

# BIBAFAX

No. 63  
March  
2003

Magazine of the British Isles Backgammon Association

Editor/Publisher: Michael Crane, 2 Redbourne Drive, Lincoln. LN2 2HG

Office/Fax: 01522 888676, Home: 01522 829649, Mobile: 07900 916468

info@backgammon-biba.co.uk, www.backgammon-biba.co.uk



**Dedicated To  
Backgammon**



*It's come again!*

Once again, another Bibafax falls through your letter box.

Have you got a paper copy? It's easy to tell; it's all in black and white and doesn't come with any extras. Or have you got a PDF copy? You can tell a PDF copy by the fact that it's on a CD-ROM, is in full colour, is fully searchable, has dynamic links to the internet, and has many extras such as Snowie html files of the featured matches in each issue, and, as an added bonus there are previous issues (61 & 62) to date.

Would you like to receive a full colour copy of the Bibafax? If so, just let me know and I'll change your delivery from paper to CD-ROM. If you'd like to receive both formats then send £5 for a one year upgrade to Biba HQ.

Index on page 45

## Anatomy of a David Naylor Board



made by  
David Naylor



Discover the Beauty of Leather in its Noblest Form - BACKGAMMON  
David has been building leather backgammon boards for over 22 years at his workshops in the Italian Alps and now London. All leather used is finest Tuscan quality selected personally by David himself.

Info Email: [info@backgammon-boards.co.uk](mailto:info@backgammon-boards.co.uk)

Tel: Within UK 07930 460647 Tel: Outside UK +44 7930 460647

### Advertising Rates

**1 column: £24**

**2 columns: £43**

**3 columns: £58**

The above rates are for single issues. For multiple issues the following discounts are applied:

2 = - 5%

3 = - 10%

4 = - 15%

5/6 = - 20%

Copy must be *camera ready* or Biba can typeset and format for the above rates without the discount. For details contact Biba HQ or email: [adverts@](mailto:adverts@) etc, etc.

#### Issue Dates

Mid: January

March

May

July

September

November

## The Nordic Open Championship Final, April 2002 . . .

By Roy Hollands

There were 399 players at the Nordic, 92 of them entering the Championship.

The final was between Morten Holm (Denmark) and Raj Jansari (UK). Morten is a very strong player with a long list of victories to his credit. He was semi-finalist in the World Championship at Monte Carlo, 2001. Raj played excellent backgammon throughout the tournament. I was particularly impressed with his victory over the ex-World Champion Peter Thomsen.

Morten won the final 25-11. The Snowie statistics show that Raj was very unlucky to lose. The luck factor was 9.321 in Morten's favour. Snowie rated Raj as 51.3% favourite. Thus his slight advantage in skill was counteracted by his lack of luck.

Snowie rated both players as *expert* level. Most of the winners of our BIBA tournaments are at *advanced* level so the play in the Nordic final was of a very high standard.

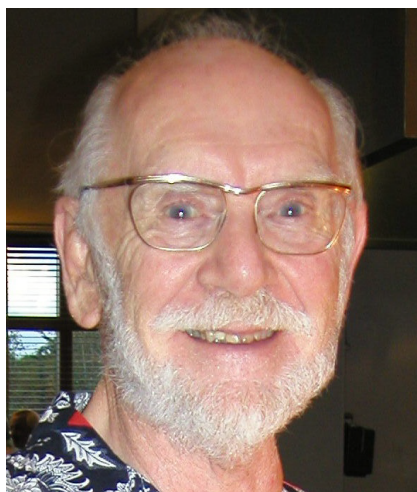
Raj made 20 errors of which 8 were blunders. His error rate was 5.283. Morten made 21 errors of which 7 were blunders. His error rate was 5.482. *A blunder is when there is 0.10 or more difference between the move, or cube decision, and Snowie's choice. An error is when the difference is 0.03 or more.*

We continue this article from Game 6 following the last Bibafax.

## Game 6

**Raj Jansari 8      Morten Holm 14**

**White                          Black**



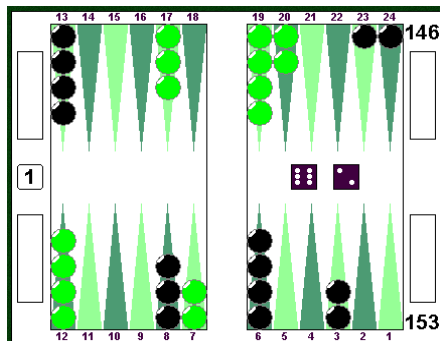
01) 14: 13/9 24/23

51: 13/8 24/23

02) 41: 9/5 6/5

53: 8/3 6/3

03) 65: 24/18 23/18



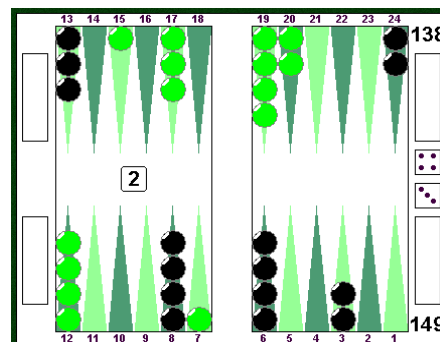
### Black to play 62

62: 23/21 21/15

13/5 is better, slotting the valuable five point. Escaping a checker by 23/15 is not a priority.

04) 62: 18/16 16/10\*

51: 25/24 13/8



## White doubles to 2 / Black drops

Black's drop is a blunder that loses 0.152 equity. A clear take even at

this match score.

**Wins 1 point**

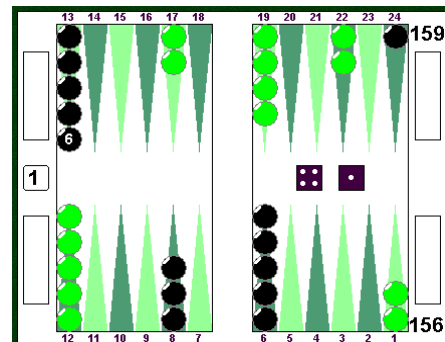
*In Game 6 Raj was rated Extra-terrestrial and Morten as Novice.*

## Game 7

**Raj Jansari 9   Morten Holm 14**

01) 65: 24/18 18/13

02) 53: 8/3 6/3



### Black to play 41

41: 13/9 24/23

A minor error here. Snowie prefers  $13/8$ .

03) 41:  $6/2^* 24/23$

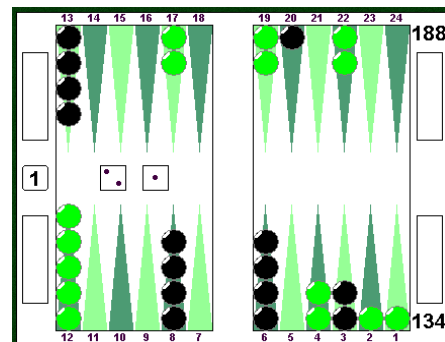
$$23: 25/23^* 23/20$$

04) 11: 25/22 6/5\*

52: 25/20\* 13/11

05) 41: 25/21 22/21

33: 11/8 9/6 6/3(2)



**White to play 21**

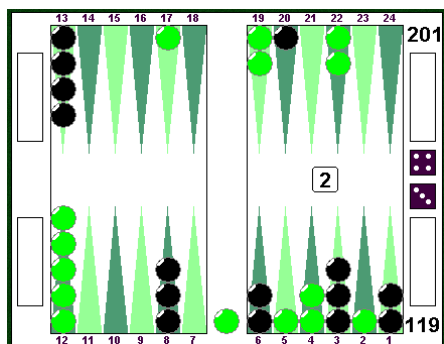
06) 21: 8/6 6/5\*

A blunder that loses 0.151 equity.  
Better to consolidate and prepare  
for a back game by 24/23 13/11

55: 25/20\* 8/3 6/1(2)\*



07) 51: 25/20

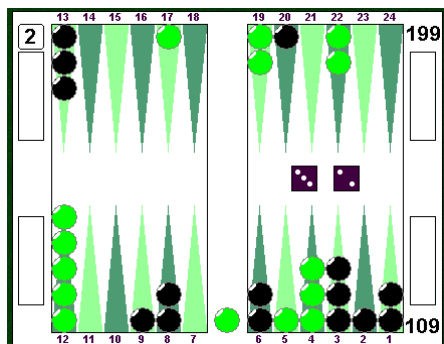


**Black doubles to 2 / White takes**

This take is a serious blunder costing 0.417 equity. White is 82 pips behind in the race, has the weaker home board and three blots. The probability of a gammon (44.4%) is too high to justify a take, even at this match score.

64: 8/2\* 13/9

09) 64: 25/21



**Black to play 32**

32: 8/5\* 13/11

A blunder. 20/17\* 9/7 is better by 0.112 equity.

10) 54: 25/20\* 25/21

54: 25/20 9/5\*

11) 55: 25/20\* 21/16(2) 13/8

11: 25/24 6/5(2)\* 3/2

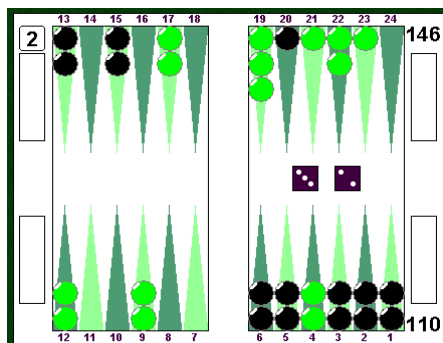
12) 66: 25/13 13/7(2)

32: 24/21 8/6

13) 31: 7/4\* 7/6

55: 25/20 20/15(2) 11/6

14) 65: 13/7 7/2



**Black to play 32**

32: 13/10 10/8

Black is hoping to provoke an exchange of hits due to his superior home board and White's two blots in his home board. However with his racing lead of 36 pips it is thematic to play safe and try to cash in on his racing advantage. Hence 20/15 is best.

15) 41: 6/2 4/3

21: 8/6 6/5

16) 21: 3/1 2/1

61: 13/7 7/6

17) 44: 13/9(2) 9/5(2)\*

62: 25/23\*

18) 52:

62: 23/21 21/15

19) 51:

52: 15/10 10/8

20) 31:

33: 15/12(2) 8/5 5/2

21) 31:

42: 12/5 (Illegal play)

22) 32:

64: 12/6 5/1

23) 42: 25/21 8/6

31: 3/0 1/0

24) 63: 21/15 15/12

51: 6/1 1/0

25) 64: 16/10 10/6

54: 5/0 6/2

26) 44: 21/17 17/13 13/9 9/5

63: 6/0 6/3

27) 55: 21/16 16/11(2) 11/6

54: 5/0 5/1

28) 32: 12/9 8/6

43: 3/0(2)

29) 43: 11/7 9/6

43: 2/0(2)

30) 44: 7/3 6/2(3)

52: 2/0(2)

31) 52: 5/0 3/1

24: 1/0(2)

32) 31: 5/2 3/2

62: 1/0

**Wins 2 points**

*In Game 7 Raj was rated Intermediate and Morten Expert*

## Game 8

**Raj Jansari 9 Morten Holm 16**

01) 21: 13/11 6/5

02) 62: 24/18 13/11 31: 8/5 8/7\*

03) 51: 25/24 13/8 42: 8/4 6/4

04) 41: 11/7 8/7

33: 24/21(2) 13/10 10/7

05) 53: 8/3 6/3

Doubles to 2

06) Drops

**Wins 1 point**

*There were no errors in this game in which both players were rated World Class*

## Game 9

**Raj Jansari 9 Morten Holm 17**

01) 25: 13/8 13/11 42: 8/4 6/4

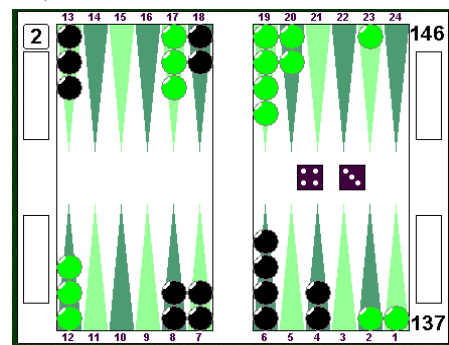
02) 61: 11/5 6/5

66: 24/18(2) 13/7(2)

03) 61: 8/2 24/23

Doubles to 2

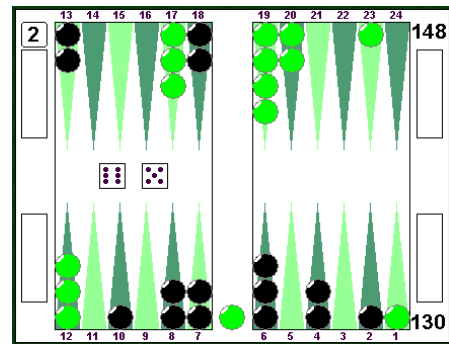
04) Takes



**Black to play 43**

43: 6/2\* 13/10

A blunder. 13/6 is much sounder, bringing down a builder without the risk that the loose hit involves.



**White to play 65**

05) 65: 25/20 20/14

An error. Snowie prefers bar/20 8/2. This makes a three point board and retains the possibility of making an anchor. When 18 pips behind running should not be the game plan.

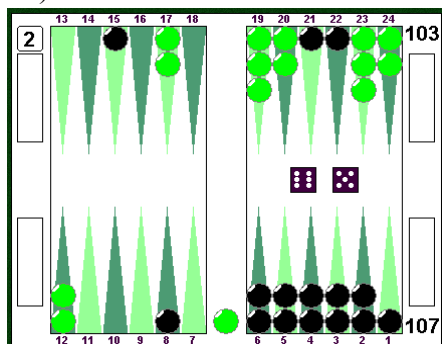
22: 13/11\* 13/11 6/4 4/2

06) 32: 25/22 24/22 41: 11/7 7/6

07) 65: 8/2 13/8 11: 7/6(2) 6/5(2)



08) 65: 8/2 6/1      51: 11/6 6/5  
 09) 61: 22/16 16/15\*  
     33: 25/22 18/15(2) 6/3\*  
 10) 33: 25/22\* 15/12 12/9 9/6  
     44: 25/21 15/11 11/7 7/3\*  
 11) 51: 25/24 6/1      54: 8/3 5/1\*  
 12) 43:



**Black to play 65**

65: 22/16 21/16  
 An error costing 0.047 equity.  
 Snowie prefers 21/16 15/9. This  
 duplicates fours.

13) 65:              42: 15/11 8/6  
 14) 54:      33: 16/13(2) 11/8 8/5  
 15) 43:      44: 13/9(2) 9/5 5/1  
 16) 66:              21: 6/4 9/8

17) 22:              22: 8/6 6/4 4/2 2/0  
 18) 66:              54: 5/0 4/0  
 19) 54:              45: 6/1 6/2  
 20) 61: 25/19 13/12      61: 5/0 1/0  
 21) 51: 12/7 7/6      61: 5/0 1/0  
 22) 65: 13/7 19/14      63: 4/0 3/0  
 23) 21: 8/6 7/6      31: 3/0 1/0  
 24) 51: 14/9 5/4      54: 4/0 2/0  
 25) 51: 9/4 4/3      52: 2/0(2)

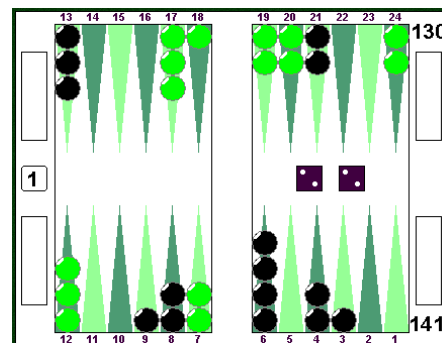
**Wins 4 points**

*In Game 9 both players were rated  
 World Class.*

### Game 10

**Raj Jansari 9 Morten Holm 21**

01)              51: 13/8 24/23  
 02) 54: 13/8 24/20      63: 23/20 20/14  
                                 65: 25/20  
 03) 52: 6/1\* 13/11\*      44: 25/21(2) 8/4(2)  
 04) 61: 11/5\* 6/5  
 05) 62: 24/18 20/18      43: 13/9 6/3  
 06) 51: 6/1 8/7



**Black to play 22**

22: 13/11(3) 11/9

Although the race is close Black  
 will have a slight disadvantage  
 after he has played. White will be  
 3 pips up and on roll. Thus 13/9  
 6/2 is better as the black checkers  
 on the 13-point will maintain some  
 contact and be more of a hindrance  
 to White.

07) 43: 13/9 9/6              64: 9/3 9/5  
 08) 54: 8/3 7/3              52: 6/1 3/1

Continued on page 7 ➤

# BACKGAMMON

## SNOWIE 4

**Available now  
from Biba**

**Order your copy now from Biba**

**£250 : (\$380, €400)**

[snowie@backgammon-biba.co.uk](mailto:snowie@backgammon-biba.co.uk)

**01522 829649**

**From the Biba Shop online:**

[www.backgammon-biba.co.uk](http://www.backgammon-biba.co.uk)

|                                                                        |              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Professional edition 4, full version                                   | <b>\$380</b> |
| Student edition, 4 full version                                        | <b>\$100</b> |
| Professional edition 4, upgrade from any previous Professional edition | <b>\$190</b> |
| Professional edition 4, upgrade from Snowie 4 Student                  | <b>\$300</b> |
| Professional edition 4, upgrade from any previous Snowie Student       | <b>\$340</b> |
| Professional edition 4, upgrade from any previous Snowie Champion      | <b>\$250</b> |
| Student edition 4, upgrade from any previous Snowie Student            | <b>\$ 50</b> |
| Professional edition 3, full                                           | <b>\$190</b> |

## PUT YOUR BACKGAMMON SKILLS TO WORK IN THE CITY

Saxon Financials run a business in the City of London whereby we take on, train and coach people to trade the financial futures markets.

The skills of consistent backgammon players (not risk junkies!) are often closely related - pattern recognition, quick arithmetical ability, assessing and managing risk, squeezing winners and cutting losers.

Personality wise they are often highly independent, disciplined (at work if not out of it!) and obsessed with the game.

Our people are typically 20-30; we support, train and fund them, and if they have the ability, they can become highly successful.

If you are interested, please email me with a brief outline Curriculum Vitae to show your education, career, age, any special achievements and other relevant information.

[andy@saxonfinancials.com](mailto:andy@saxonfinancials.com)

Saxon are now entering their fourth year, having been fortunate in experiencing successful and enjoyable growth.

Our philosophy is that successful day trading is a skill that can be taught - with the caveat that from average potential we can create average traders but from outstanding potential, we can create super traders. We are now looking for exceptional people to join us on the next leg of our journey.

We have taken on and had success with people from all different backgrounds and nationalities – from PhDs to bricklayers! – and have found that it is the character and aptitude that count, more than education and background.

I am a backgammon player (for a hobby) and have made my living from the markets for fourteen years. I see a tremendous synergy between the two – by way of instant reactions in understanding pattern recognition, probability, risk control and arithmetical aptitude – in fact, when played with the doubling cube, I believe it is as near the perfect proxy for trading as is possible to get.

The attractions of working with us are that:

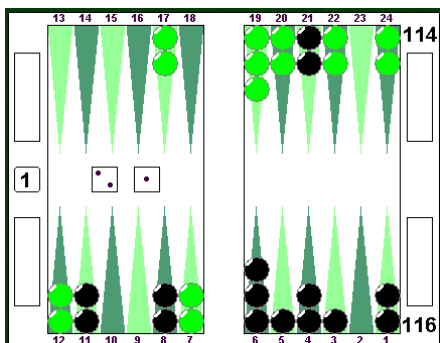
- we fund you
- we teach and manage you to get the best from your trading
- we are a young, entrepreneurial company with a great atmosphere
- there are no customers – our interests are perfectly aligned with the traders on a profit split
- lifestyle choice : after your successful development, you make your own hours, wear your own clothes, do your own thing (within the parameters of our risk limits)

All our traders however:

- are committed to working very hard in the City, from 7 am to 4 pm initially
- demonstrate the skills and aptitudes mentioned above
- have a passion and burning desire to succeed

Successful trading is a lot of fun and very rewarding – not unlike backgammon!

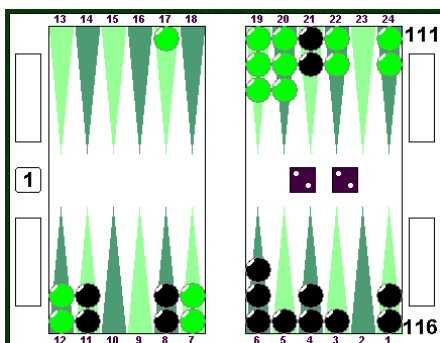




### White to play 21

09) 21: 8/6 6/5

A blunder costing 0.165 equity. Snowie's move is 13/11 13/12. Leaving the two indirect shots makes it impossible for Black to hit one of them and also cover one or both of his home board blots.



### Black to play 22

22: 6/4 5/3 4/2(2)

An error that loses 0.069 equity. The next few moves are tricky and crucial for both players since either may have to leave a blot. Hence Snowie's preference for 11/9(2) 6/4 5/3. This avoids leaving a blot in Black's home board. Also the two checkers in the nine point give more flexibility for later moves than if they were on the eleven point.

10) 64: 8/2 6/2

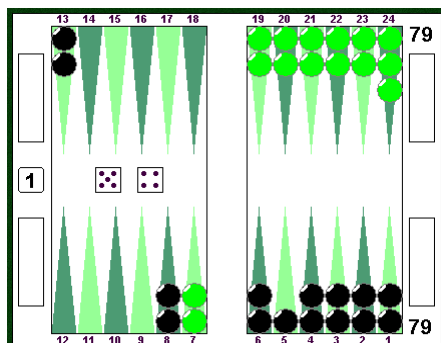
44: 21/17(2) 17/13(2)

11) 44: 13/9(2) 9/5 5/1

53: 11/6 11/8

12) 51: 9/4 5/4

41: 8/4 6/5



### White to play 54

13) 54: 18/13 18/14

A blunder. Pay later! Snowie's 6/1 6/2 (equity -0.316) is to be preferred to White's move (equity -0.100) which leaves Black 20 hitting numbers.

32: 8/5 13/11\*

14) 53:

53: 11/6 8/5

15) 66:

63: 13/7 7/4

16) 55:

32: 5/2 6/4

17) 55:

12: 2/0 4/3

18) 56:

54: 6/1 6/2

19) 61: 25/19 13/12

55: 5/0(2) 4/0(2)

20) 52: 19/14 12/10

52: 4/0 2/0

21) 52: 10/5 14/12

43: 3/0(2)

22) 31: 12/9 9/8

63: 3/0 2/0

23) 36: 8/5 6/0

66: 2/0 1/0(3)

**Wins 1 point**

*In Game 10 Raj was rated Advanced and Morten as World Class.*

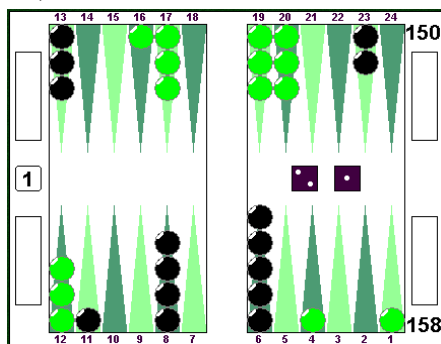
### Game 11

**Raj Jansari 9 Morten Holm 22**

01) 13: 8/5 6/5 21: 13/11 24/23

02) 31: 24/21 6/5 51: 13/8 24/23

03) 54: 13/8 13/9



### Black to play 21

21: 13/11 6/5  
An error costing 0.052 equity. 11/10 6/4\* is far better. It puts White on the bar and 11/10 provides a cover for the four-point. It also keeps a valuable spare on the mid-point.

04) Doubles to 2

Takes

05) 66: 21/15 15/9 13/7(2)

41: 8/4 5/4

06) 65: 24/18 18/13 61: 11/5 6/5

07) 62: 13/7 13/11 42: 13/9 5/3

08) 64: 9/3 7/3 61: 9/3 6/5

09) 51: 9/4 5/4

66: 13/7 8/2(2) 7/1

10) 43: 11/7 8/5 41: 11/7 8/7

11) 52: 8/3 8/6 32: 7/4 7/5

12) 31: 7/4 6/5 54: 6/1 6/2

13) 11: 7/6(2) 6/5 5/4

65: 23/17 23/18

14) 55: 5/0(4) 43: 18/14 14/11

15) 64: 6/0 4/0 41: 11/7 7/6

16) 63: 6/0 3/0

66: 17/11 11/5 6/0 5/0

17) 61: 6/0 3/2 66: 5/0(3) 4/0

18) 41: 4/0 6/5 21: 2/0 1/0

19) 11: 4/3 3/2 2/1 1/0

61: 4/0 1/0

20) 32: 3/0 2/0 21: 2/0 4/3

21) 65: 5/0 4/0

**Wins 2 points**

*In Game 11 Raj was rated Extra-terrestrial and Morten as World Class.*

### Game 12

**Raj Jansari 11 Morten Holm 22**

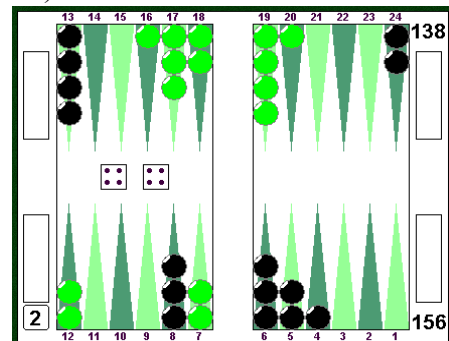
01) 14: 13/9 6/5 51: 13/8 6/5

02) 66: 24/18(2) 13/7(2)

32: 8/5 6/4

03) Doubles to 2

Takes

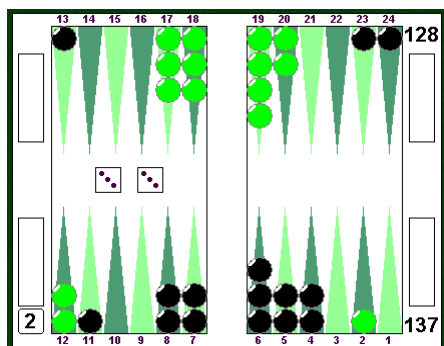


### White to play 44

04) 44: 18/14(2) 14/10 9/5

It is difficult to choose between the many good moves available. Here is Snowie's choice for the top six. *MC: After a mini-rollout the actual play came out in 3<sup>rd</sup> place. Clearly 9/5 8/4(3) is the best move.*

|                     |              |
|---------------------|--------------|
| 9/5 8/4(3)          | 0.714        |
| 13/5 8/4(2)         | 0.687        |
| 18/14(2) 14/10 9/5  | 0.624 A      |
| 13/5(2)             | 0.618        |
| 13/9(2) 9/5 8/4     | 0.609        |
| 13/9 (2) 9/5 6/2    | 0.580        |
| 42: 8/4 13/11*      |              |
| 05) 36: 25/22 22/16 |              |
| 41: 13/9* 24/23     |              |
| 06) 32: 25/23 10/7  | 62: 13/7 9/7 |



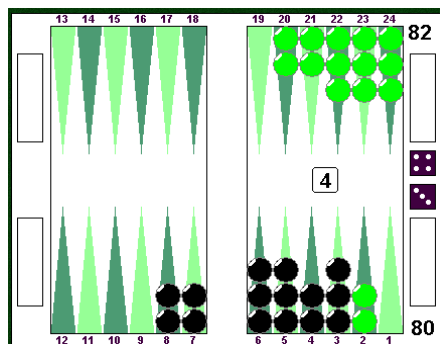
White to play 33

07) 33: 13/10(2) 6/3(2)

An error bordering on a blunder and losing 0.095 equity. Snowie prefers 13/7 7/4(2) establishing a five prime at the expense of leav-

ing a blot on the 13 point. Is it worth it? Yes. If missed it is a useful spare and if hit it may help to form an anchor with White's blot on the 23 point.

|                   |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 42: 13/9 11/9     |                 |
| 08) 42: 10/6 7/5  | 21: 23/21 24/23 |
| 09) 52: 10/5 6/4* |                 |
| 21: 25/24 23/21*  |                 |
| 10) 62: 25/23 8/2 |                 |
| 52: 21/16 16/14   |                 |
| 11) 54: 7/2 7/3   | 54: 14/9 9/5    |
| 12) 32: 8/5 8/6   | 61: 24/18 18/17 |
| 13) 31: 5/2 5/4   | 53: 17/12 6/3   |
| 14) 51: 6/1 5/4   | 63: 9/3 9/6     |
| 15) 63: 6/3       | 63: 12/6 6/3    |
| 16) 52: 6/1 3/1   |                 |



Black re-doubles to 4

Re-doubles to 4

At this score the double is a serious blunder costing 0.551 equity. White wins only 14.1% of the games but at this score it is an easy take; a redouble giving White an

unexpected chance of winning.

|                                    |                   |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 17) Takes                          | 51: 8/3 8/7       |
| 18) Doubles to 8                   | Takes             |
| 19) 42: 5/1 5/3                    | 65: 7/1 6/1       |
| 20) 61: 23/17 17/16                |                   |
| 54: 7/2* 7/3                       |                   |
| 21) 64:                            | 65: 6/0 6/1       |
| 22) 11:                            | 41: 5/1 3/2       |
| 23) 65: 25/19 16/11                | 51: 5/0 1/0       |
| 24) 51: 11/6 19/18                 | 63: 5/0 3/0       |
| 25) 43: 18/14 14/11                | 43: 4/0 3/0       |
| 26) 41: 11/7 7/6                   | 64: 4/0 3/0       |
| 27) 52: 6/1 2/0                    | 41: 3/0 1/0       |
| 28) 52: 6/1 3/1                    | 11: 2/1(2) 1/0(2) |
| 29) 15: 4/0 2/1                    | 41: 1/0(2)        |
| <b>Wins 8 points and the match</b> |                   |

*In Game 12 Raj was rated as World Class, Morten as an Intermediate. For the match, both players were rated as Expert.*

*MC: This match is available as a Snowie match file or as an html file suitable for most PCs (Snowie is **not** required to view html files). The html file is just over 3mb and the match file 470kb. To obtain a copy please send a recordable CDR (html) or a floppy (match file) to Biba HQ including a self-addressed envelope. **PDF version - see CD-ROM for html file.***



## Blunders from the Biggies!

By Michael Crane

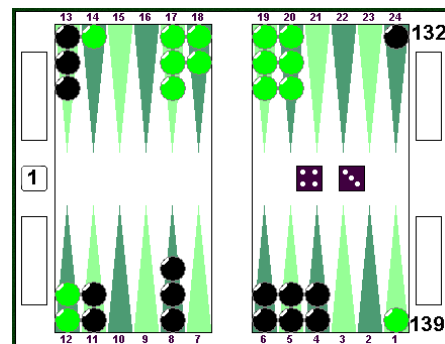
Once again I have trawled my stock of recorded matches and this time I have chosen one played in 1991 between Thomas Lumper of Germany and Wilcox Snellings from Canada.

Lumper, at this time was the 1990 European Champion and was perhaps one of the best German players around. Snellings, already a World Class, player was to be voted the World's No1. In the

1993 and '97 *Giants of Backgammon*; and to take 2nd place in 1995 listings. Snellings also featured in *Costa Rica 1993* by Antonio Ortega, playing against Mike Senkiewicz

I haven't reproduced the entire match; which is unusually only up to 11 points, I have just taken out the positions identified by Snowie as being less than the best!

Game 1 Pos. 6  
Snellings (w) 0 Lumper (b) 1



Black to play 43





After this move the race will be even. Starting from where it means to continue, Snowie rates the actual play of 13/10 11/7 in joint 7th place.

Having leveled off the race, why let White take an advantage by leaving a direct shot? Certainly it is a point worth making, but is the risk of leaving three blots on worth it? Snowie says no.

In fact the only play it rates that leaves Black a shot is in 6th place, 8/1\*, leaving just the one blot on.

