



One Foot In The Gammon

Monthly Backgammon in Ealing Newsletter

BGIE
Issue 5

Backgammon in Ealing

in association with

The James Ahern Foundation

proudly presents



The Grand Summer Tournament

30th September 2017 at Ealing Bowls club

Numbers strictly limited to 32 players

(Look out for more details soon + our super duper raffle with great prizes including a week for 2 in Les Deux Alpes, a weekend country cottage in mid Wales, Champagne afternoon tea in The Rubens Hotel, and many more!

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Editor's page

Welcome to issue 5 of One Foot in the Gammon and I hope that you and your families are all safe after the horrific recent events in Manchester and London.

It feels quite apt that I am writing this page on June 6th when 73 years ago 156,000 Allied troops landed on the Normandy beaches and within 10 months were knocking on the door of Berlin. Taking that into account I feel that we can put the London attack on a par with D-Day as our security forces not only managed to respond, but also neutralise the threat of three brainwashed terrorists within 8 minutes of the start of the London attack, something that should help make us all feel not only proud, but also much safer and secure in the knowledge that we have one of the best police forces in the world watching over us. So people - remember to keep calm and carry on!

On the Backgammon front, we have some fabulous news, Backgammon in Ealing is starting up a Beginners class! From Monday 26th June from 7pm-10pm we will be inviting new (and "rusty") players along to the Owl and the Pussycat micro brewery on Northfield Avenue, Ealing. You can read more about this on pages 4-6.

We are also looking for your support at the Hanwell Carnival this month where we have a stall. The carnival takes place on June 17th from 12 noon so I hope that some of you will come along for a game or two and keep us company.

Our man in India, Colin Saunders, has very kindly put his pint and dice holder down and put pen to paper to send me a very enjoyable piece about his love affair with Bangalore and Backgammon, whilst Gary Bratton, a player from the North East of England and an all-round good bloke has written a very open and honest article about the spiral that he currently finds himself in, so I do hope that somebody out there will read his piece and say, "I want that man working with me!"

I won't spoil the rest of the newsletter but let you crack on and not only read and hopefully enjoy it, but offer me some feedback, however cruel that might be. My email is on the base of every page.

Keep safe, keep well and in keeping with my old friend Emad Salib's recent suggestion that my humour comes right out of the film comedies of the 1960's - 70's, I say to him and all of you...

Carry on Regardless!

Darren Woodcock

Editor

Player Profile: MIKE IRELAND



Unfortunately we were unable to locate a photo of Mike, so instead here is one of a typical Englishman.

Where do you live? I am dual based. I live in Camberley Monday to Fridays and in Essex with mummy and daddy at the weekend.

What phrase do you most overuse in backgammon?

I borrow and use Ben's phrase "That's BG!" or Alan Briefel's "Shall we have a maths debate" a lot. Both are equally good.

What's your favourite roll? 8-and-a-quarter. Because that is the average throw.

What's your biggest strength? Remaining calm in adversity, and playing the match with good spirits.

What's your biggest weakness? Not doing things on time when I said I would do them. I don't use XG and habitually leave my dice and scorecard behind.

What's your biggest secret? I have a private pilots licence that I obtained in 2007. I used to work at a Buckingham Palace as an Assistant Anniversaries Officer. I am a slow driver, so don't get a lift with me.

What has been your biggest laugh in backgammon? Winning the 2017 London Open Intermediates, but not entering the pools. On top of which I now have two identical Geoffrey Parker roll-up boards.

What do you do outside of Backgammon? Skiing, running and befriending people in prison.

Beginners' Club by Valerie Hayes

Here is an initiative the committee of BGIE have come up with to get the world, well, Northfield Avenue, to play backgammon. We have the Hanwell Carnival advancing on us, we have only a few weeks to work out whether to invite new players to try the Thursday night tournament format, not knowing their level of play, and how to involve the club in the initiation of new members. This venture is an inspiration of one man's drive and the commitment of BGIE's love of Backgammon. We need your help.....

Here is the email thread which got the ball rolling....

Darren : I took it upon myself to try an experiment on Northfield Friends. I put an advert up about BGIE with just the basic details on it, "we play in West Ealing and by Ealing Common and for more details contact me".

