



OBEДИENT to the *eXtreme*

By Bill Davis

There's a new 21st century breed of backgammon players out there. Some refer to them as uber-thinkers or techno-philosophers. Snowie, eXtreme Gammon (XG), and GNU are their gods. They play on their computers over and over and over again training themselves to mimic the bot's style of play. The player who is best at following XG's game plan is rewarded with the lowest error rate (ER) and morphs into a backgammon cyborg.

But what happens if you step outside of the box and diverge from Snowie methodology? Win or lose, your high error rate will put you at risk of belittlement from the brainiac pack. "He can't play—he's just lucky," or "She may have won, but her ER was a joke," are common retorts following an upset loss.

Many of these players have relinquished command of their own checkers. They take their marching orders from eXtreme Gammon. But sometimes, being obedient to the eXtreme can hurt your winning chances.

Have you ever heard a player say, "I would rather lose a match playing at a Snowie ER of 2.0 than play at 9.0 and win it"? People like this actually exist. Win or lose, they can use their low error rate to maintain superiority over their "inferior" opponent. It's also a form of protective cover used to soothe the pain of an unlucky loss.

Here's a two-word taste of reality for these error rate addicted players: *results matter.*

I honestly couldn't care less what my ER is as long as I win the match. If I want to test my luck on the opening roll by slotting my 5-point with 6-2, that's my business. I am free to make moves like that because I am in charge of my game strategy, not the bots.

When I play, there are a lot of things I

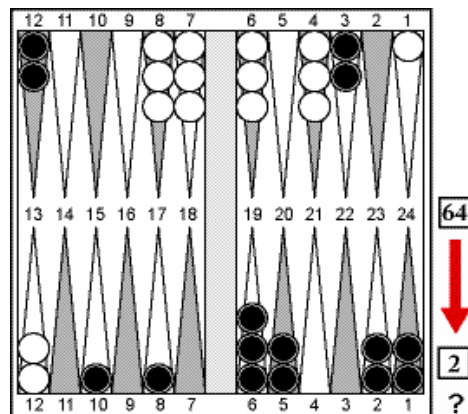
consider other than what Snowie would do. What is my current mental attitude? How's my energy? Am I rolling hot or cold? What is my opponent's state of mind? Do I play better or worse than him? How does he react to pressure? In other words, I play in touch with my feelings and I play my opponent. Those are two things that computers don't do.

In every major tournament that I have won, good luck has been on my side. Early on in the first match, I often "test my luck" by making a very bold play that if successful, allows me to win with the doubling cube on my next turn. There's no question that bots would rate my aggressive play "error" or "blunder;" however, for me, it's a great way to gauge my weekend luck quotient.

Of course most technocrats don't believe in lucky streaks. "All dice rolls are random individual occurrences," they'll tell you. But I do believe in luck and have cashed in many tournaments exploiting a hot streak. My backgammon tournament philosophy is very simple: *When the dice are with you, run with them.*

BGOnline.org webmaster Stick Rice is an excellent player who maintains an ER among the lowest in the world. Yet last year in the finals of the Nevada State Tournament, Stick (who has never won an ABT event) lost a match probably because he made the best play against Gammon Associates director Patrick Gibson:

Nevada State 15 point finals. Stick Rice (White) leads Patrick Gibson (Black) 13 to 11. Black on roll. **CUBE ACTION(S)?**



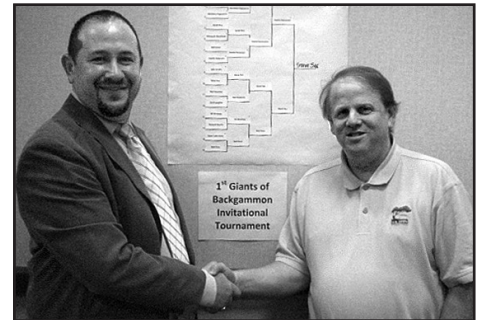
[Continued on page 4]

31st chicago open/1st giants invitational

A 'GIANT' SURPRISE

My amazing path to victory in Chicago
By Steve Sax

When new director Rory Pascar invited me to play in the "Giants of Backgammon Invitational" at his Chicago Open (26–30 May at the Holiday Inn O'Hare in Rosemont, Illinois), I was hesitant to accept. I knew there would be no easy matches and it would be a fairly grueling event as every round was best two-out-of-three nine point matches for up to four rounds. Eventually I accepted because even if I didn't win, just being part of such a special 16-player field would be an honor and a challenge.



Steve Sax (R) is congratulated by Chicago Open director Rory Pascar upon winning the 1st Giants event. [Photos: Carol Joy Cole]

After going over the rules, Rory had us assemble in the hall for a group photo that included twelve Americans as well



Open winner Chuck Bower.

as Michihito Kageyama and Masayuki Mochizuki (Japan), Falafel Natanzon (Israel) and Ralf Jonas (Germany). The two shortest "Giants" (if that isn't an oxymoron!), Kit Woolsey and I stood in the front row while Bob Koca, the tallest "Giant" was in the back.

In the first round, I drew long time friend and fellow Gammon Village writer Jake Jacobs (Singapore/USA). After winning the first

[Continued on page 6]

CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

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LETTERS



c/o CHICAGO POINT

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LEARNAPOOLOZA

The weekend of June 25th there is a free "Learning Fair" in Wicker Park where people can stroll through the park and stop and learn various skills and games. I will be there Saturday and Sunday with a few backgammon boards and will teach anyone interested how to play. I will even have a few boards that can be purchased in case someone wants to continue at home, and I'll provide information on where to play on line and live.

If anyone in the Chicago area would like to help, I would welcome the company. If nothing else, we can sit and play some backgammon if interest wanes. If you would like to help, let me know if you can come on Saturday or Sunday and what hours.

You can find out more about Learnapooloza at www.learnapooloza.com — *Phil Simborg, Chicago, Illinois*

[Continued on page 3]

