

NIGI NIGI NU NOO'S and THE GREAT DOUBLE-5S CONTEST

by Jake Jacobs



It's a bad sign when they weigh your luggage, then tell you it will follow on a later flight. It's a worse sign when they weigh you, before assigning your seat. I think they wanted to put *me* on a later flight. Perhaps in a year or two, after they had upgraded their equipment. But Sonia and I had our tickets, so they let us board. The last bad sign was when, after demonstrating how seat belts should be buckled, our flight attendant got off the plane.

I kept Sonia's spirits up during the flight by pointing out that, small as the plane was, surely if it exploded the blast would be commensurately small. Then I pointed out that if we landed in water it wasn't all that far a swim to the nearest island (though if we hit a mountain, all bets were off). Finally, I pointed out that her hitting me after each reassurance was making the plane tip.

We landed at Caticlan airport. My brother claims that the airport in Minsk has cattle grazing along the runway. There is a fence around the Caticlan airport—around most of it, anyway—so the children and the

chickens are kept safe, dozens of feet from the runway.

An hour and a half later, our bags joined us, including the troublemaker, a large, flowered monstrosity of mine that is guaranteed to be the largest size accepted by airlines. (I guess Asian Spirit is an airline, though I had never heard of it. It does have a monopoly on the Caticlan route, since the Caticlan airport is too small to handle larger planes.)

It was not simply a matter of hopping into a limo to get from Caticlan to our resort. Instead, Sonia, JB (our guide), a driver, and myself, all boarded a motorcycle, along with all our bags, including the troublemaker, and set off. The mountain we had to climb was quite small, a hill really, and unpaved for better traction. It was also fuel efficient, as the driver demonstrated by turning off his bike, and saving gas on the way down the far side. We coasted like this all the way to the jetty.

The tide, it seemed, was just right, so the gangplank was thrown down not so very far from the beach. We hardly had to wade at all to reach it. After a short sea voyage to the island of Boracay, it was just another trike ride, and a few hundred yards of overland portage, and there we were. I have schlepped my backgammon board to Seoul, carted it to Kathmandu, and played on it pool side in Pattaya, but this was the farthest it has been.

And so we found ourselves at Nigi Nigi Nu Noo's. I have no idea what the name means, but if you are ever in that neighborhood, drop by for a drink. There, you may sit seaside, sipping rum drinks or eating their daily barbecue, while day turns to twilight, and twilight to tropical night. Best of all, your bar receipts are redeemable in back. Yes my friends, Nigi Nigi Nu Noo's has Internet access.

I did some fishing while there. I brought my board to Nigi's, and sat at the bar, playing with Sonia. A few fish wandered by, and glanced at the board, but none took the bait. Sonia, meanwhile, much preferred learning Pusoy Dos (referred to in *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Four-Point!* as "Cho Dai D"). There may be irony in my teaching Sonia one of the

most popular gambling games of the Philippines, but until she met me, she led a sheltered life.

The upshot was that, while I dragged the board all the way there, I was unable to find a single decent position to share with you, the reader. The hunt would have to continue elsewhere.

My next stop was in Itaewon (Seoul, Korea), where I found the waitresses in a small bar along Fire Station Road, next to the King Club, playing backgammon. In all my years sojourning in Korea, saving only my ex-girlfriend A Rha, I had never seen a Korea play backgammon, so this was a hopeful sign. I learned that the board belonged to an English customer, who had taught them to play. This had led the staff to believe that *only* the English knew how to play backgammon, equivalent to them

[Continued on page 6]

Grand Prix de Suisse

— 1999 —

Lugano—October 26—31

THE JOY OF COLA BACKGAMMON



Here's an ad (circa late 1950s) espousing the sociability of serving Pepsi-Cola over a game of backgammon.

Pepsi is fine unless it's our shake and our opponent's blot is seven away. Then we would definitely prefer a "7-up." Δ

CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

EDITOR & PUBLISHER

Bill Davis

3940 W. Bryn Mawr Avenue 504
Chicago, IL 60659-3155

Tel: 773/583-6464 ♦ Fax: 773/583-3264

E-mail: bg@chicagopoint.com

www.chicagopoint.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Carol Joy Cole (MI)	Laila Leonhardt (IL)
Jake Jacobs (IL)	Antonio Ortega (C.R.)
Duane Jensen (MN)	Walter Trice (MA)
Danny Kleinman (CA)	Kit Woolsey (CA)

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LETTERS

c/o CHICAGO POINT
3940 W. Bryn Mawr Ave. 504
Chicago, IL 60659-3155

E-mail: letters@chicagopoint.com

LOOKING GOOD

Regarding the Tournament of the Americas, 8-12 December in Cancun, the picture of the Westin Hotel is intriguing. I would probably get down there and not want to play backgammon!—*Randy Armstrong, Springfield, IL*

And at \$75/night, it's an incredible deal. But hurry. To get this rate, you must make your reservations BY 30 OCTOBER. [If you want to see the Westin photos that impressed Randy, go to: www.cr-bg.com/taenghotel.html]—Ed.

ANTI-CHAUVINIST LETTER OF THE MONTH

What is this? I went to your CHICAGO POINT website [www.chicagopoint.com] to look for some good online competition and found an almost-naked fake blond! Am I at

[Continued on page 3]

coming attractions

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

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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

E-mail: cjc@tir.com

* Denotes new or revised listing

NATIONAL

American Backgammon Tour events underlined.

