

championship of great britain

MAN, OH MAN!

Alan Steffen brings Isle of Man Champ Trophy back to Chicago

Alan Steffen of Chicago, IL gained a few pounds on his May 18-21 trip to the Isle of Man: £16,340 to be exact. That was the first place award (over \$25,000 U.S.) for winning the Championship of Great Britain. The mega-event on the tiny island situated in the Irish Sea was chaired by the Baron and Baroness of Culcreuch in cooperation with the Worldwide Backgammon Federation. 200 players from 15 countries participated with £10,000 added by the Palace Hotel & Casino.

Steffen, the 1988 Nevada State Champ faced international chess master Hans Böhm of Amsterdam in the 25 point finals. The championship was shown on closed circuit TV with expert commentary provided by America's best: Joe Sylvester and Bill Robertie.

Playing conditions for the final match were not the best. The 8' by 16' converted storage room had only a fan to fight the 80° temperatures brought about by the TV lighting. With WBF President Alberto da



Alan Steffen receives the Champion's trophy and a handshake from the Baron of Culcreuch.



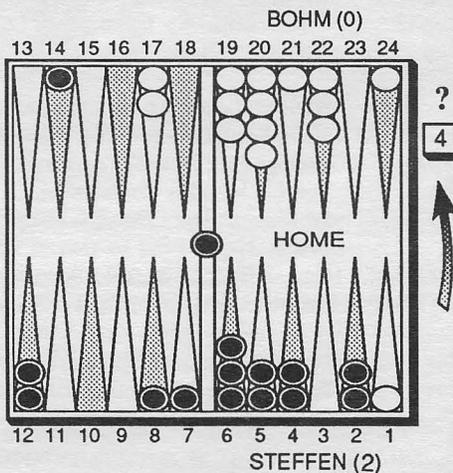
The Joe Sylvester and Bill Robertie finals commentary was "electric."

Pra and Julian Wilson alternating referee duties, the match began.

Böhm offered an early double in the first game which Steffen quickly took. Alan later turned the position around and redoubled Böhm out for a 2-0 lead. The next game effectively decided the match.

Böhm got off to a good start in game two. After taking a sip of his Perrier and lemon, he cubed Steffen. Once again, Alan, seeming very comfortable with the surroundings, had an easy take. This time when he turned the game around and redoubled to 4, Hans scooped:

Championship of Great Britain. 25 point finals. Alan Steffen (Black) leads Hans Böhm (White), 2 to 0. **BLACK RE-DOUBLES TO 4. SHOULD WHITE TAKE?**



In the packed viewing room, there was a difference of opinion. Commentator Robertie said he would probably take, but Joe Sylvester was very leery of the dangerous 4-cube. Within minutes, Steffen had three of Böhm's pieces on the bar and marched in for a gammon and a 10-0 lead. Although Böhm got as close as 11-7, he could never come back against his more experienced opponent, losing the match 25-12.

During one of the later games when Böhm failed to go for a gammon, Sylvester summed up the story of the match: "Chess players aren't used to playing for huge sums of money. The pressure obviously got

(Continued on page 7)

the chicago open

KALANTARI HAS MEMORABLE WEEKEND

Fred Kalantari (Edina, Minnesota) proved that slow and steady wins the race. Fred earned his 15 points one at a time, including an exciting double match point victory to defeat Doug Huch of New York City and win the Chicago Open. Joann Feinstein and Howard Markowitz co-directed the 10th annual invitational staged at the O'Hare Westin Hotel over the Memorial Day weekend. Once again, the 10 match format was utilized.

"I've won 4 out of 7 \$500 jackpots, but this is my first regional title," said the likable Kalantari who compiled a 7-3 record in the preliminary rounds. His opponent, Huch was in Illinois primarily to visit relatives. Although a fine player, excluding St. Martin in 1988, Huch couldn't remember the last tournament he entered. The complete results:

10TH ANNUAL CHICAGO OPEN

CHAMPIONSHIP (32): 1st Fred Kalantari (MN); 2nd Doug Huch (NY); 3/4 Jim Baroff (DC) and Gary Keyes (IL); 1st Cons. Steve Brown (MN); 2nd Cons. Howard Ring (CA).
 INTERMEDIATE (48): 1st Jeff Baker (IN); 2nd Sandy Grassel (MI); 3/4 Greg Varbanov (IN) and Merrill Schrage (WI); 1st Cons. Jim Allen (NV); 2nd Cons. Alice Kay (IL).
 DOUBLES (32): 1st M. Cyrkiel (IN)/T. Walther (IL); 2nd B. Meese (IN)/W. Kaplan (NY).
 OPEN BLITZ (64): 1st Dave Cramer.
 LIMITED BLITZ (32): 1st Merrill Schrage.



The Big Wheel of Backgammon Interviewed

See page 4

CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

EDITOR & PUBLISHER

Bill Davis
2726 West Lunt Avenue
Chicago, IL 60645
Telephone: (312) 338-6380

REGULAR CONTRIBUTORS

Carol Joy Cole (MI) **Larry Strommen (IN)**
Duane Jensen (MN) **Kit Woolsey (CA)**
Danny Kleinman (CA) **Dean Muench (IL)**
Tak Morioka (IL)

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LETTERS

c/o Chicago POINT
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Chicago, IL 60645

BARGAIN RIPOFF

I also ordered but have never received the "A.I. Backgammon" computer program from Paradise Programming. However, the ad in the November 29, 1988 *PC Magazine* only asked for \$9.75—not the \$19.77 price that Jim Wallace paid (see May "Letters"—Ed.). I guess I got a good deal.

