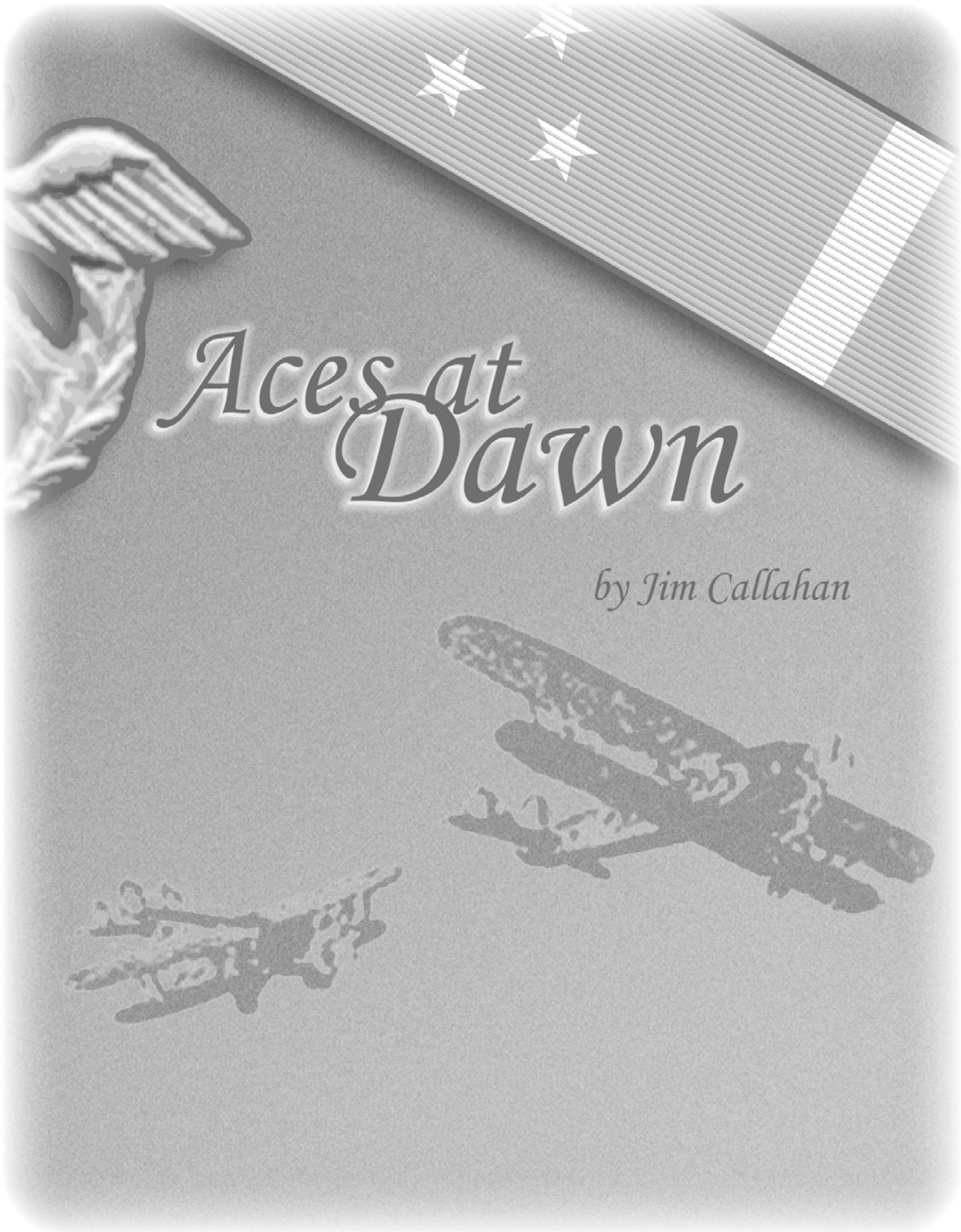




# *Aces at Dawn*

*by Jim Callahan*



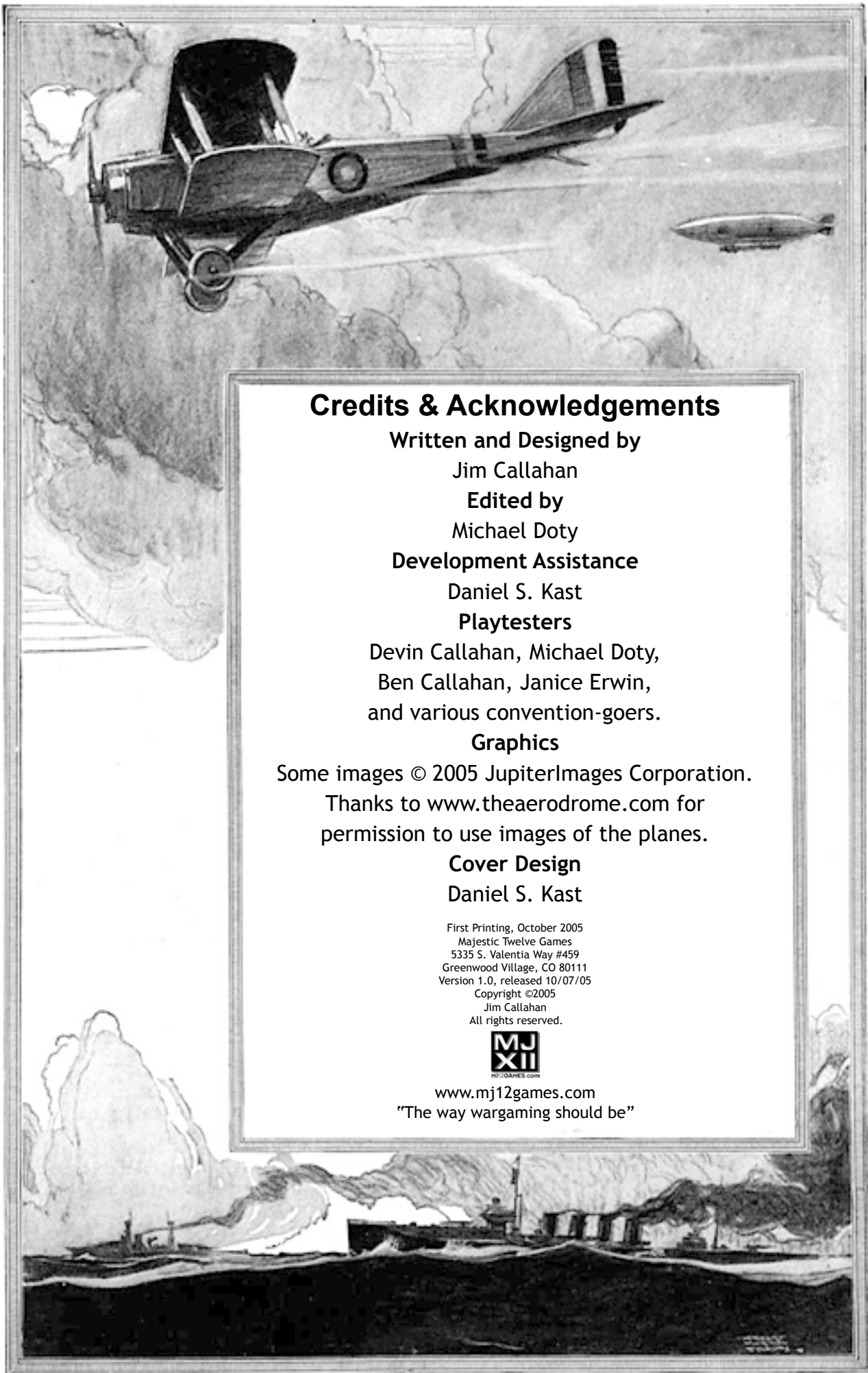


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*by Jim Callahan*



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## Introduction

*"Find the enemy and shoot him down. Anything else is nonsense"*

-- Manfred von Richthofen

In August of 1914, the airplane had barely made its 10th anniversary, and had only just become a weapon of war. The Italians had used air power (if it could be called that) in North Africa in 1911, and Louis Blériot's famous trip across the English Channel was still a fresh memory.

The Great War was a time of heroes and villains, a war where everyone knew who was fighting whom and for what cause. Both sides had their great victories, pyrrhic defeats and plenty of trench foot. While this game is designed to simulate the greatest battles over the trenches of the WWI battlefield, we should not forget that men and women died for their beliefs and for their countries. Heroes were born of this combat on both sides.

