

VANITY FAIR



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Enter backgammon

BY GROSVENOR NICHOLAS

Some practical advice on opening moves in the new form of an old game now a dread rival of Contract

■ To those who accept the view that there is nothing new under the sun, the recent remarkable revival of backgammon will seem to be merely a revival. It is, however, more than that. It is an elaboration or development of what is perhaps the oldest game in the world, and the result is something extremely novel.

This new backgammon is said to have made its first appearance in Paris. It came to this country only a few years ago and then from Park Avenue and Long Island spread rapidly to Newport, Palm Beach, Tuxedo and Aiken, and is now sweeping the country, threatening to rival Contract Bridge in popularity.

This ancient game, known in England as backgammon and upon the Continent as tric-trac, has existed for centuries. Chaucer referred to it as "tables," and there can be little doubt that it was the *ludus duodecim scriptorum*, or twelve line game, of the Roman Empire. But the actual origin of backgammon must have been far more remote. From the tomb of Tutankhamen, Mr. Howard Carter recently has brought to light a game played in a similar way with primitive dice, while in Mesopotamia, in Chaldean tombs of even greater antiquity, there have been found highly decorated boards, dice and playing pieces.

But it is the new backgammon with its recent spirited development of "doubling" that is taking the country by storm. Backgammon has been always peculiarly a game in which the advantage shifts suddenly and frequently. By giving the players the right alternately to double the stake there has been added to the game the possibility of an increase of the stake in an unlimited geometrical progression. A game of poker offers no more exciting possibilities. At the same time the players retain the right to surrender, or decline any proffered double. Therefore even the most conservative player is afforded perfect protection.

Furthermore, this new backgammon is no longer limited to two persons. "Chouette," another elaboration of the game, has made it possible for three, four or any reasonable number to play at the same board. In this, the thrower of the highest dice plays *la chouette* or is "in the box," and in turn plays each of the others until he is dislodged and succeeded "in the box" by his conqueror.

Gammons or double games are preserved so that a fortunate player of "chouette" may, while "in the box" win double the amount of the stake, which may have been already doubled and redoubled several times. He wins this, moreover, from each of his opponents. And while the total of such winnings may amount to a large sum there is no possibility of a prolonged unfortunate experience, such as one might have at roulette with a run of bad luck. In "chouette," after each defeat "the box" changes hands.

It is difficult to realize with what rapidity the stake may mount after the initial doubles. One to two, or two to four are by no means unusual. The progression then proceeds with astonishing rapidity. In fact twenty successive doubles (which though possible, are decidedly improbable) would exceed a million!

Furthermore, this game as it is now played includes the possibility of even another double, known as the "automatic double" that occurs on the initial throw which determines who shall play first. When both players throw the same number and are accordingly obliged to throw again, the stake doubles automatically. This may occur, of course, more than once and, as there is theoretically no limit to the number of doubles which might happen in this way, many players place upon these "automatic doubles" an arbitrary limit of three.

Of course, luck is a factor of tremendous importance in backgammon. But it does not follow that skill is not equally important. Certainly if the skill of two players is equal, luck does become the deciding factor, but the slightest preponderance of skill will, in the long run give the experienced player an advantage over a luckier but less skillful opponent.

It is assumed that our readers possess an elementary knowledge of the game, that the expressions "blots," "blocks" and, "making

points" are familiar to them, that they know the two "bar points," and the numbering of the other points upon the two inner and outer tables.

Beginners should always think of the two numbers thrown as two distinct numbers, not as the sum of the two dice, unless, of course, they are doublets, in which case they should be thought of as four. They should also familiarize themselves with the thirty-six possible throws with two dice, six of doublets and fifteen of two different numbers which (as they may be made in either one of two ways—as, for example, 6 and 5, or 5 and 6—) amount to thirty. From these thirty-six possible throws it is a simple matter to ascertain the chances of getting a particular throw in backgammon. However, while a knowledge of chances is important and interesting, in practical play, the dice so frequently disregard mathematical probability that it is unwise to place too much reliance upon this knowledge.

The game is begun by the highest thrower playing the total count of the two dice originally thrown to determine who shall play first.

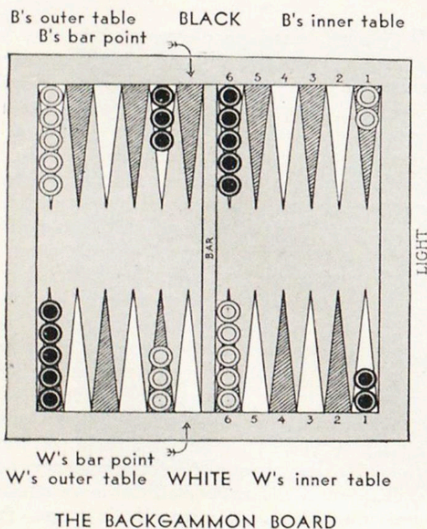
While the game is primarily a race of the draughtsmen in opposite directions, it is a race in which, because of inevitable future blots, blocks and points, victory is by no means always to the swift. In general, position is of more importance than speed, and while there are four distinct strategies, or methods of play, it is never advisable to attempt to determine in advance which one of these shall be employed. Furthermore, even after one strategy or method of play has been commenced, it is frequently advisable when the game has reached a certain point to shift to one of the others.

Accordingly the player must be always an opportunist, adopting the strategy for which the dice afford the best opportunity, and changing it whenever the situation makes a change advisable.

