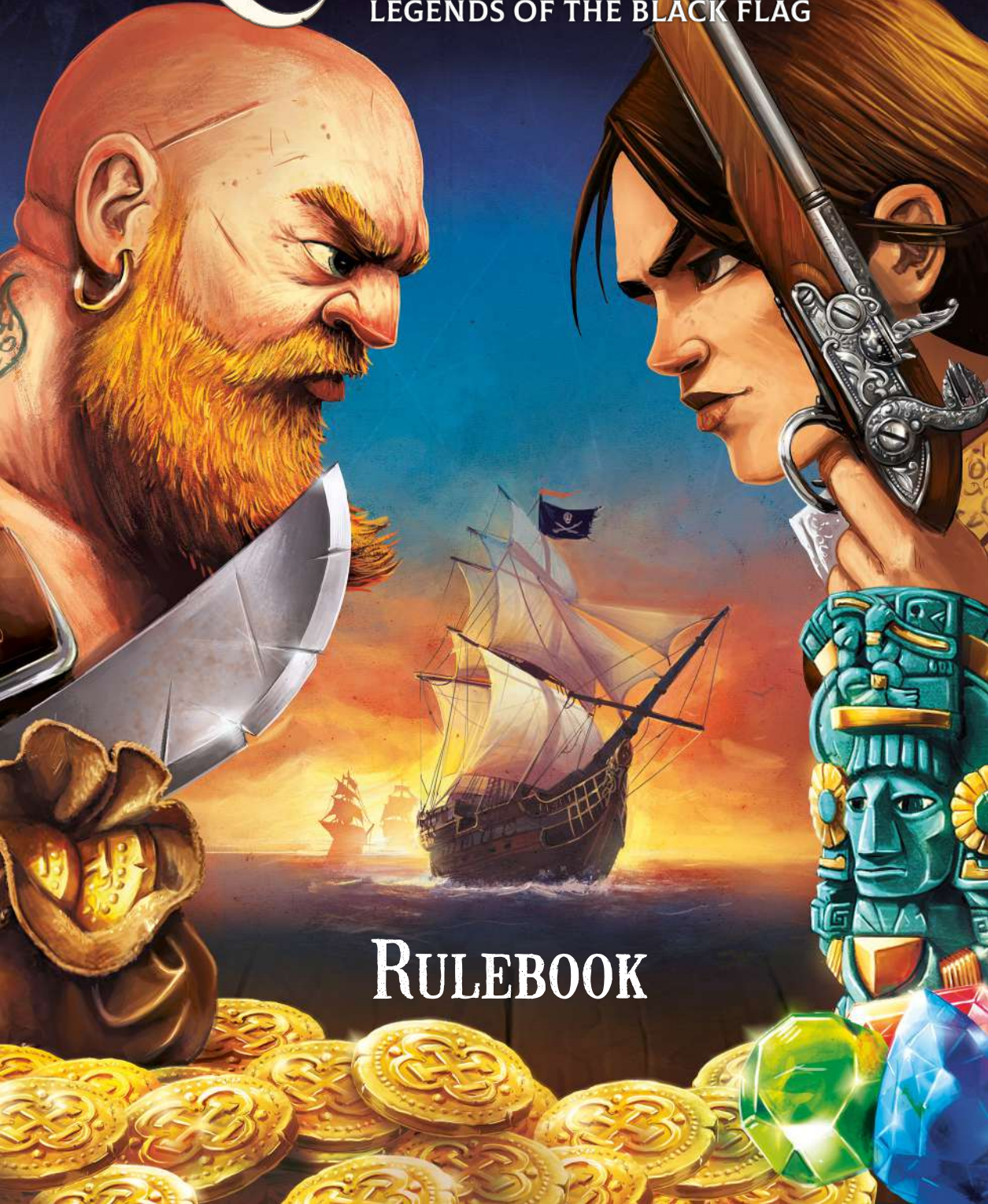


GAME AND ART BY ROLAND MACDONALD

RUTHLESS

LEGENDS OF THE BLACK FLAG



RULEBOOK

INTRODUCTION



You start with only a handful of coins and some inexperienced powder monkeys, but your goal is clear: you want to become the most notorious pirate of your era.

