

Diplomacy World #162



Summer 2023 Issue
www.diplomacyworld.net

Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of **Diplomacy World**, the Summer 2023 issue. The oppressive summer heat always drains me of some of my energy and enthusiasm for things. I don't mean I become depressed; it isn't that as much as a lack of excitement and motivation. But everything is relative, so in a week or so when I have a day that it "only" 90 degrees I'll probably feel refreshed!

In the meantime, I present you with the latest issue. In terms of content, this time around it's heaviest in terms of in-person reports from some of the major Diplomacy face-to-face events that have taken place since last issue. It's really great to see the FtF hobby bouncing back and flourishing after the battering it took during the pandemic. It seems the hope most of the hobby had has come to fruition: the virtual part of the hobby has remained strong and vibrant while the face-to-face events have returned to full strength. And there's a wonderful crossover between the player bases!

Of course, that's not the only material you'll find in this issue. You know I've said this before, but I gotta say it again: it's amazing the great articles that find their way into my inbox just when I am sitting here a few days before the deadline, wondering how I am going to stretch this into an issue worthy of publication. One minute I've got right pages of articles, and the next we're approaching 40. Impressive, and I want to thank all of you for continuing to support the zine.

One other thing I do want to mention: I saw a couple of interesting responses to articles from **Diplomacy World** #161 posted on various Diplomacy-related Discord servers. Unfortunately, I can't – or won't – pull that kind of material from outside sources without permission and attribution. So PLEASE, if you have responses to articles in Diplomacy World, remember to send them to me for publication regardless of whether you decide to post them elsewhere?

Some sad news arrived on July 1. Paul Milewski's son wrote this: It is with much sadness that I inform you of my father's passing yesterday. He had extensive surgery on Wednesday that left him weakened. We were hopeful for a recovery in 7-10 days, but fate had other plans. Paul has been involved with Diplomacy for decades, we had the board game at home and played often when my siblings and I were kids, and it was one of his greatest pleasures in life. Please give our thanks to everyone in the community for their friendship, passion, and dedication.

I'll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is October 1, 2023. Remember, besides articles (which are always prized and appreciated), we LOVE to get letters, feedback, input, ideas, and suggestions too. So, email me at diplomacyworld@yahoo.com! See you in the fall, and happy stabbing!

Knives and Daggers - The Diplomacy World Letter Column



Mark Nelson – For variant fans of an older vintage one of the best-known variants set in the Ancient/Classical Mediterranean would have been Diadochi V. This was included in Fred C. Davis Jr.'s "Personal List of the Most Enjoyable and Playable Variants".

A subset of these designs was published in a booklet by Andrew Poole that was circulated in the UK Hobby. Following publication of this book, a few postal games were run and the consensus seemed to be that it was not that good. At World DipCon I (1988) I asked Fred why he had included it and his comment was that it had a good reputation and that it was interesting that the same map catered for three variants.

I see that my interview with Fred can still be found on the web at:

<http://ukdp.diplomatic-pouch.com/pouch/Zine/S1998R/Nelson/Davis.html>

Incidentally, your readers may be interested to read about the pieces that Calhamer used in his original Diplomacy set. That information will be contained in my article on the Diplomacy hobby in 1963, which cross-fingers is appearing soon!

[[I ran Diadochi V once or twice in Maniac's Paradise and it turned out to be a below-average variant. It was Fred's recommendation that caused me to give it a try. And yes, I remember asking him about it later and he admitted he'd really not looked at it very closely at all, and instead was simply going off of what someone else had told him.]]

Diplomacy World Staff:

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Managing Lead Editor: | Douglas Kent, Email: diplomacyworld of yahoo.com or dougray30 of yahoo.com |
| Co-Editor: | Vacant!! |
| Strategy & Tactics Editor: | Vacant!! |
| Variant Editor: | Ben Durfee, Email: playdiplomacymoderator of gmail.com |
| Interview Editor: | Randy Lawrence-Hurt, Email: randy.lawrencehurt of gmail.com |
| Club and Tournament Editor: | Peter McNamara, Email me of petermc.net |
| Demo Game Editor: | Rick Desper, Email: rick_desper of yahoo.com |
| Technology Editor: | Vacant!! |
| Original Artwork | Original Artwork by Matt Pickard a.k.a. "Lady Razor" |

Contributors in 2023: Stephen Agar, Dan Bojanowski, Chris Brand, Eber Condrell, Johnny Gillam, Bill Hackenbracht, Thomas Haver, Cameron Higbe, Jon Hills, Matt Holland, David Hood, Tim Hoyt, Mikalis Kamaritis, Chris Kelly, Randy Lawrence-Hurt, David Maletsky, Alex Maslow, Craig Mayr, Zachary Moore, Mark Nelson, Adam Silverman, Paul Webb. Add your name to the 2023 list by submitting something for the next issue!

Contributions are welcomed and will earn you accolades and infinite thanks. Persons interested in the vacant staff positions may contact the managing editor for details or to submit their candidacy or both. The same goes for anyone interested in becoming a columnist or senior writer. **Diplomacy** is a game invented by Allan Calhamer. It is currently manufactured by Hasbro and the name is their trademark with all rights reserved.

In This Issue:

| | |
|---|---------|
| Editorial: <i>Notes from the Editor</i> by Douglas Kent | Page 2 |
| Letters: <i>Knives and Daggers – The Diplomacy World Letter Column</i> | Page 2 |
| Feature: <i>Diplomacy Hobby Openings: How You Can Get Involved</i> by Zachary Moore | Page 4 |
| Feature: <i>A Tornado Induces a Whirlwind: The Story of a Surprise Adventure</i> by Mikalis Kamaritis | Page 5 |
| Tournament News: <i>Selected Upcoming Events</i> | Page 7 |
| Tournament News: <i>Upcoming Events Flyer</i> by Zachary Moore | Page 8 |
| Tournaments: <i>Dipcon 2023 at Dixiecon – TD's Report</i> by David Hood | Page 9 |
| Feature: <i>All Orders Lead to Rome: A Venture with the Chaos Italy Variant</i> by Cameron Higbe | Page 12 |
| Variants: <i>Frontier Variant: Civil War in America</i> by Paul Webb | Page 14 |
| Tournaments: <i>A Friday in Boston</i> by Randy Lawrence-Hurt | Page 20 |
| Tournament News: <i>Upcoming Events Flyer</i> by Thomas Haver | Page 22 |
| Tournaments: <i>Greetings From San Marino Con 2023</i> by Thomas Haver | Page 23 |
| Feature: <i>Ask the Hobby Historian: Dipcon Site Rotation</i> by David Hood | Page 25 |
| Feature: <i>For Want of a Nail... in Airstrip One</i> by Jon Hills | Page 26 |
| Classic Diplomacy World: <i>Sun Tzu and The Art of War</i> by Tim Hoyt (from Diplomacy World #76) | Page 29 |
| Feature: <i>Surveying the Dip-Media Landscape</i> by David Hood | Page 32 |
| Tournaments: <i>The Origins Diplomacy Tournament</i> by Thomas Haver | Page 33 |
| Tournaments: <i>2023 Armada Regatta Flyer</i> | Page 42 |

Diplomacy Hobby Openings: How You Can Get Involved

By Zachary Moore

Ask the various Diplomacy hobby organizers how they went from simply playing our favorite game to actively promoting its growth, and more often than not you'll hear a similar story: they had an idea and simply did it without asking anyone or waiting until they had all the details perfectly ironed out. Over time, the details will always take care of themselves. The budding Olympus and Demosthenes communities, built through guerilla promotion through public Backstabbr games with Discord invite links in the description to circumvent the platform's lack of forum, are prime recent examples of the just-go-for-it mentality that so often precedes organizing success for this game.

And that's great, but a weakness I've started to perceive in our entrepreneurial system is that it's hard to know how to get involved in a small, reasonable way if you don't have the time to become a full blown [meta-emperor](#). Yet as our communities grow, so does the need for additional bodies in the organizer space. How can we make it easier for a person who enjoys the Diplomacy community to get involved in the building and maintaining that community without requiring the level of dedication asked of the Zeus's and Sabi Ahuja's and Dave Maletsky's of the world who selflessly lay untold hours at Calhammer's alter? I'd like this submission to Diplomacy World (itself a hobby pillar which could use volunteers in small capacities!) to highlight some smaller, less enveloping opportunities that you - yes you - can fill without jeopardizing your marriage/job/sanity.

Olympus Diplomacy

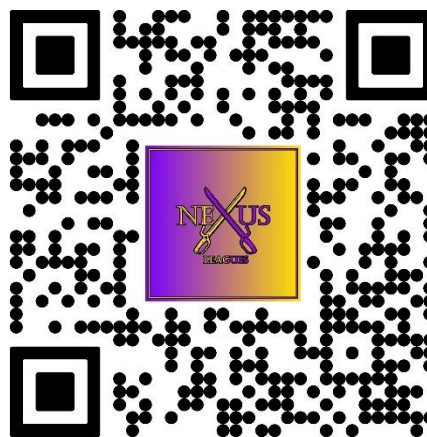
Olympus runs a lot of full press and gunboat Diplomacy games, and those games always need GMs. If you have never GMd a Diplomacy game before, it's pretty simple! You create the game on Backstabbr according to the Tournament Director's specifications, help all the players register successfully, and then keep an eye on it to make sure nobody NMRs. Simple! BobZeBuilder (also known as Zeus) has recently begun organizing a France vs. Austria tournament that will play well over a hundred games from the sound of it, so if GMing 7 players sounds like a bit much, perhaps raise your hand to GM a few games of the two-player variant. Feeling a little more industrious? If you're into variants, Olympus would love from someone to launch a variant tournament on the server. How do you get involved? Simply slide into the Olympus Discord server, introduce yourself and proclaim for all to hear "I would like to help GM or I would like to run a variant tournament on this server". Seriously, that's what you should do. If that's too forward, send me a DM on Discord and I'll help make the introduction. Follow

this link to join the server:

<https://discord.gg/xvNAh8vWEk>

Nexus Leagues

Another server dedicated to full press & gunboat; Nexus Leagues is always looking for more people to help out with GMing duties. Looking for a bigger challenge? The NL server could use a willing and able volunteer to run 'speedboat' games at regular intervals. Speedboat is gunboat played with short (usually 5 minute) adjudication periods, with an entire game finishing in about 2 hours. Speedboat organizers need to be more hands-on than other GMs, but it is a terrifically fun way to play, and if you have the time to revive that style of play, you'll be embraced with open arms. Follow the QR code below to join the server. The League Director of NL is Evan Swihart, shoot him a DM! Or just post on the server.



Virtual Diplomacy

There are three competitions on the vWDC Discord server (QR code below) that are always looking for an extra pair of hands to serve as GM. GMing a 'virtual face-to-face' Diplomacy game is slightly more hands-on than GMing an extended deadline one, but is still fairly laid back and only takes about 6-7 hours, during which you can easily multitask. The three competitions that can use your help are:

-Virtual Diplomacy League (director: me!)

-Tour of Britain (director: Garry Sturely)

-vWDC Summer Classic (director: Liam Stokes)



North American Diplomacy Federation

That's right folks, even face-to-face Diplomacy requires the kind help of volunteer organizers beyond the Tournament Directors that run events. Here are some opportunities to get involved with the NADF:

- If you're going to a tournament, bring your laptop and offer to help with sandboxing.

Backstabbr sandboxes are the secret sauce that allows the Diplomacy Broadcast Network to stream every board from every tournament, but it only works if we have, well, sandboxes.

- Whether or not you're going to a tournament soon, the NADF is putting together a team of hobbyists dedicated to recruiting and retaining new players. That can mean creating videos/tutorial materials aimed at new players, or it could mean reviving our pitifully defunct social media channels (seriously, help). If you know how to use Tik Tok, talk to me. Please.



That's all I've got for now! If you want to get involved and are having trouble navigating the complex web of Discord servers, shoot me an email directly at edwardzacha785@gmail.com, and I'll get you pointed in the right direction.

A Tornado Induces a Whirlwind: The Story of a Surprise Adventure

by Mikalis Kamaritis

It's early April in Kingston upon Hull, and I'm sitting in my university accommodation happily enjoying some ramen noodles. There's a FTF Diplomacy event in California coming up, but the idea of going to it hasn't even crept into the wildest of my student budgeting predictions. My next student loan will come in the day after it finishes, my expenditure is fully planned to eke out the remains of my last tranche, but life is good and I'm looking forward to appearing as a DBN Analyst for the event.

It's the Thursday before the event. I find myself in another part of the world, landing at San Francisco Airport. And I ask myself: "How did I get here?"

Rewind. Enter Tommy 'Tornado' Anderson. For months he'd been on the fence, umming and ahing on Discord about whether he'd go to Whipping, with Siobhan Nolen constantly encouraging him to go. And so there I am, late one night, seeing the latest post on this topic - and I

make an offhand joke that "I'm more likely to turn up than Tommy is." Siobhan replies - equally jokingly - that she could make that happen. Mirth is had, and I go to sleep, forgetting all about it. Meanwhile unbeknownst to me in California, Siobhan thinks about that joke, and it slowly transitions from a joke to the seed of an idea.

The next day, after my classes are over and I get home, I see a message from Siobhan - "I'm a little bit serious. If I made it happen, would you be able to come to Whipping?" After some initially cautious responses on my end, that seed of an idea begins to bloom. Timing-wise, I'm free that week due to Easter break. However, with less than 2 weeks until the event, and the need to get an ESTA to get into the USA, arrangements would be on an extremely tight schedule. Siobhan tells me that she'll put out feelers about crowdsourcing my flight, and I assume that - amazing though this idea is, and I'm already grateful for the thought - it'll probably not

happen. No hopes are raised too high lest they be dashed.

Come the weekend however, and suddenly I'm informed that the crowdsourcing has been successful. I'm sitting there, shell shocked at this sudden awesome transformation of reality, whilst simultaneously the panic of the sudden bureaucratic hurdles needed to clear for a first international trip since before the pandemic began to rise up. Over the next ten days arrangements are panickily planned - ESTA's applied for, London to San Francisco flights booked, train tickets, timings, vaccine certificates, bureaucratic hurdles, etc. etc. - all are overcome in a surreal whirlwind as the days fly by. And suddenly - here I am - on my way to Whipping, the first FTF event I'll have attended since the 2017 WDC in Oxford.



At the pre-event socializing I meet friends I've known for many years from webDiplomacy such as Katie Gray, Karthik Konath, and Craig Mayr. I also meet more recent friends from the world of virtual FTF - not least Siobhan, the real hero of the story, and Sabi Ahuja, who generously allowed me to room with them. And I meet many new faces, locals or otherwise, who I'd never previously had the opportunity to interact with at all. None of them are people I'd met before (Oxford was a long time ago, and whilst I may have interacted with some of the Whipping attendees there, I neither remembered them nor did they remember me, as far as I'm aware). But all of them are amazing people.

When it came to the Diplomacy itself, the results were average but the games were great fun. The first game was a three-way top as Russia, shared with Chris Brand and Siobhan in an EG after Siobhan had repeatedly attacked me to help Chris... A game that would doubtless have rather frustrated me had it been online,

but which I was too busy enjoying the event and soaking up the atmosphere to get really irritated by in person - and it provided a source of good comedy too. The east had been more chaotic, but an alliance with Edwin Lopez in Turkey helped me maintain my strength in the face of the fast-moving EG that was demolishing the west. Edwin was a new face to me (and I believe to FTF tournament play in general), but we quickly established a very strong relationship without needing to take up too much of each other's time - a great boon to me as I constantly wheeled and dealt in the north to try to stop Chris and Siobhan from eating me alive. For someone who was new to the tournament scene, Edwin played great, and I hope to get to play with him again at other events or online in the future.

Game two was more of a backs-to-the-wall game, as I played an Italy that attacked France early on with an EG but was then attacked myself by a RAT in the east. Edwin was in Austria this time, with Zach Moore in Russia and Matthew Totonchy in Turkey. My early capture of Marseilles was quickly tempered by their advance - although they had prioritized going after the three build Germany first, and relations with Edwin were sufficient for him to agree to take Venice with a fleet rather than an army. At that stage, it still looked like I was on my way out of the game, but the following year I was able to persuade Craig in Germany and Dave Roberts in England that I needed builds out of France to hold the med line, whilst simultaneously we convinced Zach's Russia to stab in the RAT, and Edwin didn't launch an attack on Rome after shuffling an army there. Suddenly I somehow go from a 4SC Italy on the verge of collapse to building two units by taking both Brest and Paris with armies, with an Austria desperate to pull back out of my lands to defend from Russia.

Because Edwin had kept the negotiation lines open, I elected to only build fleets and leave him more room to deal with Zach rather than try to retake Venice, whilst Turkey now saw my wooden wall and realized they weren't getting past the Ionian. AT banded together to take down Zach and left me alone, whilst myself, England, and Germany did some light-hearted squabbling. England took the 8-centre top, but I stayed on 6 centers (swapping Paris for Spain), and Craig in Germany didn't launch an attack on an empty Brest in the final turn. Good thing he wouldn't regret those lost points later in the tournament...

By the time of my final game, I knew that I was out of realistic contention for the tournament win, with Matt Crill having a very large lead. So, I aimed my sights at Best Country, and then rolled Turkey. A chaotic board all-over saw the formation of an AT with Brandon Fogel, but our rapid early progress was countered by a huge Western Triple with a four fleet France rolling into the Med... thereby letting a single German army walk into Belgium

and Paris as a result. With the French fleets still blocking my progress around Italy, I made a calculated gamble that I could stab Brandon and get Best Turkey even whilst Chris Brand's Germany would top the game. Sadly, that calculation proved incorrect, and in the end another mediocre result was settled for, taking me to seventh place overall. Brandon might forgive me one day!

And so, in summary, Whipping was a fabulous experience from start to finish. To go from a joke to a fantasy to reality in such a short space of time - all thanks to the generosity of the Diplomacy community - was both incredible and deeply touching. I was and remain overwhelmed with gratitude and pleasant shock that such a thing could happen. I then filed the

experience away in a "once in a lifetime" experience drawer - superb and brilliant - and happily signed up to analyze DixieCon for DBN instead. So, when David Hood showed that lightning can strike twice, and I found myself preparing for another trip over to America, the astonishment at people's generosity hit me all over again.

To anyone out there that isn't sure if Diplomacy is the next hobby you want to embrace - come on in, you won't find a better community than this! And to Siobhan, David, and everyone else that has made each of these trips happen and who gave me such a fantastic welcome in San Jose (and doubtlessly will do again in Chapel Hill) - once again, from the bottom of my heart, thank you all. What a group of people.