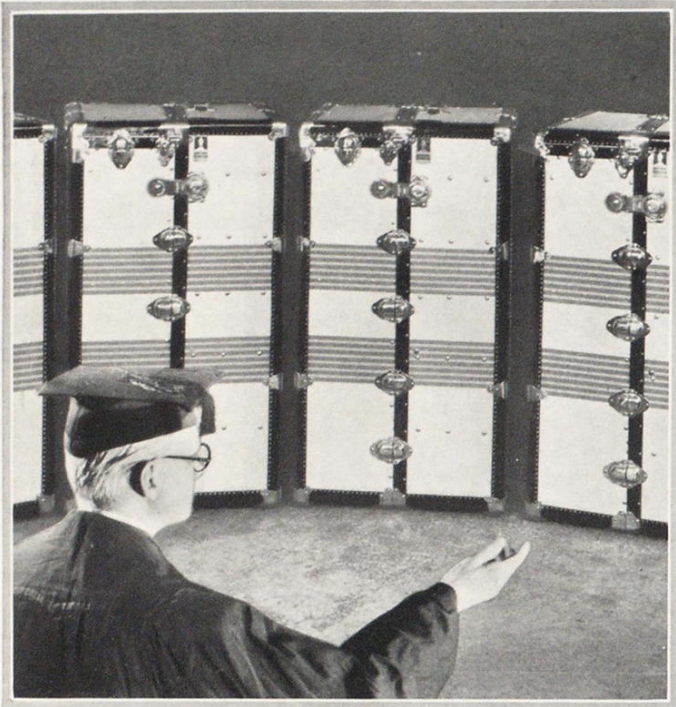
The best opening throws in backgammon are three-and-one and six-and-one. The three-and-one is always played to make the five point in the thrower's inner table, while the six-and-one is played to make his own bar point.

The five point and the bar point are the most advantageous points in the game and, while there is a difference of opinion as to which is the better, the five point is usually preferred by experts. The bar point, it is true, blocks the opponent's possible six and, as that is the largest single number the opponent can throw, it is a most effective block. Also a six-and-one is, of course, larger than a three-and-one and the result of the play is, therefore, not only greater progress, but also one more man, or "builder," available for filling one's inner table. This last is important, for "builders" are excellent reserve ammunition.

Nevertheless, the five point is preferable, as the bar point loses most of its importance whenever the ad- (Continued on page 90)



OSHKOSH TRUNKS



Every day is Graduation Day in Oshkosh

EVERY time a carload of trunks rolls away from the shipping room, we feel like a college president at graduation exercises. We can't help thinking a speech, even though we don't say it:

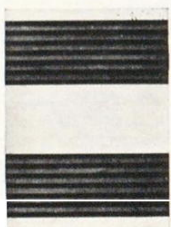
"Now you are going out into the wide, wide world. You will receive hard knocks. Burden and responsibility will be thrust upon you. You are better equipped to be of service in the world than most of your fellows. Be helpful in every way you can,

and above all remember that you have a duty to perform in always upholding the honor and reputation of dear old Oshkosh."

Every day is graduation day at our factory. Every day we send out Oshkosh Trunks to the near and far corners of the earth.

And in one respect we have a comfortable advantage over most college presidents. We know that every one of our graduates is going to be an unqualified success.

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"Chief" Oshkosh Cord Duck, the strongest and toughest trunk covering made, is found only on Oshkosh "Chief" Trunks. It is recognizable anywhere by the two bands of red and yellow stripes woven into the fabric. Oshkosh Trunks can also be had in the less expensive fibre covering. The Oshkosh trade-mark identifies them.

The descriptive booklet, "Your Home Away From Home," is interesting and helpful. For a copy, address the Oshkosh Trunk Company, 404 High Street, Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Enter backgammon

(Continued from page 76)

versary advances to make points within one's inner table, and is of no importance at all after he has moved out. The five point blocks an opponent's four, prevents a man that has been taken up from reëntering with a five and also makes it impossible for the adversary to make this point. This last is of great importance for, when the adversary is established upon one's five point he commands every open point of one's outer table in which blots are frequently unavoidable.

Furthermore, when the two men in the adversary's inner table are advanced to his five point it is difficult for him to block them effectively and they can rarely become the victims of a perfect block, or "side prime."

However, without regard to the relative merits of these three points, they are all so advantageous that, at the commencement of a game, the possession of any two of them, unless the adversary's position is equally strong, is a sufficient advantage to justify an immediate double of the stake. Other possible throws, which enable the player to make one of these three points are double sixes, double fours, double threes and double twos.

An excellent illustration of the superiority of position to speed is in the throw of double aces. Although this is one of the smallest throws, it is the best in backgammon, and it is always played to make the five point in the thrower's inner table and the bar point in his outer table.

Double sixes is always played to make one's own bar point and it is usually played to make the adversary's bar point as well. The value of this last point is always dubious. When one is ahead, excepting with the aid of another doublet, it is a position from which it is impossible to move with absolute safety. On the other hand, when one is behind, it is a source of embarrassment to the adversary.

Double fours is played by bringing over two men from the adversary's outer table and advancing them both eight points to make one's five point. This throw is also played by advancing the two men in the adversary's inner table to make the adversary's five point, and then bringing two men over from the adversary's outer table to make a point in one's own outer table.

