

Backgammon: Fun doubles and redoubles

By GERRI ANDREWS

"A free backgammon lesson," read the notice in the newspaper. I dragged my seldom-used backgammon game out of the closet and dusted it off. Then I called my husband, Dave.

"A free backgammon lesson? Do you hear that? Free?"

I made my point. We headed from our Lincoln Avenue straight for the Play for Competition store in Westland, where Mike Klolan, on behalf of the American Backgammon Club, was giving a one-time lesson in the game that boomed in popularity in recent years.

It was for beginners, and we fit right in.

I knew Klolan writes a backgammon column for the Observer, but still I'm not one to take lessons from just anyone, so I grilled him a bit on his credentials.

He's been playing the game for 16 years and has written an instruction booklet for beginners. A former Westland resident who now makes his home in Canton, he teaches beginners in the Plymouth-Canton adult education program.

He also has taught advanced backgammon seminars for the PM Series of evening classes at Cranbrook Institute.

HE MENTIONED with some pride that in September he had won the Black and White Tournament in Chicago. "That's a kind of consolation competition for those who don't make it into other tournaments," Klolan ex-

plained, "but I did come out on top in a field of 64."

Klolan, who sells real estate and runs mail order businesses when he isn't playing backgammon, also mentioned that he's planning to enter tournaments in Tennessee and Las Vegas in March and June and that he's more and more finding himself able to take on the top players in the country and compete and learn.

An organizer of the American Backgammon Club, which has been meeting in the Plymouth Hilton and Holiday Inn and recently moved its headquarters to the Play for Competition enterprise at 3130 S. Wayne in Westland, Klolan is cherishing the renewed interest in his favorite game.

"It's an easy game to play but difficult to master," he said. "The best way to learn is through a club where you can learn new strategies." He likes to play backgammon with his wife, Pamela, but also likes to get around and improve his game.

"She's a backgammon wife," he said, "and she puts with a lot of my getting home late nights and going around to tournaments."

KLOLAN WAS SET to teach us about both the dice and the doubling cube.

I had planned to skip over the part of the lesson on the doubling cube. Like most people, I was interested in playing backgammon, but didn't think the cube was important. After all, it's used just for scoring.

The teacher set me straight. He noted that when he first played back-

gammon he "didn't know it was exciting" because at that time he didn't know about the cube.

"Without the doubling cube I can see how anyone would get bored," he said. "I did, and I stopped playing for a while. But I got back to the game about the time it started getting popular again, and this time I learned about the cube."

"Let's put it this way—the cube is really what it's all about. Without the cube, backgammon isn't backgammon."

I discovered by the end of the lesson that indeed the cube is "what it's all about" for the game of backgammon.

I could be winning or losing a game and change the outcome just by offering, accepting or rejecting the cube.

BACKGAMMON shouldn't be compared with games like checkers and chess, said Klolan.

"It takes me when people think of backgammon as a fast and relate it to a pastime like checkers," he said.

"Backgammon is a very powerful game. People can get proficient enough to make a living playing in tournaments. One day I plan to do that."

And there's "no comparison" between his game and chess, he went on. "It's a faster game—faster to play and faster to learn," he said. "But both take practice and persistence."

He described backgammon as "the only socially perfect game." "That's because it is played all over the world and language is no barrier," he explained.

Several good books now are available on backgammon, which makes it easier to learn than when he was a beginner, said Klolan. He recommended Paul Magriel's "Backgammon" and several by Barclay Cooke. "Backgammon, the Craziest Game" is the Cooke work best for beginners, he said.

AFTER MY FRUSTRATION, I still haven't mastered the game, but on Feb. 3 and March 3, I'll get another chance to

pick Klolan's brain when he teaches another beginners' class.

I may also try some of the meetings of the club, which are being held the second and third Wednesdays of each month in the Westland store. And there's the club's awards dinner and championship tournament, scheduled Feb. 28 at Topinka's Country House, Seven Mile and Telegraph.

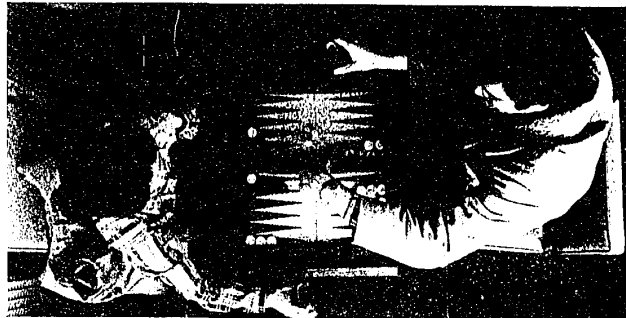
And of course I could go to the advanced backgammon seminar that

Klolan will be teaching for the American Backgammon Club.

"Who knows, maybe I'll beat you," I tell him.

"Not a chance," he comes back. "I rate myself every year, and on a scale of 1 to 10, I was an 8 three years ago. Today I'm a 9.9."

Something tells me he's right, and I've resigned myself to reading his column and then hitting it before I challenge Dave.



Reporter Gerri Andrews and her husband Dave concentrate on a backgammon board during their lesson in Westland.

Wise ways to winterize skin

icy winter weather can cause discomfort as well as possible damage to skin—the kind of damage that is cumulative. If skin isn't well protected against cold weather, the resulting roughness, dryness and other problems get harder and harder to hide.

To help skin escape winter damage, Clinique Laboratories offers some suggestions.

Best way to winterize is to moisturize much more frequently than you would in milder weather. Even in the dry cold that everyone says you don't feel, your skin still feels it and loses moisture all the more.

To conserve skin's moisture against cold winds, wrap your muffler around your cheeks, right up to eyes. This prevents not only chapping, but also injury, to capillaries (tiny blood vessels near skin's surface) that sometimes break in

the cold, leaving you with little red trademarks on your face.

If your skin has been thoroughly chilled, don't rush to a fireplace or stove. Sudden changes from cold to hot can also break capillaries. Better to give them a little time in moderate temperature, to adjust.

Take faster baths. Too much soaking in warm water dissolves your skin's protective layer of oil, helps moisture escape all over. Also, since vigorous scrubbing exposes a more porous skin surface, moisture-escape is made even easier. But this situation is corrected when you finish your bath or shower with plenty of a good moisturizing lotion.

Start running, or some other form of vigorous exercise that works up a sweat. Perspiration is another form of skin moisture that, if we're not active,

usually slows down in winter. If you do run in winter, be sure to make a double coating of lubricating cream a part of your regular running costume.

Watch out for winter sun gleaming on snow. It can burn even more than when you're on a summer beach. For any kind of winter sports, put a good sun block on your team of skin protectors. And do use sunglasses in winter.

Protect your eyes—delicate eye area from cold wind as well as sun. For all this, there's a Clinique rule: Whenever you reach for sunglasses, be sure to reach for a sun block, too.

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