

2001 canadian open

MICHEL MERLITTI WINS IN CANADA

Hugh McNeil captures Masters

Following years of banishment as a gambling dice game, backgammon returned to Canada October 5-7 with the 2001 Canadian Open. The NetGammon-sponsored event drew more than 70 players to Le Nouvel Hotel in Montreal for a weekend of exciting backgammon action. Well-known auctioneer John Brussel directed with able assistance from Ellen Allen, Julian Haley, and NetGammon representatives Pierre Labbé and Malory Dujardin.



Rematch! Michel Merlitti (left) on his way to victory over Hugh McNeil in the Canadian Open. Earlier, Hugh defeated Michel in the Maple Leaf Masters.

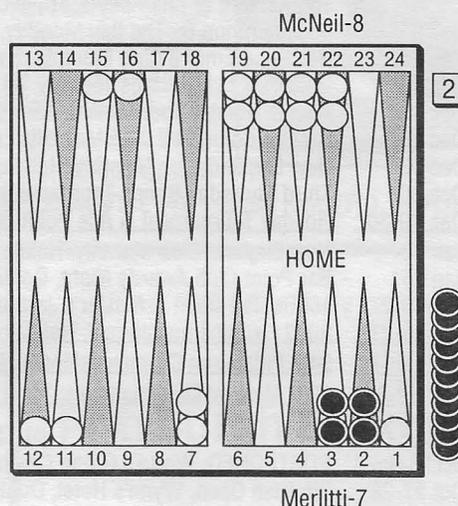
Although only 22 players took part in the Double Elimination Championship event (there were numerous cancellations after 11 September), it was a strong field, nonetheless. One of those strong players was Hugh McNeil of Toronto. On Friday, McNeil had bested 15 other competitors to capture the \$500 Maple Leaf Masters event defeating Michel Merlitti in the finals. Then on Sunday, he found himself on top of the Championship undefeated bracket. Now only one win in the next two matches stood between him and the Canadian Open title.

Once again, Hugh's finals opponent was the former proprietor of Le Gammon gaming club in Montreal, Michel Merlitti. As the two sat down to do battle, it was

obvious that Merlitti, a professional poker player, had very little major backgammon tournament experience. He balked at the cups to be used in the finals because they were lipped (but his request to use cups without lips was rightfully rejected). And he was often prone to "fast-rolling" his opponent (McNeil overlooked this, never calling for a reroll). That said, Merlitti is still an excellent player.

The first 13-point match went Michel's way as he jumped off to a quick 6-0 lead. But five games later, Hugh was on top 8-7, needing only five more points to claim the crown. After accepting Merlitti's cube, McNeil found himself in a tenuous position:

Position 1. Canadian Open finals. 13-point match #1. Hugh McNeil (White) leads Michel Merlitti 8 to 7. **WHITE TO PLAY 6-2.**



Should White run out and concede four points, or stay back and try for a gammon-saving (and perhaps game-winning) shot? McNeil pondered his decision for quite a while. In the middle of his deliberation, John Brussel announced that the bombing of Afghanistan had commenced.

McNeil looked up and said, "Message to the President: Not in the middle of my match!" It clearly disrupted his concentration and the focus of everyone in the room.

McNeil eventually decided to make his bar point. It's wrong by a lot. In the next

[Continued on page 6]

September 11 Remembrances

New York backgammon players react to a tragedy



September 11, 2001. A tragic day that will be remembered forever. Here are some personal reactions of New York backgammon players who experienced the horrific events firsthand.



For the first two weeks I rarely left home. I've eaten & slept with my television echoing hopes of survival all that time. Mayor Rudi pitched "go back to your normal routines." How possible is it to return to normalcy when everything that is routine has been curtailed? All the theaters, movies and museums were closed for a few days after the ne'er to be forgotten September 11. Even libraries were dark which meant the Harlem Branch where I tutor adults in a literacy-based program two days a week was halted. And the HIV/AIDS magazine office phones at the South Street Seaport where I answer the hotline also were disrupted.

How can we go back? We must forge ahead, renewed in determination and spirit. I've noticed that the people of New York City have become much more generous in the spirit of giving, of sharing, of caring. What we've see on TV is genuine: the outpouring of each-one, help-one has become a priority. The lies about my City being a "cold, callous town" have been eradicated. As I scooter around returning to some contrived routine, people are smiling, acknowledging each other more.

[Continued on page 5]

CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

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LETTERS

c/o CHICAGO POINT

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WBF STATEMENT

After the terrorist acts against humanity that occurred in the United States on September 11, the Worldwide Backgammon Federation (WBF) remembers the victims and offers its deepest sympathy to all backgammon players effected by these terrible events.

WBF is available to give its patronage to some ceremony commemorating the tragic events.—*Marco Fornasir, WBF General Secretary, Milano, Italy*

ANOTHER VIEW OF PROBLEM #274

It's not often that I doubt anything written in your most excellent periodical, but I must take issue with Kit Woolsey's solution to Problem #274. When I looked at the position, I instinctively wanted to play 19/14. I read Kit's analysis and thought he had missed a key variation when looking at

[Continued on page 3]

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

E-mail: cjc@tir.com

* Denotes new or revised listing

NATIONAL

American Backgammon Tour events underlined.

