

CHICAGO POINT

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A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

DECEMBER 1994

The Lopsided Score Paradox by Dean Muench

When you have a big lead in a backgammon match (e.g., 6-1 in a 7-point match, post-Crawford), the cube actions for both sides are clear:

1. in theory, your opponent should double at his first opportunity, and
2. you should make your "take" decision based on a 41% take point, being careful to avoid gammonish games.

Because some events like the "America Cup" feature long matches, I began looking at post-Crawford (PC) scores that were very lop-sided. I found that a paradoxical situation regarding cube decisions occurs when a win by the trailing player does not significantly increase his match-winning chances (MWC).

For example, assume that you are in the enviable position of being ahead 24-1 (PC) in a 25-point match. How does this lop-sided score affect your take point?

Assuming a gammon rate of 25%, your opponent (when he wins) will gain an average of 2.5 points per game. We can estimate the number of games (G) that he needs to win in a row for the match by dividing his distance (D) to match end by 2.5 and rounding up.

Assuming that each side is equally likely to win each game, we can estimate your opponent's MWC%:

$$\text{MWC}\% = 100\% / 2^G$$

In our example, $G = 10$ and his $\text{MWC}\% = 0.09765625\%$

If you drop the double:

$G = 10$ and his $\text{MWC}\% = 0.09765625\%$

If you take and lose:

$G = 9$ and his $\text{MWC}\% = 0.1953125\%$

If you take and win:

his $\text{MWC}\% = 0.0\%$

Your Take Point ($Tp\%$) =

$$\frac{99.90234375 - 99.8046875}{100.0 - 99.8046875} = 0.50\%$$

This low take point (one-half of one

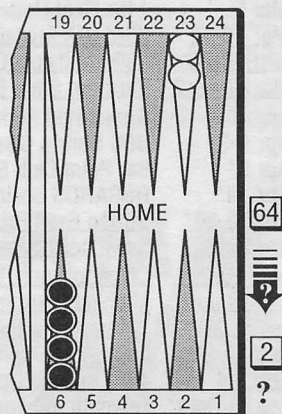
percent) means that you only need to win one game in 200 (assuming no gammons) in order to take an offered double. This is in sharp contrast to the conservative $Tp\%$ for the previous match score example.

Additional quirk related to this paradox: Because your opponent has no theoretical market-losing rolls early in the game, it may be correct (in practice) for him to delay doubling until he reaches a position where you may make a mistake by dropping.

TEST YOURSELF with the following example:

Match to 25 points. Black leads White, 24-1 (post-Crawford). White doubles to 2. **SHOULD BLACK TAKE?**

[Answer on page 5.] Δ



KAZAROSS DOMINATES 1994 AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR

1994 will be a year Chicagoan Neil Kazaross will never forget. He got married, became a father, bought a new house, and settled into his new job as an options trader.

1994 will be a year backgammon won't soon forget as well. Neil Kazaross achieved a number one ranking on Kent Goulding's International List, will repeat as the Chicago Bar Point Club Player of the Year, and blew away the competition in the American Backgammon Tour with a record 72.98 points.

The 1994 Kazaross juggernaut was unstoppable. He placed in seven ABT events including two victories. And for added kudos, he won three regional Doubles titles. The AnNEILator's record-breaking performance is listed on page 3.

Congratulations also to 1994 runners-up Patrick Gibson of Los Angeles (32.00) and Pittsburgh's Abbas Zaltash. All three players will receive their beautiful trophies at the Pittsburgh Backgammon Championships February 17-19: the kickoff ABT event of 1995. Δ

A TOAST TO THE CHAMPION



South American World Cup champion Alan Steffen (second from right) receives a congratulatory toast from fellow U.S. competitors 28 October in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Alan also finished second at the Rio Open. From left: Gayle & Wally Wolf, Emil Mortuk (a World Cup semifinalist), Andy Krenitz, Steffen and Jill Haase.

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LETTERS

c/o CHICAGO POINT
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'WASTAGE' IS A WASTE

At first I didn't know if I was supposed to laugh at author Paul Weaver's "Trice Optimal Bearoff Position" in last month's CHICAGO POINT. If it was intended as humor, someone carried the gag way too far. Are you applying the latest talk show techniques by airing (publishing) some lame, off-the-wall, crackpot idea just to stimulate controversy?

Let me simply illustrate how incredibly useless the concept of "wastage" is. How would you position five remaining checkers for minimal wastage? Oh, by the way, it is barely worth mentioning, your opponent has only one remaining pip.

Since the article is so elementally flawed, I have to go back to some basics:

Postulate #1

Even in non-contact positions, the position of your opponent continues to be an essential consideration involving how you should play your rolls (and the cube).

Postulate #2

If you bear off before your opponent, then

[Continued on page 6]

coming attractions

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

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

by Carol Joy Cole
810/232-9731

* Denotes new or revised listing

American Backgammon Tour events underlined.

