

*2001 midwest championships*

## SAVOIE SHOWS 'SAVOIR FAIRE' AT MIDWEST CHAMPS

**Weaver Wins Beaver**

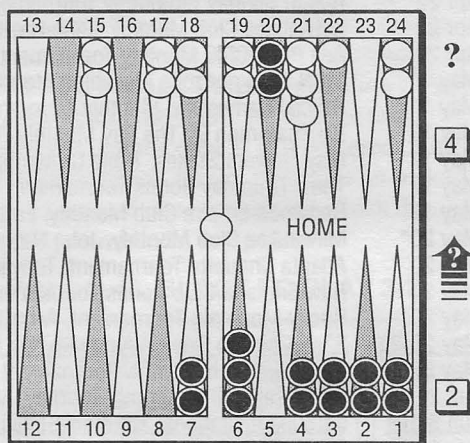
Gyl Savoie of Montreal, Quebec prevailed over a strong American field to win the 2001 Midwest Backgammon Championships (MBC). The Chicago Bar Point Club's 18th annual charity tournament was held at the Radisson Hotel in Lisle, Illinois 23-25 March. Chicago Point editor Bill Davis directed the American Backgammon Tour (ABT) event with great assistance from Peter Kalba, Carol Joy Cole, Dru Heggen, Greg Tomlin, and Amy Trudeau. \$1650 was raised to benefit Anti-Cruelty Society animals.



2001 MBC Champion Gyl Savoie.

Savoie, the 2000 Las Vegas Open Super Jackpot winner, rolled over an impressive 60-player field including victories over 2000 Florida State winner Bob Zavoral (IL) and 2000 Michigan Summer champ Mike Senkiewicz (NY). His opponent in the 15-point championship match was last year's MBC Grand Crystal Beaver champion Steve Sax (CA). Here are two interesting positions from the very volatile opening game:

Pos. 1. 15-point MBC finals. Gyl Savoie (Black) vs. Steve Sax (White). No Score. Black on roll. CUBE ACTION(S)?

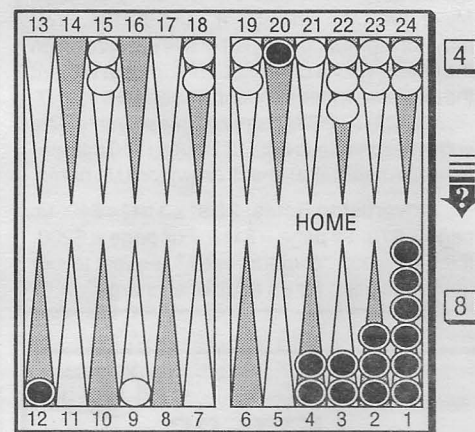


Leading the race by 12 pips with his opponent on the bar, Gyl knew that if he escaped a back man and Steve fanned, a recube would certainly be dropped. Therefore, he properly redoubled now. Steve accepted the 4-cube, although a 3-ply evaluation by Snowie favored passing. The game proceeded thusly:

Savoie: 3-3 (7/1, 7/1)	Sax: Dancing
Savoie: 3-2 (6/1)	Sax: 5-1 (Bar/19, 4/3)
Savoie: 3-2 (6/4, 6/3)	Sax: 6-5 (8/2, 8/3)
Savoie: 3-1 (4/1, 3/2)	Sax: 4-2 (20/16, 4/2)
Savoie: 6-2 (20/13)	

This brings us to Position 2. Many players would have redoubled one or more of the previous set-ups, but according to Snowie, this is the first position where Sax should recube to 8. Steve cautiously held the cube and rolled an awkward 4-1:

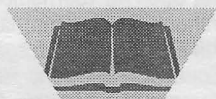
Pos. 2. 15-point MBC finals. No score. Steve Sax (White) decided against redoubling to 8. WHITE TO PLAY 4-1.



Sax correctly played the scary 10/5 hitting. Savoie answered with a 5 and was eventually able to bring home 4 points.

Leading 11-3, Gyl saw his lead cut to 12-10. But his opponent would earn no more points. Final score: Gyl Savoie-15, Steve Sax-10.

[Continued on page 5]



## Boards, Blots and Double Shots

*Everyone can learn from Norm Wiggins' new book, edited by Danny Kleinman.*

*reviewed by Walter Trice*

*Boards, Blots and Double Shots* © 2001 by Norm Wiggins, Edited by Danny Kleinman. Published by the author, 6912 W. Granada Drive; Palmdale, CA 93551. Spiral bound soft cover, 136 pages. Price: \$30 + p&h.

The neural net computer programs TD-Gammon, JellyFish, and more recently Snowie, have been part of our game

for several years now, but Norm Wiggins's new book *Boards, Blots, and Double Shots* is only the second published problem collection to take full advantage of the technology. The first was Kit Woolsey and Hal Heinrich's *New Ideas in Backgammon*, which appeared five years ago. In the interim, a couple of problem books have been produced, but they were old-style efforts: no rollout data, and a liberal sprinkling of erroneous solutions.

Mr. Wiggins has filled the gap admirably. His collection contains 129 money checker-play problems taken from his own practice games against JellyFish. Evidently they were the positions that came up over a period of several years, that the author

[Continued on page 9]

# CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

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## LETTERS

c/o CHICAGO POINT

3940 W. Bryn Mawr Ave. 504  
Chicago, IL 60659-3155

E-mail: [letters@chicagopoint.com](mailto:letters@chicagopoint.com)

## A GOOD IDEA

I was hoping to see an up-to-date posting of the entrants for the Midwest Championships when I visited the [chicagopoint.com](http://chicagopoint.com) website. Please consider this for next year.—*Jolie Rubin, Skokie, IL*

A good idea, Jolie. We'll keep it in mind for 2002.—*Ed.*

## TABLETOP BOARDS

Does anyone know where a decent (but not costing an arm and a leg) backgammon board and equipment can be purchased. I am looking for a fixed (non-folding) board for my daughter so she can teach her children the game. Everything I find on the Web is made of expensive wood and costs \$500 to \$1,000. I can't afford that. I would like a board approximately 30" wide so big counters can be used. Any help your club

[Continued on page 3]

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR



by Carol Joy Cole  
810/232-9731  
[cjc@tir.com](mailto:cjc@tir.com)