Incidentally, Paradise Programming deposited my check in April into Bank of Hawaii (acct. no. C-25058925).—*Francis Charney, Alexandria, VA*

WIND OUT OF THE NORTHEAST

At first blush, the "Club Team Challenge" at the National Labor Day tournament in Indianapolis sounds exciting. But on further reflection, it seems a bit silly. Why run such an event when it's a foregone conclusion that the New England Backgammon Club (by far the strongest club in the world) will win easily—without serious opposition? Such lopsided match-ups are bad for backgammon. Other participants will only become discouraged, possibly

coming attractions

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



by Carol Joy Cole
313/232-9731

Jun 5	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	3-689918
Jun 9-11	Austrian Tournament, Casino Velden, Austria	08341-12-825
Jun 10-12	Mats Jonasson Australian Nat'l Championship, Hilton, Melbourne	03-266-4209
Jun 11	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Bagwells, Chicago, IL	312/252-7755
Jun 11	New England Club Finals & Year-end Tournament, Cambridge, MA	617/547-4800
Jun 11	Toronto Monthly Tournament, Le Spot, Ontario	416/267-2815
Jun 12-13	Isar Cup Tournament, Munich, West Germany	089-642-3199
Jun 15	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Sheraton Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Jun 21-25	U.S. Open & Master's Invitational, Nugget Hotel/Casino, Reno, NV	702/826-1984
Jun 25	Pittsburgh Sunday Tournament, Parkway Center Inn, Pittsburgh, PA	412/241-1301
Jun 25	British Open, Harlem Hotcha Restaurant, London, England	01-370 7529
Jul 3	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	3-689918
Jul 7-9	San Remo Backgammon Tournament, Hotel Royal, San Remo, Italy	0184/7-99-91
Jul 9	Toronto Monthly Tournament, Le Spot, Ontario	416/267-2815
Jul 10-16	World Championship of Backgammon, Monte-Carlo, Monaco	301/299-8264
Jul 15-16	Nation's Capital Summer Tournament, The Promenade, Bethesda, MD	301/530-0603
Jul 24-25	Isar Cup Tournament, Munich, West Germany	089-642-3199
Jul 27	"Third Thursday" Bonus Tournament, Sheraton Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Jul 28-30	Michigan Summer Championships, Sheraton Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Jul 28-30	European Championship, Casino de Spa, Belgium	0841-12 825
Aug 4-6	1000 Islands Tournament, Pine Tree Point, Alexandria Bay, NY	716/442-8221
Aug 6	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Bagwells, Chicago, IL	312/252-7755
Aug 7	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	3-689918
Aug 7-13	Green Mountain Festival, Ascutney Mtn. Resort, Brownsville, VT	305/527-4033
Aug 13	Toronto Monthly Tournament, Le Spot, Ontario	416/267-2815
Aug 20	1989 Japan Backgammon Championship, Yaesu Fujiya Hotel, Tokyo	03-5476-4303
Sep 1-4	National Labor Day Tournament & Club Challenge, Indianapolis, IN	317/845-8435
Sep 4	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	3-689918
Sep 4	College Park Jackpot Tournament, The Promenade, Bethesda, MD	301/530-0603
Sep 10	Toronto Monthly Tournament, Le Spot, Ontario	416/267-2815
Sep 22-24	5th German Open Championship, Hotel Palace, Berlin, W. Germany	08341-128 25
Oct 4-8	Caesars Tahoe \$20,000 Added, Lake Tahoe, NV	702/826-1984
Oct 27-29	New Hampshire Fall Classic, Woodbound Inn, Jaffrey, NH	603/924-3844
Nov 10-12	NY/NJ Co-op Fall Tourney, Rocking Horse Ranch, Highland, NY	201/833-2915
Nov 23-26	European Backgammon Championships, Casino de Deauville, France	01-376 3033

hurting future tournament attendance.

To maintain balanced competition, director Butch Meese should run the Club Team Challenge in two divisions: a master's division for the New England Backgammon Club, and an amateur division for all others.—*Rick Barabino, Vice President, New England Backgammon Club*

SOMEONE'S LISTENING

In regard to Frank Frigo's letter pertaining to heavy smoking at backgammon tournaments, I've gone one step further than he has. I have virtually stopped attending tournaments, primarily because of the smoke-filled rooms.—*Lee Hren, Keokuk, IA*

The Chicago Bar Point Club is listening, Lee. Look for an editorial next month—Ed.

A REQUEST FOR THE KG LISTINGS

I realize you include the Chicago Bar Point Club master point standings each month because your paper is based in Chicago. How about also including the top 25 rated players from Kent Goulding's International Backgammon Rating list at least on a quarterly basis?—*Greg Daniel, St. Charles, MO* Δ

Kent Goulding is currently bringing his list up-to-date. When he's finished, we'll be happy to print the Top 25—Ed.

TAKE ONE EVERY MONTH

Please renew my perscription for the POINT. It's just what the doctor ordered for my gammon fever!—*Greg Tomlin, Springfield, IL*

HOROWITZ SHOT—LIES IN COMA

Gaby Horowitz of Beverly Hills, CA, flamboyant backgammon player, author, and columnist for the now defunct *Gambling Times*, was accidentally shot in the head in April by his writing partner Bruce Roman. The two men, avid gun collectors, were examining a Colt .45 in the holster when Roman accidentally discharged the pistol, striking Horowitz in the forehead. No charges were filed against Roman.

Horowitz, also known as Gabriel Monet, remains in a coma at the UCLA Medical Center with bullet fragments still lodged in his head.

MARKOWITZ RETIRES AS DIRECTOR

Howard Markowitz announced his retirement as a backgammon director/promoter on May 27 at the Chicago Open Calcutta auction. He cited interest in other areas as the reason, but will continue to play in major events.

Markowitz founded and presided over the popular Gammon's of Chicago between 1980 and 1984. This was his 10th year of involvement with the Chicago Open.

Joann Feinstein, Markowitz's Chicago Open partner for the past two years, will continue to direct Chicago's Memorial Day weekend event.

KAPLAN REFUSES GENUD'S CHALLENGE

"I'll play her any time." That's the challenge offered by backgammon legend Lee Genud to Wendy Kaplan, considered by many to be the best female player in the world today. Kaplan has declined the challenge for now, citing too many other things going on in her life.

Genud, the 1981 Monte Carlo World Champion, has been an international backgammon figure for 20 years. She won the Bahamas and Rio tournaments in 1988 and received the Woman's Prize at the Isle of Man event last month. Kaplan has the most successful tournament record of any female over the past three years. Since 1986, she has won or reached the finals in the Bahamas, Boston (twice), Chicago, Indianapolis and Louisville.