But watch out! There are others who want to make their name unforgettable as well. So, you start to plunder treasures, use the money to recruit more experienced pirates and capture ships. Competition is fierce on the high sea and only the strongest crew will take the lion's share, while the others have to be content with the leftovers. Man your ship and become a ruthless legend of the black flag!

COMPONENTS

68 Crew Cards



1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7



Quartermaster (Qtr.),
Captain (Cpt.) & Parrot (?)



Powder Monkeys
(Starting Crew)

x50 Pirates (10 cards in each of 5 suits)

x18

36 Loot Cards



Treasures

x20



Double
(Starting Loot)

x16



4 Player Aids



4 Parley Tokens



6 Legendary Achievements cards



12 Achievements tokens



21 Coins
(16x'1', 5x'3')

22 Prize tokens



8 Port tokens

each worth 1 Notoriety Point (NP)



14 Piracy tokens

each worth 1, 2, 3 or 6 NP



1 Start Player token

MAIN SETUP



Place the starting Crew and Loot cards (Powder Monkeys and Doubloons) aside for now.

- 1 Shuffle the 20 Treasures and place them face down to form the Treasure deck. Leave space beside the deck for a face up discard pile.
- 2 Shuffle the 50 Pirates and place them face down to form the Pirate deck. Leave space beside the deck for a face up discard pile.

In 2-player game remove the Kraken suit (10 cards) and put these cards back in the box before shuffling the Pirate deck.

- 3 Turn over 5 Pirates from the top of the Pirate deck in a face-up line to form the Tavern Row.

If the Tavern Row contains a total of 4 or more Cpt. and Qtr. cards, put all the cards in the Tavern Row in the discard pile and refill the Tavern Row from the deck.

- 4 Place the Coins and Achievement tokens in a common supply beside the play area.
- 5 For your first game, place the 2 Legendary Achievements shown in the illustration beside the play area and turn each so that the side showing the correct number of players is face up. (See the Almanac at the end of the rules: these cards are called 'Richest' and 'Merciless'.) Put the other Legendary Achievements back in the box.



- 6** Depending on the number of players, prepare a number of stacks of Prize tokens in order, from left to right, as follows:

2 players:

Prepare six stacks:

- Two stacks of 2 Port tokens
- Four stacks of 2 Piracy tokens (6 NP and 3 NP token).

3 players:

Prepare five stacks:

- Two stacks of 3 Port tokens
- Three stacks of 3 Piracy tokens (6 NP, 3 NP and 2 NP token).

4 players:

Prepare five stacks:

- Two stacks of 4 Port tokens
- Three stacks of 4 Piracy tokens (6 NP, 3 NP, 2 NP and 1 NP token).



Prize tokens example setup (3 players)

PLAYER SETUP

SHIP DECK

Give each player the following number of starting Crew and Loot cards:

- **2 or 3 players:** 6 Powder Monkey cards and 4 Doubloon cards.
- **4 players:** 4 Powder Monkey cards and 4 Doubloon cards.

Put any unused Powder Monkey and Doubloon cards back in the box.

Shuffle your cards and place them face down to form your own Ship deck. Leave space beside your Ship deck for a discard pile.

SHIP AREA AND NEW RECRUITS AREA

The space in front of you is your Ship Area. When you play Pirates from your hand, play them face up here. Leave space for up to 3 cards above your Ship Area: this is your New Recruits Area. When you recruit new Pirates, place them face up here.

OTHER MATERIALS

Give each player the following:

- 2 Coins from the supply
- 1 face-up Parley token (showing the 1 NP symbol)
- 1 player aid

Put any unused Parley tokens and Player Aids back in the box.

BURIED PILE

During the game, when you choose to 'Bury' cards place them face-down underneath your Parley token.

START PLAYER TOKEN

Give the Start Player token to the player who can shout the most piratical "Arrrrr!"

PLAYER SETUP EXAMPLE



Parley token
and buried pile



Discard
pile

Ship
deck



New Recruit Area



Ship
Area



2 Coins



Player Aid

AIM OF THE GAME

Your goal is to become the most notorious pirate of your era.

You will gain notoriety by recruiting and assembling the best and strongest crew of pirates. The player who has earned the most notoriety by the end of the game is the winner.



