

las vegas open

GREAT DICE HELP ME WIN LAS VEGAS

First person report
by Stacy Turner

MORE THAN 200 international players converged on the Riviera Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada (12–16 November) for this year’s Las Vegas Open. Directors Howard Markowitz and Lynn Ehrlich were pleased with the upturn in attendance, especially considering all of Las Vegas has been hurting for a few months.

The 120 player grid (98 + 22 buybacks) produced two new names in the finals: Stacy Turner of Georgia (the eventual winner) and Matt Cohn-Geier of California. Here is Stacy’s first person account of the most exciting match of his life—Ed.



Las Vegas Champion Stacy Turner. [Photos by Carol Joy Cole]

As far as my win goes, I admittedly had great dice. I played Gary Bauer in the quarterfinals which was a pretty tense match since the winner would cash. We did hedge \$1000.

I actually won on a reentry. My first 1st round opponent was Nack Ballard. That match went to DMP

(14–14) before I lost. I then reentered and never lost again. I didn’t enter the side pool or buy myself back in the Calcutta since (1) I didn’t have the cash (I had to go to the ATM in the lobby for the reentry fees), and (2) I never imagined I would be lucky enough to win the whole thing.

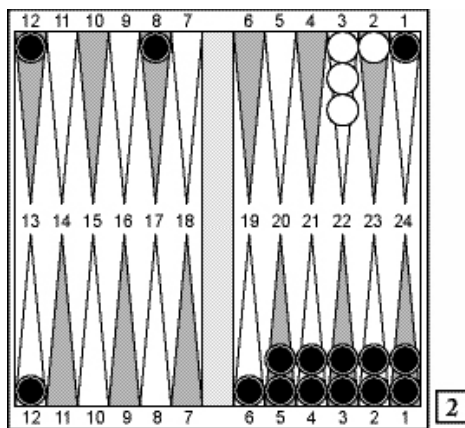
I didn’t play any of the “big names” except Alvaro Savio (Brazil) in the semi-finals. Other players did the hard work of

knocking them all out for me, and I publicly thank them for their efforts.

The final match was against Matt Cohn-Geier from San Francisco. He’s only 24 years old and has been playing backgammon for around three years—the first two with the Madison club. The match was intense basically because of the large audience. Matt is well known because he regularly posts at Stick Rice’s bgonline.org forum.

Matt supplies the first interesting position from the middle of the match:

Pos. 1. Las Vegas 15-point finals. Stacy Turner (Black) leads Matt Cohn-Geier (White) 10 to 6. **WHITE TO PLAY 5-1.**



Matt writes:

“I had trapped Stacy in a badly timed 1-2 backgame behind 6–10, hoping to win a gammon to tie it or a backgammon to pull ahead. Stacy managed to salvage his position to get to here. I left a couple of shots bearing in and now I have a 5-1 to play. I debated the ace for awhile. I couldn’t figure out which one was best and eventually flipped a coin in my head and went with 2/1.*

I rolled 5-1 to hit and save the gammon. CHICAGO POINT confirms that 720 Snowie 3-ply, precise, full rollouts show 3/off, 3/2 to be superior by –0.029. The correct play wins 1.4% more games (94.8% vs. 93.4%) and 1.2% more backgammons (4.7% vs. 3.5%), but wins 1.7% less gammons (70.5% vs. 72.2%).

We battled to 13–12 my way. Then Matt gave me what I thought to be an early cube:

ABT DIRECTORS APPROVE NEW PREMATURE ACTIONS RULE CHANGE FOR 2009

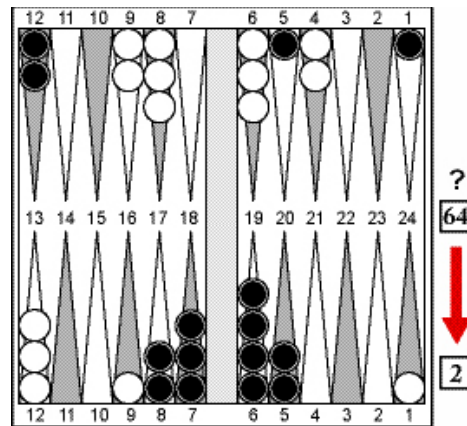
In order to bring United States backgammon rules in line with the rest of the world, the following change will be implemented into a “US Backgammon Tournament Rules & Procedures” version to officially take effect 1 January 2009:

4.6. PREMATURE ACTIONS. The opponent of a player who rolls prematurely shall complete his turn and then either let the premature roll stand or require a reroll. The opponent of a player who doubles prematurely shall complete his turn and then pass or take.

This new version was approved by a unanimous vote of 2009 American Backgammon Tour directors.

Previous rules required a player’s premature roll to stand as valid with the opponent able to make his move based on this foreknowledge. This rule remains in effect, but in January, the opponent will have the added option of canceling the premature roll and requiring the player to reroll when it is his turn to do so. This will stop the opponent from practicing bad manners by fast-rolling (without penalty) in the bear-off. —Bill Davis Δ

Pos. 2. 15-point finals. Turner (Black) leads Cohn-Geier (White) 13–12. White on roll. **SHOULD WHITE DOUBLE?**



[Continued on page 5]

CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

EDITOR & PUBLISHER

Bill Davis

3940 W. Bryn Mawr Avenue 504
Chicago, IL 60659-3155

Tel: 773/583-6464 ♦ Fax: 773/583-3264

E-mail: bg@chicagopoint.com

www.chicagopoint.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Carol Joy Cole (MI)	Danny Kleinman (CA)
Mary Hickey (OH)	John O'Hagan (IN)
Jake Jacobs (IL)	Steve Sax (CA)
Duane Jensen (MN)	Phil Simborg (IL)
Neil Kazaross (IL)	Kit Woolsey (CA)

All rights reserved. You may copy any of this for noncommercial purposes as long as you give full credit to "CHICAGO POINT, 3940 W. Bryn Mawr Ave. 504, Chicago, IL 60659-3155." You may not reproduce any part of this publication on the Internet or via other electronic media without the express-written consent of CHICAGO POINT.

Subscription Rates: \$30/10 issues (\$50/20 issues) in US and Canada. \$40/10 issues (\$70/20 issues) international airmail in USD check. Make PayPal payments to bg@chicagopoint.com.

Advertising Rates: 2 3/8" x 3 1/4" = \$40. 1/4 page = \$70. 1/2 page = \$115. Full page = \$200. If the ad is not "camera ready," request layout and typesetting for an additional charge.

LETTERS

c/o CHICAGO POINT

3940 W. Bryn Mawr Ave. 504
Chicago, IL 60659-3155

E-mail: letters@chicagopoint.com



REMEMBERING GEORGE BARR

George was a true gentlemen. He will be missed, that's for sure. I really wish he could have beaten Joe Sylvester last year for the Illinois State Championship, but making the finals was an incredible achievement in its own right.—*Ed Zell, Peoria, Illinois*

I send my sympathy and know George is playing backgammon in a very cool place right now! I knew George for many years from the Midwest Championships and always felt that he was one of the "classiest" guys around who always took it upon himself to talk to the "Pig Mistress." He will be missed!—*Dru Heggen, Metamora, Illinois*

George Barr was a kind and wonderful man. He'll make heaven a better place.—*Jill Ferdinand, Itasca, Illinois*

[Continued on page 3]

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

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
cjc@flintbg.com

*Denotes new or revised listing

NATIONAL

American Backgammon Tour events underlined.

