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# GAMER

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ISSUE #5 • JULY 2018





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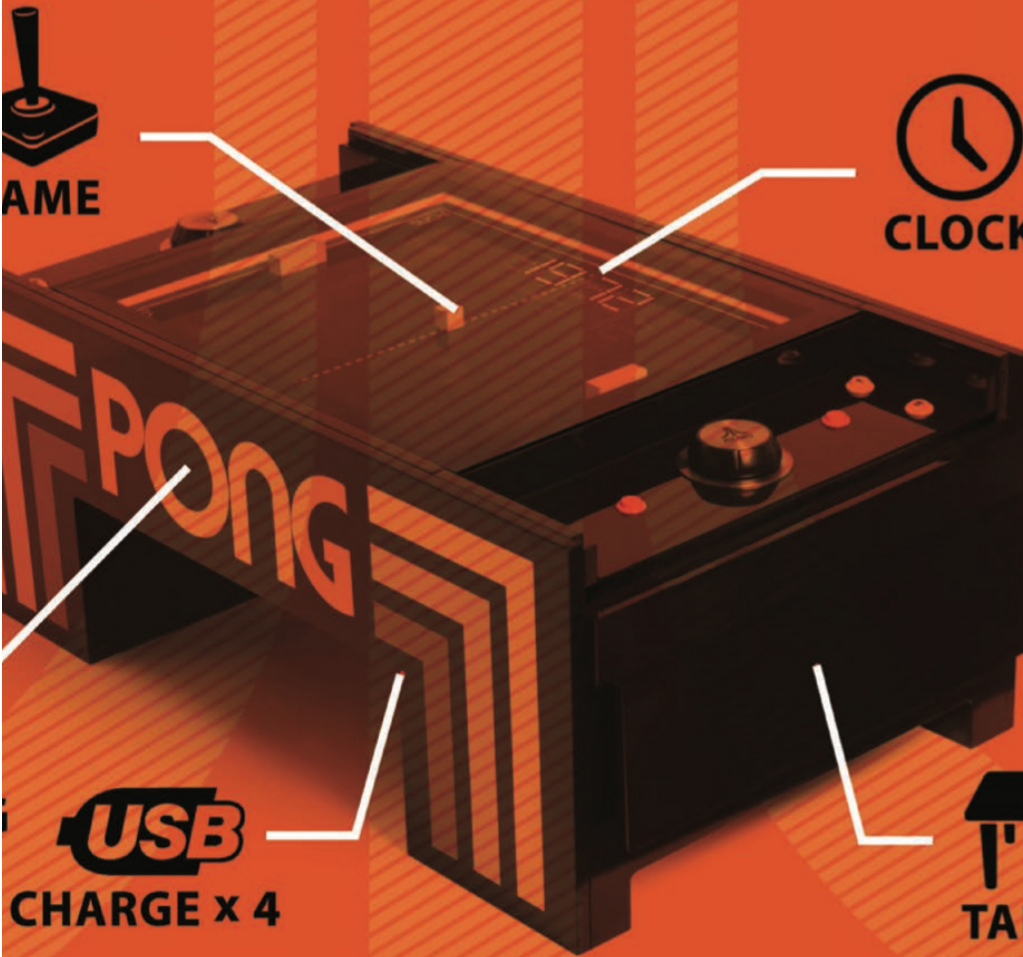
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guys make shadow boxes and c  
with a very cool retro feel. T  
boxes are done in fantastic woo  
multiple depths to their design an  
desktop art series is similarly cool  
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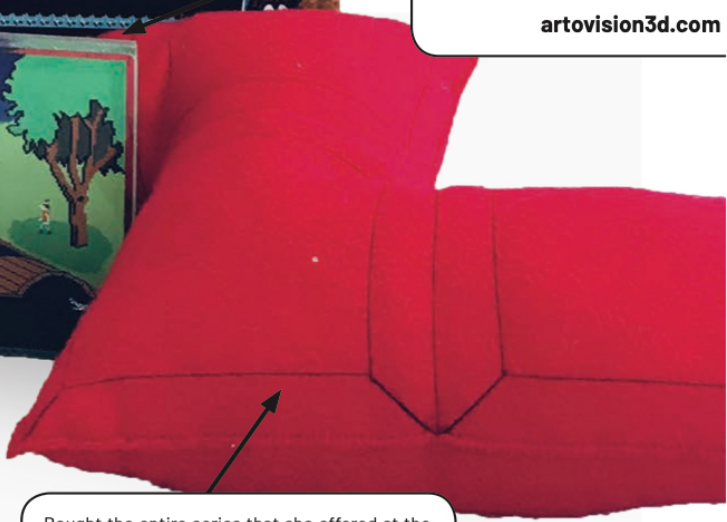
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Space Invaders Monster Beanie  
- An official Taito product that  
also comes as a Ballcap!  
**numskull.co.ok**



Space Invaders Bottle Opener - maybe the guys  
at the Guys Games and Beer podcast could use a  
couple of these when gaming at home or sharing  
a brew at the Midwest Gaming Classic!

Playstation Notebook - a 96 page replica of the  
original console.  
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Bought the entire series that she offered at the  
Portland Retro Gaming Expo last year. Tetris  
pillows in the shape of all seven of the shapes of  
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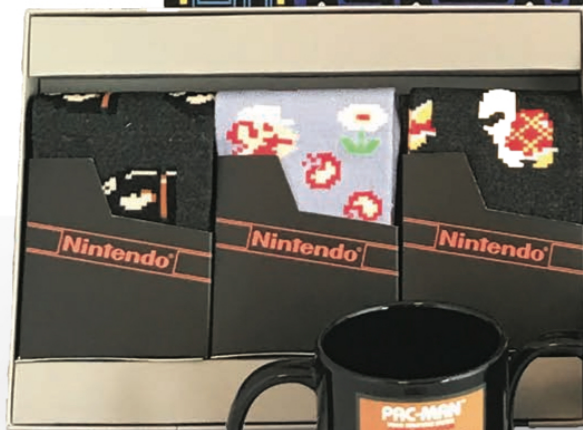
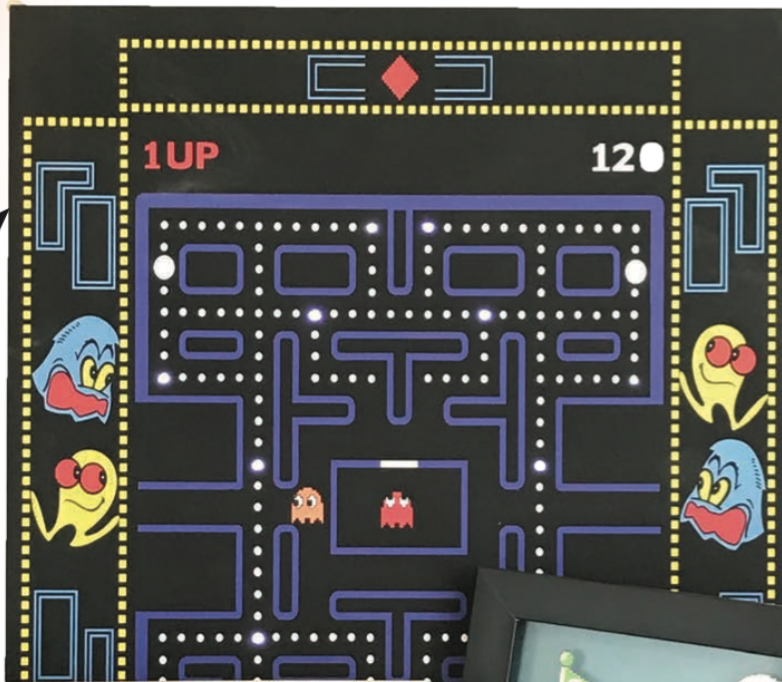


**Gaming Expos,  
revert!**

to hang up on my wall in  
lights up with LED lights  
s. They have several to  
get them you need to  
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will find "The Game Guys"

[gamingclassic.com](http://gamingclassic.com)

ool gaming  
de. These  
desktop art  
he shadow  
d and have  
d their new  
so you can  
ne day job!



Another pickup at the Midwest Gaming Classic these are a cool set of crew socks for the Nintendo Fan. And the box they come in is part of the fun looking like an original Nintendo Entertainment System. Now lets see if my wife reads this magazine and realizes one of her gifts for Christmas.

[bioworldcorp.com](http://bioworldcorp.com) / [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)



Pac-Man and Asteroids Atari 2600 Styled Heat Changing Mugs - Add hot water and they "reveal" themselves.

[numskull.co.uk](http://numskull.co.uk)



Straight out of New Jersey these cool shadow boxes are great for gamers. And the great thing is that he offers dozens of different designs. I first found them on Etsy and then had the pleasure of meeting the staff at the Connecticut Gamer Con earlier this year. Very cool product. Look for them at more of the expos soon!

