

1990 midwest backgammon championships

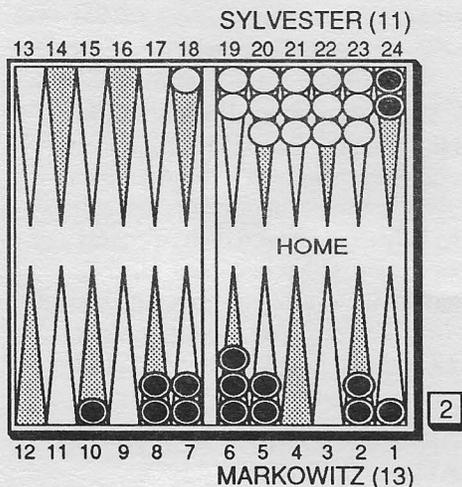
BIG PLAY GIVES MARKOWITZ THE 1990 MIDWEST TITLE

He may not be the fastest in the world at calculating match equities, but Chicago's Howard Markowitz is clearly one of the very best at collecting first place prize money. This time, chalk up the 1990 Midwest Backgammon Championships in his win column. Sellout crowds of 64 players in both the Championship and Advanced divisions swelled total participation to over 170 for the Chicago Bar Point Club's 7th annual extravaganza 23-25 March at the Oakbrook Terrace Holiday Inn.

Markowitz's opponent in the 15 point final match was the *Michigan Wizard*, Joe Sylvester. "My record against Joe is only slightly better than 50-50," claimed Howard. "But in important matches, I've now won 6 out of 7."

That figure could easily have been 5 out of 7. Take a look at the big play Markowitz was forced to make leading 13 to 11 and holding a 2-cube:

1990 Midwest Championships. 15 point finals. Howard Markowitz (Black) leads Joe Sylvester (White) 13 to 11. **BLACK TO PLAY 6-3.**



Markowitz opted to hit (24/18*, 10/7). "I decided to go for the win and risk the danger of a gammon instead of playing safe

and conceding two points," explained Howard. "Besides, with the safe play, I could be gammoned anyway." Following Sylvester's accommodating 5-5 roll (dancing), Markowitz was able to reel in the game and net the \$4,000 first prize.

The Advanced division finals pitted Minnesota's Riley Harrison against David Levine (Ontario, Canada). Harrison won the thrilling battle 13-12. The Limited title was won by Tom Roach (TX) who bested Chicago area player George Kirkby 11-6.

In the Midwest Doubles Championship, former college roommates Mark King (IL) & Randall Witt (TN) defeated Chicago-land's Dave Cramer and Bobbie Shifrin. It was King's second Doubles title within the month. He also won Louisville 4 March.

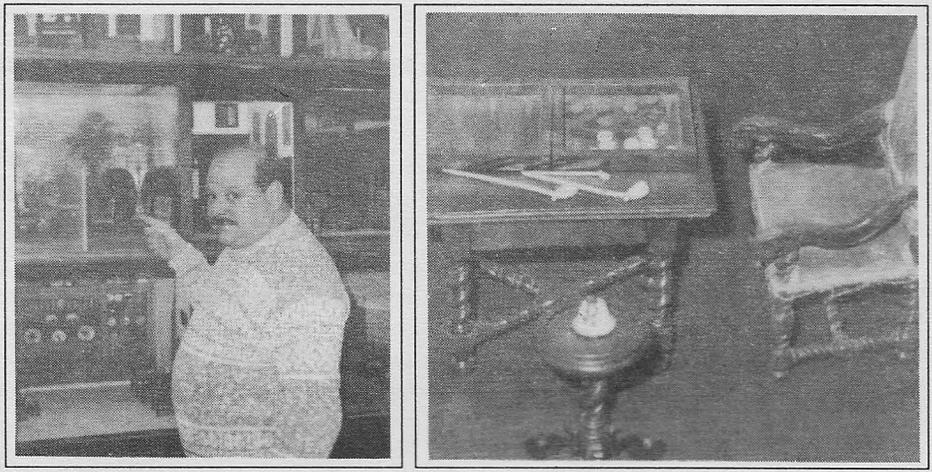
Howard Levine (MI) topped a 64 player field in the Nackgammon tournament and another Michigan player, Frank Talbot won the 128 player Blitz Tourney.

We look forward to more fun at the next Midwest Champs 22-24 March 1991 at the Oak Brook Marriott. For more on this year's madness, see the Photo Gallery on page 5. Δ