NATIONAL

Dec 4-7	CANCELLED—2nd Eldorado BG & Blackjack, Eldorado Hotel, Reno, NV	702/893-6025
Dec 11	New England Monthly, Sheraton-Commander Hotel, Cambridge, MA	508/486-0668
Dec 15	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
Dec 18	Atlanta Backgammon Association Monthly, Caffeinds, Atlanta, GA	404/682-1969
Dec 18	NY/NJ Co-op Regional Tournament, Ramada Inn, Woodbury, NY	718/341-3779
Dec 29*	Flint Area Club Holiday Party & Tournament, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
Jan 7*	Springfield Series #3, Parker's Sports Bar, Springfield, IL	217/528-0117
Jan 14-15	1995 BBC Winter Open Tournament, Promenade, Bethesda, MD	301/530-0603
Jan 15*	Austin Sunday Tournament, Bombay Bicycle Club, Austin, TX	512/261-8518
Jan 17	Chicago Bar Point Club Awards Night, Golden Flame, Chicago, IL	312/338-6380
Jan 18	RSCARDS Winter Computer Modern Tournament, GEnie	313/243-3996
Jan 20	Third Thursday Bonus & Flint Club Awards Night, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
Jan 28	Hawthorne Backgammon Classic, Hawthorne Race Course, Cicero, IL	312/338-6380
Feb 4*	Springfield Series #4, Peoria, IL	217/528-0117
Feb 5*	Bar Point Doubles Tournament, Braxton Seafood Grill, Oak Brook, IL	312/252-7755
Feb 5*	25th Willowbank Invitational, Soule residence, Shelburne, VT	802/658-4711
Feb 7-12	2nd World-Wide Twin Championships, Eldorado Hotel, Reno, NV	702/893-6025
Feb 17-19	<u>17th Pittsburgh Championships, Greentree Marriott, Pittsburgh, PA</u>	<u>412/823-7500</u>
Mar 4*	Springfield Series #5, Parker's Sports Bar, Springfield, IL	217/528-0117
Mar 5	11th Fleet Underwood Benefit Tournament, Ramada Inn, Flint MI	810/323-9731
Mar 10-12	<u>33rd G/A Invitational, Grand Slam Bridge Club, Woodland Hills, CA</u>	<u>818/901-0464</u>
Mar 24-26	<u>1995 Midwest Championships, Marriott Hotel, Oak Brook, IL</u>	<u>312/338-6380</u>
Mar 29-Apr 2*	<u>Vermont State Backgammon & Ski Festival, Stratton Mt. Inn, VT</u>	<u>305/527-4033</u>
Apr 1*	Springfield Series #6, Parker's Sports Bar, Springfield, IL	217/528-0117
Apr 1-2	BBC Spring Open Tournament, Promenade, Bethesda, MD	301/530-0603
Apr 9*	Bar Point Club Sunday Tournament, Braxton Seafood Grill, Oak Brook, IL	312/252-7755
Apr 19*	RSCARDS Spring 1995 Computer Modern Tournament, GEnie	800/638-9636
Apr 28-30*	<u>Spring Gran Prix, Embassy Suites Hotel, La Jolla, CA</u>	<u>619/294-2007</u>
Apr 28-30*	<u>New England Backgammon Championships, Oak & Spruce, South Lee, MA</u>	<u>603/863-4711</u>
May 26-29*	<u>Chicago Open, Woodfield Hyatt Hotel, Schaumburg, IL</u>	<u>708/674-0120</u>
Jun 30-Jul 3	<u>Michigan Summer Championships, Novi Hilton, Novi, MI</u>	<u>810/232-9731</u>
Jul 28-30*	<u>Thousand Islands Tournament, Pine Tree Point, Alexandria Bay, NY</u>	<u>716/442-8221</u>
Aug 16-20*	Las Vegas Open, Riviera Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, NV	702/893-6025
Sep 1-4	<u>43rd Indiana Open, Ramada Inn East, Indianapolis, IN</u>	<u>317/845-8435</u>
Sep 29-Oct 1*	<u>Towpath Inn Tournament, Towpath Inn, Turin, NY</u>	<u>716/442-8221</u>
Oct 6-8	<u>Nation's Capital Fall Championships, Promenade, Bethesda, MD</u>	<u>301/530-0603</u>
Oct 11-15	<u>5th Illinois Champs/America Cup, Indiana Lakes Resort, Bloomington, IL</u>	<u>708/945-7801</u>
Oct 27-29*	<u>Autumn Gran Prix, Embassy Suites Hotel, La Jolla, CA</u>	<u>619/294-2007</u>
Nov 3-5	<u>35rd G/A Invitational, Grand Slam Bridge Club, Woodland Hills, CA</u>	<u>818/901-0464</u>
Nov 3-5*	<u>Backgammon In The Berkshires, Oak & Spruce Center, South Lee, MA</u>	<u>603/863-4711</u>
Nov 10-12	<u>NY/NJ BG CO-OP Big Apple Series, Oritani Hotel, Hackensack, NJ</u>	<u>201/833-2915</u>

OUTSIDE USA

Dec 9-11	Finnish Open Championships, Helsinki, Finland	3580-676258
Dec 13-18	3rd International Turkish Championship, Conrad Hotel Istanbul, Turkey	972-3 544 5347
Dec 18*	Jahresendturnier der Bremer Master Serie, Kerem, Delmenhorst, GER	49421-393573
Jan 2*	Hong Kong Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	852-846 1923
Jan 6-8	BIBA's Interesting Birthday Adventure, Hilton International, England	44522-536836
Jan 7-8	Danish Mixed Doubles, Prime BG Klub, København Ø, Denmark	4535-261587
Jan 7-8*	Jahresendturnier zum Schwaben-Cup, BürgerhasuBotnang, Stuttgart, GER	49421-393573
Jan 13-15*	Backgammon Meisterschaft, Hotel Klosterbräu, Seefeld/Tirol, Austria	498341-12825
Feb 2-5*	Paradise Island Pro-Am Invitational, Ocean Club, Nassau, Bahamas	301/299-8264
Feb 6*	Hong Kong Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	852-846 1923
Feb 9-12*	6th French Open Championship, Hotel Lutetia, Paris, France	331-41050259
Feb 11-12	Jarvis Trophy Tournament #1, George Hotel, Solihull, England	44522-536836
Mar 16-19*	31st Ted Bassett & Gstaad Palace-Cup, Palace Hotel, Gstaad, Switzerland	061-3315816
Mar 23-26*	21st Winter Championships, Badrutt's Palace Hotel, St. Moritz, Switz	061-3315816
Apr 1-2*	British Open, Hilton Hotel, East Midlands, England	44522-536836
Apr 14-17	Nordic "Wide" Open, SAS Scandinavia Hotel, Copenhagen, Denmark	4539-400607
Apr 19-23*	4th Tournament of the Americas, Herradura Hotel, San José, Costa Rica	312/252-7755
May 20-21*	County Cups Trophy Tournament #2, George Hotel, Solihull, England	44522-536836
Jun 2-5	1995 Swedish Open, Sheraton Hotel & Towers, Malmö, Sweden	46040-74000
Jul 7-9*	Monte Carlo Warm-up, Loews Hotel, Monte Carlo, Monaco	305/527-4033
Jul 8-9*	Hilton Trophy Tournament, Hilton Hotel, East Midlands, England	44522-536836
Jul 10-16*	World Backgammon Championship, Loews Hotel, Monte Carlo, Monaco	3392-162133
Jul 20-23*	Riviera's Cup Championship, Hotel Martinez, Cannes, France	33141-050259



AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 1994

Top 100—Final Standings after 17 tournaments

151 players earned points



Neil Kazaross	72.98	Mary Ann Meese	11.44	Nack Ballard	4.80	Paul Klein	3.36
Patrick Gibson	32.00	Ami Tennenbaum	10.35	John Brussel	4.78	Jim Muirhead	3.22
Abbas Zaltash	31.18	Rick Bieniak	10.07	Richie Adams	4.78	Nancy Takala	3.22
Dean Muench	28.75	Judy Field	9.61	Harry Zilli	4.76	Nicole Masarani	3.21
Arnold Zousmer	26.50	Paul DiBiase	9.61	Steve Lentz	4.76	Frank Dickerson	3.20
Mike Friedman	23.35	Ed O'Laughlin	9.52	Jeff Spencer	4.64	Bob Lumbr	3.12
Doug Roberts	22.69	Paul Stebbing	9.00	Mike Ungerleider	4.64	Bob Bishop	2.82
Art Benjamin	21.26	Ray Bills	8.51	Howard Ring	4.33	Jake Jacobs	2.82
Phil Laak	20.20	Jon Vietor	8.40	Jon Stephens	4.24	Lou Florio	2.75
Kit Woolsey	20.16	Chaim Lang	8.00	Don Bernstein	4.20	Antoinette Williams	2.47
Charlie Morrison	18.86	Sig Skolnick	7.54	Lefteris Moskos	4.19	Mike Nelson	2.47
David Williams	17.31	Peter Zacks	7.25	Bob Holyon	4.16	Joann Feinstein	2.40
Steve McCormick	16.82	Richard Armbruster	7.25	Doug Mayfield	4.16	Albert Lazar	2.38
Rudy Citrom	16.80	Todd Doucet	7.21	Harriet Klein	4.00	Mark Davis	2.38
Tak Morioka	15.99	Ralph Schaffner	7.18	Jay Giuttari	3.89	Joe Freedman	2.24
David Wells	15.89	Durb Oldham	7.11	Carl Adamec	3.76	Sam Orandle	2.24
Marty Storer	15.67	Roy Springer	6.69	Marc Gray	3.74	Herb Gurland	2.16
Ed Johnson	15.00	Odis Chenault	6.56	David Rubin	3.72	Albert Steg	2.11
Lincoln Bedell	14.96	Andy Palumbo	6.44	Ed Pavilonis	3.60	Carol Falk	2.09
Ray Fogerlund	14.91	Darl Brooks	6.44	Jerry Hays	3.59	Ali Rebatchi	2.08
Mike Darooge	14.35	Kent Goulding	6.40	Mariano Rocca	3.59	Julie Crandall	2.05
Bill Szirtes	12.81	John Rather	6.30	Bruce King	3.58	Alex Rasic	2.00
Lucky Nelson	11.58	J.A. Miller	6.29	Bill Gheen	3.55	Drew Liebenthal	2.00
John Stryker	11.56	Kurt Schurecht	5.26	Kevin Muench	3.55	Lois Richards	1.91
Judy Brown	11.50	Mary Franks	5.20	Sakura Sugawara	3.51	2 tied with	1.88



CHICAGO BAR POINT CLUB 1994 PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED
THRU 30 NOV.

Neil Kazaross	26.80	Dean Muench	6.36	Ed Bauder	2.24	Scottie Mitchell	0.88
Herb Roman	21.68	Harry Cohn	6.36	Amy Trudeau	2.20	Glen Garber	0.80
Tak Morioka	21.48	Jolie Rubin	6.26	Reggie Porter	2.14	Peggy Fleming	0.72
Jake Jacobs	20.28	Bobbie Shiffrin	5.80	Barry Miller	2.08	Mary Vitale	0.72
Tim Mabee	14.24	Bob Zavoral	5.12	Frank Dickerson	2.00	Mick Dobratz	0.68
David Rubin	14.00	V.W. Zimnicki	5.04	Don Desmond	2.00	Igor Sheyn	0.64
Peter Kalba	12.72	Yamin Yamin	4.64	Marc Ingenoso	1.92	Jerry Brooks	0.64
Paul Franks	12.72	Ralph Levy	4.48	Mick Nowak	1.88	Jill Ferdinand	0.64
Alice Kay	11.96	Richard Stawowy	4.04	Betsy Miller	1.76	Mike Kaczmarek	0.64
Sarg Serges	11.68	Alex Itkin	3.92	Earl Risch	1.76	David Rockwell	0.48
Ken Bond	11.48	Paul Klein	3.72	Marty Tatossian	1.52	Tom Walthes	0.48
Phyllis Smolinski	11.20	Marcy Sloan	3.44	John Meyers	1.40	Harold Grote	0.48
Paul Friedman	10.04	Bill Keefe	3.20	Gregg Westrick	1.28	Brigid O'Meara	0.44
Norma Shyer	9.60	John Stryker	3.20	Wilcox Snellings	1.28	Tom Shields	0.40
Allen Zimmerman	9.44	Rob Silvay	3.20	Bob Holyon	1.28	Barbara Levinson	0.40
Leslie Lockett	8.96	Dan Braden	2.96	Richard Lloyd	1.20	Merrill Schrager	0.38
Joann Feinstein	8.80	Ed Buerger	2.92	Dave Cramer	1.12	Elaine Kehm	0.36
Don Jayhan	8.72	John Brussel	2.88	Roland Dieter	0.96	Tim Serges	0.32
Stu Katz	8.56	Tom Fahland	2.88	J.A. Miller	0.96	Lou Salzman	0.30
Georgina Flanagan	7.84	Jeff Kane	2.84	Rick Janowski	0.88	Mike Siegel	0.24
Bill Davis	7.68	Arlene Levy	2.56	Andy Bittman	0.88	Stan Kucharz	0.20
Gary Kay	7.56	George Barr	2.56	Frankie Farjood	0.88	Judy Feinstein	0.12
Phil Simborg	6.56	Kevin Muench	2.48	Paul Weaver	0.88	Mike Budz	0.12
Mary Franks	6.44	Andy Krenitz	2.48				

November's Player of the Month is **HARRY COHN**. Harry earned a good portion of his 4.48 points by taking first place on 1 Nov. Neil Kazaross and Tak Morioka tied for 2nd/3rd with 2.80 points each.

If you finish in the Top 20 for 1994 (bold-faced 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—one ounce silver coin. 1st through 6th—Invitation to participate in the 1995 Illinois State Challenge Cup as a member of the Chicago Bar Point Club team.

WILLIS FITTON 1914–1994

Willis Fitton, lifelong resident of Peoria, Illinois, died 27 November. He was 80 years old. He is survived by his wife Roberta, two daughters and seven grandchildren.

Mr. Fitton became active in the Central Illinois Backgammon Club following his retirement from an insurance agency he owned. He played as an Intermediate in many regional and national events. His two best finishes were at the 1980 Louisville Labor Day Tournament (2nd) and the 1982 Chicago Open (2nd).

Carol Joy Cole defeated Fitton 15–14 in the 1980 Louisville Intermediate finals: "I recall playing Willis in that match. It was a 73-player field. I was nervous, but lucky. Willis was a fearless player, but always a charming gentleman. He was a good ambassador for backgammon."

Memorials may be made to the First Presbyterian Church, Bradley University, or the Methodist Medical Center Foundation in Peoria.

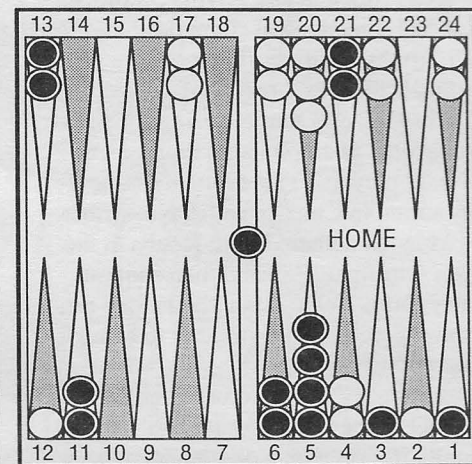
NEIL KAZAROSS'S RECORD-BREAKING 1994 ABT SEASON

Event	Result	Points
Pittsburgh	1st	19.22
Midwest Champs	2nd	10.40
Chicago Open	2nd	10.07
Michigan Summer	3rd	7.18
Illinois State	Semi	2.82
32nd G/A	1st Cons	8.40
NY/NJ Big Apple	1st	14.89
		72.98

your move

PROBLEM #210

Match to 9 points. Black leads White 8–7 (Crawford). **BLACK TO PLAY 3-2.**



DEAR MISS LONELYBLOTS



© 1994 by Danny Kleinman

A SNAKE BY ANY OTHER NAME...