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
cjc@flintbg.com

*Denotes new or revised listing

NATIONAL

American Backgammon Tour events underlined

| | | |
|---------------|--|--------------|
| Jun 9-12 | <u>Los Angeles Open/1st USBGF Invitational, Four Points LAX, Los Angeles, CA</u> | 818/901-0464 |
| Jun 11 | New England Club Monthly & Playoffs, Dockside Restaurant, Malden, MA | 781/324-0892 |
| Jun 11 | Northwest Indiana Club Monthly, VFW Hall, Porter, Indiana | 219/785-2082 |
| Jun 11 | Tampa Bay Monthly, Hampton Inn, Tarpon Springs, Florida | 727/743-0500 |
| Jun 12 | Cincinnati Club Monthly, Max & Erma's, Sharonville, Ohio | 513/807-6926 |
| Jun 12 | Miami Valley Club Monthly, Panera Bread, Dayton, Ohio | 937/864-1748 |
| Jun 14 | Arizona Club Monthly, Teakwoods Tavern & Grill, Phoenix, Arizona | 602/762-2288 |
| Jun 16* | Third Thursday Bonus (Michigan), Sharky's Sports Bar, Burton, Michigan | 810/232-9731 |
| Jun 18* | Ohio State Saturday Monthly, Brubaker's Pub, Akron, Ohio | 330/268-4610 |
| Jun 25* | Backgammon By the Bay, Britannia Arms, Cupertino, California | 831/261-4583 |
| Jun 26* | SW Ohio Summer Solstice Tournament, Max & Erma's, Sharonville, Ohio | 513/807-6926 |
| Jun 30 | Michigan Summer Warm-Up, Sheraton Novi Hotel, Novi, Michigan | 810/232-9731 |
| Jul 1-4 | <u>Michigan Summer Championships, Sheraton Novi Hotel, Novi, Michigan</u> | 810/232-9731 |
| Jul 9* | Northwest Indiana Club Monthly, VFW Hall, Porter, Indiana | 219/785-2082 |
| Jul 9* | Backgammon By the Bay Monthly, Peking Express, Berkeley, California | 831/261-4583 |
| Jul 10* | Cincinnati Club Monthly, Max & Erma's, Sharonville, Ohio | 513/807-6926 |
| Jul 10* | Ohio State Sunday Monthly, Brubaker's Pub, Akron, Ohio | 330/268-4610 |
| Jul 10* | Miami Valley Club Monthly, Panera Bread, Dayton, Ohio | 937/864-1748 |
| Jul 21* | Third Thursday Bonus (Florida), Sharky's Sports Bar, Burton, Michigan | 810/232-9731 |
| Jul 22-24 | <u>16th Minnesota Open, Courtyard by Marriott, Bloomington, Minnesota</u> | 612/718-2613 |
| Jul 23-24* | Summer Cooker, Steve Hast's residence, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania | 412/823-7500 |
| Jul 31* | Cincinnati Club BarbeCube VI, The House, West Chester, Ohio | 513/807-6926 |
| Aug 6* | VENUE CHANGE: 6th Summer Sizzler, Fiesta Ranchera, Bloomington, IL | 309/662-7967 |
| Aug 7 | Chicago Bar Point Club Sunday Tournament, Ruby Tuesday, Skokie, Illinois | 773/583-6464 |
| Aug 7* | Ohio State Sunday Monthly, Brubaker's Pub, Akron, Ohio | 330/268-4610 |
| Aug 19-21* | <u>Florida Championship, Marriott North, Fort Lauderdale, Florida</u> | 954/564-0340 |
| Sep 2-5 | <u>Wisconsin State Championships, Radisson, Madison, Wisconsin</u> | 608/354-7573 |
| Sep 17* | 3rd Anti-Cruelty Society Invitational, The Drake Hotel, Chicago, Illinois | 773/583-6464 |
| Sep 30-Oct 2* | <u>NEW DATE: Colorado State Championships, Hilton Garden Inn Airport, Aurora, CO</u> | 303/916-5170 |
| Oct 14-16 | <u>Illinois State Championships, Grand Hotel, Peoria, Illinois</u> | 847/677-6852 |
| Nov 9-13 | <u>Las Vegas Open, Imperial Palace, Las Vegas, Nevada</u> | 702/218-8238 |
| Dec 2-4 | <u>California State Championship, Four Points-LAX, Los Angeles, California</u> | 818/901-0464 |
| Dec 16-18 | <u>Sunshine State Classic, Hampton Inn & Suites, Tarpon Springs, Florida</u> | 727/743-0500 |

OUTSIDE USA

| | | |
|---------------|--|----------------|
| Jun 10-13 | 16th Kaiserbrunnen-Cup, Hotel Kaiserbrunnen, Brakel, Germany | 497152-3593466 |
| Jun 10-13 | Funen Open Pentecost Cup, Hotel Faaborg Fjord, Faaborg, Denmark | 4520-116201 |
| Jun 15-19 | Play65/EBGT: 6th Portuguese Open, Hotel Riviera, Carcavelos, Portugal | 491715-422222 |
| Jun 25-26* | NEW DATE: TBT: 18th Istanbul Championship/WBF-TR, Armada Hotel, Turkey | 905322-329228 |
| Jun 25-26 | CBT: Bol Open, Elaphusa Blueson Hotel, Bol (Brac), Croatia | 385989-736414 |
| Jul 1-3 | BIBA World Championship, Barceló Hinckley Island Hotel, England | 441522-888676 |
| Jul 6-10 | 2nd Menton Open, Casino Barrière de Menton, Menton, France | 390331-923537 |
| Jul 15-17* | Festival of Games 8th Czech Open, CEZ Arena, Pardubice, Czech Republic | 420602-222282 |
| Jul 15-23 | 36th World Championship & Monte Carlo Open, Fairmont Hotel, Monaco USA: | 702/218-8238 |
| Jul 30-31 | BBT: 16th Liverpool Open, Liverpool Bridge Club, Liverpool, England | 447931-553829 |
| Jul 30-31 | TBT: 6th Kdz. Eregli Championship/WBF-TR, Romantique Café, Turkey | 905322-329228 |
| Aug 1-5* | 65/EBGT Gogi Bukia Geo Open, Oasis, Batumi, Georgia info@world-backgammon-association.com | |
| Aug 5-7* | SAC Trophy, Barceló Hinckley Island Hotel, Hinckley, England | 441522-888676 |
| Aug 19-21* | NBT: Swedish Open, Quality Globe, Stockholm, Sweden | 46708-541362 |
| Sep 2-4* | BBT: Barceló Cup, Barceló Hinckley Island Hotel, Hinckley, England | 447985-941729 |
| Sep 10-11* | CBT: Mostar Backgammon Open 2011, Mostar, Bosnia & Herzegovina | 38763-791340 |
| Sep 10-11* | Hessen-Cup Finale, Restaurant Stadthalle Bergen, Frankfurt, Germany | 491743-397363 |
| Sep 16-18* | TBT: 6th Bodrum Open/WBF-TR, Delfi Hotel, Bodrum, Turkey | 905322-329228 |
| Sep 23-25* | Play65/EBGT: Swiss Open, Casino Barrière, Montreux, Switzerland | 4179-3584825 |
| Sep 30-Oct 2* | International Black Sea Tournament, Grand Hotel, Pomorie, Bulgaria | 359899-619219 |
| Sep 30-Oct 3* | 3rd German Championship, Hotel Kaiserbrunnen, Brakel, Germany | 497152-3593466 |
| Oct. 7-9* | Play65/EBGT: 2nd Mallorca Challenge, Marriott, Lluçmajor, Mallorca | 4917154-22222 |
| Oct. 7-9* | Sandy Osborne Memorial, Barceló Hotel, Daventry, England | 441522-888676 |
| Oct. 8-10* | 17th Japan Open, Shidax Hall, Shibuya, Tokyo, Japan | 817055-775016 |
| Oct. 14-16* | 6th Milano Open, Castello di Carimate, Carimate near Como, Italy | 393474-330340 |



AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 2011

Compiled through 30 May 2011 after 10 tournaments
(Upcoming events: Los Angeles/USBGF, Michigan, Minnesota)



| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------|--------------------|------|---------------------|------|--------------------|------|
| Ray Foglerlund | 39.84 | Lucas Bauer | 5.42 | Mark Ferrin | 2.90 | Mike Valentino | 1.13 |
| Chuck Bower | 25.78 | Jonathan Leusden | 5.33 | Bob Goldstein | 2.67 | Gerard Jendras | 1.12 |
| Neil Kazaross | 23.53 | Karen Davis | 5.00 | Jeremy Moulton | 2.60 | Ben Fleurant | 1.12 |
| Bill Robertson | 15.70 | Neal Weiner | 4.46 | Bill Kaludis | 2.60 | Early Gardner | 1.06 |
| Herb Gurland | 15.70 | Brian Scorben | 4.46 | Stuart Thomson | 2.50 | Janet Genter | 1.06 |
| Bob Koca | 14.22 | Kathleen Davis | 4.42 | Vadim Musaelyan | 2.50 | Brandy Thorward | 1.05 |
| Carol Joy Cole | 13.67 | Frank DiMaggio | 4.33 | Richie Adams | 2.23 | Rochelle Hasson | 1.05 |
| Gregg Cattanach | 13.56 | Tak Morioka | 4.33 | Bob Hickey | 2.23 | Irina Litzenberger | 1.05 |
| Bob Glass | 12.89 | Eden Windish | 4.10 | Alex Gerding | 2.23 | Kathy Weiner | 1.05 |
| Dennis Culpepper | 12.80 | Daniel Barabas | 4.10 | Erik Sawyer | 2.11 | Patti Rubin | 0.91 |
| Mary Hickey | 12.80 | Larry Taylor | 3.93 | Roman Abramovsky | 2.10 | Evan Etter | 0.91 |
| John O'Hagan | 12.44 | Kit Woolsey | 3.93 | Mike Vasilatos | 2.05 | Susan Randall | 0.90 |
| Ralf Jonas | 12.40 | Mike Senkiewicz | 3.93 | Robert Lessard | 2.05 | Alex Gerding | 0.83 |
| Ben Friesen | 10.86 | Harvey Gillis | 3.93 | Omar Dessouky | 1.96 | Keith Gershenson | 0.83 |
| Stewart Pemberton | 10.59 | Patrick Gibson | 3.93 | Bill Riles | 1.96 | Joan Grunwald | 0.63 |
| Greg Merriman | 10.55 | Kent Goulding | 3.93 | Brent Cohen | 1.96 | Fred Kamgar | 0.63 |
| Ramez Abi-Akar | 9.42 | Eduardo Maciel | 3.93 | Malcolm Davis | 1.96 | Scott Carlson | 0.56 |
| Cliff Mayoh | 8.92 | Nan Feiber | 3.83 | Mark Antranikian | 1.96 | Donna Davenport | 0.56 |
| Allen Tish | 8.67 | Oleg Raygorodsky | 3.83 | Molly Anderson | 1.96 | Charlene Britton | 0.56 |
| Josh Racko | 8.04 | John Calcott | 3.63 | Mike Minkovski | 1.92 | Elvira Greci | 0.53 |
| Rachel Rhodes | 7.85 | Vicki Ondis | 3.63 | Tom Duggan | 1.92 | Mike Wasson | 0.53 |
| David Shadi | 7.85 | Murray Bryntesen | 3.60 | Robert Ring | 1.81 | Joe Fitzpatrick | 0.53 |
| Norm Wiggins | 7.85 | Georgina Flanagan | 3.50 | Jacques Trividic | 1.81 | Theres Delaney | 0.53 |
| Al Hodis | 7.85 | Garry Kallos | 3.33 | Ron Bruns | 1.81 | Jenna Longman | 0.53 |
| Petko Kostadinov | 7.55 | Robert Sisselman | 3.33 | Russ Rosen | 1.81 | Paul Heidecker | 0.43 |
| Tim Lawless | 7.26 | Michihito Kageyama | 3.22 | Juan Rospigliosi | 1.80 | Eric Kieser | 0.42 |
| Ed O'Laughlin | 7.11 | Steve Nelson | 3.22 | Lyle Rubin | 1.80 | Frank Kovarick | 0.33 |
| Peggy Neubig | 6.67 | Gary Fries | 3.20 | Scotty Kelland | 1.75 | Stephen Collins | 0.33 |
| Masayuki Mochizuki | 6.44 | Mark Gordon | 3.20 | Jeff Fischer | 1.75 | Leon Eskenazi | 0.21 |
| Bill Davis | 6.42 | Grant Schneider | 3.20 | Kyle Wittles | 1.67 | Carol McGannon | 0.11 |
| Bill Calton | 6.40 | Mario Sequeira | 3.20 | Debra Oles Campbell | 1.67 | | |
| Alfred Mamlet | 6.40 | Dmitriy Obukhov | 3.11 | Larry Shiller | 1.67 | | |
| Mike Corbett | 6.40 | Sandra Sha | 3.10 | Sybil Sha | 1.50 | | |
| Lee Genud | 6.40 | David Levy | 3.10 | Nicholas Dale | 1.45 | | |
| David Rubin | 6.22 | Justin Nunez | 3.10 | David Dows | 1.45 | | |
| Odis Chenault | 6.20 | Brandon Macklin | 3.06 | Kate Elmore | 1.30 | | |
| Homer Hector | 6.10 | Gus Contos | 2.90 | Gary Domenickine | 1.25 | | |



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LETTERS...

[Continued from page 2]

GREG TOMLIN, RIP

It is with shock, dismay and sadness that I have read your report on the recent passing of Greg Tomlin. I never had the pleasure of meeting him in person, but from the many reports of tournament life featuring images of him as published in the Gammon Village online magazine, I felt that I knew him in a meaningful way.

It is apparent from the images you have catalogued at www.chicagopoint.com that Greg had a passion of life at least equal to his passion for backgammon. I am sure he will be greatly missed by the American backgammon community.—
Robert E Stoller, Anchorage (Alaska) Backgammon and Go Clubs

Very nice write-up and photos of Greg Tomlin online. It showed a side of him that I was unaware of. His backgammon friends looked like a real fun-loving, happy group.

I am Greg's first cousin and would appreciate it if you include me when sending out an email about a service.—
Karen Neilson, St. Louis, Missouri

See the story about Greg on page 5.—*Ed.*

'BG RESPECT' LAPEL PINS

I am teaching a weekly backgammon class to 8 + 1 (Penina) students and would like to give each of them a "Backgammon: Respect the Game" lapel pin for "graduation." Can I purchase some from you?—
Ed Rosenblum, Santa Fe, New Mexico

[Continued on page 7]



CHICAGO BAR POINT CLUB 2011 PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED
THRU 5 JUNE

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|------------------|------|-----------------|------|-----------------------|------|
| Rory Pascar | 20.56 | Mike Sutton | 4.72 | Dan Weymouth | 2.40 | Mark Murray | 0.96 |
| Carter Mattig | 14.68 | Bill Keefe | 4.68 | Kevin Berg | 2.36 | Ken Bond | 0.96 |
| Herb Roman | 12.64 | Tak Morioka | 4.48 | Amy Trudeau | 2.08 | Matt Cohn-Geier | 0.88 |
| David Rockwell | 10.32 | Joann Feinstein | 4.32 | Kerem Taskin | 1.88 | Terry Weiss | 0.72 |
| Mike Wolock | 9.96 | Howard Markowitz | 4.16 | Wendy Kaplan | 1.60 | Kit Woolsey | 0.72 |
| Bill Davis | 9.44 | Dujuan Meekins | 4.00 | Warren Barnes | 1.60 | Richard Stawowy | 0.72 |
| Bob Steen | 8.40 | David Rubin | 3.76 | Roger Hickman | 1.52 | Mike Peters | 0.68 |
| Lucky Nelson | 8.40 | Alex Owen | 3.72 | Bob Zavoral | 1.36 | Tom Harrison | 0.64 |
| Larry Goldstein | 8.00 | Adrian Rios | 3.68 | Allen Tish | 1.36 | Les Moshinsky | 0.56 |
| Steve Klesker | 7.92 | Linda Rockwell | 3.60 | Alice Kay | 1.28 | Gary Kay | 0.56 |
| Nora Luna Righter | 7.76 | Wayne Wiest | 3.48 | Steve Bock | 1.20 | Beth Whitney | 0.48 |
| Phil Simborg | 6.68 | Jerry Brooks | 3.44 | Mitch Pomper | 1.12 | Dave Settles | 0.48 |
| Leslie Lockett | 6.40 | Peter Kalba | 3.36 | Mochy Mochizuki | 1.08 | Mike Valentino | 0.40 |
| Bill Bartholomay | 6.36 | Serge Bondar | 3.36 | Jeff Fischer | 1.04 | Kit Cabello | 0.40 |
| Christopher Shanava | 5.60 | Tim Mabee | 2.56 | Eric Johnson | 1.04 | Roland Dieter | 0.24 |
| Russ Lyutik | 5.28 | Russell Head | 2.48 | Mike Minkovski | 0.96 | Jesse Anderson-Lehman | 0.16 |
| Tobias Hellwag | 4.76 | | | | | | |

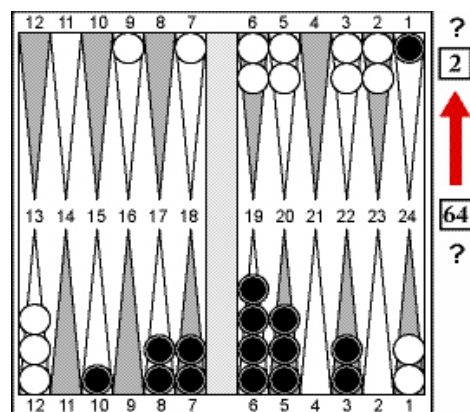
HERB ROMAN won the last tournament of the month to earn May POM honors with 3.60 points. Runner's-up were Bill Davis (2.96) and Larry Goldstein (2.80).

your move

PROBLEM #365

to be analyzed by Dorn Bishop

9-point match. Black and White tied at 7 to 7. Black on roll. **CUBE ACTION(S)?**



SHADES OF GRAY

A RULES AND RULINGS COLUMN

© 2011 by Danny Kleinman

BACKGAMMON AND HEADPHONES

Dear Danny: Poker allows for the use of headphones and although a player can answer his cell phone, he must leave the table to actually talk on the phone. Do you think the current rules of backgammon as written make it legal for a player to listen to his iPod or have a cell phone by his side: a phone that could silently transmit match equity tables and take points?