Oct 15-17	1999 Florida State Championships, Ramada Inn, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	954/938-4304
Oct 17	Backgammon by the Bay, Marines Memorial Club, San Francisco, CA	831/688-9722
Oct 21	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Days Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
Oct 22-24	<u>Northeast Regional Tournament, Comfort Inn, Albany, NY</u>	603/863-4711
Oct 24	All the King's Men Tourney, Universal Mall, Warren, MI	810/558-4790
Oct 27-31	1999 Las Vegas Open, Harrah's Casino & Hotel, Las Vegas, NV	702/893-6025
Oct 30	Clarine's Monthly Tournament, A.R. Private Club, Los Angeles, CA	213/822-9745
Oct 31	Ace Point Sunday Tournament, Ace Point Club, New York, NY	212/753-0842
Nov 1	Lainer's November/December Tournament, via computer	fibs@lainer.com
Nov 1	Official GamesGrid Monthly Tournament, via computer	tournaments@cyberarts.com
Nov 7*	Backgammon by the Bay, The Whole Shabang, Alameda, CA	831/688-9722
Nov 7	Northern Ohio Club Monthly, Belden Commons Restaurant, Canton, OH	330/966-2811
Nov 9*	Chicago Bar Point Club Fall Trophy Tourney, Golden Flame, Chicago IL	773/583-6464
Nov 12-14	<u>Illinois State Championships, Hilton Hotel, Springfield, IL</u>	217/528-0117
Nov 14	21st Flint Club Championships, Holiday Inn Holidome, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
Nov 14	New England Club Monthly, Holiday Inn, Somerville, MA	781/938-7852
Nov 18	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Days Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
Nov 21*	Austin Bimonthly Tournament, Bombay Bicycle Club, Austin, TX	512/261-8518
Nov 21	Backgammon by the Bay, Marines Memorial Club, San Francisco, CA	831/688-9722
Nov 26-28	<u>5th Thanksgiving Weekend, Belden Village Holiday Inn, Canton, OH</u>	330/966-2811
Nov 27	Clarine's Monthly Tournament, A.R. Private Club, Los Angeles, CA	213/822-9745
Nov 28	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Anyway's Grill, Oakbrook Terrace, IL	773/583-6464
Nov 28	Ace Point Sunday Tournament, Ace Point Club, New York, NY	212/753-0842
Nov 28	All the King's Men Tourney, Universal Mall, Warren, MI	810/558-4790
Dec 1*	Official GamesGrid Monthly Tournament, via computer	tournaments@cyberarts.com
Dec 3-5	<u>44th Gammon Associates Invitational, Los Angeles, CA</u>	818/901-0464
Dec 5*	Backgammon by the Bay, The Whole Shabang, Alameda, CA	831/688-9722
Dec 11*	Springfield Series #3, Ride The Nine, Bloomington, IL	217/483-4028
Dec 12*	New England Club Monthly, Holiday Inn, Somerville, MA	781/938-7852
Dec 16*	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Days Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
Dec 19*	All the King's Men Tourney, Universal Mall, Warren, MI	810/558-4790
Jan 6*	Flint Club Awards Tournament/Party, Days Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
Feb 2-6*	Pro-Am Doubles & Amateur Jackpot, Rio Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, NV	702/893-6025
Feb 18-20*	<u>22nd Pittsburgh Champs/ABT Awards, Greentree Radisson, Pittsburgh, PA</u>	412/823-7500
Mar 17-19*	<u>2000 Midwest Backgammon Championships, Radisson Hotel, Lisle, IL</u>	773/583-6464
May 26-29*	<u>21st Chicago Open, Wyndham NW Chicago Hotel, Itasca, IL</u>	847/674-0120
Jun 30-Jul 3*	<u>Michigan Summer Championships, Novi Hilton, Novi, MI</u>	810/232-9731
Dec 3-10*	Backgammon on Board V Cruise, New Orleans-Montego Bay-Cozumel	773/583-6464

OUTSIDE USA

Oct 12-17	3rd Moscow Open, Cosmos Hotel & Casino, Moscow, Russia	7095-1209005
Oct 15-17	Swiss Open, Jackpot Spielcasino, Bern, Switzerland	4179-4015811
Oct 16-17	Fyns Mesterskaberne, Fyns BG Union, Fyns, Denmark	4540-535547
Oct 26-31	Grand Prix de Suisse 1999, Hotel Royal Splendid, Lugano, Switzerland	4179-3374425
Oct 30-31	7th Irish Open, Wynns Hotel, Dublin, Ireland	3531-6689332
Nov 3-7	Brazilian Open, Clube de Regatas do Flamengo, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	5521-2676033
Nov 5-7	19th Swedish Open, Scandic Hotel, Stockholm, Sweden	468-6523033
Nov 10-14*	3rd Championship de France (residents only), Aviation Club, Paris, France	33142-518103
Nov 14	Toronto Sunday Monthly, Doghouse Riley's Toronto, ON, Canada	416/722-9709
Nov 19-21	5th Kaiserbrunnen Cup, Hotel am Kaiserbrunnen, Brakel, Germany	49521-64314
Nov 20-21*	Finnish Open, Night Club Bubbles, Helsinki, Finland	35850-68061
Nov 20-21	Townharbour Trophy, Hilton National, Coventry, England	441522-888676
Dec 8-12	6th Tournament of the Americas, Westin Regina Cancun, Mexico	USA: 773/583-6464
Dec 10-12	8th Open von Thun, Hotel Seepark, Thun, Switzerland	4179-6569700
Dec 11-12	United Kingdom Championship Finals, Hilton National, Coventry, England	441522-888676
Dec 12	Toronto Sunday Monthly, Doghouse Riley's Toronto, ON, Canada	416/722-9709
Jan 5-9*	Thai Open Championships 2000, Style Restaurant, Pattaya, Thailand	6638-303136
Jan 7-16	World Cup Challenge VI & Giant Jackpot, Hyatt Regency Istanbul, Turkey	9723-6728918
Jan 27-30*	2nd Principe Leopoldo Cup, Principe Leopoldo Hotel, Lugano, Switzerland	4179-3374425
Feb 15-20	Paris Master & Open Tournament, Hotel de Castiglione, Paris, France	33060-7551516
Feb 25-27*	4th Warsteiner Cup, Hotel am Kaiserbrunnen, Brakel, Germany	49521-64314
Mar 16-19*	Le Trophée des Alpes Championship & Pro-Am, Gstaad, Switzerland	4179-3374425
Mar 23-26*	Le Trophée des Alpes Championship, Badrutt's Palace, St. Moritz, Switzerland	4179-3374425
Jul 10-16*	World Championship, Monte Carlo Grand Hotel, Monte Carlo, Monaco	USA: 954/527-4033

SHADES OF GRAY

A RULES AND RULINGS COLUMN

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NEW RULE CHANGES PROPOSED

Dear Danny: Hoosier Club director Butch Meese has spent well over a year in an organized effort to revise the US Tournament Rules and Procedures (March 1990). A 9-person panel was formed and asked to vote on rules changes submitted by other directors and players. Many of these suggested changes were gathered off "rec.games.backgammon" on the Internet.

Most of the 16 modifications (approved as a result of receiving at least 6-out-of-9 YES votes) are minor; however two rule changes, if enacted, are certain to be controversial among the players. The first change (voted YES by the panel, 6-to-3) is "Legal Moves." With this rule, anyone, including staffers, players, and kibitzers, will be required to inform both players when an illegal move is made. The player who moved illegally must then move legally (without penalty). So if your opponent moved illegally and picks up his dice, you would no longer have the option to let it stand or require him to play legally. You must instruct him to play it legally.

