BACKGAMMON™

14 ● 23   15 ● 22   16 ● 21   17 ● 20

//// Saitek™

ELECTRO-GAMMON.NET

ELECTRONIC CHAMPION BACKGAMMON™

User's Manual

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ELECTRONIC
CHAMPION
BACKGAMMON™

User's Manual

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1

fig. 1

Saitek
ELECTRONIC CHAMPION BACKGAMMON

ELECTRONIC CHAMPION BACKGAMMON

BAR

BAR

1 NEW GAME
2 STAT ISTICS
3 VERIFY
4 PLAY
5 TAKE BACK
6 BEAR OFF
7 GAME OPTION
8 LEVEL
9 DOUBLE / ACCEPT
10 REJECT
11
12 ROLL DICE
13 GO STOP

13 24 14 23 15 22 16 21 17 20 18 19

19 18 20 17 21 16 22 15 23 14 24 13

12 1 11 2 10 3 9 4 8 5 7 6

6 7 5 8 4 9 3 10 2 11 1 12

fig. 2

fig. 2a

A —
B — 2 4 8 16 32 64
C — SET UP
    SCORE
D — VERIFY
E — 2 4 8 16 32 64
F —
G — 2 PLAYERS
H — DICE
I —
J —
K — PASS

KEYS, LIGHTS AND FEATURES (figs. 2, 2a)

KEYS

1. **NEW GAME** — Start a new game; resets board to starting position

2. **STATISTICS** — Display pip count. Press **ACCEPT** or **ROLL DICE** for more detailed information

3. **VERIFY** — Verify current board position

4. **PLAY** — Force computer to make the next move, change sides with the computer, advice from the computer

5. **TAKE BACK** — Retract last move

6. **BEAR OFF** — Tell the computer you are bearing off a man

7. **GAME OPTION** — Press repeatedly and use **REJECT** to set:
   A. Game: Backgammon (G0), Jacquet - 1 (G1) or 2 (G2), Trictrac (G3), Moultezim (G4), Plakoto (G5)
   B. Strategy (backgammon only): standard (H0), conservative (H1), aggressive (H2)
   C. Sound: on (So) or off (nS)
   D. Number of players: one or two
   E. Direction of play: [= or =]
   F. Set up: Enter Set up Mode

8. **LEVEL** — Select playing strength (0-9); use with **REJECT** and **ACCEPT**

9. **DOUBLE/ ACCEPT** — Double the stake or accept the double; accept play option choices

10. **REJECT** — A. reject a doubling offer
    B. change a **GAME OPTION**
    C. clear the score after **NEW GAME**
    D. change level setting

11. **Dice input keys** — Manually input dice rolls

12. **ROLL DICE** — Roll the electronic dice, confirm the dice value during manual input

13. **GO/STOP** — Switch computer on/off

14. **ACL** — Reset computer (back of set)

LIGHTS AND FEATURES

15. **Rack storage for 15 black and 15 white men**

16. **Dice for manual play**

17. **Point LEDs for move display**

18. **Pressure-sensory game board**

19. **Battery compartment** (in base of set)

20. **LCD Screen** (fig. 2a) shows:
    A. Doubling cube value for each side
    B. Set up special position
    C. Cumulative score
    D. Verify board position
    E. White
    F. Black
    G. 2 players, or you against the computer
    H. Flashes to signal "Roll dice"
    I. Score, verify, statistics and message display
    J. Dice display
    K. Pass (no legal move)

3

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on your purchase of Saitek Champion Electronic Backgammon™. We hope this booklet will allow you to make the most of this product and give you many hours of enjoyment.

Backgammon is an ancient game, its roots going back thousands of years. Today, it is one of the most popular board games in the world.

Perhaps what makes backgammon so popular is its entertaining combination of skill and chance. Unlike chess or other games of pure skill, in backgammon the luck of the dice can allow even the beginner to win a game, yet an experienced player can make use of a better understanding of strategy and probability to win, perhaps in spite of the dice.

Your Saitek Electronic Champion Backgammon computer knows all the rules of the game and has a good command of expert strategy; its fast response time gives you exciting games. You can change its strategy style to make it play a more aggressive, defensive, or positional game, copying the styles of human players.

The computer also knows some variations of the game, popular in different countries. As well as traditional backgammon, you can play jacquet (two variations), trictrac, moultezim and plakoto. These variations' rules are in Chapter 2.

The Saitek Electronic Champion Backgammon computer uses the latest low-power electronic components and runs for over 100 hours on one set of batteries. It has an automatic pressure sensor board which recognizes moves as you play them, and a memory that allows you to interrupt a game at any time and resume play later.

QUICK-START GUIDE

Below is a quick guide to using your Saitek Electronic Champion Backgammon computer. For details on the rules of backgammon, please see Chapter 1; for detailed instructions on using your Saitek Electronic Champion Backgammon computer, please see Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

To begin

Insert 4 penlite batteries (AA/AM3/R6) as shown in figure 1. Arrange the men on the board in the starting position (see figure 4); and switch the computer on. You see the following display:
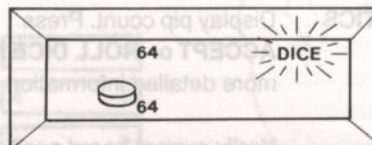
fig. 3

Press **ROLL DICE** to start the game. The LCD display shows the roll, the side with the highest die roll goes first. Black's roll is shown on the left, White's on the right. (4, 6 means White plays first; 6, 4 means Black goes first.) To move a man, press down on it (the light at the end of the point will come on), move it to the place you want to go, and press down again.

