

# Diplomacy World #164



**Winter 2023 Issue**  
**[www.diplomacyworld.net](http://www.diplomacyworld.net)**

# Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of **Diplomacy World**, the Winter 2023 issue. Another year has come and gone. I wish each and every one of you a happy, healthy, prosperous, safe, and fulfilling 2024.

If nothing else, at least it appears the Diplomacy hobby enjoyed a good 2023. The most obvious example – or at least the one that received the most press – was the release of the new Diplomacy set from Renegade Game Studios. But that's far from the only one.

I asked members of the **Diplomacy World** Staff what they thought were the other major highlights of 2023 were. David Hood provided what I thought was the best list:

- 1) The Well-attended DipCon in May. Hopefully this reflected the continuing incorporation of the pre-Covid player base with the new folks we added to the hobby during the lockdown time period.
- 2) Debut of Olympus online tournament in addition to the Nexus and Nexus Leagues online events already in operation, plus the successful conclusion of the Online Diplomacy Championship. Online events have been around for a while, but now they are much more connected to the institutions and players in the overall hobby. That is a good thing for future growth.
- 3) Reinstitution of the hobby award for writing, the Literati award, as a catalyst to encourage Diplomacy folk to try their hand at that medium. Also, the second year of the Ambassador of the Year award. Awards are a fun way to thank volunteers for their hobby efforts, so it's great to have these awards back after many years' absence.
- 4) Commentary has improved on DBN broadcast coverage of both FTF and virtual FTF leagues and events, with the addition of new voices and perspectives.

With effort, focus, and a bit of luck, we can build on these successes and make 2024 another positive year!

Meanwhile, this issue marks the 50<sup>th</sup> year of **Diplomacy World**. In January 1974, Walt Buchanan released the very first issue of **Diplomacy World**. I doubt that in his wildest dreams did Walt think that half a century later new issues of this publication would still be produced (let alone predict the concept of the internet, websites, pdf files, and high-speed downloads). But here we are!

Speaking of which, before I forget, let me point out that you can download and read every issue of **Diplomacy World** in pdf format from the DW website at <https://www.diplomacyworld.net>.

I have to admit, I had completely forgotten about this big 50-year anniversary. That is, until Mal Arky sent in an article celebrating the fact! (*Pure Gold* in page 10). So, we have Mal to thank for commemorating this anniversary at all. If not for Mal, there's a 0.00001% chance I'd have brought it up on my own.

As a matter of fact, if you turn to page 19 you can find Mal Arky's new series, "From the DW Archive" where Mal discusses material from a given ancient **Diplomacy World** issue that has a particular interest. I always enjoy articles that make use of the vast treasure trove of historical material we have available.

There have been a number of times I've thought about writing a column doing the same with a given title from my Postal Diplomacy Zine Archive (<http://www.whiningkentpigs.com/DW/kent/diplomacyzinearchive.htm>), but I haven't ever gotten enough motivation to follow through. Unlike comparing the older ideas and opinions from early hobby days to today – as Mal is doing – I think the discussion about zine published decades ago would have a much more limited appeal (mostly just interesting to old timers who were part of that community at the time). But I'd be curious to hear your thoughts on the idea?

***I'll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is April 1, 2024.***

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](mailto:diplomacyworld@yahoo.com)! See you in the Spring, and happy stabbing!

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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.

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# Teaching Diplomacy at a Holiday Charity Event for Children

By Thomas Haver

This year I had the opportunity to teach Diplomacy at events all over the country, from San Francisco to DC. Going into the last month of the year, the only event on my calendar was PAX Unplugged in Philadelphia. One idea I had been kicking around for a few years was to run a holiday gaming event for children in need. This idea grew from my work with "Step Ahead Tech" (<https://www.stepaheadtech.org/>), a charity co-founded by friends of mine in 2018. Step Ahead Tech runs several programs for underserved communities to teach them about careers in the tech industry and encourage the completion of high school as well as the pursuance of college.



**At the December 2022 Step Ahead Tech event for Product Development. My own goofy children are to my left.**

I've been volunteering since the charity was founded, most recently running a Product Development workshop for them last December and a test automation workshop this Summer with the support of Perfecto Mobile (<https://www.perfecto.io/blog/stem-workshop>). The workshop with Perfecto happened because I connected one of my long-time vendors with Step Ahead Tech to provide their cloud platform at no cost for the training. Following the same model, I reached out to Renegade Game Studios, publisher of Diplomacy (among other games), to support Step Ahead Tech's December event. I was confident they would accept the proposal because everyone at the company has been nothing but wonderful since I met them last year. The spirit of the event aligns with their company values and mission to create family-friendly games. After an online meeting, Jordan Gaeta (Marketing Manager for Renegade) had the company ship the following games for the event:

## **Diplomacy x3**

Acquire x3

Robo Rally x3

Fox in the Forest x3

Arboretum x3

The Search for Lost Species x2

My Little Pony DBG x2

Transformers DBG x2

GI JOE DBG x2

Power Rangers DBG x2



Step Ahead Tech's locations have shifted over the years. They're a 501c3 charity dependent on support from community members for event locations, equipment, and teachers. We partnered with the Ethiopian Tewahedo Social Services (<https://ethiotss.org/>) to run a holiday game night at the C Ray Williams Childhood Center. ETSS is a non-profit providing social integration services for immigrants, refugees, and low-income individuals to improve the quality of life that include after-school programs. This gave us an opportunity to turn the December event into something that happens immediately after school finishes on a weekday.



The volunteers teaching the games consisted of myself, Rodney Gates (a fellow Diplomacy player), Sarala Pandey (co-founder of Step Ahead Tech), my wife Sarah, our kids, and members of ETSS. We taught RoboRally, Diplomacy, Acquire, My Little Pony Deckbuilding Game, Arboretum, and The Fox in the Forest. The group of children gathered at the Childhood Center after school, where each table had a game setup by our volunteers. The kids were allowed to move around and try out different games. The big draws for the event were: (1) RoboRally, a game where players take control of robots in a warehouse race; and (2) Diplomacy.

I was pleasantly surprised the kids had such an interest in Diplomacy. The first thing that drew them to the game was the beautiful map. Compared to some of the older editions of the game, the map does a good job of getting the attention of potential new players. I brought a special setup with me that included the color-coded clipboards with maps printed on them, the flag pins, and stickers. I used the Quick Start Rules in the new edition of the game to get us moving fast, as I suspected attention spans would wane if my explanation went on longer than Rodney's for RoboRally or Sarala's for The Fox in the Forest.

The kids enjoyed the idea of making creative moves against their friends in-game to get stronger, adding more pieces to the board. They were well-behaved as well, pausing to raise their hands to ask me questions about convoys and support orders during negotiations. We ended up with seven girls and one boy playing, with two friends working together as Turkey. A few of the schoolteachers stopped by to inquire about the game as well. Rodney was holding similar court the next table over with RoboRally, a reprint of a classic that's also visually stunning.

The holiday event was a huge success. The kids had lots of fun and the volunteers gave away every game at the conclusion of the event. Every child went home with

a brand-new game courtesy of Renegade. All three Diplomacy games brought to the event were claimed by players, with another child coming up to me afterward asking if I had any extra copies. I got the home address from their parent and shipped another copy of Diplomacy to them the next day. I had a similar request for RoboRally, so another copy of that game was shipped as well.



Renegade has posted a writeup I did of the event on their site and included details on their socials. Promotion of Step Ahead Tech and ETSS is vital to their success, as they're reliant on support from the community to continue their mission. I hope we can turn this into an annual holiday event given the success. Overall, I'm satisfied the event ran smoothly and every kid left happy. It was a fitting end to a year filled with Diplo-joy. Thanks again to Renegade for sponsoring the event, ETSS for hosting, and Step Ahead Tech for providing the volunteers!

Details on the two charities are below:

### Step Ahead Tech

"Step Ahead Tech is a nonprofit founded in 2018 by Ashtha Singh and Sarala Pandey with the goal of



providing STEM and leadership education for underserved youth. Our current focus is running several programs and activities for underserved communities to teach them about careers in the tech industry and encourage the completion of high school as well as the pursuance of college. Programs include monthly seminars ranging from personal finance to project development through Lego builds. Additionally, Step Ahead Tech runs an annual summer camp which provides an immersive experience with daily lessons from highly qualified IT and business professionals.

The ultimate goal of Step Ahead Tech is to create an organization that can connect underrepresented communities throughout the region with the educational resources they need to develop and encourage their growth. We recognize that all communities have different needs and struggles, and we hope to provide a wide variety of compassionate support in the fight against education inequality and the cycle of poverty."



#### Ethiopian Tewahedo Social Services (ETSS)


"ETSS is a community-based 501(c)(3) organization that helps new arrivals from over 80 countries establish roots

and gain self-sufficiency in Central Ohio through programs and services. Our staff members speak over 50 languages to provide individuals and families with the services they need.

The mission of ETSS is to be the focal point of societal integration for immigrants, refugees, and low-income individuals in Central Ohio to help improve the quality of life through education, training, supportive services, and self-development opportunities while increasing awareness of the diverse cultures and heritage in Central Ohio."



## Knives and Daggers - The Diplomacy World Letter Column

 **David Smith** –Congratulations on another fine issue of Diplomacy World. I especially wanted to thank you for the wonderful illustrations you included with my article (The Double Eagle, page 17 of Diplomacy World #163), especially as they appeared within the text at just the proper moment, from the telephone that Sam Spade might have used in the 1930s, to the prison cell awaiting the murderess.

But my favorite was the photo with Bogie and Peter Lorre. Perfect.

