Serving the Online Backgammon Community Since 1999
Copyright © 1999-2014 GammonVillage Inc. All rights reserved.

Ides of March Cambridge Invitational Tournament - March 2014
09 May 2014
by Jason Pack
http://www.gammonvillage.com/backgammon/magazine/article_display_print.cfm?resourceID=6546

Introduction by Jason Pack

The history of backgammon as a social and intellectual pastime is littered with innovations, and yet in the 21st century, we tend to think that there are only three standard formats of the game -- heads-up cash games, matches, and chouette -- and that these forms are set in stone and unlikely to evolve or be surpassed. Some Western backgammon players feel that all other forms of the game are distinctly inferior and not worthy of serious study. In reality, backgammon (even with its fixed checker play rules since the 18th century) is amenable to an infinite number of variants, many of which have a special social or intellectual appeal such as the Middle Eastern practice of five point cubeless matches or the 1950s practice of cubeless match play without the Crawford rule, etc.

It is worth remembering that the doubling cube was invented by happenstance around 1926 and quickly caught on as it added an extra element of excitement and a novel field for skill and contemplation. Similarly, the idea of modifying heads-up cash backgammon games into match backgammon only evolved as a way to allow tournament play. Match backgammon has since caught on outside of tournaments, because many players find it more fascinating and dynamic than cash game sessions.

In the past few decades, the knockout tournament format, with progressive consolation rounds and a last chance, all consisting of matches of odd-number of points (i.e. 7 or 11 or 17 pointers) has achieved a near-hegemonic status within the backgammon world, but it is far from the only conceivable tournament format. In fact, some of the best and most respected tournaments in the world use other formats. Partisans of Swiss tournaments (e.g Chicago Open) or double elimination tournaments (e.g. Nordic) will say that those formats are not only more enjoyable but are more likely to favor skill, while being conducive to all attendees having fun and getting in as many meaningful matches as possible. Sadly, although Chicago and Nordic are universally respected few tournament directors are willing to apply their spirit of innovation to their own tournaments.

Having experimented with many possible tournament formats, I believe a round robin format of different match lengths -- especially stressing even-numbered match lengths -- can be particularly enjoyable, while also rewarding a deeper understanding of match score dynamics and human psychology. This format certainly has its drawbacks as it is time consuming, is best suited for smaller more "intimate" events, and requires having a suitable number of participants. Nonetheless, it maximizes the amount of backgammon played by all the participants and promotes the social aspect of the game by assuring that all participants play with and get to meet each other. Although it is impossible to declare one tournament format as the ideal, having now hosted a round robin tournament of different match lengths, I can say fairly definitively that it promoted the psychological and intellectual challenges that we all relish in backgammon.
Description of Tournament Format by Sean Williams

I am delighted to be able to write this introduction to Jason Pack's article on the unique Ides of March Cambridge Invitational Tournament that took place on March 15, 2014.

The tournament took place at Jason's beautiful seven-room Victorian house in Cambridge, UK. He hosted us with his charming girlfriend, Jennifer Segal.

As well as being a delightful host, Jenny is also a highly talented artist. The winner of the Cambridge Ides of March Tournament received a backgammon-themed painting by Jenny – a unique and cherished alternative to a trophy. Jenny also showed her skills at hand recording Jason's matches generating the body of material for the article that follows this introduction.

Jason wanted the tournament to showcase the match skills of some of the UK's best players and he devised a format to ensure that this was the case.

Eight players were to compete in the tournament. It was a round robin in which every player would play every other player. In the first round, the players would play a 2-point match. In the second round the players would play a 3-point match. In the third round the players would play a 4-point match -- and so on up to the seventh round where the players would play an 8-point match. Each match was worth the same amount regardless of match length.

Playing different match lengths would ensure that a range of match score-relevant cube decisions were encountered.

At the end of this round robin stage the two highest-placed finishers would go through to a final match to decide the overall champion. The final was to be played to 11 points. However, unlike in traditional events, the score would not start at 0-0. Instead, the player who had won the head-to-head between the two finalists would start with 1 point, and the player with the most wins from the round robin phase would get two points for every extra win that he had in his round robin score over his opponent. For example, if the top finisher in the round robin was 6-1, and the second-place finisher was 5-2 but had defeated the first-place finisher, the initial score of the final would be 2-1 to 11 in favor of the first-place finisher.

