

To *The Times*

Letter to the editor

Sir,

Thanks to Jack Malvern for his good article « Les fiendish French beat us to Su Doku » reporting the results of my research published in the June issue of *Pour La Science*, the French edition of *Scientific American*.

However, there is an error when he wrote “The first known Su Doku appeared in *La France* on July 9, 1895. M. B. Meyniel, an unknown puzzle setter, created a grid nine squares by nine and divided it into sub-squares measuring three squares by three”.

When this Meyniel’s grid was published in 1895, the grid was NOT divided in 3x3 sub-squares. Meyniel was probably aware of the 3x3 structure of his problem, because previous 9x9 puzzles of this period were already using 3x3 sub-squares (i.e. *Le Siècle* puzzle of 1892, mentioned in the Malvern’s article), but he did not mention the fact in his grid or in his text, perhaps to add a supplemental difficulty to the problem.

In some words: we can solve the Meyniel’s grid exactly as a Su Doku, in adding the 3x3 borders, but it was not presented as a Su Doku.

Perhaps that there were some complete Su Doku puzzles among the thousands of grids published in the French daily newspapers during this period. As I wrote in the conclusion of my *Pour La Science* article: perhaps a courageous searcher, who likes to ferret about in libraries, will find such a grid?

But even if somebody finds a complete Su Doku puzzle in an old French newspaper, thanks to Wayne Gould and *The Times*: you are at the origin (your puzzles since November 2004) to the current worldwide success of Su Doku, not the French!

Best regards to the “Perfide Albion” from a fiendish French.

Christian Boyer.

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