

Towards Randomness

by Larry Strommen

The game of backgammon is played by the experts using the assumption that the dice rolls that control their play as well as that of their opponent will be randomly distributed. But do all players intend to have their rolls occur in a random manner? Do they insist on using equipment that will result in minimizing the chance for strictly randomness? If so, why?

Is it because they win more often with one type of cup compared to another? Why do those wins occur? Because of their ability to consciously or unconsciously obtain the good rolls that make their game easier to play correctly? This article will discuss how to close in on achieving random rolls for your games.

To achieve randomness in dice rolls, three items have to be under control: the dice, the dice cup, and the vigorous shake. The use of perfectly balanced dice has been a goal of mine for many years. The first action was to study dice to find the imperfections from perfection. The second step was the publication of an article in CHICAGO POINT concerning

one of the imperfections that was prevalent at the time. The third step was to provide top quality dice at a low price compared to others.

The effort was successful beyond my personal expectations. Those who care, know the physical characteristics associated with the dice I provide. Only one player has told me that I am too concerned about details that do not make any difference in obtaining good dice. I say that to produce top quality, one has to be very particular about even the most minute detail. All of my dice and most of the dice in use today and some of the other dice sold are made to casino standards. Casino dice mean perfection in the dimensions of the cube and the limited depth of drilling for the flush filled spots.

A second item needed to gain randomness is the vigorous shake. Fortunately the U.S. Backgammon Rules & Procedures that are in use today include the vigorous shake rule. Unfortunately, there are two items that defeat the rule. First, it is difficult to enforce. Second, some directors who use the U.S. Backgammon Rules for the running of their tournaments do not themselves set the example by using same. They frequently just put

their dice in their cup during the bearoff and dump their dice out! But at least one can visually see whether there is or is not a vigorous shake.

The third item needed is proper design of the dice cups in which we shake our dice. With this however, there are more problems than what one can easily deal with at this time. Some players like to have full size but lightweight sets. This generally means thin cases. And thin cases means oval cups. Then there is the matter of availability of cups. To fill the gap, wood cups are being sold that have a touch of an almost not-existent trip lip. One rule of thumb that I like to use is that if your dice never hang up in the cup, the trip lip is too thin to do its job!

So how does one judge what is a "good" cup? The guidance that I use contain the following. First, the minimum dimension of the narrowest portion of an oval shaped cup should be twice the dimension of the major diagonal of the dice being used. Second, the depth of the cup on the inside should be 2 1/2 inches or more. Third, the trip lip should hang up the dice on occasion; otherwise it is not doing its job. Each of these details is important in order to be able to respect the dice rolls that result. A nipple or bump on the bottom surface is also highly desirable.

Now suppose the equipment available for use does not have the above characteristics. What should be done? A simple change that will be of great help is to use just one cup and one pair of dice. The player's turn is complete when the dice are picked up, placed in the cup and set down to the side of the board. This even allows the player to give a quick shake of the dice prior to setting the cup down if he desires.—Larry "Diceman" Strommen Δ



2003 BPC PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED
THRU 31 JULY

Bob Zavoral	19.52	Bill Bartholomay	4.40	Ken Tibbs	1.36
Tim Mabee	17.80	Gary Kay	4.32	Joe Szweido	1.28
Lucky Nelson	13.40	Bob Steen	4.12	Dan Cox	1.28
Phil Simborg	12.00	Brian Barber	4.04	Phil Martorelli	1.12
Tak Morioka	10.90	Paul Friedman	3.92	Carol Hooker	1.12
Herb Roman	10.64	Doug Rodgers	3.64	Rodney Gonzalez	1.12
Michael Peters	10.28	Barbara Levinson	3.52	Ken Tyszko	1.12
Joe Wollick	9.96	Joe Sylvester	3.40	Mark King	1.12
Carter Mattig	9.92	Georgina Flanagan	3.32	Nora Luna-Righter	1.04
Phyllis Smolinski	9.04	Tim Serges	3.14	Barry Miller	1.04
David Rockwell	8.28	Wayne Wiest	3.00	Kathy Sorci	0.96
Mark Murray	7.84	Roland Dieter	2.96	Linda Rockwell	0.96
Alice Kay	7.60	Wendy Kaplan	2.80	Mike Sutton	0.96
Paul Baraz	7.20	Royal Robinson	2.64	Richard Lloyd	0.96
Eric Johnson	6.80	Howard Ring	2.64	Aaron Ashmann	0.88
Bill Davis	6.52	Steve Klesker	2.64	James Roston	0.72
Roger Hickman	6.48	Joann Feinstein	2.32	Elaine Andrews	0.72
Val Zimmnicki	6.32	Paul Franks	2.04	Mike Wolock	0.72
Arline Levy	6.16	Elaine Kehm	2.00	Paul Klein	0.72
Ken Bond	5.52	Larry Goldstein	1.92	Don Jayhan	0.64
Richard Stawowy	5.36	Mitch Pomper	1.84	Los Moshinsky	0.64
Ed Buerger	4.96	Glenn Martells	1.72	Brian Levanthal	0.56
Bill Keefe	4.88	Rory Pascar	1.64	Don Garner	0.56
Norma Shyer	4.72	David Araiza	1.52	Bobbie Ivanova	0.48
Peter Kalba	4.64	Jake Jacobs	1.44	Mary Franks	0.48
Tim Carroll	4.48				

LUCKY NELSON is July's BPC Player of the Month winning 3.96 master points. Runner's up were Bob Zavoral (3.24) and Joe Wollick (3.08).



ILLINOIS ACTION



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Tuesday, 6:00 P.M. at Clarion Hotel, 5615 N. Cumberland Ave., Chicago; 773/693-5800.

Sunday Bimonthly, 12:00 NOON at Champs Sports Bar, 17 W. 517 Roosevelt Rd., Oakbrook Terrace; 630/691-1888.

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

BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL BACKGAMMON CLUB: Tourn. Monday, 6:30 P.M. at Damon's Place For Ribs; 1701 Fort Jesse Road; Normal. Michael Flohr (309/662-7967)

SANGAMON VALLEY BACKGAMMON ASSOC.: Tournaments Wed., 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).
T/P BACKGAMMON CLUB: Tournaments Wednesday, 6:30 P.M. at Java Oasis; 2240 S. Michigan, Chicago. J.A. Miller (312/719-1245).

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