

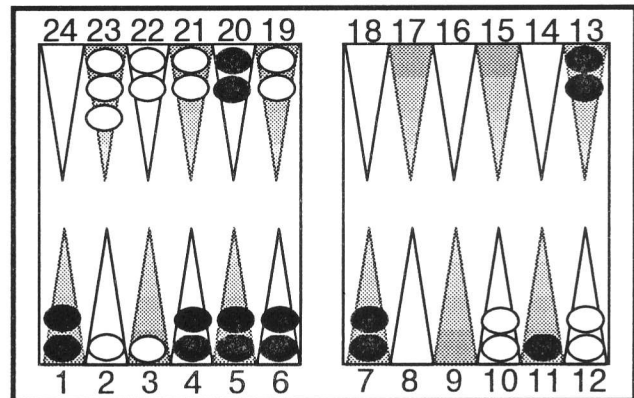


Hoosier
Backgammon
Club

April 2002



13 Point Match
Black-9 White-8
Cube Action?



64

And The Gods Are Still Laughing

by Woody Woodwooth

I didn't hear them come in. I was surprised that they hadn't arrived on schedule. Usually, they are about as subtle as Uncle Loudenproud arriving at the family reunion. You know the guy. Comes up behind you, pounds you on the back while bellowing in your ear, "*Hey there, lil' fella, long time no see!*" and leaves you choking on your hors d'oeuvre and spilling your drink. I should have been a little suspicious that they were here; but you can't see, hear or smell them unless they want you to. And, the normal joker that explodes onto the board to announce their presence had not detonated. If it weren't for the tiny giggle that I heard behind my left shoulder, I would still have been oblivious.

Chuck Stimming and I were well over two hours into our thirteen-point match for the mythical world championship of Indiana and had taken a break to purge and refill. At this point the score was 9 to 5 in my favor, and the luck factor seemed fairly even. All the games had been hard won, no quickies, and the only apparent differential seemed to be that Chuck had accepted a couple of doubles that were certain takes until they were played to completion. When we returned to our seats, it was apparent something had changed; but, I couldn't put my finger on the cause. Within five minutes, Chuck had cut my lead to 9 to 8 by rolling great opening sequences necessitating my drop of his cube on three consecutive occasions. I was becoming suspicious, but the next game seemed to be a return to normalcy, the typical struggle for position, the mutual careful play of a mixture of fair to poor rolls. I was beginning to get the upper hand in this one as you can see in the position below. I was just about to roll when I heard the giggle.

Now we all know Chuck doesn't giggle. He may grunt, snort, clear his throat, or even chuckle. But, he doesn't giggle. In this position, he certainly wouldn't be even close to a grin, let alone a giggle, even if he were a giggler. So, I stopped my shake and looked around. There they were, the whole crew. My own personal chouette group -- Murphy, Sonova, Dammit, Mutha, and Bulsh: my Dice Gods. Murph winked at me and Sonova had his hand firmly clamped over Mutha's mouth trying to stifle the giggle. Bulsh flits over, sits on my shoulder, grabs my ear and in a hoarse whisper says, "*You didn't really think we'd miss this one, did you? You know you ain't going to beat this guy without us. Those last three games were just a little reminder for you to keep us informed.*" Dammit, by now, is perched on my other shoulder. "*You really gonna roll here, son? You goin' brain daid? We'd kinda take it as a personal affront if you expect us to do all the work heah, boy!*" Needless to say, I put the cup down.

We interrupt this program to offer the reader an opportunity to study the above position and submit his/her opinion on cube decisions. Done? Good! Let's see.... Fifty-two percent vote double/drop; fourteen percent say double/take, twenty-eight percent say no double. Jim Curtis is taking whether doubled or not, and Gabe went out for a smoke. Meanwhile, back to the match.

