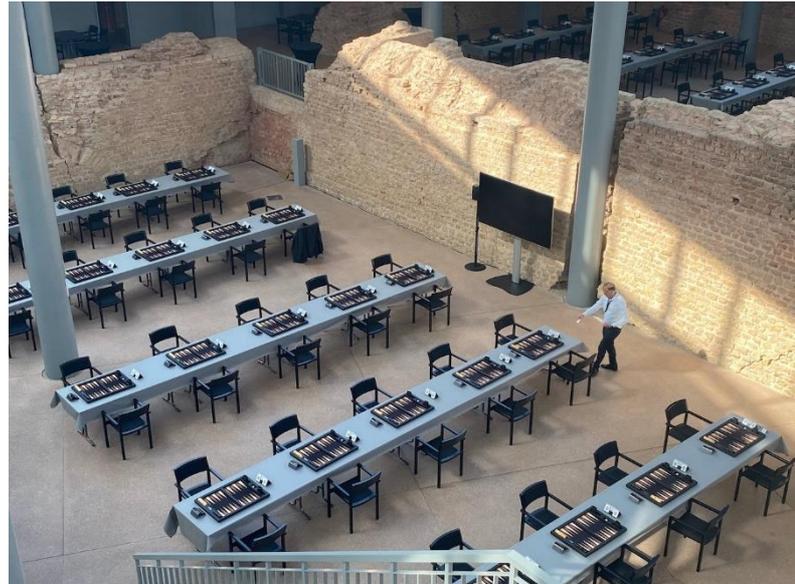


Backgammon World Team Championships

After missing 2020 due to COVID the Backgammon World Team Championships 2021 took place in the Old Roman Baths in Trier, Germany at the end of August. Trier sits close to the Germany/ Luxembourg border and is famous for being the birthplace of Karl Marx. We even found time to visit the museum created in his honour.

Nineteen teams took part in the event, with Japan being the only noticeable absentee because of COVID travel restrictions. In older times most backgammon tournaments used a straight knockout format but that has changed in the last five years to either double elimination or triple elimination. Given the short-term luck element in the game these are much fairer formats. The Trier event was triple elimination, meaning that teams had to lose three matches before they were eliminated.



All modern backgammon tournaments use clocks to ensure matches complete on time and, of course, the time element adds considerable pressure on the players. If that is not enough there is huge additional pressure when you are playing for your country rather than just for yourself. Just ask any Ryder Cup or Solheim Cup player what that feels like.

Each team has six players and five of those are involved in each round. We also had a non-playing captain, Martin Barkwill, who looked after all the logistics and selected the team. His selection was based on a mix of national rankings and his knowledge of the players. In the UK the top ten players are all very close to each other in terms of skill level. Our team, pictured here (yours truly second from the left), ranged in age from 21 to 69. Ideally, we want to see more players at the lower end of that age range in future teams!



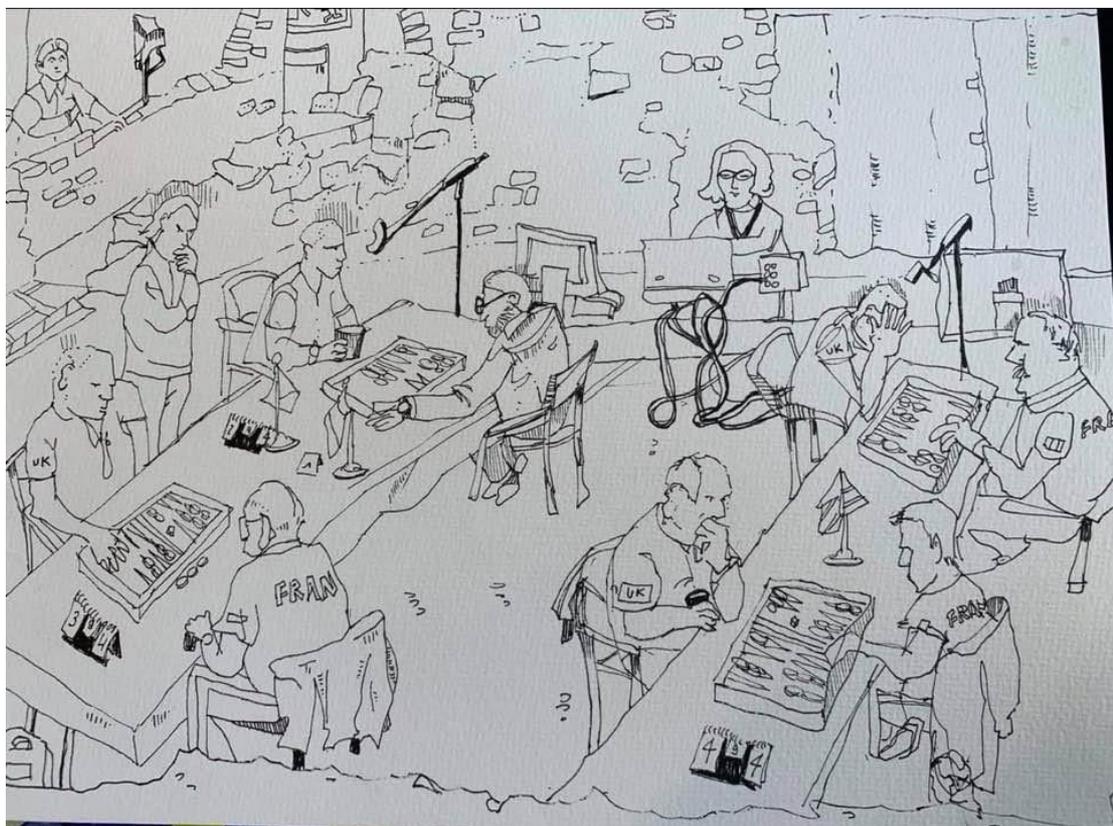
We got off to a bad start, losing two of our lives in the first four rounds. However, in the next five rounds we won every match, always by the score of 3-2. Our best win was probably against the strong team from the USA.

After nine rounds there were three teams left, each with one life left. The three were the UK, Romania and France. This necessitated a three-way play-off. After we beat France in the first match we became strong favourites. We took early leads in all the games in the match against Romania but then things went awry and with four matches completed it was 2-2. In the final match once again, we were strong favourites but, lady luck intervened at an inopportune moment, and our chance was gone. We couldn't complain because we had already had our fair share of good luck in our earlier matches.

Romania then beat France to take the gold medal. The UK took silver and France the bronze. Despite missing out on the ultimate prize this was a very good result and shows that UK backgammon is in rude good health.

We even had a sketch artist at the tournament. Spot the author in the picture opposite!

We all had a great time meeting backgammon colleagues from around the world that we hadn't seen for nearly two years. As ever there were many fascinating positions recorded for later analysis and no shortage of bad luck stories! High-level international



backgammon is a very complex game that requires many hours of study to master, if indeed one can ever claim to have done so. Next year the event will be in Venice so there will be no shortage of volunteers to make the journey.

If you are interested in finding out more about backgammon at the Club please contact Chris Bray on chris.bray@btconnect.com or Gill Bray on gillianbray@btconnect.com