

CONTINUOUS ADAPTATION IN MULTI-AGENT COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENTS

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Paper under double-blind review

ABSTRACT

In a multi-agent competitive environment, we would expect an agent who can quickly adapt to environmental changes may have a higher probability to survive and beat other agents. In this paper, to discuss whether the adaptation capability can help a learning agent to improve its competitiveness in a multi-agent environment, we construct a simplified baseball game scenario to develop and evaluate the adaptation capability of learning agents. Our baseball game scenario is modeled as a two-player zero-sum stochastic game with only the final reward. We propose a modified Deep CFR algorithm to learn a strategy that approximates the Nash equilibrium strategy. We also form several teams, with different teams adopting different playing strategies, trying to analyze (1) whether an adaptation mechanism can help in increasing the winning percentage and (2) what kind of initial strategies can help a team to get a higher winning percentage. The experimental results show that the learned Nash-equilibrium strategy is very similar to real-life baseball game strategy. Besides, with the proposed strategy adaptation mechanism, the winning percentage can be increased for the team with a Nash-equilibrium initial strategy. Nevertheless, based on the same adaptation mechanism, those teams with deterministic initial strategies actually become less competitive.

1 INTRODUCTION

Reinforcement learning has been successfully employed to solve various kinds of decision making problems, such as game playing (Silver et al., 2017; 2018), robotics (Levine et al., 2016), and operation management (Han et al., 2017). An RL method typically finds the optimal strategy through the interactions with a stationary environment, which is usually modeled as an MDP process. Nevertheless, in the real world, there could be multiple learning agents in the same scenario. The interactions among these learning agents may make the environment no longer stationary from the standpoint of each individual agent. Besides, if these agents are in a competitive relationship, we would expect an agent who can quickly adapt to environmental changes may have a higher probability to beat other agents. To discuss whether the adaptation capability can help a learning agent to improve its competitiveness in a multi-agent environment, we choose a simplified baseball game as the scenario to develop and evaluate the adaptation capability of learning agents.

A lot of games, like Chess (Silver et al., 2018), Go (Silver et al., 2017) and Atari games (Bellemare et al., 2013; Mnih et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2016), only try to find the optimal action at each state. In comparison, some complicated games, like baseball and basketball games, need to take into account not only the current status but also the opponent’s possible strategies. Moreover, the opponent’s strategy is typically time-varying. Hence, players should not only determine what to do under different situations, but also need to dynamically adjust their strategies based on the observations from the opponent’s past actions. In a typical baseball game, for example, two competitive teams play against each other based on their pre-determined initial strategies at the beginning of the game. As the game proceeds, the teams continuously update their strategies based on the actions of their opponents, trying to win the game. However, baseball games are inherently highly uncertain while the number of interactions between the pitcher and the batters is rather limited. It is very tricky for the teams to properly adjust their strategies based on a small number of interactions.

In this work, to discuss the adaptation issue in a multi-agent competitive environment, we intentionally construct a simplified baseball game scenario based on the MLB data on Statcast Search (MLB).

To focus on the impact of strategy adaptation over the winning percentage, we make the following assumptions to simplify the problem.

1. We only focus on batting and pitching in our game scenario and treat fielding as the environment which is based on the MLB data on Statcast Search.
2. We assume there are only one pitcher & batter in each team, rather than the typical 9-batter case.
3. We assume the pitcher and the batter have the same performance in pitching and batting across different teams. The only difference is their strategies. Besides, they always perform normally and we do not consider the case of abnormal performance in all games.
4. Both the pitcher and the batter have only five possible actions, as explained in the next section.

Based on the above simplifications, we manually form 13 teams, with different teams adopting different playing strategies. We also purpose a modified version of the Deep CFR (Counterfactual Regret Minimization) (Brown et al., 2019) algorithm to learn a strategy that approximates the Nash equilibrium strategy. In total, we form 14 teams to analyze their adaptation capabilities.

In our simulation, each of these 14 teams plays the-best-of-three game against every other team for many series. At the beginning of each series, each team plays based on its initial strategies. As the game proceeds, each team follows the same strategy adaptation mechanism based on the observed actions of its opponent. In our simulation, there are only three games at most for each pair of teams to adjust their strategies. We then analyze the following two main issues about strategy adaptation.

- 1. With a small number of observations (three games at most for each pair of teams), can the adaptation mechanism help in increasing the winning percentage?**
- 2. If two competitive teams adopt the same adaptation mechanism during the game, what kind of initial strategies can help a team to get a higher winning percentage?**

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, we briefly describe the setup of our baseball game scenario and mention a few previous works about multi-agent problems and the adaptation issue. In Section 3, we explain how we use a modified Deep CFR algorithm to learn an initial strategy that approximates the Nash equilibrium strategy. After that, we explain our strategy adaptation mechanism. In Section 4, we show the experimental result and discuss the two main issues mentioned above. In Section 5, we conclude what we have observed in our experiments and mention a few issues that worth further study in the future.

2 BACKGROUNDS

2.1 SCENARIO DESCRIPTION

We first explain how we define a simplified baseball game for the analysis of strategy adaptation in a multi-agent scenario. Even though all the following discussions are based on the baseball game scenario, the deduced conclusions can be useful for similar multi-agent problems as well.

In every play of the baseball game, the pitcher aims at an expected target location and selects a pitch type. On the other hand, the batter looks for specific types of pitches appearing in some preferred attack zones. Both the pitcher and the batter select their actions for each pitch and, depending on the result of their actions, the game proceeds to the next state. Specifically, we treat our baseball game scenario as a two-player zero-sum stochastic game (multi-agent MDP) (Bowling, 2000) with only the final reward (win or lose).

We first mention two examples to explain players' different strategies under different situations.

