

# Madison Backgammon News



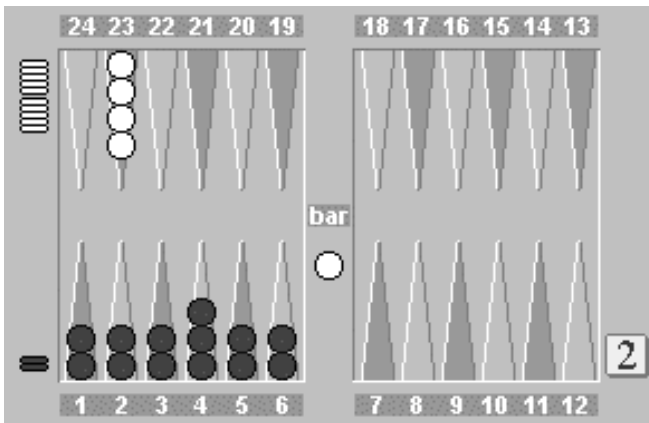
Number 38

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## Answers to Quiz Problems

By Sam Pottle

### Problem 15



Money game, Black owns the cube.  
Black to play 51. (4 points)

Black played an ace point game and hit a shot at the last minute. White got lots of checkers off before being hit. How aggressively should Black play his bearoff?

With this 51, Black can play safe with 6/5 6/1, take a man off with a bit more risk by clearing his five point (5/off 5/4), or leave a direct shot with 6/off. You may ask, how could it be right to leave the direct shot? After all, clearing the five point gets just as many men off, and is much safer. The answer is that after 6/off, Black usually gets to keep a five point board for another turn, while after 5/off 5/4 Black will probably have to break his six point on the following turn. So if Black is far enough behind, the big play is better because it tends to keep White on the bar longer.

This is the key to understanding this type of position. If White has many more checkers off than Black, Black's main hope is that White will stay out for a few turns and allow him to catch up. In the

position given, Black will almost certainly lose the race if White enters on her next turn, regardless of whether a Black checker gets hit in the process. So Black can afford to make the play that keeps White on the bar the longest, without worrying about how risky it looks. In fact, Black is actually better off getting hit if White enters immediately, because this gives him a chance to re-hit White's checker as it comes around the board. This is a minor consideration, however; Black will be a big underdog to catch the White checker, and will still not be the favorite if he does. The main thing is to keep as big a board for as long as possible, and to keep a smooth position so that Black's own bearoff is fast. 6/off is better on both counts.

How far behind does Black need to be to make these desperate measures worthwhile? In this sort of position, the state of the race can be summed up by counting crossovers, that is, the number of board quadrants that separate one side's checkers from bearing everyone off. Equivalently, the crossover count is the number of sixes needed to bear all your men off. In this position, White needs five crossovers to bear off the man on the bar, plus one each for the four men in her home table, for a total of 9. Black needs 13 crossovers to get all his checkers off.

It turns out that Black should make the macho 6/off play if he trails by three or more crossovers. If he trailed by fewer than three crossovers, the quieter 5/off 5/4 would be better. And if Black leads by more than four crossovers, he should make the super-safe play of clearing the six point. In other words, the safest play is right when Black has more checkers off than White, and the big play is right when he has seven fewer off (or worse).

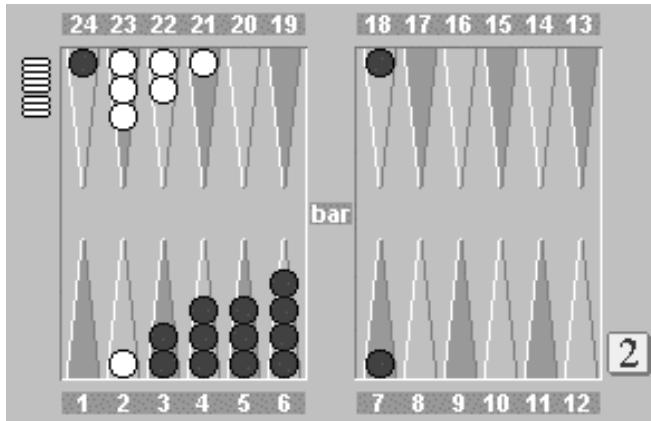
Score 4 points for 6/off.

*(continued on page 2)*

## Answers

(continued from page 1)

### Problem 16



Money game, Black owns the cube, Black on roll.

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

The rule of thumb for redoubling after a closeout is that Black should redouble when she has five fewer men off than White, if White is still on the bar. If Black closes out two men, she can redouble with ten fewer men off. This position is a hybrid—Black will probably close out either one or two checkers, and she has eight fewer men off than White.

Looking at the second problem first, it seems clear that White should take if doubled. Black hits the second checker this turn only about one time in three, and may well never hit it. Black will be only a slight favorite if she closes out a single checker against eight men off, so this should be enough to give White a take.

