

CARDINALS	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	3	7
DODGERS	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	5

ROYALS	0	1	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	6
BLUE JAYS	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2

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He made it with a roll of the dice

American Dreams

Mike Rappaport



Some people dream of playing the game. Mike Cieslinski dreamed of giving people a game to play.

Cieslinski, of Brookfield, Wis., started playing dice baseball games like Strat-O-Matic and APBA when he was 11. He enjoyed them, but after awhile he started thinking maybe he could do better.

Fifteen years later, the results are in. Cieslinski is traveling the country promoting *Pursue the Pennant*, a labor of love that has taken up four years of his life. If one glimpse of the game and an hour spent playing it are any indication, Cieslinski's dream has come true.

The only better baseball game than *Pursue the Pennant* is played between the foul lines. This is a game that has everything except cold beer and hot dogs.

Pursue the Pennant, which will soon be available locally for \$27.95, combines the best features of the two major existing games and throws in a few wrinkles that neither Strat-O-Matic nor APBA contain.

Like Strat-O-Matic, this game has individual cards for pitchers as well as hitters. Like APBA, it goes into great detail as far as different types of situations (runners on base, number of outs).

Neither of those games rates players for their clutch hitting ability. And neither Strat-O-Matic nor APBA have statistics on the 26 major league ballparks that make the location of the game a major factor.

A home run in Wrigley Field isn't necessarily one in Busch Stadium. And even in Wrigley Field, it depends on whether the wind is blowing in or out.

Everything comes down to the charts — and to three 10-sided dice that are rolled to trigger the action.

"The game took three years to design," said Cieslinski, who was in town recently to demonstrate *Pursue the Pennant*. "I'd been playing the different games since I was 11, so I had a lot of experience. Even though a lot of them had different features, there was no one game that encompassed everything.

"I wanted to go a lot further. I wanted to make sure that I not only had a lot of features in the game, but that they'd all work well together."

The best way to understand any game is to play it, and Cieslinski and I played *Pursue the Pennant* the afternoon of Oct. 3. To those with good memories, that was the day the Cardinals beat the Mets 4-3 to all but wrap up the National League East title.

We played the same game earlier that day, with Cieslinski taking the part of Whitey Herzog. I stood in for Davey Johnson.

We duplicated the starting lineups as much as possible, with the Cards pitching Danny Cox and the Mets Rick Aguilera. Both pitchers started well, and it was 0-0 after three innings.

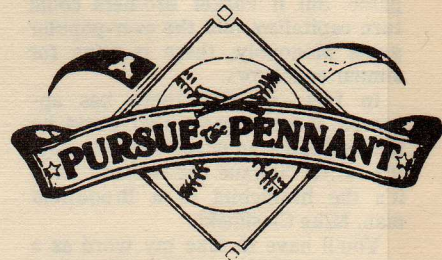
The Mets got a 1-0 lead in the fourth, and the Redbirds battled back to tie it in the fifth. Three runs in the top of the sixth knocked Cox out of the box and gave the Mets a 4-1 lead. It stood up just half an inning, as Vince Coleman's two-run double pulled the Birds back to within a run.

It was still 4-3 going into the last of the eighth, with Jesse Orosco throwing well for New York. But Coleman led off the inning with another double, and Willie McGee ripped a triple to tie it 4-4. Cieslinski then decided to have Tom Herr lay down a suicide squeeze, and when it worked, the Cardinals had a 5-4 lead going into the ninth.

Ken Dayley, the fifth Redbird pitcher, had to face the top of the order — Mookie Wilson, Wally Backman and Keith Hernandez. On the first roll of the dice, something different came into play.

"Refer to Wild Play chart," the roll directed.

"Pitcher develops blister on hand and has to leave game." That was it for Dayley, and the only reliever Cieslinski had left was Doug Bair.



Bair got Wilson and Backman for the first two outs, leaving it up to Hernandez. On the last roll of the game, the ballpark became a factor.

"Long fly ball — refer to stadium chart."

The game, of course, was in Busch Stadium, meaning there was only an 18.5 percent chance it would be a home run in this situation. If the game had been in New York, it would have been a 43.5 percent chance.

One more roll. Hernandez was out and the Cardinals had the one victory they needed against the Mets.

By then several fans had gathered in the hotel lobby.

"Hey, could you use that game to predict results so you could bet on the games?" one of them asked.

Cieslinski laughed. "I don't think so. It's just for fun."

As it turned out, the score was remarkably similar to the one in the real game played later that night, even to the number of different factors that came into play. The Cardinals won by one run in the hotel lobby — they won by one at Busch Stadium.

"I didn't want to waste my time on a game that wasn't going to be special," Cieslinski said. "I think we've turned out a game that really has it all."

Take it from someone who's played a few before.

He's right. If you can't be Whitey Herzog or Davey Johnson, this is the next best thing.

At least for Mike Cieslinski, *Pursue the Pennant* is even more than that. It's a dream come true.