

5th carolina invitational

SIMBORG TOPS MATTIG IN ALL-CHICAGO NC FINALS Thomson defends Queen City Cup

Phil Simborg defeated fellow Chicagoan Carter Mattig to claim the 2005 Carolina Invitational. Jeb & Robin Horton's 5th annual regional held 14–16 January was highlighted by a beautiful new venue (Hilton-Charlotte Hotel) and record attendance (90 main tourney participants).



Friendly rivals Carter Mattig (left) and Phil Simborg display their Carolina Invitational trophies. Phil topped Carter 13–3 in the finals.

En route to his first major win, Simborg defeated Malcolm Davis (TX) in the quarterfinals and Carol Joy Cole in the semifinals before facing fellow Bar Point Club chouette compadre Carter Mattig in the finals. The finals wasn't close as Phil won 13–3 to grab the early lead in the 2005 American Backgammon Tour (see page 3).

In other events, Stuart Thomson (GA) defended his 2004 Queen City Cup title, Carlos Azcarate (FL) collected two trophies grabbing the Advanced and Doubles, and Tony Garcia (NC) won the Novice.

\$250 for the UNICEF Tsunami relief was collected in Skunk Dice. Results: Δ



More winners: Queen City Cup repeat champ Stuart Thomson (L) with Carlos Azcarate who won both the Advanced and Doubles (with Elayne Feinstein).



Robin & Jeb Horton celebrate record attendance at the Carolina Invitational.

5TH CAROLINA INVITATIONAL

OPEN (48): 1-Phil Simborg (IL), 2-Carter Mattig (IL); 1C-Mark Rozans (LA), 2C-Carol Joy Cole (MI), 3C/4C-Gregg Cattanach (GA) / Rory Pas-car (MD); 1LC-Joe Freedman (VA). ADVANCED (32): 1-Carlos Azcarate (FL), 2-Lynn Lusk (CO); 1C-Karen Chung (MD), 2C-Cole Parker (TX), 3C/4C-Frank Patrick (GA) / Ben Elliot (NC). NOVICE (10): 1-Tony Garcia (NC), 2-Kim Owens (NC). QUEEN CITY CUP (24): 1-Stuart Thomson (GA), 2-Mark Rozans (LA), 3-Sho Sengoku (CA). DOUBLES (22): 1-Carlos Azcarate (FL) & Elayne Feinstein (FL), 2-Dave Rogers (NC) & Vadim MUSAELYAN (NC). BLITZ (32): 1-John Struss (NC). QUICKIE (64): 1-Buzz Hodous (MD). AFTER TOURNAMENT (8): 1-Jon Viotor (CA). SKUNK DICE: 1-David Wetzell (MN).

BOB ZAVORAL IS BPC PLAYER OF THE YEAR Awards Night honors Top 20

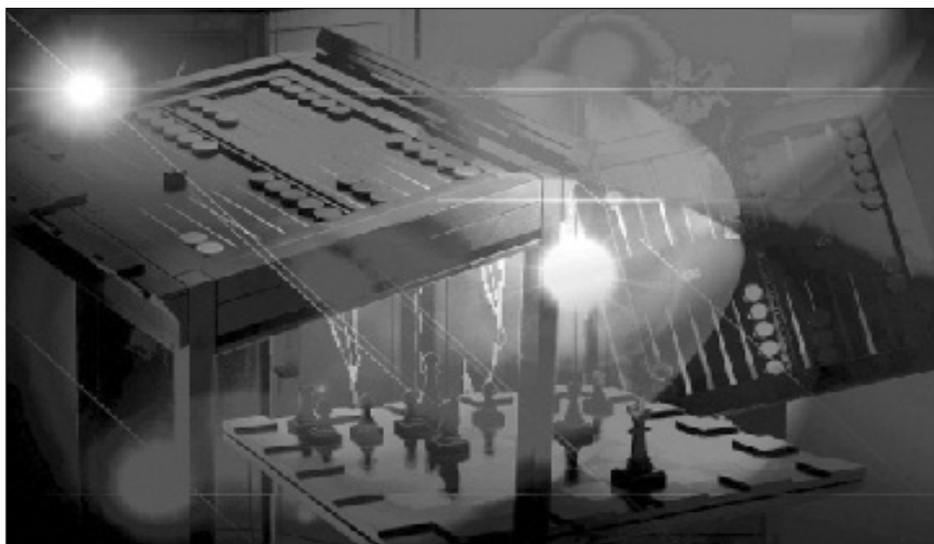
Bob Zavoral hung on by the skin of his teeth to defend as the 2004 Chicago Bar Point Club Player of the Year. Zavoral missed the last three play dates which allowed Tak Morioka to “get busy.” And that's exactly what Tak did, finishing second on 14 Dec. and winning on 21 Dec.



BPC 2004 Player of the Year Bob Zavoral with runner-up Tak Morioka at right.

[Continued on page 6]

WORTHY OF WALLPAPER



Isabelle and Benjamin of Deuce Leatherwork (France) sent us New Year's e-mail greetings including this beautiful backgammon/chess illustration. The color version is available at www.chicagopoint.com and is worthy of becoming your computer wallpaper. For more information on purchasing a leather backgammon or chess creation from Deuce, visit: www.deuce.free.fr or e-mail: deuceleatherwork@wanadoo.fr Δ

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

EDITOR & PUBLISHER

Bill Davis

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

Tel: 773/583-6464 ♦ Fax: 773/583-3264

E-mail: bg@chicagopoint.com

www.chicagopoint.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Carol Joy Cole (MI)	Danny Kleinman (CA)
Mary Hickey (OH)	Antonio Ortega (C.R.)
Jake Jacobs (IL)	Steve Sax (CA)
Duane Jensen (MN)	Kit Woolsey (CA)

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LETTERS

c/o CHICAGO POINT

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

E-mail: letters@chicagopoint.com

ZAVORAL FAILS TO DELIVER

On 29 March 2004, I ordered a backgammon board from Bob Zavoral. The cost of the custom board was \$745 (including shipping) which I paid in full. This was a special order that according to his website, would take "3-4 weeks." [*zavoralbackgammonboards.com is now down—Ed.*]

After ordering the board, I called Bob and we talked about my choice of colors and other preferences. He told me how he should be charging more for his boards. I said that after reading all the praise and endorsement from other players on his website, "Maybe you should!"

At the end of April, I emailed Bob to see how things were coming along. I received no answer. I emailed him again at the beginning of May, and Bob wrote back stating "Everything for your board is here. I just need to build it; but I probably won't be starting for a couple of weeks."

[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.

Jan 23*	Greater Columbus Club Monthly, Lucky's Grille, Hillard, Ohio	614/784-8132
Jan 23-30	Backgammon On Board VII, Star Princess, Ft. Lauderdale to E. Caribbean	773/583-6464
Jan 27*	Flint Club Awards Party/Tournament, Days Inn, Flint, Michigan	810/232-9731
Jan 29*	Atlanta 2004 Awards Tournament, Mazzy's Sports Bar, Roswell, Georgia	770/333-1876
Jan 29*	Northwest Indiana Club Monthly, VFW Hall, Porter, Indiana	219/785-2082
Feb 1*	Arizona Club Monthly, Rosie McCaffrey's Irish Pub, Phoenix, Arizona	602/279-0215
Feb 5	Bar Point Doubles Championship, Champs Bar, Oakbrook Terrace, Illinois	773/583-6464
Feb 10*	Kansas City Club Monthly, Harpo's, Kansas City, Missouri	816/561-4330
Feb 12*	Columbia Memorial, Sansone's West Oaks Bar, Houston, Texas	281/556-0428
Feb 12	Springfield Series #4 & Doubles Tournament, Damon's, Springfield, Illinois	217/528-0117
Feb 13	25th Illinois State Challenge Cup, Springfield Hilton, Springfield, Illinois	217/528-0117
Feb 13	Gammon Associates Tournament of Champions, Los Angeles, California	818/901-0464
Feb 13	New England Club Monthly, Holiday Inn, Somerville, Massachusetts	508/829-3283
Feb 13	Ohio State Club Monthly, Thirsty Dog Brewery, Copley, Ohio	330/268-4610
Feb 13*	Miami Valley Monthly, Holiday Inn McKenna's Grille, Fairborn, Ohio	937/864-1748
Feb 17	Third Thursday Bonus (Midwest Championships), Days Inn, Flint, Michigan	810/232-9731
Feb 17*	Queen City Club Monthly, Fricker's, Cincinnati, Ohio	513/729-8484
Feb 18-20	<u>27th Pittsburgh Championships, Holiday Inn, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania</u>	<u>412/823-7500</u>
Feb 26*	Southern Open Warm-up, Mazzy's Sports Bar, Roswell, Georgia	770/333-1876
Mar 1*	Arizona Club Monthly, Rosie McCaffrey's Irish Pub, Phoenix, Arizona	602/279-0215
Mar 3-6*	<u>2005 Southern Open, Marriott Hotel, Atlanta, Georgia</u>	<u>770/333-1876</u>
Mar 5	Springfield Series #5, Pizza Works, Peoria, Illinois	217/528-0117
Mar 5*	Colorado State Championship, Cadillac Jack's, Denver, Colorado	719/574-5598
Mar 6	22nd Fleet Underwood Memorial & Benefit, Holiday Inn, Flint, Michigan	810/232-9731
Mar 10*	Kansas City Club Monthly, Harpo's, Kansas City, Missouri	816/561-4330
Mar 12*	Drew McCulloch Classic, Sansone's West Oaks Bar, Houston, Texas	281/556-0428
Mar 13*	Miami Valley Monthly, Holiday Inn McKenna's Grille, Fairborn, Ohio	937/864-1748
Mar 13*	New England Club Monthly, Holiday Inn, Somerville, Massachusetts	508/829-3283
Mar 13*	Ohio State Club Monthly, Thirsty Dog Brewery, Copley, Ohio	330/268-4610
Mar 17*	Queen City Club Monthly, Fricker's, Cincinnati, Ohio	513/729-8484
Mar 17*	Third Thursday Bonus (Ohio State), Days Inn, Flint, Michigan	810/232-9731
Mar 18-20	<u>2005 Midwest Championships, Wyndham Lisle Hotel, Lisle, Illinois</u>	<u>773/583-6464</u>
Apr 3	Bar Point Sunday, Champs Bar, Oakbrook Terrace, Illinois	773/583-6464
Apr 8-10*	<u>11th Ohio State Championships, Airport Marriott Hotel, Cleveland, Ohio</u>	<u>330/268-4610</u>
Apr 27-May 1	21st Nevada State Tournament, Riviera Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada	702/893-6025
May 27-30	<u>26th Chicago Open, Oak Brook Hills Resort & Hotel, Oak Brook, Illinois</u>	<u>847/674-0120</u>
Jul 1-4	<u>30th Michigan Summer Championships, Sheraton Novi, Novi, Michigan</u>	<u>810/232-9731</u>
Jul 29-31	<u>1000 Islands Tournament, Pine Tree Point, Alexandria Bay, New York</u>	<u>855/396-0969</u>
Jul 29-31	<u>Wisconsin State Championships, Radisson Hotel, Madison, Wisconsin</u>	<u>608/516-9109</u>
Sep 2-5	Indiana Open, Sheraton Suites Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana	317/255-8902
Sep 16-18	Florida State Championship, Sheraton Suites, Fort Lauderdale, Florida	954/564-0340
Sep 23-25	<u>2nd Pacific Northwest Championships, Holiday Inn, Seattle, Washington</u>	<u>253/856-7513</u>

