

2006 midwest backgammon championships

CATTANACH & LLOYD LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL!

A carnival atmosphere prevailed at the 2006 Midwest Backgammon Championships. The Mardi Gras-themed event, sponsored by Snowie, TrueMoneygames, and Chicago Point, drew more than 180 players to the Wyndham Hotel in Lisle, Illinois 17–19 March. Bill Davis directed with great assistance from the most colorful staff in the world.



MBC staff from left: Bill Davis (director), Amy Trudeau, Robin Horton, Carol Joy Cole, Peter Kalba, & Dru Heggen. [Photo by Jeb Horton]

The Championship tourney winner was Gregg Cattanach of Doraville, Georgia. Cattanach bested a top-flight field of 64 with key wins over Neil Kazaross (IL), Phil Simborg (IL), and Steve Sax (CA) to earn a place in the finals.



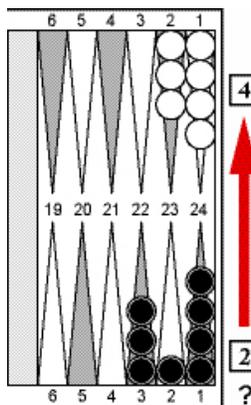
Big MBC winners Gregg Cattanach (Championship) and Richard Lloyd (Grand Crystal Beaver).

On the other half of the draw sheet was the world's hottest player: Stepan Nuniyants of Renton, Washington. Nuniyants, in

five previous American Backgammon Tour events, had won nearly 40 matches against only three losses. That's incredible.

Five Midwest victories later, Nuniyants landed in yet another finals. The 15-point match seesawed with Gregg eventually taking a 7–5 lead into the ninth game where an interesting potential redoubling situation arose with Stepan on shake:

POS. 1. Midwest 15-point Championship finals. Gregg Cattanach (White) leads Stepan Nuniyants (Black) 7-5. **SHOULD BLACK RE-DOUBLE?**



Stepan was patient, correctly holding the 2-cube. He tossed 3-2 gapping his 2-point. Gregg took two off. Again, Stepan should just roll and that's what he did. And again, he rolled a deuce making Gregg the big favorite in a 5-vs.-5 bearoff. (If Gregg was holding a 4-cube here, the proper action would be redouble to 8/take.) But Stepan cast a set of double 2s on his last shake to win two points and knot the score at 7-all.

The match was tied at 10–10 before Gregg took control winning five straight points to claim the MBC title and vault him into second place in the 2006 ABT points race, just ahead of Stepan.

GRAND CRYSTAL BEAVER

Dana Nazarian was signed to play in the \$700 Grand Crystal Beaver event but had to cancel an hour before starting time due to airport delays. That opened one spot for

[Continued on page 5]

THESE TWO WERE NO "EASY MARX"



Here are Zeppo and Harpo Marx playing backgammon in Palm Springs, CA in 1933. In a 1974 Playboy interview, brother Groucho claimed Harpo was very serious about backgammon. "He was very good . . . he used to make a lot of money (playing) guys like (pulitzer prize winners) George Kaufman & Herbert Swope, and (critic) Alexander Woollcott. He was good at all kinds of games."

CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

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LETTERS

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PROBLEMS WITH THE PITT REPORT

Congrats to Doug Roberts on his Pittsburgh win. (I am not demanding a cut, even though my absence from the drawsheet had to be a big factor in his romp through the field.)

As a longtime subscriber to this journal, however, I was disappointed by the rather churlish tone of the lead article. After acknowledging Mr. Robert's high ABT standing, the article eschewed any further plaudits, in favor of a snide synopsis of Robert's cube technique, (as contrasted to his opponent's "only" two blunders), suggesting that Doug's victory might be attributable to serendipity, rather than skillful play. Were Dougie's cube decisions as abysmal as you suggest, why were there no illustrations of these errors? Surely, an example of an egregious pass of an "easy take" would be of more interest—at least to this reader—than a minor dispute over ritualistic handling of the dice.

[Continued on page 3]

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



by Carol Joy Cole
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cjc@tir.com

*Denotes new or revised listing

NATIONAL

American Backgammon Tour events underlined.

Apr 7-9	12th Ohio State Championships, Airport Marriott Hotel, Cleveland, Ohio	330/268-4610
Apr 8	Atlanta Chouette Tournament, Mazzy's Sports Bar, Roswell, Georgia	770/333-1876
Apr 8	Northwest Indiana Club Monthly, VFW Hall, Porter, Indiana	219/785-2082
Apr 8*	Backgammon By the Bay, Peking Express, Berkeley, California	831/688-9722
Apr 9	New England Club Monthly, Holiday Inn, Somerville, Massachusetts	617/945-1257
Apr 9*	Miami Valley Club Monthly, Gambits Bar, Marriott Hotel, Dayton, Ohio	937/890-2536
Apr 16	Pittsburgh Monthly Tournament, Hartner's Lounge, Cranberry Twp., PA	412/826-1334
Apr 20	Third Thursday Bonus (Chicago Open), Days Inn, Flint, Michigan	810/232-9731
Apr 22	Springfield Series Grand Finale, Lap's Sports Bar, Springfield, Illinois	217/622-9447
Apr 22*	Backgammon By the Bay, Britannia Arms, Cupertino, California	831/688-9722
Apr 23	Greater Columbus Club Monthly, Lucky's Grille, Hilliard, Ohio	614/784-8132
Apr 23*	Pittsburgh Monthly Tournament, Hartner's Lounge, Cranberry Twp., PA	412/826-13344
Apr 23-30	BG Masters Cruise, Carnival Cruise, Miami, Florida to Caribbean	888/972-6339
Apr 24-25	IBA Live in Vegas Tournament, Fiesta Henderson Station Casino, Nevada	702/893-6025
Apr 26-30	22nd Nevada State Tournament, Riviera Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada	702/893-6025
May 1	Desert Shores Invitational, Desert Shore Club House, Las Vegas, Nevada	702/255-9918
May 3*	Kansas City Club Monthly, Harpo's, Kansas City, Missouri	816/561-4330
May 6*	Metro North Saturday Swiss #2, Crash Landing, Warren, Michigan	313/330-7803
May 7*	New England Club Bonus, Holiday Inn, Somerville, Massachusetts	617/945-1257
May 13*	Northwest Indiana Club Monthly, VFW Hall, Porter, Indiana	219/785-2082
May 14*	Miami Valley Club Monthly, Gambits Bar, Marriott Hotel, Dayton, Ohio	937/890-2536
May 21*	Greater Columbus Club Monthly, Lucky's Grille, Hilliard, Ohio	614/784-8132
May 21*	Pittsburgh Monthly Tournament, Hartner's Lounge, Cranberry Twp., PA	412/826-1334
May 26-29	<u>27th Chicago Open, Marriott Oak Brook Hills Resort, Oak Brook, Illinois</u>	847/674-0120
Jun 3*	Metro North Saturday Swiss #3, Crash Landing, Warren, Michigan	313/330-7803
Jun 4*	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Purple Hotel, Lincolnwood, Illinois	773/583-6464
Jun 9-11	<u>Los Angeles Open, Sheraton Gateway Hotel, Los Angeles Airport, California</u>	818/901-0464
Jun 29*	Michigan Summer Warm-up, Sheraton, Novi, Michigan	810/232-9731
Jun 30-Jul 3	<u>31st Michigan Summer Championships, Sheraton Novi Hotel, Novi, Michigan</u>	810/232-9731
Jul 28-30	Wisconsin State Championships, Radisson Hotel, Madison, Wisconsin	608/516-9109
Jul 28-30	Thousand Islands Tournament, Pine Tree Point, Alexandria Bay, New York	585/396-0969
Aug 10-13	<u>13th Georgia Championships, Marriott Atlanta Perimeter Center, Atlanta, GA</u>	770/333-1876
Aug 17-20	<u>Florida State Championships, Fort Lauderdale Marriott North, Florida</u>	954/249-1416
Sep 1-4	54th Indiana Open, Sheraton Suites Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana	317/255-8902
Sep 29-Oct 1	<u>Pacific Northwest Championships, Holiday Inn SeaTac, Seattle, Washington</u>	253/856-7513
Oct 6-8	<u>Illinois State Championships, Holiday Inn City-Centre, Peoria, Illinois</u>	309/699-6005
Dec 1-3	<u>California State Championship, Sheraton Gateway, Los Angeles Airport, CA</u>	818/901-0464
Jan 20-27*	Backgammon On Board 8, Princess Cruise, Los Angeles to Mexican Riviera	773/583-6464

