*cbpc fall trophy tourney*

## TAK TRIMS TIM FOR TITLE

### Beverly Klene Is Limited Champ

Tak Morioka showed why he's on top of the Bar Point Club master point list by hanging in to win the 8th Annual Fall Trophy Tourney. 58 players packed Pat's Pub in Norridge, IL for a shot at the glory.

The finals pitted BPC's backgammon guru Tak Morioka (Chicago) against Tim Serges (Arlington Hts., IL). Tak opened the 7-point match winning a doubled gammon. Serges followed with a "BG" at the 2-level: 6–4 after two games. Tak won a gammon in the third game to knot the score at 6-all.

Serges took quick command of the final game and appeared to have Tak right where he wanted him in this mid-game position:

CBPC Fall Trophy Tourney. 7 point match tied at 6-all. Tak Morioka (Black) on roll. **ESTIMATE BLACK'S WINNING CHANCES.**



SERGES (6)

HOME
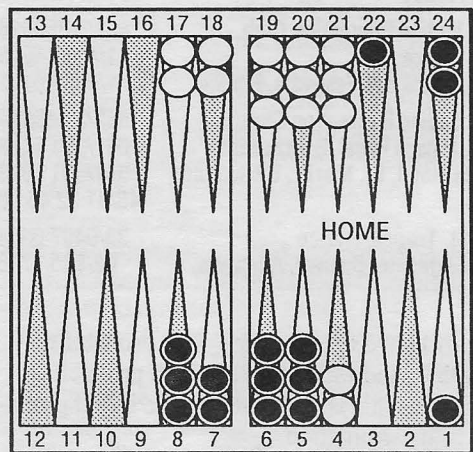
MORIOKA (6)

No problem for the Tak-monster. Morioka rolled double aces followed by double 6s and was able to waltz past Tim's two stragglers for the title.

Chicagoan Beverly Klene collected her first Bar Point Club victory at the right time outlasting another BPC newcomer Greg Try of Lincolnwood, IL. In their double



Tak Morioka    Tim Serges

Beverly Klene    Greg Try
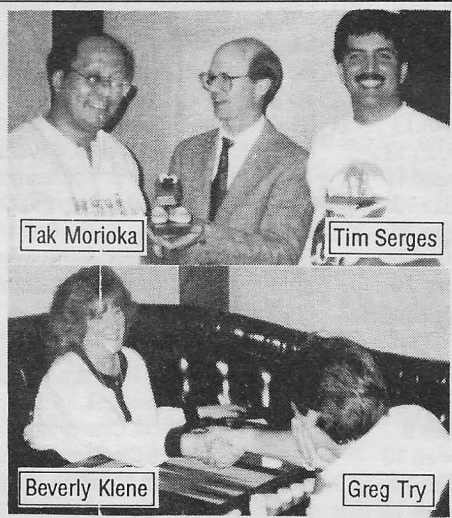
match point finals, Bev threw a necessary doubles in the final stages of the bear-off for a well-earned victory.

Thanks to Ed Creamean at Smart Food® for supplying our tournament with 100 bags of popcorn. Complete results: Δ

### 8th CBPC Fall Trophy Tourney

OPEN (32): 1st Tak Morioka; 2nd Tim Serges: 3rd/4th Stu Katz, Mark King; Cons.1 Ken Bond; Cons.2 Bruce Wittert
LIMITED (26): 1st Beverly Klene; 2nd Greg Try; 3rd/4th Mary Franks, Bill Keefe; Cons.1 George Kirkby; Cons.2 Stan Kucharz

### CHAMPIONSHIP OF GREAT BRITAIN MOVES TO SPAIN

"The 1991 Championship of Great Britain will move from the Isle of Man to a Mediterranean sea resort in Spain," said Hercules and Bridget, the Baron and Baroness of Culcreuch and directors of the event. "The Palace Hotel is unable to accommodate us during May next year, so we have contracted with the Torrequebrada Hotel & Casino in Costa del Sol, Spain for 6–12 May 1991. At least £10,000 will be added.

"There will be three divisions of play as well as the 'Viking Kick-Off' and semesters by Bill Robertie and Joe Sylvester. One new event for high rollers, the 'Manx-Med £25,000 King-Pot' has been added."

To request an invitation write: Championship of Great Britain Backgammon; 6 Mount Rule House; Braddan, Isle of Man.

## NEW CHICAGOLAND DOUBLES TEAM FORMED

*"**W**e've been going together for two years now. It's about time he made an honest woman out of me, don't you think?!"* quipped Darcey Brady Yamin when asked about her elopement-style 23 November marriage to Yamin Yamin in Lake County, IL.

*The Deerfield, IL couple met about 2 1/2 years ago at a tourney in Louisville. When he's not winning backgammon tournaments, Yamin works as a civil engineer. Darcey is a registered C.P.A.*

*We wish the newlyweds nothing but the best in 1991 and beyond.*

## LETTERS
c/o CHICAGO POINT
2726 W. Lunt Avenue
Chicago, IL 60645-3039

### DON'T LOSE SIGHT

It bothers me that two of the most talented and generous backgammon players/writers/editors/publishers (you and Bill Robertie), both of impeccable integrity, are at odds with each other over the omission of reference citations.

Let's not forget backgammon is only a game. We all play it, analyze it and write about it because it entertains us. Let's not lose sight of our objective: enjoyment.—*Billy Barron, Editor,* The Double *Newsletter, Dallas, TX*

*We have no animosity toward Bill Robertie. In fact, our views coincide in principle with Mr. Robertie's regarding individuals who reprint the work of others without giving proper credit.*

*The "Letters" column functions as an open forum for the entire backgammon community. It's not important whether we agree or disagree on a particular subject. The important factor is that we all have the opportunity to agree or disagree.—Ed.*

