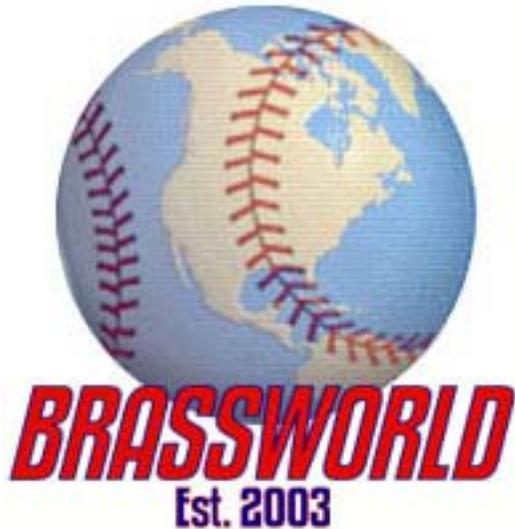


BRASSWORLD JOURNAL

Volume 2, Issue 3

December 2007



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TWICE AS NICE!

This offseason the BRASSWORLD trophy won't have far to travel. In fact, Jonah will be able to keep it safely guarded for another year as his Montreal McGaffigans won their second consecutive league title.

The Macs were powered to an 11-5 victory in Game Five (boxscore below) by taking full advantage of eleven hits and six walks. Vlad Guerrero nailed a three-run homer in the fourth inning while Frank Thomas had opened the Macs' account with a two-run blast in the first inning.

PAST CHAMPIONS

2003: Syracuse SkyChiefs (John Feola)
2004: Portland Grays (Stefan Feurherdt)
2005: Northwoods Moose (Corey Weisser)
2006: Montreal MacGaffigans (Jonah Keri)

Montreal had put up an impressive five-run first inning to gain some breathing room in the clincher. But Gotham would not go quietly as they clawed back to with one run after three innings of play. But in the top of the fourth the Macs put another five spot on the board, capped by a long home run to left by Vlad.

Young Jeremy Bonderman persevered through six innings and then turned the game over to the stellar Montreal pen. Fireballing lefty B.J. Ryan pitched the seventh and eighth, whiffing five batters. J.J. Putz pitched a perfect ninth to secure the title for Montreal once again.

The Gargoyles only victory came in a Game Two slugfest that they were able to escape with a 12-7 victory. Nick Swisher smacked two taters in that game

AL AWARDS

MVP	PTS	WALTER JOHNSON	PTS	ROOKIE	PTS
DAVID ORTIZ	107	JOHN LACKEY	84	PRINCE FIELDER	99
Ryan Howard	49	Johan Santana	54	Joel Zumaya	55
Carlos Guillen	35	Jason Schmidt	51	Dan Uggla	42
Lance Berkman	31	Brandon Webb	40	Mike Napoli	29
Chase Utley	29	Brett Myers	21	Aaron Hill	23
Alfonso Soriano	12	Jonathan Papelbon	17	Jeremy Sowers	21
Rafael Furcal	9	Joe Nathan	10	Josh Willingham	9
Justin Morneau	7	Randy Johnson	6	Ryan Zimmerman	8
Matt Holliday	3	Jon Garland	3		
Jim Thome	3				
Ichiro	1				

NL AWARDS

MVP	PTS	CHRISTY MATHEWSON	PTS	ROOKIE	PTS
ALBERT PUJOLS	100	CHRIS CARPENTER	110	HANLEY RAMIREZ	97
Miguel Cabrera	64	Roy Halladay	60	Francisco Liriano	44
Derek Jeter	43	Mike Mussina	59	Takaishi Saito	26
Manny Ramirez	20	Jason Jennings	22	Kenji Johjima	25
Carlos Beltran	14	Francisco Rodriguez	19	Scott Olsen	23
Frank Thomas	14	Jeremy Bonderman	11	Justin Verlander	22
Carl Crawford	12	Dave Bush	4	Cole Hamels	8
Bill Hall	10	Chris Capuano	1	Conor Jackson	7
Vlad Guerrero	6			Josh Barfield	6
Jason Bay	2			Andre Ethier	1
Hanley Ramirez	1			James Shields	1

