

Wings of War



Balloon Busters

Rulebook

Balloon Busters is the first expansion set for the World War I series of Wings of War Miniatures. **Balloon Busters** adds new elements to the game: balloons – which were used as observation balloons or as barrages – and the Le Prieur rockets introduced in April 1916 that were often used to shoot the balloons down.

In WWI, balloons were hard to destroy, so ‘balloon busters’ had to be skilled and brave pilots. “Drachens” were large enough that they required rockets to destroy them, and these rockets had to be fired very close to the target. The electric switch took a moment to ignite the rockets, and the plane had to head directly into the target while they fired. If the rockets ignited the gases holding the balloon aloft, it could explode and the plane could be caught in the blast. Once the ace Giannino Ancillotto was so close to his target that he flew through the balloon as it exploded. He went back to his airfield with stripes of balloon canvas hanging from his wings, winning a medal for his feat.

Balloon busting became easier with the introduction of incendiary bullets in 1917.

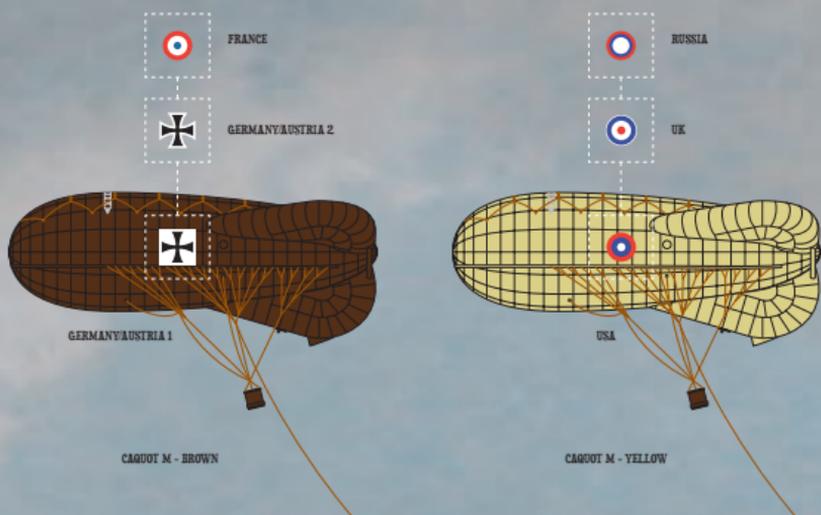
In this expansion, you will find:

- 1 balloon model
- 1 Nieuport 16 airplane model
- 2 airplane cards
- 20 maneuver cards
- 2 altitude cards
- 8 damage cards
- 3 machine gun cards
- 1 card with altitude table front/back
- 21 counters/markers
- 1 two-sided balloon card

The balloon can be used as an Allied Caquot M or a German/Austrian Achthundert English Ae 800. The decals supplied allow you to personalize the model with the markings of a specific country. You can also choose not to apply the decals, as not all balloons had national markings and some nations, such as Italy, never applied them.

In this rulebook you’ll find the rules to use the components introduced in this set, as well as scenarios featuring them.

To use this set, you must own the **Wings of War Miniatures Deluxe Set**, or any other **Wings of War** boxed set which includes the basic game rules, such as **Famous Aces**, **Watch Your Back**, or **Burning Drachens**.



You can enhance the enjoyment of using this set by adding one or more **Airplane Packs** from any other **Wings of War Miniatures** series – advanced scenarios can be played only if you add additional planes.

So, take to the sky to find your target, destroy the balloons, and become part of history!

BALLOONS

This rulebook includes all the rules for introducing both WWI balloons and the equipment used to destroy them into **Wings of War**.

OBSERVATION BALLOONS

Balloons are placed on the table and they are never moved. If there are more than one, place them at least one ruler of distance away from each other.

Balloons were both very valuable and very vulnerable, so they were pulled to the ground when attacked by enemy aircraft.

Before beginning the game, the players should agree on a number of turns during which the balloons are in the air (for example, 12). At the end of the set turn, they are pulled back to the ground and can no longer be attacked.