Selected Upcoming Events

Find Conventions All Over the World at <http://petermc.net/diplomacy/> and <https://www.thenadf.org/play/> and <https://www.diplomacybriefing.com/diplomacytournaments>

Virtual Diplomacy League Event – July 8th, 2023 - <https://diplobn.com/vdl/>

French Championship, July 14th – July 16th, 2023 - Bellevigne-en-Layon, Maine-et-Loire, France - https://tdfdiplo.fandom.com/fr/wiki/Anjou_Feu_XIII - Email - diplomatiegabriel@hotmail.com

2023 Armada Regatta – July 14th – July 16th, 2023 – Denver, Colorado - <http://armada-dip.com/2023/> - Email - Diplom@ManusHand.com

ManorCon – July 21st – July 24th, 2023 – Leicester University, Leicester, England - <https://www.facebook.com/events/579302346912218/>

World Boardgame Championships – July 28th – July 29th, 2023 – Seven Springs Mountain Resort, Pennsylvania - <http://www.boardgamers.org/>

GenCon – August 3rd – August 5th, 2023 – Indianapolis, Indiana - <http://www.gencon.com/>

Boston Massacre – August 4th – August 6th, 2023 – Pandemonium Books and Games, 4 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts – <https://sites.google.com/site/bostonmassacrediplomacy/> - Email - blueraider0@gmail.com

Virtual Diplomacy League Event – August 13th, 2023 - <https://diplobn.com/vdl/>

World Dipcon – August 17th – August 20th, 2023 – Bangkok, Thailand – Check <http://www.wdcbangkok.com> (coming soon) or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/wdc2023>

Weasel Moot – September 29th – October 1st, 2023 – The Kimpton Gray, 122 W. Monroe St., Chicago, IL – <https://windycityweasels.org>

Liberty Cup – October 6th – October 8th, 2023 – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania - <https://liberty-cup.com/2022-liberty-cup/>

Carnage – October 27th – October 29th, 2023 – Killington Grand Resort, Killington, Vermont – www.carnagecon.com - Email: dmaletsky0@gmail.com



Upcoming Events In 2023

The fun doesn't have to stop after Sunday, get back in the game with an upcoming in-person, extended deadline or virtual event!

Face-to-Face



Regatta (Denver, CO) - July 14-16
manus2hand@gmail.com

Boston Massacre (Boston, MA) - August 4-6
armaslow@gmail.com

Weasel Moot (Chicago, IL) - September 29 - October 1
<https://windycityweasels.org/>

Liberty Cup (Philadelphia, PA) - October 6-8
<https://liberty-cup.com/>

CarnageCon (Killington, VT) - October 26-28
dmaletsky0@gmail.com

Cascadia Open (Vancouver, BC)* - Date TBD, late January/early February
cascadia.open@gmail.com

*2024 DipCon

Extended Deadline



These games are played online with text-based communication, with one turn adjudicated every 24 hours and a full game lasting 1-2 months.

Nexus Press League - New waves starting every two week

Olympus Diplomacy - Registration opening soon for France Vs. Austria (FvA) tournament

Live Voice Games



Voice games or "Virtual Face-to-Face" are played on the Discord app, much like an in-person game but using voice chat for negotiations and an online adjudicator for the game board.

Virtual Diplomacy League - Next event June 17

Tour of Britain - Next event June 11



www.thenadf.org

Dipcon 2023 at Dixiecon – TD's Report

By David Hood

I had run the North American Diplomacy Championships, Dipcon, five times before this year, but it had been a while. So, running something like Dipcon...it's a lot. The event is very important to the North American hobby, particularly in years (like 2023) when we do not host the World Dipcon. Obviously, we want all of our face-to-face tournaments to be well attended and fun, but also it's important to have one big event per year where folk from all over the continent, and beyond, can see each other to rekindle past friendships and to forge new ones.

Our face-to-face hobby is still recovering from the pandemic, with a fair number of attendees from the 2019 Seattle Dipcon, for example, still not back in the hobby on a regular basis. I was happy that this year at Dixiecon we were able to get some of that Old Guard back, even if they did not actually play Dip but instead opted to participate in the Iron Man gaming. We also had a great turnout of our newer players who became more active in the wider hobby during the pandemic, including sixteen players attending a live Dixiecon for the first time! Overall, seventy-six folk descended on Granville Towers in Chapel Hill, North Carolina the last week of May to play Dip, compete in the Iron Man, and to consume large quantities of food at the traditional Saturday BBQ.

First things first, though, the gaming action actually started on Thursday night, as the Iron Man tournament for non-Diplomacy gaming got off to a raucous start with early attendees playing a number of titles, including Ra, Space Base, Terraforming Mars, Pinochle, 1775, Ticket to Ride Europe, and the venerable old classic from Dixiecons 30+ years ago, 1830. There was also a little side tournament of Magic the Gathering in which the Dip players and non-Dip players had a great opportunity to mingle, socialize and try to curse each other into oblivion.

In other words, good healthy fun.

Throughout the day on Friday, the Iron Man gaming continued even as many of us ferried travelers to the Con from the Raleigh-Durham airport. In between various activities getting ready for the start of the Dip event at 6pm that evening, I noticed the following games hitting the tables: Dune Imperium, Gaia Project, TMars, Scout, Wingspan, Paperback, Splendor, Mosaic, Strat-O-Matic Baseball, Robo Rally and yes, you totally guessed it, the very strategic and not-at-all-ridiculous game, Battle Sheep!

The 52nd annual Dipcon Diplomacy tournament began that night with the Dixiecon tradition of the awarding of trophies, plaques and more for past Dixiecons - which this year included Bruce Reiff finally getting the Order of the Knife medal for his Dixiecon wins in...1994 and 1997! We also had four of us show up for the opening ceremony sporting our seersucker suits, another Dixiecon tradition - this year our seersuckers besides me were Greg Fairbanks, Bill Morgan and Alex Ronke.



**All of the Former Dixiecon Winners Who Attended
Dipcon 2023 at Dixiecon**

Once the Dip action got started, though, it was all business. We had seven boards in Round One, all named after famous North Carolinians listed in the latest World Almanac. I won't go through each board in detail, you can watch full coverage of all these games on the Diplomacy Broadcast Network's Gameday Live coverage on YouTube, but I'll just highlight two game results which seem important in retrospect. In 1A, the David Brinkley game, Doc Binder's England was destroyed, largely by Doug Moore's France, resulting in Doc's elimination by 1904. Contrast this with the Russia of Mikalis Kamaritis in Game 1F, Andy Griffith, which was under significant pressure from Brian Ecton's Austria and others but was able to turn things around, thanks to alliance with Ben Durfee's Germany, such that Mikalis ended the game in a three way draw with 11 centers. Doc and Mikalis were to meet directly, in Round Two.

Iron Man gaming also continued apace during the Friday night slot. Games played included Conquest of the Empire, Mosaic, 1830, Split, much more Terraforming Mars, Puerto Rico and what clearly became the "Con game" of the weekend, Ark Nova. And if Ark Nova was the hot "new" game, Friday night also saw the return of a

decades-long favorite at Dixiecon, a very hot “old” game, the venerable space-based economic game Outpost.



Third Place Winner Steve Cooley

Saturday morning saw Round Two of the Diplomacy event, which at Dixie also doubles as the Team Tournament. Three-person teams face off their combined scores against the rest of the field, with this year the Doc Doc Goose team of Doc Binder, Tanya Gill and Andrew Goff easily taking the team title. All three had great scores, but the creme de la creme was the two-way draw shared with the aforementioned Mikalis Kamaritis in the Richard Petty game, 2D. Their ET convinced the remaining two players, Hudson Defoe and Ben Durfee, that their fates were sealed and thus voted themselves out of the draw. That result, as it turned out, would be the best score of the tournament and thus would catapult Doc and Mikalis to the top two spots on

the leaderboard Sunday afternoon. The question would be, though, in which order?

Other gaming during the day on Saturday included Great Western Trail Argentina, Caverna, Ark Nova, and yet more TMars, along with a spirited board of Monsters Menace America in which the four participants took the game's rules to heart - which REQUIRE the players to make their creature's noises while stomping over historical sites in the US and destroying the military units sent to stop them! I believe the winning creature was Toxicor, the monster born of nuclear sludge...but honestly, weren't the winners actually everyone who played or SAW the game being played? I thought so too.



Second Place Winner Doc Binder

After the traditional southern dinner of BBQ pork, fried chicken and all the fixin's, the Congoers settled down to more games as well as other social activities on the busy college-town strip on nearby Franklin Street. Non-Dip games included Castles of Burgundy, 1775, Terraforming, Dairyman, Ark Nova, Splendor, Mosaic, Cascadia, Magic, and 1830. Saturday night also saw

the return to Dixiecon of a variant event, this year using the 5-player map Ancient Mediterranean. Unfortunately, although 20 had signed up to play, most had to drop out because their Round One games were not yet complete or were just worn out from Round Two, so we settled for one board including Nicholas Spencer as Carthage, Steve Hogue as Egypt, Ian Rudnick as Greece, Alex Maslow as Persia, Kamaritis as Rome, and Alex Ronke as GM. After playing until 1909, the game was finally called as a three-way tie at 11 centers between Spencer, Maslow and Kamaritis, with Hogue still alive on one center. A good time was had by all, though.

Going into Round Three on Sunday morning, it was clear that the two-way participants from Round Two were in strong contention, but several other players would be in good position as well if they could get a two-way or solo themselves. The issue, of course, was the time limit on the Sunday game, although we did start the games an hour earlier - and all five boards ended WELL before the time limit was called, so the opportunity existed. As I pointed out before, the important distinction between Doc and Mikalis was that the former had the elimination while the latter already had two good scores. Doc had to get a better three way than Mikalis to overtake him. Drawing Austria in 3A, named for Ava Gardner, Doc tried his darndest, achieving that three way in 1906 - but with only 7 centers. No one else was able to bag a two-way, although Steve Cooley's 13 center Germany in the Dean Smith game, 3D, secured the third place Dixiecon spot for him as his center count was higher than the others whose best two scores were three way draws (at Dixiecon you drop your lowest score of the three.)

So Mikalis Kamaritis became the fifth British player in history to win the North American Championship, kudos to him. All the other results are listed nearby to this report. As far as the Iron Man goes, that gaming also continued on Sunday until the 2pm cutoff time - with Kevin Brown besting his long-time Iron Man competitor Bruce Duewer to take the crown. Games played on Sunday included Terraforming Mars, Pan Am, Nations, Western Empires, Conquest of the Empire, Space Base, and even more of the classic 1830. After the awards ceremony, those staying the night decamped to supper but the gaming continued long into that night. More importantly, the fellowship and camaraderie continued long into the night as well. Hopefully those new and rekindled friendships will last longer than any memories of flubs or stabs on the board.

Thanks to Michael Lowrey for his tireless work as assistant TD and scorer, and thanks to Sabi Ahuja for joining the assistant TD staff this year. Also, thanks to the many folk who did airport runs and helped us in other ways to run this 37th annual Dixiecon - facilitating the fun for seventy-six gamers all weekend really does take

a village. And congratulations to all the winners and losers alike!



First Place Winner Mikalis Kamaritis

Final Results - Dipcon 2023 - at Dixiecon

| | | |
|-----|-------------------------|-----|
| 1. | Mikalis Kamaritis (UK) | 392 |
| 2. | Doc Binder (FL) | 372 |
| 3. | Steve Cooley (MA) | 368 |
| 4. | Doug Moore (OR) | 356 |
| 4. | Peter Yeargin (TX) | 356 |
| 6. | David Miller (MD) | 352 |
| 7. | Andrew Goff (Australia) | 344 |
| 8. | Tanya Gill (Ontario) | 340 |
| 9. | Jason O'Donnell (OH) | 336 |
| 10. | Johnny Gillam (NY) | 332 |
| 11. | Brian Lee (VA) | 320 |
| 12. | Zachary Moore (MN) | 320 |
| 13. | Jason Bennett (MD) | 316 |
| 14. | Adam Silverman (CA) | 300 |
| 15. | David Maletsky (VA) | 288 |
| 15. | Emmett Wainwright (CO) | 288 |
| 17. | Alex Maslow (MA) | 220 |
| 17. | Jaromir Sulja (Ontario) | 220 |

| | | |
|-----|------------------------|-----|
| 19. | Ben Durfee (GA) | 216 |
| 20. | Chris Barfield (NC) | 202 |
| 20. | Karthik Konath (CA) | 202 |
| 22. | Mark Franceschini (MD) | 193 |
| 23. | Ben Kellman (MI) | 192 |
| 24. | Jonathan Strange (PA) | 190 |
| 25. | Todd Craig (NC) | 188 |
| 26. | Andrew Zick (WA) | 176 |
| 27. | Brian Ecton (MD) | 172 |
| 28. | David Harshbarger (OH) | 169 |
| 29. | Hal Schild (VA) | 162 |
| 30. | John Darges (NC) | 158 |
| 31. | Jack Craig (NC) | 156 |
| 32. | Tim Richardson (VA) | 154 |
| 33. | Ian Rudnick (MA) | 152 |
| 34. | Cameron Higbe (MO) | 151 |
| 35. | Ryan Rutledge (NC) | 147 |
| 36. | Hudson Defoe (DC) | 136 |
| 37. | Luke Cronin (NY) | 130 |
| 38. | Ed Turnage (SC) | 89 |
| 39. | Jason Mastbaum (CA) | 82 |
| 39. | Jeff Pierce (OH) | 82 |
| 41. | Claude Worrell (VA) | 44 |
| 42. | Emily Turnage (NC) | 43 |
| 42. | Nick Koehler (NC) | 43 |
| 44. | Chris Kremer (NC) | 32 |
| 45. | Steven Hogue (KY) | 30 |
| 46. | Nicholas Spencer (TN) | 24 |
| 47. | Brad Blitstein (VT) | 14 |
| 48. | Tarzan (PA) | 10 |

| | | |
|-----|-----------------------|------------------|
| 49. | Mitch McConeghey (NY) | 0 |
| IN | Rick Desper (MD) | (only one round) |
| IN | Keith Worstell (NC) | (only one round) |
| IN | Andy Bartalone (MD) | (only one round) |

Diplomacy Team Tournament

1. Doc Doc Goose (Gill, Binder, Goff)
2. Three Stooges (Konath, Z.Moore, Gillam)
3. Team Shylock (Miller, Maletsky, Blitstein)

Iron Man Tournament (nonDip gaming)

1. Kevin Brown (GA)
2. Bruce Duewer (TX)
3. Eric Erikson (NC)
4. Adam Sigal (NJ)
5. Dan Mathias (MD)

Best Countries

- A Steve Cooley
- E Mikalis Kamaritis
- F Doug Moore
- G Steve Cooley
- I Peter Yeargin
- R Karthik Konath
- T Doc Binder

I Got Hammered - Steve Hogue

Golden Blade - Johnny Gillam

The Brick - Hudson Defoe

Players Choice - Emily Turnage

All Orders Lead to Rome: A Venture with the Chaos Italy Variant

By Cameron Higbe

The day was sunny, the sky clear; it was the perfect foreshadowing of disaster for a nocturnal lover of rain, such as myself. I had just finished my shopping with food and drinks for tomorrow's game in tow. As the phone rang mercilessly loudly on my car's speakers across the store parking lot (thank you, bluetooth), the message it would deliver was just as grating.

"I can't make it to the Diplomacy game tomorrow," the voice on the line apologetically coughed, "I'm sick." And just like that, months of planning was undone.

After quickly bypassing the first four stages of grief and moving directly to acceptance, I sighed heavily, resigned to my fate. Of course, this meant having to figure out a way to repair this last-minute vacancy before I hosted

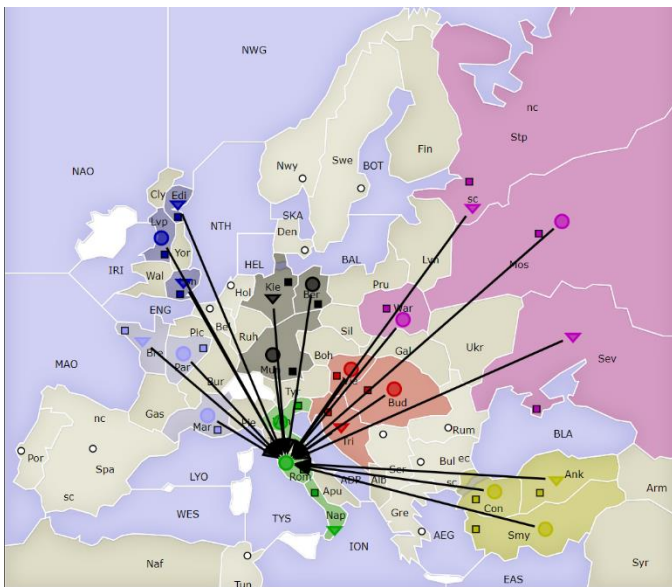
my first in-home Diplomacy event. As surprising as it may be, finding someone who was free (and willing) to stand around a game board for eight hours on a Saturday with less than 24 hours' notice proved impossible. The hunt was on to find a 6-player variant that could still hope to enchant these new players to fall in love with our dearest Diplomacy! My solution: test the Chaos Italy Variant.

On the morning of our assembly, before any powers had been assigned, we six gathered together and voted on whether to choose between the official rulebook's recommendation of a Civil Disordered Italy (all units hold indefinitely and are removed if dislodged) or the aforementioned variant. The group decided to embrace the variant, and thus the game began.

We outlined the rules for the variant as follows:

1. Each player is assigned a number on a die: 1-6.
2. Each player shall write orders for the Italian units in addition to their own for each Spring and Fall phase.
3. Upon the submission of all orders, the die is rolled. The player whose number lands face-up will have their orders for Italy read aloud with all other orders for that season.
4. If there are retreats, builds, or disbandments to be made, they shall be ordered by that same player for the season.

Notably, we excluded some additional rules as seen in places like [this article](#) to keep it simple.



While part of me was reluctant to inject the element of chance into a game so pristinely balanced, I ultimately preferred this variant over the idea of letting France and Austria become emboldened without a Mediterranean neighbour to fear in 1901. Better some uncertainty to simulate equilibrium than outright advantages for a third of the players, right? Upon the revelation I would be playing as Germany (the power most likely to suffer from an idle Italy), my precautions proved justified.

The game commenced as one might assume: each player used Italy as a vassal of their own strategic desires (with a 16.7% chance their orders would actually go through). However, not all the results were harmful for the rogue nation; for example, it managed to successfully claim Tunis in 1902, stalling others' development in the Mediterranean. With Italy so sporadic in its movements from season to season, it created a sense of foreboding that transcended the usual uneasiness of the early years. The most interesting development of this approach was how writing orders for Italy became a bargaining chip that appeared in many negotiations:

"I'll support you into Sweden on the condition that you order Italy to move into Triest."