Situation 1: 0 out, bases empty, 3 ball, 1 strike

Under this situation, the batter tends to be more selective or may even wait for a walk. On the other side, the pitcher tends to pitch a fastball to the middle of the strike zone to avoid a walk. However, if the pitcher has pitched to the middle too often, the batter may look for pitches in this zone to hit. This will increase the probability of solid contact.

Situation 2: 1 out, bases full, 3 ball, 1 strike

Under this situation, the batter tends to be more aggressive since it is a good chance to score. On the other hand, the pitcher might take advantage of the batter's aggressiveness and pitch to the corner to fool the batter. However, if the pitcher has pitched to the corner too often, the batter may shrink his attack zone to avoid being fooled.

In Figure 1, we illustrate the flow of our baseball game. The pitcher and the batter are the two learning agents to be trained to play against each other. Here, the Pitching Control represents the pitcher’s ability in ball control. As the pitcher aims to pitch at a target location, we model his Pitching Control as a Gaussian distribution centered at the target location with a manually pre-determined variance. The actual pitched location is then sampled from this distribution.

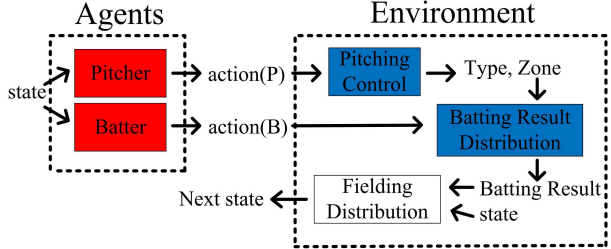


Figure 1: Flow of baseball game scenario.

On the other hand, the Batting Result Distribution $P(results|zones, type, a_b)$ models the probability of the possible batting results. Here, we classify all the possible batting results into 32 categories, listed in C, with respect to different zones (represented by different numbers in Figure 2), pitch type, and the batter’s action a_b . To model this Batting Result Distribution, we first obtain the distribution $P(results|zones, type)$ based on the MLB data on Statcast Search. After that, we heuristically convert the distribution $P(results|zones, type)$ into the distribution $P(results|zones, type, a_b)$ for every possible action a_b according to the athletic ability of the batter. Since the average MLB fastball travels at 95 mph, reaching home plate in just 0.4 second, it is very difficult for human beings to react within such a short period. Hence, the batter typically focus on a specific zone and a specific pitch type to swing in order to increase the probability of solid contact. Generally, the smaller the batter sits on the hitting zone, the more chance he can make a solid contact if the ball goes into the pre-selected zone. In Figure 1, the fielding distribution models the probability of the next state when a batting result occurs at a certain state. Again, this distribution is modeled based on the MLB data on Statcast Search.

In our baseball game, we denote each state s by a 6-tuple vector: (inning, runs, outs, runners on, strike, ball). To simply the game, both the pitcher and the batter have only five possible actions, as listed in Table 1. These actions are defined based on the pitcher’s Pitch Location and the batter’s Attack Zone, as illustrated in Figure 2. Here, we assume the pitcher only aims at three possible spots (the green dots) on pitcher’s Pitch Location and only has two types of pitch, fastball or curveball. Due to the uncertainty in pitch control, the pitched ball actually spreads around these three spots. On the other hand, based on the pitch type and the location of the pitched ball, the batter has five possible actions.

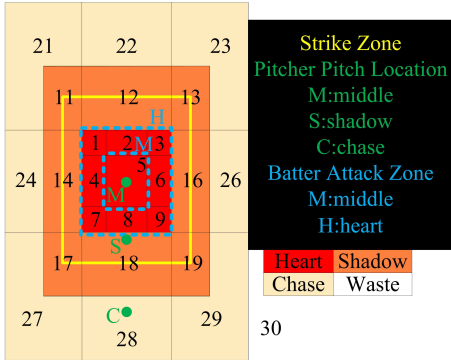


Figure 2: Strike Zone.

Pitcher’s action	Batter’s action
1. fastM (fastball in middle)	1. Wait (do not swing)
2. fastS (fastball in shadow)	2. fastM (sit on fast ball in middle)
3. curveM (curveball in middle)	3. fastH (sit on fastball in heart)
4. curveS (curveball in shadow)	4. curveH (sit on curveball in heart)
5. curveC (curveball in chase)	5. Any (hit any pitch in strike)

Table 1: Possible actions.

2.2 RELATED WORK

Meta-learning, also known as “learning to learn”, aims to train a model on a variety of learning tasks so that it can solve new learning tasks or adapt to the new environments rapidly with minimal training samples. Meta-learning has been used to learn high-level information of a model such as learning optimizers for deep networks (Ravi & Larochelle, 2017; Andrychowicz et al., 2016; Li & Malik, 2016), learning task embeddings (Vinyals et al., 2016; Snell et al., 2017), and learning to learn implicitly via RL (Duan et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2016). Especially, model-agnostic meta-learning (MAML) (Finn et al., 2017b) aims to find a set of highly adaptable parameters that can be quickly adapted to the new task. The goal of quick adaptation to the new environments for meta-learning is similar to our work, but meta-learning discusses only the case of single learning agent, instead of the two-agent case. On the other hand, Maruan et al. (Al-Shedivat et al., 2018) construct an adversarial multi-agent environment, RoboSumo, allowing the agent to continuously adapt to the changes of the opponent’s strategies. However, their approach considers only one-way adaptation and the opponent is not allowed to anticipate the learning agent’s strategy. This is different from our scenario in which both teams adapt their strategies in the game.

