

Prototype 3: Coop Hold'em

Mike B. Karstensen

December 12, 2016

Creating from an existing game by making few changes to the rules, can have huge effect on the experience. Quickly drawn to classics like chess and card-games we realised that some rules are there for a reason, and some have already seen their share of variations. This was done by researching what had been done, trying to find unexplored avenues, playing a few rounds of these new games we found until we were sure we found something interesting. Our final choice was the game resulting from sharing your hand in Texas Hold'em poker, with another player.

The initial effects of having pairs of players sharing a hand were the attempts from players to now communicate their hand to their partner, without giving anything away to the other players. This came to effect in a variety of hidden messages in the casual conversation around the table as well as encoding information in the size of bids.

After a few rounds someone would lose their last chips, and we had to figure out what to do with players who lose their partner and what actually should happen if one part folds and the other calls the bet. We then came up with the concept of 'buying' your partners card. which meant your partner would get a card even if they where out of the game, and you would get to see that card after having called the bet. To try to restore balance to the game as much as possible it was also added that if two players lose their partner, and they are not the last two players, they team up.

The resulting experience from the initial change, along with the balance changes that followed, were a much more social one. Suddenly the poker face became a bigger part of the game, even at a casual level, since you were encouraged to not just hide information, but share with your partner to maximize both your profits.

An unexpected effect was the fact, that it was an advantage to be without a partner. This resulted in a game resembling the politics of 'A Game of Thrones' where you help each

other as long as you both gain from it, but the moment you can betray your partner and thereby become a solo player you do so for the benefits it brings.

The problems from the imbalance of solo players, along with the more casual focus of the 'poker-face game' means that the resulting game no longer holds as well as a professional tournament game. The game also is very tough if you already have trouble reading people at the table, since the additional task of communicating your hand to your partner, can mean you don't have the chance to read the state of the table. Despite these issues 'Coop Hold'em' does seem to be a good game in a more social and casual setting.

Finally i would say that i feel this game could evolve into a more complex game. Using the chips as resources in a type of kingdom management game where the poker game could illustrate conflicts sounds like an interesting idea to me and one i consider pursuing.

Future plans aside, changing just a few things in the ruleset of a game is no small task, if the game has to still work afterwards. What we achieved with 'Coop Hold'em' is indeed a different experience from normal poker, maybe a good party/drinking game.