

new direction

STRASBERG BOWS OUT CHANGING OF THE GUARD IN LOUISVILLE

Larry Strasberg has retired as an active tournament director of the Louisville Backgammon Club. A dismal crowd of only 48 players at the recent Labor Day event sparked his decision.

Strasberg, a retail store owner in Louisville, was first exposed to backgammon in the late 60's. While on business in New York, he stopped by the Mayfair Club to play bridge. There he saw a half dozen individuals shaking dice and moving checkers around a board. When he returned home, he bought his first board at a novelty shop for \$5. As the years passed, Strasberg was able to convert area bridge players to his exciting dice game. The LBC was born.

STRASBERG DIRECTED his first major Labor Day event in 1976. The March Bluegrass regional began in 1977. Tournament attendance reached a peak at the 1982 Labor Day tournament when over 180 players attended with prize money exceeding \$40,000. Labor Day in Louisville at the Marriott in Clarksville was the fun place to be in the early 80's.

The 66 year old *Looville* native cited these reasons for his retirement: "First, crowds have been getting smaller. I don't

enjoy directing as much as I did. Also, I feel that I am getting a little resentment from different people outside of Louisville for some reason or other. I don't know exactly why."

STRASBERG HAS ANNOUNCED that two area players, Scott Arche and Larry Deckel will be in charge of future LBC tournament activities. Arche is 29 with 13 years playing experience. He is employed as an account executive for A T&T. The 35 year old Deckel has been active in backgammon for five years. He works all over (including Hollywood) as a free lance director.

Arche reports that the March Bluegrass Regional will be 100% return and that the Louisville Labor Day tradition will continue. Strasberg will remain as president of the LBC. He and his wife Sylvia plan to attend national and regional tournaments from time to time. Δ

LOUISVILLE LABOR DAY RESULTS

AAA (15): 1st Dean Adamian (MI); 2nd Yamin Yamin (IL); 1st Cons. Sam Janjigian (MA).

AA (26): 1st Ira Hoffberg (IL); 2nd Gaby Kairouz (KY); 1st Cons. Ron Hacker (KY).

A (7): 1st Darian Rezai (OH)

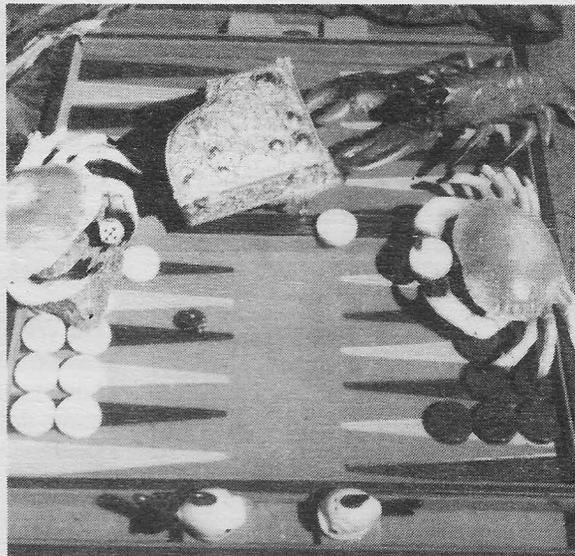
DOUBLES (16): 1st Yamin Yamin (IL); 2nd Riley Harrison/Duane Jensen (MN).

SENIORS (8): 1st Larry Strommen (IN).

DON'T WORRY, BE CRABBY.

Two crustaceans and a couple of small fish try to cheer up with an underwater chouette. Mr. Lobster serenades the group with a little cocktail piano by the bar.

Photo by John Demian



LABOR DAY UNRESOLVED

While the Louisville Backgammon Club continues to publicly state that they will hold a Labor Day tourney in 1989, questions still remain. New LBC director Scott Arche claims that the tournament is definitely on. The club president Larry Strasberg concurs. "Louisville Backgammon Club has enough money in the treasury to back another Labor Day tournament next year, so we're going to hold it."

Hoosier Backgammon Club director Butch Meese believes that the Labor Day location and sponsorship is still being debated and that nothing is finalized as yet. But Strasberg claims that Meese rejected his compromise plan. "I suggested that the Hoosier Club and the Louisville Club jointly sponsor the Labor Day tournament and alternate the location—one year in Louisville and one year in Indianapolis. Butch didn't want to do that. He said that he was willing to direct the event in Indy with joint sponsorship, but didn't want to alternate the site with Louisville. Well that's no good. What good is that?"