OUTSIDE USA

Jan 28-30	3rd Cotswold Fireside BG & Hold'em Poker, Crown Inn, Blockley, England	441453-821479
Feb 5-6	Jarvis Trophy, Hanover Hotel, Hinckley, England	441522-888676
Feb 10-13	10th Kaiserbrunnen-Cup, Hotel Kaiserbrunnen, Brakel, Germany	49711-486190
Feb 15-20*	6th Paris Master & Open, Concorde Lafayette Hotel, Paris, France	33142-618080
Feb 17-20	1st Innsbruck Open 2005, Casino Innsbruck, Innsbruck, Austria	49171-542222
Feb 19-20*	Gammonitis Peligoni Cup, Ramada Jarvis Grange Hotel, Bristol, England	447900-983038
Feb 24-27	2nd Braugold Cup, Salzungen Hof, Bad Salzungen, Germany	49521-64314
Feb 24-27	Groupe Partouche Trophy, Palm Beach Casino, Cannes, France	33147-587179
Mar 5-6	Slattery Scottish Open, Hanover Hotel, Hinckley, England	441522-888676
Mar 12-13*	Gammonitis British Time Trials, Sundridge Park, Bromley, England	447900-983038
Mar 15-18	7th Abu Dhabi Championships, Fitness Club, Abu Dhabi, UAE	613/389-4603
Mar 23-28	17th Nordic "Wide" Open, Hotel Scandic, Copenhagen, Denmark	4533-363601
Apr 1-3	3rd Trofeo di Città Cavalese, Bellavista Hotel, Cavalese, Italy	393283-380725
Apr 2-3	At-A-Glance British Open, Hanover Hotel, Hinckley, England	441522-888676
Apr 7-10	2nd Casino Salzburg BG & Texas Hold'em Open, Salzburg, Austria	49171-542222
Apr 16-17*	Neil Davidson's 50th Birthday, Eynsham Hall, Witney, England	447900-983038
Apr 21-24	1st Chalkidiki Tournament, Porto Karras Hotel, Chalkidiki, Greece	30697-3990985
May 7-8	County Cups Trophy, Hanover Hotel, Hinckley, England	441522-888676
May 12-15	Aix Les Bains Tournament, Casino Aix Les Bains, France	33142-618080
May 14-15*	Gammonitis League Tournament, Eynsham Hall, Witney, England	447900-983038
May 19-22	17th WBF European Championship, Velden Casino, Velden, Austria	39269-018168
May 28-29*	14th Città di Torino, Maison Musique, Rivoli, Italy	393489-001340
Jun 2-5	1st Bregenz Open 2005, Casino Bregenz/Mercure Hotel, Bregenz, Austria	49171-542222
Jun 3-5	5th Austrian Masters Finale, Cafe Heine, Vienna, Austria	436642-404285
Jun 4-5	Hilton Trophy, Hanover Hotel, Daventry, England	441522-888676
Jul 11-17*	<u>30th World Championship, Grand Hotel, Monte Carlo, Monaco</u>	<u>USA contact: 212/222-7177</u>

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 2]

At the end of July, I emailed Bob to check order status. He never responded. I emailed Bob once again in the second week of August: no response. On 23 August, I tried phoning Bob and received no response.

In all of my years of web-shopping, this is beyond a doubt, the worst experience I have ever had. Being swindled leaves a very bad taste in one's mouth. To take a customer's money, and then not deliver on the product is thievery, pure and simple.

Mr. Zavoral, I hope that you get the help that you so desperately need. You should be ashamed of yourself. You are an embarrassment to the citizens of Chicago and to our Backgammon world.

If, by some miracle, you were to deliver my paid-in-full board, I would sell it on Ebay. You were not my first choice when I

started shopping around for backgammon boards. I have now learned how important "intuition" really is.—Paul Dingwell, Sierra Madre, California

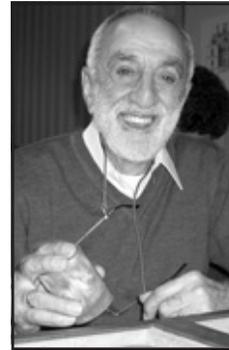
Over the past four months, we have received numerous letters from players experiencing the same problem. Bob has made good on many of his outstanding orders; however, others like Mr. Dingwell still wait. Additionally, Bob has failed to pay his dice cup supplier Tim Johnson for equipment received nearly one-half year ago.—Ed.

CALIFORNIA CORRECTION

In the first position of your December California State Championships report, Steve Sax has 14(!) rolls that don't make a closed board. On nine of them, he should (correctly) switch points; but when played correctly, the five other rolls (6-1, 6-4, 6-6) leave a home board blot.—Chris Bray, London, England Δ

[Continued on page 10]

SARGIS SERGES 1924-2005



Sarg Serges at the BPC for his 80th birthday 10/19/04.

Sarg Serges, a fixture of Chicago-land backgammon for nearly 35 years, died 16 January 2005 at the age of 80. Since his minor stroke on Memorial Day 2004, Sarg appeared to be getting better every day. He was thrilled when his son Tim staged an 80th birthday party tournament in his honor at the Bar Point Club in October.

Unfortunately, his remarkable recovery was undermined by the rapid progression of cancer diagnosed just one week prior to his passing. There was diffuse metastasis to his liver which was already damaged when he contracted dengue fever during his term of service in World War 2. Surrounded by his loved ones, he spent his final days in the comfort of his home. He was never in pain and had no request for pain medication. Instead, he seemed to find great comfort in the sound of the rolling dice and verbalizing of moves. Tim reports that "We were even able to get him to drink liquids by jokingly telling him they were brought by Rose, the Bar Point Club waitress."

Sarg occasionally played in regional events, but got his most enjoyment from the Chicago-land club scene. His 261 lifetime points is good enough for 14th on the all-time listings.

Condolences can be sent the the Serges family at 130 Burr Oak Drive; Arlington Heights, IL 60004.

AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 2005							
Compiled through 16 January after 1 tournament							
(Upcoming events: Pittsburgh, Southern Open, Midwest)							
Phil Simborg	17.28	Joe Freedman	4.67	Rory Pascar	2.22	Kim Owens	0.94
Mark Rozans	8.64	Carol Joy Cole	4.32	Gregg Cattanch	2.22	Ben Elliot	0.80
Carter Mattig	8.64	Karen Chung	3.20	Cole Parker	1.60	Frank Patrick	0.80
Carlos Azcarate	6.40	Lynn Lusk	3.20	Tony Garcia	1.56		

CHICAGO BAR POINT CLUB				FINAL STANDINGS			
2004 PLAYER OF THE YEAR				92 players earned points			
Bob Zavoral	30.64	Linda Rockwell	9.84	Richard Stawowy	2.32	Nora Luna	1.04
Tak Morioka	30.06	Joe Wollick	9.48	Sargon Benjamin	2.28	Mark Swanson	0.96
David Rockwell	21.84	Norma Shyer	9.36	Tom Meyer	2.24	David Rubin	0.96
Herb Roman	21.76	Mark Murray	9.24	Royal Robinson	2.24	Josh Riddell	0.84
Ken Bond	20.68	Joann Feinstein	8.36	Ron Washington	2.04	Cookie Frazin	0.80
Phil Simborg	20.16	Peter Kalba	8.24	Amy Trudeau	1.92	Rick Sorci	0.80
Phyllis Smolinski	19.96	Adrian Rios	7.88	John Jennings	1.92	Kathy Sorci	0.80
Gary Kay	19.88	Georgina Flanagan	6.92	Ken Tyszko	1.92	Rich Hallbeck	0.80
Bill Davis	19.44	David Marcus	6.12	Roland Dieter	1.88	Roy Cohen	0.72
Carter Mattig	19.24	Paul Franks	6.04	Felix Yen	1.76	Robert Ring	0.72
Tim Mabee	15.52	Mary Franks	5.48	Bill Stegich	1.52	Brooke Gottshall	0.72
Paul Baraz	14.52	Les Moshinsky	5.12	Neil Kazaross	1.52	John Stryker	0.72
Steve Klesker	14.24	Wayne Wiest	4.68	Tim Carroll	1.44	Jeff Ernst	0.72
Bob Steen	13.98	Michael Peters	4.12	Harry Cohn	1.44	Gaby Kairouz	0.64
Lucky Nelson	13.24	Eric Johnson	3.68	Jolie Rubin	1.44	Will Hare	0.64
Alice Kay	12.08	Boris Dekhtyar	3.16	Don Marek	1.36	Romeo Kap	0.64
Joe Auszmann	12.04	Kwong Chan	3.12	Paul Klein	1.36	Brian Ross	0.64
Howard Ring	11.96	Bill Keefe	2.96	Jerry Brooks	1.36	Brian Levanthal	0.64
Jacob Moreno	11.76	Arline Levy	2.96	Mike Bandman	1.28	Vince Bennett	0.60
Mike Sutton	11.40	Elaine Kehm	2.56	Oleg Raygorodsky	1.28	Ken Tibbs	0.60
Val Zimnicki	10.08	DeJuan Meekins	2.56	Dave Cramer	1.20	Jay Bleiman	0.56
Bill Bartholomay	10.00	Mark Phillips	2.48	Barbara Levinson	1.04	Spencer King	0.56
Roger Hickman	9.84	Jake MaandeKok	2.36	John O'Connor	1.04	Dave Settles	0.32

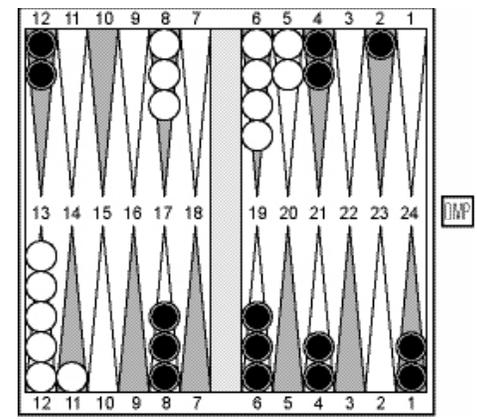
KEN BOND capped off a great year winning December monthly honors with 3.36 points. Boris Dekhtyar (visiting from NJ) placed second with 3.16, and Lucky Nelson tied with Tak Morioka for third earning 2.40 points.

your move

PROBLEM #306

to be analyzed by Kit Woolsey

5-point match tied at 4-4 (double match-point). **BLACK TO PLAY 5-5.**



ASK DANNY



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MASTERING THE POINTS

Dear Danny: There has been much discussion about modifying how the American Backgammon Tour (ABT) awards points. Additionally, the possibility of including the two Las Vegas tournaments in future ABT point races is being considered. Also on the table is whether or not Beginner and Intermediate ABT trophies should be awarded to the top finishers in their respective divisions, and if tournaments permitting reentries should be sanctioned. Rather than rush into any changes for the 2005 season, the tournament directors will be studying all of the issues involved and making changes (or not) in time for the 2006 points race.

Please enlighten us with your thoughts on this subject.—Ray Fogerlund, Bakersfield, California

DEAR RAY: Here are some theses about the “points” to be awarded in “Player of the Year” contests.

1. There are two kinds of “point” systems: call them *rating points*, and *winner points*. It would be an insult to the memory of Barclay Cooke not to invoke a baseball analogy here. Rating points are like a pitcher’s Earned Run Average. Winner points are like a pitcher’s Won-Lost Percentage, which depends heavily on the quality of his team’s offense and defense, on the adequacy of his team’s corps of relief pitchers, and on the quality of the opposing teams and the pitchers against whom he is matched.

Rating points are designed to gauge skill. The system used in chess is a rating-point system. Every chess game in a tournament puts rating points at stake to be won or lost. The number of rating points won or lost depends on the difference between the prior ratings of the players, and may also depend on which player is White (moves first). To be adequate, a rating-point formula must have two properties.

First, it must be predictive. That is, players with higher ratings should win more often than players with lower ratings, and the relative frequency of wins should be a function of the difference between the ratings.

Second, it must be stable. That is, a player’s expectation of rating-point change from playing against an opponent of any rating (or perhaps any rating within certain

limits) must be zero. Otherwise, a player could “fatten up” his ratings by playing a match of many games against a weaker opponent.

I leave it to the chess organizations to evaluate their rating system. When Kent Goulding set up his KG Rating System for backgammon many years ago, he emulated the chess system. It’s much harder to evaluate a rating-point system in backgammon than in chess, for the large element of luck in backgammon permits ratings to fluctuate much more wildly than they do in chess.

Winner points are designed to measure success, which depends on skill, luck, and frequency of opportunity. Once earned, they can never be lost. The American Contract Bridge League (ACBL) uses a system of winner points that it calls “masterpoints,” and treats masterpoints as if they measured skill (an especially gross error in light of the fact that it ignores the quality of partners and teammates, some of whom are hired by weaker players). ABT Points resemble masterpoints, not rating points.

2. Any system of winner points is to some extent arbitrary. For example, the ACBL, upon discovering that attendance in Friday night games at its franchised clubs is lagging, might promote those games by offering to double the masterpoint awards; that would not be unfair. Of course, players who had accumulated their masterpoints before the “Friday night doubling” might complain about the “cheapening” of masterpoints. Indeed, over the years, masterpoints have been cheapened in many ways. I have no complaints about that—simply because I recognize that masterpoints are not designed to measure skill or performance.

ABT points can also be arbitrary. If a backgammon organization wants to promote greater attendance at tournaments in Pittsburgh, for example, it might offer to double ABT points for Pittsburgh tournaments. However, to do so would detract from the ostensive purpose of winner points, which is to measure players’ success at tournaments, not the location of the tournaments in which they succeed. I see nothing intrinsically unfair about either a system of ABT points that awards them only to 1st-place finishes (like a high school that recognizes only a “valedictorian,” the student with the highest grade-point average) or a system that awards an equal number of points to each of the first four places (like a high school that recognizes an “Honor Roll” of all students with a grade-point average of at least 90%). Again, however, either such system would detract from the ostensive purpose of win-

ner points.

3. Many of the points made by participants in this discussion have merit. Among them:

(a) No awards or trophies should be given for performances in any but the top flight of a tournament. (“Don’t reward sandbagging!”)

(b) No points should be given to players who “win” tournaments only because they were allowed, upon payment of additional fees, to reenter after having been eliminated. This, like the policy of permitting buybacks itself, is controversial, with merits on both sides. Although I do not favor permitting buybacks, I shall propose a compromise that caters to both positions.

(c) Because some players have weekday jobs, only wins at weekend tournaments should earn points. This is controversial too, as things other than jobs (such as finances and family obligations) can keep players from attending tournaments.

(d) Neither the prize structure of the tournament nor any “hedgies” that the players may make should affect the points earned. The points are about winning, not about money, and should not vary with how the tournament organizer chooses to divide the prize pool.

4. Is it desirable for any new system of ABT Points to be commensurable with the old?

Yes, but it is not important. Comparisons between players of different eras are dubious regardless. Again, we may draw upon baseball for an analogy. Among the home-run hitters of different eras, we can recognize Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig, Jimmy Foxx and Hank Greenberg, Johnny Mize and Ralph Kiner, Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris, then finally Mark McGwire, Sammy Sosa and Barry Bonds, as having the most outstanding seasons. Mize was helped enormously by the unusual configuration of the Polo Grounds, where fly balls that carried 260 feet could reach the grandstand along the right field line. Kiner was helped by “Greenberg Gardens,” a shortened left-field fence installed for the benefit of the aging Greenberg who had just been traded to the Pirates.

At least three things helped Maris set a record in 1961: the lengthening of the season from 154 to 162 games; the dilution of pitching talent by expanding the number of teams; the adaptation of his swing to the relatively short right-field “porch” at Yankee Stadium. I can only wonder how many more home runs Babe Ruth would have had if the dimensions of the ballparks in which he played were the same as in today’s stadiums.

In backgammon, too, conditions have

changed over the years. As Jeremy Bagai pointed out in *Classic Backgammon Revisited*, rollouts with modern computer programs have shown top backgammon experts of earlier eras to have been mistaken often; perhaps there are a larger number of skillful players nowadays. The number of tournaments, and their size, may also vary from one era to another. If there are more tournaments this year than last, should the number of ABT points awarded at each tournament be decreased so as to make the total ABT points awarded the same each year? I think not, if no such adjustment is made, the effect will be to inflate the point-totals of regulars on the circuit and thus “cheapen” ABT points. If a new formula for ABT Points is to be adopted, then it is reasonable to require only that the number of points awarded at a tournament be roughly the same as would be awarded under the old formula.

