## Introduction to Games

15-150

# Principles of Functional Programming Slides for Lecture 24 April 22, 2025

Michael Erdmann

# Modular Framework for the following kinds of games:

- 2-player (alternate turns)
- deterministic (no dice)
- perfect information (no hidden state)
- zero-sum (I win, you lose; ties ok)
- finitely-branching (maybe even finite)

# Modular Framework for the following kinds of games:

- 2-player (alternate turns)
- deterministic (no dice)
- perfect information (no hidden state)
- zero-sum (I win, you lose; ties ok)
- finitely-branching (maybe even finite)
- Examples: tic-tac-toe, connect4, ...

# Example: Nim

- Take 1, 2, or 3 pieces of chocolate
- Alternate turns
- Player who leaves an empty table loses

# Game Trees

- Nodes represent current state of game
- Edges represent possible moves
- A given level corresponds to a given player, alternating turns

-Our players: Maxie and Minnie

# Game Trees

- Nodes represent current state of game
- Edges represent possible moves
- A given level corresponds to a given player, alternating turns

#### -Our players: Maxie and Minnie

Important: These trees are not predefined datatypes, but instead are implicit representations of possible game evolutions. We will represent them functionally, expanding nodes as necessary using sequences to represent the result of possible moves.

# 4

Start with 4 pieces of chocolate

MAXIE moves first

4



MAXIE























Minnie

MAXIE



#### Nim game tree with leaf values



#### Now compute interior node values:



#### Now compute interior node values:



#### Now compute interior node values:



#### Maxie can win!



The other two initial Maxie moves would allow Minnie to win.

# **Estimators**

- In practice, trees are too large to visit leaves.
- Instead:
  - expand tree to some depth,
  - use game-specific estimator to assign values (not just ±1) at bottom-most nodes explored.
- Backchain mini-max values as before.
- Repeat after each actual move.
- Issue: horizon effect.

# **Estimators**

- In practice, trees are too large to visit leaves.
- Instead:
  - expand tree to some depth,
  - use game-specific estimator to assign values (not just ±1) at better most nodes explored.

Our simplified presentation associates the estimator with GAME. More generally, one would make it PLAYER-dependent. Either way, our automated PLAYERs assume optimal play by both Maxie and Minnie relative to the estimator.

# Nim has perfect estimator

Player making move can win for sure iff

## n mod 4 $\neq$ 1

(n is number of pieces) Why?

# Nim has perfect estimator

Player making move can win for sure iff

# n mod 4 $\neq$ 1

## (n is number of pieces) Why?

Player and opponent must each take 1, 2, or 3 pieces. Given player can ensure 4 pieces total are taken as sum of pieces taken first by opponent then by player. Thus player can repeatedly leave opponent with 4k+1 pieces (some k). Eventually opponent must take last piece.

#### Maxie can win!



# Modular Framework

- Game : GAME (e.g., Nim : GAME)
- Player : PLAYER (includes a Game)
- Referee : GO (glues 2 Players to play)

- Will have automated and human players.
- Will write automated players as functors that expect a Game. Code plays without knowing Game details, except implicitly via estimator.

# Modular Framework



(rough picture; there will be a few more administrative layers)

signature GAME =
sig

signature GAME =

sig

datatype player = Minnie | Maxie

(\* concrete \*)

The concrete type **player** models a two-person game.

We call one player Minnie and the other Maxie, because we think of them as minimizing and maximizing values associated with nodes in a game tree (these values are based on some approximate estimator).

```
signature GAME =
sig
datatype player = Minnie | Maxie (* concrete *)
datatype outcome = Winner of player | Draw (* concrete *)
```

The concrete datatype **outcome** models the idea that either one of the players wins or there is a draw, once a game ends.

```
signature GAME =
sig
datatype player = Minnie | Maxie (* concrete *)
datatype outcome = Winner of player | Draw (* concrete *)
datatype status = Over of outcome | In_play (* concrete *)
```

Finally, a game is either Over (with a given outcome) or still In\_play. The concrete datatype status models this aspect of the game.

```
signature GAME =
sig
datatype player = Minnie | Maxie (* concrete *)
datatype outcome = Winner of player | Draw (* concrete *)
datatype status = Over of outcome | In_play (* concrete *)
type state (* abstract *)
```

The types **state** and **move** depend on the particular game being played, so we leave them abstract in the signature.