HOW TO PLAY

The game is played over 5 rounds (2 players: 6 rounds). Each round consists of 4 phases:

- 1) DRAW CARDS
- 2) TAKE TURNS
- 3) ASSEMBLE RAIDING PARTIES
- 4) END OF ROUND

1) DRAW CARDS

Simultaneously, everyone draws a hand of 5 cards from the top of their own Ship deck. If you need to draw a card but your Ship deck is empty, immediately shuffle all of the cards in your discard pile and place them face down to form a new Ship deck. Then continue to draw cards until you have a hand of 5.

PARLEY:

Once per game, you may use your Parley token after you have drawn your cards to discard any number of them and redraw cards to replace them. If you do this, flip your Parley token face down, and choose any number of cards from your hand and place them in your discard pile. Then draw new cards from your Ship deck until you have a hand of 5.

At the end of the game, your Parley token is worth 1 NP if you have not used it.

2) TAKE TURNS

The player with the Start Player token goes first. Players then take turns clockwise. Continue to take turns until all players have no cards remaining in hand.

On your turn, if you have one or more cards in hand, you **must** take exactly 1 **Command action**. Then, you **may** take exactly 1 **Recruit action**.

If play passes to you and you have no cards in your hand, you may still take a Recruit action.

COMMAND

There are 5 Command actions:



TRADE



BRAWL/BURY



PLUNDER



BOARD



TRADE

Play **1 or more Loot cards** (Doubloons and Treasures) in front of you. Then take Coins from the supply equal to the total value of the white Trade icons on the cards. If any of the Treasures have additional white Power icons, use these actions immediately. The Power actions are described in detail later in the rules.

Finally, put the Loot cards you played onto your discard pile. Keep your Coins in front of you.



BRAWL

Play **1 Powder Monkey** in front of you. Then choose 1 Pirate from the Tavern Row and move it to the Pirate discard pile. Immediately turn a new card from the top of the Pirate deck face up in the Tavern Row to refill it.

If the Pirate deck is empty, shuffle the Pirate discard pile and place it face down to form a new Pirate deck.

If the Tavern Row now contains a total of 4 or more Cpt. and Qtr. cards, put all the cards in the Tavern Row in the Pirate discard pile and refill the Tavern Row from the Pirate deck.

Finally, put the Powder Monkey you played onto your discard pile.



BURY

Play **1 Powder Monkey** in front of you. Then choose any 1 card in your hand or discard pile to permanently remove from your deck. Place the buried card face down under your Parley token and keep it there until the end of the game. You may look at your buried cards at any time. Other players cannot look at them, but may count the number of cards you have buried.

Finally, put the Powder Monkey you played onto your discard pile.



PLUNDER

Play **2 Powder Monkeys** in front of you. Then reveal the top card from the Treasure deck. You must either sell it or keep it:

- If you sell the Treasure, put the card on the Treasure discard pile. Then take Coins from the supply equal to the total value of the black Trade icons on the card. If any of the Treasures have additional black Power icons, use these actions immediately. The Power actions are described in detail later in the rules.

- If you keep the Treasure, put it onto your own discard pile. You do not gain the actions of any Power icons this turn. Instead, when you play the Treasure card from your hand in a later turn (by using the Trade action), you will take the actions shown by the white Power icons.

If you Plunder and there is no card left in the Treasure deck, shuffle the Treasure discard pile and place it face down to form a new Treasure deck.

Some Treasures have no white Power icons and must be sold. Most Treasures have a value in a black banner (top right). This value is important at the end of the game when when you consider which player has best fulfilled the requirements of the Legendary Achievements.

Finally, put the 2 Powder Monkeys you played onto your discard pile.



BOARD

Play **1 Pirate** into your Ship Area, then use the actions shown by the white Power icons at the bottom of the card. All of the actions are explained in detail at the end of the rules.

- If the card has multiple Power icons connected by a “+” you must use all of the Powers, in order from left to right.
- If the card has multiple Power icons separated by a “/” you must choose one of the Powers to use.

Keep the Pirate in your Ship Area until the ‘Assemble raiding parties’ phase.

RECRUIT

After taking your Command action, you may take 1 Recruit action. The cost in Coins to recruit a Pirate in the Tavern Row is shown in the bottom left of the card.