Oct 18*	American Eagle Open, Triple Crown Sports Bar, Houston, TX	713/567-1639
Oct 18	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament (Ohio State), Day's Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
<u>Oct 19-21</u>	<u>Illinois State Championships, Springfield Hilton Hotel, Springfield, IL</u>	<u>217/528-0117</u>
Oct 20	Redwood Empire Club Monthly, Embassy Suites, San Rafael, CA	707/824-9715
Oct 21*	Greater Columbus Club Monthly, Lucky's Grille, Hilliard, OH	614/771-0981
<u>Oct 26-28</u>	<u>Northeast Regional, Comfort Inn Airport, Albany, New York</u>	<u>603/863-4711</u>
Oct 28	Ace Point Club Monthly Tournament, Ace Point Club, New York, NY	212/753-0842
Oct 28	Atlanta Chouette Tournament, Tony's American Grille, Roswell, GA	770/333-1876
Oct 28*	Milwaukee Club Monthly, John Hawks Pub, Milwaukee, WI	414/962-8549
Nov 1*	MSN Gammonzone Medallion Monthly, via computer GZMedallion@gammonzone.net	
Nov 1*	Official GamesGridMonthly Tournament, via computer tournaments@cyberarts.com	
<u>Nov 2-4</u>	<u>48th Gammon Associates Invitational, A.R. Private Club, Los Angeles, CA</u>	<u>818/901-0464</u>
Nov 4	T/P Club Monthly Tournament, Java Oasis, Chicago, IL	312/719-1245
Nov 11	Backgammon By The Bay Monthly, TGI Friday's, Oakland, CA	831/688-9722
Nov 11	New England Club Monthly, Holiday Inn, Somerville, MA	617/491-8710
Nov 11	23rd Flint Area Club Championships, Holiday Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
Nov 13*	19th BPC Fall Trophy Tourney, Golden Flame, Chicago, IL	773/583-6464
Nov 15	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament (Las Vegas Open), Day's Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
<u>Nov 16-18</u>	<u>Minnesota State Championships, Thunderbird Hotel, Bloomington, MN</u>	<u>612/378-1536</u>
Nov 17	Redwood Empire Club Monthly, Embassy Suites, San Rafael, CA	707/824-9715
Nov 18*	Greater Columbus Club Monthly, Lucky's Grille, Hilliard, OH	614/771-0981
<u>Nov 23-25*</u>	<u>7th Ohio State Championships, Radisson Cleveland, Middleburg Hts., OH</u>	<u>330/966-2811</u>
Nov 25	Ace Point Club Monthly Tournament, Ace Point Club, New York, NY	212/753-0842
Nov 28-Dec 2	Las Vegas Open, Harrah's Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, NV	702/893-6025
Dec 1*	MSN Gammonzone Medallion Monthly, via computer GZMedallion@gammonzone.net	
Dec 2	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Anyway's Grill, Oakbrook Terrace, IL	773/252-7755
Dec 8*	Tournament of Champions, Triple Crown Sports Bar, Houston, TX	713/567-1639
Dec 9*	Backgammon By The Bay Monthly, TGI Friday's, Oakland, CA	831/688-9722
Dec 15*	Redwood Empire Club Monthly, Embassy Suites, San Rafael, CA	707/824-9715
Dec 15*	Universal Mall Awards Tourney, All the King's Men, Warren, MI	810/558-4790
Dec 16*	Atlanta Holiday Tournament, Tony's American Grille, Roswell, GA	770/333-1876
Dec 16*	Greater Columbus Club Monthly, Lucky's Grille, Hilliard, OH	614/771-0981
Dec 16*	New England Club Monthly, Holiday Inn, Somerville, MA	617/491-8710
Dec 20*	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Day's Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
<u>Dec 29-30*</u>	<u>Holiday Tournament & Ace Point Club Championship, New York, NY</u>	<u>212/753-0842</u>
Jan 13*	New England Club Monthly, Holiday Inn, Somerville, MA	617/491-8710
Jan 15*	Bar Point Club Awards Night, Golden Flame, Chicago, IL	773/583-6464
Jan 16-21*	1st Boston Open & Master's Jackpot, Hyatt Harborside, Boston, MA	781/641-2091
<u>Jan 18-21*</u>	<u>2002 Carolina Invitational, Holiday Inn, Charlotte, NC</u>	<u>704/398-8480</u>
<u>Feb 15-17*</u>	<u>24th Pittsburgh Championships/ABT Awards, Greentree Radisson, Pitt. PA</u>	<u>412/823-7500</u>
<u>Mar 22-24*</u>	<u>2002 Midwest Championships: "Case of the Deadly Roll," Wyndham, Lisle, IL</u>	<u>773/583-6464</u>

OUTSIDE USA

Oct 26-Nov 4*	POSTPONED: World's Grand Championship/Jackpot, Rhodes, Greece	97252-581329
Oct 27-28	9th Irish Open, Wynn's Hotel, Dublin, Ireland	3531-6689332
Oct 31-Nov 3	Consulting Doubles Championship, Hotel Royal Splendide, Lugano, Switz.	4179-3374425
Nov 2-4	6th Grand Prix de Suisse, Hotel Eden, Lugano, Switzerland	4179-3374425
Nov 10-11	Town Harbor Trophy, Hilton National Hotel, Coventry, England	441522-888676
Nov 11*	Toronto Club Monthly, Doghouse Riley's, Toronto, ON, Canada	416/772-9709
Nov 16-18*	NEW DATES: 21st Swedish Open, Quality Hotel Nacka, Stockholm, Sweden	468-189346
Nov 24-25	Danish Championship 2001, Østerbrohuset, Copenhagen, Denmark	4533-363601
Nov 24-25	Swiss Championship 2001, Switzerland	4179-4015811
Nov 24-25	2nd Asti Golden Trophy, Hotel Aleramo, Asti, Italy	39141-907021
Dec 1-2	19th Open von Thun, Hotel Seepark, Thun, Switzerland	4179-6569700
Dec 4-9	First Cancun Open, Ritz Carlton Hotel, Cancun, Mexico	49911-409505
Dec 8-9	United Kingdom Finals, Hilton National Hotel, Coventry, England	441522-888676
Dec 9*	Toronto Club Monthly, Doghouse Riley's, Toronto, ON, Canada	416/772-9709
Dec 13-16	Championnat de France V, Aviation Club, Paris, France	331-42618080
Dec 28-30	Schwaben-Cup, Hotel Mercure, Nürnberg, Germany	49711-486190
Jan 2-6*	7th Thailand Open, Style Restaurant, Jomtien Beach, Pattaya, Thailand	6638-303136
Jan 5-6*	Bright 'n' Breezey, Brighton Metropole, Brighton, England	441522-888676
Jan 19-20*	Dutch Open 2002, European Go Cultural Centre, Amstelveen, Netherlands	3120-4633724
Jan 24-27*	4th Principe Leopoldo Challenge, Lugano, Switzerland	4179-3374425

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 2]

5/1, 2/1. He forgot to take account of the fact that 3-2 and 5-3 become very good rolls for White and leave Black only six indirect shots from the bar. This, coupled

with the fact that Black would not be burning two men on his ace point, seemed to me to make 19/14 at least as good as 5/1, 2/1.

I therefore did extensive rollouts with Snowie™ and JellyFish™ and both programs evaluate 19/14 as slightly better than 5/1, 2/1. Snowie has Black winning 20% of games with 19/14 and 19.2% with 5/1, 2/1.

JellyFish produces a similar equity variance in favor of 19/14. (Interestingly, on 3-ply evaluation JellyFish evaluates 19/15, 5/4 as better than 19/14 and only corrects this on rollout.)

3-2 is a swing roll because after 19/14, there are no shots on the first roll since White must play 4/1, 3/1; but there is continued jeopardy on the second roll. After 5/1, 2/1 White should play 8/6*3 and leave six shots but have no continued jeopardy.

Interestingly 3-1 becomes a swing roll. After 19/14 White should play 4/1, 2/1 leaving no shots but after 5/1, 2/1 White should play 9/6*5*. The fact that Black will have two men in the air combined with his weakened home board structure gives the edge to the double hit.

