

CHICAGO POINT

NUMBER 55

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

FEBRUARY 1993

1993 nevada state tournament

11 POINT RUN GIVES SCHIFFER NEVADA TITLE

Lubetkin Speeds Past O'Laughlin In The Masters

He claims to be the best backgammon player in Oregon. Now the rest of the United States will have to take notice. Mark Schiffer has won the Tenth Annual Nevada State Backgammon Tournament. Howard Markowitz and the Nevada Backgammon Association organized the event at the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas 20-24 January. A record NBA crowd of over 300 international players was on hand.

"It's just my second tournament in nine years," claimed the 40-year-old Schiffer who works for the Department of Human Resources. And it was clearly his biggest tournament payday. First prize was over \$18,000.

Schiffer's victim in the finals was another backgammon unknown: Don Smolen of Philadelphia, PA. "This is only the third tournament I've ever entered. If Mark's the best player in Oregon, I'm the best on my block!" quipped Smolen, an options trader by profession, who prepared for the event by studying "MATCHQIZ" on his computer.

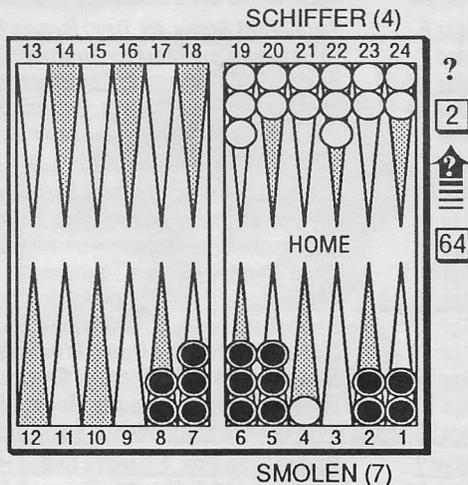
Mark Schiffer probably wouldn't have been the betting favorite in any of his first six victories. That's true for his 15-9 semifinal win over the more experienced Ray Baker of California. The same could be said about Don Smolen who trailed Jack Kissane 12-10 in the semifinals only to shock the highly-respected master 15-12 and gain a seat at the finals.

The Finals

Both competitors traded jabs in the opening games on the 17-point finals shown Sunday afternoon on closed-circuit television. After seven games, Don maintained a 5-4 advantage. Two games later, Position #1 arose (top of next column).

A good double for Smolen, even though he trails 77-72 in the race and has gaps on his 3- and 4-points. And a proper

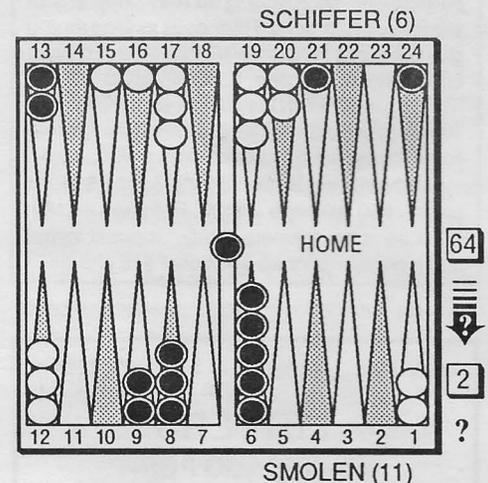
Position #1. 17 point final. Smolen (Black) leads Schiffer (White) 7-4. Smolen on roll. **CUBE ACTION(S)?**



take for Schiffer. Although 16 numbers point on Mark's head, the other 20 rolls containing a 5 or 6 (except 5-5) either provide Mark with a direct shot and/or enough racing equity to justify taking.

Smolen managed to bring the position home to go ahead 9-4. Six games later, with the score 11-6, Don believes he made a bad take that probably cost him the match:

Position #2. 17 point final. Smolen (Black) leads Schiffer (White) 11-6. Schiffer on roll. **CUBE ACTION(S)?**



[Continued on page 5]

ONE "HEAVY" CHOUETTETABLE



Swedish Backgammon Federation chairman Ulf Ring sent of this picture of the world's heaviest backgammon board. It can be found at an outdoor café in Tel Aviv, Israel. Can you imagine the dice and playing pieces? One time an Israeli rolled three sets of double sixes in a row and they had to carry him away with a ruptured hernia.

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LETTERS

c/o CHICAGO POINT
2726 W. Lunt Avenue
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WHY PURCHASE JUNK?

After reading your review of Robin Clay's new book [*Backgammon In A Week*], I was left wondering why you would encourage your readership to buy a book riddled with errors. "Controversial positions," you say? We have all seen controversial positions, and will see plenty more. Why should I, or anyone else waste time and money on a book written by an incompetent? When people knowingly buy poorly-written books, they encourage and reward incompetent behavior.

As of 24 January, the New York Chess & Backgammon will hold backgammon tournaments on a weekly basis. Please make this correction in the 1993 "Backgammon Clubs In North America" listing [appearing in the Jan. 1993 POINT]. The entry fee will be \$10 with a guaranteed first place prize of \$250. Players with questions can call me at 212/302-5989.—*Steve Manning, Director, New York Chess & Backgammon*

[Continued on page 3]