Mark Richardson of the Northern Nevada Backgammon Association has expressed interest in holding the Challenge on closed circuit TV concurrent with a future Reno event. The outstanding team of Joe Sylvester and Bill Robertie has already agreed to do the commentary. "In a 19 point match, I would make Kaplan a 7-5 favorite," added Sylvester.

Although Kaplan has declined to meet Genud this year, she did not rule out accepting the challenge in 1990.

prevention

HASTY PLAYS



by Duane Jensen

Nothing hobbles your cube play more than a big lead. Black is up 7-0 in a 9 point match. Of course he would like to win the final two points with this game but must be cautious with the cube.

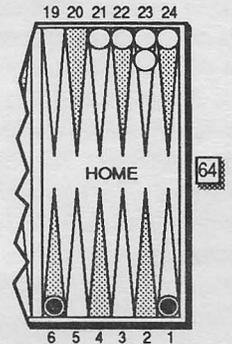
A race eventually developed with Black leading throughout, but never by the margin needed to justify a double. In the position shown at right, **WHITE ROLLED 2-2 PLAYING 21/23, 23/OFF (3).**

"It's ironic that the only time I'm favored in this game, it's too late for me to double," said White.

Black agreed. "You're right, and to compound the irony, *now I'll double you!*"

Although favored the entire game, Black could not turn the cube until the last roll, when he was an underdog. Match equity charts show that Black needed only 37 1/2% winning chances to double from this position because the possibility of a redouble didn't exist.

Just because you've put the cube on the back burner doesn't mean you should block it out of your mind completely. If you roll too quickly, you'll miss special doubling opportunities such as this. Δ



1989 BPC PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED
THRU MAY 31

TAK MORIOKA	12.72	BILL DAVIS	2.76	Dan Judd	0.96
CHRIS KENIK	10.72	John Demian	2.72	Bill Hoeflich	0.96
DEAN MUENCH	10.60	Dave Cramer	2.64	Paul Travis	0.88
GARY KAY	10.56	Ed Buerger	2.32	Jim Pappas	0.80
DAVID LIBCHABER	9.96	Don Jayhan	2.20	Ron Stur	0.80
YAMIN YAMIN	9.00	Ken Bond	2.08	Jill Ferdinand	0.80
DEEB SHALATI	7.60	VW Zimnicki	2.00	Darcey Brady	0.80
BOB ZAVORAL	7.28	Jeff Kane	1.92	Mike Cyrkiel	0.72
ARNOLD ZOUSMER	6.28	Don Desmond	1.92	René Wojtysiak	0.64
ALICE KAY	5.32	Joe Koucharian	1.72	Bob Holyon	0.64
SARG SERGES	4.16	Kathy Rudnick	1.64	Harry Hayward	0.56
NORMA SHYER	4.00	Dave Rockwell	1.60	Rich Siebold	0.56
MARK KING	3.84	John Spatafora	1.58	Craig McCullough	0.30
STU KATZ	3.52	Arlene Levy	1.56	Mark Hicks	0.28
RALPH LEVY	3.48	Mark Anshus	1.52	Richard Stawowy	0.28
PHYLLIS SMOLINSKI	3.36	Gary Keyes	1.52	Joan Hegg	0.24
ALAN STEFFEN	3.36	Lenny Loder	1.28	Trudie Stern	0.16
JOANN FEINSTEIN	3.24	Gene Chait	1.20	Leslie Lockett	0.16
PAUL JOHNSON	2.96	Bill Keefe	1.04	Dianne Cyrkiel	0.12

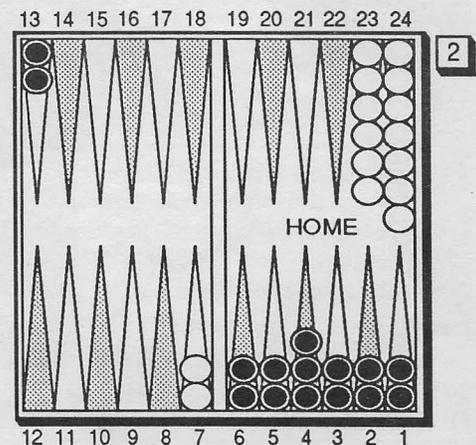
YAMIN YAMIN and **DEAN MUENCH** split honors for May Player of the Month. Both players earned 3.68 points with 1st and 2nd place finishes. New player Paul Johnson (who traveled down from the Milwaukee area) finished third with 2.96 points.

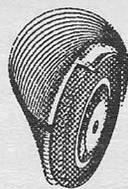
PLEASE NOTE: The three leaders through July will be invited to represent the Bar Point Club in the Club Challenge event at the National Labor Day tournament in Indianapolis.

your move

PROBLEM #148

Tournament double match point.
BLACK TO PLAY 1-1.





Jack Kissane INTERVIEWED

Jack Kissane of Albany New York is a 47 year old Personnel Examiner for the New York State Department of Civil Service. He holds a B.B.A. in Accounting from Siena College. Jack makes everyone's list as one of the 16 best backgammon players in the United States.

Although Jack is a paraplegic, to say he is "confined" to a wheelchair would be most improper. Jack and his chair have traveled all across North America and half way around the world in pursuit of backgammon at the highest level. This is his telephone interview conducted by the Chicago POINT on May 15, 1989:

POINT: Duane Jensen told me an interesting story involving you at the recent Midwest Championships. He was watching you play in a chouette when a beginner pulled him aside to say, "That Mr. Jennings must be a great player. He's been in the box for more than an hour." When Duane asked the girl who she was referring to, she pointed to you and replied, "The man seated there. His name is Everest Jennings, isn't it?"

KISSANE: (Laughs) I didn't hear that one. (Laughs)

POINT: What's that all about?

KISSANE: "Everest Jennings" is the name of my wheelchair! And they've got that name on the side here. (Laughs) That's beautiful.

POINT: I would guess your wheelchair has something to do with how you started playing backgammon.

KISSANE: Yeah, really, it does. Uh, well,

I had a car accident. It will be 25 years this August. It was a one car accident—my own fault. I was thrown out of the car. It broke my back and severed the spinal cord. So I've been paralyzed from the waist down ever since.

