

nevada state tournament—abt

NEVADA GOES MY WAY Hugh Sconyers wins Super JP By John O'Hagan

The 25th annual Nevada State backgammon tournament was held once again at the Riviera Hotel in Las Vegas April 15–19. The American Backgammon Tour event drew a crowd of 155 national and international players who battled it out for their share of the prize money at the “Top of the Riv.” Howard Markowitz and Lynn Ehrlich directed the event assisted by an able staff that once again, did a fine job.

The National Dart Association also held a tournament the same week at the Riviera and I'm told they drew some 6,000 entries. In the current era, the throwing of darts is apparently 40 times more popular than the throwing of dice.



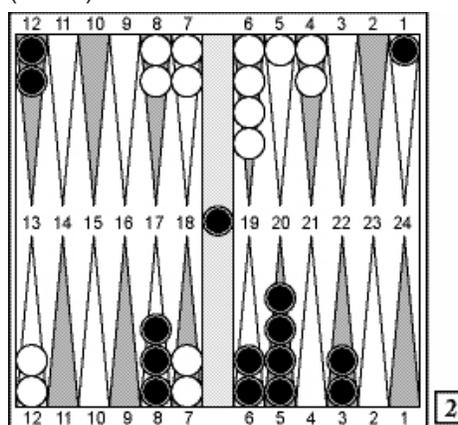
Nevada State Champion John O'Hagan (left) and runner-up Shinichiro Kaneko. [Photos by Carol Joy Cole]

I was lucky enough to win first place in the Championship division, but it sure wasn't easy. Four of my six matches went to DMP including the semi's against Rory Pascar (IL) and the finals against Japan's Shinichiro Kaneko. Other DMP matches included my opening round against the super-strong Stick Rice (OH) and my third round match versus Eduardo Maciel of Brazil.

My final match against Mr. Kaneko was close and could have gone either way. He took an 8–5 lead in the 15-pointer, but I was able to rally and eventually pulled

ahead 14–12, Crawford. He won the Crawford game and doubled right away in the next game sending us into DMP. An early 3–3 gave him the advantage. Later in the game, my chances didn't look too good. I danced in the following position and Shinichiro rolled 4-2:

15 point Nevada State finals. John O'Hagan (Black) vs. Shinichiro Kaneko (White) at DMP. **WHITE TO PLAY 4-2.**



What play would you make? You can cover the 5-point with the 2 and then play either 13/9, 8/4, 7/3, or 6/2 with the 4. Alternatively, you can make the 3-point with 7/3, 5/3. Over the board, Shinichiro played the pure 7/5, 13/9 and a long GNU rollout confirms that he was right. Unfortunately for him, I hit back with a 6-1, he danced, and I was able to reel in the Nevada State title from there.

A GNU 2-ply 4-2 rollout shows 13/9, 7/5 to be the correct play by a statistically significant amount (> 95% according to JSD):

Play	Winning chances
13/9, 7/5	65.5%
7/5, 7/3	64.6%
7/3, 5/3	63.3%
8/4, 7/5	63.1%

Congratulations to the other tournament winners including Hugh Sconyers (TX) in the Super Jackpot, Mark Antranikian (CA) in the Limited Jackpot, Bob Schumacher (MN) in the Intermediate division, and Joe Nolan (NV) in the Beginners. Congrats also to Stick Rice (OH) who placed second

[Continued on page 4]

atlanta spring classic—abt

TODD WINS IN ATLANTA Thomson takes Georgia Masters

David Todd (MO) prevailed over a solid 32-player field to win the Atlanta Spring Classic. The event, directed by Brian Ross, replaced the Southeast Backgammon Championship on the ABT calendar.

Todd defeated the red-hot Rod Covlin (NY) to win his first major title since the Las Vegas Open in 2005.

In the big money event, it was local favorite Stuart Thomson over Ray Glaeser (OH) to win the Georgia Masters. Congratulations also to main event winners Murray Bryntesen (Advanced) and Jon Hochberg (Novice). Ken Larson took the Atlanta Cup. Δ



Atlanta Spring Classic Champion David Todd. [File photo]

ATLANTA SPRING CLASSIC—ABT

CHAMPIONSHIP (32): 1-David Todd, 2-Rod Covlin; 1C-Rob Maier, 2C-Bob Carpenter; 1LC-Malcolm Robertson. ADVANCED (25): 1-Murray Bryntesen, 2-Rollow Mickle; 1C-Peter Roubicek, 2C-Scotty Kelland; 1LC-Kate Elmore. NOVICE (4): 1-Jon Hochberg, 2-Ron Colling. DOUBLES (16 Teams): 1-Harry Georgiou & Larry Taylor, 2-Betty Coppic & Richard Munitz. GEORGIA MASTERS (20): 1-Stuart Thomson, 2-Ray Glaeser. ATLANTA CUP (14): 1-Ken Larsen, 2-Danielle Bastarache. MINI-MATCH (64): 1-Jeb Horton, 2-Rod Covlin. MINI-MATCH (16): 1-Carl Sorg. EARLY EXIT JACKPOT (8): 1-Jerry Kane, 2-Samra Hadden. \$50 SUNDAY JACKPOT (8): 1-Julius High, 2-Richard Munitz.

CHICAGO POINT

A Prime Source of Backgammon Information

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LETTERS

c/o CHICAGO POINT

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NEW CLUBS

I am pleased to see so many flashing yellow "NEW" signs on the list of USA Backgammon Clubs at chicagopoint.com/usclubs.html. I count six new clubs and several with venue changes. I think this shows that our game is healthy and hopefully can sustain this growth in the future. It's also nice to see so many ABT events including some with new venues. — *Dan Pelton, Phoenix, AZ*

IPHONE CHESS CLOCK IMPROVES

Based on CHICAGO POINT input, the Game Timer chess clock (with Bronstein capabilities) has increased the font size of the remaining time making it easier to read. The new update is now posted at the Apple App Store. The cost of the clock remains at 99¢. Thanks for your suggestion. — *Nicolas, Trivial Technology LLC.*

[Continued on page 3]

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



by Carol Joy Cole
810/232-9731
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*Denotes new or revised listing

NATIONAL

American Backgammon Tour events underlined.

