


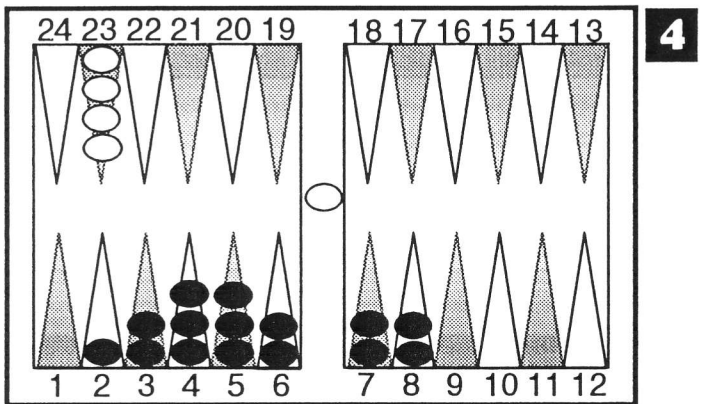
**Hoosier
Backgammon
Club**

August
2001



Two Ways To Win Are Better Than One

by Chuck Bower



Position One. 7-Point Match
Black-3, White-4. Black to play 5-4?

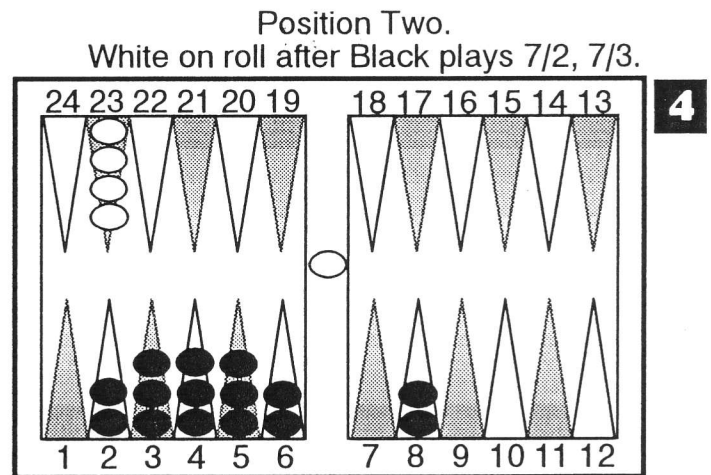
Position One occurred during the second round of the Open Doubles at the 2001 Michigan Summer Championships. White was the Atlanta pair of Carl Sorg and Gregg Cattanach. The Black checkers were under the stewardship of HBC's Butch Meese and Chuck Bower. I'd like to blame these poor dice on Butch, except that I was the one rolling. Well, if I get the blame for rolling then I should get the credit if we make the right play! There are many choices here. Please decide what you would have done before proceeding.

Let's take a look at Black's goals. We had been hoping that White would enter with a 2, hitting, so that we could recirculate and buy some time. Then, if White cooperated by rolling an ace other than 1-1, they'd be forced to blot on their acepoint and we might get some chances to send a second checker back. If Black can start the bearoff with **two** White checkers on the bar,

they will be a big favorite, winning well over 80% with proper play. Even if White anchors on Black's 2-point, Black will be a reasonable favorite (60% wins according to Snowie rollouts).

If we can't get a second checker back, we at least want to close out one and then have our spares on high points where they can be borne off before we break our board. Unfortunately this 54 roll made **all** of our goals more difficult to achieve. By comparison to getting two White checkers back, if Black closes out only one checker and places his spares efficiently on high points, they only win about 35% of games from there.

Snowie can be a big help with this type of position, not only telling us which play is best, but even **why** it's best. And you didn't think Snowie could give explanations! Let's step through the candidates one-by-one, starting with the 5th best choice and working our way up to number 1. By weighing the pluses and minuses of each position, we can determine which factors are most important.

