

new york metropolitan open & world doubles

SENK WINS NY DEBUT EVENT

Big Crowd “Loves New York”

By John O’Hagan

114 players came to Jersey City, New Jersey January 10–14 for the inaugural New York Metropolitan Open and World Doubles Championship. The tournament was held at the Hyatt Regency on the Hudson in Jersey City, a very nice hotel with a beautiful view of the Manhattan skyline. The event was very ably co-directed by Lynn Ehrlich and Howard Markowitz and their staff of Carol Joy Cole, Jeb Horton, and Troy Longman. This was a beautiful location for a tournament and I hope it becomes an annual event on the ABT tour.



Director Lynn Ehrlich presents Mike Senkiewicz his beautiful Liberty trophy.

New York’s own Mike Senkiewicz was the big winner. He beat me in the finals of the main event and teamed with Kent Goulding to win the World Doubles Championship. Another New Yorker with good results was Rick Barabino. He cashed twice—as a semifinalist in the main and as the winner of the Liberty Cup Masters event.



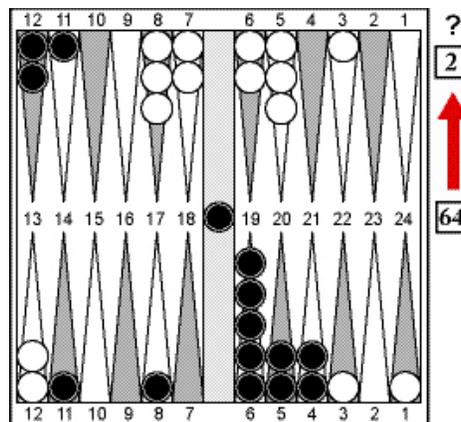
Masters winner Rick Barabino.

I rolled extremely well on my road to the finals which allowed me to defeat several excellent players by lopsided scores. In the 3rd, 4th, and 5th rounds, I beat Antonio Ortega (Costa Rica), Paul Magriel (Las

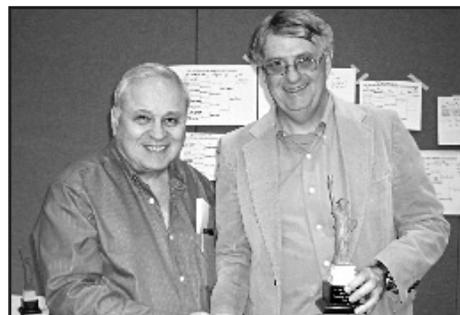
Vegas), and New York’s Neil Deutsch by scores of 13–0, 13–5, and 13–1. I now had to play a 15–pointer against Senk in the finals. Would my hot dice continue?

It looked as if they would early in the match. Things were going my way as I jumped out to an 8–3 lead. But Senk won the next seven games in a row to turn his 3–8 deficit into a commanding 13–8 lead. In the next game, I gave one of those early doubles the trailer is supposed to give at this score:

NY Metro finals. Mike Senkiewicz (White) leads John O’Hagan (Black) 13–8 to 15. Black on roll. **CUBE ACTION(S)?**



Certainly an easy take but I thought there were enough market losers to justify a cube at this score. I never imagined that Mike would pass this, but pass it he did to make the score 13–9. A 720 roll, 3-ply, precise Snowie rollout showed passing to be a huge .443 error.



Director Howard Markowitz with Champ runner-up John O’Hagan. [All NY Met photos by Carol Joy Cole.]

[Continued on page 7]

8th carolina invitational

KOCA & RICE WIN IN CAROLINA

Bob Koca of Baltimore, Maryland defeated Chicago area player David Rubin to win the Carolina Invitational. It was his first ABT Open victory since the 1995 Towpath event.

Jeb and Robin Horton’s 8th annual event was held 18–20 January at the Hilton University Place hotel in Charlotte, NC. Although the attendance was down from 2007, the energy level was as high as ever.



Carolina champion Bob Koca in action.

Koca needed only five match victories in a row to claim the title. After knocking out Bar Point expert Rory Pasciar in the semifinals, Bob faced the always-tough David Rubin. The match was uneventful with Koca coasting to an 11–5 victory.

In the Queen City Masters, Stick Rice of Columbus, OH won the \$7,000 prize money. Stick bested José Farca in the finals to capture the Queen City Cup.



Carolina director Jeb Horton (L) congratulates Queen City Cup champ Stick Rice.

The skunk dice game (won by Nora Luna Righter) raised \$500 for charity and the Horton’s made it \$1000. Nice gesture! Δ

[Complete results are on page 9]

CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

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LETTERS

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THE NEW RULES

Great job covering the new tournament rules in last month's issue, and thanks for inserting a copy! —*Drew Giovanis, Las Vegas, Nevada*

I just read the rule changes. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," or something like that. My thoughts of this especially apply to changes made to rule 4.6 (Premature Actions). What's the improvement here? If I understand it, we can both roll at same time now? Is that correct? How is "no premature rolls," going to apply if there is no such thing? How is allowing something previously forbidden going to stop it? Seems to me a whole different strategy is going to be developed, especially in clear no contact racing positions with the cube in play. Like I said, I'm not a master at this game, but I certainly don't understand how this improves anything? Maybe you can enlighten

[Continued on page 3]

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

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

by Carol Joy Cole
810/232-9731
cjc@flintbg.com

*Denotes new or revised listing

NATIONAL

American Backgammon Tour events underlined.

