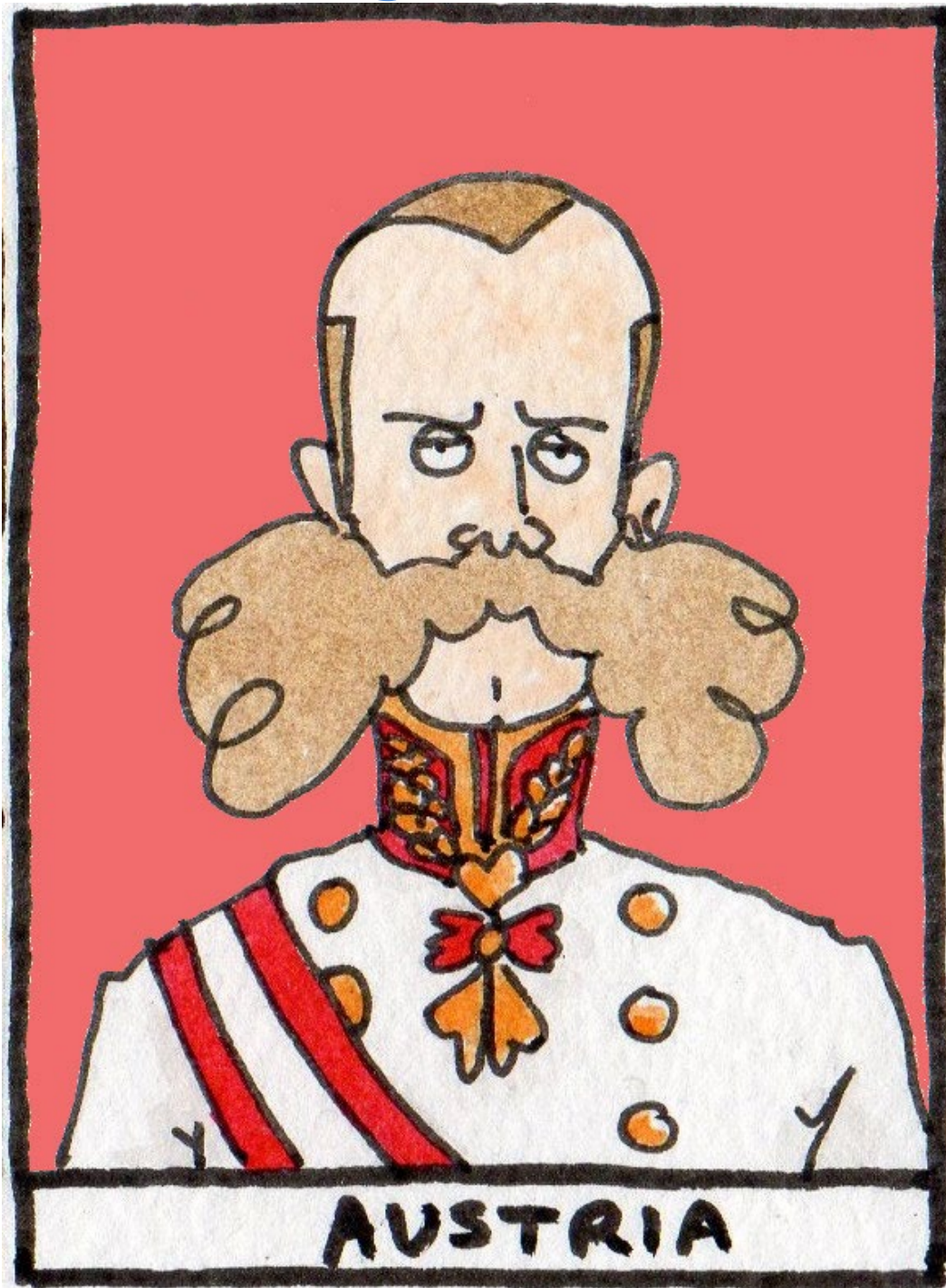


Diplomacy World #174



Summer 2026 Issue
www.diplomacyworld.net

Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of **Diplomacy World**, the Summer 2026 issue. Sometimes it's a surprise to just make it to the next one. There have been so many issues over since I returned to the zine in 2007. Jim Burgess never told me it would be a 20-year sentence!

With less than a week to go before the deadline, we still have a number of excellent articles for you to read and enjoy (plus all the material which will arrive at the last minute). Just in the last few days I received:

- Edi Birsan writing about World DipCon in Athens
- Conrad Woodring answers all your questions about the upcoming EDC 2026
- Chris Brand writing about the evolution of DipTV
- Randall Lawrence-Hurt interviewing Liam Bennett

And that's just what I remember off the top of my head!

Oh, by the way, starting this issue we've begun including the solution to Archie Duke's Never a Cross Word in the **same issue**. That way you don't have to wait three months to find out what clues you might have missed. Just check the table of contents. For safety (so you don't accidentally read it when you don't want to) the solution will be placed upside-down.

What's the Diplomacy variant universe look like these days? Do people play many variants anymore? I get the feeling the interest level in them was much higher back when we had postal zines. Maybe the fact that you can get into standard a game online at will, whenever you feel like it, means less time thinking about other forms to play.

In a way – and I guess some of this is simply old-timer's syndrome – I found games of Diplomacy to be more valuable to me back when the commitment was bigger. Sign up for a postal game and it might take a few months for a gamestart is even announced. Then you have a month between turns, numerous letters back and forth. I'm not really saying it was "better" back then. Only "different." And some of those differences were positive. "The world went and got itself in a big damn hurry." – Brooks (The Shawshank Redemption)

That's enough from me this time around. ***I'll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is October 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 Fall, and happy stabbing!

Diplomacy World Staff:

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

Contributors in 2026: Nassim Abed, Sabrina Ahuja, Alex Amann, Mal Arky, Shane Armstrong, Stuart Barton, Edi Birsan, Chris Brand, Zoe Cameron, Dr. William B. Drummond, Archie Duke, Katie Gray, Manus Hand, Thomas Haver, David Hood, Robert Lacy, Randy Lawrence-Hurt, Peter McNamara, Mark Nelson, Andrew North, Rob Schuppe, Adam Sigal, Adam Silverman, David Smith, Nastja Styles, Bonnie Tatatutaki, Conrad Woodring, Chris Woolgar. Add your name to the 2026 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 Calhmer. It is currently owned by Hasbro and the name is their trademark with all rights reserved. Diplomacy World is a quarterly magazine devoted to discussion of all topics related to the game of Diplomacy, and was founded by Walt Buchanan in 1974.

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Knives and Daggers - The Diplomacy World Letter Column



Adam Sigal - As a long-time reader of Diplomacy World I have come to appreciate how great this publication is in not only bringing people together but in being the "newspaper of record" for our hobby. The consistent quality and efforts by the volunteers are praiseworthy. For those not in the media world, such a publication is described by Wikipedia as a source whose "news-gathering functions are considered authoritative and independent. Such publications are thus 'newspapers of record by reputation' and include some of the oldest and most widely respected newspapers in the world." These authoritative publications are also described as having the function of posting legal or public notices.

It is with this in mind that I call into question recent editorial choices to publish knowingly false information. In the past three editions editors have printed, without correction, articles claiming that WDC 2027 will take place in Las Vegas, NV when it was voted to be hosted in North America in Chicago at Weasel Moot, per the rules of the WDC charter. It was voted that way in San Francisco.

I know writing this letter stating this fact risks getting me banned permanently from Renegade events - a penalty others have faced for similar statements. I personally refuse to be intimidated by such possible threats.

[[Right or wrong, my position on disputes such as this has been that, as the current steward of the zine, it is not my responsibility (nor my place) to take my personal opinions and make them the official views of Diplomacy World. I have my own beliefs, views, an opinions as an individual and a (somewhat detached) hobby member. But those personal opinions are just that: personal.

Certainly, other Lead Editors have done things differently. Larry Peery would be the clearest example; he was always happy to decide what was right or wrong, and demand everyone else follow his choices. That's simply not me. Thirty years ago, when I started my first stint as Lead Editor, I bet I would have felt differently. But I was younger, more energetic, and above all I felt much more involved in the hobby. I received a hundred zines back then, wrote fifty letters a week (mailed postally), ran PDORA, compiled the hobby census, and published not just Diplomacy World but my own thick dipzine Maniac's Paradise, as well as secondary hobby publications like Foolhardy and Your Zine of Zines. Today, I am Lead Editor of Diplomacy World and a hobby old timer (albeit not as old as some). That's all.

These days, I leave it to people who actually attend the events on a regular basis, or who are active members of hobby organizations, to state their opinions and to fight their battles. And you can do so here if you choose; I encourage it.

As I said, I have my own opinions. And if I'd founded Diplomacy World myself, perhaps I'd be pounding the table expressing them. Or if I still published Eternal Sunshine or Maniac's Paradise, maybe I'd be writing a column in there on this topic. But right or wrong, this is the way I've chosen to conduct myself within the pages of Diplomacy World since Jim Burgess convinced me to return.

...even though my patience is often sorely strained.

I should also add: I think it would be wholly inappropriate for anyone to be banned from an event simply for expressing an opinion about the WDC Charter, and whether it was properly followed.]]



Peter McNamara - WorldDipCon 2028 has been voted to be held in Melbourne! (Goffy is the one responsible)

[[I generally blame Goffy for everything, always. Even the weather.]]



Thomas Haver - The release of The Golden Blade has been accompanied by print and online media. I thought I would aggregate some of the materials here for anyone interested. Multiple designer interviews have been conducted with Rosco Schock, one by Game Design Unboxed (https://gamedesignunboxed.podbean.com/e/142_diplomacy_thegoldenblade/) and one by Legendary Tactics (<https://youtu.be/UrNctWSTOBY?si=KENflXrjYy4C4yDv>). The Discriminating Gamer posted a review (<https://youtu.be/7EgydXz5n1k?si=H-L4rqxyDXFT-leg>). Board Game Nation released an unboxing & review (<https://youtu.be/XXOKfPMWdm8?si=mykJBiyXuJvM-Qlh>).

If you're seeking written content (and if you're reading Diplomacy World I know you are), then please give Rosco Schock's "Designer Diary" over at BoardGameGeek (BGG) a read (<https://boardgamegeek.com/blog/1/blogpost/185137/designer-diary-diplomacy-the-golden-blade-card-gam>). Rosco does an excellent job of laying out the timeline from idea to published game. He even picked up some praise from BGG founder Scott Alden in the comments. I was fortunate enough to work on the game with Rosco

going back to 2023, but even if you weren't directly involved you can see the effort (and patience) required to publish a game. The designer diary helped propel "The Golden Blade" to #4 on the BGG "hotness", a tracker for the most popular board games on the site. Renegade ended up selling through their latest print run of Diplomacy thanks to the added visibility of the game. Congrats to Rosco on his game and thanks for promoting Diplomacy to the larger gaming community!

A set of Diplomacy accessories is scheduled to be released in August this year (see links to the product <https://renegadegamestudios.com/diplomacy-deluxe-map/> and <https://renegadegamestudios.com/diplomacy-deluxe-token-pack/>). As part of the promotion, we recorded a video with Legendary Tactics reviewing the Deluxe Map and Deluxe Tokens. These are the first two such accessories in the history of Diplomacy. I hope the fans will enjoy them. I started using the Deluxe Map & Tokens at events in March and have received a lot of positive feedback.

Jon Peterson gave an excellent interview for Asterisk magazine on the history of gaming. Jon is a historian who specializes in gaming. He published the book, "Playing at the World," which was released more than a decade ago and recently underwent a reprint. The book tells the story of role-playing games from the post WW2 think tanks to Gary Gygax's Dungeons and Dragons. Included in the book (and interview) is the connection between war games and Diplomacy, along with the connection between Diplomacy and RPGs. The interview is here: <https://asteriskmag.substack.com/p/what-playing-games-can-teach-us-about>.

Lastly, I recently published an article about "Diplomacy: The Golden Blade" card game in the May issue (#158) of Meeple Monthly magazine. Those fans who are looking to collect Diplomacy memorabilia can find the magazine in their local game store or by subscribing online at <https://www.acdd.com/more/meeple-monthly/>. I previously published two articles in "Game Trade Magazine" in 2023 and 2025; those articles focused on the new release of Diplomacy and Era of Empire, respectively. Print is far from dead. Keep supporting your friendly local magazine publishing Diplomacy content.



Shane Armstrong - An update on WDC Charter Revision

Following the open letter published in the last Diplomacy World, the following motion was carried unanimously at WDC in Athens in May.

"That Shane Armstrong, Katie Gray, Dan Lester, and Lei Saarlainen be appointed as the working group to seek submissions, and consider and draft amendments to the World Dip Con Charter to enable voting on any amendments at WDC 2027 in Chicago.

The working group must seek submissions from the face-to-face hobby, and publish submissions unless the person or group making the submission requests that their submission be confidential. The working group should take into account the content of submissions when considering and drafting amendments. The working group should present a draft of the amended charter to the community informally through channels including Discord, WhatsApp and email a month before the commencement of WDC 2027."

Further information about the submission process will be communicated across Discord servers and WhatsApp chats, and published in Diplomacy World.



Race to the Finish in DC: The Circle DC Diplomacy Triathlon (2026)

by Thomas Haver

The Circle DC Diplomacy Triathlon wrapped up in dramatic fashion, with a single placement point determining the championship. Four years ago, we committed to bring Diplomacy back to Washington, DC after many years of absence from the wider Diplomacy community. Circle DC (Fort Circle Games) has been an excellent partner in those four years, providing event space and promotion to bring in both local players and travelers.



In 2025 we hosted a classical Diplomacy tournament, with Evan Walter of New Jersey winning the event. This year we modified the format for the convention with a new style of Diplomacy tournament: the Triathlon. For those unfamiliar with the format, in a Diplomacy Triathlon players compete in a three-round event, with each round featuring a different published Diplomacy game (classical Diplomacy, Era of Empire, and The Golden Blade). The winner is the best all-around player across the three games/rounds based on placement. For each game we award Gold, Silver, and Bronze plaques for the top 3 performances across all boards played. Plenty of prizes and variety in games to keep our players happy.

Circle DC is a three-day convention focused on historical & wargaming hosted at the DC History Center (<https://dchistory.org/>). The convention brings in game designers, publishers, media, and fans of tabletop gaming. You'll get an opportunity to play "Twilight Struggle" against Jason Matthews or learn "Votes for Women" from Tory Brown. The convention is a golden opportunity to bring your unpublished design and schedule decades-old classics. The founder, Kevin Bertram, is a fan of Diplomacy and shows his support for our events by giving Diplomacy a separate room to ourselves.

Day 1 of the event featured teaching (learn to play) events for Diplomacy. We teach both Diplomacy and Era

of Empire at the same time on giant, walkable maps. This gives new or inexperienced players an opportunity to play the game (and win some prizes!). Everyone participating in the Diplomacy event this year, Triathlon or teaching games, received a free Diplomacy shirt and a Diplomacy hoodie. Renegade Game Studios also donated many games to the daily raffle for the convention. We also featured something unique this year: the first appearance of the Deluxe Diplomacy / Era of Empire Map and Deluxe Tokens, which were sent directly from the factory months ahead of their planned production release.



Round 1 of the Triathlon began with classical Diplomacy. Start with the familiar. We had a good mix of player experience for the first event between new players who wanted more after our teaching round and folks who've played for decades. In each round of the event, board assignment and Power draw was random. We split the games between the giant, walkable map outside and our separate "Diplomacy Room" on the second floor. On the deluxe map, Robert Zahn (Germany) steamrolled the board behind a Western Triple that turned into an English-German alliance end-game. His growth was made possible by an absolute dismantling of Russia, who never got to build in the game. Austria and Turkey combined on both Russia and Italy early game, not picking up on the Western Triple until it was too late. By the time they shifted focus, Germany was sitting in Tyrolia, Galicia, and Ukraine. Zahn's Germany finished with a 13-center board top and Jason Williams' England finished with 9-centers.

The giant map, in comparison, was a hotly contested battle of shifting alliances. Under early pressure as France, Kevin Fernandez invited Germany into his territory to help defend against pressure from Italy and England. The risky play ended up paying off, as Kevin avoided elimination and stuck around as a key player.

Aram Schvey's Turkey leveraged (maybe created?) turmoil in the east, first attacking Russia with England and then shifting toward Austria to establish a strong position. Like crabs in a bucket, the player's changed allegiances multiple times during the game to pull others back down. There would be no runaway leader on this board. Turkey and Germany tied for board top at 7-centers each, with no players eliminated.



After the first round was complete, our players attended a planned dinner at The Capital Burger next door. The DC History Center is near the convention center, with dozens of restaurants within walking distance of the venue. As part of the Triathlon activities, we were able to provide comped dinners on Friday and Saturday evening. Throughout the weekend, Circle DC also planned multiple external activities, including visits to the Folger Shakespeare Library, the Supreme Court, various lunches & dinners, and even a trip to the Congressional

Cemetery to learn about beekeeping (you get your own jar of honey too!). Social activities are a core part of Diplomacy events, and Circle DC takes this to another level.

On Saturday morning Round 2 featured "Diplomacy: Era of Empire". Released in 2025, Era of Empire transports players to the Age of New Imperialism where each Power is grasping for control over large swathes of Asia, Africa, and Europe. The game has the same core mechanics as classical Diplomacy with some added mechanics to make the experience unique. The game features "Conscription" and "Conversion" mechanics. Conscription allows players to build in any unoccupied Supply Center they own, which is different from classical Diplomacy where you can only build in your Home Centers. Conversion allows you to change Armies to Fleets and vice versa, so long as the unit is in a Supply Center during the Winter phase. The game is played on a larger map (more provinces, more Supply Centers) compared to classical Diplomacy. Most notably, given the recency of the release, there is no established meta for the game. No "named" alliances. No standard openings. At events I've run, this has resulted in some spectacular, exciting games with unexpected endings.



In Round 2 on the giant, walkable map we had early game dominance from Jordan Green, playing Britain. Many Powers "doubled up" on their Supply Center counts in the first year. The second year was the big swing, with attacks on Russia and France. The primary beneficiary was Andrew Burnard's China, who moved up to 9-centers. Eventually, both were eclipsed by Blake Hakimian's Japan, who had allied with the Dutch to carve up east Asia. Russia, led by Owen Fleming, wisely abandoned the east and focused his efforts on the West and Central Asia. Owen regrew Russia into a 7-center power by game end. However, it was Blake Hakimian's Japan that ruled the day. He finished with a 16-center board top.

One the deluxe map, we experienced the reverse of the other game. Japan was best by three neighbors and Russia opted to abandon the West to focus his attention on the Eastern front. The British-Turkish alliance quickly divided up the neutral in Africa and the Middle East, then

went to work across the map. Despite the best efforts of Kevin Fernandez's Japan and Gavin Burnard's Netherlands, the British-Turkish alliance continued to roll. Whit Swafford's Turkey tied with Robert Zahn's Britain with 14-centers each at game end, splitting the victory. The two games ended up flowing in opposite directions with two strong alliances and one Power attacked by three neighbors. A couple of great games where the players learned -- unlike classical Diplomacy - - you can't setup a full defense if you want to be successful in Era of Empire. Swing your sword!



Players were on an even footing in the final round. Only a few of them had played the game previously (at Battlefront Dayton in 2025), so much like Era of Empire, there was no established meta. In fact, the game had just started to ship from Renegade in February. From the three games in Round 3, several players clearly separated themselves from the others in a key aspect: table talk. In many social deduction card games, it's essential to flex your muscles via over-the-table negotiation. Diplomacy is all about negotiation. Whenever another player moved perilously close to victory, the smart players would call this out publicly. They weren't just negotiating with their neighbors -- they were negotiating with the entire board. This same lesson applies to Diplomacy. You may be playing Turkey in the corner of the board, but you need to talk to France every turn, regardless of whether you border them or not. You have common neighbors and you don't want anyone to establish a dominant position.



After Round 2 was complete, players left the venue for lunch while I reset the room with Rosco Schock for the final round. Rosco is the designer of "Diplomacy: The Golden Blade" card game. He drove down from his home in Lancaster, PA to both teach the game during the convention and lead Round 3 (who better to run the game than the designer?). Rosco had been teaching The Golden Blade during the convention with positive response from attendees. The Golden Blade is Diplomacy in card game form, with the same focus on negotiation and strategic play via secret Orders. Compared to classical Diplomacy, the new card game plays about 15 minutes per player and has no player elimination. Instead of racing to 18 Supply Centers (22 in Era of Empire) for an outright win, players instead race on a Power track with lanes for your Army, Fleet, and Political cards. Players have a hand of cards with Orders to play next to adjacent neighbors. Just like classical Diplomacy, nothing holds you to your word in negotiations -- only when you reveal the Order cards each turn will you see if your neighbor is an ally or an enemy. Alliances shift throughout the game as players come close to a victory. The game features a lot of close, back-and-forth play with tense finishes.



The players who quickly translated their classical Diplomacy skills to The Golden Blade were the most successful. On one board, that involved playing the tried-and-true role of "I'm so weak -- that guy over there is the real threat; let's attack him!". Two of the three games ended with two players simultaneously reaching level 3 of the Power track. The tiebreaker rules go to the level of the next highest Power track, which determined our two winners for each game. Nigel Mease, Keith Boone, and Derek Croxton emerged victorious at their respective tables.

Rosco provided one last rules explanation before the start of Round 3, then we assigned the players to three tables. Each game of The Golden Blade can handle 2-7 players, compared to the 7 needed for both classical Diplomacy and Era of Empire. The tournament leaders, Blake Hakimian and Robert Zahn, both won their games of classic Diplomacy and Era of Empire in the first two rounds. It would come down to who could perform better in The Golden Blade.

As for our two tournament leaders coming into the final game, Zahn opted to build up his Power tracks safely at his table, whereas Blake went for the outright victory on his table. There would be no free path to victory, with both leaders taking some attacks from their neighbors seeking a share of glory. At the end of all three games, Zahn edged out Blake by one placement point for the championship. A razor thin margin of victory in The Golden Blade.



Congratulations to Robert Zahn on winning the Circle DC Diplomacy Triathlon! This is the second such Triathlon event conducted, with more to come at BGG Spring, Battlefront Dayton, and BGG Con. For his efforts, Zahn won an engraved Golden Blade to go with his championship. A worthy and fitting trophy for the event. Robert's primary competitor in the final, Blake Hakimian, took home 2nd place. A fantastic finish for his first ever tournament. Whit Swafford, who played in his first Diplomacy tournament at last year's Circle DC, rounded out the podium at 3rd place.

The podium (top 3) finishers received a Diplomacy hat. We awarded Blake Hakimian the coveted "Best Diplomat" award for his performance throughout the event. He participated in the teaching round, helped adjudicate the Era of Empire round, switched into new themed hats every day, and was an absolute pleasure to be around (as noted by many other players). Designer Rosco Schock received the honorary "Golden Blade" award, a carved wooden blade, as thanks for his volunteer work throughout the convention. Kevin Fernandez, DC native, finished the tournament in 4th place and took home the "Best Propagandist" award. Kevin fought through attacks in each of his games and managed to pull a rabbit out of his hat in each game, picking up solid placement scores to claim 4th. Brothers Andrew and Gavin Burnard finished 4th (tied) and 6th place in their first ever tournament. To round out our top board, former World Boardgaming Championships

Diplomacy winner Keith Boone finished 7th. Each of the top seven finishers received a copy of The Golden Blade card game.

We finished the event with a trip to "Founding Farmers & Distillers" for comped dinner & drinks. Just like the tournament itself, we were joined by both new and experienced Diplomacy tournament competitors. Circle DC finishes each night at a reasonable time, which means we can make reservations at local restaurants for group meals each evening. A wonderful, friendly way to end a weekend of backstabbing on the board.

Overall, the Diplomacy Triathlon format was popular, making it our largest event in four years in Washington, DC. 34 players competed in the tournament event, with dozens more participating in teaching events during the convention. Many thanks to Kevin Bertram and all the volunteers associated with Circle DC for making the convention a memorable experience for us all. Thanks to Renegade Game Studios for sponsoring the event. Lastly, Congrats to the winners listed below and see you next year!

Top Board:

- 1st Robert Zahn
- 2nd Blake Hakimian
- 3rd Whit Swafford
- 4th (tie) Kevin Fernandez
- 4th (tied) Andrew Burnard
- 6th Gavin Burnard
- 7th Keith Boone

Classical Diplomacy:

- Gold - Robert Zahn
- Silver - Blake Hakimian & Aram Schvey
- Bronze - Jason Williams

Era of Empire:

- Gold - Blake Hakimian
- Silver - Whit Swafford & Robert Zahn
- Bronze - Joaquin Matamis & Samuel Planck

Golden Blade:

- Gold - Nigel Mease
- Silver - Keith Boone
- Bronze - Derek Croxton

- Best Diplomat - Blake Hakimian
- Best Propagandist - Kevin Fernandez
- Golden Blade (honorary) - Rosco Schock

Overview of the North American Diplomacy Federation (NADF)

by Katie Gray

Diplomacy is alive and well with numerous opportunities to play this exciting game including virtual, face-to-face, and press formats with people from all around the world. This issue of Diplomacy World overflows with recent tournament reports, promotions for upcoming events, and strategy discussions to support anyone interested in playing Diplomacy! For new players, these different options can be overwhelming so we wanted to share information on a key resource available to Diplomacy players; the North American Diplomacy Federation (NADF).