Dec 5-7	California State Championship, Airtel Hotel, Van Nuys, California	818/901-0464
Dec 6	Springfield Series #2, Ride the Nine, Bloomington, Illinois	217/622-9447
Dec 6*	Southwest Ohio Club Challenge, Panera Bread, Dayton, Ohio	513/777-7862
Dec 7	Bar Point Club Sunday Tournament, Holiday Inn-O'Hare, Chicago, Illinois	773/583-6464
Dec 13*	Backgammon By the Bay, Peking Express, Berkeley, California	831/261-4583
Dec 13	Northwest Indiana Club Monthly, VFW Hall, Porter, Indiana	219/785-2082
Dec 13	New England Monthly, Docksider Restaurant, Malden, Mass.	781/324-0892
Dec 14	South Florida Monthly, NorthRidge Raw Bar, Fort Lauderdale, Florida	954/564-0340
Dec 14	Hoosier Club Fall Trophy Event, McAlister's Deli, Indianapolis, Indiana	317/241-0605
Dec 18	Third Thursday Bonus (Carolina), Days Inn, Flint, Michigan	810/232-9731
Dec 20*	Backgammon By the Bay, Britannia Ams, Cupertino, California	831/261-4583
Dec 21*	Pittsburgh Monthly Tournament, Panera Bread, Wexford, Pennsylvania	412/760-8363
Dec 26*	Flint Club Holiday Party/Tournament, Days Inn, Flint, Michigan	810/232-9731
Dec 28*	Pair-O-Dice Monthly, Cavendish Bridge Club, New York, New York	212/222-7177
Jan 3*	Springfield Series #3, King Pin Lanes, Springfield, Illinois	217/622-9447
Jan 4*	Ohio State Monthly, Spaghetti Warehouse, Akron, Ohio	330/268-4610
Jan 5*	Arizona Club Monthly, Rosie McCaffrey's Irish Pub, Phoenix, Arizona	480/286-8239
Jan 5*	Roy's Monthly, Restaurant Roy, Santa Barbara, California	805/966-5636
Jan 8-11	<u>New York Metropolitan Open, Hyatt Regency, Jersey City, New Jersey</u>	<u>702/218-8238</u>
Jan 11*	South Florida Monthly, NorthRidge Raw Bar, Fort Lauderdale, Florida	954/564-0340
Jan 13*	Kansas City Club Monthly, Granfalloon Bar & Grill, Kansas City, Missouri	816/916-6599
Jan 15*	Third Thursday Bonus (Pittsburgh), Days Inn, Flint, Michigan	810/232-9731
Jan 16-18	<u>9th Carolina Invitational, Hilton University Place, Charlotte, North Carolina</u>	<u>704/651-2949</u>
Jan 18-25	Backgammon & Poker On Board, Princess Cruise, Ft. Lauderdale to Caribbean	773/583-6464
Jan 31*	Bar Point Club Doubles Championship, Holiday Inn O'Hare, Chicago, Illinois	773/583-6464
Feb 20-22	<u>31st Pittsburgh Championships/ABT Awards, Holiday Inn, Pennsylvania</u>	<u>304/685-3214</u>
Mar 20-22	<u>2009 Midwest Championships, Wyndham Lisle, Lisle, Illinois</u>	<u>773/583-6464</u>
Apr 3-5*	<u>15th Ohio State Championships, Airport Marriott Hotel, Cleveland, Ohio</u>	<u>330/268-4610</u>
Apr 15-19*	<u>25th Nevada State Tournament, Riviera Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada</u>	<u>702/218-8238</u>
May 1-3*	<u>Atlanta Spring Classic, Crowne Plaza Ravinia, Atlanta, Georgia</u>	<u>678/441-1005</u>
May 22-25*	<u>29th Annual Chicago Open, Eaglewood Inn & Resort, Itasca, Illinois</u>	<u>702/218-8238</u>
Jun 4-7*	<u>US Open—Washington DC, Doubletree, Arlington, VA</u> ckt@world-backgammon-association.com	
Jun 12-14*	Los Angeles Open, Airtel Plaza Hotel, Van Nuys, California	818/901-0464
Jul 2-5*	Michigan Summer Championships, Sheraton, Novi, Michigan	810/232-9731
Aug 6-9*	Florida State Championships, Sheraton Airport, Fort Lauderdale, Florida	954/564-0340
Sep 4-7*	Wisconsin State Championships, Radisson Hotel, Madison, Wisconsin	608/516-9109
Sep 25-27*	Colorado State Championships, Hilton Airport Hotel, Aurora, Colorado	303/791-0271
Oct 9-11*	Illinois State Championships, Ramada Inn, Peoria, Illinois	847/845-3579
Oct 16-18*	Mid-Atlantic Championships, Marriott Berkshire, Towson, Maryland	954/564-0340
Nov 4-8*	2009 Las Vegas Open, Riviera Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada	702/218-8238
Dec 4-6*	California State Championship, Airtel Plaza Hotel, Van Nuys, California	818/901-0464

OUTSIDE USA

Dec 2-7	5th Cancun Invitational Tournament, Ritz-Carlton, Cancun, Mexico	775/829-8403
Dec 5-7	15th German Open, Recklinghausen, Germany	49521-64314
Dec 5-7	Gilbertson UK Finals, Barceló Walton Hotel, Warwickshire, England	441522-888676
Dec 12-14	Stockholm Events, Piperska Grottan, Stockholm, Sweden	4676-2335759
Dec 12-14	46th Thun Open, Beo Cup, Doubles, Waadtlanderstube, Thun, Switzerland	4179-4329378
Dec 17-21	12th Championship of France, Casino Barrière d'Enghien-les-Bains, France	33142-618080
Dec 20-21*	WBF-Turkiye Istanbul Championship, Nosta Restaurant, Istanbul, Turkey	90532-2329228
Jan 2-4	13th Thailand Open, Somboone's House, Dongtan Beach, Thailand	668-70826120
Jan 3-4	5th BG Masters International Open, Café Den Bengel, Antwerp, Belgium	31653-276835
Jan 8-11	3rd Casino-Cup, Casino Kleinwalsertal, Riezlern near Oberstdorf, Austria	49711-486190
Jan 9-11	12th Bright 'n' Breezy, Paramount Old Ship Hotel, Brighton, England	441522-888676
Jan 17-18	1st Zürich Open, Restaurant Rotel, Zürich, Switzerland	4178-6329404
Jan 17-18*	Rhein-Neckar-Cup 2008 Year-End, Phönix Clubhaus, Mannheim, Germany	496204-620396
Feb 6-8	Jarvis Trophy, Barceló Paramout Hotel, Daventry, England	441522-888676
Feb 11-15*	PGT: PartoucheGammon Tour Grand Finale, Palm Beach, Cannes, France	331-4764-5938
Feb 19-22*	Innsbrucker BG & Poker Open, Casino Innsbruck, Austria	49711-486190
Mar 6-8*	BIBA International Championship, Daventry Hotel, Daventry, England	441522-888676
Apr 2-5*	Combination BG & Poker Tournament, Casino Seefeld, Seefeld, Austria	49711-486190
Apr 3-5*	British Open, Barceló Daventry Hotel, Daventry, England	441522-888676
Apr 9-13*	21st Nordic Open, Marienlyst, Helsingør, Denmark	4533-363601
Apr 15-19*	21st WBF European Championship & 8th Velden Open, Velden, Austria	390331-923537

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 2]

ED ZELL ANNOUNCES HIS RETIREMENT AS PEORIA DIRECTOR

I want to let everyone know that I will be resigning as Director of the Peoria Backgammon Club at the end of the year. Sue

Will has graciously offered to take over for me now that she is retired and has lots of time to devote to our shared passion! As you remember, she ran the club for quite a few years along with Linda Rockwell before I came along.

They reeled me when I won the second tournament I ever played in on Thursday

nights back in 1991. Then I discovered their master point system was done by hand, so of course I had to computerize it! I wrote it in COBOL and it still runs on a Mainframe system today. Very geeky, I know, but I can tell you your record against anyone else in the club going back almost 17 years :-)

After I became the official statistician, Sue decided I would be a good PR guy for the club, too. And before you know it, I was the Director, or as Patrick Gibson might say, the "MFIC." We had our ups and down over the years, but a great core group of players has kept the club going strong. Backgammon is definitely alive and well and does "Play in Peoria."

I want to especially thank Cliff Mayoh for getting me started with the game back at Illinois Mutual in 1990. We played a ton of 5 point matches for quite a few months until I felt comfortable going to the club for the first time. Ed Bauder was also a very influential person who helped me elevate my game to a another level. He taught me about match play and equities long before Snowie came on to the scene. And both of them helped keep me safe from the chouette vultures in my early days, so my BG lessons we relatively cheap!

I also have a great deal of admiration and respect for all tournament and club directors in general. It takes a lot of hard work, energy, and time and they graciously donate theirs to making Backgammon a great experience for the player. I am proud to have been a part of the group, and I know I will always enjoy the friendships I made.

