

Strat-O-Mania

Newspaper exec gets his kicks through dice baseball

By MIKE HUDAK

Free Press Staff Writer

Glenn Guzzo, the 42-year-old managing editor of the the Akron Beacon Journal, has always been a workaholic. By the time he was a junior in college, not only did he carry a full class load at Wayne State University, but he was also putting in 50 hours a week as the editor of the Dearborn Times-Herald, his hometown weekly.

The workload hasn't diminished through the years for the lifelong bachelor. But he does occasionally find time to relax, and one of the ways is an extension of his chosen career — he publishes Strat Fan, a specialty magazine aimed at devotees of Strat-O-Matic Sports Games.

The Strat-O-Matic Game Co. was founded in 1961 in Glen Head, N.Y., when Hal Richman borrowed \$5,000 from his father

for start-up costs. Now, it's the largest company of its kind, with Richman believed to be netting more than \$300,000 annually in sales according to Forbes Magazine.

Strat-O-Matic is a game played with dice, individual playing cards and charts that recreates a player's actual abilities in baseball, football, basketball or hockey. Each year the company puts out a season based on the preceding year's statistics, plus it also publishes a number of sets based upon past baseball seasons. ("Opening Day" for the baseball cards is a tradition at the game's home base of Glen Head, where hundreds of fans wait for hours in the cold and snow to get their hands on the new edition of the cards each January.)

Guzzo himself has made the trek to New York for the new cards. He knows what it means to be a "Strat-O-Matic fanatic," and his magazine reflects it.

Strat Fan, available through the mail in several varying formats, depending upon which sports game you play, has several uses to its readers. It not only offers advanced-playing tips and advanced-players' ratings, but also includes professionally done reprints of playing cards, including old-timer football teams updated for use with modern-game rules not in existence when they were first printed.

"I had written several stories about Strat-O-Matic for a variety of national publications beginning in the late 1970s, and it had always been in the back of my mind to publish a magazine that would provide the Strat-O-Matic community with the type of information not traditionally available

SANDY KOUFAX					
throws LEFT			hold -3		
24% AGAINST LEFT-HAND BATTERS			76% AGAINST RIGHT-HAND BATTERS		
4	5	6	4	5	6
2-strikeout	2-strikeout	♦ 2-N-HR 1-10	2-strikeout	2-WALK	♦ 2-fly (lf) B
3-FLY (rf) X	3-GB (1b) X	fly (rf) B11-20	3-FLY (lf) X	3-GB (p) X	♦ 3-N-HR
4-GB (3b) X	4-CATCH-X	▼ 3-SINGLE (cf)	4-GB (3b) X	4-CATCH-X	4-strikeout
5-SI* 1-18	5-strikeout	4-strikeout	5-strikeout	5-strikeout	5-N-HR 1-16
lo (2b) 19-20	6-strikeout	5-strikeout	6-WALK	6-strikeout	DO 17-20
6-WALK	7-GB (2b) X	6-DO** 1-6	7-WALK	7-GB (2b) X	6-DO** 1-5
7-WALK	8-strikeout	SI** 7-20	8-strikeout	8-strikeout	SI** 6-20
8-strikeout	9-strikeout	7-WALK	9-strikeout	9-strikeout	7-WALK
9-strikeout	▼ 10-fly (lf) C	8-WALK	10-GB (ss) X	▼ 10-fly (rf) C	8-strikeout
10-GB (ss) X	11-GB (p) X	9-GB (ss) X	11-GB (1b) X	▼ 11-SINGLE (cf)	9-GB (ss) X
11-FLY (lf) X	△ 12-strikeout	10-FLY (cf) X	△ 12-strikeout	12-WALK	10-FLY (cf) X
12-strikeout	SI* 1-16	11-N-HR 1-14	SI* 1-16		11-FLY (rf) X
	lo (2b) 17-20	fly (rf) B15-20	lo (ss) 17-20		12-SI* 1-5
		12-strikeout			lo (3b) 6-20

Reproduction of Sandy Koufax's 1959 season card

to it," said Guzzo. "Finally, I called up Hal (Richman), and we worked out an agreement where I was assured complete editorial independence, and the first issue was published in 1991."

The venture is not exactly a gold mine for Guzzo.

"In terms of time spent and economic gain, the publication is a disaster," said Guzzo. "There are a lot better ways I could have invested my money, but readers tell me I'm adding something to their lives, and that's all I need to hear to make it worthwhile in my own mind."

But Guzzo's interest in the game isn't limited to writing about it. The baseball game is much more than an abstract journalistic endeavor to him. He plays it. With a passion.

"It was 1963 and I was nearing my 12th birthday when I saw an ad in a baseball annual that featured a drawing of a pitcher and the alluring words, 'Here's your season ticket to hundreds of big league baseball games.' I sent away for the brochure, and talked my mom into getting me the set for my birthday.

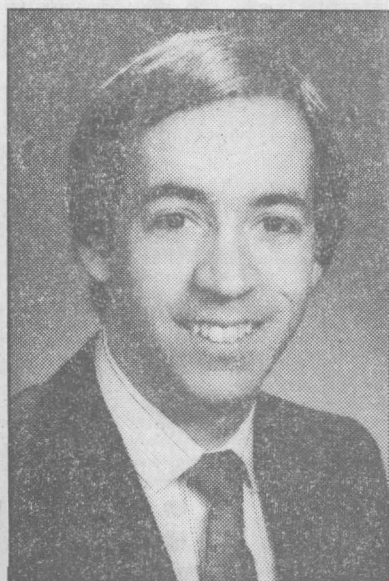
"It turned out that was the first complete season ever made by Strat-O-Matic, and it's worth a small fortune on the collector's market today. Unfortunately, my younger brother — without my knowledge and permission — traded it away one summer for two Bill Cosby comedy albums."

