Formule Dé Rules Modifications
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Being totally smitten by the magnificent game boards and fine miniature cars of Formule Dé, but also being less than satisfied with the official rules, we decided to try to fix those aspects which we found most disagreeable. This is a summary of our original objections and the resulting rules modifications.

We have also designed two versions of a new car record and chart sheet, one with "stock" rules and the other reflecting our changes. The "bookkeeping" changes in the category names and point allotments from the original car sheets are explained first, and the section on our rules modifications follows.

The Car Display Sheet

One of the first things we changed was the names used for some of the various car point categories. We could certainly understand "tyres", but "endurance/consumption/wear" (all three terms are used at different points in the Mark Green rules set) is pretty nebulous. Relating the categories to the components of a real car was simple enough, and so "Road Holding" became "Suspension", and "Consumption" has been renamed "Transmission".

At the same time, we simplified the way points are distributed among the different categories. According to the original rules, the loss of the last point of Engine or Bodywork results in a car's elimination, whereas all Tire and Brake points may be expended and only going below zero points causes similar bad results. To avoid making Tires too much of a special case, the allotment of Engine, Bodywork, and Suspension points was reduced by one each, which allows any category to be reduced to zero without penalty.

The bracketed colour indicators beside the various points categories on the "modified" version of the record sheet assist with an alternate method of tracking expended points. "Bingo chips", which are 3/4" translucent plastic disks, are available locally in several different colours, and can be initially issued and then turned in as required to track each car's remaining points in the different categories. Record sheets are completely reusable in this case, and each car's status is more easily determined by other players (which may or may not be considered an advantage).

Rules Modifications

Everyone we've played with dislikes the original engine trouble rule. There's no reason why one car's engine should be affected by another car's speed, and it makes no sense that the engine's durability should depend on the number of other cars in the race. If the original rule is used, a full field of cars racing on the Portugal track, where 5th or 6th gear is chosen 8 or 9 times each lap, would have a horrible rate of eliminations due to engine failure. We wanted to reduce the chance of engine damage, and also base it only on each car's own movement.

The biggest annoyance in a race, though, was the problems a car had if it ended a turn just before a corner. Coming up just short usually cost a car two turns of movement, as it had to drop to a lower gear in order to get through the corner safely, and then suffer again in a lower-than-everyone-else gear in the following straight. The whole sequence had a bad feel to it: going a tiny bit too slow caused much greater grief than going too fast, and whether this happened to a particular car was entirely due to the luck of a bad dice roll.

Changing the Engine Damage rule fixed both problems. First, we now play that only a car's own movement roll can cause a loss of Engine Points when a 19 or 20 is rolled while in 5th or 6th gear, although the confirmation range has been changed slightly to "1 - 5" (instead of "1 - 4"). Adding a new option, allowing a car to add 5 to its movement die roll by expending an Engine Point ("straining the engine"), simultaneously fixed the "short move just before a corner" problem and made sure that Engine Points didn't lose their importance now that random damage was less likely. If anything, Engine Points are more valuable with this change, as they now present a choice of when to use them to get out of bad situations or (very rarely) sprint for the finish line.

Previous issues of _Sumo_ have contained several useful suggestions for rules changes. The most important is that either one 20-sided or two 10-sided dice may be chosen each turn for the movement roll. This change is particularly vital for tracks which have short corners, since otherwise the race is reduced to an exercise

in die rolling. For instance, Hockenheim has three corners which are at most five spaces long, while approaching in 5th gear (normally used to enter two of those corners) will give a range of ten possible movement results.

We have also adopted the suggestion that Collisions should be checked only within corners. Checking for collisions and debris damage can seriously slow down a multi-lap race with a large field of cars, so both of these (Bodywork and Suspension Points) are often ignored in these circumstances. Collision checks often seemed rather pointless anyway because of the low chance of any damage occurring. To make keeping track of Bodywork worthwhile, our latest rules adjustment is to change the damage possibility for cars adjacent within a corner. We now play that damage now occurs if the roll is within the range from 1 to the corner number, the rationale being that cars are in much closer proximity in slower corners. A tight field now has more to think about in the Monaco hairpin, where the collision damage range is 1 - 3.

We made a minor adjustment to the Swerving penalties in order to spread the potential loss of Brake and Tire points in this situation more evenly. Up to three Brake Points are lost first, but Tire Points may be substituted once the car has no remaining Brake Points. Being blocked completely by preceding cars is mostly a matter of bad luck completely beyond the players control, so we prefer to give a car in that situation every reasonable chance to survive. This is in contrast to cornering penalties, which we don't feel any need to change because a player largely chooses his own level of risk by his selection of gear and dice. [Late addition: to further reduce the chance of a car being knocked out due to a blocked track (this was our player's biggest remaining rules complaint), you may either leave the setting of each car's gear until immediately before it moves (best for smaller short races), or allow a last-moment downshift just before the die/dice are rolled at a cost of one Transmission Point per gear (a better method for longer races and/or more players).]

Finally, we felt that the original rules for pit stops led to excessively random results, with the penalty for stopping being hugely dependent on whether a car reached the pit at the beginning or at the end of a move. Restrictions on passing in the pit lane didn't seem appropriate either: such rules would be fine for a simulation which covered each lap of the real contest, but not for a "condensed" race where the cars stay relatively close together on the track. The pit layout seemed to put the blue team at a particular disadvantage: their pit is very close to the following corner (if any), and cars leaving that pit have little room to get "set up" for that corner. And some sort of special rule was required for Monaco (and any other circuit where the pit lane cuts off a corner), to prevent the route through the pits from being generally the faster way around the track. We decided that making a pit stop for new tires should affect a car's position in the race as if it had lost approximately one turn's worth of movement.

Therefore, we consider pit lane to be infinitely wide, and any number of cars may occupy the same space in pit lane at the same time. Only one car can stop in each of the five pits at once, but a car may enter any unoccupied pit, regardless of colour. The existing variation in movement rolls provides the mechanism for determining how long a pit stop takes: a car in a pit expends the number of movement points which correspond to a roll of "10" for its current gear, possibly over two or more turns, in order to gain its replacement Tire Points. No gear changes are allowed while a car is stopped in a pit. For instance, a car which makes a pit stop in 4th gear expends 10 movement points to replace its Tire Points, while a car in 5th would expend 15. There is no rule restricting the gear a car may be in when it makes a pit stop, but a car which uses too high a gear will have severe difficulties when it returns to the track.

Monaco (and similar tracks, if they exist) requires one additional rule because of the way the pit lane cuts off one of the corners of the circuit. On this track, a car may only enter pit lane while in 4th or lower gear. This limit was chosen to match the limit faced by cars not making pit stops due to the cut-off corner. We have found that the only complicated aspect of these modified pit stop rules is keeping track of required movement points for stops extending over multiple turns, but this hasn't been a practical difficulty because of the small number of cars which are stopped at any one time.

Summary

In spite of the length of this write-up (probably longer than the originally rules translation), most of these changes are simply fine tuning to bring the game better into line with how we think a Grand Prix game should feel. We have reduced the "uncontrolled chaos" aspect considerably: more cars will finish a race under our system, and the players have more influence over the types and amount of risk run by each car. We hope you find these changes useful, or at least worthy of some consideration.