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR
*coming attractions*

by Carol Joy Cole
313/232-9731

•Denotes new or revised listing

### NATIONAL

| Date | Event | Phone |
|---|---|---|
| Dec 9 | Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Bagwells, Chicago, IL | 312/252-7755 |
| Dec 9 | New England Club Monthly, Sheraton Commander, Cambridge, MA | 617/641-2091 |
| •Dec 16 | NY/NJ Co-op Regional Tournament, Ramada Inn, Long Island, NY | 516/334-4833 |
| Dec 20 | Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI | 313/232-9731 |
| •Dec 30-Jan 1 | Last of 1990/First of 1991 Tournament, Loew's Summit, New York, NY | 305/527-4033 |
| Jan 5 | Sangamon Valley Tournament, On Broadway, Springfield, IL | 217/789-6275 |
| Jan 8 | Bar Point Club Awards Night, Pat's Pub, Chicago, IL | 312/338-6380 |
| •Jan 9 | Winnetka BG Club Award's Night, Winnetka Community House, IL | 708/446-0537 |
| Jan 13 | New England Club Monthly, Sheraton Commander, Cambridge, MA | 617/641-2091 |
| •Jan 13 | Sandy Kaplan Invitational, Cavendish North Club, Southfield, MI | 313/642-9616 |
| •Jan 17 | Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI | 313/232-9731 |
| Jan 19 | Sangamon Valley Tournament, On Broadway, Springfield, IL | 217/789-6275 |
| Jan 19 | College Park Winter Open, Promenade Party Room, Bethesda, MD | 301/530-0604 |
| •Jan 24 | Flint Area Club Awards Party & Tournament, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI | 313/232-9731 |
| Jan 26 | 3rd Hawthorne Classic, Hawthorne Race Course, Cicero, IL | 312/338-6380 |
| Jan 30-Feb 3 | 8th Nevada State Championship, Nugget Hotel/Casino, Reno, NV | 702/826-1984 |
| •Jan 31-Feb 3 | Pro-Am Doubles Tournament, Resorts International, Bahamas | 301/299-8265 |
| •Feb 2 | Sangamon Valley Tournament, On Broadway, Springfield, IL | 217/789-6275 |
| •Feb 3 | 21st Annual Willowbank Invitational, Shelburne, VT | 802/985-3932 |
| Feb 9 | Spring Connecticut Championship, Hall of Fame, Southington, CT | 203/755-9749 |
| •Feb 10 | 11th Illinois State Challenge Cup, Bagwells, Chicago, IL (tentative) | 312/338-6380 |
| Feb 10 | New England Club Monthly, Sheraton Commander, Cambridge, MA | 617/641-2091 |
| •Feb 10 | NY/NJ Co-op Regional Tournament, Ramada Inn, Long Island, NY | 516/334-4833 |
| •Feb 10 | Hoosier Club One-Day Tournament, Grisanti's, Indianapolis, IN | 317/845-8435 |
| Feb 17 | 8th Fleet Underwood Memorial Tournament & Benefit, Flint, MI | 313/232-9731 |
| •Feb 22-24 | 13th Charity Tournament, Greentree Marriott, Pittsburgh, PA | 412/371-5844 |
| •Mar 2 | Sangamon Valley Tournament, On Broadway, Springfield, IL | 217/789-6275 |
| Mar 10 | New England Club Monthly, Sheraton Commander, Cambridge, MA | 617/641-2091 |
| Mar 22-24 | 1991 Midwest Championships, Marriott Hotel, Oak Brook, IL | 312/338-6380 |

### OUTSIDE USA

| Date | Event | Phone |
|---|---|---|
| Dec 7-15 | 1st Georgian Open Backgammon Championship, Tbilisi, USSR | 78832/23 40 22 |
| Dec 23 | Double Door Tournament, Amsterdam, Netherlands | 0031/324014734 |
| •Jan 7 | Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club | 852/3 689918 |
| Jan 10-13 | Seefeld International Tournament, Seefeld/Tirol, Austria | 08341 12825 |
| Jan 17-20 | 2nd French Open, Hotel Lutecia, Paris, France | 331/4772 2810 |
| •Feb 4 | Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club | 852/3 689918 |
| •Feb 21-24 | 2nd French Open, Hotel Lutecia, Paris, France | 1/4288 6645 |
| •Feb 28-Mar 3 | Fifth Cannes International Tournament, Palais des Festivals, France | 1/9339 0101 |
| •Mar 4 | Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club | 852/3 689918 |
| Mar 7-10 | 27th Ted Bassett & Gstaad Palace-Cup, Palace Hotel, Switzerland | 061/331 5816 |
| Mar 14-17 | 17th Int'l Winter Championships, Palace Hotel, St. Moritz, Switzerland | 061/331 5816 |
| •Mar 29-Apr 4 | Nordic Open, Copenhagen, Denmark | 45/31 22 46 00 |
| Apr 22-25 | 18th Byblos European Championship, St. Tropez, France | 33/9497 0004 |
| •Apr 24-28 | Australian Open Championship, Hyatt Kingsgate, Sydney, Australia | 02/955 7726 |

### EXPECT TO IMPROVE WHEN YOU HAVE AN ADVANTAGE

Amidst the hocus-pocus of Jake Jacobs [Nov. 1990 POINT, p. 9] lies a curious assertion which is true for a reason Jake does not explore. Yes, the player with an advantage is more likely to improve his position than have it deteriorate. To see why, let's suppose that the cube is out of play (e.g. at double match point) and White is a 75%–25% favorite to win the game at time T1. Now let's examine the position at some future time T2. If that time is the end of the game, then White's winning chances will have risen by 25% with probability 75%, and fallen by 75% with probability 25%. This is presumed by the initial probability stipulation.

But suppose that time is just one roll later. Conceivably, of course, there could be, e.g. 12 rolls which make White an 85% favorite and 24 rolls which leave him only a 70% favorite. There are undoubtedly some backgammon positions which are more volatile upward than downward for the favorite. But more often, I'm sure, there are, e.g. cracking numbers in a prime-vs.-

prime game, dancing numbers on a one or two point board in a blot-hitting contest, double misses in a bear-off, which bring the 75% favorite down to an underdog position immediately.

We've all seen the bear-offs where a player has a sound redouble at his turn yet must eat the cube (or even pass) after a bad roll. If there's a roll which makes the 75% favorite a 25% underdog, then this must be counterbalanced by two rolls which make him a 100% lock, five rolls which make him an 85% favorite, or ten rolls which make him an 80% favorite. Otherwise his mean winning probability cannot be 75%

as hypothesized.

