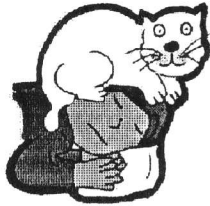




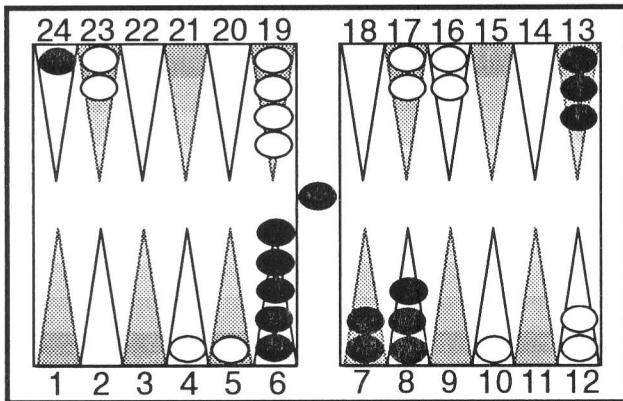
Hoosier  
Backgammon  
Club

August 2002



## Fighting Hard For The Home Turf

by Chuck Bower



### Position 1.

Black to play 3-1 at the following situations:

- money play,
- tied 6-6 in a 7-point match,
- leading 6-5, Crawford in a 7-pt match, and
- trailing 5-6, Crawford in a 7-pt match.

Tournament (or match play) backgammon can offer many variations in both checker play and cube decisions. At money play, gammons count twice normal games for both sides. Experienced players know that with the cube on 1 (and ignoring the Jacoby Rule), risking a loss to go for a gammon in a game that is otherwise won requires that you win two new gammons for every loss you generate. That is because the gammon only gains you 1 point (+1 --> +2) whereas the loss costs you 2 (+1 --> -1). With an elevated cube, the gain or loss is multiplied by the cube value but the odds remain the same. Similarly, risking a gammon in a game that is otherwise lost in an attempt to win that game only requires that you win one game for every two new gammon losses that you generate.

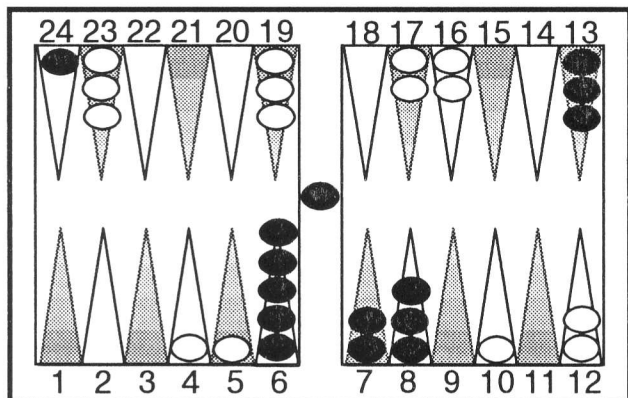
The three match scores referenced in Position 1 are common occurrences and have subsequently earned nicknames. When each side needs one point to end the match, gammon wins and losses are irrelevant. Just win, baby! Backgammon players have borrowed the term **Double Match Point (DMP)** from tennis to

describe this situation. Trailing by two points in the Crawford game, a player can play aggressively for gammons for two reasons: a gammon loss is irrelevant while a gammon win is for the match and saves playing another game (compared to a simple win). In this situation (coined **Gammon Go (GG)** by Bob Koca), the trailer only risks 1 to gain 1 by playing for gammon, considerably better than risking 2 to gain 1 at money play. Similarly at this score the match leader must be more conservative than normal to avoid losing a gammon, and his/her situation was given the name **Gammon Save (GS)**.

Besides always knowing the cube location (imperative at money play as well), the skillful tournament player also must know the current score and the implications that score has on cube and checker play. Actually, I threw a curve ball in the above problems because the best play is the same in all four listed conditions! (You will see below a simple modification which changes that.) I just wanted to keep you on your toes.

