

Madison Backgammon News



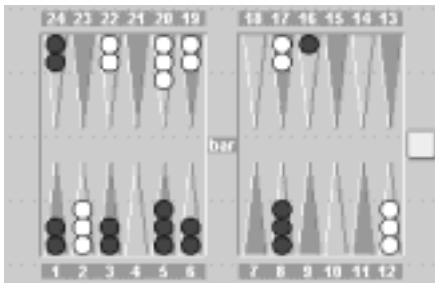
Number 34

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Answers to Quiz Problems

By Sam Pottle

Problem 7



Money game, center cube.
Black to play 64. (4 points)

It looks natural to play 16/6 here, safetying the outfield blot. But what will Black do for a followup? His rear checkers are stranded a long way from home. White will have complete control of the outfield, and can spread out his men to try to make his bar point, and to catch any fleeing Black checkers.

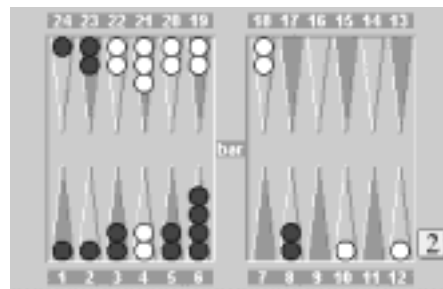
If Black leaves his back men where they are, and tries to play a prime-versus-prime style game, he is likely to have the worst of it. Black will lead in the race by 44 pips after playing 64, so his timing is quite poor. Also, Black's prospects for effectively blocking White's rear checkers are hurt by his two men permanently out of play on the one point. White, by contrast, has all his checkers still in play, and has real chances to build a strong prime in front of Black's back men.

If Black plays 16/6, he will be forced to move his back men within a couple of rolls anyway, at a time when it may be more dangerous to do so. Black must simply play 24/14 and hope for the

best. This does leave a double shot in the outfield, but both blots are missed over a third of the time. If Black is hit, he can just enter and try again. It's crucial not to cede the entire outfield to White.

Score 4 points for 24/14.

Problem 8



Money game, Black owns the cube.
Black to play 64. (4 points)

Black faces a simple choice in problem 8: run a man out (23/17, with 6/2 or 17/13) or hold the fort (8/2 6/2). If he runs, stopping on the 17 point must be better than running all the way to the midpoint, because it leaves fewer shots, fewer blots, and a stronger board.

This problem is similar to Problem 7 in its structure, but Black is in worse shape here. Most of the differences argue for running now: White has a solid 5-prime, White has a higher anchor so that Black can't hope to build a useful prime himself, Black is already out of time on his side of the board, and the non-running play leaves a shot anyway.

The only real downside to running is that it gives up the anchor on the 23 point. This exposes Black to a possible attack and subsequent loss of a gammon. In weighing these

arguments, there are two things you should understand about this position.

First, running out is by far the best play to win the game. If Black stays back, it's hard to see how he plans to win this one. He'll need a one and three sixes to get all his back men past White's prime in order to win "going forwards." Failing that, Black will need to win a deuce point holding game with three men back and a crunched board -- a tall order. It's usually right to make the play that can win the game, even at the risk of more gammons. Sometimes, though, the win is so unlikely and the increased gammon risk so great that one should basically concede the game, and play simply to avoid being gammoned.

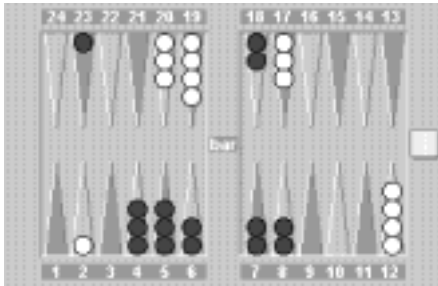
That is not the case here. The second thing you should understand about this problem is that leaving the anchor does not greatly increase Black's gammon risk! White is not well placed for an all-out attack, with only a single spare checker in his home table. Also, Black's strong board makes it risky for White to hit loose, particularly if he gives up the prime to do it. Also, and very importantly, Black loses a lot of gammons with the "safe" play. Three men back in a deuce point game get gammoned a fair amount of the time, and White has good chances to send a fourth man back. Even if the direct shot (after 8/2 6/2) is missed, White can sit back and wait for Black's six and five points to go, with possible blots left as Black's position collapses.

Kent Goulding has written that playing to win is better than playing not to lose. That is the case here.

Score 4 points for 23/17 6/2.

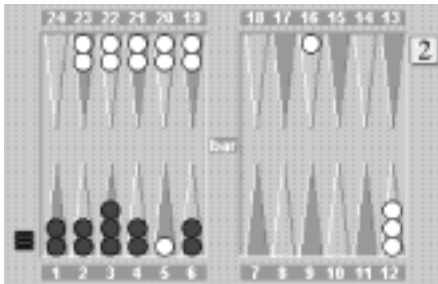
New Quiz Problems

Problem 9



Money game, center cube.
Black to play 42. (4 points)

Problem 10



Money game, White owns the cube.
Black to play 43. (4 points)

1999 Club Standings Awards To Be Presented on Feb. 15

Trophies will be presented to the top three finishers in the Madison Backgammon Club standings for 1999. The ceremony will take place on February 15 at 7:00 p.m., just before the start of that evening's club tournament.

The trophies have been graciously donors by anonymous benefactor of the club.