Feb 9*	Backgammon By the Bay, Peking Express, Berkeley, California	831/261-4583
Feb 9*	Pub Club Trophy Tourney, Playoffs Bar, Carol Stream, Illinois	630/606-2388
Feb 9*	Northwest Indiana Club Monthly, VFW Hall, Porter, Indiana	219/785-2082
Feb 10*	New England Club Monthly, Docksider Restaurant, Malden, Massachusetts	781/324-0892
Feb 10	Illinois State Challenge Cup, Playoffs Sports Bar, Carol Stream, Illinois	630/606-2388
Feb 10	South Florida Monthly, Northridge Raw Bar, Fort Lauderdale, Florida	954/564-0340
Feb 17*	Pittsburgh Monthly Tournament, Panera Bread, Wexford, Pennsylvania	412/826-1334
Feb 17	2008 Ohio Doubles Championship, Panera Bread, Dayton, Ohio	513/777-7862
Feb 21*	Third Thursday Bonus (Pittsburgh), Days Inn, Flint, Michigan	810/232-9731
Feb 23*	Backgammon By the Bay, Britannia Arms, Cupertino, California	831/261-4583
Feb 24*	Colorado Monthly, Bennigan's Restaurant, Denver, Colorado	303/761-0271
Feb 29-Mar 2	<u>2008 Midwest Backgammon Championships, Wyndham Lisle, Lisle, Illinois</u>	<u>773/583-6464</u>
Mar 1*	Kansas City Club Monthly, Westport Flea Market, Kansas City, Missouri	816/916-6599
Mar 2*	Ohio State Club Monthly, Spaghetti Warehouse, Akron, Ohio	330/268-4610
Mar 3*	Arizona Club Monthly, Rosie McCaffrey's Irish Pub, Phoenix, Arizona	602/279-0215
Mar 3*	Roy's Monthly, Restaurant Roy, Santa Barbara, California	805/966-5636
Mar 8*	Northwest Indiana Club Monthly, VFW Hall, Porter, Indiana	219/785-2082
Mar 8*	Springfield Series #5, Peoria Pizza Works, Peoria, Illinois	217/622-9447
Mar 9*	New England Club Monthly, Docksider Restaurant, Malden, Massachusetts	781/324-0892
Mar 9*	South Florida Monthly, Northridge Raw Bar, Fort Lauderdale, Florida	954/564-0340
Mar 16*	Pittsburgh Monthly Tournament, Panera Bread, Wexford, Pennsylvania	412/826-1334
Mar 16	25th Fleet Underwood Memorial, Holiday Inn, Flint, Michigan	810/232-9731
Mar 20*	Third Thursday Bonus (Ohio State), Days Inn, Flint, Michigan	810/232-9731
Mar 28-30	<u>30th Pittsburgh Championships & ABT Awards, Holiday Inn, Coraopolis, PA</u>	<u>412/823-7500</u>
Mar 30*	Colorado Monthly, Bennigan's Restaurant, Denver, Colorado	303/761-0271
Apr 5*	Springfield Series #6, Los Potrillos, Normal, Illinois	217/622-9447
Apr 6*	Bar Point Club Sunday Tournament, Holiday Inn-O'Hare, Chicago, Illinois	773/583-6464
Apr 6*	New England Club Monthly, Docksider Restaurant, Malden, Massachusetts	781/324-0892
Apr 6*	Ohio State Club Monthly, Spaghetti Warehouse, Akron, Ohio	330/268-4610
Apr 7*	Arizona Club Monthly, Rosie McCaffrey's Irish Pub, Phoenix, Arizona	602/279-0215
Apr 7*	Roy's Monthly, Restaurant Roy, Santa Barbara, California	805/966-5636
Apr 11-13	<u>14th Ohio State Championships: Airport Marriott Hotel, Cleveland, Ohio</u>	<u>330/268-4610</u>
Apr 16-20	<u>24th Nevada State Tournament, Riviera Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada</u>	<u>702/893-6025</u>
May 2-4	<u>Southeast Championships, Holiday Inn Dunwoody, Atlanta, Georgia</u>	<u>678/982-3203</u>
May 23-26	<u>28th Chicago Open, Eaglewood Resort, Itasca, Illinois</u>	<u>702/893-6025</u>
Jun 6-8	<u>Los Angeles Open, Airtel Hotel, Van Nuys, California</u>	<u>818/901-0464</u>
Jul 3-6	<u>Michigan Summer Championships, Sheraton Novi, Novi, Michigan</u>	<u>810/232-9731</u>
Aug 1-3	<u>Thousand Islands Tournament, Pine Tree Point, Alexandria Bay, New York</u>	<u>585/752-5393</u>
Aug 15-17	<u>Florida State Championship, Marriott North, Fort Lauderdale, Florida</u>	<u>954/564-0340</u>
Aug 29-Sep 2	<u>Wisconsin State Championships, Radisson Hotel, Madison, Wisconsin</u>	<u>608/516-9109</u>
Sep 26-28	<u>Colorado State Championships, Holiday Inn, Denver, Colorado</u>	<u>303/791-0271</u>
Oct 10-12	<u>Illinois State Championships, Ramada Hotel, Peoria, Illinois</u>	<u>847/845-3579</u>
Oct 17-19	<u>Mid-Atlantic Championships, Days Inn, Timonium, Maryland</u>	<u>954/564-0340</u>
Nov 12-16	<u>Las Vegas Open, Riviera Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada</u>	<u>702/893-6025</u>
Dec 5-7	<u>California State Championship, Airtel Hotel, Van Nuys, California</u>	<u>818/901-0464</u>

OUTSIDE USA

Feb 14-17	PGT: Groupe Partouche Trophy, Palm Beach Casino, Cannes, France	33147-587179
Feb 23-24*	Queensland Championship, Gold Coast Club, Surfers Paradise, Australia	61402-863825
Feb 29-Mar 2*	17th Città di Torino, Circolo Idea Bridge, Turin, Italy	393489-001340
Mar 7-9	BIBA International Championship, Barceló Daventry Hotel, Daventry, England	441522-888676
Mar 15-16*	WBF-Turkiye 1st Izmir Open Championship, Istanbul, Turkey	905322-329228
Mar 20-24	WSOB: TrueMoneygames Nordic Open, Marienlyst, Helsingør, Denmark	4533-363601
Apr 3-6	PGT: Lyon Trophy 2, Casino Le Lyon Vert, La Tour de Salvagny, France	331-47645938
Apr 3-6*	6th Torneo Città di Cavalese, (Hotel Bellavista), Cavalese, Italy	393283-380725
Apr 4-6	British Open, Barceló Daventry Hotel, Daventry, England	441522-888676
Apr 23-27	PGT: 9th Paris Master & Open, Hotel Lutetia, Paris, France	331-47645938
Apr 29-May 4	EBGT: 2nd Davis Cup/3rd Portuguese Open, Estoril (Lisbon), Portugal	491715-422222
May 2-4	County Cups Trophy, Barceló Daventry Hotel, Daventry, England	441522-888676
May 9-12*	13th Kaiserbrunnen-Cup, Hotel Kaiserbrunnen, Brakel, Germany	49711-486190
May 15-18*	20th WBF European Championship & 7th Velden Open, Velden, Austria	390331-923537
May 16-18*	NetGammon's Montreal Open, Hotel Novotel, Montreal, Quebec, Canada	661/618-9940
May 17-18*	4th Oulu Open 2008, Bar & Café Miliou, Oulu, Finland	358405-806916
May 29-Jun 1	PGT: Eden Tournament, Eden Casino, Juan-les-Pins, France	331-47645938
May 30-Jun 1	Austrian Masters Finale, Cafe Heine, Vienna, Austria	436642-127412
May 31-Jun 6	Neil Davidson's 2008 Festival of Backgammon, Andalucia, Spain	447798-614800
Jun 5-8	2nd Braunlage-Harz-Cup, Hotel Hohenzollern, Braunlage, Germany	49521-64314
Jun 6-8*	Barcelo English Open, Barceló Daventry Hotel, Daventry, England	441522-888676

LETTERS...

[Continued from page 2]

me.—Larry Buckingham, Dayton, Ohio

Thank you for including a copy of the “2008 Backgammon Tournament Rules & Procedures” along with the January POINT. And I also appreciated the way you highlighted some of the significant rule changes in your January issue. CHICAGO POINT guides us around the rocky shoals as shown on the card I’m sending you.—Lee Hoge (age 92)—Saratoga Springs, New York

Thanks so much for your kind thoughts and the nice thank-you card, Lee. And Larry, please read Danny Kleinman’s “Shades of Gray” column (page 4) for his take on the new fast-rolling rule.—Ed.

RANDOM DOUBLING THOUGHTS

Please send me the full text of the 1929 Vogue article as offered in the Nov./Dec. POINT. By the way, I also have a set of Backgammon Matches, so that makes at least three of us who own them.

The doubling meter that Chris Bray owns (or a similar one) was up for auction several years ago on eBay. I got outbid in the closing moments.

The ship’s manifest from a 1926 Cunard line warns passengers to “stay away from the professional gamblers,” but does

not list which gambling games were involved. The search continues.—Maurice Barie, Ferndale, Michigan

You’ll be interested in our historic Doubling finds on page 5, Maurice. Keep searching!—Ed.