Don't worry, though. I am not going

[Continued on page 8]



AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 2008

Compiled through 16 Nov. 2008 after 18 tournaments
(Upcoming events: California State, 2009–NY Metro, Carolina)



Neil Kazaross	43.83	Sal Chehayeb	12.50	Eric Barr	8.33	Eliot Bean	5.64
Tim Mabee	36.00	Dave Settles	12.46	Reggie Proulx	8.20	John Rockwell	5.64
Richard Munitz	34.22	Barry Silliman	12.40	Paul Berg	7.83	Antonio Ortega	5.58
Ray Fogerlund	31.88	Carol Joy Cole	12.00	Lynn Ehrlich	7.64	Neil Deutsch	5.58
Stacy Turner	28.44	Antoinette Williams	12.00	John Jennings	7.40	Rick Barabino	5.58
Chris Knapp	25.27	George Matthews	11.27	Alvaro Savio	7.11	Les Moshinsky	5.33
Bob Koca	23.33	Roy Gandy	11.27	Gary Bauer	7.11	Larry Liebster	5.33
Stick Rice	23.07	John O'Hagan	11.17	Steve Flam	7.00	Herb Roman	5.33
Mike Senkiewicz	22.33	Mary Hickey	10.93	Rose Sheedy	6.89	Bruce Ballance	5.28
Ray Glaeser	21.33	Matt Reklaitis	10.76	Larry Taylor	6.52	Jeff Whitelaw	5.11
Steve Brown	21.20	Tak Morioka	10.67	David Olson	6.52	Karsten Busch	5.11
Bill Davis	20.17	Greg Merriman	10.67	Carter Mattig	6.40	Jesse Eaton	5.04
Matt Cohn-Geier	18.92	Barry Miller	10.67	Alfred Mamlet	6.40	Evan Etter	4.81
Jon Vietor	18.67	Jolie Rubin	10.56	David Escoffery	6.40	Dana Nazarian	4.67
Drew Giovanis	18.07	Jonah Seewald	10.22	Michael Flohr	6.40	Howard Markowitz	4.67
Jeff Acierno	15.84	Alan Robinson	10.00	Saad Ghiso	6.25	Bob Sahagian	4.54
Stepan Nuniyants	14.95	Adam Bennett	9.40	Owen Black	6.20	Ed Bennett	4.52
Christopher Yep	14.80	Joe Russell	9.04	Rod Covlin	6.20	Jona Alexander	4.52
Mike Corbett	14.00	Justin Nunez	9.04	Bill Versaw	6.20	Justin Bor	4.52
Kit Woolsey	13.77	David Rubin	9.00	Vadim Musaelyan	6.00	Ed O'Laughlin	4.50
Perry Gartner	13.71	Scott Casty	8.84	Joe Freedman	6.00	Lynn Lusk	4.42
Michael Edge	13.67	Kevin Jones	8.83	Steve Hast	6.00	Fabricio Schaffrath	4.42
Petko Kostadinov	13.18	Gary Schachtschneider	8.66	Robert Lessard	6.00	Sean Garber	4.30
Johathan Bennetts	13.04	Faddoul Khoury	8.60	Alan Gold	5.71	Mark Donaldson	4.27
Jeremy Bagai	12.80	Tom Hodous	8.40	Julius High	5.65	Three tied with	4.20



CHICAGO BAR POINT CLUB 2008 PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED THRU 25 NOV.

Rory Pascar	33.74	Mike Sutton	9.28	Elaine Kehm	2.92	Ray Lass	1.04
David Rockwell	29.80	Wayne Wiest	8.88	Mike Pufpaf	2.76	Sargon Benjamin	1.04
Phil Simborg	24.00	Bob Zavoral	8.54	Scott Casty	2.72	Ken Tyszko	0.96
Herb Roman	21.72	Bill Bartholomay	8.48	Jeff Fischer	2.62	Mary Franks	0.96
Bill Davis	21.68	Michael Ginat	8.04	Arline Levy	2.52	Amy Trudeau	0.96
Carter Mattig	17.70	Gary Kay	7.56	Henry Gray	2.28	Cookie Frazin	0.88
Tim Mabee	15.74	Richard Stawowy	6.80	Mark Murray	2.08	Chiva Tafazzoli	0.72
Ken Bond	15.60	Alex Owen	6.60	Howard Markowitz	1.92	Tim Rockwell	0.68
Nora Luna Righter	14.72	Bill Keefe	6.32	Ken Tibbs	1.84	Ben Schneider	0.64
Steve Klesker	13.64	Roger Hickman	6.16	Dan Cox	1.76	Sherry Nelson	0.56
Tak Morioka	13.40	Mike Wolock	5.88	Lenny Loder	1.60	Bill Gradl	0.56
Albert Yakobashvili	13.20	Bob Steen	5.28	Dan Weymouth	1.44	Bill Devine	0.56
Lucky Nelson	13.16	Royal Robinson	5.20	Les Moshinsky	1.36	Kathy Sorci	0.52
Oleg Raygorodsky	13.08	Adrian Rios	4.32	Linda Rockwell	1.28	Andrew Mack	0.48
Dave Settles	12.40	Georgina Flanagan	3.72	Yamin Yamin	1.28	Jacki Singleton	0.48
Larry Goldstein	11.04	Paul Baraz	3.68	Mitch Pomper	1.20	Mark Swanson	0.40
Alice Kay	10.60	Eric Johnson	3.40	Nicole Tibbs	1.12	Roz Ferris	0.32
Jacob Moreno	9.86	Wendy Kaplan	3.20	Tom Machaj	1.12	Phyllis Smoliński	0.24
Christopher Shanova	9.64	Jerry Brooks	3.08	Efim Liberman	1.12	Lucia Armenta	0.24

October: **BILL DAVIS** won the month on the strength of his Sunday, 5 October double point victory. Runner's-up were club leader Rory Pascar with 4.96 points and Carter Mattig with 4.56 points.

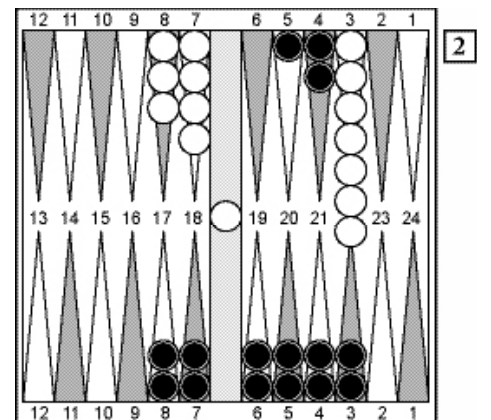
November: **RORY PASCAR** earned November honors by winning the Fall Trophy Tourney. His 6.08 points bested 2nd and 3rd place finishers David Rockwell (3.84) and Phil Simborg (3.12).

your move

PROBLEM #341

to be analyzed by John O'Hagan

5-point match. White leads Black 3 to 1.
BLACK TO PLAY 2-2.



ASK DANNY

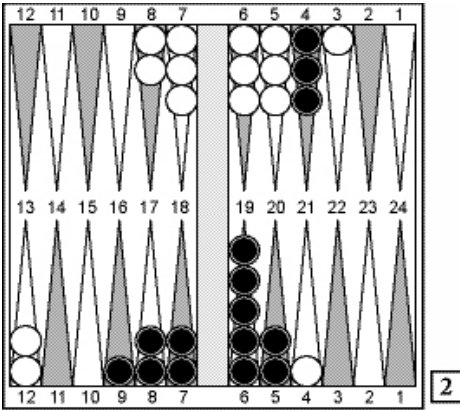


© 2008 by Danny Kleinman

5s DILEMMA

Playing in the Last Chance in Las Vegas, I was challenged by this roll:

5 point match. Black leads White 3 to 1. **Black to play 5-5.**



I was sure about two of the 5s: 9/4* and 21/16. And if I get gammoned, I lose the match, so there was no way I was going to

leave my 4-anchor. I decided on making the acepoint with the final two deuces. White rolled 6-3, entering and leaping out to my 9-point. I failed to safety my outfield blot. White hit it and won a fluke gammon.

Certainly making my 3-point would have worked out much better. But it leaves such an unsmooth position. What do you think, Danny. Was I right?—*Just wondering*

DEAR WONDERING: Your fear of losing a gammon is slightly exaggerated. White's gammon threat isn't large. White has made only two inside points, and you have only one blot. True, losing a gammon will lose the match, but by the same token, winning the game will win the match ... and is just as important as avoiding a gammon-loss.

The anchor that you are so reluctant to leave is only a mixed blessing. Keeping it will save very few gammons, but it will force you forward on your side of the board, leading to the further separation of your army and isolation of those three back men.

