

LAS VEGAS



# BACKGAMMON

MAGAZINE

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Volume IX #9

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DOUBLE ISSUE

Monte Carlo  
Championship

Cube Strategies

The Baron On  
Backgammon

Las Vegas  
The Amateurs

Gammon-Saving  
Quiz

Susan Smith





# LAS VEGAS BACKGAMMON MAGAZINE

An International Publication

DECEMBER 1981

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**COVER: SUSAN SMITH**

Gracing our new cover design is high-powered Las Vegas beauty Susan Smith. Besides being a knock-your-socks-off backgammon player Susan is also a karate expert — the serious kind. Sue is now in training to meet Andy Kaufman's wrestling challenge on this season's "Saturday Night Live." The fancy life is behind in New York and Los Angeles, where Sue is in hot pursuit of a modeling career. Las Vegas is the place to bring it all back home, where she can hike through the desert in search of a natural spring and calm. If you think you know "that face" from somewhere, try "Playboy" (September '81) featuring Susan Smith as the September Playmate.

Location: Dunes Hotel & Country Club  
Styling: Patricia Judice  
Photographer: Andrea Waller



**INTERNATIONAL FOX**  
The LVBC Annual Awards Banquet, page 29

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Dice manufacturers advertise dice as being true to a tolerance of 1/10,000.

It is obviously important to their customers (such as casinos) that dice be as near perfect as possible.

Casinos would not wager ten cents on dice that were not made by hand to a precision of 1/10,000 and cast in indestructible material. Even then, they quickly discard them knowing that edges and corners wear from use and the dice become imperfect.

Yet, in backgammon, tournament players will sit down to play for \$100,000 purses using machine-made, unbalanced, and often mutilated dice.

Drugstore or candystore dice as these are often called, are a common phenomenon of big-money backgammon tournaments.

The Desert Inn was the first to show concern. The DI ordered precision dice for their tournament last year. The dice were numbered and discarded after each use.

We were told by Desert Inn executives that it is foolish for all these so-called experts to be playing a game of statistical probabilities with dice that distort the odds.

It seemed to them that if two players of similar abilities sat down to play, that the result could be pre-determined by the condition of the dice.

The DI was surprised that tournament participants were not more demanding.

"Would Borg" they asked, "play with some random racquet handed to him by a linesman or found lying next to the court?"

It makes sense.

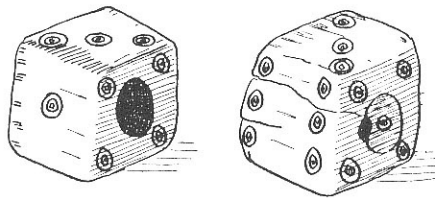
We decided to check the quality of the

dice at the next super tournament. With a micrometer caliper we randomly gauged dice that were being used in big-money matches.

Needless to say we found them to be as much as 20/1000 off. Some surfaces showed convex bevels, while others were concave. Many had high and low spots on them. Rounded edges were not uniform on all corners. Still others lacked a true right angle from side to side. Not to mention worn dice, chipped edges, and misdistributed weight.

We showed the dice to an expert who claimed that if he didn't know any better, he would think these dice were "SHAPES."

Shapes are dice made deliberately lopsided or shaved to favor certain numbers. The dice settle down most often on their larger surfaces. They are percentage dice. Knowing which numbers are favored will over a period of time give a winning edge to a wise guy.



Hoping to get a good set of dice out of the batch of cheap ones is unrealistic. The odds are nearly 100% against.

A player sitting down at a tournament to play with drugstore dice provided by the promoter should not presume that the throws will adhere to a just probability table.

The famous backgammon story perhaps is not just a tall tale of woe but the result of erratic dice.

It is time for all this to change. Tournaments are now played for big-league money. Promoters are charging heavy fees and taking a large percentage for their troubles. They must be obligated to provide proper equipment. Perhaps it is an inconvenience to purchase perfect dice at \$2/per but it is not necessarily money out of the promoters' pocket. This is one fee that all participating players will gladly pay.

It is ludicrous to study probabilities in hopes of improving one's game and then sit down to face abnormal odds. It is unheard of in any competition to go into a contest with less than perfect gear. Dice are as much stock-in-trade to a backgammon player as a properly balanced weapon to a sharpshooter or an unblemished ball to a pitcher. Would a card player enter a blackjack tournament and tolerate cards without a seal, or a deck that might or might not have fifty-two cards?

As we see it, precision dice are a priority item. Candystore dice have no business in backgammon. We must take our game seriously if we expect others to.

Tournaments promoters have an obligation to provide fair dice. Players have enough pressure without having to fight dice quirks.

Dice are the oldest gambling instruments known to man. We know enough by now not to trust them. Let's at least make an effort to compete with dice that deliver a fair roll.

Demand perfect dice now or beware of the "shapes" of things to come. ★★

## DON'T PLAY AROUND WITH SECOND BEST

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## A CHALLENGE FROM ALI or I CALLED MUHAMMAD ALI WHITE AND LIVED

"How would you like to appear on TV with Muhammad Ali?" asked Dralin Purrington, an independent TV producer from Puerto Rico, as he strode into my private office in the Hotel 1829. Instead of answering, I just stared blankly up at the slowly turning blades of the overhead fan, waiting for Dral to finish what I thought was a put-on. "No kidding!" he said, "I've been talking to Ali's people about shooting a twenty-minute tape of you — the World Backgammon Champion — interviewing Ali, the World Heavyweight Champion, on his upcoming Coopman fight; then for a switch, Ali will interview you on backgammon and you can give him some pointers on the game. What do you say?" What do I say? I'll tell you what: "I would swim the sixty miles of shark-infested waters between St. Thomas and Puerto Rico just to shake the Great One's hand, that's what!"

On the appointed day, I selected a backgammon set covered in black leather as a presentation gift to Ali and pointed my little Cherokee 140, which is just great for island-hopping, in a westerly heading toward Puerto Rico. Ali and his entourage were headquartered at a luxury beachfront hotel and when I arrived I found Dral and his crew setting up their TV equipment in a sunny spot adjacent to the main entrance. A few hundred onlookers and autograph seekers were milling

about, apparently sensing that wherever there's a TV camera there's Ali, and they were right. Towering two feet above the crowd, dressed in black on black, the tall exotic Khalilah in pink flowing muslin robes at his side, and flanked by two of his mean-looking security types, Ali passed by us and without breaking stride, said to nobody in particular, "I'm gonna have a quiet breakfast. Be back in an hour. Be ready 'cause I only got ten minutes to spend with you," and he disappeared around the corner.

I spent the hour rehearsing the questions I would ask him and getting nervous. I really shouldn't have worried about either, because when Ali returned I only got a chance to ask the first question and Ali took over from there. What a showman! He put me so much at ease I could actually hold the mike in one hand without shaking. He had the crowd, the TV crew, and myself mesmerized for about twenty minutes. I finally got up enough nerve to ask Ali to join me at the backgammon table which I had previously set up. Ali asked all the right questions about the origin and the history of the game. Although he had seen it played in his travels throughout Europe and Asia, he didn't realize how popular the game is in America and finally said, "How long does it take to learn this game? Can you teach me to play in an hour or two?"

A little of his self-assured, confident airs had rubbed off on me and I answered, "Sure." The board had red and white checkers and Ali was seated by chance on white's side of the board and the first sentence of instruction I uttered was, "**Ali, you are white.**" First I heard the audible gasp from the onlookers, a chuckling from some of the TV technicians, and then observed the funny look on Ali's face. Then I realized I had just called the greatest living black man in the world, the man who's face and name is the most recognizable on our entire planet, **white**, while innocently referring to the color of the checkers he was to play. The law of self-preservation took over and I figured I'd better skim over the basics fast, before I had his fist accompanying my own foot that had become lodged in my mouth.

After another ten minutes of basic instruction, Ali folded up the board and announced, "Now that you have taught me backgammon, in six months' time I challenge you to a match and I will be the new World Champion." I said, "Ali, for our match, I'll put my title on the line." I might have known that Ali would have the last word, even at my own game. "You put your title on the line and your behind will be mine," said the great Muhammad Ali, and you know, I think he was only half-kidding.



# QUIZ

by Dr. Jeff Ward

## GAMMON-SAVING QUIZ-

I enjoyed Bill Robertie's Cube and Checker Play Quizzes so much that I just had to give the idea a try myself — so with apologies to Bill for the similarity of format, I present the following quiz.

IN EACH POSITION, BLACK OWNS THE CUBE AND IS ON ROLL IN A MONEY GAME. BLACK HAS FIFTEEN MEN ON THE BOARD; WHITE HAS LESS. SELECT THE BEST PLAY FOR BLACK'S ROLL.

