

27th chicago open

GARTNER ENDURES AT CHICAGO OPEN

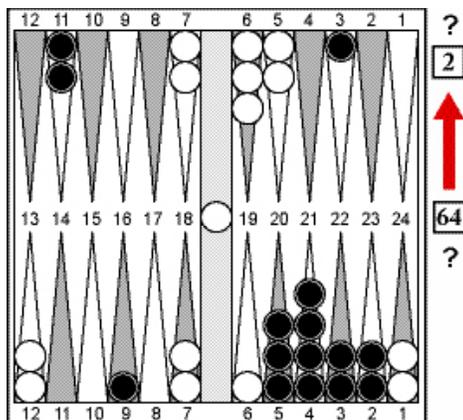
Shimony over Fischer in Masters

Perry Gartner of Englewood, New Jersey certainly got his money's worth at the Chicago Open. After winning his first 13-point Championship match, then losing to Bruce Russell (WI) in the second round, Perry clawed his way through six straight 11-point matches to "draw even" with Sam Pottle. Sam, who earned his undefeated finals berth a day earlier with a bye and five wins, was still a 3-to-1 favorite to capture first. Perry would need two 13-point victories in a row to take the title. No problem.

The Chicago Open, now in its 27th year, was held at the beautiful Marriott Oak Brook Hills Resort 26-29 May. Generous sponsorship from BackgammonMasters.com allowed organizers Howard Markowitz and Joann Feinstein to return 105% prize money in the three main divisions. And although attendance dipped to its lowest level since 1989, the 86 main tourney entrants were a fun group.

The first 13-pointer rolled off just after 3:30 P.M. on Memorial Day. The eleven game match was slow and relatively uneventful with Sam trailing throughout. One big potential swing position occurred in the ninth game:

13-point match #1. Perry Gartner (Black) leads Sam Pottle (White), 8 to 3. Black on roll. **CUBE ACTION(S)?**



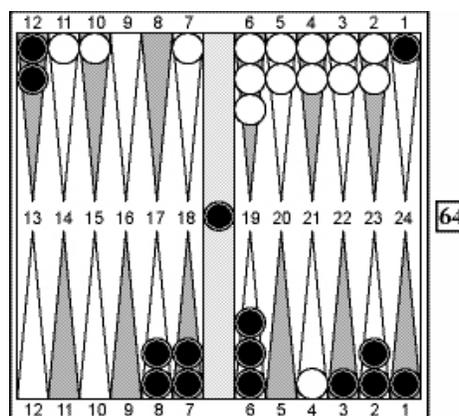
Championships winner Perry Gartner (R) with runner-up Sam Pottle.

Perry doubled and Sam scooped. 720 full Snowie (3-ply, precise) rollouts show Perry's cube to be a blunder. Neil Kazaross comments: "Trailing 3-8 to 13, Sam has enormous cube vig when he redoubles to 4. In this type of position, it is difficult for the leader to properly double since he is only a slight game favorite (about 58-42), gains little from a gammon when the cube comes back at 4, and pukes if he loses a G holding a 4-cube."

Perry ended up winning a four point gammon, but not before presenting Sam with a shot in the bearoff (which he missed). Perry then went on to win the first match 13-4 in just under four hours (including a room service dinner break).

WHEN THE "FINAL" FINALS began around 7:15 P.M., the room was relatively quiet. Sam came out with guns blazing, winning the first six points. Leading 1-0, with a centered cube, Sam faced tricky double-4 move:

13-point match #2. Sam Pottle (White) leads Perry Gartner (Black), 1 to 0. **WHITE TO PLAY 4-4.**



27TH CHICAGO OPEN

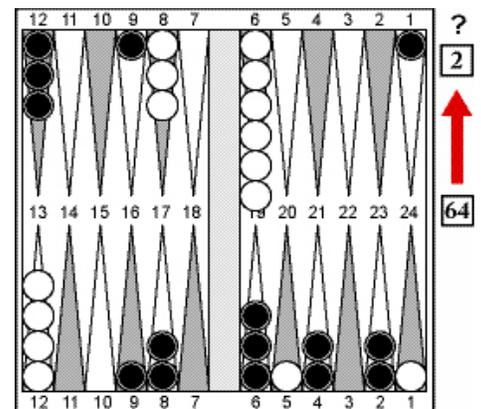
CHAMPIONSHIP (42): 1-Perry Gartner (NJ), 2-Sam Pottle (WI), 3-Neil Garvie (Canada); 1C-Tak Morioka (IL), 2C-Doug Mayfield (CA). INTERMEDIATE (31): 1-Sal Pittelli (Canada), 2-Keene Marin (WI), 3/4-Michael Flohr (IL) / Garry Kallos (Canada); 1C-Eric Barr (MO), 2C-Ron Wagner (IL). BEGINNER (13): 1-Dean Schneider (MN), 2-Anton Schragel Jr. (IL); 1C-Kathleen Schuler (KS). MEMORIAL DAY MASTERS (32): 1-Yaniv Shimony (Israel), 2-Ken Fischer (CA), 3/4-Perry Gartner (NJ) / John Jennings (IL). USTEAM CHAMPIONSHIP (12 teams): 1-Mark Antranikian (CA) / Ken Fischer (CA) / Harvey Gillis (WA), 2-Ray Fogerlund (CA) / Doug Mayfield (CA) / Frank Talbot (MI). BLITZ (32): 1-Garry Kallos (Canada), 2-Eric Johnson (IL). MINI-MATCH (32): 1-Phil Simborg (IL). DOUBLES (16 teams): 1-Roz Ferris (IL) & Howard Markowitz (NV), 2-Ken Bond (IL) & Bill Davis (IL).

Although three plays are close, Sam made the best one: 11/7, 10/6, 5/1*(2). In his own words, "I must switch points to keep Perry from anchoring here. My gammon chances are excellent even if I never close the 5-point."

Additionally Sam's play allows small numbers (1s and 2s) to work on his 5-point, and large numbers (5s and 6s) to escape.

Now ahead 7-1 with things going his way, Sam faced a 2-cube:

13-point match #2. Sam Pottle (White) leads Perry Gartner (Black), 7 to 1. Black doubles. **SHOULD WHITE TAKE?**



[Continued on page 5]

CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

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LETTERS

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BETSY IS STILL KICKING!

Hi Bill, someone from your past . . . I would like to subscribe to your newsletter. Although I haven't been playing much backgammon, for my 85th birthday, my family gave me a \$200 buy-in to play in a local Texas Hold-Em tournament. I've never played for money, but did rather well for a novice, finishing 83rd out of 192 total players. I kicked a lot of butt!—Especially a young, cocky one who was heard saying "What does that old lady know?" I had such a good time. It was the greatest.

Say "Hi" to Peter Kalba and the other BPC players.—*Betsy [Miller] Walsh, Cedar Rapids, Iowa*

DROPPING DECIMALS

I've never understood where those crazy decimal numbers come from in most backgammon club master point lists. It's difficult to look at the rankings and know how

[Continued on page 3]

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30
31				

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

*Denotes new or revised listing

NATIONAL

American Backgammon Tour events underlined.