PAST AWARD WINNERS

YEAR	AL MVP	NL MVP	JOHNSON	MATHEWSON	AL ROY	NL ROY
2003	Barry Bonds	Vlad Guerrero	Randy Johnson	Tim Hudson	Not awarded	Not awarded
2004	Javy Lopez	Albert Pujols	Carlos Zambrano	Bartolo Colon	???	???
2005	Barry Bonds	Albert Pujols	Randy Johnson	Ben Sheets	David Wright	Khalil Greene
2006	Alex Rodriguez	Albert Pujols	Carlos Zambrano	Roger Clemens	Gustavo Chacin	Huston Street

Jurassic Park Strat By Jim Bodnar

One of my favorite parts of the Strat Fan Forum is the discussion of issues relating to Strat League constitutions: usage, penalties, draft style, roster composition, minor leaguers, salary leagues, anti-stratball rules. One recent idea would be gargantuan in scope: a stock team league composed of one player from the team from each of 25 consecutive seasons. A "Strat League for All Seasons", it might be named. Yet, this would technically require each to own all 25 seasons and would have to be a monster for the Commissioner to create and maintain. Depending on the rules, there might be little turnover in roster composition and thus some teams could find it difficult to compete even over several years.

A few years back Strat released their 40th anniversary Hall of Fame set, the Mona Lisa of the baseball sim universe. The beautiful cards even if only in electronic version are apparently seldom enjoyed as an integral part of any league; perhaps although dazzling to behold, the static nature of these hallowed cards makes them less suited for continuous league play. On the other hand, a single season league for many of us is like eating one M&M; besides, the stathead part of us would have all the cards ratings burned into Excel to the last gbC and part of the game's mystery is lost in the process. So how can Strat's best effort be rescued from museum piece only status and incorporated into a keeper league?

There have to be ways to create some unknown variability in the cards, both innate and perceived. Also, the HOFers are such strong performers that their performance can not be allowed to dominate a yearly keeper league. So what follows are a few general ideas to create a Jurassic Park Strat league and resurrect those immortals from the past onto our own fields of dreams:

1. One HOF player active per team; this is a yearly keeper league after all. More HOFers could be owned but would be inactive.
2. A HOF player when drafted is immediately tied to another real life player, draft pick or free agent, pitcher for pitcher, position player for position player. The HOFers usage in any season is limited by one of various means by the AB/IP of the linked player or his own 7 year average as stated on the computer roster disc, whichever is less.
3. Allow the HOF players to have their cards fluctuate in value depending on circumstances or have them affect the value of their teammates. Some knowledge of baseball history is needed here. Just for example, Reggie Jackson's card could be modified to turn some chances into HRs if he plays in the World Series. If "Old Aches and Pains" Luke Appling rolls an injury, it is ignored and a reroll is allowed. A team with Ernie Banks could have all players' usage increased by 2%; call this the "let's play 2" bonus that Ernie will bring to any team.

The Jurassic Park Strat League is purely a twinkle in my imagination for now but maybe someday Walter Johnson will once again take the mound and pitch to some of his old foes as well as the likes of Pujols, Ortiz, and A-Rod.

* * *

I Hart Corey!

By Mark Lentz

I'm a Brewer fan. A BIG Brewer fan. Much to my wife's chagrin I watch most



every game each year. Corey Hart's range rating of a 3 in RF in the upcoming SOM set has stuck in my craw. Before I proceed, let me preface my remarks that this is not some anti-HAL, SOM rant. I know the range ratings can cause some overly serious griping. This is just me pleading my case for a guy I like a lot, ala my hopes for Bert "Be Home" Blyleven and the Hall.