1990 MIDWEST BACKGAMMON CHAMPIONSHIPS

- CHAMPIONSHIP (64): 1st Howard Markowitz (IL); 2nd Joe Sylvester (MI); 3rd/4th Wendy Kaplan (IN), Bob Zavoral (IL); 1st C Drew Giovanis (FL); 2nd C Duane Jensen (MN); 1st LC Rich Sweetman (NH).
 ADVANCED (64): 1st Riley Harrison (MN); 2nd David Levine (Canada); 3rd/4th Linda Ross (MI), Rick Zyber (MI); 1st C Ron Stur (IL); 2nd C Mark Zyber (MI); 1st LC George Barr (IL).
 LIMITED (30): 1st Tom Roach (TX); 2nd George Kirkby (IL); 1st C Frank Callea (IL); 2nd C Glenn Swanson (IL); 1st LC Sylvia Huddleston (MI).
 DOUBLES (32): 1st Mark King (IL) & Randall Witt (TN); 2nd Dave Cramer (IL) & Bobbie Shifrin (IL); 3rd/4th Dave Heffner (NV) & Dean Muench (IL), Bob Holyon (WI) & Jeff Kane (WI).
 SATELLITE DOUBLES (8): 1st Jonathan Bennetts (Canada) & Jeane Eggenberger (MI).
 BLITZ (128): 1st Frank Talbot (MI).
 MiniBLITZ (32): 1st Tony Siegel (CO).
 NACKGAMMON (64): 1st Howard Levine (MI); 2nd Mark Harlan (CA); 3rd/4th David Levine (Canada), Charles Morrison (Canada).
 PIG-ROLLING CHAMP: Mark Zyber (MI).
 BG BLOCKHEAD CHAMP: Ben Zemaitis (IL).
 RACCOON POKER CHAMP: Dave Rockwell (IL).
 WHEEL OF FORTUNE CHAMP: Mark Anshus (WI).
 BACKGAMMON PROFESSOR: Jake Jacobs (IL).

BACKGAMMON IN MINIATURE



Here's John Brussel (NY) in Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum pointing out a backgammon room in a French doll house [circa 1700]. The second photo, taken by Jill Ferdinand (IL), shows a blow-up of the incredibly detailed miniature room. Note that the actual board size is only 2" x 1"!

John and Jill plan a 24 June wedding in New York.

CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

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LETTERS

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IN DEFENSE OF CUBE DECISIONS

If you want new ideas and new authors for backgammon books, you have to accept that some will not meet your expectations. But to knock a good faith effort is very unkind. Bill Barron identified in his introduction what readers would find in his book *Cube Decisions, Vol. I*. A buyer who either failed to read or ignored the introduction is his own worst enemy.

I praise Barron for his effort to bring us checker positions that some well-known and highly skilled players considered for a double or redouble. Remember, deciding *not* to double can be as important a decision as deciding *to* double.

Yes, there are shortcomings in Bill's book, but the effort was done to help the backgammon community, *not* to make money, and I for one commend Barron on his effort. Last month in the POINT's "Letters" section, Marc Gray said if he pays \$30 for a plate of bouillabaisse (Roy Friedman's book), then he would balk at paying \$20 for a wiener (Barron's text). I look at it differently. If I buy a "tube steak" for \$20, then I'm getting a real bargain

coming attractions

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



by Carol Joy Cole
313/232-9731

Apr 6-8	38th Indiana Open, Omni Severin Hotel, Indianapolis, IN	317/845-8435
Apr 7-8	Düsseldorf Open, Hotel Novotel, Ratingen, West Germany	02151-50 35 91
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 21	Springfield Spring Open, On Broadway, Springfield, IL	217/789-6275
Apr 22	New England Club Monthly, Sheraton Commander, Cambridge, MA	617/861-7340
Apr 29	Spring Fling Tournament, Grisanti's, Indianapolis, IN	317/845-8435
Apr 29	IBA Tournament, The Palm Hotel, West Palm Beach, FL	305/527-4033
Apr 29	Cavendish North Monthly Tournament, Southfield, MI	313/642-9616
May 3-6	17th 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, Frankestown, NH	603/863-4711
May 6	Central Illinois BG Club Spring Tourney; Sly Fox Pub; Lacon, IL	309/692-6909
May 7	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	3-689918
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 27-28	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 4	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	3-689918
Jun 10	New England Bonus Tournament & Play-off Finals, Cambridge, MA	617/861-7340
Jun 28	Special Thursday Bonus Tournament, Sheraton Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
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 2	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	3-689918
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 13-15	San Remo International Tournament, Hotel Royal, San Remo, Italy	184-79 991
Jul 14-15	College Park Summer Championship, Promenade, Bethesda, MD	301/530-0604
Jul 16-22	World Championship of Backgammon, Monte-Carlo, Monaco	305/527-4033
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 16-19	Palace Summer Championships, St. Moritz, Switzerland	061/50 58 16
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

when I purchase good bouillabaisse for \$30.
—Larry Strommen, NABS, Indianapolis, IN

Please advise your readers that the book I authored [*Cube Decisions, Vol. I*] is being revised to include analysis by players Neil Kazaross and Malcolm Davis.—Bill Barron, Editor, *The Double*, Dallas, TX

KIND WORDS FROM GERMANY

We enjoy every issue of the *Chicago POINT* ranking it first among all newsletters. Excellent contributors, reliability and idealism—these are the qualities that make your fine medium possible.

This kind of mutual support differs totally from the German backgammon scene. Surprisingly, it is the American players, tournament directors and editors who help us most with their openness and cooperation. Other countries, other temperaments. Keep on doing the fine job!
—Haio Forler & Iris Romagna, Editors, *Backgammon Magazin*, Bonn, W. Germany

CONSIDER EXPERIENCE WHEN RATING PLAYERS

There is tremendous interest in the world backgammon community to know which

[Continued on page 2]

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 2]

players are achieving the best tournament results. Kent Goulding's International Ratings are an important step forward. Unfortunately the Top 50 rated players [see *Chicago POINT*, Feb. 1990] present a somewhat distorted picture because they don't take into account player experience.

