Games of No Chance 4

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Games of No Chance 4

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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The Mathematical Sciences Research Institute wishes to acknowledge support by the National Science Foundation and the *Pacific Journal of Mathematics* for the publication of this series.

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107011038

First published 2015

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-107-01103-8 Hardback

The volume contains the first comprehensive explorations of misère games. It includes a tutorial for the very successful approach to analyzing misère impartial games and the first attempt at using it for misère partisan games. It also includes an updated version of Unsolved Problems in Combinatorial Game Theory and the Combinatorial Games Bibliography. The well-known normal-play games of Hex and Go are featured as well as new games: Toppling Dominoes has already spawned several papers and graduate theses; Maze extends the analysis of option-closed games; the question of Nim-dimension is introduced and new regularities are seen in take-and-break games.

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Preface

This volume has its roots in the Banff International Research Station (BIRS) Workshop on Combinatorial Games (2008) organized by Elwyn Berlekamp, Tristan Cazenave, Aviezri Fraenkel, Martin Mueller and Richard J. Nowakowski. The research presented and collaboration started at BIRS has had great impact on the field. Some important seminal papers are in this volume.

Misère games are well represented. Aaron Siegel continues his work on impartial misère quotients in "The structure and classification of misère quotients" and gives a walk-through of the techniques required to analyze these games in "Misère canonical forms of partizan games". Mike Weimerskirch's article offers another approach. Of even greater impact is Siegel's "Misère canonical forms of partizan games", which has already spawned several papers, while Meghan R. Allen's "Peeking at partizan misère quotients" gives a hint of the new directions being taken.

In "Nimbers in partizan games", Carlos Pereira dos Santos and Jorge Nuno Silva expand on an early question of Berlekamp and introduce the nim-dimension measure.

The early analysis (prior to 1960) of Wythoff's game opened up a window into relationships between some games, enumerations schemes, partitions and sturmian words. This work continues in Aviezri Fraenkel and Udi Peled's "Harnessing the unwieldy MEX function", Fraenkel's "The Rat Game and the Mouse Game" and Urban Larsson's "Restrictions of m-Wythoff Nim and p-complementary Beatty sequences".

Advances on well-known games are represented by articles on Dots-and-Boxes by Sébastien Collette, Erik D. Demaine, Martin L. Demaine and Stefan Langerman; on Hex by Philip Henderson and Ryan Hayward; and on a variant thereof, Bidding Hex, by Sam Payne and Elina Robeva. Teigo Nakamura extends his work on Go in "Evaluating territories of Go positions with capturing races". The analysis of Sprouts is extended by Julien LeMoine and Simon Viennot.

Tristan Cazenave's "Monte-Carlo approximation of temperature" is about the method that has revolutionized the approach to games taken by computer scientists. J.P. Grossman and Richard J. Nowakowski show the existence of a new type of regularity in hexadecimal games.

New games with interesting structures are also introduced: MAZE, by Neil McKay, Nowakowski and Angela Siegel; Toppling Dominoes by Alex Fink, Nowakowski, Aaron Siegel and David Wolfe; and Woodpush by Cazenave and Nowakowski. Variants of Clobber are surveyed by Laurent Beaudou, Eric Duchêne and Sylvain Gravier.

The book concludes with an updated list (with discussion) of unsolved problems in combinatorial game theory, and an update to Fraenkel's bibliography of articles published on combinatorial games.

Thanks to all who made the workshop a success. A special thanks to the BIRS organization and staff. Their help leaves the participants and organizers free to concentrate on the job (fun) of research.

Lastly, a big thanks to Silvio Levy for the final preparation of this volume.

Richard J. Nowakowski (Dalhousie University)

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Peeking at partizan misère quotients

MEGHAN R. ALLEN

1. Introduction

In two-player combinatorial games, the last player to move either wins (normal play) or loses (misère play). Traditionally, normal play games have garnered more attention due to the group structure which arises on such games. Less work has been done with games played under the misère play convention, Just as in normal play, misère games can be placed in equivalence classes, where two games G and H are equivalent if the outcome class of $G+K$ is the same as the outcome class of $H+K$ for all games K. However, Conway showed that, unlike in normal play, these misère equivalence classes are sparsely populated, making the analysis of misère games under such equivalence classes far less useful than their normal play counterparts [ONAG]. Even though these equivalence classes are sparse, Conway developed a method, called genus theory, for analyzing impartial games played under the misère play convention [Allen 2006; WW; ONAG]. For years, this was the only universal tool available for those studying misère games.

