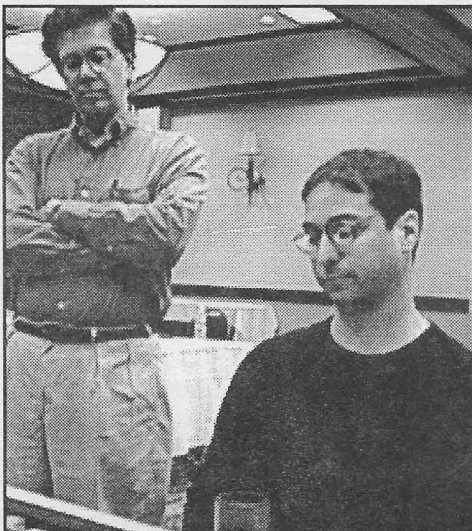


world cup VI & us open

HOWARD RING IS WORLD CUP VI CHAMP

Grandell tops Kazaross in US Open
by Laila Leonhardt

A quiet and considerate man, a winner! Howard Ring of Northbrook, Illinois brought the big prize back to Chicagoland after a convincing and masterful display of skill and strength that lead him to victory at this year's World Cup VI. The biennial event, co-chaired by Kent Goulding and Bill Robertie, lured over 150 players into the 100° temperatures of Dallas, Texas for a cool week of backgammon August 1-9.



World cup co-chairman Bill Robertie (standing) watches WC VI champ Howard Ring in an early tourney round. [Both World Cup photos courtesy of Elliott Winslow.]

Over the past two years, Howard had only participated in one other tournament—last year's America Cup in Chicago. Out of practice, he started preparing for the World Cup by revisiting equity tables and playing on Games Grid in his quiet hours, sometimes rocking the family's youngest on his arm.

Howard Ring is not your typical backgammon player. He works 50 hours per week as the Associate Director of Susquehanna Investment Group, is the father of 3 wonderful little kids, and the

husband of a remarkably sweet and supportive woman, Linda.

The World Cup field was tough and certainly all players were in better practice. But typically there is a direct relationship between the size of the entry fee and the amount of pressure a player feels. Given Howard's normal responsibilities and the monetary risks he assumes on a daily basis, the World Cup money didn't effect him the way it did others.

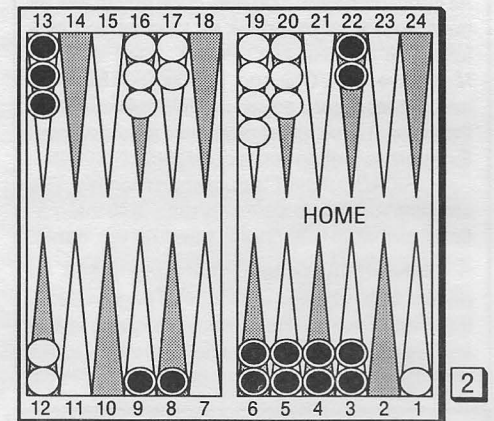
With a best three-out-of-five 11-point match format, it takes stamina and cool-headedness to stay with it. Howard describes his first round bye as "very fortunate." He always got off on the right foot winning the first match of each round, and no round every went the full five matches. These are the results of each round (Bye, WLWW vs. Nick Ballard, WWLW vs. Armando Balbi, WWW vs. Dag Ekmark, WWLW vs. Malcolm Davis, WWW vs. Johannes Levermann).

In the finals, Howard felt he had a huge psychological advantage over Germany's wunderkind, Johannes Levermann. (Levermann had defeated another Chicago player, Fred Chamanara three matches to two in his hard-fought semifinals.) He owned half of Johannes from the auction (a built-in hedge), and therefore was less concerned about the money pressure than the very talented young German. Ring won three matches in a row, though the first and third matches were decided at double matchpoint with only minutes left on the clock.

With the score tied at 9-9 in match one, Johannes rolled 6-5, Howard answered with 4-2 and Johannes offered a very slim

advantage cube putting the first match on the line. Later, with timing a critical factor, Howard faced a tough 5-2 shown below:

World Cup finals. 11-pt. match #1 in best 3-out-of-5. Double matchpoint Howard Ring (Black) vs. Johannes Levermann (White). **BLACK TO PLAY 5-2.**



Howard correctly decided to slot for the prime, playing 13/8, 9/7. Levermann tossed 5-4, moving 13/8, 13/9. Ring's 5-3 failed to cover, but his strategy remained unchanged. He played 13/5 leaving the bar slotted. Johannes missed again and this time, Howard was able to make his 6-prime. The prime held and he escaped to victory in match #1.

HOWARD HAD MODESTLY booked his flight home for Sunday morning, but when he found himself in the finals of the World Cup, he had to change his plans. After each round Howard would call home to inform Linda of his victory. She would then tell him what his equity of winning the tournament was from that point and get more and more excited about each round. In the finals he called home after each match.

When Howard won the World Cup he felt a kind of sadness. Sadness because he felt he should have been more thrilled and happy than he was. But as he said, the thrill of winning such a prestigious tournament just doesn't compare to the birth of a son or daughter.

But there is pride in Howard's eyes and he has earned every right to that. It is a great achievement and we are proud of you. Congrats, Howard! **COMPLETE RESULTS ON PAGE 7.**—Laila Leonhardt Δ



Sweden's red-hot Jerry Grandell (left) pictured with tourney co-chair Kent Goulding. Grandell defeated Chicago's Neil Kazaross in a tight US Open finals.

CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

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LETTERS

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RESPONSE FROM THE AUTHOR

Candid though Walter Trice's review is I think he has missed the point. The book is not intended to be a primer such as Robertie's *Backgammon for Winners* nor a major theoretical treatise such as Magriel's *Backgammon*. It is an anthology of articles, the majority of which were published in *The Independent*, a UK national newspaper with a circulation of some 300,000. The articles that I write started out on an ad hoc basis and have now grown, solely due to public demand, into a weekly column. In fact when the editors of the paper tried to discontinue the column due to the redesign of the paper a couple of years ago, such was the public outcry that the column was back in its regular place within three weeks.

As I take pains to point out in the book, the articles are intended to appeal to, instruct and amuse (using the various subtleties of English wit) a very wide range of BG players

[Continued on page 3]

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

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

by Carol Joy Cole
810/232-9731

E-mail: cjc@flint.org

* Denotes new or revised listing

NATIONAL

American Backgammon Tour events underlined.