OUTSIDE USA

Apr 7-9	Mind Games Ascona (Chess & BG), Hotel Ascona, Ascona, Switzerland	4179-3374425
Apr 8-9	Gammonitis League Tournament, Eynsham Hall, Oxford, England	447900-983038
Apr 8-14	1st Trophée du Mont-Blanc, Latitudes Hotel du Golf, Arc, France	33672-008957
Apr 12-17	18th Nordic "Wide" Open, Casino Marienlyst, Helsingør, Denmark	4533-363601
Apr 28-May 1	6th City of Jesolo Tournament, Park Brasilia Hotel, Jesolo, Italy	3941-5211029
Apr 29-May 1	Gammonitis League Tournament, Eynsham Hall, Oxford, England	447900-983038
May 6-7	County Cups Trophy, Hilton Hotel, Coventry, England	441522-888676
May 18-21	18th WBF European Championship, Velden Casino, Velden, Austria	39331-923537
May 25-28	12th Oslo Open, Vika Atrium Hotel, Oslo, Norway	4791-601277
May 27-28	15th Città di Torino, Maison Musique, Rivoli, Turin, Italy	39349-648868
Jun 1-4	2nd Aix les Bains Open, Casino Grand Cercle, Savoie, France	336-62467001
Jun 2-4	Austrian Masters Finale, Café Heine, Vienna, Austria	43664-2404285
Jun 3-4	Hilton Trophy, Hilton Hotel, Coventry, England	441522-888676
Jun 10-11*	Gammonitis League Tournament, Eynsham Hall, Oxford, England	447900-983038
Jun 15-18*	2nd Belgian Open, Grand Casino Kursaal Oostende, Oostende, Belgium	49171-5422222
Jun 29-Jul 2*	2nd Sommer-Cup & DBGL Team-Cup, Kaiserbrunnen, Brakel, Germany	49711-486190
Jul 1-2*	Gammonitis League Tournament, Eynsham Hall, Oxford, England	447900-983038
Jul 6-9	2nd Lucien Barrière Gold Cup & Cannes Open, Cannes, France	392-69018168
Jul 8-9*	Keren Di Bona Memorial, Hilton Hotel, Coventry, England	441522-888676
Jul 10-16	31st World Championship, Fairmont Hotel, Monte Carlo, Monaco	USA: 954/527-4033
Jul 18-21*	3rd Nations Cup, Palm Beach Casino, Cannes, France	336-62467001
Jul 20-23*	Riviera IV Tournament, Palm Beach Casino, Cannes, France	336-62467001
Jul 29-30*	11th Liverpool Open, Liverpool Bridge Club, Liverpool, England	441514-283082
Aug 5-6*	Studio Anne Carlton Trophy, Hilton Hotel, Coventry, England	441522-888676
Aug 19-28*	10th MindSports Olympiad Backgammon, Manchester, England	441522-888676

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 2]

I trust that future articles in this publication will be more in keeping with the high journalistic standards it has traditionally maintained.—*Joe Freedman, Albuquerque, New Mexico*

Doug dropped four doubles in positions where Malcolm was making errors by doubling. Of course it's hard to fault an early double when it evokes a pass. The drops weren't interesting—they were embarrassing, one of which amounted to a sextuple blunder giving up 3% match equity on the spot.

As for this particular match, Malcolm played at "expert" Snowie level (5.0) and Doug low "intermediate" (11.4). But if you face him in the future, be warned that one match is no indication of Doug's overall high level of expertise.

We only had room for two positions and chose to spotlight some interesting errors

made by the loser to imply that had he played these positions differently, he might have been able to win the match. Why show super blunders of the match-winner effectively saying "he was totally lucky"?

As far as mentioning "ritualistic handling of the dice," we believe that it is important for the backgammon community to know that when your opponent is on roll, there is only one place for you dice and that is in your cup at rest on the table.—Ed.

BACKGAMMON BEAUTIES?

My wife found a website (www.lwcbc.com) that celebrates beautiful women in chess. She didn't comment, but I think she may have been suggesting that we ought to have a similar site for backgammon players. That may be a good idea if it stimulates new interest in our game.

Here's a grandmaster that is ranked as one of the ten most beautiful chess players in the world: Maria Manakova of Russia.
—Name withheld upon request



Maria shines in chess but who are the world's backgammon beauties?

DON'T 'CLOCK' SLOW MATCHES, SHORTEN THEM

Two letters in the March 15 POINT inquired about time limits and chess clocks as solutions for slow play. Rather than enforcing time limits or employing chess clocks, which most players—slow or otherwise—might find intimidating and off-putting, small clubs might consider simply shortening all matches involving habitually slow players. We did this with great success at the old Tucson club. It was handled in a way that neither offended/embarrassed the slower players nor in any way troubled their opponents.