In short, the favorite's downward swings, because they are larger, must be less numerous than his upward swings in winning chances.—*Danny Kleinman, Los Angeles, CA*

## MORE CLASSICAL EXCERPTS

I have a book entitled *Modern Backgammon* authored solely by Grosvenor Nicholas. The book (copyright 1928 by Henry Holt & Company) mentions gammons, backgammons and Chouettes. Doubling is also discussed, but like *Winning Backgammon* [reviewed last month], no reference is ever

made to an actual doubling cube.

Let me quote some interesting and often amusing excerpts from Chapter VI entitled "The Back-Game and Doubling.":

- "For backgammon even in its modern development is not an appropriate subject for serious study."
- "In regard to doubling the stake, there is not very much to be said."
- "To determine when it is advisable to double is frequently extremely difficult."
- "We release 'backgammonist' as a new word to be added to our language . . . We cannot say 'backgammon player,' for that would imply a proficiency which we do not possess and an interest primarily in the game itself."
- "Backgammon appears to us to be, like life, a product of evolution from an early beginning, which was simplicity itself." (This one should be of interest to "Takgammon" columnist Tak Morioka.)

The quotes are lifted out of context and should not necessarily be taken literally. Mr. Nicholas qualifies everything he says and demonstrates a sound knowledge of the game. Overall, *Modern Backgammon* is well written and delightful to read.—*Chuck Giallanza, president, Las Vegas Institute of Scientific Gaming, Las Vegas, NV*

*Does anyone know the first backgammon book to reference the doubling cube? If so, write* CHICAGO POINT, *2726 W. Lunt Ave., Chicago, IL 60645-3039.—Ed.*

## PRAISE FROM A BARON

The POINT is a great newsletter: it keeps me informed.—*Baron Vernon Ball, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands* Δ

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### CHICAGO BAR POINT CLUB — 1990 BPC PLAYER OF THE YEAR — COMPILED THRU NOV. 30

| Player | Pts | Player | Pts | Player | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TAK MORIOKA | 26.48 | Rudy Emmelot | 3.88 | Steve Potashnick | 1.04 |
| GARY KAY | 23.84 | Ralph Levy | 3.84 | Bob Holyon | 1.04 |
| MARK KING | 20.40 | Alex Caraplis | 3.80 | Greg Try | 1.04 |
| BRUCE WITTERT | 17.76 | V.W. Zimnicki | 3.60 | Merrill Schrager | 0.96 |
| YAMIN YAMIN | 15.88 | Peter Kalba | 3.52 | Dave Rockwell | 0.96 |
| LUCKY NELSON | 15.52 | Jay Ward | 3.52 | Barry Miller | 0.88 |
| STU KATZ | 15.12 | Norma Shyer | 3.52 | Randall Witt | 0.88 |
| PAUL FRANKS | 14.72 | John Spatafora | 3.44 | Sharon Lennon | 0.88 |
| DAVE CRAMER | 14.12 | Howard Ring | 3.44 | Jerry Brooks | 0.88 |
| JAKE JACOBS | 13.80 | Leslie Lockett | 3.28 | Alex Itkin | 0.80 |
| TIM SERGES | 11.52 | Dean Muench | 3.04 | Joe Wollick | 0.80 |
| DEEB SHALATI | 11.32 | David Lynn | 3.04 | Jeff Kane | 0.80 |
| KEN BOND | 11.04 | Bart Levin | 2.80 | Harold Seif | 0.72 |
| JOHN DEMIAN | 10.52 | Bill Hoeflich | 2.80 | Ed Bauder | 0.72 |
| PHYLLIS SMOLINSKI | 10.32 | Mary Franks | 2.76 | Bill Hargrave | 0.72 |
| DON JAYHAN | 10.04 | Arline Levy | 2.68 | Larry Deckel | 0.64 |
| DON DESMOND | 9.68 | Barbara Levinson | 2.60 | Hal Heinrich | 0.64 |
| MARCY SLOAN | 9.20 | Ron Stur | 2.60 | Mike Fengya | 0.64 |
| GEORGE BARR | 8.08 | Kathy Rudnick | 2.60 | David Rubin | 0.56 |
| JOANN FEINSTEIN | 7.80 | Mike O'Brien | 2.56 | Mike Siegel | 0.56 |
| Herb Roman | 7.64 | Kurt Warning | 2.48 | Reggie Porter | 0.52 |
| Bill Davis | 7.56 | Mike Spiropoulos | 2.48 | Darcey Yamin | 0.48 |
| Joe Koucharian | 7.36 | Harry Cohn | 2.48 | Jill Brussel | 0.48 |
| Arnold Zousmer | 7.04 | Howard Markowitz | 2.24 | Terry Moskowitz | 0.48 |
| Bobbie Shifrin | 7.00 | Greg Shore | 2.16 | Jenny Miller | 0.40 |
| Bob Zavoral | 6.80 | George Kirkby | 2.12 | Elaine Kehm | 0.32 |
| Rich Galeba | 6.56 | Jim Gibbs | 1.92 | Mike Sutton | 0.32 |
| Alice Kay | 6.32 | Gabriel Kairouz | 1.68 | Larry Knoll, Jr. | 0.28 |
| Sarg Serges | 6.04 | Stan Kucharz | 1.64 | Jamie Dodge | 0.24 |
| Andy Argy | 5.88 | Betsy Miller | 1.60 | Bernie Smuda | 0.24 |
| Ed Buerger | 5.84 | Grant Dace | 1.60 | Larry Knoll | 0.24 |
| Femi Owiku | 5.84 | Walt Schafer | 1.44 | Judy Kaplan | 0.16 |
| Frank Callea | 5.04 | Richard Stawowy | 1.36 | Jeff Ferguson | 0.16 |
| Lenny Loder | 4.68 | Mark Anshus | 1.28 | Marv Arnol | 0.12 |
| Bill Keefe | 4.64 | Walter Trice | 1.28 | Ted Mann | 0.12 |
| Judy Brown | 4.44 | René Wojtysiak | 1.12 | Mickey Kaplan | 0.08 |
| Jolie Lewis | 4.28 | Beverly Klene | 1.04 | | |

**PAUL FRANKS** put it in overdrive with a big win on the last Tuesday of Nov. to earn 5.28 points and win BPC monthly recognition. Paul needed the victory to move past Phyllis Smolinski (who enjoyed a nine match win streak) and Tak Morioka, each with 4.08 points.

