



Hoosier Backgammon Club

January 2002
Happy New Year!!!

2001 HBC Player of the Year **Jim Curtis**

It turned into a 3-horse race after three months into 2001 among Jim Curtis, Sean Garber and Butch Meese (pictured in order below).



Jim and Sean won **Player of the Month** three times while Butch won it twice. All three held the Number One spot during the year. At the end of November, Sean was leading by a single gammon point over Jim with Butch needing a lot of points. Jim and much improved Sean both cashed three times in December. The big difference was Jim cashed in the Sunday tournament with the longer matches and more gammon points. Jim won **Player of the Month** for December and this first **Player of the Year** honor. Congratulations to a true gentleman of the game: **Jim Curtis**. Thanks to all who supported HBC in 2001.

HBCs Awards Tournament

Sunday - February 24th, 2002

Arni's Restaurant (875-7034)

3443 West 86th Street (west of Walmart)

Regist: 12 noon Awards 12:45PM Play: 1PM

Open Div: \$20 with \$10 Op SPool

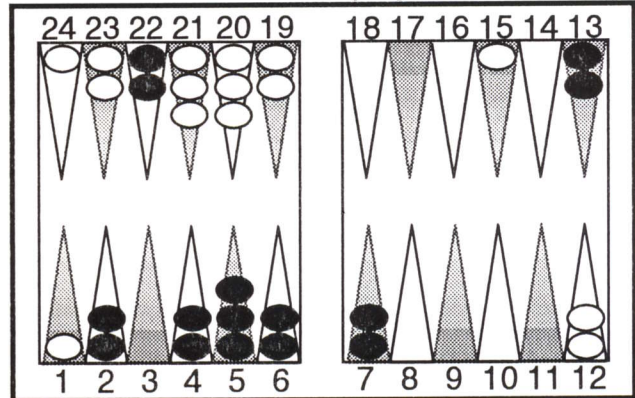
Limited Div: \$8

Format: Main-Consolation

Just Win The Game...Simple, Right?

by Chuck Bower

9 Point Match. Black-7 White-6
Black to play 4-4?



Tournament backgammon can sometimes offer different challenges than money/chouette play. The contrast is often emphasized in cube handling, where gammons (either wins or losses) can be extra valuable, or completely worthless.

Checker movement differences between money play and match play are typically less pronounced. Usually, the play which wins the most games also wins the most (money) equity. A play which results in maximum wins will typically lead to the most gammons. But there are exceptions, and sometimes those exceptions are extreme. The illustrated position is just such a situation.

What is most surprising to me is that even if you are told that the best money play is not the best move at this match score, it can difficult to find the best match score play. And the differences between candidate plays are significant at both match play and money backgammon. Given this hint, find your favorite candidates at both forms of competition before reading further.

The single most important characteristic of positions which are likely to lead to gammons are having opponent's checker(s) on the bar. With money play, the top three candidates all involve 5/1x. White has four checkers to bring home and two of them are blots. Black can extract a lot of gammons by putting White on the bar, keeping him there, and hopefully adding company for the incarcerated. After 5/1x, Black wins somewhere between 36% and 42% gammons with the top three money plays.

Still, one play stands out at this form of competition: 13/1x, 5/1 puts White on the rail, adds a fifth homeboard point and leaves no direct shots. White needs to resurface soon and get a fresh gulp of oxygen in order to avoid asphyxiation. The purer plays of making the 3-point and hitting loose on the acepoint (7/3(2), 5/1x and either 13/9 or 22/18 with the last 4) win more gammons but lose more games, due to the homeboard blot. In cubeless equity units these choices sacrifice 0.05.

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The experienced tournament player has already noticed that Black gets nothing extra from winning a gammon at this score after the cube has been turned (as is the case here). Black must maximize wins, and secondarily needs to void gammons losses. Quantitatively, if the status quo is a non-gammon loss (leaving Black trailing -2, -1 Crawford for 30% match winning chances -- MWC), a win is worth 100% MWC and a gammon loss 0% MWC. So going for the win gains Black 70% while losing a gammon only costs 30%. Putting it all together, a gammon loss is even less harmful at this match score than at money play. Thus the emphasis is on finding the play which wins the most games.

