

1991 michigan summer championships

COHN TAKES HIS SHOW ON THE ROAD

Malcolm Davis Wins Oasis Jackpot

Chicagoan Harry Cohn has a good record in his home town. "I won the Chicago Open in 1985 and 1990, but this is my first 'road' victory." So said the even-tempered Cohn, a director of product development for a computer software company. Cohn went undefeated in winning the Michigan Summer Backgammon Championships 5-7 July at the Ramada Inn, Flint, MI. Flint Area director/editor Carol Joy Cole drew a sellout crowd of 150+ players to her 12th annual "Backgammon Bacchanalia"—outstanding attendance for a holiday weekend tournament.

Cohn bested Frank Talbot (MI), Don Kandel (MI), Jake Jacobs (IL), Stuart

Hosen (TX), Chris Campbell (NV) and Jack Kissane (NY) to become the finalist of the winners bracket. Then he polished off 2nd Chance winner Chris Campbell one more time (11 to 7) to keep his record of never losing in the finals of a sectional or regional event intact.

What was Harry's toughest match of the weekend? "I would say it was in the first round against Frank Talbot. I was down 6-1 and 10-9 before winning 11-10."

What makes Harry win? Perhaps his easy-going philosophy toward the game. "Winning is certainly more fun than the alternative, but it isn't life-or-death with me. By avoiding the severe feelings of tension, it's easier for me to concentrate on the game."

WHY THEY CALL BACKGAMMON A GENTLEMAN'S GAME

The \$500 16-player Oasis Jackpot saw two of the game's finest gentlemen—Malcolm Davis (TX) and Don Desmond (IL) battle

down to the wire in the \$7500 finals. After 17 tough games, Davis prevailed, 13-11.

ELSEWHERE . . .

. . . Carol Falk topped Mike Darooge in the Intermediate finals. But don't hold a tag day for Mike: he won or placed in a total of four events.

Josh Lantto (MI) was the top Novice and Hoosier director Butch Meese won the Overflow event.

This reporter teamed with Tak Morioka to win the Open Doubles. Perry Gartner's wife and daughter, Norma and Marcie Gartner (NJ) captured the Limited Doubles.

The Summer Freeze-Out winner was Canada's Steve Fletcher, and Kevin McDonough (AZ) grabbed the Blitz tourney.

KUDOS . . .

. . . to Carol Joy Cole, Dave Cardwell, John Carrico, Mary Ann Meese and Woody Woodworth for the smoothest Michigan Summer Championships ever. Δ

1991 MICHIGAN SUMMER CHAMPIONSHIPS

OPEN (64): 1-Harry Cohn (IL), 2-Chris Campbell (NV), 3-Walter Trice (MA); 1C-Jack Kissane (NY), 2C-Robby Roberts (MI), 3C/4C-Rick Todd (MI) / Ali Zaitash (PA).

INTERMEDIATE (64): 1-Carol Falk (MI), 2-Mike Darooge (MI), 3-John Edmiston (IL); 1C-Bill Szirtes (CAN), 2C-Miriam Bureson (MI), 3C/4C-Ed King (OH) / Jane Lewandowski (MI).

NOVICE (14): 1-Josh Lantto (MI), 2-Marleen Carol (MI); 1C-Judy Schaffner (CAN), 2C-Marge Lewandowski (MI).

OVERFLOW (8): 1-Butch Meese (IN), 2-Ira Hoffberg (IL).

OASIS JACKPOT (16): 1-Malcolm Davis (TX), 2-Don Desmond (IL).

OPEN DOUBLES (32): 1-Bill Davis & Tak Morioka (IL), 2-Sandy Kaplan (MI) & Carol Starr (NV), 3/4-Roy Friedman (MA) & Butch Meese (IN) / Toivo Puhm & Carl Sellars (CAN).

LIMITED DOUBLES (14): 1-Marcie & Norma Gartner (NJ), 2-Jeane Eggenberger & Diana Pianko (MI), 3/4-Marleen Carol & Noah Monro (MI) / Carrie Morris & Dee Valley (MI).

SUMMER FREEZE-OUT (32): 1-Steve Fletcher (CAN), 2-Mike Darooge (MI).

\$50 EARLYBIRD JACKPOT (16): 1-Jon Vietor (CA), 2-Jeff Acierno (NY)

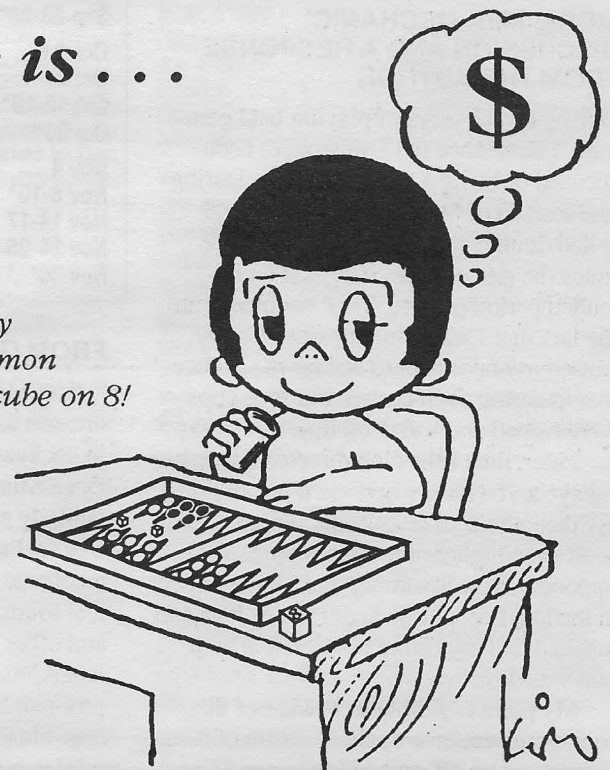
\$25 EARLYBIRD JACKPOT (16): 1-Toivo Puhm (CAN), 2-Mike Darooge (MI).

BLITZ (128): 1-Kevin McDonough (AZ), 2-Pete Ryder (OH).

4TH OF JULY SPECIAL . . . \$50: John Brussel (NY), \$20: John Edmiston (IL), \$25: Mike Darooge (MI), Novice: Marleen Carol.

love is . . .

*. . . a tasty
backgammon
with the cube on 8!*



CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

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LETTERS

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

MORE 'MINI-MECHANIC' DISCUSSION AND A RESPONSE FROM THE AUTHOR

During my 12 years of playing backgammon, I have once (and only once) been accused of being a dice mechanic. During one session of head's up money play, I rolled double 4s at approximately 2 1/2 times the rate of expectancy for an extended period of time. This, coupled with the fact that I was winning significantly, caused my opponent to accuse me of dice manipulation even though our dice cups were ribbed and had deep lips.

Later, under the club director's watchful eye and with my opponent pre-shaking my dice, the double 4s continued to appear at an even higher ratio than before. My opponent, now assuming that I had palmed in loaded dice, quit in anger. I was hurt and insulted and my future relationship with him was destroyed.