Flint Backgammon Club director Carol Joy Cole feels there is a strong movement to hold a Labor Day tourney outside of Louisville, possibly in a more centrally located venue. In an editorial appearing in the September *Flint Area Backgammonews*, Cole suggested that "Perhaps it is time for all clubs who host more than one weekend event a year to reconsider the economics of doing so... It is time to consolidate into fewer tournaments and focus on increasing the equity and excitement of those events."

Whatever the decision, the Midwest directors should quickly come to an agreement that reflects the desires of the backgammon community. If promoters in other areas of the country detect disarray, they may be motivated into holding a Labor Day event of their own, thus further diluting attendance. Δ

CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

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LETTERS

c/o Chicago POINT
2726 W. Lunt Avenue
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How Bad Are Imprecision Dice?

"Imprecision Dice" (August 1988) was generally informative, but I must question the author's initial premise that "Everyone wants to play a fair game." It sure would be great if they did!

I could be wrong, but I honestly doubt if reasonably good precision dice would exhibit sufficient bias to affect the result of a match (even to 21 points or more). First, the bias is unknown so plays cannot be adjusted accordingly.

Second, with irregular surface and checkers on the board, as well as rebounding from the sides, an "uninterrupted" long roll which would allow the dice to be affected in a consistent manner by their bias cannot be achieved.

The author has calculated that the imprecision dice have a 1.6% bias in favor of 2's, 3's, 4's and 5's vs. 1's and 6's. Has anyone ever done a long roll-out under normal playing conditions to test the validity of this claim?—*Jim Vanselow, Blackburn, Australia*

Larry Strommen, the author of the article, is going to do the roll-out you mention. Using a baffle box, he'll make 10,000 rolls each using precision, imprec-

coming attractions

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



by Carol Joy Cole
313/232-9731

Oct 2	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Bagwells, Chicago, IL	312/252-7755
Oct 7-9	5th Indiana Classic & Indy \$500, Viscount Hotel, Indianapolis, IN	317/845-8435
Oct 8	CPBC Fall Open Tourney, Promenade, Bethesda, MD	301/530-0603
Oct 9	Celebrities Bi-monthly Tournament, Houston, TX	713/495-2240
Oct 9	Toronto Monthly Tournament, Le Spot, Ontario, Canada	416/267-2815
Oct 14-16	European BG/Golf Combo Championship, Zell am See, Austria	0 8341/12825
Oct 15	Springfield Open, On Broadway, Springfield, IL	800/223-6146x286
Oct 15-16	L.A. Invitational, Stouffer Concourse Hotel, Los Angeles, CA	818/905-6937
Oct 16	NEBC Monthly, Sheraton Commander Hotel, Cambridge, MA	617/547-4800
Oct 16	Cavendish North Monthly Tournament, Southfield, MI	313/642-9616
Oct 20	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Sheraton Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Oct 21-23	North-German Open, Hannover, West Germany—CANCELLED	
Oct 22	Pewter Mug Tournament, Watertown, NY	315/482-9753
Oct 23	Pittsburgh Monthly Tournament, Parkway Center, PA	412/241-1301
Oct 26-30	International Backgammon Tournament, Hyatt-Lake Tahoe, NV	702/831-1111
Oct 28	Bayou Club Monthly Tournament, Houstonian, Houston, TX	713/681-9671
Nov 1	Bar Point Club Fall Trophy Tourney, Pat's Pub, Norridge, IL	312/338-6380
Nov 4-6	Bad Zwischenahn, Spiel-Casino, West Germany	040/270-1166
Nov 4-6	Crystal Cup Venezia, Casino Municipale, Italy	061-50-5816
Nov 4-6	Swedish Open, Stockholm, Sweden	0046-8-524099
Nov 5-6	Gammon Associates Invitational, Los Angeles, CA—CANCELLED	
Nov 11-13	NY/NJ Co-op Fall Tourney, Rocking Horse Ranch, Highland, NY	516/334-4565
Nov 11-13	North Rhein-Westfalen Open, Novotel, Breitscheid, W. Germany	02151-503591
Nov 13	Toronto Monthly Tournament, Le Spot, Ontario, Canada	416/267-2815
Nov 17	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Sheraton Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Nov 17-20	European Championship, Bad Salzschlirf, West Germany	0 8341/12825
Nov 20	Bi-monthly Sunday, Bombay Bicycle Club, Austin, TX	512/490-6538
Nov 20	10th Flint Birthday Club Championship, Sheraton Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Nov 25-27	Children's Hospital Benefit, Sheraton Hotel, Cambridge, MA	617/547-4800
Dec 2-5	Backgammon On Board III, Tropical Cruise: Miami to Nassau	312/338-6380
Dec 2-5	Valencia Tournament, Casino Monte Picayo, Spain	96-142-01-00
Dec 3	Bayou Club Christmas Tournament, Houstonian, Houston, TX	713/681-9671
Dec 7-10	Garrucha-Almeria Tournament, BG, Chess & Bridge Club, Spain	951-460080
Dec 11	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Bagwells, Chicago, IL	312/252-7755
Dec 11	Celebrities Bi-monthly Tournament, Houston, TX	713/495-2240
Dec 11	Pittsburgh Monthly Tournament, Parkway Center, PA	412/241-1301
Dec 18	NEBC Monthly, Sheraton Commander Hotel, Cambridge, MA	617/547-4800
Jan 11-15	Nevada State Championships, Peppermill Hotel, Reno, NV	702/826-1984
Jan 14	College Park Winter Open, Promenade, Bethesda, MD	301/530-0603
Jan 15	NEBC Monthly, Sheraton Commander Hotel, Cambridge, MA	617/547-4800
Feb 3-5	11th Annual Charity Tournament, Airport Marriott, Pittsburgh, PA	412/241-1301
Feb 5	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Bagwells, Chicago, IL	312/252-7755
Feb 12	Fleet Underwood Memorial Tournament, Sheraton Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Feb 20-23	Cannes International Tournament, Palais des Festivals, France	061-50-5816

