

How Little We Know About Doubling



By Chris Bray

‘Good checker play will never compensate for serious errors of judgement in doubling.’

Thus wrote Paul Magriel in 1976. Despite the advent of JellyFish, Snowie, gnubg and now eXtreme Gammon, that statement remains as true today as it was 35 years ago. A school report on the backgammon community’s understanding and use of the doubling cube would read, “Must do better”!

We have certainly come some distance since Georges Mabardi wrote in 1930, “If two absolutely perfect players engaged in a match, there would never be an accepted double.” But we still have a very long way to go. It took over 40 years after the invention of doubling for anyone to even document the concept of the basic 25% take point.

Historically, most books on backgammon pay scant attention to doubling, perhaps just because it is so difficult. Honourable exceptions go to the pioneering works of Danny Kleinman and Jeff Ward and more recently, Kit Woolsey and the late Walter Trice. The definitive book on doubling has yet to be written.

The PRaT (Position, Race, Threat) technique, first documented by Paul Lamford, has grown in popularity in the last few years and has given players at least the start of a framework to use when evaluating doubling decisions. The question now is how do we refine that technique?

Sadly there is no easy answer, and actually you wouldn’t want there to be or we might “solve” the game of backgammon. What we need to do is get a better understanding of key positional elements, see how they influence our decision making, and perhaps determine if we can quantify any rules to assist us.

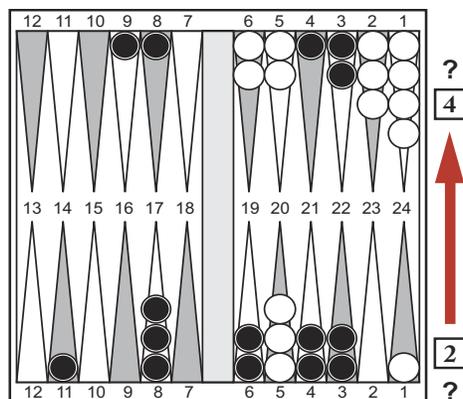
Here are some observations on positional elements:

- Anchors are undervalued when considering a take; conversely lack of an anchor is sometimes ignored with disastrous consequences

- An irreparably damaged home board often leads to a double being dropped
- Dead checkers are ruinous
- Long-term assets (e.g. primes) can be very powerful
- A broken prime is still very strong
- A well-timed back game can be lethal
- Command of space is more important than you think

It would be nice if these elements were mutually exclusive but they aren’t. Let’s look at a practical example by studying three positions from the same game:

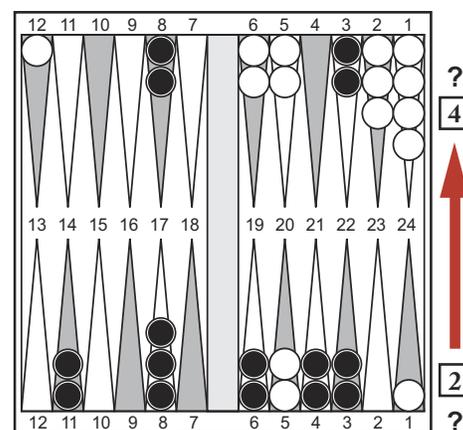
Pos. 1. Money game. Black on roll. CUBE ACTION(S)?



In this first position Black trails in the race by 43 pips but has tremendous command of space. White has three dead checkers and therefore a compromised home board. Despite holding Black’s 5-point, if White is redoubled, she has only a borderline take.

A few rolls later we reach:

Pos. 2. Money game. Black on roll. CUBE ACTION(S)?



Black’s slightly improved structure and the loose White blot on her midpoint now turn this into a small pass.

[Continued on page 6]

CLARIFYING OUR STAND ON THE VIDEO RECORDING OF MATCHES

We want to clarify our stand regarding last month’s editorial “Video Recording of Matches: a Privilege, not a Right.” The purpose of the article was to question the legitimacy of allowing a player to video a match against his opponent’s wishes. This was the policy at director Linda Rockwell’s recent Illinois State Championships.

Jena Jennings wrote a letter to the editor regarding her negative video experience at the Illinois tournament. The purpose of last month’s article was *not* to investigate whether Jena Jennings was telling the complete truth. Our desire was to give her a forum to air grievances *from her perspective* on a controversial subject.

Nor was the article’s purpose to cast aspersions on Linda Rockwell’s directing skills. Linda Rockwell is one of the very best backgammon directors in the United States. Of all the ABT events we attended in 2011, the Illinois State Championships was our favorite for many reasons. Linda’s Halloween-themed tourney had a congenial and attentive staff. There were friendly players, fun costuming, great room decorations, “spooky” handouts, and lots of candy treats, all of which made us feel like a kid again. And the actual tournament was very well run. we thoroughly enjoyed ourself in spite of losing two big money round matches!

Based on what was written in the brochure, “Video taping is welcome,” Linda was correct in ruling against Jena’s request to stop her opponent from recording their match. Since

[Continued on page 4]

CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

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LETTERS

c/o CHICAGO POINT

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TRAVELING TO CHINA

My wife and I are going to Beijing next month, and I'm trying to find a bg club in the city. Do you know of any? I figured if anyone knew, it would be you guys.—
Brian Donahue, via Internet

WHERE DO YOU BUY A BACKGAMMON BOARD IN CHICAGO?

I was hoping you could suggest a store in Chicago which sells decent backgammon boards. I'd like to get one for my girlfriend on her upcoming birthday so that we could play together. Any advice would be greatly appreciated.—*James Hendele, via Internet*

Sorry, James, but unless you want to get a luxury Taki-Board or Zavoral Board, you are out of luck. The boards that Chicagoland stores sell are all over-priced. We suggest you contact Carol Joy Cole (cjc@flintbg.com) who sells a diverse collection of

[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@flintbg.com

*Denotes new or revised listing

NATIONAL

American Backgammon Tour events underlined.