Normally, the computer plays as Black. If you want the computer to make the first move, regardless of the roll, press **PLAY** after pressing **ROLL DICE**.

The computer tells you which man it wants to move by turning on the light at the end of the point. Press that point, and a string of lights shows where it wants to move. You must move the computer's men, following the same steps as for your own moves.

Hitting a blot

When you hit an opponent's blot (a single man), press down on it; four lights come on around the bar. Move the man being hit to the bar and press down (one end is for black, the other for white).

Bearing off

When removing your men from the board (**bearing off**), press down on the man to be removed, press **BEAR OFF**, and take the man from the board. If playing jacquet, first press down the man to be removed, press **BEAR OFF** then press the man down on the opponent's start point. When the computer wants to bear off, first the point LED lights, press that point, then all 5 LEDs in that section light. Press **BEAR OFF** and remove the man.

Passing

The computer instantly recognizes when a player cannot play his roll (or part of it) and automatically displays "PASS". Press **ROLL DICE** to continue the game.

Doubling

When the computer wishes to double the stakes you hear a series of beeps and see a "2" flashing in the display. You can accept by pressing **DOUBLE/ACCEPT** to continue the game, or reject by pressing **REJECT**, which ends the game - sometimes better than continuing! The computer will only double on Level 9, but you can double at any level.

If you wish to double the stakes yourself, press **DOUBLE/ACCEPT** when it is your turn to roll. If the computer accepts, the new stake shows on the far left of the LCD display. If it doesn't accept, the computer ends the game and awards the stake to you.

Winning

At the end of the game the computer plays an "end of game" melody and shows you the cumulative score of the games played so far.

Levels of play

Electronic Champion Backgammon has 10 levels of play which can be adjusted at any time during the game. Level 0 is the beginner's level. Level 9 is the strongest and is preset when you turn on the machine.

Press **LEVEL** to see the current level. Press **REJECT** repeatedly to change levels, then **ACCEPT** when the level you want is shown. For the other games there is only one level, Level 5, which cannot be changed.

1. RULES OF BACKGAMMON

1.1 Set up

Backgammon is played with thirty pieces (**men**) on the board, 15 white and 15 black. One player uses the white men, the other the black. At the beginning of the game, they are arranged on the board as shown in figure 4.
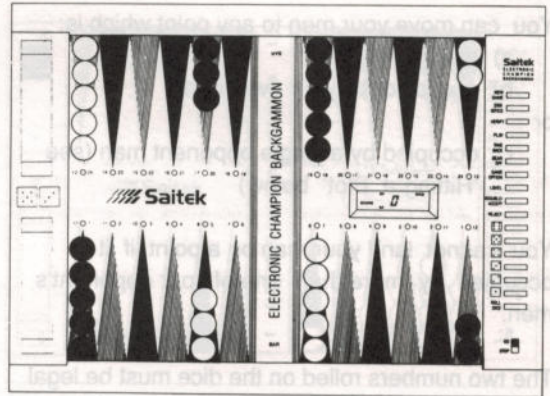
fig. 4

1.2 Moving your men

Each player takes turns rolling the dice to move his men; each triangular spot on the board is a **point**, along which the men move. For example, if a player rolls a '4' and a '6', then he can move one man four, then another man six points, or move one man ten. If both dice show the same number (called **doubles**), for example, two '6's, the player makes four moves; the roll is effectively doubled.

There are twenty-four points on the board. White moves in a 'U' counterclockwise, black clockwise (fig. 5). Men cannot move backwards.

OUTER TABLE   **INNER or HOME TABLE**

fig. 5

BLACK

WHITE
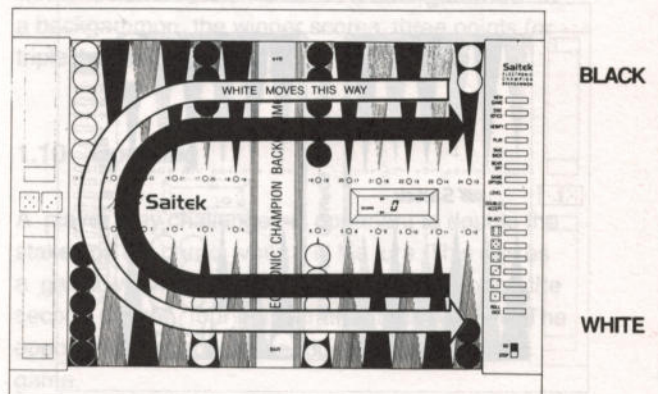
1.3 Where men may land

You can move your men to any point which is:

a) empty

b) occupied by your own men

or

c) occupied by a single opponent man (see 'Hitting a Blot' below)

You cannot land your man on a point if it is occupied by more than one of your opponent's men.

The two numbers rolled on the dice must be legal individually, e.g., if you roll 1, 6, and you wish to move a man seven, you must be able to move your man six points, then another one, or one and another six. This means that if your opponent occupies the first and sixth points, you may not move seven and 'hop' over the occupied points.

A player must use the full roll, and cannot pass unless there are no legal moves he can make. The men have to be moved in whatever way allows for all numbers rolled to be used. For example, in figure 6, a white man from the 24th point must move to the 17th point (24-23, 23-17), as no other piece can fully use the roll.

