

CHICAGO POINT

NUMBER 72

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

SEPTEMBER 1994

las vegas open

HEINRICH'S OPPONENTS SUCCUMB TO HEAT STROKE

Colen Edges Davis In Super Jackpot

August 14-17 in Las Vegas, Nevada. 110° in the shade. The only things hotter at this year's Las Vegas Open were Hal Heinrich's dice.

Nevada Backgammon Association director Howard Markowitz and an experienced national staff (Ed Bauder, John Brussel, John Carrico, Joann Feinstein, Mike Fujita and David Todd) welcomed close to 250 players to the Stardust Hotel for the summer extravaganza. By all accounts, things ran well.

"I had probably the best dice in this tournament that I can ever remember having," commented Heinrich, a 39-year-old computer programmer from Calgary, AB, Canada. When the former 1990 World Champion (who is currently ranked 12th in the world) gets good dice, he's awfully tough to beat.



Hal Heinrich's "love affair" with Nevada continued at the Las Vegas Open.

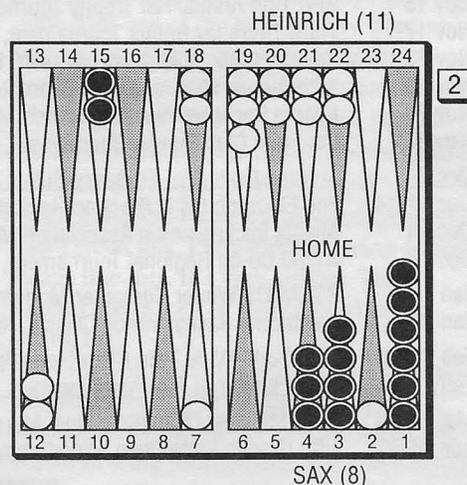
Heinrich, playing in his first tournament since winning the December 1993 Vegas Masters Invitational, rolled over six opponents before facing Steve Sax of Los Angeles in the finals. It was a bloody trail.

"Until the finals, nobody scored more than 4 points off me," Hal recalled. "I beat Aram Kouleyan (CA) 15-0, winning two straight gammons at the 4-level. Later I played Gino Scalandre (NY) and went through him 15-0, too. I think he played

well, but it's hard to tell when everything works your way.

"In the finals, Steve and I had some interesting games, but they went pretty much my way and I hopped out to an 11-2 lead. Then I took a relatively innocuous-looking cube and got backgammoned. All of the sudden it was 11-8." This set up the following crucial game and position:

Las Vegas Open 17 point finals. Hal Heinrich (White) leads Steve Sax (Black), 11 to 8. **BLACK TO PLAY 5-4.**



Sax played 15/11, 15/10. Would 15/6 have been better? Heinrich wasn't certain, but he was redoubling to 4 either way. It was at this point that Steve thought for 45 minutes before accepting Hal's recube.

"I didn't really think that much about the time Steve took one way or the other.

You're in a position where you want to perform at your peak. You can't afford to let yourself get annoyed by things that you really have no control over. You just try to zone out and concentrate on being relaxed and ready to make the proper decisions when it's your turn.

"My perception was that Steve was really thinking at that time and it does rate to be a key decision. If he loses the 4-cube, he's down 15-8 to 17. If he wins it, he might have been able to get in a sexy rewhip to 8. However, I don't think anybody likes to watch their opponent stew on any decision for 45 minutes."

After the match, Hal ran one of his computer programs and found out that Steve's take point at the given score was 20%. Hal admits he would have taken the cube because, "... if Steve isn't hit, he could have recubed me out at the 8-level."

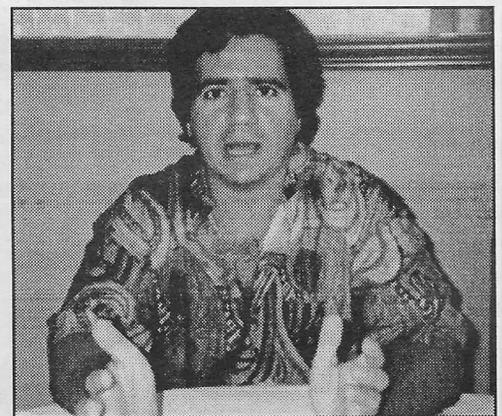
In the actual game, Hal rolled a 4-1, hitting one checker. Steve was able to enter and safe his other man, but Hal managed to bring home the victory and go on to win the \$12,495 first place prize money.

IN OTHER EVENTS, James Colen (NY) edged Malcolm Davis (TX) 15-14 to win the big \$3,000 Super Jackpot. David MacBryde (CA) topped Kevin McDonough (AZ) in the \$1,200 Limited Jackpot. Azzam Masarani (CA) bested Corlan Chinn (WA) to win Intermediate honors and Boston's Nora Luna defeated Linda Landre (OR) to hit it big in the Beginner division. Complete results appear on page 5. Δ

"Finally. You have something worthwhile to read in this rag you call CHICAGO POINT."

—Neil Kazaross

A candid interview with the number one rated player in the world begins on page 6.



CHICAGO POINT

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LETTERS

c/o CHICAGO POINT
2726 W. Lunt Avenue
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A NEWFOUND INTEREST IN GABY

It was interesting to learn that O.J. Simpson prosecuting attorney Marcia Clark was once married to Gaby Horowitz. Years ago, I read that Gaby used to give Lucille Ball private backgammon lessons for \$200/hour. His group rate was \$150/hour, and he used to receive \$100/hour for instructions over the telephone.—*Buddy Cummings, New York, NY*

Jeremy Louwse at King World Productions informs us that something more is brewing on this incredible story. Stay tuned.—Ed.

WHERE TO BUY GAMMON GEAR

Please send me information about your backgammon-related products. I may want to subscribe to your newsletter as well, so send me a sample issue.—*Goran Hassel, Chonburi, Thailand*

The only backgammon merchandise we sell is the Backgammon Watch (\$25 plus \$3

[Continued on page 3]

coming attractions

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

BACKGAMMON						
1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

by Carol Joy Cole
810/232-9731

* Denotes new or revised listing

American Backgammon Tour events underlined.

