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**Backgammon's
#1 Magazine**

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Monte Carlo

Chouettes -
Individual Cubes Variation

Fall Tournaments

OCT. 1980

LAS VEGAS BACKGAMMON MAGAZINE

An International Publication



James Darren

BACKGAMMON MAGAZINE

An International Publication



Editorial Offices: 9457 Las Vegas Blvd. So. #58, Las Vegas, Nevada 89119. Published since 1974. Advertising Offices: 9457 Las Vegas Blvd. So. #58, Las Vegas, Nevada 89119

COVER: JAMES DARREN, actor, singer and current strip star of the Sahara Hotel. His screen triumphs include "Guns of Navarone," "Diamondhead" and the "Gidget" movies in which he stole the show with the "Moondoggie" character.

"Goodbye Cruel World" was just one of his top ten hits during his teen idol recording star period.

James Darren also starred in the long running "Time Tunnel" T.V. series. He is currently doing dramatic roles on T.V. and appearing at the Sahara Hotel.

James Darren is a motorcycle and automobile enthusiast who also finds backgammon a relaxing pastime.

Cover courtesy of Sahara Hotel and David Dearing.

Photo by Andrea Waller

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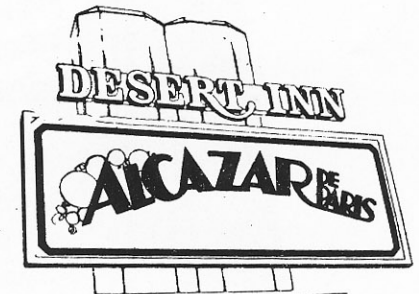
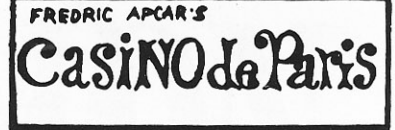
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BACKGAMMON IN THE PUBLIC EYE

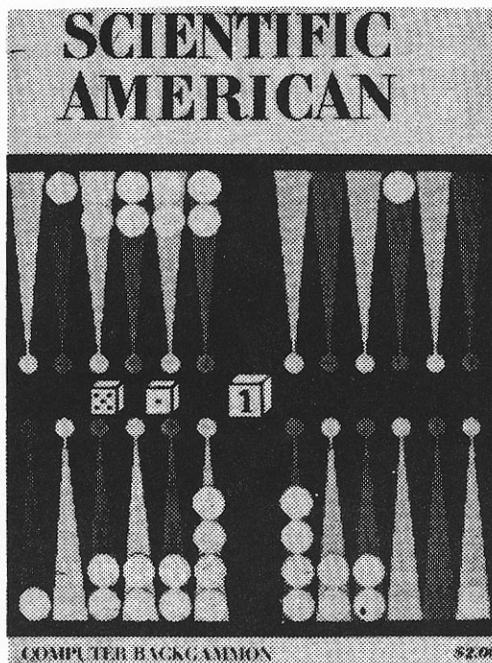
MAGAZINE: Backgammon got the cover of *Scientific American*. Computer backgammon to be exact. The June 1980 issue carries an in-depth article by Hans Berliner and a full-color cover. Computer backgammon it seems is contributing to progress in the technology of artificial intelligence.

San Diego Physician Magazine with a two page layout on Dr. Roy Springer, backgammon competitor. Dr. Springer currently filling a contract to practice in Saudi Arabia, is quoted as saying "it (backgammon) certainly is not supplementing my income."

Several magazines have carried the "List of Baseball Lists" in which the category, "Players Favorite Partners in Lobbies," is noted. Backgammon rates fourth behind electronic games but in front of poker.

Gammon Erotica - Games for Lovers is a magazine published by Playgirl Enterprises. Some of the features are erotic crosswords and games to play with the shades down. On the cover in full color entangled in a hot tub, are a semi-nude blonde, a tall dark and handsome male, and a backgammon board.

Velvet magazine (June Issue) has outdone everyone. If you haven't seen this piece called "Gammon Amour," you haven't seen anything. The most torrid lovemaking on a backgammon board ever. "Redhead Lisa" and "Mouthwatering Margo" are supposedly



showgirls who get together over a backgammon board between shows.

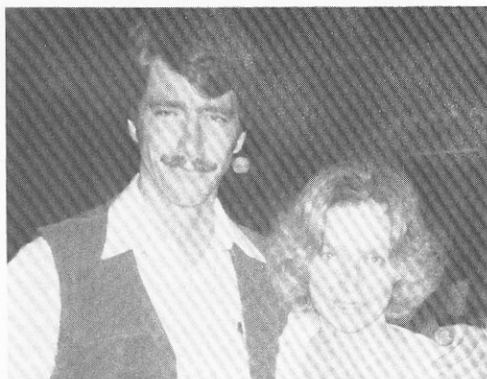
NEWSPAPER: *St. Louis Dispatch* carried a full page puff piece on Elliot Winslow and his champion fantasies. *Tahoe Bonanza*, a full

page with pictures on the Incline Village Backgammon Club and their high school backgammon project. Phoenix newspapers report on the Backgammon Mike tee-shirt phenomenon. Shirts seen everywhere read B. G. Mike's father, B. G. Mike's friend, B. G. Mike's mechanic, etc. The writer wondered how long it would be before there was a Backgammon Mike's Governor tee-shirt. Soon!

UPI - carried that most colorless article on backgammon and the World Amateur Tournament. Goldsmith, Markowitz, Jackson, and Boyd are all quoted and come off sounding like they're asleep. Markowitz is reported to echo "The game's popularity soared when it became a social phenomenon." What does that mean, Howard!

The stupidity award was won hands down by Joe Scott, reputed developer of Pips in Beverly Hills. No longer with Pips, he now operates the Club Barrington, a private disco and hangout for the movieland elite. Scott is quoted in a major column featuring his eliteness. "Backgammon is no longer popular with most of the Hollywood crowd." This new club will provide only a couple of backgammon tables. The next time we're with the "Hollywood crowd" we promise not to mention backgammon. ☆☆

BINGEN ON BACKGAMMON



JEFF HENRY & SANDY BINGEN

One of the friendliest places to play backgammon in the Chicago area is the weekly Pub Club Tournaments at the Ground Round in Downers Grove on Monday nights. Jeff Henry, the Tournament Director, strives to make everyone feel welcome and even a newcomer is engaged in friendly banter in a matter of minutes. Jeff produces a monthly newsletter with current master point standings along with other backgammon tidbits. We're each others' Monday night family, and whether you want to be consoled or cajoled, there is always someone ready and willing.

On a recent Monday night several of the men presented a surprise baby gift to one of the pregnant women. We have our own Kenny Rogers look-alike that I would defy anyone to pick out the real Kenny Rogers if they were side by side.