coming attractions

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



by Carol Joy Cole
313/232-9731

* Denotes new or revised listing

1993 American BG Tour events underlined.

NATIONAL

Feb 13-14*	11th Valentine Tournament, South Shore Harbor Resort, League City, TX	713/332-2674
Feb 18	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Feb 19-21	<u>15th Annual Charity Tournament, Greentree Marriott, Pittsburgh, PA</u>	<u>412/823-7500</u>
Feb 21	New England Club Monthly, Sheraton Commander, Cambridge, MA	617/262-0173
Feb 26-28	<u>29th Gammon Associates Invitational, Cavendish West Hollywood, CA</u>	<u>818/901-0464</u>
Feb 28	13th Illinois State Challenge Cup, Braxton Seafood Grill, Oak Brook, IL	708/378-5205
Feb 28	Fleet Underwood Memorial & Benefit Tournament, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Feb 28*	13th Illinois State Challenge Cup, Braxton Seafood Grill, Oak Brook, IL	708/378-5205
Mar 6	Springfield Series #5, Davy Byrnes Restaurant, Springfield, IL	217/789-6275
Mar 7	Crestmoor Club Monthly Tourney, Crestmoor Downs Apts., Denver, CO	303/388-8849
Mar 12-14	<u>Boston Open, Sheraton Commander Hotel, Cambridge, MA</u>	<u>617/262-0173</u>
Mar 13-14*	MDA Benefit Tournament, Solvang Holiday Inn Resort, Buellton, CA	800/638-8882
Mar 18	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Mar 19-21	<u>1993 Midwest Championships, Marriott Hotel, Oakbrook, IL</u>	<u>312/338-6380</u>
Apr 3	Springfield Series #6, Davy Byrnes Restaurant, Springfield, IL	217/789-6275
Apr 4	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Braxton Seafood Grill, Oak Brook, IL	312/252-7755
Apr 4*	Crestmoor Club Monthly Tourney, Crestmoor Downs Apts., Denver, CO	303/388-8849
April 15*	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Apr 16-18	<u>41st Indiana Open, Omni North Hotel, Indianapolis, IN</u>	<u>317/845-8435</u>
Apr 17	Springfield Series \$1000 Bonus Tourney, Davy Byrnes, Springfield, IL	217/789-6275
Apr 17	College Park Spring Open, Promenade, Bethesda, MD	301/530-0603
Apr 18	New England Club Monthly, Sheraton Commander, Cambridge, MA	617/262-0173
Apr 21	Rscards Spring Computer Modem Tournament, GENIE	800/638-9636
Apr 30-May 2	<u>14th Granite State Open & Team Tourney, Woodbound Inn, Jaffrey, NH</u>	<u>603/863-4711</u>
May 2	<u>Spring Gran Prix, Embassy Suites Hotel, La Jolla, CA</u>	<u>619/294-2007</u>
May 2*	Crestmoor Club Monthly Tourney, Crestmoor Downs Apts., Denver, CO	303/388-8849
May 28-31	14th Chicago Open, Sheraton Suites Hotel, Elk Grove Village, IL	708/674-0120
Jul 2-4	<u>Michigan Summer Championships, Novi Hilton, Novi, MI</u>	<u>313/232-9731</u>
Jul 9-11	<u>College Park Summer Championships, Promenade, Bethesda, MD</u>	<u>301/530-0603</u>
Jul 30-Aug 1	<u>Pine Tree Point Tournament, Alexandria Bay, NY</u>	<u>716/442-8221</u>
Aug 9-15*	<u>Green Mountain Festival of Backgammon, Stratton Mountain Inn, VT</u>	<u>305/527-4033</u>
Sep 3-6	<u>National Labor Day Tournament, Indianapolis, IN</u>	<u>317/845-8435</u>
Oct 1-3	<u>Towpath Inn Tournament, Turin, NY</u>	<u>716/442-8221</u>
Oct 6-10	<u>3rd Illinois State Championships & America Cup, Hyatt Deerfield, IL</u>	<u>708/945-7801</u>
Oct 29-31	<u>New Hampshire Fall Classic, Sheraton Tara Wayfarer, Bedford, NH</u>	<u>603/863-4711</u>
Nov 2	<u>Autumn Gran Prix, Embassy Suites Hotel, La Jolla, CA</u>	<u>619/294-2007</u>

OUTSIDE USA

Feb 11-14	7th Cannes International Tournament, Palais des Festivals, France	1/42 88 66 45
Feb 12-14	4th Holland Open, Motel Gilze Rijen, Gilze, Netherlands	04167/77776
Feb 13-14	BIBA Trophy Tournament No. 1, George Hotel, Solihull, England	0522/53 68 36
Feb 18-21	4th French Open Championship, Hotel Lutetia, Paris, France	1/42 88 66 45
Mar 1	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	852/846 1923
Mar 3-7*	Blackjack & Backgammon Mountain Open, Casino Kranjska Gora, Slovenia	392/48019343
Mar 11-14	29th Ted Bassett & Gstaad Palace-Cup, Palace Hotel Gstaad, Switzerland	061/50 58 16
Mar 12-14*	1993 Rosendahl Open Tournament, Hotel Rosendahl, Tampere, Finland	35831/654400
Mar 14-17*	4th Carlsberg Backgammon Cup, Nation's Cafés throughout Denmark	039/400607
Mar 18-21*	19th Winter Championships, Badrutt's Palace, St. Moritz, Switzerland	061/50 58 16
Mar 19-21*	Brazilian BG Assoc Tournament, Hotel Rosa dos Ventos, Rio do Janeiro	5521/267 6033
Mar 23-28*	Casino de Vilamoura Portuguese Championship, Vilamoura, Portugal	4421/440 3428
Mar 28*	1993 South Australian Open, Unley Citizens Centre, Unley, So. Australia	08/373 2580
Apr 2-4*	Düsseldorf Open 1993, Hotel Antana, Kaarst, Germany	02151/503591
Apr 3-4	British Isles Open 1993 Trophy Tourney, Lawn Complex, Lincoln, England	0522/53 68 36
Apr 5	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	852/846 1923
Apr 9-12	5th Nordic Open Championships, Hotel Marinelyst, Elsinor, Denmark	039/40 06 07
Apr 28-May 2	2nd Tournament of the Americas, Cariari Hotel, San José, Costa Rica	312/252-7755
Apr 29-May 2*	Brazilian BG Assoc Tournament, Hotel Meridien, Rio do Janeiro, Brazil	5521/267 6033
May 5-10*	1993 Backgammon In Paradise, Plantation Club Hotel, Mahé, Seychelles	212/687-9766
May 5-11*	World Series of Backgammon, Carnival's Crystal Palace, Nassau	4421/440 3428
May 29-30	BIBA Trophy Tournament No. 2, George Hotel, Solihull, England	0522/53 68 36
Jun 3-6*	Brazilian BG Assoc Tournament, Hotel Meridien, Rio do Janeiro, Brazil	5521/267 6033
Jun 30-Jul 4*	Mitteuropa BJ & Backgammon Tourney, Casino Nova Gorica, Slovenia	392/48019343
Jul 10-11*	Hilton/Mateus Rosé Cup, Hilton Hotel, Anstey, Coventry, England	0522/53 68 36
Jul 19-25*	World Backgammon Championship, Monte Carlo, Monaco	061/50 58 16

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 2]

With Backgammon In A Week's low price tag (£5.99—about \$10 U.S., available from Carol Joy Cole, 313/232-9731), we still believe that it would be a good exercise for any backgammon player to carefully proof the text for errors. In fact, if you send your findings to CHICAGO POINT; 2726 W. Lunt Ave.; Chicago, IL 60645, we'll forward them to Mr. Clay in England so that he may incorporate them into a second edition.—Ed.

Evidently pip-shuffling is alive and well. Diagram 68 from Robin Clay's new book *Backgammon In A Week* (shown on page 1 of the Jan 1993 book review in CHICAGO POINT) is the diagrammed position on page 17 of my text *World Class Backgammon, Move By Move* with colors reversed and two checkers moved by one pip!

Incidentally, I do not believe this position belongs in an introductory backgammon book. The recommended play involves the recirculation motif, which is full of pitfalls for neophytes. I have witnessed many games that were butchered by improper application of this concept.—Roy Friedman, Lexington, MA

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

I fully agree with your criticisms about lack of checking *Backgammon In A Week* for typographical errors. Lack of space force me to cut down on the amount of space devoted to analysis and explanations. However, as you rightly note, shot count-

ing on diagram 22 was bad!

The lost chequer in diagram 22 was actually present on the disks I supplied the publishers, but the colour separations were done in Thailand where they were using outdated software. As the publishers were in a panic to get the book out, I was not given the opportunity to do a final check before the text was rushed to Hong Kong for printing.

