

GUIDE TO GAME LOBBY FOR STRAT-O-MATIC COMPUTER BASEBALL

By Jack Mitchell

Game Lobby (also referred to as NetPlay) is a valuable feature of Strat-O-Matic Computer Baseball that serves three purposes:

1. Two gamers can connect their computers via the Internet for head-to-head play;
2. Gamers can use Game Lobby as a forum for meeting other players and finding new opponents; and
3. Game Lobby allows authorized spectators to observe a game on their computers as it is played by the two opponents

Although Game Lobby has been designed to be user friendly, any system for connecting multiple computers, possibly with different operating systems, firewalls, spam filters, and routers, necessarily introduces some technical challenges. We will later address some of the more common issues that can arise.

An Overview of Game Play with Game Lobby

Playing Strat-O-Matic Computer Baseball on Game Lobby involves the following:

1. The two gamers must create Game Lobby accounts.
2. Both gamers log on to Game Lobby.
3. One of the gamers serves as “host” and creates a “private room” in Game Lobby in which the game will be played.
4. His opponent enters the private room.
5. The host designates the other gamer as his opponent and launches the game. Play then proceeds in a similar fashion to normal SOM Computer Baseball except that control of the game is swapped back and forth between the two opponents as they enter their various game decisions.
6. Play outcomes appear simultaneously (or nearly so) on both computers.

Same Version of SOM Computer Baseball required

To play a game with Game Lobby, the two players (and any spectators who wish to observe) must be using the same version of Strat-O-Matic Computer Baseball, including any patch updates. The game version (for example, 16.00H) can easily be determined from the main SOM Computer Baseball game screen by mouse clicking on **Help** on the top menu bar and then clicking on **About** from the drop-down menu. The version of the game is displayed in the window that appears. The version is also displayed on the title bar of the Game Lobby window. Patches, if needed, can be downloaded from www.strat-o-matic.com.

Launching Game Lobby

From the menu bar on the main SOM Computer Baseball screen, click on **File**. From the drop-down menu click on **Enter Game Lobby** (see Figure 1). In most cases, the Game Lobby Logon/Create Account window will pop up instantaneously.



Figure 1. Enter Game Lobby from main screen

TROUBLE-SHOOTING

In rare cases, Game Lobby might not launch when you click your mouse on **Enter Game Lobby**. Most crashes, hangs, and error messages are caused by the failure to have the latest Microsoft Windows updates installed. If you are unable to enter the Game Lobby, the first step in resolving the issue is to run Microsoft Update and install all high-priority updates that are identified by the program. It is especially important to make sure that all updates to Windows.NET Framework have been downloaded and installed (When it checks your computer, Microsoft Update will advise you if updates for Windows.NET Framework should be installed.)

If after running Microsoft Update and installing any high-priority updates you still experience difficulty accessing the Game Lobby, the next step is to run the Microsoft Redistribution Installer program (vcredist_x86.exe) that is included on the Strat-O-Matic Computer Baseball program CD. Insert the program CD in your CD drive and use Microsoft Windows Explorer to examine the contents of the disk. Double click on vcredist_x86.exe and follow the instructions. Once the installation is complete, restart your computer and again try to enter the Game Lobby.

Creating a Game Lobby Account

The first time you enter Game Lobby, you will be prompted to create an account. Choose a user name and a password and type them in the appropriate boxes. Confirm your password by typing it a second time, and click on the **Create Account** button. In most cases, you will immediately gain entry to the main lobby. However, if the user name you

have chosen has been previously selected by someone else, you will be prompted to create a different user name. Once an acceptable user name has been selected, entry to the lobby should quickly follow. Your username and password will be stored by the program and will automatically load for subsequent logons. Once you establish your account, entry to Game Lobby can be accomplished by simply clicking on the **Logon** button.



Figure 2. Game Lobby Logon/Create Account Window

Security Caution: Your saved logon information is not encrypted within the program. Therefore a sophisticated computer user who knows you have this account and who has access to your computer could possibly learn your username and password. If your computer is used by multiple people, choose a username and password that are unique to this program and which will not provide access to any of your other programs or sensitive files.