At no other time in our warring history has there been such a change as the airplane. Not only did combat change forever once our soldiers were airborne, but a whole generation became enamored of this newest weapon in our military arsenal.

Even into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the romance and joys of those first years in the air evoke the deepest respect for these new knights, these men of the airways.

***Aces at Dawn*** is a game of quasi-historical combat in the skies. Set at the turn of the century, ***Aces at Dawn*** models the man-to-man combat of the World-War I flying ace and his dreaded enemies. As with all Majestic Twelve games, ***Aces at Dawn*** is fun and easy to play, works with any line of miniatures, and encourages players to use their imagination and have fun, which is the way wargaming is supposed to be.



## Game board

*Aces at Dawn* is normally played on a hexagonal grid, and several pages of maps and counters are included with this set of rules. These boards have been designed to fit 1/300 scale models, but you can use any models you wish. Additionally, with very minor changes, these rules can be used without the hexagonal grid.

The playing pieces used in *Aces at Dawn* each represent a single aircraft. Included in the game are several paper aircraft models from Ernesto Tramontana, which can be assembled and used instead of the counters.

## Scale

There is no set scale in *Aces at Dawn*; however, if we were forced to make a decision, the scale might be 1 hex equal to 100 yards. Thus, the aircraft do not represent exactly the size that they seem to on the board.

## Unit data cards

Each aircraft is comprised of various statistics which, when taken as a whole, represent the important bits we're trying to model on the play field.

**Type:** The type of plane being modeled. These range from Fokker Eindeckers to Spad XIII's.

**Pilot:** Strictly used to distinguish one Fokker from another. Optional rules may modify the effects of certain pilot maneuvers and procedures; these will be indicated on the card and move with the pilot from plane to plane.

**Point Value:** A quantification of the plane's combat effectiveness.

**Fuel:** A representation of the staying power of the plane. Each maneuver has an associated fuel requirement stated on the maneuver card.

**Movement (Mvt):** The first number is the minimum number of Movement points a plane must spend; the second number is the furthest a plane may move during each movement phase.

**Turn Class:** How easy or difficult it is to maneuver the plane in combat.


**Guns:** The number of dice a player rolls for attack from that plane.

**Damage:** the number of damage points a plane can withstand before it is considered destroyed.

**Quirks:** Any special quirkiness about the plane or pilot will be recorded here.

**The Picture:** The picture is just for fun.

## Sample Plane Data Card

|   |  |   |      |     |      |      |                       |  |
|---|--|---|------|-----|------|------|-----------------------|--|
| <h1 style="margin: 0;">Sopwith Camel</h1>   |  | Point Value<br><b>120</b>   |      |     |      |      |                       |  |
| <b>Pilot:</b> Snoopy  | <b>Fuel: 50</b>  | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>   |      |     |      |      |                       |  |
| <b>Mvt (min/max):</b> 2/5   | <b>Turn Class:</b> B   | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |      |     |      |      |                       |  |
| <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">60°</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Any</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">120°</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Any</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">180°</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Half</td> </tr> </table> | 60°  | Any   | 120° | Any | 180° | Half | <b>Guns:</b> 2d Front |  |
| 60°   | Any  |   |      |     |      |      |                       |  |
| 120°  | Any  |   |      |     |      |      |                       |  |
| 180°  | Half   |   |      |     |      |      |                       |  |
|   | <b>Damage:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |   |      |     |      |      |                       |  |
| <b>Quirks:</b> Decreased Turn Radius (Left)   |  |   |      |     |      |      |                       |  |
| Image credit: www.theaerodrome.com  |  | © 2005 Jim Callahan   |      |     |      |      |                       |  |

## Maneuver cards

Game play in *Aces at Dawn* is governed by a deck of maneuver cards that allow a player to position his or her planes appropriately to destroy their opponents.

Any maneuver performed can also be followed with up to a 180° bank. All turns must be preceded by a bank of at least 45°.

## Banking

A bank is not a separate maneuver, but it is indicated on the board. You may use the "Bank Port" and "Bank Stbd" counters to indicate the direction each plane is banking. Or, if you are using miniatures with flight stands, you may simply swivel the model so that it is obviously banked or not.

Note: a plane's port and starboard sides never change, even if the plane is upside down. Starboard is the nautical term (used on boats and ships) that refers to the right side of a vessel, as perceived by a person facing forward standing on the deck (i.e., towards the bow). If the vessel (or aircraft in our case) is upside down, in the event of a loop, the starboard side will be the left side of the model.