The biggest difficulty in writing this book was the tight formula laid down by the publishers. An "In A Week" series book must be a standard size and contain exactly 96 pages. My first rough draft ran some 200 pages, hence the need for small 7 point type.

I hope to correct all errors found in this book when, and if there is a second printing.—Robin Clay, East Sussex, England

STAYING NEUTRAL

Is CHICAGO POINT caught up in the British Isles Backgammon Association/National Backgammon Players' Society [UK] cross-fire? I didn't see any mention of Michael Grabsky's win in the British Festival of Backgammon, but noticed BIBA's Tourney #4 results published in your January 1993 issue. The fact that I came in second has nothing to do with the question!

Also, I may be wrong, but I seem to recall Duane Jensen's January "Hasty Plays" article from a previous issue. This is taking recycling too far!—Phil Churton, London, England

CHICAGO POINT has not taken sides in the "Backgammon Battle of Britain." In 1989, Haig Kessedjian (NBPS) sued Michael

Crane and Jim Moore (BIBA) alleging that BIBA (a new backgammon club) had stolen members from NBPS. Kessedjian's case was eventually struck out of court in 1991, but ill feelings between the two clubs remains. BIBA results are included because they send us their results—NBPS doesn't.

Incidentally, we checked the Nov. 1992 BIBAFax newsletter and despite the situation, they did report the British Festival results: 1st: Michael Grabsky, 2nd: Rick Janowski. Are you sure you finished second?

Regarding your second point, you are correct. The January 1993 "Hasty Plays" article was previously published in August 1991. The reprint was unintentional. We guarantee a fresh "Hasty Plays" in this issue.—Ed.

WBF AND SHORTENED MATCHES

Four years ago, in an important (now discontinued) European tournament, the final match, under the benevolent eye of the director and a non-existent committee, was decided by high dice. Fortunately this tournament was not part of the Golden Circuit.

Shortening a tournament match, like Mike Senkiewicz and Tino Lechich did in the finals of the recent America Cup, is an important decision that should not be made by the players or the director. The committee should rule upon matters of this nature.

The Worldwide Backgammon Federation (WBF) reminds players, directors and committee members that backgammon is a sport, not a business. All rulings should be made in this spirit.—Alberto da Pra, President, WBF, Mendrisio, Switzerland Δ



1993 BPC PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED
THRU 31 JAN.

NEIL KAZAROSS	7.68	STU KATZ	0.88	Tim Serges	0.48
JAKE JACOBS	4.08	HOWARD RING	0.88	Tony Schroeder	0.44
YAMIN YAMIN	2.88	LOU SALZMAN	0.88	J.A. Miller	0.40
GARY KAY	2.80	TAK MORIOKA	0.88	Ed Buerger	0.32
DEEB SHALATI	2.56	DAVE CRAMER	0.88	Ralph Levy	0.32
ALEX ITKIN	2.16	JOLIE LEWIS	0.88	Bill Davis	0.32
MARY FRANKS	1.92	ANDY KRENITZ	0.80	Harry Hayward	0.32
GEORGINA FLANAGAN	1.52	PHYLLIS SMOLINSKI	0.64	Alice Kay	0.28
HERB ROMAN	1.28	RICHARD BEAGARIE	0.56	David Rubin	0.24
ALAN ZIMMERMAN	1.28	Paul Franks	0.56	John Meyers	0.20
PHIL SIMBORG	0.96	Larry Strommen	0.56	Arline Levy	0.16

NEIL KAZAROSS means business at the Chicago Bar Point Club this year. Neil's 20-4 won/lost record allowed him to cash in all five January tournaments for a big 7.68 points. Jake Jacobs and Yamin Yamin followed 2nd and 3rd respectively.

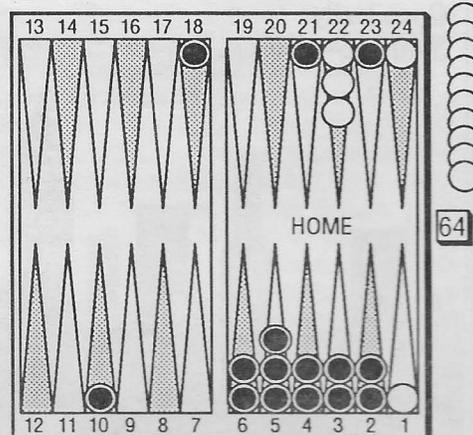
If you finish in the Top 20 for 1993 (capitalized names on list), you'll be entered in a drawing for over \$300 worth of valuable merchandise. The higher you finish, the better your winning chances. Individual awards: 1st—Trophy + \$200, 2nd—\$125, 3rd—\$75. 1st through 20th—engraved doubling cube. 1st through 6th—Invitation to participate in the 1994 Illinois State Challenge Cup as a member of the Chicago Bar Point Club team.

your move

PROBLEM #190

1993 Nevada State Tournament 17 point Open finals. Mark Schiffer (Black) leads Don Smolen (White) 15-11.

BLACK TO PLAY 6-2.



DEAR MISS LONELYBLOTS



THE FACES OF BACKGAMMON

Dear Miss Lonelyblots: I've played backgammon at a number of clubs throughout the United States and I'm curious about who plays this game. There is a far higher percentage of Jews among backgammon players than in the general population. Conversely, there are far lower percentages of black, Hispanic and Oriental players. Can you shed any light on these observations?—Just Curious

DEAR JUST: Are you really curious? You seem to have more answers than questions. I cannot confirm your observations. I don't ask the backgammon players that I meet whether they're Jewish or Christian, Hindu or Moslem, Buddhist or atheist. I don't ask Caucasian backgammon players if they have Spanish ancestors. Because racial features like skin color and facial shapes are prominent *visual* characteristics. However, I have been able to see that relatively few American backgammon players are African-American or Asian-American.

If you are seeking explanations for this phenomenon, I can offer only unverified

hypotheses.

Ours is a nation largely of immigrants, descendants of immigrants, descendants of slaves, and offspring of matings between people of different racial and national origins. Whether Americans play backgammon may depend partly on the cultures in which they or their ancestors grew up, reasons for coming to America, and social or occupational strata.

Because backgammon is an intellectual game, your question may mask another hypothesis: that certain racial or national groups are, on the whole or on the average, more intelligent than others. Studies of mathematical aptitude offer some support for this hypothesis: Asian-Americans, especially Japanese-Americans, outperform other American children on standardized tests. I question the validity of these studies, however. I doubt they control adequately for differences in education (which takes place in homes as well as schools), family income, family size, and social class—all of which may be relevant variables.