What started out as an apparently straightforward problem looking only one roll ahead requires greater analysis to get to the truth and the accumulation of all the facts gives the edge to 19/14. Getting all of this right over the board would be nigh on impossible and just shows how much we have to rely on reference positions to come close to the truth.

It was only because I had a similar position in a match recently and had taken the time to analyze it that I even questioned Kit's original analysis. Tricky game backgammon!—Chris Bray, London, England

IS THAT YOUR FINAL ANSWER?

The Partnership of Michael Crane, Chris

[Continued on page 7]



ABT
AMERICAN
BACKGAMMON
TOUR ★ 2001

AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 2001

Top 100 compiled through 30 Sept. 2001 after 11 events
(Coming in October: Illinois State Champs and Northeast Regional Tourney)



ABT
AMERICAN
BACKGAMMON
TOUR ★ 2001

Jake Jacobs	62.93	Greg Lilley	8.80	Richard Munitz	4.44	Mike Flohr	2.40
Rick Todd	28.00	Adam Versaw	7.17	Norman Hansen	4.40	Glenn Ramsey	2.27
Neil Kazaross	24.76	John Brussel	7.12	Tim Mabee	4.14	Mark Haley	2.27
Bruce Russell	24.13	Charile Martin	7.06	David Rockwell	3.90	Danielle Bastarache	2.20
Gyl Savoie	21.45	Fred Kalantari	7.00	David Groner	3.90	Jeff Flowers	2.14
Steve Sax	16.20	Glen de Guzman	6.73	Ron Rogers	3.56	Steve Maas	2.08
Richard Del Furia	15.67	Herb Roman	6.69	Steve Goldstein	3.56	John Meyers	2.08
Matt Reklaitis	15.00	Julian Haley	6.60	Tak Morioka	3.51	Eden Windish	2.00
Dennis Culpepper	14.86	Eliot Bean	6.45	Chuck Bower	3.51	John Mansour	2.00
Jim Hall	14.21	Greg Merriman	6.34	Masayuki Mochizuki	3.49	Ed Johnson	2.00
Sakura Wells	14.00	Rob Maier	6.34	Tim Carroll	3.35	Mariano Gonzalez	1.92
Emil Mortuk	14.00	John Grecni	6.08	Bill Minser	3.35	Jim Zinkhon	1.83
Mike Corbett	13.89	Reza Nowbar	6.00	Norm Wiggins	3.22	Connie Tipton	1.78
Bob Wachtel	12.89	Mary Franks	5.88	Doug Roberts	3.22	Paul Lombardo	1.78
Chen Fu Yu	12.69	Jeremy Bagai	5.88	Fabricio Schaffrath	3.22	Landon Leming	1.56
Chuck Stimming	12.35	Chris Wilson	5.60	Joe Griffith	3.22	Matt Armbruster	1.56
Dean Adamian	12.35	Mike Friedman	5.56	Mark Tremayne	3.20	Ed King	1.53
Carl Sorg	12.15	Larry Taylor	5.56	Gregg Cattanach	3.05	Mark Murray	1.53
James Roston	11.44	Tom Daniel	5.22	Jewell Morris	3.05	Saad Ghiso	1.53
François Margot	10.98	Keith Kuligowski	5.20	Bill Keefe	2.95	Glenn Nunez	1.53
Bob Glass	10.46	Marianne Gatenby	5.11	Will Horton	2.94	Vadim Musaelyan	1.47
Tom Machaj	10.20	Brian Barber	5.11	Dave Cardwell	2.77	Doug Johnson	1.47
David Wells	9.94	Dana Nazarian	4.50	Ken Lazar	2.62	Roger Hickman	1.44
Jane Lewandowski	9.37	Paul Weaver	4.44	Gary Lohr	2.46	Hunter Jones	1.44
Paul Stebbing	9.00	Howard Shapiro	4.44	Craig Campbell	2.45	Ali Malik	1.34



Chicago

CHICAGO BAR POINT CLUB 2001 PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED
THRU 30 SEPT.

Bob Zavoral	24.56	Arline Levy	5.04	Paul Lombardo	1.76	Jolie Rubin	0.80
Lucky Nelson	19.80	Howard Chow	4.96	Georgina Flanagan	1.68	Wayne Weist	0.80
Jake Jacobs	18.08	Joann Feinstein	4.56	Jerry Brooks	1.60	Brian Leventhal	0.64
Glenn Martells	17.96	Peter Kalba	4.40	Roger Hickman	1.60	Paul Friedman	0.64
Tim Mabee	16.24	Alice Kay	4.08	John Brussel	1.36	Mike Sutton	0.64
Joe Wollick	14.04	Ed Buerger	3.88	Don Marek	1.28	Roger Blaine	0.64
Tim Carroll	13.56	Ken Bond	3.76	Erik Erland	1.12	Brian Kozin	0.64
Brian Barber	13.52	Scott Richardson	3.68	Ken Tyszko	1.12	Beverly Becker	0.64
Bill Bartholomay	11.88	Marc Rosset	3.60	Ed Bauder	1.04	Reginald Porter	0.56
Tak Morioka	11.56	Steve Klesker	3.20	David Donaldson	0.96	Sharon Steffens	0.56
Norma Shyer	9.52	Paul Baraz	2.88	Rob Farmer	0.96	Tom Roberts	0.48
Herb Roman	8.96	Wayne Wiest	2.80	Leo Campos	0.88	Barbara Levinson	0.48
Carter Mattig	8.16	John Jennings	2.72	Bob Katz	0.88	Richard Stawowy	0.48
Phyllis Smolinski	8.08	Mary Franks	2.72	Richard Lloyd	0.88	Joe Szewdo	0.32
Bob Steen	7.52	Mark Ryan	2.56	Wendy Kaplan	0.88	Scott Zucker	0.32
Don Jayhan	7.16	David Araiza	2.40	Karsten Nielsen	0.88	Amy Trudeau	0.32
Bill Davis	6.84	Mark Murray	2.40	Gary Kay	0.88	Tom Roach	0.32
Elaine Kehm	6.48	Tom Meyer	2.24	Barry Miller	0.88	Sakura Wells	0.24
J.A. Miller	5.92	Joe Auszmann	2.16	Paul Franks	0.88	Ken Tibbs	0.16
Bill Keefe	5.28						

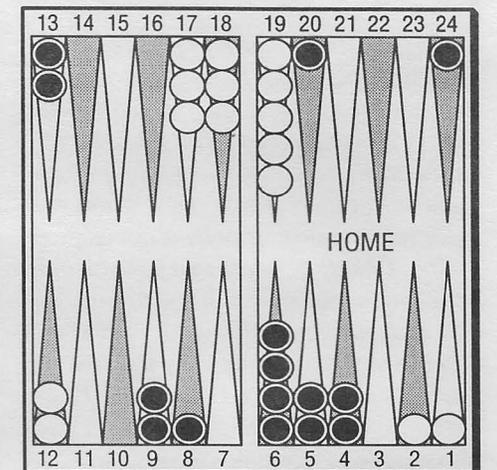
September's Player of the Month is **GLENN MARTELLS**. Glenn collected 2.88 points in a shortened month of play (there was no tournament on Sept. 11). Runner's up were Wayne Wiest (2.80) and John Jennings (2.72).

your move

PROBLEM #276

to be analyzed by Kit Woolsey

Tournament double match-point.
BLACK TO PLAY 6-5.