Top marks goes to 24/21 13/9 forcing White to take action against the Black runner, whilst at the same time bringing down a builder for the 7- and 3-points.

Snowie's pick of the crop was:

|   |            |          |
|---|------------|----------|
| 1 | 24/21 13/9 | -0.072   |
| 2 | 13/6       | -0.109   |
| 3 | 24/21 8/4  | -0.118   |
| 4 | 13/9 8/5   | -0.121   |
| 7 | 13/10 11/7 | -0.225 A |

Black soon has reason to regret the above play. White rolls 63, picks up two blots, and a couple of rolls later doubles Black out. If Black had played 24/21 13/9 he would not have been hit and might not have been doubled out.

the two Black checkers. Black's timing isn't too good with just one spare checker on his mid-point. Black should be looking to activate the runners and force White to take evasive action. This is the advice from Snowie: 24/20 24/21.

Perhaps in an attempt to *improve* his timing, Black moves one checker from his mid-point, and one from his 8-point, 13/9 8/5! This will of course vastly improve his timing if hit - but in an even race, is it a good idea?

Snowie's choices are:

|   |             |         |
|---|-------------|---------|
| 1 | 24/20 24/21 | 0.155   |
| 2 | 24/21 13/9  | 0.113   |
| 3 | 24/20 13/10 | 0.103   |
| 4 | 13/9 8/5    | 0.025 A |

As it turns out, White rolls 51 and cannot hit any of the three Black blots and settles for making the bar-point instead. Black rolls 65 and leaves two blots playing both from his mid-point. Black soon ends up with two on his 24-point and one in the air, facing four closed home board points with White needing any one of 25 rolls to make it five closed points. Facing this makes it impossible for Black to accept a 2-cube when White ships it across.

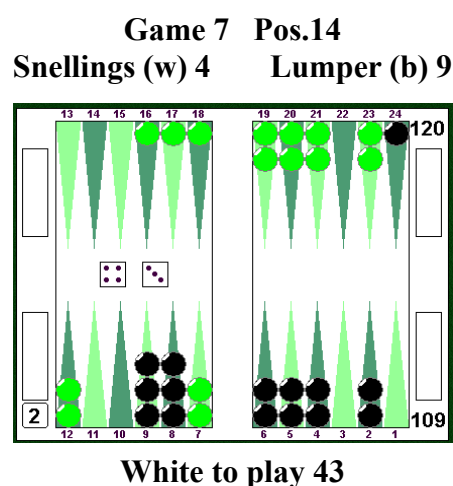
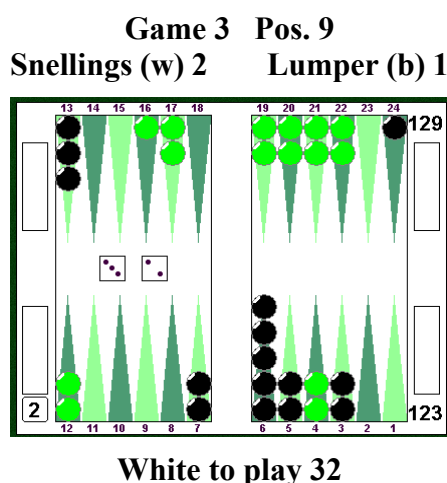
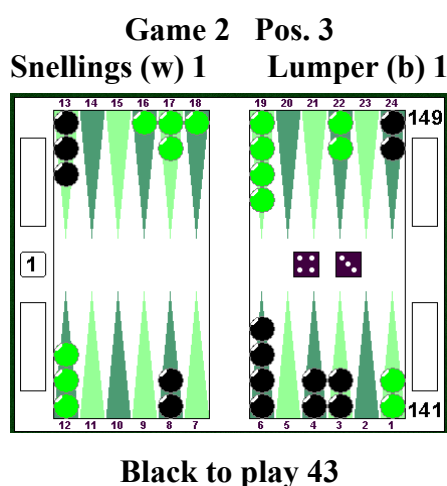
charts. The race is fairly even and the priority for White is to keep the Black runner where he is - caught on the White 1-point.

The actual play, although setting out to achieve this, is far too risky giving away too many hits. Snowie prefers to bring both checkers off the mid-point playing 13/10 13/11. This is still risky but not directly; however, 62 63 or 64 will prove bad for White. On the plus side, the less risky indirect shots do give White several rolls next time that will make the important 7-point: 14 in all. Getting hit on Black's roll isn't catastrophic for White, not while he holds an advanced anchor.

The Snowie moves were:

|   |             |         |
|---|-------------|---------|
| 1 | 13/10 13/11 | 0.173   |
| 2 | 9/4         | 0.167   |
| 3 | 8/5 8/6     | 0.219   |
| 4 | 9/6 8/6     | 0.090   |
| 8 | 9/7 8/5     | 0.020 A |

Black rolls the perfect roll, 61, and hits both blots. Although White re-enters on the first roll with 21 he (wrongly) declines a re-cube to 4 a few rolls later. If White had just been a little more careful here and not slotted the 7-point, Black's 61 would not become the game winning move it turned out to be.



With the race being very close, White is threatening to block in

With a massive -0.153 equity loss the actual play of 9/7 8/5 comes out in 8th place on the Snowie

Having played the very risky 61 as above, White escaped being hit

when Black rolled 44. Now, despite having only eight non, 8-point making rolls, White cannot make the 8-point! So, what to do? Well, playing 8/1\* isn't what Snowie recommends - he puts it in the charts at 7th place - but that's the play made by White. This play gives Black a great chance to get into this game and set White well back. Black has almost 42% hitting rolls, all 1s plus 34 and 36. It isn't necessary to make this 'bold' play, there are enough White checkers between the Black runner and its nearest partner make it difficult for it to escape without being hit back. The best move according to Snowie is 9/5 7/4 keeping the 9-point blot safe and all builders in play.

Snowie moves were:

|   |          |         |
|---|----------|---------|
| 1 | 9/5 7/4  | 0.254   |
| 2 | 8/4 7/4  | 0.229   |
| 3 | 13/9 7/4 | 0.228   |
| 4 | 13/6     | 0.136   |
| 7 | 8/1*     | 0.126 A |

As it turns out, Black dances three times in a row, White makes the 1-point, but is unable to make the 3-point. White eventually gets a chance to roll a three to effectively win the game but misses. Black runs past the last of the White checkers and wins the game (and the match) in the bearoff.

| <u>Match detailed statistics</u>           |                         |             |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Player                                     | Lumper                  | Snellings   |
| Rating                                     | World Class             | World Class |
| Overall                                    | 3.781/6.129             | 3.926/7.163 |
| Errors(blunders)                           | 9(2)                    | 10(2)       |
| Checker play errors                        |                         |             |
| Checker play                               | 3.454/5.714             | 3.775/6.799 |
| Errors(blunders)                           | 8(2)                    | 9(2)        |
| Double errors                              |                         |             |
| Overall                                    | 0.323/0.416             | 0.151/0.364 |
| Missed double                              | 0.044/0.091             | 0.151/0.364 |
| Wrong double                               | 0.282/0.324             | none        |
| Errors(blunders)                           | 1(0)                    | 1(0)        |
| Take errors                                |                         |             |
| Overall                                    | (none for both players) |             |
| Wrong take                                 |                         |             |
| Wrong pass                                 |                         |             |
| Errors(blunders)                           |                         |             |
| Paul Magriel was 51.78% - 48.22% favorite. |                         |             |

As can be seen above, both played at World Class level; which is just what was expected!



## Can't afford to buy Snowie 4? Why not purchase a copy of JellyFish 3.5?

**3.5** Not interested because the Fish isn't as strong as the Snowman? Boy, you're hard to please! Just how difficult an opponent do you want for sixty-three quid? The Fish plays as well as or better than most players you'll ever play against in real life. Try and get Bill Robertie to come 'round your house for £63 and play against you on demand.

JellyFish Tutor and Analyser versions will not only beat you on a regular basis but they will both tell you why you are losing by pointing out better plays and all your doubling mistakes. With the Analyser version you can even rollout positions to be sure of playing the correct move.

| JellyFish 3.5 Prices Jan '99 |      |
|------------------------------|------|
| Analyzer 3.5                 | £136 |
| Upgrade A 2.0/3.0 to A 3.5   | £33  |
| Tutor 3.5                    | £63  |
| Upgrade T 2.0/3.0 to T 3.5   | £17  |
| Upgrade T 2.0/3.0 to A 3.5   | £88  |
| Player 3.5                   | £24  |
| Upgrade P 2.0/3.0 to P 3.5   | £15  |
| Upgrade P 2.0/3.0 to T 3.5   | £54  |
| Upgrade P 2.0/3.0 to A 3.5   | £127 |

**Order today from Biba HQ. Cheques payable to M. Crane.**

# Do You Know Your Ace-Point Game?

By Kit Woolsey

While the computer program that plays backgammon at world-class level has yet to be written, computers can be very valuable in analyzing end-game positions. One of the programs I have written analyzes the bearoff against an ace-point game. This program involves exact calculations rather than simulations. For each configuration of checkers, the exact probability of being hit at some point in the bearoff is calculated. This is done by starting with the simple positions and working backward to the more complex ones, so that every possible move from a complex position leads to a position already solved.



Picture courtesy of  
KG Publications

MC: see the following page for the answers.

In order to simplify the problem and to cope with limited computer memory and time considerations, the following assumptions were made:

The 2-point is "infinitely held"- i.e., you will always have excess men on the 2-point if needed.

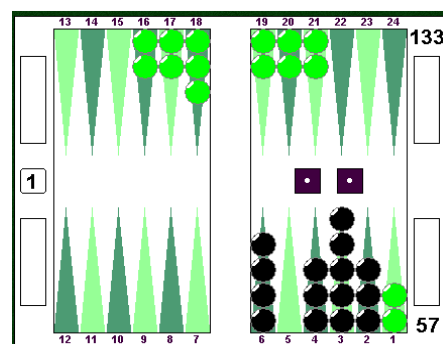
If the 3 through 6 points are cleared, the position is considered 100% safe.

The possibility of the opponent splitting off the ace-point at some time is not considered.

All configurations of up to 12 men on the 3 through 6 points are analyzed.

These conditions may cause slight inaccuracies, but the results should still indicate best play in most if not all positions. Here is a quiz involving some of these results. In each case, rate the four given choices from best to worst, and see how well you know your ace-point game. Assume that safety is the only consideration, and that the number of men borne off when a shot is left is irrelevant.

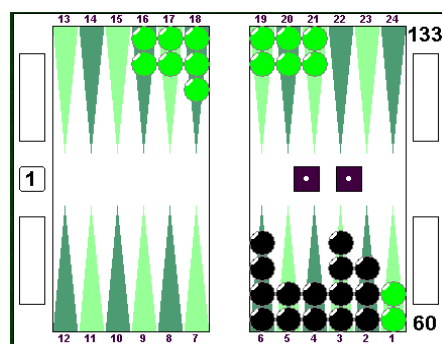
Position 3



Black to play 11

- a 6/5(4)
- b 6/4(2)
- c 6/5(2) 4/2
- d 6/5(2) 3/2(2)

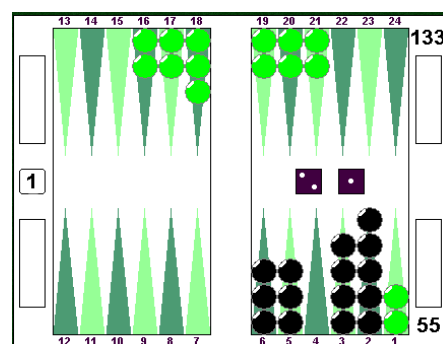
Position 1



Black to play 11

- a 6/5(4)
- b 6/4(2)
- c 6/4 3/2
- d 6/5 5/4(3)

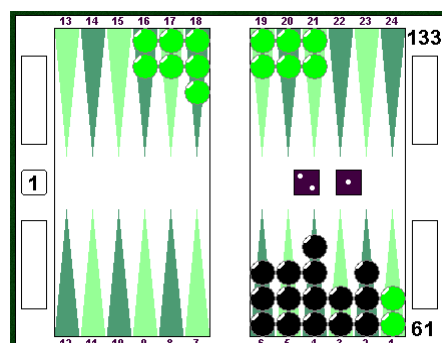
Position 4



Black to play 21

- a 6/4 5/4
- b 6/3
- c 6/5 2/0
- d 3/0

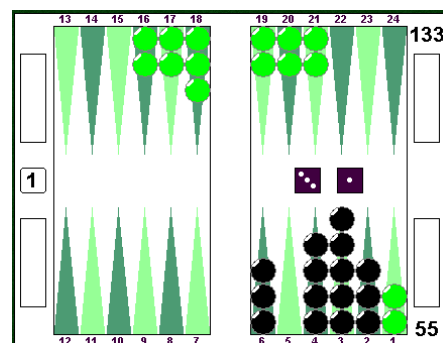
Position 2



Black to play 21

- a 6/4(2)
- b 6/3
- c 6/5 2/0
- d 4/3 2/0

Position 5



Black to play 31

- a 6/2
- b 4/0
- c 6/3 4/3
- d 3/0 3/2

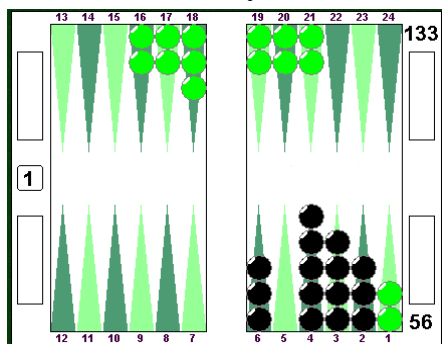


MC: Here are the answers. I have used Snowie 4 to see how, if at all, the moves chosen by Kit differ from those suggested by Snowie. The Snowie analysis is based on the four candidate moves and a mini-rollout of each one.

Kit continues:

In each case, I list the probability of being hit before clearing down to the two point for each play. These are not guesses - they are exact computer calculations.

### Position 1. Played move d



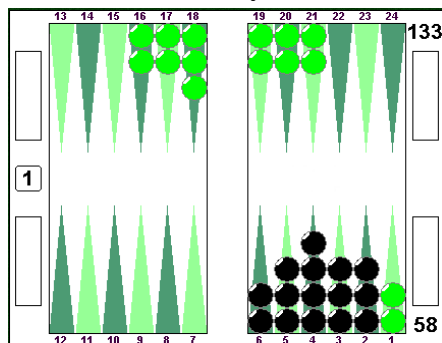
|               |        |
|---------------|--------|
| 6/4; 5/4(2)   | 0.2906 |
| 6/4(2)        | 0.3096 |
| 6/5; 6/4; 3/2 | 0.3230 |
| 6/5(4)        | 0.3248 |

Observations: A gap next to the outer point is not bad at all. It is worth risking a double shot to clear points quickly. The point next to the outer point stripped with several men on the outer point is a very bad position.

MC: Snowie 4 agrees with the best move but differs on the 3rd and 4th places, making 6/5(4) better than 6/4 3/2(2) by 0.036%

|            |         |
|------------|---------|
| 6/5 5/4(3) | 1.123 A |
| 6/4(2)     | 1.059   |
| 6/5(4)     | 1.036   |
| 6/4 3/2(2) | 1.000   |

### Position 2. Played move b



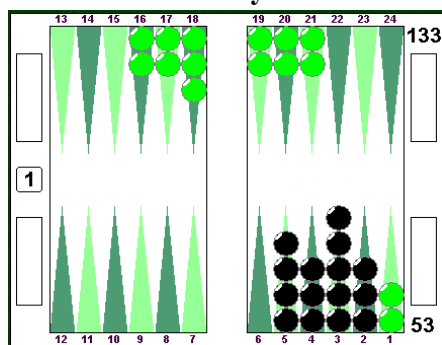
|          |        |
|----------|--------|
| 6/3      | 0.3133 |
| 4/3; 2/0 | 0.3200 |
| 6/5; 2/0 | 0.3221 |
| 6/4; 5/4 | 0.3584 |

Observations: Having builders on interior points is very important, and definitely outweighs the need to keep even on the outside points. A huge stack of checkers on one point with the other points stripped is much inferior to a smooth position.

MC: Kit's move drops down to Snowie 3rd with an equity loss of 0.032%, swapping places with his own 3rd choice.

|         |         |
|---------|---------|
| 6/5 2/0 | 1.136   |
| 4/3 2/0 | 1.124   |
| 6/3     | 1.104 A |
| 6/5 5/4 | 1.013   |

### Position 3. Played move a



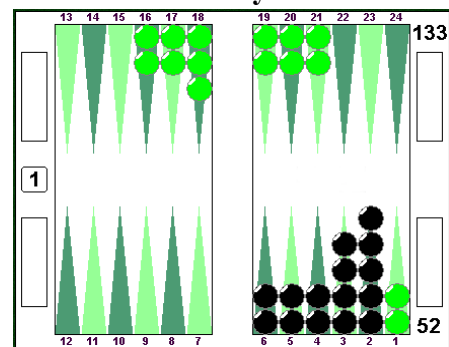
|                |        |
|----------------|--------|
| 6/5(4)         | 0.2750 |
| 6/4(2)         | 0.3016 |
| 6/5(2); 4/2    | 0.3305 |
| 6/5(2); 3/2(2) | 0.3314 |

Observations: Clearing the back point has highest priority, provided it can be done smoothly. A stripped position is quite dangerous - gap may well be safer.

MC: Back on track. Both Kit and Snowie agree on the first two but Snowie transposes 3rd and 4th again; but only by the narrowest margin of 0.001%!

|               |         |
|---------------|---------|
| 6/5(4)        | 1.175 A |
| 6/4(2)        | 1.088   |
| 6/5(2) 3/2(2) | 1.001   |
| 6/5(2) 4/2    | 1.000   |

### Position 4. Played move a



|          |        |
|----------|--------|
| 6/4; 5/4 | 0.3306 |
| 6/5; 2/0 | 0.3507 |
| 6/3      | 0.3571 |
| 3/0      | 0.3745 |

Observations: A gap two away from the outside point is much worse than a gap one away, and it is key to fill it. It is important to strip the back point so as to be able to clear it next roll.

MC: Although both of them disagree about first place it isn't worth debating because the equity difference between 1st and the rest (all joint 2nd) is just 0.005%

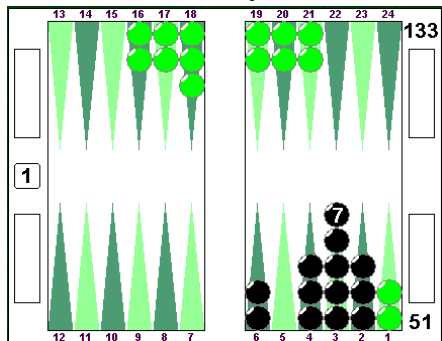
|         |         |
|---------|---------|
| 6/5 2/0 | 1.005   |
| 6/4 5/4 | 1.000 A |
| 6/3     | 1.000   |
| 3/0     | 1.000   |



**Want to play Backgammon  
for real money?**



### Position 5. Played move c



|          |        |
|----------|--------|
| 6/3; 4/3 | 0.2976 |
| 6/2      | 0.3008 |
| 4/0      | 0.3025 |
| 3/0; 3/2 | 0.3101 |

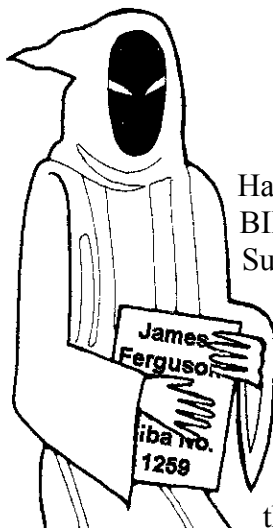
Observations: If the resulting position is relatively smooth, clear from the back and don't ask any questions. This has clear priority over any odd-even considerations. MC: No agreement here. Snowie turns the moves upside down making Kit's No1 the Snowie No4; and by a margin of 0.108%

|         |         |
|---------|---------|
| 3/0 3/2 | 1.139   |
| 4/0     | 1.128   |
| 6/2     | 1.075   |
| 6/3 4/3 | 1.031 A |

MC: This article was copied from the Fall 1983 edition of Backgammon News and appears here with acknowledgement to this now-defunct publication and Kit Woolsey.

**An advert this size would cost just £5 for one issue or place it in five issues and it costs just £4 a time!**

**See page two**



## Last Biba Man In

Dedicated to non-mathematicians  
by James Ferguson

Having joined BIBA on the Sunday of Bright 'n' Breezy – I was delighted to be instantly relieved of the burden of loose change by Chris Bray during the first match of the suicide, which is probably not newsworthy – however... Now reading the Article *Last Man In* in January 2003 Bibafax 62 – The point is arguable as the Last Man In (to BIBA) has something to contribute.

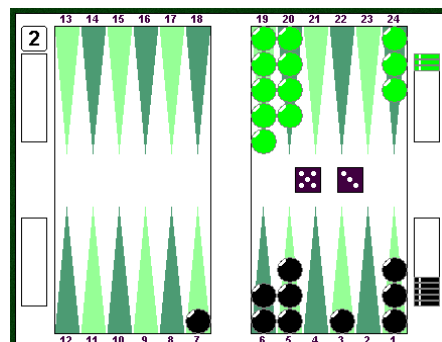
“Magger” in the article gives a (to me) horrific mathematical formula for calculating how to bear a last man in and a first off, and then suggests that it isn't actually accurate and should be far more complex in some circumstances. Breathless in his naivety, the new boy rushes to his word processor and starts banging away to explain his simpler, accurate means for calculating the right play, which works in more situations. By the way, if anyone likes it I would love to beg borrow or steal a copy of Magriel – Hint!

Consider the generic problem of bearing a last man in and another off - Each can be expressed as two possible distributions of checkers on points after the play with a choice to be made between each (Opt 1 & Opt 2.). The second option (Opt 2.) has for each point: the same, more or less checkers

(which we can annotate as M = More, S = Same, L = Less)

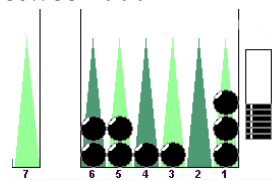
The four problems in the article are reproduced with this annotation below and a simple procedure can be followed.

### Problem 1 ..



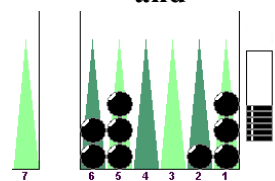
between ...

Opt 1



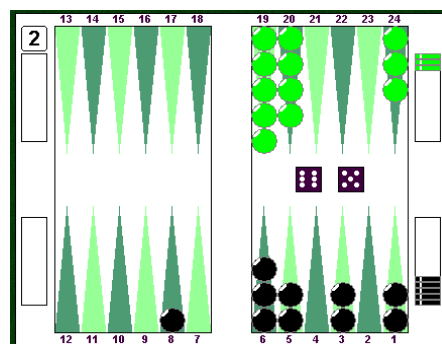
and

Opt 2



SMLLMS

### Problem 2 ..

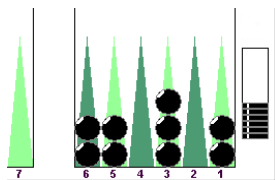


between ..



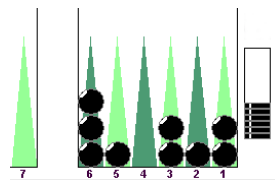
**Now you can do it @....**

Opt 1



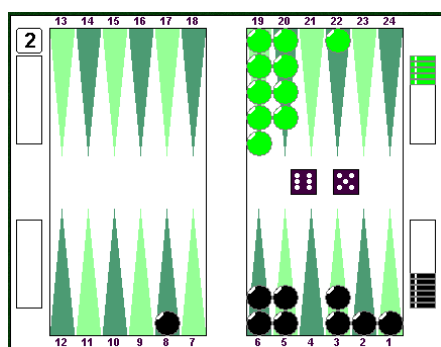
and

Opt 2



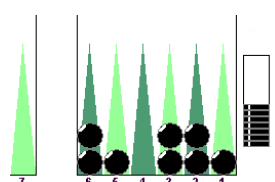
MSLSMS

Problem 3 . .



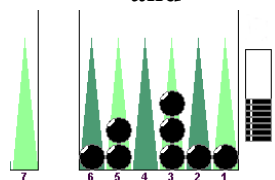
between . .

Opt 1



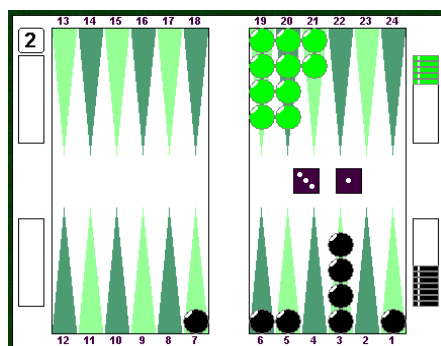
and

Opt 2



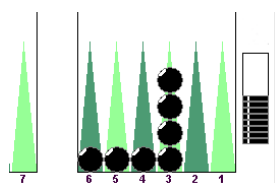
LMSMLS

Magger's Problem . .



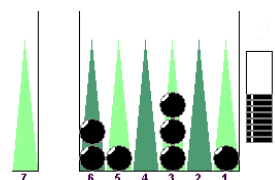
between . .

Opt 1



and

Opt 2



MSLLSM

Now our problems have reduced without maths to - Which is more even?

2,1 or 3,0

2,0 or 1,1

2,2 or 3,1

1,4 or 2,3

(Think sharing cigarettes amongst children and it is child's play!)

We have two possible arrival points for the checker coming in, and two possible departure points for a checker being borne off so four points have their checker count More or Less under the annotation above. But there are always two whose count is the same, so we can simplify - these we can ignore as they don't change the size of the standard deviation, nor do they significantly impact the skew of the distribution for the two options - see below for enhancements on Magger's Method.

We note from our annotation that, because the sum of the pips played is the same there are only two possible outcomes MLLM or LMML. We also note that the amount by which the checker count is more or less is always exactly one because we are only moving one checker from or to any of four possible positions.

So setting aside skewing problems for the time being (as does Magger initially) we can eliminate two more of these from consideration because they have the same results in different positions (2 on 4 , 1 on 3 verses 1 on 4 , 2 on 3 ) for example.

This gets our answer right for Magger's simplified method (but ignores skewed distributions) - but what more can we add???

The last case we saw a pattern of MLLM being more even but it's the wrong play - Why? This option relatively moves chips from point 4 to point 6 and point 3 down to point 1 (they have to go in different directions - symmetry! and because the unaffected points are 2 and 5 they are moving as far as possible - two points each). This loads our 1 and 6 points from our 3 and 4 points - the worse scenario because sixes are hard to clear and ones invoke wastage (that's why gaps seem to show up in the middle). In addition, the degree of unevenness is less in the sense that five checkers can be shared in more than two ways between two points (it isn't as unfair as 5-0). Scientifically - the ratio between the variance of the two distributions is close to one. Finally, with five checkers to be shared between two points with four on one point and one on the other the rollouts are skewed by the fact that the stacked point is the three, which four different doubles may clear in one roll. If the other points are ignored, (the board shown is ▷



already half cleared) this is equivalent to comparing one on 6 point and three on 3 point with four on 3 point – I know which I would rather face! However, if the unaffected point above the stacked point has a large checker count (3 plus) again the even method is best. (This finally accounts for the tiny skew).

In short – eliminate the unchanging points, pair up the M and L which have the same checker

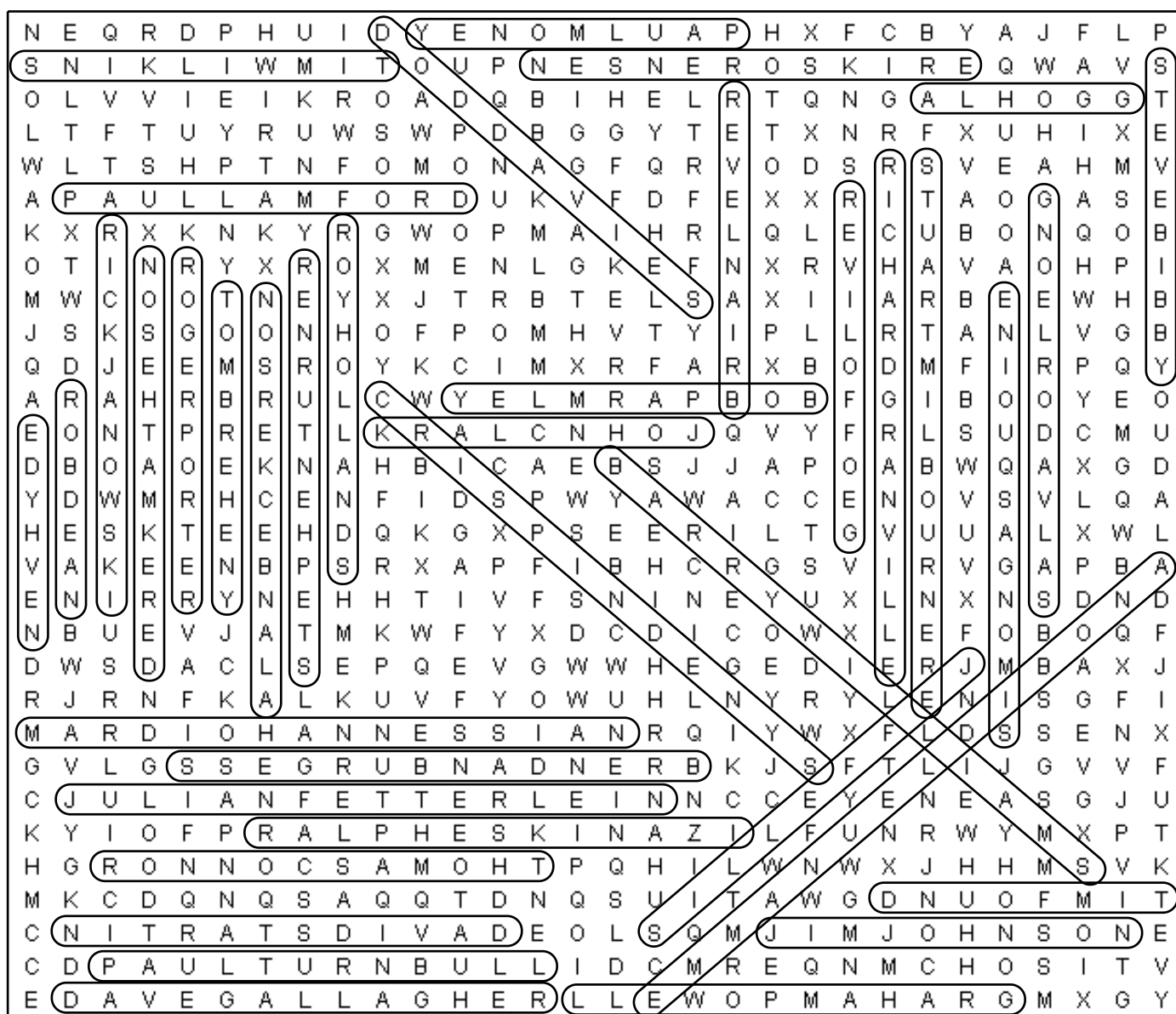
counts reversed and ignore, then decide which distribution of the other two points to be considered exhibits the fair split. This will always work unless there is a split with four men available in the lower half of the home board (or when it's the only way to win – doubles required) with the Ms on the one and six and the Ls on the three and four for the most even split.

By the way - who is Magger (Paul

Magriel?) and far more interesting who is "The" and what position does she play?

MC: This is (I hope) the first of many articles from *The Last Biba Man In*. I don't know who "Magger" is, but Paul Magriel is a good guess. As for "The", you'll have to ask Ric about her - but I'd imagine she'd prefer the reversed missionary position!

