

national labor day tournament

ED O'LAUGHLIN WINS 5 POINT "FINALS"

**New Jersey Backgammon Club
Takes Team Title**

“Could you call me a cab for ten after six?” That was Ed O’Laughlin’s question to co-director Butch Meese at 5:45 PM prior to beginning an abbreviated 5 point finals against Minnesota’s Steve Brown at the National Labor Day Tournament September 1-4.

The beautiful Radisson Hotel in Indianapolis accommodated the successful “return of the crowds” to Labor Day backgammon. The Hoosier Backgammon Club/Louisville Backgammon Club joint promotional effort garnered nearly 150 satisfied participants.

Both O’Laughlin and Brown compiled minimum 6-3 records in the Match Play format and had to qualify for the Monday “Final 8” via play-off. Play on Monday began at 10:00 AM. O’Laughlin’s two 11 point matches, including an 11-2 semifinal victory over Alan Steffen, went smoothly. The other side was bogged down by the exceedingly slow play of Ed Petrillo (FL). Admittedly, Ed’s 11-9 win over Marty Storer and 11-10 semifinal loss to Steve Brown were tough battles. But 7 1/2 hours for two 11 point matches was still far too long. So long in fact, that when the Brown-Petrillo match finally ended (at 5:30 PM), O’Laughlin had only one hour to catch Monday’s last plane back East.

O’Laughlin approached co-director Meese to request a split with Brown. The possibility of O’Laughlin catching a Tuesday flight was suggested, but Ed wanted to get home Monday evening so he could take his 3-year-old son Austin to his first day of preschool in the morning. In order to determine a winner, Brown courteously agreed to split the prize money and play a 5 point match for the trophy and \$200.

Ed offered a loose cube in game one. Steve fell into a massive backgame and

missed a double shot to get gammoned. Score: 4-0. Elapsed time: 9 minutes.

In game two, O’Laughlin again commanded the better dice primed Steve out for a 5-0 whitewashing. The match ended in 15 minutes and Ed had a 10 minute wait for his cab!

In the Intermediate division, Terry Kuchenbrod (KY) won a nail-biter over Chicago’s Stu Katz. Prior to the event, the red-hot Katz announced this to be his last regional Intermediate tournament regardless of his finish.

The New Jersey Backgammon Club (5-4), Hoosier Backgammon Club (5-4), Backgammon In Georgia (4-5) and the Chicago Bar Point Club (4-5) reached the finals of the first-ever National Club Team Challenge event. Despite an undefeated performance by the Bar Point Club’s Gary Kay, New Jersey’s 5-4 record was enough to claim top honors.

The overall consensus: A fine effort by the Hoosier and Louisville Clubs. Δ

NATIONAL LABOR DAY TOURNAMENT

OPEN (53): 1st Ed O’Laughlin (NJ); 2nd Steve Brown (MN); 3/4 Alan Steffen (WA) and Ed Petrillo (FL).

INTERMEDIATE (65): 1st Terry Kuchenbrod (KY); 2nd Stu Katz (IL); 3/4 Jonathon Bennetts and Marc Ingenoso (WI).

BEGINNER (21): 1st Lee Shapiro (GA); 2nd Randall Witt (TN); 3/4 Leslie Lockett (IL) and James Roston (NY).

MASTERS (8): 1st Joe Sylvester (MI).

DOUBLES (32): 1st Carl Sellars (CAN) & Tim Dunphy; 2nd John Bashian & Mike Rezai (OH); 3/4 Bobbie Shifrin & David Libchaber (IL); 3/4 Joe Sylvester & Mike Charison (MI).

MASTERS MICROBLITZ (16): 1st Doug Mayfield (IL).

OPEN MICROBLITZ (64): 1st Rick Bieniak. LIMITED MICROBLITZ (128): 1st Jim Bowman (FL).

TEAM CHALLENGE (10): 1st New Jersey Backgammon Club (Ami Tennenbaum, Doug Roberts, Steve Jacobson); 2nd Hoosier Backgammon Club (Jim Curtis, Wendy Kaplan, Chuck Stimming).

WIN \$50. CAPTION THIS PHOTO. (See page 3.)



CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

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LETTERS

c/o Chicago POINT
2726 W. Lunt Avenue
Chicago, IL 60645

NETHERLANDS REQUEST

The most recent issue of the POINT arrived here on the 12th. Enclosed is a check for two more subscriptions. If you keep up the good work, you've got three long-time subscribers. Keep "Mark Your Calendar" complete for Europe as well, and increase your efforts to include Kent Goulding's International Rating List.—George Rolf, *The Netherlands*

DUANE'S STILL INHUMAN

I noted an error in Duane Jensen's "David and Goliath" article last month. The captions for the diagrammed positions had "BLACK" and "WHITE" reversed. Welcome to the human race, Duane!—Larry Strommen, *Indianapolis, IN*

Oops! We take full responsibility for those typos. So unfortunately, Duane must remain inhuman.—Ed.