Dear Miss Lonelyblots: I've been playing backgammon for just over seven years and feel very comfortable with the level of skill I have achieved. Now I'm looking to improve my results with another weapon: "shtick." Which head games have you found to be most effective in psyching out your opponent?—Ready to Rattle

DEAR RATTLER: You're off to a good start just by having an attitude. Here are some slithery tips to carry you the rest of the way.

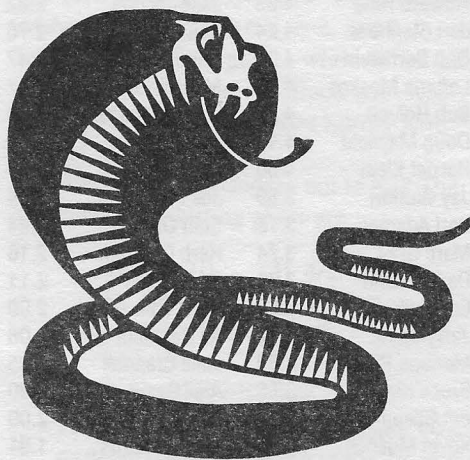
PROMISCUOUS RATTLING. Rattle your dice in your cup while your opponent is contemplating his play. It's sure to rattle him.

SELECTIVE RATTLING. Wait until after your opponent has made his play before rattling your dice. Then do so only if he's chosen a bad move. Your gesture suggests that his move is an "obvious" play and encourages him to lift his dice. If by some fluke your opponent finds a good move, your delay in rattling your dice will suggest that he should reconsider before lifting his dice. Alas, this won't work against an opponent whose checker-play is better than yours.

RELUCTANT CUBE-TURNS. When you want your opponent to take an especially gammonish cube, pause, scratch your head, and knit your brow before doubling or redoubling. If the pip-count is irrelevant, stop and pretend to count pips. Your opponent will read you for a doubtful double,

not a cash.

CONFIDENT CUBE-TURNS. When you have a marginal double, turn the cube quickly, with your *left* hand, without pausing to think. At the same time, grab your pencil with your right hand and make a motion to enter the score. Your opponent will be embarrassed to take when your body language says he should pass. Lefties beware: turn the cube with your *right* hand and grab the pencil with your left.



CUBE INDUCTION FEINTS. When you are hit and fail to reenter, your opponent may contemplate doubling. If his advantage is minimal or non-existent, it is to your advantage for him to turn the cube. Pick up your pencil as if about to score a pass. Your opponent will think he can cash.

FALSE PIP-COUNT. Most backgammon players would rather not stop to count pips (it's too much work). So pretend to do it for them in non-contact positions. If you want your opponent to pass your cube, overstate your lead; if you want him to take, understate it.

When you trail in the race, your task is more difficult. You must pretend to count pips *before* making your play. Then overstate your opponent's lead to induce a double or understate it to obtain a "free shake." Note that you need never bother actually counting pips: that's too much like work. You intend to misstate the pip-count anyway. **HEIGHT ADVANTAGE.** You can convey an impression of dominance by piling three chairs on top of each other and sitting on the pile.

SEX TEASE. This distraction is primarily for use by women against men, but also works against women whose boyfriends are watching. If you are young and well-endowed, open the buttons on your blouse. If you are ugly or past your prime, or happen to be male, hire a prostitute to display even more.

PERSONAL INSULT. You have to be careful here, lest a wrong word get you barred from the club or tournament, or subject you to a lawsuit in these litigious times. It won't do, for example, to call a male opponent a *fag*, a female opponent a *dog*, or anybody a *rat*. An attorney I know gets around this by addressing all his opponents as *rodent*. They feel the insult but cannot prove it in court: who is to say that this master of intimidation didn't mean *squirrel*?

And please note, Rattler, that I never actually called you a *snake*.—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.

MUENCH AND SMOLINSKI ARE FALL TROPHY WINNERS

Dean Muench and Phyllis Smolinski had something in common at this year's Fall Trophy Tourney. Their opponents in the finals didn't score a point.

The Chicago Bar Point Club's 12th annual club championship tournament drew 57 players to the Golden Flame Restaurant in Chicago on 15 November.

Muench defeated Jake Jacobs in the Open semifinals 7-3 and then shut out Harry Cohn 7-0 to claim the unique urn trophy (purchased this year at the Greek Championships).

Smolinski's 7-0 victory over Ed Buerger in the Intermediate finals was equally impressive. Complete results: Δ

OPEN (32): 1-Dean Muench, 2-Harry Cohn, 3/4-Jake Jacobs / Tak Morioka; 1C-Bob Holyon, 2C-Sarg Serges. INTERMEDIATE (25): 1-Phyllis Smolinski, 2-Ed Buerger, 3/4-Elaine Kehm, Bobbie Shifrin; 1C/2C-Reggie Porter / Merrill Schrager.



"Just another win" for Bar Point Club Fall Trophy Open champ Dean Muench, who nationwide, had an excellent 1994.



Phyllis Smolinski proudly displays her first-ever backgammon trophy. Smolinski overran Ed Buerger 7-0 to earn the award.

JELLYFISH TUTOR 1.0: PROGRAMMED TO WIN

reviewed by Kit Woolsey

Ever since Gerry Tesauro finished TD-Gammon, it was only a matter of time before a neural network program would become available to the public. That time has come. Fredrik Dahl's masterpiece, JellyFish Tutor 1.0®, is a breakthrough for backgammon. Both the checker play and cube action of the program are at an expert level, making JellyFish a truly enjoyable and challenging competitor. In addition, the program looks over your plays and points out when you have made a serious error—extremely valuable for learning purposes.

JellyFish runs under Windows 3.1 (or later) on the PC. Moves are made with the mouse, and can be done very quickly and efficiently. The display is nice and easy to see. Some additional features of the program:

- Plays both single games and matches. (Yes, it understands match equities.)
- Allows the user to construct positions and save them.
- Gives the user the program's evaluation of the equity of a position upon request. The evaluation function is surprisingly accurate.
- Tells the user when he has made a cube error (or significant checker mistake), making the program the most valuable tutor in the world.