My suggestion is to require a reasonable minimum amount of experience points before the final list is compiled. About 120 players in Goulding's list have 1000 or more experience points. The Top 20 from this active group would be a more meaningful way of identifying "the best."—*Perry Gartner, Englewood, NJ*

GAMMON IN WASHINGTON SQUARE

During the spring and summer months in New York City, interesting 8 to 10 player chouettes are played in the southwest corner of Washington Square Park (West 4th Street, east of 54th Avenue) in the afternoon and evenings until about 11:00 P.M. Although the stakes are small (\$1-\$3 per point), the level of play is quite high

and the action is very lively. Most importantly, the players are basically friendly and honorable. It's a really pleasant way to pass a warm afternoon or evening.—*Rob Mathes, Gammoner's Inc., New York, NY*

"CLEAR" PRAISE FOR THE MIDWEST CHAMPIONSHIPS

Many thanks for a most enjoyable tournament. I enjoyed the side events, the professional appearance of the staff and the handouts, and even the smoke-free environment. (I'm a smoker—I can't believe I said that!) See you at the Indiana Open.—*Mary Ann Meese, Hoosier Backgammon Club, Indianapolis, IN*

PUT THE CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

I enjoy your publication every month and rely on it exclusively for notice of upcoming tournaments. On behalf of the members of the Ottawa Backgammon Club, I wish to extend a hearty "Thank you" for all the hard work you obviously put into the *POINT*.—*Eden Windish, Vanier, Ontario, Canada*

In turn, we want to thank (a) our contributing editors (see pg. 2) for their outstanding submissions and (b) the Macintosh computer which makes layout fun!—*Ed. Δ*

first person

THE BEAUTY OF THE FRENCH RIVIERA— AND VICTORY, TOO!

by Perry Gartner

When I arrived in Cannes for the International Backgammon Tournament at the Festival of Games Feb. 22–25, I wondered if I should have made the trip. My vigil included a rough overnight flight, jet lag, and a scheduled five hour train ride that turned into eleven hours. Finally, I felt so discombobulated that I was only able to sleep three hours before my first match.

What a difference two wins make! Before my third round at 4:00 P.M., I decided that I had made the right decision in coming to Cannes. Bright French sunshine, a temperature in the mid-70s, and a light ocean breeze made for a perfect day as I strolled up and down the promenade. Lunch was alfresco, among beautiful people, with an ocean view that included a panorama of yachts and sailboats of all sizes. The food was delicious, and the stress and anxiety that had accompanied me from the office in New Jersey seemed to have taken an early flight back home. I felt terrific, alert and focused on my next objective—to play the final rounds as well as I possibly could.

Winning the Championship was exciting, particularly since I was the only American in the tournament and my Italian opponent in the finals had a contingent of his countrymen rooting him on. My celebratory dinner companions that evening included among others, a French games player trained in psychotherapy, a young German stock market millionaire, two German students and a successful American business woman living in London. Our lively conversation revolved around social, political, and economic issues, as well as "What's happening with backgammon in your country?"

St.-Tropez in May? I'd love to go but it doesn't look promising right now because of work. Damn! Δ



1990 BPC PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED
THRU MAR. 31

TAK MORIOKA	8.32	Marcy Sloan	1.84	Paul Franks	0.72
MARK KING	7.92	Jay Ward	1.84	Bill Hargrave	0.72
LUCKY NELSON	7.68	George Barr	1.80	Mike Spiropoulos	0.72
ARNOLD ZOUSMER	7.04	Andy Argy	1.68	George Kirkby	0.72
DAVE CRAMER	6.52	Don Jayhan	1.52	Ken Bond	0.64
YAMIN YAMIN	4.68	Walt Schafer	1.44	Bruce Wittert	0.64
BILL DAVIS	4.52	Leslie Lockett	1.44	Hal Heinrich	0.64
DEEB SHALATI	4.24	Judy Brown	1.40	Mike Siegel	0.56
RUDY EMMELT	3.64	Howard Markowitz	1.36	Richard Stawowy	0.48
GARY KAY	3.04	Bill Keefe	1.36	Betsy Miller	0.40
BOBBIE SHIFRIN	2.88	Ron Stur	1.28	Sarg Serges	0.40
RICH GALEBA	2.80	Joann Feinstein	1.28	Arline Levy	0.36
STU KATZ	2.56	Ralph Levy	1.28	Mike Sutton	0.32
BOB ZAVORAL	2.56	Walter Trice	1.28	Reggie Porter	0.32
ALICE KAY	2.52	Phyllis Smolinski	1.12	Femi Owiku	0.28
DEAN MUENCH	2.40	Herb Roman	1.12	Larry Knoll, Jr.	0.28
JOE KOUCHEAN	2.28	John Spatafora	1.12	Mary Franks	0.24
GREG SHORE	2.16	Bob Holyon	1.04	Larry Knoll	0.24
JAKE JACOBS	2.16	Jerry Brooks	0.88	Bernie Smuda	0.24
JOHN DEMIAN	2.08	Norma Shyer	0.88	Bill Hoeflich	0.24
Don Desmond	2.08	Sharon Lennon	0.88	Terry Moskowitz	0.24
Kathy Rudnick	1.92	Frank Callea	0.80	Ted Mann	0.12
Bart Levin	1.92	Jolie Lewis	0.76		

TAK MORIOKA's 13 match winning streak produced three tournament victories in a row—enough to easily give him March Player of the Month honors with 5.76 points. And his 13 game winning streak tied Howard Markowitz's club record set in December 1986. Tak now "leads the league" for the first time since August 1989.

