

2005 midwest backgammon championships

KAZAROSS CLAWS HIS WAY TO THE TOP

Garber Wins Grand Crystal Beaver

Told my friends I wasn't going to cut my hair until I lost an ABT match. You're going to see a shaggy Neil in Ohio!"

So said Neil "The An-Neil-ator" Kazaross after winning the 2005 Midwest Backgammon Championships—his second major American Backgammon Tour victory of the year.



MBC Champion Neil Kazaross proudly displays his 10 pound bear trophy.

This was the Chicago Bar Point Club's 22nd annual charity tournament and was held 18–20 March at the Wyndham Lisle Hotel in the Chicagoland area. Bill Davis directed with great help from Carol Joy Cole, Peter Kalba, Amy Trudeau, Dru Heggen, and Greg Tomlin.

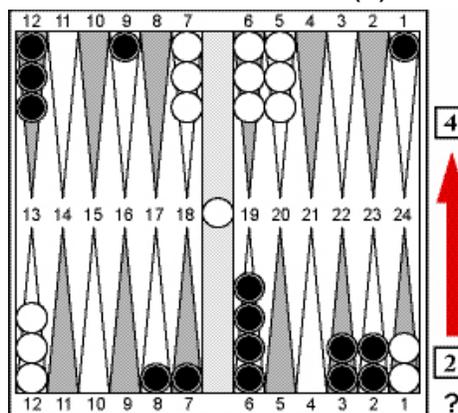


MBC staff from left: Peter Kalba, Amy Trudeau, Dru Heggen, Bill Davis, Carol Joy Cole & Greg Tomlin. [Photo: Steve Klesker]

The 170+ players attending were treated to a "bear" theme including free Bear-Gammon T-shirts, bronze bear trophies, Teddy Tennis competition, and the chance to win a \$1200 Taki Bear-Gammon board.

Twice before the finals, Kazaross found himself on the ropes. In round two, Neil was faced with a tough redoubling decision in a sequence that eventually led to a 16-cube:

Championship round-of-32. Neil Kazaross (Black) trails Tom Meyer (White) 2–4 to 11. **RECUBE ACTION(S)?**



In Neil's own words, "This is definitely an aggressive recube. Some might think that I shouldn't redouble Tom when his take is so easy; but technically, the recube is correct by 0.042 in the live cube rollout. I took a very aggressive approach to the cube in the early rounds, noting that Tom had hammered me the only two other times we had played.

"After recubing, I rolled 6-2 and after some thought, misplayed it by running 24/16. (13/7, 24/22 is clearly better.) Tom hit with a 6-1 and the game turned around soon enough leading to the position where I had a trivial take of his 8-cube with my 2-point game.

"The difference between money play and trailing 2–4 to 11 is very important here. In money play, Tom can get full value out of a recube to 8 and whatever gammons he can then win and a recube to 4 from my side rolls out as a clear blunder being wrong by 0.183."

In the semifinals, trailing 6–12 (Crawford) to 13 vs. Peoria Club Director

[Continued on page 5]

BILL'S A 'BRAVE' PLAYER



With baseball beginning, Atlanta Braves president and Chicago Bar Point Club regular Bill Bartholomay wore his unique Braves jacket—one of only three in the world—to the recent Midwest Championships. Ted Turner and Jane Fonda own the other two. Δ

CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

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LETTERS

c/o CHICAGO POINT

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PRAISE FOR WHISTLER'S

I just wanted to say "kudos" to Chicago Bar Point Club members Georgina Flanagan and Arline Levy for selecting an excellent venue as new backgammon club location. Whistler's is everything we need and want in a club location. Congratulations on a job well done. Cheers!—*Steve Klesker, Green Oaks, Illinois*

DOUBLING A MASTER

Regarding Phil and Randee Simborg's decision to cube backgammon giant Howard Ring and daughter Julia in Diagram #1 of last month's "Doubling Our Pleasure," it can be right to crank up the cube against a stronger player, e.g. you should be doubling a last-shake 4, 3 bearoff against a world-class master. But if the position is complex (this one qualifies) you are less likely to double. This is called a "reverse fish" non-cube.—*Jake Jacobs, Tucson, Arizona*

[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.

Apr 8-10	11th Ohio State Championships, Airport Marriott Hotel, Cleveland, Ohio	330/268-4610
Apr 8-10	6th Annual Las Vegas Hard Board Tourney, Fitzgerald's, Las Vegas, NV	702/240-6646
Apr 9	Tax Refund Classic, Sansone's West Oaks Bar, Houston, Texas	281/556-0428
Apr 9*	Backgammon By the Bay, Peking Express, Berkeley, California	831/688-9722
Apr 10*	Miami Valley Club Monthly, Gambits Bar, Marriott Hotel, Dayton, Ohio	937/864-1748
Apr 14	Kansas City Club Monthly, Harpo's, Kansas City, Missouri	816/561-4330
Apr 16	Springfield Series Grand Finale, Wildlife Sports Bar, Springfield, Illinois	217/528-0117
Apr 17	New England Club Monthly, Holiday Inn, Somerville, Massachusetts	508/829-3283
Apr 17*	Greater Columbus Club Monthly, Lucky's Grille, Hilliard, Ohio	614/784-8132
Apr 21*	Third Thursday Bonus (Chicago Open), Days Inn, Flint, Michigan	810/232-9731
Apr 23*	Atlanta Spring Mini-Blitz Tournament, Mazzy's Bar, Roswell, Georgia	770/333-1876
Apr 23*	Northwest Indiana Club Monthly, VFW Hall, Porter, Indiana	219/785-2082
Apr 27-May 1	21st Nevada State Tournament, Riviera Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada	702/893-6025
May 1*	Ohio State Club Monthly, Boulevard Tavern, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio	330/268-4610
May 2*	Kansas City Club Monthly, Harpo's, Kansas City, Missouri	816/561-4330
May 3*	Arizona Club Monthly, Rosie McCaffrey's Irish Pub, Phoenix, Arizona	602/279-0215
May 14*	Mother's Day Open, Sansone's West Oaks Bar, Houston, Texas	281/556-0428
May 15*	New England Club Monthly, Holiday Inn, Somerville, Massachusetts	508/829-3283
May 19*	Third Thursday Bonus (Wisconsin), Days Inn, Flint, Michigan	810/232-9731
May 21*	Atlanta Spring Doubles, Mazzy's Sports Bar, Roswell, Georgia	770/333-1876
May 21*	Austin Club Saturday Bimonthly, JC's Steakhouse, Austin, Texas	512/261-8518
May 21*	Northwest Indiana Club Monthly, VFW Hall, Porter, Indiana	219/785-2082
May 27-30	<u>26th Chicago Open, Oak Brook Hills Resort & Hotel, Oak Brook, Illinois</u>	<u>847/674-0120</u>
Jun 5	Bar Point Sunday, Champs Sports Bar, Oakbrook Terrace, Illinois	773/583-6464
Jun 5*	Ohio State Club Monthly, Boulevard Tavern, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio	330/268-4610
Jun 7*	Arizona Club Monthly, Rosie McCaffrey's Irish Pub, Phoenix, Arizona	602/279-0215
Jun 11*	Father's Day Open, Sansone's West Oaks Bar, Houston, Texas	281/556-0428
Jun 12*	New England Club Monthly, Holiday Inn, Somerville, Massachusetts	508/829-3283
Jun 17-19*	<u>Los Angeles Open, Airtel Plaza Hotel, Van Nuys, California</u>	<u>818/901-0464</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>585/396-0969</u>
Jul 29-31	<u>Wisconsin State Championships, Radisson Hotel, Madison, Wisconsin</u>	<u>608/516-9109</u>
Aug 7	Bar Point Sunday, Champs Sports Bar, Oakbrook Terrace, Illinois	773/583-6464
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>
Oct 14-16*	Illinois State Championships, Springfield Hilton, Springfield, Illinois	217/528-0117