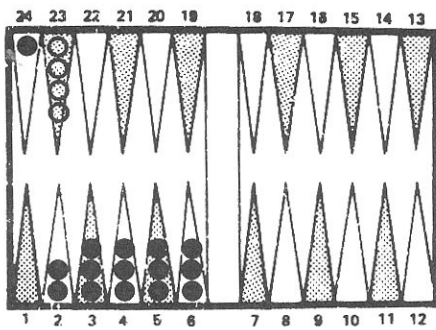


FIGURE 1 4-2

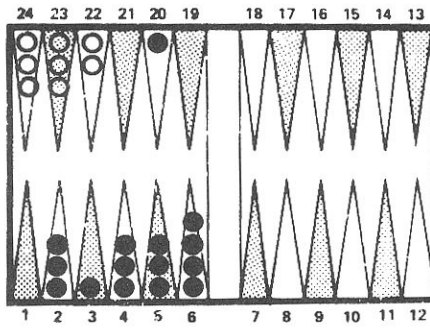


FIGURE 5 3-1

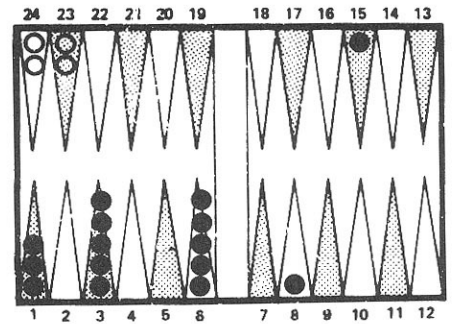


FIGURE 9 5-1

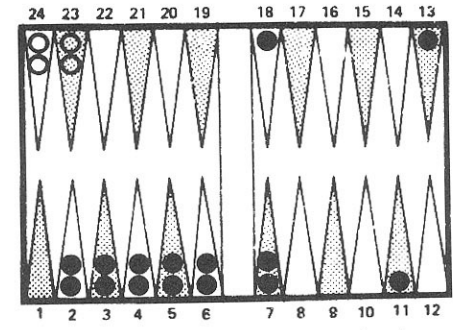


FIGURE 10 4-4

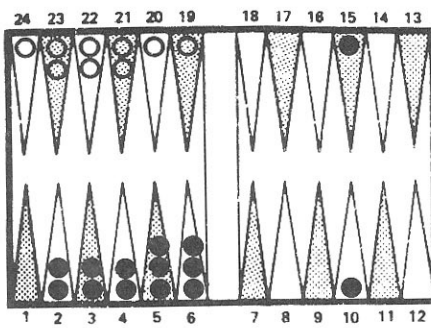


FIGURE 2 2-2

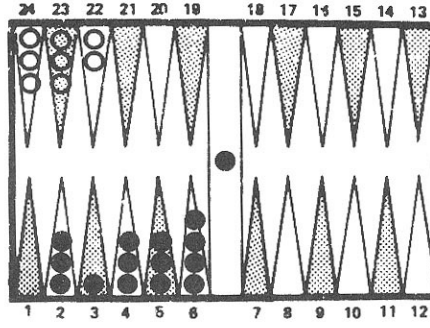


FIGURE 6 6-1

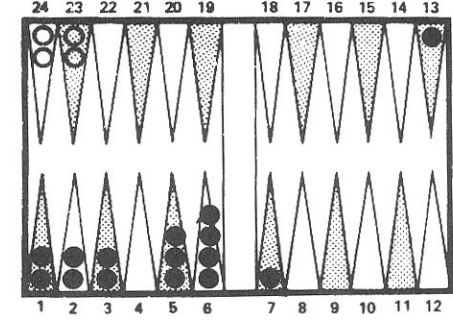


FIGURE 11 3-2

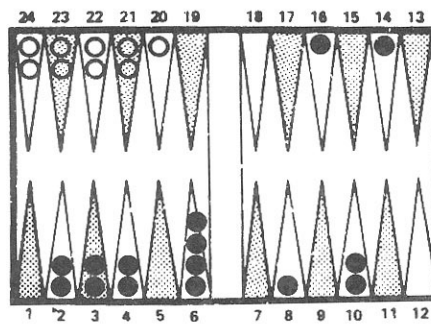


FIGURE 3 5-3

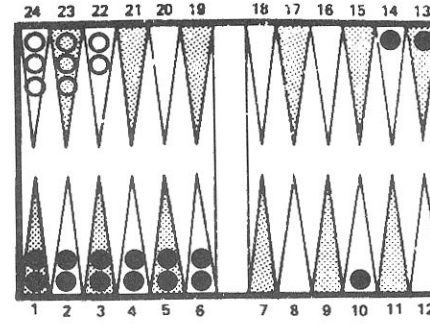


FIGURE 7 4-3

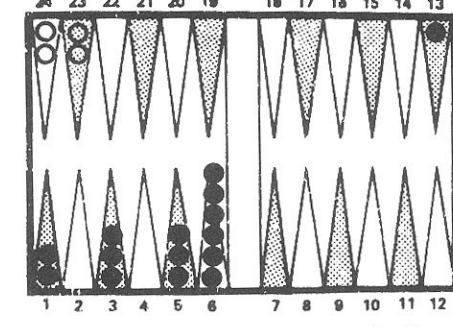


FIGURE 12 1-1

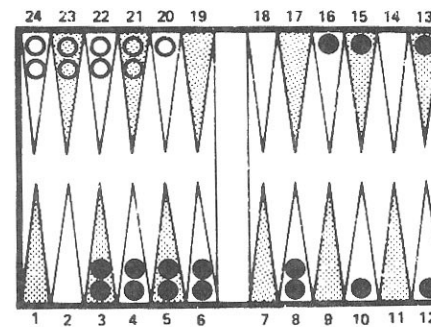


FIGURE 4 5-2

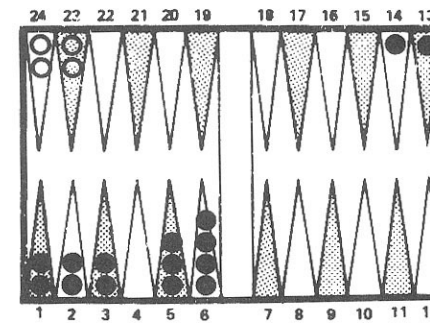


FIGURE 8 4-2

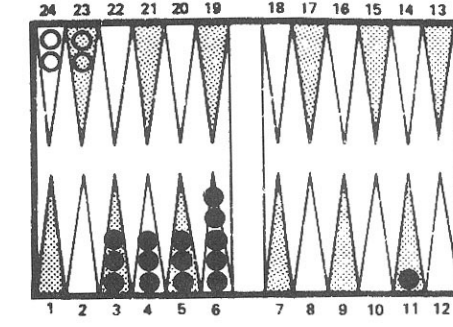


FIGURE 13 3-1



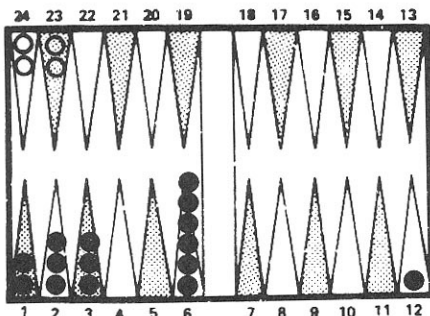


FIGURE 14 5-4

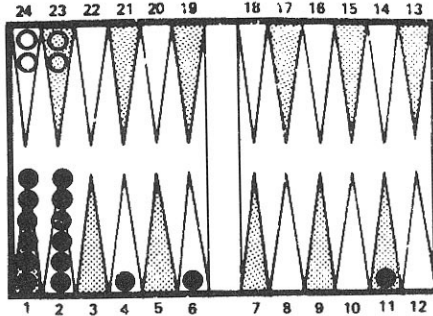


FIGURE 19 1-1

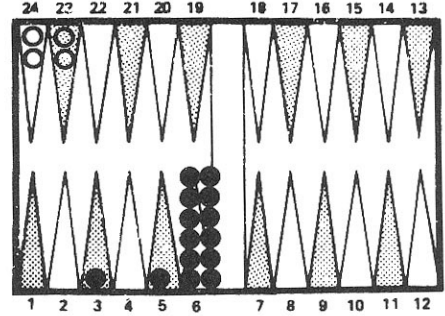


FIGURE 20 2-1

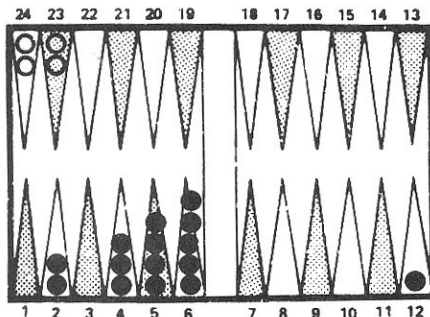


FIGURE 15 2-1

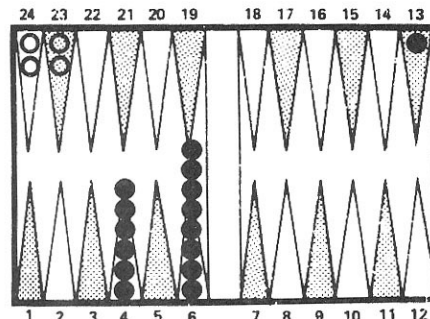


FIGURE 16 3-3

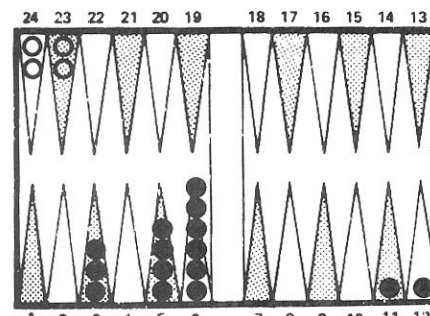


FIGURE 17 6-2

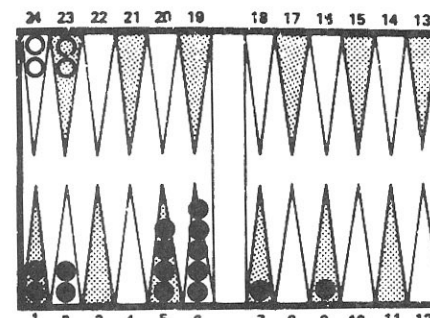


FIGURE 18 4-2

# ANSWERS

1. 24/18  
The percentages dictate running to save the backgammon (but with three White checkers on the two-point, Black should stay). With some luck, Black might even save the gammon.
2. 10/6, 15/11  
Black stays back to force White to use his next roll to play safe. If White rolls a low number, he bears off only one man — and still needs four more rolls to finish.
3. 14/6  
Playing to the six-point is the most efficient bear-in because no pips are wasted within the home board. Avoiding waste and making cross-overs (quadrant crossings) are higher priorities than bringing men in. The gap on the five-point is unimportant.
4. 8/6, 15/11  
Black diversifies in his outer board to create an efficient 5.
5. 20/17, 2/1  
Using an ace to slot the one-point is usually correct.
6. Bar/19/18  
Crossing a quadrant is more valuable than slotting.
7. 10/6, 14/11  
The best spacing for two men in the outfield is usually two points apart, unless an additional crossover can be made with a different spacing.
8. 13/9, 14/12  
Don't settle for 4-4, 5-5, and 6-6 when you can get 3-3 as well.
9. 15/10, 3/2  
All doubles work except 1-1. Some plays leave Black with only three good doubles.
10. 13/5, 7/3(2)  
Black must make four crossovers now just to give himself one saving roll, 6-6, next turn.
11. 13/10, 7/5  
Slotting the four- or five-point to save the gammon is rarely correct. It is more important to make crossovers and to move the rear man as close as possible.
12. 13/10, 3/2  
It is usually best to move a lone straggler as close to home as possible, but here more saving rolls result from using the last ace to slot the two-point. A useful indicator of this kind of exception is the fact that it is bad to have a spacing of seven points between a home board gap and the outside man. I call this the "Rule of 7's." If Black moves 13/9, the Rule would apply with respect to the two-point. A spacing of 7 is bad because a specific number, 2 in this case, neither bears in nor bears off. Black thus creates good 2's by slotting.
13. 11/7  
The wrong time to slot. Slotting the two-point creates a spacing of 7, making future aces worthless.
14. 12/8, 6/1  
Black is helpless against a future 5-4 or 5-5, but can turn 4-4 into a good roll by landing on the eight-point and staying there.
15. 12/9  
Best not to slot. The Rule of 7's is a useful guide.
16. 13/7, 6/3, 4/1  
It's unusual for slotting with a 3 to be correct, but this position calls for an even rarer double slot. Only 5-5 won't save the gammon next turn. All other plays leave additional bad rolls.
17. 12/6, 4/2  
Ignore the open five-point and bring the **back** man in. Slotting the two-point to avoid a spacing of 7 is slightly better than slotting the 1 or 11/9.
18. 9/5, 6/4  
The right time to slot a high point. With nothing else to worry about, Black slots to destroy his last bad roll, 4-4. Other plays don't eliminate 4-4, 4-3, or 2-1.
19. 11/8, 2/1  
Playing to the eight-point gets the low rolls, but Black must "burn" the last ace to maintain a delicate status quo containing no bad rolls. Other choices turn 5-3, 3-3, or 5-4 into gammon-makers.
