FLORIDIANS SHINE IN TAHOE
Corbett Captures Colossus Giovanis Grabs Open

The Sunshine State really had something to shine about at the NNBA's Caesars Tahoe Backgammon Tournament 24–28 October in Lake Tahoe, Nevada. Ft. Lauderdale's Mike Corbett topped a superstar 45 player field to win the $50,000 Caesars Colossus. Drew Giovanis of Clearwater also landed sunny-side up by winning over $17,000 in the Octavius' Open event.

Although 43-year-old Mike Corbett "couldn't remember" his last major backgammon tournament win, he is recognized everywhere as one of America's true backgammon celebrities. Corbett entered at the $1250 level and won four rounds to reach the Saturday night semifinals. His opponent, 1989 World Champion Joe Russell (Cal.), fell 19–10 on the strength of a game-ending six point backgammon.

Mike Senkiewicz, a former trader on the American Stock Exchange ("I crashed with the rest of them.") played the entire tournament listening to the Talking Heads, Elvis Costello and others on his Sony Walkman. (Headphones are legal in American tournament play as long as your opponent doesn't object.) Senk, possibly the best Scrabble player in the world, entered at the $5000 level and needed just two wins (against Mika Lidov and Malcolm Davis) to reach Joe Sylvester in the semifinals. Joe eventually fell 19–10. Just as Corbett's match ended on a backgammon, Senk's began on one: a 12 pointer that Sylvester could not recover from.

The Colossus Finals—Playing To Lose?
Although scheduled to begin at 11:00 A.M., it was apparent that audio problems and a conflicting match involving Senkiewicz in the Open III flight was going to delay the finals. Corbett was in no mood to wait in the playing room, so he informed directors Mark Richardson and Jim Roderick, "I'm going to play tennis. Call me on the courts."

At 2:00 P.M., the action commenced. Corbett and Senkiewicz squared off in a closed room with Kent Goulding, Kit Woolsey and Bill Robertie offering insightful commentary to nearly 100 spectators.
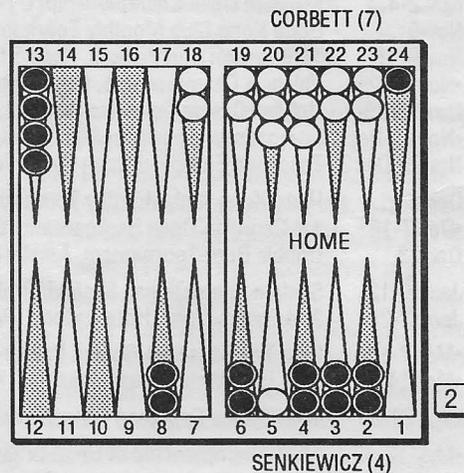
Senkiewicz won the first game via quick double and drop. Half way into the second game, Corbett looked up at Senk and said, "It would be nice to skip all this and go to 16–all."

"That's show business," replied Senkiewicz who began shaking his dice but then paused. "I have an idea. Sometime during the middle of the match, let's blow Goulding's mind and play a game with both of us trying to lose. Can you imagine his analysis?"

"Sounds like fun." It was obvious that the two players were good friends.

Leading 4–3, Senkiewicz lost a redoubled game to fall behind 7–4. Then in game 8, this pivotal position occurred:
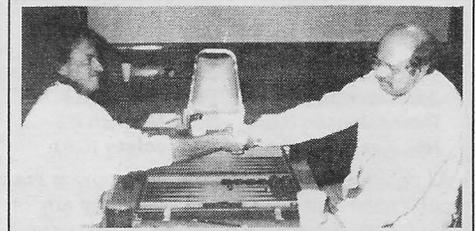
Caesars Colossus 21 point finals. Mike Corbett (White) leads Mike Senkiewicz (Black) 7 to 4. **BLACK TO PLAY 6-3.**

CORBETT (7)

HOME

SENKIEWICZ (4)

Senkiewicz made the big play, 13/7, 8/5*. Corbett threw a 5-4 hitting twice, and Senk lost a gammon.

In the viewing room, Kit Woolsey thought Senk's play was right, Kent Goulding said he could be talked into the move, and Bill Robertie wasn't sure.

Ahead 13–8, Corbett ended the match by winning a redoubled gammon for a 21–8 Colossus victory. After the handshake, Senkiewicz said, "We never did

Mike Senkiewicz (right) congratulates Mike Corbett upon winning the 1990 Caesars Colossus tournament and $50,000.
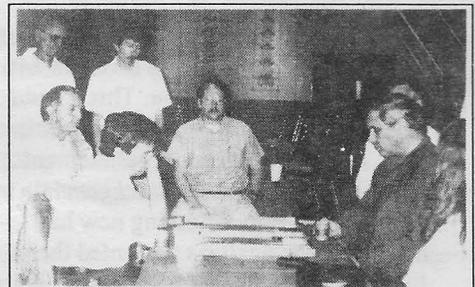
play that game to lose."

"The match ended so quickly," explained Corbett. "Maybe next time."

Octavius' Open
How good is Drew Giovanis? "I offered to hedge [part of the $17,000 first prize money] with Howard Markowitz in the finals, but he wanted odds. There's no way I was going to do that. So I tracked down Wilcox Snellings who offered me an even hedge. I think that tells you something about my game."

Drew's play also tells us something. The Clearwater, Florida financial consultant won seven straight matches (including

Drew Giovanis (left) and Howard Markowitz battle for first place in the Octavius' Open finals.

four at double match point) to prevail over 119 of the best players in America. In his last match, Drew, trailing Chicago's Howard Markowitz (a.k.a. "Mr. Reno") 7–5 in the 19 point finals, won 14 straight points to gain the title.

Yamin Again
Chicagoan Yamin Yamin is forcing people to notice his game. Since the World Cup in August, the hottest player in America has

LETTERS
c/o CHICAGO POINT
2726 W. Lunt Avenue
Chicago, IL 60645-3039

ATTRIBUTE THE SOURCE

In the July 1990 POINT, the "What Is The Kauder Paradox?" article used two diagrams. The second diagram is Problem 146 from *Advanced Backgammon*. This should have been referenced. Actually, the whole article is simply a misleading restatement of the analysis in *Advanced Backgammon* (pages 181–184), since nothing new has been added to the analysis presented there.

In the October 1990 POINT, Duane Jensen's "Hasty Plays" problem is Problem 223 from Advanced Backgammon, with two trivial changes made which don't affect the problem at all. This is the sort of thing Alfred Sheinwold was doing a few years back in his Los Angeles Times column: taking a position from Cooke or Magriel, moving a checker forward or backward a pip so as not to disturb the solution, and printing it as his own work.

