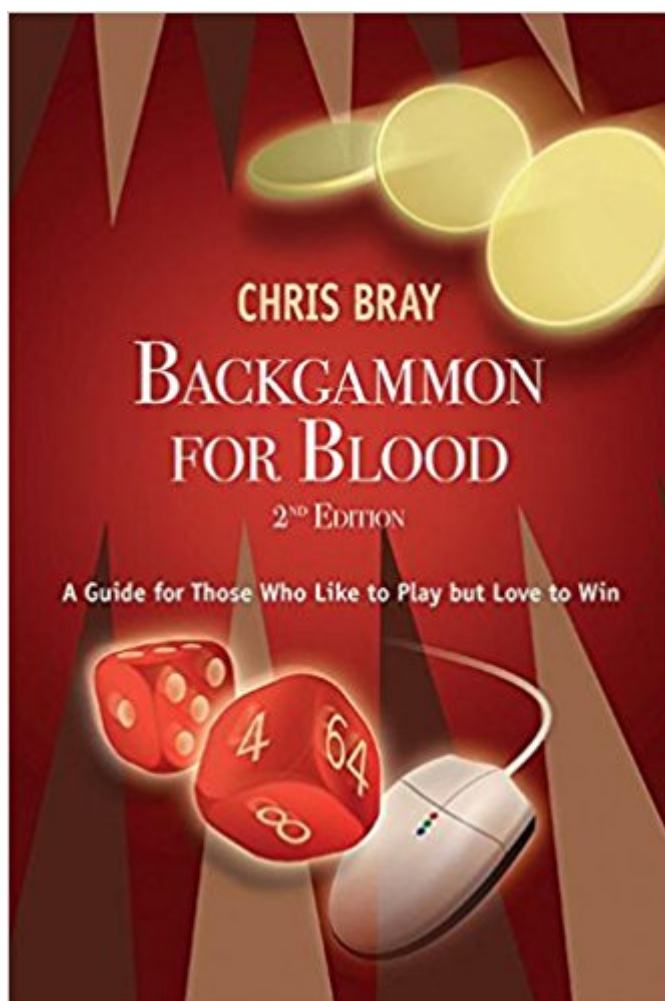


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# Backgammon For Blood: A Guide For Those Who Like To Play But Love To Win



## Synopsis

Backgammon is the ultimate head-to-head board game—an action-packed race to the finish with an addictive mix of luck and skill. It's easy to pick up the basics, but this is a game that continually surprises—there's always something new to learn, and the Internet has opened up a whole other world of gaming opportunities. In *Backgammon for Blood*, Chris Bray, top-ranked backgammon player, reveals the tips and tricks needed to help you play the game like a pro, whether you want to make serious money in online tournaments or just play for fun at a board with friends. While backgammon can be lost or won on the throw of the dice, tactical moves and game plans can help you adapt your play to deal with whatever comes your way. With chapters on opening rolls, mid-game strategies, and races and endings, his step-by-step suggestions, sample game illustrations, and easy-to-follow text have everything you need to come to grips with the game. The different ways to play backgammon—from tournaments and chouettes to computer and online play—are all covered, as are the secrets of making the doubling cube work in your favor. Insightful and informative, *Backgammon for Blood: A Guide for Those Who Like to Play but Love to Win* is the ideal introduction to this dynamic and challenging game.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Chris Bray has played backgammon for more than thirty years. He is ranked in the top five in the United Kingdom and regularly competes in the World Championships. He was the first ever backgammon columnist for a major newspaper. In addition to his book *Backgammon for Blood*, Bray also gives seminars on the game.

This book has the advantage of being a modern book. As such, it includes information not contained in books written more than a few years ago. For example, it contains info on using backgammon bots, e.g. Snowie, eXtreme Gammon, and GnuBG. These are programs that play at World Class levels and are great for learning how to play really well. Plus, GnuBG is free, so get it if you don't have it already (eXtreme Gammon is inexpensive and probably the best). This book also contains some info on playing online and other internet resources (there is a ton of great free stuff online). However, this type of info in the book is not real in-depth. Actually, this book's biggest weakness is that most of the topics it covers are not really covered in-depth. For example, it covers the opening roles, but doesn't cover any of the responses (2nd roll) to the opening roles. There really aren't that many, and you wouldn't need to write something on every move, but some of the key moves should be covered and at least a list of the correct responses should have been provided (you can find this info on the web). Similarly, the basics of each type of game are provided but not covered in much depth. The bearoff is also covered but once again not thoroughly. Yet the book does cover a lot of ground -- just not deeply. Instead of slamming Mr. Bray's book I thought it would be more useful to recommend some other books that are very highly regarded in the backgammon community. The top backgammon books are --

