

fall trophy tourney

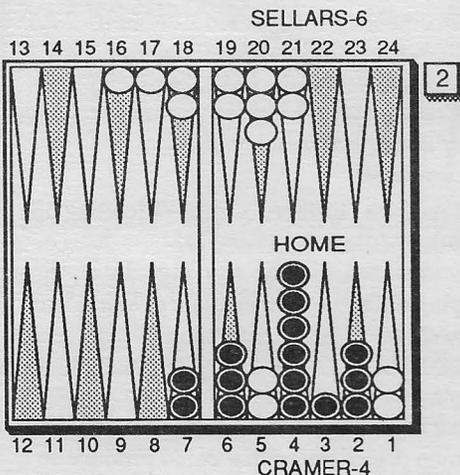
JUST VISITING CHICAGO: SELLARS TAKES HOME "SOUVENIR" TROPHY

Carl Sellars of Toronto, Canada concluded a sight-seeing vacation in Chicago by winning the Fall Trophy Tourney. Pat's Pub in Norridge was the site of the Bar Point Club's 6th annual autumn event November 1. 43 players from Illinois, Wisconsin and Indiana attended.

Sellars, who found out about the tournament at the last minute, had a relatively easy time reaching the finals. It looked like his Championship match against Chicago's Dave Cramer would also be an easy one. Well-behaved dice allowed Carl to take a 4-1 lead in the 7 point finals. Next he was able to turn a Cramer 2-cube around to gain a 6-1 advantage.

Then it was Dave's turn. He tossed back-to-back doubles on the last two rolls of the Crawford game to stay alive. When Dave won two more points directly, things became interesting.

In the next game, a gammon win by Cramer would mean the match. Dave's hopes were boosted when Carl fell into a 1-5 backgame. But Dave had trouble bringing his men home and was forced to leave a shot. Carl missed, setting up the following position with **CRAMER TO PLAY 6-4**:

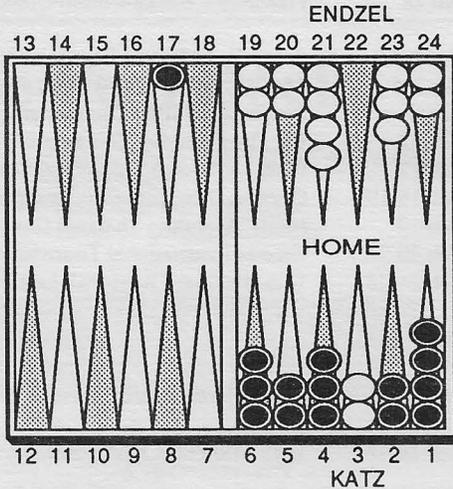


Here Dave should leave a double shot by moving 7/3. It is imperative to make the

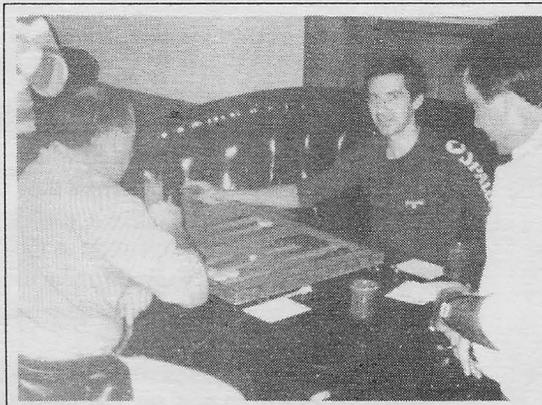
3-point to have any chance for a healthy bear-off. Instead Dave chose the inferior 6/2 single shot play. Although safer the next throw by a factor of 20 to 11, this move begs for trouble down the line.

Carl rolled 6-3, making his 2-point. Then Dave tossed an ugly 3-1. He cleared his bar-point but the 3-blot still remained. This time Sellars hit the target and eventually closed Cramer out to win the match.

In the Limited division, Bruce Endzel slipped past Stu Katz in thrilling fashion. At double match point, Stu was beginning to smell victory when the parlay of doom rolled into motion. The position shown below has **BLACK TO PLAY 1-1**:



BPC FALL TROPHY TOURNEY WINNERS



Carl Sellars of Toronto enjoys the progress of his Open Championship match against Dave Cramer.



Chicago's Bruce Endzel displays his Limited first place trophy.

THE DEADLINE APPROACHES

In order to be included in the January *Chicago POINT* listing of "Backgammon Clubs In North America," send information about your club by December 15, 1988. See page 3.

Stu played 17/14, 6/5. Bruce followed with 5-1 and broke his 6-point. Then Stu found a number he hadn't thought of: 6-5. Bruce capitalized by hitting both blots and was able to slither home for the win. Δ

BPC 1988 FALL TROPHY TOURNEY

OPEN (29): 1st Carl Sellars (CAN); 2nd Dave Cramer (IL); 3/4 Ken Bond (IL) and Yamin Yamin (IL). 1st Cons. Ron Stur (IL); 2nd Cons. Tom Walthes (IL). LIMITED (14): 1st Bruce Endzel (IL); 2nd Stu Katz (IL); 1st Cons. Bill Keefe (IL); 2nd Cons. Marv Arrol (WI).

CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

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LETTERS

c/o Chicago POINT
2726 W. Lunt Avenue
Chicago, IL 60645

MORE ON THE HOFFBERG CONTROVERSY

I was astonished to discover in last month's POINT that I am at least partially responsible for a controversial situation. I'm referring to a letter from a Mr. Ira Hoffberg, who according to the October POINT, has compiled an enviable record of success over the last few years playing in Intermediate events. Mr. Hoffberg writes that he chooses not to play in the Open division because he might run up against "true professional players," or even worse, "people who write books." He suggests that if only directors would create a separate division for such people, he'd be happy to enter the Open division.

Well, golly gosh. I can think of one good reason why directors don't run sections limited to "true professional players"—there wouldn't be anyone to enter them. Anyone who tries to make a living from backgammon today would have to be seriously demented. (Besides, isn't the point of a "Open" division to be open to anyone? Maybe I'm missing

coming attractions

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



by Carol Joy Cole
313/232-9731

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	Toronto Monthly Tournament, Le Spot, Ontario, Canada	416/267-2815
Dec 11	Pittsburgh Monthly Tournament, Parkway Center, PA	412/241-1301
Dec 11	Special £100 Tournament, Stocks Town Club, London, England	01-261-1077
Dec 11	Cavendish North Monthly Tournament, Southfield, MI	313/642-9616
Dec 15	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Sheraton Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Dec 16-18	Gammon Associates Invitational, Stouffer Concourse, Los Angeles	818/901-0464
Dec 18	NEBC Monthly, Sheraton Commander Hotel, Cambridge, MA	617/547-4800
Dec 27-28	Christmas Tournament, Massa Hotel, Wiesbaden, West Germany	0661-62 644
Dec 30-Jan 2	Last Tourney of '88/First Tourney of '89, Loews Summit, New York	305/527-4033
Jan 7	Sangamon Valley Tournament, On Broadway, Springfield, IL	800/223-6146 x286
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
Jan 17	Bar Point Club Awards Night, Pat's Pub, Norridge, IL	312/338-6380
Jan 19	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Sheraton Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Jan 20-22	BG-SKI Happening, Seefeld/Tirol, Austria	08341/12825
Jan 21	Sangamon Valley Tournament, On Broadway, Springfield, IL	800/223-6146 x286
Jan 26	Flint Area Club Awards Night, Sheraton Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Jan 26-29	European Championship, Le Byblos Des Neiges, Courchevel, France	061-50-5816
Jan 26-30	Paradise Island Pro-Am Invitational, Bahamas	301/942-4365
Jan 28	Hawthorne Backgammon Classic; Hawthorne Races; Cicero, IL	312/338-6380
Feb 1-5	Australian Masters Tournament, Town House Int'l, Wagga Wagga	(02) 92 7726
Feb 3-5	11th Annual Charity Tournament, Airport Marriott, Pittsburgh, PA	412/391-6363
Feb 4	Sangamon Valley Tournament, On Broadway, Springfield, IL	800/223-6146 x286
Feb 12	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Bagwells, Chicago, IL	312/252-7755
Feb 12	Fleet Underwood Memorial Tournament, Sheraton Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Feb 18-19	German Championship, Stuttgart, West Germany	040-270 1166
Feb 19	NEBC Monthly, Sheraton Commander Hotel, Cambridge, MA	617/547-4800
Feb 20-23	Cannes International Tournament, Palais des Festivals, France	061-50-5816
Feb 24-26	13th Bluegrass Regional, Louisville, KY	502/458-5439
Mar 4	Sangamon Valley Tournament, On Broadway, Springfield, IL	800/223-6146 x286
Mar 12	NEBC Monthly, Sheraton Commander Hotel, Cambridge, MA	617/547-4800
Mar 17-19	37th Indiana Open, Radisson Hotel, Indianapolis, IN	317/845-8435
Apr 14-16	1989 Midwest Championships, Holiday Inn, Oakbrook Terrace, IL	312/338-6380

something here.)

Even if there aren't any true professionals left, there certainly are "people who write books." I know because I'm one of them. Now I can't blame Mr. Hoffberg for not wanting to play against us: we are a bunch of slimy sleazebags—the lowest of the low—and I'm always amazed when any decent person sits down across the board from me. However, I don't want to be accused of stifling competition in the Midwest—far from it. So I will make to Mr. Hoffberg the following one-time-only, money-back guaranteed offer:

Mr. Hoffberg: If you will play in the Open divisions from now on, I promise that if I am paired with you in any section of any tournament, no matter how important, I will forfeit to you without play. This offer

good for one year—January 1, 1989 to December 31, 1989. How about it?—*Bill Robertie, 1983 World Champion, 1987 World Champion, 1988 World Cup Consolation Champion, and author (Ugh!) of three (Horrors!) books*

I read Ira Hoffberg's letter defending his Intermediate status and to some degree, understand what he's saying. He's been playing in the Intermediate division with good results for a long time. But certainly there are a lot of really good Intermediates playing all over the country. This problem highlights the need for a national backgammon organization that could produce an accepted standard for rating players and

See "Letters..." page 5

Help us create a listing of...

Backgammon Clubs In North America

Last month, the *Chicago POINT* announced its intention to compile a listing of Backgammon Clubs in North America for publication in the January *POINT*. The response has been good: 33 clubs from 17 states and Canada have sent in information. Obviously, many clubs have yet to reply.

Please help by sending in the following information about your local club:

1. Name of club,
2. Location and address where club meets,
3. Is club organized, casual, or private?
4. Is a guest fee required?
5. Is there a tournament and/or side play?
6. Does club meet (daily, weekly, monthly)?
7. Starting time,
8. The club director and phone number,
9. Name and address of individual submitting information.