Making the 1-point leaves your army split into three segments instead of two. When White reenters, even on your 2-point or 3-point without hitting, you will have only ten of your fifteen men involved in blocking White's back man. Before mak-

ing your 1-point, you need to bring more men into the attacking zone. The spares on your 6-point are builders for the more important 4- and 3-points; do not put them out of play on your 1-point.

Making the 3-point is not quite as bad as making the 1-point, but it breaks your 4-prime and leaves you very poorly placed if White hits the slot on your 4-point.

Your best strategy is to leave the anchor and bring those three back men into the field of action and closer to the rest of your army. So play 21/16(3) with your first three 5s.

For your fourth 5, you have a close choice between continuing 16/11 and hitting 9/4*. 16/11 minimizes shots, but it creates a second blot and fails to gain the tempo that hitting gains. After 9/4*, White must use 2s, 3s and 4s for reentry instead of covering the 3-point ... and cannot use rolls like 6-1 and 6-2 for escape. So play 9/4*: the 2 extra shots are a small price to pay for the gains from hitting. *Yours, Danny Δ*

Questions for Danny Kleinman should be addressed to: Ask Danny, c/o CHICAGO POINT, 3940 W. Bryn Mawr Avenue 504; Chicago, IL 60659-3155 or send e-mail to: bg@chicagopoint.com



Marcy's B&G Holiday Gift Ideas
by Marcy Sloan

Here's the 2008 sackful of backgammon-related goodies from our favorite Santa, Marcy Sloan (Boynton Beach, FL). Everything here can be purchased at the Internet address shown.—Ed.



Dozens of backgammon designs are available for t-shirts, wall clocks, coffee mugs, etc. at cafepress.com. Search "backgammon."



The ultimate gammon lunch box! Made of enamel, this collectable work of art sells for \$154. From annabelchaffer.co.uk. Search "enamel backgammon"



This 25" x 29" shadowbox art piece would look nice on any wall. Price \$210 from showoffboutique.net. Search: "backgammon"



Put your pooch in his own backgammon t-shirt from pets.cafepress.com. \$19.99. Search: "backgammon"



Here's the perfect throw pillow (17" x 17") for those craving "hot dice." \$25 from ladyluckfurniture.com/dicepillow.html

George L. Barr
Sept. 12, 1938–Oct. 26, 2008



George Barr with future wife Marianna at the Midwest Championships in 1994.

George Barr of Lake Barrington, Illinois has died following a courageous battle with lung cancer. He was 70. The Chicagoland native made his living in the banking business. Following his retirement, he drove a school bus which gave him as much pleasure as his main profession.

George first began playing backgammon in the early 1980s. He earned the bulk of his 98.89 Chicagoland points playing at the Bar Point Club and in Winnetka where despite serious health issues, he managed a 4th place finish in 2007.



Barr in the 2007 Illinois State finals.

Nationally, George was also a successful player ranking 77th all-time on the American Backgammon Tour with 41.76 points. He was the 2005 Chicago Open Intermediate victor and reached the Open finals at Pittsburgh in 2000. But his most satisfying finish was in 2007 at the Illinois State Championship. Playing in the Open, George battled the legendary Joe Sylvester in the finals. Although George finished second, he received a standing ovation for his brave and determined effort.

George is survived by his wife Marianna, three children and six grandchildren. Δ

Cabins still remain! **Backgammon & Poker** **On Board IX**

Ft. Lauderdale to Caribbean
 18–25 January 2009

Contact Sue Will today!
 309/699-6005 • cruiserbag@comcast.net

bpc fall trophy tourney

PASCAR & RIOS WIN BPC FALL TROPHIES

Rory Pascar was unstoppable at the Bar Point Club's 26th Annual Fall Trophy Tourney. The event was held Friday, 21 November at the Holiday Inn O'Hare with 41 players attending.



Champ winner Rory Pascar shares his trophy presentation with BPC server Rose Gecht and Christopher Shanova.

Rory defeated 2007 BPC Player of the year in the quarterfinals, then knocked out defending Fall Trophy champ Tak Morioka in the semifinals. His opponent in the finals was 2008 ACS Invitational champ Wendy Kaplan. After relinquishing the first point, Rory scored 7 straight points to capture the trophy and over \$900 cash.



Intermediate winner Adrian Rios with friend Neal Banoff hamming it up behind.

Congratulations to Adrian Rios who rallied to win a double match-point nail-biter over Wisconsin's Jacki Singleton 7–6. And also to Herb Roman who topped Bill Davis to win the One-Point Tourney. Complete results: Δ

2008 BPC FALL TROPHY TOURNEY

OPEN (29): 1-Rory Pascar, 2-Wendy Kaplan, 3/4-Tak Morioka/Lenny Loder; 1C/2C-Bill Davis / Phil Simborg.

INTERMEDIATE (12): 1-Adrian Rios, 2-Jacki Singleton (Wisconsin), 3/4-Wayne Wiest / Amy Trudeau; 1C-Oleg Raygorodsky, 2C-Jeff Fischer.

ONE POINT TOURNEY (16): 1-Herb Roman.

LAS VEGAS...

[Continued from page 1]

It's a simple take and CHICAGO POINT's 1000 rollouts (3-ply, precise, full cubeless) show the double to be an error of –0.087 magnitude (a loss of 1.08% match equity). Matt wins 52.5% of the games of which 15.1% are match-ending gammons or backgammons. That's not quite enough to cube in this position.

The game developed into my having to run off his 5-anchor. Matt attacked hitting me loose on his 5-point (with a four-point board), but I hit right back and proceeded to win the biggest tournament of my life.

My next tournament will likely be Charlotte in January. Looking forward to it.



Macfarlane

Congratulations to Jonathan Bennetts (Canada) and Louis Gordon (CA) for their Intermediate and Beginner victories, and also to Brazil's master Ian MacFarlane who edged Jeremy Bagai (CA) to win more than \$20,000 in the Super Jackpot. — Stacy Turner Δ

2008 LAS VEGAS OPEN

CHAMPIONSHIP (98+22 rebuys): 1-Stacy Turner (GA), 2-Matt Cohn-Geier (CA), 3/4-Perry Gartner (FL)/Alvaro Savio (BRZ); 1C-Richard Munitz (NY), 2C-Gary Bauer (NJ), 3C/4C-Pia Jeppesen (DEN)/Zoran Maric (France); 1LC-Stepan Nuniyants (WA), 2LC-Malcolm Davis (TX). INTERMEDIATE (88+28 rebuys): 1-Jonathan Bennetts (CAN), 2-Larry Taylor (GA), 3/4-Elli Nache (CA) / Bob Sahagian (NV); 1C-David Olson (TX), 2C-Evan Etter (FL), 3C/4C-Fred Dardashti (CA) / Julius High (NY); 1LC-Tom Duggan (ENG), 2LC-Michael Derylo (CA). BEGINNERS (21+5 rebuys): 1-Louis Gordon (CA), 2-Yehuda Hodara (NY), 3/4-Susan Lee (AZ) / Don Thompson Sr. (NV); 1C-Dale Kerr (AUS), 2C-Adam Lusk (CO); 1LC-Vergine Kouleyan (CA), 2LC-Cherie Owens (AZ). SUPER JP (16 @ \$2,000): 1-Ian Macfarlane (BRZ), 2-Jeremy Bagai (CA). LIMITED JP (16 @ \$1,000): 1-Jeff Acierno (NJ), 2-Ken Bame (CA). OPEN JP (16 @ \$400): 1-Stepan Nuniyants (WA), 2-Steven Keats (NY). SENIORS (128): 1-Ed O'Laughlin (VA), 2-Steven Keats (NY), 3/4-Wolfgang Griese (GER)/Marc Steyvers (SPN). BLITZ (256): 1-Ted Chee (CA), 2-Gary Tong (MI). MINI-MATCH (64): 1-Walter Trice (MA), 2-Alex Katchikian (NY). DOUBLES (32 teams): 1-Susan Randall (FL) & Stacy Turner (GA), 2-Pedro Carvalho (BRZ) & Alberto Chreem (BRZ). OVERFLOW DOUBLES (8 teams): 1-Mark Antranikian (CA) & Ted Chee (CA), 2-Matvey "Falafel" Natanzon (ISR) & Arkadiy Tsinis (NV). SATURDAY JPS \$300 (10): 1-Ed O'Laughlin (VA), 2-Mike Corbett (FL). \$100 (34): 1-Art Grater (CA), 2-Akiko Abe (JPN). \$50 Beginners (8): 1-Cherie Owens (AZ), 2-Michael Groff (CA). AFTER TOURNAMENT \$50 (25): 1-Kit Woolsey (CA), 2-Tom Wheeler (TX). \$20 (14): 1-Dale Kerr (AUS), 2-Jonathan Bennetts (CAN).