Similarly, the term for the left side of the vessel, port, is derived from the practice of sailors mooring on the left side (i.e., the Portboard side) as to prevent the steering boards from being crushed.

Banking serves the dual purpose of looking cool on the board and indicating to your enemy, "Hey, I'm going this way next time I maneuver!" This simulates the flow of battle when flying, and at the same time provides the necessary pre-movement to a turn.

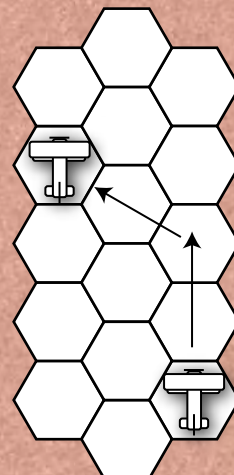
## The Cards

Note that modifiers for Defense Rating, Initiative, and Fuel Use appear under the descriptions of the maneuver cards. These modifiers are applied on the game turn in which the card is played.

## Forward Movement

The plane moves forward at least the minimum distance, and no more than the maximum distance indicated on its card's movement rating.

If the plane is banked before executing a Forward Movement, it must move half the number of hexes in the direction of the bank (slip) and remain facing the same direction as it faced at the beginning of the turn.



Example of forward move of 3 when banked to the port.

**Defense Rating:** 0

**Initiative:** 5

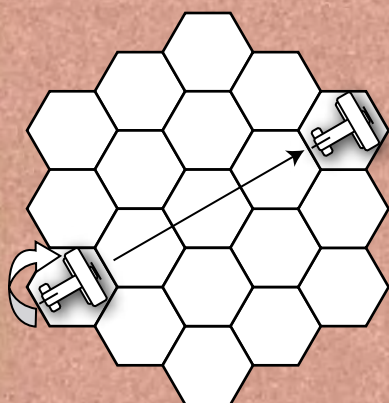
**Fuel Use:** 1

## Fast Turn

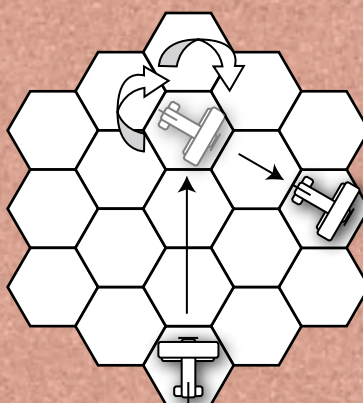
The plane moves forward at least the minimum distance, and no more than the maximum distance indicated on its card's movement rating.

No plane may make a fast turn unless it was banked the correct direction the turn before.

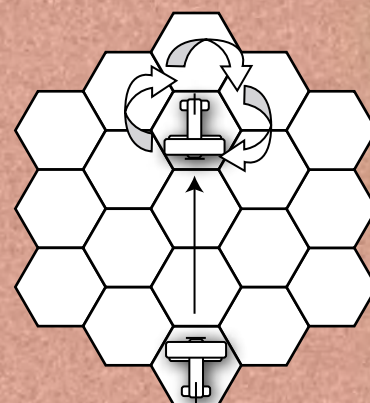
The plane must turn two or three hex sides in the direc-



Turn Class C:  
A slow turn using 4 MP



Turn Class C:  
A fast or slow  
turn using 4 MP



Turn Class C:  
A fast turn using 4 MP

tion of the bank and the plane must reduce altitude band by one.

This altitude reduction is required for a fast turn, although it is optional for a slow turn.

**Defense Rating:** +2

**Initiative:** 1

**Fuel Use:** 3

### Slow Turn

The plane moves forward at least the minimum distance, and no more than the maximum distance indicated on its card's movement rating.

No plane may make a slow turn unless it was banked the correct direction the turn before.

The plane must turn one or two hex sides in the direction of the bank and the plane may reduce altitude band by 1.

This altitude reduction is not a requirement for a slow turn, although it is mandatory for a fast turn.

**Defense Rating:** +1

**Initiative:** 2

**Fuel Use:** 2

### Dive

The plane moves forward at least the minimum distance, and no more than the maximum distance indicated on its card's movement rating.

