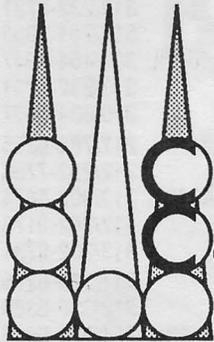


CHICAGO POINT

NUMBER 52

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

NOVEMBER 1992



Cluster Counting

by Jack Kissane

Jack Kissane, backgammon master from Albany, New York, is known in many *chouette* circles as the fastest pip counter in the world. In a June 1989 CHICAGO POINT interview, Kissane claimed that he can count almost any backgammon position within five seconds

For the first time anywhere, Jack Kissane shares his counting techniques with the backgammon community. Enjoy.

Pip counting. How do you view it? An annoyance? A necessity? Just part of the game? Some backgammon players can't or won't be bothered doing a pip count. Others use the count as a crutch, basing far too many checker moves on it. After a hard day of match play or during an all-night *chouette*, pip counting can be sheer torture, draining our limited supply of "thinking" energy. However, once or twice a game, knowing the count is critical for making the right checker play or, more importantly, the correct cube decision.

Over the years, I have developed a system of pip counting that significantly reduces the amount of time needed to count a position. I call it **Cluster Counting**. Hopefully, this fairly simple system will help you minimize the drudgery of pip counting and thus increase your enjoyment of the game.

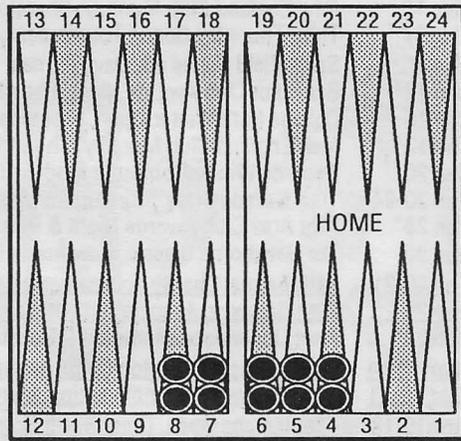
Basically, Cluster Counting involves the mental shifting of checkers to form patterns of **Reference Positions (RP)** whose pip totals end in zero (with two notable exceptions) for quick, easy and accurate addition. Here are my seven basic Reference Positions:

REFERENCE POSITIONS

RP #1: 5-Primes. Multiply the midpoint of

any 5-Prime by 10 and you have just counted a cluster of ten checkers. Position 1 shows a 5-Prime from the 4-point to the 8-point.

Position 1. RP #1. 5-Prime around the 6-point. Black = 60.



The 6-point is the midpoint and the count for these ten checkers = 60 pips (6 x 10). This is so because 5s and 7s average out to 6s, and 4s and 8s also average out to 6s.

RP #2: Closed Board = 42 pips. This is just a 5-Prime around the 4-point plus two checkers on the ace point.

RP #3: Five checkers each on the 6- and 8-points = 70.

RP #4: Two checkers each on the 7- and 8-points = 30.

RP #5: Five checkers on the 8-point = 40.

RP #6: Two checkers each on the midpoint and opponent's bar point = 62.

RP #7: Two checkers on the midpoint and one on the 14-point = 40.

These seven Reference Positions combined with **Key Points** and **Mirrors** are the backbone of Cluster Counting.

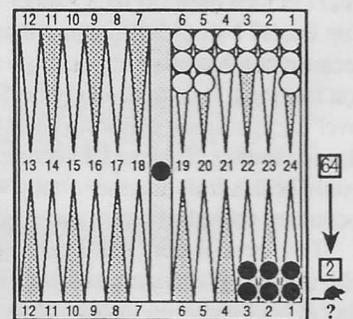
KEY POINTS

The two **Key Points** most often used are the 5-point and the 20-point (opponent's 5-point). The 10-, 13- and 15-points are also quite valuable.

Position 2 shows two examples of counting a cluster of eight checkers all at

[Continued on page 4]

WHICH IS NOT A BEAVER?



Which one of the four items shown above is not a beaver? ANSWER: Theodore "Beaver" Cleaver, a Canadian beaver coat and Black's proper cube action are all beavers. The animal pictured in the lower right corner is a muskrat.

CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

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LETTERS

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

HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FINALS?

Why do you think Mike Senkiewicz and Tino Lechich blew off the October America Cup finals? I would conjecture that it is not because of a lucrative chouette prospect as you reported. It is more likely because high level backgammon is boring and chouette play is exciting. If pressed, I venture that they would both admit that the money was of secondary consideration to these gentlemen.

If the best players don't care to prove who the best players are and just want to play at backgammon instead of working at backgammon, then their organization should change to support letting them do that, without admonishing them. And they can burn the damn trophies.—*Lee E. Harvey, Excelsior, MN*

I think greed is taking over backgammon. Certain players are reluctant to play finals matches because they are "too busy" playing in chouettes with their pigeons. This is unfair to their Calcutta owners whose winnings become dependent on a shortened match. It's also disappointing to