Dec 10	New England Monthly, Docksider Restaurant, Malden, Massachusetts	781/324-0892
Dec 10	Northwest Indiana Club Monthly, VFW Hall, Porter, Indiana	219/785-2082
Dec 10*	Backgammon By the Bay Monthly, Peking Express, Berkeley, California	831/261-4583
Dec 11	Cincinnati Club Monthly, Max & Erma's, Sharonville, Ohio	513/807-6926
Dec 11	Miami Valley Club Monthly, Panera Bread, Dayton, Ohio	937/864-1748
Dec 11*	Pair-O-Dice Monthly Tournament, Lincoln Center Atrium, New York, New York	212/222-7177
Dec 11	Portland Monthly, Spring Creek Coffee House, Milwaukie, Oregon	503/805-1218
Dec 13	Arizona Club Monthly, Teakwoods Tavern & Grill, Phoenix, Arizona	602/762-2288
Dec 15*	Flint Third Thursday Bonus (New York), Sharky's Sports Bar, Burton, Michigan	810/232-9731
Dec 16-18	<u>Sunshine State Classic, Hampton Inn & Suites, Tarpon Springs, Florida</u>	<u>727/743-0500</u>
Dec 17*	Backgammon By the Bay Monthly, Britannia Arms, Cupertino, California	831/261-4583
Dec 18*	Atlanta Northside Club Monthly, Il Forno NY Pizza, Atlanta, Georgia	770/612-0818
Dec 18	Cincinnati Tournament of Champions, Max & Erma's, Sharonville, Ohio	513/807-6926
Dec 21	5th Annual Maxakuli Cup, Jackson's Bar, Las Vegas, Nevada	702/458-0926
Dec 29*	Flint Club Holiday Tournament Party, Sharky's Bar, Burton, Michigan	810/232-9731
Jan 4*	Charlotte Club Monthly, Dilworth Grille, Charlotte, North Carolina	704/965-3573
Jan 5-8	<u>5th New York Metropolitan Open, Hyatt Hotel, Jersey City, New Jersey</u>	<u>408/529-6769</u>
Jan 7*	Backgammon By the Bay Monthly, Peking Express, Berkeley, California	831/261-4583
Jan 7*	Springfield Series #4, T.G.I. Friday's, Bloomington, Illinois	217/622-9447
Jan 8*	Ohio State Club Monthly, Brubaker's Pub, Akron, Ohio	330/268-4610
Jan 8*	Portland Monthly, Spring Creek Coffee House, Milwaukie, Oregon	503/805-1218
Jan 10*	Arizona Club Monthly, Teakwoods Tavern & Grill, Phoenix, Arizona	602/762-2288
Jan 10*	Chicago Bar Point Club Awards Night, Ruby Tuesday, Skokie, Illinois	773/583-6464
Jan 13-16	<u>US Open, Embassy Suites Hotel, South San Francisco, California</u>	<u>304/685-3214</u>
Jan 14*	New England Monthly, Docksider Restaurant, Malden, Massachusetts	781/324-0892
Jan 14*	Northwest Indiana Club Monthly, VFW Hall, Porter, Indiana	219/785-2082
Jan 14*	Tampa Bay Club Monthly, Hampton Inn, Tarpon Springs, Florida	727/786-9133
Jan 15*	Cincinnati Club Monthly, Max & Erma's, Sharonville, Ohio	513/807-6926
Jan 15*	Miami Valley Club Monthly, Panera Bread, Dayton, Ohio	937/864-1748
Jan 26-29	<u>New Mexico State Championship, La Posada, Santa Fe, New Mexico</u>	<u>303/519-5711</u>
Jan 28*	Backgammon By the Bay Monthly, Britannia Arms, Cupertino, California	831/261-4583
Feb 1*	Charlotte Club Monthly, Dilworth Grille, Charlotte, North Carolina	704/965-3573
Feb 4	Bar Point Doubles Club Championship, Ruby Tuesday, Skokie, Illinois	773/583-6464
Feb 4*	Springfield Series #5, Rusty's Clubhouse & Grill, Lincoln, Illinois	217/622-9447
Feb 5*	Ohio State Club Monthly, Brubaker's Pub, Akron, Ohio	330/268-4610
Feb 12*	32nd Illinois State Challenge Cup, Location TBD, Chicagoland, Illinois	773/583-6464
Feb 16-19	<u>Pittsburgh Championships/ABT Awards, Four Points Hotel, Pittsburgh, PA</u>	<u>304/685-3214</u>
Mar 3-4*	4th New Orleans "Sweet 16," Inn on Bourbon Street, New Orleans, Louisiana	504/366-7498
Mar 9-11	<u>3rd Central States Invitational, Sheraton Gateway Suites, Rosemont, Illinois</u>	<u>773/583-6464</u>
Mar 23-25	<u>Ohio Championships, Cleveland Airport Marriott Hotel, Cleveland, Ohio</u>	<u>330/268-4610</u>
Apr 18-22*	<u>Nevada State Tournament, Flamingo Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada</u>	<u>702/218-8238</u>
Apr 26-29	<u>Atlanta Spring Classic, Crowne Plaza Airport, Atlanta, Georgia</u>	<u>770/633-0001</u>
May 11-13	<u>Florida Championship, Marriott North Hotel, Fort Lauderdale, Florida</u>	<u>See Internet</u>
May 24-28	<u>Chicago Open, Holiday Inn O'Hare Hotel, Rosemont, Illinois</u>	<u>617/699-9100</u>
Jun 8-10	<u>Los Angeles Open, Four Points LAX, Los Angeles, California</u>	<u>818/901-0464</u>
Jul 5-8*	<u>Michigan Summer Championships, Sheraton Novi Hotel, Novi, Michigan</u>	<u>810/232-9731</u>

OUTSIDE USA

Dec 10-11	TBT: Istanbul Championship/WBF-TR, Armada Hotel, Istanbul, Turkey	90533-235255
Dec 16-18*	Tirgu Ocna Tournament, Motel Anda, Tirgu Ocna, Romania	40745-895980
Dec 26-27	Christmas Tournament, Somboons, Dong Tarn Beach, Pattaya, Thailand	6681-6649085
Jan 2-3	17th Thailand Open, Somboons, Dong Tarn Beach, Thailand	6681-6649085
Jan 13-15	BBT: Bright 'n' Breezy, Old Ship Hotel, Brighton, England	441522-888676
Jan 13-15*	TBT: 2012 Istanbul Open/WBT-TR, Armada Hotel, Istanbul, Turkey	905322-329228
Jan 14-15	8th Masters Open Café den Bengel, Antwerp, Belgium	31653-276835
Feb 3-5	Jarvis Trophy Tournament-BIBA, Barceló Hotel, Daventry, England	441522-888676
Feb 24-26	EBGT: Istavder 4th Anniversary, Istanbul, Turkey	905337-122151
Mar 2-4	British Doubles-BIBA, Barceló Hotel, Hinckley Island, England	441522-888676
Mar 9-11*	3rd Mokum Open, Café Twee Klaveren, Amsterdam, The Netherlands	31652-663616
Mar 16-18*	BBT: XIII Scottish Open, Barceló Hotel, Edinburgh, Scotland	441522-888676
Mar 17-18*	3rd Sántis-Open, Restaurant Bierhof, St. Gallen, Switzerland	4176-3077525
Mar 24-25*	BFCE UK Open & Clubs Championship, Hilton Hotel, Coventry, England	442476-445467
Mar 28-Apr 1*	EBGT: European Pro Championships & Doubles, Lefkosa, North Cyprus	491715-422222



AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 2011

Top 136 through 4 Dec. 2011 after 19 tournaments
(Coming: Florida. 2012: NY Metro, US Open, New Mexico)



Ray Fogerlund	88.80	Cliff Mayoh	8.92	Karen Davis	5.00	Lyle Rubin	3.24
Harvey Gillis	40.16	Neal Weiner	8.71	Jolie Rubin	4.99	Michihito Kageyama	3.22
Neil Kazaross	37.73	Allen Tish	8.67	David Taniguchi	4.82	Steve Nelson	3.22
Chuck Bower	25.78	Masayuki Mochizuki	8.55	Mark Antranikian	4.77	Gary Fries	3.20
Matt Cohn-Geier	24.63	Art Benjamin	8.46	Carsten Muencheberg	4.74	Mark Gordon	3.20
Alfred Mamlet	24.04	Rachel Rhodes	7.85	Brian Scorben	4.46	Grant Schneider	3.20
Jeff Nitschke	21.20	David Shadi	7.85	Kathleen Davis	4.42	Mario Sequeira	3.20
Ed O'Laughlin	20.55	Norm Wiggins	7.85	Frank DiMaggio	4.33	Jeff Fischer	3.20
Bill Robertie	20.50	Al Hodis	7.85	Tak Morioka	4.33	Faddoul Khoury	3.17
Todd Crosner	19.27	Gerry Tansey	7.40	Rory Pascal	4.23	Dmitriy Obukhov	3.11
Gary Bauer	18.30	Tim Lawless	7.26	Vadim Nuniyants	4.20	Sandra Sha	3.10
Bob Koca	17.39	Jake Burak	7.25	Eden Windish	4.10	David Levy	3.10
Odis Chenault	17.33	Cheryl Andersen	7.20	Daniel Barabas	4.10	Justin Nunez	3.10
Petko Kostadinov	17.19	Kit Woolsey	7.10	Bob Lekse	4.00	Brandon Macklin	3.06
John O'Hagan	16.14	Antoinette Williams	6.80	Greg Cottle	4.00	Alex Gerding	3.06
Herb Gurland	15.70	Peggy Neubig	6.67	Larry Taylor	3.93	Chris Scott	2.90
Joe Sylvester	14.80	Juan Rospigliosi	6.60	Mike Senkiewicz	3.93	Ken Tyszko	2.90
Garry Kallos	14.24	Bill Davis	6.42	Patrick Gibson	3.93	Mark Ferrin	2.90
Greg Merriman	13.72	Bill Calton	6.40	Kent Goulding	3.93	Dorn Bishop	2.81
Carol Joy Cole	13.67	Mike Corbett	6.40	Eduardo Maciel	3.93	Luiz Torres	2.81
Gregg Cattanch	13.56	Lee Genud	6.40	Nan Feiber	3.83	Leslie Lockett	2.73
Bob Glass	12.89	Felix Yen	6.33	Oleg Raygorodsky	3.83	Walt Smith	2.73
Dennis Culpepper	12.80	David Rubin	6.22	Bill Minser	3.80	Ron Bruns	2.71
Mary Hickey	12.80	Homer Hector	6.10	Jesse Eaton	3.80	Lynn Lusk	2.71
Josh Racko	12.78	Vinton Knarr	5.80	Penina Rosenblum	3.75	Bob Goldstein	2.67
Jason Lee	12.67	Falafel Natanzon	5.63	David Rockwell	3.70	Jeremy Moulton	2.60
Ralf Jonas	12.40	Wayne Jeffcoat	5.63	Frank Ley	3.63	Bill Kaludis	2.60
Malcolm Davis	11.56	Charlie Pipkin	5.63	John Calcott	3.63	Stuart Thomson	2.50
Tom Duggan	11.40	John Quinn	5.45	Vicki Ondis	3.63	Vadim Musaelyan	2.50
Jeremy Bagai	11.26	Prince Barlow	5.45	Murray Bryntesen	3.60	Kathy Weiner	2.45
Motonori Kunishima	11.26	Lucas Bauer	5.42	Alex Eshagian	3.60	Andranik Safarian	2.41
Ben Friesen	10.86	Scotty Kelland	5.35	Georgina Flanagan	3.50	Joan Grunwald	2.41
Stewart Pemberton	10.59	Jonathan Leusden	5.33	Robert Sisselman	3.33	Bob Howayeck	2.40
Ramez Abi-Akar	9.42	Gus Contos	5.01	Evan Etter	3.28	Dan Gruby	2.40

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 2]

backgammon sets, all at a very fair price. Additionally, Ms. Cole offers reasonably-priced shipping worldwide.—Ed.

IN DEFENSE OF VIDEOTAPING

I was sad to see some exciting news for fans of backgammon relegated to page 4 in your November issue. The triumphant return to backgammon of champion Joe Sylvester by winning the Illinois State Championships, my husband David achieving the rare feat of placing in three separate events and a 25% increase in tournament attendance (bucking the current downward trend in participation)—these great stories were given short shrift in deference to a disgruntled player's jeremiad about videotaping. I would have appreciated at least a chance to verify the statements attributed to me in your front page editorial, especially considering that you see me nearly every week, supporting your local tournament.

A fortune cookie recently advised me: "There is no glory unless you put yourself on the line." This appropriately sums up my feelings about videotaping (among other things). Those who go through the hassle of toting expensive recording equipment to tournaments deserve credit for their efforts toward self-improvement. My belief is the majority of them have little interest in the playing ability of their opponents—their focus is on learning from their own mistakes.

Having the opportunity to review a tape of one's performance is a great learn-

[Continued on page 6]



CHICAGO BAR POINT CLUB 2011 PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED
THRU 4 DEC.

