

JOHN BRUSSEL

1945–2003

Player, director, and Calcutta auctioneer extraordinaire John Brussel died following a long bout with cancer at the Hospice of the North Shore in Skokie, Illinois on 23 June 2003. He was 57.

A native New Yorker, John attended the Univ. of Wisconsin for his undergraduate work. He earned a masters at Georgetown and a law degree from Fordham. In the 1980s, he was employed as an international tax lawyer for AT&T.

John married Jill Ferdinand in 1990. Although the marriage lasted only three years, the close friendship between the two remained.

It was in the early 1990s that John moved to Chicago to work in the public relations field. The decade of 1990 saw John succeed as a player (he ranks 23rd all-time on the ABT) and organizer (Las Vegas, Chicago, Indiana, et al).

John will be best remembered as a Calcutta auctioneer. Across North America, he brought entertainment and laughs to the often boring Calcutta Auction with his quick wit and hilarious Don Rickles-type personal "observations." Nobody was safe from the lashes of John's tongue.

But John's insults weren't delivered with malice; they were delivered with humor. He loved the game and looked upon the players as part of his family. John believed that when we laugh at each other, it brings us all closer together. In that endeavor and on so many other levels, he was a success.

His service at Temple Shalom in Chicago on 25 June 2003 was attended by over 100 people including 20 backgammon players. Condolences were held following the service at Terry Phillips residence (John's girlfriend during his trying years).

John is survived by his parents, Harrison & Bernice Brussel (NY), and sister Anne Brooks (NY). Send contributions in John's memory to: Temple Shalom (3480 N. Lake Shore Drive; Chicago, IL 60657), or Hospice of the North Shore (9701 N. Knox Ave., Skokie, IL 60076).

Kent Goulding sent John Brussel the following letter [above right] towards the very end which was read at the service. CHICAGOPOINT wants others to read it, too. Δ

Dear John,

I hope this card finds you comfortable and at peace, with family and close friends constantly at your beck and call.

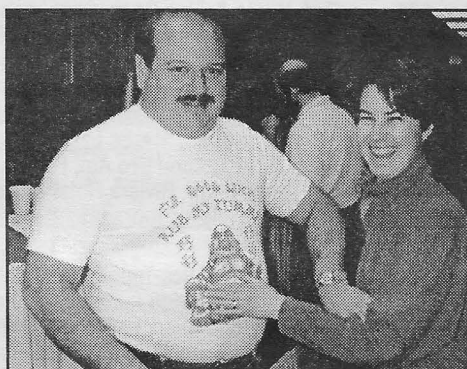
I believe the measure of a human being is not in how much material wealth he accumulates, nor the number of monuments he builds, or things he leaves behind, but rather in the way he affects the people he comes in contact with. To cause another person to smile or laugh or simply feel good, even for a moment, is of enormous value. John, by such standards you are a giant among men, rich beyond calculation.

For the many years I have known you, you've consistently had such an affect on me and, I am certain, on thousands of others. Simply arriving at a backgammon tournament and seeing you in the room causes me to feel better. It goes up from there.

I was touched when you asked me to play doubles in Pittsburgh this year and treasured our time together. I am honored that you consider me your friend.

While your gift to those around you requires no acknowledgment, I am confident such goodness will, one way or another, lead to further rewards. God bless you, John Brussel. I look forward to when our paths cross again.

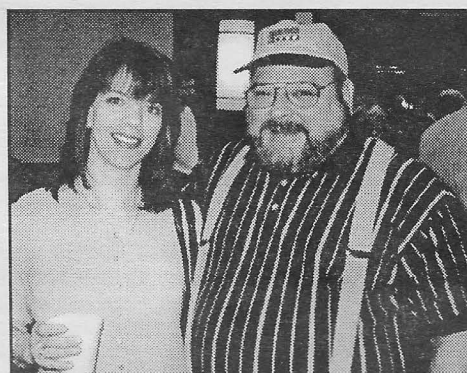
With great affection and appreciation.—KG



Tami Sylvester getting a little "good luck" from John in 1989.



John models a handsome beaver tou-pee in 1997.



Midwest staffer Amy Trudeau with John in 2000.



John's last appearance at the Chicago Bar Point Club in December 2002.

CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

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LETTERS

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REMEMBERING JOHN BRUSSEL

January 1992, at the Amsterdam Marriott Hotel . . .

John Brussel decided with me at breakfast to offer his help to Dutch Championships tournament organizers Peter Bouman and Abraham Eitan, who seemed rather overwhelmed with their new adventure. Abraham, one of the foremost tournament promoters and organizers of our time, knows this better than I, but John helped launch his (Eitan's) directing career. I think all of the international tournament players should be happy for that. John Brussel has likewise been "The Man" at so many major USA tournaments as well.

May the Almighty comfort John, his family, and closest friends. With our respects.—Alan and Lourdes Steffen, Ace Point Club, New York, New York

Each year, John Brussel was there to assist

[Continued on page 3]

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



by Carol Joy Cole
810/232-9731
cjc@tir.com

* Denotes new or revised listing

NATIONAL

American Backgammon Tour events underlined.

