

first person account

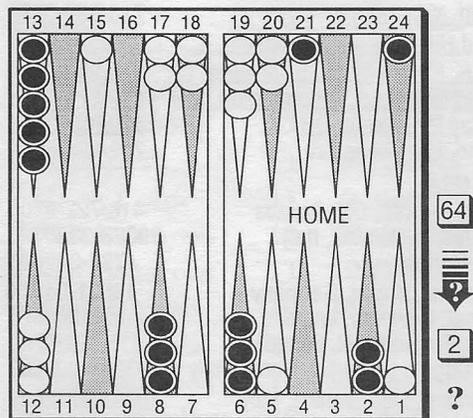
## MY MATCH WITH NACK

A Personal Assessment of My Errors vs. Nack Ballard in the Midwest Champs Grand Crystal Beaver Event  
by Paul Weaver

Nack Ballard, fresh from his prestigious win with Harvey Huie in the February Pro-Am Doubles in Las Vegas (who was the pro and who was the amateur?), was my opponent in the first round of the Grand Crystal Beaver event at this year's Midwest Backgammon Championships.

Nack's advantage in skill was not enough to compensate for my advantage in luck, and I won the match 11-4. The positions that follow show some of my errors from my first round match against Nack. In each position, I have the Black pieces and Nack has the White.

**Pos. 1.** 11-point match. Paul Weaver (Black) vs. Nack Ballard (White). No score. White on roll. **CUBE ACTION(S)?**



With two enemy checkers behind a 4-prime that may soon become a 5-prime, White clearly has a doubling advantage. Black's position is not yet hopeless, as he has several different ways to win the game. Although none by itself is significant, taken together, Black has barely enough equity to take.

First, if White rolls a number that fails to hit, Black will have a chance to anchor on the 21-point. Black will then have

decent racing equity. Additionally, Black may have opportunities to attack one or both of White's back checkers before they can come home safely.

Second, if White hits loose on his 4-point, Black will have 18 numbers that hit back. Even if Black fails to hit back, he may be able to anchor on the 22-point, with both shot and racing equity. If unable to anchor on the 22-point, he will probably be able to at least anchor on the 23- or 24-point, thereby giving himself a chance of hitting a shot in the bearoff.

Third, even if White rolls one his 15 numbers that point on Black's face (on the 4-point), Black will usually have return shots. For example, if White points with

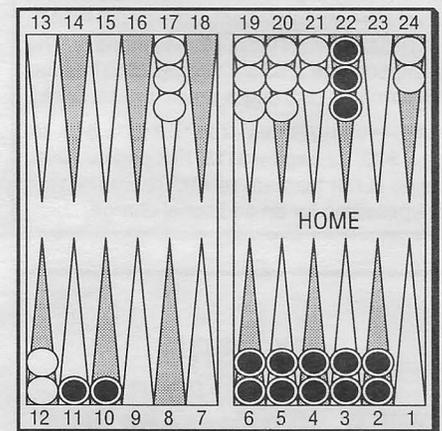


GCB champ Paul Weaver.

3-2, 4-3, or 6-3, Black will have at least 10 return shots, in addition to the two jokers (1-1 and 3-3) that point on White from the roof. Even if Black fails to hit a return shot, he will still be a favorite to eventually anchor.

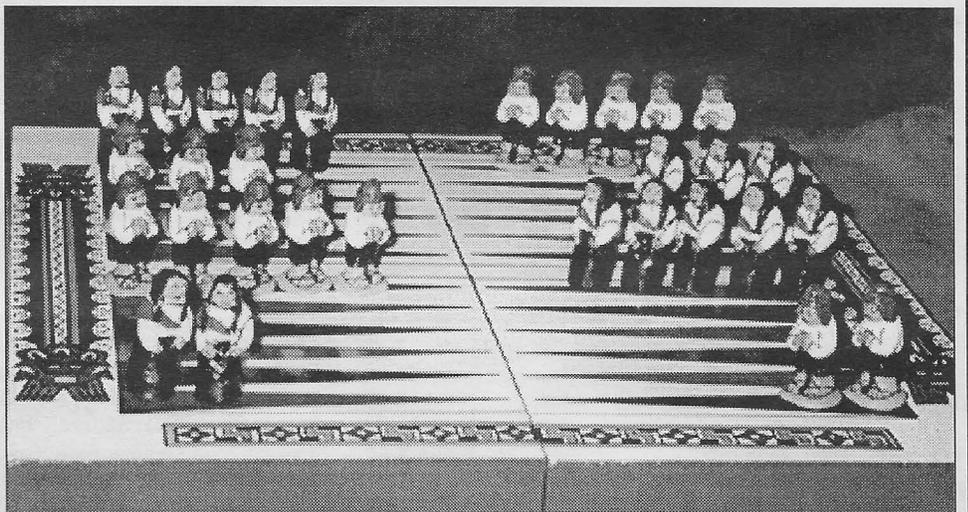
There is still enough play left in the game for Black to take. Although a close decision, my pass in Position 1 was an error.

**Pos. 2.** 11-point match. Paul Weaver (Black) leads Nack Ballard (White), 2 to 1. **BLACK TO PLAY 6-3.**



[Continued on page 5]

## A SET FROM ECUADOR



Pierre Zakia and Patricia Le Thi Ngoc enjoy mixing their two favorite hobbies—traveling the world and playing backgammon. Here's a unique set they found on a recent trip to Ecuador. Δ

# CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

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## LETTERS

c/o CHICAGO POINT

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## LIPPED VS. UNLIPPED CUPS

I have noticed that a lot of backgammon players still use cups without a tripped lip (a raised protrusion running around the inside of the cup at the top). Certainly these type of cups guarantee a more random roll than the unlippped ones. Why not add a rule about this?—*Timothy Johnson, Peoria, IL*

Your concern is covered in Rule 3.1 of the current US Backgammon Tournament Rules & Procedures, Tim. "Either player may demand that both use, when available and approved by the Director: (a) precision dice (over any others) and/or (b) lippped dice cups (over unlippped)."—*Ed.*

## THANKS FROM ACS

On behalf of The Anti-Cruelty Society, I would like to thank all those who participated in the Midwest Backgammon Championships for the generous contributions

[Continued on page 3]

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR



by Carol Joy Cole  
810/232-9731  
[cjc@tir.com](mailto:cjc@tir.com)

\* Denotes new or revised listing

### NATIONAL

American Backgammon Tour events underlined.

