

Chariots

A History Repeats Itself game for the piecepack by Mark A. Biggar

Version 2.1, July 2004

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2-4 players - 45 min (10-15 minutes per lap)

Object

This is a game of racing chariots like in the Circus Maximus in ancient Rome.

Game Setup

Give each player the pawn, six coins and die of the same color. Using all 24 tiles grid-side up, construct the race track as shown in the following diagram. You may want to place a pencil, soda straw or other long straight stick on the thick line to mark the start/finish line.

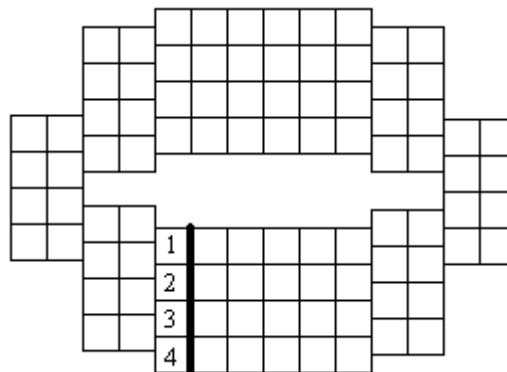


Figure 1. Race track

Each player rolls his die and the player with the highest value (null low, then ace-5, ties roll off again) places his chariot (pawn) on position one in the figure above. The second highest takes position two, etc. The players should agree on the number of laps in the race: 2 to 4 laps are suggested for a good game length.

Running the Race

The race consists of a number of rounds each containing 3 phases. At the beginning of each round, each player secretly plots the speed that his chariots will move for each of the three phases in the round. This is done behind the player's hand using three of the four number coins (2, 3, 4 & 5). Of each the player's set of coins, the null and ace coins are special and are not used for plotting movement. Place the three coins in a line; they will be used from left to right. Put the unused coin aside and turn all four coins suit-side up. After all players have plotted out the round, there are three phases of movement where

the players simultaneously expose the coin corresponding to each phase and then move their chariots the number of spaces specified by the coin's value.

Movement

Each phase of movement is divided into 5 impulses. During each impulse a chariot either moves one square or stands still depending on its speed. The following table shows on which impulses a chariot moves based on its speed..:

Speed →	2	3	4	5
Impulse 1		X	X	X
Impulse 2	X		X	X
Impulse 3		X		X
Impulse 4	X		X	X
Impulse 5		X	X	X

The direction of the race is counter-clockwise around the track and a chariot finishes a lap by crossing the thick line shown in Figure 1 above. Chariots normally move one square orthogonally and not diagonally. Chariots may move backwards. Chariots scheduled to move during an impulse are moved by their players in the order of their advancement along the track. The chariot furthest along the track moves first, with ties broken by the chariot closest to the inside of the track. In the turns of the track, a chariot is further along if it has fewer squares to move to reach the next straightaway. After all five impulses of a phase are completed the next phase's coins are exposed and that phase's movement is done. After all three phases of movement are completed the next round is plotted. Repeat plotting rounds and performing movement phases until someone has completed the agreed number of laps and wins the race.

Movement Restrictions in the Turns

Chariot movement is restricted while in the turns of the track. In the following figure the light grey squares are the inside of the turn, the dark grey squares are the outside of the turn and the white squares are the straightaway.

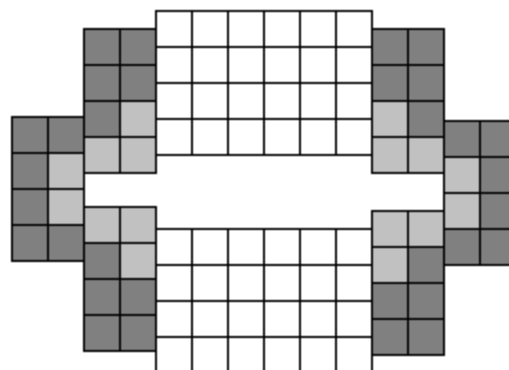


Figure 2. Track Turns

A chariot moving speed 2 is always allowed to enter the inside squares of a turn. A chariot moving speed 5 may not enter the inside squares of a turn, but must remain in the outside squares. If a player's chariot is moving speed 3 or 4 the player must roll his die at the time he exposes his coin to determine if he can tightly control his chariot during that movement phase. On a roll of 2-5 for a speed 3 chariot or 4-5 for a speed 4 chariot, the chariot is allowed to enter inside turn squares during the that phase of movement. If a player does not make his roll, then his chariot may not enter inside turn squares and must only move to outside turn squares for that movement phase.

