



Hoosier
Backgammon
Club

May-June 1994
Volume X1, No. 3



FreeTime Knock-Out

Results

Mick Dobratz won the Open Knock-Out
over **Chuck Stimming** 13-11 in 18 games.

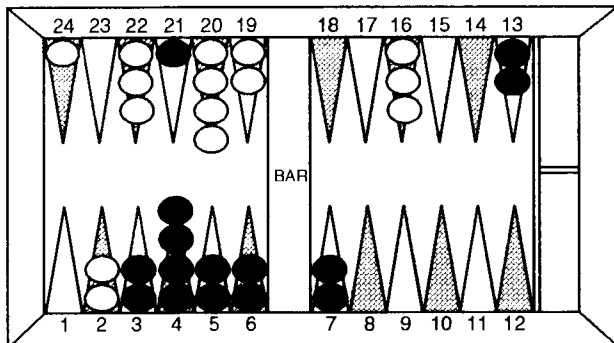
Bill Hodes won the Advanced Knock-Out
over **Woody Woodworth** 11-9 in 11 games.

Hoosier Pips: Two Hoosiers captured glory at the Midwest Backgammon Tournament: Mary Ann Meese won the Advanced Division and Scott Richardson placed 2nd in the overflow Open Division...HBC welcomes new players, Sean Garber and Angie Jones and welcomes back Steve & Eileen Perlman after a 4 month absence...John O'Hagan will be visiting Thursday evenings while he is on a temporary assignment in the area for a few months...Marc Simon, NY has a doubling cube collection of 70 plus. Drop him a line at 155 Oakley Avenue, Elmont, NY 11003 if you have something to add to his collection.

Board Talk

What is the most important thing in a backgammon match? The score! Your main objective is to reach match point. The score governs your cube action as in the position below.

7-Point Match



2

Question #1? WHITE-0 BLACK-0 (On roll.)

What is the proper cube action? Should BLACK redouble? If BLACK redoubles, should WHITE take?

Redouble, pass. Both decisions are easy. Very likely a simple deucepoint game; BLACK is nowhere near too good to double. 0-2 is no tragedy for WHITE.

Question #2? WHITE-0 BLACK-3 (On roll.)

What is the proper cube action? Should BLACK redouble? If BLACK redoubles, should WHITE take?

No redouble, take. BLACK doesn't want to play for match. Cube would be gammy, and with gammons not counting, WHITE needs only about 15% winning chances to take and recube. He clearly has this; sometimes he rolls boxes, or luckily escapes his back men one by one; sometimes he can attack Junior on his 4 point and gain time to escape; sometimes he can hit a fly shot; sometimes he wins by racing after getting an early hit in a crashed deucepoint game. All those sources of equity have to add up to more than 15%. Is BLACK threatening to overshoot WHITE's takepoint? Not hardly. BLACK will probably edge up towards the takepoint rather slowly.

And practically speaking, many of WHITE's takes after the theoretical takepoint are overshot, underestimating the winning chances from 0-5.
Marty Storer, NH

Found in the MailBox

Dear Butch & Mary Ann:

You really out did yourselves on the last issue of the **HBC newsletter!** Chuck Bower's analysis of opening rolls provides lots of food for thought and perhaps an assist toward better results. The coverage of complete matches is always enjoyable and instructive. The plentiful diagrams are particularly useful. Finally the discussion of ExBg (which I own) and copy protection had its point but my sympathies are with Tom Weaver not the naysayers. Is their indignation less high-minded and self-serving?

John Rather, Kensington, MD

Editor's Note: *CNN Headline News reported that businesses lost \$10 billion in 1992 and \$7.5 billion in 1993 to software piracy.*

I just finished the following experiment with EXBG 2.1: I played ten 9-point matches each with (a) EXBG rolling the dice and (2) me manually rolling and inputting the dice rolls. With EXBG rolling, I won 1 of 10. With me rolling (precision dice, dice cup, box lid...just like reality) I won 8 of 10. Generally, the match scores were convincingly toward EXBG in (a) and convincingly toward me in (b). I think some other people should try this, and then we should discuss what we think EXBG is doing. TIA.

Ed Rybak, OR

Hoosier Backgammon Club's Newsletter for HBC members and subscribers.

Subscription rate: \$10/year (Canada \$12 and overseas \$14). Let us know if your address changes.

Butch & Mary Ann Meese: (317) 845-8435. 7620 Kilmer Lane, Indianapolis, IN 46256-1634

**Annotated match
Kit Woolsey vs Jeremy Bagai
Internet - 9 Point Match**

In February, Kit Woolsey and Jeremy Bagai played a match and then annotated it for FIBS* players so they could see the thought process of the more experienced players. They played a fairly interesting match, logged it, and then annotated it independently. You will see reasons for their plays and cube decisions, as well as their second thoughts upon later analysis which often came to a different conclusion than their original choices.

Gerry Tesauro also volunteered TD-Gammon's valuable help. TD analyzed the whole match and listed its top 3 choices for each play along with its estimated equities. These equities are always assuming a 1-cube and they do not take into account cube ownership. Thus on a pass-take decision an equity of -0.50 would be a break-even decision (not taking cube ownership into account -- that would probably make it a little higher), since that would translate to an equity of -0.100 on a 2-cube. TD was also nice enough to

comment on the game, giving its reasons behind its choices as well as getting in a few snide remarks about their mistakes. Mark Damish (MA), first formatted the commentary for the Internet*.