Most vitally, do these studies control for *reason for coming to America*? If Japanese teenagers come here to study physics, while Mexican teenagers come here to pick grapes, we should expect Japanese-Americans, on the average, to have greater aptitudes for backgammon than Mexican-Americans. This implies nothing about the aptitudes of Japanese and

Mexicans because the Japanese-American and Mexican-American samples are *self-selected*, not *random*. Nor does it mean that any particular Japanese-American will play backgammon more skillfully than any particular Mexican-American.

Might there nonetheless be genuine national differences in mental abilities?

Possibly. Cultural differences may spawn genetic differences through social-sexual selection. In a nation which values brawn above brains, football and basketball players will father many children while mathematicians and poets remain childless bachelors. In a nation which values brains above brawn, scholars will have more offspring than athletes. (Note that in this regard, women decide the direction of each nation. Men in all cultures foolishly select mates on the basis of women's superficial physical traits.) After many generations, the gene pool of each nation may reflect its cultural values.

This bodes ill for the United States and well for Japan and Taiwan—unless the people of the latter countries continue to send their children here.—Miss Lonelyblots Δ

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

ACE POINT BACKGAMMON CLUB

Michael Valentine, Director

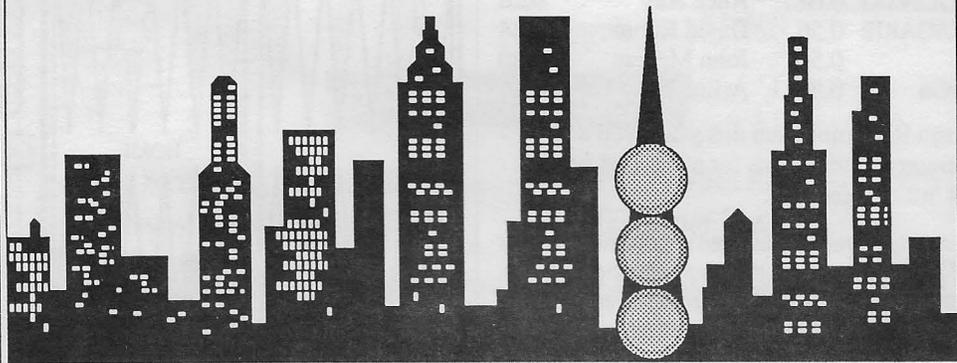
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Bill Davis
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Tuesday, 6:45 P.M. at Pat's Pub, 4343 N. Harlem Ave., Norridge 708/457-1166.

Sunday Bimonthly, 12:30 P.M. at Braxton Seafood Grill, 3 Oakbrook Center Mall, Oak Brook 708/574-2155.

PUB CLUB: Tournaments Monday, 7:30 P.M. at Fiddler's, 345 W. North Ave., Villa Park. V.W. Zimnicki (708/378-5205.)

SANGAMON VALLEY BG ASSN: Tournaments Tuesday, 6:00 P.M. at On Broadway, 210 S. Broadway, Springfield. Randy Armstrong (217/528-0117).

BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL BG CLUB: Tourn. 1st/3rd/5th Tuesday, 6:15 P.M. at Ride The Nine, 503 N. Prospect, Bloomington. Lane O'Connor (309/454-1947).

WINNETKA BG CLUB: Tournaments Wednesday, 7:00 P.M. at 620 Lincoln, Winnetka. Trudie Stern (708/446-0537).

CENTRAL ILL. BG CLUB: Tourn. Thurs., 6:30 P.M. at Chi-Chi's, 4415 N. Rockwood, Peoria. Sue Will (309/692-6909).

PRIME BG CLUB OF CHICAGO: Tourn. Friday, 7:00 P.M. at TJ's Lounge, Radisson Hotel, 4500 W. Touhy, Lincolnwood. Joann Feinstein (708/674-0120).

NORTH CLUB: Daily side play except Sunday at 4747 W. Peterson (402), Chicago. Greg Defotis (312/286-8417).

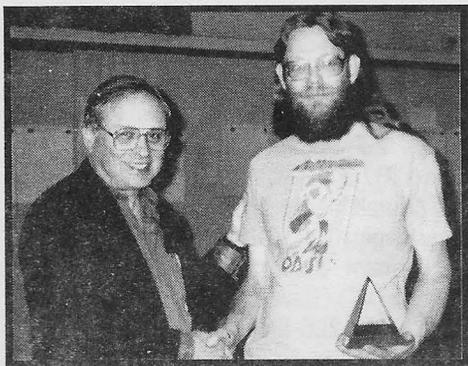
NEVADA STATE...

[Continued from page 1]

Perhaps after winning so many matches, Don felt invincible. This was a very dubious take to say the least. He had no board and was likely to face two on the bar following Mark's cast.

And that's exactly what happened. Don did manage to anchor on the ace point and fall into a poorly-timed 1-2 backgame. He eventually lost a gammon and with the score 11-10, the television spectators could feel the tide turning.

The 10-minute break requested by Sands personnel to change the video tape was no help to Smolen. When he returned, Schiffer won the next 7 straight points (beginning with an interesting recube to 4) to become the 1993 Nevada State champion.



Howard Markowitz (left) awards the Open Champ trophy to Mark Schiffer.

Lubetkin Beats The Clock and O'Laughlin To Win The Masters

Can you imagine being faced with task of playing a 23-point match against "Lightening" Ed O'Laughlin? Definitely pack your lunch and a flashlight.

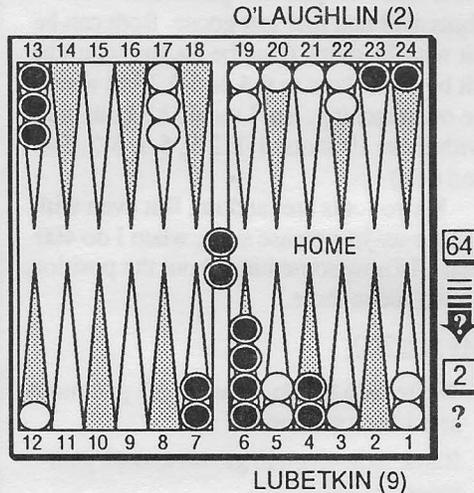
That "slow play" nightmare was not the case in the finals of the Masters Invitational. Although finalists Sandy Lubetkin and O'Laughlin were to begin their battle Sunday at noon, Sandy, who works as a cardiologist, had to catch a plane back to Texas for business reasons at 3:30 p.m. He explained his predicament to Ed who graciously agreed to play at a quicker-than-normal pace.

In general, the quality of play was not affected and Ed never expressed the feeling of being rushed. Time was saved by the elimination of breaks and fast-rolling in bearoff positions. A reasonable amount of time was taken on the difficult decisions; however Lubetkin's cube play seemed a bit more aggressive than normal.