"If the three of us all write the same orders for Italy, we have a 50% chance of success."

"Guys, can't we all just agree not to order Italy into anyone's homeland?"

Although success of these orders was far from guaranteed, players obsessed over the chaos, shaping their social strategies around the boot of Europe. Likewise, the centre of the board was indeed the focus of everyone's tactical attention, but not because of stalemate lines nor a rowdy scuffle between sovereignties. Rather, this puppet state with strings tied to each empire danced to a tune unknown to any but Lady Luck, which entranced and terrified all.

Naturally, any power that receives such undivided scrutiny on a Diplomacy board quickly becomes a meal to its contiguous fellows. Such was the kismet of the southern puppet. The national identity of Italy was all but forgotten by 1906, its centres annexed and finally under direct rule. With random fate once again purged from the equation, gameplay resumed to the usual tales of trust, betrayal, and conquest.

While this experience was indisputably an outlier, given that all but one player had not played a face-to-face game before, it still proves to be an enthralling case study of the dynamic of chance in a game otherwise praised for its mechanical purity. It also flips the script of Italy often being casted as uninfluential in the early game. I would certainly recommend its employment for casual play when circumstances necessitate a 6-player game.

Frontier Variant: Civil War in America

By Paul Webb

There have been countless American and North American Diplomacy variants produced over the years. However, none have been totally satisfactory to me. I will not cover any specific designs here, but many of these variants are massive in terms of size and geography, with some containing over 50 supply centers and centers extending into the Arctic Ocean, north of Canada. Also, very few of these variants have any historical relevancy. So my goal was to develop a new American variant about the same size as Standard Diplomacy with some historical application.

The two most obvious scenarios to base this new American variant are the French and Indian War and the American Civil War. The French and Indian War is an interesting setting, but it was a local theater of a larger global conflict, the Seven Years War, which is a fascinating variant idea in itself. But really, the Civil War is America's most historically important war. The one problem though, unlike the Great War in Europe, is that there were principally two belligerent states, the United States and the Confederate States, so I would have to introduce some other powers to the conflict.

I drew a starting map with seven powers across America's frontier: Great Britain, California, the Confederate States, an Indian Confederation, Mexico, Texas, and the United States. Britain and Mexico were already established North American powers before the Civil War. The California Republic existed as an unrecognized breakaway state from Mexico for 25 days in 1846. The Republic of Texas was an independent nation for ten years from 1836 to 1846. And the

American Indians are worthy participants, as the United States fought the Indian Wars for 150 years.

I determined that the variant should meet three criteria: (1) the strongest power should not score more than three times the weakest power, (2) no power should have an opening move that Albert plays more than 50 percent of the time, and (3) the United States should be the strongest power (because it's the United States.). Over the past 15 months I tested 391 different variations (whew!) and only one version met the three above criteria.

The Frontier variant begins in Spring 1851 and the map shows the starting position of each power's armies and fleets. The variant has a total of 78 provinces and 34 supply centers (space/center ratio of 2.29). For this variant, I used a map of the United States, Canada, and Mexico from February 28, 1861, when the United States established Colorado Territory. This date was a month after Texas declared independence from the United States and two weeks before Virginia declared its independence. There is a discrepancy between the 1851 start date of this variant and its 1861 map, but this inconsistency exists in Standard Diplomacy as well. Allan Calhmer used a 1914 map of Europe for his game, but with a 1901 start date.

Jason van Hal's Albert Diplomacy AI played 600 games of the final variant. Below are the results. A power received 60 points for a solo win, 20 points for a 3-way draw, 15 points for a 4-way draw, and 12 points for a 5-way draw. There were no 2-way, 6-way, or 7-way draws.

| | Solo | 2-Way | 3-Way | 4-Way | 5-Way | 6-Way | Points | Avg |
|---------------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| United States | 115 | 0 | 11 | 16 | 2 | 0 | 7384 | 12.31 |
| Confederate States | 112 | 0 | 8 | 7 | 4 | 0 | 7033 | 11.72 |
| Mexico | 90 | 0 | 9 | 7 | 4 | 0 | 5733 | 9.56 |
| California | 80 | 0 | 12 | 16 | 5 | 0 | 5340 | 8.90 |
| Britain | 78 | 0 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4847 | 8.08 |
| Texas | 42 | 0 | 7 | 17 | 5 | 0 | 2975 | 4.96 |
| Indian Conf. | 33 | 0 | 18 | 20 | 4 | 0 | 2688 | 4.48 |

The Frontier variant meets the power balance criteria. The United States, the strongest power, scored 2.75 times more than the Indian Confederation, the weakest power. Power distribution is similar to Standard Diplomacy. The United States and Confederate States

are the superpowers (like Turkey and France in Standard). Mexico, California, and Britain are mid-tier states (England, Austria, and Germany). And Texas and the Indian Confederation are the weak sisters (Russia and Italy, not Austria and Italy as some claim!).



Diplomacy

Frontier Variant

By Paul Webb

- Britain
- California
- Confederate States
- Indian Confederation
- Mexico
- Texas
- United States
- Army
- ⊕ Fleet
- ⊙ Neutral

Game Notes:

- Standard Diplomacy rules apply.
- Game starts in Spring 1851.
- 18 centers required for victory.

Map Notes:

- Cuba is an island that an army can occupy.
- Rocky Mountains (in Colorado Territory) and West Virginia are impassible.
- Central America, Mexico City, and Wisconsin have multiple coasts.
- Lakes Erie and Ontario combine into one sea province: Lower Great Lakes.
- Lakes Huron, Michigan, and Superior combine into one sea province: Upper Great Lakes.
- Mississippi, Ohio, and St. Lawrence Rivers are waterways where fleets can move through adjacent land provinces like coastlines (i.e., a fleet can move between Arkansas and Missouri and between Canada East and St. John).
- Canada West, Chicago, Cincinnati, Michigan, New Grenada, and New York are canals with one coastline (i.e., a fleet can move from Missouri to Chicago, and then to Michigan).
- Units can move between Montreal and Newfoundland.

Legend:

- Baj = Baja California
- Cea = Canada East
- Eas = East Texas
- Gal = Galveston
- GOC = Gulf of California
- LGL = Lower Great Lakes
- Los = Los Angeles
- MAT = Matagorda Bay
- Nor = New Orleans
- Nwf = Newfoundland
- Rio = Rio Grande
- Sac = Sacramento
- San = San Antonio
- Sbr = San Bernardino
- Sfo = San Francisco
- Sie = Sierra
- Sta = St. Augustine
- UGL = Upper Great Lakes
- Upp = Upper Peninsula
- Wdc = Washington

This variant also meets the opening move criteria. The following table is the percentage of each power's most-

played Spring 1851 opening, along with the total number of openings:

| | Most Common Opening | % | Total |
|---------------------------|---------------------|------|-------|
| Britain | 182/600 | 30.3 | 24 |
| California | 132/600 | 22.0 | 13 |
| Confederate States | 119/600 | 19.8 | 16 |
| Indian Conf. | 267/600 | 44.5 | 7 |
| Mexico | 219/600 | 36.5 | 6 |
| Texas | 136/600 | 22.7 | 19 |
| United States | 116/600 | 19.3 | 17 |

Furthermore, this variant does not produce many draws. Only 50 of 600 test games (8.33 percent) resulted in

draws, compared to 168 of 500 games drawn (33.6 percent) when Albert played Standard. And finally,

according to the bot simulation, Frontier games last about eight years longer than Standard games. The median end date in Frontier was 1883 (33 game years), while for Standard it was 1925 (25 game years).

Map Notes:

Below are particular map features of the Frontier variant:

Islands. Cuba is an island province which an army can occupy. When a fleet occupies Cuba, it is like occupying a coastline and cannot execute a convoy.

Impassible Areas. The Rocky Mountains (in Colorado Territory) and West Virginia are impassible areas, like Switzerland in Standard. Armies cannot move between Colorado Territory and Utah Territory.

Multiple Coasts. The following land provinces have multiple coasts: Central America (east coast and west coast), Mexico City (east coast and west coast), and Wisconsin (east coast and north coast).

Great Lakes. Lake Erie and Lake Ontario are combined into one sea province: Lower Great Lakes (LGL). And Lake Huron, Lake Michigan, and Lake Superior are combined into Upper Great Lakes (UGL). As a result, units cannot move between New York and Canada West, nor can units move between Michigan and Upper Peninsula (Upp).

Waterways. The Mississippi River, Ohio River, and St. Lawrence River are waterways where fleets can move through adjacent land provinces like coastlines. For example, a fleet can move between Arkansas and Missouri and between Canada East (Cea) and St. John.

Canals. Canada West, Chicago, Cincinnati, Michigan, New Grenada, and New York are canals with one coast where fleets can exit on any side of the province. For example, a fleet can move from Missouri to Chicago on one turn, and then move to Upper Great Lakes (UGL) on the next turn. A fleet can also move from North Atlantic Ocean to New York, and then move to Canada East (Cea).

Other Notes. A unit can move between Montreal and Newfoundland (Nwf) and a fleet cannot move between Montreal and Canada West.

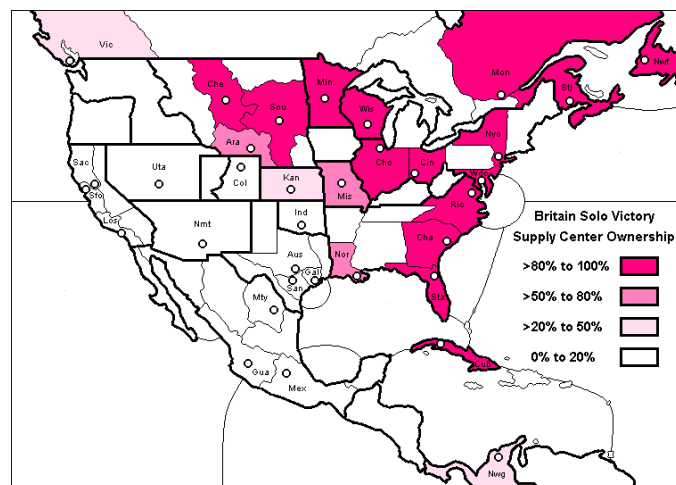
Waterways and canals were an important part of America's transportation system during this era. These map rules allow for fleets to travel inland from the Gulf of Mexico all the way to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, which was possible back then. However, New Grenada's use as a canal in this game precedes construction of the Panama Canal by 50 years. This historical concession is necessary for gameplay. There's a practical requirement

to connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans without sailing all around South America.

Britain:

Britain has the advantage of an edge power and the capability to build fleets on both oceans, but its Victoria home center is isolated, three spaces away from another home center. One early decision for Britain is whether to dedicate resources to its west coast, or just surrender the fort at Victoria. In the Spring 1851 opening, Britain's main decisions are where to move the Victoria army and whether to take the Newfoundland neutral supply center with the army in Montreal or the fleet in St. John.

The below map is the average distribution of Britain-owned supply centers at completion of British solo victories. For example, Britain owned its Montreal home center 100 percent of the time at the end of its 78 tested solo victories, but only owned its Victoria home center in 32 of 78 of those games (41 percent). The map shows where Albert went to achieve ownership of 18 supply centers (winning criteria) for Britain.



The table below depicts the average supply center ownership for each foreign power at completion of Britain's solo victories. It's obvious, according to the Albert simulation, that California, Mexico, and Texas are friends of the British Empire, while the Indians, CSA, and USA are its principal adversaries.

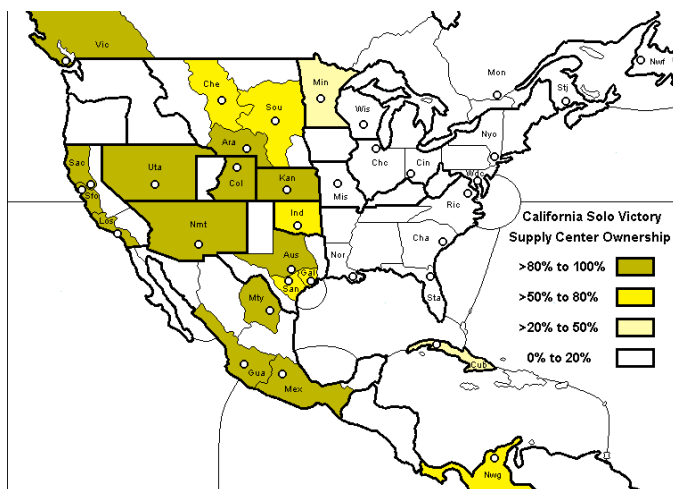
Average foreign supply center ownership in Britain solo victories:

| | Avg SCs |
|-----|---------|
| CAL | 5.32 |
| MEX | 4.95 |
| TEX | 3.77 |
| IND | 0.85 |
| CSA | 0.68 |
| USA | 0.13 |

California:

California is the middle power nestled on the west coast, away from most dangers. It does though have an immediate threat from Mexico, which can attack two of its home centers from the Central Pacific Ocean (CPO) in Fall 1851. California does not border a neutral supply center and sometimes has trouble getting the ball rolling. In the opening, the fleet in San Francisco can harass the British in Victoria or protect its coastline by ordering CPO. California can also double attack its armies on Utah Territory or New Mexico Territory, by ordering A(Sac) - Ore and A(LoS) - Sie or A(Sac) - Sie and A(LoS) - Sbr, or even A(Sac) - Sie and A(LoS) - Son.

As expected, testing shows that the Indians, Texans, and Mexicans stand in the way between California and victory:



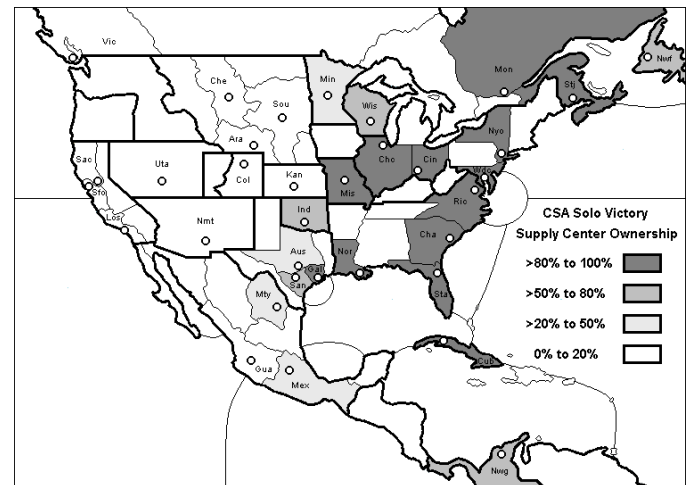
Average foreign supply center ownership in California solo victories:

| | Avg SCs |
|-----|---------|
| USA | 6.21 |
| BRI | 5.04 |
| CSA | 2.84 |
| IND | 0.99 |
| TEX | 0.36 |
| MEX | 0.26 |

Confederate States:

According to the bots, the Confederate States is Frontier's second strongest power. The CSA probably accomplishes more in this game than its historical performance merits. I tested a three-home-center CSA in over 100 different variations, but I usually achieved better overall power balance using a CSA with four home centers. In the opening, the CSA's primary decisions are to seize Cuba with the fleet in New Orleans or St. Augustine and how to negotiate the US home center in Washington that borders Richmond.

Like during the actual Civil War, the Confederacy's most important relationship is with the United States. The CSA can ally with the United States and move south and west, or it can make peace with Mexico and Texas and try an all-out assault on the USA. Based on the Albert games, the CSA and USA ultimately impede each other in their goals at some point in the game.



Average foreign supply center ownership in Confederate States solo victories:

| | Avg SCs |
|-----|---------|
| CAL | 6.37 |
| IND | 5.49 |
| TEX | 1.54 |
| MEX | 1.21 |
| BRI | 0.87 |
| USA | 0.19 |

Indian Confederation:

The Indian Confederation is comprised of unorganized territory and Nebraska Territory in 1861. Its three home centers do not border water provinces or waterways, so they cannot build fleets! The Indian Confederation is the weakest power in Frontier, however, the Indians here score 70 percent better than Italy in Standard with the Albert bots. Two Indian home centers border four neutral supply centers, so in the opening phase, they have several combinations available to capture these centers. It is not unusual for the Indians to build three armies in Winter 1851.

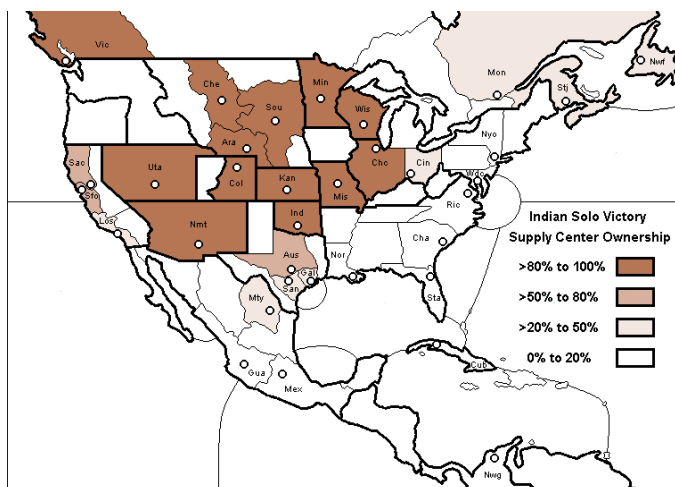
The perpetual problem for the Indian Confederation is California. The Indians must weigh how many armies its needs to repel the Golden Horde and the number of armies necessary to grab the resource-rich territories of the American West.

