



AMERICA'S



SECRET WEAPON

by Barbara Houston

**BEWARE:
LONDON,
NASSAU,
MONTE CARLO,
ST. MORITZ,
GSTAAD,
HELSINKI,
ITALY,**

American men are proud of it. European men refuse to admit it. American men encourage it. European men snicker at the very thought of it.

"It" is the burgeoning strength of women backgammon players in the United States—and European men had better beware of the potent force about to invade foreign shores. America's secret weapon is its women!

The American woman backgammon player has, in the late seventies, become a tough contender in any major tournament—national or international. She no longer fears those big, bad moustachioed boys with the charming, seductive accents. She now knows that behind that tough macho exterior is a little boy frightened to death of being outplayed by a mere female. *(continued next page)*

Typical compulsiveness in playing is not restricted to men. For example, as this writer was playing in a chouette in Los Angeles the other day, a call came in from Marie Reynolds in North Carolina to proof check some copy. The conversation was "Glad you called. We were just doubled to 128. Do you take?" Marie replied, "Of course. How does one refuse a double at 128?"



VALERIE DEEDS

Born: Scotland
Lives: Los Angeles
Plays: Cavendish West, Pips
Taught: By Edwin Kantar, one of the foremost bridge players and writers in the world.
Influence: Stan Tomchin and Tom Gilbert
How Long: 5-6 years
Tournaments: Three Pips tournaments in a row. Placed in San Martin, Las Vegas, Chicago, Aruba
Hobbies: Bridge, tennis, table tennis, Monopoly
Quote: "Never look back."



MARY ZITA JACOBY

Married to Oswald Jacoby, internationally known author of books on backgammon as well as one of the better backgammon players.
Quote: "After rolling your dice, ask yourself two questions. One, can you hit a man or make a point? And two, which is more important?"

Our men are not intimidated by us. Unlike their brothers across the Atlantic, American men treat us as equals. The women mentioned in this article are but a handful of the damsels whose mettle has been tested and who have proven themselves to be winners. I would venture our men would back any one of us against a stiff upper-lipper (Lewis Deyong?) or a suave Frenchman (Jean Noel Grinda?) or even an exotic Persian (are you listening, Maurice?).

We certainly don't mean to imply that European men aren't charming, intelligent and often quite nice. You are all that and more. But we do feel that you are a bit archaic in your attitudes about women's place in the hallowed halls of gaming rooms. On any given night at Crockford's or Clermont's there will be only one woman for every 20 men playing. But at the Mayfair (New York) or Cavendish (Los Angeles), easily *50 percent* of the players are women. There is a depressing lack of any really outstanding European women players. And the fault, dear Brutus, lies with *you!*

While you European men shun your women who attempt to improve their skills, your less insecure American counterparts have given us support and encouragement and yes, even lessons! Every woman mentioned in this article has had a husband or boyfriend mentor who was willing to spend as much time with her in the library, playing backgammon, as in the bedroom playing.



LEE GENUID

Born: Woodberry, N.Y.
Lives: New York
Taught: By Stan Tomchin
How Long: 6 years
Influence: Manny Wong, Stan Tomchin, Tom Gilbert, Billy Eisenberg
Tournaments: Won, Pips (Los Angeles) Tournament, twice. Came into the money in St. Maarten Tourney.
Hobbies: Music. Great bridge player.
Quote: "Rolling prime gathers no loss."



MARIE REYNOLDS

Born: Daytona Beach, Florida
Lives: Southern Pines, No. Carolina
Plays: Home, Mayfair House of Bridge, New York.
Taught: By Josh Reynolds, and Kibitzing a chouette consisting of Tim Holland, Johnny Crawford, Walter Cooke, Ted Bassett, Oswald Jacoby, Porter Ijams and Hunter Goodrich. She watched hundreds of hours and this is how she really learned to play.
Influence: Tim Holland
How Long: 8 Years.
Tournaments: 2 New York Finals, Runner up Palm Beach; Winner, Cruise Tournament, Fort Lauderdale; 1st Consolation, Palm Springs; Placed, in Las Vegas
Hobbies: Horses-riding and exhibiting hunters, tennis, gin, poker and cooking.
Quote: When the cube gets to 128, of course we take."