SHADES OF GRAY

A RULES AND RULINGS COLUMN

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A TRIO OF QUESTIONS

1) Dear Danny: *The 1990 Rules of tournament backgammon state in 3.2 (Preferences) that: "If necessary, the backgammon board, direction of play, choice of checker color, and set location shall be decided by roll of the dice prior to the commencement of play." Recently, in a causal game, my opponent started to play with the home boards not in front of the players, but across on the opposite tables. (I saw the same thing 15 years back.) Therefore, there are really four possible directions of play.*

If this player came to a tournament, could he demand that the home boards be set up on the far sides of the table and cite Rule 3.2 as his defense?—Roland Dieter, Deerfield, IL

DEAR ROLAND: There are only two directions of play: clockwise and counterclockwise. The choice of direction refers only to whose men shall move clockwise and whose men shall move counterclockwise. What you are talking about is the placement of the board, and there is only one placement of the board permissible: with each player's home and outer courts nearest him and aligned horizontally. Were other placements permissible, any number would be possible, not just four. For example, the board could be placed with both home boards nearest one player and farthest from the other, or diagonally, or at any other angle.—*Yours, Danny*

2) Dear Danny: *In our chouette, Player A likes to touch all of the checkers freely when counting pips. (Pipcounts are not common knowledge in our chouette.) This annoys Player B no end, claiming that it obstructs his view when he's also trying to count pips. Player A says there is nothing in the rules against what he is doing.*

The 1990 Rules state that you can only move the checkers when it's your turn, and only with one hand. The word "touch" is never used. Can you shed any light on this?—Drew Giovanis, Clearwater, FL

DEAR DREW: Even if no rule says so

explicitly, both players are entitled to an unobstructed view of the board, the pieces, and the roll at all times. If Player A can place a finger on an occupied point in such a way as not to obstruct Player B's view, he may do so legally. However, obscuring part of the board with any body part while counting pips or preparing to move, is no more legal than covering a blot with an elbow during your opponent's turn to move (a coup made famous by Gaby Horowitz in the 1970s).—*Yours, Danny*

3) Dear Danny: *I was the captain in a three-handed chouette when the man in the box rolled a terrible number. The box's choice was close between two plays, but it really didn't matter because I was going to cube him out regardless.*

After allowing him to struggle with his decision for more than a minute, I clarified everything by simply taking the cube and placing it on "2" in front of him. Although he immediately realized he couldn't take the cube with either play, the opponent was greatly offended by my premature action. All I was trying to do was relieve him of a difficult decision and speed play for everyone.

Do you think what I did was ill-mannered enough to harm a friendship? I certainly didn't mean it that way.—Tim Carroll, Oak Lawn, IL

DEAR TIM: Your intentions were honorable, and you did nothing ill-mannered at all. Though you are supposed to wait until your opponent completes his turn before you double, there is no penalty for a premature double such as yours. You merely lose both the chance to change your mind about doubling and the right to draw attention to an opponent's inadvertent illegal move, while your opponent gains foreknowledge of your double that may help him choose his play. Of course he need not act on the cube until he has lifted his dice.

"No harm, no foul"? Not necessarily. If the Box can benefit from your premature double, a Crew member may be harmed. So as Barclay Cooke said about making the golden anchor early, simply following the rules "just can't be wrong."—*Yours, Danny*

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.

AMALGAMATION

Backgammon is "OK" in Oklahoma with the debut of the Oklahoma City Backgammon Club Wednesdays at Henry Hudson's Pub. For more info, contact **Kathy Lamandia** (405/524-1885) or **Bill Gronos** (bgronos@juno.com)... Some readers have mentioned an eerie premonition in the September CHICAGO POINT. On page 7, the graphic for **Jake Jacobs'** (IL) "Not a Ghost of a Chance" article depicts an airplane crashing into a tower. The newsletter was mailed the evening of 10 September... Congratulations to **Wendy and Steve Manning** who were married in June. Steve is the proprietor of the New York Chess and Backgammon Club... **Abraham Eitan** (Israel) reports that due to current events in the world, the promoters of the \$100,000 added World's Grand Championship in Rhodes, Greece has been indefinitely postponed... **Michael Sneed** printed a letter from BPC player **David Araiza** (IL) in her 27 September *Chicago Sun-Times* column. In his letter, David describes how he was pulled off an airplane for questioning because he was looking at some engineering drawings on his laptop. David is Catholic of Spanish, Mexican, French and American Indian descent... GamesGrid's attempt to stage a Vegas tournament at the Las Vegas Hilton Hotel over the 2002

[Continued on page 8]



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). Phone before attending.

PUB CLUB: Tourn. Mon., 7:00 P.M. at Danny's Grill and Bar, 345 W. North Ave., Villa Park. Joe Wollick (847/942-2068).

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).

T/P BACKGAMMON CLUB: Tournaments Wednesday, 6:30 P.M. and Sunday monthly, 11:45 A.M. at Java Oasis; 2240 S. Michigan, Chicago. J.A. Miller (312/719-1245).

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

I am a New Yorker. No matter how much steel has crumpled, the steel to survive will strengthen our hearts. —
Antoinette-Marie Williams

There is not much to say. I watched it live on TV and it will effect me the rest of my life. I lost no family members, but we did lose two neighbors and at least one business customer.

This is something that I do not wish to write about. I live about 35 miles from New York City. Our community lost about fifty people.

It will never be the same.—*Bob Bishop, 2000 ABT Player of the Year*

CENTRAL AMERICA, TUESDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 11 (ABOUT 5 MINUTES AFTER THE SECOND PLANE HAD HIT): I had just arrived at the office building when two Spanish-speaking women from the office next door came running, speaking very excitedly and in very fast Spanish. There was horror and shock in their faces. At first, I thought there had been a mid-air collision. Then they drew a picture of the twin towers. Frantically, they grabbed the remote for the cable television. Oh my God!

Stunned. Shocked. Scared. Those were my initial feelings. Over and over, I tried to call New York. The circuits were busy to the states for several hours, and to New York for several days. Fortunately, news came to me that my closest friends and family were okay. But the world had changed.

