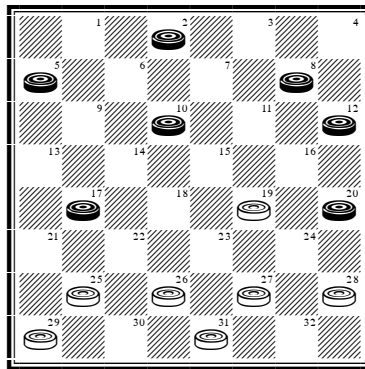


Americans in Ryde

Pat McCarthy



Asa Long: to play and win

Asa Long's victory in the 1984 British Open Draughts Championship

Annotated by Richard Pask

INTRODUCTION

In 1922, at the age of 18, Asa Long won the US National tournament: to this day, the youngest ever winner. In July 1984, just shy of his 80th birthday, he won again (ignoring countless victories in between!): to this day, the oldest ever winner!

In September of 1984 he, along with Charles Brumfiel, James Guthrie, Harry Koff, Charles Walker and Norman Wexler, travelled from the USA to the Isle of Wight in England to compete in the British Open Championship. With 64 entries all playing in just one section, it took four days (of the five) for Asa to take the lead, but on the final day he convincingly secured victory, defeating both Pat McCarthy and Harry Koff.

The final standings were as follows:

1st: Asa Long: 29 points

2nd: Richard Pask: 27 points (235 honour points)

3rd: Norman Wexler: 27 points (234 honour points)

4th: Pat McCarthy: 26 points (243 honour points)

5th =: Bill Edwards: 26 points (240 honour points)

5th =: Harry Koff: 26 points) (240 honour points)

7th: Danny Shields: 25 points (beat Harwood)

8th: Dave Harwood: 25 points

9th: Tom Landry: 24 points (238 honour points)

10th: Con McCarrick: 24 points (229 honour points)

11th: David Glennie: 24 points (220 honour points)

12th: Charles Walker: 24 points (217 honour points)

13th: Fred Bucky: 24 points (207 honour points)

Having defeated Pat McCarthy, Bill Edwards and Harry Koff, and narrowly failed to defeat Richard Pask, there can be no doubt at all that the best player won.

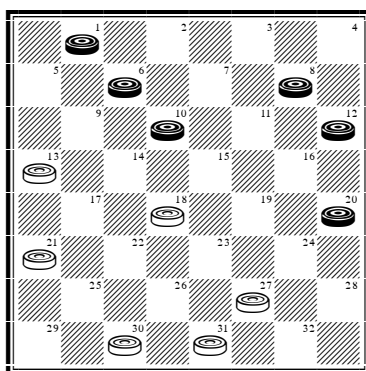
In addition to his impressive manner and appearance at the board, throughout the tournament Asa made everything look easy: never moving hastily (perhaps once in Game 15!) but never remotely getting into time trouble. In addition, as a careful review of the following 20 games will show, he displayed his usual thematic style in the opening and midgame and masterly technique in the endgame. Enjoy!

Richard Pask (21st May 2026).

Game 1/20. Round 1, Game 1. 24th September 1984

Black: J. Pendray; White: A. Long

9-14 22-17; 11-16 25-22; 16-20 22-18; 8-11 18-9; 5-14 **(A)** 29-25; 11-15 25-22; 7-11 17-13; 4-8 24-19 **(B)**; 15-24 28-19; 11-15 32-28; 15-24 28-19; 10-15? **(C)** 19-10; 6-15 22-18; 15-22 26-10; 2-6 10-7; 3-10 23-18 **(D)**
Forms Position: Black to play.



Continue: 8-11 **(E)** 18-14; 10-17 21-14; 11-16 14-9; 6-10 9-6; 10-15 6-2; 15-19 2-7; 19-24 7-11; 1-5 30-25; 24-28 27-24; 20-27 11-20. **White wins.**

Notes

A: Key Landing Number 1.

B: Mr Long's favourite line of the *Pioneer*. He has played it on countless occasions.

C: A radical exchange which looks like a loser and is. Instead, 8-11 is the standard draw. W. Hellman vs. A. Long 1948: CC: RH #542.

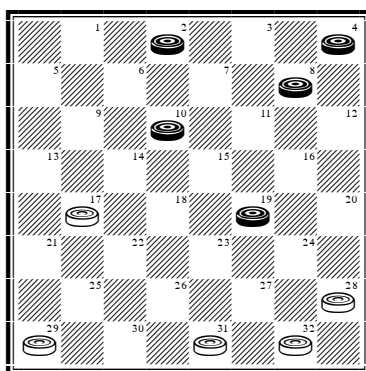
D: White now dominates the centre.

E: Against 12-16, which gains a tempo on 8-11 in getting to square 19, White wins with 21-17 (Not 18-14?).

Game 2/20. Round 1, Game 2. 24th September 1984

Black: A. Long; White: J. Pendray

9-14 22-17; 11-16 25-22; 16-19 **(A)** 24-15; 10-19 23-16; 12-19 17-10; 6-15 27-24; 1-6 21-17; 5-9 22-18; 15-22 24-15; 9-13 **(B)** 30-25 **(C)**; 7-10 25-18; 13-22 **(D)** 26-17; 10-19 18-14 **(E)**; 6-10 14-7; 3-10 **Forms Position: White to play.**



Continue: ... 32-27 **(F)**; 8-11 29-25; 4-8 25-21; 10-15 27-24; 19-23 24-19; 15-24 28-19; 8-12 17-14; 11-16 19-15. **Drawn.**

Notes

A: The *Double-Corner Dyke*. It could be argued, as Norman Wexler remarked to me that, whereas with the *Pioneer* White gets pushed around all over the place, here Black is pro-active. Ultimately, it is just a matter of taste.

B: Of course this is sound, but 7-10 is favoured after 30-25; 10-19 25-18; 6-10 32-27 to a draw. M. Tinsley vs. E. Fuller 1976: CC: RH #564.

C: 32-27 is stronger after 7-10 27-24; 10-19 24-15; 2-7 30-25; 7-10 25-18; 13-22! (Not 10-19?: P. McCarthy vs. P. Davis 1983) 26-17; 10-19 18-14 to a draw: E. Frazier vs. W. Hellman 1967. The continuation, notes courtesy of *KingsRow*, points to the immense power of the modern endgame databases: 19-23 17-13; 8-11 (6-10 is easier) 14-9; 6-10 9-6; 10-14 6-2; 14-17 13-9; 4-8? (Loses. 17-22 and 11-16 draw) 9-5? (2-6 wins); 17-22 2-6; 3-7? (Loses. 23-26 and 11-16 draws) 6-9? (6-2 wins);

11-16 9-14; 23-26 5-1; 7-11? (Loses. 26-30 draws) 1-6? (29-25 wins); 26-30 14-10; 8-12 10-14; 30-25 28-24; 25-30 6-10; 11-15 10-19; 16-23 24-19; 30-25 19-15; 23-26 14-18; 26-30. Drawn.