***[[Anything to mix the enjoyment of Diplomacy with one of my favorite films of all time!]]***

## 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 Championship – January 12<sup>th</sup> – January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024 - <https://diplobn.com/vdl/>

DipCon at Cascadia Open – February 3<sup>rd</sup> – February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada – Email - [cascadia.open@gmail.com](mailto:cascadia.open@gmail.com)

DBNI Invitational – February 16<sup>th</sup> – February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024 and February 24<sup>th</sup> – February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024 - <https://diplobn.com/invitational/>

OwlCon (Teaching Event and Possible Tournament) – February 23<sup>rd</sup> – February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024 - Houston, Texas - <https://owlcon.com/>

PrezCon (Tournament and Teaching Event) – February 24<sup>th</sup> – February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – Charlottesville, Virginia - <https://www.prezcon.com/>

Whipping – March 23<sup>rd</sup> – March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – San Francisco, California - <https://windycityweasels.org/>

Circle DC (Teaching Event Only – No Tournament) – April 4<sup>th</sup> – April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024 - Washington, DC - <https://tabletop.events/conventions/circledc>

Hung-Parliament Handicap - April 12<sup>th</sup> – April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – Canberra, Australia - <http://daanz.org/dip-tournaments.htm>

No Time Draws 2024 - April 27<sup>th</sup> – April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024 - <https://discord.gg/jbdZtRFMTA>

Buckeye Gam (Teaching Event Only – No Tournament) – May 3<sup>rd</sup> – May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024 - Chicago, Illinois - <https://www.gaminghoopla.com/>

BGG Spring (Teaching Event Only – No Tournament) – May 23<sup>rd</sup> – May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024 - Dallas, Texas - <https://tabletop.events/conventions/bgg.spring-2024>

DixieCon – May 24<sup>th</sup> – May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – Chapel Hill, North Carolina - [www.dixiecon.com](http://www.dixiecon.com) or email [davidhood@dixiecon.com](mailto:davidhood@dixiecon.com)

KublaCon (Teaching Event Only – No Tournament) – May 24<sup>th</sup> – May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024 - Burlingame, California - <https://tabletop.events/conventions/kublacon-22>

World DipCon 2024 – May 31<sup>st</sup> – June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024 - Croce Rossa Italiana - Comitato di Varedo, Italy - <https://www.facebook.com/events/2407467882765459> or <http://agiletechideas.com/event/world-diplomacy-convention-2024/>

Origins (Tournament and Teaching Event) – June 19<sup>th</sup> – June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024 - Columbus, Ohio - <https://www.originsgamefair.com/>

Dice Tower East (Teaching Event Only – No Tournament) – July 3<sup>rd</sup> – July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – Orlando, Florida - <https://dicetowereast.com/>

ARMADA Regatta – July 12<sup>th</sup> – July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – Denver, Colorado - <https://armada-dip.com/>

CharCon (Teaching Event Only – No Tournament) – July 12<sup>th</sup> – July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024 - Charleston, West Virginia - <https://www.charcon.org/>

World Boardgaming Championships (Tournament and Teaching Event) – July 26<sup>th</sup> – July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024 - Seven Springs, Pennsylvania - <https://www.boardgamersorg/index.html>

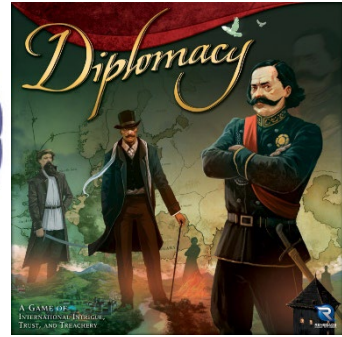
US Diplomacy Championship at GenCon (Tournament and Teaching Event) – August 1<sup>st</sup> – August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024 - Indianapolis, Indiana - <https://www.gencon.com/>

Nuke-Con (Teaching Event Only – No Tournament) – October 4<sup>th</sup> – October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024 - Council Bluffs, Iowa - <https://www.nuke-con.com/>

BGG Con (Teaching Event Only – No Tournament) – November 13<sup>th</sup> – November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – Dallas, Texas - [https://boardgamegeek.com/wiki/page/BGG\\_Events](https://boardgamegeek.com/wiki/page/BGG_Events)

PAX Unplugged (Tournament and Teaching Event) – December 6<sup>th</sup> – December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania - <https://unplugged.paxsite.com/>

World DipCon 2025 – Probably March 2025 – San Francisco, California



February 24-25, 2024

*Diplomacy has a long history at the PrezCon gaming convention. Diplomacy was part of the first PrezCon in 1994 and the convention previously hosted DipCon in 2006. For more than a decade Diplomacy at PrezCon has gone without a GM to help steward the event. We're happy to announce the PrezCon Diplomacy Tournament will return in 2024. The three-round event will be held on Saturday & Sunday (2/24-2/25) in Charlottesville, Virginia. Diplomacy at PrezCon is back!*

#### Details about PrezCon

"The PrezCon Annual Convention presented by Faceless Men Productions, LLC, is proud to have been hosting their Winter Board Gaming Convention since 1994. PrezCon has grown into a big event. It is now attended by hundreds of people from around the globe. We host over 100 Tournaments and dozens of demos during the convention! Our Open Gaming rooms entertain over 200 players utilizing our 500+ board game library. PrezCon Winter Nationals include some of the old favorites and many new tournaments as well."

#### Purchase Tickets here:

<https://www.prezcon.com/program>

#### Dates:

February 19<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The Diplomacy tournament is February 24<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>.

#### Diplomacy Tournament:

Contact - Thomas Haver ([tjhaver@gmail.com](mailto:tjhaver@gmail.com))

*Tournament Details* - PrezCon is an annual gaming convention held at the Hilton Doubletree in Charlottesville, Virginia. The 18th edition of the Diplomacy tournament will be three rounds over two days. The best two rounds of three will count towards the tournament score. Best Country awards and tournament prizes will be provided by the organizer. Firm time limits for negotiation and order writing will be followed to ensure expedient play for competitors with other events on their schedule. Food and drink will be provided during each round, with a pizza party during round two. The style of play is open to all skill-levels and encouraging for new players to gain experience.

Round One: Saturday 2/24 from 12pm to 4pm

Round Two: Saturday 2/24 from 7pm to 11pm

Round Three: Sunday 2/25 from 10am to 2pm

Scoring System: C-Diplo

Rank: Best two out of three rounds



## A Peek at World DipCon 2024:



# An Interview with Davide Cleopadre

By Randy Lawrence-Hurt

## Randy

So, first question: I understand you'll be the TD for World DipCon 2024, taking place in Milan. Could you tell our readers a bit about the event? When it'll be, where it'll take place, where they can get more info?

## Davide

That's a simple answer! All the info necessary is here, and this is the only source of truth:

<https://agiletechideas.com/event/world-diplomacy-convention-2024/>



Davide with the late Giovanni Cesarini

## Randy

Convenient! So tell us about Milan - do you live there? What should Diplomacy players/tourists seek out in their spare time?

## Davide

In fact, the event is around 16 km away from Milan, but we will play in front of Varedo train station that will bring the tourists to the Milan city center (Milano Cadorna station) in a 27 minutes train ride. As anybody will know Milan is the fashion capital of Europe and also the main business city of Italy.

The center is small, you can visit it in a day, but you need more time if you want to visit all the churches and monuments. There are also some museums, in particular the "brera pinacoteca" mainly paintings in the city center and some others. If you are there for shopping you need three days at least.

We also have the city stadium (San Siro) if you are interested in football; there is also a museum inside about the two main teams, Inter and Milan.

If you want to see everything you need more than five days.



World DipCon 2015, also in Milan

## Randy

World DipCon is obviously a big event in our hobby - do you have anything special planned for the opening ceremonies or tournament?

## Davide

Yes, but it will be a surprise; be prepared to dance! Also, a curiosity: around the 1904 turn, we will have a 15-minute beer break.

## Randy

Haha, noted!

Can you talk about the scoring system players will be dealing with?

## Davide

It is simple, you must get three centers more than second place. All the board must play against the leader so he cannot get three centers more than the second. If the six others succeed in not letting the leader get the three centers more, they all get 10 points more. All the players will get more points if nobody goes below three centers. The best result, better than a solo, is winning at 16 and all the others are at three. You cannot share the ranking, there is always a winner, a second and a third. There will be a top board as well.

## Randy

I don't think I've ever encountered this scoring system before - is it common in Italy or European tournaments generally?

**Davide**

In Italy yes, in Europe are others with many similarities

**Randy**

Interesting! Do you find it encourages a certain style of play? Any strategy tips for players new to the scoring system?

**Davide**

It encourages everyone to play with everyone and to keep people alive. The strategy is simple, when you have 7 to 9 and three more than second place, ask for a draw

**Randy**

Any insight on who some of the good European players you hope will turn out are? Whose names should we remember?

**Davide**

Right now we have good numbers: Toby Harris, Luca Pazzaglia, René van Rooijen, Cyrille Sevine, Jelte Kuiper and many more. If we keep that pace, we could aim for ten boards.

**Randy**

I count at least two prior world champs in that list, impressive!

I think that's all the questions I have - any last words for our readers?

**Davide**

The WDC will be a memorable event; be there or be square!

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## Pure Gold!

by Mal Arky

I realized, when I was looking back through past issues of *Diplomacy World*, that the first issue came out in January 1974. This is issue #164, published in January 2024, making *Diplomacy World* 50 years old.

### **FIFTY. YEARS. OLD!**

Some issues along the way have been missed, obviously. Otherwise, we'd be at *DW* #201 on the current quarterly publication. When it first came out, it was published every two months. It went quarterly in 1975, with #7.

It looks like there was six months between #19 and #20, when it was advertised as a bi-monthly (every two months) zine again, but it went back to being quarterly in #21. Then a year between #27 and #28. Six months between #32 and #33...

The odd missed issue.

But that doesn't include *DW* #31A which was a fake issue, published by Al Pearson, someone with more time on their hands than is good for anyone, frankly.

And you'd think that was enough... but no. There are *three* issue #40s. An acknowledged fake; one with the publishing date "Indian Summer", and the official #40. I mean... seriously? No, absolutely *not* seriously!