The Main Lobby

Your point of entry is the Main Lobby. Your username will appear under “Main Lobby Users” on the left side of the window, and you will also see the usernames of other gamers who are currently in the Main Lobby (see Figure 3). From the Main Lobby you can initiate a number of actions:

1. You can chat with the other players in the Main Lobby.
2. You can issue a challenge for a game.
3. If you are meeting an opponent on Game Lobby and are serving as host, you can create a private room in which your game will be played.
4. If you are meeting an opponent on Game Lobby and your opponent is acting as host, you can enter the private room that he creates.
5. If you will be a spectator for a game being played via Game Lobby, you can enter the private room that is established by the host for that game.

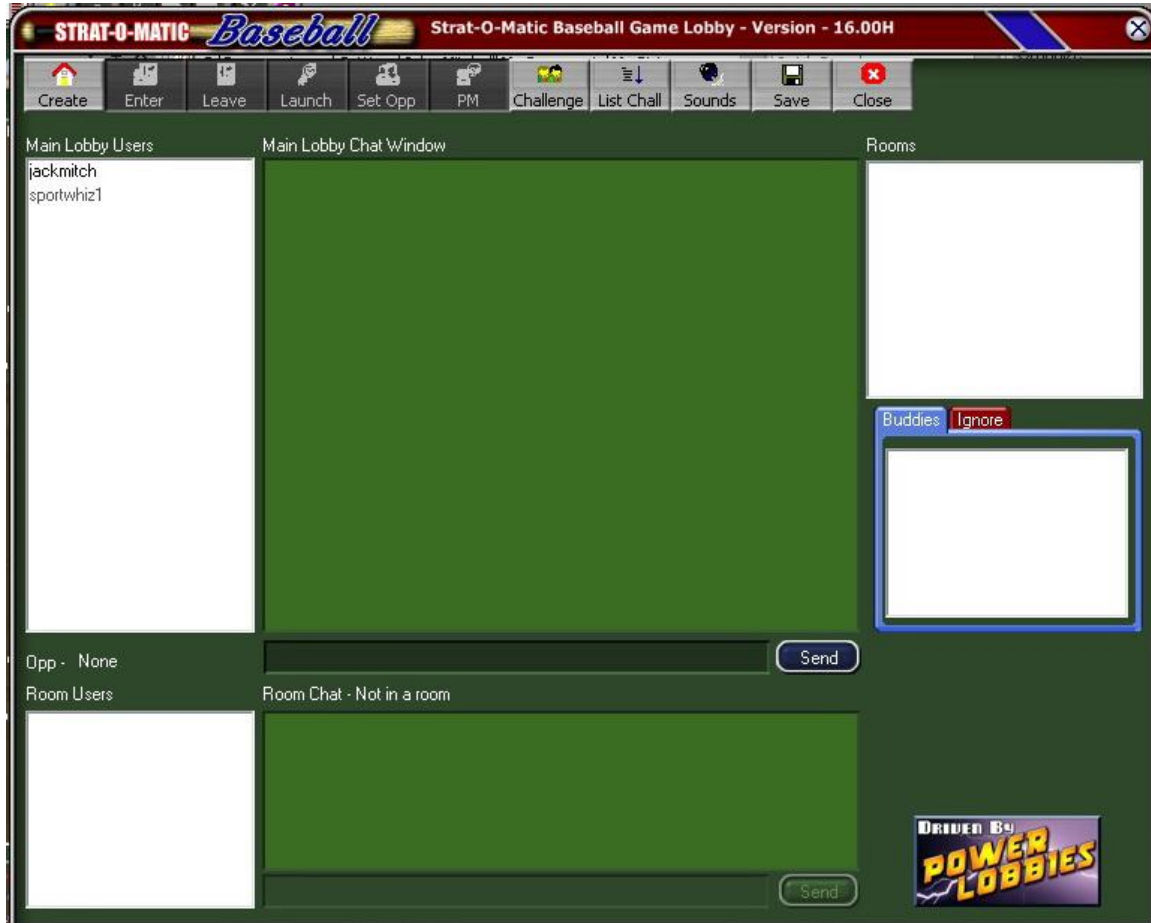


Figure 3. Main Game Lobby Window

Chatting with Other Players

The Main Lobby is a great place to meet and greet other Strat-O-Matic Baseball gamers. To send a message that can be seen by all Main Lobby Users, type your text in the edit box at the bottom of the Main Lobby Chat Window and click the **Send** button. Obviously, the Chat feature in the Main Lobby should not be used to distribute information of a private or confidential nature, such as a password.

The Room Chat feature allows private chatting among players who are in a private room. This feature is available only if you are in a room, and your messages will be seen only by those in the room. If you are in a room, the name of the room will be displayed above the Room Chat window.

If desired, Game Lobby chat may be saved to a text file by clicking on the **Save** button on the menu bar at the top of the window.

Private Messages

You can send a private message to any gamer who is logged on to Game Lobby by highlighting his name in the list of Main Lobby Users and clicking on the **PM** button on the menu bar. This will bring up a Private Message window in which you can type the text of your message. Clicking on **OK** will then send your message to the designated recipient. This feature can be used to convey a room password or other information of a confidential nature.

Private Rooms