## Word Search 01 Solution

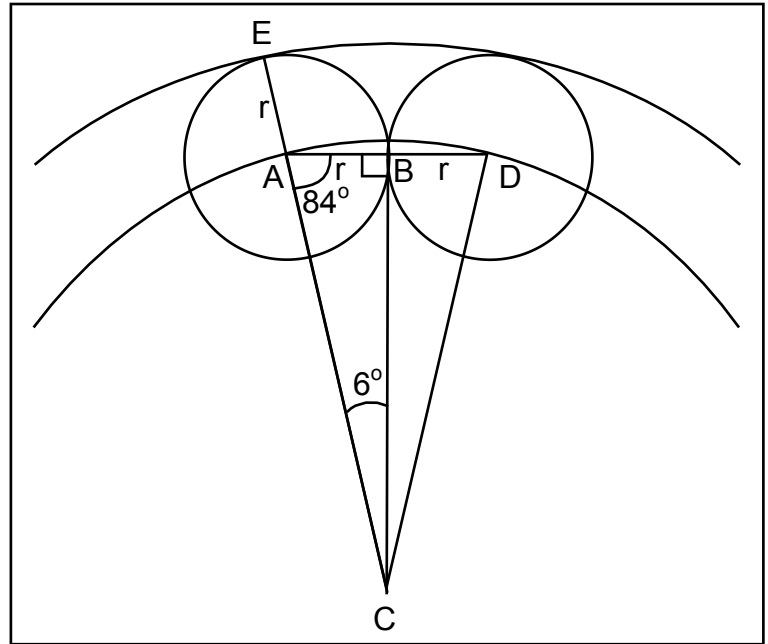


Well, the response to this was very good. Enough to include another in this issue! The winner out of the hat was Ann Pocknell, who correctly found all forty-nine winners and identified the *pretender*, John Slattery. Yes, despite his continued success, John has never won a Swiss Format tournament. Fifteen quid is winging its way to Monica by carrier pigeon.

## Let Them Eat Cake . . .

Adam Stocks (spitting cake crumbs) gives the answer

Ok, so you're dying to know the solution to this life and death sugarcraft problem, aren't you? Well it's a well-known fact that being good at maths means you haven't got a girlfriend, and instead of counting sheep to go to sleep, you calculate cubeful equities of short bearoffs. Moving on, in the diagram, the outer circle is the circumference of the cake, the inner circle passes through the centre of each checker, line CE is the radius of the cake, and  $r$  is the radius of each checker. If we find the length of line CA, we can add  $r$  ( $1.57''/2$ ) to it and double the result to find the cake diameter.



Since there are 30 checkers, angle ACB is 6 degrees ( $360/30/2$ ), therefore angle CAB is  $(180-90-6) = 84$  degrees (the angles in the triangle must add up to 180). Wanted: any age backgammon playing female with GSOH, for extended sessions of Strip- No Limit Texas Hold'em Poker (MSO rules, no experience required), and regular fun nights out on the outskirts of Coventry (all bills shared, including petrol). The Cosine of angle CAB is defined as AB divided by AC, so AC will be equal to  $AB / \text{Cosine}(84) = (1.57/2) / \text{Cosine}(84) = 7.509916203$ . Adding  $r$  to this gives line CE =  $7.509916203 + (1.57/2) = 8.294916203$ , which is half the cake diameter, so Cake Diameter = 16.590 inches, to the nearest thou.

MC: Any female readers who suddenly get the urge to play Adam at Strip-anything are the victims of some very clever subliminal advertising! Any male readers with similar urges . . . . .

Also, see Cedric Lytton's letter on page 24

## Start Here

This section is directed towards beginners and intermediates. However, the content is often of use to everyone as it contains information that will improve your game and match winning opportunities

### Double or Quits . . . continued

By Michael Crane

Following on from Bibafax No61, we continue with the extract from 'Backgammon' by Paul Magriel.

#### Chapter 22 - Doubling Theory

Doubling is one of the most important aspects of backgammon: correct doubling decisions alone will give a player an enormous advantage over his opponent. The doubling cube holds the key to being a winner or a loser. Good checker play will never compensate for serious errors of judgment in dou-

bling.

Unfortunately, there are no easy rules to guide you in all doubling decisions. As you learn to play the checkers better, you will also achieve a better understanding of the dynamics of the game. This in turn will enable you to better judge the overall potentialities of a position and evaluate your chances. Thus, there is no shortcut to doubling strategy - it can only be improved as your understanding of

the play and strategy improves.

With this in mind, we shall present a theoretical framework and some general rules for doubling. Their proper application relies heavily upon your understanding of the dynamics of the game and your ability to draw upon past experience. Two main decisions have to be made: when to double, and when to accept a double. Let's first look at the question of when to accept doubles.



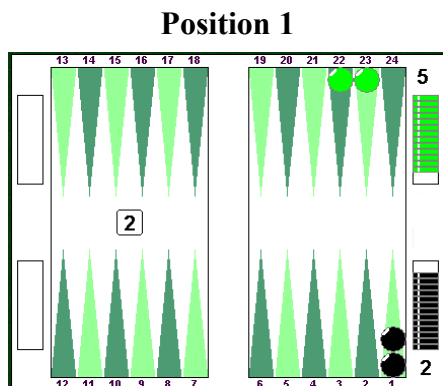
## Accepting Doubles

### The 3-to-1 Principle

In Chapter 7 we mentioned that a commonly followed guideline is to accept a double if you have better than a 25% chance of winning and reject it if you have less. Using the language of odds, this is referred to as the 3-to-1 principle: *If your opponent doubles when he is better than a 3-to-1 favorite - if he is going to win the game in question more than 75% of the time - you should pass. When his edge is less than 3-to-1, you should accept.*

To understand why, imagine your opponent is exactly a 3-to-1 favorite. This is a borderline case and, theoretically, you are indifferent about accepting or refusing. If you were to play the same position four times, passing each time the cube were turned to 2, you would lose a total of 4 points. On the other hand, if you decided to take each time, you'd lose on the average three times out of four at double the stakes for a loss of 6 units, and win one time for a gain of 2. So if you were to accept, the result would be a net loss of 4 points. You won't end up a winner, but in the long run you won't lose any more than you would have if you had passed each time.

Bear-off positions can sometimes be precisely calculated with this principle in mind.

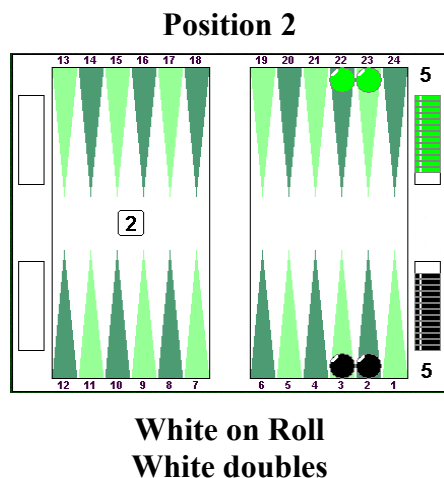


## White on Roll White doubles

For example, in Position 1, White's turn will win the game for him unless he rolls a 1. Therefore, 25 out of 36 possible combinations of the dice will take both his men off. The other 11 won't. This makes him a 25-to-11, or 2.2-to-1 favorite. Since this is less than 3 to 1, his double should be accepted. Remember that this doesn't mean you are a favorite to win - merely that you stand to lose less on the average by taking than by passing.

It is important to note that this rule applies to the person who has been doubled, not to the one who is making the offer. The doubler needn't have the odds so heavily in his favor; he can turn the cube when his possibilities are considerably less than 3 to 1. (In fact, occasionally it is correct for a person to double when he is actually an underdog.)

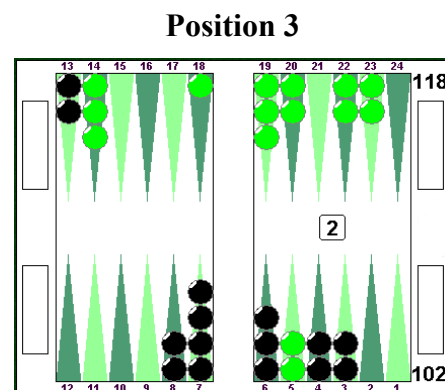
This 3-to-1 principle has some important exceptions: First, it fails to take into account the equity involved in actually owning the cube - in other words, the power of the cube and the ability to re-double at a favorable opportunity. Again we shall go to the bear-off for a concrete illustration.



In Position 2 with White on roll, it

may be calculated that White is better than a 3-to-1 favorite. In other words, Black has less than a 25% chance to win: White must first roll a 1 and then Black must not roll a 1. However, it is correct for Black to accept the double because if White does roll a 1, Black has the privilege of re-doubling (which White should accept). Whenever Black wins in such positions, he will receive enough extra to justify the gamble.

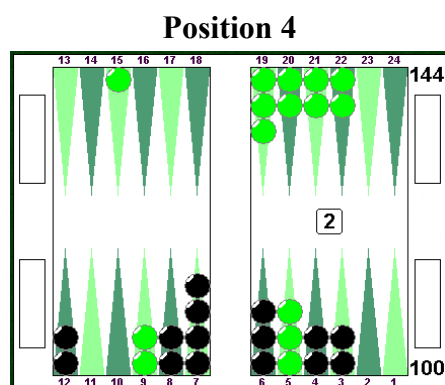
In practice, the main drawback to the 3-to-1 principle is that it is usually impossible to determine exactly what the true odds of winning are. The bear-off examples just given were cases where it was possible to figure out the exact odds (although we wouldn't recommend trying it in your head in Position 2). Let us examine some comparatively simple positions which are not pure races or bear-offs and see how we may evaluate the chances.



## Black on Roll Black doubles

In Position 3, Black doubles. In order to determine his chances, White must realize that he has two distinct winning possibilities: He may win the race, or he may be able to hit Black as he comes home. Neither possibility looks very appealing. White is 16 pips behind in the race, which is slightly higher than a permissible take (he could take with 13) in a

pure race. White's chances of hitting Black are also poor - they depend mainly on being able to throw a combination 8 (5/36) when and if Black clears his mid-point, leaving a blot. Roughly, then, Black will be hit about 10% of the time. If White had to count on either method alone (race or hit), he would pass. However, since the race is not too far from being a take, White, by adding on the extra 10% for the chance of hitting, has enough combined chances to take.



**Black on Roll  
Black doubles**

In Position 4, White is 44 pips behind. Since Black is on roll, White has virtually no chance in the race. White must therefore pin all his hopes on getting a shot and hitting Black. It looks as if Black is quite likely to give White a direct shot, which would give White better than a 25% chance to win and justify his take. However, to properly estimate White's chances, we must realize that in order to win, White needs three specific occurrences to happen: (1) Black must leave the shot, (2) White must hit it, (3) White must win the game after hitting. We shall let  $P_1$  stand for the probability (percentage of the time) that the first event occurs,  $P_2$  for the second event, and  $P_3$  for the third. Mathematically, the probability of all three occurrences happening can be shown to be the product of

each one occurring independently, i.e.,  $P_1 \times P_2 \times P_3 = P$ , the probability White wins.

Now, we may assume that occurrence (3) is close to a certainty, that is,  $P_3 = 1$ , since if Black is hit White will almost certainly win since White will be able to double Black out of the game.  $P_2$  is White's chance of hitting Black (assuming that Black leaves a shot). If Black leaves a shot on the twelve point, White will have  $18/36 = 1/2$  to hit; we therefore assume  $P_2 = 1/2$ . At first glance,  $P_1$ , the chance of White getting a shot, appears fairly high since there are only a few numbers (6-6, 6-4, 6-5, 5-5, 5-4, 4-4, 2-2, and perhaps 1-1) that allow Black to move his men off the twelve point safely. However, Black will probably have three or four rolls to get one of the numbers, so the odds are that Black will probably have to leave a direct shot only about 1 time in 3. In other words,  $P_1 = 1/3$ . Returning to our formula, then,  $P = 1/3 \times 1/2 \times 1 = 1/6$ . White's actual probability of winning is less than 25%, 50 White should pass.

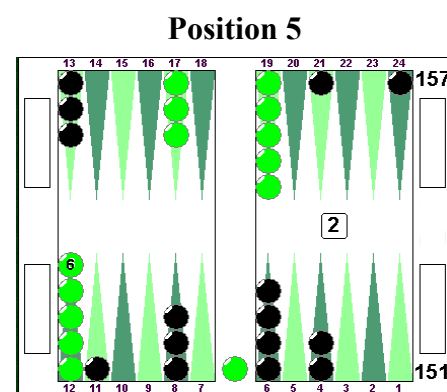
These last two positions were comparatively simple. In more complicated backgammon positions, any such calculations would be impossible. Basically, then, the 3-to-1 principle can be a helpful guideline, but mathematical odds can only help in a very limited number of cases and will never be a substitute for good general judgment.

### Gammons

Another major exception to the 3-to-1 principle is that it only applies to situations in which there is no gammon involved. When you run a serious risk of being gammoned, you generally need much more than a 25% chance of win-

ning in order to accept. In fact, in positions where you are certain to be gammoned if you lose but where your opponent is in no such danger, you need almost 50% rather than a 25% chance to win the game in order to accept a double. When you accept a gammon-prone double, you are risking three extra units, or four times the original stake.

A good part of the skill in accepting or refusing doubles lies in being able to recognize which positions are gammon-prone and which are not. In any position where you are under attack and have no anchor in your opponent's board, you risk being closed out and gammoned. Many seemingly inferior positions can be taken when you have an anchor so that you can play the game out until the very end and hope for a lucky shot without any chance of being gammoned. An anchor makes gammons harder, but by no means impossible.



**Black on Roll  
Black doubles**

Position 5 is a position where some people take a double. They argue that White is unlikely to be gammoned because even if White is closed out immediately, he will have only one man closed out. This is faulty logic for two reasons: First, White may have a second man picked up since he will probably be forced to leave other

men exposed when he comes in; second, White may not be able to move any significant distance with his other men before he is closed out and will probably be gammoned. White should drop in this position not because Black's game is so strong, but because his own game is so weak.

A word of advice: Never be afraid to decline a double. Paradoxically, the two words, "I pass," are your single most powerful weapon despite the tradition of fighting until the end and never saying "uncle." Both the ability to recognize bad doubles and the discipline to give up a particular game lead to winning backgammon.

There are many rationales and motivations for accepting bad doubles. Many players lose unnecessarily because they are unable to resist the temptation to see how the game comes out. Particularly in situations where you began a favorite and then suffered an incredible stroke of ill-luck, you may be tempted to see if you can turn the tables on your opponent. It is better to pass and begin the next game rather than compound the tragedy. Situations where you would normally accept a double but must pass because of the possibility of being gammoned are especially difficult to resist. If you consistently pass when you should do so, however, you may lose more games but will certainly win more points.

Each game must be considered on its own merits; you must try to avoid letting what happened during the last game cloud your judgment. There is no surer way to lose many points than to double prematurely and accept bad doubles to try to recoup past losses. From a theoretical viewpoint, the question of accepting doubles (and offering

them also) should be considered independently of the level of the cube. In other words, it is never theoretically correct to accept a double at the 8 level which you would pass at the 2 level or vice versa. Some players lose their perspective when a game has been doubled and re-doubled several times; they have the dangerous habit of accepting doubles they would ordinarily pass. Other players lean to the opposite extreme and pass doubles they are clearly justified in taking because they become intimidated by the possibility of losing a big game. Of course, from a practical viewpoint there may be a limit to the amount you are willing to lose in the game; nevertheless, there is only one correct theoretical decision. An important exception to this rule, as well as many others, occurs in tournament and match play where you play to reach a specific number of points.

### **Offering Doubles**

#### **Advantages**

Let us first examine the advantages of doubling. First, your opponent may pass, thus conceding the game and giving you a definite win. By forcing your opponent to pass, you eliminate whatever chance he has of winning.

The benefit of doubling is in simply increasing the stakes in a position which is favorable to you. You want to extract the maximum number of possible points for each game you win. You must make your opponent pay extra for the privilege of trying to continue to win a game at which he is at a disadvantage.

#### **Disadvantages**

The disadvantage in doubling is that you may not then double next.

Let us examine why mere possession of the cube is itself often a considerable asset. By owning the cube, you have control over the stakes for which the game is being played. If the game goes badly, you can hang on to the cube and play the game out until the end without fear of ever being re-doubled. During these games, seemingly hopeless positions may come to life. If the game goes well, you can increase your equity in the game without changing the checker position, merely by doubling. Having the sole determination of when and whether to double is therefore an important consideration. If the position of the checkers gives either player about equal opportunity to win, the player holding the cube will be at a considerable advantage.

To illustrate the importance of the cube, consider the following proposition. You allow your opponent to begin the game with 1-1, and in return you get possession of the cube. Despite the fact that 1-1 is an extremely strong opening roll, it has been found that merely shifting the cube from the middle to your side virtually compensates for this opening role.

Because ownership of the cube is important, you must avoid doubling when you have only a small advantage because you do not want to give away the cube. For this reason, when considering whether to double, it makes a difference if the cube is in the middle or if you own it. When making the first double, you do not own the cube, whereas by re-doubling you are giving away what is already yours. You should be slightly freer about doubling if the cube is in the middle and slightly more conservative if you already own the cube. The reason for this lies in the power of your opponent to re-dou-

ble. If you already own the cube and the game takes a turn for the worse, you will be able to play the game out until the end. If the cube is in the middle, you cannot prevent your opponent from doubling in a superior position.

MC: *This extract from 'Backgammon' appears with acknowledgement to the author, Paul Magriel.*

### **Backgammon by Paul Magriel**

First published in 1976, 404 pages long. This is the soft-cover reprint from 1996 of the world's most desired backgammon book. Also known as the "Bible".

Concise non-technical language, breaking down every aspect of backgammon so it's easy to understand even when discussing advanced theories of the game. The definitive backgammon book. Can turn a beginner to an expert. Well written, logically organized, with numerous diagrams and clear explanations.

A must for any player!

Purchase from:

[www.bgshop.com](http://www.bgshop.com)

Europe: \$64.75  
(plus p&p)

**Free to good home,**



**one dead horse!**

**O**K. I give up. I'm tired of flogging a dead horse and I've now decided to be rid of it! What's brought this on? I hear you ask. Well. I'll tell you.

First of all it appears that hardly any backgammon player in the UK is interested in being chauffeured from home to the airport, flown to Monte Carlo and accommodated in the Grand Hotel, and then entered into the Championship Flight of the World Championships where they'll get to meet and play against the very best players in the world, and finally being chauffeured back to the airport and flown back home -- all for a measly forty quid!

It's hard to image what possible objections players can have to winning a prize worth £2,560 for a stake of just £40. Answers please to 'bewildered' at Biba HQ.

Second. The total lack of interest in the January Hi-Rollers event that led to just two entries (Friday night) and not one more on the Saturday has convinced me that backgammon players don't want to play for money! An investment of my time and money in the event turned out to be a complete waste of my time and my money. To say I am disappointed is an understatement - I'm pissed off, would cover it.

I am grateful to the two players that did turn up - thank you, Myke Wignall and Jeff Barber. As for the rest of you, well, thanks too. At least I now know what you think of my efforts to provide extra backgammon for you. However . . .

I have been urged by Hanover to try one more time. So, I have cancelled the March event and will concentrate upon the May event. But, it will only go ahead if there is a demand and commitment from players well before the due date. If any player is interested in attending the May 23/25 event then it is essential that they contact me at Biba HQ or via [hi-rollers@backgammon-biba.co.uk](mailto:hi-rollers@backgammon-biba.co.uk) before April 23rd.

If the demand for Hi-Rollers does not increase (well beyond zero!) then it will be totally cancelled. The choice is entirely yours - if you want to play backgammon in a fantastic venue, if you want to take part in jackpots and tournaments, if you want more backgammon then support me.



# How Good Is Your Backgammon?

Asks Michael Crane

Once again we follow the 1991 Monte Carlo World Championship ¼ Final between Neil Kazaross and Michael Meyburg. We pick up the action in Game 6.

When you come to ??? cover up the text below the diagram and work out your move before continuing. At the end of the article you can check your score to see how good you are.

## Game 6

**White**  
**Kazaross : 3**

**Black**  
**Meyburg : 5**

01) 64: 24/18 13/9

02) 52: 6/1\* 24/22

Nice move, this. Moving the 2, 24/22 threatens the blot on Black's 9-point. However, this is just the start of a blot-hitting contest. In the next 10 moves checkers are in the air for nearly all of them!

62: 25/23 9/3\*

Black is forced to hit with the 6 else leave another blot on . . . but the hitting continues.

03) 61: 25/24 13/7\*

61: 25/24\* 24/18\*

04) 43: 25/21 25/22\*

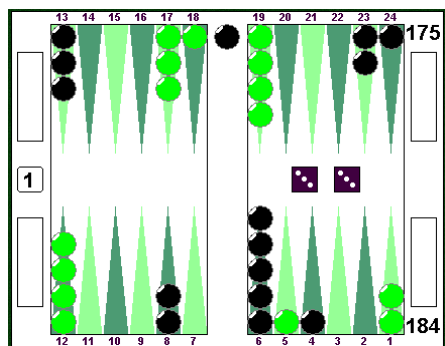
62: 25/23 13/7

05) 54: 22/18\* 18/13

41: 25/24 8/4\*

06) 65: 25/20 13/7\*

## ??? Black to roll 33



I must admit I wasn't too sure how to play this myself, but one thing I

was sure of was - how I wouldn't play it! The actual move here came out in 15th place with a massive loss of equity of 0.318 over the best move after a mini-rollout of 20 possible plays!

The favourite play with an equity of -0.060 was 25/22 23/20 8/5(2)\*. Neither side having a home board this is an attempt by Black to stop White making his 5-point. At the same time Black is threatening to make the Golden Point (Black's 5-point) or Black's bar-point.

The actual move does give away a lot of equity, but I can't see any real gain in doing so. White can easily anchor on the Black 5-point, he can hit a couple of blots; whereas Black hasn't really got a lot going for him with this move.

|                     |      |
|---------------------|------|
| 25/22 23/20 8/5(2)* | 5    |
| 25/22 13/10 8/5(2)* | 4    |
| 25/22 24/21 8/5(2)* | 3    |
| 25/22 8/5(2)* 6/3   | 1    |
| 25/22 24/18* 13/10  | -5 A |

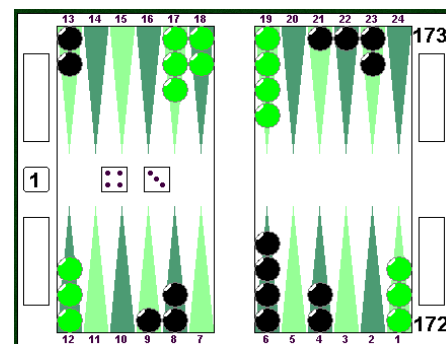
33: 25/22 24/18\* 13/10

07) 51: 25/24 20/15\* 32: 25/22 6/4

08) 61: 13/7\* 8/7 64: 25/21 22/16

09) 52: 15/8 43: 16/9

## ??? White to roll 43



A few good moves here; many of which hit (and mostly, point) in White's home board.

Candidates are: Make the 4-point.

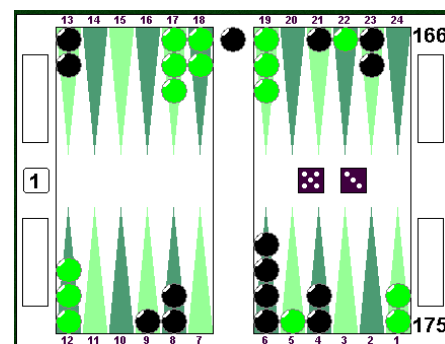
Make the 3-point. Hit both blots. Hit one blot.

I favoured making the 4-point, but Snowie reckoned on 3-ply that 24/20 6/3\* hitting loose was better. After a mini-rollout, making the 4-point was voted number one, and the actual play was relegated to 2nd place.

|            |     |
|------------|-----|
| 8/4* 7/4   | 5   |
| 24/20 6/3* | 4 A |
| 8/4* 6/3*  | 3   |
| 7/3* 6/3   | 2   |
| 8/4* 4/1   | 1   |

10) 43: 24/20 6/3\*

## ??? Black to roll 53



Well, entering off the bar narrows down the options. Is it better to make the 20-point or to hit the 22-point blot? If we do the latter the options for the 5 are limited to moving a couple of 5s; 9/4 or 21/16. If we do the former then at least we'll hold a good advanced anchor that is unlikely to be broken for some time.

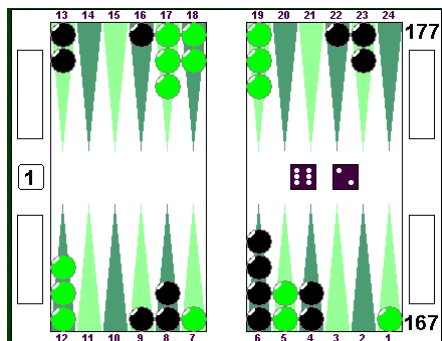
Black chose the Snowie 1st, 25/22\* 21/16. Moving 9/4 takes a checker out of play and no longer of use in making the 5-point. Making the Golden Point came out 2nd losing just 0.018 equity in the bargain; but that was my preferred move.

25/22\* 21/16 5 A

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 25/20 23/20 | 4 |
| 25/22* 9/4  | 2 |
| 250/20 8/5* | 1 |

53: 25/22\* 21/16  
11) 65: 25/20 24/18

### ??? Black to play 62



Some good plays here: Point on the bar-point blot, hit the bar-point blot, or hit both blots! What's a gal to do?

Two in the air always looks good but it leaves only 5s and 7s (and 33, 44 and 66) to cover; but is holding the 1-point really useful?

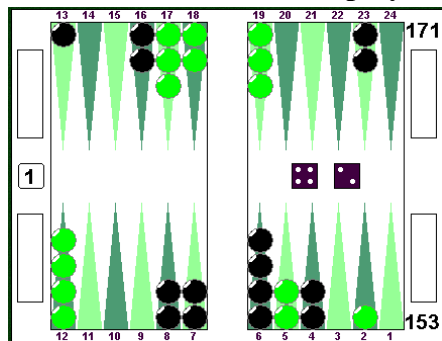
Certainly the bar-point blot has to go. The choices are make the point or hit it and cover the 16-point. Black chose to hit and to cover the 16-point thus giving him excellent outer-board control and a handy landing point for the back checkers. Being hit with a 1 from the mid-point isn't too much of a worry, not with White's home board!

There was only 0.012 equity between the actual play and making the bar-point, with two on the bar coming in at 4th.

|             |     |
|-------------|-----|
| 22/16 9/7*  | 5 A |
| 13/7* 9/7   | 4   |
| 23/21 22/16 | 3   |
| 9/7* 7/1*   | 2   |

62: 22/16 9/7\*  
12) 42: 25/23 24/20      51: 13/7  
13) 52: 20/13

### ??? Black to play 42



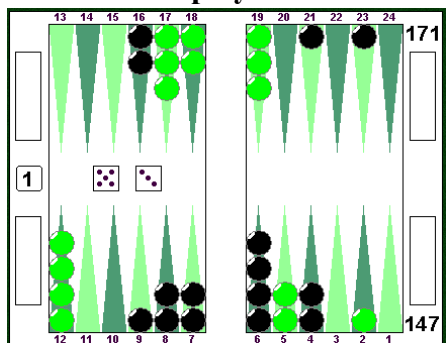
I liked the actual move here. It probably wasn't everyone's first choice because it looked a little risky, but, when looked at closely the risk is minimal. Black played 13/9 23/21.

The 4 is played to tease White off the advanced anchor, now that he (White) has lost the builder from there, to hit will mean losing the point (unless, of course, he rolls 43 or 61). The 2 threatens to either escape or perhaps make an advanced home-board anchor. Another advantage of this play is that it duplicates 4s. I do like it!

|            |     |
|------------|-----|
| 23/21 13/9 | 5 A |
| 13/7       | 4   |
| 23/21 6/2* | 3   |
| 13/11 6/2* | 2   |
| 13/9 6/4   | 1   |

42: 13/9 23/21

### ??? White to play 53



So, did you make your 3-point, or did you run out with the back checker, or did you play safe?

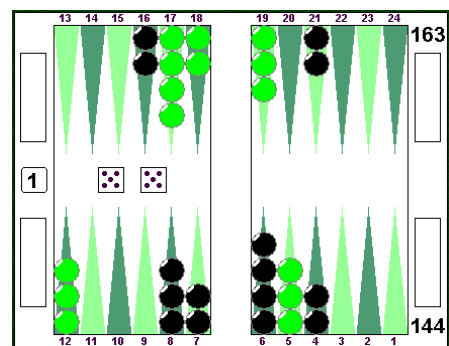
Making the 3-point isn't much use. The point you want to make next

is the 5- or at the lowest, the 4-point. Running a checker out means that the Golden Point anchor has to be broken should a blot present itself. Playing safe, 23/20 13/8, gives an extra builder on both the 20- and 8-points and still controls the Black outer-board.

|            |     |
|------------|-----|
| 23/20 13/8 | 5 A |
| 23/15      | 4   |
| 8/3 6/3    | 3   |
| 23/20 8/3  | 2   |
| 23/20 6/1  | 1   |

14) 53: 13/8 23/20    21: 23/21 9/8

### ??? White to play 55



Just what the doctor ordered. So, don't waste 20 pips in the race by making the 3-point! It's of no use to you when the race becomes level (well, nearly level) after this move. The checkers anchored on the 20-point are crying out for a large double to move them *en mass*.

|               |     |
|---------------|-----|
| 20/15(3) 8/3  | 5 A |
| 20/15(3) 13/8 | 4   |
| 20/5 8/3      | 3   |
| 20/15(3) 6/1  | 2   |
| 20/10(2)      | 1   |

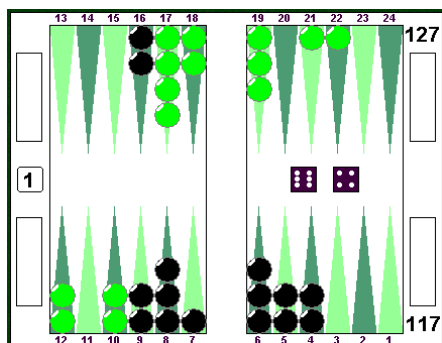
15) 55: 20/15(3) 8/3    66: 21/9(2)  
Touché! Black moves 24 pips and takes the lead by 23 pips.

16) 53: 15/10 13/10    21: 7/5 6/5  
17) 62: 10/4 10/8

Continued on the next page



### ??? Black to move 64

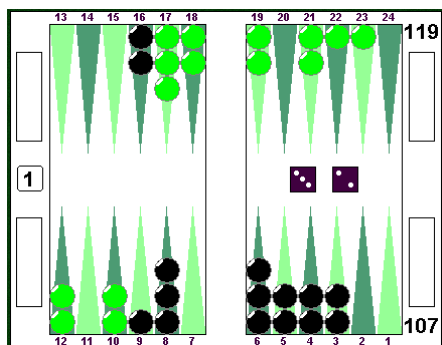


Using a 3-ply analysis Snowie placed the actual move in 12th place out of 14! This seems a huge blunder, but in reality the equity loss is just an error with -0.055. Doing a mini-rollout wouldn't make a lot of difference to the position, so the scoring for this move is:

Any move except . . . 5  
 9/3 7/6 3 A  
 8/2 5/1 2  
 7/1 6/2 1

18) 62: 8/2 6/4 64: 9/3 7/3

### ??? Black to play 32

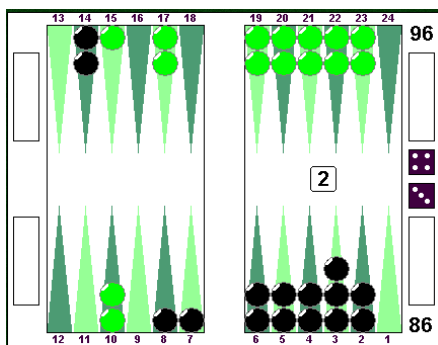


Another one where on 3-ply Black comes well down the list. But, once again the equity loss is slight. So . . .

