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Electric football enthusiast Chris LeMay sets up a play.

STEVEN S. HARMAN / STAFF

Community News

Football is electrifying experience for board game enthusiast

By **BONNIE BURCH**
Staff Writer

NOLENVILLE - Chris LeMay is king of the gridiron. The master of the contest. He's the quarterback, kicker, defensive line, tight end and offense all rolled into one, albeit in a mini-football universe.

But what he wants is for others to share in his love for the game.

Off and on for the past five years, LeMay has been trying to start the Nolensville Electric Football League. At the moment there are only two active players - LeMay and his 16-year-old stepson.

But the Nolensville resident believes there are others out there who enjoy the miniature football board game. It's just they are hard to find.

Currently he journeys to Birmingham, Ala., about twice a month to play in a league there.

I can travel four or five hours to play, but I'd like to find people to play in this area. At least, if it was only to play once a month and not have to travel so far," LeMay said.

For the uninitiated, electric football is more like a board game than the real contact sport.

The inch-tall football figurines outfitted in favorite team colors (or hand-painted by the collector) are attached to plastic bases, which are then set on the playing surface. When the switch is turned on, the board vibrates - allowing the players to move out of the scrimmage formation on the field during the



Chris LeMay plays electric football in the kitchen of his Nolensville home. LeMay is seeking other electric football enthusiasts to play against.

snap.

A stationary quarterback figure can then be brought in to throw a pass with his spring-loaded arm. Any contact with another player is counted as a completed pass.

The board is electrified until the player that possesses the "ball" is hit by another team player or "scores".

"The big joke is that they run around in circles, basically. You can them to sort of go where you want, but it takes a lot of practice," LeMay said.

Fanatics will sometimes file the prongs on the bases - a practice known as "base tweaking" - to encourage their players to go in certain directions.

There is also a kicker figurine,

which can be called upon for punting opportunities. "Really there is not a whole lot of punting that goes on in these games," LeMay said.

The Nolensville resident got his first taste of the miniature football universe as a 12-year-old, when he got his first set. Back then, it was the New York Jets, the boy's favorite team and the Kansas City Chiefs that filled his board.

But not until he found an electric football board at Toys R Us about five years ago did his interest rekindle.

A big football fan in general, LeMay estimates he spends about 20 - 25 hours a week on his hobby - not only playing the game, but painting figures, searching the Internet for

electric football teams and checking chat rooms to converse with other fans. He even invented kick placement cards to take the place of having the electronic player actually kick the ball.

The enjoyment mainly comes in collecting the pieces and sharing in a game of chance and some skill. Fanatics will even keep stats on their favorite teams and players.

LeMay has collected more than 50 different teams, from the Tennessee Titans - in both their light and dark jerseys - to the University

of Tennessee Vols, Vanderbilt University's squad and more.

And his fellow fans will travel great distances to play in tournaments. There's even a Super Bowl on the miniature fields.

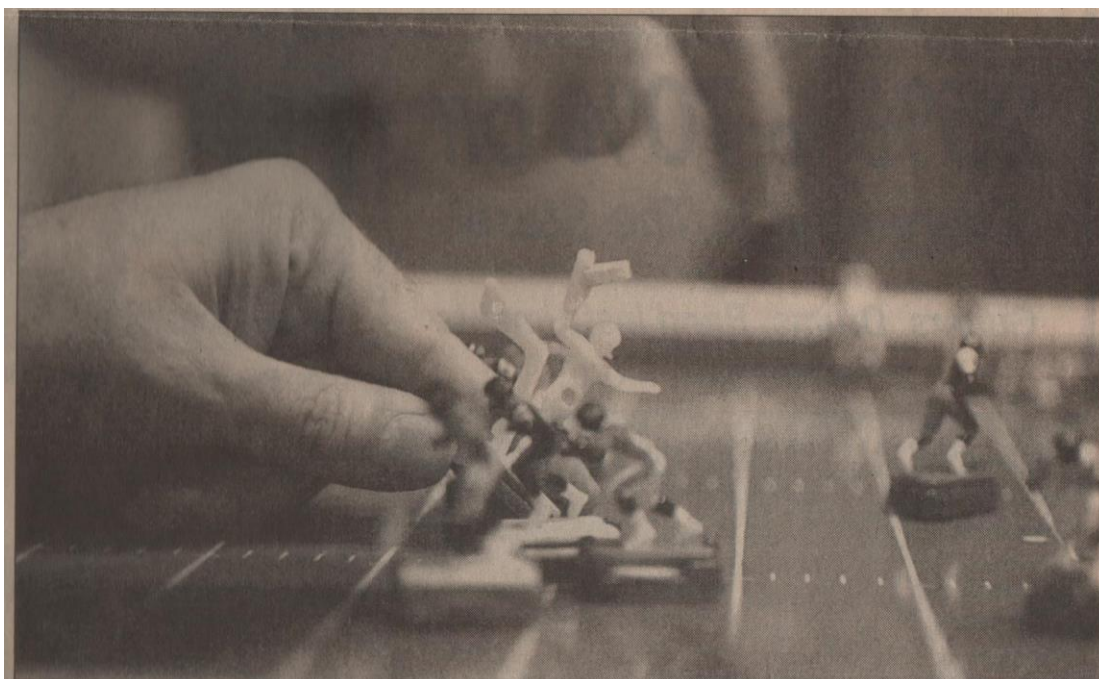
I've never made it past the first round (in the Super Bowl), but I enjoy going just so I can meet people from all over the country," LeMay said.

It's also a good way to bond with his stepson, a student at Ezell-Harding Christian School.

In 2001, when the school won

the state championship, LeMay created a special Ezell-Harding edition complete with an electric football field painted with the school logo and a red-and-white checkerboard pattern painted in the end zone.

At the end of the season, LeMay's board was auctioned off as part of a school fund-raiser, bringing about \$325. But the buyer presented the board back to the school's coach, Scott Smith, now the football coach at Independence High School.



LeMay executes a pass play.