After careful consideration, and noticing that I had only 2-1 that was a terrible roll, and that Chuck had no yellow-brick-road even if I rolled poorly or just so-so, I shipped the cube! "*Hooray!*" yells Snowie from his room below, "*Close double and close drop. Good play, Sawdust!*" Murphy had gone down and turned on my computer to retrieve his file of laws, and Snowie self-activated as is his wont. "*Oh, pipe down, you digital ding-a-ling!*" shouts Mutha.

Hoosier Backgammon Club
Home Page: <http://www.hoosierbgclub.org>
E-Mail: meese@worldnet.att.net

Butch & Mary Ann Meese
1008 Tuckahoe, Indianapolis, IN 46260-2215
(317) 255-8902

Hoosier Backgammon Club new webpage: www.hoosierbgclub.org

- A few new links, a couple updated links.
- Local pages redesigned, information added.
- 50th Indiana Open web page included.

Indiana Open Tournament Of Champions

All the past winners and finalists of the Indiana Tournaments of the past 25 years have been invited to compete in a special event: **The Indiana Tournament of Champions**. This event will take place during the **50th Indiana Open**. The list of winners and finalists are listed on the new HBC web site. The list goes back to the 25th Indiana Open. Results are very difficult to find before 1979 since the tournaments were city based and results were not recorded. At least 24 players have committed to attend.

And The Gods Are Still Laughing

"He ain't rolled yet, and we haven't voted on whether he's gonna like it or not!" Uh oh, I didn't like the sound of that. Besides, Chuck hadn't taken yet though I was pretty sure he couldn't hear Snowie or, for that matter, the other gaggle of voices in the room. In fact, I wasn't positive that Chuck was conscious. He was staring at the board like it was one of those spiraled turntables and he definitely wasn't laughing. *"Don't have a clue,"* he says suddenly and he scarfs up the cube. Uh oh, again! Whenever Chuck says that, you can be sure that not only does he have a clue, but also he is planning to disprove the adage about putting the proverbial square peg into a round hole at the next available opportunity. I pick up the cup and shake the dice, visualizing double anythings rolling out onto the playing field. The dice are in mid air. Just then, Murphy returns from down at the computer. *"Found it!"* he screams. *"Law number 327: When you need **any** doubles, you will get **no** doubles. And corollary (d) if you have visualized getting them you will instead get the most diabolical roll available."* Uh, oh

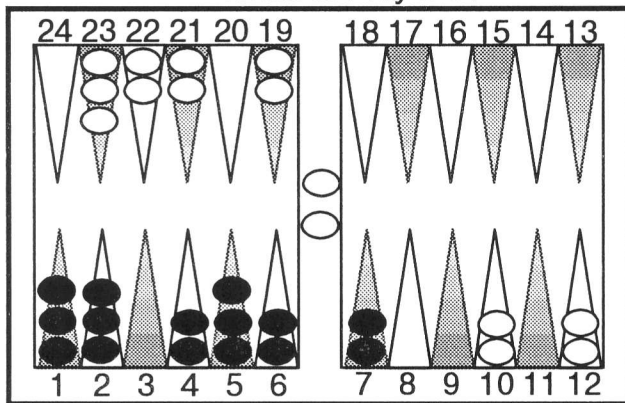
number three. Didn't even have to open my eyes to know I was going to get: a 4-1! Mutha is now bent over laughing and the whole crew is snorting and high-fiving. Only Chuck wasn't laughing, and I could tell by his eyes that he was definitely conscious.

We interrupt this program again for the benefit of the reader to offer an opinion on the play of 4-1 in the position above. Time's up! *"Oookay,"* says Sean and all the other optimistic money players. *"Hit twice."* *"Eleven to six,"* yell all the wimps. Snowie shouts from below, *"It's not that close, you wuss! Hit twice 7/3x/2x, pick up the dice, bury face in hands, peek through very small crack between fingers and pray to that bunch of practical jokers who are up there laughing their butts off!"*