Corey Hart received a 3 in right field. By comparison, Sports Illustrated pretty boy Jeff "Frenchy" Francouer received a 1 in right. I will grant that Frenchy *may* be a better RF than Corey...but I will not grant *two* ratings better.

Here are the stats I bring to the argument:

For the just completed season, Jeff Francouer played 1440 innings in right field for the Atlanta Braves. Corey Hart, on the other hand, split his 1096 defensive innings between right (864) and center (232) for my Brewers.

According to Win Shares statistics supplied on The Hardball Times website, Frenchy was credited with 5.5 win shares for his defensive play and Hart 3.9 shares for his performance. Broken down on a per nine inning basis you get the following:

Jeff Francouer	0.34 defensive win shares per 9 innings
Corey Hart	0.32 defensive win shares per 9 innings

I'm no math major, but the difference of two hundredths of a point has to be fairly inconsequential, no?

I feel these numbers are further strengthened by the fact that win shares do take in the fact that Corey played center field a little over 20% of the time. I don't need to preach to this choir that center field is harder to play than right.

Still not convinced? Consider the following statistics:

John Dewan introduced the Plus/Minus fielding analysis system in his book *The Fielding Bible*. Someone can correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe it is quite possibly the most rigorous attempt at objective fielding analysis ever attempted. I will allow Mr. Dewan to sum up the Plus/Minus system:

A "player gets credit (a "plus" number) if he makes a play that at least one other player at his position missed during the season, and he loses credit (a "minus" number) if he misses a play that at least one player made. The size of the credit is directly related to how often players make the play. Each play is looked at individually, and a score is given for each play. Sum up all the plays for each player at his position and you get his total plus/minus for the season."

For 2007, Jeff Francouer was credited with making 10 more plays in right field than other right fielders would not have made. This is an impressive number. Frenchy is no slouch in right, to be sure. His plus/minus number ranks him seventh amongst all right fielders. Pretty good, but Corey Hart is just plain better, objectively speaking. In almost 600 less innings in right field Hart made **THREE** more plays! Compared to the Win Share difference displayed above, this is a notable difference. Once again, on a per nine inning basis:

Jeff Francouer	0.063 plays made per 9 innings
Corey Hart	0.135 plays made per 9 innings

That math IS significant. Corey's rate is **DOUBLE** that of Frenchy's!

You want to argue that Frenchy has a cannon for an arm? I grant you that. But when it comes to running down batted balls in right field in Major League parks, the very definition of range, very few are better at it than Corey Hart.

* * *

Jayson Stark Article on ESPN website, September 6 2007

One thing we never get tired of, here at International Rumbblings and Grumbblings Headquarters, is offering our completely voluntary services to save the game of baseball.

We're selfless like that.

So this week, what we'd like to help with, if this sport will just let us, is to save the save.

We're not sure at what point the save reeled completely out of control. But over the past couple of weeks, it's become obvious that this stat has arrived, officially, at that stage of lunacy where it needs rescuing. After all, just since mid-August, we've seen:...

- One pitcher (the Rangers' [Wes Littleton](#)) get credit for a save in a (shudder) 30-3 game.
- Two other pitchers (the Angels' [Marc Gwyn](#) and the Phillies' [John Ennis](#)) earn dramatic saves in games their teams won by scores of 18-9 and 14-3, respectively. (Ennis' save was so meaningful, he got designated for assignment the next day.)
- And a longtime closer (the Braves' [Bob Wickman](#)) get dumped by his team in mid-pennant-race because, allegedly, he wasn't happy about being asked to pitch in those dreaded "non-save situations."

We'd love to address all those issues. But there's a more fundamental question about the save that we need to pose first:

Is there anyone out there, other than your average \$7 million-a-year closer, who thinks this stat still accurately reflects which relief pitchers are (1) pitching the best, (2) pitching in the most critical stage of a game, or (3) even, in many cases, making the most important contribution to winning in their own bullpen, let alone the whole sport?

