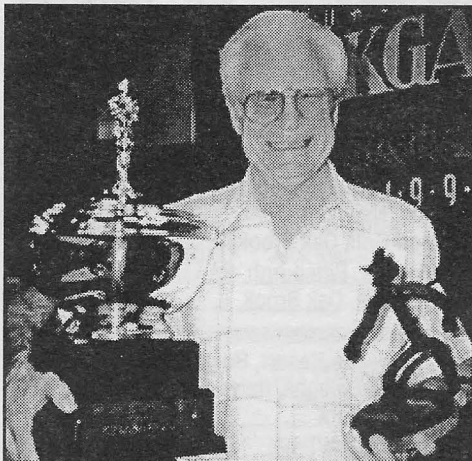


world cup V and u.s. open

WORLD CUP 1996 MALCOLM WINS BIG; I TAKE THE U.S. OPEN

First Person Account by Jake Jacobs

Dallas in August, and the action was hotter indoors than out! The backgammon players convened at Harvey's Hotel Addison, had come from all over the world to vie for the World Cup—heck, Steve Nelson was from four different countries all by himself—and so the trick was to try to play 12 hours of backgammon a day, and also kibitz for 16. I'd like to tell you about all the matches, but there isn't time.



1996 World Cup Champ Malcolm Davis of Dallas, Texas. See page 8 for details. [Photo by Carol Joy Cole]

"Time" was the key word of this tournament. The main flight of the World Cup features best 3-out-of-5 matches to 11-points, while the consolation matches start at 25-points, and culminate in a 29-point final. Accordingly, chess clocks are used. KG (tournament co-director Kent Goulding) says that out of approximately 560 World Cup matches played with clocks, four have been decided by time. Three of those occurred this tournament, and one of *those* in a highly dramatic fashion.

New Yorker James Colen and Wilcox Snellings (Reno, Nevada) faced off in the round-of-16. Both players are young, and

bright, and each is generally regarded as among the game's best. People made time to watch this particular round.

The Colen/Snellings third match reached double match-point. Unlike Wilcox, who is famed through the medium *Costa Rica 1993* as a very fast player, James is a very slow match player. He was in definite time trouble, and had to race through this game. Fortunately for Jim, he was bearing in against a busted deucepoint game. Unfortunately for him, he left a shot, was hit, never entered, and lost anyway. However, his flag hadn't fallen: lucky guy!

The next match, with Wil leading 2 matches to 1, found James again in desperate time trouble at double match-point. Moreover, he had one man stuck back, needing a 2 followed by a 6. First he got the 2, then rolled boxes, which left a shot that Wil missed. James began peeling faster than Demi Moore on cantharides. He won the match with at least a minute to spare. Why hurry?

Tied at two matches each, the winner of the rubber match would advance. James rattled off 8 points, but Wil fired back 9. Trailing 8 to 9, James doubled a complex position. Wil passed, perhaps missing what Kit Woolsey described as a potential coup. Incredibly, Wil was in as much time trouble this match as James. If Wil took, in what looked to be a long game, this is what might have happened. Wil's flag could drop. Then, KG would stop the clocks, give James 2 points and a 10-9 lead, add 5 minutes to Wil's clock, and have the game resume. Now, if James' flag fell (remember, if Wil's flag fell, this wouldn't add any time to James' clock), Wil would receive 2 points and win 11-10.

All this is moot. KG offered to allow the players, by mutual agreement, to throw out the clock for what would almost certainly be the last game, but James, feeling that his 3 minutes and 15 seconds trumped Wil's 3 minutes, would have none of it. KG planted his chin firmly on the table, which is either the best way to spot a falling flag, or something his yogi taught him, and the game commenced.

[Continued on page 6]

KG RATING LIST DATA IS DESTROYED

Nearly 14 years of international backgammon tournament data is in jeopardy as Kent Goulding ponders what to do following the August crash of his computer hard disk—a disk that contained the *KG International Backgammon Rating List*. In a telephone interview with the POINT, Goulding explained what happened.

Kent's wife Joanne does all the data entry for the rating system. Before coming to last month's World Cup in Dallas, she had the new July 1996 rating book printed and sent to the tourney site. It was later discovered that for unknown reasons, a number of names were missing from the list. This remains a mystery.

When Joanne returned home (ahead of Kent), her hard disk was making funny noises. It later crashed. The 1 GB disk was under warranty, so Joanne called Dell Computer Company. Dell immediately FedEx'ed a new hard disk and sent a technician out to install it. Joanne wanted to keep the disk in case any data could be recovered by a professional, but the technician took the disk, convincing her that recovery would be impossible.

When Kent arrived home, he immediately phoned Dell in an attempt to recover the old disk. So far, he has been unsuccessful. "If I get the hard disk back," Kent said, "I'm willing to go to some trouble and expense to get a data recovery firm to work on it.

"If I can't get the disk, that leaves me... I don't no where. Most of Joanne's adult life, she was a professional data processing person. She knows better than to work without a backup. The most recent backup we have is no newer than a year and perhaps a lot older than that.

"The tournament draw sheets are mostly gone. If we can't recover the hard disk, then there are multiple possibilities. Number one... I'm done. Another possibility is that we start the system all over again. That seems sort of stupid, though."

[Continued on page 3]

CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

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LETTERS

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POINT EDITORS ARE WINNERS

Congratulations to Jake Jacobs (1st—U.S. Open) and Kit Woolsey (Runner-up—World Cup) for their recent success in Texas. It never hurts to have two Point contributors succeed in real live tournament play—kinda pumps up the veracity and legitimacy of the newsletter.—*Duane Jensen, Minneapolis, MN*

SLAPPING MISS LONELYBLOTS

Kudos on a great August CHICAGO POINT with one exception. The Miss Lonelyblots column dealt with two important issues: inappropriate behavior by a kibitzer (and lack of rules enforcement by a director), and sexual harassment by an opponent. Both matters were handled fairly well in the response.

But the alleged letter from "Laura Houlihan" was tasteless and juvenile. The

[Continued on page 3]

coming attractions

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

BACKGAMMON
1 2 3 4 5 6
7 8 9 10 11 12 13
14 15 16 17 18 19 20
21 22 23 24 25 26 27
28 29 30 31

by Carol Joy Cole

810/232-9731

carlcole@alumni.sils.umich.edu

* Denotes new or revised listing

NATIONAL

American Backgammon Tour events underlined.