D: 10-19? would again be hasty!

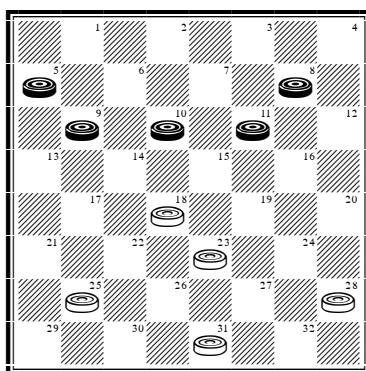
E: 29-25 to a draw: W. Hellman vs. W. Ryan 1949.

F: Totally routine from here to the end.

Game 3/20. Round 2, Game 1. 24th September 1984

Black: J. Latham; White: A. Long

10-15 24-20; 15-19 (A) 23-16; 12-19 27-24; 7-10 24-15; 10-19 21-17;
11-15 32-27; 6-10 17-14; 9-18 26-23; 19-26 30-7; 3-10 20-16; 8-11 (B)
16-7; 2-11 22-18; 15-22 25-18; 4-8 29-25; 5-9 27-23; 1-5 Forms
Position: White to play.



Continue: ... 28-24 (C); 8-12 25-22; 10-14 (D) 24-20; 12-16 (E) 31-27;
16-19 (E) 23-7; 14-32 7-2; 9-13 2-6; 5-9. Drawn.

Notes

A: Being extremely knowledgeable in the field of 2-movers, this ballot was no doubt warmly welcomed by Mr Latham.

B: Mr Long won with this exchange twice in the 1927 (!) 2nd International Match, good alternatives being available with 8-12, 10-14 and 5-9.

C: 31-27 might fairly be described as the normal continuation, but I suspect Asa didn't want to reveal the draw after 8-12 25-21; 10-14 as shown in the next game and so came up with an alternative.

D: The 9-14 18-9; 5-14 exchange is nondescript in itself, but it does allow White to employ a quintuple squeeze play to draw with 22-18

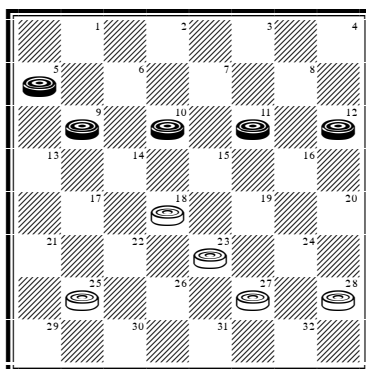
(1); 14-17 18-14 (2); 10-15 23-19 (3); 15-18 19-15 (4); 11-16 24-20 (5);
16-19 20-16. Drawn!

E: The 9-13 exchange loses at these points but was never going to be played by someone of Mr Latham's class.

Game 4/20. Round 2, Game 2. 24th September 1984

Black: A. Long; White: J. Latham

10-15 24-20; 15-19 23-16; 12-19 27-24; 7-10 24-15; 10-19 21-17; 11-15 32-27; 6-10 17-14; 9-18 26-23; 19-26 30-7; 3-10 20-16; 8-11 16-7; 3-10 22-18; 15-22 25-18; 5-9 29-25; 4-8 27-23; 8-12 31-27; 1-5 **Forms**
Position: White to play.



Continue: ... 28-24 (A); 9-13 (B) 24-20; 12-16 (C) 25-21; 10-15 18-14; 15-19 23-18; 19-23 27-24; 23-27 14-10; 27-32 18-15; 11-18 20-11.
Drawn.

Notes

A: My preference is 25-21; 10-14 27-24; 9-13 18-9; 5-14 24-20 (24-19? lost: A. Long vs. T. Goldsboro 1927 2nd International Match) 13-17 28-24; 17-22 24-19; 22-25 21-17!; 14-21 23-18. Drawn. S. Cohen vs. A. Heffner 1927: CC: RH #1441.

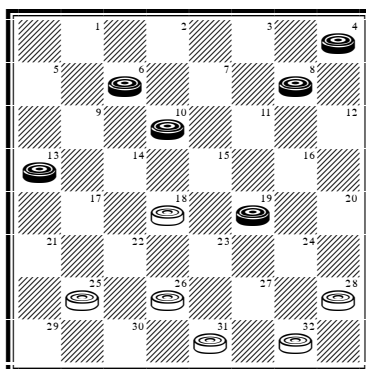
B: 10-14 could transpose into Note A after 24-20; 14-17 25-21; 9-14 18-9; 5-14 27-24 same.

C: Black has several playable options, but nothing of great strength.

Game 5/20. Round 3, Game 1. 25th September 1984

Black: T. Landry; White: A. Long

11-15 21-17; 9-14 (A) 25-21; 15-19 24-15; 10-19 23-16; 12-19 17-10; 6-15 21-17; 5-9 27-24; 1-6 22-18; 15-22 24-15; 7-10 (B) 30-25; 10-19 25-18; 9-13? (C) 17-14; 2-7 29-25; 7-10 14-7; 3-10 Forms Position: White to play.



Continue ... 32-27 (D); 8-12 25-21; 4-8 18-14; 10-17 21-14; 8-11 27-24; 11-15 24-20. White wins.

Notes

A: The third 2-move ballot in a row.

B: As mentioned in Game 2, when followed up correctly this is easier than 9-13.

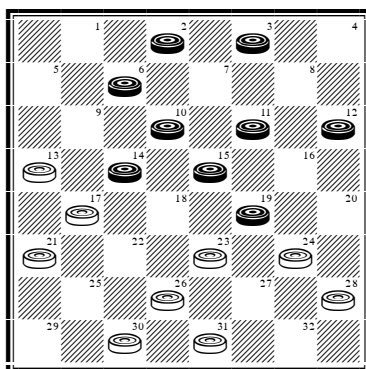
C: 6-10 is essential. The text loses, allowing White to dominate the centre.

D: From here it's simply a matter of White timing his moves correctly – something which Mr Long invariably does to perfection.

Game 6/20. Round 3, Game 2. 25th September 1984

Black: A. Long; White: T. Landry

11-15 21-17; 9-14 25-21; 15-19 24-15; 10-19 23-16; 12-19 17-10; 6-15 (A)
21-17 (B); 5-9 29-25; 1-6 27-24; 7-10 25-21; 8-12 32-27; 4-8 17-13; 9-14
22-17; 8-11 27-23 (B) Forms Position: Black to play.