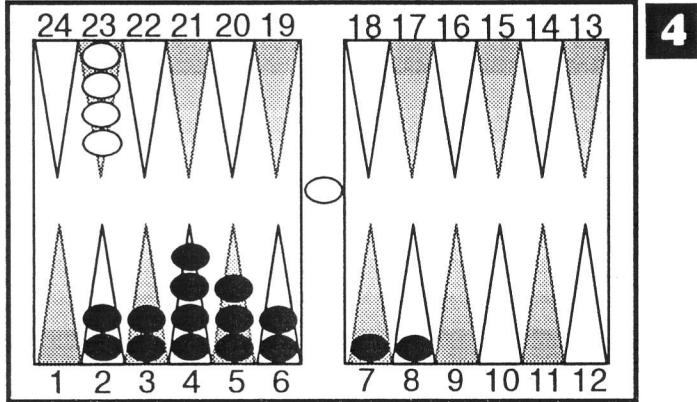


Position 2 shows the situation after Black makes the 5th best play: 7/2, 7/3. This is a well-balanced position with no blots. If White had most of their checkers still to bear off, with an imposing homeboard of their own, this would probably be the best play. One problem here is that Black's two remaining checkers can't easily help with the open acepoint, either to build or to hit loose. A minor negative is the fact that both Black's outside checkers are on the same point, making their bearing awkward. Snowie rollouts say Black will win 30.8% after 7/2, 7/3.

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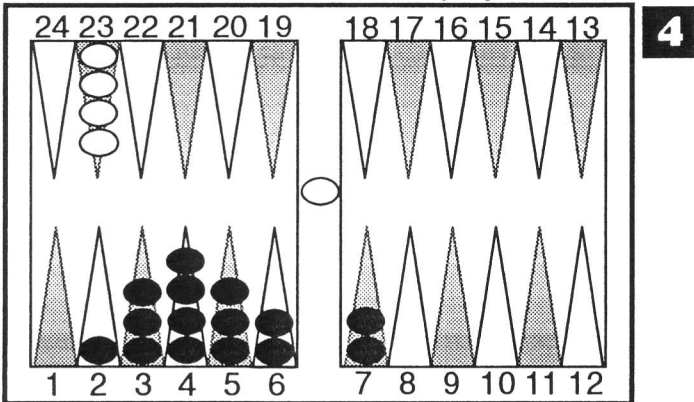
Two Better Than One
...continues from Page 1...

Position Three.
White on roll after Black plays 8/4, 7/2.



Position Three, by comparison, has a better distribution of the last two checkers, and the 8/4 move puts that spare on a higher point than the 7/3 move of position 2. Note that although now White's 6-1 joker roll sends Black back, even this is an advantage over Position 2 because not only does an immediate 1 put White on the rail, but failing that, Black will have one last chance to pick off White as they come around the board. Snowie rollouts give Black 32.1% wins after 8/4, 7/2.

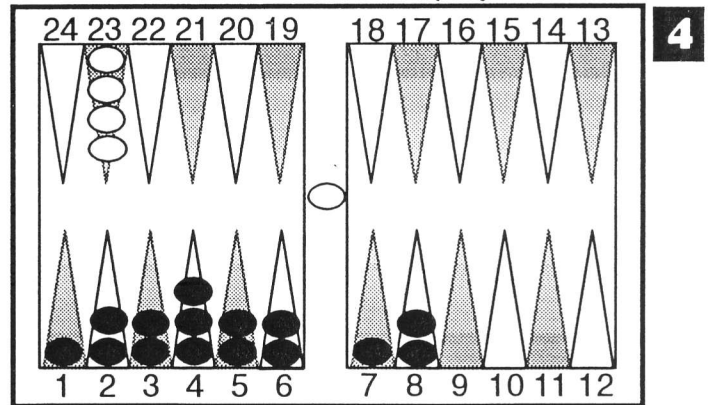
Position Four.
White on roll after Black plays 8/3, 8/4.



In Position Four, all of Black's checkers are aiming at the key unmade points. In addition, White now has two spaces to enter on instead of 1. Although in general allowing opponent to enter is a bad thing, recall that our goals included getting another White checker sent back, and that can only occur if White is allowed to play. Finally, the blot on the 2-point gives Black some chances to recirculate and buy time. That comes with the risk of White rolling a 2-6 joker. A Snowie rollout

gives 8/3, 8/4 a 32.4% chance of succeeding.

Position Five.
White on roll after Black plays 7/2, 5/1.



Position Five is quite a change over the previous ones. Let's break things down between White's fans and White's entries. If White stays on the bar, Black's 1's allow them to remake the prime, although this is an advantage for only one roll. Black's 6's allow him to complete the closeout and hopefully bring the remaining checkers in to high points. Recall that short of getting two checkers back, Black wants to begin the bearoff with their spares efficiently placed on the high points.