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

coming attractions



by Carol Joy Cole
312/232-9731

* Denotes new or revised listing

NATIONAL

1993 American BG Tour events underlined.

| | | |
|----------------------|---|---------------------|
| Nov 10 | Bar Point 10th Annual Fall Trophy Tourney, Pat's Pub, Norridge, IL | 312/338-6380 |
| Nov 14-15 | San Diego Autumn Gran Prix, Embassy Suites Hotel, La Jolla, DA | 619/294-2007 |
| Nov 15 | New England Club Monthly, Sheraton Commander, Cambridge, MA | 617/262-0173 |
| Nov 19 | Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI | 313/232-9731 |
| Nov 20-22 | BG Co-Op Fall Championships, Rocking Horse Ranch, Highland, NY | 516/781-3993 |
| Nov 21* | 1992 Bloomington-Normal Championships, Ride The Nine, Bloomington, IL | 309/454-1947 |
| Nov 22 | 14th Annual Flint Area Club Championships, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI | 313/232-9731 |
| Nov 28* | Fall Backgammon Championship, Chess Palace, Long Beach, CA | 310/634-8477 |
| Dec 5 | Springfield Series #2, Davy Byrnes, Springfield, IL | 217/789-6275 |
| Dec 6 | Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Braxton Seafood Grill, Oak Brook, IL | 312/252-7755 |
| Dec 6* | Sunday Monthly Tournament, New York Chess & Backgammon Club, NY | 212/302-5874 |
| Dec 13 | New England Club Monthly, Sheraton Commander, Cambridge, MA | 617/262-0173 |
| Dec 17 | Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI | 313/232-9731 |
| Jan 9* | Springfield Series #3, Davy Byrnes, Springfield, IL | 217/789-6275 |
| Jan 12* | Bar Point Club Awards Night, Pat's Pub, Norridge, IL | 312/338-6380 |
| Jan 16 | College Park Winter Open, Promenade, Bethesda, MD | 301/530-0603 |
| Jan 17* | New England Club Monthly, Sheraton Commander, Cambridge, MA | 617/262-0173 |
| Jan 20 | Rscards Winter Computer Modem Tournament, GEnie | 800/638-9636 |
| Jan 20-24 | 10th Nevada State Tournament/Masters Invit'l, Sands Hotel, Las Vegas | 708/470-9491 |
| Jan 28* | Flint Area Club Awards Night & Bonus Tournament, Ramada, Flint, MI | 313/232-9731 |
| Jan 30 | 5th Hawthorne Classic, Hawthorne Race Course, Cicero, IL | 312/338-6380 |
| <u>Feb 19-21</u> | <u>15th Annual Charity Tournament, Greentree Marriott, Pittsburgh, PA</u> | <u>412/823-7500</u> |
| <u>Feb 26-28</u> | <u>29th Gammon Associates Invitational, Cavendish West Hollywood, CA</u> | <u>818/901-0464</u> |
| Feb 28* | Fleet Underwood Memorial & Benefit Tournament, Ramada, Flint, MI | 313/232-9731 |
| <u>Mar 12-14</u> | <u>Boston Open, Sheraton Commander Hotel, Cambridge, MA</u> | <u>617/262-0173</u> |
| <u>Mar 19-21</u> | <u>1993 Midwest Championships, Marriott Hotel, Oakbrook, IL</u> | <u>312/338-6380</u> |
| <u>Apr 16-18*</u> | <u>41st Indiana Open, Omni North Hotel (tentative), Indianapolis, IN</u> | <u>317/845-8435</u> |
| Apr 17* | Springfield Series \$1000 Bonus Tourney, Davy Byrnes, Springfield, IL | 217/789-6275 |
| Apr 17* | College Park Spring Open, Promenade, Bethesda, MD | 301/530-0603 |
| Apr 21* | Rscards Spring Computer Modem Tournament, GEnie | 800/638-9636 |
| <u>Apr 30-May 2*</u> | <u>14th Granite State Open & Team Tourney, Woodbound Inn, Jaffrey, NH</u> | <u>603/863-4711</u> |

OUTSIDE USA

| | | |
|--------------|--|---------------|
| Nov 12-15* | NRW Championships 1992, Hotel Antana/Kaarst, Düsseldorf, Germany | 02151/503591 |
| Nov 13-15 | Dunhill Special Lights Hong Kong Championships, Ladies Recreation Club | 852/846-1923 |
| Nov 14-15* | National Danish Championships, Denmark | 039/400607 |
| Nov 21* | Deutsche Merkur Meisterschaft #11, Queens Hotel, Hamm, Germany | 0521/64314 |
| Nov 21-22 | BIBA Trophy Tournament No. 4, George Hotel, Solihull, England | 0522/536836 |
| Nov 23-Dec 1 | Viva Vila Backgammon Cruise, P&O Fairstar, Sydney-to-Vila, Australia | 03/726-0222 |
| Nov 28 | Weisbaden Cup 1992, Hotel Fürstenhof-Esplanade, Wiesbaden, Germany | 06122/16124 |
| Dec 5* | Deutsche Merkur Meisterschaft #12, Maritim Hotel, Gelsenkirchen, Ger | 0521/64314 |
| Dec 7 | Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club | 852/846-1923 |
| Dec 7 | Victoria Monthly Tournament, Botanical Hotel, South Yarra, Australia | 03/822-3730 |
| Dec 9-13 | First International Turkish Championship, Hotel Akgün Istanbul, Turkey | 3120/6254775 |
| Dec 13 | Christmas Open, New South Wales | 02/369-3620 |
| Dec 19 | Kater Cup 1992 No. 7, Café chantant De Kater, Enschede, Netherlands | 3153/353115 |
| Dec 19-20 | Weisbaden Cup 1992, Hotel Fürstenhof-Esplanade, Wiesbaden, Germany | 06122/16124 |
| Jan 4* | Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club | 852/846-1923 |
| Jan 14-17 | 2nd Dutch Open Championship 1993, Amsterdam, The Netherlands | 3120/6254775 |
| Feb 4-7* | 5th Pro-Am Tournament, Paradise Island Resort & Casino, Bahamas | 301/299-8264 |
| Feb 18-21 | 3rd French Open Championship, Hotel Lutetia, Paris, France | 1 42 88 66 45 |
| Mar 11-14 | Ted Bassett & Gstaad Palace-Cup, Palace Hotel Gstaad, Switzerland | 061/50 58 16 |
| Mar 22-28* | Casino De Vilamoura Portuguese Championships, Portugal | 4421/440 3428 |
| Apr 3-4* | British Isles Open 1993 Trophy Tourney, Lawn Complex, Lincoln, England | 0522/536836 |
| Apr 9-12* | 5th Nordic Open Championships, Hotel Marinelyst, Helsinki, Finland | 039/40 06 07 |
| Apr 28-May 2 | 2nd Tournament of the Americas, Cariari Hotel, San José, Costa Rica | 312/252-7755 |

the spectators who look forward to the excitement of a good finals. Imagine the outcry if the finalists at Wimbledon decided to play just one set of tennis to determine a champion!

I suppose it is more profitable to play

big bucks chouettes with easy marks, but what about the glory of the game? How about giving something back to backgammon for a change?—*Alex Caraplis, Hackettstown, NJ*

[Continues]

Tino Lechich and Mike Senkiewicz shortened their America Cup match from 25- to 11-points because all prize money had been equally divided. I see nothing wrong with this. Can we really expect any two players to spend three to four hours of "work" for trophies alone?

The most important round of any tournament is the first one because every player is actively involved and there is never any

hedging. Therefore, why not scale *down* the match lengths with each advancing round? For example, begin with a "playto" of 17-points leading to an 11-point finals.

At most International Backgammon Association events, one match length is established for the entire tournament. An even better idea might be to set all lengths at (let's say) 15-points. In money rounds, give the involved players an option to

reduce their match length to 13-, 11-, or 9-points. Unless both players agree to the reduction, the match must be played to the pre-established 15-points.

