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## They're on A Roll

By Toby Smith

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Imagine you're playing golf with some pals and during the entire round nobody tosses a club. Matter of fact, nobody has a club, much less a golf ball.

Fantasy golf? Dream on, it's Mulligan Dice Golf.

The game bears a vague resemblance to Yahtzee, but in truth it's like nothing else. That's because Mulligan Dice Golf involves strategy—not just blind rolls of hard plastic cubes.

Clearly it's not luck that an Albuquerque couple conceived the game, which has gained a nationwide following. Kelly and Kirk Steingreaber are avid golfers and gamers.

"Backgammon, cribbage, euchre, you name it, we play them all," says Kelly, 40.

Kirk, 39, has played golf since he was 6 and has an 8 handicap. Kelly picked up golf 14 years ago when the two were married. "Kirk put it in our vows," Kelly admits. These days she plays to an 18.

As a kid, Kirk had fooled with dice games and even invented a football version. "You know, you roll a 5 and Chuck Foreman gains five yards." So moving to golf was a natural. Initially, the Steingreabers considered six-sided dice. Then Kelly suggested instead of using dots on the dice, why not actual golf words, like "hazard" and "chip" and "green." They wound up using 10-sided dice.

And then Kirk said, We ought to have a weather die, too.

And then Kelly said, What about a "mulligan" die? You know, for a do-over shot?

And then Kirk, the golf purist, said, I don't like that.

And then Kelly said, I do.

And then in spring 2006 they agreed on a name: Mulligan Dice Golf.

They tweaked it with a wild card called a "stymie," an archaic term in which one golf ball lies in the path of another.

"Says Kirk, "You can use it in our game to screw your opponent."

Their game, they decided, needed no board. Rather, players would use scorecards with each hole rated. You throw your dice to try to get, say, par on par-4 hole. Or better yet, a birdie. Or an eagle.

The average score of a game is 73.1 But it's still easy for a player to shoot an 8 or a 10. Kelly says she once shot a 63. She also confesses to an 89.

Playing ups and downs

After the couple had some 10-sided dice crafted, they tried out the game on Albuquerque friends. The friends had some suggestions.

Then the Steingreabers held a focus group at Chamisa Hills Country Club. Forty people showed up. More feedback.

Then the couple went to UNM's Anderson School of Business and talked to entrepreneurial majors. Still more feedback.

Just about everyone, the Steingreabers discovered, liked their game—from teens to retirees. It was easy to learn, but required skill to play well.

In November 2006, the Steingreabers realized they had a marketable product.

And that's when they got scared.

Though Kelly worked in human resource consulting and Kirk was a wholesaler for Nationwide Financial, their small business knowledge was nil. Moreover, they had two young children to raise.

Did they really need a side job? A genuine mom-and-pop enterprise?

They decided they did.

In early 2007, they hired a manufacturer in China to make a game to their specs. Six months later they got a game—but it was unusable. They lost a chunk of money.

Making the game in the United States, the couple knew, was too expensive. So, bravely, they went back to China, to another manufacturer. Two months later, in June 2007, they received a prototype. Perfect.

One morning last November the Steingreabers were making breakfast for their children when an 18-wheeler pulled up in front of the family's Northeast Heights home. All four Steingreabers hurried out to find the truck held 250 large boxes, 40 games of Mulligan Dice Golf to a box.

The stacks of boxes in the couple's two-car garage have receded, thanks to sales online and at golf shops across the country. Even so, Kirk still must park his Ford 500 in the driveway.

The game sells for \$24.99. "We're not profitable yet, but we're getting there," Kirk says.

You might think the Steingreabers would be tired of playing Mulligan Dice Golf. Not so. In fact, they play each other often — on their dining room table.

Says Kelly, "This is the only time I can beat Kirk in golf."

For more information, see <http://www.playmulligan.com/> or call (877) 752-9685®

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