With the abundance of male players at the Pub Club and at most tournaments, I don't understand where all the female players are. Ladies of the Chicago area, I personally invite you to the Pub Club Tournaments to share the joy of friendly criticism and stimulating conversation with my Monday night family.

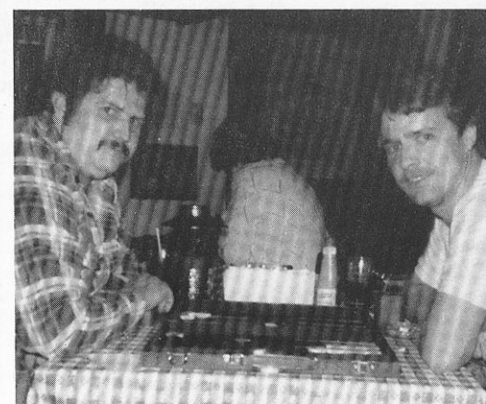
Editors Note: Sandy will be teaching beginning backgammon for the College of Du Page in the fall. Ladies, sign up! ☆☆



FRANK MASSI & JIM OPRE



EARL RISCH & SUE ZEMAN



PAUL HOSTELAND & FRANK MROZEK

Black & White

San Francisco Classic



Computer programmer and games expert Allen Van Gelder, of San Francisco, won a series of grueling matches, \$10,710 in prize money and a place in the record books by winning the first-ever Black & White San Francisco Classic Backgammon Championship.

The Memorial Day weekend event — held at the Stanford Court Hotel on San Francisco's Nob Hill — drew participation by some 200 of the best backgammon competitors in the United States, along with a sprinkling of leading players from Europe, Asia and Canada.

Sponsored by Black & White Scotch Whiskey, it was the first time that a championship backgammon circuit event has been held in the Western U.S. Prize money in the 2½ day program totaled \$34,550 — one

of the richest backgammon purses in the country, and a record for western players.

Organized and conducted as a benefit for the Cystic Fibrosis Summer Camp program, the Classic was directed by Lewis Deyong, of London. San Francisco attorney William E. Boyd served as tournament coordinator.

Excitement ran high during the final match between Van Gelder and *Backgammon Magazine* publisher Michael Maxakuli. The championship match was telecast on closed-circuit television to an enthusiastic audience of several hundred backgammon fans. Paul Magriel, the 1978-79 World Backgammon Champion, was commentator for the broadcast. According to Magriel, the two players were exceptionally well matched, and played one of the finest "textbook" competitions he had ever witnessed.

The final score was 21 to 16, giving Van Gelder the honors and some \$10,000.

San Franciscan Ted Kim won first place in the championship division's consolation program, while Timothy Behr, of San Rafael, finished first in the last chance event. The intermediate division winners were: Richard Mauer, of Los Altos, who won first place in that division's main event, narrowly edging-out Mike Margolis, of San Francisco. The intermediate consolation event was won by Daly City's Marv Porten, and Don Burns, of San Francisco, won the last chance program.

The Black & White Championship Backgammon Circuit is the game's only major commercially-sponsored circuit in the United States. Other cities on the 1980-81 tour include: Chicago, Atlantic City, Miami, Washington, D.C., Boston and Los Angeles. ★★

Two Points To Go

by Kit Woolsey

Several years ago when I played in my first big backgammon tournament, I was fortunate enough to reach the quarterfinals. The score progressed to 19-19 in the 21 point match. I started with 3-1 and 4-2, while my opponent's first two rolls accomplished nothing much. I then chose to double, figuring that I might as well put the match up for grabs while I had an advantage. He took, and I eventually lost the game and the match. Afterward, I asked a couple of good players if my double was correct. The general consensus was that it was a good double if my opponent dropped, but otherwise it was questionable. As we shall see, I actually doubled one roll too late!

A couple of years later I was kibitzing a 15 point match at the European championships, along with Al Lorenz, one of Europe's best players. The score progressed to 13-13, at which point Al whispered to me, "If these guys know what they are doing, the next game should be the last game of the match."

At the time this seemed to be somewhat of an overstatement. I knew that it was correct to double earlier than usual at this score, but is it right to always double so early that it becomes a take, regardless of the sequence of rolls? It turns out upon careful analysis that Al was quite correct. With proper play at this score, no double should be made so late that the opponent has a drop.

The argument for doubling on any advantage when each side has two points to go in a match can be seen by examining the possible costs of being wrong by doubling or not doubling. Suppose we start with a 3-1 roll, making our 5 point, and our opponent rolls 3-2, bringing two men down. The cost of being wrong by not doubling is the same as always — we might roll a joker such as 4-4 or 6-6 on our next roll, and our opponent will now have a drop when we would have preferred to play the game for the match.

Now, what is the cost of doubling when things fail to go well immediately? We lose the opportunity to double our opponent out later, but should that situation arise we will

be happy to have already doubled. Suppose the game turns around. If the cube is still in the middle, and our opponent knows what he is doing, (i.e., if he has read this article), he will double early enough that we will still have to take. Consequently, we will be playing the game for the match whether we double now or not, even if things go sour and we lose our advantage. Therefore, there is no cost at all in doubling immediately if we are wrong, so we should double now to avoid the risk of losing our market.

Another way of seeing the argument is as follows: The reason we do not double on a slight advantage in regular money play is that our opponent would then own the cube, which means that he has the option for the rest of the game of jacking the stakes up to 4, while we do not have that option. However, when each side has two points to go in the match, this cube ownership becomes worthless. Consequently, we are giving away nothing by giving away the cube, so we should double if it is at all possible that we will lose our market on the next roll. ★★

TOURNAMENT PSYCHOLOGY

Winning

by Joel Rettew

You, too, can succeed if you know the power within you.

The difference between money games and tournaments are so great I am surprised that there has not been more written about them. For a long time I have been looking for the right words to describe the difference and last month while teaching my 16 year old son to drive, the words came to me: automatic and manual.

As I have been driving for many years, the thousands of bits of information that I had learned were implanted in my subconscious, and I drove automatically without thinking. Now in teaching my son, I had to take the information out of automatic and put my learned expertise in manual to explain them to my son. (In other words, I had to think about everything I did.)

Comparing this to backgammon, I realized that the average player played far more money games than tournament games and didn't realize that many of the takes that were "good takes" in a money game were drops in tournaments. If I can give you just one thought, it would be during a tournament, shift your mind from automatic into "manual," and look at every point as if it were the most important point of the match. Play tournaments with your mind in manual and not in automatic.

The more I play this game called backgammon, the more I realize that I have a lot more to learn, with all the subtle skills involved

and because most players tend to rationalize the dice. It is difficult not only to recognize your mistakes but to evaluate your abilities.