Money round hedging at tournaments is commonplace. By permitting a mutually-agreeded reduction in money round match lengths, the tournament director remains in better touch with the desires of the players.—*Les Boyd, International Backgammon Assoc., Ft. Lauderdale, FL*



1992 BPC PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED
THRU 31 OCT.

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|------|---------------------|------|
| GARY KAY | 18.92 | Marcy Sloan | 4.16 | Graham Sievers | 0.96 |
| YAMIN YAMIN | 16.72 | Richard Stawowy | 3.60 | Peter Naguib | 0.88 |
| DEEB SHALATI | 16.00 | Lou Salzman | 3.52 | Bob Vining | 0.88 |
| DON JAYHAN | 15.94 | Judy Brown | 3.44 | Jeff Gottesman | 0.88 |
| STU KATZ | 15.72 | Bill Davis | 3.44 | Kathy Rudnick | 0.88 |
| DAVID RUBIN | 14.88 | Roland Dieter | 3.28 | Ron Stur | 0.88 |
| MARY FRANKS | 13.52 | Leslie Lockett | 3.20 | Larry Yakowenko | 0.88 |
| DAVE CRAMER | 12.48 | George Barr | 3.20 | Ken Bond | 0.88 |
| DAVID ROCKWELL | 11.92 | Herb Roman | 3.20 | Gary Hines | 0.80 |
| HOWARD MARKOWITZ | 11.28 | Peter Berkman | 3.20 | Jerry Hartsman | 0.80 |
| PAUL FRANKS | 10.88 | René Wojtysiak | 3.12 | Neil Kazaross | 0.80 |
| PHYLLIS SMOLINSKI | 10.32 | Ralph Levy | 2.80 | Dan Judd | 0.76 |
| DEAN MUENCH | 9.52 | Barry Miller | 2.56 | Patrick Desmond | 0.76 |
| JOHN DEMIAN | 9.36 | Devin Dallaire | 2.56 | Tony Schroeder | 0.72 |
| JOLIE LEWIS | 9.32 | Jim Gibbs | 2.56 | Kurt Warning | 0.64 |
| JOHN BRUSSEL | 8.24 | Femi Owiku | 2.48 | Katy Clark | 0.56 |
| BOB ZAVORAL | 8.12 | Stan Kucharz | 2.44 | Larry Lau | 0.56 |
| SARG SERGES | 7.52 | Jeff Kane | 2.40 | Marv Arnol | 0.52 |
| HOWARD RING | 7.32 | Frankie Farjood | 2.36 | Harold Grote | 0.48 |
| LENNY LODER | 7.20 | Jerry Brooks | 2.32 | Fred Gehlhoff | 0.44 |
| Lucky Nelson | 6.96 | Steve Katz | 2.32 | Elaine Kehm | 0.40 |
| Peter Kalba | 6.72 | Scott Goode | 2.16 | Karen Kertz | 0.40 |
| Tak Morioka | 6.40 | Joe Koucharian | 2.04 | Kurt Schurecht | 0.34 |
| Bobbie Shifrin | 6.28 | Andy Argy | 2.00 | Harry Hayward | 0.32 |
| Bill Cox | 6.24 | James Colen | 1.92 | Earl Risch | 0.32 |
| Norma Shyer | 6.16 | Wilcox Snellings | 1.92 | John Macaluso | 0.32 |
| Arline Levy | 6.00 | Tim Serges | 1.88 | Phil Simborg | 0.32 |
| Reggie Porter | 5.92 | Fred Feldman | 1.76 | Joan Hegg | 0.28 |
| Bob Ebbeler | 5.92 | Marty Tatosian | 1.76 | Betsy Miller | 0.24 |
| Joann Feinstein | 5.88 | Paul Klein | 1.76 | Bill Gradl | 0.24 |
| Alex Itkin | 5.52 | Harold Seif | 1.68 | Jeff Durkes | 0.24 |
| John Stryker | 5.48 | Georgina Flanagan | 1.68 | Jill Ferdinand-Brus | 0.24 |
| Chris Stanford | 5.28 | Don Desmond | 1.68 | Tad Wilson | 0.24 |
| Jake Jacobs | 4.96 | Les Moshinsky | 1.56 | Gary Fritz | 0.24 |
| Ed Buerger | 4.96 | Amy Trudeau | 1.56 | Bill Keefe | 0.24 |
| Tim Mabee | 4.92 | Ray Baker | 1.28 | Mark King | 0.24 |
| V.W. Zimnicki | 4.72 | Rich Galeba | 1.28 | Bruce Russell | 0.20 |
| Alice Kay | 4.36 | Steve Sacher | 1.28 | J.A. Miller | 0.20 |
| Chris Kenik | 4.32 | Maurice Barie | 1.12 | Jeff Peck | 0.20 |
| Paul Friedman | 4.24 | Mario Madrigal | 0.96 | Mike Spiropoulos | 0.16 |

He's baaak! **TAK MORIOKA** won two tournaments in October to become the month's top master pointer with 3.84. Norma Shyer had a fine October grabbing 2.80 points. And Yamin Yamin placed third with 2.40 points and drew to within 2.20 of leader Gary Kay with two months to go.

If you finish in the Top 20 for 1992 (capitalized names on list), you'll be entered in a drawing for over \$300 worth of valuable merchandise. The higher you finish, the better your winning chances. Individual awards: 1st—Trophy + \$200, 2nd—\$125, 3rd—\$75. 1st through 20th—engraved board tag. 1st through 6th—Invitation to participate on the Chicago Bar Point Club team in the 1993 Illinois State Challenge Cup.

WILCOX IN GREECE

I have just returned from a trip to Greece, in a large part, thanks to Jim Caray of Athens. Jim is a retired businessman from the United States who has lived (and worked) in Greece for the past 20 years. He had responded to my interview in the September 1991 POINT where I expressed an interest in visiting Greece.

During my visit last month, Jim shared a few excursions with me, introducing me to some of his business acquaintances as well as members of the local BG community.

I was also entertained by Anthony Maltezopoulos, a dedicated backgammon promoter living in Athens. His selfless enthusiasm for backgammon is a bit unrequited as it happens. However, there is usually a weekly tournament fielding near 20 players (with an enthusiastic auction!) which Anthony organizes.

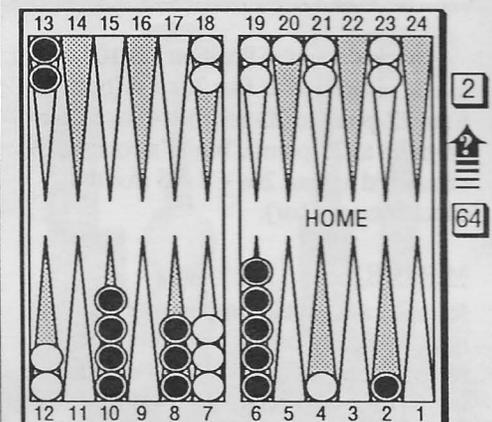
For varying reasons, Anthony has had great difficulty sustaining a regular club here. But he hasn't given up. Much of his time is spent writing a backgammon book

[Continued on page 7]

your move

PROBLEM #187

1992 Tournament of the Americas 19-point final match. Neil Kazaross (BLACK) leads Talmadge Tinsley (WHITE), 17–16. **CUBE ACTION?**

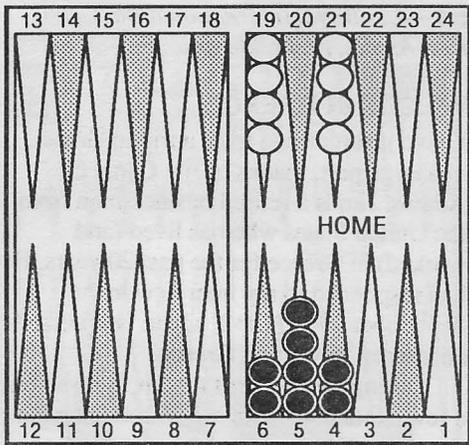


Cluster Counting...

