

Trying to "Moneyball" Yahtzee

A personal attempt at trying to maximize efficiency in a game of chance

By Zach Silva

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The NBA had the three-point revolution. The NFL spread the field. The MLB rode analytics into the future. At their core these decisions all began with people finding inefficiencies in their favorite game as they looked to increase their own probability of success. So, I, too, decided to join in on the fun.

Last week, I found myself in the same position as these statistical pioneers as I sat at my kitchen table and played the game I love: Yahtzee.

I have played Yahtzee, I assume, as soon as I could kind of do math. My parents would play and sometimes my sister Kendall but most of the time not my sister Kendall because my sister Kendall would get very overwhelmed by the amount of decisions that had to be made on any given roll. So, my parents and I played Yahtzee.

On its face, Yahtzee, much like all games, seems simple. Roll the dice and find ways to score. Similar to the concepts of shoot a ball and score, hit a ball and score or throw a ball and score. But much in the same that I view these games through a prism of advanced metrics and efficiency, I now see Yahtzee in the same light. The rise of Moneyball and Moreyball alike have fundamentally changed how I look at games of chance.

Where once it was a simple roll of the dice and go for what your heart tells you, now it is certainly more. Where the Houston Rockets shoot only three pointers and lay-ups, there I was attempting to get fives and sixes in pursuit of a bonus at all costs.

It was crossing out ones and yahtzees in a calculated risk to optimize points elsewhere. It was playing multiple games and averaging out scores and values per turn to see where I needed to focus. (Two noteworthy things: I got really into Yahtzee and just couldn't stop playing for like a week and I don't think this is a cry for help but you know, just be warned. More importantly, the Yahtzee cards my family uses are from the 50s and have no spot for bonus yahtzees which could certainly shift strategy.)

But even that, on its head doesn't look revolutionary rather, just good strategy. The Rockets have been in a similar vein as shooting threes isn't new in the NBA but doing it at the volume they do it is. And that's how my strategy for this dice game also changes, it is doing it at volume and settling out in hope for an efficient way forward.

The problem here, is that sometimes analytics can only take you so far. In sports this shows up with the other team just being too good. The Oakland A's lost to the Twins after having a successful year. The Rockets missed 27 threes in a row against one of the greatest NBA teams ever in game seven. In Yahtzee, it manifests and doing all the right things but not having the luck of the roll.

But I will not be deterred by the shortcomings of the A's, Rockets or my sister Kendall and will roll on to success.

Rally comes to Cottage Grove



PHOTOS BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL

A motorcyclist starts off for an 80-mile ride on Saturday morning as part of the Jackie Colwell Memorial National Rally.

Riders from across the country converge for three days of riding around Oregon

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There's the rider that started once he entered college and was free of his parents' ill-will and the rider at 15 ½ who could legally ride a motorcycle in California. And then the man who started at 11 after making a makeshift motorcycle with his brother that featured no brakes and the woman who, at the age of two,

was regularly seated on the front of a motorcycle and given a ride.

Over 80 riders gathered in Cottage Grove last week for the Jackie Colwell Memorial National Rally for a multi-day event of riding antique motorcycles.

"I think Jackie would like it," said Jennifer Nielsen, the president of the Oregon Trail Chapter of the Antique Motorcycle Club of America (AMCA). "She would be riding her Spyder having the time of her life. And with her little dog Ozzie." Nielsen, a long-time member, passed away last October.

Riders from around the state, country and some from Canada filed into

Cottage Grove for the rally that began last week. On Thursday riders went on a 50-mile ride around the area; on Friday they travelled to Reedsport and Winchester Bay for a ride that some stretched to 180 miles; Saturday riders went on an 80-mile ride that went through covered bridges. With the \$145 entry fee, riders are together for these rides in addition to receiving meals, support on the road, a jacket and other various items.

"Planning and organization. We've been planning this for a year. Just looking at every possible detail that could happen," said Nielsen. "Our goal is once the people show up to when they leave that it's easy and fun. That there's no responsibilities or worries and that we've thought of every need they may have and we try to meet it."

For Thomas Krise, who was participating in the event, it was good to see that this organization has continued to grow since its inception. In 1984, Krise, led by big names in the motorcycle world, was one of the founding members of the group.