Hines Scores Back-To-Back Wins At Milw. Bi-Monthly

Gary Hines scored his second 1st place finish in a row at the recent Milwaukee Bi-Monthly Tournament which was held on Sunday, January 23 at John Hawks Pub in downtown Milwaukee. The Pub is a tastefully decorated English pub with a substantial number of tap and bottled brews, as well as excellent, well-portioned dishes and sandwiches.

*Results: (8) 1-Gary Hines, 2-Marv Arrol,
Cons.-Bob Holyon / Rudy Langenbach.*

Return of the 17 Point Tournament

By popular demand, our special invitational tournament is back in 2000! Last year at this time we invited each of our club "regulars" to participate in a special free tournament. The format was double elimination, the matches were all 17 points long, and the tournament was played over the course of calendar year 1999. The final match was played in September, with Gary Hines emerging as the tournament winner.

The event was a big hit. People really seemed to enjoy the experience of playing longer matches, and (in some cases) the opportunity to play in other venues, or at other times of the day. So, we've decided to do it again!

As before, we are inviting those players who participated in at least half of our 1999 club tournaments. In alphabetical order:

Bruce Garner
Gary Hines
Carl Jespersion
Tom Machaj
Bill Minser
Lee Pflugrad
Sam Pottle
Bruce Russell
Lenn Schneider
Mark Tremayne

There is no entry fee. This is a thank you from our club to those players who have played regularly and made it such a success. Prizes are still being determined. We won't be able to offer the kind of money prizes that were awarded last year, but there will be worthwhile prizes for the top three finishers.

The format will be again be pure double elimination, with all matches 17 points in length. This year we are adding a consolation flight, so that each player will still be alive in the tourney until he has lost three times. Prizes will be awarded to the top two finishers in the double knockout, and to the winner of the consolation flight.

Please let Sam or Tom know within the next couple of weeks whether you can participate, so we can get the ball rolling! Sam will serve once again as

tournament director. We will play a round every four to six weeks. The tournament will take several months, so if you're planning to move to Japan in February (for example), please bow out. Otherwise, please join us -- we're looking forward to another fun event!

Tournament Stats for 1999

Here's this year's rundown of the stories that the club standings don't tell...

Points per tournament -- Our club standings system rewards regular attendance, as it should. But an arguably better measure of performance is to use club standings points **per tournament** (or ppt). By this measure, the runaway winner is Rob Keast, who scored 9.10 points in only three tournaments before he left town, for a whopping 3.03 ppt. Among players who played in more than a few events, Gary (2.12 ppt) edged Tom (2.00 ppt), just as he did in the regular standings. In third, however, we have Bill Minser (1.65 ppt), ahead of Mark (1.58) and Sam (1.50), by virtue of having finished only 3 or so points behind them while playing in only 18 tournaments.

1000 to 1 Club -- Once again this year we had a near miss in the quest for membership in the 1000 to 1 club. Gary Hines won nine consecutive matches in club tournaments in May and June, falling in match #10 to Tom Machaj on June 15th. Bill Minser won eight in a row in November and December, only to see his streak cut short in the last tournament of the year. We have yet to see a ten-in-a-row streak at our club. Maybe 2000 will be the year.

Who's winning? -- Gary Hines and Tom Machaj won five tournaments apiece this year, followed by Bill Minser and Mark Tremayne with three wins each. Who's cashing? Gary and Tom each cashed 13 times in 1999, while both Bill and Sam finished in the money eight times.

Ironman -- Nobody had a perfect attendance record last year, but Tom Machaj showed up for 23 out of 24 tournaments, ahead of four other players with 22.

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Recent Club Tournament Results

January 4 – (6 players) 1st Carl Jespersion,
2nd Bill Minser.

January 18 – (9 players) 1st Charlie Walter,
2nd Gary Hines, Cons. Carl Jespersion.

February 1 – (9 players) 1st Charlie Walter,
2nd George Steele, Cons. Sam Pottle.

Club Standings As Of 2/01/00

Charlie Walter	8.45
Carl Jespersion	4.80
Gary Hines	4.55
Bill Minser	4.35
Sam Pottle	3.05
George Steele	2.45
Mark Tremayne	1.80
Mark Kremer	1.65
Jerry Neviaser	1.00
Sonja Peacock	0.80
Tom Machaj	0.00
Lee Pflugrad	0.00

Upcoming Events

February 15 – 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.

February 18-20 – 22nd Annual Pittsburgh Backgammon Championships. Greentree Radisson. Pittsburgh, PA. (800) 333-3333. 1:00 p.m. Friday registration opens. 9:00-10:15 a.m. Saturday final registration. 12:30 p.m. Play begins. \$200/championship - \$100/side, \$100/advanced - \$50/side, \$35/novice. Several other events.

March 5 – Milwaukee Bimonthly Tournament. John Hawks Pub, 100 E Wisconsin Ave, Milwaukee, WI (414) 272-3199. 12 p.m. Registration. 12:30 p.m. Play begins. \$40/open - \$10/side, \$20/limited.

March 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.

March 17-19 – 2000 Midwest Backgammon Championships. Radisson Hotel, Lisle, IL. (630) 505-1000. 3 p.m. Friday registration opens. 9:30-10:30 a.m. Saturday final registration. 11:00 a.m. Charity Calcutta auction, followed by public draw. \$275/championship, \$140/advanced, \$30/limited. Several other events.

March 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.

April 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 south central Wisconsin. 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 have completed their tournament matches. For further information, contact Tom Machaj at (608) 276-8144 or by e-mail at machaj@itis.com