If you think headphones should be barred (and it is my understanding that they are allowed), should the rules be revised to state as much? And what about the potential for cheating if headphones continue to

be tolerated? What are the rules at bridge tournaments?—*Phil Simborg, Chicago, Illinois*

DEAR PHIL: Are not the current rules (1.5 and 1.6, quoted below) explicit enough?

1.5 AIDS. Once a match is in progress, players shall not use written, mechanical or electronic aids except to keep score.

1.6 COMMUNICATIONS. The official Tournament language is English. Speech in any other language will not be permitted between players and/or spectators while matches are in progress. Players may not use cell phones or other electronic communication devices except during authorized breaks.

At duplicate bridge clubs, simply because they're an annoyance when they ring, cell phones must be turned off, with exceptions being made for physicians and

others who may need to be contacted in emergencies. Alas, directors are lax in enforcing this rule.

At national bridge tournaments, cell phones must not be brought into the rooms where championship events are being held, presumably to guard against just what concerns you: cheating.

I see no reason to change Rules 1.5 and 1.6, and would interpret these rules as forbidding headphones unless it can be demonstrated that information such as you cite cannot be transmitted through headphones. Isn't backgammon stimulating enough so that nobody needs headphones to listen to music while playing?—*Yours, Danny Δ*

Have you ever been involved in a questionable ruling? Get Danny Kleinman's opinion. Write to: Shades of Gray; c/o CHICAGO POINT; 3940 W. Bryn Mawr Avenue 504; Chicago, IL 60659-3155 or e-mail: bg@chicagopoint.com.

OBEDIENT...

[Continued from page 1]

According to XG, it is fractionally correct to take this cube. But there are other factors. Given the skill disparity of the competitors, intentionally hurting your error rating by dropping the double is clearly correct. In this game, Patrick's strategy is trivial: turn the cube and then try to safely bring the game home. If forced to leave a shot, hope to be missed. If he can win this game, the match becomes 2-away, 2-away and the cube is neutralized. Of course Patrick could also get real lucky and win a match-ending gammon (which is what happened).

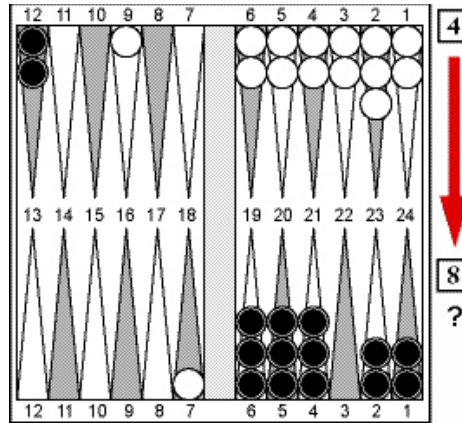
Compare this to what transpires when Stick purposely hurts his error rate by dropping. Now Patrick must play the match from the far more complex score of 3-away, 2-away with plenty of chances to make both cube and checker errors.

Here's another example of when thumbing your nose at the bots is the right thing to do. I recently faced this position in Pittsburgh en route to winning six matches in a row:

[See Position, above right]

I trail by only six pips with the potential to hit a shot if White doesn't run past my 13-point. An XG analysis shows this to be a clear Redouble/Take. If I drop, I'm making a near blunder-sized .080 error. Who cares? I dropped in a flash. That's because I judged my opponent to be both lesser skilled and on a bit of a hot streak (he had turned the previous game around in similar fashion). So I dropped the double to fall behind 3-5,

Black leads White 3-1 to 9. SHOULD HE TAKE WHITE'S RECUBE TO 8?



took a break, rinsed my face, came back, mixed the dice, and rallied to win 9-7.

Does all this mean I am discrediting the importance of studying backgammon? No way. For 23 years, Chicago Point has published a Problem of the Month and many other technical articles on a regular basis. The current books for sale at www.flintbg.com are fundamental in building a solid backgammon foundation. XG is an absolute must-purchase for every serious student of the game. And taking lessons from Phil Simborg, John O'Hagan, Bob Koca, et al is another certain way to improve your winning chances.

Nor do we believe that players the caliber of Stick Rice, Falafel, and Mochy are merely Snowie slaves. These players did not get as far as they have in the backgammon world by only copying the style of a machine.

Just realize that backgammon is much more than achieving a low error rate. There is an artistry/creativity to the game that is equally important. That's why many players who have never read a book or taken a single lesson still enjoy success.

Backgammon is a game of war. You are the general, not Snowie. It's your army of men. Your goal is to oversee correct military tactics involving the disposition and maneuvering of your units on the battlefield. Just be sure to remain focused on the grand strategy—winning the war. A low error rate is great, but you don't take home the first place trophy or gain the lion's share of prize money and ABT points unless you win.

eXtreme Gammon didn't pay your entry fee. It's your game and you can do what you want with it. If you remember this, you'll have a lot more fun playing backgammon and maintain better focus as well.

Tak Morioka, Chicagoland's all-time point leader for decades and ranked 16th all-time in the ABT sums it up: "I play backgammon; it doesn't play me."

Words to remember.—*Bill Davis Δ*



American Backgammon Tour is now on FACEBOOK. **Chicago Point** is on TWITTER.



If you are on Facebook, please LIKE us. If not, you can still visit and get the latest info about ABT events including live updates! Both links are at the top of chicagopoint.com.

What's Your GAME PLAN? Reviewed



By Wilcox Snellings

I've been away from the backgammon scene for many years. For the most part, I closed up my board as the opportunities for high stakes money games declined in the late 90s. So I've missed some of the new programs and several good books. I consider myself fortunate to have been asked to return briefly—and review a fresh book.

What's Your Game Plan? (WYGP) is a must addition to the BG library of all Intermediate and Open players. This exemplary work, subtitled “Backgammon Strategy in the Middle Game,” addresses the meat-and-potatoes of BG with a terrific array of problems. Coauthored by BG talents and teachers Mary Hickey and Marty Storer, WYGP is a treasure trove of analysis wrapped in a flowing fabric of creative metaphors, playful humor, and well-placed “insider” jargon.

122 challenging checker play positions launch this backgammon journey in the first 21 pages. After this, the positions are framed individually with central questions to consider, solutions, and explanations.

eXtreme Gammon was the bot chosen as the analytic assistant for WYGP. The authors employ 2592 rollout trials for nearly all the problems, using a 4-ply look-ahead for both checker play and cube action. One of the many attractive features of this work is that none of the answers appear to be truly on the borderline; although some are a bit close, clarity rules.

Throughout the book, many strong reminders and principles are mentioned and elaborated upon. I am convinced that middle game prowess in piece movement is one of the key skills that separates the good players from the great. The weighing of possibilities and priorities here trumps memorization of base positions or racing formulas elsewhere in the game. A high percentage of WYGP's problems lead naturally to *these* critical middle game

questions and the authors provide sound guidance for answering them:

- 1) What are my current priorities?
- 2) Is it time to address my biggest concern?
- 3) Should I leverage my assets?
- 4) Where is the game headed and what is about to be the deciding theme?
- 5) What should this pip count be telling me?
- 6) How relevant is the cube position to this play?