20. 12/10, 5/4  
This has to be one of the most bizarre correct moves in all of backgammon. Advancing to the ten-point is mandatory, but continuing 10/9 is unusually ineffective (Rule of 7's), adding not a single good roll. Shifting the gap from the four- to the five-point, however, adds 4-4 and 2-2 while retaining 5-5.

## Scoring

- 19-20 How much do you charge for lessons?  
 17-18 Rather not play you for money  
 15-16 Good, but not great  
 13-14 So-So  
 9-12 Choose opponents with care  
 5-8 First cousin to Mr. Bye  
 0-4 Have I got a deal for you





# OSWALD JACOBY



"Take backgammon, bridge, and gin rummy and there is no one who can beat me at all three games."

But because he is seventy-eight and knows his limitations, the master gamesman qualifies that claim: "Individually, they'd beat the hell out of me."

That's a hefty admission for a man, who for fifty years, has collected championship titles like flies.

Jacoby holds thirty-two national bridge titles and three international backgammon titles. His syndicated bridge column has run in newspapers for thirty years, and he has written primers on poker, bridge, backgammon, and canasta.

Nowadays, you'll find him at the Dallas Country Club, playing his current passion, gin, rummy. He usually wins, and that pleases him.

He plays for "moderate stakes" — nothing specific — an insists gambling is essential to a pleasurable game.

"There is no such thing as playing any game for mere joy," he says, racing through his words. "If you don't have something to lose, you tend not to care. It spoils the game."

Jacoby pocketed sixty cents in his first poker game. He was eight at the time. The

stakes later climbed considerably — though he won't say how much — in matches with Long Island's wealthy and Texas oil people. He's been known to play above his means, but he's mysterious about that, too.

The quality of play at such tourneys is respectable, Jacoby allows. "There's no bad backgammon anymore. Everyone plays pretty well. There is enough luck in the tournament so that no one is favored to win."

White-haired and intense, Jacoby still lives up to his reputation for brisk manner and rapid speech. His eyes dart constantly around the meeting room of the Dallas Country Club. He's always thinking about his next move, his next project.

In an interview he acts tied down. There's no telling how he'll survive the sessions when he begins to work on his own life story with Roger Dionne, who wrote about Jacoby for *Sports Illustrated*.

Despite his natural impatience, Jacoby says he is slowing down. He tires easily and travels rarely. He restricts his projects to revising his 1941 standard poker text, **Oswald Jacoby on Poker**, and consulting with a British company for the game "Jacoby Computer Bridge."

"I figured the name was still worth something," he quips.

In addition, he did manage to travel to Las Vegas last week to view, if not play, the poker tables.

"Decadence," Jacoby says, "People have no respect for money. It's easy to see people bet \$100,000 in an hour."

"Maybe," he adds, "I'm just getting old."

While Jacoby mourns that "youth is wasted on the young," he admits the young are rough competition.

But Jacoby was considerably younger when he won the first Goldman Pairs competition (held in 1929), teamed up with a Manhattan businessman named George Reith.

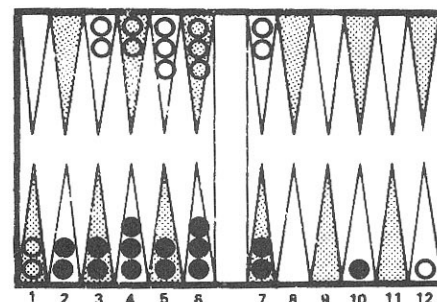
Three years later, the Brooklyn native came to Fort Worth to give a speech. He met a young woman the next day on a Dallas tennis court. She was Texas state tennis champion Mary Zita McHale. The two were married one week later, and have made their home in Dallas since 1937.

An insurance actuary for many years, Jacoby also did intelligence work for the Navy during World War II and in Korea.

Of his two sons — Jon, an investment banker in Little Rock, and James, a stock broker who lives in Richardson — only James shares Jacoby's fervor for games. Jacoby calls James one of the ten best bridge players in the world. high? ☆☆

## IS IT ALL LUCK?

by Arthur Dickman



White to Play 4—3

Knowing how and when to capitalize on luck is an important part of playing expert backgammon. It is essential to have a game plan that allows luck to play in one's favor.

