

Schilling's company launches first video game

February 14 2012, By RACHEL COHEN , AP Sports Writer

(AP) -- A teenage Curt Schilling got a paper route so he could afford an Apple II just like the one his Little League coach owned.

Three decades later with cash to spare from his baseball career, the retired pitcher has invested nearly \$35 million into a business producing the sort of fantasy video game that first made him yearn for a personal computer.

In New York on Monday to promote the first offering from his 38 Studios entertainment company, Schilling stopped in at a video game store and asked how "Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning" was selling. The answer was encouraging, though the conversation went a bit downhill when the clerk realized who Schilling was and turned out to be a Yankees fan.

Schilling had long been a hard-core gamer when he led the Red Sox past New York with his bloody sock. In the early 1980s, his best friend's father - who was also Schilling's youth baseball coach - brought home an Apple II from his job as an engineer. Young Curt was soon hooked on "Wizardry," an early role-playing video game. The graphics felt cutting-edge at the time; Schilling was stunned the other day when he looked up some old screen shots and realized how primitive they look now.

Always a fan of books like "The Lord of the Rings" series, Schilling kept inhabiting the world of role-playing video games throughout a 20-year major league career in which he won three World Series championships.

Fascinated by technology, he owned a laptop in the early 1990s "before they were truly portable."

"I wasn't really a big car or jewelry guy," Schilling said. "I always had the best laptop you can have."

By the late 1990s, he was toying with the idea of launching a production company.

Schilling got serious about it several years later. He recalled feeling disappointed by "[EverQuest II](#)," the sequel released in late 2004 to the popular multiplayer online game. Irked by certain elements, he'd wonder: "What were they thinking?"

While playing online with several developers from Sony, which produced the game, Schilling would muse about hatching his own startup.

"You do that, I'll definitely join your company," they'd tell him.

They didn't quite believe him when he later actually offered them jobs. In October 2006, the business launched with 11 employees. Today, 38 Studios - as in his uniform number - has nearly 400.

The cost of producing an intricate [video game](#) was just one of many surprises in store for Schilling. He knows he has the luxury of deep pockets instead of having to search for venture capital. Other investments have come from "high net-worth individuals" and the state of Rhode Island, where the company is headquartered. Schilling, 45, is partnered with comic book and toy creator Todd McFarlane and fantasy author R. A. Salvatore.

"Reckoning," a role-playing game, was released last Tuesday.

Up next is a product code-named "Copernicus," a multiplayer online game. Schilling said he never realized how difficult it was to ensure the program would work with players using different gaming systems.

"The only thing I've seen that could be harder is missile defense systems," he said.

Never lacking for confidence, Schilling plans for 38 Studios to create all sorts of products and someday become a "multibillion dollar entertainment company."

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