Continue: 3-7 (C) 23-16; 11-27 31-24; 12-16 (D) 24-19; 16-23 26-19; 15-
24 28-19; 7-11 30-26 (E); 11-15 19-16; 14-18 16-11; 18-22 26-23; 22-26
17-14; 10-17 21-14; 26-30 (F) 11-8; 30-25 8-3; 15-19 23-16; 6-10 14-7; 2-
20. Drawn.

Notes

A: After this series of exchanges it will be seen that Black is ahead in development – typically a disadvantage in the opening. On the plus side, Black has established a man on square 19 and has better control of the centre. The student should thus see that the game of checkers contains many conflicting elements and that it is dangerous to become obsessed with any particular one. Incidentally, although Derek Oldbury was the first author to deal with the development aspect in depth in *Move Over* – Dr Harry Langman had alluded to it in an earlier article in *Elam's Checker Board* – every master player who has ever lived has necessarily been aware of it.

B: The 15 moves given here can be played in many different orders and are entirely thematic – Black developing a dyke formation while White waits.

C: The break with 2-7 is also good. Interestingly, 11-16 will draw too.

D: As mentioned under CC: RH #566, against 7-11 26-23 draws.

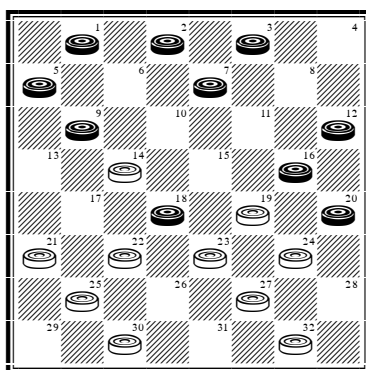
E: 30-25 also draws: N. Banks vs. J. Ferrie 1927.

F: Or 26-31 to a draw: N. Banks vs. G. O'Connor 1927.

Game 7/20. Round 4, Game 1. 25th September 1984

Black: A. Long; White: D. Retallick

10-15 21-17; 15-18 22-15; 11-18 23-14; 9-18 24-19; 8-11 17-14 **(A)**; 11-16 26-23; 6-9 31-26; 4-8 25-21 **(B)**; 16-20 **(C)** 28-24; 8-11 29-25; 11-16 26-22 **Forms Position: Black to play.**



Continue: 1-6 **(D)** 22-15; 9-18 23-14; 16-23 27-18; 20-27 32-23; 7-10 14-7; 3-26 30-23; 12-16 **(E)** 18-15; 6-10 15-6; 2-9 21-17; 16-20 17-13; 9-14 13-9; 14-17 9-6; 17-21 25-22; 21-25 22-17; 25-30 23-19. **Drawn.**

Notes

A: Although 17-13 is objectively the strongest move, this is a good alternative, transposing into **11-15 22-17; 15-18** 23-14; 9-18 17-14; 10-17 21-14; 8-11 24-19 same.

B: 28-24; 16-20 25-21 (32-28: CC: RH #1506; 26-22: CC: RH #1507) is a more forceful and better order of moves.

C: As Black now has a good option with 9-13.

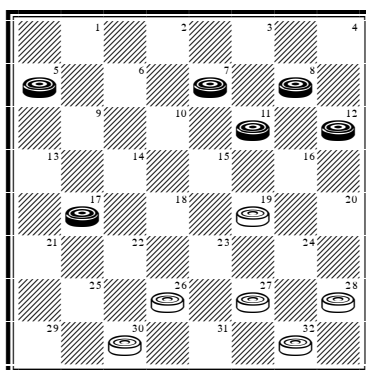
D: From 11-16 at the 11th move until 26-22 at the 22nd, both sides have been thematically working towards this break up (2-6 draws similarly). This is strongly reminiscent of **11-16 22-17; 8-11** 17-14; 9-18 23-14; 10-17 21-14; 4-8 26-23; 16-19 24-15; 11-18 28-24; 8-11 24-19; 11-16 31-26; 6-9 26-22 followed by 1-6.

E: Nothing to it now.

Game 8/20. Round 4, Game 2. 25th September 1984

Black: D. Retallick; White: A. Long

10-15 21-17; 15-18 22-15; 11-18 23-14; 9-18 24-19; 8-11 17-13; 4-8 (A) 26-23 (B); 6-10? (C) 23-14; 10-17 25-21 (D); 2-6 21-14; 6-9 13-6; 1-17 29-25; 7-10 25-21 (E); 3-7 (F) 21-14; 10-17 31-26 **Forms Position: Black to play.**



Continue: 11-16 (G) 28-24; 16-23 27-18 (H); 5-9 24-19 (H); 9-13 19-15; 7-11 15-10; 11-16 10-7; 16-19 7-3; 8-11 (I) 26-22; 17-26 30-7. White wins.

Notes

A: 7-10 is standard and by far the best move. Although this looks awful, *KingsRow* rates it as sound. I don't expect it to be adopted any time soon!

B: The natural squeeze.

C: Now into a loss, with the horrible-looking 6-9 being required to draw.

D: Keeping up the relentless pressure.

E: A clever squeeze.

F: Against 17-22, 21-17 is overpowering.

G: 5-9 and 7-10 get shot, while 17-21 loses to 27-23.

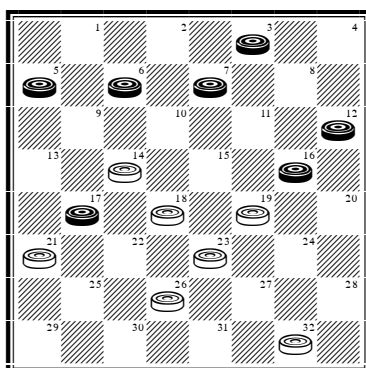
H: As in Games 1 and 5, White dominates the centre.

I: Falling into the shot, but Black's position is hopeless anyway.

Game 9/20. Round 5, Game 1. 26th September 1984

Black: A. Long; White: J. Guthrie

11-15 22-17; 9-13 17-14 (A); 10-17 21-14; 8-11 24-19 (B); 15-24 28-19; 11-16 25-21; 4-8 (C) 29-25; 6-9 26-22; 9-18 22-15; 7-11 (D) 31-26 (E); 11-18 23-14; 16-23 26-19; 8-11 25-22; 2-7 (F) 22-18; 11-16 27-23 (G); 13-17 (H) 30-26; 1-6 Forms Position: White to play.



