A Quiz From A Whiz
### by Jake Jacobs

Early every October, I feel the wheels of my flight bouncing on the tarmac, glance out the window, and discover I am in Japan. (I'm never surprised, as that's where I booked to go.) Just as Labor Day is synonymous with the **Indiana Open**, the second weekend of October equates to the **Japan Open**. Just as you have never been to Japan for the Open, few Japanese players have made it to the **Indiana Open**, or any of the other US tournaments. Yes, you've seen a few, but these are hundreds more, and many are very, very good.

One of the best players you have never seen is a graduate student named **Itikawa Masanori**. That name might not sound familiar, but try this one: Othello. When I first wrote about Othello several years ago he was the highest rated player on Games Grid. Since then he's had three more years to improve his game. Playing as much as he does, Othello has saved and analyzed many backgammon positions. Starting several years ago he collected ten of the most interesting positions, ones where the best play might not be easy or obvious, but where even the second best play was a blunder and offered them as a quiz. Participants in the Japan Open had the entire weekend to read the posted problems, fill out an answer sheet, and submit it. The quiz proved so popular that the **Othello Quiz** has become a regular feature at the **Japan Open**.

Butch is running the complete quiz from the recent Japan Open 2002. Here, to whet your appetite, is a problem from 2000.

Match to 5, Score tied 0 to 0.
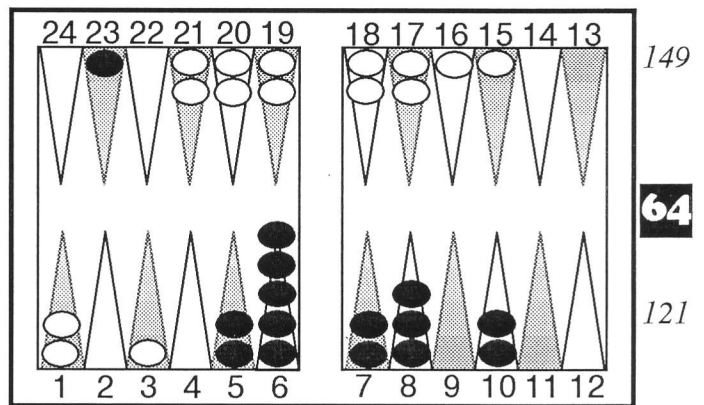
Black to Play 3-2?

Answer at bottom of this page.

Answer to Position above: I (Jake) got this right when I took the quiz (I was second that year with 8 right, to **Hugh Sconyer's** perfect 10), but I wonder if I'd have found it over the board? The correct play is 6/3x, 6/4.

The quiz is presented with JBL permission for your enjoyment. They are available on the **Japanese Backgammon League** website at **www.backgammon.gr.jp**.

#1.   Money Game.

141

64

128
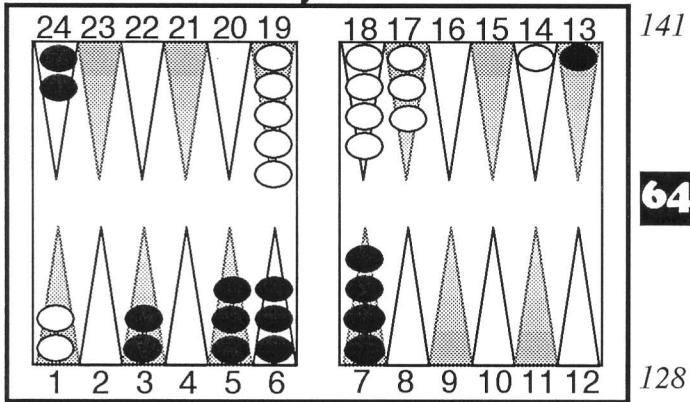
Black to Play 4-3?

#4.   Money Game.