\* Denotes new or revised listing

## NATIONAL

*American Backgammon Tour events underlined.*

Apr 6-8	47th Gammon Associates Invitational, A.R. Private Club, Los Angeles, CA	818/901-0464
Apr 7	Springfield Series #6, Ride the Nine, Bloomington, IL	217/528-0117
Apr 7	Universal Mall Bimonthly Tourney, All the King's Men, Warren, MI	810/558-4790
Apr 8	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Anyway's Grill, Oakbrook Terrace, IL	773/252-7755
Apr 8	Backgammon By The Bay Monthly, TGI Friday's, Oakland, CA	831/688-9722
Apr 19	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Day's Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
Apr 19*	Tax Refund Classic, Triple Crown Sports Bar, Houston, TX	713/567-1639
Apr 21	Redwood Empire Club Monthly, Embassy Suites, San Rafael, CA	707/824-9715
Apr 21	Springfield Series Grand Finale, Parker's Sports Bar, Springfield, IL	217/528-0117
Apr 22	New England Club Monthly, Holiday Inn, Somerville, MA	617/491-8710
Apr 22*	Austin Sunday Bimonthly Tournament, CJ's Bar & Grill, Austin, TX	518/261-8518
Apr 22*	Milwaukee Club Monthly, John Hawks Pub, Milwaukee, WI	414/962-8549
Apr 29	Ace Point Club Monthly Tournament, Ace Point Club, New York, NY	212/753-0842
May 1*	MSN Gammonzone Medallion Monthly, via computer	CTMaster41@aol.com
May 1*	Official GamesGrid Monthly Tournament, via computer	tournaments@cyberarts.com
May 13	Backgammon By The Bay Monthly, TGI Friday's, Oakland, CA	831/688-9722
May 17*	May Flowers Stakes, Triple Crown Sports Bar, Houston, TX	713/567-1639
May 17*	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Day's Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
May 19	Redwood Empire Club Monthly, Embassy Suites, San Rafael, CA	707/824-9715
May 20*	Milwaukee Club Monthly, John Hawks Pub, Milwaukee, WI	414/962-8549
May 20	Atlanta Chouette Tournament, Tony's American Grille, Roswell, GA	770/333-1876
May 20	New England Club Bonus Tournament, Holiday Inn, Somerville, MA	617/491-8710
May 20*	Rocky Mountain Tournament, Arthritis Office Building, Denver CO	719/574-5598
May 25-28	<u>22nd Chicago Open, Wyndham NW Chicago Hotel, Itasca, IL</u>	<u>702/893-6025</u>
May 27	Ace Point Club Monthly Tournament, Ace Point Club, New York, NY	212/753-0842
Jun 2	Universal Mall Bimonthly Tourney, All the King's Men, Warren, MI	810/558-4790
Jun 8-10*	<u>Carolina Invitational, Comfort Suites, Gastonia, NC</u>	<u>704/398-8480</u>
Jun 10	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Anyway's Grill, Oakbrook Terrace, IL	773/252-7755
Jun 10	Backgammon By The Bay Monthly, TGI Friday's, Oakland, CA	831/688-9722
Jun 10	New England Club Playoffs, Holiday Inn, Somerville, MA	617/491-8710
Jun 12-17	8th Worldwide Twin Championships, Treasure Island, Las Vegas, NV	702/893-6025
Jun 27	Michigan Summer Championships Warm-up, Novi Hilton, Novi, MI	810/232-9731
Jun 28-Jul 1	<u>Michigan Summer Championships, Novi Hilton, Novi, MI</u>	<u>810/232-9731</u>
Aug 3-5	<u>Thousand Islands Tournament, Pine Tree Point, Alexandria Bay, NY</u>	<u>716/387-0767</u>
Aug 9-12	<u>Georgia State Championships &amp; Peach Cup, Hilton Garden Inn, Atlanta, GA</u>	<u>770/333-1876</u>
Aug 31-Sep 3	<u>49th Indiana Open, Sheraton Hotel &amp; Suites, Indianapolis, IN</u>	<u>317/255-8902</u>
Sep 21-23	<u>Florida State Championships, Sheraton Suites, Ft. Lauderdale, FL</u>	<u>954/564-0340</u>
Oct 19-21	<u>Illinois State Championships, Springfield Hilton Hotel, Springfield, IL</u>	<u>217/528-0117</u>
Nov 2-4	48th Gammon Associates Invitational, A.R. Private Club, Los Angeles, CA	818/901-0464
Nov 16-18*	Minnesota State Championships, Thunderbird Hotel, Bloomington, MN	612/378-1536
Nov 24-25	<u>Ohio State Championships, Akron Holiday Inn, Akron, OH</u>	<u>330/966-2811</u>
Nov 28-Dec 1	Las Vegas Open, Harrah's Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, NV	702/893-6025

## OUTSIDE USA

Apr 7-8	British Open, Hilton National Hotel, Coventry, England	44152-2888676
Apr 8*	Toronto Club Monthly, Doghouse Riley's, Toronto, ON, Canada	416/722-9709
Apr 12-16	13th Nordic "Wide" Open, Hotel Marienlyst, Helsingør, Denmark	4533-363601
Apr 21-22	1st Open Air Tournament, Maghetti, Lugano, Switzerland	4179-3374425
Apr 28-29	Yahoo Elite Live Tournament, Skratch, Brossard, Quebec, Canada	418/837-4296
May 1-6	7th EBN May Day Backgammon & Gin Rummy Tourney, San Roque, Spain	34950-133009
May 5-6	County Cups Trophy, Hilton National, Coventry, England	441522-888676
May 13*	Toronto Club Monthly, Doghouse Riley's, Toronto, ON, Canada	416/722-9709
May 19-20	Roma Colosseum Cup, Circolo Le Barbù, Rome, Italy	39333-4809363
May 24-27*	CANCELLED: Basel Open, Hotel Drei Konige, Basel, Switzerland	41793-205276
May 25-27*	DATE CHANGE: 8th Oslo Open 2001, Vika Atrium, Oslo, Norway	4722-360966
Jun 1-4	7th Kaiserbrunnen Cup, Kaiserbrunnen Hotel, Brakel, Germany	49521-64314
Jun 2-3	Hilton Trophy Tournament, Hilton National, Coventry, England	441522-888676
Jul 5-8	13th City of Venice International Tournament, Lido, Venice, Italy	3941-5900769
Jul 7-8*	Keren Di Bona Memorial, Hilton National Hotel, Coventry, England	441522-888676
Jul 9-15	World Championship, Grand Hotel, Monte Carlo, Monaco	USA contact: 954/527-4033
Jul 16-17	10th Nice Open, Lido Plage, Nice, France	33493-879436
Jul 18-22*	Czech Open III, Marriott & Renaissance Hotels, Prague, Czech Republic	49911-409505
Jul 18-22*	22nd Grand Prix de Lugano, Hotel Eden, Lugano, Switzerland	4179-3374425
Jul 27-29*	Bergen Open 2001, Sardinien, Bergen, Norway	4755-981544
Aug 4-5*	Studio Anne Carlton Trophy, Hilton National, Coventry, England	441522-888676
Aug 18-27*	BG at Mind Sports Olympiad V, Alexandra Palace, London, England	441522-888676
Aug 31-Sep 3*	13th European Championship, Hit Casino Park, Nova Gorica, Slovenia	3902-69018168
Sep 29-Oct 3*	8th German Open, Kaiserbrunnen Hotel, Brakel, Germany	49521-64314
Oct 5-7	Canadian Open, Le Nouvel Hotel, Montreal, QB, Canada	904/777-8816



## LETTERS...

[Continued from page 2]

could shed on this problem would be deeply appreciated.—*Cort Taylor, via Internet*

*Carol Joy Cole of Backgammon à la Carte answers: Among the boards I sell is a flat tabletop model for \$100 + \$10 UPS shipping. It is made with a sturdy wood frame and vinyl trim. The playing surface is a quiet cork layer with points screen-painted on it with your choice of colors: red/white, green/white, brown/white or blue/white. The marbled checkers are large, tournament-sized, 1-3/4" in diameter, and the board includes two dice cups. The overall board dimensions are 26-3/4" x 22-3/4" x 1-1/8". To order, contact me via e-mail at [cjc@tir.com](mailto:cjc@tir.com) or call 810/232-9731.—Carol Joy Cole, Backgammon à la Carte, Flint, MI*

## SEE HOW THE POSITION EVOLVES

Sometime in the mid-1970s, I played in a tournament in New Jersey. It was a snowy night and Jersey Jim Pasco (the least mentioned of the great modern day backgammon players) invited Steve Keats and myself over to his home to ride out the storm (and try to take some of our Long Island money). The first thing we noticed on his table was a backgammon board set up in the middle of a game with a pad of paper and results written on it. Keats asked, "What's this about?"