Remember always the most important thing is ATTITUDE; it is not who you are, but who you think you're not. It is the attitude you have when you sit down to a match that determines the winners.

I heard someone say at the last tournament I attended, "Guess who I just drew — Paul Magriel." This person further added that he couldn't beat him, and you know what, he didn't. He lost before he sat down because he told himself he couldn't win. When I play in a tournament, I play to win and I look at my opponent as my adversary, whom I am going to battle. My attitude is I CAN WIN, and I play hard with my mind in manual; I don't do anything automatic. Once the dice have been thrown, a battle begins and each succeeding roll will alter the position, tactics and strategy. This is a game of few absolutes; it is an ever-changing fluid, with unlimited options.

At the start of the match never appear nervous or uncomfortable when you sit down to play. Say little or nothing to your opponent, maintain table presence, never refer to dice rolls as "good rolls" or "my worse." Don't be intimidated by an opponent. Take your time but play with a steady rhythm that is comfortable for you. The positions are in front of you at all times. While I am waiting for my opponent to move, I use the time to go over the positions with a "what if" I rolled 6-2 or 5-

3, and then when one of the rolls comes up, I know what to do.

Attempt to size up your opponent quickly, look at his weaknesses, and use your strengths, especially while playing against a well-known player. I then try to find the odds on the match. If I'm the underdog, I then will take a little side action. Without his knowing I have moved the odds over to my side of the table with my attitude.

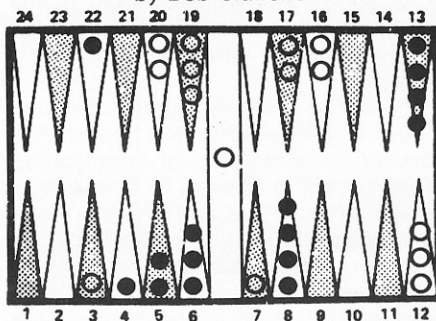
There is a certain gamemanship to be employed in backgammon tournaments. And if you are to win at this game, you must understand the specific skills and psychology of the traps laid by your adversary. I watch my opponent very carefully and try to guess what he is thinking. For example, in a match when my opponent had doubled me to two, and he has the best of the position, I see him looking at the score sheet, and I can almost feel that he is scoring the 4 points from this game that is not yet over. As I turn the game around in my favor, I watch him look at the score sheet again, and with his eyes he removes the 4 points. When I go on to win this game and it's scored, I call a break. I have never heard anyone talk about the importance of breaks in a match and who calls them and at what point. Think about it for a moment, wouldn't you like to control the breaks, and pick your spots? Change your attitude, shift from automatic to manual, and play to win one point at a time. ★★

THERE OUGHT TO BE A LAW!

White rolled a 4-3 and entered from the bar, continuing on with the checker to make his opponent's bar point. However, instead of picking up the enemy blot on the opponent's four-point, he mistakenly picked up his own man on the three-point and put it on the bar. Black rolled double sixes and, thinking he had a man on the bar (we hope), picked his dice up. White rolled double fives and started to point on the man on his own three-point, whereupon Black "woke up" to point that it was a *White* checker that was on the bar. A ruling was asked for. The players were (properly) told "illegal plays stand once the next player rolls the dice." White was forced to remain on the bar, and Black went on to win the game.

Was justice done in this case? Well, the penalty here was quite harsh, but the rules are the same for all, aren't they? Well, yes and no. The fellow who had the white pieces in this case was one of our weaker players; elderly, nervous, and somewhat absent-minded, but a likeable person and quite courteous toward other people. Who is it in your club that would be a likely candidate for the kind of mental error mentioned here?

by Bob Ciaffone



Quite probably, the last time you saw this type of mistake occur, the person who made it fit the description I have just given you. Shouldn't this type of person be given more protection by the laws of backgammon than he presently receives?

The situations that are most frequently dealt under the "illegal moves" rule are:

1. Moving a man an incorrect number of pips.
2. Playing an incorrect number of moves when rolling doubles.
3. Failing to put the opponent's man on

the bar even though the point it occupied was or could have been used as a landing place for part of the move.

The present rule seems to work fairly enough in these situations. The areas where we need an improvement are when

1. A player moves the wrong-colored men.
2. A player hits his own blot and puts it on the bar.

These situations are so disruptive to the normal course of the game and so obvious for the opponent to notice, that it should be the responsibility of *both* players to prevent their occurrence. I am not exactly sure how the amended rule should read. Perhaps the position should always be returned to that prior to the infraction, no matter how much later the error is discovered. Perhaps this type of play should only become official after the offender rolls the dice again, to give more time to rectify the mistake than is presently allowed. I do know there ought to be a law governing this situation that is fairer to the weaker players than the all-purpose law now in common use. Which law appeals to your sense of fairness? ★★

ON THE BAR... BEHIND BARS

Even if we were caught in possession of the dice, the worse that would happen to us would be to get thrown in the hole for a couple of weeks and our dice taken away.

It happens to be my misfortune that I currently find my sleeping quarters within the confines of a state correctional institution. My woes are further compounded by the fact that dice are considered contraband here. This can and does present a number of problems if you happen to be a gammon-crazed, doubling demon such as I am.

I have discovered, however, that if you take several decks of playing cards and remove the ace through the six, with each player drawing two cards at a time and playing the numbers accordingly, a reasonable facsimile of backgammon can be played. In fact, this method of playing adds to the strategy as far as the cards are played. They are placed in the discard pile and remain there until one of us gets ambitious enough to shuffle them back into the deck.

If you play as many backgammon games an evening as my friend and I do, you understand why it can become tiresome to have the flow of play interrupted by frequent shuffles. And though, either player can shuffle the deck at any time; it is usually not done unless you require a certain number that may be in short supply because of previous play. Therefore, if a player has a keen memory for numbers, he can gain a small advantage when it comes to important decisions on where to leave blots or build points.

This unorthodox style of backgammon was how my friend and I had been playing until fortune brought us a pair of contraband dice. Now our only problem is to not get caught using them. Because of the guards making frequent patrols of the playing area, it has become a game of hide and seek. The cards are visible to any passing guard and the dice get slipped in when the coast is clear.

We have been playing with the dice for almost three months now, and have yet to be detected. That is not to say there hasn't been any close calls. One time during a fit of

reentry difficulty, I threw the dice a little too hard and flung them on the floor. If you have ever seen how fast a set of dice can travel when they are thrown on a waxed, tile floor, you may well understand our panic. Fortunately, the guards were otherwise distracted, and my carelessness went unnoticed.

Even if we were caught in possession of the dice, the worse that would happen to us would be to get thrown in the hole for a couple of weeks and our dice taken away.

