

Diplomacy World #172



Winter 2025 Issue
www.diplomacyworld.net

Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of **Diplomacy World**, the Winter 2025 issue. I recently had someone ask me “why is the next issue the Winter 2025 issue, when it comes out in 2026?” For the answer, simply look to the game. The results for the Winter turn come out after Winter is over. In a similar way, the issues of **Diplomacy World** are released after the seasons begin. I seem to recall the Diplomatic Pouch actually called their issues “Spring Results” to highlight this process. For me, I just like having the Spring issue come out in spring, etc. It makes it easier for my addled brain to remember when a particular issue came out.

At any rate, here we are once again, another issue chock full of articles. And there’s a real cross-section, with some familiar names, and some new names. For example, new contributor Nancy Jin provides an article entitled “I Want to Die But I Want to Eat Dots” about how you can hate many aspects of Diplomacy (stabs, losing, etc.) while still returning to the game time and again. Jonathan Frank returns to revisit the topic he first approached in 2024: properly classifying game results and using that to build a new scoring system.

Tournament-wise, there are reports from various parts of the globe: Conrad Woodring on UK action, Shane Armstrong on the Australian hobby, and Egoitz Campo on the Basque Championship, just to name three.

I’ve been happy to see some humor make its way inside Diplomacy World the last few issues. This time around, David E. Cohen adapts a Gilbert and Sullivan song to the game we all enjoy. And that’s just the beginning. There are many, many more articles for you to read and consider (including some that haven’t even arrived yet as I write this). Just turn the page and jump in!

I would be remiss if I didn’t call your attention to this issue’s Never a Cross World from Archie Duke. Go check out the puzzle, read the clues, figure it out. SOLVE it. Then send your solution in to the email address provided, and you will have a chance to win a free copy of the new Diplomacy card game from Renegade. Exercising your brain and having a chance to win a prize? It’s a win-win!

That’s enough from me this time around. ***I’ll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is April 1, 2026.*** 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 Spring, and happy stabbing!

Diplomacy World Staff:

Managing Lead Editor:	Douglas Kent, Email: diplomacyworld@yahoo.com or dougray30 of yahoo.com
Co-Editor:	Elle Doerr, Email: locke.athena.a@gmail.com
Strategy & Tactics Editor:	Edi Birsan, Email: edibirsan@gmail.com
Variant Editor:	Ben Durfee, Email: playdiplomacymoderator@gmail.com
Interview Editor:	Randy Lawrence-Hurt, Email: randy.lawrencehurt@gmail.com
Club and Tournament Editor:	Peter McNamara, Email: me@petermc.net
Demo Game Editor:	Rick Desper, Email: rick_desper@yahoo.com
Technology Editor:	Vacant!!
Original Artwork	Original Artwork by Matt Pickard a.k.a. “Lady Razor”
	<i>This issue’s Cover Art by Michael Paul</i>
	Some classic art by Nemanja Simic

Contributors in 2025: Alex Amann, Mal Arky, Shane Armstrong, George K. Atkins, Brandon Austin, Edi Birsan, Chris Brand, Philip Burk, Egoitz Campo, David E. Cohen, Elle Doerr, Spyros Dovas, Dr. William B. Drummond, Archie Duke, Ben Durfee, Ryan Feathers, Brandon Fogel, Jonathan Frank, Thomas Haver, Jeff Hayman, Steve Hogue, David Hood, Nancy Jin, Mikalis Kamaritis, Christian Kelly, Lucas Kruijswijk, Robert Lacy, Randy Lawrence-Hurt, Marcus Loane, Justin Loar, Alex Maslow, Charles Mosteller, Roger Pitfield, Bryan Pravel, Lewis Pulsipher, Robert Schuppe, Adam Silverman, David P. Smith, David Spencer, Cameron Taylor, S.A. Tyre, Riaz Virani, Anton Wilsbach, Conrad Woodring, Robert Zahn. Add your name to the 2025 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 owned 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
Tournament Report: <i>Choosing Connection: Reflections on DipCon 57</i> by Bryan Pravel	Page 4
Tournaments: 2026 Asia Pacific Diplomacy Flyer	Page 9
Tournament Report: <i>A Loane On Top</i> by Shane Armstrong	Page 10
Feature: <i>2025 State of Play in the UK</i> by Conrad Woodring	Page 12
Feature: <i>Fear and Loathing in the Netherlands</i> by Dr William B. Drummond	Page 15
Letters: <i>Knives and Daggers – The Diplomacy World Letter Column</i>	Page 19
Tournaments: Cascadia Open 2026 Flyer	Page 21
Feature: <i>The Grand Synthesis of the Convoy Paradox</i> by Lucas Kruijswijk	Page 22
Tournament Report: <i>It All Comes Down to the Australian Open</i> by Shane Armstrong	Page 28
Tournaments: Con of the North Flyer	Page 32
Tournament News: Selected Upcoming Events	Page 33
Humor: <i>Player of Diplomacy</i> by David E. Cohen	Page 34
Feature: <i>From the DW Archive – Tournament Scoring</i> by Mal Arky	Page 35
Feature: <i>Ask the Hobby Historian: The Déjà Vu of 30 Years</i> by David Hood	Page 37
Tournaments: Prezcon 2026 Flyer	Page 39
Tournament Report: <i>2nd Annual Basque Country Diplomacy Championship 2025</i> by Egoitz Campo	Page 40
Tournaments: Circle DC 2026 Flyer	Page 41
Feature: <i>The Pursuit of the Bismark</i> by Shane Armstrong	Page 42
Tournaments: Whipping 2026 Flyer	Page 43
Feature: <i>Your-Draw-Size Scoring</i> by Jonathan Frank	Page 44
Feature: <i>For the Diplopups</i> by Mal Arky	Page 45
Tournaments: BGG in Texas Flyer	Page 48
Interview: <i>An Interview with David Miller</i> by Randy Lawrence-Hurt	Page 49
Tournaments: World Boardgaming Championships Flyer	Page 51
Puzzle: <i>Never a Cross Word</i> by Archie Duke	Page 52
Tournaments: Origins Flyer	Page 54
Feature: <i>I Want to Die But I Want to Eat Dots</i> by Nancy Jin	Page 55
Tournaments: Breakout Con Flyer	Page 56
Tournament Report: <i>Robert Zahn Wins North American Grand Prix</i> by Thomas Haver	Page 57
Feature: <i>Flipping the Table</i> by Brandan Austin	Page 59
Tournaments: GenCon Flyer	Page 63
Tournament Preview: <i>World Diplomacy Convention 2026 in Greece</i> by Spyros Dovas	Page 64
Tournaments: National Diplomacy Masters Flyer	Page 67
Feature: <i>Nolan David named “Diplomat of the Year”</i> by Thomas Haver	Page 68
Tournaments: OwlCon Flyer	Page 69

Choosing Connection: Reflections on DipCon 57 at Weasel Moot XIX

by Bryan Pravel, Tournament Director



A Celebration of Community

The 57th North American Diplomacy Convention, DipCon 57, took place October 2–5, 2025, at the SpringHill Suites in Park Ridge, Illinois, just outside Chicago. Hosted by the Windy City Weasels, this year's event was more than a tournament, it was a celebration of community, connection, and the enduring joy of Diplomacy.



Across 26 boards, and two variant events, 66 players gathered from around the world. Nearly one-third were attending their first-ever Diplomacy tournament; a sign that, despite uncertain times, our hobby continues to grow. For four days, laughter and negotiation filled the room, and the friendships and fellowship formed across tables felt even more important than the games themselves.

The Noble Sport of Treachery

Our theme “The Noble Sport of Treachery, Honoured Since 1967” honored nearly six decades of DipCon tradition while embracing Chicago’s proud sporting spirit.

Chicago has been intertwined with DipCon since the hobby’s formative years. From 1972 to 1975 the convention ran annually in the Chicago Loop, beginning with DipCon V at the Sherman House Hotel, and again in the region at nearby Lake Geneva in 1977, a period when DipCon winners were often regarded as de facto world champions. More recently, Chicago hosted World DipCon in 2012 and 2016, and since 2006 Chicago’s Windy City Weasels have carried that legacy forward as one of North America’s most active Diplomacy clubs.

Each board at DipCon 57 was named for a local icon or pop-culture figure with ties to Chicago athletics: from Michael Jordan and Mike Ditka to Ferris Bueller and the SNL “Super Fans.” Like Chicago sports, Diplomacy is a game of loyalty, heartbreak, hope, and learning to get back up after losses.

It is a theme that captures the essence of the game: skill and strategy paired with patience, humor, and community.



A City Under Shadow

Yet even as we gathered, a shadow hung over the weekend.

Across the Chicagoland area, federal raids unfolded in real time. Reports described agents breaking down doors of private residences, forcing residents into hallways at gunpoint, separating children from their parents and zip tying them together, detaining migrants and citizens alike.

Friday was especially difficult for me. About an hour before we began the tournament, I received a call from my wife. ICE was raiding our son's elementary school. I could hear the noise of Blackhawk helicopters through the phone. Moments later, my sister-in-law called. Agents had used tear gas on the street just one block outside my nephew's school while she was there for pickup. A neighbor texted that our neighborhood children's museum had been raided, picking up nannies and leaving children without caregivers.

All weekend helicopters circled over my home. Groups of military-style vehicles with spotlights and automatic weapons patrolled through the alley behind our home every few hours. No one in my family slept much. My family is safe. Not all of my neighbors can say the same.

Choosing Connection

As Tournament Director, I was conflicted. How does one reconcile playing games in a time like this? I felt scared, helpless, and guilty.

Assistant Tournament Director Sabi Ahuja urged me to take a break and get some air. I walked around the

venue. I saw players from all over North America and the globe —veterans and first-timers, young and old — sharing laughter, telling stories, making friends.

I realized that joy, friendship, and shared play aren't escapes from darkness, they're acts of human connection.

This weekend, our community rose to the moment. Players checked in on one another, welcomed newcomers, and filled the room with warmth and laughter. I saw that in a small way, Diplomacy is practice for the world; proof that people can clash and still care, disagree and still belong.



Rivalries stayed on the board. Off the board, we were friends, we were community, we were there for each other. That, more than any trophy or title, is what made this a great tournament.



Four Rounds, Two Variants, One Epic Karaoke Night

DipCon 57 at Weasel Moot XIX featured four main rounds using Open Tribute scoring and a drop round (the best three of four games counted for score), along with two variant tournaments.

Thursday night's Diplomacy: Era of Empire event, played on the stunning giant board provided by Era playtester, long-time Weasels club member, and great human Tony Prokes, kicked off the weekend with flair. Wisconsin's Elle Doerr claimed the first win of the weekend.

Friday's 1862 variant, Game Managed by designer Keith Worstel, brought global scale to the mix, running both face-to-face and extended-deadline formats for 16 players. West Virginia's Jonathan Dingess emerged victorious.



Key Moments

Across the main event, players showed remarkable skill and a bit of noble treachery:

- **Andrew Wu's Lazarus Moment:** In Round 1, Andrew turned a struggling four-center Russia into a 13-center board top.
- **Robert Chase's Golden Blade:** A decisive 1906 strike on France in Round 1 earned him best stab.
- **Alex Baker's Player's Choice:** Alex was a model of sportsmanship, smiling through every game. Fourteen other players earned nods, reflecting a weekend defined by good natured camaraderie.

- **First-Time Brilliance:** Nearly one-third of attendees were first-time tournament players, bringing fresh energy and new friendships.
- **Final Turn Tie Break:** As time expired, Andrew Wu and Jonnie Gillam were tied in points and on all tiebreakers. In the final turn of the tournament, Andrew captured one final center, clinching victory and avoiding a draw from a hat for the tournament win.

And of course, no Weasel Moot would be complete without off-board festivities. Thursday's welcome event featured dinner, open gaming, and karaoke where alliances formed in duets, rivalries dissolved in harmonies, and the Golden Microphone went to Cameron Higbe's popular performance.



Awards and Honors

When the final orders were read, New York City's Andrew Wu emerged as DipCon 57 Champion, earning 390 points across his best three rounds.



Top Seven Standings:

1. Andrew Wu – 390
2. Jonnie Gillam – 350
3. Katie Gray – 297
4. Brandon Fogel – 295
5. Andrew Zick – 274

6. Nicolas Sahuguet – 245
7. Ed Sullivan – 219

Best Country Awards:

- Austria – Andrew Zick
- England – Aurora Attemann
- France – Brandon Fogel
- Germany – Andrew Wu
- Italy – Seth Keim
- Russia – Katie Gray
- Turkey – Jonnie Gillam



Tournament Committee

An event the size of DipCon doesn't happen on its own. Chicago is fortunate to have a dedicated group of volunteers who care deeply about this hobby, this city, and this event.

Special Awards:

- Player's Choice: Alex Baker
- Golden Blade (Best Stab): Robert Chase
- Biggest Weasel (Most Centers in a Single Game): Andrew Zick
- Golden Microphone (Best Karaoke): Cameron Higbe
- Lazarus (Best Comeback): Andrew Wu
- Icarus (Biggest Fall): Andrew Wu
- Chicago Rat Hole (Meme Board): Round 1 Board B keeping Denmark neutral until 1906
- TD's Choice: Keith Worstell for organizing the 1862 variant, helping with setup, and providing so many large sized custom boards including one that was color blind friendly.
- Weaseliest Weasel: Noah Merritt for stabbing ally Brandon Fogel three times in a single game.
- Biggest Stoat (Top Rookie): Joshua Taylor
- Mayor of Chicago (Top Local Player): Julian Wellman
- Steadfast Weasel (Persists Despite All Odds): Katie Gray Round 3 Board D
- Curse of the Billy Goat (Bad Luck): Noam Brown for experiencing a bit of targeting after his recent World DipCon win!
- Diplomacy: Era of Empire Champion: Elle Doerr
- 1862 Champion Jonathan Dingess



Committee Members

- Sabi Ahuja: Assistant Tournament Director
- Rob Chase: Committee Member
- Brandon Fogel: Committee Member
- Chris Kelly: Committee Member
- Kevin O'Kelly: Committee Member

A special thanks to Sabi Ahuja, whose partnership allowed me rest and clarity throughout the weekend. And to Rob Chase and Brandon Fogel, who helped secure the venue, and to Rob, for designing and donating the amazing swag!

Also, thanks to club members Eber Condil and Tony Prokes for volunteering to assist all weekend.



Lesson Learned

DipCon 57 was one of the best tournament experiences I've had. For future Tournament Directors and organizers, a few takeaways:

1. Prioritize attendee wellbeing and community.
2. Schedule time for players to rest. Tired and hungry players get hangry.
3. Appoint an Assistant TD and rotate shifts.
4. Don't shy away from variants and side events.

DipCon celebrates the diversity of Diplomacy's play styles. Our side events, especially the large-scale 1862 variant that can really only be played at a convention, were major draws.

DipCon Society Meeting

The Association of Rocky Mountain Area Diplomacy Adversaries (ARMADA) club's bid to host the 2026 DipCon at their Regatta tournament in Denver received a near unanimous vote of 45-1 during the DipCon Society Meeting.

Legacy and Light

J.R.R. Tolkien wrote that while we cannot choose the time we live in, we can decide what to do with the time we are given.

This weekend taught me that when the world feels heavy, choosing to gather; to play, to laugh, to connect, is no small thing.

I saw what makes the Diplomacy community special — not just brilliant tacticians, strategists, and negotiators, but people who care deeply about each other. DipCon 57 reminded me that strength isn't in the stab, but in the handshake that follows.

This is the legacy of DipCon 57, a weekend of courage and kindness, of strategy and laughter, of connection in the face of uncertainty. A reminder that even in uncertain times, light shines brightest when shared.

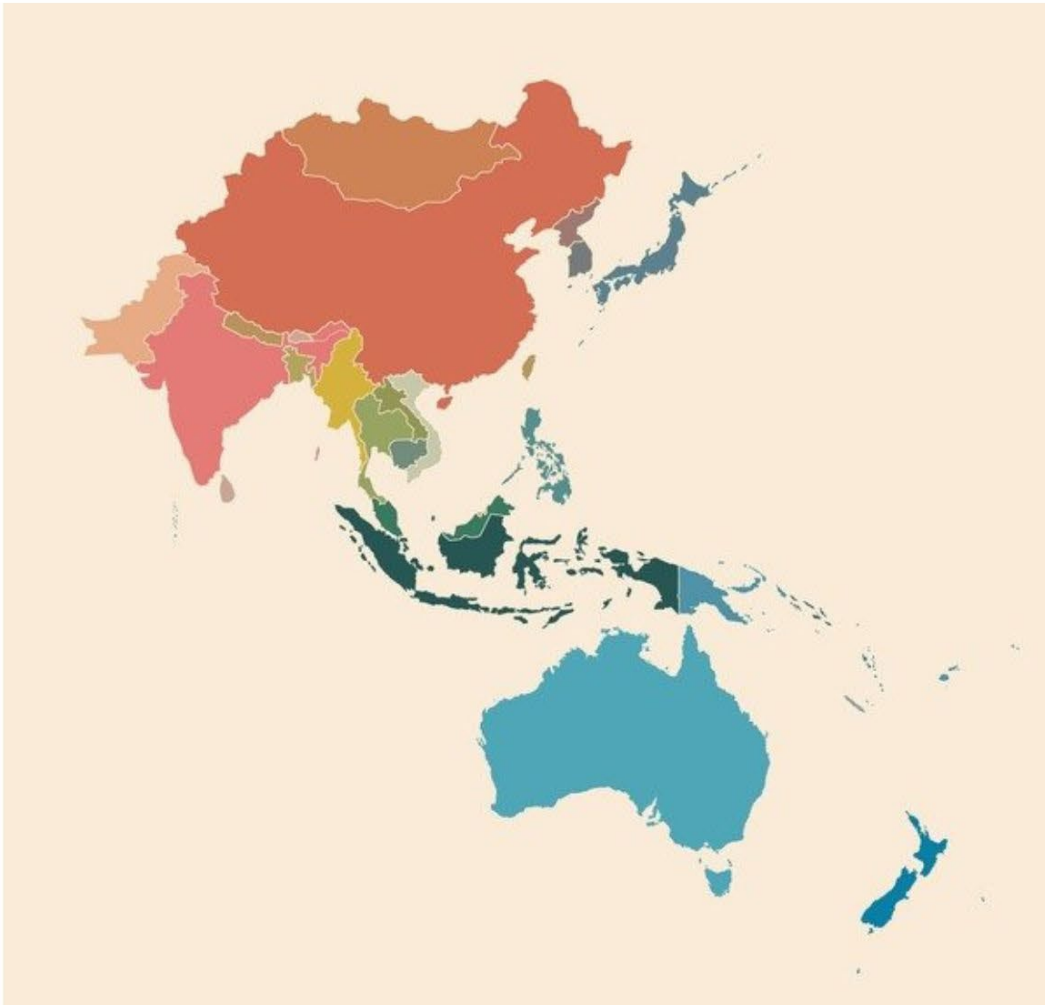
On behalf of the Windy City Weasels and the Tournament Committee, thank you to everyone who played, volunteered, and tuned in to watch the broadcast coverage on the Diplomacy Broadcast Network. Your engagement turned a tournament for a board game into something much larger.

Thank you for choosing connection over division, and for reminding us all that diplomacy, in every sense, still matters.

We'll see you at Regatta for DipCon 58, back in Chicago for Weasel Moot XX in 2026, and again when the world returns to Chicago for World DipCon 2027!



2026 Asia Pacific Diplomacy Schedule



23-25 January - Asia-Pacific Championship - Bangkok

13/14-15 March - Melbourne Open

24-26 April - Hung Parliament Handicap - Canberra

27-28 June - Sydney Cup

TBC August - Cane Toad Classic - SE Queensland

TBC October - Flying Fox Fandango - Melbourne

13-15 November - Australian Open - Canberra

More info? asiapacificdiplomacy@gmail.com

A Loane On Top

by Shane Armstrong

Mid-October saw the caravan of Australian FTF tournament Diplomacy move from Brisbane back down to Melbourne for the second time this year. Mission to Seafarers Melbourne on the banks of the Yarra River saw some of Australia's finest players donning their sequins to fight out the inaugural Flying Fox Fandango.

First time Tournament Director Zoe Cameron brought everything together for a fantastic weekend. The tournament featured three rounds (the lowest scoring round dropped), and the debut of a new scoring system dubbed Southern Sun.



Rosettes for prizes!

Round 1 kicked off on Saturday, and saw five boards keenly fought. Board 1, 'Flashy, Crowd-Pleasing Steps' saw Dominick Stephens (NZL) samba to the top the board on 10 dots to Andrew Goff's (VIC) 9 as Turkey, and Alex Batten (ACT) on 8 as England. Board 2, 'Happy Face On' was topped by the always smiling Tianyu Sun (ACT) on 9 as Germany, followed by Daryl Cox (VIC) as Turkey on 8. Anyone who thought Dominick Stephens's Austria would give him a good shot at Best Austria was mistaken, as Board 3, 'The Bogo Pogo' saw Brandan Austin (ACT) vault to the lead in that race, finishing on 11, with Jonathan Sun (VIC) in hot pursuit on 9 as France. The fourth board 'Apricot Scrub' was a grinding game in which Robert Hillier (VIC) was never troubled, finishing on 8 as Germany, followed by Stella Walter (ACT) on 7, as Austria enjoyed another good game. The final board of the round, 'Waratah Championships' saw the only shared board top of the round, with Nancy Jin (ACT), and Clare Bradbery (ACT) sharing an 8-dot board top as an efficient E/F.



Round 2 in action (though you can ditch this photo if you like – non-essential!)

After Saturday lunch, Round 2 saw the tournament practically blown out of the water with Marcus Loane soloing as France on Board 1, 'Fruity Rumba', finishing on 18 dots, taking 500 points, and leaving all of his competitors on zero. Board 2 'Gutless Wonder' saw England and France take 25 dots between them, with Robert Hillier on 13 as England (getting him Best England), and Stephan Kumar (SA) finishing on 12 as France, giving Rob his second board top in two rounds and putting him in a very solid position heading into Sunday. The third board of the round, 'A Bit of Musicality, Please' was topped by Andrew Goff on 15 as France. Shane Armstrong (ACT), and Tristan Barrett (NSW) were in perfect harmony on 9 each as Austria and Turkey, earning them both the Best Bats award on Sunday for the best alliance of the weekend. Board 4, 'Spa-A-Rama' saw Clare Bradbery as Austria-Hungary with her second shared top of the weekend, this time on 10 dots, with Stella Walter as England. The final board of the round, 'Barry Fife's "Dance to Win"' saw Brandan Austin taking Barry's advice to get himself his second top of the day and Best Germany on 10 dots. Second place was taken by Evalyn Marshall (VIC) on 7 SCs as Turkey. Pizzas arrived, the on-site bar was visited, and players from across Australia and visitors from New Zealand and also Canada (Gordon Clarkson, coming from out of nowhere after an appearance at Weasel Moot a week or so earlier!) caught up and formed new friendships.



Marcus with his solo

Sunday morning saw four boards in the final round. Board 1, 'Pan-Pacific Grand Prix' was topped by Shane Armstrong on 12 as a France with an Army in Greece and, at one point, a Fleet in Constantinople, followed by Andrew Goff on 11 as Germany. Board 2, 'Island Fantasy' was topped by Best Shane Cubis winner, Casey Mcallister (VIC) for his 10 dot France with Dominick Stephens 3 dots behind on 7 as Turkey. On Board 3, 'Bend Your Ear For a Tick?', Darryl Cox stabbed for the win (and Best Austria, beating out two other great performances), taking 12 dots, leaving silverware chasing Robert Hillier in second on 9 as Italy (giving him a Best Italy as a consolation prize). The fourth and final board of the tournament, 'Not Always Strictly Ballroom' was topped by Alex Batten in Turkey on 8 dots, getting him the honors as Best Turkey, and leaving another trophy chaser, Brandon Austin, in second on 7 as Italy.

