INTRODUCTION
The Paradigm Chess30 concept is an enhancement of MRL Chess Paradigm. The MRL Chess Paradigm concept was originally introduced to minimise the excessive number of draws, which occur in normal (classical) chess.

With its set eight starting positions (derived from Fisher Random Chess) together with the applicable dynamic rules (“anti-draws”), the MRL Chess Paradigm concept encouraged chess players to display their strategical creativity, especially in the opening phase of the game. The MRL Chess Paradigm version of the game made for many an exciting duel between chess players, which magnified the need for principled play in chess.

The objective of Paradigm Chess30 is to further improve the dynamics of normal chess, without changing the basic rules of our beloved game. Paradigm Chess30 should be simple to implement in tournament play, without altering the game completely.

BACKGROUND
MRL Chess Paradigm, founded in 2011 by Lourenzo Van Niekerk and pioneered by means of an annual tournament held in Cape Town between 2011 and 2016, was a unique variant of Fischer Random Chess and consisted of dynamic rules (stalemate is a win, no perpetual checks, no repetition, and no agreed draws) which were derived from Chinese Chess (Xiangqi). Although this original concept effectively decreased the amount of draws to a large extent, the rules requiring chess players to play for an all-out win proved too burdensome and at times stirred up controversy. In the result, the rules were impractical to implement in tournament play.

In recent years, chess in general has evolved by leaps and bounds – to the point where Fischer Random Chess was accepted by the international chess community (FIDE), with GM Wesley So of the USA crowned as the first official FIDE Fischer Random Chess World Champion in 2019.
EVOLUTION OF CHESS

The origins of chess stems from a game called Chaturanga, which later evolved into Shatranj with limited chess piece movements. Castling was not permitted. The Bishop (Elephant) could leap only two squares. The Pawns could move only one square at a time (with no en passant). And the Queen was one of the weakest pieces on the chessboard moving only one square diagonally. This version of the game quickly became stale since the limited capabilities and range of the pieces proved inadequate to produce much excitement on the chessboard.

Various other forms of chess were introduced since the 17th century. By introducing two extra chess pieces and a 10x8 checkered board, the Italian Pietro Carrera developed a new chess variant, which centuries later was popularised as Capablanca Chess. One of the two additional pieces had the combined movement capabilities of the Knight and Bishop – called the Archbishop – and the other had the combined movement abilities of the Rook and Knight – called the Chancellor.

More recently, Americans GM Yasser Seirawan and Bruce Harper further enhanced the idea of Capablanca; but maintained the original 8x8 chessboard and further clothed these new chess pieces with the Shogi Chess approach (when a square is vacated at the back rank any of the 2 extra pieces could be placed on the empty square negating the need for a 10x8 chessboard).

The above brief historical sketch shows that a constant search for the truth and the generation of fresh ideas underpin the evolution of chess.

METHODOLOGY & INSPIRATION

In chess, material imbalances make for compelling games that demand great levels of chess understanding. Paradigm Chess30 has added a new dimension to piece play, which brings into sharp focus the need for greater consideration when exchanging pieces. The obvious result is that there is a more complex dynamism on the chessboard and, hence, fewer simplified games occur.

Inspired by the evolution of our royal game and Capablanca Chess, the birth of the Dragon Bishop emerged. This unique idea of enhancing the normal (classical) Bishop with the additional movement capabilities of the Xiangqi horse will radically transform the game of chess – by increasing attacking possibilities without jettisoning the classical positional and strategical chess principles.
The Dragon Bishop moves like a normal Bishop, and like a Xiangqi horse (not jumping over pieces like a Knight but moving one square vertically or horizontally, followed by one square outward diagonally). (See diagram 1 below.)