The plane may change altitude down 1 band for each MP spent and may increase speed by  $\frac{1}{2}$  its maximum speed rating.

**Defense Rating:** +1

**Initiative:** 2

**Fuel Use:** 1

### Climb

The plane moves forward at least the minimum distance, and no more than the maximum distance indicated on its card's movement rating.

The plane may change altitude up 1 band for each two MP spent; any single MP spent is discarded. The plane must reduce speed by 1 for each altitude band changed.

**Defense Rating:** +2

**Initiative:** 4

**Fuel Use:** 2



## Playing The Game

### Turn order

- Phase 1) Card Selection phase
- Phase 2) Combat Phase
  - Sub-phase 2.1: Reveal Maneuver Card
  - Sub-phase 2.2: Determine initiative
  - Sub-phase 2.3: Perform maneuvers
  - Sub-phase 2.4: Combat
- Phases 3 and 4) Repeat phase 2

### Building a maneuver deck

Before play, each player is given two of each type of maneuver card: Forward Move, Fast Turn, Slow Turn, Climb, and Dive. This is the player's Maneuver Deck.

Planes designated as bombers may not use the Fast Turn Maneuver.

### Game setup

Each player selects the particular airplane(s) he or she will be using during the combat. Normal setup for the game calls for each player to sit at the long end of a 3' by 5' table with their planes no further than 3 hexes in from the side. However, scenario rules can supercede this generic setup, obviously.

### Card selection phase

Each player selects three maneuver cards from his or her hand to play and places them face down on the table in the order that the player wishes them to occur.

### Reveal maneuver card phase

Players each reveal one maneuver card at exactly the same time, starting from each player's left.

### Determine initiative phase

Each player rolls one die per plane and adds it to the initiative score printed on the maneuver card. In the event of a tie, the player with the worst turn rating goes first. In the unlikely event of a further tie, the player sitting furthest from Dan must take his or her turn first. Optionally, tied players may each roll 1 die to see who goes first; the lowest roll on 1 die being the loser, must go first.

### Perform maneuver phase

Once initiative has been determined, players move their planes in turn. Turn class plays a key role in the types of maneuvers a plane may perform. Each maneuver class

indicates how many facing changes may be performed and when they may be performed.

Hex facing changes occur at certain points during the turn depending on the maneuverability of the plane in question. A pilot can usually make only one turn during the plane's movement; however, when and how far a plane may turn depends on the turn class of that aircraft. Perform maneuvers according to the following table:

| Hex Facing Change Table |                   |                     |                     |
|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Turn Class              | 60°<br>1 hex face | 120°<br>2 hex faces | 180°<br>3 hex faces |
| A                       | Any               | Any                 | Any                 |
| B                       | Any               | Any                 | Half                |
| C                       | Any               | Half                | End                 |
| D                       | Half              | End                 | —                   |
| E                       | End               | —                   | —                   |

**Any:** This means that the aircraft may make that number of hex facing changes at any point during its movement.

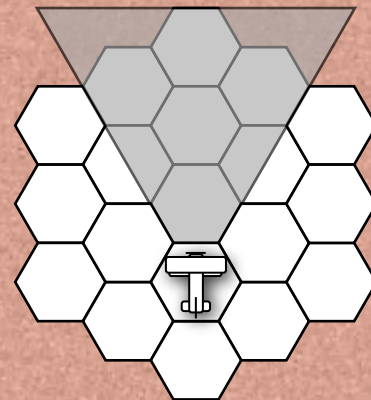
**Half:** This means that the aircraft may not turn until it has used at least half its movement points (round up).

**End:** The aircraft may not turn until the end of its movement.

For example, the Nieuport 17 has a Turn Class of C. If the pilot wishes to make a 180° turn, then the plane may only turn at the end of the movement. However, if the pilot wishes to make a 120° turn, then the plane may turn at any point after the halfway mark (round down).

### Combat

Planes may shoot at enemies that are in the front 60° arc of fire (see diagram). Hexes which are partially covered are considered inside the arc of fire.



Front Arc Firing Diagram



## Target Number

Players roll dice equal to the number of guns on the plane. Target number is 1 + the range + target's defense number based on the maneuver it performed that phase. For example, if Oswald Boelcke's Albatross had a bead on a poor Sopwith Camel 4 hexes away that just performed a dive, the target number would be 1 + 4 + 2 or 7...a difficult shot.

