Price Guide now available for Collectors and Game players

by Tim Duarte

Joe Santulli and the Digital Press team have published *The Digital Press Collector's Guide*, a comprehensive source of classic videogame information. The guide lists every 2600 game cartridge ever made and includes a price you can expect to pay or sell the game for. The prices are based on the research of the DP staff and a number of serious collectors such as Al Backiel, Steve Bender, Jeff Cooper, Sean Kelly, and Edward Villalpando.

The guide states that the prices listed are not "set in stone" and should only be used as a guideline. Personally, I think the staff did an excellent and accurate job at determining a price value for each game. This guide serves as an excellent reference when trading, buying, or selling games with other individuals. I just recently referred to it during a trade. I checked the value of the game I was offering and the value of the game I was going to receive in trade. Both games were valued in the same price range, so I figured the trade was a fair deal!

The guide is not just for the 2600; it also has complete listings for the 5200, 7800, Arcadia 2001, Astrocade, ColecoVision, Fairchild Channel F, Intellivision, Odyssey², and Vectrex systems. The guide came in handy to when I recently sold some Intellivision games to a friend. Since I don't have a vast knowledge of this system, I didn't know the value of the games I planned to sell. The guide helped me set a selling price.

The last few pages of this 40-page guide include interesting pictures of box covers, systems, peripherals, rare games, and more. I highly recommend this guide to any classic game collector or player. The DP staff is becoming an authority on the subject of classic games. All videogame fans should be glad they have contributed this useful product to the videogame community. To receive a guide, send $5 to: Digital Press Products, 44 Hunter Place, Pompton Lakes, NJ 07442-2037. Please make checks payable to: Joe Santulli.

ARCADE ARTIST

by David Allen
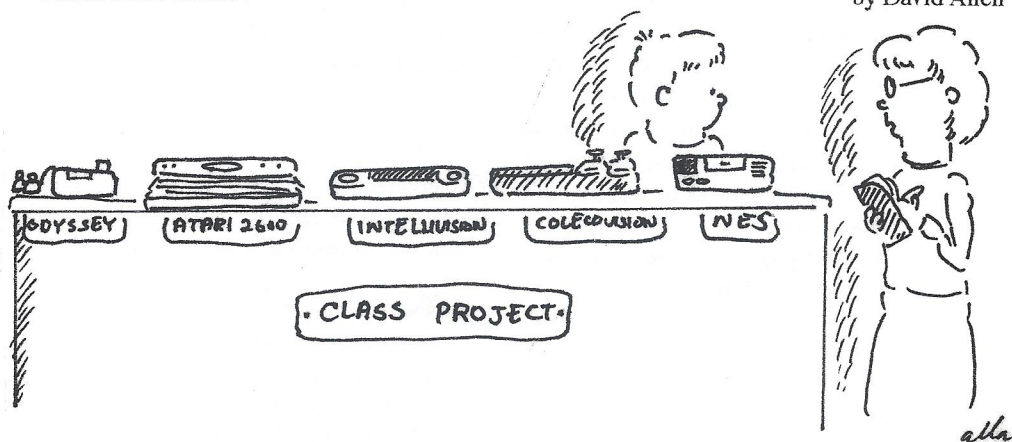
"A very...er....unique display of the evolutionary process, Mr. Turner."

Even More Newsletters

by Tim Duarte

Want to read more about the Atari 2600? There are a number of other newsletters, or fanzines, which discuss the Atari 2600 on a regular basis. Last issue, *Digital Press* and *Classic Systems and Games Monthly* were in the spotlight. Here are two more worth checking out:

Concordant Opposition
c/o Jeff Bogumil
187 N. State RR 2, Apt. #B-201
New Martinsville, WV 26155-1631

This newsletter combines a mix of 16-bit coverage, 8-bit coverage, and classic system coverage. Jeff's roots in videogaming began with the 2600, and he's still a big fan of the system. Issue 1 featured a review of **Solaris** (by Atari) and an interesting perspective on the videogame market crash of 1983. Sample issue $1.25

Video Game Review
c/o Travis Scott
8 Peppertree
Anderson, SC 29621

VGR contains reviews and commentaries with a main focus on today's systems. However, classic systems are mentioned a bit. Contributing editor Jayson Hill writes about the early days of videogames in his *The Historical: Look to the Past* column. Another interesting section is the *Videogame Hall of Fame*, which honors games which deserve recognition in the history of videogames. Jeff Bogumil is also an active contributor to VGR. Sample issue: $1.25

INSIDE: 2600 Baseball Games, Tales of the 2600, Cartridge List: Spectravision, Tips & Tricks, and lots more!