May 10*	DATE CHANGE: May Flowers Stakes, Triple Crown Bar, Houston, TX	713/567-1639
May 13	Backgammon By The Bay Monthly, TGI Friday's, Oakland, CA	831/688-9722
May 15*	Lincoln Club Monthly, Crane River Brewpub, Lincoln, NE	402/483-7930
May 17	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Day's Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
May 19	Redwood Empire Club Monthly, Embassy Suites, San Rafael, CA	707/824-9715
May 20	Milwaukee Club Monthly, John Hawks Pub, Milwaukee, WI	414/962-8549
May 20	Atlanta Chouette Tournament, Tony's American Grille, Roswell, GA	770/333-1876
May 20	New England Club Bonus Tournament, Holiday Inn, Somerville, MA	617/491-8710
May 20	Rocky Mountain Tournament, Arthritis Foundation Building, Denver CO	719/574-5598
May 20*	Greater Columbus Club Monthly, Lucky's Grille, Hilliard, OH	614/771-0981
May 25-28	<u>22nd Chicago Open, Wyndham NW Chicago Hotel, Itasca, IL</u>	<u>702/893-6025</u>
May 27	Ace Point Club Monthly Tournament, Ace Point Club, New York, NY	212/753-0842
Jun 1*	MSN Gammonzone Medallion Monthly, via computer	<i>GZMedallion@gammonzone.net</i>
Jun 1*	Official GamesGrid Monthly Tournament, via computer	<i>tournaments@cyberarts.com</i>
Jun 2	Universal Mall Bimonthly Tourney, All the King's Men, Warren, MI	810/558-4790
Jun 3*	Northern Ohio Club Monthly, Thirsty Dog Brewery, Canton, OH	330/966-2811
Jun 8-10	<u>Carolina Invitational, Comfort Suites, Gastonia, NC</u>	<u>704/398-8480</u>
Jun 10	Bar Point Sunday Tournament, Anyway's Grill, Oakbrook Terrace, IL	773/252-7755
Jun 10	Backgammon By The Bay Monthly, TGI Friday's, Oakland, CA	831/688-9722
Jun 10*	Greater Columbus Club Monthly, Lucky's Grille, Hilliard, OH	614/771-0981
Jun 10	New England Club Playoffs, Holiday Inn, Somerville, MA	617/491-8710
Jun 12-17	8th Worldwide Twin Championships, Treasure Island, Las Vegas, NV	702/893-6025
Jun 16*	Redwood Empire Club Monthly, Embassy Suites, San Rafael, CA	707/824-9715
Jun 21*	Father's Day Open, Triple Crown Sports Bar, Houston, TX	713/567-1639
Jun 21*	Third Thursday Bonus Tournament, Day's Inn, Flint, MI	810/232-9731
Jun 24*	Ace Point Club Monthly Tournament, Ace Point Club, New York, NY	212/753-0842
Jun 24*	Austin Sunday Bimonthly Tournament, CJ's Bar & Grill, Austin, TX	518/261-8518
Jun 24*	Milwaukee Club Monthly, John Hawks Pub, Milwaukee, WI	414/962-8549
Jun 27	Michigan Summer Championships Warm-up, Novi Hilton, Novi, MI	810/232-9731
Jun 28-Jul 1	<u>Michigan Summer Championships, Novi Hilton, Novi, MI</u>	<u>810/232-9731</u>
Jul 8*	Backgammon By The Bay Monthly, TGI Friday's, Oakland, CA	831/688-9722
Jul 8*	Northern Ohio Club Monthly, Thirsty Dog Brewery, Canton, OH	330/966-2811
Jul 28-29*	8th Annual Summer Cooker, Steve Hast residence, Pittsburgh, PA	412/823-7500
Aug 3-5	<u>Thousand Islands Tournament, Pine Tree Point, Alexandria Bay, NY</u>	<u>716/387-0767</u>
Aug 9-12	<u>Georgia State Championships &amp; Peach Cup, Hilton Garden Inn, Atlanta, GA</u>	<u>770/333-1876</u>
Aug 31-Sep 3	<u>49th Indiana Open, Sheraton Hotel &amp; Suites, Indianapolis, IN</u>	<u>317/255-8902</u>
Sep 21-23	Florida State Championships, Sheraton Suites, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	954/564-0340
Sep 22-23*	Vietor Invitational, Jon Vietor's residence, La Jolla, CA	858/456-3829
Sep 28-30*	<u>Towpath Tournament, Towpath Inn, Turin, NY</u>	<u>716/387-0767</u>
Oct 19-21	<u>Illinois State Championships, Springfield Hilton Hotel, Springfield, IL</u>	<u>217/528-0117</u>
Nov 2-4	48th Gammon Associates Invitational, A.R. Private Club, Los Angeles, CA	818/901-0464
Nov 16-18	<u>Minnesota State Championships, Thunderbird Hotel, Bloomington, MN</u>	<u>612/378-1536</u>
Nov 24-25	<u>Ohio State Championships, Akron Holiday Inn, Akron, OH</u>	<u>330/966-2811</u>
Nov 28-Dec 1	Las Vegas Open, Harrah's Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, NV	702/893-6025

### OUTSIDE USA

May 13	Toronto Club Monthly, Doghouse Riley's, Toronto, ON, Canada	416/722-9709
May 18-20*	1st Tournament Città di Jesolo, Lido di Jesolo-Venezia, Italy	39328-3380725
May 25-27	8th Oslo Open 2001, Vika Atrium, Oslo, Norway	4722-360966
Jun 1-4	7th Kaiserbrunnen Cup, Kaiserbrunnen Hotel, Brakel, Germany	49521-64314
Jun 2-3	Hilton Trophy Tournament, Hilton National, Coventry, England	441522-888676
Jun 10*	Toronto Club Monthly, Doghouse Riley's, Toronto, ON, Canada	416/722-9709
Jun 16-17*	DATE CHANGE: Roma Colosseum Cup, Circolo Le Barbù, Rome, Italy	39333-4809363
Jul 5-8	13th City of Venice International Tournament, Lido, Venice, Italy	39041-5211029
Jul 7-8	Keren Di Bona Memorial, Hilton National Hotel, Coventry, England	441522-888676
Jul 8*	Toronto Club Monthly, Doghouse Riley's, Toronto, ON, Canada	416/722-9709
Jul 9-15	World Championship, Grand Hotel, Monte Carlo, Monaco	USA contact: 954/527-4033
Jul 16-17	10th Nice Open, Lido Plage, Nice, France	33493-879436
Jul 18-22*	NEW LOCATION: Czech Open III, Corinthia Towers, Prague, Czech Republic	49911-409505
Jul 18-22	Master Chouette & 22nd Grand Prix de Lugano, Hotel Eden, Lugano, Switz.	4179-3374425
Jul 27-29	Bergen Open 2001, Sardinien, Bergen, Norway	4755-981544
Aug 3-6*	Backgammon Summer Bash, Cairn Croft Hotel, Niagara Falls, Canada	Fax: 661/275-6460
Aug 4-5	Studio Anne Carlton Trophy, Hilton National, Coventry, England	441522-888676
Aug 18-27	BG at Mind Sports Olympiad V, Alexandra Palace, London, England	441522-888676
Aug 31-Sep 3	13th European Championship, Hit Casino Park, Nova Gorica, Slovenia	39026-9018168
Sep 29-Oct 3	8th German Open, Kaiserbrunnen Hotel, Brakel, Germany	49521-64314
Oct 5-7	Canadian Open, Le Nouvel Hotel, Montreal, QC, Canada	904/777-8816
Oct 6-8*	7th Japan Open & 31st Championship, Nakano Sun Plaza, Tokyo, Japan	813337-33814

# LETTERS...

[Continued from page 2]

totaling \$1,650. Your donations are very special to us and will assist in providing important programs and services to animals and their owners throughout the Greater Chicago area.

