

Well in my continuing effort to write for the fun of it, here is another installment that I'll entitle "My Inner Geek". I know that if I told my wife and kids that I was going to write something like this, they'd beg me not to, but I'll ignore them. After all if you believe strongly in something, why not share it.

I have some unusual interests that fall outside the norm like UK basketball and goetta. I love the former, won't touch the latter, but that's a whole other story. I'm also teaching myself to be a photographer (believe it or not, I've even helped on some weddings). I make simple websites (like this one and some for companies) and as you know I coach soccer. But if there is one big major passion in my life that few people know about it's games. I've played computer games and such since the days of the home computer, but that's not what this is about. Video games require way too much dexterity for me these days, and online games are dangerously addictive (Never let kids play them!). No, I'm actually talking about the old familiar board games. Well sort of. Let me explain.

Most people, hear 'board games' and immediately, they think Monopoly, Clue, Life and Risk. And in many ways that's a real shame. There is a world of games that would astound you. The kind of games that I primarily enjoy are what people around the world call 'European' or 'Designer' games. These are games that generally involve a lot less luck and more decisions leading to more strategy. Let's face it, the only real strategy to Monopoly (short of cheating) is "Buy Everything you can". After that, it's just a matter of where you land with your roll. Sure, there is some strategy in Risk, but if I roll 6 more than you, I'll win. No, these are games that often have no dice. Sure there is some chance, but generally if you play better, you'll win. They are games where you need to make decisions each turn. These are games with names like Carcassonne, Ticket to Ride, Stone Age, and Dominion. Games I'm sure most of you have never heard of. (If you've ever played any of them, let me know!)

I fell in love with games in the 70's. (Yes for you kids, it was just like the show in many ways). And I collected games. Unfortunately many of them were quite complicated and took a long time to learn. The good news is that I kept them in good shape and many of them are quite valuable in gaming circles and I've been able to often trade them 2 for 1 for newer games. So I've slowly replaced my good sized collection (Not the word my wife would have chosen) with easier to learn, more interesting games. My youngest daughter is my primary gaming partner. She puts up with me convincing her to play new games all the time. We go back and play some a second or third time, but for the most part, we're still making our way through the collection.

And this is the real point of this article. I spent a lot of time with my daughter coaching her in soccer at every level from U8 all the way through High School and I loved it. I loved being able to spend time with her. I've been wanting to find something that we could do together after soccer was done. And this has turned out to be the answer. This is the real beauty of board games. They bring family and friends together. At Christmas time with a lot of family in town, we played games all day, every day and had a great time. We laughed, talked and spent time together. Which was far better than sitting quietly watching a movie or having everyone doing their own thing alone. So if you're looking for things to do as a family, try board games. Especially try these new games that you probably won't find at Toys 'R Us (internet is your friend). There are great games for every age, skill level and time commitment. (Yes, some games last many many hours, others are quick 30 minute things). If you want recommendations,

or if you're a closet gamer and love games, but your family won't let you tell anyone, then let me know. Maybe we can get together to play. Or if you just got a game I suggested and now you need someone to show you how to play it, I'd love to help.

For you kids, there is life outside of Facebook. There are things you can do without a cell phone in one hand. It's actually possible to have fun with \*gasp\* parents. Try it sometime, like usual you'll find out I was right. ;)

If anyone wants recommendations, or just wants to talk (even if you want to make fun of me), then say something. I have a few hundred games so I might actually know more about this than I do soccer.