Sep 15	Backgammon By The Bay, San Mateo Bridge Center, San Mateo, CA	510/838-7789
Sep 19*	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
Sep 20-22	<u>Minnesota State Champs, Minneapolis Athletic Club, Minneapolis, MN</u>	<u>612/378-1536</u>
Sep 27-29	<u>Towpath Inn Tournament, Towpath Inn, Turin, NY</u>	<u>716/442-8221</u>
Sep 28	Beverly Hills Monthly Tournament, Clarine's, Beverly Hills, CA	310/273-1632
Sep 29	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Braxton Seafood Grill, Oak Brook, IL	312/583-6464
Sep 29	Austin Bimonthly Tournament, Bombay Bicycle Club, Austin TX	512/261-8518
Oct 1	FIBS 1996 Fall Tournament, via computer modem	davide@sco.com
Oct 1	Games Grid Online Tournament, via computer modem	lainer@cwconnect.ca
Oct 1*	2nd bibi Tournament on Fibs, via computer modem	gobbo@alpha.science.unitt.it
Oct 3-6	<u>Illinois State Champs & America Cup, Holiday Inn, Rolling Meadows, IL</u>	<u>847/945-7801</u>
Oct 5	Midtown "Sweet 16" Invitational, Midtown Club, New York, NY	212/935-9800
Oct 5	CBOB First Saturday Monthly Tournament, Clubroom, Chicago, IL	312/922-0404
Oct 11-13	<u>Nation's Capital Championships, Promenade, Bethesda, MD</u>	<u>301/530-0604</u>
Oct 16	RSCARD 1996 Fall Computer Modern Tournament, GENIE	301/294-2212
Oct 17*	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
Oct 20	Backgammon By The Bay, San Mateo Bridge Center, San Mateo, CA	510/838-7789
Oct 25-27*	<u>Big Apple Series, Best Western Oritani Hotel, Hackensack, NJ</u>	<u>201/833-2915</u>
Oct 25-27	<u>Autumn Gran Prix, Embassy Suites Hotel, San Diego, CA</u>	<u>619/294-2007</u>
Oct 26-27*	<u>Florida State Championship, Courtyard by Marriott, Ft. Lauderdale, FL</u>	<u>954/785-1282</u>
Oct 26*	Beverly Hills Monthly Tournament, Clarine's, Beverly Hills, CA	310/273-1632
Nov 1-3*	<u>Backgammon in the Berkshires, Oak & Spruce Center, South Lee, MA</u>	<u>603/863-4711</u>
Nov 2*	CBOB First Saturday Monthly Tournament, Clubroom, Chicago, IL	312/922-0404
Nov 2*	Midtown "Sweet 16" Invitational, Midtown Club, New York, NY	212/935-9800
Nov 6-10	Las Vegas Open, Riviera Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, NV	702/893-6025
Nov 17*	Backgammon By The Bay, San Mateo Bridge Center, San Mateo, CA	510/838-7789
Nov 19	BPC 14th Annual Fall Trophy Tourney, Golden Flame, Chicago, IL	312/583-6464
Nov 24*	18th Flint Area Club Championships, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
Nov 29-Dec 1	<u>2nd Thanksgiving Tournament, Best Western Hotel, Akron, OH</u>	<u>330/966-2811</u>
Nov 30*	Beverly Hills Monthly Tournament, Clarine's, Beverly Hills, CA	310/273-1632
Dec 6-8	<u>37th Gammon Assoc. Invitational, Holiday Inn, Woodland Hills, CA</u>	<u>818/901-0464</u>
Dec 7*	CBOB First Saturday Monthly Tournament, Clubroom, Chicago, IL	312/922-0404
Dec 7*	Midtown "Sweet 16" Invitational, Midtown Club, New York, NY	212/935-9800
Dec 8*	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Braxton Seafood Grill, Oak Brook, IL	312/583-6464
Feb 14-16*	<u>19th Pittsburgh Championships, Greentree Marriott, Pittsburgh, PA</u>	<u>412/823-7500</u>
Mar 21-23*	<u>1997 Midwest Championships, The Drake Oakbrook, Oak Brook, IL</u>	<u>312/583-6464</u>

OUTSIDE USA

Sep 14-18	Balkan International Open Tournament, Duni Black Sea Resort, Bulgaria	359-2723612
Sep 28-29	2nd Tournament of the City of Bologna, Hotel Zola, Bologna, Italy	3951-374349
Sep 28-29*	Sjælland Open 1996, Amtgymnasiet, Roskilde, Denmark	4542-366112
Sep 29-Oct 4	3rd German Open, Hotel am Kaiserbrunnen, Brakel, Germany	49521-64314
Oct 4-6	Asian Championships, Ladies Recreation Club, Hong Kong	852-8461923
Oct 5-6	Sandy Osborne Memorial Tournament, George Hotel, Solihull, England	441522-546993
Oct 11-13*	Turku Gran Prix 2, Turku Finland	3580-676258
Oct 12-13	Abne Fyns Mesterkaber, Fyns Backgammon Union, Odense, Denmark	4565-911995
Oct 19-20	4th Irish Open, Wynn's Hotel, Dublin, Ireland	3531-6689332
Oct 25-27	Two Nations Cup, Watermill Hotel, Hemel Hempstead, UK	44161-9453741
Oct 25-28	Rio de Janeiro Internat'l Tournament, Hotel Intercontinental, Rio, Brazil	5521-2676033
Oct 30-Nov 3	Grand Prix de Suisse, Hotel Splendide Royale, Lugano, Switzerland	4179-3374425
Oct 31-Nov 3	First São Paulo Open, Club Homs, São Paulo, Brazil	5521-2676033
Nov 1-3*	Tampere Open Tournament, Hotel Rosendahl, Tampere, Finland	3580-676258
Nov 2-4	2nd Japan Open, Nakano Sun Plaza, Tokyo, Japan	813-33733814
Nov 7-10	NRW Championships, Holiday Inn, Düsseldorf/Kaarst, Germany	49215-1501359
Nov 16-17	Townharbour TT Trophy Tournament, George Hotel, Sulihull, England	441522-546993
Nov 22-24*	Finnish Open, Hotel Kalastajatorppa, Helsinki, Finland	3580-676258
Nov 23-24*	DM 96 og DM u.21, Østerbro, Copenhagen, Denmark	4539-400607
Dec 6-8	CB Software British Open, Watermill Hotel, Hemel Hempstead, UK	44161-9453741
Dec 12-15	Rio de Janeiro Tournament, Miramar Palace Hotel, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	5521-2676033
Jan 4-5*	Mary Rose Tournament, Hilton National Hotel, Portsmouth, England	441522-546993
Jan 5-12*	Lasseters Indoor Games Challenge, Alice Springs, Australia	018-3732580
Jan 9-12*	2nd Thailand Open, Style Restaurant, Pattaya, Thailand	(USA): 847/824-2466
Jan 10-13*	World's Giant Jackpot & Warm-up Tourney	9723-6727063
Jan 13-19*	World Cup Challenge III, Conrad Istanbul Hotel, Istanbul, Turkey	9723-6727063

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 2]

situation could have been recounted without inserting the cheap vulgarities (even the edited versions, which, by the way, no woman would ever refer to as "parts of the female anatomy"). While I appreciated the concerns raised in the column, the manner

in which they were presented almost seemed to imply a tacit approval of Lothario's behavior. The column certainly seemed to give a mixed message.

Your publication is a hot fudge sundae. Please leave out the anchovies.—*Linda Woods, director Central Illinois BG Club, Peoria, IL*

But we like anchovies.—Ed.

THE KG RATING CRASH

As tournament directors, Joan Clark and I have been paying for the KG rating service. Now the data has apparently been glitched. It would be a loss to the backgammon community if Kent is unable to reconstruct his database.—*Beth Skillman, director, Backgammon By The Bay, San Francisco, CA*

WE SUCK

Sorry, but I think your Chicago Point website <<http://homepage.interaccess.com/~chipoint/>> sucks. Your service provider is too slow, and instead of having the solutions to your puzzles, you try to get me to subscribe to CHICAGO POINT to get them.