Coming up with new backgammon problems really isn't all that tough. Virtually every game contains several interesting positions which would stretch backgammon theory if properly solved. Seven

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

coming attractions

by Carol Joy Cole
313/232-9731

• Denotes new or revised listing

NATIONAL

Nov 3	Sangamon Valley Monthly Tournament, On Broadway, Springfield, IL	217/789-6275
Nov 4	Minuteman BG Club Tournament, Sit'n Bull Pub, Maynard, MA	617/863-0012
Nov 6	8th Bar Point Club Fall Trophy Tourney, Pat's Pub, Norridge, IL	312/338-6380
Nov 9-11	Children's Hospital Benefit, Sheraton Commander, Cambridge, MA	617/641-2091
Nov 9-11	BG Co-op Fall Championships, Rocking Horse Ranch, Highland, NY	201/833-2915
Nov 11	HBC Fall One-Day Tournament, Grisanti's, Indianapolis, IN	317/845-8435
•Nov 11	Cavendish North Monthly Tournament, Southfield, MI	313/642-9616
Nov 15	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
•Nov 15-18	Regency Whist Club Backgammon Tournament, New York, NY	617/641-2091
Nov 17	Winter 1990 Connecticut Championship, Hall of Fame, Southington, CT	203/755-9749
•Nov 17-18	Autumn Gran Prix, Hindquarter Restaurant, San Diego, CA	619/294-2007
Nov 18	12th Annual Flint Area Club Championships, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Dec 1	Sangamon Valley Monthly Tournament, On Broadway, Springfield, IL	217/789-6275
Dec 9	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Bagwells, Chicago, IL	312/252-7755
Dec 9	New England Club Monthly, Sheraton Commander, Cambridge, MA	617/641-2091
•Dec 16	NY/NJ Co-op Regional Tournament, Ramada Inn, Long Island, NY	516/334-4833
•Dec 20	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Jan 5	Sangamon Valley Tournament, On Broadway, Springfield, IL	217/789-6275
•Jan 8	Bar Point Club Awards Night, Pat's Pub, Chicago, IL	312/338-6380
Jan 13	New England Club Monthly, Sheraton Commander, Cambridge, MA	617/641-2091
Jan 19	Sangamon Valley Tournament, On Broadway, Springfield, IL	217/789-6275
Jan 19	College Park Winter Open, Promenade Party Room, Bethesda, MD	301/530-0604
Jan 26	3rd Hawthorne Classic, Hawthorne Race Course, Cicero, IL	312/338-6380
Jan30-Feb3	8th Nevada State Championship, Nugget Hotel/Casino, Reno, NV	702/826-1984
•Feb 9	Spring Connecticut Championship, Hall of Fame, Southington, CT	203/755-9749
•Feb 10	New England Club Monthly, Sheraton Commander, Cambridge, MA	617/641-2091
•Feb 10	NY/NJ Co-op Regional Tournament, Ramada Inn, Long Island, NY	516/334-4833
•Feb 17	8th Fleet Underwood Memorial Tournament & Benefit, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
•Mar 10	New England Club Monthly, Sheraton Commander, Cambridge, MA	617/641-2091
Mar 22-24	1991 Midwest Championships, Marriott Hotel, Oak Brook, IL	312/338-6380

OUTSIDE USA

Nov 2-4	NRW German Open, Düsseldorf-Breitscheid, Germany	02151-27775
Nov 2-4	Swedish Open Championship, O'Henry's Hotel, Stockholm, Sweden	08-524099
Nov 5	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	3-689918
Nov 9-11	14th Crystal Cup Venezia, Casinò Municipale di Venezia, Italy	76 00 37 05
•Nov 22-25	Valencia Championship, Casino Monte-Picayo, Valencia, Spain	34 1 441 20 24
Nov 23-25	Holland Casino Open Tournament, Nijmegen, Netherlands	080/564628
•Nov28-Dec2	International Tournament In Israel, Eilat, Israel	3-720683
Nov 29-Dec 2	Teacher's European Open Championships, Casino Deauville, France	31 98 66 22
Dec 3	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	852/3-689918
•Dec 7-15	1st Georgian Open Backgammon Championship, Tbilisi, USSR	78832/23 40 22
Dec 23	Double Door Tournament, Amsterdam, Netherlands	0031 324014734
Jan 10-13	Seefeld International, Seefeld/Tirol, Austria	08341 12825
Jan 17-20	2nd French Open, Hotel Lutecia, Paris, France	331 4772-2810
•Mar 7-10	27th Ted Bassett & Gstaad Palace-Cup, Palace Hotel, Switzerland	061/331 5816
•Mar 14-17	17th Int'l Winter Championships, Palace Hotel, St. Moritz, Switzerland	061/331 5816
•Apr 22-25	18th Byblos European Championship, St. Tropez, France	33/9497 0004
•May 13-19	1991 Championship of Great Britain, Palace Hotel, Douglas, Isle of Man	0624/851045

years of work went into *Advanced Backgammon*. If you or your writers would like to quote from it, feel free. All I ask is that you attribute the source.—*Bill Robertie, president, New England Backgammon Club, Arlington, MA*

DUANE JENSEN RESPONDS: Bill, I assure you that my October "Hasty Plays" problem is not just a modification of Problem 223 in your *Advanced Backgammon*. I do

not *own* nor have I even *read* any of your fine books on backgammon (I haven't read any of Danny Kleinman's books, either). The idea for the problem came from a position in one of our weekly tournaments in Minneapolis. About 70% of the positions I've discussed in the POINT have been culled from tournament or chouette play. The remaining positions are contriv-

ances I've created to (hopefully) amuse and/or inform the reader.

There is bound to be repetition in backgammon writing, especially with common theme problems. Don't assume this repetition is necessarily caused by deceit. Accord me the same integrity I have given you.—*Duane Jensen, Editor, Twin Cities Backgammon Club Newsletter, Minneapolis, MN*

We respond to Bill Robertie's charges on page 7.—Ed.

ANY TAKERS?

With reference to Joe Sylvester's reported decision to stop slotting the 4-point with an opening 5-2 [Sept. 1990 POINT], I believe Kit Woolsey's analysis of this opening in the Jan. 1990 POINT holds the answer.

Kit refers to Hal Heinrich's database of 10,000+ games and the poor results for 5-2 (13/8, 13/11). I believe that statistical analysis of the opening rolls will eventually find the best play for most opening rolls.

