

CHICAGO POINT

NUMBER 53

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

DECEMBER 1992

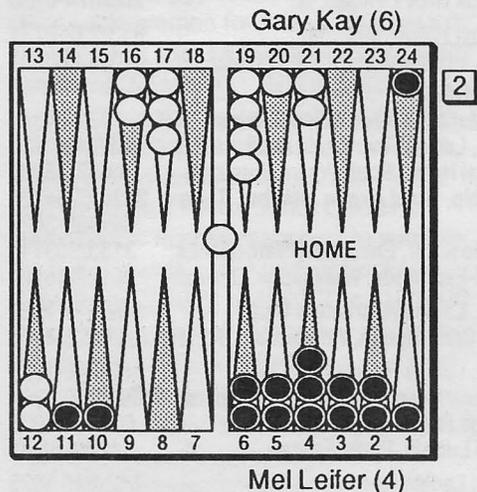
10th bar point club fall trophy tourney

MIRACLE PROPELS GARY KAY TO VICTORY

Norma Shyer Also Wins a Squeaker

An old Greek proverb says, "Substance is not enough; accident is also required." Chicagoan Gary Kay had the substance in this year's Chicago Bar Point Club Fall Trophy Tourney. He had won his first two rounds breezing. But now in the round-of-8, after watching his 6-3 Crawford lead over Mel Leifer of Maryland slip to 6-4, a *major* accident in the following position would be necessary to save him:

Bar Point Club's 10th annual Fall Trophy Tourney quarterfinals. Gary Kay (White) leads Mel Leifer (Black), 6 to 4 post-Crawford. **BLACK TO PLAY 4-3.**



A roll made in heaven. It allowed Leifer to close his board and hit a second checker on Kay's 5-point. But Leifer missed the play. Instead he played 4/1, 10/7. Kay didn't object.

The miracle continued. Leifer rolled back-to-back 5-3s followed by a board-cracking 1-1. Kay fanned twice, while Leifer continued to remain trapped behind Kay's broken 4-prime, still unable to hit that second checker. Kay entered on his third try and was able to contain Leifer en route to the miracle win.

There was no denying it was Gary

Kay's tournament. He would go on to defeat Marty Tatosian in the semifinals and Paul Klein in the finals by identical 7-0 scores.

Another exciting win in Intermediate division with Norma Shyer outpacing Jeff Durkes 7-5 on the strength of a *Coup Classique*. Leading 6-5 Crawford. Shyer found herself on the verge of being gammoned for the match. Durkes had borne off 12 checkers with three checkers left to bear off from his 2-point. Shyer had one man on the ace point. Durkes rolled a 4-1 taking a man off but exposing two blots. Shyer picked up both checkers, eventually closed Durkes out, and won the bear-off by a nose.

Thanks to Pat's Pub in Norridge for hosting the 10 November event a 10th straight year, to Rose (our faithful hostess) and to all the BPC players who make playing on Tuesday nights so much fun. Δ

10TH CBPC FALL TROPHY TOURNEY

Open (24): 1-Gary Kay, 2-Paul Klein, 3/4-Peter Kalba / Marty Tatosian; 1C/2C-Tak Morioka / Faye Schwimmer.

Intermediate (30): 1-Norma Shyer, 2-Jeff Durkes, 3/4-Rich Galeba / Tad Wilson; 1C-Ron Stur, 2C-Paul Friedman.

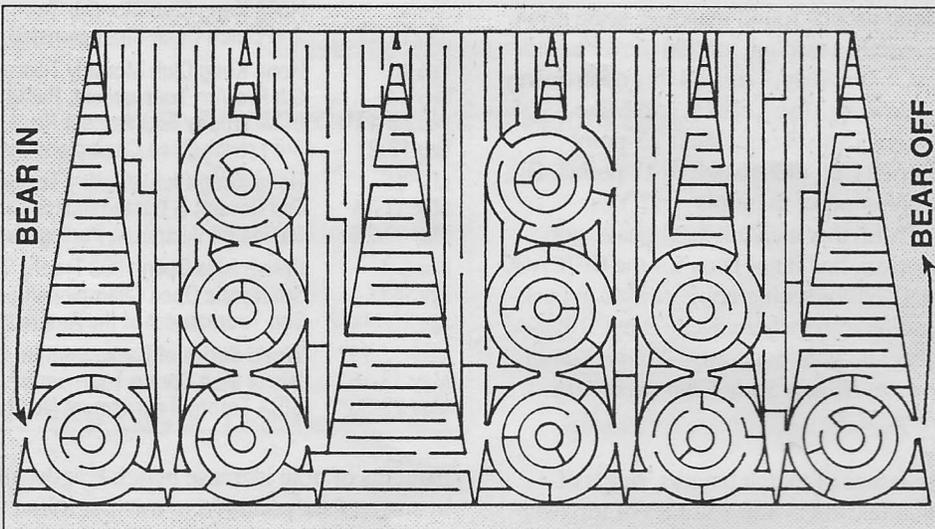


Champ winner Gary Kay with wife Alice



Intermediate victor Norma Shyer

BACKGAMMAZE



Many times, the ability to avoid being hit in the bear off is a maze in itself. That's the motivation for this "Backgammaze." See if you can safely BEAR IN and BEAR OFF without crossing over any lines.

CHICAGO POINT

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CHICAGO POINT is published monthly. The subscription rate is \$25/12 issues (\$35 international airmail in USD check drawn on U.S. bank).

Advertising Rates: 2 3/8" x 3 1/4" = \$35. 1/4 page = \$60. 1/2 page = \$100. Full page = \$180. If the ad is not "camera ready," request layout and typesetting for an additional \$15 charge.



LETTERS

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

THE FINALS: TO PLAY OR NOT TO PLAY?

First, who the hell is Lee E. Harvey? [See Harvey letter, November POINT.]

Second, Les Boyd has a good solution to long money round matches: scale down the matches through mutual player agreement. Obviously, I caused this controversy by allowing Tino Lechich and Mike Senkiewicz to shorten their 25-point America Cup final match to 11 points. Did I accommodate these players? Yes.

Third, this incident might have gone unnoticed had it not been for the CHICAGO POINT editor seeing noble causes in backgammon everywhere. Keep it up, Bill. We appreciate your concern.—*Yamin Yamin, director, Illinois State Championships, Deerfield, IL*

The issues of match lengths, rights of Calcutta owners and attitudes of top players facing each other in final matches are important ones and I hope I can add some meaningful thoughts.