OUTSIDE USA

Apr 7-10	2nd Casino Salzburg BG & Texas Hold'em Open, Salzburg, Austria	49171-542222
Apr 14-17*	POSTPONED: Palmedes Challenge Cup, Puente Romano, Marbella, Spain	34626-212344
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
Apr 22-25	5th City of Jesolo Backgammon & Gin, Park Brasilia Hotel, Jesolo, Italy	3941-5211029
Apr 23-24	POSTPONED: Schwaben-Cup Goes Franken, Nurnberg, Germany	49711-486190
May 6-8	11th Oslo Open, Vika Atrium, Oslo, Norway	4798-219323
May 7-8	County Cups Trophy, Hanover Hotel, Hinckley, England	441522-888676
May 12-15	1st Aix Les Bains Tournament, Casino Aix Les Bains, France	33142-618080
May 14-15	Gammonitis League Tournament, Eynsham Hall, Witney, England	447900-983038
May 14-15*	High Q Royal Cup & High Q Consulting Cup, Copenhagen, Denmark	4525-652223
May 14-15*	Mick Butterfield's 50th Birthday Bash, Oddfellows Inn, Huddersfield, UK	441484-603568
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
May 28-29	1st Australian Championships, Legends Hotel, Queensland, Australia	617-55887888
Jun 1-5*	1st Deauville Backgammon Trophy, Casino Barrière, Normandy, France	33672-008957
Jun 2-5	1st Bregenz Open 2005, Casino Bregenz/Mercure Hotel, Bregenz, Austria	49171-542222
Jun 4-5	Hilton Trophy, Hanover Hotel, Daventry, England	441522-888676
Jun 10-12	5th Austrian Masters Finale, Cafe Heine, Vienna, Austria	436642-404285
Jun 18-19	Liz Barker's 30th Birthday, Sundridge Park, Bromley, England	447900-983038
Jun 23-26	1st Belgian Open, Grand Casino Oostende, Oostende, Belgium	491715-422222
Jul 2-3	Keren Di Bona, Hanover Hotel, Daventry, England	441522-888676
Jul 7-10*	17th City of Venice International Tournament, Venice, Italy	3941-5211029
Jul 11-17	30th World Championship, Grand Hotel, Monte Carlo, Monaco USA contact: 954/527-4033	33142-618080
Jul 20-24	3rd Riviera's Challenge & Open, Partouche Hotel, Cannes, France	33142-618080
Jul 23-24	10th Liverpool Open, Liverpool Bridge Club, Liverpool, England	441514-283082
Jul 28-31*	1st Czech Challenge/Prague Giants, Casino Savarin, Czech Republic	491715-422222

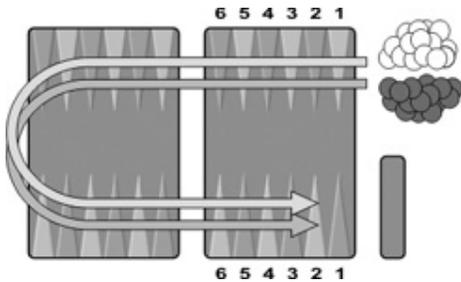
LETTERS...

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RUSSIAN BACKGAMMON

I am trying to find out about a variation called "Russian Backgammon." What can you tell me about it?—*Michael Gnoske, Rolling Meadows, Illinois*

The board is set up like this:



All checkers start off the board. Both players enter their fifteen checkers into the

same starting table, move them around the board in the same direction, and bear them off from the same finishing table.

For more information, go to Tom Keith's excellent "Backgammon Galore" website (www.bkgm.com/variants/Russian-Backgammon.html) where the complete rules are posted.—*Ed.*

FUN AT MIDWEST CHAMPS

What a great tournament you folks ran this year. I had a really fun weekend. This was only my second tournament, but I wanted to attend because it's clear that the midwest, especially the Chicagoland area, is the hotspot for backgammon in the US. Playing one of my matches while seated next to Neil Kazaross really drove that home!

Two things that stood out for me about the tournament: first, how friendly everyone was. What a great conversational, fun, informative atmosphere. Secondly, the

amount of playing opportunities we were given. You folks really know how to keep everyone in action!

Thanks massively for all your efforts.—*Steve Schreiber, Carmel, NY*

It was a pleasure meeting you, Steve. See you at next year's Midwest Championships with a "Mardi Gras" theme.—*Ed.*

SHAKEN, NOT STIRRED

I was surfing through the channels recently, when I stumbled across the movie *Octopussy*. The scene was where Bond (Roger Moore) was playing against the villain (Louis Jourdan) in backgammon. Being the purist that I am in most things, especially music and movies, there was and always will be only one James Bond, and that of course is Sean Connery. I don't recall seeing the complete Bond movies of any other actor playing the part.



Roger Moore as 007 plays backgammon against Louis Jourdan in "Octopussy."

