



The well-played game: A player's philosophy

Bernard De Koven

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In *The Well-Played Game*, games guru Bernard De Koven explores the interaction of play and games, offering players -- as well as game designers, educators, and scholars -- a guide to how games work. De Koven's classic treatise on how human beings play together, first published in 1978, investigates many issues newly resonant in the era of video and computer games, including social gameplay and player modification. The digital game industry, now moving beyond its emphasis on graphic techniques to focus on player interaction, has much to learn from *The Well-Played Game*.

De Koven explains that when players congratulate each other on a "well-played" game, they are expressing a unique and profound synthesis that combines the concepts of play (with its associations of playfulness and fun) and game (with its associations of rule-following). This, he tells us, yields a larger concept: the experience and expression of excellence. De Koven -- affectionately and appreciatively hailed by Eric Zimmerman as "our shaman of play" -- explores the experience of a well-played game, how we share it, and how we can experience it again; issues of cheating, fairness, keeping score, changing old games (why not change the rules in pursuit of new ways to play?), and making up new games; playing for keeps; and winning. His book belongs on the bookshelves of players who want to find a game in which they can play well, who are looking for others with whom they can play well, and who have discovered the relationship between the well-played game and the well-lived life.

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