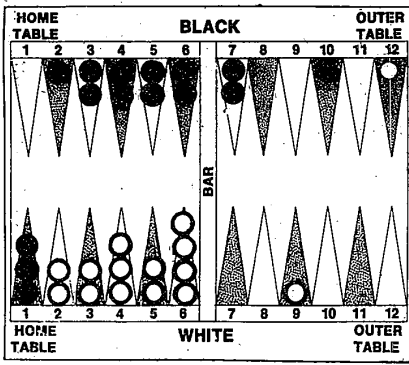




backgammon
Michael Kiolan
 of the American Backgammon Club



● COMPETITION PLAY
 During the \$100,000 Gold Cup Backgammon Tournament, held March 25-29 in Washington, this position appeared with white having to play 3-3. The match is played to 13 points. White has a lead, 12-11. Since white needs just one point to win the match, the Crawford Rule applies. The rule says that when either opponent reaches one point from winning, for the next game only the doubling cube may not be used by either player. This rule can be advantageous to the player who is winning. However, gammons (double) and backgammons (triple) still count.

In any Crawford game — the game in which the doubling cube has virtually lost its power — a gammon is not important to the one winning. Only the player behind in score should play super aggressive in hope of winning a gammon — or at least one point.

The player needing one point to win the match must exercise complete caution at all times during the Crawford game so his opponent will not have an extra chance at a lucky hit at a critical stage of the game.

Also, during the Crawford game, your opponent will likely "camp out" if

he owns one or more of your home board points. Since he has nothing to lose, he hopes to steal the game in the bear-off. This can be a problem if he has been able to maintain perfect timing and a strong home board.

Considering the Crawford game and the score of 12-11, how would you move the 3-5 for white?

Many would run the checker in from the 12 to the 5 point to "fill the gap." Although this may look good in preparation for the bear-off, it is dangerous.

When bearing in, one needs to learn to prepare for the worst — double 6s, 5s and 4s.

The proper play is to move from the 12 point to the 8 point and from the 9 point to the 6. Now, a double 6 will play well. Double 5 is safe with two checkers off, and double 4 plays safe with one off.

As you well know, large doubles have a peculiar way of winning and losing a game unexpectedly.

For more information, contact the American Backgammon Club at 459-5776, or write to Box 599, Plymouth 48170.



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