The thought of not being able to play backgammon for a couple of weeks is so unbearable that we remain on our toes at all times. I have even come up with an ingenious method to transport the dice back and forth to the playing area. I conceal them in my coffee cup with about an inch of coffee left in the bottom. Then, if necessary, I can just take a drink of coffee and transfer them to my mouth. Several times, during routine frisks, I have been able to conceal them in this manner.

Backgammon is slowly gaining in popularity here and my partner and I have been discussing the possibility of approaching our keepers with a request to form a club. The major difficulty lies with the dice being considered contraband. The administration fears that the dice will end up in crap games. We still may press the issue, and if worse comes to worse, we could always use cards instead of dice. At least we might gain a place where backgammon players could meet and share knowledge of the game. Perhaps we may even interest an outside club to offer assistance in the way of supplies, books, and teachers.

We will keep you updated on our struggles and would appreciate any correspondence, even if it's just in the form of your fine magazine. Happy gammon to you all and BEWARE: I will be getting out of here soon and have all intentions of financing my good living from backgammon proceeds. Now ain't that criminal!

☆☆

BACKGAMMON BIZ

In the last issue we mentioned enterprising experts who taught advance backgammon in exchange for a piece of the students' winnings in future tournaments. And it happened. The winner of the 1980 Amateur Backgammon Championships was a graduate of the coach and cuddle school of backgammon. Rumor has it that 35% of his winning will go to his mentor, David Leibowitz. Now that it has been proven that the method works, expect to see a boom in the backgammon business schools.

Black & White Scotch continues to make hay with backgammon. They spend heavily on each and every tournament primarily for promotion and direction. Very little finds its way to players' pockets and only 10% to the participating charity.

The small businessman is alive in backgammon, too. Several tournament regulars carry their wares with them. Jewelry is a common item and so are other luxuries at bargain basement prices. The usual back alley items are also being pandered. Someone was selling battery operated stick pins in the last few tournaments.

The most likable enterpreneurs are the players who sell themselves. They travel in backgammon circles, promoting backers, and arranging future games preferably with pigeons. The next thing you know, they're in your hometown with a friendly "remember me." But, how are you supposed to remember? Very simply, they'll give you a card. Some cards are very creative and informative, but this is the best one we have ever seen!



That's Style

Backgammon may never be the same.

Former film idol Marlene Dietrich insisted she needed something out of the ordinary in a backgammon board. So artist Neal Orfaley went to work, the *New York Daily News* reported today.

The result was a board encrusted in gold and solid silver with dice cups cast from silver bearing the actress's monogram in solid gold.

She plays constantly with her housekeeper in Paris on the \$17,000 board, the *News* reported.

(Reprinted from *Lexington Herald-Leader*)

DOUBLING QUIZ

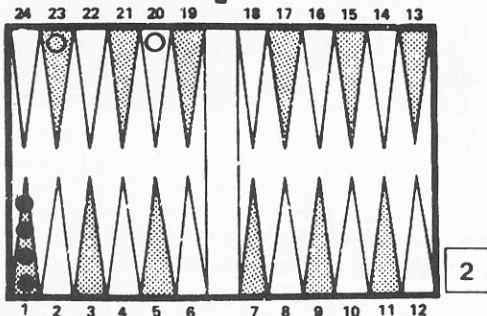
In each of the following positions, BLACK is on roll in a money game with the Jacoby Rule and beavers in effect. For each position, answer these two questions:

A) Should BLACK, on roll, double or not?

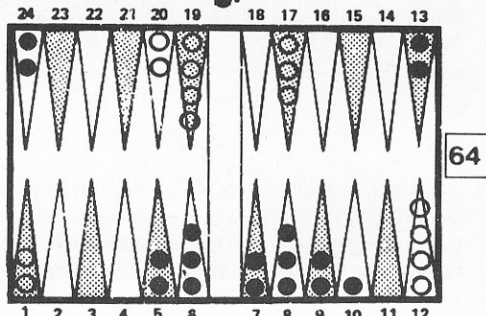
B) If BLACK doubles, should WHITE drop, take, or beaver?

Pay attention to the position of the cube. (It might make a difference!) Solutions and comments on next page. Give yourself one point for each correct solution.