OK, let's answer all of those questions for you: No. No. And, well, no.

If you'd like to *try* to argue that [Joe Borowski](#) (40 saves, 5.50 ERA) is having a better, or more significant, season than his trusty Cleveland 'pen-mate, [Rafael Betancourt](#) (one save, 1.48 ERA), go right ahead. But we wish you luck trying to prove that case.

So now that we've got that point settled, here's another of our longtime gripes. This stat no longer merely measures the performance of closers. It has somehow hijacked managers everywhere. It has made them slaves to one of

the worst stats in baseball. And it has turned into the only number in baseball that actually dictates strategy.

Watch any game on any night. You're almost guaranteed to see more absurd evidence that the way closers are used "has now been defined pretty much entirely by the save rule," says Baseball Prospectus' always-insightful Joe Sheehan. "It is the most ridiculous case of a stat driving a tactic in baseball history, and how that has been lost in the discussion boggles my mind."

Well, amen.

We're not sure we can solve all these issues with a quick trip to the Jiffy Rule Change Shop. But after surveying a bunch of people around baseball over the last week and a half, we're determined to give it a shot.

We heard lots of great ideas on righting these save-rule injustices. So now that we've sifted through them, here are three options we'd love to hear your reaction to:

1. We have to begin with what might forever be known as the Wes Littleton Rule. Even other relievers found that 30-3 save slightly offensive, and they should. "I had no idea you could do that," said [Tom Gordon](#), a fellow with 156 career saves. "If a guy is coming in there in a five-, six-, seven-, eight-run game, he's not 'saving' a game -- because the game is not actually on the line."

Yes sir. Couldn't have said it better. So our proposal is this:

No matter how long a reliever pitches to finish the game, he *must* enter the game with no more than a three-run lead, or with the tying run either at the plate or on deck. If not, the Save Nazi says: "No save for you!"

2. But why stop there? The idea that a pitcher deserves massive credit for getting three outs before he allows three runs is preposterous. So we would love to propose modifying the current save rule this way:

- A save of one inning or less would require no more than a *one*-run lead to protect -- or the reliever would have to enter with the tying run on base or at the plate.
- A save of between 1 1/3 and two innings would require no more than a *two*-run lead -- or the reliever would have to enter with the tying run on base or at the plate.
- A save of more than two innings would use the definition in the Wes Littleton Rule -- no more than a three-run lead unless the tying run is at the plate or on deck.

One general manager was so enthusiastic about this idea, he told us he'd even be willing to propose this rule change at the GM meetings this fall. Wish him luck.

3. But there's also a downside to making a rule change that dramatic. It would, as one AL executive put it, screw up nearly 40 years worth of stat keeping. Granted, we're talking about often-misleading stat-keeping. But if we radically revamp this definition, what do we do about all those saves that have piled up since 1969 -- set fire to them? Tough question. So our third alternative is to suck it up and keep the current rule, but also add a stat that would reflect which relievers are truly getting the toughest outs in a game.

The same AL executive proposed this idea, and he would call it a "stop." To earn a stop, a reliever would have to enter with the tying run either on base or at the plate at any point in the game -- and then:

- A. Retire at least one hitter.
- B. Leave with the lead intact.
- C. Get his team through the inning without any baserunner he was responsible for scoring.

So if, for instance, [Carlos Marmol](#) strikes out [Prince Fielder](#) with two on and two outs in the eighth inning of a 5-3 game, he gets a stop. But if [Ryan Dempster](#) then enters and gets through the ninth, he wouldn't earn a stop even though he would get a save.

* * *

Yost Will Be Back

By Jeff Sackmann of Brewcrewball
Oct 05, 2007

As you all know by now, Doug Melvin has announced that Yost will return for 2008. Attanasio had already given him a vote of confidence, and I don't think any of us seriously believed there'd be a hunt for a new manager this offseason.