JAPANESE BACKGAMMON OPENINGS

Nack Ballard and I are very happy that *Backgammon Openings, Book A* has been translated into Japanese. Masayuki “Mochy” Mochizuki arranged for Kenta Kawano, a 21-year-old English student, to do the translation which took more than three months. When Mochy sells a copy of our book in English to someone in Japan, he will include a CD containing the Japanese translation.

I went to Jake Jacobs’ wedding on January 16 in Lom Sak, Thailand. It was cool. I am now up in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Next, I’ll go to Australia February 6–25 to play in three tournaments on successive weekends. Tourney organizers arranged the schedule for me in Adelaide, Sydney, and Gold Coast. It’s quite an honor.—Paul Weaver, via e-mail

JAKE’S THAI WEDDING

Ta spent most of Thursday and Friday trying to get a replacement passport (hers was stolen last week). Friday afternoon Ben discovered a gift-wrapped box of candy I had for the front desk staff here: “Birth-

day!” She wasn’t happy that I wouldn’t let her open it, but luckily I had a substitute: the Bar Point Club and Pub Club gift and wedding card that my best man Carter Mattig brought with him from Chicago. (I had to explain what “Waterford” meant to Ta—she says “Khap khun mahk ka!”)

Thank Chicagoland from both of us. Wish you all could have been here! Out of six backgammon players attending, one was molested by a transvestite, one gave a stripper an oil massage, and one sliced open his hand on the bus demonstrating the proper way to open a beer. Think what we could have done with a bracket of 32!—Jake & Ta Jacobs, Sommerville Park, Singapore



Newlyweds Ta and Jake Jacobs with best man Carter Mattig in Thailand.

THE TALENTED ART

I just watched Art Benjamin’s “Mathematics” performance on the Internet and it is incredible. I know that Art put his show on at one of your Midwest tournaments and thought your members would enjoy this: www.ted.com/index.php/talks/view/id/199 —Art Grater, Pebble Beach, California Δ

ABT AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 2008	AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 2008 Compiled through 20 Jan. 2008 after 2 tournaments (Upcoming events: Midwest Champs, Pittsburgh, Ohio)	ABT AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 2008
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MIKE SENKIEWICZ 22.33	Owen Black 6.20	Ed O’Laughlin 4.50	Tom Rebelo 2.05
BOB KOCA 18.00	Rick Barabino 5.58	Milton Gonzalez 4.10	Evan Etter 1.55
JOHN O’HAGAN 11.17	Neil Deutsch 5.58	Dave Settles 4.10	Ben Elliott 1.55
Jeff Acierno 11.17	Antonio Ortega 5.58	Joseph Jemal 3.10	Josh Rechnitz 1.25
Michael Edge 9.00	Stepan Nuniyants 5.58	Beth Raby 3.10	Alan Lawrence 1.00
David Rubin 9.00	Bill Davis 4.50	Charles Toots 2.05	Camille Lawrence 0.50
Reggie Prouix 8.20			

	CHICAGO BAR POINT CLUB 2008 PLAYER OF THE YEAR	COMPILED THRU 31 JAN.
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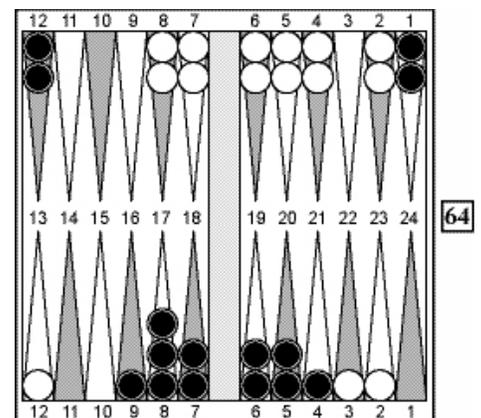
Nora Luna Righter 5.12	Tak Morioka 2.04	Tom Machaj 1.12	Wendy Kaplan 0.60
Steve Klesker 4.64	Bill Davis 1.96	Gary Kay 1.00	Alice Kay 0.56
David Rockwell 3.28	Ken Tibbs 1.84	Mike Sutton 0.96	Linda Rockwell 0.56
Royal Robinson 3.04	Bob Zavoral 1.52	Wayne Wiest 0.88	Lucky Nelson 0.56
Phil Simborg 2.88	Adrian Rios 1.36	Bill Keefe 0.72	Sherry Nelson 0.56
Rory Pascal 2.48	Albert Yakobashvili 1.36	Richard Stawowy 0.72	Kathy Sorci 0.52
Bill Bartholomay 2.16	Oleg Raygorodsky 1.36	Herb Roman 0.72	Roger Hickman 0.48
Michael Ginat 2.16	Larry Goldstein 1.28	Mike Pufpaf 0.60	Roz Ferris 0.32
Jacob Moreno 2.16	Nicole Tibbs 1.12		

NORA LUNA RIGHTER (5.12) had a dream January including capturing the BPC Doubles tournament and winning 11 in a row. Runner’s up were Steve Klesker (4.64) and David Rockwell (3.28).

your move

PROBLEM #334
to be analyzed by Kit Woolsey

9-point match tied at 0 to 0. **BLACK TO PLAY 5-4.**



SHADES OF GRAY

A RULES AND RULINGS COLUMN

© 2008 by Danny Kleinman

FAST-ROLLING CONSEQUENCES

4.6 PREMATURE ACTIONS. All premature actions (dice rolls or cube actions) shall stand if otherwise valid. An opponent who has yet to complete his turn or act upon the cube may then do so with foreknowledge of the premature action.

New US Backgammon Tournament Rule 4.6 seeks to discourage fast-rolling by creating adverse consequences for fast rolls. The principle is simple: No rolled numbers are canceled. The fast-roller's opponent completes his turn with foreknowledge of the fast-rolled numbers.

The problems that can arise from fast-rolling are not all that simple. Here are some questions to be resolved. In each case, White has rolled before Black has reached to lift his dice. (Feigning lifting one's dice raises other questions.)

1. White's fast-rolled dice land cocked. When must he reroll?

Clearly, White cannot turn the cube and then reroll. Some directors have ruled that White must reroll before Black completes his play to give Black the same benefit of foreknowledge that Black would enjoy had the fast roll not been cocked. That's not unreasonable, but I feel it's unduly

harsh. I would rule that White lucked out when his dice landed cocked, and need not reroll until after Black completes his play. Why? Because the aim of the rules is not to punish violators, but to deter violations, for which a risk of adverse consequences suffices. Room for disagreement here!

2. Realizing that he has rolled prematurely, White lifts his fast-rolled dice immediately. Has he, in effect, made "no play" just as if he had rolled in turn and lifted his dice without moving?

Some directors have ruled that White must restore the fast-rolled dice to the table, and will get to play his numbers after Black completes his turn. This seems reasonable for a first offense, an innocent attempt to cancel a violation that has already occurred. I could go along with this ruling, provided the director warns White that future lifting of fast-rolled dice will be deemed *no play*. Again there is room for disagreement.

3. White snatches his fast-rolled dice so quickly that Black and White cannot agree as to what the numbers were. Should the fast roll be voided just as if it had never occurred (as one director ruled)?

Emphatically *not*. If the director can determine what the fast-rolled number actually was, White's fast roll stands and his dice must be restored to the table. In case of dispute, the director may take the word of Black, the non-offending player. If the director cannot determine what the fast-rolled number was, then the fast roll should

be treated as cocked dice. [*see (1) above.*]

Of course a dishonest Black could claim the fast-rolled number was the number that is White's worst, but this problem is not unique to fast-rolling. A dishonest player could make a similar claim about his own or his opponent's dice after the completion of a legal move. No rule addresses what to do about lying and cheating players, but sooner or later (we should hope sooner) they get found out and bounced.