The second rule change eliminates a player's right to appeal a director's ruling (voted YES by the panel, 7-to-2). In the past, if a player was unhappy with any ruling, he was permitted to appeal the decision to a committee of three knowledgeable and disinterested backgammon players (usually designated by the tournament prior to commencement of play). If this rule change is ratified, the director's ruling will always be final.

Can you address the upside and downside of these two rulings with regard to tournament play.—Concerned

DEAR CONCERNED: I declined Butch Meese's invitation to serve on his panel because (except for one 1987 tournament I co-directed with him) I had not directed backgammon since 1978 at the Cavendish West Club. Valuing a voice more than a vote, however, I sent comments about proposed rule changes to Butch. Presumably the panel read my comments and rejected my opinions about the rule changes that concern you.

Those changes are really three: "Legal Moves"; The Role of Kibitzers (which "Legal Moves," as interpreted, affects);

and Appeals. I shall discuss them separately and in reverse order. I beg any panel members who may read this to forgive me my repetitions.

APPEALS

The right to appeal is essential to the quest for fairness and justice in all domains of life. Else the director in his game room or the judge in his courtroom may become an incompetent or corrupt autocrat, to the detriment not only of the persons damaged by his rulings, but the sport or society itself.

Even a fair and knowledgeable director may err, and players should have timely redress when he does. However, practical difficulties in administering appeals may outweigh the benefits. In the legal system, many suffer injustices because the time, expense and burden of proof required of the victims render the cost of appealing prohibitive. High costs deter appeals with merit or without, except for appellants with vast resources or whose costs will be borne by others.

Appeals in backgammon are very different from appeals in bridge. In most bridge tournaments, the cost of appealing a ruling is minimal relative to the benefit sought, and time is not of the essence. The unit of luck is the deal, and in most cases, each deal may be treated independently from the next. Scores can be adjusted and matchpoints retallied long after a session ends.

"The right to appeal is essential to the quest for fairness and justice in all domains of life."

In backgammon tournaments, except in final matches, time is of the essence. The unit of luck is the roll, and each play or cube action depends on the previous. A retroactive ruling renders subsequent rolls, plays and cube actions, even entire games, utterly meaningless. Like a patient whose HMO denies him an urgent medical treatment, a backgammon player who feels injured by a ruling must have his appeal decided before anything else can be done. Delay of more than a few minutes may cause irreparable harm, in this case not to the appellant, but to an entire bracket of the tournament awaiting the outcome of his match.

I sympathize with backgammon directors who would like their rulings to be final. I realize that most seek not autocratic power, but protection of players against undue delay. The best preventive of delay, however, is not to bar appeals, but to convene committees promptly. Because some potential committee members may

have biases or conflicts of interest (especially where hedging, Calcuttas and book-making are permitted), a three-member committee should be drawn from a larger pool of six or seven.

THE ROLE OF KIBITZERS

Kibitzers differ from umpires of a baseball game in that they are not observers trained to be accurate, not generally impartial, and not obligated to be alert at all times. Unlike jurors, they are not screened for bias or incompetence (some critics of our legal system would say *competence*) prior to acceptance. Their only obligation is negative: don't disturb the players and don't affect the game. This does not conflict with a director's right to solicit a kibitzer's testimony about observed events, nor with a kibitzer's right to warn a director about any cheating he suspects. The director, or course, will take the kibitzer's credibility into account.

"If the new rule is adopted, then each player, to protect himself, should bar any kibitzer who may be rooting for an opponent."

Kibitzers may be as partisan as Crew members in non-consulting chouettes. Under the "Legal Moves" some chouettes adapted at the Cavendish West in the 1980s, Crew members would draw attention to illegal moves *selectively*. In some cases, they would cry "Illegal!" after the Captain moved legally but before he lifted his dice; then the Captain (realizing they had meant to cry "Immoral!") would find the play his partners preferred. Partisan kibitzers at tournaments might try the same ploy (but see "Legal Moves" in *Meanwhile, Back at the Chouette* for a partial remedy).

To assign any official role to kibitzers, except as appointed agents of the director, is repugnant. To require kibitzers to watch for illegal moves without pay violates labor laws. To permit kibitzers to draw attention to allegedly illegal moves invites them to aid players with whom they are involved financially or emotionally. If the new rule is adopted, then each player, to protect himself, should bar any kibitzer who may be rooting for an opponent. That means nearly every kibitzer should be barred by one player or the other. I'm too fond of kibitzers to want that.

"LEGAL MOVES"

The rules already require players to

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SHADES...

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move legally. The only issue is the remedy for infractions. Any appropriate remedy must not only redress harm done to opponents, but deter deliberate illegal plays. moreover, since a player's intentions cannot always be discovered, the rules must not distinguish between deliberate and inadvertent infractions.

Any remedy must also be timely. In contract bridge, an established revoke can be redressed after the deal by transferring tricks to the non-offending side, for the unit of luck is the deal. In backgammon, where the unit of luck is the dice roll, prompt remedy is required.

When does the chance to correct an illegal move expire? It must expire as soon as the opponent rolls or turns the cube. Else the following (and similar) may occur. A player moves illegally by advancing a blot one pip too far, 7 away from the opponent's hitter instead of 8 away. The

opponent rolls 6-1. "Oops, I moved illegally—I'll put my checker back where it belongs."

Condoning an illegal move *must* be an option because an opponent who doesn't notice the illegality *may act promptly*. The situation is not unlike that in contract bridge, where if a player makes an "insufficient bid" or "call out of turn," the opponent next to act may call and is thereby deemed to condone the infraction.

"I do not see how 'Legal Moves'
can be enforced fairly."

Because condoning must be an option, a player's right to correct his own illegal move must expire as soon as his opponent can legally roll or turn the cube—which means as soon as he lifts his own dice. To frame the rules otherwise penalizes an opponent who by shaking the dice thoroughly or pausing to consider turning the cube, forfeits the right to condone.

I do not see how "Legal Moves" can be

enforced fairly. Suppose we are playing, and I move illegally. You (perhaps because you have not noticed) roll or double. Now I notice (or claim just to have noticed) that my last move was illegal. Can I call the director and demand that *you* be penalized for not noticing (or not requiring me to correct) *my illegal move*? Can I correct my illegal move, perhaps by moving a blot where your roll won't hit?

It's absurd to give me all options at all. That simply encourages me to make *deliberate illegal moves to my own advantage* (nobody may be able to discern my intent), for I risk nothing at all. If anything, illegal moves should risk *penalty*, just as insufficient bids and calls out of turn, when *not* condoned, incur penalties in bridge.—
Yours, Danny Δ

Have you ever been involved in a questionable ruling? Get Danny Kleinman's opinion. Write to: Shades of Gray; c/o CHICAGO POINT; 3940 W. Bryn Mawr Ave. 504; Chicago, IL 60659-3155 or e-mail: bg@chicagopoint.com.