Any of these moves . . .  
 8/5 4/2; 4/1 6/7; 5/2 3/1; 9/2 5/7;  
 8/5 3/1; 4/1 4/2; 9/6 4/2; 8/5 9/7;  
 16/11; 9/6 3/1; 4/1 8/6; 4/1 3/1; 5/2  
 8/6; 5/2 4/2; 8/5 8/6; 4/1 5/3; 9/4;  
 9/6 8/6; 8/3; 9/3 5/3; 8/5 6/4; 6/1;  
 5/2 6/4; 5/2 5/3; 6/3 4/2 all = 5  
 6/3 9/7 4 A  
 6/3 6/4 3

6/3 5/3 2  
 8/5 16/14 1  
 32: 6/3 9/7  
 19) 54: 7/2 7/3 42: 8/2  
 20) 21: 8/5 11: 16/14 16/14  
 21) 53: 13/8 13/10 42: 8/2  
 22) 21: 8/5

### ??? Black on roll Cube action?



OK, your choices are: No double.  
 Double, pass or Double, take.

The correct choice is double/take.

Double/take 5 A  
 No double 3  
 Double/pass 0

Doubles to 2

23) Takes 31: 4/1 8/7  
 24) 62: 10/4 8/6 54: 6/1 7/3  
 25) 31: 4/1 8/7 66: 14/2 14/8 7/1  
 Joker! Twenty-four pips in the  
 race puts Black 35 pips ahead.  
 Which is where he remains until  
 White concedes.

26) 43: 15/11 15/12 53: 8/0  
 27) 51: 11/5 65: 6/0 5/0  
 28) 41: 12/8 7/6 51: 5/0 1/0  
 29) 62: 8/0 42: 4/0 2/0  
 30) 65: 6/0 5/0 32: 3/0 2/0  
 31) 53: 5/0 3/0 22: 3/1(3) 2/0  
 32) 41: 4/0 1/0 33: 1/0(4)  
 Concedes Wins 2 points  
**Kazaross : 3 Meyburg : 5**

So, how do you think you fared?  
 Check out your score below.

50 Cheating again?  
 40-49 You are Michael Meyburg  
 30-39 You are Neil Kazaross  
 20-29 Hello, Mr. Average  
 10-20 Come on, keep trying  
 0-10 Board for sale!

# Cottagewebs

We are a Sussex, England based company specialising in producing high quality websites for any type of business, large and small.

We can offer a service to suit your needs, from your very first web presence - to full online shopping facilities. Or if you have an existing website which needs a professional input, you need look no further.

Phone: 01243 820565

Fax: 01243 868382

Email: [info@cottagewebs.co.uk](mailto:info@cottagewebs.co.uk)

## Letters

**John Broomfield** *faxes in:* Re: Bibafax 62. Please find attached my Word Search. Hopefully, there will be sufficient entrants for you to believe that backgammon players do have an amount of patience! Whether John Slattery would approve of your compilation, however, is something else!

Please look at page 33 of the same Bibafax. In this first column, where there is a reference to the first (on page 32) of three problems, either there should be nine checkers after the bearoff, or the diagram should only be showing a total of nine checkers prior to the bearoff.

*Well spotted, John. The publication from which the article was taken is now in the safe hands of Peter Bennet - and he confirms that I did reproduce the board correctly - the original is wrong! However, Peter points out that this doesn't affect the outcome of the solution.*

*John also pointed out on the telephone that the diagram at the top of column 3, on Page 13 of Bibafax 61, is in the wrong place. It should in fact be before White plays 65, Move 15). Sorry for any confusion this might have caused anyone. Well spotted, again.*

**Peter Bennet**, *also via the telephone informed me of another mistake! This time the Competition Comment by Chris Bray on page 22/23 shows the wrong board! This is a major blunder! It makes nonsense of Chris' comments; and for that I apologise. To redress the error I have re-done the article in full - this time with the correct board - plus another little teaser from What Colour Is The Wind?*

*With reference to 'Let Them Eat Cake' in the last Bibafax, Cedric Lytton not only sent in a diagram and calculations identical to Adams, he also adds: How can we guess such numbers unless we are good at picking Lottery numbers? If Adam's checkers had been 1.5142" diameter, his cake would have been a nice 16", much easier for his mum! (Unless I've got it wrong).*

*You? Get it wrong? No way! Not the man that baffled the world of backgammon with his stunning display of mathematics and precision dice.*

*Taking about precision dice, here's a spooky thing. This was sent in by Arthur Williams:*



*Talk about being able to palm the dice!*

**Brian Busfield** *says:* I return from abroad to find (page 50 Bibafax 61) a horrible position alleged by Tony Lee to be 'a standard Brian Busfield position.' Is he being ironic? Sarcastic? Malicious? Machievellian? Factual? If the latter I would agree that many of my brilliant plays meet with the kind of result illustrated. But I doubt that this is Tony's meaning - backgammon players are not commonly sympathetic to the woes of others, and are apt to gloat rather than commiserate.

Given the roll of course you make the two point - anything else is pusillanimous. If you have an e-mail address for Tony please send

this on, saying I look forward to meeting him again - possibly at dawn with choice of weapons.

*Methinks perhaps he had his tongue in his cheek at the time. Tony is too nice to be all of those things you thought him of being - although I won't rule out irony.*

**New member, Ron Havenhead** *emails:* Just to say how much I enjoyed the BIBA event (Jarvis, Feb.) - despite being well hammered in three or four of my matches! Much room for improvement and great incentive for me to do better in future. Internet games are OK, but over the board tournament matches are much more enjoyable and exciting.

I learned a good deal and enjoyed the atmosphere and friendliness of the players. I have also made a contact at the Manchester club and hope to play some games up there. I hope to see you again at future events.

*Thank you, Ron, for turning up to play. I am pleased you enjoyed yourself. Attending to your first Biba tournament can be a bit daunting, I know, but, overall the members are very friendly and most newbies fit in well.*

*Finally, here's what Ken Arnold has to say about the new-style Bibafax:* Thanks for the copy of Bibafax. It is impressive.

For those of you who don't know who Ken Arnold is, he is the man behind GamesGrid (see the back page). He is responsible for the biggest and best online games server there is. His list of members reads like a *Who's Who?* of backgammon. Want to play a World Champion? Join GamesGrid!



## Competition Comment - Again!

By Chris Bray

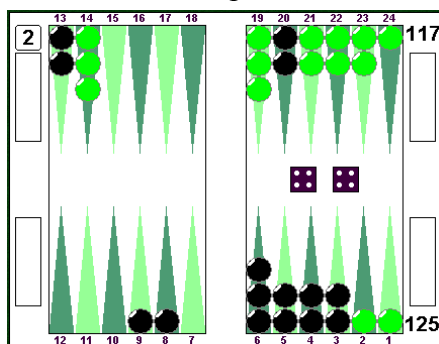
I have always thought your competition quizzes in BIBA an excellent idea. In my view the comments of the entrants are actually worth their weight in gold as it gives an insight into how players think (or don't think) about positions. As with most things in life the errors are more interesting than the right answers!

I've always found the marking system somewhat arbitrary but still entertaining! The one thing that leaves me dissatisfied is that at the end you still don't what the best move is in many of the positions. From the perspective of the quiz itself that doesn't matter as all contestants have to abide by the rules and no one gains or loses as a result. However, leaving readers not knowing what the best move is, or even worse giving them wrong information on which they will base their future play is definitely a problem. Most of the time the combination of carbon and silicon life forms combine to get to the right answer but human beings, as we know, are somewhat fallible and JellyFish 3, whilst not bad, is a little past its sell by date especially as we now have Snowie 4. JellyFish rollouts would be a distinct improvement and would be right about 95% of the time.

Occasionally the quiz throws up a position where if you are not careful you can be way off target and never know it. Position 60.5 from the last Bibafax is just such a position and it is interesting that not one of your correspondents picked the right move (neither did I when I studied it before turning to my Silicon friend) or even discussed it! JellyFish got close but was way out in its equities.

When I come across positions like this I initially run Snowie 4 on 3-ply analysis. I then take its top ten moves and do mini-rollouts. Snowie 4 is strong enough that this normally gives a fairly clear indication of the best move. However I then take the top 3 moves from the mini-rollouts and run full rollouts for 36 games and use the maximum settings running on a 2.5Ghz computer. Once that is done there is normally a very clear indication of the best move but I have learnt caution over the years. I then run several hundred additional rollouts on close or apparently close moves. Even on a fast computer this can take 24 hours but by the end 99% of the time I am comfortable with the results.

Thus it was with position 60.5.



**11 Point Match**  
**White 4 Black 1**  
**Black to play 44**

Those quiz entrants that advocated aggression here were absolutely correct. Black has given the cube away, is behind the match and has an anchor. The position absolutely cries out for aggression. What is not articulated clearly in any of the responses is how gammon percentages (both for and against) can have a huge impact on move selection. In fact far too often in the quiz responses we see people worrying about guarding against losing instead of talking about how they are going to win and how many gammons they are going to win in the process. This negative

attitude is far too prevalent in the game – particularly in chouettes where people play for more money than they can afford! You will find that the best players in the world at backgammon (or indeed any other game or sport) enter the fray with very strongly positive attitudes. This reflects the old but very true adage, “Winners are not afraid of losing, but losers are afraid of winning.”

So what is the correct play in 60.5? It should be obvious by now that the only moves that qualify are those that hit two blots and we should (and can) quickly discard any switching plays – this is no time for half measures. This leaves us a choice between (a) 13/1\*, 6/2\* and (b) 9/1\*, 6/2\*, 8/4. Over the board the choice would be difficult indeed and I admire Tony Lee's bold choice of (a). However Snowie's detailed analysis shows this losing too many gammons whilst winning only a few more.

(b) is the clear winner, so much so that any other move is not only a blunder but actually a gross blunder. The two moves awarded 10 points in the quiz both give away more than 0.1 points of equity – a quite staggering figure. Note that Jellyfish nearly got the right move on its 3-ply analysis – a testament to its durability. Sadly, nearly right doesn't win matches and money. However much work it takes we should strive first to get to the right play, then analyse why it is the right play and then add it to our mental model of the game for re-use the next time we face a similar situation. Snowie 5 may change our views again but for the moment I'll back Snowie 4's rollout analysis as being the nearest we can get to “right”.

*MC: Righted!*

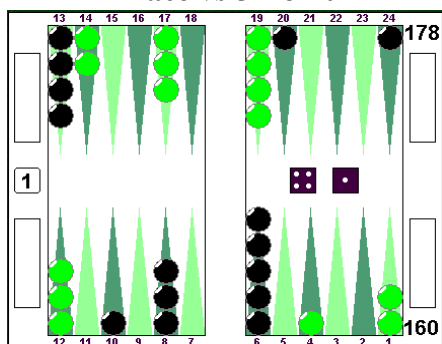


# What Colour is the Wind

By Chris Bray



## Race vs 5-Point



A few weeks ago we revisited Barclay Cooke's old adage "it's never wrong to make the 5-point". Here's another dilemma from Robertie's "501 Essential Backgammon Problems". Should black with a 41 to play take the security of his opponent's 5-point with (a) 24/20, 10/9 or make his 9-point with (b) 13/9, 10/9?

Barclay would have had no doubts and made his opponent's 5-point.

When I looked at the problem I also instinctively made the 5-point. Robertie and our silicon friend Snowie disagree, both making the 9-point. A roll-out with Snowie shows a significant equity difference between the two plays. Why should that be?



The answer lies in the fact that backgammon is fundamentally a race. In this position black has got off to a good start as he will lead by 23 pips after the roll. (a) gives white 19 numbers to hit black's blot and equalise the race. In contrast (b) leaves white 10 numbers to make his own 5-point, at the same time putting black on the bar. Admittedly these 10 numbers

do more damage to black's position than the 19 hitting numbers in the other variation. However it would seem that nearly doubling the opponent's good numbers is giving too much away and black should take the risks associated with playing (b).

It is problems such as this which can fundamentally alter your thinking about the game and lead to a re-assessment of your backgammon model. The lessons of such a problem can be re-applied many times to similar positions thus leading to an incremental improvement in your game. Thus is progress made.

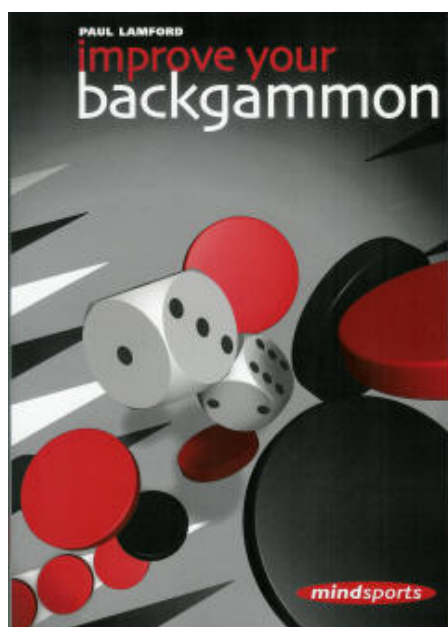
# What Colour is the Wind?



By Chris Bray

£14 + £3.50 p&p

Available from Biba



## Improve Your Backgammon

By Paul Lamford

Following the success of his first, *Everyman Mind Sports* book, **Starting Out In Backgammon**, Paul has now moved up the skill level and come out with his latest offering, **Improve Your Backgammon**.



To get the best from this latest tome you are assumed to have read and understood the first one. If you have not, or you have not learnt the basics of backgammon this new book will probably be over your head in parts.

Simon Gasquoine and Stefanie Rohan, good friends of Paul, both helped him with **Improve Your Backgammon**. Simon is attributed with writing much of Part Two and Stefanie researched the internet sites and computer software. An extract from the book appears on the following page.

# Improve Your Backgammon

By Paul Lamford

## Chapter Six : Special Scores

### Double Match Point

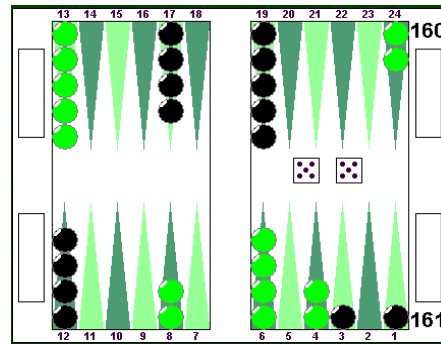
We start with what might seem to be the simplest of scorelines. No complexities here, surely? The game is of course cubeless, so that eliminates a great swathe of possible errors for a start. All we have to do is win! Gammons and backgammons no longer count. But this simplification creates a form of backgammon to which we're otherwise unaccustomed. There's the rub

The term DMP shouldn't be restricted to that final match game in which each side is a single point from victory. Once the score and cube value determine that the present game must be the last of the match (0-0 in a 7-point match with the cube on 8, say), we have effectively reached DMP.

What can we say in general terms about checker play at DMP? Those checker plays and overall game plans which involve taking the extra risks justified when gammons count should be downgraded. Wimpy running plays rate higher than normal. Gonzo blitzes rate lower. Slotting with an opening 2-1 and 5-1 beats splitting. But it isn't so easy to establish a neat set of general rules. For instance: advanced anchors no longer ward off gammons, but though the ace-point, we are always told, 'keeps us in the game until the end', making the golden anchor may actually give us the more flexible game.

To take just one example of these perplexities: what is the DMP play here?

(next column)



### 5 Point match Both players on 4 wins White to play 55

For money there's nothing to think about: the double whammy  $8/3*(2)$   $6/1*(2)$  is best by the length of the street. At DMP, however, the more positional  $13/3*(2)$  might be played by those aware that gammons are of no value at this score; but the all-out blitz play is still best (although by a far shorter distance), as it is simply the best way to win the game. There are many examples of DMP decisions throughout the book.

Remember that the DMP game is the most important game of the match. Why? Because both players have all their match equity on the line. We may play abominably in the nervous opening game of our 25-point World Championship final match, but without fatal consequences - unless the cube changes hands several times, the amount of match equity we are liable to lose is a single figure percentage, probably a low one at that. But at DMP the equity loss incurred by every little error is hugely magnified. It is therefore vital at this (and other late scores) to be prepared to slow down and play the most accurate backgammon we can muster

### 2-away / 2-away

No prizes for knowing the doubling point at this score. Whenever

both sides need the same number of points, the doubling point is clearly 50%.

What about the take point? After a double/take we are effectively playing for the match at DMP; our take point is therefore our winning chance if we were instead to pass and trail Crawford 2-away 1-away, which we calculated above to be worth about 31%.

The orthodoxy propounded by most backgammon literature today is that the game should always finish with the cube on 2. If one player doesn't double, the other one will and if both players can contrive not to lose their markets by pointlessly waiting too long, their cubes should always be taken. The logical conclusion reached is that there's really nothing to be lost at 2-away / 2-away from doubling at the first legal opportunity.

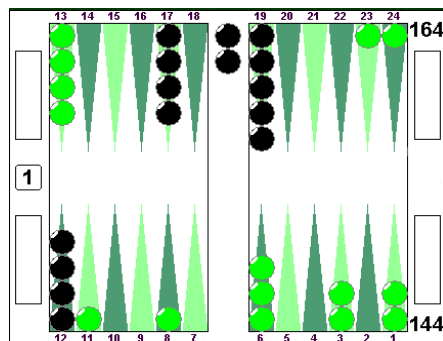
But readers who've played any amount of match backgammon should smell a rat here. This reasoning would be fine if we could assume perfect knowledge and cube handling by our opponents. But in fact we have here to consider the complicating effects of skill difference on match decisions. Even if our opponents do know the take point here, an immediate double on our part still deprives them (and, admittedly, us too!) of the opportunity to make a cube error

And suppose our opponents don't know the take point? Now if the game goes against us, we're gaining big time if the cube has stayed in the centre. We can hope to get an extended 'free ride' during which we may manage to turn the game around whilst our opponents close in on what they may very

likely be unable to distinguish from a normal money cube. Unless they get really lucky and play on successfully for an undoubled gammon, we can expect them to overshoot the far end of the doubling window in the process and wind up doubling us not in but out, leaving us still alive, gratefully clinging on to our 2-away / 1-away 31% match equity. And having established their misconceptions about the take point, if we can turn the game around, we can delay our own double, knowing that they will (if they're consistent) be taking too late.

Of course our opponents may know all this. They may well be thinking: what does he know about this scoreline? Does he know how high the take point is?

A sudden reversal of fortune (a blitz 5-5 followed by a dance), and one player may wind up playing for an undoubled match-winning gammon.



**5 Point match  
Both players on 3 wins  
White on roll**

For example, the position above occurred after Black danced on her second move - the Poirrots among you will have no difficulty recon-

structing the game. White correctly didn't double before his last roll, and it is now right for him to play on (rather than cash the game - Black should pass if doubled) as his gammon wins comfortably exceed his losses. This position shows that the theorists are not even right in theory!

So, of all scorelines, this is the one where received theory and good practice should diverge most drastically. The conventional advice must be stood on its head: never double at the first opportunity at this score. When you are 2-away / 2-away, knowing what your opponents know and what they think you know are invaluable. So get second-guessing!

## Improve Your Backgammon

*Improve Your Backgammon* is the ideal book for those looking to advance from the basics and build a better understanding of the intricacies of backgammon. In this book, ex-British champion Paul Lamford follows on from his earlier book, *Starting Out in Backgammon*, to develop further the strategies needed to master this fascinating game.

- ☐ Revolutionary layout allows readers to absorb the key ideas
- ☐ Numerous test positions to help you gauge your progress
- ☐ Explains how strong backgammon players deal with typical problems

## Paul Lamford - Author

Paul Lamford was the 1993 British Backgammon champion and is currently rated number one in the UK. He is the author of several books on backgammon and has published many other books on chess, bridge, gambling and puzzles and is a frequent writer of articles for the Bibafax backgammon magazine. And other publications.

A member of Biba since November 1991, Paul is one of the most successful backgammon players in the UK.

He has given many well-attended seminars at Biba tournaments and is (hopefully) going to be at the At-A-Glance British Open in April where he will give a seminar based upon *Improve Your Backgammon*.

## Purchasing Details

To launch the release of Paul's latest backgammon book, Biba is offering the book post free whilst stocks last - anywhere in the world!

The book retails at £12.99 (\$22.00, €20.00). Payment can be via personal cheque payable to M Crane, or via PalPay online (ask for details).



**ZX81**  
**Half man -**  
**Hal machine -**  
**Halfwit!**



I've been having talks with TB and GWB over the sponsorship of their latest war. I have been retained as an agent for a few major oil companies to see if I can get a new name for the war. The first, *Gulf War*, went ahead without any discussion with any oil company except Gulf - a coup there for them - and this, quite rightly, upset the other potential sponsors.

So, this time I've been trying to get it recognised as the Texaco War, or the Mobil War, or the Shell War. Strangely enough there are no plans to call it the Q8 War! Mind you, I think we're on a hiding to nothing - I hear that Gulf have upped their sponsorship deal and that it will inevitably be once a gain, The Gulf War.

Colon Powell is still livid with the Frogs. "Hell, we bailed the pussies out back in WW2. That was a mistake," he ranted as we met over an espresso in a small French bistro, "and now they are in bed with the Krauts! What the hell is going on in this ungrateful continent?" I pulled my beret over my head and kept a low profile.

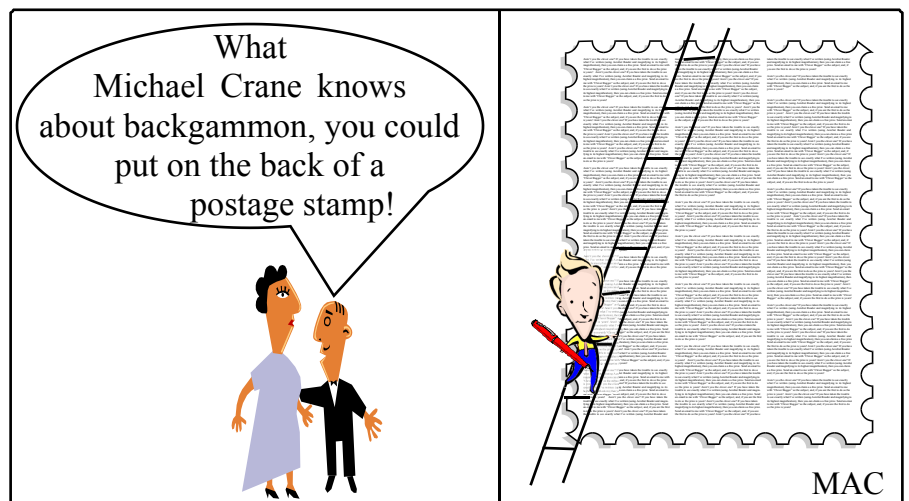
Michael Portcullis is making waves for I'm Drunken Stiff over the leadership of the Tory Party. He's rocking the boat; and there's not a whore in sight to grab hold of should it capsize. I'd often wondered about his sexuality so I asked him outright the other day. "M.P." I said, "Are you or are you not a homeowner?" He didn't reply, he just slapped me across the face and left the sauna!

Now that Clare Shirt has threatened to resign if there *is* a war, I am afraid war is inevitable!

Oh well, back to the world of backgammon. Remember I asked for tee-shirt designs about four years ago, well, I've narrowed it down to a couple. I can't decide so I'm asking the nation to decide. Which one should win? Votes please via email to [zx81@youknowwhereiam](mailto:zx81@youknowwhereiam). Or via Biba HQ to arrive before the end of April.

Send in a cartoon on a backgammon theme (see MAC's effort) and the the best one judged by me will win a tenner. Send them in in any format you want and make sure they arrive before April 15th to stand any chance of winning the money.

## The Nation Decides



## Competition No. 4 6101-06 - The Answers

By Richard Granville

*Before we start this article here is a comment from Cedric Lytton:*

Reading Richard Granville's and the solvers' comments on Competition 2002 No.3 (Bibafax 61, pages 42-54), for several problems striking differences appear between the resulting ranking orders and those of Jellyfish. This and Roy Hollands's article on page 14 prompted me to tabulate, for each problem and each solver, the equity losses according to Jellyfish - thus for problem 60.01 Jellyfish has 0.136 and Bob Young's play has 0.118, so the equity loss is 0.018 as shown.

Adding the six numbers in each column gives the bottom row and the total equity loss on the set by each solver.

We observe that ranking the solvers by total equity loss gives a rather different order. Peter Bennet is now first (instead of 7th), Rodney Lighton 2nd (instead of bottom), and Tony Lee 3rd. (Rodney's excellent decision reported on page 41 confirmed his expert status.)

Richard Granville is absolutely within his rights to mark generally according to majority verdict, but these findings do suggest that (contrary to politicians' rules and opinion polls) majorities are not always right.

Of course, to mark according to computer ratings would put solvers on their honour not to use a

computer before posting their entries. In any case, computers may not be the near-perfect players of repute; indeed, it seems likely that algorithms for selecting a move and for assessing equity are in their relative infancy (certainly compared to chess algorithms). Consider: with 21 possible rolls, even narrowing the choice of moves to 2 per turn, a code considering 3 successive turns by each side (6 turns altogether) with  $21 \times 2 = 42$  positions each turn already gives a tree of  $42^6$  or about 5.5 billion positions to store and assess, probably near the limit of available storage on home computers. Thus there must be a substantial Monte Carlo element in the algorithm, even when a 1296 roll-out is done. These are cubeless situations; the presence of the cube, and maybe match scores, complicates the calculations even further.

Incidentally, as a former computer programmer, I'd love to know the algorithm change in Snowie 4 that has altered its choice on opening 64 from 24/14 to my own preference 24/18, 13/9: (reference: Chris Bray, The Independent, 7/1.2/02).

Cedric Lytton

*While I have considerable sympathy with the views expressed, I think that it is important to consider the objectives of the competition. I believe that the primary objective of the competition is not to find the best move for each problem. If so, it would be much simpler to present the problems to Snowie, or perhaps to Jellyfish as well for comparison purposes.*

*No, the primary objective of the competition is surely to persuade a number of people to think about each problem, choose their preferred move and write some words justifying it. All answers, whether "right" or "wrong" are valuable and instructive, with the positive result of increasing the amount of technical material in Bibafax. Several people have spoken to me at tournaments saying how much they enjoy reading the different points of view.*

*Of course one needs to have a marking scheme by which to judge the competition, but this should not persuade people to choose the "perfect" move (as determined by Snowie or Jellyfish) as opposed to the "natural" move (which many players would choose at the table). Comments on the latter kind of*

| Problem 60n | JellyFish | Bob Young | Tim Wilkins | Brian Lever | Tony Lee | Richard Biddle | Don Hatt | Peter Bennet | Julian Hayward | Mark Oram | Rodney Lighton |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|-------------|----------|----------------|----------|--------------|----------------|-----------|----------------|
| 1           | 0.136     | 0.018     | 0.035       | 0.035       | 0.018    | 0.018          | 0.035    | 0.000        | 0.110          | 0.035     | 0.000          |
| 2           | -0.262    | 0.054     | 0.040       | 0.062       | 0.000    | 0.062          | 0.047    | 0.000        | 0.390          | 0.085     | 0.047          |
| 3           | 0.508     | 0.019     | 0.019       | 0.019       | 0.008    | 0.008          | 0.008    | 0.019        | 0.000          | 0.096     | 0.000          |
| 4           | -0.010    | 0.000     | 0.013       | 0.000       | 0.000    | 0.000          | 0.051    | 0.013        | 0.000          | 0.013     | 0.008          |
| 5           | 0.733     | 0.008     | 0.008       | 0.007       | 0.033    | 0.000          | 0.083    | 0.007        | 0.083          | 0.103     | 0.000          |
| 6           | 0.042     | 0.017     | 0.017       | 0.017       | 0.017    | 0.000          | 0.017    | 0.000        | 0.000          | 0.017     | 0.000          |
| Totals =    |           | 0.116     | 0.132       | 0.140       | 0.076    | 0.088          | 0.241    | 0.039        | 0.583          | 0.349     | 0.055          |



move are likely to be more helpful to readers than those on the former.

*I note that Chris Bray has written a follow-up article. I strongly approve of this and would like to encourage him to do the same in future. This could include some or all of:*

*Snowie equities;  
detailed discussion of one or two problems, preferably picking up some of the competitors' comments;  
input from other players (competitors or not) relating to the problems.*

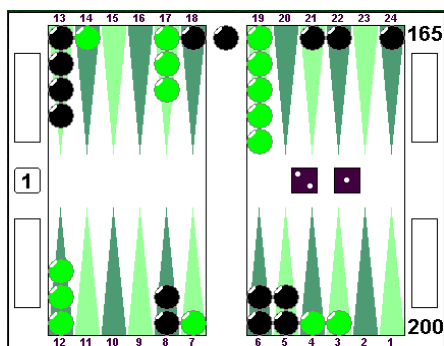
*To summarise, I would like to run the competition as before, but would like to encourage subsequent discussions of the problems.*

*Richard Granville.*

In Bibafax 61, all BIBA members were invited to enter the fourth 2002 competition, comprising 6 problems. This article contains the competitors' answers, together with selected comments.

Marks have been awarded primarily according to the number of votes. In some cases, they are also influenced by the Jellyfish equities, as well as my own view.

### Problem 61.1



**11 point match**  
**White 0 Black 0**  
**Black to play 21**

*This is an early game position in which both sides have been hit. What should Black be trying to achieve here?*

**Tim Wilkins:** A pretty useless roll. Both sides have a lot of blots and Black has a slightly better board, but hitting on the 7 point gives up the useful 8 point and doesn't put White under much pressure. Even though White does not yet have much of a board, if Black leaves too many blots he could easily get hit twice and find himself struggling if he throws a poor re-entry number. I choose 25/23 22/21 as it's the best anchor Black can make (which may come in useful) and it's just about the only constructive thing Black can do.

*Achieving one constructive aim with a pretty useless roll is surely a reasonable outcome. Agreeing, but with rather less self-confidence:*

**Rodney Lighton:** Warning to all readers: I had the lowest score in the last two competitions, so my comments may be worth skipping! Coming in with the 2 and hitting on the bar point is gross – the blots on the 7 and 8 points are too weak and playing for a back game at his stage is far too negative. So it is a question of shuffling the back checkers to best effect. Coming in with the 2 and moving up to the 20-point aims for the best anchor, but leaves Black open to a blitz especially if White throws 3-3 or 5-5 next. I would play 25/23, 22/21 and grab the next best anchor before something nasty happens. A 4-point anchor game will be playable for a long time.

*This seems to add some sound points to the analysis of the position. Going back to Rodney's initial comment, one of the main*

*objectives of this competition is to present different views of the same position. It's often the case that a competitor will choose a reasonable, but unpopular move and receive a poor mark despite providing sound justification of the move. In any case, Rodney, you're by no means bottom this time.*

*What about some alternatives?*

**Bob Young:** 13/11 25/24. Behind in the race but not sunk. The front checkers are in the right place, so hitting from the 8-point, with only 32 return hits! somewhere on the board seems counter-productive. I could get an anchor on the 22 or 23 point, but everything looks a bit "wooden" from there. I prefer to keep it all a bit more dynamic, bringing another checker down from the mid-point, which puts more pressure on the next vital point (the bar point) in my blockade. Anchoring in White's home board does nothing for this cause. The checker placed there duplicates White's fours nicely, 6-4, 4-1, 4-2 all play well elsewhere, and 13/11 leaves everything more fluid for me. If hit, then no great problem, I just fall a bit further behind, leave all my pieces up front where I want them, and a chance to rearrange my rear pieces according to future rolls. (Admittedly double 6 five times in a row doesn't do much for rearranging).

