Proximity

A game designed by and adapted for the piecepack by John Wetmiller
Version 1.0, March 25, 2004
2 players, 5-60 minutes

Introduction

Proximity is a concise game of crowding within a limited space and time. Each player's crowd is really only variations on a single core piece, as represented by the pawn. Each pawn can be positioned within the space to spawn avatars, as represented by the coins, of itself or its opposing piece. The pawns have more choice to which spaces they may be moved, but the coins are bound to follow in the footsteps of their pawn. A piece is considered to age only in moves taken, and its age must always be kept within proximity to either its time of birth, or its next-oldest self. It is the nature of the battlefield that determines the proximities binding coins, pawns, and players.

Equipment

- two (2) suits of tiles, coins, and pawns from one (1) piecepack
- pencil and notepaper for each player
- (optional) chess clock

Setup

Each player adopts a suit, and collects the seven coins, the single pawn, and the null tile for that suit. The values of the coins are not relevant. The remaining ten tiles of both suits are shuffled face down. Reserve space on the playing surface for a 3x3 arrangement of tiles. Place the two null tiles on opposite sides of this space, each adjacent to the center of its side. Deal nine of the remaining tiles into the 3x3 space at random, flipping each face up. These tiles are called the board of play. The final tile is set aside, face up. This tile is called the throne tile. Each player places their pawn on their own null tile.

Tile Sums

The tile values play an important part in defining the limits of gameplay. It is important to keep track of sums of these numbers depending on which suited pieces are occupying which suited tiles. The two important tile sums to understand are:

Open sum: the open sum for any turn is the sum of numbers on all tiles not occupied by pawns or coins, regardless of suit, at the beginning of the turn. This includes the throne tile. The open sum is used as the age proximity limit when determining which pieces may not move because of improximate age.

Suit sum for a player: the suit sum for a player is the sum of numbers on all tiles of that suit occupied by any piece of that player, **subtracted from** the sum of numbers on all tiles of the opposing suit occupied by any piece of that player. The suit sum for each player is compared when any piece is moved to an ace tile of that suit. The player with the greater suit sum in that case must try to place a new coin into the board of play. (Because this sum is structured in this way, it is impossible for the player who moves first to place a new coin on his first turn.)

Rules

Players alternate turns, beginning with the player who shares suits with the throne tile. During a turn, a player must move either his pawn or one of his coins in play if a legal move exists. If no legal move exists, the player must choose either his pawn or one of his coins in play and sacrifice it. A coin may not be sacrificed in certain situations (see below). After moving or sacrificing, any consequences (see below) are determined and both players note the action using pencil and paper (see below).

A pawn may only move if its age (in moves) is still in proximity (as per the open sum) to the oldest coin of the same suit in play, (or to zero if no such coin is currently in play). A pawn may move from one tile to an unoccupied, adjacent (horizontally, vertically, or diagonally) tile of the active player's choice. Exceptions: a pawn may not move onto either null tile or the throne tile.

A coin may only move if its age (in moves) is still in proximity (as per the open sum) to the next-oldest coin of the same suit in play, (or to zero if no such coin is currently in play). A coin may only move to a single specific tile in play and only if that tile is unoccupied. The specific tile is the same tile to which the same-suit pawn had moved to when the pawn was the same age (in moves) as the coin is at the time of the coin's move. (Notes taken by both players should keep straight which tiles are legal tiles for the movement of which coins).

If a legal move is completed, and the pawn or coin involved was moved to an ace tile of either suit, each player then determines their ace sums for that ace tile's suit. Whichever player has the greatest ace sum for that suit must take one of his coins and place it on his null tile face down (coin values are not used). However, if that player has no coins remaining that are not already in play, or his null tile is currently occupied, no coin for either player is introduced.

If a player has no legal moves for any of his pieces on the board, the player must choose a piece (pawn or coin) and sacrifice it by removing it from the board and setting it aside. A coin may only be sacrificed if the age (in moves) of the next older piece (pawn or coin) is still in proximity to either the age of the next younger coin, or zero if there is no such younger coin. If the pawn is sacrificed, the oldest coin of the same suit is promoted to become the new suit pawn, by placing the pawn piece on that tile and removing the coin. A coin removed through either sacrifice or promotion is still subject to reintroduction to play as part of the move-to-ace rule (see above).

The pawn of a promoted coin is not subject to blindly follow the tile movements of the sacrificed pawn. A promoted pawn may move as a normal pawn from that point forward. Coins now follow the promoted pawn's path instead of following the path of the original.

Noting Moves

Once a legal move is completed, each player should note the result.

As pawns move, they determine the trail of tiles that coins must follow. Once a new tile is determined for the path as part of a pawn move, each player should note that tile (value and suit is usually sufficient). It is suggested to note the tiles themselves in a single column descending.

Adjacent columns are best reserved to represent the states of the various pieces. When a new piece is born, beginning with the initial pawn, the next adjacent column should be reserved for that piece's progress. A simple mark (like a dot or a check) in a column next to a tile easily denotes to where on the known trail a piece (pawn or coin) has traveled. There should be no need to erase previous marks as new moves are made.

The most extreme case to note is the result of sacrificing a pawn and promoting a coin. In this case the promoted pawn is no longer bound to follow the established trail. This should be noted by striking through the rows of the tiles representing the part of the trail the sacrificed pawn traveled, but the promoted coin had not yet traveled. These rows should be skipped as pieces progress through this point of the trail.

Winning

The game is over when a player sacrifices a pawn and has no coin on the board of play to promote. The player with his pawn still on the board of play at that time wins the game.

Optionally, a chess clock can be used to limit the total time of play. The clock should be started before the first player makes his first move. A player should only pass the clock to the opponent after he has properly noted his turn. The game is over when a player's time is reduced to zero even if both players have pawns still on the board of play. In this case, the player still with time on his clock wins the game.