The NADF is a volunteer-run organization that aims to promote the play of Diplomacy in all its forms with a focus on the competitive, face-to-face tournament scene. Our goals are to strengthen and grow the hobby by connecting players to the broader community, encouraging folks to play, and fostering a welcoming, fun, and safe environment for all attendees. There are approximately a dozen NADF-recognized face-to-face tournaments across the US and Canada throughout the year, run by extraordinary tournament directors who bring years of experience and passion. Their dedication results in well-organized tournaments that include competitive games and fun off-board social events. The NADF draws upon their collective knowledge to provide resources and connections for organizers looking to start or grow local clubs and tournaments.

A key tenet of the NADF is ensuring that a positive environment is provided for all players. As such, all NADF-recognized events adhere to a strict Code of Conduct (CoC) requiring all participants to treat others with respect, refrain from unsafe and disruptive behavior, and safeguard the integrity of the competition. Any reported violations are handled confidentially according to the formal process outlined in the CoC itself and actions are taken to prevent further infractions. In addition, any of the tournament directors or the NADF board members are available to address incidents that may not rise to the level of a CoC violation or that a player wishes to address informally. The goal is to minimize any negative behavior while encouraging a positive and fun environment for everyone.

The NADF Board currently consists of Matt Crill and Emmett Wainwright of Colorado, Justin Loar of

California, Keith Worstell of North Carolina, and President Katie Gray of New Mexico. Join us on Discord by following the QR code, visit thenadf.org for more information, or email NADFboard@gmail.com with feedback or questions.

The NADF is passionate about sharing the game of Diplomacy and we are available to help with a variety of topics including providing outreach materials for growing local clubs, information about upcoming tournaments, or connections to online Diplomacy communities. We'd love to hear from you!



2026 Asia-Pacific Diplomacy Schedule



TBC October - Flying Fox Fandango - Melbourne
13-15 November - Australian Open - Canberra

World DipCon in Athens

by Edi Birsan

The World DipCon in Athens was the best event overall of the twenty-four I have been to. The effort by Spyros and the full team of organizers - including Jamal, to Spyros' daughter Georgina and a gang from the Athen's club - was world-class, from the fun pre-event tours to the tournament management.

The players were featured as major contributors, with Tournament Director Jamal doing a fantastic job, and it was a credit to the players that they resolved things between themselves. Jamal's ability to handle 106 players through announcements and running meetings was special. Jamal, a former World Champion, is an excellent addition to the hobby, coming from the Australian side like other Down Under folks such as Goffy Goff.

There were some aspects to this event that the hobby should consider discussing and making mainstream:

1. Wellbeing team members.
2. Voting with cards, but not with a neutral tournament director.
3. Soft central clock, soft discipline.
4. Large, customized maps.
5. Shadow Analyst from media DBN for the top board.
6. Seeded final round, with ranking restricted by board assignment.
7. The absolute best country awards I have seen.
8. Some interesting non-rank awards relating to Greek Golden Age History.
9. A spectacular pre-tournament week of events.
10. Top-notch personal service in the usual friction in such tours.
11. Designated order reader and piece pusher, rather than rotating the functions amongst the players.
12. Sashes for country identification.
13. Recorded hobby meeting.
14. Scoring system.
15. Board assignment notification by email

1. Wellbeing team members.

This was a collection of 4 or 5 players that were designated as go-to contacts for when people were getting stressed, or when anyone needed some help when they see developing escalation or crashes amongst other players.

I saw this in action with one of the younger players (well, actually when you're 76 years old like me, everyone is younger, so let's narrow it down to younger than my grandson: 33). It was a great success and I am sure

saved the event for the player and had them return to game without disturbance to the other players, and play in subsequent rounds.

2. Voting without a neutral party

When there was to be a vote, what they did was give players the voting card (red for stop and black to carry on). The order box was where the actual ballot was placed, and the discard was placed UNDER the box. The orders for the turn were also placed in the box so your orders reflected the possibility that if the play stop or draw was defeated you would go on with the game.

Then the first thing at deadline was to count that you had the right number of cards. Too many cards and all the cards were gathered, shuffled, and redistributed to immediately do it again. If in the order box there were less than the number of cards then all the missing cards were counted in FAVOR of stopping. Everyone was supposed put cards in and manipulation by people trying to get no one to put votes in was consider BANNED and equivalent to taking someone else's moves out of the box.

All the vote cards were then revealed, and any black card vetoed the proposal. You did find out how many voted against the proposal, but this was a good thing, and the system kept players from having to call in the tournament director or an assistant to run the draw.

In addition, the Silverman method was applied: you could only have three private votes, and all subsequent votes were done in public when the deadline arrived, with players holding up their votes publicly at the same time.

No game got to the public voting, but this method resulted in a massive increase in good sportsmanship, and stopped the player perpetually voting draws down in secret, dragging the game out and casting a very unfun vibe on the game.

I strongly support this for future events. After discussion locally in the San Francisco area, it may be fully copied.

While I have always disliked all private voting techniques in favor of the simple show-of-hands method, this was a very good innovation. ((I understand the peer group pressure of open voting, and I confess I love that part.))

3. Soft Central Clock

Doing a central clock with Drop-Dead deadlines can be a real stressor during play, notably when someone wants to refuse a set of orders because they are not in the box.

Players were advised to be polite on this, without turning it into a repeating abuse of extra time. That worked as far as I saw, with one case on the top table where Jamal did a countdown from ten to force an order set in.

A central continuous clock means you are all on the same turn. In a specific game-year ending, it means the game must end at a specific time that is not subject to players purposely delaying a game, when there is a specific time ending even when it is only known to the Tournament Director within a range of one to two hours.

The Spring turn was given 3 to 5 minutes extra to account for the adjustments that are done at the end of the Fall move, (traditionally called Winter).

4. Large maps/Backstabbr Maps

There were customized cloth maps with the Greek Club logo. They were a little larger than the game box boards, and provided excellent space for play. In addition, there were special 'Backstabbr'-style maps, which were also big, with special 3-D printed pieces that match the triangle fleet and circle army pieces used there. These maps also had the official abbreviations used on 'Backstabbr'.

The top board featured two maps: one that was only used by the players (which was about 40% bigger than the standard map) and had large 3D pieces of battleships and World War 1 trapezoid-tread-style tanks. Then there was a huge map set on the ground with larger pieces, which was a mirror of the positions of the top board, where the orders were read out a second time and moves echoed. This allowed spectators to follow without interfering with the players.

5. Shadow Analyst from media DBN for the top board.

To assist with DBN's coverage of the top board, there were two reporters who followed the players around and made notes about the diplomatic discussions. This helped give more background to the orders issued. They did not speak or comment on the discussions, and were like a shadow. At this time, not having seen the broadcast, I cannot evaluate the impact. It seemed to work from my experience with them.

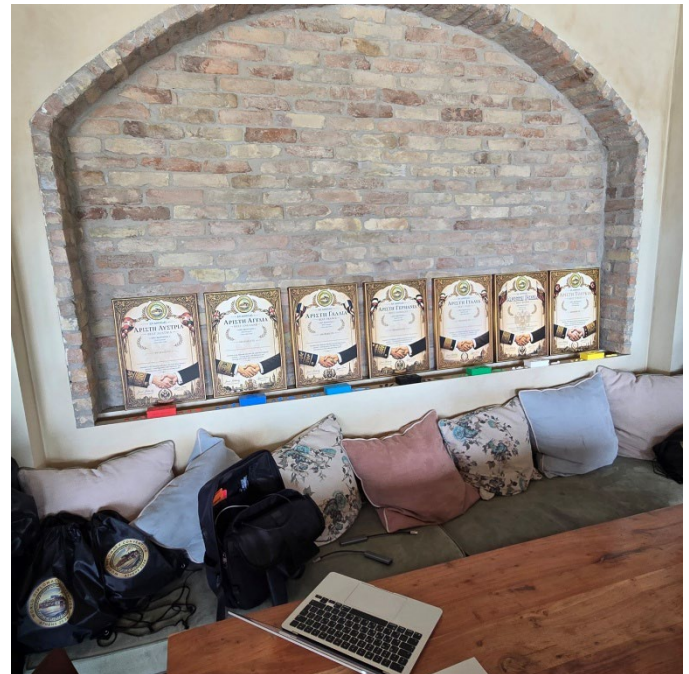
6. Seeded final round with ranking restricted by board assignment.

There were restricted, seeded boards for the final top 49 ranked players, with the final event rank based on the 4th round points in that game controlling ranking from 1-7, 8-14, 14-21, 21-28, 29-35, 36-52, 43-49.

For example, if at the end of 3 rounds you were ranked 10th, you were placed on the 2nd board, and the results of that board were restricted to rankings of 8 to 14. If the 10th player did not show, then they were delegated to the top of the following group, and the top player of the category was moved up to replace them and enjoy the opportunity to achieve a rank of 8-14 rather than 15-21.

Players in the category of 50th or beyond were simply rank restricted to positions 50 and higher.

This worked well without much grumbling. It avoided having someone who got clobbered on the top board from finishing many spots down, when someone from say the 4th tier board had a massive score for rolling over a weaker board. Having had that happen to me on numerous WDC Top Boards, I am biased in favor of this, as I feel that all top board players should be guaranteed ranking 1-7, as clearly they have the hardest board in that tournament.



7. The absolute best country awards I have seen.

In 1976 at Origins in Baltimore, (still the most boards in an event at 29 in the first round and 22 in second) Mike Rocamora and I introduced Best Country Awards. Since then, they have become a standard feature of the hobby. The awards in Athens - with a definite Greek history theme - were outstanding, being a framed printed cloth that can be hung on a wall (see picture) with a set of special country pieces with WDC printed on

them. The second best I ever saw were done about 20 years ago, and had a country plaque with replica top military metals (such as the Victoria Cross) for each country. They were also not given out on simple score basis, but were given out on the concept of Outstanding Play. This allowed the awards to be spread around to reflect tough competition as well as outstanding play, and avoided giving multiples to a single player.



I strongly advise that all folks consider renaming the Best Country awards to “Outstanding play of...”, which reflects that flexibility.

8. Some interesting non-rank awards relating to Greek Golden Age History.

This was a great way to imbed the locale into the tournament experience for better memories. Here are a few:

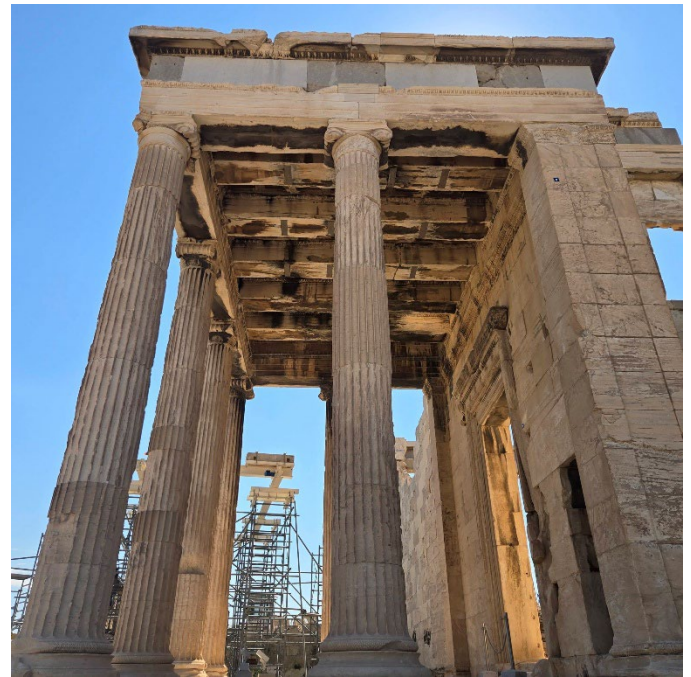
Ajax Award: the Trojan War’s 2nd best Greek Hero that Homer did not consider in the top tier characters of the Iliad over shadowed by Achilles etc. This went to the person who came in 8th and missed the top board.

Icarus Award: the most spectacular collapse after reaching a height which went to an 8 center Russia that went to zero.

The Sicilian Expedition Award: for the most disastrous ill-conceived attack of the Greek-Sparta war. In this case it was given to an entire board that drew the game in 1904 after deadlocking and maybe having 6 units move over the course of 2 years and everyone banging their heads against each other’s walls. It will hang in my study as a reminder of what not to do in the future.

9. A spectacular pre-tournament week of events.

I cannot say enough about the events including a day exploration to the nearby historic island of Hydra ((Hail Hydra for Avenger Fans)), or the trip to a special tour of the Acropolis and other sites, that doubled as a 5Km semi marathon for at least one of the participants and the trip to the Poseidon Temple.



10. Top-notch personal service for the usual friction in such tours

I cannot praise Spyros and Team Greece for their help in my case, which was plagued with some snafus, but reflected on the extraordinary level of service to the hobby that they displayed to all players. Bravo.

11. Designated order reader and piece pusher rather than rotating the functions amongst the players.

This worked out well, moving the game along, especially since many players are not familiar with alternative valid abbreviations (or even some variation on how to pronounce Marseilles). Of course, the piece pusher has to be watched, because when the board position takes precedence over the computer reporting of orders, there can be some awkwardness. But the efficiency factor prevails over the occasional failure to push Army Ukraine to Sevastopol in Fall 01...urghhhhh.

12. Sashes for country identification.

The highly visible sashes - in the color of the country - are a great innovation from the Greek Club, and cheap and better than having a fleet piece stuck in your name

badge or a small book in the color of your country. One idea is that for any sash that was worn by a soloist, that the name of the player and the date be written on the sash as a living history of the position, and something better than graffiti on a bathroom wall at the venue.

13. Recorded hobby meeting.

The recording of the hobby meeting was a good precedent, especially after the chaos in prior meetings with wildly disagreeing reports. I would also like these to be recorded on audio and video; those recordings may be entertaining as part of a podcast.

14. Scoring system.

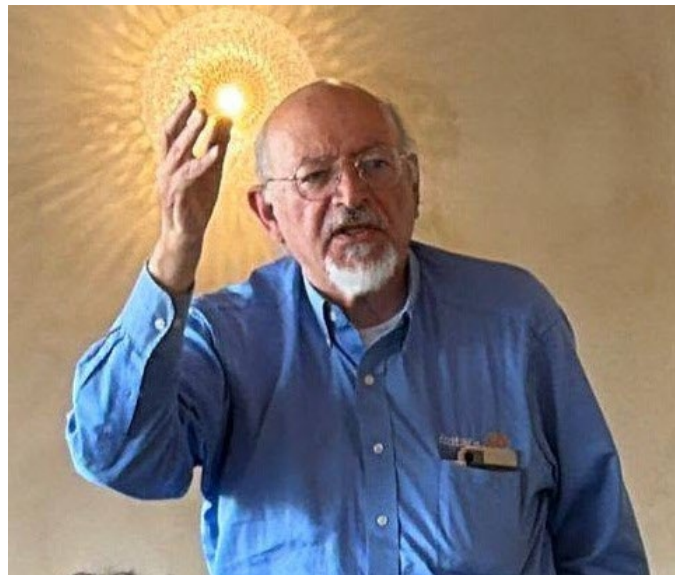
This was another unique scoring system and I love that. Not that this was superior to all others; I strongly oppose copying another system, as for me, the charm of Diplomacy is that there is no consensus on a universal scoring system. I applaud everyone who makes a unique scoring system, even if other people think it stinks. I remind people that the very first DipCon scoring system was whoever the tournament director felt deserved to win the championship was named the winner. (1970 DipCon III won by John Smythe with no complaints, even by a certain juvenile delinquent who was considered 2nd.)

15. Board assignment notification by email

I believe this was started by Chris Brand in Vancouver, it was used to perfection here. It saves time and

eliminates the boring reading out of board assignments. I suggest that those who are going to have large events get in touch with Chris to figure out how the cyber-demon code can be put in place to perpetuate the A.I. takeover of the human species.

That is enough for now, and hope there is something that you can use to make your events better. Use these innovations as a basis from which you can add onto for the greater good of the hobby.



The Evolution of DipTV

by Chris Brand

Genesis

Back in 2014, John Jamieson and I were sitting in a bar with TVs all around us showing some sporting event. He commented that it would be nice if there was similar coverage for face-to-face Diplomacy tournaments. That's how the Diplomacy Tournament Visualizer, or DipTV, was born.

The original intent was that somebody at the tournament (probably the Tournament Director) would enter enough detail that a website could auto-generate coverage of the tournament, allowing viewers to follow it. Of course, that meant that the system needed to know who was playing, how the games were progressing, and the current scores (or how the scores were calculated). At the time, the plan was to take photos of the games themselves, and to use them to show the positions. To provide background, the system was able to read the World Diplomacy Database (WDD) and calculate performance statistics for the players from that information. This

system debuted with the 2017 Cascadia Open that I ran in British Columbia, Canada.

Evolution

One of the first changes I made was to integrate the board-seeding software that I'd been working on separately. Both systems needed to know who was playing, and DipTV needed to know about the games, so combining the two avoided a lot of duplication. DipTV started to become useful for actually running a tournament rather than just watching one. Another early feature was the ability to easily generate the spreadsheets needed to upload tournament results to the WDD.

Then along came COVID, and face-to-face Diplomacy was forced to evolve. Games were taking place on Backstabbr, with voice communication over Discord. So DipTV evolved to be able to read the game state from Backstabbr, and to be able to post board calls to Discord (as well as via email). The Diplomacy Broadcast

Network (DBN) was also born, with real live tournament commentary, which filled that original niche that DipTV was created for far better than DipTV ever did. The focus shifted completely to being a tool for TDs.

When the World Diplomacy Reference (WDR) was created in 2024, it and DipTV were both modified to facilitate exchanging data between the two, and changes have also been made to make it easier for the DBN folk to extract the data they need from DipTV.

Over time, it's been adopted by more and more TDs from all over the world. It has now been used to manage almost 100 tournaments. As TDs come up with imaginative new ways to structure their tournaments, DipTV has often been tweaked to support them. It supports over 30 different ways to score games, along with multiple ways to combine those scores into overall tournament scores. It also recently got proper support for seeding rounds with top boards...finally.

Anyone can see the public tournaments on the site, but you need an account to add tournaments (please contact me if you're a TD who'd like an account). Tournaments can also be kept hidden so that only the TD can see them on the site.

Technology

A website is simply a computer running some software. For DipTV, I didn't just want to put a website online, but also to make the software available so that anyone can see how it works, run it themselves, and contribute to it. As far as I know, the only website running the software is the one I run at diplomacytv.com. That's a tiny Amazon Web Services instance (they lured me in with a "first year free" offer) with a PostgreSQL database.

The DipTV code is published on GitHub at <https://github.com/UEWBot/dipvis>. It is "open source," meaning that anyone can read it, run it, and even change it. It's mostly python code, with web pages written in an HTML templating language. It uses an Open-Source toolkit called Django, which provides a database interface and generates the actual web pages from the templates. The code can be run on any computer, but diplomacytv.com knows about a lot of the regular players already. There is a test suite that exercises the vast majority of the code – this helps to ensure that changes don't break existing functionality.

Future

One of my personal goals in developing DipTV was to improve my knowledge of the python programming language, so the code itself is of varying quality; bits of it

are very well-structured and quite accessible, while other parts are frankly a bit of a mess. One ongoing project is to break up some of the huge files into more manageable pieces. The vast majority of it was written by me, but a few others are also contributing. Coming soon is an improved board-seeding algorithm from Peter McNamara.

I'm trying to maintain a balance between keeping it as simple as it can be while still providing everything a TD needs to run a tournament. The "to-do" list of improvements and fixes is online at:

<https://github.com/UEWBot/dipvis>.

It does include some great suggestions from people who have used the site. I generally work on whatever aspect seems most interesting to me at the time, so exactly how it will evolve going forward is a bit of a mystery, even to me!



EUROPEAN DIPLOMACY CHAMPIONSHIP



**CHESTERFIELD, UK
2-4 OCTOBER 2026**

www.Diplomacy.co.uk/EDC2026

Why Chicago? A Look Ahead to the 2027 World Diplomacy Championship

by Sabrina Ahuja

Every World Diplomacy Championship is more than just a tournament.

It's a reunion. It's a chance to see old friends, make new ones, explore a new city, and spend several days surrounded by people who share the same passion for the hobby. Long after the final board is scored, it's often the conversations over dinner, the sightseeing, and the memories made outside the tournament hall that people remember most.

That's exactly the experience the Windy City Weasels hope to create when we welcome the Diplomacy community to Chicago for the 2027 World Diplomacy Championship.

Chicago is one of the world's great cities. From its iconic skyline and award-winning architecture to its museums, neighborhoods, lakefront, and music scene, there's something here for everyone. It's also one of the most accessible destinations in North America, with two major international airports making travel straightforward from nearly anywhere in the world.

The championship will be held September 23–26, 2027, at the historic Allerton Hotel on Chicago's Magnificent Mile. You will be within walking distance of some of the city's best restaurants, shopping, and nightlife, all while enjoying a discounted tournament room rate.

The tournament schedule has been designed to balance competitive Diplomacy with the opportunity to experience Chicago:

- **Thursday, September 23:** Welcome Dinner
- **Friday, September 24:** One to two rounds
- **Saturday, September 25:** Two rounds
- **Sunday, September 26:** Final Round

But we don't want visitors to only see the ballroom.

We'll be organizing optional activities before and after the tournament, including Chicago's famous architecture river cruise, visits to world renowned museums, trips through Chinatown, baseball or football games, lakefront bike rides, and evenings enjoying live jazz or blues. Whether it's your first visit or your tenth, Chicago always has something new to discover.

Then there's the food.

Chicago has earned its reputation as one of the best food cities in the world. Beyond the classics like deep

dish pizza, Chicago style hot dogs, and Italian beef, the city is home to an incredible collection of Michelin-starred restaurants, James Beard Award winners, and neighborhood favorites. We're also planning optional outings to several restaurants featured in *The Bear*, giving visitors another taste of one of Chicago's defining cultural exports.

We're also excited to bring something new to the World Diplomacy Championship.

For the first time in WDC history, attendees will have the opportunity to play **Imperial** during the weekend. While the World Championship itself will still be played on the classic map, we wanted to showcase one of the hobby's most popular variants and give players another reason to gather around the board. Whether you've played Imperial for years or have always wanted to learn, we hope this becomes another memorable part of the weekend.



This will be Chicago's third time hosting a major Diplomacy tournament. Each of our previous events has developed its own legendary reputation, not simply because of the games that were played, but because of the experience that surrounded them. We believe great tournaments are built on more than standings and awards. They're built on friendships, late night conversations, shared meals, exploring the host city together, and making every attendee feel like they're among friends.

That's something the Windy City Weasels have always taken seriously.

Hospitality isn't an afterthought for us – it's part of the event. We want every player, whether it's their first tournament or their 50th, to leave feeling welcomed, included, and already looking forward to the next time our community gets together. It's something we've worked hard to build over the years, and it's what we hope people remember most when they think back on a weekend in Chicago.

The Windy City Weasels have also experienced incredible growth over the past year, becoming the largest and most active Diplomacy club in North America. That growth has only strengthened our excitement for welcoming players from around the world and sharing the community we've built.

Every World Championship leaves behind a legacy. It becomes another chapter in the history of our hobby and another collection of stories told for years afterward.

Our goal for 2027 is simple: to host a World Diplomacy Championship worthy of that legacy.

We hope you'll join us in Chicago next September. Come for world-class Diplomacy. Stay for world-class food, architecture, music, museums, and a community that can't wait to welcome you.

We'll see you in Chicago!

Find out more at: <https://linktr.ee/wdc2027>

Diplomacy in Denver

by Manus Hand

Can one city support TWO multi-round face-to-face Diplomacy tournaments that you -- yes, you! -- should attend? Well, if that city is Denver, the answer is yes! Or it will be when you (again, that's YOU!) show up there in March to support the first annual Jameson Hand Diplomacy Derby, hosted by the newly-minted High Altitude Trust & Treachery Society.

The event will be held at the exact same hotel venue (and by the exact same Tournament Director) that hosted the 2001 North American Championships (DipCon XXXIV), the 2002 US Championship (where the immortal "Immaculate Concession" game was played), and the more-than-famous 2003 World Championships.

Which of the first two weekends in March 2027 will be the lucky one to host the Derby is yet to be finally decided, but mark your calendar! Because Manus Hand (that's me...The Diplomatic Pouch, the Blue Water Lepanto, and the ARMADA guy) and his DBN-personality-of-a-grandson Liam Bennett, along with Eliot Howell and a whole host of other high-country backstabbers, have formed the HATTS, and its yearly Derby will be something special and unique!

Among many other ideas in play are making one of the rounds a "Steeplechase" round, with invited players facing each other in chosen variants. The HATTS -- even in its monthly "Claiming Races" -- are making Diplomacy the spectator sport that it should be! Come to

the Derby! Great time, great prizes (you don't even know!), great people, great Diplomacy!

The Rockies in March! Mix in some skiing if you want, or just gaze in awe across the Big Wooden Boards out the window at the gorgeous snowcaps! Get in touch with Liam, the group's founder and its most enthusiastic promoter, or just go to <https://hatts.org/> to register your interest! Stab you soon!





2027 WORLD DIPLOMACY CHAMPIONSHIP

CHICAGO IL SEPTEMBER 23-26



<https://linktr.ee/wdc2027>

Origins Report

by Robert Lacy

I went to Columbus, OH for the 51st Origins Convention. It is always good to see some of my Diplomacy friends there and play games of Diplomacy with them in a long running and well-organized event.