My point is simply to beware of the sometimes extreme cyclical nature of dice before you go off on a witch hunt.—Tom Johnson, Komodo Software, Los Altos, CA

coming attractions

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



by Carol Joy Cole
313/232-9731

* Denotes new or revised listing

NATIONAL

Jul 13-14	Nation's Capital Summer Championships, Promenade, Bethesda, MD	301/530-0604
Jul 20	Atlanta Association Monthly Tournament, Taco-Mac, Atlanta, GA	404/921-0672
Jul 21*	Plymouth Club Picnic & Pot Luck Tourney, Plymouth Twp. Park, MI	313/453-7356
Aug 1-4	Illinois State Championships, Hyatt Hotel, Deerfield, IL	708/945-7801
Aug 2-4	Thousand Islands Tournament, Pine Tree Point, Alexandria Bay, NY	716/442-8221
Aug 4	14th Annual Bob Hill Summer Classic, Hill residence, Long Island, NY	516/334-4833
Aug 12-18	Vermont Festival, Stratton Mountain Inn, Stratton Mountain, VT	305/527-4033
Aug 18	Summer Cool Tournament, Braxton Seafood Grill, Oak Brook, IL	312/338-6380
Aug 30-Sep 2	National Labor Day Tournament, Radisson Plaza, Indianapolis, IN	317/845-8435
Sep 14	Connecticut Open, Hall of Fame Lounge, Southington, CT	203/755-9749
Sep 22-26	Las Vegas Open Tournament, Golden Nygget Hotel & Casino, NV	708/470-9491
Oct 3-6	Sertoma Invitational Doubles Tournament, Winn Ranch, Leander, TX	512/267-3968
Oct 4-6	Rochester Club Tournament, Towpath Lodge, Turin, NY	716/442-8221
Oct 6*	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Braxton Seafood Grill, Oak Brook, IL	312/252-7755
Oct 19	College Park Fall Open Tournament, Promenade, Bethesda, MD	301/530-0604
Oct. 25-27	Chicago Fall Classic, Hyatt Regency O'Hare, Rosemont, IL	708/674-0120
Nov 1-3	9th New Hampshire Fall Classic, Sheridan Wayfarer, Manchester, NH	603/863-4711
Nov 5	9th Bar Point Club Fall Trophy Tourney, Pat's Pub, Norridge, IL	312/338-6380
Nov 16	Connecticut Open, Hall of Fame, Southington, CT	203/755-9749
Nov 17*	13th Annual Flint Area Club Championships, Ramada Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Jan 15-19*	9th Nevada State Championship, Peppermill Hotel/Casino, Reno, NV	708/470-9491

OUTSIDE USA

Jul 12-14	San Remo International Tournament, San Remo, Italy	39/2 76003705
Jul 15-21	1991 World Championship, Hôtel Loews, Monte-Carlo, Monaco	305/527-4033
Jul 27*	1991 Wiesbaden Cup, Hotel Fürstenhof-Esplanade, Wiesbaden, Germany	06122-16124
Aug 5	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	852/8 461923
Aug 15-18	Palace Summer Championships, Badrutt's, St. Moritz, Switzerland	061/50 58 16
Aug 24*	1991 Wiesbaden Cup, Hotel Fürstenhof-Esplanade, Wiesbaden, Germany	06122-16124
Aug 29-Sep 1	1st Mitteleuropa Tournament, Casino Nova Gorica, Yugoslavia	39-2-48019343
Aug 31-Sep 1	BIBA Trophy Tournament, Post House Hotel, Crick near Rugby, England	0522/721630
Sep 2	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	852/8 461923
Sep 15-22*	Georgia International & World Cup, Colhety Hotel, Kobuleti, USSR	305/937-0659
Sep 28*	1991 Wiesbaden Cup, Hotel Fürstenhof-Esplanade, Wiesbaden, Germany	06122-16124
Sep 28-29*	5th British Festival of BG, Morecambe Town Hall, Lancaster, England	061/946 0828
Oct 4-6	Rio de Janeiro Open/91, Le Meridien Copacabana Hotel, Brazil	5521/2676033
Oct 7	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	852/8 461923
Oct 10-13*	Buenos Aires Tournament, Argentina	54-1/790 8177
Oct 26*	1991 Wiesbaden Cup, Hotel Fürstenhof-Esplanade, Wiesbaden, Germany	06122-16124
Nov 4	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	852/8 461923
Nov 8-10*	1991 NRW-Meisterschaft, Novotel Düsseldorf-Nord, Germany	02151/503591
Nov 14-17	British Open Masters Tournament, Empress Hotel, Douglas, Isle of Man	0624/851045
Nov 24-25	BIBA Trophy Tournament, Post House Hotel, Crick near Rugby, England	0522/721630
Nov 30*	1991 Wiesbaden Cup, Hotel Fürstenhof-Esplanade, Wiesbaden, Germany	06122-16124

FROM GREECE

"Dice, Mini-Mechanics and You" addressed one of the most serious problems in backgammon today. I am very glad that Dean Muench and the CHICAGO POINT publicly exposed it. If you've ever had the sick feeling of playing a practicing dice mechanic, you'll understand why I believe that tournament organizers, club directors and other backgammon officials must *immediately* take steps to deal with this problem before matters get worse. What a horrible thought that one day, players might chose to practice their dice mechanics in favor of studying and learning the

theory of the game.

Congratulations to Hercules, Baron of Culcreuch who in May, introduced the mandatory use of transparent precision backgammon dice at the Championship of Great Britain. I understand that Monte-Carlo will follow suit this month as well. This is a good first step in helping to solve the problem.

I recently faced a good player who (it was clear) was also a dice mechanic, and a successful one at that. I countered his rolling talents in a very simple way. I challenged him to play a match in which

[Continues]

each of us would roll *three* dice.

How do you play with three dice? Simple. Two of the dice are of the same color and the third die is a different color. Each player shakes and rolls the three dice together, but only reads the two of the same color. In effect, the third die is neutral, merely used to randomize the shake and roll. It worked. We played a very nice match and there were no complaints about the dice.

Let the tri-dice roll be my proposal to counter mini-mechanic techniques until we produce an individual dice-casting apparatus . . . as the ancient Greeks did thousands of years ago!

We must not be naive. The game of backgammon is not without its problems. I know many players from different countries who would like to discuss and solve them; however, they cannot do much about it because *they are not offered the chance*. I think the time has come for a worldwide conference . . . —Anthony Maltezosopoulos, Greek Backgammon Players Club, Athens, Greece

Thanks for your letter, Anthony. We also agree that the best way to solve problems is to get them out into the open.—Ed.

DEAN COMMENTS

I would like to thank the CHICAGO POINT for allowing me to bring some important problems to the public forum in my May 1991 article on "Dice, Mini-Mechanics and You." For the most part, the feedback I have received has been positive. Let me address two of the negative letters that appeared in last month's "Letter's" column.

First, I definitely understand how a person would be skeptical when hearing that dice rolls are not always random. Nearly ten years ago, when I was told about the "repeat" and "flip-flop" phenomena by some old-time Chicago players, I was very doubtful. I decided that observation, although not done in a scientific manner, was the only reasonable course of action. After five years of observation, I was about 80% certain that a few people were rolling better than average by taking

advantage of these techniques. Of course, there was no way of telling if these people were cheating on purpose or had simply learned the rolling skills subconsciously.

