



INTERNATIONAL
BACKGAMMON
FEDERATION

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IBF JOURNAL

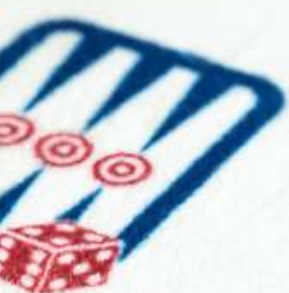
**UMAR
KREMLEV**

Leading a New Era of Backgammon

First World Longgammon
Championship &
The Georgian Grand Prix

Special Edition





INTERNATIONAL
BACKGAMMON
FEDERATION



MASTHEAD

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FROM THE EDITOR

The first thing I heard as I walked into the tournament hall was the sound of dice hitting the baffle box. It filled the entire room, and from that moment on, it became a sound I could never forget or mistake for anything else. Then came the emotions: the joy of victory, the tension, the disappointment, the excitement. That was the moment I realized that backgammon is not just a game. It is a way of life.

The International Backgammon Federation brings together people from all over the world for whom backgammon has become a common language. Bigger tournaments, record-breaking prize funds, new countries, new players, new disciplines — we are not simply organizing competitions: we are shaping the history of our sport.

This magazine is more than a sports publication. Its pages capture the atmosphere of international tournaments, the people driving the growth of backgammon, the beauty of the game, travel, new friendships, and the global community that continues to grow with every gathering around the board under the International Backgammon Federation.

My name is Angelina Suslova, and I will be your guide into the world of IBF. I will be truly happy if, after reading the magazine, you find yourself saying:

«I want to be part of this.»

We are standing at the beginning of a new era in the global history of backgammon. Are you ready to take the first step?



**WE ARE SHAPING
THE HISTORY OF OUR
SPORT.**

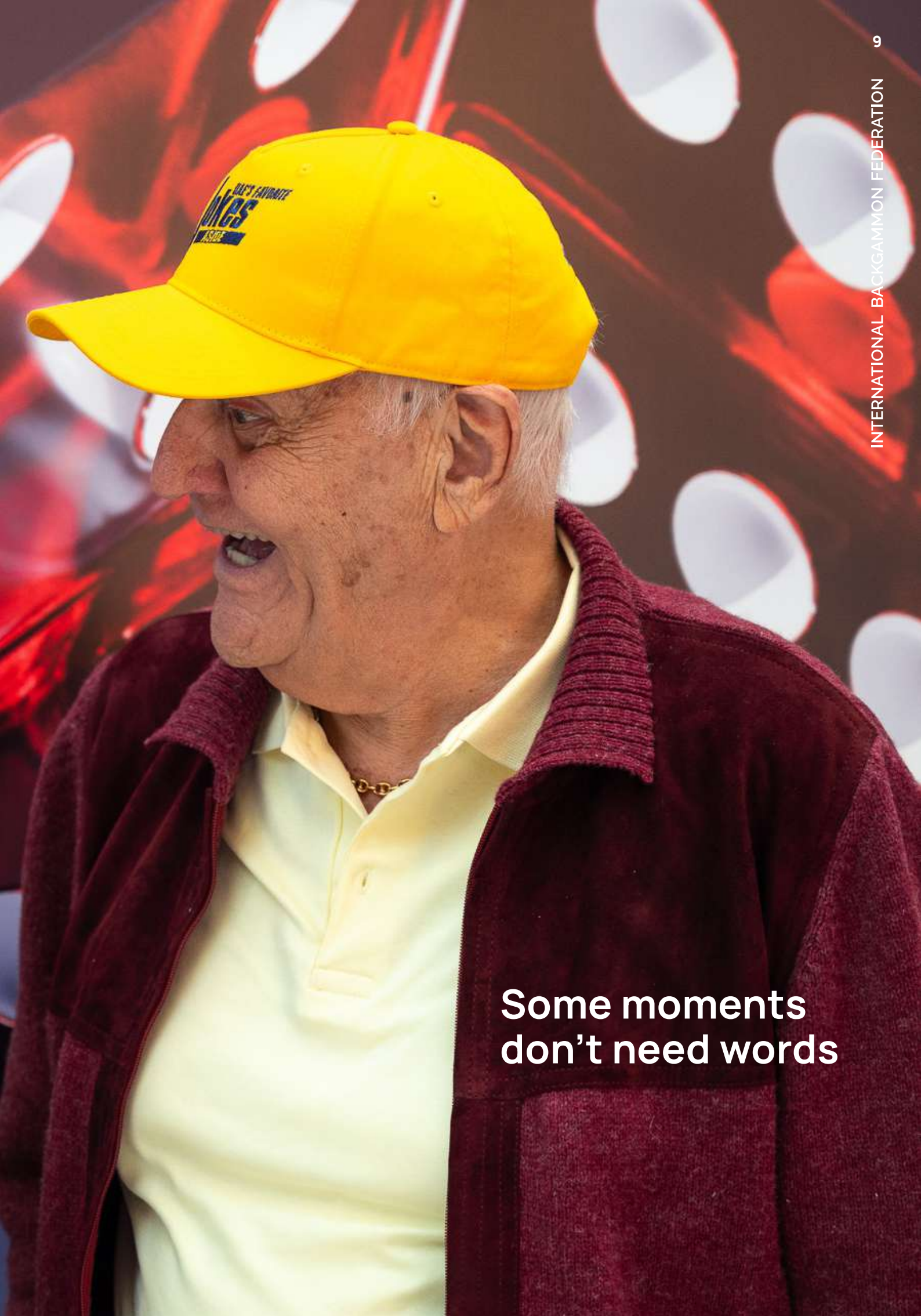


CONTENTS

08	THE MOMENT
10	WHAT IS IBF?
16	OFFICIAL IBF APP
18	COVER INTERVIEW
26	THE IBF JOURNEY
37	WORLD LONGGAMMON CHAMPIONSHIP
47	GEORGIAN GRAND PRIX
54	THE IBF STANDARD
58	CHAMPIONS
69	DESTINATION: GEORGIA
73	FACES OF THE TOURNAMENT
83	YOUNG GENERATION
87	WOMEN IN BACKGAMMON
93	BACKGAMMON & STYLE
98	BACKGAMMON VISION
100	BEST PHOTOS
104	FINAL NOTE

01. THE MOMENT





DAVE'S FAVORITE
MOVIES
INSIDE

Some moments
don't need words

02. WHAT IS IBF?

The International Backgammon Federation (IBF) is an international organization dedicated to developing backgammon as a modern global intellectual sport.

Today, IBF brings together national federations, players and tournament organizers from around the world, establishes unified international competition standards, and builds a global sporting system for the development of backgammon.

MISSION

Uniting the world through backgammon.







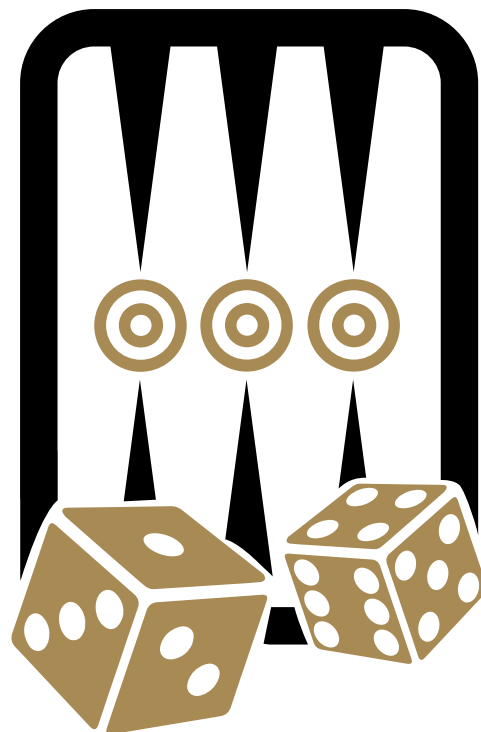
THE PEOPLE BEHIND IBF

President

Umar Kremlev

Organizing Committee

15 members



IBF IN NUMBERS

35 member countries

60 countries represented at IBF international tournaments

4 international tournaments

300+ hours of live broadcasting

6 official sporting disciplines

12 disciplines in the tournament program

THE NEW ERA OF BACKGAMMON

- 🎯 The first-ever World Longgammon Championship
- 🎯 International Grand Prix series
- 🎯 The largest guaranteed prize fund in backgammon history — **\$500,000**
- 🎯 Sprintgammon — a new international sporting discipline
- 🎯 A unified international refereeing system and the first-ever international referee seminar
- 🎯 Development of an international refereeing corps: over four tournaments, the number of referees grew from 16 to 20, then to 24 and 32
- 🎯 Television feature tables with professional commentary in two languages and match analysis
- 🎯 An archive of match recordings from all streamed tables
- 🎯 An international competition calendar



03.

OFFICIAL

IBF APP



IBF IS GETTING EVEN CLOSER

Become part of our international community,
wherever you are.

The IBF app will bring together players from different
countries on one platform. Take part in international
online competitions, play against opponents from
around the world, and compete for prize money.

If you are unable to attend an IBF tournament
in person, distance will no longer be a barrier.
International competitions, new opponents, and
the atmosphere of IBF will be available right on your
phone.

Scan the QR code to learn more, register, and be
among the first to access the app.



04.COVER INTERVIEW

Umar Kremlev,
President of the International Backgammon Federation



You have successfully led major projects across different sports. Why did you choose backgammon as the next direction to develop?

I have loved backgammon for many years and enjoy playing it myself. It is an ancient, wise game with enormous potential. It combines intellect, character, composure, strategic thinking, and the ability to make decisions when the outcome can never be known in advance.

At the same time, millions of people around the world already play backgammon at home with their families and friends. Yet for many years, this vast community lacked a strong international structure. The sport needed clear rules, professional tournaments, official titles, referee education, meaningful prize funds, and youth competitions.

I saw an opportunity to take backgammon to an entirely new level. The mission of the International Backgammon Federation is to make the game more accessible and establish it as a respected international mind sport, played by people of all ages across the world.



Is there a backgammon board that holds a special place in your heart?

I have been playing backgammon for many years, and over that time I have collected many boards. Some are unique, beautifully crafted, and many were given to me as gifts. Yet I have always believed that the board itself is not what matters most.

You can play on the simplest, well-worn board and experience one of the warmest games of your life. Or you can sit down at an expensive, beautifully crafted board and never feel the same connection.

Backgammon is not about the wood, the craftsmanship, or the checkers. It is about the moment shared between two people –

the conversations, the laughter, the silence, and the stories that unfold during the game.