The first 3 people who replied wanted more information and rather than reply on the same page, I sent them a private message on their own FB page, not only stating where and when we played, but also offering to meet them outside the main door if they felt a bit daunted, or invite their friends along etc. Two replies came back and both were very pleased with the offer as they said it's always difficult walking into a venue alone for the first time. One is coming along on Thursday and wants to just sit and watch/play a friendly to get used to the game again. The other person is going to pop in for an hour as she has a class to attend.

Since then I have had quite a few other replies, from beginners to players who have played before, and I've only responded to them on the page itself and not directly. I have also had an offer from the "Owl and the Pussycat" in Northfield Avenue offering their space to play in. (It's a micro brewery) Unfortunately they only have space for 20 players but I said I would pop down in the week (knee permitting) just to show willing so might need a beer companion Ben?

So if things do pan out and we do get some new players along, can we make sure that we all make the effort to introduce ourselves and make them feel welcome. We do seem to get new players but we don't always seem to be able to keep them, so it's something we all need to work on.

Valerie : Brilliant Darren, great start and happy to hear beginners are responding.

I Had a lovely chat with Ben about Eric's idea to have lessons or doubles with comment for new players. I then talked to Graham on Thursday, we both noticed how full Thursday night at the Bowls club gets with advanced players. We thought perhaps another night for beginners may be a good idea? For example the 2nd Monday of each month? (Or similar).

We could use The Owl and The Pussycat, and ask our regular players if they would have time and ask them to come along, to help or join in by teaching, this could effectively be a good way to gauge players before inviting them to play on Thursday nights, giving newbies instruction on regular tournament play and etiquette.

Eric: Fully with Valerie on this one, great initiative! Happy to leave the "reckie" to you guys, fully trust your judgement. As to when to run beginners' nights, or new players' nights, whichever way we want to name this, please note that I can't do Tuesdays + have several friends who would be interested.

Darren: An update re new players and "The Owl and the Pussycat".

Last night I visited The Owl and the Pussycat along with Peter and Valerie to ascertain the suitability of using the pub as a once a month BG Training/introductory venue for beginners, or for those wanting to refresh their relationship with Backgammon. We also invited along one of the new players I found on Northfield friends, to "test drive" the idea and to give her a chance to acquaint herself with us rather than throwing her in at the deep end at the Bowls club.

We met with Mark, the co-owner and he was very keen to have us there, especially on a Monday evening, and by way of further encouragement, we will be advertising their venue in OFITG.

After a chat between ourselves we felt that the last Monday of each month would be the ideal date to start, the first one taking place [on 26th June](#) and also gives us something to push at the Hanwell Carnival, and we can also hold some impromptu Mondays beforehand if we so wish.

We still have a bit of work to do in organising the right system for this to work, and Valerie is going to take the lead on this. For instance we don't want to turn up on the Monday and no new players show up, so perhaps an acknowledgement system for newbies/teachers would be in order but I will leave Valerie to mull that one over. **I also spoke to our finance director this morning and we both agree that any teachers that have turned up to actually teach will be rewarded with 2 free drinks** (as long as they get a receipt from the bar) and we can reimburse them when they are next at the Bowls club unless Peter is on hand on the Monday to "square them away".

Eric: Great stuff guys. Put me down for the first evening on 26th June. I'd suggest to keep the format simple, i.e., something like a double (*) consultation / direct elimination format on 5pts matches and without any money involved (not even any registration fee), (Or triple if we don't have enough experienced players)

Peter: Yesterday we didn't have any sort of formal competition. Obviously we can change what we do according to what the newcomers want and how experienced they are, but we just played a fully consulting game with two players on each side. Everyone could chip in with comments in turn - the first to do so being whoever was making the move for that roll. No reg fee; no entry fee.

...End of thread

We have come up with these designs to hand out at the Carnival, where we hope to get a list of email addresses from interested players.



So, we've got Eric, Darren, Peter signed up so far to come to The Owl and The Pussycat on 26th June. If you would like to be part of this, if you have time to teach or share your skills, please contact Valérie Hayes to get on the list. Remember, any excuse to play backgammon is a great excuse, this one could be one of the best!