Anyhow, it was a bearoff in a high stakes backgammon game with a large

[Continued on page 4]

AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 2005

Compiled through 20 March after 4 tournaments
(Upcoming events: Ohio State, Chicago Open)

Neil Kazaross	46.34	Tom Green	5.27	Ralph Byrns	2.94	Cole Parker	1.60
Phil Simborg	40.24	Michael Plog	5.20	Steve Goldstein	2.90	Mark King	1.57
Howard Shirey	16.71	Randy Armstrong	5.09	Doug Roberts	2.90	Tony Garcia	1.56
Larry Strommen	10.61	Boris Dekhtyar	4.99	Connie Tipton	2.80	Joe Davidson	1.41
Carter Mattig	10.54	Ed Zell	4.99	Neil Garvie	2.58	Carmen Webb	1.41
Bob Hathaway	10.54	Jeff Aciermo	4.94	Jonah Seewald	2.58	Dick Nelson	1.28
Bill Minser	10.40	Joe Freedman	4.67	Kathy Sorci	2.56	Shane Joos	1.28
Mark Rozans	8.64	Carol Joy Cole	4.32	Les Moshinsky	2.53	Mark Hong	0.99
Vadim MUSAELYAN	7.60	David Rogers	3.80	Jolie Rubin	2.50	Ray Reed	0.96
Chuck Bower	6.40	Petko Kostadinov	3.80	Mike Cyrkiel	2.50	Greg Buonocore	0.96
Carlos Azcarate	6.40	Ben Elliott	3.38	Jeb Horton	2.35	Kim Owens	0.94
Ray Glaeser	5.80	Cookie Frazin	3.20	Rory Pascar	2.22	Frank Patrick	0.80
Malcolm Davis	5.80	Karen Chung	3.20	Gregg Cattanch	2.22	Tim Johnson	0.67
Herb Roman	5.80	Lynn Lusk	3.20	Stuart Thomson	1.90	Brenda Cohen	0.63
J. A. Miller	5.44	Bruce Ballance	3.19	Ernie McCombs	1.64	Richard Newfield	0.51
Mary Ann Meese	5.27						

CHICAGO BAR POINT CLUB

2005 PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED
THRU 31 MARCH

Tak Morioka	10.20	Paul Baraz	3.32	Sargon Benjamin	1.52	Eric Johnson	0.72
Phyllis Smolinski	9.18	Igor Kaplunovsky	2.80	Paul Franks	1.44	Joe Auszmann	0.72
Carter Mattig	6.56	Arline Levy	2.72	Elaine Andrews	1.28	Royal Robinson	0.56
Bill Davis	6.00	Norma Shyer	2.64	Val Zimnicki	1.28	Mark Murray	0.56
Herb Roman	5.84	Alice Kay	2.64	Wayne Wiest	1.28	Cookie Frazin	0.56
Phil Simborg	5.74	Oleg Raygorodsky	2.16	Randee Simborg	1.12	Boris Dekhtyar	0.56
Lucky Nelson	5.72	Georgina Flanagan	2.04	Bob Steen	1.04	Julia Ring	0.56
David Rockwell	5.52	Steve Klesker	2.04	Kurt Thompson	0.96	Don Marek	0.48
Gary Kay	5.36	Dave Cramer	2.04	Kwong Chan	0.88	Roger Hickman	0.48
Tim Mabee	4.20	Jerry Brooks	1.84	Adrian Rios	0.84	Mark Phillips	0.48
Larry Goldstein	3.88	Bill Bartholomay	1.84	David Marcus	0.80	Bill Stegich	0.40
Bill Keefe	3.76	Dan Weymouth	1.76	Ken Tibbs	0.72	Lisa Nelson	0.32
Howard Ring	3.52	Albert Yakobashvili	1.76	Greg Merriman	0.72		

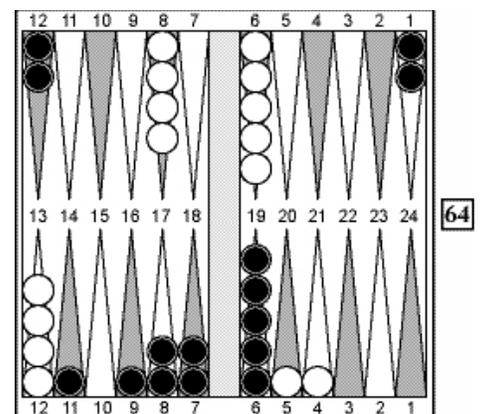
Back to back Player of the month honors for **TAK MORIOKA** with 4.32 points and the 2005 lead to date. Runners-up where Phyllis Smolinski (3.56) and Lucky Nelson (3.00).

your move

PROBLEM #308

to be analyzed by Kit Woolsey

Money game. **BLACK TO PLAY 4-2.**



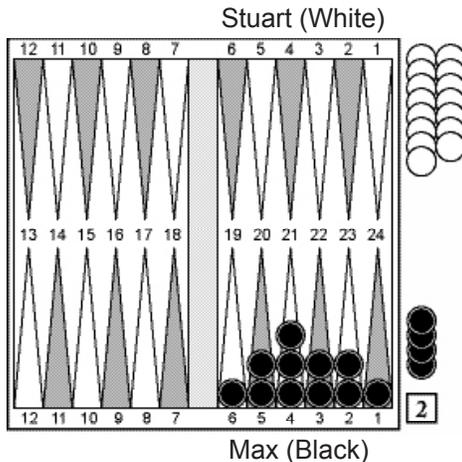
SHADES OF GRAY

A RULES AND RULINGS COLUMN

© 2005 by Danny Kleinman

THE DISPUTED ENDING

In what has been a slow 9-point match, Max (Black) leads Stuart (White) 8-7 post-Crawford. Max takes Stuart's double, so the match is on the line. Soon the game becomes a race, and both players, aware that Norman has already won his match and is waiting to play the winner, move very quickly as they start to bear off. This is what I see when I am summoned to the table:



Stuart, after playing a 6-5, has cleared all his checkers off the board and claimed victory. Max, however, has not conceded. Neither player can reconstruct the positions of Stuart's remaining checkers, nor even agree as to how many checkers Stuart had left after playing his 6-5.

"I think I had seven men left," says Stuart.

"I think you had ten men left with a couple of gaps," counters Max.

"Maybe I did, but that was before I played my 6-5," says Stuart.

"No, that was after you played your 6-5," insists Max.

Norman, who is watching, and would prefer to play Stuart, the weaker player, says, "No, Max, that was before Stuart played his 6-5."

Everyone agrees that before clearing his remaining checkers off the board, Stuart was a favorite to win the game.