Thursday evening there were learn to play events for classic Diplomacy and Diplomacy Era of Empires. I filled in on the classic board so that there were a full seven players for the game. Being a learn to play game I made lazy moves and helped the Austrian and Turkish players play out their idea of a Russia, Turkey, Austria alliance, making suggestions and helping them with their moves and order writing.



Friday night saw round one of the actual Diplomacy Tournament. Round one I drew Germany coming in second place with eight supply centers after a split first place. This was a tough game and felt I did the best I could with the board. I tried to work with the French and British but France insisted on getting three builds in F1901 which made both England and myself uneasy, especially since it felt more like a demand than a negotiation over Belgium. Instead, I supported England into Belgium, sealed an alliance with England and we agreed to fight France and then Russia together. This plan worked out but I feel we spent too much time eliminating France and making up time attacking Russia. Still over all I wasn't displeased with the result, but I wasn't pleased either.

Round two Saturday morning I played two boards at the same tie to fill out both boards. One the first board I drew Italy. At first we had a southern Italy, Austria, Turkey alliance going. I went after France hard, taking

Marseilles in F1901, but then got bogged down. Once Austria and Turkey cleaned up the Balkans, Austria decided I needed to go. I was not completely surprised by this but felt I should have been left a little longer to see where the southern alliance went. I thought there was still some life left in that agreement.

One the other board I drew France. The German player and I agreed from the start that we needed to remove England. I suggested a strategy to take out England fast. It required a lot of faith from both of us the first year, but I felt the German player would stick to the plan and alliance as I had played games in the past with him and I knew he would be on board with an alliance, was reliable and would stick to it. We ended up eliminating England in F1903, Germany then turned towards Russia and I turned towards the Med.

This turned out to be a great alliance which dominated and controlled the board from the start while the east tried to get their act together. We came up with plans, checked our orders, supporting each other where needed for builds in the fall. It was very nice alliance, though I felt he bungled two moves that cost him speed at getting to Russia, but these errors were in my favor and did not hurt me, however I wish he had not made them at the same time.



Austria kept teasing me and poking me for not going for the solo in round 2, pointing out from mid-game onward that Germany was exposed and that I was sitting next to German supply centers I could take with ease. I told

Austria that I wasn't betraying my ally. I stood firm with that play style you. I could have betrayed Germany but stood firm. In retrospect not getting a solo cost me the tournament championship. However, I am ok with that because I stood the course and stuck to the plan. I also got some respect that players will remember in the future by sticking with my ally like I did. IF anything, maybe that will be remembered when I see them again.

I could have turned on Germany in S1904 and gone for a solo win but held back. I was safe in a 1st place position on the board, so I helped Germany as best I could while poking at Austria, keeping him boxed in and forced to defend Tuscany and Venice over and over, while encouraging Turkey and Russia to pick at Austria from behind.

Then came the board politics. Austria proposed a draw the end of F1904. My Germany ally asked for one more turn to pick up two centers to end the game at nine centers (beating the previous high score for Germany of eight) and a second-place finish over Austria on our board and to be in position for the best Germany plaque. So I gave him one year to do it.

I did this because his ask was reasonable and possible and I wanted to support my longtime faithful ally. When his attempt failed it was over. He failed getting only one of the two he needed and getting even further out of position, so I stabbed for four supply centers the following spring, losing one of them in the fall.

At that point we had two years left. I attacked Germany at that point as I wanted to get as many points as possible for tiebreakers and such and with enough time left for one more game year in timed gameplay I needed to get in a strong position as to not loose top board position in case any more draw proposals failed, the game kept going, and the board rallied against me. I ended with a twelve-supply-center France, accepting the next draw proposal.

Saturday evening, I drew Russia. The board assignments were handed out and I found myself in second place with the first-place contender on the same board. Then I drew Russia and he drew Austria. It was going to be a clash for the title on this board. However, nothing went the way we thought it would. Immediately Turkey and I allied, making the black sea DMZ. But we then sniffed out after the first move a Key Lepanto. We countered this in the fall and then saw the moves made in the west. Austria, Italy, Turkey and I all read the writing on the wall; two supply centers each, France building fleets, and no moves against each other and realized we were up against a western triple.

The Austrian player called it out first, and I immediately called Italy, Austria, and Turkey over. Austria and I both

agreed we can fight each other and both loose or put the daggers away. I also said that I am tire of the lazy wester triple, which is something the Austria player and I had talked about off and on the past few years. We then decided to show these guys up and crush them east verses west, otherwise we are all doomed. All four players in the east got on board. THIS turned out to be some of the most fun all tournament. Four very experienced players working in lock step to take down the western triple.



The three players doing the triple were stunned when we rallied and fought back. We outsmarted them beating them back and countering their moves. We quickly set up the Mediterranean stalemate line, smashed into Munich sending the wester triple reeling and then moved after stalling England in the north, moved past the northern line into Berlin and Kiel. Meanwhile we were continuously pointing out to France they have not gotten any builds since 1901 and telling Germany he has lost centers to us each fall and pointing out that only England is the one growing in their alliance. Eventually France decided we were right and flopped sides but it was a little too late as we reached time.

I will say though that this ended up being some unexpected fun; having the four brains work together and show the newer less experienced players up and stopping them while countering the western triple. Any Diplomacy player would have loved the energy we had in that game! In addition, in the end it sort of did not matter. The scores from the previous two round held. Phil Burk got first in the tournament and I came in second which actually surprised me some. It was also amusing as that is now three years in a row coming in second at Origins. Well, there is always next time!

Players on Players : The Other webDip Mafia

by Zoe Cameron

Mikalīs Kamarītīs, Katie Gray and Karthik Konath have generously made time for a sit-down chat across four different time zones. Some of us have wine; others, caffeine. I needn't have worried about asking for a 2-hour slot - the time flies. What did I expect? We all play Diplomacy.

The three are known for commentating others' games on the Diplomacy Broadcast Network. I couldn't pass up an opportunity to hear them reflect on the strengths, joys, challenges and frustrations of their own play - and each other's.

While the frank conversation is punctuated with sly references and teasing jabs, their ease with each other is underpinned by no small degree of shared history and genuine respect.

MODERATOR: *You've all referenced it at different times - [you have] quite a long history and it's through webDiplomacy.*

KATIE GRAY: I started playing on webDiplomacy... probably 2018. One of my lab mates sent out a link to a game, like, "hey, join this". We played the most ridiculous game - it basically just fizzled out. Some of us decided we wanted to play a second game, and I won that second game. I'm very competitive, and so, therefore, I was forever attached to Diplomacy.

MIKALIS KAMARITIS: I joined at the start of 2010. I played map games all through my childhood: *Age of Empires, Civilization, Total War...* And I saw people playing this map game called Diplomacy online. I'm like, *oh, map game. That'll be fun.*

KARTHIK KONATH: I also love map games and nation building games and I thought Diplomacy would fall under similar lines.

MK: I look it up; I go in; I start playing it. And I'm awful. It's not just a strategy game like all the other ones I've played - you actually have to negotiate with people. I hadn't done any of that before. I was like, *oh, tactics, strategy, I can get them ...* It took me a couple of years to work out that negotiating is important.

KK: I started playing in 2010 with some friends in real life and joined webDiplomacy soon afterward. Much like Mikalis, I had some early success purely on the basis of strategy and tactics. But then once I started playing against good players, I realized, *oh, negotiation, and*

making people like you, and agree with you - very, very different game that I was not really used to.

KG: I played on webDip for a couple years, back when I had time to play forever on extended deadline, and then when COVID happened, I decided to play Mafia. I became friends with webDippers through Mafia. That same group - Tanya [Gill], Markus [Zijlstra] and Mikalis - eventually brought me to virtual [*virtual face-to-face Diplomacy, or vF2F*].

MK: [I'd] left webDip [around] 2018. I was done with extended deadline. I didn't have the motivation for weeks or months long games anymore. And then, yeah, COVID happened. I went back to webDip and was playing Mafia again. Eventually Tanya and Markus managed to persuade me to give virtual a go. And yeah, that bug bit me quite hard!

KK: Funnily enough, that's also how I got back in, during COVID - I started playing Mafia [elsewhere]. And then I remembered webDiplomacy [had Mafia] - like, wait, I should go back and, you know, see what's up. I decided to rejoin webDiplomacy and [eventually] joined the moderation team, in 2021.

KG: I don't remember you being a mod.

MK: We'd stopped playing [there] by then.

KK: Exactly. That was the moment. That's actually why Katie stopped playing. She was like -

MK: - "Karthik's a mod? Right, Backstabbr it is."

KG: I guess I should mention I was also a mod on webDip. It's kind of funny that all three of us were at different times.

You have all been pretty successful in face-to-face and virtual face-to-face. When did you become aware you'd known each other?

KK: In terms of playing Diplomacy in the virtual era... Mikalis and I had interactions on the webDiplomacy Forum back in 2010 and 2011, arguing philosophy in 5000-word posts with this guy who liked to post 20,000-word posts -

MK: I blocked all of this from my memory, by the way.

KG: I would like for Karthik to talk about how long it took him to realize -

KK: I knew as soon as Katie had, like, a little Cheshire grin - *oh my god, you're gonna make me talk about this.* Right before I got into virtual, Katie and I were playing [a webDip masters' game \[in 2020\]](#). We had a really good alliance. At some point, I get frustrated because she wants to change the deal that we made, to adjust to the actual circumstances at the time. And I wanted to keep the deal that we had already struck like 3 years prior, because it was more favorable to me. And she refused to honor the deal. I stabbed her for a top. She was more furious with other people in the game, thankfully -

KG: I was actually laughing.

KK: So then we're doing DBN [coverage] at some point. And I'm like, *huh, this Katie Gray person is really, really good. I wonder what her experience is with Diplomacy.* At some point, someone else in the broadcast points out to me that they're kgray on webDiplomacy.

KG: Literally my name. It's not -

KK: Yeah!

MK: [*enjoying roasting Karthik*] You did so well, though! Karthik was like, surely kgray must have been a man.

KK: Oh my -

KG: He literally was like, "I thought it was Kevin". *Kevin!*

KK: I told Katie, after we'd actually [become] friends, "I assumed you were just a weird white guy who likes Diplomacy."

KG: No, I'm a weird white lady who likes to play Diplomacy! It's so different!

MK: So, Katie, which is worse: Karthik thinking you were Kevin Gray, or Eamon Gaffney thinking you were Karen Gray?

[*All laughing.*]

KG: I forgot that it was Karen. Why did he think it was Karen?

Having spoken to each of you about this in some capacity... you all have a good understanding of your own [play] style. What do you feel is your Diplomacy secret sauce - what differentiates you as a player?

MK: I started this game playing 5-minute Blitz games on webDip - hundreds of them. 5-minute press games - you get 30 seconds to read the board, and four and a half minutes to try and make something happen. You had to read the board really, really, really quickly.

This comes across both in my games and in my commentary. I look at a board and I absorb what's happening on it - not just for me, but for the whole board - really, really quickly. I'm getting more time to think, more time to negotiate - I don't need to spend 5 minutes working out what's happened on the board.

And I can [also] just go to people, like, *okay, so this is happening over here.* A lot of the time they won't have noticed what I'm talking about and then they'll look and go *oh, you're right.* All of a sudden, everything I'm saying sounds quite convincing when I'm picking up on things they haven't even seen.

That helps me a lot in my negotiations. I'm pretty good tactically, I'm pretty good strategically - but the difference-maker for me, I think, is how quickly I read a board and use that to my advantage negotiating.

KG: People, for whatever reason, trust me or want to work with me. It's really hard for me to think of examples of a game where I didn't have multiple people who wanted to work with me. It's also very stressful for me - I really am uncomfortable with that decision even now, trying to pick between people. But it's very rare that I don't have any options.

That doesn't always mean it goes well, right? I may not be able to work that into something successful. I may pick an alliance that doesn't work for the board state. I may make a bunch of misorders, or whatever. But for the most part, I feel like people, for whatever reason, want to work with me.

I was in a game recently [...] I was Austria. And [another player in the East] convinced all the rest of the East to attack me. And I just had to hold out for one year, and talk to Russia and Italy. It didn't take very long, to be honest, for that to flip. I think I'm pretty easy to work with. I'm pretty good at telling people how we can both succeed together.

A lot of people try to run alliances in ways that are clearly all about getting them a better position. And I honestly don't do that. I think that's one of my weaknesses! But for the most part I really am a solid partner, and I think people see that. I don't have that early game struggle for somebody [to] work with me. I have to struggle to decide [between allies]. I've been pretty lucky in that regard.

KK: Someone else told me my secret sauce - at least according to them. Ed [Sullivan] told me that I'm a really good storyteller. I tell people what the future will look like two or three years down the line, and convince them that story is accurate and correct and that they have to respond to it.

People believe my worldview for the board not just for that turn, or the turn after - but like two, three years down the line. They go into other negotiations with that worldview as their ground truth, and negotiate from that basis.

I am much weaker than Katie, for example, at convincing someone that they should be my long-term game partner. [But] I think I am very good when my back is up against the wall - convincing someone, *I am essential for your future. Your future is this with me; your future is this without me; let's do something tactical and strategic here.*

Three very distinct and - from my perspective - accurate answers. But I'm also interested in your reflections on each other.

ON MIKALIS

KG: I've thought that Mikalis was the best player in the world for a year or two now. At one of the first Broadcaster Brawls, they asked people to send videos of who you hope will win. And I was like, *I think Mikalis has shown on DBN in his commentary that he reads the board better than anyone, so I'm rooting for him.* Guys, Tanya was so pissed at me. Tanya was like...

[Laughter.]

I was like, first of all, you're going to have like five people rooting for you publicly! But what do you want me to say? It's really obvious when he does commentary, he knows what he's talking about.

Mikalis always has a long game. [On the World Championship top board](#), he knew he was going to have to stab Bradley [Grace] to win, and that he would need Ruben [Sanchez]'s support. He played a lot of the game thinking about how he could keep Ruben on side and make sure he had other options - it wasn't just *I need four dots from Bradley*. It was: *I need to prevent Bradley from winning, I need to get dots from Bradley, I need to keep Ruben onside, this is how I'm gonna do it.*

Mikalis knows what needs to happen for him to win. His own movements - but I think better than anyone, Mikalis understands what needs to happen on the rest of the board. He has a really good bird's eye view of the situation - doing whole board politics, whole board strategy, who's going to stab who next, is my ally going to fight another person? And he's pretty convincing at making that happen.

You don't sell a lot of bullshit. Your read of the board is correct. You fit the way that the board is into your narrative, as opposed to trying to come up with a random narrative to explain why you want people to do things. That is a multi-step process in negotiations that is

really tricky, and really rare for people to do well. You do that very well.

KK: Those I view as good players recognize when they do and don't have to fight for things, [and get] better positions and better scores through that. It's something both Katie and Mikalis do much better than a lot of people in the hobby.

Mikalis is one of the best players at understanding what he needs to win, and not going past that. In a [vWDC Summer Classic 2021] game - maybe the first time we played [vF2F] together - [we had a really, really good \[Austria-Italy\] alliance](#). You waived builds for, like, four years straight.

MK: France charged into the Med for a Western Triple. Karthik was getting screwed because he's in Italy. And I'm in Austria - I'd done pretty well, actually, and got the jump on Turkey. I was the big player in the East.

KK: You knew you didn't need any more units to accomplish your goals of taking German supply centers and helping me clean up Russia. You could have built all those units if you wanted to. You could have secured your position. But in doing so, you'd have given me a lot of reasons to be deeply worried about where those units would be going. At a certain point, those Austrian units can only go so many places, right? You committed to managing the senior partner/junior partner alliance very, very well. As a result, we both got bigger than we would have done otherwise, had we decided to come to blows.

A lot of people lose respect among players for throwing games. There are people who I'm like, *I'm just not going to play with you, I'm going to [eliminate] you the instant I see you - because you throw too often, for incomprehensible reasons*. Unlike them, Mikalis understands when to throw and when not to throw really effectively to maximize his own game and long-term strategic interests. This comes from our shared heritage playing draw size scoring - [where] if you can make the draw on one center, that is a really good result. Mikalis [weighs the options] to give himself some chance to come back into the game.

In my opinion, one of the best games of Diplomacy ever played [was] [the VDL championship in 2021](#) - a top board that, mind you, neither of us won. It was a four-way battle for the top between me, [Mikalis], Nicolas Taillet and Brandon Fogel. There are few people in the hobby that I trust to read the strategic state of a board and balance powers effectively with both movements and builds. Mikalis has... in my opinion, right now, probably the best ability to read a board of anyone in the hobby. Mistakes were made along the way... But for a game to exist in that balanced state for so long, it takes... an immense amount of skill.

KG: I feel like Mikalis and I either have a really good game together where we're mostly vibing, or it's one of the most frustrating experiences of my life. And this is similar to how I felt playing Mafia with you. You're not inflexible, but I do think you're stubborn, like, "I'm right, the way I'm seeing this is correct". When that's also the way I see it, and our interests align, it's really great. But there are other times... if I don't agree with your outlook, it can be hard for me to trust that you actually have my interests in mind.

[On [R1B12](#)] at WDC San Francisco, [I was Italy and you were Russia](#). I like working with you, I love a Wintergreen. On paper, that should have worked. And I don't know why, but I felt like whenever you were asking me to do something, I felt like it would only benefit you. I realize it's a little bit contradictory with what I've previously said about your strengths... I was probably intimidated. Like *I can't give him an advantage, I can't help him win, because he's better than me, and he'll beat me if we get there*. I still don't know why we couldn't make that work. I remember being so frustrated and being like, *he wants me to blow this up just for him to benefit*. I really couldn't see where you were coming from. And I don't think we talked about that game afterwards or did an AAR.

MK: I felt that there was lingering tension - it was, what, a month and a half after [that DBNI top board?](#) I don't think either of us had played at all in between that. So our experience of a game [directly] before that first game at a World Championship was this 1916 DBNI top board where we were duking it out to win...

KG: And you won! So I was - yeah, I think I was, I don't know, very afraid.

MK: Yeah, that's how I felt about that game was that we couldn't get on the same page. If I remember rightly, I felt like I couldn't get you to agree to do anything anti-Ruben in that game - Ruben was in Turkey. It felt very easy to get you to do things that were anti-Austria, very very difficult to get you to do anything that was anti-Turkey. That made me very concerned that - IT propagandist in chief that I am - what would actually happen is we kill Austria, and then the IT just destroys me, because I can't get Katie to stab Ruben. And in that case, I probably need Austria.

So I was reticent to attack Austria and we ended up very sort of crossed wires in that game. You wanted to go after Austria, I wanted to go after Turkey. It sort of meant that we were actually going after nobody, and couldn't really make each other feel safe in that regard.

As a relative newcomer, I often [process] an inability to connect as like, oh, I haven't found the trust with that person [yet], so we clashed. It's weirdly heartening to hear that those sort of "we can't quite

get it right" [do still] come up in long timelines of playing together, of knowing each other. Just because you found the trust before [but] couldn't find it this time - it's not... going to break the way you play together, or mean that you can't find that trust again.

KG: Every game is individual. People come up to me all the time and they say *Oh, you're just going to work with Mikalis*. And I'm like - it's worked, but you should see the times it hasn't worked! I think it's funny. Cause like, yeah, you play with somebody enough, it happens all the time. To Mikalis's point, maybe we couldn't do that a month after the DBNI top board, but you do have to put whatever history aside.

MK: On the WDC top board, people were saying that me and Bradley were obviously going to work together because we know each other really well. Before that, the amount of times I'd been in an alliance with Bradley Grace was zero. I had played four or five games with him. We'd always either been enemies from the start or on the complete opposite side of the board. We never had any sort of alliance. And then people are like, *Oh, you and Bradley are obviously going to kill Edi Birsan*. It's like, yeah, we are! Because it makes strategic sense, not because of what you think.

I've had people say about me and Maaike [Blom] as well. [Before VDC in January](#). I'd probably played like seven or eight games with Maaike and she'd attack me in seven or eight games. It had never gone well whatsoever. And yet people were like, *oh, you and Maaike, I saw you allied once*. And - nope! It's happened once or twice - that doesn't mean that it's guaranteed to happen again at all. Every game is its own game.

KK: I would say for Mikalis, I think his biggest issue that Katie touched on earlier is he can be overly stubborn sometimes, right? His read of the board is often correct - 95 percent of the time it's probably the right read -

KG: Can I just jump in? I think I know where you're going - I just want to say, it can also be when even if Mikalis is right, [it can be where] somebody else doesn't see it the same way. Do you know what I mean? Not just [a case where] Mikalis is wrong and somebody else is right - [but] if somebody else doesn't see it the way he does.

KK: Exactly, that was the perfect segue. Sometimes... when there's a difference in a perception of the board, and the other person's perception matters in terms of how the game [will] be handled - even if you are right. Sometimes you'll be too stubborn to cave in, [when] it [might be] a good idea to cave in for the long-term health of the board.

I'm talking a little bit too abstract - one example that has come to mind was [you] building the third South Coast fleet in the VDL top board, at a time when Nicolas Taillet was topping the board and needed to be kept in check. I was telling you that, to me, it creates a severe danger in our relationship - in my ability to trust we can work together effectively, and that you'll give me the space you need to handle Nicolas. At the time, if I remember correctly, Nicolas was in the North Atlantic, going to get into the English Channel - I was in a really really rough position.

You made the argument that this fleet can help me against Nicolas. But I'm like - I know you, I know how you see the board. And I know what your idea of the end state is. You already have enough units from Nicolas to keep me in check. You do not need this unit. And I'm willing to work with you through some of this, but it makes me deeply, deeply apprehensive. And I'm going to have to give Nicolas more space as a result of it. It resulted in me having to pull back a significant amount of units in ways that I think were harmful to our long-term alliance and to our long-term ability to check Nicolas when he was leading the board.

But, I mean, I think - because of how often you are correct - I do think being as stubborn as you are serves you better than the alternative. I don't see it as a hugely problematic thing or a long-term risk.

The idea that caving to someone else's perception, even if it's wrong, is sometimes the right thing for the board, is quite interesting.

KK: There have been plenty of times when I've been playing with people whose read I trust much less than Mikalis's, where I'm like, *your read is obviously incorrect, but I know that keeping you happy is important. I'll give in to you here*, because I think I can still come out on top without pressing the point. But I think Mikalis's manner works better in the long run more often than not. And I mean, it's clear - given the fact that he won the World Championship on a very, very impressive board - that it does work!

MK: I agree it was certainly my mistakes that ended up putting it beyond any of us beating Nicolas. I think the biggest mistake I made in this game was when I kept Tom de Greef alive, a one-center Turkey, one year too long against Brandon [Fogel]. I thought it was something that would be perfectly salvageable. It was not salvageable when Brandon went fully into me from it. And even though I was offering him support into Munich while he was attacking me - Munich was owned by Taillet at the time - Brandon was done and went straight into me regardless. It was a point where I expected Brandon to have a response against me but to still be looking at the board balance, and I misjudged it. He'd lost his interest in the board balance and was only

interested in going for me at that point. That suddenly put Taillet's position to be too good to beat for anyone else.

KK: I remember that happening and I was also flummoxed by it. I thought Brandon had a very good chance to win, even at that point in the game, even with you obviously being a little bit cheeky and trying to have your cake and eat it too. But I thought that play was perfectly reasonable. When Brandon decided that... it did put it beyond the reach for all of us. And I think that's one illustration of when sometimes it's better to cave in and accept [a different course of action when] someone's being a little bit overreactive [rather] than [pushing] the alternative. I'm willing to hear the argument that I was overreacting to the third fleet, just like I believe Brandon was overreacting to the whole Turkish issue.

MK: It was a big diplomatic misjudgment on my part to think that Brandon would tolerate it - as I say, I expected some kind of reaction, just not as strong as what came.

ON KATIE

KK: Katie is one of the easiest people I've found in the hobby to work with. Sometimes she'll have this particular paranoia of working with me because she's scared that I'll tactically do something weird, but we've worked together enough now... we're able to have really honest conversations about what we want from a game state. Katie's willing to make those asks, whereas a lot of people will be so afraid to ask it that they cause the dissolution of the alliance in the process.

[I think \[we had\] a really good alliance at Cascadia](#), and it ended up winning Katie the tournament. Midway through the game, Katie could have had a relatively nice stab on me, that would have resulted in her having a 10-center top. I'd probably [have fought] her for the rest of the game [and] end on 8, or something like that. And there's a chance someone from the West comes in and steals an 11-center top or something like that. But Katie just says basically, *Karthik, I had the stab on you. I think I played a really good game here. Would you be okay continuing this alliance under the idea that, if there's an odd number of centers between us, that I have one more center than you?*

Katie made that request in really plain language, and didn't try to fuff it about, or do anything silly, and I agreed with her that she had a position for the stab if she wanted it. I was willing to continue on and be like *hey, I think we can get to 13-12 together, maybe 14-13 if we win some guesses*. We marched all the way to a 12-11 that put me on the podium in third place, and gave her the NA Dipcon victory.

It's a testament to Katie's skill as a player - [when she] has an alliance that is working with her, she finds ways

to reorganize it that ensures the alliance keeps working. A lot of other people in that circumstance would have killed that alliance and harmed their long-term results as a result. There are few people in the hobby that I can think of [who] are as reasonable of an ally when it comes to requests for trust as her.

