

ZDENĚK ŽIŽKA

International Backgammon Star

By Karen Davis



Q&A

Zdeněk Žížka, the talented 16-year-old son of Eva Zizkova, is already an international backgammon star. In October, at his first international tournament, he won the Intermediate Division (71 entrants) of the Merit Open in Cyprus. Zdeněk also plays a lot on the net: this year he entered 19 USBGF online tournaments, winning the Masters Divisional IV event, where he defeated San Francisco

Backgammon by the Bay director Ted Chee, top German player Frank Simon, North Carolina math professor Igor Erovenko, and top-ranked Jeff Acierno. His USBGF online ranking is 1809, putting him in the top 15 percent of 500+ online players. He's won two-thirds of his matches, close to his Mom's stellar online record.

We posed some questions to this young Czech player which he answered by email:

When and why did you start playing backgammon?

Winner of the 2nd Merit Open Intermediate Division and USBGF Masters Divisional IV Online Tournament

I started to play backgammon when I was 5 years old. My parents taught me the game, because I love math and counting.

I prefer live play, where I can roll the dice myself. The advantage of online play is that I can analyze and learn from my mistakes.

How have you tried to improve your game?

Analyzing all my matches in eXtreme Gammon and consulting with my mom and with our friend Honza Cerny (he is the best player in the Czech Republic).

How did you find your experience participating in the USBGF Online Circuit?

I really like playing on the USBGF Online Circuit. It is a good opportunity to play with many strong players

Do you play in live tournaments as well as online?

I play more online, because there are not many players and opportunities to play live games. In Prague, we play live every 2 weeks in a backgammon league.

Tell us a little about your life outside backgammon.

I am 16 years old, a student at a mathematics-specialized high school. I live in Prague with my parents, younger brother, and dog. I play basketball. We practice four times a week, and on weekend have matches.

What have been your most memorable experiences playing live, online?

Two weeks ago I came back from the Merit Open tournament in Cyprus, where I won the intermediate division. Both the great tournament organization and my win made it a fantastic experience for me! This tournament was my first international tournament.

What suggestions would you have for USBGF to enhance playing opportunities for members?

I would like it if the Leaderboard included only active players, meaning that if a player does not participate in any tournament in a given period of time (for example 3 months), he would be out of the rankings. ♦

Which do you prefer and why?

- KAREN DAVIS