If a player can move either one of the numbers, but not both, then he must move the higher number, and pass the lower. For example, in fig. 6, with a roll of 3,4, a white man from the 6th point must move to the 2nd point.
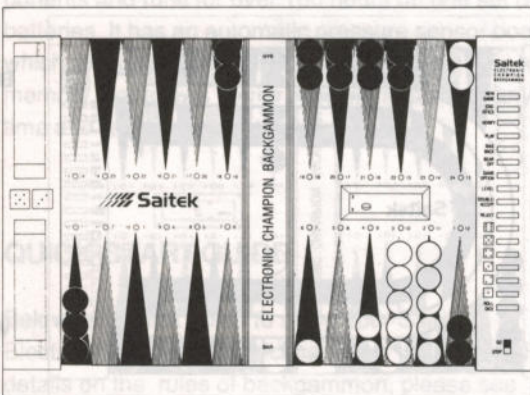
fig. 6

1.4 Tables

The board is divided horizontally into a white half and a black half; when playing White, the side of the board closest to you is the white side. The board is also divided vertically, for a total of four sections or **tables**; the left side being the **outer table**, the right side the **inner** or **home table** (as illustrated in fig. 5). The object is to move all of your men around the board to your home table. Once all of your men are in the home table, you begin moving them off the board (**bearing off**); the first player to bear off completely wins.

1.5 Hitting a blot

When you land your man on a point occupied by a single opponent man (**blot**), you are **hitting a blot**. When you hit an opponent's blot, the opponent's man is removed from the table and placed on the **bar**, the section dividing the home and outer tables.

1.6 Removing men from the bar

Men entering the table from the bar must come in on the opponent's home table, which means that they must start their journey to the home table from the beginning. To remove a man from the bar, roll the dice on your next turn as usual, then move your man onto the opponent's home table.

For example, if you roll a 2,4, you may enter your man on either the second or fourth point of the opponent's home table (second or fourth from the edge). If, however, the points are occupied by two or more of the opponent's men, then you cannot enter. As you must enter all your men from the bar before you may move any other men, you must pass, and your opponent rolls again. Figure 7 illustrates this.

It is possible for both players to have men on the bar at the same time.

fig. 7

fig. 8
The man on the 6th point must move to his 1st point.

1.7 Making a point

When more than one man occupies a point, it is safe from being hit; this is called **making a point**. Since a man which is hit must begin again at the opponent's home table, it is safer not to leave too many men vulnerable to being hit. Any number of men may occupy a point.

1.8 Bearing off

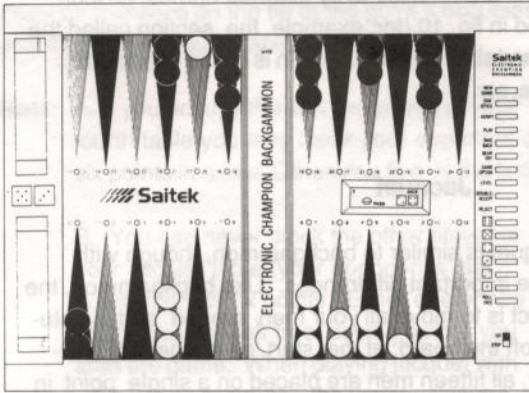The object of backgammon is to move all your men off the board. Once all of your men are on the home table, you begin bearing off. When bearing your men off, you roll the dice as usual, and simply move your men until they are off the board. E.g., if you roll a 2, 6, you may bear a man off from the sixth and the second points. A higher roll can be used to remove a man *only* if there are no men left on higher points, so if you roll '5' with no men on the sixth or fifth points, you may remove a man from the fourth (or the next occupied point). If you roll '5' and still have a man on the sixth point and not the fifth, you must move that man five points. See example below.

1.9 Winning - gammon and backgammon

As explained above, a player wins by moving all of his men off the board before his opponent. The winner scores one point for the victory. In some cases, the winner can score more than one point:

Gammon
If the loser has not been able to bear off any of his men, then this is called a **gammon**, and the winner scores two points (or double the stakes).

Backgammon
If the loser has not been able to bear off any of his men, and has one man stuck on the bar or in the winner's home table, it is called a **backgammon**. In a backgammon, the winner scores three points (or triple the stakes).

1.10 Doubling

A player may challenge his opponent to double the stakes of the game when it is his turn. This makes a game worth two points rather than one, or on the second double, four points rather than two, etc. The opponent must accept the double or forfeit the game.

Normally, a doubling cube is placed in the center of the bar to keep track of the stakes. The cube has the numbers 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, and 64 on its faces. At

7

the start of the game, 64 faces up. After the first double, it is turned so that the 2 faces up, to show that the stakes are double; after each following double, the cube is turned again to show 4, 8, etc. On your Saitek Electronic Champion Backgammon computer, this is simulated in the LCD screen.

At the beginning of the game, either player may double. After one player has doubled, however, it is the other player's option (a player cannot double twice in a row). **Note:** in two player mode, you cannot double.

2. VARIATIONS OF THE GAME

Your Saitek Electronic Champion Backgammon computer plays four different variations of backgammon: jacquet, trictrac, moultezim, and plakoto. For each of these games there are many variations popular in different countries. The rules which your Saitek computer follows are explained later in this section.

The initial set up for jacquet, trictrac and moultezim is shown in figure 9 below. The setup for plakoto is shown in section 2.4 below.

