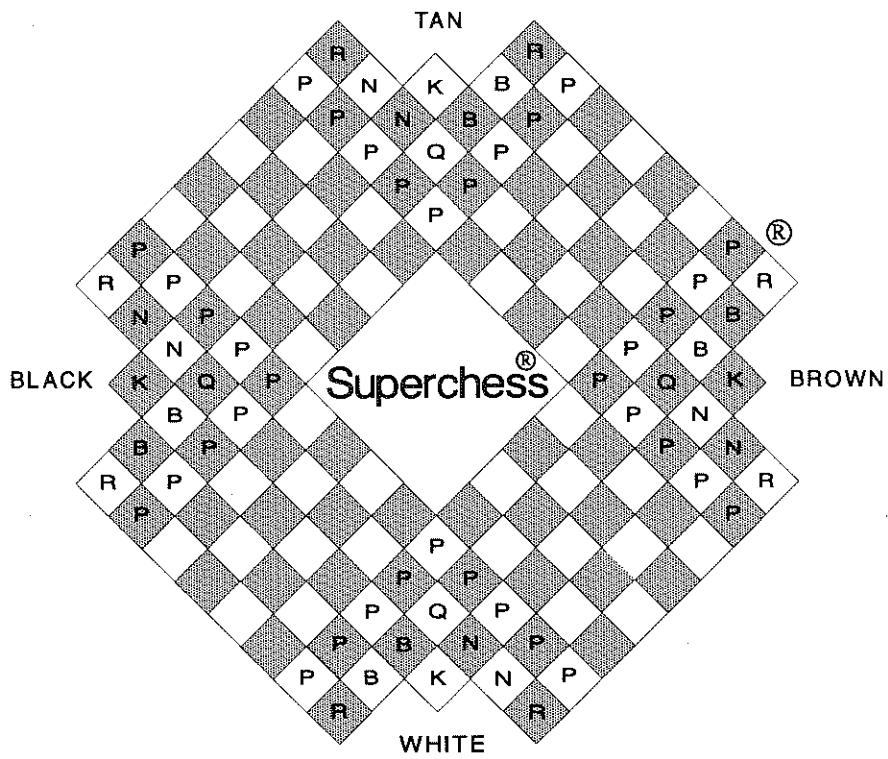
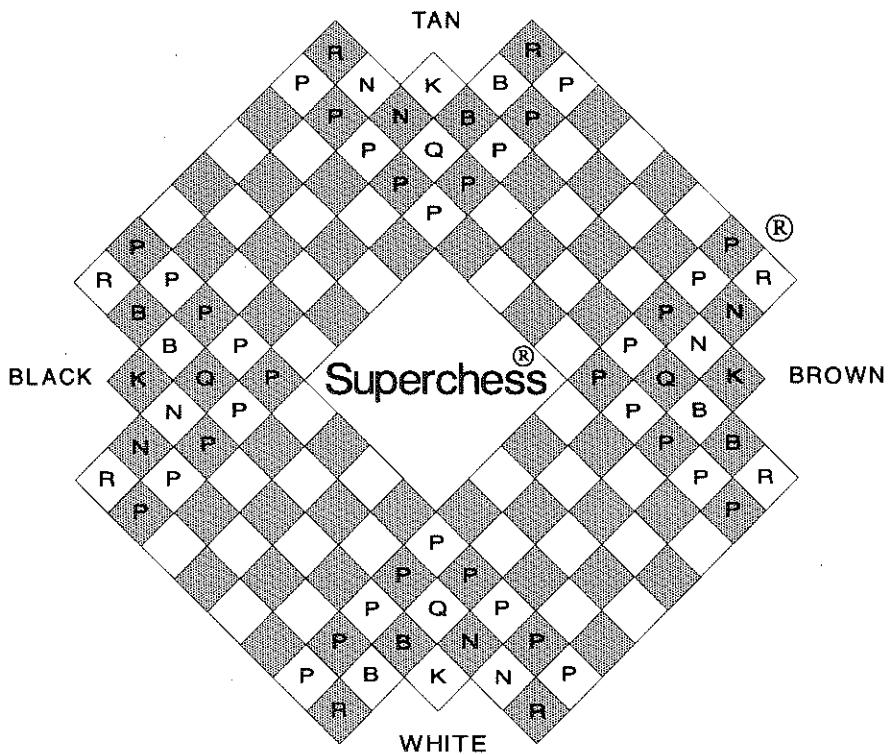