Tak's fine monthly total gives him a 2.64 lead over Gary Kay with only five play dates remaining. And a ten-horse race is on for the top six slots and an invitation to represent the Bar Point Club at the Illinois State Challenge Cup, Feb. 1991 in Chicago.
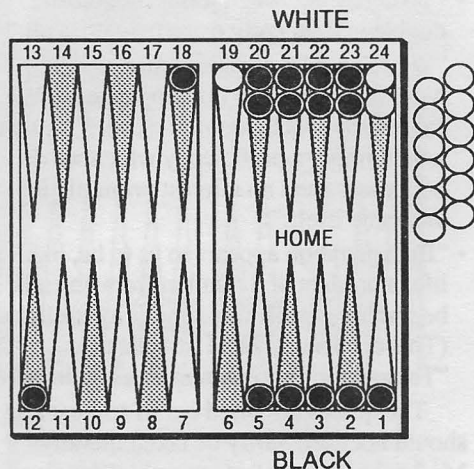
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*your move*

## PROBLEM #166
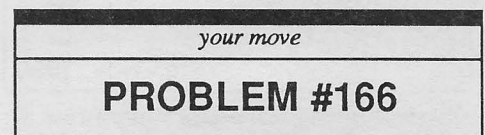
Money game. **BLACK TO PLAY 5-1.**
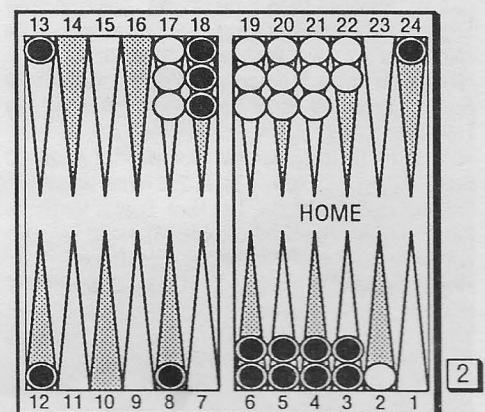
# HASTY PLAYS

### by Duane Jensen

I n this fanciful double match point position, **HOW SHOULD BLACK PLAY 4-2?**

WHITE



HOME

BLACK

Should Black hit with the 2 or the 4? In fact, *not hitting* may be a better play.

If Black hits, he'll struggle to close out White's blot. He must hit repeatedly, trying to recycle the blots in his own board. If Black is hit frequently, he may get enough checkers back to build a 5- or 6-prime which he can slowly advance around the board until he closes out the White checker.

White has only a one point board, but that point can often frustrate Black when he's on the bar. White can win by hitting so many Black blots that Black cannot use his rolls effectively. White can also win by quickly rolling big doubles, bringing his blot home before Black has time to build a prime.

Black may close out White's blot only 50% of the time. Once closed, White, with 12 men off, is still about a 6-to-1 favorite to win. Black's match winning chances are roughly 50% of 15%, or *less than 8%*.

If Black does *not* hit, but uses the 4-2 to slot his 6-point, what happens after White's next roll? When White rolls a 5 or 6, she wins. When White rolls 1-1, she has 14 men off and wins most of the time. Nine numbers don't play (4-3, 2-2, etc.). And six numbers (2-1, 3-1, and 4-1) give Black a ray of hope, for White now has *two* blots.

What are Black's winning chances with the *nonhitting* play?

• White leaves two blots 20% of the time.

• Black picks up both White blots 85%.

• Black closes out both checkers 75%.

• With two men closed out, Black wins the game 70% of the time.

Therefore, Black's non-hitting winning chances are about 0.20 x 0.85 x 0.75 x 100% = *more than 8%*.

W ith the estimates I've used, not hitting produces a few more wins than hitting. Of course if one or more of my "estimates" is off by much, hitting with the 4-2 may be the better play.

Sometimes alternative plays seem so "off the wall" that they are not considered. You should not always seek out the "creative" play, but should always be open to it. Δ

## Hal Heinrich's Opening Roll Survey©

W hat is the best way to play each opening roll? Certain rolls like 3-1 and 4-2 are clear. But even experts remain divided on many shakes like 6-4 and 4-3.

I'v collected 900 matches involving expert players dating back to 1975. Two years ago, Kit Woolsey prodded me into creating a data base of the opening rolls for all of the games in these matches and then recording the outcome of each game. The findings from over 11,000 games appear at right in the OPENING ROLL SURVEY©.

In all cases, the cube level is valued at one point. If a player was doubled and later redoubled his opponent out, that is listed as a "cube" victory and for equity purposes, is assigned a value of one point. Undoubled and doubled gammons score as two points. Obviously, at different match scores, the style of play changes causing more or less gammons to occur.

"Who Doubled first?" is another way to gauge the strength of a play. The inclusion of this table is due to the suggestion of Malcolm Davis. The "Doubling Equity" is calculated by subtracting the times the roller was doubled first from the times he initially doubled and then dividing by the total number of trials.

The OPENING ROLL SURVEY© has a wealth of information. Study it carefully. Δ

*[Hal Heinrich of Calgary, Canada is the reigning World Backgammon Champion.]*

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# THE PRICE OF GAMMONS
## PART 2: MATCH PLAY

### by Neil Kazaross

In my last CHICAGO POINT column (July 1990), I showed how to use the concept of Gammon Price (GP) to help evaluate a money game cube decision and determine the taker's Gammon Adjusted Winning Probability (GAWP). In match play, the Gammon Price can also be used to evaluate cube decisions. The GP in money play was shown to be equal to 1/2:
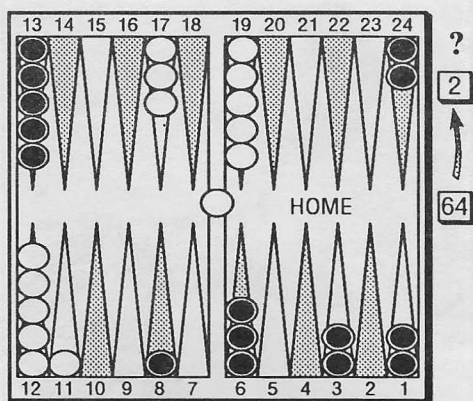
$$GP_\$ = \frac{\text{Value gained from winning gammon}}{\text{Value lost from losing the game}} = 1/2$$

In match play, each point won does not have constant value in terms of match equity. Therefore, the Gammon Price varies for each player according to the score and cube level. In match play:

$$GP_M = \frac{\text{Match equity gained from winning gammon}}{\text{Match equity lost from losing the game}}$$

Let's once again look at the cube decision in this familiar opening blitz position where Black needs 4 points and White needs 2 points to win the match.