Having noticed poor initial results for 5-1 (13/8, 6/5), and outstanding results for 6-4 (24/18, 13/9) and 6/3 (24/18, 13/10), I have switched to 24/18 with an opening 5-1. A number of players are now collecting data by experimenting with this play.

Although at present, I only have a small sample of win/loss statistics comparing the 5-1 splitting and slotting play, I am prepared to offer the following wager to the first taker: I wager $50 that within two years, the 5-1 opening of 24/18 will become the choice of most experts.—*Brendan McInerney, Hadley Wood, England*

Look for a Christmas present from World Champion Hal Heinrich in the CHICAGO POINT next month. For the first time anywhere, Hal will publish his now 11,000+ opening roll database.—Ed.

ANTI-SEMITISM CHARGED

I have a bone to pick with one of the articles in the October POINT. Although Duane Jensen's story about "Bozo Lieberman" was amusing, I feel it had anti-Semitic overtones. Perhaps another name should have been substituted for "Lieberman."—*Merrill Schrager, Milwaukee, WI*

BOSTON, Mass.—Two new problem and analysis-oriented Boston area bimonthly backgammon publications are putting the finishing touches on their premiere issues. *LeadingEdge Backgammon* debuts this month and costs $30 per year ($45 overseas air) for six issues. Order from: Roy Friedman; 18 Potter Pond; Lexington, MA 02173.

Inside Backgammon, due in January 1991, is edited by Kent Goulding and Bill Robertie. $40 ($60 overseas air) will get you a one year subscription (6 issues). Mail to: Inside Backgammon; P.O. Box 294; Arlington, MA 02174.

EXTORTION CONVICTION UPHELD BY COURT IN BACKGAMMON CASE

FRESNO, Cal.—The 5th District Court of Appeal had upheld a conviction in which an attempt allegedly was made to extort payment for money a Bakersfield attorney lost playing backgammon.

The appellate brief said Mark Derzon lost $23,000 to Shaul Harosh during two backgammon sessions at El Rey de los Pollos restaurant in August 1988.

Derzon said he concluded that Harosh had cheated by manipulating the dice, so he didn't pay the debt but did record some conversations from Harosh about the money.

In one conversation, Harosh threatened to bury Derzon alive, cut his throat, cut off his testicles, blow him and his house up and hire three guys to collect the debt, the appellate brief added.

Later, Derzon's car was burned up while he was in a nightclub watching female mud wrestling, the brief added. Harosh's thumb print was on a can of charcoal lighter fluid found in the car, the appellate court said. [*From an Associated Press article appearing in a September edition of the Las Vegas Review Journal.*]
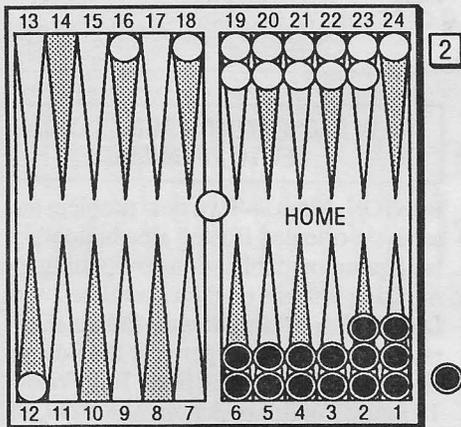

CHICAGO BAR POINT CLUB
1990 BPC PLAYER OF THE YEAR
COMPILED THRU OCT. 31

GARY KAY	22.56	Ralph Levy	3.84	Walter Trice	1.28
TAK MORIOKA	22.40	Lenny Loder	3.80	Steve Potashnick	1.04
MARK KING	18.56	Alex Caraplis	3.80	Bob Holyon	1.04
BRUCE WITTERT	16.24	V.W. Zimnicki	3.60	Merrill Schrager	0.96
LUCKY NELSON	15.52	Peter Kalba	3.52	Dave Rockwell	0.96
YAMIN YAMIN	15.24	Howard Ring	3.44	Randall Witt	0.88
DAVE CRAMER	14.12	Jay Ward	3.28	Sharon Lennon	0.88
JAKE JACOBS	13.80	Leslie Lockett	3.28	Jerry Brooks	0.88
STU KATZ	13.36	Jolie Lewis	3.16	Alex Itkin	0.80
KEN BOND	9.76	Dean Muench	3.04	Joe Wollick	0.80
JOHN DEMIAN	9.64	Norma Shyer	2.80	Jeff Kane	0.80
DEEB SHALATI	9.64	Bart Levin	2.80	Kurt Warning	0.72
TIM SERGES	9.60	Bill Hoeflich	2.80	Harold Seif	0.72
PAUL FRANKS	9.44	John Spatafora	2.64	Ed Bauder	0.72
MARCY SLOAN	9.20	Barbara Levinson	2.60	Bill Hargrave	0.72
DON DESMOND	8.80	Ron Stur	2.60	Hal Heinrich	0.64
DON JAYHAN	8.12	Kathy Rudnick	2.60	Mike Fengya	0.64
GEORGE BARR	8.08	Mike O'Brien	2.56	David Rubin	0.56
JOANN FEINSTEIN	7.68	Mike Spiropoulos	2.48	Mike Siegel	0.56
JOE KOUCHARIAN	7.36	Harry Cohn	2.48	Reggie Porter	0.52
Arnold Zousmer	7.04	Arline Levy	2.44	Jill Brussel	0.48
Bill Davis	7.00	Bill Keefe	2.40	René Wojtysiak	0.48
Bobbie Shifrin	6.84	Howard Markowitz	2.24	Terry Moskowitz	0.48
Bob Zavoral	6.80	Greg Shore	2.16	Elaine Kehm	0.32
Rich Galeba	6.56	Jim Gibbs	1.92	Mike Sutton	0.32
Phyllis Smolinski	6.24	Mary Franks	1.76	Larry Knoll, Jr.	0.28
Alice Kay	6.16	Gabriel Kairouz	1.68	Jamie Dodge	0.24
Sarg Serges	6.04	George Kirkby	1.60	Bernie Smuda	0.24
Herb Roman	5.96	Betsy Miller	1.60	Larry Knoll	0.24
Andy Argy	5.88	Grant Dace	1.60	Judy Kaplan	0.16
Ed Buerger	5.84	Walt Schafer	1.44	Jeff Ferguson	0.16
Femi Owiku	5.84	Richard Stawowy	1.36	Marv Arnol	0.12
Frank Callea	4.64	Stan Kucharz	1.36	Ted Mann	0.12
Judy Brown	4.44	Mark Anshus	1.28	Mickey Kaplan	0.08
Rudy Emmelot	3.88	David Lynn	1.28		

KEN BOND receives a free BPC tournament entry for amassing 4.16 master points and October Player of the Month honors. Ken earned the bulk of his points with a 2nd place finish on 9 October and a victory on 23 October.