Valerie

Hanwell Carnival

Saturday 17th June 12.00 – 6.00pm

BGIE will be getting involved for the second year running at the local Hanwell Carnival. It is London's oldest carnival, and last year attracted 30,000 people. All who volunteered last year loved it, and the feedback from carnival-goers was extremely positive. The carnival offers us a superb opportunity to showcase our growing club by promoting BGIE as well as the game in the shop window. We want to make the event as successful as last year, **but we can only make it work if we get some help!**

What's involved? We are not looking for the next X-Factor star! The big ask is to spare a bit of time, represent BGIE at our stall to play BG with anyone and everyone in a beautiful park. Maybe go to the pub afterwards for a warm down bit of BG too!

What will we be doing? Either playing BG, dishing out flyers, chatting to carnival-goers and inviting them to play (under a Gazebo), or taking down email addresses. Or doing all of that - whatever is in your comfort zone. You might be teaching one person the basics, and the next person could be a talented player who never knew there was a local club. Essentially just promoting BGIE.

Is there anything I need to say to potential new players? Just remember what day we meet up and where the venue is! If you are a regular at Ealing you can tell them how friendly we are, or if they are a totally new player make sure you give them one of our new business cards which has details of our Beginners classes on it.

We need more tables, chairs and boards. Waitrose has generously agreed to lend us some tables and chairs, but if you have some that we can borrow then that would be amazing. We will have some club boards there, but there is no harm in bringing a board if you are happy to.

What about setting up the stall and dismantling it? We will want to start setting up from around 10.30am and will need some help then. More hands make lighter work. The same goes for end of play at around 6.00pm. I will have a van to cart everything to and from the park.

Where is the carnival? Elthorne Park, Boston Manor Road, W7 2AH

Closest tube: Boston Manor (Piccadilly). Buses 195 and E8 from Ealing Broadway station pass the park. Overground: Brentford or Hanwell stations are a 30-35 minute walk away.

If you would like to help, please contact Ben at bjowen33@gmail.com or Tel. 07974 407766

Your local Bowls Club Needs You!!



ECUBC Bowling Club, Craven Road, Ealing, W5 2UA

Have you ever considered bowling? Why not give it a try: great fun, gentle exercise, very social.

Come along to our open day on **Saturday 24th June, from 1.00pm**, all you need is a flat pair of shoes to give it a go.

We did last year and have not looked back.



In his own words: GARY BRATTON

I spotted this post on Facebook by Gary Bratton and got his permission to share it with you. I found it an incredibly brave and honest piece of writing and I hope at the very least it will help others come to terms with their own life problems - Editor.

Chapter One

In 2001 my career as a Business Development Manager was flourishing. I was working in a very buoyant, exciting IT industry and I was loving it.

Within 12 months I had moved to a company that turned out to be totally wrong for me and the wheels came off my career. My 6+ year relationship also ended and the wheels came off my life too.

I moved back to my native North-East, became suicidal and was diagnosed with chronic depression.

At my worst, I felt unable to get out of bed for several weeks.

Chapter Two

It took around 18 months to battle through my depression and find light at the end of the tunnel.

I was helping in my parents' business throughout this recovery process. Having been successful in setting up an e-commerce website for them, I began to branch out on my own in the art & craft supplies market.

I set up a design company, and even greater success followed. We began manufacturing and distributing papercraft products and the business grew quickly.

At its height, the company employed 16 people and turned over nearly £500k a year.

Then the wheels came off. Again.

Chapter Three

To cut a very long story short, I was screwed over by a global organisation. QVC's reckless venture into the arts & crafts market crashed and burned, with us firmly strapped into the passenger seat.

My business was destroyed in the wreckage, and I should have called it a day then and there, back in early 2011.

But I owed a lot of money to some fabulous local suppliers who had backed me in this growth venture with QVC and I simply refused to leave them high and dry.

I stuck it out for 5 more years, scaling the business back, increasing profitability and keeping as many staff as I possibly could throughout the rebuilding process.

Finally, after half a decade of fighting a losing battle, I had to throw in the towel in October 2016.