NATIONAL

Sep 5-11	World Cup IV and U.S. Open, Harvey's Addison Hotel, Addison, TX	301/299-8264
Sep 15	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
Sep 24*	Mayfair One Thousand Tournament, Mayfair Club, New Your, NY	212/779-1750
Sep 25	Austin BG Assoc. Sunday Tournament, Bombay Bicycle Club, Austin, TX	512/280-5945
Sep 25	Atlanta Backgammon Association Monthly, Caffeinds, Atlanta, GA	404/682-1969
Sep 25*	Michigan BG League Kickoff Special, Cavendish North, Southfield, MI	810/642-9616
Sep 30-Oct 2	<u>Towpath Inn Tournament, Towpath Inn, Turin, NY</u>	<u>716/442-8221</u>
Oct 2	Bar Point Club Sunday Tournament, Braxton Seafood Grill, Oak Brook, IL	312/252-7755
<u>Oct 5-9</u>	<u>4th Illinois Champs/America Cup, Indiana Lakes Resort, Bloomingdale, IL</u>	<u>708/945-7801</u>
<u>Oct 7-9</u>	<u>Nation's Capital Fall Championships, Promenade, Bethesda, MD</u>	<u>301/530-0603</u>
<u>Oct 14-16</u>	<u>32nd G/A Invitational, Grand Slam Bridge Club, Woodland Hills, CA</u>	<u>818/901-0464</u>
Oct 19	RSCARDS Fall Computer Modem Tournament, GEnie	313/243-3996
Oct 20*	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
Oct 23	NY/NJ Co-op Regional Tournament, Ramada Inn, Woodbury, NY	718/341-3779
Oct 23	Atlanta Backgammon Association Monthly, Caffeinds, Atlanta, GA	404/682-1969
<u>Oct 28-30</u>	<u>Backgammon in the Berkshires, Oak & Spruce Center, South Lee, MA</u>	<u>603/863-4711</u>
<u>Nov 11-13</u>	<u>NY/NJ BG CO-OP Big Apple Series, Oritani Hotel, Hackensack, NJ</u>	<u>201/833-2915</u>
Nov 15	BPC 12th Annual Fall Trophy Tourney, Golden Flame, Chicago, IL	312/338-6380
Nov 17*	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
Nov 20	Beltway Club Jackpot Tournament, Promenade, Bethesda, MD	301/530-0603
Nov 20	16th Annual Flint Area Club Championships, Ramada Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
Nov 20	Atlanta Backgammon Association Monthly, Caffeinds, Atlanta, GA	404/682-1969
Nov 27*	Bar Point Club Sunday Tournament, Braxton Seafood Grill, Oak Brook, IL	312/252-7755
<u>Dec 3-4</u>	<u>Autumn Gran Prix, Embassy Suites Hotel, La Jolla, CA</u>	<u>619/294-2007</u>
<u>Dec 11-14*</u>	<u>2nd Eldorado BG & Blackjack Invitational, Eldorado Hotel, Reno, NV</u>	<u>702/893-6025</u>
Dec 18	Atlanta Backgammon Association Monthly, Caffeinds, Atlanta, GA	404/682-1969
Dec 18	NY/NJ Co-op Regional Tournament, Ramada Inn, Woodbury, NY	718/341-3779
Jan 18*	RSCARDS Winter Computer Modem Tournament, GEnie	313/243-3996
Jan 28	Hawthorne Backgammon Classic, Hawthorne Race Course, Cicero, IL	312/338-6380
Feb 7-12*	2nd World-Wide Twin Championships, Eldorado Hotel, Reno, NV	702/893-6025
<u>Feb 17-19*</u>	<u>17th Pittsburgh BG Championships, Greentree Marriott, Pittsburgh, PA</u>	<u>412/823-7500</u>
<u>Mar 24-26*</u>	<u>1995 Midwest Championships, Marriott Hotel, Oak Brook, IL</u>	<u>312/338-6380</u>
<u>Apr 28-30*</u>	<u>16th Granite State Open, Woodbound Inn, Jaffery, NH</u>	<u>863-603-4711</u>

OUTSIDE USA

Sep 10*	Bawü-Cup, Motodrom Hotel, Hockenheim, Germany	49621-698539
Sep 15-18	International Austrian Open, Hotel Schloß Seefeld, Pörschach, Austria	08341-12825
Sep 17-18	2nd Irish Open Championships, Sachs Hotel, Dublin, Ireland	3531-661 4771
Sep 17-18*	Danish Lyn Backgammon, Prime BG Klub, København Ø, Denmark	4535-261587
Sep 29-Oct 3	First German Open, Sportpark Hotel, Halle, Germany	49521-64314
Oct 1-2*	De Åbne Jydske Championship, Bridgelokalerne, Århus, Denmark	4586-163264
Oct 3	Hong Kong Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	852-846 1923
Oct 13-16	Grand Prix du Casino de Biarritz, Biarritz Hotel du Palais, France	331-41 050259
Oct 15-16	Sandy Osborne Memorial Trophy, George Hotel, Solihull, England	44522-536836
Oct 15-16*	De Åbne Fyns Championship, Bridge Unionens, Odense C, Denmark	4566-140712
Oct 20-23	4th Rio de Janeiro Open Tournament, Hotel Rio Palace, Rio, Brazil	5521-267 6033
Oct 24-28	3rd SA World Cup & 1994 Buenos Aires Open, Hotel Regente, Argentina	541-794 7000
Oct 28-30	Malmö Open, Savoy Hotel, Malmö, Sweden	4640-981911
Nov 3-6	1994 Swedish Open, Foresta Hotel, Lidingö Island, Stockholm, Sweden	468-765 2700
Nov 4-6	Hong Kong Backgammon Championships, Ladies Recreation Club	852-846 1923
Nov 10-13	NRW Championship 1994, Hotel Antana, Kaarst (Dusseldorf), Germany	2151-501359
Nov 18-20	Swiss Open, Hotel Nova Park, Zürich, Switzerland	41-1381 3177
Nov 19-20	BIBA Ranking Tournament #4, George Hotel, Solihull, England	44522-536836
Nov 23-27*	1st Kenyan Open, Malindi, Kenya, Africa	Eitan Fax: 972-3 544 5347
Dec 2-4*	8th British Festival of Backgammon, Hemel Hempstead, Herts, England	4461-946 0828
Dec 5	Hong Kong Monthly Tournament, Ladies Recreation Club	852-846 1923
Dec 13-18*	3rd Turkish Open, Conrad Hotel Istanbul, Turkey	Eitan Fax: 972-3 544 5347
Jan 6-8*	BIBA's Interesting Birthday Adventure, Hilton International, England	44522-536836
Jan 7-8*	Danish Mixed Doubles, Prime BG Klub, København Ø, Denmark	4535-261587
Feb 11-12*	Jarvis Trophy Tournament #1, George Hotel, Solihull, England	44522-536836

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 2]

p&h). The two largest distributors in the states are Backgammon à la Carte (3003 Ridgecliffe Dr.; Flint, MI 48532) and The

Gammon Press (P.O. Box 294; Arlington, MA 02174). In Europe, contact European Backgammon News (Apartado 81; E-04630 Garrucha Almeria; Spain. Price listing: USD) or Danish Backgammon Federation (Gersonsvej 25; DK-2900 Hellerup; Denmark. Price listing: Kroner).

WHO IS M.K. MAGNUM?

Thanks for publishing our first anonymous letter last month. Now here's the solution to Problem #206. [See the Woolsey analysis on page 8 for the board diagram.—Ed.]

We ran Black's 5-4 roll through our neural network with these results:

Play	Equity	Notes
21/16, 6/2	-0.236	minimum shots
21/16, 13/9	-0.238	
21/16, 11/7	-0.245	duplicates 4s
8/3*, 13/9	-0.263	four blots

The results demonstrate that the priorities of the position are *first* to get off the 21-point "hot spot," and *then* to reduce the number of shots on the remaining blots. Incidentally, if White had been on roll with the same 5-4, the best play would be to hit loose on the 21-point rather than to run.

