# NO MAN'S LAND

A Solitaire Game of Sniping in World War I using common playing cards
By Walter O'Hara

Having recently read the excellent Sniping in France With Notes on the Scientific Training of Scouts, Observers, and Snipers, by H. Hesketh-Pritchard, I became hopped up to try to simulate sniping activity in the trenches during World War I. Note that this isn't a very "game-able" concept to some, representing a very cold-blooded and solitary activity. Still, Pritchard's book did convey the excitement of the hunt to me, and if we can rise above our disdain for the subject matter, I think there's a nice game of solitaire in there somewhere.

## The Game

This is a variant of solitaire, which seems appropriate for the subject matter. There's nothing more solitary than a sniper, according to Hollywood notions *(in real life, snipers operate in teams, with an observer and sometimes a loader nearby, but that's bogging us down in details*). In this game, the player is assumed to be a corporal assigned to a sniper post, somewhere on the Western Front in 1917. The corporal hopes to do a workmanlike job of dispatching his countries' enemies as a means to promotion, fame, and the thanks of a grateful nation. The game is played entirely with a single standard deck of playing cards and a piece of paper to keep score with. Aces count as ones and jokers are discarded. **NML** is played in rounds, with a progressive score to determine the level of victory.

## Step One: Prepare the Three mini-Decks

The player must use a standard playing deck to prepare three smaller decks: TARGET, CONDITIONS, and SHOOT.

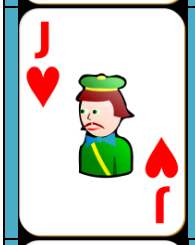
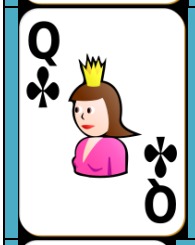
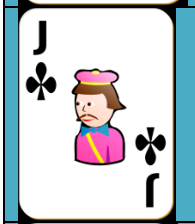
- The **Priority Target Cards** are all of the Royal cards (every suit) and 1 joker.
- The **Condition Cards** are the Clubs, numbered 1-7
- The **Shoot Cards** are everything else, including Clubs 8-10.

Shuffle these 'mini-decks' thoroughly, and place them side by side in front of you.

## Step Two: Draw a Priority Target

The royal cards (and, optionally, a joker), will select your priority targets for Sniping.

Draw a priority target and refer to this table:

| CARD | TARGET | DEFENSE/SCORE |
|---|---|---|
|  | King of Hearts: **The Kaiser himself**, inspecting the trenches on a visit. Discard after Scoring. Multiple target: 2 staff | 10/25<br>(staff 5/5 each) |
|  | Queen of Hearts: **General with Staff**<br>Staff of 1. Multiple target: 1 aide | 7/18<br>(aide 5/5) |
|  | Knave of Hearts: **Captain of Artillery** | 8/5 |
|  | King of Clubs**: German Sentries** (2) Multiple Counterattack, 1 Shoot Card | 9/6 each |
|  | Queen of Clubs: **Artillery Crew** (3) Multiple | 9/12 each |
|  | Knave of Clubs: **Guard Dogs (3) and Handler**<br>Multiple | 4/4 per dog<br>7/8 per handler |
|  | King of Spades: **German High Command**<br>Multiple 4 targets | 8/15 each |

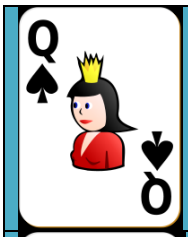
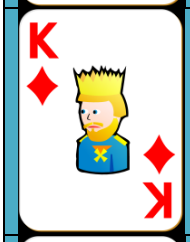
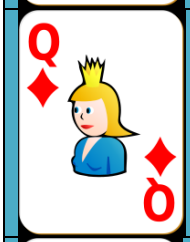
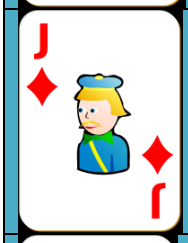
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|---|---|---|
|  | Queen of Spades: **German Master Sniper**<br>Has Counterattack – 2 Shoot Cards | 11/20 |
|  | Knave of Spades: **Downed Pilot** trying to reach his own lines. Symbolic Morale victory. | 7/12 |
|  | King of Diamonds: **Counter Sniper** (stalking YOU)<br>Has Counterattack – Three Shoot Cards. | 9/18 |
|  | Queen of Diamonds: **Forward/Artillery Observer**<br>Hides well, but a very valuable target, hence the high points. | 7/14 |
|  | Knave of Diamonds: **Company Cook** Serving Chow.<br>Quite Damaging for Morale, hence the high point score. | 6/12 |
|  | (Optional) Joker: **Disgruntled Corporal** in Bavarian Infantry. Discard after scoring.<br>Low score, but hey, you might just prevent World War II if you nail him…<br>Has Counterattack – One Shoot Card. | 7/14 |

**Table 1: Priority Targets for NML**

# Step 3: Draw Environmental Conditions (1-7 Clubs Deck)

Draw from the smallest CONDITIONS DECK to see if weather or the environment affects your shot. Refer to this table.