Double threes is played to make the five point in one's inner table, the two remaining threes being used to make the three point in one's inner table or else to advance the two men in the adversary's inner table where they will command most of the open points in the adversary's outer table. Double threes is also played by bringing over two men from the adversary's outer table to make one's bar point. Which of these two plays will prove the better, the future throws of the dice alone can determine.

Double twos may be played by advancing the two men in the adversary's inner table to establish the five point in the adversary's inner table. As this is one of the points which has been described as an immediate objective, the play is an excellent one. However, many good players prefer to utilize this throw to make the four point in their inner table and then to bring over two men from the adversary's side, making

an additional point in their outer table.

In the beginning of a game the seven throws described are the best. None of the others enables one to make any of the three principal points immediately. Some of the remaining throws, however, are by no means bad for they can be played to accomplish results which, although not of the first importance, are nevertheless helpful.

Double fives are always played by advancing two men ten points from the adversary's outer table to make one's three-point. Four-and-two is always played to make one's four point, while six-and-five is invariably employed to accomplish the escape of one of the two hindmost men which is moved across the board to safety. This last play is sometimes described as "the lover's leap."

The other possible throws, when considered independently of throws which may follow, are all either indifferent or bad. With a six-and-four, a three-and-four and also probably with a five-and-four one should advance one of the hindmost men as far as it will go. These plays leave a blot in the adversary's outer table but, as it is exposed to only one number, the chances are against its being hit. Five-and-two is generally played by bringing two men over from the adversary's outer table and many prefer to play a five-and-four in this way also.

There remain for consideration the five-and-three, four-and-three, six-and-two, five-and-one, four-and-one, two-and-three and two-and-one. These seven throws, while in themselves bad, may all be used in conjunction with throws which may follow to make one of the principal points and especially the five point. This can only be done by voluntarily exposing a blot in the hope that, upon the next throw, it may be covered and the point secured.

In this method of play the hazard is considerably increased for, while after most of these seven throws, blots are inevitable, they can all be played so that the blots, when unavoidable are only exposed in one's outer table, (where they can only be hit with a combination of numbers); or else in the adversary's inner table, (where, if hit, they may be reëntered with very little effect upon one's progress).

This voluntary exposure of blots, for the purpose of strengthening one's position upon the next throw, is advisable only in the beginning of a game when the adversary's table is open. While this method of play is advantageous, it is one which should not be attempted by beginners.

Beginners, for example, should play a five-and-three to make the three point in their inner table, although that point is too far advanced to be of much value and the men are practically put out of play, giving the adversary, in effective playing pieces, a numerical advantage. Beginners should also play the remainder of the seven throws, described in this article, with as little risk as possible.

More experienced players often find it to their advantage, when definitely behind, or in order to achieve decisive results, to run greater risks. This subject and the various strategies of backgammon will be taken up in next month's article.



F. Depero

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The strategies of backgammon

BY GROSVENOR NICHOLAS

How to change defeat into victory by switching the method of play when it is necessary

At the close of the article preceding this, the question was considered of playing certain of the opening throws in backgammon in an extra hazardous manner for the purpose of securing, in conjunction with throws which may follow, one or more of the principal points which are the foundation of a strong position. In connection with this, plays later on in the game were referred to which, although increasing the hazard, are often advantageous when one is definitely behind or when there is a reasonable possibility that more decisive results can be achieved.

To a beginner, or to one having only a brief experience in the play of this game, it might seem to be advisable to avoid blots whenever possible. In like manner it might seem to be advisable, when blots cannot be avoided, always to play so that the risk will be as little as possible. And, of course, it is generally quite possible to keep the risk at a minimum in either one of the following simple ways. First, since the game is a race, by exposing a man that is behind rather than one that is ahead or, second, by exposing the blot, not to a six or lower number, when it may be hit directly by either one of the two numbers which the adversary throws, but to a number higher than six, which requires a combination

shot by the adversary against which the chances are so much greater.

In backgammon nothing is certain. We have only a series of future dice throws. And so, although when one is ahead one should be more conservative (for one has only to remain ahead to win), in a like manner, when one is behind one should run an increased risk for an additional chance of reversing the position. Still no policy has been definitely fixed. For, should the last eventuality happen and the position be actually reversed, the whilom policy of either player will become immediately the policy of his opponent.

In playing backgammon, after a foundation of technical knowledge has been acquired, it is this understanding of when and to what extent to take chances that is the really fine art of the game.

It will perhaps be remembered, from the article preceding this, that the opening throws referred to are seven in number. These throws are the five-and-three, four-and-three, six-and-two, five-and-one, four-and-one, three-and-two and two-and-one and, it will be observed, they are all bad throws. Nothing of any real importance can be accomplished with any of them and they are all smaller than the average throw with two dice, which, counting doublets double, as we do, in playing, is eight and a fraction.

Now, we must bear in mind that we are considering these throws as opening throws when the adversary's inner table is open. Furthermore, that the game is one in which position is of more importance than speed, that sooner or later blots are inevitable and that most of these seven throws oblige us to expose blots in any event. The question then naturally arises as to whether, in playing these throws, one should not immediately run a risk which one might avoid, or increase a risk that one is obliged to run, for the chance, upon the next throw, of making one of the points which are the foundation of a strong position.

Experienced players will find it to their advantage to answer this question in the affirmative. This belief is founded not only upon individual experience but upon the general principle that in backgammon it is better to run the risks early. If one is over cautious in the beginning of a game and, for example, plays a four-and-three, four-and-one or three-and-two by bringing over one man from the adversary's side and placing it in absolute safety upon the point in the outer table or upon the point in the inner table which is established by the original set-up, one will generally find that this present security becomes in the future a danger.