Please keep trying! I'd like to see more quizzes with solutions, and a speedier web site.—*Marc Ringuette, via e-mail*

WRONG TARGET RULE REVISITED

I commend Ulf Ring for his proposal of a shared scorecard, and Carol Cole for her written warning to check the match length (target) before beginning a match. Unfortunately their proposed remedy for an incorrect target (first player reaching posted target wins) creates problems far worse than the "Wrong Target Rule" in ...*But Only the Hogs Win Backgammons*. That rule gives director discretion, but forbids him to shorten a too-long target sufficiently

[Continued on page 4]

AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 1996

Top 100 through 2 Sept. 1996 after 10 tournaments
(Next up: Minnesota State Championships, Towpath Inn Tourney)

Dennis Culpepper 31.00	David Wells 9.67	Hersel Namdar 4.16	Bob Lumbra 2.56
Jake Jacobs 27.88	Janice Newman 8.52	Jim Mieske 4.16	Ed Johnson 2.56
Dave Cardwell 26.70	Greg Lilley 8.35	Clarine 4.13	Russ Hoser 2.40
John O'Hagan 23.03	Mario Sequeira 8.25	Ron Bruns 4.12	Keith Jackson 2.38
David Jaffe 22.68	Blake Sorem 7.60	Jim Pascoe 4.00	Reggie Porter 2.36
Dave Williams 20.00	Steve Petersen 7.60	Drew Giovanis 3.87	Jeff Acierno 2.16
Bruce Brown 18.00	Al Jones 7.50	Doug Roberts 3.85	Dan Loughren 2.15
Art Benjamin 16.50	Jolie Rubin 7.23	Mike Ungerleider 3.82	Larry Deckel 1.88
Linda MacLean 15.50	Mike Reklaitis 7.20	Ray Gronck 3.82	Diana Pianko 1.75
Tak Morioka 15.22	Austin Healy 6.44	Gus Contos 3.79	Ed King 1.63
Ernest Ho 15.21	Tim Mabee 6.40	Odis Chenault 3.79	Lee Pflugrad 1.61
Marc Ingenoso 13.30	Kevin Muench 5.86	Jerry Ungar 3.43	Gary Fries 1.57
Bruce Pollack 12.93	Elijah Miller 5.70	Frank Dickerson 3.33	Wally Wolf 1.57
Howard Levine 12.88	Francois Margot 5.67	Georgina Flanagan 3.32	Jill Ferdinand 1.56
Kent Goulding 11.53	Reza Nowbar 5.67	Jonathan Bennetts 3.25	Kandice Kane 1.50
Rob Maier 11.44	Ray Glaeser 5.67	Paul Friedman 3.20	Ora Friedman 1.50
Harry Cohn 11.34	Ali Haddad 5.61	Pete Ryder 3.15	George Foster 1.38
Abdi Zaltash 11.34	Judy Collins 5.58	Ray Baker 3.15	Adam Tyson 1.33
Wally Watson 11.34	Bob Koca 5.38	Ron Weiner 2.89	Bruce Ballance 1.19
Carl Adamec 10.96	Fred Badagnani 5.29	Jeff Kaiserman 2.84	Harold Roberson 1.19
Bill Talmadge 10.80	Chester Warzel 5.29	Ray Bills 2.84	Jan Gurvitz 1.17
Andy Palumbo 10.67	James Rosten 5.20	Alkis Pappas 2.78	Wanda delaBarre 1.04
Kit Woolsey 10.40	Dean Adamian 4.80	George Photias 2.76	Kim Starbuck 1.04
Bob Glass 10.00	Jack Kissane 4.44	John Brooks 2.75	Greg Bradfield 1.00
Paul Magriel 10.00	Bob Bishop 4.44	James Roston 2.75	Peaches Stewart 0.96

CHICAGO BAR POINT CLUB 1996 PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED
THRU 31 AUG.

Neil Kazaross 21.32	Mary Franks 5.24	John Jennings 2.48	Jon Viotor 0.88
Herb Roman 17.52	Alice Kay 5.12	Jerry Brooks 2.24	Mark King 0.88
Reggie Porter 14.64	Bill Davis 4.92	David Rubin 2.16	Steve Klesker 0.88
Richard Lloyd 13.84	John Demian 4.88	Fred Badagnani 1.92	Gary Fries 0.88
Tim Mabee 12.04	Arline Levy 4.64	Don Jayhan 1.80	Jolie Rubin 0.82
Jake Jacobs 10.72	Jeff Kane 4.40	Tak Morioka 1.76	Sarg Serges 0.80
Paul Friedman 10.72	Paul Klein 4.32	Elaine Kehm 1.68	Fred Gehlhoff 0.72
Peter Kalba 10.44	Tim Serges 4.08	Henry Gray 1.60	Scott Richardson 0.68
Harry Cohn 9.08	Bill Keefe 3.92	Marcy Sloan 1.52	David Flinn 0.64
Paul Franks 9.04	Wendy Kaplan 3.92	Nora Luna 1.44	Ralph Levy 0.60
Andy Krenitz 8.88	John Stryker 3.84	Harold Seif 1.28	Marv Arnol 0.60
Phyllis Smolinski 7.98	Bob Koca 3.84	Russell Harris 1.28	Peaches Stewart 0.56
Ken Bond 7.52	Leslie Lockett 3.80	Dave Cramer 1.28	Roz Ferris 0.56
Stu Katz 6.92	Dean Muench 3.80	V.W. Zimnicki 1.20	Richard Stawowy 0.44
Norma Shyer 6.28	Georgina Flanagan 3.68	Bruce Pollack 1.20	Tom Fahland 0.40
Gary Kay 6.24	Phil Simborg 3.44	Ernest Ho 1.12	Elaine Andrews 0.24
Joann Feinstein 6.20	Amy Valerio 2.84	Wally Wolf 0.96	Travis Kane 0.20
Ed Buerger 6.16	Frankie Farjood 2.80	George Barr 0.92	Scott Kaplan 0.16
Bobbie Shifrin 5.68	Marty Tatosian 2.56	Darryl Purpose 0.88	

An August tip of the hat to **NEIL KAZAROSS**. Neil's 4.96 points gives him a nice cushion going into the last third of 1996. Herb Roman earned 4.72 points and in the process, won 10 matches in a row. Phyllis Smolinski and Stu Katz tied for third with 2.56 points each.

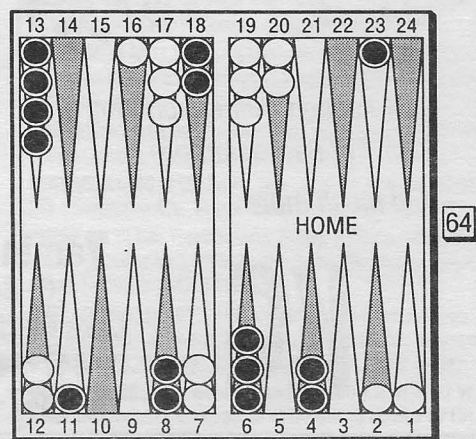
NOTE. Issue 94 of CHICAGO POINT will be mailed November 1st. Remember: a 1-year POINT subscription entitles you to 12 issues.

your move

PROBLEM #228

to be analyzed by Kit Woolsey

Match to 7 points. Black leads White, 5 to 3. **BLACK TO PLAY 5-5.**



LETTERS...

[Continued from page 3]

to bring either side within one point of victory.

To see why such a prohibition is necessary, we may examine some general principles for rule-making:

1. A rule that can be broken inadvertently can also be broken deliberately.
2. A rule violation that can be detected can also escape detection.
3. Incentives to break rules knowingly must be eliminated or minimized.
4. The need to judge whether rule violations are deliberate must be minimized.

Most rule violations are by one side only, e.g. moving illegally or turning the cube in the game after an opponent reaches match-point. Such violations should be penalized. Merely restoring the status quo ante isn't enough, else the chance of escaping detection offers an incentive to break rules to one's own advantage (a "free shot"). Penalizing an infraction obviates the need to judge whether it was deliberate.

Playing to a too-high target is a rule violation by *both sides*. To lengthen a match enhances the stronger player's edge slightly, but usually each player considers himself the stronger. Seldom will there be evidence that either player has chosen to play to the wrong target deliberately. Without such evidence, neither can be penalized for this infraction. The best we

can do is *remove* the strong incentive that exists for *misrepresenting the target*.