To be included in the 1989 Listing, mail the preceding information **BY DECEMBER 15** to:

Backgammon Listings
c/o Chicago POINT
2726 W. Lunt Avenue
Chicago, IL 60645



1988 BPC PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED
THRU NOV. 30

TAK MORIOKA	27.20	Bob Zavoral	3.64	Doug Mayfield	0.88
YAMIN YAMIN	26.56	Dean Muench	3.60	Larry Strommen	0.88
RICH SWEETMAN	21.56	Peggy Fleming	3.44	Ida Zeman	0.88
KATHY BAUDER	20.96	Ron Garber	3.24	Mark King	0.84
JOHN DEMIAN	19.12	Neil Banoff	2.96	Carol Mennis	0.80
DAVID LIBCHABER	17.08	Gary Keyes	2.88	Don Desmond	0.80
DEEB SHALATI	13.72	Don Pearson	2.84	Marty Tatosian	0.72
STU KATZ	13.24	Bob Holyon	2.72	Don Marek	0.64
PETER KALBA	12.32	Barry Epstein	2.68	Miles Cohen	0.64
IRA HOFFBERG	12.20	Ron Stur	2.40	Marcy Sloan	0.60
BILL DAVIS	11.44	Carl Sellars	2.32	Arlene Levy	0.56
ARNOLD ZOUSMER	10.80	Andy Suszczyk	2.16	Bruce Endzel	0.56
JOANN FEINSTEIN	10.56	Jeff Kane	2.12	Mark Hicks	0.52
SARG SERGES	10.52	George Panagakis	2.08	Kevin Bryant	0.48
DON JAYHAN	8.52	Jeff Vaughn	2.04	Mark Anshus	0.48
RICH SIEBOLD	8.48	Bill Hoeflich	2.00	Paul Reiner	0.40
ANDY ARGY	8.40	Jeff Henry	1.92	Howard Markowitz	0.32
KEN BOND	8.04	Jim Rudig	1.92	Duane Jensen	0.32
GREG SHORE	7.92	Kevin Muench	1.88	Les Berg	0.24
NORMA SHYER	7.72	Ralph Levy	1.84	Rudy Emmelot	0.24
Phyllis Smolinski	7.20	Betsy Miller	1.80	Trudie Stern	0.24
Connie Sychowski	6.24	Jill Ferdinand	1.72	Chuck Evers	0.20
Bobbie Shifrin	6.20	Gene Chait	1.68	Sharon Hegg	0.20
Joe Koucharian	6.08	Harry Hayward	1.44	Dave Lehrer	0.16
Chris Kenik	6.08	Jim Sargent	1.28	Nabeel Jeha	0.16
Dan Judd	6.04	Roland Dieter	1.28	Marv Arnol	0.16
Bill Keefe	5.72	Tom Walthes	1.20	Chris Hegg	0.12
Ed Buerger	5.20	Dean Morehouse	1.16	Dave Shifman	0.12
John Spatafora	4.68	Al Meinecke	1.16	David Hegg	0.12
Dave Cramer	4.52	Elaine Kehm	0.96	Ray Lanzillo	0.12
Alyce Wallen	4.16	Larry Guzan	0.96	Jay Bleiman	0.08
Ed Bauder	4.08	Dave Rockwell	0.88	Richard Stawowy	0.08
Don Muellner	3.72				

"I feel like a bicyclist in a long race who's been riding second in the draft of the leader. Now it's time to make my move." And that's just what BPC Player of the Month YAMIN YAMIN is doing. Yamin placed in all five tournaments in November to collect 4.28 points and move to within 0.64 points of Tak Morioka. Expect a frantic sprint in December!

prevention

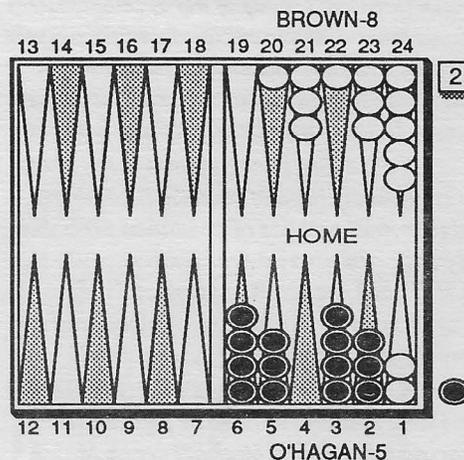
HASTY PLAYS



by Duane Jensen

As the designated expert in hasty plays, I've wondered if a "hasty play" has ever been the best one. The 1988 Chicago Open was the site of a probable candidate.

Steve Brown (Minnesota) led John O'Hagan (Indiana) 8 to 5 in a 9 point match. With Brown holding a 2-cube, O'Hagan (Black) rolled 4-2 in the position below. What's the best play?



- Bear off one from the 6-point, or
- Play 6/2 and slot a man on the 4-point (hoping Brown rolls 3-5).

The best way to play 4-2 is probably to play it hastily! I'll explain.

The Chicago Open is a collection of ten 9 point matches, each limited to 90 minutes—*strictly enforced*. No new game can begin once the 90 minutes have expired. O'Hagan rolled this 4-2 with only about 4 minutes left in the match. However he chose to play the roll, he should have done it **quickly**. O'Hagan might gammon Brown this game and win the match; but the important point was to give himself the chance to **start another game** before time ran out.