In the following diagram, white has to play 4—3. To make the obvious two-point would be an ill-judged play. Projecting, if black stays out a few times (not so unlikely with five points closed), white's game would wind up in an impossible position. Once his men are forced into his inner board, black would probably wind up shooting at a blot and have a chance to win a gammon from white.

Here is the suggested play: blot the 3 to the two-point and bring the 4 down to the nine-point. Now, if black rolls a 2, putting white on the bar, and white manages to stay out a few times (not too unlikely in the face of black's five-point board), this is where we give luck a chance to play its part. If black does not roll a 6 for a few rolls, he will find himself in deep trouble.

Actually, this happened and after a few rolls not containing a 6, black's board crumbled. He lost his bar, six-point, and had a blot on his five-point. White, who hadn't rolled into into black's board was able to redouble. Black, facing the possible loss of a gammon, was forced to resign.

Ironically, white won this game without moving. Surely, white was very lucky, but he did stick to a game plan. In conclusion, I would like to point out that even if black had escaped with a 6 from white's board, by staying out, white would still have had a well-timed one-point game. With white's board intact, he would be bound to get many winning chances. ☆☆

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Andre Rolfo-Fontana, Lee Genud, Walter Coratella, Joe Dwek, Prince Louis de Polignac

# WONDER WOMAN WINS

by Joel Rettew

Who is the only woman to have won the Women's World Championship twice? Who is the only woman to have authored a modern-day backgammon book? Who is the only woman to have spent many hours in Hugh Hefner's bedroom (and kept her clothes on)? Who is the only woman to have won the male-dominated World Championship of Backgammon? The answer to all questions is: the incredible Lee Genud.

## CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISION

Main Event World Champion: **LEE GENUD (USA)**; Runner-up: **JOE DWEK (UK)**; Semi-Finalists: **P. SWART (UK)** and **M. CAMHI (FRANCE)**. Ladies Prize: **LEE GENUD (USA)**. First Consolation Winner: **M. GARDNER (USA)**; Finalist: **S. CAPRIO (ITALY)**; Semi-Finalists: **K. WRIGHT (USA)** and **A. GOODMAN (USA)**. Second Consolation Winner: **K. MOTAKHASSES (IRAN)**; Finalist: **T. HARRISON (USA)**; Semi-Finalists: **F. NARBONI (SWITZERLAND)** and **S. CLAPP (USA)**. Last Chance Winner: **E. COIRRE (FRANCE)**; finalist: **DR. BURRAS-CANO (USA)**.

## INTERMEDIATE DIVISION

Main Event Winner: **M. ABITAN (FRANCE)**; Finalist: **M. ARTUS (FRANCE)**; Semi-Finalists: **P. SCHNEIDER (GERMANY)** and **S. NAIM (USA)**.

## BEGINNERS DIVISION

Main Event Winner: **W. PETTY (UK)**; Finalist: **C. PERONI (ITALY)**; Semi-Finalists: **J. PHILLIPS (UK)** and **M. RODRIGUES (BRAZIL)**.

**L**ee Genud has become the first woman to capture the World Backgammon Championship, in a dazzling victory over international champion Joe Dwek.

Dwek, author of "Backgammon For Profit," and a former world champion, underestimated the ability of his opponent. The confident Genud maintained control over the match, while Dwek was slow to adjust to the novelty of a woman challenger.

The historic moment of her final victory was greeted with a ten-minute standing ovation from the crowd of six hundred spectators.

The game of backgammon is serious business to Lee Genud. Heretofore, she was continually underrated despite her tournament record, which includes the 1978 and 1979 Women's World Championship, and ten other finalist awards in major tournaments.

In 1974 she published "Lee Genud's Backgammon Book," which still enjoys brisk sales.

And what was she doing in Hefner's bedroom? Teaching him backgammon, of course. Ms. Genud taught not only Hefner but Diana Ross, James Caan, Jim Brown, Dionne Warwick, and Lucille Ball as well.

Genud attributes her success in Monte Carlo to "an extremely

high level of emotional control." The control was important because she had to play more than seventy hours of backgammon in eight days, competing in more than 100 games and winning eight straight matches.

"I loved the game and the competition," she said, "and I love being the only woman to compete with the men at this level."

Two hundred and fifty players from forty-three countries vied for the championship in Monte Carlo.

The event is sponsored annually by La Societe des Bains de Mer of Monte Carlo and directed by Lewis Deyong. Participating sponsors this year included Merit and Black & White Scotch.

If anyone doubts that this is a premiere backgammon event in the world today, all they have to do is attend one of the gala black-tie calcutta dinners at the Sporting d'Hiver. Nowhere in the world is there a more spectacular room. Rarely is there a more elite group gathered in one place; and surely no calcutta of any kind takes in more money. Between the calcutta, the entry fees (including \$1,000 jackpot special), and the official book operated by Peter Gold, there is more backgammon action than anywhere else in the world.

The winner in Monte Carlos is truly the World Champion — and this year the queen reigns.





Joel Rettew, Joe Dwek, Joe Suzyn, Michael Maxakuli, Marc Gardner





# AUSLEY'S LAWS OF BACKGAMMON by John Ausley

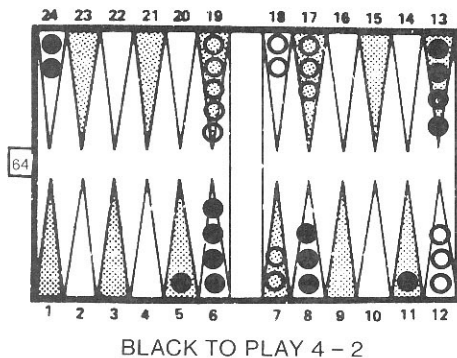
- ▶ The senior talent in backgammon is the ability to spot superiority in others.
- ▶ When someone tries to rush your play, say, "I've only got two speeds and the other one is slower."
- ▶ Compulsive gambling could be an inherited trait. It is a combination of getting the ability to spend from your mother and the ability to not make money from your father.
- ▶ When you're up, make nothing happen, very slowly.
- ▶ When you see a Snake, never mind where he came from.
- ▶ Always play til sun-up, no gonads – no cube, and never break a streak.
- ▶ Advertising is the art of making whole lies out of half truths.
- ▶ Broke players love to give advice; it compensates them for their inability to set a bad example.
- ▶ If you can tell the difference between good advice and bad advice, you don't need advice.
- ▶ Lessons are very often the product of the untalented, sold by the unprincipled to the utterly bewildered.
- ▶ Listen well to old masters — they are much more entertaining than old mistresses.
- ▶ Gamble and play within your own income bracket, even if you have to borrow to do so.
- ▶ If you can't bedazzle them with brilliance, then baffle them with bullshit.
- ▶ The Dice-Gods of Backgammon go by whim and favour. If they went by merit, most of us would never win.
- ▶ Bad losers are sometimes better players. "Good losers" can get in the habit of losing.
- ▶ In heavy pro-money play there are no winners, only survivors.
- ▶ Any player who has really begun to think has placed some portion of the backgammon world in jeopardy.
- ▶ Most of the time, beginners don't win — the rest of the time they lose.
- ▶ Never trust a player unless you've got his pecker in your pocket and not even then, if he's gay.
- ▶ Reading poor books on backgammon can make one weaker than not reading at all.
- ▶ There are two times in a person's life when they should not gamble above their means — when he can't afford it and when he can.
- ▶ The definition of an ethical backgammon player should include the fact that they must be at least fifteen points up.

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## AN EARLY GAME QUANDRY: TO BLOCK, BUILD, TRAP OR COVER THE OUTFIELD?

by Ronald Weingard

Many positions arise during a game or match that do not lend themselves to simplistic, dogmatic solutions. Take, for example, the position below, which occurred during my eighth round match at the World Amateur Backgammon Championships held in Las Vegas from June 8 - 15, 1981. I was playing Nick Gura, a top New York amateur (who incidentally, finished runner-up to Bill Kennedy, a San Franciscan, for the \$100,000 first prize). With the score 4 - 3 in Nick's favor in our eleven-point match I played my standard 2-1 opening move, dropping a checker from the mid-point to the eleven-point and a checker from the six-point to the five-point. Nick proceeded to roll 6 - 6, making both bars. My next roll was 4 - 2. This is the position as it existed at this time:



Certain immediate choices came to mind. My first reaction was to block 4 - 4 by dropping another checker from the midpoint to the eleven-point and playing the 4 either inside my opponent's home board or from the eight-point. Another alternative was to

take the lone checker on the eleven-point and cover my five-point. Another tact which I rejected quickly because it accomplished very little was to make my nine-point. Finally, I could play a trap move and make my four-point, hoping to bait Gura into hitting me with a 4 from my bar-point. In the absence of an immediate return hit, however, I would be hard pressed to take a cube so I similarly rejected this move. After much deliberation I proceeded to make my five-point. Subsequent to losing one point in this game and eventually losing the match, I was besieged by two Masters' Class players, Abbas Zaltash and David Schor (a former Pittsburgher) who both insisted that I played the move incorrectly, even though they admitted it had no bearing on the outcome of the game.

