

Incident at the Bluebird

One night, during a visit with Russell, we were playing Homeworlds at the Bluebird when the clock struck 1 am. Suddenly the stoner-friendly low lighting was replaced with fully-on bright lights and we were being told it was closing time. We had to go.

Fortunately, we were already in the habit of “freezing” a game by taking a digital photo of the game in progress and reassembling the game later, using the photo for reference.



So Russell took a picture and we packed up for the night. I was happy enough to stop the game at that point, since I was feeling pretty good about my position and looking forward to resuming it the next day.

Well, the next morning we settled in at the 420 Cafe and prepared to resume the game. I carefully reconstructed the arrangement of the pieces and said “I declare this game reconstituted. And it’s your turn.”

“OK,” said Russell instantly. “Are you ready?” Suddenly, I was hesitant. I didn’t like the sound of that. “Uh, yes?”

“I sacrifice my large yellow for three moves, and send these two ships into your Homeworld. Catastrophe! Game over!”

I was flabbergasted. Obviously, I hadn’t seen that coming, but what really made it sting was that he clearly knew he could have made this move the previous night. Instead, he allowed me to document and rebuild the game without ever letting on that he was about to checkmate me.

“Why didn’t you just do that last night and get it over with?!” I demanded. “Well, you were so pleased with how things were!” He explained. “If I’d gone ahead and finished the game, you’d have been cranky about it the whole way home. Instead you were in a great mood. And now we can just go right ahead and start a new game.”

Anyway, as a result of this incident, the strategic blunder I made that night has become known by the name of this coffeeshop. You’ll find it written up on page 25 of the *Pyramid Arcade* rulebook, in the section about Homeworlds strategies called “Avoid Getting Bluebirded.” And as you can see in the original photo, I was indeed vulnerable, with just two green ships at my Homeworld (on the left), while my opponent has a large yellow to spare and two green ships within striking range.