*It's true that 13/11 creates flexibility in Black's forward position and anchoring on the 1-point provides some long-term security, but Black's position seems just too loose to me. While being hit once should cause Black no great problem, Tim is right to say that being hit two or three times could provide White with the initiative to develop his position while Black is*



*re-entering his men.*

*What about the “gross” or “counter-productive” play alluded to above?*

**Mark Oram:** 25/23 8/7\*. We definitely need an anchor, to improve our development and/or prevent White from improving his. We can certainly seize any one of three points in White’s inner board (our 24, 23 or 21 points) and this addresses our first need. One weakness of this approach seems to be that if we do so, White then has pretty much a free hand to improve. His ones, fours and sixes hit on his bar, and his twos, threes and fives allow him to clean up a blot or two.

How about 25/23 8/7\*? This passes up our anchor for this roll, but keeps White off balance. Since he needs to re-enter our board, he cannot (excluding doubles) hit us more than once or make a second inner board point. True, four of his six doubles are particularly strong for him: 1-1 and 2-2 hit two men or close a second point; 3-3 and 4-4 hit two men and close a second point. (White has two ‘dream rolls’, but then again twice this number of rolls keep him out altogether!) If White enters and hits us elsewhere, we then have one man facing a one point board, with every chance to secure our anchor this time, without having given White the chance to improve.

Maybe the gammon threat with the second play is, on reflection, too big here to justify such a loose play, but I’ll stick with my answer since making a wrong decision firmly at least seems better than wavering and not sticking to one at all. It would be instructive to see a full break-down of the roll-outs (win/loss/g/bg etc) for the two

plays: any chance of this please?

*This again seems rather a loose play, but White’s double 1s to 4s will probably be good for him, no matter what we do, while if White is unable to re-enter Black can probably launch a powerful attack. I’ll leave Michael to do a roll-out, but the standard level 7 Jellyfish equities put this move in third place.*

*If you think this is loose, then what about this?*

**Brian Busfield:** 25/24 6/4\*. Obvious; make the 1 point for security (in it to the end - Bob Watschell). Hitting on 4 point duplicates/triplicates 8’s and 4’s. Flexibility and flair! Preparing for blitzing, priming, holding game, back game. Also cube provocation. Prop anybody?

*Brian has managed to achieve the feat of selecting the 12<sup>th</sup> best out of 13 legal plays, with the 13<sup>th</sup> only 0.001 behind. Why do you want to provoke a cube when you could play solidly and have a negative equity of only .097? Bob and Mark have shown plenty enough flair on this position for me.*

*For the majority:*

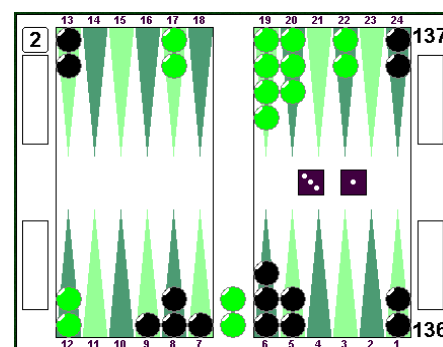
**Richard Biddle:** It is important for Black to get that forward anchor on the 21-point which will form the basis of the game to come. Black will want to encourage contact but it is not worth hitting any White blots yet. I can’t see a more important strategy than making the anchor so I’ll plump for **25/23 22/21**.

**Peter Bennet:** 25/23 22/21. It cannot be right to sacrifice the 8-point in order to hit on the bar point, leaving seven (!) blots in the process. Making a high anchor

and working on the offence later looks like the prudent approach.

**Brian Lever:** Only 2 real choices in this very loose position - hit or anchor. Hitting with 8/7 destroys much of what structure Black has and would be recommended only for those passionate about their back games or anxious to run down time on a clock! So anchor it is, and go for the highest : play **25/23 22/21**.

### Problem 61.2



**11 point match**  
**White 7 Black 7**  
**Black to play 31**

*It’s good to see the opponent with two men on the bar, but Black often has to be careful in such positions. Sounding a note of caution:*

**Brian Lever:** The blitz is on; bring ammo to the front but watch out for your rear! Black would like maximum coverage for the remaining open points in his inner board. Playing 8/5 or 13/10 with the 3 is therefore indicated - probably 13/10 because it brings another checker to the scene of the action rather than shuffling one already there. Black now has 6 spares - 2 for each of his 3 open points if he rolls very well! Then the other half of the roll allows a split of the rear checkers 24/23, avoiding a potential crunch particularly on 5s. Crunching in blitz positions is a regular hazard as the attacker concentrates all his en-



ergy on his home board neglecting his stragglers. A different play might be indicated if White had no board to speak of; as it is, his board is temporarily as strong as Black's.

*Coming to a similar conclusion:*

**Brian Busfield:** 8/5 24/23. Maximum point-making blitz potential.

*Both Brians seem to think that their move provides the best chance to make new points. I can't see any difference between them myself, and indeed Jellyfish provides the unusual conclusion that both moves are equally good.*

*There is of course another way to split the back men:*

**Richard Biddle:** Black needs to chase the gammon. I can see the argument for playing safely with 13/9, as this leaves no hits and begins to build a five-point prime. However, despite the 44 and 22 joker, I prefer **24/21 6/5**. This still leaves plenty of builders in the outfield to blitz, keeps the mid-point and begins to bring the back men home or lay the foundation for an anchor on the 4-point.

*Sometimes it's right to consider defence and escape as well as the blitz. If White can re-enter his men quickly (but not with a 2-2 or 4-4!) then starting the 4-point could provide Black with some much-needed security. This is in fact Jellyfish's preferred move, though only by an insignificant margin of 0.007. Unfortunately for Richard, nobody else voted for it.*

*Another lone voice:*

**Tim Wilkins:** Black has a chance of a doubled gammon, which would win the match, if he can

close White out. The back men can move with 1s, 3s and 6s so there doesn't seem to be much imminent danger of them getting stuck. Several good looking options:

8/5 24/23 maximising point-making rolls

9/5 brings an extra man to bear on the 2 point and doesn't create so many blots

13/9 brings another man into the attack

The last of these doesn't seem to gain enough to be my choice. I'm tempted by the first (especially given the match score), but it just looks a bit too blotty. Therefore I play 9/5.

*Sorry Tim, this seems rather a "nothing" sort of move to me. Black should be trying to develop his position in one or more ways.*

*The final unique vote:*

**Mark Oram:** 13/10 6/5. A blitz on the cards: a doubled gammon to give us four points and the match at this sitting: what could be better? With this in mind we should aim all our fire-power at our home board: 13/10 seems a must. We now have five builders for our 4-point, four for our 3-point and three for our 2-point. Since we cannot improve this already impressive array, either 8/7 or 6/5 leap to mind as a way to maintain this distribution. I choose 6/5 for the following two reasons. Firstly, we still block White's 4-4 salvation roll, and secondly, *any* double for us (after 6/5) allows us to close a fourth point: this is not true with 8/7 (where both 6-6 and 1-1 fail to grab us the fourth point).

*This seems much more constructive to me and I'm not sure why its equity is so low. Perhaps Black*

*has more chance to get stuck with his back men than some of us think. Rodney picks up on this point by siding with Brian Lever:*

**Rodney Lighton:** We're in blitz mode, get as many diversified builders into place and don't forget to split the back checkers to give them maximum chance of getting out once we have got White stuck on the bar (if things go well). Therefore 13/10, 24/23 is my choice.

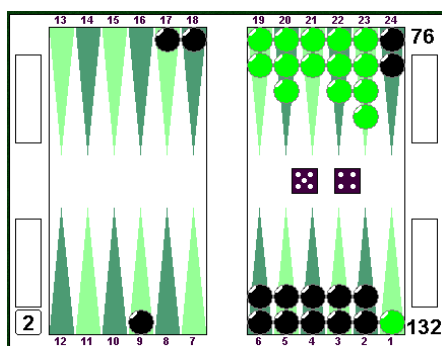
*The remaining panellists vote alongside Brian Busfield and thus provide the top-scoring move:*

**Bob Young:** 8/5 24/23. Gammons for the match, so the move providing the maximum firepower aiming at the remaining three open home board points seems to be the way to go. A checker could be brought down from the mid-point, but this only gives direct cover to the 4-point, whereas 8/5 provides cover for all the remaining open points. This gives 58 hitting rolls out of 36 possible, as opposed to only 44 if playing from the mid point! Everyone knows that the more above absolute certainty you can get, the better. That just leaves the other dice to think about, and that doesn't take too long. Nothing can be done to improve the current distribution of checkers, so split the back anchor and curse a little when he rolls 4-4.

**Peter Bennet:** 8/5 24/23. A gammon win is much more valuable than usual as it wins the match exactly. Of course a gammon loss is rather costly too, but that doesn't mean that Black should worry unduly about White's double four joker. Diversification of builders to point on White wherever he enters is top priority, and diversification of the back checkers to prepare to escape is also

desirable. My play caters to both requirements.

### Problem 61.3



**11 point match**  
**White 0 Black 0**  
**Black to play 54**

*What's the best way to contain White's straggler?*

**Brian Busfield:** 18/13 9/5. Best coverage of outer boards and a man to hit inside.

*Analysing in more detail but coming to the same conclusion:*

**Rodney Lighton:** Black needs to maximise coverage of the outfield in case White throws a six. Moving 18/13, 18/14 or 17/13 covers the 12 to 8 points well. Moving the checker on the 9-point in seems like a good idea as well to protect against 6-2, and to threaten White's checker on the 1-point, which Black may have to hit loose later. 18/13, 9/5 gives slightly better coverage of the outfield than 17/13, 9/4 so I choose the former.

*Providing yet more analysis:*

**Peter Bennet:** 18/13 9/5. I found this to be the hardest problem of the set. The tendency is to concentrate on what happens when White escapes and not prepare sufficiently for the more likely scenario where he stays put and probably cracks his board. Possible choices are:

- 1 18/9 – Completely safe and converts 1-1, 2-2 and 4-4 into jokers if White doesn't escape. Outfield coverage is poor.
- 2 18/13 17/13 – Blocks White's 6-6 and converts his own 6-6, 3-3, 2-2 and 6-2 into jokers (although 6-6 is pretty good anyway). Outfield coverage is better but Black gets hit on White's 6-2.
- 3 17/12 18/14 – Great outfield coverage.... Unless White hits or rolls 6-6 (five of his eleven sixes). Only generates 5-2 as a joker.
- 4 18/13 9/5 – Pretty good outfield coverage and only gets hit on 6-6, which is great for White anyway unless Black makes play 2. Although 4-4 is the only joker generated, any four will allow Black to hit loose next time. White's board will probably have already cracked by then but, even if it hasn't, several of his entering numbers will do the job.
- 5 17/12 9/5, 17/13 18/3 and 18/14 9/4 are all obviously inferior to 18/13 8/4 and therefore do not merit further consideration.

The choice for me boiled down to 18/13 17/13 or 18/13 9/5 and the latter play, giving fours to hit, got my vote.

*Although Peter quite rightly says that Black must be prepared for White not to move his back man, it is important for Black to cater for White's rolling a six next move. Other moves may be better in this respect:*

**Bob Young:** 18/13 17/13. Blocking 6-6 seems the obvious choice, but White is twice as likely to roll 6-2, which is pretty certain to be a winning roll. The natural reaction is to therefore bring in the checker from the 9-point to protect it and to act as a direct shot on White's

remaining rear checker. But would I use it to hit? Probably not until White's home board is seriously collapsed, and that won't happen for certain in the next roll. I also have no checkers in the vicinity to cover that hitting blot, so it would be a problem for several rolls to come. I want also to give myself good future rolls, and playing 18/9 covering my front blot is not so good for the next roll, only 1-1 and 2-2 look seriously good. Similarly, 18/14 17/12 doesn't achieve too much. I think in the end I am opting for a compromise. The blocking mid point move achieves three things, it blocks the 6-6, it makes 6-2, 6-6, 3-3 and 2-2 good rolls for me next roll, and it gives me at least one direct shot if White runs with the six.

*The drawback of this move is of course the lack of firepower against White's blot if it is not moved, although many of White's throws would cause his board to weaken. Picking up on this possibility:*

**Richard Biddle:** A very good case can be made for playing 18/13 9/5. It leaves only one hit with double sixes for White. It also gives Black a direct shot on the White blot. However, if we think about Black's strategy, this should be to force White to break up his own home board and possibly pick up another White checker. This can be best achieved by making the bar-point, if hit in the process, we are still in the game. Playing **18/13 17/13** makes full use of all our checkers. It blocks the 6-6 joker and it gives us two builders bearing down on the bar-point or the escaping White checker. My move is **18/13 17/13**.

*Jellyfish rates this move a close second. This one is a little further behind:*

**Mark Oram:** 18/9. We clearly need to do all we can to stop White's last man getting home: we will not be winning any races in this position. He will be forced to crunch in he fails to roll a six (or 5-5) which can only help us distribute our back men more effectively to catch his fleeing checker. As only 5-4 or 3-3 this time force him to leave us a shot, we cannot realistically plan to send a second man back just yet.

However, if he does roll his six, we have only three men to try to contain him. 18/13 17/13 blocks 66 his potential game winning 6-6 (he may well have problems still in his bear-off, given the advanced position of the spares in his inner board, but would we wish to rely solely on this chance?) but leaves his 6-2 as a crushing roll. In other words we save one game in 36 at the expense of two games in 36.

18/9 blocks his 6-2, and with any 6 roll (except 6-3) his back man will come within range of a direct shot. 6-3 itself leaves us a 7-shot, but if we are forced to rely on a combination roll this is as good as any. We give him back his 6-6 of course, but this is only one roll in 36, against the 2/36 times he rolls 6-2.

*18/9 is clearly a very reasonable move, but this seems to provide less coverage than 18/13 17/13 or 18/13 9/5.*

*The remaining competitors chose the latter of these moves:*

**Tim Wilkins:** Black wants to maximise shots if White throws a 6, and shots at the 1 point if White doesn't throw a 6. 13 of White's rolls force him to break a point, in which case Black will definitely want to hit White off the 1 point. Options are:

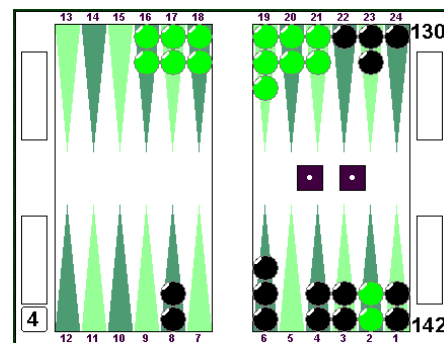
18/13 17/13 blocks 66, double shot if White throws 61, single shot if 63,64,65  
 18/9 double shot if 61,62, single if 64,65, indirect if 63  
 17/8 no double shots, indirect if 63,64, single if 65  
 17/13 9/4 single if 61,62,63,64  
 18/13 9/5 single if 61,62,63,64,65

17/8 looks clearly worst. Only 18/13 17/13 blocks 66, but gives White 62 as a near game winner. I choose 18/13 9/5, which leaves only 66 as an immediate winner and brings a man to bear on the 1 point.

**Brian Lever:** White is about to crack if he doesn't roll a 6; though he isn't favourite to do so, Black has to put himself in a position to recapture the White checker just in case. That indicates moving to the mid-point with either the 4 or 5. Black can also take advantage of the probability of White's weakening of his board next roll by getting into a position to attack. The obvious move is with the checker on the 9 point, which isn't covering much of the outer board anyway. For maximum flexibility, that checker shouldn't move too far in, so use the 4 to play 9/5, the 5 to play 18/13.

Another reasonable play would be 18/13, 17/13 blocking 6-6; however, that leaves the checker on the 9 point hanging around doing very little - and it's twice as likely White will throw a hitting 6-2 than 6-6.

#### Problem 61.4



#### 11 point match White 4 Black 4 Black to play 11

*This is obviously a poor position for Black and some competitors concentrate upon avoiding the gammon:*

**Mark Oram:** 24/22 23/22(2). Neither of us can afford to lose a gammon here (when can anyone?), and with our complete lack of timing hoping for a back game seems foolhardy. Holding on to two points in White's inner board, then, seems like the wrong approach: we can rule out 24/22 8/7(2) in other words.

Instead, we need to try and do what we can to escape our back men, and try and control the outfield to hinder the progress of his stragglers. By piling everyone on his 3-point we are poised to jump as soon as he breaks his prime, and furthermore we now allow him to do this as we have made his fours and sixes playable. White will need threes and fives to escape, but with only nine men to block him we cannot hold more than four points in front of his anchor.

**This space could be selling  
 your product or tournament  
 for just £15 for one issue**



White therefore will always have two numbers on the dice to retrieve his back men, no matter what we do. Finally, by holding our 8-point we give White slight pause for thought with 3-1, 5-1, 3-2 and 3-3. Not all the time, but occasionally players will subsequently roll the nightmare 1-1!

**Peter Bennet:** 24/22 23/22(2). Attempting to play this position as a back game is a recipe for losing a gammon and the match. Black should just get all his men on the launch pad ready to run. This is much better for saving the gammon and gives him some real winning chances in the priming battle if White finds one of his fourteen cracking numbers (all combinations of 6,4,2,1 except 4-1).

*As Mark and Peter rightly point out, piling the men on White's 3-point doesn't preclude saving the game – also Black might throw 6-6 soon and be able to escape and threaten White's back men as they return home.*

*If Black want to keep his back men diversified, this is one option:*

**Bob Young:** 24//22 6/4. Primes are all about timing, and low numbers are good for that cause, and, with a double, then the opportunity for rearranging the checkers to suit the situation arises. White will run with any three or five next roll, and I can do nothing to block those good rolls, without giving alternative good rolls. Leaving checkers as blots on any of those gaps will only increase my risk of being gammoned, and at this match score, with the cube at the level that it is, I don't want to put the match beyond reach if future rolls don't go my way. Leaving the checkers on the 8-point means that I can't play 6s except 6-1, slowing my entry into my home

board down. I could place all my checkers on the 22-point waiting for White to throw one of his breaking rolls, but I would only have one point of exit. If I make a double anchor, then White has more rolls that break his prime, while leaving more chances of blots, e.g. 6-4, 5-5, and I have more numbers that allow me to escape one checker, as I have more than one point of departure. So, fingers crossed, hope for a non-escaping roll from White next roll, and the game is still far from over.

**Richard Biddle:** I think if we can make two points in White's home board, we give ourselves the best fighting chance for the rest of the game. It may force a split in White's prime leaving escape an easier task and or possible hits. If we keep the points on our side of the board, it means unless White throws a 5 or 3, they may face difficult move next time. My move is **24/22 6/4**.

*Jellyfish actually prefers this move, but only by a tiny 0.006 margin. Two other ways of keeping two points in White's home board were suggested:*

**Brian Lever:** Black is in double trouble here losing the game and possibly the match. His only real chances come when he can force White to break his prime. This requires a careful analysis of White's potential breaking rolls for each of several plausible plays, among them my favourites - 24/22 8/7(2) and 24/22 23/22(2).

The former gives good blocking/breaking potential on 14 numbers, the latter on 15.

Double anchors are useful for generating shots, causing primes to break in the middle and providing an option of which anchor to play

from, whereas the pile-em up approach has as its primary objective getting out and round fast without leaving a loose blot around behind to attack.

I'd say that 24/22 8/7(2) is the play more likely to lose a gammon but it is the more compact play and the more likely to win; so It's my choice - that's why I lose a lot of gammons!

*The Jellyfish equities suggest that the extra gammons are more significant that the extra wins, although this move is still 4<sup>th</sup> highest. Further down the rankings:*

**Brian Busfield:** 23/22 8/7(2) 6/5. Looks like trouble. Can't get MUCH worse and something good MIGHT happen! Good backgammon concepts!!

*This could provide even more wins that the other Brian's move, but probably even more gammon losses as well.*

*For the majority:*

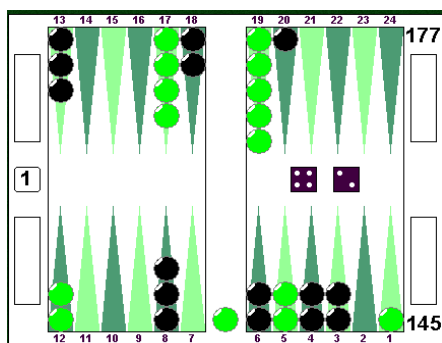
**Rodney Lighton:** It is clear to make the 22-point to get to the edge of the prime. Black's best chance to win this game is when White cannot leap out next turn and has to break the prime. The big question is should we pile all 4 checkers on the 22-point or keep two back on the 23-point? I prefer to keep two back on the 23-point as it gives White fewer places to dump checkers behind the anchor and gives us more shot numbers if White is forced to leave a blot. With the other two ones I play 6/4 rather than 8/7(2) because 3-3 is then poor for White.

**Tim Wilkins:** Black needs White to break his prime before he can escape his back men. If White



gets his back men out Black's board is likely to collapse before he gets a shot. Best option looks to be 24/22, which would force White to break his bar point with most 6s. After 24/22 it would be a mistake to move 8/7(2), which gives White somewhere to play his 6s, so I think it's a choice between 6/5(2) and 6/4. I prefer 24/22 6/4 as it doesn't leave a blot (which might reduce Black's chances of being gammoned slightly) and makes 6-4 very bad for White.

### Problem 61.5



**11 point match**  
**White 2 Black 2**  
**Black to play 42**

*One competitor thinks that Black is well ahead in this position:*

**Richard Biddle:** I probably would have doubled before this roll. Black's strategy, ahead in the race, needs to bring his checkers home as quickly and as safely as possible, yet still maintain a board that will cause problems for White. I think it is still worth holding the White bar-point in order to cover the loose checker home safely, so I would definitely move 20/16. One could keep on going, but I think it will create more problems for White if left there and I would play the dull 8/6. I feel any other move carries too much risk. My move is **20/16 8/6**.

*While Black is well ahead in the race and has the better board, there is no way that this position is*

*good enough for a double prior to this roll. 4-2 is an adequate roll and our equity is no more than .417. Furthermore, White's anchor on his "golden point" means that we have no big market losers. Richard's pedestrian (though sound) move surely reinforces this assessment of the situation.*

*Richard's move attracts some support in preference to other suggestions:*

**Brian Lever:** Black is well ahead in the race with a stronger board and should be thinking of heading home now, whilst he can do so with relative impunity. That argues for moving the rearmost checkers - either 20/14 or 20/16 18/16 or 20/16 8/6 appear to fit the bill. They all seem reasonable plays; I would choose the last of them if only because I like to have a spare or 2 on my 6 point!

*Two competitors plump for the first of Brian's suggested alternatives:*

**Brian Busfield:** 20/14. Simple! And probably wrong.

*Simplicity is often a virtue. Providing more justification:*

**Mark Oram:** 20/14. We don't want to keep White's 5-point slot- ted with 1-1 hanging over us, so we should get this man moving. Where to? 20/18 13/9 looks possible: we would however strip our mid-point and possibly have the man on our 9-point sent back for no hugely obvious benefit, unless the loss of White's golden point would be enough compensation for us. 20/16 18/16 is another option. This move would give us fine coverage of our outfield, as any White man heading to our 10- or 11-points would face a double shot. We would of course leave

behind a man on White's bar point vulnerable to two numbers. Of these, his ones are duplicated on this roll and his sixes force him to cede his mid-point.

20/14 follows a very similar theme. Although we would still have to safety our blot next roll we are only exposed to a single number from White i.e. a two; again one which is duplicated, or which forces him to lose his mid-point if we are unable to find our lone man a home. Finally, we still keep our bar-point anchor as a lifeline for our blot if the worst should happen.

*There was only one vote for Brian's second alternative:*

**Peter Bennet:** 20/16 18/16. With his big racing lead Black should be thinking about disengagement. Both 20/14 and 20/16 8/6 are reasonable, but I think Black should take the opportunity to break his anchor while White is on the bar.

*I've seen the 16-point described as the "Bulgarian anchor". While it appears to provide an uneasy compromise between full contact from the opponent's bar-point and running home, it still provides effective coverage of the area around the mid-points. It's certainly a good choice in this position.*

*Two competitors chose a more positional type of move:*

**Bob Young:** 13/7. Lots of options, but the issue is resolved in my mind by simply looking at my goals in this situation. I need to block White in, and placing a checker on the bar point is fighting for the next important point on the board. At a time when White has no home board, and I have no re entry problems, and White is on

the bar is as good a time as I could wish for to steal this point. If hit, re-enter and try again.

**Tim Wilkins:** Black has a better board and a White man on the bar, but White has the 5 point which will keep him in the game for a long time. This looks as though it may come down to a holding game with Black trying to clear his mid-point while White holds the 5 point. Black's best option would be to try to give himself some landing spots, so I choose 13/7 to try to make the bar point.

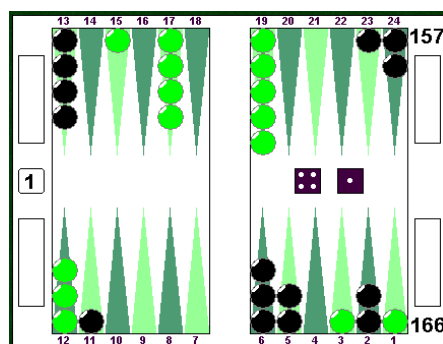
*I don't agree with either of these analyses. Why does Bob think that he can block White in when he has the golden point? Why doesn't Tim clear the mid-point while he has the chance if he thinks that this is the main issue? I much prefer the final choice:*

**Rodney Lighton:** Black is well ahead in the race for the only time in this set of problems, this suggests playing safe. The only totally safe move is 8/4, 20/18. This looks wrong though. Black is unlikely to get away without leaving any blots while getting round and playing behind the anchor with 8/4 is anti-thematic. While White has a checker on the bar I prefer to play 13/9, 20/18, White should be reluctant to abandon the anchor to hit with a 4-2 or 4-1, only a 5-4 hits safely.

*While I would probably have chosen 20/14 or 20/16 8/6 at the table, I can see the merits of this move. Black leaves only one blot which White might decide not to hit in any case.*

**Hi-Rollers**  
**You know you**  
**want it!**

## Problem 61.6



**11 point match**  
**White 0 Black 0**  
**Black to play 41**

*Another early position with several different possible approaches:*

**Bob Young:** 24/20 24/23. I don't like making the 23-point anchor, but it's just a temporary anchor with a view to making the golden point later. I could hit, but with no nearby helpers, this looks a waste of five pips and one checker. I could play 24/20 23/22 duplicating fives and threes everywhere, but at this match score (joke!, but it shows I noticed it), with no anchor at all, it could suddenly become a good platform for a blitz for White. I want to keep the checker on the 11-point well back to provide good outfield cover, there is no merit in placing it on the bar point as it will just get clobbered three quarters of the time. The high stacked mid point will only bring checkers into direct range if used with this roll, so they will have to be utilised better in future rolls. The remaining viable option is to place a checker on the White bar point. Whilst not a bad option, in this case it will give White too much of a gain if rolling one of the pointing rolls, it will close a point, send me back, and still leave an anchor way back at home base. All in all a poor roll, but still a very close race and I have a stronger home board should the opportunity arise to take advantage of it.

*This move seems to provide a good balance between development and security. A slight variant of this choice:*

**Tim Wilkins:** Black has the better board and more men back, so bold play is indicated. The best alternatives I can see are:

24/23 24/20, hoping either to make the 5 point or to hit White's outer table blot.

24/20 11/10, similar but bearing on Black's 4 point also.

13/8, hoping either to make that point or to hit the 3-point blot.

13/9 11/10, variation of the above.

I prefer 24/20 as the 5 point would be a good one to make, Black has less to lose by being hit there and more to gain if he can return-hit White. I'm not sure there's much between the first 2 moves, but I'll go for 24/20 11/10 as I think Black can risk not having an anchor and it puts the man on the 11 point in a more useful place.

*Tim has one supporter:*

**Rodney Lighton:** Black badly needs an advanced anchor here, the only sensible four is 24/20, the problem is what to do with the one. 23/22 leaves Black with twos to cover on the 11 and 20 points. 11/10 leaves Black with threes to cover on the 10 and 20 points. So not much difference there. However, 11/10 gives extra cover for the 4-point so this looks marginally better, despite giving White more shots at the outfield blot.

*Both Tim and Rodney prefer the greater options resulting from 11/10 to the stability provided by 24/23. Two competitors opt for a completely different approach:*

**Mark Oram:** 6/1\*. As in 61.01, we need an advanced anchor and



we need to keep White off balance, lest his point making potential be fully realized. We cannot take an advanced anchor this time, but we can hit White in our board. White then needs ones, threes or fours to re-enter: numbers that play very smoothly for him to make his offensive points. We welcome our man being sent back to improve our chances of grabbing his 4- or 5-points, and we have a superior board if he wishes to engage us in a blot-hitting contest. Finally, there seems to be little appeal in any of the other ways to play this 4-1, unless slotting his bar point (with the idea to prevent him hitting us *and* making an inner board point) can be played. I still prefer the hitting play however!

**Peter Bennet:** 6/1\*. I instinctively wanted to play 23/18 here: to try for the bar anchor, to generate return shots if White hits, and to distract White from either making an inside point or escaping a back man. However, 6/1\* is very tempting considering Black is behind in the race and has the stronger board. White fans a quarter of the time and, unless he rolls an appropriate double, the hit prevents him from making an inside point. Black may even pick up White's other outfield blot. On the downside, covers for the ace point are a long way off. However, being hit back is not too serious while White's board remains undeveloped.

*loose hit. I'd be tempted to play this way myself, but perhaps one of the quieter moves is sounder.*

*One competitor could find only one move:*

**Brian Busfield:** 23/18. Not very exciting but what else?

*For the second point, see above. As for the first point, there's often nothing wrong with steering clear of excitement (Brian could have won the competition had he done so on problems 1 and 4). Jellyfish rates this as the best move, but as nobody else voted for it, I can't award more than 4 points. It clearly provides a very safe way to seek a reasonable anchor.*

*In the end, there were two supporters for Bob's safe way to seek the best anchor:*

**Richard Biddle:** So early in the game, there are many moves available led by different strategies depending on which part of the board you are trying to take control of. Black has most of the board covered except for White's outer board. Moving up to the 20-point deals with this and may offer a forward anchor later. It also focuses White on this point. It could be argued that Black should park on the White bar-point, as Black would rather be hit and pointed on there than on the golden point. But White has no home board; Black can afford a little risk to get the better point. My move is **24/20 24/23**.

**Brian Lever:** Not a very inspiring roll; Black has the better board but perhaps not for long, so it seems clear that he must mobilise the troops and head for anchor territory - play 24/20 with the 4 and look for the 1. How about 23/22 (too loose); or 11/10 - aiming at highest available point in home board; or 24/23 (consolidating). Actually the spare on the 11 point would be more readily employed in an outfield blocking operation in conjunction with the spare checkers on the midpoint and may as well stay where he is, relatively out of harm's way, so 24/23 it is.