Suppose the posted target is 7 but I tell you that it is 11 and you take my word for it. Here are just a few of the things that can happen if the rule awards our match to the player who reaches 7 first (a *bad rule*):

1. You reach 7 first (perhaps violating the Crawford Rule in doing so) but I reach 11 first. I report my victory and start my next match. You are knocked out and leave the tournament. Nobody is ever the wiser.
2. You reach 7 first (again, perhaps violating the Crawford Rule) but I reach 11 first. I report my victory and lose my next match. You walk by the draw sheet and notice that the correct target was 7, not 11. Should the player who beat me have his win cancelled and have to play you? Any correction after the fact damages an innocent third party.
3. Game 1: you double and win a backgammon to lead 6-0. Game 2: I double and win a gammon to trail 4-6. Game 3: you double, and many rolls later, I redouble you out to tie the score 6-6. Game 4: I wait until you'll surely pass, and double you out to lead 7-6. Game 5: you double and win a gammon to lead 10-7. Then I take a break, walk by the draw sheet (as several witnesses observe), and return to tell you the match is to 7.

Should I be allowed to win the match

7-6? Look at all that happened. Game 2: I've violated the Crawford Rule. Game 3: you've made an "idiot" double leading 6-4 in a 7-point match. Game 4: you've made an "idiot pass at 6-6.

"Danny tricked me!" you cry.

What if I have? Anyway, given the facts as I've stated them, nobody can tell. To defend myself, I cite Game 3. Trailing 4-6, and knowing the match was to 7, I would have redoubled immediately. In fact, I waited many rolls. And Game 5: why did I bother playing it as all?

"Danny didn't want to be too obvious!" you cry. How paranoid!

A *good rule* forces me to finish the match trailing 7-10 Crawford.—*Danny Kleinman, Los Angeles, CA* Δ

Next Issue: The Monte Carlo Finals.

Backgammon MAGAZIN

Harald Johanni's *Backgammon Magazin* is a must for individuals who want to follow the world backgammon scene. Each issue is packed with 80+ pages of annotated matches. Printed in German with English translations.

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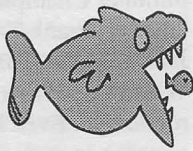
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TASTING THE FISH.

Can A Fish Taste Twice As Good

Book Review
by Danny Kleinman



Can A Fish Taste Twice As Good. © 1996 by the authors, Jake Jacobs and Walter Trice. Published by ToBak Press. Spiral bound soft cover, 114 pages. Price: \$30.

When Jake Jacobs met MEG, it was instant love. MEG3a (Match Equity Generator) is Walter Trice's computer program, and she can custom tailor match equity charts to your precise measurements. You need only tell her how much better your checker play is than your opponent's (as measured by cubeless probability of winning), what percentages of the games won by each player are gammons and backgammons, and how large each of two different "overshoot factors" for cube turns by each player are. ("Overshoot" attempts to measure the deviations from perfectly timed cubes that arise from both the discontinuity of backgammon itself and players' errors.)

You needn't tell MEG the "gammon reduction factor": this is a presumed reduction in proportion of wins that are gammons with every cube-turn, and she assumes that it is one-half. Based on your assumptions and hers, MEG prints out a chart of match-winning probabilities to the nearest thousandth (good!) in 25-point or shorter matches.

These charts and others occupy roughly one-third of Jake's book *Can A Fish Taste Twice As Good?* The "fish" is your opponent, of course, and Jake's title reflects a riotous sense of humor that kept me laughing while grappling with the charts. How should you "Cooke" your fish? Barclay said you should slow-bake him, keeping a low flame under the cube lest the fish eat you for breakfast in big four or eight point gobbles. Bill Robertie suggested cooking the small fry on the same hot grill you would use for sharks. Jake comes down with Barclay on firm mathematical grounds, while urging you to quantify how much better than your opponent you are and by how much this should alter your normal turn- and take-points. Such quantification is the point of the charts and the book.

As a measure of skill differences, Jake takes the complex rating system designed by Larry Kaufman and used by Kent

Goulding, which he describes in great detail. The system is designed so that each difference in rating points corresponds to a fixed ratio of matches the two players can expect to win in head-to-head play. Jake cites some limitations of even this well-designed system. It won't work for players who earn their rating points in different backgammon circles. It reflects performance—which is a combination of luck and skill—rather than skill alone. It assumes that if a shark figures to bet a barracuda and the barracuda figures to beat a marlin, then the shark figures to beat the marlin. In backgammon, however, the marlin may have the shark's number.

I'd go farther than Jake in doubting the accuracy of match-winning odds derived from this rating system. The system implies a "multiplication rule": if a shark is a 6-to-1 favorite against a barracuda, and the barracuda is a 7-to-1 favorite against a marlin, then the shark is a 42-to-1 favorite against the marlin. In real life, however, it's hard enough to find 7-to-1 favorites, and nobody is a 42-to-1 favorite. (In a pivotal game of the one match where I thought I was at least that, I rolled five sets of double-5s. Not good: too bad nobody had told me that when the fish is tasty enough, you're supposed to let him off the hook early and race him to the ocean floor!)

Moreover, the processes that convert the winning chances of a stronger player in a 25-point match to his winning chances in some shorter match lean on dubious applications of random walk theory. Even when we know winning chances, we cannot isolate the variables MEG requests. Some of these variables are involved in the very cube decisions at issue. How much of your fish's flavor (and low rating on the Kaufman-Goulding scale) flows from an "overshoot factor" that gives you frequent "free shakes"? How much flows from his timidity in taking cubes like the one you are contemplating now but hesitate to turn because of the theory?

You won't be able to memorize the many charts in the book, but Jake offers a rough guideline for taking initial doubles. Tighten up your takes by about 1% for every 50 rating points better than your fish that you think you are. If you're the fish, shade your takes nearly as much. At the start of a long match, for example, a fish who is 500 rating points weaker than his predator may take with as little as a 16% chance of winning.

I'm not about to check the accuracy of the 62 charts in the book: that would require years of laborious calculation. I did check Table 13, however: the benchmark

equity chart for players presumed equal, for I have two bases of comparison. One is Kit Woolsey's empirically-derived chart for 15-point matches. The other is my own chart for 15-point matches. Recently, aware of the consensus among experts that gammons in games rolled to completion occur at higher rates than the 20% I had assumed while developing my chart for 9-point matches some twenty years ago, I developed a new chart using a 25% gammon rate.

The entries in Jake's Table 13 differ from my figures by an average of less than 0.6%, with the maximum difference being 1.2%; and from Woolsey's figures by an average of less than 0.4%, with the maximum difference being 1.4%. 63% of them fall in between Woolsey's figures and my own. I conclude not only that you can trust Table 13, but also that you can trust Jake's other charts, for MEG produced them all. If she gets one right, she'll get them all right.

I remain skeptical, however, that you can judge how tasty your fish is from differences in rating points. Each fish has his own distinct flavor. In practice, you may want to notice early in a match how your opponent plays his checkers. What kinds of mistakes does your fish make, and will he have a chance to make them in the positions that will arise after you take his

[Continued on page 6]



ILLINOIS ACTION



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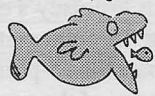
CENTRAL ILL. BG CLUB: Tourn. Thur., 6:30 P.M. at River Station, 212 Constitution Ave., Peoria. Linda Woods (309/686-6662).

PRIME BG CLUB: Tournaments Friday, 7:30 P.M. at Honest John's (Holiday Inn), 1000 Busse Road, Elk Grove Village. Joann Fenistein (847/674-0120).

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TASTING THE FISH...