With the information I have, how should I rule? —Perplexed Director

DEAR PERPLEXED: Rule that Max wins the game. A player who removes checkers from the board before a result in the game has been agreed, in effect, concedes the game. To claim victory, a player must obtain the agreement of his opponent before altering the position.

Norman is not a disinterested spectator, and his testimony should not be solicited

by the director. When Norman testifies without being asked, you should ignore his testimony.

Nor should Max be required to specify the position. What if Max gets it wrong to his own detriment?

This ruling may seem harsh, but it is necessary. The first principle of settling disputes in any game, including backgammon, is that the position must be left unaltered until the director rules.—*Yours, Danny Δ*

Do you have a ruling question for Danny Kleinman? Write to: Shades of Gray; c/o CHICAGO POINT; 3940 W. Bryn Mawr Avenue 504; Chicago, IL 60659-3155 or e-mail: bg@chicagopoint.com.

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Backgammon
Portal on the net.

LETTERS...

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crowd standing around the board. Bond had four checkers left, with two of them on his 6-point. Louis Jordan had just two left, I believe on the 3- and 4-points. As expected, there was a lot of macho gloating by Jourdan, who was a huge favorite in the position. Moore then takes the dice from Jourdan's cup (apparently they were loaded), saying something like, "Player's privilege. You wouldn't mind if I used your dice for this roll, would you?"

Of course out popped boxes, followed by a gasp from the onlookers.

As much as everyone wants 007 to win, I thought to myself at that very moment: Bill Davis would have ruled that even James Bond can't have a dice change in the middle of a game.—*Herb Roman, Chicago, Illinois*

ALTERNATE WHO GOES FIRST

This is in regards to the Simborg Rule ("A point cannot be made on the first roll of the game.") and other suggested changes to re-

duce the element of luck in backgammon. I don't think any of these suggestions should be incorporated because when you start messing around like that, you lose the very essence of what backgammon is all about.

I do have a suggestion that would make backgammon more fair to both opponents: Alternate who goes first. This is nothing new; it is used in many of our games and sports. The only adjustment needed to apply this rule would be to require a reroll if doubles appeared on the first roll.

Just as in the game of craps, where a shooter can have a lucky streak, a backgammon player can have a lucky streak allowing him to go first many more times than his opponent. After all, backgammon is a race and the player who goes first has the advantage.

Imagine that you are in the finals of a major Championship. Your opponent has won the opening roll 17 out of 21 games. If both of you are equal in ability, this translates into a huge advantage. That wouldn't be fair, would it? Not with the Championship and all that money at stake.—*Joubert Malouf, Henderson, Nevada Δ*

Tommy Wouldn't Shake His Dice by Phil Simborg



Tommy wouldn't shake his dice. We've often told him, "That's not nice." He drives us nuts and makes us crazy. He's not dishonest, he's just lazy.

We scream and yell, but he won't do it. He doesn't care—that's all there's to it.

Somewhere there's justice, though my dream sounds ballsy:

I see Tommy in a row boat, in the ocean, with palsy.—*Phil Simborg Δ*

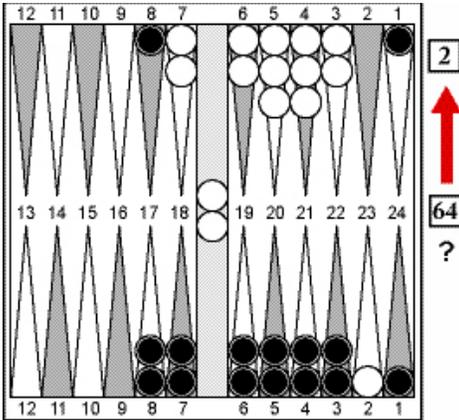
KAZAROSS CLAWS...

[Continued from page 1]

Ed Zell, Neil needed a specific bearoff miss from Ed, then a large double for himself to stay alive. The parlay occurred and Kaz rallied for a double match-point victory to go up against Madison Club player Bill Minser in the 15-point finals.

Trailing 2-4, Neil offered Bill an interesting recube:

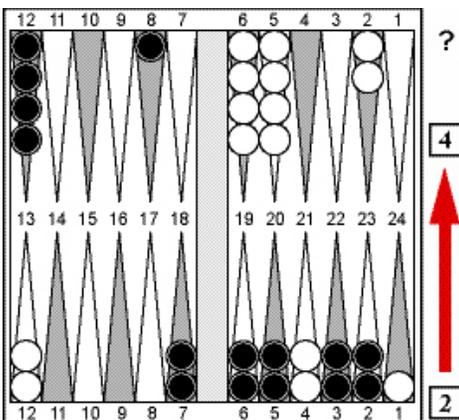
15-point Champ finals. Neil Kazaross (Black) trails Bill Minser (White), 2-4. Black on roll. **CUBE ACTION(S)?**



Neil knew that this was his opponent's first appearance in the MBC Championship division. The double actually rolls out as slightly "too good to double;" however if Bill mistakenly takes, it becomes a huge coup. No luck. Bill made the right decision passing.

A similar situation occurred with Neil trailing 11-12:

15-point Champ finals. Neil Kazaross (Black) trails Bill Minser (White), 11-12. Black on roll. **CUBE ACTION(S)?**



As Kazaross puts it, "The score makes this position (because of the gammon threat) a big pass. Bill cannot maintain his midpoint for long and will have difficulties containing a checker after a quick hit."

Again, Neil collected a point when Bill correctly dropped. But Bill's fine play fell just short as Neil went on to win at double-match-point (15-13) and claim his second MBC title in seven years. Coupled with his big victory in Pittsburgh, Neil's ABT point total for the 2005 season now surpasses fellow Chicagoan Phil Simborg even though Phil won the Championship Consolation!

GRAND CRYSTAL BEAVER VII

Congrats to Indiana's Sean Garber for his win in the Swarovski Grand Crystal Beaver jackpot event. After rolling over Steve Sax (CA) 11-0 in the semi's, Sean defeated his final opponent, Twin Cities Club Director and the defending Crystal Beaver champion Steve Brown, to claim victory.



Sean Garber receives his Swarovski Crystal Beaver Trophy from director Bill Davis as Steve Brown looks on.

OTHER MAJOR WINNERS

A tip of the hat to Larry ("The Diceman") Strommen for defeating Central Illinois player Michael Plog in the Advanced finals. Backgammon owes a debt of gratitude to Larry who for decades, supplied the world with thousands of ultra-high quality precision dice and doubling cubes. He retired from the business earlier this year.



