



Hoosier Backgammon Club

December 2004

Challenging Game Plan Choices At DMP by Perry Gartner

Double Match Point (DMP) play is not only decisive; the play and the very thinking about strategy and tactics is unique compared to usual match play. This comes about because now neither side can use the cube and gammons or backgammons do not count. Whenever DMP comes up, I make a conscious effort to always ask myself, what are the DMP considerations inherent in this play? There really is another world out there called DMP. We all should be (or become) familiar with the general principles of DMP play if we are to be competitive in this environment.

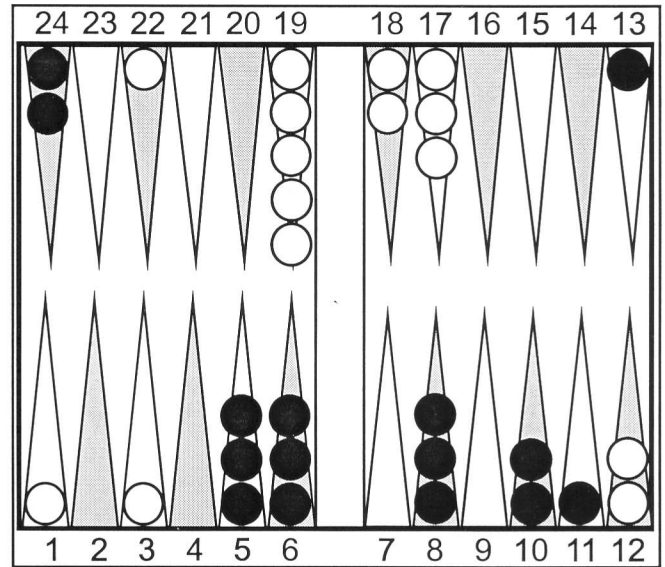
Here are the principles that I have found useful:

1. Stress pure play. This follows from the fact that gammons or backgammons are not useful.
2. Consider bigger plays than you would for **money** play.
3. Lean towards a racing game plan more than you would in a **money** situation because the lead can be smaller to win; there is no cube coming back.
4. Be more ready to risk getting hit when attempting to break contact; factoring out the gammons that normally would be against you.
5. When losing, seek low anchors as a potential game winning refuge. Consider a low anchor long before you normally would.
6. Blitzes are worth a lot less.
7. Go for establishing a forward anchor earlier, if possible. The anchor will permit a range of even more aggressive play than you usually would make.

Think about this situation I was faced with a DMP situation at the **52nd Indiana Open**.

Match to 9, White-8, Black-8.

Black to play 4-4? **DMP** (Double Match Point)



The serious candidate plays are:

- 1) 24/16(2)
- 2) 24/20(2), 11/3*
- 3) 11/3*, 8/4(2)
- 4) 24/20(2), 13/5

Play #1: 24/16(2). THE RACING PLAY PLUS.

Black would be up 10 pips at 133-143 after the roll. In short, it's a big plus to have both back checkers onto the 16-point and offer serious offensive threats, before the opponent has progressed to a strong defensive position.

The inducement for not stopping to anchor on the 20-point are:

1. Development is so far along, most often, I get to launch a formidable prime, or attack, without needing the protection of an inner anchor.
2. I can't get gammoned in the scenarios where I end up with checker(s) back.
3. I get the 2 back checkers past 11 of his checkers.
4. It is easier to break contact from the 16-point.

The 16-point from a strategic view:

1. I can stay put while I lengthen my prime.
2. I can attack on the inside.
3. I can inhibit your opponents escape chances

Hoosier Backgammon Club
Butch & Mary Ann Meese
1008 Tuckahoe, Indianapolis, In 46260-2215

Home Page: <http://www.hoosierbgclub.org>
Email: indybg@comcast.net
Phone: 317.255.8902

when racing becomes his game plan, because I am positioned to get a direct shot.

4. I can wait until there is an opportune moment to break contact with the midpoint.
5. I am well positioned to take on an exchange of hits if that kicks in on the next roll.

Let's look at the major variations that are likely to arise from his next roll (all 36 numbers):

- A. The 13 numbers that hit me on the next roll are perhaps the most severe challenge on the way home, but because of the massive returns, and the ability to escape or stall while my other forces are in play, most hits are relatively benign. 1-1, 4-4 and 6-6 are his best, yet I still look like a mid-50% favorite on roll against these numbers. He doesn't hit with 1-2.
- B. The 9 two's that make an anchor on my 3-point relegate him to be a 2 to 1 underdog. How did I estimate that? We know in a money game, the constricted 3-point game plus a few fly shots is a clear take, lets say worth 23% cubeless. Here's the difference. I have to break direct contact from the 16-point, there are 5 outside points to clear, the bar and 4-point have not yet been made, all 15 checkers need to get by his anchor on my 3-point and his anchor can stay put longer than usual. The 10% add-on for multiple shot potential, plus some racing chances is simply an educated guess based upon the factors I mentioned.
- C. Six numbers escape one checker, leaving one stranded. The race is close but I am a favorite to contain the remaining checker.
- D. Two numbers make my bar. Now a race is more likely for him, with some hitting chances as well. Since my structure in the outfield is favorable to breaking contact and bearing in, the bar point becomes highly unfavorable to him if I manage to clear the 16-point safely.
- E. Six numbers improve his interior structure

and one of them (5-5), puts him ahead in the race. He would like to roll these over as I have a broad range of inviting initiatives available.