Rory Pascal	35.24	Bill Keefe	8.12	Kevin Berg	3.08	Steve Blanchard	0.96
Larry Goldstein	29.12	Linda Rockwell	7.96	Mike Valentino	2.76	Hugh Morris	0.72
Herb Roman	27.04	Wayne Wiest	7.68	Dan Weymouth	2.68	Richard Stawowy	0.72
Phil Simborg	24.32	Jerry Brooks	7.36	Roger Hickman	2.24	Kit Woolsey	0.72
David Rockwell	22.16	Oleg Raygorodsky	7.16	Allen Tish	2.16	Mike Peters	0.68
Bill Davis	20.60	Joann Feinstein	7.08	Joe Sylvester	2.04	Guseyn Aliyev	0.68
Carter Mattig	20.60	Dave Settles	6.84	Eric Johnson	2.00	Scott Richardson	0.64
Bob Steen	19.68	Wendy Kaplan	6.80	Kerem Taskin	1.88	Tom Harrison	0.64
Nora Luna Righter	18.56	Amy Trudeau	6.40	Ken Meng	1.64	Georgina Flanagan	0.56
Lucky Nelson	18.24	Russ Lyutik	6.08	Warren Barnes	1.60	Michael Ginat	0.56
Mike Wolock	16.72	Peter Kalba	6.00	Mark Ostrovsky	1.52	Les Moshinsky	0.56
Bill Bartholomay	14.84	Jeff Fischer	5.80	Roz Ferris	1.44	Gary Kay	0.56
Dujuan Meekins	14.40	Tobias Hellwag	5.72	Terry Weiss	1.44	Ben Silk	0.48
Mike Sutton	12.76	David Nosik	5.52	Bob Zavoral	1.36	Beth Whitney	0.48
Alex Owen	12.76	Tim Mabee	5.20	Alice Kay	1.28	Roland Dieter	0.48
Ken Bond	11.84	Russell Head	4.96	Steve Bock	1.20	Kit Cabello	0.40
Steve Klesker	11.28	Howard Markowitz	4.16	Mitch Pomper	1.12	Efim Liberman	0.32
Serge Bondar	11.24	Matt Cohn-Geier	3.92	Mochy Mochizuki	1.08	Roy Cohen	0.32
Christopher Shanava	11.04	David Rubin	3.76	Vladimir Pekler	0.96	Jay Robinson	0.24
Leslie Lockett	10.76	Adrian Rios	3.68	Mark Murray	0.96	Jesse Anderson-Lehman	0.16
Tak Morioka	9.52	Mike Minkovski	3.20				

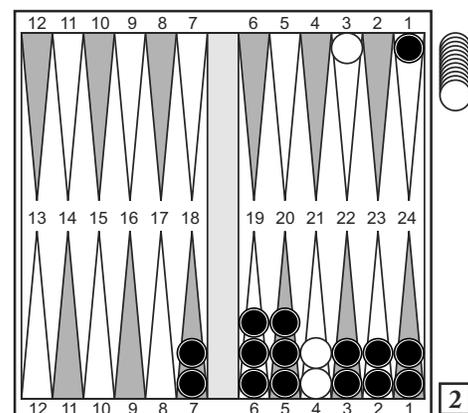
WENDY KAPLAN, on the strength of her Fall Trophy Tourney victory earned (4.48) points—enough to edge Larry Goldstein (4.36) and Bill Davis (4.24) to capture November Player of the Month honors.

your move

PROBLEM #370

to be analyzed by Kit Woolsey

Money game. BLACK TO PLAY 2-1.



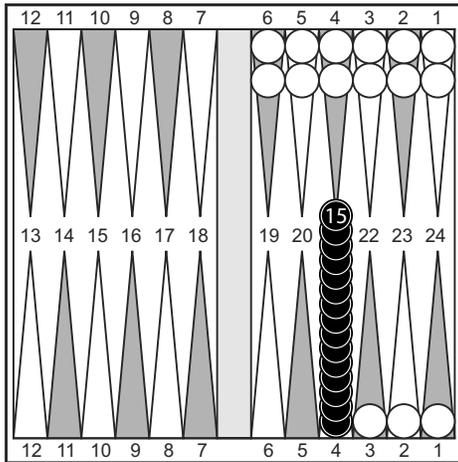
ASK
DANNY

© 2011 by Danny Kleinman

A PUZZLING PROP

I was reading the ABT Facebook page (www.facebook.com/AmericanBackgammonTour) and saw this proposition last month:

Black is on roll. The doubling cube is out of play, but either side can still win a gammon or backgammon. In a prop, which side would you choose to play?



There seems to be quite a difference of opinion as to which side has the edge. I don't know how to analyze it using eXtreme Gammon, so I come to you for an opinion. Can you help clarify? — Very Curious

DEAR CURIOUS: I am Curious Yellow. I know no mathematical analysis that will settle whether Black or White is the favorite. If White had a full prime stretching from her bar-point to her 2-point, I would strongly prefer the White side, but with a closed board, White's chances of closing out two men are significantly diminished and her timing is also poorer. So it looks too close for me to call.

Black has a substantial number of favorable rolls: all six doublets, another six combinations of 6s, 5s and 4s, and 3-1 (which of course he will play 4/1*, 1/off). After any of these 14 rolls, White will almost always have to run one man, thus reducing Black's shot danger. Black's 6-3, 5-3 and 4-3 also play well for him, as the forced 4/off, 4/1* dislodges White's hitter from the acepoint, which substantially reduces White's shot-hitting chances if she doesn't hit immediately. The gammon threat is virtually one way; even after Black's horror shake, 3-2, White must still perform, and most 2s will let her put only one man on the bar.

Counting White's hitting sequences in a 1296-roll cross-section, I get 368 (including a handful of double-hits), but in the other 928 sequences, White still has considerable (albeit significantly diminished) shot equity. Calculating that equity is prohibitively difficult, as the exact number of second-turn hitting sequences varies with the particular first-turn sequences, and the chances of White's winning after hitting vary with the number of men Black has borne off.

eXtreme Gammon doubling rollout results results following a trial of 7200.

Cube	Move	Summary
Winning Chances ND (click for D/T)		
●	45.25%	(G:8.56% B:0.40%)
○	54.75%	(G:1.04% B:0.02%)
Cubeless Equity		
		N: -0.016 D: -0.041
Cubeless Equities:		
♣	No double	-0.012
	Double/Beaver	-0.668 (-0.656)
	Double/Pass	+1.000 (+1.012)

That being said, I've seen eXtreme Gammon's equities derived from rollouts that seem to give a tiny edge to White; but they do not convince me that White is the favorite. If eXtreme Gammon plays as well as it's reputed to play, its equities do not take into account human errors, and in many variations, White will have more difficult checker-play problems than Black. So if I had to bet one way or another (and I'm glad I don't), I would bet on a human Black against a human White.