A pair of winners. Advanced champ Larry "Diceman" Strommen (L) and Limited victor Les Moshinsky.

The Limited title went to Les Moshinsky (IL) over Shane Joos (IL) with the \$150 Open event going to Sangamon Valley Club director Randy Armstrong

who came back from the loser's bracket to defeat Carolina Invitational Director Jeb Horton twice.

CALCUTTA AUCTION PROGRAM

It was another great charity auction total for Peter Kalba who generated over \$17,000 in bids. And of course, what is a Midwest Championships auction without the surprises? The inside of the brochure showed the following graphic just above the entry form. Can you figure out what it means?



Tom and Karen Meyer did. They both brought panda bears to the auction program. Around noon, Bill Davis explained that the bear typing meant "Bear Type," and the type of bear requested could be found if you looked at the first letters of the five message words: P-A-N-D-A. Those pandas won Tom & Karen \$100.

The Backgammon Wheel of Fortune puzzle was captured by Howard Ring. Howard took home an ounce of Silver and a quarter ounce of Gold for solving the following puzzle:

"How a thirsty tavern patron is like a Chouette crew member whose Captain rolls an opening 6-1."



Answer: "They both want the bar maid."

In the Chubby Beaver competition, four players randomly selected from the audience came on stage and had to say "Chubby Beaver." Each round, another large marshmallow was added to their mouths and they couldn't chew, swallow, or spit. The individual who could say "Chubby Beaver" clearest as judged by the audience would win \$50. After Mike Shanas (MO) had stuffed eight marshmallows into his jowls, "Chubby Beaver" was still perfectly understandable.

BEAR-BLUFF

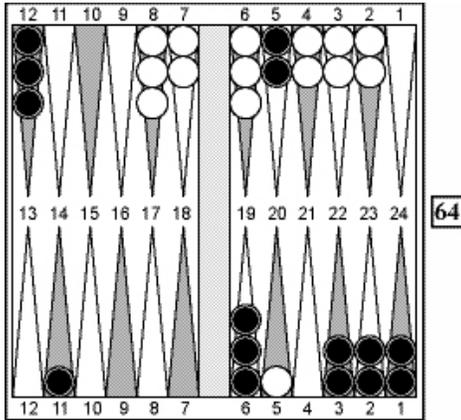
The Taki Bear-gammon board (valued at \$1200) helped to raise nearly \$1500 for the Anti-Cruelty Society. By means of luck and a charity raffle, 16 players competed

[Continued on page 7]

Searching for Jerry Cowell

A telling tale

Match to 5 points. Black leads White, 3 to 1. **BLACK TO PLAY 4-1.**



As Black, I'm playing my 4-1 carefully—especially at this score. I would like to win the match with this game, but I don't want to lose the match by getting doubled and then gammoned.

I'm looking at three plays:

- A) **11-6** (A safe, blotless play. An easy take for me with little risk of being gammoned.)
- B) **6-5*, 13-9** (The play that wins the most games for me, but gets me gammoned the most.)
- C) **6-5*, 5-1** (A play with more wins than play A, but fewer than play B.)

After trying out each move, I prefer B, the play that wins the most games . . . but I'm scared. The gammon risk seems too threatening. Then out of the blue, it comes to me. I *know* which play to make. It was more like a flashback, a snippet from a gambling trip I took to Vegas 20 years ago while searching for Jerry Cowell.

In the mid-1980s, the Twin Cities Backgammon Club held weekly tournaments at *Scotties on Seventh* in downtown Minneapolis. Scotties was an art deco bar/restaurant/dance club in the space that once was the Forum Cafeteria. The club was being run by Terry Mikan, son of basketball great George Mikan. Terry also played a little backgammon, mostly in the chouettes. The chouettes at Scotties were entertaining and volatile. The cube handling was careless with often expensive outcomes. The "Rule of 64" was finally created in

the quarter chouette. It was actually more a gentleman's agreement than a rule. The cube wasn't allowed to go higher than 64. The rule protected players from emotional, or steamed takes.

One of the players who had a hard time dropping a cube was Jerry Cowell. He'd seen Paul Magriel and Joe Sylvester turn around many games with little more than an ace point anchor. The problem was that he wasn't Magriel or Sylvester; he was Jerry Cowell.

Eventually the fun at Scotties ended and the Twin Cities Backgammon Club had to find a new home. Jerry Cowell also moved on . . . to Las Vegas to be a blackjack dealer at the Mint Casino.



The Mint was located in downtown Las Vegas next to Binion's Horseshoe Club. In 1988, Binion's expanded, taking over the Mint. I decided to say hello to Jerry Cowell during a gambling trip and made a special visit to the Mint. Jerry should have been easy to find being about 6'-3" and 250 pounds. I talked to several blackjack dealers at the Mint about Jerry Cowell. One had never heard of Jerry, another thought he was on break, another wanted to know what I wanted with him.

I wasn't making much progress with my search for Jerry Cowell so I walked next door to Binion's to play my favorite game, craps. I love craps and craps loves me. And I was in Binion's, the best place to play craps.

An hour later I staggered away from that cruel, godforsaken crap table. I walked past the cashier but was too embarrassed to cash in the few chips I had left. So I found a blackjack table that could have the last of my chips. Quickly I found myself in an embarrassing dilemma. I'd ordered a drink from the waitress, but my chip stack was shrinking rapidly and I was going to bust before she returned with my beverage. Another player joined the table taking the chair to my right. He leaned over and said quietly, "You keep touching your right rear pants pocket. Every pickpocket will know

where your money is."

I just laughed and said, "No, that tells the pickpockets where my money *used to be*."

I was down to my last five dollar bet. The dealer had a king up and proceeded to peek at her hole card to see if she had twenty-one. The player to my right said to her, "Ah, so your hole card is a four!" It was a curious comment because I knew he couldn't see the card himself.

I busted, but didn't leave the table because I wanted to see the hole card. The dealer flipped over the card: a four! I said to the player, "Good guess."

He replied, "I'm a dealer myself at another casino. When she peeked under the king, she did a double-take, a hesitation many dealers display when the hole card is a four. The '4' in the corner of the card looks so much like the 'A' on an ace that you give it an extra look. That hesitation tipped me off because it happens to me, too."



Just then my drink was delivered by the smiling waitress. She said, "You're from Minnesota aren't you?"

"How can you tell?" I asked.

"You ordered Christian Brothers Brandy; only people from Minnesota order that brandy."