Balloons ignore all types of special damage except for fire and explosions, with an exception: if you use the **Incendiary Bullets** rules (see page 5), the balloons should treat all smoke, rudder jammed, and engine damage results as if they were fire.

Keep the damage points taken by balloons secret, placing damage cards directly on the balloon.

When a balloon catches fire, place a flame counter on it. The balloon takes an A damage card at the start of each turn, just as airplanes do. Only damage points and explosions are counted as affecting the balloon; all other types of special damage are ignored.

Unlike airplanes, flame counters are never discarded from balloons. Instead, a balloon that is on fire takes a damage card every turn, until the balloon is destroyed or reaches the ground. If a balloon accumulates more than one fire damage, put a flame counter on it for each fire damage taken and draw an A card for each counter each turn.

A balloon explodes if it 1) takes an “explosion” special damage result or 2) reaches its maximum damage while on fire.

In either case, it is removed from the game. All airplanes overlapping the balloon with any part of their base take two A damage cards immediately.

Planes taking this damage only count damage points, explosion tokens, and fire tokens, ignoring other types of special damage. If a balloon reaches its maximum damage while it is not on fire, it is eliminated but does not explode.

ROCKETS



Some airplanes were equipped with incendiary rockets. These Le Prieur rockets were rarely useful against aircraft and never attained any success against dirigibles, but they were quite effective against balloons. Le Prieur rockets were fired electrically and only launched after a short delay.

When creating scenarios, you can decide that one or more planes have rockets. If so, put two rocket counters on the planes' control boards.

To fire rockets, the airplane must perform either a straight or a stall maneuver. Once the maneuver is completed, the plane must have the target in its front arc of fire at one ruler of distance or less. Players may fire machine guns or rockets, but not both at the same time.

When firing rockets, the player can decide to use one or both of the counters. If a plane fires only one of its initial two rockets, it can fire the other during a later turn.

The target is hit after the next maneuver, if all three of the following conditions occur:

- 1) This next maneuver is either a stall or a straight.
- 2) After this second maneuver, the same target is in the plane's front firing cone, or the airplane overlaps the target.
- 3) The firing airplane does not draw any card with a special damage symbol because of enemy fire during these two rounds of maneuvers.

If all three conditions are met, the target takes one D damage card for each rocket fired. If any of the conditions are not met, the rockets missed the target and the counters are wasted.

Exception: For condition two, if the target balloon is still in the firing arc, but an airplane completely blocks the view of the plane launching the rockets, then the blocking airplane (friend or foe) is hit instead, taking one D damage card.

INCENDIARY BULLETS

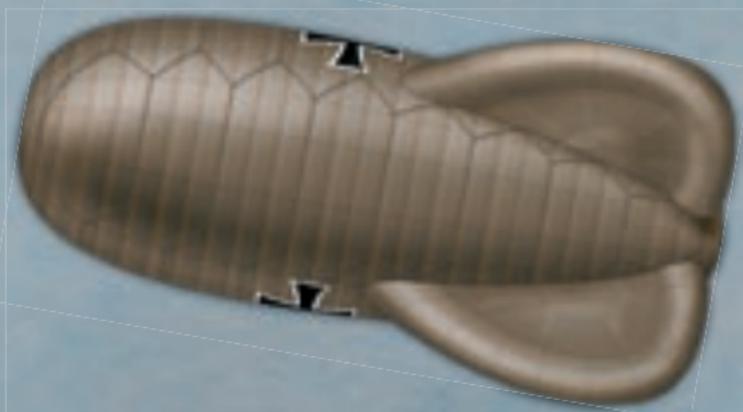


Some aces, like the balloon-buster Willy Coppens, used special incendiary bullets that were especially effective against balloons.

If you decide one or more airplanes are equipped with incendiary bullets, put an incendiary bullets counter on the planes' control boards. This counter is never discarded; the airplane keeps it for the entire game.

When a shot from an airplane carrying incendiary bullets inflicts smoke special damage on an enemy plane, the damage should be treated as fire instead. When incendiary fire causes engine damage, the target plane also takes a smoke damage result, with the usual effects.

