

# MATRIX GIPF

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Kris Burm  




# M A T R X



## Dear player,

*Allow me to begin these rules with a few notes.*

- 1. 'Easy to learn, hard to master' has been said numerous times about the games of Project GIPF. I'm sorry to report that this doesn't apply to MATRX GIPF. 'Hard to master' will be all that's left of that phrase after you've gone through these rules and made a first few moves...*
- 2. Before GIPF became a project, it was just a game like all the others I had been working on. With GIPF, however, I had something on my worktable I hadn't come across yet: a game that could evolve in so many different ways—with additional pieces offering so many possibilities—that the development process resulted in versions that were more and more complex. I ended up with something that was played with 72 pieces on a board that expanded during the game. Because playing this version had become too exorbitant a challenge, I decided to go back to an earlier version and make GIPF the central game of what had to become a multigame project. This allowed for the release of expansion kits containing some of those skipped possibilities (the "potentials"), along with the games that were to follow.*



But already back then I had the idea of fusing the expansion kits together (GIPF Sets 1, 2 and 3) once the project was to be fully realized. Not only as one set of additional pieces for GIPF, but also as a game in its own right. I ended up working at intervals for close to 15 years on that game but, unfortunately, never with a satisfying result. Still that time was well spent, because my failed attempts became the basis for two other games that joined the Project: TZAAR and LYNGK.

That said, my wish to offer a use for the potentials in a standalone game remained. Since I hadn't been able to come up with something that was completely different from the other games in the series, I looked at the other end of the timeline—to GIPF before it became a project. Two of the early versions stood above the others. That was a version with basic pieces and a number of extra pieces, i.e., a precursor of GIPF With Potentials (Ultimate GIPF), and another version with nothing but potentials. Back then I had selected the first one (albeit without the extra pieces) as the central game for Project GIPF; the other ended up in a drawer. That is, until three or four years ago, when I began to rework this latter version into a game that is played with all the pieces found in the three GIPF Sets (minus the ZERTZ rings)—and this is the game you are about to play. It uses the mechanisms that drive GIPF With Potentials, and yet, without the basic pieces, it develops completely differently.

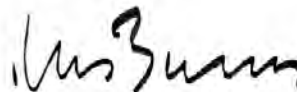
I had my doubts for a long time. Was it okay to add yet another game to Project GIPF? Is it squeezing another drop out a concept that is already complete? Is it too GIPF-like to be presented as a game

in its own right. Or too complex for what can be expected of a Project GIPF game? I still have no answers. But this game is something I was striving for from the very beginning. And now that I have it, I love it. I've always proclaimed that GIPF is my favorite of the series. I'm not sure about that anymore. Maybe MATRX GIPF has surpassed it...

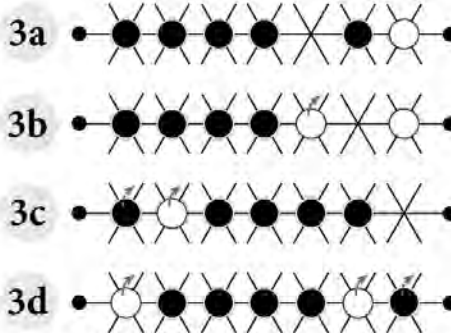
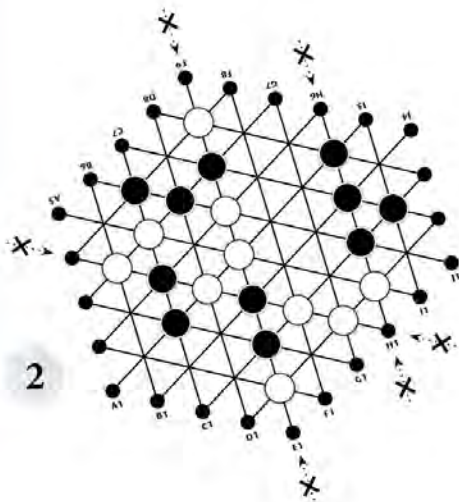
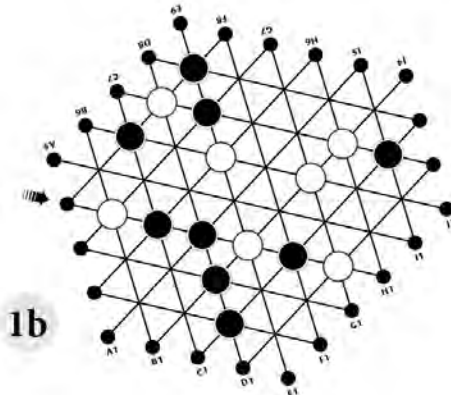
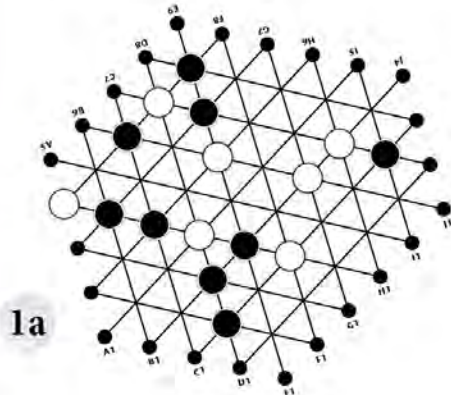
Time will tell. Anyway, I trust there are players (hopefully you too) who will be very happy with this game—and for now, that in itself is enough of an answer to the aforementioned questions.