In 1986, there was an issue #41.5, a special "Valentine's Day" issue. This was something of a cringe-worthy issue. Go read it. It also introduced one of the worst

variants, the perfectly balanced "Five Italies" variant. Oh, wow.

The darkest days hit at the turn of the century. Between issue #84 and #85 was more than a two-year gap, broken only by a special issue to publish the results of a demo game, "Flapjack", in an unnumbered issue.

When *DW* returned, with #85 in Summer 2000, it returned as a webzine (although you could still pay for a paper zine). By this time, *The Diplomatic Pouch* was running and, somewhat surprisingly, Jim Burgess and Stephen Agar, co-editors of *DW*, were also working on *TDP*.

*DW*'s current publisher/editor, Doug Kent, was editor of #84. He'd taken over with #74. In #84, Doug's editorial apologized for the zine being two months late. Why? Lack of articles. This must have proved almost terminal with that issue. More on this later.

One thing you might notice when you're looking through back issues of *DW*, as you must do with this kind of inspiration, is that the editors of this august publication read like a who's who of Hobby Diplominati. I'm not going to list them here - go look. Thankfully, many of these editors are still around today; sadly, too many are not.

There are a number of things I want to draw out from issues #84 and #85. The first is Doug's warning in his editorial in #84. In this he tells us the reason #84 was late: "... a chronic lack of contributions."

This seems to almost be the rule these days. I seem to see Facebook posts by Doug calling for more contributions before each issue. The difference is that, today, with online sites and apps, there are probably more Diplomacy players than ever before, and much fewer zines to get their musings published in.

Is it *my* problem? Well, not really. I publish my own zine, "I", monthly. I really don't have time to write for another zine. I write - or, it feels like *wrote* - a blog, "The Diplomaticon"; I'm organizing (just about) a two-year long event that I've called the "World Cup of Diplomacy"; and I'm writing my second book, "50 Tips for Better Diplomacy (in Diplomacy)". And I'm trying to play... occasionally. I *really* don't have the time.

But I don't want *DW* to disappear again. So come on; there are loads of you out there. Get on your laptop. The Hobby has evolved. Discord posts aren't really enough. Write something.

The other parallel was mentioned by Jim Burgess in #85, again in his editorial: "*If you don't think there are enough 'tactics articles' appearing, then write your own or entice someone whose tactics you respect to write for us.*"

In #85, there were three articles that might come under what I'd call 'strategy' (rather than 'tactics') articles: "The SWAT Approach in Diplomacy" by Mark Fassio; "How to Lose Friends and Influence People" by Doug Kent and Jack McHugh; and "What Do You Do When You Have to Guess" by Stephen Agar. Jim calls this not enough.

I looked at *DW* #163, the last issue before this one. In that issue the only strategy-ish article was "Revenge (or 'You Made Your Bed Now Lie In It') by Doug himself. One.

What has happened to the strategy articles? Are there no new strategies out there? Have we exhausted strategy? Or are we worried that we don't know what *strategy* is anymore?

So, for this issue and going forward, I'm going to revisit strategy articles from the *DW* archive. Nothing new, therefore, but perhaps a modern take on strategies discussed in the past.

What I've found when looking at strategy articles, mainly from the Diplomacy Archive, is that they come around in cycles. Sweden is a perfect example of this. Does Germany order F Den-Swe in F01? It became popular at

one point, then it dropped off, only to become popular again... and then to begin to wane once more. In a similar way, the E/F alliance, once known as the "Entente Cordiale", was discouraged; today it is more commonly known as the "Leviathan" alliance, indicating just how often and successfully it is used.

Strategy, it seems, is both popular in cycles and moves on to different things. So, there is a lot of scope for strategy articles. Not from me, not here. So that's up to you.

I suppose one of the reasons strategy has almost become exhausted is that much of the writing on this aspect of Diplomacy was about opening strategy. When I read these articles, I personally don't think they address opening strategy as much as they could have. They tend to be a discussion of which openings are better. For me, strategy is *not* what moves you make on the board alone - it needs to focus on what goes on behind the scenes, *off* the board, in your communication with other players. And I don't think I'm the only person who thinks this.

The problem is that diplomatic strategy, rather than military tactics, is less exact. It depends on the people playing the game, rather than the more objective idea of what each power should do. Perhaps a more modern understanding of strategy is more difficult to write about?

However, there is still room for both aspects. So why not add *your* viewpoint on strategy?

I have no delusions: more people will read *Diplomacy World* than will ever read my own zine "34" (even with its subzine *Send Noobs*) and that's fine. That's how it should be.

What I'd hate to see, though, is *Diplomacy World* fade away. Is there anyone out there who would put anything like the effort Doug puts in to get an issue of *DW* out?

### **FIFTY YEARS.**

If you don't think that's worth celebrating, I'm not sure what you think is? Celebrate it by injecting your ideas, thoughts, insights about this great Hobby of ours and write. Make Doug's job hard, where he needs to *choose* what to publish, not just publish an article from a pernickety old sod like me.

Here's to many more issues - and years - of *Diplomacy World*.



# DIPLOMACY CASCADIA OPEN

**And DipCon 53**

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Round 3: 8:30am on Sun 4<sup>th</sup>

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Chris Brand

**PRIZES**

7 "best countries" and

Overall winner/North

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**QUESTIONS**

[Cascadia.open@gmail.com](mailto:Cascadia.open@gmail.com)

# Ask the Hobby Historian: DW Thirty Years Ago

By David Hood

So, about this time last year I devoted my hobby history column to the state of the Diplomacy hobby forty years earlier, based on an issue of Diplomacy World released in 1983. For this particular history piece, let's get into our Hot Tub Time Machines and go back thirty years, instead, to the wonderful world of DW issue 72, published in the winter of 1993.

The mid-nineties were a time of significant change for the Diplomacy hobby, and DW itself was no exception. This issue 72 was the first one edited by Jack McHugh and published by Doug Kent. I myself had edited/published issues 60-71, from the summer of 1990 to summer 1993, but due to Real World considerations I needed to step away from that responsibility. Luckily Jack was able to edit the zine for two issues before Doug took over both duties beginning with issue 74.

One way in which the hobby was changing during this time period mirrored a major change in overall society - the rise of the internet, and interconnectedness in general. In DW issue 72 there was an extensive article by then-prominent hobbyist Mark Nelson about how Diplomacy had been played through Usenet since 1982 (the very first electronic zine Mad As Hell was distributed that year by Steve Knight) but how the game's electronic play had grown and developed during that 11-year period up to 1993. By then, hobbyists had created the "judges", electronic adjudicators which would form the backbone for the e-play of the game for a couple of decades. Mark also talked in great detail about Eric Klien's zine Electronic Protocol and how it helped to bring order to the otherwise messy and chaotic world of early email play of the game.

This rise of play over the internet would, of course, be the death of the traditional postal Diplomacy hobby, although that would not happen for several years into the future.

Another fun memory for me in revisiting this issue of DW was the report from David Kovar and David Partridge about their very first Diplomatic Incident, a face-to-face event held in the Boston area. There had not been a regular Boston Diplomacy event before this, even though the area was thickly populated with Dipfans. These Incidents would eventually lead to the establishment of the Boston Massacre, a mainstay of the face-to-face hobby for years to come.

Recently, I reported on my DBN Deadline show on YouTube about the 2023 EuroDipcon, the EDC, and

featured an interview with the winner Jelte Kuiper. In DW issue 72 there was a report from attendee Larry Peery about the first EDC, held in 1993 in Paris. The event was massive, with one round hosting 19 boards of Diplomacy! Many of the players were French-only speakers, so in order to facilitate play for everyone, separate boards were created for the English speakers, and for those French players who were able to communicate in English. Since few tournaments in those days had a Top Board feature, this was actually doable in an event of this size, since the champion could be crowned without ever having to bridge the language barrier.

Fun fact - one of the organizers of this year's 2023 WDC in Bangkok, Lei Saarlainen, was named "Best Tactician" at this 1993 EDC in Paris.

Also in 1993, we had the publication of the 2nd edition of Avalon Hill's Gamers Guide to Diplomacy, an invaluable help to novice players of the game. I had an article in this DW issue 72 about the new release. In it I recounted the fact that when my friend Michael Lowrey and I went in halvesies on buying our first set of Diplomacy back in 1984, we also bought at the same store a copy of the original Gamers Guide, written by Rod Walker. That publication certainly "guided" how our gaming group saw the game during our first few years of play, for good or for ill. The new Guide was a significant improvement in that it included a multiplicity of writers and a wide variety of topics that the first edition had. I believe that this new Guide helped many hobbyists in the 90s to get a firmer grip on the game, before this role was basically taken over by online publications like the Diplomatic Pouch.

By the way, Manus Hand (who heads the Dip community in Denver to this day) started DP just a couple of years later - and he is listed as part of the "New Blood" in issue 73, as someone new to the hobby. I guess everyone starts somewhere.

The Diplomacy hobby has had several periods of significant change over its existence, but the mid-90s would certainly count as one of the most striking examples. I wonder what exactly the hobbyists of 2053 will be saying about us!

# Cascadia Chat - An Interview with Chris Brand

By Randy Lawrence-Hurt

## Randy

You run the Cascadia Open in Vancouver, BC, Canada; could you tell us a little about the origin and history of your tournament?

## Chris

Sure! I first ran Cascadia for two reasons. Firstly, in 2017 WAC was no more, so there wasn't a tournament in the Pacific Northwest. Secondly, I'd attended quite a few tournaments at that point and had some ideas for things that hadn't been tried before. In particular, having seen various efforts to keep the current standings secret, and having seen how seasoned players were able to figure them out anyway, I let everybody know the "if all games ended now" standings in almost real time. I've always been TD, but a number of locals always take on some of the organizational work



Players at Cascadia Study the Board

## Randy

What would you say the main attractions or reasons to attend Cascadia are?