Chapter Four

Just a few days before my 40th birthday, I made the incredibly difficult decision to wind up the business that I had poured everything into for more than a decade.

All suppliers had been paid, but I had a lot of personal debt that I had taken on to keep the company afloat and the remaining staff in jobs. My life savings had gone, as well as money that had been generously loaned to me by family members.

The business was now very profitable, but almost everything was going towards paying ever-increasing interest rates on bank loans and credit cards.

I was left with little choice but to liquidate the company and file for personal bankruptcy.

Chapter Five

When I was 23 I decided that I wanted to reach millionaire status by the age of 40. It was all that my close friend Jason and I could talk about in the pub after work. We were young high-flyers and clearly destined for greatness.

Now having reached this landmark age, I found myself bankrupt and unemployed. (For the record, Jason went on to become a millionaire in his mid-30s.)

Bankruptcy is truly horrible. Of course, I knew that it would be tough, but nothing has prepared me for how devastating it has been, not just financially but mentally, emotionally and even socially.

Chapter Six

The last 12 or so years of running my own business have led me to a very disturbing conclusion about people. Almost everyone who has found themselves with the opportunity to stab me in the back has done so, often completely without remorse and sometimes even with apparent glee.

To add insult to injury, I am now getting screwed by the system. My claim for Job Seeker's Allowance has been denied because I haven't contributed enough NI in the last two tax years. That's because I didn't pay myself a salary.

Forget the fact that I have personally paid well over £100k in taxes and NI throughout my life.

Forget the fact that I have employed more than 30 people, paying total net wages in excess of £1m with employer's tax and NI contributions of over £150k.

None of that seems to matter.

Chapter Seven

I can't claim income-based JSA because my wife is living here on a Spouse Visa, which comes with the condition that neither of us can claim any public funds.

I'm jobless because employers don't seem to like the fact that I'm unemployed and bankrupt.

Fancy that.

Soon I'm going to be made homeless. When my official bankruptcy period ends on 28th November this year, the Insolvency Practitioner will begin steps to force through the sale of my home to recover the equity in the property to pay my creditors (now only the big banks).

Finally, the icing on the cake is that I could be left without a country to live in.

I kid you not.

My wife's UK Visa is due for renewal in June 2018. Even if I get a job and meet the financial requirement of earning more than £21,000 between now and the end of March next year, it will cost well over £3000 to apply for the visa itself.

That cost is prohibitive for us and we are very likely going to have to leave the UK, with the only destination available to us being the USA.

And even then, US residency isn't guaranteed as there are financial requirements there too, so Bailey & I could actually find ourselves in the utterly unthinkable position of not being able to legally live together as a married couple in any county on earth!

Chapter Eight

Why tell this story to everyone I know?

For attention? For sympathy? Absolutely not.

I am looking for a job. That's it.

I'm a good person and I like to think that I'm reasonably bright. In business, as in life, I believe in honesty, integrity and loyalty. I feel as though I have a lot to offer and I just need a shot to prove it.

While most people are starting to wind down their career ambitions as they get older, mine are ready for take-off. All I need is a runway.

I'm way more ambitious and hungry for success than I was at 23 when I was dreaming of becoming a millionaire in the pub with Jason.

If there is anyone out there who knows of anyone who might give me a chance, tell them my story (if they can stay awake for long enough) and then please get in touch with me.

If you don't personally know anyone who is hiring, one of your friends (or friends of friends) might, so please feel free to share this post if you are so inclined, as it might just end up being seen by the right person at the right time.

I'm looking for something in Business Development, Sales, Marketing or quite frankly any professional position that doesn't require specific industry qualifications (though I'd be more than willing to get qualified).

I'm a very quick learner and I'm up for absolutely any challenge. Plus, Bailey and I are willing to relocate to anywhere on the planet.

I will be a major asset to any company that takes me on. I guarantee it. Nobody wants it and needs it more than me. My family's future depends on it. I'd like to see employers find more motivation in a candidate than that.

Chapter Nine

As yet unwritten.

Competition Page

Caption of the Month winner is.....Anna Price!

"Come on Biddle let me out now.....I promise to look at your proposals again"



Thank you for all your contributions.