WHITE'S FIRST TABLE
15 WHITE MEN

15 BLACK MEN
BLACK'S FIRST TABLE
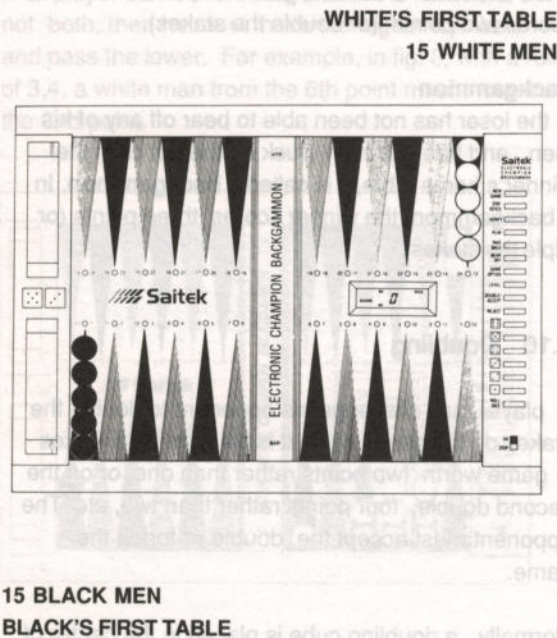
fig. 9

Note that in these games the four sections of the board are referred to by different names, as indicated in fig. 10 (for example, the section called the **home table** in backgammon is called the **fourth table**, etc.).

2.1 Jacquet

Jacquet is similar to backgammon, though with some important differences. Like backgammon, the object is to move all your men around and eventually off the board; at the start of the game, however, all fifteen men are placed on a single point in the first table, the one furthest from the table from which they bear off. The positioning of the men at the start of the game gives the game a different flow than backgammon (see figure 10 below).

WHITE'S SECOND TABLE   **WHITE'S FIRST TABLE**
(BLACK'S FOURTH TABLE) **(BLACK'S THIRD TABLE)**
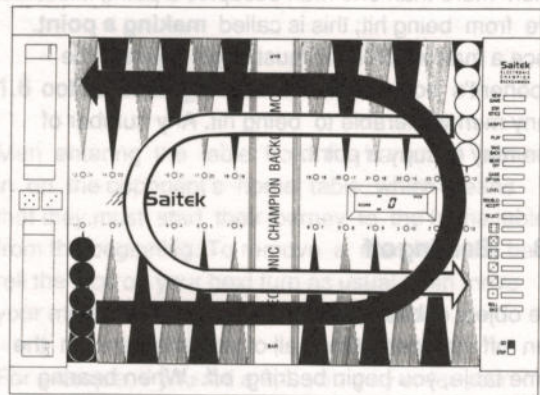
(BLACK'S FIRST TABLE)   **(BLACK'S SECOND TABLE)**
WHITE'S THIRD TABLE   **WHITE'S FOURTH TABLE**

fig. 10

There is no hitting a blot, no bar and no doubling in jacquet. You may block your opponent by simply occupying a point with one or more men. If a point is occupied by a man of one color, the opposing men may not land on that point.

The first man moved in jaquet, called the Postillon (**Le Postillon**), must reach the fourth table before any of the other men, together called the Talon

(**Le Talon**), can be moved. To avoid confusion, the Postillon is placed on the tip of the point it occupies until it enters the fourth table.

Note: A. If you occupy the last two points in your fourth table you may block your opponent on six points in a row. Otherwise five is the limit.

B. You can never block the other player in your second table (your opponent's last quarter) on all six points. Either one or two points must be left free; decide before you start the game. When playing jacquet with your Saitek computer, the variation where one point is left open is referred to as "G1", and the variation with two open points "G2" (see section 4.1).

In jacquet, you must always play the lower number of the roll first. If you cannot play it, then you must pass (even if you can play the higher number).

When doubles are rolled, you play the numbers rolled plus the numbers on the opposite side of the dice. For example, if you roll two '5's, you play 2, 2, 5, and 5 (2 is the number on the opposite side of the dice from 5).

On your Saitek Electronic Champion Backgammon computer you do not have to make the most of your move in jacquet, unlike backgammon (see section 1.3).

When bearing off in jacquet, men are placed on the opponent's starting point. You cannot bear off if that point is occupied. The starting positions for a new game exchange after each game.

Like backgammon, the winner in jacquet scores more points if the opponent is further behind, as follows:

Points	Meaning
1	The opponent has brought out at least one man
2	The loser has all men in the fourth table but has not brought any out
3	The loser has one or more men in the third table
4	The loser has one or more men in the second table
5	The loser has one or more men in the first table

2 . 2   Trictrac

The basic rules of trictrac are the same as those of jacquet; the starting position is the same, both sides move in the same direction, there is no hitting a blot, no bar and no doubling, and you do not need to make the most of your move. As in jacquet you can block a point with a single man. However the following rules apply in trictrac:

Men may begin to move at any time.

There is no limit to the number of men in any quarter or of the number of positions they hold.

A roll of '1' and '2' is called a 'trictrac', and the player moves 1, 1, 2, 2, 5, 5, 6, and 6 *in that order*. If there are no legal moves, remaining moves are lost. Doubles are treated as in backgammon (play the number four times).

Once a player has moved all 15 men to his fourth table he can begin bearing off; the rules for bearing off are identical to normal backgammon. Unlike backgammon, the winner in trictrac wins only one point, regardless of whether or not his opponent has borne any men off.

2 . 3   Moultezim

This variation, popular in Turkey, is similar to trictrac and jacquet: same initial position, counterclockwise movement, no blots, bars or doubling. However, the dice rolled may be played in any order, and the player must make the most of his moves. There are no special rolls, though doubles are treated as in backgammon (play the number four times).

In moultezim one man must travel to the third or fourth board before the rest may begin moving. You cannot occupy more than four points in your third table in front of the starting point of your opponent. In any of the other boards, you can block with as many men as you like. Bearing off and scoring are exactly as in backgammon, except that there is no doubling cube.