Very few people are actively innovating in the tournament format space and Jason's format was innovative, challenging and highly entertaining. There was an entry fee of £200 per person to be split 70/30 between the winner and runner-up along with an optional £50 side pool. Additionally each match was worth £25 to ensure that players had something to play for in the later rounds even if they were no longer able to win the tournament. The stakes certainly focused the mind and provided a sizable prize fund for the winner.
Under this structure, eight players sat down to compete in this unique Ides of March Invitational Tournament – seven of the UK's best players and "the best player in the world," who was actually only invited as a substitute. Or, worded differently, due to a last-minute cancellation we were down to seven players and a unanimous decision was taken to include Extreme Gammon as the eighth player with the proviso that it did not pay an entry fee, could not advance to the final, and wins or losses against it did not count for 25 pounds, but did affect each player's overall record for the purpose of reaching the finals.

The other seven players were Peter Bennet, Julian Fetterlein, John Hurst, Jason Pack, Lawrence Powell, Tariq Siddiqi, and Sean Williams.
Jason and Jenny were wonderful hosts throughout the event. We were welcomed at 10 a.m. with coffee and croissants and the top-notch hospitality continued throughout the day. Jason gave us a tour of his house including the four rooms in which we were to play our matches – the Conservatory, the Sewing Room, the Main Sitting Room and the Lounge Office. Players rotated between rooms with the exception of Extreme Gammon who stayed on Jason’s computer in the Lounge Office.
The tournament was a huge success and I sincerely hope that Jason decides to repeat the event.

-- Sean Williams

* * * * * * * *

Ides of March Cambridge Invitational Tournament - March 2014 - by Jason Pack

In the first match, I faced the UK's top Giant, Julian Fetterlein. Despite it being a two point match and both of us knowing that the other perfectly understood the score, we delayed the cube until there was a possibility of market loss. I was on the roof but Julian had four blots that I might pick up with a joker sequence. Unfortunately for me, that eventuality did not pan out, and after fanning, I fell into a back game. I actually had three back points (2, 3, and 5) and on a particular roll, I abandoned the three anchor, as a 2,5 game was all that I felt I had the timing for and I didn't want to risk busting on a freak double four or something, but XG strongly wanted me to stay back. Nonetheless, my timing held for the 2,5 game and Julian ended up with very awkward stacks which culminated in him leaving a repeating ace shot on the three point. I missed both times and as Julian was trying to clear his last stack he was faced with an interesting 31.
It seemed clear to me that Julian had to hit me en passant to bearing off. Yet he did not and it cost him the match as I later hit with an ace from my 22-point, closed him out and won from there. If he had hit (assuming the subsequent dice would have been the same) I would have re-entered my second back man remaking the 23-point and would have had no opportunity to re-diversify with an ace to the 22-point before he left his shot. I commented on the play to Julian after he chose not to hit saying that I would definitely have hit as I can’t see how doing so could hurt him. He mentioned that the hit could slow me down and he wanted me to bust my forward men or be forced to run one of my back men. This is an interesting point that I hadn’t considered but it only seems to apply to an immediate double 4 from me which I would be thankful to not have to play if I am on the roof. On all other sequences, hitting appears to be either equivalent or distinctly advantageous for Julian when I am forced to re-enter beyond his stacks (16 numbers). Furthermore if I reenter on the deuce (remaking the point) I may never diversify my back men again so that if my shot comes it will only be a single instead of a double shot.

After winning that match (with both of us playing at under a 3PR in a rather complex game), I lost my three point match 0-3 to John Hurst on an undoubled gammon to Crawford and then a blitz without ever really having had a chance in either of the games. John played both those games well, but the dice left us both without any particularly interesting decisions to analyze.

In my four point match, I played XG roller in a contest with a few fascinating positions. XG cubed me early in the opening game, in which it had a two-way forward position. I took, then neither the potential attack nor the prime materialized and I anchored on the five point. Shockingly, I then managed to outplay XG roller in the first game. I played at 0.16 and the bot judged itself at a measly 1.09 as according to its slower and more thoughtful cousin (i.e. XG++), it made the small checker play mistake shown below:
Here XG roller chose to try to maintain its prime against my anchor but in so doing forced itself into a situation of TMP (Too Many Points). The higher ply versions would have thought a few turns ahead and chose to create a few useful spares by clearing the 9 point.

