

SHORT RELIEF

Observations from THE NATIONAL staff

Skins problems

Skins Games, golf's version of pro rasslin', are events in which players win money if they win a hole. If there is no winner, the money carries over until, as in the recent LPGA event, a Jan Stephenson wins \$200,000 by making a two-foot putt on the 17th hole.

The discouraging thing is that the players close their eyes to the fact that such exhibitions demean the game. The first time Jack Nicklaus made a putt for big bucks in a Skins Game, he flipped his putter high as if he had won a fifth U.S. Open. All he had won was a share of an exhibition purse given to four chosen-for-their-TV-appeal players.

This confusion of reality and fantasy would be less troublesome if the guys put up their own money. As Lee Trevino once said, "Pressure ain't playing for \$50,000. Pressure's playing for \$10 when you don't have a dime in your pocket."

— DAVE KINDRED

Boss in the wrong game

George Steinbrenner would have saved a lot of money, and fans in New York a lot of grief, if he had bought what everyone else in the '70s did when the



(ILLUSTRATION BY LARRY JOHNSON OF THE NATIONAL)

itch came along to own a major league team — a Strat-O-Matic baseball game.

In fact, he's been operating the Yankees since 1973 as if it were the dice game so many of us grew up with.

Only in Strat-O-Matic are player personnel moves easier than dangling piles of money in front of unsuspecting has-beens. If George wanted to obtain a certain player [for instance, Claudell Washington — twice] all he would have to do is remove the rubber band from the Braves or Angels pile and slip Claudell into his lineup.

Naturally, there would be no farm system, but George has rarely sweated over such details anyway.

And Steinbrenner, who judges field bosses as crudely as Henry VIII did spouses, would no longer have to trust his manager when it came to actual game situations. A roll of the dice would decide the Bombers' fate.

So George, do baseball a favor and invest in a 1990 version of Strat-O-Matic. At least, for New York's sake, practice on cardboard and dice before you mess with the real thing.

— ALAN SCHWARZ

6/13/95 Nation