



**backgammon**  
**Michael Kiolan**  
of the American Backgammon Club

**WHO'S HOLDING WHO?**

Black rolls double fours. What should he do?

At this stage in the game, black's main choice is to either move the furthest two checkers away from white's 7 point (called the "bar point") to black's 15 point and begin the running game, or stay there to continue a "holding game" and move other checkers.

A holding game consists of purposely holding an opponent's key point in order to thwart his progress into his own inner table, with the possibility of obtaining a hit later.

Let's look at a few considerations to help make the choice easier.

No matter how black moves, white will be eight "pips" (total number of points outside the home board) ahead in the race. White will also be up to roll and has better inner table distribution for the bear-off.

If black runs from the bar point now, he will give white the further advantage of having a clean run home. This will allow white the opportunity to

move as quickly as possible instead of as safely as possible if black stays put.

**BEST OVERALL MOVE...**

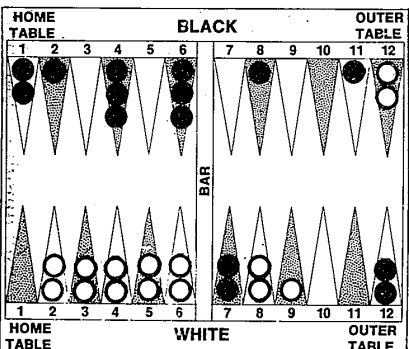
Black should stay on white's bar point and move both men from white's 12 point down to black's 5 point. Black now has active builders to cover the 2-point blot and stall for time in the next few rolls while waiting for white to open up.

White now is under pressure to cover his own 9-point blot and may even have to break his inner table instead of leaving another outer table blot.

This holding situation is most often misplaced when the player who is actually ahead in the race doesn't realize it and thinks he should try to hold his opponent and wait for a shot. He is unknowingly thwarting his own running game.

So remember: Before you move, decide who's holding who.

The American Backgammon Club can be contacted by writing to Box 599, Plymouth 48170, or by calling 459-5776.



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