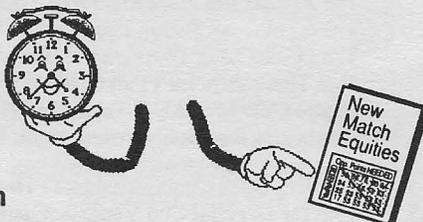


MATCH EQUITIES: It's Time To Change Your Table

By Roy Friedman

New match-equity table shows greater chance for trailing player (See page 4)



Are you haunted by the memory of blowing what seemed to be a comfortable lead? If this has happened too often, the explanation is not bad luck. The explanation is that comebacks are more likely than most players realize. Most match-equity tables underreport the trailing player's chances because they underestimate the degree of "gammonishness" in the starting position.

How does one measure "gammonishness?" Extracting meaningful data from games with a live cube is problematic because many games end when a double is passed. The answer is to focus on "cubeless" games, which include Crawford and post-Crawford games. (Post-Crawford games are effectively cubeless because the trailer doubles at the first legal opportunity and the leader always takes unless he has a "free drop.") The relevant cubeless games for obtaining gammon data are those won by the trailing player where it is material for the trailer to win a gammon. Crawford games where the trailer needs an odd number of points to win the match are excluded from data collection because the trailer's only benefit from a gammon is precluding a free drop by the opponent.

Most previously-published match-equity tables implicitly assumed a cubeless gammon rate of 20%. But empirical data reveals that the frequency of cubeless gammons is much higher. About two years ago, Bill Robertie (Boston) told me he had accumulated data on cubeless gammons and found that the rate was 38%: almost double the rate assumed by most match-equity tables! I was astonished and decided to keep my own data, which has shown a

gammon rate only slightly lower than what Bill found. I checked with Hal Heinrich (Calgary), who has played a large number of cubeless games and has experienced a gammon rate of about 36%. Also, Malcolm Davis (Dallas) has used mathematical models for match equities that are based on a cubeless gammon rate of 35%.

Given a cubeless gammon rate, computer software technology to construct a rough match-equity table is well understood. For greater accuracy, match-equity software can incorporate parameters such as the rate of cubeless backgammons, the value of free drops, and the effect of move-to-move volatility; however, the impact of these parameters is generally much smaller than the impact of the cubeless gammon

rate. I derived the new match-equity table (shown on page 4) using a cubeless gammon rate between 37% and 38%. This match-equity table is recommended by Bill Robertie and has been endorsed by *The Double* newsletter of the Dallas Backgammon League.

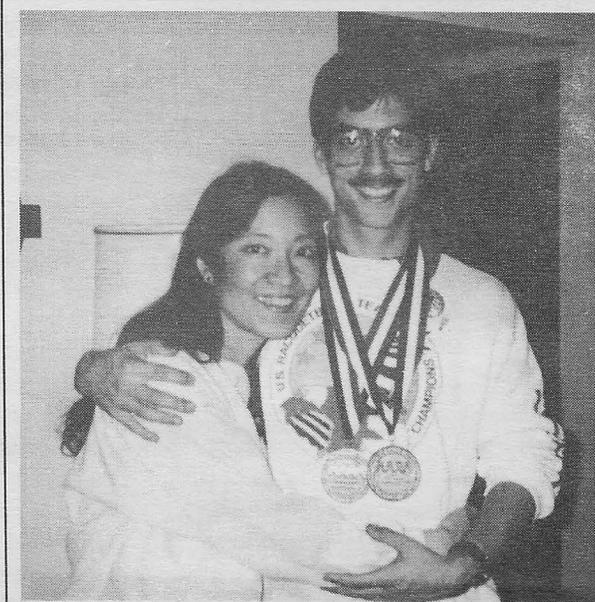
Some players have a hard time believing that the starting position is as gammonish as empirical data indicates. It's true that the starting position, when viewed statically, doesn't seem all that gammonish. But the modern style of opening play, which emphasizes aggressive slotting, splitting, and hitting loose in the home board, can readily produce positions with strong gammon threats. Many games end within the first few moves when one player rolls a joker and doubles the opponent out on the next turn. Because these games are short and the checker play is routine, there's a tendency to overlook such games in formulating an intuitive opinion about the degree of "gammonishness" in the starting position.

In a future article, I'll discuss how using my match-equity table affects cube handling at specific match scores. Δ

PROUD MOM

Here's Flint Backgammon Club director Carol Joy Cole with her son Christopher, a world class racquetball player. Chris, who attends the University of Michigan (Flint), is the Resident Pro at his area racquetball club. Earlier this year, Chris won two medals (gold in singles and bronze in doubles) and received the sportsmanship award at the World Intercollegiate Racquetball Championships in New Orleans.