9 point match. White leads Black, 7 to 5. Black doubles. **SHOULD WHITE TAKE?**



Roll-out results yielded the following probabilities:

Black won a single game (Ws) = 31.5%
Black won a gammon (WG) = 25%
Black lost a single game (Ls) = 43.5%

Assuming White takes the 2-cube, multiplying these results into the match equities occurring from each outcome yields a White Match-Winning Chance (MWC) of 59.25% if she takes vs. 60% if she passes and plays from "needs 2 vs. needs 3." See the March 1990 column for

detailed calculations.

[As I stated in March, these rollouts were done with a live "money game" cube. However, in this case, White's cube is dead so she should expect to lose several percent more games. This is because she cannot double Black out. I would estimate White's MWC to be only about 56.5% if she accepts, making this a clear pass. Paul Weaver has also rolled out this position for money play. His results yield an equity very close to mine but with a few percent more gammons lost. This makes White's pass even clearer.]

Now let's use GP to analyze this cube decision. For analytical purposes, we will assume that the rolled-out results for money are the same as for match. First of all, what is the GP for Black if he gammons White with the cube on 2 here (Black needs 4 vs. White needs 2)?

$$GP_M = \frac{\text{MWC if you win "G"} - \text{MWC if you win game}}{\text{MWC if you win game} - \text{MWC if you lose game}}$$

Black's GP for winning a gammon at this score:

$$GP_M = \frac{100\% - 50\%}{50\% - 0\%} = \frac{50\%}{50\%} = 1$$

Thus, unlike money play, the gammon is just as valuable as the game is to Black at this score. White's GPL for losing a gammon is always, for any score, equal to Black's GPw for winning a gammon.

At this score, if White wins a "G" with the cube on 2, the extra two points won do not help her since she only needs two points to win the match. So White's GPw = 0%/50% = 0.

Let's compute White's take point at this score assuming she can't be gammoned. By taking, White risks 10% MWC (the difference between "needs 2 vs. needs 2" and "needs 2 vs. needs 3") to gain 40% MWC (the difference between "needs 2 vs. needs 3" and winning the match).

Thus White can take at this score with the odds at 1-to-4 against her: a 20% chance.

In the July 1990 column, I showed that in money play, Gammon Price could be used to determine a Gammon Adjusted Winning Probability. Since in this position, White's GAWP was above 25%, she could take this cube. Similarly, in tournament play, GAWP can also be calculated and used to assess cube decisions.

In match play:

$$GAWP = \overset{\text{Total}}{\text{Wins}} + GP_w\,(W_G) - GP_L\,(L_G)$$

Since, at "needs 2 vs. needs 4," White's GPw = 0 for a 2-cube, the formula becomes:

$$GAWP = TW - GP_L\,(L_G)$$

White's GPL = 1 at "needs 2 vs. needs 4:

$$GAWP = TW - L_G$$

Thus, after accepting this cube at "needs 2 vs. needs 4," White's GAWP is simply *equal to her wins minus her gammon losses!* Plugging in using our figures yields:

$$GAWP = 43.5\% - 25\% = 18.5\%$$

Since White's 18.5% GAWP is less than her 20% take point at "needs 2 vs. needs 4," she should pass.

Now let's use the GAWP to determine White's MWC if she takes. According to GAWP, she wins 18.5%, so conversely, she loses 81.5%. Her MWC = 18.5% (100%) + 81.5% (50%) = 59.25%.

This MWC is exactly the same as calculated by the long hand method.

"Why use this Gammon Price method?" you may ask. The reason is it applies beautifully to very common short match situations, especially *where only one side can be gammoned,* or because of the score, the gammon only matters for one side. You simply determine the take point (which you should know for all short match situations) and the GP (which you should also know as it can effect checker plays as well) and then use the method shown. I find it much easier than using the long hand method to calculate my MWC. Δ



22-24 March 1991

# SHADES OF GRAY
## A RULES AND RULINGS COLUMN
### by Danny Kleinman

*This occasional column will offer the opinions of Danny Kleinman on how to rule the game. A highly-respected backgammon author/analyst, Mr. Kleinman also provided invaluable input into the formulation of the "U.S. Backgammon Tournament Rules & Procedures."*

**D**ear Danny: Many backgammon clubs have adopted the "U.S. Backgammon Tournament Rules & Procedures" (March 1990), or "USTR" for short. USTR was in effect at the Chicago Bar Point Club when the following occurred.

Trailing 0–2 in a 7-point tournament match, Black doubled after just a few rolls. White took, placing the cube at 2 on her side of the board. Much later, she achieved a strong advantage and a possible cube-turn of her own.

Now this backgammon set had been used in a chouette preceding the tournament and several stray cubes remained on the center strip. Grasping one of these, White turned it to 2 and slid it towards Black. Black took, placing that second cube on his side at 2. White rolled a 6-3 (a moderately favorable number), moved, and lifted her dice. When Black rolled, White stopped his dice in mid-air and exclaimed, "Wait! I just redoubled you. Your cube should be on 4."

Only then did Black recall his own initial double. When I was called, Black claimed that he'd been willing to take a 2-cube but would have passed a 4-cube. How would you rule?—*Bill Davis, Director, Chicago Bar Point Club*

**DEAR BILL:** The USTR reads in part:

"1.1 INTERPRETATION. The Tournament Rules and Procedures cannot, and should not, regulate all possible situations that may arise during a game. No set of rules should deprive the Director of his freedom of judgment or prevent him from finding the solution dictated by fairness and compatible with the circumstances of a particular case."

I disagree with USTR on many issues. I recognize that the rules can't cover everything, but deplore this fact and seek wherever possible to *substitute law for judgment*. Far too often have I seen honorable, intelligent and impartial Directors differ in their concepts of "fairness." Here are four "fair" rulings:

(a) "The cube left over from the chouette has nothing to do with this game. It's like a stray cigarette butt. White can't double Black by turning a cigarette butt, so she can't double him with by turning an extraneous cube. White still owns a 2-cube."