Other people get really, really paranoid when they are in a position in 1906 with their alliance partner that they should not be paranoid in. Katie trusts that she can have good enough diplomacy to make the alliance work, and keep working all the way into the end game. That has served her well in so many circumstances. More people should be playing like Katie does if they want to have success in the game.

MK: It's not just in terms of managing paranoia, but in terms of not being greedy in an alliance. The [DBNI top board I won](#) - I left Katie with a 3-dot stab on me in the middle of the game... There are few players in this hobby I would trust not to just do the short-sighted thing, and dot me. I think if she dots me for 3, everyone turns on her, and she loses. I've got confirmation bias, I don't know! Either way, it allowed us to deal with a very big France [which] no one else on the board could do anything about. But the only way I could was sending all of my units - Germany was dead, and France is a really solid defensive country. If it were anyone else in that game, [almost] anyone else in the hobby in Russia, I can't risk leaving a 3-dot stab [there]. But I've played enough games with Katie - I trusted she wouldn't do the short-sighted thing and take all of those free dots. And it worked out. We put France in the box. I ended up winning. I don't know if either of us would have been able to beat Doug if I hadn't turned at that point, especially given what was happening to Italy in the East, and with Germany off the board.

KK: Only Mikalis can give a... We're supposed to talk positively about the player in question. He'll give an example where he won the board!

KG: Where I missed an opportunity to prevent him from winning!

MK: This is why I'm also going to give an opposite! With Katie, the other example I'll give would be one of [the old format DBNI games years ago \[2022\]](#). Me and Katie were in a Wintergreen. Ed Sullivan was on the other side in some sort of EF.

Katie and I worked together really effectively, took down Italy and Turkey. And [then]... I'm stuck. I'm not getting anything. I'm locked against France. I've been working with Katie all game. And then Ed's ally started offering him centers. Katie sort of soft-sells me, like, "I think this is quite outrageous" - but she doesn't push the point, demand that I throw to her, or anything like that. She does the right thing - maximizing my annoyance with the

situation in the West, to a position where I just go, "all right, Ed, screw you". I did a bunch of weird convoys that put her next to so many dots that, if she wanted to, she could immediately solo. I was convoying her to North Africa to walk into Tunis; convoying her to Tuscany. She was next to 6 or 7 dots. And Ed finally went, "All right, fair enough," and accepted that he hadn't won that game. But that was part of Katie's trick, because... Yeah, I'm probably not the hardest person in the world to convince to throw dots, but...

[Laughter.]

Making sure that I'm only angry at one person, and not at the person who starts making outrageous demands, isn't always the easiest thing. Katie played that game super effectively to make sure she was the beneficiary, and that I was happy that it was happening.

Katie could have done the short-sighted thing. She could have jumped into like 2 or 3 dots and gone, *oh, Ed's being given dots. I've got to gang rush. I've got to compete.* She didn't do that. She was patient - talked about it with me, talked it through. And [she recognized] if she takes 3 dots from me in the East and I disband, probably Ed breaks through and beats her. She made sure my units on the line holding the EF back were still able to be there. We only had to actually exchange one dot, and it would keep the position. It would halt Ed in his tracks, and make sure that she got the top she deserved from that game.

KG: I knew at that point how you played. I know you pretty well. I know how you blow up in Mafia! I feel like, once you make a threat like that, I think everybody knows that you're not joking around about it.

KK: Katie has an embarrassment of riches when it comes to choices of people to work with. I think you can sometimes be either indecisive in the person that you choose, or when you are decisive, you sometimes go for safety over growth. I think your weaknesses come when you give into those fear-based motivations. At Worlds, I think you thought that I would try to fight you for a certain advantage late in the game and that I'd have a much greater hunger to win that board, whereas [your chosen ally might] happily give you a 2-center lead for the top. But as I pointed out in the game, because of how he's going to want to play and how you're going to be able to play with it, the best you're ever going to do is 9-9, maybe 9-7 - that's not enough to put you on the top board.

When your back is up against the wall and you know that the only way that you're going to make a top board is if you get a sufficiently large score in Round 2 to have a chance in Round 3, you need to be less risk averse, more risk forward, and go for the home run shot. You're more than good enough to do so.

I remember - this must have been a year ago now or so. You came to me and talked to me about a series of tactics on a top board that you were really, really proud of, that you realized DBN coverage would not recognize why it was tactically important. That showed me that you're really, really strategically and tactically sound now. So like, you shouldn't have to fear like - [*Chortles from others.*] I phrased that wrong, I know!

It was the "now".

KK: I'm too used to taking casual shots at Katie that being nice didn't come out normal! [*Everyone laughing.*] You are really good, strategically and tactically. You don't need to fear that much. You have sound reads of the board independently. You can go fight and be aggressive knowing you have that backstop. So take the risk, go for home run shots, maximize your score that way. I think you'll have a lot more 14s to 17s than you will have 11s, 12s, 13s.

KG: I was thinking about how you guys are both players who can just have an explosive game. You'll get to like 15, 16, and it's not very rare. And I soloed once when my ally threw it to me. But other than that... When I do well, it's in tournaments that reward consistency. I definitely am risk averse... I would like to say that I'm not motivated by fear, but I think it's accurate. I'm not paranoid in games, but I am *nervous*. I am nervous all the time! ... Yeah, I chose the safe option in our game. Even as we were talking about it, I was like, *I think you're right. I understand what you're saying, and I think that that's true, but it's safer this way.* I think that holds me back a lot.

KK: The "safe" works for you quite well for the reasons that you mentioned. I can't think of the last time you were eliminated in a game. I've been eliminated plenty, but I've also had my 14s, 15s, and 17s. I take the home run shots, right? I want to swing big. If I'm at a 3, I don't really care if I'm on a 3 or a 5, but if I know I have a chance to go for the 15, 16, 17... When you have a 120-person tournament, and you need to make the top board, then you need to have some big results.

MK: This is something I was doing at Worlds: consciously adapting to be more ruthless than I normally am. It's the world championship; there's so many more players there; what normally gets a good result won't be good enough. I made some pretty brutal stabs during that tournament that a lot of the time I don't normally make. I was looking for every single dot I could possibly make to get towards that top board. So I negotiated the hell out of David Wigglesworth in Round 1 to let me have the 3-center gap despite our game-long AI. And in Round 3, I just brutally gutted ally after ally - Austria, Turkey, and Russia one after another - to make damn well sure that I was on that top board. I ended up a 15-

center Italy by 1906. That's not the kind of game I normally play, but it's the World Championship. I know how competitive that top board is going to be to get on.

Karthik sort of alluded to it a little bit. I don't want to call it an inferiority complex, but when it comes to tactics, I think Katie...

KG: I'm motivated by fear. I have a complex. That's great. That's what I was looking for!

MK: Exactly! I thought you'd love that. Katie is very, very good at tactics. But I think that Katie *thinks* that she's not very, very good at tactics. The problem with this isn't that it means that Katie gets tactics wrong. I've seen Katie pull out amazing tactical turns in game after game. But when you're not sure about the tactics, and you're discussing it with your ally, it gets out of the sort of press where you excel and into a conversation about tactics, which can then go on for quite a lot of time.

I don't think that's the sort of press that best suits your strengths. In those turns, you lose an advantage that you normally have in your conversations by instead drilling down into tactics with other players who are maybe just as good as you at tactics, but are much more confident *talking about* the tactics. It gives them an upper hand in the negotiations because all of a sudden, the negotiation window has shifted entirely into what you're not so comfortable with.

As a result, I think the advantages are sort of lost in alliances or in opportunities, because you're talking about the wrong thing, essentially. You've only got a certain amount of time in that turn, and the time that you would normally use to build your own advantage and get your good result out of that turn is lost. It's talking about something that probably didn't need to be talked about for anywhere near as long.

KG: Mikalis' point is very specific. I've thought a lot about something related to that, which is that, in the games where I have known going into a turn what I want to happen, things go better. I know that's very basic advice that a lot of people give: by the time you start talking to people, you should know what you want them to do. One of my struggles is that I often don't know what I want to do, and therefore I don't know what [I] want [them] to do. Yeah, talking about tactics - especially the way I do it, it probably doesn't make me come off as like a strong, reliable ally. Cause I'm kind of just like, *oh, I don't know, should we do this? What if they do that? What if they do this?*

You know what? Looking back, [when I was sidelining for WDC in Greece](#), the number of times on that top board I heard people talking about actual tactics was, like, rare. People did not sit there and talk about moves. They *would* say, hey, can you support this? Or hey, can you

like hold me here or something? But there was not [intricate, extended back and forth on tactics]. I don't think I ever heard those conversations. They just didn't happen.

And I have those conversations all the time. [laughs] You're right. Mid game, that's all I'm talking about. And I think it does take away from the goal of the game because the goal is really not to win this one tactical position battle. That's a really good point.

A tiny counterpoint to that, because I've gotten to sideline a few of your games, Katie. I have heard you in negotiations - you letting [an ally] have a tactical conversation where they run their mouth builds trust on their side towards you. I have then gone into other negotiations and heard, "oh, yeah, Katie and I are going great" from the person who just yammered at you about tactics.

[Laughter from all]

The feedback is astute, and I think that you also use what your allies are interested in and let them talk to your advantage. Even if it comes from a place of not feeling as confident with that subject matter, it can still come off really beneficially for you. I've heard it.

KG: Well thank you, I appreciate that. There are even more layers though, right? [The VDC 2025 top board](#) ... The Austrian player was newer. I got some feedback afterwards - maybe within the stream... I am really bad at micromanaging. I don't want to tell people what to do. I don't want to be controlling. I'm not going to write my ally's orders for them. Ever. But then they'll do stuff that's just like, not optimal.

With Austria, I was like, *Okay, we need to take Greece now - it's guaranteed*, and he was like, *I'd really rather do it in the fall*. I said *It's not guaranteed in the fall, we need to do it now* - and he pushed back and I was like, okay well, I'll let it be up to you. I had no other friends! I needed this guy to like me and work with me. [But] I think he would have still worked with me if I really pushed on it. Later he said, *We should have done it in the spring, you were right*. And I was like, *I know...*

KK: I think your biggest issue is confidence in your tactical ability. In my opinion, I think at this point in time, I think there's literally maybe 5 people in the world that are notably better than you at tactics in a meaningful way. You're more than good enough where the tactical advantage is really meaningless, it doesn't go that far once you reach a certain standard. You are above that standard by quite a bit.

MK: When Karthik said you're as good tactically as most players in the world - I think he's right, but I also think that, for top players, tactics are not the differentiator.

What separates you at the top level is your press and your strategy. If you are not competent tactically, you're not in that conversation in the first place. If you're incredibly convincing at press but awful at tactics, you're just a nice guy who gets overrun at the end of the game.

KG: Maybe I didn't have the confidence to be like, *I am right, this is what we should do*. But I [also] don't like doing that. I'm so sensitive to people talking down to me, or treating me like I'm stupid. I hate it. And so I'm really sensitive to [potentially doing] that to other people, which I think is why I have a hard time managing less experienced allies.

ON KARTHIK

KG: I don't think I've ever felt like Karthik was selling me bullshit. It was interesting to hear him talk about how Ed thinks he's a storyteller. That sounds initially like a bad thing to me - like somebody who will sell you a lot of bullshit! But it's not. Karthik is resilient. He will tell you why you should work with him, even if he knows that you know that you're not going to work with him - he's just honest and upfront about stuff.

[At Worlds, he was England and I was France](#). Germany and I were attacking him, and we ended up killing him. And most of the time we were killing him, Karthik was making pitches that were believable and good. I never felt like he was making stuff up to save his skin. Oh, dude - I hate it when you're attacking somebody and they give you this absolute bullshit plan that's like, *stab your ally like this*. And it's like: *you know that I know that that's not going to work. Stop wasting my time*. I don't think Karthik does that. He's very straightforward.

And there's another game where I also attacked Karthik. And...

[Everyone laughing at the pattern recognition.]

You had one center, and you were janissarying, but like an advisory [role] - giving tactical advice and reads of the board.

KK: [This was a top board, if I recall correctly](#). I was dogpiled early as England by France and Germany. I was so frustrated with them because neither of them would see sense on that board, in my opinion, and recognize the threats that existed, and respond to them appropriately. So I'm like - *Katie, so long as I'm alive, I'll help you write any order set you want*. For four years, while I was fighting off Nicolas Taillet and Jason Mastbaum tactically with guesses in England, I was also helping Katie [in] Russia because I was like, *Katie, I genuinely want you to win this game*. I died, I think, 2 years before Katie ended up topping the board - and winning the tournament.

KG: I know that in that situation you weren't mad at me. At Worlds, I was the one leading the attack against you, so I'm sure you were frustrated with me. But it still didn't come off like, "I'm just going to say whatever I can to ruin your game, or to screw you over". I just appreciate that.

MK: Karthik, when you're attacking him, will always give you a pitch - like Katie said. Karthik's a very creative player. I'm also a pretty creative player. That gels really well together. [On that early virtual board as Austria and Italy], Karthik's coming to me making these pitches, like, *I'll be your junior partner the whole game, but we can definitely pull this back, kill France*. We worked a really good alliance together. From being down to like, 2 centers at one point, Karthik rises back up to 8 or 9. I got my 13, 14 center board top. How many times, when Italy gets attacked by France in a Western Triple, [do they] get a good game? They might survive, but stuck on their home centers. They go nowhere. And we turned it around really, really effectively, and it was really fun working with him.

The other example - [at Dixie](#), Karthik had [about as bad a spring as Germany can possibly have](#). France was in Burgundy, Italy in Tyrolia, Russia in Silesia. [As England,] I looked at that - already looking for a massive score in this round - and go, *yep, I'm definitely bouncing Holland. I am killing Karthik, this is how to get the tempo*. Even while that's happening, Karthik is coming to me making pitches. In the Dixie-specific circumstance, it's like - there's nothing he could offer that is better than what I'm doing by killing him! But they were always perfectly reasonable pitches.

Like Katie said, Karthik doesn't sell you bullshit: he thinks about a creative way to solve the situation. And if you have the upper hand, he'll let you keep the upper hand, but he'll still try and come away where he's useful to you while you have the upper hand. He's very resilient that way.

KG: This is a strength and a weakness - I think you are very unemotional. You react calmly; you look at the board objectively. You play with your brain. In so many ways, that is a benefit to you. Where it's not a benefit is when you are playing with people who play [more] with their heart. You can give me the best laid out plan, and if I'm just more comfortable with somebody else, that's who I'm gonna go with. I'm not saying that it's better to play with your heart, to be emotional - but there are a lot of people who do.

You are a funny, fun person; you connect with people in general. But sometimes when you're playing on a board, you don't make that connection in terms of finding someone who wants to trust you and work with you. I think a lot of that is because you're looking at the game so objectively.

Another player said to me once, *I don't play based on who I want to work with, I play based on what the board tells me*. I think that that's also how you play. You look at the board and you see what needs to happen, and you're very methodical about it. It is definitely a strength to not get angry, to not be emotional. But to connect with the kind of player who wants a cozy alliance - like me, to be honest... At the end of the day, if I know you are playing the board versus playing the people, there's going to be a time when the board tells you to attack me. That's not necessarily true for someone who's playing the people, if that makes any sense.

KK: That makes a lot of sense.

KG: I think that would help you find more alliances. You have really good games when you match up with a good player who sees the board like you do. More than me, probably more than Mikalis - you [tend to] have a sort of all or nothing result. You are eliminated or on a couple of centers, or you've got more [centers] than I've ever had.

If I'm trying to critique your game, it's not anything long term, or how you read the board - it's that initial step into finding partners, finding people who want to work with you. Diplomacy doesn't need an emotional connection, but you do want to be able to trust somebody, to have that comfort and confidence where you're like, to some extent, *this person's gonna have my back*. I know at the end of the day, everyone wants themselves to win, that's always true - but how much do they want themselves to win versus do they want the alliance to work? If you're the kind of person who just reads the board and plays very stoically, it gives the impression that you're gonna do things that benefit you more than the alliance - which may or may not be true, but I think that's how sometimes I've seen myself and you interacting.

KK: I really appreciate that. There have been times I've tried to figure out, like, why is there a disconnect? My style of play is very much [to] find an alliance partner and just treat our pieces as if they were one combined army-navy, like we were one power. To some degree, I do sacrifice gains at certain points because I think it is better for the alliance to do so. Especially now, compared to -

KG: The Masters in 2021?

KK: Exactly.

KG: Just kidding.

KK: No, no, I deserve that jab. Like you said, there are some times like - *ah* - I just didn't feel connected and feel the trust. I was like, *why is that?* Because I do have those emotions running through my game. I feel satisfied and happy when my alliance partner and I succeed, [when] we get through an entire game without stabbing.

There are plenty of times where I've had a 2- or 3-dot stab on someone at the end of the game, and I'm like - we're at 12 or 13. *Do I really care about 14, or 15, when it's not rewarded that much by the scoring system in particular? Not really. Let the stab go.* We can both be happy, and get a drink afterwards, and celebrate that.

But I never vocalize it. I mean, I'm probably going to start now! But it's something I've never really said out loud. I think I feel weird talking about my emotions and my emotional goals for the game instead of my piece goals, strategic goals, tactical goals for the game. [I talk about] my alliance goals for the game - that we would move together super-fast and super effectively. But I've never said, "Hey, I'd be really, really *happy* if we could [work together] the entire game and we could end on, you know..."

If I remember, Katie, I said to you, "we could have this really, really efficient game together and that'd be great". In my head, I'm like *Efficient. Fast. Big score. That makes me happy.* I don't think I've ever said the word - "It would make me happy". Like, ever. That's actually really, really useful feedback.

MK: We mentioned earlier your ability to always come up with a credible pitch. You're very, very good at this. But I think you are... not very good at recognizing when to shut up, in the nicest possible way, and -

KG: Wow, from HellenicRiot himself!

MK: [On a DBNI top board](#), you spent an entire phase having a conversation with Peter [McNamara]. He said, like, three words; and then he brutally stabbed the shit out of you at the end of it.

There are some players where you talk so much that you can overwhelm them. What they actually need is a bit of space to think and to work things out themselves. Instead of planting a seed and then letting them cultivate it themselves, you're very focused on... "I've planted the seed, now I've got to water the seed, I've got to feed the plant, I've got to grow all of it myself". It can be very difficult with a player who needs space, or has [already] done their own thinking, and you end up spending far too much effort and time on this one person and you overwhelm them - or they haven't been sold on it because they haven't done the thinking, because you've just kept talking to them. You're so good at coming up with these pitches - you're like, oh cool, *I've come up with this, I'm going to keep talking about this, and you do that...* A lot of the time, it works - but sometimes you need to take your foot off the gas a little bit and recognize the other person needs some space to breathe.

This is obviously player dependent. I can't say I've ever been overwhelmed in negotiations with you. But

certainly, if people are not reading the board as quickly as you are, or in the same way, and need time to adjust, I don't think you build in that time to let them come to the same conclusion. You try to get them to the conclusion yourself rather than letting them independently get there.

KG: Can I say something hypothetical? This is based out of no actual knowledge.

KK: Yeah, go for it.

KG: In that conversation with Peter, I wonder if you had asked Peter to talk more, if maybe there would have been indications on a stab. Peter is very good at this - Peter will go to people and he'll say *nothing*, and they'll just tell him everything. He gets a lot of information that way. The more someone is talking, the less their understanding of what the other person is thinking. You're reinforcing your own perspective and not necessarily getting their feedback.

KK: I think I knew Peter was likely to stab me, so I spent 10 minutes trying to talk him out of doing so. I'm like, *my only hope of winning this game is getting Peter to do something that is not in his interest.* This is probably one of the few times where I had to have, like, a bullshit conversation! And I think part of it was talking enough to make me believe that bullshit I was selling Peter.

KG: Yeah, and that's probably what it felt like to Peter too. Like, honestly, right?

KK: You know... in hindsight now, that was what was happening. At that point I was just kind of cooked. I should have just put some seeds in his head that were semi-plausible, moved on and tried to convince the others, and that would have been a better use of my time and wouldn't have been overwhelming to anyone.

A question for [Mikalís] - you have talked at length to me about tactics, gone through the whole stage of "watering the plant", because I think you know that I do appreciate that level of discourse. How do you intuitively sense when the point for cutoff is for different people, and how much they want in terms of strategic dialogue from you? To say, *I've done what I should with you*, and move on.

MK: It's very difficult to pinpoint that, right? Instead of going on a monologue, I'm trying to come up with a point where they can interject. And I'm judging the interjections. If they're thinking about what I've planted, I've probably already done enough. If they're going back to the crux of what I'm still trying to plot, then maybe I've said too much. Maybe I need to give them some space. Maybe they've not understood. Like Katie said, building in time to listen to their responses is a crucial part of it. Otherwise, you can end up selling yourself on your plan, but not selling *them* on your plan, which is sort of the worst of both worlds.

A similar question for Katie - having sidelined some games, I've seen you... discern someone's intentions from how they respond to you.

KG: It is very person-specific. There are some people who are kind of wishy-washy and unsure about stuff, and they're always like that, even if they're going to keep working with you. And there are some players who are always paranoid, and it doesn't matter the context, so you can't read anything into it.

I think what's helped me on certain occasions is asking a really specific question... Okay, you want to move to Burgundy. But - why? Why do you want to do that? And if they can't give you a satisfying reason, you just have to think about what makes sense.

I... Don't print this. It's embarrassing. It's the dumbest trash reality show ever. I love *Judge Judy*. She always says, "If it doesn't make sense, it isn't true". I feel like that's really applicable to life and to Diplomacy. If somebody tells you something that just doesn't make sense, then something's going on. On discerning people's intentions, if you can ask them a specific detailed thing and they don't have a good reason for it - well, why not? You can say all kinds of vague good things - *oh, we'll do this, then we'll attack England, and blah, blah, blah*. But - why is your unit in Burgundy?

I talk a lot. But I also try to always ask *what do you think? What do you want?* Partially because that helps me get an idea of what they want. Partially because I want other people's opinions. I don't want to steamroll the plan.

MK: It's a difficult question to pinpoint specifically... Prioritize what matters. If your alliance is working together, it's rare that you actually need every single unit to be perfect in a turn. A lot of the time, you need one or two crucial things, and the rest of it is nice to have as a bonus. [You could] throw [a nice-to-have] out there as, *oh, I guess we could do that in the South*. But don't make it a key point of discussion if it doesn't need to be. If they lose one percent of tempo because they move to Lyon instead of Western Med, you can handle that later. The more important thing is that they moved in that direction at all, right?

KK: Yeah, for sure. That makes sense. Thank you.

Throughout the compliments and constructive feedback, I hear this idea of what it means to respect other players on the board. We play a zero-sum game, backstabbing and taking dots off each other. [I've heard a point that] when you're playing a fierce competition, the way that you best show respect to your opponents is to be good competition for them.

KK: Both Katie and Mikalis said the thing they liked about me is that I'm a no-bullshit person, right? Like, I speak in reliable, plain - in Katie's words - unemotional language. Because I have no heart and I have no soul. [Everyone laughing.] No, but...

And you love to talk tactics for ten minutes at a time to Peter McNamara.

KK: Exactly.

KG: How more of a robot could you be?

KK: On the flipside, when I have someone nakedly bullshitting me, I think, either: *You are not very good at this game. You have no clue what you're talking about. You haven't done the work [or taken] the time to understand what things mean.*

The other side is - *you think I'm an idiot, that I'm gonna fall for this absolute nonsense. You do not respect me in the game context*, and in that case, I am not going to reciprocate the respect that you desire. If you're trying to tell me that the sky is green and you pissing on my leg is rain, I'm just not gonna take you seriously as someone negotiating with me in good faith. I think good faith is what underlies good diplomacy. If you do not trust the person aside from you to be at least considering your interests and making pitches to you based on that, you're just going to laugh them out of the room, right?

At Cascadia, where Katie basically came up to me and asked *are you okay with me topping* - she understood the state of the game and why it made sense for me to say yes. If it was a game in which I could grow faster than Katie, and have a better result fighting her, it'd be like *Katie, what on earth are you talking about?*

With Mikalis - going to the Austria-Italy game, he had the advantage. He knew that. He was negotiating from a position of power and a place where he could make these requests. But at the same time - this is so important - he was acting in good faith and negotiating reasonably.

In order to get respect, you need to be able to show respect to the person you're talking to, and then prove that you're good at whatever it is that you're good at. That's true in Diplomacy and real life.

KG: And in both those cases, it only worked because - well, for my case, and I presume for Mikalis - we know that you know what's up too. You can be working with someone who's less experienced and they don't understand why you're in a better position than them. And you can't have those same kinds of conversations because they'll just see it as, like, you're trying to get over on them or something.

To the point about - if you're gonna play this game competitively, the most you can respect the other people is to take it seriously? I think that's true. If we're on a top board and you're telling me openly, outright, you want a funny thing that'll make people laugh, you don't care about winning... This is a competitive setting, and people come into this wanting to play competitively. You can do fun and unique things that require trust that aren't just [disrespecting] the game.

It's not just *can I make the longest convoy?* It's, can I have a 17-17? Can I do some clever tactic where I really have to rely on the other person trusting me? The reason there's tension is because you know that you [both] want to win. If nobody wants to win, there's no tension - you can do whatever you want. But that's not fun for me. To have a good game of Diplomacy - where you can make good arguments to people, defend yourself, make good pitches - you have to respect that the other person knows what they're doing and that they want to win.