## Chris

I like to think that it makes a good first tournament. It's a good size - pretty consistently three boards per round, and easy to get to (although you will need a passport if you're not Canadian). We will drive people from Vancouver airport and can usually arrange a ride from Seattle, too. We've always had separate order-writing time, and the real-time standings help newer players see how their game fits into the tournament overall. This year we also had all games limited to 1909, too. We always have a social event on Friday night which gives everyone a chance to get to know each other. And of

course, Vancouver is a great place to visit, although I will admit that it's not at its best in early February!

## Randy

I understand Cascadia will be the site of DipCon 2024? Could you talk about the process of preparing to host such a big event?

## Chris

It's mostly just a scaling-up of what we were already doing for Cascadia. The biggest question up-front was "are we ready and able to host DipCon?". We're lucky in that the space we've used for last couple of years is large enough to comfortably accommodate probably six or seven boards, and Cascadia has been running for long enough now that I'm comfortable that I know what I'm doing and I have people who I can rely on to help out and ensure that we don't miss anything. I generally advertise Cascadia fairly widely anyway. The big difference is that I'm getting more "yes" responses from farther afield.

## Randy

Are you planning anything special in the way the tournament is run, scoring, or off-the-board events?

## Chris

For the tournament itself, I'm just working to smooth out some of the rougher edges. I want to be very confident that everything is obviously fair, that everyone has the same expectations, and that things run smoothly. As for off-the-board events, we always have an informal get-together on Friday evening, which will be happening. We'll also be facilitating things before that. That's mostly a matter of making sure that people are aware of who's around earlier, and suggesting things that people might like to do in the Vancouver area in February. We should also have the hotel space available at some point on Friday, so there may be some non-Diplomacy gaming, too. That's still being figured out.

## Randy

I know there's an age-old debate in the hobby on the merits of a "top board" to determine the winner, especially at events like a DipCon or World's. Where do you land in that debate, and will there be a Top Board at Cascadia?

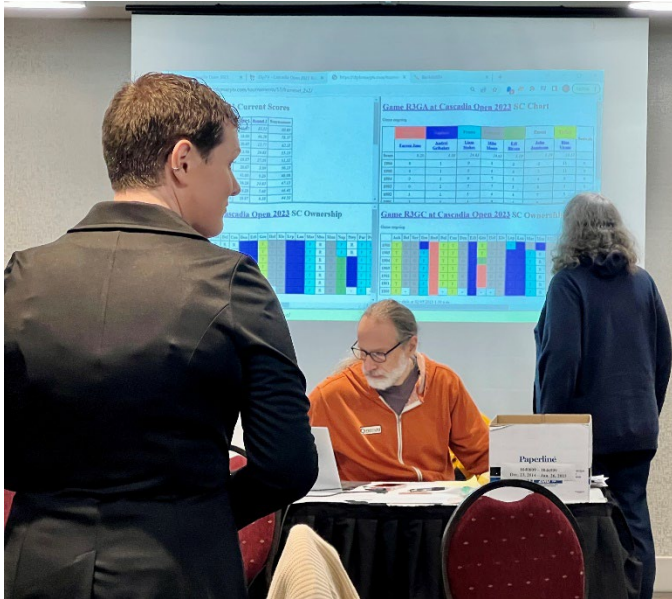
## Chris

Interesting question. I'll try to keep this brief. I used to not be keen on top boards mostly because I wasn't getting to play on them and that meant that I didn't get to play against the best players in the final round of the



tournament. I changed my mind after WDC in Columbus, Ohio in 2009 (where there wasn't a top board) when we had the strange result that Andrew Goff won, with Dan Lester coming second, despite the fact that Dan had soloed the only board they played together. I also think that the spectacle of a top board is a good thing for a tournament. The dynamics of a final round in a tournament without a top board can be a little odd where the leaders are often watching each other across boards as much as they are watching their own board.

So overall I think a top board is a good thing for the major tournaments. Having said all that, there won't be a top board at Cascadia. I did consider having one round Friday, two Saturday, and a top board on Sunday, but decided against it. Two qualifying rounds doesn't feel like enough to justify a top board, so the title will be awarded to the best total score from all three rounds.



**Cascadia 2023 Underway!**

**Randy**

I've never gotten to play on a top board, but definitely favor them, mostly because if they go away, I'll never get the chance.

Can you tell us about the scoring system at Cascadia?

**Chris**

Top boards are a lot of fun to play on.

Scoring will be ManorCon. ManorCon scoring is derived from Sum-of-Squares, but it adds an additional factor that helps to alleviate the problem with SoS that there's very little difference in score between a small power and an elimination. One thing that I do at Cascadia is to have an almost live display of everyone's "if all games ended now" score, so all players will be able to see where they stand at any time.

**Randy**

Have you found that the live game display impacts players' decisions? I could easily see that making meta-gaming both easier and more profitable.

**Chris**

It does have an impact. Overall, though, I think it helps to level the playing field a bit. The people who travel regularly to FTF tournaments are generally able to get that sort of information anyway, so this just means that everyone has it, rather than just a select few.

Tournament games are always going to be a little different than stand-alone games anyway.

**Randy**

Makes sense. Speaking of leveling the playing field, as a former World Champion yourself, any advice for hopeful North American champions coming to Cascadia?

**Chris**

That's a tough one. I've learned a few things over the years that have helped me. Making sure that I pay attention to all the moves, not just the ones near my units. Always knowing which 18 dots I'm aiming for. Playing the board as it is rather than as I hoped it would be. Not agreeing to a draw when I could increase my score. Most importantly, though, you can't win if you don't play.

**Randy**

Solid advice! Remind the people when DipCon at Cascadia will take place, and where they can get more info?

**Chris**

It's the first weekend of February, the 3rd and 4th (with a get-together on the 2nd). All the information is on the registration form at <https://forms.gle/ZaqjiNSfWukHXzjP7> or in the Cascadia channel of the NADF discord server. I can also be emailed at [Cascadia.open@gmail.com](mailto:Cascadia.open@gmail.com).

# Pure Innovation Is Highly Overrated

By Lewis Pulsipher

*"Innovation is taking two things that already exist and putting them together in a new way."* Tom Freston

I wrote about Innovation many years ago in my RPG column "Worlds of Design" on [enworld.org](http://enworld.org). I've adapted this for *Diplomacy* variants.

Why is pure innovation regarded as important in games, even as it turns out that it hardly ever happens? People like to be surprised when they play games, and some of the most famous game designers such as Shigeru Miyamoto (*Mario*, *Zelda*, etc.) look for ways to surprise players. A true innovation is going to be surprising because no one has ever seen it before. On the other hand, even though most "innovations" have been done before, if the players don't know about that then they can be surprised.

Innovation is personal. It depends on what you already know when you play the game. People become jaded (not good) when they have experienced so much that it seems like nothing is new to them.

What's innovative to a novice may not be innovative to an expert. It's the cognoscenti, the grognards, who think that innovation is important - perhaps they fear becoming jaded. In the end, most people play games to enjoy them, and innovation isn't important. Certainly, in *Diplomacy*, much of the surprise comes from the players and what they do, not from the game itself.

Videogame developers realize this. Think of all the videogame sequels that sell so well. Some years ago, 12 of the 13 "most anticipated games" listed in *PC Gamer* magazine were sequels. The occasional reviewer may complain about lack of originality in sequels, but players clearly don't mind.

One man's innovation is another man's old hat. Example: *Stratego* has been around a long time. Most people of my generation have played it, although as time passes its popularity has decreased. In fact, *Stratego* is an almost exact copy of a much older game, *L'Attaque*, originally patented and published in 1909. The patent expired by the end of World War II and a Dutchman added a column of squares and four pieces to each side, called it *Stratego*, and licensed it to a Dutch company who then licensed it to a series of American companies. So, people playing *Stratego* for the first time might think it is innovative, but in fact it's an almost exact copy of a

much older game that was still in print in England in the late 70s.

Ideas are not the main point of a game, and hardly any idea is original. Your "great idea" probably isn't that great and has probably been thought of by dozens of people. It's the combination of things, and their execution, that counts. Good combinations won't be purely innovative but the result may be surprising or "fresh", something people have not seen before. E.g. people make up brand-new monsters in RPGs to surprise players; but you can use combinations, or use monsters in new contexts, to achieve freshness.

*Diplomacy* variants are usually models of some reality (whether historical or fictional), and in models it's more important to make good models than to be original. My recommendation to variant designers is to make good combinations to provide freshness, make good models, make good games, and don't worry about pure innovation.

Here's a good description of how innovation in games works, from an interview with Tim Sweeney, founder and leader of Epic Games (*Gears of War* and other well-known video games):

One minute I'm completely on my own and I think, 'Wow, I'm a genius, I can't believe this idea nobody else had!' And then you look at the references on it, and it turns out that a hundred other people have done the same things in the 1980s. And then you look, and you get your additional ideas from those. Between invention and stealing, you come up with a really good combination of ideas.

Try not to **copy** what other people have done, of course, but don't strive for innovation. It's not worth the effort, and you may find out someone else did that long ago. Do what is necessary to make your variant the best it can be, and you're unlikely to go wrong.

(We could apply this to "new openings" in *Diplomacy* play as well. Who cares if the opening is "new" (though likely used sometime in the past)? What matters is how effective it is.)