Carol Joy's next directorial "performance" is in Lake Tahoe at the Caesars Tahoe Backgammon Tournament October 4-8. Δ



CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

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LETTERS

c/o Chicago POINT
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THEY "THROW THE BOOK" AT DANNY

Reading Danny Kleinman's analysis of Roy Friedman's new book, *World Class Backgammon, Move by Move* reminds me of being on a date with an extremely beautiful woman. We have two choices: (1) to enjoy the company of the charming lady at hand; or (2) spend the evening comparing her with all the other women we've known.

It really doesn't matter whether Friedman's book is better or worse than those of Cooke, Goulding, Magriel or Robertie. It stands on its own as a brilliant effort that we may use to entertain and teach us. That should be the goal of any book.—Bill Barron, Editor, *The Double, Dallas, TX*

Danny Kleinman's recent review of Roy Friedman's new book *World Class Backgammon, Move by Move* disturbed me. He quotes several sentences from my work *Backgammon With The Champions* in an apparent effort to show its inadequacies and, in doing so, demonstrates that he has completely missed the point of what the

coming attractions

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



by Carol Joy Cole
313/232-9731

Oct 4-8	Caesars Tahoe Tournament, South Lake Tahoe, NV	702/826-1984
Oct 6-8	1989 Victorian Open, Hilton Int'l Hotel, E. Melbourne, Australia	03/266-4209
Oct 14	Springfield Open, On Broadway, Springfield, IL	217/528-0117
Oct 14	College Park Fall Open Tourney, The Promenade, Bethesda, MD	301/530-0603
Oct 15	New England Club Monthly, Sheraton-Commander, Cambridge, MA	617/547-4800
Oct 15	2nd Annual Jim Flora Memorial Tournament & Benefit, Plymouth, MI	313/981-5706
Oct 19	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Sheraton Inn Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Oct 21	The Pewter Mug Tournament, Watertown, NY	315/788-5114
Oct 27-29	New Hampshire Int'l Fall Classic, Woodbound Inn, Jaffrey, NH	603/863-4711
Oct 28	Bayou Club Monthly Tournament, Houstonian Hotel, Houston, TX	713/498-4141
Oct 29	Celebrities Bimonthly Tournament, Bombay Club, Houston, TX	713/498-4141
Nov 3-5	Swedish Open Championship, O'Henry Hotel, Stockholm, Sweden	08/52 40 99
Nov 3-5	13th Int'l Crystal Cup Venezia, Casinò Municipale di Venezia, Italy	61/505816
Nov 4	Sangamon Valley Monthly Tournament, On Broadway, Springfield, IL	217/528-0117
Nov 6	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	3/689918
Nov 7	Bar Point Club Fall Trophy Tourney, Pat's Pub, Norridge, IL	312/338-6380
Nov 10-12	NY/NJ Co-op Fall Tourney, Rocking Horse Ranch, Highland, NY	201/833-2915
Nov 11-12	Danish Open Championships, Hotel Marina, Vedbæk, Denmark	45/31 22 46 00
Nov 16	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Sheraton Inn Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Nov 17-19	Children's Hospital Benefit, Sheraton-Commander, Cambridge, MA	617/547-4800
Nov 19	11th Annual Flint Area Club Championships, Sheraton Inn Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Nov 19	Austin Bimonthly Tournament, Bombay Bicycle Club, Austin, TX	512/490-6538
Nov 23-26	Teacher's European Open Championships, Casino de Deauville, France	01/376 3033
Dec 2	Sangamon Valley Monthly Tournament, On Broadway, Springfield, IL	217/528-0117
Dec 3	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Bagwells, Chicago, IL	312/252-7755
Dec 4	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	3/689918
Dec 10	New England Club Monthly, Sheraton-Commander, Cambridge, MA	617/547-4800
Jan 6	Sangamon Valley Monthly Tournament, On Broadway, Springfield, IL	217/528-0117
Jan 9	Bar Point Club Awards Night, Pat's Pub, Norridge, IL	312/338-6380
Jan 14	New England Club Monthly, Sheraton-Commander, Cambridge, MA	617/547-4800
Jan 17-21	7th Nevada State Championship, Peppermill Hotel/Casino, Reno, NV	702/826-1984
Jan 20	College Park Winter Open Tourney, Promenade, Bethesda, MD	301/530-0604
Jan 20	Sangamon Valley Monthly Tournament, On Broadway, Springfield, IL	217/528-0117
Jan 25	Flint Area Club Awards Party & Tournament, Sheraton Inn Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Jan 27	Hawthorne Backgammon Classic, Hawthorne Race Course, Cicero, IL	312/338-6380
Feb 3	Sangamon Valley Monthly Tournament, On Broadway, Springfield, IL	217/528-0117
Feb 11	7th Annual Fleet Underwood Memorial & Benefit, Sheraton Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Feb 18	New England Club Monthly, Sheraton-Commander, Cambridge, MA	617/547-4800
Mar 3	Sangamon Valley Monthly Tournament, On Broadway, Springfield, IL	217/528-0117
Mar 8-11	Gstaad International Tournament, Hotel Palace, Gstaad, Switzerland	061/50 58 16
Mar 15-18	16th International Winter Championships, St. Moritz, Switzerland	061/50 58 16
Mar 18	New England Club Monthly, Sheraton-Commander, Cambridge, MA	617/547-4800
Mar 23-25	1990 Midwest Championships, Holiday Inn, Oakbrook Terrace, IL	312/338-6380

series was trying to accomplish.