The beauty of the neural network is that one gets *equity* estimates first and then can state a verbal argument that explains the results.—M.K. Magnum, No address given

I found M.K. Magnum's letter responding to my Opening Roll Survey particularly interesting. I realize that Expert Backgammon™ is not the strongest player in the world. However, the question is: are the plays it makes reasonable or not? The answer is "not always," but this also applies to the human player and the neural network.

Incidentally, I would guess that M.K. Magnum is Gerry Tesauro and that the human player is Kit Woolsey, Bill Robertie, or Kent Goulding. Gerry has the

[Continued on page 5]



AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 1994

Top 100 through 6 Sept. 1993 after 10 tournaments
(Coming 30 Sept–2 Oct.: Towpath Inn Tournament)



Neil Kazaross	46.87	Todd Doucet	7.21	Ed Pavilonis	3.60	Michelle Colpo	1.59
Dean Muench	28.75	Ralph Schaffner	7.18	Jerry Hays	3.59	Paul Farah	1.59
Arnold Zousmer	26.50	Durb Oldham	7.11	Mariano Rocca	3.59	Wally Wolf	1.59
Abbas Zaltash	26.48	Roy Springer	6.69	Bruce King	3.58	Marilyn Fallor	1.53
Kit Woolsey	20.16	Odis Chenault	6.56	Bill Gheen	3.55	Mark Damish	1.38
Charlie Morrison	18.86	Andy Palumbo	6.44	Kevin Muench	3.55	Taylor Sage	1.38
David Williams	17.31	Darl Brooks	6.44	Paul Klein	3.36	Irving Achtenberg	1.18
Steve McCormick	16.82	Kent Goulding	6.40	Jim Muirhead	3.22	Sakura Sugawara	1.04
Lincoln Bedell	14.96	John Rather	6.30	Nancy Takala	3.22	Lara Simsic	1.00
Mike Darooge	14.35	J.A. Miller	6.29	Frank Dickerson	3.20	Nicole Masarani	0.90
Mike Friedman	14.35	Ray Bills	5.60	Bob Lumbr	3.12	Bob Neumann	0.89
Art Benjamin	13.25	Kurt Schurecht	5.26	Bob Bishop	2.82	Casey Jones	0.83
Bill Szirtes	12.81	Mary Franks	5.20	Lou Florio	2.75	Irv Taylor	0.83
John Stryker	11.56	David Wells	5.18	Joann Feinstein	2.40	Chris Larsen	0.83
Judy Brown	11.50	Nack Ballard	4.80	Carol Falk	2.09	Mark Kaplan	0.83
Mary Ann Meese	11.44	John Brussel	4.78	Ali Rebatchi	2.08	Hunter Jones	0.83
Ami Tennenbaum	10.35	Richie Adams	4.78	Julie Crandall	2.05	Bret Handson	0.81
Rick Bieniak	10.07	Howard Ring	4.33	Lois Richards	1.91	Paul Mangone	0.81
Judy Field	9.61	Jon Stephens	4.24	Ken Truman	1.88	Jerry Wlosinski	0.77
Paul DiBiase	9.61	Leferis Moskos	4.19	Walter Trice	1.88	Kelly Danton	0.77
Tak Morioka	8.47	Bob Holyon	4.16	Richard Heinz	1.79	Brian Nelson	0.76
Marty Storer	7.83	Doug Mayfield	4.16	Tony Pow	1.67	Sean Garber	0.76
Sig Skolnick	7.54	Carl Adamec	3.76	Greg Shoults	1.67	Wanda delaBarre	0.52
Peter Zacks	7.25	Marc Gray	3.74	Tim Kirby	1.63	3 tied with	0.45
Richard Armbruster	7.25	David Rubin	3.72	Bill Slater	1.59		

Five of the remaining seven 1994 ABT events will be decided in October. Can Neil be caught?



CHICAGO BAR POINT CLUB 1994 PLAYER OF THE YEAR

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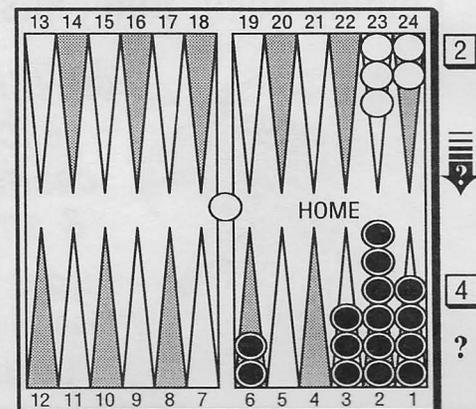
Neil Kazaross	21.92	Joann Feinstein	5.04	Tom Fahland	2.32	Frank Dickerson	0.88
Tak Morioka	18.68	Bill Davis	4.84	Ed Bauder	2.24	Scottie Mitchell	0.88
Jake Jacobs	15.56	Gary Kay	4.72	Amy Trudeau	2.20	Glen Garber	0.80
Herb Roman	14.72	Phil Simborg	4.64	Jeff Kane	2.16	Peggy Fleming	0.72
Paul Franks	12.08	Ralph Levy	4.48	Don Desmond	2.00	Kevin Muench	0.72
Peter Kalba	10.24	Georgina Flanagan	4.16	Dean Muench	1.92	Jerry Brooks	0.64
David Rubin	10.16	V.W. Zimnicki	4.16	Marc Ingenoso	1.92	Igor Sheyn	0.64
Norma Shyer	9.60	Jolie Rubin	4.12	Ed Buerger	1.76	Jill Ferdinand	0.64
Allen Zimmerman	9.44	Bobbie Shifrin	3.84	Bill Keefe	1.76	Mike Kaczmarek	0.64
Tim Mabee	9.36	Paul Klein	3.72	Betsy Miller	1.76	Mary Vitale	0.60
Paul Friedman	9.16	Marcy Sloan	3.44	Barry Miller	1.60	Marty Tatosian	0.56
Leslie Lockett	8.08	Rob Silvay	3.20	Andy Krenitz	1.52	David Rockwell	0.48
Phyllis Smolinski	7.76	John Stryker	3.20	John Meyers	1.40	Earl Risch	0.48
Alice Kay	7.28	Richard Stawowy	3.16	Wilcox Snellings	1.28	Tom Walthes	0.48
Sarg Serges	7.04	Dan Braden	2.96	Gregg Westrick	1.28	Brigid O'Meara	0.44
Ken Bond	7.04	Alex Itkin	2.96	Dave Cramer	1.12	Tom Shields	0.40
Stu Katz	6.64	John Brussel	2.88	Roland Dieter	0.96	Tim Serges	0.32
Don Jayhan	6.56	Yamin Yamin	2.72	Andy Bittman	0.88	Barbara Levinson	0.28
Mary Franks	6.28	George Barr	2.56	Frankie Farjood	0.88	Mike Siegel	0.24
Bob Zavoral	5.12	Arline Levy	2.56	Paul Weaver	0.88	Mike Budz	0.12

NEIL KAZAROSS cashed in five out of six September play dates to earn an impressive 5.08 points. Peter Kalba placed a close second with 4.88 points: enough to vault him into the Top 6. Norma Shyer and V.W. Zimnicki each won 3.68 points for a third place tie.

your move

PROBLEM #207

1994 Michigan Summer Championship 7-point Doubles finals. Howard Markowitz & Joann Feinstein (White) lead Tak Morioka & Bill Davis (Black), 4-1. White owns a 2-cube and is on shake. **CUBE ACTION(S)?**



ASK
DANNY

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BEAROFF ANOMALIES

Dear Danny: I was recently using a computer bearoff program to examine data from 4x4 men symmetrical cubeless bearoff positions. There is something unusual in the printout shown at the right. It seems intuitively obvious that as the length of the race (measured by the number of pips) increases, the advantage of the roller should decrease. Indeed, this is usually true, as the chart above confirms. But in some cases, the roller has a greater advantage despite a greater number of pips.