[Continued from page 1]

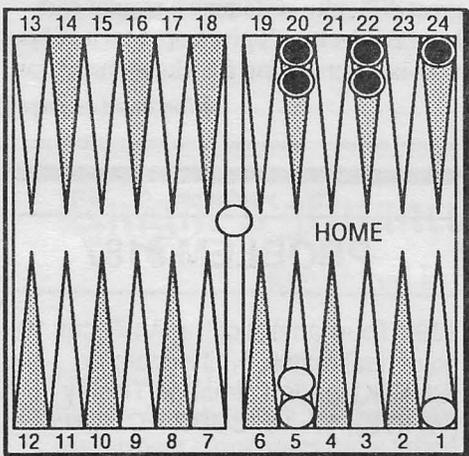
once as if they were eight 5s = 40:

Position 2. Making use of the 5-point as a KEY POINT. Black = 40. White = 40.



The 20-point (opponent's 5-point) is the most useful Key Point. All checkers in your opponent's home board should be counted as 20 plus the pips required to get to the 20-point.

Position 3. Making use of the 20-point (opponent's 5-point) as a KEY POINT. Black = 108. White = 89.



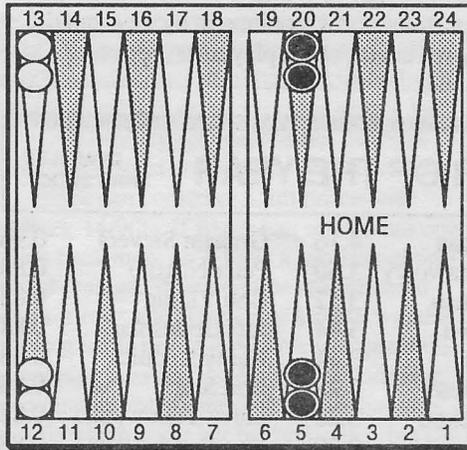
Black's count in Position 3 is 108 which can be visualized as five 20s + 4 (two each from 22-point to 20-point) + 4 (one from 24-point to 20-point). White's count is 89, visualized as four 20s + 4 + 5 (for the checker on the bar).

MIRRORS

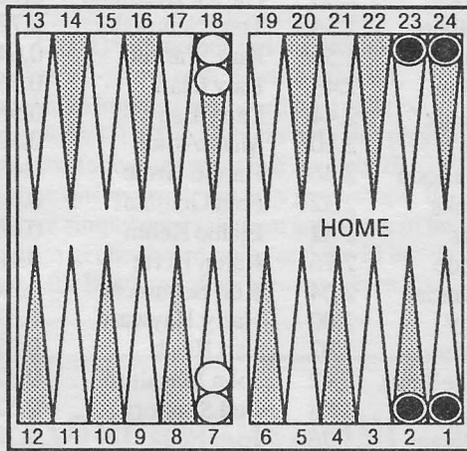
Mirrors are another important counting tool. Any point on the board plus its mirror-opposite point equals 25. For example, the 5-point + 20-point, the 1-point + 24-point, and the 12-point + 13-point all total

25 pips. It follows that that any cluster of 4 checkers in mirror positions total 50. See Positions 4 and 5:

Position 4. Using MIRRORS to count a cluster of four checkers. Black = 50. White = 50.



Position 5. Using MIRRORS to count a cluster of four checkers. Black = 50. White = 50.



O.K! It would be nice if every time you needed a pip count, the board would consist of clusters as previously described. Unfortunately, that doesn't happen. Fortunately, these easy-to-count clusters are relatively simple to form by mentally moving the checkers where you want them.

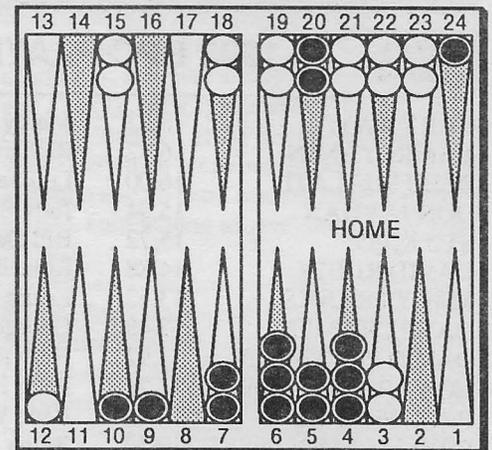
MENTAL SHIFTING—ONE WAY

One Way Mental Shifting involves moving checkers forward to Key Points or Reference Positions and then adding the forward movement to the value of the Key Points or Reference Positions.

In Position 6 (shown above), Black's pip count of 137 can easily be counted in three clusters: 40 (eight 5s) + 33 (RP #4 + 3 pips) + 64 (three 20s + 4). Divide White's checkers into three clusters to yield a total pip count of 121: 44 (5-Prime: + 4 pips forward,

2 each from the 7- to the 5-point) + 33 (three 10s + 3 pips from 13 to 10) + 44 (two 20s + 4). Note that two of White's checkers were shifted to White's 5-point which is occupied by Black's checkers. When shifting one player's checkers, the other player's checker position can be ignored.

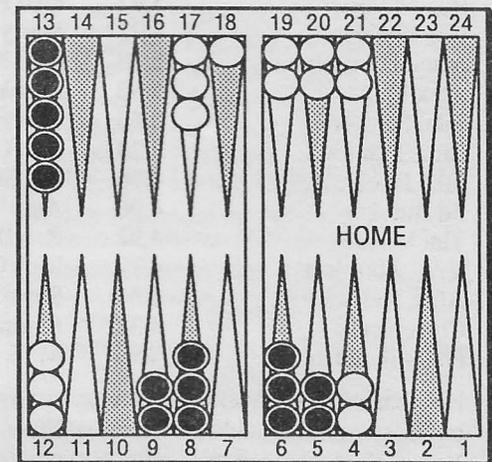
Position 6. ONE WAY MENTAL SHIFTING yields counts of Black = 137 and White = 121.



MENTAL SHIFTING—TWO WAY

Two Way Mental Shifting differs from One Way Shifting in that checkers are shifted either forward or backward to Key Points or Reference Positions and then compensating shifts are made in the opposite direction on the same side of the board or in the same direction on the opposite side of the board. Examine Position 7:

Position 7. TWO WAY MENTAL SHIFTING yields counts of Black = 135 and White = 142.



Black's spare checkers on the 6- and 8-points are on the same side of the board. By shifting them one pip in opposite directions to the 7-point, a 5-Prime is formed. Black's position can easily be counted in two clusters: 70 (5-Prime) + 65 (five 13s) = 135.