All games are played within a private room created by the host for that specific game. At the upper right of the Game Lobby window, you may see names of one or more rooms that have been created for game play. Each room has a unique name assigned by the host. The version of SOM Computer Baseball that was used to create the room appears after the room name. All users of a room must be running the same version of SOM Computer Baseball, including any installed patches. The numbers in parentheses that follow the room name indicates how many players are currently in the room and how many the room was set up for. Private rooms are frequently password protected, and you can enter only if you have the password. We advise against crashing rooms uninvited, even if the room is not password protected.

When you see rooms listed, it is an indication that the creator of the room (the “host”) is awaiting the arrival of one or more additional players and /or spectators or is in the process of launching a game. Once the host launches a game, that particular private room disappears from the list of rooms. Similarly, gamers who enter a private room disappear from the list of “Main Lobby Users” once their game is launched.

Creating a Room in Which To Play a Game

All games must be played in a private room created by the host specifically for that game (or for a series of games between the same two teams). To create a room, the host clicks the **Create** button on the menu bar. In the Create Room window that appears (see Figure 4), give the room a name, specify the number of persons (players and spectators) who are to be allowed in the room (the minimum is two—you and your opponent—but others can be allowed to enter as spectators), and if you choose, set a password. Leave the entry for the server port at the default setting of 6501. Click **OK** and the newly created room will appear in the Room window at the upper right of the Game Lobby window. The host will automatically become a Room User and appear in the Room User window at the bottom left.

The host must communicate the name of the room and its password, if one was established, to his opponent and to any spectators who will enter the room. A password will prevent uninvited gamers from entering the room.

