

STRAT-O-MANIA

Highlights of the 35-year history of Strat-O-Matic baseball:

1958 — After 11 years of entertaining friends with his games, Harold Richman comes up with his masterwork: Strat-O-Matic Baseball. The name comes to him during a night of snow shoveling.

1961 — Strat-O-Matic is incorporated; the business opens in the house of Richman's parents.

1963 — The release of the first complete set of cards.

1966 — Young Bob Costas, behind a 14th inning grand slam by the obscure Gary Geiger, scores a stunning 7-6 victory over a team skippered by his older cousin.

1968 — The overwhelming domination of pitchers like Bob Gibson (1.12 ERA) and Denny McLain (31-6) make this Richman's least favorite card set.

1972 — Introduction of the advanced version of the game.

1981 — The baseball strike leads to unprecedented Strat-O-Mania: The game makes the baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y., after the canceled All-Star game is played in Cleveland's Municipal Stadium — using Strat-O-Matic.

1985 — Computer version of game is released.

1986 — Lenny Dykstra hits a ninth-inning homer as the Mets defeat the Houston Astros in Game 3 of the NL championship series. Dykstra tells reporters his last such dramatics came "when I beat my brother in Strat-O-Matic."

1993 — Spike Lee says his next film, "Crooklyn," will include playing the board game in some scenes. Lee was "a major Strat-O-Matic nut," whose favorite team was the 1953 Dodgers.