Jun 9-11	Los Angeles Open, Sheraton Gateway Hotel, Los Angeles Airport, California	818/901-0464
Jun 10	Atlanta Summer Shootout, Mazzy's Sports Bar, Roswell, Georgia	770/333-1876
Jun 10*	Father's Day Open, Sansone's West Oaks Bar, Houston, Texas	281/556-0428
Jun 10	Northwest Indiana Club Monthly, VFW Hall, Porter, Indiana	219/785-2082
Jun 11	Miami Valley Club Monthly, Gambits Bar, Marriott Hotel, Dayton, Ohio	937/890-2536
Jun 11	New England Club Playoffs, Holiday Inn, Somerville, Massachusetts	617/945-1257
Jun 11*	South Florida Monthly, Northridge Raw Bar, Fort Lauderdale, Florida	954/564-0304
Jun 15*	Third Thursday Bonus (Wisconsin State), Days Inn, Flint, Michigan	810/232-9731
Jun 18	Greater Columbus Club Monthly, Lucky's Grille, Hilliard, Ohio	614/784-8132
Jun 18	Pittsburgh Monthly Tournament, Hartner's Lounge, Cranberry Twp., PA	412/826-1334
Jun 20*	Arizona Free Monthly, Rosie McCaffrey's Irish Pub, Phoenix, Arizona	602/296-4307
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>	<u>810/232-9731</u>
Jul 3*	Roy's Monthly Tournament, Restaurant Roy, Santa Barbara, California	805/966-5636
Jul 4*	Arizona Club Monthly, Rosie McCaffrey's Irish Pub, Phoenix, Arizona	602/279-0215
Jul 5*	Kansas City Club Monthly, Harpo's, Kansas City, Missouri	816/916-6599
Jul 8*	Georgia Warm-Up/Peach Cup Qualifier, Mazzy's Bar, Roswell, Georgia	770/333-1876
Jul 8*	Backgammon By the Bay, Peking Express, Berkeley, California	831/688-9722
Jul 8*	Northwest Indiana Club Monthly, VFW Hall, Porter, Indiana	219/785-2082
Jul 8*	Firecracker Classic, Sansone's West Oaks Bar, Houston, Texas	281/556-0428
Jul 9*	South Florida Monthly, Northridge Raw Bar, Fort Lauderdale, Florida	954/564-0304
Jul 9*	Miami Valley Club Monthly, Gambits Bar, Marriott Hotel, Dayton, Ohio	937/890-2536
Jul 9*	Ohio State Club Monthly, Spaghetti Warehouse, Akron, Ohio	330/268-4610
Jul 16*	Greater Columbus Club Monthly, Lucky's Grille, Hilliard, Ohio	614/784-8132
Jul 16*	Pittsburgh Monthly Tournament, Hartner's Lounge, Cranberry Twp., PA	412/826-1334
Jul 28-30	<u>Wisconsin State Championships, Radisson Hotel, Madison, Wisconsin</u>	<u>608/516-9109</u>
Jul 28-30	<u>Thousand Islands Tournament, Pine Tree Point, Alexandria Bay, New York</u>	<u>585/396-0969</u>
Aug 6	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Purple Hotel, Lincolnwood, Illinois	773/583-6464
Aug 10-13	<u>13th Georgia Championships, Marriott Atlanta Perimeter Center, Atlanta, GA</u>	<u>770/333-1876</u>
Aug 17-20	<u>Florida State Championships, Fort Lauderdale Marriott North, Florida</u>	<u>954/249-1416</u>
Sep 1-4	<u>54th Indiana Open, Sheraton Suites Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana</u>	<u>317/255-8902</u>
Sep 29-Oct 1	<u>Pacific Northwest Championships, Holiday Inn SeaTac, Seattle, Washington</u>	<u>253/856-7513</u>
Oct 6-8	<u>Illinois State Championships, Holiday Inn City-Centre, Peoria, Illinois</u>	<u>309/699-6005</u>
Nov 1-5*	<u>2006 Las Vegas Open, Riviera Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada</u>	<u>702/893-6025</u>
Nov 5-9*	<u>2006 Las Vegas Pro Am, Riviera Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada</u>	<u>702/893-6025</u>
Dec 1-3	<u>California State Championship, Sheraton Gateway, Los Angeles Airport, CA</u>	<u>818/901-0464</u>
Jan 20-27	<u>Backgammon On Board 8, Princess Cruise, Los Angeles to Mexican Riviera</u>	<u>773/583-6464</u>

OUTSIDE USA

Jun 10-11	Gammonitis League Tournament, Eynsham Hall, Oxford, England	441634-840592
Jun 14-18	2nd Belgian Open, Grand Casino Kursaal Oostende, Oostende, Belgium	49171-542222
Jun 15-18*	Torneio de Gamão, Hotel Portobello, Arraiald Ajuda, Bahia, Brazil	55219-4982218
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	441634-840592
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 14-16	Festival of Games Czech Open, CEZ, Pardubice, Czech Republic	420466-535200
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 22-23	Danish Mixed Doubles, Foreningshuset Strandlyst, Humlebæk, Denmark	4561-331133
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 11-13	BG Sommerfestival, Hotel GlockenSpitze, Altenkirchen, Germany	49521-64314
Aug 19-20	Gammonitis Live Challenge Finals, Eynsham Hall, Oxford, England	441634-840592
Aug 19-28	10th MindSports Olympiad Backgammon, Manchester, England	441522-888676
Aug 23-30	Bristol International Festival of Backgammon, Clifton, Bristol, England	441179-756349
Aug 31-Sep 3	16th Mitteleuropa Championship, (Venue TBA), Nova Gorica, Slovenia	39331-923537
Sep 1-3	Franken-Cup Open-Air, Hotel Daucher, Nürnberg, Germany	49711-486190
Sep 9-10	Backpacker Backgammon Trophy, Hilton Hotel, Coventry, England	441522-888676
Sep 9-10*	4th Antwerp Open, Café Den Bengel, Antwerp, Belgium	32475-256734
Sep 16-17	Gammonitis League Tournament, Eynsham Hall, Oxford, England	441634-840592
Sep 20-24	1st Portuguese Open & Grand Prix d'Estoril, Casino Estoril, Portugal	491715-422222
Sep 29-Oct 1*	Norwegian Championship, Vika Atrium Hotel, Oslo, Norway	4791-601277
Oct 6-8	9th Austrian Open, Hotel Veronika, Seefeld, Austria	39331-923537
Oct 6-9	12th Japan Open, Nakano Sunplaza, Tokyo, Japan	817-55775016

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 2]

many wins a person needs to catch another.

This year, the Kansas City Club is utilizing a new points system where the winner earns the same number of points as there are players in the tournament. Second place gets half as many points, and then successively lower places each get half as many points.

