

Russian backgammon

BY D. B. FALOOD

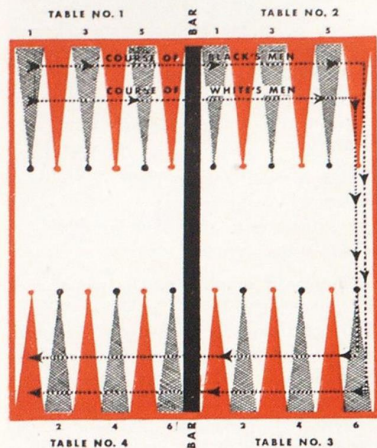


DIAGRAM I

■ Russian Backgammon is probably the most interesting and intriguing variation of the ancient game. It is also a game which rewards the skill and ingenuity of the player and develops a backgammon "sense" which can not be acquired in any other way.

The same table, same number of dice, and the same number of men are used as for English Backgammon. The table is not "set up" at the beginning of the game, but is bare—the men being placed at the side of, and off the board.

In Russian Backgammon, both players enter their men in the same table, according to the throws of the dice, and after they are all entered, progress them around the board in the same direction to the table opposite the one of entrance. (See Diagram I.) When all of the men of one player have been entered in this common "home" table that player can bear them from the board upon

the indications of the dice. This is the object of the game, and the first player to attain it, wins the game.

The general rules of English Backgammon apply to all of the plays of Russian Backgammon. Blots can be hit in the same manner and the same odds of the throw of the dice can be used in calculating the probabilities of throwing certain combinations. Blockades, or the making of points are carried out in the same way. The same procedure is followed for the bearing off of men after they have all been entered into the last or home table.

The game opens by each player throwing one die to determine the first player, the higher having the privilege of playing first. He shakes again for first play. This player enters two men (or more as will be explained under doublets) according to the numbers

on the dice. For example, if he throws a three and a five he places one man on the three point and one man on the five point of table No. 1. The second player throws the dice and enters two men in the same table. If he, for example, throws a three and a six, he enters one man on the No. 6 point, and entering a man in accordance to the three he is able to hit the blot which the first player has left on the three point. Thus a player can hit a blot at any time upon entering. Any man which has been hit and is on the bar must be entered before any other men can be entered or before any other moves can be made of men already entered. If a player can not enter a man which is on the bar he loses the throw. A player has the privilege of making points if the throws of the dice permit and any such covered points are eliminated from the free points on which an opponent may enter. Each player must enter all of his men into this starting table, No. 1, before he can proceed to move his men around the table to the opposite, or home table.

■ Doublets, in Russian Backgammon, have a different valuation than in English Backgammon. A player who throws doublets has the privilege of playing the number of doublets shown on the dice and then—if he can complete that play—he has the privilege of playing the doublets on the opposite face of the dice. After this play has been completed he has the privilege of continuing the play by another throw of the dice. For example, if a player throws double six—he must first enter or move double sixes, i.e., four men six points, two men twelve points, etc., as desire or necessity dictates. Then he has the privilege of playing double one, the complimentary doubles on the opposite face of the dice, i.e., four men one point, two men four points, etc. He must complete all of the moves of his double sixes before he can use his double ones. Both doublets having been played, he is allowed to have another throw, and he then plays his men according to the dictates of the dice. If a second doublet results the player proceeds to, use them the same as above, using the doublets of both the top and the bottom faces of the dice and, these being completed, throws again. If a player can not complete the play of the first doublets he loses the remainder of the throw—thus each portion of the playing of doublets must be completed or a player loses the privilege of continuing.

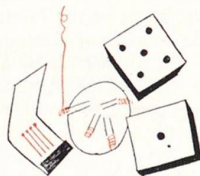
The first doublets thrown by each player are restricted so that the beginning of the game will not be over balanced by unusually fortunate throws on the part of one player. Thus the

first doublets thrown by EACH player only permit him to use the doublets shown on the face of the dice. For example, if a player throws double six, he can enter four men on the six point of Table 1, but he does not have the additional privilege of playing the complimentary doublets nor does he have the privilege of a second throw of the dice. This restriction applies to each player for the first doublets thrown in each game.

The throw of a one-two is considered in the light of a partial doublet. The caster of the one-two throw has the right to play his one and his two moves and then the additional privilege of choosing a doublet of either numeral shown on the opposite face of the dice, and after playing these he is permitted to throw again. For example, a player throws an ace-two. He may move one man two points and a second man one point, or one man three points as he may choose. The opposite face to the one is a six, and the opposite to the two is the five. Thus the player can choose to play either the double five or double six. He must play complete doublets of one or the other and not a combination of the two. If he is able to complete this doublet he has the privilege of another throw. If he can not complete the play of the doublets he does not receive the additional throw. The restriction concerning the "first doublets" of each player's game does not apply to the playing of a one-two throw and this throw does not count as doublets. If a one-two throw is cast before the first doublets it is played as above, is not counted as doublets, and does not remove the restrictions regarding the first doublets.