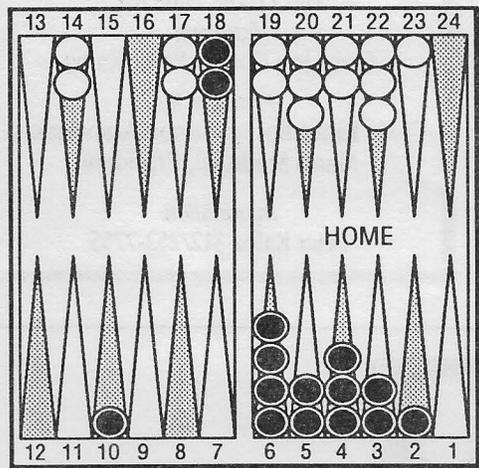
White's spare checkers on the 8- and 13-points are on opposite sides of the board. By shifting them in the same direction, in this case left to right, a 5-Prime is formed (RP #1) and Reference Position #7 is also formed. White's position can then be counted in three clusters: 60 + 40 + 42 (two 20s + 2) = 142.

It should be noted that there are often several Cluster Counting choices available. For instance, in Position 7, instead of forming a 5-Prime, you could have shifted the two 9-point checkers to the 8-point and compensated by shifting the two 5-point checkers to the 6-point to form RP #3. This cluster is also 70 pips.

YOUR TURN

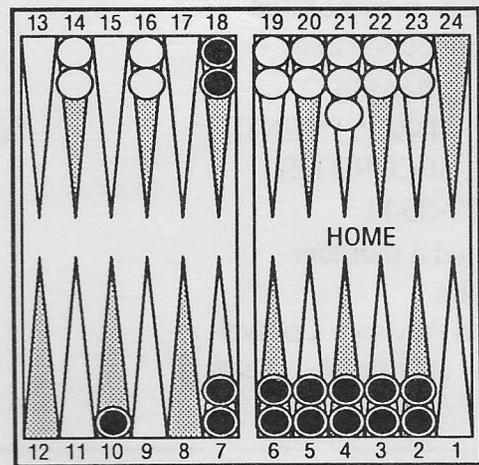
Let's try counting some positions. Original positions and adjusted positions (after shifting) are shown but not described. Can you spot the shifts? If not, set them up on your backgammon board and they will become clear.

Position 8. Black = ? White = ?



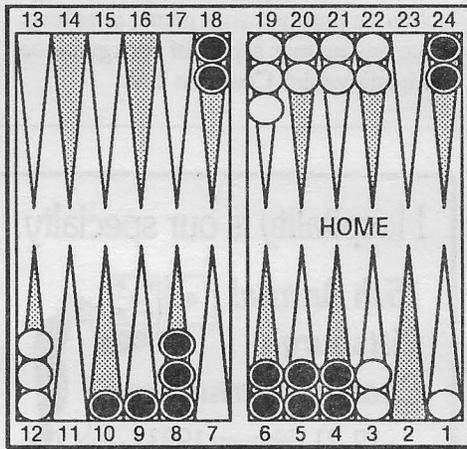
By using **Two Way Mental Shifting**, the position becomes:

Position 8A. Black = 100. White = 84.



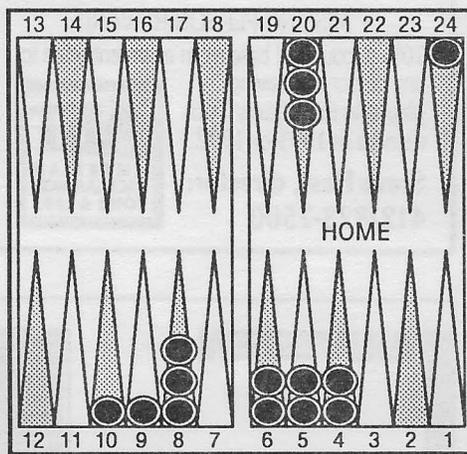
Black's 100 pips can be counted in three clusters: 40 (5-Prime from the 6-point to the 2-point) + 50 (Mirrors on the 7-point and 18-point) + 10. White's 84 pips can be counted in two clusters: 44 (5-Prime + 4) + 40 (four 10s).

Position 9. Black = ? White = ?



After shifting, Black's position becomes:

Position 9A. Black = 157.

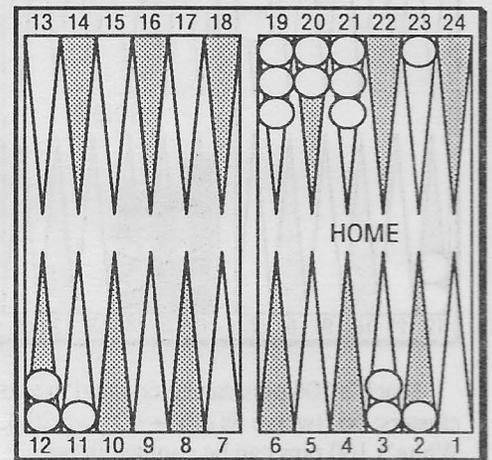


Black's 157 can be counted in three clusters: 30 (six 5s) + 43 (RP #5 - five 8s +

3) + 84 (four 20s + 4).

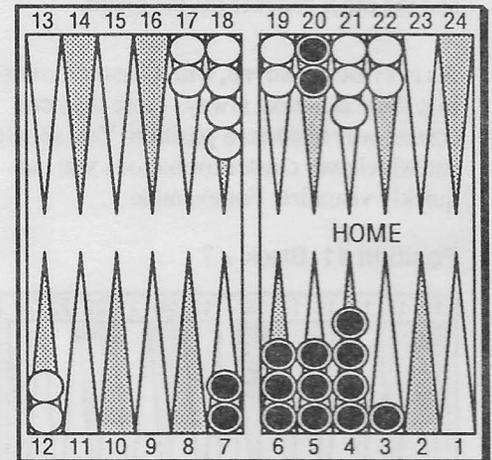
After shifting, White's position becomes:

Position 9B. White = 149.



White's 149 pips can be counted in three clusters: 42 (eight 5s + 2) + 40 (RP #7) + 67 (three 20s + 7).

Position 10. Black = ? White = ?



After shifting, the position becomes:

[Continues]

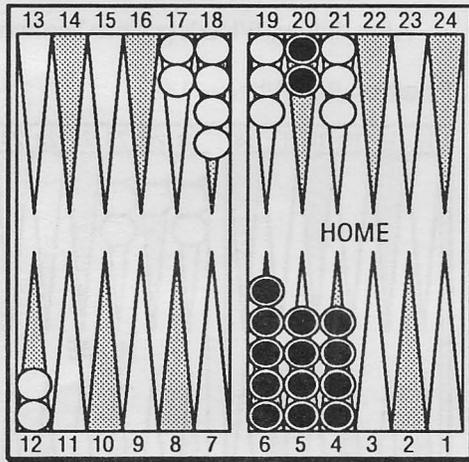


**Worldwide Backgammon Federation
GOLDEN CIRCUIT 1992—TOP 10**

Shown at right are the current results of the Worldwide Backgammon Federation Golden Circuit Standings as reported by Alberto da Pra. Results are current through 1 September 1992 (13 events).