So, with no Round 3 solos, it was clear that Marcus Loane had won the inaugural Flying Fox Fandango. But who had finished in second and third? Final scores revealed that there was a three-way tie for second (a real possibility in a 3 round tournament employing a drop round), and that tiebreakers would have to be applied. Following application of tiebreakers, Andrew Goff was

awarded second place, Robert Hillier third, and Brandon Austin fourth. The Fandango had been completed the scores and prizes awarded, and the scene had been set for the final tournament of the year, the 2025 Australian Open. Continue reading this edition of Diplomacy World for the thrilling conclusion to the Australian season!



Foxtrotting his way to victory

Flying Fox Fandango 2025 Top 7

- 1st – Marcus Loane
- 2nd – Andrew Goff
- 3rd – Robert Hillier
- 4th – Brandon Austin
- 5th – Darryl Cox
- 6th – Shane Armstrong
- 7th – Clare Bradbery

Best Countries

- Best Austria – Darryl Cox
- Best England – Robert Hillier
- Best France – Marcus Loane
- Best Germany – Brandon Austin
- Best Italy – Robert Hillier
- Best Russia – Casey Mcallister
- Best Turkey – Alex Batten

Awards

- Best Bats (Alliance) – Shane Armstrong and Tristan Barrett, Troy Adderly (VIC) (who took an ally's dot in Spring, tried to leave in the Fall, but was bounced and forced to keep it).
- Best Stab – Stella Walter
- Player's Choice – Casey Mcallister
- Best Shane Cubis – Casey Mcallister
- Cassandra Award – Nancy Jin (to soloist Marcus Loane: "Why would I talk to you? I'm trying to stop you solo!")

2025 State of Play in the UK

by Conrad Woodring

Saturday, 6 December 2025 was not like any other day in London. There was magic in the air. Twenty-one festively dressed people clustered outside Sambrook's Brewery in Wandsworth. Almost all of them had arrived *before* the brewery opened — a level of commitment that says a lot about both Diplomacy players and beer. They were eagerly awaiting pints, festivities, and surprises.

This wasn't a tournament. It wasn't a special event. This was the regular monthly London Diplomacy Club game — albeit the Christmas special. Post-EDC excitement, a close race for the London crown, and the general chaos of the festive season combined to draw an unusually large crowd for a Saturday afternoon game. Players came from as far afield as the Netherlands, Austria, and Germany.

And of course, you can't have a Christmas special without... Santa.

Actually, we went big. As has become something of a theme in the UK this year, we had *two* Santas. And yes — they played against each other.



London Diplomacy Club co-founder Conrad Woodring with George Mork, winner of the Santa award.



George Mork with Phil Weissert who came over from Vienna for Diplomacy and a weekend with friends.



We even had a Santa vs Santa game!

We played. We smiled. We laughed. And when the games were done, we stayed. Stories were told. Old friends caught up, new ones were made, and veterans quietly dispensed wisdom to newer players. I overheard gems like:

“Watch out for Santa — he’s going to be really good after a few more games.”
“Darcy and Bradley? I can outplay them.”
There was no grumping. No sour faces. Just smiles. There’s photographic evidence, should anyone doubt it.



20 PLAYERS! (I HAD TO HOLD THE CAMERA)

That Saturday perfectly captures the year we’ve had in the UK. It was fun. It was energetic. It was exciting. And — crucially — people just kept coming.

Across 2025, the UK hosted **41 face-to-face games**, up from 14 in 2024 and just six in 2023. We attracted **61 players**, and increased our player retention rate from **40% to 60%**. The numbers don’t lie. Something is happening in the UK.

		YoY Variance	2025	2024	2023
Primary KPIs					
Boards Played		+27	41	14	6
Unique Players		+41	94	53	30
New Players		+21	61	40	n/a
Returning Players		+20	33	13	n/a
Non-Returning Players		-3	(20)	(17)	n/a

2025 Strategy

So, what did we do differently to have such a strong year?

Honestly: nothing new.

Our communications strategy, as set out in the UK Manifesto (available at www.UKDiplomacy.co.uk/about),

remains unchanged. We continue to publish our newsletter (www.patreon.com/UKDiplomacy) and maintain a consistent presence across Discord, Instagram, Facebook, and Reddit. That’s all exactly the same as before.

If anything, we’ve simply sharpened the message as we’ve learned what works and what doesn’t. But at no

point did the leadership team tear up the playbook and start again.

What *has* made a big difference is the networking effect. People are having fun, and they're telling their friends — who then turn up and also have fun. A couple of highly connected individuals have been instrumental in this.

We also added a second major event this year: **SpireCon**. Between SpireCon and the UK NDC in Warrington, **23 of the UK's 41 games** were played at just those two events. Both were hugely successful. The UK NDC, in particular, exposed a new generation of players to tournament Diplomacy — and they loved it.

The UK also recorded its largest-ever attendance at a European Diplomacy Championship held *outside* the UK. Eighteen UK players travelled to Leiden, making up nearly 25% of total attendance. That came down to exactly two things: the buzz following the 2025 UK NDC, and a couple of hard-working people working the phones.

London remains the center of gravity for the UK hobby. In 2025, **51 players played 12 games** in London alone. Outside the capital, only two club games took place — one in Brighton and one in Chesterfield. Sadly, Colchester and Warrington showed no signs of life.

We had hoped 2025 would be the “year of the club”. Instead, it felt more like London burned twice as bright.

With my co-founder at the London Diplomacy Club, Marvin Fried, still on family sabbatical, it's unlikely I'll be able to do much more for the club next year. To surpass 12 games in 2026, new organizers will need to step up. If I had to bet, I'd say they will — several players are already doing excellent behind-the-scenes work.

Ninety-four players. Forty-one F2F games.

I'm extremely happy with that.

2025 Misses

Of course, 2025 wasn't perfect.

Warrington and Colchester both failed to host club games, and no region outside London managed to organize more than a single game all year. Seeding and sustaining regional clubs remains our biggest ongoing challenge.

The much-discussed F2F Tour of Britain never materialized. Instead, we implemented the JT London scoring system across all UK games and awarded prizes for both London-specific and UK-wide play — a decent fallback, but not quite what we'd envisioned.

The biggest failure came from Renegade Games, who announced — and then quietly dropped — plans to host Diplomacy at the UK Games Expo in Birmingham. UKGE is one of the largest board game conventions in the world, and expectations were high. Unfortunately, the event vanished from Renegade's marketing material, and there's been silence ever since.

Plan for 2026

We have a formula that's working, so we aren't likely to change that. Our comms strategy will continue unchanged.

The London Diplomacy Club will continue to drive forward with regular club games.

We plan to host at least four events in 2026:

- 1) January – Steel Showdown in Middlesbrough
- 2) May – WDC warmup weekend in London
- 3) July – Majoron in Northampton
- 4) September/October – European Diplomacy Championships in Chesterfield
- 5) November – Warrington

We have not yet selected a host for the UK NDC, but we will be sure to tell everyone once we have done so. The strong UK presence seen at EDC Leiden will be repeated at the **World Diplomacy Championship in Athens** in May 2026. Fourteen UK players have already signed up, with more likely to follow.

People come for the game, but they stay for the people.
Our secret weapon is simple: our people.

We're fun to play with. We genuinely like each other. We don't carry the baggage that can accumulate in older or larger organizations. We've had no feuds, no schisms, and no dramatic exits. Our biggest problem right now is finding venues big enough for our ambition.

I encourage all readers to come and play with us when we host EDC in 2026 — or come early for WDC Athens and join the London warm-up event. London is a great city, and we're a great group.

I promise it'll be better than whatever else you had planned that weekend.

LDC 2025 Rankings

Final Standings

1. Tom Garretty - 24 points
2. George McDonald - 17 points
3. Darcy Morris - 16 points

Best Countries

- Austria - George McDonald 7 centers 2nd place in LDC Game 9
- England - Dave Ainsworth 7 centers shared top in LDC Game 1

- France - Nat Shirley 10 centers top in LDC Game 4
- Germany - Darcy Morris 12 centers top in LDC Game 9
- Italy - George McDonald 7 centers 3rd place in LDC game 2
- Russia - Darcy Morris 11 centers top in LDC game 11
- Turkey - Hugh Edmonds, Tom Garretty and Tom Garretty all with 9 center tops (LDC 6, LDC 3 and LDC 10)

UK 2025 Rankings

Final Standings

1. Gunther Bedson - 40 points
2. Dan Lester - 33 points
3. Darcy Morris - 32 points

Conrad Woodring had 47 points but was disqualified as he was the only one who knew about the scoring system.

Best Countries

- Austria - Dan Lester and Gunther Bedson with 10 centers hared tops (both at UK NDC R1B1 and R1B2)
- England - Mikalis Kamaritis with 14 center top at UK NDC
- France - Issac Jukes with 11 centers at the Chesterfield club game in November
- Germany - Darcy Morris 12 centers top in LDC Game 9
- Italy - Darcy Morris with 12 center top at UK NDC
- Russia - Dan Lester with 13 center top on the UK NDC top board
- Turkey - Dave Simpson with 10 center top at ManorCon board 1

Additional awards

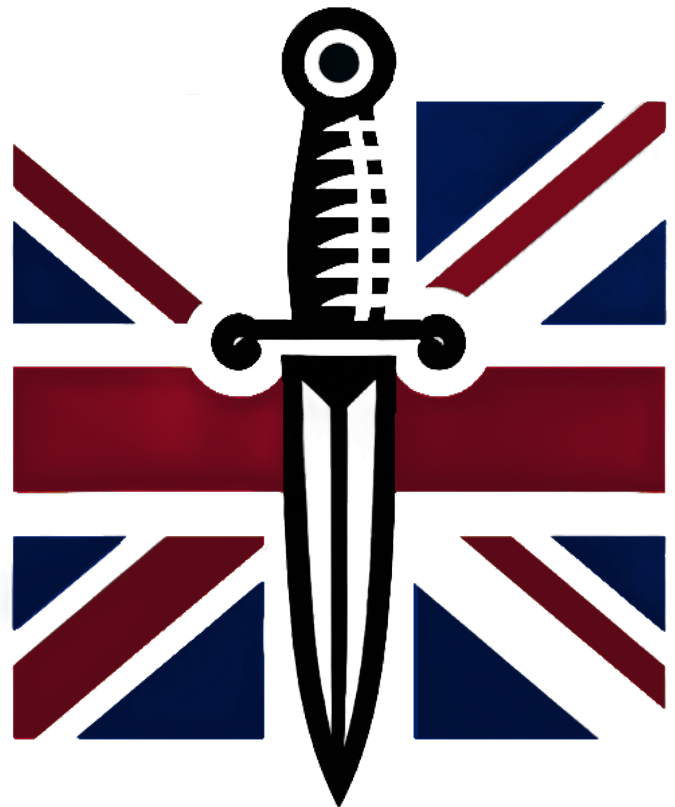
Best new player - George McDonald for nearly winning the London league and snatching two best countries in his first three games with the club.

Hardest working (most games) - George Mork for playing 14 face-to-face games in the UK in 2025

Greediest (most centers) - Conrad Woodring on 80 centers over 12 games

Most efficient (centers per game) - Dan Lester and George McDonald averaged 8.33 centers/game

Most Hammered - Ian Wilson managed only 13 centers across six games in 2025, giving him the lowest average centers per game with 2.17. On top of that he had negative points at year end. This is off the back of nearly winning the UK NDC in 2024 and generally having a cracking 2024.



Fear and Loathing in the Netherlands: A Journey with Low People in Low Countries

by Dr William B. Drummond

There's a buzz about the place... More hornets... a hive of criminals...

Yet again. That bloody phone. Dragging me out of a stupor. Sure, I love it chirping away when I'm three sheets, but I hate that I forget to turn it off before Morpheus knocks Bacchus over the head and puts an end to my fun.

At least I'm in my bed, and, mercifully this time, it's a text. I don't have that momentary fear that I'll still sound drunk or it'll be clear that I've just been woken up with another dry-mouthed king hell hangover. We all know the truth of the matter, but still I cling to my delusions.

"Dr Drummond, your last article on Whipping was an

outstanding success! As such, the publishers would like to fund you to fly to EDC in the Netherlands to cover that event. Expenses covered as previously."

I scratch my head. Whipping. Ah yes! Well, at least I now know what I'm getting myself in for. It's another Diplomacy tournament, but this time it's in the Netherlands. Amsterdam seems my kind of town – liberal beyond all sense of reason. I text back "email details", and return to the deeply unfulfilling sleep of the drunkard.

I resurface hours later. Leiden?! Where the hell is Leiden?! I blow some dust off the atlas and work out that, yes, it is in the Netherlands, and that it's close to The Hague. Great. Former home of Slobodan Milosevic, Charles Taylor, and Dick Advocaat. Current home of Geert Wilders. Cheery stuff. Well, I guess Leiden can't be host to a crowd worse than that. I find I've been added to a WhatsApp chat, and I pay it very little heed, though some guy called Toby tends to have a habit of deleting any messages he posts before I get the chance to read them.

Planes, trains, and then some more questionable modes of transport...

I'm flying KLM to Schipol, and then a train to Leiden. I'm excited about the rail journey until I actually get to the airport station and find out it's only a 20-minute ride. My visions of hours of windmills, polders, tulips, and strapping farmers with an over-fondness for livestock are ruined by nearly endless suburbia. I get maybe 3 minutes of verdant fields before it's back to railway sidings and housing. I don't have an off-sider for this trip so it's just me and a fairly steady flow of Heineken cans in the back row of the flight, and a few swigs of duty-free booze on the train.

I check into my hotel in De Waard, and arrange to tag along on a tour of The Hague with this weekend's cavalcade of weirdos. Great. I've just arrived in Leiden, it looks vaguely interesting, there are plenty of canals to drunkenly fall into, and we're straight off to The Hague. Whatever, take a back seat, let the freaks show themselves. My people always do.

It never takes long, either. We pull into a café – Beagles and Beans. Offering a Furryccino. From S&M types in SF to Dutch Zoophiles at the home of the International Criminal Court. What is with Diplomacy players? That freaky undertone is never too far away. But still more comes – we're told the Royal Carriage is out of commission due to some controversial artwork. Initially I suspect it's because of some old timey racist art, but then I begin to wonder if there are other reasons. We're also treated to the delightful story of the Brothers de Witt being subject to mob murder and a little light cannibalism in the 1670s. A cheery omen for the weekend, then. I

wonder if an award will be given in their honor on Sunday afternoon...

Bicep curls... the Rise of the Robots continues... familiar faces...

It's back to Leiden and lurking with intent at the Denksportcentrum. I've never bothered learning Dutch, but surely the literal translation is Think Sport Centre. I ponder asking one of the organizers if there's a Drinksportcentrum, but I know many inhabitants of The Netherlands wouldn't see notice my poor attempt at humor and suggest my alcoholism wasn't a laughing matter, so I keep it to myself.

I ponder the nickname I've seen bestowed on one of the Australians. 'The Aussie Android'. Total misnomer, compared with what I've seen and heard around the traps across my two weekends in his presence. The entire hobby is being swamped by AI researchers seeking to train their systems around some of the best bullshitters in the business. To speed up The Singularity in the search of a few quick bucks before a bloody, robot-driven death. Robots are even winning games of this stupid thing now, which must suck all of the joy out of it. There's chat that some players have learned things from the way AI plays the game, and some of the players I observe over the weekend may well be the latest in robotic technology put out there by Silicon Valley's latest Villain of the Week. Unsurprisingly, the actual humans at the boards see through them for the most part. This alleged android, though, is one of the best humans I see over the course of the weekend. He plays for the love of the game, and is just so present over the board. He manages to mix both domination and fun – doubtless he'll be welcome back at Whipping any time.

There's some concern about players missing their Round 1 games due to delayed flights, but it seems that plenty of people roll in that I've seen before. The Shouty American, the pub brawl enthusiast from Warrington (who would have probably appreciated my Drinksportcentrum gag), the amiable Frenchman with a glint of mischief in his eyes, doubtless working out how to get the best of everyone in front of him, and the Hellenic titan a few family members lighter than our last meeting in San Francisco.

Whiplash boardgaming... Lester and Son... The Kid...

Roll call, board draw, Spring 1901. We're all familiar with this now. They all race around again like Lewis Carroll's Caucus Race. Speed dating for dorks. But unlike WDC, this is a sprint, rather than a marathon. While American players play painfully slowly, adding writing time, adjudicating the game off the clock, and taking interminable hours before finally agreeing spiteful draws, European games are speed metal. The stern

Tournament Director is militant about orders being in the box at time, keeping the breakneck pace of a hardcore beat surrounded by thrash guitars, before games all end at a set game year. Get in, do some damage, get out again. Get a drink. My kind of people.

I spot Dan Lester, apparently a former world champion at this lark, indoctrinating his son Nathan into "The Hobby". Precisely what these people need – potential dynasties! I ask around, and apparently Lester Jr is quite handy already, and keen to continue to improve. With even half of his old man's talent, he'll be one to watch for the future. If I was any of this lot, I'd be terrified for my future.

Then I see the one I've been hoping to see. The Kid. Last I'd seen him, I'd left him at the Spero in SF cross-eyed mad for this stupid game. He looks back at me with what I hope is fond recognition, and goes to speak, but I direct him to his opponents and let him do his thing. He's got a Poundland Fabio fellow Australian on his board, and two English players. He doesn't die, but he doesn't flourish either, but from talking around the place over the next few years, that's more common than not, especially in these time limited European games.

The lack of eliminations means little opportunity to speak to the dead, and I don't want to sit in on the interminable bull sessions at the end of this round. I'm here for the vibe, not the nitty gritty. Let's leave that to the types who actually care about placings and scoring systems. I take a half hour walk back along the Rijn, drag myself into a charming hole in the wall just off Langebrug, get a decent buzz on, and then finish the walk back to my digs at closing. The air is positively fresh. A relatively sedate evening for this particular Doctor of Journalism, but I expect it to all properly kick off tomorrow now some of them have the whiff of blood in their nostrils.

Europe's weird gets cracking... Going Dutch for lunch...

Saturday morning. I wake almost refreshed but still can't shake the habit of destroying black coffee and still feeling vaguely seedy. More nonsense. A sunny dispositioned organizer who is apparently a stone-cold killer on the board when required, an Italian with the subtle gender politics of Tinto Brass, the Hobby's Denis Thatcher. They've come out of the woodwork today for sure and certain. This is going to be a day for the wildest ones. Only the weird survive, and the losers have their livers fried up by a bunch of feral Dutchmen. It's a round for the Europeans. Dutchmen, Germans, the English (sorry lads, you're victims of geography on this one, you can't Brexit your way out of The Hobby). There's a win for the withering sarcasm and general miserability of the Hellenic Hullster, Mikalis Kamaritis – a man who would stare down fun if it dared even think about knocking on his front door. Even the Canadian winner is actually

resident in Switzerland. In a nod to 1945, cigar enthusiast Ed Sullivan manages to challenge his inner Patton to storm to victory. Dollar Store Fabio almost manages to "solo" a board – apparently the only legitimate form of "win", and very rare in these environments. Chalk one up to the Antipodeans, then.

I see more fun and less personal rancor than I saw in San Francisco earlier in the year. Maybe these Europeans are onto something, creating an environment where the game can be enjoyed in short bursts, rather than just endured for interminable hours. But Whipping, of course, was all about masochism. Leiden is for Lovers.

We all break at the same time for a Traditional Dutch Lunch. I never knew my wino mother was Dutch – meat, bread and cheese was about as good as it ever got for me as a kid. It was rather disturbing being transported back to my childhood - eating disappointing fare while being looked at disapprovingly by borderline psychopaths. I retreat to the bar, forever doomed to be my mother's son...

Business time... Calhamer's gift... pseudonyms and a bunch of Skuumkoppe...

She said, 'there's gonna come a time, when I'm gonna have to go... with whoever's gonna get me the highest...'

They're all serious now. It's the third round, and the top 7 placed players will play off in a winner takes all top board on the Sunday. The pros, at the top of their game, going at it, the rest of them playing for shits and giggles, if they play at all. Doubtless a few egotists will put the cue in the rack and not come back for the Sunday, and the incurable tragics like The Kid will be there no matter what – they're able to hear a box being cracked from 100mi away.

They all run around like always. Promises, lies, trust, suspicion, incredulity, naivety. Half-truths, sins of omission, leaks – every form of human interaction. For a while I brought Objective Journalism to politics. I've seen the types that attracts. The general public don't quite understand the service the inventor of this game has done to them. He keeps this gaggle running the spectrum from straights to maddies to absolute psychos away from the actual levers of power in legislatures and executive branches the world over. This lot can all only count to 18, and while that might be enough to run Europe on a board, it ain't quite enough to run an actual country. Praise be.

Now there's eliminations and bigger scores. They can be just as bloodthirsty as the Americans. Europeans dominate the round again. Canada's finest Swiss Miss and Temu Fabio share a win, and The Kid puts a game

away – he clearly has a knack, as well as an enthusiasm. They're all enthusiastic, but, whisper this quietly, to my untrained eye, plenty of them aren't actually much good. To be one is fine, and to be both is a blessing, but the good players really owe their existence to the second tier, because they're the reason there's enough players to actually play this stupid game in the first place.

I reacquaint myself with The Kid. He's done alright, but not good enough to make it onto the top boards. He's got plenty of games ahead of him though, and he'll crack his first win sooner rather than later. It's off for some Dutch-Asian fare at Woo Ping, just around the corner from my night before watering hole. Woo Ping. A nice Whipping callback – doubtless those SF flogger and mask enthusiasts would be feeling a rush of blood to the head were they here to experience it.

There's plenty of socializing. I ply The Kid with a few drinks. The beer options are fairly dreadful - Tsingtao or Heineken, but I spot Skuumkoppe – a wheat beer that sounds like one player might just call another when they were betrayed. A couple of Skuumkoppe have broken off onto their own table to have their own little exclusive shindig – Patton, Fabio, the Swiss Miss, and a French ex-World Champion who still steamrolls chumps in his sleep. That's a murderer's row of talent that's managed to stab the rest of the gathering. To boot, two of them were good enough to find their way onto tomorrow morning's top board.

I'm introduced to a tall, perpetually friendly type who goes by the name "Astronaut". I've met these pseudonymous gaming captain types before, and in a game based on truth, lies, and persona, must tell you all that this lot are all for the watching, regardless of the size of their smiles or the quality of their conversations. As young Liam Healey knows, the only thing worse than being talked about is not being talked about.

The drinks continue to flow, we kick on elsewhere, it all blurs. I find myself with a sick sense of admiration that Fabio, the Swiss Miss, and a chilled-out beanpole Brit are still going at the drinks hammer and tongs while the other softer or more sensible types have fallen by the wayside. My kind of people. Perhaps they are chasing just the right amount of self-loathing to be at their peak performance tomorrow. For some of us, self-disgust is a powerful motivator.

I forget staggering home, but, because I'm a professional, goddamnit, I have set my alarm for the morning prior to my blackout. More unsatisfying, unrefreshing sleep. Buy the ticket, take the ride...