2.4 Plakoto

This version is especially popular in Greece. The board is divided into the same tables as in backgammon, although at the start of the game, all 15 men are placed on a single point on the opponent's inner table (see figure 11 below). The men move in the same manner as backgammon.

WHITE'S FIRST TABLE
15 WHITE MEN
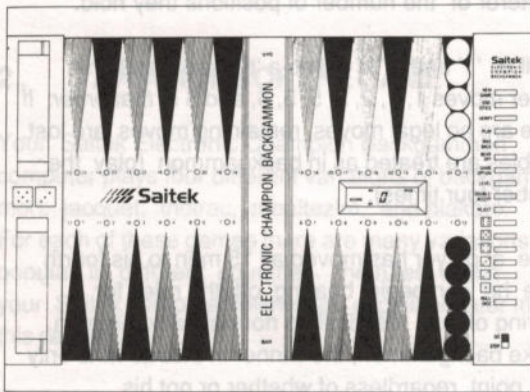
15 BLACK MEN
BLACK'S FIRST TABLE

fig. 11

In plakoto, when a blot (a single man on a point) is hit by the opponent, the man is not removed from the board and placed on the bar. Instead, it is **pinned**, i.e. it cannot move from that point until the opponent's man pinning it is removed. There is no doubling. Everything else - bearing off, scoring, etc. - is exactly as in backgammon.

WHITE'S SECOND TABLE   **WHITE'S FIRST TABLE**
(BLACK'S THIRD TABLE) **(BLACK'S FOURTH TABLE)**
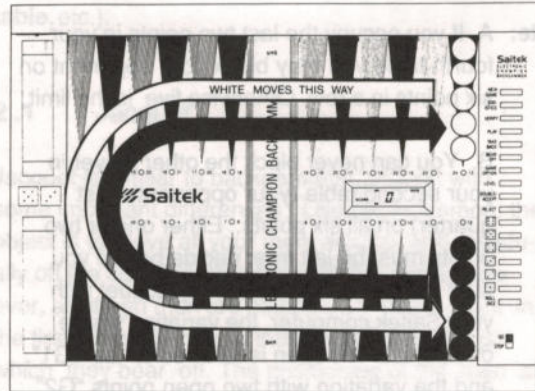
(BLACK'S SECOND TABLE)   **(BLACK'S FIRST TABLE)**
WHITE'S THIRD TABLE   **WHITE'S FOURTH TABLE**

fig. 12

3. YOUR ELECTRONIC CHAMPION BACKGAMMON COMPUTER

In this chapter you learn the basic operation of your Saitek Electronic Champion Backgammon computer - how to start a game, make moves, correct errors and generally understand all the things that might occur during a game.

3.1 Batteries

The computer operates on four standard AA batteries. We recommend alkaline cells as they give you over 100 hours of operating time. Insert the batteries into the compartment at the bottom of the set as shown in Fig. 1 and move the main switch to the **GO** position.

Electronic Champion Backgammon has an automatic power-off feature. If you do not press a key for about 10 minutes, the computer automatically turns itself off in order to conserve power. Move the main switch to **STOP** and back to **GO** to turn it back on (see section 3.14).

3.2 Playing against the computer

Arrange the men on the board in the starting position (see Figure 4), switch the computer on and press **NEW GAME** (if appropriate); you see the following display:

fig. 13

The LCD display is flashing "DICE" to tell you to press **ROLL DICE** to begin. The "64" indicates that the doubling cube is set to 64 and that both players have the option of doubling the stakes of the game.

If you see a different display or have trouble getting started in a normal game, it is possible that the computer has been set to a special function. Please see section 5 for details on special functions (section 4.1 explains how to choose your game option.
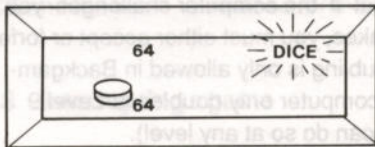
3.3 Starting the game

Remember that the dice are rolled to determine the moves made by each side. To begin playing, simply press **ROLL DICE.** You hear a beep, and two dice appear in the display: this is the result of the computer roll to determine who plays first. The left die shows Black's roll, and the right die shows White's. The player with the largest roll goes first. The computer normally plays as Black, but if you want the computer to play White, press **PLAY** and the computer will make the first move.

3.4 Making moves

In normal backgammon men move in a "U" around the board; White moves counterclockwise, Black clockwise (in reversed direction play, the other way around).

After rolling, decide which man you want to move, press down on that man (a beep and the light at the top of the point confirm that the computer recognizes your move), and move the man. Press the man down after it has been moved; you hear another beep and the light on that point flashes briefly. The die you have just played disappears from the LCD display. Play the second number in the same way to complete your move.

If you have rolled a double, the display shows a double frame around each die, indicating that you can make four moves. The second die frames disappear as you make each move. In normal backgammon, you can combine your rolls into one move, as long as you can legally take each one separately, e.g. 3, 4 becomes 7.

3.5 Hitting a blot

Remember that a single man on a point can be 'hit', meaning that it is placed on the bar and must enter from the start.

When **hitting a blot** (in normal backgammon this means moving to a point occupied by a single opponent man) the computer reminds you to remove that man and place it on the bar. When your man lands on the blot, you hear a beep and the four lights surrounding the bar come on. Now move the man being hit to the bar and press. One end of the bar is for white men, the other for black.

3.6 Bearing off

After you have moved all of your men to the home table, you begin removing them from the board. The first player to bear off completely wins.