Jim answered, "To see how the position evolves," and went into an explanation of what he had discovered.

Keats listened for a moment and then responded, "Shut up and let's play."

To this day, Jim's answer sits with me. It has now become the norm, even at tournaments, to see players input positions into Snowie of JellyFish for a quick out-

come. they never see how the position evolves, just the end result from a computer program. Even today, I will take the time (not as often as I would like) to play out positions, if only three or four times.

This is not to say that these programs do not serve a purpose. They do; however, they are only a tool. So when I read some of the articles in today's backgammon publications, I often wonder if the author ever took the time to "see how the position evolves."

In conclusion, I saw pendulum move in the other direction in 2000. Many of the "players" are again on top. Katie Scalandre, Mike Senkiewicz, and Paul Magriel (who I believe should be the most feared player in the game) are all winning. I have faced them over the years and see how they play. They all have one thing in common. They know more about positions than just the results—they know how positions evolve.—*Bob Bishop, Long Island, NY*

*Bob Bishop is the 2000 ABT Player of the Year—Ed.*



## AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 2001

Compiled through 25 March 2001 after 2 events  
(Coming in April & May: 47th G/A Invitational & 22nd Chicago Open)



Jake Jacobs	33.56	Richard Del Furia	6.00	Tom Daniel	3.59	John Meyers	2.08
Gyl Savoie	21.45	Chris Wilson	5.60	Ron Rogers	3.56	Connie Tipton	1.78
Chen Fu Yu	12.69	Keith Kuligowski	5.20	Mark Tremayne	3.20	Paul Lombardo	1.78
James Roston	11.44	Marianne Gatenby	5.11	Bill Keefe	2.95	Roger Hickman	1.44
Bruce Russell	11.36	Brian Barber	5.11	Ken Lazar	2.62	Ali Malik	1.34
Dennis Culpepper	10.46	Dana Nazarian	4.50	Mike Flohr	2.40	Tracy Galloway	0.82
Bob Glass	10.46	Paul Weaver	4.44	Glenn Ramsey	2.27	Lynn Marsella	0.62
Steve Sax	9.75	Howard Shapiro	4.44	Mark Haley	2.27	Jim Zinkhon	0.62
Herb Roman	6.69	Richard Munitz	4.44	Adam Versaw	2.27	Dick Nelson	0.53
Greg Merriman	6.34	David Rockwell	3.90	Steve Maas	2.08	Erik Erland	0.53
Rob Maier	6.34	David Groner	3.90				

## CLOCK RULE QUESTIONS

Having read the new Unified Backgammon Clock Rules [[www.chicagopoint.com/bgclockrules.html](http://www.chicagopoint.com/bgclockrules.html)], I noticed an apparent paradox. Section 5.1 (Time Expiration) states that in games whose outcome will always end the match, time limits and

[Continued on page 4]



## CHICAGO BAR POINT CLUB 2001 PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED  
THRU 31 MAR.

Bob Zavoral	11.32	Norma Shyer	3.04	Elaine Kehm	1.76	Richard Lloyd	0.88
Bill Bartholomay	10.04	Lucky Nelson	2.88	Phyllis Smolinski	1.52	Mark Murray	0.80
Glenn Martells	4.72	Joann Feinstein	2.80	Brian Barber	1.28	Wayne Weist	0.80
Herb Roman	4.72	Scott Richardson	2.80	David Araiza	1.28	Brian Leventhal	0.64
Tim Mabee	4.64	Don Jayhan	2.80	Don Marek	1.28	Paul Friedman	0.64
Carter Mattig	4.56	Mark Ryan	2.56	Roger Hickman	1.28	Mike Sutton	0.64
Joe Wollick	4.56	Arlene Levy	2.48	John Brussel	1.12	Roger Blaine	0.64
Tak Morioka	4.48	Steve Klesker	2.16	Leo Campos	0.88	Brian Kozin	0.64
Bob Steen	4.32	Marc Rosset	2.16	Alice Kay	0.88	Georgina Flanagan	0.64
Tim Carroll	4.08	Bill Davis	2.08	Bob Katz	0.88	Tom Roberts	0.48
Jake Jacobs	3.44	Bill Keefe	1.92	J.A. Miller	0.88	Joe Szvedo	0.32
Howard Chow	3.20	Peter Kalba	1.76				

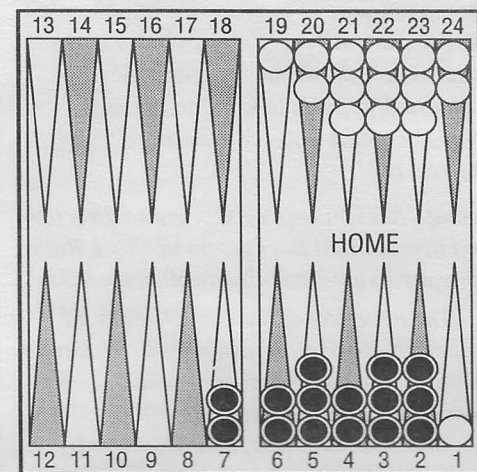
**BOB ZAVORAL** had an outstanding March winning the last three tournaments of the month to earn 6.36 master points. Bob goes into April with a record-tying 13 wins in a row. [Other 13-in-a-row match winners: Howard Markowitz 12/86, Tak Morioka 3/90, David Rubin 3/93 —Ed.] Special congrats to March's runner-up (with 4.12 points) Bill Bartholomay who won 11 matches in a row in March. Bill had a 12-match win streak in January, so his result breaks the record for the least time between 1000-to-1 Club achievements (56 days: 1/23/01 to 3/20/01). The March 3rd place finisher was Tim Mabee (2.80).

your move

## PROBLEM #271

to be analyzed by Mary Hickey

Tournament double match-point.  
**BLACK TO PLAY 5-1.**



# SHADES OF GRAY

## A RULES AND RULINGS COLUMN

© 2001 by Danny Kleinman

### WRONG 'PLAYTO' AGREED

**D**ear Danny: At a recent midwest event, I witnessed a problem that really isn't covered by the current US Tournament Rules. Two championship players (let's call them Alan and Bob) were battling in the quarterfinals. Although the match was posted as 11-points, both scoresheets showed that the players were incorrectly playing to 13-points.

A staffer was first informed of this problem by a kibitzer. He quickly went over to the match (score: 4-3) and told both players that the match must be played to 11-points. Alan wasn't pleased. It seems that Bob had told him the match length was 13-points and he had apparently taken Bob's word for it.

