



Hoosier  
Backgammon  
Club

January 1998

**Happy New Year**

**HBC's Player of Year:  
Don Woods**

Old news...new year...**Don Woods** repeats as **HBC's Player of the Year**. There were some tense times during December. Don only had a 20 point lead at the end of November over Chuck Stimming. Even on the last night of the year, Don had only a 30 point lead. Don and Chuck were doing a lot of looking over the others shoulder the whole night. But Chuck watched Don finish first and win his second title in a row. Congratulations to all the players who finished in the 1997 **Top Ten**. Jim Mieske from Cincinnati makes the Top Ten for the first time even though Jim only played for part of the year while being on temporary assignment at Lilly. A picture of the Top 3 players of 1997 is on the HBC Home Page:

<http://home.att.net/~meese/hbclocal.htm>

**HBC's Awards  
Tournament**

Sunday...February 1, 1998  
Wildcat Brewing Company

2 Divisions...**Open** \$20 (OSP \$10) **Limited** \$8

Registration 12 Noon - 12:45 PM  
Awards 12:45 PM - 1:00 PM  
Play Begins 1:00 PM

Pre-Register either by phone 255-8902  
or email: [meese@worldnet.att.net](mailto:meese@worldnet.att.net)

Three more Sunday tournaments are planned for 1998.

**1997 Players of the Month ReCap**

January..... Chuck Stimming  
February..... Butch Meese  
March..... Chuck Stimming  
April..... Don Woods  
May..... Don Woods  
June..... Butch Meese  
July..... Jim Curtis  
August..... Jim Curtis  
September..... Don Woods/Butch Meese  
October..... Don Woods  
November..... Chuck Stimming  
December..... Jim Curtis

1997 Final **HOOSIER BACKGAMMON CLUB** Gammon Point Standings.  
HBC Player of the Month for December was **Jim Curtis** with 142 gammon points.

**Note: Gammon points will not awarded for the Indiana Open.**

1) <b>Don Woods</b> ..... 1552	Richard Heinz..... 200	Jim Painter..... 30
2) <b>Chuck Stimming</b> ..... 1472	Chuck Bower..... 198	Brian Nelson..... 20
3) <b>Butch Meese</b> ..... 1370	Al Gomez..... 198	Rod Hali..... 10
4) <b>Jim Curtis</b> ..... 1192	David Schwind..... 182	Jana Miller..... 10
5) <b>Sean Garber</b> ..... 1130	Luke Clippinger..... 178	Rick Reahard..... 10
6) <b>Larry Strommen</b> ..... 832	John Brussel..... 120	Rudy Citrom..... 10
7) <b>Mary Ann Meese</b> ..... 782	Brett Robey..... 96	Phil Barrett..... 10
8) <b>Jan Gurvitz</b> ..... 658	Mark Larios..... 96	Lance Jenkins..... 10
9) <b>Dave Groner</b> ..... 634	Janice Newman..... 84	Jon Stephens..... 10
10) <b>Jim Mieske</b> ..... 424	J.A. Miller..... 80	Bill Julian..... 10
Alan Haas..... 380	Bill Gheen..... 70	Bud Robey..... 10
Kevin McLeaster..... 376	John Ritchie..... 64	Diana Dialidonis..... 10
Peter Kalba..... 316	Herb Gurland..... 47	Reggie Porter..... 10
Woody Woodworth..... 296	Mary Ritchie..... 47	Alan Tavel..... 10
Gabe Stiasny..... 250	Frank Scott..... 42	Jim Clunie..... 10

December 4th  
1st Alan Haas  
2nd Al Gomez  
2nd Sean Garber

December 11th  
Mary Ann Meese  
Jim Curtis  
Jim Mieske

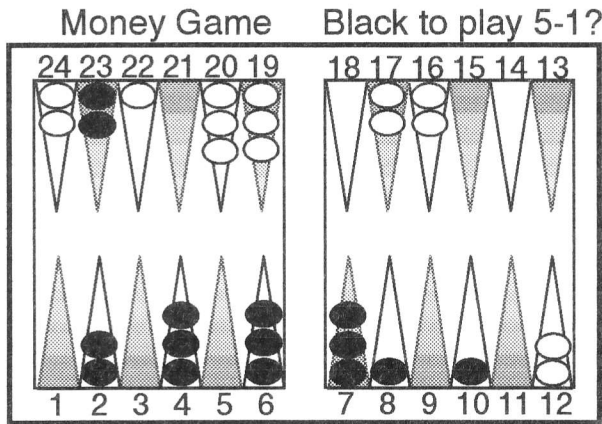
December 18th  
Don Woods  
David Schwind  
Jim Curtis

December 25th  
Merry  
Christmas

**Hoosier Backgammon Club's Newsletter**

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**To Slot or Not to Slot;  
That Is the Question**  
by Chuck Bower



Nice roll! Now, how do you make the most of it? The hit should be clear, since you may never get another shot with many options for the five. The first is 23/18. You can also slot one of the open home points; 5-point, 3-point or 1-point. Finally, there is the safe play of 7/2. Which is best?