And here's a little something to keep you thinking until next month...

Guess Who??

A Caliber Milieu

Samba Deli

Natural Cubic

A Newborn Lord

Yes ok then I will offer a prize, but in the event of a tie the Mars Bar will be divided accordingly!

Ealing Ladder Review

Movers and Shakers

And so we find ourselves halfway through the 2017 ladder. Some are halfway up the ladder, others halfway down the ladder – surely somebody is up the top. But will it be the same somebody up top for some time yet? Will this band of players we call the Top Ten put on a good show?

Ladder	Ealingite	Rating	Rank Change
1	Eric Maillebiau	1,710.92	3
2	Mardi Ohannessian	1,705.66	-1
3	Paul Mortimer	1,660.37	0
4	Ray Mills	1,633.52	1
5	Jon Barnes	1,631.15	2
6	Catalin Bucur	1,627.90	new
7	Chris Hamilton	1,621.92	-1
8	Mike Ireland	1,613.89	new
9	Graham Read	1,603.58	1
10	Simon Morecroft	1,600.83	new

After a long reign at the top, Mardi has to settle for playing second fiddle for now as Eric leads out with a Paganini concerto from the top rung.

Paul and Ray have picked up a triangle each. They're still in the band, they're legacy members, but if they don't start finding some rhythm soon another triangle player with a bigger triangle might just come along.

We can hear quite a bit of noise growing from the brass corner, that saxophone Jon has is shiny and it looks like he's getting ready to crank out a power sax solo if the spotlight finds him right. Chris is also playing brass, but his trombone went out of tune during that last Kenny Rogers cover – will he get it fixed? Will he choose the cello instead? Hard to say really.

Graham is getting a growing grumble out of his piano accordion. In the background just now but getting louder and louder. We could all be dancing to his folk tune soon.

And the Top Ten welcomes three new members to the stage. Mike on bass guitar, Simon strumming the ukulele and Cat the conductor. Will these three find a permanent spot in the band? Can they jam with these cats? Can they consolidate their spot and make their opponents dance?

WHAT'S THAT BIG DICE FOR?

by Peter Bennet

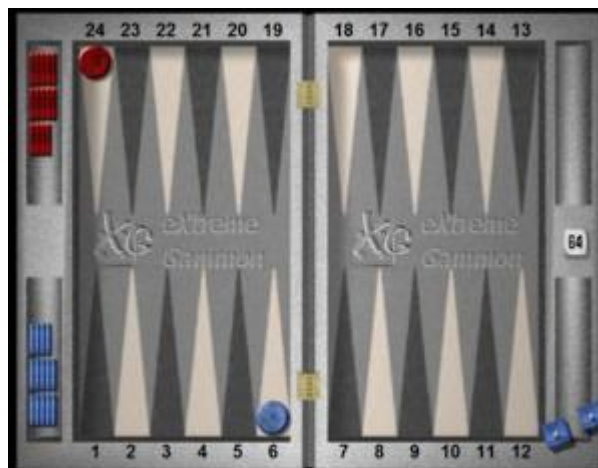


Those of us who have played backgammon for years often assume that anyone who has ever played the game will have some idea of the purpose of the doubling cube (referred to simply as 'the cube'). But many casual players have never used this mysterious device at the side of the board so they don't realise how much more excitement, and skill, the cube can add to the game.

First – the basic doubling rules. Assume that two players are playing a match and it is early in the first game with the cube untouched. The game is currently worth one point to the winner (or two for a gammon, or three for a backgammon). As the game progresses one player will gain an advantage and, on their turn but before rolling the dice, they may offer the cube on '2' to the opponent who then has the choice of accepting the double (so the current game would continue but be worth 2 points), or 'passing' which means resigning and losing one point. Accepting the cube gives a player sole access to it and they may subsequently 'redouble' to 4 should the game swing in their favour. In this short discussion we will be looking at the take/pass decision – which beginners may be forced to grapple with before they really understand what's going on.