CALL A SCANDAL A SCANDAL

Why do you write in the August POINT

coming attractions

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



by Carol Joy Cole
313/232-9731

Sep 1-4	National Labor Day Tournament & Club Challenge, Indianapolis, IN	317/845-8435
Sep 4	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	3-689918
Sep 4	College Park Jackpot Tournament, The Promenade, Bethesda, MD	301/530-0603
Sep 10	Toronto Monthly Tournament, Le Spot, Ontario	416/267-2815
Sep 17	Austin Bimonthly Tournament, Bombay Bicycle Club, Austin, TX	512/490-6538
Sep 17	New England Season Opener, Sheraton-Commander, Cambridge, MA	617/547-4800
Sep 21	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Sheraton Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Sep 22-24	5th German Open Championship, Hotel Palace, Berlin, W. Germany	08341-128 25
Sep 23	Bayou Club Monthly Tournament, Houstonian, Houston, TX	713/495-2240
Sep 27-Oct 1	8th Austrian BG/Tennis Casino Cup, Hotel Schloss Seefels, Austria	61-505816
Sep 29-30	8th Annual All Georgia Championships, The Beef Cellar, Atlanta, GA	404/257-0567
Sep 29-Oct 1	Towpath Lodge Tournament, Turin, NY	315/348-8122
Sep 30-Oct 1	Hard Rock Cafe Tournament, Hard Rock Cafe, Stockholm, Sweden	08-74 22 250
Oct 1	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Bagwells, Chicago, IL	312/252-7755
Oct 2	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	3-689918
Oct 4-8	Caesars Tahoe Tournament (\$20,000 added), South Lake Tahoe, NV	702/826-1984
Oct 6-8	1989 Victorian Open, Hilton Int'l Hotel, E. Melbourne, Australia	03-266-4209
Oct 8	Toronto Monthly Tournament, Le Spot, Ontario	416/267-2815
Oct 14	Springfield Open, On Broadway, Springfield, IL	217/528-0117
Oct 14	College Park Fall Open Tourney, The Promenade, Bethesda, MD	301/530-0603
Oct 15	New England Club Monthly, Sheraton-Commander, Cambridge, MA	617/547-4800
Oct 15	2nd Annual Jim Flora Memorial Tournament & Benefit, Plymouth, MI	313/981-5706
Oct 19	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Sheraton Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Oct 21	The Pewter Mug, Watertown, NY	315/788-5114
Oct 27-29	New Hampshire Int'l Fall Classic, Woodbound Inn, Jaffrey, NH	603/863-4711
Oct 28	Bayou Club Monthly Tournament, Houstonian, Houston, TX	713/495-2240
Oct 29	Celebrities Bimonthly Sunday Tournament, Houston, TX	713/495-2240
Nov 3-5	Swedish Open Championship, O'Henry Hotel, Stockholm, Sweden	08-52 40 99
Nov 3-5	13th Int'l Crystal Cup Venezia, Casinò Municipale di Venezia, Italy	61-505816
Nov 4	Sangamon Valley BG Ass'n Monthly, On Broadway, Springfield, IL	217/528-0117
Nov 6	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	3-689918
Nov 7	Bar Point Club Fall Trophy Tourney, Pat's Pub, Norridge, IL	312/338-6380
Nov 10-12	NY/NJ Co-op Fall Tourney, Rocking Horse Ranch, Highland, NY	201/833-2915
Nov 12	Toronto Monthly Tournament, Le Spot, Ontario	416/267-2815
Nov 17-19	Children's Hospital Benefit, Sheraton-Commander, Cambridge, MA	617/547-4800
Nov 19	Flint Area Club Championships	313/232-9731
Nov 19	Austin Bimonthly Tournament, Bombay Bicycle Club, Austin, TX	512/490-6538
Nov 23-26	Teacher's European Open Championships, Casino de Deauville, France	01-376 3033
Dec 2	Sangamon Valley BG Ass'n Monthly, On Broadway, Springfield, IL	217/528-0117
Dec 3	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Bagwells, Chicago, IL	312/252-7755
Dec 4	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	3-689918
Dec 10	Toronto Monthly Tournament, Le Spot, Ontario	416/267-2815
Dec 10	New England Club Monthly, Sheraton-Commander, Cambridge, MA	617/547-4800
Jan 6	Sangamon Valley BG Ass'n Monthly, On Broadway, Springfield, IL	217/528-0117
Jan 20	College Park Winter Open Tourney, Promenade, Bethesda, MD	301/530-0604
Jan 17-21	7th Nevada State Championship, Peppermill Hotel, Reno, NV	702/826-1984
Feb 11	6th Annual Fleet Underwood Memorial & Benefit, Sharaton Flint, MI	313/232-9731

that a major scandal "nearly" came to pass at Monte Carlo when so clearly it *did* happen? The Van Eyck-Schreuder deal violates the rules concerning settlement and completion of matches. To throw a game is obviously to settle it.