We greatly appreciate the Chicago Bar Point Club's support of The Anti-Cruelty Society over the years. See you at the Midwest Championships in 2002.—*Gene Mueller, D.V.M., President, Anti-Cruelty Society of Chicago*

## SEEKING ONLINE ACTION

Is there anywhere on the Internet to play backgammon and gamble with real money?—*Steven Jeppson-Gamez, Cambridge, MA*

*Susan-Jane Berson answers: ProGammon.com, a new web site for serious backgammon players, opened up in*

*April and offers web based money tournaments and chouettes on line. It might be just what you are looking for. Membership is free and includes a "Player Locator Service" where one can go in and search for other players by their geographic location as well as online.*

*ProGammon offers online money players private and password-protected individual detailed accounting of all activities including date, amount of win/loss, and name of opponent. Future events include matches between champion players with live chat commentary, and private & group lessons.—Susan-Jane Berson, ProGammon, Miami, FL*

## CONTEST?

In case you are running low on contest ideas, here's a "fill in the blank" one:

Old dice never die. The just \_\_\_\_\_.

—*Walt Swan, Newark, NJ*

*Thanks Walt, but we're set. Check out "Can You Reconstruct This Position For Me" on page 7. First prize is \$50.—Ed. Δ*

# THE Backgammon Bugs CONTEST SOLUTION

By Duane Jensen

The Backgammon Bugs Contest printed in the March 2001 POINT and online at [chicagopoint.com](http://chicagopoint.com) asked readers to determine White's best non-hitting roll in the diagrammed position

and how that roll should be played.

The best non-hitting roll for White

is 1-1. The best way to play the

roll is 8/7, 18/17,

18/16. With this move, only 12 rolls for

Red can be played with complete safety.

CHICAGO POINT received over 30

entries to this puzzle but only 18 of the

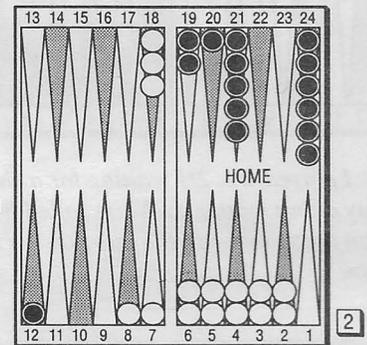
submissions were correct. The winner of

\$50 by random draw is **TOM MACHAJ**,

Fitchburg, Wisconsin.—*Duane Jensen Δ*



White's best non-hitting roll in this position is 1-1: 18/17, 18/16, 8/7.

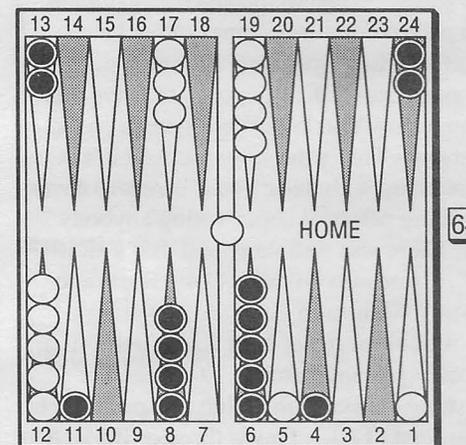


your move

## PROBLEM #272

to be analyzed by Kit Woolsey

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



**AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 2001**

### AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 2001

Compiled through 8 Apr. 2001 after 3 events  
(Coming in May & June: Chicago Open, Carolina Invit'l, Michigan Champs)

**AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 2001**

<b>Jake Jacobs</b> 33.56	Richard Del Furia 6.00	Ron Rogers 3.56	Paul Lombardo 1.78
<b>Gyl Savoie</b> 21.45	Chris Wilson 5.60	Norm Wiggins 3.22	Landon Leming 1.56
<b>Steve Sax</b> 16.20	Keith Kuligowski 5.20	Mark Tremayne 3.20	Matt Armbruster 1.56
Bruce Russell 14.46	Marianne Gatenby 5.11	Bill Keefe 2.95	Roger Hickman 1.44
Bob Wachtel 12.89	Brian Barber 5.11	Ken Lazar 2.62	Ali Malik 1.34
Chen Fu Yu 12.69	Dana Nazarian 4.50	Mike Flohr 2.40	Bob Courtney 1.00
James Roston 11.44	Paul Weaver 4.44	Glenn Ramsey 2.27	Tracy Galloway 0.82
Dennis Culpepper 10.46	Howard Shapiro 4.44	Mark Haley 2.27	Jay Cordes 0.78
Bob Glass 10.46	Richard Munitz 4.44	Adam Versaw 2.27	Lynn Marsella 0.62
Herb Roman 6.69	David Rockwell 3.90	Steve Maas 2.08	Jim Zinkhon 0.62
Eliot Bean 6.45	David Groner 3.90	John Meyers 2.08	Dick Nelson 0.53
Greg Merriman 6.34	Tom Daniel 3.59	Connie Tipton 1.78	Erik Erland 0.53
Rob Maier 6.34			