After following baseball from a sabermetric vantage point over the last several years, I should be used to this sh*t. But I'm not. I think people generally agree that baseball managers have two roles:

- Emotional leader: keeping the players motivated, avoiding clubhouse acrimony, etc.

- Field tactician: effectively using the 25-man roster to do the best job of winning games.

I think people (at least with sabermetric leanings) also generally agree that most baseball managers are pretty good at the former (if they last long, as Yost has), and not so good at the latter. That's why guys like Davey Johnson and Earl Weaver--notably good at the field tactician aspect--are held up as heroes.

Here's what makes me angry. I refuse to believe that there are so few eligible baseball managers out there who are good at field management. Okay, maybe I *am* willing to believe that--after all, they all studied at the knee of some other bad field tactician--but given how modern analyst types have infiltrated front offices--up to and including the general manager, in some cases--it seems like managers ought to be better educated. (And I don't mean that buying a copy of "Baseball Between the Numbers" and having it on display when a reporter stops by is good enough.)

Maybe this is hubris talking, but I'm convinced that if you let me sit down and talk with a receptive major league manager for an hour or two, I could show him how to win--I'm pulling a number out of my hat here--three more games a season, with the same players. For just one example, I pointed out the other day in my Menchkins Post Mortem that using the two of them in a more strict platoon could've been an extra 1-1.5 wins for the Crew. Would that have been so hard?

Bullpen management, of course, is the thing that most infuriates us about our managers. They stick with "proven closers," play matchups when the sample size is five whole at-bats, and ignore the splits data that they should apply, such as Turnbow's results on the second of back-to-back days.

And here, again, is where I get *really* angry. I'm guessing many of you have played Strat-o-matic or Diamond Mind. For those who haven't: they are (now, anyway) computer games with very detailed player information, and your job is basically to manage your team. Set the lineup, make in-game changes, pick strategy, etc. , and see what happens. If you're playing against the computer, the program makes those decisions for the other team.

And you know what? It (usually) makes *good* decisions! I would argue that the computer manager in Strat or Diamond Mind is better at bullpen management than, oh, I don't know, 75% of active managers. Maybe 100%. It's simple really: bring in your best reliever when the leverage index is as high as it is likely to get, play lefty-righty matchups, try not to burn your entire pen in one day, and don't pitch guys who are tired. Funny how far those principles will get you.

That, as I see it, should be the bare minimum of what is expected of major league managers. *A f'ing computer can do it!* If somebody wants to pay me

\$10,000 to do it (Hi Doug!), I will write you an application you can put on a f'ing BLACKBERRY that will tell a manager when to make pitching changes and who to bring in. It is not that hard.

I don't doubt that there are times when human judgment is helpful. My point isn't that Yost, or anyone else, should manage just like Strat does. But so long as Strat is *better* than Ned, Ned has a hell of a lot to learn, and he ought to be more concerned with bringing his skills up to that point than with improving on the computer algorithm at the margins.

* * *

This is a diary entry posted by career minor leaguer Dirk Hayhurst on the Baseball America website.

A mother brought her son past the bullpen a few days back. As they approached, we instinctively acted as if our attention was wrapped up in the game; looking away from them, avoiding eye contact.

They made their way directly to us, eyes trained on us, hoping to catch our attention. Soon they had closed the distance and were standing right in front of us, staring expectantly through the fencing with wide eyes and nervous smiles.

"Hello," said the mother. We said nothing in return and continued to act as if we couldn't see or hear her. She stumbled at our coldness, and cast her eyes around sadly. She looked at her son, who never took his eyes off us, smiled, and then mustered enough courage to try again.

I can't explain to you what it's like to avoid someone on purpose. When I write about the concept it just seems too rude and heartless. Maybe it is, but I still do it all the time. In my line of work, sometimes you have to ignore people. You have to tune out the noise of the game. There is no shortage of kids who want balls just because some other kid got one. No shortage of folks who want scraps signed with illegible autographs because everyone else is doing it. No shortage of begging, and pleading for stuff they don't really need, just want because someone else has.