# VOTE

## 2023 Hobby Awards



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Sunday round 8:30am, awards ceremony ~3pm



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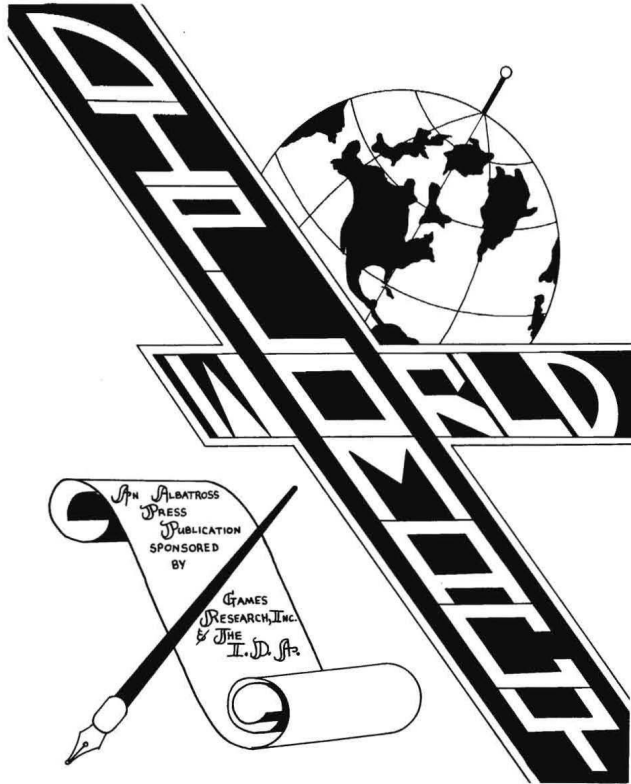
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# From the DW Archive: Odds or Evens?

by Mal Arky

[Diplomacy World #1](#) had two articles written by Edi Birsan, the then Strategy Editor. Unsurprisingly, then, both were to do with strategy, and *real* strategy, i.e., not discussing moves. (An article that was about moves was labelled 'An article on Tactics' by then editor Walt Buchanan; this was "[A Fight to the Finnish](#)" by Tom Hubbard.)



One of Edi's articles was "Rebuttal to the Illyrian Opening" in which Edi tells us that there are too many pointless named openings. It's an interesting article on its own. It made me rethink what opening strategy should be about, and whether naming every version of an opening is *really* needed. I don't think this article was ever added to the [Diplomacy Archive](#).

The other was called "[The Odd Theory](#)." In this, Edi discussed how a Diplomacy game might develop. It's an interesting read. You can read it in *DW #1* if you like, and if you can enlarge the PDF enough to read it. In those days, the articles were typed on a typewriter (you may need to ask your parents, or possibly your grandparents - which is particularly scary for me) and,

while Stephen Agar's scanning of *DW #1* allows us to read it today online, sometimes it can be difficult to read. Thankfully, "The Odd Theory" is reproduced on the Archive and that's where my link will take you.

Edi proposed that a well-played game of Diplomacy would *not* end in a 7-way draw. There was an argument at the time that a 7-way draw would be the natural result if all seven players were of equal skill. The assumptions behind this, according to Edi, are:

1. *Everyone on the board knows the tactical and strategic side of the game inside out and,*
2. *Each player is of the win-only school of thought in which one must either try for a win or stop all others from winning."*

Rather than ending in a 7-way draw, Edi says, it should end in a 3-way draw. Why? Because the game would break down into:

- A. *Round one: 5 countries against 2, leaves 5 for*
- B. *Round two: 3 countries against 2, leaves 3 for*
- C. *Round three: 2 countries against 1 or draw on strategic grounds."*

Now, to me, with the game starting with an odd number of players, this makes sense. However, in [Diplomacy World #5](#), Lewis Pulsipher, *DW*'s Variants Editor, wrote an article called "[A Myth Defended](#)" in which he suggested that Edi's "Odd Theory" wasn't correct. He says: "*I thought of titling this 'The Even Theory'...*" and he goes on to suggest why this is the case.

What Lewis (a man of many talents: he also came up with a variant of the board game "*Kingmaker*", which happens to be another favorite game of mine, although not necessarily Lewis' version) suggests is that, actually, a perfect game of Diplomacy *should* end in a 7-player draw, or a 6-player draw or, indeed, an *n*-player draw. Which is slightly confusing until you read what Lewis is saying.

The main thrust of Lewis' counter-argument is that, while Edi is discussing the game in terms of players, Lewis is thinking of the game in terms of 'interest groups'. So, before we look any further, what does Lewis mean by this term?

Lewis says that players may have to work together, and thereby form an "interest group". In other words, while

there may be five players in the game, they may break down into three groups. He uses the example of a demonstration game. (DW used to publish games in which players voluntarily shared their thoughts about how they played the game.) Here, he says:

*"Turkey, Italy and Austria were part of a single interest group which had to remain together in order to withstand the other two players, who were each [a separate] interest group but were working together to take advantage of the disorganization of the third interest group on the board."*

So, three players formed a single group; the other two were separate interest groups, both aiming to win the game outright, although they were forced to work together. He *doesn't* say that the two potential winners were a single interest group, which I find surprising - it would seem to fit his definition of 'interest groups', after all.

What Lewis suggests, ultimately, is that a game will end in a draw where there are three interest groups, although this doesn't necessarily involve just three players. One or more interest groups may involve multiple players, forced to act as a single entity.

He differentiates here between games that end in a draw without a stalemate line, which is the above outcome, and those that do involve a stalemate line, which is a 2-interest group draw, although either group may involve single or multiple players.

How does this equate to Lewis defending the 7-player draw theory? He believes that a player can't afford to cause a conflict in their own sphere (based on a western interest group and an eastern interest group) because, by doing so, they run the risk of the other sphere taking advantage of the chaos in this sphere. He goes on to say that the game should break down into a Western Powers interest group, an Eastern Powers interest group, and Italy, in the middle, scrambling to survive but holding the balance of power. A 3-way draw, featuring seven players.

Lewis also disagrees with Edi's definition of a good, or 'perfect', player. Lewis believes:

*"A perfect player is one who maximizes his minimum gain – this is the definition used in game theory. This means that a perfect player will always strive to avoid losing. If he has a choice between a win and six losses on the one hand, and seven 7-player draws on the other, he will take the latter because he has a minimum gain of a 7-player draw (1/7 of a win), while in the former he has a minimum gain of a loss."*

To understand Lewis' ideas properly, you really have to read his article. He includes a variety of different exceptions that, here, there really isn't space or time to reproduce.

OK, wow.

I said above that I like Edi's theory. However, this is based on my instinctive agreement. It seems to me that, in a game with an odd number of players, there should be a breakdown that reduces the number of players so that the surviving number of players remains odd.

I'm not sure that a game I've been involved in, though, has ever featured 5v2 in the Early Game. A 5-player alliance? Let's face it - a 3-player alliance is difficult enough to maintain! On the other hand, I'm not sure Edi is actually suggesting this (and Edi is free to correct me!); it could be more that, following the Early Game, five players survive, no matter how they play it out.

A Mid-game of 3v2 is more likely, although I think that 3v1v1 is most likely in practice.

An Endgame where 3 players balance each other, because none can afford to attack the others, is fairly common.

But, then again, games can commonly end in a 4-player, or even a 5-player draw? So, why is this?

Well, one argument is that, in practice, whatever definition of a 'well-played' or 'perfect' game is used, games are *not* played this way. Are there *any* perfect players? Could you *ever* get seven perfect players in a game? No - to both questions.

But, of course, we're thinking theoretically, here, not realistically. So, let's visit Edi's distant planet, watch his mythical game, and see what happens.

The more I consider this, I think Lewis is right. No matter how many players are involved, the game resolves into groups of players. Rather than each player acting as a single entity, players form groups which are united by similar objectives. It could be that England and France unite on one side of the board, Russia and Turkey on the other, and Germany, Austria and Italy in the center. All seven players involved; three 'interest groups'. Or, perhaps, E/F/G as one group, I/A/T as a second, and Russia - straddling both sides of the main stalemate line (the Neutral Zone) - acting as an individual; again, three groups. (Russia is more often seen as the non-aligned power in modern thinking *because* it straddles the Neutral Zone, rather than Italy.)



You could come up with various combinations of powers but, in a perfect game, each combination would balance the others. And, as Edi says, a 3-player game, or in Lewis' theory, a 3-group game, will be balanced because one player/group can't afford to disrupt the balance as this could lose them the game.

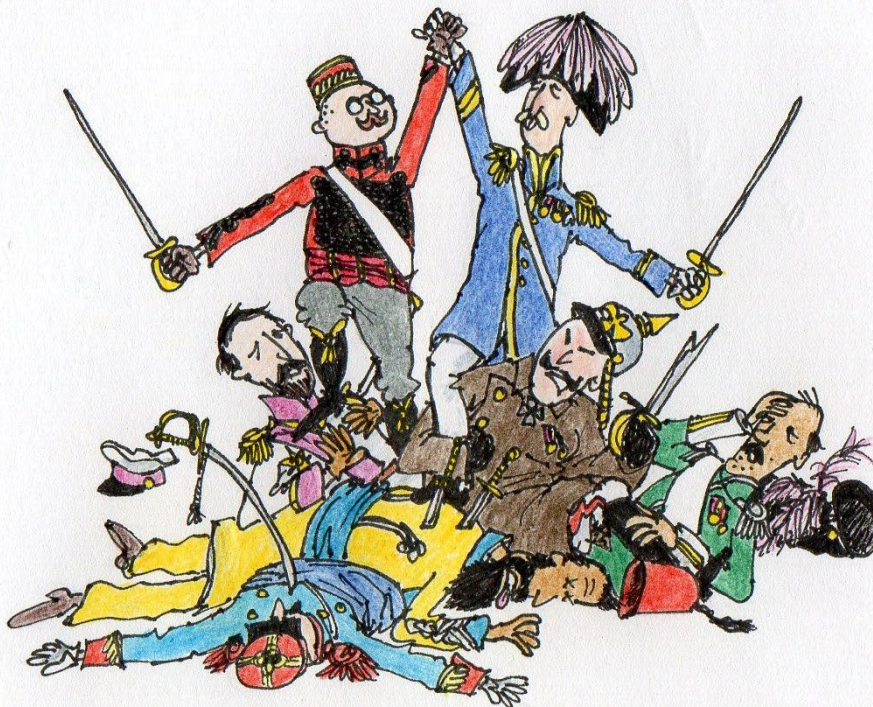
I also find myself agreeing with Lewis that a 'perfect' player would do nothing to lose the game. No risks, no errors - nothing that might see the player eliminated. So, theoretically, a perfect game featuring perfect players will end in a 7-player draw.