For example, if you win an 8-player tournament, you get 8 points. Second place is awarded 4 points and each semifinalist

receives 2 points. If the tournament has 11 players, the winner gets 11 points and we always round down, so second place would get 5 points. We proceed down the bracket, dividing by two and rounding down, until we get to the spots that are awarded one point. So with eight players, the loser of the consolation final gets 2 points, then each person who came within a win of the Consolation final gets 1 point. More players get points, and it rewards people who win some matches, but don't reach the finals.

I applied this system to our past year of results where we, too used decimal points. The rankings were almost identical, which

is what I expected. But the points are easier to understand and interpret. And because we now award points to more people each time, a few players who attend often but don't win that many matches, moved ahead of some players who only attended a few times but were able to place. For us, honoring loyal attendees and regular winners are both important.—*Eric Barr, Kansas City Backgammon, Missouri*

Great system, Eric! Unfortunately, Chicagoland backgammon has used the same master point chart for recording points since 1975, so a change now is not feasible.—Ed.



AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 2006

Compiled through 29 May 2006 after 5 events

(Upcoming events: Los Angeles Open, Michigan Summer)



Ken Fischer	28.13	Roz Ferris	5.64	Bill Finneran	2.83	John Grayson	1.47
Doug Roberts	26.56	Sal Chehayeb	5.57	Ray Fogelund	2.83	Scott Johnston	1.47
Gregg Cattanach	25.04	Stuart Katz	5.29	Henry Gray	2.82	Ron Wagner	1.39
Stepan Nuniyants	24.94	J.A. Miller	5.28	Nayan Shah	2.82	Beth Raby	1.25
Perry Gartner	17.63	Sean Garber	5.28	Chris Martin	2.82	Garry Kallos	1.09
Petko Kostadinov	14.54	Steve Sax	5.20	Keene Marin	2.72	Michael Flohr	1.09
Arlene Austin	12.25	Dana Nazarian	5.20	Jesse Eaton	2.60	Wayne Wiest	1.03
Malcolm Davis	11.59	Elayne Feinstein	5.12	Faddoul Khoury	2.57	Doug Johnson	0.99
Chuck Bower	11.59	Mary Hickey	5.06	Stewart Pemberton	2.56	Kate Elmore	0.99
John Jennings	10.72	Richard Lloyd	4.77	Christopher Yep	2.30	Kathleen Schuler	0.98
Mark Donaldson	10.24	Peter Beling	4.44	Mark Haley	2.00	Scott Erickson	0.92
Tak Morioka	8.83	Bill Bartholomay	4.32	Jack Takala	1.83	Brendan Winslow	0.92
Sam Pottle	8.83	Cole Parker	4.00	Marlene Murphy	1.80	Pat Winslow	0.88
Matthew Miner	8.20	Norm Hansen	4.00	Steve Harris	1.79	Stephen Liss	0.71
Michael Battaglia	8.00	Doug Mayfield	3.78	Gale Pollack	1.79	Anton Schragel, Jr.	0.68
Barry Murphy	7.20	Pete Esposito	3.68	Bill Chibnik	1.79	Bill Schragel	0.55
Bruce Russell	6.40	Peggy Neubig	3.57	Dan Kiurski	1.60	Maxine Diamond	0.45
Carlos Azcarate	6.27	Nancy Takala	3.52	Dean Schneider	1.60	Joe Szvedo	0.45
Sal Pittelli	5.96	Eric Barr	3.26	Antoinette Rodi	1.52	Sharon Steffens	0.45
Richard Munitz	5.65	Dan Cramer	3.15	D.J. Oles	1.52	Irv Taylor	0.40
Mark Rozans	5.65	Neil Garvie	2.94				

FINDING THE BASIC RULES

I have a couple of grandchildren who have a standard game setup but no basic playing rules. Could you please them?—*Martin Richardson, via e-mail*

We always recommend Tom Kieth's "Backgammon Galore" website at www.bkgm.com. A treasure trove of backgammon information can be found there.—Ed.

TOUCHY-FEELY

My brother in law is trying to locate a store selling quality backgammon equipment in the Chicagoland area, or Michigan. Online won't do. He wants to touch and feel before buying. Any suggestions?—*Chuck Roberts, via e-mail*

We can't even offer one store suggestion that wouldn't be a total rip-off, Chuck. Why not attend the Michigan Summer Championships June 30–July 3 in Novi, Michigan?

[Continued on page 4]



CHICAGO BAR POINT CLUB 2006 PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED
THRU 31 MAY

David Rockwell	13.68	Wayne Wiest	4.56	Les Moshinsky	2.16	Tom Harrison	0.76
Tak Morioka	12.22	Mark Murray	4.48	Russ Lyutik	2.16	Kwong Chan	0.72
Herb Roman	10.28	Linda Rockwell	4.40	Ken Bond	2.16	Richard Stawowy	0.72
Gary Kay	9.36	Albert Yakobashvili	4.20	Vlad Genkin	2.16	Dave Cramer	0.72
Phil Simborg	8.68	Bill Keefe	3.90	Larry Goldstein	2.00	Martha Ghio	0.72
Steve Klesker	7.40	Georgina Flanagan	3.88	Arlene Levy	1.84	Ryan Anderson	0.64
Phyllis Smolinski	6.88	Boris Dekhtyar	3.56	Elaine Kehm	1.80	Ron Washington	0.52
Tim Mabee	6.84	Carter Mattig	3.56	Efim Leiberman	1.60	Doug Rodgers	0.48
Bill Davis	6.32	Amy Trudeau	3.12	Jerry Brooks	1.48	Judy Zager	0.48
Bill Bartholomay	6.20	Alice Kay	2.96	Glenn Martells	1.48	Tony Santori	0.48
Paul Baraz	5.76	Mike Wolock	2.88	Steve Mellen	1.44	Elaine Andrews	0.48
Bob Zavoral	5.36	Sargon Benjamin	2.68	Dave Settles	1.40	Ken Tibbs	0.48
Roger Hickman	5.32	Willis Elias	2.60	Ken Tyszko	1.20	Tony Garcia	0.48
Oleg Raygorodsky	5.20	Alex Owen	2.60	Felix Yen	1.20	Nora Luna Righter	0.36
Eric Johnson	4.92	Michael Ginat	2.32	Adrian Rios	1.12	Mike Sutton	0.32
Bob Steen	4.88	Peter Kalba	2.16	Marcia Karen	1.08		

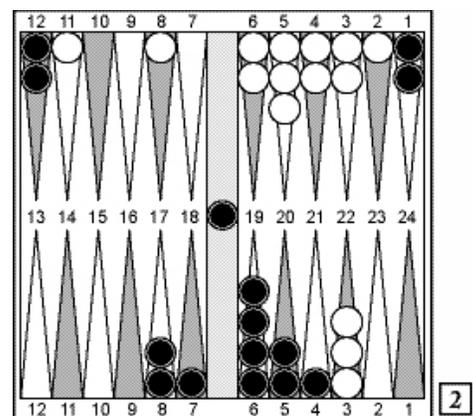
BOB ZAVORAL had an incredible May scoring every week for an impressive total of 5.36 points. Dave Rockwell (3.84) and Herb Roman (2.96) finished second and third respectively.

your move

PROBLEM #319

to be analyzed by Neil Kazaross

7 point match. Black leads White 5 to 2.
BLACK TO PLAY 2-1.