LETTERS

Dear Editor: *The 2600 Connection* is really great. I'm kicking myself for waiting so long to get a copy.

My collection of 2600 and 7800 games consists of approximately 500 cartridges. During the early 1980s, I wrote a book entitled ABC to the VCS (A Directory of Software for the Atari 2600). Publishers were interested in it, but I completed it in 1984, just when interest in videogames was waning. I also had two articles published in *Videogaming Illustrated* magazine. The first, "Tragic Imagic", (Dec. 1983) was about the problems of Imagic. The second was called "The Strategic Scenario", (Jan. 1984) and it was about the different strategy games that were available for the 2600. I have now completed a 300+ page book entitled Phoenix: The Fall and Rise of Home Videogames and I am now looking for a publisher.

I would like to comment about the so-called rumored games you mentioned in issue 15. The two AD&D games were not to have been under the M-Network moniker which had been abandoned. In fact, the two final releases by Mattel for the 2600—**Masters of the Universe** and **Bump 'N' Jump**—had not been released as M-Network games. Anyway, the two AD&D games were in development at the time of the Jan. 1984 CES and were to be based on new Intellivision games. Shortly after the CES, Mattel closed down the Mattel Electronics Division and the games were never released. INTV Corporation later released *Tower of Doom* for the Intellivision and negotiated with Atari for the release of 2600 games under the Atari name. These negotiations never went anywhere.

Regarding the Telesys cartridge list, **The Impossible Game** was an actual game that was displayed at the Jan. 1983 CES, but was only intended for export to the Far East. The following is the entry to The Impossible Game as it appeared in my ABC book:

"On first glance, the appropriately titled The Impossible Game may seem like a simple maze game. The object is to trace your way through an invisible maze. The maze is contained in a 6 x 6 grid of 36 squares. In all there are six boards that you have to make your way through.

The first board is the easiest, as you only have to trace your path one square at a time. From your starting square, you must move to one of the squares surrounding the one you are in. By moving the joystick, a cursor will appear in one of the surrounding squares. To move to the new square, press the red firing button. If the square that you chose was incorrect, the computer will buzz and you must pick a new square. You have to be fast, however. The object is to complete the maze in the fastest time possible.

If the box that you chose was correct, you will move to it and a little box at the bottom of the screen will fill in with one square. From this new spot, you must choose another square. Every time you choose correctly, the box at the bottom will fill up with another square. When the box is completely filled, you have completed the maze and move on to the next board.

The second board is a little more difficult. Here you must choose two squares at a time to move through the maze. In the third board three squares must be chosen at a time and so on until you reach the sixth board, which is an impossible six squares at a time. Hence the title: unless you have the time and patience to try every possible move (and there are billions) it will be impossible to get through all six boards of the game.

If you don't have the patience and you want to complete the game there is a way you could do it and this is the aspect of the game which requires logic. As you move through the easier levels of the game, jot down the directions that you are moving. A pattern will emerge from which you will be able to deduce what moves to make in the later boards. Unfortunately, the pattern is not obvious and you'll really have to think about it to get through it."

I consider myself somewhat an expert on 2600 software and would like to participate in the newsletter.
—Leonard Herman
2069 Stecher Ave.
Union, NJ 07083

Thank you for sharing your information and expertise with us, Leonard. I gladly welcome articles and contributions from anyone who is interested in writing for the newsletter. If you have an idea for an article, please write and let me know about it. I will reply to all submitted ideas. If your piece is published, you will receive some free issues or subscription in appreciation.