**CHICAGO BAR POINT CLUB**

### 2001 PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED  
THRU 30 APR.

<b>Bob Zavoral</b> 13.08	<b>Bob Steen</b> 4.32	Arline Levy 2.48	Georgina Flanagan 0.88
<b>Bill Bartholomay</b> 10.04	<b>Norma Shyer</b> 4.24	David Araiza 2.40	Wayne Weist 0.80
<b>Glenn Martells</b> 8.24	<b>Scott Richardson</b> 3.68	Steve Klesker 2.16	Brian Leventhal 0.64
<b>Tim Mabee</b> 6.56	<b>Peter Kalba</b> 3.52	Mark Murray 1.76	Paul Friedman 0.64
<b>Tim Carroll</b> 6.48	<b>Phyllis Smolinski</b> 3.44	Roger Hickman 1.60	Mike Sutton 0.64
<b>Joe Wollick</b> 6.40	<b>Bill Davis</b> 3.04	John Brussel 1.36	Roger Blaine 0.64
<b>Carter Mattig</b> 5.92	<b>Marc Rosset</b> 2.96	Don Marek 1.28	Brian Kozin 0.64
<b>Jake Jacobs</b> 5.24	Lucky Nelson 2.88	Erik Erland 1.12	Reginald Porter 0.56
<b>Tak Morioka</b> 5.12	Joann Feinstein 2.80	Leo Campos 0.88	Tom Roberts 0.48
<b>Howard Chow</b> 4.96	J.A. Miller 2.80	Alice Kay 0.88	Joe Szvedo 0.32
<b>Herb Roman</b> 4.72	Elaine Kehm 2.72	Bob Katz 0.88	Barbara Levinson 0.24
<b>Don Jayhan</b> 4.60	Mark Ryan 2.56	Richard Lloyd 0.88	Sakura Wells 0.24
<b>Brian Barber</b> 4.48	Bill Keefe 2.56	Wendy Kaplan 0.88	

The April Player of the Month is **GLENN MARTELLS**. Glenn's 3.52 points moved him into 3rd place in the 2001 points race. Brian Barber (3.20) was 2nd and Tim Carroll (2.40) finished 3rd.

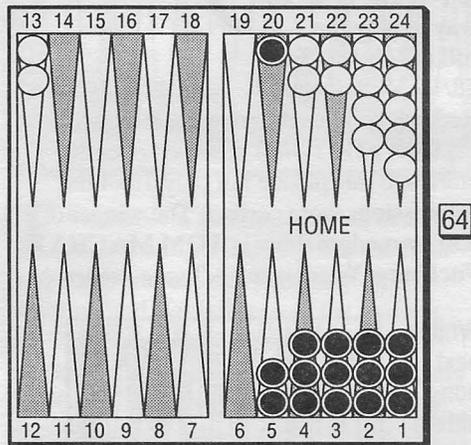
ASK  
DANNY

© 2001 by Danny Kleinman

DOES CUBE POSITION EFFECT  
THIS PLAY?

**D**ear Danny: I have played backgammon for many years but only recently with the doubling cube. Earlier this year, I played in my first backgammon tournament and faced this problem:

Match to 11-points. No score. **BLACK TO PLAY 1-1.**



I played 4/1, 2/1 waiting for a shot. My play didn't matter as White rolled 6-6 and won the game with the cube on his next turn.

*After the game, I heard two experts commenting on how they might have played the double aces differently if the cube had been (a) in the center, (b) in my possession and/or (c) in my opponent's possession.*

*Perhaps it's just my doubling cube inexperience, but I would play 1-1 the same in all three cases. What am I missing?—Cube Novice.*

**DEAR NOVICE:** Here's the relevance of the location of the cube in this position.

With the cube centered in this close race and both sides having good boards (though Black's is stronger), either player can double profitably if the other leaves a direct shot.

If Black owns the cube and gets a direct shot, he can redouble profitably (unless he is on the bar), for when he misses the shot he will often break contact.

If White owns the cube and gets a direct shot, he should refrain from redoubling, for he will leave direct shots on many of his misses and would not welcome Black's redouble to 8.

Though rare exceptions exist, it is a sound general principle that one should not "step into" an opponent's cube-turn voluntarily. Therefore I agree with your centered-cube play of the double-aces.

If White owned the cube, you could advance to his 6-point, leaving a direct shot but creating more shots for yourself when he misses, without stepping into a redouble. Likewise, or course if you owned the cube. Thus you could "get away with"

playing 20/19 and moving the other three aces within your home board.

But why should you? To advance to White's 6-point exposes you to seventeen shots (eleven of which *don't* leave direct returns) instead of six (all of which do leave direct returns). Because White cannot play 6s, 5s or 4s within his home board, he will have to move from his 12-point. If you stay back on his 5-point, you will get plenty of shots: direct shots not only on his six hitting rolls (6-1, 5-2 and 4-3) but also on six of his non-hitting rolls (5-1, 4-2 and 4-1), and indirect shots on the twelve other rolls (6-5, 6-4, 6-3, 6-2, 5-4 and 5-3) that get past you without hitting.

To advance to White's 7-, 8- or 9-point is worse still. If you get hit on any of these outfield points, you will get *no* direct returns at all. Though you gain two, three or four pips in the race when White does not hit, White gains more when he does hit. Though by advancing, you increase your chances of breaking contact if not hit, the indirect contact you retain on White's 5-point favors you.

You mention that you heard two "experts" commenting how they might have moved differently if either side had owned the cube. I'm curious to know what they were saying.—*Yours, Danny Δ*

*Questions for Danny Kleinman should be addressed to: Ask Danny, c/o CHICAGO POINT, 3940 W. Bryn Mawr Ave. 504; Chicago, IL 60659-3155 or send e-mail to: bg@chicagopoint.com*

## AMALGAMATION

Great TV publicity for our game as **Tina Wesson** (TN) and **Colby Donaldson** (TX) were shown playing backgammon on the 3 May *Survivor* finale. Additionally, Tina used a BG analogy in her final speech to the panel: "When we played backgammon—we played countless games of backgammon together—you don't go into backgammon and say 'OK, I'm going to leave this man open.' You know you have to cover that man. That's the strategy. And it's the same thing with this game. There was never anything personal about voting anybody off. There was a strategy and that's all it is."... **Antonio Ortega** (Costa Rica) and **Danny Kleinman** (LA) are preparing a book about some of **Neil Kazaross's** (IL) most important matches. Stay tuned... Visiting the Bar Point Club in April: **Chris Stanford** (TX)... Peoria director **Ed Zell**