Finishing second was John Demian (3.80) with Mark King (3.28) in third.

WHICH POINT TO BREAK?

*D*ear Danny: In the money game shown below, I rolled 4-1:

Money game. **BLACK TO PLAY 4-1.**

Should I break the 6-point, 5-point or 4-point? This type of problem has plagued me since I began playing backgammon eight years ago.

What about situations where I really need to bear off in a hurry, or when White has two or more men on the bar? Does my play change?—Just Not Sure

Dear Just: In "Breaking Your Closed Board" from *Is There Life After Backgammon?* (pp. 99–100), I calculated immediate and long-haul shot danger (one turn, two turns, three turns, even four turns) for various alternative plays with rolls of 5-1, 4-1, 3-1 and 2-1. In general, an odd number of men on the two highest occupied points combined creates greater immediate danger than a gap on a lower point—especially when the odd man is on the very highest point. But a lower gap increases the danger of a later shot.

Does the later danger exceed the earlier?

YES on 3-1, where 6/3, 6/5 is best because the spare on the 3-point eliminates the immediate danger of 6-3, 5-3 or 4-3 next.

NO on 5-1, where 5/off, 5/4 is best.

MAYBE on the 4-1 which perplexes you. If you calculate shot danger only three rolls in the future, 4/off, 4/3 looks safest. But if you calculate four rolls in the future, the 5/1, 5/4 looks slightly safer.

Nonetheless, overriding these calculations, I recommend 4/off, 4/3. For some of the hits several rolls down the road will come when you have six, seven or eight men off. You'll be able to take cube returns you would have to pass if hit earlier with only three or four men off. Moreover, even when both plays result in a later hit, and you can take the redouble, the more men off, the better. You'll win more often with seven men off than six, more often with eight men off than seven.

As you hint, other variables may be relevant in slightly different positions. If White has a bunch of her own men off, you have a stronger incentive to make the play which bears a man off, since your own speed of bearing off weighs heavily. Bearing off quickly is desirable (even though not urgent) in the position you show as well, because it may turn an ordinary win into a gammon.

One variable you don't mention is whether White has a closed board. White's blot on her 1-point makes her late hits more dangerous than if she had a closed board, for occasionally she'll be able to win otherwise lost games by picking up a second man. I'm sure that 4/off, 4/3 is best when White has a closed board, not sure when White has an open 1-point.

You ask how additional enemy men on the bar affect your decision. The more enemy men on the bar, the more likely you are to win a gammon when you don't get hit—even without bearing men off quickly. Speed in bearing off figures to add little to your already large gammon chances. Extra men on the bar make it more likely that your opponent will still be around to hit a later shot. That hit, even if it comes too late to cost you the game, will cost you the gammon you'd otherwise win.

This makes it appear that extra enemy men on the bar should sway you to move 5/1, 5/4. But they also have an opposite effect. One merit of 5/1, 5/4 is that it sometimes ends all shot danger forever. Suppose White rolls a single 5 and enters on your 5-point. If you roll 6-6, 5-5 or 4-4 next, you're safe when White has no more men on the bar, but you leave a shot when White has another man on the bar.

If you roll 6-5, 6-4 or 5-4 next, you're likewise safe when White has no more men on the bar, but in immediate blotting danger when White has another man on the bar and dances. White's second man on the bar has little effect on her shot chances after you move 4/off, 4/3, but adds almost 1% to her probability of hitting an early shot after you move 5/1, 5/4. When the probabilities are small to begin with, that's very significant.

Does the increased shot danger of 5/1, 5/4 when White has more than one man on the bar compensate for the increased costliness of later hits after 4/off, 4/3? I think so, and therefore I'll stick with 4/off, 4/3. But like you, I'm "just not sure" and would be pleased to see a more definitive analysis.—*Yours, Danny* Δ
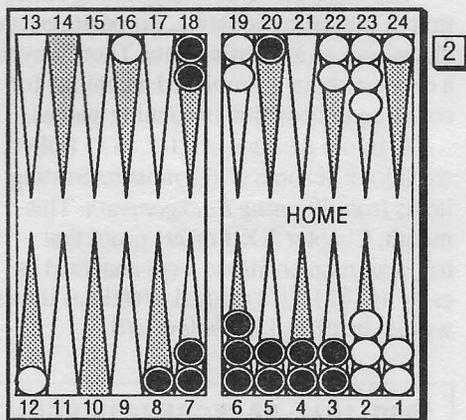
your move

PROBLEM #165

Money game. **BLACK TO PLAY 6-5.**

Money game. **BLACK TO PLAY 2-2.**

We are all taught early in our back-gammon careers to avoid hitting excess men when our opponent is playing a backgame. If we put too many of his checkers on the bar, he will not be able to play, which should aid his timing. Para-doxically however, there are backgame positions where it is advisable to hit as many men as possible. Problem #164 is a case in point.

To be in a position to complete his prime, Black is clearly forced to hit one man, and the big question is whether or not to hit two men. If he hits once, the best play appears to be 18/16*/14(2). If he hits twice, 18/12*, 18/16* looks right.

If Black does put two on the bar, he will almost certainly be able to complete his prime before White even threatens to escape. Once established, Black's 6-prime figures to last at least five rolls for two reasons: (a) his men are so far back, and (b) he is playing against a 1-2 backgame which naturally "kills" sixes on the bear-in.

Even after breaking the 8-point, Black will probably be able to hold the bar for a few more turns. White is a clear favorite to bring both men in within five rolls. Since her board will start to crunch after this, a very likely scenario is that White will have a crunched board with seven men back on the 23- and 24-points. This will lead to many gammons for Black.

Now suppose Black hits only one man. If White immediately enters, she will be in position to escape which is the one thing that Black doesn't want. Consequently, if Black fails to cover the 8-point, he will be forced to hit if he can. If he cannot, White may release a man which will both help her timing and reduce the gammon chances considerably.

If White should happen to enter with a 6-1 or 6-2, she is in much better shape. She will have helped her timing by springing another man into the outfield. Additionally, she gains the possibility that Black will be forced to send the man on her ace-point to the bar—a definite positional improvement. Even if none of these things happen and Black comfortably closes the prime (thus forcing White to crunch), White will have only six, instead of seven men back. This makes it far more likely that she will be able to scramble off the gammon.