O'Hagan pondered the 4-2 so long that the 90 minutes expired and a new game couldn't be started. He mistakenly thought the director had proclaimed *this* to be the last game, and he was trying to milk a gammon from the position. Brown escaped the gammon and won the match on time.

Each tournament has its own peculiarities. Be sure to keep your antennae fully extended at all times. Besides your opponent, the dice and the score, a time limit match requires you to play a proper strategy against the clock. Δ

DEAR MISS LONELYBLOTS



HOW TO PLAY FASTER

Dear Miss Lonelyblots: I am a chess player who left the game for backgammon. I enjoy chess, but during my high school years, it was evident that backgammon was the way to go from a coed standpoint. From chess, I retained my slow play characteristics which for some odd reason, bothers many of my opponents. I don't quite understand this because players ponder even the most mundane moves in chess for 10 minutes or more and it is not unusual for one move to take one hour.

I realize that backgammon is not chess; it is infinitely harder because it employs higher mathematics of combined probability laws and normal probability curves that chess does not use. My question is: how can I speed up my play so I do not hold up my local tournament without severely compromising my thought process? It takes me time to count to 1296 or figure out racing takes based on the Muench Match Equity Formula and the normal probability curve. This doesn't even mention complicated strategy moves that take me longer to work out because I am not a natural player.—Molasses In January

Dear Molasses: I'm glad you play chess, for comparisons of backgammon to chess may prove helpful.

(1) Major chess tournaments schedule one game per day; backgammon tournaments, several matches (each usually embracing many games) per day. Therefore, it is reasonable to demand that backgammon, even though the more difficult game, be played more rapidly.

(2) Speed matters in chess, too. Serious chess utilizes clocks. Even if his flag does not fall, the slow chess player's game suffers under time pressure. In backgammon, for many reasons, clocks would be impractical and unfair, so a director's admittedly subjective judgment replaces any mechanical procedure for penalizing slow play. Just as time pressure accelerates a slow chess player's moves, the director's warning and his power to assess penalty points should prod you to play backgammon more quickly.

(3) In chess, you don't waste your

precious thinking time bemoaning the fact that your opponent found the best reply to your last move or hoping that he'll miss the best reply to your next. Similarly, in backgammon it is futile wasting your time cursing the bad numbers you have already rolled or wishing for the good rolls you need.

(4) You never ponder your opening move in a chess game, weighing the comparative merits of the French Defense and the Sicilian. Instead you pick a style and stick to it. In backgammon you should do likewise. Decide once and for all whether to slot or split on an opening 5-1, for example. Similarly, it may be right to try a major split on an opening 4-3, or it may be right to bring two builders down, but we have no good evidence of the marked superiority of either play. Even though the mid-70's fashion of bringing two men down from the midpoint on an opening 5-3 has yielded to making the 3-point, the purer play can't be far wrong if it's wrong at all. Make the play that produces a comfortable game for you when the differences in equity between plays are too small to discern in any case.

(5) Don't try to examine all possible moves. Reject most alternatives as irrelevant or harmful, just as you don't even consider playing P-QR4 in the midst of an attack upon an enemy king nestled on his own KN1.

(6) Computers "think" about both chess and backgammon by rating the positions which result from each legal move and choosing the move with the highest rating. That's inefficient, and may explain why, despite the computers' superhuman speed and accuracy, the best human game-players beat the best computers. Human experts organize their thinking around long-range game plans and short-range objectives. It helps the chess player to think in terms of purposes and principles, like developing his minor pieces, controlling the center, contesting open files, protecting his king, maintaining his pawn structure, attacking and defending the squares which become pivotal at various stages of the game. Analogously, backgammon has its general principles and specific tactics. The beginner (or computer) scans every possible play. The expert examines only the moves which bear on his objectives and ignores the rest. If he can hit a blot on the enemy 5-point, for example, he may not even "see" the alternative of making his own 9-point.

(7) As a chess player, you've adapted to

the "touch-move" rule. You've learned to visualize future positions in your head before you create them on the board. Look at backgammon positions in the same way. See how the board will look after each alternative play by looking at it in your head. Don't waste time shuffling checkers back and forth before settling on your move and lifting your dice.

(8) Chess players may spend 20 minutes on one move, developing a plan, but then play the next six moves quickly to execute that plan. In backgammon, you may also face pivotal decisions which involve game plans. Shall you run or play a holding game? Can you maintain two low anchors and your board to play a back game, or should you keep just one anchor and play a deucepoint game? Take a little extra time at a few such junctures, decide on your goals, and then pursue these goals without undue second-guessing. Above all, take time on your cube decisions, which are less frequent and more weighty than play decisions. If you decide not to double, think ahead to what changes in the position will justify a double a few rolls later.—Miss Lonelyblots

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



ILLINOIS ACTION



Bill Davis
312/338-6380
Peter Kalba
312/276-4144

Tuesday, 7:15 PM at Pat's Pub, 4343 N. Harlem Ave., Norridge (457-1166).

Sunday Bimonthly, 12:30 at Bagwells, 4636 N. Cumberland, Chgo (625-1717).

PUB CLUB: Tournaments Monday, 7:30 PM at Fiddler's, 345 W. North Ave., Villa Park. Ed Bauder (312/985-1568).