Hickey and Storer display depth and care throughout this important work. I applaud the way the authors show variants of the problem positions; either to highlight the strength of the original solution, or to show how a key checker shift can produce a new answer. I noted a consistently appropriate amount of quality commentary per position. There are many excellent outfield issue positions. The authors also aptly reference some of Paul Magriel's timeless considerations and points of emphasis.

I HAVE LONG FELT it useful to track one's errors with simple but clear descriptions. As lists of error types and themes pile up in a running log, you will note cluster areas of your weakest points. When you have a play or cube choice and keep in mind your tendencies, do what is *unnatural* for you if you feel the decision is close. This can be an effective way to shore up parts of your game. As a personal example, early in my backgammon career, I used to pass too much. Upon realizing this, I forced myself to take most positions I felt were close passes and to live with the results. After dissecting WYGP, my main error themes were not doing enough methodical rolls breakdown analysis *and* being a bit passive. Find your own tendencies using this book and your other tools. It's a fine way to accelerate what's left of your learning curve.

Especially for those who attend tournaments and still engage in some live backgammon, I recommend quizzing yourself with the static book format and then on a board before checking your results. *Your* answers may not change much, but *mine* certainly did when I put the positions on a board. If you are at all like me, I often experienced what I would describe as an organic relationship between my mind, eyes, hand and the board. Because of this, my solutions were typically a bit better in actual play than when looking at positions on cards or book pages.

How did I fare with WYGP? I *subjectively* report that I *objectively* revised my score upon trying out the hands-with-board

experiment after my static quiz. This led to a result that I felt made more sense, while still including many errors. Fourteen of my mistakes finished in the domain of “whoppers,” while I bloated further with three “double whoppers.”—*Wilcox Snellings* Δ

Wilcox Snellings was acknowledged to be the best backgammon player in the world during the 1990s ranking as the #1 Giant in 1993, #2 in 1995, and #1 in 1997. He contributes a freelance piece to CHICAGO POINT about once every 15 years, so we're hoping he'll find time for two or three more! Wilcox lives in Costa Rica with his wife Viria and their two adult children, Maria and Juan Carlos.—Ed.



Greg Tomlin at the MBC with Carol Joy Cole in 1998 and Amy Trudeau in 2002.

Greg Tomlin, long-time Springfield, Illinois backgammon regular and Midwest Backgammon Championships staffer has died. He was 56.

John Jennings, a long-time friend became worried when he was unable to reach Greg for a week. So on Sunday, 22 May, Jennings, along with a mutual friend drove to Tomlin's 300 acre farm in Pleasant Plains, Illinois and forced entry into the farmhouse. They found Tomlin slumped in a chair in front of the television. The coroner estimated that he had been dead for a week.

Chicago Point remembers Greg with fondness. He first played in a Midwest Championships in 1988. Ten years later, Greg was hired as an MBC staffer partly because of his acting skills. Greg worked a total of seven Midwest Championships. His most memorable tournament “performance” was as the lead detective in the 2002 Calcutta Auction original play “The Case of the Deadly Roll.”

You can see many pictures of Greg in costume at past Midwest Championships at www.chicagopoint.com.

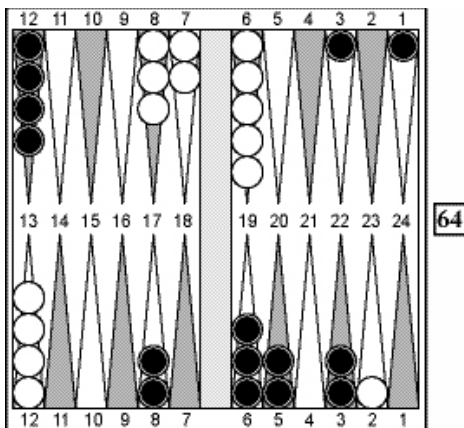
Following an autopsy, the body was cremated. John Jennings will inform anyone who emails him on any future memorial service to be held in Greg's honor. Email John at johnjennings@aol.com. Δ

GIANT SURPRISE...

[Continued from page 1]

match and leading 4-3 to 9 in the second, I had an interesting set of double 6s to play:

#1. Steve Sax (Black) leads Jack Jacobs (White) 4-3/9. BLACK TO PLAY 6-6.



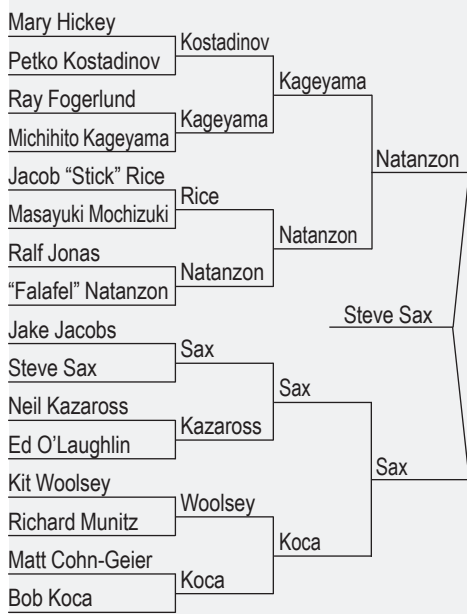
I could make the priming play 22/10, 13/7(2), the attacking play 13/7(2), 8/2*(2), or the attack and escape play 22/10, 8-2*(2). Each had it's own merit.

The priming play looked pretty, but it allowed Jake to attempt to counter-prime me or hit me on my 10-point with 14 numbers so I rejected that choice.

The pure attacking play makes the bar and the deuce point. That would be my choice if there were additional blots to attack. But in the end, I chose the combination of attack and escape which facilitated an efficient escape from deep in Jake's

A 'GIANT' DRAW

Without a doubt, the most skilled 16-player drawsheets in the history of backgammon. All matches were best 2-out-of-3 to 9 points.



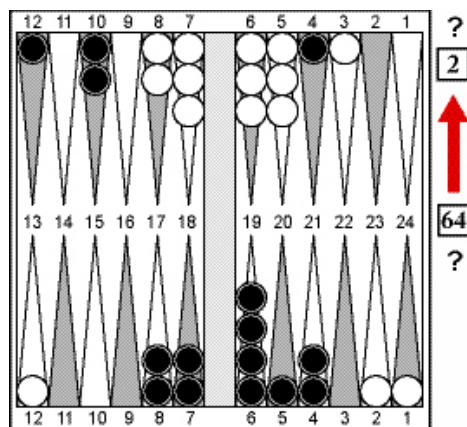
board and put him on the bar against my four point board. With the cube in the middle, I could double him out if he entered. If he stayed out, I could elect to play on for the gammon.

An eXtreme rollout has it close between the two attacking plays. My play wins 1% more games but fails to capitalize on the 2% additional gammons earned through the pure attacking play.

At money it would be a wash, but the gammon price of slightly less than 0.5 made my play just a hair better than the pure attacking play. I went on to win the match in two sets and face Neil Kazaross who had just defeated Ed O'Laughlin.

After splitting matches, we played the third and decisive 9-pointer. Leading 4-3, I doubled Neil after he came in with an awkward 6-2 exposing a blot on his midpoint:

#2. Steve Sax (Black) leads Neil Kazaross (White) 4-3/9. Black on roll. CUBE ACTION(S)?



I felt strongly about the cube as I had 1s and 3s to either hit or cover the blot on my 5-point, and 6s and 5s to escape his four prime. I don't have any bad numbers, although I have a few that aren't all that productive. Neil has a four prime with active builders on it. The fact that my 1s and 3s are duplicated means that he rates to have some kind of counter-play unless I roll a joker.

I rolled a 4-3, covered my 5-point, and hit loose on the deuce. Kit Woolsey who was watching, later correctly pointed out that I should have simply made my 2-point.

