

Madison Backgammon News



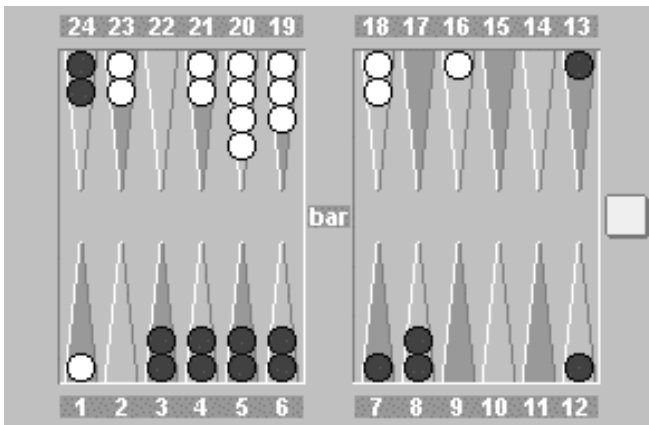
Number 36

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Answers to Quiz Problems

By Sam Pottle

Problem 11



Money game, center cube, Black on roll.

- (a) Should Black double? (2 points)
 (b) If doubled, should White take? (2 points)

As usual, we should consider the second question first: can White take a double in this position? Black has many numbers that complete a scary-looking full prime, and several more that make five in a row while breaking the eight point. In fact only 43 and 44 fail to cover the blot on the bar point. Unfortunately for Black, he still has to extract his two back men after that.

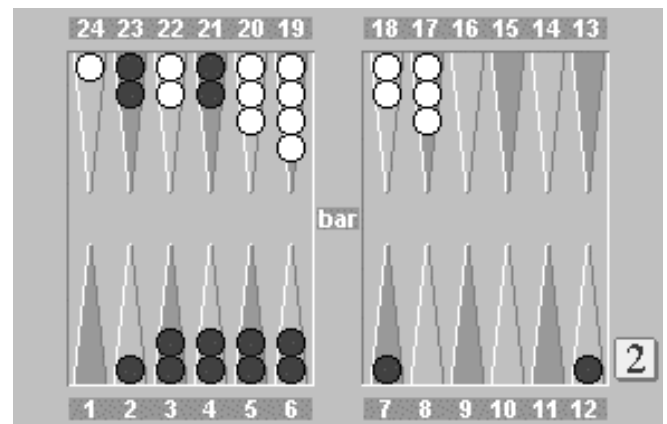
It turns out that White could easily win a priming battle here, even if Black makes six in a row. If Black doesn't roll a 2 quite soon he will have to try to roll his prime forward, which is not so easy with only 13 checkers to play with. Often Black will be obliged to attack White's back man, and even if this attack succeeds he will still need to roll two 2's and two 5's or 6's in order to escape his own back men and win. Also, once White brings home the outfield checker, she will no longer have to play 6's, so her position will be slower to break.

All this adds up to an easy take for White. It is true that White may lose her bar point before Black's prime breaks, but on the other hand, White has several numbers that make her three point, a big improvement. Also, White's aces come up to the edge of Black's prime, freezing the checkers on his 8 point.

It turns out that Black does not yet have a double here. Too many things can go wrong, and having two men back vs. one in a prime-against-prime position is a significant disadvantage. Black needs to roll a 2, or hit a blot, or see White's bar point break, before he has a serious advantage.

Score 2 points for "no double" and 2 points for "take".

Problem 12



Money game, Black owns the cube.
 Black to play 65. (4 points)

Black is playing a poorly timed 2-4 backgame. In fact, it may already be time to break an anchor in order to avoid crunching her board. Black can leave with both checkers (21/15 21/16), leave with one man (e.g. 21/15 7/2), or sit tight (12/6 7/2).

(continued on page 2)

Answers

(continued from page 1)

If Black sits tight, she will usually have to leave next turn anyway, and she risks crashing if she rolls something like 43 or small doubles. On the other hand, White has several numbers (65, 63, 44) that leave shots immediately, and Black will not get as many shots out of these numbers if she has left the four point. (44, for example, becomes a great roll for White if he can shift from the eight point). Also, staying for one more turn may make the difference between White closing his four point or never making it. White has several spares aimed at the four point right now, but by next turn, one or more of them won't be there anymore.

If Black leaves with one man, the other one may get pointed on, or pick-and-passed. White will certainly have an easier time bearing in if Black is on the bar. This risk is not as severe as it might be, though, because of White's blot on the 1 point. Many of the potential hitting numbers leave a direct shot from the bar.

If Black clears the 4-anchor entirely, she avoids both the crunching risk and the attacking threat. But if White then closes the four point, Black has just your basic deucepoint holding game. In any case, Black will get only single shots at White's blots.