Continue: ... 14-9? (I); 6-13 21-14; 7-10 (J) 14-7; 3-10 26-22; 16-20 18-15; 10-14 15-10; 20-24 22-18; 24-27 18-9; 5-14 19-15; 12-16 10-6; 27-31. Black wins.

Notes

A: Strongly favoured by Derek Oldbury, but really just a matter of taste.

B: Forming the *Boston*. Instead, 25-21; 4-8 24-19; 15-24 28-19; 11-16 runs into the game as played, while 23-19 transposes into **11-15 23-19; 8-11 22-17; 9-13 17-14; 10-17 21-14**: the *Mixed*.

C: The immediate 6-9 is my preference (CC: RH #1497), but the text is on a par.

D: Squeezing to reduce the pieces, but Hellman's 5-9 is better: CC: RH #1500.

E: The conservative choice. Instead, 15-10! mixes things up: W. Hellman vs. N. Banks 1939. Note that Hellman's 5-9 was created as a result of this game. After 15-10; 2-7 (16-20 is easier) 27-24; 7-14 24-20; 14-18 23-14; 16-23 31-27; 12-16 27-18; 16-19 14-10; 19-23 25-22 gave Banks the playing edge.

F: Better than ancient play by J. Tonar which gives 1-6.

G: The rebound shot with 30-25 draws easily here.

H: An unpleasant invasion.

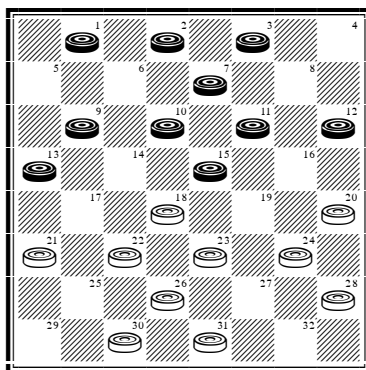
I: Loses. 32-27 draws but is not choice looking!

J: The sequel to 2-7. White's pieces are caught in a logjam.

Game 10/20. Round 5, Game 2. 26th September 1984

Black: J. Guthrie; White: A. Long

11-15 22-17; 9-13 24-20 (A); 13-22 25-11; 8-15 29-25; 4-8 25-22; 5-9 23-18; 8-11 27-24; 9-13 (B) 32-27; 6-9 27-23 **Forms Position: Black to play.**



Continue: 1-5 (C) 24-19; 15-24 28-19; 9-14 18-9; 5-14 22-18; 13-17? (D) 18-9; 11-15 21-14; 15-24 30-25; 10-17 25-21; 12-16 21-14!; 24-28 20-11; 7-16 23-18; 28-32 9-6; 2-9 14-5. White wins.

Notes

A: The *Wagram*, Mr Long's preference. And mine.

B: I designated this 'inferior' to 10-14 in CC: RH and given that its adoption has led to many Black wins this might fairly be held to be the case. However, see Note C! After 10-14 we have 26-23; 7-10 30-26; 9-13 (3-7 32-27; 1-5 24-19; 15-24 28-19; 9-13 18-9; 5-14 and the 19-15 shot to an unforced White win: J. McCarthy vs. A. Long 1983) 18-9; 1-5 24-19; 5-14 19-16; 12-19 23-7; 2-11 22-17; 13-22 26-17 15-18?! (3-8 to a draw: L. Ginsberg vs. A. Long 1929. CC: RH #467.) to an unforced White win: W. Edwards vs. A. Long 1973.

C: The diagrammed position frequently arises with the colours reversed from **10-15 22-18; 15-22 25-18; 9-13 29-25; 11-15 18-11; 8-15 25-22; 4-8 23-18; 8-11 27-23; 5-9 24-20; 6-10 28-24; 1-5 same.** Strangely enough, from this ballot the better 23-19 (rather than 32-28) is invariably played, leading to an easy draw after 11-16 20-11; 7-23 26-19; 3-7 18-11; 7-23 31-26; 9-14 26-19 2-7 to a draw: T. Watson vs. E.

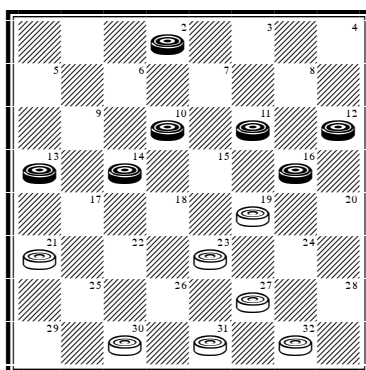
Lowder 1989: CC: RH #1311. However, from the *Wagram*, the weaker text is usually played (!), transposing into **9-13 24-19; 10-14** with the colours reversed after 24-19; 15-24 28-19; 9-14 18-9; 5-14 22-18; 14-17 21-14; 10-17 same. Analysis by W. Hellman: CC: RH #378.

D: A blunder which loses immediately, the unappetising 14-17 being forced.

Game 11/20. Round 6, Game 1. 26th September 1984

Black: A. Long; White: R. Pask

11-16 22-18; 7-11 24-19; 3-7 25-22; 11-15 18-11; 8-24 28-19; 4-8 (A) 29-25; 8-11 (C) 22-18; 9-13 26-22; 6-9 18-15; 11-18 22-6; 1-10 25-22; 9-14 22-18; 7-11 18-9; 5-14 Forms Position: White to play.



Continue: ... 30-25; 2-7 25-22; 14-17 21-14; 10-16 31-22; 16-20 23-18; 7-10 22-17 (D); 13-22 18-15; 11-18 27-24; 20-27 32-27 (E). Drawn.

Notes

A: *KingsRow* shows an interesting internal transposition here. Namely, 7-11 22-18 (B); 10-14 29-25; 6-10 26-22; 4-8 18-15; 11-18 22-6; 1-10 25-22; 8-11 22-18; 9-13 18-9; 5-14 is an alternative, sound way to reach the diagrammed position.

B: Against 22-17 Black draws with 10-14 17-10; 6-24 27-20; 2-7 23-18; 9-14 18-9; 5-14 29-25; 16-19 25-22 and now 7-10! avoids 4-8? and the loss of Note C. Analysis by *KingsRow*.

C: But now 7-11? fails after 22-17; 10-14 17-10; 6-24 27-20; 2-7 23-18; 9-14 18-9; 5-14 25-22; 16-19 22-18! (the extra tempo makes all the difference); 14-23 31-27; to a White win. *KingsRow* once more.