Perhaps a rule should be added prohibiting a player from having action on his opponent. Then if Schreuder had bought Van Eyck in the Calcutta, he could have been required to sell his share prior to their

match. Likewise, a rule could limit hedges to no more than the prize money of which the winner of the match is assured.

I would have allocated any prize money won by Van Eyck for "3rd/4th" among the legitimate players finishing 5th through 8th. Tough luck for Gino Scalamandre or anyone else betting on the player who accepts the bribe.—Danny Kleinman, *Los Angeles, CA*

(Continued on page 3)

LETTERS...

(Continued from page 2)

DEYONG ON MONTE-CARLO

On a point of clarification relating to last month's "Amalgamation" column. It is technically correct that Paul Magriel was unseeded at this year's Monte-Carlo World Championships. There is, however, a reasonable explanation. We seed only 8 players of the final 64 players, and always two from each quarter of the draw. The top section of the Monte-Carlo draw had three great names left: Magriel, Billy Horan and Kiumars Motakhshes. In order to adhere to our formula, only two could be seeded. We rolled dice and Magriel's name was the odd one out. This was a rare case where

nonseeding had nothing to do with ability.

The discussion of the Van Eyck-Schreuder affair was essentially correct. I am happy to say that in subsequent discussions with the sponsors, they have provisionally agreed to add Bill Robertie and Mike Svobodny to the Rules Committee. This should add some much needed ruling "expertise" to future events.

While no longer active in the direction, I do still feel a sense of personal involvement in the Monte-Carlo World Backgammon Championship, which I originated 15 years ago together with André Rolfo-Fontana. These "hiccups" do happen, but we hope that 1990 will see a stronger, better organized event and one I can continue to view with pride. And I am assured it will not include Messrs. Van Eyck and Schreuder. —*Lewis Deyong, London, England* Δ

ROBERTIE OFFERS BACKGAMMON CATALOG

Bill Robertie has compiled a listing of backgammon supplies into *The Gammon Press 1989 Catalog*. The catalog includes books, unannotated matches, video tapes, analysis software, computer programs, precision dice and backgammon sets.

Anyone who would like to receive the free catalog should write: The Gammon Press; P.O. Box 294; Arlington, MA 02174.

SORRY, WRONG NUMBER

Individuals who dialed the Radisson Hotel reservation number listed on the back of the National Labor Day Tournament invitation instead received "life." Radisson's phone number is (317) 846-2700. But the back of the invitation gave the reservation number as (317) 845-2700 which is Aetna Life and Casualty.

"We get the calls all day long," one of the switchboard operators told the *POINT* on August 30. "I have personally handled dozens of calls the past six weeks." Δ



1989 BPC PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED
THRU AUG. 31

GARY KAY	21.92	Alan Steffen	3.36	Dan Judd	0.96
YAMIN YAMIN	17.48	Bob Holyon	3.28	Lenny Loder	0.96
TAK MORIOKA	17.48	Ken Bond	3.04	Rich Galeba	0.96
CHRIS KENIK	14.32	Paul Johnson	2.96	Tad Wilson	0.96
DEAN MUENCH	13.08	Rich Siebold	2.72	Paul Travis	0.88
DAVID LIBCHABER	10.84	Kathy Rudnick	2.52	Jill Ferdinand	0.80
BOB ZAVORAL	9.96	Joe Koucharian	2.36	Jim Pappas	0.80
ARNOLD ZOUSMER	8.84	Arlene Levy	2.20	Ron Stur	0.80
DEEB SHALATI	7.04	Dan Cramer	2.16	Darcey Brady	0.80
VW ZIMNICKI	6.96	Judy Brown	2.12	Marv Arnol	0.76
JOHN DEMIAN	6.76	Don Desmond	1.92	Mike Cyrkiel	0.72
DAVE CRAMER	6.64	Jeff Kane	1.92	Carl Severino	0.72
JOANN FEINSTEIN	6.44	Lucky Nelson	1.92	Howard Chow	0.64
SARG SERGES	6.28	Miles Cohen	1.92	Harry Hayward	0.56
DON JAYHAN	6.04	René Wojtysiak	1.92	Joan Hegg	0.56
MARK KING	6.04	Wilcox Snellings	1.84	Trudie Stern	0.48
ALICE KAY	5.96	Bobbie Shifrin	1.68	Leslie Lockett	0.32
NORMA SHYER	5.70	Andy Argy	1.60	Randall Witt	0.32
STU KATZ	5.36	Mark Anshus	1.52	Ted Mann	0.32
ED BUERGER	5.04	Gary Keyes	1.52	Craig McCullough	0.30
Bill Davis	4.28	Gene Chait	1.20	Elaine Kehm	0.28
Phyllis Smolinski	4.00	Mark Hicks	1.16	Betsy Miller	0.16
Ralph Levy	3.90	Bill Keefe	1.04	Dianne Cyrkiel	0.12
Peter Kalba	3.84	Richard Stawowy	1.00	John Brink	0.12
Dave Rockwell	3.76	Bill Hoeflich	0.96	Ahmad Assadi	0.08
John Spatafora	3.66				

The all-time one month Bar Point Club master point record is held by Tak Morioka (9.92 points in August, 1987). Tak's record was established when we played on Tuesday and Thursday nights. With Thursday play suspended, GARY KAY's August, 1989 total of 9.28 points is all the more impressive. Hot off an undefeated Michigan Summer Championships performance, Gary amassed a Bar Point Club one month match record of 22 wins and 3 losses. Outstanding.