Most international backgammon tour-

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

coming attractions



by Carol Joy Cole
313/232-9731

* Denotes new or revised listing

1993 American BG Tour events underlined.

NATIONAL

Dec 5	Springfield Series #2, Davy Byrnes Restaurant, Springfield, IL	217/789-6275
Dec 6	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Braxton Seafood Grill, Oak Brook, IL	312/252-7755
Dec 6	Opening Sunday Tournament, New York Chess & Backgammon Club, NY	212/302-5989
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 Restaurant, Springfield, IL	217/789-6275
Jan 12	Chicago 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
Feb 6*	Springfield Series #4, Davy Byrnes Restaurant, Springfield, IL	217/789-6275
Feb 18*	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI	313/232-9731
<u>Feb 19-21</u>	<u>15th Annual Charity Tournament, Greentree Marriott, Pittsburgh, PA</u>	<u>412/823-7500</u>
Feb 21*	New England Club Monthly, Sheraton Commander, Cambridge, MA	617/262-0173
<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
Mar 6*	Springfield Series #5, Davy Byrnes Restaurant, Springfield, IL	217/789-6275
<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, 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>
May 2*	Spring Gran Prix, Embassy Suites Hotel, La Jolla, CA	619/294-2007
May 28-31*	14th Chicago Open, Sheraton Suites, Elk Grove Village, IL	708/674-0120
<u>Jul 2-4*</u>	<u>Michigan Summer Championships, Novi Hilton, Novi, MI</u>	<u>313/232-9731</u>
<u>Jul 9-11*</u>	<u>College Park Summer Championships, Promenade, Bethesda, MD</u>	<u>301/530-0603</u>

OUTSIDE USA

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, Forte Crest Apollo, Amsterdam, NETH	3120/6254775
Feb 1*	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	852/846-1923
Feb 4-7	5th Pro-Am Tournament, Paradise Island Resort & Casino, Bahamas	301/299-8264
Feb 13-14*	BIBA Trophy Tournament No. 1, George Hotel, Solihull, England	0522/536836
Feb 18-21	3rd French Open Championship, Hotel Lutetia, Paris, France	1 42 88 66 45
Mar 1*	Hong Kong Club Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	852/846 1923
Mar 11-14	Ted Bassett & Gstaad Palace-Cup, Palace Hotel Gstaad, Switzerland	061/50 58 16
Mar 22-28	Casino de Vilamoura Portuguese Championships, Vilamoura, 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
May 12-19*	World Series of Backgammon, Crystal Palace Casino/Hotel, Nassau	4421/440 3428
May 13-16*	Isle of Man Spring Tournament, Sefton Hotel, Douglas, Isle of Man	0624/851045
May 29-30*	BIBA Trophy Tournament No. 2, George Hotel, Solihull, England	0522/53 68 36

naments of note increase match lengths an average of six points from the first round to the last. There is enough luck in tournaments to begin with, so increasing the likelihood (incrementally) that skill will out as the money rounds enter the picture is

only reasonable if we are to have a modicum of "proof" over time as to who the better players are.

Calcutta owners must be protected! In fact, this was the case at the recent America

[Continues]

Cup finals where both players and owners were agreeable to a monetary split with a shortened match for the trophy. In my many years of playing, I have never seen Calcutta owners abused in settlements, and knowing the top players pretty well, I would say that fairness is a high priority with them.

Amongst the top players, there is a near consensus that the advantage the best player in the world holds over the 15th best player in the world in a 21-point match is negligible, and that the results of ten such matches would prove next to nothing. So unless one of the competitors has nothing

better to do, or there is an ego clash, or it is Monte Carlo or the World Cup, playing a shorter match for the trophy would appear to be reasonable. After all, unlike Wimbledon, there are really no high-paying spectators to answer to. Besides, there are usually several exciting pairings during earlier tournament rounds.

I believe that players should have an option of shortening money round matches (if there is mutual consent) to at most, one point over 50% of the posted match length for the round in question. Presumably, the better player will never agree to this, nor will those who come only for the tourna-

ment itself. It is simply an option, and I believe one that does not threaten the integrity of the tournament.—*Wilcox Snellings, Santa Barbara, CA*

True, unlike Wimbledon, there are no high-paying spectators to answer to. But what about the high-paying entrants whose money the winners are splitting? Haven't they paid enough to be afforded the opportunity to watch and learn from an exciting,

[Continued on page 6]



1992 BPC PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED
THRU 30 NOV.

GARY KAY	20.84	Marcy Sloan	4.16	Larry Yakowenko	1.12
YAMIN YAMIN	16.72	Bill Davis	3.68	Bill Keefe	1.12
DAVID RUBIN	16.16	Richard Stawowy	3.60	Maurice Barie	1.12
DEEB SHALATI	16.00	Lou Salzman	3.52	Tony Schroeder	1.04
DON JAYHAN	15.94	Judy Brown	3.44	Mario Madrigal	0.96
STU KATZ	15.72	Roland Dieter	3.28	Graham Sievers	0.96
MARY FRANKS	14.16	Leslie Lockett	3.20	Peter Naguib	0.88
DAVE CRAMER	12.48	George Barr	3.20	Bob Vining	0.88
DAVID ROCKWELL	11.92	Herb Roman	3.20	Jeff Gottesman	0.88
HOWARD MARKOWITZ	11.28	Peter Berkman	3.20	Kathy Rudnick	0.88
PAUL FRANKS	10.88	René Wojtysiak	3.12	Ken Bond	0.88
PHYLLIS SMOLINSKI	10.32	Jerry Brooks	2.96	Gary Hines	0.80
JOHN DEMIAN	9.92	Ralph Levy	2.80	Jerry Hartsman	0.80
DEAN MUENCH	9.52	Paul Klein	2.72	Dan Judd	0.76
NORMA SHYER	9.44	Barry Miller	2.56	Patrick Desmond	0.76
JOLIE LEWIS	9.32	Devin Dallaire	2.56	Faye Schwimmer	0.72
HOWARD RING	9.24	Jim Gibbs	2.56	Tad Wilson	0.68
JOHN BRUSSEL	9.20	Andy Krenitz	2.56	Kurt Warning	0.64
SARG SERGES	8.32	Femi Owiku	2.48	Katy Clark	0.56
BOB ZAVORAL	8.12	Stan Kucharz	2.44	Larry Lau	0.56
Peter Kalba	7.36	Marty Tatosian	2.40	Marv Arnol	0.52
Lenny Loder	7.20	Jeff Kane	2.40	Harold Grote	0.48
Tak Morioka	7.12	Frankie Farjood	2.36	Fred Gehlhoff	0.44
Arline Levy	6.96	Steve Katz	2.32	Elaine Kehm	0.40
Lucky Nelson	6.96	Scott Goode	2.16	Karen Kertz	0.40
Tim Mabee	6.68	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
Jake Jacobs	6.16	Wilcox Snellings	1.92	John Macaluso	0.32
Alice Kay	6.12	Tim Serges	1.88	Phil Simborg	0.32
Joann Feinstein	6.12	Amy Trudeau	1.80	Joan Hegg	0.28
Reggie Porter	5.92	Fred Feldman	1.76	Betsy Miller	0.24
Bob Ebbeler	5.92	Jeff Durkes	1.72	Bill Gradl	0.24
Alex Itkin	5.84	Rich Galeba	1.72	Jill Ferdinand-Brussel	0.24
John Stryker	5.48	Harold Seif	1.68	Gary Fritz	0.24
Chris Stanford	5.28	Georgina Flanagan	1.68	Mark King	0.24
Ed Buerger	4.96	Don Desmond	1.68	Bruce Russell	0.20
V.W. Zimnicki	4.72	Les Moshinsky	1.56	J.A. Miller	0.20
Paul Friedman	4.56	Ron Stur	1.48	Jeff Peck	0.20
Neil Kazaross	4.49	Ray Baker	1.28	Mike Spiropoulos	0.16
Chris Kenik	4.32	Steve Sacher	1.28	Rudy Emmelot	0.16