When pairing a slow player with an opponent, I simply explained briefly that, to even the pace with the other players'

[Continued on page 9]

ABT AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 2006	AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 2006 Compiled through 19 Mar. 2006 after 3 events (Upcoming events: Ohio State, Chicago Open, LA Open)	ABT AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 2006
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Doug Roberts 26.56	Richard Munitz 5.65	Dan Cramer 3.15	D.J. Oles 1.52
Gregg Cattanach 25.04	Roz Ferris 5.64	Ray Fogelund 2.83	Antoinette Rodi 1.52
Stepan Nuniyants 24.94	Sal Chehayeb 5.57	Bill Finneran 2.83	Scott Johnston 1.47
Ken Fischer 17.78	Sean Garber 5.28	Chris Martin 2.82	John Grayson 1.47
Petko Kostadinov 14.54	J.A. Miller 5.27	Nayan Shah 2.82	Beth Raby 1.25
Arlene Austin 12.25	Dana Nazarian 5.20	Henry Gray 2.82	Wayne Wiest 1.03
Chuck Bower 11.59	Steve Sax 5.20	Jesse Eaton 2.60	Kate Elmore 0.99
Malcolm Davis 11.59	Elayne Feinstein 5.12	Faddoul Khoury 2.57	Doug Johnson 0.99
John Jennings 10.72	Richard Lloyd 4.77	Stewart Pemberton 2.56	Scott Erickson 0.92
Mark Donaldson 10.23	Peter Beling 4.44	Mark Haley 2.00	Stephan Liss 0.71
Matthew Miner 8.20	Bill Bartholomay 4.32	Jack Takala 1.83	Bill Schragel 0.55
Michael Battaglia 8.00	Norm Hansen 4.00	Bill Chibnik 1.79	Sharon Steffens 0.45
Bruce Russell 6.40	Cole Parker 4.00	Gale Pollock 1.79	Joe Szwedo 0.45
Carlos Azcarate 6.27	Peggy Neubig 3.57	Steve Harris 1.79	Maxine Diamond 0.45
Mark Rozans 5.65			

	CHICAGO BAR POINT CLUB 2006 PLAYER OF THE YEAR	COMPILED THRU 31 MARCH
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Tak Morioka 7.26	Georgina Flanagan 3.40	Carter Mattig 1.88	Arlene Levy 0.80
Gary Kay 7.00	Eric Johnson 3.12	Mike Wolock 1.80	Tom Harrison 0.76
David Rockwell 5.92	Bill Keefe 2.74	Bob Steen 1.68	Kwong Chan 0.72
Paul Baraz 5.76	Sargon Benjamin 2.68	Les Moshinsky 1.52	Richard Stawowy 0.72
Herb Roman 5.40	Oleg Raygorodsky 2.64	Vlad Genkin 1.44	Dave Cramer 0.72
Bill Bartholomay 5.08	Wayne Wiest 2.64	Willis Elias 1.44	Martha Ghio 0.72
Steve Klesker 4.92	Alice Kay 2.56	Adrian Rios 1.12	Peter Kalba 0.64
Phil Simborg 4.76	Boris Dekhtyar 2.52	Jerry Brooks 1.08	Doug Rodgers 0.48
Phyllis Smolinski 4.72	Albert Yakobashvili 2.52	Marcia Karen 1.08	Judy Zager 0.48
Tim Mabee 4.68	Mark Murray 2.32	Michael Ginat 1.04	Tony Santori 0.48
Linda Rockwell 3.68	Larry Goldstein 2.00	Russ Lyutek 0.96	Elaine Andrews 0.48
Bill Davis 3.64	Roger Hickman 1.92	Dave Settles 0.92	Ken Tibbs 0.48

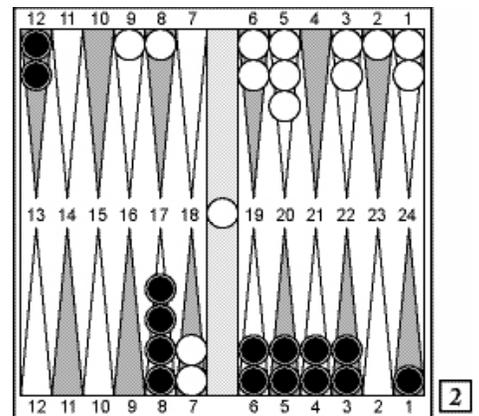
PAUL BARAZ collected 3.04 points in March to win Player of the Month. Eric Johnson finished second with 2.40, and Steve Klesker & Phil Simborg tied for third with 1.92.

your move

PROBLEM #317

to be analyzed by Mary Hickey

9 point match. Black leads White 6 to 5.
BLACK TO PLAY 5-3.



DEAR MISS LONELYBLOTS

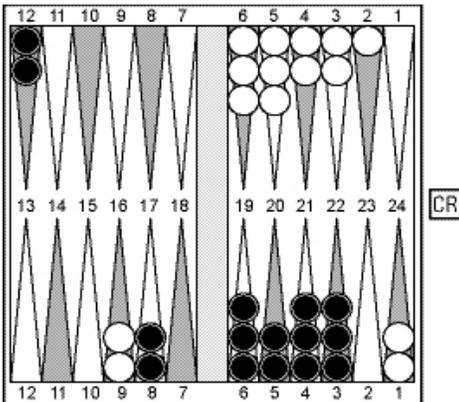


© 2006 by Danny Kleinman

ALL ABOUT THE TIMING

Dear Miss Lonelyblots: Please settle an argument that my friend (or should I say ex-friend) and I have been having. We were in a weekend Doubles tournament and this particular problem split our team for the duration of the match.

7 point match. Black leads White, 6 to 3, Crawford game. **BLACK TO PLAY 1-1.**



I really liked making the bar- and 12-points [13/12(2), 8/7(2)]; my partner much preferred making the deuce point [6/5, 4/3, 3/2(2)]. I wanted to confine our opponents while he wanted to use the extra point as a future safe landing spot. Since I was rolling, I demanded that we make the bar point.

What happened was a crime. Our opponents rolled 4-1 making their 2-point. We rolled 6-1 playing 12/6, 12/11 leaving a deuce shot. Our opponents then rolled double aces hitting and playing 24/23(2). It was a joker roll that cost us a fluke gammon and eventually the match.

My partner was livid. He said that if we had simply made the 2-point, then our 6-1 could have been played so that only 6-1 would hit us. That is true, but I told him that no matter what happened following my play, our opponents still would need two aces followed by two 6s to escape both checkers.

Can you shed any light on this problem, Miss Lonelyblots? A years-long friendship hangs in the balance. Regardless, I am—Standing By My Play

DEAR STANDING: Perhaps you and your doubles partner both lost sight of your goal

in this position: to win the match, not to gammon your opponent. With a huge lead in the race, your goal should be to reduce contact and let White escape, not to block him. Your bar-point represents mutual blockage: shot jeopardy for you.