In addition, a separate Analyser version that permits the user to roll out positions will be available 16 January. In the past, computer rollouts were always suspect because of the program's skill level. This is no longer the case: JellyFish definitely plays well enough to adequately handle almost any position. Results from its rollouts can be trusted. This means that we will be able to find the answers to many backgammon questions which were previously unsolvable.

For the casual player, JellyFish provides an excellent opponent and a way to improve while playing. For the serious student of the game, this program is an absolute must. Our knowledge of the game is about to take a quantum leap, and the player who does not have access to JellyFish will be left far behind. Δ

JellyFish Tutor 1.0® is available from Effect Software, Box 56, Skøyen, N-0212 Oslo, Hovfaret 4 B, Norway. Telephone: 4722-520356. Fax: 4722-731155. The price is \$110 for the Tutor version and \$220 for the Analyser version, both including postage and handling. If you first purchase Tutor, you will only have to pay the remaining \$110 for an Analyser upgrade. Or you can send \$220 now, receive the Tutor immediately and the Analyser when it is released in January.

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- (2) International postal money order.
- (3) Check. Please add \$10 for expenses.

Lopsided...

[Solution from page 1]

The answer is "Yes" because Black's game-winning % = 0.7716% which is greater than his Tp% of 0.50%.



ILLINOIS ACTION



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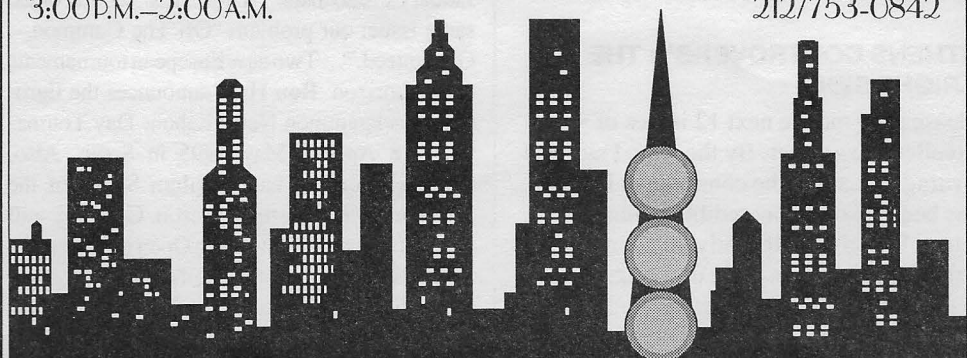
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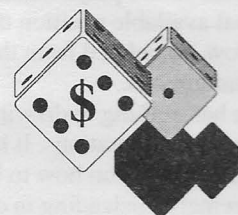
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LETTERS...

[Continued from page 2]

it just doesn't matter how many pips you wasted getting there.

Postulate #3

If your opponent bears off first, then it just doesn't matter how your remaining board looks (except for counting gammons and BGs).

There. Wasn't that refreshing?!

Now let's build on the first postulate. If you are bearing in with the cube and your opponent is already bearing off with a speed board, then your optimal bearoff position is one that will allow you *any* chance to win. The only chance you may have is to stack them all on the 6-point now and hope you roll four boxcars in a row. If you can bear everything in, one turn sooner by stacking them on the 6-point, and you absolutely need that turn to win, then the "Trice Optimal Bearoff Position" is not your optimal bearoff position. In fact, it is not even a viable option.

Now let's look at Postulate numbers 2 and 3 in combination with number 1. I will give you Position 1 with its minimal wastage. I will take Position 13 with its horrible wastage. We can play this as a proposition. If this isn't good enough for you, I will make an even better offer: put all 15 of my pieces on my 1-point. My wastage will be incredible. Go for it!

Bottom line: The non-conflict optimal bearoff hierarchy of positions for all given counts can be (has been) calculated presuming that the future plays will always be to the optimal available position that the dice will allow, calculated from the same extended assumptions.

Wastage has nothing to do with bearoff calculations or considerations. It has little or no practical bearing on how to bear in, and it is extremely misleading in considering how to manage the bearoff once it has started. Optimal bearoff positions based upon archaic calculations of an incidental parameter do not deserve a footnote in your publication, let alone feature article status.

On another topic, Miss Lonelyblots suggestion of how to keep ringers out of lower divisions via sliding scale payouts was excellent. I still wonder where I would fit in competition. Perhaps some day in other circumstances... —*Lee E. Harvey, Excelsior, MN*

I regret that Mr. Harvey was unable to grasp the difficult concept of wastage. When I return to the United States for Christmas, I will be happy to converse with him to explain the intent of my article. —*Paul Weaver, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*

A MARRIED MARIO

Thanks for your congratulations on my marriage to Viria on 5 November. It was kind of a quick thing. Mario Lizano married us with Antonio Ortega and a friend of Viria as witnesses.

When we returned from our honeymoon in Mexico, the November POINT had arrived. I enjoyed Paul Weaver's informative and sometimes-funny article on the Trice Optimal Bearoff Position. —*Mario Madrigal, President, Costa Rican Backgammon Association, San José, Costa Rica*

Again, CHICAGO POINT and Chicago Bar Point Club wish you and Viria a wonderful life together, Mario. —*Ed.*

THE 'TOURNAMENT OF THE AMÉRICAS' IS WHERE?

I find "Mark Your Calendar" a valuable edition to the POINT. However, there were two curious inclusions in your November issue. First off, you printed the location for the First Kenyan Open as Malindi, Kenya, Africa. Africa is a continent. You've never included Europe, Asia, or South America in your location listings. Why mention Africa?

Secondly, I see that next year's Tournament of the Américas is scheduled to be played in Oak Brook, Illinois. Perhaps you should rethink this. —*Femi Owiku, Chicago, IL*

You're right on both counts, Femi. Obviously, the Tournament of the Américas will be held at the beautiful Herradura Hotel in San José, Costa Rica. Many read-ers also noticed that the photo on page one identified Harry Cohn as Kent Goulding and vice-versa. CHICAGO POINT regrets the errors. —*Ed.*

SILVER ANNIVERSARY WILLOWBANK INVITATIONAL

We would love to have you join us at our 25th Anniversary Willowbank Invitational. This is the longest-running backgammon tournament of its type in the United States. It's a low-key fun event for all ages. One gal started with us at age 11 and now works as a CPA. She won the event two years ago. —*Gardner Soule, Shelburne, VT*

ATHENS CONTROVERSY: THE BRIGHT SIDE

Please send me the next 12 issues of your excellent newsletter. By the way, I stopped writing you about the controversy in Athens because of the incredible volume of letters I received. Recently, my son's stamp collection has taken a big upswing, especially with the beautiful issues from the Isle of Man. My best wishes for 1995. —*Ion Ressu, Lausanne, Switzerland Δ*