5. What should a formula for ABT points be like?

(a) The total points available in a tournament should vary with the number of entrants. A case has been made for it to vary with the base-2 logarithm of the number of players, on the grounds that (for example) to win a 32-player tournament you must win 5 matches but to win a 64-player tournament you must win 6 matches. However, it is also true that your chances (other things, such as the skill of the players, being equal) of winning are directly proportional to the number of entrants itself, not to its base-2 logarithm. As a compromise, I propose that the points for winning a tournament vary with the *square root* of the number of entrants.

(b) Another compromise is available to take into account the buybacks that are permitted in some tournaments. I suggest that for players who win or place without reentering, the field size be taken as the total number of entries and reentries, but for players who win or place after reentering, the field size be taken as the total number of players.

(c) Should points be available in Consolation and Last Chance tournaments composed of players who get eliminated in the main draw? A case can be made that they should not, as the “winners” of these events are really losers, just like the players. However, I do not find such a case convincing. I believe only that the award for finishing first in a derivative tournament should be no more than the award for a 3rd/4th place finish in the tournament that feeds it.

(d) Which constitutes the more successful

performance: finishing 2nd in two tournaments of equal size, or winning one but not placing in the other? The prize-pool allocations popular among tournament organizers favor the player with one 1st-place finish over the player with two 2nd-place finishes, but that seems entirely arbitrary. If tournaments did not have prize pools, we might rate the two performances equally, or rate the two 2nd-place finishes as the greater success.

6. How can we put my suggestions together to make a formula?

By using three factors to calculate the number of points to be awarded: (a) field size, (b) place in the standings, (c) a coefficient to calibrate the new formula to the scale of the old, so that ABT points accumulated in future years be commensurable with ABT points accumulated in past years using the old formula.

For (a), I have already proposed using the square root of the field size. For players who win or place after reentering, the field size is the number of players. For players who do not buy back, the field size is the number of entries.

For (b), we must make a judgment. My personal opinion is that two 2nd-place finishes represent a greater degree of success than one 1st-place finish (even if the money allocated in a prize pool is twice as large, or higher, for a 1st-place finish than a 2nd-place finish). Perhaps arbitrarily, let us deem one 1st-place finish equal to one 2nd-place finish plus one tie for 3rd and 4th places. This suggests using numbers from the Fibonacci Series where you add the last two numbers to get the next (1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89 . . .) to determine the ratios of points awarded for *place in the standings*.

Perhaps arbitrarily also, but in keeping with tradition, let us equate 1st in a derivative tournament with 2nd in the tournament that feeds it, and permit up to ten awards of *place-points* using Fibonacci numbers as in the following table:

- (1) 1st in the main draw = 34
- (2) 2nd in the main draw = 21
- (3) 1st in the consolation = 21
- (4) 3rd in the main draw = 13
- (5) 4th in the main draw = 13
- (6) 2nd in the consolation = 13
- (7) 1st in the last chance = 13
- (8) 3rd in the consolation = 8
- (9) 4th in the consolation = 8
- (10) 2nd in the last chance = 8

The total of these place-points is 152.

For (c), we should notice that a 64-player Championship tournament offers

64 ABT points under the current scheme. So, to retain the same scale, we should set $152(a)(c) = 64$. As (a) is the square root of 64, which is 8, (c) is $8/152$: in lowest terms, $1/19$. So the entire formula becomes: [(the square root of the field size)(place-points)]/19.

Everybody say it with me: “Slipstick, slide rule, secant, sine. Three point one four one five nine.” — *Yours, Danny Δ*

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

2004 PLAYERS OF THE YEAR

NATIONAL (Alphabetized by State)

American Backgammon Tour: Frank Talbot (MI)
 Gammon Associates (CA): Frank Ley
 Backgammon Club of San Diego (CA): Sho Sengoku
 Backgammon By The Bay (CA): Ted Chee
 South Florida Backgammon Club (FL): Al Tesoro
 Atlanta Backgammon Assn. (GA): Dave Cardwell
 Bloomington-Normal BG Club (IL): Jim Zimmerman
 Chicago Bar Point Club (IL): Bob Zavoral
 Peoria Backgammon Club (IL): Faddoul Khoury
 Sangamon Valley BG Assn. (IL): Jena Jennings
 Winnetka Backgammon Club (IL): David Rubin
 Hoosier Backgammon Club (IN): Butch Meese
 Northwest Indiana BG Assoc. (IN): John O'Hagan
 Louisville Backgammon Club (KY): Bill Rudd
 Beltway Backgammon Club (MD): Barry Silliman
 New England BG Club (MA): Herb Gurland,

Wizard of Wednesday Night: Alex Zamanian.
 Flint Area Backgammon Club (MI): Frank Talbot
 Grand Rapids BG Club (MI): Michael Kloian
 Plymouth Backgammon Club (MI): Dean Adamian
 Metro North Backgammon Club (MI): Paul Berg
 Twin Cities Backgammon Club: Duane Jensen
 Las Vegas Backgammon Club (NV): Cy Yerhos
 Charlotte Backgammon Club (NC): Jeb Horton
 Greater Columbus BG Club (OH): Trevor Dierkes
 Ohio State Backgammon Club (OH): Mary Hickey
 Miami Valley BG Club (OH): Jeremy Weyland
 Pittsburgh Backgammon Club (PA): Bill Versaw
 Charleston BG Society (SC): Brett Meyer
 Nashville Backgammon Club (TN): Richard Lloyd
 Austin Backgammon Club (TX): Wolfram Sauer
 Dallas Backgammon League (TX): Malcolm Davis
 Houston Backgammon Club (TX): Gary Fomby
 Tyson's Corner Backgammon Club (VA): Gary Fries
 Puget Sound BG Club (WA): Ned Cross
 Madison Backgammon Club (WI): Brad Andersen
 Milwaukee Backgammon Club (WI): Bob Holyon

INTERNATIONAL (Alphabetized by Country)

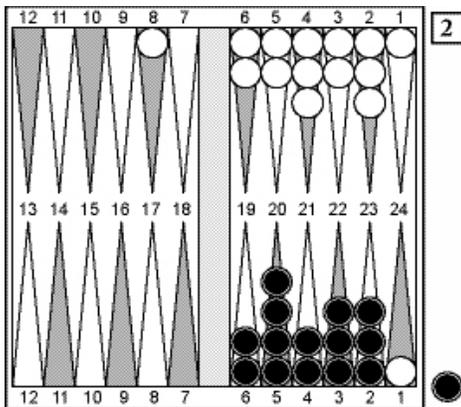
World Champion: Peter Hallberg (Denmark)
 European Champion: François Tardeau (France)
 National Capital BG Club (Canada): Paul Stebbing
 Italian Champion (Italy): Massimo Moretti
 BIBA Grand Prix (UK): John Slattery
 BIBA Ranking (UK): Peter Christmas
 Gammonitis (UK): Martin Barkwill

ZAVORAL...

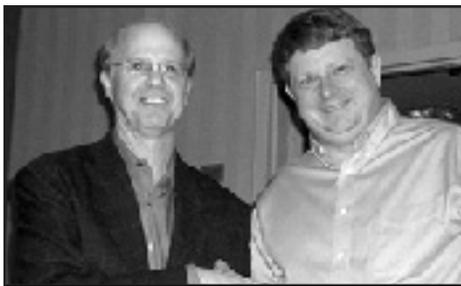
[Continued from page 1]

Trailing by only 0.58 points going into the last play date, Taki needed only a semifinal finish to become Player of the Year. After winning his first match, he faced Ken Bond. The tight battle went to double match-point with Tak bearing in for the title when he face the following fateful move:

Tak Morioka (Black) and Ken bond (White) are tied at 7-all in a match to 9 points. (DMP) **BLACK TO PLAY 6-5.**



Taki thought for a minute, then played 6/off, 5/off. Bond hit the 5-shot and went on to dash Morioka's hopes. A full 2160 game Snowie 4.1 (3-ply, precise) rollout shows 6/off, 6/1* slightly better by 0.011. Worth considering are the times that White hits on the acepoint, then fails to roll a 5 or 6 for a few shakes and has to break his board.



BPC director Bill Davis (R) presents David Rockwell with his 3rd Place awards.

Bob Zavoral's BPC 2004 title is his fourth since 1999. He was unfortunately unable to attend the Awards Ceremony on 11 January when the Top 20 finishers were honored with cash and merchandise totaling \$1200. Special congratulations to the other Top 6 finishers who earned the chance to represent the Bar Point Club at the Illinois State Challenge Cup in Springfield on 13 February: 3-David Rockwell, 4-Herb Roman, 5-Ken Bond, 6-Phil Simborg.

The 2005 race is on. See you on Tuesdays at the Clarion and bimonthly at Champs for Chicago Bar Point Club action. Δ

THE SIMBORG RULE

By Phil Simborg

For more than 30 years, I've been trying to come up with a backgammon rule that could bear my name and live in immortality as have the "Jacoby Rule" and "Crawford Rule." I've come up with some doozies, including a couple we sometimes use in private games. Now I've finally come up with an idea that I really believe is worthy of my name [drumroll]:

THE SIMBORG RULE

It is not legal to make a point on the opening roll.

Very simply, if you get a 6-1, 3-1, 4-2, 5-3 or 6-4, you have to find some way to play it other than making a point. The most obvious reason for this rule is to take away the significant advantage gained by getting such a roll.