Sep 4-7	46th Indiana Open, Sheraton/Westin Hotel, Indianapolis, IN	317/255-8902
Sep 13	New England Club Monthly, Sheraton-Commander, Cambridge, MA	508/829-3283
Sep 13	Northern Ohio Monthly Tourney, Belden Commons Restaurant, Canton, OH	330/966-2811
Sep 13	Sunday Bimonthly Tournament, John Hawks Pub, Milwaukee, WI	414/463-2498
Sep 13*	Austin Bimonthly Tournament, Bombay Bicycle Club, Austin, TX	512/261-8518
Sep 17	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
Sep 18-20	<u>Minnesota State Championships, Minneapolis Athletic Club, MN</u>	<u>612/378-1536</u>
Sep 19	Dr. Bob's "Sweet 16" Invitational, New York Chess & BG, New York City	212/302-5874
Sep 20	Backgammon by the Bay, San Mateo Bridge Center, San Mateo, CA	408/688-9722
Sep 25-27	1st NetGammon Festival, Comfort Inn Airport, Bloomington, MN	<u>rayb@cp.duluth.mn.us</u>
Sep 26*	Clarine's Monthly Tournament, A.R. Private Club, Los Angeles, CA	213/822-9745
Sep 25-27	<u>Towpath Inn Tournament, Towpath Inn, Turin, NY</u>	<u>716/442-8221</u>
Sep 27	Ace Point Sunday Tournament, Ace Point Club, New York, NY	212/753-0842
Sep 27	Louisville Monthly Tournament, Oldenberg Grill, Louisville, KY	502/458-9660
Oct 1*	Official Games Grid Monthly Tournament, via computer	<u>tournaments@cyberarts.com</u>
Oct 5*	FIBS 1998 Fall Tournament, via computer modem	<u>davide@sco.com</u>
Oct 9-11	<u>Nation's Capital Championships, Promenade, Bethesda, MD</u>	<u>301/530-0604</u>
Oct 10*	Rocky Mountain Bimonthly Tournament, Cheers, Denver, CO	719/574-5598
Oct 11	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Anyway's Grill, Oakbrook Terrace, IL	773/583-6464
Oct 11	New England Club Monthly, Sheraton-Commander, Cambridge, MA	508/829-3283
Oct 17*	Dr. Bob's "Sweet 16" Invitational, New York Chess & BG, New York City	212/302-5874
Oct 17-18*	TENTATIVE: Crystal Park Tournament, Crystal Park Casino, Compton, CA	818/901-0464
Oct 18*	Backgammon by the Bay, San Mateo Bridge Center, San Mateo, CA	408/688-9722
Oct 23-25	<u>South Florida Championships, Day's Inn, Ft. Lauderdale, FL</u>	<u>954/938-4304</u>
Oct 25*	Ace Point Sunday Tournament, Ace Point Club, New York, NY	212/753-0842
Oct 25*	Louisville Monthly Tournament, Oldenberg Grill, Louisville, KY	502/458-9660
Oct 30-Nov 1	<u>Northeast Regional, Best Western Airport Hotel, Albany, NY</u>	<u>603/863-4711</u>
Oct 31*	Clarine's Monthly Tournament, A.R. Private Club, Los Angeles, CA	213/822-9745
Nov 1*	20th Flint Area Club Championships, Holiday Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
Nov 10-14	1998 Las Vegas Open, Riviera Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, NV	702/893-6025
Nov 15*	Backgammon by the Bay, San Mateo Bridge Center, San Mateo, CA	408/688-9722
Nov 15*	New England Club Monthly, Sheraton-Commander, Cambridge, MA	508/829-3283
Nov 15*	Sunday Bimonthly Tournament, John Hawks Pub, Milwaukee, WI	414/463-2498
Nov 27-29	<u>Northern Ohio Thanksgiving Tournament, Belden Holiday Inn, Canton, OH</u>	<u>330/966-2811</u>
Dec 4-6	<u>Gammon/Associates Invitational, A.R. Private Club, Los Angeles, CA</u>	<u>818/901-0464</u>
Dec 6	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Anyway's Grill, Oakbrook Terrace, IL	773/583-6464
Dec 26-27	<u>Ace Point Holiday Tournament, Ace Point Club, New York, NY</u>	<u>212/753-0842</u>

OUTSIDE USA

Sep 12-13*	Åbne Bornholmsmesterskab, Hotel Hoffmann, Rønne, Denmark	4556-999098
Sep 19-20	6th Irish Open, Camden Court Hotel, Dublin, Ireland	3531-6689332
Sep 25-26	6th Italian Festival of Games, Cagli/Urbino, Italy	3941-5211029
Sep 25-27	Inner Table Tournament #3, Grand Hotel Leicester, England	44152-2721630
Sep 26-27	1st Humlebæk Open, Humlebæk Centre, Humlebæk, Denmark	4549-193630
Oct 1-4	Asian Championships, Ladies Recreation Club, Hong Kong	852-28461923
Oct 1-4	4th Kaiserbrunnen Cup, Hotel am Kaiserbrunnen, Brakel, Germany	49521-64314
Oct 3-4*	8th Open Norwegian Championship, Bridgens Hus, Oslo, Norway	4722-541269
Oct 3-4*	Frederiksberg Open, Frederiksberg, Denmark	4535-361448
Oct 3-4	12th British National Champs, Jarvis Hotel, Watford, London, UK	44161-4380966
Oct 10-11	Sandy Osborne Memorial Trophy, Stakis Birmingham Metropole, England	44152-2546993
Oct 11-18*	Manx Festival Gaming: BG, Poker, Blackjack, Stakis Hotel, Isle of Man	44162-4662662
Oct 13-18	2nd Moscow Open, Cosmos Hotel & Casino, Moscow, Russia	<u>Spain: 3450-133009</u>
Oct 15-18*	1st Tyrolian Backgammon Cup, Hotel Die Post, Seefeld in Tirol, Austria	43664-2303940
Oct 16-18	CH-Meisterschaften '98 & Swiss Open, Kursaal Bern, Bern, Switzerland	4179-3584825
Oct 24-25*	Åbne Fynsmesterskaber, BridgeUnionens lokaler, Odense, Denmark	4566-106080
Oct 30-Nov 1*	High Class Competition, Cafe Florianhof, Vienna, Austria	43664-2303940
Oct 30-Nov 1	Swedish Open, First Hotel Amaranten, Stockholm, Sweden	468-6523033
Nov 3-8	Grand Prix de Suisse 1998, Lugano, Switzerland	4179-3374425
Nov 4-8*	VIII Rio de Janeiro Open & Brazilian Cup II, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	5521-2676033
Nov 12-15	Bodensee Grand Prix 1998, Bregenz, Austria	4179-3374425
Nov 12-15*	French National Championships, Aviation Club de France, Paris, France	331-40150870
Nov 14-15	Townharbour Trophy, Stakis Birmingham Metropole, England	44152-2546993
Nov 21-22	UK Classic, Jarvis Hotel/Watford/London, England	44161-4380966
Nov 21-23	1998 Japan Open, Nakano Sun Plaza, Tokyo, Japan	813-33733844
Nov 27-29	Inner Table Tournament #4, Grand Hotel Leicester, England	44152-2721630
Dec 4-6*	3rd Santa Claus Tournament, Spielcasino Aachen, Aachen, Germany	4940-8306415
Dec 11-13*	2nd Casino Open, Hotel Seepark, Thun, Switzerland	4417-569700
Dec 12-13*	Stakis UK Championship Finals, Stakis Birmingham Metropole, UK	44152-2546993

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 2]

from complete novices, through intermediates to experts. I would not claim that players at WT's level will learn a great deal from the book, but that doesn't stop them enjoying it and being reminded of one or two key playing pointers that they may otherwise

have forgotten. For beginners and intermediates I have tried to balance anecdote, history and instruction to give them an overall perspective of the game. Thus material such as the Cooke-Sammis back game and the Villa World Championship position can be found in the book, as I would expect them to be in any book of this type. WT makes a good point on acknowledgments and the next print run will find this section updated and a

full bibliography added.