I suspect that this off-the-cuff analysis may leave you Curious Blue. — Yours, Danny Δ

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

Clarifying our stand . . .

[Continued from page 1]

the statement's purpose was evidently to encourage studious players to bring their camera equipment, it's reasonable to deduce that in the event of a dispute, videotaping would prevail.

We have now contacted the United States Chess Federation, the American Contract Bridge League, and the North American Scrabble Player's Association. All of them said the same thing: if one player wanted to video a tournament match and another objected, the camera would not be allowed.

It's obvious why. A camera can disrupt one's concentration.

How do you feel when a photographer comes over in the middle of a match to take your picture? Some people are uncomfortable; others become self-conscious. Imagine the reaction a player would get at the World Series of Poker if he went to his assigned table with camera and tripod and said, "Do you guys mind if I take movies of your faces during play? I want to use this tournament as a learning experience."

We've seen players bar their loved ones from watching their matches because of concentration issues. No problem. The rules allow it. A camera-shy person who has paid hundreds of dollars in entry fees, hotel room charges, and travel expenses should have the same rights.

If players were allowed to bar their opponent from recording a match, how many would actually do it? We're guessing less than 10%. So what's the problem? Can't BG videographers learn enough by taping 90% of their matches?

Any player who forces a video camera on his opponent knowing that it negatively affects that opponent's concentration has a lot more to learn in life than backgammon. — Bill Davis Δ



ILLINOIS ACTION



Bill Davis
773/583-6464
Peter Kalba
219/671-5268

Tuesday, 6:30 P.M. at Ruby
Tuesday, 5203 Old Orchard
Road, Skokie. 847/967-8292.

Sunday Bimonthly, 12:00 NOON
at Ruby Tuesday, 5203
Old Orchard Road, Skokie.
847/967-8292.

BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL CLUB: Tournaments Monday, 6:00 P.M. at Ride The Nine; 503 N. Prospect, Bloomington. Michael Flohr (309/662-7967).

MIDSTATE BG CLUB: Tourn. Tues., 6:00 P.M. at Ride The Nine; 503 N. Prospect, Bloomington. Ed Bauder (309/830-1632).

SANGAMON VALLEY BACKGAMMON ASSOC.: Tournaments Wednesday, 6:00 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. Thursday, 6:30 P.M. at Peoria Pizza Works, 3921 Prospect, Peoria. Sue Will (309/699-6005).

TAKGAMMON



By Tak Morioka

WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

Realizing your own limitations in backgammon is often perceived as a concession of defeat; however it's much more than that. It can be a golden opportunity to redefine one's skills.

Accepting your inadequacies can be more productive than you realize. By weighing both the negative and positive aspects of your game, a balanced picture will begin to emerge. All the self-promoted rhetoric is put away as expectations begin to meld with reality.

Look at a 70% position and tell me what you see? Can your skill improve the numbers? Even with a pristine effort on your part, that slippery slope of expectation will not change very much.

Other players may think that no such slope exists and that they have often scaled it with their skill alone. They are mistaken if they think they can make that climb to the top. Conquering this mountain is usually boosted by their opponent's inadequacies along with the dice gods.

Players in the habit of leveraging skill will find fundamental problems with maintaining consistency. Given enough time, your opponent is bound to find the right play. Before, there was an advantage to doing nothing. But today, making a practice of attempting to capitalize on unforced errors is just penny wise.—*Tak Morioka* Δ



Fortune Cookie: Backgammon skills are graded on a curve, not from a fixed point.

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 2]

ing opportunity. In my opinion, striving for excellence through careful review and analysis raises the caliber of both the game and the players—at least as much as imposing a dress code on the participants. Should we restrict the right of some players to learn, because the perfectly legal technique they employ makes someone less dedicated feel ill at ease? If I choose to dress like a slob at a tournament, should I have the right to prevent you from dressing up because it makes me feel uncomfortable? Isn't it really all about freedom? Since when is it a "privilege" to document a product of one's own creation, such as a match they've played?

As evidenced by the statement in our brochure and the tables reserved specifically for recording equipment, the policy at my tournament has been, and will continue to be, that we welcome videotaping. That means if I'm forced to make a ruling, I'll rule in accordance with the tournament policy. Asking a director with such a pre-determined policy on this issue to decide a dispute by having the players "roll for it" would be asking her to violate her own integrity. "Rolling for it" is an option that should be considered first, before seeking a director's decision. In the case cited in your editorial, the two players were encouraged

by me to work things out—and they did. The match was *not* recorded. Why this non-event was worthy of front page coverage is beyond me.—*Linda Rockwell, Director, Illinois State Championships*

KUDOS TO ELAYNE

The South Florida backgammon community thanks Elayne Feinstein for being a dedicated tournament director of our weekly and monthly tournaments for the past 10 years. We wish her well on her future endeavors. As a result, a new venue in Hollywood has been organized and our new director is Norlu Hammad. This location is convenient to both Fort Lauderdale and Miami players and we look forward to greeting you when you visit.—*Perry Gartner (President, USBGF), Danielle Bastarache, and Mike Corbett*

BACKGAMMON TREASURE HUNT

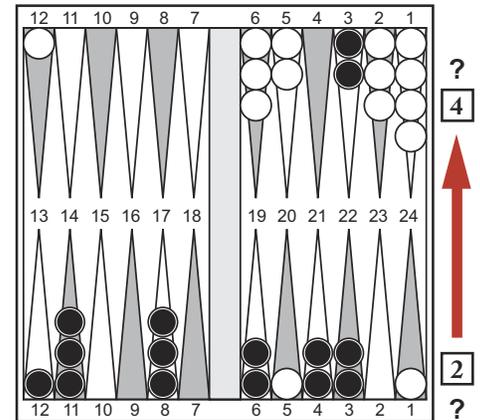
I wrote an article on backgammon that got published. After reading my article, the grandson of Grosvenor Nicholas (author of *Modern Backgammon*) emailed me and said his grandpa left behind many pages of notes, hopefully some pertaining to backgammon. This may shed some light on the doubling cube. I hope to visit him in December to see what he has. This may be a breakthrough on research!—*Maurice Barie, Ferndale, Michigan*

DOUBLING...

[Continued from page 1]

Moving on a couple of rolls, White is squeezed off Black's 5-point and we reach:

Pos. 3. Money game. Black on roll.
CUBE ACTION(S)?



This is now a huge drop.