4. If a match is being video-recorded, can the director use video evidence to help him make a ruling?

Absolutely. Why not always use the best evidence available?

THESE QUESTIONS HIGHLIGHT a feature of the rules, and of rules in general, whether in the laws of backgammon and other games or in the laws of societies. Nobody has the ability to anticipate all the circumstances that may arise and write a set of rules that covers all situations fairly; but if anyone did, the rule book would be far too lengthy and complicated for even the best director or judge to research and apply.

Law must not be confused with justice. Rules alone will not suffice, and we shall always need knowledgeable and fair-minded arbiters to make rulings.—Danny Kleinman 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 Avenue 504; Chicago, IL 60659-3155 or e-mail: bg@chicagopoint.com.

BACKGAMMON PROBLEMS

Mike Corbett's New Book

Reviewed By Bill Davis

Backgammon Problems by Mike Corbett. © 2007 by Llumina Press. Softcover, 205 pages. \$31 plus shipping (\$5 USA, \$11 overseas). Order from Carol Joy Cole (cjc@flintbg.com or 810/223-9731).

Any of you who have attended a lecture by backgammon giant Mike Corbett will know how entertaining he can be. Mike's speciality is finding complex positions that even Snowie fails to solve. And that's what this book is all about.

The reader is made aware that this will be a "fun" book by the cover showing a player stretched across a backgammon board having accidentally rolled the pills out of his prescription bottle. And a quick

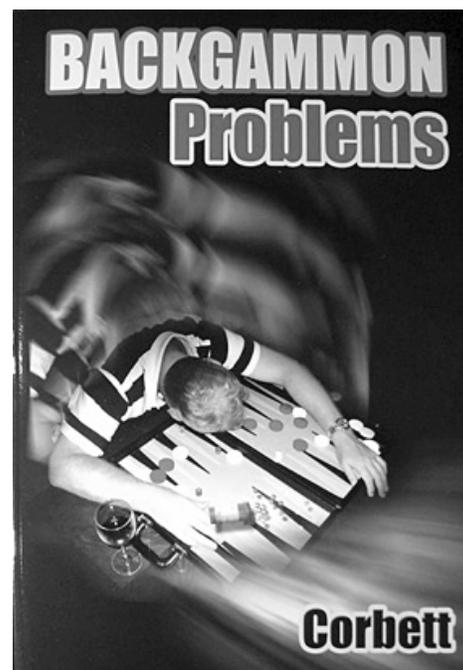
read of the problem chapter titles confirms this: "Gratitude is a Disease of Dogs," "Fyzzyx," "The Coroner's Tale," "The Kitten and the Puddle," "Sex," and "Eggs and Cows" are just six of 38.

Backgammon legend Kent Goulding sums up the book with his wonderful forward to *Backgammon Problems* on the back cover:

"While those who worship at the altar of Snowie might find Mr. Corbett's writing irreverent or sacrilegious, he finds an excellent balance between exposing Snowie's evaluation flaws while respecting its invaluable use as a research tool in this delightful series of well-written articles . . .

" . . . Quotes from famous figures in history? Check. Suggestions on cooking exotic game? Check. Philosophical discussions of the human condition? Check. Sex therapy for the backgammon set? Check.

"I like Mike's book. Buy it." Δ





NEW DOUBLING DISCOVERIES

By Bill Davis

Thanks to newspaperarchive.com and the *Beginner's Book of Modern Backgammon* (Oct. 1930 by Ralph A. Bond), we have new information on the invention of backgammon doubling and the doubling cube. This information will soon be incorporated into our online Doubling History article (chicagopoint.com/doubling.html).

A search of thousands of newspapers at newspaperarchive.com for the word "backgammon" between the years 1930 and 1931 yields over 1600 backgammon references. Articles in these years tell the tale of how popular backgammon actually was. There were three major syndicated series designed to teach the game: "How To Play Today's Backgammon" by Elizabeth Clark Boyden (September 1930), "Learn Backgammon In 5 Minutes A Day" by J. Van Cleft Cooper (October 1930), and "Backgammon of Today" by John Longacre (December 1930).

THE BRIDGE CONNECTION

Mr. Cooper's third article in his series is titled "Doubles." In the first paragraph, Cooper gives insight into where the concept of doubling came from:

"The doubling feature of bridge has been adapted to modern Backgammon. In Backgammon the first double raises the value of a game from one to two, the second makes it four, the third eight, and so on."

In bridge, if a player doubles his opponents' bid, he doubles the game scoring. The team whose bid has been doubled has the right to redouble. In the early 1900s (prior to Harold Vanderbilt's invention of Contract bridge in 1925), multiple redoubling was permitted. So it seems very reasonable to assume that bridge gamesters introduced doubling into backgammon.

FIRST DOUBLING CUBE PHOTO

The September 23, 1930 *Olean (NY) Evening Times* provides us with what is now the first-ever photograph of a doubling cube (this beats the photo we used in POINT Issue 195 by about 10 months). The photo that follows appeared in many news-

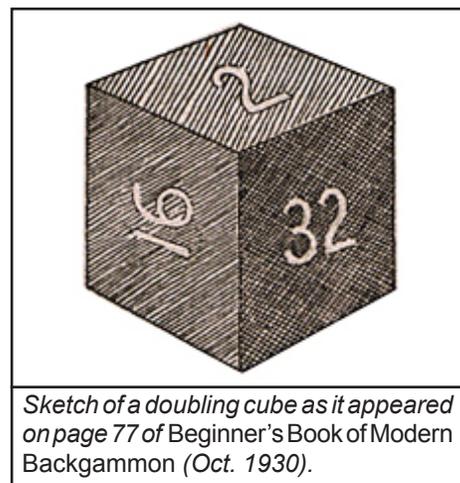
papers between September 23 and October 4, 1930 to promote the coming backgammon craze. Thanks to Kathleen Davis for having Ara Kaye at the State Historical Society of Missouri send us a microfilm copy from the *Jefferson City Post Tribune*.



This is the earliest known photograph of a doubling cube. It first appeared in the *Olean Evening Times* Sept. 23, 1930.

The *Beginner's Book of Modern Backgammon* provides two new cube discoveries. The book, published in October 1930, strongly promoted the use of the doubling cube. The beginning of the book (page 9) states:

"The three changes in the ancient game which have been responsible for its present day rebirth and tremendous popularity are, (1) "doubling" . . . (2) "chouette" . . . (3) **the use of the doubling cube** which has done so much to popularize the modern phase of the game as it makes clear at a glance the stakes and the player's standing in the game. It replaces the antiquated use of matches which has been aptly described as a "cord of wood" in a game where there is considerable doubling and redoubling."



Sketch of a doubling cube as it appeared on page 77 of *Beginner's Book of Modern Backgammon* (Oct. 1930).

1930s TOURNAMENTS & THE CUBE

Additionally, the last page of the book (p. 94) contains a section titled "Rules For Tournaments." It is clear that the doubling cube was used for tournament play in 1930:

RULES FOR TOURNAMENTS

After the entry list is closed and tournament play has begun, each player throws [*sic*] one die and the one who throws the highest number makes the opening move from this combination. In the event of tied dice the game is not doubled. The players throw again or until one die is larger in number than the other. From this time on throughout the game the doubling for points rests with the players themselves.