One of my main objectives in writing *BGWTC* was to let the reader get an idea about how certain top players think. I never set out to exhaustively analyze every position from the matches I worked on. In many instances, I made little or no effort to prove the best possible play. Many of my choices and recommendations can be shown to be second or even third best. While I did roll some of the positions out, I did this infrequently and usually only for positions which perplexed me. What I did do was give the reader my opinions on just

about every position, and offer, with some thought, the moves I judged as best along with the reasons for my choices.

Kleinman quotes me "playing the position out 20 times to get a feel for it." Then he compares this with Bill Robertie rolling certain positions out several hundred times. So what? If you want to simply find the best move, then perhaps you are better off with more extensive roll-outs. If you want to see how an expert thinks, you don't need any roll-outs—certainly not from me, Barclay Cooke,

(Continued on page 7)

SUMMER CONFLICTS LOOM FOR 1990

Still 9 months off, the summer of 1990 is presenting scheduling difficulties for international directors who normally hold their events in June, July and August. Here is the tentative setup:

June 20-24	U.S. Open & Masters Invit'l	Reno, Nevada
July 5-8	Championship of Great Britain	Isle of Man
July 6-8	Michigan Summer Championships	Flint, MI
July 13-15	San Remo Tournament	San Remo, Italy
July 16-22	World Championship	Monte-Carlo
Aug. 7-12	World Cup II & Eastern Open	Cambridge, MA

Two additional events have been added to the 1990 summer circuit since 1989:

(1) The World Cup, which is held in even-numbered years, and

(2) The Championship of Great Britain.

This added-money event had to be rescheduled from last season's May dates due to Hotel conflicts. To tie in with the summer European calendar, the July date was eventually selected. "I do have the option of going back to May in 1991 if this proves desirable," said the Baron of Culcreuch.

The Michigan Summer Championships, normally slated for the last week in July, was forced to change dates because of vacation scheduling problems for director Carol Joy Cole. Recently, Ms. Cole indicated that rescheduling is probably in the cards. "It's between June 29-July 1 and July 13-15. I avoid European conflicts with the June dates, but I'm better spaced between the two American events (U.S. Open & World Cup II) in mid-July."

COMPUTER MASTERS CHESS

Carnegie-Mellon Institute has developed a computer for Chess that ranks in skill among the top 150 players in the world. It's only a matter of time before all of mankind falls victim to the machine in chess.

On the other hand, no commercially available computer backgammon program plays any better than today's low intermediate tournament player. It seems that the thought process necessary to play backgammon is more difficult to program compared with chess.

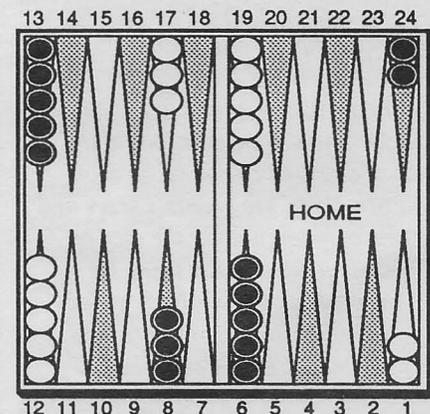
prevention

HASTY PLAYS



by Duane Jensen

The opening roll. How should Black play 5-3?



For years, I made the 3-point with an opening roll of 5-3. I chose this play for two reasons: (1) all my friends did it, and (2) a woman once told me that making the 3-point had been "scientifically" proven to be the best play.

With this assurance, I never took the time to study an alternative to making the 3-point. I made a hasty choice years ago and have been making the second best play ever since. I now think that bringing down two builders from the midpoint (13/8, 13/10) is a superior play. Look at what each play offers:

MAKING THE 3-POINT

- (1) No blots exposed,
- (2) The opponent cannot make your 5-point with deuces,
- (3) The additional point helps in an early blot-hitting contest.

BRINGING DOWN TWO BUILDERS

- (1) Normally poor second rolls of 3-6, 5-1, and 5-3 now play very well.
- (2) All the builders are concentrated on building the important points.

My early objective in a game is to quickly build a 4- or 5-prime incorporating my 6- and 8-points. This prime should be built on the important points: those between the 4- and 9-point. A prime can be built quicker within this area than anywhere else. The 3-point is not a part of this plan. It is part of a 6-prime, a nice objective but too difficult to be built quickly.