Chicago newcomer **NEIL KAZAROSS** was victorious in two Bar Point Club November tournaments to win top monthly honors with 3.68 points. Norma Shyer (3.28) and Andy Krenitz (2.56) followed closely behind.

MILWAUKEE PLAYERS DIE IN PLANE CRASH

Sam and Nancy Sansone, past members of the Milwaukee Backgammon Club, died in a plane crash 20 November in a suburb of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The two were returning home in a two-seater aircraft following a Friday night gambling excursion to Shawano, Wisconsin.

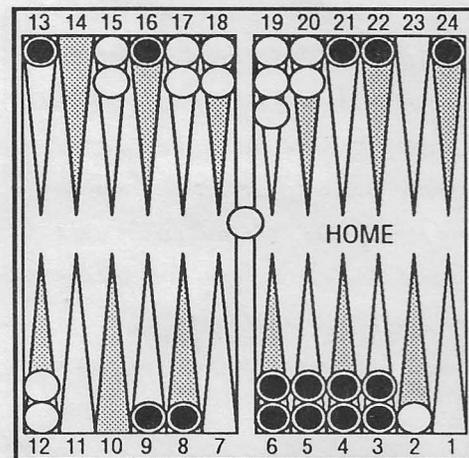
During the attempted landing at the Waukesha Airport, Nancy came up short, crashing into trees well ahead of the runway. Because it is a small airport, the plane wasn't found until Sunday, 22 November. Apparently, both individuals died upon impact. The Waukesha Fire Department needed a "Jaws of Life" to open the wreckage.

The Sansones had been active in Milwaukee backgammon. Sam had ventured to various midwest tournaments over the past decade including the Midwest Championships. They had no children.—*Lenore Holyon, Bob Holyon and Merrill Schrage reporting*

your move

PROBLEM #188

1992 Nevada State Masters Invitational semifinals. Joe Sylvester (Black) vs. Jack Kissane (White). Double match point. **BLACK TO PLAY 6-1.**



DEAR MISS
LONELYBLOTS

LUCKY IN LOVE, UNLUCKY AT DICE

Dear Ms. Lonelyblots: Since I met my latest girlfriend two months ago, I've suffered an horrendous losing streak at backgammon. Do you think there's anything to the old saying, "Lucky in love, unlucky at dice"?—Just Wondering

DEAR WONDERING: I suspect your "old saying" is a new variation of "Lucky in love, unlucky at cards," an hypothesis much easier to test. Were your game Texas Holdem or contract bridge, for example, you might keep records over a 2-year period of a simple measure of luck: how many aces you were dealt per hand. For in these, as in most card games, it's always good luck to have aces.

In backgammon, alas, aces are sometimes good, sometimes bad. Likewise for any other particular number (e.g. 6s) or combination (e.g. double-5s or 4-2s). The one meaningful measure of luck applies only in pure races: the number of pips per

shake. Even then, the measure is fallible: it isn't "good luck" to roll double-4s when that's the only number which fails to save a gammon; while double-aces, though only four pips, becomes exceedingly lucky when it bears your last four men off.

Suppose, however, your 2-year records showed an average of only seven pips in non-contact positions. Could we conclude that you were unlucky at dice?

I doubt it. There's too large a risk of experimenter error. Most players consider good luck as merely their due (the Backgammon God rewarding them for their skill?), noticing and remarking on only their bad luck (an injustice!). If you roll 2-1 (your only miss) on the last shake to lose a race, you'll surely record it, perhaps turning to a kibitzer and muttering, "Why does this always happen to me?" But if you roll 5-5, one of the two numbers that wins for you, you may forget to record it in the excitement of victory.

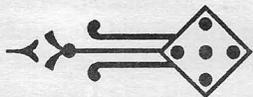
Too much attention to the quality of your luck can harm you. Which would you rather: record your bad rolls accurately or play them accurately? And what opponent would consent to your slowing down the game while recording rolls? Furthermore, a conviction that you have bad luck may produce that bad luck. For example, you may roll a game-winning 5-5, but not

anticipating such good luck, misread the dice and play a 5-4. Few opponents, even among "legal moves" adherents, will bother to correct your error.

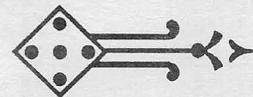
Perhaps your recent losing streak reflects something other than luck. Are you distracted by your new girlfriend's presence while you play? Does your mind wander away from the backgammon table to thoughts of what you will do with her when you get home? Did last night's bedroom activities deprive you of the sleep you need to play your best? Has your newfound confidence from getting lucky-in-love prompted you to join tougher chouettes that you used to avoid?