"I was told yesterday, as far as road runs go, that this chapter, basically set the mold for how these runs operate by having events and planned rides and everything. So there's a lot of good runs around the country but ours was the model for a while," he said.

But it has never just been about the motorcycles for Krise who was sporting his 1953 Indian Roadmaster.

"Motorcycle people are the best people you're going to find in the world," he said, adding "These bikes need a lot of fiddling and stuff and if you have a prob-

lem, there's going to be six, seven people around you helping out. Somebody will say I have one of those parts. We're very cohesive, here. If some stranger is here from Illinois or something like that and needs a part and needs some help, we're here."

Krise, wasn't the only member who has experience with the club. John Crawford, who tries to go to as many of these rallies as possible and has been involved in the AMCA since 1983, made the journey from British Columbia to be in Cottage Grove. Crawford has been to rallies from this group across the state in cities such as Harrisburg, McMinnville and Corvallis.

"The neat thing about this is you meet people from all walks of life. Blue collar iron workers, doctors and scientists and everything in between. And everybody loves riding their old bikes and that's sort of the common denominator amongst all of us," said Crawford. "And generally speaking, we have fun riding the bikes, we park the bikes and then we have a beer or two if that's what you like to do." Crawford was riding a 1948 Indian last week.

While there are lots of returning faces at the event, there was also some new blood in the mix. Steve Gusinde, 70, of Salem has been riding motorcycles for 50 years and decided that it was time to try something new.

"I like vintage motorcycles so I've been doing it for a few years and had never joined a group before," he said. "This is the first time so it's kind of new for me also but a lot of nice people and you always learn something."



Jennifer Nielson, president of the Oregon Trail Chapter of the Antique Motorcycle Club of America gives participants a run-down of Saturday's ride.

Braaten, Corley and Schmidt walk away winners at Speedway

By Ben Deatherage

CG Speedway

In addition to the Interstate Sprint Car Series racing on Saturday, July 28, so would three other classes. They would include the IMCA Sport Mods, Street Stocks, and Quality RV Repair Hornets.

Matt Sanders, of Brookings, had another incredible night of racing in the IMCA Sport Mods. Sanders paced the field for the vast majority of the distance only to get

passed on the final circuit by Jorddon Braaten. Braaten, from Central Point, worked on Sanders in the final seven laps and eventually prevailed. It is Braaten's seventh triumph at CGS in 2018.

In the Street Stocks David Schmidt would get the job done. The Junction City driver lead the entire distance to procure his third victory of the year and ties him for the most wins of the season in the class with Andrew Langan.

Oakridge's Josh Corley would duke it out with Creswell chauffeur Graig Osborne in the Quality RV Repair Hornet main. Corley seized the initial lead while Osborne hunted him down to get around for the top spot on the fourteenth trip around the ¼-mile. Corley would recapture first place shortly afterwards in lapped traffic. Corley held on to win his sixth victory which ties him with Osborne for the most wins in the campaign.

Cottage Grove Speedway has two nights of racing on

tap as the Summer Thunder Sprint Series will be in town on Friday, August 3, and Saturday August 4. This will be the last chance this season to watch 360 Sprints at CGS this year. Support divisions for Friday are the Mohawk Metal IMCA Modifieds and Street Stocks while both divisions return on Saturday with IMCA Sport Mods also added for that night only. For more information log on to www.cottagegrovespeedway.com.

Results (top five in each race listed):

IMCA SportsMods:

1. 84 Jorddon Braaten, 2. 2 Matt Sanders, 3. 01 Daniel Ray, 4. 15 Justin McCreddie, 5. 30 Michael Medel,
1. 1 David Schmidt, 2. 33 Hunter Bloom, 3. 33 Ray Bloom, 4. 44 Troy Chamberlain, 5. 23 Garrett Barth Hornets:
1. 7 Josh Corley IV, 2. 07 Graig Osborne, 3. 85 Gene Ashley, 4. 14 Matt Ferguson, 5. 84 Erick Ashley

Athlete of the Week



This week's athletes of the week are Connie and Jerry Pifer of Cottage Grove. The pair caught a 47.5-pound dorado to win the Dorado Shootout fishing tournament. In addition to first place, the pair also receive a 2018 Volkswagen Amarok.



Connie and Jerry Pifer pose with their 47.5 pound catch.