75

64

151
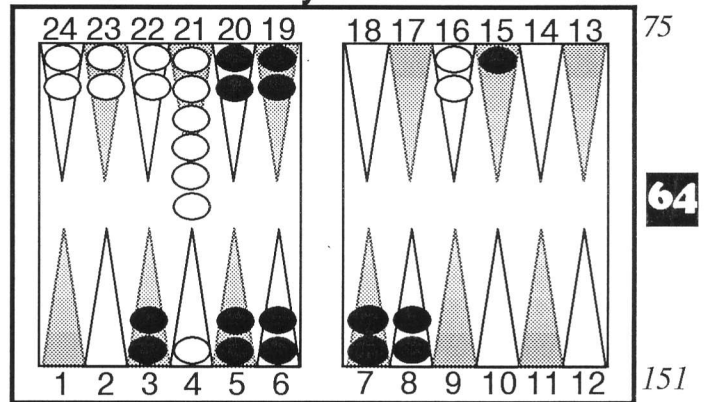
Black to Play 6-6?

#2.   Match to 3, tied at 0.

146

64

173
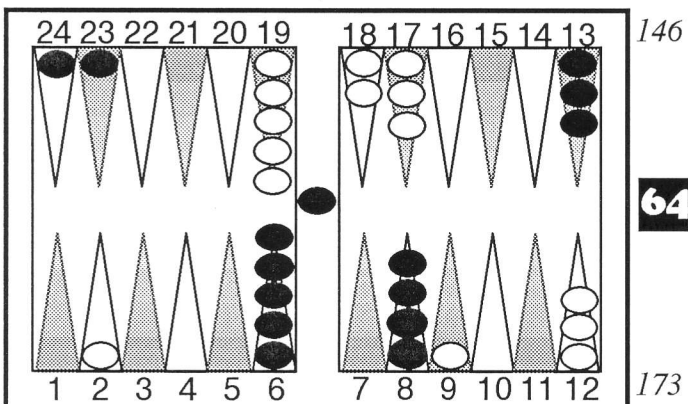
Black to Play 6-4?

#5.   Match to 5, Black leads 3 to 1.

88

173

2
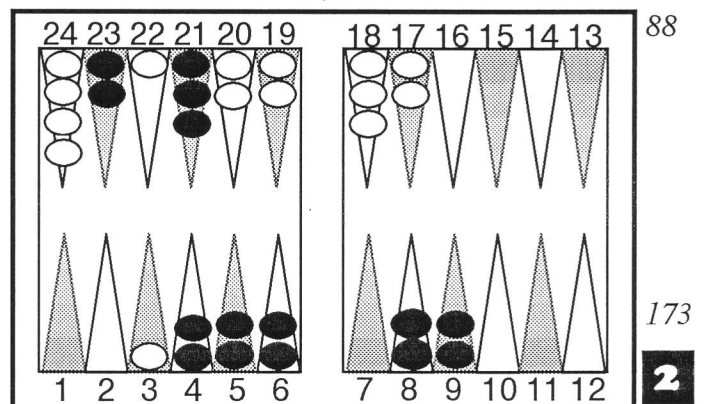
Black to Play 2-2?

#3.   Match to 5, White leads 2 to 1.

93

119

2
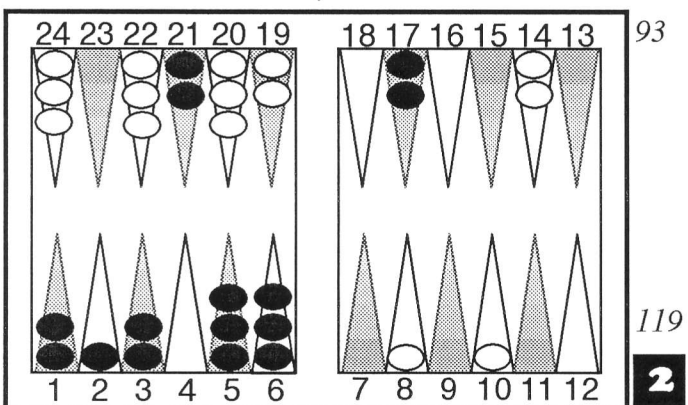
Black to Play 4-4?

#6.   Money Game.