One of the things I love about this game is: how do you tailor what you want through the eyes of somebody else who wants something different? That's really interesting to me. I think that's something, like I said, that Mikalis is really good at. *This is what I need to happen, this is how I'm going to get you to do that.* But it's all for him, right? It's not really for Ruben.

[Laughter.]

And I think that's really interesting, one of the fun things about this game. And when there's not that conflict and people aren't taking it seriously, I struggle with that.

KK: You cannot have stakes if we're faffing about and nothing matters. If you're telling me that the board and result do not matter to you, what's the point? Why are we spending eight hours if no one here cares?

You can [absolutely] have fun tactics and competition at the same time. And Katie is one of the best people to talk about that with because when we were playing together at Cascadia, which - once again - Katie, North American DipCon champion because of it -

KG: Excuse me, I had two other good games. I would just like to point that out.

KK: No, I'm not arguing - oh my God! [Laughter.]

MK: No, no, you only won because of Karthik, Katie. That's what the conclusion is! We might as well just give him the title.

KK: Something that helped Katie get a bigger top on that board was that she trusted that [we had a shared] view of the game and were acting towards that, right? In the

final turn of the game, we made a really cool multinational convoy, with weird cut supports and other fun tactics that [ended up winning the Coolest Move award](#). But it wasn't, "oh, this move is so funny, it's goofy". It was a cool move because it had stakes and tension associated with it.

KG: I have one final comment about that. Part of the agreement was that if we won Coolest Move, I was like, *Karthik, you can have it, because you're letting me top the board.*

KK: It was a beautiful award - a really, really nice wooden award Chris Brand made. I was like, you know what? I can't top this board under realistic circumstances anyway. May as well take the cool move award... and the points that came with a 12-center second place, which was quite a lot actually.

MK: I want to build on what Karthik said - how if you're making a stupid pitch, people are either going to think you're lying or not very good. Bullshit merchantry can be incredibly effective against less good players. If you can sell them on doing something dumb and get yourself a great result, it might win you a tournament or get you to a top board. But then you come up against top players and you play the same way...

When you're playing with top players, if you treat them like idiots, they won't want to work with you. That isn't the same as meaning they *aren't going* to work with you; sometimes circumstances mean they have to. Sometimes you have two bullshit merchants on a board, and you end up having to work with one... But then the midgame happens and now they're the only bullshit merchant left and they die. They are weakening their own position and playing against their own interests by treating you like an idiot. If you don't treat people with dignity and respect at the highest level you're not going to receive it in return - or your chances are reduced. We'll put it that way.

I want to give Nicolas Sahuguet an incredible shout out. On the top board in Athens, Nicolas and I were never really allies, but throughout, he kept the lines open. He would say *okay, I'm moving to Tyrolia with support this turn, so you can block it and I'm gonna go for Vienna* - he told me that in the spring when I had Vienna - like, "you can brace it".

Strategically, it's not good for him, it's actually helping my position more than him. But from a negotiation standpoint, he is making sure that we are on an incredibly level page. The tactical benefit from not telling me wouldn't have been enough to justify the diplomatic cost of lying to me.

Nicolas is really, really good at judging the right time to tell the truth and the right time to - not necessarily even

lie, but just to omit or to not have a conversation that phase. It's one of his strengths.

KG: Diplomacy is a game where we all sign up [knowing] people are going to lie to you. [You might have a player who] lies very little, but the way that they negotiate is very manipulative. There are ways that you can lie that still feel you're playing straight up. I know that doesn't make a lot of sense, because you're lying! But it's like, *well, this is the reason, this is why I did it and it worked out* - I think most players will respect you for lying to them when they [see] a clear outcome.

What I really, really hate [is] when you're about to die; there's nothing you can do. Like there's literally nothing I could do to ruin your plan - and you're lying to me. For what? Like, for what? That feels so slimy.

Just be straight up with people if you're not going to work with them. You can tell them that - and you can come back from it in a year or two, because the game changes very quickly. If you're lying to me about how you're going to work with me for four years, and then the game changes and now you actually want to work with me - like, too bad! You've been lying to me! Or what's the quote? "There's people who lie and then there's bullshitters". People who bullshit are not concerned with the truth. They don't care if it's true or not. They're just going to tell you whatever.

[Whereas] if you're lying, and there's a specific reason... Lying is not immoral in Diplomacy. Lying is part of the game; it can happen. If you trick me into doing something, or if you have a different deal with somebody else that you didn't have with me, okay. But that's different from bullshitting.

KK: If you are lying in a way that benefits your self-interest, and I can see after the fact why it benefited you - then I know if it's in your interest to work with me, I can believe that you will do so, and that you will work with me without lying in those cases.

If you are lying and backstabbing because you don't have an attachment to the truth, and you don't see value in it - I have no reason to believe that when it actually is in your interest to work with me and you're trying to tell me the truth, that you're actually going to follow through on it.

MK: Some less experienced players think Diplomacy is a game about lying. It is not a game about lying at all. Yes, I will lie, but very, very rarely. It is about lying at the perfect time to take the maximum advantage. Sometimes you can go an entire game without lying and still come out on top because you don't need to. You do not want to lie unnecessarily. The more you lie, I think the worse you generally are as a player. It's a very

limited approach because you are burning trust with no benefit to you.

On the WDC top board, I barely talked to Bradley after I stabbed him. I didn't go to him every turn saying *this is how we can work it out*. I had no pitch. He will know any pitch I make is bullshit. The die is cast.

We kept good relations. At no point did I disrespect him saying, *no, I don't want to talk to you*. But there was not a long conversation of me pitching him, because there wasn't anything [either of us] could pitch that [we] would believe. He knows that these next few turns are going to be a tactical battle.

But it might change. If Ruben had stabbed me in that game, then I'm going to need to work with Bradley. I won't burn my bridges with unnecessary lies that, maybe, I get one turn of tactical advantage out of - but do so much damage diplomatically that it may well end up costing me the game.

KG: And he didn't do that to you, right? He didn't try to bullshit you, because he knew what was going on.

MK: He knew what the score was, yeah. Everybody has my respect to begin with. At the start of a game or an alliance, you have my respect. And now it is - what do you do with that respect?

We play a game that's essentially arguing over a map of Europe - yet within the hobby, we find such strong friendships, foundations for community.

KG: I actually really don't think Diplomacy is arguing. I think it's about working through that, and finding a connection: whether that is sort of an emotional connection, as with a good ally - or a strategic connection, where you and someone across the board are racing. You know what they're looking for, what you're looking for.

It doesn't have to be about friendship on the board, but it is about finding common ground. Mikalis said he treats everyone with respect. And you have to, because everyone's units can do the same thing. You need other players' support. You need other people to be on your side doing what you want them to do.

And everyone's fighting for themselves. I don't think the way to bridge that is to argue the best; to be right. So many times, I have players coming to me and saying - *you were the most straight up with me, or you're the one who did me the least harm, or you're the only person who kept talking to me as I was dying - how can I help you?*

The game, in my opinion, is based on trust, and on finding a way to work through arguments and conflicts.

It's natural to form bonds with people really quickly [through that]. It's true in general that there's some people you just meet, you hit it off, and after a couple hours, they're your best friend. I think that's really easy to do in Diplomacy. It's really easy to get excited about a move set working: *this thing that we planned, it all panned out how we wanted*. I think those kinds of bonds are more what the game is about.

MK: The three of us came to this game having played Mafia, which is a game about arguing. And at the end of the day, there's a reason I don't play Mafia anymore: it brings out the worst in me. I do not like the person I become when I play Mafia, and so I no longer play Mafia. And Diplomacy doesn't do that. Diplomacy is the opposite. Like Katie said, it's about conflict resolution and relationship management, relationship building - working out common goals, making them happen.

KK: You're put under a high amount of stress. And when things go well and resolve nicely from a position of stress, the... bonding associated with it. When that bit of safety is returned - the people you thought you were working with actually were working with you - you get that incredible dopamine rush. You've gone from peak fear to peak safety in a matter of seconds.

KG: Dan Lester literally leaped for joy when Jake Mannix supported him on the top board in Athens. It was like a pure moment of catharsis, almost like, yes.

KK: Right. It is one of the most primordial feelings in the world, that feeling of safety rushing over you, when something goes right in Diplomacy. We have these high-stakes, long-term trust relationships, and then, *boom*, out of nowhere, a stab to win the game. Or - oh, man - we go back and forth. We stab each other in '03 and [we're] working together again in '05. And then we stab each other in '07, and we get back together again, because we all care about the competitive state of the game. And we all recognize that the game is only fun when we all care together.

**This interview is based on transcription. It has been edited for length and clarity.*

Mikalīs Kamarītīs is the 2026 World DipCon Champion (Athens, Greece). Among other titles, he was the Diplomat of the Year in 2024-25 through his victory in the Diplomacy Broadcast Network Invitational

tournament, and 2023 North American DipCon Champion (Dixiecon, Raleigh, North Carolina, USA).

Katie Gray is the President of the North American Diplomacy Federation. She was the 2024 North American DipCon Champion (Cascadia, Vancouver, Canada). Other notable wins include SkyCon 2024 (Bozeman, Montana, USA) and the virtual Summer Classic of 2022.

Karthik Konath travelled a lot in 2024. He was that year's European DipCon Champion (Championnat de Suisse, Sion, Switzerland), Dixiecon (Raleigh, North Carolina, USA) winner, and won the Australians' fealty to the underdog with a close-shave second at the revived Melbourne Open.

Zoe Cameron (moderator, but not on webDip) was the 2025 Asia-Pacific Diplomacy Champion (Cane Toad Classic, Brisbane, Australia). She still cherishes her WDC 2025 (San Francisco, California, USA) Players' Choice award.

All four are contributors to the Diplomacy Broadcast Network.



Carnage in Canberra as the Hung Parliament Handicap comes back to town!

by Shane Armstrong

The third stop on 2026's Asia-Pacific Diplomacy tour was Canberra in late April for the 2026 Hung Parliament Handicap. The Hung Parliament Handicap is a genuinely unique tournament in global Diplomacy. It attempts to level the playing field between experienced and novice players by operating as a normal tournament right up until the end of the final round. After that, players are provided with a pre-determined points boost decided by the Tournament Director before the tournament commences. The purpose of this is to encourage new players to take the plunge and experience tournament Diplomacy.

This year, the event was held on the campus at the Australian National University by both the Canberra Diplomacy Club and the Australian National University Diplomacy Society to further drive involvement of new players, particularly from ANU to tournament Diplomacy. One third of registered players for the tournament were first timers, and more than half had played three tournaments or fewer.

The tournament also had a debutant Tournament Director, ANU Diplomacy Society Secretary Alex Batten. Alex ran a fun and well-organized tournament that ran beautifully. Capacity building has been a focus of the Canberra Diplomacy Club, with the last five tournaments in the capital run by five different people. This focus shares the load for local organizers, and builds organizational skills within the club, while developing confidence and leadership skills of club members. Alex also recently arranged the use of the Australian National University Students' Association bus, driving a board's worth of players to and from Melbourne for March's Melbourne Open. Alex's selfless, community-focused attitude embodies the best aspects of the community of Australian Diplomacy players.

Round 1 commenced on Friday night with three boards. Board 1, Fusion Party, saw Connor Muirhead (ACT) in Turkey and Jacob Traeger (ACT) in Italy share a 9/9 board top. Commiserations were in order for the unfortunate debutant Jakob Peter (ACT) in Austria who was denied a build in 1901 and was rapidly eliminated. Board 2, Liberal Party, saw Darcy Morris (ACT) take all available bonus points under the Bangkok scoring system finishing on 11 as Russia, followed by Stephan Kumar (SA) on 8 dots as France. But the action was on the third board of the round, Jacqui Lambie Network, where Brandan Austin (ACT) in England notched the first solo of his career. James Leib (NSW) in Turkey, finished on 10 dots in his tournament debut in this game, and

should be congratulated for his excellent play in getting into double figures. James wanted to keep enjoying playing, vetoing several draws, aware of the potential consequences. In some ways, this is the point of this tournament - to create an environment where players can experiment and play under tournament conditions with less pressure. Indeed, it should be noted that a certain Brandan Austin once played a very similar role in a solo at the 2024 Cane Toad Classic.

The ability to walk out of the venue and straight into a bar was a definite drawcard in playing at ANU, and players enjoyed a debrief over a few quiet drinks before wrapping at closing time.

Saturday brought two rounds and a fairly casual start a bit after 10am. All rounds were run to Winter 1908, and the certainty of that allowed people to have a fairly relaxed morning and a good break between the morning and evening sessions. Round 2 Board 1, Sustainable Australia saw Connor "Dr Solo" Muirhead square away Best Austria with a massive 15 dots, 8 clear of Max North (VIC) on 7 as France. Board 2, Centre Alliance, was taken out by everyone's favorite kiwi, Dominick Stephens (NZL), finishing on 12 and taking Best Turkey, ably followed by Tristan Barrett (NSW) on 10 as France. Tristan was an integral part of the weekend, sitting out or double boarding where possible to help facilitate a smooth experience for everyone. Tristan will be making his Tournament Director debut at the Sydney Cup (4-5 July), and will do a fantastic job. Board 3, HEART Party, saw Darcy Morris continue his dominant play, finishing on 13 as Turkey, followed in second by another tournament debutant, Jasper Klijn (ACT) finishing on 8 as England. While Jasper has some online experience, competitive FTF play is a new horizon, and Jasper posted ever improving scores as the weekend went on.

A leisurely lunch was followed by a few drinks for those so inclined before the evening session kicked off with four boards. Round 3 Board 1, United Australia Party was a reprint of the previous 2 Darcy Morris rounds, with the Iron Man of Diplomacy again hoovering up all of the Bangkok bonus points finishing on 11 as Russia, followed by Max North and Shane Armstrong (ACT) on 8 apiece as England and Germany. Max and Shane ran a rock-solid alliance and earned themselves Best Alliance when the prizes were handed out on the final day. Board 2, National Party, saw Tianyu Sun (ACT), and Connor Muirhead share an 11-dot board top. Charlie Murphy (ACT) finished with a career-best 6 dot finish in third as Germany, and tournament Diplomacy debutant Mike

Chen (ACT) also rack up 6 as Austria. Board 3, Australia's Voice saw Stephan Kumar rack up a ridiculous 14 dots as a Western (or perhaps more accurately a Northern) Italy, picking up Best Italy in the process. Controlling each of the English home SCs during the game, and ending with an army in Denmark, his 5 fleet, 9 army Italy was a lot of fun. Second was taken out by Jasper Klijn, finishing on 12 as Austria, in a performance that would generally be good enough to take out a best country award. The final board of the round, Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party saw a dominant E/F of Max Wanji Roe Banks (ACT) and Brandan Austin reach an accommodation with Stella Walter's (ACT) Austria to share an 11-dot board top three ways before players again decamped to the next building for drinks.

As is the style in Australian Diplomacy, Saturday night also meant karaoke, and the members of the Karaoke Caucus were easily identifiable the next morning by their hoarse voices.

So, to the final day. Scores were not published throughout the tournament, but people had a vague idea that Brandan Austin and Darcy Morris were in contention, but that a solo from Connor Muirhead could throw the cat amongst the pigeons. Board 2, Katter's Australian Party saw the east absorb the pressure from an E/F, debutant Alex McCutcheon (ACT) read the game and pivot perfectly to turn an R/T into a RAT that would have rolled the entire board in a time unlimited game. Alex got into Ruhr, Munich Piedmont and Burgundy in a bold performance before the game long R/T of Shane Armstrong and Max North (ruler of a Turkish Spain) stabbed for dots in the final year, netting Shane Best Russia on 12 SCs. Board 3, Sun Ripened Warm Tomato Party continued Connor Muirhead's fine run of scoring form, finishing on 14 as France, with Tianyu Sun in Germany on 11 scooping up Best Germany for his efforts. Brandan Austin finished in third on 8 as Turkey. Board 1, Australian Labor Party was the board that would decide the winner. Stella Walter and Darcy Morris ran an efficient E/F that stormed the board before Darcy stabbed in 1907 and took the required dots to record his first career solo and take out the top spot on raw score at the 2026 Hung Parliament Handicap.

Once handicaps were applied, there were some significant shifts. Max Roe Banks, 12th on raw score slid to 28th, and Shane Armstrong, 4th on raw score, dropped to 8th, as both were revealed to be playing off scratch. The big movers were Alex McCutcheon improving from 14th to 8th, and James Leib going from 19th to 13th. Within the Top 7, Max North went from 11th to 7th, Stella Walter moved from 10th up to 6th, Jasper Klijn went from 7th to 5th, and Stephan Kumar upgraded his 5th to 4th. However, the handicapping did not do

much to shift the top 3. 3rd was Brandan Austin, 2nd was Connor Muirhead, and first was Darcy Morris. Brandan was playing off scratch, and the 5 point bonus (the lowest possible) given to Darcy and Connor was irrelevant to the final outcome.

Congratulations to Darcy Morris, the winner of his first FTF tournament, Hung Parliament Handicap 2026!

Final handicapped placings

1st- Darcy Morris (ACT)
2nd - Connor Muirhead (ACT)
3rd - Brandan Austin (ACT)
4th - Stephan Kumar (SA)
5th - Jasper Klijn (ACT)
6th - Stella Walter (ACT)
7th - Max North (VIC)
=8th - Alex McCutcheon (ACT)
=8th - Jacob Traeger (ACT)
=8th - Shane Armstrong (ACT)

Best Austria - Connor Muirhead (ACT)
Best England - Brandan Austin (ACT)
Best France - Darcy Morris (ACT)
Best Germany - Tianyu Sun (ACT)
Best Italy - Stephan Kumar (SA)
Best Russia - Shane Armstrong (ACT)
Best Turkey - Dominick Stephens (NZL)

Best Alliance - Shane Armstrong (ACT) and Max North (VIC)

Maritime Excellence - Alex McCutcheon (ACT) (Russian Fleet Belgium!)

Austrian Cliché - Charlie Murphy (ACT) (Best Austrian dogpile)

The Kiwi - Kayton Lee (ACT) (Survival on the edge of extinction) A skilled player, Kayton had some tough games, but continually played his positions with aplomb.



BGG CON 2026



- November 18-22, 2026- (9:00am Wednesday - 3:00pm Sunday)
- Hyatt Regency Dallas, 300 Reunion Blvd, Dallas, TX 75207

BGG Fall returns to downtown Dallas, TX this November for its twenty first year!

We will have many Diplomacy events again this year including learn to play events and a diplomacy Tournament.

There will be trophies for top three finishers in each round (Gold, Silver, Bronze) as well as a Grand Champion Award for the overall tournament winner with the most points from all three tournament rounds. Participate in one or more of the DIPLOMACY TRIATHLON events to qualify for the Champion Trophy. The more rounds you play the more points you get!

There will also be special awards given out, many prize drawings and board game giveaways for just showing up and participating in each event, as well as lots of Diplomacy themed swag to give away.

Dates and times for the events are pending approval.

To get tickets please go to:

<https://tabletop.events/conventions/bgg.con-2026>

In addition, there are games for beginner and new players to learn the rules and games. People who have not played in a while or feel they need a refresher are also invited to join.

Dixiecon 2026 Narrative Report

by Tournament Director David Hood

Let me tell you what happened in that other event in late May, the same weekend when Mikalis Kamaritis was winning the 2026 World Dipcon in Greece with an outstanding performance as Germany on a stacked top board. The 40th annual Dixiecon was taking place in Chapel Hill, North Carolina during that same time, featuring a total of eleven boards of Diplomacy, open gaming out the Wazoo, and a new addition to the tournament's list of champions that we call the Order of the Knife.

But let's start at the very beginning, as Julie Andrews would sing. Before the Diplomacy event begins on Friday night, there are activities on site as folk arrive Thursday afternoon all the way to 6pm Friday when Diplomacy commences. This year we had a lot of Thursday attendees actually, so gaming was hot and heavy both that night and during the day Friday. Games I saw Thursday included Concordia, Imperial Tide, Forest Shuffle, Love Letters, Railways of the Western US, Long Shot and two more that would compete for "Game of the Con" over the weekend, Space Base and One Hour WW II. During Friday gaming I saw boards played of Baltic Empires, Watergate, Ink, Terraforming Mars, Five Crowns, Bridge, Castles of Burgundy, Seven Wonders Architects, and more Space Base.

These non-Dip games are played just for fun, of course, but also in order to win points during our Iron Man competition. Game results are scored based on length and complexity of each board game, with the event run (quite well I might add) by first time GM Alex Ronke. The Iron Man provides a nice side event for Diplomacy players who have been eliminated from their games or who are skipping a round, as well as the main event for what usually amounts to around half of overall Dixiecon attendees - those who do not now or never really did play Dip on a tournament level. There are several past Dixiecon Diplomacy champs who now come just to socialize and Iron Man during the weekend, and it's great to have them. Also they are usually willing to fill out a Dip board when I need another person, which is a major benefit to me as tournament director. I've never, ever, had to ask someone to play two boards to fill out a Diplomacy round, a luxury in today's Dip tournament scene.

Friday afternoon saw the earlier trickle of attendance turn into a flood as the Diplomacy players crowded into the basement of Granville South to make the 6pm open ceremonies. This consists of awarding trophies from past years, providing logistical information, and as a special Dixiecon yearly event, all those who can wear some form of seersucker clothing to honor the Southern

tradition of changeover from spring fashion to summer. Then, it was time for the games!



This year, the Diplomacy games were all named for things invented in North Carolina. Naturally, the first game was called Pepsi-Cola and featured a very caffeinated EF two way between David Miller and Keith Worstell - which would catapult them each into contention from the word go. They were able to convince Jason Bennett in Turkey that, had he insisted on being in the draw, they could and would grind him out into a 17/17. Each of the other games that round ended in three-way draws, including results which would eventually lead to Best Country awards for Chris Barfield as a 12-center Italy and Doc Binder as an 11-center Germany. You want the game names? Of course you do: Barcodes, Overalls and Nascar, which are all NC inventions.

Friday night also saw the continuation of Iron Man gaming, including titles such as Railroad Tycoon, M'Lem Space Agency, Tichu, as well as an old-style Britannia game won by Steve Koehler. Steve parlayed that victory into a second-place showing overall in the Iron Man event.

The Saturday morning Dip round also doubles as the team tournament at Dixiecon. Each team of three players combines their scores from the round and the highest total is the winner. This year, the team of Smiling Nicely came out on top, on the strength of Keith Worstell's solo as Russia in the Krispy Kreme game and a two-way by Randy Lawrence-Hurt also as Russia in the Lance Crackers game. Third team member Todd Craig survived his Vicks VapoRub game, weirdly also as Russia. They edged the second place Team Colorado, consisting of Manus Hand, Liam Bennett and Eber Condrell. Other important results from this second round included Randy's draw partner Tim Richardson as

Austria in Lance Crackers relying on that score to finish fourth in the tournament overall, and Andy Bartalone's three-way allowing him to clinch seventh place overall in the Gatling Gun game.

Iron Man action continued all day on Saturday, with games being played (among others) of Splendor, Battle Sheep, Space Base, M'Lem, Magic: The Gathering, Princes of Florence, Ark Nova and Transamerica. After a break in the action for our traditional annual barbeque, the Iron Man gaming intensified that evening as Diplomacy players were mostly now free to participate. Games I saw that evening included Pillars of the Earth, St Petersburg, Watergate, TMars, Cascadia, Space Base, Ticket to Ride, So Clover, Just One, Magic, Outpost, Twilight Struggle, Captain Sonar, TMars and Flip Seven. There was also a rousing poker game lead by Vincent Agosta, Andy Bartalone, and others, as well as (in lieu of our usual Dip variant offering) a board of the new diplomatic game called Imperial Borders. Let's just say that Granville was loud, crowded, and awesome all night long.



Players' Choice Winner Liam Bennett

Going into the Sunday round of Diplomacy, everyone knew that Keith would be very difficult to catch given his previous results of a solo and two-way draw. Sunday solos are possible, though (see Karthik's win in 2024 based on a Sunday solo) so three boards of hopefuls gathered to fight it out for spots on Dixiecon's annual top

board (best seven finishers.) The Putt Putt Golf game ended in a four-way, so its participants could not use that score to place high in the overall standings. Same was true in the M-1 Carbine game, ending in a five-way stalemate as the EGR powers were able to stymie the AT attempt at domination of the board by Jason Bennett as Austria and Sloth Wheeler as Turkey. In the third game, called Modern Shipping Container, a three-way draw result did cement David Miller's third place overall and Andy Bartalone's seven-place overall.



Tournament Winner Keith Worstell

In the Iron Man competition, Sunday saw a number of games played as contestants tried to break into the top three positions for awards. Games included Dune Imperium, Space Base, Titan, Heat, Forest Shuffle, Remix and Terraforming Mars. Ultimately, Bruce Duewer added an Iron Man victory in 2026 to his decades long list of awards in the competition, with Steve Koehler taking second and Bill Morgan in the third position. In addition to the Best Country awards already mentioned above, other Besties included Ben Kellman as Turkey and Keith Worsell taking both Best France and Best Russia. Tim Crosby had quite the Diplomacy weekend, with two eliminations and a very llooonnnngggg small survival in his other game, winning I Got Hammered by a mile. Doc Binder won Golden Blade for his round one game as Germany, with Liam Bennett taking a very tight vote as Players Choice with Farrell Moskow a close second.