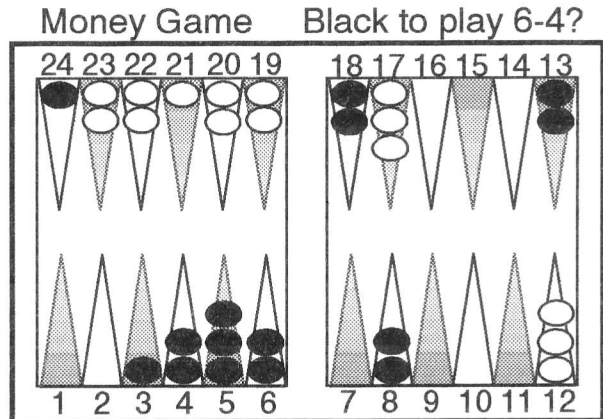
Notice that you own the cube. If you didn't notice it...Shame! If you had a big lead (interpret that-probable cash) then minimizing shots would probably be best. Problem is, even if White fans you have a long way to go. This argues against the inefficient 7/2. If you choose to slot, 6/1 looks pretty lame. Again, you aren't yet close to a cash so you want to take the maximum advantage of your checker distribution.

Normally slotting an inner-board point when the opponent is on the bar is reserved for positions where it will be difficult to make the slotted point naturally (that is, without slotting). Here Black has four different builders for the 5-point, and plenty for the 3-point as well. Is this the exception to the rule?

Most experts tell you that counting shots is almost never necessary (well, for them, anyway!). Here, that may be the case as well. Counting shows two things about the 23/18 play: 1) White gets fewer shots and 2) on average, when White hits, Black gets more return shots.

If Black keeps his/her flexibility and can also win the blot hitting contest, s/he is well on the way to winning the game. Jellyfish v3.0 level-6 rollouts say that 23/18 beats the next best alternative by a whopping 0.15 cubeless equity units. The rule holds up: *slotting is unnecessarily risky.*

**Whose Weakness  
Gets the Attention?**  
by Chuck Bower



Black has a lot of legal plays, but they really seem to boil down to three alternatives: **SAFE**--24/18, 8/4, **BOLD**--13/3, and a little of both--13/7, 13/9. If you look at the race (and you **SHOULD**) you will see that after this roll is played White will have a 31 pip lead and be on roll. That's a lot of ground to make up. Black pretty much needs to hit a shot in order to win. But avoiding a gammon is also important. Which play is best overall?

The safe play is certainly safe! Not even White's best rolls give much gammon chance. Often Black will get a shot at one of White's checkers trying to clear the midpoint. Is that enough?

The bold play seals up the home board nicely. Unfortunately it gives White some extra chances at clearing the midpoint--hit the new blot and then hope Black fans. Even if Black hits back on the 21-point, s/he has a long way to go before being able to cube.

The in-between play banks on future assets. White is left with very few knockout rolls this time. Next roll Black will shore up his/her home board and then wait for the shots to appear, either inside White's home board or outside. More wins than the safe play; fewer gammons (and maybe even more shots) than the bold play.

The key to this position is White's inflexibility: an inner board blot and only two spare checkers. Both the **safe** play AND the **bold** play take some of the pressure off of White, allowing his/her distribution to be improved with minimum risk. The **in-between** play leaves White with the fewest profitable options. This is another example of the classic play *exploit your opponent's weakness*. Here, keep the pressure on and minimize White's escape routes. Jellyfish rollouts say that **in-between** play 13/7, 13/9 is 0.05 cubeless equity units better than the **safe** play and 0.06 better than the **bold** play.

**Tournament Schedule**

Feb 13-15.....	<b>20th Annual Pittsburgh Backgammon Championships</b> , Pittsburgh, PA.....	(412) 823-7500
Mar 20-22.....	<b>1998 Midwest Championships</b> , Radisson Hotel, Lisle, IL.....	(770) 583-6464
Thursdays.....	7:00 PM at <b>Wildcat Brewing Company</b> (872-3446) 92nd & North Michigan Road .....	255-8902