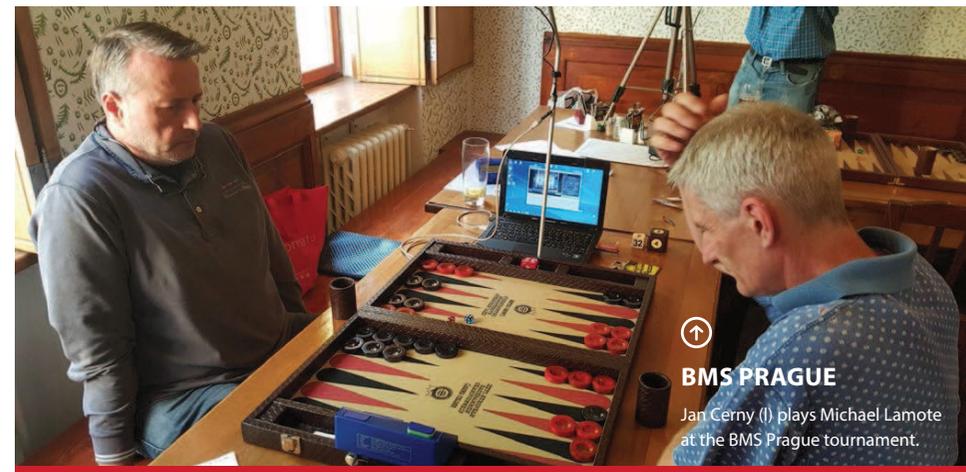


Jan Honza Černý



BMS PRAGUE

Jan Černý (l) plays Michael Lamote at the BMS Prague tournament.

JAN HONZA ČERNÝ

Winner of USBGF Circuit Monthly for July

Interview by Karen Davis

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Nowadays, I analyze every online match. I have a database of positions divided into a lot of chapters, so when I make a mistake, I add the position to the database and check what went wrong.

Jan Černý, a citizen of the Czech Republic, was the winner of the 2015 USBGF Circuit Monthly for July. Jan, who is ranked among the top 50 on the USBGF Online Leader Board, kindly agreed to answer questions by e-mail about his interest in backgammon.

When and why did you start playing backgammon?

I started to play backgammon 20 years ago, when I was working on cruise ships in the Caribbean. I love every game, so I was soon hooked.

How have you tried to improve your game?

Nowadays, I analyze every online match. I have a database of positions divided into a lot of chapters, so when I make a mistake, I add the position to the database and check what went wrong. I play live doubles consulting matches with my friends (you

know the Zizka family!); we openly discuss matches, insert them straight into XG, and after the match, we analyze mistakes.

Tell us a little about your life outside backgammon?

I have an apartment rental agency catering to tourists. My family includes my wife, two young daughters, one dog, and one cat. I spend a lot of time with them. I am a big music and sports fan, going to concerts and sporting events, and competing in sports myself as well.

Do you play in live tournaments as well as online?

Yes, I discovered live international tournaments a couple of years ago, and every year go to a couple of them.

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

If you ask about successes, I won a tournament in Velden, Austria, in 2012 (category champion). The best tournament I ever attended was last year's Merit tournament in Northern Cyprus. I finished 2nd in Mochy's quiz.

Which do you prefer and why?

Honestly, I love the game, live or online, if I win or lose. Of course, live is better, but online is more accessible, with immediate analysis.

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

I would like to thank USBGF for a great job promoting backgammon! Tournaments, *PrimeTime* magazine, Simborg video lessons, all of these are great for USBGF members to learn and enjoy the game.

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

I am sure that USBGF is doing its best, but I still believe that there is the possibility to improve online tournaments. It would be great if all of the USBGF members, including top players, participated in the online tournaments. How could we persuade them to do so? Maybe a small entry fee (10 to 50 USD?) and prizes for winners? Weekend tournaments with different starting times (to attract international players as well), doing online qualifications to live tournaments? I am not sure if the USBGF should rely on GridGammon or build its own software.

I would encourage USBGF members to participate in online tournaments organized by Ebif.at and Ebif-deutschland.de, which are very well managed.

I believe that in the near future a world backgammon organization should be established, which would promote backgammon as a mind sport and promote the game itself.

Common rules of backgammon should be uniform worldwide as well for all major tournaments.

I strongly support Phil Simborg and his Backgammon Learning Center and the BMAB [Backgammon Masters Awarding Body] initiative by Rick Janowski.