Points in backgammon, in addition to being blocks, are also safe resting places for the subsequent moves which must be made. All of one's outside men cannot be expected to

travel in absolute safety into one's inner table upon the few points which the original position affords. To make their journey a safe one or, at all events, a less dangerous one, additional points must be provided and, to accomplish this, it is far better to risk early the blots which may serve as "builders" of necessary and important points than to postpone this until additional points in the adversary's inner table make the risk a much more serious one.

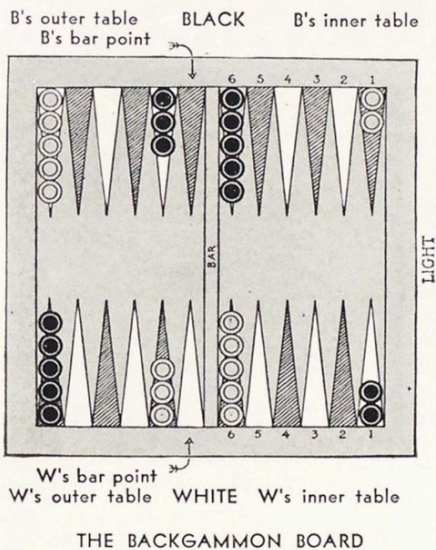
Another reason for running the risks early is that this enables one to determine early in the game whether or not one will be able to play a forward game, strengthened by the possession of one of the principal points, or by some other advantageous position. Without position the uncertainties of a forward game are considerably increased. It may be that one's better chance of winning, under such circumstances, will be to employ that other and very different strategy known as the back-game. And, if one is to play a back-game, the sooner one knows this and sets about it the better, for it is much less difficult early in the game to develop a formidable back-game.

Accordingly, we would recommend experienced players to play a five-and-three by bringing over one man from the adversary's outer table and advancing it to one's five point. This leaves the man exposed to a four, but the chances against a four are twenty-one to fifteen and, if the man is not hit, there are a number of chances of covering this blot upon the next throw and making the five point. Those who desire to be more conservative may play this throw by bringing over two men from the adversary's outer table, leaving the blot in one's outer instead of one's inner table.

We are aware that this throw is very generally played to make one's three point but, excepting for beginners, we would not recommend this. As we have explained in the preceding article, advancing two men as far as the three point places them practically out of play and gives the adversary, in effective playing pieces, a numerical superiority which may seem to be disadvantageous but which is in fact just the reverse.*

Four-and-three may be played by bringing over two men from the adversary's outer table. This means, of course, two blots but in the outer table where they can be hit only by a combination. While these blots can be avoided, they may serve as useful "builders" and the play is a good one. We prefer, however, to play this throw in an even more hazardous manner. We prefer to bring over one man from the adversary's outer table with the four and, with the three, advance another man to the five (Continued on page 68)

*There is an amusing story in regard to this. A beginner insisting upon a handicap was told by his wily opponent that he might take five men off before the game started. He accepted this gladly but soon found to his dismay that it was he who was giving the handicap.



The strategies of backgammon

(Continued from page 47)

point in one's inner table, or else, to bring over one man with the three and advance one of the hindmost men to the five point in the adversary's inner table. Either one of these plays gives one the chance, upon the next throw, of making one of the principal points.

Six-and-two should be played by moving one man from the adversary's outer table as far as it will go, that is, to the five point in one's inner table.

Three-and-two should be played by bringing over one man from the adversary's table with the two and, with the three, advancing another man to the five point in one's inner table. If one wishes to be more conservative, two men may be brought over from the adversary's side, but we prefer the increased risk for the chance of making the five point.

Five-and-one, four-and-one and two-and-one all should be played in substantially the same manner. With these opening throws one man should be brought over from the adversary's outer table and another man moved from the six to the five point in one's inner table.

It will be observed that with most of these seven opening throws we have recommended or expressed a preference for plays which leave a blot exposed upon the five point. This is an increased risk, of course, because the man is exposed to a single number and is also far advanced. However, by running this increased risk—and the chances are seven to five against the man being hit—one is giving one's self a two to one chance upon the next throw, if the man is not hit, of making the five point. We believe the five point to be of such importance that this excellent chance of securing it justifies this increase of the risk.

Players who prefer the bar point to the five point can, of course, use some of these throws to leave a blot upon that point instead of upon the five point. I consider this unwise, as the bar point is of less importance than the five point and a blot upon the bar point is exposed to more chances of being hit.

Concerning these opening plays I may say in conclusion that the plays which we have suggested assume that the adversary's men are in their original position or that they have not been moved to positions which will make the hazard of these plays greater. For example, if the adversary has established an additional point, or has advanced one of his hindmost men so that he may hit one with some number in addition to a four, the risk of a blot upon the five point is considerably increased and generally speaking these plays should not then be considered.

In backgammon there are four types of games. Three of these are forward games and, while they not infrequently blend to some extent one into another, they each require a distinct strategy or method of play. The fourth is the back-game, which is totally different and requires a strategy that, in its initial stages, is totally different and, indeed, quite the reverse of any forward game.

Of the first three types the simplest

is the running game. This is generally attempted after a player has succeeded in moving his two hindmost men safely out of the adversary's inner table. He has made perhaps equal or greater progress than his adversary and concludes that his best chance of winning is to run for his inner table. His strategy or method of play is to get all of his men into his inner table and remove them as rapidly as possible, at the same time avoiding, whenever that is possible, even a remote chance of being hit.