Those are the games that become unforgettable for me – not because of the board, but because of the person with whom I shared that time.

Compared with chess, bridge, and other mind sports, what makes backgammon unique?

Backgammon brings together calculation, intuition, and the ability to work with probability. A player cannot control every circumstance, but is fully responsible for every decision.

You can receive a difficult roll and still find the strongest move. You can be given a favorable opportunity and fail to make the most



of it. Backgammon is very much like life. No one is promised perfect conditions, but everyone has the opportunity to demonstrate character and skill.

Another unique quality is its accessibility. The rules can be learned quite quickly, yet mastering the game can take a lifetime. Children and adults, beginners and grandmasters, people from different countries and cultures all sit down at the same board. Backgammon speaks a universal language.

You lead both the International Boxing Association and the International Backgammon Federation. What has one sport taught you that has helped develop the other?

Boxing taught me that sportsmen must always be at the center of everything a federation does. A federation exists for its athletes, coaches, and national teams. Its responsibility is to organize

tournaments, ensure fair officiating, support competitors, and create opportunities for their development.

We apply the same principle to IBF: sportsmen will always come first. Players should understand the competition rules, the ranking and title systems, and be confident that their results will be determined by their skill.

Backgammon, in turn, constantly reminds me to think several moves ahead. Building an international organization requires patience, long-term strategy, and consistent effort. Great achievements are always the result of countless decisions made day after day.

II

What do you think people today are missing most that backgammon can offer – not just in sport, but in life?

What people increasingly lack today is genuine face-to-face communication – the opportunity to sit across the table from one another and simply connect. Backgammon brings people back together around the same board.

Today, many people spend their free time on their phones, especially children. It is important to offer them a meaningful alternative – one that develops critical thinking, teaches concentration, and encourages real communication.

Backgammon brings families, generations, and friends together. It teaches people how to accept both victory and defeat with dignity. Those are qualities that everyone needs in life.

You often say that sport should unite people. How is that philosophy reflected in the work of the International Backgammon Federation?

The IBF is open to every country committed to developing backgammon and following a common set of rules. We do not divide people by politics. Across the board sit sportsmen. Every player should have the opportunity to represent their country, compete on equal terms, and fight for victory.

We bring together national federations, educate referees, exchange experience, and create international competitions. At our tournaments, people meet, build friendships, and discover shared interests.

The more countries become part of this movement, the stronger backgammon becomes. Sport should build bridges between nations, and that is exactly the principle on which the International Backgammon Federation is founded.



Imagine that ten years have passed and everything has developed exactly as you envisioned. What will the global culture of backgammon look like?

Backgammon will become part of everyday sporting culture. People will play at home, in schools, universities, sports clubs, and public spaces. Young players will have coaches, training programs, and a clear pathway from their first tournament to earning the title of international grandmaster.

Professional players will compete within a stable international calendar, a transparent ranking system, substantial prize funds, and a well-defined sporting career. World Championships will attract millions of viewers, and the world's best players will be recognized and supported just like the stars of other sports.

At the same time, backgammon will never lose its soul. The board will continue to bring together families, friends, and people of different generations around the same table. Its reach will become global, while the warmth and spirit of the game will remain exactly the same.



What qualities do you believe define a true backgammon champion – not in terms of ranking, but as a person?

A champion must respect their opponent, carry themselves with dignity, and take responsibility for their decisions. Patience, composure, discipline, and emotional control are essential qualities. You do not recognize a great athlete only by the way they win. You recognize them by the way they lose.

A true champion accepts the result, learns from it, continues working hard, and comes back stronger.

A title may bring recognition, but it is a person's character that determines whether they become someone others truly look up to.

What continues to impress you most about the people who choose backgammon?

Their passion for the game and the respect they show toward it. People are willing to travel thousands of kilometers to compete, spend countless hours at the board, analyze matches, keep learning, and return to the game again and again. Even in the most intense matches, they never lose respect for their opponents.

At neighboring tables, you might see a school student, an entrepreneur, a retiree, a professional sportsman, or players from Japan, Russia, Argentina, or South Africa. They all come from different walks of life, yet they share the same love for backgammon. That shared passion is what creates a truly strong and welcoming international community.

Is there a player's story that you will never forget?

The stories that inspire me most are those of people who discover their purpose through backgammon, become part of a larger community, and gain confidence in themselves.

Not long ago, Viktoriya Borzenkova, a schoolgirl from Kursk, became the World Youth Backgammon Champion. Young players from many countries competed for the title, and it was a girl from Russia who emerged victorious. Achievements like hers clearly demonstrate why we invest so much effort in developing youth backgammon. Children learn to think, make decisions, work hard, and achieve their goals. They set an example for all of us.

Another person I will always remember is Doolot Abzhaparov. He is 57 years old and comes

from Kyrgyzstan. Doolot uses a wheelchair and has lost both legs and one arm. He has taken part in the last International Backgammon Federation tournament, cared deeply about every match, enjoyed meeting players, and is always someone we are happy to welcome.

Viktoriya and Doolot are at very different stages of their sporting journeys, yet they are united by the same love for backgammon, strength of character, and determination to keep moving forward. It is for people like them that we continue developing our sport and building a global backgammon family where everyone is welcome.

IV

What principle guides you not only in sport, but in life as well?

Never stop moving forward. Keep growing every single day.

Every goal worth achieving requires hard work. You will face difficulties, make mistakes, and experience defeat, but you must never give up. Sport teaches you to withstand adversity, get back on your feet after every setback, and keep moving toward your goal.

Another principle I deeply believe in is always standing on the side of truth. Sport must be





governed by fair rules that apply equally to everyone. When fairness, respect, and responsibility exist, trust follows. And without trust, it is impossible to build either a strong federation or a strong team.

Imagine that someone who has never touched a backgammon board opens this magazine. What would you like to say to them?

Open a board and play your very first game.

Do not be afraid of making mistakes, and do not think

that backgammon requires years of preparation. You will learn the rules quickly, and then an entirely new world will open before you.

You will experience the excitement of the game, begin thinking several moves ahead, understand your opponent more deeply, and learn to recognize your own mistakes. Invite your parents, your children, or your friends. Sit down together around the same board. Perhaps that very first game will become the beginning of a lifelong passion.

Backgammon brings people together.

Join our global backgammon family.



05. THE IBF JOURNEY

Every International Backgammon Federation tournament is far more than just a few days of competition.

It creates new opportunities for players, strengthens international connections, provides valuable experience, and becomes an important milestone in the development of backgammon in the host country. When the tournament comes to an end, it leaves behind not only memories, but also new ideas, new projects, and a shared determination to keep moving forward.

The future of backgammon is being shaped through international cooperation. That is why the International Backgammon Federation continues to bring its tournaments to new countries and remains open to dialogue with national representatives who are ready to stage international competitions.

We spoke with the presidents of national federations that have already hosted IBF tournaments to learn how these events have influenced the development of backgammon in their countries.







Armenia

Armenian Grand Prix 2025

Yerevan, Armenia

16 countries

150+ players

\$50,000 added prize fund



Khachik Melikyan

President of the Armenian Backgammon Federation • 67 years old

The tournament in Armenia left me with nothing but bright and positive memories. What makes me especially happy is seeing how much the game has continued to grow since then. The level of backgammon is improving, interest keeps increasing, and we are already looking forward to welcoming another IBF tournament to Yerevan.

International cooperation is incredibly important. It brings people together, creates new friendships, strengthens respect between nations and opens new opportunities for the development of our sport. Over the past two years, tremendous work has been accomplished, and we are sincerely grateful to the entire International Backgammon Federation team, especially its President, Umar Kremlev.

We are always open to further cooperation and look forward to many more successful projects together.

**WHAT MAKES ME
ESPECIALLY HAPPY
IS SEEING HOW
MUCH THE GAME HAS
CONTINUED TO GROW
SINCE THEN.**



United Arab Emirates

Arabian Grand Prix 2025

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

36 countries
200+ players
\$70,000 added prize fund



Patrick Gebeili

Mindskillz GM representing UAE Backgammon
under Dubai Sports Council • 54 years old

The IBF tournament in Dubai introduced longgammon to many new players, inspiring them to learn the discipline through its attractive format and significant added prize fund.

The professionalism of the IBF team, the introduction of official arbiters, the mandatory use of baffle boxes and official dice, together with activities beyond the tournament itself, created a truly high-level competition.

For the United Arab Emirates, cooperation with the International Backgammon Federation is especially valuable because of our multicultural community. The IBF's international tournament calendar gives more players the opportunity to compete in different countries and become part of the global backgammon community.

I believe what the International Backgammon Federation is doing is truly remarkable for backgammon, and I sincerely hope to see Dubai return to the IBF calendar.

**THE IBF'S CALENDAR
GIVES MORE PLAYERS
THE OPPORTUNITY
TO BECOME PART
OF THE GLOBAL
BACKGAMMON
COMMUNITY.**





Uzbekistan

Asian Grand Prix 2026

Tashkent, Uzbekistan

52

countries

500+

players

\$500,000

added prize fund



05

Sherzod Eliboev

President of the Uzbekistan
Backgammon Federation • 34 years old

The IBF tournament marked an important milestone in the development of backgammon in Uzbekistan. For our community, it was a true celebration of sport, bringing together top players from different countries. The high standard of organization, warm Uzbek hospitality, and welcoming atmosphere left a lasting impression on everyone who took part.

The tournament sparked growing interest in backgammon across the country. It inspired us to organize more international events and became a powerful step forward in the development of the sport in Uzbekistan.

We are grateful to IBF for its trust, professionalism, and support. We share the same values — fair competition, high organizational standards, and a commitment to developing backgammon around the world. We believe this is only the beginning of a long-term partnership, and we look forward to welcoming IBF tournaments back to Uzbekistan.

**THE IBF TOURNAMENT
MARKED AN IMPORTANT
MILESTONE
IN THE DEVELOPMENT
OF BACKGAMMON
IN UZBEKISTAN.**





GEORGIA

World Backgammon Championship & Georgian Grand Prix 2026

Tbilisi, Georgia

60 countries
500+ players
\$500,000 guaranteed prize fund



Revaz Tskhovrebashvili

President of the Georgian Backgammon
Federation • 58 years old

The tournament in Tbilisi exceeded every expectation. More than 500 players from nearly 60 countries came together, making it one of the largest events in the history of backgammon. It was a great honour for Georgia to host a tournament of this scale.

Events like this always become a powerful catalyst for the development of the sport. They attract new players, strengthen the international community and inspire more people to discover backgammon.