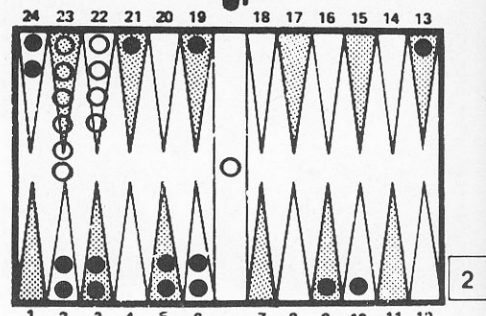
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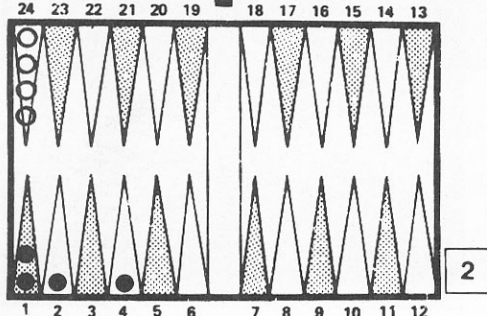
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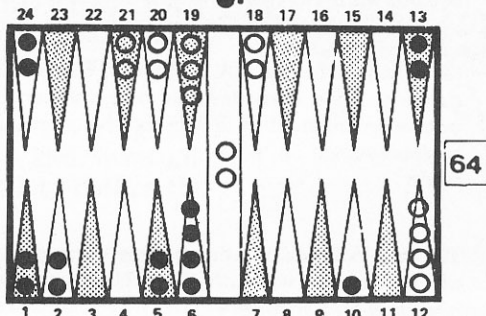
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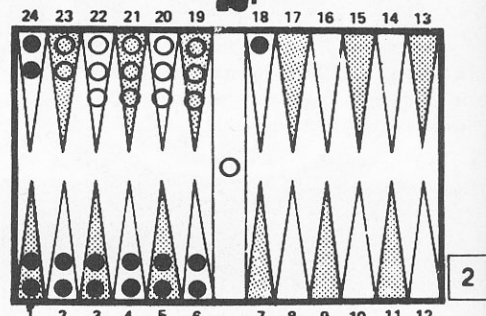
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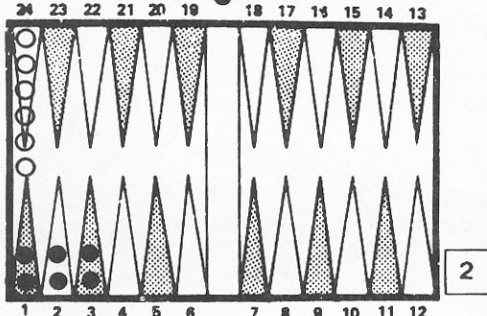
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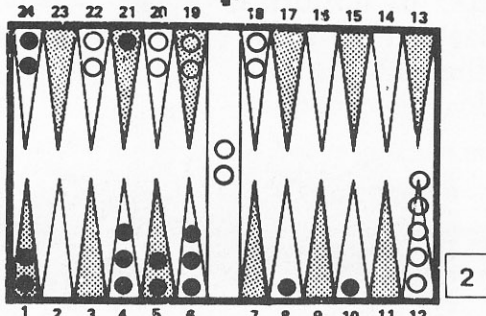
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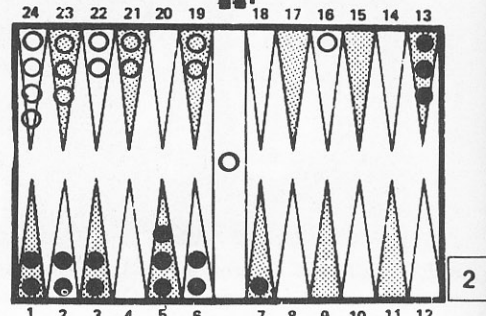
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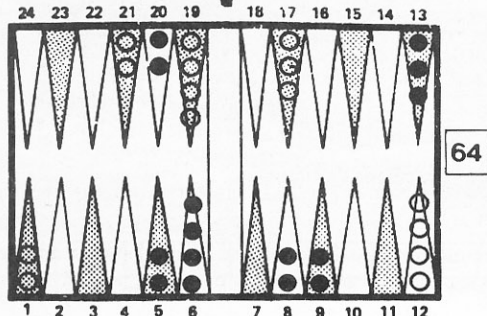
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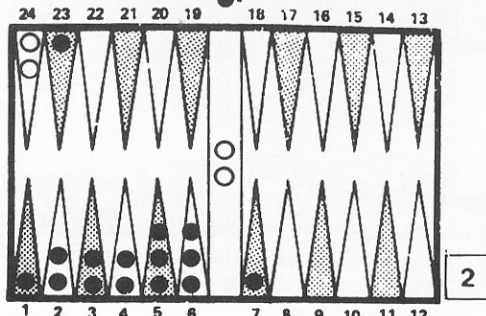
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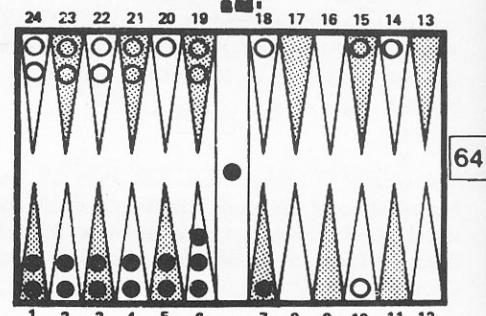
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12.



Solutions and Comments

1) A: Yes B: Take

A cute position: BLACK can win 1/6 of the time with a double. Although he will be redoubled when he misses, he will then be only a very slight underdog (19-17). The chance of winning immediately makes this a correct double. White has far better than a 25% chance of winning, so he should take.

2) A: Yes B: Take

Black must double; this is effectively the last roll of the game and BLACK is a favorite. Evaluate WHITE's equity as consisting of three parts:

1. White can roll a double after BLACK doesn't (approx. 14%)

2. Black rolls 3-1 or 3-2 and loses (approx. 11%)

3. Black rolls 2-1 and subsequently misses (approx. 1/2%)

Since the sum of all these equities is greater than 25%, WHITE should take.

3) A: Yes B: Take

In a pure three-roll position (6 men each on the one-points), BLACK would double and WHITE would pass. (White's equity would then be 22%). Here WHITE has the extra possibility that BLACK can roll three ones in a row (probability approx. 3%). In fact, after the sequence BLACK: 2-1, WHITE: non-double, BLACK: 2-1, WHITE can redouble! Therefore, take.

4) A: Yes B: Take

Obviously BLACK has a double. What's not so obvious is that WHITE has just enough equity to take. This type of position is particularly difficult to evaluate since WHITE has no constructive game plan. His best strategy is to wait and hope to get a lucky shot as BLACK brings his men around the board, relying on innate randomness of backgammon. In 100 trials of this position, WHITE lost a total of 90 units owning the cube at 2 (as opposed to the 100 units he would have lost by dropping).

5) A: Yes B: Take

Again, an easy double. Curiously, this is an easier take than in position 4. Although BLACK's home position is stronger, WHITE still has the possibility of building a prime of his own. This problem illustrates the defensive value of owning your own 5-point. Without that point, WHITE would have to pass.

6) A: No B: Take

Black's double here is overly optimistic in view of WHITE's 4-point prime. However, BLACK is still a slight favorite, so WHITE should only take.

7) A: No B: Drop

Too good to double! Black's distribution of men makes him a favorite to win a gammon. Don't be deceived by WHITE'S semi-4-point-prime; once BLACK closes his board he'll have no trouble escaping his back men.

8) A: No B: Take

White still has a clear take in position 8 even after BLACK closes the one-point. BLACK should therefore wait to avoid the

variation where BLACK rolls 2-a and WHITE subsequently makes the one-point. BLACK should not double until he sees the distribution of his three spare checkers for the bear-off.

9) A: No B: Take

Black must wait, since he will still have a double and take even after closing the 4 or the bar-points. White should not beaver; BLACK is still a slight favorite.

10) A: No B: Take

An interesting position which violates the usually reliable principle that you should wait until the last possible moment, **when your opponent still has a take**, before doubling. White has a clear take now, and will have a clear drop after BLACK rolls a single six. Nonetheless, BLACK almost doubles his equity in the position by waiting until he rolls a six, then cashing the game.

11) A: Yes B: Take

A good example of the general principle mentioned in problem 10. Black should double now. After next turn, he may have three or four builders aiming at the 4-point, and WHITE would have to pass if still on the bar. White has a 15-pip lead in the race and just enough equity to take now.

12) A: No B: Beaver

Time to put this problem to rest once and for all. It is true that with the Jacoby Rule in effect, there **theoretically** exist positions which are both initial doubles and beavers. For such a position to occur, three conditions must hold:

1) Black must win between 30% and 33% of the time.

2) Black must win a gammon whenever he wins.

3) Black must lose a single game whenever he loses.