**Diagram 1: Dragon Bishop movement**

- The Dragon Bishop on g1 can move to either square f3 or h3, because g2 is vacant.
- The Dragon Bishop on d1 cannot move like a normal Knight to square c3, as the d2 pawn blocks it. But it can move to square c2 like a normal Bishop.
- The Dragon Bishop on d8 can move to square b7 (because c8 is vacant), as well as square c7 as a normal Bishop.
- The Dragon Bishop on g8 is blocked by the g7 pawn and cannot move as a normal Knight, but it can develop normally as a Bishop on the f7 to c4 diagonal.

If we consider the reasons for the countless draws in chess, they mostly occur in Rook endings which come about after many exchanges in the middle game. In Paradigm Chess30 the different values of each piece will now engender a greater emphasis on piece activity and spatial understanding, as well as injecting more tactical nuances on the chessboard.

The Dragon Bishop, as a self-standing chess piece, will also eliminate common drawn endgame positions involving opposite colour square Bishops, Rook and Bishop vs Rook, Rook vs Bishop, Bishop and wrong Rook Pawn, etc. In fact, contrary to classical chess, experimental games have shown that a King and a sole Dragon Bishop can checkmate the opposing sole King!
CONCEPT

The normal Bishop will be transformed into a Dragon Bishop, giving it the movement capabilities similarly to that of a Knight and Bishop. Although the Dragon Bishop has a similar movement as its predecessor — the Archbishop — it cannot leap, but has unique tactical capabilities to pin pieces (see diagram 2 below) and to unleash a discovered attack with the Xiangqi horse movement (see diagram 3 below).

Diagram 2: The Pin

- The Dragon Bishop on g7 pins the Knight on f7.
- The Dragon Bishop on d3 pins the Queen on d2.
- A good idea here for Black is ... c3!

Diagram 3: Discovered attack

- If the pawn e4 moves to e5, it allows the Dragon Bishop to attack the Queen on f3.
In accordance with the nature and complexity of Paradigm Chess30, the chess pieces will be shuffled with only King, Rooks and Pawns remaining on original starting squares as per normal chess to ensure that normal castling rules apply.

Thirty starting positions will be generated, and in some instances the Dragon Bishops will start on the same colour squares (two dark-squared/two light-squared). Diagonals can, of course, be changed in one single horse movement.

The Paradigm Chess30 concept will furthermore render obsolete chess players’ reliance on computer assistance when preparing for a game of chess. As a result, each new game will be refreshingly original.

Paradigm Chess30 Bishops representing flames and skin of Dragons. The Dragon Bishops’ conceptual design was done by Chantal van Niekerk.
CONCLUSION

Paradigm Chess30 was created by combining MRL Chess Paradigm (Fischer Random Chess variant & Xiangqi), the various forms of chess as it evolved and Capablanca Chess principles.

By transforming the classical Bishop into a Dragon Bishop, strict anti-draw rules will not be required, as frequent exchanges will be minimised. Thus, automatically reducing the occurrence of draws.

The 30 unique starting positions maintain the conventional method of castling, which keeps the play as standard as possible, yet making it extremely difficult to prepare against an opponent.

Since no extra squares and/or pieces are required, Paradigm Chess30 (with a classical Staunton chess set and chessboard) will be readily accessible to all chess players across the world.

The implementation of the Paradigm Chess30 concept in tournament play will revolutionise chess as we currently know it, reinstating the battle renaissance directed at dethroning the opponent’s King.

- **Craig Willenberg** is a top South African Chess Player with the title of National Chess Instructor. He has coached many SA juniors at various World Youth Chess Championships.

- **Lourenzo van Niekerk** is the founder of MRL Chess Club based in Cape Town. He is the father and coach of the famed MRL sisters: former Women’s African Zonal Champion Megan van Niekerk; and Chess Olympiad players Robyn van Niekerk and WFM Lauren Willenberg.

- This article was reviewed and edited by **Adv. Maxwell Solomon**. Maxwell is a former South African National Chess Champion, a former Chess Olympiad player, and the current South African Senior Chess Champion.

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