I don't think there is a theoretical difference, though, between Edi's definition and Lewis'. Lewis says that the perfect player will play to maximize their minimal gain and play for a draw. How is that different from the second part of Edi's definition? (The first part is a given.) Edi says a perfect player will play to win or prevent any other player from winning - in other words they will play to maximize their outcome. The only difference is that

Lewis believes the perfect player will play to draw, whereas Edi's player will play to win *if they can*; in a perfect game, is there a way for a perfect player to win? Not in either Lewis' or Edi's definition.

I'm not sure, though, that Lewis really proves an 'Even Theory'. For me, he proves the 'Odd Theory'... but based on groups of players rather than individual players. And I think it is fair to say that a well-played game of Diplomacy, with equally good players, is more likely to end in a 7-player draw than any other outcome.

The joy of Diplomacy, though, is that nobody is a perfect player, and that no game is a perfect game. The very best players may do something unpredictable, and this is often suboptimal. Why? Because players don't want to settle for a draw. Even a Carebear, who *does* want to draw the game, won't want to play for a 7-player draw; the optimal result for a Carebear is that abomination, the 2-player draw.



# 2023 Virtual Diplomacy League Awards

By Zachary Moore

The 2023 regular season is in the books, and what a year it was! We started the year with 38 players on 6 boards in March, then followed that up with 42 on 6 boards in April, which equaled the largest ever single-day turnout in VDL history dating back even to the pandemic. Then in October, Round 1 of VDL featured two boards for the first time in its 4-year history. This put the exclamation point on a trend in which the Virtual Diplomacy League - initially envisioned as a virtual stopgap for players in the state of Minnesota - has seen the world catch up to and possibly even surpass the United States in participation.

But the more things change, the more they stay the same. One thing that will always stay the same in the Virtual Diplomacy League is that at the end of the year, we hand out awards to those individuals whose accomplishments absolutely must be spotlighted in Diplomacy's flagship publication. I now present to you, Diplomacy fans, the 2023 Virtual Diplomacy League awards!



## **Sleepless in Seattle Award - Cody Greene**

Cody smashed the VDL record for most games played in a year with twenty-one (21!!), and would have gladly played more if he could have. That includes, by my count, at least three instances of participating in all three VDL rounds, making him the most prolific member of the VDL 3-game club which also includes maniacs like Jaxon Roberts, Tommy Anderson, Morgante Pell,

Mohammed A, Isaac Juckes and Christopher Ward. Cody's accomplishments stand head and shoulders above them all. A second year player, Cody showed his improvement with a [14-center board top as France](#) earlier this season, and followed it up with a nice [11-center Turkish top](#) later on. He got squeezed off the top board in the madness of the final day, but figures to be right back in the thick of things in 2024.

## **GM of the Year - Isaac Juckes**

Isaac ran away with this award, GMing 7 consecutive months from June-December, saving Round 1 of VDL when we needed him most. I always have a little bit of trouble getting to sleep the night before a VDL knowing that if any funny business goes down in R1, I won't be awake to help clean it up. But Juckes runs a clean operation and, toward the end of the year, I was sleeping like a baby knowing that he had everything under control and frankly, could be more trusted than me to handle whatever came up. Thank you Isaac for adopting R1 and keeping VDL a truly global league! It should also be mentioned somewhere in this article that Isaac Juckes, a true madman, played all 6 rounds of the vWDC Summer Classic, setting what has to be a world record for most Diplomacy played in a single weekend.

Additional shout outs are in order for: Farren Jane, Peter McNamara, Steven Hogue, Jason Bennett, Ed Sullivan, Seren Kwok and Sabi Ahuja for GMing at least one round this year. Thank you all very much!

## **Uncle of the Year - Tommy Anderson**

Every once in a while, Tommy pops into the VDL chat to share a GIF, image or Saturday Night Live YouTube video with all of us, usually deep into the night in his hometown of Boston. This year, one of Tommy's random pictures was him and his young niece, who was gazing into his eyes with the type of look a child can only muster for their favorite uncle. It's not the first time Tommy has shared a heartwarming family picture in a Diplomacy server, and I would be remiss if I didn't honor him as Diplomacy's consummate family man. In a way, Tommy is kind of like VDL's uncanny uncle: we only see him a couple times a year, but when we do it's always memorable and maybe just a little bit uncomfortable, depending on what YouTube videos he's watching that night. Tommy played two games this year and you better believe he [violated a Spring 1901 DMZ of Galicia in one of them](#). Next time you see Uncle Tommy on a board, throw him a dot or two and tell him you love him.

### **Survive & Advance Award - Christian Brown**

You can't win in Diplomacy if you don't survive! And nobody did a better job surviving this year than Christian Brown, who played 8 games all without a single elimination. That includes a scrappy Italy in which was [reduced to 2 centers in 1906](#), before hitching his wagon to the dominant A/T alliance and making himself just useful enough to hold onto both of them for four years before a merciful draw after 1910. It also includes a Russia that saw him lose [Warsaw and Sevastopol in 1902 \(!\)](#) before bouncing back to regain them both as a 5-center Russia in 1904. By the end of 1906, he was reduced again to rubble, owning only Budapest and Sevastopol, with armies standing in Budapest and Galicia. He survived 1907 clinging to two dots and was yet again saved by a draw. Excellent survivorship!

### **Wally Pipp Award - Bradley Grace**

In 1925, struggling New York Yankees first baseman Wally Pipp, one of the great hitters of his time, asked a team trainer for a couple aspirin so he could play through a splitting headache. Overhearing this, the manager of the team told Wally to take the day off and recover; a young Lou Gehrig could take his place that day. Eleanor Gehrig, for what it's worth, tells a different version of the story in which Wally Pipp didn't show up to the game at all because he was drunkenly gambling at the local horse track. In any case, non-Americans can Google "Lou Gehrig" to learn how all that ended up for Wally. Or to save you the effort, I can tell you that it ended up very much the same as December VDL did for Bradley Grace, who voluntarily gave up his R3 spot to Christopher Ward only to get [knocked off the top board](#) by - you guessed it - Christopher Ward! Did Bradley take any aspirin that night? Was he gambling at the local race track? Let that be a lesson to all the youngsters out there not to gamble or ask for medicine.

### **Student of the Year - Mikalis Kamaritis**

Congrats to Mikalis Kamaritis for studying hard enough to receive this glorious honor! Previous VDL Students of the year were Jaxon Roberts (2022) and JJ Raymond (2021), making Mikalis the first Student of the Year without the initials JR, which is appropriate because he was in fact a SR this year and graduating any minute now if not already. Mikalis read so many books that he only had time to play 4 VDL games this year, but unlike his SotY predecessors, that was enough to qualify him

for the Big Game! Now Mikalis must defend his thesis against Professor Peter McNamara on January 27th if he wants to become VDL's first valedictorian.

### **Lawyer of the Year - Ed Sullivan**

This one goes to the highest performing known lawyer in the Virtual Diplomacy League and I'll be honest folks, it was a down year for the profession. Ed Sullivan finished 36th place but did have a 25% topshare, which isn't terrible, but not what we've come to expect from our hobby's great legal minds.

What Ed lacked in VDL points he made up for in the courtroom, where he was a menace all year long. Filing briefs, raising objections - you name it, he did it. Approaching the bench? You bet he did that. He also filed a couple motions to dismiss you from your home centers in Regatta, where he smashed the rest of the field, topping all three boards on his way to a convincing championship.

### **Brotherly Shove Award - Teague Eppright**

The Brotherly Shove Award goes to the Philly local who couldn't be stopped from pushing their ally's tush over the stalemate line. As everyone in Philadelphia knows, you couldn't have a good Brotherly Shove without the FAT (France-Austria-Turkey) boys out in front, and that's exactly how it went down in [VDL 152](#), when Eppright's France pushed Johnny Gillam's Austria over the stalemate line into German supply centers while Mikalis Kamaritis gobbled up dots from the back as Turkey. Earlier that game, Teague showed his 'Philly nice' by organizing a western triple and promptly driving the knife into Jason Bennett's England. When Teague came for England, Liam Stokes' (Germany) said nothing, so there was nobody left to speak for him when Teague turned that same knife against the most vulnerable member of the ill-fated alliance. Congrats to Teague on winning this prestigious award! Enjoy it while it lasts - the VDL competition committee will be taking a close look at this type of play in the offseason to determine if it should be banned.

That's all folks! Be sure to tune in to the Virtual Diplomacy League championship game on January 27th, which will be broadcast on the [Diplomacy Broadcast Network YouTube channel](#) starting at 6:00p EST!





# *The 38th Annual Dixiecon*

## *Chapel Hill NC - May 24-26, 2024*

**Tournament Director:** David Hood

**Assistant TD:** Michael Lowrey

### **Overview**

Dixiecon is the longest-running Diplomacy tournament location in the world. Since 1987, Diplomats from around North America and beyond have gathered in Chapel Hill to play games, eat BBQ, and deepen hobby friendships.