DEAR MISS LONELYBLOTS



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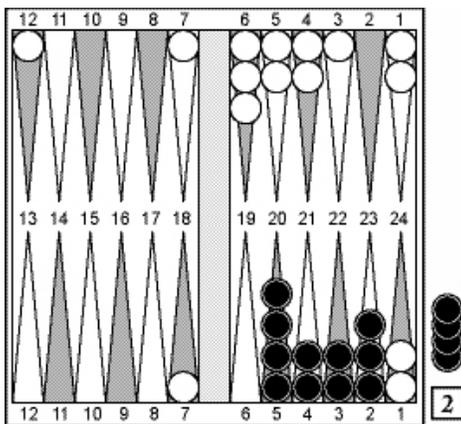
A POKER PLAYER LOOKS AT BG

Dear Miss Lonelyblots: Following three years of playing serious tournament poker, I am just discovering the intrigue of backgammon. Although the ability to bluff is greatly diminished because the game is on the table, it is still possible to gain an advantage by doubling your opponent early when you can read that he is likely to drop. The “all in” concept still exists, too. At certain scores, like when my opponent leads me 3-1 to 5 and doubles, I can fold or go “all in” by taking and immediately reshipping for the match.

And my biggest poker dislike, having to fold so many hands and sit around as a spectator, is not part of backgammon. Whether I’m winning or losing, I’m in the action until the game is over.

But I still have a lot to learn and last night in the finals of an online tournament, proved it to myself by butchering the following contact bearoff:

9 point match. Black leads White, 6 to 4. **BLACK TO PLAY 1-1.**



Should I play the smooth 5/3(2) exposing myself to a double shot if I next roll 5-4 or 6-4; or is it better to clear the 5-point with 5/4(4) and risk leaving a single shot if I next cast 3-2, 3-4, 3-5, and 3-6?

I ended up playing 5/3(2) going for “smoothness.” Naturally I next rolled 5-4. White was able to pick up both checkers and close me out. I never scored another point losing the match 9-6. If I had made the more ugly stacking play, my 5-4 would have played safely. Additionally, even if I had rolled one of the eight blotting numbers, White would have fewer ways to hit.

And even when she did hit and close out one checker, I would still have five pieces borne off with a decent chance to quickly enter and win the race. I won’t make this mistake again!

I’m great at analyzing poker hands, Miss Lonelyblots. How did I do in my first written backgammon analysis? —Poker Star

DEAR STAR: You did very well for a beginning analyst—certainly far better than I could do if I tried to write about poker, a game of which I have very little knowledge and even less experience. Yes, the risk of leaving two blots is serious indeed, so much so that it is better to leave eight rolls that force one blot than four rolls that force two.

If immediate danger were your only concern, 5/4(4) would indeed be better than 5/3(2), but piling six men on the 4-point while leaving the 3-point stripped creates prolonged exposure to future blotting on most 3s, a danger that will persist until you clear those six men from your 4-point. Such strippage, on your next-to-highest point, is most harmful indeed. For this reason, your play was better than your analysis.

However, I know enough about poker to appreciate the advantage of position. You are better equipped to make good decisions if you are among the last to act than if you are among the first. Being in the last position able to see the actions of the other players—check or bet, call, fold or raise—lets you gauge how good their hands are and how large the pot will be. The player

who acts first must act half-blindly, seeing his own hand but not the actions of the other players.

I wonder if you were acting half-blindly when you examined only one alternative to the double-blot-risking 5/3(2): namely, clearing your 5-point. You might have examined another alternative: clearing your 4-point, 4/3(2), 5/3. This kills 4s temporarily, and leaves you with spares on all three occupied points. With 4s killed, your only blotting roll next turn is 6-5.

Yes, your opponent is a 3-to-1 favorite to be able to resurrect your 4s by splitting her back men, but to do so she must abandon the ace-anchor that is a thorn in your side, exposing herself to nine point-ing rolls. Even then, the only blotting rolls added by resurrecting your 4s are 6-4, 5-4 and 4-3, and these rolls leave only a single blot. Meanwhile, you’ll have avoided stripping any of your lower points. 4/3(2), 5/3 is clearly better than either of the plays you considered.

Just as you do better at poker when you observe the actions of all the other players, so also you’ll do better at backgammon when you notice all the plays available to you.—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.

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 3]

Carol Joy Cole’s Backgammon Boutique will be there in “full regalia.” —Ed.

NOT A HEINOUS CRIME

Regarding my take of Dana Nazarian’s 4-cube in the Nevada State Masters finals—the “very serious blunder,” as you put it. It’s important to understand that this position is a take at other scores (0-0 to 15 for example). So although I was wrong, it wasn’t exactly a heinous crime or anything.

I am actually not so disappointed that I took that one, but I really wish I hadn’t sent over the early double in the first place. I know better than that.—Ray Fogerlund, Bakersfield, California.

SHORT AND SWEET

Enclosed find my renewal for two years. I always look forward to CHICAGO POINT.—Wolfram Sauer, Austin, Texas. Δ

Backgammon On Board VIII

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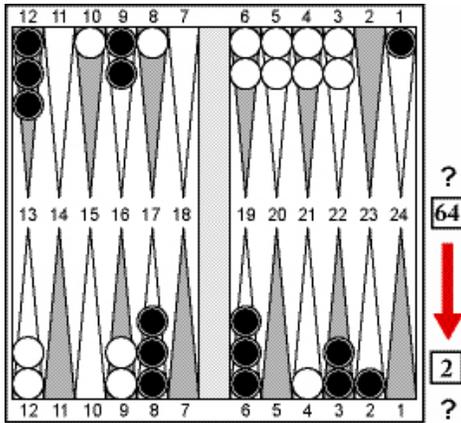
CHICAGO OPEN...

[Continued from page 1]

Taking this double is a monster blunder. A Snowie rollout shows Perry winning nearly 70% of the games including over 33% Gs. Perry's win cut Sam's lead to 7-3.

Perry managed to turn around Sam's early cube in the next game and all of the sudden, it was 7-5. The two games later with the score knotted at 7-all, Perry made a match-jeopardizing error:

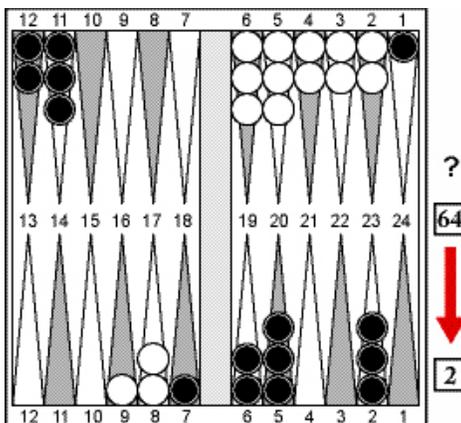
13-pt. match #2. Perry Gartner (Black) and Sam Pottle (White) are tied at 7-all. White on roll. **CUBE ACTION(S)?**



This is a solid double/pass, but Perry took and ended up losing a gammon. Perry comments: "In hindsight, my weak inner board structure diminishes the prospects of winning enough contact variations. Moving the blot on my 2-point back to the 6-point transforms my structure, and now I'm in 'take' territory. When I own my 5-point rather than my 3-point, it's an easy take. A good reference position for me."

