CONTENTS

SETTING

The year is 66 B.C. and gladiator games are at their most violent and bloody. Craving more political power, you excite the masses by announcing Gorus Maximus: Exceptionally Bloody Games.

You approach the owners of five gladiator schools to recruit their strongest gladiators and most ferocious beasts. These games will also allow you to do away with the criminals, deserters, and naysayers standing in your way.

Unfortunately, you are not the only one with such schemes! As the games draw near, you hear of political opponents with similar plans: to sacrifice gladiators for crowd favour and political support. Vying for the upper hand, each of you will dispatch gladiators, ensuring the most exciting and gruesome games.

You are confident great things await you... And it will be well worth all the blood on your hands!
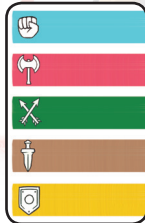
OBJECTIVE

When the sun sets on the soiled battlefield, you want the spectators chanting your name. Earn their bloodthirsty support by giving them the most gruesome games and earning the title: *Champion of Gorus Maximus*.

COMPONENTS

- 80 Gladiator Cards

- 1 Preferred School Card

- 5 Crowd Support Cards

- 1 "2-Go" Tuck Box

- 1 Preferred School Tracker

- 8 Crowd Support Tokens

- Rulebook

GAME OVERVIEW

The deck contains 80 gladiators (cards) made up of 16 gladiators from each of the five schools (suits), with strength ranked from high (15) to low (0).

The five schools are represented by different colours and icons. Each school has one gladiator of each rank; a stronger gladiator beats a weaker gladiator of the same school.

Depending on player count (see Deck Setup, p. 4), a set number of gladiators from a set number of schools will be shuffled together. Each player will be dealt 10 gladiators to create their **troupe** (hand). In a clockwise manner, each player will contribute one gladiator, chosen from their troupe, to create a **bout** (trick).

In each round of the game, one school will be preferred over all the others (trump). Any gladiator in this **preferred school** will win against all gladiators not in the preferred school. (See Preferred School, p. 5.) A Challenge can change the preferred school mid-trick when a player matches the rank of the last gladiator played (see Game Play, below).

Players attempt to win bouts containing gladiators with positive crowd favour (CF), and avoid gladiators with negative CF (see Card Information, p. 5). The player with the highest crowd favour at the end of the round will earn 1 Crowd Support. This support is tracked with Support Tokens (see Round End, p. 5).

The game ends when one player has earned the support of the masses by earning 3 Crowd Support, signifying they have satisfied the crowd's lust for blood and earned their political support.
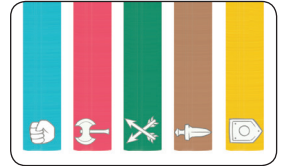
GAME PLAY

The first bout begins with the player to the left of the dealer leading with any gladiator. The school of this first gladiator of the *round* is *both* the **initiating school** and the **preferred school**.

(The first gladiator in future bouts only sets the initiating school; the preferred school will have carried over from the previous bout.)

If a player has a gladiator from the initiating school in their troupe, they **must** enter one of those gladiators into the bout, with one exception:

A Challenge: can occur when a player matches the rank of the last gladiator played; this immediately changes the preferred school to the school of this new gladiator.

Note: Players must follow the initiating school (school of the first gladiator played) even if the preferred school changes. It is recommended that players place their chosen gladiator in front of them, not in a pile, so players can easily see which gladiator was played last, and which **2** school is the initiating school.

Place the tracker on the corresponding school on the Preferred School Card.

A Challenge changes the Preferred School immediately.

GAME PLAY, CONTINUED

If a player does not have a gladiator from the initiating school, and they do not wish to Challenge, any gladiator from their troupe may enter the bout to fight (*sluff*), including one from the preferred school.

The highest-ranked gladiator from the preferred school will win the bout. If no gladiator from the preferred school entered the bout, then the highest-ranked gladiator from the initiating school will win.