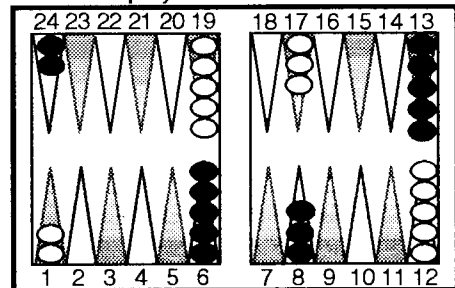
Internet*: In short, the Internet is a network of computers. People login to an Internet server. Each server has a subset of features which may include email (electronic mail) and server-to-server connections. One of the servers provides a means for players to play each other - FIBS (First International Backgammon Server).

Editor's note: I felt that the material was too good to restrict it only to the Internet. I received permission from Kit, Jeremy, Gerry and Mark to reprint the match and I thank them. Those readers who are on the Internet can drop me a line and say hello (butch@inxs.att.com).

In the backgammon positions, Kit is the black checkers and Jeremy the White. The board numbers are shown from the player on-roll point of view.

Start of Match - Game 1

BLACK to play 32?



Moved: 24/21, 13/11

Jeremy: Probably just as good as the more common 13/10, 3/11. Perhaps even better when playing against an intermediate because he may be unfamiliar with the correct replies.

TD-Gammon: Kit's opening 3-2 is the best choice in my opinion.

24/21, 13/11.....	+0.014
24/22, 13/10.....	-0.003
13/11, 13/10.....	-0.004

1994 HOOSIER BACKGAMMON CLUB Gammon Point Standings.

HBC Player of the Month for March is Butch Meese with 212 gammon points.

HBC Player of the Month for April is Woody Woodworth with 170 gammon points.

1) Chuck Strimming.....866	Kevin McLeaster..... 142	Jeff Baker..... 20
2) Butch Meese..... 774	Cyrus Mobed..... 134	J.A. Miller..... 20
3) Don Woods..... 612	Rick Reahard..... 90	Dave Cardwell..... 20
4) Ellis Bray..... 506	Alan Haas..... 80	Stu Sherman..... 20
5) Larry Strommen..... 438	Scott Richardson..... 77	John O'Hagan..... 20
6) Woody Woodworth..... 322	Craig Hampton..... 68	Angie Jones..... 10
7) Mary Ann Meese..... 300	Bill Julian..... 58	Sean Garber..... 10
8) Neil Ezell..... 268	Mick Dobratz..... 57	Steve Perlman..... 10
9) Dragan Stevanovic..... 207	Chuck Bower..... 40	Krystal Shaffer..... 10
10) Jan Gurvitz..... 196	Frank Scott..... 32	
Jim Curtis..... 166	Wendy Kaplan..... 30	

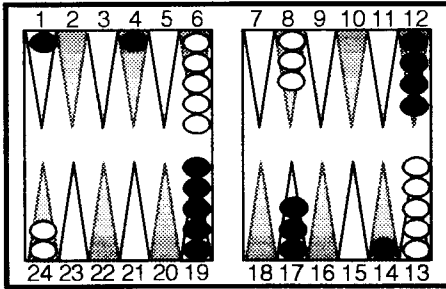
March 3rd	March 10th	March 17th	March 24th	March 31st
1st <i>Rick Reahard</i>	<i>Butch Meese</i>	<i>Mary Ann Meese</i>	<i>Chuck Strimming</i>	<i>Dragan Stevanovic</i>
2nd <i>Ellis Bray</i>	<i>Craig Hampton</i>	<i>Ellis Bray</i>	<i>Woody Woodworth</i>	<i>Butch Meese</i>
2nd <i>Woody Woodworth</i>	<i>Don Woods</i>	<i>Don Woods</i>	<i>Butch Meese</i>	---
April 7th	April 14th	April 21st	April 28th	
1st <i>Butch Meese</i>	<i>Ellis Bray</i>	<i>Woody Woodworth</i>	<i>Neil Ezell</i>	
2nd <i>Jim Curtis</i>	<i>Woody Woodworth</i>	<i>Jim Curtis</i>	<i>Woody Woodworth</i>	
2nd <i>Chuck Strimming</i>	<i>Chuck Strimming</i>	<i>Larry Strommen</i>	<i>Cyrus Mobed</i>	

BACKGAMMON Tournament Schedule

May 27-30....	15th Chicago Open, Sheraton Suites Hotel, Elk Grove Village, IL.....	(708) 674-0120
May 28-30....	Spring Gran Prix Memorial day Weekend, Embassy Suites, La Jolla, CA.....	(619) 294-2007
July 1-4.....	Michigan Summer Championships, Novi Hilton, Novi, MI.....	(810) 232-9731
July 29-31....	42nd INDIANA Open , Radisson Hotel, Indianapolis.....	(317) 845-8435
Aug 14-17....	Las Vegas Open Tournament, Stardust Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, NV.....	(702) 893-6025
Sep 5-11.....	World Cup IV and Eastern Open, Harvey's Addison Hotel, Dallas.....	(301) 299-8264

Thursdays 7:00 PM at **SPATS** (842-3465) Castleton Square between J.C.Penneys & L.S.Ayres.....845-8435

WHITE to play 54?