(IL) has compiled 20 years of statistics all about the Illinois State Challenge Cup. The info is posted online at: [www.thezells.com/bg/cupstats.htm](http://www.thezells.com/bg/cupstats.htm) ... **Ed King** (OH) reports that his "Operation Feed" backgammon tournament raised a record \$3,246 for charity. Tourney results of the 18-player event will be posted next month... With the promise of improved performance, **Frank Williams** takes over as Director of Technology for the GammonVillage website ([www.gammonvillage.com](http://www.gammonvillage.com)). His focus will be to improve on an already successful site... We wish **Ed Buerger** (IL) a speedy recovery following a triple heart bypass on 3 May. And more good wishes go out to Winnetka Club director **Trudie Chibnik** (IL) as she recovers from oral surgery for an impacted wisdom tooth... Congrats to **Carter Mattig** (IL) who graduates from Second City Comedy Improv on 9 May at North & Wells (2nd floor) in Chicago. The show (\$5 cover) is open to the public... **Erik Erland** (IL) has created a Pub Club

backgammon website. Check it out at: [www.pubclub.homestead.com/clubindex.html](http://www.pubclub.homestead.com/clubindex.html) ... **John Brussel** (IL), who will direct the Canadian Open in October, will also direct the Chicago Open this month. That will allow advertised director **Howard Markowitz** (NV) to participate... Illinois to Indiana: **John O'Hagan**... **David Wells** (IL) surprised wife **Sakura** with a birthday cake at the Bar Point Club last month... After many years at the Praena, the Twin Cities Backgammon Club moves to Little Wagon, 420 South 4th Street in Minneapolis. For more info, go to [www.twincitiesbackgammon.org/news.html](http://www.twincitiesbackgammon.org/news.html) ... More TV backgammon publicity: "When Billie Beat Bobby," a made-for-TV movie about the 1973 battle of the sexes between **Billie Jean King** and **Bobby Riggs**, was shown 16 April. The first scene with Riggs has him seated over a backgammon board. In fact, Riggs was a BG fan, hosting a celebrity tournament in Miami in April 1987. Δ

## MY MATCH...

[Continued from page 1]

Black will trail by 25 pips after playing his 6-3. Although he has only a little racing equity, he will still win in the range of 25% if he plays correctly.

Afraid of getting hit and losing a gammon, I played the entire number on my own side of the board with 11/5, 10/7. This is a short-sighted approach because it greatly increases the chance that I will be forced to break my beautiful five point board within the next few rolls.

Black's main source of equity lies in hitting a shot and subsequently containing the enemy checker. Although leaving a voluntary shot in the outfield against White's four point board slightly increases his gammon risk, Black is more than compensated by the increased chance of preserving his best five point board.

In choosing between 22/16, 10/7 (15 possible shots) and 22/13 (11 shots), it is tempting to make the play that minimizes shots. A closer inspection, however, reveals that 22/16, 10/7 is superior to 22/13.

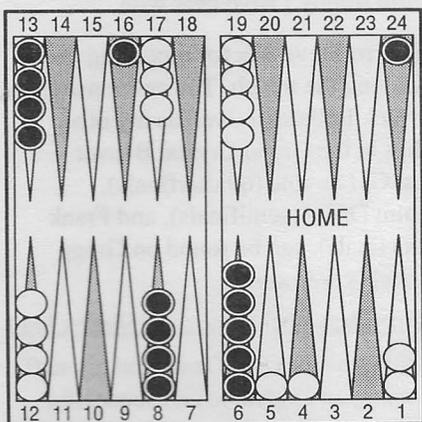
There are only 12 actual hitting numbers and not 15 because it is wrong for White to hit with 6-4 and 1-1. Black will get return shots if White hits with 4-2 or 3-1, whereas Black gets no return shots with any of White's aces after playing 22/13.

By staying on the 16-pt., Black prevents White from clearing his midpoint with 5-2 and 5-3.

Although my rollout results gave a tiny edge to 22/16, 11/8, slotting the back edge of the prime with 22/16, 10/7 is slightly better.

Finally, note that after playing either 22/16, 11/8 or 22/16, 10/7, if Black had not already been doubled, his position would be a close take, in spite of his 25 pip deficit. After making any other play (e.g. 22/13 or 11/5, 10/7) Black's position would be a pass.

**Pos. 3. 11-point match. Nack Ballard (White) leads Paul Weaver (Black), 3 to 2. BLACK TO PLAY 2-1.**



There are a few players who sometimes play the opening 4-3 by advancing both back checkers with 24/20, 24/21. Although this play is incorrect for money, a very lengthy Snowie rollout suggests that this "double advancing" play is correct by a tiny margin at DMP and also at the Gammon Save score (you need 1, your opponent needs 2, Crawford).

The correct 2-1 response to this seldom seen 4-3 opening is 6/5\*, 6/4\*. Although this play leaves two blots in the inner board, it is correct by a large margin.

With my 2-1 in Position 3, I thought that my 35 pip lead in the race indicated a more conservative play, and I played like a beginner with 16/13. This play is greatly inferior to 6/5\*, 6/4\*, and is, in fact, a serious blunder.

After playing 16/13, it is totally unrealistic for Black, who has no new points on his side of the board, to expect that he will somehow be able to bring all of his checkers home without getting hit. Paraphrasing Paul Magriel from 20 years ago, "Don't start to play safe until you have at least one new point on your side of the board."

Black needs a new point, and after playing 6/5\*, 6/4\*, his chance of covering at least one of the blots on his next shake is about 64%. His chance of covering both is about 9%. His chance of both covering his 4-point and making his 7-point is about 1% (occurring after a White miss and Black's 6-6).

After Black plays 6/5\*, 6/4\* White will have 14 numbers that fail to hit, 19 numbers

[Continued on page 6]



## 13<sup>th</sup> International Backgammon Tournament

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#### Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> July

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23.30	Superjackpot

#### Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> July

14.30 - 17.30	Registration Champion
14.30 - 20.00	Registration Interm. and Beginner
15.00	Double Consultation
18.00	Champion Public Draw
18.30	Champion tournament start
21.00	Intermediate and Beginner Public Draw
22.00	Interm. & Beginner tournament start

#### Saturday, 7<sup>th</sup> July

14.30	Progressive Consolation
16.00	Tournament continues
23.00	Superjackpot

#### Sunday, 8<sup>th</sup> July

13.00	Last Chance
15.00	Finals
19.00	Prize-giving & cocktail

## MY MATCH...

[Continued from page 5]

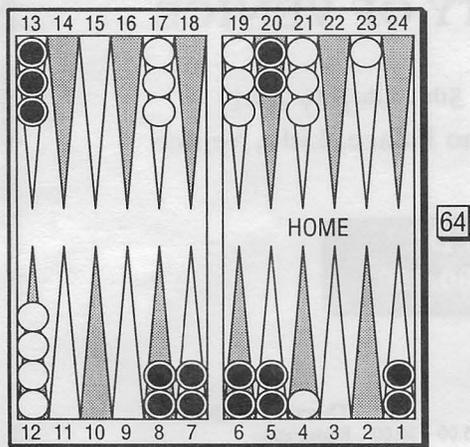
that hit one of the blots, and three numbers that hit more than one.

If White fails to hit, then Black should have a doubling advantage immediately. If White hits only one checker, then Black is still the favorite, and will have either 18 or 19 numbers from the roof that cover the other blot. Even White's jokers (5-4 and 4-4) are far from fatal for Black.