Every partnership is a step forward, especially when working with the International Backgammon Federation and its team, who are fully dedicated to the global development of backgammon. On our side, we will continue doing everything possible to ensure our cooperation grows stronger and brings many more successful tournaments in the years ahead.

**IT WAS A GREAT HONOUR
FOR GEORGIA TO HOST
A TOURNAMENT OF THIS
SCALE.**



INTERNATIONAL BACKGAMMON FEDERATION

WORLD LONGGAMMON CHAMPIONSHIP 2026

28 MAY-3 JUNE
GEORGIA / TBILISI

DAY 3

Pips 136 (-16) Score: 8/11

AKIKO YAZAWA

LEV ROSENFELD

Pips 152 (+16) Score: 8/11

Bar23*(2) -0.267
 Bar24 Bar23* 23/22 -0.357
 Bar24 Bar23* 11/10 -0.411
 Bar24 Bar23* 8/7 -0.446
 Bar24(2) 8/7(2) -0.600
 Bar24(2) 8/6 -0.689
 Bar24(2) 8/5 -0.722

LONGGAMMON HAS
EVOLVED FROM A REGIONAL
DISCIPLINE INTO A TRULY
GLOBAL SPORT

06. WORLD LONGGAMMON CHAMPIONSHIP

May 27 – June 3, 2026

A new World Champion can be crowned every year.

But the first one only once.

That is why June 2026 has secured its place in the history of world sport. Tbilisi hosted the first-ever World Longgammon Championship, a tournament that players had been waiting for over many years. Hundreds of longgammon masters from dozens of countries came to Georgia to become part of this historic event and open a new chapter in the world of mind sports.

Longgammon had long deserved a World Championship of its own. Millions of people have played it since childhood, and for many nations it has become part of their culture and family traditions. Now, longgammon has its own place on the world stage.

Throughout the week, the tournament hall had a unique atmosphere. There were no accidental participants. At every board sat national champions, experienced masters, and players who had dreamed their entire lives of standing on the top step of the podium. Every match became part of the history of the very first World Longgammon Championship.

Yet this tournament proved to be far more than a battle for the world title. It demonstrated just how rapidly the discipline is developing and how many people from different countries are ready to build its future together.

No one can describe the atmosphere of the first World Longgammon Championship better than those who experienced it themselves. Their stories begin on the following pages.

Masayuki Mochizuki

Japan • 47 years old

For me, the biggest difference between longgammon and backgammon lies in the way a game unfolds. In backgammon, the outcome is more often decided by fortunate rolls. In longgammon, it is more often determined by unfortunate ones.

The most challenging part of longgammon is understanding the tempo of the game and preventing your opponent from getting the numbers they need on the dice. To be honest, I still do not fully understand all the subtleties of this game.

I know I am not yet strong enough to become a world champion, so every match is an opportunity to gain experience and improve.

I am very happy that I started playing longgammon. It helped me realize that in Russia many people know longgammon rather than backgammon. I still remember playing with local people in a small café in Kazan. Had I never learned longgammon, that meeting would never have happened.

I choose longgammon because the International Backgammon Federation is actively developing this discipline, and several outstanding Russian players have helped me improve my game tremendously.



**HAD I NEVER
LEARNED
LONGGAMMON,
THAT MEETING
WOULD NEVER
HAVE HAPPENED.**

Armen Ovsepyan

Russia • 70 years old

Longgammon and backgammon share the same foundation: in both disciplines, each player moves fifteen checkers across the board, trying to bear them off before the opponent. But that is where the similarities end. Backgammon is faster and more emotional, while longgammon develops at a calmer pace without losing any of its excitement.

The greatest challenge in longgammon is steadily improving your position and knowing exactly when to use the doubling cube. In both longgammon and backgammon, a single decision can completely change the course of a match.

On March 14 this year, I turned 70, and winning the bronze medal in the Masters Cup here became a wonderful birthday gift. It is a great honor for me to compete in the first World Longgammon Championship at such a respectable age.

I am convinced that longgammon will continue to grow around the world. Today, backgammon may be the more popular discipline, but I am certain that within a few years both disciplines will hold an equal place in international sport.

Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that I did not choose longgammon — longgammon chose me. Since childhood, I have played both longgammon and backgammon, but longgammon has always felt a little closer to me, because it suits my character and the way I think.

**PERHAPS
IT WOULD BE
MORE ACCURATE
TO SAY THAT I
DID NOT CHOOSE
LONGGAMMON —
LONGGAMMON
CHOSE ME.**



Agabala Khalidov

Azerbaijan • 69 years old

Longgammon and backgammon are played on the same board, with the same fifteen checkers for each player and the same pair of dice. Beyond that, they have almost nothing in common. The opening position, the rules, the tactics, and the strategy are entirely different. Backgammon is faster and more aggressive, with the outcome often uncertain until the very last roll. Longgammon, on the other hand, demands patience, precise calculation, and the ability to make the most of every move.

That is probably why I prefer longgammon. It suits my calm and balanced personality, although I also enjoy playing backgammon.

The greatest challenge for me is resisting unnecessary risks in the pursuit of a quicker victory. Very often, those decisions end up costing you the game. Risk is justified only when it is truly necessary.

I have been fortunate enough to win several major tournaments, including the Azerbaijan Championship in 2019. But a World Championship is a completely different level. There are no weak players here, and the competition is so intense that even champions rarely manage to repeat their success. That is exactly what makes the world title so special.

Today, I am especially pleased to see longgammon attracting growing interest around the world thanks to the work of the International Backgammon Federation. Even many of the strongest backgammon players are beginning to embrace this new discipline, giving me every reason to look confidently toward its future.



**LONGGAMMON
DEMANDS
PATIENCE, PRECISE
CALCULATION,
AND THE ABILITY
TO MAKE THE MOST
OF EVERY MOVE.**

Giorgi Gogoladze

Georgia • 56 years old

I do not know which version of the game appeared first, but I have always believed that longgammon became the next stage in its evolution. In longgammon, you have to think not only about your own moves but also constantly anticipate your opponent's decisions. Sometimes it feels as though you are playing for both sides at once.

In longgammon, even the smallest mistake can prove irreversible. Every move matters, and that is what makes the game both so challenging and so fascinating.

It is a great honor for me to be part of the first World Longgammon Championship. This event will remain in the history of our sport forever. It is especially meaningful that it is taking place in my hometown. Although I was not able to compete as a player this time, serving as a referee allows me to contribute to the development of the discipline I love.



Akmal Buriyev

Uzbekistan • 49 years old

I play only longgammon. To me, it is much more than a game. It is my favorite passion and the best way to escape everyday worries. Every time I sit down at the board, I simply relax and enjoy the game.

The greatest challenge in longgammon is controlling your emotions. The moment you become nervous, making the right decisions becomes much more difficult. That is why I always try to stay calm and enjoy every match.

Taking part in the first World Longgammon Championship means a great deal to me. I was truly happy to become part of such a historic event.

I am convinced that longgammon has a bright future. People play it not only to win, but because they genuinely love the game itself. That is why I believe the popularity of this discipline will continue to grow.



David Giorgobiani

Georgia • 61 years old

I truly love longgammon and believe it demands even deeper intellectual thinking. Of course, backgammon enthusiasts may disagree with me, but for me, longgammon is the highest form of the game.

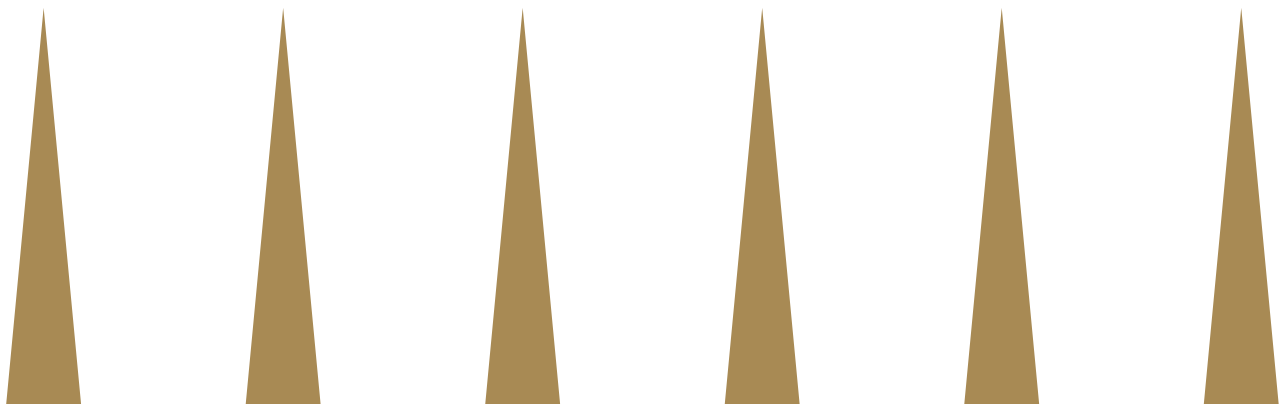
The greatest challenge is calculating every possible development on the board. In many ways, longgammon reminds me of chess: you must constantly analyze the position and think several moves ahead.

I am delighted to be part of the first World Longgammon Championship, and I sincerely hope this tournament becomes a lasting tradition. I would love to return here again and again.

I am convinced that longgammon has an outstanding future. This intellectual game deserves to become just as popular worldwide as backgammon. I continue to choose longgammon because success here depends, above all, on the ability to think.



**I CONTINUE TO CHOOSE
LONGGAMMON
BECAUSE SUCCESS
HERE DEPENDS, ABOVE
ALL, ON THE ABILITY
TO THINK.**



Gadzhimurad Vaniyev

Russia • 55 years old

To me, longgammon and backgammon are two completely different games. In essence, they are connected only by the board, the checkers, and the dice. Everything else belongs to an entirely different world.

For many years, I considered longgammon the purest, most strategic, and most intellectual form of the game, while I saw backgammon as a more dynamic and straightforward discipline. Over time, I realized how mistaken I had been. Today, I can no longer say which one I prefer. I simply love backgammon in all its forms.

The most difficult part of longgammon is getting exactly the roll you need at that particular moment. And it is not always about rolling the highest numbers. What truly matters is rolling the right ones.

Representing my country at the first World Longgammon Championship is something I will never forget. Of course, I dreamed of fighting for the medals, but the most important thing is that I had the opportunity to become part of history.

I sincerely believe that longgammon has a great future. Thanks to the work of the International Backgammon Federation, more and more people around the world are discovering this game. I am confident that before long, the biggest longgammon tournaments will attract just as many participants as the world's leading backgammon events.