Back in the city now, went downtown to see the destruction. The television cannot convey the magnitude. Store windows blown out two blocks away. The charred skeleton of the seven remaining stories of Four World Trade Center. Still, after two weeks, there is so much in the air that it is really difficult to breathe. Incredibly sad.

New Yorkers are a tough breed. We are dealing with it. Everyone knows someone who lost someone. There is enormous grief here. And some fear. But there is also a spirit of strength. And pride in our leaders and heroes. Slowly things are returning to “normal”; however, life will never be the same.—*Martha Ghio*

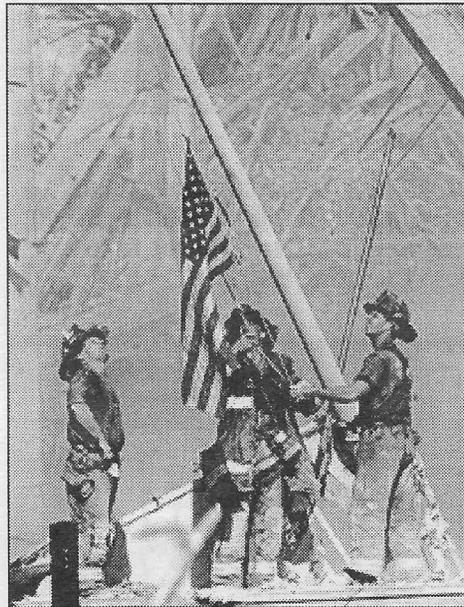
I cry every time I think of September 11.

My first phone call was to my son in Washington, who lives in the Capitol

District. He was in Reston, Virginia that day, which I now know is even closer to the Pentagon. He assured me he was fine. When he returned to DC, he said it was like a ghost town.

Roger and I canceled our trip to London. We were going to leave on October 5 on United from Dulles. The anniversary of the 1973 Yom Kippur war is October 6—our arrival date in London. I just could not bring myself to go.—*Renée Rosenbloom, ABT tournament director*

Lourdes, Rosemary and I were tucked quietly in bed when the phone rang like a wake-up call at 8:55 am. Lourdes’ brother from Connecticut said “Are you watching the tube? Manhattan is under terrorist attack!” From then we, like everybody else, just watched every channel around the clock for days, totally awestruck . . . we are still watching.



Then our employees called to ask, “Should we open the club early?” And we did, because we wanted to provide a safe haven for our club members (many who work downtown), all of whom we care about immensely. We emptied the supermarket on the way. (It was packed with crying kids and their parents.) We wanted to be prepared to feed and house people for who knew how long.

The fire stations in our neighborhood are totally decorated with photos of the lost firemen, as well as candles, flowers and notes of thanks from the survivors. Our neighborhood churches have lists of “the dead” and “the missing,” which have been changing daily. Every street post, wall and

window has photos of the local missing. Some days the air is clear and beautiful. Other days it is like coal-dust. We are about three miles uptown.

I think all of the initial emotions have not changed, nor are they likely to change. They are probably universal, too. Those of us who have not suffered the immediate grief for lost ones all have remorse and sadness for those who did.

We are disappointed for whatever and whomever allowed it to happen, especially those whose job we pay to protect us. And we are angry about that, too. Unfortunately, the hopelessness lingers . . . What is going to happen next? How do we escape it? We don’t even have a car to drive away, if we could get out of the city.

You know what I did that day? I made a list and recorded all of the people from all over the world, that I know are friends. It was easy. I just wrote down the names of everyone who called or sent e-mails to see if we were OK and how they could help. Some tried for days before getting through. —*Alan & Lourdes Steffen, proprietors, Ace Point Club*

When the planes hit, I was in my office, which is roughly 900 feet from ground zero. My co-workers and I evacuated soon thereafter. Outside our building we watched in shock as the towers burned. The streets were littered with glass and papers from WTC offices. Fortunately we were out of harms way when the towers collapsed. My overwhelming reaction at the time was anger, not fear. It took several days for fear and sadness to set in.

New York was and still is the greatest city in the world to me. The city will return to “normal,” but my view of the world has permanently changed. A couple of days later, Mika and I went out drinking with a group of friends, civil libertarians all, and conversation included serious debate on the merits of torture and limitations on civil liberties. Such a discussion would have been unthinkable a few days earlier.

Backgammon may seem trivial in light of these events, but the camaraderie, community, and competition it provides are more important now than ever. I enthusiastically look forward to the Las Vegas tournament in November: an insistent return to normalcy is only way that the average citizen can counter this attack. To do otherwise would hand the terrorists a perpetually-renewed victory.—*Rick Barabino Δ*

CANADA...

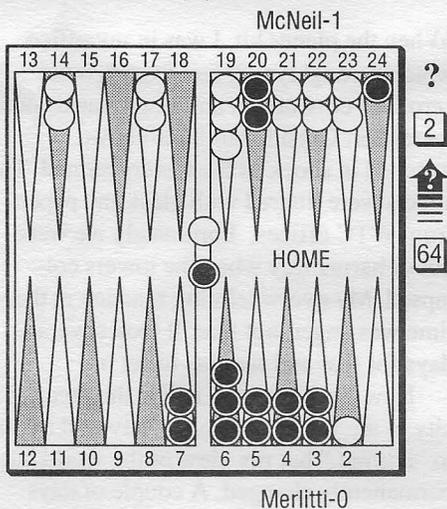
[Continued from page 1]

two rolls, White has less than 9% chances to get a shot and hit it. By staying back, he will be tripled and lose the match over 20% of the time. White should simply run and take his 25% chances trailing 11-8.

Merlitti went on to win the first match 13-10. During the break, Michel left the table, but Hugh made another tactical error. He played a couple of his 1-point mini-matches (an event he had entered earlier in the day). He won the first one, but his second one was such a complex game that he simply resigned in the middle of it. The wasted thinking energy during what should have been a break coupled with squandered quarterfinal equity in the mini-match event created negative vibrations for McNeil.

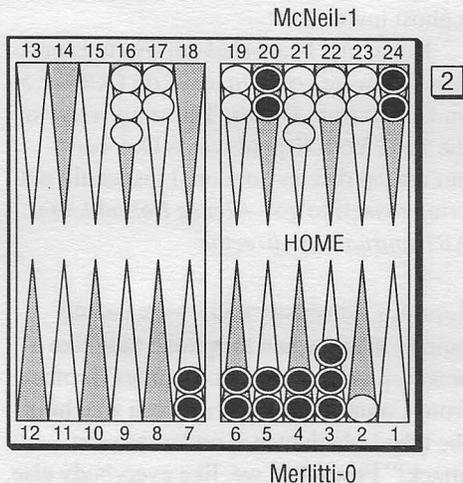
In match #2 and trailing 1-0, Merlitti cubed aggressively.

