

Madison Backgammon News



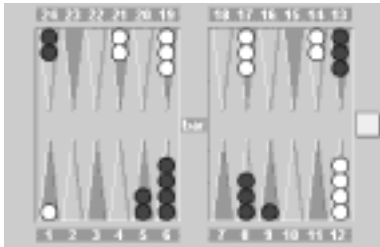
Number 32

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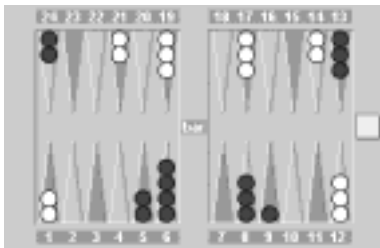
Answers to Quiz Problems

By Sam Pottle

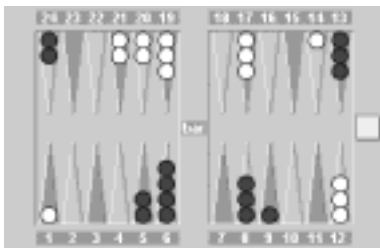
Problem 3



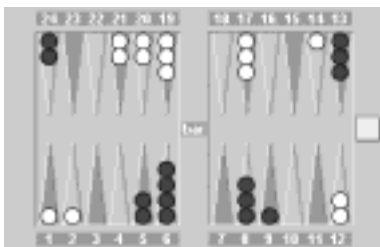
Part A: Money game, center cube.
Black to play 11.



Part B: Money game, center cube.
Black to play 11.



Part C: Money game, center cube.
Black to play 11.



Part D: Money game, center cube.
Black to play 11.

This problem was designed to illustrate some basic themes in the early game. Black's position is the same in all four parts of the problem, while the White position varies in some simple ways (two men back vs. one, back men split or not, strong home board vs. weak). Amazingly, Black's best play of double 1's is different in each position!

The first theme is that Black's priorities should change once White has escaped a back checker. With one man back to Black's two, White will have a big advantage in a priming contest unless Black gets those back men moving. There are several reasons for this. One is that two men are easier to contain than one. Another is that it's easier to build a prime with 14 front checkers than with 13. The third reason is subtler, but also important: if the race is at all close, Black's timing will be poor. With 24 more pips tied up in back checkers than White has, Black's prime is likely to break first.

For all these reasons, it is important for Black either to form an advanced anchor, escape a checker of his own, or hit a White blot, restoring the balance. Look at position C. White has the advantage in every department: stronger board, longer prime, fewer men back, and a racing

lead. He has several numbers that make the bar point or the three point next turn. Black needs a defense **now**. Happily, he can use his double 1's to anchor on the 22 point.

Now look at part A. Here again White has only one man back, but his board is less threatening. Black should split his back checkers (24/23), but can afford to use the rest of the roll to make the bar point (9/7 8/7). Splitting the back men does several good things. It gives Black several rolls that form an advanced anchor. It doubles his chances of hitting a shot in White's outfield. And it makes it easier for Black to escape his checkers one at a time, particularly if White makes the 20 or 18 point. Making the bar point is obviously useful for containing White's back man, and Black can afford to do it because there is not yet a state of emergency on the other side of the board.

In contrast, when White has two men back Black needn't be in a hurry to do anything with the rear checkers. Consider position B. This is the most symmetrical and most even of the positions. Black can get an advantage in the priming contest by simply making another point on his side of the board. Which point should he make? Making the bar point gives Black four in a row, while 6/4 (2)
(continued on page 2)

Answers

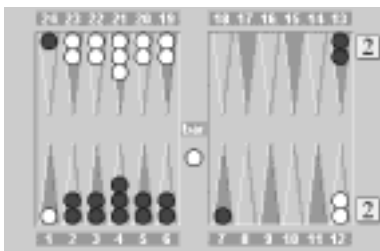
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makes a stronger board. As usual, the inside point is better than the outside point. After making the four point, Black still has three builders trained on the bar point. The only drawback of this play is that the distribution of spares is awkward for attacking. But since White is securely anchored on the ace point, Black has nothing to attack, so this is not such a big defect.