[videogameshadowbox.com](http://videogameshadowbox.com)

# BoomShakaLaka with NBA Jam

By Todd Friedman

**N**BA Jam is a basketball arcade game developed by Midway in 1993. It is the first entry in the NBA Jam series and has 2-on-2 arcade-style basketball game that with over-the-top gameplay. The exaggerated nature of the gameplay means that players can perform gravity defying dunks with ease and shove opposing players down without penalty.

Each game consists of four 3-minute-long quarters, and the team with the most points at the end of the fourth quarter wins the game. When starting a match, players have the option to enter their initials in order to keep track of their win-loss record and teams that they have beaten. The only fouls a player can commit in NBA Jam are goal tending and shot clock violations. This means that the player can shove opposing players (and even his own teammate) down in order to get the ball without committing a foul. A shot clock is present in order to keep the game moving at a fast pace and goal tending is used to prevent players from hoarding the basket while on defense. You can choose from 27 different NBA teams and take to the court for incredible two-on-two action. Each NBA team from the time is represented, and there are plenty of hidden bonuses to uncover with each hard-earned victory. All of the flips, twists, shooting flames, and loose refereeing from the coin-operated original are present, right down to the "on fire" streaks. If you make it too far into the game to lose your valuable progress, you can save your game with the use of a password. Whether you're looking for NBA basketball or a fast-paced brawl, you'll find plenty of both in NBA JAM. From outrageous Tomahawk jams to wild full-court shots, you control the super moves, amazing blocks and awesome slam dunks from 54 of the NBA's hottest stars. The game features ultra-realistic digitized graphics and play-by-play. It is 4-player adaptable for true arcade competition. NBA JAM puts you on the court and above the rim.


NBA Jam Tournament Edition is the second game in Midway's basketball arcade series, featuring two-on-two fast paced matches with NBA players from the 1993-94 season (1994-95 on consoles). In total, the game features over 120 NBA athletes and over 40 hidden characters. Improvements include additional power-ups, more detailed player attributes, player substitutions after each quarter, and a new soundtrack. The core gameplay is largely unchanged from the original NBA Jam. Players still have the ability to do all the crazy dunks from the original, and all actions (running, passing, shooting) can be enhanced by holding down the "Turbo" button. Turbo drains while active and replenishes quickly when not in use. Players also have the series-staple ability to go on fire after making 3 un-

answered scores in a row - giving the player temporary unlimited sprint and the ability to goal tend without being penalized. Small but significant changes in the T.E. include slightly improved A.I., game speed, new dunks, and court changes matching the color of the home team. Up to four players can play at once, with the A.I. filling in any empty slots.

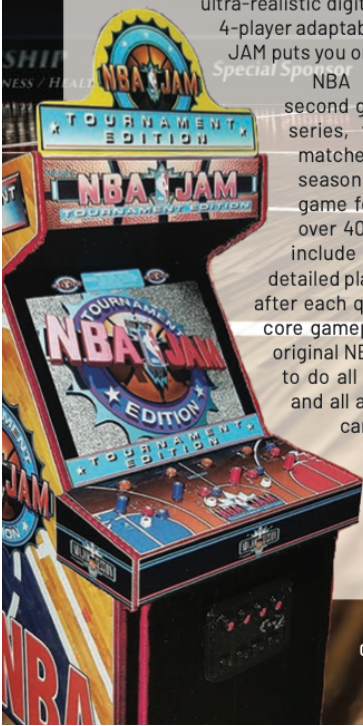
NBA Jam was showcased on multiple console platforms after the arcade version. It can be played on the Super Nintendo, Sega Genesis, Sega CD and even the handhelds of Gameboy and Game Gear. There were many sequels to the original like NBA Jam Extreme for the Sega Saturn and NBA Jam 2000 for the Nintendo 64. A little-known fact that many people don't know is there are two different versions of most console NBA Jams. One with Charles Barkley on the Suns and one without. Charles signed a deal with another company and Midway dropped him from the game and made new ones.

One of the most popular console relaunch of NBA Jam is for the Sega Genesis. This game featured every sight and sound as the arcade version. Based on the popular arcade game of the previous year, NBA Jam is a two-on-two basketball game featuring all of the 27 NBA teams competing in 1994. Not only are the teams there, but so are many of the real players. You and up to three of your friends (with a 4-player adaptor) can be Olajuwon as the Rockets, Pippen as the Bulls, Ewing as the Knicks, Mourning as the Hornets, and so on.

The arcade-hit NBA Jam also made a Game Boy debut with two-on-two basketball and a choice of 27 professional teams. Pass and shoot with the handheld's two face buttons and use the start button for the all-important turbo boost. You can unlock secret characters and special features by inputting certain initials before each game. Choose to play with or without CPU assistance, which determines whether the computer takes control over your teammate. Each pro athlete is individually rated in speed, three-pointers, dunks, and defense. Unlike the coin-op game and its console versions, NBA Jam on Game Boy does not include Game Link Cable support for head-to-head matches against a friend.

It's no mistake that NBA Jam has paved the way for many games like NFL Blitz, Mutant League Football and Street Hoops to name a few. No matter if you play it in the arcade, where it was originated, or you play at home on a console or handheld, this game will entertain and bring back memories of how fun playing a basketball video game can be. I wouldn't be surprised if they come out with another version for the next Gen consoles. This game is meant to be played by anyone at any time! 

**Todd Friedman** is heavily involved in the video game community. He is currently writing for Old School Gamer Magazine, Little Player Magazine, Retro Player Magazine, RetroGaming Times and The Walter Day Collection. He has Co-Promoted the Video Game Summit in Illinois for the past 10 Years. Todd is an avid video game collector with over 3500 console games and 35 systems. One of his main responsibilities is keeping the Walter Day Trading cards alive. Todd holds over 60 world records on the Nintendo Wii game DJ Hero. Todd was also a nominee for the International Video Game Hall of Fame, class of 2016 and 2017.



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# MUTANT LEAGUE FOOTBALL

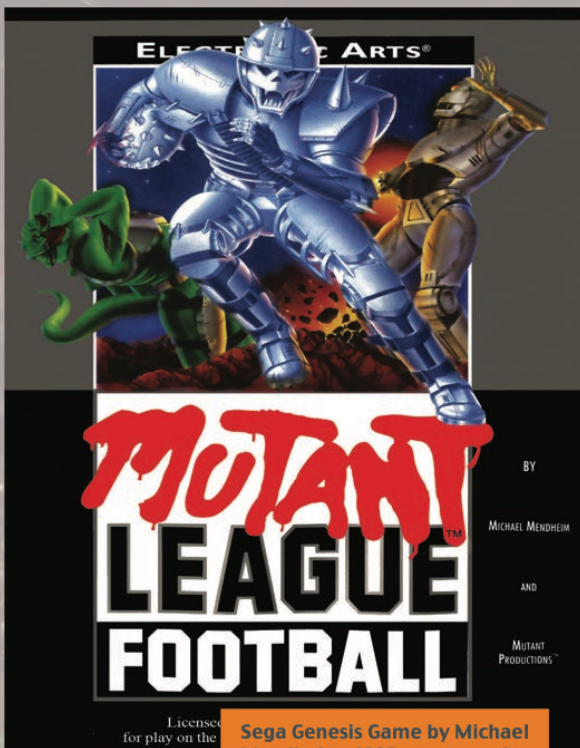
## Interview with Michael Mendheim and Tim Kitzrow

By Brad

**R**ecently, I had a stand up interview with Michael Mendheim, the creator of Mutant Football League and Tim Kitzrow, the voice behind the announcer of MFL at the Midwest Gaming Classic. And as a professional, I had complete and total control of the interview.

**OSG** - Why did you want to create Mutant Football League and give it a new name?

**MM** - Well, game players have no options, right? There's one football game to play on console and we wanted to change that. So now game players have alternative to a sports simulation. They can play an arcade action football game. We wanted to create a niche. It's not really a remake of the original game. It's a brand new vision. It plays like NFL Blitz and yeah, we have monsters. The original game had monsters and mutants, but this game has so much more.



Sega Genesis Game by Michael Mendheim, 1993 courtesy of TheCoverProject.Net

**OSG** - Now if you don't remember, Tim Kitzrow, just think back to the voice for games like the NBA Jam series, NFL Blitz series, and a handful of famous pinball machines. So what was your first reaction when he said, hey, I've got this new game coming out?

**TK** - I just wanted to see his wallet.

**MM** - Yep. That was it.

**TK** - Yeah. but you know, business transaction as it was, I was excited because this is up my alley and there are not a lot of games, as you were describing, that are arcade style, that I cut my teeth on. Those were all my big hits and then where did I go? I was a dinosaur. I was in the tar pits. All of a sudden games came along. No one wanted big mouth anymore and this guy had a big game and he needed a big mouth and it all worked.

**MM** - Signing Tim to Mutant Football League was awesome, because it brought credibility to the product. It was basically like a trademark for the game, because it's Tim Kitzrow and he's just associated with arcade sports style games. That really helped with the whole marketing strategy of the game and Tim also brings a creative energy. He doesn't just go into the studio and do this dialogue. I mean, he actually helps write the dialogue and then he goes in and he ignores the script and he just goes off and that's how we get some of the really crazier stuff.

