



MICHAEL BAUMAN
SPORTS COLUMNIST

Yanks control board meeting

BAD NEWS for New York Yankee haters: If the race in the American League East comes down to the final series of the season against the Red Sox in Boston, the Yankees win the series and the division, 3-1.

How can I be sure of this, you justifiably ask? I can't, I'm just a humble columnist, not an oracle.

But what I did do recently was to play a simulation of this series using the game "Pursue the Pennant" with the game's inventor, Mike Cieslinski of Brookfield. "Pursue the Pennant" hit the market last year. It was very good then, it's even better now. It is more lifelike, more dramatic, and oh so much better at capturing the subtleties of baseball than any other board game known to man.

Before we get to the gory details of the Yankees' inevitable triumph, let me relate an incident illustrating the game's realism. Cieslinski and this columnist were playing one of the simulated games in the visitors' dugout at County Stadium during the afternoon before a night game. The visitors were the California Angels, and their third-base coach, Moose Stubing, got out to the dugout early and watched the action for a minute before asking what was happening.

What was happening at that moment was that Boston reliever Sammy Stewart was pitching to New York's Mike Pagliarulo. "Hmmm," Stubing said, pondering the situation. "Stewart against Pagliarulo? Double to the gap in right-center."

Next play in "Pursue the Pennant"? Pagliarulo doubled to the gap in right-center off Stewart. Stubing smiled at his precise knowledge of baseball. Cieslinski smiled at this proof of his game's precise realism. I smiled, because, what the heck, everybody else was smiling.

THIS WAS no fluke. Cieslinski put four years of research into this game, and he went way beyond runs, hits and errors. The players in his game have range factors, injury frequency factors, fatigue factors, clutch performance factors, the factors they have in real life. And all the factors are based precisely on their records in the game, not just on somebody's subjective guess as to what kind of players they are.

Cieslinski's game has updated player profiles, bringing in the improvements or declines in individual careers. And he has added a three-dimensional touch with replicas of each stadium that can be attached to the board for each game. It's still a board game, but it was kind of nifty making believe you were managing in Fenway Park with a replica of the Green Monster in left.

As to the series itself, the Yankees won the first game, 10-8; the Red Sox won the second, 7-4; but then the New Yorkers came back with 8-1 and 3-1 victories. Real lineups were used; there were no cutesy tricks employed.

Speaking of realism, the Red Sox's chances were severely damaged in the second game when centerfielder Tony Armas was injured. Check out Armas' record in recent seasons and see how many times he has been hurt. This could happen.

BOSTON'S PITCHING did not hold up in this board game series. The only time it totally held up was the second game when Roger Clemens, of course, stopped the Yankees with a complete-game victory. Dennis (Oil Can) Boyd failed in the first game and Bruce Hurst failed in the third. In the finale, Tom Seaver was tough but Ron Guidry was a little tougher.

Boston's Wade Boggs, just like in real life, did everything he could. He went 6 for 12 and drew five walks. But in the final game, again as in real life, the Red Sox grounded into three double plays and took themselves out of three promising innings.

Overall, Boston showed little bench strength, not as much speed and a lesser defense than the Yankees. Real life again. The Red Sox might beat the Yankees with better starting pitching, but the Yankees' lineup is much stronger against right-handers, and Fenway is not a left-handed pitchers' park, unless you keep the ball down as Guidry was capable of doing in Game 4.

This game gives you all the components of the current game except long-term contracts. It is on display in the Hall of Fame at Cooperstown, N.Y. It is available in some retail stores, and it can be obtained by mail order from P.O. Box 1045, Brookfield, 53005. If this reads like an advertisement, at least it's not a paid advertisement. Besides, I like to see a local guy do something better than the Madison Ave. marketing hotshots who usually decide what Americans are supposed to do with their spare time.

Michael Bauman's column appears on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and alternate Sundays.