FAYE SCHWIMMER

Born: Chicago, Illinois
Lives: Chicago with her husband Walter, who is a great player of all games.
How Long: 15 years
Plays: Maxim's, Chicago
Taught: By Prince Alex Obolensky.
Influence: Joe Dwek and Lewis Deyong.
Tournaments: Consolation in Nassau; Las Vegas, Tourney, Women's Prize
Quote: "Play, play, play and more play!"
Plays running backgammon game on the telephone with Carol Crawford.

Why are American men so much more supportive of competitive women than are European men? Well, the easy answer, of course, is that the women's liberation movement in America has created a society where men and women compete in all economic, sociological and recreational fields. If a man spends his day with women at a boardroom conference table, it just seems natural for him to spend his evening with a woman at a backgammon table.

The advanced state of American technology has helped too. We women have so much extra time that some of it we devote to backgammon. One can play just so many sets of tennis.

But the biggest aid is that our men lack that centuries-old tradition of "machoism" so deeply instilled in even the most modern Europeans. For example, the only public place to play backgammon in Paris (Le Gran Circle) is closed to women!



CAROL CRAWFORD

Born: Buffalo, New York

Lives: New York City

How Long: 10 years

Taught: Self-taught but very much influenced by her late husband Johnny Crawford.

Tournaments: Won, Womens World Championship, International Championship at Biarritz, 2nd to Oswald Jacoby in the American Championship Tournament, Champion at St. Regis in New York City. Came into the money in many other tournaments.

Hobbies: Plays tennis, golf and very good at bridge.

She feels that the best backgammon book is by Crawford and Jacoby, which came out at Christmas, 1970. She considers it the Bible of backgammon. She prefers tournament play to clubs because clubs start too late for her.



BARBARA HOUSTON

Born: Chicago, Illinois

Lives: Chicago, Illinois

Taught: By Bob Viner of New York City.

Plays: Aries, Washington, D.C.; Pips,

Los Angeles; Palm Bay Club, Miami

Influence: Billy Eisenberg, Stan

Tomchin, Mike Carson, Chuck Papazian.

How Long: 5 years

Tournaments: Consolation prize in Palm Springs, Consolation in Palm Bay Club, Quarter finals in Women's 1st World Championship.

Hobbies: Games she plays, voracious reader and practices law.

Quote: "To be a winner." One word quote from Barbara, "PASS."



LILI GROSS

Born: Buenos Aires, Argentina

Lives: New York City

Plays: Mayfair House of Bridge, Cavendish West

Taught: Billy Eisenberg and Stan Tomchin

Influence: Paul Magriel

How Long: 4½ years

Tournaments: Won a few New York tournaments, Doubles Finalist, Metropolitan Opera N.Y., Consolation Finalist, Monte Carlo, Won Consolation, El Morrocco, N.Y., Placed: Crockfords, London; Plaza, N.Y.; Dallas, Texas; Palm Beach, Florida

Hobbies: Art, Travel, Gin.

Fluent in French, Spanish, Italian

Quote: "You only live once, and if you live right, once is enough."



LYNN GOLDSMITH

Born: New York City

Lives: New York City

Plays: Mayfair

Tournaments: Chicago Tournament, Hippopotamus, 1st Consolation at Paradise Island, 1st Consolation at St. Maarten, 2nd Consolation at St. Moritz, Last Chance, Puerto Rico

Taught: By Paul Magriel

Influence: Mainly Paul Magriel



NANCY WEICHSEL

Born: New York

Lives: Berkeley, California

How Long: 5 years

Plays: Mayfair

Taught: By watching Kyle Larsen and being helped by Peter Weichsel, Paul Magriel and Stan Tomchin.

Hobbies: All games, bridge, riding horses.

Tournaments: Mayfair Club, Semi-Junior - consolation prize. San Francisco, Semi-Junior - consolation prize. Quarter finalist in last 6 Obolensky tournaments. Semi-finalist in last 8 World Backgammon tournaments.

The women backgammon players of America have taken one small step for women and one huge leap for womankind, and we fervently hope that the men of Europe will begin encouraging and supporting their women as our men have us. In the meantime, come on, fellas—we are happy to take you on, and even happier to beat the pants off you!