**TK** - We thought it was going to be the biggest college game, but we didn't realize -- like the generation that came in and found Blitz and Jam who were eight years old are going, oh, you're the voice my childhood from 1993. They're going to be the same kids 20 years from now going, oh my God, this amazing game I found at the MGC, and I can't wait for it to have that same kind of impact that people are going to be talking about 20 years later like, "remember when that game came back and it was the biggest game that we'd see in the past 10 years"?

**MM** - So the game is rated M, but there are options to turn off swearing and to reduce the gore content.

**TK** - Or you can make it dirtier.

**MM** - So if anybody from the ESRB is happening to read this....

**TK** - Where's the fun in that?

# Michael Mendheim Kitzrow

Feingold



**MM** - Well, if you're eight years old, you know.

**OSG** - What was your reaction when he said, "you can say what you want"?

**TK** - Last time I did NFL Blitz for EA Sports, we were so constrained because of the powers that be, and of course the NFL license. For me, I've been waiting for the shackles to be taken off, the muzzle to be taken off. We knew that we could beep and bleep some stuff if we had to, but we let it roll for this one. We had a blast. I mean, there's no doubt about it.

**MM** - So actually that's not how it went down. At the studio, Tim goes off, right? And I let him go, because he's the talent. So then there's swear words all over the place. So then it's in the game and then Tim goes, man, there's way too much swearing in the game. Like, dude, that was you. (But you can turn off the language)

**TK** - You can turn it up and there's a switch for making it dirtier: fouler and more violent.

**MM** - It was so great to have Tim be a part of it. It's really hard to make people laugh when they're playing, but our game does that. It really is going to make you laugh and probably slam down your controller a couple times during a session too.


**OSG** - Why did you launch the project as a Kickstarter?

**MM** - We actually did two Kickstarters. The first one we did without a demo and it was on the wrong platform and that one failed. Then we came back a year later and had a demo. Pledge a dollar, play the game. The Kickstarter was successful in four days and we actually hit our target on Super Bowl Sunday as Brady was taking the game into overtime. But I did Kickstarter because we were self-funding our project and we didn't have enough cash to get across the finish line. The reason this game exists is because of our community and Kickstarter backers. Thank you, guys.

**TK** - That's right. And now Bomb Shady back to pass, oh, he gets sacked right in the lunch pail. Oh man, that's got to hurt. Now, we know that Bomb Shady likes to play with soft balls, but after that hit, he's going to be playing with deflated balls the rest of his career. Careful what you wish for! Boomshakalaka! From the MGCC, Michael Mendheim, Tim Kitzrow from Mutant Football League. Boomshakalaka! Drop the mic!



**OSG** - Complete and total control!

At the 2018 E3, they announced that Mutant Football League is going to be releasing the carnage on the Nintendo Switch this fall. They also announced that in addition to the digital download that is available now, they are releasing a physical copy for purchase in local retail stores in with the Mutant Football League Dynasty Edition. This will have several new options that were not with the original game. Visit [mutantfootballleague.com](http://mutantfootballleague.com) for more information. 

**Brad Feingold** - Brad has been a die-hard arcade fan ever since he can remember. From the first time he played Space Invaders, to the first time he played Pacman, Brad has always had a love for video games. Hanging out at either the Great American Fun Factory in the mall, or spending the night in front of the glowing games at the local roller rink, he was always thinking about when he can spend the next quarter. But has a true love is for video games and Star Wars, as he is a member of the 501st Central Garrison. His ultimate dream is to own a fully working pinball machine and arcade machine. Difficult to say which one, but a Star Wars one would be nice start.

# Early Computer Baseball

By Bill Lange

**T**he earliest computer baseball games felt like pencil and dice tabletop baseball simulation games like *Sports Illustrated Superstar Baseball*, or the much more influential *Strat-O-Matic Baseball*, with the computer simply taking over the role of the dice, the pencil, and the scorecard.

As the hardware advanced and the programmers became more skilled, computer baseball games would begin to gain depth as well as better graphics and sound. Two styles of computerized baseball games emerged. One type allowed you to use, modify



Computer Baseball - Apple II  
Strategic Simulations, 1981

or enter new real-world statistics. These statistics were easily found in the sports pages of newspapers, on the back of baseball cards, the Baseball Encyclopedia and other sources. These styles of games typically let you play the field manager or general manager rather than the individual players. The other main style of computerized baseball games were the arcade-action twitch games in which one or two players could battle it out with buttons, joysticks, trackballs and/or the computer keyboard.

In the early 1960s, an IBM engineer and rabid baseball fan from Akron, Ohio named John Burgeson created an early punch card-based baseball simulation game for the IBM 1620 computer. While Burgeson programmed the game for his own use, it was later included in the free software library shipped with the million dollar (adjusted for today's dollars) computer. In this one player game, the player would pick a team of nine baseball players from a preset roster. The computer would then form a team from the remaining available players. Once the two teams were picked, the computer would play the game based on programmed statistics and print the results.

In the early 1970s, an English major named Don Daglow created a baseball game for Digital Equipment Corporation's PDP-10 mainframe at Pomona College in Claremont, California. What made Daglow's game different from Burgeson's game was that the players could actively manage the baseball game instead of just picking the teams. Players could direct their pitchers, batters and even their baserunners throughout the game. The computer would print the results as if it were a play-by-play radio announcer. Daglow would continue to tinker with his game and would have a hand in computerized baseball games (and many other genres) for the next forty years.

## COMPUTER BASEBALL

An early baseball game for the microcomputer, *Computer Baseball* by Charles Mellow and Jack Avery, was published by Strategic Simulations in 1981. It was released for various platforms such as Apple II, Atari 8-bit, Commodore 64, DOS and others. In this game, featuring text and primitive graphics, you could choose one to two players, or no players, with the computer managing both teams. The game comes with a selection of all-time great teams from 1906 to 1980. With *Computer Baseball*, you could manage other teams by purchasing or creating new data disks. Players are limited to managerial decisions such as batting lineups, pitcher selection as well as player substitutions.

## STAR LEAGUE BASEBALL

*Star League Baseball (SLB)* is a 1983 release by Gamestar Software. It is a one or two player game created by Dan Ugrin, Scott Orr and Bruce Mitchell for the Apple II, Atari 8-bit, C64/128 and the Macintosh. SLB shows the field as if you were looking down from the right field upper deck seats.

SLB has great graphics, animation and sound effects. The pregame screen plays catchy theme music. The game itself starts off with the flag waving in the breeze above the scoreboard as the National Anthem plays on the stadium organ. Each half inning begins with a brief view of the scoreboard and then the roar of the crowd as the leadoff hitter approaches the plate.



Star League Baseball - Atari 8 Bit  
Gamestar Software, 1983

In his recent book *Breakout: How Atari 8-bit Computers Defined A Generation*, author Jamie Lendino states that "... *Star League Baseball* is tremendous fun, and has a fast and addictive pace ... *Star League Baseball* is an excellent and original example." And recently on Facebook, SLB fan Don Janis stated "Loved that game. A buddy and I made entire teams and two divisions, kept stats, and did commentary while playing." That is a dedicated fan!

While the game had a few minor issues, such as being able to easily throw out runners at first base on hits to right field, at the time of its release, it was one of the best arcade-style twitch baseball games and it still holds up pretty well today. It also included some nice features such as the ability to foul, scoreboard trivia display and bases-loaded rally music.

## MICRO LEAGUE BASEBALL

Micro League Baseball (MLB), a traditional baseball simulator for one or two players, was released for the Apple II, Atari 8-bit, Atari ST, Commodore Amiga, Commodore 64 and DOS platforms. It was published by Micro League Sports Association and was one of the first baseball games to get licensed so that it could use actual Major League Baseball teams and players.

On the Atari 8-bit version, the game starts out with a rendition of Take Me Out to the Ballgame. If you wait long enough, it will go into demo mode. The graphics and sound are nice, but make no mistake about it, this is a statistics-based baseball game.

It also had an optional General Manager disk so that users could create, edit and delete player statistics and team rosters. You have the ability to create any kind of roster you choose. It also has an optional Box Score/Stat Compiler disk for the Sabermetricians.

MLB is a General Manager/Field Manager wannabe's dream! In addition to the MLB game disk itself, there are a dozen or so optional disks, including actual Major League Baseball team statistics for the early to late 80s, All-time great All Stars statistics and various World Series teams from the 50s, 60s, and 70s. There are also a few General Manager utilities.

During the World Series in the fall of 2017, my friend Peter Fletcher entered the season statistics for the Houston Astros and the Los Angeles Dodgers in to Micro League Baseball II on his Atari ST. He allowed his computer to play out the series and tweeted out the results. The Dodgers won his 2017 Micro League World Series with a 9-2 victory in game 5 with Clayton Kershaw's two wins and ERA likely edging out Justin Turner's two Home Runs and batting average for MVP honors!