1. Ion Ressu (Switzerland) 56.10
2. Bob Wachtel (USA) 22.42
3. Richard Cieciorco (France) 22.36
4. Philippe Narboni (Switzerland) 21.50
5. John Simon (Hong Kong) 18.36
6. Japp Vischschraper (Holland) 14.19
7. Paul Magriel (USA) 13.77
8. Oscar Naghizadeh (Switzerland) .. 13.77
9. Maurice Djemal (Panama) 12.90
10. Rolf Schreuder (Holland) 10.71

Position 10A. Black = 106. White = 100.

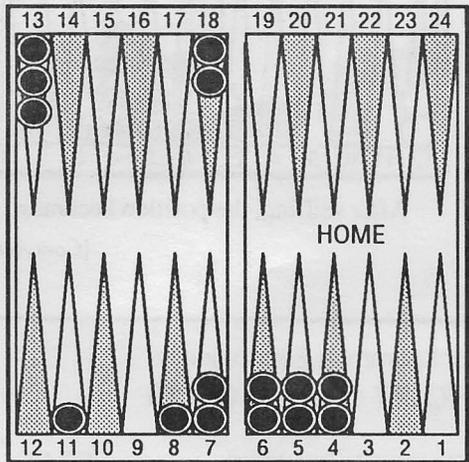


Black's 106 pips can be counted in two clusters: 66 (twelve 5s + 6) + 40 (two 20s). White's 100 pips can be counted in two clusters: 30 (six 5s) + 70 (RP #4 + RP #4 again + 10 for two checkers moved from the 13-point to the 8-point).

In Position 10A note that White only has 14 checkers. The two checkers originally on the 3-point were shifted in different directions—one checker to the 6-point and the other checker off the board.

AS PREVIOUSLY NOTED, with Cluster Counting, there is almost always more than one correct way to count a position. You should use whichever cluster formations you can quickly visualize. For example:

Position 11. Black = ?



With a minimum of shifting, Black's pip count of 138 can be quickly counted in several different ways:

- 63 (5-Prime + 3) + 75 (five 13s + 10 by shifting two checkers from the 18-point to the 13-point);
- 63 (5-Prime + 3) + 62 (RP #6) + 13 (spare checker on the 13-point);
- 50 (Mirrors on the 12- and 13-points) +

50 (Mirrors on the 7- and 18-points) + 30 (six 5s) + 8 (checker on the 8-point).

WELL, THAT'S THE SYSTEM. Certainly my list of seven Reference Positions is by no means inclusive. You probably already know or will discover other positions that can be added to the list.

Will mastering the Cluster Counting technique improve your game, or at least make one tedious aspect of backgammon more enjoyable? Count on it. Δ

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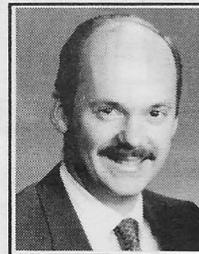
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WINNER'S CORNER



Oct.-Nov. 1992

Pittsburgh Sunday Tournament (Pittsburgh, PA; 4 Oct.)... Open (16): 1-Ron Genter, 2/3-Marc Ringuette / Lou Steiner. Novice (3): 1-Tony Pow.

Bar Point Sunday (Oak Brook, IL; 11 Oct.)... Open (14): 1- Maurice Barie (MI), 2-Neil Kazaross, 3/4-Don Desmond / Jeff Kane (WI); 1C/2C-John Brussel / Gary Kay. Intermediate (11): 1/2-Kurt Schurecht / Don Jayhan, 3/4-Tim Mabee / Lou Salzman; 1C-David Rubin, 2C-Alice Kay.

New England Monthly (Cambridge, MA; 11 Oct.)... Expert (26): 1-Mehran Shahidi, 2-Rich Sweetman; 1C-Bob Mohahed. A Div. (16): 1-Dennis Malkowski, 2-Tony Wuersch; 1C-Gil Evans. B-Div. (5): 1-Larry Liebster, 2-Zita Samuels; 1C-Al Mason.

Sangamon Valley Fall Open (Springfield, IL; 17 Oct.)... Open (20): 1-Dave Wallace, 2-John McCabe; 1C-Carl Severino, 2C-Randy Reiff; 1LC-Larry Whittenburg.

College Park Fall Open (Bethesda, MD; 17-18 Oct.)... Open (29): 1-Ed O'Laughlin, 2-Roger Williamson; 1C-Ali Rebatchi, 2C-Harry Zilli; 1LC-William Wilner. Jackpot Tournament (17): 1-Roger Williamson, 2-Bob Faucon; 1C-Jim Baroff, 2C-Ed Maslansky.

New Hampshire Fall Classic (Bedford, NH; 30 Oct.-1 Nov.)... Open (24): 1-Antoinette Williams (NY), 2-Walter Trice (MA), 3/4-Karen Davis (NY) / Jack Kissane (NY). 1C-Marty Storer (NH), 2C-Carl Adamec (NY). Intermediate (9): 1-Gil Evans (NH), 2-Jerry Padova (NH). 1C-Carol Falk. \$500 Event (8): 1-Doug Roberts, 2-Rick Barabino. Doubles (8): 1-Carl Adamec (NY) & Wally Watson (NY)... Linc Bedell held his tournament over Halloween weekend and many players came in costumes. Scarriest: Jim Smyth (nun). Most Creative: Bob Lumbra (Vermont bear). Champion Antoinette Williams' birthday was 30 Oct. making for a great weekend.

Hoosier One-Day (Indianapolis, IN; 7 Nov.)... Open (9): 1-Wendy Kaplan, 2-Jim Curtis. Advanced (9): 1-Judy McHale, 2-Scott Richardson. Intermediate (4): 1-Jan Gurvitz, 2-Sharon Baker.

Springfield Series #1 (Springfield, IL; 7 Nov.)... Open (26): 1-Larry Whittenburg, 2-Mark Kaye; 1C-John McCabe, 2C-Linda Woods; 1LC-Greg Tomlin... The Sangamon Valley Backgammon Association's kickoff event for the 1992-1993 season. Results reported by Ed Zell. Δ

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 3]

in the Greek language. Topics include a wide range of "modern" concepts and applications as well as a heavy dose of quotes from many American masters.

I should also mention the intended Greek backgammon tournament that Eduardo Carrer is attempting to organize for early next May. Eduardo is in the entertainment field and has brought outstanding performers like Frank Sinatra to Greece. Undoubtedly, an event promoted by Eduardo would be well-sponsored with plenty of media attention.

I found the country of Greece filled with great beauty and history, and the Greek culture exceedingly hospitable. The backgammon spirit is great, but remains in transition, steeped in many centuries of cubeless play with many different styles of play still in practice today.

Mr. Caray and Mr. Maltezopoulos both extend fond wishes to you and high praise to the POINT contributors. Thanks again to Jim and Anthony and all the others with whom I shared meals and good conversations, especially Aris, Andreas and Peter Caray, Jim's brother from New York. And last, but not least, I blow a kiss to a wonderful woman whose husband is ailing, my friend, Daisy Antonopoulos.