Perry marched back the next two games starting with a good aggressive double. Now Sam's lead has shrunk to 11-10, but in this game, he commands a huge advantage:

13-pt. match #2. Sam Pottle (White) leads Perry Gartner (Black) 11-10. White on roll. **SHOULD HE CASH?**



Although Sam could claim a point by doubling, giving him a 12-10 Crawford lead, he rolled on. The game turned Perry's way and suddenly it was 11-all.

The last game quickly became double match-point. Perry rolled it home for the win and the title just before 10:15 P.M. — nearly seven hours after it all started!

Did Sam have any regrets about not cashing the 11-10 position to take a Crawford lead? "No regrets," Sam commented. "The position is clearly too good to double. For a long time in the game, I had positions where most of my wins were gammons and I was confident that I should leave the cube in the middle at the score. Playing on is not without risk, but my game philosophy goes like this: 'Always try to make the best play and never complain about the results.'"

MEMORIAL DAY MASTERS

15 minutes after completing his Championship victory, Perry had to start his Memorial Day Masters semifinals against ABT leader Ken Fischer. Because it was after 10:30 P.M., Perry and Ken agreed to play a shortened 7-point match. Mercifully, Perry's long day ended just after midnight as Ken advanced to the ultimate match.

Ken's opponent in the finals was Yaniv Shimony of Israel, a BackgammonMasters.com staffer. Because of the late hour, both competitors agreed to play a shortened 3-point finals to determine the trophy winner. Finally at around 1:00 A.M., the tournament was over. Yaniv became the first person to win the Memorial Day Masters on the day after Memorial Day!

OTHER EVENTS

Congratulation to Canada's Sal Pittelli who won the Intermediate tournament besting



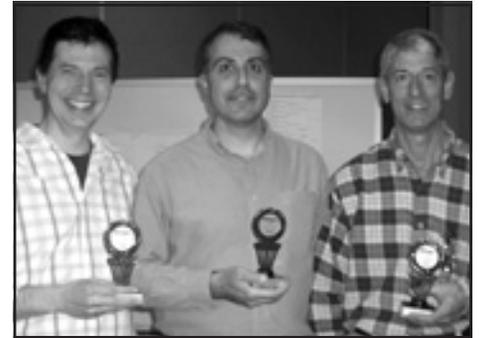
Intermediate champ Sal Pittelli with tournament administrator Joann Feinstein.

Keene Marin (WI) in a hard-fought 11-10 finals. Following his victory, Sal had this to say: "Thanks so much to everyone for a great tourney. I would like to dedicate my first win to a close and dear friend. Get better soon, Adrienne!"

Congrats also to Beginner winner Dean Schneider of Minnesota. Also to Mini-Match victor Phil Simborg (IL). The Doubles champs were Roz Ferris (IL) and Howard Markowitz (NV), and Garry Kallos (Canada) won the Blitz.

US TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

A new innovation at this year's Chicago Open was the US Team Championship.

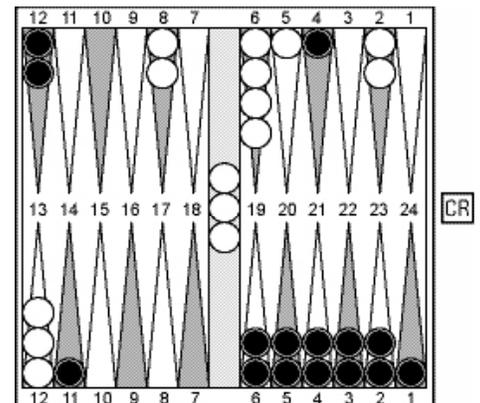


US Team Champs (from left) Ken Fischer, Mark Antranikian, and Harvey Gillis display their trophies.

3-player teams competed against one another in three 7-point singles matches. Best 2-out-of-3 decided the winner. The event started great on Saturday night, but time constraints forced the finals to be shortened to 5-point matches. Ray Fogerlund (CA), Doug Mayfield (CA), and Frank Talbot (MI) faced Harvey Gillis (WA), Ken Fischer (CA), and Mark Antranikian (CA).

The Talbot vs. Antranikian matchup was a real barn-burner with this play possibly deciding the entire tournament:

5-pt. US Team finals. Mark Antranikian (White) leads Frank Talbot (Black) 4-3 Crawford. **BLACK TO PLAY 5-3.**



Frank played 13/5, maintaining his 5-prime. How could he possibly lose from here?

The important point is that winning a gammon at this score wins the match. The play that wins both the most games and gammons is 13/10, 6/1! Incredibly, Mark turned this game around, winning the match, and rallying his team to victory. Δ



The Anti-Joker Quiz Results!



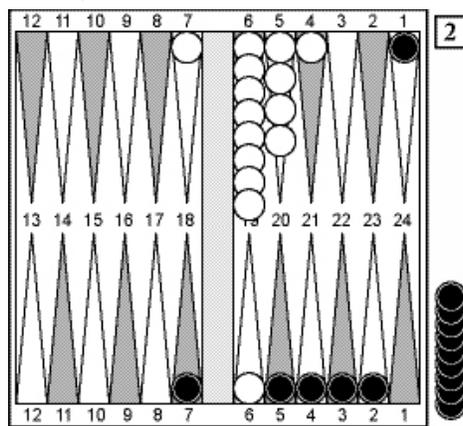
Last month's contest asked you to create a backgammon position, and then give Black an absolutely sick roll that completely turns the game around. CHICAGO POINT received entries from across the globe but the best two came from Ray Kershaw (London, England) and Pierre Zakia (Pau, France).

ABT directors Joe Miller, Randy Armstrong, Elayne Feinstein, Steve Hast, Howard Markowitz, Patrick Gibson, Clyde Jones, Carol Joy Cole, and Gregg Cattanaach participated and a solid majority chose Pierre Zakia's jaw-dropping position as the winner. So Pierre wins the \$50

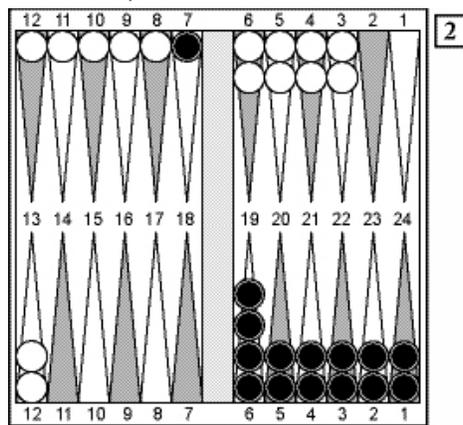
However if you judge the contest by mathematics alone, Ray's submission would win hands down. Prior to rolling, Black is a 92.1% favorite winning tons of gammons. After tossing 6-6, Black falls to a 13.3% underdog and must drop White's recube. Pierre's position only swings from being a 67.5% favorite to becoming a 23% underdog. Although not as visually shocking, we are designating Ray as the "technical" winner and he will also receive \$50.