While MLB has nice graphics, it is not a twitch game. It is a management strategy game based on real-world statistics. If you are a Sabermetrician, you are likely to enjoy this game.

## HARDBALL!

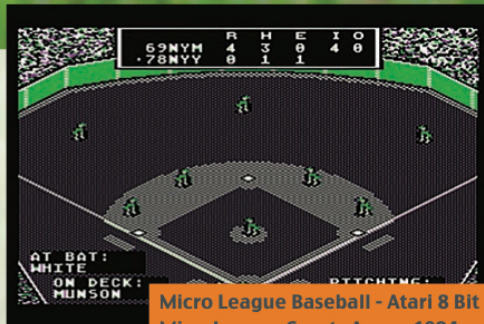
Hardball! is another arcade-style game designed by Bob Whitehead (also creator of Home Run on the Atari VCS/2600), published in 1985 by Accolade. At the time of its release, it had some of the best arcade graphics of any computer-based baseball game.

Hardball! gives a screen full of options before starting such as one player, two player, DH, etc. It also gives you a lineup of players and allows you to manage substitutions. It also displayed on-screen instructions for pitchers and batters.

The manager has a lot of



Hardball! - Atari 8 Bit  
Accolade 1985



Micro League Baseball - Atari 8 Bit  
MicroLeague Sports Assoc, 1984

optional decisions to make: hit, bunt, player substitution, fielding defense. The pitchers have a half dozen pitches to choose from and they can also pick pitch locations. Also, according to the manual, "As a pitcher gets tired, the probability of throwing a strike goes down."

The main viewpoint of the camera, is from left-center field or from behind the pitcher from just to the shortstop side of second base. An over-head look at the playing field resides in the lower right hand corner of the screen.

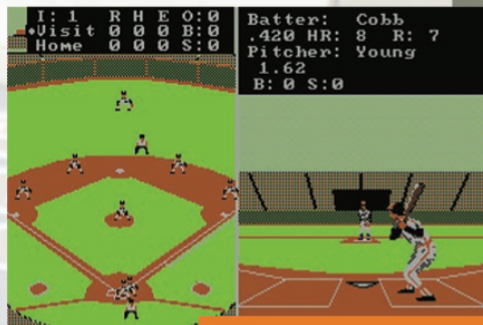
Hardball! is a strategy-based arcade-style twitch game with a lineup of fictional ball players and made-up statistics. After playing the game enough times, the players start to feel real enough as you get used to their abilities and style of play.

This game was available for just about every popular micro-computer in the mid-1980s.

## EARL WEAVER BASEBALL

Earl Weaver Baseball (EWB). EWB was another game by Don Daglow as well as Eddie Dombrower and published by Electronic Arts. Long time Baltimore Orioles' manager Earl Weaver, provided the managerial strategy for the game, hence the game's name.

EWB was another one player, two player or computer vs. computer game. It was available for the Apple II, Commodore Amiga, DOS and other platforms. Computer Gaming World magazine named EWB its game of the year for 1987.



Earl Weaver Baseball - DOS  
Electronic Arts, 1987

EWB was a hybrid game in that it allowed players to choose from either arcade or manager mode. It has both single pitch mode (where one pitch determined the outcome of the at bat) and regular mode (where every pitch of an at bat was played out). The game also displayed both current (as of the late 1980s) and historical baseball stadiums.

While this game also had a few minor issues, it included many new features that would go on to become the standard in the computer baseball game genre.

Definitely give this game a try, especially if you can find the Commodore Amiga version of the original EWB.

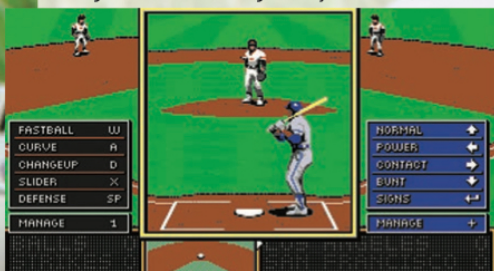
## TONY LARUSSA BASEBALL

Tony La Russa Baseball (TLRB) was a series of computer and console computerized baseball games. And again, Don Daglow was on the development team. You can see how Daglow's work evolved from his early mainframe games to 1983's Intellivision World Series

Baseball to 1987's Earl Weaver Baseball to TLRB. The game refined many of the features found in EWB. It also included some firsts of its own. Instead of using Earl Weaver as the managerial inspiration, the developers of this game worked extensively with Major League Baseball manager Tony La Russa, who managed the Oakland

Athletics at the time, on the game's management artificial intelligence.

This game was available for the Commodore 64 and DOS. There was also a console version for the



Tony LaRussa Ultimate Baseball - DOS Strategic Simulations, 1991

Sega Genesis. It is fairly easy to find and run the DOS version of the game today in a DOSBox. It has nice colorful graphics and superb baseball sound and music.

This article is just a brief history and covers only a few of the early computer baseball games on various computer systems. There were many others available as well, including games for consoles such as the Atari VCS/2600, the Mattel Intellivision, the Nintendo Entertainment System, etc. Many of the games also had various add-on and expansion disks with additional team data, stat compilers and other interesting utilities.

What was your favorite computerized baseball game? Hit me up on Twitter at @BillLange1968 at let me know!

**Bill Lange** - Bill is a software engineer. He designs and developments cloud based software solutions. He resides in NJ with his wife Lucy and their dog Yoda. In his spare time, he likes to tinker with game programming, 8-bit computers and the classic arcade machines of his youth.

## EXTRA INNINGS

Likely my first electronic baseball game, **Mattel's Baseball** (1978) is a classic handheld electronic LED-based game. I drained many free Radio Shack "Battery Of The Month" Energell 9v batteries on this game until I was gifted a 9v plug-in power adapter. The game controls the pitching and defense. The human player controls hitting and base running. No stats, all twitch. In recent years, some of Mattel's handheld electronics games, including Baseball, have been re-released for a new generation.



In 1978, soon after the release of the **Atari VCS/2600**, Atari released **Home Run** programmed by Bob Whitehead and Dave Rolf. This simplistic one or two player game has the baseball basics: pitcher, batter, ball, bat, bases and an on-screen scoreboard. There is pitching, hitting, fielding, balls and strikes, but not much else.



# I Didn't Know My Retro Console Could Do That!

BY OLD SCHOOL GAMER



One of my favorite games to play in the yard when I was a kid was Pickle, and now Good Deal Games is bringing it to the Atari 2600! A simple game that kept me playing for much longer than any baseball game that Atari put out back in the day!



[gooddealgames.com](http://gooddealgames.com)



AtariAge provides a home for many people that want to talk on their chatboards and provides a home for homebrew publishers to put out their unique new games for various mostly 8 and 16 bit systems. Many of their games available are also reimagined of games from other systems converted to older platforms like their new releases of Golgo 13 for the ColecoVision and Halo for the Atari 2600.

This time I picked up Asteroids Deluxe, Space Invaders and The Pacman Collection all programmed by Bob Decrescnzo. These versions of the classics are extensively modified from the original versions released back in the day and add a ton of flexibility in play. For instance Pac-Man Colleciton has the original, Puck Man with more difficult mazes, Hangly Man, Ultra Pacman and Random Mazes versions that will throw you off plus Ms. Pac-Man and it's variants.

[atarilage.com](http://atarilage.com)





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**S**ince the beginning of videogame history, sports have always played a major role. Higinbotham's Tennis For Two, Baer's video table tennis, and Bushnell & Dabney's Pong are also video versions of tennis or table tennis. But no matter how much you tell yourself that these videogames are sports, it's a hard sell. However, if you add a special controller that simulates something from an actual sport, the game takes on a new dimension and makes the game much more interactive. Let's look at several of these peripherals for video sport games.

There have been sports peripherals for videogames even before the first videogame console was released in 1972. To enhance the console prototype known as the Brown Box, the father of home videogames, Ralph Baer, also developed two sports-related peripherals for his invention. One was a "Golf Putter", which was a real golf ball mounted on the end of a joystick. This would be placed on the floor, and then tapped with an actual putter that would cause the on-screen "ball" to move



Ralph Baer "Brown Box" Putter

into an on-screen "hole".

The Golf Putter never made it to the production phase, but Baer's other prototype peripheral did. This was a light rifle that allowed to player to shoot targets on the screen. And isn't target shooting a sport? And if you turn those targets into

# The Sporting Life

By Leonard Herman, the Father of Video Game History



Magavox Odyssey Light Gun, 1972  
Mfg By Nintendo

animals, you'll have the sport known as hunting.

The production model of the Brown Box was the Odyssey from Magnavox. And when it became available in late 1972, the world's first sports-related peripheral (the first videogame peripheral, period!) was also available as an option. The \$24.95 (\$150 in today's dollars) light rifle (manufactured by Nintendo) featured simulated wood grain and looked exactly like a real hunting rifle.