When it comes to the multi-agent environments, multi-agent reinforcement learning (MARL) has been widely applied in various applications, such as transportation (Fernandez-Gauna et al., 2015), social sciences (Leibo et al., 2017), resource management (Hussin et al., 2015), and controlling a group of autonomous vehicles (Hung & Givigi, 2017). The critical issue in MARL is the instability of the training process which is particularly severe in a competitive environment (Lazaridou & Baroni, 2016). To deal with the instability issue, MADDPG (Lowe et al., 2017) and M3DDPG (Li et al., 2019) have been proposed which adopt a centralized critic within the actor-critic learning framework to reduce the variance of policy gradient results. However, these methods have been designed for deterministic policies only. These methods do not perform as well in our baseball game scenario. Opponent modeling (Zhang & Lesser, 2010; Foerster et al., 2017b) is another method in which each agent can explore the opponent’s strategy. Foerster et al. (Foerster et al., 2017b) purpose a learning method, named Learning with Opponent-Learning Awareness (LOLA), to consider the learning processes of other agents. Their method has successfully enabled the cooperation of two players in repeated prisoner’s dilemma games. In this paper, we further extend the discussion to the learning issue of multiple agents in a competitive game scenario.

3 NASH-EQUILIBRIUM STRATEGY & STRATEGY ADAPTATION

3.1 NASH-EQUILIBRIUM STRATEGY

Intuitively, the Nash-equilibrium strategy is a proper strategy in a competitive game. To study the impact of initial strategy over the strategy adaptation mechanism, we propose an algorithm based on the modification of the Deep CFR algorithm to learn a strategy that approximates the Nash equilibrium strategy between the batter and the pitcher. The Deep CFR algorithm is a state-of-the-art technique to solve the imperfect information game, especially the Poker game, by traversing the game tree and playing with the regret matching algorithm at each iteration to reach the Nash equilibrium (Brown et al., 2019; Zinkevich et al., 2007). However, due to the stochastic state transitions in our baseball game scenario, we learn the state-value function via temporal-difference (TD) learning (Sutton, 1988), instead of the tree searching method originally used in Deep CFR. Besides, baseball games are inherently highly uncertain and only has one final reward (win or lose). This makes it difficult to reach Nash equilibrium. To simplify the problem, we learn the strategies of the pitcher and the batter in a half-inning and then apply the learned strategies for the whole game.

In a half-inning game, a state s is represented by a 5-tuple vector: (runs, outs, runners on, strike, ball). The batter’s final reward V_t is defined as expressed in Equation 1, while the pitcher’s final reward is defined as $-V_t$. We regard the final reward as “the state-value of the terminal state $V_t(s)$ ” to avoid the possible confusion with the term “reward”, which is to be discussed later.

$$V_t(s) = \begin{cases} -20 \cdot \delta[runs] + 30 \cdot \delta[runs - 1] + 90 \cdot \delta[runs - 2] \\ \quad + 180 \cdot \delta[runs - 3] + 300 \cdot \delta[runs - 4] + 400 \cdot \delta[runs - 5] & \text{if } runs \leq 5 \\ 400 + (runs - 5) \cdot 30 & \text{if } runs > 5 \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

The above definition is based on the observation that the average number of runs per game in MLB is about 5 and the intuition that different number of runs in a half-inning would have different impacts on the final winning percentage.

To learn the Nash-equilibrium strategy, our algorithm alternatively estimates the payoff matrices and updates the two agents' strategies based on the modified Deep CFR algorithm. In two-player zero-sum games, it has been proven that if both agents play according to CFR at every iteration, then these two agents' average strategies will gradually converge to the Nash equilibrium as the number of iterations approaches infinity (Cesa-Bianchi & Lugosi, 2006; Zinkevich et al., 2007; Waugh, 2009).

In more details, at the Iteration t , given the batter's strategy σ_b^{t-1} , the pitcher's strategy σ_p^{t-1} , and $V_t(s)$, a state-value network $V(s|\theta_v)$ is trained from scratch by using TD learning. Based on $V(s|\theta_v)$, we define the trained reward as

$$reward_{trained} = V' - V(s|\theta_v) \quad \text{where} \quad V' = \begin{cases} V(s'|\theta_v) & s' \neq s_{terminal} \\ V_t(s') & s' = s_{terminal} \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

where s' is the next state, depending on the current state and the two agents' joint actions (a_b, a_p) .

Since this game only has one final reward, we manually choose a default reward $reward_{default}$ in order to improve the training efficiency. In our approach, the reward is defined as

$$reward = [V' - V(s|\theta_v)] \cdot \frac{t}{K_1} + reward_{default} \cdot (1 - \frac{t}{K_1}) \quad (3)$$

where K_1 is a manually selected constant. Based on the above definitions, an action-value network $Q(s, a_b, a_p|\theta_Q)$ is trained from scratch to estimate the expected reward of the two agents' joint actions (a_b, a_p) . We can express $Q(s, a_b, a_p|\theta_Q)$ at the state s as a 5×5 payoff matrix with respect to pitcher's and batter's actions. With $Q(s, a_b, a_p|\theta_Q)$, the batter's instantaneous regrets r_b can be estimated by the following equation:

$$r_b(s, a_b) = \mathbb{E}_{a_p \sim \sigma_p^{t-1}(s)}[Q(s, a_b, a_p|\theta_Q)] - \mathbb{E}_{a_p \sim \sigma_p^{t-1}(s), a_b \sim \sigma_b^{t-1}(s)}[Q(s, a_b, a_p|\theta_Q)] \quad (4)$$

The pitcher's instantaneous regrets r_p is calculated in a similar way. We assume both agents know each other's strategies in order to improve the learning efficiency. The sharing of strategy information is feasible in real life since we can ask the pitcher and the batter in the same team to compete with each other to learn their individual strategies.