For example, in Position 13 (16 pips), the roller wins 74% of the time, but in Position #4 (13 pips), the roller wins only 72% of the time.

Is there some general principle we can use to explain this anomaly?—Dean Muench, Palatine, IL

DEAR DEAN: The 15 positions in question are all “in between” 2-roll endings and 3-roll endings. Despite the chance of getting off in one, there is a greater chance of failing to get off in two rolls.

I have added a column to your chart. The “DK #” has three components. The first is the number of rolls in 36 which bear off immediately. The second is a letter identifying a series of positions, each series in order of increasing race length. The third is the percentage of the time (which I obtained from bearoff charts) that two rolls do not suffice to bear off.

The “norm” in each position is for both sides to get off in two. The non-roller can win in any of three ways:

- (1) with an immediate sufficient doublet (unless the roller has already rolled a sufficient doublet),
- (2) by getting off in two when the roller misses (fails to get off in two), or
- (3) by getting off in three when the roller fails to get off in three.

Position #13 favors the non-roller because the greater number of pips increases Way (3). Against this, however, Position #13 favors the roller in two ways:

Way (1): Double 5s work in Position #4, but not in Position #13.

Way (2): Misses occur 47% in Position #4, but 72% in Position #13. Now the probabilities of missing and getting off in two are nearly complementary: their sum is 1 minus the probability of getting off in one. The closer to 50% either of these probabilities, the closer their *product* is to 50% (its upper bound). Thus for Position #4, the product is about 22% (47% x 47%). But for Position #13, the product is about 18% (72% x 25%).

FOUR CHECKER MIRROR BEAROFF POSITIONS

Probability Of The Roller Winning

Position #	Pips	Roller	Non-Roller	Probability	DK No.
1	10	4321	4321	0.821	3A13
2	11	5 321	5 321	0.754	2A30
3	12	54 21	54 21	0.727	2A40
4	13	543 1	543 1	0.719	2A47
5	14	5432	5432	0.714	2A53
6	12	6 321	6 321	0.735	1B48
7	13	6 4 21	6 4 21	0.735	1B55
8	14	6 43 1	6 43 1	0.735	1B60
9	15	6 432	6 432	0.731	1B64
10	14	65 21	65 21	0.742	1C63
11	15	65 3 1	65 3 1	0.742	1C67
12	16	65 32	65 32	0.733	1C70
13	16	654 1	654 1	0.740	1D72
14	17	654 2	654 2	0.723	1D74
15	18	6543	6543	0.705	1D76

These two differences favoring the roller in Position #13 combine to outweigh the greater race-length favoring the non-roller.

If you examine other entries in this chart, you will see an amazing sequence in Series (B). There the roller's advantage remains nearly constant as the number of pips increases from 12 to 15, even though in all of Series (B) only one roll, double 6s, wins for the non-roller immediately. For as the number of pips increases in this series, so also does the deviation of the miss probability from the 48%-49% which maximizes the non-roller's chances to win in Way (2).

I believe the mathematical principle that the product $p(1-p)$ increases as p goes from 0 to $\frac{1}{2}$ and then decreases as p goes from $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1, which underlies the variation in Way (2), may be the general principle you seek.—Yours, Danny Δ

Questions for Danny Kleinman should be addressed to: Ask Danny, c/o CHICAGO POINT, 2726 W. Lunt Avenue, Chicago, IL 60645-3039.

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LETTERS...

[Continued from page 3]

only neural network that has been mentioned in literature and he is closely affiliated with the three players mentioned. You might want to send M.K. Magnum the results I am enclosing for his information.—*Jerry Godsey, president, Hong Kong Backgammon Club*

We'd like to send your investigation, Jerry, but we don't know his address. If M.K. Magnum sends us a mailing address, we promise to keep it confidential.—Ed.

TYPO ALERT

The third number in the last paragraph of my August letter to the editor should have been 25.74, not 35.73. Otherwise all other numbers are correct.

I was glad to learn that you forwarded my letter and calculations to Jerry Godsey in Hong Kong. I feel that there is much to be learned from this type of effort, and I'm happy someone else has the patience and dedication to do the hard work.—*Mel Leifer, Germantown, MD*

A THANKS TO OUR CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

I have enclosed a cheque for \$35 as my subscription for another 12 issues of your excellent newsletter. The information it provides has had a marked improvement on my game.—*David Wallbank, Lancashire, England*

PRAISE FOR WALTER

I enjoyed Walter Trice's analysis of Problem #205. I had given the problem to an intermediate player who opted for a seventh play—Bar/21, 23/21, 11/9*—because "I'm always getting my back men stuck." He obviously could not properly prioritize the competitive strategic motifs. In the interest of completeness, I will follow Walter's analysis technique and give you my scoring of the intermediate's play:

Initiative = 1, Purity = 4, Escape = 5, Attack = 1, Safety = 5, Priming = 2, Timing = 2, Flexibility = 3.

This totals to 23 points and if grouped with Walter's six plays, would rank it fifth out of seven. This leads me to a suggestion that I think is critical in improving one's backgammon. Don't let bad results in a particular type of position keep you from at least looking at a play in another position that looks similar but really is not.—*Ed Maslansky, Silver Spring, MD* Δ