There are several important factors in the position which, if modified, would make hitting only one man more attractive:

(1) Black's outfield men are very far back making it likely that he will be holding the prime a few rolls after White has entered both men. If the Black men were more advanced, hitting one piece would be a better idea. In this case, two men up would improve White's timing because by the time she entered both men, Black's 6-prime would be gone.

(2) The Black prime is not yet complete. If it were, hitting only one man would be-come more attractive, since as soon as White entered, he would be headed for oblivion—no chance of escaping a back checker. With the prime still under construction, there is the real danger of White escaping a back checker and significantly improving her position.

(3) White's front position is quite ad-vanced. Put the men on White's 1- and 2-points back on the 6- and 8-points. This extra timing would give White a fair chance of holding her board if both men were hit.

(4) White is playing a 1-2 backgame. If she was playing a more advanced back-game (such as 2-3 or 2-4) that didn't slow Black's bear-in, it would be more attractive to hit one men and hope that she entered immediately and crunched while Black's prime was still in force.

(5) White's second man to be hit still had several pips to move before crunching. Thus, Black does not hurt White's timing all that much by refusing to hit it. If the checker in question was al-ready in White's home board, hitting would be far less attractive.

Changing one or more of these factors could well swing the pendulum towards hitting only one checker. However, all the significant factors argue in favor of the second hit. It will lead to several more gammons, and it is not at all clear that it will cost any more losses. In this position, it isn't even close. Δ

AMALGAMATION

Tom Johnson claims his "Expert Back-gammon" computer program (for the Mac-intosh) won $40 playing for $2 per point against all comers at the Caesars Tahoe tournament last month. To get a copy, send $60 to Komodo Software; 346 Costello Court; Los Altos, CA 94024… For those of you interested in ordering any of **Danny Kleinman**'s excellent books, he has a new address: 5312 1/2 Village Green; Los Angeles, CA 90016… New Yorkers **John & Jill Ferdinand-Brussel** visited The BPC 7 October. **Jonathan Bennetts** (Toronto, Canada) and **Rick Gallen** (London, Eng-land) stopped by 9 October en route to Guatemala… Medical call: Bar Point regular **Scotty Mitchell** is healing nicely after ripping ligaments in his ankle from a jogging accident in late September. Granite State director **Lincoln Bedell** dislocated and broke a bone in his elbow resulting from a stair mishap one week prior to his October New Hampshire Fall Classic… Chicago's **Kathy Posner** moves from Martin Janis to Senior V.P. at Communica-tions 2000. Kathy was instrumental in bringing together the Bar Point Club and Hawthorne Race Course for the first Back-gammon Classic. The third one is set for 26 January 1991… **Ed King** writes *Gammon-Teaser* for work backgammon group. The current issue is 15 pages with lots of math. For a sample, send $2 to: Ed King; 375 S. Gay Street; Plain City, OH 43064… Apple Computer recently transferred **Mark & Julie Harlan** from California to the United Kingdom offices for one year. No doubt they'll run into another UK Apple em-ployee: Teacher's European Open director **Julian Wilson**… Former BPC player **Greg Shore** wrote to tell us he received his Ph.D. in June and is now working for Italian state television and the Italian Institute for Philo-sophical Studies… **Mark Richardson**'s and **Jim Roderick**'s 8th Nevada State Championships (30 Jan.–3 Feb. 1991) invitation lists a new event: Midnight Mixed Doubles. It's limited to eight couples who will play all of their 5-point matches in a jacuzzi! Call 702/826-1984 or 702/852-1221 for the "steamy" details. Δ

Excerpts From A CLASSIC

Reviewed by
Brendan McInerney

Recently, whilst browsing through a book shop in Hay-On-Wye on the England/Wales border, I found a book entitled *Winning Backgammon* and purchased it for £6. Incidentally, despite being a small town of some 3,000 inhabitants, Hay claims to be the largest centre of second hand booksellers in the world.

Unlike most early backgammon books, *Winning Backgammon* has some genuinely interesting and advanced concepts. The book was coauthored by Grosvenor Nicholas and

C. Wheaton Vaughan and published by D. Appleton and Company in 1930. For you backgammon historians, Wheaton Vaughan was chairman of the Card and Backgammon Committee of the Racquet and Tennis Club of New York. In 1931, he invited other club representatives (including Oswald Jacoby) to join with the Racquet Club in producing the first backgammon code of laws.

The terms "double" and "redouble" are used throughout *Winning Backgammon,* but no mention of an actual doubling cube

is ever made. "Double game" is substituted for "gammon," and "throwing off" for "bearing off." On all of the board diagrams, the position of the candle designates the location of the inner (home) boards. This was customary because the best lighting was desired on the side of the bar where the most important action occurred.

The book contains a fascinating collection of thematic problems. Propositions are discussed; so are settlements. There's even a chapter about a simplified technique for counting the position in running-games.

In future editions of CHICAGO POINT, we'll look at some of the most interesting items from *Winning Backgammon*. This month, Chapter XXII offers proof that backgammon positions were analyzed as early as 1821. It is printed exactly as it was written in 1930. [*See below left*]

XXII
"ACCORDING TO HOYLE"

ILLUSTRATING A CLASSICAL QUESTION FOUND IN AN ANCIENT HOYLE'S "GAMES," DATED 1821

"THE FOLLOWING QUESTION IS WORTH ATTENTION AS BEING CRITICAL AND INSTRUCTIVE"

Place the men on your board as shown on this diagram and play as soundly as you can the following throws. These must be taken one at a time without looking ahead.

When you finish compare your play and results with the Play Analysis.

WHITE'S PLAY

White   **Black**

WHERE AND WHY?

Black's Inner   Black's Outer

White's Inner   White's Outer

Situation reviewed and suggestions for good play made on the following page.

[Solution]

Play the one BO4 to BO5, risking a seven instead of an eight, for the following reasons:

"*First*. Because the chances of being hit by a 7 or 8 are equal.

"*Second*. If he does not hit 7 you will then have in your favor twenty-three chances to thirteen, that by your next throw you either hit him or pass beyond him.

"*Third*. In case your second throw should be under 7, and you cannot hit him, yet you may play that cast at home and consequently leave the blot upon double dice.

"Whereas if, on the contrary, you had left the blot upon 8, you would have made a bad choice, for the following reasons:

"1. Because the chances of being hit by 7 or 8 are equal only.

"2. Because if you should escape being hit by 8, yet then you would have but seventeen chances in your favor, against nineteen for either hitting him or passing beyond him by your next throw.