These instantaneous regrets $r_b(s, a_b)$ and $r_p(s, a_p)$ are converted to the new strategies σ_b^t, σ_p^t based on the following equation:

$$\sigma^t(s, a) = \frac{r_+(s, a)}{\sum_{a' \in A(s)} r_+(s, a')} \quad (5)$$

where $A(s)$ denotes the actions available at the state s and $r_+(s, a) = \max(r(s, a), 0)$. If $\sum_{a' \in A(s)} r_+(s, a') = 0$, each action is assigned an equal probability.

Equation 5 comes from the modification of the Deep CFR algorithm. The original Deep CFR algorithm converts the agent's accumulated regret R into the strategy by using the regret matching algorithm at each iteration (Hart & Mas-Colell, 2000; Zinkevich et al., 2007; Brown et al., 2019). Due to the heavy computational load of the learning process, we cannot afford too many iterations. Hence, we replace the accumulated regret R in the Deep CFR algorithm by the instantaneous regrets r . However, the replacement of R by r results in larger strategy variations at different iterations. To mitigate this problem, we define the new strategy based on the following equation

$$\sigma^t = \bar{\sigma}^{t-1} \cdot \frac{t}{K_2} + \sigma^t \cdot (1 - \frac{t}{K_2}) \quad (6)$$

where $\bar{\sigma}^{t-1}$ denotes the average strategy and K_2 is a manually selected constant to balance between $\bar{\sigma}^{t-1}$ and σ^t . At the next Iteration $(t + 1)$, σ_b^t, σ_p^t are used to train a new value network $V(s|\theta_v)$. Meanwhile, σ_b^t, σ_p^t are accumulated respectively in their strategy memories M_σ as encountering the state s , weighted by t as expressed below:

$$M_\sigma(s, a) \leftarrow M_\sigma(s, a) + \sigma^t(s, a) \cdot t \quad (7)$$

The average strategy at Iteration t is then computed from the strategy memories, expressed as

$$\bar{\sigma}^{t-1}(s, a) = \frac{M_\sigma(s, a)}{\sum_{a \in A(s)} M_\sigma(s, a)} \quad (8)$$

where $A(s)$ denotes the actions available at the state s . Note that the state-value function $V(s|\theta_v)$ highly depends on the agents' strategies, which have large variations at different iterations. Hence, $V(s|\theta_v)$ has to be retrained from scratch at every iteration.

To sum up, two agents play against each other for several iterations. In principle, their average strategies will gradually converge to the Nash-equilibrium strategy. The learned strategy is then used as the initial strategy of one baseball team for performance comparison.

3.2 STRATEGY ADAPTATION

At the beginning of the baseball game, each team plays against each other with its initial strategies σ_p and σ_b for the pitcher and the batter, respectively. The payoff matrix $Q(s, a_b, a_p|\theta_Q)$ at each state is then learned based on σ_p and σ_b . The payoff matrix is used for a team to estimate the expected reward of the two agents' joint actions at any state. As the game proceeds, we propose a strategy adaptation mechanism to gradually modify the strategies. In the following paragraphs, we present the adaptation mechanism for the batter only. The adaptation mechanism for the pitcher can be deduced in an analogous way.

During the team's batting time, σ_b is the batter's initial strategy and σ_p is the prior assumption about the opponent pitcher's strategy. At each pitch, the batter anticipates what the pitcher will pitch based on the past observations over the pitcher's actions. In Equation 9, $O(s)$ denotes all the past observations at the state s and $\tilde{\sigma}_p(s, a_p)$ denotes the predicted probability of the pitcher's action a_p at the state s . In our mechanism, we treat $\tilde{\sigma}_p(s, a_p)$ as the posterior probability, conditioned on the past observations and the prior belief. That is,

$$\tilde{\sigma}_p(s, a_p) = \pi(a_p|s, O(s)) = \frac{\prod_{i=1}^{N(O(s))} \pi(o_i(s)|s, a_p)}{\pi(O(s))} \sigma_p(s, a_p) \quad (9)$$

In Equation 9, $\sigma_p(s, a_p)$ denotes the prior knowledge about the pitcher's action at the state s . $\prod_{i=1}^{N(O(s))} \pi(o_i(s)|s, a_p)$ denotes the likelihood function based on all the past observations at this state s for the pitcher's action a_p . Here, $N(O(s))$ denotes the number of observations at the state s .

In addition to properly anticipate the pitcher's action, the batter should also know the expected reward of each action under different situations, which are expressed by $Q(s, a_b, a_p|\theta_Q)$. The batter can then obtain the advantageous strategy $\tilde{\sigma}_b$ by calculating the instantaneous regret in 4 based on $Q(s, a_b, a_p|\theta_Q)$, $\tilde{\sigma}_p(s, a)$, and $\sigma_b(s, a)$. After that, he can update his strategy $\tilde{\sigma}_b$ based on 5. To gradually modify the strategy, the batter also takes into account the initial strategy $\sigma_b(s, a)$. The adapted strategy at the state s is then defined as

$$\sigma_b^*(s, a_b) = \sigma_b(s, a_b) \cdot \left(1 - \frac{N(O(s))}{K_3}\right) + \tilde{\sigma}_b(s, a_b) \cdot \frac{N(O(s))}{K_3} \quad (10)$$

where K_3 is a manually selected constant. Equation 10 indicates that $\sigma_b^*(s, a_b)$ depends more on $\tilde{\sigma}_b$ as the number of observations $N(O(s))$ at this state s increases. This is similar to the batter's behavior in real-life baseball games.