Keith Discovers He Wins the Brick Award Too

It also very much deserves mentioning that Keith Worstell pulled off a never-seen-before combo by winning not only the Diplomacy Tournament, but also the Brick award (for bone-headed play), as a result of the EXACT SAME GAME. He ordered F MAO to Spain without specifying a coast, meaning he was stuck at seventeen for that game year. He then, of course, proceeded to take three the next year to end at 20 centers, but he was clearly still a bonehead.

All in all, a great time was had. I was personally pleased to see the good turnout and loads of new friend connections made, even in a year when many of our normal attendees were in Greece. After awards and dinner, the open gaming continued into the night with the traditional Escape from Colditz game being played alongside boards of Railways of the Eastern US, Splendor, Magic, Cascadia, Transamerica and Space Base. Make plans now to attend the 41st annual event over Memorial Day weekend 2027!

An Interview with Liam Bennett

by Randall Lawrence-Hurt

Our hobby is enjoyed by players of all ages, and one of the new up-and-comers is the young Liam Bennett. Our Interview Editor Randall Lawrence-Hurt sat down with Liam to learn about his experiences, involvement, and lessons-learned!

Randy - So jumping right in, how did you get started in Diplomacy?

Liam - I got started in diplomacy when my (very lovely) grandfather Manus Hand took me to my first house game in June 2024 after my uncle died. It was then where I realized how much fun the game was, but I truly fell in love with the game in my next three games at the 2024 Regatta.

Randy - Oh wow, I didn't realize Regatta 2024 was your first time playing! Can you talk about what it was like coming into the hobby with that tournament? How were your boards, what was it like playing with experienced players? It must've been a little overwhelming at first?

Liam - Yeah, I was a bit nervous and I didn't think much would come of it. My first game I was Germany, featuring Katie Gray and Doc Binder to my east side (an alliance that very quickly dominated their neighbors). I got stabbed quickly, but Katie let me live on one center. My second-round game I was quickly eliminated and I got a bit upset. After that I drew Russia, with Karthik

Konath in France, and one of my favorite people to work with, James Larson (a former local). After a long game Karthik helped me stab James, and I ended up sharing a 14/14 top.

I won't say the main reason I like Diplomacy is because I'm good at it. I'll say that's my secondary reason.

Overall though I was amazed with how nice the people were to me despite my young age, I wasn't sure what type of people to expect, but I couldn't be happier with them.

Randy - Bit of a baptism by fire there, but sounds like you handled it well. What was your next tournament experience like, did you feel more prepared and comfortable?

Liam - Haha, yeah. My next tournament was the 2025 JAMESON HAND MEMORIAL ARMADA Regatta tournament. I did feel a bit more confident, but ultimately scored worse than I did in my first tournament. It wasn't until Blazecon and the 40th Dixiecon where I truly found my footing in a tournament setting.

Randy - So what changed in those next two tournaments for you? Were you able to carry forward any specific learnings from the two Regattas?

Liam - Well I learned a lot about how I like to play in general, my overall strategy and what I prefer to do in certain situations. I think most importantly though I greatly improved my tactics, especially on the defensive side.

Randy - I remember my first two tournaments, about 20 years ago: the first one was so overwhelming, I didn't know what was happening on my boards half the time, I simply couldn't keep up; then the second one, that dramatically improved, I understood the pace of the game a lot better, I was able to take moments to think about my next moves. Did you find a similar change in your own mentality in your second and third tournaments?

Liam - In my second tournament, I was still kind of nervous, but I was a lot more sure of my game. Third tournament (Blazecon) I wasn't nervous, and I was pretty confident in my play but not 100%. It wasn't until Dixiecon 40 where I was 100% all around.

Randy - Let's talk about DixieCon 40. First of all, general impressions? What did you think of the tournament, the people, the schedule and scoring system, etc.?

Liam - Well the schedule was definitely amazing. I liked the barbecue, and the time for open gaming and social time was such an amazing aspect. The people as always are amazing, I even made some new friends, like Buffalo, Farrell and Hal. The scoring system was decent, pretty good actually. However I will die on this hill: the Non-DIAS rule ruined a lot about the tournament. If the idea is to play as long as the game should go, and it's a draw-sized format, the tournament needs to be DIAS.

Randy - I don't think you're alone in that opinion. I lean that way myself. So you've played in four FtF tournaments now. Are you active online as well?

Liam - Yes! I am active online, especially in the Snakepit league. Last season I played a lot of VDL, and I play speedboat on the Nexus server. My favorite of all though is my involvement with the youth community I run with Jelte Kuiper, I enjoy talking to him and other people, and I enjoy keeping people close to my age involved in the hobby.

Randy - I didn't know about that, that's great! How did this youth community come about, can you tell me more about it?

Liam - Jelte (a Dutch player) runs it, and has been since 2024. (That is the earliest I know of it being active). This

past year I have been getting the server more active, we have gunboat, press, and Vf2f games outside of the tournament. We've grown to over 130 server members, and I couldn't be more thrilled with the amount of activity lately.

Randy - That's amazing, what a great way to grow the hobby and ensure a player base for years to come.

I know you've also made yourself quite popular at FtF events, if I recall correctly you've won two Players Choice awards, including most recently at DixieCon 40? What advice would you give someone, particularly a young person, who wants to come to a tournament, put in a good showing, and also make a good impression?

Liam - I sure did. For me I guess I just act polite, and decent to everyone and it all goes well. It sounds cheesy but just treat everyone the way you want to be treated. Even if you don't do well, if you make a good impression you've done well as a person: much like life, diplomacy is a game of relationships.

Randy - Sage advice. I think that about wraps this up for me. Where can our readers expect to hear about your next exploits? Oh, and can you share a link to that youth league, so we can help it grow?

Liam - The youth league Discord is here: <https://discord.gg/e7cVv6DMp>

I'll be at Dipcon in Denver, and hopefully one more, maybe Carnage.

Randy - Oh, I understand you're involved in organizing for a local hobby now too; how's that going, and where can folks get more info?

Liam - Yes, I am currently co-organizing HATTS (The "High Altitude Trust and Treachery Society) with ARMADA Grand Admiral Manus Hand, and Eliot Howell, a new Denver club. Our mascot is the Clydesdale horse, which shares its name with my absolute favorite territory on the board, Clyde. We had 29 people at our inaugural house game, which was just so exciting to see. In our house games we will be scoring them for a year-long season, to crown a winner at our annual tournament. Speaking of our annual tournament, we will be hosting the "*Jameson Hand Diplomacy Derby*," in an attempt to honor and memorialize my uncle who sadly passed away not too long ago. We couldn't be more excited to host this event. Our discord server can be found here: <https://discord.gg/cypgXckj5T>. And our Facebook link is: <https://Facebook.com/groups/hatss>

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/>



EDC 2026 – All Your Questions Answered

by Chris Woolgar

TL:DR:

The EDC is in Chesterfield on 2nd-4th October 2026, latest check-in to party is 2:20pm on the Friday. Entry cost is £20 (£15 on or before 10th July) and is payable by PayPal to w_woolgar@hotmail.com following registration at www.diplomacy.co.uk.

Chapter 1: So You're Saying there's a Chance?

If you have opened this... let's call it a brochure... then 80% of the battle is won; you're interested in joining us for the European Diplomacy Championships 2026.

That's great!

This will put you in the company of a select group of not much over 400 people who have played in an EDC since records began (way back in 1993), and in 33 tournaments there have been a hefty 66 different podium occupiers. We can reasonably say that if you play you have a chance of winning.

However,...

Of course, this year's tournament is in the UK and, owing to popular culture and historic public perception, this means that a Brit is expected to win (see Football 1966; Olympics 2012 without USA and Russia in the medal table). To those people I say, "Look, Toby Harris' form has dropped off to the point where I was able to win Best Toby Harris at the UK National Championships in 2025". It really is a wide-open field this year and anyone's trophy to claim, but I'm waffling, so let's dive into it.

Chapter 2: I'll Start Reading Here, Thanks

The European Diplomacy Championship (EDC) 2026 is taking place in Chesterfield, UK from 2nd to 4th October. There will be four rounds of Diplomacy (1 Friday, 2 Saturday and 1 Sunday). You need to have arrived and checked in by 2:20pm on the Friday to plan in Round 1.

The Setting

Chesterfield is pretty much smack in the middle of the country. It takes 100 minutes to drive to the east coast and 100 minutes to drive to the west coast. We're on the midland mainline railway straight from St Pancras International in 1 hour 55 minutes and we're 5 miles from the edge of the Peak District National Park. We also have a local international airport just 40 minutes away by car or train.

During your visit you can take in the breathtaking walks and views of the Peak District, from the scenery of Curbar Edge to the ancient spa town of Buxton.

Further afield, for those who want to arrive a day in advance, consider paying a visit to Whitby, the setting for the novel Dracula and the only place in the world where you can find the naturally occurring gem stone, Jet.

Perhaps a day in York is more your cup-of-tea, with its original 2000-year-old city wall on which you can walk.

Arrive early enough and you could choose to walk the 73-mile Hadrian's Wall separating England from Scotland, visit Blackpool – the funfair town of the North, or any of the dozens of medieval or iron age castles.

Chesterfield itself has a rich history dating back to its market charter in 1594 and then all the way back to the construction of the 'Crooked Spire' church in 1234. Archaeologists have even found buildings forming a crossroads dating back to a few years BC underneath what is now the town center.

Chapter 3: What's Occurring?

We'll get right into it: On Friday 2nd October registration will open at 12 noon, please try not to attend the venue before this time although it does open at 10am for those interested in browsing the shop or hovering over the odd TCG battle that might be taking place.

Actually, I should mention the venue shouldn't I?

It's called Geek's Headquarters and it's an independent gaming and sales venue specializing in all sorts of card and board games. The venue, spread across three floors, has been open for 11 years. The EDC has booked certain areas and tables for the weekend (sufficient to ensure exclusive organized tournament status), but the venue as a whole will be open to the public throughout.

You can find out more at: www.geekshquarters.co.uk

Registration will close and the first board draw will commence at 2:20pm with the first round scheduled to start at 2:40pm on the Friday.

Until that time there's plenty of Key high street shops and independent boutiques to see around Chesterfield. Here are a few highlights that I recommend:

- Crit! | <http://www.crit.co.uk> - For all your Funko pops, board games and other memorabilia
- Shop Indie | www.shopindie.co.uk - A great place to pick up locally handmade gifts and knickknacks.

- The Shambles | www.chesterfield.co.uk/visiting/shopping/chesterfield-town-centre/the-shambles - Previously a literal shambles (narrow lanes designed with gullies to carry away blood and other waste from butcher's shops), this is now home to 20 or so independent shops, cafes and even a pub. Definitely the place to sample regional delicacies such as Bakewell Tart, Pork Pie and Stilton Cheese.
- Queen's Park | www.visitpeakdistrict.com/business-directory/queens-park - Opened in 1887 for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, the park,

complete with cricket ground, bandstand café and ice cream van, is a great place to unwind before or after a grueling diplomatic encounter. You can even ride the train, which has no upper age limit!

- Chatsworth House | www.chatsworth.org Still home to the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, this stately home is open for tours and also boasts over 12,000 acres of gardens and farmland plus a farm shop which sells mostly produce made on site. Fun Fact: Over 75% of bananas in existence can trace their ancestry back to one tree at Chatsworth House.



TL Clockwise: Curbar Edge, Buxton Spa Town, Hadrian's Wall, Blackpool

Chapter 4: Will there be Diplomacy at the European Diplomacy Championships?.. Yes, and lots of eating and drinking

Great question, sport.

So, we know the first round kicks off at 2:40pm on the Friday and should be wrapped up by about 8:30pm. The Saturday rounds will kick off at 9:20am and 3:20pm on the Saturday and then the final round will start a little later at 10:20am on the Sunday. What more do you need to know?

On to the food:

After the first round on Friday there will be an organized meal. The location of this is to be determined based on the final number of attendees but will be within walking distance of the venue.

You are also welcome to do your own thing or meet up after the meal for a social wetting of the whistle, so to speak. There are two Wetherspoons in Chesterfield offering an excellent low-cost menu of drinks and fast meals, but there are also lots of cool and interesting places such as:

- The Rutland | www.rutlandarmschesterfield.co.uk - A large selection of ales and other beverages, live music on Fridays, and a warm welcome to any board gamers (it even hosted SpireCon 2025). Beware of the ghost.
- Chandler's | www.chandlers-bar.co.uk - Cocktail venue extraordinaire styled as half an indoor garden with paving slabs and half a log cabin with real fireplace.
- Einstein's | www.einsteinschesterfield.co.uk - Not feeling the English food? Try this German

inspired beer haus with some great food offerings including schnitzels and pizzas.

If you've reached Saturday morning you will be hankering for a coffee or perhaps wanting to dabble in the quintessentially British pastime of tea drinking? Not only does Chesterfield have you're Costa, Nero and Coffee#1 in the town center, and a Starbucks just by Casa Hotel, but I can wholeheartedly recommend [Society Coffee Shop and Bar](#) for that extra bit of local taste and without the CoffeeBucks™ London-style pricing.

Chapter 5: Do you need to Sleep?

Unfortunately, we don't have space in our homes for everyone (England does have the smallest homes in Europe), but luckily for you there's plenty of places to stay in Chesterfield and here are just a few:

[The Premier Inn Chesterfield Town Centre](#) is a fairly new edition to Chesterfield, occupying the fake Tudor premises of a bankrupt department store. It's only 1 minute walk from the venue and standard double rooms are only £67. On top of that the unlimited breakfast buffet is only £11.

[The Travelodge](#) is around a five-minute walk from the venue and about 30 seconds from a Dominoes. A standard room (king size) will run you £53. Breakfast sneaks in at £10.35.

[Casa Hotel](#) is where you go if you want the luxury. This is Chesterfields top 4-star hotel run by Chesterfield's own founder of the Vodka Kick ('VK') drinks brand. It's 20 minutes' walk from the venue and costs £111 for a standard room... but the rooms are nice.

Chapter 6: I'd have a lovely time if I could get there

And you can Kevin! You can fly, drive, walk, swim or choo-choo your way to Chesterfield and it's super easy.

Chesterfield is on the midland mainline which runs from London St Pancras International all the way up north as far as York. The fast train every hour takes 1 hour and 55 minutes and it's just four stops. There are also dozens of trains a day coming down from Edinburgh and up from Bristol (via Birmingham) plus running West to East is the Liverpool to Norwich train which can get you here from Manchester in 1 hour and 15 minutes.

Flying has never been easier, although it's probably been cheaper given the price of aviation fuel these days, but I digress. You could fly into the UK to one of dozens of airports but there's probably four places you want to consider – London (Luton ideally, or Heathrow), Manchester, Birmingham (see above for train connections) or East Midlands Airport. EMA as it's

known is 35 miles from Chesterfield and sits on the midland mainline too so once transferred to the train station you can be here in 30 minutes, but my recommendation is sharing (to get the cost down) a pre-booked airport taxi which will pick you up directly at the terminal (3 passengers return trip will cost between £140-£160). Some Chesterfield firms which offer this service include Galaxy Travel and A-Line Taxis.

<https://galaxy-travel.co.uk/airport-transfers/>

[Line Taxi Services | Minibus, Airport Taxi, Pricing](#)

Chapter 7: So I can get there, why should I? (The Summary)

If it isn't obvious already that you'll be playing Diplomacy – a European Championship no less – in a picturesque market town on the border of the Peak District, with great transport links, great shopping, great drinks, great food, great friends, great rivals, and a great chance of winning then... may I add to the list, a goody bag! That's right, you'll get merch just for attending. What merch you ask; well, you'll have to come to find out.

To register go to www.diplomacy.co.uk then send your entry fee (20£ or 15£ if before 01 July) by PayPal to w_woolgar@hotmail.com.

If you prefer to pay by CashApp please email w_woolgar@hotmail.com for information.



Never a *Cross* Word

By Archie Duke

Never a **CROSS** word No. 7

ACROSS:

- 1 Fall between summer & winter. (6)
- 5 Great power's general staff ran central operations to some extent. (6)
- 8 Messes with broken sled on mud. (7)
- 9 Scene in play was inflammatory material. It could cause a bit of a stink. (7)
- 11 Weight in gold of certain vegetable we hear. (5)
- 12 English 'capitalists'(?). (9)
- 13 Wound apparent when sloop was slightly damaged with ignitions of explosive devices. (7)
- 15 Aboard steamship bleat about basic accommodation. (7)
- 16 Part of the Czechlands but not Bohemia. (7)
- 19 Instrument used by Luke catching eel perhaps. (7)
- 22 Notice saver traveling with railway competitor. (9)
- 23 Partly stomachached hurt. (5)
- 24 Left Mediterranean for example first to get to 14D. (7)
- 25 Opened and bombed. (7)
- 26 Stripped hero sadly lost stable role. (6)
- 27 Trigger trap ahead of Build Turn. (6)



'I know we aren't going the right way, but can't you go any faster?'



'Please ask your chef to prepare some lobster mayonnaise and pickles. We are expecting a picnic tomorrow.'

DOWN:

- 2 French and German articles on game experience. (7)
- 3 As at Gallipoli, unit left in dark. (5)
- 4 Led teens to become comfortably settled. (7)
- 5 Dastardly scoundrels surrounded Romeo and became allies. (7)
- 6 Safe harbour - on the Pacific coast. (9)
- 7 Hide fake intricate lace. (7)
- 8 Came scrambling south for weapons in the Wars of the Roses. (5)
- 10 Relaxes having started enlisting auxiliary soldiers every spring. (5)
- 14 Vile prop with nothing on got transferred to Merseyside club. (9)
- 16 Averages resources. (5)
- 17 Discloses several jumbles. (7)
- 18 This wasn't used at Waterloo when charging French battery - but likely would be now. (7)
- 19 Brave old hero presented general grant. (7)
- 20 No leech could aspire to the top one of these. (7)
- 21 Finished up. (5)
- 23 Middle eastern leader found in a shallow body of water. (5)

ANSWERS to 'Never a CROSS word' No.6

ACROSS: 1 *Africa*, 5 *Alsace*, 8 *Perugia*, 9 *Castles*, 11 *Quart*, 12 (&27) *Trafalgar Square*, 13 *Enemies*, 15 *Concern*, 16 *Seeland*, 19 *Bedbugs*, 22 *Emptiness*, 23 *Plumb*, 24 *Earring*, 25 *Relapse*, 26 *Troyes*.

DOWN: 2 *Furnace*, 3 *Ingot*, 4 *Abattis*, 5 *Archaic*, 6 *Sustained*, 7 *Cologne*, 8 *Pique*, 10 *Siren*, 14 *Inability*, 16 *Siege*, 17 *Emperor*, 18 *Dredges*, 19 *Bistros*, 20 *Usurper*, 21 *Sable*, 23 *Pilau*.

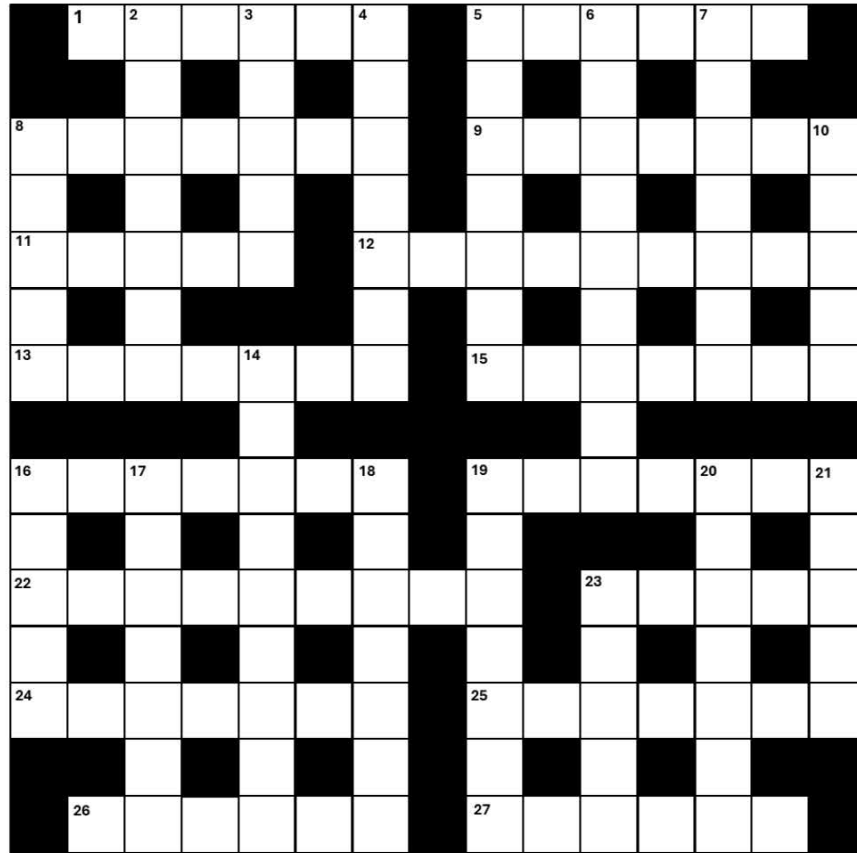


'I'm at their embassy now. It looks like our treaty has been torn up.'



'I told you we should never have trusted that Italian Gigolo!'

Never a **CROSS** word No. 7



By Archie Duke

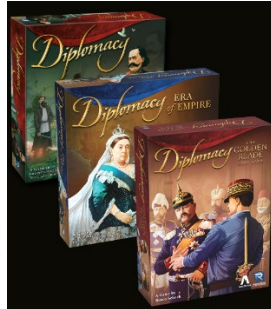


*'You told me you didn't drink Mustafa.
Wake up – the British have Burgundy!'*

Tournament Haven

by Thomas Haver

In this edition of "Tournament Haven", we'll cover our Spring tournaments, upcoming events, the North American Grand Prix, and we'll look ahead to WDC 2027 Las Vegas. Let's dive in!



Last year we brought back the "North American Grand Prix", a circuit event for Diplomacy to support travel and play across the continent. Aligning with the creation of the Renegade Heroes program

(<https://renegadegamestudios.com/blog/introducing-the-renegade-heroes-community-program/?srsltid=AfmBOorp6YE2nUiXnoTo4yZgH1NGcgJonGe5OWL8ERdQnzrwl2AT30wA>), a central body for organized play within the Diplomacy community made it possible to align on standards for teaching the game and running events. The current North American Grand Prix rules are posted on Renegade's site:

<https://renegadegamestudios.com/diplomacy-north-american-grand-prix-2026>

<https://renegadegamestudios.com/diplomacy-north-american-grand-prix-2026>

As an incentive to win we awarded a free trip to the World Series of Board Gaming to the champion. In 2026 we kept the same scoring system and are providing a track for interested tournament directors or potential tournament directors to participate. Anyone interested in running an event should submit their registration for the Renegade Heroes program using the link above. For anyone with questions, please reach out to Heroes@RenegadeGames.com.

Onto the current top players!

Since the last update, we've completed tournament events in Circle DC, BGG Spring, and Origins Game Fair. There are many more opportunities to participate this year. Join the Renegade Discord for the latest updates (<https://discord.gg/PNqNt2Uy>).!

Rank	Player	Points
1	Robert Zahn	76
2	John Carpenter	27
3 (tie)	Ivory Whitehead	25
3 (tie)	Phil Burk	25
3 (tie)	Richard Sweat	25
6 (tie)	Aaron Fischer	18
6 (tie)	Jeff Hayman	18
6 (tie)	Caden Towlson	18
6 (tie)	Blake Hakimian	18
6 (tie)	Anatoly Morosov	18
6 (tie)	Robert Lacy	18

February 21-23 - OwlCon (Houston, TX) - Robert Lacy

"Richard Sweat is the champion of the first ever OwlCon mini tournament. The Diplomacy Tournament at Owlcon XLIII was held at Rice University on February 21.

Diplomacy has been a part of Owlcon since the beginning. Since Owlcon X in 1989. There were two rounds to the tournament, each round there was a classic Diplomacy board and a concurrent Era of Empires board. Each game was to the end of 1907 on the Classic board and 1877 on the Era board.

The number of people who walked up to comment on the game and the setup, get information about what we were doing, and take flyers for upcoming events. Another positive thing of note as well was bystanders taking pictures and people stopping by to just see what was going on. I had two different people come up to me wanting information for a friend that loves diplomacy and lives in the area." – Robert Lacy, tournament director

Top Board:

- 1st - Richard Sweat
- 2nd - Caden Towlson
- 3rd - Bryce Cruise
- 4th - Andrew Katcher
- 5th - Frankie Torres
- 6th - Lance Hlvaty
- 7th - Daniel Bowers

February 27-28 - PrezCon (Charlottesville, VA) - Thomas Haver

Congratulations to Robert Zahn for winning the PrezCon Diplomacy Tournament in dominant fashion. Zahn earned a Best Country award on all three boards he played over the weekend. The best two of three round

event was brought back in 2024 after a 14-year hiatus. Held annually in Charlottesville, Virginia the convention is known affectionally as the "Winter Nationals", a sister convention of the World Boardgaming Championships. Per usual, we treated players to Diplomacy shirts and some winter wear -- Diplomacy hoodies! The thick winter clothes keeps you warm and doubles as protective padding from backstabs.