Sandy Lubetkin, winner of the 1985

ABC Open tournament (also held at the Sands Hotel), jumped off to leads of 5-0 and 9-2 before O'Laughlin got his game in gear. In the next game, Ed cubed Sandy in the following position:

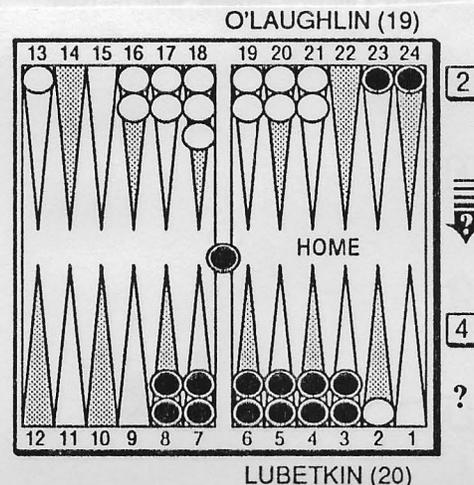
Position #3. 23 point final. Lubetkin (Black) leads O'Laughlin (White) 9-2. White on roll. **CUBE ACTION(S)?**



With two men on the bar, Lubetkin could be wiped out; however Sandy has a trivial take because Ed still has too far to travel with his back men. For this reason, the double is the questionable decision. There just don't seem to be enough market-losers to evoke a cube now. Lubetkin was eventually forced into a 1-2 backgame. Ed's gammon victory cut Sandy's lead to 9-6.

Four games later, O'Laughlin found himself on top 12-11. He never trailed until Sandy pushed passed him 20-19 setting up this pivotal position:

Position #4. 23 point final. Lubetkin (Black) leads O'Laughlin (White) 20-19. White on roll. **CUBE ACTION(S)?**

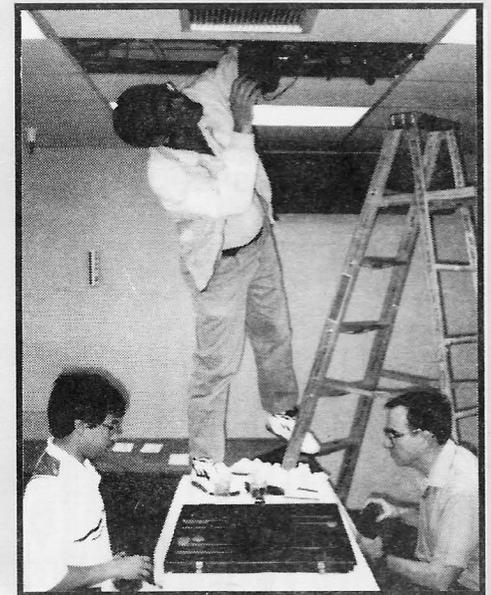


Ed elected not to double in this set-up. While analyzing the position out loud in

the closed playing room, he mentioned the possibility of rolling 4-4. That and 6-6 were clearly his worst two numbers. Dice have ears. Ed rolled 4-4 and Sandy was able to turn the game around and take a commanding 22-19 lead into the Crawford game.

Although Lubetkin was convinced that Ed was correct to play on for the gammon, there were experts who preferred to double.

The video tape jammed in the final game of the match, but the game was relatively uneventful as Lubetkin went on to win the \$25,000 Masters prize 23-19.



Sandy Lubetkin (left) and Ed O'Laughlin (right) begin the last game of the 23-point Masters Invitational. Efforts to repair the camera were fruitless.

After the match, Howard Markowitz, aware of Lubetkin's time problem, came directly into the closed room to award the prize money and trophies. "Thanks, Howard," Sandy said. "You run a great tournament" Then the action junkie checked his watch as he hurried out of the room. "2:30. I have time for 30 minutes of Blackjack."

Also...

Jacques Trividic (Canada) defeated two Chicago area players, Don Jayhan in the semifinals and Frank Dickerson 13-7 in the finals to win the Intermediate championship. Ling Nelson traveled from Hong Kong to capture the Beginner's trophy. Wilcox Snellings and Joe Harris were Blitz victors. Jim Scott and Norm Wiggins won the \$1,000 Limited Jackpots. And it was Flint BackgammonNews editor Carol Joy Cole and Rick Reahard (IN) edging past Portugal expert Mario Sequeira and Pierre Semour (Spain) to win the 64-team Doubles.

[Continued on page 6]

HAROLD'S VIEW

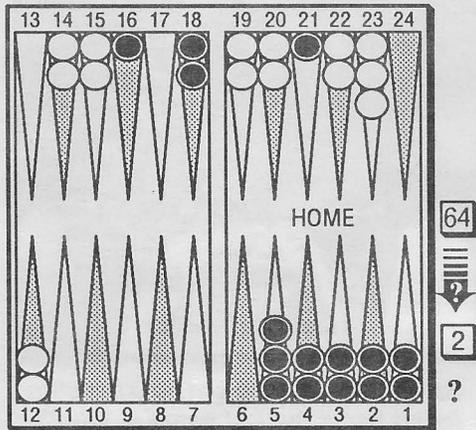


by Harold Branch

Wouldn't it be great to never see an error in a backgammon study? We admire the game's best writers. We sense that they know more than we do, so we study to improve and advance our knowledge of the game to their level.

I was "improving" along one evening when all of the sudden . . . WHAM! The pianist hit a clam.

Match to 7 points. Black leads White, 3 to 0. White doubles. **SHOULD BLACK TAKE?**



This diagram is from an annotated match appearing at the bottom of page 129 of Danny Kleinman's book *... But Only The Hogs Win Backgammons*. Like all of Danny's works, this is a fine, helpful book. Danny's opinion here is that "...the race is close enough for [Black] to win, and [Black's] five point board makes shots effective, so [Black] can take."

HAWTHORNE CHAMPS CROWNED

41 players were on hand for a night of backgammon and harness racing 30 January at Hawthorne Race Course. As usual, the event was great fun. Thanks to Hawthorne's Caryl Meadows for all her efforts. Results:

OPEN (21): 1-Deeb Shalati, 2-Tak Morioka, 3/4-Larry Strommen (IN) / Paul Franks; 1C-Dave Cramer, 2C-Neil Kazaross.

INTERMEDIATE (20): 1-Andy Krenitz, 2-Jolie Lewis, 3/4-Tony Schroeder / Alice Kay; 1C-J.A. Miller, 2C-John Meyers (WI).

I disagree. And strongly. I don't think Danny paid enough attention to this particular position. It surely has to be a drop in a match where Black, not White, holds a 3-0 lead. Black's score is not nearly desperate enough to merit a take. (He can drop and retain a 3-1 lead.) It is a pretty big drop for money, also.

Black already trails by 10 pips. And his blots make the position gammonish. 27 shots drill that first lost goose. Both can be hit with 14 shots. (Can be hit, but won't be hit by such shots as 6-4 or 6-2. That would be overreaching. But I would hit both blots with these 10 shots: 1-1, 2-2, 5-1, 5-2, 5-4 and 6-1.)

My rollouts are random. But even with this go-as-you-please style, when I do 400 trials, I know something about the position. I have "been there."

My first 200:

- White won 89 plain games, 53 gammons and 1 backgammon.
- Black won 46 plain games and 11 gammons.