Besides, my signature is just that: words written across something to spell my name. And my name is not important (hence, non-prospect diaries!). Yet to baseball fans, signatures are very important. They're so important in fact, even the mascot signs balls. It doesn't even have to be my name, or a name at all, just the fact we players scribbled on a scrap for fan is enough. It's all about the context.

For me, it's a dead ritual, and doesn't make sense. Maybe this is because I know who I am. Because everyday I see the mistakes and shortcomings I deal with

that humanize me. I disagree that I am somehow more valuable because I do this job. Fans however, see my clean uniform and their boyhood dreams incarnate. When my hand presses a pen to paper, they find it magical. I don't understand why this works the way it does, but its lack of logic in no way negates the reality of it.

"My son," said the mother as she looked at her boy, "would really like to meet you."

Again, she smiled nervously and again she was met with silence.

After a moment I broke and said hello to the young boy. He smiled and tried to hide behind his mom like young kids do when they are nervous. Mom asked him if he could be a big boy and say hello in return? He did, in a mute voice, then ducked behind his mother again. I bent down at the fence to get on the boy's level, steadying myself with one hand on the links. As I did this, the mother knelt down quickly and put her hand on mine. My comfort zone was just violated, but before I could say anything, she spoke, in a soft and sad voice saying, "My son has liver cancer. It's terminal. He really wanted to do this before . . . um, thank you so much for taking the time to talk with him."

I was silent again, but this time for a different reason. I stared at the young boy, then at his mother whose face was serious and stalwart. The fellas around me had started talking with the young boy where I left off, though they were unaware of his condition. I walked away from the scene and over the some of the guys and whispered what I was just told. We looked at each other and, without a word of discussion, scooped up the youngster and placed him the pen with us.

We sat him down in one of our chairs and took seats around him. There he sat while we lavished him with attention. We asked him about everything a young boy loves to talk about: toys, baseball, candy, parks, games . . . We acted amazed at his stories and affirmed how he would become a big leaguer someday. We made him feel special, because he is. Finally, when our time was up and he had to go, without request or prompting, we produced a baseball and signed it for him.

When we gave the boy that ball, there was no dead ritual involved. Our names were no longer scribbles to be collected, and the ball was no longer a souvenir. That baseball was now a letter, and each signature was a testament of hope, encouragement, and joy. I can't explain to you how much happiness it gave that mother and her son to share those moments with us.

I still can't explain why people treat us so special for putting on a baseball uniform. But in those few moments together, it didn't really matter--in those few moments, baseball made perfect sense.

* * *

Unique Online Game Puts Stars on the Field and in the Dugouts

Schilling, Glanville, "Baba Boeey," Others to Guide

Clemens, Schmidt, Strawberry and other Stars of 1986

By Glenn Guzzo

Surely you've heard that Curt Schilling will be managing the Red Sox. And that Doug Glanville will be running the Phillies.

Did you do a double-take? Good. Because with that announcement, Strat-O-Matic and *The Sporting News* introduce Take Two - an online replay of the 1986 season with celebrity managers.

Schilling, who starred as the pitching ace for the history-changing 2004 Red Sox world champions, will try to change the tragic history of Boston's ill-fated 1986 World Series team. A veteran of four real World Series, Schilling also is a veteran of Strat-O-Matic Baseball Online hosted on *The Sporting News* web site.

"He wrote to us," recalled Bernie Hou, the creator of Strat-O-Matic Online Baseball and manager of the 1986 Montreal Expos. "He really enjoyed the game; he just wished his card didn't have so many homers on it."

Hou said only a few of the managers have played SOM online, but most are Strat veterans.

That includes Glanville, who spent most of his nine Major League seasons with Philadelphia, including 1999, when he hit .325 with 204 hits. Glanville is a Strat player since 1976.