Even at GS where gammon losses are more costly than normal you don't want to go overly conservative. Winning the game is important. Black must hit a White checker in the above position. The choice is between anchoring on the 24-point and hitting on the 10-point or entering on the 22-point and hitting on the 5-point. Any other play sacrifices at least 0.05 units of cubeless equity (losing at least 2.5% more games). This includes the third hitting play of bar/24, 8/5x. Black doesn't want to strip away a lone builder when s/he has a big stack (on the 6-point) which can accomplish the same objective.

The two remaining plays will likely lead to very different consequences. Hitting loose on the 5-point leaves more home side shots (20 vs. 19) but starts a better point. Not only is it a better point for Black, but also a better point for White, so hitting there could lead to a double improvement. A bigger downside than the extra shot is the lack of a Black anchor which a lucky White can turn into a gammon. (Note that at some scores this latter concern is irrelevant.) But that is also somewhat compensated for by the increased possibility of making an **advanced** anchor in the near future, especially on the 22-point. Snowie rollouts say this decision is reasonably close and that knocking your opponent off your 5-point is better by 0.03 units of cubeless equity at \$-play, 1% more total wins, 1.5% more gammon wins, but giving up 0.5% more gammon losses. Fighting hard for the home turf, especially one's own 5-point is a strong principle at any score.



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**Position 2.**  
 (Same four situations as Position 1.)

In Position 2, I've moved a White checker from his/her 6-point down to the 2-point, but otherwise all checkers are in the same locations. Although this increases White's pipcount lead, that is a minor gain compared to the inflexibility of a spare on the 2-point. Snowie says the net effect is that White wins 3% fewer games in Position 2 compared to Position 1. The real issue is: *Does White's spare on the 2-point change Black's move?* At one score the answer is a clear **yes**. That inflexibly placed checker has only one good way to help White out, which is to move one more space to the 1-point. If White can accomplish that by hitting, the improvement is considerably stronger. Compared to Position 1, Black has extra incentive to make the 24-point anchor. At money play and DMP the choice between bar/24, 13/10x and bar/22, 6/5x is a tossup. At GG, hitting on the 5-point is worth the risk of giving White the 2/1x response, winning 1.5% more gammons. However, since Black loses 2.0% more gammons by not anchoring, making bar/24, 13/10x the best choice at GS. When you have a choice between close plays, the match score can make the difference.

Wednesday August 29, 2002  
**No Backgammon**  
 Thursday August 30, 2002  
**Backgammon at the Sheraton Hotel Suite 16...The start of the 50th Open**

## 50th Indiana Open Backgammon Tournament Labor Day Weekend

**HBC 2002 Standings**  
 The **Player of the Month** for July was **Jim Curtis** with 176 gammon points.

1	Jim Curtis.....	1087
2	Butch Meese.....	825
3	Rick Steele.....	776
4	Sean Garber.....	608
5	Woody Woodworth.....	565
6	Larry Strommen.....	552
7	Mary Ann Meese.....	545
8	Chuck Stimming.....	470
9	Gabe Stiasny.....	457
10	Scott Day.....	318
	Terry Bateman.....	285
	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
	Dan Moore.....	28
	Stan Denski.....	26
	Jeff Baker.....	22
	Dragan Stevanovic.....	18
	Mike Kelley.....	16
	Charley Haley.....	12
	Roger Blaine.....	10
	Butch Bates.....	10
	Bob Weeks.....	8
	Cathie Benneth.....	8

<u>July 10th</u>	<u>July 17th</u>	<u>July 24th</u>	<u>July 31st</u>
1st <i>Jim Curtis</i>	<i>Butch Meese</i>	<i>Sean Garber</i>	<i>Terry Bateman</i>
2nd <i>Rick Steele</i>	<i>Jim Curtis</i>	<i>Larry Strommen</i>	<i>Jim Curtis</i>
2nd ...	...	<i>Chuck Stimming</i>	<i>Chuck Stimming</i>

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