

U.S. Backgammon Tournament Rules & Procedures

January 2009

1.0 PROPRIETIES

- 1.1 INTERPRETATION. The Tournament Rules and Procedures cannot and should not regulate all possible situations that may arise during a match. No set of rules should deprive the Director of his freedom of judgment or prevent him from finding the solution dictated by fairness and compatible with the circumstances of a particular case.
- 1.2 SCOPE. Except where otherwise specified, the commonly accepted rules of backgammon apply.
- 1.3 STAFF. A knowledgeable and disinterested Director or Directors advised by a Tournament Committee shall represent the Tournament.
- 1.4 ENTRIES. All entries are subject to the approval of the Tournament. Reasons for exclusion need not be stated. Where more than one Tournament division exists, an entrant may be restricted from playing in a lower division.
- 1.5 AIDS. Once a match is in progress, players shall not use written, mechanical, or electronic aids except to keep score.
- 1.6 COMMUNICATIONS. The official Tournament language is English. Speech in any other language will not be permitted between players and/or spectators while matches are in progress. Players may not use cell phones or other electronic communication devices except during authorized breaks.
- 1.7 SPECTATORS. Spectators shall remain silent while observing a match. Spectators have no right to draw attention to any misplays or comment on plays. Spectators who observe improprieties or irregularities during a match should discuss them in private with the Director. A player may request the Director to bar one or more spectators from viewing his match.

2.0 REGULATIONS

- 2.1 PLACE. Matches shall be played in designated Tournament areas.
- 2.2 TIME. Matches shall start promptly at the appointed times. Each player may take one 5 minute recess (between games) in a match not exceeding 13 points in length. The Director may permit additional recess time in longer or especially important matches.
- 2.3 PENALTY POINTS. Unless excused by the Director, a late player shall be penalized by points

awarded to his opponent. The first penalty point shall be awarded 15 minutes after the appointed starting time and accrue thereafter at the rate of 1 point for each 5 minute delay. When the penalty points awarded exceed half the number needed to win the match, the absent player loses by forfeit. To avoid penalties, a player shall obtain the Director's consent when leaving the Tournament site for more than 10 minutes.

- 2.4 SLOW PLAY. Players are expected to play at a reasonable pace. The Director may require a time clock on any match to keep the tournament on schedule.
- 2.5 MONITORS. On his own initiative or at the request of a player, the Director may appoint a monitor to observe a match and protect against irregularities during play.

3.0 PRELIMINARIES

- 3.1 EQUIPMENT. Either player may demand that both use, when available and approved by the Director: (a) precision dice (over any others) and/or (b) lipped dice cups (over unlined). A baffle box may be used by agreement of both players or by requirement of the Director.
- 3.2 PREFERENCES. Prior to the commencement of a match, the backgammon board, direction of play, checker color, and seat location may be decided by rolls of the dice.
- 3.3 EQUIPMENT CHANGES. The Director may replace equipment at any time. Otherwise the equipment initially selected shall be used throughout. Either player may demand a mixing of the four initially selected dice prior to the start of any game. To mix the dice the demanding player shakes the four dice together in one cup and rolls them out. The opponent selects a die, then roller, then opponent, with roller taking the last die.

4.0 GAME PLAY/IRREGULARITIES

- 4.1 RANDOM ROLLS. Dice are strictly a means of obtaining random numbers; any other use violates the rules and the spirit of backgammon. A legal roll consists of shaking the dice vigorously in a dice cup and then simultaneously tossing them out at a discernible height above the playing surface, allowing them to bounce and roll freely. Between turns the dice shall remain in the dice cup with the cup kept in plain view.

