

PROBLEM OF THE WEEK – DECEMBER 12, 2020

● is JBNY
score: 0
pip: 148

7 point match

pip: 134
score: 0

○ is Double A Red

XGID=a--aBbBBBA-AB--B--abbbba--0:0:-1:51:0:0:7:10

○ to play 51

In this week's problem, our very own local hero, Ralph "Double A Red" D'Onofrio is playing in the Winners' Bracket Finals in the Long Island Backgammon Club's annual online backgammon tournament. It is the first game of a 7-point match, and Ralph (with the White checkers above) has rolled a 51 – obviously this is not what he was hoping for.

Hitting one of Black's outfield blots from the bar would have been much preferred – and any entering roll containing a 4 or a 6 would have allowed him to do precisely that. With a Black checker on the bar facing White's well-constructed five-point inner board, Ralph would have been in very good shape indeed. Alas, that circumstance has not come to pass. Ralph briefly curses the backgammon dice Gods for giving him such a poor shot, as is their wont. But being the true gentlemen that he is, Ralph takes this bad roll in stride, brushing aside any thoughts of the poor luck that he has been unfairly confounded with, and he takes some time to ponder his next move. He thinks through the pertinent aspects of the position as he seeks out his best play for his 51 roll:

"It would have been nice to be able to hit one of Black's outfield blots, since I have a very strong five-point board. Unfortunately, I can't hit a checker with this roll. At least I didn't roll one of the 4/36 combinations of dancing numbers, which would have left me on the bar in very bad shape, facing an onslaught from Black's oncoming army. My biggest asset in this position is my strong inner board/prime. On the downside, I have four men back to Black's one, and Black has a much stronger presence in the outer board. He is poised to improve his budding outside prime, which will worsen my defensive position considerably, leaving me in danger of crunching in my inner board if I can't quickly escape some of my back checkers. What should I do here?"

So, how should Ralph play his 51 roll in this position?

Note that, as is the rule in modern 21st century trivia contests, consultation with electronic devices of any kind (including, in this case, assistance from any silicon-based life forms) is strictly prohibited – any such usage is, in fact, cheating.

Extreme Gammon's solution to this problem (including a rollout and some analysis and discussion from a carbon-based life form) will be circulated tomorrow evening, Sunday (12/13), or Monday (12/14), in either case well in advance of our weekly online tournament.