May 9	New England Bonus Monthly, Dockside Restaurant, Malden, Massachusetts	781/324-0892
May 9	Northwest Indiana Club Monthly, VFW Hall, Porter, Indiana	219/785-2082
May 9	Tampa Bay Club Monthly, Hampton Inn, Tarpon Springs, Florida	727/786-9133
May 10	South Florida Monthly, Northridge Raw Bar, Fort Lauderdale, Florida	954/564-0340
May 15-17	2nd Annual Atlantic City Tourney, Best Western, Pleasantville, New Jersey	732/608-7100
May 21	Third Thursday Bonus (L.A. Open), Days Inn, Flint, Michigan	810/232-9731
<u>May 22-25</u>	<u>29th Annual Chicago Open, Holiday Inn Select, Rosemont, Illinois</u>	<u>702/218-8238</u>
May 30*	Compete for the Cause—Whatcom, Boundary Bay Brewery, Bellingham, WA	360/676-0122
May 31*	Colorado Monthly Tournament, Old Chicago, Denver, Colorado	303/791-0271
May 31*	Dayton Club Monthly—USBL, Barnes & Noble, Beavercreek, Ohio	937/864-1748
May 31*	Pair-O-Dice Monthly, Così Restaurant, New York, New York	212/222-7177
<u>Jun 4-7</u>	<u>US Open—Wash. DC, Doubletree, Arlington, VA</u>	<u>ckt@world-backgammon-association.com</u>
Jun 7	Bar Point Club Sunday Tournament, Holiday Inn-O'Hare, Chicago, Illinois	773/583-6464
Jun 7*	Ohio State Club Monthly, Spaghetti Warehouse, Akron, Ohio	330/268-4610
<u>Jun 12-14</u>	<u>Los Angeles Open, Airtel Plaza Hotel, Van Nuys, California</u>	<u>818/901-0464</u>
Jun 13*	Southwest Ohio Summer Solstice Tournament, Peter's, West Chester, Ohio	513/777-7862
Jun 13*	Kansas City Double Points, Granfalloon, Kansas City, Missouri	816/916-6599
Jun 13*	New England Monthly, Dockside Restaurant, Malden Massachusetts	781/324-0892
Jun 13*	Northwest Indiana Club Monthly, VFW Hall, Porter, Indiana	219/785-2082
Jun 13*	Tampa Bay Club Monthly, Hampton Inn, Tarpon Springs, Florida	727/786-9133
Jun 14*	Miami Valley Club Monthly, Panera Bread, Dayton, Ohio	937/864-1748
Jun 14*	South Florida Monthly, Northridge Raw Bar, Fort Lauderdale, Florida	954/564-0340
Jun 18*	Third Thursday Bonus (Florida State), Days Inn, Flint, Michigan	810/232-9731
Jul 1	Michigan Summer Warm-Up, Sheraton Hotel, Novi, Michigan	810/232-9731
<u>Jul 2-5</u>	<u>Michigan Summer Championships, Sheraton, Novi, Michigan</u>	<u>810/232-9731</u>
<u>Jul 24-26</u>	<u>14th Minnesota Open, Courtyard by Marriott, Bloomington, Minnesota</u>	<u>612/718-2613</u>
<u>Aug 6-9</u>	<u>Florida State Championships, Sheraton Airport Hotel, Dania, Florida</u>	<u>954/564-0340</u>
Aug 15-16*	Summer Cooker, Steve Hast's residence, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	412/823-7500
<u>Sep 4-7</u>	<u>Wisconsin State Championships, Hilton Hotel, Madison, Wisconsin</u>	<u>608/516-9109</u>
<u>Sep 25-27</u>	<u>Colorado State Championships, Hilton Airport Hotel, Aurora, Colorado</u>	<u>303/791-0271</u>
<u>Oct 9-11</u>	<u>Illinois State Championships, Ramada Inn, Peoria, Illinois</u>	<u>847/845-3579</u>
<u>Oct 16-18</u>	<u>Mid-Atlantic Championships, Marriott Berkshire, Towson, Maryland</u>	<u>954/564-0340</u>
Nov 4-8	2009 Las Vegas Open, Riviera Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada	702/218-8238
Dec 4-6	California State Championship, Airtel Plaza Hotel, Van Nuys, California	818/901-0464

OUTSIDE USA

May 8-10	County Cups Trophy, Barceló Hotel, Hinckley Island, England	441522-888676
May 14-17	EBGT: TMG Portuguese Open, Casino Estoril, Estoril (Lisbon), Portugal	491715-422222
May 20-24*	Backgammon Spring Challenge, Hotel Veronika, Seefeld, Austria	390331-923537
May 22-24	14th Oslo Open, Bridgesenter Vest, Oslo, Norway	4797-513941
May 23-24	Istavder Club Monthly, Green Park Hotel Bostanci, Istanbul, Turkey	905324-008211
May 29-31*	Casinorip.com London Open, Doggett's Coat & Badge, London, England	447985-941729
May 29-Jun 1	14th Kaiserbrunnen-Cup, Hotel Kaiserbrunnen, Brakel, Germany	49711-486190
Jun 5-7	Austrian Masters Finale, Montesino, Vienna, Austria	436642-127412
Jun 5-7	Barceló English Open, Barceló Daventry Hotel, Daventry, England	441522-888676
Jun 11-14	3rd Braunlage-Harz-Cup, Hotel Hohenzollern, Braunlage, Germany	495204-880305
Jun 12-14*	Swedish Championship 2009, Loginn Hotel, Stockholm, Sweden	46708-541362
Jun 19-21	1st Torneo del Mediterraneo, Siracusa, Italy	393388-022946
Jun 19-21*	Stavanger Bymesterskap, Hovmesteren, Stavanger, Norway	4799-153113
Jun 27-28	3rd Geneve Club Open, Bar L'Aperitivo, Geneva, Switzerland	4178-7685569
Jul 3-5	BIBA World Championship, Barceló Hotel, Daventry, England	441522-888676
Jul 8-12	3rd Nice Casino Ruhl Open, Casino Ruhl, Nice, France	390331-923537
Jul 12-19	34th World Championship, Fairmont Hotel, Monte Carlo, Monaco	USA: 212/222-7177
Jul 17-19*	Festival of Games 6th Czech Open, CEZ Arena, Pardubice, Czech Republic	420466-535200
Jul 22-26*	WSOB: Cannes Riviera Cup, Cannes, France	336-86235554
Jul 25-26	14th Liverpool Open, Liverpool Bridge Club, Liverpool, England	447931-553829
Jul 29-Aug 5	EBGT: 3rd Gogi Bukia Memorial & Georgian Open, Tbilisi, Georgia	491715-422222
Jul 31-Aug 2	Studio Anne Carlton Trophy, Daventry Hotel, Daventry, England	441522-888676
Aug 15-16	Stavanger Bymesterskap, Resept AS, Stavanger, Norway	47916-22655
Aug 21-23	Offene Deutsche BG-Championship, Penta Hotel, Wiesbaden, Germany	49711-486190
Aug 28-30*	Bristol Open, Artillery Grounds & Bristol Sports Club, Bristol, England	441179-556862
Aug 28-30	Swiss Championships 2009, Casino Barrière, Montreux, Switzerland	4179-3584825
Aug 31-Sep 6	18th Mitteleuropa Championship, Park Hotel, Nova Gorica, Slovenia	390331-923537
Sep 4-6*	Backgammon in London at BIBA, Barceló Hotel, Hinckley Island, England	441522-888676
Sep 9-13*	WSOB: European Championships, Prague, Czech Republic	336-86235554
Sep 11-13*	29th Swedish Open, Elite Palace Hotel, Stockholm, Sweden	46762-644266

LETTERS...

(Continued from page 2)

SIMBORG CUBE

Here's an idea to spike up heads-up money backgammon. Play with two cubes. I have played this in several variations, and the one that seems to be the most interesting and challenging is this:

- (a) The first cube is worth twice as much as the second cube;
- (b) You can't give both cubes at the same time;
- (c) If you have taken both cubes and you

want to redouble, you can only redouble the higher cube first, and then you can redouble with the lower cube on your next, or any subsequent roll.