*Once again, nobody managed to score ten points on more than four of the problems. Congratulations to Tim Wilkins for finishing just in front with a score of 51. Once again, I would like to thank all the competitors for taking the time and trouble to enter the competition.*

*Most of the competitors produced material worthy of the "best presentation" prize, but after due consideration I have awarded this to Mark Oram for his painstaking analysis, even though this was occasionally wide of the mark.*

*So, it's £20 for Tim Wilkins, £5 for Mark Oram, and the annual winner of the fifty quid is Brian Lever. Well done to these three and many thanks to the panelists who gave us an insight into their backgammon thinking.*

*Two very different reasons for the*

*(charts on the next page)*

| competitor     | 61.1        | 62.1        | 63.1        | 64.1             | 65.1        | 66.1        | score |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------|
| Tim Wilkins    | 25/23 22/21 | 9/5         | 18/13 9/5   | 24/22 6/4        | 13/7        | 24/20 11/10 | 51    |
| Brian Lever    | 25/23 22/21 | 13/10 24/23 | 18/13 9/5   | 24/22 8/7(2)     | 20/16 8/6   | 24/20 24/23 | 50    |
| Richard Biddle | 25/23 22/21 | 24/21 6/5   | 18/13 17/13 | 24/22 6/4        | 20/16 8/6   | 24/20 24/23 | 49    |
| Rodney Lighton | 25/23 22/21 | 13/10 24/23 | 18/13 9/5   | 24/22 6/4        | 13/9 20/18  | 24/20 11/10 | 49    |
| Bob Young      | 25/24 13/11 | 8/5 24/23   | 18/13 17/13 | 24/22 6/4        | 13/7        | 24/20 24/23 | 48    |
| Peter Bennet   | 25/23 22/21 | 8/5 24/23   | 18/13 9/5   | 24/22 23/22(2)   | 20/16 18/16 | 6/1*        | 47    |
| Brian Busfield | 25/24 6/4*  | 8/5 24/23   | 18/13 9/5   | 23/22 8/7(2) 6/5 | 20/14       | 23/18       | 40    |
| Mark Oram      | 25/23 8/7*  | 13/10 6/5   | 18/9        | 24/22 23/22(2)   | 20/14       | 6/1*        | 32    |





| Competition 2002 Final Totals |          |      |  |  |
|-------------------------------|----------|------|--|--|
|                               | Scores   | Tot. |  |  |
| Brian Lever                   | 50 53 59 | 162  |  |  |
| Bob Young                     | 48 52 52 | 152  |  |  |
| Richard Biddle                | 47 49 52 | 148  |  |  |
| Don Hatt                      | 45 48 54 | 147  |  |  |
| Peter Bennet                  | 43 47 53 | 143  |  |  |
| Rodney Lighton                | 39 49 50 | 138  |  |  |

| Jellyfish equities (level 7) |    |        |       |       |
|------------------------------|----|--------|-------|-------|
| <b>61.1:</b>                 | 1  | -0.097 | 25/23 | 22/21 |
|                              | 2  | -0.116 |       | 25/22 |
|                              | 3  | -0.128 | 25/23 | 8/7*  |
|                              | 4  | -0.140 | 25/23 | 24/23 |
|                              | 5  | -0.143 | 25/24 | 13/11 |
|                              | 12 | -0.377 | 25/24 | 6/4*  |
| <b>61.2:</b>                 | 1  | 0.363  | 24/21 | 6/5   |
|                              | 2  | 0.356  | 8/5   | 24/23 |
|                              | 3  | 0.356  | 13/10 | 24/23 |
|                              | 4  | 0.346  | 24/21 | 8/7   |
|                              | 5  | 0.335  | 24/21 | 24/23 |
|                              | 6  | 0.316  |       | 13/9  |
|                              | 7  | 0.312  | 24/21 | 9/8   |
|                              | 8  | 0.311  | 13/10 | 6/5   |
|                              | 9  | 0.304  | 13/10 | 8/7   |
|                              | 10 | 0.296  |       | 9/5   |

| Jellyfish equities (level 7) |    |        |       |          |
|------------------------------|----|--------|-------|----------|
| <b>61.3:</b>                 | 1  | 0.057  | 18/3  | 9/5      |
|                              | 2  | 0.045  | 18/13 | 17/13    |
|                              | 3  | 0.029  | 9/4   | 18/14    |
|                              | 4  | 0.022  | 9/4   | 17/13    |
|                              | 5  | 0.014  |       | 18/9     |
| <b>61.4:</b>                 | 1  | -0.841 | 24/22 | 6/4      |
|                              | 2  | -0.847 | 24/22 | 23/22(2) |
|                              | 3  | -0.884 | 24/22 | 6/5(2)   |
|                              | 4  | -0.893 | 24/22 | 8/7(2)   |
|                              | 10 | -0.972 | 23/22 | 8/7(2)   |
|                              |    |        | 6/5   |          |
| <b>61.5:</b>                 | 1  | 0.417  | 20/16 | 8/6      |
|                              | 2  | 0.413  | 13/9  | 8/6      |
|                              | 3  | 0.410  |       | 20/14    |
|                              | 4  | 0.410  | 20/16 | 18/16    |
|                              | 5  | 0.408  | 13/9  | 20/18    |
|                              | 6  | 0.407  | 18/14 | 18/16    |
|                              | 7  | 0.406  | 18/14 | 8/6      |
|                              | 8  | 0.403  | 20/16 | 13/11    |
|                              | 9  | 0.378  |       | 13/7     |
| <b>61.6:</b>                 | 1  | -0.048 |       | 23/18    |
|                              | 2  | -0.050 | 24/20 | 11/10    |
|                              | 3  | -0.054 | 24/20 | 24/23    |
|                              | 4  | -0.056 | 24/20 | 23/22    |
|                              | 5  | -0.062 |       | 6/1*     |

| No.         | move              | score     |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------|
| <b>61.1</b> | 25/23 22/21       | <b>10</b> |
|             | 25/23 8/7*        | <b>3</b>  |
|             | 25/24 6/4*        | <b>3</b>  |
|             | 25/23 13/11       | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>61.2</b> | 8/5 24/23         | <b>10</b> |
|             | 13/10 24/23       | <b>7</b>  |
|             | 13/10 6/5         | <b>4</b>  |
|             | 24/21 6/5         | <b>4</b>  |
|             | 9/5               | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>61.3</b> | 18/13 9/5         | <b>10</b> |
|             | 18/13 17/13       | <b>5</b>  |
|             | 18/9              | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>61.4</b> | 24/22 6/4         | <b>10</b> |
|             | 24/22 23/22 23/22 | <b>7</b>  |
|             | 23/22 8/7 8/7 6/5 | <b>3</b>  |
|             | 24/22 8/7 8/7     | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>61.5</b> | 20/14             | <b>10</b> |
|             | 13/7              | <b>10</b> |
|             | 20/16 8/6         | <b>10</b> |
|             | 13/9 20/18        | <b>5</b>  |
|             | 20/16 18/16       | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>61.6</b> | 24/20 24/23       | <b>10</b> |
|             | 24/20 11/10       | <b>7</b>  |
|             | 6/1*              | <b>7</b>  |
|             | 23/18             | <b>4</b>  |

Here is a list of the Competitions; when they will appear, questions and answers. Competition 2003 is made up of 62n, 64n and 66n, it starts in January 2003 and ends in January 2004 when the next one starts.

| Fax | Month | Questions | Answers |
|-----|-------|-----------|---------|
| 62  | Jan   | 6201-06   | -       |
| 63  | Mar   | -         | 6101-06 |
| 64  | May   | 6401-06   | 6201-06 |
| 65  | Jul   | -         | -       |
| 66  | Sep   | 6601-06   | 6401-06 |
| 67  | Nov   | -         | -       |
| 68  | Jan   | 6801-06   | 6601-06 |
| 69  | Mar   | -         | -       |
| 70  | May   | 7001-06   | 6801-06 |
| 71  | Jul   | -         | -       |
| 72  | Sep   | 7201-06   | 7001-06 |
| 73  | Nov   | -         | -       |
| 74  | Jan   | 7401-06   | 7201-06 |

## Sportsmanship Trophy 2003

Voting will take place at the British Open in April. Please circle three of the ten players below. The player polling the most votes will be the 2003 Sportsmanship trophy winner and will receive £100 from the sponsor, Dod Davies.

|              |                   |
|--------------|-------------------|
| Myke Wignall | Tony Lee          |
| Michael Main | Simonetta Barone  |
| Brian lever  | Dave Motley       |
| Bob Young    | Cliff Connick     |
| Stuart Mann  | Julian Fetterlein |



After the Crawford game, the cube decisions are supposed to be simple. You need to pay attention to whether the trailer now needs an even number of points to win the match or an odd number. Here we will focus on post-Crawford odd-away, such as 10-8 or 10-2 in a match to 11.

The trailer can double immediately, and the leader should always take with an odd number of points to go. However, the initial double is usually optional, and there are some subtleties that allow sharp players to trip up most serious backgammon players by delaying the double. In this article, we'll take a look at the theory, some examples, and a simple but counterintuitive defense.

### Post-Crawford Racing Take Points

In most cube action problems in match play, the most important statistic to keep in mind is the take point. With what chances should the leader take at 10-8 to 11? What about 10-6? 10-4? Most tournament players don't know, and are not familiar with borderline positions at these scores.

At all of these scores, the take point when there are no gammons is very low. At post-Crawford (pC) 3-away, 10-8 to 11, the take point in a position with no gammons possible is about 3%, as opposed to the normal 22% in money play. Why is this? If you pass, you are a very slight favorite with perhaps 51.5% match winning chances (mwc) because you have the free drop. If you take and lose, you lose only the free drop, 1.5% mwc, while winning will win the match, worth an extra 48.5% mwc. Risking 1.5% to gain 48.5% is a good idea if you win 3% of the time.

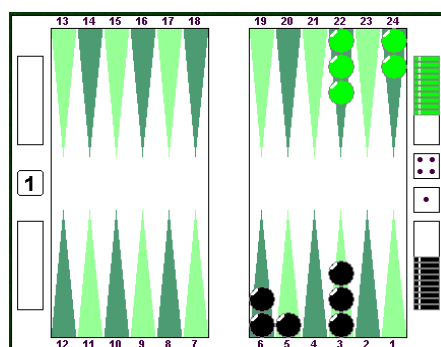
## Post-Crawford Odd-away

By Douglas Zare

At pC 5-away, passing will leave you very slightly better than taking and losing 2 points. How much better? According to Chuck Bower's rollouts in *Inside Backgammon*, you risk 1.3% to gain about 30.2%, which is a good idea if you win 4.1% of the time. I don't agree with all of his assumptions, and my guess is that this is a slight underestimate. At pC 5-away and 7-away, I would take with 5% chances in a position with no gammons. I don't know of any study of the racing take point at pC 5-away and above, though. Snowie's match equity table argues that the take point should be about 2.2% at pc 5-away, which is definitely wrong, and if you use Snowie to roll out any decisions at this score you will need to make a manual adjustment.

What does 3% or 5% winning chances mean in a race? Here are some examples:

White leads post-Crawford.



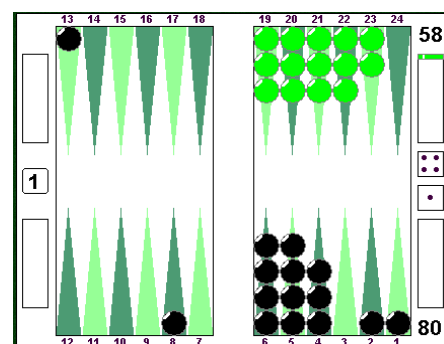
**White is on roll.  
Black wins 2.6%.**

This arose in actual play. My opponent lost his market here at pC 3-away. A 3-roll versus 3-roll position wins 21.2% of the time, but that is with all doubles working for Black. Since 6-6 is the only working double, you can start by dropping the chance of winning by a factor of 6, to 3.5%. Since 6-6 would leave Black a favorite to

miss on the other roll, you might cut this in half, but there are also chances to win other ways. It's a pass at pC 3-away, but not a huge pass. There are no huge racing passes at pC 3-away.

Actually, some people have estimated lower values for the free drop. If it is worth only 51.2% to lead pC 2-away, then the take point is 2.4%, and this was still a take.

White leads post-Crawford.



**White is on roll, leading 80-58.  
Black wins 4.8%.**

I usually remember that 90-60 is about 2% if the player with 60 is on roll. The above position is a take at pC 3-away, but is a close decision at pC 5-away.

There is a formula you can use: The Kleinman count  $K = (D+4)^2 / (S-4)$ , where  $D$  is the nominal difference between the pip counts, and  $S$  is the nominal sum of the pip counts. Another way of looking at it is that  $D+4$  is the racing lead when you subtract 4 pips for the player on roll, and  $S-4$  is the sum after you make this adjustment.

According to Chuck Bower, a Kleinman count of 5-8 corresponds to winning chances of 95%-98%. In contrast,  $K=1.2$  corresponds to 22%, and a borderline take/pass decision for money.

While it can be used here, the Kleinman count comes up more

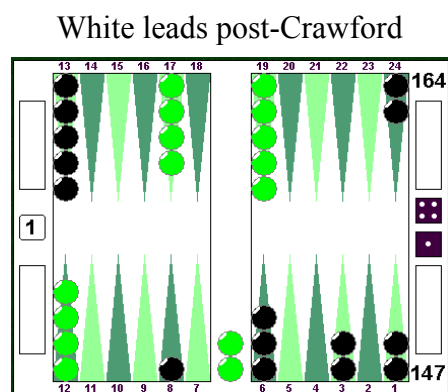


frequently if you are considering trying a "hopeless" race or staying back to wait for an unlikely shot, either risking some gammon losses or wasting pips, hence decreasing the already low racing chances. Sometimes it matters how hopeless the race is.

## Gammons

Gammons are very important when you decide whether to take. At pC 3-away, the gammon price on a 2-cube is 1. That means the leader should be willing to give up some wins to avoid an equal number of gammons. Winning 50% of the games, and getting gammoned on all of the 50% losses, will win the match 50% of the time. That is the same as losing a single game 100% of the time. This is much different from the nominal gammon price of 0.5 for money play. Although you only need to win 3% to take, that's the same thing as winning 13% while losing 10% gammons. Therefore:

**The take point at post-Crawford 3-away is 3% + gammon losses.**



**Black is on roll.**

**Black wins about 40% gammons and loses about 32.5%.**

This is a pass at pC 3-away. With 40% gammon losses, the leader can take with 43% wins. Here there are too few wins, only 32.5%. Note that entering one checker would have made this a

take.

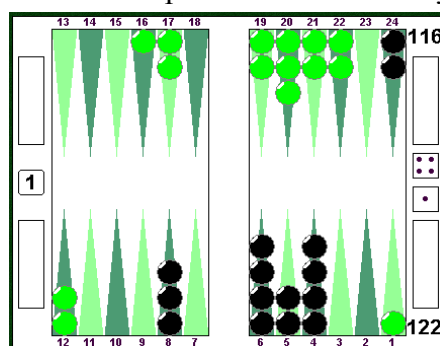
It's a take at pC 5-away! Didn't we see that the take point is higher at pC 5-away? That was for a race, but losing a gammon on a 2-cube is not nearly as costly at pC 5-away as it is at pC 3-away. Depending on which match equity table you believe, the gammon price ranges from 4/7 (0.57) to 2/3 (0.67). I believe the 4/7, but I'll use 3/5 (0.6). That means the leader at pC 5-away should be willing to give up 3 wins to convert 5 gammon losses to single losses. Winning 32.5% of the time and getting gammoned 40% of the time is just as good as winning  $32.5 - 3/5(40) = 8.5\%$  of the time with no gammon losses. That's a take at pc 5-away. Another way to look at it is that the take point is  $5\% + 3/5(40\%) = 29\%$ . Since the leader wins 32.5%, it looks like a take.

Actually, there are also backgammons to consider. Rollouts indicate that in money play, Black wins 0.5% backgammons. Backgammons are much more valuable at pC 5-away than for money play, since the difference between winning a backgammon and winning a gammon is now 50% mwc, the same as the difference between winning a gammon and losing! In money play, the difference is only 1/3 as much. Closing two checkers out may win only 3% backgammons in money play, but here I think it ought to win a bit more. If we trust the 0.5% figure, then this should be used to decrease the wins by about 0.8% beyond the adjustment we have already made by counting these games as gammons. Even taking backgammons into account, it is a take.

**The take point at post-Crawford 5-away is 5% + 3/5 gammon losses + 8/5 backgammon losses.**

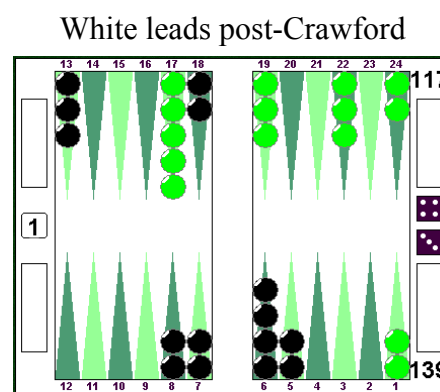
This formula includes backgammons in the count of gammons.

Black leads post-Crawford 5-away



**White doubles. Take or pass?**

This arose in actual tournament play. My opponent passed, but it's a clear take at pC 3-away and 5-away. There is a tendency to underestimate the winning chances and overestimate the gammon losses of clear money passes. Here, a Snowie 3 2-ply rollout finds about 23.3% wins versus 17.2% gammons including 0.8% backgammons. It is a take at pC 3-away since  $23.3$  is greater than  $3 + 17.2 = 20.2$ , and it is a take at pC 5-away since  $23.3$  is greater than  $5 + (3/5)17.2 + (8/5)0.8 = 16.6$ .



**Black is on roll.**

An unfortunate pair of 5-5's was a poor response to being primed, but the leader still has a take. Snowie 3 2-ply rollouts say that the leader wins about 21% and gets gammoned about 16%. It may look hopeless, but the leader has a stronger board and no killed checkers. These add up to a big

money pass but a take at pC odd-away.

The take point is lower at pC 5-away than at pC 3-away if the chance of losing a gammon is at all significant, at least 5% if there are no backgammons. The take point at pC 3-away is lower than the take point for money unless the position is very gammonish, with perhaps 30% gammons.

## Doubling strategy

You could double immediately. It would always be a take, and you would never technically regret doubling. Since you can use the points and your opponent can't, and you are not too good to double, it is a technical error not to double if there is any exchange of rolls that will produce a position in which your opponent will have a correct pass. Until the possibility of a market loser, the double is optional.

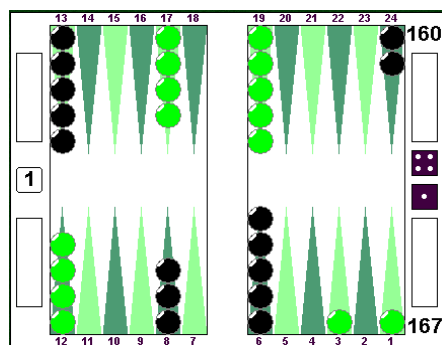
If you think you will forget to double and will actually lose your market, then perhaps you should double immediately and concentrate on the checker play. However, if you want to give your opponent a chance to make huge blunders at no cost to yourself, delay the double. In fact, it is often worth making small technical mistakes in order to try to provoke much worse mistakes by your opponent.

Most players do not know the absolute equities of positions that would be money passes, but are takes at this match score. Many will simply drop if you reach a clear money pass with gammon chances. Some top players understand pC 3-away, and erroneously pass at pC 5-away if you reach a position that would be a pass at pC 3-away.

When you delay the double, you hope to get an erroneous pass of a position that is a clear take. You don't gain if your opponent is scared, but takes anyway. You want them to think the position is a pass. So, for example, if you get into a straight race, try to avoid doubling when your opponent has a money take. Of course, in a short race, you may have to double to avoid losing your market on 6-6 followed by a small roll, but there are no large market losers in a race. In a potential blitz, it is often better to double after a discouraging exchange that makes your opponent think, "I'm going to be gammoned! I'm glad he/she forgot to double." The take point isn't so different for pC 3-away as for money in a blitz, but you will often get bad passes when your opponent's position is awkward or as you start blitzing at pC 5-away.

Remember to look sheepish as you double.

White leads post-Crawford.  
**Black is on roll.**



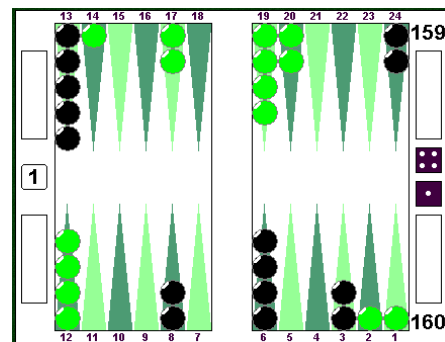
This may lead to a position considered in the previous section by 5-5  $8/3^*(2)$   $6/1^*(2)$  followed by any dance. That's the best exchange for Black. Since it is a market loser at pC 3-away, it is a non-optional double. On the other hand, that exchange would not be a market loser at pC 5-away, which means that the double is still optional.

As a practical matter, you might

hold off doubling at pC 3-away if you feel the bad passes after 3-3/dance or 5-5/enter or after subsequent exchanges outweighs the error from losing your market by 10% 9/1296 of the time.

If you want to make sure that you don't lose your market, you need to look for the best exchange. That doesn't always start with the best roll, but often it involves hitting doubles followed by a dance, or making a prime followed by doubles that crash. Sometimes it is a hit followed by a terrible entering number whose second half is particularly awkward. If you recognize that your best exchange will produce a take, you can safely take a roll, hoping to give your opponent a tougher decision.

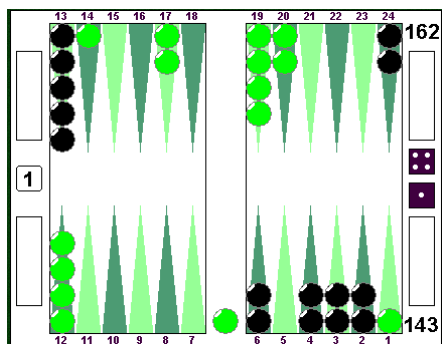
White leads post-Crawford 5-away  
**Black is on roll.**



White opened 2-1, splitting, Black rolled 5-3, and White made the 5-point with 3-1. Snowie rollouts indicate the double is still optional pC 3-away and 5-away, though I'm skeptical at pC 3-away. I'd hold off doubling at pC 5-away, since after 4-4  $6/2^*(2)$   $8/4(2)$  and a dance, we get to the following position on the next page.

White leads post-Crawford 5-away

## Black is on roll.



How many players would take this? Snowie 3 2-ply rollouts say that White wins about 36.5% while losing about 32.5% gammons including 2.0% backgammons. I think stronger play that takes into account the greater value of gammons post-Crawford would make this a close pass at pC 3-away, but it is a big take at pC 5-away. White only needs to win at least  $5 + (3/5)(32.5) + 8/5(2.0) = 27.7\%$ , making this a huge take. However, you will find many passes here, and after 6-6 followed by a dance.

How much do you gain by trying for a bad pass? If your opponents will pass with 10% winning chances above the take point at pC 3-away, they will give up 5% mwc. You will reach such a position more than half of the time, although often you have technical doubles before then. Playing for a bad pass can mean that you win not 31.5% of the time, but more than 33% (plus whatever you can extract from superior checker play).

You can be more certain of getting a bad pass if you wait until you are closer to the real take point. However, passes of smaller takes are not worth as much. You have to weigh the risks and rewards of doubling later. In my experience, it is often good to double after an opponent has rolled a number that plays particularly awkwardly and

increases the gammon chances.

## Defense

At this point, you might wonder how much time you will need to devote to studying strange take/pass decisions after the Crawford game. I haven't even mentioned how pC 7-away and pC 9-away are different. In fact, you don't have to study cube actions at these match scores at all. You don't have to try to figure out whether to pass with one checker off and one closed out, if you don't want to, and this won't cost you any match equity. There is a simple cube strategy that gets you all of the equity you ought to have leading pC odd-away:

## Always take!

This is probably surprising, given how badly this strategy works in money play. However, the strategy of always taking is what I call *semi-perfect*. A semi-perfect strategy is one that cannot be beaten by anyone on average. It doesn't necessarily take advantage of all of the opportunities to exploit a weak opponent, but it can't be exploited by anyone, even if you announce the strategy ahead of time.

If you take everything, then it's just like you start the game with the cube at 2 on your side. It is as though you force your opponent to make the optional double at the start of the game. You give up the opportunity to punish your opponent for waiting until you can correctly pass, but completely protect yourself from making a bad pass.

Suppose I announce that I will take any position, even if you are about to backgammon me on the next roll to win the match. How can that be semi-perfect? In money play it would not be semi-

perfect, and you could exploit such an opponent by taking aggressively and waiting until the last roll to double. You would double all of your wins, and few of your losses. At this match score, it doesn't matter whether the leader's wins are doubled. Further, it takes an error to get to a position in which the leader ought to pass, and the average error from market losses is as large as the average error from taking a pass.

Fishing for an incorrect take post-Crawford is like fishing for a failure to beaver a horrible double. While it costs someone equity not to beaver if it is appropriate, you have to give up as much or more equity to set up the chance for them to err (except for Jacoby Rule considerations).

An improvement on always taking is to take if there is even the slightest doubt about whether it is a take.

## Checker play

Whether or not the doubling cube has been turned, in almost all situations you should play the checkers as though the cube has already been accepted at 2.

At pC 3-away, gammons are very valuable for the trailer. The checker play should be exactly the same as for Crawford 2-away, since gammons for the trailer win the match and wins make the match even. This usually means that the leader fights hard for an advanced anchor, while the trailer attacks aggressively. The leader should avoid backgames like the plague, and should consider it a success to obtain a straight race with at least 37% winning chances.

At pC 5-away, gammons are slightly more valuable for the trailer than for money (gammon



price 0.6), but not nearly as much as at Crawford 2-away. The value of a gammon is about the same as at Crawford 4-away. Backgammons are most valuable here, which makes the number of blots important. Two closed out loses 3% backgammons in money play, 3 closed out loses 8% backgammons, and 4 closed out loses 25% backgammons.

At pC 7-away and above, the gammon price is about 2/3. Backgammons are more valuable than for money, but not as much as at pC 5-away.

### Reminder

Post-Crawford even-away is much different. Instead of the leader being able to take with less than a 10% chance to win, at pC 2-away the leader should pass with a 49.9% chances. At pC even-away the leader has a free drop, since passing does not decrease the number of doubled games the trailer needs to win in order to win the match.

The trailer should usually double immediately, and it is usually a big blunder not to double at the first opportunity. The take/pass decision is not perfectly understood at pC 4-away and above. The leader can take as an underdog if the position is less gammonish than normal. In addition, taking may allow the leader to use the free drop in the future.

If you are sure your opponent understands this, and as the trailer you roll 3-1, 4-2, or perhaps 6-1, and the leader responds badly, then you are too good to double, and can take a roll to try for the gammon. This is completely different from waiting to double at pC odd-away.

### Summary

At post-Crawford odd-away there is nothing wrong with doubling immediately, but you can get a significant advantage over many experienced players by delaying the double, then getting a bad pass. Technically, you only need to dou-

ble when there is some market-losing exchange. The take points are roughly 3% + gammons at pC 3-away and 5% + 3/5 gammons + 8/5 backgammons at pC 5-away.

A simple but counterintuitive defense against those who double late: Always take. Always play the checkers as though the cube is already on 2.

Don't get this confused with post-Crawford even-away.

© Douglas Zare and Bibafax.

*Douglas is a professional mathematician at Columbia University in New York and an expert Backgammon player. He plays online as zare on GamesGrid, FIBS and GameSite 2000.*



*Douglas's GammonVillage column appears on the 25th of every month.*

## INDEX

|    |                                            |    |                                           |
|----|--------------------------------------------|----|-------------------------------------------|
| 02 | Advertising Rates - Reach a lot of players | 10 | JellyFish 3.5 - Advert                    |
| 50 | At-A-Glance British Open - Details         | 13 | Last Biba Man In - Newbies comments       |
| 52 | Biba Backgammon Calendar - Make a date     | 16 | Let Them Eat Cake . . .                   |
| 51 | Biba Tournament Details 2003 - Read this!  | 24 | Letters - What you have to say            |
| 08 | Blunders from the Biggies! - Snowie helps  | 48 | Local Clubs - One near you?               |
| 25 | Competition Comment - Again!               | 52 | Mind Sports Olympiad 2003 - Press release |
| 30 | Competition No. 4 6101-06 - The Answers    | 53 | Mind Sports Olympiad 2003 - Programme     |
| 23 | Cottagewebs - Advert                       | 47 | National Team Challenge - Details         |
| 02 | David Naylor Boards - Advert               | 41 | Post-Crawford Odd-away - Advanced info    |
| 11 | Do You Know Your Ace-Point Game?           | 06 | Saxon Financials - Advert                 |
| 16 | Double or Quits . . . continued            | 58 | Slattery Scottish Open - Full report      |
| 49 | Forthcoming Events - Read all about it!    | 05 | Snowie - Advert                           |
| 20 | Free to good home . . One dead horse!      | 40 | Sportsmanship Trophy 2003 - Vote now      |
| 64 | GamesGrid - Advert                         | 03 | The Nordic Open - The final chapter       |
| 21 | How Good Is Your Backgammon?               | 61 | Tournament Results - All the latest data  |
| 26 | Improve Your BG - By Paul Lamford          | 26 | What Colour is the Wind - By Chris Bray   |
| 54 | Interview with John Slattery - John speaks | 15 | Word Search 01 Solution - Did you win it? |
| 55 | Jarvis Trophy - Full report                | 46 | Zakynthos Festival of Backgammon - Ad.    |





## ZAKYNTHOS FESTIVAL OF BACKGAMMON

June 19<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> and June 26<sup>th</sup> – July 3<sup>rd</sup>

Join in the Festival of Backgammon  
Daily Tournaments of various formats,  
Chouettes and Backgammon Tuition.  
100% of all entry fees returned as prizes. No table charges.

**VENUE: THE PELIGONI CLUB – ZAKYNTHOS, GREECE.**

If you need a break from the games, there is sailing, canoeing, massage, yoga, mountain walks, tennis and windsurfing all available. In only 30 seconds, you can be away from the game and diving into the clearest sea you will ever experience – in fact, ‘the other half’ always enjoys this holiday too.

**COST:** £425 for one week, £750 for two weeks – to include room at nearby hotel with pool and magnificent views, all transport and transfers on the island and three meals a day of sensational food.

“An amazing holiday – quite unique in the Backgammon Calendar”  
**Paul Gilbertson**

[www.peligoni-backgammon.co.uk](http://www.peligoni-backgammon.co.uk)



**To Book please call: Neil Davidson 07798 614800**  
**Or our Reservations below**

Please call Tarific Holidays to book a place:  
**01243 511499** during office hours  
(9.30 – 12.30 and 1.30 to 5.00 p.m. Monday to Friday)  
**www.peligoni.com**

# The Hanover

## National Team Challenge 2003

### October 18/19 2003

**Registration (entry payment) 10:30 / 12:30**

**13:00 start of competition**

## Hanover Daventry Club & Hotel

*Near M1, M6 and M40 motorways, one mile from Daventry town centre.  
Forty minutes from East Midlands and Birmingham International airports*

**Registration Fee: £30 per team, Entry Fee: £78 per team**  
**Limited to 32 teams of 3 players each**

**This exciting new event is sponsored by Hanover Hotels  
and is organised and directed by Michael Crane**

**Main: 11-point knockout.** Each team will be drawn at random for the 1st Round. The team that scores two wins will progress to the next round, the losing team shall go into the progressive Consolation (excepting the last 4 of the Main) as determined by the Main draw.

**Consolation: 7-point knockout.** Same playing format as Main.

**Team Trial: 3-point knockout.** Same playing format as Main.

| <b>£2,496</b>   | <b>£ total</b> | <b>£ each</b> |
|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| <b>Main 1</b>   | <b>£702</b>    | <b>£234</b>   |
| <b>Main 2</b>   | <b>£468</b>    | <b>£156</b>   |
| <b>Main 3/4</b> | <b>£546</b>    | <b>£91</b>    |
| <b>Con 1</b>    | <b>£273</b>    | <b>£91</b>    |
| <b>Con 2</b>    | <b>£234</b>    | <b>£78</b>    |
| <b>Team 1</b>   | <b>£156</b>    | <b>£52</b>    |
| <b>Team 2</b>   | <b>£117</b>    | <b>£39</b>    |

**Expected Prize Fund. NB: Prize pools will also be available in all events for TC members only (£1 fee, see details).**

**This event is likely to prove very popular and, due to the limit of 32 teams, pre-registration is essential. To reserve space, Team Captains are urged to send the following information to Biba HQ:**

**Team Captain**

**Contact (email or telephone)**

**Team Name (members can be declared on the day)**

**£15 Registration Fee (refundable if unable to attend)**

**Cheques made payable to Biba**

#### **Entry Conditions:**

Teams must comprise of 3 members with one designated as Captain through whom all correspondence will be channeled. Team Captains will agree upon the playing order for each round. If agreement cannot be reached then the Director will decide by a roll of dice. Local clubs can field as many teams as they like providing that no players are in more than one team. Once a team has started the event they cannot field a substitute and must complete the event in their original form.

