

GOT TO HAVE GUTS...

Last weekend in Bulgaria there was a final of The Volleyball World League. Polish team beat US team 3:0. It was nice, thank you very much Americans! Anyway, when I was watching the match I realised that you can learn a bit as a designer when you take a second to talk about volleyball.

You know, for almost my whole life rules of scoring in volleyball worked like that: when you serve and win the point, you score. If opponent serves and you win the point, you don't score, you just have the right to serve. If your attack is successful now, you score. If the opponent wins, he only has the right to serve...

Official volleyball federation was founded in 1947. For 40 years people were playing like it was described above. If you serve, and I win, I don't get a point. I only get the right to serve. So now I serve, but this time you win, so you don't score but now you can serve... And it goes like that for two hours. Score? 0:0.

Watching volleyball was kinda' boring for over 40 years.

And then somebody finally figured it out. This game is broken, he said. We have to change the rules. You need to score after every successful attack, no matter who served.

It's not easy to change rules of a game that is played for almost 50 years. A game that was played in world championships, during olympics, a game with official leagues all over the world.

But the Federation of Volleyball had the balls.

They had the guts to say: 'Our game sucks. We can make it better.' And they changed the rules. It was 1998, 41 years after Federation was founded. They had guts to remove rule that was making volleyball boring.

Volleyball got much more simple. It is fast, extremely engaging. It is a great sport now.

This is a nightmare for a designer. You design a game. You test the game, you play a lot, you get used to this rule. Finally you're stuck with it. But you didn't ask yourself an important question:

'Does my game really need this rule?'

It is hard to ask this question. There is a risk you can hear 'No'. You would need to delete this rule. The rule you got used to. The rule you liked. Exactly this rule...

So you're stuck with it. Your game is filled with rules that don't bring anything to the gameplay. They don't make the game better. They don't bring more choices. They don't bring more emotions. They just exist. They just exist because you got used to them after all those test games.

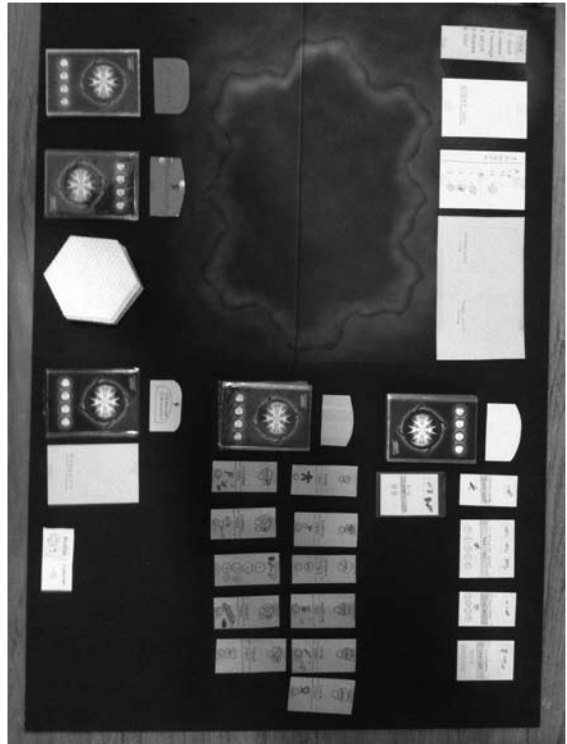
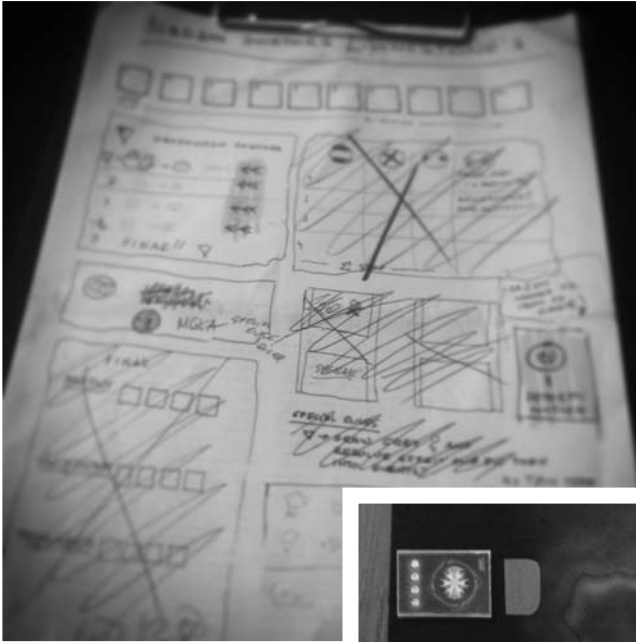
All those rules could be removed if you had the guts to ask the question.

I am a young designer. Yes, I was lucky to make some – I believe good - games like Stronghold or The New Era but this is just the beginning. I am aware of that. I am still in the primary school of designing. I am learning every single day. I have flaws that I need to get rid of. I know that.

One of my flaws is putting too many rules into my games. I have difficulties with designing simple games. It's hard for me to delete rules, to ask myself a question: 'Does my game really need this rule?'

But I am working hard. I am trying to be better. I am aware of the problem and I believe this is a good beginning. I see the problem. This is always a good first step.

BOARDGAMES THAT TELL STORIES



'In last months I have been working damn hard on my Robinson Crusoe game. The game is ready. (...) But it's not going to print yet.'

IGNACY TRZEWICZEK

In last months I have been working damn hard on my Robinson Crusoe game. The game is ready. Works really great. I am proud of it and I can't wait for you guys to see it. But it's not going to print yet. I still have a few weeks left.

During these weeks I will ask myself the question.

In 1998 the Volleyball guys showed that they have guts. Now it is my time to act.