**REPRESENTING MY
COUNTRY AT THE FIRST
WORLD LONGGAMMON
CHAMPIONSHIP
IS SOMETHING I WILL
NEVER FORGET.**





Doolotagly Abzhaparov

Kyrgyzstan • 57 years old

Longgammon and backgammon differ not only in their rules, but also in the very logic of the game. In longgammon, all checkers move in the same direction, they cannot be hit, and success depends on precise calculation, building a strong position, and careful planning. That is what gives the game its remarkable depth.

The greatest challenge for me is maintaining psychological balance. You need to calculate probabilities, think several moves ahead, and remain calm even after an unfortunate roll.

Competing in the first World Longgammon Championship is a tremendous honor. It is an opportunity to represent Kyrgyzstan and the Yekaterinburg school of backgammon, compete against the world's strongest players, gain invaluable experience, and contribute to the development of the discipline.

I am convinced that longgammon has a bright future. More international tournaments are appearing, young players are discovering the game, and the global community continues to grow. I choose longgammon because behind its simple rules lies an incredibly deep strategy, where every match presents a new challenge.

**I CHOOSE
LONGGAMMON
BECAUSE BEHIND
ITS SIMPLE
RULES LIES
AN INCREDIBLY
DEEP STRATEGY,
WHERE
EVERY MATCH
PRESENTS A NEW
CHALLENGE.**





**I CANNOT THINK
OF ANOTHER
TOURNAMENT WHERE
THE ORGANIZERS
HAVE CREATED SUCH
COMFORTABLE
CONDITIONS
FOR THE PLAYERS**

Stepan Nuniyants



07. GEORGIAN GRAND PRIX

May 27 – June 3, 2026

Great tournaments are not always built over decades. They earn that status when players want to come back again and again.

That is exactly how, in less than a year, the International Backgammon Federation Grand Prix series became one of the most anticipated events on the international backgammon calendar.

In 2026, the Georgian Grand Prix, held alongside the World Longgammon Championship, brought together hundreds of players from all over the world. Seven days of intense competition, hundreds of matches, thousands of smiles, handshakes and conversations between people speaking different languages.

Every day of the tournament was filled with memorable moments: a spectacular opening ceremony, the international referee seminar, live broadcasts, professional commentary, a rich cultural program, renowned Georgian hospitality, and countless games that continued long after the official schedule had ended.

It is tournaments like these that show what IBF has become today. We are more than an organization that runs competitions. We are a global community of people united by one game.

Now it is time to hear from the players themselves. No one can tell the story of the Georgian Grand Prix better than those who spent these seven unforgettable days at the boards and left Tbilisi with memories that will stay for years to come.

Gökhan Yıldız

Turkey • 56 years old



Every International Backgammon Federation tournament becomes better than the last. After the Asian Grand Prix in Tashkent, I could clearly see that the tournament in Tbilisi was even better organized and that the team had gained valuable experience.

What makes IBF tournaments special is that they are completely player-focused. Everything is built around the players' comfort, safety, health, and overall experience. I have never seen another backgammon organization with so many staff members working throughout the tournament.

The most emotional moment for me was personally presenting Umar Kremlev with the premium model backgammon set produced by our company. Seeing that he liked the gift made me even happier.

The playing conditions, the opportunity to relax between matches, and the refreshments were the three things I appreciated most during the tournament.

Tage Mellgren

Denmark • 63 years old



The International Backgammon Federation is changing the standard of backgammon tournaments. With a relatively low entry fee, players have the opportunity to compete for huge added and guaranteed prize funds.

I enjoy discovering new parts of the world, and Georgia was a beautiful and friendly country.

What I appreciated most was the professional organization, the substantial prize funds, and the safe environment throughout the tournament.

Almaz Salimzyanov

Russia • 45 years old

The Georgian Grand Prix left me with nothing but positive emotions. It was inspiring to see such a huge number of players from different countries gathered in one place.

These are exactly the kinds of tournaments that give you the opportunity to face opponents with different playing styles, levels of experience and approaches to the game. For me, it is invaluable match practice and a chance to keep improving.

The most emotional moment was my backgammon blitz quarter-final against a Turkish player. At the decisive point of the match, he accepted an incorrect cube, but then immediately rolled double sixes twice in a row. That match reminded me once again just how unpredictable backgammon can be.

Georgia impressed me with its breathtaking nature. I had never seen scenery like that before, and the variety of traditional Georgian cuisine became another unforgettable part of the trip.



Sultan Haddadin

Jordan • 45 years old

I left the Georgian Grand Prix with very positive impressions. The tournament was excellently organized, everything ran on schedule, and the organizing team was always friendly and ready to help.

The most emotional moments came during the final stages of the competition, where you could truly see how much passion, effort and determination every player invested in the game.

The International Backgammon Federation brings together players from different countries, creating opportunities to meet new people, compete against the world's strongest players and learn from one another.

Another wonderful discovery for me was Georgia itself. The beauty of the country, its culture and cuisine exceeded my expectations. From the very first day, we felt truly welcome.



Doron Claxton

South Africa • 44 years old



My tournament life was hanging by a thread. In front of me sat a beautiful Coup Classique, and all I had to do was roll a 1 or a 2.

I didn't.

Just like that, I was out of the main event. That was the most emotional moment for me.

What makes International Backgammon Federation tournaments special is that they feel like an occasion. The opening ceremony, the players, the production, and the attention to detail make you feel that you've arrived not just at a tournament, but at a truly special event.

One of my favorite parts of the week was catching up with old friends, meeting new people from all over the world, and listening to the live commentary, which really brings the game to life.

Stanislav Stoynov

Bulgaria • 59 years old



The first thing that comes to mind when I think about the Georgian Grand Prix is its outstanding organization. Everything was planned down to the smallest detail, and I could hardly find a single remark throughout the tournament.

The most emotional moment came on the final roll of Round 8. I rolled double fours and won the match. Those dice have always been special to me because 44 was the number of the school I graduated from.

What makes International Backgammon Federation tournaments special is the excellent organization, the impressive prize funds, and the friendly atmosphere created by players from all over the world. If I had to choose my favorite moments, they would be the opening ceremony, the gala dinner, and the new friendships I made during the tournament.

Nina Taksanova

Russia • 52 years old

This was my first visit to Georgia. What impressed me most was the Old Town of Tbilisi. Walking through its streets feels like traveling back in time.

For me, International Backgammon Federation tournaments mean a huge number of players from different countries, multiple disciplines, attractive prize funds, professional refereeing, and a genuinely friendly atmosphere.

The most emotional moment of the tournament came during a match where it seemed a gammon loss was unavoidable. I needed to roll a 6-1 — and I did. Even better, I went on to win the match. These are exactly the moments that make us love backgammon.



Ali Barqebani

Iran • 56 years old

The Georgian Grand Prix was a great tournament and gave us an opportunity to challenge ourselves. What makes International Backgammon Federation tournaments special is that they are held in different countries, giving players the chance to discover new cultures.

I particularly appreciated the tournament's international scale, the variety of disciplines, and the active work of the organizing team. Georgia also left a wonderful impression on me. I especially enjoyed its beautiful nature and the city of Tbilisi, where tradition and modernity come together.



Stepan Nuniyants

USA • 71 years old



I have participated in many international tournaments, so I have a good basis for comparison. IBF tournaments are truly unique. I cannot think of another tournament where the organizers have created such outstanding conditions for the players.

The equipment, boards, cameras, dice, and many other details were all of the highest standard. The breaks were very well organized, with food and refreshments always available. Everything was designed so that players could focus entirely on the game without being distracted by anything else.

As always, the most emotional moments for me were meeting friends. I hope to take part in future IBF tournaments as well.

Pete Heskett

United Kingdom • 54 years old



My strongest impression of the Georgian Grand Prix was the exceptional organization. Honestly, it ran like a Swiss watch – if that watch also served beautiful natural wine and came with a mountain view. As a Brit, I kept expecting something to go wrong. It never did.

The International Backgammon Federation is bringing an exceptional level of professionalism to tournament organization. It is wonderful to see the game growing in this way. One match I will never forget was Vardanyan vs. Setzfeld, which I commentated on together with Sebastian Wilkinson. It was one of the best matches I have ever witnessed.

One of the most emotional moments for me was losing the doubles quarter-final with my partner, Miho McLeod. We played a great match with a PR of 1.46, but lost in the end.



08. THE IBF STANDARD

Every IBF tournament is built around one goal:
creating a world-class experience for every player.

60 countries

Players from 60 countries came together around the same board, demonstrating the truly international scale of the tournament and the unifying power of backgammon.

500+ participants

More than 500 players took part in the World Longgammon Championship and Georgian Grand Prix 2026 — the largest events in the history of the International Backgammon Federation.

\$500,000 guaranteed prize fund

The guaranteed prize fund for the World Longgammon Championship and Georgian Grand Prix 2026 reached \$500,000. These record-breaking figures make backgammon tournaments even more attractive and create new opportunities for the growth of mind sports.



175 playing tables

Every match was played under identical conditions across 175 playing tables.

175 cameras

Every playing table was equipped with a camera. Every match was recorded in full, allowing players to review and analyze their games after the tournament.

175 baffle boxes

Every table was equipped with a baffle box, ensuring fair and consistent dice rolls.

175 sets of precision dice

A dedicated set of precision dice was provided by the IBF for every match.

3 live-stream tables

Matches from three feature tables were streamed live every day.



Professional commentary

Live broadcasts featured English commentary by Sebastian Wilkinson and Russian commentary by Sergey Rigold, making the games easier to follow and even more engaging for viewers.

Transcribing

Every move on the live-stream table at the Georgian Grand Prix was recorded by transcribers Ivan Lankin and Alexander Abushkevich.

Live information system

Throughout the tournament, players could follow live results, standings, pairings and schedules through the official tournament website, with all information available in real time.