Although many, many light guns have been released since 1972, very few have pretended to be hunting rifles. Most were pistols and used for target shooting. Hunting as a gaming genre began roughly in 1998 when HeadGames Publishing, in conjunction with the hunting supply company, Cabela's, released Cabela's Big Game Hunter for the PC. And while the object of the game was to hunt wild animals with a rifle, the game was displayed in a first-person view and the rifle was virtual. This continued onto the console when Activision released the game for the PS2. New versions were released every few years but the game's mechanics were the same. Finally, the 2010 version that came out for the Wii became the first hunting game bundled with a rifle controller. But this controller was a far cry from the realistic light rifle for the Odyssey. It looked like a toy and both the Wii Remote and the Nunchuck had to be inserted into it for it to work.

While the hunting game genre was new in 1999, fishing games have been around ever since Activision published David Crane's Fishing Derby for the Atari VCS in 1981. However, it wasn't until 1999 when fishing games would become more realistic with the release of fishing controllers. The first was for Get Bass: Sega

Bass Fishing, which was released for the Japanese Dreamcast in Japan on April 1, and as a launch title for the American Dreamcast on September 9 (sans Get Bass in its title). Although the game could be played with a standard Dreamcast controller, Sega released a fishing rod controller that looked like an actual fishing rod, which used motion sensitivity to cast a line. The unit vibrated when a fish was caught, and included a reel winder on its side for reeling in the captured fish. On September 16 Agetec released Bass Landing for the PlayStation. This third-party fishing game was bundled with a fishing rod controller that looked similar to the one from Sega. Although the third console of that era, the N64, also had fishing videogames in its catalog, none of them had been bundled with a fishing rod controller. However, a



Nintendo Wii Rifle

third-party fishing controller was sold by Mad Catz. Fishing rod controllers then took a sabbatical until 2007 when Hooked! Real Motion Fishing was released for the Wii. But like the Wii hunting rifle controller, the fishing rod controller needed the Wii Remote/Nunchuck combination in order for it to work, if that was possible. A reviewer for IGN described the game as painful and stated that he had to put the Rod Controller aside after trying it just once.

Three more fishing rod controllers were released for the Wii in 2009. The one that was packaged with Rapala: We Fish, ruined the gaming experience. The next game, Hooked! Again, was an update to the poorly received Hooked! Real Motion



Hooked Real Motion Fishing

Fishing and used a fishing rod controller that supported the new Wii MotionPlus. The third game was Bass Pro Shops: The Strike, which used a fishing rod controllers that wasn't much different from its predecessors. However, an Xbox 360 version of the game was also released and came with that console's first fishing rod controller. GamePro called the Xbox 360 version "the best fishing game out there."

The release of games with fishing rod controllers continued into 2010. Kevin VanDam's Big Bass Challenge only came out for the Wii. Rapala Pro Bass Fishing had versions for all three major systems, marking the first time a fishing rod controller was available for the PS3. While the Wii version used the standard Wii Remote/Nunchuck configuration, the Xbox 360 and PS3 versions were, for the first time, wireless.

A completely different type of fishing peripheral was released for the Japanese Game Boy in 1998. The Pocket Sonar from Bandai turned the Game Boy into a device that helped fishermen find fish. Developed by Bandai and Honda Electronics, the Pocket Sonar consisted of an oversized cartridge that plugged into the Game Boy, and a sonar unit that went in the water. A wire connected the sonar unit to the cartridge. When the sonar unit sat upon the surface of the water, it could detect fish up to 30 meters deep. The data was then sent to the Game Boy, which displayed it on its screen. And for would-be fishermen who weren't near water, a fishing game was also included.

Hunting and fishing games weren't the only sports games that made use of non-conventional controllers. In 1994, a company called Sports Sciences released

TeeV Golf for the SNES and Genesis. This was a modern realization of Ralph Baer's original Golf Putter. TeeV Golf consisted of a base unit and a pseudo club that included a realistic grip and shaft. The base unit sensed a light that emitted from the golf club and was able to calculate the swing. Unfortunately the TeeV Golf couldn't work with every golf game. Specific cards for a game had to be inserted into the base unit to make it work correctly. The unit came with a card for Electronic Arts' PGA Tour Golf.

That same year Sports Sciences also released Batter Up for the SNES and Genesis. This was a baseball bat that plugged into the console's controller port. After an onscreen player pitched the ball, the real-life player would swing the Batter Up, which would then figure out whether the ball had been hit or not. If it decided that the ball had indeed been hit, it then calculated exactly what kind of hit had been made. Unlike TeeV Golf, which had to be programmed to work with selected golf games, Batter Up was compatible with any baseball game.

But the award for the console with the most sports-related peripherals has to go to the XaviX, an obscure, but revolutionary system that came out in 2004. Released two years before the Wii, the XaviX from a company called SSD pioneered the art of motion controllers. Six sports games were released for the system and all of them are memorable for the wireless controllers needed to play them. For example, the controller for the Bowling was a miniature bowling ball. The player held the controller like a real bowling ball and did everything but release it (a lanyard was also



XaviX Bowling Ball




Sports Sciences Batter Up for SNES and Genesis

connected to the ball to prevent the player from releasing the ball.

The other XaviX sport games and their controllers are:

- Baseball – a bat and ball
- Bass Fishing – a rod and reel
- Golf – 2 golf clubs (wood and putter) and a base unit
- Powerboxing – a pair of boxing gloves
- Tennis – a tennis racquet

While the Wii had a multiple of hunting rifles and fishing rod controllers that required the inclusion of the Wii Remote and Nunchuck controllers, other sports peripherals such as the ones available for the XaviX were never produced. The closest Wii owners got to peripherals were generic plastic golf clubs, tennis racquets and baseball bats that attached to the end of the Wii Remote. These did not enhance the game since the games could be played exactly the same whether these add-ons were attached to the Wii Remote or not.

The future for sports peripherals does not look good. As virtual reality technology improves, the need to produce controllers that made players feel like they were actually in the game becomes less and less likely. And who knows? Maybe one day the Tee-V Golf will sit alongside Ralph Baer's "Golf Putter" on a shelf in a backroom at the Smithsonian for a future exhibit on the lengths that designers went to make videogames somewhat realistic. 

**Leonard Herman** – The Game Scholar, is regarded as one of the earliest and most respected videogame historians. The first edition of his book Phoenix: The Fall & Rise of Home Videogames, which was published in 1994, is considered to be the first serious and comprehensive book about the history of videogames. He has written articles for Videogaming & Computer Illustrated, Games Magazine, Electronic Gaming Monthly, the Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine, Pocket Games, Classic Gamer Magazine, Edge, Game Informer, Classic Gamer Magazine, Manci Games, Gamespot.com and Video Game Trader, which he also edited. In 2003, Mr. Herman received a Classic Gaming Expo Achievement Award in recognition for his accomplishments in documenting game history.



# From Pigskin to Pixels: Going Long for Atari Football

by Michael Thomasson

**A**t first glance, Atari Football (1978) appeared to be a no-thrills gaming experience. The monochrome screen displayed simple field lines and a few statistics in a rudimentary sans-serif font. The single-channel rarely beeped, and when it did, it was a muffled sound of a kick or a garbled whistle. There were only seven players on each team and were represented simply as X's and O's, as if ripped from a coach's playbook. The tech of the time could not even handle two eleven player teams. However, the game stood out handsomely with its large rolling black trackballs sunken into the unique

cocktail table design, a feature unique to most arcade aficionados at the time.

## ELIGIBLE RECEIVER

While renowned engineer Jerry Lichac is often recognized as having designed the first video game trackball for Atari Football, that claim to fame actually belongs to Tomohiro Nishikado who designed Soccer for Taito five years earlier in 1973. In fact, Atari Football barely beat Midway's trackball game Shuffle B Goingard to the market. However, it is miscredited as the premier trackball game for a reason; it was Atari Football that introduced the control peripheral to the masses.

## SCRAMBLE

The trackball replaced the traditional joystick, allowing gamers to control the running speed of the football players in addition to the football players' movement. The faster the ball was spun, the faster the game played, and the faster the fun came. Just like real football, this physically exhausting game also dealt out the injuries, resulting in sore palms and pinched, blistered fingers! Atari, in its fashion of bucking the trend, refers to its trackball apparatus as a Trak Ball. It seems that dropping the 'c' makes the term more efficient and hip!

The funny thing is, the marriage of the trackball with football almost didn't

happen at all! It seems Atari President Nolan Bushnell found the device cost prohibitive. It wasn't until team member Mike Albaugh threatened to quit that Bushnell changed his mind and allowed the trackballs to be used. Atari Football became a smash hit, confirming that the choice to include the trackballs was correct. During the '78 NFL football season, Atari Football was set to win the arcade Super Bowl until Space Invaders invaded the playfield and intercepted the ball.

## COIN FLIP

A single quarter would garner a minute and a half of playtime, ample time to run the length of the gridiron. It also offered a one-of-a-kind buy-in stratagem termed "add-a-coin" by Atari. Each quarter added extended the length of the game an additional ninety seconds. A full game of American football could be played for ten dollars!