My checker play should be consistent with my objective. Bringing two builders down gets me closer to my objective. Δ



1989 BPC PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED THRU SEPT. 30

GARY KAY	22.88	John Spatafora	3.66	Bill Hoeflich	0.96
TAK MORIOKA	21.64	Alan Steffen	3.36	Lenny Loder	0.96
YAMIN YAMIN	19.56	Bob Holyon	3.28	Tad Wilson	0.96
DEAN MUENCH	15.20	Paul Johnson	2.96	Paul Travis	0.88
CHRIS KENIK	14.32	Rich Siebold	2.72	Jill Ferdinand	0.80
DAVID LIBCHABER	10.84	Kathy Rudnick	2.52	Jim Pappas	0.80
BOB ZAVORAL	9.96	Joe Koucharian	2.36	Ron Stur	0.80
ARNOLD ZOUSER	8.84	Arlene Levy	2.32	Darcey Brady	0.80
JOHN DEMIAN	8.16	Dan Judd	2.24	Leslie Lockett	0.76
VW ZIMNICKI	7.92	Dan Cramer	2.16	Marv Arnol	0.76
DEEB SHALATI	7.60	Judy Brown	2.12	Mike Cyrkiel	0.72
MARK KING	7.60	Don Desmond	1.92	Carl Severino	0.72
DON JAYHAN	7.00	Jeff Kane	1.92	Randall Witt	0.64
DAVE CRAMER	6.64	Miles Cohen	1.92	Howard Chow	0.64
ALICE KAY	6.60	René Wojtysiak	1.92	Harry Hayward	0.56
JOANN FEINSTEIN	6.44	Wilcox Snellings	1.84	Joan Hegg	0.56
LUCKY NELSON	6.44	Bobbie Shifrin	1.68	Trudie Stern	0.48
SARG SERGES	6.28	John O'Hagen	1.64	Betsy Miller	0.32
STU KATZ	6.24	Andy Argy	1.60	Ted Mann	0.32
NORMA SHYER	5.70	Mark Anshus	1.52	Craig McCullough	0.30
Bill Davis	5.68	Gary Keyes	1.52	Elaine Kehm	0.28
Ed Buerger	5.04	Rich Galeba	1.32	Joe Wollick	0.16
Phyllis Smolinski	4.20	Gene Chait	1.20	Dianne Cyrkiel	0.12
Ralph Levy	3.90	Mark Hicks	1.16	Larry Knoll	0.12
Peter Kalba	3.84	Bill Keefe	1.04	John Brink	0.12
Ken Bond	3.76	Richard Stawowy	1.00	Ahmad Assadi	0.08
Dave Rockwell	3.76				

LUCKY NELSON ended his tournament backgammon hiatus with a 4.52 point September and top honors for the month—his first such Bar Point Club award. The total included a big 32 player field win on September 19. Tak Morioka's 4.16 points placed second and helped him claw away much of Gary Kay's overall lead. Dean Muench (2.12) was third.

DEAR MISS LONELYBLOTS



THE JEKYLL/HYDE SYNDROME

Dear Miss Lonelyblots: Aside from the money I win, I enjoy playing backgammon for the good company and friendly competition. Not so my usual opponent Dr. Jekyll. Away from the backgammon table, he's a good doctor and a good man, but in the presence of dice and checkers, he soon becomes Mr. Hyde. He grunts, curses and accuses me of manipulating the dice or casting magical spells upon them. He ignores my protests and disdains my advice to cease this rude conduct. Others have stopped playing with him, but I hate to desert a friend. Short of shooting him in the foot, what can I do?—Abused Opponent

Dear Abused: Shoot a man such as you describe in the foot, and he'll shoot you in the groin. Tape his mouth, and he'll pull off the tape and punch you in the mouth. You can no more change another person by force than by the friendly advice which has already failed.

If your Mr. Hyde enjoyed sport, companionship, or winning money at backgammon, he would adapt by conforming his outward behavior to the requirements of those who have fled him. Most superficial

change arises from adaptation to social conditions. Transformation is rare, and usually flows from an inner desire to change triggered by personal tragedy or traumatic realization.

Since you are apparently the only one in your town or club who still plays with Mr. Hyde, you can force him to adapt or stop playing. Just quit at his first rude word or gesture and rebuff his pleas to resume playing. Tell him that the "second chance" for which he begs must come another day.

Frankly, however, I doubt his behavior will improve. For his motive in playing backgammon is the one staring you in the face: to abuse other people. Take away the opportunity to do so, and he'll lose interest in the game. I doubt also your characterization of him as "a good doctor and a good man." If Mr. Hyde enjoys abusing backgammon opponents, Dr. Jekyll probably abuses nurses, patients and members of his family. For backgammon paraphernalia do not induce radical mood swings; only chemicals do. Is it possible Mr. Hyde takes drugs before he sits down to play?

I question your motives, too. I don't see how you can describe as a "friend" someone who levels insincere cheating accusations (surely he'd quit you if he believed them). Nor can I believe that you seek good company and friendly competition, else you'd shun Mr. Hyde and play with the others who bar him.

No, anyone who continues to play with Mr. Hyde or others like him does so only

because the money to be won outweighs the misery of the experience. It isn't a "friend" you're reluctant to forsake but a "pigeon."