International referee seminar

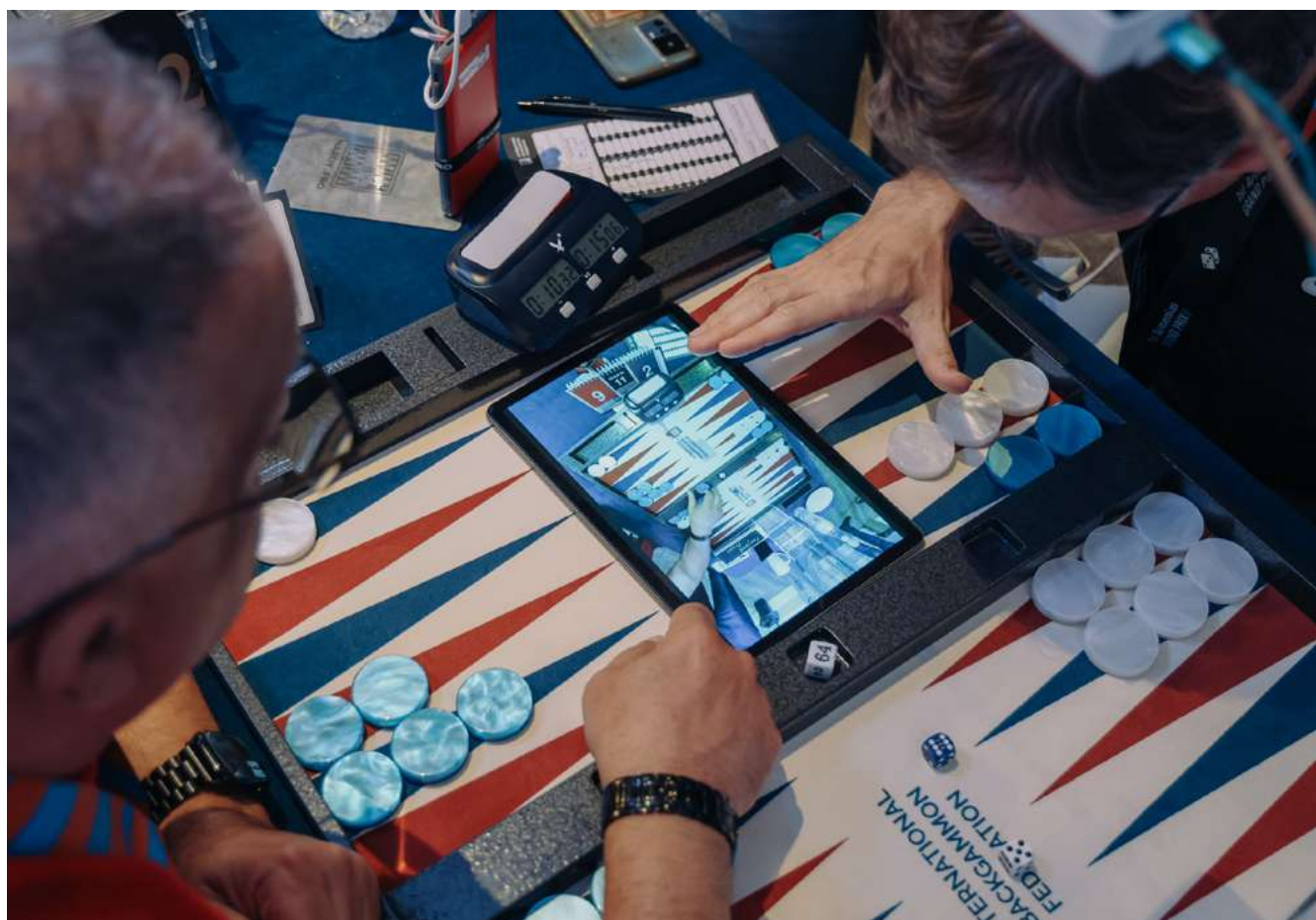
During the tournament, an international referee seminar was held under the leadership of chief arbiter Arda Findikoglu. Representatives from 10 countries attended the seminar, and 40 participants successfully passed the examination, earning the opportunity to become international referees.

2 coffee breaks every day

Two daily coffee breaks with refreshments gave players the opportunity to relax, socialize and recharge between matches.

Medical support

A doctor was available throughout the tournament, providing medical assistance whenever needed.





Opening ceremony

The tournament opened with a vibrant ceremony featuring International Backgammon Federation President Umar Kremlev, who officially welcomed the players and wished them the best of luck in the competition. Guests enjoyed performances by the legendary Georgian ensembles Basiani and Rustavi, a presentation showcasing Georgia, and the ceremonial introduction of all 57 participating nations.

Tbilisi city tour

The IBF organized a guided tour of Tbilisi's historic landmarks for all participants. The excursion offered players the opportunity to discover Georgia's heritage, architecture and renowned hospitality, making the event not only a sporting competition but also a memorable cultural experience.

Professional media team

Throughout the week, the media team captured the tournament's most memorable moments through photography, interviews, video production, and daily coverage.

Gala dinner & Closing ceremony

The tournament concluded with a closing ceremony and gala dinner, where the champions and medalists were honored. Bringing together players, organizers, and guests, the evening provided a fitting finale to one of the most remarkable weeks in the history of the International Backgammon Federation.

09.

CHAMPIONS

Every title has a story behind it. For some, this victory was the fulfillment of a dream years in the making. For others, it became an unexpected triumph, a family milestone, or another important step in their sporting journey. We asked the champions of the first-ever World Longgammon Championship and the Georgian Grand Prix to share their emotions immediately after the finals.

Misak Gevorkyan

Longgammon Main champion •
Russia • 54 years old

It was a great final. My opponent was not only a strong player but also a wonderful person with a kind heart. We met during this tournament, and it was a privilege for me to play against him.

I am very happy that everything turned out this way. We worked hard for this victory for a long time. Of course, winning the first-ever World Longgammon Championship is a great honor.

I dedicate this victory to our country, Russia, to my family, my wife, my children, my son-in-law, my beloved grandson, and to all my relatives and close friends.

**OF COURSE, WINNING
THE FIRST-EVER
WORLD LONGGAMMON
CHAMPIONSHIP
IS A GREAT HONOR.**



Ayrat Fatykhov

Longgammon Blitz
Champion • Russia •
39 years old



I worked toward this victory for a very long time. I won my first international tournament back in 2017, and now I have fulfilled my dream by becoming the champion on the first World Longgammon Championship and earning the title of international master of sports.

The feeling is incredible. I would like to thank everyone who supported me, as well as Umar Kremlev. Without him, I believe this celebration would not have been possible.

I dedicate this victory to Tatarstan, my family, my parents, my friends, and, of course, to my son. He asked me to show everyone who the champion is. I did it.

Dmitrii Nikitin

Longgammon Masters Cup Champion •
Russia • 53 years old

The emotions after this victory are overwhelming. Last time in Tashkent I won the Longgammon Blitz, and this time, quite unexpectedly even for myself, I became the Masters Cup champion. The competition was incredibly strong, and I certainly needed a bit of luck along the way.

The most special moment was that my wife came to Tbilisi for the tournament. She supported me throughout the event and was cheering for me in the final, almost in tears.

I would like to dedicate this victory to my beloved mother, my wife, and my daughter.



Sergei Krasnobaev

Longgammon 1-point winner •
Russia • 56 years old

The emotions are nothing but positive. Whenever I sit down at the board, I always hope to win, even though I know it doesn't always happen. This tournament went well for me, and in the final I managed to turn the match around after a difficult start.

I am a coach and the President of the Kaliningrad Region Backgammon Federation, where I train players. I had already won the Russian Cup in backgammon, and now I have also claimed an international title in longgammon. It is especially meaningful that it happened at the first World Championship.



Julian Becker

Backgammon Main
champion • Germany •
49 years old

Winning the Backgammon Main is the greatest success of my backgammon life. I trained very hard to come here in good shape, and now I can say that my dream has come true.

For me, the Georgian Grand Prix is one of the strongest tournaments. Before coming here, I played many matches, analyzed my games, transcribed them, and tried to prepare with as much discipline as possible.

The hardest game for me was in the fourth round. I was leading 8:3, but eventually lost 8:9, a very tough match and an important experience.

I dedicate this victory to everyone who helped me come here. I especially want to thank Alicia Becker, my friends in Germany, and my training partner. This victory means a lot to me.

**I TRAINED VERY
HARD TO COME
HERE IN GOOD
SHAPE, AND NOW
I CAN SAY THAT
MY DREAM HAS
COME TRUE.**



Ali Haydar Bayar

Backgammon Blitz
champion • Turkey •
28 years old

Winning the Georgian Grand Prix was especially meaningful because the entire podium was taken by Turkish players. It was an outstanding result for our team.

Before the tournament, I trained hard and prepared as much as I could. But, like every sportsman, I believe the most important thing is to enjoy the game. Backgammon has become a part of my everyday life. We play constantly at home, analyze games together, and keep learning from one another.

I would like to dedicate this victory to my sister.

Ali Haydar Bayar & Selin Kurt Talipoglu

Doubles champions •
Turkey • 28 and 38 years old



We are very happy and we deserved this victory. The final match was difficult, which makes the title even more important for us.

This victory means a lot because the Georgian Grand Prix is one of the best tournaments in the world. Winning here is very special.

We help each other a lot in the game. In many ways, we are coaches for each other. This victory is for Dennis. Thank you all so much.

Milos Mikic

Sprintgammon champion •
Serbia • 47 years old



Winning the Sprintgammon title was a very good feeling. I always try to take the result calmly: when I win, I feel only a little better than when I lose. But of course, winning this title is something special.

I would like to thank the tournament organizers. They have been very persistent in promoting backgammon and created a tournament of very high quality. I especially appreciate the work of the entire team: marketing, referees and everyone involved in making the event happen. I even tried to count how many people were part of the organization, and it made me realize how much work stands behind this tournament.

For me, backgammon is a sport. It is a way to compete, meet new people, travel with meaning and discover new cultures. And the most important part of the game is people.

Ioannis Atmatzidis

Backgammon 1-point winner •
Greece • 39 years old

This victory is very special to me. Right now, I feel like I'm flying high in the sky. Moments like this give me even more motivation to keep playing and moving forward.

Winning this title gives me the opportunity to take part in more major tournaments, and that is just as important to me as the trophy itself. I want to keep improving and competing against the best players.

I dedicate this victory to my family, especially to my grandfather, who taught me the game of backgammon and helped me take my very first steps.



Lev Rosenfeld

Backgammon Masters Cup
champion • Israel • 48 years old

When you go all the way and lift the main trophy, it is a truly special feeling. If you don't win every match and become the champion, there is always a little sadness inside. This time, everything came together perfectly.

This is my first major title, so I am truly happy and excited. I hope to return to IBF tournaments again.

I would like to dedicate this victory to my late girlfriend, Irina. She passed away many years ago, but she still holds a very special place in my heart.

Thank you, everyone. IBF is doing a great thing. Good luck to all of you, and see you at the backgammon boards.



Elena Anuchina

Women's winner •
Russia • 46 years old



I still can't believe that I won this tournament. On my way to the title, I had to face many strong opponents. Maybe I was just a little luckier than the others.

The most anticipated match was the final against Akiko. Near the end she offered a double to two, I accepted it, and then I managed to play the ending better. The winning 4 – 4 roll sealed the victory.