The winner of the bout collects the spent gladiators and places them facedown in front of themselves. The preferred school will carry over between bouts, but not between rounds. Any player is allowed to look back at the gladiators involved in the last bout, but no further.

Play continues with the winner of each bout leading the next bout, *with any gladiator from any school*. That gladiator's school will be the new *initiating school* and could be from the preferred school if desired.

Once players have exhausted their troupes by contributing to each bout, they will tally their Crowd Favour (see Card Information, p. 5). The player with the most favour will earn 1 Crowd Support. Support is tracked with Support Tokens.

Then the player to the left of the dealer will become the new dealer, and will shuffle and distribute all the gladiators to create new troupes.

The game ends when one player has earned 3 Crowd Support, signifying they have won the political support of the bloodthirsty crowd. They are named the Champion of Gorus Maximus!

Crowd Favour
1+1+2+1+2+1=8
8-4=4

Support Token

Example: Ann starts the round by leading with the Blue Fists' 4, making it the *initiating school* as well as the *preferred school.* Daniel plays the Blue 10, as this school was called for, and beats Ann's 4. Maureen has a Blue 9, but instead of playing it and losing to Daniel's 10, she Challenges, playing her Green 10, immediately changing the *preferred school* (not the initiating school), winning the bout and 2 Crowd Favour (1 CF for each 10). Maureen will now collect the gladiators, place them facedown in front of her, and she may lead the next bout with any gladiator from her troupe. (The preferred school is now Green Arrows, until it is Challenged.)
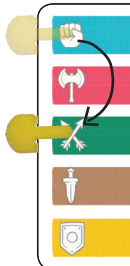
DECK SETUP

Player Count	Number of Schools	Gladiators/ School	Total Deck Size
1 - 3	3	10 (0, 4-12)	30
4	4	10 (0, 4-12)	40
5	5	10 (0, 4-12)	50
6	5	12 (0, 3-13)	60
7	5	14 (0, 2-14)	70
8	5	16 (0-15)	80

To help with organization and setup, on the bottom right of some cards there is a number for player count (see Card Information, p. 5).

Cards with no number will be used in all player counts (as long as that school is in play).

For example, in a six-player game, use all five schools and include all the gladiators without any number and those with "6+".

In a game with three or fewer players, take only three of the five schools, and use only the gladiators without any number on the bottom.

8   7+   6+   All Player Counts   6+   7+   8

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15
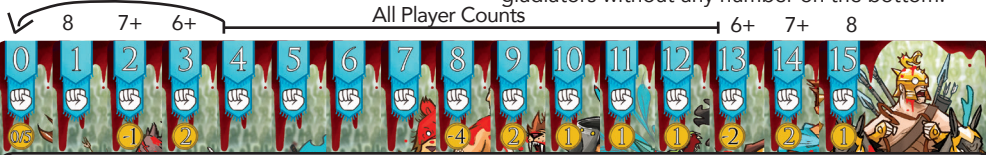
All gladiators without any number would be used in a 1 to 5 player game, but the number of schools needed would change. Three schools for 1-3 players, four schools for 4 players, and five schools for 5 players.

TROUPE SETUP

Create the deck using the setup chart above, shuffle the cards, and then deal out all gladiators to create each player's troupe of 10 gladiators. It is recommended to sort your gladiators into their schools, and then by rank.

2-PLAYER SETUP

Create the deck using the setup chart above, shuffle the cards, and then deal out 10 gladiators to both players. The remaining gladiators are placed facedown in a draw pile. After a gladiator is played, draw a new gladiator from the draw pile. Once the draw pile is empty, play as usual until your troupe is exhausted. There will be 15 bouts per round instead of the usual 10.