tion and drilled-out dice in an effort to determine whether or not any substantial bias exists. Look for Larry's findings early next year in the Chicago POINT.—Ed.

BOINQ Solves Bearoff Problems

I enjoyed Neil Kazaross's analysis of Problem #138, in part because he used my program to arrive at the solution. The program he was referring to is called BOINQ (Bear Off Inquiry). BOINQ comes in two IBM compatible versions. The first handles up to 9 men and costs \$50 US. The second version handles 15 men and requires a hard drive. This 3 meg

version costs \$100 US. Interested parties can write me at 402-1122 15 Ave. SW, Calgary, AB, Canada T2R 1K5.—Hal Heinrich, Calgary, AB.

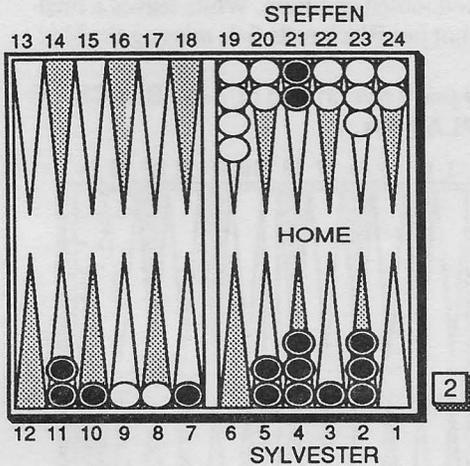
He Wants The "Total World"

Good World Cup coverage last month; however I would like to have seen the entire draw sheet, given the strength of the field.—David Montgomery, East Palo Alto, CA

Try sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to World Cup tournament director Kent Goulding, P.O. Box B, Kensington, MD 20895.—Ed.

GUESS JOE'S PLAY CONTEST RESULTS

1988 World Cup semifinal match: to 37 points. Joe Sylvester (Black) leads Alan Steffen (White) 19 to 16. **SYLVESTER TO PLAY 3-3.**



Last month, you were asked to guess the play that Joe Sylvester made in the setup at left. Sylvester, who took a half hour to decide on a move, calls this "the toughest backgammon position of my life."

The *Chicago POINT* received dozens of submissions with nine different move guesses represented. Only two entrants, Larry Strommen and Nick Maffeo, correctly guessed Joe's move as 10/1, 4/1. By random draw, the one year *POINT* subscription and wallet-size backgammon board goes to Nick Maffeo of Palm Springs, CA.

Joe's reasons for making his ace point without hitting were partly psychological: "I had just taken my first lead in the match by gammoning Alan. I didn't want to get G'd myself and immediately lose that lead. I made the best anti-gammon play. As a general rule, this is good strategy in very close positions.