Position 2. Canadian Open finals. 13-point match #2. Hugh McNeil (White) leads Michel Merlitti (Black) 1 to 0. **CUBE ACTION (S)?**



This is a good double that some Open players would miss. McNeil correctly accepted. A few moves later, Merlitti had a tough 3-2 play.

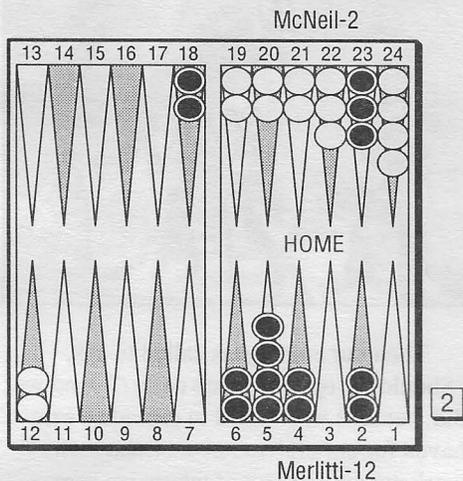
Position 3. Canadian Open finals. 13-point match #2. Hugh McNeil (White) leads Michel Merlitti (Black) 1 to 0. **BLACK TO PLAY 3-2.**



With the cube turned, most players would attack on the deuce point (7/2*). But according to a Jake Jacobs and a Snowie review, Running out 20/15 is best by 0.042. Merlitti hit and was rewarded with a gammon.

Buoyed by his aggressive success, Merlitti's dice took over to surge ahead 12-1. At 12-2, post-Crawford, Hugh made one last gasp to stay alive.

Position 4. Canadian Open finals. 13-point match #2. Michel Merlitti (Black) leads Hugh McNeil (White) 12 to 2, post-Crawford. **WHITE TO PLAY 4-2.**



Although many experts would bring two down (13/11, 13/9), Antonio Ortega's analysis (confirmed by Snowie) shows (5/3, 5/1) to be "clearly correct." Hugh brought two down, Michel hit and Hugh was unable to recover. Game, set, match to Merlitti.



Montreal staffers (from left): Malory Dujardin, John Brussel (director), Ellen Allen, Julian Haley, Pierre Labbé.

Special recognition is owed to NetGammon who provided \$5,000 in sponsorship money to make this event the success that it was. Montreal resident Michael Strato also did a terrific job reporting for Gammon Village, keeping the world updated on a daily basis.

There were many other tournament winners and they are shown below. Δ

2001 CANADIAN OPEN

CHAMPIONSHIP (22): 1-Michele Merlitti, 2-Hugh McNeil; 1C-Frank Talbot (MI). **INTERMEDIATE (32):** 1-Gil Evans, 2-Bill Wasley; 1C-Thomas Hanlon (CT). **NOVICE (11):** 1-Gilles Blais, 2-Davia Browning; 1C-Yvan Beaudry. **MAPLE LEAF MASTERS (16):** 1-Hugh McNeil, 2-Michel Merlitti. **LIMITED JACKPOT:** 1-Patrick St. Laurent, 2-Vadim Musaelyan. **DOUBLES (16):** 1-Carol Joy Cole & Len Dangremond (MI), 2-Isham Yamani & Mario Leone. **BEAVER BLITZ:** 1-Alan Robinson. **ONE-POINT MATCH:** 1-Claude Forget. **NETGAMMON CUP (32):** 1-Michel Merlitti, 2-Daniel Dorenbaum.

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LETTERS...

[Continued from page 3]

Ternel and John Gale regret that the proposed World masters Finals is to be canceled. We apologize to everyone involved with the event and those players that have shown an interest in taking part.

Our website is no longer valid, so please erase all links that you might have set up.

Any creditors of the Partnership are advised to contact Michael at the e-mail michael.a.crane@ntlworld.com where arrangements for payment of outstanding invoices shall be discussed.—*Michael Crane, Chris Ternel & John Gale, Backgammon-Global*

ANOTHER CHALLENGE

I loved the photo story about Jake Jacobs and Herb Roman challenging themselves with a four pound hamburger [Sept. POINT]. Maybe next year at the Central Illinois Summer Sizzler picnic, Cliff Mayoh can

cook up a four pound fillet challenge.—*Ed Zell, director, Central Illinois Backgammon Club, Peoria, IL*

CRUELEST GAME

Your mention of Norman Zadeh [September "Letters"], a world-class player from the 1970s, recalls a vivid memory: his thrilling match against bridge great Billy Eisenberg at the 1979 World Championships in Las Vegas. I think it was the semifinal round and the entire match came down to a single game. Norman was a near-lock to win as he had 12 checkers borne off. Billy had a closed board with two spare checkers on his 4-point. His last checker was back on Norman's 1-point. Norman's last three checkers were on the 2-point and it was his roll. He threw 6-1, bore off a checker and had to split his remaining two, hitting Billy's last checker and leaving blots on the 1- and 2-points.

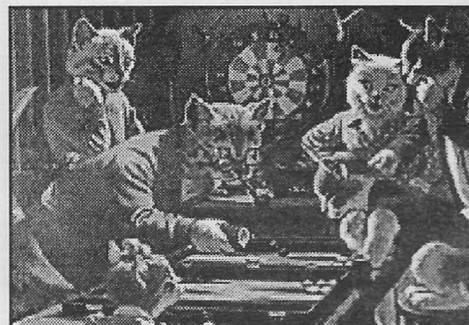
Considering the importance of the match, Billy entered with the most miraculous of rolls: double-1s hitting both checkers!

And minutes later, he won the game with a very big crowd watching.

Yes, backgammon is the cruelest game!—*Joli Quentin Kansil, Honolulu, HI*

CATGAMMON

Thanks for letting us know about the "Cats Playing Backgammon" artwork on eBay. We bid on it but someone wanted it more than us. If you run into another copy, let us know.—*Butch & Mary Ann Meese, Hoosier Backgammon Club, Indianapolis, IN Δ*



"Cats Playing Backgammon" sold for \$58.07 on eBay in September.

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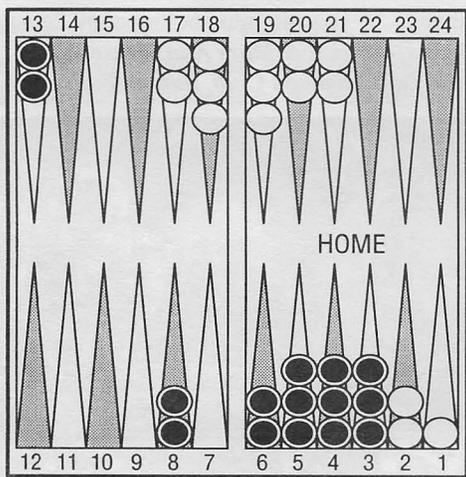
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Michael Meyburg (Two-times World-Champion) phone: +49 911 409505 fax: +49 911 409503 email: michael.meyburg@t-online.de

PROBLEM #275 ANALYZED

by Antonio Ortega

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



This interesting position arose in a match between championship players at the last Indiana Open. The many kibitzers who were watching disagreed about the right play.