Black's best option is to stay back with both checkers, planning to leave with one or both next turn. White has 10 numbers that make the four point this turn, unless Black is still anchored there. If Black can prevent White from making that point, she will have a sort of phantom 2-4 backgame, which will generate many more shots than a pure 2-point game would. The downside of crunching is severe, but the risk is small: only 5 numbers (43, 44, 33 and 22) force Black to break next turn. If Black leaves one man on the four point, White will happily point on its head anyway, despite the blot on the ace point. Even if hit, his full prime will give him good winning chances.

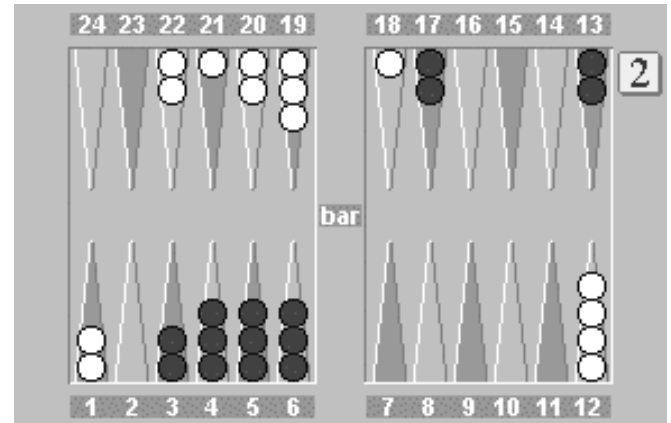
The moral is that the underdog in a position should be optimistic. In this position, Black would obviously prefer to hold both anchors. The only reason to consider any other play is the crunching risk if she rolls badly enough next turn. But since Black is the underdog, she probably would have lost in that case anyway! This is an important principle: if you're losing, a bad sequence doesn't

cost very much. Black should just assume that she'll be able to leave the anchor next turn.

Score 4 points for 12/6 7/2.

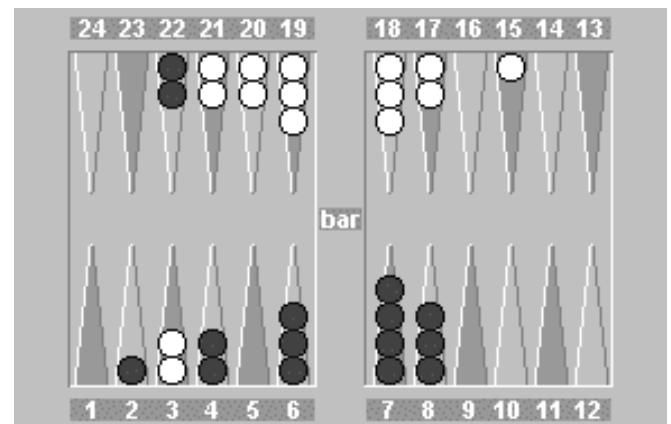
New Quiz Problems

Problem 13



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

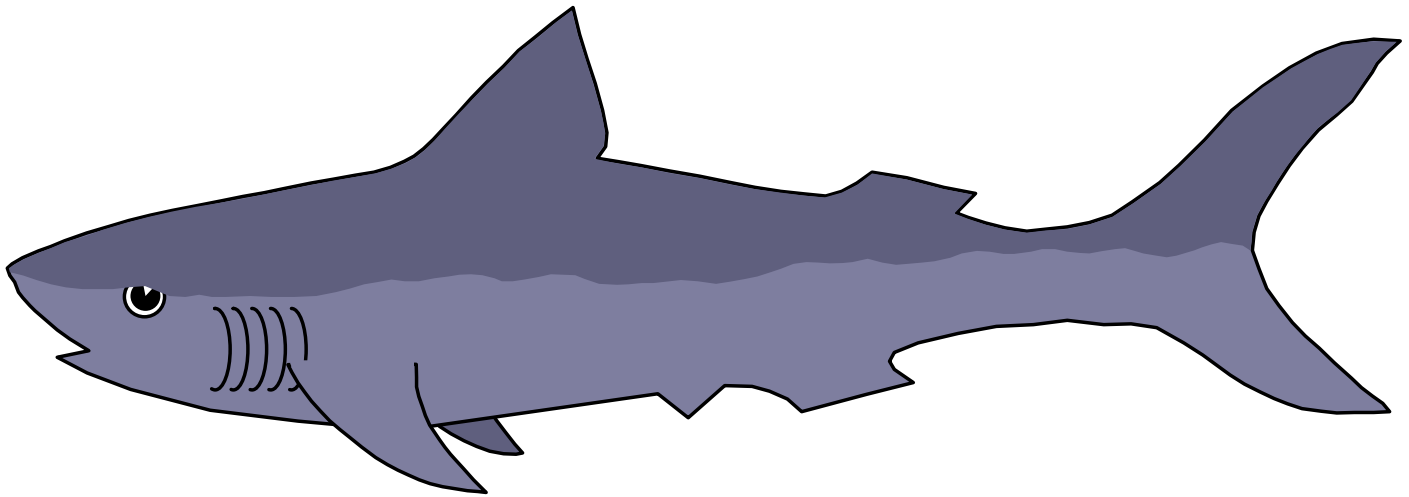
Problem 14



Money game, Black to play 61.
(a) Center cube. (2 points)
(b) Black owns a 2-cube. (2 points)

>>> **NOTICE** <<<

The club tournament that would normally be held on the 1st Tuesday in July (July 4) has been rescheduled to the 2nd Tuesday in July (July 11).



