

Ludus Latrunculorum or Latrunculi

Rules for the Classic Roman Game



History

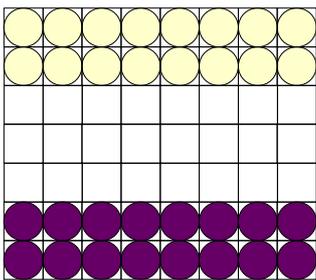
The earliest reference to Latrunculi around the beginning of the 1st century BC. The rules are not entirely clear and various game historians have come up with widely differing interpretations - notably Robbie Bell and Ulrich Schaedler. Bell has a game featuring 2 extra 'King' type pieces that have additional powers but evidence collected since implies this was probably incorrect.

Equipment and Objective

Roman gaming boards that are thought to be Latrunculi have been found most commonly with grids of 7x7, 7x8, 8x8, and 9x10 squares. Larger boards of a more rectangular nature such as 8x12 and 10x12 (the famous Colchester board) have also been found and ascribed to Latrunculi but academics still argue whether such boards were for a different game. The number of pieces for a 7 x 8 board is likely to have been 16.

Latrunculi is a war game and it's a straight fight – the winner is the player who captures the most enemy pieces.

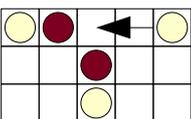
Masters' Rules



Ancient games usually did not have complicated rules so these are designed to be a straightforward interpretation based on evidence available in 2011.

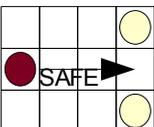
The pieces are placed on the first two rows in front of each player. Toss a coin to decide who will start - white moves first.

All pieces move like the rook in Chess – in a straight line for as many empty squares as the player chooses. Pieces cannot hop over other pieces and cannot move diagonally.



Capturing only happens when a piece is moved so that a single opposing piece ends up trapped between two of the players pieces. A captured piece is immediately removed from the board. It is possible to capture more than one piece at once as shown in this example.

Whenever a piece makes a capture, it earns another move and so in theory one piece can rampage across the board capturing several enemy pieces in one turn.



A piece can safely move to a square between two of the opponent's pieces without being captured.

Captured pieces remain off the board for remainder of the game. The game is finished when a player loses all pieces or when it's clear (and players agree) that the side presently losing will not be able to force any more captures.

Strategy

It should be apparent that 2 pieces next to each other are safer than a single piece alone. A square of 4 men is invulnerable.

A line of men, whether straight or otherwise from one edge of the board to another can provide an impenetrable barrier. One strategy for a player who is ahead is to form such a wall ensuring that any remaining pieces are behind it. If the player then refuses to break this blockade, the game ends with the blockading player victorious.