I disagree with WT's comments regarding the selection of positions and the depth of analysis. Any 400-500 word article has to be succinct and try to make but a single point, else it can become too obscure for the reader. The subjects of many of the articles, like the market-loser one, merit a book in themselves, but a brief rule of thumb (derived from my analysis) is still of great value, particularly to those who do not, and more importantly cannot, play at WT's level. It is perhaps ironic that WT does not appreciate the irony of this situation.

All critics are entitled to their views. That is after all their role. Whether critics elect for destructive rather than constructive criticism is also a matter of personal choice. For example I received a well thought out and constructive critique from Alan Steffen that I found highly beneficial. Harald Johanni's review in his excellent *Backgammon Magazin* was accurate and again constructive. Both of these reviews will ensure that the second edition will be a better product than the first. Good critics are able to take many different perspectives when undertaking a review. I'm afraid I find WT's review somewhat one-dimensional.

In summary WT's review is at odds with others published to date, personal feedback that I have received and the level of sales that the book is achieving. It is obvious that WT and myself will never be in accord on the topic but at the end of the day we don't actually matter. The proof is in the reactions of those who have actually read the book and whether they believe their purchase to have been worthwhile. Readers are invited to send

[Continued on page 7]



AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 1998

Compiled through 2 Aug. 1998 after 8 tournaments
(Coming in Sept.: Indiana Open, Minnesota State, Towpath Inn)



Maurice Barie	27.73	Howard Markowitz	6.40	Paul Dibiasi	3.99	Lenny Loder	2.08
Dennis Culpepper	23.53	Odis Chenault	6.11	Peter Kalba	3.92	Kieth Hramstad	1.81
Steve McCormick	22.88	Ray Fogelund	6.11	Don Faix	3.67	Rob Keast	1.55
Mike Friedman	22.45	Paul Stebbing	5.88	Karen Davis	3.41	Julian Haley	1.44
Bob Glass	17.42	Larry Yudin	5.88	John Graas	3.41	Jolie Rubin	1.44
Alex Caraplis	15.95	David Simpson	5.77	Richard Del Furia	3.41	Ken Lazar	1.40
Steve Hast	14.36	Andy Glazer	5.77	Bob Wilensky	3.41	Tom Machaj	1.35
Doug Mayfield	13.74	Mike Cyrkiel	5.60	Kim Haubert	3.15	Roger Baff	1.25
Perry Gartner	13.64	Jeremy Kirkpatrick	5.46	Eliot Bean	3.05	Bruce Brown	1.22
Merrill Schrager	13.22	Bill Keefe	5.20	Butch Meese	3.00	Bill Tallmadge	1.22
Doug Roberts	11.76	Wendy Kaplan	5.04	Sam Pottle	2.88	Wilder Radford	1.17
Malcolm Davis	11.75	Jack Kissane	4.89	Francois Margot	2.88	Almon Hall	1.15
Jannica Tornqvist	11.63	Joe Freedman	4.80	John Mazur	2.81	Frank Rogers	1.15
Jim Hickey	11.55	Denny Leatherman	4.80	Linda Resnicoff	2.39	Dennis Cupp	1.14
Frankie Farjood	11.44	Mike Lauzon	4.74	Matt Reklaitis	2.39	Ray Bills	1.08
David Wells	11.20	Mike Hendrikson	4.72	Hunter Jones	2.36	Julius High	1.05
Mike Rezai	9.59	Zia Afshani	4.68	Wally Wolf	2.35	Paul Armbruster	0.88
Art Benjamin	8.71	Lucky Nelson	4.55	Mark Cohen	2.34	Elaine Kehm	0.79
Lincoln Bedell	8.56	Dave Orandle	4.36	Gordon Bass	2.34	Boris Mindich	0.70
Jeff Acierno	8.09	Rob Maier	4.36	Adam Versaw	2.33	Jennifer Waller	0.63
Mike Fujita	7.97	Walt Swan	4.21	James Roston	2.16	Wanda de la Barre	0.63
Bob Holyon	7.00	Chuck Bower	4.16	Jobey Calitri	2.11	Betty Coppic	0.58
Jack Takala	6.82	John Brussel	4.16	Bob Bercu	2.11	Niel Borden	0.44
Frank Talbot	6.82	Mark Larios	4.11	Bruce Russell	2.08	Andre Mattar	0.44
Sig Skolnick	6.44						



CHICAGO BAR POINT CLUB 1998 PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED
THRU 31 AUG.

Steve Mellen	19.56	Andy Krenitz	4.88	Ken Bond	2.32	Jay Ward	0.64
Joe Wollick	18.12	Norma Shyer	4.80	Georgina Flanagan	2.12	Ralph Barnes	0.64
Tak Morioka	12.92	Marty Tatosian	4.72	Joseph Esfahani	1.92	Reginald Porter	0.56
Laila Leonhardt	11.72	Jerry Brooks	4.36	Reggie Porter	1.92	Steve Rota	0.56
Neil Kazaross	11.28	Tim Mabee	4.20	Paul Baraz	1.76	Joe Wehrle	0.48
Paul Friedman	11.28	Elaine Kehm	4.08	Marc Rosset	1.48	Joann Feinstein	0.38
Paul Klein	9.64	Gary Kay	4.08	Richard Lloyd	1.28	Rich Gast	0.32
Alice Kay	8.00	Arlene Levy	3.30	Romeo Kap	1.28	Sonia Peacock	0.32
Rick Bieniak	7.88	Bill Keefe	3.28	Val Zimnicki	1.16	Ken Tyszko	0.32
Ed Buerger	7.56	Rodney Bell	3.28	Bob Steen	1.12	Linda Woods	0.32
Phyllis Smolinski	7.24	Tim Carroll	3.24	Barry Miller	0.96	Jannica Tornqvist	0.32
Jake Jacobs	7.12	Don Jayhan	3.16	Earl Risch	0.96	Henry Gray	0.28
Paul Franks	7.12	John Demian	2.72	Ed Zell	0.96	Barbara Levinson	0.24
Herb Roman	6.76	Richard Stawowy	2.56	Sam Pottle	0.92	Mark Murray	0.24
Harry Cohn	6.56	George Barr	2.56	Rex Savage	0.88	Mark Ryan	0.16
Bill Davis	6.44	Peter Kalba	2.56	Roz Ferris	0.84	Boris Mindich	0.16
Bob Zavoral	5.96	David Araiza	2.56	Wendy Kaplan	0.84	Frankie Farjood	0.16
Mary Franks	5.88	Dave Cramer	2.48	Greg Defotis	0.72	Paul Lombardo	0.16
Phil Simborg	5.60	Steve Klesker	2.40	Roland Dieter	0.64	Stan Kucharz	0.12