You may recruit only **1 Pirate each turn**, and may only recruit a maximum of **3 new Pirates each round**.

When you recruit a Pirate:

- Return the a number of Coins equal to its cost to the supply.
- Take the card from the Tavern Row and place it in your New Recruit Area (above your Ship Area).
- Immediately take the action shown by its white Power icons.

Now turn over the top card of the Pirate deck and add it in the Tavern Row so that it once again contains 5 cards.

If the Tavern Row now contains a total of 4 or more Cpt. and Qtr. cards, put all the cards in the Tavern Row in the discard pile and refill the Tavern Row from the deck.

CONTINUING PLAY

Play now passes clockwise. Keep taking turns until, at the end of a player's turn, all players have no cards left in hand. All players have one final turn in which to take a final Recruit action, then the phase ends.

Remember: If play passes to you and you have no cards left in hand, you may still take a Recruit action if you wish.

3) ASSEMBLE RAIDING PARTIES

Simultaneously, everyone uses the Pirates in their Ship and New Recruits Areas to assemble the strongest Raiding Party.

- In rounds 1 and 2, every player who assembles a Raiding Party of Strength 4 or more takes one of the Port tokens worth 1 NP. It doesn't matter who assembled the strongest Raiding Party.
- In later rounds, all players compare the Strengths of their Raiding Parties. The player with the strongest Raiding Party takes the most valuable Piracy token, the player with the next strongest Raiding Party takes the next most valuable Piracy token in the stack, and so on.
- In any round, if you do not assemble a Raiding Party with a Strength of at least 4, you do not take a Prize token.

Your Raiding Party can contain **one or more sets of Pirates**. Each set must match one of the following patterns:

- 2 or more cards of the same rank: a **'pair'**, **'three of a kind'**, **'four of a kind'** or **'five of a kind'**.
- 3 or more cards with sequential ranks, but any combination of suits: a **'straight'**.
- 3 or more cards of the same suit: a **'flush'**.
- 3 or more cards with sequential ranks and of the same suit: a **'straight flush'**.
- A **'full ship'** of one card of each rank: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, Qtr. and Cpt.



Each set contributes the following Strength to your total:

- **Pair:** 4 Strength. Each additional card of the same rank adds 6 Strength.
- **Straight:** 6 Strength. Each additional sequential card adds 2 Strength.
- **Flush:** 8 Strength. Each additional card of the same suit adds 3 Strength.
- **Straight flush:** 12 Strength. Each additional sequential card of the same suit adds 4 Strength.
- **Full ship:** 25 Strength.



The patterns and Strengths are summarised on your player aid.

Each Pirate can only be part of one set.

Unused Pirates that are not part of a set do not add any Strength to your total.

QUARTERMasters, CAPTAINS AND PARROTS

When creating sets of Pirates, Quartermasters (Qtr.) and Captains (Cpt.) can be combined in the following order with numbered Pirates (1-7) to form 'straights' or 'straight flushes':

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - QTR. - CPT.

When you form a set using a Parrot, you can choose its rank (1-7, Qtr. or Cpt.). The rank must be **different** from all other cards of the same suit that you have used to assemble a Raiding Party in this round.

TIE-BREAK

If the Raiding Parties of two or more players are tied for total Strength, break the tie in the following order:

- **Unused Pirates:** First, break the tie in favour of the tied player who has the most unused Pirates remaining in their Ship or New Recruit Areas.
- **Most Coins:** If the tie is not broken, break it in favour of the player with the most Coins.
- **Turn order:** If the tie is not broken, break it in favour of the player seated closest to the player with the Start Player token going clockwise.

EXAMPLE:

Lucy, Craig, and Julie use their Pirates to assemble the following Raiding Parties:



LUCY



CRAIG



JULIE

- Lucy forms a 3-card straight (2 Heart, 3 Heart, 4 Anchor) worth 6 Strength, and a pair (6 Swords and 6 Kraken) worth 4 Strength. Her total Strength is 10.
- Craig forms a 3-card flush (the 1 Swords, 7 Swords and Parrot Swords). His Strength is 8.
- Julie cannot form a Raiding Party (she has a Qtr. Heart and a 5 Swords which cannot be combined). Her Strength is therefore 0.

