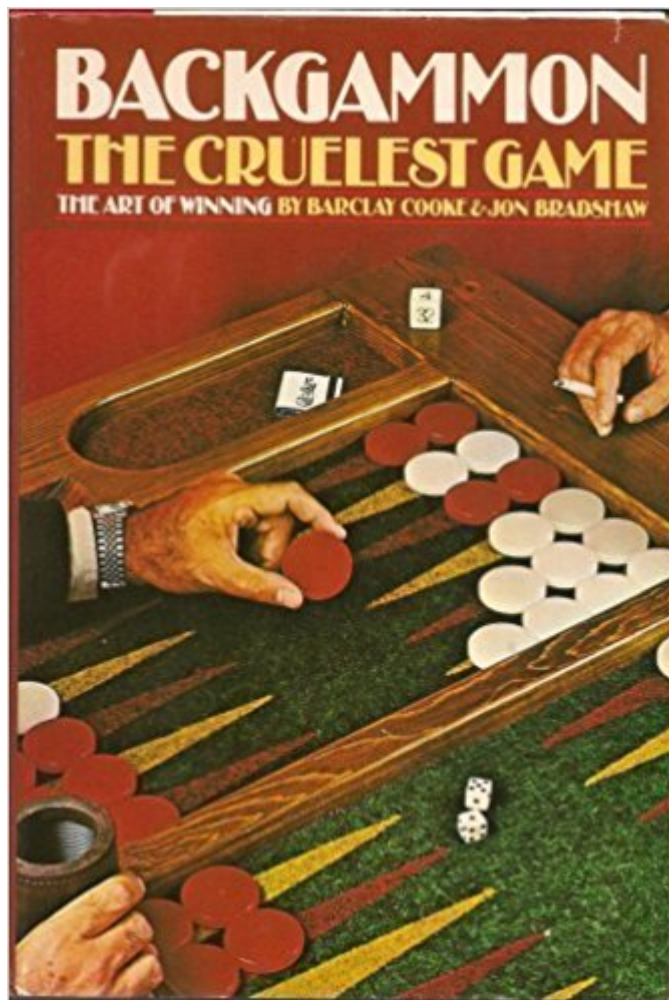


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Backgammon: The Cruellest Game



Synopsis

Barclay Cooke (Author) Backgammon: the cruelest game [Hardcover] 207 pages Publisher: Random House; 1st edition (1974)

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

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A classic with an excellent section on probability: the key to winning plays.

A must have for every serious player

Technically speaking: Pay little attention to what Cooke says about backgammon. Yes, control your emotions and pay your debts when you lose. But don't make any move Cooke recommends without verifying it by other means, such as running it by a bot like eXtreme Gammon, GNU Backgammon, or Snowie. Example: First player opens with 43: 13/9 13/10. Second player replies with 22: 24/20(2) (now, this play is wrong, but Cooke's endorsement influenced almost a whole generation of players to select it). The really egregious recommendation is not for that double 2, which is well motivated and at least reasonable: it's for the first player's roll of 11 in reply. Cooke recommends 24/22(2) instead of the natural and correct 10/9 24/21. He reasons that since the second player won't abandon his advanced anchor to hit, it's safe for the first player to upgrade from the 24 anchor to the 22. Of course, the second player will be eager to hit, and the first player has a lot more to lose by

being hit in the outfield than by being attacked on the opposing 4 point. No modern expert would play anything but 10/9 24/21. The only players who would make the 22 point are those whose only exposure to backgammon theory was Cooke! Of course, no backgammon book written in the 1970s will be free of gross mistakes. This book is worth buying for historical interest, and also to help you understand Jeremy Bagai's wonderful Classic Backgammon Revisited.

Ah, nostalgia. I made a lot of money with this book when it first came out. I was playing backgammon for a living. I did very well playing matches where my opponent and I alternated playing black and red from an illustrated position, on the provision that the opponent played the book's recommendation and I played something else. Used my way, this book was a real money maker. Playing as the book recommends will get you thoroughly trounced by someone who has spent some time playing against Gnu Backgammon or other good computer program. Just the reluctance to split the backmen alone would do you in. But there is much more. I do not know why I am writing this. :-)

I was sitting in Longi's, a food and backgammon club in Maui many years ago. Mr. Cooke walked over to my table and asked me all the opening moves. I was just learning but got all of them right except one. I bought his book and with a lot of practice and play with a lot of different players with a variety of skills, became a fairly good player. It is easier reading than Magriel's Backgammon, and is an excellent book for the beginning to intermediate players.

The authors of this book were Barclay Cooke and Jon Bradshaw. A very good 70s book for beginners and intermediates and surpasses many of the authors whose only claim to understanding the game is that they wrote theirs in the 90s.

This is one the best books ever written on backgammon too bad it is out of print. Nuff said.

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