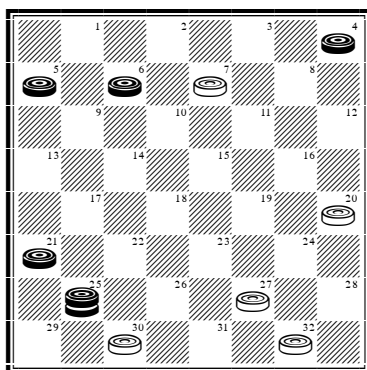
D: David Glennie, who was watching this game, looked quite excited when he saw this shot being executed. But of course it's only a draw.

**E: Much-repeated published play. M. Tinsley vs A. Cameron 1954: CC:
RH #1957.**

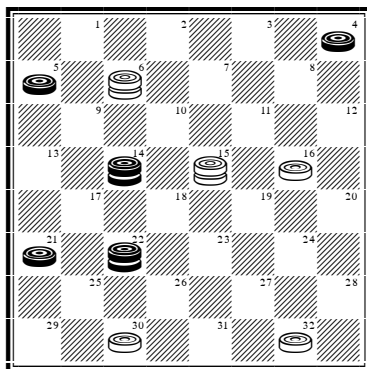
Game 12/20. Round 6, Game 2. 26th September 1984

Black: R. Pask; White: A. Long

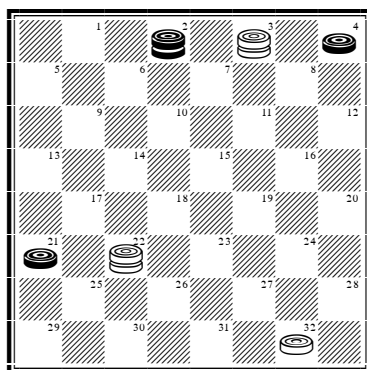
11-16 22-18; 7-11 25-22; 3-7 29-25; 16-19 24-15; 10-19 23-16; 12-19 21-17; 9-13 17-14; 6-10 25-21 (A); 10-17 21-14; 1-6 27-24; 11-15 18-11; 8-15 14-10; 7-14 22-18; 14-23 31-27; 15-18 24-15; 13-17 (B) 26-19; 18-22 15-11; 17-21 19-16; 22-25 28-24; 25-29 24-20; 29-25 11-7; 2-11 16-7
Forms Position: Black to play.



Continue: 25-22? (C) 7-3; 22-17 20-16 (D); 17-14 3-7; 6-9 7-11; 9-13 11-15; 13-17 16-11 (E); 17-22 11-7 (E); 22-25 7-3 (E); 14-17 3-7; 25-29 7-10; 29-25 27-24; 25-22 24-20; 17-13 10-6; 13-17 20-16; 17-14
Forms Position: White to play.



Continue: ... 15-11? **(F)**; 22-18 16-12 **(G)**; 21-25 30-21; 14-17 21-14; 18-2 **(H)** 12-8; 5-9 8-3; 9-13 11-15; 13-17 15-18; 17-21 18-22 **Forms**
Position: Black to play.



Continue: 2-6 32-27; 6-9 27-23; 9-6 23-19; 6-9 19-16; 9-6 16-11; 6-2 3-8; 2-7 11-2; 4-11 22-18; 11-16 18-23; 16-20 23-27; 21-25 2-7; 25-30 7-10; 30-25 27-32; 25-21 10-14; 20-24 14-18; 21-17 18-15; 17-14 15-19; 24-28 19-15; 14-9! **(I). Drawn.**

Notes

A: ‘Must find something new,’ said Asa under his breath. Although old play, it was new to me, so for all intents and purposes it was new! Needless to say, this strategy – wrapping up old as new – is a very worthy and totally legitimate one. It is one of the key tools of the masters.

B: Displaying terrible judgement. Employing elimination properly, this should have been dismissed and the correct 4-8 26-19; 2-7 played by default. Analysis by W. Ryan & J. Bradford: CC: RH #1848.

C: Incredibly, *KingsRow* shows that 4-8! holds the draw at this point.

D: Rightly dismissed as hopeless for Black by Willie Ryan in Volume 1, Page 22 of his *American Checkerist*.

E: The 15-18; 14-23 27-18 exchange would have won more easily at these points.

F: Missing the win with 6-2! Asa was definitely not amused. (I heard him!)

G: 11-7?? was too much to hope for.

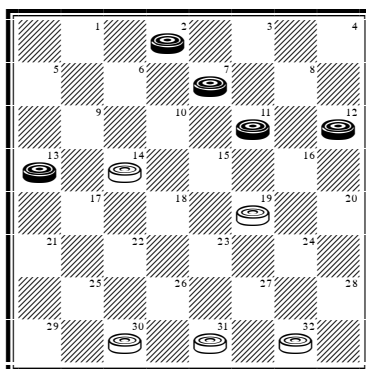
H: Still not pleasant looking for Black, but the draw is there nevertheless.

I: One of those 'Long' games.

Game 13/20. Round 7, Game 1. 27th September 1984

Black: W. Edwards; White: A. Long

9-13 24-19; 6-9 22-18; 11-15 18-11; 8-24 28-19; 9-14 25-22; 4-8 29-25; 8-11 22-18; 11-16 (A) 18-9; 5-14 25-22; 1-5 22-18; 3-8 (B) 18-9; 5-14 23-18; 14-23 27-18; 16-23 26-19; 8-11 (C) 18-14; 10-17 21-14 **Forms**
Position: Black to play.



Continue: 11-16 14-10 (D); 7-14 31-27; 16-23 27-9; 12-16 9-5; 16-19; 32-27; 13-17 5-1; 17-22 1-5; 2-7 5-9; 7-11 9-14; 11-16 14-18; 19-23 (E) 18-25 23-32. Drawn.

Notes

A: This and the 1-6 defence are about equally popular, the latter having greater utility.

B: The 14-17 exchange is perfectly sound but allows more scope.

C: The exchange with 13-17, as played in the 1973 3rd International Match (E. Markusic vs. G. Davies), loses after both 31-26! and 32-27! in reply.

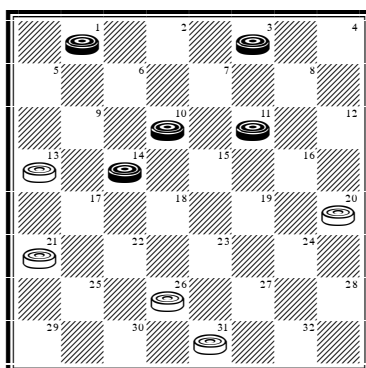
D: Both this and 14-9 are covered under Lesson 317 of CC: IH.