Oops! My sister Dr. Lonelyhearts, a clinical psychologist, just glanced at my answer to you and tells me I missed the real point: how can you conclude only *two months* after meeting your new girlfriend that you are "lucky in love"? Come back in *two years* and tell us if you are still together and in love.—Miss Lonelyblots

Do you have a backgammon-related question for Miss Lonelyblots involving people problems, game etiquette or the play itself? Write: Dear Miss Lonelyblots, c/o CHICAGO POINT, 2726 W. Lunt Avenue, Chicago, IL 60645-3039.



SECOND DUTCH OPEN BACKGAMMON CHAMPIONSHIP



Dear Backgammon Friend,

Do you remember last year's tournament in Amsterdam? It was great, and this time it will be even better!

Hopefully, I'll have the honour of welcoming you again to the Second Dutch Open. The Forte Crest Apollo, a 5-star hotel situated in the best part of the city, is proud to be your host.

Superb facilities, such as luxury rooms, exquisite restaurant, brasserie, lounge bar, free parking, etc., etc. will ensure you a pleasant stay. And a playing area and service will be at your disposal day and night.

Hope to see you in swinging Amsterdam.

Best regards,

Abraham Eitan, tournament director

AMSTERDAM

14-17 JANUARY 1993

ADDED PRIZE

hfl. 5000,-

**FORTE
CREST**

Apollo

ENTRY FEES

CHAMPIONSHIP hfl. 1000,- 100% return of
INTERMEDIATE hfl. 400,- all entry fees.

Championship registration fee—hfl. 150,-
Intermediate registration fee—hfl. 80,-
Social guest—free entry

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Junior Suite hfl. 575,- per night

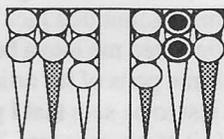
RESERVE YOUR ROOM DIRECTLY THROUGH:

Forte Crest Apollo
31-20-6735922
Fax: 31-20-5705744

FOR MORE INFORMATION

ABRAHAM EITAN, tournament director
2e Weteringdwarsstraat 43^{II}
1017 ST Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Telephone: 31-20-6254775

Defensive Anchor Devaluation



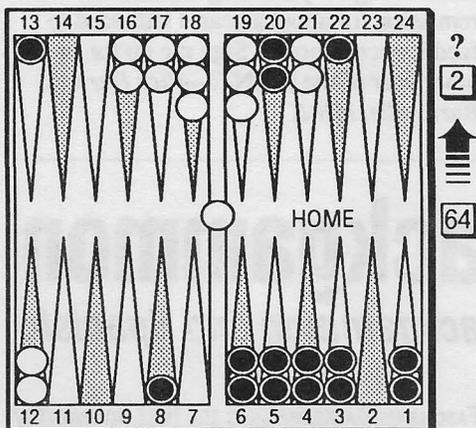
by Bill Kennedy

As a follow-up to Walter Trice's quiz [CHICAGO POINT No. 49-50], the following positions from Bill Robertie's *Advanced Backgammon* (first and second editions) are worth reviewing.

Bill has produced a series of excellent books, and his generally high level of accuracy makes investigating for mistakes all the more interesting. (I was disappointed by the lack of new contact positions in the new edition of *Advanced Backgammon*, however.)

Let's first look at Position #134 in Bill's original *Advanced Backgammon*, which is evaluated as a pass:

Position 1. Problem #134 from *Advanced Backgammon* (Ed. 1), © 1984 by Bill Robertie. Black doubles. SHOULD WHITE TAKE?

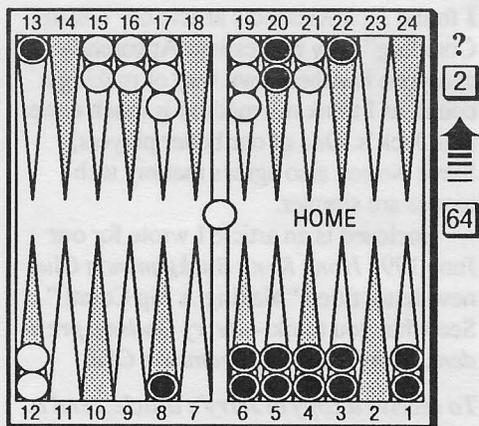


I was suspicious of this, and a rollout of 72 games (using somewhat "normalized" rolls) confirmed my doubts. The position produced an equity of $\frac{1}{2}$ point for Black after the double; i.e., White loses $\frac{1}{2}$ point per game taking as opposed to the point per game she loses by passing. 72 games is a small sample, but this is a clear take.

In the new edition of *Advanced Backgammon*, this problem (now labeled as Position #112 in the positional volume) has been discreetly adjusted to make it worse for White (See Position 2). Again, it is evaluated as a pass.

While this position is stronger for Black, I believe White still has a take. A rollout of 144 games gave Black an equity of 0.85 on a 2-cube, with White winning a gammon in about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the games.

Position 2. Problem #112 from *Advanced Backgammon* (Ed. 2), © 1991 by Bill Robertie. Black doubles. SHOULD WHITE TAKE?



Why are these positions weaker for Black than they might appear? When you have a very advanced strong offensive position as Black does here, the value of your defensive anchor becomes less important. Black's possession of White's 5-point is not as impressive as it looks, mainly because he will be running off it immediately. In the first position Black must come off the 5-point with any 5 or 6. In the second position, Black's main strategy is also to escape.

When you have this kind of powerful offensive position, the worst thing you can do—a major crime—is to be forced to break it because you failed to escape your back men. Black is not immediately squeezed in these positions, but has a long term problem where one bad roll can often put him under real pressure to escape. Black's shortness of time makes White's outside prime more formidable than it would be in an early position when there is more contact and time.

The first position is better than the second for White because of the quality of her prime. In the original position, Black needs a specific 2 followed by a 5 or 6 to escape his back man. (Note that this is precisely the escape sequence White's checker on the bar needs: the "primes" are equal.) It is also true if White later hits a Black blot on her 5-point. Possession of her bar-point makes it much easier to prime

Black out. The 10-point in itself blocks the 5-point better than the bar-point does, but cannot form part of a prime with the 4-point. The bar point can.

The seven pip difference in the two positions helps Black's gammon chances when White never escapes, and Black's winning chances when White does get away. Generally when White escapes early, Black is in the game; however, White's equity holding the cube is quite high.