In position 12 (from an article in the March 1980 *Las Vegas Backgammon Magazine* conditions (1) and (3) hold, but condition (2) fails. If BLACK hits, he will win a gammon about 80% of the time, win a single game about 15%, and lose about 5%. Unfortunately, the more blots BLACK hits, the greater his chances of leaving a blot in the bearoff and losing. The next effect is that BLACK's initial double is incorrect. WHITE, of course, should still beaver. (In fact, WHITE **must** beaver to make BLACK's double incorrect).

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END GAME DOUBLING: A SCIENCE, NOT AN ART

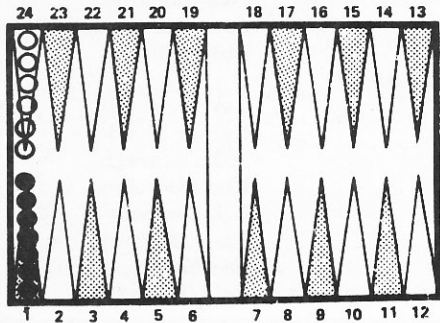
by: "Dr. J." Jeff Ward, Ph.D.

Proper use of the doubling cube is probably the most important and most difficult part of backgammon beyond the beginner level. One reason it is so difficult is that it is normally hard to prove whether a particular doubling decision is correct or not. About the best that can usually be done is to play out a position (as a "proposition") to the end of the game over and over again, and keep track of the results. After a large number of repetitions the correct answer usually becomes clear. This is a slow and laborious process, however, and one could do this night and day and still not investigate more than a tiny fraction of the situations that can come up. As a result, good cube play is more the product of much playing experience and the development of a feel for positional strengths and weaknesses. In this sense it is more an art than a science.

There is, however, one important part of backgammon where art gives way to science (mathematics), and doubling decisions can be determined precisely. This is the part of the end game when both sides are bearing off. Correct cube play has been determined for many such end game positions through mathematical analysis. Since mathematics is primarily of interest only to mathematicians, I leave a discussion of how this is done to the end of the article. It is suffice to say that the process is rather complicated and involves very expensive computer time even for simple positions.

One group of positions is worth some special attention because they occur fairly often and because they offer guidance as to how to handle more complicated positions. This is the group of positions characterized as "guaranteed, no-miss." A typical group of such positions are those in which both players have all their remaining checkers on their respective 1-points. With each normal roll a player will bear two checkers off, and with a double, four checkers off. These positions are best described by the number of normal rolls it takes to complete the bear-off. For example, three or four checkers on the 1-point is the "2-Roll" position, nine or ten checkers is the "5-Roll" position, and fifteen checkers is the "8-Roll" position.

FIGURE 1



Now, what do you do if you encounter one of these situations during a game? In Figure 1, assume you are BLACK and it is your roll. Should you double? If so, should WHITE take? Or assume it is WHITE's roll. Should he double and should BLACK take? Mathematics provides the answer to each of these questions.

Let's first consider the situation in which one player needs more rolls to bear off than the other player. For example, in Figure 1 BLACK needs four rolls to complete the bear-off, and WHITE needs three. If it is the turn of the player needing **more** rolls, he should not double. Of course, if he mistakenly doubles, it is a take by the other player. If it is the turn of the player needing **less** rolls, he should double and his opponent should drop. In Figure 1, if it is BLACK's turn, he should not double. If it is WHITE's turn, he should double and BLACK should drop.

This takes care of most possibilities, but what if each player needs the **same** number of rolls to bear off? Here is where it gets interesting, because it depends on **how many** rolls are needed (Table 1). If BLACK is on roll, and needs three or less rolls, he should double and WHITE should drop. If BLACK needs four rolls, he should double and WHITE should take. When five or more rolls are needed, BLACK should double only if the cube is in the middle. In other words, BLACK should not redouble; WHITE should take in all cases.

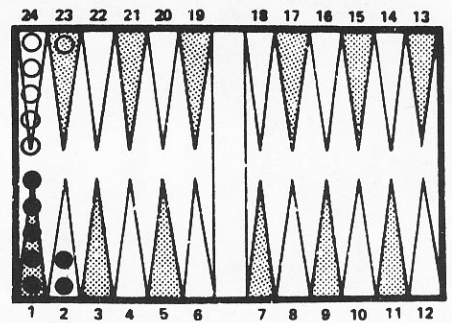
TABLE 1

Black's Position		White's Position								No. of Rolls	No. of Checkers
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
No. of Rolls	No. of Checkers	1 or 2	3 or 4	5 or 6	7 or 8	9 or 10	11 or 12	13 or 14	15		
1	1 or 2	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		
2	3 or 4	-	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		
3	5 or 6	-	-	*	*	*	*	*	*		
4	7 or 8	-	-	-	+	*	*	*	*		
5	9 or 10	-	-	-	-	/	*	*	*		
6	11 or 12	-	-	-	-	-	/	*	*		
7	13 or 14	-	-	-	-	-	-	/	*		
8	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	/		

After studying Table 1, you may say to yourself, "OK, but how often will both my opponent and I have 13 or 14 checkers stacked on our 1-points?" The answer is: probably not very often. But the information is still useful because it can be applied to a large number of closely related positions. For example, the rules still apply if a few of the checkers are on the 2-point instead of the 1-point. In Figure 2, Table 1 applies because all doubles still remove four checkers and non-doubles remove two checkers.

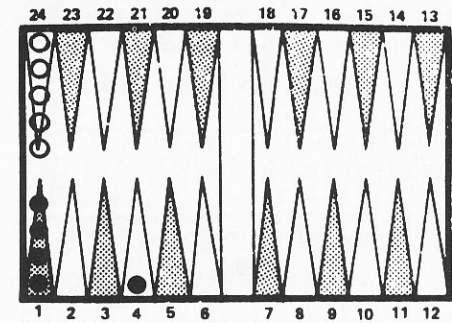
Table 1 can be applied in another way. If a player has an odd number of checkers remaining, he can afford while bearing off to

FIGURE 2



miss once and not have it hurt him. In Figure 3, BLACK has five checkers left. If he misses by rolling, say, a 3-1 and takes only one checker off, he will be left with four checkers. But he is no worse off than if he rolls something like 6-1 and has three checkers left. In each case, he needs two more normal rolls to complete the bear-off. Therefore BLACK should consider this the equivalent of the 3-Roll vs. 3-Roll situation of Table 1. This means BLACK should double and WHITE should drop.

FIGURE 3



With a little thought, Table 1 can be extended further. In Figure 4 both players have four checkers, and the pip count in each case is 18. As a starting point, Table 1 says that 4 checkers vs. 4 checkers is a double and a drop. Because of the checker placement, however, both players are likely to miss should they roll a non-double. This means that 3-Rolls vs. 3-Rolls is a better indicator. But most rolls that are doubles fail to take four checkers off, and so are not as effective as in the earlier positions we looked at. This necessitates making the judgment that 4-Rolls vs. 4-Rolls is probably an even better indicator.