Average foreign supply center ownership in Indian Confederation solo victories:

| | Avg SCs |
|-----|---------|
| MEX | 6.00 |
| CSA | 3.97 |
| USA | 2.58 |
| BRI | 1.91 |
| TEX | 0.88 |
| CAL | 0.39 |

Average foreign supply center ownership in Mexico solo victories:

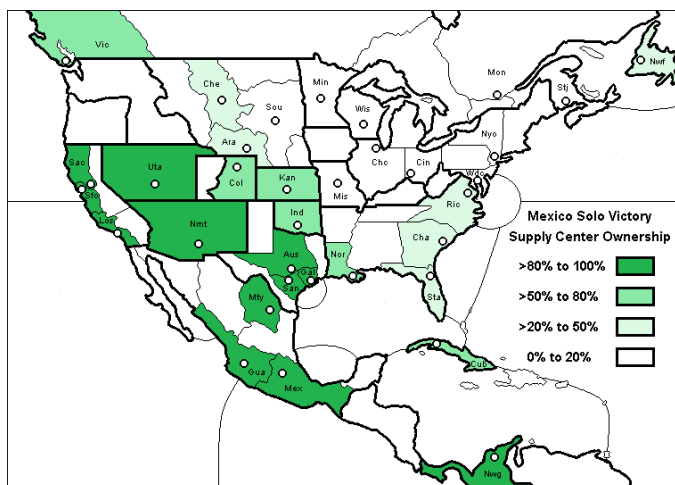
| | Avg SCs |
|-----|---------|
| USA | 6.28 |
| BRI | 4.10 |
| IND | 4.07 |
| CSA | 1.13 |
| TEX | 0.08 |
| CAL | 0.07 |



Mexico:

Mexico, like Britain, is an edge power that can build fleets on both oceans. Mexico also has first dibs on New Grenada, an important canal province. In the opening, Mexico must decide to take New Grenada with the Mexico City army or the Guadalajara fleet. Also, the Monterrey army can proceed to New Mexico Territory via Chihuahua or Rio Grande, to trouble the Texans. In the early phase, Mexico can choose to attack California or Texas. But can Mexico survive a war with both California and Texas at the same time?

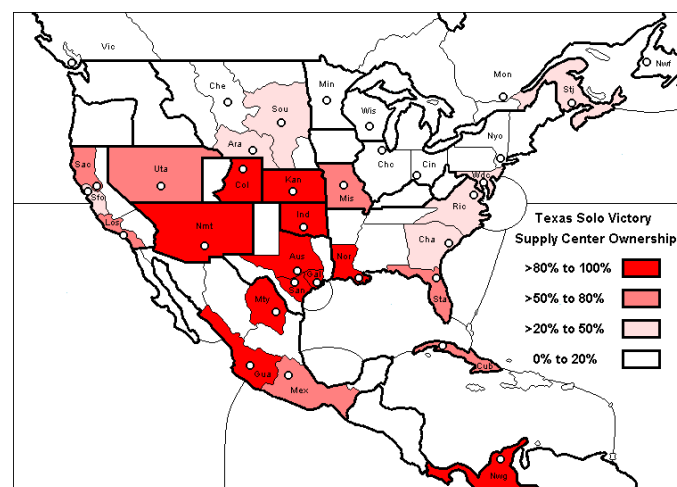
Albert confirms that the path to Mexican victory is through the American Southwest, with both California and Texas as its victims.



Texas:

Texas is similar to the Indian Confederation in that while it is accessible to several neutral supply centers, it is a central power that can't fight everyone at once. CSA and Mexico can attack Texas early from New Orleans and Monterrey, but fortunately for Texas, these cities have weak defensive positions as they cannot be protected by a unit at an adjacent home center. If Texas can control both Monterrey and New Orleans in the early years, the Lone Star Republic has good prospects. In Spring 1851, the Texans' key decision is to move the Austin army to Indian Territory or New Mexico Territory, with advantages to both moves. Also, the Texas player needs to choose if he wants to safeguard his border by ordering A(San) - Rio for a potential bounce against Mexico.

Of all the powers, the Texas distribution of supply center ownership is most widespread. Texan victories can be achieved by marching units to the east or west, or even north or south.



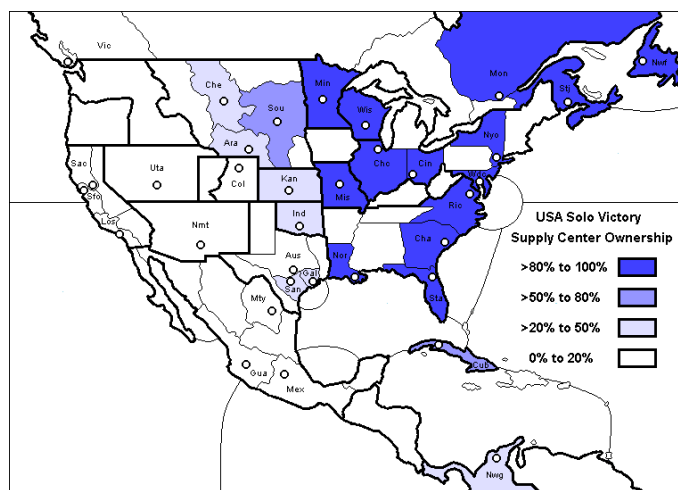
Average foreign supply center ownership in Texas solo victories:

| | Avg SCs |
|------------|---------|
| BRI | 6.76 |
| USA | 3.76 |
| IND | 2.55 |
| CAL | 1.43 |
| CSA | 0.83 |
| MEX | 0.10 |

United States:

The United States, by design, is Frontier's strongest power. The USA, like the Confederacy, starts the game with four units, but the USA has better entry into the interior's neutral supply centers. A major determination for the Americans in the opening is to send the Chicago army to Missouri or Wisconsin. The Missouri move is more anti-Confederate and the Wisconsin move is more anti-British and anti-Indian.

The American-Confederate alliance at the beginning of the game is powerful, as both blue and grey armies sweep westward. But long-term, the alliance has little chance. Eventually, one will need to stab the other.



Average foreign supply center ownership in United States solo victories:

| | Avg SCs |
|------------|---------|
| CAL | 7.65 |
| MEX | 3.80 |
| IND | 2.06 |
| TEX | 1.61 |
| CSA | 0.40 |
| BRI | 0.19 |

Statistically, the USA-California alliance is the strongest in Frontier, followed by Britain-Texas and Britain-California. Also, the strongest rival is Mexico-Texas, followed by Britain-USA, California-Mexico, and CSA-USA. But this semi-historical variant, like Standard Diplomacy, has limitless possibilities and each game presents its own unique story and circumstances.



A Friday in Boston

By Randy Lawrence-Hurt

On Friday, June 9th of 2023, I got to play a house game of Diplomacy with a bunch of Boston Backbiters. I was in town for the weekend, and Alex Maslow (the Boston Massacre TD and primary organizer in the area) put together a game with five other locals, two of whom I knew well, and three I don't believe I'd ever played with before. It was a truly excellent experience, and a good reminder that, as much as I enjoy tournament Diplomacy, casual house games are so, so much more fun. We should all play them more. My EOG is below, and you can follow along season-by-season on Backstabbr:

<https://www.backstabbr.com/sandbox/69-house-game/5197361744314368/1901/spring>.

The board was:

Austria: Andy McLaughlin (our gracious host)

England: Oliver Bok

France: Andrew Katcher

Germany: John Bihn

Italy: Ian Rudnick

Russia: Alex Maslow

Turkey: Me

At the start of the game, like most games when I play Turkey, I was looking to avoid making any early enemies, and figure out which power would be most likely to let me out of the "box" that Turkey so often gets stuck in. My first conversation was with Andy in Austria, and was very brief; we agreed an AT can work very well, we'd both be interested in it, and that was that. My next conversation, with Ian in Italy, was slightly longer, but just as productive; he immediately told me he likes to attack Austria, because that's where the dots are, and he'd move to Trieste in the spring if I supported him to Greece in the fall. I naturally said yes whole-heartedly.

So three minutes into negotiations, and I had two of my neighbors saying, one with great specificity, that they'd like to work with me to attack the other. A promising start.

My chat with Alex in Russia was slightly longer, but not really focused on the south. We agreed to bounce in the Black Sea, and then began discussing the dynamics of the western powers. Alex didn't express much interest in opening north, but also gave me no signals he was interested in running in on Austria either (or me, for that matter). I figured he'd probably have a similar plan to myself; bide our time in 1901, see what develops, try not to make any early enemies.

I don't remember much of my conversations with the other powers, except that I suggested to Oliver in England (after he'd indicated he didn't have a lot of experience with playing that power) that a safe English play is to grab Norway and St. Pete, as that's a very defensible position, and it's easy to go from 5 to 7 SCs from there. I had no animosity towards Alex, but it's rarely a bad thing for Turkey to have Russia at least slightly distracted by events elsewhere on the board.

Clearly my persuasion skills were still a tad rusty, as Oliver instead opened fully south against Andrew in France. This came as a surprise to, I think, just about everyone on the board, and almost over-shadowed the other surprising (to everyone except myself and Ian) opening of Venice to Trieste.

In the fall, I made the strategic decision to be very honest with both Italy and Austria. I told Italy I would support his army convoy into Greece, and I never changed that order. I also told Austria that I was supporting Italy's army into Greece, so he could plan his defense with some advantage. My goal was to keep them both happy with me, and mad at each other, and I think I succeeded at this for the next several years. In fact, I'd say this was the root of most of my success this game; I never really had any enemies. Even when I fought Italy and Russia from 1902-1904, there was never any particular animosity, and those conflicts evolved very freely. This was probably due in part to it being a house game with no real stakes, but I'd like to believe I did a good job of continuing to talk with everyone, but especially my neighbors, and making it clear there were always options to cooperate or at least stop fighting with each other.

Ian took Greece in the fall of 1901, with my assistance. Had I been thinking ahead, I would've also told Andy about Ian's plan to tap Serbia; with that info, Andy could've kept Greece neutral, which I think would've also benefited me. Alas, Italy got the two builds we'd planned on, and Austria stayed on three, likely destined for a short game.

In 1902, Alex joined in the Austrian dogpile, while Ian helped me into Serbia as agreed in 1901. In the west, what I thought was a fairly obvious EF (despite England being in the Channel, I figured the convoy to Belgium was definitely aimed at seizing Holland in 1902 and getting France into Ruhr) turned out to be an FG, as England was kicked out of Belgium. This would start a merry-go-round of the western powers allying and stabbing each other on a practically seasonal basis. It

was wildly entertaining, and had massive implications for how my game went as well.

Fall of 1902 came, and I figured I had a good opportunity to become the dominant power in the east. I had Serbia, and with Austria's help I could take Greece (which I did). Admittedly I was army-heavy, but I figured with two fleet builds, Italy going down one, and Russia taking Budapest, the RT could start rolling.

Alas, I had forgotten Italy didn't yet own Tunis, and so instead of going down one, the destruction of his Greek army allowed him to rebuild a fleet on the boot. My Mediterranean adventure was going nowhere fast if I couldn't get Russian help through Austria (who was also onboard for helping me against Ian, but was down to one unit and not many options).

1903 was a complicated year. In the spring, I squared up against Ian in the Med, while Alex and Andy kicked him out of Trieste, and Alex's other units headed west for German dots (and took Denmark). Alright, I thought, the Juggernaut is on! Then, in the fall, Alex dropped a fleet behind me into Armenia, and pulled an army back into Galicia, while helping Italy retake Trieste and walk into Vienna. The Juggernaut was no longer on. There were glimmers of hope, though; because fall 1903 was also the turn England walked into St. Pete., and France dropped two armies into the Western Med.

I believe this all occurring simultaneously made fall 1903 the single most important turn in terms of determining how the rest of the game played out. Had England not taken St. Pete while France pulled into the Med and gave Italy something to think about, I'm pretty confident Alex and Ian would've at least ground me down to four and kept me in the corner the rest of the game. As it was, Alex was unable to build an army in the south to capitalize on his position against me, and Ian, while not in immediate danger from France, couldn't afford to fully utilize his three-to-two fleet advantage over me either. Even though Andrew pulled back in spring 1904, that bought me a season to put an army back on my mainland and prevent Alex from taking any of my centers; Ian took Serbia, but I eliminated Alex's fleet, and helped Oliver and John understand the tactics to guarantee they could take both Sweden and Denmark. The Juggernaut wasn't back on, but the RI was dead in the water.

By 1905 my position had stabilized. I was only on five, but Russia was no longer a threat, and while Italy looked likely to be the dominant power, I could defend my two Balkan centers from him as long as Russia also defended his. England and Germany were cooperating against Russia, and nobody knew what France was thinking. Which again proved to be pivotal. With no warning to anyone (as far as I know), in spring 1905

Andrew came right back into the Med, and put an army in Piedmont for good measure. This was fantastic news for me; both my erstwhile opponents now faced tremendous pressure from the other side of the board.

I promised Andrew that I would tap the Ionian so he could take Tunis, while also promising Oliver that I would do no such thing, so he and John could stab Andrew thinking he wouldn't be building anything. Italy had attacked Russia's units in Austria in the spring, so Alex agreed to help me take back Serbia, and also supported Andrew into Venice (which was the real reason I didn't end up helping Andrew take Tunis; I didn't want him to grow two, but did want him to have one extra unit to slow down England/Germany). I also moved my fleet in the Black Sea to Sevastopol, because I had nothing better for it to do, and didn't think Alex had a reason to move out. I somehow hadn't noticed that John in Germany was about to walk unopposed into Warsaw, and Alex obviously had to pull his army in Sev back to deal with that. Whoops. I went up two, while Ian and Alex lost two and three, respectively.

I started to roll in 1906. Ian wanted to pull everything back to fight Andrew, so long as I agreed not to take dots off him (at least, not right away). Alex wanted to pull north to fight off John. Andrew had to deal with both England (or so it appeared) and Italy. And there I was, in the corner, once again with no real enemies.

England immediately reversed direction in spring of 1906, stabbing Germany instead of continuing against Andrew. While it was a very nice stab, I think this was a strategic mistake, and sacrificed long-term gains and position for short-term dots. With Italy moving against France in the south, Ian could've forced the Mid Atlantic in fall 1906, at which point France loses Brest and Paris quickly; and with Russian pressure on Germany, England would still be in position to grab the Lowlands and Denmark in 1907 or 1908. This could've become a real race between Oliver and myself for the board top.

But with all the pressure shifting towards the west and middle, as England, France, and Russia all squeezed Germany, I was free to march through formerly-Austrian dots unopposed, as Italian fleets pushed through the Med. The betrayal carousel continued in the west, as Andrew dotted Oliver for Belgium, which really only succeeded in making sure none of the three of them would ever trust each other again.

By 1908, Italy and Russia were operating in my interests at least as much as their own. I wasn't directing their moves by any means, but Ian continued to hammer on Marseille and Iberia while letting me into the Ionian, and Alex and Oliver were focused on taking German dots, not on preventing me from grabbing Munich. I walked

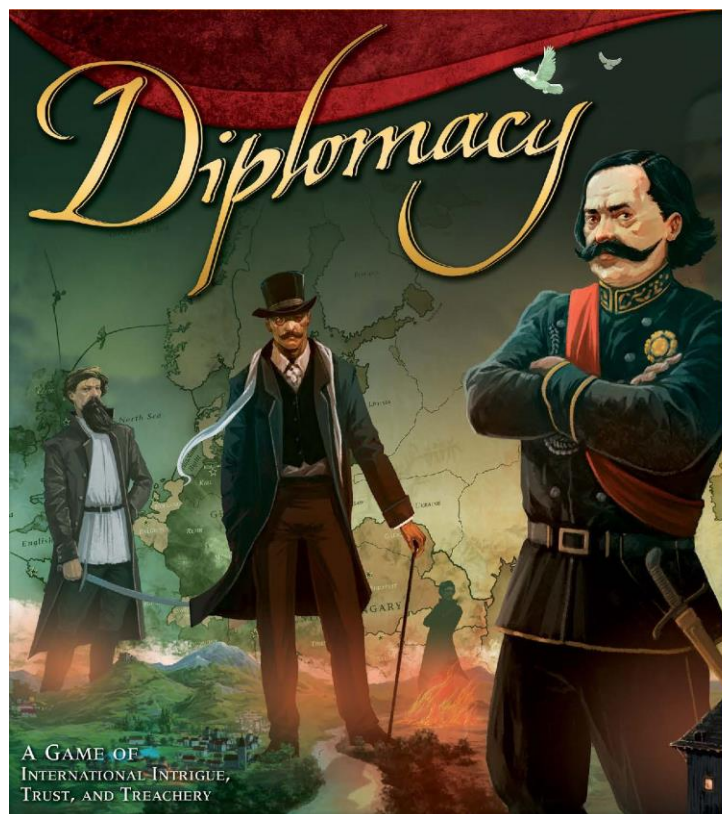
through Vienna and Trieste, knowing I had at least them, and probably also Venice, whenever I wanted them.

I believe spring 1908 is when the first draw vote occurred. I was already topping the board and probably would've voted for the draw (it was a house game, and already closing in on midnight, I had no real desire to make people keep playing if they really didn't want to), but for a hunch I had. I was pretty sure that if I (secretly) vetoed the draw, the rest of the board would be more likely to blame Andrew and/or Oliver. There were a few reasons for why I had this hunch, but the primary ones were that Andrew was acting shifty right before the draw vote, and Oliver could reasonably expect to pick up at least a couple more centers from Germany. I hadn't played Diplomacy in quite a while, and wanted to see if my gut instincts were correct. It turned out they were. I found out after the game that I was the only vote against the draw, which made me feel a little guilty, but my hunch was proven correct; not a single person suggested that I had vetoed it, and all the speculation revolved around Andrew, Oliver, and (slightly to my surprise) Ian.

This allowed me to continue to do basically whatever I wanted. Italy kept pressing against France, letting me walk into Tunis. Vienna and Venice were undefended, so

I walked into them (continuing to leave Trieste for later). I held Munich, despite plenty of other countries' armies surrounding it; they were all focused on Berlin, Kiel, and Marseille. I also walked into Moscow. This was also, like Sevastopol, basically by accident; I again didn't see any reason Alex would walk out, but figured nothing ventured, nothing gained. I went up five centers after the fall, putting me on 14; after winter, it was clear Italy and Russia not only weren't going to coordinate against me, but were helping me get more centers, and the west was entirely in disarray (as far as I could tell, England, France, and Germany were all actively fighting each other with zero alliance structure). A solo was very likely, but it was also well after midnight, and I didn't feel the need to prove it on the board, or take further advantage of Andy's hospitality. I called for a draw vote in spring 1909 and it passed.

It was one of the most fun games of Diplomacy I've played in years, with flexible alliances, clever tactical decisions, good diplomacy, and no animosity throughout. Many thanks again to Andy for hosting, and Alex for organizing and getting us a full board! The Boston Diplomacy scene continues to grow and improve under his stewardship, so make sure you get up to Boston Massacre the first weekend of August and see what they're all about!