A balloon that takes a smoke, rudder jammed, or engine special damage result from an airplane with incendiary bullets treats it as fire instead.

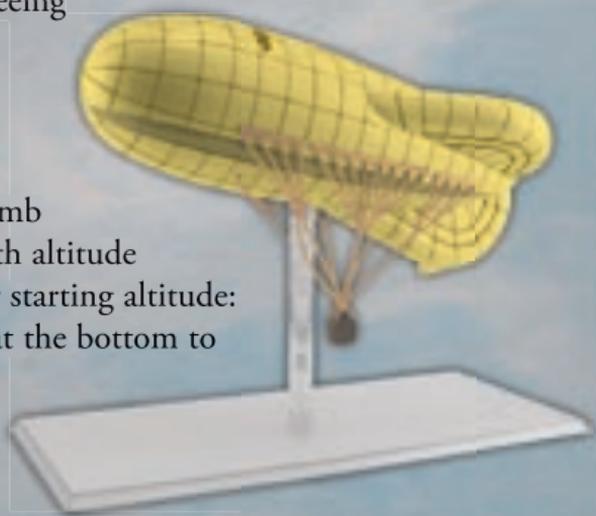


COMBINING ALTITUDE WITH BALLOONS

This section includes new rules for using balloons in scenarios that include altitude. These rules must be used as a complete whole.

OBSERVATION BALLOONS

Instead of players agreeing on the number of turns that balloons will be in the air, place the balloons on the table with two climb counters each and with altitude stands matching their starting altitude: place the long stand at the bottom to represent altitude 0, plus one small stand (the usual stand used for airplanes) for each altitude level above 0.



At the beginning of any turn's planning phase when an enemy airplane is on the table, before any maneuvers are revealed the owning player can order a balloon to be taken to the ground.

Once this happens, the balloon loses one climb counter at the end of each turn. If it has no climb counters, it loses a level of altitude (remove a stand) and it receives two climb counters. When a balloon reaches level 0 with no counters, it is out of the game, but is not considered eliminated for victory conditions.

At the start of any turn, the player owning a descending balloon can decide to stop its descent. The balloon stays at the altitude where it stopped. The player can decide to resume descent at the start of any turn.

If a balloon explodes (because of an explosion special damage result or because it takes too much damage while on fire), two A damage cards are taken by each airplane within a half-ruler of distance on the balloon's altitude level, and by all airplanes overlapping the balloon at one altitude level just above or below it. Anti-aircraft batteries and ground targets are unaffected by exploding balloons.

ROCKETS

Rockets can be fired in a turn in which a straight, a stall, or a dive (but not a climb) is executed. To hit, the next maneuver must be a stall, a straight, or a dive. After both the maneuvers, the airplane has to be at the same altitude level or one level above the target. All the other requirements for successful rocket hits must also still be met (see page 5).



Airplane	⬇️ Top altitude	⬆️ Climbing rate
Nieuport 16	10	5
Balloon	⬇️ Top altitude	
Achthundert English Ae 800 – Caquot M		4

ALTITUDE OPTIONAL RULES

Some or all of these rules can be included in a scenario if the Altitude rules are in use.

COLLISIONS

Two overlapping planes and/or balloons collide if 1) they are both at the same altitude and 2) either they both have climb counters (no matter how many) **or** they both have *no* climb counters.

Each colliding plane or balloon takes two A damage cards for each airplane or balloon, enemy or friend, that it collides with. Take into account damage points and explosions, but ignore other types of special damage.

Example: A Nieuport 16 at an altitude of 2 with 2 climb counters, and overlaps both a 2-altitude Austrian balloon with 1 climb counter and a 2-altitude Pfalz D.III with 3 climb counters. The balloon and the Pfalz don't overlap each other, but the balloon also overlaps a 2-altitude Sopwith Camel with no climb counters.