E: 22-26 30-23; 19-26 18-23; 26-31? (26-30 draws) loses but is scarcely relevant.

Game 14/20. Round 7, Game 2. 27th September 1984

Black: A. Long; White: W. Edwards

9-13 24-19; 6-9 27-24; 9-14 22-17 (A); 13-22 25-9; 5-14 29-25; 11-15 25-22; 7-11 22-18 (B); 15-22 26-17; 11-15 24-20; 15-24 28-19; 8-11 30-26; 11-15 32-28; 15-24 28-19; 4-8 17-13; 8-11 19-16; 12-19 23-7; 2-11 Forms Position: White to play.



Continue: ... 13-9 (C); 10-15 26-23; 15-18 21-17; 18-27 17-10; 27-32 9-6; 11-15 6-2; 15-19 2-7 (D); 32-28 31-26? (E); 19-24 26-22; 24-27 22-17; 27-31 17-13; 31-26 13-9; 26-22 9-6; 22-18 6-2; 18-14 2-6; 28-24 20-16; 24-19 16-12; 19-23 6-2; 23-26 2-6; 26-22 6-2; 22-17 2-6; 17-13 6-2; 13-9 (F). Black wins.

Notes

A: Also arising from **10-14 24-19; 6-10 22-17; 9-13 27-24** same, this line doesn't carry the same force as 22-18. Mr Edwards was of course well aware of this and no doubt seeking originality.

B: Also played in the 3rd International Match of 1973, this move transfers the advantage to Black. Better would have been 32-27 seeking 3-7? (P. McCarthy vs. E. Lowder 1983) or 31-27 (W. Edwards vs. T. Watson 1987: CC: RH #308.).

C: 26-23; 10-15 13-9 comes to the same thing, but 26-22? loses to both 1-6! and 10-15! while 31-27? loses to both 1-6! and 14-18!

D: White's best drawing plan would have been to crown the man on square 20 as quickly as possible, playing either 2-6 or 20-16, then when Black had obtained two kings, to leave the man on square 31.

The details of this draw are shown in CC: IH, Lesson 298. Although the move played is sound, it wastes time apropos this plan.

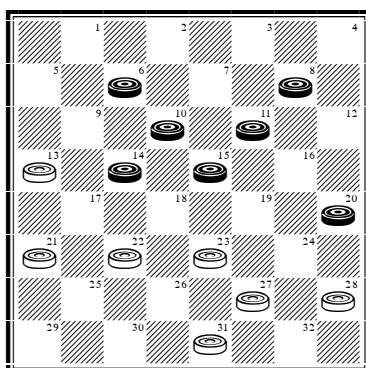
E: Now into a loss. See CC: IH, Lesson 294.

F: Mr Long's mastery of bridge endgames was legendary.

Game 15/20. Round 8, Game 1. 27th September 1984

Black: A. Long; White: C. Walker

12-16 22-18; 16-19 24-15; 10-19 23-16; 11-20 25-22; 6-10 29-25; 1-6 27-23; 8-11 32-27; 10-15 **(A)** 18-14; 9-18 23-14; 6-9 26-23; 9-18 23-14; 7-10 14-7; 3-10 22-17; 5-9 30-26; 9-14 17-13; 2-6 25-22? **(B)**; 4-8 **(C)** 26-23
Forms Position: Black to play.



Continue: 11-16? **(D)** 22-18! **(E)**; 15-22 31-26; 22-31 21-17; 14-21 23-18; 31-24 28-3; 10-15 18-11; 6-10. **Drawn.**

Notes

A: A fine, original thematic move, completely in keeping with the main lines of this ballot, which Asa apparently found over the board.

B: A loser. Instead, 27-23!; 11-16 25-22; 4-8 is sound, transposing into **12-16 22-18; 16-19 (!)** 24-15; 10-19 23-16; 11-20 25-22; 6-10 22-17; 8-11 29-25; 1-6 17-13; 10-15 25-22; 7-10 26-23; 3-7 28-24; 4-8 24-19; 15-24 32-28; 9-14 28-19; 14-17 21-14; 10-26 31-22; 6-10! 22-17; 8-12 30-25 same with the colours reversed!

C: Now a published win from **12-16 22-18; 16-19 (!)** 24-15; 10-19 23-16; 11-20 25-22; 6-10 22-17; 8-11 29-25; 1-6 17-13; 10-15 25-22; 7-10 26-23; 3-7 28-24; 4-8 24-19; 15-24 32-28; 9-14 28-19; 14-17 21-14; 10-26 31-22; 8-12? 30-25! same with the colours reversed!

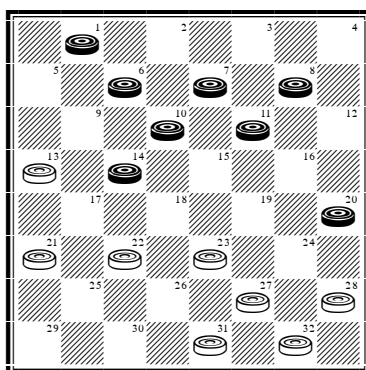
D: An incredibly rare blunder from Asa, falling into a shot previously published in *Elam's Checker Board*. Instead, 15-18! 22-15; 10-26 31-22; 14-18 22-15; 11-18 picks up the man on square 27 to win.

E: The joy of this wonderful shot was marginally diminished for me when I realised it could be taken in three different ways. Well done to Charles for selecting the most artistic route!

Game 16/20. Round 8, Game 2. 27th September 1984

Black: C. Walker; White: A. Long

12-16 22-18; 16-19 24-15; 10-19 23-16; 11-20 25-22; 8-11 22-17; 9-14 18-9; 6-22 26-17; 5-9 29-25; 7-10 25-22; 2-6 (A) 17-13; 4-8? (B) 30-26; 3-7 (C) 26-23; 9-14 Forms Position: White to play.



Continue: ... 22-17? (D); 8-12 23-18; 14-23 27-18; 10-15 18-14; 6-10? (E) 13-9; 20-24 28-19; 15-24 9-6; 10-15 6-2; 24-28 14-10; 7-14 17-10; 15-18 2-6; 18-22 6-9; 22-25 9-14; 11-15 10-7; 25-30 7-2; 12-16 2-7; 15-19 14-18; 16-20 7-11; 30-25 11-16; 19-24 16-11; 1-5 11-15; 25-30 18-22. White wins.

Notes

A: Unusual but sound. Instead, 11-15 30-26; 4-8 returns to regular play: E. Hunt vs. A. Long 1936: CC: RH #2114.

B: However, this second unusual move loses, with 11-15 30-26; 9-14 26-23 being a sound alternative.