When removing your men from the board or 'bearing off', press down on the man to be removed and then press **BEAR OFF** (the lights on the inner table flash briefly). Place the man in the rack. If playing jacquet, first press down the man to be removed, press **BEAR OFF** and then press the man down on the opponent's start point.

The computer makes sure you bear off correctly, depending on which game you are playing. If you

3.7 Computer moves

The computer tells you which man it wants to move with a light at the end of the point. Press one of the men on this point. A string of lights indicates the spot where the computer wants to move. Move the man to that point, and press. A beep indicates that the computer has accepted the move.

When bearing off, the computer turns on all the lights of the inner table. Press **BEAR OFF** to inform the computer that you have removed the man and placed it in the rack. In jacquet you must press the man down on the opponent's starting point, as indicated by the light.

3.8 Correcting errors (TAKE BACK)

If you make an illegal move, the computer sounds a low beep and refuses to accept it. Move to a legal point, or replace the man on its original point and press down to cancel the move.

If you have just made a move (or part of a move) and wish to change it, just press **TAKE BACK**. The computer helps you to retract the entire move, showing you which pieces moved last and where they came from. It even reminds you to replace men from the bar.

After you have taken back a move you can replay it differently. But you must key in the dice numbers before you do so (or press **ROLL DICE** again for a new roll).

Note: The trictrac move 1-1, 2-2, 5-5, 6-6 (see section 2.2) cannot be taken back.

If you do not understand why the computer will not accept a move, please consult Chapters 1 and 2 - the computer knows all the rules!

3.9 Pass

The computer instantly recognizes if you are unable to play all or part of your dice roll and automatically displays "PASS". Press **ROLL DICE** to continue the game. Note: if the computer can play its first move, but not the second, it makes the first move and is ready to **ROLL DICE** without displaying **PASS**.

3.10 Doubling

Remember that if the computer challenges you to double the stakes, you must either accept or forfeit the game. Doubling is only allowed in Backgammon, and the computer only doubles at Level 9 (although you can do so at any level).

When the computer wishes to double the stakes you hear a series of beeps and see a "2" flashing in the display. You can accept by pressing **DOUBLE/ACCEPT** to continue the game, or reject by pressing **REJECT**.

If you wish to double the stakes yourself, press **DOUBLE/ACCEPT** when it is your turn to roll. If the computer accepts, the new stake shows on the far left of the LCD display. If it doesn't accept, the computer ends the game and awards the stake to you.

When a double offer has been accepted, the display shows the current stake for the side that has the right to double (i.e. on the top of the display for Black and on the bottom for White). Doubling is not allowed in two player mode.

Remember that there is no doubling in trictrac, jacquet, plakoto or moultezim.

3.11 Scoring

At the end of the game the computer plays an "end of game" melody and shows you the cumulative score of the games played so far. The computer's score display is reset to 0 after 255.

In the case of a **gammon** (the loser has not been able to take off any men) the stake is doubled, and in the case of a **backgammon** (the loser has not taken off any men and has at least one man on the bar or in the opponent's inner table) the stakes are tripled. (See section 2.2 for jacquet scoring.)

3.12 NEW GAME

After a game is over you can reset the board by pressing **NEW GAME**. If you wish to clear the score (restart at 0) press **REJECT** *immediately after* you press **NEW GAME** (whenever the computer is flashing the score in the display you can press **REJECT** to reset it to 0). Otherwise just press **ROLL DICE** and the score is retained for the next game.

3.13 Interrupting a game

If you have to interrupt a game (or a match) just switch off the computer. It retains the last position and all game information in its unique long-term memory and is ready to continue where you left off when you switch on again - even weeks or months later.

3.14 Automatic power off

Your Saitek Electronic Champion Backgammon has an automatic power off circuit designed to conserve battery power. If no key or piece is pressed for about ten minutes, the computer automatically turns itself off. Switch off and on again to resume play.

3.15 Levels of play

Electronic Champion Backgammon has 10 levels of play which can be adjusted at any time during the game. Level 0 is for beginners; Level 9 is the strongest and is automatically set when you first switch on the machine.

Press **LEVEL** to see the level currently set. Press **REJECT** to change it and keep pressing until you find the level you want. Press **ACCEPT** when the level you want is displayed.

For games other than backgammon there is only one level, Level 5, which cannot be changed.

4. GAME OPTIONS

At the beginning of a game there are certain settings and parameters which you can change by pressing the key marked **GAME OPTION**. Every time you press this key a new option is displayed, and you can change it by pressing **REJECT** (or leave it unchanged and go on to the next by pressing **GAME OPTION** again). You can also press **ACCEPT** at any stage to confirm an option and return to the game.

These are the options in the order in which they appear when you press **GAME OPTION**:

4.1 Game

Choose one of the following:

G0 = normal backgammon
G1 = Jacquet 1 (with one free point in the last quarter)
G2 = Jacquet 2 (with two free points in the last quarter)
G3 = Trictrac
G4 = Moultezim
G5 = Plakoto

Press **REJECT** until the game you want appears. Pressing **GAME OPTION** or **ACCEPT** gets you back to the game. If you do not change the game, pressing **GAME OPTION** takes you to the next option. If you change games, the direction of play automatically resets to normal.

4.2 Strategy

Here you can choose how aggressive you want your opponent to be:

H0 = standard (optimum) strategy
H1 = conservative
H2 = aggressive

The strategy style option is only available for normal backgammon, not for the other games.