I do *not* recommend this for chouettes, as it gets too complicated, but it is a fun way to play heads-up backgammon and it creates some interesting situations.—*Phil Simborg, Chicago, Illinois*

ANOTHER TYPE OF CUBE

Great article on doubling cube facts on the Point website (www.chicagopoint.com/bgdoubling.html). My compliments. I've

been in contact with Ray Kershaw and he thinks adding a picture of an 8-sided block has merit.—*Chris Bray, London, England*

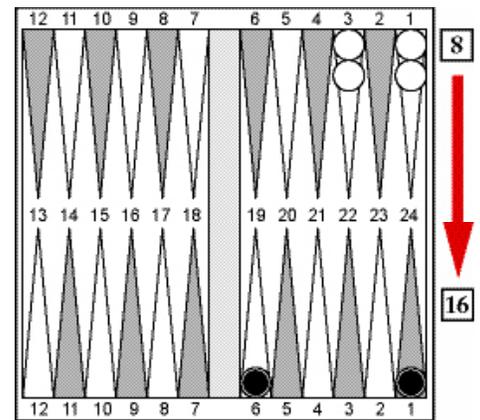


An unusual 8-sided doubling block.

DOING THE MATH

Recently in a money game, I faced the following end game bearoff position:

Money game. White on roll and holding an 8-cube. **CUBE ACTION(S)?**



White recubed me to 16. I didn't think it was a recube and beavered him to 32. I knew that all 2s (except 2-2) were bad for him. It turns out that I performed the correct action according to GNU. I must admit

(Continued on page 7)

AMERICAN BACKGAMMON TOUR ★ 2009

Compiled through 3 May 2009 after 7 tournaments
(Upcoming events: Chicago Open, US Open, Los Angeles Open)

Neil Kazaross	28.50	Ed King	6.22	Bill Pow	3.00	Beverly Flowers	1.80
Stick Rice	22.37	Tom Hodous	6.00	Joe Eckert	3.00	Jon Hochberg	1.67
Julius High	21.33	Lucky Nelson	5.33	Justin Nunez	2.59	Luciana Abes	1.67
Bob Glass	21.00	Al Faller	5.25	Mark Schiffer	2.59	D.J. Oles	1.56
John O'Hagan	20.74	Herb Roman	5.25	Gary Bauer	2.59	Terry Seymour	1.50
Rod Covlin	20.73	Matt Reklaitis	5.25	Frank Frigo	2.57	Harry Georgiou	1.50
Victor Ashkenazi	17.00	Ramon Eleazar	5.19	Bill Schragel	2.54	Irv Taylor	1.44
Petko Kostadinov	15.00	Rory Pascar	5.19	Larry Buckingham	2.54	Sean Garber	1.29
Mary Hickey	13.33	Matt Cohn-Geier	5.19	Scott Casty	2.54	Kate Elmore	1.25
David Todd	12.80	Ramez Abi-Akar	5.08	Patty Geoffroy	2.54	Scotty Kelland	1.25
Rob Maier	11.54	Sal Chehayeb	5.08	Peter Roubicek	2.50	Glen Arnold	1.17
Adam Bennett	10.67	Murray Bryntesen	5.00	Rollow Mickle	2.50	Scott Cole	1.17
David Rubin	10.67	Jesse Eaton	5.00	Wanda Roberts	2.50	Lynda Clay	1.17
Ray Foglerlund	10.44	Bill Devine	4.67	Bob Hathaway	2.50	Andre DeLucinges	1.05
Shinichiro Kaneko	10.37	Charles Toots	4.67	Peter Carcier	2.50	Susan Lee	1.05
Brandon Macklin	10.17	Jon Vietor	4.50	Jason Switzer	2.50	Bob Pondelicek	0.94
Ed Johnson	10.00	Boris Dekhtyar	4.25	Samuel Raisenen	2.33	Jerry Woods	0.94
Steve Sax	9.58	Pernille Rosendal	4.25	Robert Tansi	2.33	B.R. Hall	0.94
Bob Schumacher	9.33	Richard Munitz	4.25	Sam Ahmed	2.33	Michael Auer	0.94
Philip Smith	9.00	Robert Regan	3.60	Christian Stoddard	2.33	Jeff Moretti	0.83
Charlie Silverman	8.60	Frank Talbot	3.33	Joe Nolan	2.10	Ian Kane	0.72
Falafel Natanzon	8.50	Malcolm Robertson	3.20	David Hamill	2.00	Lorenzo Morales	0.72
Rick Barabino	8.50	Bob Carpenter	3.20	Tim Johnson	1.89	Antoinette Rodi	0.52
Majid Jahanbani	7.20	John McDonald	3.11	Sheri Peters	1.88	Timour Fawaz	0.52
Neil Garvie	6.67	Mike Hendrickson	3.11	Robert Sisselman	1.80	Joan Grunwald	0.50

CHICAGO BAR POINT CLUB

2009 PLAYER OF THE YEAR

COMPILED
THRU 30 APR.

Rory Pascar	11.26	Oleg Raygorodsky	4.56	Alex Owen	2.04	Paul Baraz	1.16
Lucky Nelson	10.92	Wayne Wiest	4.04	Christopher Shanava	1.92	Eric Johnson	1.08
Herb Roman	10.32	Albert Yakobashvili	3.68	Roger Hickman	1.92	Sonja Peacock	0.88
Bob Steen	8.04	Tim Mabee	3.60	Michael Ginat	1.68	Roz Ferris	0.80
Howard Markowitz	7.36	Peter Kalba	3.60	Jeff Fischer	1.64	Dustin Lindgren	0.80
David Rockwell	7.24	Larry Goldstein	3.36	Jacob Moreno	1.60	John Jennings	0.80
Mike Wolock	6.68	Tak Morioka	3.36	Richard Stawowy	1.56	Royal Robinson	0.72
Carter Mattig	6.14	Alexander Medvedev	3.20	Linda Rockwell	1.52	Roy Cohen	0.68
Bill Davis	5.76	Gary Kay	3.16	Ken Bond	1.52	Bob Pondelicek	0.60
Mike Sutton	5.56	Dave Settles	3.08	Nora Luna Righter	1.44	Lindsay Mattig	0.56
Bill Bartholomay	5.36	Michael Minkovski	3.00	Scott Casty	1.36	Barry Miller	0.56
Alice Kay	5.28	Mike Pufpaf	2.80	Bill Keefe	1.28	Dan Cox	0.32
Steve Klesker	4.68	Jerry Brooks	2.56	Adrian Rios	1.20	Georgina Flanagan	0.32

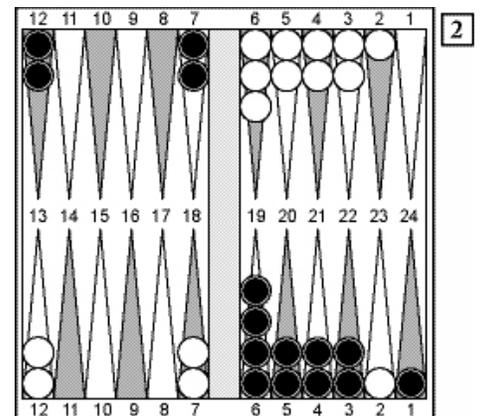
HERB ROMAN earned 4.56 points to capture April honors. Oleg Raygorodsky finished second with 2.56 points. Lucky Nelson was third with 2.48 points.

your move

PROBLEM #345

to be analyzed by Paul Weaver

9-point match. White leads Black 6 to 5. **BLACK TO PLAY 4-3.**



ASK DANNY

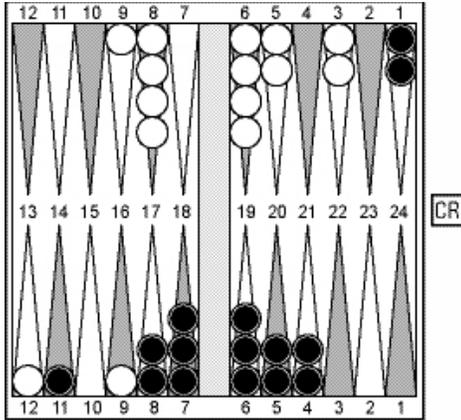


© 2009 by Danny Kleinman

PLAYING DOUBLE 5s

Dear Danny: Playing in the Consolation bracket of my weekly tournament, I faced this gem:

5 point match. Black leads White 4-3, Crawford. **BLACK TO PLAY 5-5.**



Am I supposed to lift my 11-blot, or give White some grief if she rolls an ace? I know gammons lose the match for me, but I also want to win. I made two inside points 8/3(2), 7/2(2). Naturally White rolled a hitting deuce and went on to gammon me for the match.