(b) "I don't believe Black. He *trails* in the match. If he took a 2-cube, it would be irrational for him not to take a 4-cube. Black owns a 4-cube."

(c) "Black says he'd have passed a 4-cube, so I believe him. White leads 4–0."

(d) "Before her 6-3, White had a proper initial double but an unsound redouble to 4 at this match score. That's because Black's possible redouble to 8 would put three useful points at stake for him but only one for White. White must be presumed not to have intended redoubling, so she still owns a 2-cube."

USTR, true to its promise, does not "regulate this situation." Here are some principles which do. I believe these principles should apply to all 2-sided games (including "4-handed" bridge games), not just backgammon. They are based on some very general facts. *Any illegal action may escape the attention of an opponent, or may be noticed too late to remedy equitably. This creates some chance for the offender to benefit from an illegal action.*

Therefore:

ANY ILLEGAL ACTION MUST INCUR A RISK OF LOSS WHEN DETECTED, COMMENSURATE WITH THE PROSPECT OF GAIN WHEN UNDETECTED. AN OPPONENT NEED NOT PREVENT OR CORRECT AN ILLEGAL ACTION, BUT RETAINS AN OPTION TO CONDONE IT WHICH MAY EXPIRE WHEN HE NEXT TAKES ANY ACTION OF HIS OWN.

These two principles have far-reaching implications for backgammon rules, some highly controversial (one of the reasons I call this column "Shades of Gray"). I'll be happy to elaborate at some other time. But for now, just notice that they do not ask the Director to decide whether a player's backgammon action would be sound (d) or irrational (b), nor whether a player's possibly self-serving statement of intention should be believed (c). They eliminate (a) because that would permit White (intentionally or not, but at no risk to herself if she cancelled her illegal double) to gain by "stealing a point" if Black (perhaps foolishly) "passed" the 2-cube thrust at him, scored one point for White, and set up the board for the next game.

My opinion of the right ruling? . . .

(e) "White's cube-turn to 2 was illegal: she could only turn the 2-cube she already owned to 4. Black's take of the 2-cube condoned White's error. Black owns the cube at 2, at some jeopardy to White who would otherwise still own a 2-cube."

Nobody need accuse White of "taking a shot" by tricking Black into thinking he was facing a cube of another size. The rules themselves punish and deter.—*Yours, Danny* △

*Have you ever been involved in a questionable ruling? Get Danny Kleinman's opinion. Write to: Shades of Gray; c/o CHICAGO POINT; 2726 W. Lunt Avenue; Chicago, IL 60645-3039.*

# THE PRICE OF GAMMONS

## PART 2: MATCH PLAY

### by Neil Kazaross

In my last CHICAGO POINT column (July 1990), I showed how to use the concept of Gammon Price (GP) to help evaluate a money game cube decision and determine the taker's Gammon Adjusted Winning Probability (GAWP). In match play, the Gammon Price can also be used to evaluate cube decisions. The GP in money play was shown to be equal to 1/2:
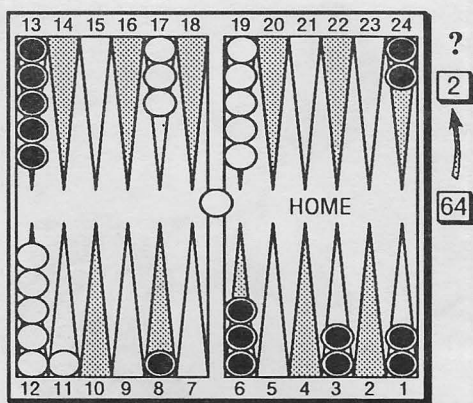
$$GP_\$ = \frac{\text{Value gained from winning gammon}}{\text{Value lost from losing the game}} = 1/2$$

In match play, each point won does not have constant value in terms of match equity. Therefore, the Gammon Price varies for each player according to the score and cube level. In match play:

$$GP_M = \frac{\text{Match equity gained from winning gammon}}{\text{Match equity lost from losing the game}}$$

Let's once again look at the cube decision in this familiar opening blitz position where Black needs 4 points and White needs 2 points to win the match.

9 point match. White leads Black, 7 to 5. Black doubles. **SHOULD WHITE TAKE?**



Roll-out results yielded the following probabilities:

Black won a single game (Ws) = 31.5%
Black won a gammon (WG) = 25%
Black lost a single game (Ls) = 43.5%

Assuming White takes the 2-cube, multiplying these results into the match equities occurring from each outcome yields a White Match-Winning Chance (MWC) of 59.25% if she takes vs. 60% if she passes and plays from "needs 2 vs. needs 3." See the March 1990 column for detailed calculations.

[As I stated in March, these rollouts were done with a live "money game" cube. However, in this case, White's cube is dead so she should expect to lose several percent more games. This is because she cannot double Black out. I would estimate White's MWC to be only about 56.5% if she accepts, making this a clear pass. Paul Weaver has also rolled out this position for money play. His results yield an equity very close to mine but with a few percent more gammons lost. This makes White's pass even clearer.]

Now let's use GP to analyze this cube decision. For analytical purposes, we will assume that the rolled-out results for money are the same as for match. First of all, what is the GP for Black if he gammons White with the cube on 2 here (Black needs 4 vs. White needs 2)?

$$GP_M = \frac{\text{MWC if you win "G"} - \text{MWC if you win game}}{\text{MWC if you win game} - \text{MWC if you lose game}}$$

Black's GP for winning a gammon at this score:

$$GP_M = \frac{100\% - 50\%}{50\% - 0\%} = \frac{50\%}{50\%} = 1$$

Thus, unlike money play, the gammon is just as valuable as the game is to Black at this score. White's $GP_L$ for losing a gammon is always, for any score, equal to Black's $GP_W$ for winning a gammon.

At this score, if White wins a "G" with the cube on 2, the extra two points won do not help her since she only needs two points to win the match. So White's $GP_W$ = 0%/50% = 0.

Let's compute White's take point at this score assuming she can't be gammoned. By taking, White risks 10% MWC (the difference between "needs 2 vs. needs 2" and "needs 2 vs. needs 3") to gain 40% MWC (the difference between "needs 2 vs. needs 3" and winning the match).