SOLO PLAY

Create the deck using the setup chart above, shuffle the cards, and then deal yourself 10 gladiators. The remaining gladiators are placed facedown in a stack of contenders. A contender will **always** initiate the bout, regardless of who won the previous bout. After you contribute a gladiator, a second contender will be played into the current bout. Resolve according to the regular rules.

Important: You **must** collect at least one gladiator with a rank of "8" (-4 CF) each round or the crowd will believe the fights are rigged, you will immediately lose that round, and the contenders will gain 1 Crowd Support. All gladiators collected in bouts won by contenders are combined and tallied together at the end of the round.

TEAM VARIANT

With 4 or more players, players can play in teams, making sure to sit in alternating order. One teammate should gather all gladiators from each bout won, and at the end of the round, they will total values of all Crowd Favour collected. The team with the highest Crowd Favour earns 1 Crowd Support. It is recommended that each team play for a number of Crowd Support equal to their team size plus one.

8 players = 2 vs. 2 vs. 2 vs. 2, or 4 vs. 4.
7 players = 2 vs. 2 vs. 2 vs. 1, or 3 vs. 2 vs. 2.
6 players = 2 vs. 2 vs. 2, or 3 vs. 3.
5 players = 2 vs. 2 vs. 1, or 3 vs. 2.
4 players = 2 vs. 2.
Team seating examples:
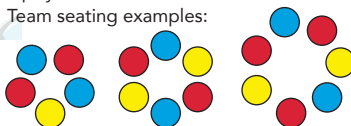
4   *Designer's note*: "I like team games with 6+ players!"

CARD INFORMATION

**A** - The gladiator's *rank* within the school; 15 high to 0 low.

B - The gladiator's *school*, denoted by both colour and icon.
(Blue Fists, Brown Swords, Green Arrows, Pink Axes, Yellow Shields.)

C - Crowd Favour (CF) value. Only on select gladiators. Collected values are calculated at the end of each round, and the player with the highest total earns 1 Crowd Support (see Round End, below).

> **Important:** During bouts, 0s are not worth any CF. At the end of the round, check which school is preferred. The 0 from that school, and only that school, is now worth 5 CF. All other 0s are not worth any CF.

D - Indicates in which configuration (number of players) the card is used. Cards with no number will be used in all player counts, as long as that school is in play. (See Deck Setup, p. 4.)
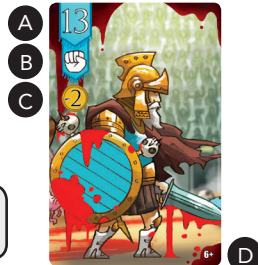
PREFERRED SCHOOL

During each bout, one school will be preferred over all the others. Gladiators from this school will beat any gladiator from any other school. As the preferred school can change mid-bout, we highly recommend using the Preferred School Card and Tracker. When the preferred school is established, or changes, one player should immediately make this change on the card so that all players can see and take note. (The Preferred School Tracker may be a different colour in your game.)

The preferred school carries over between bouts, not rounds.

Players should not use this card to track the initiating school, as that can be easily seen by looking at the first gladiator played in each bout.
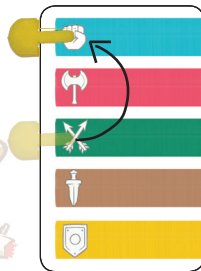
ROUND END

At the end of each round, the player with the highest Crowd Favour will earn 1 Crowd Support, tracked with a Support Token taken from the general supply. (In the event of a tie, all tied players receive 1 Crowd Support.)

Reminder: The 0 from the preferred school ***at the end of the round*** is the only 0 worth 5 CF; the other 0s are worthless.

When a player wins a second round, they simply flip their token to the "II" side. And when they have won their third round, they have won the game!

(For a longer or shorter game, players can increase or decrease the amount of Crowd Support needed to win.)

