

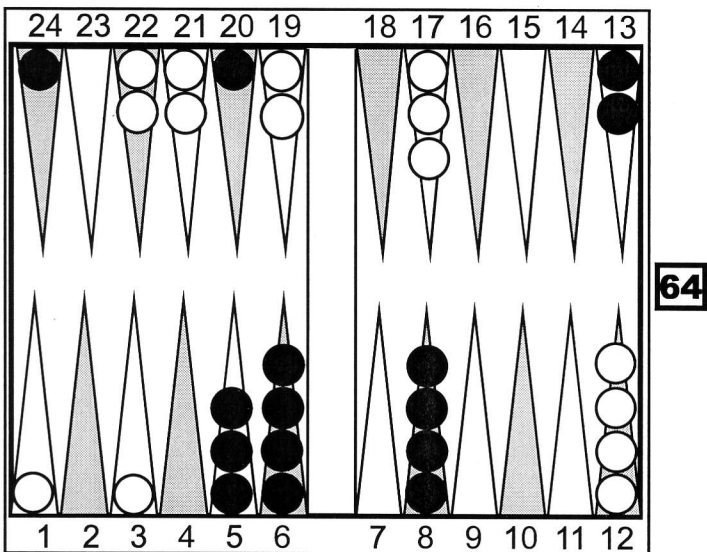


# Hoosier Backgammon Club

September 2005

## Don't Get Duped Out Of Your Gameplan

by Chuck Bower



Score 0-0 in a 25-point match. Black to play 5-1.

One of the first principles learned by players is duplication. This is simply a shortcut to minimizing the opponent's good rolls. You could look at all 36 of the opponent's upcoming numbers, but often noticing two good things he can do with a single die (e.g. hit and hit or hit and cover) determines your decision. By giving the opponent the same number to accomplish two goals, you minimize the chances he can do either.

The problem with duplication, as with many rules of thumb, is that it is often overused. The above position occurred at the beginning of the recent Monte Carlo World Championship. Over the board, Black ran with 20/14. Many would agree, citing duplication of White's deuces to hit and deuces to make the anchor. Gnu-backgammon rollouts indicate this play is wrong by 0.13 equivalent money game (EMG) units.

Duplication should be a secondary consideration. The primary consideration is always to make a play consistent with the gameplan. The decision in this position is not easy due to two facts: 1) Black leads the race by 13 pips after the play. This argues for making a race play. 2) White has the better board which argues against hitting. So why not run?

First, running 20/14 isn't a safe play. White hits with

any deuce plus 6-5 for 13 hitting numbers. If White gets one of these 13 numbers, the race lead then becomes Whites. Secondly, White's distribution is awkward with 3 being the only single die which hits loose on White's 5-point. Thus Black is under less pressure to move off the 20-point. Meanwhile White is vulnerable with no anchor and Black has many builders aimed at the homeboard. This is a good opportunity to attempt to take the initiative by hitting loose with 8/3x.

Black still has an ace to play. Three choices are: continuing 3/2, shifting a builder 6/5, and stepping up to the 23-point with the back checker.

Moving 3/2 has two downsides. Structurally the 3-point is better than the 2-point, especially with the 8-point made. (The 2-point and 8-point cannot both be part of a six prime.) Secondly, by staying on the 3-point, White's 3's are duplicated -- hitting on Black's 3-point and on White's 5-point both require a 3. (NOTE: this is an example where considering duplication is correct. All three aces fit within the game plan. Use duplication to help decide between similar plays.) GNU-bg Rollouts show that continuing to the 2-point is wrong by 0.08 EMG units.

The remaining two plays (6/5 and 24/23) are a tossup. Neither play is ideal since 6/5 moves a spare from an optimum position (6-point) to a less than optimum spot. 24/23 puts the back checker in direct range of White's only spare home side checker, vulnerable to getting hit with a 6.

It is worth noting that in the actual match, we don't know if the duplication of 2's was a factor in Black's decision to play 20/14 or whether he thought this move was simply the best for his chosen game plan. But next time you have a choice to cleverly duplicate your opponent's dice, make sure your choice is consistent with your game plan.

## Backgammon As A Spectator Sport

An Onlooker's Take on the 53rd Indiana Open  
by Michelle Frydell

I recently had the opportunity to attend the 53rd annual Indiana Open tournament at the Sheraton Hotel in Indianapolis, Indiana. I know that keeping your checkers covered is a good idea and that bumping somebody else's checker isn't bad, either, but other than that, my knowledge of backgammon is pretty darn limited. No, I was there as (dare I say it?) a spectator!