Initially it seems foolhardy to take a double and risk losing twice as much in a game where you are at a disadvantage. But you cannot escape from a game without penalty – it costs you a whole point to pass, so you shouldn't give up too easily! The question is, what minimum winning chances do you need to correctly accept the double? Intuitively it is obvious that you should accept if you are 49% to win (the game is almost a toss-up); and equally obvious that you should pass if you only have a 1% chance – if you take in the latter case you lose 2 points 99% of the time, so it must be cheaper to pay 1 point 100% of the time!

Let's take a very simple bear-off position to work this out (the home boards are on the left):





Blue is on roll and with just one checker left on his 6 point he is favourite to win so he doubles. If Blue fails to bear off his last checker this turn Red will win because she will always bear off her last checker which is on her 1 point. Blue's chance of winning is the number of rolls which succeed, divided by 36. All rolls containing a 6 or a 5 win, which comes to twenty, plus 4-4, 4-3, 4-2, 3-3, 2-2, for a total of 27 out of 36, or 75%, so Red will win the remaining 25% of the time. Now consider what might happen, on average, over four identical games in which this position is reached and Blue doubles:

- If Red passes every time she will lose $4 \times 1 = 4$ points over the four games.
- If Red takes every time, on average she will lose three games and win one (because she is winning 25% of the time). She gains 2 points in the one game she wins, but loses $3 \times 2 = 6$ points in the other three games, for a net loss of $6 - 2 = 4$ points in four games.

Notice that the net loss is the same in both cases: 1 point per game. This tells us that the break-even point for accepting a double is when you have a 25% chance to win the game. More than a 25% chance indicates a take; less than 25% suggests a pass.

Things are rarely as simple as in this example however. Except in a last roll position (such as this), the cube will have some value to the taker, who may then correctly take with somewhat less than 25% winning chances. Or the doubler may have a significant gammon threat, so the chance of a four-point gammon loss must somehow be factored into the equation. The current match score adds another complication, often making a meaningful assessment so difficult over the board that many players simply resort to gut feeling for their take/pass decision.

To improve on gut feeling, the 25% benchmark is a good starting point. If assessing your winning chances as a precise percentage figure seems an impossible task just ask yourself, "Do I think I can win from here more than a quarter of the time?" If the answer is "Yes, I think I probably can", and you don't think you will lose a gammon very often, take that cube! You should lose less in the long run in these games. That translates into fewer matches lost...and therefore more matches won!

Diary of Events

DATE	EVENT	VENUE
JUNE		
9-11	Blackpool Imperial Cup	Imperial Hotel Blackpool
12	Hippodrome monthly	Hippodrome Casino, Leicester Square, London
24-25	BMAB Ranking Tournament	Best Western Hotel, Long Eaton
JULY		
7-9	BIBA English Open	Wokefield Park, Reading
10	Hippodrome monthly	Hippodrome Casino, Leicester Square, London
15-16	22nd Liverpool Open	Leo Casino, Liverpool
AUGUST		
12	UKBGF Clubs Championship	The Priory Centre, St Neots, Cambs.
14	Hippodrome monthly	Hippodrome Casino, Leicester Square, London
20-28	Mind Sports Olympiad	JW3, Finchley Road, London NW3
SEPTEMBER		
1-3	4th UK Open	Coombe Abbey Hotel, Warwickshire CV3 2AB
11	Hippodrome monthly	Hippodrome Casino, Leicester Square, London
16-17	BMAB Ranking Tournament	Best Western Hotel, Long Eaton
23-24	Winchester Open	The Discovery Centre, Winchester
30	Ealing Summer Tournament	Bowls Club, The Pavillion, Craven Road W5 2UA
OCTOBER		
5-8	EUBGF European Championships 2017	Reykjavik, Iceland
6-8	25th Irish Open	Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire
9	Hippodrome monthly	Hippodrome Casino, Leicester Square, London
14	Bognor 1-day	The Waverley Pub, Bognor Regis
21-22	Newcastle Open	The Royal British Legion, Newcastle
27-29	Bristol Open	Rainbow Casino, Explore Lane, Bristol

For weekly or monthly club events see:

[UKBGF Clubs page](#)

[London Players' League calendar](#)

And the Winner is Backgammon!