After five more years of observing, I am now about 90% certain that these assertions are true. The reason that I cannot be 100% certain is that no empirical data exists to support the assertions.

Although the problem is still small (somewhere between 5% and 10% of the players have poor shaking and/or rolling habits and, of those, only a small fraction are taking advantage of them), I saw a steady increase and felt an obligation to bring these potential problems to light. Now that these ideas are known, better equipment and enforcement of rules should bring peace of mind to both experienced and novice backgammon players alike.

Second, in response to Mr. Magriel, I will not accept any proposition that would have me practice something which I abhor and have done my best to avoid for a long time. If someone does offer to take you up on this, I advise you to reject their offer.

Incidentally, you claim to have 25 years of experience playing backgammon. What I want to know is how many of those years have you spent playing in Chicago?

Thirdly, to Mr. Trice, although I applaud your attempt to obtain useful empirical data, I am afraid that your study has missed the point for the following reasons:

- (1) Your sample size is too small because in your 300 matches, you have grouped

[Continued on page 5]

CHICAGO BAR POINT CLUB 1991 BPC PLAYER OF THE YEAR COMPILED THRU 30 JUNE

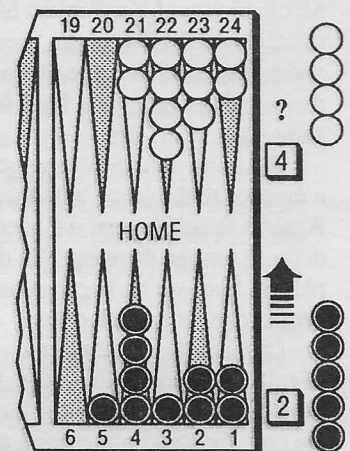
TAK MORIOKA	17.60	Alice Kay	3.84	Larry Lau	0.96
JAKE JACOBS	14.96	David Rubin	3.80	Bob Zavoral	0.96
DAVE CRAMER	12.48	Peter Berkman	3.68	Dean Muench	0.96
GARY KAY	10.88	Beverly Klene	3.36	Jerry Brooks	0.92
YAMIN YAMIN	10.40	René Wojtysiak	3.32	Greg Try	0.92
DON DESMOND	8.96	Mark King	3.20	Craig Chellstorp	0.88
JOE KOUCHARIAN	8.88	Alex Itkin	3.12	Peter Naguib	0.88
GEORGE BARR	8.08	Norma Shyer	2.96	Mike Landau	0.88
STU KATZ	8.00	Phyllis Smolinski	2.72	Mickey Kaplan	0.80
DEEB SHALATI	7.76	Betsy Miller	2.64	Ron Stur	0.80
BRUCE WITTERT	7.76	Harold Seif	2.56	Kathy Rudnick	0.80
JOHN DEMIAN	7.56	Marcy Sloan	2.52	Don Marek	0.80
JOANN FEINSTEIN	6.88	Adam Kay	2.40	Rich Galeba	0.80
LUCKY NELSON	6.80	Ken Bond	2.40	Sheila Arnold	0.72
LENNY LODER	6.48	V.W. Zimnicki	2.32	David Rockwell	0.72
MARY FRANKS	6.32	Tim Serges	2.28	David Curd	0.64
STEVE POTASHNICK	6.16	Howard Ring	2.08	Bob Ebbeler	0.56
RALPH LEVY	5.72	Ed Bauder	1.92	Steve Katz	0.48
JOLIE LEWIS	5.52	Arline Levy	1.92	David Orman	0.44
PAUL FRANKS	5.44	Stan Kucharz	1.84	George Kirkby	0.44
Leslie Lockett	5.36	Ed Buerger	1.52	Bob Holyon	0.40
Don Jayhan	5.16	Chris Stanford	1.44	Walter Schafer	0.40
Howard Markowitz	4.96	Harold Grote	1.44	Mike Cohen	0.40
Frank Callea	4.40	Alex Caraplis	1.44	Kurt Warning	0.40
Herb Roman	4.32	David Lynn	1.28	Jeff Vaughn	0.32
Bobbie Shifrin	4.28	Barry Miller	1.28	Kurt Schurecht	0.24
Sarg Serges	4.24	Dan Judd	1.04	Roland Dieter	0.24
Bill Davis	3.96	Richard Stawowy	1.00	Mike Spiropoulos	0.24
Femi Owiku	3.92	Barbara Levinson	1.00	Larry Knoll	0.24

Credit JAKE JACOBS with June BPC Player of the Month honors. Weekly victories on 4 and 18 June earned the Jakester 4.24 points and lifted him into second place.

Runners-up were leader Tak Morioka (with 2.80 points) and George Barr, whose 2.48 points vaulted him from 14th to 8th in the standings.

your move PROBLEM #173

Money game. Black redoubles White to 4. SHOULD WHITE TAKE?



DEAR MISS LONELYBLOTS



BE CAREFUL WHO YOU DATE

Dear Miss Lonelyblots: Here in Savannah, there's only one place to play backgammon: Savvy's. It was at Savvy's that I first met Mogul Moe. We took to each other and went together for a year. Then I got tired of Moe and dumped him. No problem—guys are a dime a dozen in Savannah—but two months later, Moe bought Savvy's. First time I tried to enter a tournament, he barred me.

"How can you bar me, Moe?" I asked.

"Very simply, Hannah. I'm the boss here now. Besides, the rules say, 'All entries are subject to the approval of the Tournament. Reasons for exclusion need not be stated.'"

That's unfair, Miss Lonelyblots. I've done nothing to deserve banishment. Shall I:

- demand a committee hearing to reinstate me?
- ask the other players in Savannah to boycott Moe's tournaments?
- tell the cops there's gambling at Savvy's?
- send copies of Moe's draw sheets to the IRS?, or
- sue Moe for monopoly practices under

the anti-trust laws and infringement of my civil rights?

—Hard-Hearted Hannah

DEAR HANNAH: I agree that it's unfair of Moe to bar you. Only those who steal wallets and break legs should be barred, not those who steal—and break—hearts. And I don't think claiming the right to bar a player arbitrarily (if that's really what the "rule" asserts) establishes such a right. That "rule" may have been inserted by frightened directors to discourage lawsuits threatened by thugs and cheaters.

I understand their fears. It's no fun having an attorney, Jimmy Kauder, call you at the behest of Jim Ward and demand that Steve Goldman, a known thug and cheater, be admitted to your tournaments under pain of lawsuit. For defending a lawsuit can be costly and traumatic.

What the frightened directors did not understand is that prosecuting a lawsuit can be just as costly, and that thugs and cheaters have little chance of winning but face grave danger of public exposure. The Horowitzes and Goldmans of this world may threaten lawsuits, but they deliver only guns and brass knuckles.

In contrast, you might be able to "win" the lawsuit you contemplate. But it would still be costly and traumatic for you. The crowded calendars in civil courts might delay your case for five years. Then—if you won—it might take five more years for

Moe to exhaust his appeals. He might also exhaust his funds on legal fees and have no money left to pay a judgment. Meanwhile, Moe would have a plausible excuse for barring you ("How can I let her play when she's suing the club?") and you'd spend the next ten years in court instead of playing backgammon.