[Continued from page 5]

double or he takes yours? You may also try to gauge his cube-handling, but this is more hazardous. If he doubles you too early or too late, is it because he is too bold or too timid with the cube, or is it because he misjudges the position? Furthermore, to appraise your fish's timidity or boldness in taking, you must pay a definite price, offering experimental early or late cubes yourself.

To Jake's credit, he is aware of these difficulties in relying on charts. In his discussion of real-life cube decisions, he mentions such possibilities as the fish playing back games badly and blitzes well, or vice versa. He is especially aware of the kinds of mistakes a JellyFish makes. To Jake's credit also, he offers aids to boiling down his charts and remembering their essence.

Hard as Jake's material is to digest, it is harder still to apply. Most published matches are between roughly equal players. Whatever the difference between the ratings of Mike Senkiewicz and Mike Svobodny, for example, they are too evenly matched to warrant departures from normal cube strategy. Perhaps we could learn to apply Fish Theory more easily if we saw matches between experts and beginners annotated from the opposite perspectives of both.

What would make Jake's book better? Clearer (even redundant) labeling of charts and definition of variables. For example, I cannot tell what it means for Player B to have a "type 2 overshoot factor" of 1.50 while Player A's is only 0.10. It would be easier for the reader if atop each of Tables 13 to 29, the parameters used by MEG were stated explicitly rather than shown in a chart of their own (Table 12). It would be convenient to see the rows labeled "Number of Points that Player A (predator) needs" and the columns labeled "Number of Points that Player B (fish) needs," and Row "C" and Column "1" identified as showing the equities at the start of the Crawford Game.

I'VE BEEN CALLING THIS Jake's book because it is written in the first person singular (not plural) and in Jake's breezy style. However, we also have co-author Walter Trice to thank for the computer analysis and good math.—*Danny Kleinman* Δ

WORLD CUP 1996...

[Continued from page 1]

The cube was immediately turned, and soon James was bearing in against Wil's deucepoint game. This time, Wil's timing was good . . . too good. James had 8 men off, and 6 men on the acepoint. He could concentrate on moving (or not moving) just one checker, while Wil had to steer an army. Wil had a 6-prime, but each time he slashed James off the ace, James entered, hitting, and prolonging the game.

By now both players were moving so fast that James claimed Wil had played 5-5 illegally, but no one—players, kibitzers, KG—could tell if he had, or where the checkers had started. That 5-5 may have been a missed opportunity to close the acepoint; no one had time for that sort of analysis, and so I am not sure.

While Wil was still whacking away at that pesky acepoint, KG screamed, "TIIIIIMMEEEE!!!" (Well screamed, KG), and James Colen, with 41 leisurely seconds still on his clock, was in the quarterfinals.

This may not have been good backgammon, but it was terrific theater, in a bread and circuses sort of way. In the bar, later, Kit Woolsey came up with several suggestions for improving the clock rules, and avoiding this sort of thing. Shy fellow, he hasn't written them up, but if we all clasp hands and chant "Ommm," he might publish them so that KG can officially ignore them.

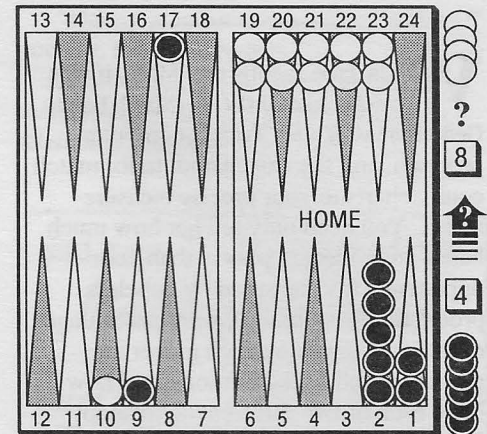


The new U.S. Open Champion: Chicago's Jake Jacobs. [Photo by Carol Joy Cole]

With so many positions to share, I'll have to offer them up as snapshots in a photo album, rather than the epic films that might be made of each. This first one comes from my opening match in the World Cup. Because of the blockbuster entry fee necessary to play in the World

Cup (\$3500 + registration), I chose to enter by winning a qualifier at the Michigan Summer Championships. I had to beat Ray Glaeser, Frank Talbot, Drew Giovanis, and Jack Kissane. That was just to enter the World Cup! How lucky then, to draw a first round bye. Even luckier, I won the first two matches in my round-of-32. Position #1 is from my match #3:

Position #1: Match to 11. Black (Jake) has 5. White (Juan Bizarro) has 6. Black on roll. CUBE ACTION(S)?



I redoubled, and my opponent, Juan Bizarro of Argentina, took. The CPW here is 79.1%, so Juan might do better by passing, but this is not a familiar position. Both of us were guessing. After the take, how should I play 6-1? I can't take full credit for making the correct play of 9/3, 2/1 as I miscounted the number of immediate fly shots. Two rolls later, we had broken

[Continued on page 7]

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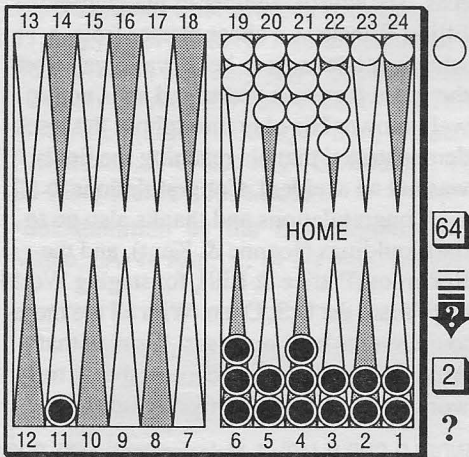
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WORLD CUP 1996...

[Continued from page 6]

contact, and my race equity was over 96%. My chances of reaching the round-of-16 were now greater than 99%, but . . . Okay. That was my last hard luck story! Anyway, in the fifth match, I contributed to my own defeat through a series of cube decisions so inept I have locked them in a vault along with a picture my younger brother once snapped, of me, sunbathing, while wearing just one dark sock, strategically placed to ward off sunburn. (Even with strategically placed commas, there is a lot dangling in that last sentence. Which, come to think of it, was why I was wearing that sock.)

Position #2: Match to 25. Black (Jake) has 15, White (Elliott Winslow) has 23. White on roll. **CUBE ACTION(S)?**

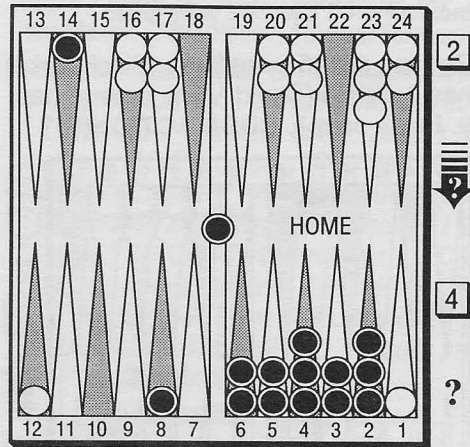


World Cup Consolation, round-of-64. My opponent, Elliott Winslow, made it to the finals before losing to Paul Magriel. I once wrote an article about not panicking when the opponent was at 2-away. Even top players seem to think the take is automatic. It isn't. Not even close. My takepoint is 19.3%, and my race is just 15.1%. Top marks to Paul Magriel, who got this right at a glance, and who has been lecturing for years about this very situation.