13

4.3   Sound

Choose between:

So = sound effects on
nS = no sound

4.4   Players

Normally you play against the computer, but two humans can also play against each other on the sensor board. Choose between:

1Pl = one player against the computer
2 PLAYERS = two human players with the computer monitoring the moves

If you set the second option, "2 PLAYERS" is permanently displayed during the game. See section 5.1 below for a description of how you can use the 2 player function to turn the computer into a teacher.

4.5   Direction of play

Choose between:

[= = normal counterclockwise direction of play
=] = reverse clockwise play

Notice that the starting position is altered with the direction of play. Use **VERIFY** to ensure that the pieces are properly located (see section 5.5).

4.6   Set up Mode

If you press down on any square on the board you enter Set up Mode and can enter a position for experiment and study. See section 5.6 below.

If you press **GAME OPTION** (or **ACCEPT**) once more then this mode is terminated and you return to a regular game.

4.7   Summary

Here is a summary of the game options:

A.   Game:
       Backgammon   G0
       Jacquet 1   G1
       Jacquet 2   G2
       Trictrac   G3
       Moultezim   G4
       Plakoto   G5

B.   Strategy (only backgammon):
       standard   H0
       conservative   H1
       aggressive   H2

C.   Sound:
       sound   So
       no sound   nS

D.   Players
       one player   1Pl
       two players   2 PLAYERS

E.   Direction of play:
       normal   [=
       reversed   =]

F.   Set up:
       Set up mode

Note: the computer automatically sets to a new game position if the type of game is changed.

5.   SPECIAL FEATURES

What you have learnt so far is enough to give you countless hours of pleasure with your Saitek Electronic Champion Backgammon computer. You can play six different games against the machine, correct errors, adjust the strategy and level of skill to suit your needs. But there are some more interesting features that make the computer even more versatile. This chapter deals with each of these features individually.

5.1 The computer as a teacher

You do not have to play against the computer all the time. You can also use it to monitor games between two people. Just switch to 2 player mode as described in section 4.4 above and play the games on the sensor board. Entering moves is exactly the same as in a regular game against the computer. Press **ROLL DICE** to use the electronic dice. The computer checks each move, making sure it is legal (great for teaching!), and keeps track of the score.

A very useful teaching feature is that, at any time during a two player game, you can consult the computer by pressing **STATISTICS** or **PLAY**. In the first case it gives you the pip count and hit probability (see section 5.3 below) and in the second it makes the move for the next player after the dice roll.

5.2 Changing sides/Advice from the computer

When playing against the computer you can change sides at any time by pressing **PLAY** instead of making a move. This is also an excellent way of getting advice from the computer. If you do not know what to do with a roll, press **PLAY** and the computer makes the move for you. Keep pressing **PLAY** instead of the points on the board if you only want to see the move the computer suggests (Hint function); in that case, the move is only displayed but not excuted. If you do press the points on the board, the moves are actually made, and the computer switches sides with you, continuing play with your men.

For trictrac dice, the computer still shows the first part of the hint (1, 1, 2, 2), after the player has executed it - you can then ask the computer to give advice for the second part.

If you press **ROLL DICE** and **PLAY** after every move, the computer plays the entire game against itself.

5.3 Statistics

Your Saitek Electronic Champion Backgammon computer has a special statistics function which gives you valuable information on the pipcount (an analysis of which side is ahead) and the chances of men being hit.

This function will help you to develop an understanding of the element of chance in backgammon, especially helpful in assessing risk to formulate strategies. As the element of chance is significant in backgammon, understanding probability is an important part of becoming an accomplished player (especially with regard to the chances of men being hit).

Pipcount

Pipcount refers to the total number of points that a player must move his men before they are all off the board. Both players start with a pipcount of 167, and work their way down through the course of the game. For example, after rolling a 3,1 combination, the player would then have a pipcount of 163 (his men have moved four points, and therefore reduced the total points remaining by four). When men are hit and placed on the bar, a player's pipcount can increase, as that man must re-enter the board and move back toward the home table.

The pipcount provides you with information as to which side is currently in the lead, which is important when considering doubling.

A good exercise for a player wishing to develop the ability to assess which side is leading is to try to estimate the difference in pipcount by examining the board, then check the estimate against the one which the computer provides.

Hit probability

In some situations being hit can cause you to lose the game, especially when your opponent is close to having all of his men in the home table (which means that he is close to beginning to bear off). This is especially true if your opponent has covered most or all of the points in his home table. This allows him to block you from re-entering from the bar while he begins bearing off.

This function is very useful in helping you to find a move which gives your opponent the least opportunity to hit one of your men.

The statistics are calculated based on 36 possible dice combinations (2 dice with 6 sides each, 6 times 6 equals 36). If a blot can be hit by a combination of 3 and 5, then the odds of the man being hit are actually 2 in 36, because both a 3,5 and a 5,3 combination allow for the same move (for statistical purposes, the two are considered different combinations). The odds for doubles, for example 1,1, are only 1 in 36, since there is only one possible combination which allows the same moves.

Detailed statistics

Press **STATISTICS** once; the computer shows which color is ahead and the pipcount (the number of points) by which he is leading. For example, the White symbol and "20" in the display means that White is ahead by 20. You can then press either **VERIFY** or **ACCEPT** to access further information.

Press **VERIFY** and the computer shows the score. To leave the score display, press any other key.

Press **ACCEPT**, and the computer scans the board, and shows the chances of any of your blots being hit or pinned. Here, the White symbol plus "12" means that there is a 12 in 36 chance that any white blot will be hit or pinned.

Press **ACCEPT** again and the computer shows the odds of any of the other side's blots being hit or pinned. Press **ACCEPT** repeatedly and the computer shows the chances of being hit or pinned for each of the individual blots, and exits when there are no more.

