LAPS DOWN/WAVE AROUND OPTIONS FOR RED WHITE & BLUE RACIN'
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I had a delightful phone visit with Dennis about his "Laps Down/Wave Around" rules for RED WHITE & BLUE RACIN' Stock Car Action Game, which he had posted on the PLAAY Games Delphi Forum. I liked the concept, but I was a bit confused by the methodology. Between the two of us we came up with a streamlined version of Dennis' system that can easily be implemented for uber-gamers who want as much depth and drama as possible in their sports games!

Before we go into specifics, I should mention that for the sake of simplicity and playability, the original RWBR game rules intentionally abstract the "bottom group" re-positioning, so that you would not immediately know from the game actions how serious the PROBLEM or WRECK results are. That is to say, when I'm running a race, I let the game results define the severity of the PROBLEM.

For instance, consider a driver who encounters a PROBLEM or fails to ESCAPE a TROUBLE roll, then has a successful REPAIR roll, and goes to the bottom of the bottom group. Under normal game rules, let's say a turn or two later which represents 10 or 20 miles of driving) he succeeds in challenging out of the BOTTOM group. If that happens, I just assume that it was a very minor problem or damage that was quickly repaired. If the driver belatedly (or never) gets out of the BOTTOM group, then of course I assume it was more serious.

That said, here's a way to recreate the "laps down" phenomenon and add a little more depth to your tabletop racing experience, without having to do a lot of note-taking or book-keeping. It involves splitting the BOTTOM group into two stacks when necessary: a "lead lap" stack, and a "laps down" stack. Obviously, at the start of a race, all BOTTOM group drivers are considered to be on the lead lap, and there's only ONE stack. The second, "laps down" stack only begins to be populated when there's TROUBLE or PROBLEMS, followed by successful REPAIR rolls.

The cool thing about this system is that If and when the BOTTOM group splits into two stacks, there's no change to the basic game mechanics. Any BOTTOM group challenge result always includes both stacks, starting with the "laps down" stack, and moving to the "lead lap" stack. Challenges are conducted from both stacks just as outlined in the game rules, vs. drivers in the MIDDLE group. HOWEVER, when a driver in the "laps down" stack of the BOTTOM group wins a challenge, instead of exchanging places with the MIDDLE group driver, his card is instead moved to the bottom of the "lead lap" stack of the BOTTOM group. (The driver will then get a second chance to challenge that turn, along with the other drivers in the "lead lap" stack.)

Doing it this way will preserve the game's "King of the Hill" methodology, in that cars are ranked in order at all times during the race. (Under Dennis' original method, a "laps

down" driver might occupy a position in the MIDDLE or even TOP group, requiring some sort of notation on the score sheet or driver card.)

Dennis and I also discussed how a driver's PIT CREW grade might be a factor in this process, and tentatively decided that a driver with a PIT CREW grade of A, B, or C would operate under the procedure described above. A driver with a PIT CREW grade of D would be required to win TWO challenges from the "laps down" stack, while a driver with a PIT CREW grade of E would not be able to escape the "laps down" stack at all: this driver would simply "limp around the track" until the race ended.

In thinking further about it, it's possible that PIT CREW grades might also factor into what happens next after a driver moves out of the "laps down" stack via a successful challenge. Perhaps a PIT CREW grade of A or B would be required to be able to make the second challenge from the "lead lap" stack BOTTOM group—maybe C or D drivers would have to settle for simply getting back on the lead lap.

Obviously, these rules aren't "etched in stone," and some play-testing is required. But both Dennis and I felt like this was a cool way to recreate the effect of losing valuable laps due to a wreck or mechanical problems.

For the "Wave Around" option, we decided on a similarly simple process. Whenever a YELLOW flag comes out, the highest-ranked driver in the "laps down" stack becomes the "Lucky Dog" and automatically moves to the bottom of the "lead lap" stack of the BOTTOM group. The other drivers in the "laps down" stack have the chance to get back on the lead lap with a dice roll, based on their PIT CREW grade…

[A] roll one die, "waved around" on die roll of 4 or less.
[B] roll one die, "waved around" on die roll of 3 or less.
[C] roll one die, "waved around" on die roll of 2 or less.
[D] roll one die, "waved around" on die roll of 1 or less.
[E] [cannot return to the lead lap.]

Using these options will, I think, add some extra drama (and maybe a little desperation!) to the "bottom feeder" and "hangers-on" drivers in your typical stock car race. The better drivers and crews will find it easier to rebound from a mechanical problem or wreck and get back into the thick of the race, while the poorer drivers and crews will find it that much more of a challenge.