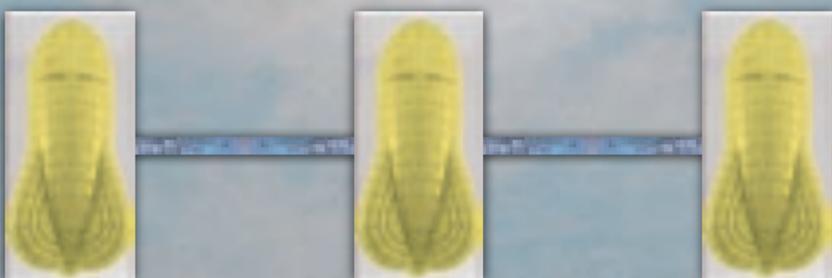
The balloon and the Sopwith don't collide, since one has climb counters and the other does not. The Pfalz and the balloon both collide with the Nieuport, so they take two A damage cards each, while the Nieuport takes four A cards.

BALLOON BARRAGES

Balloons were not only used to provide observers with an overview of the battlefield, but could also be used to create "barrages."

The balloons were set up in a line, with steel cross-cables between them. Balloon barrages prevented airplanes from passing through or below them.

To form a barrage, place a line of balloons spaced one ruler of distance or less from each other. If any part of an airplane model is between two adjacent balloons while at the same altitude as the lowest of the two balloons or lower, the plane is eliminated.



A plane is also destroyed if it is between the balloon and a side of the playing field while at the same altitude of the balloon or lower. If it overlaps a balloon, the plane is destroyed if it is at the same altitude as the balloon or lower (however, if you use the optional **Collisions** rule on page 7, if the altitude is the same – regardless of climb counters – give the balloon two A damage cards, ignoring all special damage results except for explosions).

If a balloon is destroyed or brought to ground, a plane can then pass between the two balloons that were adjacent to the downed balloon, or between the adjacent balloon and the side of the gaming area.

Scenario Rules

Wings of War

BURNING DRACHENS

When playing a scenario with balloons but without the altitude rules, if no balloons are destroyed after 12 turns, they are considered on the ground and taken out of the game.

However, if the game ends before turn 12 and a balloon is burning, before scoring, each burning balloon takes a number of damage cards equal to the number of flame counters on it, times the number of unplayed turns.

If this damage would destroy the balloon, then the balloon is counted as destroyed for victory conditions.

***Example:** The game ends on the 9th turn. A balloon has two flame counters. Since 3 turns are remaining before the 12th, the balloon immediately takes $3 \times 2 = 6$ cards of fire damage.*

BAILING OUT

Balloons' observers had no heavy weapons and usually bailed out from their basket, parachuting to the ground, if enemy planes were sighted. One of the goals of planes was to force observers to parachute. Their mission was then interrupted and the balloon, damaged or not, had to be taken to the ground so the observers could get back into the basket and resume their duties.

If players use or design a scenario in which the observers are part of the victory conditions, such as in the scenario **A Pair of Sentinels** (see pag. 15), they may add this rule.

Each balloon has two observers, unless the scenario states otherwise. Put two observer counters on each balloon. At the end of each round, after firing has been resolved and damage taken, the owner of a balloon can decide to bail out his observers.

If he does, they are considered to be safely on the ground. If altitude rules are not in use, the observers cannot bail out during the last 6 turns in which a balloon is brought to the ground. If altitude rules are used, they cannot bail out if the balloon is at an altitude of 1 or 0.

If a balloon explodes before the observers bail out, they are eliminated. If a balloon takes an “observer incapacitated” special damage card of 3 damage points, both observers are eliminated. If the “observer incapacitated” card has a different number of damage points, only one observer is eliminated.

ACE SKILLS



Before the start of a scenario you can decide to give one of these skills to each pilot involved.

Skills can also be used to compensate for weaker planes, as in the last variant of the **Twin Targets** scenario (see pag. 17). The same skill can be chosen by more than one pilot, but no pilot can choose the same skill twice.

Acrobatic pilot: An acrobatic pilot can perform an Immelmann turn without having to do a straight after it. The pilot still must perform a straight before the Immelmann. Once this ability is used, it cannot be re-used for the rest of the turn and for the whole next one. Use a blank counter to remember that you used the ability and discard it after a turn.