THE U.S. OPEN

Losing to Elliott put me in the U.S. Open along with all the other World Cup losers (a distinguished, albeit chastened group) and all the entrants who had come in only for the weekend. I drew another bye, then melted down Chuck Papazian and Dick Cather with some nuclear powered rolling. In the round-of-16, Brazil's Armando Balbi redoubled me in Position #3 (shown above), and gammoned me (the take is easy, but scary):

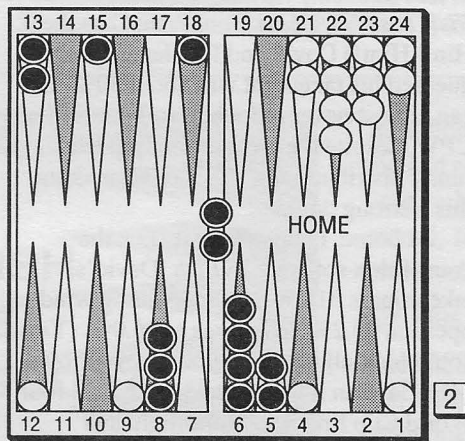
Position #3: Match to 21. Black (Jake) has 8, White (Armando Balbi) has 7. White on roll. **CUBE ACTION(S)?**



Eventually trailing Armando 9-17, I won some lucky gammons of my own and was able to advance to the quarterfinals.

I led Canada's Al Jones 12-5 when I misplayed a 2-1. Some time later, I trailed 16-19, but as the score shows in Position #4, I rallied:

Position #4: Match to 21. Black (Jake) has 19. White Al Jones has 19. **BLACK TO PLAY 5-5.**



I looked and looked, but didn't see the elegant Bar/20 (2), 20/15, 18/13. Pretty, isn't it? The whole world, except me, and Neil Kazaross when I showed him this position days later, spotted that play. Neil and I were forced to go with the ugly Bar/20 (2), 6/1* (2) . . . which is the correct play, even at double match point! *Moral:* when your opponent has lots of blots strewn around, point on him..

FUN STUFF

Following this match, Al and I joined a group of questionable characters and went off to dinner at Chili's restaurant. Actually, we were on a mission. With an uncharacteristic lack of foresight, our esteemed

tournament directors had forgotten the beer! Every two years there is a side event called the Armadillo Chase (won this year by the Chicago Board Of Backgammon's own giant armadillo Dean Muench). The entry is \$100, and the format is one-point matches. It happens that Chili's restaurants feature an exclusive beer called Road Knight, which has a picture of an armadillo wearing sunglasses while drinking a bottle of beer. KG's marketing strategy for the Armadillo Chase was to offer a bottle of Road Knight to every fool willing to drop a hundred bucks. Kent and Bill had driven supplies cross country, but had neglected to stock up on Road Knight, so there we were, dining at Chili's.

After the meal, KG called over the server and said, "I'd like an after dinner drink, please."

"Certainly, sir. What can I get you?"

"Forty-eight bottles of Road Knight!"

Disaster! It seems that Texas does not permit its restaurants to sell carryout liquor. So there we were. Hal and Al were discussing the quaint customs of their southern neighbor (in Canada, each car is required by law to keep at least one six-pack under the front seat); tourney co-director Bill Robertie was offering a free

[Continued on page 8]

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WORLD CUP 1996...

[Continued from page 7]

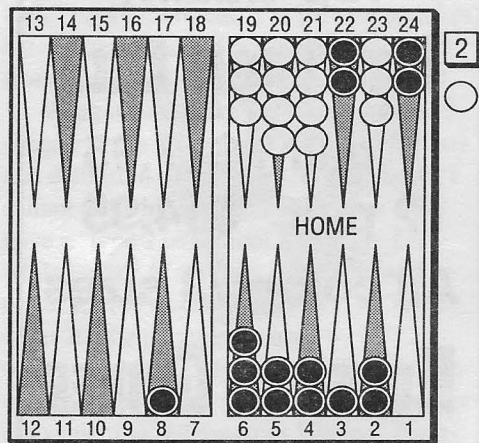
subscription of *Inside Backgammon* to the manager, or even free advertising (though it pained him); KG, who probably has 3 or 4 "Y" chromosomes anyway, was offering actual cash bribes to any Texans who would leave the Chili's loading dock door open (Did the manager know any such Texans?); and Senk was trying to convince me to pose as the Attorney General of the Sovereign State of Texas and pull rank on the manager . . .

Well, I expected that any minute the Texas Rangers would come piling in and fill all us Yankee varmints and Canadian carpetbaggers full of lead, but instead we drove off and found a carryout store where KG stocked up on Rattlesnake beer, and Buzzard Breath beer, and some other noxious quaffs, so all was well. Except . . . Kent, I don't mind paying \$100 for a bottle of beer, but usually when I do, I get to look at a topless waitress, and not at David Ben-Zion!

THE OPEN: SEMIFINALS & FINALS

After dinner came the semifinals. Lila Swan had me down 17-22 Crawford when I won a lucky gammon.

Position #5: Match to 23. Black (Jake) has 19. White (Lila Swan) has 22. **BLACK TO PLAY 6-1.**

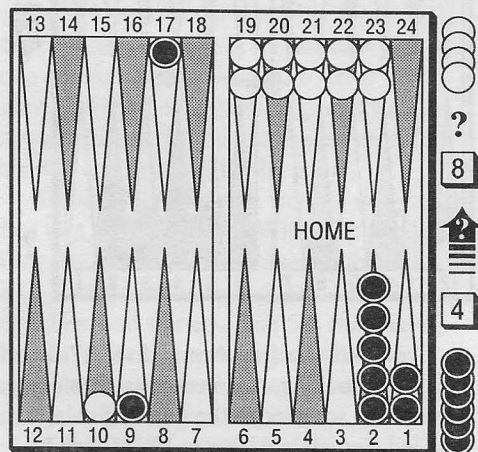


I ran out to my 15-point. I don't want to throw a man on my ace point, and I don't want to crack. Running wins almost 1% more than staying, but Lila rolled a 3-1 and pointed on me. Then, when her 4- and 3-points were stripped, she rolled an unlucky 4-3. I closed out both men, won the game, and won the next game to advance to the finals.

My U.S. OPEN FINALS opponent, David Montgomery of Maryland, had won *Inside Backgammon's* World Cup Quiz. His prize

was entry into this event and eight days stay at Harvey's Hotel Addison. I had swallowed a bitter 4-cube, then rolled 2-5 off the bar. David missed a double shot at me, and a roll later, we were here:

Position #6: 25-point finals. Black (Jake) has 2. White (David Montgomery) has 9. Black on roll. **CUBE ACTION(S)?**



I thought for five minutes before redoubling to 8, and David thought for 10 minutes more before accepting. Working out the equities in a situation like the above has been a perennial challenge due to the dearth of tables that cover 25-point matches. (However, there is now a terrific book out, *Can A Fish Taste Twice As Good?*, that has them. Hint! Hint!) David and I, independently, guessed his takepoint was about 30%. He can almost never redouble, so I guessed my CPW, despite the meager four pip lead and funny distribution, was 65-67%, making this a strong double.

At home, I consulted MEG3a, the companion software to *Fish*. David's takepoint is 31.2%. His redoubling window opens at 93.2% and closes at 96.0%. (You could look all this up if you had your own MEG3a. Can it be an accident that all four World Cup finalists, Main flight and Consolation, already owned copies of *Fish*? I think not. Hint! Hint! Hint!) His race is worse than we thought. His CPW is only 29.7%. This position is a borderline pass.

David took though, as I would have. I took a 10-9 lead, and battled even to 15-15. Then David pulled ahead 22-16. From there, he never scored another point.

MALCOLM DOMINATES WORLD CUP V

Playing all these matches, I didn't get a chance to see much of the later rounds of the World Cup. Our final took five hours, which was twice as long as it took Malcolm Davis of Dallas, Texas to steamroll California expert Kit Woolsey in the World Cup final. Theirs was a best 3-out-of-5 match series, but it was over in

three matches and just 2 1/2 hours. "I really didn't want to lose any in the finals," said Malcolm. "You lose one, the next thing you know, you might lose another one."