C: 11-15 26-23 would have transposed back into published losses with which Asa would have been very familiar. Namely, 8-11: L. Ginsberg vs. E. Hunt 1929 (CC: RH #2115.) or 8-12: K. Grover vs. A. Long 1939 (CC: RH #2116.).

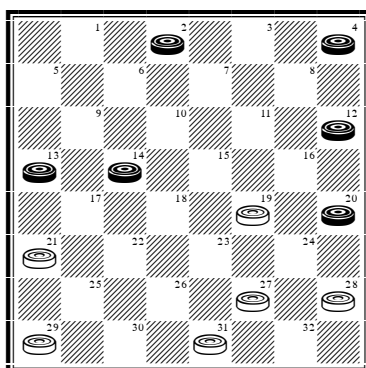
D: Missing the win with 22-18!; 14-17 21-14; 10-17 23-19. No doubt the text looked good enough.

E: But this second losing move proves fatal. Instead, 15-19 draws narrowly.

Game 17/20. Round 9, Game 1. 28th September 1984

Black: A. Long; White: P. McCarthy

9-13 23-18; 10-15 27-23; 6-10 32-27 (A); 1-6 18-14; 10-17 21-14; 15-18 22-15; 11-18 26-22; 12-16 22-15; 7-10 14-7; 3-26 30-23; 6-10 25-21; 16-20 24-19; 8-12 23-18; 10-14 18-9; 5-14 Forms Position: White to play.



Continue: ... 29-25; 4-8 25-22; 2-6 27-23 8-11; 22-18 6-9; 28-24 20-27 31-24; 13-17 (B). Drawn.

Notes

A: Studying Alex Moiseyev's wonderful new book, *All My Games*, I spied the following transposition here. Namely, 24-20; 5-9 32-27 (28-24 can come to the same thing); 10-14 22-17; 13-22 26-10; 15-22 25-18; 7-14 30-26; 3-7 27-24; 7-10 26-22; 11-15 18-11; 8-15 24-19; 15-24 28-19 into **9-13 24-20; 10-15 28-24; 5-9 23-18; 1-5 27-23; 6-10 23-19; 11-16 20-11; 7-23 18-11; 8-15 26-19; 3-7 30-26; 7-11 26-23; 9-14 22-18; 15-22 25-9; 5-14 same with the colours reversed!** CC: RH #453.

B: Regular published play which invariably continues as follows: 19-15 (24-20; 17-22 19-15; 11-16 same); 11-16 24-20; 17-22 20-11; 22-26 15-10; 26-31 18-15; 12-16 10-6; 31-26. Drawn. M. Chamblee vs. W. Hellman 1951: CC: RH #219.

On Computer Programs

Back in 1995, Chinook narrowly defeated Don Lafferty (1-0 & 31 draws) to win the Man vs. Machine World Title. Now, over 30 years later, we are in a good position to assess the impact of the strongest programs.

In my opinion, it is substantially positive news:

- 1) The game has been proved sound (safeguarded) – for ever!
- 2) World class practice opponents are readily available.
- 3) The breadth and depth of the game has been redemonstrated in spades: no human being could ever come close to anything approaching complete mastery.
- 4) World championship matches (of the human variety) have been greatly enhanced.
- 5) Authors like me have benefited enormously.

Therefore, I offer my sincere thanks to all of the leading programmers.

And, I must add, we have to thank the governing bodies for their wisdom and far-sightedness when they set up up three separate titles in the first place. (Obviously a computer program is not a human being and thus may defeat but never become the human world champion.)

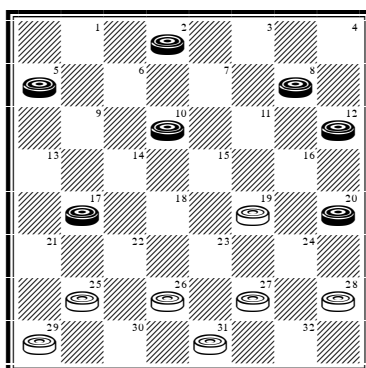
Recent correspondence with the ever-helpful Ed Gilbert reveals that a match between today's two leading programs, *KingsRow* and *Cake* (both phenomenal, although not yet oracles) played on all 156 ballots under tournament time limits, would undoubtedly result in 312 draws. Thus it can be seen that for all practical purposes, the Computer vs. Computer and Man vs. Machine World Titles have died a competitive death.

Thankfully, the warts-and-all, unpredictable and flawed (human) World Title – the ‘real’ World Title if you will - is going strong, with 14 exciting, hard-fought matches played since 1995. With 156 esoteric 4th moves to consider anew, courtesy of *KingsRow* (around 100 of them worthy of becoming mainstream), I have no doubt that the 3-move game will continue with full vigour for as long there is a human race.

Game 18/20. Round 9, Game 2. 28th September 1984

Black: P. McCarthy; White: A. Long

9-13 23-18; 10-15 26-23; 6-10 23-19; 11-16 18-11; 16-23 27-18; 8-15 18-11; 7-16 22-18; 1-6 (A) 30-26; 16-20 24-19 (B); 4-8 18-14; 10-17 21-14; 6-10? (C) 14-7; 3-10 32-27; 13-17 Forms Position: White to play.



Continue: ... 19-15! (D); 10-19 25-21 (E). White wins.

Notes

A: This is sound, but my preference is 3-7 as in J. Childers vs. M. Tinsley 1994: CC: RH #227.

B: Pat's recording of the game was muddled, so it is possible that the order of moves was actually 32-27; 4-8 18-14; 10-17 21-14; 6-10? 14-7; 3-10 24-19. However, I suspect that the game as given is correct.

C: Black has a number of sound options, so this loser must have come as a surprise to Asa.

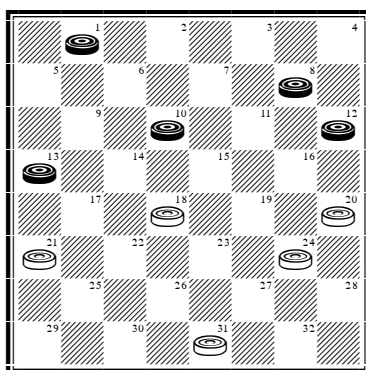
D: An absolute knockout blow. Obviously Pat missed this pitch when he took the 6-10 exchange, probably expecting 25-21; 2-7 21-14; 10-17.

E: Surely the shortest loss of the Irish Grandmaster's career.