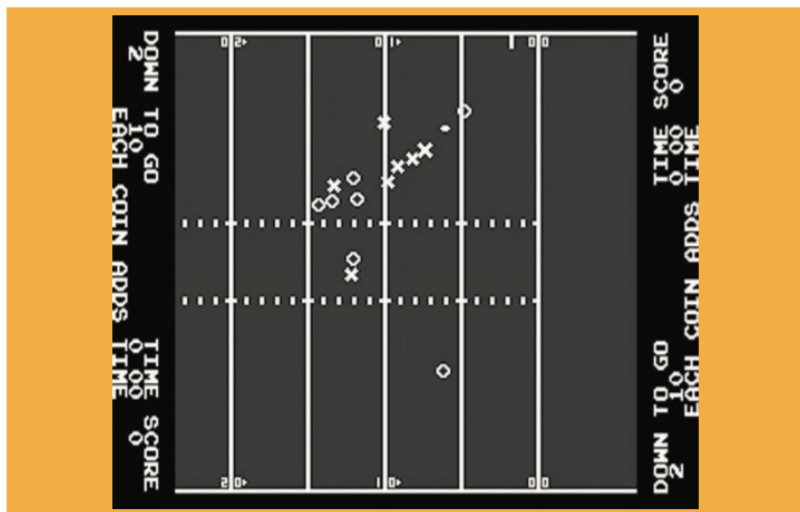
The offensive side had eight plays to choose from: four running and four passing options. The defensive player only had four plays at their disposal. Sadly, kicking plays were omitted from the game

## REMATCH

For the '79 football season, Atari upped the game by publishing a four-player version of Atari Football, equipped with four trackballs. This allowed cooperative play for a two-on-two game, with players playing the positions of the quarterback and the wide receiver. The upgrade also added a line of scrimmage, and additional plays which finally allowed for the option to kick the ball for a punt or field goal. The success of Atari Football, led to Atari publishing other popular trackball sports games that same year, including Atari Soccer, Atari Baseball, and Atari Basketball, respectively.

## FIRST DOWN

While Atari Football may not have been the first to introduce the trackball to the arcades, it was the first on other notable fronts. It was the first video game and the earliest non-racing title to offer a playfield that scrolled vertically beyond the borders of the screen. With the release of Atari 4 Player Football, it had the first coin-box to accept the ill-fated Susan B. Anthony dollar coin. One could even argue that it was the first realistic video game sports title, and that's a TOUCHDOWN!



# Old School Gamer Overtime Trivia

## TURNOVER

Video games did not get a full field of twenty-two players for another decade after Atari dropped the ball. The same slow computers and technical limitations that prevented Atari from filling up the field also delayed Trip Hawkins' initial release of John Madden Football. When Madden previewed the proposed game by Electronic Arts in 1984, Madden balked, "I'm not putting my name on it if it's not real." Time passed and when technology finally caught up to his demands, the first version of John Madden Football was released for MS-DOS in 1998. Two years later it landed on Sega's Genesis, and it has been running laps ever since.

## COMEBACK ROUTE

Atari Football makes a cameo in two Disney films. First was the 1980 comedy *Midnight Madness*, which was Michael J. Fox's film debut and also featured competitive gaming as part of the plot using the Exidy's *Star Fire*. The second film in which Atari Football made a cameo was *Tron*, in 1982. As *Tron* took place in Flynn's Arcade and featured dozens and

dozens of coin-op games, the Atari Football appearance isn't so impressive in this film.

## EXTRA POINT

You can get the upper hand in the two-player version of Atari Football by rolling your quarterback past the line of scrimmage... and then going back behind it. Once over the line, the computer's defense stops covering the receivers to tackle the quarterback. This is what they should do, except a programming bug allows you to exploit this by doubling back behind the line of scrimmage and still making a long pass to your receivers who are now completely wide open! Normally, this kind of pass is illegal, but players can sidestep it to great advantage here. Atari Football made a cameo was *Tron*, in 1982. As *Tron* took place in Flynn's Arcade and featured dozens and dozens of coin-op games, the Atari Football appearance isn't so impressive in this film. .



**Michael Thomasson** is one of the most widely respected videogame historians in the field today. He teaches multiple college level videogame courses, and has contributed to dozens of gaming texts and television shows including MTV's *Video MODS* and the highly-rated book *Downright Bizarre Games*. He has written business plans, managed a multiple game-related retail stores, and consults for multiple video game and computer museums. Michael has helped publish 100s of games on Atari, Sega and other console platforms. In 2014, *The Guinness Book of World Records* declared that Thomasson had "The Largest Videogame Collection" in the world. Visit [www.GoodDealGames.com](http://www.GoodDealGames.com).

# 2018-2019 OSG EVENTS CALENDAR

OLD SCHOOL GAMER IS GOING TO BE ALL OVER, THIS YEAR AND NEXT. ARE WE COMING TO YOUR TOWN?

SUMMER

JULY 14

Villa Park, IL • Video Game Summit • [videogamesummit.net](http://videogamesummit.net)

JULY 21-22

Cleveland, OH • Classic Console and Arcade Gaming Show • [ccagshow.com](http://ccagshow.com)

JULY 26-29

Pittsburgh, PA • ReplayFX • [replayfx.org](http://replayfx.org)

JULY 28-29

Austin, TX • Classic Game Fest • [classicgamefest.com](http://classicgamefest.com)

JULY 28-29

Irving, TX • Lets Play Gaming Expo • [letsplaygamingexpo.com](http://letsplaygamingexpo.com)

JULY 28-29

Houston, TX • RetroPalooza Houston • [retropaloozahouston.com](http://retropaloozahouston.com)

AUGUST 3-5

Bloomington, MN • 2D Con • [2Dcon.net](http://2Dcon.net)

AUGUST 4 -

St. Louis, MO • MoGameCon • [mogamecon.com](http://mogamecon.com)

AUGUST 10-12

Phoenix, AZ • Game On • [gameonexpoaz.com](http://gameonexpoaz.com)

AUGUST 11-12

Garden City, NY • Long Island Retro • [Expo.liretro.com](http://Expo.liretro.com)



FALL & WINTER

SEPTEMBER 8-9

Hartford, CT • RetroWorldExpo • [retroworldexpo.com](http://retroworldexpo.com)

SEPTEMBER 14-16

Atlantic City, NJ • J1Con • [j1con.com](http://j1con.com)

SEPTEMBER 15-16

Secaucus, NJ • A Video Game Con • [avideogamecon.com](http://avideogamecon.com)

SEPTEMBER 29-30

Arlington, TX • RetroPalooza • [retropalooza.com](http://retropalooza.com)

OCTOBER 4-6

Ottumwa, IA • Galaxies of Gaming • [ottumwaoldschoolarcade.com](http://ottumwaoldschoolarcade.com)

OCTOBER 13-14

Philadelphia/Oaks, PA • RetroCon • [retrocons.com](http://retrocons.com)

OCTOBER 19-21

Portland, OR • Portland Retro Gaming Expo • [retrogamingexpo.com](http://retrogamingexpo.com)

Walter Day will be joining the OSG crew at one of our favorite events!

NOVEMBER 2-4

Tulsa, OK • XPO Game Festival • [XpoTulsa.com](http://XpoTulsa.com)

NOVEMBER 3-4

Syracuse, NY • RetroGameCon • [RetroGameCon.Com](http://RetroGameCon.Com)

NOVEMBER 9-11

Orlando, FL • Free Play Florida • [FreePlayFlorida.Com](http://FreePlayFlorida.Com)

DECEMBER 9

Sacramento, CA • Sac Gamers Expo • [SacGamersExpo.Com](http://SacGamersExpo.Com)



2019

JANUARY 5-6

LA Fairplex, CA • Retro City Festival • [retrocityfestival.com](http://retrocityfestival.com)

MARCH 15-17

Banning, CA • Arcade Expo • [arcadeexpo.com](http://arcadeexpo.com)

MARCH 18-22

San Francisco, CA • Game Developers Conference • [gdconference.com](http://gdconference.com)



# Going For Golden Eye

SOMETIMES REALITY IS TOO CLOSE TO FICTION

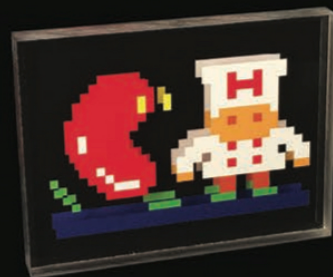
By Ryan Burger

I'm a fan of the movie of King of Kong and I have the pleasure of knowing many the personalities from the movie. So when I heard about this mockumentary, I had to see it. Clocking in at just under an hour, it starts out with, and often flashes back to, 'authentic' footage from the 90s, then progresses to current day. Also, just like movies such as Ready Player One, it's loaded with retro references, in this case the 1990s, and that adds to the fun factor of this movie.

Legendary Retro Gamer Ethan (yes he has only one name) is preparing for his 20th world championship tournament for the N64 multiplayer game GoldenEye. The story also follows Ben Beagle who is the up and coming gamer who has the opportunity to challenge Ethan. This is a storyline similar in nature to King of Kong's Steve Wiebe against Billy Mitchell, complete with a tournament director dressed in a ref shirt like Walter Day.