Two-sided
Support Tokens

GAME END

The game ends when one player has won the support of the masses by earning 3 Crowd Support. If two or more players earn their third Crowd Support at the same time, the player who collected the 0 wins. If neither has the 0, whoever has collected the fewest gladiators this round wins.
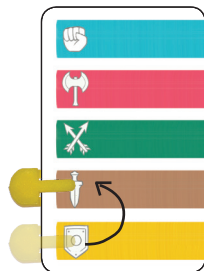
3-PLAYER EXAMPLES

Sluffing: Yellow Shields is the preferred school. Daniel won the previous bout and he decides to lead with the Brown Swords' 5. Maureen does not have any Brown, so she plays the Blue Fists' 8 to give her opponent -4 CF. Ann avoids the negative CF by playing her Brown 4.

> Daniel wins the bout and receives -4 CF.

Bad Idea: Yellow Shields is still the preferred school. Daniel won the previous bout, so he decides to lead with the Blue Fists' 6. Maureen does not have any Blue, so she plays the Pink Axes' 8. Ann gets excited and throws down her Brown Swords' 8, hoping to give Daniel another -4 CF. Unfortunately, since Ann Challenged by matching the rank of the last gladiator played, she changes the preferred school to Brown Swords and wins the bout!

> Ann wins the bout and receives -8 CF.

4-PLAYER EXAMPLES

Sneaky Idea: Green Arrows is the preferred school. Maureen won the previous bout, so she decides to lead with the Blue Fists' 9. Carter, having no Blue, is happy to get rid of his Pink Axes' 8. Ann follows the initiating school and plays her Blue 5. Daniel has Blue, but seeing an opportunity to hurt Carter, who has a Support Token already, he Challenges by playing his Pink Axes' 5, matching the previous gladiator's rank and immediately changing the preferred school to Pink Axes. This means Carter has the strongest gladiator from the preferred school, and therefore wins the bout.

> Carter wins the bout and receives -2 CF.

Big Finish: Blue Fists is the preferred school, and all players have only one gladiator left in their troupe. Carter leads with the Green Arrows' 12. Ann tosses in the Blue 7. Daniel plays the Blue 0, which could be worth 5 CF as it is currently the preferred school. However, Maureen plays her Brown Swords' 0, matching the last gladiator played. This Challenge changes the preferred school to Brown Swords. As the round is over, and the preferred school can no longer change, her Brown 0 is worth 5 CF. The Blue Fists' 0 is now worthless.

> Maureen wins the bout and receives 6 CF.

TEAM EXAMPLES

**Point Thief:** Pink Axes is the preferred school. Maureen won the previous bout, so she decides to lead with the Pink Axes' 10. Carter follows with the 7. Hudson, one of Maureen's teammates, decides to throw 2 CF for his team and contributes the 9. Ann follows the initiating school and adds the 4, as does Daniel with the 6. Greg wants the CF so he matches Daniel's 6, changing the preferred school to Brown Swords and winning the bout for the blue team.

Red vs. **Blue**

Blue wins the bout and receives 3 CF.