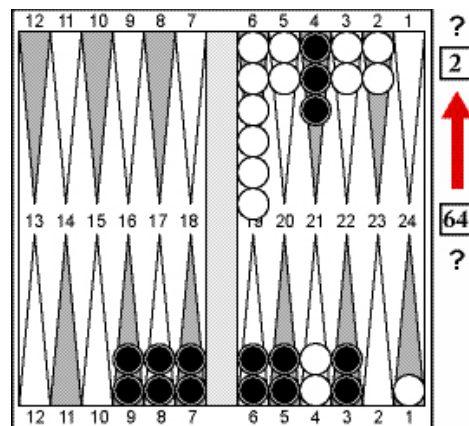
I went on to gammon Neil and after he won the Crawford game, I won the first post-Crawford game to advance to the semifinals and face Bob Koca who had already beaten Matt Cohn-Geier and Kit Woolsey.

"UBK" has quite a presence over the board, methodically tearing his opponents apart with precision play and cool-headed confidence. This was demonstrated in his

win at the 2011 New Mexico State Championship in January.

After winning the first match and with the second one tied 5-5, I had a cube decision to make:

#3. Steve Sax (Black) and Bob Koca (White) tied at 5-5/9. Black on roll. CUBE ACTION(S)?



I had Bob five-primed on my 4-point with a checker back on my ace to boot. I was way down in the race, but had total control of the outfield. If it hadn't been for the pressure of playing in this event, I think I would have made the "obvious" double.

XG says the correct cube action is double/drop, and the drop is fairly easy. Bob just has too much work to win the game. Bob was very surprised I didn't cube and I was immediately punished as I rolled 2-2 to crack my prime. After that, I didn't have a cube for a long time and when I eventually doubled after remaking the five-prime, Bob correctly dropped.



The food (including rotisserie chicken) was served up by Rory's Dad Sheldon Pascar.

A good thing to do when you are considering doubling is to put yourself in your opponent's position. Had I done that, I would have obviously doubled because I would have seen how hard it was for him to win the game.

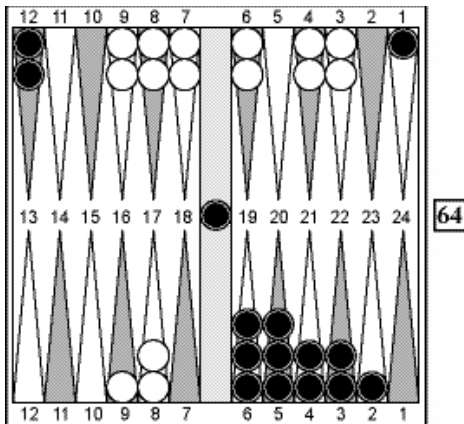
After Bob dropped, I led 6-5 and two games later won the Crawford game to secure a spot in the finals against Falafel Natanzon who had defeated Ralf Jonas,

Stick Rice and Michy in two straight sets.

I'd come close, but never beaten Falafel in three prior tries. My most memorable loss to him was in the 2006 Las Vegas Open semifinals where I had a direct four shot that if I hit, would likely put me in the finals. I missed the shot and Falafel advanced to defeat Carter Mattig for the title.

Falafel won our first match fairly easily. Leading 3-2 in the second 9-pointer, I had a 5-4 to play from the bar:

#4. Steve Sax (Black) leads Falafel Natanzon (White) 3-2/9. **BLACK TO PLAY 5-4.**



I could make the anchor, maintaining a nine pip lead and hope to either hit the checker on his 16-point or roll a big double to escape his four prime.

I'm at a timing disadvantage as he can always disassemble his four prime while waiting to clear his 17-point with a working double. I have two stripped points which rate to leave a direct shot if I roll a 6.

The other choice is to enter on the 20-point and hit his blot on my 9-point. That will succeed if he stays out as I can double him out to take a 4-2 lead. Even if he enters hitting, I can possibly reanchor; although with all those blots floating around the board, I'd likely be doubled or even gammoned if I failed to anchor on the 20.

Fortunately, I made the correct choice according to an eXtreme gammon rollout. Unfortunately, in the actual game, he rolled a crushing 2-2 from the bar and gammoned me easily to go ahead 4-3.

He extended his lead to 8-3 Crawford before I hit a flyshot from the bar to secure a win and bring the score to 8-4 post Crawford. The next game, I nearly gammoned him, and at 8-6 I did win a doubled gammon which ended the second match and forced a third and deciding match that would determine the grand champion.

I won a doubled gammon in the first game of the rubber match but then gave up three consecutive drops as Falafel reduced

my lead to 4-3. From that point on, I failed to relinquish another point winning 9-3. Although the score wasn't close, I never lost focus on the task at hand.

I won't give out our eXtreme Gammon Performance Ratings (PRs) because Rory Pascar wants them to be a surprise for those who purchase the tournament match book. I can say that even though I played fairly well, Falafel vastly outplayed me in every match and it was just my luck that my only win over him was in the biggest match of my life.

Falafel who congratulated me and



Matt Cohn-Geier sets up the computer for play in the Masters finals. That's Ed O'Laughlin on the left and event winner Falafel Natanzon on the right.

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 3]

Sure Ed. We sell them for \$3 each postage paid, but since you're teaching students, you can have them for \$2 apiece.—Ed.

ANTIQUE IRAQI BOARD

We are an Assyrian family from Iraq. My grandfather had an wooden backgammon board with what looks like an Israeli star inlaid onto the playing field. We think it was made by an Iraqi Jewish carpenter in 1940s. My father kept it for 30 years in Iraq fearful that Saddam Hussein's men would seize it.

We were fortunate enough to be able to bring it with us when we came to the US four years ago. Here are photos of it. Do you have a word of advice about selling it?—Noor Shaba, via Internet

Ebay would be your best bet. If marketed properly, we think it could fetch \$200-\$300. We'll ask our readers to send us an email if they are interested in your antique set.—Ed.

CALENDAR PROPS

I like the way you list all of the upcoming tournaments, with phone number and sites links at www.chicagopoint.com. It is a great way to promote the game of back-

gammon.—M.S. Arkawi, via Internet

was gracious in defeat also played in the Master's Jackpot finals defeating Ed O'Laughlin to collect another trophy. As well as he's playing, Falafel easily has my vote for #1 Giant when the ballots are handed out later this year.

Another big weekend winner was Chuck Bower in the 58 player Open tournament. Chuck compiled the best record over nine rounds (8-1), lost to Mochy in the 10th round, but came back to defeat Bob Glass in a hard-fought finals.

I would like to thank Bill Riles and Matt Cohn-Geier for recording my matches during the tournament. Also, thanks to Yamin Yamin for promoting the "Giants of Backgammon" for all these years. Finally, special gratitude goes to Rory Pascar for putting together such a unique event that I will always remember. Great staff (Beth and Bill Minser), great trophies, great food, and great electricity in the playing room, with wonderful seminars by Bob Koca and Mochy.

Winning was wonderful, but the honor to be included in the company of such great players—champions all—is something I will never forget.—Steve Sax Δ

gammon.—M.S. Arkawi, via Internet

Carol Joy Cole's "Mark Your Calendar" is so popular that if you merely Google those three words (without any mention of "backgammon"), her site comes up second in the world!—Ed.

KAYS IN CALIFORNIA

We have moved into our new house and I am trying to unpack one million boxes by myself. My son keeps telling me to slow down as he will soon be here to help me—but not soon enough!

The house is more beautiful than I remembered and Gary loves it, too! I truly feel that I died and went to heaven. I stand outside and look at the blue skies, sun shining and no humidity. I have to drag myself in to continue unpacking.

Anyway, hope all is well with you. We are missing our Chicago BG friends, of course.—Alice & Gary Kay, 42318 La Rochelle Place, Murrieta, CA 92562 Δ

BACKGAMMON

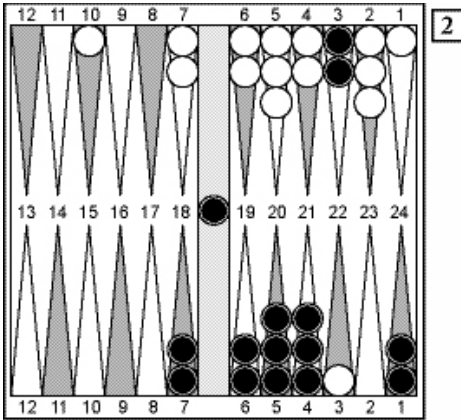
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PROBLEM #364 ANALYZED

by Kit Woolsey

9-point match. Black trails White 4 to 7.
BLACK TO PLAY 3-1.