Each player calls aloud the numbers on the dice thrown and leaves them on the table until the moves of the men are made and accepted by his opponent.

Each player must throw the dice into the table on his right hand and the die must rest flat upon the field before a move of the men is made.

- Preliminary round, first 7 points win.
- Semi-final round, first 9 points win.
- Final round, 11 points win.
- Doubling method to be used.
- One point counted for single game.
- Two points counted for double game.

MAKE A DISCOVERY!

Sometime in March, look for an updated article on the History of Backgammon Doubling and the Doubling Cube online at www.chicagopoint.com/doubling.html.

CHICAGO POINT will continue to search books, magazines, and newspapers to find out more about one of the most intriguing (and mysterious) parts of our game. Submit new information on the doubling or an earlier documented photograph of the doubling cube and receive a one year subscription to the POINT. Happy hunting.—Bill Davis Δ

VEGAS SUPERJACKPOT

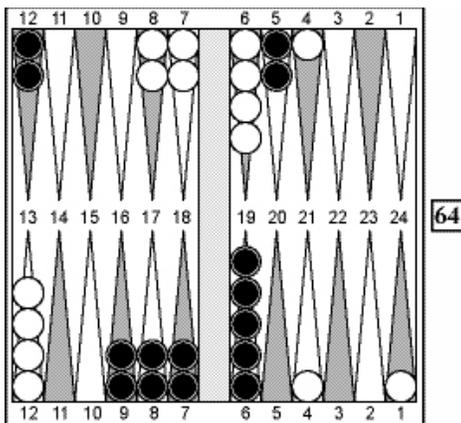


By Paul Weaver

 Steve Sax and Hugh Sconyers have been super backgammon players for decades. They met in the finals of the Super Jackpot event at the Las Vegas Open in November 2007. According to the Snowie analysis, both played exceptionally well. In particular, Steve, who won the match, played with an error rate of 3.0.

Although quite a few players somehow manage to play this well online, there are probably fewer than a dozen who average better than 3.0 in live tournament play. Let's look at a few positions from the match:

Pos. 1. 2007 Las Vegas Super Jackpot 15 point finals. Steve Sax (Black) and Hugh Sconyers (White) are tied 0-0. **BLACK TO PLAY 2-1.**

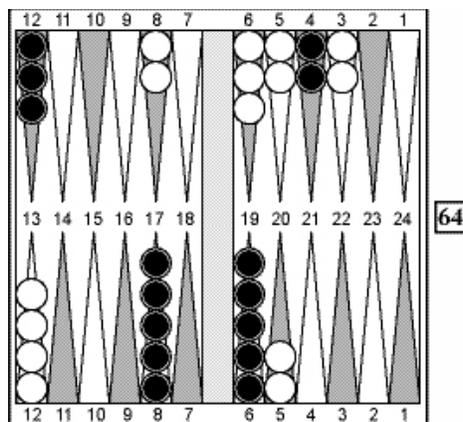


In Pos. 1, Steve (Black) has a 2-1 to play. The beginner's safe but sorry 9/8, 9/7 is a major whopper. Steve found the correct move: 7/5, 6/5. Although this play breaks the four-prime and volunteers a double shot, it:

- Makes the 5-point
- Unstacks the 6-point
- Duplicates White's 3s.
- Guarantees Black will have return shots if hit.

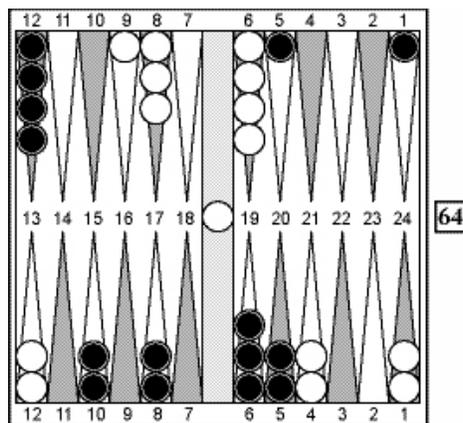
Incidentally, the second best play is 6/5*, 6/4.

Pos. 2. Steve Sax (Black) leads Hugh Sconyers (White) 1-0 to 15. **WHITE TO PLAY 4-3.**



Hugh (White) has a 4-3 to play. Ahead by 9 pips (before the roll) and owning the stronger board, Hugh correctly broke his anchor. If White plays the pedestrian 13/6, White may not be blessed with another convenient anchor-breaking roll before Black strengthens his board.

Pos. 3. Steve Sax (Black) leads Hugh Sconyers (White) 4-1 to 15. **WHITE TO PLAY 3-2.**

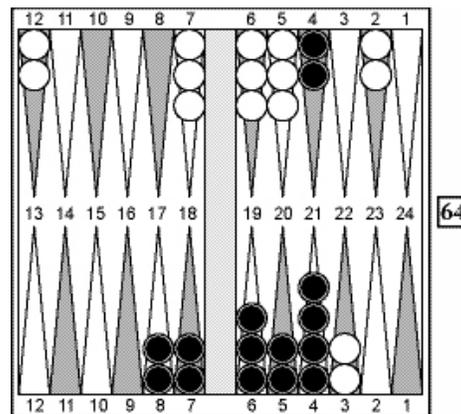


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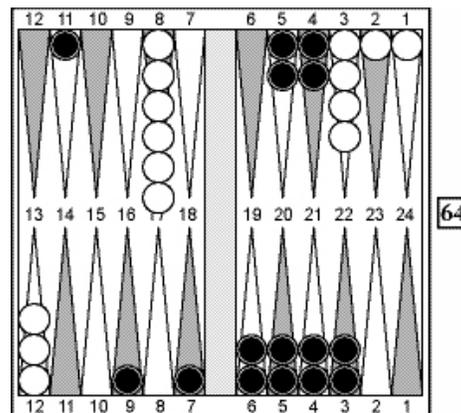
Trailing by 38 pips, Hugh (White) has a 3-2 to play. Many players would fight for the 5-point, but Hugh correctly used the roll to improve his defense. Making the 22-point upgrades White's backgame. Hugh's play would be right even if it did not duplicate Black's 4s (i.e., if his 9-point blot was on the 10- or 11-point).

Pos. 4. Steve Sax (Black) leads Hugh Sconyers (White) 6-4 to 15. **BLACK TO PLAY 6-4.**



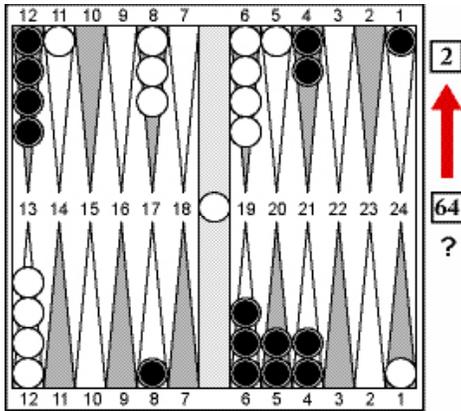
Black is ahead by 20 pips after his play. Breaking his five-prime would be a whopper. Many players would run one checker (21/11), but Steve played 21/17, 21/15. Although it leaves two blots exposed, it gives White only one number (4-4) that both hits and makes an inner point. The incorrect 21/11 gives White nine numbers that point on Black, in addition to 6-2 that hits outside.

