

ENTERTAINMENT

Neenah kids invent football card and pong game FUMBLE! now sold on Amazon



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NEENAH - Take the card game spoons, a slapdash game with more players than spoons, and give it a football theme. Then replace the spoons with table tennis balls. Then add a skills challenge of bouncing those balls into a cup. That's FUMBLE! a "card-n-pong game" created, designed, assembled and sold by the brother and sister team of Daphne and Nolan Moore, ages 8 and 10, respectively.

"Designing a new game was really fun because you get to think about like if there's a game sitting on the shelf and you're walking by in the store and would you be like, 'oh this is cool' or would it be 'nah, I don't like that, I'm going to go find a different game,'" Daphne said.

A round of FUMBLE! starts with players cards that are passed from one player to the next with each player attempting to collect a set of matching cards. In this case five cards of the same football position.

The first person to complete a set grabs the orange ball, which is worth six points. The remaining white balls aren't worth any points, initially. Everyone who grabbed a ball (there's one less ball than the number of players) gets to attempt an extra point or field goal and adds 1 or 3 points upon successfully bouncing a ball into the cup. The first player to score 21 or more points wins.

Invented in the Moore home during the lockdown days of COVID-19 then boosted by a successful Kickstarter campaign in January, FUMBLE! (\$19.99) has been sold on Amazon since June.

Mom and dad, Lindsay and Ryan Moore, helped the kids launch ThunderMouse Games LLC. FUMBLE! is the first game from the fledgling company that will legally belong to the kids once they turn 18.

The name ThunderMouse combines Nolan's and Daphne's family nicknames. The siblings collaborated on the logo design that's evolved to the lightning bolt behind the cartoon mouse.

Ryan and Lindsay said they've been as hands-off as possible with the launch and operation of ThunderMouse. But they've been involved.

Lindsay, a substitute English teacher, said it was a challenge having the kids write the directions.

They know how to play the game, she said, but pretending like someone doesn't know how and explain it to them was ... "frustrating" Nolan chimed in.

"Dad would type it in the file thing, because he can type way faster than I can," Nolan said. "Me and Daphne and mom would come up with rules and dad just typed it down on the computer."

Dad was also the graphic designer, working under the kids' art directions. Final decisions are more of a family vote.

Daphne said she "really wanted to do like thunderbolts coming down" from the top of the cup on the label.

"We added those and then we looked at it but it was like kind of too much and we had to take them off, and I was really sad," Daphne said.

FUMBLE! got its name because you're trying to recover the balls after the first one is snatched.

The cards and balls fit inside a plastic cup that's capped by a lid. The compact packaging was part of the thought process in creating the game.

"We made it in a cup because it can fit easily in a backpack," Nolan said.

The family also made a pair of FUMBLE! videos.

The first video shows the Moores playing FUMBLE! as a promo and instructional guide. The video was also part of a successful Kickstarter launched in January 2022 that raised \$1,550 from 51 backers.

That investment plus a small loan from the bank of mom and dad, kicked off the siblings' business.

The family has assembled 1,000 games so far. With five balls in each game, Lindsay is happy to have the boxes containing the 5,000 table tennis balls out of the house.

The second video was the second step in the application process for "Shark Tank," the television show where entrepreneurs pitch their inventions to investors. Ryan said that after

filling out an online application they were asked to make a video but weren't chosen for the next step in the application process.

As part of the "Shark Tank" application they had to explain why they wanted to be entrepreneurs.

In the video, Ryan said he's been an entrepreneur over 20 years, starting his first business in 2000 and working in startups mostly software architecture and data science, including how to build business models.

He's been coaching Daphne and Nolan through the process of launching and running ThunderMouse Games, calling it one of the best experiences of his career.

Nolan likes making up games and once ThunderMouse is profitable, wants to buy a 3D printer to do more prototypes of new games.

"I like to design anything that comes to my mind," Nolan said.

He also enjoys playing with Legos. His biggest build to-date is a Kylo Ren "Star Wars" ship.

Daphne likes doing crafts.

"I don't like to design anything that takes hours and hours and hours to build. If it's like two hours, I'll work with it but not five hours," she said.

Plans are in the works to launch a basketball version of the game early next year. Other sports like soccer and baseball may follow.

For now the siblings are happy with the first game they've created.

"It's neat when kids are like, 'You're game is on Amazon?' because I see you in a video," Nolan said.

He gave a copy of FUMBLE! to his fourth-grade teacher last year to be used for indoor recess option.

"It's pretty cool having a game that you can play and know this game is awesome and knowing you made it," Daphne said.

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