Thus White can take at this score with the odds at 1-to-4 against her: a 20% chance.

In the July 1990 column, I showed that in money play, Gammon Price could be used to determine a Gammon Adjusted Winning Probability. Since in this position, White's GAWP was above 25%, she could take this cube. Similarly, in tournament play, GAWP can also be calculated and used to assess cube decisions.

In match play:

$$GAWP = \frac{\text{Total}}{\text{Wins}} + GP_W \,(W_G) - GP_L \,(L_G)$$

Since, at "needs 2 vs. needs 4," White's $GP_W$ = 0 for a 2-cube, the formula becomes:

$$GAWP = TW - GP_L \,(L_G)$$

White's $GP_L$ = 1 at "needs 2 vs. needs 4:

$$GAWP = TW - L_G$$

Thus, after accepting this cube at "needs 2 vs. needs 4," White's GAWP is simply *equal to her wins minus her gammon losses!* Plugging in using our figures yields:

$$GAWP = 43.5\% - 25\% = 18.5\%$$

Since White's 18.5% GAWP is less than her 20% take point at "needs 2 vs. needs 4," she should pass.

Now let's use the GAWP to determine White's MWC if she takes. According to GAWP, she wins 18.5%, so conversely, she loses 81.5%. Her MWC = 18.5% (100%) + 81.5% (50%) = 59.25%.

This MWC is exactly the same as calculated by the long hand method.

"Why use this Gammon Price method?" you may ask. The reason is it applies beautifully to very common short match situations, especially *where only one side can be gammoned,* or because of the score, the gammon only matters for one side. You simply determine the take point (which you should know for all short match situations) and the GP (which you should also know as it can effect checker plays as well) and then use the method shown. I find it much easier than using the long hand method to calculate my MWC. Δ

# PROBLEM #165 SOLVED

### by Mika Lidov

Money game. **BLACK TO PLAY 6-5.**
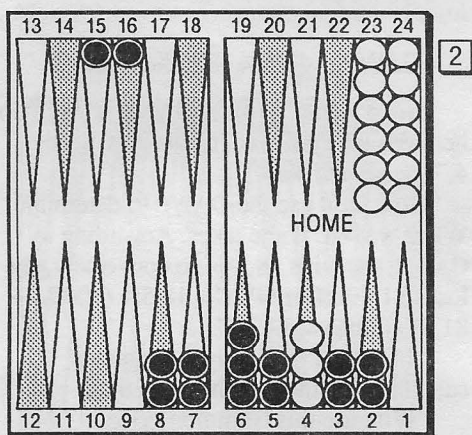


**P**roblem #165 is particularly good fodder for a column as the position is relatively commonplace and the best play is extremely unclear. Virtually all legal plays have some merit, and as I found while showing it around, all plays have some very reputable advocates. A fairly exhaustive roll-out provided insight into the position, but failed to demonstrate a clearly superior play. Hence, I was thrown into the analysis patch.

White's only significant winning chance lies in the race. Employing the methodology of Los Angeles author/analyst Danny Kleinman, I assigned a pip count of 105 (63 plus 42 for the 12 men on the ace- and deuce-points) for White and 88 for Black following his 6-5 play. I estimate, based in part on my roll-outs and in part on Mr. Kleinman's assessment, that White's winning chance owning the cube in a no-contact race of this length is roughly 30%. Therefore, Black's best overall strategy is to create confrontation.

With this goal in mind, six plays merit consideration:

(a) 16/10, 15/10,

(b) 16/5,

(c) 7/1, 6/1,

(d) 8/2, 8/3,

(e) 15/9, 16/11,

(f) 15/9 (or 16/10), 6/1.

The advantage of play (a), making the 10-point, is that it functions as a 5-prime and blocks 6s. Its weakness is that after one roll, prime disintegration begins. Play (a) abandons outfield control immediately and for all successive rolls, thus minimizing contact for the entire game.

The degree to which White is actually impeded by this play is best assessed by how readily she escapes. Roughly ten 5s get away (5-1 is hit 11/36 times). Compare this to how often White escapes when she leaps a 3- or 4-prime but finds two of Black's men shooting at her in the outfield. On average, White will escape a man only six times (16 leaps followed by 33% misses).

Plays (b), (c), (d), (e) and (f) are related in that they attempt to maintain and/or actively promote contact. As previously stated, leaving one or two outfield snipers gives Black the opportunity to hit White's running man. When he whacks, a few fans by White allow Black to lock up the race.

If Black misses the escapee, his new plan will be to attack White when she is eventually forced to break her 4-anchor. Barring big doubles, this occurs on average within two rolls.

Given the weakness of White's inner board, Black should play aggressively because the games Black loses in these violent variations are offset by the gammons he wins. Plays (b) through (f) are evaluated with respect to these overall strategies.

Play (b), 16/5, maintains an outfield control on the 15-point. It also adds a valuable builder for the anticipated 4-point attack. The main disadvantage is the number of potential outfield shots Black sacrifices at the expense of that builder (which I have come to feel is the most important factor of this problem). Furthermore, if Black misses, he will have to relinquish either his outpost on the 15-point or his builders on the 5- and 6-points before White's 4-anchor breaks.

Play (c), building the ace-point, leaves two controls in the outfield and creates a five point board, making the hit-and-fan sequence much more likely. A double dance by White will assure Black's race and five or six fans may even produce a gammon.

Making the ace-point with (c) leaves an exposed blot on Black's 7-point. However, the danger of this blot is quite illusory. Being hit is entirely advantageous to Black, so much so that with rolls of 6-3 or 5-3, White should eschew the hit. The 20-odd pips that Black loses in the race are more than offset by the threat that increased contact poses for White. In the event that Black does get hit and is sent back, the 4-point attacking positions which previously tended to result in one-checker closeouts now produce two- and three-checker closeouts, as Black's recycled checker functions as a catcher.

Play (d), breaking the 8-point, differs from (c) primarily in creating awkward ace-point entries. However, the few extra gammons that occur (approximately 1%) do not justify its relative inferiority with respect to the more common 4-point attacking variations.