At this gammon-save score, the spectators thought I was totally crazy to give White the chance to send a third piece back. I'm beginning to think they were

right. Can you shed any light on this one, Danny?—Doubting Thomas

DEAR THOMAS: Was getting a third man sent back the cause of your losing a gammon? Who can untangle cause and effect here? Sometimes getting hit might let you make an advanced anchor (the 4-anchor) more easily, which leaves you in less danger of losing a gammon than the 1-anchor.

Making a fifth inside point improves your winning chances more than the risk of a third man back harms you. The fifth point makes it more dangerous for your opponent to leave blots and shots. By leaving a blot on your 11-point, you do more than give your opponent “grief” on some aces (6-1 and 2-1, which otherwise makes his bar-point). You also induce him to hit on 6-2 (which otherwise makes his bar-point), 5-2 and 4-2 (which otherwise make his 4-point).

Yes, sometimes a disastrous result can be traced to an error, but this is not one of those times. Rather, I believe, the benefits of your play outweighed its risks.

Barclay Cooke called backgammon *The Cruellest Game* in that you can lose not in spite of making the best play but *because* you make the best play. I suspect that may have happened here. Or perhaps your opponent’s rolls were so lucky that you were destined to lose a gammon no matter how you played.—*Yours, Danny Δ*

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

NEVADA...

(Continued from page 1)

to Hugh in the Super Jackpot, then bounced back to defeat Ray Foglerlund in the Championship Consolation.

The Doubles winners were Tom Magne (MN) & Bob Schumacher (MN), and the 128-player Seniors event was captured by Alan Grunwald (NJ). Eduardo Maciel won the Blitz event.

During the tournament, there was a nice tribute to CHICAGO POINT columnist Larry Liebster (NV). Larry had recently celebrated his 80th birthday so Jona Alexander (CA) briefly interrupted play Saturday night to announce this milestone. We all sang “Happy Birthday” to Larry, and Jona then presented Larry with two birthday cakes decorated as backgammon boards. Larry thanked us all and joked that

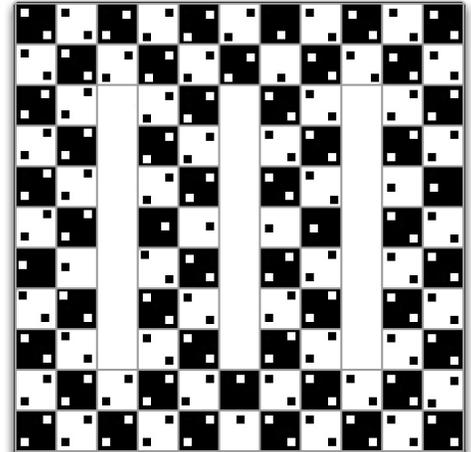
his next “BG Peeves” column might be about how he really hates it when backgammon tournaments get interrupted by birthday announcements. It was nice of Jona to do this for one of the finest gentlemen in the game.—*John O’Hagan Δ*



Super Jackpot winner Hugh Sconyers (right) with runner-up Stick Rice. Rice also won the Championship Consolation.

WAVEY TWOS?

These dice may look wavey, but they are actually straight as an arrow.



NEVADA STATE TOURNAMENT—ABT

CHAMPIONSHIP (70+26 rebuys): 1-John O’Hagan (IN), 2-Shinichiro Kaneko (Japan), 3/4-Ramon Eleazar (Philippines) / Rory Pascal (IL); 1C-Stick Rice (OH), 2C-Ray Foglerlund (CA), 3C/4C-Justin Nunez (CA) / Mark Schiffer (OR); 1LC-Matt Cohn-Geier (CA), 2LC-Gary Bauer (NJ). INTERMEDIATE (63+25 rebuys): 1-Bob Schumacher (MN), 2-Bill Devine (NV), 3/4-Samuel Raisenen (CO) / Robert Tansi (MA); 1C-Charles Toots (CA), 2C-Sam Ahmed (Egypt), 3C/4C-Glen Arnold (NV) / Scott Cole (NV); 1LC-Christian Stoddard (CA), 2LC-Lynda Clay (CO). BEGINNER (22+6 rebuys): 1-Joe Nolan (NV), 2-Andre DeLucinges (CO); 1C-Susan Lee (AZ), 2C-Antoinette Rodi (FL); 1LC-Timour Fawaz (France), 2LC-Aaron Foust (NV). SUPER JACKPOT (16 @ \$2,000): 1-Hugh Sconyers (NV), 2-Stick Rice (OH). LIMITED JACKPOT (16 @ \$1,000): 1-Mark Antranikian (CA), 2-Stacy Turner (FL). SENIORS TOURNAMENT (128): 1-Alan Grunwald (NJ), 2-Bill Riles (TX). DOUBLES TOURNAMENT (32 teams): 1-Tom Magne (MN) & Bob Schumacher (MN), 2-Petko Kostadinov (SC) & Stepan Nuniyants (WA). BLITZ EVENT (224): 1-Eduardo Maciel (Brazil), 2-Odis Chenault (CA). MINI-MATCH EVENT (64): 1-Akiko Abe (Japan), 2-Howard Markowitz (IL). \$400 OPEN JACKPOT (16): 1-David Taniguchi (CA), 2-Norm Wiggins (CA). \$300 SATURDAY JACKPOT (8): 1-Alan Grunwald (NJ), 2-Rod Covlin (NY). \$100 SATURDAY JACKPOT (23): 1-Tom Wheeler (TX), 2-Bill Riles (TX). \$50 SATURDAY BEGINNERS JACKPOT (4): 1-Tigran Avetisyan (Armenia), \$50 SUNDAY JACKPOT (8): 1-Aram Kouleyan (CA), 2-Richard Munitz (NY). \$50 AFTER TOURNAMENT (23): 1-Greg Bowman (KS), 2-Ray Foglerlund (CA). \$20 AFTER TOURNAMENT (10): 1-Sam Orandle (NV), 2-Daniel Stroberger (WA).



The Frustration Factor

By Bill Davis

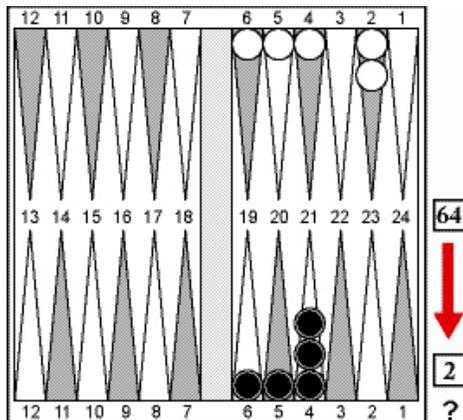
The study of backgammon has changed dramatically since the early 1990s.

