



How are the experts opening their game in 1990? Last month, the *Chicago POINT* surveyed master players Kent Goulding (MD), Bill Robertie (MA), Mike Senkiewicz (NY), Joe Sylvester (MI), Kit Woolsey (CA) and theoretician/analyst Danny Kleinman (CA) to find out. The participants choices assume money play against good competition.

There's complete unanimity with how our panel plays all of the opening rolls containing an ace. Of the other ten shakes, only 2-4, 3-5 and 3-6 are chosen en masse.

One surprise is Kent Goulding's opening 6-5 choice (24/18, 13/8). "The two plays are interchangeable in my mind. I dislike six checkers on the mid-point. Splitting to my opponent's bar point is more balanced and flexible. There's little question that the weaker my opponent, the more apt I am to play 18 and 8. Little question at all."

Goulding and Kit Woolsey also stir things up with their second choice for 6-1 (13/7, 6/5). Kit would make the play if "...I felt like making it an active game. 6 to 5 with the ace can't be that bad because it alleviates stackage on the heavy 6-point."

Mike Senkiewicz questions the unusual 6-5 and 6-1 openers. "Of course there are many 'legal' plays in backgammon. I just hope Kent and Kit make those moves against me every time we play."

Only Bill Robertie and Danny Kleinman split their back man (24/20) with the opening 4-3. Robertie claims that "...when you

split, you give your opponent a lot of tough rolls to play that he will often botch. My choice slots the most valuable point on the board and doesn't leave so many shots."

The 5-2 roll was split down the center. "Kit Woolsey's analysis on the benefits of slotting (6/4) changed my mind on this roll

[*Chicago POINT*, Jan. 1990]," claims Joe Sylvester. But other experts didn't even list it for their second choice.

Danny Kleinman sums things up: "Nearly all of the panel's choices are close. Only for rolls of 3-1, 4-2 and 6-1 am I certain." Δ

	Kent Goulding	Bill Robertie	Mike Senkiewicz	Joe Sylvester	Kit Woolsey	Danny Kleinman
2-1	11, 5 11, 23	11, 5	11, 5	11, 5	11, 5 4, 5 11, 23	11, 5
3-1	5 pt.	5 pt.	5 pt.	5 pt.	5 pt.	5 pt.
4-1	9, 5 9, 23 20, 5	9, 5	9, 5 20, 5	9, 5	9, 5 9, 23 20, 5	9, 5
5-1	8, 5 8, 23 18	8, 5	8, 5	8, 5	8, 5 8, 23 18	8, 5
6-1	7 pt. 7, 5	7 pt.	7 pt.	7 pt.	7 pt. 7, 5	7 pt.
3-2	10, 4 10, 11 21, 11	10, 11 21, 11	10, 11	10, 11	10, 4 10, 11 21, 11	10, 11
4-2	4 pt.	4 pt.	4 pt.	4 pt.	4 pt.	4 pt.
5-2	8, 4 8, 11	8, 11	8, 11	8, 4 8, 11	8, 4 8, 11 8, 22	8, 11
6-2	18, 11 5	18, 11 5	5 18, 11	18, 11	5 18, 11 16	18, 11
4-3	9, 10 20, 10 9, 21	20, 10 9, 10	9, 10 20, 10	9, 10	9, 10 9, 21 20, 10	20, 10 9, 10
5-3	3 pt. 8, 21 8, 10	3 pt. 8, 10	3 pt.	3 pt.	3 pt. 5 8, 10	3 pt.
6-3	18, 10 15	18, 10	18, 10 15	18, 10	18, 10 15 7, 10	18, 10
5-4	8, 9 8, 20	8, 20	8, 20 15 8, 9	8, 9	8, 20 8, 9 15	8, 9
6-4	14 18, 9	18, 9 14	14	18, 9 14	14 18, 9 7, 9	18, 9
6-5	18, 8 13	13	13	13	13 18, 8	13

CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

EDITOR & PUBLISHER

Bill Davis
2726 West Lunt Avenue
Chicago, IL 60645-3039
Telephone: (312) 338-6380

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Carol Joy Cole (MI) Tak Morioka (IL)
Duane Jensen (MN) Dean Muench (IL)
Neil Kazaross (CA) Kit Woolsey (CA)
Danny Kleinman (CA)

All rights reserved. A word about copying this publication—go ahead. You may copy any of this for noncommercial purposes as long as you give full credit to "Chicago POINT, 2726 West Lunt Avenue, Chicago, IL 60645."

Chicago POINT is published monthly. The subscription rate is \$15/year (\$20/year overseas in U.S. funds).

Advertising Rates: 2 3/8 x 3 1/4 = \$25. 1/4 page = \$45. 1/2 page = \$75. Full page = \$130. If the ad is not "camera ready," request typesetting for an additional \$15 charge.



LETTERS

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

WOOLSEY WINS PRAISE, BUT CUBE DECISIONS IS A DROP

Kit Woolsey's "Problem #154" analysis of the opening 5-2 roll [Jan. 1990] was outstanding and thought-provoking. In it, Kit mentions Hal Heinrich's 10,000 game data base that he has used to evaluate opening rolls. I was not altogether surprised that 6-2 (13/11, 24/18), 5-2 (13/11, 13/8) and 3-2 (13/11, 13/10) actually put the opening roller at a disadvantage; however, I'm astonished that 2-1 (13/11, 6/5) is not also in the group! Please favor us by publishing a profile of all opening rolls according to Hal's data base.

