

S-O-M Basketball Critique

John Eng of New York city offers a critique of the newest Strat-O-Matic creation--basketball--offering ideas in areas he believes improvement is needed, plus also pointing out the solid aspects of the tabletop version of the hardwood game.

His biggest complaint about the game is that it should be expanded, or in other words more variety brought into it in such areas as fouls, turnovers, plus adding a new dimension--dribbling.

Regarding shooting, he says: "On inside shots for centers, nine out of the possible 11 dice roll numbers are the same for all except Wilt Chamberlain. On outside shots, six of the 11 dice numbers bear the same result for every player. The only difference S-O-M accounts for is the individual player's field goal percentage. There is a large difference among players. For instance, Kareem Abdul Jabbar draws more fouls than a player like Lamar Green. Also, some players turn the ball over more than others. But this can only happen during a passing situation. Besides this, all the players have the same chance to turn it over.

"For the players like Jabbar, who draw more fouls than others, I suggest that the game company assign better numbers on which he can draw them. Likewise, for the players who don't draw many fouls, the inverse should be done. The same could be done for player turnovers."

Eng also expresses interest in incorporating dribbling into the game, similiar to how passing is currently handled. "I don't think that dribbling would slow the game down immensely. Even so, you would be able to see the top penetrators of the game in action."

Whether the dribbling feature can be added, without an increase in the playing time, is a moot question. A smooth and rapid-flow to the game, complete with statistical realism, was Strat-O-Matic's objective when the basketball game was being researched. This is why both rebounding and assists [passing] were highlighted rather being a part of each and every play. Perhaps dribbling can also be included. We'll leave that up to Harold Richman, Strat-O-Matic's creator, to decide.

As far as many of the numbers being the same as far as results [the shooting percentages vary, of course], this was done in the beginning to speed the flow of the game. It was felt that if gamesters knew certain numbers would contain the same general results, a lot of time would be saved. For instance, on No. 8 for everyone, the result is always a missed shot and a rebound situation. You don't even have to check the card--you can automatically pick a split card for the rebounding result. Certain other numbers also bear the same general results, although varying for each individual.

Eng, concerned about the players who seem to draw more fouls than in real-life, has made up a chart that readers may want to try. "I know that someone is capable of devising a much better chart than the one I have, but it is a step toward a much desired item in basketball. Actually, the letter I sent to the Review may sound anti-S-O-M, but I hope that it is read as constructive criticism. There are some parts of the game that I like, such as inside and outside defensive ratings, defensive and offensive rebounding abilities and the chance for intimidation on inside and penetration shots."

In addition to the foul chart [on the following page], Eng also proposes another playing tip called the "full-court press". He describes it as follows: "If Phoenix, for instance, had the ball and missed the shot and the Knicks grabbed the rebound, the Knicks could call a full-court press before they take a shot. If they called the press and the shot result number was seven, the Suns would turn the ball over, regardless of whatever happened to the shot. If the shot result was a 'plus-plus' (++), however, the shot by the Suns would be good [the ++ refers to the shot by the Suns]. In other words, if the shot by the Knicks was anything but a seven and the Suns got the rebound, the Suns' shot, if a ++, would be good.

"Here is my foul chart. Anytime someone gets fouled, roll two dice and consult the chart. The foul is always against the defensive team. The foul ratings are obtained for each player by dividing the number of fouls he committed during the season into the number of minutes played. There are basketball books available that tell the number of fouls committed and the number of minutes played by each player. If the chart says '3rd highest foul rating', the player on the defensive team that has the third highest foul rating receives the foul. If it reads 'Defender', whomever is matched up defensively with the player who got fouled receives the foul."

STRAT-O-MATIC FOUL CHART

| <u>Dice</u> <u>roll</u> | <u>Foul charged to:</u> | <u>Dice</u> <u>roll</u> | <u>Foul charged to:</u> |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2 -- | 3rd highest foul rating | 8 -- | 3rd highest foul rating |
| 3 -- | 2nd highest foul rating | 9 -- | Highest foul rating |
| 4 -- | 5th highest foul rating | 10 -- | 4th highest foul rating |
| 5 -- | 4th highest foul rating | 11 -- | 2nd highest foul rating |
| 6 -- | 5th highest foul rating | 12 -- | 2nd highest foul rating |
| 7 -- | Defender . . . | | |