## Tailing

Pilots attempt to gain an advantage in air combat by tailing. This advantage increases with time spent on the enemy's tail.

Tailing is accomplished when a pilot's front arc is in the rear arc of another plane during the reveal maneuver cards phase.

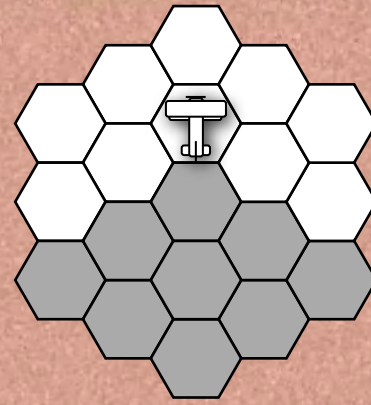
For each subsequent combat phase spent in the enemy's rear arc, the enemy suffers a -1 defense. For example, if Boelcke (from the example above) has spent the last two turns tailing the Camel in question, the target number would be 1 + 4 + 2 - 2 or 5...a much easier shot to make. The Sopwith Camel pilot had better try some fancy maneuvers to get out of Boelcke's firing arc.

However, if a plane moves out of the front arc of the tailing plane, then all bonuses for tailing are lost.

## Firing to the rear arc

Many aircraft had a crew member sit behind (or in some cases in front of) the pilot in order to man extra weapons or equipment. These gunners usually had a larger arc of fire than the pilot (see diagram), but were at the whim of the pilot as far as which direction their guns pointed.

Rear firing weapons are at -1 to hit because the aerobatics of the pilot were difficult to compensate for.



Rear Arc Firing Diagram

## Balloon Busting

Any plane may attack Balloons. Balloons usually have a single damage point and are treated exactly like any other airborne vessel. However, balloons usually were heavily defended both with anti-aircraft and other airplanes. Balloons have a base defense number of 2.

## Bombing

Any plane designated as a bomber may attack ground targets and airships.

In order to attack, a Bomber must be 1 or 2 altitude bands above the target and be flying straight and level.

Bomb attacks succeed on a 5 or 6.

Each bomber has a bombing rating indicated on the plane card thusly: Xd Bombs. A plane with this indicator is automatically designated a bomber and is subject to all the bomber penalties and benefits.

If the bomber 2 altitude bands above the target, subtract one from the die roll.

Bombers are the only aircraft that can be given a turn class of E at construction

## Did you know?

Three hundred women were sworn into the U.S. Army as volunteers in response to General Pershing's emergency call for bilingual (French-English) long-distance operators to run the switchboards in the first effort in the history of warfare to connect the foot-soldiers in the trenches to their generals behind the lines.

These 300 women were selected for their fulfillment of the requirements, they were to be given the equivalent to the men's rank of lieutenant, "same as Army Nurses," which gave them the 'privilege' of buying their own uniforms, unlike the enlisted men. They were addressed as "soldier," subject to Court-Martial and to all U.S. Army regulations plus ten more that preserved the virtue of women. They also received their mail in the same way as all soldiers and were hospitalized

with them when ill. Several of them were under 25 – these exceptions having been made because so few were fluent in French.

Like every war women have fought in, they were as dedicated and brave as the men who fought next to them. When one of the buildings, in which these ten women were installed, was set on-fire, GHQ ordered them to leave and the women refused because the calls were pouring in from the trenches and communications could not be interrupted for their personal safety at the height of the battle because of the order issued in consideration of their sex. GHQ finally threatened them with court-martial before they succumbed and left the switchboards. They returned no more than an hour after the flames were doused to resume their important duties.