"Now in case your second throw should be six-ace, which is short of him, you would then be forced to play the man that is out of your tables, being unable to play the six at home, and consequently to leave a blot to be hit by a single die (or flat), in which event, computing that you play for eighteen shillings a game, he would be entitled to eleven shillings of the whole depending stake."

[*Editor's note: In this position, the actual settlement would be very close to a wash.*]

1930–1931: BACKGAMMON BOOM

The two years following the stock market crash must have been the time many Americans learned backgammon. Here's the complete BG bibliography for those two years as compiled by V.H. Yanko and first published in the June 1981 *Las Vegas Backgammon Magazine*:

Backgammon in 20 Minutes. Thorne, Harold: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1930.

Backgammon of Today. Longacre, John: Bell Publishing Co., 1930.

Backgammon—Rules for the Standard Game and Modern Variations. Springfield, MA: Milton Bradoet Co., 1930.

Backgammon Standards. Walling, William & Hiss, William Jr. New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1930.

Backgammon Tactics. Thorne, H.: Dutton, 1931.

Backgammon Up-To-Date. Point, B.: De Larue, 1931.

Comic Backgammon. Vail, Barry: Conde Nast Publ., 1931.

Complete Backgammon. Richard, Walter L.: J.J. Little & Ives Co., 1931.

How to Play Backgammon. Hoyle, R.: Laurie, 1931.

How to Play the New Backgammon. Hattersley, Lelia: Country Life Press, 1930.

Laws of Backgammon. Racquet/Tennis Club: Scrbner, 1931.

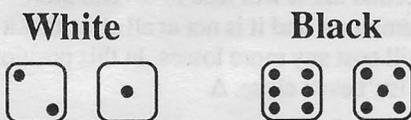*Modern Backgammon*. England, F.: De Larue, 1930.

Modern Backgammon, The. Boyden, Elizabeth Clark. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1930.

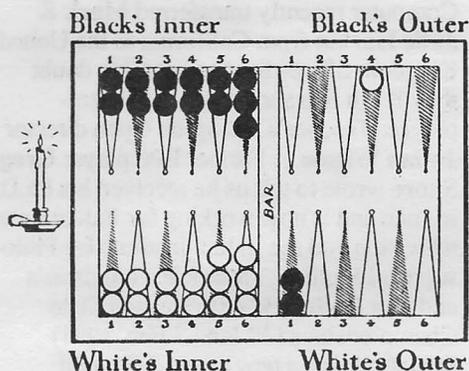*Taking Some Of The Luck Out Of Backgammon*. Eyre, W.D. Ramapo Publishing Co., 1931.

Vanity Fair's Backgammon To Win. Mabadi, George: Conde Nast Publ., 1930.

Winning Backgammon. Nicholas, Grosvenor & Vaughan, C. Wheaton. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1930.

AN OPEN LETTER TO BILL ROBERTIE

Dear Bill: In your letter to the editor this month (page 2), you level some very serious charges involving plagiarism against the CHICAGO POINT and contributing editor Duane Jensen. As the most highly respected backgammon figure in the world, whatever you write has a tremendous impact on the backgammon community. Publicly demeaning our integrity without first substantiating your accusations benefits no one.
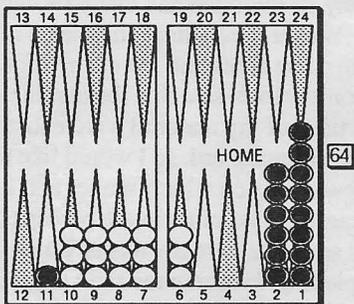
Regarding our July article "What Is The Kauder Paradox?," you correctly identify our second diagram as identical to your Problem 146 in *Advanced Backgammon*. Your comment is, "This should have been referenced." Our article did give you credit for your Kauder Paradox efforts stating "...Bill Robertie analyzed it in his *Advanced Backgammon*." However, to be precise, we should have mentioned your name and book a second time.

Then again, your Problem 145 really should have credited James Kauder for his pioneering effort to find a position that was both a correct double and beaver (as Danny Kleinman did in his 1980 *Vision Laughs At Counting*). But because all of us work at backgammon in our spare time, unintentional oversights are bound to occur.
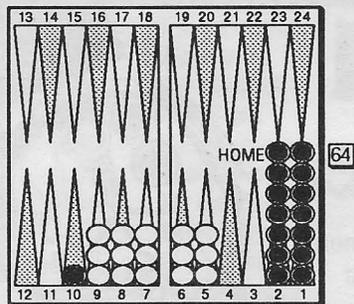
What did you mean with, "Actually, the whole article is simply a misleading restatement . . . since nothing new has been added to the analysis presented there"? We certainly were not trying to *mislead* anyone. The Kauder Paradox was mentioned in the June "Miss Lonelyblots" and the July "Uncle Jake" columns. Our article was attempting to *inform* those readers unfamiliar with the paradoxical position.

You chide Alfred Sheinwold for ". . . taking a position . . .moving a checker forward or backward a pip so as not to disturb the solution, and printing it as his own work." Does the following example demonstrate that you are guilty of positional piracy?

Kent Goulding's true double-beaver position from his article "Tying Up Loose Ends" (April/May 1982 *Las Vegas Backgammon Magazine*).

Your true double-beaver position (Problem 146 from *Advanced Backgammon*, 1984). Goulding's position is not referenced.

Case dismissed, Bill. You're innocent of any wrongdoing. That's because nobody *owns* a backgammon position—only the analysis that goes with it, and your brilliant analyses are always fresh and original.

Advanced Backgammon has exposed hundreds of students to classics like the 8 vs. 8 bearoff (Problem 4B) and the Jacoby Paradox (Problem 5). Who cares if these positions have been previously discussed in earlier books and magazines?

And that's exactly what we were attempting to do with our story about the Kauder Paradox. We are also innocent of any wrongdoing. Δ

FLORIDIANS SHINE...

won too much money to put in print. At this tournament, add victories in the Open III flight and Cleopatra's Kickoff to his list.

"Ho hum." That almost seems to be red hot Yamin Yamin's reaction after winning two Caesars Tahoe events and a $4200 poker jackpot.

