



Hoosier Backgammon Club

March 2004

Trolling For American Fish in Swedish Waters

By Jim Curtis

In August 2003, my second daughter convinced me I should **get a life**. She suggested a trip to the Arctic Circle in February and sleeping on a slab of ice at something called the Ice Hotel would be a fun experience. My psychiatrist was hesitant, but said that since I obviously had a death wish, I should go ahead. The clincher was when my daughter mentioned backgammon was popular in Stockholm and perhaps I could find a game.

Relegating thoughts of the Ice Hotel to my subconscious, I communicated with **The Prime Minister of Backgammon** in Stockholm. Initially I learned they played on Monday nights, which fit our schedule perfectly. Later I discovered they also had a **small tournament** on Thursday and a major tournament starting at 1PM on Sunday. Our plane was scheduled to land at noon. I intended to call from the plane and hire the fastest dog sled I could find to get me from the airport to downtown Stockholm where the tournament was to be held. My wife, who I always count on for proper etiquette, mildly suggested it would be uncouth not to spend some time with our daughter and her fiancé who were meeting us at the airport. As it turned out, our plane was late (I think my wife bribed the pilot), so I missed Sunday's play anyway. Nevertheless, I consoled myself with the thought of playing the next day.

In scanning the travel brochures I overlooked an interesting tidbit. No one in Sweden suffers from obesity. I soon learned why. My family (there were nine of us, but only one appreciates the exhilaration of games) thought I should try the steeple chase course (three times!) Fortunately, I started with a large breakfast. Unfortunately, I did not realize that was the last meal I would have for sixteen hours. Despite a marathon of museums and "must see" sights, I made it to the backgammon restaurant about 6 PM with play to start at 7 PM.

It was sort of a fancy restaurant. I mentioned to the maitre d' that I hoped to play backgammon that evening. He looked me over and then handed his clip board to his assistant. He said he played a **little backgammon** and we could start immediately after he changed his clothes. At that moment I identified with a tuna watching the troller approaching. About five minutes later, the maitre d' returned and said he would have to pass because he had a meeting

to attend. Later I learned they had a lottery in the kitchen to see who would play me and he lost.

Sadly I learned that Monday nights are league play made up of teams (like bowling), so I could not participate. However all was not lost. The captain of the leading team said he would graciously let his sub play in the league so he and I could have a **little fun**. At this point I should explain that I called Discover Card and told them I would be in Sweden in case any charges came through. They said **no problem**. From their standpoint there was no problem because Discover Cards are not accepted in Sweden. The company failed to impart this information to me, but it became rudely apparent when I tried to use the card shortly after getting off the plane.

I knew the Swedish currency is SEK. I had lots of SEK (sort of like having a million lira in Italy), but wasn't sure of its real value. I was thrown for a loop when my opponent suggested we play for so many Kroner. I had no idea what he was talking about, but never one to pass on a challenge, I said sure. In my defense, I was delirious from too much exercise and lack of nutrition. I did try to counter balance my involuntary diet with a few Swedish beers (good), but don't think it helped.

My opponent was no slouch. He played very well. Since I had no idea what we were really playing for, I uncharacteristically played very conservatively. After ten games or so, I was down a few points. Then came the bombshell. In any language I was significantly ahead in the race with little contact. I turned the cube to eight. Regardless of the monetary units, I knew I was going to be ahead. Surprisingly, my opponent accepted. After rolling double 5's and double 6's, he gave me the opportunity to play for a 16 cube. I was steamed. My thoughts were that I was entitled to a large double also. In my best Sean imitation I was about to say **Let's go** and my right hand was reaching for the cube. Fortunately, my left hand had been feeling how thin the Swedish money was. My left hand sprung from my pocket and intercepted my right hand before the latter touched the cube. Begrudgingly, I said **nice game** and my opponent graciously commented how lucky he was.

Intermittently, other players would come to the table and speak first in Swedish and then ask if I would like to play with them. I'm not sure what the Swedish word for fish is, but I'm sure I heard it used several times. I believe it was the club director (the Prime Minister) who offered to teach me a new game played with backgammon board called **Swedish Hall**. I told him we could try it later that evening although we never got around to it. At another point an emissary approached me and said Sweden's world champion happened to be in the restaurant and might be willing to play me. However the agent mentioned the champion rarely played for anything less than a hundred **something**. As enticing as the offer was, it came right after my loss of the eight cube, and I declined.

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Hoosier Backgammon Club

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Swedish Trip (continues)

There were probably thirty people playing in the room and I was impressed with the turn out on a Monday night. I was overwhelmed when I used the W.C. facilities and walked through a larger room also filled with backgammon players. It reminded me of the US popularity in the 70's. Sweden seems to be a hot bed for backgammon, but keep in mind they play well.

After a few hours my opponent said he had to work the next day and suggested we play six more games. I said fine. At that point I had struggled back to even or was ahead a few points. I won the first five games and then took a loose cube. I lost that game but that gave him some solace and we ended the battle on a good note. I thought my opponent overpaid me, and said so, but he insisted it was correct. (I don't think I'll make my fortune in the international monetary exchange market.) I had enough money to pay for my drinks and found a **Golden Arches** to quiet my growling stomach.

It was only about 10:30 PM and I considered going back to the restaurant, but opted to take the metro home. (Another steeple chase was scheduled for the morning.) My decision was fortuitous because I promptly got on a train for Denmark. I realized my mistake before getting to Copenhagen, and eventually got home. I kept thinking the backgammon players at the restaurant were probably still talking about the fish that got away.

Swedish people are wonderful. The populace have their problems and complaints, (i.e. taxes) but across the board they embody the best religious tenets for human interaction. I'm still trying to come to terms with the fact a socialist society with minimum religious vigor may routinely practice the moral and ethical standards that religiously based countries can only give lip service to.

Obviously, we had a wonderful time.

HBC Standings As of February 2004	
Butch Meese	320
Rick Steele	220
Jim Curtis	208
Sean Garber	204
Chuck Stimming	182
Scott Day	154
Mary Ann Meese	153
Woody Woodworth	142
Terry Bateman	121
Larry Strommen	112
Frank Scott	109
Dan Moore	69
Josh Riddell	52
Mark Swanson	30
Derrick Swanson	12
Randy Foster	10
Jeff Flowers	10

Special K: Sean Garber

Between October 29th and November 12th, **Sean Garber** won 10 matches in a row and joins the **Special K Club** for the second time. The complete list is on the HBC website.

Bill Julian

Condolences to the family and friends of **Bill Julian** who passed away in late February. Bill was one of the original members of the Hoosier Backgammon Club. He always had good stories to tell. As a player, he could be heard saying "*I play by feel*". Bill, we will miss your smile.

Player of the Month of February was Butch Meese with 194 gammon points.					2003 Club Championship Jim Curtis defeated Rick Steele in the Final 13-7 (8 games).
	February 4	February 11	February 18	February 25	
1st	Chuck Stimming	Butch Meese	Rick Steele	Butch Meese	
2nd	Larry Strommen	Woody Woodworth	Dan Miller	Rick Steele	
2nd	Frank Scott	Rick Steele	

Regional Tournament Schedule

Mar 19-21	2004 Midwest Championships , Lisle, IL	Bill Davis 773.583.6464
Apr 16-18	Ohio State Championships , Cleveland, OH	Joe Miller 330.966.2811
May 28-31	25th Annual Chicago Open Oak Brook Hills, IL	Joann Feinstein 847.674.0120
July 1-4	Michigan Summer Championships Novi, MI	Carol Joy Cole 810.232.9731