Another of these three types we shall call the "shut out" game. This usually occurs after a player has made one or more additional points in his inner table and the adversary has split or separated his two men in that table. The player has then thrown doublets or some other throw which enables him to take up one of the adversary's men and make a further point. The adversary's man may then fail to reenter and, if there are enough "builders" available, the remaining points may be made until the table is filled and both of the adversary's men are shut out upon the bar.

This type of game is generally a most decisive victory. It is frequently a double game and can be frequently concluded without any risk at all.

While these two types of forward games occur quite frequently, the most usual type or style of forward game is that of preventing the escape of the adversary's men from one's inner table. This is done by making points in one's inner and outer table, by means of which moves by these two men are obstructed or blocked. The primary object of this type of game, as well as its strategy, is to make points, the most important of which are the five point and the bar point. The ultimate object is to establish what is known as a "side prime", which is accomplished when one has made the bar point and all of the points of one's inner table, excepting the one point. This constitutes a perfect block, the adversary's men upon the one point being unable to move until this block is broken.

This blocking style of game is so usual and typical of backgammon that it has given rise to the saying that backgammon is a game of blocks. This type of game may be also a running game and, should the adversary's two men try to escape, it may also become a game of the shut-out type.

We shall only say in conclusion that, while there are four types of games and one distinct strategy or method of play appropriate to each, it is never advisable to attempt to determine in advance which one of these strategies shall be employed. In playing backgammon one must be an opportunist, guided by one's dice in adopting that strategy for which one's dice afford the best opportunity. Furthermore, even after one strategy has been commenced, it is frequently advisable after the game has reached a certain point to shift into one of the others. The situation changes with every throw of the dice. One must be always alert and ready to change one's method of play whenever that is advisable.

Among our magazines

(Continued from page 60)

but little then of the course of human passions, pitched high in the excited quest for gaiety. Temptations crossed my path, for in those days of unbridled love and fierce hates, the Scarlet Highway beckons to Youth. . . ."

EDITOR: "Go on."

GIRL: "I ran off with man I loved. Then soon came the fatal night of indiscretion. I was heedless, carefree, young. I dined with an artist—a Bohemian—afterward we went to his studio. It's the old, old story—he asked me to pose in the nude—"

EDITOR (brightening): "That's better."

GIRL: "Slowly I undraped my beautiful body, fresh and trembling as the dew on the lily. . . . I stood unprotected before him. He advanced toward me. . . . I trembled—"

(Phone rings. Editor starts violently.)

EDITOR (in voice shaken with emotion): "He—hello? What? (He shudders.) Oh. . . hello, dear. Yes, No. . . . No, dearest, I'm afraid I won't be home for dinner. What? (He glances at the applicant.) You see, dear, I've got to work late tonight on another True Confession."

4 And now let us examine life on that carefree, happy magazine of Flaming Youth, the editorial offices of *College Humor*.

The walls of this cheerful room are entirely covered with pennants of Harvard, Cornell, Yale, Columbia, Dartmouth, Vassar, etc.; with framed pictures of pretty girls; and with a handsome array of stolen signs, including *Stop, Look and Listen, Broadway 7th Ave. Subway and Gentlemen*. The secretary, dressed like a flapper, is seated upon the typewriter, strumming

a uke. The editor, clad in raccoon coat and freshman hat and wearing a huge fraternity pin on his sweatshirt, is shouting into a battered telephone.

EDITOR: "Hello—hello—Is this the printing plant?—We want to see the next issue of *College Humor*."

ASSISTANT EDITOR (seizing a megaphone): "Come on boys, spell it out for *College Humor*. Ah ya reddy? One—two—"

STAFF: "C-O-L-L-E-G-E H-U-M-O-R."

EDITOR (jiggling receiver): "Hello—hello—Is this Hanover 6473—?"

(Staff leaps into position, in the center of the room, crouching in team formation on the floor facing the stenographers.)

EDITOR: "Hello! 6—4—7—3—"

OFFICE BOY: "Signals!"

EDITOR (leaving phone and assuming quarterback position behind stenographers): "6—4—7—3—"

(The office boy passes the issue to the center assistant editor. The editor intercepts the forward, rushes downfield, straight-arming his interference, and falls exhausted across his desk, as the staff piles up on top of him. The whistle blows shrilly.)

EDITOR (extracting himself from the pile and waving a college pennant feebly): "Final score, *College Humor* \$35, Public 0."

(Members of the staff rise to their feet, their arms about each other and lift beer steins aloft as they join in close harmony.)

STAFF:

"Drink a highball, at nightfall
When you march for dear old Yale
For we don't give a damn for the whole
state of Michigan—
We're from the I.C.S."

The peril in the Pommard

(Continued from page 24)

laughed. Lucie turned pale. Adolphe picked up the painter, who had sunk beneath the table, and dragged him away by the heels, saying:

"At least, I needn't talk to you in the third person!" Then this terrible man addressed the assembled ladies and gentlemen, "I beg to apologize, *messieurs et mesdames*, for my cousin's behaviour. I'll just take him off to the pantry and make him drink a glass of tonic, and then he can finish his dinner with the rest of us, in the servants' hall. Don't be disturbed—he's used to that!"