■ If the players choose to do so, they may agree to have one player complete any unplayed portion of the other player's throw. For example, if a player can not complete his throw or any part of it, whether it be doublets or not, it is agreed that the opponent shall play the remaining portion of the move with his own men, moving only one man at a time. If however, in making this move, the opponent leaves a blot which opens a point on which the first player can move one of his men, the first player resumes action and continues his play by taking up the blot. If, by this move by the opposing player, the first player can complete his throw and has thrown doublets or one-two he has the privilege of throwing again. However, if he can not complete his first throw or if the opponent has already completed the points designated by the first throw, the first player (or the opponent in the case of doublets, or one-two) may not throw again.

In order that the reader may play through a complete game and thus visualize the points which have been stressed in this article the following game is given as an example with reasons for making certain advantageous moves.



The tables of the board have been designated as No. 1, 2, 3 and 4. No. 1 is the entering table and No. 4 is the home table into which each player must enter all of his men before bearing off.

White and Black each throw one die for the privilege of first play. White throws a two and Black a five—thus Black wins the throw and casts two dice in active play. (pt.: point; T.: table.)

B.: 3-4: Enters one man on 3 pt. T. 1, and one man on 4 pt. T. 1.

W.: 2-5: Enters one man on 5 pt. T. 1, and one man on 2 pt. T. 1.

B.: 1-4: Enters man on 1 pt. Enters second man on 4 pt., thus making a pt. on 4 and preventing W. from entering men on 4 pt.

W.: 5-6: Enters man on 6 pt. Enters second man on 5 pt. covering his own blot on that pt.

B.: 1-4: Places second man on 1 pt. and third man on 4 pt.

W.: Double 6, (first double): Enters four men on 6 pt.

B.: 2-4: Enters man on 2 pt., taking up W.'s blot, and enters man on 4 pt.

W.: Double 3: Enters 4 men on 3 pt., taking up blot. Not being able to play the complimentary double 4, W. loses the remainder of the play.

B.: 2-4: Enters a man on 2 pt., making that pt. Enters man on 4 pt. Thus now has five men on 4 pt.

W.: 5-6: Enters man on 5 pt., and man on 6 pt.

B.: 2-6: Enters man on 2 pt. Loses the 6 pt. throw because W. has that pt. occupied by more than one man.

W.: 1-4: Loses throw, as both points are occupied by B.'s men.

B.: Double 2, (first doublets for B.): Enters 4 men on 2 pt.

W.: 4-5: Enters man on 5 pt. Loses the 4 throw because 4 pt. is occupied by B.'s men.

B.: 5-6: Loses throw, as both pts. are covered by W.'s men.

W.: 3-4: Enters man on 3 pt. All W.'s men are now entered in T. 1. W. can begin to progress his men to T. 2. Moves man from 6 pt. T. 1 to 4 pt. T. 2. (See Diagram II.)

B.: Double 5s: Can not enter, loses throw.

W.: 2-4: Moves man from 6 pt. T. 1 to 4 pt. T. 2, making that pt. Moves man from 3 pt. to 5 pt. T. 1.

B.: Double 4, (second doubles): Enters man on 4 pt. All men now entered. He moves 3 men from 4 pt. T. 1 to 2 pt. T. 2. Plays complimentary Double Threes, moving 3 men from 2 pt. to 5 pt. T. 2, and one man from 1 pt. to 4 pt. T. 1. Shakes again:

6-4: Moves man from 4 pt. T. 1 to 2 pt.

T. 2, and a man from 2 pt. T. 1 to 2 pt. T. 2.

W.: 3-6: Moves man from 3 pt. T. 1 to 3 pt. T. 2; moves a man from 6 pt. T. 1 to 3 pt. T. 2.

B.: 2-6: Moves man from 2 pt. to 4 pt. T. 1; moves man from 2 pt. T. 1 to 2 pt. T. 2.

W.: 1-4: Moves man from 5 to 6 pt. T. 1; moves man from 6 pt. T. 1 to 4 pt. of T. 2.

B.: Double 6: Moves 2 men from 2 pt. of T. 2 to 5 pt. T. 4. Plays complimentary double ones by moving 3 men from 5 pt. to 6 pt. T. 2, and 1 man from 1 pt. to 2 pt. T. 1. Throws again:

1-5: Moves man from 2 pt. T. 2, to 6 pt. T. 3; moves one man from 6 pt. T. 2, to 6 pt. T. 3.

W.: 1-5: Moves man from 6 pt. T. 1 to 5 pt. T. 2; moves man from 4 pt. to 5 pt. T. 2.