Why do I address you, however? You, Mr. Hyde's hustler, have no problem. I'm sure you win enough money from him to make it worth your while.

It is he and others like him who have the problem. For they are all losers at backgammon, and the only "friends" they have are their hustlers. And so I say to all the losers who grunt and groan, who curse the dice and lyingly accuse their opponents of manipulating them, "Your vile behavior assures that only those who profit heavily, who make their backgammon living off you, will play with you."

Maybe this insight, if new to them, will be the revelation which sparks their transformation.—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.

MATCH-EQUITY TABLE

from *World Class Backgammon, Move By Move* by Roy Friedman

Your points NEEDED to win match

Opponent's points NEEDED to win match

C = Entering the Crawford game.

	1c	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1c	50	66	75	80	83	87	90	92	94
2	34	50	59	64	72	77	82	85	88
3	25	41	50	56	63	69	74	78	82
4	20	36	44	50	57	63	68	72	77
5	17	28	37	43	50	56	62	66	71
6	13	23	31	37	44	50	56	60	65
7	10	18	26	32	38	44	50	55	60
8	8	15	22	28	34	40	45	50	55
9	6	12	18	23	29	35	40	45	50

BEAROFF 1

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1. Expectancy in points x initial cube value,
2. Probability of winning
3. Is it a *double*?
4. Is it a *take*?
5. The best piece play for each dice roll.

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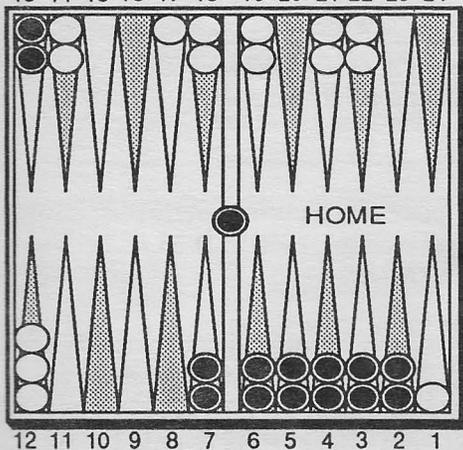
**PROBLEM #151
SOLVED**

by Wilcox Snellings

There are several stages of learning the diabolical game of backgammon. One thing that has always fascinated me is how in one sense, the game seems simple when we begin, then grown tremendously complex, then returns to an educated simplicity once a player becomes good. The great player often tosses out the equivalent remark of "Keep it simple, stupid" (K.I.S.S.) to mere undergraduates of the game who think they have discovered a profound move.

Tournament double match point.
BLACK TO PLAY 5-1.

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



At the board, playing the Black pieces, I stopped cold upon rolling the 5-1. The match had already featured several violent intra-game swings and somehow the ultimate fate of the match felt like it would fall on the playing of this roll. Weighing as best I could, outcomes of games resulting from B/24, 13/8 vs. B/20, 2/1* vs. B/20, 7/6, I chose the slightly radical B/20, 2/1* and whether correct or not, proceeded to win game and match.

I discussed the play at the tournament and back in New York City at the Coterie Club with several of our country's top players. With varying degrees of vehemence, they all thought B/24, 13/8 was superior, saying that Black remains a substantial favorite that way, while with the other moves, Black has just a slight edge.

I sat down with two players and factored down the likely outcomes distributing White's first roll responses. These analyses revealed an apparent closeness in the

strength of the plays.

Then came the real test. The three considered plays were rolled out 144 times, in each case, distributing the opening responses according to their probabilities. Results showed the best play to be B/20, 2/1* by far. By making this play, Black becomes a 64-36% favorite, while with either of the other plays, the game is roughly a toss-up (within 5%). Even if this were a money game, the best play is clearly still the same, since Black sweeps to gammons with great regularity after a fan by White.

Wherein lies the illusion in the position that confuses even great players? In what turns out to be the right play, a stay-out by White results in a win by Black nearly 90% of the time. But even if White enters, Black is only a small underdog on the strength of a few rolls (1-1, 2-2, 2-3 and 2-6).

With B/24, 13/8, Black is in serious jeopardy of being counterprimed even if White fails to roll an ace, for White's prime vs. prime timing favors him should he establish his own. White should know to play numbers like 4-2 and 4-6 by slotting his 5-point, and 6-2 and 3-2 by making it. Because of the problems with this play, B/20, 7/6 (with some duplication and plenty of return action on most of White's rolls) is not much better or worse, but rather puts the game on the line in shorter order.

Bottom line: When in serious doubt, play aggressive, and keep in mind that primes are usually, but not always all they are cracked up to be. K.I.S.S. only when it is correct, and remember that even players with "household names" don't know it all. 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. Cum-
berland, Chgo (625-1717).

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

SANGAMON VALLEY BG ASS'N: Tournaments Tues-
day, 6:15 PM at On Broadway, 210 S. Broadway, Springfield.
Randy Armstrong (217/528-0117).