I didn't start playing backgammon until about 11 years ago. Backgammon was what got me out. I had never done any traveling before except day trips. I was always kind of apprehensive about that. But in order to go to a backgammon tournament, I had to stay overnight. So I made the arrangements and decided to take a shot at it and I've been going ever since. The next year, I flew out to Vegas. That was my first time flying.

POINT: Who introduced you to the game?

KISSANE: I've always been interested in games—pinochle, poker, chess. I've got a pool table in my basement and have been involved in sports since I was a kid. I was an MVP in the Babe Ruth baseball league. Following my accident, I managed a fast pitch softball team between 1968 and 1982. We won 70% of are games over that period.

I've always been interested in math. That was my strong subject in school. And I had a boss, Mary Louise Satterfield, who thought I would be interested in backgammon. She wanted to teach me how to play, but I just said I had too many other things going.

One night, my aunt was visiting and she mentioned that her son-in-law had started playing backgammon. I responded that someone had told me about the game, but

that I didn't know how to play it. Well, she took that cue (this was only a few weeks before Christmas) and got me a little plastic and cardboard set. So then I had to get my boss to teach me. I learned quickly and within a couple of games, I was showing her the right moves. I remember her saying, "I've created a monster!"

She gave me *The Backgammon Book* by Oswald Jacoby. I went to a local tournament four weeks later and as luck would have it, I beat three experienced players to win the tournament. I thought, "Boy, this game is easy." (Laughs) Only later did I find out that it isn't easy.

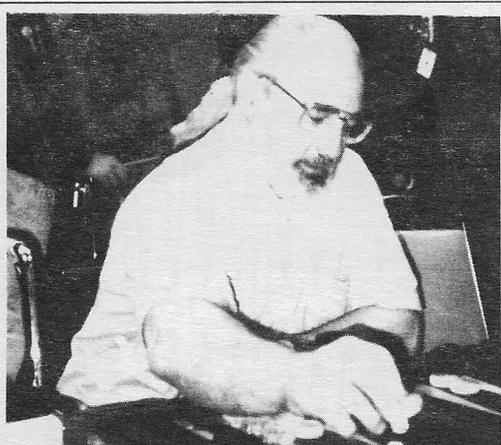
I started traveling after playing the game for a year and a half. My friend Wally Watson took up backgammon a few months after I did and we've been playing it ever since. We went up to the Stratton Mountain tournament in Vermont. I was going to commute to it. I was very apprehensive about that but everything worked out fine and from then on, I've traveled all over the world.

POINT: That brings us to your record over the past six years, and impressive it is:

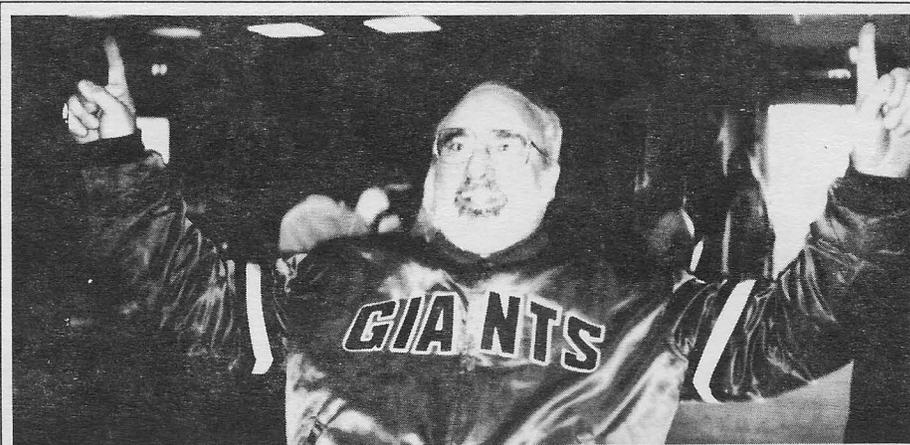
Nov. 1983 .. Backgammon Co-Op Fall Champs	1st
Apr. 1984 .. Boston Symphony Orchestra Benefit	1st
May 1984 .. Granite State Open	1st
June 1984 .. Las Vegas World Amateur (Plimpton Cup)	1st
July 1984 .. Monte-Carlo World Championships	2nd Team
Feb. 1985 .. Backgammon Co-Op Winter Champs	2nd
Mar. 1986 .. Indiana Open	1st Cons.
May 1986 .. Granite State Open	1st, 1st Team
July 1987 .. Flint Summer Championships	1st
Oct. 1987 .. New Hampshire Fall Classic	1st
Feb. 1988 .. Pitsburgh Charity Tournament	1st \$500
Feb. 1988 .. Louisville Bluegrass Regional	1st Doubles
Nov. 1988 .. Indiana Classic	2nd \$500
Feb. 1989 .. Pitsburgh Charity Tournament	1st
Apr. 1989 .. Midwest Backgammon Championships	2nd

POINT: Like Joe Sylvester in 1983, you went on a tournament tear prior to winning the \$100,000 World Amateur tournament. Do you remember that period?

KISSANE: It just seemed like I couldn't lose. Boston had 60 players and I won six



"In Vegas, I was playing one match for \$100,000...but I wasn't nervous at all."



"The New York Giants are my passion. Nothing stands in the way of the Giants, including a backgammon tournament."

rounds there. The Boston finals were on closed circuit TV which turned out to really help me for the Plimpton Cup finals. In Vegas, I was playing one match for \$100,000 and it was also televised but I wasn't nervous at all. My opponent Farzan Garmroodi was noticeably nervous.

POINT: How did winning that event change your backgammon life?

KISSANE: Notoriety, I guess. I had won a lot of other local things, but this was the "big one." This got me onto the national scene.

POINT: Have you received your full payment from that tournament as yet?

KISSANE: Oh, yeah. I had a choice of taking \$100,000 over five years or \$75,000 the first year. I opted for the \$75,000.

POINT: Backgammon, like everything else, seems to be moving into the computer age. What do you think about using a computer to study the game?

KISSANE: I've never used one. I've stayed away from computers and uh, I don't even use a calculator unless I have to. When I do record keeping or my bank statements, I just do them either in my head or on paper. Generally, I don't like to use calculators. Of course I use them at work where time is of the essence, but basically, I shy away from them... (Pauses) *Not keeping up with the times, I guess.* (Laughs)

POINT: Have you memorized the match equity charts and take-point formulas that many of the experts are using in tournament play?