**Accommodation: £100 dinner, b&b per person for 2 nights, £55 for 1 night.**

**Contact Central Reservation on 08457 444 123 and quote 'backgammon'**

*Players who choose not to stay in the hotel will incur a cover charge of £10 for hotel services and facilities*

Details ►



## The Hanover National Team Challenge 2003 Timings & Details

### Friday 17 October

21:00 - Team Warm-up: Playing in three separate knockouts as individuals, team members are set the task of showing that they will be a force to be reckoned with as they compete to win each of the three knockouts. The entry fee will be £30 per team with an added £90 (£30 for each knockout) from the tournament sponsor.

### Saturday 18 October

10:30 to 12:30 . . Registration (fee payment)

12:40 to 12:50 . . Auction of the teams to the highest bidders

13:00 (prompt). . Start of Main tournament

15:20 . . . . . Main Round 2 and Consolation start (latest start time)

17: 40 . . . . . Main Round 3 (latest start time)

20:00 . . . . . Dinner

21:30 . . . . . Consulting Team Knockout. 5-point matches. Entry fee £25 per team (2 or 3 players)

### Sunday 19 October

10:15 . . . . . Auction of leading teams

10:30 (prompt) . . Main & Consolation continue

10:45. . . . . Start of Team Trial. Open draw to suit demand, allowing entry from Consolation.

16:30 . . . . . Anticipated finish and prize-giving

### Prizes

Sponsors are being sought for extra prizes. Will interested parties please contact Michael Crane?

### Pools

£30 and £75 (per team) pools will be available for Team Challenge members only. Annual membership is just £1 per person. All pool entries are a private matter and are administrated by the organiser who shall ensure 100% return, acting as agent for Team Challenge members. All income derived from membership will be raffled off at 10:30 Sunday to members who shall receive one free ticket each.

*February 1, 2003: The feedback from interested parties is to leave as is. So, no changes. But . . . I still need a commitment from members. Hanover Hotels are anxious to stage this new event but are unsure about the logistics. They need to have a good idea of its viability before they ask me to sign contracts. Once signed I become liable for any costs incurred should the event produce less than the expected entries. So, I am appealing to all Backgammon Club organisers to contact me and let me know how many (if any) Teams each Club is entering. Of course, if the current wave of apathy mentioned on page 20 is still washing its way through the ranks, then I am once again flogging a dead horse!*

*Being optimistic, I am compiling a list of interested members who would like to form teams (i.e. non-club members who are perhaps isolated from other players). Get in touch and I'll try to pair?, triple you up.*

### Local Clubs

I have only produced a truncated version of the club details: where, who and when. Anyone requiring a fuller list can see one on the Biba web site or via the mail from Biba HQ. If your club isn't on this list then send me the details (*see key*) either via Biba HQ or you can email information in the order below, to:

[clubs@backgammon-biba.co.uk](mailto:clubs@backgammon-biba.co.uk)

#### Key:

1. Club Name
2. Venue
3. Address/location
4. Club contact
5. Club web page
6. Club nights
7. Club format and activities

8. Club fees or cost to join/play
9. Accepted playing standard
10. Can beginners/guests play
11. Comments

#### **Birmingham**

Birmingham BG Club  
Dave Motley 0121 476 4099  
[motleydavid@hotmail.com](mailto:motleydavid@hotmail.com)  
Every Monday





**Brighton**

Brighton Backgammon Club  
<http://eiloart.com/bbc/>  
 Tuesday 8pm until closing

**Bristol**

Bristol BG Organisation  
 Ian Tarr 0117-9756349  
[brisgammon@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:brisgammon@blueyonder.co.uk)  
 Second Thursday of the month.

**Colchester**

Mersea Island & District BG.  
 Ron. Bishop 01206 384651  
[ronbish@mersea25.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:ronbish@mersea25.fsnet.co.uk)  
 Tues. most weeks

**Dublin**

Dublin Backgammon Club  
 Brendan Burgess 603 0891.  
[wildlife@indigo.ie](mailto:wildlife@indigo.ie)  
 2nd Monday of every month.

**Dunfermline BG Club**

Graeme Campbell, 01383 738968  
[gccannon@euphony.net](mailto:gccannon@euphony.net)  
 Every 4th Sunday

**Eastbourne**

Eastbourne & Bexhill BG Club  
 Roy Hollands 01323 722905  
 e-mail [royhollands@aol.com](mailto:royhollands@aol.com)  
 Mondays 19.30

**Halifax**

Halifax/West Yorkshire Club  
 Rachel Rhodes 07961 355433  
[dicewitch@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:dicewitch@yahoo.co.uk)  
 Sporadic

**Herne Bay**

Broomfield BG Club  
 Bob Bruce 01227 362181  
 or mobile 07754 549 576  
 Monday

**Lincoln**

Lincoln BG Club  
 Michael Crane, 01522 829649,  
[michael.a.crane@ntlworld.com](mailto:michael.a.crane@ntlworld.com)  
 Every Tuesday

**Liverpool**

Liverpool Backgammon Club

John Wright, 0151 280 0075,  
[jpwright@cableinet.co.uk](mailto:jpwright@cableinet.co.uk)  
 First Friday of each month

**London**

Double Five BG Club  
 George Sulimirski. 020 7381 8128  
[jgsulimir@aol.com](mailto:jgsulimir@aol.com)  
 Thursdays 7pm. & Sundays 5pm

**London**

Fox Reformed  
 Robbie (020) 7254 5975,  
[robbie.richards@foxreformed.co.uk](mailto:robbie.richards@foxreformed.co.uk)  
 Monday (tournament);

**London**

The Brave New World  
 020-8399-0200 or 07946 801801  
 Tuesday

**London**

Ealing Backgammon League  
 Grahame Powell 020-8968 6327,  
[abband@aol.com.net](mailto:abband@aol.com.net) or  
[sagusb@aol.com](mailto:sagusb@aol.com)  
 Every Sunday 3.00pm

**Manchester**

Manchester & District Club  
 Rodney Lighton 0161 445 5644  
[lighton@btinternet.com](mailto:lighton@btinternet.com)  
 3rd Tuesday of each month

**Nottingham**

Nottingham BG Club  
 Conrad Cooper 0115 9113281  
[conrad\\_cooper@excite.com](mailto:conrad_cooper@excite.com)  
 Monday, 9.00 pm

**Preston BG Club**

D.Wallbank  
[d.wallbank@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:d.wallbank@blueyonder.co.uk)  
 Last Tues of every month.

**Reading**

Reading Backgammon Club  
 Kevin Carter  
[kevin@profundus.com](mailto:kevin@profundus.com) & +0118-  
 971-2948,  
 Alternate Wednesdays

**St. Albans**

Not really a club, no membership  
 Uldis Lapikens, 01582 455970,  
[uldis@talk21.com](mailto:uldis@talk21.com)  
 Every Tuesday 19.45

**Forthcoming Events**

British Open 05/06 April See the next page.

Manchester One Day Tourney 27 April Manchester Bridge Club 30, Palatine Road, Withington.

Registration 9-30 to 10-30. Play starts 11 am prompt (finish about 11pm). Entry Fee £20 - pre-entry by 20th April essential (numbers limited to 64). Please bring your own board if you have one.

**Main and non-expert sections**

Main event 5 qualifying rounds (Swiss format) then 8 or 16 player knockout. Consolation Event 5 point knockout. Last Chance 3 point knockout. 1 point knockout event.

**Non-expert event -**

Format will depend on numbers entering. £10 for each session in non-expert event, play afternoon or evening or both

Trophies - Prizes - Pools -All day buffet - Bar

Contact: Rodney Lighton for form: 0161 445 5644

Email: [lighton@btinternet.com](mailto:lighton@btinternet.com)  
[www.lighton.btinternet.co.uk/backg.htm](http://www.lighton.btinternet.co.uk/backg.htm)

County Cups 03/04 May The second Swiss Format (perhaps Slats will win this one!) of the year and your chance to rack up a few more ranking points by playing 6 x 11 point matches.

Hi-Rollers Event 24/25 May OK, so if no-one turns up then this is the end! But, if you do want it then

*Continued on page 51* ➤



# BIBA CALENDAR

## APRIL 2003



Sponsored by

Peter Bennet

At-A-Glance®

Calendars

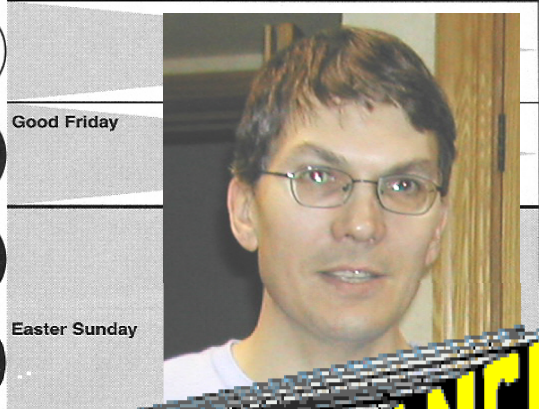
**AT-A-GLANCE BRITISH OPEN  
COVENTRY**

The top title in British backgammon, the Open, is sponsored by At-A-Glance Calendars via Peter Bennet. The format is a knockout with the usual four elements offering players plenty of backgammon action ranging from 11-pointers down to 3-points.

All trophies and prizes are kindly donated by At-A-Glance Calendars

*If you haven't got your 2003 Biba Tournament Calendar yet, then contact Biba HQ whilst stocks last.*

|             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| TUES<br>1   | THURS<br>17 |
| WED<br>2    | FRI<br>18   |
| THURS<br>3  | SAT<br>19   |
| FRI<br>4    | SUN<br>20   |
| SAT<br>5    | MON<br>21   |
| SUN<br>6    | TUES<br>22  |
| MON<br>7    | WED<br>23   |
| TUES<br>8   | THURS<br>24 |
| WED<br>9    | FRI<br>25   |
| THURS<br>10 | SAT<br>26   |
| FRI<br>11   | SUN<br>27   |
| SAT<br>12   | MON<br>28   |
| SUN<br>13   | TUES<br>29  |
| MON<br>14   | WED<br>30   |
| TUES<br>15  | THURS<br>1  |
| WED<br>16   | FRI<br>2    |



### Champions

|      |                 |
|------|-----------------|
| 1992 | Rick Janowski   |
| 1993 | Nigel Merrigan  |
| 1994 | Barry Williams  |
| 1995 | Graham Seivers  |
| 1996 | Stephen Turner  |
| 1997 | Dave McNair     |
| 1998 | John Broomfield |
| 1999 | Neil Kazaross   |
| 2000 | Rachel Rhodes   |
| 2001 | Steve Hallet    |
| 2002 | Murat Imamoglu  |

Paul Lamford Seminar

It is hoped that Biba member and backgammon author, Paul Lamford will be holding a Seminar based upon his latest book. *Improve Your Backgammon.*

This seminar will be confirmed nearer the date.



◁ you'll be playing backgammon all weekend with lots of side action and jackpots to keep you going.

The Hinckley Hanover Hotel is a fantastic venue; and the rate of £55 for one night, or £100 for two nights dinner, bed & breakfast is

well worth it - and, unlike the Hilton, Coventry, there is no single supplement!

Entry fees for the Main are just £50 with 100% returned in prize money. If you want to take part then let Michael know via Biba HQ or email [hi-rollers@...](mailto:hi-rollers@...)

Hilton Trophy 7/8 June Back to the Knockout format offering those that keep losing at least four matches - unless, of course, you go home sulking after being knocked out in the 1st Round of the Main!

7th Mind Sports Olympiad 16-25 August. (see next pages for details)

## Biba Tournament Details 2003

(timetable below for all Biba tournaments)

Registration: Saturday 1030 to 1230

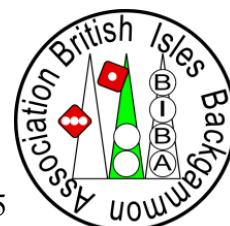
Play Starts: Friday 2130, Saturday 1300, Sunday 1030

Auctions: Group, Saturday 1245, Individual, Sunday 1015

Pools: Private, members only prize pools available at £25, £10 & £5

Formats: Knockouts - 11, 7, 5, & 3 point matches, Swiss - 6 x 11 point matches

All tournaments feature a Friday night Warm-up and a Saturday night Doubles Knockout



### FRIDAY

#### **Warm-up\* Knockout**

Play starts 2130, \*1st prize, free accommodation for this tournament plus first byes in next Main knockout entered.

### SATURDAY

#### **Registration 1030 / 1230**

Players arriving after close of registration only accepted at Director's discretion.

All jackpot pools will close promptly at 1230

### SUNDAY

#### **Play resumes 1030**

(penalty points apply)

Presentation 1630 - 1730

## 2003 Accommodation

### **Costs sharing:**

One night : £55 per person dinner, bed & breakfast

Two nights: £100 per person dinner, bed & breakfast

### **Single occupancy in double or twin room:**

£10 per night added to the normal costs.

### **The contact numbers are:**

Tournament information 01522 888676

Accommodation (Central Reservations) 08705 201 201 and quote 'backgammon'.

### *(Hilton terms & conditions for Special Events)*

*Backgammon tournament weekends cannot be booked through any other Hilton special offer or promotional rate. Current Biba members not obeying these terms and conditions will be barred from entering the tournament excepting non-residents who shall pay a surcharge of £10.*

### Registration Fees

**Full Members: £15 (you can join on the day)**

**Entrants not residing at the hotel, £10 surcharge**

(all fees and surcharges to be paid on the day - prepayment not required)

## Mind Sports Olympiad Moves to a Permanent Home!

Biba is delighted to announce that the annual **Mind Sports Olympiad** is moving to a new permanent home. We expect the host city and the exact venue to be announced at a press conference in the near future.

The **7<sup>th</sup> Mind Sports Olympiad** will take place from Saturday August 16<sup>th</sup> to Monday August 25<sup>th</sup> inclusive. By reverting to the 10-day format we will be able once again to offer more than 100 tournaments encompassing more than 40 Mind Sports. The permanent move has been made possible through generous sponsorship provided by our hosts. Dates have already been agreed for the following four years, with the event starting each year on the corresponding Saturday and ending on the bank holiday Monday (the last Monday in August).

### Key points about the 7<sup>th</sup> Mind Sports Olympiad:

Excellent playing site within 2 minutes walk of more than 500 student and hotel bedrooms.

Accommodation at very competitive rates for the different qualities of bedroom (including VAT):

Standard Single    £23.50 B&B

Standard Twin     £20.00 per person B&B

En Suite Single    £28.50 B&B

Hotel single        £45.00 room and £6.00 breakfast

Hotel Twin         £22.50 per person and £6.00 breakfast

Hotel Double       £22.50 per person and £6.00 breakfast

A one-stop booking service for accommodation, both for the above-mentioned rooms and for a large number of additional hotels of various standards and with price-ranges to suit all budgets.

Self-service lunches at very low prices.

Snacks, sandwiches, confectionery and beverages on a cash basis adjacent to the largest playing hall.

Social events will include at least one party and one barbecue.

Bar area for socialising and playing games in the evenings.

Cash and other prizes to be announced shortly.

**For further information visit us from time to time at [www.msoworld.com](http://www.msoworld.com)  
or contact us via: [tony@msoworld.com](mailto:tony@msoworld.com). Telephone enquiries: +44 1707 659080**

## Biba Backgammon Calendar

| Date      | Tournament                 | Venue      | Type        | Accommodation    | Info          |
|-----------|----------------------------|------------|-------------|------------------|---------------|
| Mar 22/23 | Hi-Rollers Event           |            |             | <b>Cancelled</b> |               |
| Apr 05/06 | British Open               | Coventry   | Knockout    | 08705 201 201    | 01522 888676  |
| Apr 27    | * Manchester 1 Day Tourney | Manchester | Combination | n/a              | 0161 445 5644 |
| May 03/04 | County Cups Trophy         | Coventry   | Swiss       | 08705 201 201    | 01522 888676  |
| May 24/25 | Hi-Rollers Event           | Hinckley   | Knockout    | 08457 444 123    | 01522 888676  |
| Jun 07/08 | Hilton Trophy              | Coventry   | Knockout    | 08705 201 201    | 01522 888676  |
| Jul 05/06 | Keren Di Bona Memorial     | Coventry   | Knockout    | 08705 201 201    | 01522 888676  |
| Aug 09/10 | SAC Trophy                 | Coventry   | Swiss       | 08705 201 201    | 01522 888676  |
| Aug 16-25 | * 7th Mind Sports Olympiad | tba        | Swiss       | 01707 659080     | 01707 659080  |
| Sep 06/07 | Roy Hollands Trophy        | Coventry   | Knockout    | 08705 201 201    | 01522 888676  |
| Sep 20/21 | Hi-Rollers Event           | Daventry   | Knockout    | 08457 444 123    | 01522 888676  |
| Oct 04/05 | Sandy Osborne Memorial     | Coventry   | Knockout    | 08705 201 201    | 01522 888676  |
| Oct 18/19 | National Team Challenge    | Daventry   | Knockout    | 08457 444 123    | 01522 888676  |
| Nov 08/09 | Townharbour Trophy         | Coventry   | Swiss       | 08457 444 123    | 01522 888676  |
| Nov 22/23 | Hi-Rollers Event           | Daventry   | Knockout    | 08457 444 123    | 01522 888676  |
| Dec 06/07 | UK Finals                  | Coventry   | Combination | 08705 201 201    | 01522 888676  |



# Backgammon

**At the 7<sup>th</sup> Mind Sports Olympiad 16-25 August 2003**

**Beginner's Tournament**  
**August 16**  
**Play starts 09:45**  
**(45 minutes per round)**

Qualification: Generally but not exclusively, the criteria for a beginner is anyone who has not previously won or has been highly placed in a backgammon tournament. The Director reserves the right to refuse entries if he thinks the entrant does not qualify for this category.

Entry Fee: £tba (Juniors £tba under 16 years old).

Format: One day Swiss Format of 5, 3 point matches without the doubling cube. 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>. (Gold, Silver, Bronze) will go through to join the Weekend Tournament on the Sunday, (subject to numbers the 4<sup>th</sup> placed player may also go into the Weekend Tournament).

**Weekend Tournament**  
**August 16, 17**  
**Play starts 09:30**  
**(3 hours per round)**

Qualification: Open to all players (including top players from Saturday Beginner's Tournament - see above).

Entry Fee: £tba (Juniors £tba under 16 years old).

Format: Two day Swiss Format of 6, 11 point matches, three per day. 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> will win Gold, Silver, Bronze.

**Olympiad Championship**  
**August 18 to 22**

Qualification: Open to all players.

Entry Fee: £tba (Juniors £tba under 16 years old).

**Qualifying starts 10:30**  
**continuous until 17:30**

Format: ( August 18<sup>th</sup> to August 20<sup>th</sup> ) Three qualifying days of Swiss

Format 3, 5 point matches, playing in random groups of eight players.

All players initially start as Bronze Category and can advance to:

3 wins for Gold Category.

2 wins for Silver Category.

**Gold Final starts 09:30**  
**(3 hours per round)**

All entrants are allowed three attempts to better their Category subject to time constraints and numbers re-entering.

**Silver Final starts 10:00**  
**(2 hours per round)**

Finals: ( August 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> )

Gold: 6 x 11 point matches. Two day Swiss Format, 3 per day

Silver: 6 x 7 point matches. a/a

**Bronze Final starts 10:30**  
**(1½ hours per round)**

Bronze: 6 x 5 point matches. a/a

Gold Cat.: 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> : Gold, Silver Bronze. (Gold Category)

Silver Cat.: 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> : Gold, Silver. (Silver Category)

Bronze Cat.: 1<sup>st</sup> : Gold - (Bronze Category)

**English Open Championship**  
**August 23, 24**  
**(See Weekend times above)**

Qualification: Open to all players.

Entry Fee: £tba (Juniors £tba under 16 years old).

Format: Two day Swiss Format of 6, 11 point matches, three per day. 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> will win Gold, Silver, Bronze.

**Olympiad Champions Finals**  
**August 25**  
**Play starts 09:30**  
**(1 hr 45 mins per round)**

Qualification: Top four places from the four above events. Should any entrant appear more than once the next highest will qualify.

Entry Fee: Entry by qualification only.

Format: One day Swiss Format of 4, 5 point matches.

1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> (Trophies).

## IMPORTANT

**Entrants must be in the playing area no later than 15 minutes prior to the start of Round One to register with the Director for entry into the draw.**

Tournament positions in all the above: In the event of a tie for position the sums of opponent's scores will determine final positions. The scores of players that fail to complete all rounds will be extrapolated to render a total score. E.G. Wins 2 out of 3, extrapolated to 4 out of 6.

Byes: Random byes will be chosen from the lowest scoring players in each round. No player will have more than one bye.



## An Interview with John Slattery

Interviewed by Sharen Crane. February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2003

Sharen Crane is the wife of Biba Director, Michael Crane. She has been his assistant director for ten years and is very experienced in tournament directing. Michael is grooming her to take over so that he can relax and play!



***I first met you at the inaugural Scottish Open in 1998 where you were the Consolation Runner-up. How long have you been playing backgammon and how did you learn?***

I have been playing since 1997, 5 years now. I learnt by just watching. In actual fact what I did was summon most of the top UK players to my place in Scotland and paid for my lessons highly! I think £150,000 was what I lost in the first two years. A lot of it to people like Mardi Ohannessian and John Clark. It was like learning to swim by jumping in at the deep end.

***Whilst learning, what backgammon books did you read, and have read since?***

The first one I read was one of Robin Clay's; I think it was called Backgammon for Winners. I thought it was a well laid out book, but I would probably disagree with some of the content now, but it was a good grounding. Magriel's book 'Backgammon' was the second one I read, which gives you a whole set of concepts.

***A lot of players use bots nowadays. Do you prefer Snowie or Jellyfish and do you analyse any of your games?***

I don't analyse anything. I am not a big fan of Snowie or Jellyfish because they are computers and

people are human and you have to play the person rather than play like a computer, because the computer plays as if it is playing another computer. Humans have emotions, so you build up a repertoire so you know regardless of what Snowie says, when some people should be cubed and when they shouldn't, just by their own actions. It's a bit like poker, only you can see what is going on, you get tell tale signs. Very seldom do I give anything away I have a poker face for backgammon.

***Over the years which players do you think have influenced you?***

David Levy, John Clark, Mardi, Dod Davies. What I felt when I was playing these people is that you can take a little from each of their games, you know there are some good points in each of them and you try and collect all of this. But you could live to a hundred and still be learning.

***You have become very successful over the last three years; to what do you attribute this?***

I play a lot and certainly the more time you put into it you become more successful. I have always been a bit of a strategist so the game suits me very well.

***Every time you come to a Biba tournament (and there have been many since that first Scottish en-***

***counter), you always seem to have another board. How many boards do you now own and is there one which you favour over others?***

I own 17 I think. I play on them all by rotation. If I have a really bad session, I throw that board to the back of the pile and start with the next one. I'm not all that superstitious to be honest but I do like to rotate them and give them all a bit of use. There is no point in having boards for the sake of having them if you are not going to use them. I may die tomorrow who knows.

***Are you planning on having them buried with you?***

To be honest I have actually put some bits in my will regarding my boards, but you will have to wait and see.

***You play a lot of backgammon. Do you prefer Tournament, Head to Head or Chouette?***

In order of preference I would say tournament, head to head then chouette. Chouette last because I like to play backgammon and I think what put me off chouette was that I used to go to Ealing, and play chouette on a Wednesday night and there used to be 11 or 12 players there, so if you got into the box, which first of all you waited about two hours to get into the



**Want to play Backgammon  
for real money?**



box, and then all of a sudden all of these cubes are thrown at you and you know if you don't take them you have got to wait another two hours for a game, so it then screws your decisions. I don't mind chouettes if there is a maximum of four people, but to play in big chouettes puts me off.

***Apart from backgammon, what other games of chance/gambling have you played?***

Blackjack. I don't so much like gambling, I don't consider myself so much a gambler, and I like to feel that I can put odds in my favour. So it's not so much a gamble if you like. Blackjack was my big love before backgammon, I have been told I should be playing Poker because of my poker face but I feel if you diversify too much you dilute your skill and I would rather concentrate on that.

***I've heard that you are playing backgammon somewhere every day of the week. You appear to live backgammon; do you ever see a time when you won't play anymore?***

At this stage no, but I could have said the same about blackjack.

Things change, I am having fun with it and so long as I am having fun then I will carry on. If I am not enjoying it I will stop and it doesn't matter if I am making a lot of money. I made a lot of money at blackjack and I stopped because I wasn't enjoying it, so the money is not the driving force, it is just for fun.

***You have become a bit of a celebrity, especially well known for your waistcoats; when did this start and do you make them yourself?***



This probably started 10 years ago, I have them all made, I don't make them myself (laughs) I don't have the time. I'm not very practical when it comes to these things; I commission people to make them

for me. I do design them myself; the people who make the waistcoats know what I am like so I don't get odd looks anymore. I like to have fun with the whole thing, I am worse than a woman in some cases, I love to dress up and have fun with it.

***An addition to the waistcoats your latest trademark is the trilby. What is the next trademark going to be?***

I go off and on with the trilby, I used to wear one before but I went off it, and then came back to it. I have had some new creations done. I will be introducing them at the Scottish Open, the new style. If you want to see it you have to come to the Scottish Open.

***Finally, I understand you were in a punk rock band many years ago and that you cut a record, is that true?***

It is and I have done records yes. Do you have a record player because it's on vinyl so I'll look one out for you?

***Thank you John.***

---

## **Jarvis Trophy 8/9 February**

Report by Michael Crane

What a bloody shambles! It might not be Hilton Hotel's conscious effort to sabotage the tournament but it had good try. First of all there wasn't any accommodation booked for the directing staff, then the hotel tells me that they have overbooked the bedrooms and that a dozen or more

Biba members have been moved to the Holiday Inn! God knows how many more were put off entering when told that the hotel was full - this sort of incompetence is a reason why the total entry was only 48 compared to 80 last year. Well, incompetence and the very unpopular 'single supplement' imposed by the Coventry General Manager, Michael Squires. I have heard he is moving elsewhere; fin-

gers crossed that I can re-negotiate with the new General Manager and get him or her to see sense. A failure to do so will only result in falling attendance - and strengthen my resolve to find an alternate venue.

### **Friday Knockout (10)**

Small but perfectly formed - that's the way to see it. Paul Gilbertson got off to a cracking start after



**Now you can do it @....**



beating his girlfriend, Jane, in the 1<sup>st</sup> Round. Spurred on no doubt by, "You'd better win now, or else!", Paul played himself into the Final. Here, Myke Wignall was waiting for him. Myke, an exponent of *dynamic backgammon* wasn't dynamic enough, unfortunately for him, and Paul notched up his first Friday KO victory.

### Doubles (10)

For those in the know, *The Hitman & Her* was a very appropriate name - but if I told you who they were, I'd have to kill you! Mind you, *The B Team* were either very brave or else they were very ignorant, but the despatched *The Hitman & Her* in the 1<sup>st</sup> Round. They next made mincemeat out of *Slow & Grumpy* (they were), then they knocked 42 for six (actually it was seven sixes), after which they found themselves in the Final. *The Same Pair of Anchors* were sunk without trace by *Annisia Associates*, who then made sure that *Christmas Passed*, passed out of the comp as they slotted themselves into the Final against *The B Team*.

Proving that sometimes Bs can come before As, *The B Team* emerged victorious and took home the dosh . . . Well, they would have done but *The Hitman & Her* robbed them at gunpoint and took it all off them!

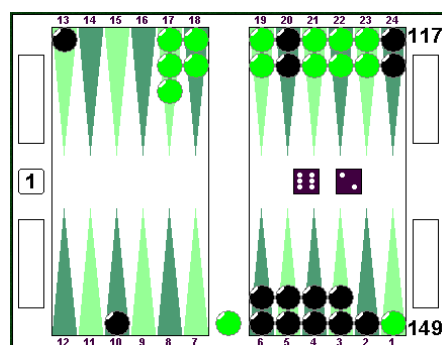
### Main (48)

With an entry of just 48 we were on for a true Swiss. It was entirely possible that we could end up with no-one winning 6/6 and that a five could be the winner. This is what makes the Swiss format so well suited to smaller entries - you can

lose one round and still win.

It was just one win on countbacks that separated John Slattery and Steffen Nowak. The only player to beat Steffen was in fact John himself. John, playing on 5/5 in the 6<sup>th</sup> Round faced Bob Young who had earlier beaten Tony Lee, Kevin White, Peter Bennet, Emmanuel Di Bona and Ian Tarr. On paper, using rankings as a gauge, Bob's opponents had an average ranking of 1667.6, which is 129.6 higher than Bob's ranking of 1538; whereas Slats' average opponents ranking was 1622.6, equating to 58.4 less than his own 1681. So, Slats favourite, Bob underdog!

Certainly the flow of play leaned towards this prediction. Slats took an early lead and after five games he led 7-0. Mind you, Bob did tend to lose his concentration a little in Game 4. Trailing 5-0 in the match, but leading in the race by 32 pips and with Slats on the bar, Bob rolled what all the onlookers saw as the perfect roll.

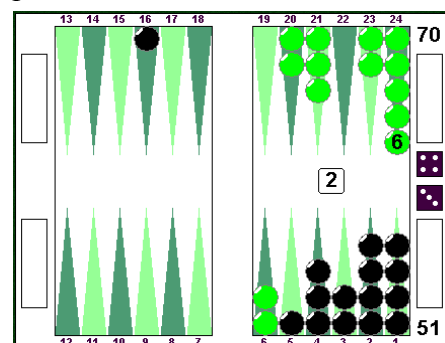


Black (Bob) to play 62

Bob simply didn't see the covering play, 10/2, and played 13/7 10/8 giving away a massive 0.561 equity! Slats rolled 61 and Bob never recovered.

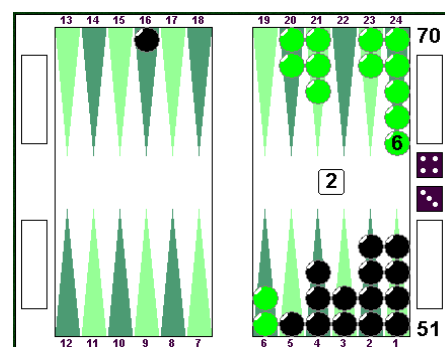
In Game 6 Bob, trailing 7-2, with

his last checker trailing on his 16-point offered the cube across . . .



. . . Slats took (it should have been a drop) and then an incredible sequence of rolls occurred. Bob rolled 53 and moved to his 8-point leaving Slats direct 2s to hit. He doesn't hit, he rolls 31 instead. "Ah. What the hell," Slats says, moving 5/2 5/4, "you never know, it might come out," meaning double one. Bob obliges by rolling 11, and Slats takes full advantage and rolls a 1 to hit! Bob re-enters easily and goes on to win the bearoff and thus gained his first points in the match.

A pivotal move in the match came in Game 8. Bob trails 4-8.



Black (Bob) on roll

### Cube action?

A lot of the onlookers saw the take by Slats as an error. It wasn't, though it could be seen as borderline. Snowie says:

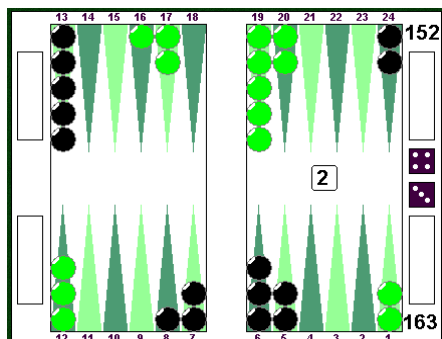
|               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| Double / Take | 0.850          |
| No Double     | 0.816 (-0.034) |
| Double / Pass | 1.000 (+0.150) |





As it turned out, dropping would have been better because Slats was gammoned for four points and the score moved to 8-8.