After losing a hard-fought battle, Alan approached the staffer telling him that he should have let the match proceed without interference. Alan complained that his strategy for the first part of the match had been based on a 13-point length and inferred that the ruling could very well have cost him the match.

*Although the US Rules don't mention a remedy for this situation, the specific tournament rules (written in the welcoming letter) were explicit:*

*"Make sure you are playing your match to the correct 'playto.' A match in progress will be judged 'completed' if the correct 'playto' has already been reached."*

*Based on the given situation, do you think the staffer acted properly? The match was not really holding up the tournament. I wonder why the staffer couldn't have just let the match proceed—kind of a "no harm, no foul" situation.*

*Also, can you think of a better ruling for situations like this?—Trying To Understand*

**DEAR TRYING:** This area of the rules is grayer than almost any other.

Technically speaking, the staffer who restored the match length to the posted 11-points acted properly to enforce the rules. However, if the match was proceeding smoothly, with neither contestant taking inordinately long to play, you are right: the match could have been allowed to proceed to 13-points with no harm to the tournament nor to the two contestants.

The rules, as stated in the welcoming letter, were designed to protect the tournament against delays caused by overly long matches, and the players against swindles by opponents who knowingly misstate match

lengths only to "discover" or fail to "discover" their errors later, to their own benefit.

In the past, I have formulated remedies for incorrect match lengths that cover all situations. Now, however, I believe it better to leave the remedy to the judgment of the tournament director in each particular set of circumstances.

Though the staffer's ruling was not unfair, I would prefer the following alternative: After determining the facts, offer Alan (the player whose opponent had misinformed him about the match length) the option to leave the match as posted, or lengthen it (and have the new 13-point match length posted on the draw sheet to inform all who might be concerned).

By the way, you don't say if Alan strongly objected at the time the staffer ruled, or if he waited until after he had lost to complain. A timely objection might have persuaded the staffer to rule differently.

And if Alan had geared his play to a 13-point match in the first several games, I'd like to know just how his strategy would have differed in an 11-point match.—

*Yours, Danny Δ*

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

### LETTERS...

[Continued from page 3]

penalty points no longer apply. This means that at a 1-away, 2-away, post Crawford score, if the 1-away player is about to run out of time, proper cube strategy is opposite what common sense would normally dictate: the 1-away player must double to make it last game, and the 2-away player should not double to allow his opponent's time to run out. There are certainly many other situations where redoubling earlier than usual in order to kill ones penalty points becomes correct.—Richard Munitz, Suffren, NY

Atlanta Backgammon Association director and new Unified Backgammon Clock Rules co-contributor Dave Cardwell responds:

The net effect of the clock here is nil. Under no-clock circumstances in Richard's example, the trailing player would double immediately. However, if the trailing player attempts to gain an advantage by delaying doubling due to the remaining

time on the clock(s), the leading player will immediately double instead, resulting in the exact same game/match outcome as if no clock were used, or if the trailing player had correctly doubled instead of attempting to seek a clock advantage.

There may indeed be a paradox here, but the clock plays no role in determining the match outcome. In fact, the clock merely forces the "correct" cube behavior by insuring there will only be one last game, which is the technically correct outcome even if no clock is used. If the net effect of a clock on a match outcome is nil, it makes no difference how the outcome is achieved.

Even looking at the 1-away, 2-away Crawford game where the leading player is short on time, he is prevented from doubling abnormally to save penalty points simply because the Crawford rule itself is in effect.

Several people have stated, "... there are certainly many situations...", but to my knowledge, nobody (except myself) has actually cited any specific examples where actual doubling behavior outcomes would

be altered by clock use.

For example, in theory, one area where cube strategy may actually be influenced is the 2-away, 2-away game where the time trailer doubles for match (whether winning the game or not) and the time leader passes (whether losing the game or not), hoping to drag out the subsequent Crawford game and win a victory on time. However, with the longer match times of the revised Unified Rules, this scenario is extremely rare in practice—in fact, it has not occurred once during any of the thousands of clocked matches at our weekly tournaments over the past two years.

The same is true for other obscure match scenarios where the clock could potentially play a role in the match outcome. They are so extremely rare as to be rather insignificant in the grand scheme of things.—Dave Cardwell, Director, Atlanta Backgammon Association

[Dave Cardwell will again be using clocks for his main tournament and Peach Cup events at the Georgia State Championships 9-12 August.—Ed.] Δ



## SAVOIE WINS MBC...

[Continued from page 1]

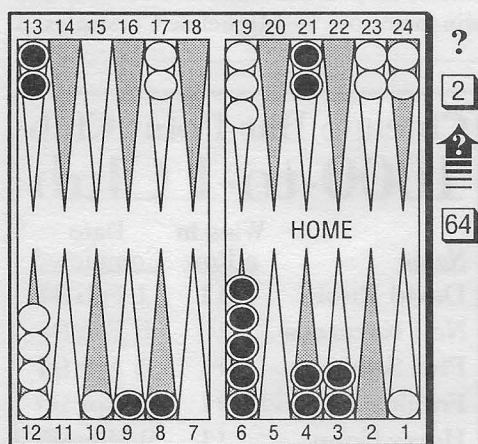
### Grand Crystal Beaver III

THE MASTERS EVENT at the Midwest Championships is the \$600 Grand Crystal Beaver. Based on a 16-player field, the winner receives \$6000 and a coveted Swarovski crystal beaver on a mirrored base. This year's competition was as fierce as ever with names like Ballard, Senkiewicz, Jacobs, Fogerlund, Frigo and Malcolm Davis in the field.

The two finalists, 2001 Pittsburgh runner-up Paul Weaver (AL) and Frank Talbot (MI) squared off on Sunday afternoon in an 11-point match with 66 minutes on each clock. (The entire event was clocked.)

Talbot, a 3-time MBC champion, opened a 5-0 advantage. Then Weaver rallied to retake the lead at 7-6. It was at this score that an interesting position developed:

**Pos. 3.** 11-point Grand Crystal Beaver finals. Paul Weaver (Black) leads Frank Talbot (White), 7 to 6. Black on roll. CUBE ACTION(S)?



With the race virtually dead even, Paul doubled. Current ABT leader Jake Jacobs agreed with Weaver's decision stating, "The score calls for aggressive doubling by the leader."

Paul's decision paid off as Frank passed the cube. Weaver never trailed again, eventually winning by a score of 11-7.

An excellent player, Weaver was honest about his assessment of luck vs. skill when playing an opponent as talented as Frank Talbot: "Paul Magriel once told me that it was more important to be lucky at the end of the match than at the beginning. I tried to follow his advice."

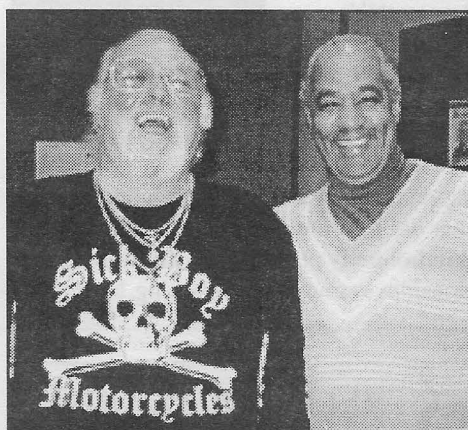
### Other Results

THE 64-PLAYER Advanced division saw a hard-fought battle between New Yorker



Paul Weaver in an early game from the Grand Crystal Beaver finals.