Jul 3-6*	Michigan Summer Championships, Hilton/Sheraton Hotel, Novi, Michigan	810/232-9731
Jul 10	Miami Valley Club Monthly, Buffalo Wild Wings Bar, Fairborn, Ohio	937/864-1748
Jul 13	Backgammon By the Bay Monthly, Shattuck Hotel, Berkeley, California	831/688-9722
Jul 13	Ohio State Club Monthly, Thirsty Dog Brewery, Canton, Ohio	330/866-2811
Jul 13	South Florida Monthly, Sheraton Suites Hotel, Fort Lauderdale, Florida	954/564-0340
Jul 17	Third Thursday Bonus (Indiana Open), Days Inn, Flint, Michigan	810/232-9731
Jul 19	Double Trouble, New York Chess & Backgammon Club, New York, NY	845/373-7272
Jul 19*	DATE CHANGE: Firecracker Classic, Sansone's Bar, Houston, Texas	281/556-0428
Jul 19	Redwood Empire Monthly, Embassy Suites Hotel, San Rafael, California	707/477-6430
Jul 20	CANCELLED: Austin Club Bimonthly, JC's Bar & Grill, Austin, Texas	512/261-8518
Jul 20	Greater Columbus Club Monthly, Lucky's Grille, Hilliard, Ohio	614/771-0981
Jul 25-27	1st Wisconsin State Championships, Radisson Inn, Madison, Wisconsin	608/516-9109
Jul 25-27*	31st Hawaii State Championship, Players Sports Club, Honolulu, Hawaii	808/294-7475
Jul 26*	Atlanta Warm-up Tournament, Mazzy's Sports Bar, Roswell, Georgia	770/333-1876
Jul 26-27	10th Summer Cooker, Steve Hast's residence, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	412/823-7500
Jul 27*	Ace Point Monthly Tournament, Ace Point Club, New York, New York	212/753-0842
Aug 1*	Official GamesGrid Monthly Tournament, via computer tournaments@cyberarts.com	
Aug 1-3	Thousand Islands Tournament, Pine Tree Point, Alexandria Bay, New York	585/396-0969
Aug 2*	Universal Mall Bimonthly #4, All the King's Men, Warren, Michigan	313/330-7803
Aug 3	Bar Point Sunday Bimonthly, Champs Bar, Oakbrook Terrace, Illinois	773/583-6464
Aug 3*	Ohio State Club Monthly, Thirsty Dog Brewery, Canton, Ohio	330/866-2811
Aug 7*	Miami Valley Club Monthly, Buffalo Wild Wings Bar, Fairborn, Ohio	937/864-1748
Aug 7-10	Georgia Championships & Peach Cup, Hilton Garden Inn, Atlanta, Georgia	770/333-1876
Aug 9*	Hot As Hades Open, Sansone's West Oaks Bar, Houston, Texas	281/556-0428
Aug 10*	Backgammon By the Bay Monthly, Shattuck Hotel, Berkeley, California	831/688-9722
Aug 10*	South Florida Monthly, Sheraton Suites Hotel, Fort Lauderdale, Florida	954/564-0340
Aug 16*	Redwood Empire Monthly, Embassy Suites Hotel, San Rafael, California	707/477-6430
Aug 16-17	Summer Sizzler, Zell residence (Sat.) & Pizza Works (Sun.), Peoria, IL	309/674-0557
Aug 17*	Grand Rapids Swiss, Garden Room Café, Grand Rapids, Michigan	616/647-9965
Aug 17*	Greater Columbus Club Monthly, Lucky's Grille, Hilliard, Ohio	614/771-0981
Aug 21*	Third Thursday Bonus (Florida State), Days Inn, Flint, Michigan	810/232-9731
Aug 29-Sep 1	51st Indiana Open, Sheraton Hotel & Suites, Indianapolis, Indiana	317/255-8902
Aug 31*	Ace Point Monthly Tournament, Ace Point Club, New York, New York	212/753-0842
Sep 4*	Miami Valley Club Monthly, Buffalo Wild Wings Bar, Fairborn, Ohio	937/864-1748
Sep 13*	Red, White & Blue Open, Sansone's West Oaks Bar, Houston, Texas	281/556-0428
Sep 14*	Backgammon By the Bay Monthly, Shattuck Hotel, Berkeley, California	831/688-9722
Sep 19-21	Florida State Championships, Sheraton Suites Hotel, Fort Lauderdale, FL	954/564-0340
Sep 20-21	24th Invitational Vietor Cup, Jon Vietor's residence, La Jolla, California	818/901-0406
Oct 10-12	Illinois State Championships, Springfield Hilton Hotel, Springfield, Illinois	217/528-0117
Oct 31-Nov 2	Minnesota Open, Mystic Lake Casino Hotel, Prior Lake, Minnesota	651/699-6758
Nov 15-19	2003 Backgammon Pro Am, Riviera Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada	702/893-6025
Nov 19-23	Las Vegas Open, Riviera Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada	702/893-6025
Dec 26-28	Ace Point Holiday Tournament, Ace Point Club, New York, New York	212/753-0842

OUTSIDE USA

Jul 3-6	15th City of Venice Tournament, Cà Vendramin Palace, Venice, Italy	3932-90513415
Jul 4-6	Sanremo Open/16th Italian Championships, Casino Sanremo, Italy	3902-69018168
Jul 5-6	Keren di Bona Memorial Trophy, Hilton National, Coventry, England	44152-2888676
Jul 7-13	28th World Championship, Grand Hotel, Monte Carlo, Monaco	USA contact: 954/527-4033
Jul 14-15	13th Nice Open, Promenade des Anglais, Nice, France	33493-879436
Jul 15-20*	Riviera's Challenge & Open, Royal Casino Sofitel, Cannes, France	331-42618080
Jul 16-20	5th Czech Open, Renaissance Marriott Hotel, Prague, Czech Republic	49911-409505
Jul 19-20	8th Liverpool Open, Liverpool Bridge Club, Liverpool, England	44793-1553829
Jul 24-27	Grand Prix de Lugano, Hotels Splendide & Eden, Lugano, Switzerland	4179-3374425
Aug 9-10	Studio Anne Carlton Trophy, Hilton National Hotel, Coventry, England	44170-7659080
Aug 16-17	Danish Doubles Championship, Sølvrod BG Klub, Denmark	4533-363601
Aug 16-25	7th MindSports Olympiad, Manchester Conference Centre, England	44170-7659080
Aug 21-24*	Backgammon on the Beach, Git Grado Principal Beach, Grado, Italy	3902-69018168
Aug 24*	Toronto Masters, Bayview Games Club, Toronto, Ontario, Canada	416/722-9709
Aug 30-31*	Gammonitis Hare & Hounds Trophy, George Hotel, Solihull, England	44127-3261073
Sep 5-7*	15th European Championship, Hit Hotel Casino, Nova Gorica, Slovenia	3902-69018168
Sep 6-7*	Roy Hollands Trophy, Hilton National Hotel, Coventry, England	44152-2888676
Sep 6-7*	Sjællandsmesterdkab, Kildegården, Roskilde, Denmark	4533-363601
Sep 13-14	First Antwerp Open, Café den Bengel, Antwerp, Belgium	32347-5256734
Oct 2-5	10th German Open, Hotel glockenSpitze, Altenkirchen, Germany	49521-64314
Oct 9-12	Austrian Open & Doubles Championship, Hotel Veronika, Seefeld, Austria	43512-287244
Oct 11-13*	33rd Japanese Championship & Tokyo Open, Nakano Sun Plaza, Japan	813-33733814
Oct 16-19*	1st Lucien Barriere Tournament, Enghein-les-Bains, near Paris, France	4989-152762
Nov 1-2*	11th Irish Open Championship, Wynn's Hotel, Dublin, Ireland	3531-6030891
Nov 5-8*	Consulting Doubles World Championship, Lugano, Switzerland	4179-3374425
Nov 7-9*	Gran Prix de Suisse, Hotels Splendide & Eden, Lugano, Switzerland	4179-3374425

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 2]

me in running a top notch Calcutta Auction in Pittsburgh. He also served on my tournament appeals committee.

I really liked John and was very pleased (especially for his sake) that he made it to our February tournament to conduct what would be the last Calcutta Auction of his life. Hearing the players give him a standing ovation must have given him a great

boost.—*Steve Hast, director, Pittsburgh Championships, Pennsylvania*

A REVIEW AS GOOD AS THE BOOK

Bob Zavoral's review of Paul Lamford's *Improve Your Backgammon* is one of the best book reviews I've ever read. Yes, it sounds like Bob really likes the book, but more importantly he made me want to buy it *now!* His teases of "...any one of these axioms properly applied will pay for the book—I guarantee you!" and "...seven

extremely general points will improve your match play—no doubt about it..." are true "sizzle-sellers," as we in the sales game like to say!