I trust that most players would get the doubling decisions correct in Position 3, but I am not so sure about Positions 1 and 2. They require an ability to understand the influence of the elements listed above and critically, to see how the game might evolve from Position 1 to reach Position 3. Without that understanding you could end up waiting until Position 3 to redouble and cash two points. The expert redoubles Position 2 and wins eight!

Note that none of this discussion takes account of the relative skills of the two players, their temperaments, or any influence of the match score, all of which add further levels of complexity.

The foregoing discussion simply illustrates that we are only at the start of getting to grips with doubling. I have developed a seminar around some of this thinking and I am working towards developing it into a book, but don't hold your breath—there is a long way to go!

Hopefully a progress report on my work on this topic may appear in the fully on-line version of CHICAGO POINT for which I wish Bill every success.—*Chris Bray* Δ

NEWSLETTER THANKS

Thanks for publishing CHICAGO POINT all of these years. I can't tell you how much we have looked forward to receiving it in the mailbox every month. Your hard work is appreciated. I realize that you will still produce the POINT online in 2012, but it is the end of an era.—*Trudie Chibnik, Director, Winnetka Backgammon Club* Δ



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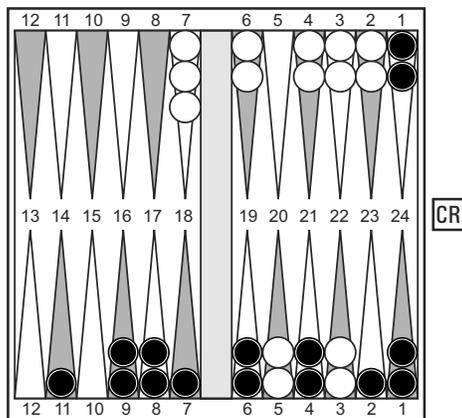
LESLIE WAS INVOLVED IN A 'REALLY BIG SHOW'

Here's Chicago Bar Point Club's Leslie Lockett with Ed Sullivan around 1970. At that time, Leslie was living in New York City and working directly for the Associate Producer on The Ed Sullivan Show. Δ

**PROBLEM #369
ANALYZED**

by Mary Hickey

7-point match. White leads Black 6 to 5, Crawford. **BLACK TO PLAY 4-2.**



It's a privilege to analyze the "Your Move" problem of one of the final issues of CHICAGO POINT. The printed Point has had a wonderful run, observing and reporting on many people, places, and things in the world of the game we all love . . . even if we also hate it at times. Farewell, print CHICAGO POINT, and as the saying goes, thanks for the memories. [Thanks, Mary. Beginning in January, we'll be online at www.chicagopoint.com with articles and problems.—Ed]

The last problem I analyzed in the POINT was at Gammon Save. For this one, the score is the other side of that coin: Gammon Go. Black is behind 5 to 6, Crawford in a race to 7 and will win the match right now if he scores a gammon. Unfortunately, this position looks more gammonish for Black's opponent than it does for him.

We can quickly make this a two-play problem: you either want to get ambitious with 24/20, 11/9, or you want to play safe and hope for better things later with 11/7, 4/2. All other possible plays take greater risks for lesser gains when they work, and so can be quickly discarded.

11/7, 4/2 is the clear winner if you are playing for money. You leave only one blot and the minimum 11 shots, hoping to avoid being hit rather than provoking action before you are ready to get the party started. You avoid the weak and gammonish quality of a game where you have the functional equivalent of a *splot*—a slot and a split at the same time. Sometimes a splot is correct; but when it gives your opponent a double shot at the slotted checker, and you also have the lower quality board, you should think hard before trying it.

At the Gammon Go score, it's harder to choose between these plays. Getting off the ace point is desirable, and so is trying to seize control of the "no man's land" of your opponent's outer board. Trying to achieve these goals with a split risks an immediate attack; but it may not happen, and if it does, it may not succeed. If it does succeed, you may at least end up back in your ace point game. That's an unhappy thought, but not as bad an outcome at this score as it would be for money.

So which play is better at the score? Is the safe play still best, or is it all right to reach for a greater positional gain since the price of an "epic fail" is marked down? It's hard to eyeball something like this over the board, and in this case the bots aren't much help, either. An XG rollout gets a .01 pull favoring the safe play on strong settings. Snowie 4 shows a rising trend favoring the split, ending with a .008 pull for it on 3-ply. Since Snowie 4 can't roll it out at the score, its rollout would be meaningless, making its 3-ply evaluation the best it can do for us.

Plays clearly exist where the bots cannot find a difference. Sometimes, you may as well phone a friend, flip a coin, or just play what feels right to you at the moment. But when the bots can't find a clear answer, that isn't always the end of the story. In most cases, your opponent will be a human being, not a bot. If the trumpet call is uncertain enough that you don't know how to proceed (or even if it is clear but close), sometimes one play will stand out as more likely to draw errors by your human opponent.

Here, White should follow the advice I gave last time for playing at Gammon Save: Use caution but don't be afraid of ghosts. Nevertheless, if the phantoms you see are quite real and material, it may be better to run away from them. Settle for a single-point loss a bit more often rather than overreaching and taking an unacceptably high risk of getting gammoned. Do either of the contending plays here open the door to these strategic errors for our opponent—that is, seeing ghosts or else overreaching in the face of excessive danger? Let's see!

If we make the safe play, we certainly create some nasty rolls for White, particularly 4-4 and 3-3. 4-3 is bad too, no matter how she plays it. It's conceivable someone would misplay a 2-2 by trying to hold both anchors with 7/5(2), 7/3 instead of using the last 2 to abandon the back anchor with 22/20, but I can't picture it happening very often. The other rolls either have only one serious option available, or the choices are similar-themed and the differences are small.

On the other hand, there are some major

errors White could make after the split play. For starters, she could see ghosts with small doubles and "blunderously" switch points to drive you off the ace point, not realizing that your ace point game won't be all that good even if you reestablish it. In both cases, she should grab the 5-point and leave you with sloppy seconds.

If she rolls 5-5, will she recognize that she still needs to hit you on the 5-point, just as she would for money? But that if she rolls a 3-2, she should not pick-and-pass, because the mobility and outfield control achieved by 20/18*/15 are more important? If she rolls a 4-2, she should hit twice, 22/18*, 7/5*, again letting you have the ace point back if you manage to grab it, but trying hard to prevent you from getting the advanced anchor.