Back then, best moves were determined by hand rollouts and expert opinion. Then in 1994, along came JellyFish, the first commercially available neural net-based program. Today, programs like Snowie and Gnu can roll out checker play and cube decision problems hundreds, or even thousands of times to determine what is best.

Many players are improving their game by mimicking the styles of these “bots.” Nobody would doubt that studying with Snowie and/or Gnu is a highly beneficial endeavor. But there is another factor that cannot be dismissed when you are playing a live opponent over the board. Let’s call it the “frustration factor.”

In this year’s Pittsburgh Doubles semifinals, Steve Burke and I faced Joe Eckert and Neil Garvie. As good as our dice had been the first three rounds equates to how evil and nasty they were in this match. Trailing 0–5, it appeared that we were going to finally get on the board when our opponents threw a few timely sets. Unbelievably sick! Now *we* were the ones being cubed:

7 point Pittsburgh Doubles semifinals. Bill Davis & Steve Burke (Black) trail Joe Eckert & Neil Garvie (White) 0–5. White doubles. **SHOULD BLACK TAKE?**



If we drop this, we trail 0–6 Crawford. If we take, naturally we recube to 4 at our first opportunity. Mathematically, this is a drop. Snowie’s database says our chance of winning this game is 20.2%; and even if we do win, we still trail 4–5. The tables say that trailing 0–6 Crawford gives us around 9% match-winning chances (MWC). By winning a 4-cube, and then trying to bring home the match trailing 4–5, our equity is around $.40 \times .20 = 8\%$. So by taking this cube, we lower our MWC by 1%.

If our opponents had a huge skill advantage over us, we could justify putting a lot of points on the line in a pure dice game. But the skill levels were close to equal. So why did we take and recube anyway? The frustration factor.

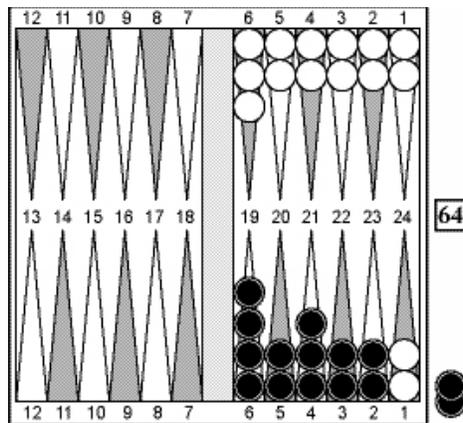
Steve and I talked it over and we decided to take and recube for two reasons:

1. We were both frustrated losing five one-point games in a row. Everything was going against us and we didn’t want to try and grind out three or four wins in a row (depending on gammons). We also agreed that our frustration was clouding our decision-making abilities.
2. We felt that if we could win a fast four points by taking a “bad cube,” it would have a mentally adverse effect on our opponents (who had worked hard to earn their points), perhaps even frustrating them.

We ended up losing, but had no regrets. We knew our mental attitude at that point in the match and taking was the best play for *our psyche* at that time.

Let’s take a look at another potentially “frustrating” example:

7 point match. Black leads White 5–1. **SHOULD BLACK DOUBLE?**



Snowie rollouts show that this position is “too good to double.” You should play on for the gammon. But what happens if you double?

Unless he is crazy, your opponent will

drop and give you a 6-1 (Crawford) lead. That means that you would have to lose four non-gammon games in a row (or three with a gammon) to lose the match. If you choose to roll it out, toss one of the four blotting number, get hit and lose one or two points (depending on cube actions), how will it affect your mental attitude?

If you can honestly say that it won’t bother you, then by all means, roll on. But if you believe that a 6-1 Crawford lead would keep your mental spirits high, I would suggest that you give up less than a half percent in match equity by “kicking the field goal,” and claiming your point.

Official disclaimer: Both of the initial cube decisions in this article are mathematically incorrect. If you are confident that your emotions won’t get the best of you, by all means play like a robot. But if you know that your play suffers when you are “bummed out,” making small errors in order to maintain a positive mental attitude might end up winning you more matches.

At least it’s something to consider.—
Bill Davis Δ

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

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CHICAGO BACKGAMMON ASSOCIATION: Tournaments Monday, 6:30 P.M. at The Parthenon; 314 S. Halsted, Chicago. Phil Simborg (312/543-0522) or Carter Mattig (312/493-2911).
BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL BG CLUB: Tournaments Monday, 6:00 P.M. at Ride The Nine; 503 N. Prospect Road, Bloomington. 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).
WINNETKABG 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).
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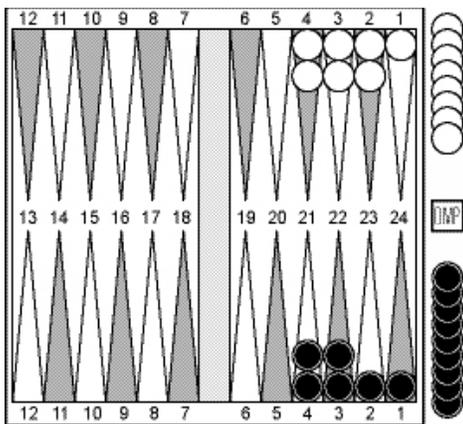
Can you tell the difference between a **BLUNDER** and a **HOLE IN THE GROUND?**

By Duane Jensen



A checker play is labeled a “blunder” if it is significantly worse than the best possible play.

Example: In the following position, Black rolls 2-1 and plays 3/off. Bearing off two checkers is much better.



This is the Grand Canyon, a large hole in the ground.



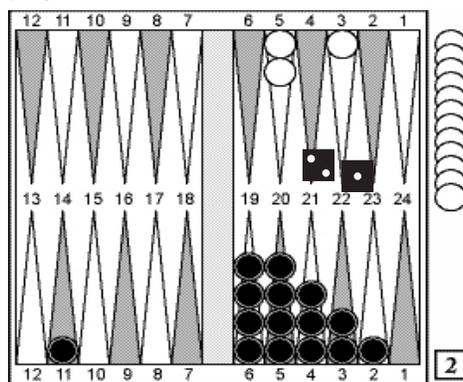
In life, no one should confuse a backgammon blunder with the Grand Canyon. And in this backgammon quiz, no one should confuse a blunder with the best possible checker play.

In each of the twelve problems, Black has rolled 2-1 and I've suggested a checker play. Your task is to decide if my suggestion is the *best play* or a *blunder*. (For this quiz, we define a blunder as a 0.080 or greater equity error.)