AMALGAMATION

Visiting the Bar Point Club in August: **Nora Luna** (MA), **Scott Salisbury** (NY). When you visit New York City, Scott invites you to the NYAC Backgammon Club, meeting the 4th Tuesday each month at the New York Athletic Club. Call Scott at 212/980-1697 for more info... Former World Amateur Backgammon Champ **Russell Sands** (FL) has many sides. He's a 1st Degree Black Belt, has been barred from Caesar's Palace for his blackjack strategy, and will be teaching his "Turtle" commodity trading strategy seminar 1-3 October at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas (fee: \$2,500). For info, call Russell at 800/532-1563... There were other winners at the recent Las Vegas Open: **Ami Tennenbaum** (NJ) hit a Caribbean Stud Poker jackpot for \$8,500. And **Bobbie Shifrin** (IL) hit yet another poker machine royal flush for \$2200... **Yamin Yamin** (IL) informs us that he will award certificates to the top 64 Giants of Backgammon at the Byzantine Auction/Dinner 6 October at the Illinois State Championships and America Cup in Bloomingdale, IL. Call Yamin for details at 708/945-7801... Pub Club Director **Val Zimmicki** (IL) reports that **Jake Jacobs** (IL) is terrorizing the Monday night club this year (Fiddler's Restaurant, Villa Park, IL). Through 21 August, Jake's tourney record is 56-14: an unheard-of 80% win record! Jake has only lost two of his last 25 games. "And even more incredible, the Jakemeister is only 5th on our master point list." jokes V.W... Congratulations to Costa Rica's **Antonio Ortega** who beat **Richard Heinz** (IN) in a tiebreaker to win the *Inside Backgammon's* "1994 World Cup Quiz. The quiz, for *Inside Backgammon* subscribers only, consisted of 25 questions including problems and historical backgammon trivia. First prize was one week's stay at the Harvey's Addison Hotel, plus free entry into the U.S. Open... The *European Backgammon News* is developing into a very nice newsletter. The 12-issue subscription rate is \$30 in Europe and \$40 for the rest of the world. Write Publisher **Martin de Bruin**, European Backgammon News, Apartado 81, E-04630 Garrucha, Spain. Δ

CHICAGO POINT

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LAS VEGAS OPEN RESULTS

CHAMPIONSHIP (102): 1-Hal Heinrich (CAN), 2-Steve Sax (CA), 3-Oliver Baksic (CAN), 4-Gino Scalmandre (NY), 5/8-Nack Ballard (WA) / Gene Chait (CA) / Stu Hosen (TX) / Antonio Ortega (CR); 1C-Steve Clark (WA), 2C-Kent Goulding (MD), 3/4-Jake Jacobs (IL) / Ami Tennenbaum (NJ); 1LC-Norm Wiggins (CA), 2LC-Mariano Rocco (ARG). INTERMEDIATE (96): 1-Azzam Masarani (CA), 2-Corlan Chinn (WA), 3-Andreas Born (GER), 4-Veronica Mooney (AZ), 5/8-Mick Dobratz (IN) / Laura Petrillo (FL) / David Simpson (CO) / Jorge Tsao (CR); 1C-Ramon Eleazar (NV), 2C-Paul Wurmbrand (NV), 3C/4C-Michael Ginat (CO) / Chen-fu Yu (MD); 1LC-Jorge Tsao (CR), 2LC-Wally Wolf (MI). BEGINNER (34): 1-Nora Luna (MA), 2-Linda Landre (OR), 3/4-Casey Jones (CAN) / Twila Slesnick (CA); 1C-Gail Latter (MI), 2C-Linda Compton (NV); 1LC-Julie Schroer, 2LC-Carlos Hamon (CA). \$3,000 SUPER JACKPOT (16): 1-James Colen (NY), 2-Malcolm Davis (TX), 3/4-Wilcox Snellings (NV) / Paul Weaver (NY). \$1200 LTD JACKPOT (16): 1-David MacBryde (CA), 2-Kevin McDonnough (AZ). \$500 STARDUST JACK-POT (4): 1-Howard Markowitz (NV). DOUBLES (32): 1-Odis Chenault & Christian Podivsky (CA), 2-Bruno LeMilinaire & Francois Tardieu (FRA), 3/4-Antonio Ortega & Jorge Tsao (CR) / Howard Ring (IL) & Joe Russell (CA). \$50 BLITZ (120): 1-Bruno LeMilinaire (FRA), 2-Joe Miller (OH). \$25 BLITZ (152): 1-Joe Harris (CA), 2-Joe Miller (OH). 1ST SPECIAL BLACKJACK TOURNEY: Cancelled.



ILLINOIS ACTION



Bill Davis
312/338-6380
Peter Kalba
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Tuesday, 6:30 P.M. at Golden Flame, 6417 W. Higgins Rd., Chicago; 312/792-0424.

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. Chouette play most Sundays, 1:00 P.M. at Cricket's Pub & Grill, 602 W. North Ave., Glendale Hts. V. W. Zimmicki (708/924-8632.)

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).

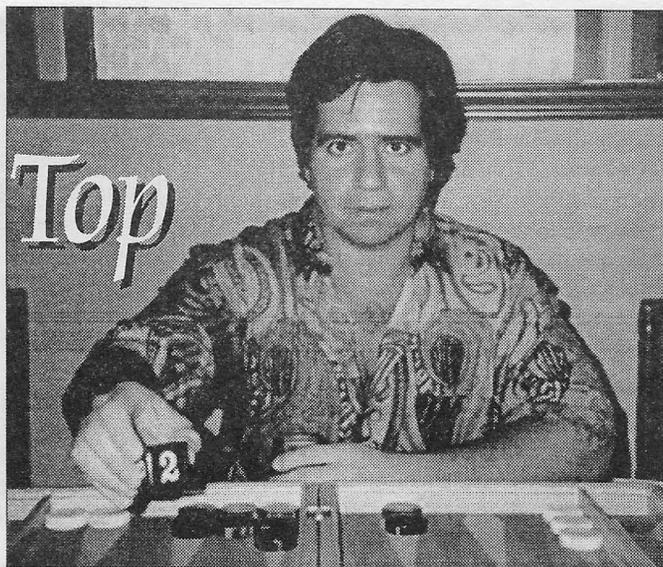
CENTRAL ILL. BG CLUB: Tourn. Thurs., 6:30 P.M. at Chi-Chi's, 4415 N. Rockwood, Peoria. Ed Zell (309/673-7622).

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 (312/286-6719).

At The Top

with
NEIL
KAZAROSS



Neil Thomas Kazaross was born in Providence, RI in 1958. He grew up in Pawtucket, RI. In 1981, Neil earned a B.S. degree from Union College (Schenectady, NY). From 1981 to 1991, he worked as an electrical engineer. During that time, he lived in El Segundo, CA; Amesbury, MA; Ogunquit, Maine; and San Diego, CA. In 1983, Neil married Laura Nugent—a marriage that lasted seven years.

Neil moved his life to Chicago in 1992. It's a move that has agreed with Neil. He began working as a stock options trader with the Susquehanna Investment Group. Last April he married Laura Relkin. ("It seems I only marry women named 'Laura.'"). The Kazaross family (Laura has two children from prior marriages) recently purchased a new home on five acres of land in Barrington, IL. And together, they're expecting a baby girl.

And one other thing: this year, Neil managed to earn the ranking of number one backgammon player in the world. A ranking that appears on the license plate of his Nissan pick-up truck (1 BKG MN).

CHICAGO POINT interviewed the "An-Neil-ator" last month. Some would say Neil Kazaross is over-confident, brash, or even egotistical. You be the judge. But remember one thing: what Neil has achieved, he's earned.

POINT: You're leading the Chicago Bar Point Club point race, you're tops in the American Backgammon Tour standings and you're ranked number one in Kent Goulding's 1994 International Rating List.

