

Monday, November 1, 1982 O&E

Corpse reappears in hilarious spoof

Performances of the The Farmington Players' production of "The Best Laid Plans," a farce by Fred Carnichael, continue through Nov. 13 at the Farmington Players barn, theater at 32332 West 12 Mile, Farmington Hills. For ticket information, call the box office at 535-8822.

By Barbara Michals
special writer

"The Best Laid Plans" does not go astray and The Farmington Players hit the funny bone right on target in this delightfully silly spy spoof.

Ada Westbrook (Pat Niehaus) is an immensely successful author of James Bond-type spy thrillers, but in real life this glib lady "couldn't even rub the spot out of a dress." Suddenly life echoes art and Ada is thrust into the middle of a slapdash spy caper.

Someone has "the plans" and everyone wants them. Ada's Jamaican win-ter home is soon crawling with spies and she has great difficulty separating "them" from "us." At play's end, Ada seeks clarity by asking the good guys to step to one side of the room and the bad guys to the other.

In true farcical style, mistaken identities occur and five doors are kept in constant motion as spies duck in and out surreptitiously. The same corpse keeps disappearing, then reappearing in the window seat, and the results are a little more hilarious each time.

NIEHAUS IS convincing in her gentility but seldom seems sufficiently animated for someone caught up in a deadly spy game.

Hope Nahstoll is wonderfully droll as Ada's secretary and confidant, a mid-

review

die-aged woman constantly lamenting her spinsterhood. Nahstoll has a marvelous deadpan delivery that enhances her lines and she has the most of the choice ones.

Ralph Rosati gets a workout as the Gorbasky twins, spies who work on opposite sides. Rosati is the poor fellow who is constantly hoisted and dragged in and out of Ada's window seat and he manages to never twitch a muscle when he shouldn't. When he's on his own feet, Rosati's Russian accent is good and his acting effective.

Judie Rosati makes it easy to believe that Phoebe, the highly attractive Russian spy, was always number one in her spy classes. Phoebe is saddled with an inept partner in Vincent, and Joe Doehler plays the role with appropriate timidity. His large build provides an amusing contrast with the diminutive Rosati.

Julie Austin is pleasing as Ada's lively granddaughter who tries to be helpful at all the wrong times and Erik Carlson is her flustered fiancé.

Dick Coe, John Hollingsworth and Robert Tavis are the other spies who hang around Ada's house and make a general nuisance of themselves.

"The Best Laid Plans" maintains a breezy pace and director Dolores Shevlin gets maximum laugh mileage from a few ounces of fluff.

To the best of my knowledge, all board games from chess and checkers to backgammon have been likened to a battlefield.

While I am hardly an expert on the so-called art of making war, it does seem to me that in any form of confrontation tactics should be a function of objectives. In other words, before we can determine a course of action, we must first know what it is we are trying to achieve.

In this week's position, white has a five-one to play. Before making any play, white should assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of both sides.

First of all, the race is very close (white will be a little ahead after playing his roll). In terms of the blocking position, black has a slight advantage that could grow dramatically, should he be able to build the fifth point in a row.

COMPARING THE relative strengths of the two inner boards, white has the edge with four points built compared to three for black. So what does all this mean?

First of all, the race is an inconsequential factor if you are blocked in and are unable to race. In fact, being ahead in the race may well be a disadvantage, for if white is unable to get away, he will be forced to advance his forward men, thus breaking up his own blockade.

This leads us to a consideration of the blocking potential. Blocking is the name of the game in backgammon, and in this department black's edge will soon be all but insurmountable unless his forward progress can be arrested.

White's only real advantage is that he has a four-point board while black has a three-point board. This means that should both players miraculously find themselves on the bar, black will come in 55.5 percent of the time, while white will enter on black's board 75 percent of the time.

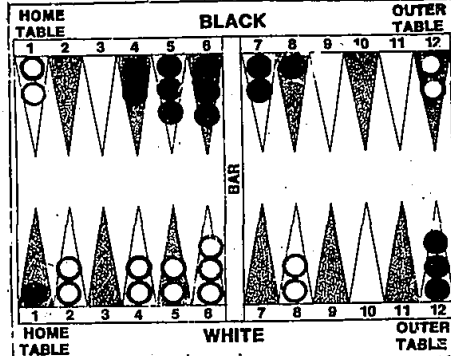
All this should make it clear that white must play his five from his six point to his one point, putting black on the bar. But is this play the beginning of a blitzkrieg attack aimed at closing out his board, while black is on the bar, or is it more in the nature of a preemptive strike, hoping to divert the enemy's attention while we mount an attack on his stronghold?

IF WHITE'S objective is to blitz his opponent, he should play his one from his eight to his seven point, thus giving him sixes as well as sevens to cover his one point.

Conversely, white could play his one from the black one to the two point, thereby coming into range of the vulnerable man on black's eight point. It is easy to demonstrate the superiority of this second line of play.

Let us assume that (against the odds) black will fall to enter white's board on his next roll, and white rolls a six after that. White would be much better off hitting the second black man, as opposed to covering his own one point.

With two men on the bar, black will be hard pressed to withstand the onslaught. In fact, if he doesn't roll a one in short order, black will most likely be gammoned. Even if black hits on the one point and establishes it by rolling a second one, he is in a much worse



position than he started in.

On the other hand, if white plays for the blitz and covers his one point with his hypothetical six, black should have at least three or four rolls to roll a three, where he will have substantially

after chances than with two men on white's one point.

By hitting on his one point, white is employing an essentially diversionary tactic and should make the most of the diversion by splitting to black's two point.

Chuck E. hosts video challenge

The Chuck E. Cheese's Pizza Time Theatres throughout Oakland County will raise funds for Easter Seals with a video challenge event today through Nov. 13.

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