For example, according to Snowie, if you make the 5-point with 3-1, you

become a 55-45 favorite—that's a 10% advantage from *one roll* which is all luck! But with the Simborg Rule in effect, you are required to make the second best play and your advantage is negligible. (e.g. the opening 6-1 goes from a 53-47 favorite to a toss-up).

Not only does the rule take away the advantage of these lucky opening rolls, it also makes the game more interesting. All of the alternative plays will likely lead to more complex games with greater potential for hitting, backgames, gammons, and backgammons.

Therefore, with the application of the Simborg Rule, you not only have taken some of the luck factor out of the game, you've made the game more complex and interesting. In my opinion (and that of some very excellent players who agree with me), both of these factors are real improvements to the game.

I hope everyone will consider trying the Simborg Rule variation in their private games and matches. Perhaps some day, it will become accepted backgammon practice.—Phil Simborg Δ

who did what

WINNER'S CIRCLE

DEC. 2004—JAN. 2005



•**United Kingdom Finals** (Hinckley, England; 4-5 Dec.)... OPEN (38): 1-John Slattery, 2-Ian Gwynne, 3/4-Nodar Gagau / Rachel Rhodes; 1C-David nathan, 2C-Zibi Szczerek. KAMAKAZE (32): 1-Martin Hemming, 2-Paul Barwick, 3/4-Steve John / Uldis Lapikens. CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS (5): 1-Stuart Mann. FRIDAY WARM-UP (16): 1-Jane Oxley, 2-Rosey Bensley. DOUBLES (8): 1-LastMinute.com, 2-The Italian Stallion & His Spanish Senorita. £50 JACKPOT: 1-Ian Gwynne. £100 JACKPOT: 1/2-Chris Ternel / Connor Dickinson.

•**Houston Tournament of Champions** (Houston, TX; 11 Dec.)... OPEN (16): 1-AI Johnson, 2-Bill Riles, 3-Jim Hallers.

•**Gammonitis Julian Minwalla Trophy** (Solihull, England; 11-12 Dec.)... Open: 1-Julian Fetterlein, 2-Ann Pocknell, 3/4-Martin Hemming / David Startin; 1C-Alan Beckerson, 2-Martin Barkwill, 3C/4C-Peter Bennet / Nicky Check; 1LC-Mick Vacarey, 2LC-Lawrence Powell. £50 Jackpot #1 (8): 1/2-John Broomfield / Julian Fetterlein; £50 Jackpot #2 (8): 1/2-Martin Barkwill / Lawrence Powell. TEXAS HOLD'EM: 1-Jo Curl.

•**South Florida Monthly** (Ft. Lauderdale, FL; 12 Dec.)... OPEN (6): 1-John Jennings (IL), 2-Alan Martin. INTERMEDIATE (4): 1-Neal Rosensweig, 2-Carlos Azcarate.

•**New England Club Monthly** (Somerville, MA; 12 Dec.)... OPEN: 1-Art Benjamin (CA), 2-Nora Luna; 1C-Herb Gurland, 2C-Howard Rosenthal.

•**6th South Pattaya Cup** (South Pattaya, Thailand; 3-9 Jan.)... 6TH PATTAYA CUP (20): 1-Glenn Gill (GB/THAI), 2-Jerry Wismeijer (NL), 3/4-Jurek Sarcynski (CZECH/THAI) / Thomas Staub (GER); 1C-Martyn Nadoll (GER), 2C-Joachim Johannson (SWE/THAI); 1LC-Marvin Khattar (SWE). SUPERJACKPOT (8): 1-Khun Kim (GER/THAI), 2-Jake Jacobs (USA).

•**BG Assoc. of So. Australia KO Tourney** (Adelaide, So. Australia; 4 Jan.)... OPEN (8): 1-Theo Georgiou, 2-Nick Begakis.

•**South Florida Monthly** (Ft. Lauderdale, FL; 9 Jan.)... OPEN (7): 1-Perry Gartner (NJ), 2-Gokhan Gulac. INTERMEDIATE (8): 1-Carlos Azcarate, 2-Mike Rezai (OH).

•**Kansas City Club Monthly** (Kansas City, MO; 13 Jan.)... OPEN (8): 1-Bill Toombs, 2/3-Steve Sillimon / Keith Illig.

•**Ed Chambers Memorial** (Houston, TX; 8 Jan.)... OPEN (14): 1-Chris Stanford, 2-Gary Fomby; 1C-James Bray, 2C-Tom Wright. Δ

Backgammon Clubs in North America

Information for this listing has been obtained directly from the featured backgammon clubs. Changes are inevitable and we suggest that you always call before attending. CHICAGO POINT would like to maintain an accurate listing of USA Backgammon Clubs online at: www.chicagopoint.com/usacclubs.html. Please send club information, including new clubs and club closings and updates to: **CHICAGO POINT; 3940 W. Bryn Mawr 504; Chicago, IL 60659. 773/583-6464. Fax: 773/583-3264. E-mail: bg@chicagopoint.com**

WEST

CLUB NAME	LOCATION	CITY & STATE	MEETING DAY & TIME	CONTACT (E-MAIL)	TELEPHONE	MAIL INQUIRIES TO
Arizona Backgammon Club	Rosie McCaffrey's Irish Pub	Phoenix, AZ	1st Tuesday monthly--7:00 PM	Pete Campbell (arizonabackgammon@webtv.net)	602/279-0215	928 E. Berridge Lane; Phoenix AZ 85014
Gammon Associates	Acapulco Cantina	Burbank, CA	Tuesday--6:00 PM	Patrick Gibson (pgibsonmfc@adelphia.net)	818/901-0464	7641 Orion Avenue; Van Nuys, CA 91406
"	A.R. Private Club	Los Angeles, CA	Sunday--2:00 PM	"	"	"
Imperial Valley Backgammon Club	Downtown Chiropractic	El Centro, CA	1st Thursday monthly--7:00 PM	Doyle Pritchard (dbackjack@hotmail.com)	760/353-3045	707 State Street; El Centro, CA 92243
Sacramento Backgammon Club	Player's Sports Pub & Grill	Fair Oaks, CA	2nd & 4th Tuesday--6:30 PM	Doug Wilson (dbwilson@pacbell.net)	530/756-4872	3016 Bryant Place; Davis, CA 95616
Backgammon Club of San Diego	Coast Café/Embassy Suites	La Jolla, CA	Tuesday--6:00 PM	Tom Fahland (tom_fahland@yahoo.com)	858/472-1516	10770 Aderman Ave. 92; San Diego, CA 92126
Backgammon By The Bay	Peking Express Restaurant	Berkeley, CA	2nd Saturday monthly--12:00 PM	Beth Skillman (beth@backgammon.org)	831/688-9722	308 Arthur Avenue; Aptos, CA 95003
"	Britannia Arms Pub/Restaurant	Cupertino, CA	4th Saturday monthly--1:00 PM	"	"	"
"	It's Your Move Game Room	Oakland, CA	Monday--6:00 PM	"	"	"
Rocky Mountain Backgammon Assoc.	Cadillac Jack's	Denver, CO	2nd & 4th Tuesdays--7:00 PM	Tom Christner (poetom@yahoo.com)	303/805-8121	5638 S. Fox Creek 101; Littleton, CO 80120
Aloha State Backgammon Club	Elks Club	Honolulu, HI	Friday--6:00 PM	George Quillin (georgeq@hawaii.rr.com)	808/922-2674	2999 Kalakaua Ave. 501; Honolulu, HI 96815
Boise Backgammon Club	TableRock Brewpub & Grill	Boise, ID	Tuesday--7:00 PM	Tami Jones (boisebackgammon@hotmail.com)	208/724-8432	7116 Ashland Drive; Boise, ID 83709
Backgammon Club of Las Vegas	Jackson's Bar & Grill	Las Vegas, NV	Tuesday--7:00 PM	Michael Maxakuli (maxgammon4@yahoo.com)	702/696-1096	3351 Rome Street 2; Las Vegas, NV 89109
Nevada Backgammon Association	Riviera Hotel	Las Vegas, NV	Event dates: www.nvbg.com	Howard Markowitz (howard114@cox.net)	702/893-6025	3131 Espanol Drive; Las Vegas, NV 89121
Puget Sound Backgammon Club	Wizards Restaurant/Casino	Seattle, WA	Tuesday--7:30 PM	Ruth Robbins (ruthles5@comcast.net)	425/226-3120	12611 155th Ave. SE; Renton, WA 98059