The double hitting play would be correct regardless of the match score. Not only does Black win more games and more gammons after 6/5\*, 6/4\*, but he also loses fewer gammons.

Even if Position 3 were modified by moving Black's back checker from the 24-point to the midpoint, 6/5\*, 6/4\* would still be correct by a large margin over 16/13.

**Pos. 4.** 11-point match. Paul Weaver (Black) and Nack Ballard (White) are tied 3-3. **BLACK TO PLAY 3-2.**



In what would prove to be the decisive game of the match, I once again blundered with a wimpy checker play (13/8).

There are several features of Position 4 that cry out for an attacking play:

1. Black has a stronger board with ten checkers in the zone.
2. White has only one checker back, and will therefore be unable to anchor unless he gets another checker sent back.
3. White has a blot in his own inner board.
4. Black has an advanced anchor.
5. With two men on his ace point, Black should abandon any hope of priming White's back checker.

Black should attack now before White has a chance to escape and/or cover his inner board point. The longer Black waits

to attack, the more pips White will move in the outfield toward getting off the gammon.

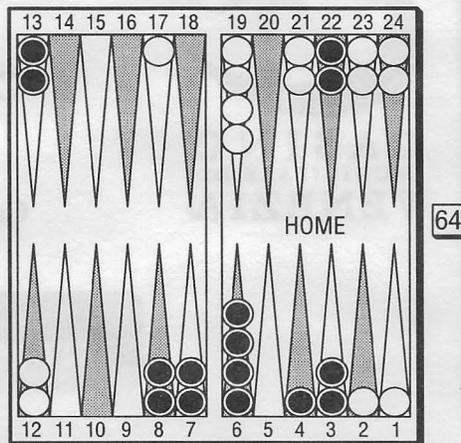
The correct play is 7/4\* 7/5. Another attacking play, 7/4\* 13/11, while much stronger than 13/8, is inferior because it leaves more shots and blots.

After playing 13/8, I doubled a couple of rolls later, Nack fanned several times in a row, and I won a lucky gammon.

In summary, I played poorly and won an undeserved gammon.

The next time an opponent blunders his way into gammoning me Mr. Magoo style, it will be helpful in attempting to maintain my equilibrium and sanity if instead of mindlessly whining, I am able to remember the fact that on various and sundry occasions, I have been on both sides of the "play-poorly/win-an-undeserved-gammon" scenario.

**Pos. 5.** 11-point match. Paul Weaver (Black) leads Nack Ballard (White) 8 to 3. **BLACK TO PLAY 2-1.**



I believe that very few backgammon players would make the correct play with 2-1 in Position 5.

The double hit, 4/2\*/1\*, should be rejected because it is seldom correct to attempt to blitz when your opponent outnumbered you four to two in inner board points and there is a reasonable priming alternative. In colloquial terms, "Don't pick a fight with someone twice as strong as you are."

Not only White's eleven hitting aces, but also his entering doubles (2-2, 4-4, and 5-5) will immediately put an end to Black's unrealistic dream of a closeout.

In order for the blitz to be successful, Black would have to avoid being hit not only on this roll, but probably on successive rolls as well.

Black's deficit in the pip count, as well as the fact that White has four checkers behind Black's anchor, are additional

reasons for favoring priming over attacking. If Black is successful in building a 6-prime in front of one or more of White's rear checkers, White will be unable to counterprime Black's 22-point anchor.

The two priming candidate plays, 6/5, 6/4 and 6/4, 8/7, are both much stronger than the blitzing play 4/2\*/1\*. I incorrectly chose 6/4, 8/7 (14 shots), which turns out to be significantly weaker than 6/5, 6/4 (20 shots).

Why leave a double shot against a 4-point board when there is a play that leaves only a single shot? Black is well compensated for leaving the six additional numbers in playing 6/5, 6/4.

If Black is hit, possessing his 8-point will make it easier for him to contain White's remaining back checker on Black's ace or deuce point, as well as any enemy checker that Black may hit in the remainder of the game.

If Black is not hit, then he becomes a 2-to-1 favorite to make his 5-point immediately, and he becomes more than a 3-to-1 favorite to make his 5-point eventually. Black needs his 5-point to gin the game, and he is much more likely to make it after playing 6/5, 6/4 than after playing 6/4, 8/7.

Finally, by playing 6/5 6/4, Black turns White's 6-6 into an anti-joker.

In the actual game, I was hit after playing 6/4, 8/7, but I luckily won the game by hitting a shot in the bearoff. After Nack won the Crawford game, the score was 10-4. I survived a blitz attempt in the next game, winning the match 11-4.

**I WAS FORTUNATE** to come from behind to win my next three matches: from 2-5 against Gyl Savoie in the quarterfinals, from 1-8 against Malcolm in the semifinals, and from 0-5 against Frank Talbot in the finals. The winner's trophy is a Swarowski crystal beaver on a mirrored wooden base valued at \$200. It is the most beautiful trophy I have ever won.

**THANKS TO** Steve Sax for recording and transcribing the match. The entire match with Nack Ballard, as well as my other matches in the Grand Crystal Beaver against Gyl Savoie (quarterfinals), Malcolm Davis (semifinals), and Frank Talbot (finals), can be found on Gregg Cattanach's web site:

<http://members.nbci.com/zox625/index.html>

Thanks also to Bill Davis and his staff for running an enjoyable and successful tournament.—Paul Weaver Δ



WIN \$50.00—A Chicago Point Contest Puzzle. Enter by 22 June

## Help Me Reconstruct This Position

by Joe Wollick

I'm trying to reconstruct a backgammon position that I played last month. Can you help me?

All I remember is that it was my opponent's turn and that he had three or more home board points (all of which had been made in order) with a spare on his 6. My last shake was a 6-1 and I was forced to play it to his bar-point. Then I noticed that all of his rolls hit even though he had the fewest number of direct shots. I had at least a four point board and my pip count was one less than half of my opponent's count.

The \$50.00 challenge is to reconstruct the backgammon position that satisfies all of the parameters as described above. When you submit a diagram of the position, assume that Joe was playing the Black (or X) pieces and his opponent was playing the White (or O) pieces. Send your diagram to: CHICAGO POINT; 3940 W. Bryn Mawr 504; Chicago, IL 60659-3155. Or e-mail your solution to: bg@chicagopoint.com.

Ties will be broken by random draw. Entry deadline: 22 June 2001.



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**GAMES PEOPLE PLAY:** Tourn. Monday, 6:30 P.M. at Chatham Computers; 8119 S. Cottage Grove, Chicago. Reginald Porter (708/715-2917). Sunday monthly, 11:45 A.M. at Java Oasis; 2240 S. Michigan, Chicago. J.A. Miller (312/719-1245).