by our man in India: Colin Saunders

Kohli-Kohli-Kohli... India has three obsessions that transcend States, Languages and cultures - Cricket, Bollywood and Arguing. Darren Woodcock - you would have the time of your life here. With over 1 billion people to argue with I doubt you'd ever go home. What I didn't expect to find was someone to play Backgammon with! A guy named Vaibhav Saxena (remember that name) played in the beginner flight at the World Championship in Monte Carlo in 2016, and in side tournaments he encountered Raj Jansari and Lawrence Powell. When he connected with these guys he found me on Facebook and we got in touch with other. Miracle upon miracle in a country as vast as Europe, he happened to live about 6 miles from me in Bangalore! And as it happened, the week we arranged to meet up coincided with a visit of a mate of mine who I hadn't seen in 20 years - Carl Broadbridge from New Zealand - who also plays Backgammon.



So me, Valrie, Vaibhav and Carl meet up at the Biere Club in the City Centre (a microbrewery - one of many brilliant ones they have here), and we decide to hold the Bangalore Backgammon Tri-Nations between the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand. Team selection didn't take long and we settled into a round robin format, with Valrie acting as Tournament Director - a role particularly suited to her skill at summoning staff to keep us all supplied with provisions.

Two additional competitions quickly ensued, 'Who could consume the Most Beer', and 'Who could consume the Spiciest thing on the Menu'. The evening was great fun of course, I think Vaibhav won the most BG games, Carl (much to my embarrassment) consumed the most beer (I put that down to the Tournament Director keeping an especially vigilant eye on me) and ill-advisedly I consumed the spiciest items they had on the menu. A fantastic evening and Vaibhav and I arranged to meet up a fortnight later to play again.



Two weeks later, Vaibhav and I met up at the Arbor Brewing Company (yes - another microbrewery) and we decided on best of three 11 pointers. Despite what the books say and playing against XG, there is nothing like playing a real opponent with their individual style, adventurous or cautious, favourite plays etc., and when two players meet who haven't played against each other very much - some interesting results can ensue. The first match I lost 1-11 to Vaibhav, and the second I won 11-1. Clearly neither of us had any idea about the playing standard or style of the other, let's just say that the cube was rarely unturned. The decider was an altogether more "respectful" match in which I managed to get ahead 8-7 only to fall foul of the 4-away conundrum. A double and a gammon and it was all over: I lost 8-11.



Many of the locals came over to our table to find out what this funny dice game was all about, and we have both been teaching locals the rudiments of the game. Who knows, maybe a legacy of my time here might be the formation of a backgammon club - I do hope Vaibhav can find other Indians with the same passion for BG and thirst to improve as he himself possesses. He is a very good player and if he can continue improving and find better players to challenge him - who knows how far he can go? I suspect he is already by far the number one player in India (are there any others?).



Vaibhav and I have been playing regularly ever since, although I must say that since I gave him my copy of 'Backgammon Boot Camp' (it wasn't doing me any good!), I've got close to beating him without quite getting over the line. But the real winner of course is Backgammon, a lifelong friendship made and cemented over the board. I hope to be able to host Vaibhav at some point in the future for the UK Open or London Open - and maybe catch up somewhere around the World if we both fulfil our dreams of playing in Japan, Las Vegas or Istanbul.... maybe even Monte Carlo!

Oh, and yes - I did regret winning the 'Spiciest thing on the Menu' competition at the Biere Club!

Colin Saunders

The 4th UK Backgammon Open



1-3 September 2017

For full details visit www.ukbgf.com/uk-open/

Venue: Coombe Abbey Hotel, Brinklow Road, Binley, Warwickshire CV3 2AB

- a magnificent historical venue approximately six miles east of Coventry city centre



The Citizens Trust

"Promoting inclusion for a caring nation"

**YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY CHARITY/TRAINING PROVIDER SERVING
THE RESIDENTS OF EALING**

Are you unemployed and looking for training and work?

Are you part of a family and looking for help, advice and work?

Are you a resident of Ealing affected by the Benefit Cap?

If you answer yes to any of these than we could help you through our

Directions West London, Family Works or Ealing Ben Cap projects.

Call us directly on **020 8566 1206** and ask for Louise.

1-2 Craven Road, Ealing W5 2UA

www.thecitizenstrust.org.uk