KISSANE: No I haven't and that's just laziness on my part because I certainly have the ability to remember those things. I have a good facility with numbers.

POINT: Barclay Cooke was once asked if he kept a running count of the position. He answered, "Vision laughs at counting." Do you at least count the position?

KISSANE: Sure, I count the race.

POINT: But basically you just look over the board and kinda play by feel, you don't...

KISSANE: No, no. I count the position all the time when I think it's important. I don't keep a running count because that just clutters my mind. But if it's a question of racing vs. staying back, or when a cube decision is involved, I will do a count. I can count any position in five seconds. People like to play in chouettes with me. They just say, "What's the count?" and I tell them.

POINT: I notice that you and Mary Ann Meese never miss church service during tournament weekends. That's unusual for backgammon players.

KISSANE: Well, I don't know. If I were home, I'd certainly give an hour and a half to the Big Guy upstairs. I've been fortunate

enough to get to the tournament and to have had a safe trip, so I should be able to give some time when I'm on the road, too.

POINT: You've been playing backgammon for about 11 years now. How has the game changed in that time?

KISSANE: You just don't see any weak players. There are obviously differences in players and not everyone is *really* strong, but the easy opening round matches just don't exist any more.

POINT: Where do you see the game going as we move into the 21st century?

KISSANE: I really don't know. It's strange to look at different parts of the country. Take Flint and Chicago and Indianapolis where things seems to be growing. The local clubs there are really pushing to bring in newcomers and teach them the fundamentals. Of course, you can see some other areas that are going downhill because they're not cultivating the new players.

It's difficult these days for new people to break in because there are no weak people playing any more. Today when you break in, you don't find anyone playing the "safe" game along with you. You can't gradually learn by going from stage one to stage two and on upwards. Now you're getting right in against people who know enough to slot the 5-point.

I know when I played in my first tournament, I never slotted the 5-point and I kept wondering, "Why are people doing these things, and why are they beating me?" (Laughs) Then I got Magriel's book. New players really have to get right in and start reading almost before they get into play because if they start playing right away, they're going to be eaten alive.

So I think cultivating new players and free lessons are good. We need more people to do that—people like Carol Joy Cole and John Carrico up in Michigan and the Meeses in Indianapolis. That's the only way you're going to get people long term.

POINT: The NNBA informs me that you are one of 16 experts chosen to participate in the Masters Invitational at the U.S. Open in Reno June 21-25. The entry fee is...

KISSANE: Two thousand.

POINT: Let me list the other 15 players for you...

KISSANE: I know. (Laughs) I do know them.

POINT: Nack Ballard, Mike Corbett, Malcolm Davis, Ray Glaeser, Hal Heinrich, Neil Kazaross, Sandy Lubetkin, Howard Markowitz, Dean Muench, Ed O'Laughlin, Joe Russell, Hugh Sconyers, Alan Steffen, Joe Sylvester and Kit Woolsey.

If you had to select two players from

JACK KISSANE

PERSONALITY

SNAPSHOT



Nickname: Casey. I managed a softball team and it's after Casey Stengel.
Weight: 260 pounds, including my wheelchair.

Other Interests: The New York Giants are my passion. Nothing stands in the way of the Giants, including a backgammon tournament. I've been to 128 consecutive games since 1970.

Best Backgammon Book Ever Read: *Backgammon* by Paul Magriel

Favorite Musical Group/Singer: The Beatles, Judy Collins

Favorite Beverage: Nonalcoholic.

Hours Per Week Watching TV: Too many.

Superstitions: It's bad luck to be superstitious.

Best Advice I'd Give To A Beginner: Ask questions.

Favorite Tournament Format: Double elimination.

When Angry: I try not to keep it bottled up.

Person In History I'd Like To Have Dinner With: John F. Kennedy.

Best Thing About Backgammon

Tournaments: Meeting people and making new friends.

that group to reach the finals, excluding yourself, who would you pick?

KISSANE: Hmm. (Pauses) O.K. Well I think if I had to pick two, I would exclude myself anyway (Laughs) ...although I never feel like I'm going to lose. Even if I'm playing someone else that I know is better, I don't believe it when I'm over the board. I just feel that I'm going to win.

But I think that Joe is the top player.

You have to consider him number one.

POINT: Joe Sylvester.

KISSANE: No question about it. Then it's close between Alan Steffen and Mike Corbett. I'd pick Corbett and Sylvester. Corbett has had a tremendous track record in Reno, and Joe has had a tremendous track record everywhere.

POINT: We'll see how your predictions work out and perhaps...

KISSANE: Do you believe in Déjà vu?

POINT: How do you mean?

KISSANE: The Saturday of Reno week will be the fifth anniversary of my Plimpton Cup win, so that's another reason why I'm entering. *Lightning strikes twice in Nevada!* Δ

DEAR MISS LONELYBLOTS



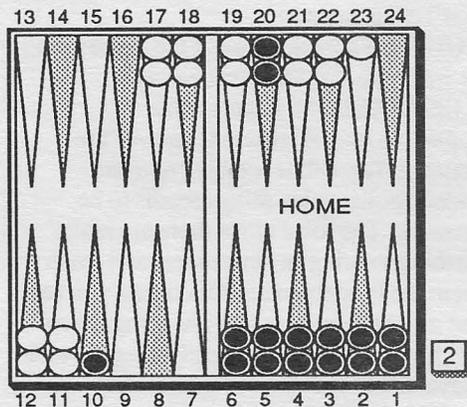
LEAVE IT TO BEAVER

Dear Miss Lonelyblots: A munchkin-like friend once told me a story about a position that occurred in a money game in Las Vegas. In the position, my friend had a holding game with two men on the 5-point and a closed home board. His tired and steamed opponent had escaped all his checkers but still had many men to bring in from his 7-, 8-, 13-, and 14-points. The opponent miscounted the position and, thinking he was ahead 20 pips in the race, doubled.

