



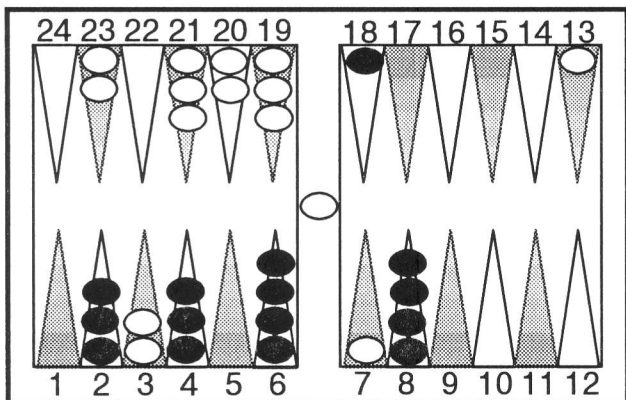
Hoosier  
Backgammon  
Club

July 2002



## But Is It a Girl's Best Friend?

by Chuck Bower



Money game. Black to play 3-1.

Backgammon has its share of clever sayings, and some of them are even useful. The illustrated position offers a dilemma: a clash of principles. What is your play?

One of the oldest backgammon axioms is **when in doubt, hit!** Unfortunately I can't take this advice literally because I'm always in doubt. (Please, no comments about slow play, Mary Ann.) What this axiom really means is: **it takes a very good reason to turn down an opportunity to hit.** That's because a hit usually does several good things: improves your racing chances, takes opponent's attention away from other pursuits, increases gammon chances to name a few.

The advantages of hitting are not so compelling. Black already has a huge race lead, enough to win easily if she can avoid being hit back herself. White is already occupied with one checker on the bar, so another is of marginal improvement in diverting White's attention. Hitting will lead to more gammons, but that is partially offset by White's improved timing. Still, the hit does have positive consequences.

Note the added safety of putting a second checker on the bar: only White's 5-5 roll hits this turn. Can we find a very good reason not to hit?  
...continues next column...

## Chuck Bower get first win at Michigan Summer Championships

Over half dozen Hoosiers travelled north to Michigan for a little backgammon over July 4th weekend. The Michigan tournament drew over 180 players with a very strong field of 81 in the Championship Division. With the true double-elimination format, all but one player, **Mary Hickey** (OH) gets a second chance to win. Chuck Bower bested the second chance group and still had to beat Mary twice in the finals. Chuck came from behind in the first match to force a truly final match. Chuck won the final match to capture the trophy and his first major win. **Jim Curtis** and **Sean Garber** cashed in the Doubles. Congratulations to all the winners.

## HBCs Summer Sunday Tournament

Sunday - June 23rd, 2002

1st...Chuck Bower

2nd...Jim Curtis

2nd...Butch Meese

The Hoosier Backgammon Club will be taking up a collection during July to treat Jim Curtis to a two month trip to Alaska or somewhere far away. Another choice is to declare **Jim Curtis** the **Player of the Year** now. Jim has almost a 200-point lead half way into the year and has won **Player of the Month** four times. Our third option is to keep playing and see if he can keep it up.

## Girl's Best Friend (continues)

Another modern backgammon saying goes like this: **shots come and go, but the 5-point is forever.** Black can cleanly make the 5-point here, leaving only four return shots which, if hit, are unlikely to be fatal. Is there enough compensation for not hitting?

Notice that White is entrenched on Black's 3-point. No matter what happens from here until nearly the end of the game, White will hold steady to this asset. Black's checkers on points higher than her 3-point will be held hostage until they can be safely cleared. Black's position will definitely improve if she holds the 5-point, since that provides safe haven for checkers on the 8-point when she rolls a 3, and those on the 6-point when she rolls an ace.

The final issue here is the ease or difficulty of Black making the 5-point in the future. If Black had many builders in various locations to make the 5-point, then hitting would be right, since she

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could have her cake (the hit) and eat it, too (make the 5-point later). Here Black will only likely ever be able to make the 5-point with 1-1, 3-1, and 3-3. Those rolls don't come up often enough to justify being greedy now.

Snowie analysis has become the standard for backgammon positions. The arguments about the existence of human players stronger than Snowie have died out: *she is the best player in the world.*

But Snowie's opinion (evaluation) is not perfect. Much better are rollouts. In this position, Snowie errs in her evaluation, ranking both hitting plays (8/7x combined with either 18/15 or the continuation 7/4) slightly better than making the 5-point by 0.01 units of cubeless equity, admittedly a close decision for the robot. A Snowie rollout produced a vastly different result.

There making the 5-point is better by over 0.10 units of cubeless (and cubeful) equity. This size of error was coined a **Whopper** by Paul Magriel. Of the two hitting plays, 18/15 is better than 7/4 by 0.02 cubeless equity units.

Hitting is usually right, but the astute player always keeps an open eye for making exceptions to the **rules**. In the illustrated position, the golden point is even more valuable than gold. It's been elevated to the lofty status of diamonds.

## 50th Indiana Open Backgammon Tournament Labor Day Weekend

### HBC 2002 Standings

The **Player of the Month for June** was  
**Jim Curtis** with **230** gammon points.

1	Jim Curtis.....	911
2	Butch Meese.....	727
3	Rick Steele.....	645
4	Woody Woodworth.....	557
5	Mary Ann Meese.....	501
6	Sean Garber.....	500
7	Larry Strommen.....	485
8	Gabe Stiasny.....	431
9	Chuck Stimming.....	373
10	Scott Day.....	268
	Terry Bateman.....	225
	Al Gomez.....	133
	Chuck Bower.....	120
	Frank Scott.....	104
	Jeff Flowers.....	90
	Luke Clippinger.....	80
	Kevin Heacox.....	72
	Peter Kalba.....	69
	Mark Swanson.....	42
	Alan Tavel.....	39
	David Schwind.....	36
	Rob Adams.....	30
	Stan Denski.....	26
	Jeff Baker.....	22
	Mike Kelley.....	16
	Charley Haley.....	12
	Roger Blaine.....	10
	Butch Bates.....	10
	Bob Weeks.....	8

**Hoosier Pips:** HBC welcomes new players Mike Kelley, Jerri Dunn, Katya Ilieva and Greg Steele and welcome back Jay Mershon and Dragan Stevanovic. Tim Serges visited HBC during June....Those planning to enter one of the popular jackpots at the **50th Indiana Open** should sign up sooner than later to be guaranteed a spot.

	<u>June 5th</u>	<u>June 12th</u>	<u>June 19th</u>	<u>June 26th</u>
1st	Woody Woodworth	Jim Curtis	Jim Curtis	Rick Steele
2nd	Mary Ann Meese	Larry Strommen	Gabe Stiasny	Butch Meese
2nd	...	...	...	Gabe Stiasny

Aug8-11.....	Georgia Championships & Peach Cup, Hilton Garden Inn, Atlanta, GA.....	(770) 333-1876
Aug31-Sep3..	50th Indiana Open, Sheraton Hotel and Suites, Indianapolis, IN.....	(317) 255-8902
Oct 4-6.....	Florida State Championships, Sheraton Suites, Ft. Lauderdale, FL.....	(954) 564-0340
Oct 11-13.....	Illinois State Championships, Springfield Hilton, Springfield, IL.....	(217) 528-0117
Nov 1-3.....	Minnesota State Championships, Mystic Lake Casino, Prior Lake, MN.....	(763) 682-1716
Wednesdays..	7:00 PM at Neon Johnny's, 86th & Township Line Rd (Cellular 442-4065).....	HBC 255-8902