After losing that game, I would throw a joker set of double 2s and totally botch them. Having extensive records of my matches, I believe that this is the number I most frequently blunder, especially when a change of game plans is required.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. XG++</th>
<th>9/8 9/3</th>
<th>eq: -0.038</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Player:</td>
<td>59.59% (G:6.21% B:0.07%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opponent:</td>
<td>40.41% (G:6.02% B:0.16%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. XG++</th>
<th>8/7 8/2</th>
<th>eq: -0.040 (-0.002)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Player:</td>
<td>59.54% (G:6.23% B:0.07%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opponent:</td>
<td>40.46% (G:6.02% B:0.16%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. XG++</th>
<th>7/1 2/1</th>
<th>eq: -0.054 (-0.016)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Player:</td>
<td>59.08% (G:6.41% B:0.07%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opponent:</td>
<td>40.92% (G:6.39% B:0.17%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. 4 ply</th>
<th>7/1 4/3</th>
<th>eq: -0.048 (-0.011)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Player:</td>
<td>58.84% (G:6.84% B:0.09%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opponent:</td>
<td>41.16% (G:6.36% B:0.27%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unsure of how to proceed, I choose to build and prime with Bar/23*21, 13/11(2), focusing maximum ammunition on the five and bar points. This is the wrong approach as the bot will have a lot of counterplay against me if it throws an immediate anchoring ace. Therefore, switching points with Bar/23*, 13/11, 3/1(2)* is a superior play which buys me time to escape some of my back men and to go for the gammon (and the match) by preventing XG from anchoring.

Despite this and subsequent foolish blunders from me, I would go on to win the game. At 2-away, 2-away I didn't try any funny business with XG but rather cubed it in on the second turn and then a few moves in the bot busted its forward position with two sets of double fives in a row. In my attempts to construct a prime to contain the bot's last checker I was faced with the following 64.
I chose to play 21/15, 13/9 as I felt it controlled the outfield far better and at the cost of two shots made it far more likely that I would construct a fifth (non-consecutive) point in my prime. The bot liked my play over the safe 21/11 by a considerable margin (.042) but then punished me mightily for my good play by rolling the 62 joker and bringing it home from there.

In my next match I would face, one of the UK's gentleman aces, Peter Bennet. Our five point match lasted only one game. I opened with a 32 major split, he rolled double fives, I fanned. I knew the position to be a monster take, but (even though I consider Peter slightly more skillful than myself) was leaning towards dropping as I hate getting gammoned in these brainless blitzing positions in short matches. While I was vacillating, various spectators came over and I reflected on the fact that the match was being recorded and my PR would soon be common knowledge. So I decided to take, then I fanned many times over the next rolls, but finally entered and anchored on the five when Peter had a five point board. He threw a series of ducks allowing me to build my board and I recubed here:
Some spectators thought it a touch early. It would have been had Peter stepped up to the edge of the prime the previous turn. Although he could have done so, he missed the play and I was able to give this goldilocks cube. From there on out: I made the prime, closed him out and even gammoned him for the match as he was very slow to come in.

I was sitting precariously at 2-2 and tied with John Hurst when it was time for the lunch break. XG was 4-0, while among the other humans Sean was leading the pack at 3-0 (with a match in progress) and the rest of the gents were a ways a back at 1-3.