3. I kept the rules of MATRX GIPF as close as possible to the rules of GIPF With Potentials. However, because the main pieces in GIPF are the single basic pieces—whereas MATRX GIPF is essentially played with potentials—a few adjustments were inevitable. This will undoubtedly cause some confusion when switching from GIPF With Potentials to MATRX GIPF, and especially when playing the one after the other. Nonetheless, I dare hope that players who are prepared to try playing with the potentials will be ready to accept the challenge that playing either version will prove to be, anyway. For the occasion, I will paraphrase a well-known saying: “When the going gets tough, the tough get tougher.”

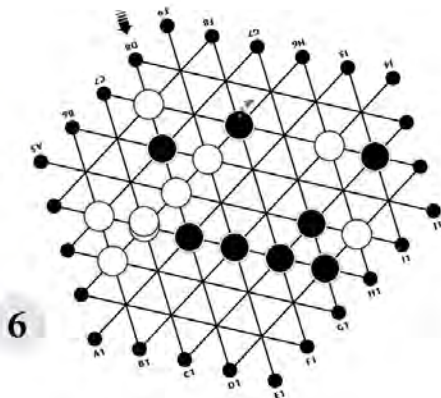
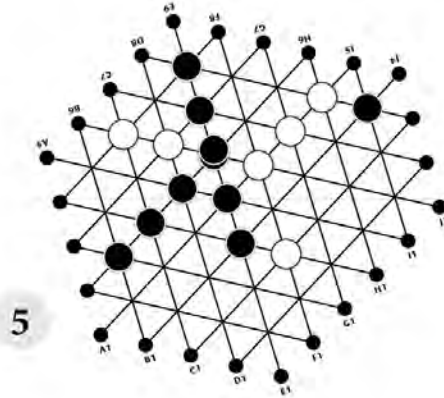
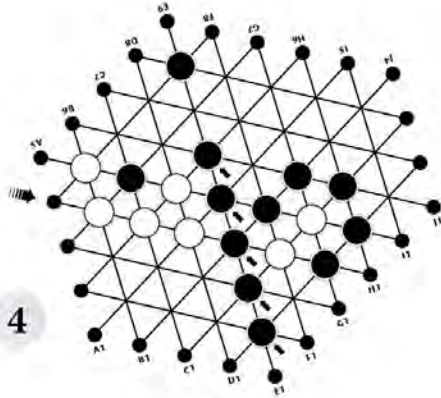
I sincerely hope you have fun with it!



# M A T R X



# M A T R X





**CONTENTS**

- 1 game board
- A white and a black set of 33 pieces, each consisting of
  - 3 basic GIPF pieces,
  - 6 TAMSK-potentials,
  - 6 ZÉRTZ-potentials,
  - 6 DVONN-potentials,
  - 6 YINSH-potentials and
  - 6 PÜNCT-potentials
- 2 player aid cards for MATRX
- 1 MATRX rulebook
- (+ 1 GIPF With Potentials rulebook)

The term “piece” without further specification refers to all kinds of pieces in the game: GIPF pieces, stacks of 2 potentials, as well as single (i.e., used) potentials.

In these rules, you’ll encounter some **highlighted** phrases. These indicate specific differences with regard to the rules of GIPF With Potentials.

**A THE GAME BOARD**

The board shows an asymmetric pattern of lines. Each line has a **black dot** at its 2 ends. The intersections of the lines are called **spots**.