Pos. 5. Steve Sax (Black) leads Hugh Sconyers (White) 7-4 to 15. **BLACK TO PLAY 6-2.**



In this complex position, Steve correctly played 14/8, 9/7. Making the 14-point gives Black an outfield presence, but giving up the 20-point now makes life too easy for White. He might cover his blots and get lucky and make his 5-point. Keeping both the 21- and 20-point will give White bad 3s and 4s for the next few rolls.

Pos. 6. Steve Sax (Black) leads Hugh Sconyers (White) 12–6 to 15. **CUBE ACTION;** then **BLACK TO PLAY 6-2.**

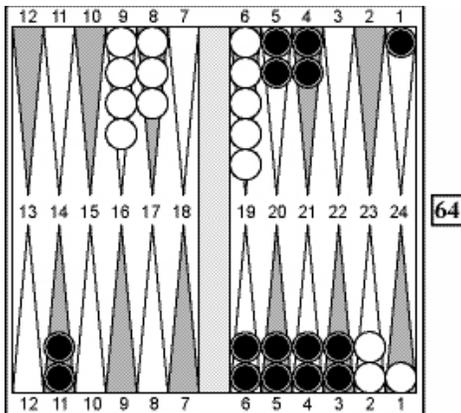


Although this position would be a huge pass for money, Steve correctly did not double. He wins a gammon roughly 40% of the time, and doing so with the cube on 1 puts him within one point of winning the match. Doubling to 2 invites White to re-double to 4, giving him too great a chance to luck his way back into the match.

With 6-2, Steve correctly played 13/7, 13/11, duplicating White's 6s. After this play, White should not hit with 6-1, 6-2 and 6-3. If White hits with 4-3, 5-2 or 5-3, Black will have many return shots.

Black can do nothing to prevent White from covering his 5-point with 14 numbers, but he can give himself a great chance to make a four-prime on his next roll.

Pos. 7. Steve Sax (Black) leads Hugh Sconyers (White) 12–6 to 15. **BLACK TO PLAY 6-3.**



With Black to play 6-3, many players would be tempted to run (24/15) or make the 18-point (24/18, 21/18). Steve found the correct play: 21/18, 21/15. Keeping a checker back on the 24-point gives Black a chance to pick up another checker over the next few rolls, thereby increasing his gammon chances.

My thanks to Nack Ballard for helping me edit this article.—Paul Weaver Δ

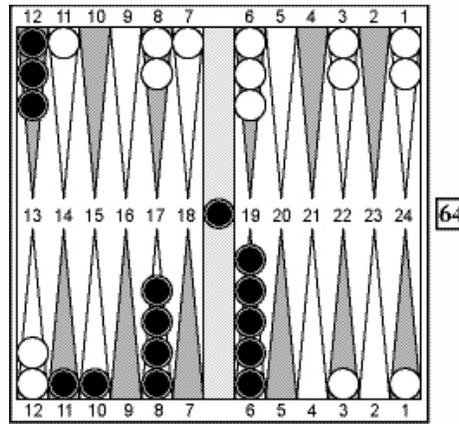
SENK WINS...

[Continued from page 1]

The next game was similar. I gave another easily takable early double and he mistakenly passed again, this time making a .228 error. If it weren't for these two huge errors, Mike's Snowie error rating would have been extremely low. But these errors boosted his error rating to 5.67 vs. my 3.54.

That made the score 13–10, and now it was my turn to make a big mistake:

NY Metro finals. Mike Senkiewicz (White) leads John O'Hagan (Black) 13–10 to 15. **BLACK TO PLAY 5-3.**



After the forced Bar/20, I quickly played 6/3* with the 3. Over the board, a tempo hit seemed automatic since I didn't want to give Mike his whole roll with those four builders aiming at my blot on his 5-point. But 13/10 with the 3 is a much better play. The 10-point is somewhat useful and lowering the blot count from four to two is valuable. A Snowie rollout showed my play to be a .255 blunder. Hitting loose gives me

fewer wins, fewer gammon wins, and more gammon losses! A very bad play.

Mike then hit on the 15-point with a 6-4 (Bar/21/15*), I danced, and he correctly played on for an undoubled gammon. I avoided the worst by anchoring on the 23-point, but he never left a shot in the bearoff, and I lost a gammon and the match 15–10.

Congratulations to Mike and to all the other winners, and also to Lynn, Howard, and staff for a job well done.—John O'Hagan Δ

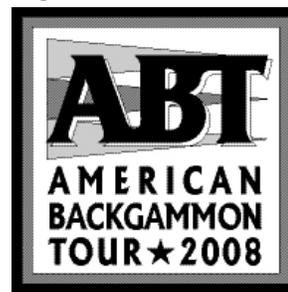
NY METROPOLITAN OPEN & WORLD DOUBLES

CHAMPIONSHIP (67+29 rebuys): 1-Mike Senkiewicz (NY), 2-John O'Hagan (IN), 3/4-Rick Barabino (NY) / Neil Deutsch (NY); 1C-Jeff Acerno (NJ), 2C-Antonio Ortega (Costa Rica); 1LC-Stepan Nuniyants (WA). **INTERMEDIATE (42+14 rebuys):** 1-Reggie Proulx (Canada), 2-Milton Gonzalez (Costa Rica); 1C-Dave Settles (IL), 2C-Charles Toots (CA); 1LC-Tom Rebelo (Canada). **BEGINNER (5):** 1-Josh Rechnitz (NY). **LIBERTY CUP MASTERS (32):** 1-Rick Barabino (NY), 2-Dion Hogan (MI). **LIMITED JACKPOT (32):** 1-Bob Tilp (NJ), 2-Antonio Ortega (Costa Rica). **NEW YORK DOUBLES (16 teams):** 1-Mary Hickey (OH) & Claude Landry (Canada), 2-Boris Dekhtyar (NY) & Felix Goykhman (NJ). **SENIORS TOURNAMENT (32):** 1-Charles Silverman (NJ), 2-Dr. Bob Hill (NY). **\$50 JACKPOT #1 (32):** 1-Herb Gurland (MA); #2 (16): 1-Richard Munitz (NY). **\$20 JACKPOT #1 (32):** 1-Garry Kallos (Canada); #2 (16): 1-Ira Siegler (NJ). **\$300 SUNDAY JACKPOT (4):** 1-Howard Markowitz (NV). **\$100 SUNDAY JACKPOT (8):** 1-Mark Megalli (NY). **WORLD DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP (4 teams):** 1-Mike Senkiewicz (NY) & Kent Goulding (MD), 2-Howard Markowitz (NV) & Ed O'Laughlin.

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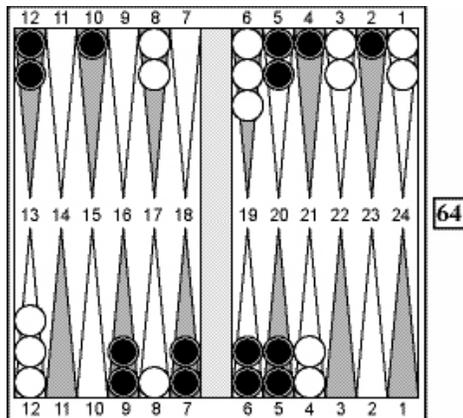
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PROBLEM #333 ANALYZED

by Dana Nazarian

11-point match tied at 6-6. **BLACK TO PLAY 5-3.**



I've heard that the roll with the highest probability of being misplayed is 2-2. I don't know if that's true, but playing that roll correctly in this particular position seems trivially easy compared to the 5-3 rolled here. (By the way, would you have played 2-2 correctly here? 23/21, 15/9 is best. I'm not sure I would have, but at least I would have had only two choices.)