As the batter's strategy is adaptively modified as described above, the strategy adaptation of the opponent pitcher is performed based on the batter's reaction in an analogous way. As the number of observations $N(O(s))$ reaches a pre-selected threshold N_{pitch} , both $\sigma_b(s, a_b)$ and $\sigma_p(s, a_p)$ are updated based on the following equations:

$$\sigma_p(s, a_p) \leftarrow \sigma_p(s, a_p) \cdot (1 - \eta) + \tilde{\sigma}_p(s, a_p) \cdot \eta \quad (11)$$

$$\sigma_b(s, a_b) \leftarrow \sigma_b(s, a_b) \cdot (1 - \eta) + \tilde{\sigma}_b(s, a_b) \cdot \eta \quad (12)$$

where η is a manually determined learning rate. After the update, all the past observations are reset and the same strategy adaptation process starts again.

In our simulation, each team has its own strategy pair (σ_p, σ_b) for its pitcher and its batter. For each team, either the pitcher's strategy or the batter's strategy is adaptively modified depending on whether the team is under pitching or batting. In our baseball game scenario, each team plays best-of-three games with every other team. That is, each team has at most three games to observe the opponent team.

4 EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

4.1 LEARNED NASH-EQUILIBRIUM STRATEGY

Table 2 lists the learned strategies for the pitcher and the batter at 24 different states based on the modified Deep CFR algorithm. Here, we attempt to observe the strategy differences with respect to different states. In Table 2, the "count" denotes the number of balls and the number of strikes. For example, (2-1) means 2 balls and 1 strike. Each row in Table 2 represents the probability of each action with respect to a specific count for the pitcher and the batter, respectively. It is very interesting to observe that the learned Nash-equilibrium strategy is actually quite similar to real-life baseball strategies. For example,

Case 1: Count of two strikes

When there are already two strikes, the batter has less freedom to sit on any preferred zone or specific pitch type. As shown in Table 2, for the batter, the probability of "any" is indeed quite high for these 2-strike cases, except the very special case of 3-2 (3 balls, 2 strikes). On the other hand, for the pitcher, the probability of curveC becomes higher because the pitcher has more freedom to pitch out of the strike zone to fool the batter.

Case 2: Count of 3-1

For this case (3 balls, 1 strike), we may consider two different situations. When the number of runners is smaller than or equal to 1 (Situation 1), the probability of fastM is quite high for the pitcher (0.98) because the pitcher wants to avoid a possible walk in this situation. On the other hand, the batter would have the freedom to reduce the attack zone to make a solid contact (the probability of (fastH+any) in Situation 1 is only 0.27 for the batter). However, when the number of runners are larger than 1 (Situation 2), a batter will be more aggressive since it is a good opportunity to score (the probability of (fastH+any) in Situation 2 for the batter is 0.44). On the other hand, the pitcher needs to pitch more carefully to prevent solid contact. (the probability of fastM (0.76) is lower than the probability (0.98) in Situation 1).

Table 2: Strategies of the batter and the pitcher.

Situation1: number of runners ≤ 1 . Situation2: number of runners > 1 .

	Batter's strategy					Pitcher's strategy						
	Count	wait	fastM	fastH	curveH	any	Count	fastM	fastS	curveM	curveS	curveC
Situation1	0-0	0.25	0.28	0.47	0.00	0.00	0-0	0.27	0.25	0.33	0.12	0.04
	1-0	0.18	0.21	0.52	0.09	0.00	1-0	0.23	0.27	0.32	0.16	0.02
	0-1	0.20	0.27	0.49	0.04	0.00	0-1	0.31	0.27	0.32	0.08	0.03
	1-1	0.21	0.28	0.47	0.04	0.00	1-1	0.28	0.33	0.28	0.09	0.02
	2-1	0.29	0.24	0.43	0.04	0.00	2-1	0.19	0.27	0.34	0.18	0.02
	3-1	0.28	0.19	0.20	0.26	0.07	3-1	0.98	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00
	2-0	0.19	0.16	0.49	0.17	0.00	2-0	0.28	0.27	0.24	0.18	0.03
	3-0	0.30	0.24	0.18	0.23	0.05	3-0	0.98	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00
	0-2	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.03	0.89	0-2	0.30	0.06	0.34	0.19	0.11
	1-2	0.00	0.02	0.18	0.02	0.78	1-2	0.36	0.06	0.33	0.18	0.07
	2-2	0.00	0.00	0.15	0.03	0.82	2-2	0.33	0.05	0.30	0.22	0.10
	3-2	0.04	0.04	0.54	0.06	0.32	3-2	0.68	0.12	0.16	0.05	0.00
Situation2	Count	wait	fastM	fastH	curveH	any	Count	fastM	fastS	curveM	curveS	curveC
	0-0	0.15	0.16	0.49	0.10	0.11	0-0	0.17	0.25	0.32	0.19	0.07
	1-0	0.14	0.13	0.43	0.17	0.13	1-0	0.17	0.24	0.30	0.22	0.07
	0-1	0.10	0.11	0.60	0.10	0.10	0-1	0.13	0.22	0.40	0.22	0.03
	1-1	0.14	0.14	0.48	0.16	0.08	1-1	0.13	0.30	0.29	0.23	0.05
	2-1	0.13	0.12	0.46	0.18	0.12	2-1	0.17	0.19	0.30	0.28	0.06
	3-1	0.14	0.29	0.34	0.14	0.10	3-1	0.76	0.14	0.06	0.04	0.01
	2-0	0.12	0.10	0.46	0.18	0.13	2-0	0.13	0.21	0.31	0.26	0.08
	3-0	0.17	0.41	0.24	0.11	0.07	3-0	0.71	0.16	0.08	0.04	0.01
	0-2	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.02	0.95	0-2	0.24	0.05	0.31	0.22	0.19
	1-2	0.00	0.01	0.06	0.07	0.87	1-2	0.21	0.04	0.30	0.23	0.23
	2-2	0.00	0.01	0.11	0.10	0.78	2-2	0.29	0.09	0.29	0.15	0.18
3-2	0.01	0.04	0.55	0.11	0.28	3-2	0.40	0.20	0.19	0.17	0.05	

4.2 STRATEGY ADAPTATION

In our simulation of competitive games, we form 14 teams, including 13 manually determined teams and 1 team trained by the modified Deep CFR algorithm. Each team has its own initial strategy and the payoff matrix. Each team plays the-best-of-three game against every other team for 200 series. In each series, each team has its own initial strategy at the beginning, followed by the adaptation mechanism mentioned in Section 3.2 to update its strategy based on the observations of its opponent.