Yamin Yamin (4.24) and Dave Cramer (2.80) finished a distant 2nd and 3rd.

If you finish in the Top 20 for 1989 (capitalized names on list), you'll be entered in a drawing for over \$200 worth of valuable merchandise including a Sony cordless telephone. The higher you finish, the better your winning chances. Individual awards: 1st—Trophy + \$150; 2nd—\$100; 3rd—\$50. 1st thru 20th—cherrywood die box. 1st thru 6th—Invitation to participate on the Chicago Bar Point Club team in the 1990 Illinois State Challenge Cup.

be a winner

WIN \$50 IN THE PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST



Your clever pun could win you \$50. We are looking for a caption, title or comment to complement Chicago artist John Demian's classic photograph of a squirrel playing backgammon (see page 1).

The winner will receive \$50 cash along with a framed 8 x 10 color print of the amazing photo engraved with the winning words.

How To Enter: Send your caption, title or comment along with your name and address to:

POINT Caption Contest
2726 W. Lunt Avenue
Chicago, IL 60645

You may enter more than once, but only one entry is permitted per envelope.

Entry Deadline: Entries must be received by October 12, 1989.

Winning: The winning entry will be selected by a panel of international backgammon directors and will appear in the November *POINT*. Δ

ASK DANNY



by Danny Kleinman

POST-CRAWFORD DOUBLING

Dear Danny: A keen student of backgammon has argued recently that it's often good strategy for the trailer in a match, post-Crawford, to delay doubling. To leave the cube unturned, he claims, is to give yourself another way to win the game—by doubling the leader out later. Do you agree?—Joe Wollick, Island Lake, IL

Dear Joe: I hope I needn't explain the post-Crawford strategy for the leader, which encompasses free passes (at odd scores like 8-5) and free takes (at even scores like 8-6). Because the trailer "gains a game" (and doubles his match chances) when he reaches the next odd total, the leader dare not surrender the crucial odd point by passing at a score of 8-6 (this makes his take "free"). Because the trailer advances his match prospects nary a whit in reaching the next even total (except to deprive the leader of a marginally useful free pass), the leader may pass readily but must be very cautious before giving the trailer a chance to reach the next odd rung

(this makes his pass "free").

More precisely, the leader should exercise his free pass whenever he is a clear (even if small) underdog in the game at an odd score; and he may take freely at an even score unless his gammon danger exceeds his game-winning chances.

Obviously, just as a money backgammon player can exploit an opponent's cube weaknesses by stealing a point with a technically unsound double against an overtimid opponent who is likely to pass, or by delaying a technically sound double against a very loose opponent who will surely take next turn even if his position deteriorates markedly, a match player may exploit his opponent's cube weaknesses, too.

In particular, an opponent who is ignorant of free takes may be faked into a pass at an even post-Crawford score if he reacts to a cube as if in a money game or a game at a very different match score. If you gauge such an opponent correctly, you may indeed win a valuable odd point without having to play out the game at some risk; the extra point the early double gains is an even point and thus almost worthless. The only risk to you in delay is that your gammon threat may become strong enough to justify your opponent's pass, so you must be careful to double before this can happen.

But at an odd score, it is anti-productive to seek a double-out. The point you win without need of finishing the game is an

almost worthless even point, and you are better off playing the game out with a 2-cube if you're as much as a tiny favorite. The only good reason for delaying a double at an odd score is not to steal a worthless even point later; it is to play for the gammon that will win a precious extra odd point without a cube-turn. Even here, it is not the double-in which you should delay, but only the double-out, and then only when you can be confident of retaining the ability to double your opponent out next turn. If your opponent has a chance to turn the game around, you require gammon chances at least twice as great as your loss danger to disdain the double-out.

To fail to double an opponent "in" at the first opportunity is like giving your opponent the cube at 2 from the start, but granting him the option to settle for 1 at any time later until you say, "Last chance to pay a point!" This can only be a good ploy against an opponent so foolish as to pay the point when it is clearly against his interest to do so. How often do you come across an opponent so reliably wrong?—*Yours, Danny Δ*

Questions for Danny Kleinman should be addressed to: Ask Danny, c/o Chicago POINT, 2726 W. Lunt Avenue, Chicago, IL 60645. Danny will answer the most interesting questions bimonthly.