In the same issue, I read with some amusement, Neil Kazaross's review (unsolicited endorsement?) of Bill Barron's *Cube Decisions, Volume I* [sic]. That was enough to light my fuse. Prior to that, I had simply accepted that this was an amateurish production replete with a misspelled title, poor grammar/syntax, pedestrian commentary and unattractive page layout. Now I am incensed. This is the worst

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

coming attractions



by Carol Joy Cole
313/232-9731

Mar 8-11	26th Ted Bassett & Gstaad Palace-Cup, Palace Hotel, Switzerland	061/50 58 16
Mar 11	Plymouth Sunday Tournament, Box Bar & Grill, Plymouth, MI	313/981-5706
Mar 15	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Sheraton Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Mar 15-18	16th International Winter Championships, St. Moritz, Switzerland	061/50 58 16
Mar 18	New England Club Monthly, Sheraton Commander, Cambridge, MA	617/861-7340
Mar 18	Cavendish North Club Monthly, Southfield, MI	313/642-9616
Mar 23-25	1990 Midwest Championships, Holiday Inn, Oakbrook Terrace, IL	312/338-6380
Mar 23-25	G/A 21st Invitational Tournament, Cavendish West Hollywood, CA	818/901-0464
Mar 31	Atlanta Monthly Tournament, Copperfields, Atlanta, GA	404/497-8505
Mar 31	IBA Tournament, The Palm Hotel, West Palm Beach, FL	305/527-4033
Mar 31	1990 Virginia Cup Tournament, Executive Motor Inn, Richmond, VA	804/786-1757
Apr 1	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Bagwells, Chicago, IL	312/252-7755
Apr 2	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	3-689918
Apr 6-8	38th Indiana Open, Omni Severin Hotel, Indianapolis, IN	317/845-8435
Apr 6-8	Düsseldorf Open, Hotel Novotel, Ratingen, West Germany	40-270 11 66
Apr 12-15	Open Nordic Championships, Hotel Marina, Vedbæk, Denmark	45/31 22 46 00
Apr 14	College Park Spring Open, Promenade Party Room, Bethesda, MD	301/530-0604
Apr 19	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Sheraton Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Apr 20	Greater NY Club Championship, Vanderbilt Bridge Club, Manhasset, NY	516/627-5120
Apr 20-25	1990 Australian Open Championship, Hyatt Kingsgate Sydney, Australia	02/955 7726
Apr 21	1990 Connecticut State Championships, Hall of Fame, Southington, CT	203/755-9749
Apr 22	New England Club Monthly, Sheraton Commander, Cambridge, MA	617/861-7340
Apr 28	IBA Tournament, The Palm Hotel, West Palm Beach, FL	305/527-4033
May 3-6	16th Byblos European Championship, Saint-Tropez, France	061/50 58 16
May 4-6	12th Annual Charity Tournament, Airport Marriott, Pittsburgh, PA	412/371-5844
May 4-6	11th Granite State Open, Tory Pines Golf Resort, Franconia, NH	603/863-4711
May 18-20	2nd Venice International Tournament, Casinò Municipale di Venezia, Italy	041/5211029
May 25-28	11th Annual Chicago Open, Westin Hotel O'Hare, Rosemont, IL	708/674-0120
May 25-28	Boston Symphony Benefit, Sheraton Commander, Cambridge, MA	617/861-7340
May 26-27	Memorial Day Tournament, The Palm Hotel, West Palm Beach, FL	305/527-4033
Jun 3	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Bagwells, Chicago, IL	312/252-7755
Jun 10	New England Bonus Tournament & Playoff Finals, Cambridge, MA	617/861-7340
Jun 29-Jul 1	Michigan Summer Championships, Sheraton Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
Jul 1-8	International Amateur Open Cup, Hotel Hélotel, Ile du Levant, France	01/302 77 45
Jul 3-4	Viking Kick-off Tournament, Palace Hotel, Douglas, Isle of Man	0624/851045
Jul 5-8	Championship of Great Britain, Palace Hotel, Douglas, Isle of Man	0624/851045
Jul 12-15	San Remo International Tournament, Hotel Royal, San Remo, Italy	184-79 991
July 14-15	College Park Summer Championship, Promenade, Bethesda, MD	301/530-0604
Jul 16-22	World Championship of Backgammon, Monte-Carlo, Monaco	301/299-8264
Aug 5	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Bagwells, Chicago, IL	312/252-7755
Aug 7-12	World Cup II and Eastern Open, Sheraton Commander, Cambridge, MA	301/299-8264
Aug 13-19	Green Mountain Festival, Ascutney Mtn. Resort, Brownsville, VT	305/527-4033
Aug 31-Sep 3	National Labor Day Weekend Tournament, Louisville, KY	317/845-8435
Oct 23-28	Caesars Tahoe Tournament, South Lake Tahoe, NV	702/851-1452

backgammon book since the outrageously ridiculous *Dynamic Cube Strategy* by Horowitz and Roman. Compared to this, Bruce Becker's *Backgammon For Blood* represents the cutting edge of backgammon thought.

The dearth of text is extremely irksome. Where are the computations of match equity? Where are the summarized roll-outs? The author doesn't even bother to distinguish between "double" and "re-double." And what little commentary there is, is absurdly shallow, frequently ambiguous, and often patently incorrect.