- 1/ There are **25 dots** around the pattern of lines on the board. Dots are not part of the play area; they serve to position a piece before pushing it into the game.
- 2/ The play area consists of **40 spots**. Only pieces covering a spot are in play.
- 3/ The lines indicate the directions in which pieces can be moved.
- 4/ The **2 separated dots**—one at each side of the board—are for the GIPF pieces that are not (yet) in play.

**B STARTING THE GAME**

- 1/ Draw lots for your color. Take all the pieces in your color. White goes first.
- 2/ Place the board between you and your opponent with the dot marked **E1** on the side of the player with the white pieces.
- 3/ Make 15 stacks of 2 potentials each. The potentials may not be mixed: each stack must contain

2 potentials of the same type. These stacks, i.e., stacks that are not in play, are hereafter called the **reserve**. Leave your stacks clearly visible in front of you on the table. You should always be able to see each other’s pieces in reserve.

- 4/ Put your 3 GIPF pieces (as a stack) onto the separate dot on your side of the board. They are also considered as in your reserve.

**C GOAL**

You must try to either capture your opponent’s 3 GIPF pieces, or make your opponent run out of moves.

**D A TURN**

You and your opponent alternate taking turns. You must make your first three moves with your 3 GIPF pieces. (See **section F. below**). After you have brought your 3 GIPF pieces in play, on each turn you must either bring a stack of 2 potentials into play or make a move with a potential that is already on the board.

**Particulars:**

- 1/ To bring a stack into play, you are free to choose any stack in your reserve. There is no specific order that must be followed.
- 2/ A stack must always first be placed on a dot (step 1). The stack is not in play as long as it is on the dot, meaning that the move is not yet complete.
- 3/ To complete the move, the stack must be pushed from the dot onto an adjacent spot (step 2), free or occupied. In the latter case, the occupied spot must first be cleared: the piece that occupies it (**regardless of its color**) must be moved to the next spot; if that spot is also occupied, that piece also moves over one spot, and so on, until you reach a free spot. You then push the new stack onto the spot you cleared. While making this move, all pieces must be moved along the same line. (See **illustrations 1a and 1b, showing step 1 and step 2**.)  
**Note: To make a move onto an occupied spot, start by moving the farthest piece in the row—and move over pieces one by one. Otherwise, you risk creating a mess on the board.**
- 4/ It is not allowed to push a piece out of the play area.

i.e., onto the dot at the opposite end of a line. A line of which all spots are occupied is blocked in both directions. (See illustration 2.)

- 5/ Instead of making a move with a stack, a player may choose to play with a potential that is already in play. The rules for playing with the potentials are explained below in sections G. and H.

**E RETRIEVING AND CAPTURING PIECES**

- 1/ When you succeed in getting 4 pieces of your color lined up next to each other, you have the possibility of taking them from the board: this is how you retrieve pieces and refill your reserve. Apply this simple rule: each single piece **must** be removed, while each stack of 2 potentials (of the same color) **may** be removed (i.e., such a stack **may** also be left on its spot). However, if the row consists of 4 stacks, you must remove at least one of them; the row-of-4 must be broken.
- 2/ In addition to this, a row of 4 pieces of the same color is the condition required to capture opposing pieces. If one or more pieces (regardless of color) extend a row-of-4 without interruption, these pieces are considered to be part of the row and may also be removed. Apply the same simple rule for the complete row: single pieces must be removed, stacks may be removed. **Removed pieces of your own color go back to your reserve, while opposing pieces are captured.** (See illustrations 3a – 3d, showing the principle of capturing. Black captures, respectively, 0, 1, 1 and 2 white pieces and can also retrieve 1 black piece in c and d. Remember that all single pieces in the complete row must be removed, while stacks may be left on the board.)  
 Note: An opponent's stack of 2 potentials may also be left on the board.
- 3/ A stack of 2 potentials of the same color must always be removed as a whole; it is not allowed to only remove the top piece.
- 4/ The GIPF pieces and used potentials are single pieces. This also goes for a (DVONN- or PÜNCT-) potential that has jumped onto another piece. Even though that potential is on top of at least one other piece, it must be dealt with as a single piece. When

it is part of a row that must be removed, you only remove the potential; the piece underneath it (of the other color) remains on the board and, in that manner, comes into play again.