Bullet checker: When any of the weapons of that airplane fires, ignore the jamming cards with a green cross. The ace jams only when a card with the red cross is drawn.

Daredevil: A daredevil can perform two steep maneuvers in a row. Once this ability is used, it cannot be re-used during the rest of the turn or the subsequent turn. Use a blank counter to remember that you used the ability and discard at the end of the subsequent turn.

Good in evading: An ace who is good at evading can ignore one damage card during the game, after drawing it. The ignored card is added to the bottom of the damage deck.

Perfect aim: Once per turn, the pilot can decide to use the +1 Aim bonus, even if he did not shoot to the same plane in the previous phase. Once this ability is used, it cannot be re-used during the remainder of the turn.

GROUND FIRE

Usually, target cards do not fire at airplanes, but trenches and anti-aircraft machine guns do.

TRENCHES

Trenches are placed on the table at the start of the game and are never moved or turned. If the centre of an airplane's base is within one ruler of distance of a trench card (or overlapping the card), the plane can be shot at by infantry fire. The plane takes a single A card of damage, regardless of the distance. Ignore the damage points on the card and count only special damage results. Each trench can take a single shot each turn: if there are several possible targets, the player controlling the trench chooses among them. Infantry fire never jams.

Planes in the air can strafe trenches. If the plane can shoot the trench card with a short-range shot (half a ruler), the trench takes two damage cards. If the plane shoots the trench card with a long-range shot (one ruler of distance), the trench takes one damage card. Damage cards are kept faceup beside the trench.

When a trench card suffers 5 or more points of damage, or if it takes an explosion card, it is silenced and can no longer fire at enemy airplanes. Trenches ignore other types of special damage.

If you need A damage cards for infantry fire and you do not have them, use a B card instead.

ANTI-AIRCRAFT MACHINE GUNS

Anti-aircraft machine guns are placed on the table at the start of the game and they are never moved or turned. Machine guns are marked A or B. They shoot and jam exactly like A- or B-firing airplanes, depending on their letter. In addition, the card can take a single shot each turn following the exact rules for trenches firing.

***Example:** A Nieuport 16 is overlapping an A-firing anti-aircraft machine gun card. Since it fires like an airplane, the machine gun cannot fire on the Nieuport. But since AA machine guns can perform infantry fire, the airplane takes an A damage card (ignoring damage points). If it was in front of the machine gun and not overlapping the card, the Nieuport 16 would take an A card from the machine gun and an A card (ignoring damage points on this second card) from the infantry fire.*

A machine gun cards can be strafed just like trench cards. Any special damage card (except jammed guns) silences the machine gun, but the card can still fire one shot of infantry fire per turn. When it suffers 5 points of damage or more, or if it takes an explosion card, the machine gun card is completely silenced (infantry fire included). If the optional **Aim** rules are in use, they apply to AA machine guns.

If you need A damage cards and do not have them, when a target is hit by an A-firing machine gun, give it two B damage cards. Ignore any special damage apart from explosions on the second card.

If you need B damage cards and you do not have them, when a target is hit by a B-firing machine gun, give it an A damage card, but halve the damage points (rounding up). To keep track of this, place the halved A cards sideways on the game board. Treat special damage results normally.

GROUND FIRE AND ALTITUDE

If optional altitude rules are used, add these rules to the trenches and machine gun rules. Trenches and anti-aircraft machine guns are at altitude level 0, and can be strafed by airplanes at 0 level when they are at one ruler of distance or less. They can also be strafed by planes at level 1 at a half ruler of distance or less: treat this as a long-range shot (the target takes only one damage card).

Infantry fire can reach planes at altitude level 0 that are one ruler's length away, and planes at altitude level 1 that are half a ruler away.

Anti-aircraft machine guns fire as planes at altitude level 0.

Scenarios

Wings of War

The scenarios are divided into one **Basic Scenario** (see page 14) and several **Advanced Scenarios** (see page 15).

