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Backgammon For Blood



Synopsis

1 SOFTCOVER BOOK (pocket size)

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

1 SOFTCOVER BOOK (pocket size)

I used to constantly lose at backgammon and couldn't understand why. Then I read this book during a couple of plane flights and immediately started winning. It almost seemed like I had an unfair advantage. He recommends a very aggressive approach to building your inner board early in the game. Since this can get you in to trouble on occasion, he spends a lot of time explaining how to play an effective back game. I have modified his approach somewhat, but I am still more aggressive than most of my competitors. His back game teaching has come in very handy and I get a kick out of playing and winning in this fashion. I read this book in 1972 and just gave it to my son as a gift.

EDIT (11/29/11): If you are new to backgammon, or your enthusiasm for backgammon is beginning to fade READ THIS BOOK! It's like a poker player watching "Rounders", you can't wait to deal the cards! This book, in all its audacity, lit the backgammon torch for me. I was 14 or 15 when I read it and wanted to fly to Vegas or New York and start playing. Yes, I've had to re-learn a lot since then (as with any author before the 1990's), but his approach and enthusiasm for backgammon got me hooked. Whereas, many of the modern authors that would criticize Becker, put me to sleep. Keep a few things in mind: 1) Becker wrote this in 1974, at a time when, believe it or not, backgammon was wildly popular and there was no Snowie or eXtreme Gammon to set us straight. 2) Becker played

backgammon against an opponent that many of us, including me, rarely face anymore.....a person!

3) Becker was a money player, not a tournament player. The difference in strategy can be more dramatic than you think, and different again based on the strength of your opponent. The point is: Do I think that in the 1970's some of his strategy may have worked against a guy with more money than skill? Heck yes. Would I try it today? No. Today's players are "chess" players, they gauge success by their error rate. Becker gauged success by how much of your money he put in his pocket! Two entirely different goals with oftentimes different strategies. It's poker vs chess. Since BG for Blood is about money play, which is rare today, it has more gamesmanship than modern theory allows and this rubs some of the "modern", computer-assisted authors the wrong way. Some authors just give you a problem and the equities for each play. The best authors are those that discuss the position and strategy first, and then the underlying probabilities (I recommend Robertie and Trice). Becker's strategy might have been wrong in some instances, but he had a strategy and could elaborate it without the computer doing it for him. There is no certainty in backgammon....none. The dice can be incredibly malicious or kind. The dice can snatch defeat from the jaws of victory for extended periods. Barclay Cooke is another author of the past that is heavily critiqued, but he and Bradshaw had one thing right.....their title. Backgammon has elements of poker and chess, but in reality it's in a world by itself. The dice and design of the game just leave open too many possibilities to try to put backgammon in a mathematical "box". You can have a zero error rate and still get beat badly. That doesn't happen in chess. That said, I am not recommending all of Becker's strategies, but his approach and enthusiasm are fantastic. Some form of backgammon has been played for thousands of years, long before computers, and Becker shows you why.

I bought this for my son-in-law. I bought it over 3 decades ago and it's excellent, but I'm not giving mine up! I haven't read it in a long time, but have been wanting to reread as a refresher. Great strategies and simple to understand!

Nice book.

Book was tight, nice dust jacket but appeared to have been splattered throughout many pages with some yellow liquid. Pages weren't wrinkled, but rather "raised" in a way that occurs through wetting or misting. The spatters did not impede reading, but were distracting on a book marked "good".

On the paperback copy I own, author Bruce Becker's disembodied head floats menacingly over a

backgammon board, grinning slyly as his severed hand clutches a cigarette. We immediately learn two things from this cover: 1) Somebody doesn't know that you don't wear a black turtleneck against a black background, and 2) This same somebody takes backgammon way too seriously. Becker's book is the kind of board game guide that one usually associates with chess, crammed full of statistics, moves, game theory, and strategic planning. The book doesn't contain nearly as much philosophical meandering about backgammon as the cover image indicates, so there is very little meditating on the ruthlessness of the titular blood sport to trudge through on the way. With chapters like "Insidious Openings" and "The Diabolical Doubler: Betting for Blood" waiting inside, you can bet this book takes backgammon as seriously as three-dimensional chess or three-week Risk campaign. When Becker gleefully recalls his daughter screaming "I hate you!" in his face after losing a game to him, you have no doubt that he is completely serious about playing "for blood." You could say that this book is specifically for those who have friends who play backgammon like Bruce Becker, but its very existence is itself advice that if you know somebody who takes backgammon this seriously, you probably shouldn't be playing backgammon with them. However, if you are the kind of person who often finds yourself in seedy bars playing backgammon for money while dressed like a beat poet, then you'll want to read this book twice. After that, good luck, or as the author closes his introduction, "Happy blood-letting!"

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