Convention Events

| EVENT | LOCATION | DATE | TEACHING | TOURNAMENT |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|----------|------------|
| Circle DC | Washington, DC | 3/31-4/2 | 🏆 | |
| Gaming Hoopla | Chicago, IL | 4/28-4/30 | 🏆 | |
| BGG Spring | Dallas, TX | 5/26-5/29 | 🏆 | |
| Origins Game Fair | Columbus, OH | 6/21-6/25 | 🏆 | 🏆 |
| Dice Tower East | Orlando, FL | 7/5-7/9 | 🏆 | |
| World Boardgaming Championships (WBC) | Seven Springs, PA | 7/22-7/30 | 🏆 | 🏆 |
| US Diplomacy Championship at Gen Con | Indianapolis, IN | 8/3-8/6 | 🏆 | 🏆 |
| FanExpo Canada | Toronto, CA | 8/24-8/27 | 🏆 | |
| GrandCon | Grand Rapids, MI | 9/1-9/3 | 🏆 | |
| CinCityCon | Cincinnati, OH | 10/27-10/29 | 🏆 | |
| BGG.CON | Dallas, TX | 11/15-11/19 | 🏆 | |
| PAX Unplugged | Philadelphia, PA | 12/1-12/3 | 🏆 | 🏆 |

Please contact Thomas Haver for details at tjhaver@gmail.com or contact TJHAVER on the Renegade Games Discord at <https://discord.com/invite/renegadegames>
 *Event availability subject to change.

Greetings From San Marino Con 2023

By Thomas Haver



Over the past several I've visited Italy multiple times for Diplomacy events. My first trip was to the 2015 World DipCon held in Milan. Most recently I traveled to Gambolo for the Italian NDC in 2022. The primary reason I keep traveling across the Atlantic to play in these Italian events is the amazing hospitality of the hosts. Whenever the Italians get a visitor from out of country, they make great effort to showcase their beautiful home and put on a great Diplomacy event. It's no surprise that I added San Marino Con to my calendar for a visit this year.

San Marino Con has been held off-and-on for a few decades, dating back to 2000. The convention has hosted the EuroDipCon three times over that span, with travelers from all over Europe, Canada, Australia, and the US. For those of you who have never seen San Marino in pictures or visited in person, it's a truly breathtaking place. The scenic views reach an almost uncanny valley of appearing not real, most especially to your reporter who is used to the corn fields of Ohio and the grayness of Western New York.

I flew into Milan and traveled the distance with Davide Cleopadre. He opened up his home to me and took me out to dinner on my first day in Italy. The travel was a few hours through the Italian countryside. Eventually we see Monte Titano rising in the distance, where the city of San Marino is located. The Diplomacy tournament itself is hosted at the San Marino Game Convention, which was celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. The tournament director for the event is Luca Pazzaglia, who has hosted numerous events and won many tournaments himself.

The first round had two boards up on the big stage of the main hall. We had two custom setups prepared for the day: the first setup was a 6'x4' fabric map that matched the new map in the 2023 edition of Diplomacy; the second setup was a 4'x4' wargaming map with a design by Canadian Diplomacy player John Fairley. We had

players from Italy, France, and the US – with a couple of transplants living in Switzerland.

I drew Austria in my first game of the day. Luca Pazzaglia was Turkey, Alex Lebedev was Italy, Carlo Selvetti was Russia, and Wes Ketchum was Germany. I was keenly aware of the trouble early on since Carlo would not negotiate with me directly. Concerned for the potentially RT, I put my efforts into allying with Alex Lebedev's Italy. I would say Alex & Luca are among the two best players in Italy, and it showed during the game. Rather than trying to carve me up, Alex leveraged my Austria armies as a shield while he kept Turkey bottled up in the Aegean & Eastern Med. At the same time, he sent his Venice army on the long route, from Tyrolia to Bohemia to Galicia. With the superior numbers, Luca still got the 50-50 defense orders correct for three straight turns. Eventually we cracked Bulgaria, Rumania, and Warsaw in the latter stages of the game, which opened the floodgates to roll through Russia. This eventually led to getting Luca to flip on his Russian ally and push north, so that Alex could send his fleets west against France. The IAT alliance rolled through Russia, Germany, and France in the late game, which an appropriate final split 8-8-8 centers for each. Given I was the first two eight centers in the prior year, I claimed the board top bonus points for the round.

The second round I drew England. I had two neighbors from the prior round: West Ketchum as Russia and Alex Lebedev as France. Joining the board was Raymond Setzer as Turkey, Vincent Reulet as Italy, Davide Cleopadre as Germany, and Luigi Sbaffi as Austria. The 2nd Round board was heavy hitters. It was clear from the outset that everyone knew what they were doing and understood how to play in the system. Davide proposed a Western Triple to start, which I eagerly agreed to since it tends to work out very well for France and England. Wes Ketchum's Russia moved north against me in Spring 1901, so I knew this game would also be a long slog. After some cautious play on both sides of the board, Ray Setzer's Turkey was squeezed down by AIR while Germany and England made gains on Scandinavia in the North. Alex Lebedev's France swung his fleets around south into Italy, taking Tunis and Venice in the process. As is typical of most Western Triples, France and England went for a multiple center stab of Germany at the midpoint of the game. This resulted in the capture of Belgium, Holland, Kiel, and Denmark at the same time Germany was taking centers off Russia. Luigi Sbaffi's Austria emerged as the strongest power in the East. By game end it was Alex Lebedev's France with the board top at 9, followed by my England at 7 at Luigi Sbaffi at 6.

No powers were eliminated in the game, which was a great back-and-forth with solid strategic and tactical play throughout.

In the final round I drew Turkey. My neighbors were Luca Pazzaglia (Austria) and Luigi Sbaffi (Russia) and Roberto Perego (Italy). In Spring 1901 we arranged for Luca to move into Galicia on Russia while I opened to the Black. Luigi had notified Vincent Reulet (England) that he would be sending Moscow North, which was met by the expected reaction of sending North by England. The following Fall turn ended up being one of the most vicious attacks on Russia I've seen in a game: Galicia made it to Warsaw, there was a 2 v 2 bounce in Rumania, Germany bounced in Sweden, and England convoyed the army to Norway. Russia had to disband after 1901. The rest of the game did not have the same back-and-forth of Round Two, with the battlelines clearly drawn between the IAT alliance against FEG. Russia was carved up in short order and the game reached close to a stalemate line. England made the most progress in the game, taking all of Scandinavia as well as STP and Warsaw (from Austria). With the game locked down, we all agreed to a draw. Vincent Reulet's England would board top at 9-centers and I would take second with 7-centers. Now it was just a waiting game for the other board to finish.



On the other third round board, it was Davide Cleopadre rolling with a 12-center France. He was working with Wes Ketchum (England), and together they had eliminated both Germany and Italy. Alex Lebedev, tournament leader going into the last round, joined an attack on Austria first with Russia and then split Italy with France. The board ended with France topping, England in second, and Turkey in third. Once the endgame had

been reached on the other board, I knew I had won the event.

The Top 7 and Best Country Awards for San Marino Con 2023 are shown below. I had a thoroughly enjoyable time at the convention. With so many classic wargames being played, the convention reminded me of the "World Boardgaming Championships" held in Pennsylvania every year. The convention director Giancarlo Ceccoli is to be congratulated for putting on such a wonderful convention and Luca Pazzaglia is to be congratulated for running an excellent Diplomacy tournament.

Before my flight home, I spent some additional time in Milan. Once again, Davide Cleopadre invited me into his home for a family dinner. When we arrived, Davide's family revealed they had prepared a care package for my return trip: meats, cheeses, pasta, spreads, and snacks for my kids. Of all the sights to see and games to play in Italy, my favorite activity has been the family meals. Multiple times now I've had the privilege to eat a homecooked meal with my friends and their family in Italy. The meals bring me back in time to dinners my grandparents and mother -- Italian immigrants -- and the quality of food I cannot seem to replicate myself or replace at a restaurant. Those are the moments I most cherish and look forward to on return visits.

I will return to Italy in 2024 with my family. The Italian Diplomacy hobby is planning to host the next World DipCon in Milan. I highly recommend anyone looking to take a trip to Italy to put this event in your calendar for 2024. The Italians run a first-rate event and their hospitality is second to none. I can't wait to see my friends again, play some good games, and enjoy more wonderful meals.

Top 7:

- 1st – Thomas Haver
- 2nd – Alex Lebedev
- 3rd – Davide Cleopadre
- 4th – Luigi Sbaffi
- 5th -- Vincent Reulet
- 6th – Wes Ketchum
- 7th – Luca Pazzaglia

Best Austria – Thomas Haver
Best England – Luigi Sbaffi
Best France – Davide Cleopadre
Best Germany – Wes Ketchum
Best Italy – Alex Lebedev
Best Russia – Wes Ketchum
Best Turkey – Thomas Haver

Ask the Hobby Historian: Dipcon Site Rotation

By David Hood

I just got finished running the 52nd annual Dipcon, our hobby's North American Diplomacy Championship. But perhaps you'd be interested to know - why was I running it in 2023, and not someone else? Why do it in Chapel Hill, NC this year as opposed to somewhere else? How come the Cascadia tournament in Vancouver will host Dipcon in 2024? Who makes these decisions, and why?

Therein lies a story.

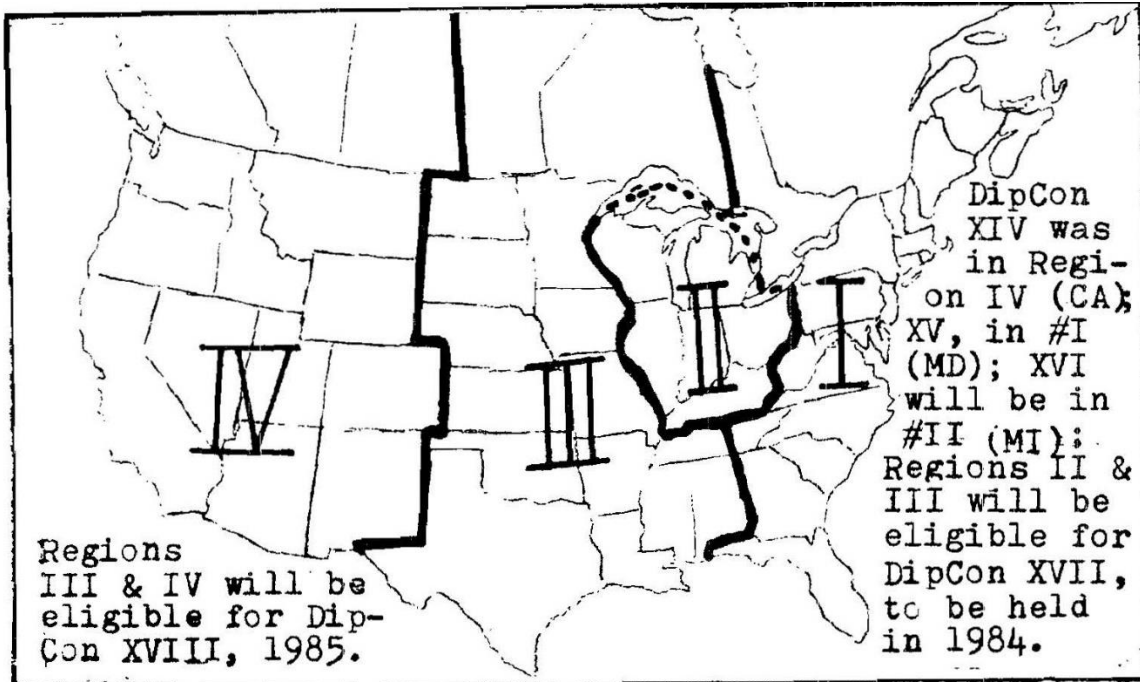
Forty years ago, in the Summer 1983 edition of this very same Diplomacy World magazine, there was a detailed promo for that year's North American Diplomacy Championship, to be held in conjunction with that year's Origins location, Detroit MI. That year's Dipcon would go on to be one of the largest ever Diplomacy tournaments, with 118 players, and featured our first female champion, Joyce Singer. It was a tournament spoken of for many years afterwards as a high point of Face-to-Face Diplomacy history.

Now, I said "that year's" Origins location, because the general games convention Origins itself rotated among various locations back in those days, before later settling on its permanent site of Columbus, OH. (Thomas Haver just ran the 2023 Dip event there a few weeks ago.) In

1984, Origins would take place in Dallas, TX, and that is indeed where Dipcon went as well. But Dipcon did not just follow Origins around, it had its own system for rotation as spelled out in the Dipcon Society Charter a few years earlier.

What was the Dipcon Society? Basically defined as anyone who attended the Dipcon the year you were asking the question. The Charter was originally passed by Dipcon attendees back in 1979 - a primary reason for its adoption was to avoid the three-years-in-a-row-in-Chicago thing in the mid-70s, which did not turn out so well by the end of that run. The idea was to move around the continent to promote local hobbyists from different geographical regions to join the traveling hobby, and also to provide a boost to the local tournament serving as host. The Charter divided North America into four regions, with events in a certain two of the four regions to be eligible to bid for Dipcon each year. (Bids from the other two regions could only be considered if there were no bids from the scheduled regions.) The regional map was printed in that Summer 1983 article in Diplomacy World I mentioned earlier, and is reproduced below.

DIPCON



UPDATE

The process worked reasonably well for many years, although the geographic regions had to be amended several times to reflect the reality of where Diplomacy

tournaments actually existed. Famously, a major revision was made in the early 1990s after my own bid for the 1990 Dipcon in North Carolina won out over the

one from Baltimore. To make sure I did not prevent the Northeast folk from getting the Dipcon they “deserved” every four years, they changed the dividing line for regions in the eastern US and Canada from a vertical line to a horizontal one - effectively putting my Dixiecon tournament into its own region by itself!

There were always some rumblings about how reasonable or fair it was for the Dipcon attendees in a particular year to be the only ones to vote on the next year's location, which was basically the way it was done. Frankly there was not the technology to perform the vote any other way in the pre-internet days. The hobby was very vibrant postally, believe me, but doing a comprehensive mail-in vote in a timely and efficient manner, when many months were needed to prepare to host a successful Dipcon, that was just beyond us.

Which brings us to the 2008 Dipcon, to be held in Maine, voted in by the attendees at the 2007 Seattle event. Basically, the Maine guy sold the Seattle crowd a bill of goods, about a large untapped pool of players in Maine just waiting for the chance to wow everyone with a large and successful event. You may sometimes still today see folks at Dip events sporting T-shirts saying “I Voted for Husky” - those are folk who dissented from that vote for Maine in favor of the Woodring housecon on Long Island, called Huskycon.

After the Maine debacle (no time to discuss that here but it was quite the thing) the hobby decided it needed to come up with a better Dipcon Rotation mousetrap. The North American Diplomacy Federation had come into being by then, and was instrumental in changing the voting method to an online one. Bids would be made, evaluated, and voted on by NADF members over a period of weeks instead of relying on the “Dipcon Society” of face-to-face attendees to have the only say. It did take the bidding war aspect out of the process, frankly, and eventually the system devolved into a pass/fail vote by the Dip public for or against whatever bid had been vetted through the Dip organizers as a group.

Which brings us to now. How do we currently decide the Dipcon rotation? It is no longer the formal stuff of a Charter with locations, amendments, knock-down-drag-out public debates between bidders, etc. I know this is kind of anti-climactic, but basically we tournament organizers just kind of talk it out online and agree on a schedule by consensus. Don't knock it - the process works. Frankly this is because we just don't have the feuding and controversy of the past, and also because we have had excellent leadership of the NADF over recent years, with names such as Chris Martin, Dave Maletksy, Conrad Woodring, Siobhan Nolen and now Zachary Moore.

Let me conclude this little trip down memory lane by answering another question you may have. Why such a big deal about Dipcon, anyway? Aren't there other events running Diplomacy, so why is Dipcon special?

Of course, for the first few decades of Dipcon's existence, it was by far the most important annual face to face gathering for the Diplomacy hobby. There were always a few who insisted it was just a “convention” instead of a “championship”, but that's beside my point. Either way, Dipcon was the one place every year you would try to get to in order to meet people and play against the very best. Remember this was before World Dipcon ever existed (the first one was 1988, and its rotation concept was based on how Dipcon rotated.) It was before the other national championship events like the one in France or Midcon in the UK became the things they became later. It was even before you had very many strong, annual regional events like we do now on the North American, or any other, circuit.

But even today, when there is a World Dipcon rotating around the world, the Dipcon gives a big tournament experience for folk who may or may not be able to travel to that year's WDC. And it's also important, historically, as one of the primary pillars of our hobby. So join me in saying - everyone get to the 2024 Dipcon in Vancouver, first weekend in February!

For Want of a Nail... in Airstrip One

By Jon Hills

Hello and welcome back to Airstrip One.

I don't know if it was the same in The States but, up until the end of last week, the news programmes here in the UK were dominated by the story of the *Titan* submersible. I am sure that you will be fully familiar with the situation that played out almost at the bottom on the

North Atlantic and in which five brave, curious and - it must be said - privileged souls lost their lives.

Naturally, our thoughts, prayers and condolences go out to their families, not least to the mother and wife of two Britons involved, who was herself aboard *Titan*'s support vessel and was so close to events yet powerless to intervene.

Too often the word tragedy is used incorrectly – usually the result of journalistic hyperbole – but this was truly a tragic situation, as indeed was the capsizing of a fishing trawler off the coast of Greece about one week previously. This resulted in the deaths of a very large number of migrants seeking to reach Europe from Libya. No one knows exactly how many men, women and children were on board that vessel and how many lives were lost.

Again, our thoughts and prayers are with the families of those who died or who are missing presumed dead following that desperately sad incident.

At the risk of provoking controversy, it is perhaps equally tragic that *Titan* captured so much of the world's media attention whereas this other unnamed vessel did not. However, I realise that that nothing attracts the attention of 24/7 news broadcasting quite like the drama of a countdown to disaster and an ongoing story is always more newsworthy than a past event.

Following any events like these, there is always an investigation to understand what went wrong and, in connection with the *Titan* particularly, what came to my mind was the Challenger Space Shuttle accident from the mid-Eighties.

If, like me, you are of middling years, you'll remember that quite vividly as it was one of the defining events of the later 20th Century. Younger readers will be aware of it I'm sure, although perhaps without the same visceral connection.

Possibly less memorable (for some) was the outcome of the Federal Investigation into that accident in which the physicist Richard Feynman, now deceased, played a key role. To cut through the copious words about risk management, cost overruns and pressure to deliver, Feynman's observation was that at the heart of that disaster lay a simple rubber 'O'-ring seal fitted to the Solid Rocket Boosters. Under certain weather conditions, this rubber could become brittle and inflexible such that could not do the job for which it was intended. This inflexibility allowed hot gases to escape and ignite. The rest, as we know, is history.

In the case of the *Titan*, only time will tell whether the instantaneous implosion of that submersible will ultimately be attributed to some equally small and seemingly insignificant flaw, perhaps in the carbon fibre that formed the majority of its hull. It is surprising, though, how often a minor detail ends up having a significant impact – although thankfully not usually was such disastrous consequences.