The Basic Scenario may be played with the contents of this set, while Advanced Scenarios require additional **Airplane Packs** from the first or second series of **Wings of War Miniatures**.

The playing area lengths and widths listed below are suggested minimums. Length is given as the distance from the German to the Allied side of the table (both sides always begin opposite each other).

Every scenario states which rules are needed to play it. Any optional rules can be added if all the players agree to do so before the start of the game.

After you are familiar with the game, feel free to invent your own scenarios, using the ones below as examples. Players are strongly advised to use anti-aircraft machine guns only in trench-strafing scenarios, or when altitude rules are in use.

Please share new scenarios, optional rules, and ideas with us at the Wings of War discussion group, **games.groups.yahoo.com/group/wow_nexus**

You will also find additional materials on the official game website: **www.wingsofwar.it**

BASIC SCENARIO

The following scenario may be played using the models included in this boxed set.

ALONE AGAINST THE DRACHEN

A single Nieuport against its target.

Players: 1

Gaming Surface: Length: 98 cm. Width: 68 cm.

German side (no player): One A-firing machine gun at the center of the German side facing the balloon. One balloon at one half-ruler distance from that card, nose pointing to the Allied side. Two B-firing machine guns at half ruler from it, one on each side of the balloon. Each should be one and a half rulers from the German side and facing the Allied side.

Allied Player: One Nieuport 16 with Le Prieur rockets on the Allied side.

Winning Conditions: If the balloon has not been destroyed after 12 turns, it is considered on the ground and taken out of the game. The game ends when the Allied plane leaves the table. Check the **Burning Drachens** scenario rule (see page 9) before scoring. The player wins if he destroys the balloon and leaves the table from his side. The player loses if the plane is destroyed. If the plane and balloon are both eliminated, the game counts as a draw.

Rules needed: Basic rules. Special damage optional rule, Balloons and Ground fire section. Don't use Altitude.

Variant: Introduce Altitude rules. The balloon starts at an altitude of 3 with 2 climb counters. Start the Nieuport at the altitude you prefer. Instead of removing the balloon after 12 turns, use the rule for bringing balloons down (see page 6): the balloon is out of the game once it reaches the ground.

ADVANCED SCENARIOS

These scenarios may be played when you own additional planes, available in individual Airplane Packs.

A PAIR OF SENTINELS

A Nieuport with Le Prieur rockets attacks an enemy balloon, aided by a friendly escort. However, a couple of German fighters come to rescue their target.

Players: 2/4

Gaming Surface: Length: 98 cm. Width: 68 cm.

German Player: One balloon at half-ruler distance from the half of the German side, nose pointing to the Allied one. One Albatros D.Va and one Fokker Dr.I are kept off the table: The German player puts either a left or a right maneuver card facedown on top of each of their maneuver decks. At the end of the second turn, he shows the card and puts the two planes on the German side of the table, within half ruler of either the left or the right corner depending on the maneuver chosen. They will move and fire normally from the third turn onward.

Allied Player: When the German player is ready, the Allied player places Nieuport 16 with Le Prieur rockets and a SPAD XIII on the Allied side within a half ruler distance of the edge, in a corner of his choice.

Winning Conditions: If the balloon has not been destroyed after 12 turns, it is considered to have made it to the ground and taken out of the game. The game ends when both the Allied planes leave the table or are destroyed: check the **Burning Drachens** scenario rule (see pag. XX) before scoring. The Allied player scores 10 points if the balloon is destroyed, 6 if it reaches the ground while on fire, and 2 if it reaches the ground damaged but not on fire. Each player loses 8 points for each of his planes destroyed, 6 points for each of his plane that exits from a side other than his own, and 4 points if it leaves from his own side. The allied player suffers no penalty for his planes leaving from the Allied side once the balloon is on the ground or destroyed. The player scoring more points wins.

Rules needed: Basic rules. Special damage optional rules. Balloons and Ground Fire rules.