If you were wondering about the answers to last month's quiz, they are (1) 5-1 (2) 6-2 (3) 6-5 (4) 5-5.

Pierre Zakia's visually horrifying Anti-Joker position. **BLACK ROLLS 6-6!!**



Ray Kershaw's technically devastating Anti-Joker position. **BLACK ROLLS 6-6!!**



ROBERTA SHIFRIN: 1932-2006

Roberta "Bobbie" Shifrin, longtime Chicago area backgammon player has died. She passed away in Las Vegas on 19 May following a heart attack. She was 74.

Bobbie was a true "action junkie" who loved backgammon, and gambling in general. She racked up over 283 Chicagoland BG points (enough to presently rank her 11th all-time) playing at eight different clubs between 1976 and 1997 before moving to Las Vegas. Bobbie last played at the Chicago Bar Point Club in May 2000.

Roberta Shifrin was cremated in Las Vegas. Her remains were laid to rest at Memorial Park in Skokie, Illinois on 25 May. Backgammon was beautifully interwoven into the Rabbi's eulogy.



She is survived by her brother Barry, three children (Linda, Susan, and Paul), and 5 grandchildren. Δ

Bobbie winning the "Lady Luck" tournament at the MBC in 1992.

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BEWARE OF BIG MONEY ONLINE BACKGAMMON

Online backgammon play is booming. Since the advent of FIBS (First Internet Backgammon Server) created in 1992 by Andreas Schneider, the number of players competing online has skyrocketed. Today, there are hundreds of play sites to choose from, both free and commercial. [For an extensive listing, visit chicagopoint.com/links, then select "Online Play Sites."]

As with any game that involves winning money, there are those who will use every trick in the book to gain an advantage. Some sharks play under multiple nicknames to mask their identity and skill level. Others team up to share an opponent database that divides the competition into two categories: "Do Not Play" (too strong) and "Fish" (easy money).

But crafty players exist in every form of gambling and there is nothing illegal about what they do. The problem arises when cheating is introduced into the mix. The easiest way to cheat online is with backgammon analysis software such as Snowie™, JellyFish™, or Gnu.

Backgammon sites are aware of this problem but say little or nothing about it. One website, backgammonbestplayers.com, does mention it in the "Etiquette" section:

"When you are playing online backgammon, you should give the game your full attention and not expect your opponent to hang around while you . . . look up best responses in backgammon software programs such as Jellyfish or Snowie. Most players would consider using outside software cheating. If they wanted to play against the software, they wouldn't be playing against you."

Most players? We believe that *all* players would consider the use of analysis software to be cheating. These programs play as well or better than the giants of backgammon. They have a huge advantage over the average Championship level player, and with the proper technique, it is next to impossible to prove that they are being used.

At the rec.games.backgammon newsgroup, Hank Youngerman (aka "redtop") has been accused of using JellyFish to fleece his online opponents out of thousands of dollars over the past few years. CHICAGO POINT is in no position to judge Mr. Youngerman's guilt or innocence; however, we understand the other players' concerns.

If online money play is risky, online tournament play is even more fraught with danger. At least with online money play, you get to pick your opponent. In tournaments, you must face whoever you are paired against.

That brings us to the upcoming "Backgammon Million"—a combined online/live backgammon event that claims to have a sponsor who is guaranteeing one million dollars in total prize money including a \$500,000 first prize. The event is tentatively set to roll off at the Atlantis Hotel in the Bahamas 21–25 January. The organizers are shooting for 128 players, 64 who are willing to pony up approximately \$14,000 in entry fees and expenses, and the other 64 who will qualify through online satellite tournaments for as little as \$10.

"In the critical final online (tournament) rounds, we don't just think that you'll face cheaters, we almost know that you will face them."

If you enter at the \$10 level, we're guessing that you'll need 11 wins in a row to qualify. Your first few matches may very well be fair; but be forewarned that the closer you get to winning a qualifier, the greater your chances of being paired against a cheater. The cheat might just invite over a consortium of backers to offer play suggestions; or maybe he'll go for all the money and use Snowie to analyze the tough moves. Really big money is involved. In the critical final online rounds, we don't just *think* that you'll face cheaters, we almost *know* that you will face them.

Does this mean that online backgammon has no future? Not at all. You can play for small stakes with people you know and trust and everything should be fine. You can also enter "sit-and-go" tournaments with smaller entry fees and you're likely to get a very fair shake.

But beware of high stakes online money play against unknown opponents or online backgammon tournaments with huge cash payouts. The money you save may be your own. Δ

How Cheaters Use Snowie To Gain An Online Advantage

Because some servers claim that they can detect when Snowie is running simultaneously on computers playing at their site, the cheat uses two computers. A fast computer for Snowie is preferred, but not necessary.

Prior to beginning his online match, the cheat start up his "Snowie" computer positioning it right next to his "tournament" computer and follows these seven simple steps:

1. Bring up the "New Match" screen with Control-M
2. Enter the appropriate match length
3. Click on "Advanced settings"
4. For "Player nature," select "Human vs. human"
5. For "Dice generator," select "Random"
6. Click "OK"
7. The "First roll settings" screen appears

The cheat is now prepared for his online match. Following the opening roll, he completes the "First roll settings" screen on his Snowie computer, clicks "OK," then clicks on the dice corresponding to the actual roll.

The cheat continues to "record" the game on Snowie while playing his match—an easy task requiring minimal practice. When faced with a challenging move or doubling decision that requires analysis, he does the following on his Snowie computer:

1. Duplicate the position with Control-D (this will bring up a new screen)
2. If it is a doubling problem, click on the number "3" at the top of the screen
3. If it is a checker play problem, first click on the dice roll, then click on the number "3" at the top of the screen
4. The move choices will appear
5. Close the duplicate play window with Control-W (do not save changes)
6. The game screen will appear waiting for a move to be entered
7. Enter Snowie's move on both computers

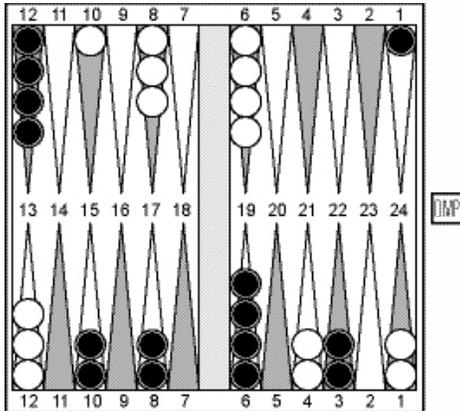
In order to hide his use of Snowie, the cheat often picks the second or even third best move if the plays are relatively close (within 0.020). He also likes to make errors by giving slightly early doubles because of the possibility that his opponent might drop.