"My play strengthened my home board

for the future. By staying back on Alan's 4-point (vs. coming up to his bar), I gave him fewer chances to duplicate my hitting numbers. For money, I'd make the ace point and hit, but this was a long match and I wanted to avoid any emotional swing that a gammon might bring." Δ

AMALGAMATION

Dean Muench had the low total at the annual Courvoisier Open golf tournament at the Americana Hotel in Lake Geneva, WI last month. Tournament director Jeff Henry thanks the Country Store & Wine Shop in Lisle, IL for the hospitality..... The bumper sticker "Warning: Backgammon May Be Hazardous To Your Wealth" is still available. Send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the *Chicago POINT* for your free copy..... Good luck to Lincoln Bedell, new director of the Granite State Club in New Hampshire. Linc takes over from Taylor Sage..... A new backgammon computer is on the market. "Sensory Backgammon" by Saitek has a touch sensitive 10" x 14" board that automatically detects your moves. Its 8K ROM memory has nine skill levels. \$126.50 postpaid from Hammacher Schlemmer..... The West German Hamburg Open found the

perfect sponsor for their event: *Gammon After Shave*. The tourney poster proclaimed



"Backgammon and Gammon. A Strong Double."..... Julian Wilson informs us of a new Saturday night tournament he's directing on a monthly basis at Morton's (28 Berkely Square) in London. £20 to £50 entry fees. For London backgammon info, contact Julian at 01-261-1077..... Hurry. The Nov. 1 Bar Point Club Fall Trophy is nearly filled. Call (312) 338-6380 to register..... When Kent Goulding handed champion Joe Sylvester a check for \$50,000 at last year's World Cup in Boston, he asked Joe in tongue-in-cheek fashion "But what's most important here?" Joe quickly replied, "KG RATING POINTS!!!" Δ

1988 BPC PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED
THRU SEPT. 30

TAK MORIOKA	24.08	Peggy Fleming	3.44	Carol Mennis	0.80
RICH SWEETMAN	21.56	Dave Cramer	3.32	Don Desmond	0.80
YAMIN YAMIN	21.56	Ron Garber	3.24	Harry Hayward	0.72
KATHY BAUDER	20.28	Chris Kenik	3.00	Marty Tatosian	0.72
JOHN DEMIAN	17.16	Neil Banoff	2.96	Don Marek	0.64
DAVID LIBCHABER	13.48	Gary Keyes	2.88	Miles Cohen	0.64
STU KATZ	11.80	Dan Judd	2.84	Tom Walthes	0.64
IRA HOFFBERG	11.48	Don Pearson	2.84	Marcy Sloan	0.60
PETER KALBA	11.28	Greg Shore	2.80	Arlene Levy	0.56
ARNOLD ZOUSMER	10.80	Barry Epstein	2.68	Mark Hicks	0.52
DEEB SHALATI	10.32	Andy Suszczyk	2.16	Kevin Bryant	0.48
JOANN FEINSTEIN	10.08	Jeff Kane	2.12	Mark Anshus	0.48
SARG SERGES	8.88	George Panagakis	2.08	Paul Reiner	0.40
ANDY ARGY	8.40	Jeff Vaughn	2.04	Ron Stur	0.40
BILL DAVIS	7.92	Bill Hoeflich	2.00	Al Meinecke	0.32
DON JAYHAN	7.80	Jeff Henry	1.92	Howard Markowitz	0.32
RICH SIEBOLD	7.64	Kevin Muench	1.88	Ida Zeman	0.24
NORMA SHYER	6.44	Ralph Levy	1.84	Les Berg	0.24
BOBBIE SHIFRIN	6.20	Gene Chait	1.68	Rudy Emmelot	0.24
KEN BOND	5.96	John Spatafora	1.52	Chuck Evers	0.20
Phyllis Smolinski	5.68	Betsy Miller	1.36	Sharon Hegg	0.20
Connie Sychowski	5.60	Jim Sargent	1.28	Dave Lehrer	0.16
Ed Buerger	5.20	Roland Dieter	1.28	Trudie Stern	0.16
Bill Keefe	4.24	Dean Morehouse	1.16	Chris Hegg	0.12
Alyce Wallen	4.16	Elaine Kehm	0.96	Dave Shifman	0.12
Ed Bauder	4.08	Larry Guzan	0.96	David Hegg	0.12
Joe Koucharian	3.80	Bob Holyon	0.88	Ray Lanzillo	0.12
Don Muellner	3.72	Dave Rockwell	0.88	Jay Bleiman	0.08
Bob Zavoral	3.64	Doug Mayfield	0.88	Richard Stawowy	0.08
Dean Muench	3.60	Larry Strommen	0.88		