- 5/ It doesn't matter which player causes a row-of-4: it is always the color of the pieces that determines the owner of the row. If you make a row in your own color, you must (at least partially) remove it right after completing your move. If you complete a row with opposing pieces, the opponent must deal with it before making his move. (See illustration 4: **White forces Black to remove the row of 5 black pieces [at least partially] from the board.**)
- 6/ It will occur that more than one row-of-4 of the same color are lined up at the same time. If these rows don't intersect each other, then they are removed (at least partially) following the standard procedure. If they **do** intersect, the player playing that color may choose which row he'll deal with first. If he removes the piece on the intersecting spot, the second row is broken up and the remaining pieces of that row stay on the board. If it is a stack and it is left on the intersecting spot, then the second row is still intact, which means that it must also be dealt with. (See illustration 5: **Black may choose between first dealing with the row of 4 pieces or the row of 5 pieces. If the piece on the intersecting spot is a stack and Black removes it from the board, then the other row is not complete anymore; if Black leaves the stack on the board, he must also deal with that other row.**)
- 7/ In a situation where both players have one or more rows-of-4 on the board, the player who created the situation first deals with his own row(s). Then the opponent handles the row(s) of his color (if still intact) before making his move. (See illustration 6: **White has made the move indicated with the arrow. He must deal with his row first and captures 1 black piece. If the piece on the intersecting spot is a stack, White may leave it on the board... but he'll remove it, of course, otherwise Black will capture 2 white pieces. After the stack is removed, Black must deal with his row, which now consists of only 4 black pieces.**)



**F THE GIPF PIECES**

- 1/ GIPF pieces are identical to the basic pieces used in GIPF, but in MATRX GIPF they are only used as single pieces.
- 2/ You and your opponent each start with 3 GIPF pieces. These pieces represent a player's GIPF—his "potential". As such, when you have no more GIPF, neither on the board nor in your reserve, you have lost all of your potential as a player, which means that you've lost the game.
- 3/ You bring a GIPF piece into play with a regular move: put it on a dot and push it onto a spot.
- 4/ **You may not leave a GIPF piece on the board when it is part of a row that must be removed.** It is a single piece, so you must take it from the board. A GIPF piece of your own color goes to your reserve, while an opponent's GIPF piece is captured.
- 5/ A GIPF piece may not be kept in reserve. If you retrieve one or more of your GIPF pieces, you must bring it/them back into play on your next move(s). This implies that instead of the obligation to each turn add a stack to the game or make a move with a potential on the board, you must play with a GIPF-piece.
- 6/ **When removing one or more of your GIPF pieces, do not mix them with the other pieces in your reserve. Put them in the hexagonal space on your side of the board, as a clear indication that you must play them first.**

**G GENERAL USE OF THE POTENTIALS**

The following rules apply to all 5 types of potentials.

- 1/ A potential may not be brought into the game as a single piece, but only as a stack of 2 potentials of the same type.
- 2/ Making a move with a potential can only be done with the top piece of a stack of 2 potentials in play. Take the potential from the stack and make the move (according to its particular ability).
- 3/ When making a move with a potential, the stack is split into 2 separate single pieces. Both potentials are then considered as *used*—the top piece because of the actual move, and the bottom piece because it was the carrier of the top piece. A single potential has no special property: you may not make a move with it,

nor may it be left on the board or on top of another piece when it is part of a row that must be removed.

- 4/ A move with a potential may not end on a black dot. It must remain in the play area.
- 5/ The consequences of a move with a potential are exactly the same as when playing with a stack coming from the reserve. A move with a potential can result in pieces being captured.
- 6/ A single potential in your reserve is of no immediate use. If at some point you retrieve a second potential of the same type, the two can be assembled again as a new stack you can bring into play.
- 7/ It can happen that you have no more stacks in your reserve, but still one or more stacks on the board with potentials in a usable position. This enables you to go on with the game.

**Note: The main difference in the use of potentials between MATRX GIPF and GIPF With Potentials is that removed potentials are returned to the reserve in MATRX GIPF, whereas that is not allowed in GIPF.**

**H SPECIFIC USE OF POTENTIALS**

TAMSK-, ZERTZ- and YINSH-potentials are used the same way in MATRX GIPF and in GIPF With Potentials. So is the DVONN-potential, for the most part. Only the use of the PUNCT-potential is significantly adjusted, because MATRX GIPF is played with only basic GIPF pieces. (In GIPF, its use is linked to the double GIPF-pieces.)

**H.1. The TAMSK-potential**

The TAMSK potential is different from the other potentials. Its use is connected to a condition that must first be met; it is not a separate move in itself.

- 1/ When you succeed in pushing a TAMSK-stack (a stack of 2 TAMSK-potentials) onto the central spot of the board, i.e. spot E5, you may use the top piece to play again. Thus, the particular ability of the TAMSK-potential is an extra move. You must make use of it in the same turn it is pushed onto the middle spot. If not, the potential goes out of the game.