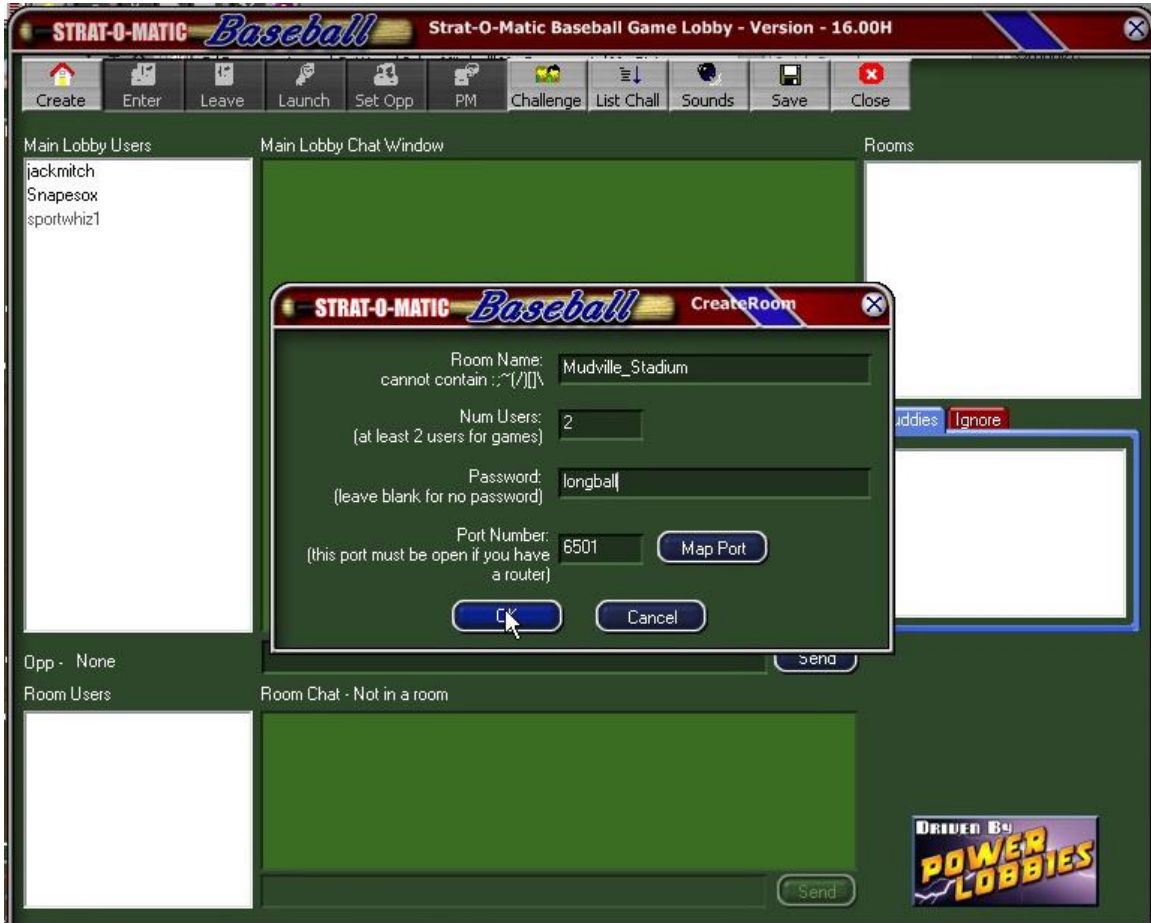


Figure 4. Creating Room Window

Entering a Room

To enter a private room that has been created by your game host, highlight the name of the room by clicking on it. Next, click on the **Enter** button on the toolbar (see Figure 5). If the room is password protected, you will be prompted to enter the password.