Although both felt my move was incorrect they had separate ideas on how the move should have been played.

Abbas was insistent that I should have made the eleven-point and step up to the twenty-point, thereby covering the outfield. Dave was equally insistent that the eleven-point should have been made, although for the 4, he would have slotted the four-point. Applying advanced concepts of backgammon, both Abbas' and Dave's moves prove to be incorrect.

In each instance Abbas and Dave felt it necessary to block 4 - 4. However, had I blocked double 4's by making the eleven-point, a cube position still develops should that number be rolled by Gura for he simply makes his five-point from his mid-point, forming an early but powerful prime position. Therefore, blocking double 4's is fairly irrelevant.

Additionally, Abbas' variation of stepping up to my opponent's five-point negates any advantage I might have due to my opponent's cramped position. Rolling 6 - 6 early tends to stifle good sixes later in the game. By splitting one's back anchor, numbers that would not normally play well can now be used to the opponent's advantage. 6 - 5 and 6 - 4 are just two examples which would play poorly against a one-point anchor but better after a split.

Dave's option is also weak because, with two blots in my inner board, it gives my opponent an immediate option of running. It is of primary importance in my position to make at least one or two board points as quickly as possible, thereby making it consequential for my opponent to try to run from my bar; however, by slotting two points, Gura would be given the advantage of immediately running should he be able to safely one checker with half of his roll. One blot in my board at this time may prove illusory but two blots would be an open invitation to run at this early juncture in the game.

One final note: If Nick had rolled 6 - 1 instead of 6 - 6 and had made his bar, it would become imperative to step up from my twenty-four-point as soon after making my five-point as possible, because Nick would not then be squeezed for time, having two men on my one-point to play at will. One must step up as quickly as possible once the opponent makes his bar with a number other than 6 - 6 because of the likelihood of being primed. The same reasoning does not apply, however, in my opinion, where the opponent's opening roll is 6 - 6, because of the reasons noted above.



# COMMANDMENTS

by

GABY HOROWITZ and DR. BRUCE ROMAN

## I THOU SHALT NOT PLAY WITHOUT PROOF OF SOLVENCY

Never play a game unless you are certain that you will be paid should you win. If you are playing an unfamiliar opponent, make an agreement to pay up every five to ten points. Avoid taking a check from an unfamiliar opponent.

## II THOU SHALT NOT PLAY WHEN UNDER FINANCIAL STRESS

The vast majority of players do not perform to the maximum of their ability when they are playing for stakes at which they are not comfortable. This includes wagering too small an amount per point as well as the more frequent situation of betting too great an amount per point.

Adverse pressure can also be encountered when you wager money that you cannot **easily** afford to lose. This would obviously preclude borrowing money to play that you could not immediately repay. This should not be confused with securing backers which is consistent with proper money management principles.

## III THOU SHALT NOT BELITTLE OR ATTENUATE THY STRENGTH OR POWER

There are many situations in which you can get involved to your disadvantage. These would include playing a far superior player or participating in a chouette in which you are the weakest player, engage in propositions which you haven't thoroughly studied, and giving "spots" or handicaps.

The most flagrant violation of this rule would be participating in a consulting or non-consulting chouette in which there is a possibility of silent partners in collusion.

## IV THOU SHALT NOT LET EMOTIONAL INFLUENCES AFFECT THY DECISIONS

There are three basic emotions you should be cognizant of and in control over throughout the game:

A) Steaming: When you are behind, do not attempt to get even quickly by doubling or redoubling prematurely or by taking bad doubles.

B) Fear: Do not let all previous unfortunate results or occurrences affect present decisions.

C) Greed: When you are doing well, never "get hungry" — avoid "cube fever" (doubling or redoubling too early).

## V THOU SHALT NOT FEAR LOSING

One of the primary lessons to be learned about backgammon is that no one wins every game. While losing should be avoided whenever possible, realize that it happens to everyone, it statistically rate to occur and that it is a "built-in" ingredient of the game.

To their detriment, many players perceive their losses as a diminution of self-worth and feel greatly invalidated when losing. This type of response to losing is simply incorrect.

## VI THOU SHALT NOT PLAY WHILST UNDER PHYSICAL OR MENTAL STRESS

It is most advisable to play when you are tired, have had a bad day at the office, or following an argument.

A factor in playing your best is feeling your best.

## VII THOU SHALT NOT IGNORE THE "OPPONENT FACTOR"

Knowing your opponent's technical ability, emotional state, and financial situation, and **then** acting accordingly, move after move, game after game, is mandatory if one wishes consistent success.

## VIII THOU SHALT NOT USE THE CUBE AS A GIFT, BUT AS A WEAPON

Do not double or redouble lightly and never redouble when your game is too good.

The cube should be used as an instrument of pressure against your opponent.

## IX THOU SHALT NOT NEED COMPLIMENTS, COMISATION OR ADMIRATION

Never forget the basic purpose of playing backgammon — **to win points**. Playing for show to impress the spectators, or desperately trying to prove yourself "always right and never wrong," is a common foible of many backgammon players and the primary cause of substantial losses.

## X THOU SHALT NOT RELY ON MIRACLES

Understand that the game of backgammon is not "all dice" or a "craps-

shooting experience." It is a game that abounds with subtle tactical and strategic nuances.

Never base your prosperity on an "I'll get lucky" approach. Consistently playing against the odds, and hoping and begging for miracle rolls, not only eliminates your chances for financial success, but also your enjoyment of the game.

Refuse to remain a dilettante! Obtain information (from qualified sources) and demand improvement of yourself. This is the **only** avenue to success — there is no easy one. ☆☆



by Ronald C. Weingrad

Oftentimes backgammon professionals fail to practice what they preach. This most recently occurred on my last trip to Las Vegas for the World Amateur Backgammon Championships.

Playing in the Las Vegas Backgammon Association's Sunday Night Tournament, Linda paired me in the first round against one of backgammon's most dynamic individuals. An author or world renown on the dynamic handling of the cube and advanced cube strategy, this player had just dynamically saved himself from a backgammon on the last roll of the game to place me ahead in our nine-point match 8 - 6. Then, with equally dynamic fervor, he won one point at Crawford, narrowing the score to 8 - 7.

Now for the dynamic cube strategy that occurred in the following game: I had an opening 5 - 1 roll and I dropped a checker onto my five-point. Without hesitancy, this most dynamic of backgammon professionals shook and rolled, giving no thought to the cube. With the eyes of a snake, the double 1's fell to the table, and, as smooth as silk, our dynamic pro had made his five-point and bar. I proceeded to roll 6 - 4 and made my two-point. Then, with dynamic verve, our author smashed the cube to the board in my general direction. With quiet reserve, I contemplated the position and decided the dynamics of it called for me to pass, which I did by making some comment about not owning an all-night grocery store.

Justice, in my eyes, failed to prevail, for I got caught in a five-squeeze the following game (through no fault of my own) and lost the match 9 - 8.

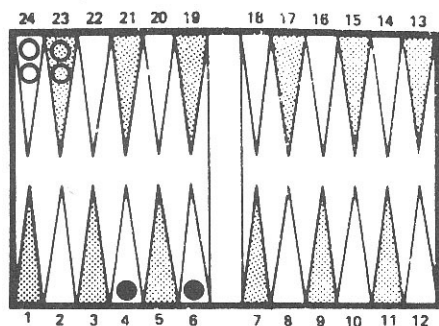
Dynamic Strategy with the cube — it will snare victory from the jaw of defeat all the time! ☆☆



# CUBE STRATEGY FOR MATCH PLAY

by Dennis Kaiser  
© 1981

Is it ever correct to take a double if your probability of winning the game is less than 25%? Such a double can be a **take** as the following situation demonstrates.



In figure 1 with White to roll Black will have only one roll at best to win the game. Winning rolls for Black are 6-6, 5-5, 4-4, 3-3, 6-5 and 6-4 (a total of 8 ways.) White is correct to double here to deprive Black of a free chance at one of these winning shots if White does not throw a 6-6, 5-5, 4-4, 3-3 or 2-2. Black's probability of winning is  $(31/36) \times (8/36) = .19$ . No one can fault Black for declining the double since .19 is less than the breakeven probability of .25. However, what if the score is 3-1 in White's favor in a 9-point match and White redoubles to 4? In this case, Black should **TAKE** the redouble. The following analysis will explain the apparent violation of basic cube strategy.