Pottle Strikes Again!

Chicago Reels in Terror From Second, More Vicious Attack

For the second time in a little more than three months, Sam Pottle stunned the Midwestern backgammon establishment by winning the consolation prize in the Championship Division of The 21st Annual Chicago Open. (In March, at the 2000 Midwest Backgammon Championships, Sam took the Last Chance title.) A well-respected open class player was overheard saying to Sam, "why don't you take (the prize) money from some other division and leave us alone."

The event was held May 26-29, 2000 at the Wyndham Hamilton Northwest Chicago. The tournament drew 52 participants in the Championship bracket, 50 in the Intermediate division and 7 more in the Beginners division. The Memorial Day Masters drew 32 entrants. Four Madison Backgammon Club members participated in the activities, with Sam entered in the Open Division and Bruce Russell, Stan Livingston and Tom Machaj registered in the Intermediate Division.

Joann Feinstein and Howard Markowitz co-directed the tournament with help from John "The Arm" Brussel and Linda Rockwell. The hotel is twelve stories tall, rectangular in shape and has a huge, stunning atrium in the middle of the structure.

Sam Scores Two Wins and a Second; Newcomer Stan Racks Up a Win And a Pair of Consolations

Sam Pottle picked up 9.85 points with back-to-back victories on May 16 and June 6 after a slow start this year. The wins nicely buttresses his stellar perform at the major event in Chicago over Memorial Day weekend. Congratulations, Sam!

Stan Livingston, our newest member to the club, finally broke out of his usual and customary mode of winning the consolation prizes, by winning his first club tournament on June 6. Stan moved from 9th to 6th place in the club standings, displacing a couple of seasoned veterans and previous club champions, Gary Hines (1997, 1998 and 1999) and Tom Machaj (1996). Nice work, Stan!

And not to be forgotten and forsaken, our new leaders in the point standings, are Bill Minser and Mark Tremayne. Bill stepped up into 1st place from 2nd rung. Mark Tremayne leaped from 5th place into 2nd position gaining 7.55 points over the last four tournaments.

Results from Milwaukee Bimonthly Tournament on May 7, 2000

OPEN (10 players) 1st Ron Weiner, 2nd Bob Holyon, Cons. Tom Machaj

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Recent Club Tournament Results

April 18 – (9 players) 1st Mark Tremayne,
2nd Lee Pflugrad, Cons. Stan Livingston.

May 2 – (8 players) 1st Sam Pottle,
2nd Tom Machaj, Cons. Stan Livingston.

May 16 – (9 players) 1st Sam Pottle,
2nd Bill Minser, Cons. Mark Tremayne.

June 6 – (7 players) 1st Stan Livingston,
2nd Sam Pottle, Cons. Bill Minser.

Club Standings As Of 6/06/00

Bill Minser	17.20
Mark Tremayne	16.10
Sam Pottle	15.90
George Steele	12.35
Charlie Walter	12.25
Stan Livingston	10.55
Tom Machaj	9.85
Carl Jespersion	9.65
Gary Hines	8.35
Lee Pflugrad	7.25
Mark Kremer	1.65
Jerry Neviaser	1.00
Sonja Peacock	0.80

Upcoming Events

June 20–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 pool, \$5/2nd Side pool.

June 30-July 3 – Michigan Summer Backgammon
Championships. Novi Hilton, I-275 at 8 Mile Road, Novi,
MI. (248) 349-4000. 1:00 p.m. Friday registration opens.
9:00-10:00 a.m. Saturday final registration. 10:30 a.m.

Calcutta auction. 12 Noon Play begins. \$250/Open,
\$140/Intermediate, \$40/Novice. Several other events.

July 9 – Milwaukee Bimonthly Tournament. John Hawks
Pub, 100 E Wisconsin Ave, Milwaukee, WI (414) 272-
3199. 11:30 a.m. Registration. 12:30 p.m. Play begins.
\$40/Open - \$10/Side Pool, \$20/Limited.

>>> NEW DATE <<< July 11 – 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 pool, \$5/2nd Side pool.

July 18 – 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 pool, \$5/2nd Side pool.

August 1 – 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 pool, \$5/2nd Side pool.

August 6 – Chicago Bar Point Sunday Tournament.
Anyway's Chicago Grill & Bar, 5 E Roosevelt Rd,
Oakbrook Terrace, IL (630) 932-9323. 11:30 a.m.
Registration. 12 Noon Play begins. \$40/Open,
\$20/Intermediate. Entry includes \$5 food & drink coupon.

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