Dear Editor: Thank you for giving James Catalano's *Classic 8-bit Atari* disk magazine a plug in your newsletter. He has talent. I have to confess to you up-front that my real interest is graphics and games for the Atari 800xl. I worked for Atari during 1980-1981 in the Personal Computer Systems division. The PCS, coin-op, and 2600 VCS divisions were all located in "The Engineering Building." Thus, I did get a chance to rub elbows with many of the 2600 programmers. They insisted that the 2600 was a more "creatively" designed machine than the 8-bit computers. I wish I had a lot of stories about the VCS division, but I'm afraid I don't have many.
—Bill Haslacher
720 S. Third St. Apt. #6
San Jose, CA 95112-5836

I am always pleased to promote anyone who is contributing to the Atari gaming community. After all, many 2600 owners upgraded to the 8-bit computers when they first came out.

Would you be interested in sharing the experiences you had with the VCS division? Many readers enjoy learning about the affairs of Atari, especially from an employee or programmer's point of view. We are currently working on interviews with Rob Fulop, designer of **Missile Command,** *and Larry Kaplan, designer of* **Kaboom!** *. Both of these programmers worked for Atari.*

News & Notes

Jayson and Laura Hill's 9th Annual Videogame Invitational Tournament took place on April 9. The featured game of the tournament was **Space Invaders** on the 2600! This year's champion, Brent Hubbell, managed to "roll" the score in the allotted time during the tournament.

Atari Corporation is still selling 2600 games via mail-order from its Sunnyvale, CA offices. A complete 2600 system (CX2600JR) sells for $50. Approximately 60 different game titles are available and the prices range from $10-15 per game. Purchase three games and the fourth game is free. To receive a listing and order form, call (408) 745-2098 or (408) 745-2031.

A special thanks goes out to Chris Bieniek of *Videogames and Computer Entertainment* magazine. In the return of the "Fandango" column, Chris gave *The 2600 Connection* a wonderful review (pg. 75, April 1993).

Still having problems with Pleasant Valley Video? Digital Press is offering a Pleasant Valley Complaint Kit free of charge. Addresses for the Better Business Bureau, Attorney General, other "victims", and more can be yours by simply sending a S.A.S.E. to: Digital Press Products, 44 Hunter Place, Pompton Lakes, NJ 07442-2037. It's been months since we've heard from Jim Redd at PVV. Hopefully, justice will prevail and relief will be felt by the many PVV victims.

Dayton Discount has been selling new and used 2600 games, controllers, accessories, and more for many years. Send a self-addressed envelope with two stamps to receive a listing. Please see their display ad on page 7.

Your fearless editor has tied the knot! On Saturday, May 1, 1993, Timothy Duarte married Michelle Anne Rayno. Thankfully, Michelle is a videogame fan and quite supportive of *The 2600 Connection*. Although she is not a big 2600 fan, she does own a Sega Genesis and can play a pretty mean game of *Sonic the Hedgehog*.

Cartridge List Part 15: Spectravision

Spectravision, a third party game company that was based in Santa Fe Springs, CA, released a number of games for the Atari 2600. The first six games seem to be the most common, while the later games appear to be more scarce. In the first game, **Gangster Alley**, the player must place a cross hair over a criminal and shoot before the criminal moves. This game was also released by Froggo Games as **Task Force**. While the game does not support a light gun, it may have possibly served as a source of inspiration for Nintendo's *Hogan's Alley* videogame.

Spectravision also obtained the rights to Fox programmer David Lubar's **Nexar**. This space game was originally intended to be released as a 20th Century Fox label, but Lubar switched and joined the Spectravision team. It is the only Spectravision game which credits the programmer.

The later releases, **Master Builder**, **Glactic Tactic**, **Mangia'**, **Gas Hog**, and **Bumper Bash** are much harder to find than the first six games. Master Builder was offered exclusively through a Columbia videogame-by-mail club. Apparently, the club didn't succeed as well as their record clubs, so the division was not in business for very long. Master Builder was also not available on store shelves.

After the videogame market crash, it appears that a company called Bondwell bought much of the remaining inventory from Spectravision. Many of the hard-to-find games mentioned above were offered through this company. **Cave-In**, although thought to be never released, was supposedly offered through Bondwell.

Spectravision was also associated with the production of **Chase the Chuckwagon**, a very rare game offered exclusively through the mail in a special offer from Ralston-Purina, makers of the Chuckwagon dog food.

Spectravision also released the Compumate add-on device. This unit plugged into the cartridge slot and featured a 42-key sensor touch keyboard, 2K of RAM, and a BASIC programming language. A music composer and drawing program were also included and all data could be stored on an audio cassette. Just how many of these units were actually sold is unknown.