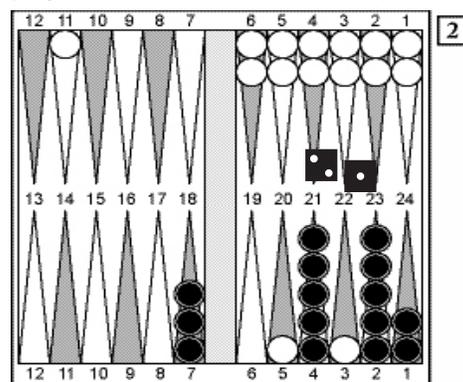
If you get six or more correct, you know the difference between a blunder and a hole in the ground.—Duane Jensen Δ

[Answers are on page 9]

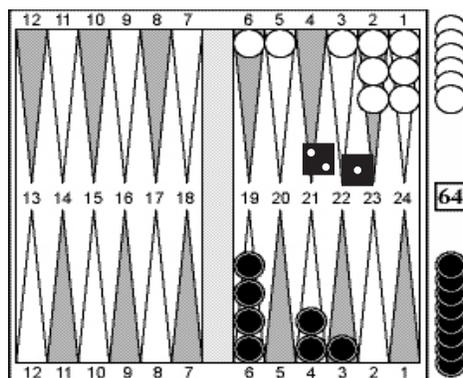
#1. Black leads 1–0 to 7. Suggested play: 11/10, 3/1. *Blunder or Best Play?*



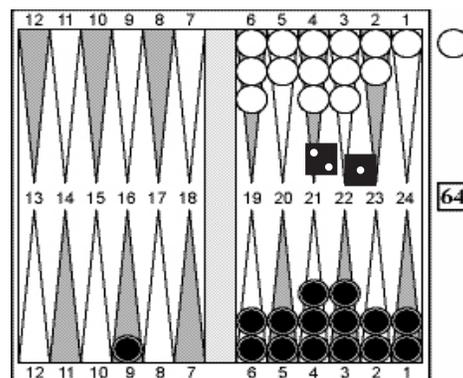
#5. Black leads 4–0 to 7. Suggested play: 7/5*1/4. *Blunder or Best Play?*



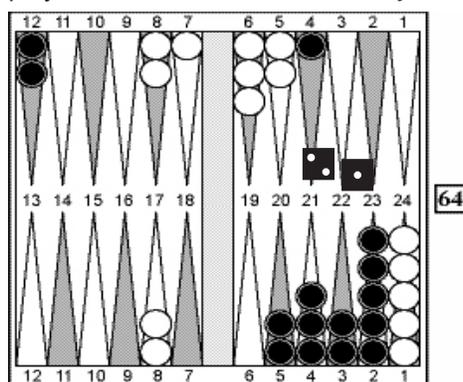
#2. Black tied 4–4 to 7. Suggested play: 3/off. *Blunder or Best Play?*



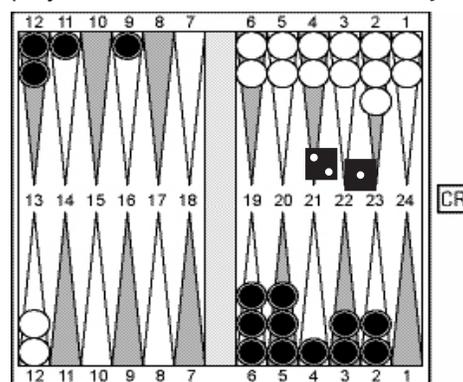
#6. Black tied 0–0 to 7. Suggested play: 9/7, 6/5. *Blunder or Best Play?*



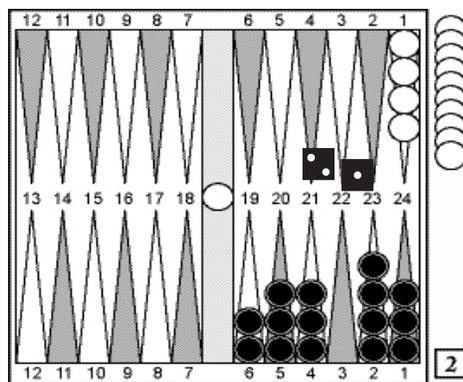
#3. Black tied 0–0 to 7. Suggested play: 5/4, 5/3. *Blunder or Best Play?*



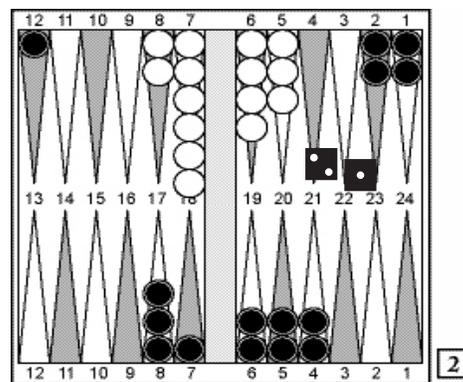
#7. Black leads 6–4 Cr. to 7. Suggested play: 14/13, 6/4. *Blunder or Best Play?*



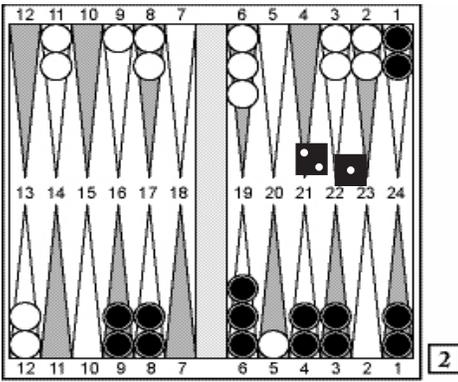
#4. Black trails 0–3 to 7. Suggested play: 2/off, 1/off. *Blunder or Best Play?*



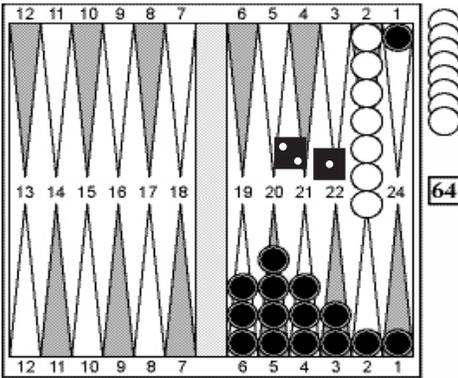
#8. Black tied 0–0 to 7. Suggested play: 24/22, 8/7. *Blunder or Best Play?*



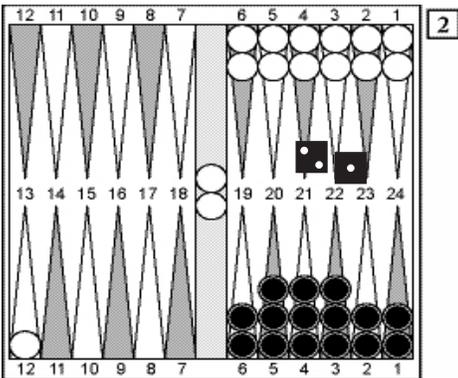
#9. Black leads 5-3 to 7. Suggested play: 9/7, 6/5*. *Blunder or Best Play?*



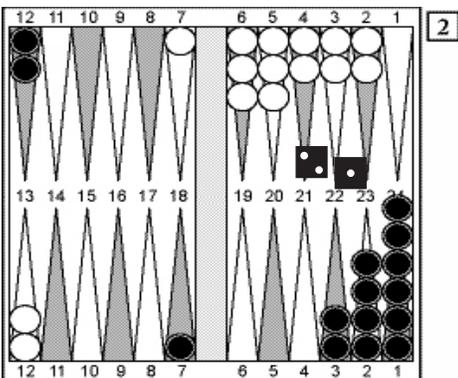
#10. Black leads 3-2 to 7. Suggested play: 24/21. *Blunder or Best Play?*



#11. Black leads 1-0 to 7. Suggested play: 3/off. *Blunder or Best Play?*



#12. Black tied 3-3 to 7. Suggested play: 3/1, 2/1. *Blunder or Best Play?*



LETTERS...

[Continued from page 3]

that I beavered on impulse and not with actual knowledge that my win percentage was over 50%. In the actual game, he rolled a single deuce, I recubed to 64, and he dropped.

Over the board, how would I go about calculating my actual winning chances?—*Seth, via Internet*

One method is to look at the 36 possible rolls and determine what happens for each of them from White's perspective:

When White rolls a single deuce (10 rolls), he must drop Black's recube.