Theoretically one could assign an estimate of winning chances to each of these groups and average them out. Too tough over the board for most of us including me. So I took the reference position I knew best, the 3-point game (B), and used the 67% number against the other variations. Were the variations worth more or less than the 3-point game? I felt A and D were worth less and C and E more and there were 3 more games in A and B so I reduced my estimate of winning chances to 64%.

Am I going to dissect each of the return rolls in the other plays? Not exactly, as I now pretty much know what they will be like. He will be anchoring on my 3-point and making inside points, and hitting blots if they are available. I will keep this in mind when I analyze the other rolls. I will use the 64% as a reference. Is this play going to win more than 64% I will ask myself after I review each one?

Play #2. 24/20(2), 11/3* THE PURE PLAY
 My checkers on my home side (infield and outfield) of the board are in a powerful formation for priming and attacking. I have both 5-points with builders in range. His undeveloped board has a blot that could be vulnerable if he is hit back. The purpose of hitting is to fight for the 3-point. His anchoring on my 1-point isn't nearly as good for him (at this stage). Attacking gives me chances to prime, or establish inner points. If attacking or priming gains ground, escaping from his 5-point becomes easier. If he does establish my 3- or 4-point, I still have some priming assets. If I lose out in the hitting exchange and more of my own checkers are re-circulated, he has to build a strong inner board, contain at least one of my checkers or become the leader in the race and leave my side of the board to win.

Regional Tournament Schedule		
Jan 14-16	5th Carolina Invitational , Charlotte, NC.....	(704) 814-0850
Feb 18-20	27th Pittsburgh Championships , Holiday Inn, Pittsburgh, PA.....	(412) 823-7500
Mar 18-20	Midwest Championship , Wyndham Lisle, Lisle, IL	(773) 583-6464
Weekly 7 PM	Neon Johnny's (86th & Township Rd).....	(Cells) 317.442.4065 or 317.430.7862

Play #3 11/3*,8/4(2)

THE FULL FLEDGED ATTACKING PLAY

With the opponents board as weak as it is, why not make another key inner point while I am hitting and still maintain priming options? How important is his 5-point when I have outboarded him 3.5 points to 1.5 points, and his hits and covers are few? A successful attack closes him out, primes him or gives him an ace point game. A thwarted attack makes priming tough, more checkers back without an advanced anchor and no midpoint.

My feeling is this play is worth less than the others because I just can't prevent the anchor from happening often enough and more checkers back are bad news without an anchor and midpoint.

Play #4. 24/20 (2), 13/5 THE QUIET PLAY

There are 24 constructive numbers for him coming up. Three that hit, 13 that make a point and the 8 that escape a checker to safety or into the outfield. Too many that stall or squash the attack or prime plans.

My CHOICE

The winner** is the RACING PLAY PLUS (Play #1). Over the board I made the PURE PLAY (Play #2). It was a tough decision between the PURE PLAY and the RACING PLAY PLUS. I chose the PURE PLAY because I thought this was **the** time to go on the offensive. I also felt this play led to more complications and therefore opened the door to more mistakes on my opponent's part, so maybe I made the right choice in this situation. I feel great about my game winning chance estimate compared to Snowie, as too many times I am further off the mark.

**ROLLOUTS

Rollout parameters: Snowie 4, level 3, precise, 648 games.

THE RACING PLAY PLUS wins 65.3%.

THE PURE PLAY wins 63.7%.

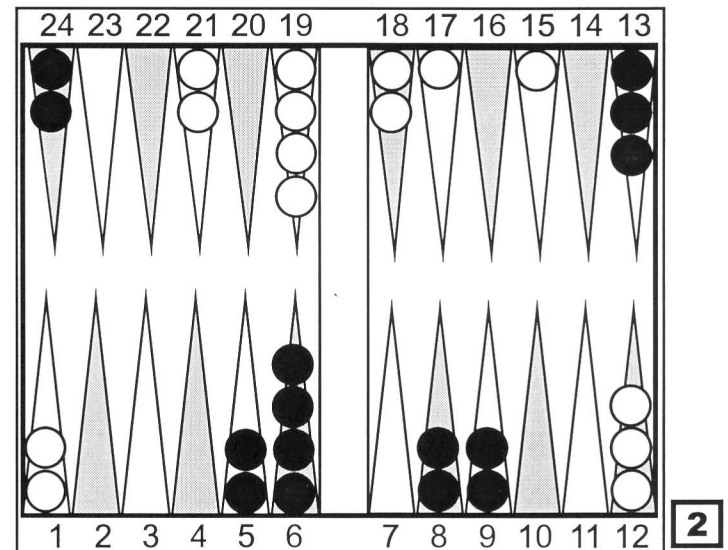
THE QUIET PLAY came in 3rd with 62.0%.