I wish all the best to USBGF and all its members! ♦

- KAREN DAVIS

Martin Zizka

MARTIN ZIZKA

Youngest Star on the USBGF Online Circuit

Interview by Karen Davis



MASTERING THE CIRCUIT

Martin Zizka, at age 14 the youngest player on the USBGF Online Circuit, has risen quickly to the Masters division.

Martin Zizka of the Czech Republic, the youngest player on the USBGF Online Circuit, won the Advanced Divisional IX (for players with Elo ratings of 1500-1649) in September 2015, after winning the Intermediate Divisional IV in May 2015 (Elo of 1500 or less), and as of this writing (October 2015), is in the finals of the Masters Divisional XIX, (Elo 1650 and above). It has been a meteoric rise, in which Martin has defeated many fine players, including his countryman Jan Honza Černý. At age 14, he is following in the footsteps of his talented mother Eva Zizkova and 17-year-old brother Zdenek Zizka.

When and why did you start playing backgammon?

Backgammon has always been a part of our family life, so I cannot say exactly when I started to play. I guess it was about when I was 8.

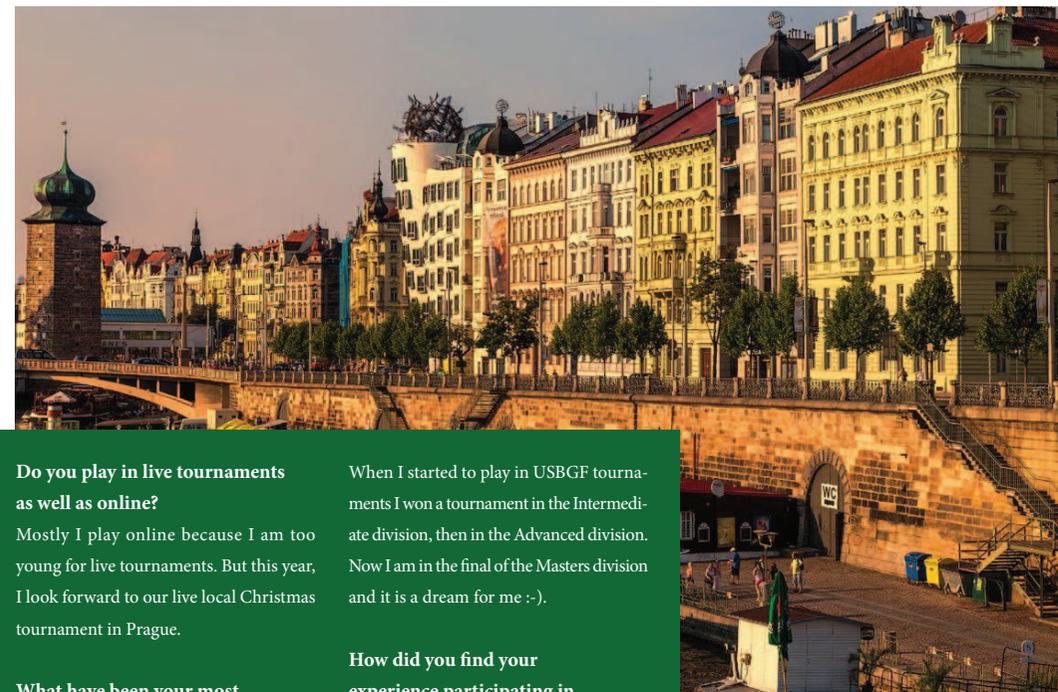
How have you tried to improve your game?

I analyze my matches with eXtreme Gammon and sometimes my brother or my mom try to explain the correct plays to me.

Tell us a little about your life outside backgammon?

I am 14. I am still in elementary school. I like sports. I have played soccer competitively since I was 6.

EVA ZIZKOVA



Do you play in live tournaments as well as online?

Mostly I play online because I am too young for live tournaments. But this year, I look forward to our live local Christmas tournament in Prague.

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

My greatest online experience is still in progress, because I am in the final of the USBGF Masters Divisional XIX! In the semifinal, I defeated our Czech friend Honza Černý. It was a big victory for me, not only for my win, but also because I played with a PR of about 6.

When I started to play in USBGF tournaments I won a tournament in the Intermediate division, then in the Advanced division. Now I am in the final of the Masters division and it is a dream for me :-).

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

The USBGF Online Circuit is a great opportunity for all players such as me who cannot travel to live tournaments, but can compete with great players from around the world.

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

I do not know; for me everything is perfect. :-)

- KAREN DAVIS



THE BEAUTY OF PRAGUE

Prague is renowned for its beauty, culture, and fine backgammon players.

'Prague Embankment in One Beautiful Summer Evening' by Jan Fidler
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