At times like this, I'm fond of chirping

"Everything is relative." If I pay \$30 for a plate of bouillabaisse, I balk at paying \$20 for a wiener. I spent \$30 for Roy Friedman's *World Class Backgammon*. In relative terms, Barron's book is worth \$5.—Marc Gray, Schenectady, NY

The reviewer Neil Kazaross responds: My review of the book was based upon the fact that comments and detailed analysis from the players involved would be added to the text. Unfortunately, the book was published with only a few player reactions.—Neil Kazaross, San Diego, CA

[Continued on page 5]

U.S. RULES GO THROUGH MINOR CHANGES FOR 1990

The U.S. Backgammon Tournament Rules & Procedures have gone through minor revisions for the 1990 tournament calendar year. Here are the few significant changes:

- (1) Players will be required to roll on the board to their right. Permission may not be granted to roll on the left side at any time. If a player rolls to the board on his left, the roll will be invalid. No exceptions.
- (2) The Holland Rule has not been added as an option. With the Northern Nevada Backgammon Association's announcement that they will henceforth drop the rule, the handful of clubs that continue to use it will have to issue an addendum at their events.
- (3) When penalty points amount to more than half of the number of points needed to win the match, the absent player will have then forfeited.
- (4) All references to a baffle box have been eliminated.
- (5) A time clock has been mentioned as an option for controlling slow play.

The changes were formulated as a result of discussions with national club directors at the past three Reno tournaments,

and from player input mailed to the *Chicago POINT* over the past year.

Players who would like to obtain a copy of the new U.S. Backgammon Tournament Rules & Procedures (March 1990) should send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Chicago POINT, 2726 W. Lunt Avenue, Chicago, IL 60645-3039.

CHICAGO'S NEW PAIR O' DICE CLUB ON HOLD FOLLOWING SUCCESSFUL OPENING

Gary and Alice Kay welcomed over 40 players to DaVido's restaurant in Harwood Heights., IL for the February 9 Grand Opening of their new Friday night venture, the Pair O' Dice Backgammon Club. The winning name was submitted by Sean Sloan (Marcy Sloan's son).

Unfortunately, after three well-attended weeks, DaVido's is reevaluating their commitment to host Friday backgammon on a weekly basis. The Pair O' Dice Club is in limbo as the Kays search for a new location. More details to follow. February 9 Grand Opening results:

Open (29): 1st Howard Markowitz; 2nd Norma Shyer; 1st/2nd Cons. (*Split*) Ira Hoffberg, Mausy Sayle. Limited (8): 1st Joann Feinstein; 1st Cons. Bobbie Shifrin.



1990 BPC PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED THRU FEB. 28

LUCKY NELSON	6.48	ALICE KAY	1.88	Walter Schafer	0.80
MARK KING	5.76	GEORGE BARR	1.80	Jolie Lewis	0.76
DAVE CRAMER	5.24	Andy Argy	1.68	Paul Franks	0.72
YAMIN YAMIN	4.68	Joe Koucharian	1.44	Bill Hargrave	0.72
BILL DAVIS	4.52	Howard Markowitz	1.36	Ken Bond	0.64
ARNOLD ZOUSMER	3.60	Ron Stur	1.28	Mike Siegel	0.56
DEEB SHALATI	3.28	Joann Feinstein	1.28	Richard Stawowy	0.48
GARY KAY	3.04	Bill Keefe	1.20	Frank Callea	0.40
RUDY EMMELOT	2.76	Leslie Lockett	1.20	Arline Levy	0.36
STU KATZ	2.56	Jay Ward	1.12	Mike Sutton	0.32
TAK MORIOKA	2.56	Don Jayhan	1.12	Reggie Porter	0.32
BOB ZAVORAL	2.56	Phyllis Smolinski	1.12	Femi Owiku	0.28
DEAN MUENCH	2.40	Bob Holyon	1.04	Larry Knoll, Jr.	0.28
GREG SHORE	2.16	Bobbie Shifrin	0.96	Mary Franks	0.24
JOHN DEMIAN	2.08	Jerry Brooks	0.88	Larry Knoll	0.24
DON DESMOND	2.08	Norma Shyer	0.88	Ted Mann	0.12
KATHY RUDNICK	1.92	Herb Roman	0.88	Mike Spiropoulos	0.08
JAKE JACOBS	1.92				

LUCKY NELSON won tournaments on February 13 and 27 to earn 4.48 points and grab the lead in the 1990 BPC point race. Mark King (3.44) and Yamin Yamin (2.80) placed 2nd/3rd respectively.

If you finish in the Top 20 for 1990 (capitalized names on list), you'll be entered in a drawing for over \$250 worth of valuable electronics merchandise. The higher you finish, the better your winning chances. Individual awards: 1st—Trophy + \$150; 2nd—\$100; 3rd—\$50. 1st thru 20th—engraved brass board tag. 1st thru 6th—Invitation to participate on the Chicago Bar Point Club team in the 1991 Illinois State Challenge Cup.

BACKGAMMON

THE MIDWEST

CHAMPIONSHIPS

HURRY

1 9 9 0

March 23-25, 1990
Chicago-Oakbrook Terrace, Illinois
Bill Davis 312/338-6380
Peter Kalba 312/276-4144
Carol Joy Cole 312/232-9731



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 708/457-1166.

Sunday Bimonthly, 12:30 at Bagwells, 4636 N. Cumberland, Chgo 312/625-1717.

PUB CLUB: Tournaments Monday, 7:30 PM at Fiddler's, 345 W. North Ave., Villa Park. Ed Bauder (708/985-1568).

SANGAMON VALLEY BG ASS'N: Tournaments Tuesday, 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 (708/446-0537).

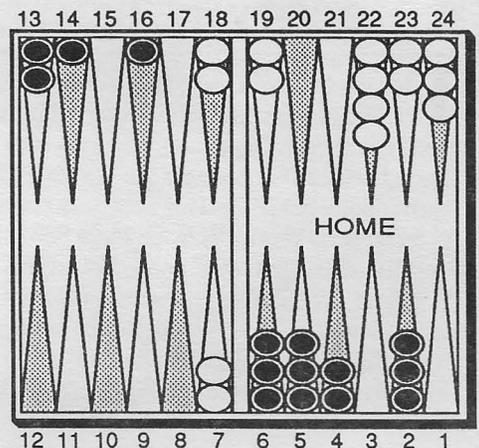
CENT. ILL. BG CLUB: Tourn. Thurs., 6:30 PM at The Julius, 5720 N. Knoxville, Peoria. Sue Will (309/692-6909).

