



Frank Frigo Triumphs at the 3rd Oasis International Cup, Dubai 2024

Tournament Report

By Martin Barkwill

A record attendance proves that Dubai is rapidly emerging as a major force in hosting international backgammon tournaments. One hundred ninety-two players competed in the Masters event and 76 in the Intermediate. This is a big increase compared to previous years: 2023, 169 Masters and 45 Intermediates; 2022: no event; 2021: 62 Masters and 35 Intermediates.

The Dubai tournament's success is due in large part to the efforts of Patrick Gebelli and MindSkillz, approved by the UAE Sports Council, who have put together a hugely attractive proposition.

This included:

- \$50,000 added prize money.
- World-class live streaming courtesy of Bill Riles and Tara Mendicino.
- The hugely respected Arda Findıkoğlu acted as the Tournament Director.
- The world's two Super Grandmasters, Mochy and Dirk Schiemann, hosted two seminars where they played a match while talking through their thought process.
- The action took place in the ballroom which can accommodate 550 players.
- Complimentary light refreshments that were subject to a mandatory charge in 2023.
- The finals of the Masters and Intermediates was held in the Burj Khalifa, at 829 meters including spire and antenna, the tallest building in the world.
- Dubai has several attractions including shopping, the world's biggest aquarium and speedboating.



Super Grandmasters Mochy (bottom) and Dirk Schiemann played an exhibition match where they explained their decisions.

The event was held at the Hyatt Regency hotel which has a gym and swimming pool, an adjoining air-conditioned shopping mall with an ice rink, several shops and a nightclub. In fact, anyone could spend the entire week in the hotel complex without having to venture outside.

Each of the above is impressive, however the *coup de théâtre* was undoubtedly the prize-giving where the players were transported to the desert for an experience that included a barbecue, riding a camel, or holding a falcon. During the course of the prize-giving, we witnessed a show that included fire eating, whirling dervishes and belly dancers.

The format of the event was Triple Elimination Swiss where each player has three lives and plays an opponent with the same number of lives in each round or as near as possible. As there was also a Last Chance on the final day, everyone was certain of at least four matches.

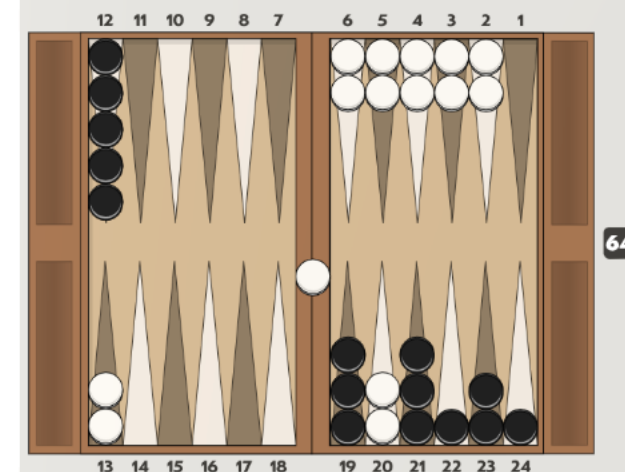
After 14 grueling rounds, two-time World Champion Frank Frigo faced Adrian Baltariu from Romania. It was not a classic match as is often the case with finals, especially if one of the players has not reached one before. Frank delivered a world class PR of under 3, but Adrian made some significant errors with the cube that damaged his PR result.

Here is one tricky position where Adrian incorrectly but perhaps understandably passed:

Position 5

Score		Pips
9-Away	White (Adrian Baltariu)	131
8-Away	Black (Frank Frigo)	103

White on roll, Cube action?



○ ND Winning Chances: 64.24%	(G:34.34% B:0.60%)
● ND Winning Chances: 35.76%	(G:5.94% B:0.11%)
○ D/T Winning Chances: 64.72%	(G:34.68% B:0.62%)
● D/T Winning Chances: 35.28%	(G:6.21% B:0.13%)

Best choice: Double / Take

No Double	+0.557	(-0.415)
✓ Double/Take	+0.971	
Double/Pass	+1.000	(+0.029)

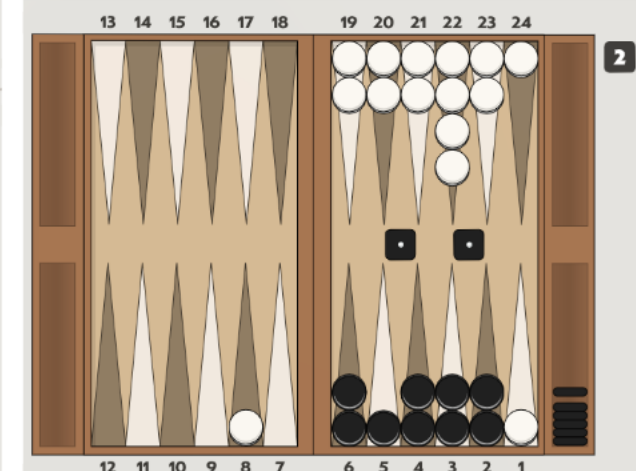
Frank leads 3 – 2 to 11. Adrian had correctly played a kind of double tiger with a 64 roll from the midpoint, whereupon Frank sent over a perfectly correct initial cube. Adrian knows that if he is hit from the bar, he faces a five-point board (except after Frank's double ace!) and will suffer a gammon loss much of the time to trail 2 – 7 to 11 making him a very clear underdog. Of course, Frank will miss Adrian's blots 16 times out of 36 and if that happens, Adrian can start thinking about recubes to 4. It pays to act boldly, especially in finals. That is surely why Frank, who went on to win 11 – 6, is such a great champion.

Remarkably, in the Consulting Doubles event which attracted 128 pairs, an all-British final occurred! Sadly, there is no match file to record how Nick Sanqvist and Warner Solomon (both bridge players) triumphed over Chris Rogers and Julian Minwalla. I am, however, grateful to Will Cockerell who recorded this difficult decision:

Position 2

Score		Pips
2-Away	White (Chris Rogers & Julian Minwalla)	88
4-Away	Black (Nick Sandqvist & Warner Solomon)	35

Black to play 11



✓ 5/3 2/1*(2)	+1.368	
6/5(2) 2/1*(2)	+1.253	(-0.115)
6/5 6/3	+1.217	(-0.151)
6/5(2) 4/3(2)	+1.080	(-0.287)
6/5(2) 3/2(2)	+0.955	(-0.412)

The clear-from-the-back play, 6/5 6/3, wins the most games. But Nick and Warner can fight for more gammons, and with it the match, with the switch play of 2/1*(2) 5/3—which is what they played although they were only rewarded with a single win.

That highly successful event will be a difficult act to follow next year. Nonetheless I am confident Patrick has an ace up his sleeve to delight us. —●●●