type move (\* abstract \*)

```
signature GAME =
sig
datatype player = Minnie | Maxie (* concrete *)
datatype outcome = Winner of player | Draw (* concrete *)
datatype status = Over of outcome | In_play (* concrete *)
type state (* abstract *)
type move (* abstract *)
```

val start : state

This line of the signature says that every particular game implementation must specify a value representing the start state of the game.
```
signature GAME =
siq
    datatype player = Minnie | Maxie
                                                 (* concrete *)
    datatype outcome = Winner of player | Draw
                                                 (* concrete *)
    datatype status = Over of outcome | In play (* concrete *)
    type state (* abstract *)
    type move (* abstract *)
    val start : state
    val moves : state -> move Seq.seq
```

(REQUIRE that the state be In\_play ENSURE that the move sequence is non-empty and all moves valid)

```
signature GAME =
siq
    datatype player = Minnie | Maxie
                                                (* concrete *)
    datatype outcome = Winner of player | Draw
                                                (* concrete *)
    datatype status = Over of outcome | In play (* concrete *)
    type state (* abstract *)
    type move (* abstract *)
   val start : state
         State -> move Seq
    val make move : state * move -> state
```

(REQUIRE that the move be valid at the state.)

```
signature GAME =
siq
                                                    (* concrete *)
    datatype player = Minnie | Maxie
                                                    (* concrete *)
    datatype outcome = Winner of player | Draw
    datatype status = Over of outcome | In play (* concrete *)
    type state (* abstract *)
    type move (* abstract *)
    val start : state
    val moves : state -> move Seq.seq
    val make move : state * move -> state
    val status : state -> status
    val player : state -> player
    These functions are called "views". They allow a user to see
    some information about the abstract type state. (Here, the
    player function returns the player whose turn it is to make a move.)
```

end



```
signature GAME =
sig
    datatype player = Minnie | Maxie
                                                 (* concrete *)
    datatype outcome = Winner of player | Draw (* concrete *)
    datatype status = Over of outcome | In play (* concrete *)
    type state (* abstract *)
    type move (* abstract *)
   val start : state
   val moves : state -> move Seq.seq
   val make move : state * move -> state
   val status : state -> status
   val player : state -> player
                                                  (* concrete *)
   datatype est = Definitely of outcome | Guess of int
   val estimate : state -> est
  . . . (* functions to create string representations *)
```

end

structure Nim : GAME =
struct

```
structure Nim : GAME =
struct
    datatype player = Minnie | Maxie
    datatype outcome = Winner of player | Draw
    datatype status = Over of outcome | In_play
```

The types **player**, **outcome**, and **status** were specified in the **GAME** signature,

so we need to write them, i.e., implement them, exactly as there.

```
structure Nim : GAME =
struct
   datatype player = Minnie | Maxie
   datatype outcome = Winner of player | Draw
   datatype status = Over of outcome | In_play
```

```
datatype state = State of int * player
```

We now implement the abstract type **state** as a particular datatype constructor expecting a pair. The pair specifies how many pieces are available and whose turn it is to take one or more pieces.

Recall: The player whose turn it is must take 1, 2, or 3 pieces, but not more pieces than are available. A player who takes all available pieces loses.

Why use constructor **State** rather than merely the pair **int** \* **player** ?

Ascription is transparent (one reason for that is to make it easier for us in this course to see what is happening when testing the code).

However, we do not want anyone messing with the internal representation even though they can see it. Since **State** is not specified in the signature, no one can pattern match on it.

```
structure Nim : GAME =
struct
   datatype player = Minnie | Maxie
   datatype outcome = Winner of player | Draw
   datatype status = Over of outcome | In_play
   datatype state = State of int * player
   datatype move = Move of int
```

We implement the abstract type **move** as a datatype that specifies how many pieces to take.

```
structure Nim : GAME =
struct
   datatype player = Minnie | Maxie
   datatype outcome = Winner of player | Draw
   datatype status = Over of outcome | In play
   datatype state = State of int * player
   datatype move = Move of int
   val start = State (15, Maxie)
             We can make this be any positive integer.
             We could even make it be an argument
             to a functor that creates a Nim structure.
             For simplicity, we make it 15 here.
```

```
structure Nim : GAME =
struct
   datatype player = Minnie | Maxie
   datatype outcome = Winner of player | Draw
   datatype status = Over of outcome | In play
   datatype state = State of int * player
   datatype move = Move of int
   val start = State (15, Maxie)
    fun moves (State (n, )) =
          Seq.tabulate (fn k => Move (k+1)) (Int.min (n,3))
           Create all valid moves at a given state (as a move Seq.seq)
           corresponding to taking 1 piece, 2 pieces, or 3 pieces,
           but no more than are still available.
           (We may assume there is at least 1 piece available.)
```

```
structure Nim : GAME =
struct
   datatype player = Minnie | Maxie
   datatype outcome = Winner of player | Draw
   datatype status = Over of outcome | In play
   datatype state = State of int * player
   datatype move = Move of int
   val start = State (15, Maxie)
   fun moves (State (n, )) =
         Seq.tabulate (fn k => Move (k+1)) (Int.min (n,3))
   fun flip Maxie = Minnie
     | flip Minnie = Maxie
   fun make_move (State (n, p), Move k) = State (n-k, flip p)
```