So you must not make it. By making your bar-point, you also constrain your 6s, leaving yourself only one point from which a 6 can be played, thus risking the creation of an outfield blot next turn.

Although your 2-point is valuable, it is your seventh point, and as such it creates strippage on your other points. So your partner's advice was misguided too.

What you need in this position is to reduce contact by bringing your outfield men home safely. So play 13/11(2), moving them closer to home. You retain the ability to play all your 6s safely next turn, with the otherwise awkward 6-1, 6-2 and 6-4 making your 2-point.—Miss Lonelyblots Δ

Do you have a backgammon-related question for Miss Lonelyblots involving people problems, game etiquette or the play itself? Write: Dear Miss Lonelyblots, c/o CHICAGO POINT, 3940 W. Bryn Mawr Ave. 504; Chicago, IL 60659-3155 or e-mail bg@chicagopoint.com.

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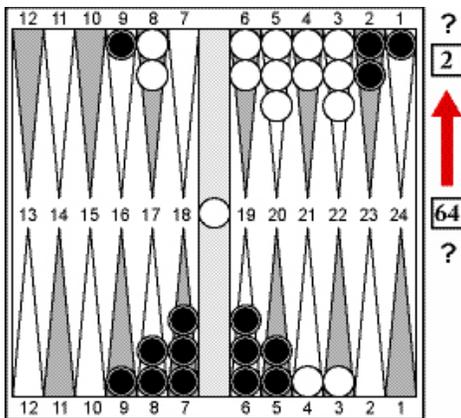
CATTANACH & LLOYD...

[Continued from page 1]

Richard Lloyd. The Sociology Professor at Vanderbilt University (Tennessee) had proved his Jackpot skills last year winning the Michigan Masters. Now it was time to go for the Swarovski Crystal Beaver Trophy and \$7500 in cash.

Leading the always-tough Fred Kalantari (MN) 4-2 in the 11-point finals, Rich-

POS. 2. GCB 11-pt. finals. Richard Lloyd (Black) leads Fred Kalantari (White), 4 to 2. Black on roll. **CUBE ACTION(S)?**

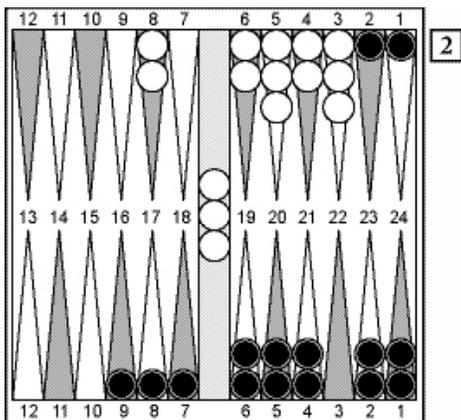


ard faced this setup:

Richard doubled the position, hoping the gammon threat might be enough to justify his cube. 720 3-ply precise Snowie rollouts show doubling to be a small 0.44 error. Fred had a trivial take.

A much larger error occurred later in the same game. Here, a gammon-hungry

POS. 3. GCB 11-pt. finals. Richard Lloyd (Black) leads Fred Kalantari (White), 4 to 2. **BLACK TO PLAY 6-4.**



Richard must play 6-4:

Leap out with 24/18 or close out three checkers immediately? Richard first ran 24/14 (in fact 24/18, 8/4 is best unduplicating 5s), then decided to close his board. He escaped immediately and won an easy gammon. Snowie rollouts show the

board-closing play to be a blunder. But it was Richard's day as he went on to defeat Fred 11-2, and then win another first place trophy in the Open Overflow event.

Richard's observations about Positions 2 and 3 were interesting:

"No one even commented on what turned out to be my closeout blunder in the match. That's the kind of position one should know. It's interesting—if Fred had only one up, it would be right to close him out by a mile. I wonder how much it would change if he had two up?"

"Regarding my initial double, while I would prefer not to make any mistakes at all, I am happy that I erred on the side of aggression rather than leaking away equity with excessive timidity. As a general rule, I just don't think that you win these things playing smallball. I saw a chance to seize the initiative in the match, and I went for it. It was wrong, but not by nearly as much as most spectators thought."

"On the other hand, my 6-4 play is a little embarrassing."—Richard Lloyd

ADDITIONALLY

Congratulations to the other major winners: Mark Donaldson (MN) in the Advanced,



Advanced winner Mark Donaldson.



Limited winner Bill Chibnik with runner-up Antoinette Rodi. [Photo by Amy Trudeau]

and Limited champ Bill Chibnik (IL).

How to you get young people back into backgammon? Hold a Children's Tournament! 16 youngsters (8th grade and under) paid a \$10 entry fee to participate in the inaugural event. And the equity was great with \$500 worth of iPods and precious metals going to the top finishers. The matches were best 3-out-of-5 games with no cube

or gammons. 8-year-old Lyle Rubin from Skokie, Illinois topped Jonathan Munitz (NY) in the finals to win top honors. The Consolation event was a family affair with



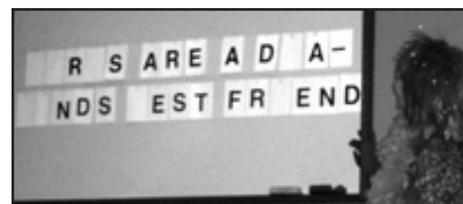
The Children's Tournament drew 16 players competing for iPods and gold.



Children's winner Lyle Rubin (L) with runner-up Jonathan Munitz.

Greg Glaeser besting sister Daisy (OH).

What's a Midwest Championships without the usual madness? The Calcutta Auction was full of merriment including "Deal or No Deal," "Basket Case," and the following BG Wheel of Fortune puzzle:



"This is true for singer Neil in the bear-off"

South Florida director Elayne Feinstein won a quarter-eagle of gold for solving the puzzle at the point shown above: "Girls are a Diamond's Best Friend."

Elayne also won Pig-Rolling and was



Pig-Master Mike Cyrkiel awards Pig-Rolling champ Elayne Feinstein an iPod.

[Continued on page 6]

BACKGAMMON CLOCK THOUGHTS



By Nack Ballard

One of the most controversial problems facing backgammon today what rules should govern clock usage. The controversy will end when digital Bronstein clocks become the standard for the game. The Bronstein clock is far superior to a standard countdown timing clock. Here is how they work.

Each player's clock is set for two minutes per point (less one minute per point already scored by either player). For example, a 9-point match, each player starts the match with 18 minutes and when a player's flag falls, he loses the match.