Lucy takes the Piracy token worth 6 NP. Craig takes the Piracy token worth 3 NP. Julie cannot take a Prize token because she did not form a Raiding Party.

4) END OF ROUND

Simultaneously, everyone moves all cards used to assemble a Raiding Party, and any unused Pirates remaining in their own New Recruit and Ship Areas to their own discard pile:

- Keep any Coins in your play area.
- Put back in the box any Prize tokens that were available in this round but not taken.
- Pass the Start Player token clockwise.

Now begin the next round.



END OF THE GAME

The game lasts 5 rounds (2 players: 6 rounds).

At the end of the game, first check the Legendary Achievements and then calculate how many Notoriety Points everyone has earned.

LEGENDARY ACHIEVEMENTS

First, check which player best fulfilled the requirements of the Legendary Achievements. For each Legendary Achievements in play, award Achievement tokens as follows:

- The player in first place takes Achievement tokens worth 4 NP.
- In a 3- or 4-player game, the player in second place takes Achievement tokens worth 2 NP.

If there is a tie for first place, all tied players take 4 NP and other players receive no NP. If a single player is in first place and there is a tie for second place, all tied players take 2 NP.

FINAL SCORE

All players now total the NP they have gained from the following:

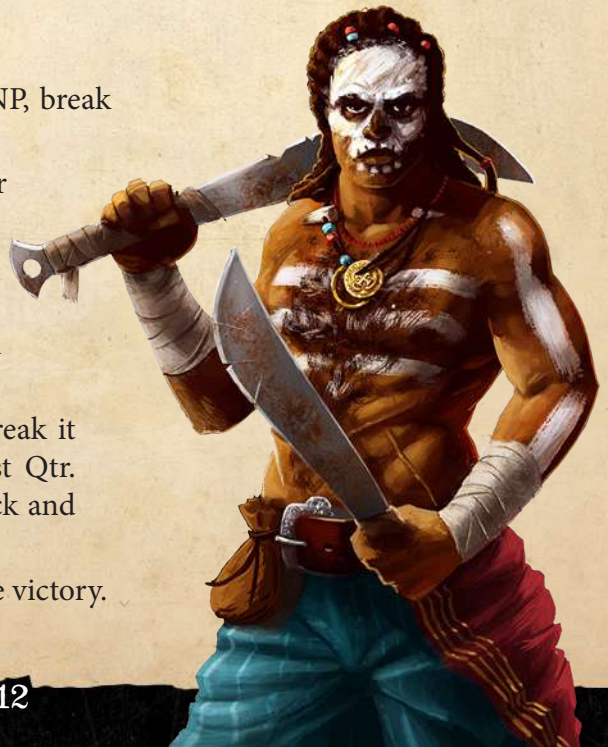
- Legendary Achievements (Sum of Achievement tokens).
- Prize tokens (each Prize token is worth the indicated number of NP).
- All Qtr. and Cpt. cards in their buried cards, deck or discard pile. Each Qtr. is worth 1 NP. Each Cpt. is worth 2 NP.
- Unused Parley token (an unused Parley token is worth 1 NP).
- Coins are not worth additional NP.
- The player with the most Notoriety Points wins!

TIE-BREAK

If two or more players are tied for total NP, break the tie in the following order:

- **Most Coins:** First, break the tie in favour of the tied player with the most Coins.
- **Greatest Achievements:** If the tie is not broken, break it in favour of the tied player with the most NP from Achievement tokens.
- **Best Crew:** If the tie is not broken, break it in favour of the tied player with most Qtr. and Cpt. cards in their buried pile, deck and discard pile.

If players remain tied, all tied players share victory.



PIRATE'S ALMANAC



ATTACK:

Choose a player to attack. The attacked player must choose to either return 1 Coin to the supply or put 1 card of their choice from their hand onto their own discard pile.



BRAWL:

Move a Pirate from the Tavern Row to the Pirate discard pile. Turn over the top card of the Pirate deck to refill the Tavern Row. If the Pirate deck is empty, shuffle the Pirate discard pile and place it face down to form a new Pirate deck.

If the Tavern Row now contains a total of 4 or more Cpt. and Qtr. cards, put all the cards in the Tavern Row in the discard pile and refill the Tavern Row from the deck.