White will win immediately with 4 rolls (3-3, 4-4, 5-5, or 6-6) = 0.1111

For the following 13 rolls (2-2, 6-5, 6-4, 6-3, 5-4, 5-3 4-3), White wins when Black fails to bear off. $13/36 \times 21/36 = 0.2106$

For the following 9 rolls (1-1, 1-3, 1-4, 1-5, 1-6), White wins when Black fails to bear off and White rolls anything except 2-1. $9/36 \times 21/36 \times 34/36 = 0.1377$

Adding up White's win percentages $0.1111 + 0.2106 + 0.1377 = 0.4595$.

So Black wins this position 54.05% of the time and it is a Beaver.—*Ed. Δ*

chicago point contest

CAPTION THIS CARTOON!

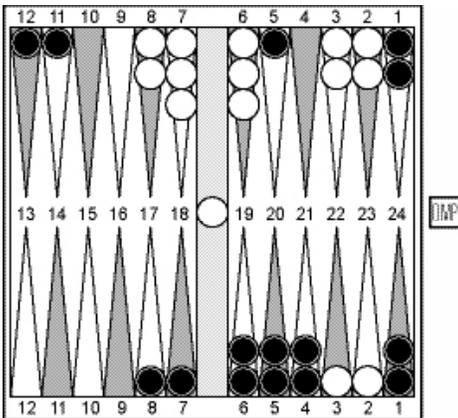
We found this cartoon (girls alternating redhead, black hair) many years ago and it didn't have a caption. Perhaps it doesn't need one. But since Chicago Point readers are the most creative people in the world, let's give it a go. First prize is a **DGT 960 CHESS CLOCK**. Answer by May 30 to bg@chicagopoint.com. A group of directors will pick the winner. Δ



PROBLEM #344 ANALYZED

by Kit Woolsey

5-point match tied at 4 to 4 (DMP).
BLACK TO PLAY 3-3.



Black has several options. Hitting loose on the two point should not be one of them. It is very bad for Black if he is hit back, and since he has already made his ace point purity isn't important. Any hitting will involve a shift of points.

If Black doesn't hit at all, it must be right to play 14/8, 13/7. While Black would like to advance his back checkers, if Black

takes the priming approach he must go all the way with it. Leaving an indirect shot on the 8- or bar point would be very dangerous.

If Black hits one checker, he will certainly be advancing the back checkers with the other two threes. On balance, 24/21(2), 5/2*(2) looks better than 24/21(2), 6/3*(2). It will be easier to attack the remaining checker on the 3-point, as it is a bit closer. Also, by retaining the 6-point, Black can put a builder there. That is why playing without the 6-point often seems so awkward—lack of a place to safely put a builder.

Thus, the three candidates are 14/8, 13/7; 24/21(2), 5/2(2)*, and 6/3(2)*, 5/2(2)*.

The priming approach looks pretty, but it has some problems. If White enters, then what? Black will have two men stuck on White's ace point, and these checkers may not get out so easily. White can afford to break her 8-point if necessary, since that isn't part of her blockade of Black's two back checkers. The real problem is that Black has already made his ace point, and holding the ace point just doesn't go well with a priming approach.

24/21(2), 5/2(2)* puts that important second checker on the bar, as well as advancing the anchor. This is important. If White does enter and anchor, Black doesn't have to worry about his game falling apart because he is stuck on White's ace point.

Black will always have a playable game, and he can focus on his outfield control. If White doesn't anchor, Black can continue attacking if the dice cooperate, and if the attack fails Black will remain with a strong position.

6/3(2)*, 5/2(2)* would surely be the right play if gammons mattered. This puts three White checkers on the bar, and makes it impossible for White to anchor unless he rolls doubles. At DMP, it isn't so clear. If White enters a checker, which she is a favorite to do, then what? Black can hit loose, but does he stay there or pick and pass? If he stays and White hits back, that could be very bad. If he picks and passes, that is a lost checker. If White does win the battle for one of the points, Black's game may fall apart quickly. Even though White will have three men on the bar, Black just doesn't have the ammo to be confident of carrying out a full blitz.

Compromise plays are often wrong, as it is usually right to adopt an approach and go all out with it. Here, however, I believe the compromise of 24/21(2), 5/2(2)* is the right idea. The key is the advance of the back anchor. This gives Black protection when the blitz goes badly. In the other variations, those checkers on White's ace point may prove to be a major problem.—
Kit Woolsey Δ

3-MAN TEAM BACKGAMMON PROVES A FUN LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR ALL

By Phil Simborg

Bill Bartholomay had to use every bounce of experience in his bag of tricks to beat Lyle Rubin at DMP in the final round of the 3-Man Team backgammon. Bill's victory iced it for his team "The Mechanics," consisting of Neil Kazaross (Captain), David Rubin and himself.

Second place was captured by "The Gammonators" led by David Rockwell (Captain), Philip Ring, and Phil Simborg. The event, organized by Phil Simborg and Serge Bondar, was held Saturday, April 11 at the Bridge Stars bridge club in Northbrook Illinois. The organizers plan to run the same event again this summer.

The team event was a great success as everyone had a fun time cheering for their teammates, and the players were all able to benefit from coaching and help on tough plays from their captains. Each of the three team members played 5-point matches with members of the other teams; however play-



A throng of spectators watch Lyle Rubin (left) and Bill Bartholomay battle it out at DMP to determine the first Chicagoland 3-man team tournament winners. [Photo: Phil Simborg]

ers were allowed to ask advice from their captain on plays and on the cube a limited number of times each game. In addition, captains were allowed to discuss strategy between games.

Said David Rockwell, one of the team

captains, "It was really fun and educational, and next time I hope we will allow even more interaction and coaching as I believe everyone enjoyed that aspect of the event as much as the competition to see who wins."—*Phil Simborg* Δ

WINNER'S CIRCLE



MAR.-APR. 2009

•**26th Fleet Underwood Memorial** (Flint, MI; 29 Mar.)... OPEN (32): 1-Carol Joy Cole, 2-Maurice Barie, 3-John Quinn, 4/6-Sal Chehayeb / Paul Farah / Jim Price. INTERMEDIATE (32): 1-Dan Bryant (IN), 2-Eric Musser, 3/4-Prince Barlow / Stewart Kelman, 5/6-Jeff Clark / Jewell Morris. NOVICE (11): 1-Linda Grosscup, 2-Dan Clark, 3-Samantha Shaffer.

•**CasinoRip.com British Open** (Daventry, England; 3-5 Apr.)... OPEN (77): 1-Jon Barnes, 2-Gaz Owen, 3/4-Stuart Mann / Chris Purchase; 1C-Paul Barwick, 2C-Kevin Stebbing, 3C/4C-Wayne Felton / Mardi Ohannessian; 1LC-Richard Biddle, 2LC-Tom Duggan. R.I.P. (32): 1-Rachel Rhodes, 2-Ann Pocknell, 3/4-Marcus Wrinch / Peter Chan. TEAM (12): 1-Richard Biddle, 2-George Miltiadou. FRIDAY 500 (33): 1-Gerry Enslin, 2-Jeff Barber, 3/4-Brian Lever / Roland Herrera. POKER (34): 1-Chris Evans, 2-Myke Wignall. JACKPOT (8): 1-John Wright, 2-Nicky Check.