Black can enter with the 3 and hit loose. If he enters hitting with the ace, he can consider 7/4, 5/2, or 4/1 for his 3. The double-hit breaking the 6-point is too rash. White does have a four-point board, and Black's position isn't nearly that desperate.

Let's first examine the plays that enter with the ace. B/24*, 4/1 is safe, but oh so ugly. The third checker on the ace point is out of play forever. If White flunks, Black will have lost one of his attackers in a position where he is short on attackers to

begin with. Black won't be able to follow up the attack. If White enters, Black will be struggling through the rest of the game in essence playing with 14 checkers.

B/24*, 7/4 is relatively safe, but it does leave White 2-4, 2-5, and 3-4 to hit the bar point blot. The real problem with this play is that it doesn't put Black's checkers where they belong. The fourth checker on the 4-point is no bargain.

The loss of the bar point could be serious, since the four-prime does make it more difficult for White to escape. If White enters, she will almost certainly anchor or escape one of the back checkers, and Black will need to roll well. If White flunks, Black will still be awkwardly placed to carry out an attack.

If White weren't on the bar and Black had a 3 to play after entering with the ace, it would be clear to play 5/2. This holds the 4-prime and starts a new point. Should the checker on the bar be enough to prevent Black from putting his men where they belong? I don't think so. B/24*, 5/2 isn't that much more dangerous than B/24*, 7/4. It leaves eleven shot numbers instead of six. But if Black plays B/24*, 7/4 and White rolls a 2, all her 2s play well anyway. 2-4 and 2-5 hit while 2-1 and 3-2 anchor. 2-6 escapes one of the checkers. Oddly enough, 2-2 probably does the least, only safeing the outfield blot.

However, if White flunks, Black is considerably better off having started the

2-point. He will have aces and 4s to hit, 5s and 2s to cover, and 6s to escape into the outfield. Nice diversification. If White enters with a 3, Black will still retain his four-prime. If White does hit, Black might enter with an ace and go into a playable ace-point game. Of the plays that enter with a hit, B/24* 5/2 looks best.

The other play to look at is B/22, 4/3*. This is the purest play. It enters on the 22-point from where the checker can escape and still hold the prime, rather than on the 24-point where the checker will need a 2 to escape. It holds the bar point, prevents White from anchoring, and slots the next point in line. But it doesn't send that second checker back and that is huge. Attacking and containing chances are much better when your opponent has two checkers back.

Hitting on White's ace point prevents White from covering the blot and making a five point board. Also, hitting gains 24 big pips in the race putting Black in race striking distance if the game takes that direction. The gains from hitting the blot on White's ace point are so big that they can't be passed up. B/24*, 5/2 is my choice.

White's blot on the ace point belongs on the bar. Black's checkers on his bar point belong right where they are. Black's other builders belong on the 2-point to make a fifth inner board point. B/24*, 5/2 puts all these checkers where they belong. So often is the case, it is correct for that reason.—Kit Woolsey Δ

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BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL CLUB: Tournaments
Monday, 6:00 P.M. at Ride The Nine; 503 N. Prospect,
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MIDSTATE BG CLUB: Tourn. Tues., 6:00 P.M. at Ride
The Nine; 503 N. Prospect, Bloomington. Ed Bauder
(309/830-1632).

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

WINNETKA BG 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).

WINNER'S CIRCLE



APR.—JUN. 2011

•**USBGF Interclub Challenge** (Online tournament; April/May)... 33 Teams: 1-Third Coast Backgammon Club—Chicago (Neil Kazaross, Carter Mattig, Rory Pascar, David Rubin), 2-Beltway Backgammon Club—Virginia (John Klein, Grant Schneider, Barry Silliman).

•**New England Club Monthly** (Malden, MA; 9 Apr.)... OPEN (20): 1-Alex Zamanian, 2-Karl Von Laudermann, 3/4-Greg Jukins / Herb Gurland; 1C-David Cox, 2C-Doug Roberts.

•**Play65 European Backgammon Championship & Doubles—EBGT** (Lefkosa, Cyprus; 27 Apr.-1 May)... MASTERS (54+10 rebuys): 1-Tobias Hellweg (GER), 2-Michihito Kageyama (JPN), 3/4-Bülent Bahar (TUR) / Simon Pankvelashvili (GEO); 1C-Arild Idsøe (NOR), 2C-Ahmet Ercan (TUR), 3C/4C-Omari Dvali (GEO) / Mario Sequeira (POR); 1LC-Stepan Nuniyants (USA). ADVANCED (24+4 rebuys): 1-Ismail Yildiz (TUR), 2-Alexander Penelov (BUL); 1C-Alattin Özalpin (TUR), 2C-Nectarios Sarafidis (GRE); 1LC-Fevzi Aslioglu (TUR). DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP (16 teams): 1-Hilmi Göçhan (TUR) & Oguz User (TUR), 2-Burak Gören (TUR) & Matvey "Falafel" Natanzon (ISR), 3/4-Yancho Hristov (BUL) & Bozhidar Stoyanov (BUL) / Talat Papatya (TUR) & Erman Sari (TUR). SUPER JACKPOT (8): 1-Frank Simon (GER), 2-Vincenzo Riceputi (ITA). 1-POINT (64): 1-Aziz Yilmaz (TUR). SPECIAL PLAYER AWARDS: Ilker Göçhan (TUR), Yancho Hristov (BUL), Naoya Kihara (JPN).

•**23rd European Backgammon Championship/10th Velden Open** (Velden, Austria; 27 Apr.-1 May)... MASTERS (30): 1-Shimon Kagan (ISR), 2-Alexandru Papadumitru (ROM), 3/4-Roman Korber (AUS) / Mario Kühl (GER); 1C-Costas Chiotinis (GRE), 2C-Sabri Büyüksoy (TUR), 3C/4C-Kimon Papachristopoulos (GRE/GER) / Werner Schmuck (AUS); 1LC-Helmut Gerdenits (AUS), 2LC-Hormoz Shahrokhshahi (IRN/GER); Ladies Prize - Angelina Charakoglou (GRE). CHAMPIONSHIP (30): 1-Arda Findikoglu (TUR), 2-Pavel Zaorel (CZH), 3/4-Mehmet Güven (TUR) / Richard Lukas (TUR); 1C-Günther Holzinger (AUS), 2C-Andrea Sirch (ITA), 3C/4C-Alexander Deliakis (GRE) / Francesco Grimaldi (ITA); 1LC-Honza Cerny (CZH), 2LC-Thomas Leitner (AUS); Ladies Prize - Eva Zizkova (CZH). INTERMEDIATE (29): 1-Seda Koç (TUR), 2-Mahmoud Taha (Egypt/AUS), 3/4-Rene Mayer (AUS) / Kwok Yan Ip (CDHN/CZH); 1C-Dora Gabanyi (Hungary), 2C-Alfredo Sperti (ITA); 1LC-Annick Hasdenteufel (Belgium), 2LC-Hans-Werner Ketteler (GER); Ladies Prize - Seda Koç (TUR). SUPER JACKPOT (8): 1-Shimon Kagan (ISR), 2-Kimon Papachristopoulos (GRE/GER). 8th EUROPEAN DOUBLES (25 teams): 1-David Boldini (SWZ) & Hormoz Shahrokhshahi (IRN/GER), 2-Shadi Azizian (IRN/ITA) & Stefan Parlow (AUS). R&R TROPHY (16+34): 1-Bob Wachtel (USA), 2-Mehmet Güven (TUR). WARM-UP (16+35): 1-Gültekin Uygur (TUR), 2-Shimon Kagan (ISR). LADIES TOURNAMENT (11): 1-Dora Gabanyi (HUN), 2-Seda Koç (TUR). PRESIDENT'S 1-POINT #1 (64): 1-John Broomfield (ENG). #2 (64): 1-Martin Barkwill (ENG).

