

## A BACKGAMMON TOURNAMENT IN MATHEMATICS PUNS

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Waco, Texas

I'm from the wide open **SPACES** near **L-paso**, and they call me **T<sub>E</sub>X**. One Sunday several years ago Emma, Dee, Polly, Cal and I were **TURING** Kentucky in our **CHEVALLEY** when I suggested that we attend a backgammon tournament in **LILOUILLE**. Em was **DERIVING**, and even though she was not **inKLEINed** to be **BOTTLED** up for several days, sheer **LOGIC** told her that it beat squeezing into a **GÖDEL** to go to **CHURCH**, so she agreed to the plan. We were lucky that Jim **JACOBIAN** his **GROUP** were not there, so we had a **FEITing** chance.

I asked a **LISPing** Catholic **CARDINAL** for advice about entering. "My thon, I don't **ORDINALLY** give advice, but I'll  $\theta$  a **MATH** for you," he said.

When we arrived the next day, I saw an old girlfriend, pretty as ever, and sending out signals that she wanted us to get together again and I greeted her, "**CONSTANCE**, I **REID** you. You never change."

Then I spotted my buddy Ed Wright across the room. **WRIGHT** **ANGLED** over to see me with his date, **ACUTE** young thing. I asked who she was, but he wouldn't tell me. "Don't be **OBTUSE**," I **COUNTERed**.

Pete Axthelm of Newsweek magazine was supposed to cover the event, but didn't show up. "i don't know **y-AXIS** not here at the tournament **COMPLEX**," the director said. "Perhaps he was delayed by those 18 wheelers on the interstate. **CHARACTERISTICaLIE**, those drivers forget to **EULER** up before they leave, and the trucks break down, delaying many of the **COMMUTATORS** headed to **Fxd**. That **SEMI-GROUP** has been **HÖLDERing** everyone up."

Emma and I went to inspect the prizes for us amateurs, and we weren't impressed. They looked as if they were for little children playing house. "**EM, TEA SET**'s a **NOTHING** prize," I said.

So we decided to enter the professional **DIVISION** of the tournament, and I hailed a friend, **RAY** who made a beeline from where we were toward the entry table. **RATIOed** me the **PRO PORTION** of the event where the better prizes were, and I **MEAN VALUE**.

We registered and got our contestant numbers. I talked to fellow competitor Eulah about who the favorite would be. She said it would **PROBABILITY** be contestant # 159. "Who's that?" I said.

"Oh, that's Taylor Simpson. He's the **TANGENT** handing out **CIRCULARS**," she replied.

"Is he in top **FORMULA**?" I wondered. There were **SUM** really good players in attendance, I might **ADD**.

Physical preparation for a tournament is as important as being mentally fit. In fact, **ABSCISSA** big plus, like the extra**ORDINATE 3!** pack on that big, muscular, angry looking man we saw across the room. I noticed it was time for him to start his match. " $\sqrt[3]{}$  that he's on," I said to Em.

"**RADICAL**, man," the brute said. He reminded me of a former Vice President of the United States. He played well, but had a **SORT** of mechanical, pre-programmed way about him – a kind of **AL GORE RHYTHM**.

As Emma and I left for our matches in round one, I told her to let me know when she wanted to go to **EIGHT** lunch. "Well, **EMMA**, I hope our **CHOICES** **COHEN**cide. **WAVE** at me when you're ready. Give me a **SINE**, and be sure to let **POLYNOMIAL** time, too. Why don't you and **HERMITE** e back at the condo at noon?"

Wouldn't you know it, in the first round I had to play my  $e^x$  wife. She got the upper hand and began **DOUBLING** me over and over. Yes, my  $X^3$  me at every turn. Finally I became desensitized to it and got **EVEN NUMBER** than I already was. It was making me sick, and I needed to get to a restroom. I hailed a tournament official and asked him, "Is **THY POT IN USE?**" He pointed **DIAGONALLY** across the room. I went and soon wished I hadn't. One **FACTOR** was that the hotel was not using **MULTI-PLY** tissue (as to why, I have never heard any **LEHMER** excuses than those I heard this time), and another was that the **f(aucets)** wouldn't **FUNCTION**. So I asked the director for some spring water, hoping it would not make him **CROSS** to provide some **ARTESIAN PRODUCT**.

I got back to my **TABLE** for the rest of the morning round. My next few opponents were real **SQUARES** and they were getting **ZERO** in every match. "**I'D, EM, POTENT** be if I kept up this kind of play," I said. My practice was paying major **DIVIDENDs** for me to achieve such **AFFINE** result. I wanted to  $\beta$  on myself, but needed a loan. I had befriended an entomologist kibitzer next to me earlier when he wanted to **SECANTS** to study, and in **RECIPROCAL** fashion he offered to **COSINE** a note. I continued to play well against contestants numbered 2, 5, 17 and 31, all of whom were **PRIMEd** for combat.

At noon we went back to our condo to have lunch. It was nice, except for its weird **GRID** like wallpaper. It had been owned by the Women's Tennis Tour, and I hear that Steffi **GRAF PAPEREd** it. One **PLUS** was that it was near a **L'HOSPITAL**, so that care would be nearby if any of us had a **COROLLARY** or was **POISSONed**. Emma had promised me Mexican food, but she changed her mind, which prompted me to ask, "**FIB ON NACHOS**, will you?" I had to settle for a sandwich. She asked what **CATEGORY** I wanted, and I told her, "**HAMEL BASIS** be for mine." But we were out of ham, so I had to settle for an **FLT**, a frankfurter( i.e., a **WIENER MIT** mustard ), **LATTICE** and **THOMato**, quite a **HARDY** meal which took all of Em's **WILES** to create, but which ended in a **CATASTROPHE**. It turned out that only a **LITTLEWOOD** have been enough because I really wasn't that hungry.