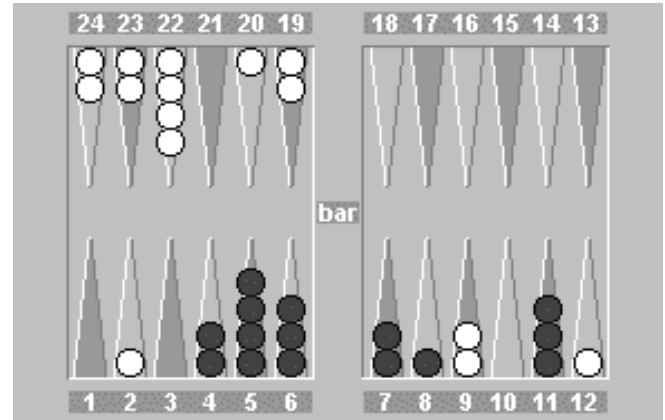
Black may want to double here anyway, if hitting this shot means losing her market by a lot (that is, if White would then no longer be even close to having a take). If Black were guaranteed to close out both men after a hit, and to close out one man otherwise, doubling would be right. But neither of these is assured.

If Black hits the second man, White may anchor, or escape one man before he gets closed out. If Black misses it, she will usually hit loose in her home board. But White has a lot of scrambling chances. If he can safety the second blot and get his back man into the outfield, he could be redoubling within a couple of turns. The fact is, Black still has a fair amount of work to do to achieve a closeout, whether she hits the second checker or not. If she hits this turn, and White fails to anchor or hit back, White will still have a take, or close to it. Therefore, Black doesn't need to double this turn.

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

## New Quiz Problems

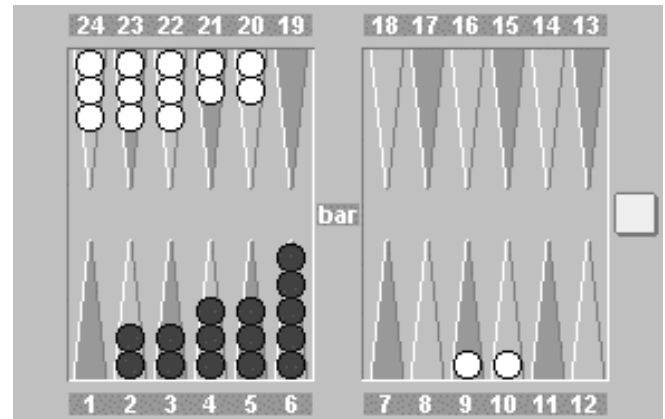
### Problem 17



Black to play 53.

- (a) Money game, White owns the cube. (2 points)
- (b) Double match point. (2 points)

### Problem 18



Money game, center cube, Black on roll.

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

## Nice Work, Stan and Bruce!

In addition to kicking our collective butts in club tournaments in the last three months (two 1<sup>st</sup>, a 2<sup>nd</sup> and a consolation finish), Stan Livingston took 1<sup>st</sup> place in the Intermediate at the Illinois State Championships in Springfield, IL, Oct. 13-15 and a 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the Intermediate at the Minnesota State Championships in Bloomington, MN, Nov. 17-19.

Bruce Russell won the 1<sup>st</sup> Consolation in the Open Division at Springfield. It was his first jump into the deep water. Congratulations, both of you!

## ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

### Recent Club Tournament Results

**Sept. 19** – (9 players) 1<sup>st</sup> Tom Machaj,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Lee Pflugrad, Cons. Charlie Walter.

**Oct. 3** – (6 players) 1<sup>st</sup> Stan Livingston,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Tom Machaj.

**Oct. 17** – (7 players) 1<sup>st</sup> Ilia Guzei,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sam Pottle, Cons. Stan Livingston.

**Nov. 7** – (5 players) 1<sup>st</sup> Stan Livingston,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Mark Tremayne.

**Nov. 21** – (7 players) 1<sup>st</sup> Tom Machaj,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Stan Livingston, Cons. Bill Minser.

**Dec. 5** – (7 players) 1<sup>st</sup> Charlie Walter,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Lee Pflugrad, Cons. Sam Pottle.

### Club Standings As Of 12/05/00

Mark Tremayne	30.70
Stan Livingston	28.40
Tom Machaj	27.60
Sam Pottle	25.50
Bill Minser	24.40
Charlie Walter	19.65
Lee Pflugrad	16.75
Gary Hines	14.10
George Steele	12.35
Carl Jespersen	12.05
Ilia Guzei	12.00
Gary Fries	3.70
Stephen Turner	1.95
Mark Kremer	1.65
Jerry Neviasser	1.00
Sonja Peacock	0.80

### Upcoming Events

**Dec. 19**–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, \$4/1<sup>st</sup>  
Side pool, \$5/2<sup>nd</sup> Side pool.

**Jan. 2** – 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, \$4/1<sup>st</sup>  
Side pool, \$5/2<sup>nd</sup> Side pool.

**Jan. 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, \$4/1<sup>st</sup>  
Side pool, \$5/2<sup>nd</sup> Side pool.

**Feb. 6** – 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, \$4/1<sup>st</sup>  
Side pool, \$5/2<sup>nd</sup> Side pool.

**Feb. 11** – 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.

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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 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>  
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@charter.net](mailto:machaj@charter.net)