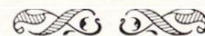
Pléque arose in a chill from this ghastly night. He shut himself up at home, and there he duly received, the following day, the anticipated invitation from the Creuil-Diaizés. He made an evasive excuse. That fatal phrase: "Pommard, Cousin Auguste?" still echoed in his ears, as in his dream. For months he did not accept a single invitation to dine out. He was even afraid to dine with the Auponts lest their brother-in-law, who knew the Creuil-Diaizés, might have borrowed their butler.

Grimly this fashionable painter renounced the world of fashion—temporarily, at least.

One day he heard that Mlle. Creuil-Diaizés had just become engaged to a young artist who had wooed her while he was executing a commission to paint her mother's portrait. This news staggered Auguste, who sought refuge in the *Parc Monceau* to be alone with his sorrow. But fate did not leave him in solitude. Once more, chance brought him face to face with his cousin Emma. He smiled bitterly.

"I suppose your husband is very busy these days," he said, "with all the entertaining for Mlle. Creuil-Diaizés and her fiancé?"

"Are you trying to be funny?" Mme. Adolphe interrupted, sternly. "No—I remember—you rushed off like a madman the last time I saw you, without letting me finish what I was saying. I was telling you that Adolphe had found a splendid position with these Creuil-Diaizés—but, unfortunately, he caught a bad cold, and a fever, and died—seven years ago, after being there only three weeks."



VANITY FAIR



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The back-game strategy

BY GROSVENOR NICHOLAS

Advice on winning games in backgammon when the luck apparently stands in favor of the opponent

■ The origin of the backgammon strategy known as the back-game is unknown. Like the origin of the game it is apparently lost in antiquity. It is true, nevertheless, that this rather unique strategy has added much to the play of the game and a knowledge of it can only increase one's pleasure and interest.

Before the discovery of the back-game, the player with the better dice for progress and position always won. Games in which the dice were very unequal, therefore, were inevitably dull. If, for example, one player commenced with a six and one and followed this with a double four, while his opponent had two really bad throws, like a two and one, there was so little uncertainty as to the outcome of the game that there could be but little interest. Even to the winner it was uninteresting, while to the loser it was hopeless.

The discovery of the back-game changed this. For the strategy of the back-game applies to backgammon that ancient and seemingly paradoxical teaching: the first shall be last and the last shall be first, and enables one to win some of the games in which one's dice at the outset are decidedly inferior to those of one's opponent.

In fact, for the purpose of playing a back-game the "worse" one's dice are the better, and *vice versa*.* For the strategy of the back-game has for its immediate objectives going backward, instead of forward, getting one's men back, instead of advancing them, and making one or more additional points in the opponent's inner table instead of in one's own.

It must be borne in mind that the back-game is a definite strategy or method of play. It is not merely being behind. We often hear a player, who finds himself behind after a game has progressed beyond its initial stages, say, "Well, I shall have to play a back-game." The game, in fact, may have progressed so far that a back-game is impossible. However, the opponent who is ahead is perhaps forced to expose a blot which is taken up and in that way the relative position and progress of the two players are reversed. This is not a back-game. While one of the players is behind, both of the games are actually forward games.

What has happened is only the shifting of the advantage from one player to the other which is so characteristic of backgammon.

In playing a back-game the greatest difficulty, as well as the first essential, is to get back far enough. To get back sufficiently is the only safeguard against being "ahead of one's game" later on (which with a back-game generally means failure) and in order to accomplish this one must set about it early.

■ In a back-game, just as in a forward game, there are always degrees of perfection. In pursuing either strategy one naturally endeavors to have one's game, whether it is of the one type or of the other, approach as nearly as possible to perfection. The extent to which one can accomplish this depends largely, of course, upon the dice, but, whether it is a forward game or a back-game, the more nearly perfect it is the more formidable it is and the more likely one is to win.

The most perfect forward game is the one which establishes the most effective block of the opponent's two hindmost men and, at the same time, provides safe landing places for the men one must move across one's outer and into one's inner table. This is best accomplished by securing at the outset one's five point and one's bar point. These two points, therefore, are the immediate objectives of a forward game.

In like manner, there is a perfect or ideal back-game. In order to establish this three things must be accomplished. Accordingly, when this strategy is employed, there are three immediate objectives. Two of these are positive and, while the third is negative, they are all three of fundamental importance.

First, one must establish in the opponent's inner table at least one other point in addition to the one point which one already has. For this purpose, the best additional point is the two point. While the chances are less that the three point will be effective, it may be regarded as very satisfactory. With this additional point upon the opponent's four point or five point, however, the danger to the opponent becomes less and less.

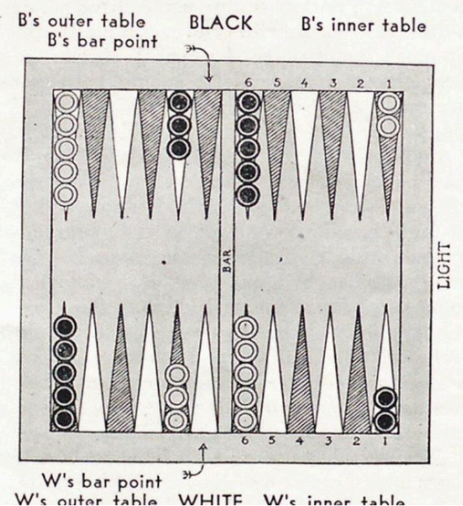
Second, one must have a sufficient number of additional men back. While the adversary is moving into his inner table and throwing off, this is the only protection possible against being obliged to move out of the adversary's inner table or to advance one's men too far into one's own inner table, where they will be out of play. It is difficult to have too many men back. It is better to have too many than too few as this is a safeguard against unusually large dice. These additional men back, moreover, must be in some position from which they can be played. To have them upon the opponent's one point is unsafe. In that position they are blocked by the bar point and, even after that point is abandoned, can

be moved only with a six. The best positions for these men are the outer tables or they may be upon the four or five point of the opponent's inner table from which positions they can generally be played.