SANGAMMON VALLEY BG ASS'N: Tournaments Tuesday, 6:15 PM at On Broadway, 210 S. Broadway, Springfield. Greg Tomlin (800/223-6146 x286).

WINNETKA BG CLUB: Tournaments Weds., 7:00 PM at 620 Lincoln, Winnetka. Trudie Stern (312/446-0537).

CENT. ILL. BG CLUB: Tourn. Thurs., 6:30 PM at Peoria Pizza Wks, 3921 Prospect, Peoria. Sue Will (309/692-6909).

NORTH CLUB: Daily side play at 4747 N. Peterson (Room 402), Chicago. Howard Markowitz (312/286-8417).

LETTERS...

(Continued from page 2)

sanctioning tournaments.

I used to belong to the American Horse Show Association. They had a terrific system for placing horses into their proper division. Like backgammon, the AHSA had three showing levels: Preliminary, Intermediate and Open jumpers. Everything was set on a dollar amount. When Preliminary horses won X amount of dollars, they were required to move up with the Intermediate jumpers. When Intermediates won so much, they had to show in the Open. When the horses reached the Open division, if they showed in a certain amount of events without winning any money, then they could move back down to the Intermediate level.

Perhaps with a money system similar to the one in the horse business, the problem of rating players could be solved.—*Louise Goldsmith, New York, NY*

I've been playing serious backgammon for about a year now, but have yet to enter a major or regional tournament because of where I live. I do the next best thing though and go to Hong Kong every month to play in their tournaments (they had 35 players last month). I know there are several players there that are stronger than I am, but I've been reasonably successful and currently rank second in master points.

Last month we had a special tournament in Macau. I lost in the finals 19-18 to one of the strongest players in Hong Kong. Does this make me a strong player? Not yet! However, when and if I do play in a major tournament in the States, I will enter the Open division. My conscience wouldn't let me try to pass myself off as a weaker player than I actually am. Obviously, characters like Ira Hoffberg have no such qualms and should be labelled for just what they are: cheaters.—*Jerry Godsey, Macau*

BACKGAMMON IN HAWAII

I look forward to your "Backgammon Clubs In North America" list being published in January. For now, can you give me any information about backgammon in Maui, Hawaii. I'll be vacationing there for Christmas.—*Marcy Sloan, Riverwoods, IL*

"Gambits," the bar in the Maui Marriott Hotel, has four well-lit backgammon boards that are usually busy throughout the evening. Try there.—*Ed.*

DON'T BLAME DEAN!

I was reading Dean Muench's "When Better Is Worse" article when my eyes saw the winning percentage in Position B stated as 91.31944444444443. It's the most unusual "backgammon number" I've ever seen. The odds of a number ending in the form AAAAAAAAAAB are 1 in 10 million. I had to check this gem out for myself so I calculated the position by hand (it wasn't that hard). My findings show that in Position A, Black wins 95.8741% and in Position B, Black wins 95.6597%. Incidentally, the correct explanation for this paradox is that Position A leaves the 5- and 2-points open, making 5-2 and 3-2 instant losers.—*Duane Jensen, St. Paul, MN*

Oops! Dean supplied us with the correct win probabilities. We erroneously printed the expectancies.—Ed.

I was interested to read the good news from Dean Muench about his latest results in using the computer to determine correct cube play in bear-off positions. Some day, computers will probably give us a complete set of correct decisions for all non-contact bear-off positions. Apparently Dean has thus far made the most progress toward this goal.

However, his discussion of cube play when each side has 15 men on their 1-point (*Chicago POINT*, Sept. 1988) is hardly news. Many years ago, using a hand calculator, I determined the equities and correct cube plays for all "no miss" bear-off positions (where each side has all remaining men on their 1-point or the equivalent). I first published this information as part of an article on end-game doubling in the *Las Vegas Backgammon* magazine in October 1980. Later, these positions became problem #61 in my book *Winning Is More Fun*, first published in 1981. A complete discussion of cube play in no-miss bear-off positions also appears on page 55 of my book *The Doubling Cube, Vol. 1*, published in 1982.

Any of these references would have told Dean that the position in question is a double with a centered cube but not if the cube is owned by the roller, and that it is a take for the other side.—*Jeff Ward, San Diego, CA*

Dean's article documents the first time a computer has been successfully used to arrive at the results. This is the point of the article.—Ed. Δ

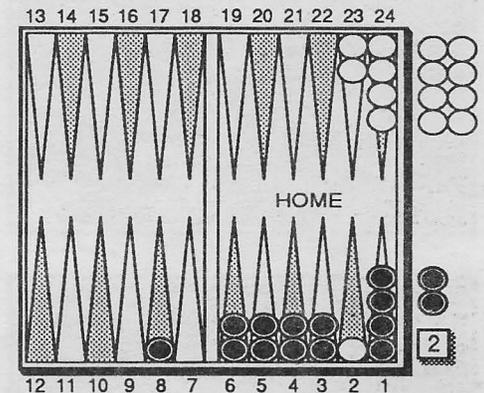
your move

PROBLEM #142

Duane Jensen submits the following position taken from the first game of an Open division match between Joe Sylvester and Granite State director Lincoln Bedell at a past Indiana Open. Linc (Black) must play 2-1. Should he come in and bear off? Should he play to the 5-point? Should he bear in the 2 and boldly hit with the ace from the 3-point?