After lunch, I hoped to put an end to Sean's winning streak and put myself in strong contention for the title. However, it is not infrequent in backgammon that even with excellent play the best laid plans are still beyond reach. Such was the case with this match. Sean cruised through the first game and then down 0-2 to six, I faced the following set of double threes:
As I will be leading by 7 pips after the roll it seems natural to think about connectivity and my desire to break contact. It appears that both issues can be addressed by playing 18/15(2) -- after which the only sensible way to play the two remaining threes are 10/7(2). This play has the advantage of creating lots of spares that should allow me to temporize until I either roll a set of doubles that bring my back men home or to quietly wait for Sean to be forced off his midpoint. However, this is not the best play, as it allows Sean to play 64 and 65 safely. Finding the best play requires me to see that if I stay back on the bar point, after this move Sean will not have any playable sixes and will also have to bust his board with all non-sixes other than doubles. I, on the other hand, will have spares with which to wait it out until Sean throws a bad number. Therefore, this is one of those situations where it is not best to race even though I'm ahead in the race and choosing the most disconnected play possible is actually correct. One might call this an antithematic situation, but in fact when Robertie explains the concept of connectivity he explains that brittleness occasionally trumps connectivity. Hence the issue is knowing which theme to focus on. The way to exploit Sean's brittleness is with the seemingly ugly-looking 8/5, 8/2, 6/3. After my misplay Sean would roll 53 with which he would also make a very understandable misplay with 6/1, 4/1. XG would like Sean to come off the midpoint even though it exposes a shot as I have two blots in my board. I then doubled Sean. It was a touch early (.051) and he correctly took. Three turns later he would throw boxes. He later left a shot trying to clear his last point. I hit; Sean immediately hit back, I fanned a few times and I was facing his redouble to four.
If I take I can reship to 8 and play for the whole match. Therefore my take point is simply my winning chances trailing at 2-away, 6-away. According to the Rockwell-Kazaross table my chances at that score would be 20.1%. It is very difficult to approximate my winning chances here but I reasoned that they were less than 22% and more than 17%. If Sean throws a low number and I immediately enter or throw one of my jokers entering and hitting, I will obviously be in very good shape. However if he throws a high number or a hitting number and I don’t immediately throw a joker entering and hitting, I will be in very poor shape indeed and have only around 5% winning chances trying to hit him as he enters his last man into his home board or attempts to bear in from the five point. I reasoned that even some of my hitting parlays would not be wins as I have two killed checkers, trail by almost forty pips, and have a gap on the four point. Therefore, Sean may win even after his very unlucky parlays of getting hit. I, therefore, reasoned that I had less than 20% and passed. This turned out to be correct, according to XG, in this position I only have 19.4% therefore it is a bare pass. That said this is a very difficult position to work out over the board even if one knows the relevant match equity table numbers and is attempting to a Mini-Max approximation of my winning chance. Were I trailing, 7-away, 4-away (instead of 6-away, 4-away) and facing a four cube here, it would be a big no-double take as my winning chances at 2-away, 7-away are slightly less than 16%. Although it is best to have these scores memorized, one can do approximations with Neil's numbers.

After dropping I trailed 6-away, 2-away. Sean rolled me off the board in that game, quickly escaping his
back men and establishing a five prime in front of my four anchor. Leading by around thirty pips, Sean missed a few cashes, and then I was faced with the following 61:

According to XG, Sean had a bare cash the turn before, but my 61 if played properly should allow me to take after the roll. It should be obvious that I need to escape one my spare on the 21 anchor. However, is it better to leave it on the 15 or the 14 point? After an inordinate amount of thought, I chose to place it on the 14 as it faces two less shots. However, this is a clear and fairly basic blunder. It is best to leave it on the 15 point because if Sean hits there and safeties his other checker from the midpoint, I may be able to hit back with 16, 26, or 46. Whereas by placing the checker on the 14, if I get hit I am far less likely to hit back, in fact I can only possibly hit back if he hits with 21 or 32. After my misplay, Sean cubed and I dropped what was a very very bare take (.023).

Trailing 6-away, 1-away Crawford, I gammoned Sean to pull within striking distance at 4-away, 1-away post-Crawford. I opened with 32, playing the major split, and Sean rolled 61 making the bar point. I then cubed. Sean has the ability to use his free drop, but he took. At the time, I mentioned that although 32 is a lackluster opening roll and Sean has already made a point, I believe he has to drop. I argued that this is even the case when Sean might want to preserve the free drop for use next game in case I win a non-gammon.
After the slight error on the take, Sean would roll a series of excellently timed double threes which attacked me and then eventually established a six prime in front of my anchor. However, after hitting Sean's last man and making a few bold slotting plays (as I am at gammon go and don't care about losing a gammon) I got hit on my deuce point but was still able to make Sean's prime crack as he was unable to leap my four prime for a few turns in a row.
This is a very very promising position for me and I have almost gone from zero to hero. Yet I fanned for the next four turns and rather than leaving a blot or being forced to totally wreck his board, Sean escaped hitting and then cruising to victory. It was a thrilling and deeply challenging match, I played at 4.4 and Sean at 5.0.