James Roston and relative BG newcomer Keith Kuligowski (IL). The difference in the match was an 8-cube that Roston was able to turn around. But even after this, the battle went down to double match-point.



Advanced Champ James Roston (right) enjoys his victory with Jerry Padova.

Congratulations to Limited Champ Bill Keefe (IL) who won his first BG trophy ever. The up-and-coming Ali Malik (IL) placed second and also won the 3-Dice tourney.



Limited champ Bill Keefe (left) with runner-up and 3-dice champ Ali Malik.

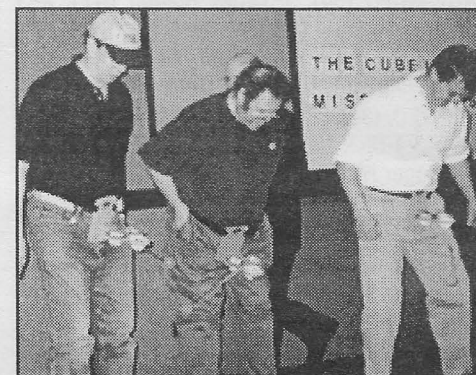
This year's Doubles champions are Minnesotans Steve Brown and Ralph Stowell who bested Tom & Karen Meyer (IL). Greg Cattanach (GA) won the \$40 Back To Attack Knockout. The Open Jackpot went to Jeff Kane (WI), and the Blitz Victor was Jim Muirhead (MI).

In the fun events, add Trudie Chibnik's name to the "Hog of Fame" for her victory in Pig-Rolling. Roger Hickman captured Put & Take Dice along with a trophy in the Limited Consolation. Pub Club director Joe Wollick won a \$100 bill in Hog Clubbing. (Anti-Cruelty Society note: no swine were actually harmed!) And John Brussel won our signature \$500 Added Back To Attack event.



Pig Mistress Dru Heggen (right) applauds Trudie Chibnik's victory in Pig-Rolling.

There were two more winners at the Calcutta Auction. Dan Wesley prevailed over Michael Flohr, Bob Steen and Bob Glass in the hilarious "Walla Balla" competition.



Bob Steen, Bob Glass and eventual winner Dan Wesley shake-'em-up onstage in 'Walla Balla.' [Photo by Michael Plog.]

Finally, John Meyers out-smarted his competition in solving the BG Wheel of Fortune puzzle: "What Kennedy faced when he redoubled Khrushchev, then failed to hit a triple shot." The answer was: "The Cube-In, Miss-All Crisis."

The \$1650 raised for the Anti-Cruelty

[Continued on page 6]



## SAVOIE WINS MBC...

[Continued from page 5]

Society brought our Midwest Championships all-time total over \$25,000. Thanks to all of our auction bidders and pull-tab buyers. Thanks also to Arnold Zousmer (CA) who sent a special donation of \$250.

We are grateful to all the individuals who helped to make the 2001 Midwest Championships a success. Watch for MBC in 2002 with "The Case of the Cocked Dice." Δ



Midwest staffers clockwise from left: Greg Tomlin, Carol Joy Cole, Bill Davis (director), Amy Trudeau, Dru Heggen, Peter Kalba. See you next year!

### 2001 MIDWEST BG CHAMPIONSHIPS

CHAMPIONSHIP (60): 1-Gyl Savoie (Canada), 2-Save Sax (CA), 3/4-David Rockwell (IL) / David Groner (IN); 1C-Jake Jacobs (IL), 2-Dana Nazarian (MN); 1LC-Richard Del Furia (MN). ADVANCED (64): 1-James Roston (NY), 2-Kelth Kuligowski (IL), 3/4-Save Maas (MN) / John Meyers (WI); 1C-Chris Wilson (IL), 2C-Mike Flohr (IL); 1LC-Mark Tremayne (WI).

LIMITED (33): 1-Bill Keefe (IL), 2-Ali Malik (IL), 3/4-Dick Nelson (IL) / Erik Erland (IL); 1C-Roger Hickman (IL), 2C-Jim Zinkhon (IL); 1LC-Tracy Galloway (CA).

GRAND CRYSTAL BEAVER (16): 1-Paul Weaver (AL), 2-Frank Talbot (MI).

OPEN DOUBLES (32): 1-Save Brown & Ralph Stowell (MN), 2-Tom & Karen Meyer (IL), 3/4-Carter Mattig (IL) & Sam Pottle (WI) / Bob Gekas & Tak Morioka (IL).

BLITZ (128): 1-Jim Muirhead (MI).

OPEN JACKPOT (8): 1-Jeff Kane (WI).

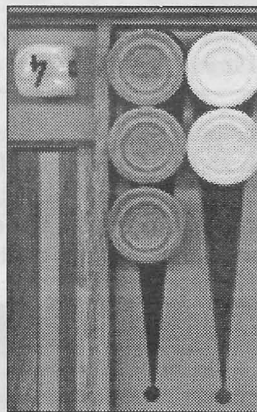
BACK TO ATTACK (16): 1-Greg Cattanach (GA), Ray Fogerlund (CA).

3-DICE BACKGAMMON: 1-Ali Malik (IL), 2-Sean Garber (IN).

\$500 BACK TO ATTACK (16): 1-John Brussel (IL); PIG-ROLLING: 1-Trudie Chibnik (IL); PUT & TAKE DICE: 1-Roger Hickman (IL); HOG CLUBBING: 1-Joe Wollick (IL); Walla-Balla: Dan Wesley (MI); BG WHEEL OF FORTUNE: 1-John Meyers (WI).

## AMALGAMATION

You have until 20 April to enter Duane Jensen's Backgammon Bugs Contest appearing in the March CHICAGO POINT and online at [chicagopoint.com](http://chicagopoint.com). How careless of us to leave out Duane's name in the newsletter version... Visiting the Bar Point Club in March: Larry Strommen (IN), Roger Blaine (IN), Brian Barber (NY)... Bob Gekas leaves the Chicago area for California this month. At the Bar Point Club on 27 March, Bob brought a huge Jeroboam of champagne (approx. 4 liters) to toast his departure; unfortunately the old bottle was flat. Let's hope the same doesn't happen to his car tires en route to San Francisco... Tak Morioka sold a special hand-crafted backgammon board at the Midwest Championships for \$1200. Roy Appley (NY) was the lucky buyer. The signed walnut board was covered in lamb-skin with a matching dice pouch and was highlighted by 50+ year old bakelite checkers... Although Bill Bartholomay played at the Midwest Championships tourney Friday evening, he dropped



The \$1200 Taki Retro.

out of the main event. We would too, if we had tickets to the Academy Awards Show... No, Jake Jacobs (IL) isn't suffering from Mad Cow Disease. It seems that Laila Leonhardt (PA) gave him a scarf to wear for good luck in the Midwest Championships



Jake Jacobs tested negative for Mad Cow.