The primary objective in all matches is, of course, to win the **match**. Your manipulation of the pieces and the cube should be directed toward this single goal. It is therefore, useful for a player to know what the probability of his winning the match based on the current or any other score in the match. In a nine point match obviously at a score of 2-2 the probability for each player of winning the match is .50. At a Crawford game score of 7-8 the low score player's probability is .25. What about score of 1-7, 3-6, 2-8 or even 1-5 as is the question Black must resolve in figure 1. Due to the complexities of the rules and strategies of cube management such as the Crawford Rule, mandatory doubling by the low score player after the Crawford game and also employment of the free drop option, calculations of these probabilities are impossible using only classical probability theory. Such calculations are best handled by a computer simulation technique called the Monte Carlo Method. This is a brute force approach where a large number of matches are played on the computer from set starting scores such as 1-7, 3-6, 2-8 and 1-5. The current score is increased by the use of random number generator such that each player has an equal chance of improving his score until one player reaches the match point. The percentage of **matches** won by the low score player is then computed for this many trials.

This simulation was programmed and executed on an IBM 360 computer by the author under the following assumptions:

1. The match is nine points.
2. The players are of equal skill.
3. The Crawford Rule is in effect.
4. After the Crawford game the low score player automatically doubles.
5. The high score player employs the free drop option as required only 40% of the time, i.e. when the high score player has a 60-40 advantage.
6. Gammons and backgammons are ignored under the assumption that the final results would not differ and furthermore the subjective decisions required to mathematically model gammons and backgammons could adversely affect the results.
7. A single random number is chosen to determine the outcome of each game.

The computer played over 200,000 partial matches, generated over 2 million random numbers and produced table 1.

Table 1 is a matrix of probabilities that the low score player will win a match to nine points assuming players of equal skill. In the problem of figure 1 Black can use table 1 to resolve his dilemma. If Black declines the redouble to 4, the score will become 1-5 giving Black only a .17 probability of winning the match. This is less than his .19 chance of winning the game. If Black takes and then redoubles to 8 this game becomes match game for **both** players and Black therefore has improved his chance of winning to match from .17 to .19. Under these circum-

stances it is a "good" take even though Black has less than a .25 probability of victory on this game.

Now let's add another variable into this problem. What if the low score player (Black) is the more skilled player? A second computer simulation was performed under the assumption that the low score player is the stronger and enjoys a 60-40 edge in skill i.e. he wins 60% of the games on the average against this opponent. Table 2 is the results of this simulation. It is evident that the low score player has a .38 probability of winning a nine-point match from a score of 1-5. Since .38 is greater than .19 Black should decline the double, if he judges himself a more skilled player, and thus live to fight again.

In studying tables 1 and 2 some interesting points are evident.

1. A player's probability of winning the match is generally directly related to the **difference** between the scores rather than how close to match point the high score player is. With a difference of one point the probability is about .40, a two-point difference about .30, three points about .20, and four points about .15.
2. A more skilled player enjoys a greater probability of victory for a match than an individual game. Furthermore, the more points in the match the greater the edge to the skilled player in the match. At an even score of 1-1, the more skilled player has a .71 chance of match victory even though his single game odds are .60.

Every backgammon player who aspires to do well in tournament play should understand these probabilities.

TABLE 1

Losing Player's Score	8							.50
	7						.50	.25
	6					.50	.36	.23
	5				.50	.37	.25	.13
	4			.50	.39	.28	.19	.11
	3		.50	.40	.29	.21	.14	.06
	2	.50	.41	.31	.23	.16	.11	.05
	1	.50	.41	.32	.24	.17	.13	.08
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Leading Player's Score								

TABLE 2

Losing Player's Score	8								.60
	7							.61	.36
	6						.63	.51	.31
	5					.66	.55	.41	.22
	4				.66	.58	.46	.36	.18
	3			.70	.61	.50	.39	.29	.13
	2		.71	.63	.53	.44	.33	.25	.11
	1	.71	.65	.57	.48	.38	.28	.20	.08
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Leading Player's Score (60/40 Skill Ratio)									

TABLE 1 — Probability of Low Score Player winning a Match to 9. (equal skilled players)

TABLE 2 — Probability of a Skilled Player, who is behind, ultimately winning a Match to 9. (60/40 skill ratio) ★★



# ELIMINATE EMOTIONAL INFLUENCE

by Gaby Horowitz & Dr. Bruce Roman

Anyone who has ever played a game of backgammon in a more sophisticated manner than aimlessly moving checkers about a board has experienced the magnitude and severity to which the game can affect one's emotions.

With this concluding principle we will cross the boundary between physical and mental backgammon to explore the various emotions we may encounter in ourselves as well as in our opponents.

The most common untoward emotion in backgammon is steaming. The World Book dictionary defines steaming as "showing anger or irritation." In backgammon, steaming occurs when a player has reached his "boiling point." Characterized by doubling without a sufficient advantage and accepting cubes that should be declined, the player's mental computations become irrational rather than prudent. Rather than deciding upon the cube as one would a business venture, it becomes an *affaire d'honneur*.

Steaming usually occurs when the player is losing and particularly if his opponent has turned around one or more big games. This tends to offend one's sense of JUSTICE. The player strikes out in reponse to this travesty of fairness. Ironically, this usually denotes the genesis rather than the denouement of his misfortunes.

Steamers, regardless of their skill level, are the most desirable opponents with whom one can engage in play. Assume that you, as an intermediate player, have a choice between two opponents, A and B. A is a weak player who is financially prosperous and indulges in the game purely as a distraction. Rarely becoming perturbed or affected by a series of misfortunes, he has a very high boiling point.

Opponent B is a fine technician who derives his sustenance solely from backgammon. Overly tense and nervous, he is known to have a very low boiling point, i.e., he steams with the best of them.

Regardless of the disparity in skill level between Opponent B and yourself, your opportunity for success is greater with him — providing you understand his weakness and exploit it.

Due to the unpredictability of the game, you need do nothing more than patiently wait for one or two games to go sour on him. Against your thoroughbred steamer, one or two unfortunate games if sufficient for him to begin doubling early and, most importantly, taking late.

Interestingly, steaming can occur when a player is not losing but becomes angry due to something said or done by an opponent or kibitzer.

A particular Los Angeles player is very superstitious and bars certain kibitzers whom he believes bring him bad luck. Most club members are aware of this person's problem and courteously attempt to not watch him play — especially when he's in the box.

One evening a new club member, uninformed as to this person's infirmity, was kibitzing *his* game. When asked to leave sans explanation, he regarded it as a personal affront and refused to depart. An altercation ensued, followed by a "ruling," and the new club member was told to leave. Unfamiliar with this brand of hospitality, he responded with a flurry of invective before exiting, visibly unnerved, Mr. Superstitious lost the subsequent game in the box and proceeded to become -26 on the score within the next several games. At this point, he barred everyone, obviously implying that they were the cause of his misfortunes. We will leave it to the reader to adjudicate the true source of this person's calamities.

Another character, whom we will call Mr. X, makes his appearance at the club approximately at midnight (two hours before closing time). Methodically noting everyone's score, he attempts to enter the chouette with the greatest number of "donators." Content to win several points and quickly leave, Mr. X is a hit-and-run artist.

One evening, as Mr. X was playing his first game in the box, he reached the position illustrated in Diagram 1. As Black, he was enjoying the position until White produced a key 6-2, hitting the blot on B9. He nervously rolled — and danced! The team immediately redoubled to 4 and Mr. X reflexively grabbed the cube, securing the dubious honor of being its possessor. The last vestiges of his smile evaporated as he finally re-entered, rolling a 1-5 in Diagram 2. Losing a gammon and a substantial number of points, Mr. X paid top dollar for his steam take.

A steam take is frequently generated by a sudden and dramatic shift in positional advantage from one player to the other.