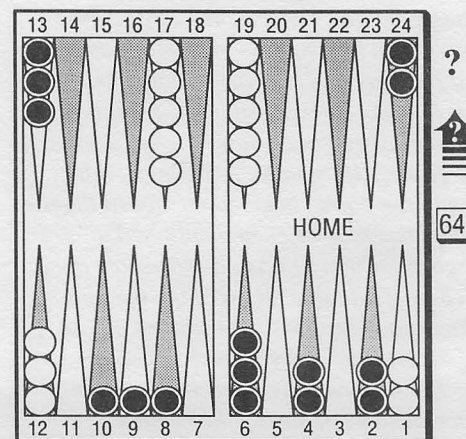
JAKE JACOBS resurfaced at the Bar Point Club to earn August top honors with 4.08 points. Rick Bieniak (3.44) and Paul Franks (2.88) placed second/third.

your move

PROBLEM #247

to be analyzed by Antonio Ortega

17-point match. No score. Black on shake. **CUBE ACTION(S)?**



DEAR MISS LONELYBLOTS



© 1998 by Danny Kleinman

LUCK VS. SKILL

Dear Miss Lonelyblots: When I was just a little girl, I learned backgammon on my daddy's knee. My husband, whom I shall call Arthur (not his real name) because he is an author, didn't learn the game until he was 36—a special backgammon number, he says. Soon after our marriage, I began Nights at the Backgammon Table. I thought I'd be a winner because it's a big advantage in anything to have learned it in childhood—and because I'm excellent at rolling 4s, which are usually very good numbers.

The more we played, the more I became convinced that I had an enormous skill advantage. Arthur played lackadaisically, strewing blots with reckless abandon, especially early in the game. He seemed immune to experience, making the same errors repeatedly. For example, he would play an opening 2-1 by leaving a blot on his 5-point.

"Arthur, Arthur, how many times do I have to remind you? I'm very good at 4s, yet you keep giving me 4s to hit. Do you think I can't roll one now?"

"Perhaps this time you will miss," he answers smilingly, but I seldom do.

When I do miss, he quickly builds a board. Cautiously as I play, I usually have to leave a blot or two. Then he pounces on it—he's very good at rolling whatever numbers he needs to hit—and often closes me out on the bar. Sometimes when I have to leave two or three blots, he wins a gammon—after turning the cube, of course, for otherwise gammons don't count. I almost always take, because if I pass, I'll never see how the game would have turned out.

It's not those games that I resent, though, but the games when I hit Arthur's blots. Then he becomes even more careless, and I hit more of his blots. Sometimes he gets five, six, seven men back. He talks about playing "back games": 2-3 games, 2-4 games, 3-4 games, 3-5 games, referring to the points in my home board that he occupies. Once he even mentioned a "3-4-5" game. When he has all those men back, of course, I double. Most of the time he takes, but occasionally he passes.

"Coward!" I cry when he passes.

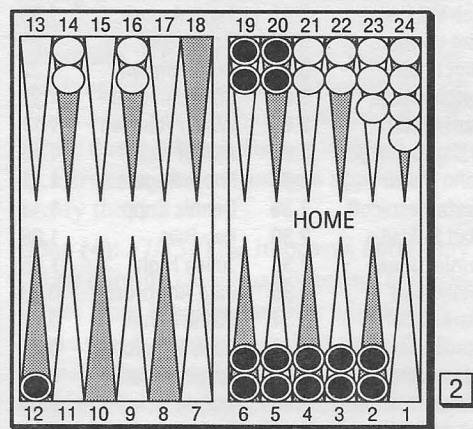
"I hate cowardice, but I hate getting gammoned even more," he replies.

Well getting gammoned is what he deserves in the games that he takes, which are invariably those in which he has the most men back and is the farthest behind. Most of the time, however, I stumble somewhere along the road to gammon. Arthur, as we've seen, plays lackadaisically, but I play lackaDICEically. One of our games last night was especially galling, because Arthur was so confident of the dice that he redoubled me even before hitting a shot.

As usual, he started out by blotting—or "slotting" as he calls it—his 5-point and I retaliated by hitting. When he had five men back, I doubled and he took. A few shakes later he paused to admire the position. "Ah, a FIVE-SIX game," he said. "I've never seen one of these."

This was the position when I rolled, as usual, lackaDICEically:

Money game. WHITE TO PLAY 4-1.



I thought and thought, but I could see no way to avoid a blot. Reluctantly, I moved 9/4.

Arthur slid the cube along the center divider and said softly, "Redouble."

"YOU'RE redoubling ME?? Such greed deserves to be punished. I know I should beaver and gammon you, but I'll just take. I'M not greedy."

Arthur hit, as he usually does, with 3-2. A few shakes later, I entered with a second unlucky 1-4 from the bar, forcing me to leave two more blots. Though Arthur was able to hit only the blot on my bar-point, he soon closed out two of my men and won a gammon.

Actually, he didn't WIN a gammon, he STOLE mine, for I was on the verge of winning a gammon in the position shown. It may seem that this game cost me only 8 points, but the swing was 12. With the help of those stolen 12 points, Arthur wound up +22 for the 17 games we played, about an average result for him.

Afterwards I told him, "The way you play, Arthur, without lucky dice you would never win a game."

"Very true," he replied. "I RELY on getting lucky rolls at crucial moments. That's the whole basis of my backgammon strategy."

What a confession! Clearly, Miss Lonelyblots, if skill had anything to do with it, I'D be the one to win regularly. I've heard many people say that backgammon is 80% luck and 20% skill, but I now believe they're wrong. Backgammon is ALL luck.