AMALGAMATION

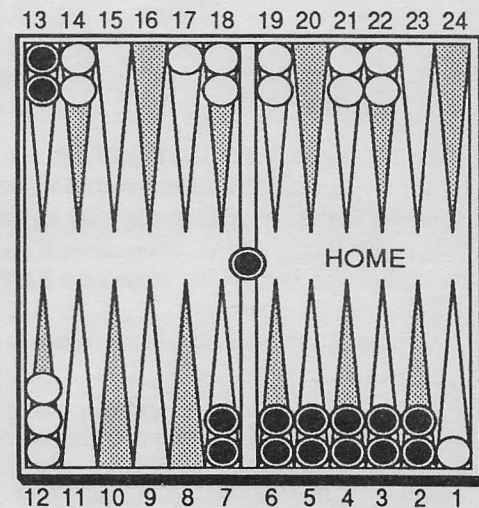
Where in the world would you find The Backgammon Pub? Chicago? New York? Los Angeles? Perhaps Hamburg, West Germany? In fact, Marcy Sloan informs us that the only pub in the world with backgammon board place mats is in Green Bay, Wisconsin!... The premiere issue of *New Jersey Backgammon Life* newsletter is out and it looks sharp. Write to Ron Whitney, Backgammon Co-Op, 279 Glen Court, Teaneck, NJ 07666 for a complimentary copy... 1970's NBL player Paul Slusarski, now a Vegas poker player, dropped by the Bar Point Club August 15. POINT subscriber Randall Witt (Tennessee) visited August 22 & 29... Talk about a distraction! Page 69 of the current Playboy Book of Lingerie boasts Lorraine Olivia playing backgammon in nothing but a camisole... Although Chicago backgammon trailblazer Valerie Valentine's grandmother Dode Bennett celebrated her 100th birthday

September 3, she'll still "only admit to 90." God bless her... Two couples met for the first time at the Indiana Classic in October, 1988 and now they're both engaged to be married. Congratulations to Jill Ferdinand (IL) & John Brussel (NY), and Wendy Kaplan (NY, now IN) & Dave Smith (IN). And let's also toast Jack Kissane's (NY) upcoming wedding to Geri Mahoney Nov. 24... Judy Brown likes how the following maxim of Carl von Clausewitz (the great military tactician) relates to backgammon: "Defense is of itself a negative exercise since we are preoccupied with the enemy's intentions instead of being concerned with our own."... The fall season means goodbye to Andy Argy who begins his Monday-Thursday commute from Chicago to Kalamazoo to teach art at Western Michigan University... Get well wishes to Granite State (NH) club director and lumberjack Linc Bedell who cut his hand (eight stitches) wielding an ax. When asked what Linc does for a living, Leslie Lockett (in her North Shore fashion) responded, "He's one of those woodpersons." Δ

your move

PROBLEM #151

Tournament double match point.
BLACK TO PLAY 5-1.





World Class Backgammon, Move By Move

REVIEWED

by Danny Kleinman

WORLD CLASS BACKGAMMON, MOVE BY MOVE, by Roy Friedman. 225 pages. Over 200 board diagrams. Published by Roy Friedman, 18 Potter Pond, Lexington, MA 02173. \$30.00. Spiral bound.

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO FRIEDMAN'S TRIPLE

Learn by playing against experts, said the hustlers. Learn by watching experts, said Lee Genud in an interview after winning the World Championship. Learn by studying annotated matches, said Barclay Cooke in *Championship Backgammon*, the 1980 book that was the first in a pageant of attempts to teach that way.

Roy Friedman's *World Class Backgammon Move by Move* is the latest such attempt. A foreword by Joe Sylvester wonders why we should believe a "Friedman" as we do "a Goulding or a Magriel," but ends up calling Roy's book, "thorough, trustworthy, revealing and unique." If justified, these four adjectives would make the book a "homer" (to invoke a baseball parallel Barclay would savor).

Let's compare Roy's book to its predecessors.

With a teacher's enthusiasm, Barclay explains even routine plays thoroughly enough for the rankest beginner. Thus Barclay's book is 50% thicker than Roy's but includes only 16 games—barely more than half the 31 games comprising the three matches Roy narrates. Yes, Barclay is more thorough than Roy, but this is hardly a virtue. With an ideologue's zeal, Barclay presents concepts; his harshest epithet for a bad play is "betrays a lack of concept." Much of what Barclay offers is opinion: intelligent opinion, to be sure, but also fallible opinion. For example, he denounces the modern major split with opening 6-2, 6-3 or 6-4. In contrast, Roy offers few opinions that he hasn't tested against extensive roll-outs (or in bear-offs, the computer calculations of his mathematical consultant Walter Trice).

The contrast to the next series of annotated matches, Kent Goulding's *Backgammon with the Champions*, begun in 1981, is even starker. Though a fine teacher, Kent

sprinkles his narratives with comments such as (Vol. 2, No. 2):

"All of the experts I showed this to passed, with the exception of Robertie who took, but said he could easily be talked out of it. I tried playing the position out 20 times to get a feel for it."