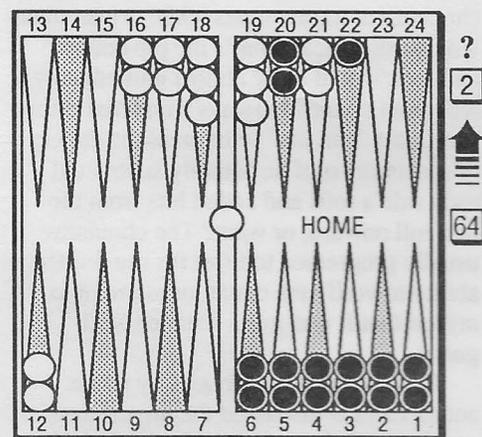
Bill has pointed out in several problems, the big advantage that three men back to one back confers. In some otherwise even positions (e.g. prime vs. prime), this alone is often enough to elicit a pass. The position is anything but even, but the three-to-one advantage gives White a big boost.

One more point. Paul Magriel has pointed out that it is usually right to disregard a specific joker double in a contact position where many other considerations exist. This is a useful general principle. I have seen many weaker players fixated on the joker while unconsciously butchering the position in a far more destructive way. In the first position especially, a big reason for White's take is based on double 2s from the bar.

White has a kind of diversification working: either she comes in, which gives her good chances, or else she gets a number of opportunities to roll a double-2 from the bar—particularly crushing when Black has a blot on White's 5-point.

After rolling out these two positions, I became curious about a different set-up, a variation of Position 1 where Black's outfield men have been used to close his home board:

Position 3. Black doubles. SHOULD WHITE TAKE?



Remarkably, a 72 game rollout of Position 3 produced almost identical

[Continued on page 9]

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 3]

evenly-matched finals?

Directors work months promoting their events and the importance attached to crowning a winner. Players know what is expected of them "playwise" when they enter a tournament. Tino Lechich may have defeated Mike Senkiewicz in a shortened, quickly-played 11-point America Cup finals, but in our mind, neither of them displayed the character of a true champion.—Ed.

DENMARK COUPLE PAYS THEIR RESPECTS

Today we are leaving Honolulu, and we will be going straight home. We have had a great time in Hawaii. We have also been to Las Vegas where we won \$125.

We would like to express our gratitude for the great time both you and Yamin Yamin showed us in Chicago. Maybe we'll be around again some day. Who knows? Until then, take care.—*Sanne Rossen & Asger Kring, Frederksberg, Denmark*

REMATCH IN COSTA RICA?

Hope everything is well with you in Chicago. Yesterday in Milan, Italy, I played a match against the visiting Costa Rican Minister of Tourism, Luis Manuel Chacon Jimenez which I won 5-4.—*Alberto da Pra, president, Worldwide Backgammon Federation, Switzerland*

CLUSTERPHOBIA?

As a long time reader and fan of CHICAGO POINT, I must compliment Jack Kissane on the fabulous article "Cluster Counting" in your November 1992 issue. On several occasions, I have observed Jack playing in chouettes at tournaments when a teammate would ask, "Jack, what's the pip count?" and Jack would reply almost immediately with both counts. I always wondered if this was just a "con job" to impress the gallery of spectators or if he actually subtracted each side's rolls and added hits from the first roll onward, or what? The chouettes usually progressed too fast for my limited ability to verify the count, or to prove to myself that it was just a scam or wild guess.

I have read several books by name authors which discussed the importance and ways of pip counting including Jeff Ward's excellent book, *The Doubling Cube, Vol. I*. However, to my limited knowledge, nobody has ever covered the subject to the extent that Jack Kissane did

in his "Cluster Counting" article.

I must admit that Jack's superb article has converted me into a believer. I have read some parts of his article more than once just to be sure that I properly understood all of his concepts. The idea of counting one's entire army of men in two or three groups (clusters) rather than the eight or more which I have often used for each side has convinced me that none of us need ever again have any fear of "Clusterphobia."—*Ed Buerger, Wilmette, IL*

I found Jack Kissane's article on "Cluster Counting" very interesting. Apparently everyone has their own way of making a count, as I think my method is much easier than Jack's. One of our better players, Steve Nelson also agrees that my techniques are simpler.

Enclosed is an article I wrote for our June 1992 *Hong Kong Backgammon Club* newsletter titled "Making A Pip Count." See what you think.—*Jerry Godsey, president, Hong Kong Backgammon Club*

To receive a copy of Jerry's article, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope (or \$1 overseas) to CHICAGO POINT; 2726 W. Lunt Ave.; Chicago, IL 60645-3039.—Ed.

Following all the topical and controversial issues which have recently been aired in

your newsletter, I suppose that it was time for a good snore. Knowing when to count and what to do with the information is far more important than being able to count quickly and accurately. My personal approach to counting is to "weigh" the comparative progress of each side in a holistic manner. It has been shown that a cat is incapable of counting her kittens, but just the same, knows if one is missing by "evaluating" the litter.

Exact count is far too bright a light to shine on almost any game situation and can blind one from the proper analysis of positional strengths and weaknesses.—*Lee E. Harvey, Excelsior, MN*

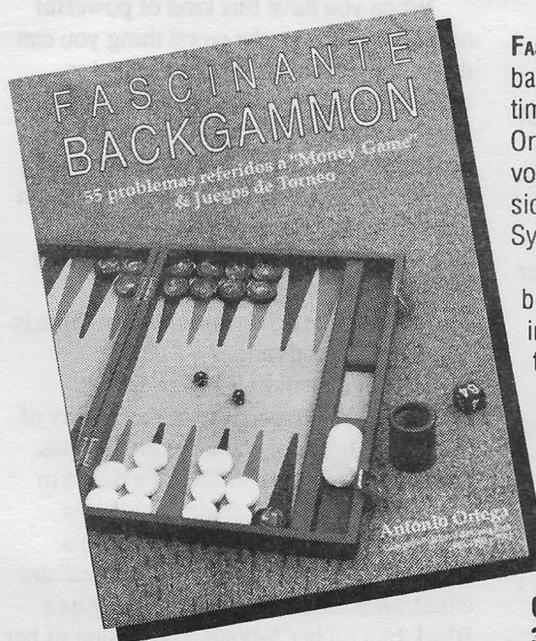
Please add me to your CHICAGO POINT subscriber list. I first heard of your publication from New Jersey Backgammon Association's Ron Whitney. A quick look through it convinced me that I need to subscribe. I was particularly impressed with Jack Kissane's article—I'm already practicing his techniques.—*Phil Franklin, Franklin Park, NJ*

MONTHLY MEDICINE

Even though my BG bug has been in remission for about a year, I still need to feed it once a month. Sign me up for another year of the POINT.—*Rick Herwig, Burnsville, MN Δ*

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WINNER'S CORNER



Oct.-Nov. 1992

Circuito Del Rio De La Plata (Buenos Aires, Argentina; Mondays in Oct.)... Championship Winners: Oscar Franco, Sergio Gelabert, Alberto Aguirre. Junior Winners: Gustavo Daich, Stefano Rossetti, Javier Wainer. Beginner Winners: León Amouraben, Pablo Ferrandini, Liliana Lowden.