■ Third, none of one's men must be out of play. That is, none of one's men must be advanced beyond the five or four point of one's inner table. Of course, a back-game may sometimes be brought to a successful conclusion with one or even two of one's men out of play. However, whenever it is possible, it is better to keep all of one's men in play. The more men one has available the greater are one's chances of preventing the escape of any of the opponent's men that are captured.

To summarize briefly, the elements of a back-game are possession of the one and two point or one and three point in the opponent's inner table, no men out of play and a sufficient number of additional men back which may be moved to improve one's position (but not obliged to move too far) until the opponent "breaks" and must expose one or more of his men. Such a back-game is perhaps perfect. While the nearer one can come to establishing such a game the greater are one's chances of success, with a back-game, as with a forward game, it is unusual to have absolute perfection. Fortunately, in either case, many games may be won with something which merely approaches it.

In order to appreciate the strength of a back-game one has only to place one's men in the positions indicated, the opponent's men being placed upon the remaining points of his inner table and upon his bar point. Then by continuing this experimental game, it will be found that the opponent generally is obliged to expose one or more of his men. If two are exposed, (Continued on page 68)



*As in a forward game a double six is often a most advantageous throw for a player, so in a back-game it is frequently a most disastrous one.

Psychology in Contract Bridge

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which was attended by good results.

♠-753	♠-A 6	♠-K 9 8 2
♥-Q J 10 8 3	♥-9 6 4	♥-A K 7 5
♦-K 8 5	♦-Q J 10	♦-A 7 3 2
♣-J 5	♣-A K 9 8 3	♣-6
	W N E	
	S	
	♠-Q J 10 4	
	♥-2	
	♦-9 6 4	
	♣-Q 10 7 4 2	

Both sides Vulnerable. Each 60, advance score.

North deals and bids one Club, which East doubles. South, very psychically, bids one Heart, hoping thereby to stop West from bidding the heart suit. The plan works beautifully, as West is fooled by the bid and passes. North now bids two Hearts, and East, with defense, passes. South now bids three Clubs, which is passed all around, and made, whereas the opponents can make four hearts, played thus:—North leads his King of clubs, then makes his Ace of spades and leads another spade which East takes. When three rounds of trumps have been led and three rounds of diamonds, North finds himself in the lead with nothing but clubs in his hand. East ruffs the club with his last trump and, on his fourth diamond, discards the remaining spade in West's hand.

In the case of this interesting hand, should South's hand be bid normally, West will certainly bid Hearts and East and West can make four Hearts, or else North and South will be forced to bid five Clubs and go down six hundred points—instead of which North and South go game and rubber—a swing of nearly twelve hundred points.

Here is another interesting hand recently played at Auction:

♠-8 6 5 4	♠-A 10 9 3
♥-8 7 5 2	♥-A J 10
♦-K 2	♦-7 6 5 4
♣-9 3 2	♣-A 5
♠-K Q J 7 2	
♥-K Q 9 6 3	
♦-A 3	
♣-4	
	W N E
	S
	♠-None
	♥-4
	♦-Q J 10 9 8
	♣-K Q J 10 8 7 6

The Bidding

E—1 NT	Pass	Pass	Pass
S—2 S	3 H	4 Club	Pass
W—Doub	Doub	Doub	
N—Pass	Pass	Pass	

In this case, East dealt and bid one No Trump, indicating an equally distributed hand. South, with his irregular distribution, figures there must be another hand something similar to his own somewhere around the table and probably composed of the major suits. If so, his (South's) hand is probably a losing one. He therefore elects to conceal his true holding and bids two

Spades without a Spade in his hand. When he is doubled he injects a little more psychic bidding into the affair and ventures a bid of three hearts which is also doubled. The result obtained is remarkable, as he finally goes game and rubber at four Clubs doubled, with a hundred honors, whereas the opponents have six spades or six hearts spread in the hand. West, not an expert, was completely fooled by South's bidding, figuring South with a four-four-four-one, or a five-four-four distribution. Should this hand be bid normally, South will have to bid seven Clubs in order to obtain the contract and will go down three tricks, doubled.

This story would not be complete, however, without relating a disastrous example of what can happen when one chooses the wrong time, or the wrong partner, to make a Psychic:

♠-10 4 2	♠-A K Q J 9 6
♥-7 6	♥-5 3
♦-4 3	♦-2
♣-8 6 5 4 3 2	♣-10 8 6 2
♠-8 7	
♥-5 3	
♦-9 7 5	
♣-A K Q J 10 9	
	W N E
	S
	♠-None
	♥-A K Q J 10 9 8 4
	♦-A K Q J
	♣-7

The above was a Goulash which was recently played in New York with both sides vulnerable. North and South were playing the two-bid compulsory take-out.

This bid should perhaps be explained. It is becoming more and more a rule among good Contract players that an original two bid in any suit (signifying as it now does, five quick tricks) must be kept open by the partner. If the partner holds a bust he must still keep the bidding open by saying "two no-trumps", so that the original bidder will have a chance to put in his very probable game bid.