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

your move

PROBLEM #157

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



ASK DANNY



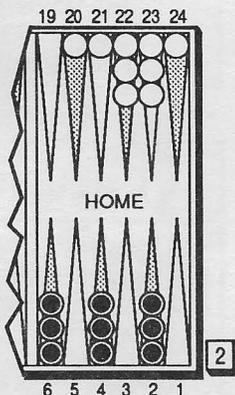
by Danny Kleinman

BEAROFF BASICS

Dear Danny: I've only been playing tournament backgammon for about three months and have a few questions regarding the bear-off. In the following setup, **BLACK HAS AN ACE TO PLAY. WHICH IS CORRECT AND WHY?**

Also, I learned your "2.7 Rule" last week. That's the one that says to maximize your chances for bearing off your last two checkers, position them so that their spacing is as close as possible to 2.7 pips apart.

Since I'm not very good at counting all the possibilities, this rule is extremely helpful. Are there any general rules that I can use for positioning my last three checkers in the bear-off?—David Rubin, Chicago, IL



Dear David: You ask for rules, I'll give you rules—or rather priorities. That is, if the first rule yields a decision, go no further. Use each succeeding rule only if no prior rule solves the problem.

In general, you should bear a man off when possible, smooth otherwise. But there are exceptions. Let's use "F" for the point you move from, and "T" for the point you move to.

SMOOTH instead of BEARING OFF only when:

- (a) you can move 4-2 with a 2, or 6-3 with a 3,
- (b) both F and T have exactly one man before smoothing,
- (c) the points adjacent to T are well-stacked, and
- (d) you remain with an EVEN number of men after smoothing.

STACK instead of SMOOTHING only to cater to specific doublets which are needed to win or turn the game around in poor positions. Inevitably, you will find borderline cases requiring fine judgment to decide between smoothing and stacking.

POSITIONING YOUR LAST 3 MEN

- P1. Minimize the double-misses which bear no man off.
- P2. Diversify your men.
- P3. Fill your 1-point (cater to the worst).
- P4. Move from your 6-point (don't bank on rolling your best).
- P5. Minimize gaps.

SMOOTHING IN LONGER BEAROFFS

- S1. SMOOTH—that is, maximize the difference F-T.
- S2. Move from high (6- or 5-) points rather than low.
- S3. Move to a thinner (preferable empty) point rather than to a heavier.
- S4. Avoid the 1-point (later misses will usually put men there anyway).

Let's use the smoothing rules to rank Black's aces in the position you show. F-T = 3 no matter how you move, so S1 doesn't distinguish. But only 6-5 moves from a high point, so that's the best ace by S2. Both 4-3 and 2-1 move to an empty point, so S3 is neutral between them. Finally, S4 makes 2-1 worse than 4-3.

You ask not only which ace is best but why. On the shallowest level, the answer

is, "6-5 is best because it moves from a high point." But this merely cites a rule, instead of justifying the rules. Why should these rules work?

Some of my parenthetical remarks hint at reasons. S4, for example, applies only with more than three men because at the end there isn't much "later" left—in fact, a contrary rule (P3) applies. With only three men left, one miss won't hurt but two will—which explains why P1 is at the top and P5 is at the bottom. The logic behind S2 isn't far below the surface of the position you show. Filling the 5-point is possible only with future 1s, filling the 3-point is possible with both 3s and 1s.

But in fact these rules are only approximate. In rare cases they yield slightly inferior moves. They are partly inspired guesses, partly confirmed by examining many bearoffs. And others advocate slightly different rules. Walter Trice, a fine analyst and mathematician, suggests these priorities for smoothing:

- (a) bear men off,
- (b) fill empty points unless this takes the last or next-to-last man from the 4- or 5-point, and
- (c) "equalize" the number of men on the 4-, 5- and 6-points as much as possible. It isn't hard to construct positions for which my rules conflict with Walter's.

Until somebody shows me that other principles are better, however, I'll call this advice *Everything You Always Wanted To Know About Bearing Off**—Yours, Danny Δ

**But Were Afraid To Ask*

Questions for Danny Kleinman should be addressed to: Ask Danny, c/o Chicago POINT, 2726 W. Lunt Avenue, Chicago, IL 60645. Danny will answer the most interesting questions bimonthly.

10th illinois state challenge cup

CBPC WINS BIG

For the fifth time in six years, the Chicago Bar Point Club is the Illinois State Challenge Cup Champion. The 10th annual invitational brought the top six 1989 master point achievers from six state clubs to do battle at Bagwells in Chicago Feb. 11.

Last year, the CBPC needed overtime to claim the cup. This year, their win-loss result was a tourney record: 24-6. Special individual congratulations go to Tak Morioka (Bar Point Club) and Al Meinecke (Tuley Park BG Club) who compiled perfect 5-0 records. The complete results:

Chgo Bar Point Club (24-6)	Central Ill. BG Club (11-19)
Yamin Yamin 4-1	Sue Will 2-3
Gary Kay 3-2	Milad Doueihy 0-5
Tak Morioka 5-0	John McCabe 3-2
Chris Kenik 4-1	Dick Nelson 2-3
Dean Muench 4-1	Cinda King 2-3
John Demian 4-1	Fouad Malouf 2-3
Tuley Park BG Club (18-12)	Sangamon Valley BG (11-19)
Reggie Porter 1-4	Greg Tomlin 3-2
Bob Zavoral 4-1	Ben Zemaitis 3-2
Phil Barrett 3-2	Tom Teague 1-4
Al Meinecke 5-0	Dan Eatherington 1-4
Femi Owiku 2-3	Mark Kaye 2-3
Mike Cykiel 3-2	Randy Armstrong 1-4
Pub Club (15-15)	Winnetka BG Club (11-19)
Ed Bauder 4-1	Stu Katz 1-4
John Spatafora 2-3	George Barr 3-2
V.W. Zimnicki 3-2	Jeff Eisner 0-5
Steve Tennant 3-2	Ed Buerger 0-5
Judy Feinstein 2-3	Marty Tatosian 3-2
Joe Wollick 1-4	Tim Serges 4-1



Chicago Bar Point Club 1990 Illinois State Challenge Cup Champions (from left to right): Chris Kenik, Tak Morioka, Yamin Yamin, Gary Kay, Dean Muench. John Demian is missing from the photo.

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 2]

A DOUBLE MYSTERY

I've read many backgammon books over the years and have always wanted more information on the origin of the doubling cube. Every book's introduction has a mysterious allusion to the 1920s, but nothing more seems to be available. Does anyone have any more information as to the origin of "our cube?"—*Brian Vance, Medellín, Columbia, South America*

DEAN AGAINST THE WORLD

Let us offer a few interesting observations on the Muench-Kazaross controversy about what possession of the cube is worth in an even position. (Dean claimed two-thirds of a point; Neil thinks the value closer to one-half.)

Emmett B. Keeler showed in a paper published in *Operational Research* on 23 February 1975 that the optimal doubling strategy is to double/redouble when your chance of winning exceeds 80%. Under the assumption that backgammon is a game that can be represented as a continuous random walk, one can show that the folding point coincides with the optimal doubling point. Furthermore, we have found formulas for the expected gain given the winning probability in the following cases:

Neutral cube: $E_1(x) = (5/3)(2x-1)$
Owning the cube: $E_{+2}(x) = 5x - 2$
Opponent owning cube: $E_{-2}(x) = 5x - 3$

Example

Opponent owning the cube in the beginning of the game:

$$x = 0.5 \quad E_{-2}(x) = 5(1/2) - 3 = \boxed{-1/2}$$

Therefore, Mr. Muench, we would like to offer you the same proposition as Mr. Kazaross ["Letters," *Chicago POINT*, Jan. 1990].—*Patrik ÖHagen and Sven-Erick Alm, Department of Mathematics, Uppsala University, Sweden*

USE CLOCK IN BACKGAMMON FOR PROPER PURPOSE

The purpose of using a chess clock in a backgammon match should be to expedite slow play, not to hurry the tournament along after a slow match has done its damage. Slow players should be observed, identified and required to complete their matches promptly, without the use of a clock if necessary and only as a last resort.

Please do not penalize other players in the same bracket as the "snail" with a penalty clock.—*Bob "I did not deserve that clock" Holyon, Milwaukee, WI*

Mr. Holyon was required to use a clock in his 5 point match against Howard Markowitz at the Hawthorne Backgammon Classic [Jan. 27, Cicero, IL]. His complaint is valid. Normally we would never put a clock on two fast-paced players like

Holyon and Markowitz. However, this tournament was a special case where we had to have a winner by the 7th race so that he could be photographed with the winning horse and jockey.

For a copy of the BPC backgammon clock rules, write to: Chicago POINT, 2726 W. Lunt Ave., Chicago, IL 60645-3039.—Ed.

COMMENTS FROM LES BOYD

A couple of comments: Here's my vote to eliminate the Holland Rule from consideration in any upcoming Backgammon Tournament Rules and Procedures revision. The IBA hasn't used it for 12 years.

Last month, Julian Wilson's letter told us that it is illegal in many European countries not to return 100% of the tournament entry fees. That's why they charge a registration fee. The IBA does the same thing because many states in the U.S. don't approve of tournaments raking a percentage of the entry fee, either.—*Les Boyd, International Backgammon Association, Ft. Lauderdale, FL*

With regard to the U.S. Rules revision, see page 3.—Ed.

DUTCH "CHOU'S"

John Brussel and I recently returned from a trip to Amsterdam. Here's where they play backgammon: Schaak Cafe; Lange Leidsewarstraat 134. Telephone: 020-243133.—*Jill Ferdinand, Mt. Prospect, IL Δ*

When in New York City...

ACE POINT BACKGAMMON CLUB

Open seven days, 3:00 P.M.—2:00 A.M.

144 East 57th Street
New York, NY 10022

212/753-0842

Michael Valentine



HOOSIER
BACKGAMMON
CLUB

presents the

38th INDIANA
OPEN

April 6-8, 1990

OMNI SEVERIN HOTEL
Illinois & Georgia Streets
Indianapolis, IN

BUTCH AND
MARY ANN MEESE
(317) 845-8435

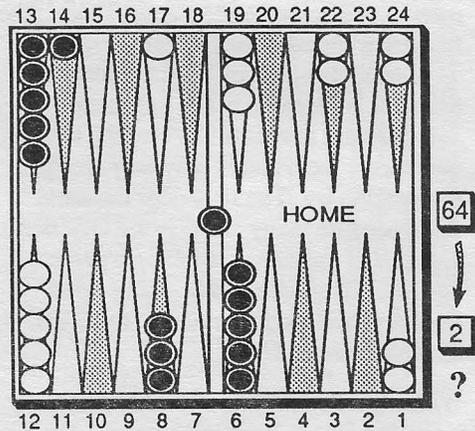
TWO AWAY— FOUR AWAY



by Neil Kazaross

As a change of pace, we'll start this month's column with a tournament cube problem.