Winners, whiners, and wisdom...

Back to the StillDrunkSportCentrum. You'd think a morning constitutional might make things slightly better, but you'd be wrong. Cyclists are overstimulating in environments like these, and I'm even more jittery than normal. If a professional like me is struggling, spare a thought for the British Beanpole and his drinking buddies.

There's a final round and a top board. A combination of sore heads and sore feelings have cut the attendance down by half. I guess the too-hungover dropouts have a semblance of self-respect - those that weren't good enough to make the cut have stayed in their hotel rooms out of shame. Respect to everyone on the 4 boards that won't quite matter so much - they're the real MVPs today. *Ludere causa ludendi*. In the main game, an English rookie is dumpstered but will doubtless get his revenge in time, the Swiss Miss ruthlessly shanks the normally cynical Hellenic Hullster. Fabio catches a goose with his face, and gets yelled at by an incensed German for his troubles. My beanpole drinking pal learns that he can be a professional level player or drinker, but not both at the same time, and some Norwegian that I've completely missed over the entire weekend pushes the proverbial up a hill for the entire game. Perhaps the Norwegians are the secret success story out of this entire gathering – there's enough of them here to get a local scene growing for sure and certain. Then perhaps their Swedish and Danish neighbors will have an excuse to get their act together again. Then the Finns will show up and scare the Scandinavians away again. Finns. No supply centers, but plenty of knife-wielding passion.

What else can I tell you? What's The Wisdom from all of this? That the robots are still trying to take over the game? They're failing, but no doubt, tech cash will continue to try and suck all the people-based joy out of this weirdo subculture. That factionalism and ego continues to threaten the cohesiveness of the hobby in North America in particular? That legitimacy is priceless? Perhaps it's that the Europeans are still nowhere closer to a collective grouping, despite the strength of the performance of their players and recent global upswings in The Hobby.

No. Those are all matters that will find equilibrium in time. It's that Leiden was is lovers. Be it for the game, the vibe, the scene, or, in some strange cases or ways, for each other. It's that this game is and always will be about the people who play it, and no amount of robots, factions, or pointless enmity will ever erase that simple fact.

Ludere causa ludendi. Res ipsa loquitur.

Knives and Daggers - The Diplomacy World Letter Column



Chris Brand - What do I have to do to get Cascadia listed in the "upcoming tournaments" section of DW? Is it enough just to mention it when I send you a flyer?

[[Yes, because I am an absolute mess at times. I TRY to include them automatically when a flyer arrives, but I often miss some. So, a reminder is advised!]]



Charles Mosteller - At the risk of being the straw that broke the camel's back, and against my better judgment, I have decided to take both the risk and the gamble associated with stuffing this Letter to the Editor into your digital mailbox.

In searching through the ever-growing horde of e-mails that had managed to infiltrate my in-box, recently, by sheer luck your e-mail of October 1st, 2025 managed to snag my eye, out of all others competing with it for my undivided attention. Issue #171 of Diplomacy World, and I thank you for giving birth to it. Hopefully, your many avid readers will not forget you, come Mother's Day.

That aside, know that I made it no further than Page 2 - the Notes from the Editor section - before the urge to write a Letter to the Editor to you became nothing short of overwhelming, just absolutely overwhelming. Are you aware that the combination of a new issue of Diplomacy World magazine with you at the helm has that effect on people? I should hope so.

Your sentence in Issue #171 of, "There is still about a week before the deadline, but at the moment we already have a nice variety of articles" filled me with envy. What a loyal bunch of followers you must have, to be beset with such good fortune. Christmas is coming up fast, so do be sure to remember them. No need to buy them presents - just remember them.

Page 3 of Issue #171 is a thing of beauty. Sure, it's not pretty. Not pretty, at all - but it's beautiful, nonetheless. Let me tell you why.

You've got a list of your magazine's contributors for the entire year, thus far, stuff into it. That you spared no expense by treating all of those many names to the bold text treatment is an affirmation of your commitment to recognizing them. It's just a good, solid, and dare I say it - obvious - way to tip the odds in your favor, should you ever find yourself in a bind and lacking in content for a future issue.

Persuading others to contribute to a magazine is an endless journey across a hell all its own, so you clearly

must have something on these "contributors" to Diplomacy World. I write, also, to encourage you to stay at it, and don't give them a moment's rest. Otherwise, they'll sandbag you and keep their articles and other contributions to themselves, while the world starves. If it weren't for you, Mister Editor, the whole of the Diplomacy world would lie in tatters.

I don't play Diplomacy (keep the gasps coming from the crowd down, please). Never have. And knowing my luck, I likely never will. The whole Diplomacy zine "fad" that was once a thriving industry all its own is the equivalent of King Solomon's mines. Brilliant writing. Biting wit. Truly, Diplomacy zines represent the apex of human civilization, even if Diplomacy players have more than earned their reputation as a bunch of backstabbing bastards. Make no mistake - I mean that as a high compliment.

One hundred and seventy-one issues is a fine and glorious run for any magazine. Your part in that collective achievement is more than substantial. You honor both the game of Diplomacy and your fellow Diplomacy lovers with your steadfast presence on the wall keeping watch and sounding the alarm of what qualifies as "news" and "information" in the realm of Diplomacy, today.

From afar, I salute you, and I salute those in league with you on the Diplomacy front.

With kind but envious regards,

Charles Mosteller
Editor of both PBM Chaos and PBM Zombies

[[Thank you. As I continue to say, the zine is only as good as the articles submitted by the readers. They do the hard part!]]



Edi Birsan - There is an error in the Haver article. The World DipCon will NOT be at Las Vegas in 2027.



Thomas Haver - I've got some exciting news for Diplomacy players from Renegade:

(1)
Renegade Game Studios is releasing "Diplomacy: The Golden Blade", a Diplomacy card game for 2-7 players. This is a complete standalone game for new or experienced Diplomacy players and is tentatively set to release in April 2026.

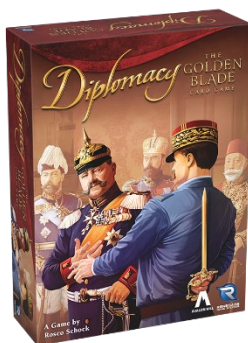
"In the prelude to World War I, the seven Great

Europeans Powers contend for supremacy, both with their military might and political maneuvering. In "Diplomacy: The Golden Blade Card Game", players must choose and negotiate alliances carefully -- knowing when to expand and when to stab. Only the most cunning leader will emerge victorious as The Golden Blade.

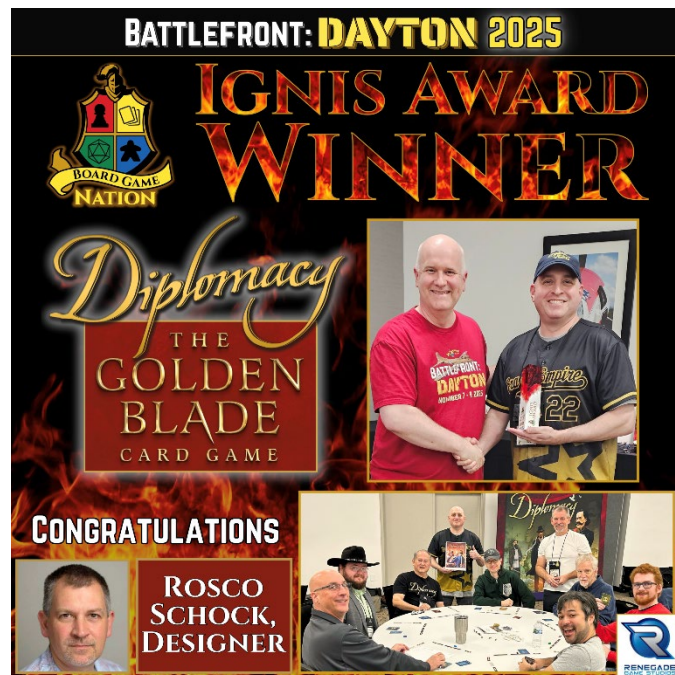
<https://renegadegamestudios.com/diplomacy-the-golden-blade/>

<https://eu.renegadegamestudios.com/diplomacy-the-golden-blade/>

<https://uk.renegadegamestudios.com/diplomacy-the-golden-blade/>



I recorded a 2-player game with Board Game Nation here: <https://youtu.be/IJciacsC3rw?si=zhjJ8lhG-jDzRFM>. Note the 2-player version plays like France v Austria in the 2-player version of Diplomacy, so it's a different format than the 3-7 player version. I look forward to publishing some designer interviews with Rosco Schock in the next edition of Diplomacy World.



(2)

Diplomacy, Era of Empire, and The Golden Blade (preorders) have done exceptionally well. How well? Renegade is going to release Diplomacy accessories on BackerKit in January. While I can't reveal exactly what we'll release, they will be "must buy" items by a large portion of the community. One of the items is something player's have been asking about for a LONG (decades) time. Anyone interested should subscribe to the BackerKit listing below:

https://www.backerkit.com/call_to_action/abca73f4-049d-4c7e-938b-ce50cc1f8661/landing



Diplomacy

Cascadia Open 2026

31st Jan - 1st Feb 2026

Schedule:

*Optional meal and social event
Friday evening.

*Round 1 9:00am Sat 31st

*Round 2 5:00pm Sat 31st

*Round 3 8:30am Sun 1st

Registration 15 minutes before each
round.

**All games will end in a solo victory, after
1909 fall retreats, or earlier if all surviving
players agree.**

Where: Holiday Inn Express 15808 104th
Ave, Surrey, BC, Canada

Cost : \$40Cdn

Wise: @christopherb4580

Paypal: cascadia.open@gmail.com

Tournament Director: Chris Brand
Questions:? Cascadia.open@gmail.com

The Grand Synthesis of the Convoy Paradox

by Lucas Kruijswijk

In **Diplomacy World** No. 28 (1981, p. 21), Rod Walker—an authority on the rules of Diplomacy—writes:

The search for a rule, or rules, which would resolve all such difficulties in the game is, I feel, a chimera. Accounting for all contingencies would probably pad the present Rulebook to several more pages...

I disagree! The number of unresolved issues in the rules is finite, and Era of Empire has fixed most of the remaining issues. We must complete the work and face our ultimate trial: the Convoy Paradox.

Or should we? From the last Diplomacy World, page 15, we learn that Mal Arky is bored by it:

First, PARADOXES. More time is spent discussing them than is spent in playing games in which they occur. Leave it.

But this wasted time is because we didn't make that final debate. Unresolved issues will continue to haunt us. And it shouldn't be that difficult, it is just a matter of weighting the pros and cons of all the alternatives and that is exactly what I will do in this article. I will not present new solutions—just what has been written before. However, I will argue that there is only one viable approach—one that is already implemented by the modern adjudicators. If we can achieve broad consensus—there will always be dissenting voices—the fix could be adopted in the next edition of the Rulebook and we can leave it as Mal wishes.

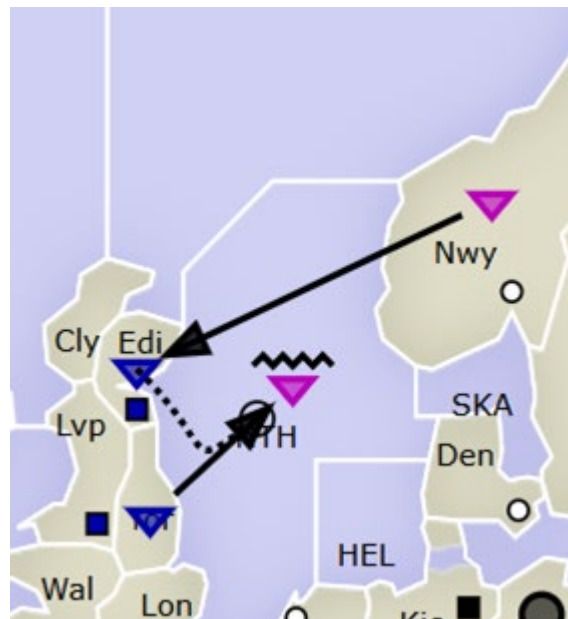
Let's begin by listing the Paradoxes as we know them. The simplest occurs when the convoying army attacks a unit that is supporting an attack on the convoy:

England:
F Yorkshire – North Sea
F Edinburgh Supports F Yorkshire – North Sea
Russia:
A Norway – Edinburgh
F North Sea Convoys A Norway – Edinburgh

Without applying the Paradox rule, there are two consistent outcomes.

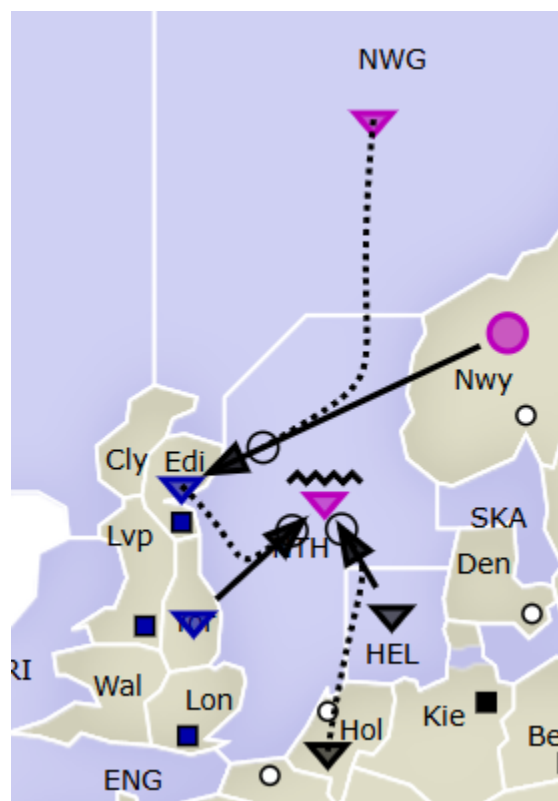
If the support succeeds, Yorkshire's move succeeds, dislodging the North Sea fleet and breaking the convoy. Without the convoy, there is no army to cut Edinburgh's support.

If the support from Edinburgh fails, the convoy remains intact, and Edinburgh's support is indeed cut.



All Rulebooks state that Edinburgh's support succeeds.

The situation can be extended with a German attack such that the support from Edinburgh actually protects the fleet in the North Sea via a beleaguered garrison:



England:
F Yorkshire – North Sea
F Edinburgh Supports F Yorkshire – North Sea

Russia:

A Norway – Edinburgh

F North Sea Convoys A Norway – Edinburgh

F Norwegian Sea Supports A Norway –
Edinburgh

Germany:

F Helgoland Bight – North Sea

F Holland Supports F Helgoland Bight – North
Sea

F Norwegian Sea Supports A Norway –
Edinburgh

Germany:

F Helgoland Bight – North Sea

F Holland Supports F Helgoland Bight – North
Sea

This is called *Pandin's Paradox*. According to the Rulebooks, the support from Edinburgh is not cut; however, in this case the convoying fleet will not be dislodged due to *beleaguered garrison*.

As you may have noticed, I have also added an additional support from the Norwegian Sea. With this extra support, the convoyed army will succeed in dislodging the fleet in Edinburgh. This is curious, because it means that a unit providing successful support is itself dislodged—contradicting the rule that states the opposite.

This point has been a recurring topic in discussions about Convoy Paradoxes, and was even mentioned by Calhamer himself in *Erehwon* No. 65 (1972):

3. ENGLAND: A Edi-Hol, F Nth C A Edi-Hol, A Bel S A Edi-Hol, F Eng S F Nth.

GERMANY: F Den-Nth, F Hol S F Den-Nth /r/.
I think the support of F Hol is not cut, due to Rule XII.5, but the result is the same either way. To this extend, it appears that XII.5 is an exception to X.

...

So far as I can see, the only real problem is 3, because it is necessary to treat XII.5 as overriding X. I think this construction would be understood because XII.5 is more specific than X and comes afterward, but I agree that I would like it better if XII.5 were specified in the rules as overriding X.

Where X (1971/1982 Rulebook) is the rule that says that dislodging a unit will cut support.

In the Betrayal Paradox or Self-Defeating Paradox, the convoying fleet is directly supported and not via a beleaguered garrison:

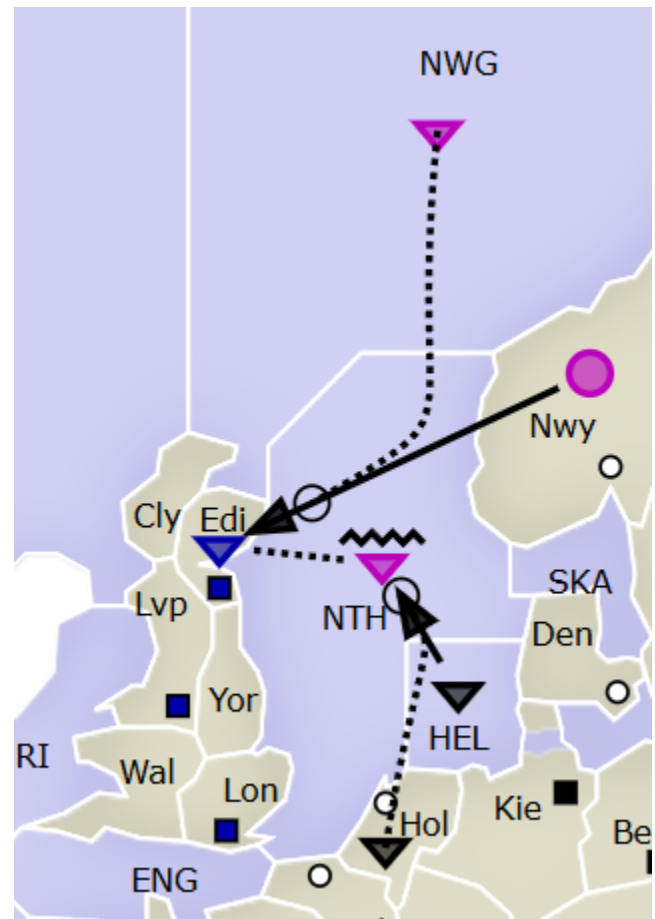
England:

F Edinburgh Supports F North Sea

Russia:

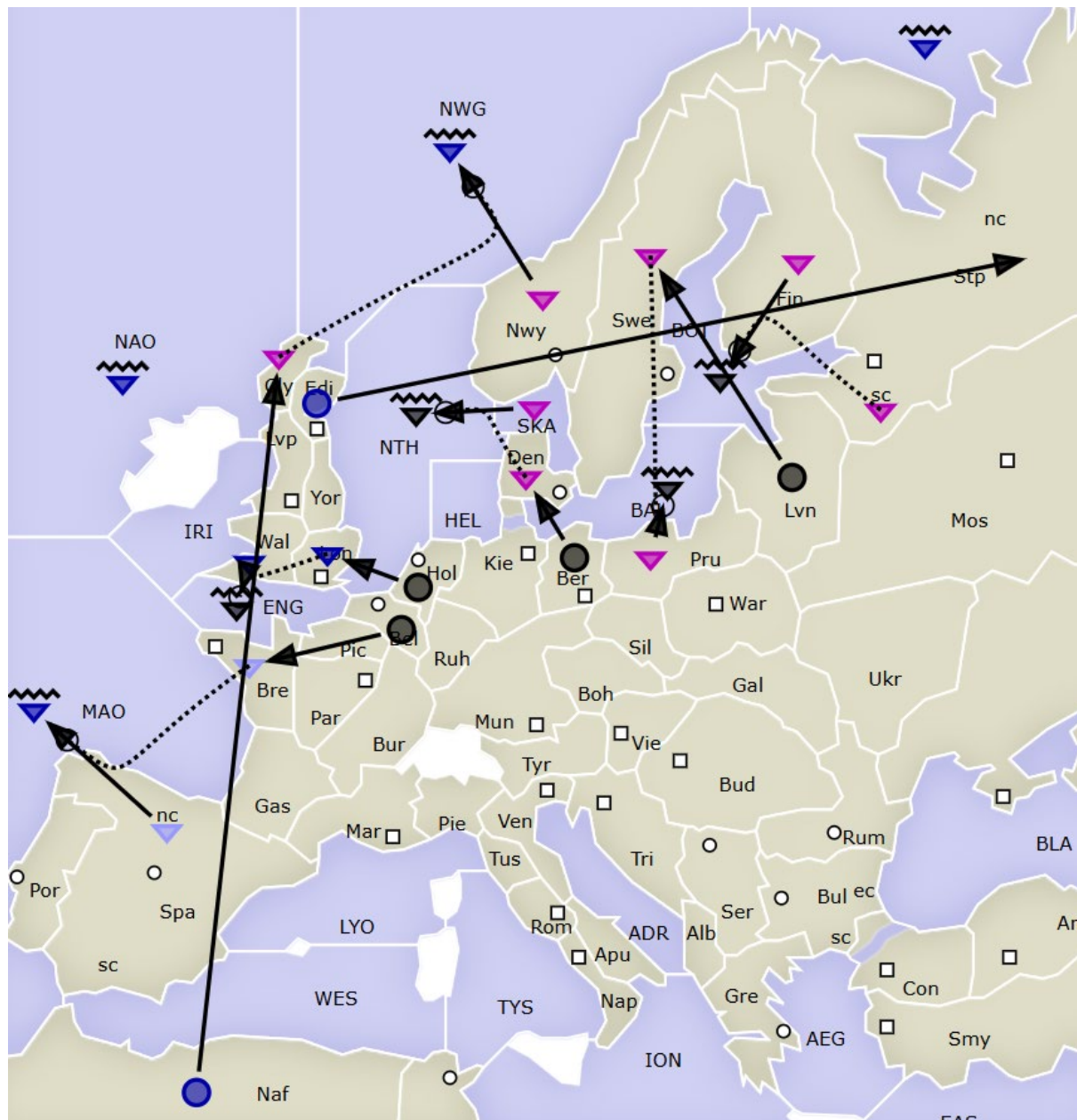
A Norway – Edinburgh

F North Sea Convoys A Norway – Edinburgh



Only the 1982 Rulebook provides an answer: the support from Edinburgh is not cut, and the fleet in the North Sea is not dislodged. The convoy succeeds and dislodges Edinburgh. The other Rulebooks could easily be expanded to cover this case in the same way.

Beyond this, we encounter the so-called higher-order paradoxes (also known as *Pandin's Bear*), involving two or more convoys where the success of one leads to the success—or the disruption—of another. In *Diplomacy World* No. 136 (2016), Thaddeus Black describes a third-order Paradox. More than a decade earlier, however, in 2002, John Fisher published a monstrous sixth-order Paradox on the Usenet group *rec.games.diplomacy*:



Russia:

F Finland - Gulf of Bothnia
 F St Petersburg(sc) Supports Finland - Gulf of Bothnia
 F Prussia - Baltic Sea
 F Sweden Supports Prussia - Baltic Sea
 F Skagerrak - North Sea
 F Denmark Supports Skagerrak - North Sea
 F Norway - Norwegian Sea
 F Clyde Supports Norway - Norwegian Sea

Germany:

A Livonia - Sweden
 F Gulf of Bothnia Convoys Livonia - Sweden
 A Berlin - Denmark
 F Baltic Sea Convoys Berlin - Denmark
 A Holland - London
 F North Sea Convoys Holland - London

A Belgium - Brest

F English Channel Convoys Belgium - Brest

England:

F Wales - English Channel
 F London Supports Wales - English Channel
 A North Africa - Clyde
 F Mid-Atlantic Ocean Convoys North Africa - Clyde
 F North Atlantic Ocean Convoys North Africa - Clyde
 A Edinburgh - St Petersburg
 F Norwegian Sea Convoys Edinburgh - St Petersburg
 F Barents Sea Convoys Edinburgh - St Petersburg

France:
F Spain(nc) - Mid-Atlantic Ocean
F Brest Supports Spain(nc) - Mid-Atlantic Ocean

It is believed that this is the highest order you can get on the standard map. Only the 1982 Rulebook covers this case, letting all supports succeed leading to all attacked convoys being dislodged and disrupted.