Game 19/20. Round 10, Game 1. 28th September 1984

Black: H. Koff; White: A. Long

9-13 23-18; 11-15 18-11; 8-15 22-17; 13-22 25-11; 7-16 29-25; 5-9 **(A)** 25-22; 10-15 **(B)** 24-19; 15-24 27-11; 3-7 **(C)** 28-24; 7-16 22-18; 4-8 24-20; 16-19 32-28; 9-14 18-9; 6-13 26-23 **(D)**; 19-26 30-23; 2-6 23-18; 6-10 28-24 **Forms Position: Black to play.**



Continue: 1-5 **(E)** 18-14; 10-17 21-14; 8-11 24-19; 13-17 31-26; 17-21 26-22; 21-25 **(F)**. **Drawn.**

Notes

A: 4-8 is of course standard. Both this and 16-20 are sound but considered weaker.

B: An excellent crossboard choice by Mr Koff which surely took Asa by surprise – although he didn't show it! Instead, 4-8 22-18; 16-20 24-19 transposes into **9-13 22-18; 11-15** 18-11; 8-15 21-17; 13-22 25-11; 7-16 29-25; 5-9 23-18; 16-20 24-19; 4-8 25-21 same.

C: Regaining the man soundly in *Glasgow* fashion and of quite a different order to Black's unsuccessful attempt in Game 1.

D: Getting to the commanding square 18 in a hurry. Once more, Mr Long's play appears effortless.

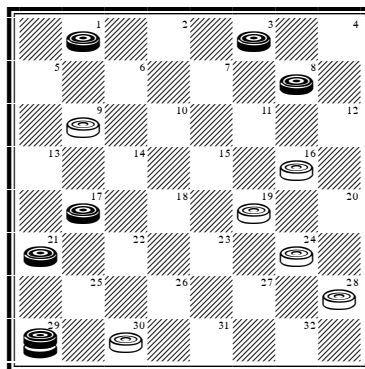
E: 8-11 24-19; 1-5 31-26 (18-14 is back into the game); 10-14 18-9; 5-14 26-22; 12-16 19-12; 11-15. Drawn.

F: The draw is clear after 22-18; 25-30 19-15; 30-26 15-8; 26-22 18-15; 22-18 15-10; 18-9 8-3.

Game 20/20. Round 10, Game 2. 28th September 1984

Black: A. Long; White: H. Koff

9-13 23-18; 11-15 18-11; 8-15 22-17; 13-22 25-11; 7-16 24-20 **(A)**; 16-19 29-25; 4-8 21-17 **(B)**; 5-9 17-13; 9-14 **(C)** 27-23; 10-15 **(C)** 23-16; 12-19 32-27; 2-7 **(C)** 25-22; 14-18 22-17; 19-23 **(D)** 26-10; 7-21 31-26; 6-10 13-9; 10-14 20-16; 14-17 26-23; 18-22 23-19; 22-25 27-24; 25-29 **Forms Position: White to play.**



Continue: ... 16-11? (E); 8-15 19-10; 29-25 9-6; 25-22 6-2; 22-18 24-20; 17-22 28-24; 22-25 20-16; 25-29 16-12; 29-25; 2-7 18-23; 24-20; 25-22 7-2; 22-17 2-6; 23-18 6-2; 17-13 20-16; 13-9 (F). Black wins.

Notes

A: 29-25; 4-8 25-22; 8-11 24-20; 16-19 is the standard move order: the text normally runs the same way.

B: 25-22; 8-11 is into Note A and favours White. After the text, the position is even.

C: Natural developing moves, in line with Mr Long's style, which give Black a very comfortable position.

D: Quite an unusual manoeuvre in top-level play (M. Tinsley vs. E. Lowder 1979: CC: RH #1136 is another example.), but in this instance gives Black winning chances.

E: The loser. Instead, 19-15 draws quite easily.

F: Clinching the game and the tournament. Another master class.

Games Summary

Game 1: 9-14 22-17; 11-16 (W) vs. J. Pendray. White win (No errors).

Game 2: 9-14 22-17; 11-16 (B) vs. J. Pendray. Draw (No errors).

Game 3: 10-15 24-20; 15-19 (W) vs. J. Latham. Draw (No errors).

Game 4: 10-15 24-20; 15-19 (B) vs. J. Latham. Draw (No errors).

Game 5: 11-15 21-17; 9-14 (W) vs. T. Landry. White win (No errors).

Game 6: 11-15 21-17; 9-14 (B) vs. T. Landry. Draw (No errors).

Game 7: 10-15 21-17; 15-18 (B) vs. D. Retallick. Draw (No errors).

Game 8: 10-15 21-17; 15-18 (W) vs. D. Retallick. White win (No errors).

Game 9: 11-15 22-17; 9-13 (B) vs. J. Guthrie. Black win (No errors).

Game 10: 11-15 22-17; 9-13 (W) vs. J. Guthrie. White win (No errors).

Game 11: 11-16 22-18; 7-11 (B) vs. R. Pask. Draw (No errors).

Game 12: 11-16 22-18; 7-11 (W) vs. R. Pask. Draw (One error).

Game 13: 9-13 24-19; 6-9 (W) vs. W. Edwards. Draw (No errors).

Game 14: 9-13 24-19; 6-9 (B) vs. W. Edwards. Black win (No errors).

Game 15: 12-16 22-18; 16-19 (B) vs. C. Walker. Draw (One error).

Game 16: 12-16 22-18; 16-19 (W) vs. C. Walker. White win (One error).

Game 17: 9-13 23-18; 10-15 (B) vs. P. McCarthy. Draw (No errors).

Game 18: 9-13 23-18; 10-15 (W) vs. P. McCarthy. White win (No errors).

Game 19: 9-13 23-18; 11-15 (W) vs. H. Koff. Draw (No errors).

Game 20: 9-13 23-18; 11-15 (B) vs. H. Koff. Black win (No errors).

- Mr Long won 9 games, drew 11 and lost none.
- In total, he made just 3 errors in the 20 games.
- There were four 2-move ballots and six 3-move ballots.
- Just four games were published play throughout: Games 6, 11, 13 and 17.
- For me, Games 9, 12, 14, 15, 18, 19 and 20 were particularly noteworthy.

Letter from Marion Tinsley to Richard Fortman (1949 extract)

Thus, Walter [Hellman] played better against Long than against [Willie] Ryan because Long played better! This is no reflection on Ryan for I like him and think highly of his ability. But the facts as I see them say that Long is a truly great player. Great not only in the checkeristic but also in the philosophical sense. His games are more likely to be deep, orderly, beautiful than those of any man who ever lived. They are filled with more genuine thought than any others and he, while in good condition, makes very few errors – as is well known. Small wonder that Walter should be inspired to play his best against him.