While we were there, a security guard named Schmidt burst in holding a **HYPERBOLIC** needle and accused Dee and Emma and the already arrested Dede of selling drugs. Using his **NAPIER-**like wit he threatened to  $\text{LOG}_d(N)$  to the **BRIGGS** with **DEDE's KIND** on a naval **CUTter** patrolling **ALMOST EVERYWHERE** in the harbor.

"**VENN DIAGRAM, SCHMIDT**, of coke?" Em asked him, **GAMEly** trying with **EULER WINNING WAYS** to **CON** her **WAY** out of the mess with the **GUY**. He told me they had been fingered by a Nicaraguan freedom fighter.

"Is the **CONTRA POSITIVE?**" I demanded. Ultimately realizing he had **NIL** in terms of **POTENT** evidence for an arrest, he realized his **POWER** was **ZERO**, so he **LEFT IN VERSE**, reciting **PRINCIPALy** from the **RING** trilogy, which was **IDEAL** for us.

Resuming, we played on into the late afternoon, when the **POWER** went out. "Is the **ROUND OFF?**" I asked the director. He nodded. Then a tottering old gentleman tapped me on the shoulder. "**SLOPE-oke, y-INTERCEPT** me?" I asked. He told me that I was wanted by one of the Australian backgammon **GROUPies** who were decked out in their **SIXY COSETS** and **BOAS**. They were so **NUMEROUS** that they were lined up in several rows, 5 or 6 deep.

"**MATE,....., TRICKS?**" they had **CAYLEY** yelled at a guard from the **LOCAL MINIMUM** security prison, as he passed by them earlier. He was scared and **DETERMINANT** to flee without a **TRACE** instead of **COLUMN** them over, which would have created quite a **ROW**. I would have gone, but remembered the warning Emma had given me if an attractive woman tried to pick me up: avoid any **fERDÖS** and **SIN** no more.

We resumed the next morning, and my play was mediocre. I was unable to **CONCENTRIC** because of health concerns. The hotel had done nothing about its exposure to inert gas decaying from radium beneath the hotel, and my opponent, a Frenchman, was smoking a **GALOIS**. The hotel refused to even try to **MEASURE** its **RADON-NICOTINE** problem. Several of the players demanded that something be done about it, but the director refused, saying, "That's an **ODD ORDER**. Are you looking for a **FEIT**? You assume this problem is **SOLVABLE, GROUP**. That's not **SIMPLE**." So nothing really happened, which infuriated Dee.

"**DEE, WHY, DEE, EX**pect any help from them? There is a **LIMIT** to what they can do, so, y **PRIME** their anger?" I asked, **INSTANTANEOUSLY CHANGING** the subject and going off on a **TANGENT**.

I was **ABEL** to **PASCAL** in the standings, but had trouble with an opponent from **CALC**utta, Ramesh Amar. I **HADAMAR**Down, but, being **MOORE METHOD**ical than I, he came back to win in a close match. Contestant number 159 was just awesome, really on a **ROLLE**. He was **DERIVING ZEROES**, leaving us flat. He was shutting people out, tossing goose eggs, doughnuts - he really **TORUS** up. It was about time, from his point of view, as he had played poorly earlier, and this **SERGE** was a **LANG** time coming. As he secured the **CRITICAL** three **POINT** in a late round game, **SOLID**ifying his position, a waiter interrupted to ask if we wanted a piece of pie. "**PI**?" I yelled. "**THREE POINT'S WON FOR ONE FIVE NINE!**"

Soon it was all over. Emma made a **POINT**ed effort to **PYRAMID** the results. She came over and told the rest of us, "In all **CANTOR** you finished in the **MIDDLE THIRD** of the **FIELD**."

I couldn't believe it and said, "Are you giving it to me **STRAIGHT**? Are you **LINE**? What do you **MEAN**? We '**AVE RAGE!** We're mad!"

And, of course, #159, Taylor Simpson, was on the winners list more often than anyone. He had **MODE** us down. Everyone else crowded around to congratulate him, but the director yelled, "Give the **VICTOR SPACE**."

It turned out that his wife had finished second, and once she realized they had **SINH**ed the top two places, she hugged **HERMANN WEYL** they crowed "**OMICOSH! SIMPSONS RULE!**"

"Is **TAYLOR SERIOUS**? Can't he be **MORDELL**icate?" I asked, incredulous at his ego.

After **HUYGENS** each other they drove off in the first prize, a new **FERRARI** with **FOUR POWER** speeds. As McGarrett might have said, "Nice **CAR, DANO**."

And knowing his wife's love of cheap champagne, he told her, "We'll have some **ANDRE WEIL** we ride!"

Emma consoled me with the **PLANE** truth and let me know that she still loved me as she gave me a love tap under the chin.

"It's **oVERT<sub>E</sub>X**. That's the **POINT**. But I **RIEMANN** convinced that you can win this thing. I **GAUSS** there's always next year. Here's looking at **EU-CLID**."