

Hoosier
Backgammon
Club

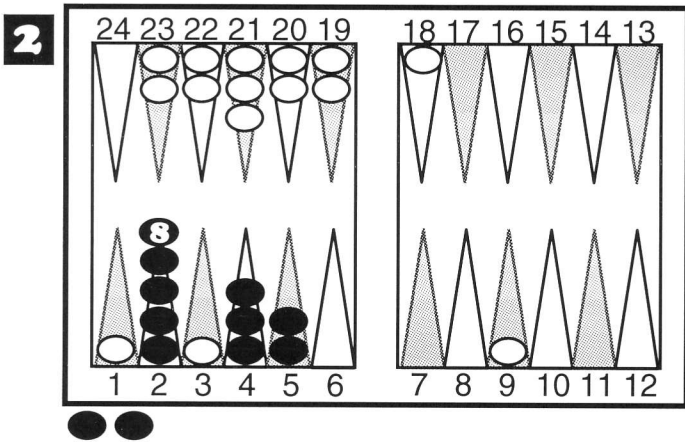
April
1997



Indiana Is In The Midwest, Isn't It?

by Chuck Bower

9-Point Match Black - 0 White - 2
Black to play 2-1?



An enjoyable backgammon *rite of spring* is **Chicago's Midwest Championships** put on by Bill Davis and friends. The Hoosier Backgammon Club was well represented by Sean Garber, David Groner, the Meeses, Janice Newman, Larry Strommen, and yours truly. With a full field of 64 in the Championship Division including former winners Hal Heinrich, Frank Talbot (three time champion), Howard Markowitz, Abbas Zaltash, and Jake Jacobs (defending champion), you'd think playing HBC opponents would be unlikely. Not in my case, as I drew (and lost to) Dave Groner in the first round. After outrolling Michigan's Dean Adamian in my first consolation match, I then squared off with Larry Strommen.

Hey, I can do this just about any Thursday night!

The illustrated Position came up in my match against Larry. Down 0-2 in a 9-point match, I doubled with a broken 6-prime against Larry's 1-3 backgame. After some amazing rolling (both horrendously bad and miraculously good) by both sides, I had a tough decision with the 2-1 roll. What are the candidate plays? There are several, but in any case, there is no way to avoid leaving a shot. Any play which leaves more than the minimum number of shots (11) seems suspect. For example, 4/3x, 2/off leaves 15 immediate shots compared with 11 for the plays which hit on the 1-point (2/off, 2/1x; 4/3x/1x; or 4/2/1x). Since any hit by White is likely a game loser for Black (unless Black continues the string of miracle rolls with an immediate 6-1), the extra four shots don't seem right, particularly considering that the subsequent position looks less safe if White stays on the bar (25% of the time).

Surely the play which leaves the fewest shots **for the remainder of the game** will produce the most winners. It seems clear that 4/2/1x will leave fewer shots overall than 4/3x/1x. 2/off, 2/1x looks like it will leave approximately the same number of shots (as 4/2/1x), the main difference being an odd number of checkers on the highest 2 points (5) as compared to an even number (4) with the 4/2/1x play. Given that an entry failure by White will still leave Black wanting to cover the blot on the 1-point, it's a tough call as to whether or not the third checker on the four point will help or hinder.

Which play wins the most gammons? Now 4/2/1x looks inferior to the double hit, because two on the rail should probably garner more gammons. 2/off, 2/1x has the advantage of an extra checker off. Since this extra checker leaves Black with an even number remaining on the board, it has to be a candidate for *gammon-master*.

What does Jellyfish have to say? One must be careful using cubeless rollouts here. Obviously, if White hits, Black is glad to have only 12 remaining checkers **IF THE GAME WILL BE ROLLED TO THE END**. But as already noted, a hit now by White will lead to a cube-out, whether or not Black has the extra checker off. Fortunately Jellyfish has a *cube-ful* rollout option, but only at level-5 (one-ply evaluation) and then the cube is only used when the opponent will drop.