"Giving this play to several experts resulted in no two answers being the same! Bill Robertie make Sconyers' original play, Sconyers changed his mind and liked the aggressive 23/21, with 13/7, and Kit Woolsey opted for 23/21, 9/7, 13/11(2)!"

"Magriel says his first instinct was to hit, but the more he thought about it, the more he liked building the 20-point. Asked to shed some light on his reasoning, he simply responded, 'The play speaks for itself.'"

That's the kind of opinion I'd call "mere" opinion.

Then in 1982, Robertie produced *Lee Genud Versus Joe Dwek*. Relying on no one's opinion but his own, and performing roll-outs frequently, by the 100, 200 or 300 rather than 20, Bill set a new standard for advanced, accurate and insightful match analysis.

Roy's book meets this standard. I agree with Joe in calling it "thorough, trustworthy and revealing." But so resembling Bill's book, it's hardly "unique." Still, three out of four ain't bad. Continuing the baseball metaphor, I'd call *World Class Backgammon, Move by Move* a "triple."

Advanced? Definitely. Most of my few criticisms are for omissions: either of general principles which beginners need to see stated, or of explanations explicit enough for beginners to grasp immediately.

Accurate? Painstakingly, especially in appraising cube decisions.

Insightful? Yes, particularly in discussing checker and cube strategy appropriate to a given match score.

As good as or better than *Lee Genud Versus Joe Dwek*? Having examined Roy's book under a reviewer's microscope which turns notes into beams, I find this too close to call. In the following portion of this review, I'll show one or two of the things with which I disagree. But to place Roy's

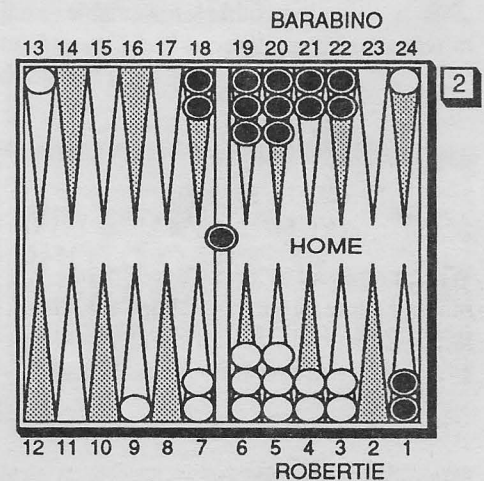
book in the same ball park as Robertie's is to rate it highly indeed. Welcome, Roy, to the elite of backgammon analysts.

CURSES, FOILED AGAIN!

I promised to show you my disagreements with Roy Friedman's *World Class Backgammon, Move by Move*. But the diabolical Roy, manifesting a clear phobia for error, stopped the press after I'd read his "Pre-Publication Draft" and sent him my critical notes. Then he sent me a packet of changed pages he'd persuaded his printer to insert. Still there was one blooper remaining. Alas, Roy worked late into the night and called me to recite his revised analysis—another bull's-eye. Curses, foiled again!

Fortunately for me, Roy left one mistaken analysis in his book:

Match to 9 points. White (Robertie) leads Black (Barabino), 5 to 2. **WHITE TO PLAY A 3.**



Roy approves White's 6/3 play on the grounds that it preserves an extra 5, ranking 9/6 as second best because it prepares to kill 6's next. But I think 9/6 is better than 6/3. The extra 5 saved does not compensate for the enhanced chances of killing 6's and the flexibility of having a spare on the highest of White's four inside points instead of the lowest.

On 6-5 next, it is true, saving the extra 5 keeps White from having to leave a blot on his 2-point. On most 1's next, it matters little how White plays now, for he will move up to Black's 2-point; the smoother bear-in and bear-off just about balances the loss of the extra 5.

Look at the rolls on which 9/6 works better than 6/3 though:

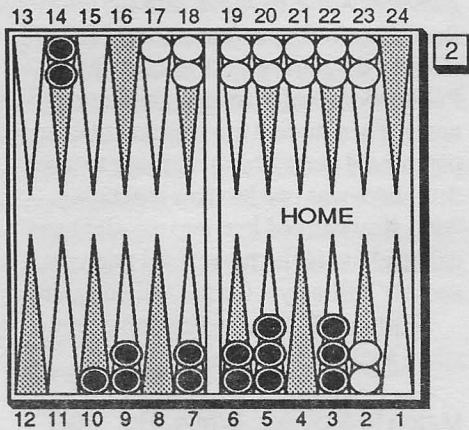
- 5-5, 4-4, 5-4, 5-3, 5-2, 4-3, 4-2: White
- (Continued on page 7)

last month's position

PROBLEM #150 SOLVED

by Kit Woolsey

Money game. BLACK TO PLAY 4-2.



As always, the first step in analyzing a position is to find all reasonable moves. Here is my list:

- (A) 5/1, 3/1
- (B) 10/6, 3/1
- (C) 10/6, 9/7
- (D) 14/10, 14/12
- (E) 14/12, 10/6.