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 The
Julius, 5720 N. Knoxville, Peoria. Sue Will (309/692-6909).

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

**DON'T WORRY,
NO GAMMON**

by Duane Jensen

In an interview given eight years ago, Michigan's Carol Joy Cole said, "I love this game because I find it to be intellectually and socially stimulating. I've met all kinds of strange and wonderful people in the backgammon world."

I wonder if Carol was dividing backgammon players into two groups: the "strange" and the "wonderful," or if "strange" and "wonderful" are merely the boundaries enclosing all backgammon players.

In Minnesota, many of our players fit into Carol Joy's spectrum. I'd put one of them, Ed Ziesche (pronounced Zee-she), in the very middle of the rainbow. Ed was raised in Chicago, later moving to some vague locale he calls "Upstate New York." His major backgammon accomplishment since moving to Minnesota is winning the last Renaissance Fair Tournament.

When Ed first joined our backgammon club, the other members made him feel welcome by never remembering how to spell or pronounce his last name. Some players noticed that while pondering a tough play, Ed would hum softly to himself, usually random notes, but sometimes a recognizable tune. From then on, he was known as "Ed the Hummer" to distinguish him from any stray "Ed" who might wander into our club. He was stuck with the moniker "Ed the Hummer" for many months until everyone was able to learn his last name.

Just when we've accepted "Ziesche" and the humming, Ed's vocalizing has progressed to singing while playing backgammon. His favorite song is an adaptation of Bobby McFerrin's "Don't Worry, Be Happy." If you want to sing along, just follow the bouncing checker...

Here's a little song I wrote.

You might want to sing it note for note.

Don't Worry, No Gammon.

In every game we have some trouble.

Especially now that you took that double.

Don't Worry... No Gammon.

Don't Worry, No Gammon now.

Ooh... ooh... ooh... ooh.

Don't Worry, no Gammon.

AMALGAMATION

Last chance to win \$50 in September's "Squirrel Caption Contest." The entry deadline is October 12... **Gayle Wolf** (MI) started work on her master's in counseling last month at Oakland College in Michigan. Soon we'll have a "graduate ear" to listen to our hard luck backgammon stories... **Walter Trice** (Boston, MA) visited the BPC September 4... Thanks to organizer **Jeff Henry** and the many friends who gathered at the Golden Ox in Chicago last month to throw this editor a memorable 40th birthday party. It "softened the blow." Thanks also for the nice cards and a "balloon barrage" at the office... **Phelicia Krakow** invites all her backgammon friends to visit her new nightclub, *Circa* at 222 W. Ontario in Chicago... Good luck to **David Libchaber** who leaves Chicago for Los Angeles and (hopefully) a job in the motion picture industry... **Harry Zilli** is the College Park (MD) BG Club's Top Player for 88/89... GOCUBSGOCUBSGO! Δ

inner game

TAKGAMMON



by Tak Morioka

THE RATIONALE

How's your mental vision? Is everything clear and concise? I ask that to find out if you suffer from a common backgammon disease: the distortion of logic called deceptive rationale.

Older players are usually the victim of this loss of perception. It is symptomatic of the cause-and-effect syndrome. Creating the link between a cause and an effect requires reasonable objectivity. However this may prove impossible considering our natural bias. About the best we can hope for is a reasonable degree of detachment.

To meet the requirements of detachment, a litmus test of plausibility must be applied. Accepting the idea that most everything is possible but very little is plausible, we have the premise to filter out misconception and half-truths that compete for our attention. The plausibility test may trash a few gems of insight, and an argument could be made that the loss is too great. But the reality of sorting through the influx of a plethora of information requires some functional sanity. My understanding of truth and perfection is that both are relative to the knowledge of the times.

Being overly concerned with details creates a myopic vision of fabrics that blinds us to the grand design of things. The ability to adapt to the next decade of knowledge requires flexibility and clear logic. Acquiring burdensome misconceptions can only interfere with that process. Δ



Fortune Cookie

Since a part is not the whole, what value should you put on a play?

match cubes

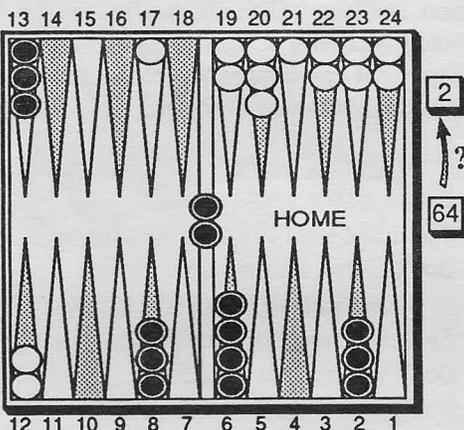
THE DESPERATION DOUBLE



by Neil Kazaross

We'll start this month's column with a problem from one of my own tournament matches. I was White, leading 5-2 in a 7 point match, trying for an undoubled gammon against another seeded Open player. It was Black's roll:

7 point match. White leads Black 5 to 2. **SHOULD BLACK DOUBLE?**



Black figured that he'd almost certainly be closed out and gammoned for the match if

he didn't roll a 4 this turn, so he doubled. I call this type of cube action a "desperation double." Black's double puts an additional point (or points should he gammon White) at stake when he wins this game, but costs little when he loses since most of his losses will be match-ending gammons anyway. The question is: *Should Black have doubled in this position?*

I've seen this type of double misused many times. In this case, Black's double is not justified. Why? Because a hit by Black does not win the game for him. Often after hitting, Black will anchor on the 4-point and go on to lose only a single game.

