

Rattle dem Bones

The game of dominoes takes over worktime, playtime of students

BY SUSAN OVERCASH
The Battalion

A typical night at Northgate usually means laughs, drinks and friends. A new breed of Friday night partiers are taking over.

They are armed with small rectangular boxes filled with lethal white tablets. One play of these tablets can make someone jump for joy or wince in pain, shouting out "Domino!"

In Aggieland, it is common to find a heated game of dominoes occurring at every corner, along Northgate, at work and on campus each and every day.

Dominoes, traditionally small tiles carved from ivory or bone and inlaid with pips, or small insets of ebony, are a Chinese invention derived from cubic dice.

Ken Tidwell, editor of gamecabinet.com, said the game of dominoes dates from A.D. 1100. The game made its way into Europe in the 18th century, evolving into the modern six and nine-count pieces.

Today, dominoes are often called "bones," a term referring to one of the original materials used to construct the tiles. Popular games include Mexican train, chick-

en foot, moon, 42 and straight dominoes.

Chris White, a senior mechanical engineering major, said he learned to play dominoes at an early age.

"I've been playing as long as I knew how to set up," White said. "When I was three or four, I'd sit up with my grandparents and watch. I started to play when I was old enough to count. I used to play moon with my parents and brother also."

Keith Kasprzak, a senior electrical engineering major, said he did not learn to play until recently, but now plays several times a week.

"I learned how to play in my senior design class," Kasprzak said. "I downloaded Windows '42' from the Web, which helped; it tells you how to play, gives hints and highlights which domino to play. I could play at home, by myself."

Megan Bradbury, a sophomore animal science major, said she plays 42 several times a week with her boyfriend and friends.

In 42, also known as Texas 42, four players team up in pairs and try to win "tricks" and "points" — dominoes that add up to a multiple of five. Much like bridge and spades, 42 has a complex bidding and

point system.

According to the gaming Website www.earth.com, legend has it that a young Baptist boy in East Texas invented 42 because he was not allowed to play cards.

The game 42 is especially popular in Texas, so much that different regions have different rules.

Residence Halls such as Lechner Hall have specialized rule books for play in that area.

Bradbury, White and Kasprzak agreed the Dixie Chicken and friend's houses are common places to find a game of dominoes.

"I play at the Chicken because you can drink beer, play, chill out and look at the scenery," Kasprzak said.

Bradbury said anywhere with a smooth table is a good place to play a game of dominoes.

Philip Hudgens, a senior petroleum engineering major, said he plays 42 and straight dominoes on campus in the petroleum engineering lounge and is always ready for a game.

"I carry dominoes with me at all times," Hudgens said. "I carry a set in my truck and play just about every day. At times, I devote more time to dominoes than my studies."

Kevin Reinecke, a senior information systems major, said he learned to play dominoes at a young age.

"I learned to play at Bus Ops with my friends," Reinecke said. "We play there to pass time. I play there, too, but I am normally too broke to play with my friends."

Kasprzak said a good game of 42 requires a sense of competitiveness, including knowing your partner well.

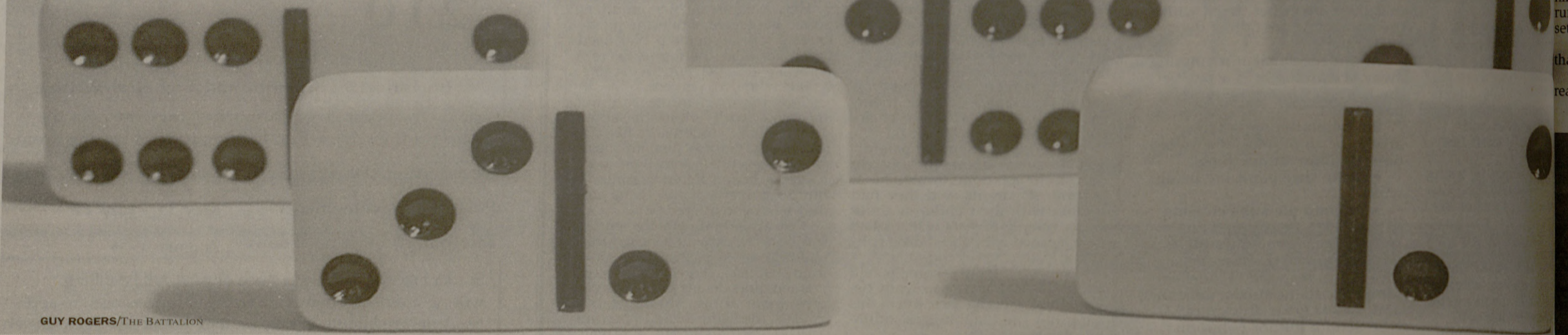
"I don't reveal my secrets," Kasprzak said. "It's more fun to win."

White said he does not have a specific strategy, simply plays the hand dealt.

"Strategy depends on what hand you're dealt," White said. "I don't believe in betting on your partner."

Bradbury said she might have one or two dominoes, but she just play for entertainment.

Kasprzak and Bradbury both admit to playing to boost their game. Bradbury said she peeks at other player's dominoes, while Kasprzak said he sometimes establishes hand signals. However, both said they try not to use them.



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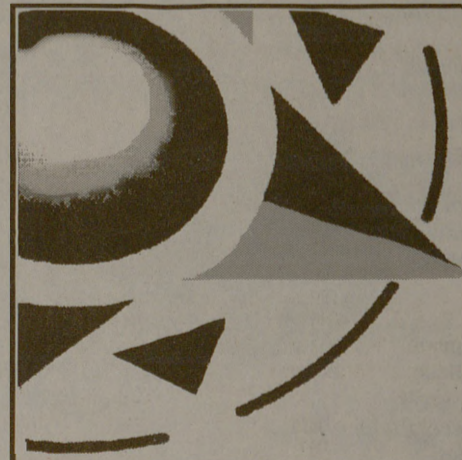
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