### **This Year's Details**

1. One round each on Friday, Saturday, Sunday — best two scores count, using Dixiecon scoring
2. Unlimited rounds except for Sunday round which has random end time 7 to 9 hours from the start
3. BBQ Dinner on Saturday afternoon
4. Open Gaming, Iron Man Event for non-Dip gaming, and Social Activities start Thursday night
5. \$50 registration, \$50/night double or \$80/night single to stay in dorm, hotel options also available
6. Full tournament coverage on the Diplomacy Broadcast Network YouTube Channel

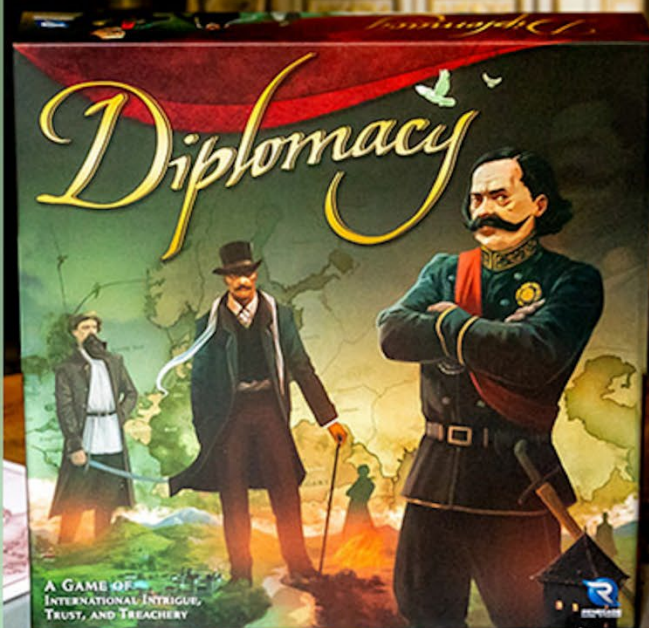
**For More Information:** Email [davidhood@dixiecon.com](mailto:davidhood@dixiecon.com) or visit [www.dixiecon.com](http://www.dixiecon.com)

# 2024 CONVENTION EVENTS

	OwlCon   Feb 23-25   Houston, TX		
	PrezCon   Feb 24-25   Charlottesville, VA		
	Circle DC   Apr 4-7   Washington D.C.		
	Buckeye Game Fest   May 2-5   Columbus, OH		
	Gaming Hoopla   May 3-5   Chicago, IL		
	BGG Spring   May 23-27   Dallas, TX		
	KublaCon   May 24-27   Burlingame, CA		
	Origins   Jun 19-23   Columbus, OH		
	Dice Tower East   Jul 3-7   Orlando, FL		
	CharCon   Jul 12-14   Charleston, WV		
	WBC   Jul 26-27   Seven Springs, PA		
	US Championship   Aug 1-4   Indianapolis, IN		
	Nuke-Con   Oct 4-6   Council Bluffs, IA		
	BGG Con   Nov 13-17   Dallas, TX		
	PAX Unplugged   Dec 6-8   Philadelphia, PA		

 Teaching

 Tournament





# Reflections: A Year with Renegade and What Lies Ahead

By Thomas Haver

It's been more than a year since the press release announcing *Renegade Games Studios* was licensing *Diplomacy* from *Hasbro* (<https://renegadegamestudios.com/blog/renegade-game-studios-expands-licensing-partnership-with-hasbro-gaming-classics/>). Renegade had an existing relationship with Hasbro, previously licensing properties such as G.I. JOE, Power Rangers, and Transformers. The announcement also included classic titles previously printed by Hasbro (the company owns *Wizards of the Coast* and the *Avalon Hill* brand). Axis & Allies, Acquire, Robo Rally, and Squad Leader were among the other licensed games Renegade committed to republishing. As we come to the end of the year, we can reflect on what that licensing deal has meant for *Diplomacy* and what lies ahead for 2024.



## Publishing the New Edition

I worked on the new edition of *Diplomacy* from Renegade as the credited "Expert Consultant" on the game. I was recommended by the Avalon Hill team at Hasbro (I also served as a consultant on *Acquire*). My relationship with Hasbro goes back many years. I've been a long-time volunteer for Hasbro/WotC, and my volunteer group *Rogue Judges* has been running games at conventions from the Avalon Hill line since we were founded decades ago.

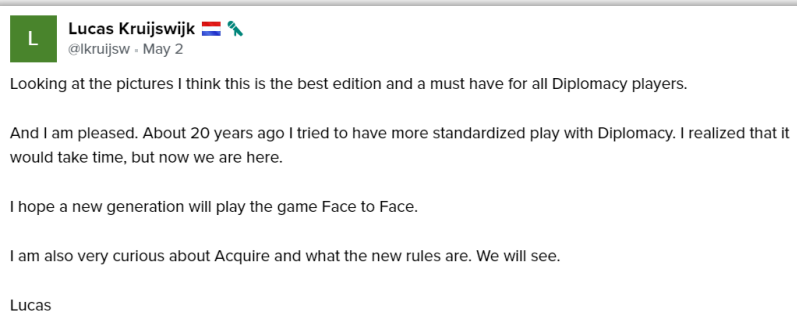
The path from volunteer running *Diplomacy* events to working on the new game was an interesting journey. In 2016, WotC announced they were formally stepping back from several conventions, which included Gen Con. The same year, they enlisted a few individuals to formally support events for their games at conventions. They wouldn't invest heavily in booth space but would support volunteers for existing events. The head of Licensing and Publishing for WotC made me a

"Volunteer Events Coordinator". In a written agreement, I was given formal permission to use the IP for *Wizards* and *Avalon Hill* ("You are granted a non-exclusive, revocable, world-wide permission to incorporate the Property into the Project as set forth above solely for noncommercial use", whew that's a mouthful!). We established a collaboration to promote *Diplomacy* events at conventions on their website and social media. Lastly, I was tapped to run the US *Diplomacy* National Championship at Gen Con. I continued to run events for Hasbro at conventions across the US for years. When the licensing deal for *Diplomacy* was near, members of the Avalon Hill team referred me to their counterparts at Renegade to work on the game.



For the development of the new game, my involvement meant *Diplomacy* would get some enhancements over the 2008 edition from Hasbro. At that point in time, I had run close to 40 tournaments, run a local club for 15 years, and taught roughly a thousand players how to play the game. In other words, I definitely had a backlog of notes from opinionated players on what worked and what was needed for a new edition. The cardboard chits were gone – replaced with the wooden blocks *Diplomacy* players love. I sent a set of blocks from Avalon Hill's 1992 "Deluxe *Diplomacy*" set to the Art Director over at Renegade so the colors of each Power could be matched exactly. We upgraded the rules by referencing the past editions of the game published in the US & internationally along with the *Diplomacy* Adjudicator Test Cases maintained by Lucas Kruijswijk (and a consultation session with several *Diplomacy* luminaries). After publication we received the blessing of Lucas in a review on BGG, which was passed around internally at Renegade.





The last change to Diplomacy was the addition of the Quick Start Rules (QSR) to the game. This ended up being a printed insert I wrote to be included in each edition of the game to help players start in a few minutes time. One of the barriers to playing Diplomacy is the lengthy rulebook with all the rare cases and tricky situations. In the current boardgaming landscape, instructional videos and quick start rules are commonplace. This helped fulfill the expectations of the new generation of gamers learning Diplomacy for the first time. For further details on the development process, I highly recommend reading the interview conducted by Doug Kent in Diplomacy World #161 (<http://www.diplomacyworld.net/pdf/dw161.pdf>).



### Promoting the Game

To help support the new release of Diplomacy, the goal was to put the Renegade edition in front of as many gamers as possible. Normally I run three Diplomacy tournaments per year at Origins, the World Boardgaming Championships, and Gen Con. Each of these conventions also host teaching events for new players that were the inspiration behind the Quick Start Rules. The start of 2023 began with outreach via email contact lists to over 1,000 players from convention events over the past fifteen years.

I decided to expand the number of convention events dramatically, going from 3 to 13. I started off the year running a corporate event in January at the Pacific Union Club in San Francisco. Diplomacy promotional events

would be hosted at existing conventions in locations such as Washington DC, Chicago, Dallas, Orlando, Philadelphia, and Toronto. For certain events, we recruited organizers such as Rob Lacy (Dallas) and Anton Wilsbach (Columbus) to support the promotion. The marketing manager (via Renegade's socials) and I promoted these events across social media platforms (Discord, Twitter, Reddit, BlueSky, Instagram, Facebook, and BGG). A call to action for other organizers was published in the Renegade interview in the aforementioned Diplomacy World #161.



We supplemented the internal effort with material support for local organizers of Diplomacy events. This included care packages from Renegade Games and me. These care packages had games, swag, and upgraded materials to run events. The organizers we targeted ran tournaments, leagues, and teaching events. We delivered care packages to organizers in California, Wyoming, Illinois, Colorado, North Carolina, Florida, Massachusetts, Ohio, Nebraska, Virginia, Texas, France, Italy, and Switzerland. For the latter three locations, I sent the care packages myself because Renegade has distributors for each of those countries and not all of them picked up Diplomacy for publication as of yet. The goal was to grow the game and show the

game being played on socials to bolster a decision to carry the new edition. Many thanks to those organizers in Europe (Luca Pazzaglia, Gabriel Lecointre, Christophe Borgeat, Patrick Garnier) who provided pictures and writeups of their events that made it to Discord, Twitter, BoardGameGeek, Facebook, and Instagram.



The face-to-face event experience was enhanced this year with custom-made Diplomacy sets promoted on social media. This included giant walkable maps, large fabric maps, LEGO maps, custom clipboards, pins, pens, stickers, mugs, shirts, and more. Diplomacy games at conventions have a lot of competition with other events being run at the same time. By creating a unique experience for players, we turned Diplomacy from just another event among hundreds or thousands into a can't miss game. We had the opportunity to talk about that experience in a Gen Con TV interview with Peter Adkisson (<https://youtu.be/Ta-5j0meXbM?si=wNH7uMDKEVpQLCrc&t=785>), which included a history of Diplomacy at the long-running convention. For those unaware, Peter Adkisson is the founder of Wizards of the Coast and current CEO/Owner of Gen Con.