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 3]

in a crowded rush-hour car.—Walt Swan (swanee@luckynumber.com), via Internet

READY TO TRY 'LIVE' BACKGAMMON

I play a lot of backgammon and am interested in joining a tournament. I consider myself an excellent player. I've been part of case ladders and have played over 2500 matches there but have tired of playing only online. Its also very political with a lot of arguing and fighting.

Any information you can provide me with would be very appreciated of where I could enter tournaments live or on the net or clubs to belong to.—Steve Bucel (sbucel@cybersol.com), via Internet

Live backgammon is the way to go, Steve. You don't have to worry about so much politics, people taking advantage of ratings loopholes, or whether someone is using a JellyFish computer against you.

You can get all the tourney listings in Carol Joy Cole's "Mark Your Calendar" in CHICAGO POINT or online at <http://www.chicagopoint.com/calendar.html> —Ed.

CUBE CHALLENGE TO OUR READERS

I am a backgammon enthusiast and have recently found myself amid a huge controversy amongst my backgammon playing friends. Perhaps a pro could help me.

I would like to know how and when the

doubling cube was introduced into the game. Backgammon is a centuries-old game and I suspect the cube has not always been a part of it. Please, please, please help me.—John Allen, Los Angeles, CA, via Internet

You ask a difficult question, John. Backgammon doubling was probably incorporated into the game during the mid-1920s and the doubling cube was born in the late 1920s, but these are only guesses.

The first book we've seen to describe "doubling" is Modern Backgammon by Grosvenor Nicholas (1928). In Chapter 3, entitled "The Modern Game," Nicholas gives some information as to the possible doubling origin:

"It is said that the doubling, which has so greatly increased the possibilities of the game, as well as its popularity, was first originated on the continent of Europe in connection with the game of golf."

The first book that actually mentions the "doubling cube" by name is How To Play The New Backgammon by Lelia Hattersley (1930). On page 39, she writes:

"Many players, especially Chouette, prefer to keep track of their doubles and the current stake with a device known as a doubling cube."

If any of our readers can beat these two written references (for "doubling" and the "doubling cube"), send proof to CHICAGO POINT and we'll extend your subscription by one year.—Ed Δ

On for 2000

MMON



ILLINOIS ACTION



Bill Davis
773/583-6464
Peter Kalba
773/252-7755

Tuesday, 6:00 P.M. at Golden Flame, 6417 W. Higgins Rd., Chicago; 773/792-0424.

Sunday Bimonthly, 12:00 NOON at Anyway's Chicago Grill & Bar, 5 E. Roosevelt Rd., Oakbrook Terrace; 630/932-9323.

PUB CLUB: Tourn. Mon., 7:00 P.M. at Danny's Grill and Bar, 345 W. North Ave., Villa Park. Joe Wollick (847/755-0887).

GAMES PEOPLE PLAY: Tourn. Monday, 7:00 P.M. at The Clique, 2347 S. Michigan, Chicago. Reginald Porter (773/471-5066).

BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL BG CLUB: Tournaments Monday, 6:30 P.M. at Ride The Nine, 503 N. Prospect, Bloomington. Gary Daniels (309/452-3034)

SANGAMON VALLEY BG ASSN: Tournaments Wednesday, 6:30 P.M. at Brewhaus, 617 E. Washington, Springfield. Ben Zemaitis (217/483-4028).

WINNETKA BG CLUB: Tournaments Wednesday, 7:00 P.M. at 620 Lincoln, Winnetka. Trudie Chibnik (847/446-0537).

PEORIA BACKGAMMON CLUB: Tourn. Thurs., 6:30 P.M. at Peoria Pizza Works, 3921 Prospect, Peoria. Ed Zell (309/674-0557).

NIGI NIGI...

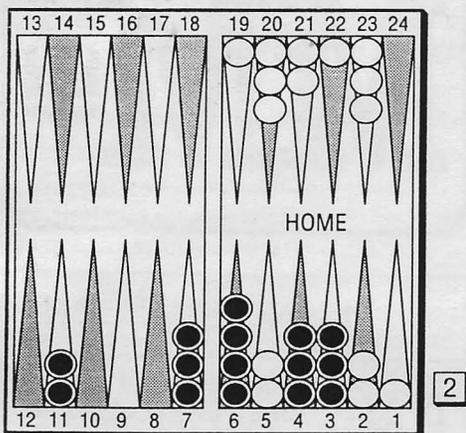
[Continued from page 1]

believing that only the English knew how to cook, poor dears.

It was only when I visited the third remote and primitive spot of the month—Lacon, Illinois—that I found a position worth describing. Before getting to the position, I should explain what I was doing in Lacon.

Lacon is a suburb of Peoria, and each year, the Peoria Backgammon Club hosts a "Summer Sizzler" tournament. After unwinding the day before at a pool party hosted by Peoria director Ed Zell. I should have been well-rested for the tournament. Unfortunately, one of the Chicago players had "gone missing." A search party bravely volunteered to track him down in the most likely spot for him to have vanished, a gentleman's club named Big Al's. (Known to CHICAGO POINT readers from my previous article "Will It Play In Peoria?") This search party was not only brave but modest, as they begged me not to publicize their heroic deeds. Suffice it to say they peeked into some unlikely places in their search.

Position 1. 9 point match. Black leads White, 6 to 2. **BLACK TO PLAY 3-3.**



Black was Bob Zavoral, board maker *extraordinaire*. In the above position, he was playing downstate star Ed Bauder in the semifinals. I had some interest in how he played his 3-3, as I owned him in the auction, and, as I would be playing the winner in the finals.

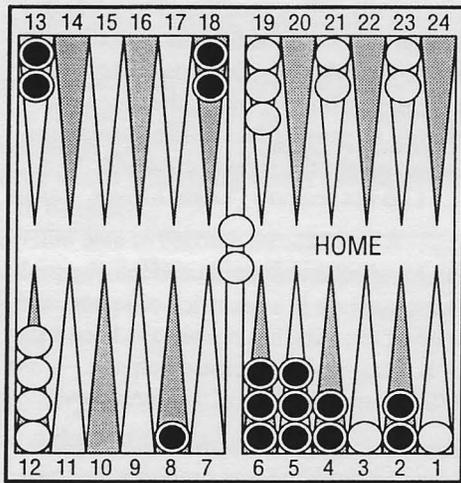
Bob played 7/1*, 4/1, 11/8. I told him after the match that I preferred 11/8 (2), 7/1*. A rollout found that my play was better at dmp, but Bob's won more gammons, and even at the score they were enough to make his play preferable. However, the best play was the super-tight 7/1*, 4/1, 6/3.