- 2/ To make the extra move, you take the top piece from the stack and bring it back into play as a single piece: put it on a dot and push it onto a spot.
- 3/ If your opponent pushes one of your TAMSK-stacks onto the central spot, then you also get an extra move. In that case, however, you must make the extra move before your regular move.  
**Note: Your opponent's turn must be completed before it is your turn; if one or more rows must be removed, he must do so before you may make the extra move.**
- 4/ A regular move and an extra move are considered one single turn, whether the extra move is made after or before the regular move. The position of the pieces between the two moves is regarded as an "interim" situation. This means that no pieces may be removed or captured in between the regular move and the extra move. The same goes for situations where you succeed in pushing a second or third TAMSK-stack onto the central spot during one and the same turn.

**H.2. The ZERTZ-potential**



- 1/ The ZERTZ-potential has the ability to jump over other pieces.
- 2/ Take the top piece from a ZERTZ-stack and use it to jump over one or more pieces. It can jump over both your own and your opponent's pieces.
- 3/ The potential must jump over at least one piece. If it jumps over more than one piece, these must all be on the same line.
- 4/ A jump with a ZERTZ-potential always ends on the first vacant spot in the direction of the jump; it cannot jump over empty spots.

**H.3. The DVONN-potential**



- 1/ The DVONN-potential has the ability to jump **only onto a DVONN-potential** of the opposite color. This can be a DVONN-stack, a single DVONN-potential on the board or a DVONN-potential that jumped atop a stack of DVONN-potentials. The potential can jump onto any such piece on an adjacent spot **or onto a piece that can be reached in a straight line over empty spots, i.e., it cannot jump over pieces.**

**Note: Unlike in GIPF With Potentials, a DVONN-potential cannot jump on a (basic) GIPF piece.**

- 2/ Since you can jump onto each other's DVONN-potentials, it will happen that several of these potentials are stacked on top of each other (always in alternating colors). Unlike a stack of 2 potentials of the same type and color, a stack of several DVONN-potentials is not to be considered as a whole. When such a stack is part of a row, you only remove the top piece (for a used potential is a single piece).
- 3/ A piece on which you jump with a DVONN-potential is neutralized, and it remains neutralized for as long as your piece stays on top of it. Your color occupies that spot. When you or your opponent must remove that top piece, then the piece underneath it is set free again and comes back in play.
- 4/ **Special case:** It can occur that you create a new row-of-4 by removing a DVONN-potential. If you capture an opponent's DVONN-potential on top of a DVONN-potential of your color, the result may be a new row of your own color (i.e., by setting free your piece underneath—which can be the fourth piece in a row). Similarly, if you remove a DVONN-potential of your color on top of an opposing DVONN-potential, the result may be a row-of-4 for your opponent. The main principle to deal with this kind of situations is to keep in mind that your turn isn't over if you still have a row that must be removed. Rows must be removed one at a time, and your turn ends when there are no more rows of your color on the board. Then it is your opponent's turn. If there's a row of his color on the board, he must remove it before making a move.

**H.4. The YINSH-potential**



- 1/ The YINSH-potential has the ability to move along the lines on the board. It may be moved onto an adjacent vacant spot or to any vacant spot that it can reach in a straight line without jumping over pieces.

**H.5. The PÜNCT-potential**



**The PÜNCT-potential is used just like the DVONN-potential, except that it can only jump onto an opponent's PÜNCT-potential. So their function is the same, but each potential can only target potentials of its own type.**

**I END OF THE GAME**

There are two ways to win:

- 1/ Capture all 3 of your opponent's GIPF pieces.
- 2/ Make your opponent run out of moves. (If he has no more pieces in his reserve and no more potentials on the board with which he can play, he cannot go on with the game.)

The first player to achieve one of these two goals wins the game.