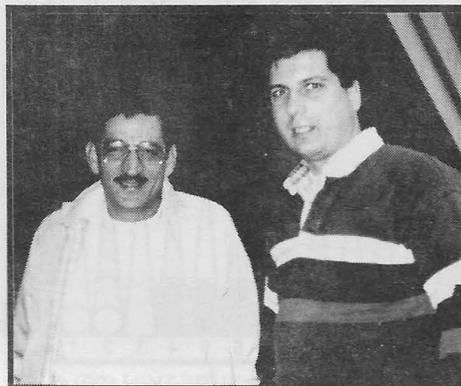
My second 200:

- White won 79 plain games, 57 gammons and 1 backgammon.
- Black won 51 games, 11 gammons and 1 backgammon.

That is 504 points net to White: an average Black loss of 1.26 points per game after the take. Too much. Too much to make allowances for variance or error. Black just has to pass and swallow his one point loss.

DANNY KLEINMAN HAS BEEN ADVANCING OUR knowledge of the game for many years. We hope and expect that he will keep the "good stuff" coming for a long time.

But it's whistle-blowin' time on page 129! Δ



1993 Hawthorne winners Deeb Shalati (Open) and Andy Krenitz (Intermediate).

NEVADA STATE...

(Continued from page 5)

HOWARD MARKOWITZ AND HIS FINE STAFF deserve much credit for running an excellent event despite many Sands Hotel oversights. Mr Markowitz plans to move from Chicago to Las Vegas in April which should ensure even better event planning and organization from the Nevada Backgammon Association in the future. The complete results: Δ

10TH NEVADA STATE BACKGAMMON TOURNAMENT

OPEN (147): 1-Mark Schiffer (OR), 2-Don Smolen (PA), 3/4-Ray Baker (CA) / Jack Kissane (NY), 5/8-Dennis Carlston (CA) / Wayne Drogseth (TX) / Doug Roberts (NY) / Al Tesoro (FL); 1C-Kyle Larson (CA), 2C-Wilcox Snellings (CA), 3C/4C-Hal Heinrich (CAN) / Rick Todd (MI); 1LC-Jim Scott (TX), 2LC-Drew Giovanis (FL)

INTERMEDIATE (111): 1-Jacques Trividic (CAN), 2-Frank Dickerson (IL), 3/4-Scott Cole (CA) / Don Jayhan (IL), 5/8-Ira Hoffberg (IL) / Butch Meese (IN) / Morry Parl (CAN) / Tony Siegel (CO); 1C-Buddy Ashmore (CAN), 2C-Graham Sievers (ENG), 3C/4C-Bob Lumbra (VT) / Dave Williams (CA); 1LC-Joe Harris (CA), 2LC-Stan Weiss (CA)

BEGINNER (49): 1-Ling Nelson (HK), 2-Ralph Rubalcava (AZ), 3/4-Cecilia Pedroza (CA) / Paul Mangone (CA); 1C-Carlos Turque, 2C-Jim Mason; 1LC-Pinchas Perry, 2LC-Katherine Willoughby

MASTERS (16): 1-Sandy Lubetkin (TX), 2-Ed O'Laughlin (VA), 3/4-Bill Robertie (MA) / Wilcox Snellings (CA)

LIMITED JACKPOT "A" (16): 1-Jim Scott (TX), 2-Tom Weaver (TX)

LIMITED JACKPOT "B" (16): 1-Norm Wiggins (CA), 2-Phil Laak (CA)

DOUBLES (64): 1-Carol Joy Cole (MI) & Rick Reahard (IN), 2-Pierre Semour (SPA) & Mario Sequeira (POR), 3/4-Aram Kouleyan (CA) & Kevy Sakuzlian / Herb Avram (MD) & Ed O'Laughlin (VA)

\$50 BLITZ (128): 1-Wilcox Snellings (CA), 2-Mike Friedman

\$25 BLITZ (128): 1-Joe Harris (CA), 2-Dale Beeber (TX)

\$100 SUNDAY JACKPOT (16): 1-Eliot Bean (CA), 2-Mike Horri (WA)

\$50 SUNDAY JACKPOT (16): 1-Jim Allen (NV), 2-George Alessi (CA)

\$25 SUNDAY JACKPOT (4): 1-Jodie Kraft (IL)

who did what

WINNER'S CORNER



Dec.—Jan '92-'93

Hoosier Backgammon Club Fall League Results (Indianapolis, IN)... OPEN: 1-Chuck Stimming, 2-Larry Strommen. ADVANCED: 1-Scott Richardson, 2-Mary Ann Meese. INTERMEDIATE: 1-Tom Helt, 2-Jan Gurvitz.

Double Five Backgammon Club Christmas Jackpot (London, England; December)... CHAMPION: Chris Bray... Martin Reade is the

club's Six Monthly League winner for 1992. The Double Five club has £30 tournaments every Thursday. When in London, call George Sulimirski at 071-589 3812 for more information.

Circuito Del Rio De La Plata (Buenos Aires, Argentina; Mondays in Dec.)... CHAMPIONSHIP WINNERS: Juan Rosa (2). JUNIOR WINNERS: Paula Estacolchic, Daniel Branchesi. BEGINNER WINNERS: Eduardo Kerman, Mauricio Sued... Juan Rosa's two wins in the final two events of the year were enough to move him ahead of Hugo Ergueta (in a 174 player field) as the Argentina Champion of 1992. (Our apologies for last month's error.) The result earned him a new car valued at \$8,000. Alberto Daich won the 1992 Junior

Championship and an air ticket to Paris, France. 216 Juniors were rated. Reported by Claudio Augusto Salamone, tournament director.

Hong Kong Monthly (Hong Kong; 7 Dec.)... OPEN: 1-Jerry Godsey, 2-Don Rae; 1C-Ernest Ho, 2C-John Simon. CHAMPIONSHIP: 1-Vicki Findley, 2-Pearl Liu. INTERMEDIATE: 1-Chris Champion, 2-Daniel Jim.

Cariari Tournament (San José, Costa Rica; 7-8 Dec.)... OPEN (20): 1-Milton González, 2-Randall Fernández, 3-Mario Lizano, 4-Flory Zuñiga. NOVICE (16): 1-Esteban Oreamuno, 2-Carlos Brenes. MASTERS (8): 1-Jorge Tsao, 2-Antonio Ortega. SPECIAL JACKPOT (8): 1-Milton González, 2-Luis Manuel Chacón. INT. JACKPOT (16): 1-Ricardo Arango. NOVICE JACKPOT (16): 1-Jorge Saprissa. HEINEKENBLITZ (64): 1-Mario Lizano, 2-W. Montero.