YAMIN YAMIN won three tournaments in September to earn him 4.40 points and BPC Player of the Month honors. Arnold Zousmer (2.44) and new 1988 leader Tak Morioka (2.40) were runners-up. An error in posting the July 5 tournament winner results in Rich Sweetman losing, and Rich Siebold gaining 2.56 points this month.

DEAR MISS LONELYBLOTS



WHEN I SAID NICKELS...

Dear Miss Lonelyblots: At the recent tournament is Nevada, I asked a guy I didn't know to play for money. He agreed, but said he had to leave after 10 games. Fine by me.

Because I didn't know the fellow, I decided to keep the stakes relatively low. "Are nickels OK?"

"Fine," he responded, so we sat down to play.

Right away, I knew I had a "fish" player. Although his checker play was very good, he took some dangerous doubles and "beavered" a few cubes that were merely takes. After 10 games, I was up 40 points—\$200.

Without delay, he reached into his wallet to pay his debt. But instead of handing me two \$100 bills, he gave me \$2!

I said, "What's this?" He responded that he had lost 40 points for nickels, or \$2. When I told him that "nickels" is the accepted money play expression to mean \$5 per point, he said that he had never heard it before and told me that if I had lost the forty points, he would only have accepted \$2 from me.

Although I didn't believe him, there was very little (aside from violence) that I could do. I feel like I've been slimed! How would you handle this situation?—Ripped Off in Reno.

Dear Ripped: I referred your question to my sister Portia Lonelytorts who is a lawyer. The following is a copy of the letter she sent back to me.—Miss Lonelyblots

Dear Sis: You can tell Ripped that he is way Off. His "nickels" is a slang term used in his and other gamblers' and hustlers' jargon. It is not part of ordinary discourse. Perhaps the hustlers say "nickels" to

suggest disingenuously that the money involved in their games is trifling; perhaps "nickels" is just a shorthand used with innocent intent.

Regardless, parties to an oral contract, such as Ripped and the stranger, are bound not by the private meanings of their words but by the plain English meanings. To be understood clearly, Ripped could have said, "Let's play for \$5 a point." The fact that he didn't, establishes a prima facie case against him.

If Ripped still has any doubts, let him ponder this. He had to explain to the stranger that "nickels" meant "\$5 per point." But if "nickels" were the accepted expression, then "\$5 per point" would be the mysterious term, and the translation would have to be the other way around.

Ripped alleges dishonesty on the part of the stranger. But his own account shows not the least bit of evidence to support this charge. Tell Ripped that if he persists, I'll be happy to represent the stranger in a slander suit. And when he hints of violence, he verges on extortion.

It is conceivable that Ripped could sustain his accusations of "slime." But to do so, he would have to find witnesses to testify that the stranger regularly played for \$5 (or more) per point in his own circles and also said "nickels" in proposing such stakes. Even then, it would be a defense for the stranger to contend that he wasn't aware that Ripped likewise used "nickels" metaphorically.

Sometimes a judge will tell litigants who come to his court, "Next time, put it in writing." I wouldn't go so far as to recommend written contracts to the gamesters with whom you deal, Sis. But I would tell them: "Next time, boys, put it in English."

—Miss Portia Lonelytorts

Do you have a backgammon-related question for Miss Lonelyblots involving people problems, game etiquette or the play itself? Write to: Dear Miss Lonelyblots, c/o Chicago POINT, 2726 W. Lunt Avenue, Chicago, IL 60645. The most stimulating query will be answered bimonthly. Δ

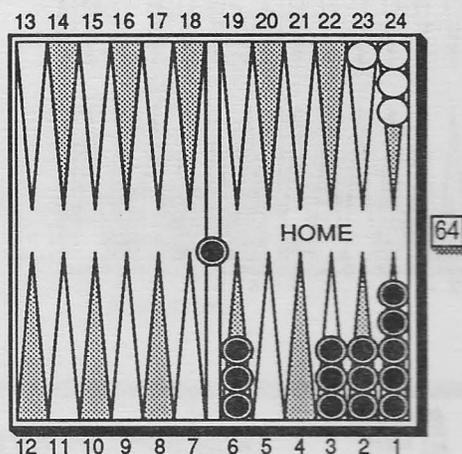
HASTY PLAYS



by Duane Jensen

The score is 7 to 7 in a 9 point match. White has been playing for an undoubled gammon. White leaves a final shot but Black rolls 6-1, missing the blot:

9 point match tied at 7-all. **BLACK TO PLAY 6-1.**

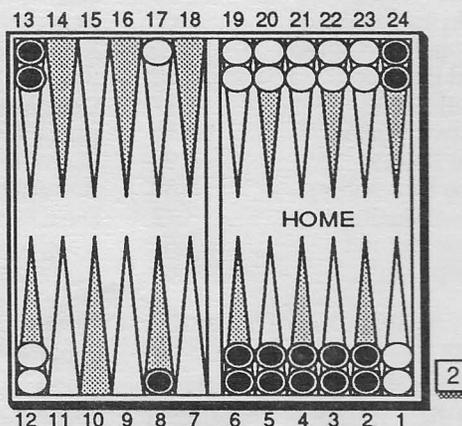


Black's correct play of course, is to enter on White's 6-point and slot his own 5-point. Black can then escape the gammon with both double 5's and double 6's.

Money game players may make the hasty, careless play of "avoiding the backgammon" by popping out to White's bar-point, (irrelevant at this match score). If you can recognize this as a critical situation, taking a few seconds of study now, will save hours of babbling to yourself later. Δ

PROBLEM #140

Money Game. **BLACK TO PLAY 6-4.**



Backgammon On Board

Final Boarding Call

Miami-Nassau
Dec. 2-5, 1988

800/234-0887

DETERMINE PROPER LEVEL OF PLAY BY PAST PERFORMANCE

Well, he did it again. Chicago area player Ira Hoffberg took home another Intermediate first place award. Hoffberg's victory in the Louisville Labor Day tournament was the third time he's won an Intermediate Main Flight or Consolation regional event within 100 days. In fact, Ira's record over the past two years is stunning:

Sept. 1988	..... Louisville Labor Day	..... 1st Intermediate
July 1988	..... Michigan Summer Championships	.... 1st Cons. Intermediate
May 1988	..... Chicago Open	..... 1st Cons. Intermediate
May 1988	..... Central Illinois Spring Tourney	..... 2nd Open
Feb. 1988	..... Illinois State Challenge Cup	..... 1st Team (4-1 record)
Aug. 1987	..... Central Illinois Summer Tourney	..... 1st Cons. Open
May 1987	..... Chicago Open	..... 1st Intermediate
April 1987	..... Midwest Championships	..... 2nd Cons. Intermediate
Feb. 1987	..... Illinois State Challenge Cup	..... 1st Team (4-0 record)
Dec. 1986	..... Chicago Bar Point Club Player of the Year	..... Runner-up
Nov. 1986	..... Indiana Classic	..... 1st Intermediate
July 1986	..... Pub Club Summer Championship	..... 1st Open

Don't blame Ira and other players with good results for continuing to enter tournaments as an Intermediate. Blame the directors who permit their actions. After Ira's second regional Intermediate win at the Cavendish Club's Chicago Open in May 1987, the Chicago Bar Point Club asked Hoffberg to enter future BPC events as an Open player. He sat out the 1988 Midwest Backgammon Championships. A similar request was made of him by the Hoosier Backgammon Club. Ira hasn't been back home again in Indiana since November 1986.

But this year, the Cavendish Club permitted Hoffberg to enter the Chicago Open as an Intermediate—he won the Consolation. Then the Flint Backgammon Club accepted his Intermediate entry—another Consolation victory. Finally, still unconvinced of Hoffberg's skills, the Louisville Backgammon Club invited him to celebrate Labor Day by working over their Intermediates. Ira did not disappoint.

Is this the last of Ira in the middle divisions? If he has his way, the answer is "No." After winning in Louisville, Hoffberg asked Flint director Carol Joy Cole if he could still enter her 1989 Summer Championships as an Intermediate. Carol didn't immediately say no! Her rule had been that until a player won in Flint, he would not be required to move up. Carol has since reevaluated her rule and will no longer permit Ira to play Intermediate.