So what's wrong with backgammon being all luck? Only this, which I forgot to tell you at the outset: the books that Arthur writes are BACKGAMMON books that pretend to teach people backgammon skills. But if skill is irrelevant in backgammon, as he confessed, then Arthur's books are a FRAUD. Honesty demands that I expose this fraud, but I really can't do so, lest people regard me as an unfaithful wife. Therefore as an act of solidarity among women, Miss Lonelyblots, I urge you to blow the whistle on my husband. If we women don't stick together, who will?—Guinivere

DEAR GUINIVERE: It wouldn't look good for me to call your husband a fraud, either, for I'm his writing rival, and people might accuse me of professional jealousy. Besides, I'm not so sure he is a fraud. In the position you show, you had 22 rolls—of the 36 (yes, it IS a special backgammon number) rolls possible—that exposed shot. After you played your 4-1, Arthur had 24 hitting rolls, with new blots likely after he hit, and future shots likely if he missed. His gammon threat was stronger than yours.

Don't draw the wrong inference from Arthur's "confession": to admit that he would never win a game without lucky rolls is NOT to imply that backgammon is all luck. As I think of it, backgammon skills are LUCK-HANDLING skills. You must cope with the numbers you roll, lucky or unlucky, by moving in such a way as to maximize the number of future rolls that are unlucky for your opponent and lucky for you. In the position you show, it appears Arthur has done exactly that.

For this reason, I too disagree with those who say that backgammon is 80% lucky and 20% skill. The two facets of the game are not divisions of a pie that add up to 100%. Rather the luck in backgammon—the capricious dice—is a given. We can do nothing to change it. We can, however, strive to sharpen our backgammon skills, which can increase indefinitely. I, for one, never expect to be able to say that my skills have reached "100%."—Miss Lonelyblots Δ

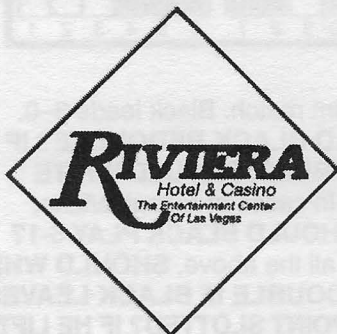
The Nevada Backgammon Association

Howard Markowitz, Director

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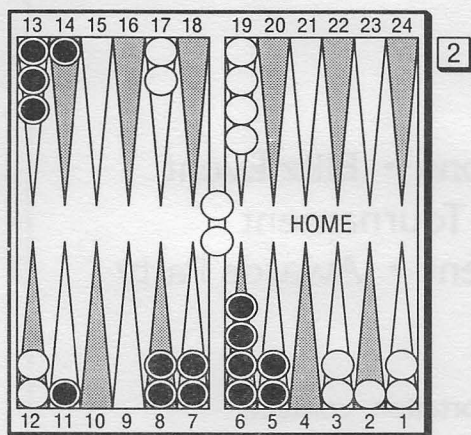
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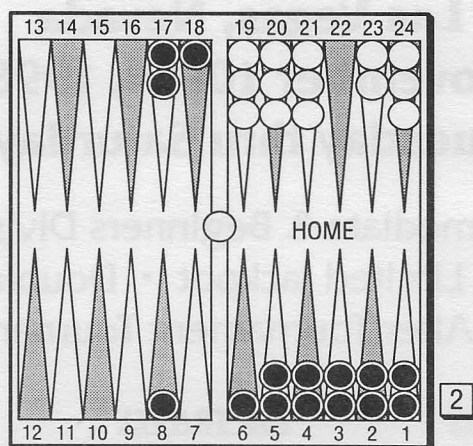


Never mind. At least you'll know that, had you been there, you could have grabbed the brass ring (Well, you could have grabbed the Howard Ring).

1. First game of a 23-point match.
BLACK TO PLAY 5-5.



After all the above, **SHOULD WHITE RE-REDOUBLE IF BLACK LEAVES THE 6-POINT SLOTTED? IF HE LIFTS?**



13 14 15 16 17 18

19 20 21 22 23 24

HOME

64

12 11 10 9 8 7

6 5 4 3 2 1

13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24

HOME

12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

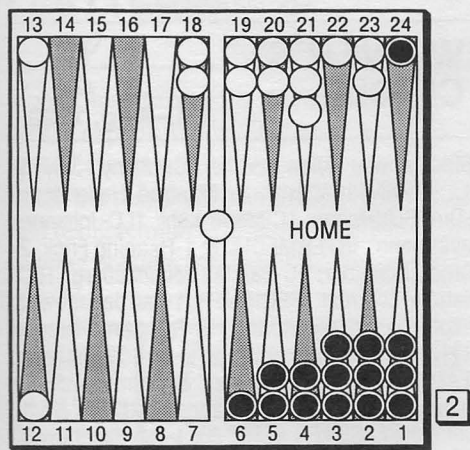
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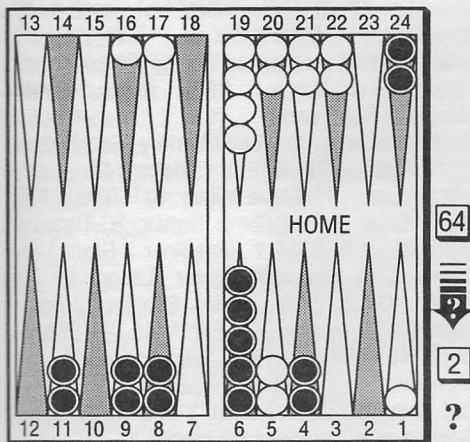
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September 1998

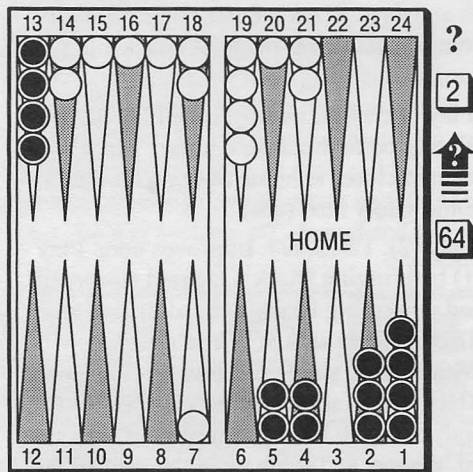
9. Money game. BLACK TO PLAY 5-2.



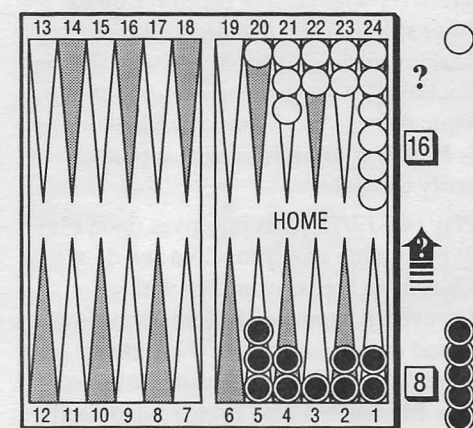
10. 23-point match. Black leads 18-17. CUBE ACTION(S) AFTER BLACK'S BEST PLAY OF 5-1? WHAT IS BLACK'S BEST PLAY OF 5-1?