Still, that first set was the beginning of a lifelong love affair. Almost 30 years later, the game still has the same appeal to Guzzo.

"The possibilities of the game are limited only by your imagination, and I still have plenty of that left," said Guzzo. "For starters, I've always been a sports fanatic who wasn't good enough to advance as a player to a very high level. Strat-O-Matic helps me get as close to the pros as possible without actually being there."

"Also, I'm a very competitive person. Building and managing a Strat-O-Matic team is a great way of venting your competitive instincts in a healthy manner."

"Besides being competitive,



Editor Glenn Guzzo

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Guzzo

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I'm also incredibly busy. For me, there's no better way of unwinding from work than a session of Strat-O-Matic. In my profession, it's hard to leave your job back at the office, but Strat-O-Matic is something I can give my full attention to. It's also such an intricate game that the time spent isn't spent vegetating, but it's time spent honing your mind to its sharpest level."

Guzzo said he most enjoys playing in leagues where you keep the same players from year to year and where success is measured in shrewd drafting of young prospects and the ability to trade fading stars for up-and-coming prospects.

"I don't think I've ever been in one of these leagues that I haven't dominated by my third season," he said.

Since moving to Ohio last June, Guzzo has joined the R.M.L. — the Replay Money League — where rosters are shaped by salary-cap limitations.

"The great thing about Strat-O-Matic over Rotisserie Baseball (leagues dictated by box-score statistics) is that you not only have to be both a good general manager, but you have to know how to manage in game situations, too. In Strat-O-Matic, the little things count — including defense, throwing arms, base-running ability and a talent for bunting the ball.

"Helping you appreciate baseball, both from a strategic and historical viewpoint, is another inherent value of the game. Before the modern influx of statistical availability, Strat-O-Matic was by far the best source of learning about a player's strengths and weaknesses.

"Strat-O-Matic's reprints of past seasons are also very informative — and nostalgic. I got an immense amount of enjoyment from playing a solitaire replay of the 1959 season, because that was the first year I started collecting Topps baseball cards. It wasn't a great season in terms of baseball history, but seeing obscure names like Pumpsie Green and Reno Bertoia, and stars like hometown hero Al Kaline, brought back a flood of memories. Plus, it's really weird seeing Roger Maris playing center field for the Kansas City Athletics."

1986, a position he held until 1989

The next stop was Miami, where he served as assistant to the vice president of news for the entire Knight-Ridder chain.

"I worked closely with 28 different papers, and the amount of travel involved was mind-boggling," he said. "I worked directly with newsrooms in terms of content, personnel and training, and also oversaw some 'big picture' projects like how to convince the average citizen to get out and vote."

Because of the travel, Guzzo was overjoyed to be named managing editor of the Beacon Journal last June.

"Not only was I happy to be back rooted in one newsroom, but I was glad to be near my home, too," he said. "Now, it's only a three-hour drive to Michigan to see my parents. In fact, this year was the first Thanksgiving since 1974 that I was able to spend with them, which was a real bonus."

Just like his work with Strat Fan is a real bonus to its readers.

"I've known Glenn for a long time; he's been like a Thomas Boswell to my Samuel Johnson," said Strat-O-Matic creator Richman. "He's a fine writer possessed of the highest journalistic standards, and I know my game company is all the better for his interest."

Charles A. "Chuck" Schumann, public affairs officer for the Louisville District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, retired on Jan. 1 after more than 30 years of service.

Schumann has served the Louisville District as media relations officer and public affairs officer since October 1963.

During his years of service he has been the focal point for media and public inquiry on major civil and military construction projects undertaken by the Louisville District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

During floods, natural disasters and emergency situations, such as the recent damaged lock gate incident at McAlpine Locks in Louisville, Schumann and his staff have provided information on the Corps of Engineers' involvement. Additionally his office has been the information source for the status of the ongoing federal water resource development projects of the Corps of Engineers.

A replacement for Schumann will be named early in 1994.

In recent years, Strat-O-Matic has developed a computer game which not only automatically keeps a plethora of statistics in its memory banks, but can replay entire seasons in a matter of hours. Still, Guzzo prefers the traditional head-to-head, roll-the-dice approach. (A typical Strat-O-Matic baseball game takes about 20 minutes to play.)

"When it comes to pure fun, nothing beats rolling the dice," said Guzzo. "But sometimes I've been known to play 18 games of solitaire at a sitting, and then I use a random-numbers book just to save wear and tear on my wrist."

As important as Strat-O-Matic is to Guzzo, it's easy to forget that it ranks a distant second in terms of time and commitment to his career. From the first, Guzzo has been on a fast track of journalism.

In 1975, Guzzo left Michigan to take a job with the Fort Worth Star Telegram in Texas. While he eventually advanced into a number of editor's positions with the paper, it was also where he earned his greatest fame as a reporter.

"I spent 2½ years on the best story of my career — the murder trial of Thomas Cullen Davis," he said. "Up to that point, Davis was the richest man to ever stand trial for murder in the United States. There were four books written about the trial, and my footnote in history is that I'm prominently mentioned in all four books, because I was the one reporter who covered the trial from beginning to end."

From Texas, Guzzo went to the Philadelphia Enquirer in 1981. Starting as an assistant metro editor, he was named executive sports editor in