The league is scheduled to launch Nov. 5 with 26 managers who will set the lineups, pitching rotations and managerial strategy options for the stock teams in a 162-game replay of the actual 1986 schedule. The league will be updated daily at www.sportingnews.com for all fans to follow and to add their comments via blogs.

The replay will include many of the standard features of Strat-O-Matic Online, including detailed standings, box scores and statistical reports. But it will be enhanced with photos and stories from *The Sporting News* archives, personal journals written by many of the managers and special write-ups tracking the season.

Fans already can begin keeping pace with the league at:

<http://sportingnews.com/baseball/1986/>

Unlike the typical SOM online games on *The Sporting News* site, this will not be a draft league. But Hou said he will permit his celebrity managers to make trades.

The online promotion promises that "history will be re-written with each swing of the bat." So, Hou reasoned, "since things will have different outcomes, we will allow trades and not impose the actual mid-season trades. It doesn't make sense to enforce a trade that actually happened in 1986 but makes no sense for the replay."

And, since the TSN Strat leagues are trading environments, we didn't want to prohibit all trades," Hou said.

Strat-O-Matic Baseball Online has involved thousands of leagues and tens of thousands of players for years. **The elaborate project will set the stage for the release of the 1986 online leagues that everyone can play.**

The public league will involve the TSN staples - draft, salary cap, trading and more. Schilling, Glanville and Hou will do battle with the likes of MSG Network broadcaster and die-hard Strat player Bill Daughtry (Yankees), Baseball-reference.com founder Sean Forman (Tigers), former Kansas City Royals announcer Brooks Melchior (Royals, of course) and Gary Dell'Abate, better known as "Baba Boeey," the producer of *The Howard Stern Show* (Mets).

A variety of broadcast, print and online sports personalities will manage the other teams. They are unpaid, but as all experienced Strat-O-Matic gamers know, you need not play for money to have all the fun you can stand playing Strat-O-Matic.

"I accepted the opportunity to run the Mariners before I took a real thorough look at the roster," writes Jeff Sullivan in his blog, Lookout Landing. "But if you yearn for the days of Danny Tartabull, Lee Guetterman, and having three managers in one summer, then this should be a lot of fun to watch progress. Being in charge of arguably the worst roster in baseball only means that it'll be that much sweeter when we take the pennant. Or win 70 games. Whichever comes first."

Bill Janssen, a veteran of both the Strat-O-Matic board game and the online version, has created a fictional back story for his startling ascension to manage Oakland.

"Vice President of Baseball Operations Sandy Alderson told how he worked throughout the winter in convincing the Athletics ownership that Bill Janssen was the right manager for the 1986 (Take Two) A's. Alderson noted, 'Bill Janssen has proved again and again during a 24-year career that he can successfully manage Strat-O-Matic teams, and in 1986 the A's WILL BE a Strat-O-Matic team.' "

(Janssen certainly had one advantage over other potential successors to real A's Manager Jackie Moore. A Strat player since 1983, he has managed the '86 A's before.)

The celebrity managers and their followers will relive a Major League season that included stellar performances by rookies Jose Canseco and Wally Joyner; young stars Roger Clemens, Wade Boggs, Darryl Strawberry and Dwight Gooden; and veterans Mike Schmidt, Mike Scott and Fernando Valenzuela, among many others.

The league championship series were as dramatic as any in history. The Red Sox overcame a 3-games-to-1 deficit to the star-laden Angels, first winning Game 5 in 11 innings. The Mets had three last-at-bat victories to eliminate Houston. One of them ended on Lenny Dykstra's "Shot Heard 'Round the Strat-O-Matic World." He told throngs of reporters afterwards that he hadn't hit a walk-off homer since he played Strat-O-Matic with his brother as kids.

Then, of course, the Mets won the World Series in unforgettable fashion - a two-out rally in Game Six ended on Bill Buckner's infamous error, permitting New York to win it all in Game Seven.