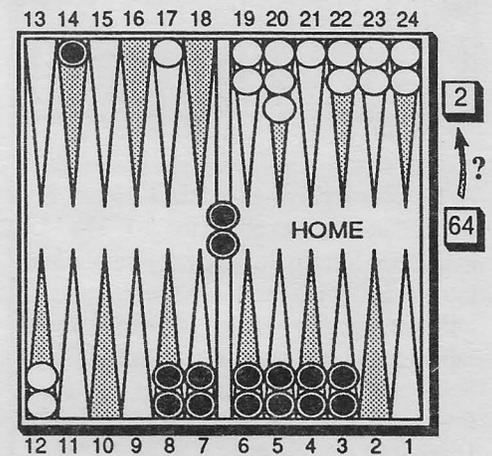
Second, Black may hit a lucky shot in the bear-off and only manage to get off the gammon as White's checker skates past Black's nonexistent board.

Third, Black cannot possibly lose his market this roll. Not even double 4's followed by White dancing will give White a proper pass.

Therefore, Black should not double. He should save the cube for a time when he has market-losing sequences. This way, Black can retain 15% match chances trailing 6-2 Crawford should he lose only a single game.

By improving Black's board to the following example position, we can create a position in which Black's "desperation double" is excellent:

7 point match. White leads Black 5 to 2. Black on roll. **SHOULD BLACK DOUBLE?**



In this case, the next roll is decisive. If Black dances, he once again will probably be gammoned and lose the match. But now if Black rolls a 4, White's dead and may even lose a gammon. Also, Black retains excellent winning chances if he catches a lucky shot in the bear-off. This is a good "desperation double" because by rolling a 4 now, Black loses his market by a mile!

Remember the "desperation double." It can be an excellent weapon when used properly. But don't give up match-winning chances by using it improperly as so many players do. Δ

LETTERS...

(Continued from page 2)

Paul Magriel or any of the other players on whose "mere" opinion Kleinman places such small value.

I am proud to have sprinkled my narratives with comments showing various experts in disagreement over seemingly straightforward positions. Knowing that a position confuses experts is valuable in itself, whatever the best move for that position turns out to be. I have seen no backgammon book, before or after *Backgammon With The Champions*, that has come close to generating the amount of feedback and commentary from so many top masters of the game.

When an established expert shares his thinking with others, he should be praised and encouraged to say more. Listen to what Barclay Cooke has to say. Listen to what I have to say. Hope that others who have played so much and won so many tournaments will share their wisdom with you. Who knows? If you listen with an open mind, you might even learn something.

I mean no offense to Bill Robertie, whose opinion on backgammon positions I often seek and whose writings I admire. Nor do I mean to criticize Roy Friedman, whose new book I have ordered but not yet read. Backgammon needs more literature of all kinds. I look forward to Mr. Friedman's book. I look forward even more to reading the thoughts of Ballard, Corbett, Magriel, Robertie, Senkiewicz, Sylvester,

Woolsey and a number of other masters, even if they roll positions out only 19 times. Perhaps we can encourage them to speak.—Kent Goulding, Potomac, MD

Danny Kleinman responds: My apologies to Kent Goulding, whose *Backgammon With The Champions* I continue to recommend (and do not think "inadequate"). I agree with almost all Kent says. Indeed, I value Kent above some of the top players he quotes. Why? Because Kent, fine teacher (to repeat my praise of him) that he is, does tell his thoughts. Consider this nine sentence paragraph, again from his commentary on Magriel versus Sconyers:

"The proper play with this roll is not so clear. The three main choices are Bar/23, 6/2*; Bar/23, 13/9; and Bar/21, 13/11. Sconyers chose hitting, both in the actual match and when given the position as a problem later on. He considers it close, but thinks hitting is the best play. His second choice is Bar/23 with 13/9. Other good players agree that the decision is close, with many choosing to hit. Magriel doesn't like hitting—he would play Bar/21, 13/11. I agree with Sconyers and would hit. Hitting denies Magriel part (or all!) of his roll and keeps him off balance in a position in which he is weaker in inner board points than his opponent."

You can keep sentences 1, 2, 8 and 9 and discard what's in between. Even if Kent's choice is only 2nd or 3rd best. Even

if Magriel is more likely to be right about any given play than anyone else in the world. For opinion with the reasons is more valuable for students than "mere" (i.e. without reason) opinion.