The Paradox of the first example only requires four units and I guess it will occur once in a while, although I do not have any statistics. The other Paradoxes are more theoretical. Rod Walker writes in 1981:

I see no reason to worry about something like this, which should occur in actual play with about the same frequency the Mediterranean fruit fly appears in Siberia.

Still, the Betrayal Paradox was reported in April 2020 [on Reddit](#) in a gunboat game. And in July 2009 Chris Babcock forwarded an email from Edi Birsan on usenet group rec.games.diplomacy:

For example, the Pandin Paradox- I was there when it actually occurred in a FtF game (DipCon 2- which was a Youngstown game by the way and it happened in the Ionian not the Channel as typically it is thought of). That has been the only time in 44 years of play and thousands of games that I have ever seen it occur.

DipCon 2 took place in 1969 in Youngstown Ohio.

How to Judge a new rule

Writing a good rule is not easy. In the manual of the Micropose computer version of 1999 Calhamer writes in an open letter to the fans:

Fans also helped greatly in development before publication, a group of lively and intelligent young men and one woman, playing many test games and offering keen analysis of both wording and the gist of the rules. They showed me how hard it was to write a rule that had no flaws in it.

A mistake that is often made is a focus on a single aspect. To evaluate a possible fix more balanced, we should at least consider the following:

- a) It should cover all cases without introducing new ambiguities. If it doesn't, we are better off keeping the current rules.
 - b) It should respect Calhamer's legacy, meaning it must resolve the simple Paradoxes (as in the first example) in the same way as the current rules. For purely theoretical or contrived cases, some deviation is acceptable.
 - c) It must not make the convoy stronger.
 - d) It should have no unwanted side effects.
- Changes to adjudications outside paradoxical

situations are generally disliked and add unnecessary complexity, especially for manual adjudication. A player would have to keep the rule in mind at all times.

- e) No stacking of multiple rules—there should be a single rule.
- f) It must be possible to adjudicate manually.
- g) It must be possible to adjudicate automatically.

For Allan Calhamer, keeping the convoy weak (point c) was important. In a letter published in Erehwon No. 65 (1972), he writes:

Also, I do not desire to give "great flexibility and tactical force to the convoy order". I think World War I represented just about the nadir of amphibious warfare. World War II represented something of a peak. Furthermore, we had some experience in our original group with more highly tactical versions of Diplomacy and did not like them, because players paid too much attention to tactics, and tried to achieve everything tactically, and didn't pay much attention to the diplomacy.

From the literature, three approaches can be identified:

- I. Prevent paradoxical situations entirely by designing the rules such that they do not occur.
- II. Accept that Paradoxes occur and apply a backup rule in those situations.
- III. Use a multi-phase adjudication process.

I. Avoiding the Paradox altogether

The official Rulebooks have attempted this. The current rule (essentially the same as the 1971 rule) states:

A convoyed army does not cut the support of a unit supporting an attack against one of the fleets necessary for the army to convoy.

Targeting the support and declaring it uncut leads to the earlier-mentioned aberration that a dislodged unit may still give successful support. This is an unavoidable drawback of this approach.

It is also incomplete. It gives no answer to the Betrayal Paradox or higher-order Paradoxes. The Betrayal Paradox can be addressed by also not cutting support if it directly supports the convoying fleet used to attack the support. In higher-order cases, the army attacks a support that backs a different convoying fleet.

The 1982 rule tries to fix this by removing the restriction that the supported convoy is the same as the attacking convoy:

If a convoyed army attacks a fleet which is supporting an action in a body of water, and that body of water contains a convoying fleet, that support is not cut.

Although the rule is now complete, it introduces the drawback that situations unrelated to Convoy Paradoxes are affected (violating principle d: no side effects) and probably for that reason the rule was reverted. It also contains an ambiguity: what does "convoying fleet" mean? A fleet ordered to convoy? Is a matching army move required? Or must there be a full convoy path? This can be clarified, but at the cost of simplicity.

In the early days, Brannan's rule was discussed. It says that the attack originates from the body of water of the last fleet in the convoy, not from the army's starting province. In some cases, this makes a Paradox rule unnecessary, since supports are never cut if the support is against the attacking unit. However, if the convoyed army would dislodge, then without a separate Paradox rule overruling the dislodge rule, the Paradox reappears.

Calhamer disliked Brannan's rule (for reasons unrelated to Convoy Paradoxes). In Diplomacy World No. 28, page 18 (1981), Rod Walker writes:

... although the language of Brannan's Rule is deliberately omitted. It was Allan's intent that Brannan's Rule should not be used in Diplomacy adjudications, but no language forbidding it was ever inserted.

So, we are left with:

- The convoying army may dislodge a unit successfully supporting (disliked by many).
- Either incompleteness (current rule) or side effects (1982 rule).

Decades of Diplomacy literature have not produced a better solution. Occasionally, someone proposes allowing a convoy to cut support unconditionally, whether disrupted or not (the opposite of the 1982 rule). This fixes all Convoy Paradoxes but violates b (disrespects Calhamer's legacy), c (strengthens the convoy), and d (affects non-Paradox cases).

There is no fix for this approach; we must look elsewhere.

II. A rule that only applies to Paradoxes

In this approach, we accept that Paradoxes exist and apply a backup rule:

If a paradoxical situation arises involving one or more convoys, then ...

The immediate advantage is that, by definition, there are no side effects. Some, however, see this as a defeat, a flaw in the universe, a failure of human intelligence.

The obvious choice, proposed as early as 1971, is to hold all units involved in the Paradox. Rod Walker writes in Erehwon No. 47:

John Boardman writes that he has reached much the same conclusions that I have, but his ruling at present would be that no units move. That was the ruling I first proposed to Tony Pandin and Eric Just, when we first discussed this problem. (see THE DIPLOMAT I.47)

He ends by expressing dissatisfaction with his own patchwork solution:

This ruling recognizes, but does not resolve the paradox.

The "All Hold" rule changes the resolution of simple Paradoxes (violating principle b: Calhamer's legacy), strengthens the convoy (convoying fleets in a Paradox cannot be dislodged, violating principle c), and is not entirely trivial to apply (principle f: difficult manual adjudication). Adding it on top of the current rules would also be stacking rules (violating principle e). Overall, it is unattractive.

In The Diplomatic Pouch (1999, Fall Retreat), Manus Hand and Simon Szykman discussed two alternatives. Hand supported a version of the 1982 rule, while Szykman proposed:

If a situation arises in which an army's convoy order results in a paradoxical adjudication, the turn is adjudicated as if the convoying army had been ordered to hold.

Readers criticized this, as it suggests that the convoying army could receive hold support in case of a Paradox. A revised version by Szykman and the editor stated:

If a situation arises in which an army's convoy order results in a paradoxical adjudication, the turn is adjudicated as if the convoying fleet had not been ordered to convoy but holds instead.

This targets the convoying fleet rather than the convoying army, reducing errors in manual adjudication. Often, only one fleet has a convoy order, making it impossible to misidentify other units as part of the Paradox.

The community generally approves of the resolutions. In the Diplomatic Pouch article readers voted on the resolutions and the majority was for Szykman, because it eliminates the aberration of a dislodged unit still giving support (e.g., in the second and third examples, the fleet in Edinburgh is not dislodged by the army from Norway). It also resolves the simple Paradox in line with Calhamer's legacy (principle b) and keeps the convoy weak (principle c).

A similar idea appeared much earlier. In Diplomacy World No. 14 (1976), Eric Verheijden proposes:

A convoyed attack may not affect the convoying fleets.

If a convoyed army's attack would affect the outcome of an attack on any of its convoying fleets, however directly or indirectly, then the convoyed attack may not take place and the army must hold in its original position.

So, in case of a Paradox the convoy fails and the other orders are processed as normal. That is the same as the Szykman rule!

However, the formulation with "affect" is problematic. If two units support a third unit in a move, but only one support is needed to let the move succeed, do both units affect the move? If so, then a convoy may affect itself without being a Paradox (a Paradox always consists of a circular dependency between orders, while the other way around is not always true). Szykman's formulation simply refers to a paradoxical situation without trying to define it. A few examples suffice to explain a Convoy Paradox; trying to define the Paradox will be—although possible—a troubling endeavor in technicalities.

For higher-order Paradoxes, the entire set of orders should be considered at once, and all convoying fleets within it should fail simultaneously. Verheijden's approach evaluates one order at a time. Szykman's wording is also imperfect but easier to refine.

The Diplomacy Player's Technical Guide (c. 1998) attempts to redefine the rules by an algorithm. In case of a Convoy Paradox, it disrupts all convoys if that yields a consistent resolution (likely to match the current rule), otherwise applying "All Hold." Compared to Szykman's rule, it differs only for theoretical higher-order Paradoxes. Since it predates the Szykman rule by one year, simplifying its algorithm to match Szykman's approach—and avoiding stacked rules—would make sense.

III. Multi-phase adjudication

For completeness I have to cover a third way of handling Convoy Paradoxes. A way that never has reached house rules or a computer implementation as far I know.

On 17 November 2002, Justin Bacon proposed his "Alexander's Rule" in the Usenet group `rec.games.diplomacy`. In case of a Convoy Paradox, the convoy is first adjudicated as if the convoy order did not exist. Then, based on that result, the convoy either proceeds or is disrupted.

Under Alexander's Rule, a dislodged fleet can successfully convoy an army. This is the opposite of the Szykman rule, where a non-dislodged fleet might fail to convoy. I consider the latter the lesser evil. For manual adjudication, I doubt that players or GMs would appreciate having to resolve the situation twice. With Szykman's rule, once the Paradox is identified, one can

proceed with taking out the convoys. With Alexander's rule, the head scratching has just been started.

A similar idea was proposed by Torsten Bille in *The Diplomatic Pouch Zine*, Winter 2016, with follow-up in later editions. His rule, developed in collaboration with René van Rooijen, also uses a two-phase adjudication—but applies it always, and not just for Paradoxes. First, the board is adjudicated without convoy orders. Then, it is adjudicated again with convoy orders for all fleets that were not dislodged in the first pass. Again, I doubt players or GMs would welcome double adjudication. Moreover, in cases with multiple interacting convoys but no Paradox, it produces results different from the current rules (violating principle d).

At that time, the Szykman rule was already established. Why not simply adopt it? In *The Diplomatic Pouch Zine*, 2020 Movement, Letters, Bille explained:

The purpose of my articles is to investigate if it is possible to add a new general rule that prevents paradoxes from happening without unacceptable side effects.

It is clear: allowing the Paradox to happen is a mortal sin, and the Szykman rule is a pact with the Devil.

Conclusions

This concludes the review of the scientific literature on Convoy Paradoxes. We can conclude:

- Avoiding the Paradox altogether results in either an incomplete rule (current rule) or one with side effects (1982 rule).
- Multi-phase adjudication is unattractive.
- The Verheijden and Szykman rules resolve Convoy Paradoxes in a way that is generally well-liked: no change for the simplest Paradox, a weak convoy, and no dislodged unit giving successful support.
- The Szykman rule is the better formulation over the Verheijden rule, though it still requires some tweaking to cover higher-order Paradoxes.
- The common objection to the Szykman rule is that it accepts the existence of Paradoxes.

The declare victory for Szykman, still one thing needs to be considered. Can it be automatically adjudicated and what are the modern adjudicators currently doing?

For the algorithm that is described in the DATC (of which I am the author), the implementation is straightforward. It detects cyclic dependencies in a generic way. If a single resolution exists, it is applied. If there are zero or two possible resolutions, the algorithm checks the orders in the cycle. If all are moves, all succeed (cyclic movement). If the cycle contains a convoy order, it is a Convoy Paradox, and all convoying fleets are marked as disrupted. With this last piece of programming, it is done,

Adjudicators such as WebDiplomacy, Backstabbr, and many others use this algorithm, including the Szykman rule. If John Fisher's monstrous sixth-order Paradox is

So, current adjudicators use the Szykman rule, and its resolutions are widely accepted. Will it be adopted in the next edition of the Rulebook? We will see, for some it is still blasphemy.

by Shane Armstrong

First time Tournament Director Brandon Austin is one of the “just play the f**king game” types, and he picked up the idea and ran with it. Brandon’s intention with the tournament was to run longer games (to around 1910 and beyond if possible), balancing intensity and fun. The idea was that the national championship should be that bit more serious, and, inspired by the devotion to deadlines demonstrated by Jelte Kuiper at the recent EDC, drove a tournament in which “orders in the box” meant players really were putting them in the box, rather than taking another 30 seconds to frantically jot the last few down.

So how do you decide who wins a tournament with no scoring system? I mean, it's possible. You could just go on raw SC counts, SC averages, etc., but all of those things are a little flawed – the average SC count for each power isn't the same, so you could say that a result wasn't entirely fair. So, a scoring system was ultimately needed. How about applying a different scoring system every round? That was ruled out as relative weightings would be needed to ensure fairness.

Probity was also considered. While a TD might have ultimate discretion over decision making, few people run an entire tournament single-handedly, and the perception that some helpers may know a scoring system hidden from the players should be avoided. Another consideration was the sweatier types who care about this sort of stuff, and may try and ask the TD for info or hints about what any hidden scoring system might be. Brandon then took the absurdity of the entire concept to the next level. What if he didn't know the scoring system either? No probity issues, no annoying questions. How about leaving it to random chance, and leaving even the revelation of the scoring system to the

last minute? It was decided. The first three rounds of the tournament would be played with no scoring system, and random chance would decide the selection of the system immediately before Round 4. He secretly picked four scoring systems, numbered them from 1 to 4, and sent himself a text message the night before the tournament commenced to make it clear which system was which. He would then roll a 4-sided die before board call on the final day to announce the system, and then score the previous rounds while Round 4 was being played.



Prizes? Yeah. We've got prizes...

Anyway, tournament prep continued as normal – board names were selected, SC charts were printed, backstabbr sandboxes were prepared, and notepads and pens were collated. The organizers also toyed with the idea of re-voicing DipTimer with something a little more Australian as a surprise to the attendees, but with no viable recognizable candidate and no real time left to change the files, it was decided to try another time.

Then, the week before the tournament, eagle eyed Melbourne-based Diplomacy player Jude Connor spotted the following in a news article marking the 50th anniversary of the dismissal of the Whitlam Government (visit Wikipedia if an Australian constitutional crisis is of potential interest...) and shared it with the Australian community. The writer of the article had sought out people still alive and depicted in one of the more famous

photos of the day, including a 26-year-old public servant, Ian Shann...

Ian Shann

Standing to Metcalfe's right is his friend, fellow public servant Ian Shann, who was chucking a sickie to play Diplomacy with his mates when he heard the news and hurried out to join the action at Parliament House.



Supplied: The Sydney Morning Herald



ABC News: Armin Azad

11/11/1975

11/2025

This reference to Diplomacy inspired your correspondent. It had everything – it mentioned Diplomacy, it was of national significance, it was Canberra based, and it mentioned chucking a sickie (Australian slang for pretending to be ill to take time off work), which was a planned board name amongst other Australian idioms/references.

It was relatively easy to make contact with Ian (now based in Perth), and I asked him for his recollections of the day more out of amazement than anything else. I figured I might say a little something about him before the tournament. 50 years on, he didn't remember much of the game itself, but he relayed recollections of the group he played with that would be familiar to anyone. Diplomacy players, as John Peel said of The Fall, are "always different, always the same..."

Then another idea hit me, and I asked if Ian might be interested in re-voicing DipTimer. He was enthusiastic,

so I worked out what he had to say, got him record himself saying it, did a bit of audio editing to make it work, and then I had a surprise ready for everyone for the weekend.

But there was more juice in the Ian thing. It was such a serendipitous moment, and we realized that this was actually of some significance. Of course, there's no clear history of when Diplomacy arrived in Australia, or, indeed Canberra. The best indicator would be to see when the first Australian zines were published, but the game would, indeed, pre-date their publication. Ian's game in 1975 made 2025 at least 50 years of Diplomacy in Canberra, so we decided to make Round 1 Board 1 the Ian Shann Board. I asked Ian what board he played on that day (turned out it was one of the brightly colored UK printings that polarize the playerbase), dusted off my copy of it, and laid it out to commemorate the occasion.



Round 1 Board 1 – Players commemorate (at least) 50 years of Canberra Diplomacy on the Ian Shann board. From left, Max North, Tianyu Sun, Andrew Goff, Gavin Atkinson, and Josh Crowther

Round 1 on a Friday night always makes for interesting Diplomacy. Some people are fresh, others have had a full day of work or study, and fatigue can lead to early misorders. Board 1, 'Chuckin' a Sickie' saw Andrew Goff (VIC) topping the board as a 12 dot Russia, followed by his ally Gavin Atkinson (QLD) on 10 dots as Turkey. Joshua Crowther (ACT) finished with 9 dots in the West as England. Board 2, 'Yeah Nah' was topped by Robert Hillier (VIC) in England on 8 dots, with Peter Legg (TAS) finishing in second as Russia on 7 dots. Board 3, 'Nah Yeah', saw Connor Muirhead (ACT) get his first top of the weekend, finishing on 9 as Austria. Second place was a 3-way tie between Stephan Kumar (SA) in England, Tristan Barrett (NSW) in France, and TD Brandon Austin (ACT) in Germany. Shane Armstrong's (ACT) 9 dot Turkey topped Board 4, 'Just Waitin' for a Mate', with Clare Bradbery (ACT), and Stella Walter (ACT) both finishing on 8 as Germany and Italy respectively.

Saturday morning's Round 2 saw games running potentially past 1909. Board 1, '1,000 Blossoms' saw Andrew Goff put away another tidy board top, finishing on 12 as France, with Clare Bradbery getting 10 as Turkey. Board 2 'Succulent Chinese Meal' saw Connor Muirhead demonstrating he knew his judo well, getting a second board top in a row, this time as England, finishing on 13, 6 dots clear of Nancy Jin (ACT) as Russia. Board 3, 'Smoko' saw an incredibly rapid E/F/G (the alliance had units in Moscow, Ukraine, Galicia, Tyrolia and Tyrrhenian Sea at the end of Fall 1903!) end up an E/F played by Shane Armstrong and Gavin Atkinson respectively take 12 dots each, with Dominick Stephens in Austria finishing on 10 – at one point Dominick had 9 dots and was playing 4 short! This effort earned him Best Austria for the weekend. Board 4, 'Fair Dinkum' rounded out the, well... round... with Robert Hillier (VIC) managing a massive 14 dots, 7 clear of

Arden Gough (VIC) as Austria. Robert's 4 dot stab of Arden earned him 'That's A Knife' for best stab.

Following lunch, it was time for Round 3. Board 1, 'That's Not a Knife' saw Shane Armstrong, Connor Muirhead, and Tianyu Sun (ACT) carve up the board 12-11-10 as Germany, Russia and England to give Shane Best Germany and his third top of the tournament, and Connor a great score to go with his two sizeable solo tops. Board 2, 'Crikey!' ran until the game timed out at 11:30pm when the game was time drawn in Winter 1915. Nancy Jin finished on 14 as Turkey, a dot clear of Stella Walter's England, with Andrew Goff finishing third on 3 dots as Germany. Board 3, 'Tell Him He's Dreamin'' saw Max Roe Banks (ACT) shake hands and promise not to solo, finishing on 15 as Italy, to Stephan Kumar's 12 in Germany. Tournament debutant Charlie Murphy (ACT) fought out a third-place finish in Turkey on 4 SCs. The final board of the round, 'All Aussie Adventures' saw a Turkish board top, with Jacob Traeger's (ACT) 8 dot effort finishing 2 clear of his rivals.

Karaoke commenced at the conclusion of the rounds, and some players may have imbibed a few more than was advised. Triple-parking long island iced teas is a serious person's game, so don't try and emulate your party heroes, kids... Donald Duck sang 'Thunderstruck'? It was quite the session as always.



Stephan Kumar (L), and Robert Hillier (R) give it their best Craig David!

After too little sleep for most, Sunday's Round 4 rolled around. It was again set for a timed end, rather than a set year end. At this point in time, the top 4 players were Connor Muirhead, Andrew Goff, Shane Armstrong, and Robert Hillier, but with no scoring system in place, it was a mystery as to who was positioned where. If the system awarded large gaps at the top, Connor was well placed. If the system was agnostic about that, the tournament was extremely close.

Round 4 also marked the announcement of the scoring system. TD Brandon Austin showed the message he'd sent himself earlier in the week listing the 4 potential scoring systems in numerical order. He then rolled a 4-sided die, announced the winning system, and immediately made the board call. Base 3? Some players scrambled to try and understand it, others opted to "just play the f**king game."

Board 1 contained two of the top contenders for the title as neighbors. Connor Muirhead drew Italy, and Andrew Goff drew Austria. Striking up an alliance with Max North (VIC), Andrew got the better of Connor, eliminating him, finishing with yet another board top on 12, with Clare Bradbery 4 behind on 8 as England. Unfortunately, this board was cursed with backstabbr problems, so I am unable to provide any more detail on how the game shook out. Board 2, 'Not Happy Jan' contained no title contenders, and was the fun board of the round – it had it all – Italian Liverpool, Russians surviving in Edinburgh, and Turkish Armies in Finland, Norway, and Clyde! A three-way top of 10 was shared between Josh Crowther in Austria, Tristan Barrett (NSW) in Italy, and Max Roe Banks in Turkey.

Board 3, 'Kiss Me, Ketut!' saw the other two title contenders, Shane Armstrong in France, and Robert Hillier in Russia furiously trying to top the board to maximize their chances of winning the tournament. Robert's Russia came out of the gates hard, destroying Isaac Silbert's (ACT) Austria handily, and striking a strong alliance with Peter Legg in Turkey. Meanwhile in the West, the game was quite cagey, but the prospect of removing Russia as a threat in the north meant Germany and England eventually sorted out an alliance and began to gain the upper hand in Scandinavia. France was playing a quiet game, leaving the rest of the board alone to try and deal with the growing Russian threat. When Russia denied Italy a build in one turn and took the Italian SC in Greece in a second, Italy lost patience trying to do a deal, and instead invited French units through to assist in turning back the Russians. This resulted in French units eventually occupying Tyrolia and Tyrrhenian Sea assisting their Italian allies to hold the line. The game then descended into a tactical arm-wrestle where numbers eventually began to prevail, and Russia was eventually turned back in the north and through Austria. In the final year, France forced three Italian dots to position themselves for the win, and at the end of the Fall, the game time drew at the end of 1910. Shane Armstrong as France had his fourth board top of the tournament (3 sole, one shared), finishing on 9, with Peter Legg taking Russian dots in the final year to finish in second on 7 SCs. Third place was taken by Zoe Cameron (VIC) on 6 as England, with Alex Batten's (ACT) Germany and Robert Hillier's valiant Russia finishing on 5 SCs each. Stephan Kumar survived on 2 SCs as Italy.