I turned back to the player and asked where he was a dealer. He said "The Mint."

"Do you know another dealer named Jerry Cowell?"

"Is he about 6'-3" and 250 pounds?" the player asked.

"Yes, yes!" I said excitedly.

"Never met the guy."

A pickpocket could tell which pocket held my money. A blackjack player could tell the dealer's hole card. A waitress could tell where I was from.

"Tells" are common in poker. Uncle Fred wrinkles up his face as if in pain when he bets. This means Uncle Fred has a big poker hand. Aunt Tilly drums her fingers on the table after making a large bet. This means Aunt Tilly is bluffing.

Tells give you information about your

[Continued on page 7]

KAZAROSS CLAWS...

[Continued from page 5]

for the Taki-board in a game combining the elements of backgammon and poker (See Bear-Bluff rules online at: chicagopoint.com/mbc05bearbluff.html). Jonah Seewald (CO), an experienced poker player, was pitted against Alice Kay (IL) in the finals.

In Bear-Bluff, playing cards numbered from 1 (ace) to 6 determine the player's roll. A player first draws two cards, peeks at them without showing his opponent, and then decides whether he wants to redouble. Holding a 2-cube in the first game of the 5-point finals and trailing substantially in the bear-off, Jonah redoubled to 4. Believing that Jonah must have picked up a pair and not wanting to give up four points, Alice dropped to trail 0-2. In fact it was a pure bluff as Jonah actually held a tiny 1-3. This thievery helped Jonah go on to claim the beautiful Taki bakelite board winning 5-4.



Jonah Seewald (L) displays his \$1200 Taki Bear-gammon board won in the Bear-Bluff tourney. That's board craftsman Tak Morioika at right.

THANKS

A big thanks to the many people who helped the Midwest Championships raise a record \$4300 for the Anti-Cruelty Society

including (among others) Barbara Levinson of "Barbara's Balloons," Steve Klesker, Arnold Zousmer, Dave Cramer, Tom Walthes, Ed Zell, Bill Bartholomay, Fred Kalantari, Steve Brown, and Howard Ring.

It's "Mardi Gras" at next year's Midwest Championships March 17-19, 2006. See you then! *Complete results:* Δ

2005 MIDWEST CHAMPIONSHIPS

CHAMPIONSHIP (64): 1-Neil Kazaross, (IL), 2-Bill Minser (WI), 3/4-Boris Dekhtyar (NJ) / Ed Zell (IL); 1C-Phil Simborg (IL), 2C-Howard Shirey (OH); 1LC-Chuck Bower (IN). ADVANCED (64): 1-Larry Strommen (IN), 2-Michael Plog (IL), 3/4-Mike Cyrkiel (CA) / Jolie Rubin (IL); 1C-J. A. Miller (IL), 2C-Kathy Sorci (IL); 1LC-Cookie Frazin (IL). LIMITED (23): 1-Les Moshinsky (IL), 2-Shane Joos (IL); 1C-Dick Nelson (IL); 1LC-Tim Johnson (IL). \$150 OPEN (9): 1-Randy Armstrong (IL), 2-Jeb Horton (NC); 1LC-Mark King (IL). GRAND CRYSTAL BEAVER (16): 1-Sean Garber (IN), 2-Steve Brown (MN). DOUBLES (32 teams): 1-Gary Kay (IL) & David Marcus (IL), 2-Howard Ring (IL) & Julia Ring (IL), 3/4-Georgina Flanagan (IL) & Norma Shyer (IL) / Mary & Paul Franks (NV). SATELLITE DOUBLES (8 teams): 1-Bud Bowers (PA) & Petko Kostadinov (SC), 2-Herb Roman (IL) & John Stryker (IL). BATTLE OF THE SEXES (32 men & 15 women): 1-David Wetzell (MN), 2-Jolie Rubin (IL), 3/4-Georgina Flanagan (IL) / Lucky Nelson (IL). BLITZ (104): 1-Fred Kalantari (MN), 2-Karen Meyer (IL). NACKGAMMON (32): 1-Steve Brown (MN), 2-Lucky Nelson (IL). QUICKIE! (128): 1-David Taniguchi (CA), 2-Barry Miller (IL), 3/4-Paul Baraz (IL) / Dave Settles (IL). BEAR-BLUFF BACKGAMMON (16 qualifiers): 1-Jonah Seewald (CO), 2-Alice Kay (IL). (First prize was a \$1200 Taki Beargammon Board.) PIG-ROLLING: Cem Aslan (GA). TEDDY TENNIS: Ray Fogelund (CA). SLOT DICE: Vadim MUSAELYAN (NC). CHUBBY BEAVER MARSHMALLOW STUFF: Mike Shanas (MO). BACKGAMMON WHEEL OF FORTUNE: Howard Ring (IL).

JERRY COWELL...

[Continued from page 6]

opponent's poker hand, information that is hidden from you. Are there tells in backgammon? All the information at the backgammon table is visible to both players. There are no hidden cards.

My backgammon opponent had a tell which allowed me to make a gammonish play. I played 6-5*, 13-9 because I knew my opponent would not double. I didn't have to fear being gammoned on a 2-cube because my opponent "told" me he wasn't going to double. While I was trying out each possible play, my opponent continued to shake the dice in his cup. If he was about to double, he would place the cup on the table with his hands on his knees. It's a habit he's had in the past that tells me what cube action he'll take.

If you have tells yourself, you might try changing your habits and mannerisms. I'm sure that Jerry Cowell would agree . . . if I could ever find him.—*Duane Jensen Δ*

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WINNER'S CIRCLE



FEB.-APR. 2005

PROBLEM #307 ANALYZED

by Walter Trice

•**New England Monthly** (Somerville, MA; 13 Feb.) ... OPEN: 1-Doug Zare, 2-Dan Chicoine, 3/4-Herb Gruland / Joe Moore; 1C-Tarek, 2C-Alex Kirimov.