Consolation bracket and it worked: Jake finished first... Finally, from Don Quixote: "Fortune may have yet a better success in reserve for you, and they who lose today may win tomorrow."—Miguel de Cervantes. Δ

## Chicago Bar Point Club 1000-to-1 Club

Name	Wins in a Row	Date Completed
David Rubin	11	1 Feb 94
Neil Kazaross	10	8 Feb 94
Phil Simborg	11	5 Apr 94
Frankie Farjood	11	25 Apr 95
Harry Cohn	11	9 May 95
Neil Kazaross	10	19 Sep 95
Neil Kazaross	11	12 Dec 95
Herb Roman	10	11 Aug 96
Andy Krenitz	12	5 Nov 96
Neil Kazaross	10	23 Dec 96
Wendy Kaplan	10	7 Jan 97
Phil Simborg	12	6 May 97
Phyllis Smolinski	10	6 Jan 98
Laila Leonhardt	10	27 Jan 98
Steve Mellen	12	1 Feb 98
Tak Morioka	12	17 Mar 98
Don Jayhan	10	14 Dec 99
Bill Bartholomay	12	23 Jan 01
Bill Bartholomay	11	20 Mar 01

Players listed above have won at least 10 matches in a row in Chicago Bar Point Club competition since 1994.



## ILLINOIS ACTION



Bill Davis  
773/583-6464  
Peter Kalba  
773/252-7755

Tuesday, 6:00 P.M. at Golden Flame, 6417 W. Higgins Rd., Chicago; 773/792-0424.

Sunday Bimonthly, 12:00 NOON at Anyway's Chicago Grill & Bar, 5 E. Roosevelt Rd., Oakbrook Terrace; 630/932-9323.

GAMES PEOPLE PLAY: Tournaments Monday, 6:30 P.M. at Chatham Computers; 8119 S. Cottage Grove, Chicago. Reginald Porter (708/715-2917).

PUB CLUB: Tourn. Mon., 7:00 P.M. at Danny's Grill and Bar, 345 W. North Ave., Villa Park. Joe Wollick (847/755-0887).

BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL BACKGAMMON CLUB: Tournaments Monday, 6:30 P.M. at Ride The Nine, 503 N. Prospect, Bloomington. Gary Daniels (309/452-3034)

SANGAMON VALLEY BACKGAMMON ASSOC.: Tournaments Wed., 6:30 P.M. at Brewhaus, 617 E. Washington, Springfield. Ben Zemaitis (217/483-4028).

WINNETKA BG CLUB: Tournaments Wednesday, 7:00 P.M. at 620 Lincoln, Winnetka. Trudie Chibnik (847/446-0537).

PEORIA BACKGAMMON CLUB: Tourn. Thur., 6:30 P.M. at Peoria Pizza Works, 3921 N. Prospect, Peoria. Ed Zell (309/674-0557).





# It Must Have Been Something I

8

by Jake Jacobs

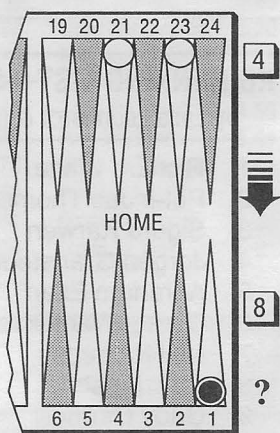
The nut was bright green, and though it was no larger than my rather small thumb, it hit the board with a loud crack, as though it had been flung down from the tree above us by an angry monkey. When I lifted it, it left a wet imprint on Gerhard Schulze's fine German board.

"It landed in your home board!" Gerhard pointed out.

"Yes, but it was a shot that missed me."

In the money round of the Thai 2001 Super Jackpot, such omens were not to be ignored. Especially when the cube was coming at 8...

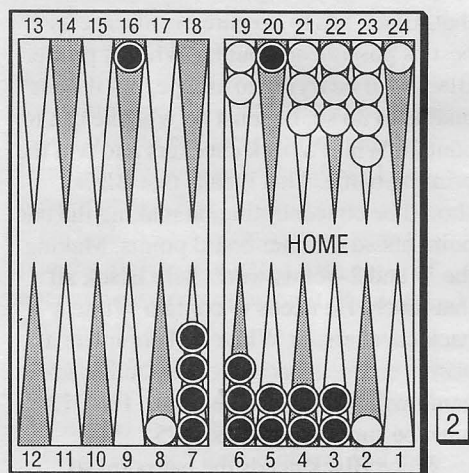
**Position 1.** White (Gerhard Schulze) redoubles Jake at 0-0 to 13.



I took, and Gerhard rolled an ace, putting me up 8-0. Two games later I saved a redoubled gammon to tie the score.

The next few games were routine, but then, leading 11-10 I felt confident after hitting with 6-2...

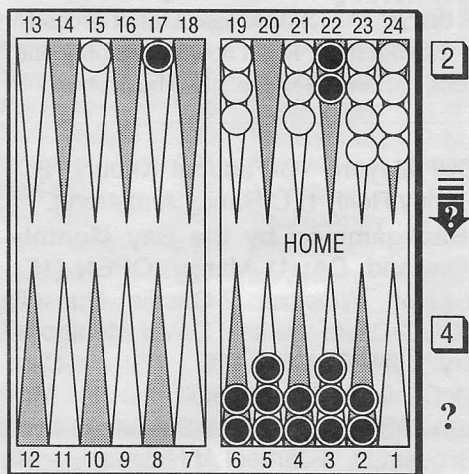
**Position 2.** Jake (Black) leads 11-10 to 13, and is about to hit with 6-2.



However, when I was gammoned from here for the match, I was ready to throw things like an angry monkey myself.

Nonetheless, I was not yet ready to forsake all 8-cubes.

**Position 3.** Steve Nelson (White) leads Jake 9-4 to 15 and redoubles.

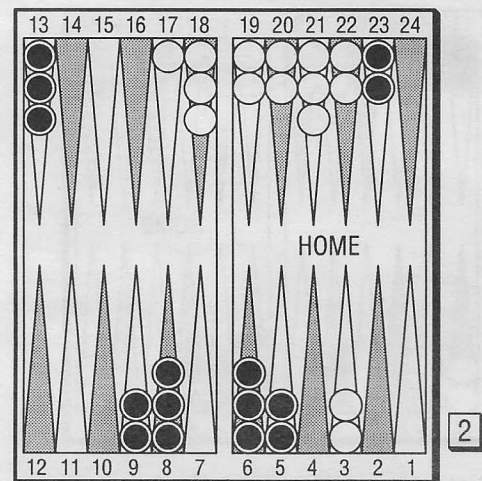


Steve Nelson redoubled me here, in our first round match of the Thai Open 2001. I guessed that by re-redoubling perfectly, I could take with as little as 14%. Since real life falls on the messy side of perfection, perhaps 16-17% would do it, and I thought I had that. In fact, a rollout gives me 18.2%.

Thinks went perfectly, and I was able to

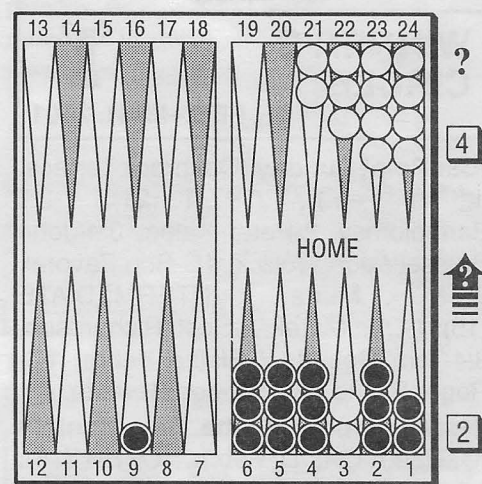
redouble shooting at two blots, while my board was closed. Then, leading 12-9, I felt that things were *really* going my way when I rolled 6-6.