So, to the scoring. This was only discovered a few weeks later, but it turned out Base 3 was being used for the first time ever! Designed by Liam Healey for a tournament that didn't proceed, the system favors sole tops but does not significantly reward large board tops. This meant that Shane Armstrong had secured victory in the Australian Open, scraping past Andrew Goff in second, with Robert Hillier in third. Trophies were handed out, and the Bismark Cup (awarded to the best scoring player across the entire Asia-Pacific tournament season) was awarded, but you'll just have to keep reading through Diplomacy World to see where that silverware ended up.



Tournament winner Shane Armstrong



Andrew Goff in second place



Robert Hillier in third

Many thanks to all the players who took part in a tournament that tried its best to remain pure to the best parts of the game by removing the consideration of scores and standings. The tournament was designed to encourage players to "just play the f**king game", and that is exactly how players approached the weekend. There were generally less draw proposals throughout, and games tended to run to time. Credit to Brandon for embarking on an experiment that might just be a game changer for tournament Diplomacy.

Australian Open 2025 Top 7

- 1st – Shane Armstrong
- 2nd – Andrew Goff
- 3rd – Robert Hillier

- 4th – Connor Muirhead
- 5th – Max Roe Banks
- 6th – Gavin Atkinson
- 7th – Nancy Jin

Best Countries

- Best Austria – Dominick Stephens
- Best England – Connor Muirhead
- Best France – Stella Walter
- Best Germany – Shane Armstrong
- Best Italy – Max Roe Banks
- Best Russia – Andrew Goff
- Best Turkey – Nancy Jin

Awards

- That's A Knife – Robert Hillier (Best Stab)
- Best Mandarin – Connor Muirhead (ACT)
- Best Kangaroo – Tristan Barrett (NSW)
- Best Cane Toad – Gavin Atkinson (QLD)
- Best Bat – Max North (VIC)
- Ausländer – Dominick Stephens (overseas player)
- Tournament Director's Award – Shane Armstrong
- Drop Bear – Max Roe Banks (Carebear behavior – promising not to solo on a handshake agreement)
- Best Shane Cubis – Dominick Stephens
- Good Show – Jude Connor (best histrionics/play acting)
- Such Is Life – Charlie Murphy (accepting your fate)
- The Outlaw – Jason Gray (roguish behavior)
- The Boomerang – Peter Legg (best comeback)
- Down Under – Jason Gray (last placed player who played all 4 rounds. Jason also managed four eliminations across the four rounds, bettering his 2024 Cane Toad Classic 0-0-0).


CON of the NORTH
Est. 1992

Diplomacy

Doubletree Hotel Bloomington

Standard Diplomacy:
Saturday Feb. 14th
3pm - 7pm, Atrium 6

Era of Empire:
Sunday Feb. 15th
Noon - 4pm, Ballroom East A



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> and <https://diplobn.com/schedule/>

BlazeCon – January 17th – January 18th, 2026 – Baltimore, Maryland - <https://blazeadventuretours.com/blazecon/>

APAC Championships – January 23rd – January 25th, 2026 – Bangkok, Thailand - https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSddcbB8_Zvk42Da5zi7Xjn9S6D-PXm4QRjNoPEsYdYnqEOALq/viewform

Cascadia Open 2026 – January 31st – February 1st, 2026 – Surrey, British Columbia, Canada – Cascadia.open@gmail.com

Con of the North – February 14th, 2026 – Bloomington, Minnesota - <https://www.conofthenorth.org/>

OwlCon – February 21st, 2026 – Houston, Texas - https://owlcon.com/attendee_info.php

PrezCon – February 27th – February 28th, 2026 - Charlottesville, Virginia - <https://www.prezcon.com/program>

Breakout Toronto – March 19th – March 22nd, 2026 – Toronto, Canada - <https://breakoutcon.com/>

Whipping 2026 – March 27th – March 29th, 2026 – San Francisco, California – <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSehHpgPyrVp84H8d9wXgFA1FcO2brOpQHSbXyrNfutA0Ocpfw/viewform?usp=header>

Circle DC 2026 – April 10th – April 12th, 2026 – Washington, DC – <https://tabletop.events/conventions/circle-dc-2026>

Netherlands Diplomacy Championship – April 11th – April 12th, 2026 - https://docs.google.com/document/d/1quKQArRryj2VTiz3D5UoWIWAi5i_6xrB/edit?tab=t.0

World DipCon – May 22nd – May 24th, 2026 – Athens, Greece - <https://athensdiplomacy.club/wdc2026/>

Origins – June 17th – June 21st, 2026 – Columbus, Ohio - <https://www.originsgamefair.com/>

DipCon at Armada Regatta – July 30th – August 2nd, 2026 – Denver, Colorado – No links yet

GenCon – July 30th – August 2nd, 2026 – Indianapolis, Indiana - <https://www.gencon.com/>

World Boardgaming Championships – July 31st – August 1st, 2026 – Seven Springs, Pennsylvania - <https://www.boardgamers.org/>

National Diplomacy Masters – September 5th – September 9th, 2026 – Las Vegas, Nevada - <https://wsbgvegas.com/>



Player of Diplomacy

by David E. Cohen



I am the very model of a player of Diplomacy,
I'm expert at negotiation, tactics and at strategy,
And openings and midgame both the current and historical,
Lepanto to Sea Lion, all in order categorical.
I'm very well acquainted, too, with stabbings quite dramatical,
With whingy little carebears and the soloists fanatical,
I lurk on Discord servers too and Hobby forums numerous,
While posting brilliant hot takes always trenchant, bold and humorous.

I'm very good at recognizing stalemate lines across the board,
When finding flaws in orders given no mistake shall be ignored,
So in negotiation and with tactics and at strategy,
I am the very model of a player of Diplomacy.
I have the rulebook memorized, no need to take it from the box,
And love to wrap my head around a juicy convoy paradox,
I treat my rivals all the same, from Christian to Saracen,
And thwart them all by holding on with a beleaguered garrison.

In variants I am adept, my products multitudinous,
With maps and rulesets of all sorts from compact to voluminous,
I've studied gaming theory and all relevant philosophies,
And bloviate at length to all, I will not stop despite your pleas.
For all my AARs I am deserving of a Pulitzer,
Though I've been told my humor is as heavy as a howitzer,
But in negotiation and with tactics and at strategy,
I am the very model of a player of Diplomacy.

When I can deal with point and click without the patience of a saint,
And have more skill with graphics than a caveman using MSPaint,
When points outside of tourneys are worth fighting for both tooth and nail,
Then I'll agree draw whittling isn't petty or beyond the pale.
When there's a widespread use of mathematical analysis,
That brings no epidemic of soul deadening paralysis,
When I am paying heed to all the metas I have said were crap,
You'll say a better Dipper hasn't ever sat before the map.

My erudition is unmatched in matters Machiavellian,
Though I obtained such knowledge in the previous millennium,
Still in negotiation and with tactics and at strategy,
I am the very model of a player of Diplomacy.

From the DW Archive – Tournament Scoring

by Mal Arky

Last issue, I covered an article from *Diplomacy World* #8, so this issue should #9. I'm clever like that; to paraphrase a shockingly ridiculous politician: "I know all the numbers."

However, *DW* #9 didn't have very much that caught my eye. That doesn't mean it isn't an interesting read: Lewis Pulsipher wrote an article on establishing a Dip zine, which is a great read for someone who's interested in the history of the Hobby (so, yeah, me), but it isn't readily applicable to the modern Hobby. And John Torrey wrote an article on the Pastiche Opening for Turkey. But it was a short one, and I wrote an article on Turkey recently, so you don't want to read another one. You probably didn't want to read the first one.

So, I skipped *DW* #9 and went on to #10. And what do we find here? Well, let's look past the information articles. Again, interesting from a historical perspective; not great for this series. But, in this issue, there is a hat-trick of articles by the Great and Good ABC himself.

One is a reproduction of a letter Calhamer wrote describing the strategy and tactics of Diplomacy from – get this – **1961!** I nearly wet my pants! This was later published in *Graustark* #60-62 and can be read on the [Diplomacy Archive](#). I'd recommend reading it [there](#); the quality of the reproduction in the *DW Back Issues* section for #10 is poor for this article. You can also read it directly from *Graustark*... if you **can** read it in *Graustark*; the [reproduction of these issues](#) is very poor.

There is also an article on "Rating FTF Diplomacy" by Calhamer in *DW* #10. I might've considered a double-up on *DW* #10 by looking at this one next time, but not enough of the article is legible to do this.

But the one I want to look at is the middle one of ABC's articles on scoring a Diplomacy tournament. There are two reasons for this: (1) I am irritatingly interested in scoring and rating systems (there **is** a difference), and (b) scoring Dip games is pretty topical now: it was discussed in [October's Deadline](#) (and I've written a post with my response to this discussion on my *The Diplomaticon* blog if you fancy it).

The system Calhamer writes about was used "At Chicago 1974". Now, I've looked on the great new(ish) website [World Diplomacy Reference](#), and this tournament was DipCon 1974, which is itself a nice coincidence as DipCon 2025 was also held in Chicago. See? **Topical**. In 1974, DipCon was won by [Mike Rocamora](#), who seems to have been a pretty good player: he won DipCon twice (the second title being

1977) and finished third in 1975. Three podiums from just six tournaments! That'll do.

On *WDR*, the scoring system used in a tournament is often named. For instance, at [DipCon 2025](#), the [Open Tribute](#) system was used (a very popular but slightly off-the-mark system, in my humble opinion). The system used in 1974 isn't named, although Calhamer states it was also employed at DipCon 1975. What this tells us (well, me, anyway) is that it wasn't a well-liked system. And Calhamer suggests why, which I'll come to below.

Having said this, Calhamer likes the system. It compares scores not across a game, but across the round. If you play Italy in a given round of games, your score is based on a comparison against the performance of *all* Italies in that round. And this, oh enraptured reader, is a system I **like**.

Whether **you** like this system or not may depend on how far you feel scoring Diplomacy needs to incorporate a way of balancing the powers. We all know that some powers in Diplomacy tend to yield better results than others. The question is whether the imbalance is significant enough to warrant a system to balance this out.

There are some systems, more often associated with ratings, that apply a weighting to results. So, a win as Italy, for instance, would yield more points than a win as France, as it is perceived that Italy is more difficult to win with than France.

A system such as the one used at DipCon 1974 achieves this without requiring weightings, which is a good thing. For a weighted system, the weighting needs to be regularly updated. This is something that **could** be accomplished in a closed series, such as a website, but it is then a question of **how often** the weightings are updated. With a power performance system, you are taking a limited number of games, comparing results over just these games.

As mentioned above, there were issues with this system, however. The system was based on placement, rather than outcome (such as a Draw Size Scoring system) or SC count. Which is to say that whether you finished first, second, or third as, say, Italy, was compared with where Italy placed in other games in that round. Scoring by placement is, to my mind, less useful than scoring by SCs held at the end of the game (and I would prefer a scoring system to be based on draw size, personally, but I recognize that this is less differentiated than an SCS system).

The main problem, in 1974, was that players were playing less cautiously towards the end of a game when they were controlling a power they had already played, if they felt that the result they'd banked was unlikely to be changed. For me, it is important with this type of scoring system that players only control a power once; however, if you average the performance if they play the same power more than once, this circumvents this problem.

In 1975, Calhamer tells us of another problem: game outcomes were being manipulated: *"Too much effort was devoted in late rounds to architecting some result which would give each player at the board the best result they could give him, relative to the performances unfolding at the other boards."* This might not be the problem it seems to be, however, as we've seen enough times that results are 'architected' in games with different scoring systems, such as throwing the game or playing for second place (another reason to dislike placement scoring). I'd go so far as to say that, no matter what the scoring system used, people play to the system.

In [Baltimore in 1975](#), the first Origins tournament (won by [Rob Fanelli](#) in his only tournament, apparently – talk about leaving at the top!), a slightly different system was used, concocted by Edi Birsan and Mike Rocamora. In this system, they combined placement and SCS systems. Like me, Calhamer is suspicious of hybrid systems: *"This sounded to me like adding apples and oranges"*. As he goes on to say, however: *"When you add two sets of [figures] together, you have to scale them."* The most intriguing scoring systems today are hybrid, and some seem to manage this scaling well. The [Tribute Scoring](#) system, the superior (to my mind) forerunner of the Open Tribute system mentioned above, combines DSS and SCS (with a twist that players have to pay some of their points to the board topper).

I'd love to say more about Calhamer's article, but frankly, the reproduction is terrible for most of the rest. From what I **could** read, Calhamer goes on to suggest variations on a theme, arguing pros and cons for different formats.

Now, this type of power comparison scoring system is most developed by Tom Hurst with his [Hurst Tournament Mean system](#). It is based on SC count alone and compares power-by-power performance. If you play Italy, your SC score is compared with all other Italies across the tournament, not just the round.

In the HTM system, if you played Italy in Round 1, your score would be calculated by a comparison of all of Italy's results in Round 1. As the tournament progressed, your score for Italy would be calculated by comparing

your score as Italy with the scores for Italy in every game played.

One problem with HTM is that there is no mention of what happens if a player solos. The scores are calculated on SC count so, in this game, does the soloist score 18, the actual number of SCs they finish on (18+), or 34?

Hurst also suggests that no player should control the same power more than once. This is possible in a tournament, but it makes it tricky in later rounds, especially if you don't want the same players to be continually playing each other across several games.

Now, I know some people don't like this type of scoring system. More traditional scoring systems are based on what happens in a game. A player's score is calculated in comparison with what the other players in the game do. The HTM system extends performance in the game to direct comparison across the whole tournament. This is very different. But this doesn't necessarily mean it is a **bad** system. In a tournament, every game – with the exception of a top, or championship, game – is part of the bigger, whole tournament picture.

The advantages are that the imbalances between the powers are not important because scores are compared with scores for the same power. Is this a significant enough issue to be important?

The HTM system **should** mean that players have to play the best they can in each game, regardless of which power they play, and what scores they've accumulated in the tournament. You can't sit on your middling SC score, because an unusual result in another game might make those 6 SCs a less useful result than you'd think! And, because your score isn't set until all the games are completed, you're never completely sure what your final score will be.

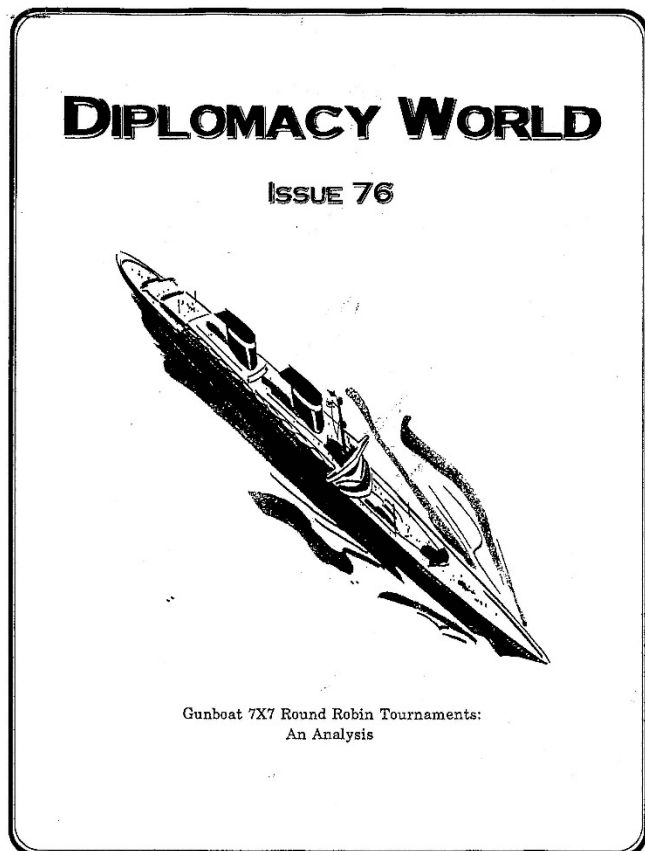
Being based on SC score, rather than placement within games, it's less easy to manipulate the system in the way Calhamer describes. Does it make for the cut-and-thrust play that the DBNI's "Winner Takes All" system does? No... but no other scoring system can match WTA for this aspect of play.

For me, the HTM system, with some clarifications, is a good system. How it performs in reality would need proving, but – conceptually – there are few downsides.

Ask the Hobby Historian: The Deja Vu of 30 Years

by David Hood

When thinking of a topic for this issue's quarterly lookback at the history of the Diplomacy hobby, I realized it had been a while since I used as my theme what the hobby looked like X number of years ago. Let's go back 30 years in our Diplomacy (Hot Tub) Time Machine and see what Diplomacy World, for example, looked like towards the end of 1995/beginning of 1996:



Where we find issue 76, the third one that some dude named Doug Kent had published. In all seriousness, that just goes to show you how important Doug has been to the history of this hobby, having published its flagship magazine now for more than 30 years. You may recognize some of the other authors from that edition of the zine: Stephen Agar, Melinda Holley, and yours truly. You may also recognize some of the topics discussed in that DW issue: Gunboat Tournaments, Scoring in Diplomacy Tournaments, and Conflict in Silesia.

Let's start off with that last article, written by longtime British hobbyist Stephen Agar. You may know him from his recent activity as publisher of God Save The Zine or his work as a variant bank curator. Back in 1995, he argued in his piece that German success is often

correlated with Russian weakness. For that reason, Germany should ordinarily bounce the Russians out of Sweden in 1901 and consider going east as soon as possible, to bolster Austria against Russia. In today's meta, conversely, I think the prevailing wisdom is not to antagonize Russia early since the EF is such a prevalent alliance and thus Russian help in the north may well be needed. Also, the canard about Austria and Germany being successful or unsuccessful in tandem (going all the way back to Richard Sharp's book in 1978 making that point) is no longer the prevailing wisdom either, as can be seen by the frequent early assault on Munich by AIR triples and/or the Germans poking into Tyrolia or Bohemia to try to influence events in the Balkans.

This is not to say, of course, that Stephen was wrong in 1995 about what German policy towards Russia ought to be. I just want to point out how the meta of Diplomacy changes so much over time, as newer players join the hobby bringing new viewpoints and new experiences. There is still much to learn about strategy and tactics by reading articles from the Zine Era, however, for nothing else but to challenge the preconceived notions of today's players. Groupthink can be a danger to your Diplomacy health, so remembering how some of the best players in the hobby thought about the bounce in Sweden, for example, can help you decide what you think about that prevailing wisdom of the day. Who knows, it may be you who begins to turn the Meta Ship in a different direction on some subject or another.

So, we should turn now to another of this issue's articles - by Melinda Holley about what used to be called 7X7 Gunboat tournaments. Melinda was the most prolific player of the 80s and 90s, particularly for Gunboat games. She also ran a lot of games in her own zine, Rebel, and gunboat games in sister zine Starwood.. She is still active in the hobby today, including being interviewed by me for my DBN show Deadline a few years ago after she participated in the first virtual Dixiecon (winning Best France). She also played in the Summer Classic virtual face to face tournament as recently as 2022.

So, what WAS a 7X7 Gunboat Tourney? Seven players, playing seven Gunboat games simultaneously, playing each of the seven powers. As you can surmise, the point was to remove the unequal gunboat capabilities of the different countries from the scoring of a single game, but instead to measure a player's performance playing each country. This has been done recently as well, by Brandon Fogel when he ran several editions of his Silent But Deadly online Gunboat event during the pandemic

period. The main thrust of Melinda's piece, though, was to give statistical info about the performance of each Great Power over 84 Gunboat games (12 7X7 events.)

The data were interesting, certainly from the vantage point of late 2025. France had the best results overall, so no surprise there, but Turkey and Austria coming in second and third probably raises a few modern eyebrows. The last place finisher? Italy, a country that many would choose high on a preference list in today's hobby both for regular and gunboat play. Italy only had one win out of the whole 84 games.

Now, it should be said that 1995 was in the era of win, draw, survival (non-DIAS scoring was the norm then) or elimination. A "board top" had no meaning whatsoever back then, at least in the North America hobby. So, it's possible the results seem odd to us now simply because the games played differently when everyone in a draw got the same score. The goal of the game was to get a solo (what we called the a "win"), which occurred 50 out of 84 times. Yes I am sure that seems high, but people took more chances back then to try for 18 centers, particularly in gunboat.

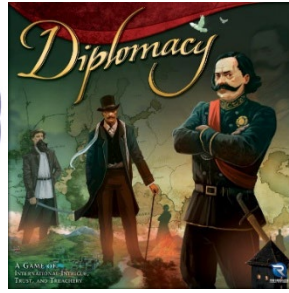
Alright, so we've covered what Agar and Holley wrote about, so what did Hood contribute to issue 76? True to form, I had the only "hobby news" article in the zine. I wrote about going to a Diplomacy tournament in Baltimore, the 1995 Dipcon at AvalonCon. It's interesting now for me to read what I wrote then - that at 73 attendees, the player total was good but still a little less than the year before. That I had presided over the Dipcon Society hobby meeting, where Columbus was selected to host the 1996 Dipcon (and also World Dipcon, as confirmed later) because that year's tournament director, Jim Yerkey, was too busy trying to win the Colonial Diplomacy event going on at the same time. And that names familiar to the hobby of today came in 3rd (Tom Kobrin) and 5th (Steve Cooley) while Brian Ecton took gold in the Gunboat Tournament.

And how did I do that year? So poorly that I actually received the I Got Hammered award, so...

Just to show that all that is old can be new again, as I write this I am looking forward to travelling to Baltimore

in a few weeks for the newest tournament on the scene, David Miller's Blazecon. It will be great to see another event take place in the city which hosted so many great Dip events over the years. Also, Avaloncon eventually changed its name to the World Boardgaming Championships, WBC, now held in Seven Springs, Pennsylvania - to which I was able to return in 2025 to play in that Dip event, for old time's sake. Where I got to play two boards with my old friend Rex Martin, who himself finished 7th at that 1995 Dipcon in Avaloncon! So yeah, deja vu all over again, after 30 years. May you all have such fond memories of your own Diplomacy hobby activities when you write your own articles for Diplomacy World 30 years from now!





February 27-28, 2026

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. Last year we brought PrezCon back and we're happy to announce the PrezCon Diplomacy Tournament will return in 2026. The three-round event will be held on Friday night & Saturday (2/27-2/28) in Charlottesville, Virginia.

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 21st – March 1st, 2026. The Diplomacy tournament is February 27th – 28th.

Diplomacy Tournament:

Contact - Thomas Haver (tjhaver@gmail.com)

Tournament Details - PrezCon is an annual gaming convention held at the Hilton Doubletree in Charlottesville, Virginia. The 20th 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. The style of play is open to all skill-levels and encouraging for new players to gain experience. **The NEW Diplomacy game will also be on display to demo during the event – the first convention appearance for The Golden Blade!**

Intro/Demo: Friday 2/27 from 5pm to 7pm

Round One: Friday 2/27 from 7pm to 11pm

Round Two: Saturday 2/28 from 10am to 2pm

Round Three: Saturday 2/28 from 7pm to 11pm

Scoring System: C-Diplo

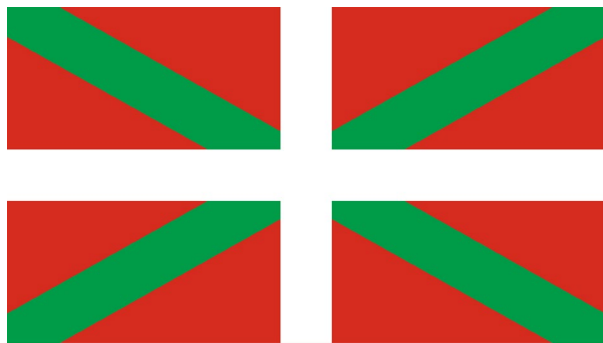
Rank: Best two out of three rounds

Past Event Pictures Here: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/5hZCmwARv7rBVuRD9>



2nd Annual Basque Country Diplomacy Championship 2025

by Egoitz Campo



Last Saturday, October 18, the Basque Association of Oware and Strategic Games organized the 2nd Basque Country Diplomacy Championship. We met on the "Almirante" bar in San Ignacio (Bilbao). We gathered eight players and we played two rounds. In the first round we divided into two groups and played the first semifinals. The top two from each group played the final. All games were played over eight rounds, except for the final, which was only played over four rounds because we didn't have much time.