Arnold Zousmer (3.44) and Rich Galeba (2.80) were the respective runners-up.

CANNES INTERNATIONAL BACKGAMMON TOURNAMENT

BACKGAMMON TOURNAMENT (48):
1st Perry Gartner (USA); 2nd Boero (ITA);
3rd/4th Marmorstein (GER), Sarzynski
(GER); 1st Cons. Kirschner (GER); 1st
LC Schiesser (GER).
BRIDGE CHAMPION: Omar Sharif.
CHESS CHAMPION: Boris Spassky.

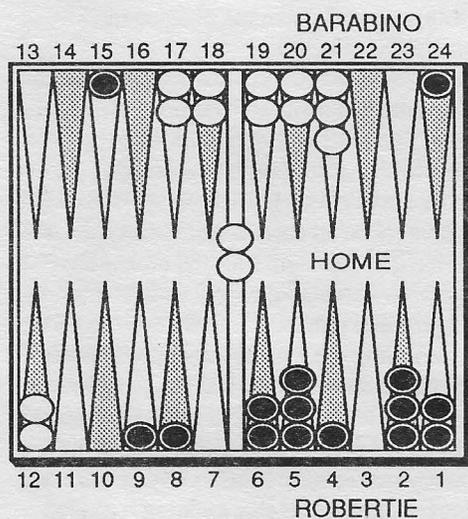
DEAR MISS LONELYBLOTS



TO LIFT OR NOT TO LIFT

Dear Miss Lonelyblots: Most authors treat the backgammon matches they annotate like a rose garden, commenting extensively on the easy plays, but neglecting the thorniest problems. This policy may help those authors, however it hurts readers like me who seek to understand backgammon better, and no doubt provokes many troublesome letters to you, Miss Lonelyblots. To wit:

From page 150 of Roy Friedman's *World Class Backgammon, Move by Move*. Double match point. White has two men on the bar. **BLACK TO PLAY HIS LAST 3.**



Of Bill's 9/6 play, Roy commented approvingly, "Maximizing covers for the 4-point."

But what if Bill's lonely blot on the 4-point gets hit? Then it's curtains for him, with two men stuck behind Rick's 5-prime. Instead, he should lift that blot with 4/1, eliminating Rick's 30% chance of a knockout blow. Look how well Bill can cope with Rick's 4s after lifting:

- Six rolls (5-4, 5-1, 4-1) point on the 4-point;
- Two rolls (2-2, 1-1) shift points;
- Twelve rolls (5-3, 5-2, 4-3, 4-2, 1-3, 1-2) pick-and-pass;
- Five rolls (6-6, 6-5, 6-2) make the 3-point;
- Eight rolls (5-5, 4-4, 6-4, 6-1, 3-2) hit loose on the 4-point;
- Only the 3 remaining rolls (6-3, 3-3) accomplish nothing.

Confirming my analysis, I rolled the position out a number of times, and found Black winning about 33% of the games after moving 4/1.

To lift or not to lift?—that is the question. I suspect, however, that Bill knew Rick's dice did not contain any 4s. Where can I buy such dice?—Haio Hamlet

Dear Hamlet: You tempt me with your argument for 4-1, but you fail to seduce me into impurity. Your roll-outs mean little unless you perform them for *both* plays. If the two plays are close, you may need to roll them out thousands of times to produce statistically significant results. Most critically, you neglect to segregate the "33% of the games" which Black wins after lifting into different categories:

- White enters with a single 4;
- White enters with a single 3;
- White dances;
- White enters with double 4s;
- White enters with double 3s.

Note that White's double 3s and double 4s devastate Black with an *outfield* hit. Thus lifting caters only to White's ten *single* 4s (just under 28% rather than over 39%). But let's digress to see how much 9/6 gains on White's eight single reentries on the 3-point and 16 dancing rolls.

When White dances, Black has 29 rolls (6-5 as well as all 4s, 2s and 1s) to cover the 4-point along with two rolls (5-3) to make the 3-point. 4-2, 2-2, 2-1 and 1-1 are especially useful because they let Black advance to the edge of White's prime while making the 4-point: six "jokers" as against only five bad rolls. In contrast, your play leaves only six rolls (5-4, 5-1, 4-1) to make the 4-point, three rolls (6-5, 6-6) to make the 3-point, two rolls (6-2) to leap White's prime and ten rolls (5-2, 4-2, 3-2, 2-2, 2-1, 1-1) to move to the edge of the prime: *no* jokers and 15 useless rolls.