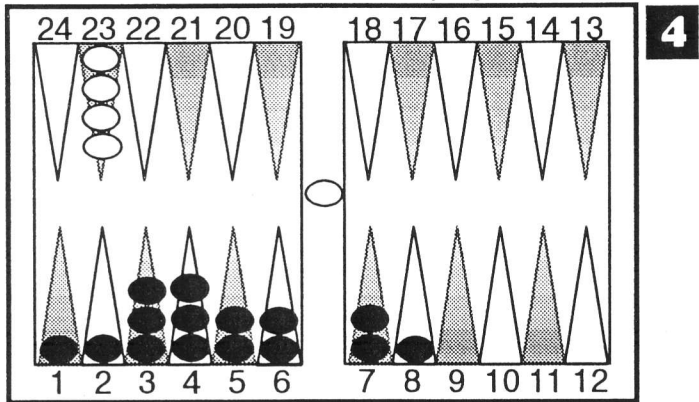
If White enters with 1-1, his forced play gives Black an immediate 2 from the bar to send a second checker back. If White jokers with 6-1, Black should be able to place those two hit checkers in decent position to catch the fleeing White checker. Although Black doesn't like this scenario, it's a worst case, and still not so bad. Any other 1 gives timing by recirculation with most 1's allowing Black to remake the 6-prime while 6's and 3's hit loose on the acepoint. The rollouts give this play a 33.3% chance of success.

HBC Summer Tournament
Sunday - July 29th, 2001

- 1st...Butch Meese**
- 2nd...Kevin Heacox**
- 2nd...Charlie Haley**

Position Six.

White on roll after Black plays 8/3, 5/1.



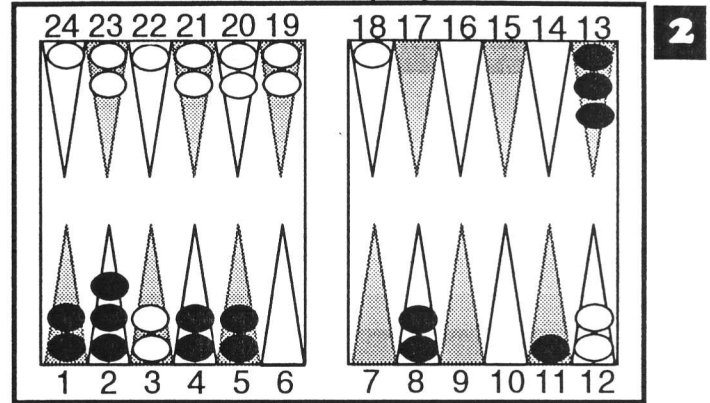
Finally we have reached the move which Snowie rollouts say is best. What are the pluses for this position? As with some previous plays, Black keeps a solid 5-prime. For the first time, however, White can enter and still be efficiently blocked by those 5-points. Any 1 except double 1's keeps White away from the edge of the prime, needing specifically a 1-6 roll to escape. By far the biggest difference between Position 6 and all others, however, is that all 20 entering numbers by White recirculate at least one Black checker, improving Black's timing. 8/3, 5/1 gives Black their best chance of getting a second checker back and vastly improving their winning chances. After this move, Snowie says Black will win 35% of the time.

Surprisingly to me, we actually found the right play at the table. We contemplated our choices for around 10 minutes, something I'm used to doing but is completely foreign to Butch! Unfortunately finding the best play wasn't enough to salvage the match. Gregg and Carl failed to enter and we closed our board. After initially cooperating by staying on the bar as we bore off several checkers, Gregg acted like a cat finally bored toying with a captured mouse and tossed double 5's.

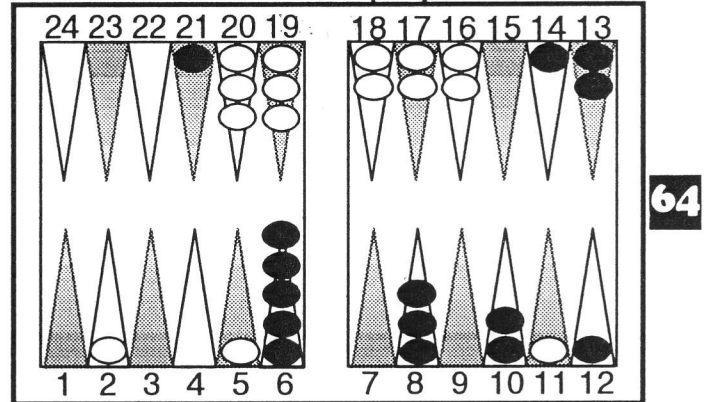
An interesting post-mortem observation is the glaring differences between the two candidates which performed best in the rollouts. Second best, 7/2, 5/1 gives Black very good prospects of completing the closeout with some long odds at getting two White checkers trapped. The top performer, 8/3, 5/1, goes for maximum recirculation and hope for trapping a second checker while still maintaining decent chances of at least starting the bearoff with one White checker on the bar. Here we gave ourselves two potential paths to victory. As is often the case, two chances are better than one.