This concept of a causative chain sits behind the risk management and hazard assessment techniques that many of us will be familiar with. It is a fundamental part of insurance practice and so has featured, in some form or another, almost every day of my working life.

Nor is this phenomenon limited in its application. We see it everywhere from law to finance, science, technology or engineering, politics, cookery and relationships. If you don't believe me, just try confusing sugar with salt the next time you bake a birthday cake and see what reaction you get!

Indeed, this is such a universal law that it spawned the nursery rhyme alluded to in the title of this article:

*For want of a nail, the shoe was lost.
For want of a shoe, the horse was lost.
For want of a horse, the rider was lost.
For want of a rider, the battle was lost.
For want of a battle, the kingdom was lost.
And all for the want of a little lost nail.*

Inevitably, therefore, it will also affect our hobbies – including *Diplomacy*.

Let me share an example that impacted the most recent game of the Colchester Diplomacy People, which took place only weekend (24 June).

As usual, we were playing a Classic seven-power game with many of our regular players; myself, Lee, Trevor, Claire & Martin but also joined by two newbies, Mick and Kayleigh.

You may remember that I mentioned Kayleigh in my last column as she had hoped to make her debut in April. Sadly, that didn't happen, so she took her bow this time around instead. Mick, on the other hand, was only new to our group, having previously been a regular in the UK Face-to-face community in its 1980's heyday – so wonderfully described by Garry Sturley in a recent edition of *The Briefing*.

Who had which Power is not terribly significant to the story – save that I was Turkey and Mick was Russia. Being possibly the two most experienced players present, we therefore had hopes of sweeping all before us.

However, as we also did not know each other at all, we were both slightly wary. Meanwhile the remainder of the board – possible excluding Kayleigh – were equally wary of us. April's game - which I had missed so cannot reliably report on – had been won in convincing fashion by just such a Juggernaut.

Possibly also relevant is that we were in our usual venue but instead were playing *al fresco* in Claire & Martin's garden – on probably the hottest afternoon of the year so far.

Our game started unremarkably with a Black Sea bounce but, by Fall Mick and I had Rumania and Bulgaria respectively. I was in the Black Sea but looking to move out through Constantinople, ready for Mick to follow. As Mick had also secured Sweden, things were looking hopeful.

My plan was to get out into the Med as quickly as possible so went for a fleet build.

As I recall...we had all had a good laugh about my wasting paper as I had used half a sheet of a reporter's notepad to write a single line. Playing to the gallery, I therefore re-wrote the order in larger hand-writing – possibly being less discrete than I would normally be. After all, where was the harm? This was just the first order in hopefully a long and successful game.

We then gathered round for the adjustment adjudication and I realised my error. Having had two open centres, I had mistakenly ordered my build for Ankara rather than Smyrna.

Surely this was only a minor lapse, I hear you say; an irritation and nothing more? But then came the kicker; Mick had built a fleet in Sevastopol too. I suspect that he had seen my order and responded accordingly.

Suddenly, we had four fleets from two supposed allies all jostling over a single sea space – a sure recipe for delays, disputes and disaster. Moreover, any trust that might have grown between Mick and I had been irrevocably broken (for this game at least).

And of course, the more I protested the honesty of my error, the more certain Mick became that it had been deliberate. I mean, only an idiot would build in Ankara when trying to build an alliance with Russia.

At least he had the good grace to think me a lying toad rather than an utter fool.

Realistically, that one order effectively determined the outcome of our respective games.

In the South, neither of us could project any power further west than Bulgaria and that remained the farthest west that my forces managed to get. This allowed Italy (Kayleigh) and Austria (Martin) space to flourish when they might not have done otherwise.

Meanwhile, sensing an opportunity, Mick was targeted by England (Lee) and Germany (Claire) in the North. The lack of pressure on France (Trevor) enabled him to grow, quietly and steadily.

Mick soon became our first and only elimination in the game whereas, by turtling up as effectively as I could, I just about managed to cling on to the bitterest of bitter ends. I finished the game with a solitary fleet - in Sevastopol.

For the life of me, I do not know why I wrote that order. Maybe it was the heat? Maybe, I am just an idiot.

Either way, it was done and there's nothing we can do now except laugh about it. Thankfully, it is only a game after all.

Before I go, I should just update you on how Kayleigh got on. It's always a pleasure to play alongside someone in their first ever game – and not because they might be seen as a source of easy dots. *Diplomacy* is a simple enough game to learn but a devilishly hard one to master and we should always regard it as a privilege to help others start their journey into madness and despair.

It's fair to say that Kayleigh enjoyed the match – or I should say, most of it. At one stage she was topping the board and, with a little more guile might even have had a shot at a share of the win in our time-limited format.

As it was, in the last two rounds, her position was ripped apart in ruthless fashion by France and Austria as Trevor and Martin battled for the top spot. Sadly, she too finished the game with one solitary centre - Bulgaria - courtesy of an unanticipated retreat that would otherwise have seen her eliminated.

And our winner was Trevor – on ten dots – by a single centre from Martin and Lee – in what was perhaps our closest finish yet.

See you in the Fall and meanwhile - Happy Stabbing!

Sun Tzu and The Art of War

by Tim Hoyt
(from Diplomacy World #76)

"War is a vital matter of state. It is the field on which life or death is determined and the road that leads to either survival or ruin, and must be examined with the greatest care." (Chapter 1).

The Art of War represents the earliest existing codification of military and political strategy, and is probably the most widely-read work on strategy in history. (It helps, of course, that the book comes from China, which is undoubtedly the most widely-populated country in history, and which has a long literary tradition.) Sun Tzu's book is widely studied by the business and military communities today. At least seven different translations appeared in the last two decades alone, including an "official" copy of the version used by the People's Liberation Army complete with Marxist dialectic and critique (I know this because I have them on my desk. Isn't it great, being weird and obsessive?)

Historical information regarding Sun Tzu is spotty, and complicated by the existence of a separate text by Sun Pin (apparently a descendant) which is also titled The Art of War (to be examined, perhaps, in a later article). The oldest Chinese historical records indicate the Sun Tzu lived at the end of the so-called Spring and Autumn Period (703-481 B.C.). During this period, the ruling Chou Dynasty gradually collapsed, and power drifted into the hands of increasingly independent provincial nobles. As these nobles contested for power and influence, China became divided into approximately a half-dozen to a dozen sizeable "kingdoms". The Period of the Warring States (403-221 B.C.) marked the struggles of the largest of these kingdoms to destroy their enemies and unify China. This period represents the closest parallel in the Asian world to the kinds of "balance of power" politics that dominated Europe from the 18th-20th centuries, and which form the basis of Diplomacy and, coincidentally, much of modern international relations theory.

Sun Tzu was a contemporary of Confucius (who lived from 551-479 B.C.). The tone of the text, which may easily be read as an exercise in Taoist philosophy, is profoundly influenced by both the increasing violence of the end of the Spring and Autumn period and by changes in the prevailing military technology. Warfare was changing from an aristocratic monopoly to a profession, and the "butcher's bills" in battle were increasing from the hundreds to the hundreds of thousands. The perfection of an "art of strategy" which would minimize the disruption and social cost of increasingly terrible and bloody wars was clearly

desirable. The Art of War consistently indicates a marked dislike for warfare. The height of strategy is not to subdue the enemy in battle, but to subdue him without fighting at all. Sun Tzu, unlike many Western analysts, focuses on the period before the war begins as a principal realm for strategy. This pre-war period requires deft manipulation of friends and enemies during the mobilization of military forces, stockpiling of logistic requirements for the initial campaigns, and other preparations for war. Sun Tzu, therefore, pays particular attention to deceit and diplomacy: two topics that should be close to the heart of any serious Diplomacy player.

"...the best military policy is to attack strategies; the next to attack alliances; the next to attack soldiers..."(Chapter 3)

There's a reason that Diplomacy recommends an extra-long period of diplomacy before the first turn. This is the period when most, if not all, players formulate their basic strategies for the game. These strategies may or may not be formulated in cooperation with allies, but in any event, they require outside assistance to have any chance of succeeding. Attacking enemy strategies still requires a strategy of your own: who is likely to be your enemy? Who do you want as an ally? How can you get them on your side? A simple method is to attack a fellow-neighbor's strategy. You don't even have to tell the truth, as long as you're persuasive. "Doug? Doug Kent? He ALWAYS attacks France when he plays Britain. He's been after me as an ally from the word go, but I just don't trust him. Germany and France are natural allies..." Denying an opponent allies at the beginning of the game is the best way of putting him in a position where you can destroy him.

"A government should not mobilize its army out of anger...Act when it is beneficial; desist when it is not. Anger can revert to joy, wrath can revert to delight, but a nation destroyed cannot be restored to its existence, and the dead cannot be brought back to life." (Chapter Twelve)

"The individualist without strategy who takes opponents lightly will inevitably become the captive of others."(Chapter Nine)

This is the essence of competitive Diplomacy play. ALWAYS have a strategy. While no strategy is perfect, in the absence of one you are simply floundering around the board waiting for someone to get organized enough to attack you and take you over. Recognize that no

strategy is perfect: there are simply too many variables, many of which reside in the individual psyches of your fellow-players, to plan for everything. Remember to be flexible, too: plans change, allies stab or are stabbed, former enemies may become fast friends or useful tools. And remember that your enemies have strategies, too.

"In ancient times, skillful warriors made themselves invincible, and then watched for vulnerability in their opponent. Invincibility is in oneself; vulnerability is in the opponent. Therefore, skillful warriors are able to make themselves invincible, but they cannot cause vulnerability in an opponent." (Chapter Four)

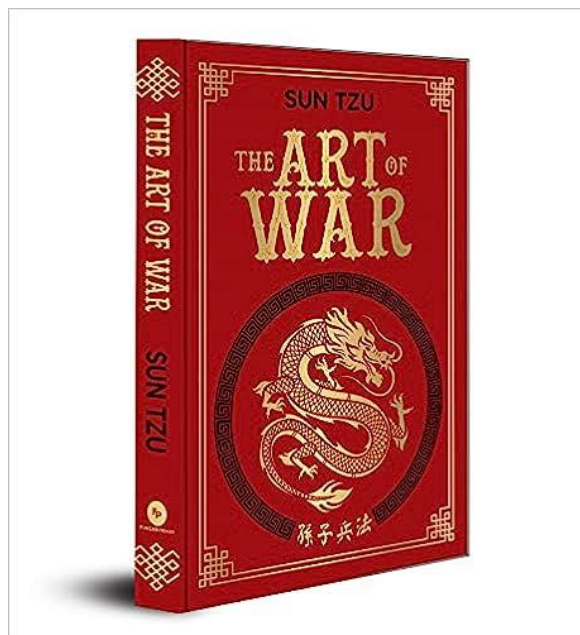
The ugly truth is that you can't force someone to be vulnerable. You can, however, sometimes persuade them to weaken themselves. If you can't get them to weaken themselves, and you decide to attack them anyway, be prepared for a long war (see below).

"Warfare is the art of deceit. Therefore, when able, seem to be unable; when ready, seem unready; when near-by, seem far away; and when far-away, seem near. If the enemy seeks some advantage, entice him with it...Attack where he is not prepared: go by way of places where it would never occur to him you would go." (Chapter 1)

Like it or not, treachery and deceit dominate the game of Diplomacy. Players spend most of their time figuring out when and who to trust. Deceiving your opponent is particularly critical just before the stab. Always have an excuse ready, and try not to make the pre-stab move too obvious. Think a turn or two ahead, and come up with clever and nasty combinations. Naturally, you don't have to worry about this if you have lots of pieces and no enemies. But for those of us not graced with those conditions, deceit is a wonderful way to assist our neighbors in becoming vulnerable.

Deceit is not lying: it is more sleight of hand, or, if you prefer, the small con. An example is the Italian opening move of A Ven-Tri. This *could* be a full-fledged stab of Austria. It also can be combined with a Lepanto to get an extra army into the Balkans against a possible R-T combination. The only way to know for sure is to wait until the fall move. Even an Austrian attack on Tri (A Vie S F Alb-Tri, or some variation) is no guarantee that there isn't an Austro-Italian alliance: perhaps Italy then retreats to Bud or Ser, where it can still be useful against the Eastern powers. A skillful Italian player can keep this up for a couple of turns. Mind you, if he's *not* allied with Austria, this deception won't do him much good! But if he is and wants to keep it secret, this deceit may forestall an R-T, or at least keep it off balance for a couple of turns early in the game.

"Forces are to be structured strategically, based on what is advantageous." (Chapter One)



The meaning of this should be obvious. In Diplomacy, there are only two kinds of pieces: armies and fleets. Each state has only limited resources. Forces must be built to achieve your objectives (which may require complementing your allies' forces) or to defend your possessions against enemy attacks. What's the threat? What's the objective? These are questions which should, but often do not, determine builds. Under what circumstances does Austria need to build a second fleet, especially early in the game. Should Italy build A Rom or F Nap in 1901? When should England build the second army? Should France build F Bre in W1901? (The answers to these and other troubling questions, naturally, can be found by a new publication by Doug Kent entitled "Diplomacy: The Truth", available for a nominal fee of \$99.95 from Illuminated Publications, Munich, Bavaria, Germany, c/o Adam Weisshaupt and friends).

Because builds indicate so much about a state's intentions, they can also be used for deceit. A French W1901 build of F Mar and F Bre could mean an attack on England or Italy. A German build of F Kie can be used against the Brits or the Tsar. Russia's first builds can be especially enigmatic, if the Tsar avoids the temptation to build F Sev and F Stp (nc). Build A War and A Mos. Then look at your options. North? Mos-Stp, War-Lvn/Pru. South? Mos-Ukr/Sev, War-Gal/Sil. Steamroll Germany? War-Sil, Mos-Lvn.

"In joining battle, seek the quick victory...in war, I have heard of foolish haste, but I have yet to see a case of cleverly dragging on the hostilities. There has never been a state that has benefitted from an extended war." (Chapter 2)

Gee, doesn't this seem obvious? In fact, academics have "proven", either through ponderous statistical research or through more readable history-based analyses (I strongly recommend Geoffrey Blainey's *Causes of War*) that wars almost always start when one, or both, sides think they can win quickly. The problem, natch, is that most wars take a long time, both in the real world and in Dip, unless you have some way to make the enemy collapse.

In Diplomacy, there are two ways to do this. 1) Have vastly superior resources and position. 2) Stab the poor bastard when he's most vulnerable. Number one can either be done as a coalition (how long does France last against an E-G-I?) or later in the game, when you have become a monster. Sometimes, later in the game, it is done to you, by someone else who's a monster. Bummer.

Stabbing has its ups and downs. That first-turn Italian stab of Austria, for instance, really looks great: it doubles the potential build for Italy, which gives so many more options for later turns because of the extra units. On the other hand, Austria may have a very hard time forgiving and forgetting: in fact, the stab may drag Italy into a long war with Austria which is both unproductive after the first turn and which allows Russia and Turkey to solve the Balkan dilemma on their own, almost invariably to the detriment of Italy. Stabbing for one center, without a plan or allies to follow up, is a good way (not necessarily the best way, but close!) to get yourself in the kind of long war that Sun Tzu abhorred.

Some long wars, however, aren't such bad things. I was recently involved in a Youngstown variant where France (Kevin Jaekley) put a truly elegant stab on Italy. He didn't gain much initially, but gradually enveloped the Italian position and drove the Italians out of the Mediterranean and the African coast. It took a couple of years and some very careful and well-planned moves before Italian centers started falling, but by stabbing when he did France completely halted Italian expansion (they both had about a dozen pieces at the time) and forced him entirely on the defensive.

As the victim of a stab, you must make a choice. Do you sue for peace quickly, and hope the stabber keeps the deal, or do you try to draw out the conflict, gain other allies, or hope that the stabber's allies eventually desert him? A long war may be better for you, and worse for your attackers, than an immediate peace. On the other hand, a quick peace may allow you to minimize your losses and stay in the game as something other than a minor power or puppet.

Last but not least, Sun Tzu devotes an entire chapter (Chapter Ten) to the "nine types of ground". Much of this discussion is tactical, but some of it is still relevant for Diplomacy players. The board is a constricted space, and therefore the occupation of certain provinces can be extremely significant. Some of the most important and influential spaces on the board are not supply centers, but provinces or sea zones which allow you to threaten multiple attacks. "Land that would be advantageous to you if you got it and to opponents if they got it is called contested ground".

Contested ground is, generally, the ground which powers try to negotiate neutrality pacts over in the first few turns of the game. It's great to have if you're there, but it usually means war once you've taken it. Burgundy is a good example. So is Armenia, or the English Channel.

"Land that is surrounded on three sides by competitors and would give the first to get it access to all...is called intersecting ground."

Early in the game, Tyrolia is intersecting ground, as is Belgium. As the game progresses, other provinces and sea areas become critical: Galicia is almost always intersecting ground during Balkan conflict, for instance. Sweden is usually intersecting ground in 1902, and Skagerrak is frequently intersecting ground that holds the key to Scandinavia. Taking intersecting ground without the support or permission of at least one of the other neighbors is likely to lead to conflict. On the other hand, if someone else gets there first, they pose a substantial threat to your position.

"When you will survive if you fight quickly and perish if you do not, this is called dying ground."

A pleasant thought, that. For Italy, the Ionian Sea is almost always dying ground: if you lose it to an opponent, your chances of winning plummet, and survival doesn't look good. The same is true for England and Nth, for France and Mid (and, often forgotten, Gas); Germany and Sil, Turkey and Arm, and Russia and Ukr (to name just a few).

So there in a nutshell, you have all the secrets <grin>. Naturally, there are no guarantees, but if you have a strategy, pursue it through alliances and deception, break the alliances or your enemies, build appropriately, and are aware of the critical provinces for you to break stalemate lines and defend your home centers, you've got a pretty good start on the parts of the game that you can control. Best of luck!

Surveying the Dip-Media Landscape

By David Hood

As I write this little piece in June 2023, it has been about three years since the Covid pandemic changed the Diplomacy hobby forever. Prior to that, there were several media outlets devoted in whole or in part to the game of Diplomacy - including this very hobby flagship publication Diplomacy World - but nothing could have prepared us for the explosion of content related to our game that resulted from months of Dip-folk being stranded at home in front of computer. While the pandemic shutdown was absolutely terrible in many ways, this Let a Thousand Diplomacy Flowers Bloom event was about the only silver lining.

Let's take a look around the world of current Diplomacy media, starting with those which already had existed before 2020 and are still going strong today.