In my next match, sitting at 2-3 and facing elimination if I lost, I faced one of the UK’s other gentlemen aces, Lawrence Powell. He played masterfully and convinced me that he is certainly one of this island’s World Class players and one of the best sportsmen around. Over the course of our 7 point match he played at under a 3PR, while, as usual, I played nearer to 5. He took a three-nil lead. I threw an early set of boxes to reach the following position:
Leading 4-away, 7-away, I actually thought Lawrence might be scared and pass as I have threats, position, and a minimal edge in the race. I knew it wasn't a pass but it never would have crossed my mind that the position is not even a cube. Lawrence took with alacrity, but I rolled 34 pointing on him and kept attacking his back man to bring the match score to 5-away, 4-away. I then cubed a 2-4 backgame which I thought ill-timed (but I probably improved Lawrence's timing by hitting when I shouldn't have). As I was bearing in, I faced the following 41:
I thought to clear from the back and ask questions later. This is quite a big blunder as in this position Lawrence has oodles of timing and the tough points for me to clear are the bar and 8 point. The 9 point is actually much easier as it is only opposed by one of Lawrence’s anchors and leaving a blot there would be a single rather than a double shot on either the bar or 8 point. Any seasoned player knows conceptually that it is best to clear the bar with this 41, but it is sometimes hard to pause and make that play OTB when clearing the rearmost point feels so instinctual.

I was not punished for my sloppy bear in and as Lawrence threw high doubles he was forced to run off his forward anchor and convert the game into a well- timed deuce point game. I was then faced with the following 21:
Without a moment’s thought I made the four point, thinking that the play was clear. I believe 99% of GammonVillage's readership would do the same if the position came up OtB. Unsurprisingly, XG says taking off a checker with 5/3, 1/off wins more gammons. Amazingly, XG also says it is safer. This continues to mystify me even after much analysis. It simply must be that red has no immediate bad numbers and doesn’t need to worry about the gap because he should just continue to take off checkers until Lawrence is forced to leave with one man, at which point the extra builders will help with a potential attack or pick and pass. Having more men off will also yield more gammons as well as salvaging more wins after possibly getting hit later.

I didn’t leave a shot but I failed to gammon Lawrence as he escaped with boxes. In the next game leading 3-away, 4-away, I got in an efficient double when I had blitzing, priming, and racing chances. We all know that the take point for the recube for the 3-away player at 3-a, 4-a is 40%. What I did not know is this means that the 4-away player can recube as a significant underdog in certain last-roll type positions or as a slight favourite in non-last roll, high volatility positions such as the one below:
Lawrence didn't recube here and I wouldn't even have been thinking about it. However, when the following position arose,
We were both thinking about it and as the Cambridge Invitational was not a clock-based tournament we had a healthy discussion. I tried not to let on that was scared to see a cube here, but did state that I didn’t think one was warranted. Lawrence was hesitant to cube, but was debating with me when the doubling window would open for the recube. Lawrence thought he could treat this as a last roll position and hence recube as an underdog. However, despite his valid argument, he finally chose not recube. I genuinely believed that he would need more than 11 shots to be able to recube, especially given that he cannot always wait for a potential subsequent shot. Throwing any six except 61 or 66 plunges him into a race down many pips and crossovers while throwing most other non-hitting numbers forces him to break his board as he has to stay back for a potential future shot. If we assume that all of Lawrence's hits are winners (which is of course not fully the case) and that when he stays hoping for subsequent shots or for a race win he has around 7% in the position, we can make a rough OTB calculation that Lawrence's chances of victory are somewhere around 38%.

In reality he has 40% as the gap on my four point and awkward distribution helps Lawrence's racing chances more than I had assumed. Well, I was happy Lawrence didn't recube and he probably was as well after he threw a 42 missing me. I would go on to win the race and win at Crawford.

I was then 3 and 3. XG was 6-0 and could not advance to the final and Sean was 4-2 and was likely to advance to the final. He was the only person to beat XG on the day.

Hence my fate hinged on the performance of Julian and John Hurst both of whom were also 3-3. Lawrence (who was 2-4) defeated Julian in an 8 point contest that lasted about two hours and John Hurst managed to defeat Peter Bennet in a single game eight point contest that lasted about ten minutes.
As the match was not recorded, Peter's initial double is lost to the sands of time. But, probably much to his chagrin, John's recube is now saved for eternity:

If in an optimistic or an aggressive mode, you can imagine the logic of a recube here: you have only three points to clear, your opponent will immediately be forced to abandon one of his anchors and has a gap in his board and, like icing on the cake, a gammon on a 4-cube wins you the match with perfect efficiency. But with a little bit of reflection, it should be clear that the recube is too early and a big conceptual error.