Make Your Play

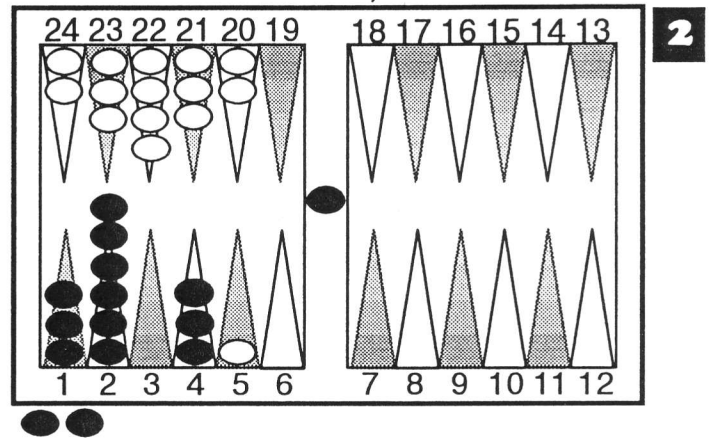
7-Point Match, Black-3, White-2
Black to play 2-2?



7-Point Match, Black-3, White-4
Black to play 6-1?



7-Point Match, Black-3, White-2
Cube action, both sides?



2001 Hoosier Backgammon Club
 The **Player of the Month** for July was
Butch Meese with 241 gammon points.

- 1 Butch Meese..... 958
- 2 Jim Curtis..... 926
- 3 Sean Garber..... 821
- 4 Mary Ann Meese..... 605
- 5 Chuck Stimming..... 593
- 6 Gabe Stiasny..... 503
- 7 Larry Strommen..... 498
- 8 Woody Woodworth..... 483
- 9 Scott Day..... 329
- 10 Rick Steele..... 247
- Dave Groner..... 238
- Al Gomez..... 236
- Terry Bateman..... 233
- Jeff Flowers..... 195
- Ron Black..... 122
- David Schwind..... 80
- Chuck Bower..... 80
- Charley Haley..... 79
- Kevin Heacox..... 58
- Frank Scott..... 48
- Alan Tavel..... 30
- Russ Haley..... 28
- Bill Benneth..... 24
- Robb Zeigler..... 20
- Jeff Arnold..... 20
- Brian Nelson..... 20
- Luke Clippinger..... 18
- John Perkins..... 16



Labor Day Weekend

Heard Across the Board.

Superstitions are bad luck.

When in dought, clear from the rear.

Luck strikes every four seconds.

Where did you get that roll?

It's a pass if you can reset your board in two seconds or less.

I'd take that in a money game.

When in dought, hit.

Never give up.

Got to get them in before you get them off.

How would a good player play this?

A checker off is a checker off.

Free Lecture
 at 49th Indiana Open by
 World Champion and Author
Bill Robertie

Friday, August 31st, 3:00 PM

	<u>July 5th</u>	<u>July 12th</u>	<u>July 19th</u>	<u>July 26th</u>
1st	Larry Strommen	Gabe Stiasny	Gabe Stiasny	Sean Garber
2nd	Jim Curtis	Larry Strommen	Chuck Stimming	Butch Meese
2nd	...	Butch Meese	Mary Ann Meese	Chuck Stimming

- Aug 31-Sep 3... **49th Indiana Open**, Sheraton Hotel & Suite, Indianapolis, IN..... (317) 255-8902
- Sep 21-23..... **Florida State Championships**, Sheraton Suites, Ft. Lauderdale, FL..... (954) 564-0340
- Oct 5-7..... **Canadian Open**, Le Nouvel Hotel, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.....(904) 777-8816
- Oct 19-21..... **Illinois State Championships**, Hilton Hotel, Springfield, IL..... (217) 528-0117
- Nov 2-4..... **48th Gammon Associates Invitational**, A.R. Private Club, Los Angeles, CA..... (818) 901-0464
- Nov 16-18..... **Minnesota State Championships**, Thunderbird Hotel, Bloomington, MN..... (612) 378-1536
- Wednesdays.. 7:00 PM at **Neon Johnny's**, 86th & Township Line Rd (Cellular 442-4065)..... HBC 255-8902