THE FULL FLEDGED ATTACKING PLAY was last with 60.9%.

CONCLUSION

This difference between the top two plays is not that big, except perhaps for our greatest players. One can appreciate the shortcoming of the two worse plays in light of the rollout results. All of these plays represent common themes at DMP.

Match to 9, White-3, Black-7. Black to play 2-2?



Editor Note: Woody Woodworth was given both positions to look at and provides his insight to both.

Just Win Baby! (Saying make famous by former Oakland Raider head coach Al Davis)

In both positions, you are a considerable favorite to win if you do nothing stupid, and you don't need to worry about winning a gammon. Only above average good luck for your opponent or bad luck for you will alter your rightful victory after your next play in either position. In the position to play the double 4s at double-match point score, the theme of connectivity of your entire 15 checker army prevails over any attacking play that would divide your forces if the attack were unsuccessful. Thus, 24-16 (2) would be my play here and I believe that any other play would probably be a blunder. Even if your opponent rolls one of his hitting numbers that at best will score only a single hit, he will leave numerous return shots while having no board. And, if he has to use an ace to hit, other than double aces; the entire battlefield from the 16 to 5 points are yours.

The play of double 2s in the above position is not quite as clear since this time the cube sits at 2 and only your opponent can benefit from any gammons. I can see several reasonable plays that advance both back checkers or improve my prime (under NO circumstances would I leave a shot here) and one play that does a little of each, i.e. 24-22 (2), 6-4(2). However, I don't like the halfway measure of that play as it probably is insufficient to accomplish either an efficient escape or a sufficient block. I will prefer either 24-20(2) or 9-7(2), 6-4(2). I would MARGINALLY choose the latter for the following reasons:

1. the pipcount is pretty even and my opponent's rolls containing large numbers (which would normally improve his overall race equity) would tend to not be as effectively used, and his future crash potential is heightened. Other than an immediate 5-3 or 4-4, none of his large numbers will improve his ability to close me in. A corollary to that is his small numbers are, in the near term duplicated, in that he can try to advance to the edge of my 5-prime or use his spares to improve his own prime, but not both. Yes his double 1s would produce a mirror image position with me on roll and favored to have to break first, but nothing is perfect.
2. (as overheard at grade school recess: "*nyaah-nyaah, I've got a five prime and you don't..... yet!*") I LIKE 5-primes with no holes when the opponent is not at the edge and not even threatening the back end of the prime. That situation allows for a fair amount of flexibility in the play of the other five checkers plus the two rearmost primers.
3. I do not think a hitting contest is going to be in my best interest. While there is some gammon risk to sitting on the 24-point, I think it is not as great as may exist in a midfield battle involving escapes. With an even race, if I advance to the 20-point, I will still need some lucky rolls to escape without shots and at the score and cube position, my opponent isn't afraid to split his rear checkers (especially to the bar) to maximize contact if that appears to be a reasonable response to the advance of my rear checkers. Also, I can see several awkward numbers containing a six possible on my next roll if I play 24-20 (2). I would rather have my opponent have to play any awkward numbers here.

Roll-Out Data (by Chuck Bower)

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. 24/20(2) | Eq: +0.2136 |
| 2. 24/22(2) 6/4(2) | Eq: +0.1928 (-0.0208) |
| 3. 9/7(2) 6/4(2) | Eq: +0.1858 (-0.0279) |
| 4. 24/22(2) 9/7(2) | Eq: +0.1437 (-0.0700) |

HBC Standings As of November 2004			
Butch Meese	1434	Mark King	54
Jim Curtis	1165	Terry Leahy	48
Sean Garber	1043	Paul Franks	48
Rick Steele	1016	Jeff Flowers	46
Larry Strommen	898	Randy Foster	38
Chuck Stimming	858	Al Gomez	36
Woody Woodworth	675	Lucky Nelson	36
Mary Ann Meese	616	Mark Swanson	30
Scott Day	594	Karen Chung	30
Terry Bateman	421	Geoff Arnold	30
Scott Johnston	365	Peter Kalba	24
Dan Moore	308	John Baron	24
Gabe Stiasny	244	Mark Drabing	18
Merle Feldman	143	Chuck Bower	18
Eric Luecking	129	Mark Mikolon	18
Josh Riddell	120	Derrick Swanson	12
Frank Scott	109	Jack Scofield	12
Mary Franks	60	Kevin Heacox	10
John Hill	58		

Player of the Month of November was Jim Curtis with 167 gammon points.				
	November 3	November 10	November 17	November 24
1st	Butch Meese	Jim Curtis	Gabe Stiasny	Jim Curtis
2nd	Jim Curtis	Rick Steele	Woody Woodworth	Chuck Stimming
2nd	Larry Stommen	Larry Stommen	Mary Ann Meese	...