Top Board:

1st - Robert Zahn
2nd - Jeff Hayman
3rd - Paul Konka
4th - Claude Worrell
5th - Santiago Carnice
6th - John Carpenter
7th (tie) - J Smith
7th (tie) - Michael McKibbin

March 19-22 - BreakoutCon (Toronto, Canada) (Canadian National Championship) - Thomas Haver

Congratulations to Robert Zahn for winning the Canadian National Diplomacy Championship at BreakoutCon in Toronto. The tournament was best two rounds of three in classical Diplomacy, with added games for "Era of Empire" and "The Golden Blade". The tournament finale was hotly contested, with local favorite John Carpenter being narrowly edged out by Robert Zahn in the third round. Zahn rode two board tops (Germany and England) to the championship.

Top Board:

1st - Robert Zahn
2nd - John Carpenter
3rd - Adrian Ongteco
4th - Dylan Surovec
5th - Owen Casselman
6th - Aaron Fischer
7th - Mike Keepence

April 10-12 - Circle DC (Washington, DC) - Thomas Haver

The Circle DC Diplomacy Triathlon wrapped up in dramatic fashion, with a single placement point separating first and second place. Designer Rosco Schock led the third round session, which included a rules explanation for the newly released Golden Blade card game. The tournament leaders, Blake Hakimian and Robert Zahn, both won their games of classic Diplomacy and Era of Empire in the first two rounds. It would come down to who could perform better in Golden Blade. Zahn edged out Blake by one point for the championship, winning an engraved Golden Blade with his championship!

Each of the top seven finishers received a copy of The Golden Blade. The Diplomacy Triathlon format was

popular, making it our biggest event in four years at Circle DC. Check out the full tournament writeup posted on Renegade's site:

<https://renegadegamestudios.com/blog/race-to-the-finish-in-dc-the-circle-dc-diplomacy-triathlon-2026/>

Top Board:

1st - Robert Zahn
2nd - Blake Hakimian
3rd - Whit Swafford
4th (tie) - Kevin Fernandez
4th (tie) - Andrew Burnard
6th - Gavin Burnard
7th - Keith Boone

May 22-24 - BGG Spring (Dallas, Texas) - Robert Lacy

BoardGameGeek Spring expanded this year from a teaching event to a full-blown Diplomacy Tournament courtesy of veteran organizer Robert Lacy. The event was easy to attend because of its proximity to DFW airport. My family made a vacation of the event, visiting many of the sights in Dallas, including multiple stops for some wonderful BBQ.

"Our overall Tournament Champion was Ivory Whitehead. Ivory tied for placement points with Anatoly Morosov and won on tiebreaker (three medals). Ivory had played classic Diplomacy online some but never played in an actual face to face game ever much less a tournament event and had never played Diplomacy Era of Empire or Diplomacy the Golden Blade. Ivory had smart consistent gameplay, good negotiations and took advantage of the board where opportunities presented while not worrying about moves that didn't work out beating out some more seasoned players.

We also made history at BGG Spring 2026! After checking, we confirmed that Ivory Whitehead is now the youngest person ever to win a Diplomacy Tournament. Ivory, a soon to be high school junior, placed third in each of the qualifying rounds of the BGG Spring Diplomacy Triathlon taking the Bronze Plaque in each event. Ivory told me before round three started that they wanted third place "to have the trifecta of thirds". Ivory was so happy to take all three Bronze plaques "to make the set" that they didn't realize they won the whole event! Congrats to our winner! Now Ivory has a title to defend at BGG Fall 2026!" – Robert Lacy, tournament director

Top Board:

1st - Ivory Whitehead
2nd - Anatoly Morosov
3rd - Bill Woodmansee
4th - Aiden Schramm
5th - Nolan David
6th - Arthur McManus
7th - Pete Tanthmanatham

June 19-22 - Origins (Columbus, Ohio) - Thomas Haver

Congratulations to Phil Burk on winning the Midwest Diplomacy Championship at Origins Game Fair! Phil expertly navigated the field to board tops with England and Turkey. Close behind him were Robert Lacy, Nick Bays, and Tony Prokes -- with the championship determined by two centers centers on the final board.

Origins is one of the "original" Diplomacy events and now in its 51st year. In addition to the tournament, we held teaching games for classic Diplomacy, "Era of Empire", and "The Golden Blade". Many thanks to Rosco Schock, designer of the Golden Blade, for traveling to Origins to teach his game.

1st - Phil Burk
2nd - Robert Lacy
3rd - (tie) Nick Bays
3rd - (tie) Tony Prokes
5th - Aaron Fischer
6th - Glenn Gasner
7th - Larkin Hastriter

July 31 - August 1 - WBC (Seven Springs, PA) - Anton Wilsbach

The World Boardgaming Championships started as AvalonCon in support of Avalon Hill. Since its inception more than thirty years ago by Don Greenwood, the convention has become most well known for the "Century", a series of competitive board game tournaments held over a full week. This convention is held at the Seven Springs Mountain Resort outside of Pittsburgh, PA. Many attendees are decades-long supporters of classic titles by Avalon Hill. The Diplomacy tournament is best two rounds out of three, with a teaching round on Friday before the first round. Website: <https://www.boardgamers.org/>

July 30 - August 1 - GenCon (Indianapolis, IN) (US National Championship) - Thomas Haver

GenCon is considered the premiere gaming convention in the US. Attending at least one GenCon is a rite of passage in the gaming world. For the Diplomacy community, it's the longest running tournament & Diplomacy gaming event aside from DipCon itself. The first Diplomacy event was at the first GenCon back in 1968 and today is the United States Diplomacy Championship. GenCon hosts the largest Diplomacy event in the world, with 187 participants at last year's event. The tournament event is unique – the Best Country system awards the seven "Best Country" winners with a spot on the Top Board on Saturday. That game is played until a solo or concession is achieved. For those looking for a lighter experience, teaching

events run concurrently with the tournament. In addition to the classic Diplomacy tournament, teaching events will be held for "Era of Empire" and "The Golden Blade". Website: <https://www.gencon.com/>

September 4-7 - National Diplomacy Masters (Las Vegas, NV) - Thomas Haver

Renegade Game Studios partnered with the World Series of Board Gaming to create the "National Diplomacy Masters" tournament in 2024. The Masters event celebrates some of the best on-the-board players and the biggest contributors to the Diplomacy community every year. The event is being played at the Horseshoe Resort & Casino in Las Vegas over Labor Day Weekend. The convention packs the most Diplomacy you could want out of an event: three rounds of classic Diplomacy to crown the National Diplomacy Masters champion, three rounds of "Era of Empire" to crown the North American Era of Empire Champion, and three rounds of "The Golden Blade" to crown the first ever Golden Blade champion. Nine total rounds of Diplomacy at one event! Not to mention the prizes. To honor those "Masters of Diplomacy" each of the below listed players has been gifted a "stay-and-play" package for the convention that covers badge & hotel at the convention. Few events in Diplomacy provide awards as significant as the National Diplomacy Masters. Try your luck in Vegas this year, and remember, what stabs happen in Vegas stay in Vegas. Website: <https://wsbgvegas.com/>

Cyrille Sevin (3x World Diplomacy Champion)
Richard Sweat (Reigning WSBG Era of Empire champion)
David Rynkowski (multi-time Best Diplomat honoree)

Gregory Vaughan (Reigning US Diplomacy Champion)
Robert Zahn (Reigning Grand Prix Champion)
Nolan David (Reigning Diplomat of the Year)
Dan McNeill (Reigning National Diplomacy Masters winner)

November 6-8 - Battlefront Dayton (Dayton, Ohio) - Thomas Haver

Board Game Nation brought us an amazing convention in 2025 at Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. The primary focus was on tabletop war, historical, and fantasy games. Battlefront Dayton has the distinguished honor of hosting the first ever Diplomacy Triathlon, which has since spread to many general gaming conventions. The convention returns this year with more surprises for players. Last year they hosted multiple notable game designers, including Axis & Allies creator Larry Harris. The convention space is linked to the hotel and just across from a bar & restaurant in the same building. You don't have to walk far to get what you need at Battlefront Dayton. The Diplomacy tournament will once again be a Triathlon, with three

different Diplomacy games across three rounds of play to crown the best all-around Diplomacy player. Discord: <https://discord.gg/tU9Td8b9> and Website (2025): <https://tabletop.events/conventions/bgn-bfd>

November 18-22 - BGG Con (Dallas, Texas) - Robert Lacy

Dallas is host to a second Diplomacy tournament this year at BoardGameGeekCon. Robert Lacy has been teaching Diplomacy events at BGG Con for a few years now, and the players are eager for tournament play. The Hyatt Regency Dallas is located in downtown Dallas. Like the Spring edition, Lacy will be hosting a Diplomacy Triathlon – three different Diplomacy games over three rounds. As per the tradition, multiple teaching rounds will occur during the 5 day convention to give players of all skill levels the opportunity to play the event they want. The championship “trophy” for this year is sure to excite players once they see it – and in Texas you can actually brandish the award in public without causing alarm. Website: <https://tabletop.events/conventions/bgg.con-2026>

December 4-6 - PAX Unplugged (Philadelphia, PA) - Thomas Haver

PAX Unplugged has quickly become one of the largest gaming conventions in the US, with more than 30,000 attendees in the halls of the Philadelphia Convention Center. The event location in downtown Philly puts you in the heart of the action, with Terminal Market and Chinatown within walking distance. The Diplomacy event is part of the “Classic Cardboard” tournament hosted by ReedPop. Diplomacy is one of the classic games included in the lineup. Teaching games will be held for “Era of Empire” and “The Golden Blade” in the exhibit hall. Join us for one of the lighter Diplomacy tournament events on the circuit then visit Renegade Game Studios in the dealer hall for some extra swag. Website: <https://unplugged.paxsite.com/>

WDC 2027 – LAS VEGAS

In 2027, we'll host World DipCon with a four-round Swiss tournament and a Top Board to determine the World

Champion. WDC 2027 will take the place of the existing “National Diplomacy Masters” event at the World Series of Board Gaming. We will also host the world championships for both “Diplomacy: Era of Empire” and “Diplomacy: The Golden Blade” card game. Three world championships at one convention – The World Series of Board Gaming!

The hotel site is also the event site, so no additional travel is required. Additional event information can be found at the WSBG site and on the Renegade Game Studios official Discord (<https://discord.gg/uGzzUQbq>).

The National Diplomacy Masters tournament traditionally honors four competitors each year as part of the event. In 2026 we expanded to sponsor seven competitors. Each competitor receives a “Stay & Play” package to cover hotel & event costs. This tradition will continue at WDC by celebrating the achievements of players on the board and those organizers who uplift face-to-face play. Additionally, four hotel rooms will be made available to select international travelers representing different nations. Each hotel room has two queen-size beds, so multiple competitors can elect to stay together for the duration of the event. Lastly, the WSBG will offer travel stipends to select VIPs to help support event attendance.

For full details and updates, visit:

Website: WDC2027.com

Contact: WDC2027LasVegas@gmail.com

2025 Photos: [Google Photos Album](#)

2024 Photos: [Google Photos Album](#)

Video Coverage: [Board Game Nation YouTube](#)

Key Details on WDC 2027:

- **Dates:** September 2027
- **Location:** Horseshoe Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas
- **Signup:** [WSBG Site](#) | [WDC Info](#)
- **Contact:** WDC2027LasVegas@gmail.com

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/>



Diplomacy



Ask the Hobby Historian: The Denver Decision of 2001

by David Hood

When I was thinking about the topic for this issue's iteration of "Ask the Hobby Historian" I remembered that the 2026 North American Championships, Dipcon, is coming up near Denver, Colorado at the end of July. It has been exactly 25 years since Dipcon was last hosted by that Armada club. Everyone should go this year if they can, because the Denver hobby puts on a great gathering. But this is a history article, so let's go back that 25 years, shall we?

The 2001 event was historically interesting for several reasons. That was where the "Immaculate Concession" was made to Edi Birsan in 1904 after reaching 13 centers and convincing the other players that another 5 would be easy for him to get. That was where the hobby saw the use of the first scoring system which reduced the center count for a solo below 18 in certain circumstances. That was also where a controversial decision was made at the event's hobby meeting, a decision with which I adamantly disagreed, thinking the consequences would be bad for the hobby as a whole.

Events would prove me to be completely wrong.

The topic was where North America would host the 2003 World Dipcon. This was before the World Dipcon Charter had been adopted by ratification at three successive WDCs, a process completed the next year in 2002. The Charter would dictate how WDC sites would be chosen from then forward, but the procedure before that was for hobby leaders to decide on which continent would host the WDC a particular year in the future (which basically involved determining if Australia had the leadership and size to host a particular year, otherwise the event just pinged back and forth between Europe and North America.) After the decision was made, that particular continental hobby decided itself where it would host the event, usually two years ahead of time or so. So in 2001, the hobby meeting at Dipcon was where this decision would be made for the 2023 North American WDC site.

The two bidders were Dan Mathias on behalf of Prezcon in Charlottesville, Virginia and Manus Hand on behalf of the Armada event itself. Both guys were (and are) very good friends of mine, and both events were good choices in the abstract. As much as I had very much enjoyed the 2001 Regatta/Dipcon up to that point, however, I thought it would look very bad to the rest of the hobby for voters in Denver to award the 2003 WDC location to, well, Denver. Another reason I favored the Prezcon bid was that the practice up to that point was that where World Dipcon was to be held, the Dipcon hobby meeting the next year would make sure Dipcon would be held at exactly the same site as that WDC. So

all previous WDCs in North America (1990, 1996, 1998 and 2000) were held in tandem with the Dipcons for that same year at the same event. The thinking was that the hobby was not big enough to support sufficient attendance at two different locations in the same year for the world championships and North American championships. I assumed this would be the practice for 2003 as well, which would result in Dipcon repeating in Denver just two years later - which I thought would set a bad precedent.

So I campaigned hard for Prezcon. I lost. The majority of voters brushed aside both of my arguments and overwhelmingly supported having Manus run the 2003 WDC. Now, I have already foreshadowed that I believe I was wrong on all this. Let's discuss why.

First off, I did not give the hobby of 2001 enough credit regarding how they would react to this vote. Instead of folk being overly suspicious of a process that involved Denver attendees voting for another Denver event, most North American hobbyists were able to objectively examine the pros and cons of the two bids and ultimately concluded that the correct decision had been made for the correct reasons. The success of the 2001 Dipcon itself proved that the site was ready for WDC, whereas Prezcon maybe was not quite there (but would eventually get there - hosting the Dipcon in 2006). Manus and his team had proven their worth, and though I was worried those not in attendance would fail to see that as clearly, I was glad to be wrong about that.

Second, I did not give the hobby of 2001 enough credit in another way as well. Turns out we were indeed capable of splitting Dipcon from World Dipcon in 2003 to avoid the problem of two Denver Dipcons in three years. Washington hosted the 2003 Dipcon quite successfully, months after the 2003 World Dipcon in Denver also performed quite successfully. The assumption that combining the two was necessary had been broken. From that point forward, we still hosted the two events together sometimes, but also ran them as separate events in the year many times as well, to the detriment of neither convention.

Indeed this "Denver Decision" of 2001 actually helped us realize just how strong our hobby was becoming. That has culminated, many years later, in a complete turnabout; now the assumption is that the two events should be held separately, so as not to eclipse the importance of our North American Championship by having it always subsumed by that year's World Dipcon. Good for us. This is partially because I think many of the hobbyists of that era have grown up and now have the disposable income to enable travel to several events per

year. It's also true that the group of traveling players is no longer so small that we could only measure success by making sure that all of the travelers came to one particular place each year. Now we have the numbers to support a wide variety of tournaments each year, not just in North America but around the world. We've all seen the tremendous growth in events over in the Asia Pacific segment of our hobby, and now we are seeing that take place as well in the UK and continental Europe, with new events springing up all over the place.

Which brings me to my last point - I want to do another little commercial for our hobby's Diplomacy Angel Fund,

which I administer. The idea is to pool our financial resources to help players who need financial assistance in order to attend face to face tournaments. The structure of the Fund is simple - I have a list of volunteer donors whom I contact after someone has come to me asking for help. Given the number of donors we have, I only need to ask some of them for small amounts in order to assemble the needed funds for more situations. Please do not be shy - if you are someone who would like to give, contact me and I will add you to the donor list. If you are someone who needs help to attend an event, reach out to me and we'll discuss the specifics. Use davidhood@dixiecon.com, or DM me on Discord.

Never a Cross Word Answer Key

ANSWERS to 'Never a CROSS word' No.7
ACROSS: 1 Autumn, 5 France, 8 Muddles, 9 Incess, 11 Carat, 12 Londoners, 13 Spooled, 15 Stables, 16 Moravia, 19 Ukelele, 22 Adversary, 23 Ached, 24 Seaport, 25 Shelled, 26 Ostler, 27 Spring.
DOWN: 2 Undergo, 3 Unit, 4 Nestled, 5 Friends, 6 Anchorage, 7 Conceal, 8 Maces, 10 Eases, 14 Liverpool, 16 Means, 17 Reveals, 18 Adaptor, 19 Ulysses, 20 Echelon, 21 Ended, 23 Amerer. Archie Duke

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/> and <https://www.world-diplomacy-reference.com/tournaments/upcoming>

DiploRat Mischief – July 10th – July 12th, 2026 – Brooklyn, New York - <https://www.eventcreate.com/e/mischief26>

Frankfurt Diplomacy Championship – July 25th – July 26th, 2026 – Frankfurt, Germany - https://docs.google.com/document/d/1yc_OTtAg82jK8vcz2s1r0kT6r5j-npB7siboDGO4NwK/edit?tab=t.0

DipCon at Armada Regatta – July 30th – August 2nd, 2026 – Denver, Colorado – <https://armada-dip.com/regatta>

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/>

Boston Massacre – August 14th – August 16th, 2026 – Boston, Massachusetts - <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSffTHMo1jFCCP4cnyG1NsyZzAqNb9e7McQ-eEEn4CGDpcFA/viewform>

Swiss Diplomacy Championship – September 5th – September 6th, 2026 – Sierre, Switzerland - https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KzVX2fiFSW20wkzRIHMfPufO8e5ec_0E7R7v-7-YcNA/edit?tab=t.0

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

Euro DipCon – October 2nd – October 4th, 2026 – Chesterfield, United Kingdom - <https://diplomacy.co.uk/edc2026>

Weasel Moot XX – October 2nd – October 4th, 2026 – Chicago, Illinois - <https://windycityweasels.org/weasel-moot-xx/>

Carnage – October 16th – October 18th, 2026 – Killington, Vermont - <https://carnagecon.com/>

Hechtstechen 2026 – October 17th – October 18th, 2026 – Dresden, Germany - <https://hechtstechen.com/>

Dutch Masters – November 7th – November 8th, 2026 – Leiden, The Netherlands - https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BWjd6FuSJ0_tzyK1H2CDvNqocGu2sle4/edit

Australian Open – November 13th – November 15th, 2026 – Canberra, Australia – No links yet

BGG Con 2026 – November 18th – November 22nd, 2026 – Dallas, Texas - <https://tabletop.events/conventions/bgg.con-2026>

Championnat de France – December 4th – December 6th, 2026 - Paris, France – No links yet

World DipCon at Weasel Moot 2027 – September 26th – September 27th, 2027 – Chicago, Illinois - <https://windycityweasels.org/weasel-moot-xxi/>

Fear and Loathing on the Saronic Gulf: The Pestilence Spreads from Leiden to Athens...

by Dr. William B. Drummond

**And I dreamt of a house... haunted by all you
tweakers with your hands out... and the headstones
climbed up the hills.**

Well, here we go again We all hear about the slow lingering decline of journalism, that there's no more money in the industry and that everything's going to be written by AI. Clearly the death of journalism is overstated, because this publication is still making enough money to pay the expenses a substance abusing degenerate to travel to The Hobby's premiere events.

Ah, The Hobby. Where friends come together to frustrate the bejesus out of each other, cancel each other out, and let some other weirdo take the win. I knew I had this job more than six months ago, which made the entire thing feel dull and routine. Hot on the heels of EDC, the editorial staff at Diplomacy World just sent me the details of the job, and didn't even ask if I was interested. The quid pro quo is clear now - I continue my business-as-usual debauchery in a different location, and they get a rough collection of ideas dictated down a telephone from the front bar of an early opener.

San Francisco, Leiden, Athens. Well, not Athens, Saronida. The Greek Riviera, perhaps? I don't know, and I don't much care. I don't mind it a bit rough - it means more potential for adventure. Mercifully it's still a full-service carrier for your correspondent. This time it's Lufthansa. Germany's way of forcing everyone to visit Frankfurt. What do I know about Frankfurt? That it's the belly of the beast for Euro-capitalism, and that it's the airport Lufthansa force you to fly through if you want to go absolutely anywhere. Stern flight attendants, cheese sandwiches, all the palatable but uninspiring lager you can drink. Still, it's for the best that the West is the Germany that survived the death grip of the Cold War. Frankfurt and Lufthansa are better than Zwickau and Interflug, and Athens sounds more pleasant than a weekend in Murmansk.

I am, again, travelling alone. No intern. Clearly the corruption of The Kid in San Francisco means I can't be trusted with an offside. They only pay me to damage myself - come and watch The Incredible Drinking Man - he slumps right before your eyes! I don't have a train trip this time either - it's a driver taking me straight down to the coast and to my accommodation. DW is doing parts of this trip on the cheap, while they've got me a villa up in the hills, I've been told it's a contra deal - mates of the editor and some sort of tax dodge. Sooner than me being chased by Hector the Tax Inspector.

Despite my driver's speeding, the car ride is interminable. It doesn't feel at all direct. The highlight is driving past a Lidl. I mean, the driver isn't mucking around at all - he's regularly 30 over the speed limit and seems impatient and twitchy. I've been led to believe that everyone's laid back in Greece, but this guy is the opposite. At one point he flips another driver off for no discernible reason. SF has fentanyl, and from my sample size of 1, every Athenian cabbie is a tweaker. Mercifully he doesn't even try and strike up conversation. I recognize a kindred spirit, and leave him to his experience - my brain is still slightly pickled in Becks.

**Mild Muscle... Taking over your life, I'm taking over
your scene...**

We draw in to Saronida. It looks like a ghost town, though it looks more dormant than dead. I haven't seen this in a while - it's a tourist town that hasn't hit peak season yet For mine it's certainly warm enough for sun, surf and sand, but I guess I'm much more familiar with colder climes than the Mediterranean types around here. Straight up into the hills and into the villa. Unlocked gates, unlocked doors - the whole place is asleep. Bag on the bed, I beeline to the fridge, fit to start a riot if the rider hasn't been fulfilled.

There's a small Greek woman in the kitchen. She wants Euros. Cash Euros. Tourist Tax. If she's Saronida's standover man, this particular Yiaya is either deceptively deadly, or this is actually some sort of legit levy the council has outsourced to the town's OAPs. Right now, though, the problem is that she's blocking the fridge. I kick her a 100 Euro note, and ask if there's any change. She ignores me and leaves. A small price to pay. The rider! It's there. I grab a handful of small bottles of ouzo to get into the local vibe, and throw myself back onto my bed for a while.

I doze. It's early evening. It's dead quiet up here, apart from some birds yelling at each other. Time to head into town and gauge the vibe. See what's going on with the freaks descending on poor old Saronida for the weekend. I open up Uber. Nothing going on down here. Fantastic. Car theft isn't my vibe, so I can't jack a neighbor's Skoda. I think it's probably OK if I borrow a car if one's in the garage. Sure, the whole drink driving thing is a bit of an issue, but I don't expect the Greeks to be too active on that front, and the streets are dead. Perhaps I'll just cite Dionysus and religious freedom and blag my way out of it. There's also a bit of the old baksheesh. Or giving the standover Yiaya another

kickback to heavy the gourounis off my back. No luck. But there is a moped. And it even has a helmet. Good idea, keep a low profile. Safety first, officer, no need to pay me any attention - it's the granny taking cash bungs you've got to keep an eye on, I'm pretty sure she's not giving anyone tax receipts.

Mercifully, I've ridden plenty, though this tiny Honda with an engine the size of a milk carton is distinctly underwhelming. It putters down the hill. The restaurants are pretty quiet. The supermarket is already closed. I turn onto the coastal road and see what looks like the only bar in town. Anchor. There are actually people there, though it's all fairly laid back and restrained.

I pull up at the bar, shades on, trying to keep a low profile and to scope out familiar faces without attracting too much attention. Work out what's coming to me. Don't give any of these bastards a second to get the better of me. I want the element of surprise when I shirtfront one of them demanding answers about their previous acts of bastardry over a board. That's the thing with this lot, keep them off balance, and you keep them honest.

Of course, I see the man I always see first. The permagrinning East Coaster. It's the guy with the sombrero. I'm not sure if he books three seats on a flight as a courtesy to his fellow travelers, or if he forces them to endure 10 hours under his hat's intimidating wingspan. He's as chill as normal. A reassuring constant.

There's a dude I've not seen before with a much smaller hat. I spot the Hellenic Titan - he's running the entire show this weekend - a proverbial Atlas keeping the only ball that matters up where it belongs. He looks composed and across everything. The most organized man in Greece. Silverman is here - a damn sight calmer than when he was driving the USS WDC in SF last year. Tonight I'm nursing glasses of Fischer - why they're selling French lager in Greece is beyond me, but I've still not been spotted. I rack up the drinks, and the tab clicks along merrily. Why we have an insincere American waitress is also beyond me, but I decide to go with the local vibe and not care too much.

I do hear some chat that a bunch of them are off to Hydra tomorrow. That's quite a schlep from Saronida, but I make a mental note for the bus arrival time, and stick to trying to drink them out of Fischer.