Match to 7 points. Black leads White, 5 to 3. **WHITE DOUBLES. SHOULD BLACK TAKE?**



The purpose of this column is to teach the reader the techniques necessary to make this decision based on sound reasoning and analysis rather than "gut feel."

Let's first look at this position from a money game standpoint. In a money game, this position is a good double and a clear take. Black's equity after taking is about -0.75 of a point as confirmed both by roll-out and Bill Robertie's *Advanced Backgammon* Problem #120. Year's ago, I rolled out three sets of each of White's 36 possible rolls to find the following results:

After Black takes, he:	Black Equity
Loses gammon (L_g)	25.0% -1.00
Loses game (L_s)	31.5% -0.63
Wins game (W_s)	43.5% +0.87
Total Black Equity	-0.76

For this sample of games, Black clearly is better to take the cube for money with an average loss is 0.76 points per game. This figure takes into account Black's added equity from owning the cube.

Let us now examine this problem from a match where the score is Black leading 5 to 3. We can note the following:

1. If Black takes and wins, he wins the match
2. If Black takes, he cannot redouble and thus has *no added equity* from owning the cube.

3. If Black takes and loses a gammon, he loses the match.
4. If White gets gammoned, it's no worse than losing the game (after Black takes) because he loses the match anyway.

Point #1 works in favor of Black versus a money game, but #2, #3 and #4 work against him.

Computing Black's take point leading 5-3 (gammonless situation) yields:

	Score	MWC*
Black takes and wins	7-3	100%
Black takes and loses	5-5	50%
Black passes	5-4	60%

(*MWC designates Match-Winning Chance)

By taking, Black gains 40% MWC if he wins, but loses 10% MWC if he loses. Black gets 4 to 1 odds on this take and breaks even at a take point of 20% CPW for the game. Or, at 20%, he wins the match on this game plus 1/2 of the 80% he loses the game, he wins from 5-5 for another 40% wins. Thus (with a game-winning chance of 20%), Black wins 60% of the matches if he takes which is equal to the 60% wins he can get by dropping and playing from 5-4. Therefore, if Black can't be gammoned, he can take at this score with 20% winning probability.

However, if the gammon matters to Black, his cube taking strategy is very different. Now we can't simply compare Black's winning chances to his take point, but we can simply input the chances of Black's possible outcomes into the match equity charts and total Black's MWC occurring from each possible result:

	Score	MWC	Total
$W_s = 43.5\%$	7-3	100%	43.5%
$L_s = 31.5\%$	5-5	50%	15.8%
$L_g = 25\%$	5-7	0%	0%
	Total MWC		59.3%

Since 59.3% is less than the 60% MWC Black has by passing, he should pass when ahead 5-3.

In actuality, this decision is not as close as it appears because after Black takes, he cannot be redoubled, and White doesn't care if she is gammoned and thus can play more recklessly for a win.

Since Black won't win as many games with a dead cube as when he can redouble, his chances will be *several percent less than in a money game* thus reducing his match-winning chances and giving him a sure pass. (This takes into account likely discrepancies between my roll-out data and

the actual chances.) My estimate for Black's match equity with reduced game-winning chances due to a dead cube is only 56.5%.

Points To Remember:

1. Beware of taking gammonish 2-cubes when your opponent is four points from victory and you are ahead in the match. Clear money takes can become clear tournament drops in these situations.
2. You will win fewer games when you can't redouble after taking due to the match score considerations than you can win from the same position when you can use the cube effectively because your opponent cannot be doubled out.

Of course nobody can perfectly assess this type of position over the board. However, it is very important to see that Black loses many gammons here and that these gammon losses weigh very heavily against him causing a clear money take position to become a clear pass at the given score.

In my next "Match Cubes" column, I'll show how to use the concept of Gammon Price to assess this cube decision. Δ

THE CHICAGOLAND ALL-TIME TOP 50

1974-1989 inclusive

1 Howard Markowitz 426.05	26 Peter Kalba 119.82
2 Tak Morioka 361.38	27 Brooks Robinson 96.82
3 Bill Davis 331.51	28 John Demian 96.19
4 Chris Stanford 232.24	29 Steve Tennant 94.26
5 Yamin Yamin 232.06	30 Jeff Henry 93.12
6 Don Desmond 212.25	31 Phyllis Smolinski 92.83
7 Randy Cone 199.94	32 Jim Gibbs 92.13
8 Bobbie Shifrin 197.97	33 Frederick Grand 80.00
9 Ed Bauder 193.14	34 Dale Barker 75.56
10 Kent Maynard 177.97	35 Sam Hakimi 74.66
11 Gene Chait 170.14	36 Charles Peres 69.87
12 Barry Epstein 169.58	37 Marlene Weinstein 68.53
13 Phil Martorelli 163.47	38 Dave Libchaber 68.52
14 Ron Garber 158.98	39 Lenore Steelman 68.43
15 Earl Risch 156.04	40 Paul Larson 67.73
16 Dean Morehouse 153.92	41 Mike Siegel 66.62
17 Kathy Rudnick 151.34	42 Ollie Mullenbach 65.13
18 Joann Feinstein 142.39	43 Greg Shore 64.92
19 Harry Cohn 139.52	44 Ken Bond 59.91
20 Dave Cramer 136.59	45 Don Jayhan 59.18
21 Deeb Shalati 135.78	46 John Aprahamian 58.96
22 Ira Hoffberg 130.80	47 Eileen Cohen 58.80
23 Ida Zeman 130.56	48 Mike Cohen 56.16
24 Sarg Serges 130.45	49 Dean Muench 56.16
25 Lucky Nelson 122.42	50 Norma Shyer 54.66

