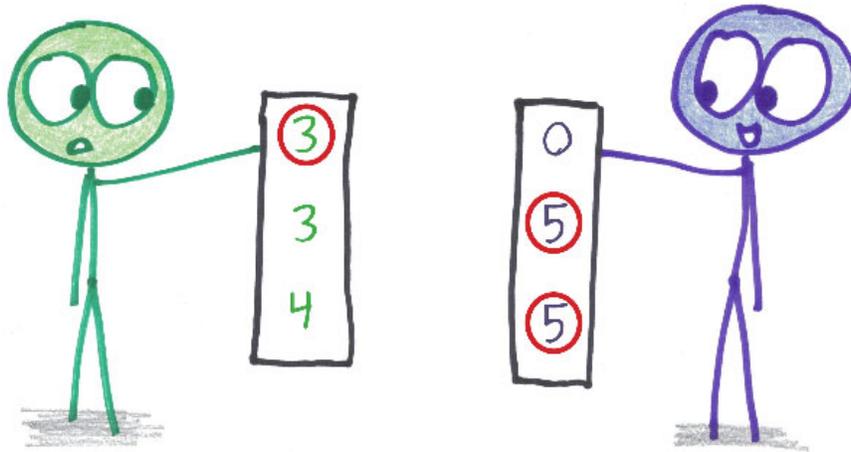


## Blotto: *A Game of Narrow Victories*

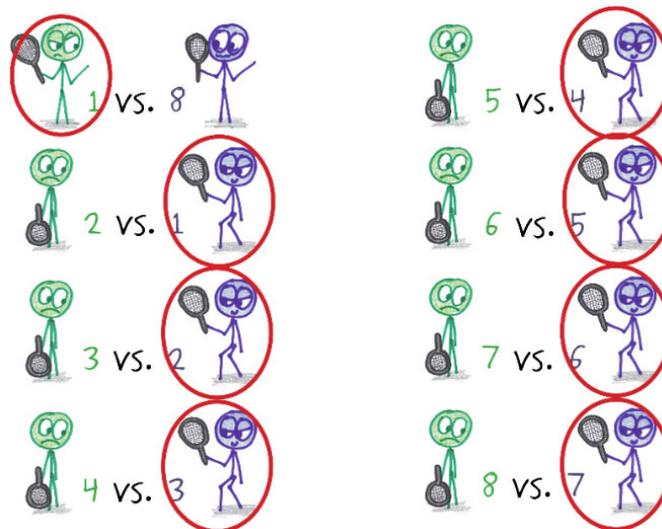
This little mind game—a quick, subtle, confrontational—played a prominent role in the growth of game theory.

Each player writes a **secret list of three whole numbers in ascending order**. Repetition is allowed, but the numbers must **add up to exactly 10**. Then, compare lists. At each spot, the **larger number wins**, and whoever has more winning numbers wins the game.

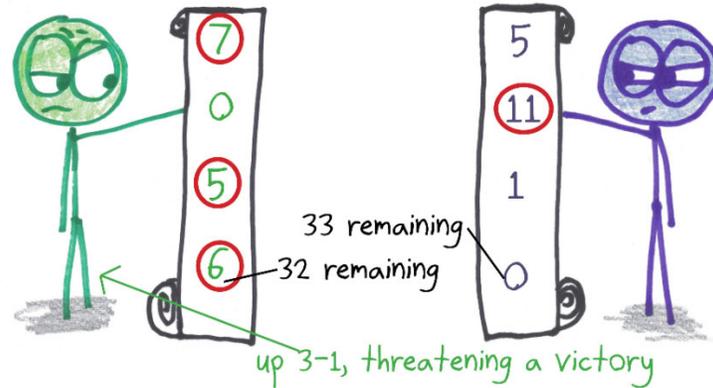


Once you learn the rules, you can tweak the specifics; make it 5 numbers summing to 20, say.

Blotto’s basic principle—“win small, lose big”—resonates far and wide. Consider this devious approach to a high school tennis match: instead of playing your best against their best, your second against their second, and so on, you can put your worst player in the top spot, as a kind of sacrificial lamb, thereby allowing every other player an advantageous match-up.



A popular variant on Blotto is to **begin with a bank of 50 points**, and instead of writing your list all at once, **play one number at a time**. You can thus adapt your strategy as you go. (The numbers need not ascend). **First to open up a three-victory lead**—for example, if you've chosen the larger number 6 times, while I've only done so 3 times—**is the winner**.



But watch out: if you spend all of your points without securing victory, then you can only watch helplessly as over and over again I win by a score of 1-0.