PLAYING FOR THE GAMMON

Separating the Women from the Girls!

By Phil Simborg

One of the many differences between a good player and a great player is knowing when to play on for the gammon and knowing when to turn the cube. Playing for the gammon also affects checker play: weighing the risk of losing the game vs. winning the gammon.

In money games, this is a major decision. Sometimes it is right to cube even if it is technically “too good” to double if you might get a take. But before you can learn to “read” your opponent, both in money and match play, you need to read the board and know what the “right” decision is.

In money play, the decision is based on a simple principle: *Go for the gammon if the odds of winning the gammon are twice as good as the odds of losing the game.* That sounds pretty simple, but over the board it can be quite challenging.

In match play, the decision is complicated by the score. If winning a gammon wins the match, clearly there are more reasons to go for the gammon. Conversely, if losing the game costs you the match, there is a greater incentive to play for the single win.

I wish I could provide some simple rules of thumb that would help you make this determination, but there are just far too many variables. The major things that have to be taken into account are:

- The position of the cube
- The score of the match
- The particular roll involved
- The odds of winning a gammon when if you make the “big” play
- The odds of losing the game if you make the big play
- The odds of winning a gammon if you play safe
- The odds of winning the game if you play safe
- The odds of losing a gammon if you play big
- The odds of losing a gammon if you play safe
- The skill-level of your opponent and how that affects the decision
- The odds of your opponent taking the cube
- Your ability to still win the game with the cube if everything doesn’t go well
- Your opponent’s ability to turn the cube if everything doesn’t go well.

That’s a lot to think about and measure

over the board. (Show this list to anyone who says they think backgammon is a simple game!) With all of those factors to consider, it is no wonder that even the best players in the world are often unsure whether to play for the game or play simply for the win.

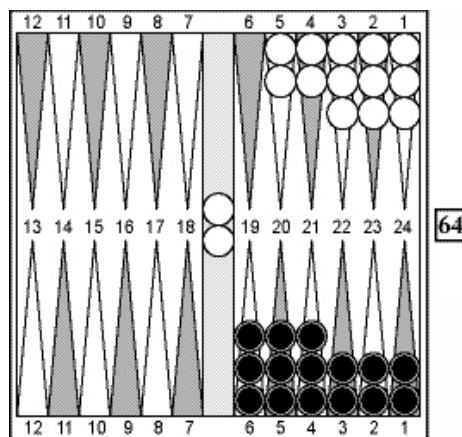
Here is one general rule I try to live by: *If I am not sure whether to play for the gammon or play for the single win, I play for the win.* That either means I turn the cube, or I make the safer play. In the long run, you will be better off taking the more conservative approach, and you still might win a gammon or you might still get a take from your opponent anyway. Many times your checker play decisions will not force you to make “the big play” or the “safe play,” but rather a play that increases both the winning *and* gammon chances.

Now, back to the original question. How do you know when to play for the gammon or when to play for the win? The answer is to consider all of the variables above and then make your best guess. The difference between a pro and a novice is that a pro’s guess is based on more knowledge and experience. The more experience and “reference positions” you have to call on, the better informed your decisions will be.

How do you get “reference positions”? The only way I know is through study. There are great reference positions in many backgammon books, but another way you learn is by constantly putting positions into Snowie or the other bots and seeing whether you should play for the win or go for the gammon. The more you do this, the better you will be able to estimate over the board.

There are some reference positions that come up often, and it is very helpful to know the gammon odds in these positions. Even if the exact position doesn’t come up, if you have the reference position in your head, you can estimate from there.

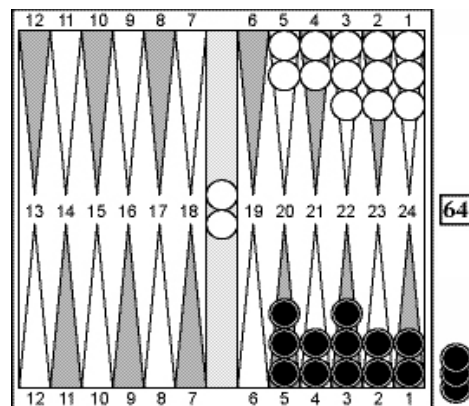
Pos. 1. Black on shake.



For example, I happen to know that if I have two of my opponent’s checkers on the bar and I have a closed board with a good bearoff position, I will win a gammon about 40% of the time. [See Pos. 1] Knowing this helps me decide how aggressive I must be in my bearoff to try for a gammon (depending on the match score, what I roll, and how early my opponent enters with one of his checkers).

Now since I know that in Pos. 1, I win gammons around 40%, when I get to a position like Pos. 2, I can adjust my estimate. What do you think the gammon odds are for black in Pos. 2?

Pos. 2. Black on shake. Then Black to play 3-1.



The answer is, about 53%. Now, I don’t remember being in the exact position shown in Pos. 2, but because I know I have a three checkers off and my opponent is still on the bar, I know it’s a lot higher than 40%, and from experience, I thought it was somewhere between 50% and 55%.

Let’s take another look at Pos. 2 and see why it is important to know that Black wins gammons about 53% of the time. In most money and match games, White will likely have the cube which greatly affects Black’s checker play. For example, how should Black play 3-1 in Pos. 2?

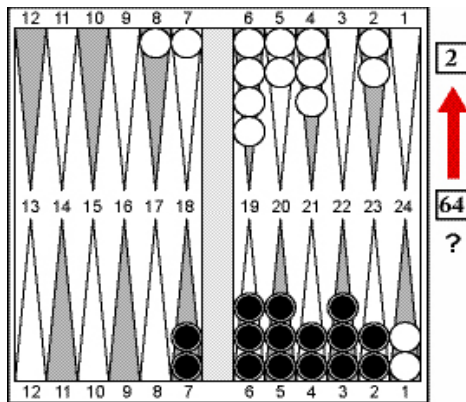
Clearly you have two reasonable choices: you can make the “safe play” and use the 3 to move the spare checker off the 5-point which eliminates the chance of leaving a shot on your next roll (or more); or you can take a checker off the 3-point and move the ace 5/4. Taking a checker off clearly wins you more gammons but risks more blots and therefore potential losses.

The answer depends on the score. In a money game, and at most match scores, it’s probably right to take a checker off, as you gain a lot more gammons than losses. You should probably play safe only when gammons don’t matter at all. The Snowie analysis shows that making the “riskier”

play nets you almost 5% more gammons and costs you less than 1% in wins.

Another common reference position is when you have a prime and your opponent holds your 1-point. The percentage of gammons depends largely on your opponent's timing and her board, but assuming she has reasonable timing, I know that the odds of winning a gammon are only around 15%.

Pos. 3. Black on shake. Cube action?



Knowing that I am about 15% in Pos. 3 allows me to adjust my checker and/or cube decisions accordingly as the game progresses. It also allows me to adjust for slightly different positions. If she has more checkers in the outfield, for example, my odds go up. If I bear off four or five checkers and she still hasn't escaped a checker, again, my odds go up. A third checker back on my ace point actually doubles the odds and makes me about a 30% favorite to win a gammon.

There are formulae to apply, knowing that for each pip the opponent needs to roll to get into her inner board, the odds of the gammon go up a certain percentage; and there are methods of counting crossovers. All of these formulae are extremely helpful and much of this information has been shared with us by the experts in their many fine books.

It is not my goal to get too technical here, as the purpose of this article is to encourage you to start thinking about the variables involved and the fact that if you really want to play backgammon well, this is one area of the game you simply have to study and memorize.

Study? Memorize? That sounds like school! That sounds like work! But just like school and work, there is a payoff when you do your homework. In this case, the payoff is winning more. As Abraham Lincoln once said: "Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe."—*Phil Simborg* Δ

mid-atlantic championships

MY WIN IN MARYLAND
By Barry Silliman

I had always expected to eventually move up to the Open level, but I thought it was not unreasonable to earn some ABT points at the Advanced level first. Well, although I had some close calls and usually won more matches than I lost, I failed to earn even a single point in eleven ABT events in the several years since I'd started playing. Nevertheless, I was thinking of making the move up to Open anyway, and decided upon it after suggestions from local heavyweights Ed O'Laughlin and Bob Koca that I could at least be competitive at the top level.