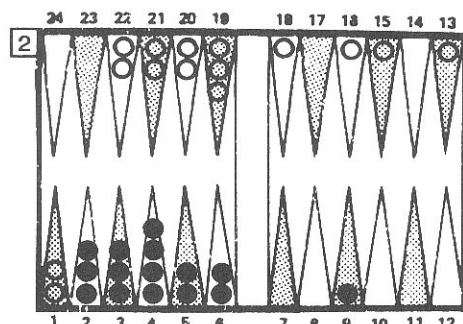


DIAGRAM 1  
WHITE ROLLS 6-2

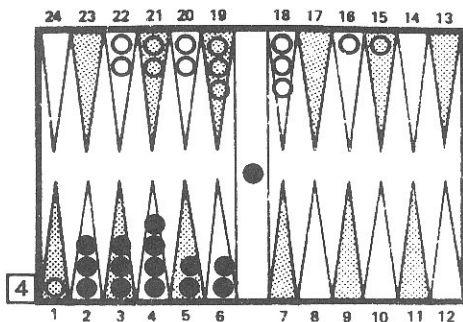


DIAGRAM 2  
BLACK ROLLS 5-1

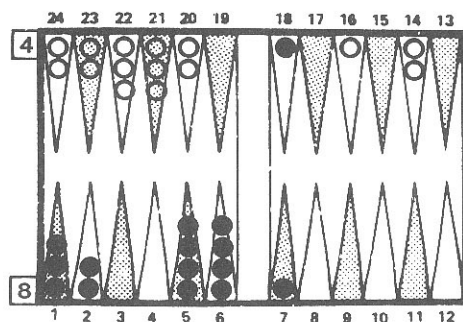


DIAGRAM 3  
WHITE REDOUBLES  
SHOULD BLACK TAKE?

EXCERPT FROM "DYNAMIC CUBE STRATEGY" BY GABY HOROWITZ AND DR. BRUCE ROMAN. COPYRIGHT © 1980. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

The span of time in which this shift occurs is too short to allow the change to be easily assimilated by the individual. This triggers an effort to stop (anger) and a denial of that which has just transpired. The steamer takes the redouble so that he may right the injustice which has occurred, and restore his equity in the game to "what it should be." This is almost as effective as selecting tomorrow's Daily Double from last week's Racing Form.

A more moderate expression of steaming can be seen among highly skilled players. At a 1976 tournament in Dallas, two top pros were playing heads-up for money between matches. Playing the last game of a previously agreed upon number of games, the position in Diagram 3 was reached.

Black is minus two on the score. After studying the position he realizes the following:

1. He is 8 pips behind *before* his opponent rolls in a fairly short race.
2. Only a 6-5 forces White to leave a direct shot on his next roll.
3. His inner board has gaps and men piled upon his 5 and 6 points.

He knows that the redouble should be declined. But he is also abundantly aware that this game marks his last opportunity to emerge plus for the session. The nominal 6-5 shot equity serves as a nucleus for sophistry which culminates in a justification for steaming.

It is not that the advanced player is immune to steaming but rather that his adroit justifications frequently camouflage the truth.

Note well that the time to evaluate a player's ability is when he is confronted with adversity, not when all is going his way. any dilettante can perform well with good dice.

A successful technique against the more skilled player that steams is to offer to play five games at high stakes. If you are plus after the five games, you may agree to an additional five games but always make it appear that these will be the *last* five games. Skilled players, of course, should not play short sessions against inferior opponents. You should not feel obliged to agree to terms that violate your best interests, as in the following conversation:

Intermediate: "Let's play three games at \$100 a point."

Expert: "I'm sorry, I dislike short sessions. But I will play you a four-hour session."

In this way the more advanced player greatly increases the probability that his skill advantage will have sufficient time to be expressed. This is far superior to gambling for three games in which one or two lucky rolls may determine the winner.

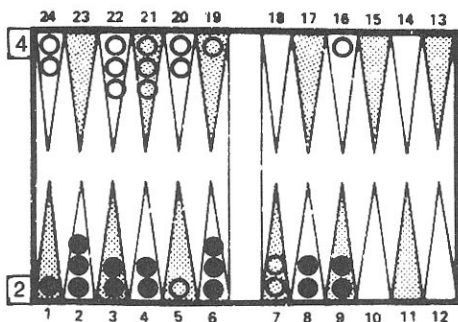
Due to the nature of tournament play, measures inapplicable in money games are often quite appropriate in match play. This fact is often used to justify steaming in a tournament.

Diagram 4 illustrates a position that occurred in a match between two skilled players at the 1977 Bill Eisenberg Cup in Los Angeles.

In the previous game, Black, trailing 4-5 in a match to 11, backgammoned his opponent to obtain a 7-5 lead. Steaming, White doubled early in the next game, justifying his action with the fact that he was behind in the match. *In most instances emotional influence clouds one's mind only in the absence of knowledge.*

Compounding the mistake of the early double, White accepted the redouble in Diagram 4 and thus played for the match from that position.

If White had really understood that the match was not yet lost and that a comeback was certainly possible, he would have greatly increased his chances for success. Frequently, we have observed players applying emergency measures in situations in which no real emergency exists. Being behind 9-5 (or more probably 8-5 if he hadn't offered the early double) is a more



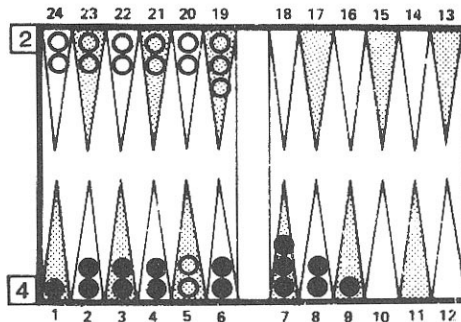
**DIAGRAM 4**  
**BLACK REDOUBLES**  
**SHOULD WHITE TAKE?**

advantageous position to be in than playing for the match from the position in Diagram 4.

Alan Martin, a former student of Gaby's, was playing a very weak opponent in one of the early rounds of the 1979 American Backgammon Championships in Las Vegas. Down 7-11 in a match to 15, Alan gammoned his opponent with the cube at 2 to tie the score at 11-11.

Remaining upset at being gammoned, his opponent redoubled Alan to 4 in Diagram 5. Ironically, the redouble is excellent. White is essentially gambling the entire match on this 5-shot and the existing racing equity — both non-skill confrontations. Due to the great skill disparity, this is the best chance to win the match. In reality, however, white was not evaluating the Opponent Factor but merely steaming (he probably would have offered the same redouble in a money game).

While many fine players would have taken the



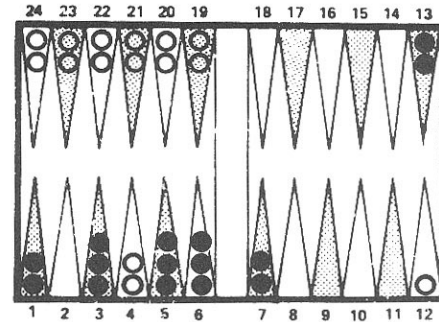
**DIAGRAM 5**  
**WHITE REDOUBLES**  
**SHOULD BLACK TAKE?**

redouble, Alan wisely decided to decline. He was unwilling to give his inferior opponent the opportunity to win the match in one roll.

Your best defense against the steamer is patience. Alan, now behind 11-13, continued on to win the match and the entire tournament to become the American Backgammon Champion.

Another emotion commonly exhibited in backgammon is fear. The player in fear doubles too late, losing his market, and passes most cubes offered to him. Protecting against 17-1 shots rather than observing true priorities, he is often found playing from very inflexible positions. This fear even extends to facing certain opponents to whom he has suffered a substantial loss or several losses.

White is in the box in Diagram 6. Black considered doubling but his two partners strongly objected. Ac-



**DIAGRAM 6**  
**SHOULD BLACK TAKE?**

quiescing to their demands, he did not double and rolls a 6-2. The teammates howled at his suggestion of breaking the midpoint (the correct play) but this time the captain insisted and made his play, leaving his opponent six numbers with which to hit him. As White rolled a 4-3, the first teammate groaned, "I'm sure glad I didn't let you double." The second teammate followed with the "astute" observation, "Especially with the way you played the position."