**Position 4.** Jake (Black) leads 12-9 to 15. Black rolls 6-6.



At this score, I need about 87% to turn it back to 4, while Steve would need just 10% to take, so I drifted through the "too good/not good enough" twilight until Steve missed with a 3-2, breaking his 5-point, and putting me on roll here:

**Position 5.** Jake (Black) leads 12-9 to 15 and redoubles.



Despite the nearness of the pip count, I rated Steve's race as an 11-roll bearoff (his shot equity is nothing to brag about, either), so I rated myself a two-roll favorite, and this a pass. JellyFish™ thinks I win this 93.9%, but Steve, and the dice, had a different thought.

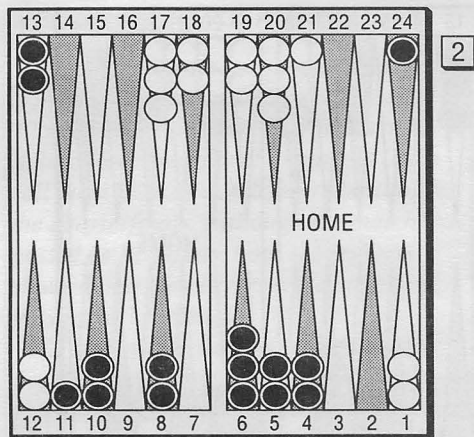
After taking and redoubling, Steve was kind enough to roli no better than average; it would have taken him eleven rolls to bear off. Unfortunately, I rolled an ace in 10 of my next 11 rolls, so I needed twelve. Δ

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# PROBLEM #270 ANALYZED

by Kit Woolsey

Money game. **BLACK TO PLAY 5-4.**

Not a great roll for Black. There are only three real candidates to consider. Black has two building plays available. One is to break the midpoint with 13/9, 13/8. The other is to break the 10-point with 10/6, 10/5. The third possibility is to slot the bar point with 11/7, 10/5. Nothing else makes much sense.

White is threatening to make her 4-point and complete a 5-prime next roll. There isn't anything Black can do about that. Black has to prepare his offense as best as possible to counter White's prime. Black will be trying to escape, but if he is unable to do so, he must do what he can to contain White's back checkers and win the priming battle. That means that Black should be concentrating on making the bar point ahead of inner board points. Making the 3- and 2-points won't help Black all that much. He needs to contain White's back checkers, or White will complete a prime, escape a back checker, and Black's game will fall apart. Therefore, 13/9, 13/8 must be superior to 10/6, 10/5.

Since Black needs the bar point so badly, perhaps he should slot it directly. He has enough cover numbers so he will be a big favorite to make it if White misses the shot. If White hits the shot, Black may have a double-shot back at the blot on White's 4-point. Black has the stronger inner board right now, which argues for a bold play.

The problem with slotting the bar point is that Black stands to lose a lot of ground if the shot it hit. Right now he has only one back checker to White's two back check-

ers, but if White hits, Black loses that advantage. In addition, White has a few hit-and-cover numbers which are devastating. Slotting the bar point and risking being hit may be too big a concession.

Does Black need to slot the bar point? Probably not. After playing 13/9, 13/8, Black can make the bar point with any combination of aces, 2s, 3s, and 4s. That's a lot of point-making numbers. In addition, Black will have 6-5, 6-3, and 5-3 to make the 3-point which is helpful.

Furthermore since White's number one priority will be to cover the blot on the 4-point, White won't be able to do much next roll to prevent Black from building his blockade. White can't both hit one of Black's blots and cover the 4-point at the same time, so if White does hit, Black will have several shot numbers from the bar at White's blot. This is in contrast to Black slotting the bar point, where White would have a few hit and cover numbers. It looks like 13/9, 13/8 is the superior play.

Slotting a key point is often necessary when you don't have sufficient builders to expect to make the point without slotting it first. When you do have a lot of builders, slotting may not be necessary. The quiet approach is often best. Δ

## WINNER'S CIRCLE



FEB.-MAR. 2001

•**Bar Point Sunday** (Oakbrook Terrace, IL; 11 Feb.)... OPEN (21): 1-Bill Bartholomay, 2-Peter Kalba, 3/4-John Brussel / Joe Wollick; 1C-Bob Zavoral, 2C-Mark Murray. INTERMEDIATE (16): 1-Don Marek, 2-Scott Richardson, 3/4-Tom Roberts / Elaine Kehm; 1C-Roger Blaine (IN), 2C-Joe Szewedo.

•**Backgammon by the Bay Monthly** (Oakland, CA; 11 Feb.)... OPEN (16): 1-Elliott Winslow, 2-Sam Ahmed; 1C/2C-Ken Arnold / Beth Skillman. INTERMEDIATE (10): 1-Clint McClintic, 2-Vladimir Kuznetsov; 1C-Cindy Moss. BEGINNER (7): 1/2/3-Anna Estrada / Tracy Galloway / Sai Rao.

•**NEBC Sunday Monthly** (Somerville, MA; 11 Feb.)... OPEN (26): 1-Herb Gurland, 2-Gil Evans, 3/4-Bo Mojahed / Alex Zamanian; 1C-Jerry Padova, 2C-Mark Damish.

•**Springfield Series #5** (Springfield, IL; 3 Mar.)... OPEN (23): 1-Ed Bauder, 2-

Cliff Mayoh; 1C-Faddoul Khoury, 2C-Randy Reiff; 1LC-Randy Armstrong.

•**Backgammon by the Bay Monthly** (Oakland, CA; 11 Mar.)... OPEN (16): 1-Elliott Winslow, 2-Charlie Russell; 1C/2C-David Jones / David Montgomery. INTERMEDIATE (7): 1-Clint McClintic, 2-Devin Skoll; 1C-Jim Mason. BEGINNER (5): 1-Sai Rao, 2-Matt Grousman, 3-Jameel Al-Hassan.

•**3rd Abu Dhabi Championships** (Abu Dhabi, UAE; 14-17 Mar.)... OPEN (107): 1-Andreas Humke (GER), 2-Ronald Reinhardt (GER), 3-Tariq Al Hmoy (EGY), 4-Mouaed Jameel Abdullah (IRAQ).

•**Ides of March Tournament** (Houston, TX; 15 Mar.)... OPEN (12): 1-Kerry Blodgett, 2-Tom Wright; 1C-Rod Sprouse, 2C-Derrick Crisp.

•**Milwaukee Sunday Monthly** (Milwaukee, WI; 18 Mar.)... OPEN (6): 1-Marv Arnol.

•**Ace Point Monthly** (New York, NY; 25 Mar.)... OPEN (12): 1-Antoinette-Marie Williams, 2-Jeremy Bagai; 1C-Gene Gold. INTERMEDIATE (7): 1-Henry Byzinski, 2-Eydie Noble; 1C-Jennifer Megalli.