Barry Silliman with Mid-Atlantic director Elayne Feinstein. [Photo by Mary Hickey]

So for the first time, I entered the Open division at the Mid-Atlantic Championships at the Burkshire Marriott in Towson, Maryland (17–19 October). I admit that I had low expectations, hoping only to win a match or two and be competitive.

On Friday night, my doubles partner, Mark Gordon, and I lost a heartbreaking but thrilling match at DMP, when we were favorites on our last shake, against Mike Corbett and Murray Bryntesen in the semi-finals, one round away from money. This match went until almost 2 am, and I retired for the night disappointed that I had come so close to probably my only chance to cash, and I was so pumped from the match that just ended that I got very little sleep.

On Saturday, I joked with my doubles partner, who also made a similar first-time move up to Open, when in the 31-player field, he drew the lone bye while I was paired with legendary Kent Goulding for my first ever Open match! As it turns out, I had to go through three current or former Giants on my way to the finals: Goulding, Ed O'Laughlin, and Petko Kostadinov. I had some good fortune and will not claim to be at the same level with these players, but after defeating Petko in the semi's Saturday night, I went to bed knowing that

regardless of my finals outcome Sunday this would be by far my best result ever at an ABT event.

So for Sunday's final match against Bill Versaw, I felt surprisingly relaxed, probably because I felt I was playing with "house money"—my expectations had already been far exceeded. My match with Bill started out similar to several of my Saturday matches with everything going right for me. I was able to turn three very solid doubles by Bill around en route to a 7–0 lead to 11 after four games. Then my luck seemed to turn when Bill whittled away a point or two at a time to tie the match at 7–7. At that point we took a break and I joked, "Okay, I scored the first touchdown, Bill scored the second touchdown, now it's my turn to get the ball back."

Well, after the break, things fell my way again (but not without some volatility of course) and I managed to win the last four points to take the match.

I know how difficult it is to win an ABT Open title, and how talented the field is. Never could I have imagined that I would win a title in my first attempt. I had a personal goal of trying to win at least one in my lifetime, so I am thrilled to have met that so quickly. I have a lot of room for improvement in my game, which I continue to work on, but I feel that now I can set higher goals while playing relaxed, knowing that at least this once, I had my proverbial "15 minute of fame"!

Congratulations to Elayne Feinstein on organizing a fun event in the finest hotel on the ABT circuit. It's great to see more ABT events on the East coast.—*Barry Silliman* Δ
[Mid-Atlantic results on page 9.]

ILLINOIS ACTION



Bill Davis
773/583-6464
Peter Kalba
312/316-1432

Tuesday, 6:30 P.M. at Holiday Inn O'Hare, 5615 N. Cumberland Ave., Chicago. 773/693-5800.
Sunday Bimonthly, 12:00 NOON at Holiday Inn O'Hare, 5615 N. Cumberland Ave., Chicago. 773/693-5800.

BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL BG CLUB: Tournaments Monday, 6:00 P.M. at Ride The Nine; 503 N. Prospect Road. Michael Flohr (309/662-7967).

SANGAMON VALLEY BACKGAMMON ASSOC.: Tournaments Wednesday, 6:00 P.M. at Capitol Teletrack, 1766 W. Wabash Ave., Springfield. Randy Armstrong (217/528-0117).

WINNETKABG CLUB: Tournaments Wednesday, 7:00 P.M. at Winnetka Community House, 620 Lincoln, Winnetka. Trudie Chibnik (847/446-0537).

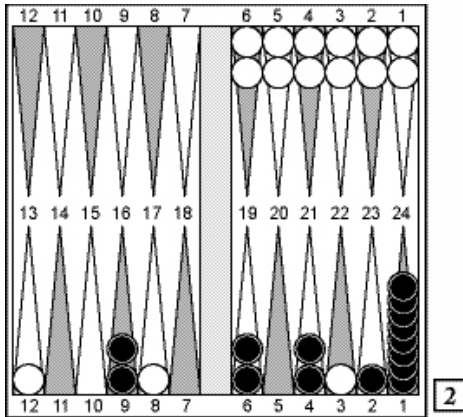
PUB CLUB: Tournaments Thurs., 6:45 P.M. at Playoffs Bar, 720 E. North Ave., Carol Stream. Tim Mabee (630/606-2388).

PEORIA BG CLUB: Tourn. Thurs., 6:30 P.M. at Peoria Pizza Works, 3921 Prospect, Peoria. Ed Zell (309/224-9579).

**PROBLEM #340
ANALYZED**

by Kit Woolsey

9-point match. Black leads White, 7 to 5. **BLACK TO PLAY 3-1.**



Black must leave a shot, and has various ways to do so. For starters, it is a good idea to see how many shot numbers each candidate leaves. That isn't necessarily the only consideration, of course, since future structure and safety can be very important. However, the immediate number of shots is very big. Keep in mind that for the future to matter, it takes the parlay of White missing, Black leaving a shot which he wouldn't have had to leave otherwise, and White hitting that shot. Only if the likelihood of that parlay is greater than the difference in immediate shot numbers will it be correct to leave more immediate shots.

9/8*, 9/6 is possible. This leaves all 2s, 3-5, and 5-5 for 14 shot numbers. It is a good position if the shot is missed. But if White hits the blot on Black's 2-point, the second blot may cause Black to get gammoned. At this match score getting

gammoned is a complete disaster, so it is unlikely that this is the best play.

6/3*, 3/2 is possible. This leaves all 6s, 5-1, and 3-3 for 14 shot numbers. It has the advantage that White might flunk, which is great since then Black has the opportunity to play pretty safe and probably leave only an indirect shot from the bar. Also, if White enters with a 5 it will be less difficult for Black to get by safely.

6/5, 5/2 is possible. This leaves all 3s and 2-1 for 13 shot numbers. The downside of this compared to 6/3*, 3/2 is that White is on the 3-point where he wants to be, making it more difficult for Black to get by. Still, that is one less immediate shot number.

4/1, 2/1 is possible. This leaves all aces for 11 shot numbers. The resulting position is very ugly, and in some cases Black might be forced to leave multiple blots. For example, look at how 6-4 will play. Still, fewer immediate shots is very important.

Let's try to compare 6/3*, 3/2 with 4/1, 2/1. After 4/1, 2/1 White misses 25 times out of 36. What rolls leave a shot as Black? 6-6, 6-5, 6-4, 6-3, 6-2, 5-4, 5-2, 5-1, 4-4, 4-3, 4-2, 3-3, 3-1. That's 23 out of 36 shot numbers if my count is correct, or around 2/3 of the time, or roughly 16 of White's 25 misses. White hits about 1/3 of these, for about five hitters. In addition, on many of Black's safe rolls (such as 2-1) there is plenty of future jeopardy. Plus, as we have seen, there is the danger of the double blot.

Of course Black isn't necessarily home free after 6/3*, 6/2. He has some rolls which leave a shot—this may depend upon what White rolls. Black might even be forced to leave two blots, although probably only one direct shot. Putting it all together including the double blot danger and the future jeopardy, it appears that the horror leave after 4/1, 2/1 is so bad that it

more than compensates for the three extra immediate shot numbers. To put it another way, if White hits with one of the 11 shots which hit either way, it won't matter which play Black chooses. So, of the remaining 25 rolls, Black is very happy with 4/1, 2/1 three times out of 35 (when White would hit the other play), but mildly unhappy with 4/1, 2/1 the other 22 rolls (when White would have missed in both cases). Is the "very happy" more than eight times greater than the "mildly unhappy"? It doesn't appear to be since coming home after 4/1, 2/1 is so difficult, thus making 6/3*, 3/2 better.

Now, what about 6/3*, 3/2 compared with 6/5, 5/2? Does putting White on the bar compensate for one extra shot number? It looks like it does. If White flunks, Black has the chance to hit a second checker, cover the 6-point, or perhaps just clear the 6-point and bring one of the back checkers in safely. If White is forced to enter with a 5, Black has a lot more wriggle room. It is more dangerous to let White sit on the 3-point with that blot, since that is where White gets maximum shots. That danger appears to be greater than the cost of one extra shot number. By the same analysis, 13 times it doesn't matter, one time Black is "very happy" with 6/5, 5/2, and 22 times Black is "mildly unhappy" with 6/5, 5/2. Again, the "very happy" doesn't appear to be 22 times as great as the "mildly unhappy," so 6/3*, 3/2 looks to be better.