**Note: If both players run out of moves on two consecutive turns, the one who made the last move wins the game, because the other player will be the first unable to make a move.**

**J GOOD TO KNOW**

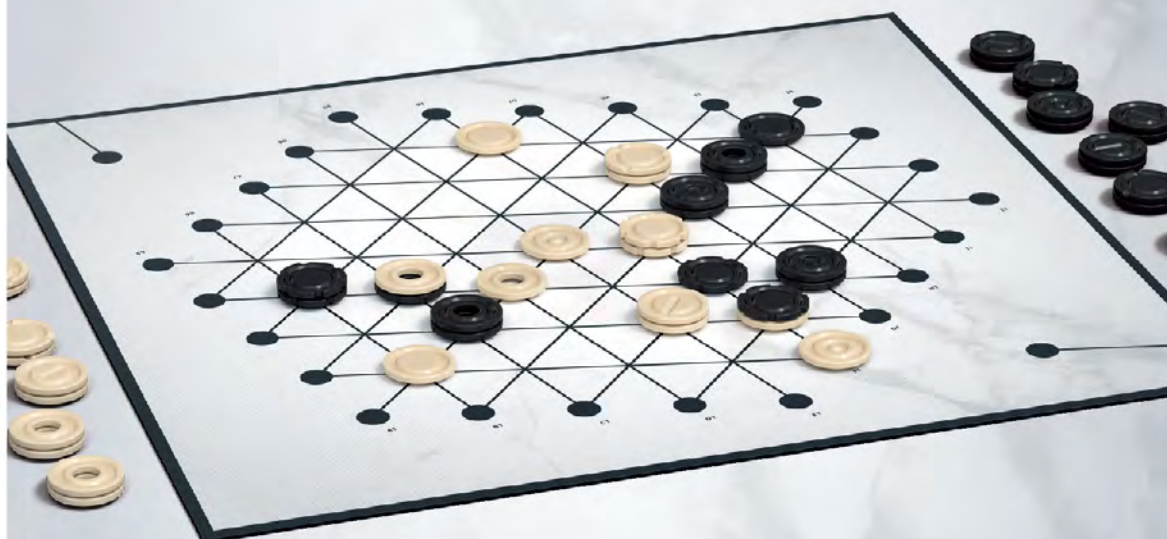
- 1/ Although MATRX GIPF is played *grosso modo* according to the rules for GIPF and GIPF With Potentials, it is more than just a variant. GIPF With Potentials is mainly played with basic GIPF pieces, to which extra possibilities are added through the potentials—as if playing GIPF with an additional layer. MATRX GIPF is played with the potentials as the core of the game. Moreover, potentials in MATRX may be returned to the reserve, which is not allowed in GIPF With Potentials. That rule difference creates a very specific and thus distinguishable dynamic for each of these games.
- 2/ MATRX GIPF is played on an adjusted GIPF board. Even though it is only 3 spots larger, the asymmetrical pattern allows for more different opening moves and creates more space for the use of the potentials. The wider pattern also has more lines with 7 spots, which makes the game more open and increases the possibilities of multiple captures. That said, it is also perfectly possible to play MATRX on a regular GIPF board. It will feel significantly different, though. On a GIPF board, the game is more dense and may take longer, but that doesn't make the experience any less challenging.
- 3/ As I already suggested in the preface, no matter how much time you take to consider your next move, you'll undoubtedly feel like you're in limbo—more so than with any other game of Project GIPF. Try this: make a move and see what happens! Therein lies the beauty of abstract 2-player games, and in

this one even more than most. Put differently, what turns out well and what goes wrong can be equally fascinating. If you accept this, MATRX will offer you plenty of surprises for a long time to come.

- 4/ One of the tough things to learn is choosing which potential you'll bring into the game, in particular during your first games. You'll have no clue yet in which situations the different potentials can be strong. Oftentimes you'll think you picked the wrong potential. So be it. Don't look back: play with what you have on the board. You have to maneuver the potentials into positions where they can become threats, and not necessarily create threats with the moves with which you bring them into play.
- 5/ The potentials are not all equally strong—but they can all be equally dangerous. They should also be considered not just as containers of special abilities, but first and foremost as pieces that can occupy spots for your color. And regardless of their different strengths, they are part of the cycle of getting pieces back into your reserve, in order for you to be able to keep playing when your turn comes around.
- 6/ Avoid focusing too much on the effective use of the potentials. Even if you feel you can't use them as often as you would like, as long as they remain on the board they form "potential" danger that your opponent must take into account. As such, they'll always influence the course of the game.
- 7/ To conclude: give and take! Accept losing one or more pieces when it can't be avoided. Don't spend valuable moves in what is inevitable and look instead for a counterattack. When your opponent makes a capture, it means he must also remove one or more of his own pieces. This will often open up opportunities to strike back, in particular when he has to remove one or more of his own GIPF pieces—which means he cannot use his potentials for their next move(s).



# M A T R X



G I P F  
*project*

G I P F  
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Z È R T Z  
D V O N N  
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