KAZAROSS: Every list in the world I'm on, I'm at the top of. It's not so bad, I guess.

POINT: What does it feel like to be playing backgammon at this level?

KAZAROSS: [Pauses] It's very exciting that I've been able to do this well. I've put a lot into backgammon at various stages of my life. I've done a lot of studying, a lot of analyzing, a lot of writing, and quite a bit of rolling out. I can apply everything I know about every aspect of the game pretty darn well. There are parts of the game that I'd like to know better, but I have no big holes. I don't give much up.

It's taken a lot of good fortune in matches to do this, and certainly there are 10 master players out there that deserve as much as I do to be number one. But to succeed on all levels, not only have I been able to compete on equal footing with the masters, I also have been very, very adept

at beating players with lesser skills and experience. And this is why I've done really well at the local club level.

POINT: How were your tournament results before 1990?

KAZAROSS: In 1988 I won the singles and doubles at the Michigan Summer Championships. I won weekenders out in Los Angeles. Really, I have not won that many events. I have my high rating because I'm very consistent.

POINT: Let's do your backgammon chronology. What games did you enjoy as a child?

KAZAROSS: Checkers, Chinese Checkers, Monopoly, Chess. We always played some kind of game: sports games, war games . . .

POINT: When did backgammon come into your life?

KAZAROSS: My dad and grandfather played backgammon and I watched. My grandfather always played with his Armenian friends. They'd come over for dinner, have desert, and then out came the backgammon board. But I never really played until I was almost 16.

POINT: Who convinced you to try it?

KAZAROSS: My grandfather had passed away. Grandma liked to play backgammon with Grandpa, and by playing backgammon with me, it gave her something to concentrate on other than losing Grandpa. We played Middle Eastern style—no doubling cube, no backgammons. You played a set of five games, so five points won.

POINT: What was your initial impression of the game?

KAZAROSS: I liked it. It was fun. It was skill and luck combined. It was better than chess because it went faster, yet there were a lot of strategic and tactical elements of chess in it.

POINT: When did you begin playing publicly?

KAZAROSS: Here's what happened. After playing with my father and grandmother for about six months, I could beat my grandmother more than she beat me and I was playing almost even with my father. Eventually, I was trouncing Grandma and doing a little better than Dad.

I was on spring break from school in 1976 and I saw in the newspaper, some backgammon results from a weekly tournament at David's Potbelly Restaurant in Providence, RI. I went down there. They played 5-point matches with the cube. I don't think I had ever used the cube before. I won a match and then I lost a match, then I won, I lost, and I was out. I thought that I moved the pieces better than all these people. Some of them had no clue, but I had no clue with the doubling cube.

I had seen a backgammon book in the library and this caught my interest. The only one they had at that time was *The Backgammon Book* by Jacoby and Crawford. I took it out and read it cover-to-cover about five times in one week. I studied what it said about the doubling cube. Digested that for myself—made sure it made sense. I was good enough with numbers that the math made instantaneous sense.



"Every list in the world I'm on, I'm at the top of. It's not so bad, I guess."

Then this book had examples of play. I took all that into account, went back to the tournament the next week and I won. Then I went back the following week and I won again. Then I was hooked.

POINT: Did anyone who still plays attend your club back then?

KAZAROSS: Bob Glass did. [*Currently living in California.—Ed*] I remember Bob at that time was reading a very popular book called *Backgammon For Blood*.

POINT: Bruce Becker's book.

KAZAROSS: Right. It's most unfortunate for me that more people don't play like that nowadays.

POINT: You're saying that this was basically a hopeless book?

KAZAROSS: There is some stuff in the book that is decent, but in general, the strategy probably makes you a 5-to-4 underdog in every game.

POINT: Could you sense that back in 1976?

KAZAROSS: I knew it was wrong. I could tell.

POINT: Well, what books did you read that you could tell were right?

KAZAROSS: [*Pauses*] Most of the Jacoby/Crawford book seemed pretty good. But the one that really did it for me was Magriel's book [*Backgammon*]. Magriel's book: that did it for me.

POINT: What makes it so good?

KAZAROSS: It's a detailed text. Even to this day, I'll reread it—look at it for a couple of hours. Perhaps not everything in it would hold up as being right under close scrutiny using today's analytics and computer rollouts, but damn near everything in it is right. And if it's not right, it's awful close.

POINT: O.K. Now you've won some weekly tournaments. When did you decide to try a tournament at the regional level?

KAZAROSS: My first regional event was the Rhode Island Open. I believe it was in

1976 or 1977. It had a \$100 entry fee, but they held a weekly qualifying tournament and I won my way into the event. Now I'm seeing some professional level of play for the first time. I did O.K. I think I won my first two matches and got beat in a close match against some big money player out of New York. So I went farther than anyone else in Rhode Island and they're telling me that I was the best in the state. I'm also winning in the chouettes all the time. So I knew I could probably compete against anybody.

In 1977 or 1978, I would occasionally go up to Boston with a couple of friends. We would play at the Cavendish where they had \$3 chouettes. I held my own, but I saw stuff that I hadn't seen before and I knew that these were good players.

POINT: Do any names stand out?

KAZAROSS: Not really. Not really. [*Pauses*] Chris Peterson, Norm Humer, I think Bill Robertie was there some.

I was also playing in college all the time with my roommates. They liked it. However, nobody in college would play me a second time for money—*never*.

I really got into it more and more because I was consistently winning in the chouettes in Rhode Island. During a summer break from College in 1979, I played 13 weekly tournaments in Providence. I won eight of them and finished second in four. I was hot.

That same year, Les and Sue Boyd had a tournament in Vermont. I went to it. I did O.K. there. I had to play Jersey Jim Pasko. At that time, Pasko, Magriel and Roger Low were probably three of the best players in the world. So I've got to play this guy—master of complications, backgames with a million men back, all kinds of crazy stuff. I thought, "Now I'm going to get a real backgammon lesson."

Well I managed to hang in, but I got beat. I learned so much about what was going on, and I remembered a lot of it. I mentally studied a lot of what had happened in that match. I came back the next year and had to play Pasko again and then I beat him.

But I didn't really get into the tournament circuit in a big way until I moved to California in 1981. My first engineering job was in Los Angeles. I played at the Cavendish. They knew I was a good player out of New England. I began winning money playing there and winning a lot of their weekly tournaments.

POINT: Did you ever run into Gaby Horowitz playing there?

KAZAROSS: Yeah.

POINT: Did you ever play him?

Neil Kazaross Personality Profile



I would like to see a backgammon tournament held: Right here is good enough. Why travel?

Favorite comedian: Anything with Chevy Chase is hilarious.

Nobody has ever said that Neil Kazaross was not: Extremely intense.

For my last meal, I would order: Barbecued New York sirloin steak.

If I had a time machine, I'd like to spend one day: On the floor of the New York Stock Exchange the day before the stock market crashed in 1987.

Favorite body of water: Atlantic Ocean

Luck is: A very important part of backgammon.

KAZAROSS: Yeah, I beat him in a match. I never played him for money, though. He did try to set me up in a home game and I avoided it. I never suspected anything, I must admit, but there was something unsavory about the guy.