White has about as strong a two point holding game as one could hope for. She has a perfect board which she can hold for a few rolls, and her sixes are not blocked.

Black still has not made the 4-point, and his men are not very well placed. In addition, the race is surprisingly close. Hence, Black is far from a lock to win this game. There are several things which can go wrong, both immediately and a few rolls down the road.

It is apparent that total safety on this roll is not Black's number one concern. He must look ahead to safety on future rolls and making the crucial 4- and 8-points. For this reason, I think we can eliminate any plays which put men out of play on the ace-point. Making the ace-point (5/1, 3/1) removes a builder for the 4-point, still leaves an indirect shot, and does little to solve Black's future problems. 10/6, 3/1 is completely safe for this roll. However, it removes a builder for the 8-point. In addition, the blot on the ace-point is a potential liability if White runs with one man, for Black cannot afford to hit and be hit back.

10/6, 9/7 creates maximum builders for the 4-point. Unfortunately it leaves White with four hitting numbers, and a hit is a certain winner (due to White's ownership of the cube) and a quite possible gammon, particularly since Black would still have two men in White's outfield. Also, this play removes a builder from the 8-point and makes it likely that Black will be leaving at least another indirect shot on the next roll.

So, it looks like we should be breaking the 14-point. 14/12, 10/6 is quite flexible, keeps three builders for both the 4- and 8-points, and gives Black maximum cover-

age of the outfield. On the down side, it leaves three hitting numbers, and these hits have a significant gammon danger due to the second blot. The alternative, 14/10, 14/12 looks slightly preferable to me. This play also leaves three builders for the two critical points. In addition, there are only two hitting numbers, and the gammon danger in case of a hit is minimized since Black has no more blots, has brought his men closer, and has made it more difficult for the remaining White checker to escape by making the 10-point. If White rolls 6-6, he will probably win the race due to his cube ownership, but it isn't over yet. If Black fails to make the 8-point or the 4-point on his next roll, he can probably play completely safe until White's board breaks. This will cut down on the ways that White can win.

Immediate safety or immediate good positioning of men is usually of the highest priority. However, this is most often true when there is a likely big swing on the next roll—i.e., when getting hit turns a big favorite into a loser, or making a vital point quickly locks up the game. Such is not the case in this problem. Black is not a huge favorite if he survives the next roll; and making the 4-point, while nice, will not come close to locking up the game. In such a position, Black must look into the future: bringing his men home in a natural manner, keeping his men in play, and concentrating on being able to play safe and make points on future rolls. Δ

chouette play

THE EQUAL VALUE RULE

by Larry Strommen

When I first started to play in chouettes, one doubling cube was used. Later I was introduced to "individual cube" chouettes. By using individual cubes, the captain and crew can play their own cube strategy—an excellent learning experience. Not all players see a position and its potential in the same light. This leads to another reason for individual cubes: to avoid arguments and indecision among captain and crew members.

The box always has the ability to double or take according to his own cube judgment. But when the box *selectively* doubles or takes cubes from players based on their skill level or personality—cubes that are of equal

value but offered or rejected selectively—the learning experience can take a spot on the back burner. In particular, players whose cubes are dropped must often sit out long games when the box accepts the weaker players' doubles. This tactic offers the box a way to retain his position even with questionable takes. Selective takes are also used to "pluck the feathers of the pigeons."

At the recent Michigan Summer Championships, I overheard Lee Genud introducing an excellent rule for chouettes with individual cubes: the *Equal Value Rule*. The box must treat all cubes of equal value in the same fashion. If offering a redouble to 4, *all* cubes at the 2-level would have to be offered. If acting on a double at 2, *all* cubes simultaneously offered at that value would have to be either accepted or rejected. This rule can help keep the chouette friendlier and avoid prolonged games in near-hopeless positions.—*Happy doubling* Δ



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WORLD CLASS BACKGAMMON REVIEWED...

(Continued from page 5)

can kill 6's safely.

- **6-6:** White has to play only one 6 instead of two, and remains with two spares on his 6-point instead of his 3-point.
- **6-2, 2-2:** White gets one spare each on his 7-, 6-, 5-, and 4-points instead of two spares on the 7-point, one on the 5-point and one on the 3-point.