Those same custom setups made their way to local events, with monthly game store events run by myself, Rob Lacy, and numerous others. One of the challenges with face-to-face play is getting seven players together. Local game stores are the perfect setting for recruiting new players and providing them a safe place to play. Those local game stores likely have their own social media presence, so they can help with the legwork required for recruiting new players. One thing that helped attendance at recurring events was to have session reports published online, whether it was BoardGameGeek, Discord, or Facebook. Building awareness around Diplomacy with regularly promoted events kept the momentum strong throughout the year. Heck, I even sent a Diplomacy custom setup to David Hill (writer of the famous Grantland article on WDC 2014) for his son's Diplomacy-themed birthday party ([https://twitter.com/davehill77/status/1657461097069199362?t=wD9JjTwijgR539VbG\\_SCYA&s=19](https://twitter.com/davehill77/status/1657461097069199362?t=wD9JjTwijgR539VbG_SCYA&s=19) ).





A common theme you've likely noticed throughout this reflection is the use of social media to promote Diplomacy. Gone are the days when players would only find each other via *The General* magazine or one of the many Zines in existence. Great effort was devoted to getting Diplomacy in various forms of media throughout the year, either traditional media or with content creators. We started media work with the interview conducted with Dan, Matt, and myself in Diplomacy World about the new edition. Renegade slowly revealed details on the game and supported events at their Virtual Con's hosted on YouTube. I wrote an unboxing review of the new edition on BoardGameGeek, which was shared with Hasbro licensing staff (<https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/3073735/unboxing-new-edition-diplomacy-renegade-games-stud>). This review was cross posted on social media such as Reddit, Twitter, and Facebook. David Hood conducted a Diplomacy "release" interview with myself and Dan on YouTube's "Diplomacy Broadcast News". Additionally, I wrote an article for *Game Trade Magazine* titled "Diplomacy Enters a Renaissance with a New Edition Arriving", which was published just in time for Gen Con. That major convention was a great opportunity to get the game in front of many reviewers and board game content creators.



Diplomacy was officially released on July 13<sup>th</sup>, but the original plan was for a Gen Con release. For a change, production of a board game was ahead of schedule. Gen Con was a great opportunity to promote the game. We had writeups of Diplomacy on Opinionated Gamers (<https://opinionatedgamers.com/2023/08/16/gen-con-2023-renegade-game-studios/>) and a mention by Keith Law in Paste Magazine (<https://www.pastemagazine.com/games/board-games/the-best-board-games-at-gen-con-2023>). Board Game Nation did a video review of the new releases on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0hDp-U96fU>). Renegade did some media work on their own,

and included the US Diplomacy Championship in their Gen Con recap video ([https://youtu.be/CbCBjR59FI?si=c1O\\_omuP5rS6xv4B&t=417](https://youtu.be/CbCBjR59FI?si=c1O_omuP5rS6xv4B&t=417)). The new release had video a video review by the Discriminating Gamer (<https://boardgamegeek.com/video/466917/diplomacy/discriminating-gamer-diplomacy>).



Lastly, to help organizers & new players, Renegade partnered with content creator GameBoyGeek to publish a Diplomacy "Rules School" video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKfAZXVKyyE>). I highly recommend current organizers and hopeful organizers save the Rules School video. It's a great addition to any event invitation so players can come into a game with a little background information. If you're an organizer looking for support, then please reach out to me on Renegade's Discord (<https://discord.gg/renegadegames>) or via email ([tjhaver@gmail.com](mailto:tjhaver@gmail.com)).

To wrap up the year of Diplomacy, I connected Renegade with a charity to run a holiday event. You can read about the full details of the event in this edition of Diplomacy World. We cross-posted of that event on Renegade's site:

<https://renegadegamestudios.com/blog/renegade-teams-up-with-step-ahead-tech-to-spread-holiday-cheer/>

The Game Manufacturer's Association (GAMA) was so pleased with the event that they plan to include a writeup of their own in GAMA quarterly magazine to publishers and stores. It's wonderful to do a nice event for charity, then get some promotion for that charity and the game we love as a result.

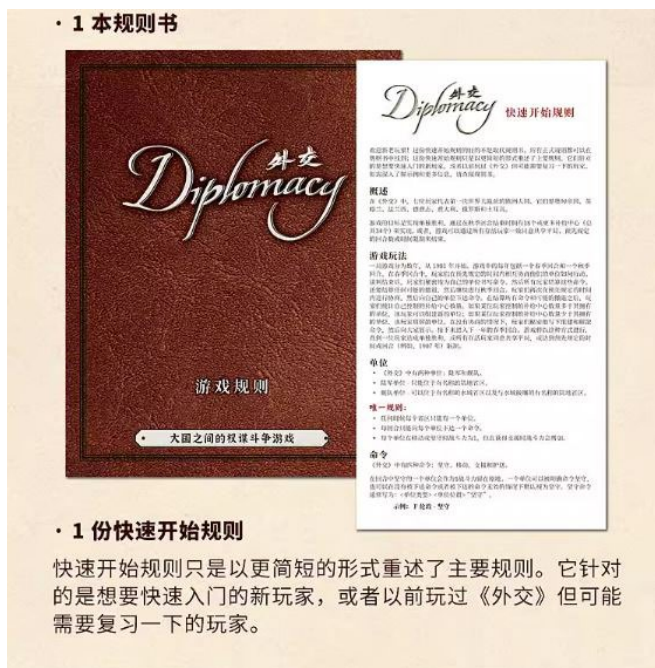
### What Lies Ahead

Earlier in this reflection piece, I alluded to other publishers of Diplomacy. The license for the game is international for Renegade and they can partner with other board game publishers to distribute Diplomacy.



They have a number of pre-existing agreements with companies to distribute the game. For instance, *Let's Play Games* is the Australian distributor. All primary English-speaking countries will have the same English-language edition. In France, the company *Origame* will publish the French-language edition. There are editions for Spanish- and Chinese-language editions. If you're able to receive a delivery from *TaoBao* in China, you'll be able to buy the *Banana Games* edition of Diplomacy. It was wild to see my Quick Start Rules in the Chinese edition of the game. If you're looking for Diplomacy to be published in your native language, the best way to show your support is to organize events and promote those events on social media.

Dan McNeill is now co-hosting our teaching event at Dice Tower East in Orlando. It's wonderful to see so many people getting involved in teaching the game. In a future edition of Diplomacy World, I plan to write an organizer's guide for anyone looking start a local club or run a convention event. In the meantime, reach out to me directly for suggestions and material support.



We had great success with organized events in 2023 so we're adding even more for 2024. In this same edition of Diplomacy World, you'll see a flyer for the 15 conventions events planned for 2024. The primary focus at these conventions is teaching the game, with five of the events also hosting Diplomacy tournaments: PrezCon, Origins, WBC, PAX Unplugged, and Gen Con (also the US Diplomacy Championship). PrezCon returns to the Diplomacy community after last being run in 2010. PAX Unplugged runs the Diplomacy tournament in Philly as part of their "Classic Cardboard" competition. Gen Con, Origins, and WBC are three of the oldest Diplomacy tournaments in existence. Gen Con is also the largest Diplomacy event in the world, with 69 tournament players and 89 introduction players at the 2023 edition. All these events have a strong positive effect on organized play, serving as an inspiration for others to follow suit. As a result of our community engagement, we added organizers for Diplomacy events at Nuke-Con and CharCon. Three-time US Champion

Renegade has been a tremendous partner throughout this experience. The company is run by gamers who care deeply about the games they publish. They're licensing these games because they love them and want to see them get a second life. Every person I've worked with at Renegade has helped us make Diplomacy stronger. At the US Diplomacy Championship, we were joined by Scott Gaeta (Founder & Owner of Renegade Games), Dan Bojonowski (Senior Producer for Renegade Games), and Chris Nadeau (Senior Director at Avalon Hill) for the Top Board in a show of support for Diplomacy. A profound thanks to everyone at Renegade & Avalon Hill who helped return Diplomacy to glory in 2023. The game will continue to be in good hands.





I also want to thank my family for playing an integral role in promoting the game. During a normal year, I work 30-40 tech events in addition to my normal job. With so many Diplomacy commitments, I had to cut many events from my calendar. That had an impact to my supplementary income, but my darling wife was supportive because she knows how much I love Diplomacy. Adding my name to the credits of Diplomacy and Acquire was a dream come true. So not only did she give her blessing, but my family joined me for multiple events. My Diplo-family were playing at events in Chicago for Gaming Hoopla, in Columbus for Origins, and at local game stores to support teaching the game. We even modified our trip to Europe to overlap with EuroDipCon in Paris, so they could finally meet some of my long-time Diplomacy friends abroad. We'll be traveling together to Milan in May 2024 for World DipCon, where we'll get a chance to meet event organizer Davide Cleopadre's entire family. I'm obscenely fortunate to have such a wonderful, supportive family.



Did all that hard work pay off? Absolutely. Before the new Diplomacy release was even a month old a 2<sup>nd</sup> print run was ordered. Everyone can expect to see the 2<sup>nd</sup> print run in local game stores starting in December 2023. You can spot the print runs by the lot number (ends with -1 for first edition or -2 for the second edition) on the back of the box above the barcode. Diplomacy has exceeded expectations, which opens the doors for more Diplomacy fun in the future. Exactly what you may ask? At present I can only discuss news publicly posted by Renegade. Note that shortly after Gen Con, Renegade announced another set of games licensed from Hasbro, which includes Nexus Ops, Vegas Showdown, Risk 2210, and Risk Godstorm:

<https://renegadegamestudios.com/blog/renegade-game-studios-welcomes-nexus-ops-vegas-showdown-risk-2210-and-risk-godstorm/>

Join the Renegade Discord server and subscribe to their quarterly Virtual Convention on YouTube where they announce game news. The successful partnership will continue. Diplomacy has a bright future!