Speaking of choices, Black has almost too many to count here. If you find yourself in this situation over the board, a good approach is to group similar plays and then compare groups. Let's see . . . we could:

A. Hit: Hit White's blot with 13/8*, then look for a 3 to play;

B. Prime: Make the 10-point improving the prime;

C. Consolidate: Make a point in White's outfield, either the 15- or 18-point, cleaning up and awaiting developments;

D. Quiet: Make a quiet play, either 21/13 or 15/7;

E. Kamikaze: Stick blots in front of everything, hope to get hit, and improve our back game.

It's great if you are sharp enough to even consider **E (Kamikaze)**, but it should be rejected right away. With a more advanced anchor, a better prime, and all checkers working in front of White, Black is the favorite in this position even with a 39 pip race deficit. It's way too early to give up on winning forward.

D (Quiet) can also be rejected by comparing it to **C (Consolidate)**. What's

better—cleaning up one blot, or cleaning up two blots while simultaneously making a valuable point?

A (Hit) can be rejected by comparing it to **B (Priming)**. Both give up the midpoint which is a big concession. It provides connectivity to Black's back men while simultaneously working for control of the outfield. If Black's going to give up such a key asset, he should do so for a good reason. The 10-point is such a reason. It strengthens an already good prime and further constrains White.

What's White's game plan? With a huge race lead, she's clearly trying to escape her two back men, connect to the rest of her army, and bring home a race. Building the 10-point makes it harder for her to do that. Conversely, hitting with 13/8* doesn't do much. It gains 8 pips in the race, but Black's still left with a huge race deficit after the play. And it actually gains nothing in the race on the 12+ shakes that hit back.

Hitting doesn't really further constrain White either. In fact, giving up the midpoint arguably allows White more flexibility on future rolls. So, if the midpoint is going to be conceded, making the 10-point must be better than hitting.

So we're down to either **B (Prime)** or **C (Consolidate)**. If we consolidate, what's better—the 15-point or the 18-point? To me, 23/15 is better for a few reasons. The most obvious reason is connectivity. By playing 23/15, Black's anchors are spread out and all his checkers are nicely connected working very hard to support each other. Conversely, the combination of the 20-point and 18-point isn't as strong. It does connect the back men, but the outfield anchor on the 18-point is now disconnected from the 9-point.

Black has many stripped outfield points after either play so he won't be able to hold all of those points long. Making the 15-point allows Black to release from the midpoint activating some spares with minimal risk while maintaining a nicely connected pattern. In general, it's better to have your anchors spread out and that's the case here.

So now we're down to two choices, but which 10-point is correct to make? It's a very tough call. When I first saw this problem, my initial gut feel was to make my own 10-point. After all, I've already outlined the merits of this play. 15/10 13/10 exploits Black's main advantage nicely. I certainly wouldn't argue with that play.

But the more I thought about it, building my opponent's 10-point made more sense. It wasn't any one individual reason, but six different small reasons added together:

1. Playing 23/15 keeps many different winning game plans alive. Although the 5-prime is better than a 4-prime, I can still win a priming battle with this play. I can still blitz if and when White leaps. And I can win the timing battle in the outfield. On the other hand if I make my 10-point, I am more or less committing to one game plan, the prime. When given a choice between making a committal play vs. leaving many viable winning game plans open, the latter is usually better, especially when the game has several shakes left and when you have cube access. (Bill Robertie thoroughly discusses this concept in his *Modern Backgammon*.)

2. White wants to leap soon. The most opportune time to leap is when your opponent is on the bar. And by making the 10-point and leaving three blots exposed, Black is headed to the bar soon and at a moment when White's board is still better than Black's.

3. Making the 10-point concedes both valuable connectivity and outfield control.

4. Even if the prime works, White still has decent chances (maybe 30%+) by just sitting tight on the 4-point.

5. There are probably more gammons against me if I make my 10-point and expose three blots. It may seem trivial in this position, but I always consider gammons, especially when two plays are close. Considering gammons often breaks close ties.

6. White's future checker play decisions will be harder if Black makes the 15-point. She will have to time her leap precisely, and she is more likely to err in the near future if I make this play. So, I give the nod to 23/15.—Dana Nazarian Δ



ILLINOIS ACTION



Bill Davis
773/583-6464
Peter Kalba
312/316-1432

Tuesday, 6:30 P.M. at Holiday Inn, 5615 N. Cumberland Ave., Chicago. 773/693-5800.

Sunday Bimonthly, 12:00 NOON at Holiday Inn, 5615 N. Cumberland Ave., Chicago. 773/693-5800.

BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL BG CLUB: Tournaments Tuesday, 6:00 P.M. at Los Potrillos, 201 Landmark Drive, Normal. Michael Flohr (309/662-7967).

SANGAMON VALLEY BACKGAMMON ASSOC.: Tournaments Wednesday, 6:00 P.M. at Capitol Teletrack, 1766 W. Wabash Ave., Springfield. Randy Armstrong (217/528-0117).

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

PUB CLUB: Tournaments Thurs., 6:45 P.M. at Playoffs Bar, 720 E. North Ave., Carol Stream. Tim Mabee (630/606-2388).

PEORIA BG CLUB: Tourn. Thurs., 6:30 P.M. at Peoria Pizza Works, 3921 Prospect, Peoria. Ed Zell (309/224-9579).

WINNER'S CIRCLE



DEC.-JAN. 2008

•**14th German Open** (Altenkirchen, Germany; 6-9 Dec.)... OPEN: 1-Axel Schürmann, 2-Peter Gelpke (NL), 3-Ingo Mohr. JACKPOT: 1-Ullrich Anhalt, 2-Jacqueline Krause. POKER WINNERS: Ingo Mohr, Athanasius Lagopatis & Peter v.d. Bruck, Anders Nielander (DEN), Stefan Bobenhausen.

•**Thun Open & Swiss Doubles** (Thun, Switzerland; 8-9 Dec.)... OPEN (13): 1-Patrick Didisheim, 2-Silvio Carrese; 1C-Damian Plesec (SLO). BERNER OBERLANDER CUP (14): 1-Conny Schoch, 2-Silvio Carrese; 1C-Claus Weissbarth. SWISS DOUBLES (7 teams): 1-Hauswirth & Scheidiger, 2-Iseppi & Weissbarth. SNOWIE WARM-UP (11): 1-Hans Weber (GER), 2-Daniel Bruni.

•**Championship of France** (Paris, France; 12-16 Dec.)... OPEN (38): 1-Eric Guedj, 2-Olivier Lafon, 3/4-Eric Sfez / Thierry Manouck.

•**Jules' 3rd Christmas Cracker** (Creton, England; 14-16 Dec.)... OPEN: 1-Raj Janasari, 2-Howard Morris, 3/4-Julian Fetterlein / Marcus Wrinch; 1C-Mike Heard, 2C-Malcolm Robertson; 1LC-Lawrence Powell. HOLD'EM POKER: 1-John Clark, 2-Andy Bell.