Bringing in the police or the IRS would get you nothing, and would be just as vindictive as Moe's barring you.

Yes, you could "demand" a committee, but under our private enterprise system, the boss is king, and Moe would have no reason to grant your demand.

A boycott might be ineffectual. Today's Americans do not know *solidarity*. I can almost hear the others players thinking, "Well, Moe hasn't barred *me*."

So I recommend none of the actions you propose. Instead, I suggest, you may appeal to the self-interest of the other women who play backgammon in Savannah: "Don't go out with Mogul Moe. For if you decide not to see him again, he'll bar you from his club—as he did me."—Miss Lonelyblots

Do you have a backgammon-related question for Miss Lonelyblots involving people problems, game etiquette or the play itself? Write: Dear Miss Lonelyblots, c/o CHICAGO POINT, 2726 W. Lunt Avenue, Chicago, IL 60645-3039.

HAROLD'S VIEW



by Harold Branch

A LITTLE EXPERIMENT

Congratulations to Dean Muench whose splendid study "Dice, Mini-Mechanics, and You" in the May 1991 CHICAGO POINT brought the attention of some of us to an unexpected backgammon danger. Fascinating . . . but I found it somewhat troubling.

We know that deliberate mechanics are a menace to the game and always will be. Against these players, we need all the defense we can develop. But do honest players like you and I constitute an unexpected danger to each other?

I am concerned about the randomness of rolls and about tendencies. Dean mentioned a "tendency" for the dice to settle in the cup, face-up on the same number as the

previous throw. In fact, his article based conclusions on this tendency. I believe a "creative" roller trying to get that effect will gain sharply on the random expectation. But will "Harold the Hopeless" get that effect by accident? Wouldn't that spoil the game for most of us? Bothersome.

One night while watching the Chicago Cubs Follies, an idea overtook me. Why don't I do a *scientific experiment* for myself? I might find a partial answer that would be satisfactory—at least to me. Are you ready for some "Hi-Tech"?

I set precision dice on the board with a 6-1 facing up. Then I picked them up—keeping the faces upwards—and flung them vigorously into a thin cup from a height of maybe two inches above the cup. Then I would peep! I would tally results in three columns labeled: (1) 6-1 showing; (2) a 6 or a 1 showing, but not both; (3) all other numbers.

Scientific? Hah! Dumb is what it was! What would you expect? But simple-minded or not, I wanted to discern for

myself what the "tendency" was, and how strong it was, if it was.

You might like to look at the idea yourself by doing a couple of dozen. Takes about five minutes. "Embarrassing"? "Too silly"? Who needs to know? Pull the shades! Shhhh. We won't tell anyone.

So what did I get? The results for 200 trials are as follows:

(1) 6 & 1	(2) 6 or 1	(3) Others
9	102	89

It looks pretty random, doesn't it? In fact, it's almost perfectly random. I don't think these figures are conclusive, but I don't see any suggestion of a conspicuous tendency to repeat, either.

For my part, I am relieved. I don't think those of us who are honest need to fear this type of unpleasantness from each other. We can sling 'em in, shake 'em up, roll big, and root for the number!

And if some time, you need a touch of deep scientific insight, you know who to call! Δ

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 3]

- the 90-95% of the players who roll fairly in with the 5-10% who do not;
- (2) you did not take into account people who can "non-repeat;"
 - (3) and what about those people who are trying to repeat the numbers facing up in the cup after either:
 - (a) practice-rolling until a good number comes up, or;
 - (b) shaking and glancing at the numbers up in the cup and repeating this until a good number shows, or;
 - (c) setting the dice before dropping them in the cup.

I do have a recommendation for a study that would determine if a player has any "rolling skill." Examine a good player with poor shaking and rolling habits. Find as many of his printed matches as possible. Search through all the games for his crucial shots. (Those that would probably swing the outcome of the game.) Then summarize the number of shots in 36 vs. the number of times he actually hits a blot. If you have enough data to make the study statistically relevant, you should be able to draw some conclusions from the compared hitting percentages.

Lastly, I would like to say that any backgammon player who has had bad rolling habits in the past but has now decided to conform to the rules, should be presumed innocent of any intentional wrong-doing. I also think the baffle tube, recently introduced in Spain at the Championship of Great Britain, appears to be a major step in the right direction. For backgammon to grow and prosper, all players must feel that they are getting a fair shake. Let's hope that a little controversy now will pave the way for things to roll smoothly in the future.—Dean Muench, Palatine, IL

WALTER TRICE RESPONDS: *I don't believe I "missed the point" of Mr. Muench's article. His basic premise was that dice rolls naturally tend to repeat. Given this, he speculated that some players were taking advantage of the tendency. My study failed to support the underlying assumption and, in fact, rather convincingly refuted it. I see no need to obtain empirical disconfirmation of giddy speculations which rest on a false premise.*

Actually, Dean chose to ignore the main point of my letter, which was that he had offered no evidence to support his

complaints, when the burden of proof was clearly his. His response only emphasizes this. After ten years of observation, he has no "empirical data"! Is there any sense in which a process that produces no evidence whatsoever can qualify as "observation"? Not in my book.—Walter Trice, Holden, MA

DANNY REMEMBERS

Perhaps I can advise your reader Buddy Cummings who plans to retire to Ithaca, New York and is interested in finding a place to play backgammon. Ithaca is a beautiful town in a spectacularly beautiful part of the country. More pertinent to Buddy's desires, it is a college and university town housing Ithaca College as well as the larger Cornell University. Buddy might wander up to Cornell's Willard Straight Hall (if it still has the student game room) and organize his own backgammon club for the many students I would imagine capable of developing an interest in the game (I remember Cornell as being a hotbed of good bridge in the late 1950s).—Danny Kleinman, Los Angeles, CA

REQUEST FOR BACKGAMMON TEACHING HANDOUTS

I will soon be teaching beginning backgammon in an adult community of about 8500. Have you run across a handout or any lesson material that I might use for the new players? I have the 12 lesson series Alfred Sheinwold put out in the 1970s and if I don't find anything better, I'll use same.—Henry Schwartz, Coconut Creek, FL

We've also used the series you refer to as a teaching guide, Henry. (In fact, this editor learned the game via the Sheinwold newspaper series back in 1974.) Perhaps one of our CHICAGO POINT readers has a better set of beginner handouts.—Ed.

ACT QUICKLY IF YOU'RE PLANNING TO GO TO RUSSIA

We wish to bring to your attention that Ms. Patti Donner is helping promote the Georgia International & World Cup tournament (15-22 Sept.) and she would be happy to make travel/hotel bookings for interested players. Each individual attending will be required to fill out a form in order to obtain a Russian visa. To receive this material, contact Patti Donner at 8A Eccleston Street; London SW1; England. Be advised that registration closes 5 August.—The Ipat Group, Inc., International Marketing, N. Miami Beach, FL

The POINT can also supply you with an invitation and pre-visa form(s). Send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: CHICAGO POINT; 2726 W. Lunt Avenue; Chicago, IL 60645-3039.—Ed.