AMALGAMATION

Visiting the Bar Point Club in November: **Rich Sweetman** (NH)... On 3 November, **Mary Franks** (IL) had a surprise birthday party she won't soon forget. Husband **Paul**, along with **Joann & Jerry Feinstein** and **Bobbie Shiffrin** surprised her at work (her boss was in on it), took her to the airport and they all flew to Las Vegas! **Howard Markowitz** (NV) joined the group for a special dinner later that evening... It seems 7 November was a popular day to have a daughter—at least in Illinois. Congratulations to **Neil & Laura Kazaross** on the birth of **Cheyenne Jane Kazaross**. Also to **Tom & Darcey Brady Wade** who welcomed **Brady Thomas Wade** into their family... **J.A. Miller** (IL) announces a new Monday night Chicago backgammon club: Games People Play. The grand opening is set for 6:15 p.m., 12 December at Alexander's at 3101 E. 79th Street. For more information, call J.A. at 312/768-5523... L.A. resident **Larry Deckel** recently finished writing and directing "Psychodelic Sundae," a new musical now playing at the Milwaukee Repertory Theater... Best wishes to **Andy & Mary Pat Bittman** who were married 3 December. A January honeymoon on the island of St. Bart's in the Caribbean is set... Congratulations to **Judy Barr Topinka**, new Republican Treasurer of Illinois. BPC player **George Barr** (IL) is Judy's brother... Neil Kazaross was the victim of a great practical joke at the Autumn Gran Prix in San Diego last month. During a break in the closed-circuit telecast in which Neil was a commentator, director **Mike Fujita** (CA) privately told both tourney victor **Patrick Gibson** (CA) and **Phil Laak** (CA) to play a wild, horrible game of backgammon that wouldn't count. Neil's actual comment to a baffled audience after three insane minutes of play: "This is the worst-played game I've ever seen in my life!"... Congrats to our own **Amy Trudeau** (IL) who accepted **Hugo Valerio**'s marriage proposal on 9 November. A spring wedding is planned, but not until after the Midwest Championships 24–26 March where Amy is an administrator... Thanks to *Games* magazine associate editor **Mark Danna** who will include the Midwest Championships in his February issue's Event's Calendar (on sale 3 January). Also in the "Wild Cards" section of the same issue: our problem "Off The Gammon—Guaranteed"... Two new European tournaments on the horizon: **Ron Held** announces the European Backgammon News Labour Day Tournament 28 April–1 May 1995 in Spain. Also, **Michael Höfener** and **Stephan Sauer** of the Backgammon Agentur in Berlin, Germany will be organizing the First Berlin Open in November 1995. Watch for more details in "Mark Your Calendar"... Finally, here's a **Peter Kalba** Postulate: The die you drop will be the one whose color most closely matches the color of the rug. Δ

WINNER'S CORNER



Oct.-Nov. 1994

Grand Prix du Casino de Biarritz (Biarritz, France; 13-16 Oct.)... CHAMPIONSHIP (64): 1-Tom Jayes (SPN), 2-Lewis Deyong (GB); 1C-Mike Svobodny (USA), 2C-Aldo Peretti (FRA); 1LC-Gorden Cross (GER). SUPER JACKPOT: 1-Kazuhiro Shino (GB). DOUBLES: 1-Kazuhiro & Sandra Shino (GB).

Berkshire Championships—ABT (South Lee, MA; 28-30 Oct.)... OPEN (22): 1-Marty Storer, 2-Doug Roberts, 3/4-David Wells / Albert Steg; 1C-Jay Giuttari, 2C-Herb Gurland. INTERMEDIATE (10): 1-Sakura Sugawara, 2-Sharon Rochon; 1C-Fred Bement. NOVICE (7): 1-Gilles Blais, 2-Marcell Roux. DOUBLES (8): 1-Sam & Joan Hanna, 2-Jay Giuttari & Nora Luna. ONE PT MATCH EVENT (32): 1-Alex Perry.

Rio de Janeiro Open (Rio, Brazil; 20-23 Oct.)... CHAMPIONSHIP (56 + 200 reentries): 1-Thomas Lumpert (GER), 2-Alan Steffen (US), 3-Luis Carlos Torres (BRZ), 4-Danilo Sahione (BRZ), 5-Sergio Gleabert (ARG), 6-David Chalom (BRZ). INTERMEDIATE (74 + 182 reentries): 1-Severino Silva (BRZ), 2-Paul Botts (USA), 3-Luis Felipe (BRZ). BEGINNER (44 + 80 reentries): 1-Felipe Andrade (BRZ), Andre Mattar (BRZ)... *Results provided by Claudio Salamone.*

3rd Southamerican World Cup & SA Tournament (Buenos Aires, Argentina; 24-28 Oct.)... WORLD CUP (37): 1-Alan Steffen (US), 2-Joaquin Viejobueno (ARG), 3/4-Gianni Bizzarro (ARG) / Emil Mortuk (US); 1C-Sergio Gelabert (ARG), 2C-Hugo Ergueta (ARG). CHAMPIONSHIP (100 + 192 reentries): 1-Rafael Silva y Cobo, 2-Horacio Anitua, 3/4-Daniel Zarlenga / José Safdie, 5/6/7-Oscar Azar / Victor Quintana / Eduardo Tultchinsky. JUNIOR (100 + 128 reentries): 1-Mario Suarez, 2-Rafael Brancato, 3/4-Juan Carlos Gonzalez / N. Suarez, 5/6-Myriam Poveda / Ariel Wicnudel. BE-

GINNER (76 + 88 reentries): 1-Gustavo Grum, 2-Federico Buiter, 3/4-Maria Alesandro / Diego Binetti. LADIES INVITATIONAL: 1-Elena Pastore, 2-Veronica Dabul... *Director Claudio Salamone reports great fun at this year's two South American events with lots of friends from around the world, closed circuit TV, farewell dinner, and dancing.*

Malmö "New Hair Clinic" Open (Malmö, Sweden, 28-30 Oct.)... CHAMPIONSHIP: 1-Frederic Wrang, 2-Flemming Glaesner (DEN); 1C-Fredrik Reinholdson; 1LC-Alan Herskind. INTERMEDIATE: 1-Thomas Petersen, 2-Trine Binderkrantz; 1C-Ulf Gustafsson; 1LC-Thomas Nilsson. SUPER JACKPOT: 1-Roland Sahlén

RSCARDS Fall 1994 Tournament (GEnie, Oct.-Nov.)... OPEN (15): 1-John Jennings (IL), 2-Dan Shirley (NY), 3/4-Greg Tomlin (IL) / Jim Allen (NV)... *Sent in by Tourney director J. Weaver.*

Swedish Open (Stockholm, Sweden; 3-6 Nov.)... CHAMPIONSHIP: 1-Roland Sahlén, 2-Dag Ekmark; 1C-Johan Moazed. INTERMEDIATE: 1-Daniel Cronholm, 2-Pavel Bielewicz; 1C-Patrik Thelin. INTERNATIONAL MATCH: Sweden defeats Denmark 3-2... *Results of the Malmö Open and the Swedish Open provided by Swedish BG Fed. president Ulf Ring.*