| Club Card | Condition and Penalty |
|---|---|
| **1 or 2** | Calm, No penalty to Shot |
| **3** | Breezy! 1 Card Penalty |
| **4** | Gusty! 1 Card Penalty to start. Draw Another Card. If you draw a 1-3, the penalty is still 1 Card. If you draw 5-7, Take another Card penalty |
| **5** | Fog… 2 Card Penalty |
| **6** | Rain… 2 Card Penalty. Draw Another Card. If you draw a 1 or 2, the rain lets up for a half an hour (only 1 Card Penalty) |
| **7** | A Ferocious Gale… 3 Card Penalty |

**Table 2: Environmental Conditions effecting the Shot**

# Step 4: Make the Shot

Draw 5 Shot Cards. Subtract any Conditions penalty you drew in Step 3. Refer to the Table below. Add up the Force Numbers per the card drawn. If your total cards applied to a shot is greater than the target's defense number, the shot hits home. If you draw the remaining three club cards (8-10), hits are automatic. If your total cards drawn is lower than the target's defense number, your shot is a miss. However, if you have more RED cards in your hand than black, it is a close miss. If you have more BLACK cards in your hand than red, it is a wide miss. More on this in *multiple targeting,* next.

| CLUBS | STRENGTH | HEARTS | STRENGTH | SPADES | STRENGTH | DIAMONDS | STRENGTH |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **8** | *R.B.T.E.* | **1** | *5* | **1** | *2* | **1** | *1* |
| **9** | *R.B.T.E.* | **2** | *3* | **2** | *3* | **2** | *2* |
| **10** | *R.B.T.E.* | **3** | *5* | **3** | *4* | **3** | *3* |
| **Note: R.B.T.E. means "Right between the Eyes"… an automatic hit.** | | **4** | *4* | **4** | *5* | **4** | *4* |
| | | **5** | *2* | **5** | *6* | **5** | *5* |
| | | **6** | *5* | **6** | *1* | **6** | *2* |
| | | **7** | *3* | **7** | *3* | **7** | *3* |
| | | **8** | *4* | **8** | *5* | **8** | *4* |
| | | **9** | *2* | **9** | *4* | **9** | *5* |
| | | **10** | *4* | **10** | *3* | **10** | *6* |

**Table 3: Shot Numbers per Card Drawn**

## Multiple Targeting

Some targets are multiples—there are more than one potential target available in your sights. There are two ways to score hits on multiple targets: intentionally (aiming at them) or by accident (missing your primary target).

Intentional Aim Method: In the target table, you are given the defense statistics of the potential target and any other possible targets as separate scores. To hit more than one target intentionally, you must divide your five card hand into smaller hands to attack separate targets with.

EXAMPLE: You may be shooting at The **German High Command** (Four targets at Defense 8, Score 15 each). You draw a five card hand with the **8 of clubs**, the **5 of Spades**, the **1 (Ace) of Diamonds**, **Six of Hearts** and **Seven of Hearts**. You can divide your cards in the following way (presuming you drew a CALM conditions card and did not have to sacrifice any):

- The **8 of Spades** is applied to ONE target (instant RBTE) – one general down.
- The **5 of Spades** (Shot Number 6) and **Ace of Diamonds** (Shot Number 1) and **7 of Hearts** (Shot Number 3) all add up to 10, which is greater than a defense of 8, so another general down.
- The remaining card, the **6 of Hearts** (Shot Value 5) is not enough to nail the last general, so he breathes a sigh of relief and ducks.
- The last general doesn't get shot at.

**"By Accident" Method**: When you get a CLOSE MISS (higher red variety) on a multiple target, draw 2 extra cards and choose the lowest point value target available. If you surpass the target's defense rating, you get the hit (Sloppy shooting, but at least you scored something).

NOTE: You may not combine methods—i.e. perform an intentional multiple attack, then turn it into a By Accident method.

### Counterattacks

You think the targets just sit there waiting to be shot at? Hah! Four of the targets on the list have the ability to shoot back: **The German Sentries**, **The Disgruntled Corporal**, **the German Master Sniper**, and **the Counter Sniper**. Each counterattacking unit draws a number of cards equal to the special notes for that target. The target fires at you as if you were a **defense 9 targe**t. If you lose this contest, the game is over.

NOTE: Conduct Counterattack AFTER making a shot attempt. Attacks/Counterattacks are considered simultaneous… i.e., the target always makes the attempt.

## Step 5: Write Down your Score, Repeat Round

Keep a tally for this round of how many points you have scored. Reshuffle SHOT CARDS, but not TARGET OR CONDITION CARDS, between rounds. Repeat the round described above in steps 1-4 for five rounds. CONDITIONS stay the same between rounds, and TARGET cards are not reshuffled between rounds.

# Step 6: Level of VICTORY!

After five rounds, you should have a hefty score built up. Compare to the following ranking table to see if you get promoted (victory!)

| SCORE | RESULT |
|---|---|
| **1-25** | Back to Scout Sniper School and loss of stripes for you! |
| **26-36** | Official Notice by the Brass |
| **37-42** | Promotion: Sergeant |
| **43-50** | Field Promotion: Lieutenant |
| **50 plus** | Field Promotion: Captain |

**Table 4: Level of Victory**

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