We may assume the move is valid, so can simply subtract the number of pieces taken. And we change whose turn it is.

```
structure Nim : GAME =
struct
   datatype player = Minnie | Maxie
   datatype outcome = Winner of player | Draw
   datatype status = Over of outcome | In play
   datatype state = State of int * player
   datatype move = Move of int
   val start = State (15, Maxie)
   fun moves (State (n, _)) =
         Seq.tabulate (fn k => Move (k+1)) (Int.min (n,3))
    fun flip Maxie = Minnie
      | flip Minnie = Maxie
   fun make_move (State (n, p), Move k) = State (n-k, flip p)
   datatype est = Definitely of outcome | Guess of int
(Type est was specified in the signature, so we need to write it as there.)
```

```
structure Nim : GAME =
struct
   datatype player = Minnie | Maxie
   datatype outcome = Winner of player | Draw
   datatype status = Over of outcome | In play
   datatype state = State of int * player
   datatype move = Move of int
   val start = State (15, Maxie)
   fun moves (State (n, )) =
         Seq.tabulate (fn k => Move (k+1)) (Int.min (n,3))
   fun flip Maxie = Minnie
     | flip Minnie = Maxie
   fun make move (State (n, p), Move k) = State (n-k, flip p)
   datatype est = Definitely of outcome | Guess of int
   fun estimate (State (n, p)) =
        if n mod 4 = 1 then Definitely (Winner (flip p))
                        else Definitely (Winner p)
```

Recall that Nim has a perfect estimator (generally a game will not).

# VeryDumbNim Structure

```
structure VeryDumbNim : GAME =
struct
   datatype player = Minnie | Maxie
   datatype outcome = Winner of player | Draw
   datatype status = Over of outcome | In play
   datatype state = State of int * player
   datatype move = Move of int
   val start = State (15, Maxie)
   fun moves (State (n, )) =
         Seq.tabulate (fn k => Move (k+1)) (Int.min (n,3))
   fun flip Maxie = Minnie
     | flip Minnie = Maxie
   fun make_move (State (n, p), Move k) = State (n-k, flip p)
   datatype est = Definitely of outcome | Guess of int
   fun estimate = Guess 0
```

Of course, there is no requirement that the estimator be useful. We could trivialize it!

```
structure Nim : GAME =
struct
   datatype player = Minnie | Maxie
   datatype outcome = Winner of player | Draw
   datatype status = Over of outcome | In play
   datatype state = State of int * player
   datatype move = Move of int
   val start = State (15, Maxie)
   fun moves (State (n, )) =
         Seq.tabulate (fn k => Move (k+1)) (Int.min (n,3))
   fun flip Maxie = Minnie
     | flip Minnie = Maxie
   fun make_move (State (n, p), Move k) = State (n-k, flip p)
   datatype est = Definitely of outcome | Guess of int
   fun estimate (State (n, p)) =
        if n mod 4 = 1 then Definitely (Winner (flip p))
                        else Definitely (Winner p)
```

```
structure Nim : GAME =
struct
   datatype player = Minnie | Maxie
   datatype outcome = Winner of player | Draw
   datatype status = Over of outcome | In_play
   datatype state = State of int * player
   datatype move = Move of int
```

We have not yet implemented the two views, so let us do that now:

. . .

```
structure Nim : GAME =
struct
   datatype player = Minnie | Maxie
   datatype outcome = Winner of player | Draw
   datatype status = Over of outcome | In_play
   datatype state = State of int * player
   datatype move = Move of int
```

```
fun player (State (_, p)) = p
```

The **player** view of a **state** returns the **player** whose turn it is.