BURY:

Choose any 1 card in your hand or discard pile and permanently remove it from your deck. Place the buried card face down under your Parley token and keep it there until the end of the game.



DRAW:

Draw cards from the top of your Ship deck equal to the number shown and add them to your hand. If your Ship deck is empty, shuffle your discard pile and place it face down to form a new Ship deck as normal.



TRADE:

Take Coins from the supply equal in value to number in the icon.



LOOKOUT:

Look at the top 2 cards in your Ship deck. Add 1 card to your hand and put the other card face down on top of your Ship deck.

If your Ship deck is empty, shuffle your discard pile and place it face down to form a new Ship deck as normal.



PLUNDER

Reveal the top card from the Treasure deck. You must either sell it or keep it as normal.



RESCUE:

Choose any 1 Pirate or Powder Monkey in your discard pile and add it to your hand. If there are no Pirates or Powder Monkeys in your discard pile, the action has no effect.



CAPTAIN:

If you choose this action when you use a Captain's Power, turn the card upside-down and declare that you want to use this ability during the 'Assemble raiding parties' phase. When you assemble your Raiding Party, you may choose the **rank and suit** of this card (including Qtr. and Cpt.). The combination of rank and suit you choose must be **different** from all other cards you use to assemble a Raiding Party in this round.

LEGENDARY ACHIEVEMENTS

For the first few games we recommend using the Legendary Achievements 'Richest' and 'Merciless'.



RICHEST:

Count the value (in the black banner) of all Loot cards (Doubloons and Treasures) in your Ship deck. The player with the highest total wins the Legendary Achievement.



MERCILESS:

Count the number of Crew cards (Pirates and Powder Monkeys) in your buried pile. The player with the most wins the Legendary Achievement.

In later games, swap Merciless for one of the other Legendary Achievements, or add a third Legendary Achievement. We recommend always playing with the 'Richest' Legendary Achievement. The 'Shipshape' and 'Commander' Legendary Achievements are two sides of a single card.



BURIED TREASURE:

Count the value of all Loot cards (Doubloons and Treasures) in your buried pile. The player with the highest total wins the Achievement.



MUTINEER:

Count the total number of Qtr. and Cpt. cards in your buried pile. The player with the most wins the Achievement.



RECRUITER:

Count the total number of Pirates (not Powder Monkeys) in your buried pile, deck and discard pile. The player with the most wins the Achievement.



SHIPSHAPE:

All players who have at least one Pirate card of every different type (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, Qtr. and Cpt.) anywhere in their buried pile, deck and discard pile win this Achievement.



COMMANDER:

Count the number of cards in the longest 'straight flush' that you can form using the cards in your buried pile, deck and discard pile. The player with the most cards in their longest straight flush wins this Achievement.

CREDITS & THANKS

Original concept, artwork and game design:

Roland MacDonald

Developers:

Roman Rybiczka, Caezar Al-Jassar, Brett Gilbert, Martin Zeeb, Daniel Theuerkauf

Rulebook editors:

Brett Gilbert and Martin Zeeb

Graphic Design:

Sebastian Koziner

We would also like to thank the following for playtesting Ruthless:

Mike Miedema, Ylfa van Bergen, Martin Boot, Lennart Wolfert, Xavèr corbet, Antonio Martino, Max Philippi, James Hargrave, Rene Derks, Lisa Mould, Jojanneke Heidema, Maartje Mulder, Jim Rowe, Gijs Blaauw, Lutz Stratmann, Arjen de Jong, Simon Casas, Timo Louisse, Michiel Justin Elliott Hendriks, Jason Roseweir, Rory J. Somers, Teresa Attwater, Joris Wiersinga (Spotter Games - special thanks for telling me to make it 4 player), Wouter de Vries, Dariia Pashkova, Rebekka Zeeb, Holger Siefke, Ferdinand Schnitzler, Bettina Brennecke, Maximilian Thiel, Nadine Holzhüter, Kevin Kaczmarek, Helge Landmesser, Stefan Zlatintsis and the many others who played at cons and expos.

Special thanks from Roland to Nienke Fokkema without whose undying support and patience this game may never have been made.



© Alley Cat Games 2018