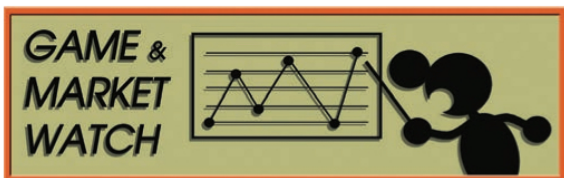
In many ways this reminds me of some of the events I've been to in the last 6 months, and also contains parody skits that are reminiscent of Saturday Night Live. Remember the episode where William Shatner comes in to a Star Trek Con and tells the attendees to 'Get A Life'? It's one of those things where parody is close enough to the truth that we all need to laugh at ourselves.

[goingforgoldeneye.co.uk](http://goingforgoldeneye.co.uk)



ARTOVISION3D.COM

THIS IS A RETROVISION



# Game and Market Watch

By Dan Loosen



Game Covers courtesy of TheCoverProject.Net

**In prior Game & Market articles, I discussed factors that increase awareness of games, and can be a large factor in driving their value up. This time, we're going to look at an entire segment of games that is generally overlooked by those factors, why they are overlooked, and the few exceptions that you as a collector might want to be aware of... Sports games.**

When most collectors that I talk with start trying to gather a complete collection of games for a system, they tend to either start or end with the sports games. The theory seems to be they can either buy a huge chunk of the library for usually just a couple bucks apiece to help complete a decent percentage of it, or they put it off until the end because they have little interest in actually playing any of them.

Let's first look at the simple factors that cause sports games to be pretty low in price:

## SPORTS GAMES ARE POPULAR

Perhaps this is obvious, but sports games in general are really popular. This means that a lot of each title is sold, and the secondary market is full of opportunities to find these games.

That isn't the only factor though, as games that sell in higher quantities often retain value better than sports games. An easy example of this is Super Mario Bros

for the original NES is more expensive to purchase than NFL or Major League Baseball for instance, even though the original Mario platformer probably sold ten times more copies than either of the other two games.

## SPORTS GAMES ARE ITERATIVE

By their nature, sports games are iterative. When you go to purchase the most recent basketball game, you expect it to be a game where you play basketball - just like if you attend a sporting event, you expect that the sport will be played in almost the same way that it was when you first saw it. It would be shocking to arrive at the local baseball stadium to find the players kicking a ball, and so sports games don't change very much.

Yes, features may be added or improved upon, but unless the developers have set out to create a different style of game altogether (like a 2 on 2 basketball game for instance), by their nature, the games do not change tons.

People who don't play sports games often knock that feature of them saying that the only difference year to year is that the players names change, but even if that was the only difference (and it never is), that is a hugely important factor to those who love their local sports teams. Players change teams regularly, rookies start, and as a fan you want to play as the team you know and love.

While this is all known, it has an interesting side effect, which is that yearly the market becomes flush with the prior

year's sports games just because of the roster updates. The changes between the years are less worried about by the people who buy them, and the older games quickly drop in value until they can be had for just a few dollars usually a few years after release.

No other game has this sort of update that changes them and removes the value from the previous game so quickly. When Super Mario Bros. 2 was released, those who really enjoyed the first did not feel that the sequel made the original game obsolete. In fact, the release of a sequel may increase the attention for the original and get it to rise in value in the secondary market, something that would never happen with a sports game.

Finally, the iterative nature of sports games makes memories of them harder to have about any one particular version of the game. I've been around many kids talking about the latest sports games, and they are always referred to by their series, not by anything else. Football is "Madden", basketball is "2K". This makes it so that if in the future you want to go back and play one of the games for a system you had really enjoyed as a kid, you probably care less about what specific title it is and just what series it comes out of.

This often leads to an inflated value for the final sports game for each sport on each console, which is reinforced by that title usually being the least produced sports titles as they are often one of the final releases for the console (as the iterative nature makes developing a "new" sports game by simply swapping



player names and stats an extremely easy way to make a buck even in a low sales way) and those games retain a bit of value, but not tons.

## SPORTS GAMES ARE TOUGH TO TALK ABOUT

This I believe is another important part of the lack of value to sports games - they simply aren't that easy to talk about. I don't mean the current games are difficult to talk about, those are some of the most talked about games for modern consoles, but the older ones.

Again, due to the iterative nature of the games, when we recall the fun we had with an old sports title, it's rare that we can single out which game it was. Often times, it is even difficult to recall the exact series. Was it Joe Montana Football on the Genesis or John Madden Football? Unless you kept the game, it's hard to tell.

This makes it so that when a person who is just looking to play a type of game for a system goes looking to buy one, they don't have a specific game they are looking for. John Madden Football and Joe Montana Football are equal in their minds, with little to differentiate the two games beyond a price, meaning the lowest priced game will generally be the one to win to people just looking for a game or two, which helps to keep the prices for all of the games low.

## EXCEPTIONS, AND THINGS TO WATCH

With all of the above, there are of course some exceptions to the above. In general, the exceptions are because the games break a rule of the above. Here's a few examples of sports games that have retained more value, and perhaps some ways to keep your eyes open for games that may rise in value in the future.

First, is the game a single entry and not a series? If so, if it isn't terrible, it's more likely that the specific game will be remembered by future gamers and will retain a bit of a higher value because of that. It's worth noting that it may be a single entry on a console of a larger series and it still generally is better at retaining value.

Second, is the game a unique take on the sport? Games that are unique spins on the sport that they represent tend to age better than games that try to

simulate the sport that they represent. Simulations continue to get better, but a game like NBA Jam for instance is a unique gameplay style that still stands against today's games. This also works for games that only vaguely represent the sports they say they do, such as the Mutant League series on the Genesis and Brutal Sports Football on the Jaguar. If the formula worked when they came out and it hasn't been constantly refined, chances are the formula is still well remembered now.

Third, is the game for a sport that is not generally represented on a console? Games for sports like Rugby and Lacrosse are few and far between. Chances are also that they didn't sell like hotcakes when they were originally released, and the combination of rarity of game type and rarity of the game itself help to give it a floor.

Fourth, does the system have many options for the type of sport that it is? Systems that don't have large libraries and received few sports titles usually find those games worth a decent amount of money. John Madden Football for the 3DO is the only traditional football game on the console, and it was a very memorable game for the system making it worth a decent amount. Troy Aikman Football is a game that you can get for the Genesis or SNES for a couple bucks, but on the Atari Jaguar it is worth significantly more.

Fifth, is the game any good? Simply put, if a game is terrible, it greatly decreases the demand for it.

Finally, how rare is the game for the system? If a company overproduces a title and it has to be liquidated during the lifespan of the console, rarely does that game increase in value.

Found a game that fits multiple of these six categories? You are likely to have found one of the rare, sought after sports titles! Here is just a few examples:


World Series Baseball for the 32X is the only entry from this popular Sega series for the system, and the 32X does actually have another baseball game, with a total North American library size of only 36 games, the system doesn't have many options for it. Additionally, World Series Baseball was a late release for the 32X, produced in very limited quantities because they knew it would have difficulty selling. That combination makes it one of the most expensive titles to get for the rare Sega add on.

NBA Jam TE for the Atari Jaguar is the only version of the unique arcade

take on basketball that is NBA Jam to have made it to the Jaguar, and in fact the only licensed NBA game to make it to the console. It was produced in limited quantities near the end of the Jaguar's life, and it happens to be one of the best if not THE best home version of this popular series. The combination has made it one of the most expensive games for the Jaguar today.

When you think Mega Man you think... soccer? I'm not sure why this unique take on soccer starring the blue bomber was made, but the combination of popular character in his only soccer title, the uniqueness of deciding to put him in to begin with, the game being fun to play and the fact it didn't sell well when it was released because, seriously, why is Mega Man in a soccer game drives this game to be a very expensive SNES game.

In general, soccer games don't sell as well in the US as football, baseball or basketball games, which tends to keep a bit more value in the soccer games that are released. The most popular series of soccer titles on the N64 was International Superstar Soccer, and the final release in the series, International Superstar Soccer 2000, was released relatively late in the console's lifespan for a sport that isn't as well represented. The combination leaves it as one of the most expensive titles for Nintendo's 64 bit console.

This is by no means a comprehensive list of titles, but it is interesting next time you're examining your collection to see which sports titles have gained value, and which haven't! 

### Dan Loosen - Midwest Gaming Classic / GOAT Store

- Dan Loosen has been running the GOAT Store, LLC with his business partner Gary Heil for 18 years. The company was formed when the pair was trying to collect video games at a time that people selling games didn't think about their collectible nature. The company has grown and changed throughout the past 18 years, now having more than 20,000 items in stock, and selling throughout the world! The GOAT Store has expanded to publish games for retro consoles and host the annual Midwest Gaming Classic trade show in Milwaukee, Wisconsin that draws more than 10,000 gamers together. Dan will bring this "behind the scenes" knowledge in his articles.