Bob's play was certainly good enough. He gammoned Ed to reach the finals.

There, he led 9-6 (to 11) before two lucky gammons let me come from behind to snatch the trophy.

Last, but by no means least remote, of my stops, was Indy, for Butch and Mary Ann's Indiana Open. It was there that I was drafted to judge the Double-Five's Contest. It is often claimed that 5-5 is everyone's least favorite shake (though I can forgive it its sins, as it once won the Consolation of the Thai Open for me—see "Fit To Be Thaid" from the March 1997 CHICAGO POINT). The conditions of contest were simple: who could make the most stupefyingly poor use of 5-5?

Position 2. 5 point match. Black leads White 4-0 (Crawford), **BLACK TO PLAY 5-5.**



Our first contestant will remain anonymous. I was White, and this was the semifinal of the "See You In September" event. If you don't know this event, you'll just have to come to Indy next year and find out what it is. I had given up all hope, when my opponent played this roll by moving 18/8(2)! (I lost the match, anyway.)

My previous entrant is protected by two factors: he is an intermediate, and I'm sure he simply overlooked the correct play: 13/3*, 8/3, 6/1*.

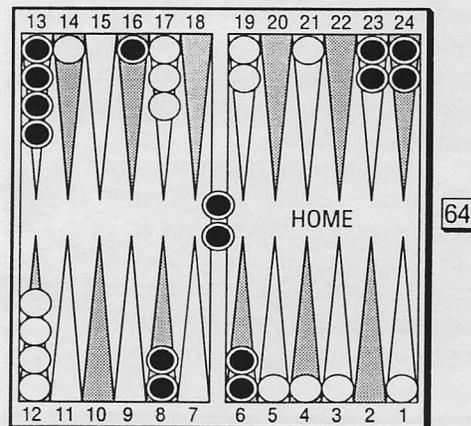
My next candidate will have to stand in

the spotlight because:

- (a) He is a strong player,
- (b) He saw the other choices and made his play anyway, and,
- (c) He is quite proud of it!

For all of these reasons, and one more, because he was able to actually *see* this play without someone posing it as a problem, our winner is Georgia star Jim Hickey.

Position 3. 13 point match. Black and White are tied at 8-8. **BLACK TO PLAY 5-5.**



Jim was opposing Paul Franks in the second round of the Master's, when he found himself rolling 5-5 here. I was kibitzing because I had lost to Jim the previous round, and because I was trying to read, and wanted a match that wouldn't draw spectators. After Jim's play, and Paul's shrieks of amazement, there were plenty of spectators, albeit bewildered ones, to watch the remainder of this game.

Jim chose to play, if you haven't guessed, Bar/20(2), 8/3*, 6/1*. As you may imagine, the rest of the game yielded more unusual positions than the entire rest of the tournament. As a result of this play, both United and American Airlines have added extra daily flights to Atlanta to handle the influx of chouetters, and Jim has been declared a state landmark by the Georgia Board of Tourism. Δ

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AMALGAMATION

If you plan on attending the Tournament of the Americas in Cancún, Mexico 8-12 December, make your Westin Hotel accommodations now. Daily rates increase from \$75 to \$95 (single or double occ.) after 30 October... Recently visiting the Chicago Bar Point Club: **Peer Seipelt** (Denmark)... The Charlotte Backgammon Club now meets at O'Charley's Monday's at 6:30 p.m. in Charlotte, NC. Contact **Jeb Horton** for more details (704/814-0850 or jeb@carolina.rr.com... **Drew Giovanis** tells us that the Suncoast Backgammon Association is firing up their action at the New York, New York Lounge in Clearwater, FL every Monday at 7:30 p.m. Call Drew at 813/726-1398 for the particulars... **Paul & Mary Franks** (IL) are just back from their 8-day Mediterranean cruise and they loved it. In London, they ran into our British BG friend **Graham Sievers** who showed them around... California to Michigan: **Julius High**... Congratulations to Wisconsinites **John Meyers** and **Kimberly Kohler** who were married on 21 August... We taped former Chicago BG player **Kathy Posner** on a segment of NBC's 8 Sept. "Dateline." Kathy, a public relations director, was spotlighted because of the frantic pace of her life. (You think *you're* busy! You won't believe this.) Stop by the Bar Point Club some Tuesday night to borrow the tape... As we go to press, don't expect to see **Bill Bartholomay** at the Bar Point Club for at least the next two Tuesday nights. Bill is Chairman of the Board of the Atlanta Braves who are facing the New York Mets in the National League Championships. In addition, Bill is Vice-Chairman of CNN (Turner Broadcast System) and Chairman of the Chicago Park District Board of Commissioners, so it's amazing he finds any time to play backgammon!... The 1930s book *Winning Backgammon* by **Grosvenor Nicholas** and **C. Wheaton Vaughan**, is dedicated to "*The Sphinx: But you can read the Hieroglyphs on the great sandstone obelisks, and you have talked with Basilisks and you have looked on Hippogriffs.*" Like wow, man!... At the Bar Point Club last month, **Tim Carroll** (IL) put together a nice 8-game winning streak. At his current level of backgammon play, newcomer **Joe Ausmann** (IL) describes a good streak as, "... not getting caught running naked through the park." Δ

INTERNET BG WEBSITES TURN TO 'GIGAPOLL' FOR ANSWERS

Now you can vote on a backgammon question of the month and see your vote tallied immediately. Art Grater (Backgammon Portal webmaster), through the GigaPoll people has secured space for a monthly backgammon question. Currently, you can vote at the Backgammon Portal, Chicago Point Online, Webby's Backgammon Quiz and Flint Area BackgammonNews sites—and you can vote only once.

This month's question was "How often do you actively do something backgammon-

related?" Thus far the vote is:

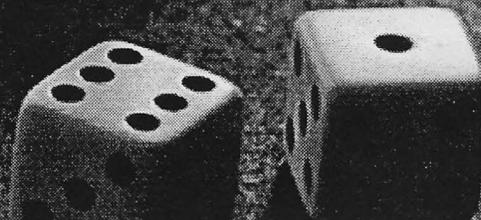
- A few times per month—5
- A few times per week—6
- Many times per week—13
- Once or twice a day—20
- Many times a day—14
- All day long—3.

If you have a question you would like to see put to the Internet backgammon community, you can e-mail us at bg@chicagopoint.com. And don't forget to vote!