Lincoln made the "best" play from among *his* choices. He hit with the ace (stopping Joe from running) and then took the 2 off! Joe decided to let the misplay stand and then proceeded to dance for a few rolls. No justice, you say? Not true. Joe managed to win this game after all. Δ

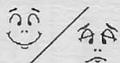
Match to 11 points. No score. **BLACK TO PLAY 2-1.**



AMALGAMATION

Duane Jensen offers this review of the new Saitek backgammon computer mentioned here in the October—"Don't buy it. The game has nine levels of skill, each equally stupid. Whoever programmed the computer knew the rules of backgammon but none of the strategies."... One week after low pre-registration cancelled their "Autumn Harvest" backgammon tournament, the Hyatt Lake Tahoe had similar problems with a money bridge tournament. Director **Danny Kleinman** reports, "The equity proved very great (346% for the Non-experts division, 1319% for the Experts) because very few entrants showed up."... Talk about your backgammon hard luck stories: Playing for sexual favors, **Ed Bauder** wins 20 minutes worth from his wife **Kathy** last month. So what does she tell him?: "Collect it from **Deeb Shalati**." Δ

TAKING THE GOOD WITH THE BAD



by Larry Strommen

When you have one or two points open in your home board, one man in the outfield and your opponent on the bar, fear of a fly shot frequently exists. Even though only two or four numbers will enter and hit, it seems that your opponent always gets the right roll and you never do.

Bear in mind that we tend to remember the bad stuff that happens to us and while we may enjoy the feeling of a good roll, we seldom remember same for long. Thus when our opponent dances or enters and does not hit, we relax. But when he enters, hits and proceeds to win the game, we accumulate the results that worked against us into a big horror story. When the situation arises again, we sit in fear of a similar occurrence. Since we run a selective memory of the bad, and forget the good, we never really know the true situation.

Be satisfied that the statistical distribution will reign supreme and that we all get our share of good rolls intermixed with the bad. Δ

WINNER'S CORNER



Oct.-Nov. 1988

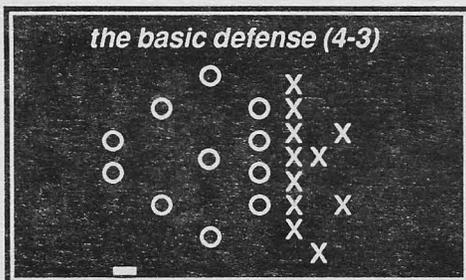
3rd South American Championships (Buenos Aires, Argentina; Aug. 20-25)...
Championship: 1st Mario Lopez Ameguido (Bu. A); 2nd Cid Torquato, Jr. (San Paulo).
Victorian Open (Melbourne, Australia; Sept. 30-Oct. 2)...
Open: 1st Steve Winter (NSW); 2nd Bryce Gilmore (Vic); 3/4 Mike Watkins (Vic) and Simon Woodhead (NSW).
Intermediate: 1st B. Ceminchak; 2nd Robert Cassidy.
CPBC Fall Open (College Park, MD; Oct. 8)...
Open (25): 1st Greg Lilley, 2nd Herbert Avram; 3rd Marcy Cohen.
European BG/Golf Combo Championship (Zell Am See, Austria; Oct. 14-16)...
Championship: 1st Mike Girone; 2nd Gerd Schiesser; 1st Cons. Carsten Joh. **Beginner:** 1st Wilhelm Graf; 1st Cons. S. Uhl.
Springfield Open (Springfield, IL; Oct. 15)...
Open (15): 1st John McCabe (Peoria); 2nd Ben Zemaitis (Chatham, IL).
Swedish Open (Stockholm; Nov. 4-6)...
Championship: 1st Frederic Wrang (SWE); 2nd Robert Lindbom (SWE); 1st Cons. Ulf Hällebo (SWE); 2nd Cons. Pierre Lundblad (SWE); 1st LC Katarina Atternäs (SWE); 2nd LC Pepe Kettunen (FIN).
Super Jackpot: 1st Jörgen Granstedt (SWE)... Ulf Ring, chairman of the Swedish Cube Federation reports that "The audience and the referee (Baron of Culcreuch) were stunned" by the huge cubes that decided each Championship flight. The doubler reached 8 in the 9 point Last Chance, 16 in the 15 point Consolation, and 32 in the 25 point Main Flight!
Cavendish North Mixed Doubles (Southfield, MI; Nov 11)... 1/2 Carol Joy Cole & Mike Keener, 1/2 Marilyn McMaster & Ron Wolton.
NY/NJ Co-op Fall Tourney (Highland, NY; Nov. 11-13)...
Championship: 1st Joe Paduch (NJ)... The rebirth of a traditionally popular event.
10th Flint Birthday Club Championship (Flint, MI; Nov 20)...
Open (27): 1st Gary Fritzsche; 2nd John Salomon; 3/4 Dean Adamian and Rick Todd. **Intermediate (31):** 1st Pete Carr; 2nd Gus Pappas; 3/4 Miriam Bureson and Nick Nowak. **Novice (12):** 1st Carol Levine; 2nd Sylvia Huddleston; 3rd Shirley Peyton.
Children's Hospital Benefit (Cambridge, MA; Nov. 25-27)...
Open: 1st Gary Garabedian (MA); 2nd Bill Robertie (MA).
Intermediate: 1st Rick Gruen (RI); 2nd Kati Pratt (TX). **Boston 500:** 1st Sam Janjigian (MA); 2nd Bill Robertie (MA). Δ

