

Joel Bowers

13 November 2008

Art 380: Assignment C

### Rob the Nest

The game *Rob the Nest* is a playground game that has been played for decades. The normal age range for players is anywhere from preschool to elementary school aged children (4-8 years old). The game originates on the island country of New Zealand, a country often associated geographically by its proximity to Australia. The country is known for its wide variety of bird species, most notably the Kiwi. The kiwi is a native flightless bird, which the people of New Zealand have made into a cultural icon. They associate it as a symbol of themselves, much like the bald eagle and the United States. In fact people even use the bird's name as an identity for themselves, calling themselves Kiwi as a people. Most people even prefer to say that they're a Kiwi than a New Zealander since it's much shorter to say. This identification with the bird is important to the game because it is a contributor to the game's theme. Since they are flightless, the Kiwi bird lays its eggs on the ground. This leaves the eggs vulnerable to predators such as opossums, which will sneak in and take the eggs from the grounded nests. This behavior is exhibited in the game itself.

The game takes place inside of a square area created either by the use of imaginary lines, physical barriers, or chalk lines. The square's size is determined by the players and is usually dependant on the allowed space, number of players, and/or desired play area. Within the square there are four teams of at least one player each. Each corner of the square is a base, one base for each team. In the center of the square, known as the nest, there are a number of objects, such as rocks or balls, representing eggs. The number of objects is also determined by the players.

Before the game begins, the players decide on a time limit for the game, most games lasting five minutes. Each team starts in their base and at the start of a timer, they run to the nest, take an “egg”, and bring it back to their base. They may also go into an opposing team’s base, take one of their opponent’s eggs, and bring it back to their base. This game play continues until the set time limit is reached. Whichever team has the most eggs in their base wins. At the start of the game it is the joy of taking eggs from the nest, but once the nest is depleted, the game changes to solely stealing from one another.

To play this game you need at least four people, one to occupy each base. If there are more than four people, then there are multi-person teams, but still just four bases. You also need a square area to play in. A base is a corner of the square, and how far the corner expands towards the center is up to the players, but for a good game there should be a decent amount of space between each base, and between bases and the nest. You will also need objects to represent the eggs, which start in the nest. Almost any object capable of being carried will work. Balls are great to use, as well as rocks, which work if just playing outdoors without any other materials. You will also need some sort of timer, either a watch with an alarm, or another person set aside to keep time and call the game’s start and end.

There are few rules to the game, which keep game play simple. Players may only carry one egg at a time. You may also not prevent people from taking eggs from your base. This prevents base guarding, and also takes defense out of the game. Essentially you may only steal eggs, either from the nest or other players’ bases, so players are constantly moving from one location to another. Eggs may only be carried and placed in the base, not thrown. This stops a player from just standing in another base or the nest and throwing eggs into their own. Eggs may also not be handed from one player to another. The person who takes the egg from a base or nest

must be the one to place it in their own base. At the end of the timer the game is over. Only eggs in the bases are counted, not any being carried so there are no last second grabs for. The team with the most eggs in their base wins.

Since it's a simple game there are not many holes with the rules. The main issue with the rules is that much is left open ended, such as the play area size, team organization, and number of objects. For a game targeted at young children these are decisions that largely affect the game play, and kids may not have the best judgment. However in a school setting someone else can step in for game set up, and even timing the game since most kids don't tell time well at all. Other than that, the game play itself is fairly solid.

For this game, the tactic may change based on the number of players. If there are only four players, then each team is just one person. In a setting such as this it is strategic to steal not just from one of your opponents, but all. If you pick on the same person over and over, you only allow the other two players to gain a lead. With more than four players, you have to add in the strategy of team cooperation. In this setting it is good not only to pay attention to the status of your opponents, but your teammates as well. It is best to spread out to stay out of one another's way. If you all run the same route you're open to interfering with one another's run.

This game is a good way for kids to let off some energy since it requires a lot of constant motion with little thought. However it does promote stealing, but leave that for Jack Thompson to argue about since I wouldn't worry too much about that one. One of the biggest benefits of this game is that it's cultural. Most New Zealand playground games come from the United States, and it's nice that they have one of their own, especially one with such national iconography. It's a fun game for kids, and since most of the games of it played are short, there's

room for replay in an afternoon. This leads to multiple winners and the encouragement of repeat play. It's also short enough to get a few good games in at a recess. Details on this game are courtesy of Tim Fletcher, a native New Zealander/Kiwi and now avid MMORPG player.