Through six rounds of world class competition, Malcolm racked up an incredible 18-3 match-winning record in the following fashion:

- Christian Lestrade (3-0)
- Steve Clark (3-1)
- Bill Robertie (3-0)
- James Colen (3-1)
- Jay Kurzet (3-1)
- Kit Woolsey (3-0)

As in years past, the finalists were an impressive group. Malcolm has been one of the hottest tournament players of the last few years. [Editor's note: Watch for an interview Malcolm Davis in the November *CHICAGO POINT*.] Runner-up Kit Woolsey and Consolation winner Paul Magriel are legendary players and theorists. The fourth member of the quartet, Elliott Winslow, a chess master from . . . wherever he wants to be . . . was away from the game for some years, and so is not as well known. His play throughout the week demonstrated that his reaching the finals was not an accident. Congratulations to all.

Congratulations and thanks also go to the Gouldings (Joanne & Kent), and the Roberties (Patrice & Bill), for staging World Cup V and the U.S. Open. With all the megatournaments held overseas, it's nice that America has at least one event that is truly world class. Nice job, guys! Results: Δ

WORLD CUP V (40): 1-Malcolm Davis (TX), 2-Kit Woolsey (CA), 3/4-Drew Giovanis (FL) / Jay Kurzet (WA); 1C-Paul Magriel (NY), 2C-Elliott Winslow (CA). **OPEN (73):** 1-Jake Jacobs (IL), 2-David Montgomery (MD), 3/4-Bill Phipps (WA) / Lila Swan (NY); 1C-David Simpson (CA), 2C-Tom Wheeler (TX). **ADVANCED (35):** 1-Philip Ward-Ackland (UK), 2-Dante Bains (CA), 3-Frank Dama (FL); 1C-David Levine (PA), 2C-Ron Williamson (TX). **INTERMEDIATE (27):** 1-Claudia Brown (TX), 2-Alex Black (TX); 1C-Jerry Lacy (TX), 2C-Oksana Gribakova (NJ). **\$1,000 JACKPOT (16):** 1-Wilcox Snellings (NV), 2-David Ben-Zion (ISR). **RIFLEMAN SHOOT-OUT (32):** 1-Armando Balbi (BRZ), 2-Kazuhiro Shino (JPN), 3/4-Stuart Hosen (TX) / Dean Muench (IL). **TEXAS GOLD RUSH (64):** 1-Steve Nelson (HK), 2-Billy Horan (NY). **GREAT TEXAS ARMADILLO CHASE (128):** 1-Dean Muench (IL), 2-Kazuhiro Shino (JPN). **CHIPMUNK CHASE (32 players):** 1-Hunter Jones (MD), 2-Ken Fischer (TX). **LAST ROUNDUP (126):** 1-Martha Ghio (NY), 2-Ray Fogerlund (CA). **OPEN MICROBLITZ (64):** 1-Tom Weaver (TX), 2-Tom Wheeler (TX). **LTD MICROBLITZ I (32):** 1-Harold Seif (IL). **LTD MICROBLITZ II (32):** 1-Philip Ward-Ackland (UK). **QUIZ-GAMMON (42):** 1/2-Howard Markowitz (NV) / Mike Senikewicz (NY).

WINNER'S CORNER



July-Sep. 1996

•**Hanko Open** (Hanko, Finland; 19-21 July)... OPEN (24): 1-Rolf Strömsholm, 2-Mika Puro, 3/4-Matti Kuortti / Jorma Tattari; 1C-Beso Bobokhidze (GEO), 2C-Risto Pönniö, 3C/4C-Sture Lift (SWE) / Juha Tenhovuori... *Results supplied by Mika Johnsson via e-mail.*

•**Hong Kong Monthly** (Hong Kong; 5 Aug.)... OPEN: 1-John Simon, 2-Steve Nelson; 1C-Avry Ben-Zeev, 2C-Marc Mostacci. CHAMPIONSHIP: 1-Nancy Wong, 2-Olivia Lee; 1C-Jonathan Collins, 2C-Glen de Guzman.

•**Midtown "Sweet 16" Invitational** (New York, NY; 10 Aug.)... OPEN (16): 1/2-Alex Rasic / Ron Whitney (NJ).

•**BPC Summer Cool Tourney** (Oak Brook, IL; 11 Aug.)... OPEN (31): 1-John Jennings, 2-Dave Cramer, 3/4-Gary Kay / Bruce Pollack; 1C-John Stryker, 2C-Harry Cohn. INTERMEDIATE (23): 1-George Barr, 2-Scott Richardson, 3/4-Alice Kay / Ed Buerger; 1C/2C-Mary Franks / Jolie Rubin.

•**Backgammon by the Bay Monthly** (San Mateo, CA; 18 Aug.)... OPEN (10): 1-Robert

Rosetti, 2-Alan Culbert; 1C/2C-Dan Epstein / Ron Karr. INTERMEDIATE (13): 1-Julius High, 2-Maureen Wasley; 1C/2C-Hamish Birnie / David Hurowitz. BEGINNER (6): 1-Jim Mason, 2-Ivo Nenov; 1C-Paul Ferguson.

•**Franken Ganz Open II** (Uttenreuth, Germany; 16-18 Aug.)... CHAMPIONSHIP (50): 1-L. Wolf, 2-J. Orlowski, 3/4-H. Lange / M. Meyburg; 1C-T. Lumper, 2C-P. Heitmüller; 1LC-A. Frommherz. INTERMEDIATE (33): 1-M. Werner, 2-B. Grau, 3/4-S. Azoulay / M. Schwartz; 1C-R. Höhenberger, 2C-B. Schmidt; 1LC-S. Scherer. BEGINNER (28): 1-M. Wacker, 2-R. Pohl; 1C-M. Brand, 2C-U. Schütz; 1LC-M. Köhnlechner... *Results provided by Marc Anders via e-mail.*

•**Studio Anne Carlton Trophy** (Solihull, England; 17-18 Aug.)... OPEN (108): 1-Geoff Oliver, 2-Alan Beckerson, 3-Tim Cross, 4-Paul Turnbull. DOUBLES (24): 1-Alan & Monica Beckerson. FRIDAY NIGHT KNOCK-OUT (24): 1-Dale Taylor, 2-Steve Pickard. CRACKSHOT (108): 1-Roy Hollands, 2-Dan O. Farrell. TOP LADY: Corrine Sellens. BETTER LUCK NEXT TIME: Mark Tucker.

•**CIBC Summer Sizzler** (Lacon, IL; 18 Aug.)... OPEN (19): 1-Cinda King, 2-Kurt Schurecht, 3-Ed Zell; 1C-Sue Will. INTERMEDIATE (5): 1-Darcey Wade, 2-Vinton Knarr.