Asian Championships (Hong Kong; 4-6 Nov.)... OPEN (31): 1-Thomas Kong, 2-Marc Mostacci, 3-Robin Swaffield, 4-Werner Kubesch (THI); 1C-Don Rae, 2C-Andre Hoffman; 1LC-Gregg Westrick, 2LC-Jerry Godsey. CHAMPIONSHIP (17): 1-Pawa (THI), 2-Pearl Liu; 1C-Ronnie Nutzati, 2C-Bodo Sprungk; 1LC-Olivia Lee, 2LC-Richard Goss. DRAGON-SLAYER (128): 1-Ernest Ho, 2-Robin Swaffield... *Jerry Godsey reports that Hong Kong Backgammon Club players represented only 42% of the Open players, but won 99% of the Open money paid out.*

Japan Championship (Tokyo, Japan; 5-6 Nov.)... CHAMPIONSHIP (96): 1-Yuji Ogura, 2-Seiichi Nagai. INTERMEDIATE (64): 1-Minoru Fujita, 2-Takao Tanaka. BEGINNER (54): 1-Tomoko Tachikawa, 2-Etsuhisa Yamada.

NY/NJ BG CO-OP Big Apple Series—ABT

(Hackensack, NJ; 11-13 Nov.)... OPEN (33): 1-Neil Kazaross (IL), 2-Ray Foglerlund (CA), 3-Mike Nelson (NY); 1C-David Wells (MA), 2C-Antoinette Williams (NY). ADVANCED (16): 1-Harriet Klein (NJ), 2-Drew Liebenthal (NY); 1C-Alex Rasic (NY). INTERMEDIATE (11): 1-Lens Krummel (NY), 2-Donny Lomuto (NY); 1C-Nancy Ishac (MI). BIG APPLE \$300 (15): 1-Tom Costigan (MA), 2-David Wells (MA). KICKOFF (32): 1-Angelo Larceri (NJ). WORM IN THE APPLE (32): 1-Danny Fogel (NY). DOUBLES #1 (16): 1-David Jaffe & Oksana Gribakova (WI). DOUBLES #2 (8): 1-AI Bader & Bob Molitor (NJ)... *Kazaross locked up 1994 ABT Player of the Year Honors with this win.*

NEBC Bonus Tournament (Cambridge, MA; 13 Nov.)... EXPERT (21): 1-Alex Perry, 2-Evan Diamond; 1C-John Mansey. A DIV. (15): 1-Nora Luna, 2-Ken Newman; 1C-Larry Liebster. B DIV. (2): 1-Ruth Moss.

Beltway Jackpot Tourney (Bethesda, MD; 20 Nov.)... OPEN (19): 1/2-Lee Ashmore / Hunter Jones, 3-Mel Leifer, 4-Sam Orandle.

Bar Point Club Sunday Tournament (Oak Brook, IL; 27 Nov.)... OPEN (21): 1/2-Yamin Yamin / Harry Cohn, 3/4-Peter Kalba / Tom Fahland; 1C/2C-Jake Jacobs / Sarg Serges. INTERMEDIATE (5): 1-Stan Kucharz, 2-Mary Vitale.

Fall Gran Prix—ABT (San Diego, CA; 2-4 Dec.)... OPEN (64): 1-Patrick Gibson, 2-Phil Laak, 3-Art Benjamin, 4-Chaim Lang. AMATEUR (14): 1-Nicole Masarani, 2-Mike Sharp. \$10 MEGABLITZ #1 (32): 1-Peter Kalba (IL), 2-Cecilia Pedroza. \$10 MEGABLITZ #2 (16): 1-Rudy Citrom. \$25 MEGABLITZ #1 (16): 1/2-Peter Kalba (IL) / Ray Baker. \$25 MEGABLITZ #2 (16): 1-George Haskour. DOUBLES #1 (8): 1-Bill Davis (IL) & Arnold Zousmer. DOUBLES #2 (8): 1/2-Leslie Lockett (IL) & Jon Vietor / Ray Baker & Gus Contos. DOUBLES #3 (8): 1-Patti Beadles (OR) & Ed Rybak (OR)... *Gammon Associates director Pat Gibson defeated Phil Laak 15-13 in a come-from-behind victory. Due to a sellout crowd, director Mike Fujita will expand his Spring and Fall Gran Prix tourneys from two to three days each next year. A very well-run event. Δ*

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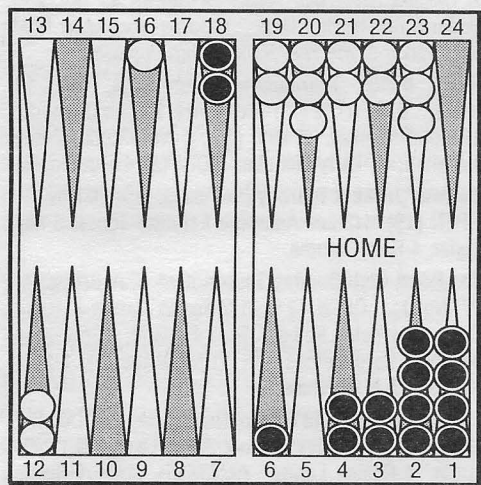
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PROBLEM #209 SOLVED

by Roy Friedman

Tournament double match-point.
BLACK TO PLAY 2-1.



In a money game, hitting in the position shown in Problem #209 would be too loose, leaving three blots and at least 14 shots. When White hits back, she often steamrollers to a gammon by closing out two or three checkers.

The match score—with no gammon jeopardy—makes hitting a plausible option, however. The motives for hitting are to make Black a big favorite in the race, and to exploit White's dancing by activating Black's back men without leaving direct shots in the outfield.

If Black doesn't hit now, he becomes only a *slight* favorite in sequences where there is no hitting for the rest of the game. Despite his big lead in the raw pip count, Black has extensive pip waste on his low inner points and he sometimes increases this wastage by moving inside his board to avert breaking the 18-point. When Black does hit on the current roll, he becomes a huge favorite in sequences without further hitting. Hence the motive of gaining ground in the race is quite compelling.

After using the deuce to hit, Black can play 6/5 (14 shots), 2/1 (15 shots), 16/15 (16 shots), or 18/17 (16 shots). Although 16/15 and 18/17 offer some benefits when White misses (more cover numbers for Black's home blot and better overall utilization of Black's numbers next turn), these benefits are outweighed by the larger number of immediate shots relative to 6/5. Ditto for 2/1. Hence 18/16*, 6/5 is the best hitting move.