Much as I value Kent's work, I value Bill's and Roy's match annotations more. Not everyone hits homers, or even triples, on every at-bat. Not everyone is Babe Ruth. But the sound of one hand clapping in the right field stands at Yankee Stadium in 1935? That was I, cheering for George "Twinkletoes" Selkirk.—Danny Kleinman

PROBLEMS, PROBLEMS, PROBLEMS

Some years ago, I asked you if you were going to put all your monthly problems from the *National Backgammon League, Gammon's of Chicago* and *Chicagoland Backgammon* newsletters, as well as the *Chicago POINT* and put them into a book. You more or less said no.

By April, 1991, if I calculate correctly, you will have exceeded Barclay Cooke's *Paradoxes and Probabilities* by one problem (168). Don't wait until then.—Shane O'Neill, Dallas, TX

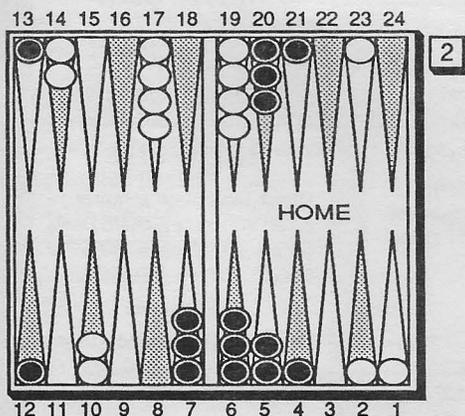
TANKA YOU

Tak Morioka—
Cryptic backgammon writings,
Perplex his readers.
Inciting them to prepare,
Irate letters bashing prose.—Unsigned Δ

your move

PROBLEM #152

5 point match. White leads Black 2 to 0.
BLACK TO PLAY 6-4.



who did what

WINNER'S CORNER



June-Sept. 1989

Mats Jonasson Australian National Championship (Melbourne; June 10-12)... Championship: 1st Steve Roberts; 2nd Andrew Peake; 3/4 Alex Falon and Tino Lechich. Open: 1st Bill Marczak; 2nd Justin Pengelly; 3/4 Brian McDonald and Emanuel Sideridis. Golden Handshake: 1st Kevin Jessup. Silver Handshake: 1st Tony Hutton. Bronze Handshake: 1st Malcolm Hutson. \$500 Jackpot: 1st Ross Hancock. **Bar Point Sunday** (Chicago, IL; Aug. 6)... Open (32): 1/2 Split Yamin Yamin and Dave Cramer; 3/4 Mark Hicks and Gary Kay; 1/2 Cons. Split Tad Wilson and John Spatafora. Limited (4): 1st Trudie Stern; 2nd Richard Stawowy. **12th Annual Bob Hill Classic** (Long Island, NY; Aug. 6)... Championship (28): 1st Mike Nelson; 2nd Alex Hennech; 3/4

Jeff Acierno and John Brussel; 1st Cons. Andy Palumbo; 2nd Cons. Alan Martin. Open (20): 1st Howard Kass; 2nd Joe Clark; 1st Cons. Otto Reisman; 2nd Cons. Pat Maloney.

Green Mt. Festival of BG (Brownsville, VT; Aug. 7-13)... Championship: 1st Herb Gurland (MA); 2nd Ami Tennenbaum (NJ).

Stroh Backgammon Fest (Detroit, MI; Aug. 20)... Open (31): 1st Joan Ross; 2nd Emil Mortuk; 3/4 Carol Falk and Gary Fritzsche; 1st Cons. Sandy Glassman.

Los Angeles Labor Day Event (Los Angeles, CA; Sept. 1-4)... Open: 1st Dan Ryan; 2nd Farzan Gamroodi; 3/4 Neil Kazaross and Tim Singer. Special 16: 1st Neil Kazaross; 2nd Ron Bruns.

Bar Point Sunday (Chicago, IL; Oct. 1)... Open (29): 1st Rich Siebold (WI); 2nd Gary Kay (IL); 3/4 Ed Buerger (IL) and John O'Hagan (IN); 1/2 Cons. Split Don Desmond (IL) and Chris Kenik (IL). Limited (8): 1st Joan Hegg (IL); 2nd Trudie Stern (IL); 1st Cons. Marv Arnol (WI); 2nd Cons. Rich Galeba (IL).

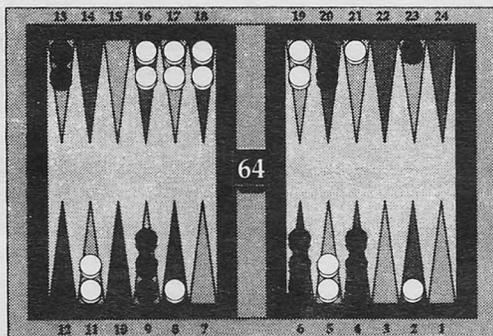
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