Lamford should be really excited about this review from one of backgammon's best!—*Tom Wright, director, Houston Backgammon Club, Texas*

'PSYCHO' PHIL DRAW'S INTEREST

I thought "Psycho" Phil Simborg's quiz and humor was a great use of space last month. I also enjoyed Bob Zavoral's book review. Carol Joy Cole, save me a copy of that new book. I need to get you a check!—*Roland Dieter, Deerfield, Illinois*

I did some long rollouts (720 games, 2-ply) of "Psycho Phil's" eight positions. It looks like he might have just looked at the 3-ply evaluations for the problems, as a couple of the results were rather different following the more extensive analysis.

For problem #1, Bar/24(2), 24/23*/22 comes up as the best move by 0.052 over the suggested Bar/24(2), 4/3*(2). Stepping one checker up to the edge of the 5-prime is quite valuable.

For problem #8, Phil has the right answer, but the rollout makes the second best play wrong by only 0.033, not the 0.375 that the initial evaluation comes up with. Thus the second best play is not a "huge blunder" and according to Phil's chart, is worth one point. Losing the 8-point is bad, but exposing two outfield checkers has a lot of downside, too.—*Gregg Cattanach, Doraville, Georgia*

[Continued on page 5]



AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 2003

Compiled through 8 June 2003 after seven events
(Coming this summer: Michigan, Wisconsin, New York, Georgia, Indiana)



Malcolm Davis	22.88	Emil Mortuk	6.73	Jon Viotor	3.37	Rebecca Marti	1.78
Gyl Savoie	22.39	Perry Firooz	6.73	Bruce Dimattia	3.37	Ron Zimet	1.61
Mike Ungerleider	16.81	Pat McCormick	6.63	Beth Martinson	3.29	Mike Charison	1.57
Ed Bennett	16.73	Mary Franks	6.40	Carol Falk	3.10	Brad Andersen	1.57
Sam Pottle	15.64	Jim Zimmerman	6.02	Petko Kostadinov	3.00	Mary Downing	1.50
Dave Cardwell	15.01	Greg Merriman	5.58	Rainer Stachowitz	2.96	Chinh Pham	1.47
Brian Barber	13.80	Jeremy Bagai	5.27	Brian Farr	2.95	Steve Delpero	1.46
Steve Sax	13.18	Walter Trice	5.27	Alain Azoulay	2.95	Max Muench	1.25
Raymond Rickard	12.29	Tom Hodous	5.15	Mike Cyrkiel	2.58	Matt Holleman	1.25
Gregg Cattanach	12.03	Marilyn Kubiak	5.15	Ben Elliott	2.57	Steve Kovach	1.06
Hunter Jones	11.15	Philip Smith	4.82	Bob Green	2.57	Jim Price	0.95
David Rubin	10.57	Frank Talbot	4.80	Rich Madzel	2.45	Neal Uphoff	0.93
Bill Finneran	10.57	Gayle Wolf	4.73	Dixie McGaffick	2.45	Bill Etue	0.89
Tak Morioka	9.18	Bob Glass	4.73	Terry Seymour	2.45	Michelle Garmise	0.81
Simon Kennedy-Rose	9.00	Vadim Musaelyan	4.50	Wendy Kaplan	2.30	Angela Hoffman	0.75
Ron Sanders	8.89	Herb Roman	4.44	James Bray	2.24	Betty Coppic	0.74
Wally Wolf	8.66	Ed Ratajczyk	4.28	Ray Woo	2.24	Eloise Johnson	0.71
Curtis Lucas	8.66	Dana Nazarian	4.16	Peter Roubicek	2.24	Bill Chibnik	0.70
Sho Sengoku	8.36	Bob Zavoral	3.94	David Rogers	2.10	Paul Lombardo	0.61
Richard Reasin	7.13	Greg Feller	3.93	Mark Murray	2.04	Kent Williams	0.61
Drew Robinson	7.08	Trina Smith	3.56	Kathy Garmise	1.94	Jill Brown	0.32
Jeff Kane	6.90	Terry Leahy	3.44	Connie Tipton	1.78		



CHICAGO BAR POINT CLUB 2003 PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED
THRU 30 JUN.

Tim Mabee	16.36	Bill Davis	5.36	Wendy Kaplan	2.80	Rodney Gonzalez	1.12
Bob Zavoral	16.28	Bill Keefe	4.88	Royal Robinson	2.64	Ken Tyszk	1.12
Phil Simborg	11.44	Eric Johnson	4.76	Howard Ring	2.16	Mark King	1.12
Tak Morioka	9.46	Peter Kalba	4.64	Steve Klesker	2.16	Nora Luna-Righter	1.04
Lucky Nelson	9.44	Arlene Levy	4.56	Larry Goldstein	1.92	Barry Miller	1.04
Herb Roman	9.12	Tim Carroll	4.48	Mitch Pomper	1.84	Kathy Sorci	0.96
Michael Peters	8.88	Ed Buerger	4.40	Joann Feinstein	1.76	Linda Rockwell	0.96
Phyllis Smolinski	8.08	Bob Steen	4.12	Doug Rodgers	1.76	Mike Sutton	0.96
Carter Mattig	8.00	Brian Barber	4.04	Glenn Martells	1.72	Aaron Ashmann	0.88
Mark Murray	7.36	Paul Friedman	3.92	Rory Pascas	1.64	James Roston	0.72
Paul Baraz	7.20	Gary Kay	3.84	Wayne Wiest	1.56	Elaine Andrews	0.72
Joe Wollick	6.88	Bill Bartholomay	3.44	David Araiza	1.52	Elaine Kehm	0.72
Alice Kay	6.44	Joe Sylvester	3.40	Jake Jacobs	1.44	Don Jayhan	0.64
David Rockwell	6.36	Georgina Flanagan	3.32	Paul Franks	1.44	Los Moshinsky	0.64
Val Zimnicki	6.32	Norma Shyer	3.28	Ken Tibbs	1.36	Brian Levanthal	0.56
Roger Hickman	5.92	Tim Serges	3.14	Joe Szewdo	1.28	Don Garner	0.56
Ken Bond	5.52	Barbara Levinson	3.12	Phil Martorelli	1.12	Bobbie Ivanova	0.48
Richard Stawowy	5.36	Roland Dieter	2.96	Carol Hooker	1.12	Mary Franks	0.48