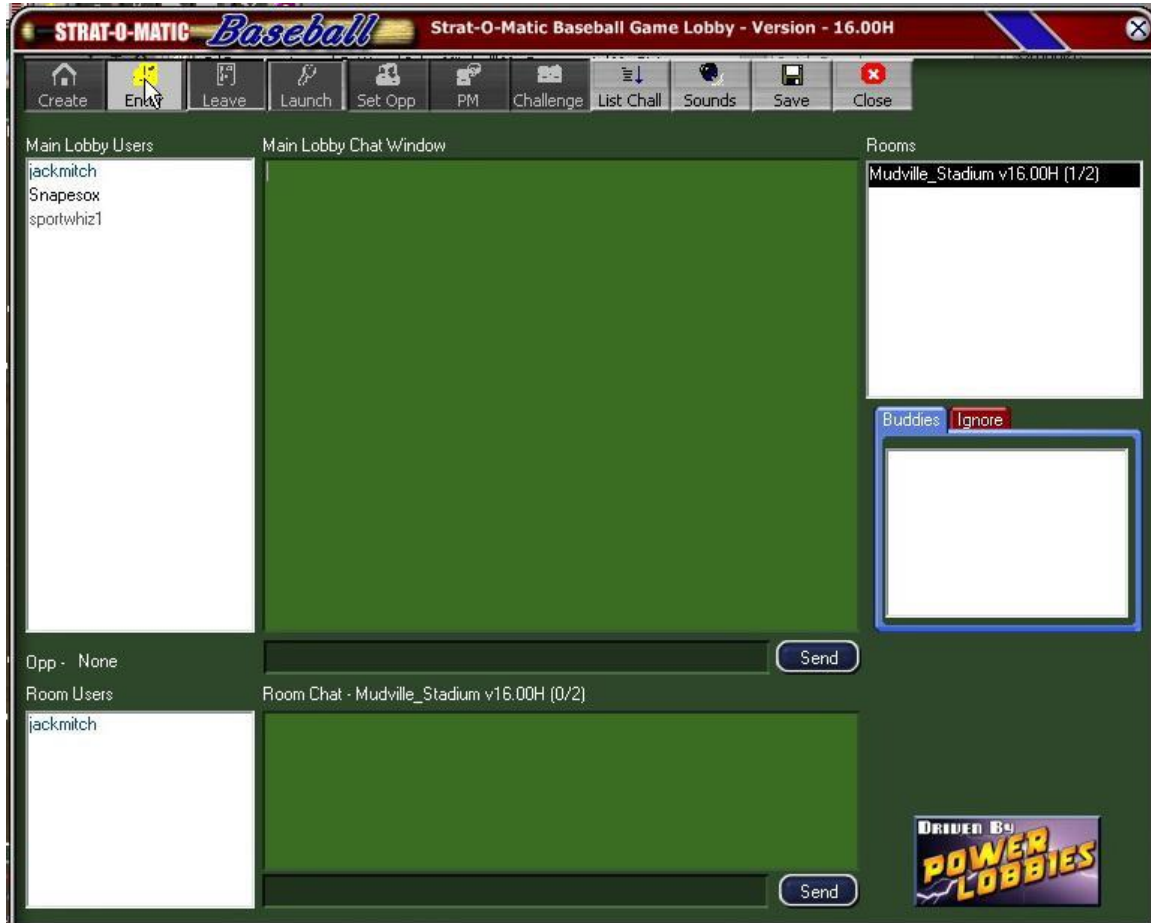


Figure 5. Entering a Room from Game Lobby Screen

Set Opponent

The names of all persons who have entered your room will be listed under the heading “Room Users.” When all invited participants have entered the room, the player who is the host (who created the private room) must designate the person who will be his opponent for the game. This is done by clicking on the name of the opponent in the list of Room Users at the lower left, thus highlighting it, and then clicking on **Set Opp** on the menu bar. This must be done even if only one gamer aside from the host is in the room.

Spectator Mode

If more than two people are in the room, those who are not playing the game (that is, they are neither the “host” nor the “opponent”) will automatically be placed in Spectator Mode when the host launches the game. All spectators must be in the room when the host launches the game; a game cannot be joined in progress. Those in Spectator Mode can watch the action as the two teams play the game and can chat with the players. All

chatting that occurs within a room is seen only by the persons in that room. Spectator Mode is ideal for League Playoffs, All-Star Games, and other games of special interest!

Launching a Game

After all invited persons have entered the room and the opponent has been set, the “host” clicks on the **Launch** button on the menu bar. The Game Lobby window will close, and the host and his opponent will now see the main Strat-O-Matic Computer Baseball game screen. A pop-up window will ask the host if he will be the home team, to which the host will click on either **Yes** or **No**. A brief message will appear telling the host that his opponent is on the field, meaning that the host’s computer and the opponent’s computer have established a connection. The host will choose the game to be played (a league game from the schedule or an exhibition game for which the leagues, teams, month, day, and day/night options must be set) using the same procedure he would follow to select a game to be played if the two players were together and playing face-to-face on the host’s computer. Once the game is selected by the host, a Game Setup window will appear on the host’s computer, and a shadow image of the Game Setup window should appear on the opponent’s computer. Initially, the host will have control of the Game Setup window, but control can be exchanged back and forth by clicking on the blue **Client** or **Server** button in the upper right corner. Once the host and his opponent have finalized their starting pitcher and lineups, the host activates the game by clicking on the blue **Play Ball** button in the lower right corner of the window. From this point, game play is virtually identical to a regular game, except that control must be swapped back and forth as the host and opponent make game entries (strategies, lineup changes, pitching changes, etc.)