There are five plausible plays:

- (1) 8/3(2), 6/1*(2)
- (2) 13/3, 8/3(2)
- (3) 13/3(2)
- (4) 13/3, 6/1*(2)
- (5) 13/8(2), 6/1*(2)

Play (1) 8/3(2), 6/1*(2) is the worst of these plays. Although pointing on the 1-point is good, clearing the 8-point is bad because two men remain isolated on the midpoint. Black will usually leave several direct and indirect shots on his way home. In the pivotal first shake:

(a) White dances with 16 rolls. Then Black leaves only indirect shots.

(b) White reenters on Black's 6-point with 13 rolls: direct 6s and 2-4. Then Black's 6-1 and 5-2 (played 13/6*) let White hit back with the same 13 rolls; Black's 5-1 leaves a double shot; and Black's 6-5 leaves a quadruple shot.

(c) White reenters on Black's 2-point with 7 rolls: all 2s but 2-6 and 2-4. Black leaves a direct shot with 5-1 and 5-2, and a double shot with 5-6.

Play (2) 13/3, 8/3(2) is also weak. It clears the 8-point without pointing on the 1-point, giving White the full use of his roll with three indirect shots. Its only merit is to start clearing the midpoint. Black's 6-6, 6-5 or 5-1 next turn leaves a direct shot. If

White doesn't roll a hitting 6-6 or 6-5 now, he will advance to Black's bar-point with 5-1 or some other 6, else stay on the acepoint and move on his own side of the board.

Play (3) 13/3(2) clears the midpoint entirely, achieving one of Black's two main goals. However, it leaves White's troublesome potential hitter on the 1-point unmolested. Fully a dozen of Black's rolls (6-5, 6-4, 6-3, 6-1, 5-1 and 4-1) leave direct shots next turn.

Play (4) 13/3, 6/1*(2) is a tiny bit better, for it points on 1-point while keeping the 8-point, and starts to clear the midpoint. However, the man that remains on the midpoint is a liability. Black will leave direct shots with several sequences: for example, with 6-5, 6-1 or 4-2 after White reenters on Black's 6-point.

Only **Play (5) 13/8(2), 6/1*(2)** achieves both of Black's main goals: clearing the midpoint, and pointing on the 1-point sending White to the bar. It is Black's best play by far. None of Black's rolls leaves a shot next turn, though Black may leave direct shots later while bearing in or off.

IN THE MATCH, Black played 6/1*(2), 8/3(2), isolating his midpoint. White entered with 2-4 and moved B/19. Black rolled 5-2, hitting 13/6*. When White danced, Black was relatively safe. Black rolled 2-1, lifting his blot (6/5) and inching closer to home (13/11). However, White countered with 6-5 from the bar, hitting B/14* and winning the match: a fitting punishment for Black's big error in the position shown. Δ

Snowie Rollouts, 2-ply. At double match pt.:

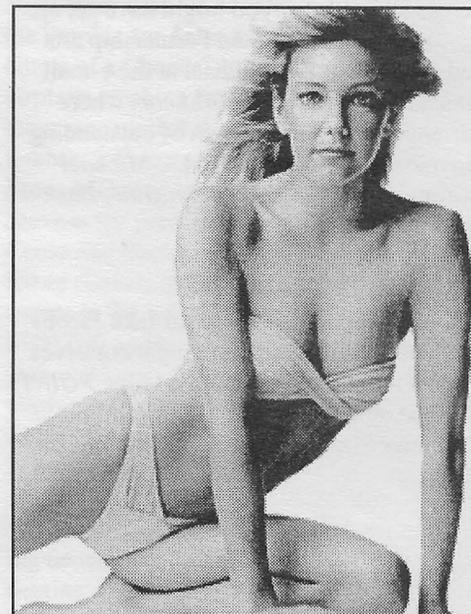
	Black's Equity	Black Wins	White Wins
(1) 8/3(2), 6/1*(2)	+0.386	63.9%	30.7%
(2) 13/3, 8/3(2)	+0.400	70.0%	30.0%
(3) 13/3(2)	+0.486	74.3%	25.7%
(4) 13/3, 6/1*(2)	+0.494	74.7%	25.3%
(5) 13/8(2), 6/1*(2)	+0.594	79.7%	20.3%

In money play, a live cube combined with Black's strong gammon threat makes Black's equities substantially larger, but preserves the order of plays and approximate size of the differences among them. Δ

AMALGAMATION...

[Continued from page 4]

Labor Day weekend is dead. There was too much fallout from directors who support **Butch and Mary Ann Meese (IN)** and their 50th Indiana Open that weekend... **Alyce Wallen (IL)** sent us a clipping about **Heather Locklear's** 40th birthday party. It



Gammon-lover Heather Locklear had a nice set for guests at her 40th birthday bash.

seems hubby **Richi Sambora** saw to it that attendees like **Michael J. Fox** and spouse **Tracy Pollan** walked away with gift bags including a Danier leather backgammon set. What better way to get a picture of Heather in the POINT!... Houston club director **Tom Wright** has renamed his 18 October "Casket Open" event the "Red, White & Blue Open." As Tom puts it, the name "...was meant to be funny, but is not funny at all, given the situation."... Did you know that **Jake Jacobs** provides the voice for Osaya/GoTo software's MasterGammon computer game? It's a great program—and reasonable... Finally, it was pro golfer **Gary Player** who said, "The harder you work, the luckier you get." That's true for backgammon, too. Δ

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**WINNER'S
CIRCLE**



AUG.—SEP. 2001

•**Hot As Hades Shoot-Out** (Houston, TX; 16 Aug.)... OPEN (17): 1-Jorge Salazar, 2-Jack Erwin; 1C-Paul Marshall, 2C-Richard Gray.