South, fearing that his almost certain small slam in hearts would be taken away from him should the opponents bid a small slam in spades, craftily decided to start the bidding with two Spades, expecting that his partner would keep the bidding open, and hoping also to stop his opponents from getting together on their spades should the spades be separated in the two hands. Unfortunately, North forgot his duty and passed. East, of course, passed also. Five rounds of Clubs were led. East and West made a grand slam with a hundred honors, and North went down the brutal amount of sixteen hundred points, instead of making a small slam in hearts, rubber, and a hundred and fifty honors. So, bridgers, don't try out your Psychics with a partner afflicted with lapses of memory.

There are many good players who do not approve of Psychics; some even consider them unfair. But, after all, one thing can certainly be said of Psychics—they undoubtedly lend a lot of colour to the game.

In this corner . . .

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expression on his pan. He has the largest and most inviting jaw in the racket and gets it clouted every so often by some local clown elected to serve as a set-up for a little ham and bean money, and falls down for ten seconds or more. Upon being revived he announces that he is not discouraged by this unfortunate accident, and that the next time out he will lick someone like Paulino or Johnny Risko. He features a rushing attack, speed, with both hands hooking, patterned after Dempsey. Not patterned after Dempsey is his chin.

William L. (Young) Stribling—acrobat, prizefighter, aviator and family man. Injected into the heavyweight picture once more when he recently subdued lantern-jawed Otto von Porat of Chicago in one round. Von Porat, a pretty good fighter, will eventually achieve immortality through Gene Fowler's imperishable couplet—"O Otto von Porat, O where is the floor at?" Stribling is as notorious an in-and-outer as Sharkey. He has the nerve to rattle a flying machine around in the upper ether in a violent manner but curls up in the ring. He has a left hand lash like a striking rattler, speed, experience, punch and color. Why he will never be heavyweight champion is one of those ring mysteries, but the fact remains—he won't be.

Ernie Schaaf—is a young ex-gob and model for the Muldoon-Tunney heavyweight championship trophy—that bronze statue you trip over in the lobby of Madison Square Garden. He is included among the list of possible candidates, because recently some of the Best People have Taken An Interest in him. A strong, two fisted aggressive young fellow, he is a product of the amateurs from which class he was excused when his varlets were discovered one evening packing his bandages with scrap iron, parts of old Ford automobiles and bric-a-brac. But it was done, as was later ex-

plained, in a spirit of true humanitarianism with a view to not prolonging the agony of his opponents, so the matter was not held against him.

No African has been included in this list, not as is popularly supposed because there is danger of race rioting, but because I know that the thought of a negro making so much money is repulsive to the fight promoters who invented and keep sacred the gigantic hocus-pocus known as the heavyweight championship and sets them to tossing fitfully in their beds at night unable to enjoy rest and repose.

As for young Max Schmeling, the new champion, if I told you how good he was you wouldn't believe me anyway and like as not I will be accused of being pro-German in sympathies. He is as intelligent as Gene Tunney and has a better business sense than Luis Firpo had, and Looie is considering sending the first dollar he made in the United States to the treasury in exchange for a new one because the numbers are pretty nigh worn off from carrying it around. Schmeling has every attribute of a champion—speed, condition, brain, punch and ambition including as well an extraordinarily astute little West Side Hebrew named Jacobs as his manager. This is an important point and should not be overlooked in placing any small wagers. A manager is about three-quarters of a champion. In the case of Herr Schmeling's strange acquisition of the title, Jacobs—as he calls him—was just about one hundred per cent. In fact there are some people who claim that Joe Jacobs and not Max Schmeling is the heavyweight champion of the world but Joe modestly puts aside such complete honors. He has the typical manager's aversion to punches, and when he says—"We will fight anybody in the world next June," he wants it distinctly understood that he means Herr Schmeling.

The back-game strategy

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the opportunity is tremendous. From one's two points in the opponent's inner table the chances of hitting one of his two blots average almost six to one, while there are many chances of hitting both. If one man only is exposed there are always five to four chances that it will be hit.

In estimating these chances only one opportunity with a single throw of the dice has been taken into consideration. This is, of course, an underestimate for the opponent often finds it impossible upon his next throw to move or cover such blots, and there are then again the same chances of hitting them.

After one of the opponent's men has been captured it is, of course, of the first importance to prevent its escape. This is done by scattering certain of one's men in the outer tables so that, when an escape is attempted, the man may be again taken up and obliged to reënter. For this purpose one should not hesitate to expose blots. At the close of a back-game the opponent's inner table is usually broken. The danger from blots is not of sufficient consequence to deter one from giving one's self as many chances as possible

of preventing the escape of a captured man. At this time, another wise precaution is to block large doublets whenever that is possible for large doublets afford a captured man the best, and frequently the only, opportunity of escape.

A back-game is always a last hope or additional opportunity to a player who, at the commencement of a game, has decidedly inferior dice. Whatever may be one's opinion of it generally, against a good forward game, a back-game has a better chance of success than another forward game which is decidedly inferior in progress and position.

With superior dice one should win. If, by means of this strategy, one can win also some of the games in which the opponent's dice are superior, the opponent is always at a disadvantage.

Those who are sceptical in regard to back-games always point to the fact that this strategy risks a double game and, of course, this is true. However, with decidedly inferior dice one may lose a double game in any event and, with the new doubling of the stake, a double at the appropriate moment is an almost perfect offset.