In the left three columns of Table 3, we list the 14 teams, together with the characteristics of the pitcher and the batter in each team. For Team-0 to Team-3, an active batter is more aggressive to swing, while a passive batter tends to wait or to choose the action fastM more often. On the other hand, an active pitcher tends to pitch to the middle, while a passive pitcher tends to pitch to the corner. For Team-4 to Team-7, both the pitcher and the batter keep choosing the same action. For example, the batter of Team-4 always chooses the action fastH and the pitcher always chooses the action fastS. Team-8 to Team-11 are intentionally formed to defeat Team-4 to Team-8. For example, the strategy of Team-8 is especially designed to defeat Team-6, while the strategy of Team-9 is designed to defeat Team-4. The strategies of Team 0 to Team 3 & Team 8 to Team 11 are listed in B.

In the two columns on the right of Table 3, we list the averaged winning percentage (WP) of each team with respect to the other teams. For the teams with "specific tendency" (Team-4 to Team-11), some of them have higher WP, such as Team 5 and Team 9 in the without-adaptation domain. This indicates some strategies, like always pitch to the corner, can be very effective in winning the games. However, as the strategy adaptation mechanism is employed, the WP of most teams with "specific tendency" actually decreases. This is quite reasonable since the team with "specific tendency" strategy will restrict themselves to properly modify their strategies against various kinds of opponents and can be easily exploited by their opponents. On the other hand, it seems the Nash equilibrium strategy for Team-13 can serve as a good initial strategy if we want to adopt the strategy adaptation mechanism.

Table 3: Average Winning Percentage (WP) for each team in the without-adaptation domain (non) and the with-adaptation domain (adap.).

	The batter	The pitcher	WP(non)	WP(adap.)
Team 0	Active	Active	0.55	0.61
Team 1	Active	Passive	0.45	0.49
Team 2	Passive	Active	0.52	0.50
Team 3	Passive	Passive	0.41	0.55
Team 4	fastH	fastS	0.57	0.52
Team 5	fastH	curveM	0.60	0.41
Team 6	any	fastS	0.43	0.53
Team 7	any	curveM	0.49	0.30
Team 8	Exploit fastS P	Exploit any B	0.59	0.46
Team 9	Exploit fastS P	Exploit fastH B	0.64	0.41
Team 10	Exploit curveM P	Exploit any B	0.48	0.52
Team 11	Exploit curveM P	Exploit fastH B	0.53	0.45
Team 12	random	random	0.20	0.48
Team 13	Trained with modified Deep CFR		0.54	0.71

Table 4: Winning Percentage (WP) among Team-0 to Team-3. The number stands for the WP of the corresponding team listed in the left column.

	Team 0	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team12
Team 0	---	0.47	0.67	0.61	0.93
Team 1	0.53	---	0.50	0.48	0.73
Team 2	0.33	0.50	---	0.66	0.90
Team 3	0.39	0.52	0.34	---	0.66

In Table 4, we compare the winning percentage among the first four teams (Team-0 to Team-3) in the without-adaptation domain. The simulation results are very similar to real-life baseball games: (1) when the batter is active, a passive pitcher has a better chance to win than an active pitcher (Team-1 vs Team-0); (2) when the batter is passive, an active pitcher has a better chance to win than a passive pitcher (Team-2 vs Team-3); (3) when the pitcher is active, an active batter has a better chance to win than a passive batter (Team-0 vs Team-2); and (4) when the pitcher is passive, a passive batter has a better chance to win than an active batter (Team-3 vs Team-1).

Table 4 shows that none of these four teams can dominate the games. Team-1 beats Team-0, Team-0 beats Team-2, Team-2 beats Team-3, while Team-3 beats Team-1. This implies the importance of strategy adaptation. Besides, in Table 4, we also show that all these four teams have better chances to beat Team-12, which adopts a random initial strategy. This implies that a team with a strategy is better than a team without any strategy.

When two teams, if named as home team and guest team, compete with each other, there are four possible combinations in strategy adaptation: (1) only the guest team adapts, (2) both teams do not adapt, (3) both teams adapt, and (4) only the home team adapts. In Table 5, we list the competition results of these four different combinations when we choose Team-5 or Team-13 as the home team and choose each of the remaining teams as the guest team. Here, Team-5 represents those teams with a "specific tendency" strategy, while Team-13 represents the team with a Nash-equilibrium initial strategy. Besides, in Table 5, we classify Team-4 to Team-11 as Category 1, whose initial strategy has "specific tendency", while classify the other teams as Category 2. On the right three columns of Table 5, "avg" represents the averaged WP value with respect to all the guest teams, "avg-1" represents the averaged WP with respect to Category-1 teams, and "avg-2" represents the averaged WP value with respect to Category-2 teams.

In Table 5, we observe some interesting phenomena:

1. In terms of "avg", Team-5 has the best performance when both teams do not adapt, while has the worst performance when both teams adapt.
2. In terms of "avg1", the WP of Team-5 is roughly 50%, basically independent of the adaptation mechanism.
3. In terms of "avg2", the WP of Team-5 drops drastically from "No Adapt" to "Both Adapt".
4. For Team-13, the WP increases if the strategy adaptation mechanism is adopted (see "Both Adapt" and "Home Adapt").
5. With strategy adaptation, the WP of Team-13 against any other team is higher than 50 %. This implies, in average, Team-13 always wins when strategy adaptation is used.