In [Plambeck 2009; 2005; Plambeck and Siegel 2008; Siegel 2006; 2015b], many results regarding impartial misère games have been achieved. These results were obtained by taking a game, restricting the universe in which that game was played, and obtaining its misère quotient. However, while, as Siegel [2015a] says "a partizan generalization exists", few results have been obtained regarding the structure of the misère quotients which arise from partizan games.

For a game $G=\{G^L \mid G^R\}$, we define $\overline{G}=\{\overline{G^R} \mid \overline{G^L}\}$. Those familiar with normal play will notice that under the normal play convention rather than $\overline{G}$, we would generally write $-G$. In normal play, this nomenclature is quite sensible as $G+(-G)=0$ [Albert et al. 2007], giving us the Tweedledum–Tweedledee principle; the second player can always win the game $G+(-G)$ by mimicking the move of the first player, but in the other component. However, in misère play, not only does the Tweedledum–Tweedledee strategy often fail, $G+\overline{G}$ is not necessarily equivalent to 0. For example, $*_2+\overline{*_2}=*_2+*_2$ is not equivalent to 0 [Allen 2006; WW]. However, having the property that $G+\overline{G}$ is equivalent to

0 is much desired, as it gives a link to which partizan misère games may behave like their normal counterparts.

To this end, this paper shows that

(1) $*+*$ is indistinguishable from 0 in the universe of all-small games, and

(2) there exists a set of games with the property that $G+\overline{G}$ is always equivalent to 0 relative to all-small games.

Using these results, the misère quotients of two nontrivial partizan examples are calculated. One such example has cardinality nine, a cardinality not found within impartial misère quotients [Plambeck and Siegel 2008]. As well, the partially ordered outcome set of one this example is given. This paper concludes with a list of six open problems of varying depth and scope in the area of partizan misère quotients.

While some elementary definitions are reviewed, this paper assumes the reader has a basic familiarity with the impartial misère quotient construction developed by Plambeck and Siegel.

2. Indistinguishability

This section contains a brief review of the indistinguishability definitions developed by Plambeck and Siegel.

Let G be a game (impartial or partizan). Then we use $o^-(G)$ to denote the misère play outcome of G, keeping the minus sign so as to not forget that we are dealing with misère play games rather than normal play ones.

We say that a set of games Υ is *closed* if it is

(1) closed under addition, i.e., if $G, H \in \Upsilon$, then $G+H \in \Upsilon$, and

(2) option closed, i.e., if $G \in \Upsilon$, then every option of G is also in Υ.

Frequently, the set of games over which we want to work is not closed. As such, we are required to take the *closure of the set* where for Υ a set of games, $c\ell(\Upsilon)$ is the smallest closed set such that $\Upsilon \subseteq c\ell(\Upsilon)$.

Suppose Υ to be a closed set of games with $G, H \in \Upsilon$. Then *G and H are indistinguishable over* Υ if

$$o^-(G+K) = o^-(H+K) \text{ for all } K \in \Upsilon,$$

and we write

$$G \equiv H \pmod{\Upsilon}.$$

Indistinguishability (mod Υ) is both an equivalence relation compatible with addition, and so, $\Upsilon/_{\equiv_\Upsilon}$ is well-defined and forms a monoid [Plambeck and Siegel 2008], which is the *misère quotient of* Υ. We denote this monoid by

$\mathscr{Q}(\Upsilon)$. Moreover, $\mathscr{Q}(\Upsilon)$ is partitioned into four disjoint outcome sets, $\mathscr{N}$, $\mathscr{P}$, $\mathscr{L}$, and $\mathscr{R}$, meaning Next, Previous, Left, and Right respectively, where, for example, $[G]_{\equiv_\Upsilon} \in \mathscr{N}$ if and only if $o^-(G) = \mathscr{N}$.

For a more detailed discussion of misère quotients, their development, and results on the monoid structures obtained, this paper refers the reader to the work of Plambeck and Siegel, most notably [Plambeck 2009; 2008; Plambeck 2005; Siegel 2015b; 2006].

3. All-small games and $* + *$

Suppose that Υ is a closed set of *impartial games* with $* \in \Upsilon$. Then we have the following result:

Proposition 3.1. $* + * \equiv 0 \pmod{\Upsilon}$ [WW].

However, if Υ contains certain partizan games, Proposition 3.1 fails.

Proposition 3.2. *Let* $1 = \{0|\cdot\}$ *and suppose* $1, * \in \Upsilon$, *a closed set of games. Then* $* + * \not\equiv 0 \pmod{\Upsilon}$.

Proof. It is easy to show that while $o^-(1) = \mathscr{R}$, Left can force a win if Right moves first in $1 + * + *$. □

Thus, while we cannot extend Proposition 3.1 to all partizan games, we can extend the result to all-small games, as shown in the following theorem.