If you have a backgammon website and want to be included in GigaPoll voting, e-mail Art Grater at: art@doggy.com. Δ

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MAKE THE BAFFLE BOX A TOURNAMENT OPTION

by Laila Leonhardt

Over the centuries, backgammon has mostly been played for recreation with players using their hand to roll the dice. Only recently, has the backgammon community taken steps to reduce the chance of foul play in an effort to make skill and *Lady Luck* the major factors in deciding a winner.

To eliminate the chance for control, very small dice were used (especially in the Middle East). To protect against magnets, some players placed compasses by their scorecards. But the two greatest randomizing improvements of them all were precision dice and trip-lipped cups.

Because cheating out of one's hand with fairly large dice is quite easy, cups were the first form of anti-cheating protection. But it didn't take long for the sharpies to find a way to beat them. First off, the dice could be slid out of the cup. By placing the dice carefully and shaking them weakly in a straight up and down movement, a practiced roller could gain a small edge at rolling the number of his choice.

So trip-lips were built inside the cups. Now when the dice roll out, they stumble over the lip further randomizing the numbers.

Before balanced, precision dice became accepted, normal square-cornered dice with indented holes were used. These dice (the kind you find in a Yahtzee™ game) are heavier on the side with one hole than the side which has 6 holes. Therefore, if a square-cornered die is rolled along its x-axis towards infinity, the die would land on the heavy side (ace) showing a 6-up. Conversely, aces are least likely to be rolled.

It took until the 1970s for beveled-corner precision dice to become the standard at tournaments. They were integrated into the rules during the 1980s. Either player may request the use of precision dice in place of non-precision ones.

So now we should be safe?

◆
“...boycotting tournaments where directors don't make this rule change now appears to be a definite possibility.”
 ◆

Well, it is known that there are still wizards out there who have spent many hours mastering dice control. “I can notice their trickery,” you might think.

Have you ever seen a magic show? Have you seen magicians make tigers, elephants or even airplanes disappear? Believe me, it doesn't take David Copperfield or Sigfried and Roy to successfully alter a dice roll.

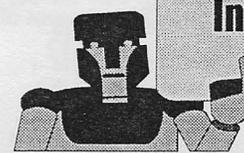
How many of us have played against an opponent who doesn't properly shake his dice? True, it probably has little or no influence on the rolls or the outcome of the match—but it might. And the energy wasted worrying about it is very destructive to one's concentration. Few of us have the nerve to say: “Please shake your dice.” (We don't want to imply anything, do we?) So what can be done?

This summer at the City of Venice tournament, a situation occurred causing a player to request a baffle box (a dice-mixing device placed at the side of the board) for the rest of the match. Since the current rules do not allow for this, the player's request was denied. In protest, he forfeited his match and withdrew from the tournament.

As a result of this incident, more than 100 players in Venice and at the Monte Carlo World Championship signed a petition in support of making the baffle box a tournament option on the same level as the precision dice and lipped cups. (A copy of this petition can be requested from Mario Sequera of Portugal.)

Permitting the use of baffle boxes is a rule change that the tournament directors across the globe will have to take, just as they have done with lipped cups and precision dice. The emotions ran high in Europe this summer on this subject and pressure from the tournament players is bound to increase. I know this might sound horribly political, but boycotting tournaments where directors don't make this rule change now appears to be a definite possibility.

I have used the baffle box numerous times in the last decade and have never found it annoying or inconvenient. Although I doubt that I would request the use of one at a tournament, I personally would appreciate having this option. Let me know what you think—*Laila (www.bg-info.com) Δ*



The 'Bots' Will End Internet Play

by Phil Simborg

I love to play for money on line, but I have stopped playing Nack, Dave Wells, Michael M., Jake, Neil, Howard, Dorn, Morten, and a few others who have proven to be so much luckier than I.

I am at the point where, no matter who I play on line, both for money or in tournament matches, I wonder if I am truly playing against a person or against Snowie™ and/or JellyFish™. Since people and computers have gotten so fast, it is now possible, with a very minimal delay, to put every tough decision to the “bots.”

The best suggestion I have heard is “Don't play someone for money that you don't trust.” Okay, but what about on-line tournaments? Or just a rated match? And if I only play people for money on line that I really trust, for the most part, I will be limited to playing those very lucky players listed above (and they're *really* lucky when they get me into a money game!)

We all know that the computers will soon be even faster and the software even better, so I guess what I'm saying is that very soon, I believe that virtually every match played on line will be suspect, and that will cause me to lose interest not only in online tournament and money play, but even ranking and ladder play. (I don't need to get on line to play Snowie.)

Won't this eventually be the end for servers like NetGammon, GamesGrid, Fibs, etc.? Is there another solution, or am I missing something?—*Phil Simborg*

'GO FIGURE' CONTEST RESULTS

Joe Wollick's contest puzzle from issue 121 challenged you to find the numbers represented by the equation:

$$\text{CUBE} \times \text{ME} = \text{GAMMON}$$

18 readers came up with the two correct solutions:

$$5932 \times 12 = 071184$$

$$6243 \times 13 = 081159$$

Congratulations to the two winners chosen by random draw: **Bob Sahagian** of Teaneck, NJ and **Esko Haapalainen** of Tuusula, Finland. Each winner receives a year's subscription to CHICAGO POINT. Δ

**WINNER'S
CIRCLE**



Aug.-Oct. 1999

•**Backgammon By The Bay** (Alameda, CA; 1 Aug.)... PLAYERS (16): 1-Sam Ahmed, 2-Nick Ballard.

•**Backgammon By The Bay** (Campbell, CA; 14 Aug.)... OPEN (13): 1-Stephen Nelson, 2-Beth Skillman; 1C-Ernest Ho, 2C-Joe Glazier. INTERMEDIATE (13): 1-Claudia Imatt, 2-Sho Sengoku; 1C-Glenn Nunez. BEGINNER (3): 1-Cindy Moss.

•**Madison Invitational** (Madison, WI; Aug.-Sep.)... OPEN: 1-Gary Hines, 2-Mark Tremayne.

•**Grand Prix de Lugano** (Lugano, Switzerland; 18-20 Aug.)... OPEN: 1-Peter Heitmüller (GER), 2-Ronald Reinhardt (GER); 1C-Ninode Bella (ITA). INTERMEDIATE: 1-Bambi de Bruin (SPA/GER), 2-Chiva Tafazzoli (IA); 1C-Jerze Benke (GER).