## KG RANKING LIST—SPRING 2001

by Laila Leonhardt &amp; Matt Reklaitis

1.	Richard White	1875
2.	Peter Jes Thomsen	1873
3.	Sigurd Karwen	1845
4.	Jorgen Granstedt	1839
5.	Abraham Eitan	1825
6.	George Vadiakas	1814
7.	Neil Kazaross	1811
8.	Jack Kissane	1810
9.	Gady Carmelli	1806
10.	Katie Scalamandre	1799
11.	Steve Clark	1783
12.	George Stephanopoulos	1782
13.	Jerry Grandell	1775
14.	David Eshed	1775
15.	Mika Lidov	1773
16.	Anders Nielander	1773
17.	John Brussel	1768
18.	Ian McFarlane	1763
19.	Phil Laak	1761
20.	Dennis Culpepper	1760
21.	Christian Liebe-Hartkort	1754
22.	Dorn Bishop	1751
23.	Steve Wood	1750
24.	Linc Bedell	1750
25.	Frank Frigo	1748

The entire list is at [www.bg-info.com](http://www.bg-info.com).

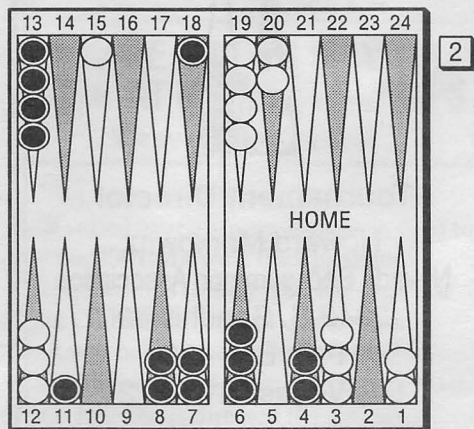


## BOARDS, BLOTS...

[Continued from page 1]

found most intriguing and worthy of analysis. I have found them to be interesting, aesthetically pleasing and instructive. They run the gamut from opening to end-game, but most are juicy middle-game plays in volatile, crucial positions. Here's a taste:

### Problem 54. BLACK TO PLAY 3-1.



The obvious play is 18/15\*/14. The "clever" alternative is 18/17/14, trying not to help White's back game timing. But the play that is right by a mile is 8/5, 6/5, a "purity upgrade" that leaves White 3(!) blots, and 33(!!) shots to knock them around with. A few years ago I might have dismissed making the 5-point as a product of the Barclay-Cooke-on-acid school of backgammon theory. I have since gained a better appreciation of the importance of solid primes against back games, but even so, this one surprised me.

The analytical write-ups are very good. Each problem fits onto one page: a diagram and a table of JellyFish rollout data, with several paragraphs of analysis sandwiched between. The solutions say what needs to be said and leave out what doesn't. They are lucid and logical, sparingly peppered with arresting turns of phrase that focus the reader's attention on the most important concepts. In all this, the hand of the "editor," Danny Kleinman, seems quite evident. In fact, overall the prose strikes me as more Kleinmanesque than that in the books Danny has co-authored with Antonio Ortega.

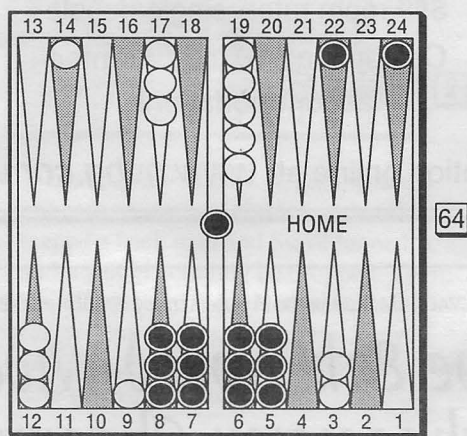
As for the "inevitable" errors . . . well, in this case there aren't any! I had "low hopes" when I first received the book two weeks ago. Wiggins used JellyFish 3.0 to do his rollouts. Each play received 5184 Level 5 (1-ply) trials, and in two close cases, these were supplemented with 720 Level 6 (2-ply) trials. JellyFish sometimes misplays positions, especially at Level 5. So I fed every problem in the book to

Snowie, getting 3-ply checker-play evaluations, and doing rollouts for all the "suspicious" positions. Snowie has not found a single problem in which the recommended play is clearly wrong. There is one problem (#4) in which a play that was overlooked may be a whisker better than the official solution, but I doubt that I could ever prove it (because the equity difference is so small), and in any case the missing alternative is thematically related to the Wiggins play.

There are a couple of others in which "Play B" is a lot closer to best than JellyFish thought. The diagram for #17 is missing a Black checker, but since the pip counts are given it is easy to figure out where it belongs. Diagram #32 shows a 2-cube across the board, though the text implies that the cube is still centered. Slim pickin's indeed, for this inveterate nit-picker!

I noticed one problem for which the analysis missed a key point:

### Problem 46. BLACK TO PLAY 3-2.



Wiggins/Kleinman neatly dispose of the plays that anchor on the 22-point or slot the 4-point. The tough choice is between B/20, and B/23, 24/21. Here they focus on the fact that although one would like to slot and later make the 20-point anchor, B/20 comes under the gun. "If White's man were on his 10-point, where it would bear on his 4-point as well as his 5-point, you would be right to move B/20, but as things are, B/23 24/21 is correct."

That sentence contains a testable claim, and it turns out that if you give JellyFish and/or Snowie the modified problem, with White's 11-point blot moved to the 10-point, then B/23, 24/21 is still correct, though it's much closer. The missing link, I believe, is simply that B/23, 24/21 gives Black a more flexible distribution. All he really wants to do here is leapfrog his three laggards home, making temporary anchors as he goes, trying to hit his opponent when possible and avoid getting hit or trapped himself. The 20-point fits into this plan

better than the 21-point, but given a choice he would rather make the 18, or better still the 16. Note the gross duplication of Black's even numbers after B/20: 6-4 makes the 20, the 18, or the 16; 6-2 makes the 22, the 20, or the 18, 4-2 makes the 22, the 20, or the 18. In contrast, after B/23 24/21 Black can make the 16 with 6-5, the 18 with 5-4, 5-3, or 4-3, and with all his 2s and 1s he can make the 21 or 20.

I believe that players at intermediate and higher skill levels will be able to learn from *Boards, Blots, and Double Shots* and enjoy themselves in the process. The book presumes a certain amount of backgammon knowledge and experience, and I would recommend it only to those who have read Magriel's *Backgammon* and Robertie's *Advanced Backgammon*, or who have alternatively at least played an awful lot against competent opposition. Norm Wiggins mentioned, in a letter that he sent with the book, that a couple of top West Coast players got 60% of the problems right in the process of reviewing the material before publication. I did just slightly better on my first run-through. Thus the problems are on average, significantly harder than the 500 problems in Robertie's recent *501 Essential Backgammon Problems*.

At the other end of the spectrum, the authors of *New Ideas in Backgammon* went to extraordinary lengths to collect the most fiendishly difficult checker-play decisions ever to occur in recorded tournament play; the problems in *Boards, Blots, and Double Shots* are less daunting, the solutions more accessible, and the instructional value at least as high.—Walter Trice

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