The teammates were, amongst other things, victims of fears, not only in their cube handling but in their checker movement. Do not judge results but do what you know to be correct. The above incident is not an isolated occurrence but a ubiquitous "ritual" performed daily wherever backgammon is played. ☆☆

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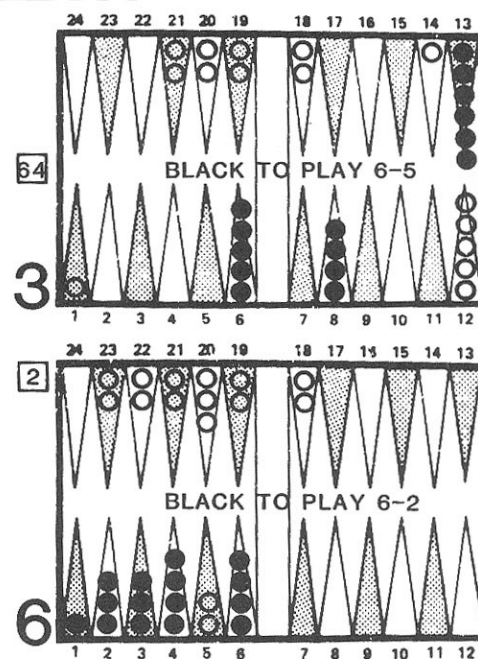
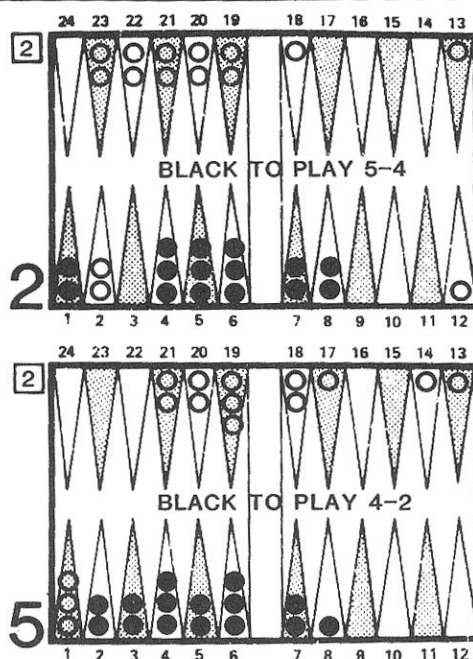
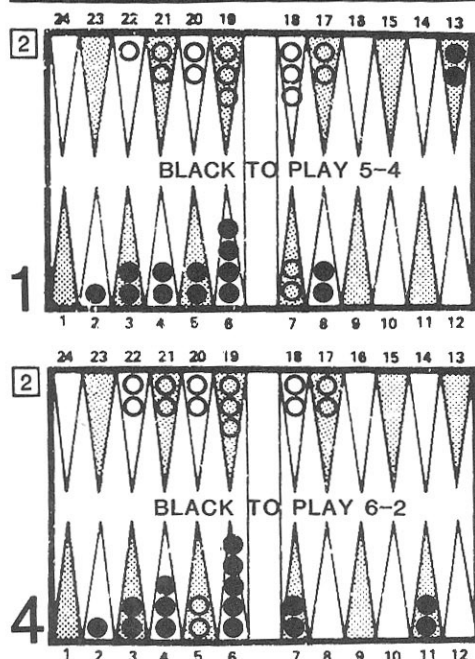
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# PAY ME NOW OR . . . PAY ME LATER

by Kit Woolsey



Many readers will remember a television commercial for oil filters a few years ago. The punch line of the commercial was "You can pay me now, or pay me later," which meant that the consumer had a choice of paying a small amount for an oil filter now, or a large amount for a ruined engine later.

It would not be surprising if the writer of that commercial were a backgammon player. The problem of whether to pay now or pay later — that is, whether to take a chance now or play safe for the roll at the possible cost of taking a greater risk later — recurs constantly in backgammon. In the early stages of the game, when the opponent hasn't built up his board, the cost of being hit is small, so it is usually correct to "pay me now." For example: on an opening 2-1 roll most experts will slot the five-point, since the cost of being hit now is much smaller than the cost of not owning the five-point at a later stage of the game.

It is with bearing in positions, when getting hit will cost the game, that the most crucial pay-me-now or pay-me-later-decisions arise. A player must often decide whether to take a risk on the current roll, with relative safety remaining if he gets away with it, or to play safer for now but leave a more awkward position with likelihood of leaving later shots. Many good players mis-evaluate this type of position. They forget that the potential later shot still has to be hit to cost, so they tend to pay now when it is safer to pay later. If we assume that getting hit loses and escaping wins, we must calculate for a given play the probability of getting hit either now or later. This figure is: probability of being hit on this roll + probability of being missed on this roll x probability of leaving shot(s) on future rolls x probability of future shot(s) being hit.

Look at example 1. Many good players will clear the midpoint with 5-4, figuring that they would rather leave eleven shots now than seventeen shots later. However, a careful analysis shows that they are wrong. If we leave eleven shots now we will be hit with a probability of  $11/36$  or .306 (I assume, for simplicity, that surviving this roll is complete safety). Suppose we play safe, playing the number in our inner board. Let us assume we will have, on average, two rolls before the eight-point must be cleared (this assumption is on the low side), and during this time we might roll double 2, 3, 4, or 5 for safety (I realize that 2-2 and 3-3 are not completely safe, but I ignore 1-1, which is helpful as a compensating factor — I'm just trying to get an approximation, so I'm keeping the assumptions simple). So for

each of the two rolls we have  $8/9$  probability of not safetifying, or  $64/81$  chance of still being on the midpoint when the eight-point is cleared. Once the eight-point is cleared we have ten bad rolls and four good rolls, so the probability of leaving a shot is  $10/14$ , and it is a seventeen-number shot, so the probability of it being hit is  $17/36$ . Consequently if we "pay me later," the probability of being hit is approximately  $64/81 \times 10/14 \times 17/36 = .267$ , so this is the safer play. I realize that there are several things I haven't taken into account, but I tried to make my simplifying assumptions equally favorable to both sides to make a rough calculation possible.

Example 2 comes from "Backgammon for Profit" by Joe Dwek. Dwek suggests paying now, clearing the eight-point and slotting the three-point, leaving a direct shot. The alternative is to move two checkers to the one-point, leaving an extremely awkward position to bear in from. Dwek suggests the reader roll it out a few times to convince himself. I did just that (100 times each play) and became quite convinced — paying later was much safer! Even though Dwek's play is considerably safer if he gets away with it, Black is far from home free and is still quite likely to leave one or more shots in the subsequent bear-in. Since the "pay me later" play has to average almost one extra future shot to compensate for the immediate shot left by "paying me now," it is better to lay safe for the roll.

The problem also occurs when there is a question of how many shots to leave. Consider example 3, which is from Magriel vs. Eisenberg in "Backgammon with the Champions" by Kent Goulding. Magriel played 13-7, 6-1x, getting Eisenberg off the one-point by leaving fifteen return shots, while 13-2 leaves only eleven shots. Since Eisenberg will probably have a game-winning double if he hits any shot, we can assume that a hit is a loss. Is it worth those four extra shots? I don't think so. Even if we assume that if Magriel doesn't ever get hit he will win, which is clearly not a valid assumption in this position, the safer play (for now) would have to leave a shot and have it hit at least  $4/25$  more often than Magriel's play to compensate for the immediate danger. This would involve leaving a direct shot almost 40% more often, which seems pretty high to me. Look at it as a proposition in the following form: Would you take Magriel's play and play it play vs. play twenty-five times each way on the assumption that the initial shot was missed, but spot your opponent four wins? This is essentially what Magriel's play does.

Now, when is it correct to "pay me now"? If your opponent hasn't built up his board, it may be correct in any of the previous positions. If his board is built up it is almost never correct to leave an unnecessary direct shot, unless doing so otherwise improves your winning or gammon chances (i.e. there is more involved than just safety). However, it may be correct to leave a few extra shots for future safety, if playing safer now is likely to lead to later problems.

Consider example 4: Black can either clear his eleven-point, leaving sixteen shots now but virtually no later problems, or clear his bar point leaving eleven shots now and the eleven-point to be reckoned with later. If he clears the eleven-point he gets hit  $16/36 = .444$ . If he clears the bar-point he is immediately hit  $11/36$ . Of the remaining  $25/36$  he will have five "good" numbers (double 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) and eight "bad" numbers (6-1, 6-2, 6-3, 6-4). Therefore he will leave a shot  $8/13$  of the time, and it will be a seventeen-number shot (I realize that there are other variations possible, but this calculation takes the major factors into account). Therefore, his probability of being hit is:  $11/36 + (25/36 \times 8/13 \times 17/36) = .507$  so it is proper to "pay me now." Experts are familiar with this type of position, but they would probably be surprised that the decision is that close. In fact, if the opponent's board were about to crunch in a couple of rolls, it would be better to "pay me later."

Another "pay me later" position comes up in example 5. Black could play safe by bringing in the man on the eight-point, but this would probably lead to an awkward bear-in later on. It would be impossible to prove without a computer, but experience has taught us that it is better to clear the bar-point and pay off to the 17 to 1 shot to achieve the smoother position.

The concept may apply to potential shots as well as immediate shots. Here, it is often correct to pay now. Consider example 6. Black can take two men off, paying off only 6-5, or he can come down to two men on the six-point, leaving a shot on both 6-1 and 5-1. It is correct to "pay me now" by coming down to two men on the six-point. The reason is that, unless Black rolls doubles, he will eventually have to come down to two men on the six-point anyway. Consequently the "safer" play is likely to have to pay off to both 6-5 now and 6-1 and 5-1 later, so to avoid this double jeopardy Black should get it over with quickly.

☆☆