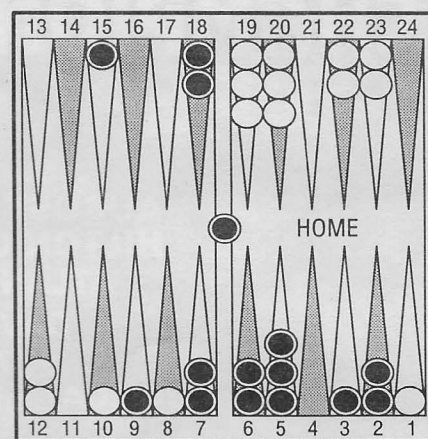
PHIL SIMBORG won two tournaments in June to earn 3.84 points and monthly honors. Ken Bond finished second with 2.88. Bob Zavoral placed third with 2.64, but still couldn't overtake Tim Mabee.

your move

PROBLEM #292

to be analyzed by Kit Woolsey

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



ASK DANNY



© 2003 by Danny Kleinman

BEARING A MAN OFF EXACTLY

Dear Danny: Although I've been playing backgammon for 25 years, a beginner had me questioning my memory at the club last week. I was giving him a backgammon bearoff lesson, including the best way to position your last two checkers on the bearoff (I believe you call it the "2.7 Rule"—space your checkers as close to 2.7 pips apart and you will never be wrong).

Then I told him that in almost every case, it's right to bear off a man "exactly" if you can. That means if you roll a 3 and can take a man off the 3-point, do it. If you roll an ace and can take a man off the 1-point, you can't go wrong.

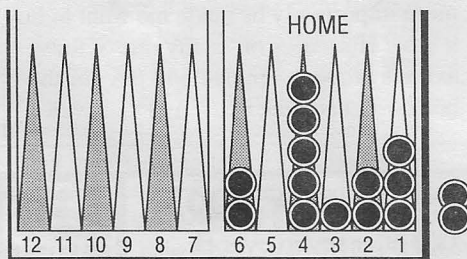
Then my beginner friend asked me, "What are the exceptions?" I hate to say it but I couldn't remember any. Do you know of any examples where (for example) the roll of an ace should not be used to bear a piece off?—Trying to Remember

DEAR TRYING: I addressed this question in "Magriel's Theorem and the Exceptions" (*The Other Side of Midnight*, 1986). Magriel's Theorem is that it's always right to bear a man off from the 1-point. In Magriel's *Backgammon* he shows a position

in which it's wrong to bear a man off from the 2-point. I show a position in which it's wrong to bear a man off from the 3-point.

Looking only at Black's side of the board and ignoring both White's position and the cube, consider this position:

BLACK TO BEAR OFF 6-3.



6/Off, 6/3, which leaves an even number of men and no gaps, is better than 6/Off, 3/Off, which leaves an odd number of men and two gaps. Reinforcing a wafer-thin point can be better than removing the last man from that point to create a gap.

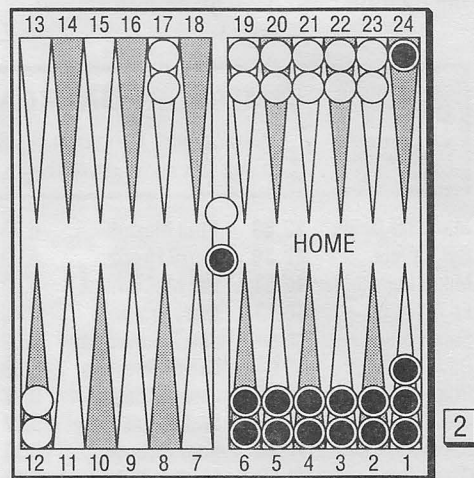
Magriel's position and mine are not the only ones in which bearing a man off "exactly" is wrong, but such positions are rare. They'll probably stand up and shout at you when they arise, so don't bother looking too hard for them.—Yours, Danny Δ

Questions for Danny Kleinman should be addressed to: Ask Danny, c/o CHICAGO POINT, 3940 W. Bryn Mawr Ave. 504; Chicago, IL 60659-3155 or send e-mail to: bg@chicagopoint.com

Expediting the Entry

A CHICAGO POINT CONTEST PUZZLER

by Joe Wollick



In the above diagram, Black rolled and rolled but could not seem to come in. After more than 10 turns without an ace, White came up with a solution.

"Since you need 1-something to enter, put one of your dice on the board with the ace up. Then roll the other die and play that roll."

"Seems fair to me," said Black who then proceeded to shake an escaping '6' to go along with his ace.

- Was White's offer fair to both sides?
- If not, why not?
- If White's offer wasn't fair, what is the most efficient way to fairly expedite the entry?

RULES

The player best answering the questions shown above wins a one-year subscription to CHICAGO POINT. Ties will be broken by random draw. The decision of CHICAGO POINT is final.

HOW TO ENTER

Submit your entries by mail (CHICAGO POINT; 3940 W. Bryn Mawr Avenue 504; Chicago, IL 60659-3155), or by e-mail (bg@chicagopoint.com). Only one entry per person. Entry deadline: August 15, 2003. Δ

www.BGinGA.com/gbc_main.html

10TH GEORGIA BACKGAMMON CHAMPIONSHIPS & PEACH CUP

AUGUST 7-10, 2003
HILTON GARDEN INN
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

DAVE CARDWELL
(770) 333-1876

BGinGA@mindspring.com



LETTERS...

[Continued from page 3]

POOR LABELING

I find your June newsletter intriguing to say the least. Pos. 2 (Page 1) says that White is on roll pondering a recube when in fact he just doubled in Pos. 1! Pos. 4 (Page 5) is also mislabeled. It is supposed to be a checker play for White, not a doubling decision for Black.—Larry Strommen, Indianapolis, Indiana.

You are 100% right on both counts, Larry. Change Pos. 2 (Page 1) to read "Black on roll." Also change the caption for Pos. 4 (Page 5) to: "11-point finals. Bob Zavoral (Black) leads Steve Brown (White), 9-8. WHITE TO PLAY 4-4."

Chicago Open article errors get worse for us. Read on.—Ed.

ROLLOUTS CHANGE CHICAGO OPEN ANALYSES

In the June Chicago Open article, the Snowie answers given for the first two positions suggesting the correct action to be Double/Take were wrong. Those familiar with the program know that Snowie offers a number of choices in analyzing cube and checker play decisions. The almost instantaneous, but most unreliable option is the "Evaluation," and that is what was used in the article. I did a Snowie 4 (Level 3, precise) rollout which are considerably more reliable. Here's a comparison:

	POSITION 1	
	Evaluation	Rollout*
Double, Take:	0.932	1.021
No Double:	0.848	0.839
Double, Pass:	1.000	1.000

**3600 games, live cube*

	POSITION 2	
	Evaluation	Rollout*
Redouble, take:	0.951	1.122
No redouble:	0.903	0.964
Redouble, pass:	1.000	1.000

**1200 games*

The POINT is a leading backgammon publication, and readers do presume the information is state of the art, so how about Snowie rollouts instead of Evaluations when presenting positions from important matches? The rollouts I did took up a large amount of computer time, but even much faster rollout parameters are better than Evaluations.