If you press **ROLL DICE** while the chance of being hit for each of the individual blots is shown, the computer shows precisely which dice combinations will hit or pin that blot. Press **ACCEPT** repeatedly to see the next combination, if any, or press any key except **ACCEPT** to show the hit probability of the next blot.

Press any key except **ACCEPT** while the computer shows the hit probability to leave Statistics Mode and return to normal play.

NOTE: A. Hit (pin) probability is available for plakoto and normal backgammon, but when playing trictrac, jacquet, and moultezim only the pipcount can be given, as no hitting is allowed in these games.

B. In the rare occasion that a possible dice combination cannot be used in a legal move to hit a blot, the actual hit probability is slightly lower.

C. When pipcount is on excess of 199, the computer's display starts again from 0.

5.4 Manual dice

You may sometimes feel that the computer is "cheating", i.e. that it is manipulating the rolls in its favor. This is completely unfounded - your Saitek Electronic Champion Backgammon Computer contains a very elaborate algorithm (which has been independently verified mathematically) to ensure that all throws are completely random. However, if it makes you feel better you can use the dice supplied with the set and enter the rolls manually. Just key in the roll using the dice input keys. Press **ROLL DICE** after entering both numbers.

5.5 Verifying the board position

If you have upset the men on the board, or for some reason are not sure that the position is correct, you can always ask the computer to show you the proper location of all the men on the board. Just press **VERIFY** repeatedly. At each press the computer turns on a point light and at the same time displays the number of men on that point in the LCD. You can tell the color of the men by the accompanying beep (high = white, low = black) and by the white/black display in the LCD. Men on the bar are indicated by the four lights next to the bar, those that have borne off with all the lights of the last table. When you have finished verifying press any key to return to the game.

5.6 Setting up a special position

You may want to experiment and set up a specific board position. To do so, enter Set up Mode as described in section 4.7 above (press **GAME**

OPTION until "SET UP" appears in the display). Set up always begins with an empty board. Pressing down on a point enters a man there. Use **REJECT** to change colors (watch the display). Press **GAME OPTION** when you are finished. You can play on immediately from the position you have entered.

You cannot enter more than 15 men for each side. If you enter less than 15 the computer assumes that the rest have borne off.
Here are some things to watch out for:

Jacquet

The position must be legal, otherwise the computer refuses to accept it. Remember that if one man (the Postillon) is not in the final quarter the other 14 men (the Talon) must be in the starting position. The number of free points in the second table must be at least 1 (for jacquet 1) or 2 (for jacquet 2), and you cannot set up a position with more than five consecutive points occupied by men of the same color if that side does not occupy the last two points of his fourth table (see the jacquet rules in section 2.1).

Plakoto

To set up a pinned man, first enter a man of one color, then put a man or men of the other color over it. The blinking light indicates that the man is pinned.

When in Set up Mode, pressing **NEW GAME** clears the board and begins the set up again. If you press **GAME OPTION** immediately after pressing **NEW GAME**, you clear the board and leave Set up Mode. If you exit Set up Mode with an empty board, the computer sets up the starting position of the selected game, since it is of little use to start playing with an empty board.

6.   TECHNICAL DETAILS

6.1   The ACL key

If the computer fails to respond after you have inserted the batteries or connected it to the mains supply — static discharge can sometimes cause it to "hang up" — use a pin or a paper clip to press the

ACL key in the back of the computer to reset it. It is advisable to hold this key depressed for a few seconds. This resets the computer and all game options.

6.2   Changing batteries

Weak batteries should always be replaced promptly as they might leak and cause damage to the computer. Always remove the batteries if you plan not to use the set for a while.

6.3   Care and maintenance

Your Saitek Electronic Champion Backgammon computer is a precision electronic device and should not be subjected to rough handling or exposed to extreme temperatures or moisture. Do not use chemical agents to clean the set as these may damage the plastic.

6.4   Technical specifications

Program memory:	16 Kbytes
LCD display:	48 segments
LED lights:	24 lights on game board
Keys:	17
Switches:	**GO/STOP, ACL**
Sound:	Piezo-electric buzzer
Power consumption:	90 mW
Batteries:	4 penlite (AA/AM3/R6)
Battery life:	100 operating hours
Memory:	Up to 1 year of memory when stopped
Size:	360 x 270 x 27 mm
Weight:	900 grams (without batteries)
Accessories:	17 magnetic white men
	17 magnetic black men
	2 dice

Saitek reserves the right to make technical changes without notice in the interest of progress.

7. TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE

SYMPTOMS	POSSIBLE CAUSES	WHAT YOU SHOULD DO
1. The unit will not turn on	Batteries weak or dead	Replace batteries
	Batteries not inserted properly	See Fig.1
	Battery connection poor	Check battery connection
2. Wrong display on LCD	Batteries dead	Replace batteries; if error persists, consult your Service Center
3. Segments in display dim	Batteries weak	Replace batteries
4. No response or improper response	Batteries dead	Replace batteries
	Electrostatic discharge	Press **ACL** key (see section 6.1 for details); if error persists, consult Service Center
5. Will not accept move	Move is illegal	Re-enter legal move (see Chapters 1 and 2 for details on rules)
6. You have no further legal move but computer does not give out a pass signal	Previous move does not make full use of roll (see section 1.3, 2.3 or 2.4 for details)	Take back and make the move that fully uses your dice
7. Cannot take back	Player has passed all the dice rolled	Continue to play
	The move is trictrac	See section 3.8

18