

# Sports/Business

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## New board game is a fan's dream

It is not easy to reduce real-life activities to the level of a board game. But if Parker Brothers could turn capitalism into the ever-popular game Monopoly, there is hope for similar endeavors.

In fact, recently there has appeared a board game that could be the baseball equivalent of Monopoly. It's called "Pursue the Pennant" and it's the brainchild of a Brookfield man, Mike Cieslinski.

You'll have to take my word as a journalist, baseball writer, US citizen and taxpayer on this, but "Pursue the Pennant" is the most lifelike, most intriguing, most enjoyable baseball board game yet devised by man.

All right, this does not rank with the discovery of a polio vaccine as a boon to mankind. But you have to have something to do during a winter — or during a strike.

This game is the product of years of work by Cieslinski and the work shows. Cieslinski, 26, along with being an inveterate baseball fan, has a degree in marketing from the University of Miami (Fla.) and experience working in public relations for the Baltimore Orioles and the minor-league Miami Marlins.

All of these factors merged in his desire to invent the ultimate baseball board game.

"If I was going to do something like this, it was going to be something really special," Cieslinski says.

"It was going to be the best I could come up with, something that would encompass everything I wanted to see in a game."

There followed four years of trial-and-error work for Cieslinski, the last two of which were devoted almost totally to working on the game, when not working at part-time jobs. It was not simply a matter of devising the game itself, but of getting the financial backing and marketing strategy in place.

"It definitely is not something that is easy to do," he said. "You have no idea of how many obstacles are going to be placed in front of you. It's almost a marathon test of your endurance, with basically no assurance of ever getting it off the ground."

But in March of this year, the game and the financial game plan



**MICHAEL BAUMAN**

## 'Pursue the Pennant': Baseball's Monopoly?

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were ready to go. The game, available by mail order, has attracted national attention, including an upcoming film segment on ESPN. What, you might well ask, rates all the raves?

There are two answers to that. One is the quality and quantity of the research Cieslinski did in putting the game together. He compiled statistics on each player over the past seven years, rating them on a comprehensive range of attributes; not simply the basics of hitting, throwing and running, but range, clutch hitting, injury frequency and more. In the case of pitchers, he came up with ratings including fatigue factor, ability to hold baserunners, wild pitch frequency and ability to get out of a jam.

Each player for each major-league team is rated on detailed cards listing all of their attributes or failings, and any or all of these factors can come into play in every play.

And that leads to the second part of the answer. There is no substitute for the real thing, but Cieslinski has come up with a game that actually gives you a feeling of the drama and strategy involved in a major-league baseball game. As you manage the game, referring to the pluses and minuses of all your players, you are presented with game situations that big-league managers face every day.

The game is played with three, 10-sided dice, the 10 sides corresponding to the nature of baseball statistics. Each roll of the dice then refers to one of the highly complex charts on individual players and plays and a world of possibilities opens every time.

The best way to describe this is by referring to a game I played against Cieslinski in which I was the Chicago

Cubs and he was the St. Louis Cardinals. More accurately, I was Jim Frey and he was Whitey Herzog.

He beat me and the Cubs, 6-2; at Wrigley Field, no less. But the realism of this game was tested before the contest began. Cieslinski not only has charts on players, but charts on ballparks that reflect their individual differences. When you play at Wrigley Field, the climate presents sort of a roll of a dice; when we rolled Cieslinski's dice, they came up showing that the wind was blowing in. And the wind at Wrigley can determine the nature of the game. It doesn't hurt the speedy, line-drive hitting Cardinals when it's blowing in.

But I'm not copping out. The whole game reflected all too perfectly what a Cubs-Cardinals game is like this year. Joaquin Andujar out-pitched Rick Sutcliffe and then the Cubs' relief pitching failed. The Cards outfielded and outran the Cubs — there's a groundball to the left side; oh no, look at those decreased range factors for Ron Cey and Chris Speier; that ball is through and the Redbirds are running again.

And on this went for nine losing, but enjoyable innings. I was left with no quibble about any aspect of this game, only admiration for the Cardinals, and more so for the game's inventor, Cieslinski.

This game is not for the mildly interested fan. It will be appreciated only by those who appreciate the subtleties of the real game. And it is not cheap — \$27.95, the cost a reflection of the complexities of the game itself and the effort that went into creating it.

If you are interested, more information can be obtained by writing "Pursue the Pennant," P.O. Box 1045, Brookfield, Wis., 53005, or calling (414) 784-5066.