1. *Backgammon - 2004 Edition* by Paul Magriel -- Covers a range of topics from beginner to high intermediate. This is regarded as the bible of backgammon books. It was originally written in the 1970s, but the vast majority of advice in this book is still quite good (the latest edition wasn't revised much if it all). Modern bots have determined that a couple of Magriel's opening moves are not the optimal moves (although they aren't bad either), and there are a few advanced topics not covered or covered only lightly (primarily cube decisions). Yet this book is still a treasure trove of information with over 400 pages of text and diagrams. Even players who are well beyond the beginner stage will find tons of great advice in this book (I certainly did). If you could buy one book, and one book only, then this is the book to buy -- even if it is a little expensive.
2. *Backgammon Boot Camp* by Walter Trice -- Primarily covers intermediate to advanced topics. This book covers much of the topics that aren't dealt with in-depth in Magriel's *Backgammon*. This book is very good at covering the details of bearing men off and knowing when to double based on factors such as effective pip count, match equity, and other more advanced topics. This book is just an absolute wealth of information aimed at the intermediate to advanced player. All serious players of the game own this book.
3. *The Backgammon Encyclopedia - Vol 1/Cube Reference Positions* by Kit Woolsey -- I believe Woolsey's intention was to write a series of books, but he only wrote the first volume of this encyclopedia. However, this book is quite good. It focuses on cube decisions and is generally regarded as the best book available on this

topic. Proper play of the cube is absolutely vital in backgammon. If your opponent knows how to play the cube better than you then she'll often be winning games worth 2 to 4 times more than games you are winning, and when she loses a game it will cost her less than the games you lose. Proper cube play is vital, and this is THE book covering cube play. It is too bad Woolsey didn't write more volumes to this encyclopedia (although his *New Ideas in Backgammon* is also quite good).

4. Bill Robertie's *501 Essential Backgammon Problems: 2nd Edition*, *Advanced Backgammon, Volume 1 : Positional Play* & *Advanced Backgammon: Technical Play*, and *Modern Backgammon*. One of the best ways to learn how to play backgammon well is to develop a series of reference positions where you know the best play for that position. These positions are general in nature and not exact -- e.g. my opponent has a strong inner board and I have a choice of slotting a man or bringing a builder down in the backfield. Going through lots of these reference positions, and knowing the thought process behind why each play is correct, is one of the surest ways to improving your checker play and cubing decisions. These books contain over 1,000 key positions with 501 Essential problems containing the most problems but the least amount of explanation for why the play is correct. *Advanced Backgammon* contains about 200 problems in each book and more in-depth coverage behind the reasoning of the plays. *Modern Backgammon* only contains 100 problems, but it was written after the bots emerged on the scene and the reference positions it covers are ones where humans often got the best play wrong. It should be noted that Robertie got a few positions wrong (usually just by a little bit), so it is best to search the web for corrections based on bot rollouts. Nevertheless, even with a few errors, these books are enormously useful. (Paul Lamford's *100 Backgammon Puzzles*, and *Improve Your Backgammon* are similar in nature and both worth a read.) BTW, I read *Backgammon for Blood* on a Kindle and it was just fine. It would have been better if the contrast between dark and light checkers was better, but it wasn't so bad that I couldn't figure out the diagrams.

I am enjoying every word of this book, great advice, very professional and well written. However when it comes to the production of the Kindle version of this book, I have to give it two thumbs down. The drawing of the backgammon boards, a key part of the book, are designed for a color media (pieces are black and red). In the black and white Kindle device they look identical. Even in the iPhone, which is a color device, the Kindle software displays the board in black and white. The only Kindle version that works for me for this book is on the Kindle PC, in which the boards are displayed in color, as it should be. could improve the experience on the Kindle device by retouching the board drawings to display black and white pieces, instead of the original red and black...

good book

I've known the basic rules of Backgammon for along time. But I'd just entered a tournament and I needed to know some basic strategy, how the doubling cube worked, even what the best opening moves really are. This book was perfect for me, results of the tournament notwithstanding. Do not buy it on kindle. Paperback only.

If you are new to backgammon, this book could be good for you. But, only the very basic strategies are covered. If you are an experienced player, at all, you will already know everything in this book.

This book taught me a lot of great moves and helped me become a good player.

I've been playing a long time and had never studied backgammon strategy. This book is a great primer for learning more about the game. I found the opening moves section particularly helpful in developing both an offense and a defense. A little hard to understand at first, but stay with and the descriptions get easier and easier.

I liked the book in general but his method of showing moves requires detail concentration so in some ways it seems like a text book with a lot of details.

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