Likewise when White enters one man with a 3, Bill's play provides 31 rolls which either point on the 3-point (5-3, 5-2, 5-1, 3-2, 3-1), cover the 4-point while moving to the edge of the prime (2-2, 2-1, 1-1), or merely cover the 4-point (6-5, 6-4, 6-2, 6-1, 5-4, 4-4, 4-3, 4-2, 4-1). Your play removes not only the slot for the 4-point, but also a builder for the 3-point, leaving only four rolls (5-4, 4-1) for the 4-point, six rolls (6-6, 6-5, 6-2, 5-2, 2-2) for the 3-point, seven rolls (6-1, 5-1, 2-1, 1-1) for the pick-and-pass and four rolls (4-2, 3-2) to advance to the edge of the prime: again *no* jokers and 15 useless rolls.

You claim that after lifting, Black wins about 33% of the time. But how often does

Black win when White enters with a single 4? Very seldom indeed, I think. Black must waste time on pick-and-pass plays now and later, burying more builders and squandering some precious rolls such as 4-2, 2-1 and 1-1 which could otherwise be used to move to the edge of the prime.

If Bill deemed his game-winning chances very slim on White's 4s regardless of his play here, then he was wise to focus on improving his chances substantially when White failed to roll a 4 next. Even though he could not "know" that Rick wouldn't roll a 4 next, he was justified in *assuming* that Rick wouldn't, since that would leave him almost helpless anyway. Keeping the 4-point slotted, in fact, catered to Rick's dice containing *future* 4s, against which that 4-point would be an effective prophylactic.

Pity the downtrodden match annotator. He cannot select only the easy plays on which to comment, nor just the ones about which he is sure, but must evaluate every position that arises in the match. Nor can he always guess which plays his readers will think erroneous or problematical. Perhaps Roy thought the need to fill in another point so obvious that lifting the blot didn't merit discussion.

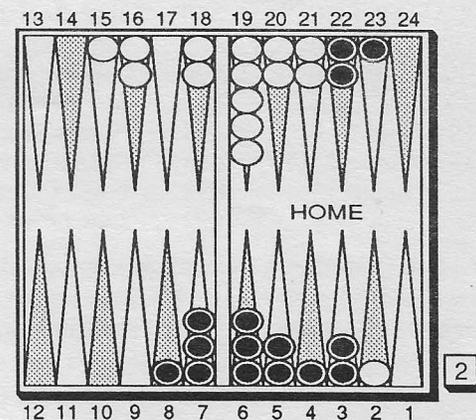
At any rate, I find letters such as yours stimulating rather than troublesome. Without them, I'd be out of a job, wouldn't I?—Miss Lonelyblots Δ

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.

your move

PROBLEM #158

Match to 7 points. Black leads White, 3 to 2. **BLACK TO PLAY 6-2.**



1990 MIDWEST BACKGAMMON CHAMPIONSHIPS

Photo Gallery



Carol Joy Cole, Bill Davis and Peter Kalba (along with John & Dru Heggen) share their seventh year together working the Midwest Backgammon Championships.



Sarg Serges (behind the gas mask) and Jim Opre ham it up on Saturday afternoon. This was the first major regional event to ban smoking in the main playing room.

SMOKING "BURNS OUT"

148 players at the 1990 Midwest Championships were surveyed as to whether the 1991 Midwest Championships should continue to ban smoking in the main playing room. Here are the responses:

STRONGLY FAVOR BAN	70
FAVOR BAN	17
NONCOMMITTAL	30
OPPOSE	11
STRONGLY OPPOSE	20



Leading 13-11, Howard Markowitz ponders a critical play against Joe Sylvester in the 15 pt. Championship finals.



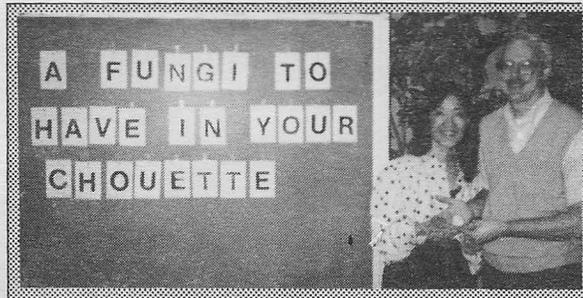
Wanda Mortuk is surprised with a cake on her birthday (March 25).



1990 Midwest Doubles Champions Randall Witt and Mark King accept their trophies as runners-up Bobbie Shirfin and Dave Cramer look on.



Dave Rockwell (and furry partner) won a \$100 bill in the Raccoon Poker tournament.



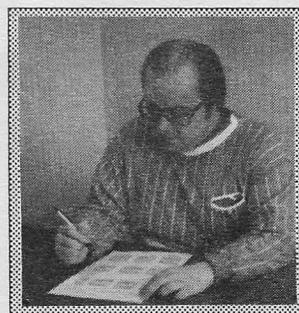
What do you call a mushroom who takes bad doubles? Wheel of Fortune champ Mark Anshus knew. That's "Vanna" Joy at his side.



Wendy Kaplan and David Smith are all smiles prior to their April 5 wedding in Indianapolis.



It's Jeff Henry and "Phoenix" at the charity Calcutta auction. \$2100 was raised for the Anti-Cruelty Society.



"Professor" Jake Jacobs on his way to winning the Backgammon Exam.