In the final Egoitz, Arrate, Galder and Joseba Zubiaurre played a short match because as I have mentioned we didn't have much time. Galder chose Russia and Italy, Egoitz Turkey and Germany, Joseba Zubiaurre France, and Austria; and Arrate UK. We played 1902 and 1903 and in end of the match. Egoitz ultimately scored the most points, but Joseba and Galder did a very good job.

I have to admit that we still have a long way to go; it's hard to negotiate and reach agreements, and people start to get desperate or bored after the fifth or sixth

round. It's not an easy game, and you must be patient, but we will keep moving forward.

Our idea is to run a Basque Diplomacy League from January to July. If all goes well we will meet three times and play a game at each meeting. We will tally the results from the three meetings and crown a winner.



Here are the results from our October event:

Round 1

- 1-Joseba Zubiaurre 13 (S.C*)
- 1-Egoitz Campo 14 (s.c.)
- 2-Galder Etxebarria 12 (s.c.)
- 2-Arrate Elorrieta 8 (s.c.)
- 3-Alvaro García 9 (s.c.)
- 3-Lander Campo 6 (8 s.c)
- 4-Joseba Fernández 2 2 (s.c)
- 4-Daniel Barrientos 4 (s.c.)

Round 2 – Final

- 1-Joseba Zubiaurre 9 (s.c.)
- 2-Egoitz Campo 9 (s.c.)
- 3-Galder Etxebarria 7 (s.c.)
- 4-Arrate Elorrieta 4 (s.c.)

Classification

- 1-Egoitz Campo 23 points (Basque Country)
- 2-Joseba Zubiaurre 22 points (Basque Country)
- 3-Galder Etxebarria 19 points (Basque Country)
- 4-Arrate Elorrieta 12 points (Basque Country)
- 5-Álvaro García 9 points (Basque Country)
- 6-Lander Campo 6 points (Basque Country)
- 7-Daniel Barrientos 4 points (Basque Country)
- 8-Joseba Fernández 2 points (Basque Country)

Circle DC Diplomacy Tournament 2026

Please join us in our nation's capital for Circle DC: A Conference on History, Education & Play. Registration for the three-day event is \$150.

Last year we were joined by an amazing group of game designers including Jason Matthews, Tory Brown, Volko Ruhnke, Sebastian Bae, and many more. Come join old friends and meet new friends at the friendliest game convention on the planet.

Circle DC will be hosted at the DC History Center (<https://dchistory.org/>) and the Shakespeare Folger Library (<https://www.folger.edu/>). The Folger Library is located a block from the US Capitol and is home to the world's largest Shakespeare collection.

April 10th – April 12th, in Washington, DC

DIPLOMACY TRIATHLON TOURNAMENT

Three Rounds -- Three Different Diplomacy Games!

In a Diplomacy Triathlon, players compete in a three-round event with a different game featured each round. Prizes for winning each round and overall event.

Teaching Round (all games) 1pm-5pm Friday

Round 1 (Diplomacy) – 5pm-9pm Friday

Round 2 (Era of Empire) – 10am-2pm Saturday

Round 3 (The Golden Blade) – 4pm-6pm Saturday

Tournament Director: Thomas Haver

Email: Heroes@RenegadeGames.com

Website: <https://www.fortcircle.com/>



The Pursuit of the Bismark

by Shane Armstrong

After 7 tournaments over the course of 11 months, the Asia-Pacific Diplomacy season has concluded. Commencing in January in Bangkok, the circuit ran through Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane, before a return to Melbourne, and its thrilling conclusion at the Australian Open in Canberra in November. While individual tournaments yielded trophies, performances throughout the season were also scored by the indefatigable Peter McNamara to determine the 2025 winner of the Bismark Cup.

Awarded to the best face-to-face player in the calendar year, the Bismark Cup is named for Arthur Bismark, a pseudonymous writer for the 1980s zine *The Envoy*. a quick buzz around the World Diplomacy Reference (<https://www.world-diplomacy-reference.com/>) seems to suggest that the Bismark Cup is the oldest circuit/Grand Prix in existence. First awarded in 1989, it was followed by the Swedish Diplomacy Rally in 1990 (last awarded in 2003), and the North American Grand Prix, which commenced in 1999. a decade after the Bismark.



36 years and still going strong

Going into the final weekend of the season, the standings were tight. Brandan Austin was the clubhouse leader, unable to add to his score given his role as Australian Open Tournament Director. Following closely behind, Andrew Goff, Shane Armstrong and Tianyu Sun

were all within a point of each other, with the highest placed player over the weekend the one who would have their name added to the 36-year-old trophy.

While Peter McNamara was not in the country to do the final calculations, he provided the scoring spreadsheet to Brandan who enlisted Australian Diplomacy's other mathematician, Tianyu Sun, to make the final calculations.

To no great surprise to diligent Diplomacy World readers who read this august publication cover to cover, the Australian Open was won by Shane Armstrong, making him the 18th individual to get his name on the Bismark, and the 25th winner in total. 2008 Bismark winner Andrew Goff finished in second place, with Brandan Austin holding onto third.



2025 Bismark Cup winner, Shane Armstrong

The addition of the Sydney Cup to the Asia-Pacific schedule was a real positive in 2025, and with all seven tournaments in the series confirmed to run again in 2026, the Bismark Cup is again assured to be keenly fought.

2025 Bismark Cup – Final Standings

- 1st – 38.09 points – Shane Armstrong (ACT)
- 2nd – 34.51 points – Andrew Goff (VIC)
- 3rd – 31.44 points – Brandan Austin (ACT)
- 4th – 28.88 points – Tianyu Sun (ACT)
- 5th – 28.82 points – Robert Hillier (VIC)
- 6th – 24.85 points – Nancy Jin (ACT)
- 7th – 24.84 points – Clare Bradbery (ACT)



CARE BEAR



WEIRD-ASS BEAR



PRIZE BEAR



B.A.D. Ass. BEARS

Learn the difference at Whipping 2026
Hotel Spero, San Francisco, CA
March 27-29, 2026

Brought to you by the Bay Area Diplomacy Association (B.A.D.Ass.)

Welcome dinner Friday. Three rounds of Diplomacy Sat/Sun.
Open gaming. Socializing. Great times with great people.

[Registration](#)

[Hotel room block](#)

Contact adam.silverman@gmail.com for more details.

Your-Draw-Size Scoring

by Jonathan Frank

Last year (in *Diplomacy World* #167), I wrote “Great Power Calculus,” an article re-imagining our idea of the game of *Diplomacy*, paying particular attention to the question of what constituted a “Great Power.” I concluded that this idea ends up ordering results short of a victory into several tiers. I believe the individual accomplishment represented by achieving a given tier is largely independent – for good or bad – of what other players on the board reach.

Those tiers were as follows: 18+ centers (victory), 14-17 centers, 11-13 centers, 8-10 centers, 4-7 centers, 1-3 centers, and 0 centers (defeat). While at the time I suggested these results could be “graded” - based loosely on letter grades commonly used in the US - I refrained from extending my considerations to a proper “scoring system.” In this article I propose to complete that project.

Of all the scoring systems that have been proposed, it seems to me at this point that Draw-Size Scoring, while not itself perfect, attempts most successfully to follow the letter of the rules. Most other approaches more or less ignore the specification of sharing the draw equally. Yet pure DSS leads to implausible situations fairly easily due to stalemate lines. A small power clinging to a couple crucial centers on the line or too far behind the line to clear may be critical to a game state and so claim points from a draw equal to the larger powers.

My system proposed here attempts to resolve this tension by using the power tiers suggested in the earlier article to score positions in a draw. Scoring is proposed to be done not by the number of players left on any actual board, but by the size of a draw implied as expected based on each player’s individual position. All players ending in a given tier should score equally in their particular games, but players in a game will not generally all score the same.

Working off this principle, the other detail to establish is the relative value of a victory. I understand the primary interest in scoring *Diplomacy* games at all to be driven by tournament play, and for my purposes I assumed a three-round tournament to be a reasonable standard. In most circumstances, I – and I believe most other players – would order possible results (“W” for a win, “D” for a draw, “L” for a loss) as follows:

WWW > WWD > WWL > WDD > WDL >
WLL > DDD > DDL > DLL > LLL

The only significant arguments I have seen are whether three very strong draws might outweigh a single (maybe lucky) win and two (possibly bad) losses. It seems to me

that the majority opinion tends to shift, largely in sync with how important “board tops” are considered at the moment. These appear to me more meaningful in the context of time-limited games, and as the Hobby seems to be shifting towards that practice at many events at the moment they are understandably gaining some precedence purists are not entirely comfortable with. For the sake of argument, though, let’s reconsider the list with “T” added in and considered important:

WWW > WWT > WWD > WWL >
WTT > WTD > WDD > WTL > WDL >
TTT > WLL > TTD > TDD > TTL > TDL >
DDL > TLL > DLL > LLL

There could still be quibbles about this list. Particularly, similar questions to the original problem of three “good” draws might be raised about how top-draw-draw compares to top-top-loss, or draw-draw-loss to top-loss-loss. I felt that I had to consider whether there was a way this could be adjusted for, in the design of the system, to accommodate different results.

A further twist is that the criterion of counting “Great Powers” doesn’t recognize a “board top” as such. (In fact, what I regard as the over-emphasis on the board top in the current Hobby is one of the motivations behind this exploration of how to represent the game’s inherent intent.) So, for the purposes of developing a system based on the tiers I had found, a “top” becomes associated with the achievement of a 14-17 center position. This of course means that I think there can be multiple “tops” in the same game – and that smaller positions that might be the biggest on another board and considered “tops” by current standards I would argue actually don’t deserve that recognition.

Throwing this all into the blender, I worked off of the common DSS idea of breaking down a common multiple of likely player counts in a draw. In this case, using 210 as the base (since my tiers don’t separate every possible draw size), and then assigning a solo victory to match the list above results in the following scoring:

Victory	300 points
14-17 center draw	105 points
11-13 centers	70 points
8-10 centers	42 points
4-7 centers	30 points
1-3 centers	21 points
Defeat	0 points

A real purist could bump the points for victory up to 320 without seriously affecting anything else. I personally would recommend doing this for traditional gaming

without year or time limits, but keeping it 300 when playing short games.

A particular effect of this scoring is how it provides answers to some of the borderline comparisons. Win-top-loss, for instance, scores as 405 total; win-draw-draw varies from 342 to 440 depending the sizes of the final positions scored. The system similarly self-adjusts for “good” and “bad” draws throughout all possibilities.

This idea of scoring based on individual players’ positions rather than the “draw size” as a whole does create one result some may see as a drawback: different boards will have different total points scored. Personally, I see this as an advantage: I find it silly to think every result is actually equivalent in summed achievements. And, even without a constant board sum,

you would still know the result you will get – and future results you need – very easily without having to adjust for anything else that may happen on your board or others.

Further refinements or tie-breaking could easily be incorporated, such as bonus points (whole numbers are easier to read, decimal values make calculating scores maybe simpler and clearer) for recording participation or exact center counts. I don’t, of course, expect this to solve all scoring system debates even if it did prove viable enough to see ongoing adoption. Even that possibility sounds a bit grandiose to me, but I would love to see a couple events give it a trial run and get some feedback from players both initially and after some time to get accustomed.

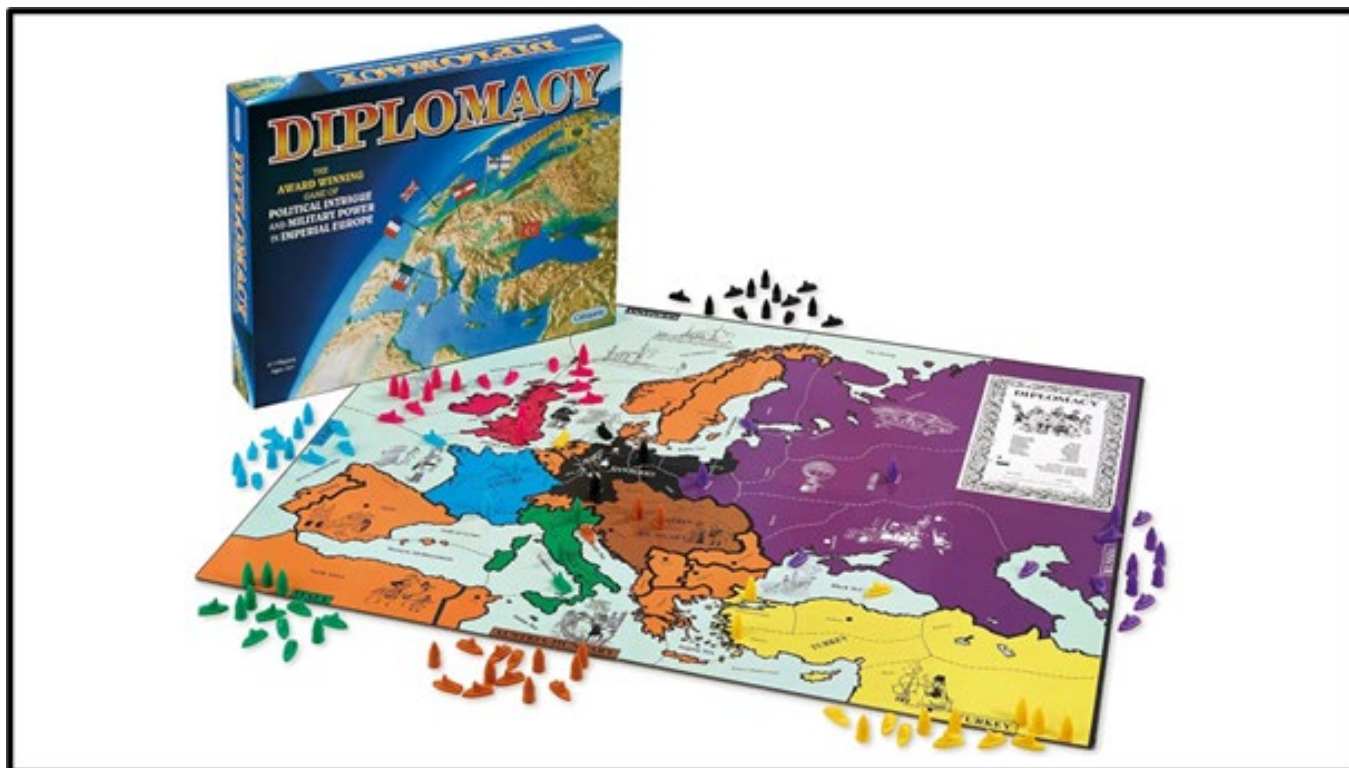
For the Diplopups

by Mal Arky

When I was a wee lad, I bought a copy of the game Diplomacy, which had inside it something more than the standard stuff: board, pieces, rules. It had ... a **flyer!!!**

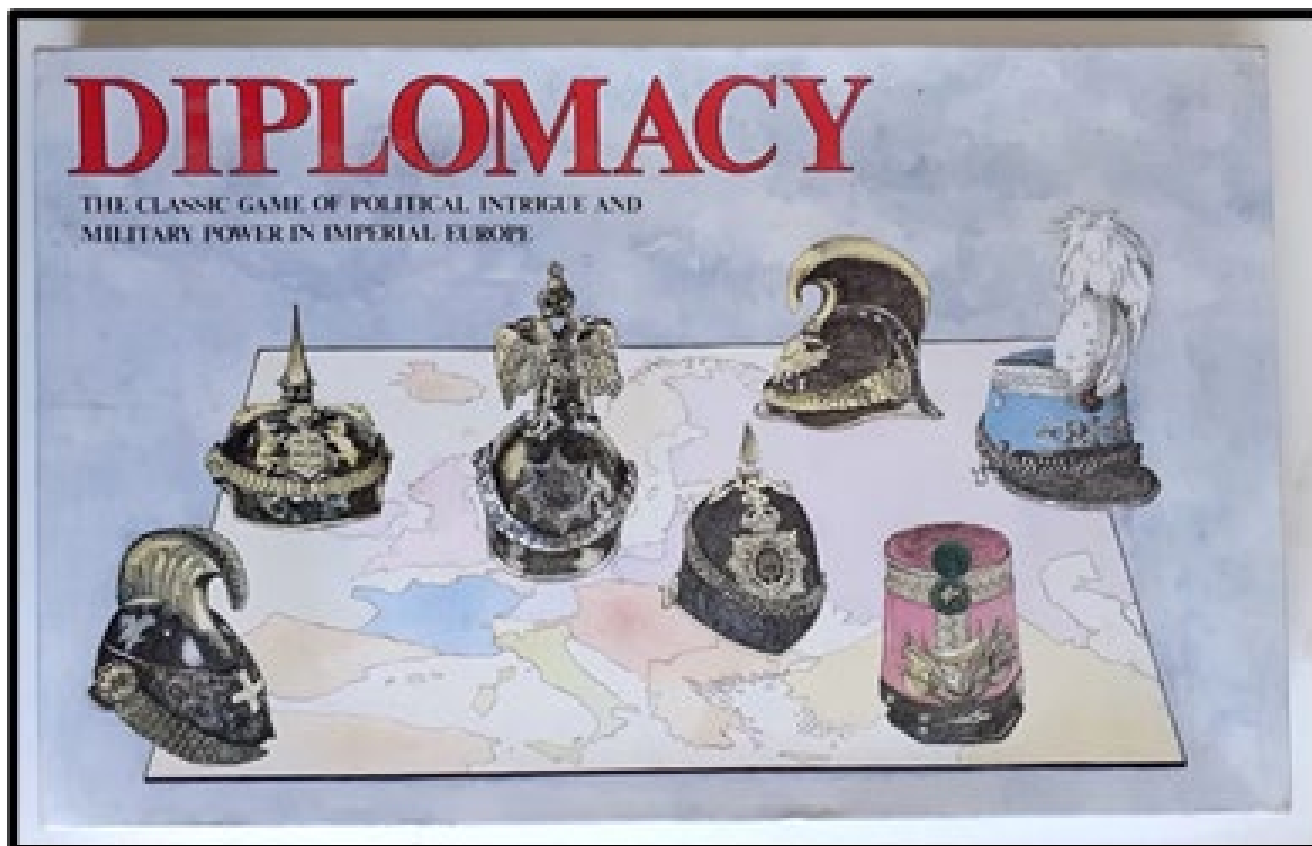
Now, can you imagine my excitement? A flyer! I mean, wow, right?

Let me explain a little more. I live in the UK. The company which sells Diplomacy over here is Gibson Games. The UK (European?) board is, well, gaudy. The picture below (If *DW* has been able to add it below) is the modern version of the game, which is even gaudier.



The version I bought was in a different box. (Is there anyone out there who collects boxes? I know there are

people who collect different versions of the game.) At the time, the box looked like this:



I like this design. Historical.

The board differed very slightly from the modern Gibson board. England wasn't quite as deep a color; France was slightly lighter; Austria was a redder brown.

I know not a lot of people do, but I *like* this board. At the time, the North American version of the board was, in my opinion, dull (I didn't know it then, of course). On that side of the Pond, they'd gone with a design which mimicked a physical map of Europe. At least the UK board was more like a political map, if slightly more colorful than they tended to be. I have since bought another copy of the game, simply so that I could take this 'original' board and put it in a frame.

The pieces were also bigger than they are now. Oh, well, everything to save money, I guess.

The game I'd bought was a second copy. The first copy, bought some years earlier, didn't have a set of German pieces, but two sets of Russian. I'd solved this problem by painting one set of Russian pieces black, using paint meant to be used for an Airfix model. That had been fine until the paint began to flake off. I couldn't play with pieces like *that* now, could I?

Anyway, nostalgia aside, back to that flyer.

There's nothing exciting about a flyer, normally. This one, however, changed my board gaming life. It told me about a Diplomacy zine that was starting up. A what now? I had no idea. However, it promised me games of Diplomacy played... wait for it... by **POST!!!**

Yes, by post.

I didn't know it at the time, but I was about to fall into a whole different world. This was the Hobby. Capital 'H'. This was what had grown out of the same frustrations I had: how to play Diplomacy when you couldn't get seven people with half a day to spare to play the game.

The zine was to be published by some guy called Danny Coleman. It was going to be for new players, people who weren't involved in the Hobby. It wasn't named yet (Danny only settled on a name for the zine in issue 3 or 4, from memory), but it would be called *Springboard*.

Great name. It was chosen by contributors. My suggestion was 'Prometheus' because the format of the zine changed from issue to issue as it settled into its final form. I wasn't very good at coming up with names for zines even then.

Springboard did for me what it was meant to do. The idea was that Danny would offer one or two games to each new Hobbyist. It would introduce people to the Hobby. And, when you were comfortable with it, you'd

then move on to other zines. For me, I started reading *Dolchstoss*, published by some guy called Richard Sharp, and *Vienna* from Richard Egan.

What *Springboard* did, apart from getting me into the postal Hobby, was introduce us to the way Dip was played, gave us a chance to experiment, introduced us to other zines, and provided some articles from other writers. It sticks in my mind with a lot of fondness.

In today's Dip hobby, zines are much fewer in number. (Take a look at the [UK Zine Archive](#) maintained by Stephen Agar, and at the [Postal Diplomacy Zine Archive](#), to get an understanding of just how many zines sprang into existence.) Postal Dip has all but disappeared, being a throwback to a different era. But I'm not sure there's very much for a novice out there to get them involved. There's no equivalent to *Springboard*.

And here is the reason for this article. At the end of January 2026, the month you're probably reading *DW* #172 in, will be a new zine, published on the web, from me. It will be called *On Silver Tablets* (you'll have to read it to find out why), and it will be aimed at Diplopups, my name for newbies to the Diplomacy hobby.

OST won't be a new *Springboard*. I won't be offering games – there are so many places to play Diplomacy these days that there's no reason to do that. What it will be, I hope, is an introduction to the modern, Digital Age of Diplomacy.

There'll be some strategy articles, although not in #1, which is about introducing the zine and Diplomacy. There'll be some heritage articles, which will look back at what has come before in the hobby. There'll be some interest articles, aimed at just discussing Dip and Dip-related stuff. And there'll be other stuff, too, as things develop.

The aim is to publish everything through [this website](#). You can join the site and join the groups section if you want.

Now some of you will be thinking '*Here we go again*' and rightly so; this isn't the first time I've launched a Diplomacy zine. But this *is* the first time I've done it with a singular goal in mind rather than simply blathering on about Diplomacy. So, I hope it'll be something that is sustainable (and I stay healthy enough to maintain it!).

I am going to need some help, though. Given that I'm not intending a huge number of articles each issue – which will help with maintaining things – I'm not asking for any article contributions, although they will be happily received.