If a publication deadline or lack of computer time precludes rollouts, Evaluations are better than nothing, but they

should be identified as such. In fact, the editor is aware of the fact that for many years I have been advocating the identification of bot rollout parameters in articles giving rollout results. Surprisingly often, they are not.

I learn a lot by reading the POINT, but erroneous results from positions like these two can and do have a negative impact on one's game. And in this instance, the reporting of the Snowie results were used in the discussion of a particular player's "errors." When this is done, it's all the more important to do extensive rollouts.—Perry Gartner, Englewood, New Jersey

You are correct, Perry. Michael Strato did send us both the Evaluations and Rollout results, but we incorrectly selected the Evaluation figures. Our apologies to Sho Sengoku for doubting his pass in redoubling Pos. 2. CHICAGO POINT has recently purchased a PC laptop and Snowie 4 so hopefully, this error won't happen again.

Incidentally, we do like your idea of specifying rollout parameters. It would seem to be a great way to make accuracy comparisons.—Ed.

RESEARCHING PLAYER RESULTS

Is there any way to search a backgammon database to locate a complete record of wins for a specific player?—Malcolm Davis, Dallas, Texas

All the it presently searchable online are results of major events (including all ABT tournaments) at www.chicagopoint.com from 1998 to present.—Ed.

WHICH SNOWIE VERSION?

Roland Dieter asks what version of Snowie and what rollout parameters I used in answering Problem 289. I used Snowie 3 with a 2592 2-ply rollout. Perhaps I should have mentioned that in the column. However, I think the differences between Snowie 3 and Snowie 4 are irrelevant for purposes of ranking the moves in a game to be played to the end with a dead cube. Those differences, on the order of 0.050, are significant, but we should realize that the evaluations of Snowie are only approximate. Any additional improvement in the program from one version to another can alter the numbers.—Antonio Ortega, San José, Costa Rica

BACKGAMMON VIDEOS

I've just finished putting up a web site to sell backgammon video tutorials at www.tcetrading.com. Do you accept

requests for reviews? What's the process?—Mike Fried, via Internet

If your website is any indication of the quality of your video, we doubt you have a best-seller on your hands.—Ed. Δ

A FISHY WEEKEND

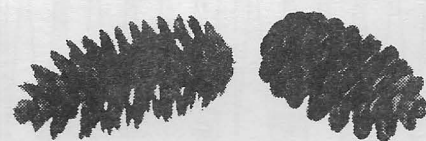


Here's Peter Kalba and his monster Muskie caught in Canada over the Memorial Day weekend. [The Muskie is in the foreground.—Ed.]

ABT

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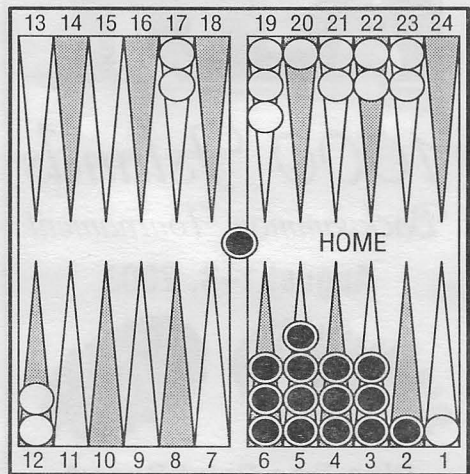
Dirty Diana



by Duane Jensen

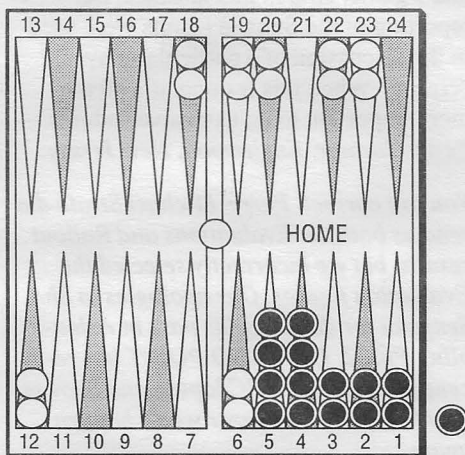
I'm at double match-point with "Dirty Diana" and my 5-5 from the bar makes me the favorite in this game.

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

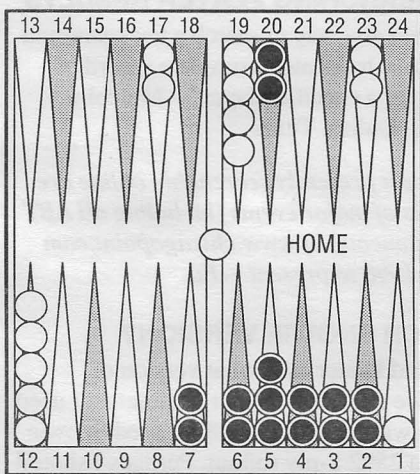


I'm studying the possible plays carefully because I've lost many games in which I was "favored." Here are a couple examples:

Pos. 2. In the 9 point match, I lead Bill Davis (IL) 8-6 (Crawford). Playing the Black pieces, **I MUST PLAY 1-1.** (I lose the game.)



Pos. 3. Leading Mary Franks (NV) 3-0 in a 5-point match, I am again Black and have a **6-2 TO PLAY.** (I get backgammoned.)



My history of losing games in which I was the favorite causes me to play carefully against "Dirty Diana," but I can't find the right play. I can't concentrate enough to allow the correct play to filter through. I think it's time to explain how "Dirty Diana" got her name.

"Dirty Diana" doesn't refer to her personal hygiene or the 1987 Michael Jackson song of the same name. "Dirty" refers to her use of distractions to confuse her backgammon opponents. My friends had told me about her dirty tricks so I was prepared. Since I knew what was coming, I decided to let her show me the whole arsenal. It might be distracting but I was sure I could deflect her best weapons.

Diana had set up her board just inside the front doorway of the playing room. She leaned across the board, extending her hand to greet me. She wore a baby-blue, very soft, very low-cut dress, which exposed me to distraction #1 . . . and #2. Her perfume was intoxicating; not sweet and heavy like the kind my Aunt Mary wore to church, but more spicy and sexier.

I took a minute to examine the playing arena. My view through the doorway was in direct line with the rest room doors. I saw a guy leave the rest room with his shirt-tail peeking through his half-zipped fly. Then I saw a woman exit with a length of souvenir toilet paper stuck to her shoe. "Dirty Diana" had strategically placed her board in a location that would be distracting for me. My friends hadn't warned me about this one. She got an extra point for originality.

When I leaned on the right side of the table, it tipped, almost spilling my beverage. She had chosen a table with one leg shorter than the others and put that leg on my side.

Her backgammon board had been altered or damaged. The bar on my half of the board had been beveled. A checker placed on the bar had to be positioned perfectly or it would fall off.