The realization that being hit so advantageously corrects Black's timing in this position engenders another family of plays: (e) and (f). Play (f) (made up of two nearly identical plays) is superior to (e) because moving a man to the 10-point relinquishes outfield control. If White rolls a 6, Black's checker on the 15- or 16-point will offer some containment. At worst, this position should transpose into one like play (c), with White's 4-point cracking in the face of a five point board.

I feel that Black's most effective winning line is to hit White in the outfield and let her contend with a five point board. Play (c) most efficiently produces this line. In addition, (c) has the added vigorish of seven forced hits by White (3-1, 3-2, 3-4 and perhaps 3-3)—variations strongly favoring Black. My close second choice is (f), conceived independently by New York experts Bruce Rosen and Roger Low. (In fact, with a little persuasion, I could make this my first choice.)

**I**ncidentally, my stringently standardized roll-out (108 trials of each play) did not differentiate in any meaningful way among plays (b) through (f); however they all outperformed the routine priming play (a). Δ
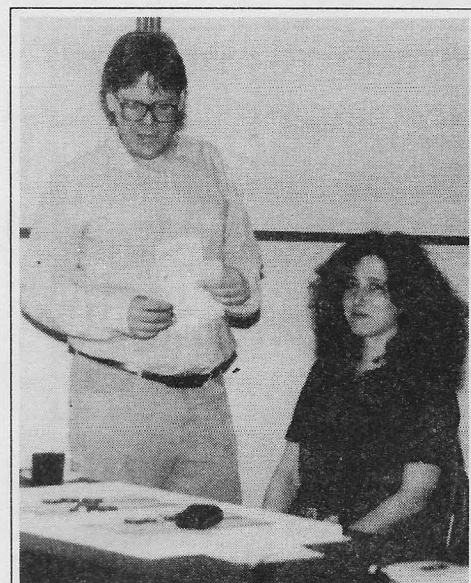


*Mika Lidov, a radiologist at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York City, shown pictured with Paul Magriel at this year's Monte-Carlo World Championship. Miss Lidov's 1806 rating in Kent Goulding's International Listing is the highest in the world.* [Photo by Haio Forler]

## AMALGAMATION

The U.S.S.R. holds it's first-ever international backgammon tournament this month (7–15 Dec.) in Tbilissi. The entry fee, hotel accommodations and food are free and the prize fund is $12,000 USD! At least four players from America—**Emil Mortuk** (MI), **Alan Steffen** (WA), **Jim Baroff** (MD) and **Tim Serges** (IL)—will be attending the Georgian Open Backgammon Championship, directed by **Michail Surguladze**… Backgammon is called "Nardi" in Russia. **Sarg Serges** tells us the Russian name might be a derivation of an old Persian term for the game, "Nor-tekh-ta" which means "Wood wrestling."… **Butch & Mary Ann Meese** report that the Indiana Open will shifted from the spring to a fall date for 1991 … Last month, Tuesday night attendance at the Bar Point Club (Pat's Pub, Norridge, IL) averaged 50 players. Not bad; however **Mario Madrigal** (Costa Rican Backgammon Club) reports it's not even close to the April through Oct. Monday night action in Buenos Aires, Argentina. 300 players are not uncommon! The club's location is a key reason. **Raúl Timerman** writes from Buenos Aires that the weekly event paddles down the Rio de la Plata on the "Delta Queen," a Mississippi riverboat…. During the holidays, the BPC will meet Wednesday 26 Dec. and Wednesday 2 Jan. at Pat's Pub … There's a new POINT in Chicago. "The Point" radio station (WPNT: 820 AM and 100.3 FM), premiered 16 Nov. featuring "Hit music from the '80s and today."… In the market for a Persian rug? See **Marty Tatosian**, proprietor of the 70-year-old Oscar Isberian Rugs in Evanston, IL (1028 Chicago Avenue). Marty keeps a board in the back and invites his friends to stop by for a game… Good luck to **Norbert Stippler** who has replaced **Werner Waschke** as editor of the German-based monthly *Backgammon Info-Service* newsletter… **Paul Wellstone** is the new senator-elect from Minnesota. That means his campaign deputy field director (and former BPC player) **Dan Cramer** is off to Washington, D.C. to serve as his legislative aid…. Nov. visitors to the Bar Point Club: **Mark Anshus**, **Larry Deckel** and **Rich Siebold**, all from Milwaukee…. Thanks to **Gardner Soule** of Shelburne, VT for awarding us a "Master of Backgammon" diploma…. **Dr. Norman Vincent Peale** warns us that "Being a winner doesn't mean that you will automatically stay a winner. A person can own an automobile or a wristwatch, but you just can't own winning. You rent winning. And you have to pay your rent every single day of your life."… Season's Greetings from the CHICAGO POINT. Δ

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*inner game*

## TAKGAMMON

by Tak Morioka

### THE HIDDEN OPPONENT

It's Sunday morning, the last day of the tournament, the time to check out. For me, it's more. I still have another match to play. I'm in the finals against one of the very best. What more could you ask?

You see, yesterday, I could do no wrong. I was destined to be here. Even my mistakes turned into brilliant traps that ensnared my frustrated opponents. But now I'm going up against a backgammon god. I've become somewhat nervous. It's as if a sudden storm has blown in. A dark cloud engulfs me with a terrible sense of dread. The rumbling within is turning me inside out. My knees are buckling from all the shaking. A tornado has sucked out the air, leaving me to gasp for what little is left.

This sense of gloom and doom comes from the possibilities of two potential outcomes. I will probably lose, but *how* I do it will matter a lot. Can I act like a gentleman, or will I let my ego turn me into a wailing baby?

Embarrassment concerns me the most. What if I should play my best and still be as bad as I fear? Would I mentally choke and withdraw back into a shell? Could I face my friends? Could I ever look at another backgammon board again?

How can winning be a problem? My skills can't be considered up to par with that of a "legend." An unexpected victory will only be attributed to luck. Is this impression to be my pinnacle of backgammon prowess?

If my dice are miraculous and grant me victory, I'll have to win another to prove the first was not a fluke. The image will be more important than who I really am. What if I can't substantiate my worth? What will I become? Less than nothing. A worm underfoot, crawling in the muck … Δ

**Fortune Cookie** | *The pressures of a match are often the things that a player brings to it.*

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# $15,000 Added