Emil Mortuk whacks the chess clock against Howard Levine (the Nackgammon champ). Only four matches were delayed enough to require a clock.

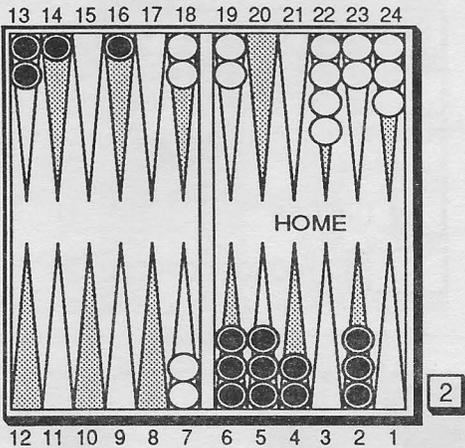
last month's position

PROBLEM #157 SOLVED

by Danny Kleinman

Tournament double match point.

BLACK TO PLAY 5-5.



Superficially, it may seem that Black, who will trail by two pips after playing this roll, is behind in the race, for the shake is worth about four pips, giving White (in effect) a six pip lead. The conventional wisdom tells the trailer to maximize contact, since the pips lost in getting hit and sent to the bar harm the leader substantially more than a player who already trails. Direct point-versus-point contact at a distance of six is as maximum as you can get. Therefore the dedicated follower of a mechanistic pip-count and the conventional wisdom may play 16/6, 14/4, happy to keep

the midpoint while leaving no shots.

A slightly more sophisticated player may see that this seemingly safe play leaves Black with no safe 6s. Therefore he may move 16/1, 6/1, risking six indirect shots so that he may play 6s with his outfield blot while making a fifth inside point. (14/4, 6/1, 6/1 is clearly weaker than this.)

But White's lead in the race is an illusion; and the contact between White's bar-anchor and Black's midpoint favors White, not Black. *Look* at the race before you *count*. White has harmful pile-ups on her 1- and 3-points, harmful gaps on her 4- and 5-points. Black has useful pile-ups and harmless gaps. In the bear-off, Black will be able to play his missing numbers constructively: 1s from the heavy 2-point to fill the 1-hole, 3s from the heavy 6-point to fill the 3-hole. Because of the synergy between gaps on the n-point and pile-ups on the 2n-point, even a fourth man on Black's 6-point wouldn't hurt.

Again, *look* at the effect of the 6-away point-versus-point contact. White has *two* safe 6s from her bar-point. Black has *no* safe 6s after moving 16/6, 14/4, and *less than one* safe 6 after moving 16/1, 6/1. (Though he can play 6-5, 6-4, 6-3 and 6-2 from the 14-point, he cannot play 6-1 without leaving a direct shot.) If Black keeps his midpoint, then (barring doublets) both sides will waste pips moving in their home boards until either is forced to crack with a 6, leaving direct, indirect, and perhaps repeat shots. And Black is much more likely to crack than White.

Black's midpoint is a liability, and he should take the opportunity to clear it now.

13/3, 13/3, while filling a gap, is too risky. Not only are Black's blots exposed to eleven hitting combinations immediately, but they are subject to continuing jeopardy. Even if Black can bring them together (e.g. with 3-1 or 5-3) next roll, he merely recreates point-versus-point contact and the danger of blotting on 6s.

But Black's 8-point, in conjunction with a single outfield blot, is an asset. It serves as a safe landing place for that blot. And it keeps White from leaving the bar-anchor. Suppose White rolls a 6-4, for example. To run with both men allows Black to hit either directly with his outfield blot. To run with one man lets Black hit directly from the 8-point or indirectly with his outfield blot.

By moving 13/8, 13/8, 16/6 or 13/8, 13/8, 14/4, Black converts harmful contact into helpful. His remaining outfield blot, though a target, is also a sniper. Barring a hit or doublets, White will waste pips on any 4, 5 or 6 next. Then White may waste pips again if she rolls any ace, since Black's 8-point will deter her from leaving the bar-anchor.

Where in the outfield should Black leave his blot?

At first glance, the 16-point might seem safer than the 14-point, for there a blot is exposed to five combinations rather than six. On the 14-point, however, the blot is not only closer to home and safety but linked directly (six away) to Black's 8-point, and thus exposed to far fewer repeat shots. Though I don't feel there is much difference between the two plays, I favor 13/8, 13/8, 16/6 over 13/8, 13/8, 14/4. Δ

Remember the thrill of winning?

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402), Chicago. Howard Markowitz (312/286-8417).

TAKGAMMON

by Tak Morioka
with Sivad Llib

THE HAND

The panorama of backgammon positional play can be perplexing, not only for the beginner, but for veteran players as well. How should we attempt to perceive troubling checker configurations?

Personally, I rely on the teachings of Sivad Llib, the gammon guru from Sri Lanka. During the years I studied the inner game with Sivad, his teachings revolved around one cardinal symbol: the hand. Although more than a decade has passed since our last meeting, Sivad's words echo through my mind every time I face a challenging piece play:

"Do not attempt to grasp any backgammon position without first opening your hand. Perceive the palm of your hand as the central energy core. The energy flows from the palm directly into your thumb. But be forewarned: with only this appendage, the ability to grasp is impossible. The index finger and thumb can do nothing more than pinch. All of the fingers operating in harmony are required to actually grasp.