The first six Spectravison games were also available to play from Control Video Corporation's Game Line Master Module. Some readers have stated they have played a game called **Save the Whales** when the on-line service was offered. The cartridge was never sold in any stores and was probably never produced in mass quantities. The Game Line may have served as a testing ground for the this game and allowed Spectravision to get some feedback from game players before actually producing the game. It would have been a great way to prevent the possible loss of money if a game "flopped" with the game players.

Although many of Spectravision's games are not quite common, the cartridge style is quite distinguishable. The cartridges are small and have rounded edges with a silver label.

SA-201	Gangster Alley
SA-202	Planet Patrol
SA-203	Cross Force
SA-204	Tape Worm
SA-205	China Syndrome
SA-206	Nexar
SA-210	Master Builder
SA-211	Glactic Tactic
SA-212	Mangia'
SA-217	Gas Hog
SA-218	Bumper Bash

Sources: Russ Perry Jr.'s Cartridge List and The Digital Press Collector's Guide.
Introductory article by: Tim Duarte

Tales of the 2600   by Dominick Roman

The year is 2035. New Earth. In an alternate time and space. Deep beneath the ruins of NorthCal Headquarters, in a murky underground bunker, sits a battered and bruised man. Strapped against an old wooden chair, the prisoner is in his fourth day of captivity. He is in the middle of interrogation by a General of the NINT empire.

"Once again, what is your assignment?" demanded the General.

The prisoner replies. "Admiral Dominick Roman. Delta Force Armada. Code Number 1011. American citizen."

After a violent slap across the face, General Tendo resumes questioning. "We have recently received word that Atari Force has entered the Phoenix phase. Our sources also indicate that in order to rectify past situations, past recollections must be retrieved, stored, and analyzed." The General stared piercingly at the prisoner. "I believe you are the 'link.' Now tell me, what are the coordinates of the base?"

Dominick weakly responds, "Alpha Omega...NCC-1701." Then he smiles.

Controlling his anger, General Tendo begins pacing. Then he stops, kneels next to Dominick and smiles. "I bet you remember your first 2600 system."

Dominick smiles.

"Well, it looks like you do. Do you remember where you bought it?"

A swarm of memories fill Dominick's soul. "It was 1980. I was 14. It was at a small electronics store. It cost 150 big ones—and it was on special!" He laughs.

"And the first game you bought?"

"Street Racer. Then **Kaboom!**, and so on and so on. He pauses and smiles again. "I got **Pac-Man** in exchange for a pool table. We were moving anyway. Besides, Pac-Man was 40 bucks at the time. Well, I thought it was a fair exchange."

Still staring, the General asks, "Do you remember...the crash?"

Dominick ponders. "I never realized there was a crash. I just thought the stores overstocked on games. I did get **Tac-Scan** at a good price, though."

Suddenly, the General grabs the prisoner's face. "Where will the Phoenix phase take place?"

Emotionless, Dominick does not reply.

General Tendo lets go of his face. He relaxes and grins, " I know you used to live in Puerto Rico. Tell me, what did you find over there?"

Dominick chose his words carefully. He focused his attention on the blank wall in front of him. "At first, there was no indication of how popular Atari was. There was a possibility that it wasn't. But it wasn't until a year later...I encountered...Atari!"

The General's eyes widened, "There was an Atari base in Puerto Rico? Tell me more!"

He took a deep breath and resumed, "It was a massive warehouse, ten levels high. It stood there proud. Its giant logo in front was shimmering in the light. It was like seeing an old friend. During the next few years, I found out how popular it really was. Atari products were everywhere. Parents were buying games for their kids and they were enjoying them. There was no sign of a market crash in Puerto Rico—games were still as high as $40. Even the system was over $100. It didn't seem to bother anyone because they kept on buying. I found out that games not widely available in the U.S. were easily available in Puerto Rico. **Crazy Climber** was only in a few selected department stores—in limited supply and very expensive.

I remember going to a local toy store and seeing **Ghostbusters** for three different systems, including the 2600. They were charging $45 for it, almost the same price as the 8-bit computer versions. The 2600 version was the first to sell out. Strange, isn't it? Makes you think."

