

*9th nevada state backgammon tournament*

## LADY 'DI' WEARS A SMILE IN RENO SYLVESTER OVER SNELLINGS IN BATTLE OF THE MASTERS



*Diane Haley (TX) is congratulated by Wilcox Snellings immediately after winning the Nevada State Championship.*

**D**iane Haley, who began playing backgammon with Oswald Jacoby 17 years ago, topped a strong field of 87 Championship players to win the Nevada State Backgammon Tournament. Under new direction in it's ninth year, the event drew over 220 international players to the Peppermill Hotel in Reno 15-19 January.

Ms. Haley, a resident of Dallas, Texas, prevailed over a strong 87 player field to win her first major title and claim prize money exceeding \$13,000. "I had a fairly tough draw in this tournament," proclaimed Haley. "I beat Wilcox Snellings in the round-of-16, Jim Wallace in the round-of-8 and of course Jay Kurzet in the finals. I do remember one easy match though . . . a bye in the opening round."

Diane's 19-point final vs. Jay Kurzet (Seattle, WA) was anything but easy. The Sunday contest began at 11:30 a.m. Haley and Kurzet squared off in a private room while Kit Woolsey, and later Kent Goulding entertained interested spectators via closed circuit pickup.

Kit commented that both competitors

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## RENO...

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were usually a roll late with the cube which slowed scoring. In fact, Haley didn't accept any of Kurzet's doubles until the 20th game of the match. At that point, Haley was on top 12-11 in the seesaw battle. But the loss of a doubled gammon saw Kurzet take a 15-12 lead and Haley take an *Anacin* 3.

Kurzet extended his advantage to 17-12 before Diane fought back to tie the match at 17-all. Then the competitors traded games to bring about a crowd-pleasing double match point finish. "How's your one point match cube strategy?" Jay quipped.

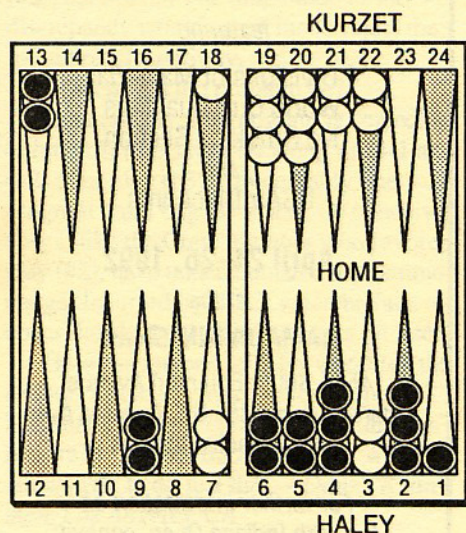
"If you double, I'm taking," replied Diane.

With that exchange, Kurzet took a washroom break; however Diane remained at the table. She poured herself a Coke refill and then applied some lipstick. Was she preparing for a "victory smile"?

Before Kurzet returned, Wilcox Snellings popped into the room to wish Diane good luck and offer his one point match strategy in two words: "Stay pure."

The final game began 4 1/2 hours after the opening roll of game one. Haley jumped off to a quick start and eventually forced Kurzet into a holding position. Diane's 15th move of the game required her to make a decision:

19 point Championship finals. Double match point. **DIANE HALEY (BLACK) TO PLAY 4-2.**



Diane chose to leave a voluntary shot with 13/9, 13/11. Match commentators Woolsey and Goulding preferred to break the 6-point, but Masters finalists Joe Sylvester and Wilcox Snellings liked Haley's play.

Kurzet rolled a 3-1, hitting. However Haley hit the last shot, a flyer from the bar, to win anyway. A great victory (and a bright smile) for the lady from Dallas.

## SYLVESTER HAS A HAPPY BIRTHDAY

The Masters Invitational saw 16 of North America's finest players pay \$2500 to knock heads with each other. Former world champs Joe Russell and Hal Heinrich were eliminated in the first round. Two-time world champ Bill Robertie was knocked out in round two.

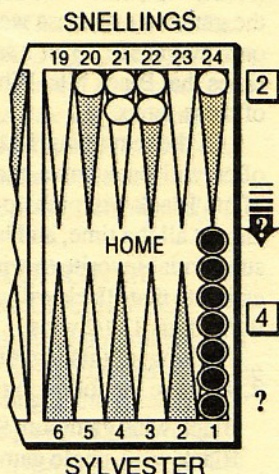
By Saturday night, the 16 were pared to 4: Malcolm Davis vs. Wilcox Snellings and Jack Kissane vs. Joe Sylvester.