POINT: Where did you play most often?

KAZAROSS: The Cavendish and Pat Gibson ran tournaments in San Fernando Valley. I played there. Todd Vander Pluym ran them in Redondo Beach. I played an average of 2 ½ times a week in the 1 ½ years I lived in L.A. That helped a lot. I got to discuss the game with good players like Joe Russell, Bob Wachtel and Bob Glass (who had moved out there before I did). Playing with stronger players helped my game.

POINT: Now you said you lived out in L.A. for about a year and a half. Then what happened?

KAZAROSS: I was burned out on the big city and I wanted to go back to New England, so I took my then-fiancée back east to Maine where we got married. Living back there, I played occasionally in Boston, a lot with my family when I visited them on weekends, and I played Lincoln Bedell's tournaments in New Hampshire. But I wasn't really serious about it.

Then I moved back to San Diego for

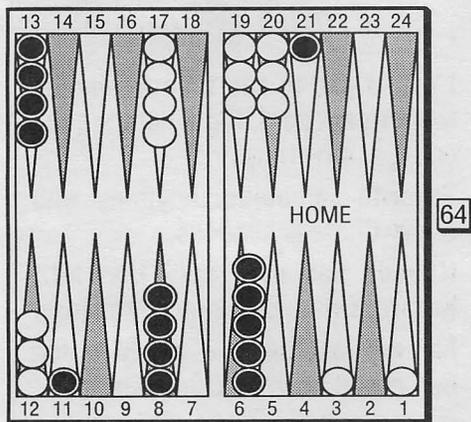
[Continued on page 8]



"I understand the nature of luck in this game and if you don't understand this, you will fall apart."

**PROBLEM #206
SOLVED**

by Kit Woolsey

Money game. **BLACK TO PLAY 5-4.**

Black has rolled an awkward number and no play is very appetizing. In particular, the 4 is extremely awkward. In order to get a handle on the problem, it is important for Black to assess his main positional priorities.

White's advantages are a stronger inner board, better distribution, and some attacking possibilities. Black's main asset is that he currently has just one man back and is a bit ahead in the race. Both of these factors point to one main game plan—get that back checker out of there! While it will be bad for Black to be hit in any variation, if White

is able to hit and make the 4-point, Black will be in real trouble.

Swashbuckling plays such as 13/9, 8/3* should be saved for another day when Black has the stronger board and more men back. That sort of play is just too loose here.

It is clear that Black must use the 5 to run with the back man. Now, what criterion should Black use to choose the best 4? Whatever 4 Black plays, he will be leaving more shots; there is nothing he can do about that. There are three main considerations:

- (1) *Which play leaves the fewest shots?* Obviously important when avoiding getting hit is a key consideration.
- (2) *Which play is easiest to clean up if the shot is missed?* If Black survives, he doesn't want to be leaving a bunch of shots next turn, also.
- (3) *Which play is least bad if the shot is hit?* Also important. Black wants to make getting hit as painless as possible by not letting White hit with the checkers she wants to hit with.

21/16, 6/2 leaves only 23 ways to be hit (aces and 4s, along with 2-2 and 6-2). The other plays leave direct 6s, which when combined with direct 4s, yield more shots.

The easiest clean up is not so clear. Starting the 2-point leaves 6s and 4s to cover, and making an inner board point for Black would be quite nice. Starting the bar point is good if it works. 6s, aces, and 5-4 will cover. Starting the 9-point is also fine, with 4s, 2s, and 6-1 covering. Also, the

checker is a strong builder to make an inner board point. In this department, all three plays are fairly close, with the slight edge going toward starting the 9-point.

But starting the 9-point is clearly the most dangerous way to get hit. Not only does it expose another blot, but if White hits on the 9-point, she would immediately threaten the 11-blot. Starting the bar point has the advantage of not jarring loose another blot; however the hit also allows White to get her back checker into play. Starting the 2-point leaves the extra blot, but the hit does nothing to advance White's back checker position. Starting the 9-point is most dangerous if hit, with the other two plays about equal.

There's probably little difference between the three plays, but it looks like 21/16, 6/2 is the winner. It leaves the fewest shots, and is not too bad in the other categories, either. There is nothing wrong with starting a deep inner board point in this position. It is not likely to become a priming battle, so any inner board point figures to be helpful. It is a natural looking play, unstacking the tallest stack. The big drawback is leaving the extra blot, but it still looks like the best of the alternatives.

This is a common type of problem which comes up all the time. We can't always roll good numbers. The true experts are those players who can make the most of their bad numbers, minimizing damage if things go badly while preparing for the future if things go well. 21/16, 6/2 is a good example of such a play. Δ

KAZAROSS...

[Continued from page 7]

job reasons in 1985. They had a club where I played twice a week. Plus there was a lot of tournament activity in L.A., so I'd play up there. I was playing a lot. Then I really got into it.

But it wasn't until 1986 or 1987 when I started getting on airplanes going to tournaments. I had played one really big event prior to this: the Vegas World Amateur tournament in 1982. The entry fee was \$400 and \$100 to buy back. But I won it back on the Blackjack table. I knew how to count cards.

I remember they used these big square dice that were a dice mechanic's dream. I was cheated by dice mechanics in both matches. One of the guys I played was thrown out of the Las Vegas Backgammon Club six months later for being a cheat. I was sure he cheated. The other guy was a mini-mechanic out of Boston. He didn't

shake very well and his dice rolls weren't random. I vowed never to go back as long as they used those big dice and I never did.

So since then I have had—and I will go on record right now—a real distaste for large dice that slide. Dice should be shaken well and they should roll well. The cups should be big enough so that the dice easily tumble around in them, they come out hitting lips, and then they hit the table and they are rolling. They're bouncing into the walls, they're bouncing off checkers. You're getting a random roll.

POINT: This is important to you.

KAZAROSS: Yes. This is why I use quality equipment.

POINT: What drives you to play backgammon? What needs does this game fulfill?

KAZAROSS: Well, I try to play it for relaxation.

POINT: You treat this cruel game as a form of relaxation?

KAZAROSS: Compared to my trading

job, backgammon is relaxing. I've changed a lot in the last year or two. I can still get pissed off, I can still yell and scream and throw a tantrum. Sometimes I get so mad at myself I just want to . . . you know, kill myself for what I've done. But I've got to put it out of my system and get back to playing.

POINT: So it is your form of relaxation.

KAZAROSS: It is intense enough that it is a big diversion. It's also fun. I gotta try to make it fun. But it's also incredibly strenuous. At times, it's not relaxing and then I gotta do something else to relax.

POINT: You've been really super hot for about a year. Why do so many people who experience similar streaks fade back into the pack?

KAZAROSS: Some of these people were that good then, and their still that good now. But today there's more parity in the game.

POINT: Could you see this happening to you: fading back into the pack with someone else taking your number one position?

[Continued on page 9]

Someone else always going for the highest price at the Calcutta Auctions?