Based on the above observations, we have the following conclusions:

1. **Those teams with a "specific tendency" strategy might have high winning percentage against some of the other teams when there is no strategy adaptation. However, as the adaptation mechanism is adopted, those teams' advantage tends to drop.**
2. **The team with a Nash-equilibrium initial strategy benefits from the strategy adaptation mechanism.**

Table 5: WP of Team-5 and Team-13 against the other teams for 2000 series.

WP of Team 5 against the other teams.																	
domain	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	avg	avg1	avg2
Guest Adapt	0.69	0.56	0.76	0.57	0.78	0.39	0.93	0.27	0.70	0.08	0.77	0.30	0.84	0.35	0.57	0.53	0.63
No Adapt	0.75	0.77	0.66	0.69	0.98	0.49	0.80	0.10	0.83	0.38	0.34	0.05	0.93	0.70	0.61	0.50	0.75
Both Adapt	0.27	0.65	0.24	0.37	0.72	0.50	0.43	0.41	0.43	0.78	0.13	0.27	0.28	0.29	0.41	0.46	0.35
Home Adapt	0.17	0.54	0.24	0.62	0.39	0.59	0.42	0.61	0.21	0.36	0.51	0.67	0.87	0.38	0.47	0.47	0.47

WP of Team 13 against the other teams.																	
domain	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	avg	avg1	avg2
Guest Adapt	0.37	0.43	0.63	0.53	0.43	0.63	0.61	0.76	0.62	0.50	0.61	0.69	0.77	0.31	0.56	0.61	0.51
No Adapt	0.46	0.57	0.57	0.67	0.47	0.31	0.65	0.46	0.44	0.32	0.67	0.57	0.90	0.50	0.54	0.49	0.61
Both Adapt	0.62	0.58	0.77	0.66	0.71	0.72	0.80	0.84	0.75	0.58	0.82	0.76	0.88	0.49	0.71	0.75	0.67
Home Adapt	0.71	0.74	0.71	0.74	0.77	0.67	0.72	0.61	0.75	0.62	0.72	0.56	0.94	0.71	0.71	0.68	0.76

5 CONCLUSION

In this paper, we construct a simplified baseball game scenario to develop and evaluate the adaptation capability of learning agents. We are especially interested in what kinds of teams have a better chance to survive when there is strategy adaptation. Intuitively, the Nash equilibrium is a proper strategy in competitive games and thus we purpose a modified Deep CFR algorithm to learn an initial strategy that approximates the Nash equilibrium strategy. The experimental results indeed show that the team with a Nash-equilibrium-like initial strategy is more favorable than a team with a deterministic initial strategy.

In this work, since we only focus on the impact of strategies on Winning Percentage, the capabilities of the pitcher and the batter are fixed across different teams. In the future work, we would relief this constraint and both teams are required to anticipate the "capabilities and strategies" of the opponents during the game process. This setup will make the game scenario more realistic, and the behavior of the agents would be more similar to the behavior of human players in the real life.

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A PSEUDO CODE

A.1 MODIFIED DEEP CFR

Algorithm 1 Modified Deep CFR

```

1: function LEARNSTRATEGY
2:   Initialize strategies  $\sigma_b^0, \sigma_p^0, \sigma_b^{t0}, \sigma_p^{t0}$  with random strategies.
3:   Initialize Strategy memories  $M_{\sigma_b}, M_{\sigma_p}$ .
4:   Choose final reward  $V_i(s)$  and default reward  $reward_{default}$ . Select constant  $K_1$  and  $K_2$ .
5:   for Iteration  $t=1$  to  $T$  do
6:      $V(s|\theta_V), M_{\sigma_b}, M_{\sigma_p} = \text{LEARNVALUE}(\sigma_b^{t-1}, \sigma_p^{t-1}, \sigma_b^{t-1}, \sigma_p^{t-1}, M_{\sigma_b}, M_{\sigma_p})$ 
7:      $Q(s, a_b, a_p|\theta_Q) = \text{LEARNQ}(V(s|\theta_V))$ 
8:     Calculate both players' instantaneous regrets  $r_b, r_p$  respectively with equation 4.
9:     Convert the both players' instantaneous regrets  $r_b, r_p$  to the new strategies  $\sigma_b^t, \sigma_p^t$  respectively with equation 5.
10:    Calculate the average strategy  $\bar{\sigma}_b^{t-1}, \bar{\sigma}_p^{t-1}$  from Strategy memories  $M_{\sigma_b}, M_{\sigma_p}$  respectively with equation 8.
11:    Calculate the new strategies  $\sigma_b^{tt}, \sigma_p^{tt}$  with equation 6.
12:  end for
13:  return  $\bar{\sigma}_b^T, \bar{\sigma}_p^T$ 
14: end function