Moved: 13/4x

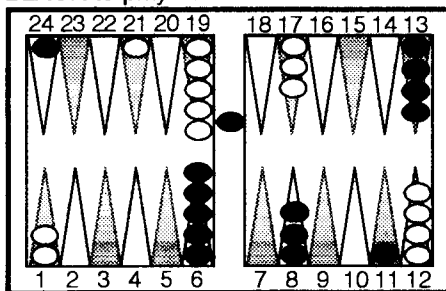
Kit: It is important for Jeremy to hit in order to prevent me from making the advanced anchor, particularly since he doesn't have any attractive fours anyway. However the double hit of 8/4x, 6/1x is just too loose. It leaves a man out of play, two direct shots, and a mess to clean up even if it works.

Jeremy: None of the usual opening 5-4's will work: 13/9, 13/8 is too passive and leaves a direct shot; 24/20, 13/8 comes under the gun on the 20-point; 24/15 leaves a double direct shot for little gain. Moving 13/4x starts a point that I want and kicks Kit off a point that he wants. The alternative to consider is hitting twice with 8/4x, 6/1x. This might be right, but I usually avoid such tempo plays unless they have great potential gains.

TD-Gammon: Correct, but not by much. While hitting an opponent off a key point is valuable, there is a lot to be said for making sure the blot hitting contest is waged on the other guy's side of the table.

13/4x.....	-0.107
24/20, 13/8.....	-0.113
8/4x, 6/1x.....	-0.142

BLACK to play 42?



Moved: B/21x 13/11

Kit: Locking up the 11-point is clearly better than anything else. You never know when some outfield point will come in very handy later in the game.

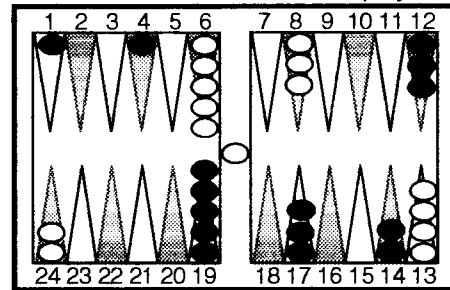
Jeremy: Hitting is clear. I used to think that 11/9 was the best deuce in this kind of position. I'd rather make the 9-point than the 11-point, and the blot would serve as a builder for 5-, 4-, and

3-points rather than just the 5-point. Now I make Kit's play. It unstacks the midpoint, bringing another checker into play, and leaves no fly shots. Note that if Kit had already made his 5-point 11/9 would be correct because the two checkers on the 11-point would be worthless as builders.

TD-Gammon: Assets are everything. Don't even think of another play.

B/21x, 13/11.....	+0.212
B/21x, 11/9.....	+0.087
B/21x, 24/22.....	+0.064

WHITE to play 21?



Moved: B/22

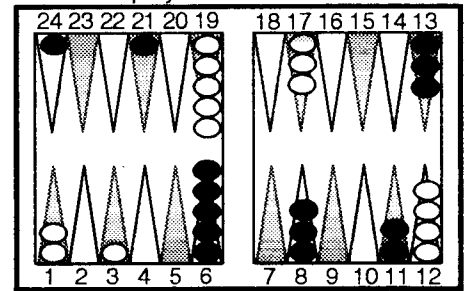
Kit: Jeremy would like to hit me off his 4-point again, but three men on the 24-point is just sick. You can spend the rest of the game trying to untangle the mess. I think Jeremy's play is better than B/23, 24/23. He would rather make the more advanced anchor of the 3-point, and since his back men aren't hemmed in yet getting off the 24-point isn't vital.

Jeremy: Three plays: B/24, 6/4x; B/23, 24/23 and B/22. Hitting on the 4-point is good and aggressive but leaves three checkers stacked on the 24-point which is very bad. Making the 23-point is strong ("much stronger than most players realize," as Kit often says) and I'll guess it is Kit's choice. I entered on the 22-point to cover more outfield and try for a more advanced anchor. No play other than these is close.

TD-Gammon: You unimaginative humans don't even consider the best play B/23, 6/5 as a candidate! I have been teaching you the importance of playing safe in the opening in many situations, so now the thought of slotting into a double shot never occurs to you. Yet thematically it is the right play. Jeremy already has more men back, so being hit won't hurt him much. Kit has no board, so it isn't particularly dangerous. Jeremy wants to play as flexibly as possible. If he is hit he improves his chances of making an advanced anchor; if not, he can make his 5-point. In all fairness, Jeremy's actual play was not too far off the mark.

B/23, 6/5.....	-0.248
B/24, 6/4x.....	-0.257
B/22.....	-0.265

BLACK to play 51?