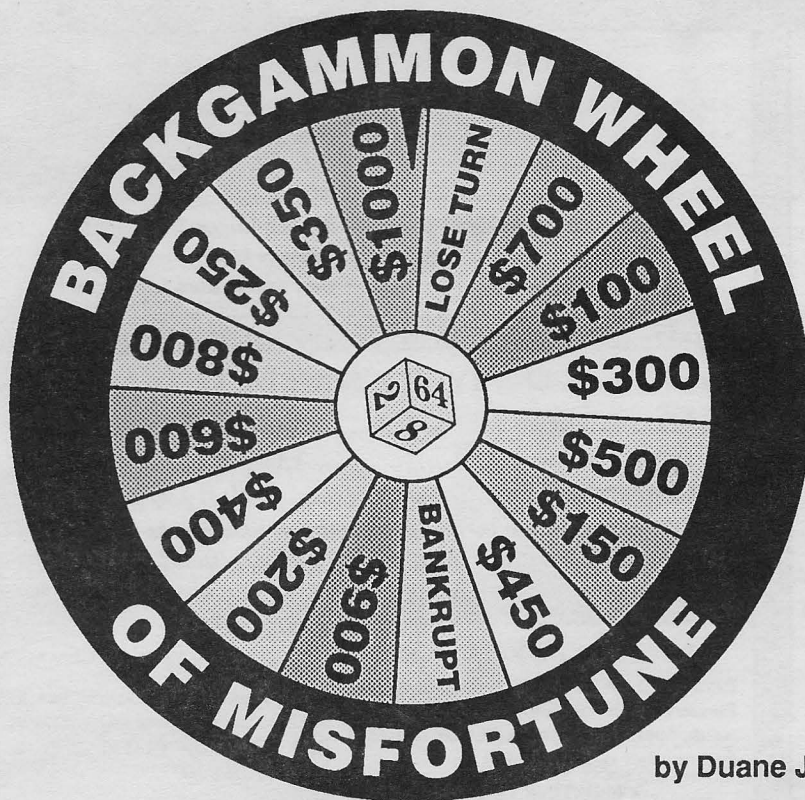
Saving the extra 5 may be adequate compensation for the inflexibility of stripping the 6-point and placing a spare inconveniently on the 3-point. But creating 12 more immediate 6-killing rolls is vital in this fragile mutual timing position.

I have one other substantial disagreement with Roy which does not involve any particular play or cube decision. He gives a match-equity chart which minimizes the significance of a lead. For example, in a 9 point match, he rates the leader at 8-7 Crawford only a 65% favorite; my estimate (the more usual) is 70%.

One way of looking at the problem is to assume simply that the leader at 8-7 Crawford will win game and match 50 times in 100, and win half the matches in which he loses a plain game as opposed to a gammon. To generate a 70% equity, we may assume that he loses 10 gammons and 40 plain games. To generate a 65% equity, we may assume that he loses 20 gammons and 30 plain games.

Roy acknowledges that the variable which drives his match-equity calculations is the gammon-probability in cubeless games. He claims to have derived a high value for this variable empirically, but he neither shows his data nor states this gammon-probability specifically. The implied value from 20 gammons and 30 plain games lost by the Crawford leader, however, is 40%.

Since I haven't compiled data to refute this estimate, I won't call Roy's implied 40% an error. But if 40% is a good estimate, then the starting position is almost as gammonish as a position where one player has a closed board and the other has two men on the bar with the rest of his men home. I find this hard to believe. Δ



by Duane Jensen

How carelessly do you play during a tournament match? I've listed 14 common backgammon blunders and assigned a dollar value to each. Add up the corresponding value for every mistake you've ever been guilty of. Then check the "Chart Of Carelessness" to see how you rate.

- \$100 – Rolled 3-3 but played five 3's.
- \$150 – Put your own man on the bar by mistake.
- \$200 – Played a 7 point match as if it were a 9 point match.
- \$250 – Hit your opponent's man but forgot to put him on the bar.
- \$300 – Mistakenly thinking you were on the bar, you picked up the dice without making a move.
- \$350 – Won a game but scored it as a win for your opponent.
- \$400 – Conceded a game before it was mathematically over.
- \$450 – Redoubled when you were already playing for match point.
- \$500 – Played an entire game with fewer than 15 checkers.
- \$600 – Left an unnecessary double shot in the bear-off.
- \$700 – Doubled in a bear-off when you were an underdog.
- \$800 – Started bearing off men before all of them were in your home board.
- \$900 – Picked up your dice and dropped them into your drink.
- \$1000 – Took a cube in the bear-off when winning was mathematically impossible.

The Chart of Carelessness

Dollar Total	Rating
\$0	A brilliant player or compulsive liar.
\$100-450	A perfectionist. A top notch player.
\$500-1150	A solid player.
\$1200-3050	Average.
\$3100-4550	Sloppy.
\$4600-5250	Careless.
\$5300 +	Avoid sharp objects.

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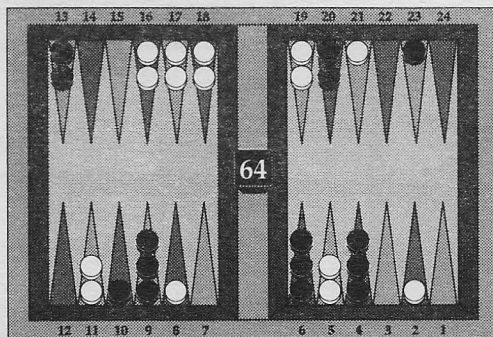
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