134

64

116
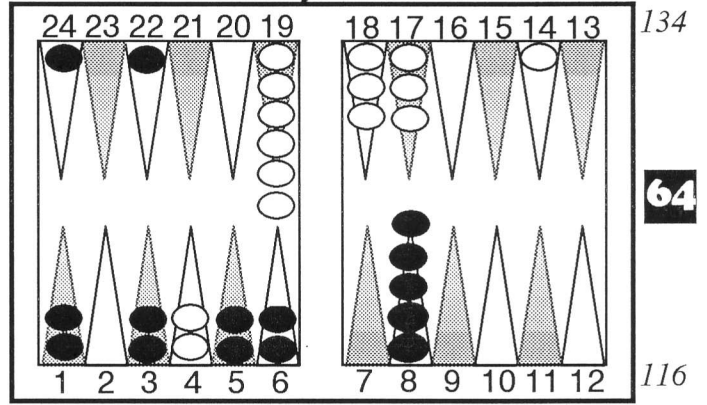
Black to Play 6-3?

#7.   **Match to 7, tied at 0.**

151

138

2
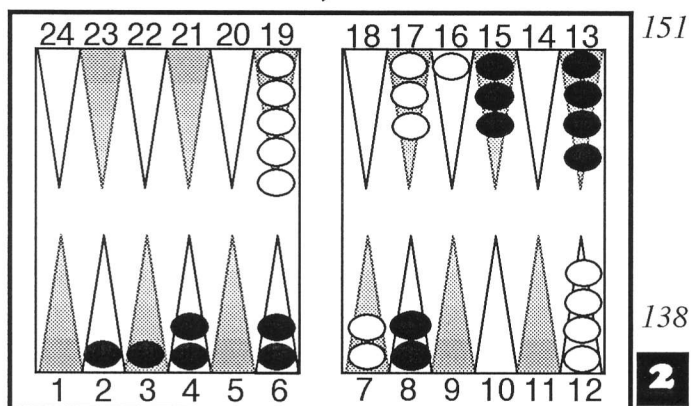
Black to Play 2-2?

#8.   **Match to 3, tied at 0.**

120

64

137
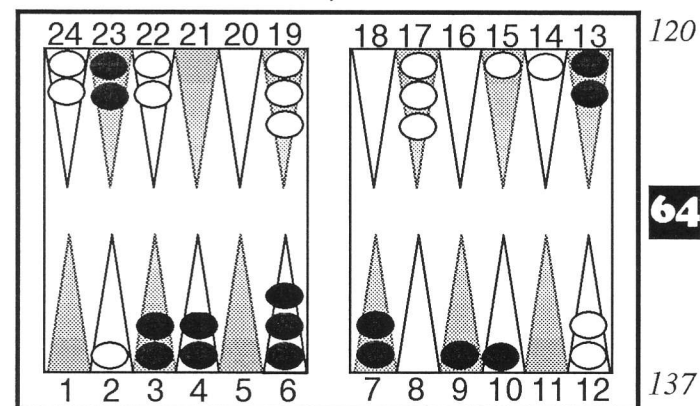
Black to Play 4-2?

#9.   **Match to 3, tied at 0.**

131

64

155
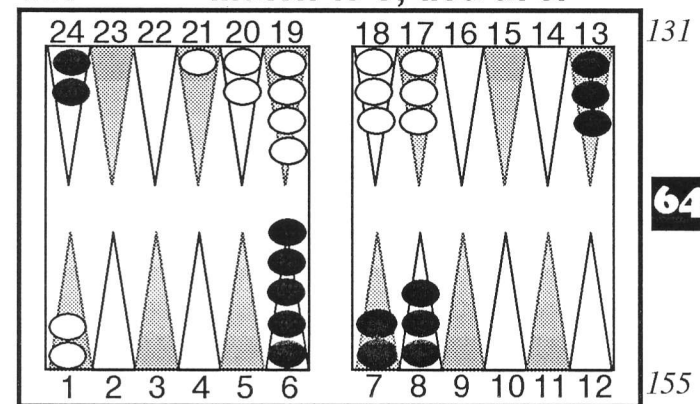
Black to Play 5-1?

#10.   **Money Game.**

105

64

151
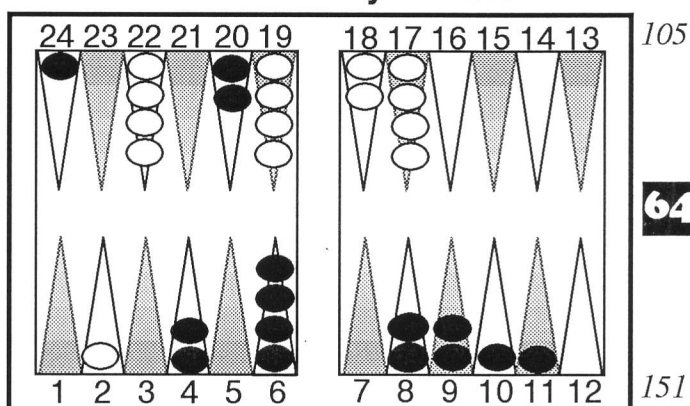
Black to Play 2-2?

