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PROJECT:	ESPN Shelfball Rules		
TITLE:	A Shelfball Players's Handbook...	VERSION:	Original
COPYWRITER:	Kevin Proudfoot	AE:	Angie Vieira
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**A SHELFBALL PLAYER'S HANDBOOK
THE OFFICIAL UNOFFICIAL RULES AND REGULATIONS**

HISTORY:

Thousands of years ago, round objects begat rules and sports emerged.
But it wasn't until the age of corporate boredom that Shelfball was born.

OBJECTIVES:

Numb the pain of being at work.
Score more points than your opponent.
Prove your superiority to your fellow coworkers.

FIELD OF PLAY:

Traditionally, Shelfball is played in an office area that contains both a bookcase (two-shelf minimum) and an 18-foot lane or open expanse where the ball can bounce on its way to the bookcase. Please note that 18 feet is a rough estimate since, unlike Shelfball's more fully developed sibling, baseball, no official Shelfball measurements or statistics have ever been recorded. It's also helpful upon line (it could be a piece of tape, it could be a seam in the carpet, it could be a stain) from which both players toss the ball.

EQUIPMENT:

1. A ball that bounces – typically a little bigger than a softball. (Anything from a mini-promotional basketball to a mini-dodgeball/gym class-type ball.)
2. A shelving unit or bookcase with at least two shelves; the bottom two need to be cleared before play can commence.

PLAY/SCORING:

Games are typically nine innings – nine turns each – alternating between two players. Occasionally, seven-inning games (regulation little league length) are played when work schedules dictate.

Using baseball's play and scoring as a framework, the visiting player (the player who most recently lost or who is acknowledged as the weaker player) is up first.

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Each time a player is "up", the player tosses the ball at the shelves repeatedly until three outs are made.

An out is made when the ball does not come to rest in one of the two shelves.

Points are scored by moving "men" (imaginary, of course) around the bases (again, imaginary.)

Players put men on base by bouncing the ball into one of the two shelves.

THE BALL MUST BOUNCE ON THE FLOOR AT LEAST ONCE BEFORE ENTERING A SHELF.

If the ball: bounces once and remains in the bottom shelf, it's a single
bounces twice and remains in the bottom shelf, it's a double
bounces three times and remains in the bottom shelf, it's a triple
bounces four times and remains in the bottom shelf - touch 'em all,
you've just gone a yard.

bounces once and remains in the upper shelf, it's a double
bounces twice and remains in the upper shelf, it's a triple
bounces three times and remains in the upper shelf, it's a homer
bounce four times and remains in the upper shelf - retire, go out on
top.

WHICH BRINGS US TO THE OFT-DEBATED TOPIC OF STEALING.

Stealing was added after the game had been around for a few years. As a more recent addition, there are certain "traditionalist" players who refuse to acknowledge stealing as an official aspect of the game. That said, here's how stealing works:

A player with a man on base can call "my man on ____ is stealing" before tossing the ball.

To illustrate, let's say you have a man on first with no outs. If you were confident that your next throw was going to be a successful one (because you're in the zone - or maybe you're not in the zone but need to make up some ground), you could announce "my man on first is stealing." Once the announcement is made, you would toss the ball toward the shelves. If the ball bounces once and lands in the bottom shelf (a single) your man who was on first, the one who was stealing, would end up on third, and you'd have men on first and third with no outs. In other words, a baserunner who is "stealing" advances two bases instead of the customary one. If, however, you fail to get a hit (the ball does not come to rest in either one of the shelves), well then, both the batter and the man on first (who was stealing) are out.

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It should also be noted that this rule, which has been adopted into the unofficial official rules under the heading "stealing", is sometimes referred to as a "hit and run." Technically, however, the hit and run is best used/called when there is more than one man on base (since "hit and run" is a lot easier and quicker to say than "my men on first and second are stealing") or when you already have two outs.

As any astute Shelfball player soon realizes, there is no excuse for not calling "stealing" or "hit and run" when you're batting with two outs. As in baseball, the runners in that situation would be "going." What sparks the occasional Shelfball controversy is whether or not a "two-out hit and run" is an unspoken assumption between players or whether the players have to remember to call it each time. On more than one occasion, benches have stormed the field when debate over this technicality arises during a game.

ADDITIONAL (ALBEIT IMPORTANT) NOTES:

At various points in time, in offices around the world, other rules have been added to the game of Shelfball. The intention of this handbook is not to house all of Shelfball's various permutations; these are Shelfball's core rules, the underlying and essential framework.

There are no restrictions on how you toss the ball. Some players find success throwing overhand; others have been inducted to The Hall of Fame throwing underhand – either is acceptable.

Since much of the game's beauty is derived from the fact that it can be played by just two people, there is never an official referee. However, bystanders have been known to voice their thoughts on strategy and/or rules violations as the game progresses.

Stepping over the line, (or tape, or stain) is typically not "called" by an opponent. But in serious matches, or matches played by serious players, illegal footwork is sometimes questioned. This tactic is more of a psychological maneuver than anything else and usually passes without much fanfare (the obvious exception being the 1968 Interdepartmental Series between Selchow and Righter's Accounts Receivable and Accounts Payable departments, in which Receivables was disqualified for repeatedly and blatantly "taking steps").

Practice, although not illegal, is frowned upon. "Playing With Yourself" is considered by most to be an unthinkable public humiliation – an acknowledgment that you are a weak, unworthy opponent.

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