How should directors judge whether a player is participating below his level? The best way is by past tournament performance in major sectional and regional events. What's wrong with a highly skilled player entering the beginner division if it's his first tournament? Shouldn't everyone be permitted to first win at least one beginner tournament before people brand him a "ringer" or a "sandbagger"? The Chicago Bar Point Club thinks so and will continue to use past sectional and regional results as the primary indicator of where a player should enter.

What about a player's reputation? Should this also be considered? Certainly; but beware. A reputation may differ depending on the source. Tournament results speak louder than words. Δ

RAY GLAESER ON LONG MATCHES

World Cup finalist Ray Glaeser (*New Jersey*) had some interesting comments on the long (33 to 41 point) matches he faced at the recent Boston tournament:

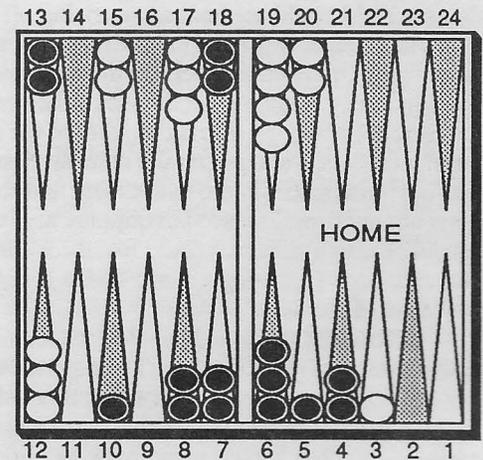
"They favor me. Actually, they might have been a little too long. I certainly wouldn't want to play matches of this length in every tournament.

"In long matches, it's especially important to avoid getting steamed, no matter how bad the swing is. I had my share of bad swings before reaching the

PROBLEM #139 SOLVED

by Bill Robertie

Tournament double match point.
BLACK TO PLAY 2-2.



Black has a number of inviting alternatives in Problem #139:

- (a) 7/3*, 5/3, 13/11
- (b) 7/5, 7/3*, 13/11
- (c) 7/3*(2)
- (d) 18/16(2), 7/5(2)
- (e) 13/9(2)
- (f) 18/14(2)

Although all these choices have some merit, my play over-the-board would be 13/9(2). This play has one great strength: it puts Black just one sequence away from making a full 6-prime. Black is about 40% to achieve this on his next roll [when White rolls any non-deuce (about 70%) and then Black rolls a 3-2, or any ace, or any 5 except 6-5 (about 55%)]. Black is better than 90% to win in the variations where he builds a 6-prime, and of course he retains considerable winning chances even if White's next roll contains a deuce.

None of the other choices put Black so close to reaching a gin position. The match score isn't relevant here either; Black would make the same play in a money game, regardless of the cube position. Δ

finals. In the semifinals, Mike Svobodny beat me in an awful game. Then he got up and took a break. When he saw that I wasn't becoming upset, he kept extending the break: 5 to 10 to 15 minutes.

"Finally after about 20 minutes, he walked up to me and said, 'Aren't you steamed yet?' I wasn't." Δ

TAKGAMMON



by Tak Morioka

THE PHOENIX

It was the beginning of one of those weekends. While I was driving to the tournament in Michigan, my air conditioning decided to stop working. The temperature was 100 degrees and I could see heat waves rising off the asphalt. Up ahead lay a stretch of road construction that was bringing traffic to a near standstill. It was late and getting later as one repair zone followed another. As the road opened up, I decided to put a heavy foot on the gas, anxiously watching for the would-be bears.

Before I could get into the rhythm of the match, my opponent began firing out devastating numbers. I was put on the defensive and an uneasy feeling of helplessness engulfed me. My vehicle to win the tournament had stalled on his tracks. His first series of rolls blew out my tires. The second crippled my transmission, and the third hit my radiator causing me to overheat. I could feel the Midnight Express chugging closer and closer. It was echoing, "I gonna get chu! I gonna get chu! I gonna get chu!" as I desperately tried to move out of the way.

KABOOM. I was history. My whole match flew past me in a flash. Needing a drink and in search of quiet solitude, I went to the bar and sought out a dark corner to get over my early demise. There I ran into another unhappy victim who was attempting to comfort his own defeat. I gave him a tentative greeting and ordered my drink. After three or four pain-killers, I felt I could crawl back into life. I asked him how he had done in his match. It was a stupid question that I wanted to take back, but it was what he needed to unburden his mental state. He burst like an over-filled dam, flooding his answer with the debris of unresolved injustices that plagued his cruel loss.