In Game 11, with the score at 9-9, the following double was offered and accepted:



I won't go into the (debatable) mandatory cube at 2-away, 2-away now, (*take a look at page 27, Paul Lamford's advice*), suffice to say that Snowie agreed with the play. Bob then went on to consolidate his forming prime and, despite having to later bearoff against a 2-point anchor, played almost flawlessly to force John into conceding the match when it became clear that Bob had won.



So, Slats is still awaiting his first Swiss victory, and, as last year is once again the bridesmaid; and Bob marks up his Biba tournament victory.

So, this is where we came in . . . Slats' position in 2<sup>nd</sup> place was



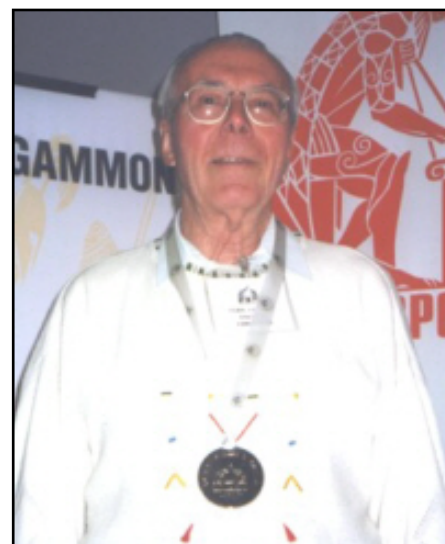
based upon count-backs (sum of opponents' scores) wherein he just pipped Steffen into 3<sup>rd</sup> place. Mind you, Steffen wasn't too disappointed, he ended up as the Top Intermediate.



And finally.  
During this tournament - on the Sunday - we celebrated the birthday of Cliff Connick (officially Monday, 10 February).

A few players have claimed to be Biba's oldest player: Roy Hollands has made the claim but he is still in his seventies; and Emmanuel Di Bona just looks the oldest. Cliff can lay claim to the title.

He joined Biba when he was 70 years old, and played in the very first Jarvis Trophy in February 1990; now, thirteen years later he played in the 14<sup>th</sup> one at the (almost) age of 83 - and with his best result ever!



The other backgammon moment that will stay with Cliff (and many others too) was the time he won the 1999 3<sup>rd</sup> Mind Sports Olympiad Beginner's Silver medal. I have never seen such a happy face on a Runner-up!

And. Let's not forget the quid he won off Slats, last year. Slats hasn't!



## Slattery Scottish Open 8/9 March

Report by Michael Crane

What a weekend; there were John Slatterys everywhere you looked! It was impossible to get away from John Slattery, no matter where you went. Why? Because quite a few of us had decided to become John Slattery for the weekend - and so we dressed ourselves up in trilbys and waistcoats and tasteful? jewellery!



John Slattery World

However, John wasn't being John Slattery this weekend - no, he'd decided to change his wardrobe and launched his new look at the Scottish Open. Ah well, back to the drawing board.

### Friday Knockout (24)

With a draw of 23 I decided to enter as well to even up the entries - and this proved to be a wise decision. I tore through the first four rounds like a tornado, coming to a halt in the Final. Here I waited patiently for my opponent. I had a choice of two, Slat (the real one) or Lawrence Powell (no less real than Slat). The tension was too much for me as they played their semi-final and I offered to bed agreeing to play the Final over the weekend.

We eventually played it on the Sunday afternoon. Slat had beaten Lawrence and he was now gunning for me. I put up a brave fight and was trounced 5-0; and I was lucky to get the nil!

### Super Jackpot (8)

Super Jackpot? I hear you say. Yep; following suggestions from members the SJ is back, and is being ranked (an addition to the 'official' matches). Once again, the ubiquitous, John Slattery was in another Final. This time it was the

job of Grahame Powell to push his finger into the dam of victory and stop Slat's tide of finals wins - but he just wasn't up to it and Slat came out first again.

Question: Could he carry on with his run of Finals and win his own tournament?

### Main (41)

Answer: No!

Even with the benefit of a 1<sup>st</sup> Round bye, Slat couldn't penetrate any further than the 1<sup>st</sup> Round. Rosey Bensley saw to that. She despatched her 'former' teacher - which serves him right. If you give people dedicated lessons and advice you have to accept the consequences when those lessons come back to haunt you.

So, did Rosey capitalise on this victory or did she squander it by losing in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Round? Spurred on by the first victory she notched up three more and found herself in the Final.

Liverpool's Peter Chan rolled and played his way through as many rounds and ended up facing Rosey across the Finals table. Would Peter's reputation for luck see him through to being the latest Scottish

Champion or would he have to resort to skill to deprive Rosey - the current English Open Champion - of her second national title?

The worst thing about being in a Biba final is knowing that your every move (and mistake) is being recorded and will, eventually, be discussed and analysed by all those that weren't good enough to make it into the final themselves. This match was no exception.

It's fair to say that both players were perhaps a little nervous and that some of the time they perhaps were a little too hasty with some of the checker plays and cube decisions. As I watched the final I guessed that Snowie would rate them overall as Beginners (although both players played from World Class to Novice within the match); and I was proven correct.

In a match of 80 errors, 32 of which were blunders there is a rich source of information there for an article which will appear in a later issue of Bibafax. If Peter and Rosey can learn from their errors then their games will improve - it is just a matter of understanding.

Two little bits of 'fact' emerged from the encounter.

1. Rosey remarked that she always danced on a 2-point board . . . and she did!
2. Peter is *officially* the luckiest player with an average luck rate of 25.310; one of the highest I've seen recorded for an 11-point match!

With a luck ratio of 25.310 and





some deft checker play to complement it, Peter rolled and played Rosey into the Runner-up position. Congrats to Peter and better-luck-next-time to Rosey.



Rosey & Peter

I'll leave the last word to Peter himself: "In my game against Graham Powell in the Quarter-Finals, Post Crawford, 8-10 down, with the cube on 2 I had an amazing run of luck. I have two men on bar, I throw my first double 5 to come in and hit and run out. I then throw a second double 5 to come in to my home table, then double 6 to start bearing off, then another double 5 and finally double 3.

With 5 consecutive doubles it helped me to get a totally unexpected gammon win of 4 points, to win the whole match. From nowhere!

I was also 7-0 down against Brian Lever, to come back to win 11-9.

I've been very LUCKY, the whole weekend."

*MC: Hopefully, the full Final match will appear on GammonVillage soon.*

### Progressive Consolation (37)

With his dander well and truly up, Slat was determined to make amends in the Consolation. His first six opponents soon fell before his mighty dice and he then found himself in the Final against Peter Bennet who'd entered via the Pro-

gressive side thanks to Leslie Singleton in the Main.

So, here was Slat in yet another final! So far his record stood at 2-2, could he make it 3-3? Not if I can help it, thought Peter. However, that thought was a fleeting one. Slat emerged from the table with his 3<sup>rd</sup> victory of the weekend. What a record, what a player, what a wardrobe!



John & John

### Last Chance (32)

David Startin is aiming for another Championship victory this year, but, thanks to Brian Lever in the Main and Julian Minwalla in the Consolation, he had to settle for a few points in the Last Chance. Some points are better than no points, and so David put all his hopes into the Last Chance. And he would have made it but for Uldis Lapikens. Uldis (taking full advantage of a re-entry) clinched 1<sup>st</sup> place leaving David holding even fewer Grand Prix points than he expected.



Uldis & David

### The Haggis (16) open draw

This was the hardest draw to fill. It began with seven entries at 13:00 and by 14:25 we had just scraped up our 16<sup>th</sup> entry. It was evident from the remaining pool of players that it was not going to be possible to extend it to an entry of 32; so we stopped at 16.

Myke Wignall fell foul of this decision. He turned up with an expectation to enter at 14:28 only to be told; sorry, it's closed. This wasn't very well received and he went off in a bit of a huff. Now, the last person I want to upset is Myke (or JJ as those in the know call him!) and so I plucked up the courage to explain why the draw was closed on 16 entries. The reason was that there were a good number of players who had opted to play chouette or head-to-head matches and they had diluted the potential entry pool by a good few. I further pointed out that the majority of these players were in fact his friends (with whom he had been playing all night) and it was their fault. I then promptly fled before he felled me with a blow to the throat - his preferred method of despatch!

Al Hogg, making a welcome return to Biba tournaments fought his way into the Final - almost literally. He was close to a bout of fisticuffs with one opponent when I had to step in and take the punch myself. Luckily for me this selfless act of bravery - or stupidity - defused the situation and the match continued, albeit in an icy atmosphere. Al then continued to the Final where Simon K Jones was waiting.

Simon, very diplomatically in a display of self-preservation, contrived to let Al win without making it obvious to the assembled onlookers



Al & Simon

### Doubles (8)

*Take That* took an early bath in the 1<sup>st</sup> and *Caught By The Sharpe & Curlies* got caught in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Round, both of them by *Dice Maidens*. *Dastardly & Motley* were made laughing stocks in the 1<sup>st</sup> and *The Great Supremo & his Lovely Assistant* disappeared in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Round, both thanks to *Bottom Burping Is Fun*.

So, could the *Dice Maidens* stop the *Bottom Burping*, or would they need to don their gas masks? The

cold air from the *Maidens* cooled the hot air of the *Burpers* as the *Maidens* proved their worth and they went off to bed with the lovely money that we had all chipped in towards.

Following a split decision, and a random roll of the dice, *Dastardly & Motley* just pipped *Caught By The Sharpe & Curlies* to the post to, take the best name . . . But I still preferred the latter!

### Finally

The cabaret night was a success. First of all Kevin Stebbing showed us that there was nothing up his sleeve as he baffled us with a collection of his favourite magic tricks. We were then treated to several jokes from the audience in their quest for 25ps and the title, Top Comedian.

For a long time the favourite was Rosey Bensley who regaled us with several gems; one of which featured an absent Backgammon Grandmaster. However, waiting in the wings was a rank outsider who popped up with a monologue on Stonehenge that had the audience in tears of laughter. Cedric Lytton played his ace and wowed us all with a skit on the famous stone circle - it might not sound all that funny, but I can assure you, it was! Rosey bowed to the better man, and she settled for Runner-up.

And, finally, finally. Thank you, John Slattery. Thanks for the sponsorship, thanks for the trophies, thanks for the bottle of wine at dinner, thanks for being my friend; but most of all, thanks for being you!

### Main (41)

|     |                  |          |
|-----|------------------|----------|
| 1   | Peter Chan       | 12.3     |
| 2   | Rosey Bensley    | 8.2      |
| 3/4 | Brian Lever      | 6.1      |
| 3/4 | Leslie Singleton | 5.1      |
| 5/8 | Jon Sharpe       | 2.0      |
| 5/8 | Grahame Powell   | 1.0      |
| 5/8 | Tony Fawcett     | 1.0      |
| 5/8 | Peter Bennet     | see Cons |

### Consolation (37)

|     |                  |          |
|-----|------------------|----------|
| 1   | John Slattery    | 10.2     |
| 2   | Peter Bennet     | 4.1      |
| 3/4 | Ron Havenhand    | 3.0      |
| 3/4 | Dave Motley      | 2.0      |
| 5/8 | Vincent Versteeg | 2.0      |
| 5/8 | Mick Butterfield | 1.0      |
| 5/8 | Julian Minwalla  | 1.0      |
| 5/8 | Jon Sharpe       | see Main |

### Last Chance (32)

|     |                |     |
|-----|----------------|-----|
| 1   | Uldis Lapikens | 5.1 |
| 2   | David Startin  | 2.0 |
| 3/4 | Rodney Lighton | 1.0 |
| 3/4 | Rachel Rhodes  | 1.0 |
| 5/8 | Al Hogg        |     |
| 5/8 | Tim Mooring    |     |
| 5/8 | Myke Wignall   |     |
| 5/8 | Jeff Barber    |     |

### Haggis (16)

|     |                  |     |
|-----|------------------|-----|
| 1   | Al Hogg          | 2.0 |
| 2   | Simon K Jones    | 1.0 |
| 3/4 | Vicky Chandler   |     |
| 3/4 | Vincent Versteeg |     |

### Super Jackpot (8)

|     |                 |
|-----|-----------------|
| 1   | John Slattery   |
| 2   | Grahame Powell  |
| 3/4 | Julian Minwalla |
| 3/4 | Gavin Crawley   |

### Friday Knockout (24)

|     |                  |
|-----|------------------|
| 1   | John Slattery    |
| 2   | Michael Crane    |
| 3/4 | Mick Butterfield |
| 3/4 | Lawrence Powell  |

### Doubles (8)

|     |                                          |
|-----|------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Dice Maidens                             |
| 2   | Bottom Burpinf Is Fun                    |
| 3/4 | Caught By The Sharpe and Curlies         |
| 3/4 | The Great Supremo & His Lovely Assistant |

Top name: Dastardly and Motley



# Tournament Results

## Jarvis Trophy 8/9 February 2003

(pos / name / wins / gp)

|     |                  |   |      |     |                  |   |   |     |                   |   |   |
|-----|------------------|---|------|-----|------------------|---|---|-----|-------------------|---|---|
| 001 | Bob Young        | 6 | 15.3 | 017 | Wayne Felton     | 3 | 1 | 033 | Richard Granville | 3 | 1 |
| 002 | John Slattery    | 5 | 10.2 | 018 | Paul Gilbertson  | 3 | 1 | 034 | Jeff Barber       |   | 2 |
| 003 | Steffen Nowak    | 5 | 7.1  | 018 | David Startin    | 3 | 1 | 035 | Aboudi Al-Halabi  |   | 2 |
| 004 | Lawrence Powell  | 5 | 7.1  | 020 | Uldis Lapikens   | 3 | 1 | 035 | Faten Issa        |   | 2 |
| 005 | Roland Herrera   | 5 | 7.1  | 021 | Tim Mooring      | 3 | 1 | 037 | Mike Butterfield  |   | 2 |
| 006 | Tim Wilkins      | 5 | 7.1  | 021 | Gabor Weiner     | 3 | 1 | 038 | Jonathan Lamb     |   | 2 |
| 007 | Emmanuel Di Bona | 4 | 4.2  | 023 | Myke Wignall     | 3 | 1 | 039 | Rosey Bensley     |   | 2 |
| 008 | Peter Bennet     | 4 | 4.2  | 023 | Amir Mossanen    | 3 | 1 | 040 | Kevin Nicholson   |   | 2 |
| 009 | Ian Tarr         | 4 | 4.2  | 023 | Niclas Wigstrom  | 3 | 1 | 041 | John P Lewis      |   | 2 |
| 010 | Ann Pocknell     | 4 | 4.2  | 026 | Stuart Mann      | 3 | 1 | 042 | Mardi Ohannessian |   | 1 |
| 011 | Cliff Connick    | 4 | 4.2  | 027 | Malcolm Hey      | 3 | 1 | 043 | Ron Havenhead     |   | 1 |
| 012 | Kevin White      | 4 | 4.2  | 028 | Edwin Turner     | 3 | 1 | 044 | Cath Kennedy      |   | 1 |
| 013 | Rodney Lighton   | 4 | 4.2  | 028 | Paul Sambell     | 3 | 1 | 045 | John Azraq        |   | 1 |
| 014 | Kevin Stebbing   | 4 | 4.2  | 028 | Johan Sallfors   | 3 | 1 | 046 | Bryony Jessiman   |   | 0 |
| 015 | Paul Barwick     | 4 | 4.2  | 028 | Simonetta Barone | 3 | 1 | 047 | David Nathan      |   | 0 |
| 016 | Paul Christmas   | 3 | 1    | 032 | Jane Oxley       | 3 | 1 | 048 | Tony Lee          |   | 0 |

## January 2003 Grand Prix

(points / name)

|      |                   |     |                      |     |                   |
|------|-------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|-------------------|
| 20.4 | John Slattery     | 4.2 | Cliff Connick        | 1.0 | Grahame Powell    |
| 20.3 | Edwin Turner      | 4.2 | Paul Barwick         | 1.0 | Mike Grabsky      |
| 15.3 | Bob Young         | 4.2 | Ian Tarr             | 1.0 | Paul Christmas    |
| 12.3 | Peter Chan        | 4.2 | Emmanuel Di Bona     | 1.0 | Chris Bray        |
| 10.2 | Barry McAdam      | 4.2 | Kevin White          | 1.0 | Simon K Jones     |
| 10.1 | David Startin     | 4.2 | Kevin Stebbing       | 1.0 | Malcolm Hey       |
| 8.2  | Julian Fetterlein | 4.2 | Paul Gilbertson      | 1.0 | Rachel Rhodes     |
| 8.2  | Rosey Bensley     | 4.2 | Ann Pocknell         | 1.0 | Richard Granville |
| 8.1  | Roland Herrera    | 4.0 | Dave McNair          | 1.0 | Stuart Mann       |
| 7.1  | Tim Wilkins       | 4.0 | Nick Check           | 1.0 | Jordan Wensley    |
| 7.1  | Lawrence Powell   | 4.0 | Amir Mossanen        | 1.0 | Julian Minwalla   |
| 7.1  | John Clark        | 3.0 | Peter Christmas      | 1.0 | Mike Butterfield  |
| 7.1  | Peter Bennet      | 3.0 | Tim Mooring          | 1.0 | Paul Sambell      |
| 7.1  | Steffen Nowak     | 3.0 | Andrew Darby         | 1.0 | Myke Wignall      |
| 6.1  | Brian Lever       | 3.0 | Ron Havenhead        | 1.0 | Tony Fawcett      |
| 6.1  | Uldis Lapikens    | 3.0 | Ricardo Falconi-Puig | 1.0 | Wayne Felton      |
| 6.1  | Paul Watts        | 2.0 | Jon Sharpe           | 1.0 | Johan Sallfors    |
| 6.1  | Francine Brandler | 2.0 | Alistair Hogg        | 1.0 | Niclas Wigstrom   |
| 5.2  | Rodney Lighton    | 2.0 | Dod Davies           | 1.0 | Simonetta Barone  |
| 5.1  | Leslie Singleton  | 2.0 | Dave Motley          | 1.0 | Jane Oxley        |
| 5.0  | Mark Lemon        | 2.0 | Vincent Versteeg     | 1.0 | Gabor Weiner      |

## March 2003 Active Rankings

(new / old / name)

|      |      |                      |      |      |                   |      |      |                  |
|------|------|----------------------|------|------|-------------------|------|------|------------------|
| 1974 | 1974 | John Clark           | 1626 | 1626 | Edwin Turner      | 1473 | 1473 | Vianney Bourgios |
| 1972 | 1972 | Julian Fetterlein    | 1616 | 1616 | Barry McAdam      | 1472 | 1472 | Arthur Williams  |
| 1949 | 1942 | Brian Lever          | 1614 | 1614 | Peter Fallows     | 1470 | 1470 | Simonetta Barone |
| 1866 | 1910 | Dod Davies           | 1613 | 1613 | Mike Waxman       | 1468 | 1460 | Ernie Pick       |
| 1807 | 1735 | John Slattery        | 1603 | 1603 | Roy Hollands      | 1466 | 1466 | Wayne Felton     |
| 1790 | 1790 | Jim Johnson          | 1595 | 1595 | Steffen Nowak     | 1462 | 1462 | Neil Davidson    |
| 1787 | 1787 | Richard Granville    | 1591 | 1591 | Kerry Jackson     | 1451 | 1451 | Monica Beckerson |
| 1780 | 1780 | Tony Lee             | 1590 | 1577 | Uldis Lapikens    | 1450 | 1450 | John Renicks     |
| 1777 | 1777 | Steve Hallet         | 1585 | 1585 | Peter Christmas   | 1447 | 1447 | Will Richardson  |
| 1773 | 1773 | Dave McNair          | 1581 | 1589 | Alistair Hogg     | 1440 | 1440 | Ian Shaw         |
| 1768 | 1768 | Ray Tannen           | 1579 | 1579 | Roland Herrera    | 1437 | 1435 | Paul Gilbertson  |
| 1760 | 1753 | David Startin        | 1578 | 1578 | Steve Pickard     | 1437 | 1399 | Leslie Singleton |
| 1753 | 1753 | Rachel Rhodes        | 1574 | 1581 | Simon K Jones     | 1436 | 1436 | Steven Reddi     |
| 1749 | 1749 | Ralph Eskinazi       | 1572 | 1491 | Peter Chan        | 1426 | 1426 | Jane Oxley       |
| 1738 | 1738 | Dale Taylor          | 1566 | 1566 | Mark Lemon        | 1425 | 1425 | Cliff Connick    |
| 1738 | 1738 | Stuart Mann          | 1565 | 1565 | John Thomas       | 1421 | 1421 | David Naylor     |
| 1736 | 1784 | Lawrence Powell      | 1561 | 1561 | Nigel Briddon     | 1420 | 1420 | Kevin Carter     |
| 1722 | 1722 | Ian Tarr             | 1559 | 1559 | Shaun Herd        | 1420 | 1468 | Liz Barker       |
| 1717 | 1717 | Jeff Ellis           | 1557 | 1557 | Jacek Brzezinski  | 1418 | 1418 | Steve Malins     |
| 1715 | 1715 | Emmanuel Di Bona     | 1553 | 1553 | Simon Macbeth     | 1417 | 1417 | Sarah Rosich     |
| 1708 | 1708 | David Gallagher      | 1549 | 1549 | Phil Caudwell     | 1415 | 1410 | Julian Minwalla  |
| 1701 | 1689 | Rodney Lighton       | 1548 | 1548 | Steve Rimmer      | 1414 | 1414 | Steve John       |
| 1700 | 1700 | Harry Bhatia         | 1542 | 1545 | Tim Mooring       | 1414 | 1414 | Jeremy Limb      |
| 1695 | 1726 | Brian Busfield       | 1542 | 1542 | Mike Greenleaf    | 1409 | 1409 | Jerry Smith      |
| 1694 | 1694 | Mike Grabsky         | 1542 | 1542 | James Vogl        | 1400 | 1400 | Nick Hamar       |
| 1688 | 1688 | John Hurst           | 1535 | 1535 | Eddie Barker      | 1399 | 1399 | Michael Main     |
| 1680 | 1680 | Graham Brittain      | 1533 | 1533 | Jim Moore         | 1388 | 1388 | Paul Watts       |
| 1675 | 1675 | David Nathan         | 1528 | 1528 | Matthew Fisher    | 1383 | 1396 | Andrew Sarjeant  |
| 1670 | 1670 | Raj Jansari          | 1520 | 1533 | Paul Barwick      | 1378 | 1378 | Colin Laight     |
| 1663 | 1663 | Tim Wilkins          | 1519 | 1519 | David Hale        | 1375 | 1375 | Malcolm Hey      |
| 1662 | 1662 | Stephen Drake        | 1516 | 1516 | John Wright       | 1368 | 1368 | Neil Young       |
| 1659 | 1659 | Arthur Musgrove      | 1516 | 1501 | Dave Motley       | 1366 | 1402 | Kevin Nicholson  |
| 1650 | 1656 | Kevin Stebbing       | 1515 | 1515 | Paul Christmas    | 1358 | 1346 | Tony Fawcett     |
| 1647 | 1647 | Mardi Ohannessian    | 1510 | 1510 | Tom Duggan        | 1351 | 1354 | Myke Wignall     |
| 1644 | 1644 | Helen Helm-Sagar     | 1507 | 1499 | Mike Butterfield  | 1340 | 1340 | Rebecca Bell     |
| 1642 | 1618 | Peter Bennet         | 1506 | 1506 | Alan Beckerson    | 1336 | 1336 | Don Hatt         |
| 1641 | 1641 | Paul Turnbull        | 1502 | 1502 | Mike Heard        | 1334 | 1277 | Rosey Bensley    |
| 1640 | 1640 | Nick Check           | 1501 | 1501 | Kevin White       | 1326 | 1326 | Sue Perks        |
| 1640 | 1640 | Charlie Hetherington | 1500 | 1500 | John Napier       | 1314 | 1264 | Jon Sharpe       |
| 1635 | 1655 | Jeff Barber          | 1493 | 1493 | David Fall        | 1294 | 1307 | Cath Kennedy     |
| 1635 | 1635 | Bob Young            | 1484 | 1484 | Raymond Kershaw   | 1292 | 1292 | John P Lewis     |
| 1635 | 1635 | Connor Dickinson     | 1481 | 1481 | Hubert De L'Epine | 1277 | 1277 | Bob Parmley      |
| 1634 | 1634 | Bill Pope            | 1479 | 1479 | Martin Hemming    | 1189 | 1213 | Paul Sambell     |
| 1628 | 1628 | Francine Brandler    | 1478 | 1478 | Anthony Coker     |      |      |                  |
| 1627 | 1614 | Vincent Versteeg     | 1477 | 1477 | Stuart Parmley    |      |      |                  |

### March 2003 1000-to1

|    |                  |   |                |   |                 |
|----|------------------|---|----------------|---|-----------------|
| 12 | Michael Brereton | 6 | Murat Imamoglu | 4 | Glen Bollington |
| 7  | Salvador Leong   | 5 | Tim Wilkins    | 4 | Martin Sloane   |
| 6  | Bob Young        | 5 | Peter Chan     | 4 | Freddy Mossanen |
| 6  | Willy Stanton    | 4 | Ray Mitchell   |   |                 |

### March 2003 Pending Rankings

|      |                      |      |                 |      |                  |
|------|----------------------|------|-----------------|------|------------------|
| 1725 | Simon Barget         | 1495 | Gabor Weiner    | 1428 | George Plant     |
| 1721 | Brendan Burgess      | 1489 | David McNamara  | 1428 | Peter Murrell    |
| 1666 | Richard Beagarie     | 1485 | Kevin Williams  | 1425 | Ian Sadler       |
| 1608 | Corinne Sellers      | 1483 | Sunni Nicholson | 1425 | Rowland Brindley |
| 1602 | James Hatt           | 1474 | Brendan Bemsley | 1404 | Evan Williams    |
| 1574 | Simon Gasquoine      | 1473 | Niclas Wigstrom | 1396 | Alan Greenwood   |
| 1574 | Dave Robbins         | 1472 | Blaine Buchanan | 1381 | Rebecca Brindley |
| 1571 | Ann Pocknell         | 1470 | Steve Lynch     | 1377 | Alison Hobbs     |
| 1568 | Ricardo Falconi-Puig | 1468 | Suart Dewis     | 1376 | Tony Pryor       |
| 1533 | Mark McCluskey       | 1467 | Lorenzo Rusconi | 1368 | Peter Wilson     |
| 1527 | Theo                 | 1459 | Roz Nathan      | 1366 | Amy Woodward     |
| 1520 | Kyriacous Kyriacou   | 1453 | Elliot Smart    | 1354 | Richard Winston  |
| 1513 | Amir Mossanen        | 1450 | David Winston   | 1351 | Liz Makepeace    |
| 1510 | Ian Hill             | 1450 | Jonathan Lamb   | 1326 | Martin Blindell  |
| 1509 | Melvyn Abrahams      | 1445 | Johan Sallfors  | 1276 | Bryony Jessiman  |
| 1505 | Daphne Smith         | 1438 | Tim Brown       |      |                  |
| 1499 | Miles Illott         | 1435 | Grant Dewsbury  |      |                  |

### March 2003 Ranking Championship (3 or more played)

(played / average / name)

|    |         |                   |   |         |                   |   |         |                  |
|----|---------|-------------------|---|---------|-------------------|---|---------|------------------|
| 13 | 1781.31 | Edwin Turner      | 7 | 1281.86 | Aboudi Al-Halabi  | 5 | 1853.00 | Nick Check       |
| 13 | 1778.31 | David Startin     | 7 | 1178.86 | Ron Havenhead     | 5 | 1780.60 | Brian Lever      |
| 12 | 1775.25 | Paul Gilbertson   | 7 | 957.00  | Bryony Jessiman   | 5 | 1733.00 | Jon Sharp        |
| 12 | 1640.92 | Peter Bennet      | 6 | 2169.83 | Bob Young         | 4 | 1792.00 | Harry Bhatia     |
| 11 | 1648.73 | Tim Mooring       | 6 | 1923.17 | John Clark        | 4 | 1744.50 | R. Falconi-Puig  |
| 11 | 1528.55 | Rosey Bensley     | 6 | 1914.17 | Barry McAdam      | 4 | 1626.25 | Rachel Rhodes    |
| 10 | 1887.60 | Roland Herrera    | 6 | 1903.33 | Steffen Nowak     | 4 | 1588.00 | Liz Barker       |
| 10 | 1781.50 | Ann Pocknell      | 6 | 1891.83 | Ian Tarr          | 4 | 1461.25 | Grahame Powell   |
| 10 | 1751.70 | Stuart Mann       | 6 | 1872.00 | Tim Wilkins       | 4 | 1405.50 | Dave Motley      |
| 9  | 1450.22 | Myke Wignall      | 6 | 1777.67 | Leslie Singleton  | 4 | 1100.00 | David Nathan     |
| 9  | 1403.78 | Uldis Lapikens    | 6 | 1758.83 | Rodney Lighton    | 4 | 937.50  | Tony Lee         |
| 9  | 1397.22 | Mike Butterfield  | 6 | 1722.83 | Kevin White       | 3 | 1810.33 | Mike Heard       |
| 9  | 1340.89 | Jeff Barber       | 6 | 1676.67 | Emmanuel Di Bona  | 3 | 1788.00 | Dale Taylor      |
| 8  | 1634.75 | Paul Barwick      | 6 | 1668.67 | Cliff Connick     | 3 | 1786.67 | Patrick O'Connor |
| 8  | 1563.38 | Lawrence Powell   | 6 | 1585.50 | Niclas Wigstrom   | 3 | 1765.33 | Peter Fallows    |
| 8  | 1529.00 | Amir Mossanen     | 6 | 1534.50 | Wayne Felton      | 3 | 1761.33 | Mike Main        |
| 8  | 1476.63 | Jane Oxley        | 6 | 1509.00 | Richard Granville | 3 | 1747.33 | Ernie Pick       |
| 8  | 1360.00 | Paul Sambell      | 6 | 1481.00 | Gabor Weiner      | 3 | 1722.33 | Arthur Musgrove  |
| 8  | 1268.63 | Mardi Ohannessian | 6 | 1438.67 | Faten Issa        | 3 | 1710.67 | John Hurst       |
| 8  | 1207.38 | Kath Kennedy      | 6 | 1368.00 | Jonathan Lamb     | 3 | 1676.33 | Ralph Eskinazi   |
| 7  | 1775.57 | John Slattery     | 6 | 1247.50 | John P Lewis      | 3 | 1655.00 | Tony Fawcett     |
| 7  | 1599.14 | Kevin Stebbing    | 6 | 1243.83 | Malcolm Hey       | 3 | 1643.33 | Spencer Close    |
| 7  | 1522.29 | Paul Christmas    | 6 | 1056.00 | John Azraq        | 3 | 1622.33 | Raj Jansari      |
| 7  | 1421.00 | Johan Sallfors    | 5 | 2103.20 | Peter Chan        | 3 | 1586.67 | Karl Simpson     |
| 7  | 1358.86 | Simonetta Barone  | 5 | 1921.00 | Dave McNair       | 3 | 1404.00 | Al Hogg          |
| 7  | 1352.00 | Kevin Nicholson   | 5 | 1897.40 | Julian Fetterlein | 3 | 1374.33 | Brian Busfield   |

# play online

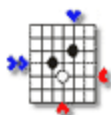
## backgammon & gin rummy

the best games in cyberspace!



**wanna bet?**  
increase the fun with **e-jackpots**

[www.gamesgrid.com](http://www.gamesgrid.com)



**GAMESGRID**

come for the games ... stay for the friends