The prisoner stopped talking. "Continue," the General demanded.

"I once saw a prototype of **Donald Duck's Speedboat Race**, but I couldn't afford it. I don't know if Atari of Puerto Rico released any prototype games, but they had the means to do so.

Even when the "Big Two' dominated the videogame industry, the 2600 system was still popular. One day near the end of the 1980s, I saw people at a department store buying 2600 systems instead of the other two. I even saw people fighting over

games. People loved Atari back then. Those were the good ol' days." A somber look appeared on the prisoner's face. " Eventually, it ended. People didn't care anymore. They began to dump them. Hide them. And mock them. People wouldn't even admit that they owned a 2600. I thought I was alone."

The General stood up and faced the prisoner. He bends slightly forward and asked, "Was it then that your were approached by the Fanzine Alliance?"

There was no response from the prisoner.

The General became more aggravated. "They were responsible for keeping Atari alive! Never once faltering! And because of them, the Phoenix phase is now upon us!"

The General was agitated. "Do the following names sound familiar to you?— Duarte, Perry, Stilphen, Androvich, Santulli, Adkins, Bogumil, Micharoni....Champion"

"There are more," the prisoner thought to himself.

"Are they the initiators of the New Atari Force?" the General demanded.

Still no response from the prisoner.

General Tendo grabbed the prisoner by the shirt. "I will ask you one last time. Where will the Phoenix arise?"

Silence.

The prisoner never saw the punch to the stomach coming. As he continued to gasp for air, the General whispered in his ear. "I know your weakness, Roman."

The prisoner regained his composure. A drop of sweat trickled down his cheek. "Nah, impossible. I never told him," the prisoner said to himself.

The General turned his chair around to face the other side of the bunker. Suddenly, a door slides open, showering the room with bright light. A figure emerges from the light. A figure of a woman. Wearing a black neglagé, she slowly walked toward him.
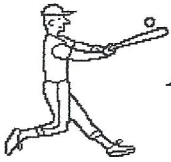
The prisoner begins to tremble. His heart pounds vigorously against his chest. Streams of sweat rush down his face. He then realizes he cannot escape.

Can't escape!

He can only think of two words.

OH NO!

A Guide to Baseball Games for the Atari 2600

cartridge comparisons by Mark Androvich

It's that time of year again! Spring is in the air, and baseball fans are emerging from their winter dormancy to once again enjoy our national pasttime. Of course, as videogamers, we can always play nine innings regardless of the season. Here is a look at the five baseball game cartridges available for the 2600. Batter up!

Home Run (by Atari)

The 2600 was never big on sports simulations, as George Plympton reminded us during his Intellivision commercials. Home Run (1978), the first baseball game produced for the Atari 2600, illustrated this point.

The field is displayed with home plate at the top of the screen. The pitcher actually throws the ball from second base. Choose from one to three fielders, including the pitcher, spaced closely or farther apart. The pitcher can "guide" the ball by steering it with the joystick. Batters swing by moving the joystick in any direction. Base runners cannot be controlled, either to advance or steal bases. If the ball is hit, and a fielder touches it, the other fielders disappear and the player with the ball must tag the runner of the base. The score, inning, outs, strikes, and balls are all displayed at the top of the screen.

Since Home Run does not even attempt to allow bunts, stolen bases, etc., I cannot really complain about the results. One problem I have with the game is the inability to hold runners. If the ball gets by your opponent, the runner advances to second base—even though it is quite clear that he won't make it. This problem can be noticed immediately when playing against the computer. Often the computer won't even try to get the out at first base. Instead, the computer's player stands on second base, apparently waiting for your "blind" player to run straight into him for the out.

Although Home Run, like most games of its day, is over-simplified, it is still somewhat enjoyable to play. Without having to worry about steals, bunts, and foul balls, players can concentrate on the one-on-one action. The simplicity of this game makes it best suited for children.

Super Challenge Baseball
(by M Network)

Despite the superior graphics capabilities of the Intellivision, the 2600 captured the lion's share of the market. Some must have decided "if you can't beat them, join them." Mattel's M Network label translated many Intellivision sports games for the 2600.