# Fokker DVII

Point Value

**82**

**Pilot:** Rudolf Berthold

**Fuel: 30**

**Mvt (min/max):** 2/6

**Turn Class:** C

|      |      |
|------|------|
| 60°  | Any  |
| 120° | Half |
| 180° | End  |

**Guns:** 2d Front

**Damage:**

**Quirks:** None



Image credit: www.theaerodrome.com

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# Fokker Eindecker E III

Point Value

**60**

**Pilot:** Max Immelman

**Fuel: 30**

**Mvt (min/max):** 3/4

**Turn Class:** B

|      |      |
|------|------|
| 60°  | Any  |
| 120° | Any  |
| 180° | Half |

**Guns:** 2d Front

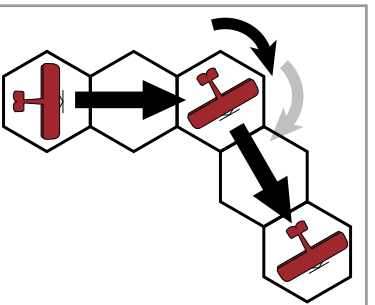
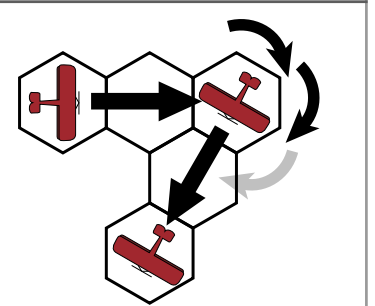
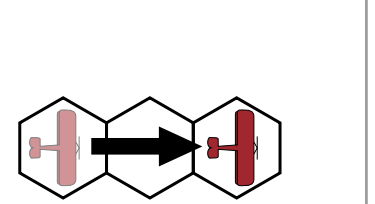
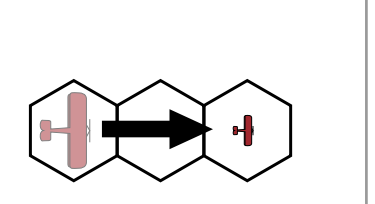
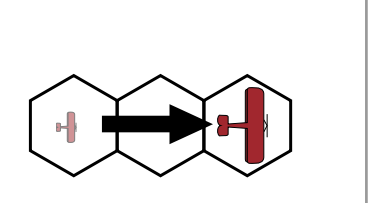
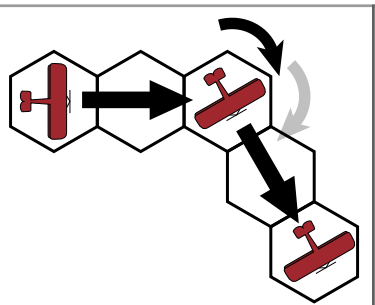
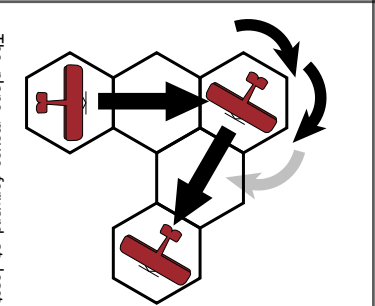
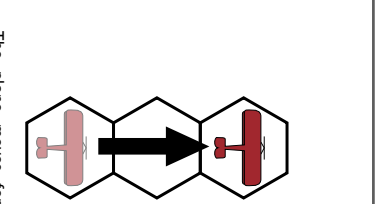
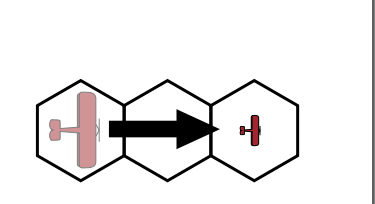
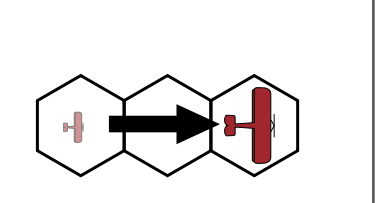
**Damage:**

