

# Atlanta Chouette Rules

Updated – November 2007

## Basics and Terms

- 1.1) These rules assume knowledge of the game of backgammon, how it is scored, the role of the doubling cube and procedures for handling dice and doubling cubes.
- 1.2) In a chouette, one person, called *the Box*, plays a game of backgammon for points against a *Team* of other players headed by *the Captain*, who rolls the dice and plays the checkers for the Team. Optionally, the Box may take a *Partner*, customary when the Team is large (generally restricted to chouettes with six or more players). At the end of each game, the Team rotates, with the next in line becoming the new Captain. The new position of the Box, Partner and Captain is according to the rotation rules below.
- 1.3) The initial determination of the Box, Captain, Team, and Partner is done by each player rolling 2 dice (doubles not counting extra), and the highest number becomes the Box, the next is the Captain, then the next determines the order of the Team. The last person on the team would be the first invited to be Partner, if any.
- 1.4) Each member of the Team has a doubling cube.
- 1.5) A cube is said to be *in the game* if and only if it has been turned and accepted, regardless of the value of the centered cube.

## Stakes

- 2.1) The *basic stake* (number of dollars per point) is determined by mutual agreement and should be written at the top of the score sheet.
- 2.2) When joining the chouette a player arranges to play for the basic stake, or for multiples of the basic stake. For the basic stake, the centered cube begins with "1" or "64" facing upward. If the player wishes to play for double stakes against certain players the cube begins showing "2" provided that the Box has agreed to play against that player for the higher stake. For quadruple stakes the cube begins at "4" and so on.
- 2.3) A player wishing to change the stake arrangement between games may do so only if the opponent(s) involved agrees.

## Consultation

- 3.1) Players may not consult on cube decisions, nor should they announce their reasons for doubling, taking or dropping. Consulting is defined as any comment or action made before or after a play that may sway another player's judgment regarding a checker play, the current position or a doubling cube decision.
- 3.2) For checker play, the Captain may seek advice from any player whose cube is in the game regardless of the Captain's cube status. Those without a cube in the game must not consult or comment. The Captain may only offer advice if his cube is in the game.

- 3.3) The Box may fully consult with Partner only after at least two cubes have been turned, regardless if they were taken or passed.
- 3.4) The Box may always consult with Partner regarding cube decisions. Until two cubes have been turned (see Rule 3.3), discussion of specific dice rolls or specific checker plays (current or future) is not allowed. Discussion of aspects of the position that have bearing on the current cube decision(s) is acceptable.
- 3.5) The only players who can handle the dice or checkers are the Box and the Captain but the Team members may handle their own cube, if desired. The Captain makes the final decision on all checker plays.
- 3.6) If a player is guilty of consulting without his cube in play, the Box has the option of either taking ownership of that player's cube (at its starting value) or declaring a "wash" on the offending player's cube and removing it from play. When a player who is already out of the current game is guilty of consulting, the aggrieved player (the Box or the Captain) may optionally take ownership of another cube (at its starting value) for which the offending player is then liable, or demand and automatically receive a penalty from the offending player of 1/2 of the original starting cube value. When Partner consults prior to two cubes being turned, Partner alone must immediately pay the original starting cube value to the Captain.

## **Scoring and Settlements**

- 4.1) Jacoby Rule: Gammons and backgammons count only if the cube in question is in the game.
- 4.2) Scoring is kept to whole point accuracy. If the Box and Partner win an odd number of points, the Box receives the extra point. When the Box and Partner lose an odd number of points, the Box loses the extra point.
- 4.3) If games are settled for a fractional point amount, the fraction is 'rolled off' by both players throwing two dice. The higher total (doubles not counting extra), wins the extra fractional point. Other dispositions of fractional points may be made by mutual agreement between players, provided that only whole points are recorded on the score sheet.
- 4.4) The Box may preempt a settlement between players in the Team. For example, 'A' has elected to double but 'B' has not. 'A' offers 'B' 1/2 the cube value for 'B's interest in the game in order to double. If 'B' accepts the offer the Box may preempt the offer, paying 'B' in order to reduce the Team. The Box may also preempt offers from spectators or players out of the game.