Other ways cheaters mask Snowie use is to purposely not double for a couple of moves in near-claim positions. Or with an overwhelming match lead, they occasionally blunder without endangering the outcome. What the cheat will never do is make any *significant* errors in critical situations. His actions are both smart and careful. Δ

PROBLEM #318 ANALYZED

by Kit Woolsey

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



White was already on the verge of a decent back game before Black rolled 6-6. Now White's timing is very good. Black is ahead over 60 pips in the race. A 1-4 back game isn't the best of back games, but White is perfectly glad to have it, particularly at double match point where gammons don't matter. What should Black be doing about this? Making the bar point with two of the 6s is obvious, but the other two 6s aren't so clear.

Black's game plan is to build as solid a wall as he can in front of White's back checkers, in the hope that White has an accident and rolls a big double. Black definitely wants to make his 5-point as quickly as possible. He can afford to slot it pretty freely, since White has no board; and if White hits she loses one of her anchors for the back game as well as her timing. Black needs builders to slot and make that 5-point. The 2-point is nothing by comparison. Black can go after that later at his leisure. Right now, the 5-point is the big thing. So 13/7(2), 8/2(2) is the wrong idea. That takes builders away from the 5-point and releases one of Black's key blocking points. Making the 2-point has the advantage of a better bearing-in structure later as well as preventing White from shifting to a better back game including the 2-point if White gets another checker back. But this can all wait until later. Black needs his 5-point first.

Let's walk over to the other side of the board and see what White's game plan is. Obviously she is trying to time a back game. She already has pretty good timing, but one large doublet at the wrong time could wreck that. White wouldn't at all mind having another checker sent back. That would both

improve her timing and give her some flexibility in Black's inner board.

If White gets two checkers sent back, she might even be able to make a third point in Black's board. White doesn't have to worry about being primed since she owns Black's 4-point. If White gets a checker hit, that checker will be able to get up to the defensive 4-point and out almost certainly, and White's timing will have improved. Meanwhile, White will be trying to build a blockade with the 11 checkers she has to work with. If Black doesn't hit, White will build points and hopefully prime Black's back checker. If this works and Black's board is forced to crunch, White can win the priming battle and win frontwards. The timing for this is all in White's favor.

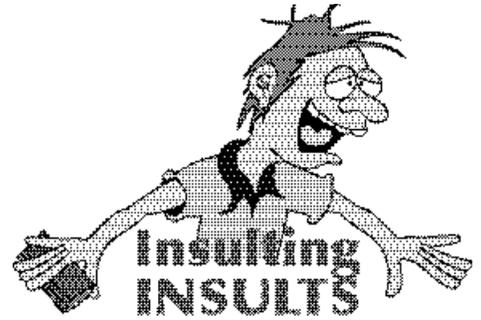
As we have seen, White will play very pure and loose. For example suppose Black plays 13/7(4) and White rolls 3-2. Her correct play is 8/5, 6/4! She doesn't care if Black hits or not. If Black hits, that helps White's timing. If Black doesn't hit, White can make her 5- and 4-points, and later her bar point (which she will slot without hesitation, of course) and perhaps win frontwards by priming Black's back checker. It is a win-win situation for White playing this way.

Now that we see what White is trying to do, it becomes clear what Black should do to counter this. He does not want to be stuck back on White's ace point. He wants to get out to White's bar point before she has a chance to slot it. Black's correct play is 24/18, 13/7(3). Suddenly White's game plan isn't so easy. What does she do? If she hits Black's lead checker, that costs her 12 pips of timing. If she hits Black's back checker, that costs 7 pips. If she hits them both, that costs 19 pips plus another 6 pips if Black rolls a 6 from the bar. If she doesn't hit, Black gets away and White can no longer shove blots in Black's face for the timing adjustment—White will have to live with the timing she has.

White might be able to hit and contain one or both of Black's back men, but this is a risky approach since it will endanger White's timing. I think that White should still be trying the prime of blots approach, aiming for a prime of points if Black doesn't hit. For example, if Black plays 24/18, 13/7(3) and White rolls 6-1, I believe her best play isn't to hit both checkers or to make the bar point—I believe she should play 13/7*, 6/5, unstacking and making it difficult for Black to get away without hitting something. At any rate, White's position will be much more difficult to handle if Black plays 24/18, 13/7(3)

than if he plays 13/7(4).

Backgammon is a war. In order to win that war, you must do more than look at your own forces. You must put yourself in your opponent's shoes, see what he is trying to accomplish, and choose the move which makes it most difficult for him to achieve his objective. This problem is an excellent illustration of this point.—Kit Woolsey Δ



by Ray Kershaw

Can readers add to this list of common ways to tell your opponent that he or she is a lucky idiot?—Ray Kershaw

"I pass—but thanks for the free roll."

"Shake your dice."

"It was never a take." (Said when dropping the opponent's redouble.)

"I'd like to mix the dice."

"Good roll." (Said when your opponent rolls his *only number*. I usually reply "Yes, but I played it well," adding to the annoyance.)

"Wrong play, but it worked."

"Thanks for the lesson."



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BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL BG CLUB: Tournaments Tuesday, 6:00 P.M. at Ned Kelly's Steak House, 1603-A Morrissy 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).

WINNETKA BG 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).

WINNER'S CIRCLE



APR.-JUN. 2006

•**New England Club Monthly** (Somerville, MA; 26 Apr.)... EXPERT: 1-Roger Rondeau, 2-Tom Meyer (IL); 1C-Dagfinn Snarheim. A/B: 1-Jim Gebhart, 2-Mark Kuchinsky.

•**Gammonitis John Leavey Trophy** (Oxford, England; 29 Apr-1 May)... MAIN (32): 1-Julian Fetterlein, 2-Barry McAdam, 3/4-Tim Line / Chris Ternel; 1C-Ray Tannen, 2C-Peter Bennet; 1LC-Simonetta Herrera. FRIDAY WARM-UP (13): 1/2-Ray Tannen / Andrew Sarjeant. TEXAS HOLDEM WINNERS: John Leavey, John Hurst, Andrew Sarjeant. £50 JACKPOT WINNERS: Roland Herrera, David Markwick, Mike Heard. £100 JACKPOT WINNER: Andy Bell. SPORTINGBET WORLD CHAMP AMBASSADOR PACKAGE: 1-Barry McAdam, 2-George Sulimirski.

•**Arizona Club Monthly** (Phoenix, AZ; 2 May)... OPEN: 1-Adrian Rios (IL), 2-Dave Perkins, 3-Michael Ramsey.

•**South Australia Monthly KOs** (Adelaide, South Australia; 2 May)... OPEN #1 (8): 1-Don Schulz, 2-Alex Athans. OPEN #2 (8): 1-Nick Papadopoulos, 2-John McLean.