Coach D. Jensen's

Chalk Talk

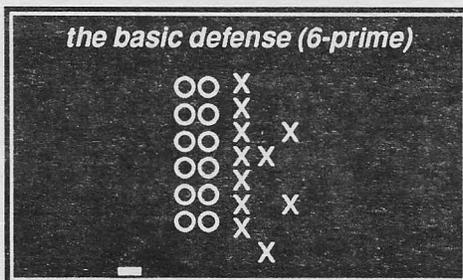
FOOTBALL

the basic defense (4-3)

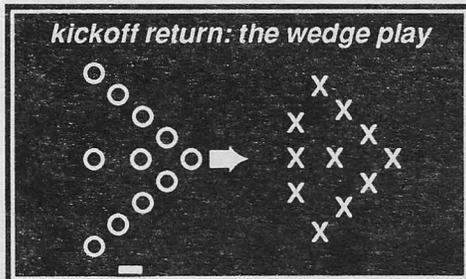


BACKGAMMON

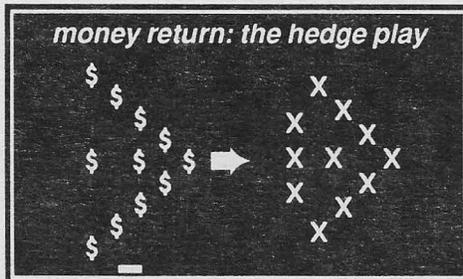
the basic defense (6-prime)



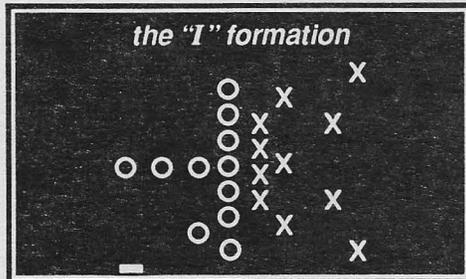
kickoff return: the wedge play



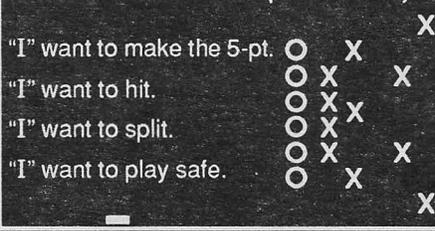
money return: the hedge play



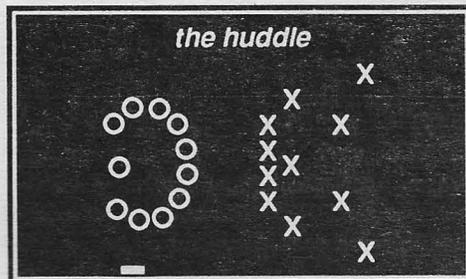
the "I" formation



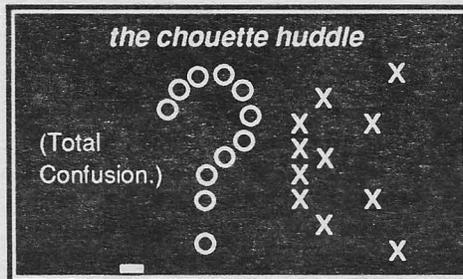
the "I" formation (chouettes)



the huddle



the chouette huddle



A CHRISTMAS GIFT



by Duane Jensen

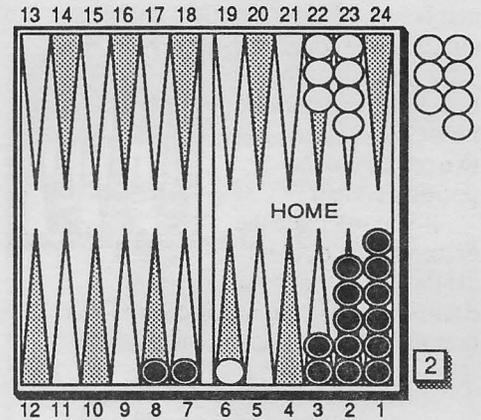
I recently found a great Christmas gift—so good that I gave it to myself. Browsing through a bookstore, I found Joe Sylvester's new backgammon book, *The Secrets of Winning*. It's a great book. Joe has collected all of the pertinent backgammon mathematics and put the material under one roof. He shows how to calculate doubling- and take-points, racing and match percentages, and the best checker positions for 2, 3, and 4 checker bear-offs. Anything important to winning a game, match or tournament is in Joe's book.

The Secrets of Winning is not a tome or door-stop. The book is small, for Joe's writing resembles himself, lean and efficient. One chapter has a few stories and anecdotes such as the miracle race and bear-off between Joe and Howard Markowitz. My favorite chapter is where Joe annotates two 9-point matches. After each roll, he explains what his goal is and why one play is superior to another. You get the opportunity to enter the mind of a top player during tournament competition. The first match is against Frank Talbot; the second is against Marilyn Monroe who, ah... Marilyn Monroe? How could Joe have played her in a backgammon match? Oh no! *Brrrrr...* Oh no! *Brrrrr...* My alarm clock. I was only dreaming. But the book seemed so real, so plausible. If enough people had the same dream, it might become reality.

Joe should write a backgammon "bible" now, while he is still interested in the game and people are interested in what he has to say. I hope Joe hasn't ruled out making this Christmas wish a reality. Say it ain't so, Joe. Δ

PROBLEM #141 SOLVED

Money game. **BLACK TO PLAY 1-1.**



A relatively simple solution this month: Merry Christmas.