My tiny buddy was considering a beaver, since he was actually ahead 20 pips with some minor gammon chances. He finally decided that he was *too good to beaver!* He felt that the opponent might recount the position, realize his error and drop the beaver. Assuming that beavers are dropable, under what circumstances would you be *too good to beaver?*—Beaver Retriever

Dear Retriever: Who says that beavers can be passed? Only doubles and redoubles can be passed. But suppose the rules were otherwise. Should your friend fear a “drop” of his beaver in the position you describe, which must look something like this?

White has mistakenly doubled. If Black beavers to 4, **SHOULD WHITE DROP BLACK'S BEAVER?**



A substantial racing lead with laggards to bring home isn't nearly as good as it looks. Unless Black frees his back men promptly, his closed board will collapse and he'll waste pips moving to his 1- and 2-points. Then Black may still have to break anchor,

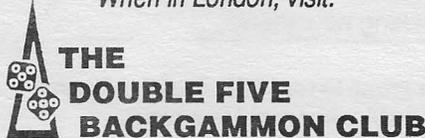
leaving direct shots for White, whose board is apt to have improved.

If your friend thinks this “too good to beaver,” then his judgment is more distorted than that of the “steamed opponent” who doubled. The only question is whether Black is strong enough to beaver, and I'm not even certain the answer is yes. Rather than expecting his steamed opponent to “drop,” your friend should anticipate a “raccoon.”

A drop need not be feared unless White's double stems from a gross oversight, such as overlooking a man on the bar. Here there is merely a difference in Black's and White's appraisals of the position. To be “too good to beaver,” your friend needs an opponent who will be alerted to an oversight by the beaver and not be so steamed as to “accept” anyway, and a position **too strong to redouble**. Here he has neither.—Miss Lonelyblots Δ

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.

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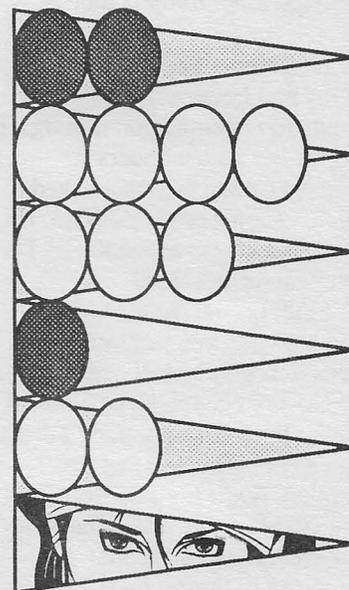
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TAKGAMMON



by Tak Morioka

THE WARD

Painful cries of agony mixed with whimpering moans of disgust: I knew I was back. Nothing had changed. This was my old haunt where torture and mayhem took little notice. Looking at all the docile people patiently waiting, you would never guess that within a split second, they could pounce on you with murderous rage burning in their eyes. Yes, this is a backgammon tournament—an asylum for the nearly insane.

If you watch carefully, you can witness the transformation take place. Apparently normal people become the instrument of destruction. The Napoleon complex sets in. Using the board as their battlefield, the conquest begins. Dice explode and the checkers charge. At the height of the battle, one general fires his volley and the other slumps from the mortal blow.

At his Waterloo, totally dejected by the terrible wounds of injustice, the defeated cries out: "Why me, God? Am I not your favorite? Don't I deserve better treatment?"

There came a deep thundering voice from above. "No! You were getting a bit too cocky so I decided to take you down a notch."

Frustrated by this abandonment and the insanity of the endeavor, he stormed out of the room, waving his hands in total disbelief.

Now, for the winner. He is another case. He beams with that self-satisfied smile called the *victory grin*. With all his strutting, you can almost sense what he is thinking: "I am great! I am invincible! I deserved to win! I totally outplayed him! I need more blood! Who's my next victim? Wheel him out! I'll make short work of him!"

Oh, I'm sorry. I have to go. My match is ready. Where did I put my hat? The one with the white feathers. I wear it to all my battles. I'll need it to beat that son-of-a-bitch. He beat me twice before when I wasn't wearing it.

How do I look? Do I look ready, mean and able? Good!—and thanks. Now *let's charge!*



Fortune Cookie

If you don't develop character, this game will certainly make you one.

MAN, OH MAN...

(Continued from page 1)

to him."

When asked about Böhm's game, Steffen replied, "He might be a very good player, but the match went by too quickly. Just before we started, he said he was tired and asked if I wanted to hedge. I had decided the night before that I would be a 7 to 4 favorite. Since he wouldn't pay that price, we played for it all."

Although Great Britain won the Inter-Nation Championship, The runner-up U.S. team also won the Super Jackpot event (that didn't count in team scoring). Rick Barabino of Massachusetts topped last-minute entry Ed O'Laughlin (Virginia) for a £8960 payday (nearly \$15,000)—a big win for the highly touted New Englander. Barabino entered primarily because he won the expensive £400 entry fee in side play vs. Alan Steffen prior to the tournament!

Congratulations to the Baron and Baroness of Culcreuch on a great tournament. For players from the U.S., it's a reasonable alternative to Monte Carlo. Results:

CHAMPIONSHIP OF GREAT BRITAIN

CHAMPIONSHIP (126): 1st Alan Steffen (USA); 2nd Hans Böhm (Holland); 3/4 S. Michaelides (UK) & S. Akirov (UK); 1st Cons. T. Eberling (W. Germany); 2nd Cons. Frank Talbot (USA); 1st LC Mr. T'Hooft (Holland); 2nd LC M. Mustafa (UK); 1st Warm-Up Emil Mortuk (USA); 2nd Warm-Up M. Crivelli (Italy).

INTERMEDIATE (74): 1st Mrs. Hassidorf (W. Germany); 2nd Jasper Salisbury-Jones (Isle of Man); 3/4 Alberto da Pra (Italy) & J. Hakimzadeh (Switzerland); 1st Cons. M. Sequira (Portugal); 2nd Cons. Mr. Thompson-Schwarz (Scotland); 1st LC Mr. Churton (UK); 2nd LC J. Brockmeier (W. Germany); 1st Warm-Up M. Sequira (Port.); 2nd Warm-Up Sandy Mangan (UK).

SUPER JACKPOT (16): 1st Rick Barabino (USA); 2nd Ed O'Laughlin (USA).
INTER-NATION AWARD: 1st United Kingdom; 2nd United States; 3rd West Germany.