Crashes

A chariot must move, if scheduled on an impulse. If a chariot has no legal square to move to (either by being blocked by other chariots or due to the movement restrictions in the turns) then that chariot crashes. It loses all remaining movement on impulses for the current movement phase. If the chariot has no impulses left for the current movement phase, it also may not move until after the second impulse of the following movement phase.

The Special Coins

A player's null and ace coins are special and can be spent once per lap to perform a special action. A player may use these special actions to avoid crashes and may even do both special actions during a single impulse by spending both coins together.

The null coin can be spent on any impulse to either move one square diagonally or ignore (for that impulse only) the turn movement restrictions and move into an inside turn square.

The ace coin can be spent on any impulse to push aside another chariot and enter the square that chariot is occupying. The pushed chariot is moved to any adjacent square by the owner of the pushing chariot; including the one the pushing chariot came from or an inside turn square. Note that in the case that the pushing chariot also used a null coin to move diagonally that impulse and there is no orthogonally adjacent open square, then the pushed chariot must be placed in the square the pushing chariot came from.

After either of these coins is used, place it in the center of the track suit-side up. The owning player retrieves it the next time his chariot crosses the line and finishes a lap. It may then be used again during the subsequent lap. Special actions once announced may not be taken back. Any player may demand a dice off to determine the order special actions are announced.

Winning

The first chariot to finish the agreed number of laps and crosses the line wins the race. Even if two or more chariots cross the line on the same impulse, the chariot that moves first still wins. The other players may continue racing to determine second place, third place, etc.

Optional rules for two players

It is suggested with only two players, that each player run two chariots. Each player receives two sets of pieces, which are used separately. The game is then played the same as with four players; each player plotting the movement and playing his two chariots independently.

Optional rule: Additional Special Actions

These optional rules add more actions for each of the special coins.

Special movement actions for the null coin:

1. Move diagonally on one impulse.
2. Ignore turn movement restrictions for one impulse
3. Move on an impulse your chariot would normally stand still. This has no effect on any turn movement restriction
4. Move first on an impulse ignoring board position. If two or more player chooses this action on the same impulse, then they move before the other players, but their play order is determined by the usual board position rules.
5. Before exposing a coin on a movement phase, swap your set aside fourth coin for the coin to be exposed.

Special combat actions for the ace coin:

1. Push another chariot as per the original rules.
2. Whip another driver in an adjacent square. The distracted driver loses control of his chariot and must move in the same direction as the last impulse he moved. If he can't due to being blocked or because of turn movement restrictions his chariot crashes.
3. Whip another player's horses in an adjacent square. The whipped horses balk and the player loses any movement for this impulse.
4. Quick recovery. Lose only a single impulse of movement after a crash.

Players may still spend both coins at the same time.

Thanks to Phillip Lerche, Mike Worden, and Clark Rodeffer for their suggestions for additional special actions.

Optional rule: Faster Special Action Recovery.

With this optional rule, players may recover their special actions coins at a faster rate. Instead of recovering all coins at the end of each lap, players may recover a single coin before plotting each movement round.

Historical Background

One of the more exiting entertainments in ancient Rome was the chariot races in the Circus Maximus. Chariot racers were highly paid professionals and not slaves like most of the gladiators. Unlike in the Movies, most chariot races were not violent bloodbaths with lots of crashes (the teams of horses were too valuable for that) so this game is about racing not combat. Chariot racing teams were known by their colors and spectators waved flags for their favorites color during the race. Much money was won and lost betting on the races. Roman chariots races were typically 8-12 laps.

Design Notes

1. The hardest part of designing this game was coming up with a good oval track. The final track is the sixth or seventh track layout I tried.
2. After the track and deciding to use a pre-plotted impulse based movement system the rest of the game fell out very easily.
3. My original idea for the *History Repeats Itself* contest was a game about the original Greek Olympics. It was going to be a series of mini-games representing different events. This game was the developed from the running event. I ran out of design and playtest time, and so took the most completely developed part and re-glossed it as chariot racing. I believe that it turn out to be a better game for it.

History

20030717	mab	0.5	History Repeats Itself contest entry version
20030822	mab	1.0	Post contest version for the web page
20040207	mab	2.0	Updates and extra special actions
20040729	mab	2.1	Annual update an added designer notes.

Thank you for playing my game. Please report rules problems or variant suggestions to mark@biggar.org.

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