CENTRAL

Chicago Bar Point Club	Clarton Barcelo Hotel	Chicago, IL	Tuesday--6:00 PM	Bill Davis (bg@chicagopoint.com)	773/583-6464	3940 W. Bryn Mawr Ave. 504; Chicago, IL 60659
"	Champs Sports Bar	Oakbrook Terrace, IL	Sat. or Sun. bimonthly--12:00 PM	"	"	"
Bloomington-Normal BG Club	Damon's Grill	Normal, IL	Tuesday--6:30 PM	Michael Flohr (mflohr0925@verizon.net)	309/662-7967	707 Broadmoor Drive; Bloomington, IL 61704
Peoria Backgammon Club	Peoria Pizza Works	Peoria, IL	Thursday--6:30 PM	Ed Zell (bg2005@thezells.com)	309/674-0557	2009 W. Clarke Ave.; West Peoria, IL 61604
Sangamon Valley BG Association	Damon's Grill	Springfield, IL	Wednesday--6:30 PM	Randy Armstrong (randya@insightbb.com)	217/528-0117	2012 N. 20th Street; Springfield, IL 62702
Sangamon Valley Springfield Series	Various locations	Central Illinois	1st Sat/Nov to Apr--11:30 AM	"	"	"
Winnetka Backgammon Club	Winnetka Community House	Winnetka, IL	Wednesday--7:00 PM	Trudie Chitnik (winnbackgammon@aol.com)	847/446-0537	740 Ballantrae Drive B; Northbrook, IL 60062
Hoosier Backgammon Club	Neon Johnny's	Indianapolis, IN	Wednesday--7:00 PM	Butch & Mary Ann Meese (indybg@comcast.net)	317/255-8902	1008 Tuckahoe Street; Indianapolis, IN 46260
Northwest Indiana BG Association	VFW Hall	Porter, IN	Saturday monthly--3:00 PM	Charlie Halberstadt (chibug@yahoo.com)	219/785-2082	P.O. Box 84; Westville, IN 46391
Flint Area Backgammon Club	Days Inn	Flint, MI	Thursday--7:00 PM	Carol Joy Cole (cjc@tir.com)	810/232-9731	3719 Greenbrook Lane; Flint, MI 48507
Grand Rapids Backgammon Club	Cascade Roadhouse	Grand Rapids, MI	Tuesday--7:00 PM	John Drexel (info@grbg.org)	616/647-9965	4845 Brookgate Dr. NW; Comstock Park, MI 49321
Plymouth Backgammon Club	Box Bar & Grill	Plymouth, MI	Wednesday--7:30 PM	Dean Adamian (Dean3491@hotmail.com)	734/981-5706	42954 Barchester; Canton, MI 48187
Metro North Backgammon Club	Crash Landing Restaurant	Warren, MI	Monday--6:30 PM	Paul Berg (paulberg@wideopenwest.com)	313/330-7803	921 Winchester; Lincoln Park, MI 48146
Twin Cities Backgammon Club	Little Wagon	Minneapolis, MN	Thursday--7:00 PM	Steve Brown (scbrown@visi.com)	651/699-6758	2032 Norfolk Avenue; St. Paul, MN 55116
Kansas City Backgammon	Harpo's	Kansas City, MO	2nd Thursday monthly--6:00 PM	Eric Barr (eric@kcbackgammon.com)	816/561-4330	711 Corbin Terrace; Kansas City, MO 64111
Queen City Backgammon Club	Frickers	Cincinnati, OH	3rd Thursday monthly--7:00 PM	Dave Dargis (qcbcc@zoomtown.com)	513/729-8484	9136 Fontainebleau Terr.; Cincinnati, OH 45231
Ohio State Backgammon Club	Thirsty Dog Brewery	Copley, OH	Sunday monthly--2:00 PM	Joe Miller (osbcc@neo.rr.com)	330/268-4610	1066 Winston Street; Akron, OH 44314
"	Boulevard Tavern	Cuyatoga Falls, OH	Wednesday--6:30 PM	"	"	"

(Continued on opposite side)

Backgammon Clubs In North America*(Continued from opposite side)***CENTRAL (continued)**

CLUB NAME	LOCATION	CITY & STATE	MEETING DAY & TIME	CONTACT (E-MAIL)	TELEPHONE	MAIL INQUIRIES TO
Miami Valley Backgammon Club	Quizno's Subs	Fairborn, OH	Sunday monthly-1:00 PM	Roger Foster (mbackgammon@aol.com)	937/864-1748	4151 West Enon Drive; Enon, OH 45323
Greater Columbus Backgammon Club	Lucky's Grille & Billiards	Hilliard, OH	Sunday monthly-1:30 PM	Trevor Dierkes (trevman007@yahoo.com)	614/784-8132	155 Delhi Avenue C; Columbus, OH 43202
Dallas Backgammon League	HOOP	Addison, TX	Wednesday-8:00 PM	Tom Wheeler (zwhnee@shoglobal.net)	972/484-3038	3705 Pageant Place; Dallas, TX 75244
Austin Backgammon Association	JC's Steakhouse	Austin, TX	Mon-7:30 PM; Sat bimonthly-12:30 PM	Jackie Seiders-Smart (jackes@austin.rr.com)	512/261-8518	30 Hightail Way; Austin, TX 78738
Houston Backgammon Club	Sansone's West Oaks Bar	Houston, TX	2nd Saturday monthly-1:00 PM	Tom Wright (tomw64@hotmail.com)	281/556-0428	14147 Lost Meadow Ln.; Houston, TX 77079
West Texas Backgammon Club	Big Daddy's	Odessa, TX	1st & 3rd Saturday-3:00 PM	Joe Tucker (wtbccc@yahoo.com)	432/366-1631	3313 Sherbrook Road; Odessa, TX 79762
Madison Backgammon Club	J.T. Whitney's Pub & Brewery	Madison, WI	Tuesday-6:30 PM	Tom Madraja (tom.madraja@madisonbg.com)	608/516-9109	5821 Tolman Terrace; Madison, WI 53711
Milwaukee Backgammon Club	John Hawks Pub	Milwaukee, WI	2nd Wednesday-7:00 PM	Marv Arrol (marrol@wi.rr.com)	414/355-5562	9031 N. 70th Street; Milwaukee, WI 53223

NORTHEAST

Beltway Backgammon Club	Promenade Cardroom	Bethesda, MD	Twice Sunday monthly-12:00 PM	Barry Silliman (sillybaz@beltwaybg.org)	202/777-2841 x1375	P.O. Box 612; Walkersville, MD 21793
New England Backgammon Club	Holiday Inn	Somerville, MA	Wed-7 PM, Sun monthly-12:30 PM	Doug Zare (douglas.zare@gmail.com)	617/945-1257	115 Fulkerson Street; Cambridge, MA 02141
Mid Jersey Backgammon Club	Town & Country Inn	Keyport, NJ	Thursday-7:30 PM	Alan Grunwald (alan205@aol.com)	732/598-2988	205 Doe Trail; Morganville, NJ 07751
New Jersey Backgammon Club	Bergen Bridge Club	Paramus, NJ	Friday-7:00 PM	Fred Fado (fadam@kimberamerica.com)	973/537-9128	670 Mt. Hope Avenue; Wharton, NJ 07885
Ace Point Backgammon Club	Clubroom	New York, NY	Daily-1 PM; Tour: last Sun. monthly	Alan & Lourdes Stefan (astefan@acepointclub.com)	212/888-2231	328 East 61st Street 5; New York, NY 10021
New York Chess & Backgammon	Bryant Park	New York, NY	Daily-11:30 AM; Tour: Sun-2:30 PM	Steve Manning (nychess@earthlink.net)	212/869-6057	8 Old North Road; Amenia, NY 12501
Harrisburg Backgammon Club	Elephant & Castle Pub	New Cumberland, PA	1st Sunday monthly-12:00 PM	Steve Shoemaker (nls132@comcast.net)	717/545-4546	6261 S. Highlands Circle; Harrisburg, PA 17111
Pittsburgh Backgammon Association	Niki's Pizza Shop	Pittsburgh, PA	Tuesday-8:30 PM	Steve Hast (pghstev1@aol.com)	412/823-7500	3560 Ridgewood Drive; Pittsburgh, PA 15235
Tysons Corner Backgammon Club	Best West Tysons Westpark Hotel	McLean, VA	Mon-6:45 PM; Quarterly-11 AM	Bill Pow (bill_22003@hotmail.com)	703/396-7224	10961 Pettigrew Way; Manassas, VA 20109

SOUTH

Suncoast Backgammon Association	New York, New York Lounge	Cleawater, FL	Monday & Friday-6:30 PM	Bob Carpenter	727/771-6544	1801 Eastlake Rd. 12E; Palm Harbor, FL 34685
South Florida Backgammon Club	NorthRidge Raw Bar & Restaurant	Ft. Lauderdale, FL	Sat.-1 PM; Sun. monthly-1 PM	Elyane Feinstein (BGINFla210@aol.com)	954/564-0340	649 W. Oakland Park Bl. 108A; Oakland Park, FL 33311
Orlando Backgammon	Mulligan's	Orlando, FL	Tuesday-7:30 PM	David Thomas (dthomas@acrcompilers.com)	386/736-0502	P.O. Box 803; Deland, FL 32721
Atlanta Backgammon Association	Mazzy's Sports Bar & Grill	Roswell, GA	1st & 3rd Monday-7:30 PM	Dave Cardwell (info@BGINGA.com)	770/333-1876	111 Radford Circle SW; Marietta, GA 30060
"	Rock Bottom Brewery	Buckhead, GA	1st & 3rd Thursday-7:00 PM	"	"	"
"	Mazzy's Sports Bar & Grill	Roswell, GA	4th Saturday monthly-12:30 PM	"	"	"
Louisville Backgammon Club	Bluegrass Brewing Company	Louisville, KY	1st & 3rd Tuesday-6:30 PM	Quint McIveyre (hnm@gdm.com)	502/587-3672	4906 Crofton Road; Louisville, KY 40207
Charlotte Backgammon Club	O'Charley's	Charlotte, NC	Monday-6:30 PM	Job Horton (jeh@carolina.rr.com)	704/814-0850	2217-D Matthews Twp Pkwy 128; Matthews, NC 28105
Charleston Backgammon Society	O'Charley's	N. Charleston, SC	Monday-7:00 PM	Brett Meyer (mrbmeyer@comcast.net)	843/442-1841	8058 Long Shadow Ln.; N. Charleston, SC 29406
Nashville Backgammon Club	Sam's Place	Nashville, TN	Wednesday-6:45 PM	J.P. White (jfb@nashvillebackgammon.com)	615/824-9461	114 Dorcas Drive; Hendersonville, TN 37075

