HOUSE RULE IDEAS for HOCKEY, SOCCER, STOCK CAR RACING
(featured in March 2015 Edition of PLAAY Games Newsletter)

One thing we've discovered over the years is that sports gamers are the best resource for great sports game ideas! This month we're featuring three interesting idea submissions from PLAAY Gamers. You're invited to read through and perhaps give these ideas a spin on your game table. We've created this article in PDF format, so you can download and save to your computer or make a printed copy to file away with your game materials…

Each idea is presented on a separate page, so you can print just the ideas you want to try for the games you own…

Again, in each of these cases we're not mandating game changes—rather, we're simply experimenting with ideas. Feel free to try these out, make adaptations as you see fit, and let us know what you think! The e-mail address is info@plaay.com!

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HOCKEY FREE AGENCY for HOCKEY BLAST Pro Hockey Game
Jack Christensen, Portage, WI

Here's an idea on how to run free agency for hockey (or, for that matter, any PLAAY Games sport whose fictional teams are in individual card format.) This is how I do it, anyway, and it seems to work well.

1) Roll a die for each player. Every player for whom a "1" is rolled is eligible for free agency.

2) Once all free agents are declared, each team can choose one of their free agent players to re-sign with club. The rest of the players are made available to sign with any club.

3) Any team that chooses not to resign one of their own free agent players will have first pick of the remaining free agent players from other teams.

4) Once each team has signed either a new free agent or resigned one of their own free agent players, you can then sign the rest of the players based on each team's particular needs. You can establish a signing order based on the previous year's records, with the worst team getting first choice. (ED NOTE: Alternatively, you could roll three dice and add, with the resulting sum representing each team's "available cap money" in millions, ranking the teams in order from most cap money to least, and letting the teams with the most cap money choose first among the available free agent players. This would capture the spirit of the current pro free agency period!)

This process is really pretty simple, and makes for some interesting decisions. I do the same thing after each season, and a player can be a free agent two years or more in a row—I just assume he was franchised, or signed a one-year deal with team. Some players may never come up for free agency, which I take to mean they're happy with the team they're on, and that long term deals were done prior or during the season.

Another added wrinkle I like to use is to run free agency as soon as my season is over, BEFORE the new cards come out. That way I have no way of knowing who's going to be good or bad next season—just like the pros!

I also run the draft of new players the same way for hockey. I read the bios you guys have available on your website [www.plaay.com/WHL] and draft players based on the information you provide—but I never know for sure what the card for that rookie might actually look like!

ALTERNATIVE TO THE "GOLDEN DIE" FOR SOCCER BLAST Pro Soccer Game
Aaron Atadero, Los Angeles, CA

With regards to playing teams from separate (and disparate) leagues, here is an option that might work for you: Instead of rolling an additional "golden" die, you can apply the superiority/inferiority match ups to specific minutes and get a better representation of league strengths.

For example, I didn't feel like a match up between an MLS club and a Championship club warranted a 5/6 disadvantage. Nor do I think they are even in strength. Perhaps a 5.5/6 advantage is closer to reality. But I didn't want to add another die (twelve-sided to accomplish the 11/12 disadvantage). I calculated an average of 36 times you'll have a quality match up in an average match. Using the 11/12 disadvantage and a 96 minute match, an MLS side would be penalized three times. With regards to the quality match ups per minute, an average of .375 match ups per minute. Using these calculations, you could simply highlight <u>every twelfth minute</u> as a minute of inferiority for the MLS side. That would be eight minutes per match.

Using .375 match ups per minute, there would be three occasions where the MLS side would be penalized, which is the same. Essentially, you're trading a golden die roll for a golden minute. Of course, this is subjective, but you could apply it to any leagues. Perhaps the Bundesliga is 9/10 the strength of The Premiere league, which would give you almost ten golden minutes, or every tenth minute.

Anyway, I simply used a highlighter and pre-marked the minutes before the match. Food for thought...

LAPS DOWN/WAVE AROUND OPTIONS FOR RED WHITE & BLUE RACIN'
Dennis Zimmerman, Staten Island, NY

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.