To conclude my trip, I ventured to Cairo, Egypt as a guest of Ibrahim Shousha (another POINT subscriber) and his wife Nadia. Ibrahim is a highly successful businessman and an enthusiastic backgammon player in the summer months. (We

first played in Monte Carlo four years ago where he soundly crushed me!)

The stay was delightful albeit much too short. I visited the Pyramids, the Great Sphinx, the mosques and the historical museum. My memory of these wonders will last a lifetime.

The Shoushas, their relatives and friends all treated me warmly and I hope my wife Randi will have the opportunity to entertain them one day.—*Wilcox Snellings, Santa Barbara, CA*

CALIFORNIA CHALLENGE CUP

Earlier this year in Los Angeles, we held the first California Challenge Cup (modeled after the Illinois State Cup). It was San Diego with George Alessi, George Foster, Treena Bouque, Jon Viotor, Billy Altay and myself vs. Los Angeles. We defeated them 8-4.

This November at our Gran Prix, we will defend the Cup. Future challenges will be held about once a year and hopefully include teams from San Francisco and Antelope Valley.—*Mike Fujita, San Diego, CA*

SOMETHING'S BEEN MISSING

Although I renewed my subscription to CHICAGO POINT in late June, I haven't received any issues. Believe it or not, it took this long for me to realize that I hadn't been getting the POINT because of a new job I have that is the "job from hell."

Please send me the back issues or just reinstate my subscription beginning now.—*James L. Lowe, Phoenix, AZ*

Sorry, Jim. To make up for the error, we'll give you 15 issues for your one year subscription.—*Ed. Δ*

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Michael Valentine, Director

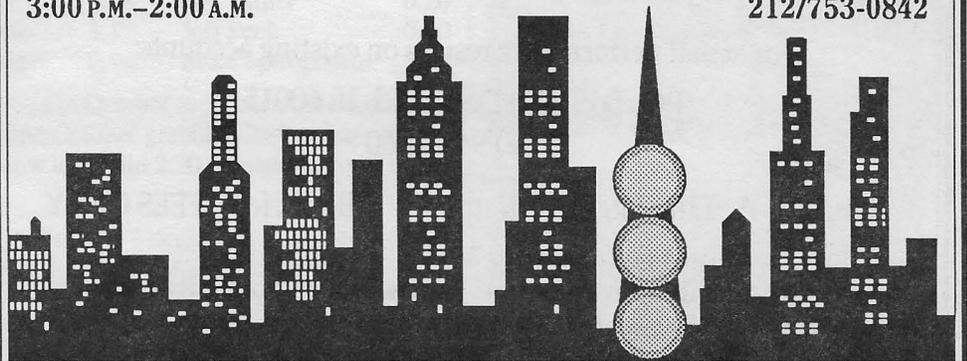
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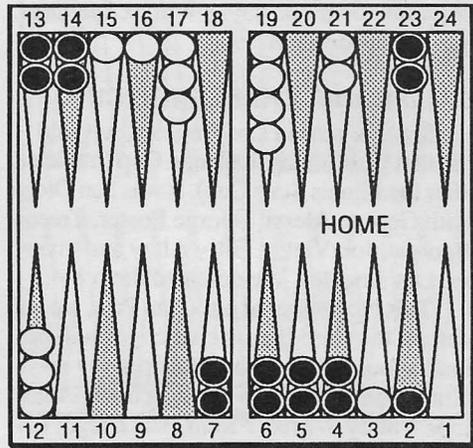


last month's position

PROBLEM #186 SOLVED

by Kit Woolsey

Illinois State Championship match. Joe Russell (White) leads Jake Jacobs (Black), 10-5 Crawford. **BLACK TO PLAY 5-5.**



Before analyzing any tournament problem, it is first necessary to examine the match score. Since White needs only one point to win, it does not matter to Black whether he loses a plain game or a gammon. More important, it is the Crawford game and Black needs an even number of points to win the match. Therefore, there is additional value attached to winning a two point gammon

The simplest choice is to run 23/13(2). Since Black will not be well poised to attack White's blot (double 5s just don't come up

every roll), the game is likely to degenerate into a race with Black commanding a mere 10 pip advantage. Black must be able to do better than this.

Also easy to reject is 23/18(2), 13/8(2). This actually gets the worst of both worlds. The 5-prime is not a big deal. White has plenty of constructive things to do before running his back man, and he will have a lot of time to roll the necessary 6. In the meantime, Black may have difficulty moving, and he still will have the problem of clearing the enemy bar point. The racing approach is not the right idea. Black must concentrate on his offense.

Black can construct a full prime with 13/8(2), 14/9(2). If Black can squirm out one of his back men, he'll have a substantial timing advantage. White will be stuck behind six-in-a-row, and Black may simply win the priming battle or force White into a gammon-generating accident as she tries to construct a counter-prime of her own. White has a lot of rolls which make her bar or 5-point, but she can't effectively make both on the same turn.

In addition, the priming play aims all of Black's available checkers at White's lone back man. Even if Black is unable to escape next roll, his forces are in place to mount a successful close-out attack right now.

13/3(2)* is another serious candidate. It makes a 5-prime with White on the bar, unable to improve her board next roll (except with 1-1). The problem with this play is that the follow-up is not fast enough. If White hits with a 2, she is in great shape. If White simply enters with an ace, she will be able to get her board going and it will be hard for Black to follow through. Even if

White flunks, Black has the dual problem of covering the 2-point and escaping two back men. Alas, the 5s he needs to do these things are duplicated. It looks like making the full prime is better.

The most unusual candidate is 13/3*, 7/2, 23/18. This play offers huge gammon potential when White flunks. Black will have 2s and 3s to pick up another checker, as well as 4s to cover the blot on the 3-point. This play generates more gammons than any of the other plays, but it will also lose more often compared to making the full prime.

Is it worth it? Not clear. Under normal conditions, this play would be far too risky, and 13/8(2), 14/9(2) would be the clear choice. However, at the given match score, with a very high premium for winning a gammon and no extra cost for getting gammoned, I am willing to give 13/3*, 7/2, 23/18 the nod.

Probably the most important lesson to be learned from Problem #186 is to keep an open mind in match play. Certain scores can create very unusual conditions where the priorities change considerably from normal backgammon. Examine all possible alternatives before coming to a conclusion. My choice is so unusual that many players might not even consider it as a possibility. Yet analysis shows that under these conditions, it could easily be the winner.

Take full credit if you evaluated 13/3*, 7/2, 23/18 and then chose to reject it in favor of making the full prime. If you never even considered my choice, you have definitely erred in your problem-solving thought process—whatever you did. Δ

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Sunday Bimonthly, 12:30 P.M. at Braxton Seafood Grill, 3 Oakbrook Center Mall, Oak Brook 708/574-2155.

PUB CLUB: Tournaments Monday, 7:30 P.M. at Fiddler's, 345 W. North Ave., Villa Park. V.W. Zimnicki (708/378-5205.)

SANGAMON VALLEY BG ASSN: Tournaments Tuesday, 6:00 P.M. at On Broadway, 210 S. Broadway, Springfield. Randy Armstrong (217/528-0117).

BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL BG CLUB: Tourn. 1st/3rd/5th Tuesday, 6:15 P.M. at Ride The Nine, 503 N. Prospect, Bloomington. Lane O'Connor (309/454-1947).

WINNETKA BG CLUB: Tournaments Wednesday, 7:00 P.M. at 620 Lincoln, Winnetka. Trudie Stern (708/446-0537).

CENTRAL ILL. BG CLUB: Tourn. Thurs., 6:30 P.M. at Chi-Chi's, 4415 N. Rockwood, Peoria. Sue Will (309/692-6909).

PRIME BG CLUB OF CHICAGO: Tourn. Friday, 7:00 P.M. at TJ's Lounge, Radisson Hotel, 4500 W. Touhy, Lincolnwood. Joann Feinstein (708/674-0120).

NORTH CLUB: Daily side play except Sunday at 4747 W. Peterson (402), Chgo. Greg Defotis (312/286-8417).

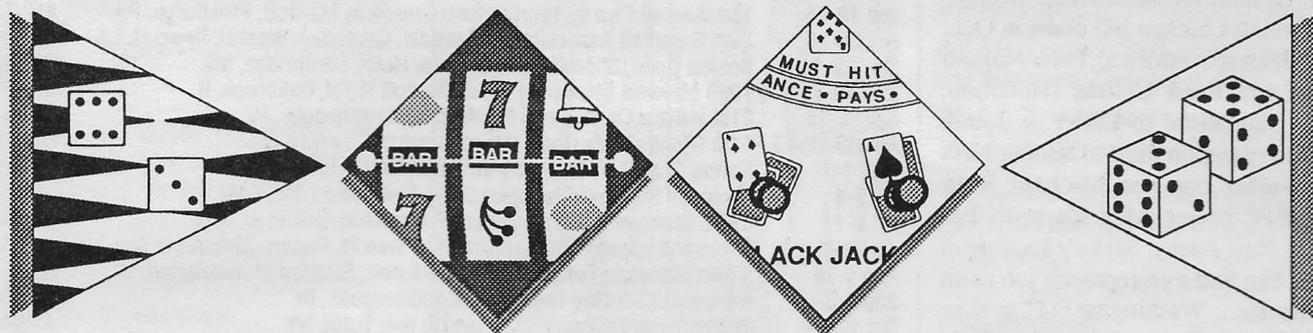
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AMALGAMATION

Myth: International expert **Wilcox Snellings** has never won a multi-day backgammon tournament. In fact, Snellings won the Granite State Open 5-7 May 1989 in Jaffrey, NH. He also won the New England Team Championship that weekend... **Lee E. Harvey** defines a *Picket Fence* for us: "One player having the 8-, 6-, 4-, and 2-points with no intervening blots. A *Full Picket Fence* would also include the 10-point, but this is more rare. *Picket Fences* act more as a sieve than a blockade, tending to screen the opponent's even or odd rolls."... Best wishes to Californians **Arthur Benjamin** and **Denna Dizengoff** on their recent marriage engagement... Visiting Chicago BG clubs in Oct.: **Mario Madrigal** (Costa Rica), **Peter Naguib** (Germany) and **Fred Collins** (Honolulu, HI)... Congratulations to **Larry & Jamie (Feinstein) Irgang** on the 11 October birth of their number one son **Michael Sean Irgang**... BPC player **Alex Caraplis** has relocated in New Jersey, but he's looking to return if he can find a chiropractic job as an associate doctor... Washington D.C. to New York City: **Karen Davis**... **Jake Jacobs** is off to Korea for six weeks. Hopefully he'll return with some material for another BG

"excellent adventure" story... Now you can send November 21st birthday greetings to *Flint Backgammon News* editor **Carol Joy Cole** via her new combined FAX/phone line: 313/232-9731... Get well wishes go out to Chicago's **Stu Katz** who is recovering from a pulmonary abscess... **Steve Manning** has opened the New York Chess and Backgammon Club at 130 W. 42nd Street (612) in New York City. The club offers daily play from 12:00 noon until ? and will hold a premiere Sunday monthly tourney on 6 Dec. Info: 212/302-5989... There's no present like the time! THE BACKGAMMON WATCH (men's or women's) is available for Christ-

mas. Send \$25 + \$3 s&h to CHICAGO POINT; 2726 W. Lunt Ave.; Chicago, IL 60645. Satisfaction guaranteed... Games expert **Greg Defotis** has purchased the Chicago North Club (see "Illinois Action") from **Howard Markowitz** who will devote more time to his Nevada Backgammon Assoc.... L.A.'s **Richard Armbruster** plays an angel (dressed in a white business suit) for a current Marriott Residence Inn T.V. commercial. Perhaps that's why he's enjoyed some recent backgammon success ... And finally, from **Joe E. Lewis**: "I'm on such losing streak that if I had been around, I would have taken **General Custer** and given points." Δ



American Backgammon Tour Events—1993 Tentative Schedule

Watch this schedule for Tour additions and/or changes

| | | |
|--------------|---|--------------|
| Feb 19-21 | 15th Annual Charity Tournament, Greentree Marriott, Pittsburgh, PA | 412/823-7500 |
| Feb 26-28 | 29th Gammon Associates Invitational, Cavendish West Hollywood, CA | 818/901-0464 |
| Mar 12-14 | Boston Open, Sheraton Commander Hotel, Cambridge, MA | 617/262-0173 |
| Mar 19-21 | 1993 Midwest Championships, Marriott Hotel, Oakbrook, IL | 312/338-6380 |
| Apr 16-18 | 41st Indiana Open, Omni North Hotel, Indianapolis, IN | 317/845-8435 |
| Apr 30-May 2 | 14th Granite State Open, Woodbound Inn, Jaffrey, NH | 603/863-4711 |
| May ?-? | Spring Gran Prix, Embassy Suites Hotel, La Jolla, CA | 619/294-2007 |
| Jul 2-4 | Michigan Summer Championships, Novi Hilton, Novi, MI | 313/232-9731 |
| Jul 9-11 | CPBC Summer Championships, Promenade, Bethesda, MD | 301/530-0603 |
| Jul 30-Aug 1 | Thousand Islands Tournament, Pine Tree Pt. Resort, Alexandria Bay, NY | 716/442-8221 |
| Aug 9-15 | Green Mountain Festival of Backgammon, Stratton Mountain Inn, VT | 305/527-4033 |
| Sep 3-6 | National Labor Day Tournament, Indianapolis, IN | 317/845-8435 |
| Oct 1-3 | Towpath Inn Tournament, Towpath Inn, Turin, NY | 716/442-8221 |
| Oct 6-10 | 3rd Illinois State Championships & America Cup, Hyatt Deerfield, IL | 708/945-7801 |
| Oct 29-31 | New Hampshire Fall Classic, Sheraton Tara Wayfarer, Bedford, NH | 603/863-4711 |
| Nov ?-? | Autumn Gran Prix, Embassy Suites Hotel, La Jolla, CA | 619/294-2007 |

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