The diamonds or "points" on my side of the board were badly worn and were peeling up in some places. Additionally, the board was asymmetrical—wider on my side than hers. This irregularity meant that a "closed board" on my side didn't look closed because there was room for a seventh column of checkers.

The dice cup she gave me had a loose bottom so I always needed to keep one hand on the bottom to stop the dice from falling out. And she requested that I play

[Continued on next page.]

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with my home board to the right. This would cause me to roll more cocked dice because of the congested space during berofffs.

I knew what was coming next . . . her bag of unshelled walnuts which she was going to crack open while I was trying to think. This was not a surprise. My friends had prepared me for this. Was this the best she could do?

She could play all the games and tricks she wanted. By knowing in advance what "Dirty Diana" was trying to do, I was able to defuse all of her weapons. Nothing would bother me; not the cleavage, the perfume, the swinging rest room doors, her personalized backgammon board, or the cracking walnuts. I might lose the backgammon match, but I felt I'd won *this* battle.

Then she put on a headset to listen to her portable MP3 player. Her head was bouncing and her fingers were dancing on the table. It must have been a catchy tune. Then she said, "Would you like to listen?"

She handed me the headset and I sat back to hear the lively tune. When the song ended, I returned the headset saying, "I've heard it many times at wedding receptions where the favorite beverage was beer!"

She asked if I'd listened to the whole song. When I said that I had, she replied, "Excellent!" and put away the player for the rest of the match.

I was mistaken. "Dirty Diana" *had* won the battle. Most of her tricks failed, but this last one had worked. She had planted a virus in my brain: a musical virus. I had listened to a song I couldn't get out of my mind. Every effort on my part to suppress it failed. Whenever I tried to concentrate, the song would pop back into my skull.

Her bouncing head and dancing fingers had been an act. She didn't even have the MP3 player running. It was only turned on when she passed it to me. She had infected me and then put the player away. It had done its job.

Sure I won the match. Big deal! I left the table outfoxed by a fox. She stuck a song in my head that stayed the whole weekend. The only way I ridded myself of that tune was to listen to "It's a Small, Small World" a half-dozen times.

Unfortunately, now I have the urge to go to Disneyworld.—*Duane Jensen Δ*

[*Hopefully, you moved correctly in all of the positions. Pos. 1: B/20*/15/10/5. Pos. 2: 5/4(4). Pos. 3: 7/1*, 20/18. To hear Dirty Diana's song, go to www.chicagopoint.com/julydd.html — Ed.]*

AMALGAMATION

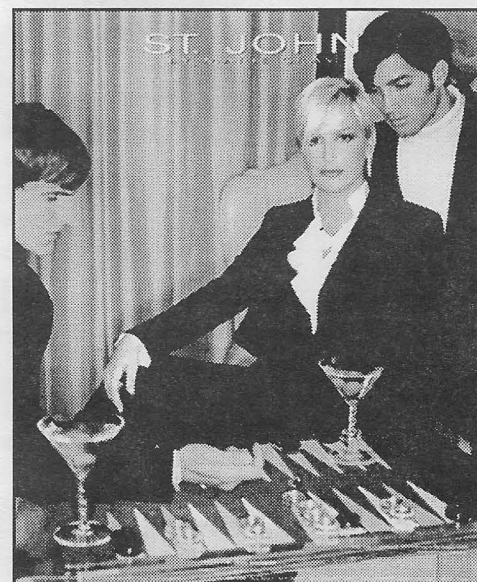
Gammon Village sparkplug **Michael Strato** (Canada) and Nevada Backgammon Association director **Howard Markowitz** are exploring the possibility of organizing a new international backgammon event at the Radisson Aruba Resort & Casino. Preliminary dates are 14–19 October 2003. Are you interested in an Aruba backgammon tournament? If so, e-mail Michael: editor@gammonvillage.com. . . The 25 December 1939 Time magazine reviews the blockbuster hit *Gone With the Wind*. According to the review, "Though **Clark Gable** taught **Vivien Leigh** to play backgammon and never won a game from her, they were not the best of friends." . . . Congratulations to **Phil Simborg** and **Randee Shapiro** who were married 22 June in Chicago at the Signature Room (top of the 100 story John Hancock Building) . . .



Randee and Phil at the Midwest Championships in 1999.

CHICAGO POINT interviewed by **Janet Pak** (NY) of Associated Press regarding the extra work and additional expense of continuing to publish a newsletter on paper vs. posting it online. . . The Hoosier Backgammon Club will be posting a webpage in memory of **John Brussel**. HBC director **Butch Meese** (IN) will be accepting write-ups and photographs from anyone who would like to contribute. Send your submissions to: indybg@comcast.net . . . Did you watch **Paul Magriel** (NV) at the Reno Hilton World Poker Tour event? It was televised on the Travel Channel 18 June. X-22 quacked his way to a 4th place finish and \$30,000. . . "Thank you" to **Jake Jacobs** (AZ) for a great story about his 15+ years of good times at the Chicago Bar Point Club. You can still read the 15 May 2003 article ("Return of the Native") online at gammonvillage.com. . . **Val Zimmnicki** (IL) told us about the glitzy St. John's

backgammon-related ad on the back page of the June *Chicago Scene* magazine. Of course the models don't know the first thing about backgammon, but it looks pretty. For a full color version, go to the chicagopoint.com website. . .



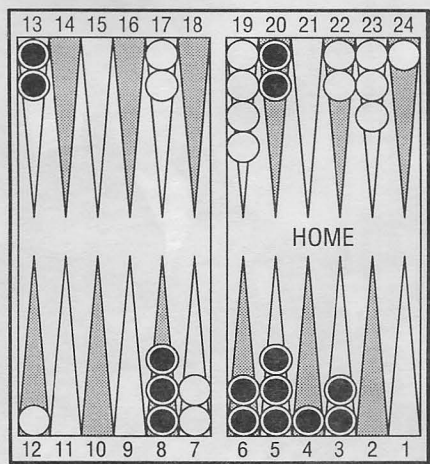
St. John's backgammon ad. Obviously the martinis are shaken, not stirred.

Do you have an old Crisloid board with a worn cork surface? Turn it into a Zavoral Board for only \$150 + postage. That's what **Bob Z.** (IL) is charging to resurface them. . . CHICAGO POINT has always been published on a Macintosh computer. But we have broken down and purchased a Sony PC laptop in order to run Snowie 4. **Perry Gartner** (NJ), who analyzes Snowie with three computers 24 hours a day, will be assisting us in proper rollout methods. . . Illinois to Texas/Mexico: Peoria player **Dick Nelson**. . . To paraphrase **Jawaharlal Nehru**: "Life is like a dice roll. The numbers that you roll represent determinism; the way you play them is free will." . . . In her 20 June 1988 article comparing the differences between the elder **George Bush** and **Michael Dukakis** "A Tale of Two Childhoods," **Margaret Carlson** writes: "Each summer of his childhood, George Bush went with his family to a sprawling shingle-and-stone cottage in Kennebunkport, Maine, joined by assorted cousins and friends who could always find a spare bedroom, an extra tennis racquet. Days were crammed with sailing and tennis at the River Club, fierce games of backgammon and Scrabble at night." Now go out and enjoy *your* summer. CHICAGO POINT will take an August vacation. See you in September. Δ

**PROBLEM #291
ANALYZED**

by Steve Sax

Match to 11 points. Black leads White, 9 to 8. **BLACK TO PLAY 6-1.**



In this checker play problem with future cube implications, you have two clear candidates. All other choices can readily be dismissed.

