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Strat-O-Matic turns 50

By The Common Man

This past weekend was a great one if you're a baseball geek. Not only could you get geared up for the start of spring training, but you could celebrate the 50th birthday of Strat-O-Matic baseball. If you haven't played Strat, you're missing out. There was a blow out celebration in New York City, attended by former outfielder and ESPN analyst Doug Glanville.

As I wrote in 2009, I got my Strat-O-Matic game 20 years ago, between the 1990 and 1991 seasons, and was immediately hooked:

“The box contained (and still contains, because you don't think The Common Man threw the single greatest present he ever got as a child away, did you?) a cardboard playing field, little pieces to represent baserunners, three dice (one white and two red), and two sets of pick cards numbered from 1-20 (which The Common Man quickly replaced with a 20-sided die... Also, there were several complicated looking charts and 800 individual player cards from the 1990 season.”

It looked a lot like this. So, it's a dice game, based on probability, that is startlingly realistic, and very detailed. I built leagues, ran teams, and played games long into the night. I got my co-blogger Bill into it (Bill went a bit nuts, buying something like seven seasons in a row before buying the computer game). Along the way, Strat-O-Matic branched out into other sports and into computer and online games as well. It became the gold standard on which other excellent baseball sims, like Diamond Mind Baseball, Baseball Mogul and Out of the Park Baseball were based. Even modern fantasy baseball, like what has been offered right here owes it a debt.

If you're at all interested in board games, and love baseball, it's a must have. And it's a great way for fathers to bond with their sons and teach them about the game they love (and, heck, maybe teach some math, too). And it's not too late. Strat-o-Matic will be around for another 50 years, so you might as well start preparing for the next anniversary now.

The Common Man writes for The Platoon Advantage on the SweetSpot Network, and you can follow him on Twitter.