KUDOS TO DANNY

Last month's "Ask Danny" column on how to play 2-1 was indeed a model of logic and clever thought. I was impressed and offer Danny Kleinman well deserved congratulations on his analysis.—George H. J. Black, Lisbon, Portugal

A WARNING FROM MICHAEL VALENTINE

I wish to publicly inform the backgammon community that the Ace Point Backgammon Club has permanently barred David Adgishvili (also known as David Agin) from our club for cheating. On 24 June, Mr. Adgishvili was accused of wearing a magnetized knee pad to control loaded dice. When confronted with the accusation, Adgishvili said the pad he wore was due to an injury. Upon further questioning, he fled the club leaving behind his opaque precision dice. When the dice were inspected, one was found to be magnetized.

Adgishvili had been living and playing in New York for the past year. He is a about 5'-6" tall with dark hair and eye-glasses. He was born in Russia and speaks English with a Russian accent.

One method of controlling this form of cheating is to play with transparent precision dice. As a further safeguard for checking equipment, I suggest you keep a magnet in your set at all times. Mr. Adgishvili's idea of how to play backgammon must be stopped once and for all.—Michael Valentine, Director, Ace Point Backgammon Club, New York, NY

THE EXAM TESTS POSITIVE

The Backgammon Exam II (May 1991 CHICAGO POINT) was great fun. I think the problems were much better than those in last year's Exam I.—Patrik Öhagen, Uppsala Backgammon Club, Sweden

'TOO TOUGH' DOUBLE

Enclosed is my subscription fee for one year of the POINT. It is a very good magazine. I just wish it was even bigger. How about "doubling" the number of pages to 16?—Jean-Christophe Lanoe, London, England

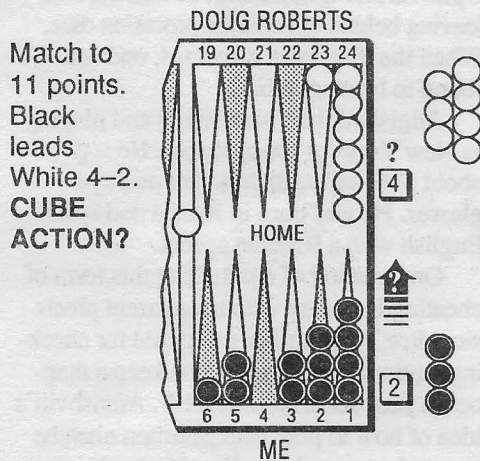
Sorry J-C. For now, we'll have to "drop" your suggestion.—Ed. Δ

Tournament Notes

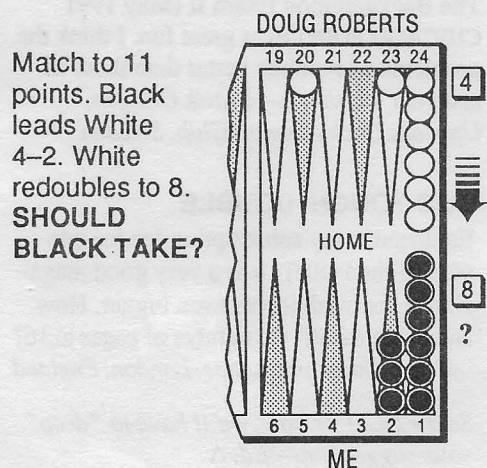
The Chicago Open
by Jake Jacobs

I spent Memorial Day weekend at the Chicago Open this year. As expected, Joann Feinstein, Mary Ann Meese, and Howard Markowitz ran a nice event. The great Bridge writer Eddie Kantar always comes back from tournaments with tales of fine plays made by various friends and teammates, and amusing accounts of his own blunders. I'm not sure how amusing they are; but since I have a large and fresh supply of the latter, I'll describe a few.

THE FIRST OCCURRED during my second chance match with Doug Roberts. I was leading 4 to 2, playing to 11. With ten minutes remaining until dinner break, we decided to start one more game. Twenty-five minutes later, this was the position:



I redoubled and Doug took. The next three rolls of the game were: 4-4, 5-5 (Heh, these are the major leagues), 6-2. Oh, no! Here comes Mr. 8-Cube! ...



The kibitzers moved in a little closer. I would like to think that the spectators had stayed fifteen minutes into their dinner break because they so admired the dazzling display of backgammon brilliance that Doug and I poured into our match; however, I am duty bound to report their identities. The four witnesses were: diligent tournament director Mary Ann Meese, the guy whose board we had borrowed, his wife, and one dead sparrow that Doug had accidentally downed while shaking his dice.

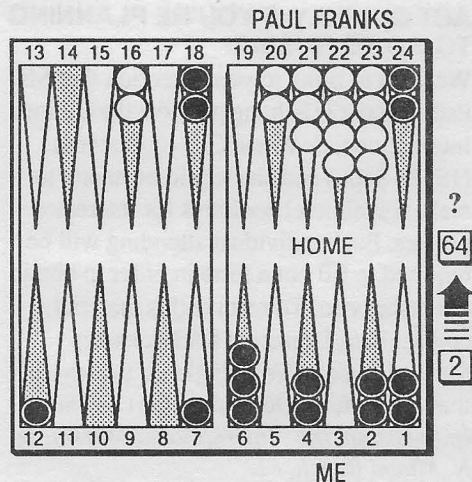
Working quickly under time pressure, I noted that if Doug rolled 2-2, 3-3, or 4-4 this shake, he would not enjoy full value. Also, ten numbers (3-1, 3-2, 3-4, 4-1, and 4-2) cost him a roll. All of this comes on top of my chances of rolling doubles while he does not. Since I put my take point at 26.7%, I took and lost the game. Though after dinner, I fought back to double match point, I lost the last game and the match.

Several hours later, I showed this position to the lovely Leslie Lockett, and described my reasoning behind my take. She then asked, "But even if Doug throws one of his ten misses, isn't he already a full roll ahead?"

Good point, Leslie! I think next time I'll back her in the Open, and I'll try playing Intermediate. The moral is: while counting misses and calculating percentages is fine, it's also important to *count checkers*.

HAVING "EARNED" A BERTH in the Consolation, I now faced Paul Franks. In the early part of the match my dice were almost good enough to inspire Dean Muench, who was kibitzing, to write another "Mini-Mechanic" article. In the following position, I was ahead 7-3 playing to 9 points when Paul doubled me:

Match to 9 points. Black leads White, 7 to 3. White doubles. **SHOULD BLACK TAKE?**



In match play, the first factor I calculate always (almost), is the appropriate take point. A beginner's instinct is to drop the cube and protect the lead. But at this score, the take point (disregarding gammons for a moment) is 19.5%.

What sort of winning chances did I have? All 1s, 2s, and 3s except 3-3 either left immediate shots or postponed the issue a roll. Even if Paul cleared or left a shot which I missed, I would still have some considerable shot equity from the ace-point.