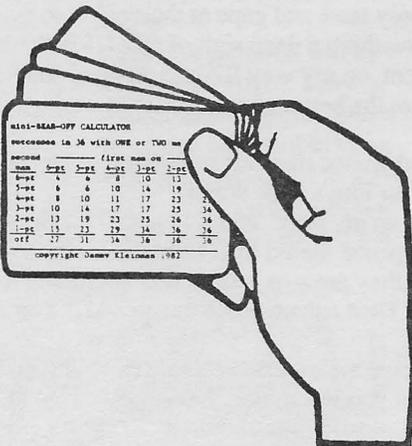
Black is in the process of beating back White's straggling checker and now has a good chance for victory. Black is still slightly behind in the race. To win, he'll need to pick up about one roll on his opponent. Which play—(a) 7/6*/3 or (b) 8/6*, 7/6, 1/Off—best accomplishes this task?

It's true that if Black makes pick-and-pass play (a), White has only 10 rolls that break contact altogether (4-5, 4-6, 5-5, 5-6, 6-3, 6-6). With (b), White gets 14 breakaway rolls (4-3, 4-4, 4-5, 4-6, 5-2, 5-3, 5-5, 5-6). Also, after making his 6-point, Black may be forced into leaving White a shot following 12 shakes next turn (4-1, 4-2, 5-2, 5-2, 6-1, 6-2). But both of these considerations overlook the big picture.

Black should make play (b) for two obvious reasons. First, the extra point increases White dancing rolls by 43% (16 vs. 9). Second, from a racing standpoint, compare bringing in two checkers and taking a piece off to leaving a checker in the outer table. Play (b) gains Black nearly a full roll right off the gun! Δ

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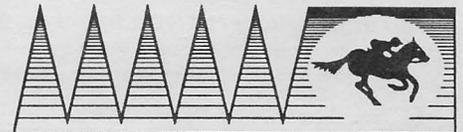
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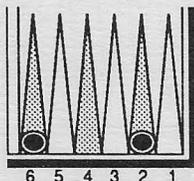
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UNFORGETTABLE

by Duane Jensen

Some numbers are so deeply embedded in my brain that I can never forget them: my phone number, social security number, π , Mickey Mantle's uniform number, and some bear-off percentages.

What percent of the time will you bear off both checkers within two rolls from the position at right?



If you calculate the percentage and round off the answer to seven decimal places, you will see why I can never forget this nine digit number. Δ

----- %
(Answer next month)

TAKGAMMON



by Tak Morioka

THE ENCOUNTER

It was a cold and damp night in late October. The trees stood like sentinels against the moonlit sky. The autumn leaves were losing their fragile grip as the swirling north wind rushed between the outstretched branches. I was walking in the crisp night air, communing with nature and the forces that be. Lashed by cold winds across my face, I sought shelter in a nearby place. There ahead was a pub with red neon lights—the answer to my present plight. When I entered that haven door, I noticed that only a few had braved the night.

As I approached the bar to order a drink, I recognized a familiar sound rising from the back. It was the rhythmic click of rolling dice and the sudden bang of slammed checkers. I had heard this often over many years of play. The sounds brought back an indelible memory of excitement and pain.

Drawing closer to the noises, I saw three nervous players glued to their chairs. They were totally oblivious of my intrusion as the volatility of the game held their complete attention. A titanic mental and emotional battle was in the making. The inability of anyone to land a blow on the soft underbelly of the other's position brought out the moans and groans of anguish and frustration. The silence of uncertain expectation heightened the tension, and the rattle of the dice cup became the drum roll before the execution. Pressure took its toll as calm demeanor gave way to pleas for numbers. The panic had set in, giving voice to the fears. I felt the anxiety surface as quivering lips muttered:

*Double trouble. The cube's on sixty-four,
Beavers and Raccoons have sprung this trap door.
Falling into certain doom,
Will I get out? Will I survive?
What magic number can end this dread?
Winning or losing is hanging by a thread.*

I nervously fumbled for a cigarette, not wanting to miss a second of what was happening. As I turned to reach for my lighter, everything fell silent. The game had stopped. Nobody was around. Where did they go? How did they get out? As I looked down upon the board with bewilderment and disbelief, I saw the identical position that the others had been playing. There on the board, a faint green glow was coming from a pair of dice. When I tried to pick them up, they scattered like two frightened bugs.

Whoa! I leapt back. Frozen by fear, I could only stare and gape at their effort to evade my grasp. After a while, the dice came to rest. Breathing a deep sigh of relief, I looked up to see if I could safely flee. To my own amazement, on my very flight, I stopped and pocketed the strange pair of dice. My curiosity got the better of me. I was determined to find out what made them tick.

When I got home, I put them in a glass jar and waited days for something to happen. After a month, I got tired of the vigil and put the jar into a desk drawer.

About a year later, I heard a noises coming from my desk. When I opened the drawer, I saw glowing dice rolling around in the jar. As I opened the lid to get a better look, they jumped out. The brighter they glowed, the larger they grew. A mouth was beginning to appear. Menacing red eyes grew over the mouth. Then a deep voice threatened, "You got away last year, but you will pay dearly."

Nervously, I asked what they wanted. They gave me a sardonic smile exposing their formidable sawlike teeth and said, "We heard that you were good. Let's see *how* good." Δ



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