- 4.5) The Box may offer settlements to any player or number of players and is not obligated to offer the same settlement to the entire Team. Settlements between the Box and Partner regarding ownership of the cubes in play do not affect who rolls the game or the determination of keeping or losing the Box. Such settlements are considered a separate agreement between the Box and Partner that does not affect the game in progress, only the points won or lost by the Box and Partner. Such settlements do not dissolve the partnership for the next game if the Box wins. However, if the settlement removes all financial interest for the Box or Partner for the remainder of this game, the consulting rights for that player are removed.

## **Doubling**

- 5.1) By default, automatic doubles are not used. When matching starting dice are rolled, an automatic double (cube turned to next higher value with the cube remaining in the center) can be made by mutual agreement between the Box and any number of the other players.
- 5.2) A player doubles by placing the cube on the backgammon board with the doubled value showing. If requested by a Team member the Captain may turn that player's cube.
- 5.3) When a double is offered to a player, the player acts with a drop, take, or beaver (turning the cube to the next value and retaining possession).
- 5.4) If a player beavers, the player who offered the double may accept the beaver, raccoon (turning the cube once more without changing possession) or drop the beaver, immediately losing the value of the cube before the beaver. Raccoons or other further immediate redoubles are allowed only with consent of both players involved.
- 5.5) Misunderstandings about doubling, drops, and takes should be avoided by announcing the decision and making sure all involved have heard. However, if there is confusion, the cube position resolves any dispute. When dropped, the cube is restored to its initial value and should be put in a different location than centered cubes that remain in play. When accepted, a cube shows the new value and is positioned so that it is easily visible and all know that it is in the game.
- 5.6) The Box may offer a partial number of initial doubles, but he must double the Captain and then players from the top of the rotation. However, he is free to redouble selectively and with any number of cubes.
- 5.7) When the Box doubles all cubes from the middle and a lone player takes, he is obligated to accept any offered extras. The lone player is paid the value of the undoubled cube, and will now hold the cube of the player(s) who offered the extra at double the value. Beavers and raccoons are allowed as per rule 5.4. The player(s) who offered the extras are now on the side of the Box with no consulting permitted, and have independent cube action between them and the lone player from that point on. The taking player has the option to change his original decision and drop the Box's cube if he does not wish to accept the offered extras. The lone taking player also has the option to continue the game but immediately drop any of the offered extras (to reduce the gammon risk), losing a net of one point to each of those players.

- 5.8) The Box can insist that the team make take and pass decisions in order of the rotation. Optionally if allowed by the Box, players in the Team may act on a cube offer by the Box in any order, but have the right to wait until all those preceding them in the rotation have acted.
- 5.9) At the Captain's turn, a player in the Team may offer the Box a double, at which time the Box is required to verbally solicit the Team for other players that also may wish to double. This applies to initial doubles and redoubles. When a Team member may wish to double on the next sequence, he must tell the Captain "hold your roll" or words to that effect, to give that Team member the option to double before the dice are rolled. The Box can insist that the cubes be offered in order of the rotation, asking the Captain first if he wishes to double and then continuing through the rotation.
- 5.10) When all cubes are turned from the center: the Box may drop or accept all cubes, or may accept at least one half of the cubes and drop the rest. When the Box accepts only some of the cubes, he must accept the Captain and then players starting from the top of the rotation. The Box may not accept less than one-half the number of offered cubes, regardless of their value. The Box may beaver any cubes but still must accept at least half of the cubes.
- 5.10a) (For 3-handed chouette only) When both cubes are turned from the center, the Box must take both or drop both cubes. Extras are handled as in rule 5.7.
- 5.11) For cubes that are redoubles, the Box may accept or pass any number of cubes. The Box may also accept or pass any number of initial cubes if the entire Team does not double together.

## **Rotation**

- 6.1) The Box for the next game is the winner of the Box vs. the initial Captain. However, the Box must always show a net profit for the last game to remain the Box. If the Captain loses and the Box also shows zero or a net loss in that game, or if the Captain and the Box settle their cube for zero points, then the Box goes to the end of the Team behind the Captain, the player behind the original Captain becomes the Box, and the next player becomes the Captain.
- 6.2) If the Box defeats the Captain with the cube and other players in the Team remain in the game, the game continues with the next player in line becoming *Acting Captain*. The losing Captain goes to the end of the current Team for the next game. This first Acting Captain is also scheduled to be the Captain for the following game regardless of this game's outcome. If an Acting Captain also loses while others are still playing the next player in rotation becomes Acting Captain. A player that becomes Acting Captain has no effect on the rotation of players.