**PUB CLUB:** Tourn. Mon., 7:00 P.M. at Danny's Grill and Bar; 345 W. North Ave., Villa Park. Joe Wollick (847/942-2068).

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

**SANGAMON VALLEY BACKGAMMON ASSOC.:** 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 Winnetka Community House; 620 Lincoln, Winnetka. Trudie Chibnik (847/446-0537).

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

who did what

## WINNER'S CIRCLE



FEB.-APR. 2001

•**Bar Point Sunday** (Oakbrook Terrace, IL; 8 Apr.) ... OPEN (11): 1-Peter Kalba, 2-Mark Murray, 3/4-Bill Davis / Tak Morioka; 1C-Bob Zavoral, 2C-Carter Mattig. INTERMEDIATE (14): 1-David Araiza, 2-Reginald Porter, 3/4-Brian Barber / Glenn Martells; 1C-Erik Erland, 2C-Roger Hickman.

•**Springfield Series #6** (Springfield, IL; 7 Apr.)... OPEN (16): 1-Sean Garber (IN), 2-Michael Plog; 1C-Jeff Anderson, 2C-Cliff Mayoh; 1LC-Faddoul Khoury.

•**47th Gammon Associates Invitational—ABT** (Los Angeles, CA; 6-8 Apr.)... OPEN (29): 1-Bob Wachtel, 2-Eliot Bean; 1C-Steve Sax, 2C-Norm Wiggins. ADVANCED (14): 1-Bruce Russell (WI), 2-Landon Leming; 1C-Matt Armbruster, 2C-Jay Cordes. LIMITED (4): 1-Bob Courtney. SUPER-32 (22): 1-John Gamalielson (WA), 2-Bob Glass, 3/4-Oliver Fink / Phil Laak. DOUBLES (8): 1-Azzam Masarani & Patrick Gibson, 2-Sho Sengoku & Dan Pehoushek. 1-POINT BLITZ (56): 1-Bill Papa, 2-Ray Fogelund.

•**British Open** (Coventry, England; 7-8 Apr.)... OPEN (114): 1-Steve Hallett, 2-Stuart Mann, 3/4-Paul Lamford / Dave McNair; 1C-Dave Coyne, 2C-John Slattery; 1LC-David Nathan, 2LC-Rebecca Bell. SAD LOSERS (64): 1-Kevin Stebbing, 2-Daphne Smith, 3/4-Jeff Ellis / Albert Tinker. FRIDAY KNOCKOUT (47): 1/2-Paul Lamford / Michael Brereton, 3/4-Martin Hemming / Alan Farrell. DOUBLES (32): 1-Tale of Two Cities, 2-Fat Man & He.

•**Nordic "Wide" Open** (Helsingør, Denmark; 12-16 April)... CHAMPIONSHIP: 1-Lars Trabolt (DEN), 2-Lars Klammer (DEN), 3/4-Johannes Leverman (GER) / Morten Daugbjerg; 1C-Shoichiro Sengoku (JPN), 2C-Stefan Blancke; 1LC-Paul Magriel (US), 2LC-Sven Wisløff-Nilssen. ADVANCED: 1-Shinichiro Kaneko (JPN), 2-Willi Preskar, 3/4-Peter Lego Fursund / Stein Wellw; 1C-Johnny Tønnesen, 2C-Shahin Azami; 1LC-Jakob Garal, 2LC-Jens Ostermann-Petersen. INTERMEDIATE: 1-Jacob J. Rasmussen, 2-Christer Hagenfeldt, 3/4-Peter Elman Hansen / Mohammed Mosaddegh; 1C-Franz Kettler, 2C-Rene Strøm Rasmussen; 1LC-Karl Frogner, 2LC-Mads Klindt. NOVICE: 1-Lars Rosquist, 2-Villy Dohrmann, 3/4-Søren Weis / Thomas Anderon; 1C-Casper Nancke, 2C-Helle Ditlevsen; 1LC-Martin Foldager, 2LC-Gabriel Andersen. BEGINNER: 1-Jesper Brok Hansen, 2-Sanne Hartmann; 1C-Flemming Mortensen, 2C-Jesper Larsen. \$500 SUPER JP: 1-Michel Siegel (FRA), 2-Pavel Bielewitz. \$1000 SUPER JP: 1/2-Mike Svobodny (USA) / Francois Tardieu (FRA). \$2000 SUPER JP: 1-Howard Markowitz (USA), 2-Kit Woolsey (USA). DOUBLES (44 Teams): 1-Serge Rived & Michel Siegel, 2-Lars Bøje & Robin Neumann. TEAM EVENT (25 Teams): 1-Blot Busters (Tobias Helweg, Thomas Zimmer & Shinichiro Kaneko), 2-Team Kurland (Lennart Kurland, Frank Mortensen & Michael Lund).

•**Springfield Series Grand Finale** (Springfield,



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The full schedule of events  
will be printed in the  
June Chicago Point.

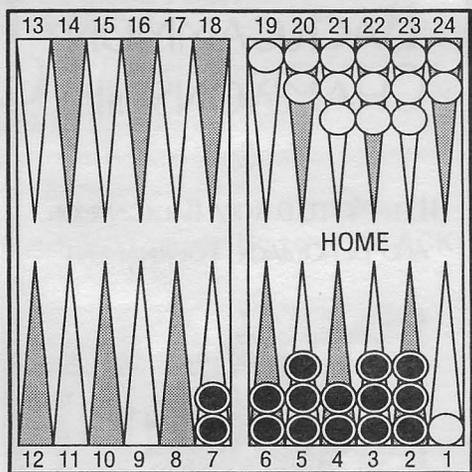
IL; 21 Apr.)... OPEN (14): 1-Ed Zell, 2-Mike Flohr; 1C-Randy Armstrong, 2C-Randy Reiff; 1LC-William Hutchison... Randy Armstrong reports a number of incredible wins for Peoria director Ed Zell who didn't get gammoned all day.

•**Ace Point Monthly** (New York, NY; 28 Apr.)... OPEN (16): 1-Richard Munitz, 2-Boris Golubov, 3/4-Henrik Gwinner / Jens Averkamp-Peters; 1C-Steve Elkin. INTERMEDIATE (4): 1-Boris Dekhtyar

•**NEBC Sunday Monthly** (Somerville, MA; 18 Mar.)... EXPERT/A/B (25): 1-Nora Luna, 2-Dan Chicoine, 3/4-Connie Machakos / Ernie Pittelli; 1C-Herb Gurland, 2C-Jerry Padova (NH). Δ

**PROBLEM #271  
ANALYZED**

by Mary Hickey

Tournament double match-point.  
**BLACK TO PLAY 5-1.**

This problem generated much heat and occasionally a little light at the Pittsburgh tournament this February. The position card floated around the various playing rooms and hallways inspiring plenty of discussion and an approximately 50-50 split among the experts consulted regarding it. None other than your fearless editor, Bill Davis, had to make this difficult decision in an early round Open match.