Backgammon Web Site of the Month:

Backgammon GALORE! <http://www.bkgm.com/>

Featuring the **Best of rec.games.backgammon** maintained by **Tom Keith**

Hoosier Backgammon Club's Newsletter

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Nevertheless, in this position that is pretty realistic.

At level-6 (one-roll lookahead) cubeless rollouts, 2/off, 2/1x wins the most games (64%) and comes in a close second in gammons (29%). Play 4/3x/1x wins the most gammons (31%) but wins the fewest games (60%). 4/2/1x is intermediate in wins (63%) but by far the worst in gammons (24%). If neither player had cube access, taking the extra checker off would be the clear winner.

At level-5 **cubeless**, the results are virtually identical. This is a good *sanity check* that Jellyfish is playing as well at level-5 as at level-6. So what happens when JF plays with White owning the cube? Now 4/2/1x wins the most games (58%) but only by a bit. 2/off, 2/1x comes in a close second in total wins with 57.5%. 4/3x/1x still grabs the most gammons (30%) but continues to fall well behind in total wins with only 54%. Meanwhile taking the extra checker off (2/off, 2/1x) gets a lot of gammons itself (28%). 4/2/1x remains distant in gammon wins with 24%.

The bottom line is that 2/off, 2/1x comes in a close second in both total wins and gammon wins, which is enough to make it the best play overall. Our early analysis (before looking at Jellyfish rollout results) hinted at this. It looked like 2/off, 2/1x should be about equal to 4/2/1x for leaving fewest shots for the rest of the game, and having the extra checker off helped win a lot of gammons (competing with 4/3x/1x). It seemed pretty clear that the other two plays could not be BEST in BOTH categories (most total wins and most gammon wins). And what play did I make in the heat of the battle? Unfortunately for me, I chose 4/3x/1x and Larry justly punished me by rolling a one. Larry went on to win the game, and later the match. Next tournament, I play in will be A LOT more than 180 miles from Indy!

1997 HBC Gammon Point Standings.

Player of the Month for March
was **Chuck Stimming**
with 194 gammon points.

- 1) Chuck Stimming.....426
- 2) Butch Meese.....368
- 3) Larry Strommen.....296
- 4) Dave Groner.....260
- 5) Sean Garber.....252
- 6) Kevin McLeaster.....216
- 7) Woody Woodworth.....198
- 8) Don Woods.....194
- 9) Jan Gurvitz.....180
- T10) Alan Haas.....170
- T10) Mary Ann Meese.....170
- Jim Curtis.....164
- Gabe Stiasny.....106
- J.A. Miller.....80
- Peter Kalba.....30
- Brian Nelson.....20
- Reggie Porter.....10
- Jim Clunie.....10
- Rod Hali.....10
- Rick Reahard.....10
- Bill Julian.....10



45th
INDIANA
Open
Backgammon
Tournament

Labor Day Weekend
Radisson Hotel • Indianapolis

	March 6th	March 13th	March 20th	March 27th
1st	Dave Groner	Chuck Stimming	Woody Woodworth	Alan Haas
2nd	Sean Garber	Butch Meese	Chuck Stimming	Dave Groner
2nd	Larry Strommen	Kevin McLeaster	Jim Curtis	Gabe Stiasny

Backgammon Tournament Schedule

Apr 22-27...	4th Worldwide Twin Championships , Four Queen Hotel, Las Vegas NV...	(702) 893-6025
May 23-26..	18th Annual Chicago Open , Wyndham Hamilton Hotel, Itasca IL.....	(847) 674-0120
Jun 20-22...	1997 Georgia Championships & Peach Cup , Atlanta Ga.....	(770) 333-1876
Jul 3-6.....	Michigan Summer Championships , Novi Hotel, Novi MI.....	(810) 232-9731
Au 29-Se 1.	45th Indiana Open , Radisson Hotel, Indianapolis IN.....	(317) 255-8902

Thursdays... 7:00 PM at **Wildcat Brewing Company** (872-3446) 92nd & North Michigan Road 255-8902