- 4.2 **VALID ROLLS.** Both dice must leave the cup before either die contacts the board; otherwise they must be rerolled. Both dice must come to rest flat on the playing surface to the right of the bar; otherwise they are “cocked” and must be rerolled. In the event of dispute, a player who rerolls prior to receiving acknowledgment from his opponent that the dice are cocked will be at a disadvantage. Alternatively, players may roll legally by casting both dice simultaneously through a baffle box.
- 4.3 **MOVING.** A player shall move the checkers in an unambiguous manner, using only one hand. Checkers must be reentered from the bar before moving any other checker. A player shall not touch any checkers or dice during the opponent’s turn.
- 4.4 **CHECKER HANDLING.** Checkers which have been hit must be kept on the bar pending reentry. Checkers which have been borne off must be kept off the entire playing surface for the rest of the game. A player with a checker illegally removed from play may still be gammoned or backgammoned.
- 4.5 **LIFTING DICE.** A player concludes his turn by lifting either or both of his dice. He may reposition the dice on the playing surface to facilitate moving the checkers, but in the event of a dispute he will be at a disadvantage if he fails to give notice to the opponent before doing so.
- 4.6 **PREMATURE ACTIONS.** The opponent of a player who rolls prematurely shall complete his turn and then either let the premature roll stand or require a reroll. The opponent of a player who doubles prematurely shall complete his turn and then pass or take.
- 4.7 **ERROR IN SETUP.** An incorrect starting position must be corrected prior to the fifth roll of the game. Thereafter the existing setup becomes official. Players starting with less than 15 checkers in play may still be gammoned or backgammoned.
- 4.8 **ILLEGAL PLAYS.** A player may condone his opponent’s illegal play by rolling his dice or turning the cube. Otherwise, he must require the opponent to replay the entire roll legally.
- 4.9 **COMPLETION.** Each game must be rolled to completion unless ended by passing a double or redouble, or conceding a no-contact position as a single game, gammon, or backgammon loss. No individual game or match may be canceled, replayed, or settled. Players are responsible for playing to the posted match length. The first player to reach the posted match length is the winner.
- 4.10 **REPORTING RESULTS.** The match result shall be reported to a Tournament official by the winner. The official shall verify and post the result on the draw sheet. The director may correct a wrongly-posted result and should do so in a timely manner fair to all.

5.0 **SCORING/DOUBLING**

- 5.1 **KEEPING SCORE.** Each player shall keep a running match score and compare it to his opponent’s score at the start of every game. In the event of a scoring dispute, a player not keeping a written log of the score will be at a disadvantage.
- 5.2 **CUBE SETUP.** Both players shall take care that each game (except the Crawford game) begins with the cube centered at 1 (or “64”). Should a dispute arise, the current position and level of the cube may influence the Director’s ruling.
- 5.3 **CUBE RULES.** Gammons and backgammons count at all times whether or not the cube has been turned.
- 5.4 **CUBE HANDLING.** A player may double when it is his turn only before rolling the dice, but not after rolling cocked dice. To double or redouble, a player moves the cube toward his opponent with the higher value face up while saying “double” or words to that effect. To take, the opponent says “take” or words to that effect while placing the cube on his side of the board in plain view with the new value face up. To reject the double, the opponent says “pass” or words to that effect, records the score, and resets the board. The cube should not be handled capriciously; verbal or physical acts may be interpreted as cube actions.
- 5.5 **CRAWFORD RULE.** When either player reaches one point from victory, the next game (the “Crawford game”) shall be played to conclusion with a cube value of 1. The cube shall be removed from the board during the Crawford game.
- 5.6 **DEAD CUBE.** When the cube level is high enough to ensure that the match will end with the current game, that game shall be played to conclusion at the present cube level.

6.0 **CONTENTIONS**

- 6.1 **DISPUTES.** When a dispute arises, all players must leave dice, checkers, cube and score unchanged while the Director is summoned. Violations by players in this area are most serious and create a presumption in favor of the opponent.
- 6.2 **TESTIMONY.** Any player may argue issues of fact or rule. Spectators shall only testify at the Director’s request.
- 6.3 **APPEALS.** A player may appeal a Director’s ruling, but he must do so promptly while timely redress may still be obtained. To resolve an appeal, the Director shall convene a committee of three knowledgeable and disinterested backgammon players. The committee shall hear relevant testimony and arguments and may only overturn the Director’s ruling by unanimous decision. This exhausts a player’s right to appeal.