First International Turkish Championship (Istanbul, Turkey; 9-13 Dec.)... CHAMPIONSHIP (73): 1-Thomas Lumper (GER), 2-Hervé Pietraru (FRA), 3/4-Frank Kirschner (GER) / Joel Schiff (ISR); 1C-Jerry Wismeijer (NL), 2C-Ray Tannen (UK); 1LC-Hans Capel (NL), 2LC-Shimon Kagan (ISR). INTERMEDIATE (20): 1-Gerhard Beirlein (GER), 2-Luisa Sequeira (POR); 1C-David Ben-David (ISR); 1LC-Roland Kuhfuss (GER). EMPYRAL TOURNAMENT: 1-Jerry Grandell (SWE), 2-Joel Schiff (ISR). DOUBLES: 1-Bavarian Dreamers: Heiner Haussleiter & Christoph Haller (GER). TEAM TOURNAMENT: 1-The Big Winners: A. Aras (TUR), Nurelham Aras (TUR), Wally Wolf (USA)... Directors Abraham Eitan and Chris Ternel directed the \$30,000 added tournament.

NEBC Sunday Monthly (Cambridge, MA; 13 Dec.)... EXPERT (19): 1-Garbis Zerdelian, 2-Seth Towle, 3/4-Jay Giuttari / Walter Guleserian; 1C-Dan Chicoine, 2C-Ed Guleserian. A DIV. (18): 1-Toni Wuersch, 2-Michael Zehr; 1C-Belle Pronman B DIV. (4): 1/2-Al Mason / Tim Spencer.

Louisville League Elimination Tournament (Louisville, KY; Jan.)... OPEN: 1-Harold Branch, 2-Rich Emmett.

Springfield Series #3 (Springfield, IL; 9 Jan.)... OPEN (22): 1-Mark Kaye, 2-Ben Zemaitis; 1C-Carl Severino, 2C-Gary Schechter; 1LC-Jim Painter.

Baleares Tournament (San José, Costa Rica; 11, 13 Jan.)... OPEN (23): 1-Bernardita Solano, 2-Randall Fernández, 3-Matti Karsikko (FIN), 4-Mario Madrigal. INTERMEDIATE (16): 1-Jorge Saprissa, 2-George Aron (USA). NOVICE (16): 1-Javier Aguilar, 2-Estevan Oreamuno. HEINEKEN JPTS #1 (8): 1-Jorge Tsao. #2 (8): 1-Milton González.

College Park Winter Open (Bethesda, MD; 16 Jan.)... OPEN (31): 1-Robert Eberlein, 2-Brad Paleg; 1C-Bruce Hall; 1LC-Sam Orandle. BEG/INT (10): 1/2-Rebecca Martin / Mort Resnicoff.

Springfield Series #4 (Springfield, IL; 6 Feb.)... OPEN (16): 1-Don Garner, 2-Gary Schechter; 1C-Mike Flohr, 2C-John Jennings; 1LC-Carl Severino.

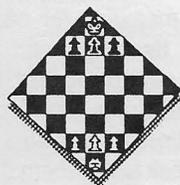
Bar Point Doubles (Oak Brook, IL; 7 Feb.)... OPEN (20): 1-Don Desmond & Steve Grubart, 2-Tak Morioka & Stu Katz, 3/4-Larry Strommen (IN) & Neil Kazaross / Ed Buerger & Ralph Levy; 1C/2C-Jolie Lewis & David Rubin / Phyllis Smolinski & Marty Tatosian... Ken Smith, General Manager of the O'Hare Hilton Hotel donated a weekend package to the main winners. Steve Grubart, owner of "Condoms Now" in Chicago donated a Valentine's Bouquet of condoms to the consolation winners. Δ



1992 CHICAGO BAR POINT CLUB CHAMPIONS were honored at Awards Night 12 January at Pat's Pub in Norridge, IL. Over 32 players braved an ice storm to be in attendance. Thanks to Jolie Lewis who supplied a cake in honor of David Rubin's birthday and Pat's Pub who shared the cost of the complimentary drinks.

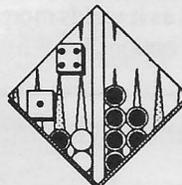
Photo at left: Gary Kay (1) and David Rubin (3). [Don Jayhan (2) was on vacation.] Photo at right: Jolie Lewis (18) and Mary Franks (7) in the front. Yamin Yamin (4), Paul Franks (12), Sarg Serges (15), Howard Markowitz (9), David Rockwell (8), Stu Katz (6), Tak Morioka (10) and Deeb Shalati (5).

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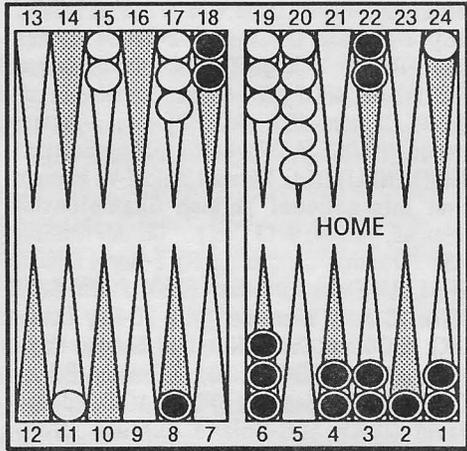
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PROBLEM #189 SOLVED

by Joe Sylvester

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



Problem #189 is a curious position with intangibles. Black's options are few:

- (a) 22/10 (2)
- (b) 22/16 (2), 18/12 (2)
- (c) 22/10, 22/16, 8/2

Both plays (a) and (b) leave no blots. Of these, (b) is far superior.

Commanding a 100-102 racing lead after the boxes in this holding position, Black's first thought must be to race. (After all, at this pip count, who's holding whom?) Hence, he should try to disengage as quickly as possible.

After play (a), Black has only three crossovers before he has to break the 18-point. White has seven crossovers before she is "all in." Any attempt to save crossovers will result in a worsening inner board distribution for Black. Conversely, if White

needs to play in her inner board, she can efficiently use the numbers to improve her distribution.

Also, after play (a), when White rolls any of six numbers: (1-2, 2-3 and 2-5), Black will need a 7 to hit (six hitting numbers).

$$(6 \text{ rolls}/36) \times (6 \text{ hits}/36) = (36/1296) \text{ hits on the initial parlay.}$$

After play (b), Black gets 22 ways to hit with four numbers (1-1, 1-5 and 5-5). Black also gets a single shot with four other numbers (1-2 and 2-3).

$$(4/36) \times (22 \text{ hits}/36) = (88 \text{ hits}/1296) \\ + (4/36) \times (11/36) = (44 \text{ hits}/1296)$$

The total is 132 hits in 1296. Hence play (b) extricates Black and improves his hitting potential by over 2 1/2 times in the process!

