

This loses eye appeal and is sometimes confusing.

Each play represents one minute of real time. To activate any play the offense announces his choice of strategy and both pairs of dice are rolled. The offense is entitled to attempt to advance the ball, shoot or pass long or short. For any advance or pass, one pair of dice determines whether the result is to be read from the ball-carrier's card or the defensive team card. The offense may be successful in moving the ball or the defense may steal. On occasion, the final result will require a reference for a defender's rating or a chart referral to find who ends up with a pass. It's simple but not elementary.

The different abilities of players are obvious upon inspection of the cards. Some players are best suited as strikers (shooters) while others, because of their ability to pass or advance the ball, are play-makers. The offensive coach must decide how deep to work the ball before shooting and whether to pass or run the ball on the attack. Defensive choices are limited. There is an option for a "pressure defense" on plays which do not drive to the goal but that's it. Actually, this works rather well since the offensive/defensive result split will preserve the abilities of both teams on and against pressure defense.

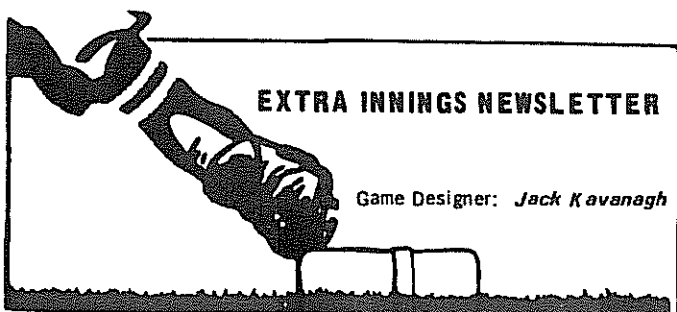
The simplest improvement to the game would be in the activator. It would be easier to decide whether the result will come from the ball carrier or the defense card with one die, a la' SOM, than with two. Replacement of the dice with a flip-deck would vastly simplify timing, now accomplished by marking a scoresheet. Both of these things can be accomplished by individual game owners who prefer them.

If the game system were slightly modified, to afford the defense a chance to speed-up, slow-down it would be a bit more interesting. This is the strongest complaint I can find to make. The game is exceptionally rewarding as it is.

I hope that Universal will apply this system to some other sports. It is suited to the full range of continuous-action team sports, from lacrosse to polo. I anxiously await a day when the NASL design is used as the basis for a hockey or basketball game.

I recommend the game. I've had much fun with my copy and it plays as well solitaire as head-to-head.

NASL Soccer is available from Universal Games, Box 45141, Westlake, Ohio 44145. Price is \$9.95. The currently available edition is based on the 1976 NASL season. The next will be published as data for last season becomes available (blame the NASL). The people at Universal are very nice and helpful, if a bit slow in their correspondence; but who isn't?



FROM THE BENCH/Jack Kavanagh

Among the several points which keep turning up for reaction via correspondence is the problem some table gamers have with our relying on earned run averages to measure the abilities of pitchers. Here's the point as expressed by Rick Derks, Jefferson City, MO, together with his solution and our reply.

"...I am not satisfied with the pitchers part in the game. It seems kind of useless to bring a relief pitcher in when his ERA is higher than the starter, even tho the starter has given up 6 runs. Here is my solution: I adjust the ERA of the pitcher during the game. For every run allowed the ERA goes up .05, for every no hit inning pitched the ERA goes down .05. When you go to the adjustment chart sometimes it makes a change and at times it doesn't. The change should only affect the singles ratings. This works out real well for me. Let me know what you thing."

O.K. - here's the response we find ourselves making, particularly to draft league players which Rick is (participating via Bill Campbell's Global League which converted to EI and his own AGDL - Any Game Draft League.)

Extra Innings was conceived in terms of replaying actual seasons of the past. My original intention was to recreate the 1941 National League season. When my primitive version of EI (1970) concluded the full season it had achieved the effect of all teams finishing in exact order as originally except the Cincinnati Reds were down several notches. The strength of the Reds of that era was in pitching and defense. This led to my making defensive action a team matter primarily and that also has been a problem to draft leagues. We moved in the direction of dealing with that by proposing a technique of rating teams defensively according to the grading for SD and LD of the individuals in the game at the time. For draft leagues - such as might be assembled from the Top 400 section of EI where such a defensive rating is given at the start of the section - this seems to handle that problem.

The problem Rick describes is only a problem when it is considered to be one. My perception of extended action is that I am pledged to use each player only for the number of games played at each position, times at bat, and innings pitched, both as a starter (games started being particularly limited) and reliever. This brings a whole different kind of strategy to the competition. It's not necessarily better, just another way to go.

So, when I'm engaged in a contest and a starting pitcher has given up six runs I regard this as a signal to pull him. Now, I'm faced with a bull pen which contains relievers of various potential abilities. If the six runs yielded have put the game virtually out of reach, I'll bring in one of the lesser lights and use up some of the Rps he represents. If the game is still close, I'll bring in a better reliever, knowing I'm dipping into his reserve store of relief innings pitched.

That's why we provide such data for our rosters as games started and, where possible, not only innings pitched but relief innings pitched and separate ERAs for starting and relieving roles. This always supports the principle of using whole teams intact and adhering to actual stats.

This can be carried forward to draft leagues provided the players selected on the basis of a given season are limited to appearances as they were made in that season. Of course, if you are drafting on a virtually unlimited basis you could well have a squad without any weak statistics to use up. I like it my way but keep reminding that EI serves as a basis for your way.

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