B.: 4-6: Moves man from 4 pt. and man from 2 pt. T. 1 to 2 pt. T. 2.

W.: 4-6: Moves man from 5 pt. and man from 3 pt. T. 1 to 3 pt. T. 2.

B.: 2-3: Moves man from 2 pt. T. 1 to 4 pt. T. 1; moves man from 4 pt. T. 1 to 1 pt. T. 2.

W.: 2-6: Moves man from 3 pt. to 5 pt. T. 1; moves man from 3 pt. T. 1 to 3 pt. T. 2.

B.: 3-4: Moves man from 4 pt. T. 1 to 1 pt. T. 2; moves man from 4 pt. T. 1 to 2 pt. T. 2.

W.: 2-6: Moves man from 3 pt. to 5 pt. T. 2; moves man from 5 pt. T. 1 to 5 pt. T. 2.

B.: 2-6: Moves man from 2 pt. T. 1 to 4 pt. T. 1; moves man from 2 pt. T. 1 to 2 pt. T. 2. (Thus both players have safeguarded all advanced men.)

W.: 3-6: Moves man from 6 pt. T. 1 to 3 pt. T. 2; moves man from 5 pt. T. 1 to 5 pt. T. 2.

B.: 1-3: Moves man from 2 pt. to 6 pt. T. 1, taking up blot.

W.: 2-4: Enters on 2 pt. moves to 6 pt., taking up blot.

B.: 2-3: Enters on 2 pt. Moves man from 4 pt. T. 1 to 1 pt. T. 2.

W.: 2-3: Moves man from 6 pt. T. 1 to 5 pt. T. 2.

B.: 1-6: Moves man from 2 pt. T. 1 to 2 pt. T. 2; moves man from 1 pt. to 2 pt. T. 2.

W.: Double 6: Moves 2 men from 3 pt. T. 2 to 4 pt. T. 4. Moves complimentary double ones,—two men from 5 pt. to 6 pt. T. 1 and 2 men from 4 pt. to 3 pt. T. 4. Shakes again:

3-5: Moves 1 man from 3 pt. T. 2 to 5 pt. T. 3; moves one man from 5 pt. T. 2 to 5 pt. T. 3.

B.: 1-6: Moves man from 1 pt. T. 2 to 6 pt. T. 3; moves man from 1 pt. to 2 pt. T. 2, again making all advanced men safe.

W.: 5-6: Moves one man from 5 pt. T. 2 to 3 pt. T. 3; moves one man from 4 pt. T. 2 to 3 pt. T. 3.

B.: 3-6: Moves man from 4 pt. T. 1 to 4 pt. T. 2, taking up blot, (Continued on page 70)

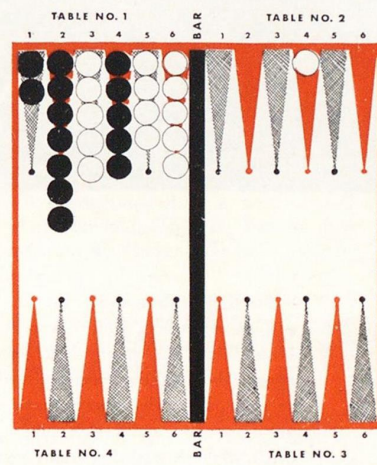
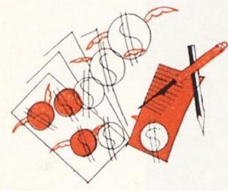


DIAGRAM II

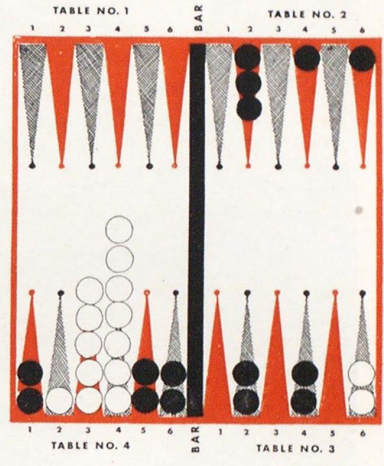


DIAGRAM III

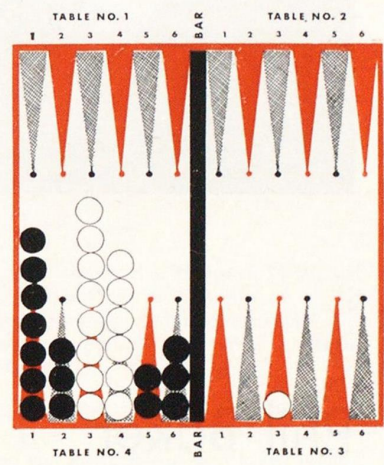


DIAGRAM IV