What if she can't attack on the 5? With a 5-1, 6-1, or 6-3, she should hit on the ace point, but not because she wants it, or even wants you off it. Her concern is that if she instead jumps one checker from the forward anchor, she leaves you too free to play, including attacking the man left behind. But with a 6-5, she should forget about the tempo hit on the ace point, and simply jump two checkers out to gain mobility and challenge your bid for control of the outfield.

The list goes on, but you get the idea. You wouldn't go through all 36 rolls over the board, anyway. What you would do is notice that after the safe play, most of her moves are easy or practically forced, but that many tempting options, and therefore opportunities to err, abound after the split. You don't even have to know what the right answers are to choose the split! All you have to do is realize there will be more difficult decisions, and for your opponent, not you.

Against a human opponent, no matter how good, I am convinced that the error-draw potential of the split is so much greater than that of the safe play, that the choice clearly favors that move in practice. When you roll that 4-2, play 24/20, 11/9, and see what you can catch in the trap you have set.—Mary Hickey Δ

Backgammon & Poker On Board.

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WINNER'S CIRCLE



OCT.-DEC. 2011

•**2nd Online Nation's Cup 2011** (online via GridGammon; 3 Sep.-27 Nov.): GOLD MEDAL—United States (Neil Kazaross, Kit Woolsey, Bob Glass, Todd Crosner, Carol Joy Cole). SILVER MEDAL—Italy (Marco Tamigi, Fabio Gullotta, Alessandro Rietti, Federico Toledo, Antonio laquinta). BRONZE MEDAL—Norway (Sondre Rike, Geir Pedersen, Tommy Nesbakk, IM Jon Kristian Roeyset, Sven Eldar Malvaag). *Organized by Leonardo Jerkovic.*

•**New Orleans Fall Sweet 16** (New Orleans, LA; 22-23 Oct.)... 11 AM TOURNEY: 1-Paul Sanchez (LA), 2-Larry Taylor (GA); 1C-James Bray (TX), 2C-Ray Gaudet (LA). 7 PM TOURNEY: 1-Stuart Thomson (GA); 2-Ray Gaudet (LA).

•**Townharbour Trophy** (Hinckley, England; 4-6 Nov.)... OPEN: 1-Mardi Ohannessian, 2-Uldis Lapikens; 1C-Peter Finnimore. FRIDAY 500 (6): 1-Gerry Enslin, 2-Mick Vacarey. DOUBLES (6): 1-Bad Influence.

•**WBA Highroller's Classic** (Punta Cana, Dominican Republic; 7-9 Nov.)... OPEN (16): 1-George Chonopolis, 2-Falafel Natanzon... *The prize money guarantee was not honored. Read the controversy at www.chicagopoint.com.*

•**Las Vegas Open—ABT** (Las Vegas, NV; 9-13 Nov.)... CHAMPIONSHIP (76 + 24 rebuys): 1-Matt Cohn-Geier



Matt Cohn-Geier

(NV), 2-Jeremy Bagai (CA), 3/4-Wayne Jeffcoat (CA) / Falafel Natanzon (ISR); 1C-Motonori Kunishima (JPN), 2C-Gary Bauer (NJ), 3C/4C-Dorn Bishop (CA) / Luiz Torres (Brazil); 1LC-Charlie Pipkin (NV), 2LC-Mark Antranikian (CA). INTERMEDIATE (64 + 20 rebuys): 1-Tom Duggan (ENG), 2-Carsten Muencheberg (GER),

3/4-Charlie Raichle (CO) / Neal Weiner (FL); 1C-Josh Racko (CA), 2C-Evan Etter (FL), 3C/4C-Elli Nache (CA) / Charles Toots (CA); 1LC-AI Lunder (WA), 2LC-Patty Geoffroy (MA). BEGINNER (17 + 3 rebuys): 1-Joe Roth (CA), 2-Susan Lee (AZ); 1C-Michelle Andersen (CA), 2C-Myra Chapman (CO); 1LC-Joseph Touts (FL). SUPER JACKPOT (16 @ \$2,000): 1-Michihito Kageyama (JPN), 2-Justin Nunez (CA), 3/4-Gary Bauer (NJ) / Falafel Natanzon (ISR). LIMITED JACKPOT (16 @ \$1,000): 1-Raul Mulanovich (Peru), 2-Greg Cottle (NV), 3/4-John Rockwell (CA) / Daisuke Katagami (JPN). SENIORS (128): 1-Ricardo Malas (Lebanon/Spain), 2-Paul Polatov (NY). DOUBLES (32): 1-Ted Chee (CA) & Kit Woolsey (CA), 2-Austin O'Laughlin (CA) & Ed O'Laughlin (VA). BLITZ (120): 1-Ted Chee (CA), 2-Justin Nunez (CA). MINI-MATCH (64): 1-Kit Woolsey (CA), 2-Ted Chee (CA). SAT. BEGINNER JP (4): 1-Susan Lee (AZ). SAT. \$100 JP (24): 1-Ted Chee (CA), 2-Andre Larsen (Norway). AFTER TOURNAMENT (32): 1-Jeff Nitschke (MN), 2-Cheryl Andersen (CA). USBGF PROFICIENCY EXAM (20): Open—Ray Foglerund (NV). Intermediate (tie)—Garry Kallos (CAN) / Joe Nolan (TN).

•**New ENG Bonus Tourney** (Malden, MA; 19 Nov.)... OPEN (22): 1-Herb Gurland, 2-Howard Rosenthal, 3/4-Anne Bidner / Roger Rondeau; 1C-Alex Zamanian, 2C-Eri Wicklund.

•**1st Michigan/Ohio Challenge Cup** (Toledo, OH; 20

Nov.)... 1-Michigan (Dean Adamian, Paul Berg, Carol Joy Cole, Ralph Dietz, Dion Hogan, Jim Slomkoski, Frank Talbot, Rick Todd).

•**Pair-O-Dice Monthly** (New York, NY; 20 Nov.)... OPEN (14 + 2): 1-Chris Trencher (NY), 2-Michael Senkiewicz (NY); 1C-Kevin Finch (PA). INTERMEDIATE (7): 1-Sonja Fischer (NY), 2-Jason Switzer (PA); 1C-Lemont Haskins (NY). BEGINNER (4): 1-John Johnson (NY), 2-Scott Rademaker (NY)

•**HBC Fall Trophy** (Indianapolis, IN; 26 Nov.)... OPEN (15): 1-Sean Garber; 1C-Jim Curtis, 2C-Scott Johnston.