Occasionally, the opponent might not see a shadow image of the Game Setup window on his computer even though it appears on the host’s computer. If that occurs, allow 15 seconds or so to see if the host computer and the opponent’s computer can reestablish an Internet connection. If not, both the host and the opponent (and any spectators) must exit Game Lobby altogether and repeat the log-on and launch game processes.

Auto-save

To protect against the loss of game information should you or your opponent experience a power failure or the loss of the Internet connection, Game Lobby automatically saves the game on the host computer after each batter. If game play is interrupted for any reason (often the game screen will “freeze” when there is an interruption), the host and the opponent (and any spectators) should exit the SOM Computer Baseball program. The process of logging on to Game Lobby is repeated. Once at the main Strat-O-Matic screen, the host player should restore the game to the point of stoppage by using the **Open Game** function on the drop-down menu under the **File** tab on the menu bar. The file to be opened is named **autosave.sav**. Click on this file, thus highlighting it, and then click on the **Open** button at the lower right (see Figure 6). Allow 10 to 15 seconds for the game to be restored.



Figure 6. Restoring a Game from the AutoSave File

Box Scores, Score Sheets, and PAC Files for Games Played on Game Lobby

The **Autoplay/Boxscore** settings for the host computer will determine if the results and statistics for a completed game will be saved, in what form they will be saved, and where the output will be directed. Therefore, prior to hosting a game on Game Lobby, a player should visit these settings to ensure that they are as desired. Generally, for league play box scores and score sheets should be generated for every game and saved to a file where they can be accessed later and forwarded to the league commissioner or league statistician.

Additionally, leagues will need for Game Result Files to be generated for each league game so that the league master file can be updated with team statistics, individual statistics, injuries, and player fatigue. In order for Game Result Files to be automatically generated, the **Create Game Results Files** box must be checked in the Autoplay Options window.

To verify these output settings are as desired, before entering Game Lobby, the host player should highlight the league for which games will be played on the main SOM Computer Baseball screen. Next, click on **Options** on the menu bar, and from the drop-down menu, click on **Autoplay/Boxscore**. All output settings will be found in the

window that opens (see Figure 7). When the output settings are correct, there is no need to manually save the box score and/or score sheet once a game concludes.

PAC Files are not generated for games played via Game Lobby.



Figure 7. Boxscore, Score Sheet and Game Result File Settings

Issuing Challenges

If you wish to play a game but don't currently have an opponent, you can solicit an opponent by issuing a challenge to all gamers logged on to Game Lobby. Click on the **Chall** button on the menu bar. An Issue Challenge window will appear, and you will be prompted to type the text of your challenge which will be available to every gamer in the Main Lobby. For example, your challenge might read: "The 2010 Chicago Cubs challenge any 2010 NL team" (see Figure 8). Click **OK** to distribute your challenge.

When you issue a challenge, a special challenge room will automatically be created and you will be placed in the room as a Room User. You must wait in the challenge room for a response. Since your challenge might not be answered immediately, you can leave the game in that state and do other work while you wait for a response. If your challenge is accepted, you will hear the Challenge Sound and you can return to your computer to talk with your potential opponent and start a game. To cancel a challenge, simply leave the challenge room and the challenge will be automatically revoked.

If you would like to see a list of all available challenges, click the **LIST CHALL** button on the top menu bar.



Figure 8. Issuing a Challenge

Bear in mind that the more specific your challenge becomes, the less likely it will be that a gamer will accept it. The person who issues the challenge and the gamer who accepts it must have both teams that will be involved in the game installed on their computers. If for example your challenge is that the 1964 Cardinals will take on any 1964 NL team, you must have the 1964 season installed on your computer and the person who accepts the challenge must also have the 1964 season installed. The more general the challenge (for example: “I want to play a game using teams from the 2010 season”), the more likely it is that it will be accepted.