•**Mitteuropa Tourney/European Championships** (Novia Gorica, Slovenia; 3-5 Sep.)... MASTER FLIGHT (44): 1-Mario Sequeira (POR), 2-Guido Flamigni (ITA), 3/4-Andy Grötsch (GER) / Piergiorgio D'Ancona (ITA); 1C-Michael Higatsberger (AUS), 2C-Mats Andersen (DEN); 1LC-Hans-Heinrich Stahl (GER), 2LC-Gordan Markotic (CRO); *Ladies Prize*: Cathrin Bladh-Risselin (SWE). CHAMPIONSHIP (43): 1-Werner Reisel (AUS), 2-Antonio Serventi (ITA), 3/4-Piero Galo (ITA) / Franco Perinelli (ITA); 1C-Chiva Tafazzoli (IRAN), 2C-Thomas Köb (AUS); 1LC-Michele Muratori (ITA), 2LC-Wim van der Novelen (NETH); *Ladies Prize*: Giovanna Zen (ITA). INTERMEDIATE (31): 1-Kazuko Numazawa (JPN), 2-Alberto da Pra (ITA), 3/4-Carlo Faccio (ITA) / Fabio Gergolet (ITA); 1C-Giacomo Caterini (ITA), 2C-Andrea Marfori (ITA); 1LC-Peter Sifrer (SLO), 2LC-Paolo Fragiacomio (ITA); *Ladies Prize*: Kazuko Numazawa (JPN). SUPER-JACKPOT (16): 1-Paul Lamford (UK), 2-Nino DiBella (ITA). WARM-UP (64): 1-DOD DAVIES (UK), 2-DAMIAN PLESEC (SLO). ONE-POINT TOURNEY WINNERS: Leonid Riskin (UKR) & Mika Laukkanen (FIN). SPERTI TROPHY: 1-Martin de Bruin (SPN/US), 2-Cathrine Bladh-Risselin (SWE). BLACK-JACK TOURNEY: 1-Massimo Goretti, 2-Silvana Chigarelli.

•**Backgammon By The Bay** (Alameda, CA; 5 Sep.)... PLAYERS (14): 1-Jen Wickboldt, 2-Sam Ahmed.

•**Roy Hollands Trophy** (Nottingham, England; 11-12 Sep.)... GOLD (45): 1-Peter Christmas, 2-Graham Brittain, 3-Chris Evans, 4-Dod Davies. SILVER (37): 1-Al Hogg, 2-John Broomfield, 3/4-Uldis Lapikens / David Fall. BRONZE (64 incl. re-entries): 1-Shaun Herd, 2-Chris Baker, 3/4-John Gale / Michael Damaniou. FRIDAY KO (16): 1-David Holman, 2-John Slattery. DOUBLES (14 incl. buybacks): 1/2-Cathrine's Ex / Losing Semifinalists. SUPER-JACKPOT (4): 1-Murray Henderson.

•**NEBC Sunday Monthly** (Somerville, MA; 12 Sep.)... EXPERT (16): 1-Garbis Zerdelian, 2-Ernesto Adrienzen; 1C-Walter Trice, 2C-Herb Gurland. A DIV. (8): 1-Marcus Hermansen, 2-David Menkes; 1C-Rob Papp, 2C-Jim Glover.

•**Backgammon By The Bay** (San Francisco, CA; 19 Sep.)... OPEN (10): 1-Mike Colgan, 2-David Marona; 1C/2C-Nick Ballard / Elliott Winslow. INTERMEDIATE (13): 1-Pat Hurley, 2-Joan Clark; 1C/2C-Sho Sengoku / Danilo Dacosta. BEGINNER (6): 1-Cindy Moss.

•**Ohio State Championships-ABT/Netgammon Festival** (Canton, OH; 24-26 Sep.)... CHAMPIONSHIP (8): 1-Frank Talbot (MI), 2-Carol Joy Cole (MI); 1C-Laila Leonhardt (IL). INTERMEDIATE (8): 1-Jim Slomkoski (MI), 2-Joe Miller (OH); 1C-Len Dangremond (MI). BEGINNER (10): 1-Vince Mounts, 2-Paul Lombardo; 1C-Jennifer Waller (OH). \$50 MASTERS (8): 1-Carol Joy Cole (MI). BLITZ (16): 1-John Brussel (IL), 2-Mark Haley (Canada). HYPERBLITZ (8): 1-Arlene Austin (PA). DOUBLES (8): 1/2-Buster Buchanan & Mike Hendrickson (OH) / Julian Haley (SC) & Laila Leonhardt (IL). RAFFLE DOUBLES (8): 1-Julian Haley (SC) & Jennifer Waller (OH).

•**Towpath Inn Tournament-ABT** (Turin, New York; 24-26 Sep.)... OPEN (11): 1-Wally Swan (NJ), 2-Renée Rosenbloom (NY), 3-Walter Trice (MA). DOUBLES: 1-Walter Trice (MA) & Rich Reasin (NY).

•**2nd Humlebæk Open** (Humlebæk, Denmark; 25-26 Sep.)... MASTER (62): 1-Morten Kaspersen, 2-Ebbe Mølgaard Pedersen, 3/4-Stig Christensen / Klaus Rydeng; 1C-Hallur Sævarsson, 2C-Ebbe Groth. INTERMEDIATE (41): 1-Rolf Nielsen, 2-Flemming Nielsen, 3/4-Thomas Kokholm / Frans Machata; 1C-Morten Kidal, 2C-Thomas Fuglheim. BEGINNER (18): 1-Carsten Andersen, 2-Helle Ditlevsen. ONE POINT BLITZ (121): 1-Thomas Hollænder. JACKPOT WINNERS: Jes Bondo Andersen, Christian Jensen, Leonid Riskin (GER), Henrik Thruue, Thomas Jespersen, Kim Schmidt, Bjarne Riboe, Iars Klammer.

•**Ace Point Monthly** (New York, NY; 26 Sep.)... OPEN (27): 1-Toni Wuersch, 2-Mika Lidov; 1C-Richard Munitz, 2C-Ron Weinstock. INTERMEDIATE (8): 1-Douglas Gitlin, 2-Laurent Colli; 1C/2C-Haley Eber / Robert Regan. NOVICE (3): 1-John Collins.