Only two plays exist here:

- 7/1\* hitting, or
- 7/2, 7/6 clearing the bar point.

Clearing has the obvious advantage of being immediately safe. If White is unable to run, Black has numerous rolls that point on him next roll, or failing that, increase his racing chances by bearing off a checker or two.

The main advantage of the hit is the opportunity to freeze White where he is in the race, with the intent of all but eliminating his winning chances next roll by completing the closeout. Since gammons aren't a factor at the score, those favoring the hit (I was originally of that opinion) weren't overly concerned about the 1-6 joker. (I could rationalize that since it gave a shot back on the 6-point, it should be considered only 70-75% of a joker anyway.)

This problem appeared on the GammOnLine bulletin board shortly after the event, and one poster quoted a rule regarding these positions to the effect that you should hit if the opponent is missing his 6-point, and his highest spare is located no higher than the 4-point. I tried to track down the source of this rule, but the expert whose name had been taken in vain at

GammOnLine disclaimed any knowledge of it. At the time of this writing, I have not been able to find anyone who will take credit for this rule, or explain how it came into being and to what situations it was intended to apply.

Regardless of the source, I was going to have to verify any rule before stating it here anyway, so toward that end I fired up my old silicon seafood friend, JellyFish 3.0. I ran evaluations and rollouts of quite a few variants of the original problem to get a feel for this general class of endgames. All rollouts here are Level 6, full, with variance reduction, 2880 trials. Standard deviations were 0.002 for almost all the runs, with an occasional 0.003 in the hitting cases.

As is often the case in backgammon, a fair number of close calls swing on whether the match score is Gammon Go, Gammon Save, DMP, or something resembling normal. (Speaking of attribution, I did track down the origin of the terms "Gammon Go" and "Gammon Save" (or Safe) to Bob Koca, who used them in his exhaustive JellyFish rollouts of the opening rolls and responses, among other things.)

For our purposes here, when I say "Gammon Save," I mean a more or less *standard* Gammon Save situation such as 1-away, 2-away Crawford where the gammon price is 1.0, that is, there is a 1:1 tradeoff for additional games won versus additional gammons lost instead of the usual 1:2. Similarly, when I say "Gammon Go," I mean the other side of that equation, where added gammons are worth twice as much as usual. When I say "always" or "never," situations beyond these boundaries are not included.

With that said, let's look at some cases where it's always right to hit, then at some where it's always right to play safe. Extensive JellyFish rollouts show that if White's board is crashed to the 4-point and below, *it's always right to hit*. The only possible exception is at what perhaps we could term "Gammon Super Safe" when it's more important to save the gammon than win the game (for example, at 2-away/8-away redoubled) when White has two or more spares on the 4-point, since the two-spare case showed added games won versus added gammons lost traded off of at 2.5:2.1, normally plenty but not at some extreme GSS-type scores.

Now for the opposite situation: If he has a closed board, regardless of where the two spares are placed, *it's always right to play safe*. Even the many root numbers that result from both spares being on the ace point are not sufficient to swing this. The only way to make it right at some scores,

notably DMP, is for the other two checkers to be already borne off.

So now getting back to Bill's actual problem, we find that he's facing neither a crashed board nor a closed one, but something right in the middle between them—a five point board with sufficient spares to keep it that way at least one more roll, barring an accident. If the rule of nebulous origins stated above is correct, we should consider the highest spare to be the one on the 6 point, and the safe play should be best. A rollout confirms this is the case, with the safe play winning 84.9% of the games versus 82.0% for the hit. Even in the most desperate gammon-hungry situations ("Gammon Go-Go"?), the hit can't be right, since it only wins 1.3 more gammons than the safe play (2.5 versus 1.2) in return for giving up 2.9 wins.

To extend this to a general solution, let's next try the case where the highest spare is on the 5-point instead, arranging the other spares two on the ace and one on the deuce to make it represent something close to the extreme here. Seafood sez that the safe play is still correct by a comfortable margin, regardless of the score.

What about when the highest spare is on the 4-point? Again, I ran it with two other spares on the ace and one on the deuce. The first run was a statistical tie, so I ran two more sets of rollouts to see what range of results I'd get that way. All were close, but there is a slight pull toward the safe play at DMP, and the safe play is better by about 0.02 if gammons are of equal value for both sides. However, at Gammon Go, the hit is better by a lot, winning 1.5 more gammons in exchange for only 0.2 added losses.

Since that case is so close, and we already know the crashed-board cases call for the hit, it seems logical to presume that if the highest spare were lower down, the hit would be correct as long as Black's own distribution is like that given here, or something close to it. But just to be sure, I ran a case with the highest spare on the 3 point, and found that though in most cases the hit is right, at Gammon Save it's a close call and may be correct to play safe depending on small details of position on either side of the board.

I feel as though there's something else... oh yeah, the results! Bill correctly played safe, 7/2, 7/6, and won the game without further incident.—Mary Hickey Δ

[Although I did move correctly over the board, after hearing the discussion among all the experts, I wasn't sure which play would actually turn out to be the JellyFish choice!—Ed.]

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## Chicago Bar Point Club 1000-to-1 Club

Name	Wins in a Row	Date Completed
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Neil Kazaross	10	8 Feb 94
Phil Simborg	11	5 Apr 94
Frankie Farjood	11	25 Apr 95
Harry Cohn	11	9 May 95
Neil Kazaross	10	19 Sep 95
Neil Kazaross	11	12 Dec 95
Herb Roman	10	11 Aug 96
Andy Krenitz	12	5 Nov 96
Neil Kazaross	10	23 Dec 96
Wendy Kaplan	10	7 Jan 97
Phil Simborg	12	6 May 97
Phyllis Smolinski	10	6 Jan 98
Laila Leonhardt	10	27 Jan 98
Steve Mellen	12	1 Feb 98
Tak Morioka	12	17 Mar 98
Don Jayhan	10	14 Dec 99
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Bill Bartholomay	11	20 Mar 01
Bob Zavoral	14	3 Apr 01



## Michigan Summer Backgammon Championships

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the experience and reputation of Director Carol Joy Cole along with the able assistance of staff members John Carrico, Mary Ann Meese, Woody Woodworth, and Paul Berg is considered. ¶ This year, I urge you to kick off summer by spending your pre-4th of July weekend playing backgammon in Novi, Michigan. You will not be disappointed. —Bill Davis, Director, Chicago Bar Point Club.

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