I dedicate this victory to my parents – my mom and dad – as well as to my son, who also plays backgammon, and to my daughter.

Everyone in my family has already achieved first place. Now, for the first time, I have my own first place too – in backgammon.

Tsaruk Manukyan

Seniors 50+ winner •
Russia • 68 years old



My emotions are very positive. It wasn't easy for me, so I'm very happy that I managed to win.

You could say that backgammon was my main subject at school, and all the other subjects came after that.

I'd also like to send my greetings to my grandchildren, whom I missed very much.

The Numbers Behind the Performance

Analysis of the matches played on the three streamed tables highlighted the exceptionally high standard of play at the Georgian Grand Prix 2026

The tournament's lowest PR of 1.46 was recorded by Macleod / Heskett, based on one analyzed match.

Among players with multiple analyzed matches, tournament champion Julian Becker delivered the most impressive performance. **Across 6 sportsman matches, he maintained an outstanding average PR of 2.52, demonstrating remarkable consistency throughout the event.**

THE TOP PERFORMERS ALSO INCLUDED:

Hossein Aghili	PR 1.68, 1 match
Jansari Neeraj	PR 1.70, 1 match
Jurgen Orłowski	PR 2.10, 1 match
Amirali Tavakkoli	PR 2.15, 1 match
Lars Trabolt	PR 2.22, 1 match
Eduard Nazaryan	PR 2.30, 1 match

The complete match analysis and full sportsman statistics are available on the official IBF website.

Congratulations to all the players on an outstanding display of world-class backgammon!



**GEORGIA TASTES
LIKE WINE, WARMED
BY THE SUN
AND THE KINDNESS
OF ITS PEOPLE**

Tamar Pularia

10. DESTINATION: GEORGIA



There are countries you visit once and remember for a long time – Georgia is one of them. It is a country where ancient monasteries stand alongside modern cities, where the vibrant streets of Tbilisi give way to the silence of the mountains, and where every dinner feels like a celebration. In just a few days, you can discover dozens of unforgettable flavors, listen to Georgia's famous polyphonic singing, explore centuries-old fortresses, admire snow-capped peaks and, only a couple of hours later, find yourself by the sea. It feels as if several completely different worlds have come together within one small country.

Perhaps that is Georgia's true character. It is vibrant, passionate, generous and deeply authentic. Its people carefully preserve centuries-old traditions while embracing the new with remarkable ease. Here, food, wine, music and meaningful conversation are not simply part of everyday life – they are part of the culture itself. That is what gives every event held in this country its unique atmosphere.

To discover Georgia better, we asked the people who have known it all their lives.

Zviad Shatirishvili

Georgia • 56 years old

Georgia has been hosting major international sporting events for many years, and every new tournament proves that it is an ideal destination for competitions of this scale. We continue to develop modern sports infrastructure, we have experienced professionals, and hospitality has long been part of our national character.

Our country's history spans thousands of years, and this year we celebrate the 1,700th anniversary of the adoption of Christianity, an event that played a defining role in shaping Georgian culture and national identity.

Many visitors first discover Georgia through its cuisine and wine. After all, it was here, more than 8,000 years ago, that one of the world's oldest winemaking traditions was born. But what stays with people just as much is the country's unique pace of life, which invites them to slow down and savor every moment.

If I were asked to describe the taste of Georgia, I would compare it to the feeling of holding a newborn baby in your arms for the very first time. It is a feeling you never forget. That is exactly how I hope people will remember my country.



**I WOULD COMPARE THE
TASTE OF GEORGIA TO
THE FEELING
OF HOLDING A NEWBORN
BABY IN YOUR ARMS
FOR THE VERY FIRST
TIME.**

Tamar Pularia

Georgia • 72 years old

To me, Georgia is a place where ancient history naturally blends with modern life. Although our country is small, it offers an incredible variety of experiences. Here, centuries-old churches and the cave city of Vardzia stand alongside contemporary architecture that blends harmoniously into the surrounding landscape. Mountains and the sea, world-famous Georgian cuisine and wine – all of these help create the atmosphere that makes our country so special.

Backgammon and longgammon have long been part of family life in Georgia. Almost every household knows the game, and many people become familiar with it in childhood. Hospitality is just as deeply rooted in our culture. We are always happy to welcome people and do everything we can to ensure that everyone leaves with the warmest memories.

Georgia tastes like wine, warmed by the sun and the kindness of its people. We are always happy to share all of this with everyone who comes here.

**BACKGAMMON
AND LONGGAMMON
HAVE LONG BEEN
PART OF FAMILY LIFE
IN GEORGIA.**



**FOR THEM,
BACKGAMMON HAS
LONG BEEN MUCH
MORE THAN JUST
A GAME**



11. FACES OF BACKGAMMON

Every board has a story to tell.

For some, this was their first international tournament. Others dream of becoming World Champions. Some found lifelong friends here, while others found the love of their lives. Yet they all share one thing in common: backgammon has become much more than just a game.

We spoke with participants from different countries at IBF tournaments to discover how they found backgammon, what they dream about, and why they keep coming back to the board again and again.



Amir Eshraghi

Iran • 43 years old

I was introduced to backgammon in 2005 while studying for my master's degree in mechanical engineering. For the birthday of a close friend who loved the game, I bought a traditional backgammon board. Wanting us to play our first match together, I learned the rules – and immediately became fascinated by the game.

Today, backgammon has become a form of therapy for me. It helps me disconnect from the outside world and recharge. As a high-level player, I have developed a deep understanding of the game's mechanics, and that is what motivates me to keep learning and improving in pursuit of one day reaching the top of the world rankings.

What I enjoy most is playing against thoughtful opponents who see backgammon as an intellectual challenge and enjoy discussing strategy after the match.

I believe that mind sports help overcome cultural differences and bring together people with different ways of thinking. By crossing those boundaries, we gain a deeper understanding of life.



**MIND SPORTS HELP
OVERCOME CULTURAL
DIFFERENCES.**

Sergey Drmoyan

Armenia • 69 years old

At first, I played backgammon simply for pleasure. Later, I began studying strategy and taking part in tournaments.

To me, backgammon is a combination of intellect, strategy, and luck. It develops the mind and creates opportunities to meet interesting people.

My dream is to become a strong competitor and win a major international tournament. I want to play against the world's best players, gain experience, and continue improving my level.



Afshin Foulad

United Kingdom • 53 years old

My father taught me how to play backgammon. From that moment on, the game captured my imagination and became a source of joy and friendship.

My goal is simple — to win. To me, backgammon is much like life: learning the rules is easy, but becoming a true master is almost impossible.



Batbayar Bat-Ochir

Mongolia • 26 years old



I started playing backgammon two years ago when my coach introduced me to the game. It is truly exciting. What I enjoy most is that the result can change until the very last moment of the match.

My dream is to improve my skills and compete against the best players in the world. I would especially like to play against Mochy and Michi.

I believe backgammon is not just a game of luck. It requires calculation and strategic thinking. Victory belongs to the player who makes better decisions — just like in life.

Mehman Rzayev

Azerbaijan • 71 years old



Backgammon has become a symbol of strength and character for me. My dream is to compete in International Backgammon Federation tournaments and become a World Champion.

Backgammon is one of the oldest and most popular games in the world. I hope more people across the globe will discover and fall in love with it.

Rodion Pliev

Russia • 45 years old

I came to backgammon thanks to a friend, and I stayed thanks to the President of the St. Petersburg Backgammon Federation.

For me, backgammon is a game, a sport, and an art form all at once. In 2026, my goal is to finish in the Top-3 at one of the major international tournaments.

Backgammon has reached the peak of its popularity. It is accessible to a wide audience, allowing people to study theory and apply it in practice. Most importantly, it brings together players of all religions and nationalities. Thanks to backgammon, the world becomes kinder and more interesting.



Kimon Papachristopoulos

Germany • 60 years old

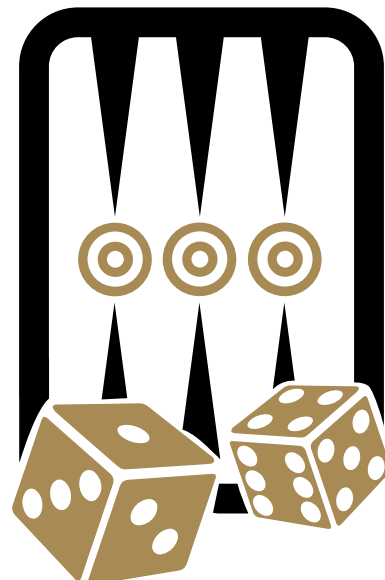
My father taught me how to play backgammon. It has remained a lifelong passion ever since. I dream of seeing the backgammon community continue to grow.

To me, backgammon is an exciting game and a true school of life. It improves your mental fitness while teaching diligence, dedication and modesty.



LOVE AT FIRST ROLL

Backgammon brought Emma and Sergey together.



Sergey Petukhov

Russia • 43 years old



I first played backgammon at home with my relatives. Later, I found out that tournaments were being held in Moscow and attended my first one in 2005. I have been playing ever since.

For me, backgammon became not only a favourite game, but also part of the life in which Emma appeared. We met through backgammon, travel to tournaments together and share the same passion for the game.

My dream is to win a major international tournament or Russian Championship. If I could choose any opponent, I would play against Leonardo DiCaprio, because, as far as I know, he also plays backgammon.

To me, backgammon is an exciting ancient game that deserves to be known all over the world.

TO ME, BACKGAMMON IS AN EXCITING ANCIENT GAME THAT DESERVES TO BE KNOWN ALL OVER THE WORLD.

Emma Petukhova

Russia • 35 years old

I learned to play longgammon in Georgia, where I was born. Years later, after moving to Moscow, I spent a long time playing online until I discovered live tournaments about six years ago. I attended one of them and became part of this world for good.

At first, backgammon was simply an interesting hobby for me. Then it became my favourite sport. Then it turned into a true passion. At one of the live tournaments, I met my future husband, Sergey Petukhov. Today, we travel together to tournaments in different cities and countries, devote a lot of time to the game and stay closely connected to the backgammon community. That is why backgammon is now an essential part of my life.

My dream is to win a major and meaningful tournament. I would especially like to play against Akiko Yazawa, whom I admire both as a player and as a person.

I believe the world should discover backgammon because it is the perfect board game. It combines knowledge and luck, mathematics and intuition, wisdom and simplicity, courage and drive, composure and strategy, impulse and endurance. It draws you in quickly and keeps you in suspense for a long time. In many ways, it resembles life: much depends on our own decisions, but not everything depends only on us.