**Quirks:** None



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|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  <p><b>Slow Turn</b></p> <p>The plane moves forward at least the minimum distance, no more than the maximum indicated on its card.<br/>No plane may make a slow turn unless it was banked the correct direction the turn before.<br/>The plane must turn one or two hex sides in the direction of the bank and may reduce altitude band by 1.</p> <p><b>Defense: +1 Fuel Cost: 2</b><br/><b>Initiative: 2</b></p> |  <p><b>Fast Turn</b></p> <p>The plane moves forward at least the minimum distance, no more than the maximum indicated on its card.<br/>No plane may make a fast turn unless it was banked the correct direction the turn before.<br/>Plane must turn two or three hex sides in the direction of the bank and must reduce altitude band by 1.</p> <p><b>Defense: +2 Fuel Cost: 3</b><br/><b>Initiative: 1</b></p> |  <p><b>Forward Movement</b></p> <p>The plane moves forward at least the minimum distance, no more than the maximum indicated on its card.<br/>If the plane is banked before executing a Forward Movement, it must move half the number of hexes in the direction of the bank (slip) and remain facing the same direction as it faced at the beginning of the turn.</p> <p><b>Defense: 0 Fuel Cost: 1</b><br/><b>Initiative: 5</b></p> |  <p><b>Dive</b></p> <p>The plane moves forward at least the minimum distance, no more than the maximum indicated on its card.<br/>Plane may change altitude down 1 band for each MP spent and may increase speed by 1 for each altitude band change.</p> <p><b>Defense: +1 Fuel Cost: 1</b><br/><b>Initiative: 2</b></p> |  <p><b>Climb</b></p> <p>The plane moves forward at least the minimum distance, no more than the maximum indicated on its card.<br/>Plane may change altitude up 1 band for each two MP spent, any single MP spent is discarded. Plane must reduce speed by 1 for each altitude band changed.</p> <p><b>Defense: +2 Fuel Cost: 2</b><br/><b>Initiative: 4</b></p> |
|  <p><b>Slow Turn</b></p> <p>The plane moves forward at least the minimum distance, no more than the maximum indicated on its card.<br/>No plane may make a slow turn unless it was banked the correct direction the turn before.<br/>The plane must turn one or two hex sides in the direction of the bank and may reduce altitude band by 1.</p> <p><b>Defense: +1 Fuel Cost: 2</b><br/><b>Initiative: 2</b></p>   |  <p><b>Fast Turn</b></p> <p>The plane moves forward at least the minimum distance, no more than the maximum indicated on its card.<br/>No plane may make a fast turn unless it was banked the correct direction the turn before.<br/>Plane must turn two or three hex sides in the direction of the bank and must reduce altitude band by 1.</p> <p><b>Defense: +2 Fuel Cost: 3</b><br/><b>Initiative: 1</b></p>   |  <p><b>Forward Movement</b></p> <p>The plane moves forward at least the minimum distance, no more than the maximum indicated on its card.<br/>If the plane is banked before executing a Forward Movement, it must move half the number of hexes in the direction of the bank (slip) and remain facing the same direction as it faced at the beginning of the turn.</p> <p><b>Defense: 0 Fuel Cost: 1</b><br/><b>Initiative: 5</b></p>   |  <p><b>Dive</b></p> <p>The plane moves forward at least the minimum distance, no more than the maximum indicated on its card.<br/>Plane may change altitude down 1 band for each MP spent and may increase speed by 1 for each altitude band change.</p> <p><b>Defense: +1 Fuel Cost: 1</b><br/><b>Initiative: 2</b></p>   |  <p><b>Climb</b></p> <p>The plane moves forward at least the minimum distance, no more than the maximum indicated on its card.<br/>Plane may change altitude up 1 band for each two MP spent, any single MP spent is discarded. Plane must reduce speed by 1 for each altitude band changed.</p> <p><b>Defense: +2 Fuel Cost: 2</b><br/><b>Initiative: 4</b></p>   |



The possibility of earning the title of ace was a strong incentive for the competitive and proud pilots to risk their lives repeatedly, spurring many through their first months of combat. Once they had become aces, the lure of medals and prestige continued to drive them. The ace symbolized everything people thought a warrior should be. They followed the moral code of war which many felt had been forgotten.

Aces became the heroes of the war. And they have passed into the pages of modern mythology. They presented a vision of war based on past virtues like chivalry and decorum. But they were also modern-day heroes: they flew machines instead of riding horses, and many were from the middle class, not the aristocracy. This new age meant men without any political or social connections could attain the fame and recognition they dreamed of as children.

*Aces at Dawn* is a complete historical air-to-air combat system. The flexibility of the system allows players to recreate the man-to-man air jousting at the turn of the twentieth-century. A simple combat and maneuver system means you can dispense with complicated maneuver charts and intricately detailed plane record-keeping. What's left on the board is just plain fun.

Like all Majestic Twelve games, *Aces at Dawn* can be used with any miniatures from any line. However, included in this booklet are several example plane charts and all the counters you need for a quick afternoon of fun. Once you've mastered the mechanics, you can create any of the dozens of different types of plane used in WWI and even ones that weren't! *Aces at Dawn* encourages players to be creative, use their imagination and have fun. Which is the way wargaming is supposed to be.

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