The kind of trade-offs involved in this sort of position are a type of pay me now or pay me later problem. It is often right to pay as little as possible now, since the cost from paying later involves a parlay. When there is a big difference in the resulting structure and future safety, it may well be right to leave extra shot numbers in order to maximize later safety.—Kit Woolsey Δ

LETTERS...*[Continued from page 3]*

away. I still plan on playing as much as I can. But at this point in life, there are some other priorities that I need to focus on. So soon, I will become just a player again. Thanks for supporting me and the Peoria Backgammon Club, I sincerely appreciate it.—Ed Zell, Director Emeritus, Peoria (Illinois) Backgammon Club

DOUBLE DUMMY?

I wrote the book *Backgammon for Dummies* (home.comcast.net/~doooc/site/?/photos) several years before Chris Bray's work. Many people liked the chapter that included

my grandmother's recipes. My favorite is her recipe for "Dunkers," a Norwegian cookie made with baking ammonia. Also, I'm sure Bill Davis liked the book because it is the first backgammon book with a centerfold.—Duane Jensen, St. Paul, Minnesota

Duane actually created a parody cover. The real Backgammon For Dummies review is on the back page. And by the way, we did NOT like your centerfold!—Ed.

BACKGAMMON OUT EAST

I noticed the 2009 Mid-Atlantic tourney listed in "Mark Your Calendar" and was so pleased to be able to participate with so many world-class players only 20 miles from home. The beginners I played against

and the advanced players that I've gotten to know online and at Vic Morawski's club all seemed to be satisfied with the event.

Kudos to Elayne Feinstein for a job well done.—Jim Briggs, Bel Air, Maryland Δ

**2008 Awards Night****Tuesday, January 13, 2009****Holiday Inn O'Hare at 6:45 PM***Come honor our Top 20 finishers of 2008*

WINNER'S CIRCLE



OCT.–NOV. 2008

•**Backgammon by The Bay** (Berkeley, CA; 11 Oct.)... OPEN (10): 1-Matt Cohn-Geier, 2-Zafer Yasa; 1C-Jeremy Bagai. Intermediate (7): 1-Peter Chechele, 2-Jack Fraenkel; 1C-Jack Scheinman.

•**ABT–Mid-Atlantic Championships** (Towson, MD; 17–19 Oct.)... CHAMPIONSHIP (31): 1-Barry Silliman (MD), 2-Bill Versaw (PA); 1C-Rod Covlin (NY), 2C-Mary Hickey (OH); 1LC-Perry Gartner (FL). ADVANCED (42): 1-Tom Hodous (WV), 2-Ken Collins (VA); 1C-Bob Hathaway (VA), 2C-Wanda Roberts (MA); 1LC-Daniel Peters (VA). NOVICE (15): 1-Alan Pruce (VA), 2-Stefanie Rodriguez (MD); 1C-Jonathan Munitz (NY); 1LC-Larry Brown (VA). CHARM CITY CLASSIC (11): 1-Ed O’Laughlin (VA), 2-Joe Freedman (VA). IMPERIAL CRAB CUP (25): 1-Neal Rosensweig (FL), 2-Charlie Silverman (NJ). DOUBLES (15 teams): 1-Alan Grunwald (NJ) & Petko Kostadinov (SC), 2-Murray Bryntesen (FL) & Mike Corbett (FL). BLITZ (64): 1-Brent Cohen (PA), 2-Boris Dkhtyar (NY). SUNSHINE CUP (16): 1-Mike Wilkerson (VA). First prize was a Vitor Hollanda backgammon board. CRAB DIP FREEROLL: 1-Bob Hathaway (VA).

•**Rotterdam Open** (Rotterdam, The Netherlands; 17–19 Oct.)... OPEN (20): 1-Paul van Rooijen, 2-John Jacobs, 3/4-Hassan Rida / Achim Müller; 1C-Rogier van Gemert, 2C-Michel Lamote. BEGINNERS (6): 1-Manolito, 2-Oekie. FRIDAY WARM-UP (13): 1-Rogier van Gemert, 2-Mike Heard. SUNDAY JACKPOT (20 + 6 rebuys): 1-Rutger Cornets de Groot, 2-Walter Meuwis, 3/4-Susan van der Heiden / Nico van der Meer.

•**New England Club Monthly** (Malden, MA; 18 Oct.)... OPEN (19): 1-Dave Metz, 2-Alex Zamanian, 3/4-Dan Chicoine / Greg Jukins; 1C/2C-Herb Gurland / Walter Trice.

•**Backgammon by The Bay** (Cupertino, CA; 25 Oct.)... Open (16) 1/2-Matt Cohn-Geier / Ernesto Nassau; 1C-Rob Rossetti, 2C-David Dows. Beginner (4) 1/2-Avo Sadakian / Nina Novitski.

•**4th European Doubles & 6th French Open** (Enghien-les-Bains, France; 28 Oct.–2 Nov.)... EUROPEAN DOUBLES (13 teams + 3 rebuys): 1-Ed O’Laughlin (USA) & Sasan Taherzadeh (Iran), 2-Ron Reinhard (Austria) & Rainer Witt (Germany), 3/4-Peter Heitmüller (Germany) & Götz Hildsberg (Germany) / Stefan Kostov (Bulgaria) & Dobromir Kyurkchiev (Bulgaria). FRENCH OPEN (52+12 rebuys): 1-Fabrizio Lo Surdo (Italy), 2-Matvey “Falafel” Natanzon (Israel), 3/4-Götz

Hildsberg (Germany) / Mario Sequeira (Portugal); 1C-Dobromir Kyurkchiev (Bulgaria), 2C-Masayuki Mochizuki (Japan); 1LC-Dario de Toffoli (Italy). ADVANCED (22): 1-Bülent Bahar (Turkey), 2-Stefan Kostov (Bulgaria), 3/4-Marian Manaila (Romania) / Sasan Taherzadeh (Iran); 1C-Alexander Veshkurtsev (Russia), 2C-Zeki Özgül (Turkey); 1LC-Paul Kalina (Peru). INTERMEDIATE (7): 1-Boris Kaplivsky (Peru), 2-Jerome Pierrat (France), 3-Timofey Zimin (Russia). AMATEURS (9): 1-Antoine Delamarre (France), 2-Jean Mocaut (France), 3-Renaud Perez (France). SUPER-JACKPOT #1 (8): 1-Vyacheslav Pryadkin (Ukraine), 2-Leonid Riskin (Ukraine/Germany). SUPERJACKPOT #2 (8): 1-Matvey “Falafel” Natanzon (Israel), 2-Ed O’Laughlin (USA). PRO/AM DOUBLES #1 (16): 1-Iancho Hristov (Bulgaria) & Svetlana Kostova (Bulgaria), 2-Artur Muradian (Armenia) & Chiva Tafazzoli (Iran). PRO/AM DOUBLES #2 (8): 1-Michael Michael (England) & Antonia Schultze (Germany). SASSANGAMMON #1 (98): 1-Carter Mattig (USA). SASSANGAMMON #2 (98): 1-Isabelle Bonvalot (France). LADIES TOURNAMENT (8): 1-Scarlett Serrero (France), 2-Steffi Peschke (Germany). MEMBERS OF HONOUR: Jean-François Panin (Casino Barrière d’Enghien-les-Bains), Ali Zehpour (South Africa), Jose Antonio Torres (Peru), Fuat Erdag (Turkey). ELEGANCE TROPHY: Ira (Russia). ENCOURAGEMENT PRIZE: Steffi Peschke (Germany). SPECIAL PLAYERS: Anthony Patz (South Africa), Filomila Karantzali (Greece), Christina Pfeifer Mattig (USA), Cécile Wolf (France). BEST FRENCH PLAYER: Thierry Manouck.

•**Springfield Series #1** (Peoria, IL; 1 Nov.)... OPEN (28): 1-Greg Tomlin, 2-Scott Johnston (IN); 1C-Scott Rudebeck, 2C-Randy Armstrong; 1LC-Dave Settles.