The field in Super Challenge Baseball (1982) is drawn with home plate at the bottom of the screen. Bases and field lines are clearly delineated. Teams are colored a bright blue and red, which contrast nicely with the green field. Pitch selection is made by the joystick, while the red button is used to hit the ball. If the ball is hit, the runner automatically advances to first base. The player in the field must choose which fielder to "activate" in order to catch the ball. To select an infielder, hold the red button down while moving the joystick in one of the cardinal directions. To select an outfielder, the joystick must be moved twice in that direction. For example, pushing the joystick left once selects third base and twice selects left field.

There is no way to steal bases, and runners are advanced automatically. Sound effects are kept to a minimum. A "sliding" sound indicates when a team scores a run. A thrown ball makes a sound that increases in pitch as it nears the plate. There is no attempt at simulating the cheer of the crowd. There is, however, a strange sound when players change sides.

The game is a step up from Home Run, although it still lacks the sophistication of later baseball cartridges. This game has one major drawback—the lack of a one-player version. The ambidextrous among us will try to pitch to themselves and then field their own hits, but the rest of us will have to wait for another player to come along.

Realsports Baseball (by Atari)
Just prior to the videogame market crash, Atari revamped all of their sports titles. Previous sports titles, which may have been acceptable in the late 1970s, were no longer adequate compared to the advanced graphics and programming techniques pioneered by

Activision and other manufacturers. Atari's Realsports series was therefore touted as the next "wave" of sports simulations.

Realsports Baseball (1982) features multi-colored players that are taller than average graphics. Fielders under the control of a player appear as a solid color. These animated players run on and off the screen at the start of every inning. This seems like a neat idea, but it gets boring quickly. By the fifth inning, you may start yelling at the players to "hurry up." The players are accompanied by a noise which sounds more like a jet airplane buzzing than the cheering crowd.

Choose from four different pitches. They are selected by moving the joystick in one of the cardinal directions. To throw the ball, hold the red button and pull the joystick down. This actually takes some getting used to. There is no audible sound to let you know you've selected a pitch. Once you hold the button down, you will be set to throw the pitch represented by the last position the joystick was in.

Hitting also takes some getting used to. Hold down the red button and "flick" the joystick at the same time. The direction and trajectory of the ball are determined by the position of the joystick. There are no shadows to differentiate ground balls from fly balls, but fly balls make a high-pitched noise. Hit balls will bounce off the edges of the screen if they make it that far. Runners are not automatically advanced. You even have to send your batter to first base, so don't stand at the plate very long admiring your hit! In a one-player game, it is impossible to hit intentional balls. However, it is also nearly impossible to tell when the computer is throwing an intentional ball.

Stealing is possible. Transfer control from the batter to the runner by moving the stick towards the base runner is on. Next, hold down the fire button and move the joystick to the right, regardless of what base the runner is on. If your steal is successful, you need to transfer control back to the batter by pushing the joystick down. There are no sounds to indicate runner selection, however the color of the selected player becomes slightly brighter. Unfortunately,

the same controller actions needed to steal a base will also make your batter swing if you didn't properly select the runner.

The game isn't sophisticated enough to try a pick off play, so you can steal liberally. If, at the last minute, you realize that you are not going to make it in time, you can leisurely stroll back to your original base. The computer is also not very observant, often allowing you to steal your way from first to home without attracting a throw. One final complaint is the lack of accuracy of throws between fielders. You will have to move your infielders off the base every time to catch a ball that has been thrown to them.

Realsports Baseball is exactly what it was designed to be—a big improvement over Home Run. Baseball fans will prefer it over both that cartridge and Super Challenge Baseball because it allows base stealing, pitch selection, and two-player action.

Super Baseball (by Atari)

Atari once again updated their baseball and football games in 1988 in order to sell cartridges to post-crash 2600 owners who no longer had access to the older titles. Unlike Super Football, which differs radically from the Realsports counterpart, Super Baseball makes only minor changes.

The first thing you will notice is the inclusion of a display screen on which players may choose the type of game—two players, one player up first, or one player up second. A tune, supposedly the chorus of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame," plays from time to time while on this screen, but never during the actual game. The field colors are also brighter than before, giving the game a nicer look to it. The fielders are smaller, all composed of a single color, and move much quicker than before. The runners seem to move at the same speed as before, however. As a result, the center fielder is able to make an out by beating the runner to first base. Not fair! The players still run on and off the field every inning, but at a much faster pace.