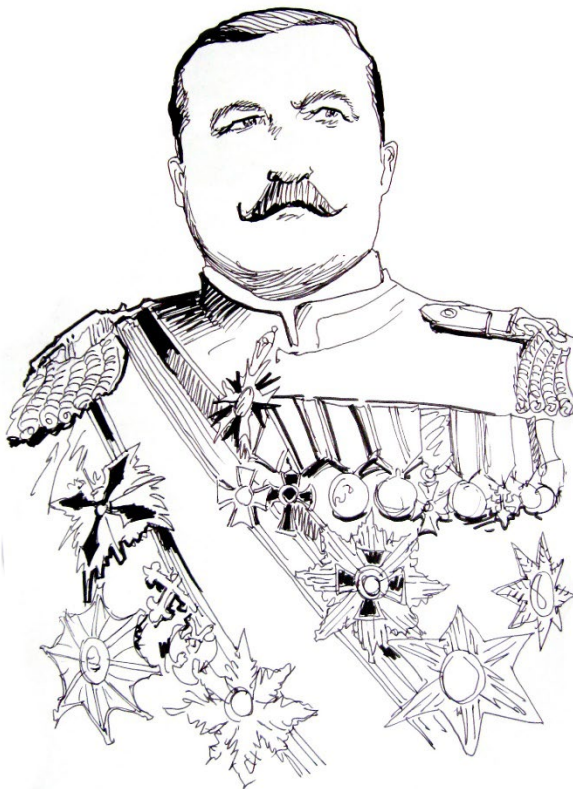
What I do want is some short bits of information for some on-going themes and from more experienced players. You don't have to be massively experienced to do this, but what I am hoping you'll send through are tips to share. Here're the topics:

- How I got into Diplomacy
- What I wish I'd known when starting to play Diplomacy
- The key to Diplomacy is...

You can send me these, ideally as attachments (Word or Google Docs) to diplomaticonpublishing@gmail.com. All I ask is that you also provide the name you'd like to be published under (and this goes for everything), whether your real name, a pseudonym or your *nom de la diplomatie*, the name you use on whichever Diplomacy website or app you want to nominate. It just helps people know a little about yourself.

Although the zine will be aimed at novices, I hope you more experienced Dipmeisters and Diplominati will also find something to like about it. Give it a look. Publication date is planned for 31 January 2026. The website – and the groups – are pretty much ready to go.

[ON SILVER TABLETS](#)



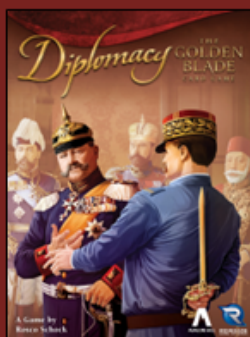
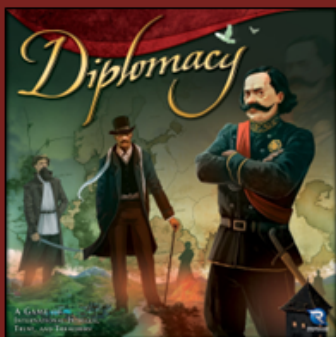
Diplomacy



Tournament Diplomacy is returning to Texas!



After years of growing Diplomacy in the Dallas area, veteran organizer Robert Lacy will host tournament events at BGG Spring and BGG Con in Dallas, Texas in 2026. Both events will be three rounds of Diplomacy using three different games: Diplomacy, Era of Empire, and The Golden Blade card game. Are you the best all around Diplomacy player?



BGG SPRING 2026

Dates: May 21-25, 2026

Venue: Hyatt Regency DFW Airport

Site: https://boardgamegeek.com/wiki/page/BGG_Events

BGG CON 2026

Dates: Nov 18-22, 2026

Venue: Hyatt Regency Dallas (Reunion Tower) in downtown Dallas

Site: https://boardgamegeek.com/wiki/page/BGG_Events



Contact Robert Lacy for additional details: r_lacy@yahoo.com



An Interview with David Miller

by Randy Lawrence-Hurt

Anyone who's watched DBN this year, or paid any attention to NADF tournament results, knows that one of the big storylines of the season has been David Miller's run of wins and near-wins. On top of being one of the hottest names in North American Diplomacy, he's also putting a new tournament in the circuit for 2026! Our own Randall Lawrence-Hurt sat down with him to discuss his evolution, new style, and upcoming debut as a Tournament Director.

Randy

So just to start, you've had quite the run of good form over the last 18 months: 2nd at Dixie 2024, 1st at Carnage 2024, 1st at Cascadia 2025, 1st at Dixie 2025, 2nd at Carnage 2025. Your performances in the years prior to that were certainly good, but not this recent elite level. What would you say have been your keys to success over the last couple years?

David

I really think it's been about my approach to the game. After winning Dixie in 2018 and 2019, I went through a bit of a rough patch. I was too focused on winning itself, and not enough on the elements that actually lead to winning. Instead of letting the board come to me, I was trying to force a result — and that rarely works in Diplomacy. Lately I've put much more emphasis on two things: grand strategy and relationship building. I'm trying to shape the overall direction of the board and cultivate trust, rather than dictate outcomes. When I focus on those, the right moves tend to present themselves naturally, and my results have followed.

Randy

I think that's a mental shift that a lot of players (myself certainly included) struggle with - did you have any players you attempted to emulate in making that transition, or any specific practices that helped you keep that mindset?

David

I wouldn't say there was a specific player I tried to emulate — the shift for me was more internal. I started thinking about the game through a more Buddhist lens: letting go of ego, meditative-like observing, and appropriate action. For a long time, I tied my success to whether I won or lost, and that creates tension — you start forcing outcomes instead of letting the board and players show you where to go. You hear what you want in your negotiations instead of really listening to the other players and understanding what they are going to do next. Now, I try to approach the game with a different goal. I want to build relationships, understand people, and leave the board having gained something from the game. When you stop chasing the result and focus on

connection, not only is the experience more enjoyable, but ironically, you tend to play better. I really mean this - when I play a game of Diplomacy I walk into the room with the goal of trying to make sure everyone on that board has a good time, whether or not they win or lose. Don't get me wrong, I am extremely competitive, and that obviously comes out, but I have found that you can still play hard while earnestly engaging with your competitors.

Randy

I imagine that works particularly well with a certain kind of experienced player. How do you find it fares with newer players, or experienced players who see the game through a "blocks-and-dots" sort of lens? When you're approaching the game from this sort of meta level, how do you square that with players who approach it from a more technical standpoint?

David

It's definitely true that this approach connects more naturally with some players and less so with others. But even with newer or more tactical players, I think the same principles apply, just in a different way. When I sit down with someone who sees the game as pure tactics — blocks and dots — I try to meet them where they are. The key is curiosity rather than conversion. Instead of trying to pull them into my meta framework, I focus on understanding their framework: what do they value, what are they afraid of losing, what does success look like to them? Once you start from that place, the relationship forms naturally, and the board tends to open up in more interesting ways. At its core, Diplomacy is still about connection — even a purely tactical player is making emotional decisions, whether they realize it or not. If I can tune into that, the mindset I'm bringing — detachment from ego, focus on relationships — still works. It just manifests differently. Instead of persuading someone through philosophy, I'm speaking their language through consistency, trust, and maybe a long conversation about the tactics of taking Munich. So even though the mental framework feels 'meta,' it's actually very practical. You can't remove your ego and still try to change others — you have to accept the board, and the players, exactly as they are. Once you do that, you can find harmony even with people who are playing completely different kinds of games.

Randy

And no one can argue with success. Of your recent results, do you have a specific one that you're particularly proud of, or that stands out for some reason?

David

Great question, it has to be Dixiecon this year. First of

all, Dixie holds a very special place for me. It was the first tournament I ever attended and my first ever tournament win. To come back and win after 6 years with 40 of my favorite people around was just amazing. From the Diplomacy side, it was also a standout for me. In round one I had a great alliance with Keith Worstell and ended an early game with all smiles. My round two game is what I would point to as the purest expression of my approach. I in no way forced that solo tactically. I built a relationship with every single player on the board, and then just did what they and the board dictated. I took actions that were appropriate to each circumstance and other players were responsible for my advancement. The third game was very similar and my 15 center 3-way sealed the win. To top it off, one of my favorite people pushed me to the literal brink, also turning in a solo and a huge 3-way draw; the final score difference between us was decided by only one center. Your play at Dixie and at Carnage has me looking your way for some huge results to come, Randy.

Randy

As soon as I asked that question, I was afraid your answer would be one of my more painful recent tournaments. Guess I walked into that one. Dixie 2025 was definitely one for the history books, though. I understand you're launching a new tournament onto the North American scene in 2026, BlazeCon in Baltimore, January 17-18. What can you tell us about the tournament structure, scoring, amenities, etc.?

David

Yes!! The tournament will be in Harbor East, a.k.a., the nice part of Baltimore. Three rounds over two days using a center-based scoring system with bonuses for placement. More importantly we have a great hotel rate so book now before the block empties! The night before we are going out to Little Italy for a great group Italian meal. And Randy, the best part is, you don't even have to play against me to be crowned the first ever all-time BLAZECON CHAMPION.

Randy

Trust me, that is 100% on my mind. I understand there may be a charity aspect as well? A way for people to do some good while lying to each other's faces?

David

Yes sir. Those who know me well know that my wife, Meredith, and I are devoted to our pets. A few years ago, our dog, Blaze, passed from lymphoma after a year of chemo and a bone marrow transplant. We had help paying for this from an organization called the Perseus Foundation. Each year we hold a charity event in April to raise funds - last year we donated over \$12,000! So, what's the tie-in? Blazecon (named for Blaze, duh) will

now be part of this effort and folks who are willing and interested will have a chance to contribute to this beyond-worthy cause. I almost forgot to mention, you can find tournament details here:

www.blazeadventuretours.com/blazecon.

And more about Blaze's story here:

<https://blazeadventuretours.com/blazes-canine-lymphoma-story/>

Randy

You've obviously been going to tournaments for some time; what lessons have you learned about how to run a fun successful tournament, and how do you plan to apply them to BlazeCon?

David

Fun. Just have fun. The best tournaments are really just an excuse for us all to get together and have a great time. I've learned from the best - Hood, Maletsky, Brand, Silverman etc. This is going to be a great time, with great people, and great stabs. Come help us make Blazecon a must-attend tournament by showing up and having a great time! And I'll throw a little more enticement in here; we are going to have some great awards and fierce competition. David Hood, Adam Silverman, Ed Sullivan, World Champion Doc Binder and more are already signed up. Awards will include things such as: Littlest Italy, King Crab, and the 'Old Bay Spiciest Play of the Weekend' (please sponsor us). So, I will see you all there in just two short months!



World Boardgaming Championships

WBC is an annual gaming convention held at Seven Springs Mountain Resort. The best two rounds of three will count towards the final tournament score. Best Country awards and prizes will be provided by the organizer. Food and drink will be provided during each round, with a pizza party during Round Three. A teaching round will be taught on Friday with board game prizes to select competitors.

July 31st – August 1st in Seven Springs, PA

Demo – 5pm-7pm Friday

Round One – 7pm-11pm Friday

Round Two – 10am-2pm Friday

Round Three – 7pm-11pm Saturday

Scoring: C-Diplo

Rank: Best two out of three rounds

Contact: Thomas Haver (tjhaver@gmail.com)

Website: <http://www.boardgamers.org/>



Never a *Cross* Word

By Archie Duke

To mark the entry into its second year, this edition's 'Never a CROSSWORD' has a prize associated with it. The crossword contains direct and indirect references to Archie's two of Archie's other favorite games. He assures me though that Diplomacy is Number One and always will be. If you can identify the two games and, as he puts it, 'Who did What, to Whom, Where and with What' and submit your answers to the following email address by February 1, you may win a copy of the new Diplomacy Card Game from Renegade: nogametoosmall@gmail.com

Never a **CROSS** word No. 5

ACROSS:

- 1 Old Boy watched and followed orders. (6)
- 5 Knife Dirk! (6)
- 8 Brandenburg state capital reverses mad stop. (7)
- 9 Cut out Stan before start of dance – with ease by the sound of it. (7)
- 11 & 13 Where many murderous ideas might be shelved. (2,3,7)
- 12 Speed required in an emergency – or I may die in mix-up with Mike and Charlie. (9)
- 13 See 11.
- 15 Closest north-east Army starting retreat is in France. (7)
- 16 Giant iguanas swamp this Caribbean island. (7)
- 19 LOL – once perhaps. Just rank! (7)
- 22 Ship of Britain. (9)
- 23 Ample fruit picked straight away. (5)
- 24 You'd have to cut this to impress Colonel. (7)
- 25 Three characters (one Greek, one eccentric and one unknown) meet somewhere in France. (7)
- 26 Expose slippery character with VAR. (6)
- 27 Dance losing nothing with the French results in confused mess. (6)



'Maybe you should try chess – it's just a thought!'



'I will kill that damned Italian gigolo, if I get my hands on him.'

DOWN:

- 2 Sanitary fitting provided by Georgian city and some tube stations. (7)
- 3 Sing a mountain call or your own dirge like Elvis to begin with. (5)
- 4 Curse outrageous infamy following wicked end. (7)
- 5 Brush off valet – he collects rubbish. (7)
- 6 Might this prevent a sentry from dropping off? (9)
- 7 The period during which men on board invariably reach a conclusion. (7)
- 8 Arduous type of battle perhaps. (6)
- 10 You could be in denial reportedly if here. (5)
- 14 Great golf VAT raid will annoy and cause anger. (9)
- 16 Book infamous US mobster and tramp together. (5)
- 17 Fleet in the Adriatic? Steer it perhaps to supply centre in Austro-Hungary. (7)
- 18 Remote point has air conditioning installed before Mafioso boss comes back supported by infamous mob leader. [*Yes, him again!*] (7)
- 19 A site of conflict and descriptive of Belgium's place in Europe. (7)
- 20 Orange Free State could be classic early Great Power target. (7)
- 21 Cheeky cosmetic. (5)
- 23 Much of canape, strangely, contains nut. (5)

ANSWERS to 'Never a CROSS word' No. 4

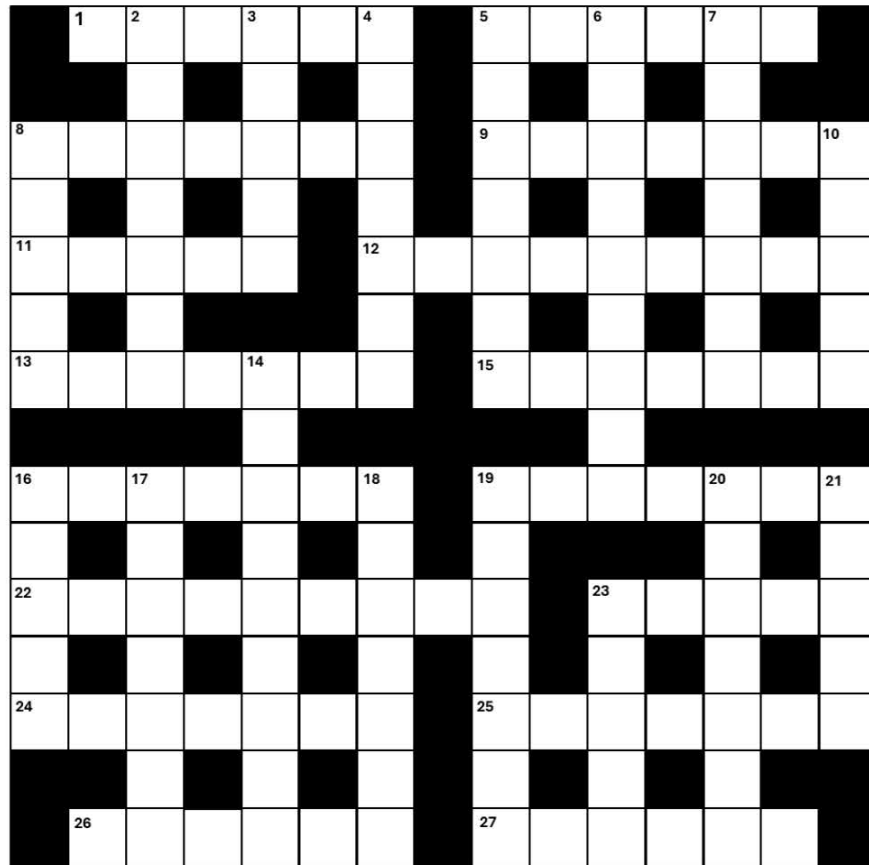
ACROSS: 1 *Acetic*, 5 *Hobart*, 8 *Collate*, 9 *Lionise*, 11 *Barge*, 12 *Dressings*, 13 *Empower*, 15 *Derided*, 16 *Towrope*, 19 *Biplane*, 22 *Nailbiter*, 23 *Juror*, 24 *Science*, 25 *Eleanor*, 26 *Chaste*, 27 *Sesame*.

DOWN: 2 *Caltrop*, 3 *Trace*, 4 *Cheddar*, 5 *Halberd*, 6 *Bootstrap*, 7 *Reigned*, 8 *Cable*, 10 *Eased*, 14 *Woodbines*, 16 *Tunis*, 17 *Whitish*, 18 *Extreme*, 19 *Borders*, 20 *Acronym*, 21 *Error*, 23 *Joeys*.



'Et voila – and there you have it, a French Fleet in Naples.'

Never a **CROSS** word No. 5



By Archie Duke



Major: *“Spies are abroad my friend.”*
Cabbie: *“In that case Guv’, we won’t
 ’ave to worry about ‘em.”*

Origins Game Fair

The annual Origins Diplomacy Tournament is held at one of the largest gaming conventions in the US. The tournament is three rounds running Friday through Saturday. Best Country Awards, the Midwest Diplomacy Championship, and prizes will be awarded following the third round. We also host a teaching round on Thursday evening with prizes to select participants.

June 17th - June 21st in Columbus, Ohio

Teaching Round: 7pm-11pm Thursday
Round One: 7pm-11pm Friday
Round Two: 12pm-4pm Saturday
Round Three: 7pm-11pm Saturday

Scoring System: C-Diplo
Rank: Best two out of three rounds

Contact: Thomas Haver (tjhaver@gmail.com)
Website: <https://www.originsgamefair.com/>



I Want to Die But I Want to Eat Dots

by Nancy Jin

I wrote this because I really wanted to understand the appeal of the game, and its draw and repulsion to me—why after every game I never wanted to play again and yet inevitably would end up play more games. So, at the beginning of this year my inner Miss Trunchbull took the Bruce Bogtrotter approach to punishment: why have only one slice of chocolate cake when you could be forced to consume the whole thing? Why not go to every tournament easily accessible and see if I puke afterwards?

And why should we be forever be hearing from winners and runners-up and people with a good understanding of tactics and strategy and diplomacy? It is rare to hear from someone mediocre; rarer still in the pages of this zine is the dull navel-gazing (the contents of which are better served in a therapist's office). Yet, here is such a reflection, to corner my own niche in the market—following a year of attending every face-to-face tournament in Australia.

When I learned the game about two years ago, I was regularly spending a significant portion of my day crying in toilets and being unable to speak to anyone or leave the house. I stumbled across a notice for a game of Diplomacy being run locally and I willed myself to try it.

Immediately, I realized that the game required me to confront things that I found difficult about 'real life' interactions—trying to make myself understood, to really listen, to understand the motivations of others, to exert empathy. Interacting with people had never come naturally to me. I was too quiet or too loud; too awkward or too bland; too awful at small talk and lacking any charm. I could only stumble from one faux pas to another. Yet this game of shaping influence quickly made me realize the arbitrariness of interactions. I had to recognize the extent of my control and relinquish and accept that which was outside. As I persisted, I found the game evolving alongside me as I learned it. Past actions and reputations become new points of failure. Inevitably, I lose control of how others see me—if, in fact, I had control in the first place, and if perceptions are not shaped by a myriad of immutable factors.

They say that this is a game and it should be fun.

At some point during this year, the concept of fun when it comes to this game has become nuanced for me. A lot of what goes on in this game is not fun—being lied to

and manipulated is not fun, having my poor judgement in trusting people I shouldn't have blow up in my face is not fun, writing down incorrect orders and having plans fall apart is not fun. Yet feeling the struggle against these things is part—or maybe all—of the draw to the game. Regardless of the outcome of a game, there doesn't appear to be perfection, only bursts of anxiety, relief, delight and dejection in turns without catharsis, until in the end I'm hardly pleased that I've spent four or more hours doing this. Mistakes are predominant in my recollections; seeing divergent paths in retrospect can only amplify rumination and self-recrimination. And yet—I would look at the prospect of a new game and feel a knot of anxiety—and it brought comfort with the knowledge that I wanted to throw the dice again.

Every interaction in this game, they are just a moment, like so many before and after this one—sunk in time. By the end of this year, losing or winning by having the most supply centers at the end of a game came to feel secondary after accepting that I will live with my choices. It is possible that I will plunge headlong into any number of poor choices and make my fumbling apologies. It is more than likely I will fail, have two or three or four neighbors encircle me, watch my supply centers get eaten up—it's not a big deal—just some pieces over a historically inaccurate map of Europe. I'm going to make mistakes; I live to make more mistakes.

Maybe there was a tipping point where the failure had become the point. Maybe fun is overrated.

The game certainly doesn't make me happy, doesn't clear up my skin, doesn't make my crops flourish—but it is something. These days, I can fill a few minutes of conversation- with-a-stranger with some kind of European geography, Napoleon complex mumbo-jumbo—and it is a kind of joy.

I want to extend a heartfelt thanks to the face-to-face community in Australia for conscientiously making it a welcoming place, and for being kind, patient and generous. I can only say that I regret everything I've ever done over a board, but next time my mother asks me 'why are you spending the weekend with a bunch of other nerds?', I'll still defend you all to the (proverbial) death.

(Apologies to Baek Se-hee.)

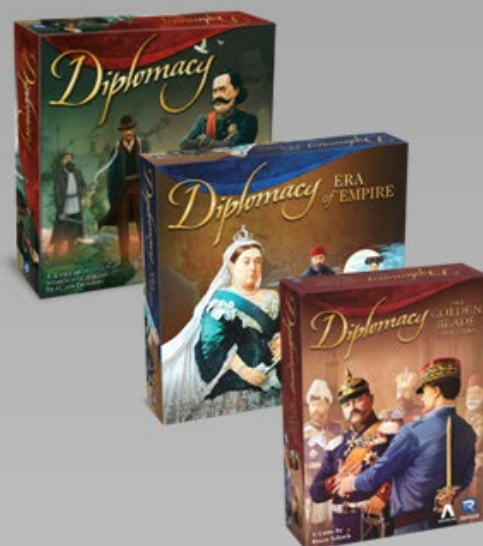


Canadian National Diplomacy Championship

Renegade Game Studios and Breakout Con are thrilled to announce the Canadian National Diplomacy Championship will be held at Toronto's premiere tabletop gaming convention in 2026!

The tournament will be three rounds running Friday through Saturday. Best Country Awards and prizes will be awarded following the final round, with board game giveaways planned each round.

Teaching rounds will also be hosted for Diplomacy, Era of Empire, and the soon-to-be-released Golden Blade card game!



Breakout Con 2026 | Canadian National Diplomacy Championship



Dates: March 19-22, 2026

Venue: Sheraton Centre Toronto

Site: <https://breakoutcon.com/>

Contact for additional details: Heroes@RenegadeGames.com



Robert Zahn Wins North American Grand Prix

by Thomas Haver

The North American Grand Prix (NAGP) made a triumphant return after many years away. The circuit event had been a regular fixture in the tournament scene for years but disappeared after lack of interest. With added focus on face-to-face play at convention events these last few years, we elected to resurrect the circuit on a trial basis to gauge interest from the North American player base.

