

Getting The Pip – Why I Hate Dice With Alternative Symbols

Description



I was recently asked, during an interview with the Illuminating Rounds podcast [Illuminating Rounds 63](#), what I didn't like about ASL. I listed a few things but later ended up kicking myself, as I'd forgotten to mention my main pet hate – dice that have alternative symbols printed in place of the '1' pip.

To begin with, I used to think that such dice were unbalanced, even if they were nominally 'precision' dice, as they always seemed to roll more 'one' results. I used to quote the fact to any opponent using such dice that they had been banned by Gary Trezza at the Albany tournament in the US (the best weekend tournament in the world), though now I believe that only the infamous sets produced by Schwerepunkt are so outlawed. As any game where my opponent used such dice progressed, I would become more and more irritable and increasingly vocal in my condemnation of them, until the player opposite me would often offer to switch dice.

I have revised my opinions and reactions to them recently though – these dice with stars, roundels or flags in place of a solitary pip. I have come to realise that, possibly except for the Schwerepunkt sets, they probably are balanced – it is my reaction to the 'ones' they roll that is the issue.

The fact is that the brain reacts differently to the unfamiliar. It may only be a delay of a nano second, but my mind takes that tiny amount of time longer to process the result when these dice roll a one, and somehow, probably unconsciously, notices them more. This effectively fools my brain into thinking they are rolling lower than pure randomness



should dictate, which irritates me.

Knowing this, I intend to declare at the outset of games in the future that I would rather my opponent not play with such dice, because it reduces my enjoyment of the game. I will always instead have a spare set of my own precision dice to offer them, if they do not possess their own – they can then choose to use either of my sets.

I realise that one might say my declaration to be somewhat presumptuous, requesting that my rather obtuse preferences be catered for. However, one could argue that starting a scenario with non-standard dice is also somewhat presumptuous. Be that as it may, I think it better to have a polite conversation about matters before the first die is rolled.

I should state that I might also start any game with discussions over dice if my opponent does not possess any precision dice at all, as I also don't like playing against non-precision dice. That though, is another story...