That is a very small amount of time to be faced with such a severe penalty except for the way a Bronstein clock works. At the start of every move, the Bronstein clock counts down 12 seconds (the specified increment) before deducting any time from the player's 18 minutes. Whether a player makes his move in five seconds or 12 seconds doesn't matter. Time is neither deducted nor added to his 18 minute reserve. But when a player takes 52 seconds on a tough cube decision, his time reserve will be depleted by $52 - 12 = 40$ seconds.

We encourage all future backgammon clock buyers to purchase Bronstein clocks; however, for those who are still using analog clocks, games pro Nack Ballard has a suggestion for assigning penalty points that makes a lot of sense.—Ed.

People generally seem to agree that Bronstein clocks are superior, in large part to accommodate the randomness of a series of long games occurring in a match without materially affecting the requisite tempo of play. However, for practical (financial?) reasons, large-scale Bronstein usage is not going to happen soon. I will therefore confine my comments to the use of simple time controls (used by standard clocks).

Personally, it is fine with me if when a player's flag falls for the first time, he loses the match. However, I have my doubts that this would be a readily accepted rule. If we want people to be happy using clocks,

CATTANACH & LLOYD...

[Continued from page 5]

Advanced runner-up. Great tournament!

The event raised a record \$4400 for the Anti-Cruelty Society. Special thanks go to \$100+ contributors Arnold Zousmer, John Jennings, Richard Lloyd, Martha Ghio, Stepan Nuniyants, Ed Zell, Dave Cramer, and Tom Walthes.



Dru Heggen (L) watches for fouls as Shuffle Gammon champ Tom Machaj takes his turn.



Surely you jest! Point staffers (L to R): Robin Horton, Carol Joy Cole, Amy Trudeau.



Frank Talbot receives a strand of Mardi Gras dice beads from Carol Joy Cole. The winner of each individual match received beads.

then it is necessary to consider their well-considered preferences (as opposed to their uninformed initial prejudices).

Instant death is not an *unfair* paradigm (since either player is equally vulnerable to it at the start of the contest), but in my experience having played many different games with clocks, people strongly resist the notion of instant flag death when it is possible to create incremental penalties. For example, in Scrabble the official rule is: 10 points for each overstepped minute (or fraction thereof) is assigned as a penalty. People are much happier with that rule than they are with the flag drop automatically

Thanks also to our tournament sponsors TrueMoneygames, Snowie, Chicago Point, and Nannon permitting us to return 100% of all collected entry fees. And a rousing thank-you to Barbara Levinson of *Barbara's Balloons* (847/272-8388) whose decorations gave our room the special Mardi Gras feel. Complete results above right: Δ

2006 MIDWEST CHAMPIONSHIPS

CHAMPIONSHIP (64): 1-Gregg Cattanach (GA), 2-Stepan Nuniyants (WA), 3/4-Dana Nazarian (CA) / Steve Sax (CA); 1C-John Jennings (IL), 2C-Sean Garber (IN); 1LC-Bruce Russell (WI). ADVANCED (63): 1-Mark Donaldson (MN), 2-Elayne Feinstein (FL), 3/4-Matthew Miner (NY) / Stewart Pemberton (CT); 1C-J.A. Miller (IL), 2C-Jesse Eaton (MN); 1LC-Dan Cramer (MN). LIMITED (22): 1-Bill Chibnik (IL), 2-Antoinette Rodi (FL), 3/4-Sharon Steffens (IL) / Joe Szewdo (IL); 1C-Scott Erickson (IL), 2C-Maxine Diamond (Canada); 1LC-Bill Schragel (IL). \$125 OPEN (11): 1-Richard Lloyd (TN), 2-Carlos Azcarate (FL); 1C-Faddoul Khoury (IL); 1LC-Jack Takala (MI). CHILDREN'S TOURNEY (16): 1-Lyle Rubin (IL), 2-Jonathan Munitz (NY); 1C-Greg Glaeser (OH), 2C-Daisy Glaeser (OH). GRAND CRYSTAL BEAVER (16): 1-Richard Lloyd (TN), 2-Fred Kalantari (MN). SHAMROCK SHAKE (32): 1-Fred Kalantari (MN), 2-Faddoul Khoury (IL), 3/4-Eric Johnson (IL) / David Rockwell (IL). 5th BATTLE OF THE SEXES (32 men+16 women): 1-Mary Franks (NV), 2-Bill Finneran (VA). OPEN MIDWEST DOUBLES (25 teams): 1-Jeb Horton (NC) & Petko Kostadinov (SC), 2-Eric Johnson (IL) & James Roston (NY). INTERMEDIATE DOUBLES (13 teams): 1-Dave Settles (IL) & Bob Bartolone (IL), 2-Vicki & Stewart Pemberton (CT). VODOO BLITZ (96): 1-Keene Marin (WI), 2-John Rockwell (CA). QUICKIE TOURNAMENT (128): 1-Adrian Rios (IL), 2-Paul Baraz (IL), 3/4-Linda MacLean (MA) / Herb Roman (IL). SHUFFLE-GAMMON: 1-Tom Machaj (WI). BACKGAMMON WHEEL OF FORTUNE: 1-Elayne Feinstein (FL). PIG-ROLLING: 1-Elayne Feinstein (FL). MARDI GRAS CONCENTRATION: 1-Beth Martinson (WI). DOUBLOON GAMMON for TAKI BOARD: 1-John Rockwell (CA).

deciding the game.

It is a terrible feeling to be up 200 points in a Scrabble game and lose a game by a few seconds. Again, there is nothing "unfair" (the winner could have been more careful with his initial 25 minutes) but the winner of the game feels a lot worse than the loser of the game feels happy about such a lopsided game being reversed on time. The penalty is perceived as *disproportionate* to the crime. If the winner exceeds the time control by as much as 22 minutes, and loses his 200-point lead to that (i.e. $22 \times 10 = 220$), that's another

[Continued on page 7]

REDOUBLES

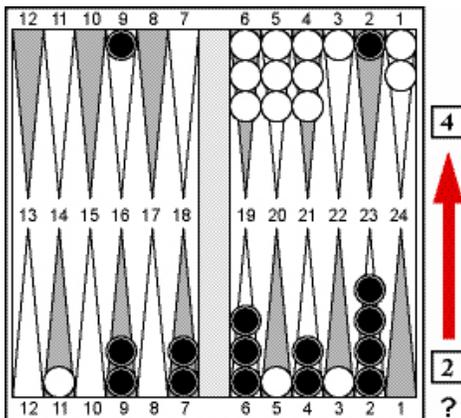
by Duane Jensen

After the chouette broke up, I congratulated my friend on winning the last game, the biggest of the night. He'd gammoned his three opponents while holding their 8-cubes. He said, "While its great to win 48 points in a game, I feel I lost 48 points because I didn't redouble earlier when they could still take. If I'd played better, the game would have ended with three 16-cubes on their side of the board!"