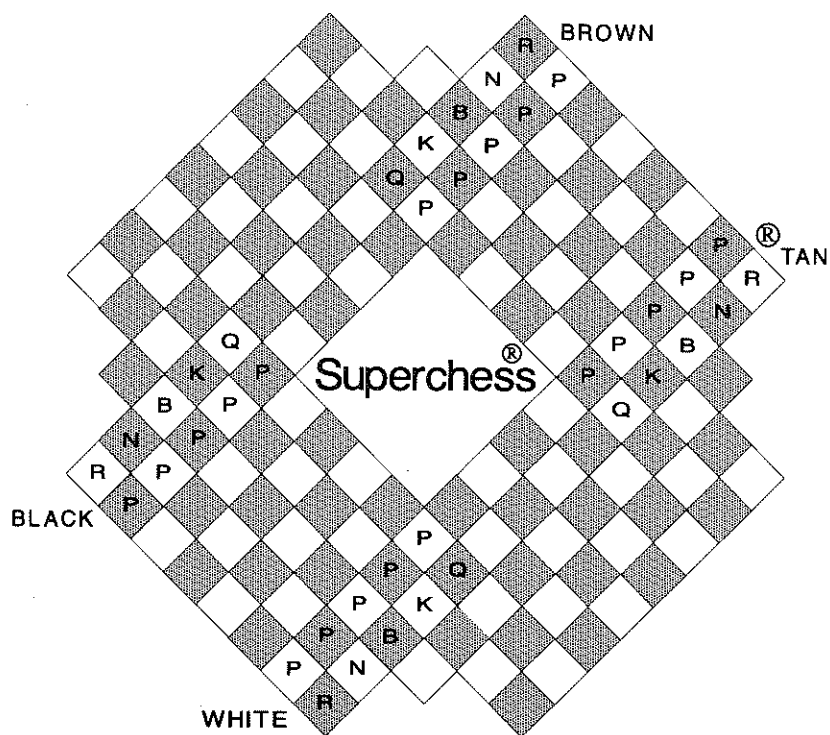