And for a little icing on the cake, Yamin hit a royal flush worth $4200 on one of Caesars' poker machines! Complete results:

1990 CAESARS TAHOE TOURNAMENT

CAESARS COLOSSUS (45): 1st Mike Corbett (FL); 2nd Mike Senkiewicz (NY); 3rd/4th Joe Russell (CA), Joe Sylvester (MI)

OVERFLOW COLOSSUS (8): 1st Jim Pasko (CA)

OCTAVIUS' OPEN I (119): 1st Drew Giovanis (FL); 2nd Howard Markowitz (IL); 3rd/4th Eliot Bean (CA), Nathan Jones (TX); 5th/8th Bill Barron (TX), Peter Gala (CAN), Wendy Kaplan (IN), Max Shapiro (CA)

OPEN II: 1st Vladimir Dobrich (CA); 2nd Doug Mayfield (IL); 3rd/4th A. Kouleyan (CA), H. Zafaranian (TX)

OPEN III: 1st Yamin Yamin (IL); 2nd Ali Zaltash (PA)

ANTONY'S INTERMEDIATE I (164): 1st George Foster (CA); 2nd Duane Eshima (CO); 3rd/4th Thom Hanlon (TX), Mike Snow (TX); 5th/8th Jonathan Bennetts (CAN), Duane Boeck (CA), Richard Miles (NY), Kathy Rudnick (IL)

INTERMEDIATE II: 1st John Ritchie (KS); 2nd Peter Zacks (CA); 3rd/4th Wanda Mortuk (MI), Richard Packard (WA)

INTERMEDIATE III: 1st Mike Colgan (CA); 2nd Kevin McDonough (AZ)

NERO'S NOVICE I (48): 1st Sherry Lee (CA); 2nd Dan Wesley (MI); 3rd/4th Dennis Cupp (OH), Mary Zak (CA)

NOVICE II: 1st Nick Babakanian (CA); 2nd Marjorie Gibbs (CA); 3rd/4th Mansour Mashhadian (CA), Carol Leatherman (PA)

NOVICE III: 1st Alkis Pappas (CA); 2nd Barb Liston (CA)

CLEOPATRA'S KICKOFF (512): 1st Yamin Yamin (IL); 2nd Hal Heinrich (CAN); 3rd/4th Bill Robertie (MA), Howard Robinson (FL)

ROMULUS & REMUS'S DOUBLES (32): 1st Arthur Benjamin & Trish Hegland (CA); 2nd Hal Heinrich & Bill Scollard (CAN)

DOUBLES II (16): 1st Azzam Masarani & Joe Harris (CA)

DOUBLES III (8): 1st Bill Kennedy & Scott McKenzie (CA)

OPEN JACKPOT (32): 1st Doug Mayfield (CA); 2nd Alan Steffen (WA)

OPEN JACKPOT II (16): 1st Gary Kay (IL)

INTERMEDIATE JACKPOT (64): 1st Al Demirjian (CA); 2nd Kevin McDonough (AZ)

NOVICE JACKPOT (16): 1st Barbara Fogerland (CA)

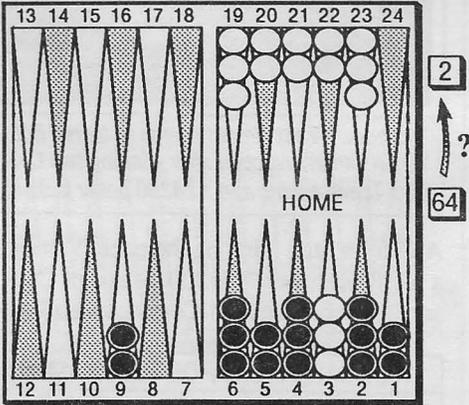NOVICE JACKPOT II (8): 1st Diane Hoag (AZ)

DETECTIVE WALTER TRICE REOPENS THE CASE

I love a mystery, but Jake Jacobs' latest ["Too Many Market Losers," October 1990 CHICAGO POINT] contained nothing but mystification. It should have been called "To Many Red Herrings And Too Little Ratiocination." Here's the real scoop on this case.

13 point match. Black led White, 11 to 9.
SHOULD BLACK DOUBLE?

First, counting market-losers vs. immediate hits is pointless if you don't quantify the related gains and losses from doubling. When Black throws a clearing number, he gets to a position which he should win about 88% of the time. The match-equity gain from a double-in is then 88% – 83% = 5%. When Black gets hit after a double-in, he finds himself playing for the match when his chances are maybe 15%, whereas if he hadn't doubled, he would be dropping his opponent's cube and keeping 60% match equity. Cost = 60% – 15% = 45%. Therefore, we need a market-loss/hit ratio of at least 45/5 (= 9/1) to even think about doubling. As Jake noted, the actual ratio is only 8/1. Black gets hit 4 x 15/36 = 1.667 times out of 36 on the first roll, and "loses his market" 11 + 4 – 1.667 = 13.333 times. If this was the whole story, the verdict would be: close, but apparently no double.

But Black's gain from a market-loser is actually even less than 5%. Jake forgot about gammons. Granted, Black doesn't win many, but if his first throw is 4-3, for instance, he is trivially too good to double, because he has zero blot numbers and White can't get into the race. At this score, the gammon-gain to loss-cost ratio is 17/23, so that many positions which would be

cashes for money become too good. If Black can net as many as 2% gammons, the 5% gain goes down to 3%, making the necessary market-loss/hit ratio 15/1.

There is also some checker play vig from not doubling. With the cube at 4, White is gammon-proof and can wait forever for a shot. As a result, he wins more.

Jake decided to ignore the no-blot, non-clearing numbers: "He gained only on the immediate hits; otherwise the position was pretty static." This is incorrect.

Consider 5-2. Black loses playable spares and goes from four blot numbers to 10. If the original position was close to a double, the position after 5-2 must be not good enough by a wide margin. Similar "deterioration" numbers are 5-1, 4-2, 4-1, 3-2, 3-1, 6-3, 6-4, 6-5, and 2-1. If positions after these rolls aren't doubles, Black loses by having doubled when he rolls one of them.

In short, Black simply has far to few market-losers, and the only real mystery is how Jake's rollout managed to make the double/no double issue even seem close.— *Walter Trice, Holden, MA*

JAKE JACOBS REPLIES: I am pleased to see Walter Trice's criticism of my article. Since my primary purpose in writing it was to entertain, I felt it necessary to leave many i's undotted and many t's uncrossed.

Walter's trenchant comments illuminate some areas that were heretofore hazy. I don't want it said that the instructional portions of my material were entirely slap-dash or haphazard, so I would like to clarify a few points on which Walter and I seem to disagree. Two of them are perhaps trivial; but since they are my nits at which Walter is picking, I reserve the right to pick back.

Walter says that "Jake decided to ignore the non-blot, non-clearing numbers: 'He gained only on the immediate hits; otherwise the position was pretty static.' This is incorrect." Walter than discussed one such non-blot, non-clearing throw (5-2) and its relative effect on Black's game.