Strong players and weak players view the cube from different perspectives. Strong players see the cube as a weapon to win more points. Weak players see the cube as a threat they must overcome or, at best, as a tool to double out their opponent. Here are three redoubling problems:

1. Gregg Cattanach is contemplating a redouble against Neil Kazaross in the 2005 Minnesota Open. What should he do?

9-point match. Gregg Cattanach (Black) and Neil Kazaross (White) are tied at 0-0. **SHOULD BLACK REDOUBLE?**



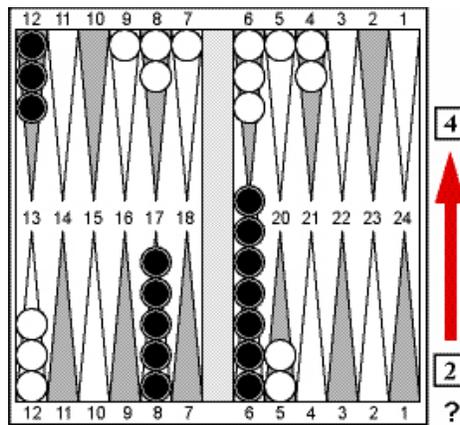
The weak player in this position is relieved because he accepted the 2-cube and turned the game around—he "overcame" the threat of the cube. The weak player talks himself out of redoubling for two reasons:

- A. If he recubes, he might expose himself to another threatening recube.
- B. With four blots to shoot at, he might get a gammon anyway, and an 4-0 lead is a good way to begin a match.

A strong player sees great potential in a recube from this volatile position. A gammoned 4-cube could lock up this 9-point match. This is an opportunity to win the match, and Gregg should go for it.

2. Paul Magriel redoubles Nack Ballard in the Nevada \$500 Jackpot Tournament. Would you redouble from this position?

11-point match. Paul Magriel (Black) leads Nack Ballard (White) 6-2. **SHOULD BLACK REDOUBLE?**

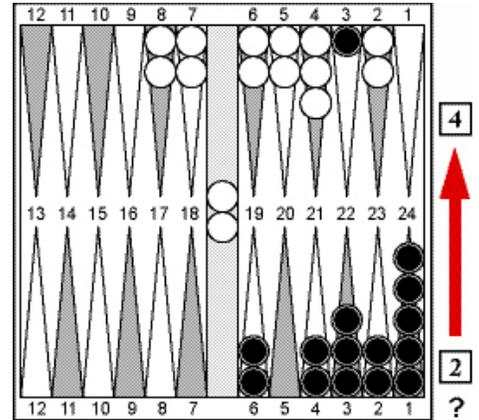


At a 0-0 score this would be a redouble, but leading 6-2, it is too aggressive to toss out a 4-cube to someone trailing in the match. When strong players err, it's usually

on the aggressive side. That's the side I'd favor because sometimes it pays off when your opponent drops a takable cube.

3. Fred Kalantari redoubles Duane Jensen (7-point match) weekly Thursday tourney.

7-point match. Fred Kalantari (Black) and Duane Jensen (White) are tied at 0-0. **SHOULD BLACK REDOUBLE?**



If Fred rolls a 6, I'm usually gammoned and I'm through for the night. I wanted to stay longer so I dropped the cube. It's not a redouble for Fred, and it's a take for me. Here's a case where the aggressive redouble scared off his timid opponent.

Aggressive checker play is the most profitable, and your recubes should complement that style of play. You've heard players say "When in doubt, hit!"

I would add, "When in doubt, redouble!" — Duane Jensen Δ

BPC SUNDAY BACKGAMMON
June 4, 2006 – 12:00 NOON
The Purple Hotel
4500 W. Touhy, Lincolnwood, IL

CLOCK THOUGHTS...

[Continued from page 6]

matter—he took a ridiculous amount of time and clearly deserves his fate.) Similarly, a neophyte backgammon clock-user who reaches a score of 16-2 to 17 and loses because his flag falls in the final game may never want to use a clock again.

I believe that backgammon could be served by applying a similar Scrabble-type rule, structured as follows:

A match is over when one player reaches the target score (overtime isn't counted), just as in non-clock backgammon, OR when both flags have fallen, whichever

comes first. However, each player is penalized one (1) point for each excess "unit" (say for each 6 minutes, or fraction thereof) that he oversteps his allotted time. After this adjustment is made, the player with the higher score wins the match. (If there is a tie, the player with the higher unadjusted score wins.)

A player may claim victory if the difference between his score and the target score is less than the number of units that his opponent has overstepped.

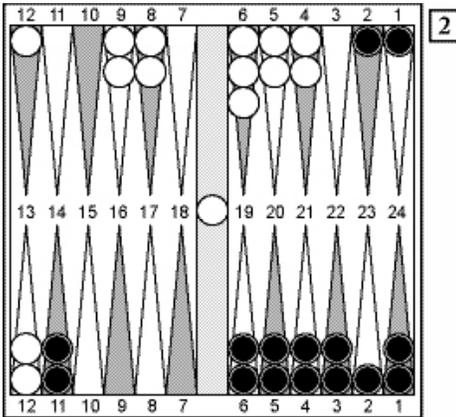
(For example, you have time left and have 13 points in a match to 17, but your opponent, regardless of score, has overstepped more than four time units—you may claim victory.)

I don't think that the above rule is overly complicated. One of its joys is that less monitoring is necessary than with the current clock rules. There are no clock resets or intra-match scoring adjustments; just final score adjusted by time.

No matter how DMP or other late scores are treated, score-finessing is going to be part of the game when the clock is used. Incremental penalties, however, ameliorate the amount of finessing that is possible. An absolute loss from a flag drop maximizes the amount of finessing. To whatever extent that people complain that finessing shouldn't be part of the game, it is only made worse if the player whose flag falls first loses no matter what. —Nack Ballard Δ

**PROBLEM #316
ANALYZED**

by Kit Woolsey

Money game. **BLACK TO PLAY 4-3.**

Black has several goals. He would love to close his board, of course. It will be necessary to escape at least one back checker before he crunches. Also, he would prefer not to be hit. What should his priorities be?

11/7, 11/8 is a clear candidate as it maximizes builders for the 2-point, but it leaves a lot of blots and duplicates the 5s and 6s needed to escape. 11/4 is safer and more diversified, but this doesn't give Black as many ways to cover.

11/8, 6/2 or 11/7, 5/2 are clever shifts which diversify; however giving up the higher point could be costly. 6/2, 6/3 is also possible as it is safe, but this buries a

checker and eliminates the possibility of closing the board.