Moved: 13/8 21/20

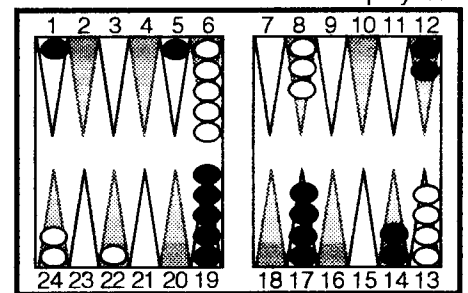
Kit: Hitting loose with 8/3x, 21/20 accomplishes little if it works and loses a lot if it doesn't. Running with 21/15 is possible, but just leaves me scrambling next turn when I should be doing constructive things. My play covers his whole outer board, makes a move toward the best advanced anchor, and brings some more firepower into play on the offensive front.

Jeremy: This play is fine although I would choose 21/15. It doesn't strip the midpoint and tries to escape a checker.

TD-Gammon: Kit is on the wrong theme here. He is ahead in the race, so he should be trying to extricate the back men rather than going after an advanced anchor. His actual play just invites Jeremy to do what he should have done last roll -- slot the 5-point.

24/23, 21/16.....	+0.184
21/15.....	+0.176
24/23, 13/8.....	+0.165
21/20, 13/8.....	+0.149

WHITE to play 22?



Moved: 24/22 13/11 6/4 6/4

Kit: This is a little rich for my blood. Jeremy's idea is to make sure he has some advanced anchor, and he feels that getting hit on the 11-point may not be too serious. I prefer nailing the offense down with 13/11(2), 6/4(2). Getting an advanced anchor isn't too vital since I have no board, and not leaving a shot plus making the potentially very valuable 11-point looks

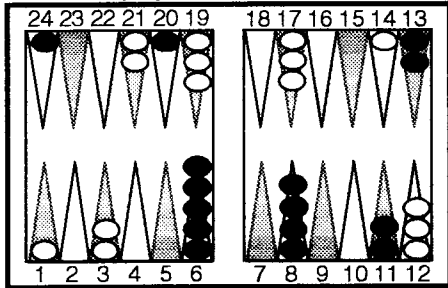
more important to me. It should be noted that 24/20(2), often the right play with 2-2, would be incorrect here. The reason is that I haven't begun to build my board so the back men aren't in trouble yet. With the 2-2 roll such a fine developing roll, offense comes before defense.

Jeremy: Making the 20-point is nice but it does nothing offensively and leaves an awkward two. Making the 4-point is very strong. Making the 11-point after that would be good offensively, but would strip the midpoint and do nothing defensively. Making the 4-point and anchoring on the 22-point leaves a balanced position. With the anchor I'm willing to expose a blot on the 11-point which will be very useful if not hit. I like my play.

TD-Gammon: Jeremy got a bit carried away here. An advanced anchor just isn't all that important. Kit's more solid suggestion is the clear winner.

13/11(2), 6/4(2).....	-0.053
24/22, 13/11, 6/4(2).....	-0.089
24/22, 6/4, 6/4.....	-0.096

BLACK to play 61?



Moved: 20/14x/13

Kit: Clearly better than making my 5-point, which would leave Jeremy a lot of counterplay. By sending a fourth man back I rip away a key builder, making it

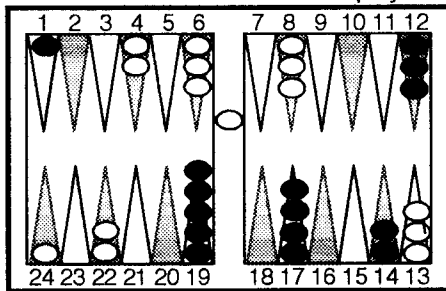
even more difficult for him to build his board. At the same time, I am now playing with only one man back, which is good.

Jeremy: Much better than making the 5-point which would leave the blot on the 20-point under the gun with me having a full roll.

TD-Gammon: Absolutely! Kit follows the proper theme -- when ahead in the race, run for home. He punishes Jeremy's last play. Not remotely close.

20/14x/13.....	+0.172
20/14x, 24/23.....	+0.108
11/5, 6/5.....	+0.030

WHITE to play 21?



Moved: B/24 13/11

Kit: The 1-3 structure is ok here and the builder on the 11-point could be very important, so Jeremy's play is better than B/23, 24/23. Slotting plays such as B/23, 6/5 or B/23, 8/7 don't look right. While Jeremy may wind up playing a back game, he doesn't have to try to get into one yet. He would rather win frontwards.

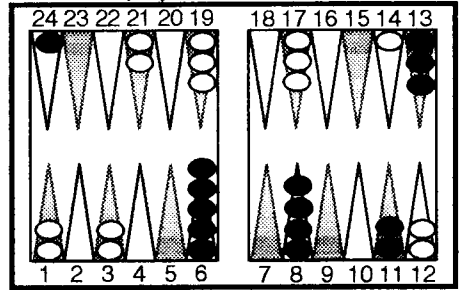
Jeremy: B/23, 24/23 might be better if I were committed to playing a back game because the 2-3 back game is usually a tad better than the 1-3 back game. But I'm not playing a back game yet by any means, and putting the builder on the

11-point is a big plus. B/22 doesn't give me the security of two defensive points and doesn't give me the new offensive builder.

TD-Gammon: Good play. Jeremy properly keeps all his options open rather than committing himself to one path.