Farewell to Brian Menkes Tournament (Woodbury, NY; 11 Oct.)... Championship (20): 1-Brian Menkes, 2-Perry Gartner, 3/4-Dr. Bob Hill / Doug Roberts; 1C-Steve Keats, 2C-Bob Bishop. Intermediate (6): 1-Alex Caraplis, 2-Harry Levy.

Torneo de Baleares (San José, Costa Rica; 19,21,26 Oct.)... Open (18): 1-Mario Lizano, 2-Rolando Coto, 3-Cesar Hernández. Novice (16): 1-Jorge Saprissa, 2-Jorge Castro. Blitz (64): 1-Mario Madrigal, 2-Cesar Hernández, 3-Milton González.

Kater Cup 1992 No. 6 (Enschede, Netherlands; 24 Oct.)... Championship (27): 1-John Jacobs, 2-Jeroen Sikkema, 3/4-Sacha van der Graaf / Alexius Giesing (GER); 1C-Vincent Versteeg, 2C-Klaus Farwick (GER). Beginner (8): 1-Margit Hagen (GER), 2-Patrick Lehman; 1C-Alex Slegt. Grote Kater Shootout (37): 1-Ria Driessen.

XII South American Tournament and S.A. World Cup (Buenos Aires, Argentina; 26-30 Oct.)... Championship (112 + 256 reentries): 1-Hugo Ergueta, 2-Oscar Leonetti, 3/4-Jorge Pan / Jaun Carlos Gostanian, 5/8-Mario Sequeira (PORT) / Robert Prager (GER) / Sergio Gelabert / Marcelo

Argento. Intermediate (128 + 176 reentries): 1-Moises Romano, 2-Ramon Alkerman, 3/4-Pablo Mindlin (Paraguay) / Gustavo Baetti. Beginner (96 + 96 reentries): 1-Adrian Bistolfi, 2-Eduardo Kerman, 3/4-Oscar Portolan / Leonor Viejobueno. South American World Cup (56): 1-Andranik Safarian, 2-Miguel Angel Alesandro, 3/4-Ian McFarlane (Brazil) / Carlos Mayer (Germany). Ladies Tournament: Julia Estacolchic. Ladies Prizes: Championship-Celia Mauas, Intermediate-Teresa Codolosa, Beginner-Patricia Ramos (CHILE)... Representatives from eight countries participated in the World Cup. WBF president Alberto da Pra announced that henceforth, this tournament will be part of the Golden Circuit.

Swedish Open Championships (Stockholm, Sweden; 29 Oct.-1 Nov.)... Championship: 1-Bob Wachtel (USA), 2-Gustav Jacobsen (DEN), 3/4-Murray Henderson (UK) / Lars Degerman (SWE); 1C-Richard Whitehouse (UK), 2C-Johan Moazed (SWE). Intermediate: 1-Olle Hultén (SWE), 2-Jan Skog (SWE), 3/4-Dennis Claus (SWE) / Einar Tryggvason (SWE); 1C-Faik Gousseinov (AZER), 2C-Bertil Söderberg (SWE). Beginner: 1-Tommy Molin (SWE), 2-Per Aschan (SWE), 3/4-Thomas Westerstal (SWE) / Jon Jarl (SWE); 1C-Gustaf Sanderström (SWE), 2C-Wolfram Dahlström. International Match: Denmark over Sweden 3-2.

Backgammon In Paradise (Maui, Hawaii; 31 Oct.-7 Nov.): Open: 1/2/3-Barry Miller / Mark Richardson / Gino Scalamandre.

RSCARDS Fall Modern Tourney (GEnie Computer Service; Oct.-Nov.)... Open (18): 1-Blake Sorem (MD), 2-Glenn Daily (NY), 3/4-Jim Wilson (MI) / Paul Enriquez (FL), 5/8-Douglas Johnson (NC) / Mark Hudgik (MA) / Rich Galeba (IL) / Robert Paris (FL).

Torneo de Baleares (San José, Costa Rica; 2, 4, 9 Nov.)... Open (18): 1-Mario Lizano, 2-Jorge Tsao, 3-Mike Walker. Novice (16): 1-Jorge Saprissa, 2-Jorge Castro. Blitz (64): 1-William Charpentier, 2-Rita Ramirez.

Hong Kong Championships (Hong Kong; 13-15 Nov.)... Open (29): 1-Don Rae (HK), 2-Glen Lo (HK), 3-Jerry Godsey (HK), 4-Yoshihiro Ujiie (JPN); 1C-Lito Frondoso (PHL), 2C-Yoko Sato (JPN); 1LC-André Hoffman (HK), 2LC-Johan Leibig (BALI). Championship (11): 1-Alex Lichauro (PHL), 2-John Bailey (HK); 1C-Richard Goss (MACAU), 2C-Steve Herman (JPN); 1LC-Danny Quant (HK), 2LC-Steve Herman (JPN). Intermediate (12): 1-Laurent Megret (HK), 2-Nancy Wong (HK); 1C-Kajikawa Susumu (JPN), 2C-Nick Gavrila (MACAU); 1LC-Mayumi Yamaguchi (HK), 2LC-Cynthia Roberts (HK). Dragon Slayer (64): 1-Melody Rae (HK), 2-Klaus Paatach... An incredible weekend for the Rae family. Don won the Open, Melody won the Dragon Slayer, and one day after the tournament, Melody gave birth to a baby daughter. Talk about playing up to the last minute!