The easiest play to eliminate is 6/2, 6/3. If White enters on her next roll, Black will be in trouble whether White hits or not. Of course Black will be in more trouble if he is hit, but not enough to justify playing safe. The gain from closing the board far outweighs the cost of being hit.

A shifting play such as 11/7, 5/2 has the advantage of giving Black 2s and 6s to cover, along with 5s and 6s to escape. Unfortunately Black would be giving away a lot. There are only 24 cover numbers with 2s and 6s, compared to 28 cover numbers with 5s and 6s. Black would show a profit if White flunked and Black rolled 6-2 or 5-2 since he could both cover and escape. That is the advantage of the diversification. These are the only big swings in favor of the shift.

On the downside, if Black leaves the 5-point open and White enters, Black is left with little or no counter-play. At least if White enters on the 2-point, Black has some chances as long as White is stuck on the deuce. For example, Black might enter with 1-1, 2-2, or 3-3 and be able to get White back on the bar against the five point board. But once White is out and running, Black has little going his way.

How important is escaping? It matters, but it isn't vital. Once Black covers, he escapes with any 5, 6, 4-2, and 4-1—that's 24 escaping numbers. In addition some of Black's non-escape numbers may be small enough so Black will be able to play his other spare checker (after closing his board) and still maintain the closed board.

Thus, while escaping is of course very important, Black will probably be able to get out once he closes his board. Closing the board is the big thing.

11/4 keeps the outer points in the board and doesn't leave as many blots. It also diversifies, with 2s to cover and 5s and 6s to escape. The problem is that there aren't as many cover numbers: 2s, 1-1, 5-4, 6-3, and 3-3 for 17 covers.

That is a lot less than 28 cover numbers. How important is the safety? Not overly important. Black will get gammoned more if White rolls a 2-5 or 2-6, or if White rolls some other 2 and Black flunks. But even if this happens, it probably won't make a difference. The key is that White owns the cube, and in most variations he will be cashing as soon as Black makes an anchor anyway, since it won't pay to play on for a gammon against an anchor. Thus, the cost of leaving the blots on the 8- and bar-points is less than it would be if Black owned the cube.

While duplication and diversification always matter, they are much more important when the player has two equally vital things he needs to do with the same number. In this position closing the board has a much higher priority than escaping. Thus, 11/8 11/7 which maximizes the cover numbers is the superior play. If both of Black's back checkers were on the 2-point, say, then using 5s for escaping would be more critical since Black would have fewer escaping rolls. If that were the case, there would be a lot more to be said for the plays which don't use 5s as a potential cover number.—Kit Woolsey Δ

AMALGAMATION

Visiting the Bar Point Club in March: **Martha Ghio** (NY), **James Roston** (NY), and bride-to-be **Marcia Karen** (MO)... Another BG player succeeding in the Poker world: **Mads Anderson** (Denmark) won over \$412,000 at the EPT Poker Stars Scandinavian Open tournament earlier this year. Other well-known BG players to score big: Paul Magriel (NV) and Lars Bønding (Denmark) for about \$200,000 each, and Phil Laak (CA) for \$160,000... Midwest Champs dual champion (Grand Crystal Beaver & \$125 Open) **Richard Lloyd** is a Professor of Sociology at Vanderbilt University. His new book, *Neo-Bohemia: Art & Commerce in the Postindustrial City*, was published by Routledge (NY) earlier this year. He'll return to Chicago to give a public lecture later this spring. We'll keep you posted...

Director **Elayne Feinstein** announces that her Florida State Championships will become the second US tournament to hold an advertised Children's event 17–20 August in Fort Lauderdale, Florida... The 2005 Backgammon Assoc. of So. Australia has been determined and it is **John McLean**... Beware of high stakes Internet backgammon play. rec.games.backgammon claims that a certain individual has won over \$10,000 and obtained an incredibly high ranking while playing online with Snowie running in the background. Many websites claim that they can detect a player's use of Snowie, but if the individual uses a second computer to run the program, and purposely avoids making the very best play every time, it's virtually impossible to detect... The BPC's **David Rockwell** regularly Longtime gammonville.com editor **Michael Strato** (Canada) has left his position to work on other backgammon projects. Owner **Mel Dragicovic**,

along with **Frank Williams** will continue to publish all BG news articles as in the past. We agree with Mel who writes "We will miss Michael very much. He is definitely not replaceable."... To go with our picture of the **Marx Brothers** playing backgammon on the front page, we found this story on the Internet: While playing backgammon with the producer **Samuel Goldwyn** one day, **Chico Marx** grew annoyed when Goldwyn's son Sam repeatedly knocked the board over (when Chico was winning handily). Though Chico asked his opponent to deal with the problem, and though Goldwyn tried to do so, the youngster kept returning. At last chico personally escorted the boy from the room, returned alone a few minutes later, and completed the game without further interruption. Amazed by Chico's ability to handle children, Goldwyn asked him how he had done it. Chico's reply?: "I taught him to masturbate." Δ

WINNER'S CIRCLE

MAR.—APR. 2006



•**Kansas City Club Monthly** (Kansas City, MO; 1 Mar.)... OPEN (8): 1-James Worley, 2/3-Christy Sharp / Eric Barr.

•**Ohio State Club Monthly** (Copley, OH; 5 Mar.)... OPEN: 1-Mike Vasilatos, 2-Bob Green.

•**Arizona Club Monthly** (Phoenix, AZ; 7 Mar.)... OPEN: 1-Dave Perkins, 2-Jason Siciliano, 3-Ken Dennison, 4-Brian Comer.

•**South Australia Monthly KO** (Adelaide, South Australia; 7 Mar.)... KO #1: 1-Bill Korallis, 2-Nick Papadopoulos. KO #2: 1-Emmanuel Lavrentiadis, 2-Alex Athans.

•**Springfield Series #5** (Peoria, IL; 11 Mar.)... OPEN (19): 1-Michael Flohr, 2-Jim Zimmerman; 1C-Sean Garber (IN), 2C-Scott Johnston (IN); 1LC-Milad Doueih. Taki-Board Qualifier: Roger Hickman.

•**Drew McCulloch Classic** (Houston, TX; 11 Mar.)... OPEN (15): 1-Patrick Lee, 2-George Morse; 1C-Scott Ward.

•**Northwest Indiana Club Monthly** (Porter, IN; 11 Mar.)... OPEN: 1-John O'Hagan, 2-Charlie Halberstadt.

•**Greater Columbus Monthly** (Hilliard, Ohio; 12 Mar.)... OPEN: 1-Mary Hickey.