Snowie rollouts provide a clear winner, a clear second choice and four plays which battle for a distant bronze medal. Surprisingly, the three top candidates at money play are among the four competitors for third best. The clear winner at money play (13/1x, 5/1) and the pure 22/18, 7/3(2), 5/1x lose a whopping 5% more matches than the best play. The pretty looking 18/14(2), 7/3(2) is in a virtual tie with the other pure hitting play -- 13/9, 7/3(2), 5/1x for last place, losing 6% more matches than the best match candidate.

The solid silver medalist is 22/14(2), while the overwhelming winner is also a non-hitting play: 22/18(2), 13/9(2). This move wins 83% of matches, while 22/14(2) wins 81%. The best money play (pointing on White's head on the acepoint) garners 78% of matches and the other three mentioned candidates are all in the 76% MWC neighborhood.

It's nice to know **which** move is best, but much better is to understand **why?** Note that the top two plays have two things in common: they leave no shots, and White's backmost checker is efficiently blocked.

Given White's formidable homeboard, leaving no shots makes sense. Considering the race (even after a 16 pip gain Black is still behind), keeping White hemmed in, either on the bar or on the acepoint with 6's blocked, is immediately appreciated. Thus the top two candidates stand out as plays which lead to the most wins.

Finally, how do we separate the two top performers? There are three assets of 22/18(2), 13/9(2) which combine to make it clearly superior. First off, the 9-point blocks White's best escape routes since it hold vigil over the open 3-point, exactly 6 spaces distant. Secondly, White's blot on his 10-point (Black's 15-point) is threatened if Black hangs out one the 18-

point, but is perfectly safe after 22/14(2). Finally, and likely most important, Black's race deficit cries out for maintaining contact. After Black moves 22/14(2), three of White's four outside checkers are nearly home free whereas camping out on White's barpoint makes White's homeward journey fraught with danger.

Adding it all up, 22/18(2), 13/9(2) wins a significant 2% more matches (0.06 equivalent money game units) than its nearest competitor, and 4-6% more matches than the other candidates. Although this wasn't my problem in real life, I still was unable to sort through all the subtleties to find the best match score move, even without the immediate pressures of tournament play. Sometimes simply winning isn't so simple.

Hoosier Pips: HBC welcomes new players Bob Weeks, Kari Jerman and Chuck Mariner.

| Final 2002 HBC Standings | |
|--|---------------------------|
| The Player of the Month for December was Jim Curtis with 210 gammon points. | |
| 1 | Jim Curtis..... 1586 |
| 2 | Sean Garber..... 1550 |
| 3 | Butch Meese..... 1411 |
| 4 | Woody Woodworth..... 1010 |
| 5 | Mary Ann Meese..... 885 |
| 6 | Chuck Stimming..... 884 |
| 7 | Gabe Stiasny..... 841 |
| 8 | Scott Day..... 619 |
| 9 | Larry Strommen..... 612 |
| 10 | Dave Groner..... 546 |
| | Terry Bateman..... 492 |
| | Rick Steele..... 491 |
| | Al Gomez..... 351 |
| | Jeff Flowers..... 336 |
| | Kevin Heacox..... 157 |
| | Ron Black..... 122 |
| | Jeff Baker..... 120 |
| | Chuck Bower..... 110 |
| | Steve Brown..... 100 |
| | David Schwind..... 80 |
| | Charley Haley..... 79 |
| | Timothy Jaxon..... 69 |
| | Karen Davis..... 63 |
| | John Brussel..... 60 |
| | Frank Scott..... 48 |
| | Geoff Arnold..... 40 |

| | <u>December 5th</u> | <u>December 12th</u> | <u>December 19th</u> | <u>December 26th</u> |
|-----|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1st | Sean Garber | Jim Curtis | Butch Meese | Larry Strommen |
| 2nd | Chuck Stimming | Sean Garber | Sean Garber | Chuck Stimming |
| 2nd | Woody Woodworth | Chuck Stimming | Jim Curtis | ... |

Feb 15-17..... **24th Pittsburgh Champs/ABT Awards**, Greentree Radisson, Pittsburgh, PA..... (412) 823-7500
 Mar 22-24..... **2002 Midwest Championships**, Wyndham Lisle, Lisle, IL..... (773) 583-6464
 Apr 12-14..... **8th Ohio State Championships**, Radison Cleveland, Middleburgh Hts, OH..... (330) 966-2811
 May 24-27..... **23rd Chicago Open**, Oakbrook Hills Resort, Oakland, IL..... (702) 893-6025
 Wednesdays.. 7:00 PM at **Neon Johnny's**, 86th & Township Line Rd (Cellular 442-4065)..... HBC 255-8902