Tabletop teammate plays odds on season victories

By Joe Hudson

Hunched over a card table in a grey folding chair, Bill Davison concentrates on the white cards spread before him.

It's two out in the bottom of the ninth, men on second and third, he says. The home team trails by a run, and the shortstop is due to bat. He's usually a weak hitter, but he's had two singles tonight.

Davison ponders a moment.

"I'll pull him for a pinch-hitter," he declares.

A few cards are rearranged, and the dice clatter across the board. Davison reads them, consults a chart, draws a card and runs his index finger down a column of another chart.

"All right!" he says. "A double. The Yanks win."

For Davison, 21, scenes like this have been a part of his life for 12 years. Since the age of 9, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln marketing major has called every play of close to 5,000 professional baseball, football and basketball games right in his own bedroom.

Davison is a self-proclaimed addict of solitaire tabletop sports.

These games include performance cards for players on each team, based on the previous season's statistics. The makeup of each card is determined by the player's actual performance, but a roll of the dice determines where on the card to look for the result of the play.

In the long run, performance on the table top should come close to reality, but the chance element of the dice roll makes anything possible on any given at-but or carry of the ball.

The worst hitter in the league can pop one out of the ball park, and the most supreme fielder can boot two in a row.

"It's really pretty realistic," the blond-haired Davison said. Players even get in slumps and hot streaks, depending on how the breaks go.

With the game board and cards come charts and rules that at first seem complicated enough to discourage even the most optimistic novice.

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