My husband had recently joined the Hoosier Backgammon Club and had entered in the intermediate division. He has played online backgammon for a pretty good while now and plays the guys he works with on their lunch breaks, and he has what I consider to be a fairly extensive collection of backgammon strategy books. Now, I'm a bit too goofy to enter the tournament because I would get all giddy and excited if I rolled a nice set of doubles. That, plus I talk WAY too much to actually participate, but let me tell you that I highly recommend attending as a spectator!

The tournament is held every year over the Labor Day weekend and this year our son's birthday fell on that Sun-

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day. We decided that it would be fun to get a room at the Sheraton for that Saturday night (even though we live in Indianapolis) and make a little celebration excursion of it, ordering room service breakfast and swimming in the pool when we had breaks or when my husband's play was over for the day. We had a fantastic time. The location was prime, close to shopping (the hotel adjoins the nicest shopping mall in Indianapolis) and there are some fantastic restaurants right in the same parking lot (Cheesecake Factory, Maggiano's Italian Bistro, Benihana Japanese Steak House, Café Patachou and the Keystone Grill).

From a bystander's prospective, it seemed to be a very well-run tournament and everyone who was there to play looked like they were able to get their fill with the regular match play and all the side matches that seemed to spring up out of nowhere. Tournament organizers, Butch and MaryAnn Meese, did a stellar job putting it all together.

On the Friday prior to the start of actual tournament play, there was a free lecture by Kit Woolsey. Now, I'll admit that I didn't know who Kit Woolsey was, but my husband certainly did. And it actually was quite cool to meet so many of the people whose names I had seen on countless backgammon books on my husband's bedside table. Neil Kazaross was there, always in a tropical print shirt. I was surprised to learn that he and his palm leaf gear are stationed in Illinois (I would have guessed Key West). Steve Sax was there, unassuming as he could be considering he's one of the top ranked players in the country. And Phil Simborg did a little trick that ended with him giving our son a Sacagawea golden dollar coin. He even sang Happy Birthday to our son (in a Donald Duck voice, I must add!). That was really funny and I was really pleased that the people there were so friendly, especially since Bobby was the only child present. Just a fine group of folks.

Now, chances are that if you're reading this newsletter you are probably already a pretty serious follower of backgammon and that's great. But I'm writing this article primarily for those of you who WOULD have attended this tournament but didn't (or who DID enter but had to come alone) because your wife (or husband or whatever) thought they would be bored stiff by a weekend full of backgammon. Even I, a person with slightly less than a beginner's knowledge of the game, started really *getting into* the matches, at times rising from my seat to get a better look at the board. It was actually quite exciting at times.

On the way home from the tournament on the final day of play, after watching Steve Sax win the Championship Division finals, I walked over to the table where a consolation match was being played out between Kit Woolsey and former Indiana Open champion Perry Gartner. That game was so close, everybody within 10 feet of the table was holding their breath and you could cut the tension with a knife. At that point, it was pretty much a *done deal* that we would definitely be participating again next year. We're going to make a long weekend out of it, spending time together and supporting my husband in an activity that turned out to be almost as much fun for us as it was for him! Maybe this will help convince your own personal fan base that you should definitely plan to participate in next year's Indiana Open. We'll look for you...and I'll save a seat for your cheerleader!

<b>HBC Standings As of August 2005</b>	
Sean Garber	1249
Butch Meese	1010
Scott Johnston	738
Rick Steele	714
Chuck Stimming	581
Terry Bateman	495
Scott Day	334
Jim Curtis	298
Larry Strommen	297
Woody Woodworth	275
Mary Ann Meese	241
Merle Day	141
Paul Berg	96
Dave Groner	74
Josh Riddell	69
Bob Frydell	52
Dan Moore	42
Dragan Stevanovic	38
Charlie Haley	34
Mark Swanson	32
Ron Bartov	30
Jack Scofield	24
Mark Mikolon	20
Eric Luecking	18
Derrick Swanson	10

**Player of the Month of August was Sean Garber with 150 gammon points.**

	August 4	August 11	August 17	August 24
<b>1st</b>	Butch Meese	Scott Johnston	Sean Garber	Sean Garber
<b>2nd</b>	Scott Johnston	Rick Steele	Chuck Stimming	Rick Steele

<b>Tournament BG Schedule</b>	
Oct 14-16	<b>Illinois State Championship</b> , Springfield Hilton, Springfield, IL ..... 217.528.0117
Oct 28-30	<b>2005 Minnesota Open</b> , Mystic Lake Casino, Prior Lake, Minnesota ..... 651.699.6758
Nov 16-20	<b>2005 Las Vegas Open</b> , Riviera Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas ..... 773.583.6464
Wed 7 PM	<b>Neon Johnny's</b> , 86th & Township Line Rd.....(Cells) 317.442.4065 or 317.430.7862