•**Asian Championships** (Hong Kong; 30 Sep.-3 Oct.)... FAR EASTERN OPEN (31): 1-Harold Sespa (GER/THAI), 2-Gerhard Schulze (GER/THAI); 1C-John Simon, 2C-Patrice Hattu; 1LC-Yutaka-san (JPN). CHAMPIONSHIP (6): 1-Olivia Lee. BLITZ (32): 1/2-David Brown (THAI) / Mochi (JPN). SUPER-JACKPOT (4): 1-Jonathan Barnes. DRAGON-SLAYER (128): 1-Nasu-san (JPN), 2-Robin Swaffield. TEAM (8): 1-Mix & Match (Rae, Modesti, Barnes)... *Our own Jake Jacobs provided a lecture and commentary on the finals.*

•**Sandy Osborne Trophy** (Coventry, England; 2-3 Oct.)... OPEN (62): 1-Dod Davies, 2-Gerry Carolan, 3/4-Ray Kersahw / Hubert L'Epine; 1C-Peter Ozanne, 2C-John Hurst; 1LC-Danny Cohen, 2LC-Peter Christmas. SUICIDE! (64): 1-John Broomfield, 2-Roy Hollands. FRIDAY NIGHT KO (16): 1-John Broomfield. SUPER JACKPOT (8): 1-Al Hogg. DOUBLES (7): 1-Harry On The Boat, 2-Tarts On Tour.

•**Bar Point Sunday** (Oakbrook Terrace, IL; 10 Oct.)... OPEN (8): 1-Tim Mabee, 2-Tim Carroll, 3/4-Ken Tyszko / Carter Mattig; 1C-Peter Kalba, 2C-Bob Zavoral. INTERMEDIATE (5): 1-Ron Zimet, 2-Mark Murray. Δ

“Shesh u Besh”:

The Language of Backgammon

by Sargis Serges

Many people have asked me what “shesh besh” means in relation to backgammon. It’s true I am of Assyrian descent and my ancestors date back to the Land of Ur of the Chaldeans, but I’ve only been playing backgammon here in Chicago since about 1974.

In order to clarify the language of the game, I made a research project out of it. I interviewed people from Turkey, Iran, and Kurdistan; I consulted foreign dictionaries; I downloaded information off the Internet; I even was able to recall some of what I was taught as a boy.

The historical numbers for backgammon are in three languages: Turkish, Kurdish and Farsi (the spoken language of Iran—formerly Persia). Notice that some are the same, a few are similar and many of the others are completely different.

Because more than one language is predominant in the game, there is controversy as to which number designations are “correct.” For this reason, some readers may question the accuracy of the following:

Number	Turkish	Kurdish	Farsi
1	i bir	yek	yek
2	iki	du	do
3	yuch	sis	seh
4	dort	c-ar	chahar
5	besh	penj	panj
6	alti	ses	shesh

What follows are the generally-accepted Middle Eastern styles of calling dice rolls:

Roll	Mid-East Name	Roll	Mid-East Name
6-6	Du shesh	4-4	Dort chahar
6-5	Shesh u besh	4-3	Chahar u seh
6-4	Shesh chahar	4-2	Chahar u du
6-3	Shesh u seh	4-1	Chahar u yek
6-2	Shesh u du		
6-1	Shesh u yek	3-3	Jut seh
		3-2	Seh ba du
5-5	Du besh	3-1	Seh yek
5-4	Besh dort		
5-3	Panj u seh	2-2	Du barah
5-2	Panj u du	2-1	Iki bir
5-1	Panj u yek	1-1	Yup yek

When you’ve learned these dice rolls, you can confidently go up to a Middle Easterner and ask him to play. Just say:

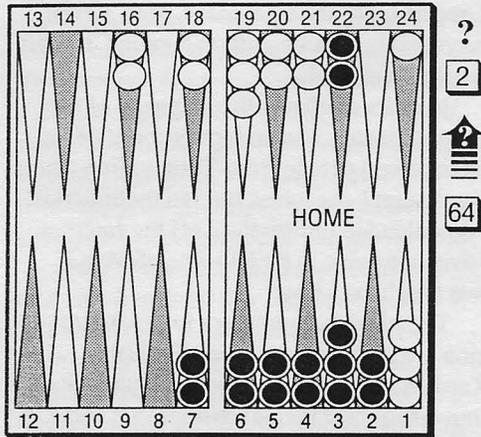
- (1) “Do you want to play Shesh u Besh?”, or
- (2) “Do you want to play Taw-leh (Arabic)?”, or
- (3) “Do you want to play Nor-tekh-ta?” (Farsi for “Wood-wrestling”). Δ

last month's position

PROBLEM #257 ANALYZED

by Neil Kazaross

Money game. Black on roll. **CUBE ACTION(S)?**



When I first saw Problem 257 and heard how many people were surprised that Black had doubled, I was honestly amazed. Let's look at this position and consider the relevant features.

Black has a big prime-vs.-prime advantage here. All 5s basically win the game for him. White has three men pinned on her 24-point, so if she loses this priming battle, many of her losses will be gammons.

If Black fails to roll a 5, he will be forced to break his prime except with 6-1 and 6-6. White will break another blocking point with all non-escaping rolls (assuming there are any) except 1-1. This will leave Black two direct escaping numbers and a big advantage.

Once Black escapes, White's dead checker on the acepoint is no help in counterpriming Black's remaining man. Also, White will usually be way too fast to time an acepoint game.

Even though Black wrecks his board with 4-4 or 3-3 now and a few other sequences which don't escape in two rolls, the preceding discussion makes this position sound like a pass for White. In fact, I believe White would have a pass here if Black's home board spare checker was not so far advanced.

When Black rolls 6-2, 6-3, or 6-4, he has to expose a direct 6 shot which will be very painful if hit. After a sequence like that, Black will often enter, break up further, and end up losing. This combined with two roll-cracking sequences allows White to take.

This type of position is a clear illustra-

tion of one of the basic principles of doubling. If one direct 11-number shot will give you good winning chances (with gammon potential), and most of the other 25 numbers leave you with at least an even chance in the game, you should double now to avoid the huge market loss on your 11 great shots. Position 257 satisfies this principle very well. After an escaping 5-1, Black's equity is actually higher than the value of the cube due to his gammon wins. And following a horrid shot like 6-4, Black is still a slight favorite in the game even when White owns the cube.

To assess the effect of the added breaking numbers caused by the position of Black's spare, I did long Snowie™ rollouts

shown below in tabular form.

Spare position White's take equity
Cube action

2-point	0.626	Take
3-point (text)	0.827	Take
4-point	0.984	Take
5-point	1.187	Pass
6-point	1.363	Pass

Even with the spare on the 2-point, the position is actually good enough to re-double. The greater flexibility of the higher spare also results in fewer disasters later in sequences where the board breaks.

This position is quite volatile since all eleven 5s are crushing and that demands a Black double now. Answer: *double/take*. Δ



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François Tardieu
Tel.: (0033) (0) 6 07 55 15 16
E-mail: Ftardieu@bgparis.com

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