

New Year, New Dice – or, Rolling with 2020 foresight

That's right, it's New Year's Day. I'm a little tired from driving back from Virginia Beach, but I have traditions to uphold. For those of you starved enough for entertainment to read my Fun With Stats 2019 version, I'm not really into college football. The first game(s) will usually hold my interest, especially this year as the University of Michigan (Dad got his masters there) is playing. The Rose Bowl usually gets boring though, so by halftime I start thinking about strat, and that's when I go through the ritual of looking through all my dice and seeing which ones I want to use as sets for the new year.

Last year I was exceptionally bored, as the weather was bad and I wasn't able to be smoking anything for dinner, so I overdid it and came up with seventeen different combinations – but since I pretty much stuck with my standard nine throughout the year, I was sort of figuring on just changing them out for common colors on my current sets – but then two things happened. Down years for my dice have happened before, although not ever to this extent with the original (except for Evil Blue, who was banned by league vote) rally dice. But the other thing was the salt water check of the dice. Now although you may remember that I ridiculed the whole thing to the tune of no wonder your dice don't do well when you think so little of them as to drown them, I have to admit I was intrigued and I've been planning this ever since.

Now I may lose a few dice over this, but what I have never realized is how many twenty-sided dice I've actually piled up over the last 34 years. I have sixteen in my active 2019 set, another sixteen in the reserve bags from last year, and SIXTY-EIGHT others that have been unassigned. This may take me more than the second half of the Rose Bowl, especially as I'll be smoking burgers for Victoria and I as well...

Okay, first for the employed dice – these are the ones I actually was using at the close of the 2019 season, identified in the Fun with Stats article if you don't recognize them, including the black and white ones that were banned (also for being hard to see, not only for bad performance). After all, I only played the AL teams six games, and only three NL teams actually saw every set of dice – due to frustration against the Grays along with combinations of blowouts both ways and crazy extra innings against the Sluggers and Venom.

The test – I boiled water and then made a solution using regular salt. I mixed as much as I could with it hot, and I was able to float 35 of the dice. The guide actually suggests Epsom salt, but I didn't see that to plan in advance. So out of 100 multi-sided dies, 65 of them have been set aside for further testing one of these days – I'm in no rush, I was able to make good sets out of the ones that passed. – after all, 31 is more than enough for a season.

Yes, four dice failed the test and to say I was surprised is a major understatement. The very first ones I checked were the rally dice, of course. They passed. I was really expecting the bluish one with the silver

numbers that Shane gave me to fail – no, it just missed Shane this year. Hopefully the dice will realize I have more of a serious contending team this year and come back from the off-year with an off-team. After all, I generally don't insult that set by using them on teams that aren't going to succeed. In fact, of the dice I used last year all of them passed (that's actually an overstatement, as most of the ones I was using last year didn't float).

Of the ones I was planning to use this year, one jumped out. It's one of the slightly larger ones, and it's red with light blue numbers. It kept floating back to an eleven. That made a little sense, as it is identical to a purple one with blue writing (I call it my illegal alien die because I got it in Calgary some years back) that I had pulled after a night on my card table when it rolled four consecutive 4's against Don. A couple were very suspicious as they were some of those that bump up against a little incline or obstacle and then back up until they slowly settle on that number. I instantly got the illegal alien die, and it passed. Go figure. Well, I went into the next room and rolled it ten times – getting nine different numbers, the only repeat being a 14. It took me twelve rolls to get a 4. It's back in the lineup, replacing a die that sunk.

There is a half purple and half stone gray die with thick black numbers that I like because it's both different and very easy to read. It was stuck on 20. I didn't remember it being great, but I do remember a homer on a 6 or else in extra innings against Earl for a win a few years back (I didn't use a purple set at all last year).

Two of the dice were stuck on ones. One might not be a terrible shock, as the spotted pink one (or blood spattered, as Chip Foster referred to it) used to do pretty well as late as two years ago, but I never pulled out that set last year either. The other one was a huge shock. Most of you know that I banned the orange dice two years back because they were performing so badly, and I had been using yellow dice with the orange pen. So when my spotted orange die turned up all ones I realized this whole thing is bogus.

I rolled the two "One-loaded" dies together. A bunch of times. If you had told me that the blood spattered one had been stuck on 2, I would believe it – I rolled four of them, as well as three 15's. On the 24th roll, the orange one hit a 1. I gave up after that and went to try the purple and grey one. I roll, and I roll, and I roll. I finally decide I'm going to stop at 50 if I don't hit a 20. After roll number 44, I accidentally knock it off the table and it lands on the floor with a 20. Does that count? It has to, because I did six more rolls anyway but never hit one.

I'm not going to use any of those four dies, but my faith in this process is zero. I then go dig up the banned classics – the orange D&D die that was the only one I had my first year, and it passed. The cursed die (my lucky dice award from 1992 was by consensus the worst 20-sider anyone could find – I picked it up, rolled a 2, and used it until it was banned in whatever year as all these are the "hi-low" style. Evil blue sank too, but even though that thing was underwater I could still hear it laughing at me for doing this.

Be that as it may, I have eleven sets of cleared dice put aside for this coming year, and they are Rally (White with blue 20), Teal, Gray, Brown, Purple, Red, Dark blue, Light blue, Green, Orange, and pink

(Since I seem to have a gay park, why not embrace it?). Some of these are veteran sets, so I foresee the teal set being the primary to start out, the brown and tan ones in middle relief, and the purple ones being the late inning dice. All the other sets are rookies, so we'll see how they pan out and what roles they get.