Theorem 3.3. *Let* Υ *be a closed set of all-small games with* $* \in \Upsilon$. *Then* $* + * \equiv 0 \pmod{\Upsilon}$.

The proof of this theorem extends that of a similar result for impartial games given in [Siegel 2006].

Proof. Take $G \in \Upsilon$. We want $o^-(G + * + *) = o^-(G)$. Proceed by induction on the options of G.

We know that $o^-(0) = \mathscr{N}$, and $o^-(* + *) = \mathscr{N}$, so the base case holds.

Now suppose true for all options of G and consider G.

Since G is nonzero and all-small, Left must have a move from G. Suppose Left wins moving first in G. Then Left wins moving first in $G + * + *$ by moving to $G^L + * + *$, where G^L is a winning position for Left moving second. Since G^L is an option of G, by induction, $o^-(G^L + * + *) = o^-(G^L)$. Therefore Left wins moving second in $G^L + * + *$, and so Left wins moving first in $G + * + *$.

Suppose Left wins moving second in G. Right has two possible starting moves in $G + * + *$. Ge may move to either $G^R + * + *$ or to $G + *$. Suppose Right moves to $G^R + * + *$. By induction, $o^-(G^R + * + *) = o^-(G^R)$, where Left has a winning move moving first in G^R. Thus Left has a winning move moving first in $G^R + * + *$, and so, this is not a good opening move for Right. If Right moves to $G + *$, then Left responds with G, leaving Right to make the next move in G, and so Left wins.

Therefore, if Left moving first (or second) wins G, then Left moving first (or second) wins $G + * + *$. A symmetric argument works for Right.

Therefore $o^-(G) = o^-(G + * + *)$, and so $* + * \equiv 0 \pmod{\Upsilon}$ when Υ contains only all-small games. □

Corollary 3.4. *Let Υ be the set of all all-small games. Then $* + * \equiv 0 \pmod{\Upsilon}$.*

Proof. The set of all all-small games is closed. Thus the result follows from Theorem 3.3. □

The importance of this result is two-fold. Not only does it extend a result for impartial games, it also allows us to reduce misère monoid calculations when examining closed sets of all-small games, as we need only consider positions which contain at most one $*$.

4. Conjugation and equivalence with 0

As reviewed in the introduction, $G + \overline{G}$ is not necessarily equivalent to 0 for G played under the misère convention. However, this does raise an interesting area of investigation. For what G is it true that $G + \overline{G} \equiv 0 \pmod{c\ell(G, \overline{G})}$? This section gives an infinite set of games for which this is true.

Definition 4.1. Let G be a game. Then G is a *binary game* if at any point, a player has either no moves available or exactly one move available.

Definition 4.2. A position G is called ab$n$ if

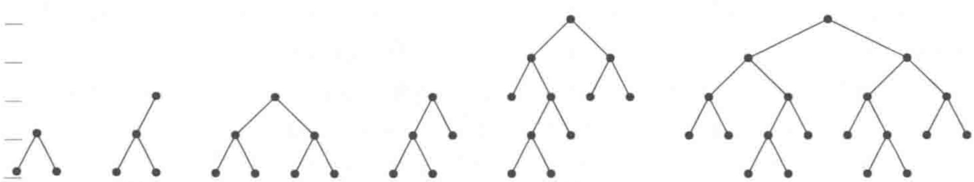
(1) G is all-small,

(2) G is binary,

(3) each alternating path in the game tree of G is of length n or less.

Consider the games given in Figure 1. Then $*$ is ab1, G_1, G_2, and G_3 are ab2, and H_1 and H_2 are ab4.

Note that if G is ab$n$, then G is ab$m$ for all $m > n$. Also note that if G is ab$n$, then all of G's options are also ab$n$.



$*$ G_1 $G - 2$ G_3 H_1 H_2

Figure 1. The games $*$, G_1, G_2, G_3, H_1, and H_2.

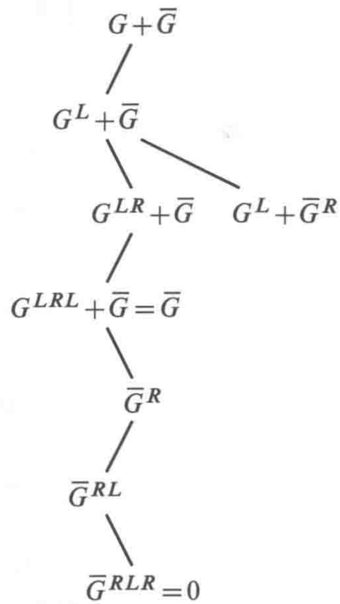


Figure 2. Left wins $G+\overline{G}$ moving first if G is ab3 and $G^{LRL}=0$.