Those players answered the call!



The overall participation of the circuit was amazing, with more than 300 competitors registering at least one event in 2025. To help support the event throughout the year, we added some promotion with shirts, stickers, magnets, and more. Just like the glory days of the Grand Prix, attendance is directly linked to the culture of the events. Getting an opportunity to play against people you want to see again and again helps convince people on the fence to sign up for that next event and travel great distances. This is what the 2025 edition looked like:

We elected to use a similar scoring system as F1, with added emphasis on finishing in the Top 7 (Top Board) instead of Top 10. Participating in any event earns points. The better a player performs at an event, the more points they earn (25 points for a 1st place finish, 18 points for a 2nd place finish, 15 points for 3rd, etc.). To make the events more accessible, we held all NAGP events at public game conventions. Lastly, as an incentive to win we awarded a free trip to the World Series of Board Gaming to the champion. Onto the results:

1st Robert Zahn
2nd Phil Burk

3rd Robert Lacy
4th Evan Walter
5th Brendan Lim
6th Richard Sweat
7th Ryan Feathers

Congratulations to Robert Zahn for winning the 2025 North American Grand Prix! Zahn was a constant traveler this year, attending seven of the possible events. Of course, it's not enough just to attend these events: you've got to perform well to earn those big points and have a shot at being the champ. This is where Zahn outclassed his opponents as well. Zahn finished 1st at PrezCon (Charlottesville, VA) to start the year. He followed with a 2nd place finish at Circle DC (Washington, DC) a month later. Two events, two good finishes.

Zahn then got to put away his luggage and enjoy some home cooking in Columbus, the site of Origins Game Fair. The 20+ year veteran of the convention snagged a come-from-behind victory in the final round of play to win that event for the 4th time. He was the early and runaway leader for the circuit and the biggest event of the year was coming: The US Diplomacy Championship at Gen Con (Indianapolis, IN). Zahn was the defending champion of the event and had a target on his back. The blades of his opponents delivered and for the first time in many years, he was locked out of the Top Board on Saturday night. Nevertheless, his consistent play over the four qualifying rounds earned him 8th place at Gen Con. He didn't defend his US Championship, but he was still picking up points in the Grand Prix.

A month later players from all over the globe descended on the World Series of Board Gaming (Las Vegas, NV) to compete at the National Diplomacy Masters. There were TWO opportunities at this convention: the classical Diplomacy event with a Top Board and the first-ever Era of Empire tournament. Zahn finished 4th in the Diplomacy event and 2nd in the Era of Empire event. Both solid finishes keeping up a strong lead in the event. Going into the final two events for the year, Zahn's lead would be difficult but not impossible to beat. His biggest competition (Robert Lacy, Phil Burk) would have to show up and grab a victory while denying Zahn a Top Board finish.

The next event was Battlefront Dayton at Wright Patterson Air Force Base. This event also happened to be the first Diplomacy Triathlon – a three round event featuring three different Diplomacy games. Those games were classical Diplomacy, Era of Empire, and the yet-to-be-released Golden Blade card game. For the latter, designer Rosco Schock was on hand to conduct multiple

teaching sessions during the convention to give everyone an opportunity to learn before the final round's game. Zahn proved himself adept in the first two rounds, earning Silver in each of classical Diplomacy and Era of Empire. It was in The Golden Blade round where he met his match: a 5th place finish in the final round. After scores were tied, it required two tiebreakers to determine the champion. Robert Zahn edged out Phil Burk for the Battlefront Dayton win at the first Diplomacy Triathlon.

A well-deserved title for the resurrected North American Grand Prix. Zahn had three tournament wins and six Top Boards. For his efforts, Zahn earned the championship plaque and a free trip to the World Series of Board Gaming in 2026. Congratulations again to Robert Zahn!

Retrospective: Overall, we were extremely pleased with the circuit event. Renegade is aiming to have more circuit events for their games going forward. They already run a successful Heroscape organized play circuit (over 1500 events in the first year!). The participation in Diplomacy events at these conventions have a strong positive response from our community of players. Expect the Grand Prix to return in 2026. We plan to make some adjustments to the circuit. In the 2025 edition, we only had events in the USA. For 2026 we're adding an event in Canada, Breakout Con, which is also the Canadian National Championship. We're also planning an event in Mexico, but confirmation on that is TBD as of this writing.

For anyone out there running Diplomacy tournaments at conventions, please reach out to Heroes@RenegadeGames.com to express your interest. We're adding more tournament events. More opportunities to play Diplomacy is great for the community. See you there!

Tournament Events 2026

February - PrezCon (Charlottesville, VA)
March - Breakout (Toronto, Canada)
April - Circle DC (Washington, DC)
May - BGG Spring (Dallas, Texas)
June - Origins (Columbus, Ohio)
July - WBC (Seven Springs, PA)
August - GenCon (Indianapolis, IN)
September - National Diplomacy Masters (Las Vegas, NV)
October/Nov - Battlefront Dayton (Dayton, Ohio)
November - BGG Con (Dallas, Texas)
December - PAX Unplugged (Philadelphia, PA)



Flipping the Table

by Brandan Austin

This little project started off as an idea I had when I first moved out of home in 2016. My house mate at the time and I were playing a different board game more than 4 times a week and the constant setting and packing up of the game board seemed inefficient and unnecessary, particularly for our impatient vibes. At the time we were using the door off the kitchen pantry propped up by paint tins as our table. It loyally served us well for the purpose of LAN parties and board gaming. However, being the smart bloke I was back then, I found myself wondering... "We probably want a functional table in the house and also have our boardgame out all the time, so why can't they be the same thing?" Straight away I found a large coffee table and engraved the game board on it. We were overjoyed to have both a table and the game as a permanent feature in our house.

Skip forward a few years. In 2024 I am introduced to Diplomacy, and mate I immediately fell in love with this game! The beautiful boards, the pieces, the physical history of the different editions themselves and of course the amazing game itself and the people playing it. Since that moment I knew I wanted to make my own Diplomacy table.

Jump forward again to when we were at one of our beloved Midweek Madness games in November 2025 in the lead up to the Australian Open. The topic of different boards was raised, and it reignited that spark to do it all again. Before even leaving the game, I started the hunt for the perfect table to be my canvas.

After flicking through endless marketplace listings, I found it! Immediately I knew it was the one. It was love at first sight! I was extremely excited to go pick it up off this lovely lady the following day when tragedy struck!! She gets home and finds out that her husband had taken it to the rubbish tip the day before. I was crushed. It felt like I had been hit by a truck. I knew this table was the one, it had to be this one! So how could I salvage this situation... two important words came to mind.

"Which tip?"

It was Monday morning but stuff it! I ditched work without hesitation and drove straight to the tip. I was on a mission and my boss being the absolute legend he is knew that this was important. When I got to the tip the guy at the gate gave me a weird look as I rocked up with an empty Ute (Aussie truck) so I began to explain myself.

"G'Day mate! Unfortunately, there's been a huge mistake. There's a table that's very important to me that

was tossed here yesterday, any chance I can have a quick look for it".

He let out an amused grunt "Sure thing mate. Swing round back to the timber pile. You're lucky you got here this morning; it all goes in the crusher this arvo".

I let out a sigh of relief "You beauty! Thank you so much".

I drove off and was giddy with nervous anticipation! Will I find the beautiful table? Will it be broken? Is it going to be stacked underneath a load of rubbish? Is this goal of a creating my own Diplomacy table still achievable??

As I pulled around the corner, there it was... the most beautiful thing I'd seen all week (besides my perfect dog Banjo of course). It was still intact, propped up on top of the timber pile just waiting to be rescued, taken home and given a good dose of Brandan's TLC.

Size definitely matters when it comes to a nice piece of wood, and this table was so big and beautiful that it took up the whole tray of my Ute! But I didn't want it to be just an ordinary oversized print of a regular board, as big isn't enough to be special. It matters what you do with it, and I wanted it to be both a board and a table that is memorable. So how do I turn this already gorgeous piece of furniture into not only a playable, beautiful table, but also a memorable Diplomacy board? This was going to require more brain power than I'm capable of. I have to give a big shoutout to Shane Armstrong and Max Roe Banks, at various stages throughout this project they were legends letting me bounce ideas off them as I narrowed in towards the final product.

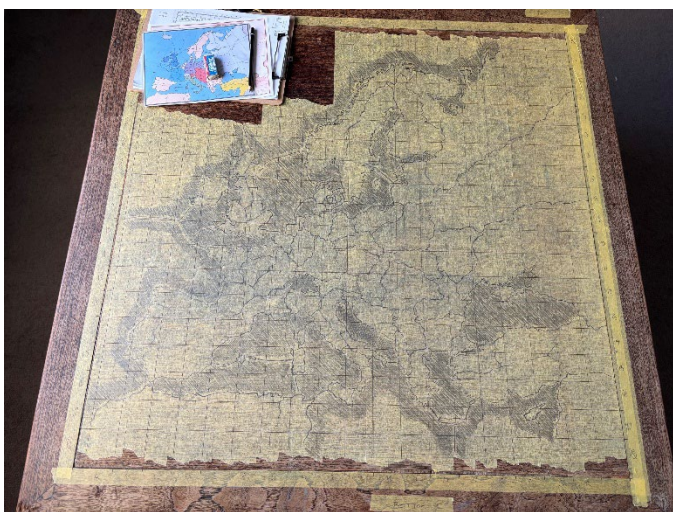


BigBird and I executing our opening move "The Rescue"



Previously loved and ready for its glow up

Once I got the table home, I gave it a good clean and sanded it down till it was all raw. I wanted to maintain an aged and weathered look, so I didn't repair any chips or dents. I also decided to stain the sides darker to keep the older look and vibe.



Setting the boundaries before committing

For the design of the map on the table, it is a blend of 5 different diplomacy boards from over the years. I needed one that fitted a square shape, but I also wanted the provinces to be balanced and pleasing to look at. Contrary to how I plan my stabs, I put a lot of time into planning how I wanted this to look when I was finished. So, following in the steps of all great political leaders, in some places I changed the borders or at least shifted

them a bit to my satisfaction whilst maintaining all existing adjacencies for gameplay.

I covered the tabletop in a particular brand of rice paper masking tape that I use at work. It leaves zero residue and is very thin and allowed me to sketch on it without tearing it. Over the course of a couple of evenings I sketched out all the board lines on the tape.

Next all that was left was the moment of truth! To engrave the table! I had a couple of hours to kill since it was the Friday morning of the 2025 Aus Open which I was Tournament Directing. What better time than to chill and get into it!

Armed with nothing but an engraver, one steady hand and a solid Mountain Dew-fueled state of hyper fixation, I decided to give it a crack! The tape I had used allowed me to engrave straight through it tracing the sketch I'd drawn, making it as easy as it could be without using a guide or stencil. While engraving, I had Gavin Atkinson editing his podcast in the other room occasionally popping in and showering me with encouragement. I decided to knuckle down and try to get it all done before we headed to the venue to set up for the tournament.

I started in the top right-hand corner on the north coast of St. Petersburg bordering the Barents Sea, wiggled my way down around Scandinavia, through Germany, to France, back through Italy, over to the Balkans and then jumped up to England. All in all, I was surprised that it only took about an hour to complete for which I must give credit to the extensive preparation work. Always measure twice and cut once! It was a huge relief to get it done. The board was finally taking shape and that sexy image I had in my head was starting to come to life.



Committed and ready to take it to the next level

The rest was all very straight forward. I gave it a good sand to remove the burrs from the engraving. Next, I started staining the different provinces in slightly different natural oil timber stains, trying to give them some distinction from the adjacent areas. After each coat I'd engrave the province lines again to keep them crisp. Then to finish it off I covered the whole thing in multiple coats of a marine grade polyurethane clearcoat. This made it hard wearing but also waterproof from any potential spills. This process took a few days due to drying and curing times between coats.

The real killer was waiting on the decals I ordered for the province names from a local sign writer. They took about 3 weeks to finally be printed off. Once I got the call, they were ready, again I was too excited to wait and left work early to grab them and get started right away. Again, I couldn't ask for a better boss, he is just a top bloke and how he has put up with all my nonsense without killing me is still a mystery to me. Excitedly I spent that evening back on the table transferring each province name slowly and carefully to avoid crushing or ruining the lettering. It was a tedious process, but it was a lot of fun.

I wish I could say I left it there, that I made no mistakes and it all went perfectly... but that wouldn't be the complete story. I had reached a point where I decided to do another clearcoat to lock down the decals and really solidify the board. This is where I broke my own heart and destroyed my confidence. This is when I regretted thinking I could create something beautiful. I hovered and that vacillating cost me dearly.

I get out the clearcoat and there is just enough left in the tin for one final coat. The tin had been sitting for a couple of weeks since the last coat. I was thinking about whether to buy a new tin or use the existing one. I gave it a stir, and it looked fine. Most products have months before they reach their use by date. But as I started to apply it, I notice a couple of little lumps which I mistake for the light reflecting off the wet clear coat, but as I apply more, I realize what's happening... my eyes widen, I stand up and softly whisper out a pain stained "ooooooooo fuuuuuuuu#%". The clearcoat had started to go off in the tin causing little gel clumps as it begun to dry and solidify. I realized I was now looking at this beautiful table half covered in a lumpy crap filled coat of irreversible clear that couldn't be removed. It was too thick and sticky to wipe off without damaging the decals. With this clearcoat product you have to keep a wet edge and keep moving, so I had no choice but to keep going and finish the rest of the table. Leaving it half coated would have created an inconsistency in the final finish across the center of the board that couldn't be hidden.

I sucked up my bad vibes and finished the coat, then stepped backwards to the wall where I slumped to the ground and stared blankly at the table. I was dwelling on my indecision and impulse to not properly check the tin

which may have just ruined all my effort. Knots formed in my stomach making me ill as I see that I have possibly ruined the project right at the finish line.

I got up. There was nothing to do but to leave the table to dry overnight. It was a real struggle to stay positive, but I took the time to calm myself and think it through. It was important to let myself feel what this was making me feel, ignoring it would only make things worse. Later that evening I went downstairs and had another look at the table. It was gut wrenching to see the once perfectly smooth finish corrupted by thousands of little chunks, even some of the province decals had been damaged by the failing clearcoat.

But I pulled myself together. I saw that there was no reason to give up or think that it was over! Even though I hated myself in that moment I knew that it could be fixed. It just required a bit of effort and care. The following day I got very fine sandpaper and began the precision process of meticulously sanding out all the lumps without tearing through and damaging the table underneath.

Then once I'd sanded it all back, repaired the province decals, cleaned it off and bought some fresh new clearcoat, I applied another coat. How did it end up looking?



**Goodbye coffee stains, time to brew some alliances.
Banjo says its Ruff**

Well, that leads to the finished product you see in these pictures, and I am proud of it! That last stage took a toll on my confidence but focusing on what I could do helped me get it done!

To add a little bonus to this project, as I'd been planning it out, I was thinking about how it being just an engraved coffee table felt a bit limiting to me... so while I had been working on the table, I actually changed the structure of it so that the flat top could be removed. Now it can be both a coffee table and a removeable large board that

can be played on a tabletop! And if one wants to get real fancy it is even wall mountable, because what home would be complete without such a sexy display piece.



**A Diplomacy board, coffee table and a display piece.
You beauty!**

Finally, I'd like to say that sharing and writing this article felt showboaty and isn't something I'm usually comfortable with doing. But I hope if anything all this rambling and the fun I hope you see I had creating this

table encourages you to do that fun little project you've been putting off for ages! Our passions and joys are beautiful things to share with people, and I know that the people in your lives would love to see your projects and what you enjoy doing! Things are going to get hard and there will be some unexpected setbacks, but don't let that stop you! Getting through those tough moments makes it all so much more rewarding. So, get up and get to it!

And if you are ever in Australia, hit me up and we can put together a game on this table or maybe even one of your own creations.



Pieces in place, but Peace is not an option



Every piece moved is a choice cast into the future, and this table shows the immediate reflection of its consequence

U.S. Diplomacy Championship

We proudly bring you the annual U.S. Championship at the largest Diplomacy event in the country. Square off in one or more of the four qualifiers. The seven Best Country winners from the qualifiers advance to the Top Board on Saturday night. Our group also hosts "Introduction to Diplomacy" events concurrent with the tournament events.

July 30th - August 2nd at GenCon in Indianapolis, Indiana

Round One: 12pm-4pm Thursday
Round Two: 8pm-12am Thursday
Round Three: 12pm-4pm Friday
Round Four: 8pm-12am Friday
Championship Board: 4pm Saturday

Contact: Thomas Haver (tjhaver@gmail.com)
Website: <http://www.gencon.com/>



World Diplomacy Convention 2026

22-24 May 2026, Saronida, Athens, GREECE

by Spyros Dovas

The premium Diplomacy event comes to Athens in May 2026 for a celebration of the values that make this hobby so unique.

We aim to set a *total miles travelled* record for any Diplomacy tournament in recent history, bringing players (more than 100!) from all around the globe to Greece for this amazing event. Athens 2026 will be your best chance to meet and play with the people you have met online, whose games in other tournaments you have

watched on YouTube, whose stories you read in newsletters and zines. We also aim for this tournament to be a showcase of the Diplomacy community as a whole, illustrating why so many have fallen in love with the game and the group of people who play it.

The place

For this year's WDC, we will skip the busy city center, and head to the seafront of the Saronic Gulf, to the resort suburb of Athens called **Saronida**.



Saronida is quite close to Athens International Airport, an Uber will take you there for 30-40 euros.

We will play by the sea!

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/pah548cDhYSCqR1Y8>



The venue!

This is the tournaments official beach, just across the road:



We may throw a Beach Party there on Saturday night!
Early eliminations will allow for a quick swim too!

Being a resort town, many affordable lodging options
varying from Airbnb's to 5-star hotels are available
nearby.

Pre-Tournament group activities:

Thursday 21/05/2026 will feature a full day of group
activities, broken in two parts. On the first leg, embarking
from Saronida early in the morning we will visit the
Acropolis, downtown Athens (Thission, Plaka and
Lycabettus Hill) , and have (late, as it is common in the
South of Europe) lunch by the sea.



The Acropolis of Athens

We will return to Saronida in the afternoon, from where
the second leg will set off, including people that may
arrive to Saronida during Thursday, to visit Sounion in

the southern tip of Attica peninsula, maybe an afternoon
swim and return to Saronida for drinks by the sea in the
night.



Sounion: We will be reminded why the Aegean Sea is called so.

Wednesday 20/5/2026: If there is participants' interest, we will take the boat to the nearby idyllic island of Hydra

The Tournament

The Tournament will be directed by **Jamal Blakkarly** and will have a strict Code of Conduct and 'no dickhead' policy in place. Any form of discrimination, bullying or any action that will harm another participant is absolutely not allowed and will be dealt with in the strictest manner. The tournament will be played across three days, with four rounds of play. These rounds will be:

- Friday evening – 5pm
- Saturday morning – 9 am
- Saturday afternoon – 4pm
- Sunday morning – 10 am

and spend most of the day there, returning late in the afternoon.

The Sunday morning round will include the top board and team round. The top board will determine the top 7 places in the WDC, and the team round will be played for both tournament score and a separate team competition. Each round will end in the Winter phase of a designated game year. That game year will be announced at the start of the round, but will not be known prior. Rounds may end on different game years.

To find out much more about this amazing event, and register, visit wdc2026.gr

See you in Athens!



Hydra



National Diplomacy Masters

The World Series of Board Gaming (WSBG) and Renegade Game Studios are joining forces to host the National Diplomacy Masters in Las Vegas, Nevada. The tournament is being held in conjunction with the WSBG championship to crown the brightest star in board gaming.



Compete against our honored Diplomacy Masters:

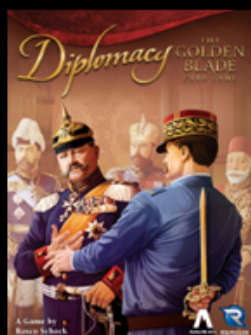
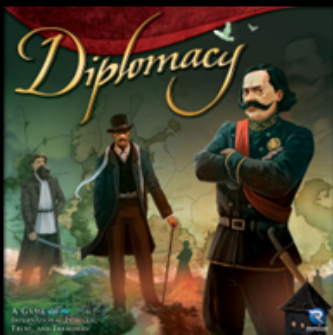
- 3-Time World Champion **Cyrille Sevin**
- North American Grand Prix Champion **Robert Zahn**
- Reigning National Diplomacy Masters Champion **Dan McNeill**
- US National Champion **Gregory Vaughan**
- Diplomat of the Year winner **Nolan David**
- Era of Empire champion **Richard Sweat**

- September 5-9, 2026 (Labor Day Weekend)
- Horseshoe Hotel & Casino

- National Diplomacy Masters tournament
- "Diplomacy: Era of Empire" tournament
- First official "Diplomacy: The Golden Blade" tournament
- Plus many opportunities to learn and win!

Do you have what it takes to defeat a Master?
Find out at the World Series of Board Gaming!

- Hotel & Tickets: <https://wsbgvegas.com/>
- Reach out to GM Thomas Haver for additional event details at Heroes@RenegadeGames.com



Nolan David named “Diplomat of the Year”

by Thomas Haver



unique experience at conventions. Players at his events will receive custom badges and clipboards for their Power, along with a plotter rod to push extra-large pieces across the map. The custom map he produced is so large it can only be played on the floor – truly a spectacle to behold for convention goers.

Congratulations to Nolan David on winning the 2025 “Diplomat of the Year” award! Each year, Renegade Game Studios recognizes a Diplomacy community member who contributes the most to the community in creating a positive and inclusive environment. These individuals are part of our established community outreach program, Renegade Heroes:

<https://renegadegamestudios.com/blog/introducing-the-renegade-heroes-community-program/>



Nolan David lives in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He travels extensively to run Diplomacy teaching events across the country, from Chicago to Pittsburgh to Orlando. He’s brought Diplomacy and the newly released Era of Empire to conventions and communities that previously had never seen a Diplomacy event. Nolan goes beyond just teaching the game. He’s spent extensive time and resources to create custom maps and setups for his players so they experience a truly

Nolan David is a fantastic follow-up to last year’s winner Robert Lacy as “Diplomat of the Year”. As part of his award, he was provided with a giant plaque commemorating the honor. Nolan will also receive a “stay and play” package to attend the World Series of Board Gaming in Las Vegas, Nevada in 2026 (<https://wsbgvegas.com/>). We congratulate Nolan on the honor and look forward to seeing him at events in 2026. If you want to get into contact with him, please reach out in the Diplomacy thread on Renegade Game Studios official Discord at <https://discord.gg/R6323FMp>.

DIPLOMACY at OWLCON

Rice University Student Center Houston, TX
Saturday, February 21, 2026
Round 1 starts 10am.
Round 2 starts 4pm.

OWLCON Diplomacy Mini Tournament

Participate in one or both rounds to score points!

Each round will last 4 hours or to the end of the fall 1907 turn for classic and fall 1875 turn for Era of Empires. (whichever happens first).

One hour before the start of each round there will be a rules teaching, overview and refresher.

Materials are provided for the events. You do not need to bring your own.

There will be prizes and giveaways for participants and trophies for the top finishers as well as special awards.

Players will play both Classic Diplomacy and then Era of Empires. In Round 1 players will be assigned either Classic or the Era of Empires board, then in the second round switch boards and play again.

Get your con attendee's badge at:

https://owlcon.com/attendee_info.php

After you get a badge. Event signups can be found at:

https://owlcon.com/event_listings.php