B/24, 13/11.....	-0.151
B/23, 6/5.....	-0.181
B/24, 8/6.....	-0.194

BLACK to play 61?



Moved: 11/5 6/5

Kit: Debatable. The 5-point is generally better than the bar point, but in this position with Jeremy having two men pinned on my ace point the bar point is pretty strong. In addition my play leaves a key blot on the 11-point and somewhat cramps the position. I think I should have played 13/7, 8/7.

Jeremy: A big part of jumping from beginner to intermediate lies in understanding how much better this play is over making the bar point with 13/7, 8/7. The 5-point is intrinsically much more important than the bar point, and in this case the play is only made clearer by comparing the unstacking of the 6-point to the stripping of the midpoint.

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

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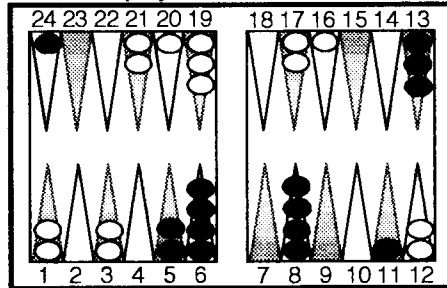


TD-Gammon: The 5-point it is, but only by a little bit. Kit's arguments for making the bar point are quite sound, but the 5-point is still the 5-point!

11/5, 6/5.....	+0.234
13/7, 8/7.....	+0.227
24/18, 6/5.....	+0.063

TD-Gammon: Double? What are we talking about? Not even close. Sure Kit has the advantage, but it isn't all that great and his threats aren't particularly strong.

BLACK to play 52?



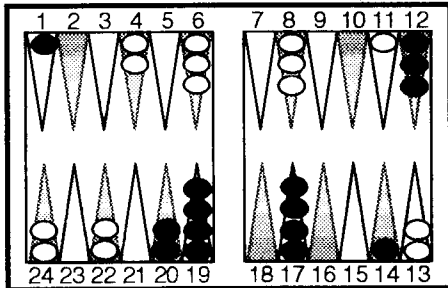
Moved: 11/6 24/22

Kit: Ugly, but there isn't much else. Picking up the stray blot is helpful, and the advance to the 22-point may force Jeremy to attack before he is ready.

Jeremy: Not a great roll. First note that all of Magriel's criteria argue for Kit to make a safe play. He has fewer men back and no anchor. If he mistakenly decided to slot his 4-point, 1/2 of my rolls would nullify his advantage instantly. In this position the relative loss of being hit is huge. What safe play should Kit make? The blot on the 11-point is of little value because the 5-point is already made, so Kit plays 11/6. 13/8 would leave the blot there and strip the midpoint. With the two, Kit chooses 24/22 over 8/6. This keeps a better distribution in the front, but subjects his blot to attack. However with four men back my attack isn't likely to be very threatening, so I'll go along with 24/22. Good play of a bad roll.

TD-Gammon: I guess I can excuse Kit for not finding the best play of 11/4. I had to search hard for it myself. It sure looks wrong to slot into a double shot, particularly when you have only one man back to your opponent's four. The key is that Kit's play is so, so ugly. Also, look at the neat duplication from my play -- Jeremy needs aces and threes to hit, aces and threes to cover the blot on the 5-point. In addition it will cost Jeremy one of his anchors to hit, and losing an anchor could come back to haunt him in the future. Actually, Kit's play is almost as good.

WHITE to play 32?



Moved: 11/9 8/5

Kit: Looks best. Now Jeremy must slot, since there is no flexible way to play safe. He needs to keep his back anchors in case of an accident. If he is hit, it may well turn into a back game.

Jeremy: If you liked 11/8, 24/22 go back and reread Magriel's chapter 16: Safe Play vs. Bold Play. (I reread the whole book twice a year -- it's a masterpiece). Magriel offers the following criteria for Safe Play vs. Bold Play: Do you have an advanced anchor? Is your board stronger (more points, fewer blots) than your opponent's? Do you have more men back than your opponent? Yes's indicate bold plays; No's indicate safe plays. I have more men back, two anchors, and an equally strong board. I should make a bold play. The logic works like this: Being hit in this position incurs a relatively small loss for me because I'm nowhere near ready to escape and/or disengage anyway. What bold play should I make? The point on the board that I want most is my 5-point -- so I start it. 11/9 is the only constructive deuce. 24/22 would be a mistake because I may want to play a back game if my forward blots are hit.

TD-Gammon: Well done, guys. It's nice to see that you are finally following the proper theme for the position.

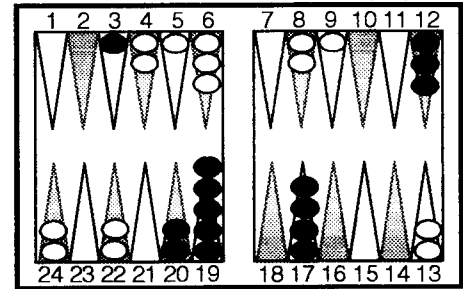
11/9, 8/5.....	-0.266
13/11, 8/5.....	-0.294
8/5, 6/4.....	-0.317

Cube Action?