I did not ignore such throws, nor fail to consider their effect. I put the words "pretty static" into the mind of a character who was trying to analyze the position in the middle of a game; but reflecting at leisure, I stand by them. Other than the parlay of each side rolling 6-6, there is no sequence that is entirely static. However, given the choice between characterizing rolls such as 5-2 (5-1, 4-2, et al.) as "pretty static" or "diabolically dynamic," I opted for the former. Sue me.

The second small point—again, something Walter suggests I ignored—is the

relevance of gammons. Walter is correct. After a 4-3, for instance, Black has a free roll toward a gammon. Will he get one? After the series: 4-3, 6-3, 6-5, 5-1, is Black too good to double? I don't know the answers, but any readers interested in making a seminal contribution toward the advancement of backgammon, please feel free to roll this out 3,600 times. Send your results to Bill Davis c/o CHICAGO POINT.

Now for Walter's central objection to "Too Many Market Losers." *The Maltese Falcon* changed the nature of mystery fiction 60 years ago. Previous works reflected a world view in which the hero, employing extremely rational, scientific thought processes, uncovered truth. Truth was easily recognized; it was after all . . . truth. The change wrought by *The Maltese Falcon* was profound and unsettling: there was no truth—everyone lied. The resolution of the story came not in the hero's unraveling the many layers of fabrication, but in his establishing for himself a personal moral base in a world without absolutes. The falcon itself, the "Rara Avis" as Casper Gutman calls it, serves neatly as central metaphor for the book's theme. Sought rabidly by all concerned throughout the story, in the end, it proves to be counterfeit. Under a glossy enamel coating, there is lead; the real falcon remains elusive.

The first half of my story details a scientific, rational approach to the problem position. Any readers now fearful of emulating my methods or reluctant to rely on my data, fear not: you got the straight dope. The conclusion, commencing with the arrival of the client, is hocus-pocus. Walter recognized this but seems not to have recognized it as deliberate. If the position is truly a double-in, it, or any such position given the match score, is already a Rara Avis. A position which was not a double because it has too many market losers would be a fabulously rarer bird, it's progenitor more rarefied than the roc's. So far, no one has raised the question: How does one reduce the ratio of market losers without fatally transmogrifying the position?

Finally, Walter questions the results of the rollout which show the position to be a marginally correct double. As should have been clear when I *cooked the books* for my client ("The ink on my alterations was already dry"), for such minor changes to have affected the conclusion, 180 rollouts is not nearly sufficient. Still, the position may possibly be a double (heretically, I don't much care one way or the other), but there is no big "mystery" about it. Black's position is very strong, and the cumulative effect of all possible sequences—even

recognizing the nasty undertow of all these forgotten 5-2's—seems to be continued improvement in Black's position.

A bit of relevant speculation in the hope of provoking new controversy: I believe that in general, the side which has an advantage is more likely to see that advantage increase rather than decrease. Here's why. I assume for a moment that in an infinite game of backgammon, the opposite is true. The favored side will inevitably slide back toward an even game. My reason for assuming this is:

A. It is comforting   B. It is tres chic
C. It is Newtonian   D. All of the above.

I will call this backsliding entropy because entropy is a word that just begs for abuse. In a normal, finite game of backgammon, entropy is taking place; but I believe that the process is slower than the rate at which the end of the game arrives; that, on average, the leader cannot lose fast enough to forestall the end of the game. (For those of you at home, a simple experiment will demonstrate this. Climb inside a balloon. Go on a hunger strike. Now, let the air out of the balloon. I'm betting you will suffocate before you starve. Please be sure you finish the 3,600 rollouts before you attempt this. We don't want to do our experiments out of order.)

The bottom line: the position is not pretty static, it's thermodynamic.—*Sir Isaac Jacobs*

DATA CONFIRMS FRIEDMAN'S HIGH GAMMON COUNT

After reading Roy Friedman's findings on the high "gammonishness" of the starting position ["Match Equity Update," October 1990 POINT], we examined 800 double/take reference positions compiled from the works of Ed O'Laughlin, Paul Weaver, Herb Gurland, Bill Robertie, Wilcox Snellings and myself to compute a ratio of gammons to straight wins. Considering contact positions only, we found, indeed, that 34% of the leader's wins were gammons. This compares favorably with Roy's reported 35% statistic for Crawford "needs two vs. needs one."

Incidentally, in positions where 34% of the wins are gammons, the taker must have almost a 36% win probability to accept the cube instead of the required 25% minimum in the gammonless case. The calculations:

Total wins: 64.1%
Losses: 35.9%
Straight Wins: 42.3% (0.66 x 64.1)
Gammons: 21.8% (0.34 x 64.1)
Equity: 0.423 + (2 x 0.218) − .359 = 0.5%

—*Jim Baroff, Edgewater, MD* Δ

HALLOWEEN

by Tak Morioka

As the wind swirled through the damp autumn air, my breath rose and faded into a chilly gray stillness. My thoughts were transfixed on the events of last week. It was the match that changed me forever.

I had him dead and buried. All I needed was to place a headstone on the grave: "Here lies my opponent. Killed by me on October 31." But to my dismay, he proved resilient. He was the reoccurring nightmare of all backgammon players, the dreaded "vampire" opponent.

As I was hammering in the last coffin nails, he broke through the lid. His eyes were red with flames, his teeth drooling in expectation. It was sheer panic. He leapt for my throat but I managed to duck the violent charge. I gave him my best uppercut, stunning him for a moment, but this only further enraged his mounting fury. He growled and raved, exhorting my destruction. The tension grew as he suddenly turned deadly silent. His shifting eyes focused on my every move, alert to any attempt of escape.

I looked for something to pick up to do battle with this evil force. Can I make a cross with these pencils to ward off the monster? Maybe I should take a bite out of that garlic pizza to repel him. I'm reaching for something that's probably not there. A drink! Perhaps another round. Kill the dread! Forget it's happening . . . it's happening . . . it's happening . . .

Later after it was all over, fellow players came to witness my burial. The eulogy was simple yet urgent: "He was one of us, but now he is one of them. Get out the stake before he awakens. Hurry! Hurry! The sun is going down!"

As you can see, they did not succeed. I'm here to tell the tale. Are you ready for the match of your life? Even if it's not your last, you *will* remember it. Δ

Non-Alcoholic Alternative

Muscadines, or Vitis rotundifolia, are grapes which grow naturally in the South.

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501/468-2740 (fax)

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1989

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