Diagram 12



**Alternative
Array No. 6**

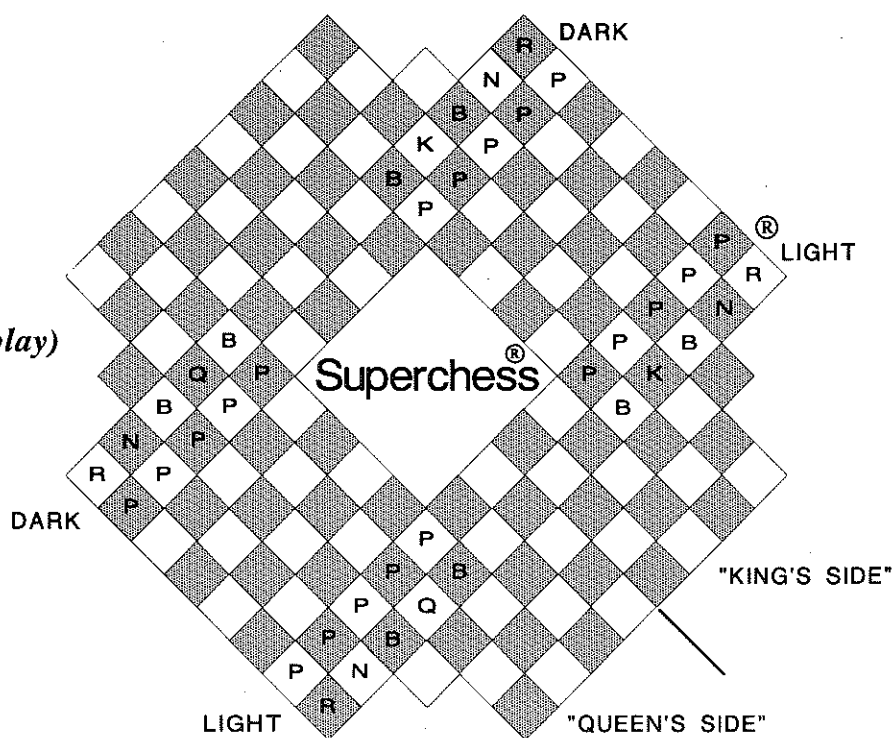
Diagram 13



Orthodox chess castling rules apply while playing Alt. Array Nos. 6 and 7.
Beware of attacks from the rear when playing these arrays!

**Alternative
Array No. 7
(for 2-person play)**

Diagram 14



A Few Notes on Strategy

Since volumes have been written on chess strategy, the same could apply to **Superchess**. However, that would be inappropriate for this rule book. What follows are a few brief notes on strategy for the beginning player.

The Bishop is more powerful relative to the Knight in **Superchess** than in standard chess, particularly in the middle and end-game, because the larger board favors a piece with unlimited range.

“Control of center” is an important strategy in standard chess. Since **Superchess** has a non-playing area in the center of the board, this axiom is applied differently. **Superchess** players seek to control points on the board which threaten their opponent and provide access to other parts of the board. One example is controlling the diagonals which cross from one “frontier” to another.

Castling is used in both chess and **Superchess** to develop the Rook and protect the King. However, a castled King in **Superchess** is in the dubious position of being on a corner square. Therefore, castling is often used in **Superchess** to delay an inevitable checkmate and cause the opponent to waste resources by sacrificing pieces to achieve checkmate.

As in orthodox chess, development of pieces is important. Many beginning **Superchess** players fail to develop both of their quadrants' pieces when playing a 2-person game. Be sure to move your pieces on both sides of the board early in the game.

For a competitive 3-person game, consider having the weakest player control two armies against the two-person team. The single player controlling two armies has an advantage because the partners on the two-person team may not be pursuing the same strategies.

In 4-person play, consider attacking the player who moved before you. This allows your partner to also attack this player before the opposing player can respond with another move.

The 4-person version is a little like playing Bridge. You and your partner must work as a team and pursue the same strategies without overt communication which would tip off your opponents. Be sure to carefully consider the ‘hidden agendas’ your partner may be pursuing; hopefully they will be hidden only to your opponents.

In 4-person play, remember you are playing as a member of a team. Do not be overly protective of your pieces (including your King) if you can better serve the team as a whole. Remember, you have as much allegiance to your partner's King as your own. Play to win as a team even if it means making individual sacrifices.

Appendix 1: Chess Piece Movement Review

Pawns move one square forward. However, the first time a pawn moves it may advance two squares. Pawns capture by moving one square in a forward diagonal fashion.

Knights move and capture one square straight and then one square diagonally in any direction. This two-step process is done in one move. The Knight is the only piece which has the ability to “jump” over other pieces. It is also the only piece which can go over the corners of the “center zone” and the staggered edges of the **Superchess** board.

Bishops move and capture diagonally in any direction over any number of unoccupied spaces.

Rooks move and capture in a straight line (though not diagonally) over any number of unoccupied squares.

Queens combine the abilities of the Rook and Bishop, i.e. Queens may move forward, backward, sideways or diagonally over any number of unoccupied spaces.

Kings move and capture one square in any direction. In **Superchess** partners' Kings may meet on adjoining squares.