The Diplostats YouTube channel started releasing Diplomacy content in 2017. Headed by British hobbyist Markus Zijlstra and also featuring occasional commentary from Bay Area, California player Marcus Edholm, the channel features a wide variety of videos including coverage of Diplomacy tournament finals, Dip-related puzzles and quizzes, humorous pieces, and more. If you have not seen the highly serious, in-depth coverage of the DiplomacyWinks final, released on April 1, 2022, you have totally missed out. Diplostats is particularly known for very, very extensive deep dives into individual tournament finals which leave virtually no possible insight left unexplored. The most recent release? A playthrough of the Diplomacy match featured in our game's only known appearance in...a Frozen Fan Fic:

<https://www.youtube.com/@DiploStrats/videos>

Floridaman, aka Douglas Rintoul, also started producing Dip-related videos in 2017. His content is much more focused on analysis of individual stand-alone standard Dip games from PlayDiplomacy, although he also covers variant games, tournament games, and other content such as his highly entertaining video debate between aficionados of online play versus face-to-face. The most recent release on this YouTube channel is an analysis of 1901 builds based upon data from 100 different online games, 50 each from PlayDiplomacy and WebDiplomacy:

<https://www.youtube.com/@floridamandiplomacy/videos>

The oldest of these three "legacy" productions is the Diplomacy Games Podcast, put out by Amby and Kaner from the hobby in Brisbane, Australia. This podcast was started in 2016 with its original episode focused on the variant called Known World 901. Because both

hobbyists are heavily involved in variants in general, and the site vDiplomacy in particular, a lot of the games covered are variants instead of the classic game. Amby and Kaner also do a lot of interviews of well-known hobbyists regarding various subjects, which often are the highlights of the show. Because they record their podcast from whatever bar they happen to be in at the time, there is also a lot of non-Dip talk and general shooting the breeze, which add to the fannish spirit of the podcasts. Latest edition? Episode 118, which centered on discussions of rules clarifications made in the Renegade's soon-to-be-released version of Diplomacy:

<https://diplomacygames.com/>

Before we move on to DipMedia which started during the pandemic, I should mention a few other options out there which appear to be dormant or defunct, but whose older material is still online and worthy of view. Chris Martin's Diplomacy Academy should really be required viewing for anyone learning the game, or learning more about the hobby surrounding the game.

<https://www.youtube.com/c/DanceScholar> The Diplomatic Pouch was once a very active, worthy sister publication to the one you are reading now, with content coming from a combination of face to face and online players. The last issue was in Spring 2021, so we maybe only can watch the reruns now:

<http://www.diplomatic-pouch.com/> Brother Bored's website and YouTube series called the Diplomacy Dojo has not featured new content in quite some time, but again, no self-respecting Dip hobbyists should say they have never perused the myriad of posts on a variety of topics from Brother Bored himself as well as from guest commentators on his website:

<https://brotherbored.com/diplomacy/>

Regarding the newer content creators out there, who started at or after the start of the pandemic, we should probably start with Diplomacy Briefing, a weekly newsletter focused on tournament results, upcoming events, other hobby news, and a featured article. The thing appears by email like clockwork, every week, and is truly indispensable as a way to keep up with the Diplomacy times: <https://www.diplomacybriefing.com/>

Somewhat related to the Briefing is a YouTube channel which was once "sponsored" by Diplomacy Briefing, Ed Sullivan's channel called The Diplomats. Ed and guest commentators cover specific high profile Diplomacy matches, with a deep dive into each turn of the game featured in separate episodes. You have not watched or analyzed an online Nexus Main Event final board,

frankly, until you have watched it being done on The Diplomats. These fellas are currently commenting on another online tournament called Olympus, which is a Discord server where top Backstabbr players compete against each other, in which the Season 1 Main Event final is currently in 1905 as I write this:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/gohornsgo2000>

The Legendary Tactics channel on YouTube is devoted to board games in general instead of Diplomacy in particular, but since 2020 they have released a number of excellent videos about our game, including strategy/tactics pieces, hobby history stories, how to play in virtual tournaments, and an outstanding series about how to play each of the seven Great Powers taught by players particularly known for playing that particular country. The most recent Dip-related video was about playing Russia competently after losing either Sevastopol or St Pete, but frankly all of the Dip content on this channel is excellent:

<https://www.youtube.com/@LegendaryTactics>

Last but not least, the Diplomacy Broadcast Network got its start due to the pandemic, as many players and organizers facing the pandemic lockdown decided to

create an entirely new way to play the game (virtual face to face) and created a broadcast network devoted in part to coverage of that style of play. In addition to Youtube and Twitch coverage of virtual tournaments, virtual leagues, and now face-to-face tournaments (shows called League Night and Gameday Live), DBN also has a monthly news show called Deadline, an occasional gossip interview segment called Backchannel, and a show devoted to the DBN Invitational virtual tournament qualifying race, called Countdown. If you have not watched any of this dip content on YouTube, please check it out - I suspect you will be pleased with what these DBN nerds have been up to in the last three years: <https://diplobn.com/>

I am sure I have missed someone in this little tour, but if so, it was not intentional. There are a few other projects which got off the ground in the last few years but seem to have lost steam, but that's just part of a volunteer, non-professional hobby like ours. And there is plenty of room for more media outlets, by the way. If you have an idea for your own podcast or video series, or print media as well, my advice to you is to reach out to any of these people for feedback and guidance, and then just to jump in with both feet!

The Origins Diplomacy Tournament

by Thomas Haver

The Origins Diplomacy tournament is the 2nd longest running Diplomacy event in the world behind DipCon. There have been 43 Diplomacy tournaments at Origins. We know from various fan zines there are more tournaments with unreported or lost results, so the likely number of events is higher. Origins has hosted World DipCon twice and DipCon NINE times. In 2007 this stalwart of the Diplomacy hobby rebranded as the Origins Game Fair (<https://www.originsgamefair.com/>), but most attendees just call it "Origins". The following is a history of the Origins event as well as a recap of the 2023 edition of the event with some feedback from the Top 3 finishers.

The Nomadic Convention

Origins was established in 1975 between Avalon Hill and a local wargaming club. Naturally the first Origins was held in the same town as Avalon Hill was headquartered: Baltimore, Maryland. The original event had a few hundred attendees and just 13 events. The convention would not stay in one location, instead becoming a nomad; Origins has been held in Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Michigan, California, Texas, Wisconsin, Georgia, and Ohio. This made it troublesome to coordinate the annual tournaments, since there was no guarantee a tournament director would be able to

make the cross-country trip for the convention. The Diplomacy event was kept strong by a cadre of committed players sharing TD duties in those early years (Edi Birsan among them).

In 1996 Origins finally arrived in Columbus, Ohio -- the permanent home for the convention ever since. Columbus was selected as a location because it was within a day's driving distance of a majority of the US population and had an inexpensive venue in the Greater Columbus Convention Center. The June to July event dates meant that Origins has oftentimes overlapped with the "Red, White, and Boom" Independence Day celebrations, the annual "Pride March" down High Street, and ComFest held at nearby Goodale Park.

I've been attending Origins since it first came to Columbus in 1996, but only started playing Diplomacy there in 2005. I've attended every Origins held in Columbus and eventually I took over TD duties of the Diplomacy tournament in 2011 from Dan Mathias.

Best Country Awards

"Best Country" Awards are standard at most Diplomacy events. These awards are given out to the competitors who play a power better than anyone else at an event,

typically determined by tournament score for that round. It's common to see "Best Austria, Best England, Best France, etc." listed alongside the top finishers of a tournament. Best Country awards can take many forms: plaques, trophies, medals, blocks of wood shaped like playing pieces, bottles of alcohol, and some other wild designs. But where did the concept of Best Country awards come from? Origins.

In Edi Birsan's recounting of Origins II in Baltimore from the "DipCon Story", he writes: "The system also saw the introduction of the new concepts of Best Country awards introduced by the tournament directors: Edi Birsan and Mike Rocamora as an incentive for players who did poorly in their first round to play extra hard in their second-round game so as to get a trophy. The scoring system also had a variation on the concept of top board in that the games in the second round were seeded based on the first round with extra points awarded to those that played in the 'tougher' board in the second round."

The introduction of Best Country awards was at Origins and the purpose behind them is to incentive players to compete even though they may be out of the running for a championship. I think this was a cool idea and I'm glad it has become a standard in the Diplomacy community. As Origins tournament director, I've used wooden plaques and medals in the past. This year, we upgraded all Best Country awards to huge pillar acrylic awards you see in the pictures below. They are color-coded to match the Power color in the game and include an optional plate for the event. All part of the upgrades for the latest release of Diplomacy in 2023!

My Time as Tournament Director

When I took over the Diplomacy event at Origins from Dan Mathias more than a decade ago, I brought the "Introduction to Diplomacy" event with me from GenCon. For many years our group at GenCon has run teaching events for Diplomacy; the change at Origins aligned with our group mantra to make every event we ran "rules taught". The Intro event would be a time-boxed session taught by an experienced Gamemaster with plenty of swag available (including a copy of Diplomacy to the "Best Diplomat" on the board).

In my experience at Origins (and other events), players who sign up for "Introduction to Diplomacy" generally fall into one of three categories: (1) those who played earlier in life looking to return for a game; (2) those who heard about the reputation of the game and wanted to finally try in person; and, (3) those who were roped into playing by one of the first two groups. I don't go into a teaching game with the goal of converting a new player to the tournament scene; the goal is to provide new Diplomacy players with a fun experience. The event should result in new players having a good time with their friends -- if

they want to go further then there is plenty of material to provide them later via email. Be authentic and let the players decide how deep they want to swim in the ocean of Diplomacy content. For those organizers who do care about conversion & retention, from my records I have 39 Intro event players who have gone on to play in two or more tournaments.

There are many "how to play" videos and documents online if you're looking to create your own "Introduction to Diplomacy" events. I recommend the "Quick Start Rules" provided in every copy of the new game, which was converted from my verbal instructions at events like Origins. A PDF version is available on Renegade's site here:

https://renegadegamestudios.com/content/File%20Storage%20for%20site/Rulebooks/Diplomacy/DiplomacyRGS_QuickStartRules_lo.pdf

Player Profile: Geoff Mize

Geoff Mize is a three-time Origins champion and the reigning champion. He started playing with us at Origins in 2016 and has become a tournament regular, participating in 16 events since then. Geoff is local to Columbus, Ohio and is a high school history teacher. He's taught Diplomacy in the classroom and runs his school's boardgame club. He's been a valuable member of our local Diplomacy group, recruiting fellow teachers and students to play in our monthly games at game cafes and game stores.

As TD of Origins and regular GM of our monthly games, I would describe Geoff's style as a friendly yet stern player. He can bring out his authoritarian teacher voice when it looks like things may go against him on the board. His background in education has made him a good ally of newer players, as he is always careful to explain the WHY and the HOW of what will happen in an alliance.

Geoff returned to defend his title at Origins in 2023 hoping for a back-to-back-to-back championship. We hope to bring him to Milan next year to compete in the World Diplomacy Championship since he's always dreamed of traveling to Europe.

Player Profile: Robert Zahn

Robert Zahn is the most consistent attendee at Origins Diplomacy, having participated 18 times. In that span he's been on the podium six times and won the event twice. His Diplomacy days go far back into the 80s before Origins ever came to Columbus, where he played in the CapCon Diplomacy events. Rob is known as a strong alliance player. He's not one to lie or deceive. His steady play and Midwestern humble attitude have won over many a board. Rob has two sons who also play the game regularly. They got their start learning at Origins

and they've both competed in the tournament many times.

I met Rob at Origins 2005 in my first ever tournament. We were both OSU fans & avid boardgamers, and quickly became friends. In those days a Diplomacy round at Origins could go 12 hours or more, so it was incumbent on one of us to secret the adult beverages from the Hyatt bar into the Game Hall at the convention center, lest we miss last call. Our families are friends: gaming together, spending holidays together, celebrating family milestones together, etc.

We've been such good friends that when my son was born, I named him James Robert, the middle name in honor of Robert Zahn. Despite the honor, he still won't support me into Belgium. That decades old friendship all started at a Diplomacy board at Origins. Rob returned for the 19th time at Origins 2023, and both our families enjoyed games together. Read on to see how he performed and his feedback on the event.

In Memoriam: Nate Cockerill

Nate Cockerill began his Diplomacy journey at the World Championship in the first ever Columbus based Origins back in 1996. He finished 10th at the tournament and would become a regular at Origins, competing in the event 13 times. Originally from nearby Greenfield, Nate was always at local board game clubs and Diplomacy events, including hosting BGF one year. He also volunteered for Z-Man Games at Origins, which sometimes meant delaying a round start so he (and Don Glass, Mayfair volunteer) could play.

Nate's style of play was Al Capone meets Second City. A comedian and improv-er, he was always making wry jokes in between deathly serious looks. As you can imagine for a game that heavily involves negotiation, the ability to demonstrate wit & charm go a long way on the board. He was a fun, wonderful guy to play with. That's what made it all the sadder when he became sick and had to go through a series of hospitalizations. Suddenly the Diplomacy regular was fighting for his life. He never lost his sense of humor though and fought back from his illness.

In 2015 our group hosted two events for Nate, and in September of that year he received the first "Tough Bast*rd Award", named in his honor. Even though he wasn't at 100%, Nate played like a champion that weekend and finally won the Origins tournament he had sought since 1996. Many people came out not to play Diplomacy, but to see Nate; he was joined by many friends from both gaming and the improv community.

In 2016 Nate was supposed to present the "Tough Bast*rd Award" at the Origins Diplomacy tournament, but couldn't attend as his health took a turn for the worse. A

few months later he passed and the sad news quickly spread through all the communities he had been part of for decades. At his funeral, many family & friends celebrated Nathan's love of gaming during the service, including the fact he was a multi-time Diplomacy champion. Three separate people mentioned his passion for Diplomacy during eulogies.

We had lost one of our own, but he was not forgotten and we intended to do him justice. Shortly after his passing, Nate's family set up a memorial fund in his honor. Our group scheduled multiple Diplomacy fundraising events, called the "Nate Cockerill Memorial", to raise thousands of dollars in support of the Arts at his local High School. We're fortunate to have called him friend and a member of our group. Diplomacy at Origins isn't just about the game, but the relationships we've built over decades.

Player Profile: John Carpenter

Our next player profile is John Carpenter. No, not the famed Director of "Halloween" and "The Thing", but rather the IT manager out of Mississauga, Canada. John's first trip to Origins was in 2017 after previously playing Diplomacy at GenCon. John came in hot, taking Best Italy and the Championship in his first Origins.

John's style of play fits in well with the recurring group of players. He's tactically strong and has a friendly demeanor. He tends to not stab or use deceitful language, which has built up his reputation as a steady ally. Many of his board tops come with general agreement of his neighbors instead of final year shenanigans because he's played so well.

In addition to winning the tournament twice, John has brought allies to the Diplomacy event. He often visits the US with his friend group, bringing additional players to the event who have now become regulars. Although he was prevented from attending in 2021 due to the pandemic, John Carpenter returned to Origins in 2023. We always look forward to his company on the board and at group dinners after the game!

Families That Play

Origins has seen multiple Father & Son/Daughter combinations over the years. At some point a father exposes their children to their hobbies, and Diplomacy is no different. Rather than playing catch in the backyard or working on the car together, these parents bust out the little wooden blocks and a map of Europe.

The Zahn family, led by Rob Zahn, has two other regular players among his sons Erich and Brian. While Erich has followed in his father's footsteps to become US Diplomacy Champion, Brian has not yet captured a trophy. He came close one year, needing only to write

the set of moves to get him a solo; sadly, he didn't see the moves and has been hunting ever since.

WBC Champion Anton Wilsbach has played at numerous events with his son Jack. He's still working on getting his other kids to play, starting with local house games. The Johnson family, led by Russ Johnson, also had his two sons (Rusty and Robby) play in Columbus. Three-time Origins Champion Chris Mazza has played with his daughter Marguerite, who thus far remains the only Father-Daughter duo to have played in the event -- until this year.

Diplomacy ends up going beyond friendships to also being a family affair, with the legacy passed down from parent to child. To my knowledge, the Zahns are the only father-son duo to have won tournaments. We expected the Zahn's, Wilsbach's, Covitz's, and Haver's this year.

In Memoriam: A.N. Doyle

Diplomacy, like most of tabletop gaming, has a history that leans towards more men participating than women. For both casual play and tournament play, most boards consisted of men. However, at Origins in 1983 the Diplomacy community experienced its first breakthrough performance by a woman in Joyce Singer.

Let's jump into the way-back machine with a recap from the late Larry Peery, who wrote: "In 1983 the North American Diplomacy Convention was held in Detroit, Michigan in the USA. Over a hundred players played a two-round tournament to determine the North American Diplomacy champion. (Keep in mind that this was five years prior to the first WDC.) When the knives were dulled and the blood congealed, Joyce Singer's 15-center Best Germany in Round II had earned her the first-place finish among the 112 players. Her husband, Daniel, had a 12-center Best Austria in Round I and came in 9th overall. This may be the best couple performance in the hobby's history. Joyce's second tournament appearance was at the 1996 WDC when she came in 55th out of 88 players."

In several Zines at the time, various contributors wondered if this would be the beginning of a shift in Diplomacy. However, it wasn't until 2005 when A.N. Doyle became the 2nd woman to win a championship, which was also at Origins. This happened to be my first competitive Diplomacy event. A.N. was a genial player with a sharp mind; she was also confined to a wheelchair, but that didn't stop her superb play during the endurance testing event. The other players in that tournament rotated turns at the board for negotiating, because in those days we all expected games to go 8-12 hours before completion. She won her first and only championship that day, but also kicked off a trend at Origins.

We've had dozens of women play in casual events and tournament events over the years. Origins has seen women win multiple Best Countries, Best New Player awards, and even travel from our other event locations from afar to participate. As the general climate around gaming has shifted to become more all-inclusive, Diplomacy seems to be following suit. Multiple women have won competitive Diplomacy events in recent years, and the trend will continue in the positive direction with a new release coming July 2023 to drive fresh interest. For anyone look to participate in community outreach to grow Diplomacy, I recommend reaching out to me directly or following the advice in the interview from the Diplomacy World here:

<http://www.diplomacyworld.net/pdf/dw161.pdf>

The Social Events

In the old days of Origins, the Diplomacy rounds were time unlimited. This meant it was wise to stock up on snacks & beverages before the evening round start, because likely every restaurant would be closed once the board was called. It was common for players from one board that finished early to bring drinks from the Hyatt bar, the large, connected hotel that was a frequent evening stop for Origins attendees. That Hyatt bar was where most of us gathered to socialize after a round.