AMALGAMATION

Ralph Levy is a grandfather for the first time: Brian Andrew Levy born April 30... In a May 4 interview with Lisa Anderson for the *Chicago Tribune*, Kimberly Conrad says of her new husband Hugh Hefner, "We play backgammon almost every night before we go to bed. And he whips me. Once in a while, I whip him." Who says backgammon isn't a contact sport?... A major move. That's Gene Chait's decision to leave the big city of Chicago for the wide open spaces of Reno. We wish the best... Oops! The correct Midwest Championships Advanced division 2nd Consolation winner was John Bashian (OH), not Arnold Zousmer as stated in last month's *POINT*... A double wedding in Peoria. Congratulations to Fouad & Yuri Malouf and Milad & Sabrina Doueihi who were married in mid-May. The two couples then honeymooned in Cancún... As of June 3, Carol Joy Cole had 84 players registered for her Michigan Summer Championships—and she hasn't even mailed out all the invitations! Don't get shut out. Call (313) 232-9731 to reserve your space today... Belated congratulations to Manx Backgammon Association chairman Hercules, Baron of Culcreuch and the new Baroness (the former Bridget Grant) upon their marriage in March... A tip of the mortarboard to Bar Point Club player David Libchaber who graduates with a B.A. from the University of Chicago this month... The best pizza in London, England is at the "Chicago Pizza Pie Factory." And guess who's pictured to the right of the pay telephone: noted backgammon director Lewis DeYong in a Chicago Bears jersey!... While at the recent Australian Open, Emil Mortuk purchased a genuine kangaroo scrotum pouch for use as a dice bag. When someone asked Emil where he found the kangaroo scrotum, Peter Kalba quipped, "'Down under,' of course!"... Finally, a quote from General George S. Patton: "Take calculated risks. That is quite different from being rash." Δ

D.I. LONG SUCCUMBS TO CANCER

The Louisville area and the entire Midwest backgammon community has lost a true gentleman of the game with the passing of Dennis Irving Long. The 64 year old civic leader and developer lost an extended bout with cancer on May 13. Long remained active in Louisville Backgammon Club play into 1989, finishing 9th on this season's final league standings. He is survived by his wife Teri and two children.

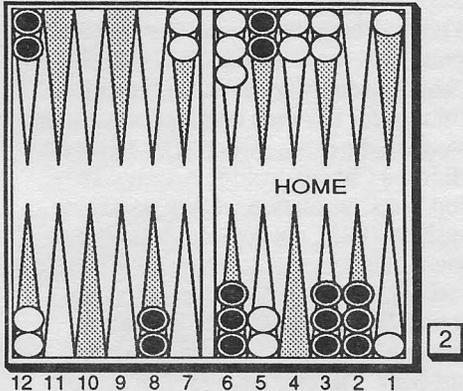
**PROBLEM #147
SOLVED**

by Kent Goulding

Money game. **BLACK TO PLAY 6-3.**

(Note the addition of Black checkers on the 2- and 3-point correcting last month's error.—Ed.)

13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24



There are four plays to consider:

- (A) break the 20-pt. with 20/11;
- (B) break the 13-pt. with 13/4;
- (C) break the 13-pt. with 13/7, 13/10;
- (D) break the 20-pt. with 20/14, 20/17.

No serious consideration should be given to any play that puts another checker on the

2- or 3-point. Black has already "over-reached" by placing six checkers so deep in his board (although there's some hope of using the extras to attack White on the 1-pt.).

Over the board, I first try to identify all reasonable choices. Many second best plays are made not because the player has chosen incorrectly, but rather because the best play was not even considered. At first, I only saw two plays here: (A) and (B). Closer study then turned up (C) and (D).

Now that we have four nominees, can we rule any out? I think it is fairly clear that (B) is superior to (C). Although (C) may lure White off the 5-point, Black's position is sounder and contains more immediate threats if he simply slots his 4-point. Black's game plan in both variations is to cling tight to the 20-point and hope White is forced to give up her anchor first. While waiting, Black should be filling in his 4-point and ace-point (using the builders on the 2- and 3-points). Notice that should Black break his anchor first, he is better served having a strong home board rather than outfield points.

What about choosing between (A) and (D)? Again, I think the choice is fairly easy: (D) leaves fewer shots and more tactical chances than (A). While Black gives up any hope of rebuilding the 20-

point, he also makes it much less likely that White will grab that key point. Also notice that White must give up something of value if she is to hit one of Black's blots, quite possibly leaving numerous return shots.

Now we come down to the big decision: should Black continue to hold the 20-point? I think he should. There is no obvious gain to Black if he runs. Even if neither blot is hit, he will have a hard time getting home while White will almost certainly be able to fill in her 5-point quickly. Black will be leaving future shots, at which time a hit could be fatal. Also, White's position is no bargain. She will have to start moving her checkers home very soon, leaving blots in the process.

Finally, I'm really not terribly concerned about the blots Black is leaving as long as he holds the 20-point. Having a blot or two hit could easily result in Black gaining the timing he needs to wait White out. If the blots are not hit, Black will build his 4-point and attempt to scramble home later, either by hitting and then running while White is on the bar, or by rolling doubles, or by simply making a break and hoping for the best.

When in doubt, make the 20-point. Then refuse to leave. If you must leave, consider vacating completely. Δ

**BACKGAMMON
BY MODEM**

by Rich Galeba

According to Oswald Jacoby's *The Backgammon Book*, backgammon has been in existence since 1500 B.C. In the 17th century, backgammon evolved into the modern game we know today with the exception of two major 20th century innovations: the doubling cube and now the micro-chip.

Today, many computer backgammon games are available. Unfortunately, most of them range in skill from beginner to a low intermediate. Now your computer can provide you with live opponents for hours of challenging money and tournament play. Along with the computer, all you need is a telephone modem and access to GENie.

Backgammon is now available as a multi-player option on GENie, the General Electric Network for Information Exchange. The game is supported with full graphic features by a program called RSCARDS. Written by John Weaver, Jr. of Novi, Michigan, RSCARDS also has routines for blackjack and checkers. The

program takes backgammon from a crude form of letters and numbers to a graphically pleasing and accurate on-screen display. It makes an excellent way to play backgammon against live opponents across the block or across the country.