## 'YER OUT!

EARLY 8 BIT DOES SPORTS

By Brett Weiss



**F**or this sports-themed issue of *Old School Gamer*, we're going back to the basics: five early and essential games for the Atari 2600 and five for the Intellivision, the two most popular systems of the pre-NES era.

These highly influential titles, which paved the way for more sophisticated offerings, sold well and are still easy to find today, so you should be able to purchase them for around a buck or two apiece—a little more for *Indy 500* since you'll need a driving controller.

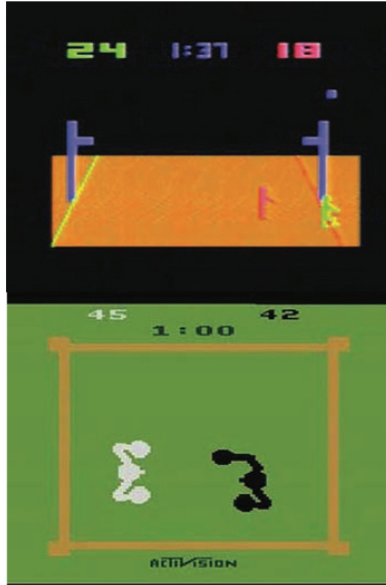
## ATARI 2600

## Basketball - Atari, 1978

With its forced 3D perspective and relatively convincing court, *Basketball* still makes for a nice game of classic roundball (actually, the ball is square) on the VCS. Beginning with a jump ball at center court, the game lets you challenge the computer or friend to a simple game of full-court one-on-one. Although there are no dunks, gamers can shoot, jump, steal, and rebound, and the arc and length of each shot depend on how high or low the player is holding the ball when the shot button is released. The sound effects are meager, but the game has nice graphics, good player animation, and smart computer A.I. (the opposing player gets in your face during close games). *Basketball* was designed by Alan Miller, who would go on to work for Activision.

## Boxing - Activision, 1980

Viewed from an overhead perspective, this intense, thumb-numbing game features two odd-looking pugilists (one solid white, one solid black) pummeling one another with long jabs (worth one point apiece) and close power punches (worth two points apiece). A round of play is actually an entire game, and rounds are only two minutes long. Since the game is so physically taxing, this is a good thing. A clock at the top of the screen runs down the seconds, but if a player reaches 100



points, the other boxer gets knocked out and the game automatically ends. Unlike the graphically superior *Rocky Super Action Boxing* for the ColecoVision, the boxers in this game can maneuver around the entire ring.

## Fishing Derby - Activision, 1980

A fun and addicting game, *Fishing Derby* is a contest to see who can be the first to catch 99 pounds of fish. The deeper the fish in the water, the more it weighs. The fishermen sit on a pair of opposing docks, facing one another, each with a fishing pole in hand. To release your fisherman's line, you move the joystick up and down, and you hook a fish by moving the joystick right or left. The fire button reels the fish in. Care should be taken, though, because a fish-gobbling shark patrols the waters. The game would benefit from more variety (different types of fish and lures, for example), but the graphics are nicely detailed, and playing with a friend is good, simple fun.

## Ice Hockey - Activision, 1981

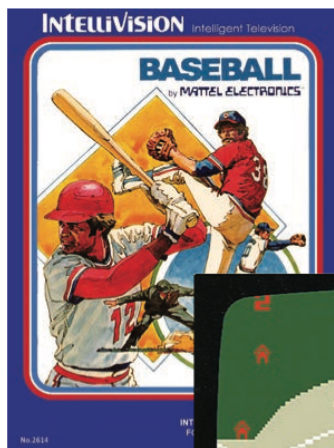
Fast paced and high scoring, this two-on-two hockey game lets players compete



against the computer or a friend, with the objective being to outscore the other player within a three-minute period. Gameplay is simple yet effective as players pass the puck back and forth and try to swat the puck into the opponent's goal. Shots can deflect off the rink, and you can pass to your goalie. The angle of the pass or shot is determined by where the puck is on the stick when it is hit. Playing the computer is a solid challenge, but battling a friend is where the true fun is, especially since gamers can get physical with their opponent with a less-than-friendly "check." Clear, colorful graphics and nice animation complement the exciting gameplay.

## Indy 500 - Atari, 1977

Patterned after such classics as *Race*, *Indy 4*, and *Sprint 2*, each of which hit the arcades in 1976, *Indy 500* is one of the better of the nine Atari VCS launch titles. Viewed from overhead, the game features 14 variations comprised of four types of races: *Race Car*, *Crash n' Score*, *Tag* and *Ice Race*. Depending on mode selected, players race on an assortment of tracks, attempt to crash into a white square as many times as possible, or purposely run into or avoid the opponent's car. The game was packaged with (and requires) special paddle driving controllers, which are precise and can be rotated continuously in either direction. Characterized by sharp twists and turns, highly competitive two-player action, and simple, but effective graphics and sound effects, *Indy 500* belongs in every VCS owner's collection.



Intellivision Covers and Screen Shots courtesy of TheCoverProject.Net



## INTELLIVISION

### Major League Baseball - Mattel, 1980

This landmark title was a remarkable upgrade from previous baseball video games, such as the comparatively crude Home Run for the Atari 2600. Players, utilizing an actual baseball diamond (as opposed to empty space), can bunt, steal and/or walk bases, control the speed of pitches, control each fielder, hit home runs, and more. The umpire even calls audible outs. There are no fly balls, and the pitcher is good at fielding to a fault, but the game was groundbreaking at the time of release and still lots of fun. At over one million copies sold, Major League Baseball is one of the most fondly remembered games in the Intellivision library. Mattel upgraded the game in 1983 with the more obscure (and now more expensive) World Championship Baseball, which had a number of extra features, including a welcome one-player mode.

### NFL Football - Mattel, 1980

The most realistic sports simulation of its era, NFL Football gives players 60 minutes of real-time gridiron goodness. Both offense and defense can select from nine different formations, making excellent use of the Intellivision keypads, and there are kicking formations to consider as well. Each team fields five players (a reasonable downgrade from the real thing), and the production values are fantastic for the time, providing gamers with a nicely marked field and a fully functional score-

board, complete with down readouts. Equal parts action and strategy, NFL Football is a must-own for Intellivision fans, despite the lack of a one-player mode.

### PBA Bowling - Mattel, 1980


Like NFL Football and Major League Baseball, PBA Bowling is an excellent example of why the Intellivision is lauded for its realistic sports simulations. Players are given options for alley slickness, ball weight, and handedness, and when it's time to step up to the lane, you can press the disc to put spin on the ball. When the pins get hit, they don't simply flatten or disappear. Rather, they spin, fall, bounce around, and visibly knock over other pins. The action is nicely animated, with the blocky bowler going through all the right motions. The screen is busy, with the pins shown at the top of the screen, the scoring line in the middle, and the bowler at the bottom. This configuration would be copied (but not matched) a couple of years later in 3D Bowling for the Arcadia 2001.

### PGA Golf - Mattel, 1980

Like other Intellivision sports games, PGA Golf is a huge upgrade over its Atari 2600 counterpart (Golf in this case), thanks

to a wide variety of authentic features, including some nice panoramic views of the action. Gamers can use nine different clubs (each of which hits relatively realistically) and three different swings (long, medium, and short) for use on a nine-hole course that features greens, sand traps, roughs, water, and trees. There are three modes of play: stroke, match, and best ball. Aiming and trajectory are crucial, as is the timing of swings. Hooks and slices play a role as well, especially for the inexperienced player.

### Tennis - Mattel, 1980

One of the few early Intellivision sports titles without an accompanying license from a professional league, Tennis is viewed from an angled, side-view perspective. The one-on-one action has players moving around the court, serving, smashing, and lobbing the ball over the net. The court looks good, the players are nicely animated, and a shadow under the ball helps gamers judge where the ball is in relation to its surroundings. There's even a head-turning crowd that follows the back-and-forth action. Once again, there's no one-player mode, so hopefully a fellow Old School Gamer Magazine reader can join you in a match. 

**Brett Weiss** - Brett Weiss is the author of nine books, including the Classic Home Video Games series, The 100 Greatest Console Video Games: 1977-1987, and The SNES Omnibus: The Super Nintendo and Its Games, Vol. 1 (A-M). He's had articles published in numerous magazines and newspapers, including the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Game Informer, Classic Gamer Magazine, Video Game Trader, Video Game Collector, Filmfax, and Fangoria.



# MUTANT FOOTBALL LEAGUE

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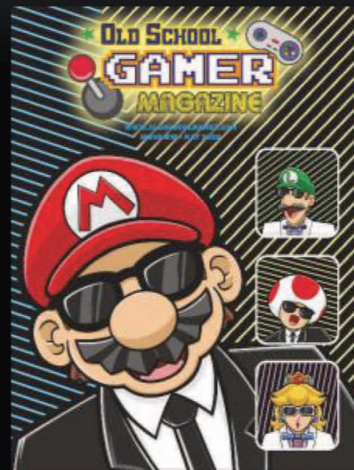
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