Red vs. **Blue**
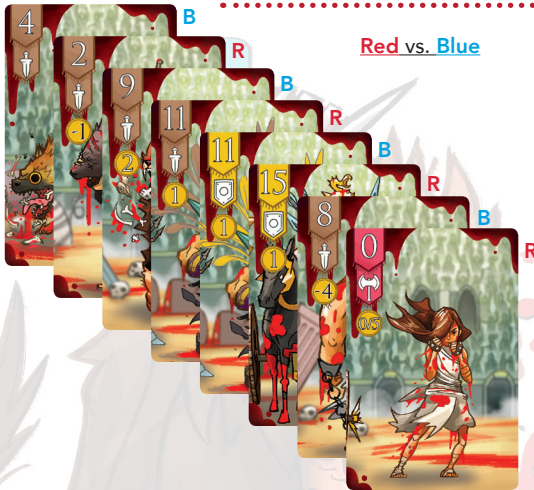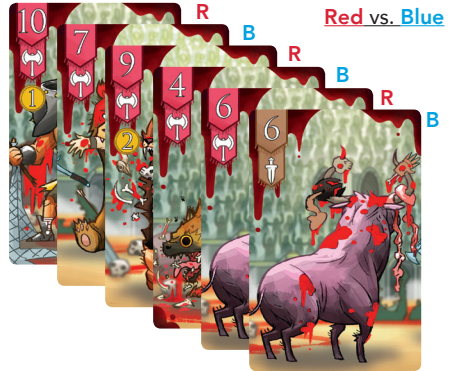
**Vindictive:** Greg leads with the Brown Swords' 4, the preferred school. Janine adds her Brown 2, worth -1 CF. Patrick contributes the 9, and Maureen beats it with her 11. Carter Challenges by matching the 11, switching the preferred school to Yellow Shields, and attempting to steal the trick. Hudson doesn't have any Brown, so he plays a higher preferred gladiator, Yellow 15. Ann can't win, but she can play her Brown 8, negating her opponents' CF. Daniel, having no Brown, throws in his Pink Axes' 0, making sure his team has as many 0s as possible! Hudson's Yellow 15 wins the bout for the Red team.

Red wins the bout and 0 CF, but has a 0!

ON THE GO

We have included a "2-Go" tuck box so that you can bring a stripped down version of the game with you, in your pocket. The tuck box is designed to hold all the cards needed to play up to a 5-player game, as well as the Preferred School Card, Tracker and the five Crowd Support Cards (which can be used in place of the tokens).

And when you aren't using it on the go, you can use it to store unused cards, to keep your game box organized and speed up setup.

GLOSSARY

Bout - A bout is created by each player contributing one gladiator in a clockwise manner.

Challenge - Matching the rank of the last gladiator played. This immediately changes the preferred school to that of the new gladiator's. Players may challenge with the preferred school.

Crowd Favour - The value of certain gladiators due to their effect on the bloodthirsty crowd. The player with the highest total at the end of each round earns 1 Crowd Support.

Gladiator - Any card, human or beast, from any school.

Initiating School - The school of the first gladiator to enter each bout. Players must play from this school, if able, or they may Challenge. If neither, then they must play a gladiator from any other school.

Preferred School - Gladiators from this school will beat any gladiator from any other school. Set by the first gladiator played in the first bout of a round. Can only be changed with a Challenge.

Round - A round consists of 10 bouts.

Sluff - When a player does not have a gladiator from the initiating school, they may play a gladiator from any school, including the preferred school.

Support Token/Card - Earned by the player with the most Crowd Favour at the end of each round. The first player with 3 Crowd Support wins the game.

Troupe - Each player is dealt 10 gladiators, which make up their troupe (hand) for the round.

REMINDERS

Player Count	# of Suits	# of Cards/ Suit	Deck Size
1 - 3	3	10 (0, 4-12)	30
4	4	10 (0, 4-12)	40
5	5	10 (0, 4-12)	50
6	5	12 (0, 3-13)	60
7	5	14 (0, 2-14)	70
8	5	16 (0-15)	80

Create the deck, shuffle, and deal each player 10 cards.
First card played in first bout sets initiating **and** preferred school.
Each player, going clockwise, contributes one card.
Players must follow initiating school, or sluff, unless:
Challenge: matching rank immediately changes preferred school.

> The strongest gladiator from the **preferred** school wins.
> Or, if no gladiator from the preferred school entered the bout,
> The strongest gladiator from the **initiating** school wins.

Winner leads next bout with any gladiator. Sets initiating school.
Preferred school carries over between bouts (not rounds).
Highest Crowd Favour at end of round earns 1 Crowd Support.
Only preferred school's 0 is worth 5 CF, other 0s are worthless.
First player to earn 3 Crowd Support wins.

CREDITS

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INSIDEUP
G A M E S

No animals (or gladiators) were hurt in the making of this game