**BACKGAMMON
RESEMBLES LIFE:
MUCH DEPENDS
ON OUR OWN
DECISIONS, BUT
NOT EVERYTHING
DEPENDS ONLY
ON US.**







EVERY GENERATION
DISCOVERS
BACKGAMMON
IN ITS OWN WAY



12. YOUNG GENERATION

Every generation discovers backgammon in its own way.

For some, it begins with a family board. For others, it starts with a tournament broadcast or a match they happen to come across. But very quickly, that first introduction turns into a desire to learn, improve and one day compete against the world's strongest players.

During the tournaments in Georgia, we spoke with several young sportsmen who are already part of the international backgammon community. Each of them has their own goals, dreams and vision for the future. But they all share one thing: it is this generation that will shape the future of backgammon over the next 10, 20 and 30 years.





Vladimir Sazonov

Russia • 16 years old

WHAT I LOVE MOST ABOUT BACKGAMMON IS THAT THERE IS NO LIMIT TO IMPROVEMENT.

I discovered backgammon by chance: one day I saw Start Superleague on television, learned the rules on my own, and later began studying the theory of the game. From the very beginning, I was fascinated by watching players who showed an outstanding PR. Today, I can sometimes reach that level myself, although not as often as I would like. But I am working on it.

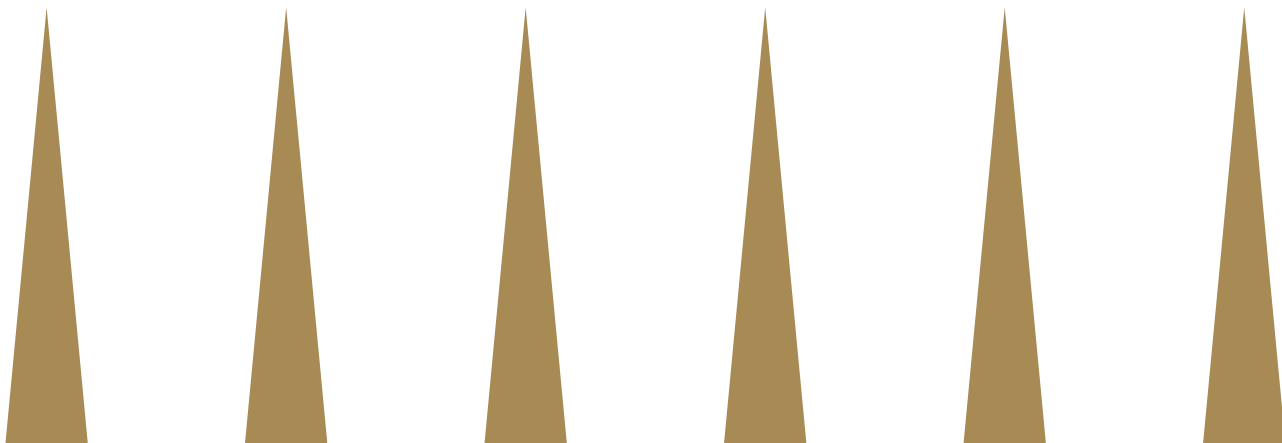
What I love most about backgammon is that there is no limit to improvement. You can keep growing endlessly. Even if you become a world champion, you still cannot say that you have fully understood the game.

I always enjoy playing against stronger opponents. At the tournament in Tbilisi, I had the chance to play against Mochy, which just a couple of years ago felt like an impossible dream.

I want to reach the highest level in our sport. My biggest goal is to win the World Championship in Monte Carlo.

Backgammon teaches you that success is never guaranteed, even when you do everything perfectly. In life, just as in backgammon, we can only maximize our chances, never our certainty. That means we have to be ready for anything and accept setbacks with resilience.

IBF tournaments have impressed me with their scale and level of organization. I also liked the introduction of sprintgammon as a separate discipline. In the future, it would be interesting to see other formats as well, for example longer matches in the main or blitz events.



Ekaterina Fikacheva

Russia • 16 years old

My father introduced me to backgammon when I was 12 years old. I became interested in the game right away, but I could never have imagined how deeply it would draw me in.

For me, backgammon is the perfect balance between luck and strategy. The outcome of a match can change at any moment, which gives you hope of winning but never allows you to feel completely certain until the final roll.

I would like to play against a world champion to gain invaluable experience against a strong opponent. My dream is not just to participate, but to win a major international tournament or finish in the top-3. I want to reach a high level, gain experience and perhaps discover the secret of this beautiful game.

Backgammon teaches patience, discipline, the ability to accept defeat and the skill of finding the best decisions even in difficult positions. It helps in life as well. That is why I love backgammon.



Nadezhda Vaulina

Russia • 23 years old

I discovered backgammon in childhood, when my father brought a board home. Later, I found players I looked up to and watched their matches on live broadcasts.

I would be interested in playing against legendary Japanese players such as Michy and Mochy. My dream is to achieve success in backgammon and consistently maintain a strong level of play.

Backgammon is important to me for another reason as well: it teaches us to make decisions that truly matter, and every decision is reflected on the board.

I would like IBF tournaments to bring together more and more strong players every time, so that people do not even have to think about whether they should come to these competitions.





**SUCCESS
DEPENDS ON
SKILL, STRATEGY,
AND DEDICATION
RATHER THAN
GENDER**

Munkhzul Mijigdorj

13. WOMEN IN BACKGAMMON

Women are making their mark in the world of backgammon with growing confidence.

We are truly delighted to see more and more women discovering this sport, competing in international tournaments and becoming part of the global backgammon community.

We spoke with several participants of the Georgian Grand Prix and the World Longgammon Championship about their journey, their first victories, what inspires them, and why, once they sat down at the board for the first time, they have never stopped coming back.



Munkhzul Mijigdorj

Mongolia • 43 years old



I first discovered backgammon about three years ago, when the Mongolian Backgammon Federation was founded. Through its activities, I became interested in the game, started playing, and it has since become an important part of my life. It is easy to learn but very difficult to master, and that challenge keeps me motivated.

One stereotype I have often faced is that backgammon is mainly a men's sport. I believe success depends on skill, strategy, and dedication rather than gender. It is wonderful to see more women joining the community and competing at a high level.

What I admire most about the women's community is its dedication. Many women balance backgammon with family, work, and many other responsibilities, yet still find the time and energy to improve. I truly believe that with consistent practice and experience, women can compete at the same level as men.

Backgammon has become an important part of my personal growth. It teaches me patience, decision-making, and resilience. Every game is different, and the opportunity to keep learning is what continues to inspire me.

Afsana Khakimova

Russia • 41 years old

I grew up in a family where everyone played longgammon. My father played with his friends, my mother played as well, and in Georgia, where my family comes from, the game has always been part of everyday life. Looking back, I realize I never really had a chance not to fall in love with it.

Some people still believe that women do not belong in this sport. I see it differently. To me, women here embody both beauty and wisdom.

Sport has become part of my life, and longgammon has become part of who I am. The game reminds me of my homeland, my parents, and my ancestors. That is why I know I will always choose longgammon.



Tatyana Pram

Russia • 38 years old

My father taught me how to play backgammon, and it has remained part of my life ever since. Our relationship has never been simple. When I win, I love backgammon. When I lose, I sometimes feel like I hate it. Yet no matter what happens or what the result may be, I always come back to the board.

Even during tournaments, I manage to balance the competition with my work by making use of the breaks between matches. And to me, luck has always been, and still is, one of the most important elements of backgammon.



Akiko Yazawa

Japan • 45 years old

Backgammon entered my life about 20 years ago as part of a personal goal to try ten new experiences every year. Learning backgammon was simply one of those challenges.

When I started playing, there were very few women in the backgammon community. Even at tournament registration, people often didn't recognize me as a player, and when I played Doubles, they assumed I was simply my partner's girlfriend. That is why having a dedicated women's community means so much to me. It provides invaluable emotional support.

Over the years, my view of tournaments has changed. I used to let every result determine my happiness. Today, I believe we are people first and competitors second. Making friends within the community and discovering new places has become just as important to me as the game itself.

I think backgammon is very much like life. It requires a balance between uncontrollable dice rolls and your own decisions. During cancer treatment, I played backgammon from my hospital bed, and after leaving the hospital I went on to win the World Championship. That experience taught me to accept the things I cannot control while still finding the strength to move forward.



**TODAY, I BELIEVE WE
ARE PEOPLE FIRST
AND COMPETITORS
SECOND.**

Elena Saukova

Russia • 43 years old



My father introduced me to longgammon when I was a child. For several years, we played only against each other before life gradually took me away from the game. I returned to longgammon with the arrival of mobile apps and later began learning backgammon.

Like many players, I have encountered the stereotype that backgammon is merely a game of chance or that it somehow deserves its unfair reputation. It is inspiring to see how the International Backgammon Federation and the Russian Backgammon Federation are changing that perception.

What surprises me most is the women's community. There is no conflict here, but an abundance of kindness, support, and friendships that often continue long after the tournaments are over.

To me, backgammon is much more than a game. It is a philosophy of life. It teaches you to accept defeat, begin again, search for the best solution, and understand that personal growth never truly ends.

Janette Hodgkinson

South Africa • 59 years old



I have never experienced stereotypes in backgammon. I also don't distinguish between men and women in the game, so it is difficult for me to speak about the women's community separately. I find it easy to balance life and sport because backgammon is such an important part of who I am that I have no need to separate the two.

To me, backgammon is a metaphor for life. It is a game where resilience, determination, skill, and luck all matter. I love the challenge it brings, and I am grateful for our community and for the wonderful friends I have made through the game.



A full-page photograph of a woman walking towards the camera in a brightly lit, sun-drenched hallway. She is wearing a white long-sleeved top, dark trousers, and sunglasses. She carries a black bag over her shoulder and holds a light-colored jacket in her left arm. The background is filled with large windows and warm, golden light, creating a bokeh effect. The overall mood is confident and stylish.

**WHEN YOU FEEL GOOD
ABOUT YOURSELF
AND FEEL CONFIDENT,
IT IMMEDIATELY AFFECTS
YOUR MOOD**

**Gulnara
Heydarova-Silkova**

14. BACKGAMMON & STYLE



Style is about much more than clothing.

It is about individuality, habits, favorite accessories, lucky charms, confidence at the board, and a way of expressing yourself. At International Backgammon Federation tournaments, we always notice people whose style is impossible to forget. It becomes even more distinctive when it includes details inspired by backgammon.

We spoke with some of the tournament's most stylish players in Georgia about fashion and sport.



Farzona Bobonazarova

Russia • 29 years old



For me, style is part of my mindset before every match. When I look the way I like, I feel more confident and comfortable. Of course, success depends on skill and luck rather than clothing, but a beautiful outfit always puts me in the right mood.