. . .

```
structure Nim : GAME =
struct
   datatype player = Minnie | Maxie
   datatype outcome = Winner of player | Draw
   datatype status = Over of outcome | In play
   datatype state = State of int * player
   datatype move = Move of int
    fun player (State ( , p)) = p
    fun status (State (0, p)) = Over (Winner p)
      | status = In play
```

The status view of a state checks whether there are any pieces remaining. If so, the game is In\_play. If not, then the previous player must have taken all the remaining pieces, Therefore, the current player is the winner.

```
structure Nim : GAME =
struct
   datatype player = Minnie | Maxie
   datatype outcome = Winner of player | Draw
   datatype status = Over of outcome | In play
   datatype state = State of int * player
   datatype move = Move of int
    • • •
    fun player (State ( , p)) = p
    fun status (State (0, p)) = Over (Winner p)
      | status = In play
```

. . . (\* functions to create string representations \*)

# **PLAYER** Signature

```
signature PLAYER =
sig
sig
structure Game : GAME (* parameter *)
val next_move : Game.state -> Game.move
end
```

We simply wrap one layer around the **GAME** signature, now requiring a function that decides what move to make given a particular game state.

# Human Player

functor HumanPlayer (G : GAME) : PLAYER =
struct

The functor expects a **GAME** and returns a **PLAYER**, meaning:

The code we write must provide a structure satisfying the **PLAYER** signature (think of that as an interface for playing games) that will work with any game **G** satisfying the **GAME** signature.

# Human Player

```
functor HumanPlayer (G : GAME) : PLAYER =
struct
  structure Game = G
  (* read : unit -> string option *)
  (* parse : G.state * string option -> G.move option *)
  fun next move s =
      let
         val = ... (* ask human to enter move *)
      in
         (case parse(s, read()) of
             SOME m \implies m
           NONE => next move s) (* for instance *)
      end
```

end

#### Recall: Game as tree of alternating player moves



#### Recall: Optimal Play from Mini-Max



#### **Recall: Optimal Play from Mini-Max**



# SETTINGS & PLAYER

```
signature SETTINGS =
sig
structure Game : GAME (* parameter *)
val depth : int
end
signature PLAYER =
sig
structure Game : GAME (* parameter *)
val next_move : Game.state -> Game.move
end
```

# Functorize MiniMax Player

functor MiniMax (Settings : SETTINGS) : PLAYER =
struct
structure Game = Settings.Game
structure G = Game
type edge = G.move \* G.est
fun emv (m,v) = m
fun evl (m,v) = v

An edge represents a move from the current state, along with a value attributed to the resulting state:

$$make_move$$
 (s,m)  $\cong$  t

(v is t's MiniMax value computed recursively)

#### Functorize MiniMax Player

```
functor MiniMax (Settings : SETTINGS) : PLAYER =
struct
    structure Game = Settings.Game
    structure G = Game
    type edge = G.move * G.est
   fun emv (m, v) = m
   fun evl(m,v) = v
    (* leq : G.est * G.est -> bool *)
    fun leq (x, y) = ...
    (* max, min : edge * edge -> edge *)
    fun max (e1, e2) = if leq (evl e2, evl e1) then e1 else e2
    fun min (e1, e2) = if leq (evl e1, evl e2) then e1 else e2
    (* choose : G.player -> edge Seq.seg -> edge *)
    fun choose G.Maxie = Seq.reduce1 max
      | choose G.Minnie = Seq.reduce1 min
```

