

backgammon

Mike Giordano

of the Cavendish North backgammon club

TWC IN THE GLUE

This position was sent in by Debby of Southfield, who writes:

"I read in Magriel that the opponent's 5 point is the golden point and that whenever there is a doubt, you should make it. So when I (white) rolled 5-1, naturally I made it. My husband, who ended up losing the game, said that my play was wrong. What do you think?"

Paul Magriel is a world champion backgammon player and author of the most comprehensive text on the game. And I agree with his husband.

Coming in from the bar and hitting on black's 5 point seems absolutely necessary. My choice of ones would be to hit the man on the white 5 point, thereby putting two men on the bar. To my way of thinking, there are three compelling reasons.

First, white has made his 3 point early in the game; if that 3 point is to have any value in terms of blocking, it is incur-

rent upon us to make the 5 and 4 points as soon as possible. It is also just as important that we prevent black from making one of these points; if he does, the value of the 3 point is drastically reduced. Even though this play looks risky, as it leaves four loose men, black is almost a 2-to-1 underdog to hit back.

Second, the fact that black has another loose man on his 5 point means that if we remain split in black's home board, we will have two numbers (fives and fours) to hit him with on later rolls. This is especially important considering white has two points in his home board to only one for black. This means black is not only a distinct underdog to hit white back, but he isn't even a favorite to get both of his checkers in on his next roll.

Third, since black doesn't own a point in white's board, he is subject to being closed out and gammoned. Therefore, white should take the initiative and not play

passively. The opponent's 5 point is an excellent defensive point and will provide white security against being gammoned. By the same token, if black makes white's 5 point, he should have just about even prospects in the game. If we make the black 5 point now, black will make the white 5 point half the time on his next roll. Even if he doesn't make it on his next roll, black will be more likely to make it than white on the ensuing rolls.

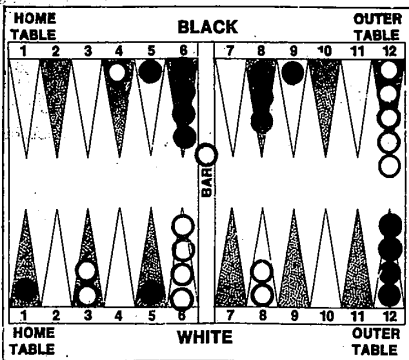
In backgammon perhaps more than on any other battlefield, the best

defense is a strong offense.

Questions about backgammon can be

sent to Mike Giordano, c/o the Observer & Eccentric, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150. All questions will

receive a personal reply, and those suitable for publication will appear in this column.



'Jazz in July' series presented at library

Concertgoers are being invited to bring their blankets or chairs and settle on the lawn for the "Jazz in July" concert series at the Bloomfield Township Public Library. The Friends of the Bloomfield Township Public Library is sponsoring the free concerts at 2 p.m. the last three Sundays in July at the library on Lone Pine Road east of Telegraph.

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