KAZAROSS: [Pauses] It wouldn't shock me if I dropped to 15th or 20th or the 25th position in a couple of years. If I keep with it, I expect I could remain in the top-20, but when you're at the top, it doesn't take too many losses to lose a lot of rating points. For starters, I have to win probably two-thirds of my matches to stay at the top this year. Not easy. Not easy.

But can I stay near the top? I would hope to keep a rating always over 1700 and that's pretty damn good if you're playing all the time.

POINT: When you reach the finals of a weekend tournaments where you play on a Saturday night and you have the final round or two set for Sunday, how do you mentally prepare yourself?

KAZAROSS: [Pauses]

POINT: Is there anything you do differently? Is there a certain way you break the tension? Do you try to go to bed early?

KAZAROSS: It doesn't work. You've usually played too late that night, so you don't get to bed early, or you're too wired to get to bed early. It's very difficult and I probably don't do it as well as I should, but you gotta try to put it out of your mind. You gotta try to forget about it. And it's tough. Sometimes you wake up wired. That's the hard part. Putting it out of your mind. I've gotten better at doing it than I used to be.

POINT: So you do experience tension.

KAZAROSS: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. I've experienced not playing too well in some final matches, too. A lot of times I'm just totally exhausted. It's tough to keep up the energy. Almost nobody I'm competing against has anywhere near as stressful a job as what I do for a living. So these people can mentally and physically hold up longer. You need an incredible adrenal rush to try to maintain intensity for that long. It's very difficult at times.

POINT: Who are Neil Kazaross's nemesis players?

KAZAROSS: I wouldn't call anyone a "nemesis player."

POINT: There's nobody that you would say "has your number"?

KAZAROSS: No.

POINT: Well then in tournament play, who are the individuals you really respect?

KAZAROSS: Let's just say, "If I've got to

win an important match, who don't I want sitting across from me?" Kit Woolsey, Mike Svobodny, Joe Sylvester, Wilcox Snellings, Joe Russell, O.K.?

POINT: There's probably many.

KAZAROSS: But I definitely don't need those guys sitting across from me.

POINT: [Laughs] I understand you prefer tournament play to money play.

KAZAROSS: I much prefer match play to money play because there's much more to it. In tournaments, the match score is everything, especially relative to the cube strategy. For example, I'm ahead of you 10-7 to 13. We're not using the cube like we do for money. O.K.?

POINT: Yes.

KAZAROSS: Do you follow me?

POINT: Yes.

KAZAROSS: And to some extent, we may even make different checker plays. You gotta blend the checker plays with the cube. But one of the reasons I've done so well in matches is my understanding of how to use the cube at different scores. That's the main reason I've done so well.

POINT: How do you cope with losing to a much weaker player than yourself?

KAZAROSS: There's a lot of players who can't stand this. I know some young Europeans like this. It's very simple. They should take a look at their record in the rating list.

I've won 62% of my matches. That's all. This means I'm losing 38% of my matches. Let's say I get into the advanced round of a big tournament, and I'm playing an intermediate guy with a 1500 rating. He's stepped up to the Open and is all pumped up. But still, he's making a lot of mistakes. I know that this guy is supposed to beat me maybe one time in four, in an 11-point match. Do you follow me?

POINT: Yes.



"At a previous World Cup, I saw a player steal a lucky game from his opponent and then take a 20 minute break to let his opponent think about it. This is bullshit."

KAZAROSS: I understand the nature of luck in this game and if you don't understand this, you will fall apart.

POINT: Could you say that the skills learned playing backgammon have helped you in your daily life? And if so, in what way?

KAZAROSS: Absolutely. In trading, it's been a great help. For example, I have the choice: make the trade or not. Typically, it's a binary decision. Backgammon has greatly helped my decision-making thought process in areas where I cannot control the outcome.

I cannot control the dice, but I can maneuver my pieces and the doubling cube to try to increase my probably of winning. But I know that's all I'm doing in backgammon. When I play chess I know if I do something, for sure, I will win the game. In backgammon, all I'm doing is going from one probability of winning, hopefully to a higher probability of winning. It's true with my decisions on the trading floor and it's true with my decisions in life. Life, like backgammon, is constant decision-making under uncertainty.

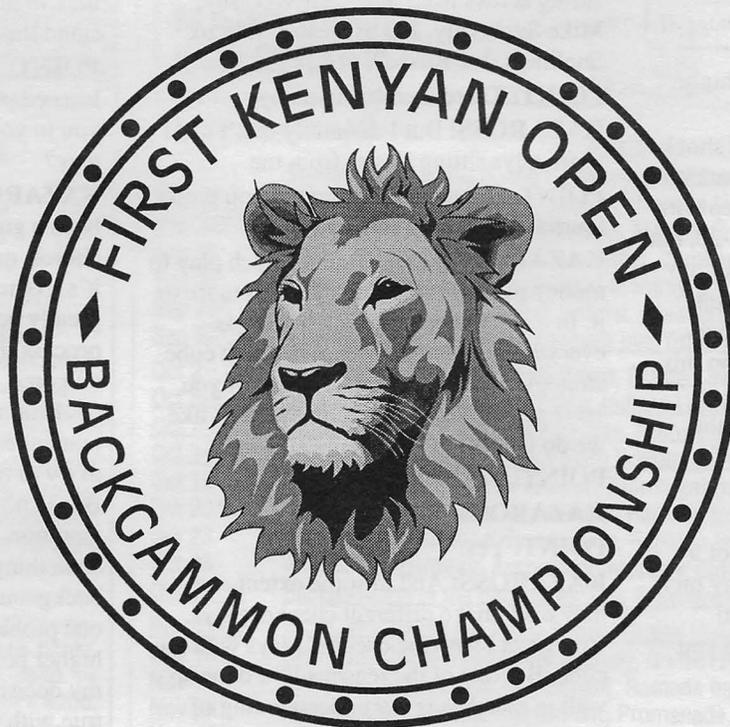
POINT: What would you like to see for the future of tournament backgammon?

KAZAROSS: I would like to see chess clocks in the Open division at all times. Slow play is awful. [Pauses] I will mention his name. Steve Sax took 45 minutes to make a doubling cube decision in the finals against Hal Heinrich at the recent Las Vegas Open [See board diagram, page 1—Ed.]. I agree there was a lot to think about, but I could have probably crunched all the numbers in five minutes. Backgammon is not chess.

I remember at a previous World Cup, I saw a player steal a lucky game from his opponent and then take a 20 minute break to let his opponent think about it. This is bullshit. This is nonsense. We need a chess clock in backgammon, maybe even to monitor breaks. Slow play has really screwed up backgammon tournaments.

I would also like to see many more Swiss tournaments. Forget single and double elimination. In a Swiss tournament, the better player will almost always place.

The World Cup, with these long 3-out-of-5 matches, is grueling. It would be a much better test of ability if everybody played six 7-point matches a day for five days. You're playing 30 matches with a totally random draw. You don't play anybody twice. And when you've lost so many matches that you can't possibly qualify for the final-4, you're out. That's a real tournament. That's a real tournament. Δ



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