Meanwhile, what about those gammons? My outside pip count was 67—on average, nine rolls to bear in. Paul needed one to come in and eight to come off, but my owning the ace should slow him down. By the time I realized all of this, I was practically ready to beaver! I took, and Paul rolled 4-4. (Ah ha! Forgot about that one!) I missed the shot, was gammoned, and later lost the match.

There were at least three factors that I failed to consider. First, backgammons and their effect on match equity. Second, my estimate of nine rolls to bear-in was based on pips (so doubles are factored in) and ignored both wastage in making the 5-point and wastage in hanging back for a late shot. My estimate of Paul's nine rolls to bear-off was based on men, and did not factor in doubles.

Finally, and most importantly, as Dean pointed out after the match, were my gaps on the 3- and 5-points. When counting shots, it's important to consider the number of times you still lose even after you are lucky enough to hit! Forget the Intermediate division; the next tournament I think I'll play beginner.

PAUL WENT ON to reach the final of the Consolation bracket. His opponent, Mike Rezai was leading their 9 point match 6-4 and had just rolled double 4s to come down to just two remaining checkers, both on the 1-point. Paul still had all fifteen checkers remaining, and most unfortunately for him, two of them were on Mike's 2-point.

Now, I had some interest in the result of this match. Paul is my friend and fellow Chicagoan, and one of the nicest people in backgammon. His wife, Mary, is also one of the nicest people in backgammon. Together, they may be the nicest couple in backgammon. Since the backgammon world is graced with the presence of couples like the Meeses, the Mooneys, and the Feinsteins, that tells you something about Paul and Mary. However, Mike Rezai was my last horse in the Calcutta

[Continues]

(and a nice fellow himself). You're a nice guy, Paul, but fifty bucks is fifty bucks.

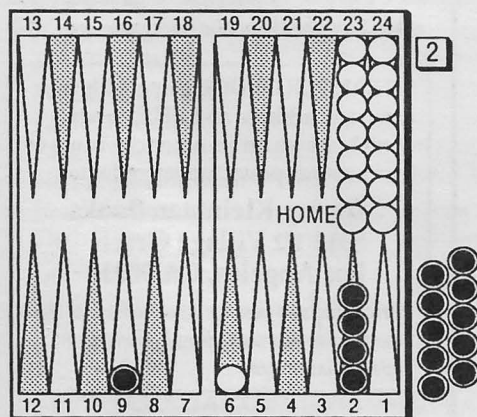
Anyway, Paul's chances didn't look very good at this point. What I find really interesting is this. Let's suppose that each player at the start of a tournament has a goal: to earn one of the three top-paying slots—winner, finalist, or consolation winner. Now, at this moment, after an entire weekend of hard playing, after slugging his way to and halfway through the Consolation finals, Paul's chances of achieving *THE GOAL* were less than they were at the beginning of the tournament, before he played game one of his first match.

I hear doubting voices crying, "That can't possibly be true!" The skeptics come in two types. Those ignorant of the underlying math, and friends of Paul Franks. But consider, at the start of the tourney, the odds of reaching *THE GOAL* were 3 in 39 (the number of players in the Championship field). Right now, Paul had only six rolls to save the BG (3-3, 4-4, 5-5, 6-6, 6-5), and those would only bring him to 8-4 Crawford with less than 20% match equity. Paul rolled 5-5 and went on to win the match (costing me fifty bucks). Well, it couldn't happen to a nicer guy!

THERE WAS ALSO plenty of side action during the weekend. Sunday night, a dozen or so of the bravest (or craziest) players tried out a San Francisco style interlocking chouette. This game really needs an off-duty air traffic controller to handle the rotation, and someone from Price-Waterhouse to keep score. It may be the single reason why so many San Francisco players have given up backgammon and gone off to join the Moonies or the C.B.O.E. or other quasi-religious cults.

How do you play 5-3 in a money game in this position?:

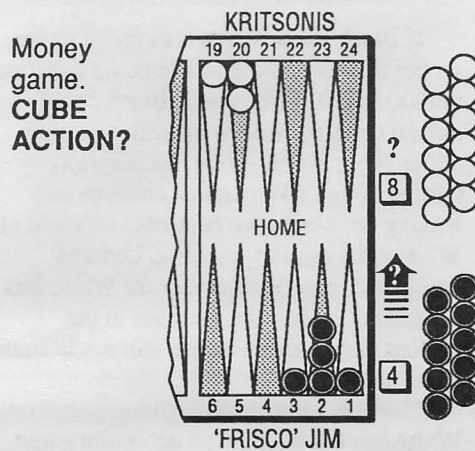
Money game. **BLACK TO PLAY 5-3.**



Quickly, that's how! Otherwise, your steaming opponent may quit you. Seriously,

you should hit. True, he hits back with aces, otherwise his worst number, but you may still gammon him after being hit. Besides, the real reason people go to backgammon tournaments is to bring back horror stories. Think of the prime specimen you'll have if you somehow lose this game.

THIS LAST POSITION arose in a side game between "Frisco" Jim Gibbs and a gentleman named Constantin Kritsonis who hails from Toronto, or one of those other suburbs of Detroit:



My initial reaction was that Black should double—but not redouble—and White should take. Black settled for three points, which seemed fair. Afterwards, Constantin indicated that he thought it was a pass.

After thinking some more, I decided that most later re-redoubles weren't terribly efficient. It was a good redouble, and perhaps three was too low. Dean Muench's computer says this is a redouble and take. The proper settlement, after redoubling to 8 is 2.862 points so "Frisco" Jim cannily pocketed \$2.76 worth of equity. (You math majors can work out the stakes yourselves.)

Perhaps my biggest error of the entire tournament was passing up an offer to play this as a prop. At \$10.00 a point, my side rates to make about five or six hundred dollars an hour. It's the same old sad story: when the bus marked "Equity" left the station, I was asleep in the waiting room.

Oh well, wait until Flint. Δ

Timely Reminder

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AMALGAMATION

Visiting the BPC in June: 1991 Nevada State Champion **Craig Chellstorp** whose parents live in Chicagoland... **Bobbie Shifrin** reports that next door neighbor Chicago Bulls forward **Horace Grant's** partying has risen dramatically since his team won the NBA title... Former Pub Club director **Ed Bauder** finds the Peoria area to his liking. He's currently going to school to become a craps dealer on an Illinois Riverboat... **Frank Frigo**, who recently moved from Fullerton, CA to Louisville, KY, informs us of a new backgammon club in Louisville. Beginning 11 July, Frank and **Quint McTyeire** will co-direct tournaments at the Parisian Pantry Restaurant the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month. For more info, call Frank at 502/897-3144... Did you ever wonder about those small sticks **Jake Jacobs** twirls between his finger and thumb at all backgammon tournaments? Jake answers: "They're maple leaf stems. I collect them in the fall and let them age six months before putting them into action."... **Themis Tsaoussis** (City of Chicago Engineer of Mechanical