•**Kansas City Club Monthly** (Kansas City, MO; 3 May)... OPEN (5): 1-James Worley, 2/3-Brad Silver / Bill Yancey.

•**County Cups Trophy** (Coventry, England; 6-7 May)... FRIDAY WARM-UP: 1/2-Paul Gilbertson / Nigel Merrigan. OPEN: 1-Paul Gilbertson, 2-Nigel Merrigan; 1C-Dave Motley. POKER: 1-Paul Gilbertson, 2-John Slattery, 3-Nigel Merrigan.

•**Ohio State Club Monthly** (Copley, OH; 7 May)... OPEN: 1-Bob Green, 2-Paul Berg (MI).

•**Mother's Day Open** (Houston, TX; 13 May)... OPEN (16): 1-Scott Ward, 2-Randy Vacek; 1C-Al Johnson, 2C-Dan Morse.

•**Northwest Indiana Club Monthly** (Porter, IN; 13 May)... OPEN: 1-Peter Kalba, 2-Sal Lovinello.

•**South Florida Monthly** (Ft. Lauderdale, FL; 14 May)... OPEN (9): 1-Neil Rosensweig, 2-Danielle Bastarache.

•**Louisville Club Tournament** (Louisville, KY; 16 May)... OPEN (8): 1-Rick Bieniak, 2-Rob Adams.

•**18th European Championship & 5th Velden Open** (Velden, Austria; 18-21 May)... MASTER (34): 1-Michel Serrero (FRA), 2-Eric Guedj (FRA), 3/4-John Slattery (SCO) / Rainer Witt (GER); 1C-Alain Babillon (FRA), 2C-John Broomfield (GBR); 1LC-Hans Uli Koch (GER), 2LC-

Nodar Gagau (GEO/RUS). CHAMPION (38): 1-Martin de Bruin (USA/SPA), 2-Jeanne Nanga (CAM/AUT), 3/4-Zoran Maric (BOS/FRA) / Florin Popa (ITA); 1C-Ralf Puchas (GER), 2C-Thomas Löw (GER); 1LC-Andrea Riebler (AUT), 2LC-Peter Winkler (AUT). Ladies Prize: Jeanne Nanga (CAM/AUT). INTERMEDIATE (39): 1-Filippo Gottardis (ITA), 2-Hans-Werner Ketteler (GER), 3/4-Fabio Cappelletti (ITA) / Ingeborg Haussleiter (GER); 1C-Inge Pfettrisch (GER), 2C-Angelo Colonetti (ITA); 1LC-Alberto da Pra (ITA), 2LC-Remus-Andrei Veres (ROM). Ladies Prize: Ingeborg Haussleiter (GER). SUPER JACKPOT (8): 1-Piergiorgio D'Ancona (ITA), 2-Heimo Krainer (AUT). LADIES TOURNAMENT (17): 1-Rosey Bensley (GBR), 2-Maria Grigis (ITA), 3/4-Inge Pfettrisch (GER) / Andrea Riebler (AUT). WARM-UP (53): 1-Zbigniew Szczerek (POL), 2-Olivier Lafon (FRA). SPERTI TROPHY (53): 1-Domenico Torrielli (ITA), 2-Hamza Nar (TUR). 1-PT. PRES. TOURNEY #1: 1-Alain Babillon (FRA). #2: 1-Alexander Iliopol (GER/RUS). #3: 1-Nedim Yardimci (TUR).

•**Bar Point Sunday** (Lincolnwood, IL; 4 Jun.)... OPEN (18): 1-Michael Ginat, 2-David Rockwell, 3/4-Linda Rockwell / Gary Kay; 1C-Phil Simborg, 2C-Mike Wolock. INTERMEDIATE (4): 1-Willis Elias, 2-Michael Peters. Δ

AMALGAMATION

Visiting the Bar Point Club in May: **Carol Joy Cole** (MI), **Steve Mellen** (NY), **Paul & Mary Franks** (NV), and **Nora Luna Righter** (MA)... Congrats to **Jerry & Carole Brooks** who were married in Chicagoland 29 May... Beginning 7 June, go to chicagopoint.com and you'll be able to read all of master boardmaker **Tak Morioka's** psychological "Takgammon" columns (1987-1991). New ones will be posted every Wednesday... Did you know that in 1983 Bar Point Club player **Mark Murray** (IL) tended bar at former world backgammon champion **Baron Vernon Ball's** "1829 Hotel" in St. Thomas?... Good luck to **Maia Kahn Bergstrom** with her Boulder County Backgammon Club. They will play 1st and 3rd Thursday monthly at Z Pizzeria in Lafayette, Colorado. For more info, go to: <http://backgammon.meetup.com/179/>... In the late 1970s, the action bar to play backgammon near Chicago's Rush Street was **Butch McGuire's**. **Butch McGuire** died last month in Minnesota... PartyPoker.com is

expanding into backgammon. Watch for PartyGammon.com to host online BG play in the very near future... **Gregg Cattana-** **ach** (GA) officially announces a brand new ABT event for 2007: The Southeast Championships will be held at the Holiday Inn Dunwoody in Atlanta 4-6 May. **Steve Kovach** (GA) and **Jeb Horton** (NC) will assist... Congratulations to **Dru Heggen's** (IL) son **Mark** on his successful completion of the US Marine's "Crucible" at the Camp Pendleton, California boot camp. Mark graduates this month... Our prayers go out to **J.A. Miller** (IL) who continues to have heart problems. He is currently recuperating with family in Alabama... 1980s player **Peter Wagner** surfaced to play doubles with **Hugh Sconyers** (TX) at the recent Nevada State Championships. We remember in 1988 when he legally changed his name to "**Beef Jerky**"... **Frank Frigo** (KY) and **Chuck Bower's** (IN) NFL football analysis tool Zeus™ continues to garner positive reviews from (among others) Fox Sports Net. Read about it at pigskinrevolution.com... Chicagoans on TV: **David Wells** (IL) took a bad beat recently to **Mike "The Mouth"**

Matusow at the "Monte Carlo Millions" poker tournament televised on the Fox Sports Net. **Fred Chamanara** (IL) returns with another \$100,000 to play "High Stakes Poker" on the Game Show Network... We notice that Madison director **Tom Machaj** (WI) is on **Butch & Mary Ann Meese's** Indiana Open "swan song" tournament staff. Does that mean the Madison Backgammon Club will host the Labor Day tourney beginning in 2007?... Speaking of Madison, the Wisconsin State Championships (28-30 July) will take the sponsorship money they are receiving from Backgammon Masters and return 100% prize money in the main events and the Badger Masters Classic. Call Tom at 608/516-9109 for an invitation... Add Berks County Backgammon Club (PA) and the Arizona Backgammon Club to a growing list of *free entry* backgammon clubs that make up the United States Backgammon League. For details, go to www.usbackgammon.org... And finally, this closing quote from British Poet **Thomas Gray** (posted on the Northwest Indiana Club website: "Alas! Regardless of their doom, the little victims play." Δ



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