•**County Cups Trophy** (Hinckley, England; 6-8 May)... OPEN (30): 1-Julian Minwalla, 2-Julian Fetterlein, 3-Marc Turner; 1C-Richard Biddle, 2C-Anabel Carrington. FRIDAY 500 (8): 1-Myke Wignall, 2-Anabel Carrington. POKER (8): 1-Lawrence Powell, 2-Marcus Wrinch.

•**1st Golden Gate Open—ABT** (S. San Francisco, CA; 12-15 May)... CHAMPIONSHIP (31+1 rebuy): 1-Ralf Jonas (GER), 2-Neil Kazaross (IL), 3/4-David Levy (CA) / Justin Nunez (CA); 1LC-Odis Chenault (CA). INTERMEDIATE (29+3 rebuys): 1-Josh Racko (CA), 2-Gus Contos (CA), 3/4-Nicholas Dale (CA) / David Dows (CA); 1LC-Mark Ferrin (OR). BEGINNER (3): 1-Paul Heidecker (CA), 2-Leon Eskenazi (CA), 3-Carol McGannon (Canada). GOLDEN GATE MASTERS JACKPOT (8 @ \$1,000): 1-Steve Sax (CA), 2-Ralf Jonas (GER). LIMITED JACKPOT (16 @ \$500): 1-Josh Racko (CA), 2-Sasan Taherzadeh (IRN/CA), 3/4-Cheryl Andersen (CA) / David Dows (CA). SASSANGAMMON (32): 1-Sasan Taherzadeh (IRN/CA), 2-Chiva Tafazzoli (IRN/GER). WBA BOARD CHALLENGE #1 (8): 1-Mark Antranikian (CA). #2 (8): 1-Justin Nunez (CA). PRO/AM DOUBLES (16 teams): 1-Ken Bame (CA) & Michelle Andersen (CA), 2-Jeremy Baghy (CA) & Chris Berkman (CA). TRAVELER'S TROPHY: Abby Philippa Biss (NZL). ENCOURAGEMENT TROPHY: Michelle Andersen (CA)—*youngest player*. SPECIAL PLAYER TROPHY: Jenann Nakamura (CA)—*most entertaining & fun*. AFTERTOURNAMENT (8): 1-Ted Chee (CA), 2-Mark Antranikian (CA).

•**New England Club Monthly** (Malden, MA; 14 May)... OPEN (17): 1-Herb Gurland, 2-Ed Ahola, 3/4-Greg Jukins / Phil Perelmutter; 1C-Dan Chicoine, 2C-Marty Storer.

•**TBT Mediterranean Open—WBF-TR** (Antalya, Turkey; 20-22 May)... CHAMPIONSHIP (62): 1-Sabri Büyüksoy (TUR), 2-Serkan Koç (TUR), 3/4-Shimon Kagan (ISR) / Tassilo Rzymann (AUS); 1C-Mesut Çelebi (TUR), 2C-Axel Etten (GER), 3C/4C-Oleksiy Naplyokov (UKR) / Nazif Sahin (TUR); 1LC-Gültekin Uygur (TUR), 2LC-Cemalettin Yüksel (TUR), 3LC/4LC-Frank Simon (GER) / Aysun Utkular (TUR). LADIES PRIZE (7): 1-Aysun Utkular (TUR), 2-Filiz Özyurt Lukas (TUR). MEDITERRANEAN DOUBLES (27 teams): 1-Necdet Güvenli & Irfan Mizrakçi (TUR), 2-Tassilo Rzymann (AUS) & Ulrich Tamm (GER), 3/4-Barbaros Erim & Aysun Utkular (TUR) / Richard Lukas (TUR) & Ricardo Malas (LEB). WARM-UP (60): 1-Abdullah Sorgüven (TUR), 2-Kemal Aksu (TUR), 3/4-Yavuz Eren (TUR) / Mehmet Güven (TUR). 869BG CUP (60): 1-Ulrich Tamm (GER), 2-Eyüp Durmus (TUR), 3/4-Axel Etten (GER) / Nihat Sorgüven (TUR). SWING (32): 1-Affan Basak (TUR), 2-Richard Lukas (TUR), 3/4-Serdar Alkan (TUR) / Levent Çetinkol (TUR). 1-POINTER ACTION (128): 1-Mustafa Isik (TUR), 2-Mesut Çelebi (TUR), 3/4-Nihat Sorgüven (TUR) / Frank Simon (GER).

•**Pair-O-Dice Monthly** (New York, NY; 22 May)... OPEN (12): 1-Christopher Trencher, 2-Steve Grill (NY); 1C-Reuben Jones (NY). INTERMEDIATE (2): 1-Victor Buischi. BEGINNER (4): 1-Justin Nowell, 2-Anna Covlin; 1C-Sonja Fischer.

•**Bar Point Sunday** (Skokie, IL; 5 Jun.)... OPEN (22): 1/2-Leslie Lockett / Mike Wolock, 3/4-Nora Luna Righter / Steve Klesker; 1C-Rory Pascar, 2C-Ken Bond. INTERMEDIATE (9): 1-Jeff Fischer, 2-Mike Valentino, 3/4-Dan Weymouth / Roland Dieter; 1C-Kit Cabello, 2C-Jesse Anderson-Lehman. Δ

AMALGAMATION

Only 16 spots are available for the 3rd Anti-Cruelty Society Backgammon Invitational. The one-day event will be held 17 Sept. at Chicago's Drake Hotel on Michigan Avenue. Contact **Bill Davis** (773) 583-6464... Visiting the Bar Point Club in May: **Mochy Mochizuki** (Japan), **Den-nis Culpepper** (VA), and **Kit Woolsey** (CA)... In her youth, **Leslie Lockett** (IL) worked on the **Ed Sullivan Show**. During those days, she dated **Mason Williams** and **Desi Arnaz, Jr.**... What's it like to be a winner? Go to YouTube, search "American Backgammon Tour winner" and see... Seattle player **Karl Pearson** (WA) was quoted in the *Seattle Post Intelligencer* as to where he was when **bin Laden's** death was reported. "I was playing backgammon at P.J. Pockets," Karl said... Trinity High School (River Forest, IL) Summer Camp is offering grade school girls a "Summer of Significance" including art, drama, dance, sports, and a "Backgammon Boot Camp"... Back in the early 1980s, two-time US Open champ **Mary Hickey** (OH) once played in a \$5 chouette at a Philadelphia social club with **Wilcox Snellings**, **Dan Harrington**, **Steve Moffit** and **Howard Ring**. In that group, breaking even is a big win!... Congrats to **Justin & Rynell Nunez** (CA) on their 30 April marriage in Temecula, CA... Comedian **Betty White** interviewed in the Atlantic on being friends with **Lucille Ball**: "We had such fun. [Lucy] was determined to teach me backgammon. So we'd get together and she'd have it all set up. But her idea of teaching was, 'Alright here, I'll take my turn. Now you throw the dice,' which I would. And then she'd move my pieces here and here, and I'd say, 'Lucy, how am I going to learn the game if you're playing the game with yourself?' But we did it a lot and had fun..." Kudos to our problem editor **Kit Woolsey** (CA) and his bridge partner **Fred Stewart** who won the invitational Pairs event at the Cavendish Bridge tournament in Las Vegas last month. First prize was over \$167,000... The Chicago Bar Point Club is now USBGF affiliated... The end of an era: Crisloid, maker of cork surfaced backgammon boards since 1948, is out of business. The owner **Jeff Caruso** has his 12,500 square foot Rhode Island factory up for rental... Last month, **Art Benjamin** (CA) was interviewed on CNN's Podcast program, "American Sauce." Mathemagician Art did mental calculations pertaining to the national debt. Those are big numbers!... Just in time for summer. A backgammon chair for sale at Home Depot. What is a "backgammon chair"? Δ





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