Unfortunately for Black, 18/16*, 6/5

leaves him in considerable danger even when White misses the 14 immediate shots. Black needs at least 24 pips—about three rolls on average—to bring home the two back men. Moreover, when White dances, Black must usually commit half a roll to pick up his home blot. This puts Black 3 to 3 1/2 rolls from safety on average, creating a large cumulative risk. According to my rollout, Black wins 55–60% of the games when White dances on her first roll, 40–45% of the games when White enters without hitting (with 6-3, 6-2, and 6-1), and less than 5% of the games when White hits on her first roll. Overall, Black wins less than 35% of the games after hitting with 18/16*, 6/5.

What if Black chooses not to hit? The candidate non-hitting plays are:

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| (a) 6/4, 2/1 | (d) 4/2, 4/3 |
| (b) 4/1 | (e) 3/1, 3/2 |
| (c) 6/3 | (f) 3/1, 2/1 |

Black's conflicting objectives are:

- Preserve high spares in the home board to delay forced breaking of the 18-point.
- Maintain a strong board in case Black hits a shot.
- Deploy men efficiently for the race.

Play (a) leaves a 4-point board with no home blots. This helps tremendously when Black manages to hit a shot. White can leave a shot in several ways. First, she could immediately roll double aces. If Black holds the 18-anchor for one turn, all of White's single 6s on her second roll leave a shot. Also, White might leave a home blot (usually from slotting the ace point) and later hit a shot without covering.

Play (a) is also relatively good for racing efficiency; although it adds to Black's home-board pip waste, it does not leave any gaps that might hurt Black during the bearoff. The drawback of play (a) is that it normally blots in the outfield with 24 numbers and 6 of these numbers leave a double shot.

Play (b) blots in the outfield with only 12 numbers and no number leaves a double shot. However, (b) crunches Black's board with no realistic hope of rebuilding it, and it leaves two home blots. Hence, Black is comparatively worse off after (b) when he manages to hit a shot. Play (b) also leaves a gap on the 5-point and a potential gap on the 4-point, adding slightly more pip waste than (a).

Play (c) leaves a position that is similar to (a). Play (a) keeps an extra spare that Black can play from the 4-point. This main-

tains a 4-point board when Black rolls 3-1 and helps in some less-common sequences. Play (c) would clearly be faster than (a) in a pure race, but in the actual position (where Black may still have to waste pips in his home board), play (a) often turns out better for racing. In any case, the difference between (a) and (c) in racing efficiency is very small, so we may assume that (a) dominates (c).

Plays (d), (e), and (f) are dominated by play (b) because they leave as many or more blot numbers than play (b) and they are worse than play (b) at meeting Black's other objectives. Hence the serious non-hitting candidates are plays (a) and (b).

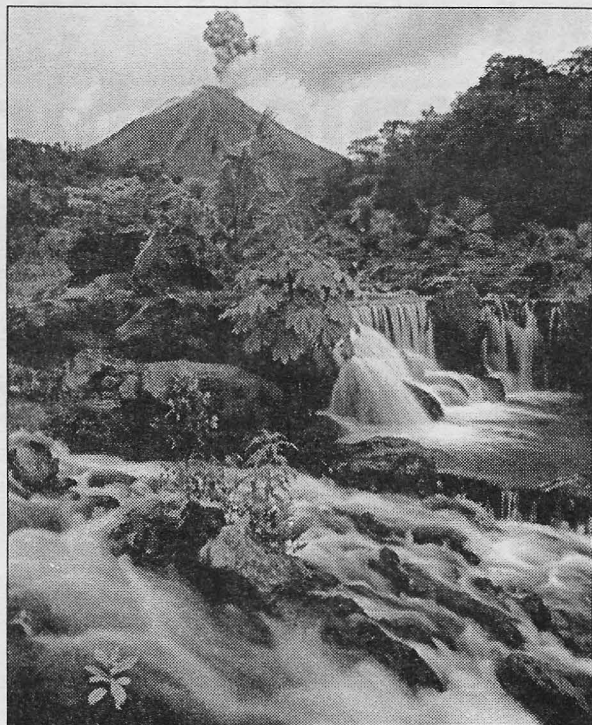
As I rolled out plays (a) and (b), I observed that the extra timing afforded by (b) is not as helpful as one might expect. Let's say Black makes play (b) and he next rolls one of the 12 "swing" numbers (such as 5-3) which blots after play (a) but not after play (b). In many of these sequences, Black leaves an outfield shot anyhow on his *third* turn, and blotting on Black's third turn usually leaves Black in even worse shape than blotting on his second turn!

No matter when Black blots after play (a) or (b), he is in bad shape when White hits. When White misses, however, the game is very likely to become a pure race. Black stands significantly better in the race when he blots on his second turn rather than his third turn because he then uses his second turn to advance one or both back men—which is efficient pip utilization—rather than essentially wasting a roll inside his board. White also moves inefficiently for the race while there is still contact, but White's newly-generated pip waste when she retains her outfield point is much smaller than Black's newly-generated waste when he retains *his* outfield point because White's board is not yet crunched.

According to my rollout, plays (a) and (b) give Black a winning percentage in the high 30s (better than the hitting 18/16*, 6/5) and play (a) is better than (b) by about 2%.

IN MY INFORMAL SURVEY, several players chose to hit, and play (b) was strongly preferred to play (a) among the non-hitting moves. Although checker play in holding games such as this one may not be as exciting as in prime-vs.-prime positions or complex backgames, evidently it isn't all that simple! Δ

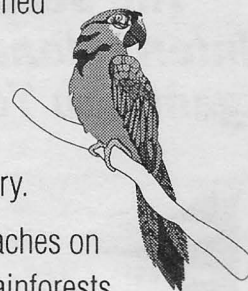
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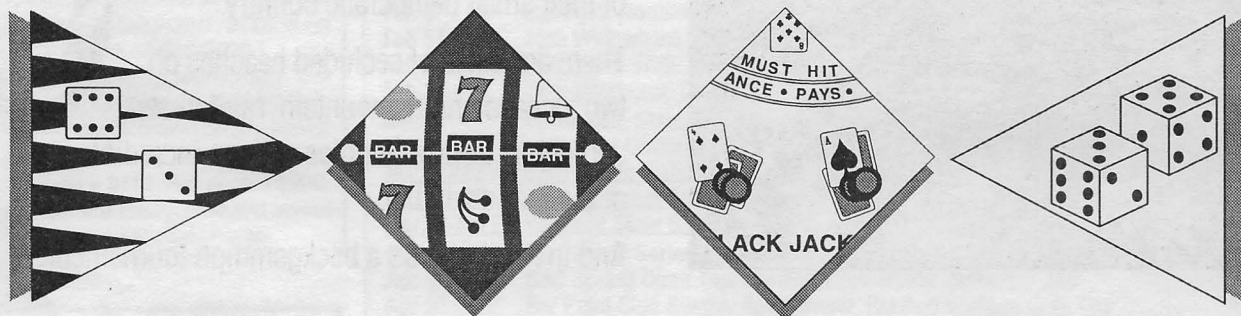
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