We restrict ourselves first to examining games which are ab3. We will show that if G is ab3, then $G+\overline{G} \equiv 0 \pmod{c\ell(G, \overline{G})}$. We first require the following proposition.

Proposition 4.3. *Let G be* ab3. *Then* $o^-(G+\overline{G}) = \mathscr{N}$.

Proof. Proceed by induction on the birthday of G.

Suppose $G=0$. Then $o^-(0+0) = o^-(0) = \mathscr{N}$, as required.

Suppose true for all K which are ab3 and which have smaller birthday than G. Consider G.

Suppose $G^L=0$. Then $\overline{G}^R=0$. Left moves first in $G+\overline{G}$ to $G^L+\overline{G}=\overline{G}$. Right's only response is to $\overline{G}^R=0$, and so Left wins.

Now suppose $G^{LRL}=0$. Then $\overline{G}^{RLR}=0$. Figure 2 shows how Left moving first can win $G+\overline{G}$, noting that $\overline{G^L}=\overline{G}^R$, and that the birthday of G^L is strictly less than the birthday of G, so $o^-(G^L+\overline{G}^R)=\mathscr{N}$ by induction.

Suppose that $G^{LR}=0$. Then $\overline{G}^{RL}=0$. If $G^R=0$ or $G^{RLR}=0$, then repeat one of the above arguments to get that Left wins moving first in $G+\overline{G}$. Otherwise, suppose that $G^{RL}=0$. Figure 3 shows how Left moving first can win $G+\overline{G}$.

A symmetric argument shows how Right wins moving first in $G+\overline{G}$, and so the result holds. □

We can now prove our main result.

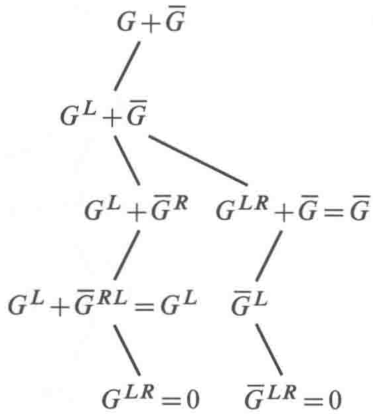


Figure 3. Left wins $G+\overline{G}$ moving first if G is ab3 and $G^{LR}=G^{RL}=0$.

Theorem 4.4. *Suppose G is* ab3 *and let Υ be the set of all all-small games. Then* $G+\overline{G}\equiv 0 \pmod{\Upsilon}$.

Proof. This proof is very similar to that of Theorem 3.3.

Proceed by induction on the birthday of G.

Suppose $G=0$. Then clearly $0+0\equiv 0 \pmod{\Upsilon}$.

Suppose true for all L which are ab3 and which have smaller birthdays than G. Consider $G+\overline{G}$. We want for any all-small H, $o^-(H)=o^-(H+G+\overline{G})$. Proceed by induction on H.

Suppose $H=0$. Then $o^-(0)=\mathscr{N}$, and, by Proposition 4.3, $o^-(G+\overline{G})=\mathscr{N}$. This shows the base case for the induction on H.

Now suppose $o^-(K)=o^-(K+G+\overline{G})$ for all all-small K with lesser birthday than that of H.

Since H is all-small and nonzero, we know that some H^L must exist. Suppose Left moving to H^L is a winning move for Left moving first in H. Claim that Left can win moving first in $H+G+\overline{G}$ with the move $H^L+G+\overline{G}$. Since the birthday of H^L is strictly less than the birthday of H, have $o^-(H^L+G+\overline{G})=o^-(H^L)$. Since Left wins moving first in H, this means $o^-(H)=\mathscr{P}$ or $\mathscr{L}$, so $o^-(H^L+G+\overline{G})=\mathscr{N}$ or $\mathscr{L}$, so Left wins moving first in $H+G+\overline{G}$.

Suppose Left wins moving second in H. Consider Right's three possible first moves in $H+G+\overline{G}$, given in Figure 4. Suppose Right makes the first move to $H^R+G+\overline{G}$. Since Left wins moving second in H, this gives $o^-(H^R)=\mathscr{N}$ or $\mathscr{L}$. Since the birthday of H^R is strictly less than the birthday of H, by induction, $o^-(H^R+G+\overline{G})=\mathscr{N}$ or $\mathscr{L}$, so Left wins $H+G+\overline{G}$ moving second if Right's first move is to $H^R+G+\overline{G}$.

Suppose Right makes the first move to $H+G^R+\overline{G}$. Left responds by moving to $H+G^R+\overline{G}^L$. Since $\overline{G^R}=\overline{G}^L$ and G^R is ab3, by induction,