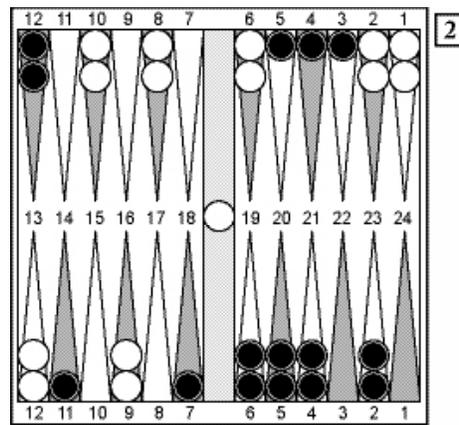
•**Paris Master & Open VI** (Paris, France; 15-20 Feb.)... MASTER (17): 1-François Tardieu (FR), 2-Michel Sneoual (FR). CHAMPIONSHIP (36+14 rebuys): 1-Lars Bonding (Denmark), 2-Yuriy Krivoy (Israel), 3/4-Leonid Riskin (Ukraine/Germany) / Avetis Rostomian (Armenia); 1C-Ed O'Laughlin (USA), 2C-Michel Sneoual (FR); 1LC-Eric Guedj (FR). INTERMEDIATE (22+10 rebuys): 1-Andrey Markov (Armenia), 2-Jean-Marie Etcheverry (FR), 3/4-Reza Abouhossein (FR) / Isabelle Bonvalot (FR); 1C-Claude Zekri (FR), 2C-Kazuko Numazawa (Japan); 1LC-Itzikowich. BEGINNERS (13+3 rebuys): 1-Liova, 2-Valery Frelin (FR); 1C-Xavier Delaitre (FR), 2C-Pascal Mandrou (FR); 1LC-Larakis. SUPERJACKPOT: 1-Yomi Peretz (FR). WARM-UP (64): 1-Laurent Arnone (FR). DOUBLES (16 teams): 1-Kazuko Numazawa (Japan) & Kazuhiro Shino (Japan/UK), 2-Christian Faure (FR) & Miki Suzuki (FR). BLITZ (64): 1-Itzikowich, 2-Cecile Wolf (FR).

•**South Australia Open** (Adelaide, So. Australia; 20 Feb.)... OPEN (14 + 2 buy-backs): 1-Terry Efthimiou, 2-Chris Benham. CONS. (16): 1-Don Schulz, 2-John McLean.

•**Partouche International** (Cannes, France; 24-27 Feb.)... CHAMPIONSHIP (46): 1-Avetis Rostomian (Armenia), 2-Jean-Philippe Rohr (FR), 3/4-David Boldini (Switzerland) / Mihai Golopenta (Romania); 1C-Sven Rumcker (Germany), 2C-Artur Muradian (Armenia); 1LC-Andreas Humke (Germany). INTERMEDIATE (16): 1-Alexander Ben Lassin (FR), 2-Michel Hileyen (Armenia); 1C-Arut Martirosyan (Armenia), 2C-Kolya Mosoyan (Armenia); 1LC-Cyril Cordray (FR). BEGINNERS #1 (33): 1/2-Abdelhak Sakri (FR) / Sorin Cosma (Germany/Romania). BEGINNERS #2 (16): 1-Cyril Cordray (FR), 2-Edmond Abrand (FR). WARM-UP: 1/2-Sven Rumcker (Germany) / Marc Santo Roman (FR).

•**Southern Open—ABT** (Atlanta, GA; 3-6 Mar.)... OPEN (19): 1-Vadim Musaelyan (NC), 2-David Rogers (NC); 1C-Petko Kostadinov (SC), 2C-Carter Mattig (IL); 1LC-Stuart Thomson (GA). INTERMEDIATE (13): 1-Ralph Byrns (NC); 1C-Ernie McCombs (TX), 2C-Ray Reed (FL); 1LC-Greg Buonocore (GA). NOVICE (6): 1-Mark Hong (GA), 2-Richard Newfield (GA). SOUTHERN CLASSIC (8): 1-Jeb Horton (NC), 2-Steve Kovach (GA). KICKOFF TOURNAMENT (9): 1-Stuart Thomson (GA), 2-Dave Cardwell (GA). MICRO-BLITZ TOURNAMENT (20): 1-Todd Obadal (MD), 2-Greg Buonocore (GA). DOUBLES (8 teams): 1-Michael Edge (SC) & Petko Kostadinov (SC), 2-Vadim Mu-

Money game. **BLACK TO PLAY 6-6.**



Black has two objectives. He needs to get his outfield checkers home safely. He would also like to close White out soon to make a gammon win likely. The closeout is not essential for the win, since a single back checker (with no anchor possible) is much more likely to get squashed than ever to generate a direct shot.

The more obviously aggressive plays make the ace point. Since all reasonable alternatives make the 7 (it is, after all, the fifth out of six consecutive points), he might as well begin by playing 13/7. Now having done so, does he want to continue, and use two more sixes to play 7/1(2)? This gets him one home board point closer to the closeout, but for bringing the outfield men home, it does nothing at all. The checkers

saelyan (NC) & David Rogers (NC). CHOUETTE TOURNEY (4): 1-Cem Aslan (GA). SIMBORGAMMON (16): Ralph Byrns (NC) / Dave Cardwell (GA) / Petko Kostadinov (SC) / Phil Simborg (IL).

•**Springfield Series #5** (Peoria, IL; 5 Mar.)... OPEN (27): 1-Sean Garber (IN), 2-Josh Riddell (IN); 1C-Les Moshinsky, 2C; 1LC-Terry Leahy... Sue Oliver reporting.

•**Colorado State Championship** (Denver, CO; 5 Mar.)... OPEN (23): 1-Adam Bennett, 2-Michael Ginat; 1C-Greg Kurell, 2C-Duane Jensen (MN).

•**Slattery Scottish Open** (Hinckley, England; 5-6 Mar.)... OPEN (43): 1-Peter Christmas, 2-Jason Champion, 3/4-Tim Mooring / Chris Ternel; 1C-Vicky Chandler, 2C-Uldis Lapikens; 1LC-David Nathan, 2LC-Rachel Rhodes. HAGGIS! (48) 1-Stephen Ferrer, 2-Myke Wignall. DOUBLES (8): 1-Aztecs, 2-M+R. £50 JACKPOT (8): 1/2-Chris Ternel / Julian Fetterlein. POKER (9): 1-Paul Gilbertson, 2-Martin Hemming, 3-Nigel Merrigan.

on the 7-point were already safe, and by moving them again Black would just be wasting 12 pips worth of potential home-ward movement.

Now suppose he makes the 7-point but doesn't go on to shift to the ace. There are three 6s left to play. Picking up blots looks like a good idea, so how about 13/7 and 11/5? That leaves one more with the choice being between 22/16 and 20/14. This too is an easy choice, since 22/16 leaves the most forward of the three laggards connected to the other two, which will (a) produce more return shots next time if it gets hit; and (b) facilitate making a temporary "pivot point" on the 16.