You don't need to have been exposed to a modern bot, or to have read Walter Trice, to know that you can only cube a backgame like this if you have three points to clear and ALL THE OTHER POINTS MADE, not three points to clear and tons of gaps and dilly builders, etc. In short, in this position John barely has any market losing sequences. The only market-losing sequences are double 5s from him, or a non-blotting number from John followed by a busting double 4 or double 2 from Peter. In fact, even his other great rolls that make the 3 point still allow Peter to take next turn.

The reason this recube is such a mistake is that in many sequences it allows Peter to recube to 8 on a shot even as an underdog so as to kill gammons. For whatever reason, I was so inclined to do XG-aided hand rollouts of this position a few hundred times (possibly because John's win after his bad recube cost me over 500 pounds) and I've come to realize one thing: recubing to four in this position one must be far more hesitant than for an initial double at 8a-8a. In fact the error of spinning it to 4 is essentially 0.3 whereas if the cube was centered the error of turning it to 2 is only .08 -- a truly colossal difference. This is primarily because, as seen in the match, you are giving the opponent in the backgame the ability to recube to 8 killing your gammons, but also another critical factor is that you are giving him the ability to recube to 8 giving you a dead cube. This is particularly relevant if things take a turn for a low gammon but high volatility.
In short, studying this problem shows some of the magic of cubes and recubes that provide perfect match efficiency. We know that at 4a-4a you shouldn't be quick to cube against a backgame even though you have a sky high gammon value with the cube on two, but this is because he can just whip it back at you, when he has high winning chances and all you have is high gammon chances. This seems to be the difference between a blitz at 4a-4a where the blitzer can cube very aggressively (far more than at money) and backgames where the attacker cannot (and must actually be far more hesitant than at money). At 8a-8a redoubling to 4 is quite similar to giving an initial cube at 4a-4a. That means that the same principles apply and one must be far more hesitant to recube than to give an initial cube in a position with a one way gammon threat that can be negated with the recube.

Well, sure enough after the redub/take, John Hurst left some blots while bearing in and Peter fully understood the principle of recubing to kill John's gammons and maximize his edge in his hitting variations.
Peter has 22 juicy shots and if he picks up one blot, he is quite likely to pick up the second blot. Moreover, if he misses, he is a favorite to get a shot either immediately or somewhere down the line as John has huge gap to fill. When asked about the cube later, Peter said, "In fact when John double blotted I was then in a quandary because, then I can win plenty of gammons and maybe I don't want to kill them! But it clearly wasn't too good, and I was favourite so I redoubled to 8, John correctly took.....and I missed."

Peter would not get any more shots and John would cruise into the final against Sean. Sadly, as my (now irrelevant) match with Tariq Siddiqi took so long to finish Sean quickly played the final against John and bagged the trophy long before I had time to finish up and get myself positioned to record it.
An enjoyable day was had by all, and I emerged convinced that backgammon is about so much more than your standard progressive consolation tournament held in the lobby of a nondescript hotel chain. Yes, fascinating positions arise in such venues, but the true wonder of backgammon is that it can take so many forms, and when played in an intimate setting with good friends, it can embody in microcosm all the complexities and ups and downs of life. I believe that the round robin format I have devised would be suitable for a one day tournament where the number of participants is exactly 8, 16, or 32. I.e. if there were 32 players they could be divided into four groups of 8 and play round robin against each other producing eight finalist who could then play a knockout to determine the winner. The same would work of course for a multiday tournament with 64, 128, etc. The round robin could be played on the first day and the playoff of the winners on the second. If any players TDs are interested in participating in or in organizing such an event please let me know and comment on this page.

My thanks go to all who were able to attend and make this special experiment possible and especially to Peter Bennet who helped proofread this article so that I could share this experience with the larger backgammon community and possibly inspire more round robin or mixed match length tournaments. I am especially keen on seeing more tournaments having some matches start with even-away scores as the cube does very funny things at 4-away, 4-away, 6-away, 6-away, etc. The backgammon community's hegemonic preference for odd-away matches seems to devalue an understanding of these scores relative to the more standard 5-away, 5-away and 7-away, 7-away, etc.

Until next time, I am bidding you Adieu from England. Good luck and roll double sixes (when not on the bar!) Lastly, if you are UK-based player and fancy coming to Cambridge in March 2015 for the Second Cambridge Invitational do let me know as I think I am likely to host it again as a warm up for the Nordic Open which is always over Easter.


Copyright © 1999-2014 GammonVillage Inc. All rights reserved.
All reproduction from any GammonVillage pages, other than for an individual user's reference, without written permission, is strictly prohibited.