1992 Bloomington-Normal Championships (Bloomington, IL; 21 Nov.)... Open (26): 1-Neil Kazaross, 2-John McCabe; 1C-Ed Zell, 2C-Jim Zimmerman.

13th Oppe Invitational (Downers Grove, IL; 21 Nov.)... Open (8): 1-Chris Stanford, 2-Jim Oppe. Doubles (4): 1-Jim Oppe & Yamin Yamin, 2-Bill Davis & Joann Feinstein... Jim Oppe was bearing off for the win when Chris "New Jersey Kid" Stanford hit a last shot. Kudos to Jim and Carmel Oppe for another wonderful party tournament. This year's theme, Jamacia, proved to be a dining adventure thanks to the catering of Marianne Winter.

14th Flint Area Club Championships (Flint, MI; 22 Nov.)... Open (31): 1-Dann Deroche, 2-Dean Adamian, 3/4-Peter Kalba (IL) / Emil Mortuk. Intermediate (31): 1-Sam Grossman, 2-Mark Zyber, 3/4-George Farah / Walter Smith, 5/6-Larry Venaska / Wally Wolf. Novice (6): 1-Gayle Wolf, 2-Mike McCarthy. Δ

Respond by 23 December. Help us create the 1993 listing of...

Backgammon Clubs In North America

It's almost that time of year. In January, we'll be updating the listing of Backgammon Clubs in North America, and WE NEED YOUR HELP! Please have your area backgammon representative send us information about backgammon in your vicinity. It might be an organized club, or perhaps just a weekly public meeting place for side and/or chouette play. Here's what we need:

Club/Group Name: _____

Organized? Yes No Were you listed in 1992? Yes No

Meeting on [include day(s) and starting time]: _____

Location name: _____

Location City and State: _____

Contact person: _____

Contact mailing address: _____

Contact telephone: _____

Send this form by 23 Dec. 1992 to: CHICAGO POINT Listings; 2726 W. Lunt Ave.; Chicago, IL 60645-3039. You can FAX it: 312/338-6384, or phone it in: 312/338-6380.

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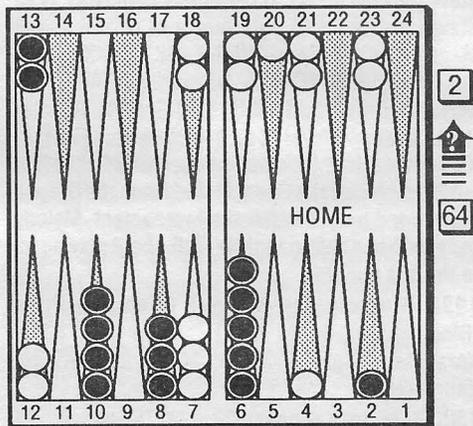


Steve Hast, director:
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**PROBLEM #187
SOLVED**

by Neil Kazaross

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



Black is ahead in the race by 22 pips (122 to 144) and will be a big favorite if he can clear without getting hit. However, even if he rolls one of the six clearing numbers, he's not yet home free since he still has to get past White's checkers on his bar- and 4-point.

From White's point of view, he has both racing equity and shot potential. Although his current three point board is somewhat awkward, it should be in a "ready" condition by the time Black is forced to leave a blot.

White won't always have the timing to maintain both the bar-anchor and 4-blot in Black's board. White will also lose more time in the race if his blot is attacked as it may be once Black closes a couple of inside points. All things considered, it looks like Black is a substantial favorite in this position since he has a long time to clear and he's far enough ahead in the race that the majority of White's wins will come from hitting.

The question of whether to double and put the match on the line is a very difficult one. We can simplify this problem somewhat by determining whether it is correct in this type of position for Black to play on for a gammon.

Black's most likely gammon scenario is where he closes out White's blot and catches him with two men on the bar-anchor. This can only happen when Black is first able to make a few more points in his board. But in most of these instances,

Black will have a proper double and White a probable pass.

Granted, it's very important for Black to win a gammon with the cube unturned. (At this score, his gammon price is 1 vs. 0.5 for money games.) However it's very unlikely to happen with proper cube usage. So, ignoring gammons, let's see at what match equity Black should double. White's take point is obviously 25% since he can redouble for the match.

What does Black risk by doubling and putting the match on the line? He risks 50% MWC (match winning chances) if he loses the game to gain 25% if he wins. Assuming no gammons, does this mean that Black should double at this score any time he's at least a 2-to-1 favorite? Strict followers of the doubling window concept would say "yes," but I strongly disagree. Black should only double as a 67% favorite if a centered cube has no further value to him, which is most certainly not the case here.

Years ago, I developed a mathematical model to estimate at what CPW (cubeless probability of winning) Black can increase his MWC by doubling to match. The model makes assumptions about Black's effective GWC (game winning chances) assuming he doesn't double.

Assumptions about Black's and White's cube efficiency are also necessary. By not doubling in this position, it's hard for Black to lose his market by a lot since White has residual shot equity after Black clears the midpoint. White's cube will sometimes be inefficient (too overpowering for Black to take) since he'll often have a very good board when he hits. After making these assumptions, my model says that Black would increase his MWC by doubling to match if his CPW is 71.5% or greater.

To test the position, and my model hypothesis, I rolled out a very controlled 72 games and recorded match equity assuming Black doubled to match in one case and waited for a slight improvement before doubling in the other. The same dice were played for both cases on the same board. (If I was certain the cube position warranted a different play, I would use a second board.) Black won 70.4% matches by doubling and 70.8% matches by waiting. My model gave Black 71% MWC by waiting to double with 70.4% CPW, so my rollout was in line.

Further rollout data comes from *Louisville Gammon Gazette* editor Harold Branch who rolled this out 200 times with White taking a money cube. He had Black winning only 66.5%. However the model, adjusted for White's somewhat inefficient money cube, shows that Black would win about

4% more or 70.5% CPW if White had no recube potential as in Harold's rollout. This confirms my result which shows that from a technical standpoint, Black should wait for a slight improvement before doubling.

From a practical standpoint, several strong players at the time felt that White should pass. In fact, Black gains a nice chunk of MWC if this happens. But doubling now eliminates the chance for White to err in a tougher cube decision later. Thus, I believe Black should wait for his position to improve slightly before doubling unless he has the feeling that his opponent might pass now.