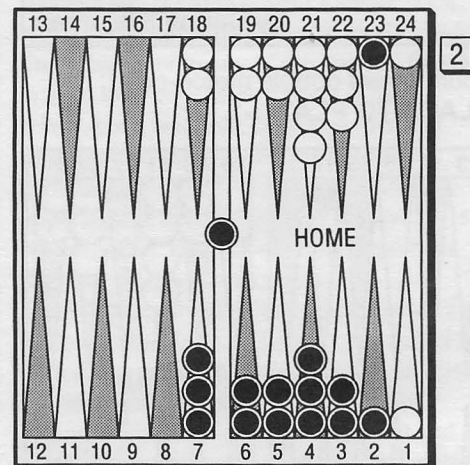
11. Money game. Black on roll. CUBE ACTION(S)?



12. 11-point match. Score tied at 2-2. Black on roll holding an 8-cube. CUBE ACTION(S)?



13. 25-point match. Score tied at 23-23 (double matchpoint). BLACK TO PLAY 2-1. HOW SHOULD BLACK PLAY 2-1 FOR MONEY?



ANSWERS & SCORING BEGIN ON PAGE 9

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 3]

me any feedback or comments to:
chris_bray@compuserve.com—Chris Bray,
London, England

FAIRNESS IN BACKGAMMON

I think the way we play a backgammon match is not fair, as it favors one player over the other. In most games and sports, the players take turns, one playing first, then the other. But in backgammon, we determine who plays first in each game of a match by the throw of the dice. With equal ability, the one who plays first has the advantage of one move, which is enough to win a game. In a 9-point match, if one player goes first seven times, it gives him a big advantage over his opponent. As in chess, the only fair way is to alternate who plays first.

There is another inequity in backgammon. The player who wins the toss is required to use the dice showing on the table.

This is not fair to him, because he only threw one die; the other was thrown by his opponent. The first player is not allowed to use doubles, whereas his opponent, on his first play is allowed to use them.

We made the game more equitable for players by incorporating the Crawford Rule, and it was a terrific innovation. We can make the game even more fair for each player by incorporating my two rules, which I shall call Joubert's Rules #1 and #2:

Joubert's Rule #1: The player to start the first game of a match is determined by the throw of the dice. After that, the players take turns playing first. This will prevent one player from starting more often than his opponent because of lucky dice.

Joubert's Rule #2: The player who wins the toss for the first game should throw again to determine the first set of numbers that he is to play. This allows him to control both of the dice and the chance to use doubles on his first play, just as his opponent will be allowed to do.

I think these two rules deserve serious thought.—Joubert Malouf, Henderson, NV Δ

WORLD CUP VI & US OPEN

WORLD CUP VI (46): 1-Howard Ring (IL), 2-Johannes Levermann (Germany), 3/4-Fred Chamanara (IL) / Malcolm Davis (TX); 1C-Stu Hosen (TX), 2C-Tino Lechich (Australia).

US OPEN: CHAMPIONSHIP (73): 1-Jerry Grandell (Sweden), 2-Neil Kazaross (IL), 3/4-Jake Jacobs (IL) / John Simon (Hong Kong); 1C-Karen Davis (NY), 2C-Danny Mayfield (TX). ADVANCED (36): 1-Curtis Lucas (TX), 2-Andy Palumbo (NY), 3-Ron Williamson (TX); 1C-Marcus Hermansen (NH), 2C-Gary Fomby (TX). INTERMEDIATE (25): Dale Smith (NJ), 2-Betty Kelly (TX); 1C-Jonathan Kaplan (NY), 2C-Lourdes Steffen (NY).

WORLD CHOUETTE CHAMPIONSHIP (28): 1-Armando Balbi (Brazil), 2-Save Nelson (Hong Kong), 3-Leo Fernandez (Brazil), 4/5-Nick Ballard (CA) / Malcolm Davis (TX). OPEN CHOUETTE TOURNAMENT (24): 1-Marc Poe (TX), 2-Masahiro Yamaguchi (Japan), 3-Veronica Dabul (Brazil), 4/5-Curtis Lucas (TX) / Danny Mayfield (TX).

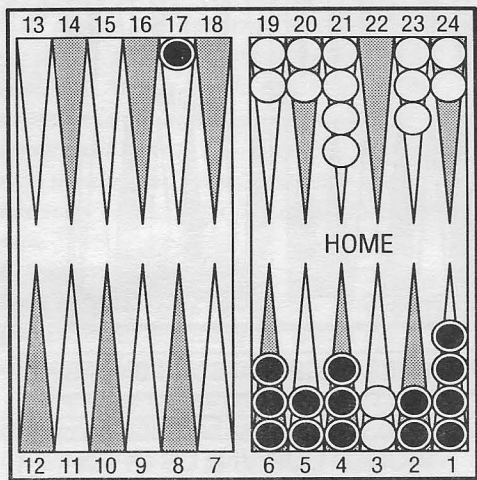
TEXAS OPEN (23 + 28 re-entries): 1-Dick Cather (TX), 2-Karen Davis (NY). ADVANCED (22 + 26 re-entries): 1-Arsalan Najafi (TX), 2-Curtis Lucas (TX). INTERMEDIATE: (10 + 10 re-entries): 1-Dan Allen (TX).

RIFLEMAN SHOOTOUT (32): 1-Nick Ballard (CA), 2-Stu Hosen (TX). GREAT TEXAS ARMADILLO CHASE (128): 1-Nick Ballard (CA), 2-Tom Weaver (TX). OVERFLOW ARMADILLO CHASE (16): 1-Rafael Lopez de Lara (Mexico). CHIPMUNK CHASE (64): 1-Andy Palumbo (NY), 2-Dale Smith (TX). GREAT TEXAS GOLD RUSH (64): 1-Ian MacFarlane (Brazil), 2-Nick Ballard (CA), 3/4-Doug Mayfield (CA) / Kit Woolsey (CA). OPEN MICROBLITZ (64): 1-Veronica Dabul (Brazil), 2-Ray Fogelund (CA). LIMITED MICROBLITZ (64): 1-Linda George (FL), 2-Sally Woolsey (CA). QUIZGAMMON (29): 1-Herb Gurland (MA). LAST ROUND-UP (120): 1-Save Herman (NC), 2-Dan Allen (TX), 3/4-Dennis Culpepper (VA) / Billy Horan (NY).

PROBLEM #246 ANALYZED

by Danny Kleinman

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



Black is far ahead in the race and should be concerned primarily with coming home safely. He is far enough ahead that he may be able to survive an outfield hit by reentering on White's open 3-point. He may also be able to survive White's large doublets. What he is unlikely to survive is a hit with large doublets. Therefore Black must avoid bringing his laggard to the 13-point (where double 5s hit) or the 15-point (where double 6s and double 4s hit).