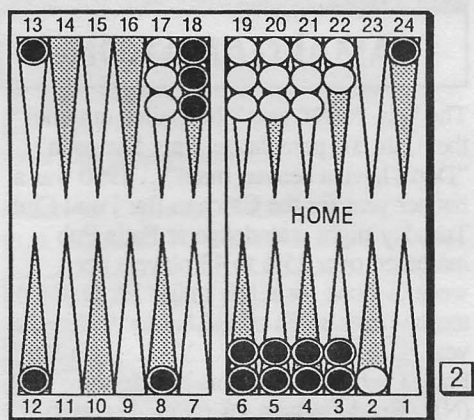


Design) helped us translate the Greek Backgammon Players Club logo: "Pray to Athena, but move your hand." In other words, "God helps

those who help themselves."... According to **Hal Heinrich, Lorraine and Al Jones** wanted to get married at the World Championship in Monte-Carlo this month, but Monaco residency is required for a license. Hence, the Ontario couple was married in Canada prior to their "honeymoon" trip. Congratulations!... Precision dice are getting smaller. 9/16" and 1/2" are replacing the old standard 5/8" size. The generate a better shake and roll, especially in oblong cups... Get well wishes go out to **John Brussel**. John won the Michigan Summer Championships Open Warm-up event on the 4th of July. The next day, an infection forced him to check into a local hospital. Wife **Jill** expected him to be released by 9 July... **Hercules and Bridget** inform us that their Championship of Great Britain tournament will be back on the Isle of Man in 1992 (12-17 May). Δ

**PROBLEM #166
SOLVED**

by Kit Woolsey

Money game. **BLACK TO PLAY 5-1.**

An interesting problem in the prime vs. prime area, where Black has to figure out how best to deal with the problems of containing the White checker and freeing his remaining back man. The apparent choices are:

- (a) 24/18
- (b) 8/2*
- (c) 13/8, 12/11
- (d) 12/7, 8/7

The running play, 24/18, leaves White with 14 hitting numbers, all of which are likely to be devastating unless Black gets lucky and rolls an immediate joker off the bar. What if Black gets away with it? Does

he have anything? Not really. White is miles ahead in the race, so even if Black escapes his back man and then secures his 8-point with White having done nothing, Black still is a long way from a menacing redouble with White only one dash away from victory. This approach appears to lose a lot when it backfires while not gaining very much when it succeeds.

The hitting play, 8/2*, suffers from similar defects. If White hits back, Black is in big trouble with two men behind the White prime and one of them in the air. Black will be out of ammunition so White will probably find it relatively easy to escape.

Suppose Black survives this roll. He is still a long way from home. He is likely to require at least two rolls to cover the blot on the 2-point, which means that White, being on roll, appears to be a favorite to hit the blot before Black can cover. Suppose black does manage to cover the blot. He still isn't home. He has the back man to free and if White merely enters on Black's ace-point, White will be in position to escape. Black can only achieve a doubling advantage if he covers the blot and White stays on the bar, and if Black hasn't also escaped his back man, White may still have a take, since it is Black, not White, who is in gammon danger. Black just doesn't have the ammunition to attempt to carry out a blitz.

Making the 8-point with 13/8, 12/11 is a good example of duplication for duplication's sake. True, White needs 5s to point on the blot on the 24-point; but that

is not important. What *is* important is that Black needs a strong prime for the future. Once the 8-point is made, it will be next to impossible to slide it up to the bar-point. If White makes a run for it, Black hits, and White enters on the ace-point, the difference between holding the 8-point and holding the bar-point could easily be the difference between being not good enough to double and doubling White out for the immediate win.

As is so often the case, the best play is the natural one: making the bar-point. White has some good numbers, but she can't do everything at once. White can run for it; however if Black hits back, he will be in excellent shape. White can hit and make the 1-point, but she then still has to prove herself by rolling the escaping 6 in time. And if White does none of the above (and there are several numbers which don't do much), black has the opportunity to escape the back man or bring the third man on the 18-point into play, improving his coverage of the outfield. then, if things go Black's way, he will be in position to claim.

When you are short of builders, it is important to put every man exactly where he belongs, which means making the bar-point (and completing a 5-prime) in this position. What should Black's overall goal be? Certainly not racing, since White is miles ahead. Certainly not blitzing, since he has no ammunition in range. It must be to prime the remaining White checker. What better way to carry out that goal then to make the bar-point? Δ

LETTERS...*[Continued from page 3]***WHAT HAPPENED TO PAUL?**

I was looking over Paul Magriel's old New York Times backgammon columns in the library the other day and found that they suddenly vanished after 21 June 1979. But I know that there was at least one in the Spring of 1980. Does anyone know where the columns went after the 21 June date?—*Glenn Daily, New York, NY*

SO YOU WANT TO START A CLUB

Do you have any information on starting a local backgammon club? I remember you gave a seminar on the topic last year at the Nevada State Championships.—*Tim Helms, Lincoln, NE*

The Reno seminar handout is still available. Send a stamped, self-addressed

envelope to: Starting A Club; c/o Chicago Bar Point Club; 2726 W. Lunt Ave.; Chicago, IL 60645-3039.—Ed.

MAYBE DUANE'S NOT SO HASTY

It seems the December "Hasty Plays" column should have been titled "Hasty Conclusion!" The probability of White leaving two blots is 6/36 or 17%, not 20% as Duane Jensen implied. This alone brings Black's non-hitting chances below 8%.—*Larry Strommen, Indianapolis, IN*

You're forgetting about the nine numbers that don't play for White. This should increase White's chance to leave two blots by at least 3%.—Ed.

ANOTHER PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Just a note to let you know that Geoff Oliver is the British Isles Backgammon Association Player of the Year.—*Michael Crane, Director, BIBA Δ*



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walk to the base of a lookout peak where a specially designed trolley took me up to the top for an overview of Tbilisi and the surrounding mountains. At the top was a small amusement park where for one American cigarette, five could ride the Ferris wheel.

The Georgians Provide A Nonstop Food and Drink "Orgy"

That evening on the mountain peak, a spectacular formal banquet was given for all the backgammon players. We were offered all we could possibly eat including the best caviar and main course Georgian food, along with delicious local wines and champagne. Every five minutes, a toast was given to which we all answered "COW-MAR-GUS," which is Georgian for "To your good health." Michigan's Emil Mortuk made instant friendship with the Georgians when he received an "upside-down toast" and reciprocated by covering his wine glass with his palm, turning it over and sucking the wine through his fingers. In between toasts, Gypsy dancers sang and danced up and down the isles.

The following day was filled with specially arranged historical sight-seeing of Tbilisi and a discussion of their claim to independence from Soviet Russia. The most memorable sight was at a park in the center of the city where Lenin's statue had recently been removed.

The event for the evening was a fabulous performance of Georgian folk dancing, singing, and magic at the Royal Theater. The backgammon players were then introduced individually, followed by a public draw for the opening round pairings. Then it was off to a cocktail reception.

The day was so busy that there had been no time to eat and all the restaurants were closed by ten o'clock. But when Vesta director Merab Kikaleishvili found out that myself and the three other American players Alan Steffen (WA), Emil Mortuk and Jim Baroff (MD) had not eaten, we were all invited to his home. It was past midnight when we arrived, but within fifteen minutes, an elaborate spread of food fit for a king filled a table over thirty feet long. We again give deepest thanks to Merab and his family and the many other Georgian families who invited us into their homes for food, drinks, music, singing and dancing.