Another welcome improvement is the fact that the game automatically advances the hitter to first base. You will still overthrow all the bases and the unrealistic crowd noise is still the same. I don't understand why Atari didn't use the cheering sound from **Pele's Soccer**. Stealing is accomplished in the same manner as in

Realsports Baseball. However, the computer is much more aware of your attempts. No more sneaking to home from first base while the pitcher checks the signs in this game! The computer won't really attempt to pick you off either, but it doesn't have to. Since runners move slower than fielders, if you start to steal and head back, the computer's fielder will run you over before you realize what happened.

Basically, Super Baseball is a refurbished Realsports Baseball. It corrects most of the flaws of the earlier game and features better-looking graphics as well as a title screen. For single players, this game is recommended over Realsports Baseball since stealing is no longer an easy task. The game is also recommended for two players, as the action is faster than its predecessor.

Pete Rose Baseball
(by Absolute Entertainment)

Of all the baseball games for the 2600, Pete Rose Baseball (1988) is the closest that the 2600 ever got to the level of sophistication of computer baseball games such as *Hardball*.

There are three main "screens" which display the action. A pitching screen shows the pitcher's view of the batter, complete with umpire and catcher. A small diamond in the corner of this screen shows the location and movement of base runners, if any. There are five pitches to choose from, and the pitcher can be moved left or right on the mound.

The batter can also be controlled by the joystick—move left or right to crowd or open up the plate, and swing the bat high or low. Pressing the button makes contact with the ball. The runner is automatically advanced to first. Base runners will advance if forced. Otherwise, you can coach their movement. You can hold or advance all runner, or hold or advance only the lead runner.

After the ball is hit, the game switches to the "fielding" screen. For infield hits, a bird's eye view of the fielders is given, with home plate located at the bottom of the screen. However, you can only see half of the diamond at one time. That is, you will

either see just the catcher, pitcher, first baseman, and second baseman, or the catcher, pitcher, third baseman, and second baseman. Don't ask where the shortstop is!

The biggest problem with this game is the control of infielders. You need to use the joystick to select which fielder is going to shag the ball. The problem is, none of the fielders is allowed free movement all over the screen. Although they can move left and right to the screen edges, they are "bounded" above and below by the other fielder's range. As a result, a slow grounder will get by the pitcher and head for the second baseman. You select the second baseman, only to discover the ball stops in the field just out of reach. You must select the first baseman or third baseman and move them from the opposite side of the screen to retrieve the ball. Balls which get by the first or third baseman will often have to be retrieved by the second baseman, who again is starting from the opposite side of the screen.

Pop flies often come down just out of your fielder's range. In addition, you will sometimes just clear the infield, automatically switching to the outfielder screen. If you were trying to catch the ball in the infield, you were pushing the joystick upwards so that the second baseman was at the top of the screen. As a result, when the screen switches, your outfielder is now moving toward the fence and not down towards the infield and ball.

For outfield hits, you will see only the single fielder and the wall behind him. Simply move the fielder into position to catch the ball, using the ball's shadow to judge the distance. Use the fire button to throw the ball, pushing the joystick in the cardinal directions representing the bases. One note—second base is represented by pushing up on the joystick. So, if the center fielder has the ball and you want to throw to second base below, you will actually have to push the joystick up, not instinctively down. The game does try to help by displaying a diamond with flashing arrows pointing in the direction you are supposed to move the joystick when throwing. Believe me, you will be too busy to pay attention to these arrows.

Stealing bases is not featured, although you can control runners who are not forced. The crowd still sounds like a jet airplane, however there is a cute "Charge!" tune

played for the batters. Fielders run off the field at the end of the inning, but this scene ends much quicker than in Realsports Baseball. The game also observes the infield fly rule, for what it is worth. On the plus side, you will never overthrow a base. The computer automatically guides the ball directly to the baseman, and the fielder you are throwing to cannot be moved off the base. The use of shadow helps in fielding the ball, and makes for a great looking game.

Pete Rose Baseball is the ultimate 2600 baseball game when it comes to graphics, but its control scheme leaves something to be desired. I would most recommend it to single players who don't mind being unable to steal bases. Two players will probably prefer Super Baseball, where all the action happens at once, on one screen.