The **en passant** (“in passing”) rule is employed in **Superchess** just as it is in orthodox chess: when a pawn moves two squares on its initial move, an opponent's pawn situated on an adjoining square of an adjacent file may capture it. This is done by moving the capturing pawn on the square over which the captured pawn has just passed (capturing the pawn as though it had moved only one square rather than two).

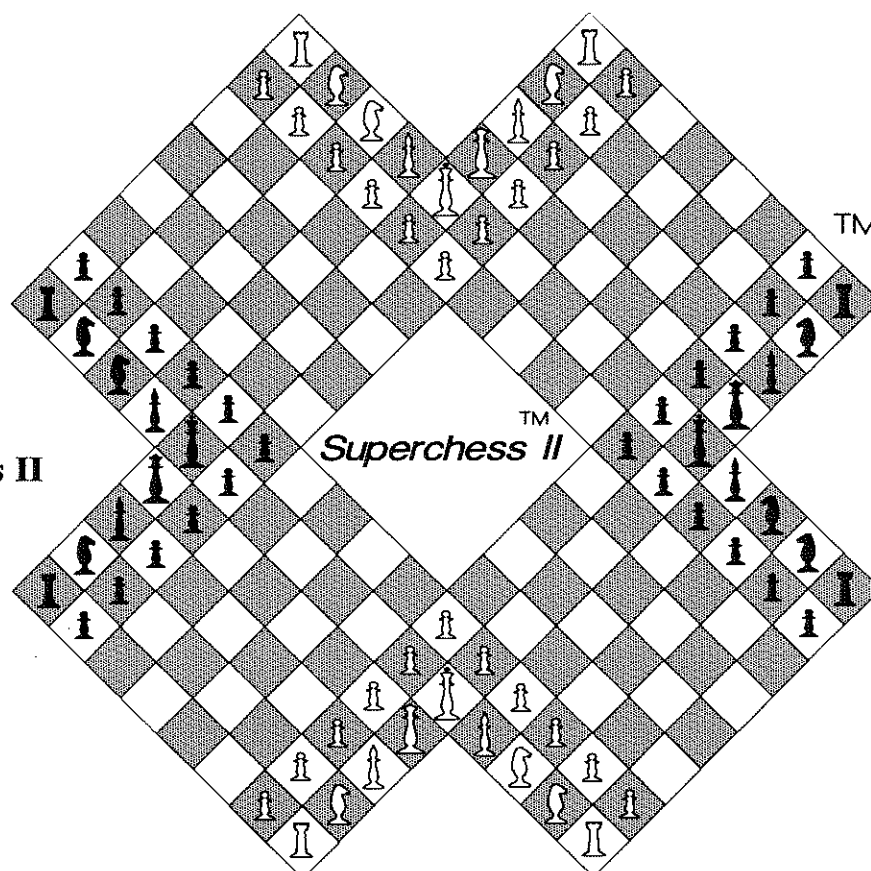
Castling is the only chess move which allows a player to move two of his pieces at once. See page 6 for an explanation of **Superchess** castling.

Appendix 2: Superchess II

If you enjoy **Superchess** you will find **Superchess II** to be a fun and challenging game as well. See the diagram below:

Diagram 15

A Typical **Superchess II**
Opening Array



Superchess II is played on a larger board, which allows Bishops and Queens greater latitude. This makes for an “open field” style of play which some players prefer. Many players also prefer the more traditional castling rules and the “strong side/weak side” feature in each quadrant.

Watch for Superchess II — Coming soon from Green Island Games!

Direct **Superchess II** inquiries to: Green Island Games
P.O. Box 17450
Seattle, Washington 98107

Superchess and Superchess II: The Best in Four-Handed Chess!

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Acknowledgments

I wish to extend my gratitude to everyone who assisted with the development of **Superchess**. The family, friends and associates listed below deserve special thanks.

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