•**11th Mitteleuropa Tournament** (Nova Gorica, Slovenia; 31 Aug.-2 Sep.)... MASTER (62): 1-François Tardieu (FRA), 2-Robert Terenziani (ITA), 3/4-Akaki Kikaleishvili (GEO) / Lorenzo Laganà (ITA); 1C-Joel Schiff (ISR), 2C-Simon Gasquoine (UK), 3C/4C-Christian Liebe-Harkort (GER) / Lawrence Powell (UK); 1LC-Jerzy Behnke (GER), 2LC-Armando Balbi (BRZ). CHAMPION (62): 1-Ingrid Sonnabend (GER), 2-Giuseppe Baù (ITA), 3/4-James Bass (UK) / Antonio Fini (ITA); 1C-Horst Ernst (GER), 2C-Elena Grigore (RMN/ITA), 3C/4C-Alfredo Sperti (ITA) / Franco Perinelli (ITA); 1LC-Stefanie Rohan (UK/EST), 2LC-Rolf Vetsch (SWT). INTERMEDIATE (60): 1-Davide Gollin (ITA), 2-Wai Mun Yoon (CHN/UK), 3/4-Mihai Raducanu (RMN/ITA) / Mauro Soster (ITA); 1C-Marco De Bortoli (ITA), 2C-Louis Zanga (USA), 3C/4C-Stefano Catani (ITA) / Herbert Höllriegel (GER); 1LC-Alberto Da Pra (ITA), 2LC-Walter Landolt (SWZ); Ladies Prize: Bambi de Bruin (GER/SPA). SUPER JACKPOT (8): 1-Piergiorgio d'Ancona (ITA), 2-Kazuhiro Shino (JPN). HEINER HAUSSLEITER MEMORIAL (85): 1-Walter Jarc (CAN), 2-Roberto Terenziani (ITA). ONE-POINT TOURNEY WINNERS: Andrea de Zandonati (ITA), François Tardieu (FRA), Pierluigi Lorusso Petruzzi (ITA). SPERTI TROPHY: 1-Maria Croce (ITA), 2-Piergiorgio d'Ancona (ITA). 13TH EUROPEAN CHAMPION: François Tardieu (FRA). 14TH ITALIAN CHAMPIONSHIP: Roberto Terenziani (ITA).

•**29th Hawaii State Championships** (Honolulu, HI; 8 Sep.)... OPEN: 1-Laszlo Losonczi, 2-Paul Lyons; 1C-Paul Bates... *Thanks to Joli Kansil for providing results.*

•**Roy Hollands Trophy** (Coventry, England; 8-9 Sep.)... OPEN (50): 1-Paul Lamford, 2-Emmanuel Doi Bona; 1C-Helen Helm-Sager, 2C-Harry Bhatia. SUICIDE! (64): 1-Albert Tinker, 2-Rowland Brindley. FRIDAY NIGHT KNOCKOUT (22): 1-Paul Sambell, 2-Jerry Limb. DOUBLES (16 teams): 1-Pinky and The Brain, 2-Yorkshire Puddings.

•**Ohio State Club Monthly** (Canton, OH; 9 Sep.)... OPEN (18): 1-Essey Zaltash (PA), 2-John Baron; 1C-Mike Vasilatos.

•**Toronto Club Monthly** (Toronto, Canada; 9 Sep.)... OPEN (20): 1-Oscar Schoen, 2-Merv

Ginsberg, 3/4-Vlad Dobrich / Art Jenkins.

•**Backgammon by the Bay Monthly** (Oakland, CA; 9 Sep.)... OPEN (12): 1-Rawlin Pullen, 2-Ed Rosenblum; 1C-Dana Nazarian, 2C-George Rosen. INTERMEDIATE (8): 1/2-Rob Rulop / Christian Stoddard; 1C-Mark Antranikian. BEGINNER #1 (5): 1-Comet. BEGINNER #2 (5): 1/2-Becky Mulovany / Penina Meisels.

•**Amsterdam Open 2001** (Amsterdam, Netherlands; 15-16 Sep.)... OPEN: 1-Philip Vischjager, 2-Hans-Willem Capel, 3/4-Hanna Milsson (NOR) / Jean van Ingen; 1C-Pim van Haasert, 2-Vincent Versteeg; 1LC-John Slattery (SCOT). INTERMEDIATE: 1-Paul Gilbertson (UK), 2-Yehuda Pelter.

•**Red, White & Blue Open** (Houston, TX; 20 Sep.)... OPEN (26): 1-Gary Fomby, 2-Duncan Cooper; 1C-rod Sprouse, 2C-Jorge Salazar... *A record crowd for this event renamed by director Tom Wright to honor the memory of the September 11 attack victims.*

•**2001 Florida State Championships—**

ABT (Ft. Lauderdale, FL; 21-23 Sep.)... OPEN (25): 1-Mike Corbett (FL), 2-Mike Friedman (Canada); 1C-Larry Taylor (GA). INTERMEDIATE (27): 1-Charlie Martin (FL), 2-Fabricio Schaffrath (FL); 1C-Joe Griffith (FL). NOVICE (4): 1-Scott King (FL). ROYAL



Mike Corbett

PALM CLASSIC (8): 1-Ray Glaeser (FL). DOUBLES (16): 1-Steve & Wendy Manning (NY), 2-Dr. Bob Hill (NY) & Al Tesoro (FL). BLITZ (64): Raymond Rickard GATOR ROLL: 1-Denise Hemingway (FL)... *Directors Elayne Feinstein and Don Heinsler sent the proceeds from the Gator Roll to the New York Firefighters Widow & Orphan Fund.*

•**22nd Invitational Viotor Cup** (LaJolla, CA; 22-23 Sep.)... OPEN (14): 1-Shoichiro Sengoku, 2-Azzam Masarani, 3-Jon Viotor. LIMITED 913: 1-Chaim Lang, 2-Ceci Pedroza, 3-Steve Allen.

•**Finnish Open** (Helsinki, Finland; 22-23 Sep.)... OPEN (34): 1-Tuomas Laibert, 2-Jyri Lammi; 3/4-Timo Väätäinen / Sampo Miskanen; 1C-Risto Pönniö, 2C-Dadi Etamad. SUPER JACKPOT (8): 1-Risto Pönniö, 2-Barkwill (UK)... *Results from Tapio Palmroth.*

•**Towpath Tournament—ABT** (Turin, NY; 28-30 Sep.)... OPEN (6): 1/2/3 (Split)-Eden Windish (Canada) / John Mansour / Ed Johnson... *The events of September 11 had a significant negative impact on attendance at this New York event.*

•**Ace Point Monthly** (New York, NY; 30 Sep.)... OPEN (13): 1-Boris Golubov, 2-Arman Karamian, 3/4-Carols Salgado / Jeremy Babai; 1C-Regeb Shadallah. INTERMEDIATE (6): 1-Ray Javadi, 2-Ellen Tittler; 1C-Dick Natali.

•**Bar Point Club Sunday Monthly** (Oakbrook Terrace, IL; 30 Sep.)... OPEN (17): 1-John Jennings, 2-Brian Barber, 3/4-Lucky Nelson / Rob Farmer; 1C/2C-Tim Mabee / Ed Bauder. INTERMEDIATE (5): 1-Ed Buerger, 2-Wayne Wiest. Δ

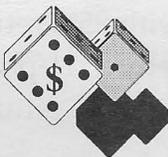
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