All of the baseball games for the 2600 could have been improved by the use of sound effects, voices, or music. Displaying a computer scoreboard between innings, rather than at the top or bottom of the screen, would free up space and thereby expand the available playing field to make for a more realistic game. None of these games tried creative perspectives of the playing field, either. And what about an option allowing the player to select the color of the teams?

I'm probably expecting too much from a machine which was initially designed to only play Pong and tank games. Now that there will be no more new 2600 games, these are the only baseball games we will ever have to choose from—for better or worse. In the final analysis, Pete Rose Baseball looks the best, but in my opinion, Super Baseball plays more like the real thing.

Home Run
Field View: Overhead, home plate at top of screen
Fielders: One to three, moving in unison
Hit Selection: not available
Pitch Selection: "guided" pitches, slow or fast, left or right
Stealing: not available
Pros: Simple game recommended for younger players
Cons: Overly-simplistic compared to later games

Super Challenge Baseball
Field View: Overhead, home plate at bottom
Fielders: Three infielders, three outfielders
Hit Selection: not available
Pitch Selection: "guided" pitches, slow or fast, left or right
Stealing: not available
Pros: Simplistic, but graphically superior to Home Run
Cons: Overly-simplistic compared to later games

Realsports Baseball
Field View: Overhead, home plate at bottom
Fielders: Four infielders, three outfielders
Hit Selection: Bunt, Fly (right, left, center), grounder (right or left)
Pitch Selection: Fastball, Riser, Sinker, Intentional Ball
Stealing: yes
Pros: More realistic play than previous games
Cons: Too easy to steal, need to advance hitter

Super Baseball
Field View: Overhead, home plate at bottom
Fielders: Four infielders, three outfielders
Hit Selection: Bunt, Fly (right, left, center), grounder (right or left)
Pitch Selection: Fastball, Riser, Sinker, Curve, Intentional Ball
Stealing: yes
Pros: Realistic play, corrects flaws of Realsports Baseball
Cons: Simple graphics, fielders move faster than runners

Pete Rose Baseball
Field View: Separate screens for pitching and fielding
Fielders: Four infielders, three outfielders
Hit Selection: Swing high, middle, or low
Pitch Selection: Fastball, Sinker, Curve, Screwball, Change-up
Stealing: not available
Pros: Excellent graphics
Cons: Frustrating infielder control scheme, no stealing

CONTEST

This issue's contest has been extended from last issue: *Imagine you are stranded on a deserted island, but you have your Atari 2600 and a TV set. If you could only have five games, which ones would they be?*

Send your choices on a postcard today!

Tips and Tricks

Pete Rose Baseball (by Absolute Entertainment)
Two-player trick: When your team is coming off the field after getting the third out, hold the fire button down. As soon as you're up to bat, the opponent's pitcher will automatically throw a strike right over the plate for an easy hit.
(Courtesy of Scott Stilphen)

Return of the Jedi (by Parker Brothers)
If you lose your last ship while avoiding the exploding Death Star and you are about 200 points from earning an extra ship, you'll get the extra ship, but the game will still end! The unused free ship will even be shown on the screen!
(Courtesy of Scott Stilphen)

The Empire Strikes Back (by Parker Brothers)
If you have a rapid-fire joystick, then try this trick. Get as close as possible to a yellow (weak) walker and hold the fire button down. You can actually destroy the walker twice and get double the number of points for it. It takes 48 hits to destroy a walker. Every eight hits weakens it one color. After the 48th shot, if you can hit the walker eight more times before it disintegrates, you'll effectively destroy it twice. I even came within one shot of destroying it three times, but I think it's due to a programming limitation. If you save your last shot for a bomb hatch before using this trick, you'll get over 250 points for a single walker. A note on scoring: you won't get a point for the 48th shot on a walker by destroying it normally (97 instead of 98). If you destroy it by hitting the bomb hatch, you'll be credited for that shot (101). The game's score flips at 10,000.
(Courtesy of Scott Stilphen)

Xenophobe (by Atari)
Move the TV type switch back and forth once to pause the game. Move it again to resume the game. This feature is not mentioned in the game manual.
(Courtesy of Andy Floyd)