Jeremy: Kit is correct not to double. My position is very sound, with winning chances frontwards and backwards. More importantly, it's very hard to find a sequence where I would have a drop next roll. Even when things go well Kit will almost always still be able to double me in.

11/4.....	+0.147
24/22, 11/6.....	+0.142
11/6, 8/6.....	+0.140

WHITE to play 43?



Moved: 9/5 6/3x

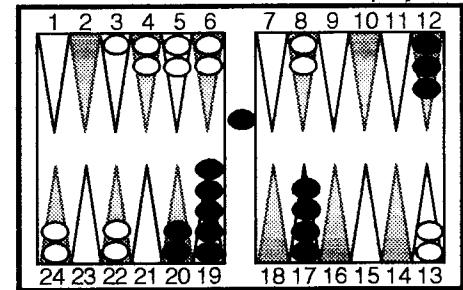
Jeremy: Nothing has changed -- I still want to make bold plays. Nothing else is close.

TD-Gammon: I agree -- the loose hit is quite clear.

9/5, 6/3x.....	-0.047
9/5, 24/21.....	-0.188
9/5, 13/10.....	-0.225

BLACK to play 64: DANCES

WHITE to play 54?



Moved: 8/3 22/18

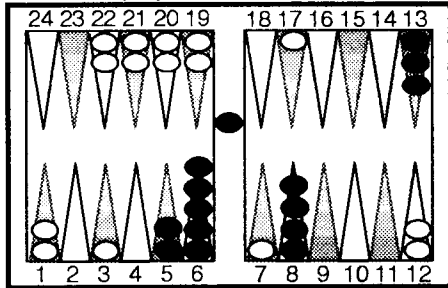
Kit: Jeremy is correct to get his back men moving while he has the opportunity to do so safely. Once I enter, it won't be as easy. Now he has a chance to grab my bar point and get all 15 of his men moving around the board as one unit.

Jeremy: The five is clear and then I have three reasonable fours. We can eliminate 13/9 because it divides my army into two unnecessarily. 22/18 is thematic. I'm no longer playing a back game so I start to extricate my back checkers. But at some risk. I give up my advanced anchor and leave three blots. What about 8/4? This does nothing with my back men, but they aren't in any great danger of being primed now anyway. The builder on the 4-point is just as useful as on the 8-point. More importantly, I retain my anchor on the 22-point in case of accident. I think 8/4, 8/3 is best. I don't think I even considered it over the board. Kent Goulding wrote that most errors occur not from selecting the wrong play over the right play, but by never seeing the right play in the first place. He is correct.

TD-Gammon: Jeremy should have stuck to his feel at the table. His actual play is clearly best. Taking this safe chance to liberate the back men is the right idea. 8/4, 8/3 is much too cramping.

22/18, 8/3.....	+0.142
13/9, 8/3.....	+0.096
8/4, 8/3.....	+0.029

BLACK to play 52?



Moved: B/18

Kit: This leaves Jeremy 24 hitting numbers, but if he misses I'm in great shape and even if he hits I will be ok if I can enter reasonably quickly. If I stop on the 23-point, I don't have a decent five. B/23, 8/3x is clearly too loose considering his 4-point board, and B/23, 13/8 is pretty ugly.

Jeremy: Three legal fives. 13/8 strips the midpoint, stacks the 8-point, and is generally non-constructive. Yet it is the safest play against my 4-point board and might be correct. 8/3x is the most constructive if it works, but has the most to lose when it doesn't. 23/18 doesn't leave a second blot and keeps a good general distribution, but does leave 24 numbers to hit on a point that I would dearly love to make. I have no clue which is better, but would probably play B/23, 8/3x.

TD-Gammon: The problem with Kit's play is that when Jeremy does hit he also starts the bar point, which is the point Jeremy wants to make. Bringing the fifth checker to the 8-point is a bit ugly, but Kit's position can handle it. The key is to see that Kit's main priority is to run the back man, not shuffle checkers in the inner board, so a fifth checker on the 8-point doesn't hurt him all that much. His back checker is much safer hiding on the 23-point out of harm's way.

B/23, 13/8.....	-0.019
B/18.....	-0.056
B/23, 8/3x.....	-0.068

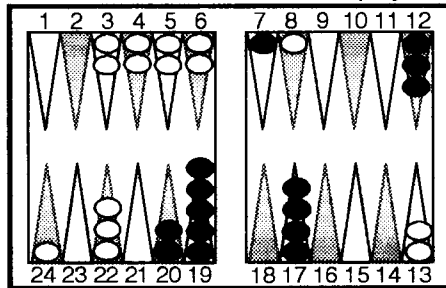
Cube Action?

Jeremy: Now I am correct not to double. Making the bar point with a 6-1 followed by a fan doesn't look like a pass -- I would still have four men back and Kit would be a favorite to enter next

roll. It looks like boxes-fan is the only market losing sequence, which clearly isn't enough.

TD-Gammon: Double? Who are you kidding. You're barely winning. Don't put such thoughts into innocent people's minds. Get ahead in the race first.

WHITE to play 31?



Moved: 24/21 8/7x

Kit: Jeremy splits his back men, virtually ensuring that he will be able to make some advanced anchor if he needs it. Reasonable, but I prefer going all out for the offensive bar point with 13/10, 8/7x. Making that bar point is just huge for him now.

