Web whiz rolls the dice with game from Cuba

**ABOUT THE GAME**

- Mentirosa, the classic Cuban dice game, is available online at [www.mentirosa.org](http://www.mentirosa.org)
- and at a few Little Havana retailers, including Sentir Cubano, 3100 SW Eighth St.
- The game, which comes in a cedar cigar box and includes six black leather bottomless tubes, six sets of Spanish poker dice and a red felt bag filled with poker chips, costs $74.99.

The game, which has long been played with pieces of piping, a handful of poker dice and a bag of chips, never been as popular as dominos.

Barluceo, 30, hopes to change that.

"I am going to take it upon myself to teach the world this game," said Barluceo, a native of Miami.

A website developer for Amadeus Global Travel Distribution in Doral, Barluceo spent two years developing a high-class version of the game to replace the homemade materials that longtime players have grown accustomed to using.

In May, Barluceo debuted his product at the Cuba Nostalgia exhibition in Miami — a fancy Cedar cigar box containing six black leather bottomless tubes, six sets of Spanish poker dice and a red felt bag filled with red poker chips. He sold 200 sets and estimates he taught about 1,000 people how to play Mentirosa.

The game is also sold in a few Little Havana stores, as well as online at [www.mentirosa.org](http://www.mentirosa.org).

Barluceo hopes that Mentirosa, which he has trademarked, will one day make it onto shelves in big retailers like Macy's and Nordstrom. If that happens, he is certain the $74.99 game will be a hit.

"I've never met a person who played it and said they didn't like it," he said.

Alejandro Acosta, a 29-year-old Miami window distributor, said he became hooked on Mentirosa eight years ago. The game, he said, is more fun than poker and more challenging than dominoes. Best of all, there is no limit to the number of players.

At least once a week, Acosta and his friends get together for dinner, drinks and some Mentirosa playing. "We sit around the dining table and everyone can play together," he said. "It's fun."

Until recently, Acosta and his friends would play the game using PVC pipes or rolled up paper for the tubes. Barluceo's product has brought more style to the game, Acosta said.

"The fact that someone has gone out and marketed it is a plus. Acosta was a real nice to play that version."

Recently, Barluceo hosted the Mentirosa World Championship 2005, where more than 30 players went head-to-head in the first city-wide tournament. Though competition went on for more than three hours, no winner emerged. The competition is slated to continue Wednesday at Chiapa Restaurant, 225 Altara Ave. in Coral Gables.

The point of the game is for players to mislead and out-smart their opponents.

Though strategies differ among players, the rules stay the same. Each player gets a tube and a set of five dice, with each die having six sides that represent the ace, king, queen, jack, eight and seven, called faces. Each player tosses the five dice into his or her tube, hiding them from other players. The faces showing represent the player's hand.

The object is to guess how many there are, of any one face, among all the players combined, without going over.

The first player begins by making a call, such as three kings, which means that player is guessing that there are at least three kings among all the dice in the game. The next player can call the same or a better hand.

If a bluff is called correctly the bluffer is out. If a player is not bluffing and is called on it, the person calling the bluff is out. Once a player has five chips, he or she exits the game.

The game continues until only one player remains.

Said Barluceo, who will soon receive a master's degree in Business Administration from Florida International University: "This is a tradition that has kind of disappeared. I'm trying to bring it back and make it something tangible that people can recognize."