•**44th Indiana Open—ABT** (Indianapolis, IN; 30 Aug.–2 Sept.)... CHAMPIONSHIP (45):

1-David Williams (CA), 2-Bob Glass (CA); 1C-Paul Magriel, 2C-Paul Franks. ADVANCED (48): 1-Andy Palumbo (NY), 2-Chester Warzel (IN); 1C-Fred Badagnani (MN), 2C-James Roston (NY). INTERMEDIATE (14): 1-Diana Pianko (MI); 1C-Jan Gurvitz (IN), 2C-Vinton Knarr (IL). NOVICE (5): 1-Justin Counts (MI), 2-Debbie Sandler. \$300 MASTERS JACKPOT (16): 1-Bob Glass (CA), 2-David Williams (CA). \$100 AMATEUR JACKPOT (32): 1-Ali Haddad (MD), 2-Chuck Bower (IN); 3/4-Wally Wolf / Dave Groner (IN). DOUBLES (16): 1-Tak Morioka (IL) & Carol Joy Cole (MI), 2-Rob Maier (WV) & Abbas Zaltash (PA). DIRECTOR'S CUP (16): 1-David Williams, 2-Kati Pratt. MICROBLITZ #1 (64): 1-Jim Curtis (IN). MICROBLITZ #2 (32): 1-Steve Mellen (MI). QUICKIE #1 (64): 1-Andy Krenitz (IL). QUICKIE #2 (64): 1-Frank Frigo (KY). THURSDAY NIGHT EARLYBIRD (26): 1-Mary Franks (IL), 2-Larry Strommen (IN), 3/4-Paul Magriel (NY) / Paul Franks... *The Radisson Hotel in Indianapolis has excellent facilities for tournament play. Connected to the playing area is a huge shopping mall and food court. There's never a dull moment between matches.*

•**CBOB First Sat. Monthly** (Chicago, IL; 7 Sep.)... OPEN (6): 1-Fred Badagnani, 2-Dean Muench. Δ

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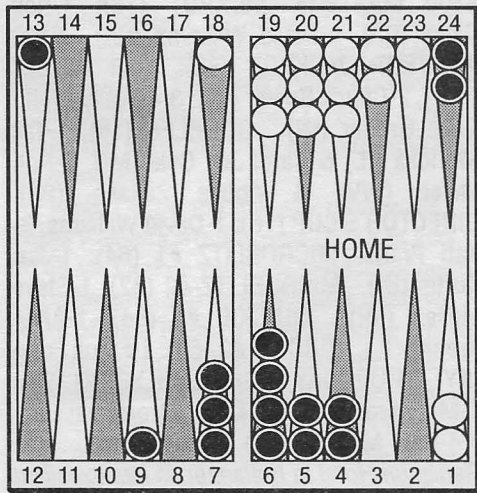
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**PROBLEM #227
ANALYZED**

by Harry Cohn

Tournament double match-point.
BLACK TO PLAY 6-3.

This is a nice problem to have. 6-3 is a great roll and Black is a heavy favorite no matter how he plays it. There are two major lines to consider; making the 3-point with 9/3, 6/3; or hitting with 24/18* and finding a 3 to play with it.

There are two reasonable choices for the 3 with the hitting play: 18/15, hoping to build the 9-point and keeping maximum builders for the 3-point; or 9/6, picking up one of the blots to reduce White's blitz variations.

13/10 is clearly inferior to 18/15, and creating an inner board builder with 7/4 is without immediate merit since Black won't break the bar to build an inner point. The flexibility of 18/15 seems to outweigh the cost of the extra blot, so let's go with 18/15

for now. If the hitting play proves to be the winner, or if it's a toss-up, we'll look closer at which 3 is best.

Back to the primary concern: should Black hit or build a 5-prime? In a prime-vs.-prime position, having only one man back versus two or three men back is a huge advantage. With only one man back, the opponent is often forced to hit and make the ace point, totally ruining his prime.

The hitting play gains a strong advantage by escaping a back checker and putting a third White checker behind Black's 4-prime. It also puts White on the bar against a 3-point board with another blot to shoot at. However, with gammons meaningless at double match-point (DMP), this isn't that important.

Making the 3-point is also very strong giving Black a solid 5-prime versus White's 4-prime. In this game, Black has far better timing.

The downside to the hitting play is that White gains some attacking chances. Her strategy in this variation is to attack the blot on the 24-point (even if she's forced to leave two blots in her own home board), and hope to wiggle out from behind Black's 4-prime while picking up Black's other blots.

Another downside to the hitting play is that White will retain more residual equity. *Residual Equity* is defined as the leftover winning chances after the main variation has failed. In this case, the main variation is winning the prime-vs.-prime battle with the residual equity being the chance of winning by hitting a shot while Black is bearing in or bearing off.

White's residual equity will be higher with the hitting play because White may be able to preserve a better board by recirculating the third (and sometimes fourth) back checker. In these variations, White often makes the 2- or 3-point anchor and uses this

as a springboard for the additional back men.

White's residual equity when Black makes the 3-point is lower because her home board is much more likely to collapse when Black escapes. Since this is DMP, residual equity is likely to be more important than usual because White can stay back to the bitter end hoping for a shot without gammon concerns.

The downside to making the 3-point is that if Black doesn't roll a 6 for two or three rolls, White's position will be slow to crumble since he has no 6s and only one 5 to play. One set of 5s or 4s could put Black in trouble.

Hand rollouts show the two plays to be about equal for escaping the back men. Therefore White's lower residual equity for the prime play makes that the clear choice. My hand rollout results (70 games each side) show the prime play wins 69% while the hitting play won only 58.6%. Both of these numbers seem low, but the number of hand rollouts was too low to be statistically significant. JellyFish™ rollouts performed by Jake Jacobs confirm the prime play with a cubeless winning percentage of 73.4% for the prime versus 69.0% for the hit.

There could be some cases where the hit play would be correct. Match scores where gammons worked for Black but not for White (2-away/1-away Crawford, for example) would make the hit more attractive. Another attractive case, even at DMP is where Black is a significantly stronger player than White. Hitting leads to far more complex positions with a lot of room for error by both sides. Δ

This column marks Harry Cohn's debut as an analyst. His BG victories are numerous. Most recently, Harry won the 1994 America Cup and the 1995 Michigan Summer Championships. In April, Harry was runner-up in the Las Vegas International Cup.—Ed.

AMALGAMATION

Note the new Northern Ohio BG Club play location: Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m. at Aroma Coffee & Tea in Akron. Call **Joe Miller** at 330/966-2811... The 1000 Islands (NY) backgammon community is mourning the loss of **Jim Dickson** who died August 4... In the new **Kent Goulding** International Rating Book (July 1996), **Ed O'Laughlin** is #1 at 1856. Curiously, **David Nahmad's** win/loss record prior to his Monte Carlo World Championship victory was 3-13. That translates to a 1337 rating: one of the lowest in the world. To order, send \$10 to **Carol Joy Cole**; 3003 Ridgecliffe Drive,

Flint, MI 48532... The Honors Club, a fashionable gaming club in New York City (115 E. 57th St.), has set up a backgammon program in honor of modern day backgammon organizer **Prince Alexis Obolensky**. This will culminate in the awarding of a replica of the Obolensky Cup. A beginner's backgammon series will commence on 25 Sept. at 8:00 p.m. at the club. For more info, contact **Joe Pasternack** via e-mail <RUQF51A@prodigy.com>... Visiting the Bar Point Club in August: **Dan Braden** (TX), Overheard at the World Cup: Someone asked, "Aren't you **Billy Horan**?", to which the former 2-time World Cup champ (who was having a bad tournament) replied, "I used to be."... Ouch! **Marc Gray** broke his finger stacking chairs at the

Indiana Open... **Chris Ternel** and **Erik Gravgaard** have resigned as organizers of the Danish BG Federation (Their annual mega-event was the Danish "Wide" Open). Erik now lists his return address as "The EMG Group." Stay tuned... From **Jon Vitor** (CA): Don't carry an ink pen in your backgammon board. It might leak... **Trisha Hegland** (CA) tells us that Dove Audio, Inc. is a company on the move. This year they expand from books on tape to an integrated multimedia enterprise. **Michael Viner** started Dove in 1985 using in part, \$8,000 Michael won playing backgammon with friend **Sheldon**... Another vacation in Las Vegas for **Bobbie Shifrin** (IL). Another Royal Flush jackpot on the poker machine. Ho hum. Δ

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