In Part D, however, it is another story. Here White has split his back checkers, making them vulnerable to attack. Black can threaten those men and improve his prime at the same time by playing 9/7 8/7 6/5. Now the man on the 2 point is staring four builders in the face. If White fails to anchor immediately, Black may develop a strong attack. If he doesn't roll the right numbers to attack, he can just keep working on his prime. Robertie calls this type of position a "two-way forward game," where Black can win either by priming or by direct attack. These positions tend to be very strong.

Score two points each for 9/7 8/7 24/23 in part A, 6/4(2) in part B, 24/22(2) in part C, and 9/7 8/7 6/5 in part D.

Problem 4



Money game, Black to play 32.

- (a) White owns the cube.
- (b) Black owns the cube.

This problem illustrates how cube

ownership can influence checker play decisions. If White owns the doubling cube, Black must play the whole game and snuff out all of White's chances in order to win. If Black owns the cube (or the cube is in the middle), his goal is to get a "strong enough" position, and then win with the cube (by doubling White out). In particular, it doesn't always make sense for Black to take a big risk to get a big gain, if that gain carries him well beyond the point where White would drop a double anyway.

In Problem 4 Black can play safe with 7/2, or he can attack with 7/5 4/1*. When White owns the cube the hit is correct. If Black is unwilling to hit loose on the ace point, White will probably succeed in anchoring there, giving him significant winning chances for a long time. With the attacking play, if White hits back, the game will be nearly even (both sides will have one man on the bar). But if White fails to hit back, Black will be in very good shape. If he completes the closeout he will probably win a gammon. The gain in Black's game when White dances is worth the risk of being hit, especially since Black will still have an even game in that case.

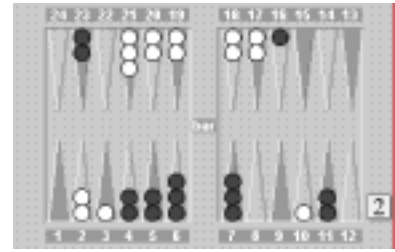
But what if Black owns the cube? Now the safe play is much better than it was before, because Black can double White out if White dances. If Black chooses the attacking play, he makes his cube almost useless: if White dances, Black is way too good to double and will play on for a gammon, while if White hits, Black has only a slight advantage in the game.

The moral is, **when you have access to the cube, try to reach positions that allow you to use it effectively.** This means creeping up on your opponent's takepoint, rather than taking big all-or-nothing type risks.

In part (a), score two points for 7/5 4/1*. In part (b), score two points for 7/2.

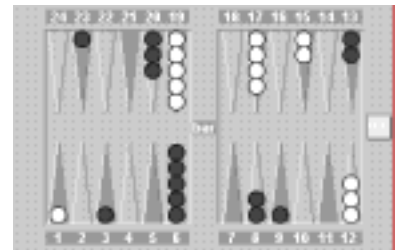
New Quiz Problems

Problem 5

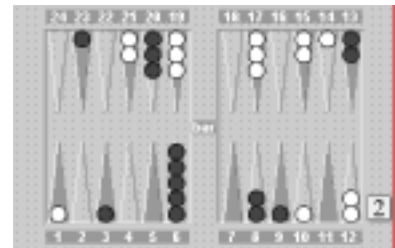


Money game, Black owns the cube. Black to play 32. (4 points)

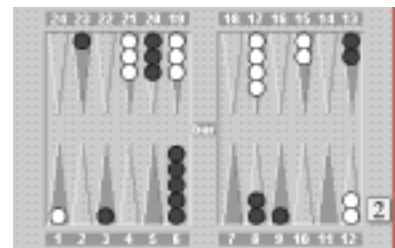
Problem 6



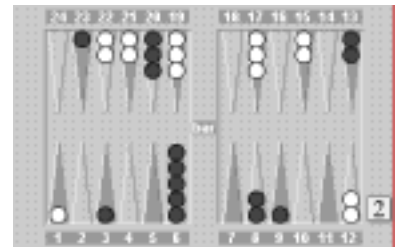
Part A: Money game, center cube. Black to play 52. (2 points)