•**7th International Paris Master & Open Tournament** (Paris, France; 1-5 Mar.)... MASTERS (13+3): 1-Ed O'Laughlin (USA), 2-

Leonid Riskin (GER), 3/4-Yomi Peretz (FRA) / Slava Pryadkin (UKR). OPEN (32): 1-Khvicha Kurtanidze (GEO), 2-Philippe Lecomte (FRA), 3/4-Didier Assaraf (FRA) / Philip Vischjager (NED); 1C-Bernard Chetrit (FRA), 2C-Alain Alezra (FRA); 1LC-Artur Muradian (ARM), 2LC-Leonid Riskin (GER). ADVANCED (32): 1-Bert Van Kerckhove (BEL), 2-Pierre Semour (FRA), 3/4-Charles Lecomte (FRA) / Cécile Wolf (FRA); 1C-Felix Vink (NETH), 2C-Harutyun Martirosyan (ARM); 1LC-Valery Frelin (FRA). Ladies Prize: Cécile Wolf (FRA). INTERMEDIATE (6): 1-Ha Tuan Bao (VIET/FRA), 2-Scarlett Serrero (FRA). BEGINNER (16): 1-Maxime Jousse (FRA), 2-Alexandre Purlich (FRA). DOUBLES (16 teams): 1-Aris Hadjiaslanis-Saracakis (GRE) & Nadya Marinova (BUL/FRA), 2-Nicoletta (GER) & Werner Schmuck (AUT). SUPER JACKPOT (8): 1-Eric Sfez (FRA), 2-Rony Orenstein (FRA). ADVANCED JACKPOT (8): 1-Minh Nguyen (FRA), 2-Laurent Arnone (FRA).

•**British Time Trials** (Oxford, England; 11-12 Mar.)... OPEN (25): 1-Julian Fetterlein, 2-Walter Busato; 1C-Rosey Bensley; 1LC-Peter Bennet. TEXASHOLD'EMPOKER: 1-Martin Hemming, 2-John Clark. £50 JACKPOT (8): 1/2-Ray Kershaw / Chris Temel.

•**23rd Fleet Underwood Memorial** (Flint, MI; 26 Mar.)... OPEN (25): 1-Joe Feldman, 2-Rick Todd, 3/4-Dan Kiurski / Jim Price, 5/6-Ralph Dietz / Sandy Kaplan. INTERMEDIATE (31): 1-Troy Longman, 2-Andy Coulouris, 3-Reggie Harvel, 4/5/6-Woody Halbritter / Dirk Hogan / Nancy Takala. NOVICE (10): 1-Bill Calton, 2-James Baltas, 2-Derek Swanson (IN).

•**Play65 British Open** (Coventry, England; 1-2 Apr.)... OPEN (72): 1-Nigel Merrigan, 2-Tony Lee, 3/4-Jason Champion / Ray Tannen; 1C-David Startin, 2C-Ann Pocknell; 1LC-Nicky Check, 2LC-Stuart Mann; 1LLC-Jeff Barber, 2LLC-Eamon Keogh. FRIDAY KO (16): 1-Brian Lever, 2-Jeff Barber. DOUBLES (8): 1-International Jet Set, 2-April Fools. POKER GRAN PRIX (26): 1-Paul Gilbertson, 2-Rebecca Bell.

•**Bar Point Sunday** (Lincolnwood, IL; 2 Apr.)... OPEN (20): 1-David Rockwell, 2-Efim Liberman, 3/4-Tak Morioka / Bill Bartholomay; 1C/2C-Ken Tyszko / Amy Trudeau. Δ



ILLINOIS ACTION



Bill Davis
773/583-6464
Peter Kalba
312/316-1432

Tuesday, 6–7 p.m. at The Purple Hotel, 4500 W. Touhy Avenue, Lincolnwood. 847/677-1234.

Sunday Bimonthly, 12:00 NOON at The Purple Hotel, 4500 W. Touhy Avenue, Lincolnwood. 847/677-1234.

BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL BG CLUB: Tournaments Tuesday, 6:30 P.M. at Ned Kelly's Steak House, 1603-A Morrisey Drive, Bloomington. Michael Flohr (309/662-7967).

SANGAMON VALLEY BACKGAMMON ASSOC.: Tournaments Wednesday, 6:30 P.M. at Capitol Teletrack, 1766 W. Wabash Ave., Springfield. Randy Armstrong (217/528-0117).

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

PUB CLUB: Tournaments Thurs., 6:45 P.M. at Playoffs Bar, 720 E. North Ave., Carol Stream. Tim Mabee (630/606-2388).

PEORIA BG CLUB: Tourn. Thurs., 6:30 P.M. at Peoria Pizza Works, 3921 Prospect, Peoria. Ed Zell (309/689-1964).

LETTERS...

(Continued from page 3)

games, that match would be 5 points rather than 7, for example. No feathers were ruffled; no feelings were hurt. On the other hand, a chess clock would have befuddled and driven off these otherwise very desirable and popular club members.

Obviously, this idea wouldn't work for an especially large or formal tournament; however it proved most satisfactory for our small, informal, weekly event.—*Terry Valentine, Jerome, Arizona*

Be sure to read Nack Ballard's view on clock penalties on page 6.—Ed.

MBC CONGRATS

Thank you yet again for another great Midwest Championships! Your efforts make this Mardi Gras-themed tournament stand above them all. And I can't even begin to tell you how accomplished my

son Lyle feels about winning the first ever Children's Tournament and how proud David and I are of his results. The event was a great idea that had us playing backgammon with Mason and Lyle in the weeks preceding the tournament. It gave them an opportunity to enjoy the competition of backgammon without having to face the challenges found in the Beginner/Limited division. It also gave the backgammon children an opportunity to get to know each other.—*Jolie Rubin, Skokie, Illinois*

Jack and I think the Midwest Champs jester trophy he won is fantastic! I have never seen such a unique trophy. I promise that next year I will be at your tournament to try to win something as cool.—*Nancy Takala, Royal Oak, Michigan*

See you 23–25 March 2007 for our Pirate-themed event.—Ed.

SHOCKED

I was shocked I didn't have the right answer

to the illustration puzzle hidden in the 2006 Midwest Champs Flyer. My guess was to bring this picture of Arthur Treacher from the 1939 Shirley Temple movie "A Little Princess." He appears as a Jester in a dream she has for just a short time in the movie.—*Rich Hallbeck, Sugar Grove, Illinois*



The actual pictogram as shown in the MBC flyer with Rich's guess at right.

The pictogram jester shown in the flyer encouraged you to bring a pic to the Calcutta. Put what you see together and you get Jester—A—R—Thor or "Chester A. Arthur," 21st President of the United States. Nobody took home the \$100 prize.—*Ed. Δ*

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