Variants: If there are three players, one Allied player controls both the Nieuport and the escort. The two German players control one plane each and form a team. You can replace the SPAD XIII with a Camel, the Albatros with a Fokker Dr.I and/or the Fokker Dr.I with an Albatros. You can also replace both the SPAD XIII with a Sopwith Snipe and one of the two German fighters with a Fokker D.VII: in this case, you can consider giving an ace skill to each other pilot besides the Snipe and the D.VII. If Altitude rules are in use, the balloon is not on the ground after 12 turns – use the Altitude rules instead. If a balloon is on fire when the Allied planes leave the field or are destroyed, the game is not finished until the balloon reaches the ground or is destroyed.

You can also add the **Bailing Out** rule (see page 9) to the basic scenario or the variants. Place two observers on each balloon. In addition to any other score, if the balloon is not on the ground and still has at least one observer on it at the end of the game, the German player scores 2 points. For any observer that is eliminated, the German player loses 2 points.

A RACE AGAINST TIME

A Nieuport tries to bring down an enemy balloon that is directing artillery fire against Allied trenches.

Players: 2–3

Gaming Surface: Length: 98 cm. Width: 68 cm.

German Player: A balloon at half-ruler distance from the the German side, nose pointing toward the Allied side, with two observers. Two A firing machine guns at half ruler distance from it, one on each side, at half ruler from the German side and facing the Allied side. Two trenches at half ruler distance from them on the opposite side of the balloon, and at half ruler from the German side. Either an Albatros D.Va or a Fokker Dr.I in a corner of the table at its choice.

Allied Player: When the German player is set up, the Allied player places one Nieuport 16 with Le Prieur rockets and one Sopwith Camel on the Allied side.

Winning Conditions: At the end of any turn, the German player can order the balloon to be taken to the ground. If the balloon has not been destroyed 12 turns after the order is given, it is considered on the ground and taken out of the game. The game ends when both the Allied planes leave the table or are destroyed: check the **Burning Drachens** (page 9) scenario rule before calculating scores. The German player scores 1 point for every turn he waits before bringing the balloon to the ground, provided at least one observer was on the balloon at the end of each turn. The Allied player scores 10 points if the balloon is destroyed, 6 if it reaches the ground while on fire, and 2 if it reaches the ground damaged but not on fire. Each player loses 8 points for each of his planes destroyed, 6 points for each of his plane that exits from a side other than his own, and 4 points if it leaves from his own side. For each observer that is eliminated, the German player loses 2 points. The Allied player suffers no penalty for his planes leaving the game if they leave from the Allied side when the balloon is on the ground or destroyed.

Rules needed: Basic rules. Special damage optional rules. Balloons and Ground Fire rules. Bailing Out rules.

Variants: If Altitude rules are in use, German planes and the balloon start at an altitude of 3 (the balloon starts with two climb counters on it). The Allied player may choose any altitude he wants for each of his planes. The balloon is not lowered to the ground after a set number of turns – use the Altitude rules instead. If a balloon is on fire when the Allied planes leave the field or are destroyed, the game is not finished until the balloon reaches the ground or is destroyed.

TWIN TARGETS

A pair of Allied balloons rise over the front and a patrol of German fighters come to destroy them.

Players: 2–6

Gaming Surface: Length: 100 cm. Width: 90 cm.

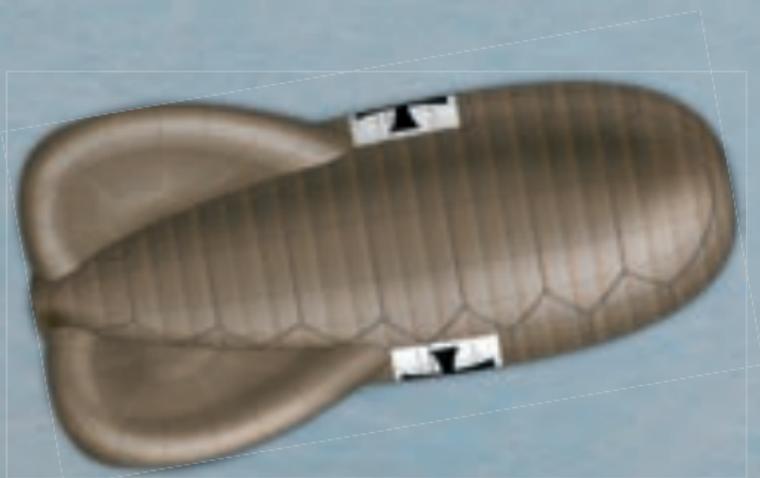
German Player: One Albatros D.Va, one Fokker D.VII, and one Fokker Dr.I along the German side of the table. The D.Va and the D.VII have incendiary bullets.