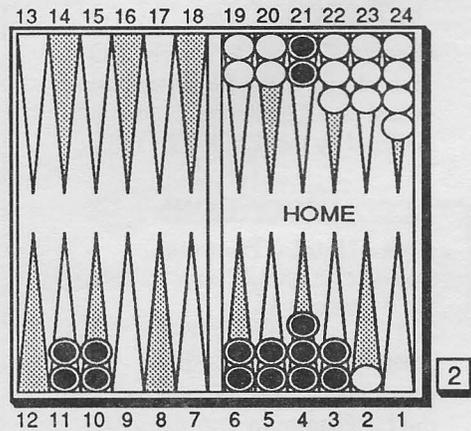
(1549 names on file)

JUNIOR MASTER-3 MASTER-10 ADVANCED MASTER-25
SENIOR MASTER-50 ADVANCED SENIOR MASTER-100
GRAND MASTER-200 CHICAGOLAND LIFE MASTER-300

Current area clubs: Chicago Bar Point Club, Pub Club, Winnetka BG Club, Pair O' Dice BG Club.
Past clubs included in all-time listings: National Backgammon League, House of Backgammon, Pub Club West, Gammon's of Chicago, Cubicle. Δ

**PROBLEM #156
SOLVED**

by Kit Woolsey

Money game. **BLACK TO PLAY 3-2.**

This position involves the common theme of hitting off the edge of a partial prime with the possibility of serious losses if you are hit back due to your opponent's strong home board. Important considerations are White's stripped position (many numbers crack her board), and Black's possession of the doubling cube. Black doesn't necessarily have to carry out a win—he just has to reach a doubling position where White has a drop or at least a close decision.

Suppose Black chooses to hit (4/2*). Then I think the 3 should clearly be 11/8. It's important to have at least one builder in direct cover range. Building the 2-point with 5/2 is not the right idea. The blotted 5-point gives White an extra shot, and if she hits, her escape route is free and clear.

Hemming in a back man and causing White's board to break is Black's best winning angle if he does get hit.

On the other hand, 10/7 is not necessary. The swing on an opposing 6-1 is just enormous. If Black plays 11/8 and White fails to hit back, she either dances or breaks her board with any entering number other than 6-1. In either of these cases, Black has a very strong double. White may have a take, but I am not at all sure and would not be surprised to see many opponents pass. Note that if Black doesn't have a builder in direct range, he wouldn't have much of a double even if White flunked. The extra gammon risk is clearly offset by the ability to possibly claim the game on 22 of 36 rolls.

What are Black's alternatives if he doesn't hit? The obvious candidates are 11/8, 10/8, making the important 8-point, and 21/16, gaining more control of the outfield and leaving no indirect shots. Something like 11/6 is clearly inferior—it gains virtually nothing and leaves four very significant indirect shots. Therefore, the three plays we must examine are 11/8, 4/2* and 11/8, 10/8 and 21/16.

The easiest play to eliminate is 21/16. This leaves White four good running numbers: 6-6, 5-5 and 5-6. (1-1 and 2-2 are not too weak, either.) More important, suppose White rolls nothing special and just clears her 6-point. Black is still a long way from a double, since White is way ahead in the race, her board is still as strong as Black's, and Black isn't threatening all that much on the next roll.

How about making the 8-point? On the down side, White is very strong with seven numbers: 5-3, 5-4, 5-5 and 5-6. And when White just clears her 6-point, Black has much the better of it. However, I still think that if he chose to double, it would be

pretty loose and White would have an easy take. True, Black now would have some threats, but White is still threatening to escape in one roll and still has a strong board. Only if White rolled 6-3 or 6-4 and was forced to leave a second blot would Black have a powerful (perhaps pass-evoking) double.

The hitting play (11/8, 4/2*) seems strongest to me. This leaves White only four excellent (5-2, 6-2) and three good (1-1, 2-1) responses. If White hits but doesn't escape, Black is still well in the fight, for White will be behind a 4-prime with her board ready to crack on the next roll if she fails to shake a 5 or 6. On the upside, suppose White dances, or enters on the 1-point but is forced to leave a shot (with 3-1, 4-1 or 5-1). Now Black is threatening to make a 5-prime and/or hit a second blot. I think this combination of threats gives Black a very strong double, one which White probably should pass. Even if White has a take, many players would certainly pass, so we can consider these variations as virtual wins for Black.

Thus, on 22 out of 36 numbers, Black has a very strong double if he chooses the hitting play. This is quite significant. Since 11/8, 4/2* leaves White as few or fewer killing responses than any of the other plays and virtually claims the game over half the time, it appears to be the clear choice, even considering the increased gammon jeopardy.

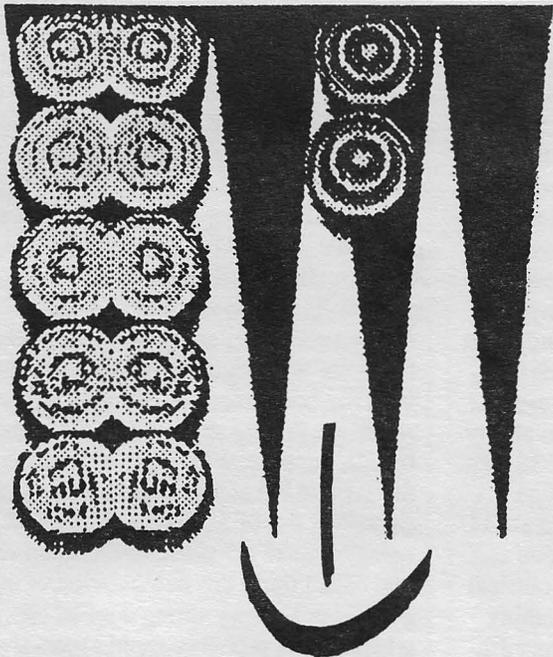
If Black did not have access to the cube, one of the quieter plays might well be superior (although my guess is that hitting off the edge of the prime, the normal thematic play, would still be best). However, with Black holding the cube and thus needing only to establish a strong doubling threat, hitting becomes the clear winner. Δ