"The hand tells the fingers to grasp. Do not attempt to juxtapose this action. The fingers cannot instruct the hand to grasp. A simple error of this nature can result in the sacrifice of all that has been previously grasped.

"The hand must be unsoiled to properly grasp. When you possess dirty digits, your grasp is illusory. Who among us can grasp future concepts of our game plan with filthy fingernails?"

Study the guru's words in my April column—don't be fooled by the hidden meaning. Naturally the *mind* should attempt to grasp what Sivad is communicating. However the *hand* is what actually reaches out and grabs positional enlightenment. Δ



Fortune Cookie

The doubling cube flies like an arrow.
Fruit flies like a banana.

who did what

WINNER'S
CORNER

Feb.-Apr. 1990

•**2nd Paradise Island Pro-Am** (Nassau, Bahamas; 1-4 Feb.) Doubles Championship (16): 1st Dennis Carlston (CA) & Jim Scott (TX); 2nd Maurice Elghanayan (UK) & Ebby Mossanen (CA)... The \$10,000 entry is split Amateur-\$8,000, Pro-\$2,000.

•**20th Willowbank Invitational** (Shelburne, VT; 4 Feb.)... Open (26): 1st Gardner Soule; 2nd Bob Lumbrá; 3rd/4th Ted Riehle, Linc Bedell; 1st Cons. Art Kimbell; 2nd Cons. Geoff Smith; 1st LC Sarah Soule; 2nd LC Kate Casavant... 8" of snow reduced this year's field from 32 to 26 players. A "party" tournament.

•**L.A. Invitational Special 16** (Los Angeles, CA; 10 Feb.)... 1st: Neil Kazaross (CA); 2nd Dennis Rutkowski (CA).

•**7th Fleet Underwood Memorial** (Flint, MI; 11 Feb.)... Open (32): 1st Sandy Glassman; 2nd Emil Mortuk; 3rd Carl Mitchell. Intermediate (43): 1st Rick Zyber; 2nd Ian Rogers; 3rd Sylvia

Huddleston; 4th/5th Al Branham, Vito D'Alessandro. Novice (13): 1st Danny Wesley; 2nd Steve Elias; 3rd Carrie Morris... \$800 raised for American Red Cross and \$100 for Bret Underwood Trust Fund.

•**South Australian Open** (Unley, South Australia; 25 Feb.)... Championship (46): 1st Justin Freytag; 2nd Andrew Peake; 3rd/4th Peter Geelen, Allan Perry.

•**14th Louisville Bluegrass Regional** (Louisville, KY; 2-4 Mar.)... Open (18): 1st Quint McTyiere (KY); 2nd Gaby Kayrouz (KY); 1st Cons. Yamin Yamin (IL). Advanced Int. (27): 1st Mark King (IL); 2nd Terry Kuchenbrod (KY); 1st Cons. Don Woods (IN). Doubles (16): 1st Mark King (IL) & Sylvia Strasberg (KY); 2nd John Cox (KY) & Rich Emmett (KY). World Cup Qualif. (8): Rob Reynolds (GA).

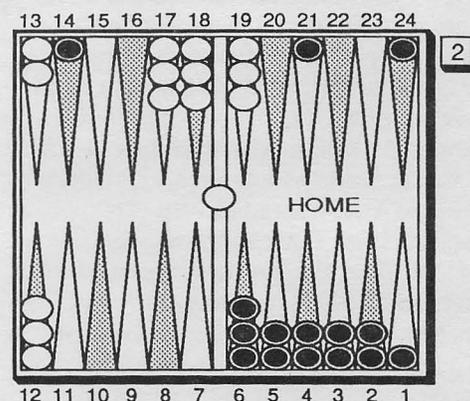
•**Backgammon Club of Phoenix Grand Opening** (Phoenix, AZ; 8 Mar.)... Open: 1st Jim Lowe; 2nd Mike Baskind; 3rd Ed Haas; 4th Doug Amenda. Beginner: 1st Russ Hoag; 2nd Diane Hoag... 21 attended.

•**Ted Bassett Cup** (Switzerland; 8-11 Mar.)... Championship (62): 1st Karl Laubmeier (GER); 2nd Lou Kollakis (GB); 3rd/4th Marc Gardener (USA), Peter Huber (GER);

HASTY
PLAYS

by Duane Jensen

Heading home towards an easy gammon, **BLACK ROLLS 5-3:**



Black covers his ace-point with the 5 and comes up to White's 4-point with the 3 so both back men can escape with 5s and 6s. A more useful and versatile 3-play would have been to bring a man down to his 11-point.

The key to Black winning this game and a gammon is for him to move his three men home while keeping his closed board intact. Playing 24/21 creates several rolls which break Black's six point board (1-1, 2-1, 2-2, 4-4). Playing 14/11 avoids these immediate board-breakers and creates a more flexible position.

If Black plays 24/21, he breaks his board 30% of the time. If Black instead plays 14/11, his board breaks only 20% of the time. Δ

1st Cons. Stefano Sartori (ITA)... The longest-running tourney in Europe (1964).