The first choice that comes to mind is to hit and safety your blot (13/12*/6). The other reasonable play is to make your 4-point and slot your 2-point (5/4, 8/2). As in all close decisions, there are gains and drawbacks with each play. Let's discuss them and then come to a reasoned conclusion.

My first instinct was the hitting play. This choice gains when White fans (25% of the time) or when she comes in with an awkward number like 3-2. Additionally, some of White's return hits are fraught with danger. If White rolls 6-1 or 6-2 and hits Black on the 12-point, White will be playing with four blots. Since Black's objective in such a position at 2-away is to win an undoubted gammon, White will be on the constant defensive to ward off such a blitz.

Other factors in favor of the hitting play include the weakness of White's position. She has a three point blotted board with deep points. White's ability to either prime Black or close him out are severely limited due to those factors as well as Black's possession of an advanced anchor.

Although the hitting play is sound, it has drawbacks. Black will be playing with two blots instead of zero. White does have a diversification of good numbers in that 4s and 6s hit, and deuces and 5s cover. Since White needs three points and Black needs two, White will seriously consider doubling if a favorable sequence goes her way. And if that sequence is dramatic enough, Black will have to pass.

There are even instances where White can double with less than 50% winning chances. Consider the one-roll position where if White hits, she might win a gammon, but if she misses, she's likely to lose a gammon and the match anyway. Note that White's position following Black's 13/12*/6 in Problem 291 is *not* an instance where it would be right to double.

Let's take a look at the non-hitting 5/4, 8/2 that builds Black's board and waits for White's timing to break. This is a less volatile move designed to out-time White by creating a strong board and hitting a shot when it is more of a winner. Is this a sound strategy?

Let's delve deeper by examining how much timing Black has compared to White. Timing can be measured by how many spare pips each side can move before having to either break the board or expose an outfield checker.

White can move 24 spare pips before she must break her 18-point or 8-point. Black can move 13 pips using his two pieces on his 8-point as vehicles to maintain timing.

At first look it might appear that White has more timing than Black; however White is on roll first and is hard-pressed to control Black's two checkers on the 20-point. Thus Black's timing, once he gets to put his anchor checkers into play, is better than White's. Still, White has many shakes to roll a joker double-5 or double-4 which would put her well on the way to winning.

If Black plays 5/4, 8/2, any future hitting of White is worth more than the initial hit (13/12*/6) since Black's board is better and Black will be less likely to have

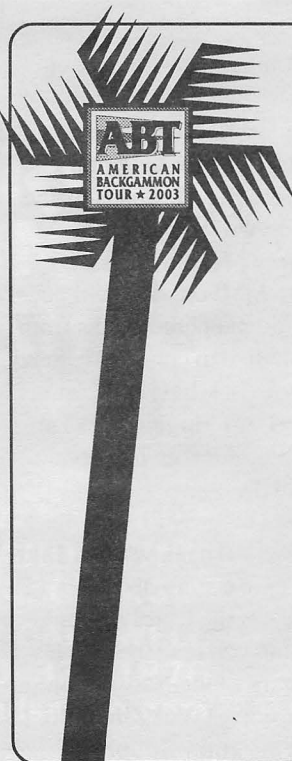
blots at jeopardy. The problem is: will Black get another shot and then hit it?

White gets hit about 10% on the initial two shake sequence after the non-hitting play. That may seem like a good sign, but when you consider that 13/12*/6 in essence and actuality hits 100% of the time, you have to question whether you will get a reasonable number of cumulative shots as the game plays itself out. You must be getting some serious compensation for not hitting right away since your overall hits will be much less with the waiting play.

I would think that one compensation is not being gammoned as often since you are playing without any initial blots and are improving your board. This is indeed borne out in a Snowie rollout of the position. You are only gammoned 5.7% of the time after the "safe" play and a full 12.4% of the time with the "risky" play. However, this is not enough compensation for the 18% of the time that you win a gammon with the "risky" play versus the 12.2% of the time you win a gammon with the "safe" play.

When you consider that the gammon ratio in comparing the "risky" play with the "safe" play is 7.2/6.7 in favor of the "safe" play, you might think that the safe play takes the lead. The fact that the "risky" play wins a full 3% more often (55% vs. 52%) is the deciding factor when examining empirical results. The "risky" play isn't that risky after all because of White's previously-stated positional weaknesses.

If any of these features were not present in a similar match score situation, hitting could easily be the wrong choice.—Steve Sax Δ



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WINNER'S CIRCLE



May-June 2003

•**Miami Valley Monthly** (Fairborn, OH; 1 May)... OPEN (13): 1-Kim Starbuck, 2-Roger Foster, 3-Larry Buckingham.

•**Northwest Indiana Monthly** (Porter, IN; 10 May)... OPEN: 1/2-Marie Fancher / Tom Wade.

•**Grand Rapids Swiss** (Grand Rapids, MI; 17 May)... OPEN (22): 1-Michael Darooge, 2/5-Brion Brooks / Rob Adams (IN) / Carol Falk / Gary Marchenia.

•**Copenhagen Open** (Klampenborg, Denmark; 18 May)... ORDRUP CUP (36): 1-Mikael Speiermann, 2-Asger Kring, 3/4-Navidi Afshar / Søren Andersen; 1C-Klaus Switon, 2C-Kim Jensen. INTERMEDIATE (54): 1-Martin Foldager, 2-Bonnie Jönsson, 3-Jens Hansen, 4-Michael Weile, 5-Jan Petersen, 6-Jakob Andersen. BEGINNER (18): 1-Peer Jensen, 2-Kevin El Hmoun, 3-Carl Erik Frost.

•**Austin Club Bimonthly** (Austin, TX; 18 May)... OPEN: 1-Bob Nickerson, 2-Marty Brown, 3/4-David Winn / Marc Lewis... *Jackie Seiders-Smart graciously cancelled her July event to avoid an unfortunate tourney conflict with the Houston Club due to their last-minute rescheduling.*

•**Ace Point Monthly** (New York NY; 25 May)... OPEN (12): 1-Richard Munitz, 2-Jorge Pan; 1C-Perry Gartner. INTERMEDIATE (8): 1-Donald Gabbai, 2-Lee Nevo; 1C-Eileen Regan.