•**Play65/EBGT 4th Cyprus Open & Grand Finale** (Lefkosa, Cyprus; 1-7 Dec.)... DOUBLES (29 teams + 3 rebuys): 1-Ufuk Aksak & Erhan Yenisen (TUR), 2-Konrad Fröschl (AUS/SWE) & Tobias Hellweg (GER), 3/4-Naoya Kihara & Akiko Yazawa (JPN) / Timur Azizov & Sergey Erokhin (RUS). MASTERS (64): 1-Tobias Hellweg (GER), 2-Aykut Üzel (TUR), 3/4-Vincenzo Riceputi (ITA) / Dimitrios Manganas (GRE); 1LC-Zafer Tas (TUR), 2LC-Talat Papatya (TUR). INTERMEDIATE (34): 1-Volkan Er (TUR), 2-Özge Apak (TUR), 3/4-Metin Erikler (TUR) / Cem Özdes (TUR); 1LC-Cengiz Dindar (TUR), 2LC-Neçati Doganaslan (TUR). BEGINNER (8): 1-Nuray Özgün (TUR), 2-Pooya Haghani (Iran). SUPER-JACKPOT (11): 1-Akiko Yazawa (JPN), 2-Peter Blachian (GER). DMP CHALLENGE #1 (64): User Hiyar (TUR). #2 (64): Hiroshi Nishiyama (JPN). FAIR PLAY: Konstantinos Mitrelis (GRE). YOUNGEST PLAYER: Aykut Uzel (TUR).

•**Christmas UK Finals** (Hinckley, ENG; 2-4 Dec.)... OPEN: 1-Arthur Wright, 2-Rachel Rhodes; 1C-Michelle Ford, 2C-Chris Ternel; 1LC-Dorothy Lee. SNOWBALL: 1-Chris Ternel. CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS: Peter Bennet. FRIDAY 500: 1-Michael Crane, 2-Anabel Carrington. DOUBLES: 1-Jingle Bells. POKER: 1-Mick Vacarey. ROSEY'S ROLLOUT: Peter Christmas.

•**California State Championship—ABT** (Los Angeles, CA; 2-4 Dec.)... OPEN (53): 1-Todd Crosner (AZ), 2-Alfred Mamlit (MD), 3-David Taniguchi (CA); 1C-Petko Kostadinov (Bulgaria/SC), 2C-Ray Foglerund (NV), 3C/4C-Ed O'Laughlin (VA) / Andranik Safarian (Argentina). ADVANCED (36): 1-Cheryl Andersen (CA), 2-Alex Eshagian (CA); 1C-Scotty Kelland (CT), 2C-Damon Singer (NV), 3C/4C-Lynn Lusk (CO) / Ron Bruns



Todd Crosner

(CA). LIMITED (10): 1-Chris Berkman (CA), 2-Kevin Kohl (CA); 1C-Maria Heiner (Brazil/ CA). SUPER-48 (48): 1-Neil Kazaross (IL), 2-Matvey "Falafel" Natanzon (ISR), 3/4-Justin Nunez (CA) / Joe Russell (CA), 5/6-Odis Chenault (CA) / David Taniguchi (CA). DINGWELL AMATEUR JP (32): 1-Carl Blumenstein (CA), 2-Scotty Kelland (CT), 3/4-Larry Liebster (NV) / Elli Nache (CA). 2-POINT MINI-MATCH (32): 1-Ray Foglerund (NV). BLITZ (64): 1-David Rennie (CA), 2-Marv Porten (CA). DOUBLES #1 (8 teams): 1-Petko Kostadinov (SC) & Stepan Nuniyants (WA). #2 (8 teams): 1/2-Ray Foglerund (NV) & Josh Racko (CA) / Howard Markowitz (NV) & Richard Siebold (CO).

•**Springfield Series #3** (Springfield, IL; 3 Dec.)... OPEN (21): 1-Vinton Knarr, 2-Ramez Abi-Akar; 1C-Faddoul Khoury, 2C-Jena Jennings; 1LC-Lucas Bauer.

•**Bar Point Sunday** (Skokie, IL; 4 Dec.)... OPEN (18): 1/2-Tak Morioka / Dujan Meekins, 3/4-Steve Blanchard / Peter Kalba; 1C-Nora Luna Righter, 2C-Bill Davis. INTERMEDIATE (9): 1-David Nosik, 2-Leslie Lockett, 3/4-Jay Robinson / Roland Dieter; 1C/2C-Mike Valentino / Dan Weymouth. Δ

AMALGAMATION

Visiting the Bar Point Club: **Peter Schroeder** (Hamburg, Germany)... **Phil Simborg, Ken Tyszko** and three others, in conjunction with the USBGF, taught 30 seniors to play backgammon at Monarch Landing in Naperville, Illinois last month. Several of the residents will be meeting to play every Saturday... Great news for Android phone users. The finest mobile BG program, "Backgammon NJ" is now available. For more info go to android.njsoftware.com... Want to watch a fun movie with backgammon playing an important role? Check out "The World is Big and Salvation Lurks Around Every Corner." The Bulgarian movie (with subtitles) will be available for purchase at Amazon.com later this month... Condolences to the family and friends of International chess master **Jay Whitehead** who died in San Francisco in October. Jay played some backgammon in Chicagoland in 1982 accumulating 1.68 master points at Gammon's of Chicago... A big congratula-



Kathleen & Eric Barr

tions to **Kathleen** (Davis) and **Eric Barr** who were married 5 November. They make a great couple... **Mike Weinberger** tells us that just five spaces for the 3-4 March Sweet 16 Tournament in New Orleans, Louisiana are left. And those signing up get free quality leather dice cups

monogrammed with their initials. To secure a spot and your cups, call **Will Hunn** at 504/366-7498... Get well wishes go out to **Lee Pflugrad** (WI) who suffered a massive coronary on 25 November. **Bruce Russell** (WI) tells us that he is in good spirits. On the same day, **Eric Johnson** (IL) had serious kidney problems. As we go to press, he is currently resting at Northwestern Hospital... **Carol Joy Cole** (MI) is back up and running with her Autumn *Flint Area Backgammon News* following a big computer crash last month. The official 2011 "Giants of Backgammon" ballot is now posted at the Flint website: www.flintbg.com/giants2011.pdf. Voting ends 29 February... Follow the Grand Crystal Beaver signups for the 9-11 March Central States Invitational at chicagopoint.com/csi2012.html... Great philosophy from the late **Bette Davis**: "I've been lucky. I'll be lucky again... Happy Holidays from CHICAGO POINT. Δ

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