With play (c), Black is left with a blotless five point board and obviously seeks to "mix it up a little." Is there something to be gained from this strategy? An inspection of White's rolls that *must* leave shots are as follows:

- 1-2 leaves 17 returns after 19/21, 20/21 = 34 hits
- 2-3 leaves 17 returns after 19/24 = 34 hits
- 2-5 leaves 17 returns after 17/24 = 34 hits
- 5-5 leaves 9 returns after 11/16*, 19/24, 15/21(2) = 9 hits

Total: 111 hits in 1296

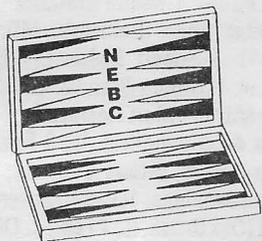
There are other rolls in which White may *opt* to leave shots (i.e. 1-1, 5-4), but that's a separate problem for another time.

For Black's purposes, he should analyze only the minimum number of forced shots, since presumably anything White volunteers will be in her best interests.

In Problem #189, play (b) is clearly best as it yields more hits for Black and less options for White. Δ

AMALGAMATION

The American Backgammon Tour premieres in February with two events: Pittsburgh (19-21 Feb.) and Los Angeles (26-28 Feb.)... Attending the **Bill Clinton** Inauguration: **Sanjit Teelock**, a member of the Mauritius parliament, on a one month tour of the U.S. to see our political system in action. Also **Linda Woods** from the Central Illinois BG Club (Peoria, IL)... It's official. **Patrick Gibson** will be directing an Acapulco tournament in May. The four-day event will be held at a classy hotel overlooking Acapulco Bay... **LAS VEGAS CHATTER:** The Dunes Hotel, site of numerous World Amateur Backgammon Championships, closed its doors forever on 24 Jan., the last day of the Nevada State Tournament... **Marta Hilsworth** (IN) took a train to the tournament because she thinks she has bad luck flying. It looks like Marta's luck is no better riding the rails. **John Brussel** reports that her train was delayed almost seven hours after it was hit by a landslide... Congratulations to **Jeffrey & Sylvia Ansari** (Newport Beach, CA) who were married at White Chapel in Las Vegas to kick off the tournament... In order to build Calcutta attendance, **Howard Markowitz** gave away \$1500 in casino chips including a \$500 chip won by **Tony Siegel** (CO)... To those of you who complained about the five hours of repetitive Greek dance music during Saturday evening play, there was nothing NBA could do about it. The Sands Hotel was to blame for a booking foul-up... A birthday cake was presented to 80-year-old **Herb Avrim** (MD) at the Awards Ceremony. "Oh, to be 80 again," quipped 90-year-old **Max Shapiro** of Los Angeles, the tournament's oldest participant. Max, who reached the semifinals of the 1991 Las Vegas Open, started playing backgammon at a bridge club in the Bronx in the 1950s. In backgammon's salad days, he played **Lucille Ball**, gave **Don Adams** lessons and was written up in *Playboy* magazine for beating **Hugh Hefner**..... **Jim Heemstra** sent us a clipping from his local newspaper that (perhaps?) explains why the Green Bay Packers had an improved year. It seems they now have a backgammon table in their locker room. "Take our word for it," writes the *Green Bay Press-Gazette*. "Backgammon is *always* being played in the Packers locker room."... Vacationing in Barcelona, Spain: BPC players **Jolie Lewis** and **David Rubin**... More Players of the Year: Backgammon Club of San Diego: **Jon Vietor** (Performance), **Nina Norden** (Club Rank). Hong Kong Backgammon Club: **John Simon**. Backgammon Assoc. of So. Australia: **Terry Efthimiou** ... Visiting the BPC in January: **Graham Sievers** and **Richard Beagarie** from England... Finally, we overheard **John Brussel** complaining at the Bar Point Club: "I was rolling so bad, I couldn't call my numbers with a phone book." Δ



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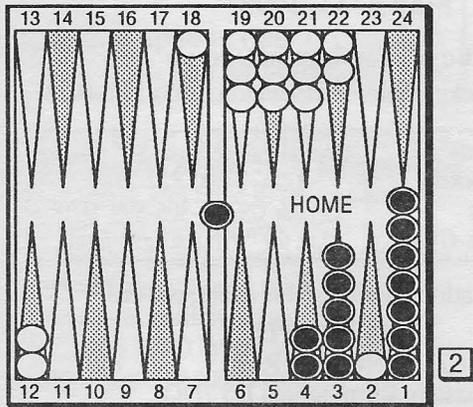
HASTY PLAYS



by Duane Jensen

Some plays increase your winning chances, but also increase your chance of being gammoned. The gammon risk associated with bolder moves often intimidates less-experienced players into making weaker plays.

Money game. **BLACK TO PLAY 2-1.**



Black entered on the 24-point and played 3/1. In fact, Black should enter on the 23-point and hit the White blot with 3/2*. True, White might hit the second checker and gammon Black. The question is: can Black afford this increased gammon jeopardy?

If Black makes the passive, non-hitting play, what future does he have? He might win 10% of the games, lose two points 85% of the time, and get gammoned the remaining 5%.

If Black makes the bolder hitting play, the second blot increases his chance of being gammoned to approximately 20%. How many extra games must Black win to mitigate the additional 15% gammon risk?

Black needs to win only half as many extra games as gammons. In this example, he exposes himself to 15% extra gammons so he needs to win only 7 1/2% more games to break even. When she's hit, White fans 25% of the time, so Black can pick up a good number of wins on this scenario alone.

Black is better off hitting with the 2-1 than simply sitting on the 24-point waiting for something to happen. Δ

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first person

POUND PUPPY PROVES A PIP IN THE PURSE IS BETTER THAN A PILE ON THE BOARD

by Kati Pratt

I know CHICAGO POINT gets inundated with serious news items. That is why I felt compelled to share this one with our readers.



"Pip"

Above is a photograph of my new puppy, Pip, whom I "adopted" from the pound when he was only four weeks old. Coincidentally, adoption day happened to fall on the same day as our regular weekly

tournament here in the "Big D." Because Pip was just a baby and hadn't even been weaned yet, I didn't want to leave him "home alone." So, unbeknownst to anyone, I smuggled him into the restaurant in my purse. Since he only weighed 2 1/2 pounds, he fit nicely into my bag. Soon Pip was quietly sleeping, snuggled up in my lap while I attempted to pound my opponents over the backgammon board.

Admittedly, I was quite distracted, fearing that at any moment, Pip might arouse and make his presence known to the restaurant personnel who would force me to remove him from the premises. Therefore, I found myself playing at a fast pace, attempting to complete each match as quickly as possible.

Was the speed of my play a factor, or was it the power of a Pip in my purse? Who can say? Anyway, I won my first Dallas tournament in two years, setting in motion a string of successive victories. Over the next two months, I racked up three more 1st place wins to finish 4th overall for the year.

The Dallas players were in awe of my sudden success. "What's your secret weapon?" they asked. Finally, for the first time anywhere, I have decided to "go public" with the truth.

The moral of this story is that if you roll like dog meat, and find yourself howling in defeat, pay a visit to your local pound. Every dog has his day, and a puppy procured from the pound might just change your dog meat into dogma.

Love and kisses.—Kati & Pip Pratt, Dallas, TX

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