This is tough! Consider that all the pain and hard work to get to this point and the correct play could put you down 12-9, Crawford in the blink of an eye. Oh, well, even if I play safe, there's no guarantee that Chuck will leave the expected shot after his next roll, or that I would hit it if he did. Plus, I do have an anchor. And, dare I think about the **G** word if he stays on the bar? So, I make the recommended play. A hush falls over the room briefly. Then Sonova pipes up gleefully, *"Anybody see those deuces I brought in with Chuck's name on them. I think they may be in with the bag of threes that I just gave him."* Uproarious laughter. Chuck is by now shaking a cup that has two dice with nothing but 2s and 3s on their faces. Out pops the roll. A 6-1!! How did that happen?? I roll very quickly before laughing boys can reach into my cup and give me a bad roll. Hah! Double 3s! Quickly cover the blot on the 2-point, 11-2, play 20-17, and start drafting my acceptance speech. Murph and the boys retreat to a corner of the room and mumble among themselves as Chuck dances several times and I bring my outside checkers to the near-bearoff position shown below.

And The Gods Are Still Laughing

13-Point Match Black-9 White-8
White to Play 3-3?



With some consternation I note that I still couldn't make the three point; but, what the hey, Chuck is still on the bar! "Pardon me, son" whispers Dammit as he appears out of nowhere to land on my right shoulder. "We have another present for you." Sure enough, on Chuck's next roll, from the depths of despair, or maybe Hades, comes double 3s. And the laughter starts again. "Oh, you ain't seen nuthin' yet", laughs Mutha as Sonova rolls on the floor in convulsions. Major uh oh! You betcha -- I roll double 4s. I check to see if Chuck is even smiling yet. Nope, but I see the corner of his mouth twitch and I begin to feel the corners of that cube in a tender round area. I make the Magriel play and await the inevitable deuce to tumble forth and start the domino effect of my destruction. Chuck rolls and, what's this! No deuce! Huge exhale of relief on my part, but I can hardly hold the cup to shake the dice as Bulsh purrs in my ear "What non-deuce would you like with your six?" I'm now trying to remember if I still have the snake-bite kit in the medicine cabinet as I roll -- 62! "I'd like to thank the academy ..." begins to print out on my mental ticker-tape. Murphy now sidles up to me with the biggest imaginary book I've ever not seen and begins flipping through the pages rapidly. "Ah, yes, Law Number 25378: You will not score a gammon to win a championship match against Chuck Stimming unless it is a mathematical certainty." Needless to say, Chuck got his 14 crossovers and a checker off before I could bear off my 15 checkers. More laughter and high-fives as Murphy and the crew headed for the bar.

I could probably manufacture a thrilling scenario for the next two games, but the fact is that Chuck had absolutely no luck in those games either, and I managed to prevail 13-8. The entire hard-fought 3-plus hour match had come down to a matter of a short sequence of rolls and luck of the dice. What else is new? But as Chuck graciously congratulated me and departed, Dammit came back in and said, "It's lucky you got those two games over quickly, cuz' we've got some more doozies in store for you. Besides, you won didn't you? Be seein' ya, pessimist!" Laughter fades into the walls.

HBCs Summer Sunday Tournament

Sunday - June 23rd, 2002

Arni's Restaurant (875-7034)
3443 West 86th Street (west of Walmart)

Registration: 12:00 Noon
Play Begins: 12:30 PM
Open Division: \$20 with \$10 Op SPool
Limited Div: \$8
Format: Main-Consolation