The answers to the quiz are on Page 4.
How good did you do?

	January 8th	January 15th
1st	Terry Bateman	Rick Steele
2nd	Larry Strommen	Scott Day
2nd	Sean Garber	Sean Garber
	January 22nd	January 29th
1st	Sean Garber	Gabe Stiasny
2nd	Chuck Stimming	Larry Strommen
2nd	Dan Moore	Rick Steele

HBC 2003 Gammon Standing
The **Player of the Month** for **January** was **Rick Steele** with 138 points.

1	Rick Steele	138
T2	Larry Strommen	136
T2	Sean Garber	136
4	Terry Bateman	78
5	Scott Day	77
6	Jim Curtis	58
T7	Gabe Stiasny	48
T7	Butch Meese	48
9	Chuck Stimming	44
10	Dan Moore	42
	Woody Woodworth	26
	Dave Groner	20
	Mary Ann Meese	18
	Josh Riddell	18

Problem #1

1.	R	24/20 24/21	Eq: 0.630				
	1.0%	19.5%	66.8%	33.2%	10.3%	0.4%	
2.	R	24/21 13/9	Eq: 0.518 (-0.112)				
	1.2%	20.5%	62.1%	37.9%	10.5%	0.5%	
3.	R	24/21 7/3	Eq: 0.515 (-0.115)				
	1.1%	18.7%	62.7%	37.3%	10.3%	0.5%	
4.	R	24/20 13/10	Eq: 0.502 (-0.128)				
	1.3%	20.0%	61.5%	38.5%	11.2%	0.5%	
5.	R	24/20 7/4	Eq: 0.445 (-0.185)				
	1.3%	21.6%	61.2%	38.8%	13.0%	0.8%	

Problem #2

1.	R	bar/21 8/2x	Eq: -0.735				
	0.3%	7.9%	34.5%	65.5%	17.1%	0.8%	
2.	R	bar/15	Eq: -0.878 (-0.143)				
	0.3%	7.2%	33.2%	66.8%	19.2%	0.8%	
3.	R	bar/21 13/7	Eq: -0.998 (-0.263)				
	0.2%	7.1%	31.9%	68.1%	20.3%	1.1%	

Problem #3

1.	R	21/13(2)	Eq: 0.300				
	0.1%	4.6%	43.4%	56.6%	3.8%	0.1%	
2.	R	17/13(2) 6/2 5/1	Eq: 0.220 (-0.080)				
	0.1%	4.3%	41.5%	58.5%	4.7%	0.2%	
3.	R	21/17 17/13(3)	Eq: 0.220 (-0.081)				
	0.3%	8.4%	41.3%	58.7%	6.8%	0.2%	
4.	R	21/13 17/13 6/2	Eq: 0.154 (-0.146)				
	0.5%	11.2%	40.0%	60.0%	13.0%	0.2%	
5.	R	21/9 6/2	Eq: 0.125 (-0.175)				
	0.2%	5.5%	38.9%	61.1%	8.9%	0.3%	

Problem #4

1.	R	20/14(2) 19/13(2)	Eq: 0.180				
	0.2%	3.3%	58.4%	41.6%	11.8%	0.1%	
2.	R	19/7(2)	Eq: 0.099 (-0.081)				
	0.3%	6.7%	54.7%	45.3%	9.2%	0.1%	
3.	R	20/8(2)	Eq: 0.075 (-0.104)				
	0.3%	6.6%	53.1%	46.9%	9.1%	0.1%	
4.	R	19/13(2) 8/2(2)	Eq: 0.039 (-0.141)				
	0.3%	6.7%	52.1%	47.9%	10.5%	0.1%	
5.	R	20/14(2) 8/2(2)	Eq: -0.011 (-0.190)				
	0.3%	6.0%	51.0%	49.0%	11.2%	0.2%	

