TRULY SOCIAL CARD GAME

Boure Acadian 'National Pastime'

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If there is a "national pastime" for Acadians, "Boure" is probably it. Pronounced "booray" and called a lot of other things, this card game rivals even crabfish - eating and quarter - horse racing, because it can be enjoyed year-round. It is one of the few truly social card games, because it does not require the intense concentration of bridge or the bankrupting stakes of poker.

Fun Game
As any Cajun will attest boure is also a fun game, for it combines the elements of chance, skill, and socializing into a challenging and sometimes rewarding indoor sport.

Paradoxically, there is no such thing as a friendly game of boure - some are just a little less unfriendly than others. Part of the fun in boure, some will say, is the fiery arguments over rules of play that invariably crop up in those games.

Disagreements occur because there are no established rule books governing this popular Acadian card game. Everyone has his own favorite variations of some of the rules (variations which are often introduced at a most favorable time for the player who knows the rule).

In other games, one of the players could simply whip out his rule book and squelch the dispute. Not so in boure - until now.

Now there is such a rule book for boure. "Boure" by Roy J. Nickens (Baton Rouge: Boure Publishing Company, 1972) sets down the most popular regulations for playing the game and thereby threatens to destroy one of the more important aspects inherent in boure: the opportunity to argue. The book is so comprehensive in its discussion of rules and variations that we expect Nickens to some day be known as the "Edmond Hoyle" of boure.

But "Boure" is far more than merely a book of rules. An excellent guidebook for novice or beginning players, it explains the procedures as well as the principles of strategy in easy to understand language.

First Written
Nickens' book is also the first written discussion of the game - one which has been a long time coming. Actual knowledge of the history and origins of boure has been noticeably limited, but the author solves that problem in the introduction to his book.

Boure was probably originated in Louisiana by the early Acadians as a variation of the French game ecarte. Ecarte is a member of the Euchre family, which includes Napoleon in England, spoil five in Ireland and euchre in America.

Euchre, in turn, was probably a variation of Trionphe, or French Ruff, Nickens writes. He also explains, "Further study revealed that the game of boure bears a remarkable resemblance to raras, which seems to be the connecting link between the Euchre family and the ancient game of LoO, also very similar to boure." In fact, the Acadian version derived its name from rams, which translates into the French word "bourre," which also means to cram, stuff, beat, or trounce.

(Nickens quips, "if a player of boure fails to take a trick, he will certainly know he has been trounced. If this is a frequent occurrence, he will undoubtedly be inclined to resort to the English version in telling the party who introduced him to the game what to do with it.")

Cursory Examination
It would be impossible in an article of this type to provide more than a cursory explanation of how boure is played. But for the uninstructed, the game may be played by from two to eight players (seven is the ideal number, and a game with fewer players is called a "short game."), each of whom is dealt five cards.

Each player antes a pre-set amount of money before the cards are dealt. After each player has received his five cards, the dealer turns his last one up, the suit of which becomes trumps for that hand.

More Tricks
A person wins by taking more tricks than anyone else, either by playing the highest card in a suit, or by playing the highest trump if he is void in the suit which was led. Should someone fail to take a single trick, he "goes boure" and must ante the size of the pot for the next hand.

Because the stakes are not as high as in other games, such as poker, the game lasts longer, thereby providing more enjoyment for the participants.

Besides being a knowledgeable boure player, Nickens is also somewhat of a humorist. During his discussion of bridge in the foreword of his book, the author says, "it's all beyond me. The only bridge I know anything about is the one I bought the first time I went to New York."

Crude Cartoons
To spice up and space out his book, Nickens has also included a number of crude but perceptive cartoons, all depicting some funny situation peculiar to card playing.

One of the funnier cartoons shows a group of boure players slugging it out over the card table. The caption: "Just a Friendly Game."

"Boure" is an informative and entertaining little book, and it is essential for anyone who plays, or would like to play boure.

It will help you settle disputes, but use it sparingly - or you may not be invited to play in many more games.