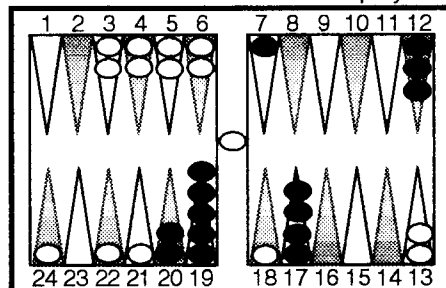
Jeremy: Leaving the bar point slotted is a worthwhile risk. 13/10 to maximize builders for the bar point is much too loose -- it might be right if Kit didn't have his 5-point and I had an advanced anchor. That leaves 24/21 and 18/15. 18/15 has the benefit of creating 5-3 and 4-4 as bar point making numbers, but isolates the back checkers. 24/21 is likely to produce an advanced anchor, but leaves a lot of blots when Kit enters with doubles. It's close, but I still like my play.

TD-Gammon: Jeremy's play is slightly the best, but all the reasonable plays are pretty close. Kit's concept of going all out after the bar point is not far off.

24/21, 8/7x.....	+0.134
18/15, 8/7x.....	+0.131
13/10, 8/7x.....	+0.126

BLACK played 61 with B/18x

WHITE to play 43?



Moved: B/21 18/15

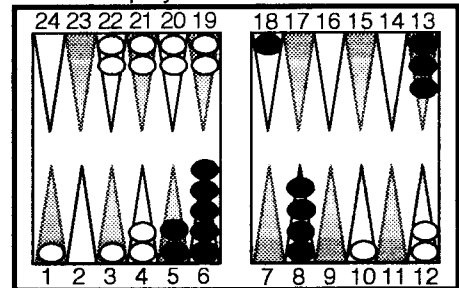
Kit: Looks best. The anchor in my inner board is much better protection against getting blitzed than making my bar point. Jeremy now covers the entire outfield, and if his outfield blot is hit he has a return six.

Jeremy: This is better than making the bar point. I don't want to leave three blots in Kit's board vulnerable to attack.

TD-Gammon: I'm afraid you guys are a bit confused on this one. Just make the defensive bar point like a normal computer. This puts full pressure on the outfield, and you will have good chances to make another anchor in addition. The blots in the inner board aren't in much danger since Kit isn't about to be attacking with Jeremy having a four point board. Your play gives Kit a much smoother ride home.

B/18.....	-0.146
B/21, 18/15.....	-0.217
B/22, 18/14.....	-0.257

BLACK to play 53?



Moved: 18/13 8/5

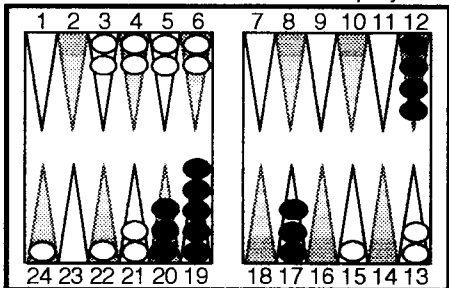
Kit: This play is far from clear. It is safe and well-balanced, but now Jeremy has the opportunity to make my 3-point and have a very powerful defensive structure. The alternative is 8/3x, 5/3, making an important offensive point and unstacking my heavy six and eight points as well as putting Jeremy on the bar. The downside of course is the blot left on his bar point. He would have a few return shots at it, and even if it isn't hit I would still have to get it to safety next turn. It's a tough choice, but if I had to do it over again I think I would make the 3-point.

Jeremy: Good play. Making the 3-point would leave eight immediate return shots and the blot would not be guaranteed safety on the next roll. Kit's play leaves no blots, smooths out the position, and will most likely lead to a perfectly efficient cube. If you wanted to make the 3-point, go back and reread Magriel's chapter 16 again.

TD-Gammon: Making the 3-point is just barely better. Really, it is too close to call. The very sound arguments for both plays just balance each other out.

8/3x, 6/3.....	+0.343
18/13, 8/5.....	+0.340
18/10x.....	+0.232

WHITE to play 42?



Moved: 22/18 15/13

leave one of my anchors prematurely. However, that doesn't mean the play is wrong. If I do have to leave his 3-point early I'll usually have the same holding game I'm resigning myself to with my actual play. On the other hand, if Kit rolls big doubles and my timing is restored I'll be much happier with the two anchors. I now think 24/22, 15/11 is best.

TD-Gammon: Jeremy's committal play is not best, as he saw in the post-mortem. Simply make the anchor and sit on the position, waiting to see which way the wind blows.

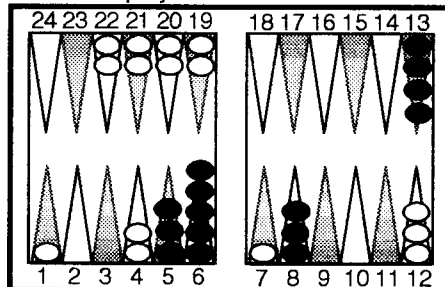
24/22, 15/11.....	-0.320
24/22, 13/9.....	-0.347
22/18, 15/13.....	-0.378

Cube Action?