•**11th Grand Prix de Suisse & World Doubles** (Ascona, Switzerland; 14-16 Dec.)... OPEN (53): 1-Christian Liebe-Harkort (GER), 2-Luigi Villa (ITA), 3/4-Vittorio Castro (IT) / Halil Tulan (SWZ); 1C-Vincenzo Riceputi (ITA), 2C-Bartolomeo Migliore (IT); 1LC-Carlo Facchetti (ITA). WORLD DOUBLES (13 teams): 1-Gian Carlo Canzi (ITA) & Bartolomeo Migliore (ITA), 2-Vittorio Castro & Alberto Rusca. CAMPIONATO TICINESE (27): 1-Raffaele Castro (ITA).

•**Thai Open 2008** (South Pattaya, Thailand; 4-6 Jan.)... OPEN (29 + 3 rebuys): 1-Jerry Wismeijer, 2-Jurek Sarcynski, 3/4-Markus Michel (GER) / Paul Weaver (USA); 1C-Bruno Orsuni, 2C-David Brown; 1LC-Gerhardt Schulze.

•**Kansas City Club Monthly** (Kansas City, MO; 5 Jan.)... OPEN (12): 1-Larry Smith, 2/3-Kathleen Davis / Eric Barr.

•**Springfield Series #3** (Bloomington, IL; 5 Jan.)... OPEN (23): 1-Scott Rudebeck, 2-Chris Scott; 1C-Jim Zimmerman, 2C-Michael Plog; 1LC: Rose Sheedy (IN). Z-Board Qualifier: Scott Day (IN).

•**Ohio State Club Monthly** (Akron, OH; 6 Jan.)... OPEN (15): 1-Dick Bennett, 2-Stijn Vanhauwaert; 1C-Stephen Benjamin.

•**Arizona Club Monthly** (Phoenix, AZ; 7 Jan.)... OPEN: 1-Michael Ramsey, 2-Doug Amenda, 3-Dan Pelton.

•**Bloomington/Normal Club Playoffs** (Bloomington, IL; 7 Jan.)... OPEN (10): 1-Terry Leahy, 2-Faddoul Khoury; 1C-John Bare, 2C-Jim Zimmerman.

•**11th Bright 'N' Breezy Tournament** (Brighton, England; 11-13 Jan.)... MAIN (90): 1-Mark Heidenfeld, 2-Roy Hollands, 3/4-David Barker / Arthur Musgrove; 1C-Rida Hassan (GER), 2C-Rachel Rhodes; 1LC-Michael Lamote (BEL), 2LC-Philip Vischjager (NL), 3LC/4LC-Simon Barget / Uldis Lapikens. TIDAL WAVE (64): 1-Ian Davidson, 2-Ed Turner. FRIDAY 500 (42): 1-Paul Barwick, 2-Martin Barkwill. TEAM EVENT (17): 1-Ian Davidson & Dorothy Lee. £50 Jackpot (4): 1-Nicky Check, 2-Rachel Rhodes. POKER (22): 1-Philip Vischjager (NL), 2-Roy Hollands, 3-Paul Learmount.

•**South Florida Monthly** (Ft. Lauderdale, FL; 13 Jan.)... OPEN (6): 1-Perry Gartner (NJ), 2-Scott Casty.

•**8th Carolina Invitational-ABT** (Charlotte, NC; 18-20 Jan.)... OPEN (45): 1-Bob Koca (MD), 2-David Rubin (IL); 1C-Michael Edge (SC), 2C-Ed O'Laughlin (VA); 1LC-Bill Davis (IL). ADVANCED (31): 1-Owen Black (FL), 2-Beth Raby (VA); 1C-Joseph Jemal (NJ), 2C-Ben Elliott (NC); 1LC-Evan Etter (FL). NOVICE (6): 1-Alan Lawrence (NC), 2-Camille Lawrence (NC). QUEEN CITY CUP (28): 1-Stick Rice (OH), 2-Jose Farca (FL). CARDINAL CLASSIC (32): 1-Stacy Turner (GA), 2-Norman Hansen (GA), 3/4-Ken Larsen (NC)/Lynn Lusk (CO). 2-POINT QUICKIES (64): 1-Howard Markowitz (NV), 2-Terry Leahy (IL). DOUBLES (17 teams): 1-Bill Davis (IL) & Nora Luna Righter (MA), 2-Jerry Godsey (GA) & Larry Taylor (GA). KILL PHIL BLITZ (32): 1-Stacy Turner (GA), 2-Jon Vietor (CA). SKUNK DICE: 1-Nora Luna Righter (MA).

•**Bar Point Doubles Tourney** (Chicago, IL; 27 Jan.)... OPEN (19 teams): 1-Nora Luna Righter (MA) & Bob Zavoral, 2-Steve Klesker & Albert Yakobashvili, 3/4-Lucky Nelson & Sherry Nelson / Linda & David Rockwell; 1C/2C-Bill Davis & Mike Pufpaf / Tak Morioka & Wendy Kaplan. Δ



BPC Doubles Champions Bob Zavoral & Nora Luna Righter.

AMALGAMATION

Out-of-staters visiting the Bar Point Club in January: **David Leonardis** (GA) and **Tom Machaj** (WI)... Backgammon is big with the Super Bowl runner-up New England Patriots. On the flight to Super Bowl XLII, boston.com reports that members of the Pats offensive line played backgammon. Additionally, **Tom Brady** is a huge fan, but apparently not such a good loser. The Marin Independent Journal quote Brady as saying: "I'm a pretty good winner. I'm a terrible loser. I rub it in pretty good when I win, but when I lose, say playing backgammon, I've broken more backgammon sets. It's like I wish I had a punching bag nearby."... Condolences to the family and friends of **Elaine Andrews-Smith** (IL) who passed away last month after a long bout with cancer. Elaine accumulated 36.84 Chicagoland points between 1995 and 2006... **Lindsay Mattig**, a Near North Montessori basketball star, was suspended a few games for "taunting." 8th grader Lindsay promises not to taunt opponents when she takes part in her last MBC Children's tourney March 1... Pub Club director **Tim Mabee** reminds us that there are only 32 slots available for the Pub Club's annual Trophy Tourney 9 February at Playoffs Bar in Carol Stream, Illinois. Call Tim (630/606-2388) to reserve space... How about an artistic backgammon set made out of pottery? **Anna Vickers**, owner of the Arkansas-based Haven Pottery is the creator. Check out her work (which you can even play on) at www.havenpottery.com, then click on "Traditional Games."... Finally! There will be a *Backgammon For Dummies* book and **Chris Bray** (UK) is writing it. Look for it in bookstores later this year... **Michael Weinberger** (LA) is looking to start a backgammon club in New Orleans. If you're interested in participating, or can offer any suggestions, go to nolabackgammon.org... Former BPC member **Mark Murray**, who recently moved to Ohio, is recuperating from 21 December triple bypass surgery. He is expected to be at the Midwest Championships come 29 February... The Northern Michigan Backgammon Club is no longer. Former director **Dr. Robert Townsend** relocated to Alaska following his acquittal on three sexual conduct counts lodged by his patients. His lawyer stated that the case is an example of "how a person's career and reputation can be destroyed by unsubstantiated allegations."... It looks like the Minnesota Open will happen again this year. Director **Dave Minikus** is looking at July dates. Stay tuned... Finally, the night before his murder, **King James I** of Scotland played backgammon. Good luck collecting IOUs in this situation!... The next CHICAGO POINT will be published in April. See you at the Midwest Backgammon Championships 29 Feb.-2 March. Δ

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