These days we follow a European style of play with time-limited rounds and planned outings. Since we know when everyone will finish, we can have group lunches and dinners. Barley's Brewing Company across the street from the convention center has become the go-to spot after the evening rounds. Ample food & drink for the attendees plus space enough to fit everyone together. Plus, Barley's has adopted Origins culture, with specialized menus & commemorative glasses. I recommend the "fried beholder eyes" if you're hungry.

Between rounds two and three, we often decide to visit the North Market. It's a converted market for a dozen local restaurants, which means everyone can get the food they want and there's enough seating for all. The North Market has American BBQ, Indian, Polish, Vietnamese, Italian, Mexican, Somali, etc. all nestled within the large building. A popular destination is Jeni's Ice Cream, which started here as a small parlor but has grown into a national brand. Other popular dining spots from years past include Marcella's (clam linguine is excellent), Hyde Park Steakhouse (the "Woody" is your steak!), and Bonifacio (Filipino cuisine).

The social aspect of Diplomacy outside the casual & the tournament is as important as the event itself. The game lends itself to retrospectives as players excitedly discuss what happened or what they were thinking at a critical juncture in the game. It's also a time to bond and learn about the person behind the Great Power. It's important

for us to plan these social experiences at our events and make them open to everyone. It's a large part of why we have such a dedicated group and add new players to the fold every year. We have 25 players with six or more events played; that commitment will continue with fun social outings and a positive culture.

The Tournament Directors

We finish our history of Origins Diplomacy where we began: the founding of the event. After discussing Origins event evolution, prizes, players, social activities, and teaching events -- we finish with our event organizers, oft-overlooked in making this event happen. Origins Diplomacy would not be here without the initial effort by Edi Birsan and Mike Rocomora. They ensured the first few years in Baltimore had a strong presence and put structure in place for other organizers to support this traveling convention. Over the years and across many cities, Origins was organized by good people like John Boyer, Mark Berch, Fred Hyatt, Rod Walker, Jim Bumpas, Fred Davis, Eric Ozog, John Caruso, Allen Pearson, Eric Sanders, Tim Moore, Andy York, and Bruce Reiff. I wanted to name all organizers that I could because the work of an organizer is typically a thankless task. That person commits their own time and resources to ensuring the event takes place, and almost all do so without compensation. So, a heartfelt thank you from me to all the past organizers who kept the torch lit.

In particular, I want to highlight the work of Dan Mathias. He hosted two World Diplomacy Championship events at Origins: the first at the inaugural Columbus event in 1996, which drew 88 players, and the second in 2009, which drew 53 players. Dan was also serving double-duty at Origins, working as the head of Boardgame HQ for years. So, he organized Diplomacy that went well into the AM every day, and immediately came back in the morning to support events. A true iron man of the hobby. He was event organizer from 1996 until 2010, with some assistance from Bruce Reiff in between. In 2011 Dan passed the torch to me. Dan's efforts are to be applauded for going above and beyond for his players and the attendees of Origins.

The second person I want to highlight is Don Greenwood, an absolute titan of the gaming hobby. He started work with Avalon Hill in 1972 and was the editor of "The General Magazine" from 1972-1982. He founded Origins and ran the convention for several years. Later he founded AvalonCon and its successor the "World Boardgaming Championships (WBC)". He ran WBC as the convention director for decades. Beyond that, he's designed 32 games, including such greats as "Advanced Squad Leader", "The Republic of Rome", and "Age of Renaissance". In 2011 when Don asked me to become the GM of the dormant WBC Diplomacy tournament, I could not refuse a hobby legend.

After a few years of running the event, Don Greenwood wrote this to the members of the BPA: "As CD of WBC and its predecessor for the last 24 years I have had the privilege of watching many dedicated GMs strive to keep their event robust and relevant in the ebb and flow of the convention's evolution as the following of old classics erode and fall victim to the cult of the new. All bring different levels of competence and devotion to the task before eventually surrendering to the inevitable. Many are motivated by self-interest and maintaining the relevancy of their favorite game while maintaining a platform for their own achievements. Others are more altruistic and seek only to preserve the tournament for others. Those who love Diplomacy tend to be in the latter camp as Diplomacy tournament directors rarely play in their own events to ensure their objectivity - aside from an occasional role as an eliminator replacement to fill boards out of necessity. Thus, it is refreshing to have watched the degree of dedication Thomas Haver brings to this event as a non-playing GM. Not only does he sacrifice his time without the gratification of playing the game, but he funds significant prizes and refreshments for his players out of his own pocket. Once upon a time, WBC regularly hosted one of the largest Diplomacy tournaments anywhere and in 2000 hosted a World Dip Con which is still one of the largest such events of all time. Those days are long gone, but Thomas is to be congratulated for his efforts. No one has ever made more of an effort to support such a classic game's relevance."

I greatly appreciate Don's comments and continued support, especially since it's coming from the founder of Origins! My group's events have a long history behind them, so we try our best to make the player experience positive & memorable. As we headed into the Diplomacy event at Origins this year, our group wanted to thank all the event organizers from years past that have kept this event going for decades. Each of us is a steward of this great tradition, with a love of the game that extends far beyond our own desire to play.

Origins 2023 Introduction Round

We kickoff Origins with an "Introduction to Diplomacy" event. This gives new or returning players an opportunity to participate in a casual, learning environment for the game. We typically average between one to two boards for the game. Unlike the tournament where we expect multiples of seven, we're ok with having fewer players on an Intro board since it gives the new players more opportunity to maneuver without being eliminated early.

We had exactly 14 players for the Intro boards, with one experienced tournament player (Aaron Fischer) serving as GM for our Lego board and myself acting as GM on the giant map. The giant map was made more special through the use of plotter rods to push the pieces and

WW1-era officer hats for players to wear. This is both fun and has the effect of reinforcing the “role play” aspect of the game. We ended up with a gallery watching us on the big board, with many people taking pictures and asking about the event. The event organizers for the convention put us on a high-traffic area between the exhibit hall and gaming event space, so we had plenty of onlookers throughout the night.

As is typical of my Intro boards, I have plenty of swag to provide players. They received stickers, patches, branded pens, shirts, and even a few board games. It's all about making a good first impression so they continue playing the game and tell their friends & family what a great time they had.

Notes From the Players

Robert Zahn: "It was exciting to see all the people come up while we were playing and watch or talk about how long it had been since they played! Most were attracted by the 12x12map & large playing pieces. I pointed out that there are intro games during origins to shake your rust off and then tournament games. Whatever your experience or skills -- it is available! Thomas has done a lot to help grow our sport. Diplomacy is one of the old classic games that like a fine wine gets better with age. Thomas does a fantastic job running the tournament & the players always go out for food at the end of the evening."

This year, we had a family of three play in the Introduction Round and later post their positive review of the experience to the Origins Facebook Group. They purchased Diplomacy after the Intro Round, so I invited them back for Diplo-shirts for the whole family. We also had one Intro player end up playing in multiple tournament rounds on Friday and Saturday, so we definitely had people catch the Diplomacy bug.

Round One

I typically conduct random board assignments for my Diplomacy tournaments, but this year was special. We had multiple custom boards for a special experience each round. So, this year I had players volunteer for the giant map and the LEGO board in Round One. I took the first seven people who raised their hand and assigned them to the giant map, with the other seven players taking a seat at the Lego board.



The Lego Board

We had some wild, unique play on the giant map. There was an early Russia-Turkey alliance against Austria, who was played by Geoff Mize. He put up a valiant defense and relied on pulling in England and Italy to keep the Juggernaut from rolling. This ended up a game for witches, as Jason Covitz as England and Robert Zahn as Turkey systemically dominated the board with guaranteed moves, leaving no room for stabs by their allies. The most creative play of the night was by Aaron Fischer's Italy, who managed to stay 3 centers as Italy for years, with those centers being Tunis, Spain, and Belgium; those three units were all supported by three different powers, hoping to leverage him as a barrier against attack.



The Large Floor Map

The LEGO board experienced no such Russia-Turkey alliance but also resulted in strong finishes by England and Turkey. Tournament veteran but Origins newbie Dan McNeill found an eager ally in Germany to make an early attack on France. Meanwhile, Anton Wilsbach's Turkey allied with Austria to first attack Russia then Italy to dominate the eastern half of the board.

The games ended up with board top as England by Dan McNeil on our Lego Deluxe Diplomacy map and a shared board top by Jason Covitz (England) and Rob Zahn (Turkey) on the Giant Diplomacy map. Hats off to David Medley and Jason Covitz for sticking with their kepi and bicorn throughout the Round. Both are GenCon originals who crossed over to Origins.

We also had a visit from John Stacy, the Executive Director of GAMA. He previously played at our store game in March and made sure we had primo space for the giant games. We gifted him a Diploshirt in thanks.

Round Two

The second round began on Saturday just after lunch. Once again, we had two boards. The original giant map was switched out for a *different* giant map and the LEGO board was replaced with a custom 3'x3' wargaming map designed by John Fairley.

Notes From the Players

John Carpenter: "Playing in the tournament is a way to catch up with friends I can see nowhere else, and to meet new people interested in how people can work together. My favorite thing is watching a plan come together and the look on my ally when I *don't* betray him!"

The first board had an uneasy back-and-forth between Turkey-Italy-Austria for most of the game. None of the players could seem to get on the same page for a long-term alliance, so it was a brute force method that won the day once they saw what was happening in the west. Dan McNeill's France and John Carpenter's Germany started as strong allies and stayed that way for the entire game. They combined to put England in a tough spot after he had already committed to moving against Russia in the first year. The alliance was unbreakable, as Dan announced he was taking a new approach to the game as a classic care bear. Even when he could have dotted his German ally at the end of the round to take the board top & bonus points for himself, he stayed firm.

On the other board, it was Robert Zahn's England that slowly, inexorably pushed out into Germany with the help of Russia and France. He then turned his sights on France in the late game, with his ally overcommitted against Italy. Russia found a good ally in Turkey for another Juggernaut attempt. Unlike the giant map, this group stayed strong, pushing Austria down to a single center in Italy and controlling almost half the map.

Ted Stephani sat out the round and showed off the new edition of Diplomacy to onlookers. Renegade has graciously provided me with the first review copy of the game, one that I reviewed over on BoardGameGeek here

(<https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/3073735/unboxing-new-edition-diplomacy-renegade-games-stud>). One of the interested onlookers was a school teacher who bought five copies(!) of Diplomacy for his school. So, we had to hook him up with our swag and will share a teaching guide with him later.

Round Two finished with a tied board top on the big board between Dan McNeill (France) and John Carpenter (Germany) at 10. On the 3'x3' custom wargaming map, Rob Zahn topped with 11 as England.

Round Three

Before Round Three a number of players visited Martini Modern Italian for dinner. There were two clear leaders in the tournament: (1) Rob Zahn with a tied board top & lone board top; and (2) Dan McNeill with the same results but with fewer centers, so a lower score. For Dan to win the championship he would need either a lone board top or another tied board top with more centers to make up the difference. Lurking in the background were John Carpenter and Jason Covitz. Since the tournament was best two rounds of three, each had one more round to add to their tied board tops from earlier in the event.

In Round Three we once again had two boards. This was expected as we capped both the Introduction to Diplomacy event and the tournament rounds at 14 event tickets each. We had overflow as needed from experienced players to ensure we had full boards, but two boards per round was the goal. For the final round, I brought out an all-wooden board with the new wooden pieces from the Renegade edition to go along with a giant map, which was switched from Round Two (seriously, having two giant walkable diplomacy maps that are 12' wide is awesome).

The final round in most tournaments typically sees more heightened play by those players looking to make a top 7 finish or earn a Best Country award before they head home. This event was no different. Over on the giant map, Dan McNeill's Austria allied with Tony Prokes' Turkey to simultaneously push against both Russia and Italy. Dan was playing like it was a qualifying round at GenCon's Best Country system – going from 3 to 5 to 7 centers as Austria in the first two years. Geoff Mize's England was pushing for a big result early too, but overextended in the attack on Russia and left his back open to Matt Davison's France to convoy an Army into Liverpool, ending England's dreams of a board top. Don Leaman, a 1996 Origins "original" player of the first tournament in Columbus, rose to 6 as Germany then

had to fend off attacks on both flanks from England and Austria. As befitting a veteran of his caliber, he gave up the neutrals but held onto three centers to end the game. The Austro-Turkish alliance was not meant to last, which started with a dotting by Turkey against Austria in Rumania. This was followed by a combined Austria stab of three centers the following year. Dan rode that momentum to 12 as Austria.



The Prize Table

On the all-wooden board, the dogpile on Rob Zahn's Russia was immediate and thorough. All four surrounding powers attacked the tournament leader. All I could do was console him, having experienced the same attack as tournament leader in Gambolo, Italy the prior year as Russia. Some games you're the hammer and other games you're the nail. Rob didn't have a chance to crack open a beverage before he was eliminated; however, in true Zahn fashion he kept a brave face and ended up volunteering to GM the board to the conclusion of the tournament. There were other experienced tournament players on Board Two, but none playing as possessed as John Carpenter's Turkey. He knew he needed to board top and get a big result to win the event. So, he pressed forward with help from the west (England and Germany) into every available center he could find. He took the approach of next nearest center to grow, and rode that wave to a huge 15 center Turkey and board top. Both boards ended up finishing about the same time.

The big pushes by Dan McNeill (Austria) on board one and John Carpenter (Turkey) on board two set the tone for the final round. Two great players putting in maximum effort to vie for the crown. Both players trying to beat the score by Rob Zahn, who was already on the clubhouse with his best 2 rounds.

For me as Tournament Director, the most entertaining thing about the final round was watching both Russian players go 4-1-0 in the first three years of gameplay. With both games wrapped up, we moved to calculation of the final results and declared the champion. . .

Notes From the Players

Dan McNeill: "I have been playing in Diplomacy events run by Thomas Haver and Rogue Judges for the past 15 years, but this was my first ever visit to Origins. Let me tell you it was absolutely worth the trip. Origins Game Fair had a ton to see and do and the city of Columbus was a wonderful host. I had been speaking to Thomas over Discord over the past few months and he gave me some sneak peeks at some of the special touches he was adding to the event. I have to say he really went all out and the pictures, while enough to get me excited enough to book the trip, did not sufficiently convey just how much flair he added to the event this year.

Between the giant 12x12 foot board with matching 3D printed pieces and plotter rods for movement to a board made entirely out of LEGO bricks (including minifigures to represent armies and fleets) to the assortment of beautiful game boards to play on, this was a Diplomacy event like no other. This is to say nothing of the custom clipboards with maps printed on them, matching pens, stickers for each country as well as historically accurate hats (which were super fun to wear). The prizes were also amazing as all players walked away with some combination of a shirt, mug, plaque, trophy, sticker, keychain, board game or my personal favorite, the gold LEGO monofigure. One of the best parts about this event was the constant stream of people coming over to observe what was going on...I mean if you saw a bunch of people wearing funny hats playing on a giant board you'd stop and ask questions too! Despite being on timed rounds and under a lot of pressure, the players made every attempt to talk to the visitors about the game and I'm confident we will be adding some new players to our ranks at the next event.

But what I love most about Diplomacy is the community of players. For many of us we only see each other one or two times a year at these major events, but each year we pick up right where we left off and it's as if we had just seen each other last week. Even the players I met this year at Origins seemed like old friends by the end of the first game. Diplomacy can sometimes be a tough game but the friendships that are forged in the heat of battle are very real and to me are quite possibly the most meaningful part of being a member of the Diplomacy community. Well, that and the satisfaction of seeing the look on your opponent's face when you execute the perfect stab. It is Diplomacy after all."



The Other Large Floor Map

Tournament Results

In total we had 23 players participate in three tournament rounds and 14 players at the introduction event. The board top by Dan McNeill was enough to separate him from both John Carpenter and Robert Zahn to win the championship. In his first Origins Diplomacy tournament, the two-time United States Champion finished all three rounds either as lone board top or tied board top. It was a dominating performance by a player known for his quick wits and ruthless board play. All hail the king, baby!

Top 7:

- 1st - Dan McNeill (Florida)
- 2nd - John Carpenter (Canada)
- 3rd - Robert Zahn (Ohio)
- 4th - Anton Wilsbach (Ohio)
- 5th - Rob Lacy (Texas)
- 6th - Jason Covitz (Ohio)
- 7th - Geoff Mize (Ohio)

Best Countries:

- Best Austria - Dan McNeill
- Best England - Robert Zahn
- Best France - Dan McNeill
- Best Germany - John Carpenter
- Best Italy - Jason Seifert
- Best Russia - Anton Wilsbach
- Best Turkey - John Carpenter

Midwest Diplomacy Champion - Dan McNeill

Dan traveled to Origins for the first time to support the event. He is a two-time US Diplomacy Champion at GenCon and a regular at that event. He finished with two board tops and one tied board top. Dan will help run the Dice Tower East Diplomacy event in Orlando in July 2023.

Best Diplomat - Tony Prokes

Tony was a supportive player in the event and went above & beyond to help others. When Tony first showed up to sign-in, he revealed he had been fighting health issues for some time that would limit him. However, he fought through his 2nd Round game on the Giant Diplomacy map until he was eliminated. Then, in the final year of the game, he volunteered to substitute for a player who could not play the entire round. In the subsequent Round, Tony volunteered to play, ensuring that the TD (yours truly) would not have to enter the decisive round with 3 players competing for the Championship. Runner-ups for this award include John Carpenter, who volunteered to sit out Round 1 and help GM a board and Ted Stephani, who also volunteered to sit out a Round. I appreciate the way our senior players conduct themselves around returning & inexperienced players – willing to sacrifice their own spots so we can continue to grow. Kudos to them all!

Best New Player - Kit Surovec

Kit played in the Intro Round then played in two tournament rounds. He was gifted a custom Diplomacy map and set of 3D printed pieces.

Best Returning Player - Don Leaman

Don played in the first Origins Columbus event in 1996, which was also World DipCon. He played with us in 2018 and returned this year.

8th Place Party - David Medley

David played with us at GenCon last year and traveled to play with us at Origins. He just missed the Top 7, but was rewarded for his efforts with a Diplomacy mug and Avalon Hill puzzle.

Challenge Coins - All top 7 finishers received a challenge coin from Avalon Hill's 2000 event releases.

Diplomacy hats - The podium all received Diplomacy hats in the classic font style for the game from 1961 - 2000.

Lastly, every player at our awards ceremony received one of two styles of Diplomacy shirts.

See MANY terrific photos of the event that couldn't be included due to space limitations here:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/n8fSR7Zc6scuLmUp9>

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Saturday the 15th:
First Round 9:00
Second Round: 5:00

Sunday the 16th:
Third Round: 9:00
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To RSVP Email Diplom@ManusHand.com

No entry fee
Lunch provided on Saturday and Sunday
More information here: <http://armada-dip.com/2023/>