Part B: Money game, Black owns the cube. Black to play 52. (2 points)



Part C: Money game, Black owns the cube. Black to play 52. (2 points)



Part D: Money game, Black owns the cube. Black to play 52. (2 points)

Madison Backgammon News

e-mail: machaj@itis.com

Tom Machaj, Editor

5812 Chesapeake Cir

Fitchburg WI 53719-1600

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Tom Sights In; Mark Leapfrogs Sam

With only three club tournaments left in the year, who is going to be among the top three finishers and their order became a lot less certain after the last three rounds. Tom Machaj gained much ground on the current leader, Gary Hines, with a whopping 10.75 point increase since September. Gary picked up an additional 4.45 points. Mark Tremayne hopped past Sam Pottle with a 5.70 point gain to take over 3rd place.

Recent Club Tournament Results

October 5 – (9 players) 1st Tom Machaj, 2nd Lee Pflugrad, Cons. Lenn Schneider.

October 19 – (9 players) 1st Mark Tremayne, 2nd Gary Hines, Cons. Tom Machaj.

November 2 – (8 players) 1st Tom Machaj, 2nd Bruce Russell, Cons. Bill Minser.

Club Standings As Of 11/02/99

| | |
|-----------------|-------|
| Gary Hines | 43.40 |
| Tom Machaj | 40.50 |
| Mark Tremayne | 32.35 |
| Sam Pottle | 29.10 |
| Bruce Russell | 24.65 |
| Bill Minser | 21.25 |
| Lenn Schneider | 20.50 |
| Lee Pflugrad | 18.35 |
| Carl Jespersion | 11.70 |
| Bruce Garner | 10.45 |
| Rob Keast | 9.10 |
| Mark Kremer | 6.70 |
| Sonja Peacock | 4.15 |
| Jerry Neviasser | 3.00 |
| Paul Gibbons | 1.00 |
| Marge Kirchoff | 1.00 |
| Paul Strasberg | 1.00 |

Upcoming Events

November 16 – Club Tournament. JT Whitney's Pub & Brewery, 674 S Whitney Way, Madison, WI. (608) 274-1776. 6:30 p.m. Registration. 7:00 p.m. Play begins. \$6/entry, \$4/1st side, \$5/2nd side.

November 28 – Chicago Bar Point Sunday Bimonthly. Anyway's Chicago Grill & Bar, 5 E Roosevelt Rd, Oakbrook Terrace, IL (630) 932-9323. 11:30 a.m. Registration. 12 p.m. Play begins. \$40/open, \$20/intermediate.

December 7 – Club Tournament. JT Whitney's Pub & Brewery, 674 S Whitney Way, Madison, WI. (608) 274-1776. 6:30 p.m. Registration. 7:00 p.m. Play begins. \$6/entry, \$4/1st side, \$5/2nd side.

December 8-12 – Backgammon Tournament of the Americas. Westin Regina, Cancun, Mexico. Reservations (800) 524-5405. Visit www.cr-bg.com for details.

December 21 – Club Tournament. JT Whitney's Pub & Brewery, 674 S Whitney Way, Madison, WI. (608) 274-1776. 6:30 p.m. Registration. 7:00 p.m. Play begins. \$6/entry, \$4/1st side, \$5/2nd side.

January 4 – Club Tournament. JT Whitney's Pub & Brewery, 674 S Whitney Way, Madison, WI. (608) 274-1776. 6:30 p.m. Registration. 7:00 p.m. Play begins. \$6/entry, \$4/1st side, \$5/2nd side.

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Madison Backgammon News is published every month or so to promote the fine art of backgammon in the Madison metro area, State of Wisconsin, Midwestern U.S., planet Earth, and so forth. Madison Backgammon Club meets every Tuesday evening at 6:30 p.m. at J.T. Whitney's Pub & Brewery. Club tournaments are held on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of every month. Chouettes and one-on-one play are conducted on all other Tuesdays and after players are knocked out of tournament play.