We have seen that plays with 13/1 and 7/1 don't do much for bringing the outfield men home. Let's consider whether the more conservative 13/7(2), 11/5, 22/16 assists in the secondary goal of closing White out. In fact, it does quite a bit. By not moving within the home board it necessarily gets more checkers close to the battlefield—that is, it provides builders for the two open home board points more rapidly. Second, the 7-point is a useful blocking point whether White comes in on the 22 or the 24. Especially if White is going to be rolling a 3, Black would much prefer to have her looking at a 4-prime and two builders than at a 3-prime and no builders. And if White will be rolling an ace, she'll still not be seeing daylight if the bar is made.

So the bottom line is that 13/7(2), 11/5, 22/16 is the all-purpose play, clearly most efficient for running home safely, but also providing substantial support for Black's other goal of containing and closing out White's back man.—Walter Trice Δ

FRIDAY WARM-UP (18): 1- Emmanuel Di Bina, 2-Chris Ternel, 3/4-Jane Oxley / Cedric Lytton.

•**22nd Fleet Underwood Memorial** (Flint, MI; 6 Mar.)... OPEN (23): 1-Frank Talbot, 2-Emil Mortuk, 3-Dave Brotherton, 4/6-Dan Kiurski / Joe Sylvester / Rick Todd. INTERMEDIATE (James Lawrence, 2-Mike Charison, 3/4-Dirk Hogan / Tom Wojno, 5/6-Abdul Alchalabi / Nancy Takala. NOVICE (8): 1-Woody Halbritter, 2-Jeanette Spilsbury, 3-Andrew Felton... \$300 raised for the United Way.

•**Drew McCulloch Classic** (Houston, TX; 12 Mar.)... OPEN (22): 1-Tom Wright, 2-Mary Morse, 3/4-Ira Hessel / Scott Ward; 1C-Bill Riles, 2C-Jorge Salazar.

•**South Florida Monthly** (Ft. Lauderdale, FL; 9 Nov.)... OPEN: (8) 1-AI Tesoro, 2-Mike Corbett. ADVANCED: (6) 1-Mike Rezai (OH), 2- John Gdowik.

•**17th Nordic "Wide" Open** (Copenhagen, Denmark; 23-28 Mar.)... CHAMPIONSHIP (61): 1-Karsten Bredahl (DK), 2-Teppo Salo (Finland),

[Continues next page]

3/4-Torben Krogh (DK) / Artur Muradian (Armenia); 1C-François Tardieu (France), 2C-Shahin Azami (Sweden); 1LC-Dan Bogenberg (Sweden). ADVANCED (79): 1-James Coaten (England), 2-Johnny Pedersen (DK), 3/4-Bengt Ehk (Sweden) / Martin Jacobsen (DK); 1C-Henrik Løber (DK), 2C-Axel Stemark (DK); 1LC-Claus Cato (DK). INTERMEDIATE (82): 1-Ingrid Øhlenschläger (DK), 2-Thomas Hansen (DK), 3/4-Roy Eikseth (DK) / Ole Jensen (DK); 1C-Louisa Dahlin (DK), 2C-Allan Westermann (DK); 1LC-Martin Kaltoft (DK). NOVICE (53): 1-Lone Marcher (DK), 2-Lennart Straarup (DK), 3/4-Poul Østergaard (DK) / Lykke Pia Rasmussen (DK); 1C-Flemming Hougaard (DK), 2C-Elin Johannessen (Norway); 1LC-Joakim Claseson (Sweden). BEGINNERS (13): 1-Mikki Nejad (Sweden), 2-Karsten Kruse (DK); 1C-Jacob Madsen (DK), 2C-Jes Frederiksen (DK); 1LC-Lis Tinsen (DK). DANISH CHAMPIONSHIP for BEGINNERS (18): 1-Andreas Koregaard, 2-Stig Thomasen; 1C-Søren Bjerg, 2C-Lotte Jean Siiger; 1LC-Line Karkov. WARM-UP (50): 1-Tanja Lewis (DK).

•2005 British Time Trials (Bromley, England; 12-13 Mar.)... OPEN: 1-Dod Davies, 2-Nicky Check, 3/4-Walter Bustao / John Slattery; 1C-Ray Kershaw, 2C-Steve John, 3C/4C-Mardi Ohanessian / Chris Ternel; 1LC-Paul Money, 2LC-Steve John. TEXAS HOLD'EM POKER: 1-Jo Curl, 2-Dod Davies, 3-Andy Bell. £25 JACKPOT: 1-Mike Heard. £50 JACKPOT: 1-Chris Ternel. Δ

AMALGAMATION

Have you played at the Bar Point Club recently? Our new location, Whistlers restaurant, is working out great. Come see for yourself some Tuesday evening... Backgammon seems to be disappearing from the Ace Point Club (NY) scene. They haven't held a tournament there for months... The Houston Backgammon Club mourns the death of **Drew McCulloch**. Drew died of liver cancer in December at the age of 54... Art Grater's Backgammon Portal website is now at: www.back-gammon.info. Play65, the online backgammon website has moved into Art's old address, www.back-gammon.com... BPC player **Kwong Chan** sends us greetings from Hong Kong where is visiting for two months... We wish **Joe Freedman** (VA) a speedy recovery following necessary hip surgery... Tax issues on prize money have forced the Marbella Backgammon International Club to postpone their \$1,000,000 (US) Palamedes Challenge Cup until the fall. The event was to be held on the Spanish Riviera. If no agreement with Spanish tax authorities can be reached, the tournament could be moved to another country. For more information, visit www.marbellagathering.com... "High

Roller—The **Stu Ungar Story**" recently premiered on Starz cable outlet. **Michael Imperioli** plays Unger, a poker player who also attended numerous backgammon tournaments prior to his early demise. The late **Andy Glazer** also has a small roll. Watch the trailer at www.highrollermovie.com, or buy the DVD for \$15 at Amazon.com... Finally, a great quote from Anne Tyler: "People always call it 'luck' when you've acted more sensibly than they have." Δ



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BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL BACKGAMMON CLUB: Tournaments Tuesday, 6:30 P.M. at Damon's Grill, 1701 Fort Jesse Road, Normal. Michael Flohr (309/662-7967).

SANGAMON VALLEY BACKGAMMON ASSOC.: Tournaments Wed., 6:15 P.M. at Damon's Grill, 3050 Lindbergh Blvd., Springfield. Randy Armstrong (217/528-0117).

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

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

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