AMALGAMATION

Thanks for the many cards and letters congratulating us on winning the Nevada State Championships. May the next victory be yours... America's First Lady of backgammon, **Carol Joy Cole** is interviewed in an upcoming issue of the German language *Backgammon Magazin* by editor **Haio Forler**. For the English translation, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope (or \$1 U.S. overseas) to: CJC Reprint, c/o Chicago POINT, 2726 W. Lunt Ave., Chicago, IL 60645... Welcome back to **Marty Tatossian** who just returned from three weeks on business in China.... Get well wishes go to reigning Midwest and Hawthorne Classic

champ **Don Desmond** who slipped on the ice in Chicago February 13 and broke his shoulder blade.... Visiting the Bar Point Club in February: **Azzam Masarani** (Pasadena, CA)... Note these three new North American backgammon spots since the January listing: (1) The Colorado Backgammon Assn. meets on Thursdays at J. L.'s Cheers in Denver. Phone **Earl Earp** at 303/778-1105. (2) The Phoenix Backgammon Club holds their Grand Opening tournament at the Jockey Club on March 8. **Veronica Mooney** (602/831-9693) has the particulars. (3) Toronto Backgammon now meets Thursdays & Saturdays at Blues & Cues, a \$3,000,000 facility. Owner **Gene Lew** (416/292-3699) has the information... The Louisville Gammon Gazette ceased

publication with the Jan. 1990 issue. Editor **Donald Guss** claimed there was not enough interest to justify its continuation. And **Werner Waschke** reports from Germany that Backgammon Zentrale is having problems with player growth and tournament tax laws. The first negative step appears to be the eminent cancellation of their English language *Info-Service* newsletter... Best of luck to **Joe Sylvester** who is now director of backgammon at the Cavendish North Club in Southfield, Michigan... Engineering student **Tim Serges** can take pride as the co-designer of a solar-powered vehicle that will represent the University of Illinois at the "America Tour De Sol" May 23 in Montpelier, VT... Will we see you March 23-25 at the Midwest Championships? Δ



2nd VENICE INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENT OF BACKGAMMON

Casinò Municipale di Venezia
18-20 May 1990
Lido di Venezia, Italy

PROGRAM

Friday 18 May
15.00-20.00 Final registration:
Casinò Municipale Di Venezia
21.00 Welcoming drink
21.30 Tournament play begins

Saturday 19 May
15:00 Tournament continues
Start of Consolation
21:30 Start of Super-Jackpot

Sunday 20 May
15.00 Start of Last Chance
Finals of all tournaments
20.00 Prize-giving ceremony
Various Jackpots will be organized.

LAST YEAR...

155 players from 8 countries
participated. 1989 Champion:
Gerhard Stoll (Italy).

FEES

Entry Fees
Open: L. 200,000
Beginners: L. 50,000

Registration Fees
1990 Worldwide Backgammon
Federation members: FREE
Non-members: L. 30,000

PRIZES

- 100% of entry fees will be returned.
- Minimum guaranteed prize money:
Lit. 24,000,000.
- Special Trophy "DAL NEGRO" for
the winner of the Open tournament
plus 10 other trophies kindly offered
by TEODOMIRO DAL NEGRO SPA.
- Special Trophy "GAZZETTINO" for
the winner of the Beginners tourna-
ment plus 10 other trophies kindly
offered by the IL GAZZETTINO.

ACCOMMODATIONS

★★★★Hotel 4 Fontane
Single: L. 120,000 Double: L. 188,000
Via 4 Fontane 16
30126 Venezia Lido, ITALY
Telephone: (0)41/5260227

*When making reservations, mention
the Backgammon Tournament.*

INFORMATION/REGISTRATION

Dario De Toffoli, tournament director
SD2 studiogiochi
S. Polo 3083
I-30135 Venezia, ITALY
Telephone: (0)41/5211029

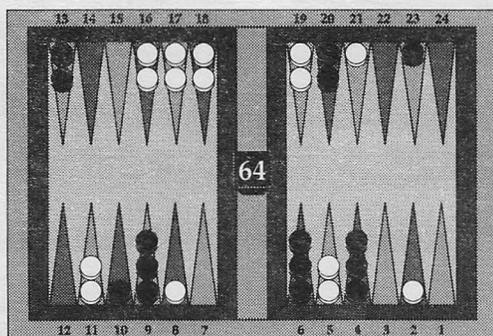
World Class Backgammon

Move by Move

by Roy Friedman

Thirty-one annotated games between two-time
World Champion Bill Robertie and
international star Rick Barabino

○ Robertie



One of the 200
board diagrams
in the book.

Barabino to play 33.



*"Thorough, trustworthy, revealing, and
unique, World Class Backgammon,
Move by Move is the best
match analysis I've ever read!"*

—Joe Sylvester, 1988 World Cup Champion

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____

Zip/Country _____

Send () copies of *World Class
Backgammon, Move by Move*
@ \$30 each: \$ _____

Mass. residents add 5% sales tax: _____

Postage and Handling _____

USA, Canada, Mexico: \$3/book _____

Overseas: \$4/book (surface) _____

\$14/book (air) _____

Total: \$ _____

Mail check or money order (USD) to:
ROY FRIEDMAN, 18 POTTER
POND, LEXINGTON, MA 02173