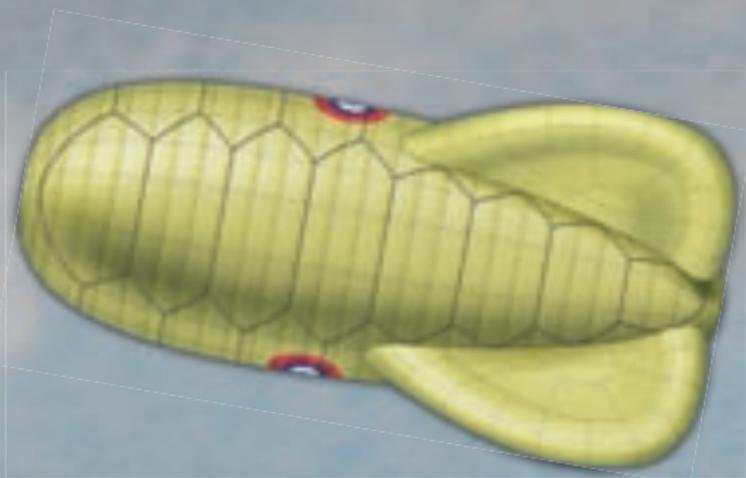
Allied Player: Place two balloons at half-ruler distance from the Allied side, nose pointing to the German one, each one 30 cm from the left side or right side of the playing area. Place one Sopwith Snipe, one Sopwith Camel and one SPAD XIII on the Allied side. The Allied player places first.

Winning Conditions: If the balloons are not destroyed after 12 turns, they are considered on the ground and taken out of the game. The game ends when all German planes leave the table or are destroyed: check the **Burning Drachens** scenario rule (see pag. 9) before scoring. The German player scores 10 points for each balloon destroyed, 6 if it reaches the ground while on fire, and 2 if it reaches the ground damaged but not on fire. Each player loses 8 points for each of his planes destroyed, 6 points for each of his planes that exits from a side other than his own, and 4 points if it leaves from his own side. There is no penalty for the German player if his planes leave from the German side when the balloon is on the ground or destroyed. The player scoring more points wins.

Rules needed: Basic rules. Special Damage optional rule. Balloons and Ground Fire rules.

Variants: If Altitude rules are in use, Allied planes and balloons start at an altitude of 3 (the balloon with two climb counters on it). The German player may choose any altitude he wants for each of his planes. The balloon is not automatically lowered to the ground after 12 turns – use the Altitude rules instead. If a balloon is on fire when the German planes leave the field or are destroyed, the game is not finished until the balloons reach the ground or are destroyed. If Altitude rules are in use, you can also decide to add





the **Bailing Out** rule (see pag. 9) to the basic scenario or the variants. Place two observers on each balloon. In addition to any other point, for each balloon that is not on the ground and still has at least one observer on it at the end of the game, the Allied player scores 2 points. For any observer that is eliminated, the Allied player loses 2 points.

All of these variants can be used with the sides reversed. Give the balloons to the German player. Select three Albatros D.Va and Fokker Dr.I planes, and do not equip them with incendiary bullets. Choose planes for the Allied side from among the following possibilities:

- Two SPAD XIII planes with incendiary bullets and one Sopwith Camel.
- Two A firing Nieuport 17s with Le Prieur rockets and one Sopwith Camel.
- Two Nieuport 16s with Le Prieur rockets, with each pilot equipped with two ace skills, and one Sopwith Camel.

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Wings of War™

Balloon Busters

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