Problem #5

1.	R	9/7(2) 5/3x(2)	Eq: -0.178				
	0.8%	14.7%	59.0%	41.0%	17.9%	0.9%	
2.	R	9/7(2) 8/6(2)	Eq: -0.253 (-0.075)				
	0.7%	12.9%	56.8%	43.2%	19.5%	0.8%	
3.	R	9/7(2) 7/3x	Eq: -0.278 (-0.100)				
	0.6%	13.3%	58.8%	41.2%	22.7%	1.4%	
5.	R	9/3x 8/6	Eq: -0.369 (-0.191)				
	0.7%	12.8%	55.6%	44.4%	24.1%	1.9%	

Problem #6

1.	R	24/21 22/16	Eq: 0.384				
	0.3%	7.7%	62.0%	38.0%	6.4%	0.3%	
2.	R	24/15	Eq: 0.309 (-0.075)				
	0.4%	10.3%	59.1%	40.9%	6.7%	0.3%	
3.	R	22/16 8/5	Eq: 0.268 (-0.116)				
	0.3%	9.3%	58.1%	41.9%	6.3%	0.3%	
4.	R	22/13	Eq: 0.146 (-0.238)				
	0.3%	9.1%	54.4%	45.6%	7.0%	0.3%	
5.	R	24/21 8/2	Eq: 0.001 (-0.383)				
	0.4%	11.5%	50.4%	49.6%	12.0%	0.6%	

Problem #7

1.	R	13/11(4)	Eq: 0.557
2.	R	15/13 13/11(3)	Eq: 0.476 (-0.081)
3.	R	13/9(2)	Eq: 0.461 (-0.096)
4.	R	15/11 13/11 4/2	Eq: 0.422 (-0.135)
5.	R	15/11 13/11 3/1	Eq: 0.420 (-0.137)

Problem #8

1.	R	9/5 7/5	Eq: 0.102				
	0.9%	18.3%	51.8%	48.2%	12.4%	0.7%	
2.	R	10/8 6/2x	Eq: 0.023 (-0.080)				
	0.9%	18.3%	49.4%	50.6%	17.5%	1.0%	
3.	R	9/7 6/2x	Eq: 0.014 (-0.088)				
	1.0%	19.0%	49.1%	50.9%	14.0%	0.8%	
4.	R	6/2x 4/2	Eq: -0.005 (-0.107)				
	1.0%	20.0%	48.1%	51.9%	19.2%	1.2%	
5.	R	13/11 6/2x	Eq: -0.010 (-0.112)				
	1.1%	19.9%	49.1%	50.9%	21.4%	1.6%	

Problem #9

1.	R	13/8 6/5	Eq: -0.713				
	0.4%	8.9%	36.2%	63.8%	23.4%	1.4%	
2.	R	13/7	Eq: -0.855 (-0.143)				
	0.4%	7.9%	33.3%	66.7%	19.7%	1.0%	
3.	R	8/3 6/5	Eq: -0.913 (-0.200)				
	0.4%	8.4%	35.1%	64.9%	28.1%	2.0%	
4.	R	13/8 13/12	Eq: -0.946 (-0.234)				
	0.4%	8.0%	32.2%	67.8%	20.5%	1.2%	
5.	R	8/3 8/7	Eq: -1.000 (-0.287)				
	0.3%	6.5%	28.7%	71.3%	26.8%	1.8%	

Problem #10

1.	R	6/2x(2)	Eq: -0.020				
	0.4%	11.0%	50.1%	49.9%	13.7%	0.5%	
2.	R	9/7(2) 6/2x	Eq: -0.154 (-0.134)				
	0.3%	10.2%	48.3%	51.7%	18.9%	0.6%	
3.	R	9/5(2)	Eq: -0.168 (-0.149)				
	0.3%	8.2%	47.1%	52.9%	13.8%	0.4%	
4.	R	11/9 9/7(3)	Eq: -0.177 (-0.157)				
	0.4%	8.2%	46.7%	53.3%	13.4%	0.3%	
5.	R	11/9 9/7(2) 6/4	Eq: -0.224 (-0.205)				
	0.4%	8.2%	46.5%	53.5%	16.8%	0.5%	

Congrats to **Frank Talbot** of Michigan who won this quiz and the Japan Open. He got 7 correct.