We may label Black's alternatives according to the number of aces he plays in the outfield:

•Play (0): 6/4, 6/5(2). Safe temporarily. However, only four rolls (the large doublets) come home safely next turn. Black loses time in the race (Black's 3-gap will remain forever: missing 3s will no longer fill the gap). Black relinquishes the option of playing some 5s from the 6-point. Black

weakens his board (still significant if future hits are possible). Black lets White play 6s, 5s and 4s to Black's outer board without coming into direct range of Black's laggard.

•Play (1): 17/16, 6/5(3). Like Play (0), but slightly better because it brings Black's laggard closer to home (6-5 also comes home safely next turn).

•Play (2): 17/15, 6/4. Improves upon Play (1) by bringing Black's laggard closer still, and preserving Black's board. It also gives Black a direct shot at White's escapee if White rolls a single 6. However, it exposes Black to two shots (White's 6-6 and 4-4), both of which become murderous rolls that hit, escape, and catch up in the race all at once.

•Play (3): 17/14, 6/5. Like Play (2), this exposes Black to two shots, but White's hitting 6-5 leaves Black reasonable chances to recover with prompt reentry. Comes closer still to home and deters White from breaking anchor with a 5. An extra risk on Black's 6-5 next (leaving a double shot if White doesn't break anchor with a 6, 5, or 4). However, the advantages appear to justify the risk.

•Play (4): 17/13. This improves upon Play (3) by coming closer to home and deterring White from breaking anchor with a 4. However, it exposes Black to three shots instead of two, and one of those shots (White's double 5s) is disastrous. It also turns Black's 6-6 next from a superb roll into a blotting roll. The advantages do not appear to justify the extra risk.

REJECTING ALL PLAYS THAT BREAK Black's board or leave disaster shots, I'll choose Play (3), 17/14, 6/5, the play I would make "instinctively" at the table. I favor 11 as the distance between my blot and my opponent's potential hitter—a distance that exposes me to only modest immediate shot danger while threatening a direct shot at my opponent if he runs with a 6 or 5. Δ

AMALGAMATION

Finding **Bob Glass** in last month's front page contest proved easier said than done. Only **Joe Wollick** (Hoffman Estates, IL) came up with the correct answer: "Bob Glass is to the left." Yes, he is **ON** the right in the picture, but he is **TO** the left of **Manuel Yarborough**, who is the subject of the sentence prior to our question... Effective January 1999, **Jerry Godsey** will no longer edit the Hong Kong Backgammon News. A new editor has not come

forth... **Malcolm Davis** (Dallas, TX) barred **Howard Ring** from eating a fruit plate in their World Cup semifinal match. Next time Howard, drink Chateau Texas wine (from Malcolm's vineyard) with your snack!... **Wendy Kaplan** (Palatine, IL) is stage manager for the fall production of South Pacific. Wilmette, IL is the venue. More info to follow... **Marv Arnol** informs us that Milwaukee Backgammon will now meet Wednesdays at the Gas-Lite East. Call Marv at 414/355-5562 for details... **Max Esquivel** reports that following the Texas World Cup, German super-

WINNER'S CIRCLE



Jul.-Aug. 1998

•**5th German Open** (Brakel, Germany; July 3-8)... **CHAMPIONSHIP**: 1- Manfred Hollenderer, 2-Dirk Schiemann; 1C-Mario Kühl; 1LC-Johannes Levermann. **INTERMEDIATE**: 1-Henning Frick, 2-Jürgen Schettler; 1C-Carsten Müncheberg; 1LC-Dietmar Schmidt. **BEGINNER**: 1-Jan Jacobowitz, 2-Thomas Altendeitering, 3-Reinhard Dreger. **BLITZ 50**: 1-Mathias Körner, 2-Dirk Schiemann. **TEAM 3**: 1-Ternel & Ekmark & Hammagren, 2-Thamm & Basdas & Mcfarlane. **SUPER JP**: 1-Ralf Jonas. **SUPER BLITZ 20**: 1-Jan Jacobowitz. **LADIES CUP**: 1-Corinna Blaschke. **MIXED DOUBLES TOURNEY**: 1-Birgit Scheuerling & Peter v. Rooy, 2-Mette Meyer & Chris Ternel.

•**Hong Kong Monthly** (Hong Kong; 6 July)... **OPEN**: 1-Thomas Kong, 2-Robin Swaffield; 1C-Melody Rae, 2C-Eric Mangl.

•**Milwaukee Sunday Bimonthly** (Milwaukee, WI; 19 Jul.)... **OPEN (10)**: 1-Bob Holyon, 2-Rudy Langenbach; 1C-Marv Arnol.

•**BIBA Studio Anne Carlton Trophy** (Birmingham, England; 8-9 Aug.)... **OPEN (58)**: 1-Ralph Ezkinazi, 2-Rob Dean.

•**Backgammon by the Bay Monthly** (San Mateo, CA; 16 Aug.)... **OPEN (21)**: 1-Richard McIntosh, 2-Kit Woolsey; 1C-Steve Miller. **INTERMEDIATE (12)**: 1-Brian Farr, 2-Glenn Nunez; 1C-Timothy Jaxon. **BEGINNER (5)**: 1-Jim Milner, 2-Gloria Lee.

•**Peoria Club Summer Sizzler** (Lacon, IL; 23 Aug.)... **OPEN (30)**: 1-Don Schiller, 2-Peter Kalba; 1C-Tak Morioka, 2C-Bill Davis. **INTERMEDIATE (4)**: 1-Michael Plog, 2-Darcey Wade... A fun weekend in Central Illinois starting with a pool party at Ed & Lisa Zell's new house. Cliff Mayoh was in charge of the steaks. Δ



Peoria winners: Michael Plog (Int.) and Don Schiller (Open). [Photo: Linda Woods.]

stars **Johannes Levermann** and **Dirk Schiemann** vacationed in Costa Rica. **Nick Ballard** (Davis, CA) came down a week later... Computer expert **Hugh Sconyers** (Austin, TX) has now solved every possible backgammon bearoff position (15x15) for all four cube positions. That's 47.1 gigabytes of information. Current plans are to make it available on-line by January 1999... Finally, from **Oliver Wendell Holmes**: "People don't quit playing because they grow old. They grow old because they quit playing." Δ

Jaker's Dozen Answers...

[Continued from page 7]

Think that was hard? Try wrestling with problems like these 16 hours a day for 10 days. With so much to cover, pardon me if I don't go into detail on why some of these answers are correct. Score yourself as we go.