•**Play65.com Danish Championships** (Valby, Denmark; 1–2 Nov.)... CHAMPIONSHIP (180): 1-Inge Christoffersen, 2-Jonas Moehrdel, 3-Kasper N. Nielsen, 4-Carsten Simonsen. SUNDAY SHOOTOUT (72): 1-Karsten Bredahl, 2-Jim Skougård Rasmussen, 3/4-Asger Kjeldsen / Michael Larsen. DMP CHAMPIONSHIP (23): 1-Torben Sørensen, 2-Peter S.H. Jensen. GAMMONGO! TOURNAMENT: 1-Erik Hansen.

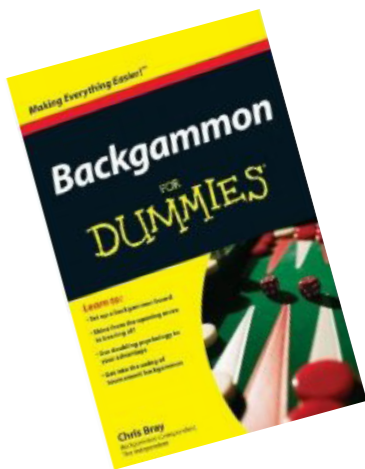
•**Ohio State Club Monthly** (Akron, OH; 2 Nov.)... OPEN: 1-Farhad Forudi, 2-Mike Vasilatos.

•**South Florida Monthly** (Ft. Lauderdale, FL; 9 Nov.)... OPEN (8): 1-Perry Gartner, 2-Jeff Lester.

•**New England Club Bonus** (Malden, MA; 18 Nov.)... OPEN (21): 1-Alex Zamanian, 2-Dave Metz, 3/4-Tom O’Riordan / George Saba; 1C-Dan Chicoine, 2C-Phyllis Seidel. Δ

AMALGAMATION

The London Mirror (28 Nov.) reports a Moscow gambler staked his life on a game of backgammon—and lost. **Vasily Lobofov** shared a cab with **Sergei Smirnitsky**, a stranger who invited him up to his apartment to play backgammon for the fare. Unfortunately, Lobofov had no money so he agreed to play for his life. He lost and was stabbed to death!... The World Series of Poker featured **Ylon Schwartz** of Brooklyn, NY whose biography says he was once good enough to make a living playing chess and backgammon... The 5 Nov. New York Times featured a nice article on Zeus—the Snowie-like computer program for deciding football play calls created by **Chuck Bower** (IN) and **Frank Frigo** (KY). In the article, Frigo accuses Patriots Coach **Bill Belichick** of making an “extremely significant whopper” of an error in their game against the Colts a few days prior... **Neil Kazaross** was spotted on television at the 8 November Bulls/Cleveland game. Neil, who has floor seats was startled when **LaBron James** literally fell in his lap. LaBron made sure Neil was OK, then shook his hand... Get well wishes go out to Illinois State backgammon director **Linda Rockwell** who is recovering from minor shoulder surgery... Shame on Gammonlife.com editor **Michael Strato** who wrote an online story stating; “**Grand Duke Dmitri** was Inventor of the Doubling Cube in Backgammon.” This was based on two magazine articles: New Yorker (6 Sept. 1930) by a society beat writer and *Vanity Fair* (July 1931) by **John Longacre**. (Who never mentioned the name in his 1930 book *Backgammon of Today* and very likely got the info from the *New Yorker*). There is no other proof that Grand Duke Dmitri ever even played backgammon, and neither article ever even mentioned the doubling cube. Strato later tempered his article to read: “Grand Duke Dmitri was Likely Inventor of Doubling in Backgammon,” unfortunately, not before Play65.com ran with the exaggeration at their site. We have far more compelling information and will let readers decide if there is enough information to claim (as Strato did) “The mystery has been solved!”... For our Canadian readers, Vancouver now has a backgammon club. **Pat MacNeil** informs us that the website has all the particulars at: vancouverbackgammonclub.com. Look for the 2009 list of Backgammon Clubs in North America in the Jan./Feb. POINT... Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and Happy New Year to all our readers. Δ



Backgammon For Dummies: A Smart Buy

Reviewed by Bill Davis

Backgammon For Dummies © 2009 by Chris Bray. Published by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Chichester, West Sussex, England. Soft cover, 260 pages. Discounted price from Amazon.com: \$10.19 plus shipping.

Hallelujah! After existing for 5000 years, Backgammon has finally arrived. How can I tell? Because there is now a *Backgammon For Dummies* book!

It's about time. After all, there are *Dummies* books on chess, bridge, poker, even Dungeons & Dragons. Now thanks to British backgammon author/columnist Chris Bray, our game has been immortalized forever.

Seriously, this is a real coup for backgammon. *Dummies* books have a built-in audience which means we can expect thousands of new gamers to be exposed to backgammon by Chris's work (with Ray Kershaw acting as Technical Reviewer). And advance sales have been great. The book has only been available commercially since late November and the publishers are already printing their second 4500 copies!

As Chris states in his introduction, the book is meant to appeal to a wide range of people, from the complete beginner to the experienced player. I was very happy to see the basic information covered so thoroughly. For example, Chris goes into up-to-date details regarding backgammon equipment such as the importance of using precision dice and trip-lipped cups.

After discussing how to set up the board, but before getting into any actual plays, Chris outlines the skills required to play good backgammon: arithmetic, pattern recognition, and psychology. Then he explains that there are three phases of backgammon: opening, middle game, and end game and that: "Playing backgammon

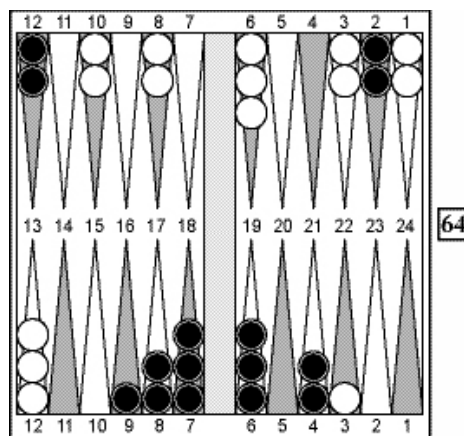
is like listening to a symphony — you enjoy the whole thing but you also understand the contribution that each movement makes to the overall effect."

Like all books in the *Dummies* series, you will find little icons marking backgammon lore, backgammon speak, examples, things to remember, tips, and warnings. And what is a *Dummies* book without Rick Tennant cartoons introducing the five book parts?



The book includes many basic theme problems. But there are also some very tough examples just to show the reader how difficult backgammon can be. Take this problem from the section titled "Selecting the best play":

Figure 3-14 on page 53. Black (Nack Ballard) to play 2-2.



Chris Bray writes that "One of the best players in the world, Nack Ballard, took over five minutes to determine all of the candidate plays for this double 2 . . . the move he chose is 13/11, 13/9, 7/5."

So although there is a lot of beginner material on opening moves and basic doubling utilizing the "25% Rule," you will also learn some simple take point calculations and the "Robertie Addition Method" for bearoff positions. Readers will also be

exposed to topics never before covered in beginner manuals such as utilizing Snowie and Gnu for analysis, Chouette tips, clock usage, playing online and entering live tournaments.

The book ends with the "Ten Commandments of Backgammon," such as "Thou shalt Follow the Words of the Expert Magriel" and "Thou shalt not Kill (the Checkers)." And the final chapter covers "Ten Useful Backgammon Resources" including a list of the best books, online supply sources, and even a section on CHICAGO POINT (newsletter and online resource) which Chris says contains "a wealth of backgammon information."

We are honored to be mentioned in such an important book. *Backgammon For Dummies* is fun to read and essential to own. Because of the mainstream exposure it will receive, Chris Bray's *Dummies* book is destined to have a major impact on the growth of backgammon in the years to come. And at its current Amazon.com online discounted price of \$10.19 (plus shipping), you simply *must* order one today. —Bill Davis Δ

Win a copy of *Backgammon For Dummies*. Visit chicagopoint.com/bgdummy for all the details.

Backgammon À La Carte

Your Untimate Source for Backgammon Supplies

Top quality ~ Fast service ~ Fair prices

GIFT CERTIFICATES for the holidays

Books & Publications (Magriel, Robertie, Ortega, Kleinman, Woolsey)

Computer Software (JellyFish, Snowie 4.5, MasterGammon, BGBlitz)

Equipment (backgammon boards, precision dice, cups, cubes, checkers)

Miscellaneous (pillows, position cards, shirts, scoreboards, match pads)

Carol Joy Cole

810/232-9731 • cjc@flintbg.com
flintbg.com/boutique.html