- 6.3) If the initial Captain defeats the Box with a double, he sits out, but will be the Box for the following game. If other players are still in the game the next player in line becomes Acting Captain and will be scheduled to be the Captain in the following game. For the following game the Partner retains the position he would have had if he did not become Partner and the losing Box becomes the Partner (or goes to the end of the Team if the new Box plays alone).
- 6.4) If scheduled to become the Captain in the next game, the Partner may 1) remain Partner and drop to the bottom of the rotation and the next player in the rotation becomes the Captain, or 2) relinquish being Partner and become the Captain for that game. If the Partner chooses to become the Captain, the player at the bottom of the rotation can be invited to be the new Partner.
- 6.5) A player wishing to join the chouette does so at the discretion of the Box or any of the players, subject to the maximum number of participants allowed. The new player joins the end of the Team. The player at the bottom of the rotation is the first choice for Partner (if any), not any new player joining. If the invited player chooses not to be Partner, the next person up the rotation can be invited, etc. When two or more players join at the same game they roll two dice, (doubles not counting extra), to determine their order at the end of the Team. It is expected that new players will not be arbitrarily excluded from the chouette unless it has become large (6 or more players).

## Proxies

- 7.1) A player in the Team who leaves the scene temporarily may appoint a proxy to handle that player's cube. The proxy can be any other participant in the chouette whether still in the game or not. The proxy may also appoint yet another proxy, and so on. If no proxy is appointed the Captain acts as the proxy for the missing player(s).

## Legal Plays

- 8.1) Any player including spectators and players not in the current game can bring attention to any illegal play involving rolling, checkers or the doubling cube. Once an illegal play has been identified, it must be corrected if possible, regardless of timeliness. The goal is the realization of the normal game position in absence of the illegal play.
- 8.2) If possible, the illegal play should be identified and corrected as it is being made or after the dice are lifted and before the opponent rolls. If the illegal play is identified after the opponent has rolled then either rule 8.3 or 8.4 is applied as appropriate:
- 8.3) If the equity achieved by the choice of legal plays is substantially the same regardless of the opponent's roll or there is only one legal play available, the illegal play is corrected and the opponent's roll stands.
- 8.4) If the equity achieved by the choice of legal plays would substantially change with prior knowledge of the opponent's roll, the illegal play is corrected and the opponent has the option to re-roll or use the number already rolled.

- 8.5) Illegal plays may also be corrected after the initial illegal player starts to move after the next roll, but only if it can be adjusted without affecting the previous plays or rolls.
- 8.6) All premature actions (dice rolls or cube actions) shall stand if otherwise valid. An opponent who has yet to complete his turn or act upon the cube may then do so with foreknowledge of the premature action.

## **Pip Count**

- 9.1) The pip count is considered common knowledge; when one player (or the Box) does a pip count it is acceptable and recommended to announce the count to the entire group. This speeds the game by avoiding every Team member doing a separate pip count.

## **Scorekeeping**

- 10.1) The score sheet should be available to all players to review at any time. It is best practice for the scorekeeper to announce the number of points that have been won or lost by each player as the score is recorded. It is recommended that points from dropped cubes be recorded as they happen. After each game is scored, the scorekeeper should verify that the sum of all scores is zero. To facilitate tracking the rotation, the loser of each game is circled. If both the Box and the Captain lose, they are both circled, with a "b" by the Box's circle to indicate that the Box follows the Captain in the rotation. As each player becomes the Box, his or her circled score is crossed through. The current Captain is indicated on the score sheet by the highest circle, and the current Box is indicated on the score sheet by no circle. When a Partner's turn to be the Captain comes up and he chooses to remain Partner, his current score is circled with a "p" to indicate that the Partner follows the loser of that game in the rotation. It is recommended that the code letters "b", "c" and "p" (for Box, Captain, and Partner) be used to identify the roles of the players for each game. When two or more players join a chouette already in progress, their starting scores should be circled, and numbers (1, 2, etc.) added near their circled score to indicate rotation order.
- 10.2) All players are expected to settle the score sheet promptly at the end of the chouette or when any player chooses to leave. If a player is plus on the sheet when they leave, the player that is the most minus on the sheet is responsible for making the first payment to that person, but others may, of course, volunteer to pay. If a player owes points to more than one player, they do not have the right to pay a single person.

## **Modifications to the Rules**

- 11.1) By mutual consent of all players in the chouette, these rules may be modified to suit the preferences of the chouette. All players must agree to any change, and any new player entering the game must be informed of the change.