My lucky charm is a bracelet shaped like dice, given to me by someone very close to my heart. In fact, it is just a simple elastic band, but I decided to wear it as a bracelet and take it with me to every tournament. Whenever it is on my wrist, I feel the support, warmth and energy of a loved one.

I enjoy feminine looks. A stylish friend once told me, "The heels on your shoes should never be lower than 10 centimeters". Since then, dresses and high heels have become a signature part of my tournament style. I like bringing a little elegance and personality into the sporting atmosphere.

To me, a modern backgammon player combines intelligence, confidence and individuality. That is why I especially enjoy seeing national teams express their identity through elements of traditional dress or matching team uniforms. It always looks beautiful and memorable.



Shirzad Huseynov

Azerbaijan • 70 years old

If I had the opportunity, I would travel all over the world and play in tournaments. To me, backgammon is about meeting new people, making friends, and building lasting friendships. That is what I consider a happy life.

I do not have a lucky charm, but I always enjoy wearing a hat at tournaments and my favorite part of the game is the doubling cube. I would say that the most stylish players come from England.

I believe a modern backgammon player should smile, stay calm, and never lose composure at the board.



Ricardo Malas

Lebanon • 73 years old

My lucky bracelet is always with me at tournaments. But the most recognizable part of my style is my hat. It has become my trademark, and many people recognize me because of it.

It is difficult for me to name the most stylish country because style is something deeply personal. And if you ask me what a modern backgammon player should look like, my answer is simple: perhaps a little like me.



Gulnara Heydarova-Silkova

Azerbaijan • 38 years old



For me, style is part of the right mindset, especially as a woman. When you feel good about yourself, look your best, and feel confident, it immediately affects your mood. Of course, the result depends on your game rather than your appearance, but competing is always more enjoyable when you feel comfortable and confident.

My greatest lucky charm is my husband. He is my most loyal supporter and my biggest source of encouragement. Even when he cannot be with me, I know he follows every match and cheers me on. That is why I always feel that my lucky charm is with me.

It is difficult for me to choose just one favorite part of my tournament look. What matters most is that everything feels harmonious. Then small details, such as glasses, jewelry, a cap, or another accessory, help express my personality. I especially enjoy it when those details are connected to backgammon.

To me, a modern backgammon player is someone whose profession and background cannot be guessed at first sight. Around the board, you meet entrepreneurs, teachers, bloggers, and world champions. It is this diversity that makes backgammon so special.

I would never name just one country as the most stylish. Style depends on personal taste, not geography. At every tournament, there are people whose appearance is just as memorable as their brilliant play.



Pouya Rajabi

Iran • 38 years old

Style is very important to me at tournaments. It is part of my confidence and the way I present myself at the board. I believe a player's appearance can influence the way they play.

Luck will always be part of backgammon, and that is exactly what makes the game so fascinating. We cannot control it, but we can learn to accept it. Before every match, I have a few personal rituals that help me stay calm and focused.

I like my style to remain simple, elegant, and true to my personality. To me, a modern backgammon player is much more than a sportsman. It is a combination of strategy, psychology, discipline, and character. In many ways, backgammon is life itself.

In my opinion, Russian and Iranian players pay particular attention to their appearance. But since the International Backgammon Federation began its rapid development, players around the world have become more conscious of their image. Today, style has become part of the global backgammon culture.



Airat Metshin

Russia • 63 years old



Style is important to me. Unfortunately, I do not speak foreign languages, so many players recognize me by my appearance. I do not have a lucky charm. Instead, I have my cap — it has become my trademark at tournaments.

To me, a modern backgammon player is someone who feels comfortable at the board. They are confident, calm, have a good sense of humor and understand the game. When it comes to style, I especially admire players from Russia, Japan and Italy.



15. BACKGAMMON VISION

Backgammon has entered a new era of development. The international community of players continues to grow, and competitions are reaching a truly global scale across every aspect of the sport.

In recent years, the International Backgammon Federation has introduced new international tournaments, an official IBF competition calendar, standardized sporting regulations, a professional refereeing system, live broadcasting and match transcription, new sporting disciplines, and the first World Longgammon Championship. And this is only the beginning.

The next stage of development will be even more ambitious:

- 🎯 The creation of the International Mind Sports Association, bringing together intellectual sports on a unified international platform.
- 🎯 Strengthening the international recognition of backgammon as a sport and expanding its presence within the global sporting community.
- 🎯 Continuing the journey toward Olympic recognition.
- 🎯 Expanding the global presence of the International Backgammon Federation through the development of international leagues and new world-class competitions.
- 🎯 Launching an international youth competition system, with the first World Youth Championship planned for next year.
- 🎯 Developing adaptive backgammon and organizing the first international competitions for players with disabilities.
- 🎯 Developing the official IBF backgammon app, connecting players from around the world. The platform will allow anyone to become part of the International Backgammon Federation community, even if they are not yet able to attend tournaments in person.

Our mission remains unchanged: to develop backgammon as a modern international sport, accessible to millions of people regardless of age, country, or playing level.

The International Backgammon Federation will continue bringing together players, national federations, and tournament organizers. We are committed to expanding a global community that will strengthen connections between people and nations for decades to come.

THE FUTURE OF BACKGAMMON IS BEING CREATED TODAY



A close-up, profile photograph of a man with grey hair and glasses, wearing a grey jacket. A hand is placed on his head, suggesting a moment of stress or contemplation. The background is blurred, showing a crowd of people. The man is wearing a pink Lacoste shirt with white stripes and Nike logos on the sleeves.

16. BEST PHOTOS







17. FINAL NOTE

This magazine is more than a collection of words and photographs. We have poured our hearts into every page. Our goal was to capture what the International Backgammon Federation represents today: people united by a shared passion, world-class tournaments, bold ideas, and a commitment to establishing backgammon as a modern international sport.

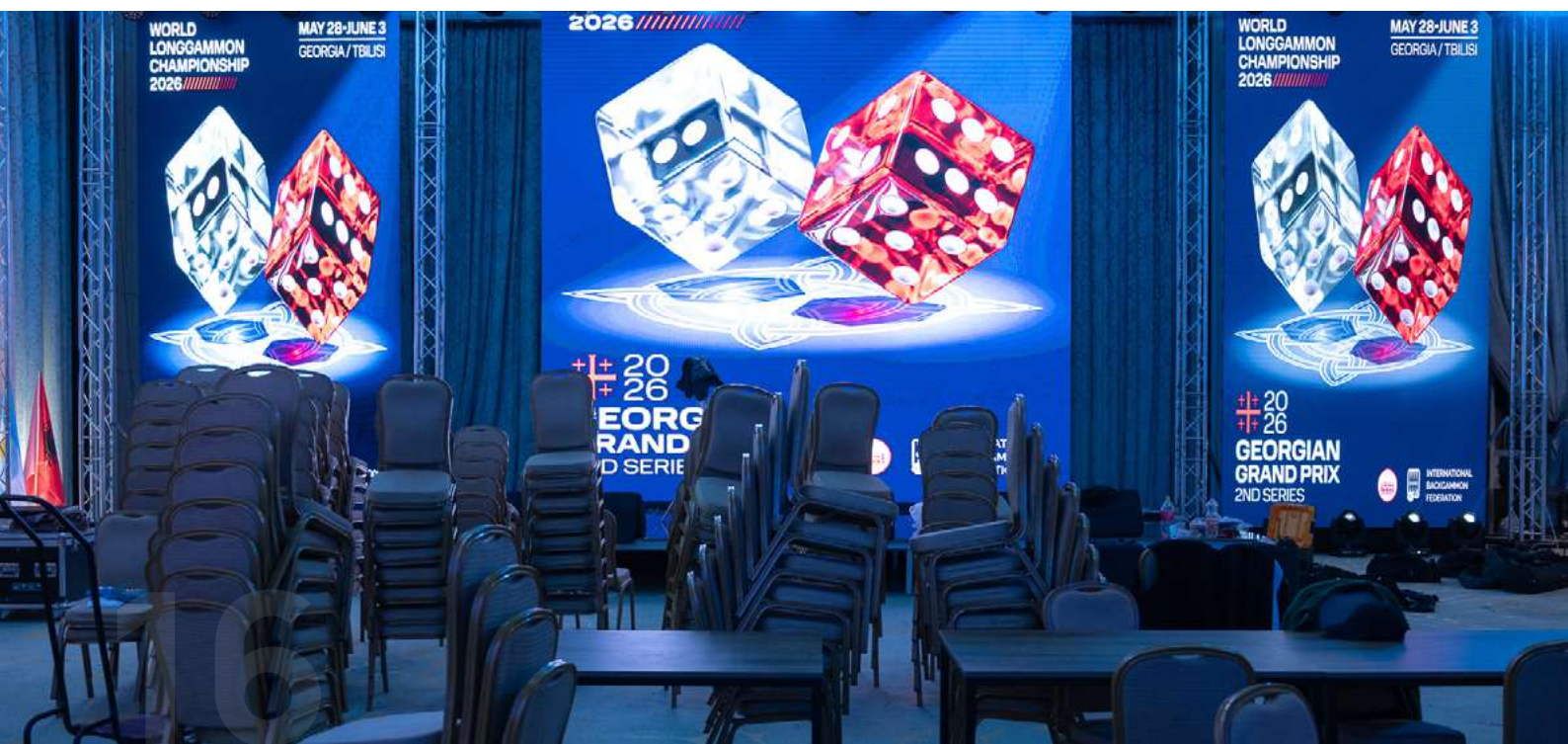
Behind these pages are thousands of matches played, hundreds of handshakes exchanged, dozens of countries visited, and countless human stories. Stories of victory and defeat, friendship and rivalry, first steps in the game, and dreams that became reality.

We are grateful to every spectator, player, referee, organizer, partner, and supporter for choosing IBF tournaments and becoming part of our international community. It is because of you that we continue moving forward, discovering new countries, creating new tournaments, and writing the history of backgammon together.

This is only the beginning of a much greater journey. New destinations, new champions, and new chapters lie ahead.

We look forward to sharing that journey with you.

Until we meet again.



JOIN THE IBF COMMUNITY

Whether you are a player, a representative of a national federation, a tournament organizer, or simply passionate about backgammon, the official IBF website is your gateway to the international backgammon community.

There you will find the official IBF rules and regulations, information about upcoming tournaments, international projects, and the latest Federation news. Authorized representatives of national federations can also apply for their country to join the International Backgammon Federation and submit proposals to host official IBF tournaments.

Official website **i-bg-federation.com**



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