# Mini-Max at a Maxie Node Maxie $= \max\{\mathbf{v}_1, \dots, \mathbf{v}_k\}$ V moves $m_1 m_2$ $\mathbf{m}_{\mathbf{k}}$ $m_{k-1}$ $\mathbf{v}_{k-1}$



```
(* search : int -> G.state -> edge
                                                        *)
(* REQUIRES: depth d > 0 and G.status(s) == In play. *)
fun search d s =
     choose (G.player s)
            (Seq.map
               (fn m \Rightarrow (m, evaluate (d-1) (G.make move(s,m))))
               (G.moves s))
(* evaluate : int -> G.state -> G.est *)
(* REQUIRES : d \ge 0.
                                         *)
and evaluate d s =
     (case (G.status s, d) of
           (G.Over(v), ) => G.Definitely(v)
         (G.In play, 0) => G.estimate(s)
         (G.In play, ) => evl (search d s))
```

```
(* search : int -> G.state -> edge
                                                          *)
(* REQUIRES: depth d > 0 and G.status(s) == In play. *)
fun search d s =
     choose (G.player s)
             (Seq.map
               (fn m \Rightarrow (m, evaluate (d-1) (G.make move(s,m))))
               (G.moves s))
(* evaluate : int -> G.state -> G.est *)
(* REQUIRES : d \ge 0.
                                          *)
and evaluate d s =
                                      Check whether the game is over!
     (case (G.status s, d) of
                                    (Don't rely on estimator to detect this.)
            (G.Over(v), ) => G.Definitely(v)
         (G.In play, 0) => G.estimate(s)
          (G.In_play, ) => evl (search d s))
```

```
(* search : int -> G.state -> edge
                                                              *)
(* REQUIRES: depth d > 0 and G.status(s) == In play. *)
fun search d s =
     choose (G.player s)
              (Seq.map
                (fn m \Rightarrow (m, evaluate (d-1) (G.make move(s,m))))
                (G.moves s))
(* evaluate : int -> G.state -> G.est
                                              *)
(* REQUIRES : d \ge 0.
                                              *)
and evaluate d s =
      (case (G.status s, d) of
             (G.Over(v), ) => G.Definitely(v)
          (G.In play, 0) => G.estimate(s)
          (G.In_play, _) => evl (search d s))
                                                       evaluat
                                                               (m, v) = (m_i, v_i)
                                                        search
                                                               with i index maximizing V.
                                                      moves
                  select the value of the best edge
```

```
(* search : int -> G.state -> edge
                                                             *)
(* REQUIRES: depth d > 0 and G.status(s) == In play. *)
fun search d s =
     choose (G.player s)
              (Seq.map
                (fn m \Rightarrow (m, evaluate (d-1) (G.make move(s,m))))
                (G.moves s))
(* evaluate : int -> G.state -> G.est
                                             *)
(* REQUIRES : d \ge 0.
                                             *)
and evaluate d s =
      (case (G.status s, d) of
             (G.Over(v), ) => G.Definitely(v)
          (G.In play, 0) => G.estimate(s)
          (G.In_play, ) => evl (search d s))
                                                             (m, v) = (m_i, v_i)
                                                      searc
                                                             with i index maximizing V
                                                     moves
val next move = emv o (search Settings.depth)
              select the move from the best edge
```

```
(* search : int -> G.state -> edge
                                                          *)
 (* REQUIRES: depth d > 0 and G.status(s) == In play. *)
 fun search d s =
      choose (G.player s)
              (Seq.map
                (fn m => (m, evaluate (d-1) (G.make move(s,m))))
                (G.moves s))
 (* evaluate : int -> G.state -> G.est
                                           *)
 (* REQUIRES : d \ge 0.
                                           *)
 and evaluate d s =
      (case (G.status s, d) of
             (G.Over(v), ) => G.Definitely(v)
          (G.In play, 0) => G.estimate(s)
           | (G.In play, ) => evl (search d s))
This is the function specified in the PLAYER signature, accessible to the outside world.
 val next move = emv o (search Settings.depth)
```
#### Functorize MiniMax Player (cont)

```
(* search : int -> G.state -> edge
                                                       *)
(* REQUIRES: depth d > 0 and G.status(s) == In play. *)
fun search d s =
     choose (G.player s)
            (Seq.map
              (fn m => (m, evaluate (d-1) (G.make move(s,m))))
              (G.moves s))
(* evaluate : int -> G.state -> G.est *)
(* REQUIRES : d \ge 0.
                                        *)
and evaluate d s =
     (case (G.status s, d) of
           (G.Over(v), ) => G.Definitely(v)
         (G.In play, 0) => G.estimate(s)
         (G.In_play, _) => evl (search d s))
val next move = emv o (search Settings.depth)
```

end (\* functor MiniMax \*)

## TWO\_PLAYERS & GO

```
signature TWO_PLAYERS =
sig
structure Maxie : PLAYER (* parameter *)
structure Minnie : PLAYER (* parameter *)
sharing Maxie.Game = Minnie.Game
end
```

```
signature GO =
sig
val go : unit -> unit
end
```

#### Functorize Playing, using a Referee

```
functor Referee (P : TWO PLAYERS) : GO =
struct
    structure G = P.Maxie.Game
    structure H = P.Minnie.Game
    (* run : G.state -> string *)
    fun run s =
        (case (G.status s, G.player s) of
              (G.Over(v), ) \Rightarrow G.outcome to string(v)
            (G.In play, G.Maxie) =>
                   run (G.make move (s, P.Maxie.next move s))
            (G.In play, G.Minnie) =>
                   run (H.make move (s, P.Minnie.next move s)))
    fun go () = print (run (G.start) ^ "\n")
```

end

#### Human vs depth-3 MiniMax for Nim

structure NimHuman = HumanPlayer(Nim) (\* Nim : GAME \*)
structure NimSet3 : SETTINGS =

```
struct
```

```
structure Game = Nim
val depth = 3
```

```
end
```

```
structure Nim3MM = MiniMax(NimSet3)
```

```
structure HvM : TWO_PLAYERS =
struct
structure Maxie = NimHuman
structure Minnie = Nim3MM
end
```

```
structure Nim RefHvM = Referee (HvM)
```

```
Nim RefHvM.go()
```

# That is all.

#### See you Thursday.

### We will review the semester.