•**Springfield Series Finals** (Springfield, IL; 11 Mar.)... 1st John McCabe; 2nd Dick Nelson; 3rd Dave Wallace; 4th Gary Blair.

•**Cavendish North Monthly** (Southfield, MI; 18 Mar.)... Open (22): 1st Linda Ross; 2nd Harry Tokatlian; 1st Cons. Len Loder; 2nd Cons. Marilyn McMaster.

•**G/A 21st Invitational** (Los Angeles, CA; 23-25 Mar.)... Open (40): 1st Neil Kazaross; 2nd Al Senter; 3rd/4th Al Demirjian, David Dekoker. Special 16: 1st Frank Frigo; 2nd Ray Foglerlund. Doubles (16): 1st Elliot Bean & Susan Alch; 2nd Ray Foglerlund... A nice birthday present for the red hot Kazaross.

•**Bar Point Sunday** (Chicago, IL; 1 Apr.)... Open (25): 1st Tim Serges; 2nd Jake Jacobs; 3rd/4th Ed Bauder, Harold Seif; 1st Cons. Don Desmond; 2nd Cons. Tak Morioka. Limited (9): 1st Femi Owiku; 2nd Andy Argy; 1st Cons. Reggie Porter. Δ

AMALGAMATION

It was a high school reunion for **Jill Ferdinand, Jay Bleiman** and **Herb Roman** at the BPC tournament on 6 March. All three were Chicago Von Steuben graduates a "few" years back. Asked to pinpoint the exact year, Jill (the prom queen of her class) quipped, "Let's just say we graduated with the generation that thought drugs were one of the four basic food groups."... Visiting the BPC in March: **Hal Heinrich** (Canada), **Sharon Lennon** (KY), **Walter Trice** (MA), and **Randall Witt** (TN)... Kudos to **Lane O'Connor** for organizing the State Farm Employees Association Backgammon League. The group plays lunch hours at the Bloomington-Normal (IL) office. Regular participation is near 20 and growing... Although the Championship of Great Britain is scheduled 5-8 July (Palace Hotel, Isle of Man), the action begins 3 July. In addition to the "Viking Kick-off," Michigan's **Joe Sylvester** will conduct "Sylvester's Semester," a free two-day seminar covering doubling strategy and timing. See below for securing an invi-

tation... Another prominent American expert, World Champion **Joe Russell** (CA), is scheduled to provide the commentary for the finals of the Quantas Australian Open (20-25 April in Sydney). We're certain Joe is hoping to provide the *play*... **Lucky Nelson** submits this quote from chess grand master **Savielly Tartakower**: "Tactics is what you do when there is something to do. Strategy is what you do when there is nothing to do."... The *Louisville Gammon Gazette* is back in publication following a January announcement that it was ceasing publication. Write to **Donald Guss**, 1606 Vivian Lane, Louisville, KY 40205 for a comp copy... How appropriate for Atlanta BG player **Jim Hickey** to name his moving company "Prime Movers."... Good luck to **Lincoln Bedell** who held his Granite State Club Grand Opening tournament on 1 April at the Bench Café in Keene, NH. For more info about backgammon in New Hampshire call Linc at 603/863-4711... From the March *Backgammon Zentrale* newsletter: "Smoking will not be permitted in the main playing room of the Midwest Championships. Will it work here in Germany? We think not." Δ

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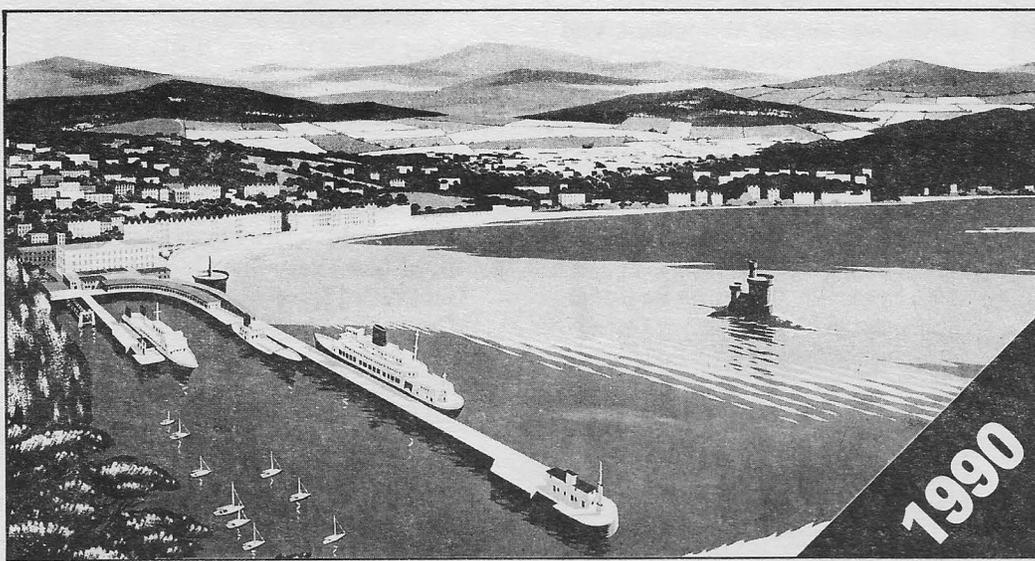
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