CANADA

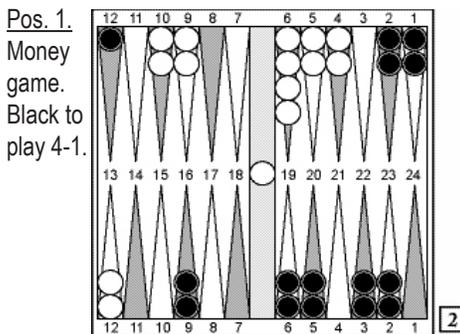
Natl' Capital Backgammon Club	Bobby's Bar & Restaurant	Ottawa, ON	1st Sunday monthly-10:00 AM	Eden Windist (eden-windist@rogers.com)	613/741-2530	396 Bangs St.; Ottawa ON, K1K 2N6; Canada
Toronto Backgammon Club	Bayview Games Club	Toronto, ON	Daily-6 PM, Tour Thursday	Vladimir Dobrich	416/722-9709	1681 Bayview Ave. 202; Toronto, ON, M4G 3C1; Canada
Quebec Backgammon Federation	Bar La Paz	Montreal, QC	Wednesday-7:00 PM	Marie-Chantal Bienvenue (morgane@sympatico.ca)	514/722-7035	4545, ave. Pierre-de-Coubertin, CP 1000, succursale M; Montreal QC, H1V 3R2; Canada



“Uncle Jake, will you help us decorate the Christmas tree?”
 “Nick, do I look like a gardener?”
 “What about singing Christmas carols?”
 “Alex, Bing Crosby I’m not. What I will do is tell you a Christmas story. Once upon a time there was a gammon player . . .”
 “Uncle Jake, that sounds like a backgammon story!”

“Nick, even backgammon players have Christmases. Some of them anyway. I’m a backgammon player, but am I out hustling backgammon at Christmas? No sir! Christmas is a time for family. In our family, it’s tradition to stay home and win money playing cards with the grandparents. But this backgammon player I am about to tell you about was *not* home with his family. Instead, even though it was Christmas Eve he was out at the backgammon club, trying to hustle. It wasn’t that he didn’t love his family, he was just . . . Well, he wasn’t very responsible. He only had a little money, so instead of using it to at least buy a few presents, he was at the club hoping to win some more. ‘One big score, and I can buy really nice presents for the kids,’ he kept telling himself.

“And there he was playing some of the biggest fish in the club, but the Dice god was turning out to be a real Grinch:



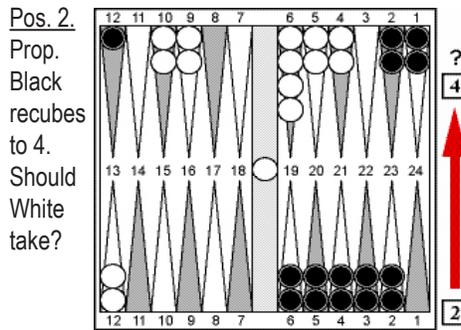
“The Captain, ‘Well Read’ Willie, so called because he had failed to understand more backgammon books than almost

any player in the Midwest, wanted to play 9/4. ‘We have more men back, we have a double anchor, it’s time for a bold play!’ he declared, boldly.

“Our hero, Feckless Fred, was quite a good player. ‘It’s imperative that we come out. We already have a four-point board, but we also have four men back. Now is the time to try for a lifeline to start moving those men out from his board. Let’s try 23/18.’

“Because Feckless was well respected, the Captain reluctantly made his play. The Box rolled 1-6 from the bar, they fanned with 6-5—a parlay that you will note (because the entire crew did) would have worked better the other way—and they got gammoned. Besides losing four points he could ill afford, Feckless got an earful from Willie.

“‘I’ve got a prop for you,’ he suggested, as propping Willie was a Christmas present in and of itself.



“Suppose we made your play, he fanned, we covered, and he fanned again?”

“I’d redouble!” said Willie.

“And?”

“And pass!”

“So that was the prop: Willie took Black’s side, and paid Fred a point to take a 2-cube as White.”

“Who was right, Uncle Jake?”

“Freddie by a mile! It’s damn near a beaver, which is why Freddie’s checker play was right, too.

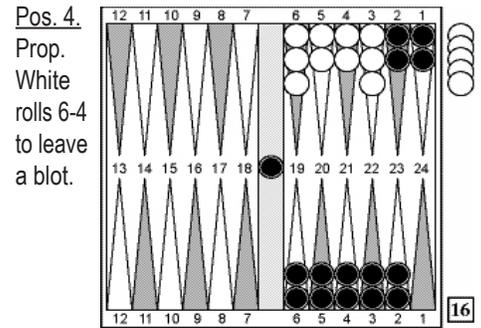
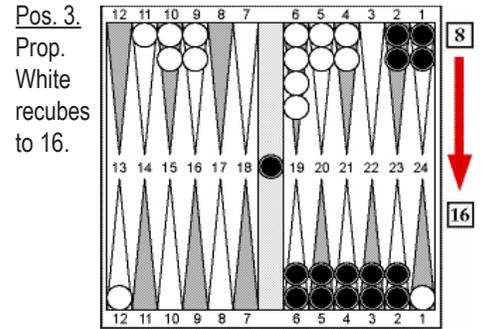
“But Fred must have been on Santa’s naughty list, as it might as well have been lumps of coal spilling out of his dice cup. He was down a hundred points when the owner yelled that it was ‘last game.’

“‘Start the cube on 8?’ Willie offered. Fred grunted, but notched it up to 8. Then, he caught a break. Willie rolled 3-3, slotting his ace, Fred came in with 1-2, and Willie fanned.

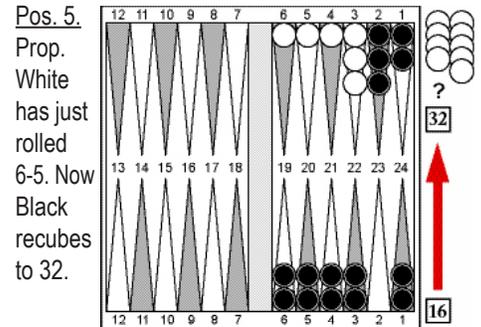
[See Pos 3 above right.]

“‘I’ve got a well-timed ace-deuce game and you’re behind a prime. I should beaver, but I *just* take,’ said Willie, which justified Freddie’s turning the cube when it really is too good to double. But it was too good to last.

[See Pos 4 above right.]



“Freddie’s awkward bearoff caught up with him, forcing him to leave a blot. Willie at last entered, but with 1-1: bar/23, 2/1(2). Then Freddie rolled 6-5!”



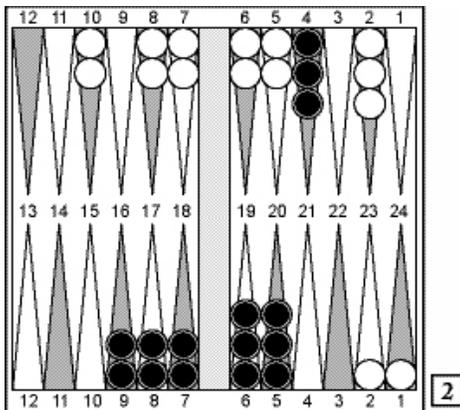
“Is this a redouble, Uncle Jake?”

“Barely, Alex. So Freddie took, but at this point, he had little hope. Then Willie

[Continued on page 11]

**PROBLEM #305
ANALYZED**

by Mary Hickey

7-point match. Black leads White, 4 to 3. **BLACK TO PLAY 4-1.**

When you have three men stuck on a blocked anchor, they're crying for help: "Come on dice, give us a 5!"

Since the dice don't like your checkers any more than they like you, they retort, "Nyeah, nyeah, you forgot to say 'direct'!" Then they mockingly oblige by producing a 4-1, a 5 of the wrong sort. How do you play it at this score, or any other score for that matter? What is your objective here?

The first thing to notice is that White's prime is strong, but also brittle. She has five points but no spares, since her five other men are behind either her prime or yours. What you want most, then, is to have her break up her prime and give you two escaping numbers instead of just one.

With that in mind, any approach that involves hitting is likely to be wrong. Hitting two is usually better than hitting just one, but here it's actually worse, since you don't get the benefit from White's rolls that would have entered but broken had you hit only once. Even the strange-looking double-blotting hit 6/2*, 5/4 rolls out with 0.033 better money equity than 6/2*/1* here, and would probably be stronger still if it didn't leave your covering 5s duplicated by the number you need to escape. The best of the hitting plays, though, is 6/5/1*, maximizing White's rooting rolls while minimizing the chance she sends another of your men back, either now or next roll.

If instead you decide to let White play, there are two ways to proceed. The first is to clear the 9-point (9/4, 9/8), leaving her only indirects to get out and many breaking rolls. One disadvantage is that White's smallest rolls all play well, anchoring on points from which she can hope to escape

more easily than you. Another is that if you fail to escape next turn, you could be forced to play awkwardly or leave direct shots.