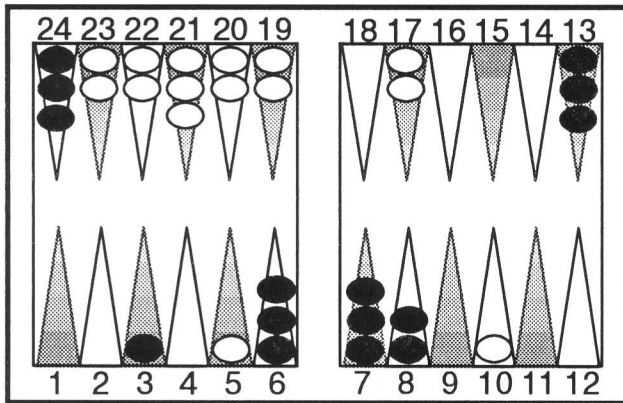
50th Indiana Open Backgammon Tournament

Labor Day Weekend
August 30-September 2, 2002

Featured Event:
Indiana Tournament of Champions

Intermediate Corner: A Matter of *Timing*

**5-Point Match Black-4, White-3.
Black to play 2-1?**



2

Black won a doubled gammon in the first game of a 5-pointer. White won the Crawford game followed by a simple doubled game. In Game 4, White kept trucking to get to this position. He had just broken off the 5-point in hopes of completing the blitz. As Black, you finally get to play the whole roll. Consider your choices: 3 plays come to mind very quickly: 1) 13/10x, 2) 5x(2) and 6/5x/3.

Consider the positives. With no checkers out-of-play, you can still win this game and the match. The checker on the 3-point is a little deep but it would definitely be worse if it was on the 2- or 1-point. Black has good timing. Timing is a very important concept when playing a backgame or a game like this. The ideal situation is to have a prime when the opportune shot and subsequent hit comes along. So your objective is to build a prime while maintaining timing. To preserve timing, getting your own checker hit so it will get recycled may be required. The key to learning to play better is knowing when to recycle or build the prime. And sometimes you can do both at the same time as in this position. Since a gammon does not matter, Black can concentrate on building the prime.

Hitting on the 10-point leaves 2 blots and White would welcome the chance to destroy your timing by hitting both blots. White would love to see you dancing therefore lessening the chance of constructing the prime.

You can play it safe by hitting and covering on the 3-point. Now, you are trying to do too much. It's better to build onto a prime than fill in any gaps. This play also leaves you inflexible.

Making the 5-point increases the prime to 4 points (one of your main objectives). It does expose a blot but only one. If it gets hit, it can help your timing. If it does not get hit, then it may become part of the prime later.

So does Snowie agree? Yes, Snowie likes making the 5-point best giving you a 31.5% change to win. All other plays are no better than 25.0% with the second best play of 6/5x/3.

HBC 2002 Standings

The **Player of the Month for March** was **Rick Steele** with 147 gammon points.

- 1 Butch Meese..... 399
- 2 Jim Curtis..... 397
- 3 Larry Strommen..... 378
- 4 Rick Steele..... 327
- 5 Sean Garber..... 282
- 6 Mary Ann Meese..... 281
- 7 Woody Woodworth..... 279
- 8 Gabe Stiasny..... 210
- 9 Scott Day..... 158
- 10 Al Gomez..... 133
- Chuck Stimming..... 123
- Frank Scott..... 104
- Terry Bateman..... 97
- Peter Kalba..... 69
- Alan Tavel..... 39
- David Schwind..... 36
- Stan Denski..... 26
- Jeff Baker..... 22
- Charley Haley..... 12
- Mark Swanson..... 10
- Roger Blaine..... 10
- Bob Weeks..... 8

	<u>March 6th</u>	<u>March 13th</u>	<u>March 20th</u>	<u>March 27th</u>
1st	<i>Rick Steele</i>	<i>Gabe Stiasny</i>	<i>Butch Meese</i>	<i>Frank Scott</i>
2nd	<i>Gabe Stiasny</i>	<i>Scott Day</i>	<i>Chuck Stimming</i>	<i>Rick Steele</i>
2nd	...	<i>Sean Barber</i>	...	<i>Jim Curtis</i>

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
 July 4-7.....**Michigan Summer Championship**, Novi Hilton, Novi, MI..... (810) 232-9731
 Aug31-Sep3.. **50th Indiana Open**, Sheraton Hotel and Suites, Indianapolis, IN..... (317) 255-8902
 Wednesdays.. 7:00 PM at **Neon Johnny's**, 86th & Township Line Rd (Cellular 442-4065)..... HBC 255-8902