Snellings was able to corral Davis 23-13 in 17 games. However Joe Sylvester's path to the finals wasn't quite as straightforward. Trailing 22-21, it would take the Michigan Wizard over 1 1/2 hours to win the next two games against a determined Kissane... and the last game was not to be believed. In fact, at one point, Joe's position was so hopeless that this reporter penciled in a Kissane victory and went to bed! [Editor's note: This incredible match was recorded and has been annotated by Kit Woolsey. To purchase it, see the MATCHQIZ ad on page 10.]

The Sunday finals started directly after Diane Haley scored her victory. Snellings and Sylvester are good friends and although there was a lot of tension in the T.V. viewing room, the players remained loose and jovial throughout the entire match.

Although Joe jumped out to an early lead, Wilcox fought back and seemed to be on the verge of winning his first major title. Leading the 25-point finals 17-10, Snellings went for the knockout punch with the following recube:

25 point  
Masters finals.  
Wilcox  
Snellings  
(White) leads  
Joe Sylvester  
(Black) 17 to  
10. White  
doubles.  
**SHOULD  
BLACK TAKE?**



Joe took, and proceeded to watch Wilcox waste. A few rolls later, Joe was faced with rolling a double or falling behind 21-10. He shook them well and out



Joe Sylvester (left) receives the Masters trophy from NBA director Howard Markowitz.

spun double 1s!

Should Joe have cubed to 8 like he did in a similar situation trailing 23-15 vs. Ray Glaeser in the 41-point 1988 World Cup finals? "No," said Sylvester. "I couldn't give an 8-cube here because the points were too efficient for my opponent."

It was a turning point for Joe, who went on to win a close 25-22 battle.

"My 30th birthday is just a few days from now," added Joe. "This makes for a great present!" Complete results: Δ

## 9th NEVADA STATE TOURNAMENT

**CHAMPIONSHIP (87):** 1-Diane Haley (TX), 2-Jay Kurzet (WA), 3/4-John Valenti (IL) / Salomon Zonana (MEX), 5/8-Gary Kay (IL) / Phillip Nutting (CA) / Jim Wallace (CAN) / Antionette Williams (NY); 1C-Kent Goulding (MD), 2C-Mike Corbett (FL), 3C/4C-Mike Mooney (AZ) / Doug Roberts (NY); 1LC-Talmadge Tinsley (TX), 2LC-Mark Mortuk (MI)

**INTERMEDIATE (101):** 1-Ron Bruns (CA), 2-George Foster (CA), 3/4-Tom Johnson (CA) / Cyrus Youseff (CA), 5/8-Ernest Klein (TX) / Azzam Masarani (CA) / Gary Oakes (CA) / Sasha Starr (CAN); 1C-Harry Tokatlian (MI), 2C-Sirka Stormbom (FIN), 3C/4C-Ken Freeman (NV) / Murry Work (CA); 1LC-George Photias (CA), 2LC-Ary Nogueira (CA)

**BEGINNER (31):** 1-Reid Vogelman (CA), 2-Tami Sylvester (MI), 3/4-John Buckler (NV) / Gary Eames (CA); 1C-Walter Reed (CA), 2C-Jim Masterson (CA); 1LC-Mac McCann (WA), 2LC-A.G. Krichner (NV)

**MASTERS INVITATIONAL (16):** 1-Joe Sylvester (MI), 2-Wilcox Snellings (CA), 3/4-Malcolm Davis (TX) / Jack Kissane (NY)

**BONANZA (32):** 1-Jim Colen (MA), 2-Talmadge Tinsley (TX), 3/4-Ismet Demirel / Kent Goulding (MD)

**KICK-OFF (512):** 1-Mike Senkiewicz (NY), 2-Jim Hickey (GA), 3/4-Art Benjamin (CA) / Steve Sax (CA)

**DOUBLES (64):** 1-Mike Horri (WA) & Jim Wark (WA), 2-Steve Allen (WA) & Stuart Hosen (TX), 3/4-Jim Allen (NV) & Jim Roderick (NV) / David Tivadar (CA) & Pete Tivadar (CA)

**CHAMPIONSHIP JACKPOT (16):** 1-Howard Shapiro (NJ), 2-Doug Wilson (CA)

**INTERMEDIATE JACKPOT (32):** 1-Mike Rezai (OH), 2-Wally Wolf (MI), 3/4-Doug Amenda (AZ) / Peter Kalba (IL)