The second play is to make the 4-point (8/4, 5/4). This has the obvious disadvantage of giving White excellent 6s and also 5-2 to "escape with tempo." The good side is that if she's unable to hit, most of her other rolls break, since you've given her fewer options with her small rolls. Also, you're better set to maintain a strong position if neither of you can escape next turn.

JellyFish 3.0 and Snowie 4.1 both show that at DMP, making the 4-point would be clear. This play achieves 61.9–62.8% wins in three rollouts, vs. 59.6–60.6% for the single hit and 59.0–60.4% for picking up the 9-point. It's also clearly best at *Gammon Go*, even though the single hit wins a few more gammons, because making the 4-point wins far more than enough extra games to compensate for them. At *Gammon Save*, it's murkier, but the bots still make the 4-point vs. picking up the 9-point. (Note that the long JellyFish and Snowie 4.1 rollouts were done without the score in mind; short Snowie 4.1 rollouts at the score confirm the play order shown.) These rollouts show the tradeoff favoring the 4-point, with from 2.2 to 2.9 extra games won for every two extra gammons lost.

For money, Snowie has the top three plays in a dead heat, separated by a maximum of 0.008. JellyFish finds a cubeless money advantage of 0.049 for making the 4-point, with the other two plays tied.

Where does this 3-away, 4-away score come in? It has a bit of *Gammon Save* feel to it, but also some money flavor since winning a gammon is still beneficial to Black, and the cube isn't entirely useless to him either. Black gains more than usual by simply winning the game, because it gets him to Crawford and its associated juicier equities; but he also loses less than usual if he loses the game, since a win by his opponent doesn't allow her to reach any kind of "privileged" score.

Hand calculations based on the Woolsey/Heinrich match equity table show that Snowie 4.1's rollouts favor making the 4-point at this score by 0.4%, and JellyFish 3.0's favor the same play by 0.6%. Though when I first saw this problem, my inclination was to play 9/5, 9/8 to minimize gammons, I now see that I overemphasized the gammon-shyness needed because of the score, and would now play 8/4, 5/4.

A final factor in favor of building the 4-point vs. picking up the 9-point is the slightly higher non-gammon wins, regardless of which bot's numbers we use. Even at this score, this could be expected to lead to

more wins for Black since he owns the cube.

There's an arcane mathematical principle hiding in this problem. Try to keep a straight face as you expound on it to your chouette:

Five points are more numerous than four!

It may still be true that "four in a row is more than you think," but a broken five point block is an even tougher structure to beat, as you're noticing over on the other side of the board. The price of a direct shot with two extras isn't out of line for what you gain when you succeed in making and keeping it.—Mary Hickey Δ

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 3]

JAKE ON EBAY

I was surprised to find out that my 1987 movie "Dance or Die" was selling on ebay this month. Gee, I see I got top billing over Laurie Thompson in the seller's ad. Then again, a ten-year old, half-eaten cheese sandwich recently sold for \$29,000 on ebay, and I couldn't get \$1.99!?!—*Jake Jacobs, Tucson, Arizona*

POINT readers will agree that there's no comparison between Jake Jacobs and a ten-year-old, half-eaten cheese sandwich! "Uncle Jake's Christmas" is on page 9.—*Ed.*

POOR LINDSAY

Poor Lindsay Lohan. [See *December cover—Ed.*] A whole world of guys out there, and she has to end up with a backgammon-addict. I can hear him now: "Hmm, I'd know how to play this 4-3 for money, but it could be different at this match score. Would you mind handing me the laptop, honey?"—*Mary Hickey, Kirkersville, Ohio Δ*



Lindsay, what did we tell you about dating backgammon players?

AMALGAMATION

Don't forget the Chicago Bar Point Club Doubles Championship 5 February at Champs in Oakbrook Terrace, IL (that's Super Bowl eve). There's a \$50 bonus if the team is made up of one male and one female... Visiting the Bar Point Club in December: **Paul & Mary Franks** (NV), **Tom Maddux** (MO), **Kurt Thompson** (MN), and **Josh Riddell** (IN)... Can you believe it? In Patras, Greece two months ago, a policeman was arrested after allegedly robbing a bank and then visiting a nearby coffee shop to play a game of backgammon! Now that's a real addiction... Look for a Chicagoland director switch at the Bar Point Club and Winnetka Backgammon Club coming soon. On Tuesday, 25 January, **Bill Davis** and **Peter Kalba** will be directing the Backgammon On Board cruise tournament so Winnetka director **Trudie Chibnik** will fill in. Then on Wednesday 2 February, **Trudie & Bill Chibnik** go on their own cruise so BPC director **Bill Davis** will take over in Winnetka... Most of you know **Jon Viotor** of La Jolla, California as a fine backgammon player. But there is another side to Jon.



A sample of Jon Viotor's art displayed at www.jonviotor.com.

Check out the beautiful art he creates at his website: www.jonviotor.com... Illinois to Florida: **Leslie Lockett**... Effective immediately, the New York Chess & Backgammon Club has relocated to a tent in Bryant Park. Obviously during the winter, the tent will be heated. For more info, contact **Steve Manning** at 212/869-6057... **Phil Simborg** (IL) suggests that you "Turn up the sound on your computer and check out the backgammon song at: www.citlink.net/~stormygal"... Backgammon recently made a TV appearance on the weekly show "Lost." After a young child finished play-

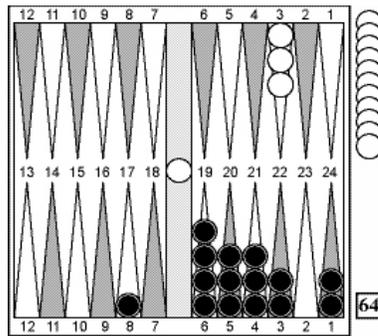
UNCLE JAKE...

[Continued from page 9]

whiffed with 6-1. Once again the recube (to 64) is too good, but at this point neither player was passing any cube offered, so Willie snatched it up. Freddie rolled another 6-5, but Willie hit on the next roll, and Freddie fanned and fanned, slumping lower in his chair each time he did.

"Why," he asked himself, "did I do this to my family? I could have gotten them presents. Maybe not good ones, but they're used to my ways. They'd forgive me. Instead, I'll be borrowing money for food this week. I'm just a bum! I deserve to lose." When suddenly...

Pos. 6.
Prop.
White rolls 6-2 from the bar.



"Freddie heard a heavenly chorus (that sounded like a duet between Ray Fogelund and Steve Mellen) singing '6-2 from the bar!' And the dice rolled like sugar plums out of his cup, and Donder-and-Blitzen if they didn't turn up a 6-2!

"Willie came in with 5-4, entering on the 20-point, and slotting his deuce. Freddie's dice came through again with 6-6, hitting and taking two men off. Willie threw 3-3, which wasn't going anywhere, and then Freddie threw likewise.

"192 points!? I just lost 192 points!?" Willie took his eggnog glass and dumped the contents over his own head, because when you've lost 192 points in one game,

ing one of the adults, you could hear him say: "You owe me \$2,000,000!"... **Jake Jacobs** (AZ) was in Thailand when the horrific Tsunami hit the Thai shoreline. Fortunately, he was on the inland side of the country... **Paul Magriel** (NV) appeared on the 8 January "Ultimate Poker Challenge" TV show and won approximately \$2000 for finishing third... Speaking of poker, "Harrington On Hold'em" is now available for \$30. This excellent work is the joint effort of former World Series of Poker champ **Dan Harrington** and backgammon master **Bill Robertie** (MA). Order from Michigan's **Carol Joy Cole** (810/232-9731)... And finally, comput-

what difference does a toupee full of egg-nog make?

"What the hell," he said, after drying off, "it's Christmas. You were unlucky most of the night, and probably right about the prop. You always are. Here, Merry Christmas!" Willie piled up a big stack of hundred dollar bills in front of Freddie.

"Just then, they heard a noise. 'What was that?' said Freddie.

"Rats in the attic!" said the owner, who had wandered over in time to watch the fireworks of the last game. 'I've got to get the exterminator back.'

"That sounded like something on the roof!" insisted Freddie.

"They ran outside. Snow was falling, and the sky was hidden under a cloak of white, but they could hear the cry: 'Ho! Ho! Ho!'"

"Was it Santa, Uncle Jake?"

"No, Alex, it was the kind of neighborhood where you heard the word 'ho' a lot. In fact, Freddie looked at the stack of hundreds he was clutching, and thought about getting a room down the street at the NoTel Motel, and inviting some of the neighborhood ladies over for a very special Christmas party.

"But he thought some more, about his long-suffering wife, about his children who loved him, who would be getting up in a few hours to see what was under the tree. He climbed in his car, drove to an all night WalMart, and did his shopping.

"You see, Nick and Alex, Freddie realized that Santa wasn't some fat guy up on a rooftop. He realized that Santa was in our hearts, in the spirit of giving."

"That's really touching, Uncle Jake."

"Yeah, I'm getting all choked up. And I hate that! I wind up with snot in my beer. Go get a deck of cards, Nick. Your dad told me how big your allowance is now. It's time for me to teach you some Jacobs family traditions." — *Jake Jacobs* Δ

ers—especially *Snowie 4.1*—have taken over the hearts and minds of today's backgammon players; but there are still a few holdouts. Chicago Bar Point Club player **Bill Bartholomay** is one. "I'm a manual player... not one of these "Snow" jobs. Δ

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