PIP TIPS

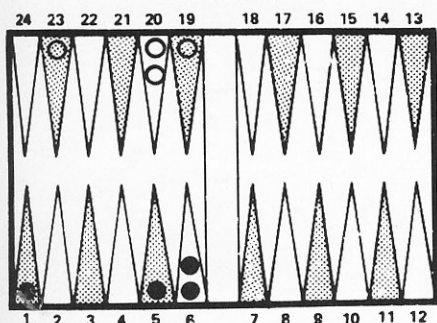
If you're always the first to see the dirt, perhaps you ought to clean your glasses.

—Van Buren

Ability wins us the esteem of the true men, luck, that of the people.

—Sir Rochefoucauld

FIGURE 4



If you are BLACK, you say to yourself, "Well, it's still a double (or redouble) in any case," and confidently thrust the cube at WHITE. If you are WHITE, you think it's a take but are not sure. You know, however, that at the very least, it is almost a take. (Incidentally, it is a take.)

One important word of caution needs to be made. Table 1 applies to stakes play (money games); it does not necessarily apply to match play (tournament games). When you are trying to be the first player to reach a certain number of points, as in a tournament match,

the general rule is to be more conservative than usual with the cube when you are ahead, and less conservative when you are behind. The recommendations given in Table 1 should therefore be adjusted accordingly. Exact mathematical solutions to tournament doubling situations can be worked out, but space prohibits a discussion of the topic in this article.

The derivation of the information in Table 1 is based upon the mathematical concept of **expectation**. In this case, expectation is the expected return per one unit bet on the game. In order to know the correct doubling strategy for BLACK's position vs. WHITE's position, it is necessary to know the expected return to BLACK should he double, should he not double owning the cube, and should he not double with the cube in the middle.

Table 2
Expected Return for BLACK in Selected Cases

Case	Number of Rolls Remaining for:		Black Doubles	Black Does Not Double	
	BLACK	WHITE		Owns Cube	Cube in Middle
#1	3-Roll vs. 2-Roll		-1.444	-.491	-.722
#2	3-Roll vs. 3-Roll		+1.000	+.768	+.768
#3	5-Roll vs. 5-Roll		+.727	+.753	+.704

QUIZ PICTURE

WHO IS THIS CHAMPION?

To win a championship is one thing. To defend it is another. In the first five years that the nation's leading contract bridge players have been ranked, there was not one repeater. Now at last the champion player has defended his title. Oswald Jacoby, who landed the top position for the season of 1934-1935, has won first place again for the competitive season of 1935-1936.

Reprinted from *Collier's* March 28, 1936.



Besides ability to repeat, there is another quality expected of a real champion at bridge. Can he win with different partners? Young Mr. Jacoby has answered that emphatically by having different partners in all of the events he won during the season just closed.

Still one other test might be applied to the record. Is his ability confined to just one style of game, such as team of four or pairs? Or does it cover the range of various kinds of contests? The reply is that it encompasses every possible kind of contract championship.

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CHAMANARA CAPTURES CHICAGO OPEN



Fancy Fred won the 1980 Chicago Open Backgammon Championships. The national event, directed under the auspices of **Gammon's of Chicago**, was held July 11-13 at the O'Hare Hilton Hotel. More than 180 entrants in four divisions of play competed for prize money in excess of \$35,000.

Chamanara's final win over Mark Jones of Indianapolis in two-out-of-three 9 point match earned him nearly \$5,000. Based on the strength of the Championship field, it was Fred's most important victory to date. Nationally ranked players in attendance included Craig Chellstorp, Vladimir Dobrich, "Slim" Gibbs, Nick Maffeo, Darrell Marcus, Dean Muench, "Jersey" Jim Pasko, Kathy Posner, Elliot Winslow and Charles Witz.

In the finals of the Intermediate division Chicago's own Fred Leinweber had his biggest payday ever by defeating Donna Silverstein of Los Angeles in two-out-of-three 7 point matches. The Beginner tournament results saw John McGoogan of Lisle, Illinois turn back a strong challenge from Denise Mowery of St. Louis. And in the Super Consolation event, local players dominated with Yamin Yamin winning a toss-up match over Chris Stanford.

Tournament Directors Howard Markowitz and Ida Weil wish to thank the tourney Chairman Sid Jackson, equipment supplier Loui Michel Cie, an able staff, and of course, all of this year's entrants for helping to make the premier Chicago Open Backgammon Championships a success. Watch for this event to grow in 1981. ★★

RANDOM THOUGHTS ON TOURNAMENT PLAY

by Oswald Jacoby

This is intended to supplement Barclay Cooke's excellent article in the May issue. Maybe there is no need to suggest proper tournament procedure, but today it seems that in a short match no one is more than a 6-5 favorite against anyone else. It wasn't so in the 60's. In the international championships at Nassau, I won 27 straight matches to win three years in a row, and lost in the finals the fourth year. Today no one wins more than one tournament out of ten.

The first rule of tournament doubling is to double when behind and keep the cube low when ahead. An extreme instance of this occurred in the 1978 Children's Cancer Fund Tournament. I led 3-1 in a 17-point match; I doubled early. Blakewell Williams, my opponent, redoubled and I took it. Later on in an extremely complicated position, I elected to make it 8. I thought he would drop (sure hoped he would), but he took it and made it 16 at his next turn. Now the whole

match hinged on one game. I won but was lucky indeed.

The year I won at Las Vegas I led John Crawford 15-3 in a 23-point semi-final match. I doubled to 8 with three men on the one point against his three men on the five point. I failed to shoot a double and he made it sixteen, but did not get his big double.

The odds in my favor were better than 20 to 1, but it is still a matter of dispute as to whether my double has been a proper one.

Now for a couple of normal match situations:

1. You need 2 points; your opponent needs 1 point. You roll 3-1. He rolls 5-2. Should you double? The answer is a decided no because he will refuse and play a final game at even money. Wait a while until you see little or no chance for gammon.

2. You both need 2 points. You roll 4-2; he rolls 5-2. Should you double? Yes, you have the advantage. ★★

COMPUTER BACKGAMMON

USER: "What stage is the game in?"

PROGRAM: "You are winning and you are in the process of bearing off."

USER: "What does my advantage consist of?"

PROGRAM: "You are ahead in the running game."

USER: "What should I try to do?"

PROGRAM: "You should lift your blockade and try to get your men home safely."

USER: "What do you mean by blockade?"

PROGRAM: "The degree to which your opponent's pieces are blocked in."