```

Algorithm 2 Learning Value function

```

1: function LEARNVALUE( $\sigma_b, \sigma_p, \sigma'_b, \sigma'_p, M_{\sigma_b}, M_{\sigma_p}$ )
2:   Initialize  $V(s|\theta_V)$ , Replay buffer  $D$ .
3:   for episode  $t=1$  to  $K$  do
4:     Initialize  $s$ .
5:     repeat (for each state of episode)
6:       Accumulate  $\sigma_b(s), \sigma_p(s)$  respectively in their strategy memories, weighted by  $t$  with equation 7.
7:       Select actions according to  $\sigma'_b, \sigma'_p$  from  $s$  and observe the new state  $s'$ .
8:       Store transition  $(s, s')$  Into  $D$ .
9:       Sample a random minibatch of  $N$  transitions  $(s_i, s'_i)$  from  $D$ . Update the value function  $V(s|\theta_V)$  by minimizing the loss:
          
$$L = \frac{1}{N} \sum_i [(V(s_i|\theta_V) - V')^2] \quad \text{where} \quad V' = \begin{cases} V(s'_i|\theta_V) & s'_i \neq s_{terminal} \\ V_t(s'_i) & s'_i = s_{terminal} \end{cases}$$

10:       $s \leftarrow s'$ 
11:     until  $s$  is terminal
12:   end for
13:   return  $V(s|\theta_V), M_{\sigma_b}, M_{\sigma_p}$ 
14: end function

```

Algorithm 3 Learning Q function

```

1: function LEARNQ( $V(s|\theta_V)$ )
2:   Initialize  $Q(s, a_b, a_p|\theta_Q)$ , Replay buffer  $D$ .
3:   for episode  $t=1$  to  $K$  do
4:     Randomly initialize  $s$ .
5:     repeat (for each state of episode)
6:       Randomly select actions  $(a_b, a_p)$  from  $s$  and observe the new state  $s'$  and  $reward$ 
       according to equation 3.
7:       Store transition  $(s, a_b, a_p, reward, s')$  into  $D$ .
8:       Sample a random minibatch of  $N$  transitions  $(s_i, a_{b,i}, a_{p,i}, reward_i, s'_i)$  from  $D$ .
       Update the  $Q$  function  $Q(s, a_b, a_p|\theta_Q)$  by minimizing the loss:
        $L = \frac{1}{N} \sum_i [(Q(s_i, a_{b,i}, a_{p,i}|\theta_Q) - reward_i)^2]$ 
9:        $s \leftarrow s'$ 
10:    until  $s$  is terminal
11:  end for
12:  return  $Q(s, a_b, a_p|\theta_Q)$ 
13: end function

```

A.2 ADAPTATION MECHANISM

Algorithm 4 Adaptation mechanism for the batter during a game

```

1: procedure A GAME
2:   Set  $N_{pitch}, \eta, K_3$ .
3:   Initialize the observation memory  $O$ .
4:   Prepare  $\sigma_b$ (The batter's initial strategy),  $\sigma_p$ (the prior assumption about the opponent
   pitcher's strategy), and payoff matrix  $Q(s, a_b, a_p|\theta_Q)$ .
5:   repeat (for each state of episode)
6:     if  $N(O(s)) \geq 1$  then //  $N(O(s))$  denotes the number of observations at the state  $s$ .
7:       Anticipate the pitcher's strategy  $\tilde{\sigma}_p(s, a)$  based on the past observations in  $O(s)$ 
       according to equation 9.
8:       Calculate the regret  $r_b(s, a_b)$  by 4 with  $Q(s, a_b, a_p|\theta_Q), \tilde{\sigma}_p(s, a), \sigma_b(s, a)$ .
9:       Convert  $r_b(s, a_b)$  to the strategy  $\tilde{\sigma}_b(s, a)$  with equation 5.
10:    end if
11:    Calculate  $\sigma_b^*(s, a_b)$  according to equation 10.
12:    We select action according to  $\sigma_b^*(s, a_b)$ , and the opponent pitcher select his action.
13:    The game proceeds to the new state  $s'$ .
14:    Restore the observed pitch into  $O(s)$ .
15:     $N(O(s)) + = 1$ .
16:    if  $N(O(s)) == N_{pitch}$  then
17:      update  $\sigma_p(s, a_p)$  by equation 11
18:      update  $\sigma_b(s, a_b)$  by equation 12
19:       $N(O(s)) = 0$ 
20:      Reset  $O(s)$ .
21:    end if
22:     $s \leftarrow s'$ 
23:  until  $s$  is terminal
24: end procedure

```

B THE STRATEGIES OF TEAM 0 TO TEAM 3, AND TEAM 8 TO TEAM 11

During a game, these team's strategies only depend on "count".

C POSSIBLE BATTING RESULTS

We collect every piece of data of batters vs. pitchers from MLB data on Stacast Search in 2016. Then we classify all the possible batting results into 32 categories, as listed in Table 14, according to the batted ball information of “Event”, “Location”, “Type”, “Distance”, and “Exit Velocity” from collected data.

Batted Ball Type describes a batted ball, depending on how it comes off the bat and where in the field it lands. There are generally four descriptive categories: fly ball, pop-up, line drive, ground ball. Line drive is that a batted ball hit hard enough and low enough that it appears to travel in a relatively straight line. Pop-up is a specific type of fly ball that goes very high while not traveling very far laterally.

Table 14: The 32 categories of possible batting results

category	description	location
Hit		
0	HR	irrelevant
1	3B	irrelevant
2	2B	hit into a gap, far
3	2B	down the foul lines
4	2B	hit into a gap, not far
5	1B	Left field
6	1B	Center field
7	1B	Right field
8	1B	Infield
Out		
9	ground ball	Pitcher
10	ground ball	Catcher
11	ground ball	First baseman
12	ground ball	Second baseman
13	ground ball	Third baseman
14	ground ball	Shortstop
15	line drive	Pitcher
16	line drive	Catcher
17	line drive	First baseman
18	line drive	Second baseman
19	line drive	Third baseman
20	line drive	Shortstop
21	fly ball	Left field
22	fly ball	Center field
23	fly ball	Right field
24	far fly ball	Left field
25	far fly ball	Center field
26	far fly ball	Right field
27	pop-up	irrelevant
do not hit into play		
28	foul ball	---
29	swing and a miss	---
30	called strike	---
31	ball	---