Jeremy: Once again, not quite a double. Kit needs another point somewhere to ensure a smooth bearin. As long as the bar point is open I'm likely to have a take, so there is little danger of losing his market. Also quite important is that my board is excellent.

TD-Gammon: Correct. Kit isn't far from a double, but the position just isn't volatile enough to send the cube over with an equity of 0.378. He needs a bit more.

BLACK to play 53?

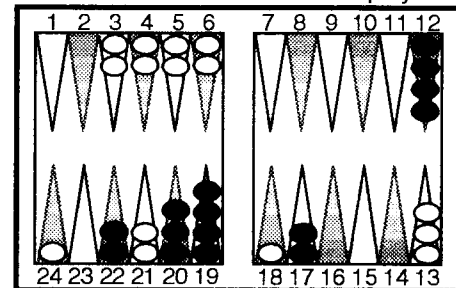


Moved: 8/3 6/3

TD-Gammon: Making the 3-point is correct, but not as automatic as one might think. 13/5 is definitely in the ball park, due to the extra flexibility from the spare on the 8-point.

8/3, 6/3.....	+0.416
13/5.....	+0.376
13/8, 6/3.....	+0.180

WHITE to play 43?



Moved: 18/11

TD-Gammon: So you humans thought this play was automatic, did you? Well, not only is it not automatic; it is wrong. The correct play is 21/18, 13/9. Don't underestimate the power of the defensive bar point in this sort of position. The remaining back men aren't in too much danger of being attacked, and there will be the chance to make a second anchor which will be very big.

21/18, 13/9.....	-0.402
18/11.....	-0.440
18/14, 13/10.....	-0.461

Kit: Jeremy thinks his best defensive chances lie in hanging back on my ace point. I do not agree. Any double anchor is quite effective for generating shots. By staying back, he risks eventually getting attacked at just the wrong time. I strongly believe he should have played 24/22, 15/11. Even though the timing is not great for a 3-4 back/holding game, this play will make life very difficult for me. Sure, I will be able to dump checkers behind his rear anchor, but I will still have plenty of problems. In addition, after making my 3-point he can't be blown away.

Jeremy: Hmm. I think I like this play better than 15/9 because the blot on his bar point is only attacked by two builders and may also provoke an exchange of hits earlier. But the real question is why not 24/22, 15/11 creating the 3-4 back game. I remember thinking that I didn't have enough timing for the back game -- meaning that I would likely be forced to

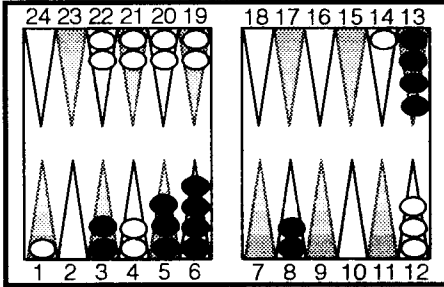
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Black DOUBLES?



Kit: This is a decent double. I have a big racing lead, so if I can come home safely I will almost certainly win. I now have a good offensive structure, so I have the additional chance of attacking his back blot. If I roll doubles and clear the midpoint or if I point on him and he flunks I will lose my market, so doubling looks ok.

Jerney: A classic double. Kit has a 39 pip lead against a 4-point holding game. My blot on his ace point is pretty insignificant and largely overrated by many players. It won't cause him many problems.

TD-Gammon: Right on! Equity of +0.440 and a fair amount of volatility. A fine double.

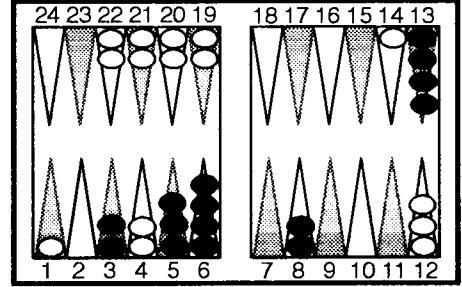
White TAKES.

Kit: A very clear take. Granted Jeremy is well behind in the race, but he will have good chances to get a shot or two. Of great importance is that his offensive board is perfect, so if he hits a shot he will have a very strong redblout immediately. If his board weren't so good, he might not have a take.

Jerney: Absolutely. Kit's bar point is open and my board is perfect. If either of these cube actions passed you by, you need Robertie's Advanced Backgammon. It is, by far, the best compendium of reference positions like this which need to be mastered by any serious player. Magriel and Robertie: those two alone will take you a long, long, way.

TD-Gammon: Definitely! Equity of -0.440 is clear take. Not bad cube handling for a couple of humans.

BLACK to play 43?



Moved: 6/2 5/2

TD-Gammon: I'm afraid you guys are playing too fast without considering all the possibilities. Kit's main goal here is to clear his midpoint, and making the 2-point has nothing to do with that. He leaves himself a thin position with only one spare left in his inner board. He should play 13/6. This starts to clear the midpoint and keeps more of an attack force in place. Making the 2-point isn't so important here, because Jeremy probably won't be hanging back on Kit's ace point too long anyway.

13/6.....	+0.462
6/2, 5/2.....	+0.439
6/3, 5/1x.....	+0.234

...match continues next issue...

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