**Monsters... animals... heroes... Atlas bells the cat.
My kingdom for a jaw harp!**

I wake up on the beach. Sure, I've blacked out again, but I'm comparatively fresh. Must be that fresh mountain water in the Fischer. I'm just across the road from Anchor, which is a blessing, because it means my moped is still nearby and I've not somehow ended up in

another town. I slink onto the back of the bus to Piraeus, pull my visor down a little further and feign sleep. I'm left to it, and we wind our way up the coast towards Athens. I've blagged my way this far, I figure I'll try and sneak onto the ferry in a similar fashion. I snaffle a staff coat left on the back of a chair, and wander around the ferry looking like I'm doing something important. This is patently ridiculous, but people leave me to my own devices, probably because they don't want to run the risk of having to interact with the freak, and the ferry pushes off to Hydra.

Apparently the appeal of this place is that it doesn't have any cars. But it does have donkeys. That should make this lot fairly comfortable - there's always a donkey or two on a board - focused, making progress, doing all the hard work, and then getting ruthlessly dispatched when they're of no more use to the deceitful bastards who have ridden them all the way to the scene of the homicide.

While my every instinct is to just grab a bunch of hooch and sit on the beach, I opt to wander (or, more accurately have a mini heart attack hiking up a bajillion steps) to Leonard Cohen's understated old digs. I immediately regret not learning to play the jaw harp to twang my appreciation to the moody old SOB. Apparently Lenny wrote Bird on the Wire here, amongst some other numbers. I can't help but think he was somewhat inspired by The Hobby...

"Like a beast with his horn
I have torn everyone who reached out for me
But I swear by this song
And by all that I have done wrong
I will make it all up to thee."

He might have meant it, but this lot don't.

Mini market. A bottle of tsipouro as I let gravity bring me back towards the water. I tag onto the back of a group headed to the Museum of Hydra. Primarily devoted to the Greek War of Independence, when the Greeks successfully dislodged the Turks, it also contains relics relating to the Balkan Wars.

Continuing the gruesomeness last experienced in the Hague hearing about the partial cannibalism of the Brothers de Witt, I discovered the heart of Andreas Miaoulis on display in a silver urn in pride of place. A native of Hydra, Miaoulis, despite setbacks, bankrolled resistance against, and then bravely fought the Turks across five years. Initially buried on the mainland, his bones were eventually received on Hydra, and his heart was kept as a relic. A son of Hydra returned triumphant to his ancestral place of belonging.

Victorious viscera sighted, it was time to while away the afternoon in the sun. Douskos Taverna, traditional Greek

seafood, and more bottles of Mythos than I ever cared to drink. The hospitality is outstanding, and I get to know a couple of the local players the Titan has introduced to the game. A friendly bunch, there's a wheeler dealer type seeming born to play the game, and another bloke who must be Billy Bragg's Greek Doppelganger.

The Titan quietly leans over to me, his voice mellifluous. "Doctor Drummond, you know, you didn't need to sneak onto the bus or the ferry today. We know you're covering the event and have made arrangements for you." Completely sprung. Caught off balance and keeping me honest. This lot should be glad he's not playing this weekend.

I mumble some excuses about trying to maintain mystique, and keeping a low profile. "It's an old journalistic technique - to keep a detached distance from the subject. To be in and around, but not of. If I'm just enough of a weirdo, the interactions are all on my terms, not theirs." He smiles tolerantly. "Of course Doctor, whatever makes you comfortable - your process is your own." This guy is across everything he surveys. He probably knows about my tweaker cabbie and the cashed up Yiaya.

I take my leave and investigate the pebble beach and the sea. The water is just fine. Eventually it's time to leave. I sit well away from the group around a pack of tourists and switch off, leaving the pilfered jacket back at the wharf in Piraeus. We eventually arrive back in Saronida, and I dine alone in a passable Tex-Mex joint, mainlining margaritas. Finally reunited with my borrowed moped, it struggles back up the hills, partly because of the incline and partially because of my mild impairment in the endlessly empty Spring evening.

Hunkering down at the front... A surprise addition.. buzzing buses, Tragedy at the Cape.

I awaken to the sound of small arms fire. It sounds like a small civil conflict is going on further across the ridge. This is what it's like holidaying about 10 miles away from the active front of a stalemated war zone - the sporadic knocking of machine guns and the occasional crash. I remember I'm in a Greek tourist town. I'm pretty sure the Greek Civil War isn't still being litigated on a limited front, and eventually work out it's the sound of concrete breakers and other assorted construction.

I decide to keep up the air of mystique. If the Titan knows I'm tagging along, what if I don't actually join them on their trip into Athens? Sure, I mean Hydra was vaguely touristy, but who is going to pass up the chance to check out where Leonard Cohen wrote 'So Long, Marianne' and to be in the presence of a heart in a silver vessel while slightly messy on tsipouro?

Evening falls. I buzz back down to Anchor. I'm amazed to see the Hullster in town. I understood at EDC that he

wasn't actually coming to Greece due to some sort of bureaucratic nonsense - apparently there was the potential that Greece would turn into a Hotel California for him. While I'd argue having to listen to 'Hotel California' was far worse than being kept in Greece against your will, he had made it pretty clear that WDC was a non-starter. But all has been resolved. He looks delighted.

Back on a bus for a trip down to the Temple of Poseidon at Sounion. By now, more and more people have arrived, but no Kid. He never showed. Doubtless woke up to himself and moved on with his life. He'll find something else to do. The weird always do. Familiar faces on this bus, but also plenty of strangers to your correspondent. The bus buzzes with chat - enough for the cynic in me to actually appreciate that this rapport between people destined to spend a weekend as rivals was genuine friendship. We get a surprise visit to a beach bar as the sun starts to go down. Then it's back on the bus for a while. 20 Euros (10 for EU citizens) to enter a self-confessed ruin is a bit rich, it was even richer for those from Brexitland to suddenly rediscover their European identities in the hopes of a 50% discount.

While the sunset wasn't postcard perfect, it was still lovely enough, and the Titan told us how the Aegean got its name. Apparently the expedition to slay the Minotaur was meant to return sailing white sails if Theseus, the son of King Aegeus remained alive, or using black sails if Theseus was dead. While Theseus survived, the expedition, excited after their triumph, forgot the agreement, sailing immediately back to the mainland without changing their sails to the white ones. Aegeus, waiting at Cape Sounion, spotted the black sails and dashed himself on the rocks at the bottom of the cape. A homecoming transformed from triumph to tragedy for Theseus, and a sea named after a failed cliff diver. Back on the bus, back to the Anchor merry-go-round. Drinks, chat, drunks. The sneaky types aiming for peak performance turn in early. The lightweights soon follow. The endurance athletes know there's nearly a whole day to sleep off any indulgences. And so we do.

The moment everyone (but me) has been waiting for... The Oracle of Hydra... Sail Ho, Hail so.

You all know how this works. You've all ridden the waves. Optimism, paranoia, crossed wires, liars and those who believe them, truth tellers and those who don't believe them. Guesses, chasing shadows. Frustration. So much frustration. Catching breaks, a line finally cracking. The Hobby. Always different, always the same. For days.

This was certainly less chaotic looking than San Francisco. The Australian Tournament Director found that sweet spot between the C-Diplo 1907 stabfest scramble, and the trench warfare and painfully slow

adjudications often experienced in the US. The format suited the environment, and enabled the best players of the weekend to slowly filter through. Old stagers and new faces joined some of the form players of the last few years on a final board to decide the overall winner. Six needn't have showed. They should have gone to Delphi and asked the Oracle. Hell, they could have consulted Leonard Cohen. He wrote about it on Hydra in the late 1960s. Either of them would have told the other runners

The Wisdom. WDC 2026 was always going to be about a homecoming of sorts. Victory was secured in Saronida. A year's long struggle was complete. And it was white sails for the ship sailing back up the Humber.

"You know who I am
You've stared at the sun
Well, I am the one who loves
Changing from nothing to one."

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- 8:00P: CHARITY BATTLE ROYALE** 🏆

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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:

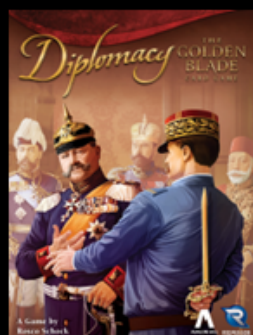
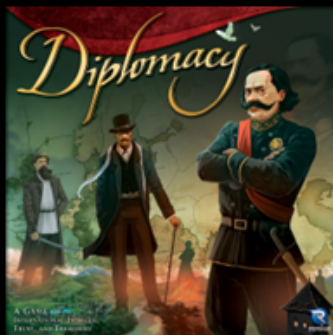
- 3-Time World Champion **Cyrille Sevin**
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- Reigning National Diplomacy Masters Champion **Dan McNeill**
- US National Champion **Gregory Vaughan**
- Diplomat of the Year winner **Nolan David**
- Era of Empire champion **Richard Sweat**

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



Growing a Diplomacy Club Offline

by Sabrina Ahuja

One of the questions I get asked the most is how we managed to grow the Chicago Windy City Weasels to the largest club in North America.

We didn't suddenly go viral on social media or have one event that changed everything overnight. Instead, we focused on being more visible in our local community.

In less than a year of making a real effort with offline outreach, our club has tripled in size. While online spaces are important, I think too many clubs overlook the opportunities sitting right in front of them.

Put Your Club Where People Already Are

One of the simplest things we did was make flyers.

Nothing fancy. Just a clean design that explained what Diplomacy is, where we meet, when we meet, and included a QR code that linked directly to our Discord or social media.

The key wasn't designing the flyer; it was where we put it.

We started hanging flyers anywhere people naturally spend time outside of work and home: coffee shops, libraries, community centers, board game stores, tabletop gaming stores, universities, gyms, breweries, hobby shops, and anywhere else with a community bulletin board.

Think about the last time you went to a local coffee shop. Chances are there was a bulletin board covered in community flyers. You almost can't walk into a coffee shop without seeing one. People waiting for their drinks actually stop and look through those boards.

Your flyer is competing with everything from local concerts and fitness classes to lost pet notices, and that's okay. It only has to catch the attention of one person who's been looking for a strategy game like Diplomacy.

Unlike a social media post that disappears after a day or two, a flyer can stay up for weeks or months, quietly recruiting new players while you're doing something else.

Build Relationships with Other Gaming Communities

The other thing that made a huge difference was building relationships with other local gaming groups.

Reach out to board game meetups, tabletop clubs, RPG groups, miniature gamers, university gaming

organizations, and other hobby communities. Don't think of them as groups to advertise to. Think of them as neighbors.

Healthy gaming communities don't compete with one another — they help each other grow. Go to their events. Get to know their organizers. Offer to teach Diplomacy during one of their game nights. Support their events whenever you can. Invite them to yours. Someone who finds your Diplomacy club may discover a new board game group, and someone from that board game group may become your next regular player.

For us, those relationships ended up being far more valuable than any single advertisement. People are much more willing to try an all-day strategy game when it's recommended by someone they already know and trust.

Consistency Matters

None of these ideas are revolutionary.

One flyer won't suddenly double your attendance.

One visit to another gaming group won't fill your next game.

But when people keep seeing your club at the coffee shop, at the local game store, at community centers, at conventions, and with other gaming groups, you stop being something they've never heard of and start becoming part of the local gaming community.

That's exactly what happened with the Windy City Weasels.

There wasn't one moment where everything changed. It was dozens of small, consistent efforts. Those efforts helped our club grow to roughly three times its previous size in less than a year, introduced new players to the hobby, and built relationships with other gaming communities that continue to support one another.

If there's one piece of advice I'd give to clubs trying to grow, it's this: don't wait for people to find you online. Go where people already are. Become part of your local gaming community. Make it easy for someone to discover that there's a Diplomacy club meeting nearby.

You might be surprised how many future players are just waiting to stumble across a flyer while they're grabbing a cup of coffee.

BGG Spring 2026 Report

by Robert Lacy



BGG SPRING 2026 in Dallas, Texas was held May 21-25 2026. We had a great time playing and making new friends. There was fun, smiles, frustrations and laughs. Overall, it was a great group of players who had some competitive but friendly fun - what we all want to see in Diplomacy. All the events ran smoothly and stayed on time and our overall attendance was 31 persons.

Prior to each round of the tournament we had a four hour long teach and learn to play session with the event host as GM. The format was a classroom style teaching followed by the individual players playing the game for eight turns with the GM answering questions, checking orders and adjudicating the moves while explaining carefully why each move did or didn't work. This was intended to give new players a chance to learn the game in a non-competitive format on equal terms with other new players while allowing them to see if they wanted to join in the actual Diplomacy Tournament as well as giving persons who had not played in a long time a chance to brush up on the rules and game play. We had seven new players for each of the Classic Diplomacy and Era of Empires Learn to Play events plus another seventeen people for the new Diplomacy: The Golden Blade learn to play event.



For the actual Diplomacy Tournament events we had thirteen unique players over all three rounds. Round

one was a full board of seven players. France and England lead out early with a strong alliance but both knew it could not last. Towards the end they both mutually backstabbed each other at the same time turning the North Sea, English Channel and lowland countries into a back and forth. In the east the Balkans remained a back and forth mess the entire game with Austria fighting to survive. The situation settled on Turkey and Austria working together against mutual enemies to counter an unpredictable Italy that snipped at Austria until the French showed up in the Mediterranean and a Russia that kept pressuring the Austrian supply centers.

For round two we had two full boards of Era of Empires each game also played on large boardroom tables. We had random board assignments then random power draws and quickly the games were off and running smoothly. Board one had more action in the negotiations of the players as the alliance kept moving and were more fluid. I observed many more intense negotiations of two and three players in the hallway. Board 2 settled into set alliances very quickly that did not change much. We also had a bounce between Russia and Japan in the first fall turn which slowed down Japan a bit at first. Of note is that Pete Tanthmanatham, who tried Diplomacy for the first time ever in the Era of Empires learn to play event. Pete had so much fun playing Era of Empires that he stayed for the Era of Empires Tournament round and ended up toping his board as Turkey after turning on his British ally in the last year, knocking them from 14 to

10 supply centers and getting the second-place silver plaque for that round.



The last round was the new Diplomacy: The Golden Blade card game. We had a large turnout for the learn to play event for this new game as it had only been on the market for a couple of weeks. Many people stayed around for the last round of game play. It was nice to see tense negotiations, gripping tension and anticipation at what would happen next, but also laughter, smiles and amusement at each of the boards as players connived and tried to out play each other making an enjoyable end to the tournament for everyone.

Our overall Tournament Champion was Ivory Whitehead. Ivory tied for placement points with Anatoly Morosov, and won on tiebreaker (three medals). Ivory had played classic Diplomacy online some but never played in an actual face to face game ever much less a tournament event, and had never played Diplomacy Era of Empires or Diplomacy the Golden blade. Ivory had smart consistent gameplay, good negotiations and took advantage of the board where opportunities presented while not worrying about moves that didn't work out beating out some more seasoned players.

We also made history at BGG Spring 2026!

After checking, we confirmed that Ivory Whitehead is now the youngest person ever to win a Diplomacy Tournament. Ivory, a soon to be high school junior, placed third in each of the qualifying rounds of the BGG Spring Diplomacy Triathlon taking the Bronze Plaque in each event. Ivory told me before round three started that they wanted third place "to have the trifecta of thirds". Ivory was so happy to take all three Bronze plaques "to make the set" that they didn't realize they won the whole event! Congrats to our winner! Now Ivory has a title to defend at BGG Fall 2026 in November!

ROUND ONE - CLASSIC DIPLOMACY (1 board)

Gold -Anatoly Morosov – England
Silver - Richard Hoey – France
Bronze - Ivory Whitehead - Russia

ROUND TWO - ERA OF EMPIRES (2 boards)

Gold - Bill Woodmansee – Turkey (B1)
Silver - Pete Tanthmanatham – Turkey (B1)
Bronze - Ivory Whitehead- China (B2)

ROUND THREE – DIPLOMACY THE GOLDEN BLADE (2 boards)

Gold - Bill Woodmansee
Silver - Nolan David
Bronze - Ivory Whitehead

FINAL TRIATHLON RANKINGS

1. Ivory Whitehead
2. Anatoly Morosov
3. Bill Woodmansee
4. Aiden Schramm
5. Nolan David
6. Arthur McManus
7. Pete Tanthmanatham

Best Diplomat: Andrew Bartruff

Best Penmanship: Andrew Mykolenko

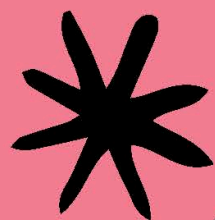
Rubber Duck Award: Arthur McManus

The Great Wave: Anatoly Morosov

Best New Player: Pete Tanthmanatham

Thank you to Renegade Games and staff for the strong prize support for this event and great game titles to give out as prizes. We gave out over 15 Renegade titles to participants and round winners. There were many smiling faces. After many years of learn to play events over and over to rebuild the player base, this was the first Diplomacy Tournament at BGG Spring. Getting organized Diplomacy tournament play back in Texas was something I have been working on building up for some time now. I am looking forward to BGG Con 2026 this fall here in downtown Dallas, Texas which has a much bigger attendance than the spring con and which the wargamers and old grognards show up for each time. I anticipate even bigger events in the Fall. Dates are November 18-22, 2026. Tickets are still available. Be there for the action!





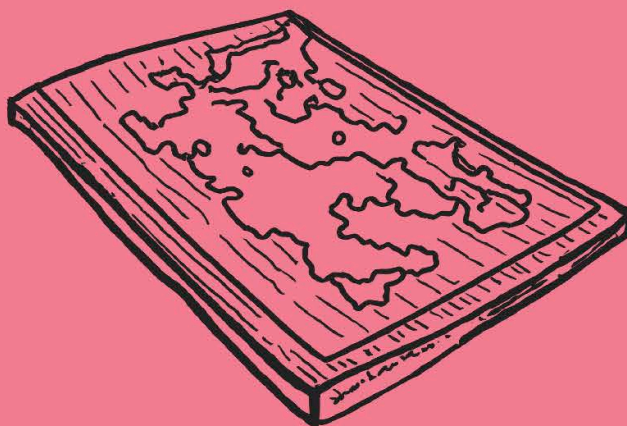
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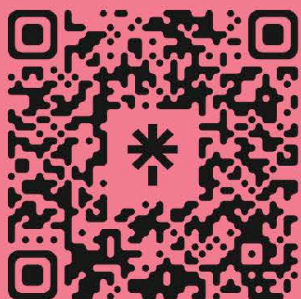
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Diplomacy Triathlon: Learn the New Diplomacy Event Format

by Thomas Haver

The Diplomacy Triathlon is a celebration of three published titles: Diplomacy (1959), Era of Empire (2025), and The Golden Blade (2026). These are the three games in active publication by Renegade Game Studios and sold throughout the world. The purpose of a Diplomacy Triathlon is to determine the best all-around player among a group or tournament event. What started out as a one-off special event at Battlefront Dayton has become a standard event format at tournaments. Let's learn more about how to run your own Diplomacy Triathlon!

Background

Diplomacy Triathlon's are intended for events where the players are looking for variety in their games. It was once the norm at Diplomacy events to hold two-round tournaments, where the "winner" from each of the 7 boards would play a second-round game to determine the champion against other winners. Eventually, the format shifted to a multi-round event with each round counting toward the overall tournament score. To further encourage play by player's effectively eliminated from championship contention in early rounds, the "Best Country" awards were introduced at Origins in 1975. Each change in the evolution of Diplomacy formats encouraged participation by players across multiple rounds.

For the past few decades, 3- and 4-round formats have become common. Some tournament director's favor the Best X of Y format, whereas others want every round to count (at least at some percentage, even with a bad score). Some tournament directors prefer to have a Top Board, where the best players in an event have an opportunity to face off against each other for the championship. Ultimately, there is no "best" format, just like there is no "best" scoring system to use. The structure of a tournament is largely up to the tournament director, who has altruistically signed up to run the event (and play host in their city to many travelers). After running more than 50 tournaments and countless other teaching events the past few decades, my favorite format is unequivocally: whatever the player's want. I don't care about format anymore so long as the players have fun. There are external constraints related to the venue and/or convention that may limit a given format, but in general my rules are based on requests from the player's intended to play. It does me no good to run a "true" time-unlimited tournament if no one shows up to play, which has happened to a TD recently. Why introduce a Diplomacy Triathlon? For variety.

The benefit of the Diplomacy Triathlon is the format caters to those who crave variety in their games.

Player's may not want to play the same exact game against the same people. Now, most passionate Diplomacy players don't mind this because every game can have a unique outcome, even though you're playing the same people with the same Powers. However, not everyone who plays Diplomacy feels this way. After many years of running events at conventions, I've encountered a particular type of player who craves variety in their games. It makes sense when you think about it. A convention likely has hundreds to thousands of events. Most people who attend conventions aren't just looking to play one event all weekend (although some are!). The Diplomacy Triathlon caters to the gamers who want to play many different games.

Event Structure

The Triathlon is structured into three rounds. One round per game. You can start with any game, but my personal preference is classical Diplomacy to start. The scoring system for each game is slightly different, but that's only used for tiebreakers. What really matters is placement: how you perform in your game. Your goal is to win your game (or just have the most centers if you're time- or turn-limited). Each of the three rounds count for tournament score, and the lowest cumulative placement points determines the winner. A player with a 1st-3rd-5th (9 total) will beat a player who finished 2nd-7th-1st (10 total). The goal is to find the best all-around player over three rounds of play.

The scoring system for each game determines overall rankings across multiple boards of play. For each round in a Triathlon, I like to award Gold/Silver/Bronze prizes for the 1st/2nd/3rd place across all games played in that round. That likely means you'll have three people who finished first on their respective boards, with the Gold/Silver/Bronze going to the three highest game scores. It's a fun way to celebrate success during each round of play.

The second round of play is "Diplomacy: Era of Empire". A different scoring system (e-diplo) is used than classical Diplomacy, but again the placement points are what matters. You take your placement on the board as the primary, with the scoring system determining the tiebreaker for Gold/Silver/Bronze prizes. If a player misses or skips a round, they earn 7th place for that game. It's still possible to make "Top Board" (top seven) while skipping a round, but it is quite difficult to win a tournament doing so. The same goes for most standard formats where all rounds count. After the first two rounds, players will have two placement scores and hopefully some nice hardware to show for their effort.

The final round is "Diplomacy: The Golden Blade" card game, which was just released to the public in 2026. The card game has a different experience than the first two games listed, but it's still Diplomacy at its core with negotiation being the primary mechanics and simultaneous action to reveal secret Orders. In the final round, players are randomly assigned both tables and seating position. Just like classical Diplomacy and Era of Empire, the game can handle 7 players. There's an outright winner in each game of The Golden Blade, so how do you determine placement? By Power cards. After the game ending tiebreaker is resolved (if multiple players reach Level 3 of the Power track), the total number of Power cards for each player determines the placement. So two players who finish the game at the same time will first have the game tiebreaker (second most cards on a Power track), and those players are ranked 1st and 2nd. The other players are ranked according to the number of Power cards on their Power track. Just like classical Diplomacy and Era of Empire, we award Gold/Silver/Bronze prizes for the top 3 finishers. The scoring tiebreaker for the Golden Blade is simple: total number of Power cards. That means the overall round scores are less for The Golden Blade compared to classical Diplomacy and Era of Empire, but that's intentional. The game is shorter than the other two, so the weight is toward time invested.

To determine the overall champion of the Diplomacy Triathlon, sum the three placement scores for the games. The player with the lowest cumulative score is the winner. For anyone tied, we first look at number of Gold/Silver/Bronze prizes from the event. If the players are still tied, then we use the scoring system for each of the three games and sum those three numbers. A player that skipped or missed a game scores 0 for that round. The format is easy for both experienced and casual players to understand: win your game. If you can't win, do your best.

In Practice

We've run the Diplomacy Triathlon at Battlefront Dayton last year and Circle DC this year. The current plans are to run Triathlon's at BGG Spring, BGG Con, and Battlefront Dayton (again). We target general gaming conventions for this event format because we're most likely to have players join who want to play three different games. For our other conventions with a long history of classical Diplomacy (WBC, GenCon, Origins, PrezCon) we kept the original format because the tradition has been established. Instead, we added events for Era of Empire and The Golden Blade to those conventions.

The results at both Battlefront Dayton and Circle DC have been positive. We had a mix of experienced tournament veterans and new players at both tournaments. Players enjoyed the challenge of switching their playstyles across games. Even though you may know Diplomacy, if you approach Era of Empire the same way you do Diplomacy, you're likely in for a surprise. Although the base mechanics are the same, the larger map plus added mechanics means you need to change your playstyle. Trust me, I know a thing or two about Era of Empire ;-). At Circle DC, we had record attendance for the Diplomacy Triathlon; we had shifted from the prior year with a classical Diplomacy tournament (best two of three rounds). We ended up with more interested players in our teaching rounds for Diplomacy, Era of Empire, and The Golden Blade. Some players may be intimidated in a multi-round classical event against experienced players who know every named opening & alliance, and who play frequently. However, there is no established meta (yet!) for Era of Empire or The Golden Blade. That puts everyone on near equal footing. The results have been exciting, and we look forward to more Diplomacy Triathlon's in the future.

Remember, variety is the spice of life. Try a Diplomacy Triathlon at your next event!