RSCARDS backgammon plays like the real thing. After the dice are randomly generated by the mainframe computer, a player selects a piece and makes his move. A doubling cube is available as well. During casual games, opponents can chat with each other about specific plays. Kibitzers in the "gallery" can also join in on the discussion.

For those of us who can't crunch numbers in our heads like the pros, RSCARDS keeps a running tally of both players' pip counts. This feature is shut off during tournament play. RSCARDS backgammon also keeps track of individual statistics. One method uses the cube value to display each person's career net score; another uses a mathematical formula to reach an ELO chess-style rating. Both of these ratings are used to rank everyone who has played backgammon on RSCARDS.

Tournaments are held roughly every three months. Typical entry is \$20 with 100% return to the top eight finishers.

Money play is also available. I personally have collected checks from Florida, New Jersey and California!

RSCARDS currently supports IBM and compatible machines along with the Atari ST and Amiga. The Apple IIGS and Macintosh will soon be supported as well.

Obviously, playing backgammon via computer will never replace face-to-face interaction. But it's a very nice alternative for those who can't locate a partner but have the itch to play. To access GENie, you'll need a computer and modem:

- Have a credit card or check ready,
- Set terminal program for 300 or 1200 baud and half-duplex (echo on),
- Dial 1-800-638-8369,
- When connected, type HHH [return],
- When you see "U#=" prompt, type XJM11795, RSCARDS [return],
- Follow the on-screen prompts.

If you have a GENie account:

- Dial your local access number & log on,
- From any prompt, type RSCARDS [return], or M875 [return].

For more information about RSCARDS Backgammon, call GENie Client Services at 1-800-638-9636. Δ

who did what

WINNER'S CORNER



Mar.-May 1989

G/A 19th Invitational (Los Angeles, CA; March 17-19)... Open (40): 1st Farzan Garmroodi (CA); 2nd Bill Arkin; 3/4 Rick Huffman (CA) and Jim Thinnsen (CA). Doubles (16): 1st Azzam Masarani & Joel Rettew; 2nd Judy Collins & Patrick Gibson. Special 16: 1st Ray Fogerlund (CA)... In

late January, Rudy Citrom topped Rageb Shadallah to win the Gammon Associates 1988 Player of the Year. 1989 Nordic Open Championships (Elsinore, Denmark; Mar. 24-26)... Championship (57): 1st H. Ostergaard (Denmark); 2nd M. Carlsson (Sweden); 1st Cons. M. Inkinnen (Finland); 2nd Cons. J. Moazed (Sweden). Intermediate (25): 1st M. Gerlach (W. Ger); 2nd F. Machata (Denmark); 1st Cons. B. Kornval (Denmark); 2nd Cons. Baron of Culcreuch (Isle of Man). Beginner (51): 1st F. Godskesen

(Denmark). Super Jackpot: 1st/2nd split M. Inkinnen and M. Carlsson. Challenge Match: Denmark-3, Sweden-2... Ostergaard crushed Carlsson 25-9 in the Championship finals of this new international tournament circuit event. Springfield Open (Springfield, IL; April 8)... Open: 1st John McCabe; 2nd Sue Will; 1st Cons. Gene Sullivan; 2nd Cons. Josh Crane; 1st LC Mark Kaye. College Park Spring Open (Bethesda, MD; April 15)... Open (25): 1st Richie Adams; 2nd Arthur Benjamin; 3rd Harry Zilli; 4th Joe Steffens; 1st LC Ed Maslansky. Limited (11): 1st Paul Riedel; 2nd Gerald Steinberg. Byblos European Championship (Saint-Tropez, France; April 20-23)... Championship (64): 1st Rolf Schrenndr (Holland); 2nd Nat Rosemberg (Austria); 1st Cons. Michel Baquiche (Monte Carlo); 2nd Cons. Mr. Goureau; (France); 1st LC Mr. Seybold. Intermediate (47): 1st Mr. Naguib; 2nd Mr. Pepe; 1st Cons. Claudia Utiger (Switz); 2nd Cons. Mr. DiBenedetto (France); 1st LC Alberto da Pra (Italy)... Prize money totalled nearly 200,000 FF. Australian Open Championships (Sydney; Apr 21-25)... Championship (97) 1st Tony McKenzie; 2nd Tony Hutton. Pan Pacific Hotels Subsidiary Tournament: 1st Joe Sylvester. Granite State Open (Jaffrey, NH; May 5-7)... Open: 1st Wilcox Snellings; 2nd Evan Diamond; 3rd/4th Wally Watson and Ed O'Laughlin; 1st Cons. Hrant Isbenjian; 2nd Cons. Tom Costigan. Advanced: 1st Bob Lumbra; 2nd Adrian Pelland; 3rd/4th Sharon Rochon and Fred Badagnani; 1st Cons. Peter DeWolf; 2nd Cons. Joe Clark. N.E. Team Championship: 1st Baroff, O'Laughlin, Snellings; 2nd Diamond, Costigan, Woo. Central Illinois Tournament (Lacon, IL; May 7)... Open: 1st Bob Zavoral (Chi); 2nd Milad Doueihy (Peoria); 1st Cons. Tak Morioka (Chi). Intermediate: 1st Alice Kay (Chi); 2nd Chuck Hughes (Peoria); 1st Cons. Greg Tomlin (Springfield). Novice: 1st G.B. Lunday (Chillicothe); 2nd Erin O'Brian... Always the best one day tournament in Illinois thanks to Sue Will, Cinda King and the Sly Fox Pub. Boston Symphony Orch. Benefit (Cambridge, MA; May 26-29)... A (33): 1st Herb Gurland (MA); 2nd David Solomon (MA); 1st Cons. Rick Barabino (MA); 2nd Cons. Linc Bedell (NH). B(18): 1st Dan Murkland (MA); 2nd Belle Pronman (MA) 1st Cons. Russ Nahigian (MA). Boston \$500: 1st Alan Steffen (IL); 2nd Perry Gartner (NJ). Doubles: 1st Herb Gurland/Evan Diamond; 2nd Bill Robertie/Joe Sylvester. A



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