



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

● SWITCHING POINTS

During the recent Boston Symphony Orchestra/Black and White Scotch Benefit Tournament, this situation came up. During a 15-point match, black and white are tied at 11 points. Black has a double 5 to move.

The doubling cube is neutral, with the proper play, black has an excellent chance for a gammon, which would give him two points. What is your suggested move?

Black has two reasonable options. The first move involves playing safe by moving both checkers from the 7 to the 2 point, a checker from the 12 to the 8 point and from the 11 to the 6 point. This creates more builders to hit or close points.

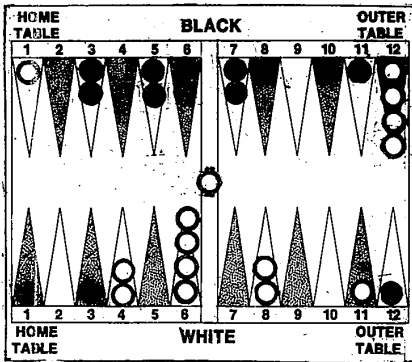
Or black could move both checkers off the 6 point and hit white on the 1. With two of white's checkers on the

bar, black could have ample time to extricate his back men. Black could also close his 2 point from the 7 point. Remember, when there are two or more of your opponent's checkers on the bar, it is not the quality of the home board, but the quantity of closed points that counts.

Although the majority of players in all skill levels would probably choose to hit white on the 1 from the 6 point, most would hit just for the sake of hitting — failing to recognize the importance of this play.

Switching points is an effective part of gammon strategy during tournament match play. Keeping your opponent busy on the bar is almost certain victory. Black's game is too good to double the cube; white would decline.

Black must play for the gammon by sending a second checker to the bar. Also, when you have sufficient



checkers in your outer board bearing on the open points, you can afford to switch points without thinking and play for the gammon.

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

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