How should the position be played assuming double-take? Black should clear the midpoint if possible. Making the 5-point offers additional safe landing space. Failing that, Black should attempt to build some of the lower points in his board before hitting White's blot, giving him the chance to reenter on a deeper point. For this reason, Black should not pick-and-pass now with 2-6 or 2-4.

I might add that this analysis was an exercise in humility for me. I doubled Talmadge (who scooped the cube) in this position. Later, I played a 2-6 in the pick-and-pass fashion: another small blunder. Talmadge entered on a lower point with 4-1 and subsequently hit me to win the 1992 Tournament of the Americas 19-17. Had I played the roll 10/2 not hitting, I would have had a perfectly efficient double on my next turn. Δ

**ILLINOIS ACTION**

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Tuesday, 6:45 P.M. at Pat's Pub, 4343 N. Harlem Ave., Norridge 708/457-1166.

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. Zimmnicki (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), Chicago. Greg Defotis (312/286-8417).

AMALGAMATION

Chicago players on the mend: **John Brussel** showed that he could pass more than doubling cubes when he (thankfully) passed a kidney stone last month. Best wishes for a speedy recovery... And welcome back to **Alex Itkin** who is recovering from knee surgery resulting from an old soccer injury... Former Pub Club director **Jeff Henry** hits the big 40 on 8 December... Thanks to **Bob Herguth** for his flattering profile of us in the 20 November *Chicago Sun-Times*... **Ulf Ring** sent us the 1 November *Svenska Dagbladet* newspaper (Sweden's second largest morning paper) with a huge front page picture of players at the Swedish Open. One tournament curiosity: the safe holding thousands of dollars in tournament prize money jammed shut. 19 hours of drilling was required to get the cash out... There's still time to order the popular Backgammon Watch for Christmas. Send \$25 + \$3 s&h to CHICAGO POINT; 2726 W. Lunt Ave.; Chicago, IL 60645-3039... "Questions about your [bridge] game? Don't give up, just call The Bridge Connection." So says an advertisement currently running in the *Chicago Sun-Times*. The 900 number rate is \$1.79 per minute. Call CHICAGO POINT and we'll be happy to answer questions about backgammon for free... Visiting BPC in November: **Mel Leifer** (Maryland), **Rudy Emmelot** (Missouri)... **Greg Feller** sent us an interview with former backgammon celebrity **Russell Sands** in the Dec. 1992 *Stocks & Commodities* magazine. Now a very successful trader, Sands credits a major part of his career success to winning the Las Vegas World Amateur Backgammon Championship in 1980. The \$100,000 prize money allowed him to buy a seat on the New York Futures Exchange... Oops! Last month we misspelled the name of **Arthur Benjamin's** bride-to-be. It's **Deena Dizengoff**... The U.S. Olympic Committee announced their choices for Athletes of the Year on 10 November. Among some of the selections: **Jim Courier** and **Jennifer Capriati** in Tennis, **Kristi Yamaguchi** in Figure Skating, and **Christopher Cole** in Racquetball. Mother **Carol Joy Cole** couldn't be prouder... "As long as we are lucky, we attribute it to our own smartness; our bad luck we give the gods credit for."—**Josh Billings**. Δ

"Season's Greetings from Chicago Point."



Defensive Anchor Devaluation...

[Continued from page 5]

results to Position 1: a take equity of 1/2 point with a gammon percentage for Black in the high 20s. It seems that gains from the closed board are almost exactly balanced by losses from the frequent busts. The strength of White's take becomes clear

when you know that Black avoided breaking his board in only about one game in six.

If the equities of 1/2 point are correct (and again, 72 rollouts is a small sampling), then Position 3 is a *must* redouble because of the huge swings on the next roll. Position 1 may not technically be a double because the equity swings are much smaller. However, in the reality of most situations, I believe it would be passed often enough to make it a correct double. Δ

ACE POINT BACKGAMMON CLUB

Michael Valentine, Director

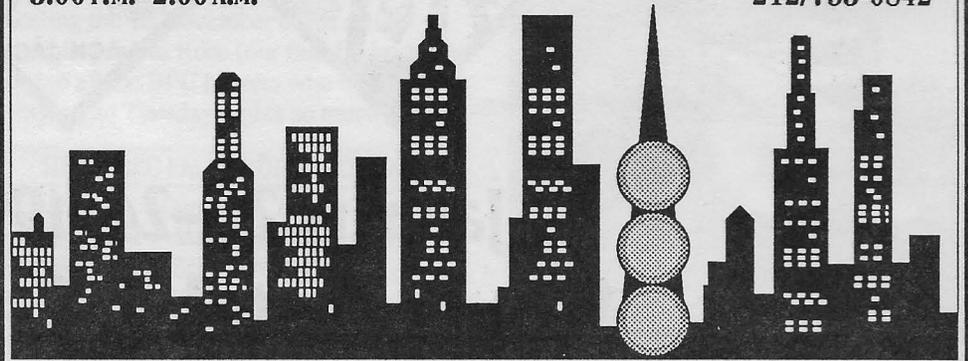
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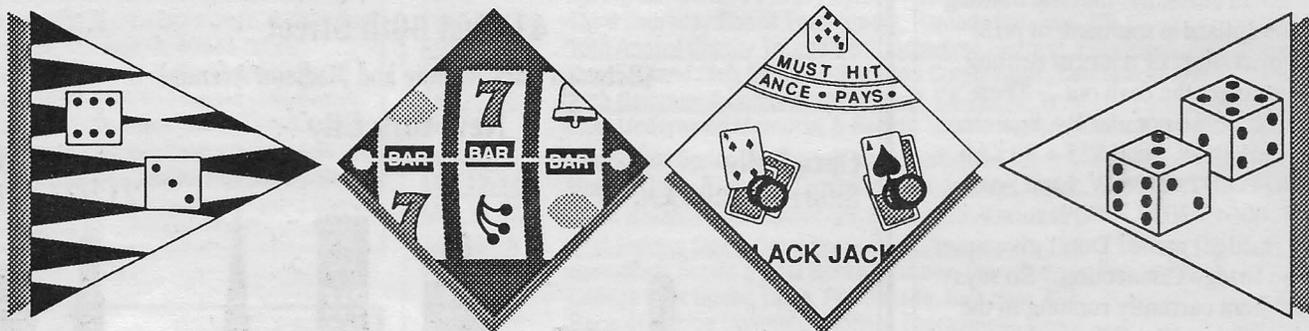
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