•**21st Nordic Open** (Helsingør, Denmark; 9-13 Apr.)... CHAMPIONSHIP (97): 1-Claus Elken, 2-Tage Mellgren, 3/4-Johnny Tønnessen (Norway) / Lars Trabolt, 5/8-Karsten Bredahl / Morten Holm Lassen / Hans Liby (Norway) / Carter Mattig (USA). INTERMEDIATE (73): 1-Neculai Draganuta (Romania), 2-Ole Jochumsen, 3/4-Dan Andersen / Klaus Jensen, 5/8-Morten Lylloff / Carina Meile / Jörg Schneider / Patrick Toxværd. BEGINNER (52): 1-Claus Steensgaard Christensen, 2-Lasse Ljungstrøm, 3/4-Anders Johannessen / Inga Vigh-Pedersen. NOVICE (52): 1-Jim Skougård Rasmussen, 2-Stig Thomasen, 3-Marianne Wedel Bach, 4-Carl Erik Frost. XXL LAST CHANCE (222): 1-Hans Kristian Mathiesen, 2-Jens Quirin Hansen, 3/4-Filomila Karantzali (Greece) / Michael H. Pedersen. 2009 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFIER (32): 1-Jan Ebbe Jensen, 2-Henrik Veje, 3/4-Thomas Schwanbeck (Germany) / Kenji Shimodaira (Japan). 2009 JAPAN OPEN QUALIFIER (30): 1-Uli Koch (Germany), 2-Jakob H. Simonsen, 3/4-Claus Klausen / Manouchr Parchami (Sweden). LADIES CUP (41): 1-Anna Bondo, 2-Eva Bergman (Sweden), 3/4-Rikke Kragh / Sara Utku (Sweden). DOUBLES (48 teams): 1-Torben Nielsen & Per Hartig Rasmussen, 2-Roland Herrera (England) & Michihito Kageyama (Japan), 3/4-Peter Lego Fursund & Søren Weis / Martin Foldager & Kim Valeur Andersen. MIXED DOUBLES (42 teams): 1-Vinni

Gertsen & Lars Nielsen, 2-Pia Jeppesen & Odin Spillum Svendsen (Norway), 3/4-Jørn Andersen & Lise Nielsen / Ditte Martinsen & Carter Mattig (USA). EAMEVENT (22 teams): 1-Team Easy E. T.: Lars Nielsen / Martin Kruse Olsen / Christian Sørensen, 2-Soja: Jostein Flood (Norway) / Sven-Olav Norén (Sweden) / Aron Tendler (Sweden), 3/4-Hatten / Rolax. NORDIC OPEN DMP (50): 1-Kenny Nissen, 2-Konrad Fröschl (Austria), 3/4-Omid Badici (Sweden) / Majken Johansen.

•**Springfield Series #6** (Springfield, IL; 11 Apr.)... OPEN: 1-Rob Farmer, Mike Flohr; 1C-Cliff Mayoh, 2C-Scott Day (IN); 1LC-John Jennings.

•**Ohio State Club Monthly** (Akron, OH; 19Apr.)... OPEN: 1-Joe Miller, 2-Mike Hendrickson.

•**4th Strawberry Hill High Stakes Tournament** (Kingston, Jamaica; 24-26 Apr.)... OPEN (32): 1-Alastair MacBeath, 2-William Mahfood, 3-Greg McClure, 4-Jonathan Todd

•**Springfield Series Grand Finale** (Springfield, IL; 25 Apr.)... OPEN (22): 1-Faddoul Khoury, 2-Terry Leahy; 1C-Vinton Knarr, 2C-Michael Flohr; 1LC-Rob Farmer.

•**Pair-O-Dice Monthly** (New York, NY; 26 Apr.)... OPEN (8): 1-Victor Ashkenazi (NJ), 2-Alan Grunwald (NJ); 1C-Mike Battaglia (NJ). INTERMEDIATE (4): 1-Jason Pack, 2-Jim Kennis; 1C-Sam Danielson. Δ

AMALGAMATION

Two official room rate drops for upcoming ABT events. First, the Holiday Inn Select (Rosemont, IL) now offers \$79/night rates for the Chicago Open. Second, the Doubletree Hotel (Arlington, VA) has dropped the rates for the US Open from \$129 to \$119/night. Stay three nights (single or double) and get a 20% entry fee reduction... Winnetka director **Trudie Chibnik** informs us that backgammon will not meet at the Winnetka Community House on Wednesday, 13 May due to the annual rummage sale... **Greg Kesich** reports at americanchronicle.com that during an April Boston Red Sox rain-out game, **Mike Lowell** and **Jason Bay** were playing backgammon in the locker room... Did you see **Neil Kazaross** (IL) at the Bulls/Boston



Neil Kazaross at Bulls/Boston game 6.

game 6 of the NBA playoffs? He had a floor seat that put him on television all night... Condolences to the family and friends of **Dr. Andrew Plater**, director of studies in math at Cambridge in England. Only 43, Plater died while cycling in Cambridge last month. At the 2007 Monte Carlo World Championship, Plater won 2nd Consolation in the Championship division. It was one of the few BG events he attended... A new California club has opened: Gammon Gamers. The club is run by John Arendsen

and meets Tuesdays at 1:00 p.m. at Vinaka's Cafe in Carlsbad. For more info, visit meetup.com/northcountygammongammers... Good news for mobile phone owners. BGBlitz2go 2.0 is now available. It is the strongest handheld program available and works on many phones including Blackberry, Motorola, Nokia, Palm, Samsung, and Sony Ericsson; but NOT on the iPhone. Price \$25 US. For more info, visit bgblitz2go.com... "The Love Boat" first season (1977) is now available on DVD. In the second show of that season, **Jaclyn Smith** and **Dennis Cole** are shown playing backgammon poolside. The couple went on to marry for real in 1978... Welcome back snowbirds **Ken Bond** (from Fort Lauderdale, FL) and **Elaine Kehm** (from Palm Desert, CA)... Over 100 years ago (April 7, 1908), the *Washington Post* wrote: "Who plays backgammon nowadays? It was on of the favorite games of our forefathers but is to day apparently as obsolete as the dinosaur. Backgammon was invented in Wales in the eleventh century and derived its name from two Welsh words—"back" (little) and "cammon" (battle). Three-quarters of a centry ago no home wof the aristocracy was complete without its backgammon board. The game was played nightly as an innocent diversion. Two Presidents—**Van Buren** and **Jackson**—were adepts." Δ

BEST PLAY/BLUNDER ANSWERS

[From quiz on pages 6-7]

BEST PLAYS:

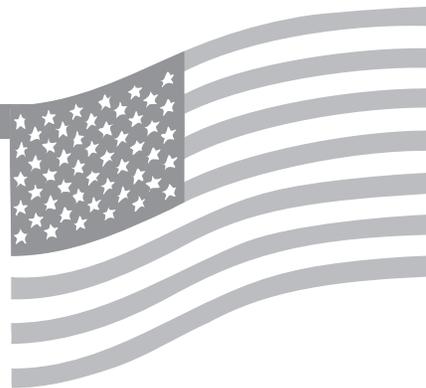
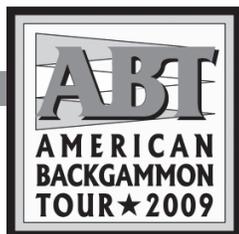
- 1 4 5 7 8 10 11

BLUNDERS:

- 2 (6/5, 6/4 is the best play)
- 3 (13/10 is the best play)
- 6 (9/6 is the best play)
- 9 (6/5*, 5/3 is the best play)
- 12 (7/4 is the best play)



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