1. 7/2(2)*, 14/4. Didn't see the slot? Neither did my US Open semifinals opponent, Jerry Grandell. Neither did I. Takes a bot to find it. It rolls out only slightly better than bringing 2 down. *10 points for slotting.*

2. Peter Heitmüller correctly made the 5-point in our World Cup match. *5 points for the five-point.* (Nice take, Jake! No wonder I was the first player in the Consolation.)

3. This was from the Chouette tournament (won by Armando Balbi of Brazil). How would you like to be in the Box, and see Malcolm Davis, Nick Ballard, and Mike Corbett staring back at you. Didn't scare Tino Lecich (2nd place finisher in the World Cup Consolation). He's from Australia, where they box kangaroos in the schoolyard, and shear sheep with their teeth. He cubed, and they dropped like koalas falling out of a eucalyptus tree.

Sorry boys, there's enough race lead and counterplay to get out from down under. *Double - 1 point, Take - 5 points.*

4. Elliott Winslow led Howard Ring in their Rifleman's Shootout match, when this little beauty batted its eyes. *Redouble - 1 point, Take - 3 points.* Howard's wins, when they come, will almost always be on 8, while his losses will be on 4. With 5-1 it is correct to leave the point slotted; *3 points for 17/12, 17/16. If you would redouble after Elliott lifts, take 3 points. Take 2 more points if you would redouble when he leaves it slotted. Give yourself 1 point (half credit) if you would have redoubled the lift play, but didn't double the slot because you were playing on!* This was almost a gorgeous problem. It is clear to redouble if Elliott lifts, but it is almost better to hold the cube if he slots. (But not quite.)

5. Jerry Grandell vs. Abe Mosseri and Falafel (consulting), circa 2:00 a.m. Passing the position card around the breakfast table next morning, my panel of experts quickly rejected the vastly inferior 11/4*, for the mundane but solid 11/5, 8/7. Jerry, even at that bleary hour, had found the beautiful, and better, 13/7, 11/10. Too bad it was 2nd best. X-22 spotted the top play, 11/10, 8/2. *10 points for Magriel's play, but 5 points for Jerry's.* (Note that it is a money game, and the cube is centered. Further note that you are

losing on over 90% of his 6s even if you don't slot.) By the way, assuming he does not throw a 6, he still has an easy take after either play.

6. Two of the German players (it came from a side game) played this as a double/no double prop! After the first day it evolved to a take/drop prop. Lots of very good players wanted to take this. White wins lots of games. White loses lots and lots of gammons. *A big pass - 2 points.*

7. Dirk got a lot of action as Black. Here, he's getting more action than he hoped for. White redoubled, but Dirk correctly took. He has a 5 point board, and White has 2 blots. *6 points for taking.*

8. *Give yourself 3 points if you thought this was too good for a center double, and 1 point for passing. Take 2 more points if you would not redouble, and 4 more points if you would take the redouble.* Two of Germany's (the World's) best, Johannes Levermann (Black), and Dirk Schiemann (White), faced this problem in the round-of-8, World Cup. They got it wrong, Snowie got it right. However the bot wasn't playing for 25K!

9. Neil Kazaross and I were propping one of Grandell's takes (from Jerry's win over Neil in the US Open Final) with Leo Fernandez of Argentina, and Christian Toth of Brazil. America against the rest of the World. The rest of the World was right by a lot! We salvaged some of our dignity when this came up. *5 points for 24/22*, 22/17.*

10. Anyone like breaking the 9-point? Snowie did. Sorry Snowie, you melted down on this one. After either 24/23, 6/1*, or 24/18 it is a money take. Normally, the hit might have more going for it, but his entering 6s and 4s hit you on the deuce. *4 points for 24/18.* I thought I might have blown an opportunity when I passed this against Jerry in the semifinals, but my rollouts, which I suspect are biased towards the take, have me winning only 49.9% of my matches if I take. *4 more points for passing.*

11. Mike Senkiewicz showed me this. He got it from Mike Corbett. God knows where Corbett got it. (He's from Florida, where strange things crawl out of the swamps, and run for Congress.) Mike claimed that Corbett's results made this a bare no double. Mine show it to be a fine redouble, but still a comfortable take. This is just too hard for Black to bring home for it to be a pass. (It is right to slot, rather than break up the board.) *Double - 1 point, Take - 6 points.*

12. Just before the first round matches began, Butch Meese asked me, given a choice of any, which match would I record? Easy, I

replied. My second choice would be Howard Ring vs. Nick Ballard. My top choice, in a walkaway, would be Jerry Grandell vs. Johannes Levermann. Both have lots of reasonably responsible adults touting them as "World's Best Player." They are not so well known here in America. Wind up the video tape! At 1:20 a.m. they began the rubber match in the best-of-5 format. Amazingly, no other players had needed 13 hours to complete their first four matches, so the eyes of the world, undistracted by competing events, were on them.

Tied at 2-all, the cube climbed to 8, and then, in the bearoff, Jerry rolled a set of boxcars. On the next roll, he paused to reflect. Jerry needed 50% to recube, but Johannes could take with just 5.5%. Obviously, Jerry was more than a 50% favorite, and could lose his market, if he hadn't already, so he sent it over.

Did Johannes have enough to take? The consensus was, no. He needed two working sets, plus a miss by Jerry. Unfortunately for Johannes, he didn't have us to guide him. He took. He rolled 2 sets. Jerry missed. Five days later Johannes got to play Howard Ring in the WC Finals. Wise consensus got to kibitz. According to Sconyer's data base, Johannes wins 6.1%, a comfy take after all. *3 points for redoubling, and 7 for taking.*

13. Billy Horan, playing Hong Kong Gastroenterologist Dr. John Simon, got his bowels in an uproar over this one! I don't recall the match score, but it might have been dmp. If so, *7 points for bar/23, 7/6. If gammons matter, 7 more points for bar/24*, 4/2.*

Six-primers are good. Two men back is good. A blot in the hand is worth his rolling a 2 from the bush! This play is clear trailing 2-away/Crawford. It only squeaks by in a mouse's whisper for money, but that is robot against robot. In my chouettes, people do funny things if they think they might get gammoned. *5 point creativity award if you chose Billy's play, bar/24*, 7/5.*

SCORING: It may have seemed to you that the point awards were random, but this is not so. They were scientifically designed so that the top score was 99. No one gets a perfect 100 on my quiz!

90-99. Yeah, right!

80-89. You're not supposed to use Snowie to answer these.

65-79. Start saving the entry fee for 2000.

50-64. You're so close! Forget the chouette. Stay home and study.

35-49. I know the chouette for you.

20-34. You're already in the chouette.

10-19. Would you like a ride to the chouette?

00-09. You *did* answer these without Snowie. Δ

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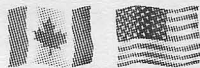
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For more information contact Allison on Netgammon
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