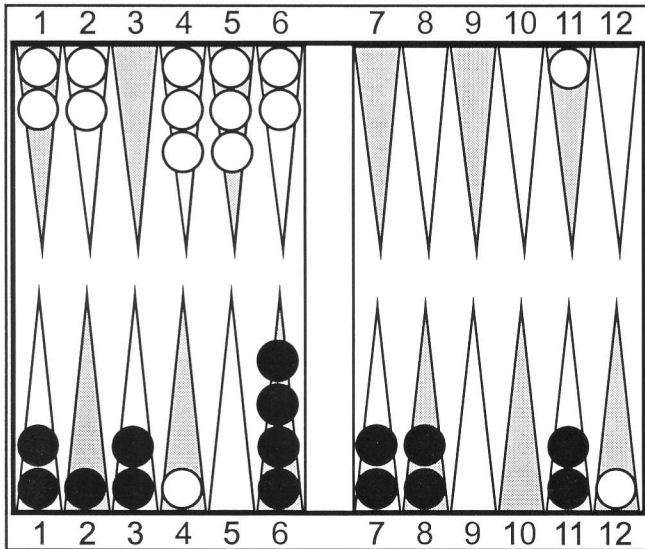# Hoosier Backgammon Club

April 2004

Pay Me Now or Pay Me Later?
By John O'Hagan

Double match point. Black to play 6-1?

Two plays come to mind, either clear the 8-point with 8-2 8-7 or the make the 5-point with 11-5 6-5. Clearing the 8-point is somewhat constructive in that it builds a 4-point board and is totally safe (at least for this roll). Making the 5-point is a much better position if the opponent fails to hit at the cost of 4 extremely strong hitting rolls which will probably cost Black the game. Choosing between these 2 plays therefore boils down to deciding whether or not the gains on the 32 misses outweigh the losses on the 4 hits. If they do, we pay now and make the 5-point. If not, we pay later by clearing the 8-point. Since we are at double match point, gammons and potential cube actions play no role in our decision.

Let's look at the loss from making the 5-point and then being hit with 6-1 or 5-2. If we clear the 8-

point and the opponent rolls 6-1 or 5-2, we will be on roll ahead 79-83 in the pip count. We will have some super-jokers that leave us in great shape but lots of other not-so-good rolls that force us to either bury checkers on our low points or volunteer 6 shots at a blot on our 11-point. There are lots of these **bury or volunteer** numbers: 6-5, 6-4, 6-3, 5-3, 5-2, 5-1, 4-3, 4-2, and 4-1. Burying checkers in this kind of position hurts your racing chances a lot. Also notice that 6-6 forces a direct while 6-2 and 6-1 can be used to make the 5-point but will leave 6 indirects. Bottom line, I would estimate our winning chances in this position to be around 65%.

If we instead make the 5-point with our 6-1 and our luckbox opponent rolls 6-1 or 5-2, we clearly are in a lot of trouble. We'll be on the roof against a 5-point board and behind in the race by 10 pips (83-93). Actually quite a bit more than 10 pips when you take our 25 dancing rolls into account. A pretty bad position to be sure, but not hopeless. I would put our chances in this position around 10%.

The **risk** from making the 5-point and then being hit is therefore around 55% (the difference between 65% and 10%). Since there are 4 numbers that hit, the total risk from this play is therefore

220%. Now we need to decide whether or not we gain more than 220% on the 32 missing numbers. 220/32 is a little less than 7. A 7% increase in winning chances is therefore the breakeven point. If making the 5-point increases our winning chances on the 32 misses from say, 65% to 72%, then it's the right play since 72% of 32 plus 10% of 4 is greater than 65% of 36.

Does making the 5-point help our game by that much? I would say it does or it certainly comes real close to the 7% mark. If we survive this roll, we rate to be able to play safely and constructively for the rest of the game. We will probably not be forced to leave any more shots although we might voluntarily hit loose if the opponent gains in the race but stays on the 21-point. We also figure to waste fewer pips which figures to improve our racing chances. I'm pretty sure these factors combine to at least increase our chances by 7%, so paying now would be my choice over-the-board.

Time to see what Snowie thinks. A 864 game rollout was run of both plays using the checker play according to score option. The rollout results were a victory for paying now: Making the 5-point won 61.58% +/- 0.26% vs. 60.97% +/- .031% for clearing the 8-point.

This same method can be used when your opponent is playing a 4- or 5-point holding game and you're trying to decide whether to clear the mid-point and leave a few shots or play safely somewhere else.

HBC Standings As of March 2004	
Butch Meese	444
Jim Curtis	367
Sean Garber	308
Rick Steele	254
Chuck Stimming	233
Woody	232
Scott Day	178
Mary Ann Meese	153
Larry Strommen	146
Terry Bateman	141
Frank Scott	109
Dan Moore	69
Mark King	54
Josh Riddell	52
Al Gomez	36
Mark Swanson	30
Gabe Stiasny	20
Derrick Swanson	12
Randy Foster	10
Jeff Flowers	10
Merle Feldman	10

52nd Indiana Open
Backgammon Tournament
September 3-9 2004
See You In September

Player of the Month of **March** was **Jim Curtis** with **159** gammon points.

	March 3	March 17	March 24	March 31
1st	Chuck Stimming	Butch Meese	Jim Curtis	Jim Curtis
2nd	Sean Garber	Woody Woodworth	Mark King (IL)	Woody Woodworth
2nd	...	Jim Curtis	...	...

Regional Tournament Schedule

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
Jul 30-Aug 1	**Wisconsin State Championships** Madison, WI	.... Tom Machaj 608.516.9109
Aug 12-15	**Georgia Championships** Atlanta, GA	.................................Dave Cardwell 770.333.1876
Sep 3-6	**52nd Indiana Open** Indianapolis, IN	.... Butch & Mary Ann Meese 317.255.8902
Weekly 7PM	**Neon Johnny's** (86th & Township Rd)	...................(Cells) 317.442.4065 or 317.430.7862