



Jack wrote me this letter last March. I filed it away in my personal correspondence and forgot about it. This summer (late) I happened across it again within a day of receiving a letter from Jack asking why I had never run it in TTS. So here it is.

FROM THE BENCH/Jack Kavanagh

Dear Jerry: Congratulations on the appearance of "Table Top Sports." This compliment applies two ways: the physical and graphic look and the fact that I got my Winter 1976 issue before the robins reappeared. Now that you have achieved that level of timing I'm sure you'll maintain it.

Which leaves me wanting to react to Julian E. Compton's rating system. It is an excellent piece of work. However, Mr. Compton has introduced a prejudicial factor which distorts the effort to achieve impartiality.

I agree with his dividing the values to be measured into three areas: Playability; Realism and Accuracy; Strategy and Tactics. However, when he assigns 50% of the composite value to Playability he is weighting the equation to reflect that which is either of major importance to him or he believes is the dominant reason for adopting table gaming as a hobby. In this last point he might be right. But, you'd have to support this with substantial motivational research.

The next difficulty with Mr. Compton's approach is that "Playability" is a subjective evaluation. This is defined only as "flow or method." The Level 2: Simulation games are, to the best of my knowledge, all games which use some kind of an activator (dice, cards, spinners, etc.) and charts to interpret the action. I don't know what Mr. Compton's idealized concept would be. But, I'd argue it derives from that with which he is most comfortable according to his initial satisfactions.

I created "Extra Innings" without prior knowledge of other table game sports forms and virtually none of such standards as Monopoly. I had a brief exposure to APBA. Rosters, rather than individual cards, were used to provide specific data because I didn't want to take the time to write up single cards. As a result, I became quite comfortable with rosters and eventually evolved a playing method which suits me. I keep the dice in a small glass jar held in my left hand. I hold a pencil in my right hand. The charts are tacked to a bulletin board at eye level as I sit at a desk placed against the wall. The team rosters are beside the score pad with much of the key information transferred to the score sheet for the game I am playing. I move right along. Shake dice with left hand, read the result, translate to action, record in score book. I don't use a miniature playing field; don't move markers around; don't adjust a score board, etc. That detail is already recorded in my score book.

After a half dozen years of this style of play, I find having to turn over individual cards for an APBA, SOM, etc. game an interruption to the flow I have developed. Yet, we know that those who have cut their table gaming teeth on games which use individual player cards have difficulty in relating to data contained on single sheet rosters. One approach is not definable as superior to the other; it's a matter of what you first found comfortable and familiar. My daughter can't cope with a stick shift car; she learned to drive with automatic transmission.

I can't understand Mr. Compton's rationale in dealing with Strategy and Tactics. This, in baseball, would seem to include all possible strategy and tactics available on an optional basis. How can he give Strat-o-matic an "A;" Extra Innings a "B;" APBA a "B?" Would you please ask him to clarify this? I can't think of a single form of strategy possible for a manager to employ that isn't included with "EI." The absence of a full roster of players in SOM and APBA certainly

limits the strategy possibilities. The "automatic" stolen base attempt in APBA reduces the optional range in this area.

Of the three areas, only "realism and accuracy" are measurable. Even there, "realism" begs some definition. If the game plays to the official rules of the sport, that should be "realism." Again, a subjective component can creep in. If the evaluator considers a game postponed because of rain as a realistic factor and the game designer has set his objective as reproducing season long stats based on "official games" only and doesn't want to risk playing four innings only to have a dice roll literally and figuratively "wash out the effort," then the evaluator might downgrade the product on "realism."

Mr. Compton's effort is laudable. However, it smacks of efforts to judge the quality of a sonnet by measuring it with a computer. My reaction to the judgments passed on "EI" are these: Since we are supposedly dealing with "real life" games, accuracy (reproduction of the statistics on which ratings are based) deserves equal value to other characteristics. I'd suggest he review his own criteria for strategy and tactics and take another look. What is "sufficient?" Is it sufficient that the surrogate manager is limited to manipulations of a less than full squad?

Frankly, there's no way to evaluate games of these kinds except for accuracy in reproducing statistics. I think each game deserves to be reviewed in the fashion of Robert Jones' review of Sherco-II Baseball in the Fall, 1975 issue of TTS. That gives a potential purchaser a realistic appraisal of the values and demerits of the game under consideration.

Mr. Compton's approach has a definite value but its application should be qualified. It does a disservice to the designers of games. Each of us is trying to satisfy too wide a variety of values held by an almost infinite number of table gamers. We must, therefore, aim at some specific element which means the sacrifice of others. "EI" strives most for accuracy. As a result, there are two dice rolls so that, after the variables of hit batsmen, wild pitches, error designations, etc. are disposed of, the games player can deal with the two absolutes which produce batting averages and power factors: hits and outs. To seek Mr. Compton's approval by restyling the game according to what I believe are his criteria would be to sacrifice accuracy. That he accords this value only 25% of the total is tempting. However, I didn't design "EI" for the Comptons, I designed it for myself and anyone who shares my view that table baseball is a substitute for the real thing, not part of a mystic cult who would rather analyze games than play them.

FROM TABLETOPS HERE AND THERE

We have a large backlog of EI Replays — most of them partials — that we need to print. Unfortunately, we just don't have the room this issue. We'll save them for the Winter issue and run a special — four pages of "EI" material. In the meantime, here is a nice letter from Dave Jenkins, White Bear Lake, MN:

Dear Gamecraft, I have enclosed \$7.00 for your "Kegler Kings." I can hardly wait for Earl Anthony to start rolling along. I've been playing EI throughout most of the summer and have had lots of fun. I've completed a 60 game season with the NL WEST Division. The Reds ran away with it, beating the Dodgers by 11 games. The stats were very close, and yet there was variation. Ken Griffey led the league in hitting with a mark of .347. Randy Jones was the ERA champ, finishing at 1.87 although his record was only 7-5. Ron Cey and Johnny Bench led the league in homers and RBI's with 16 and 50 respectively. Joe Morgan was voted the MVP award on account of his 45 runs, 40 RBI's, 21 SB and hitting mark of .316. I was especially pleased with the ERA's, all the games I've played until EI, couldn't quite capture that realism. I have started a new league also, this one being an All-Star league. I've played 27 games for each of the four teams thus far. Thanks again for EI and please rush me "Kegler Kings!"

We'll finish up time time with a short excerpt from a letter from Don Singleton, Albert Lea, MN:

....I just finished a 1975 replay of the Royals and the A's and was impressed by the accuracy in the pitching statistics. For example:

BUSBY	IP	H	ER	BB	K	CG	ShO	W-L	ERA
EI	257	201	86	78	174	17	2	17-10	3.01
Real life	260	233	89	81	160	18	3	18-12	3.08