The Games Begin

Finally after three party-filled days and nights, the backgammon tournament

began. 400 Soviets entered a preliminary event with 64 slots available to them. The other 64 spaces were reserved for invited foreign players from 12 countries, the majority from Germany. The 128 players were then grouped in fours and played a round robin within their group. 32 victors eventually emerged including Emil Mortuk and Alan Steffen.

Slip-Slidin' Away

The players were then given a one-day break from backgammon for a ski trip to Gudauri, an Austrian ski resort in the Caucasus mountains. Unfortunately, the weather was very bad with heavy fog and icy roads. Within walking distance to the ski resort, the bus carrying 40 backgammon players lost traction and began to slide down the mountain road. Immediately, 40 backgammon players jumped out of the bus and began pushing the bus to stop it from going over the edge. What a sight!



Backgammon players unite to stop their ski bus from sliding off a cliff. [Photo by Tim Serges]

We walked up to the ski resort, but the conditions were too hazardous for skiing so we had to leave. On the way down, a player complained, "Now we can't say we skied the Caucasus'."

Another replied, "Sure we can. We just happened to do it while still on the bus!"

The Soviets Are Weak With The Cube

On Wednesday the players were weeded down to the final-16 and standard single elimination format with Alan Steffen the last American hope. Over half the players remaining were either Soviet or Georgian which was surprising considering these people had been using the doubling cube for less than a year. Alan Steffen later commented, "Some of the Soviet and Georgian players I have encountered in this tournament have made near-perfect checker play. They only lack the power of the cube."

At the announced auction, we all debated over the various players' strengths and weaknesses prior to the bidding. However, the Georgian backgammon auction was a little different from what we're accustomed to in America. Instead of auctioning off the players, they auctioned off antiques,

crafts, and artwork.

The final four were determined the next day, with Steffen, Phillip Marmorstein (Germany), Michael Surguladze (President of the Georgian BG Federation), and Faik Guspinov (Azerbaijan, USSR) prevailing.

USA Wins National Team Cup

Prior to the Championship semifinals, the National Team Cup competition began. Eight teams were assembled, four from Eastern Europe and four from the West including Team USA made up of Steffen, Mortuk, Baroff and myself. All the Western



Jim Baroff (left) encourages fellow USA team members Alan Steffen, Emil Mortuk and Tim Serges in an early round. [Photo by Levan Kipiani]

teams—USA, Germany, Holland, and a multinational Team Europa—advanced to the final four. USA was pitted against a strong German team in the semifinals. Mortuk lost, but Steffen defeated European Champion Thomas Lumper and Jim Baroff made a terrific comeback to defeat Heinrich Haussleiter 9-8 in the deciding match to send the USA team into the glory round.

In the finals, USA blanked Team Europa (Petri Pietilä-Finland, Arendt Lutz-Denmark, Harald Johanni-Germany) for the title.

A "Rocky" Finals

In individual play, Steffen was pitted against Surguladze in the semifinals. Steffen, viewed as a god-figure over here, quickly grabbed a 13-2 advantage in the 17-point match. Many thought the match was over, but the Georgian player, with his freedom-fighting countrymen cheering him on, mounted a 13-9 comeback and looked like he was about to tie the match with the cube at 4 in the position shown on the back page. Surguladze elected to play safe, clearing the 6-point rather 6/off, 2/off with the chance to return hit on Steffen's 2-point if Steffen immediately rolled a 6. In fact, Steffen replied with 6-6 to win the match.

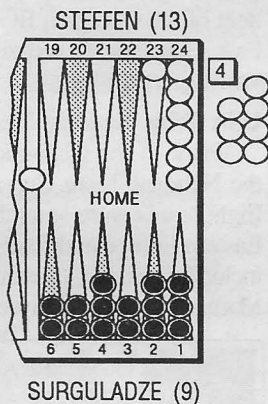
In the other semifinal, the aggressive—often wild—attacking style of Guspinov prevailed over 1988 World Champion Marmorstein. This set up a dramatic finals

[Continues]

RUSSIA ...

[Continued]

1st Georgian Open Championship 17 point semifinal match. Alan Steffen (White) leads Micha Surguladze (Black), 13 to 9. **BLACK TO PLAY 6-2.**



match pitting USA against USSR with national pride added to the prize fund.



The finals. Faik Guspinov (USSR) vs. Alan Steffen (USA). That's Germany's Harald Johanni (right) recording the action. [Photo by Tim Serges]

The two combatants squared off in a flag-draped arena with a sunken center stage surrounded by a full-house crowd watching the play on a big screen TV. Again, Guspinov's aggressive attacking style coupled with Steffen's inability to enter from the bar on two and three point boards gave Guspinov a commanding 14-7 lead. As the final game drew near, emotional tears emerged from the Georgian crowd. On the final roll, when Guspinov's dice settled victoriously for a 19-14 win, he jumped up with arms outstretched as countrymen hugged him. It was a tremendous outpour of emotion, not unlike the final scene of Rocky I. But here the underdog had prevailed over the mighty giant shouting "Azerbaijan!" instead of "Adrian!"

To The Victors...

At the awards ceremony, Guspinov received golden dice inlaid with diamonds and sapphires and \$5000 (USD) in a country where the average income translates into about \$20/month. Steffen collected \$2000. The USA team won a huge copper and bronze detailed plate.

The entire area was then transformed into a farewell banquet room. We all went out and danced to the live music of the Russian Beatles. They didn't look like John, Paul, George, and Ringo, but they sure did sound like them. The party went on until the

buses arrived early in the morning to take us to the airport.

Back To The USSR

Many players agreed that this was the most incredible tournament they had ever attended. Leaving our hosts was very difficult. However, the Georgians have tentatively scheduled their next event for Sept. 1991 at an exotic Black Sea resort. And they tell us, "You ain't seen nothing yet."

Again, congratulations must be made to the organizers of this exceptional tournament: GBF president Micha Surguladze and officers Boris Zipuria, Nodar Giorgobiani, Tamaz Vrushadze, Merab Gachechiladze, and Bidzina Kiknadze; Merab Kikaleishvili, director of the sponsoring firm Vesta; and Werner Waschke of the German Backgammon Federation who helped co-direct the tournament. To say it in Russian:

ЭТО БЫЛО ПОТРЯСАЮЩЕ! Δ

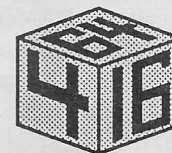
1st GEORGIAN OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP

CHAMPIONSHIP (128): 1st Faik Guspinov (AZER); 2nd Alan Steffen (USA); 3rd/4th Phillip Marmorstein (GER), Michael Surguladze (GEOR)
 NATIONAL TEAM CUP (8): 1st USA [Alan Steffen Capt., Jim Baroff, Emil Mortuk, Tim Serges-alt.]; 2nd Team Europa [Harald Johanni (GER), Arndt Lutz (DEN), Petri Pietilä (FIN)]
 LONGBACKGAMMON (32): 1st J. Babaev (AZER); 2nd V. Toreli (GEOR)

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