Using Buddy Lists in the Game Lobby

You can create a list of buddies so that you will be notified when a buddy logs on to Game Lobby. Buddies are announced when they enter Game Lobby with a special sound. To set a gamer as a buddy, right-click his name when it appears as a Main Lobby User and click on **Add to Buddy List**. To remove a gamer from your list of buddies, right-click his name in your Buddy List and then click on **Remove from Buddy List**. This feature can be especially helpful if you are involved in league play and want to be alerted when league members log on to Game Lobby.

Game Lobby Sounds

Distinctive sounds are used to announce the following events:

1. Arrival of a gamer in the lobby.
2. Arrival of a buddy in the lobby.
3. Arrival of an opponent in your game room.
4. Receipt of a private message.
5. Announcement of a new challenge.

You can either use the sounds that come with the game for these events or define your own sounds.

Exiting a Room

If after entering a room you wish to leave it, click on the **Leave** button on the top menu bar. You will be returned to the Main Lobby.

Exiting Game Lobby

If you wish to exit Game Lobby, click the **Close** button on the top menu bar.

Hosting a Game

In order to host a game on Game Lobby, it is necessary that port 6501 be open on your computer for the sending and receiving of both UDP and TCP data packets. For those with computers connected directly to the Internet by means of a telephone modem, cable modem, or DSL modem, there should be no issue with port 6501, provided your computer firewall does not block the flow of data. It might be necessary to place your firewall software into a special gaming mode or perhaps enter less stringent firewall security settings for the program SOMBB.EXE so that the flow of data is not blocked. Under some circumstances, it might be necessary to deactivate the firewall altogether, at least for the program SOMBB.EXE.

If you wish to host a game through Game Lobby and your computer connects to the Internet through a network router, it will be necessary to “port forward” port 6501 to the internal IP address of your computer (some people refer to this as “port mapping”). The internal IP address is the IP address assigned to your computer on your local network. You can determine the internal IP address by running the command “ipconfig” at the command prompt.

Once you know the internal IP address for the computer on which you will host games with Game Lobby, you will need to enter your router utility set-up program and forward port 6501 to this internal IP address. This is akin to forwarding your mail when you move. In essence, you are telling your router that any data packets addressed to port 6501 are to be forwarded to the host computer located at the specified IP address. More detailed instructions for port forwarding can be found at the web site www.portforward.com.

CAUTION: Unless you have set up a “static” IP address for your computer (that is, the IP address of your computer is fixed and never changes), it is possible that your computer will be assigned a different IP address when it rejoins your local network after it has been off network for a time. For that reason, if you have forwarded port 6501, before you attempt to host a game on Game Lobby, it is a good idea to confirm that the IP address of your computer has not changed. If the IP address has changed, it will be necessary to re-enter your router utility and forward port 6501 to the new IP address.

PFPortChecker, a free utility program available for download from www.portforward.com, can be used to confirm that port 6501 is open for both UDP and TCP data packets. If after forwarding port 6501 within your router utility you discover that port 6501 is not open for both TCP and UDP data packets, first check to confirm that the IP address for your computer has not changed. If it has changed, you will need to re-enter your router utility and correct the IP address to which port 6501 is forwarded.

If the IP address is correct, the problem most likely rests with your firewall software. Even when firewall software has been placed in game mode, it is not uncommon for port 6501 to remain blocked. If port 6501 is blocked for either TCP or UDP data packets, you will be unable to host a game on Game Lobby. In that case, try changing the security setting for SOMBB.EXE in “rules” section of your firewall software to something like “allow” or “unblock.”

These instructions should enable 80 percent of SOM gamers to host on Game Lobby and nearly 100% to play a game on Game Lobby. Unfortunately, firewall issues and other technical problems that may affect some gamers are beyond the scope of this document.