USER: "What does that depend on?"

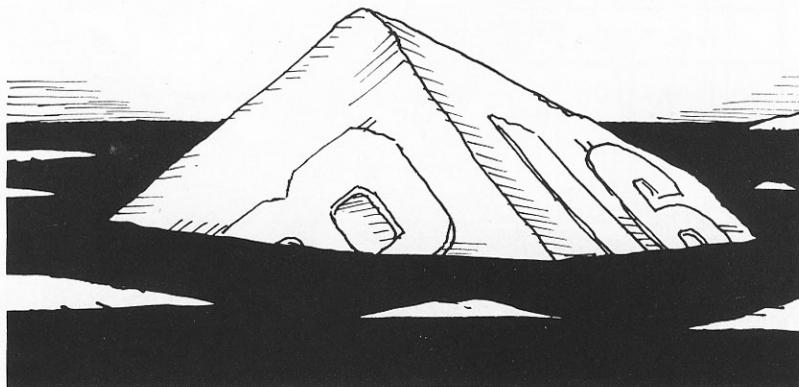
PROGRAM: "The number of men that are in front of a set of points you have made and the difficulty of passing those points."

USER: "How strong is my blockade?"

PROGRAM: "It is moderately strong."

DIALOGUE BETWEEN HUMAN PLAYER AND BKG will be possible in the future. The human player will select his questions from a list, and the program will formulate its answers by examining its own knowledge base and the set of possibilities in the current game positions.

Hans Berliner on Computer Backgammon in *Scientific America* JUNE / 80.



Tip of the Iceberg

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— Chouettes — Individual Cubes Variation

by Mary

How many times have you found yourself on a team with a captain who has a large minus on the score, and doubles on the second roll of the game, before you have a chance to say "Boo"? If you have ever been the victim of this situation, consider trying this new type of chouette, where individual cubes are used. That is, each player on the team has his own cube, and may double — or not double — whenever it suits him, regardless of the actions of the others. Conversely, the box may accept the double from some members of the team but not others, and may double team members individually at different times if he so chooses.

At my club, the Cavendish Club of Philadelphia, this new variation caught on fast after its introduction by the redoubtable Ami Oged. Ami got the idea three years ago at a tournament in New York, but only recently began teaching it to other players.

The rules of this game that differ from those of straight chouette are as follows:

1. The man in the box must show a profit in order to stay in the box.
2. When a team member offers a double, the box may not answer until all the players have decided whether or not they want to double.
3. The box is allowed to double his opponents one by one, waiting to hear each player's decision.
4. When the box drops the captain's double and takes one from another player, who then wins the game, the former captain gets the box, even if he won fewer points.

Partners can be taken in this variation, as in regular chouettes. However, I do not recommend the practice, since the rationale for taking partners is to reduce the risk when in the box. When individual cubes are used, one can easily reduce one's risk by dropping some of the players when doubled. Taking partners can turn mere confusion into total chaos even in a regular chouette, and when individual cubes are used there is no need for it.

I do not intend to expound upon the strategy of this game in much depth here. However, a few observations are in order regarding appropriate strategies for players at the extremes — the strongest or the weakest in their games.

First, if you are a very strong player and are known to be such, the other players (unless they are total wimps) will quickly learn to double you "out" rather than "in," and drop your doubles when they are in the box. You will then have the profitable but boring experience of being sidelined with an

extra point in many of the games. To stay in, you may have to double considerably earlier than you normally would.

Second, if you are the weakest player in your game, you may find yourself presented with extraordinary opportunities. The box may decide to drop all the other players and beaver you (in order to insure that he will make a profit if he wins), figuring that you'll probably butcher the game once your stronger advisers have been silenced. However, if you really put your best foot forward when this happens, you can potentially win some pretty big games. You may actually be at an advantage relative to the second — or third-weakest players, who will probably not be given these opportunities.

Who benefits from this new arrangement? Opinion varies. Several average and below-average players have indicated to me that they prefer individual cubes because it's "cheaper." Yet some very strong players also prefer individual cubes.

I have come to the conclusion that a good player can win more than ever when playing in a chouette with individual cubes. In general, he can keep the box longer and win more games by doubling out the stronger players among his opponents. In addition, he runs less downside risk because he can protect himself against a huge loss in the box by taking only one or two players when the decision is close.

So why do the weak players feel that individual cubes makes the game cheaper? Probably because they, too, are protected against large downside swings. Also, they are in the box less often, which in general is beneficial to them. In addition, the very weakest players may profit, at least occasionally, from the unusual opportunities described earlier.

Then who is losing? My suspicion is that, as with income taxes, it is the guy in the middle who is picking up the lion's share of the tab. The average player is at a disadvantage as a team member because his stronger partners are likely to have been doubled out by the time he really needs their advice.

For awhile, it looked as though this new form of chouette would completely replace 'straight' chouette here in Philadelphia. Now the tide has turned, and many players have returned to the old, familiar variety. However, the new game still has a dedicated following that never plays the old way any more.

The experiment has been a lot of fun for all of us here, and I recommend you give it a try. The insights you gain will undoubtedly make you a tougher opponent in any chouette.

"Vibing the Dice"

Northern Nevada Backgammon Association

The NNBA is considering passing an ordinance prohibiting the telling of "hard luck" dice stories within Reno city limits. This director has heard them all. What goes around comes around, so be patient. We all win some of the time. Why, I still remember the last time I won back in '76. It gives me a warm glow just to think about it. I'm going to take this time to pass on a little backgammon tip that you won't find in any available book on the game. It concerns the metaphysical approach to backgammon. "Vibing the dice" is what we're talking about here. Many of you probably engage in this practice from time to time, but there is a right and wrong way to go about this telekinetic phenomenon. I have seen it work too often to write it off as chance. I have seen it defy the laws of probability. The secret in vibing the dice is to *visualize* the dice you want to see before they stop spinning. You can practice this on your dice and your opponent's dice. Most professional tournament players swear by it. Further, the more people concentrating on a certain roll, the greater the likelihood that roll will appear. This explains the reason many national tournament players discourage spectators at their matches. They have an intuitive feeling that the laws of probability will be bent with someone silently rooting for their opponent. It requires concentration, but I think you'll agree after some practice that the results can be startling. There are certain times when this technique seems to work better than other times. Why, I don't know, although one's attitude and energy level I feel play a distinct role. All things being equal, this "vibing the dice" can be the winning edge. For more on this and other things you know nothing about, consult my book, *Mystical Backgammon Secrets*, with such chapters as 'Hexing Your Opponent,' "Fast Eddie's Dice Loading Tips," and "Hypnotizing Your Opponent Through Dice Cup Shaking Techniques," found in finer used book stores everywhere.

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