•**10th Oslo Open** (Oslo, Norway; 30 May-Jun. 1)... CHAMPIONSHIP (50): 1-Arild Idsoe, 2-Martha Gjølseth, 3/4-Marvin Khatter (SWE) / Torben Hasseriis (DEN); 1C-Tore Frederiksen, 2C-Asger Kring (DEN), 3C/4C-Shahab Ghodsi / Kristian Stegenborg (DEN); 1LC-Dan Wernberg (SWE), 2LC-Kjell Torbergsen. ADVANCED INTERMEDIATE: 1-Christian Bladt (DEN), 2-Bjørn Inge Lorentzen, 3/4-Behrutz Arshi / Thomas Kristiansen; 1C-Martin Alm (SWE), 2C-Ingrid Sonnabend (GER); 1LC-Stein Kulseth, 2LC-Eirik M. Pedersen. INTERMEDIATE: 1-Tom Arild Næss, 2-Harald Sæther; 1C-Gaute Andersen, 2C-Mona Bremnes; 1LC-Kirsti Løvold. BEGINNER: 1-Petter Høie. TEAMEVENT (24): 1-Klaps (Jes Bondo, Asger Kring, & Kristian Stegenborg), 2-Glitter (Christer Hagenfeldt, Linn Iversen, Dan Wernberg).

•**ABA Spring Doubles** (Roswell, GA; 31 May)... OPEN DOUBLES: 1-Zia Afshani

& Larry Taylor, 2-Dave Cardwell & Simon Kennedy-Rose. OPEN SINGLES CONS.: 1-Peter Roubicek, 2-Dave Cardwell.

•**51st GAMMON ASSOCIATES INVITATIONAL—ABT** (Los Angeles, CA; 6-8 Jun.)... OPEN (37): 1-Mike Ungerleider (CA), 2-Emil Mortuk (MI), 3-Jon Viotor (CA); 1C-Perry Firooz (CA), 2C-Bruce DiMattia (TN). ADVANCED (28): 1-Patrick McCormick (CA), 2-Brian Farr (CA); 1C-Alain Azoulay (CA), 2C-Chinh Pham (CA). SUPER 32: 1-Steve Sax (CA), 2-Bruce DiMattia (TN), 3/4-Badei Khoury (CA) / Bob Wachtel (CA). 2-POINT QUICKIES (128): 1-Ray Foglerlund (CA), 2-Steve Sax (CA). DOUBLES (16 teams): 1-Mark Antranikian & Ted Chee (CA), 2-Darin DuMolin & Tom Taylor (WA).

•**Ace Point Daily Gammon Social** (New York, NY; 7-8 Jun.)... DAILY GAMMON SOCIAL (8): 1-Dixie of NY, 2-Caroline Lems. DAILY GAMMON DOUBLES (6 Teams): 1-Jordan & Yoshie Lampe, 2-Dixie of NY & Mom Lampe. OPEN (8): 1-Joe Hickey, 2-Rafael Lazo; 1C-Steve Mellen.

•**Hilton Trophy Tournament** (Coventry, England; 7-8 Jun.)... OPEN (43): 1-Kevin Stebbing, 2-Mike Greenleaf; 1C-David Nathan, 2C-Lawrence Powell; 1LC-Paul Gilbertson, 2LC-Peter Chan. SUICIDE! (32): 1-JANE OXLEY. 1-PT. SHOOTOUT (32): 1-John Slattery, 2-Jeff Barber. FRIDAY KNOCKOUT (18): 1-David Nathan, 2-Tim Mooring. DOUBLES (10): 1-Ben & Bill, 2-ShawShank RedEmption.

•**South Florida Monthly** (Ft. Lauderdale, FL; 8 Jun.)... OPEN (7): 1-Raymond Rickard, 2-Al Tesoro. INTERMEDIATE (8): 1-Amir Ghazvinian, 2-Larry Richie.

•**Bar Point Sunday** (Oakbrook Terrace, IL; 8 Jun.)... OPEN (14): 1-Eric Johnson, 2-Ken Tyszko, 3/4-Peter Kalba / Richard Stawowy; 1C-Mark King, 2C-Peter Kalba. INTERMEDIATE (4): 1-Joe Szwedo, 2-Ed Buerger.

•**Double Five Club Tournament** (London, England; 13 Jun.)... OPEN: 1-Chris Bray, 2-Alistair Hott, 3/4-Engin Ongel / Dale Taylor... *Submitted by Double Fives director George Sulimirski.*

•**Father's Day Open** (Houston, TX; 14 Jun.)... OPEN (26): 1-Ira Hessel, 2-Ed Chambers, 3-Scott Ward, 4-Tom Wright; 1C-Lon Lehr, 2C-Sam Sansone.

•**Third Coast Doubles Invitational & Simborg Bachelor Party** (Chicago, IL; 14 Jun.)... OPEN (8 teams): 1-Bob Zavoral & Tim Mabee, 2-Tim Stoddard & Mike Wolock. 1-PT. MINI-MATCH (32): 1-Phil Simborg, 2-Paul Baraz... *Organized by Bob Zavoral and Rolf Boettger at "Dick's Last Resort." Here's how Phil reacted to his day:*

The party was a great success,
(I'm glad Bob came without his dress.)

And even though he played with Tim,
Bob still managed a way to win.

We all had fun, but the amazing thing,
Was my Randee crushing Mr. Ring!

So thank you for your time and money,
Both for myself, and for my honey

—Phil Simborg

•**Gammonitis Rollout Trophy Tourney** (Solihull, England; 14-15 Jun.)... OPEN (32): 1-Roland Herrera, 2-Julian Fetterlein, 3/4-Dod Davies / John Hurst; 1C-Ray Kershaw, 2C-Peter Bennet, 3C/4C-Simonetta Barone / Andrew Sarjeant. BUY BACK KNOCKOUT: 1-Martin Hemming, 2-Jane Oxley, 3/4-Gavin Crawley / Nigel Merrigan. POKER: 1-Dod Davies, 2-Francine Brandler, 3-Martin Hemming. Δ



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

BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL BACKGAMMON CLUB: Tournaments Monday, 6:30 P.M. at Caboose Smokehouse, 608 W. Seminary, Bloomington. Rob Farmer (309/821-9766).

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. 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).



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Here's a fun diversion for a hot summer night. Nina Rindt-Martyn (Phillip Martyn's wife) composed this crossword puzzle for a 1976 issue of *European Backgammon News*. How much of it can you solve?

Mail your solution by **15 August 2003** to CHICAGO POINT; 3940 W. Bryn Mawr Ave. 504; Chicago, IL 60659. Or fax your answer to 773/583-3264. The player with the most correct answers wins \$50.00. Ties will be broken by random draw. The decision of CHICAGO POINT is final.

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