When he finished his catharsis, we started to talk about the players who were still alive in the tournament. They were difficult to relate to at first; maybe because of envy or because of our all-consuming self-pity. Whatever the case, he asked, "Why do a few players consistently out-perform their peers?" It was a good question. Their cube and checker play didn't seem any better than ours. And some of them were even thought to have serious faults that should be an impediment to winning. But time after time, these players would survive and usually place in the money.

You can't easily see the reasons for their success unless you stand back and view their game in total. These performers seem to win because of all the things they do right and in spite of any errors ingrained in their game. Pursuing positive ends, they find *ways to win* versus looking for *ways to avoid losing*. Possessing a great amount of stamina, they can maintain a reasonable level of play throughout the tournament. They are the marathon players who are able to grind out the distances. While most sprinters make an impressive start, they're usually not around at the finish. The most notable quality is their emotional toughness; they can withstand the effects of overwhelming swings that would destroy an average player's concentration. Finally, the performers are highly opportunistic in exploiting a tense situation. While others debate the merits of a course of action, they swiftly seize the moment and unhesitatingly deliver the fatal blow.

Armed with the curiosity of newfound insight, I dragged myself from the quagmire of despair to face the challenges that await anyone who dares to repute the domination of defeat. Δ



Fortune Cookie

*The value of an achievement
depends on the quality of effort.*

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WINNER'S
CORNER

Aug.-Sept. 1988

Gammon Associates 17th Invitational (Los Angeles, CA; Aug. 6-7)... Open (26): 1st Peter Zacks; 2nd Bob Glass. Limited (3): 1st Sandra Murray. Doubles (8): 1st Rudy Citrom & Judy Collins.

Vermont Festival (Browsville, VT; Aug. 8-14)... VERMONT STATE CHAMPIONSHIP—Open: 1st Mark Richardson (NV); 2nd Mike Nelson (MA); 3/4 Mike Belanger (CAN) and Ed Petrillo (FL).

ASCUTNEY MT. CHAMPIONSHIP—Open (32): 1st Chuck Papazian (NY); 2nd Evan Diamond (MA).

Palace Summer Championships (St. Moritz, Switzerland; Aug. 11-14)... Open (32): 1st Fabio Russi (ITA). A world-class bridge player, this was the first backgammon tournament of Russi's life.

Bar Point Sunday (Chicago, IL; Aug. 14)... Open (29): 1st Kathy Bauder and Tak Morioka; 3/4 Don Desmond and Jeff Kane; 1st Cons. David Libchaber; 2nd Cons. Chris Kenik. Limited (8) 1st Marcy Sloan; 1st Cons. Trudie Stern.

All Georgia Championships (Atlanta, GA; Aug. 19-20)... Open: 1st Phillip Burns; 2nd Jim Hickey. Doubles: 1st Samra Hadden & Jim Hickey; 2nd Dave Cardwell & Butch Meese.

Bar Point Club Summer Knockout (Schiller Park, IL; Aug. 25)... Open (23): 1st Ed Bauder; 2nd Bill Davis.

Labor Day Festival (Los Angeles, CA; Sept. 2-5)... Open (26): 1st Joe Russell (CA); 2nd Mike Mooney (AZ); 3/4 Jim Allen (NV) and Neil Kazaross (CA).

Special Tourney (15): 1st Bill Arkin (CA). **9th Oppe Invitational** (Downers Grove, IL; Sept. 24)... Open (8): 1st Joann Feinstein; 2nd Tom Walthes. Doubles (4):

1st Jim Oppe & Al Thacker... Joann was the first female ever invited to this party tournament. Jim Oppe's invitation humorously proclaimed: "Ladies not disqualified! Since our sponsors may bid on lucrative government contracts, we've had to allow our first token woman to enter."

Jim Flora Memorial (Plymouth, MI; Sept. 25)... Open (22): 1st Carol Joy Cole; 2nd Rick Schuman... A total of 63 players raised \$600 for the Heart Association.

Bar Point Sunday (Chicago, IL; Oct. 2)... Open (27): 1st David Libchaber and John Spatafora; 3/4 Ira Hoffberg and Greg Shore. Limited (4): 1st Phyllis Smolinski; 2nd Trudie Stern. Δ