

# FIGHTBALL

REAL TIME CARD GAME

A Game of Futuristic Ball-Throwing, etc.  
Designed by James Ernest and Mike Selinker

**In the all-too-distant future, a bunch of kids play a dangerous sport called Fightball, and this is the card game we wrote about it.**

It's not the real future, but that crazy apocalyptic future we all know and love. In this particular version, gangs of street thugs have (again) fallen in love with modern professional sports. Unfortunately, these gangs have no real idea how these modern sports were played, because they have nothing but antique photographs and their vivid imaginations to work with.

If all future sports use multiple balls, surely so did the sports of the twentieth century, right? And even if they didn't, they should have. Those baseball bats must've been for hitting people, and so on. Thus was born Fightball, a weird version of Basketball with three balls, two teams, floating robot "refballs" and mighty rough gameplay.

Fightball is populated by the weirdest assortment of characters to ever put on a uniform. At least, until we make **Fightball II**.

**The Aztecs:** The Aztecs, led by their center and high priest Huitzilopochtli, are talented and serious players. They dress in traditional Aztec garb and their leader assures them that if they don't win every game, they will be sacrificed. This explains the serious part.

**The Cavaliers:** If there were a Renaissance reenactment society in the future, we think they'd dress like musketeers and play Fightball. The Cavaliers are an all-for-one team, fans of high chivalry and fancy swordplay. Plus they look smashing in their heraldic purple and gold.

**The Cruisers:** Along with rediscovering the sports of the twentieth century, some teams have also adopted the culture. The best example is the Cruisers, a 50s-style gang of boppers, rockers, and jocks. Watch out: the Cruisers like to cheat!

**The Dark:** Of all the Fightball teams, The Dark is the only one that is really as cool as they think. The Dark is a cadre of martial artists and ninjas, and the original inventors of Fightball, if "invent" is the right word. They play the game like it was meant to be played, at least by them.

**Team Sport:** Nothing says "cool" like a random assortment of used sports equipment. At least, so say the boys and girls of Team Sport. They're the only team with a goalie, a target man, and (most important) a boomeranger.

**The Texas Wildcats:** They aren't actually from Texas, but the Wildcats (who dress like cheerleaders) think a placename makes them sound more authentic. They're the perkier team on the court, and their center has rockets instead of feet. Hey, it's the future!

## Game Overview

**Fightball™** is a 2-player real-time card game that requires fast reflexes and expert strategy. Each deck represents one team of Fightball players, and each team has different tactics, looks, strengths, and weaknesses. Fightball teams are sold in pairs, so one box contains everything you need to play.

A game consists of four quarters. Each quarter has two parts: a *fast round* in which both players play cards simultaneously, and a *scoring round* in which the cards are checked to see which plays scored points. The team with the highest score after four quarters wins the game.

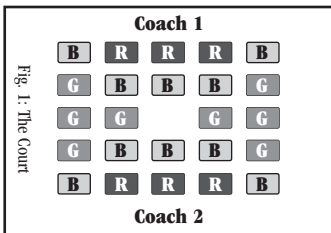
Though they are sold in pairs, *all* the Fightball decks are compatible with the others. Collect them all and be the envy of your gang!

(Note: from here on, the term "Player" will refer only to a Fightball *card*, while "Coach" refers to the *person* playing the cards. The Coach and all the Players make up the "Team.")

## Setting Up

Before the game, construct the playing surface using the *court* cards. Court cards have simple Red, Blue, and Green patterns, with text like "Red Zone: 2 Points." It takes 24 court cards to build a full court, so each Team contributes 12.

Arrange the court cards in the pattern below. Each Team shoots at an imaginary goal on the *opposite* side of the table. For example, Team 1 is shooting at the goal in front of Coach 2.



Leave plenty of space between the court cards. You will be building stacks of cards on each one, playing very quickly, and you don't want those stacks to mix.

Each Coach finds his *Buzz* card and sets it aside. Shuffle the remaining cards in your deck, and place the *Buzz* card at the bottom, where it will be dealt last.

Now you're ready to play!

## How to Play

If you've played **BRAWL**, another real-time game by James Ernest, you will recognize this basic style of play. Hold your deck facedown in one hand so that you can deal cards with the other. This is the fastest way to get cards from your deck into play.

With your dealing hand you can hold just *one* card at a time. You can play that card on any stack in the court (only some plays are legal, discarded later) or you may put it on top of your *discard pile*, which is a stack of cards in front of you.

You can always take the *top card* of your discard pile instead of taking the next card from your deck, but once you've drawn a card off your deck you *can't* put it back. You can play a card that's buried in your discard pile, but first you will have to play every card on top of it.

Both Coaches play cards at the same time, with no turns. Start simultaneously and go as fast as you like, until one Coach reaches the bottom of her deck and plays her *Buzz* card.

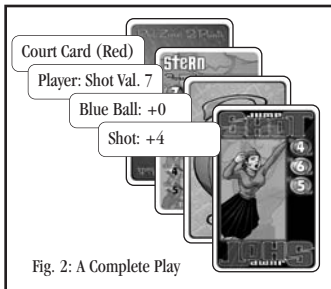
When either Coach plays a *Buzz*, the fast round stops. Now you will score each pile individually to see which plays were successful. Briefly, a *complete play* must contain a Player, a Ball, and a Shot, in that order, and the "Shot Value" of those cards must total 10 or higher.

Score every pile, reshuffle your decks, and play the next quarter. The Team with the most points after four quarters wins the game.

If you're new to the real-time card game, you should play slowly at first to get the hang of it. Focus on building successful plays and keep an eye on your opponent's most obvious mistakes. Don't try to track everything at once or play perfectly; you'll learn to do that with practice!

## A Complete Play

Every stack of cards tells a story, starting with the bottom and going to the top. To describe a shot on your opponent's goal, you must create a *complete play*, which is a stack that contains (at least) a Player, a Ball, and a Shot *in that order*. Figure 2 shows the simplest possible complete play.



To *succeed*, this play must have a total "Shot Value" of 10 or higher. This total includes the Shot Values of the Player and Shot cards, a bonus for the right Ball if applicable, and the Block Values (subtracted) of any opposing Players in the play.

The play in Figure 2 starts with a Red court card, so it is in the Red zone. (Most cards have different Shot Values in different zones.)

The Player card has a Shot Value of 7 in the Red zone, so the Shot Value begins at 7.

The Blue Ball makes the play complete, but adds no bonus. If the Ball were *Red*, it would add +2 to the Shot Value. A Ball that matches the zone color adds +2 to the Shot Value, while other Balls add no bonus.

The Shot card has a value of +4 in the Red zone, which brings the total Shot Value to 11. This is enough to make the play succeed. Because it's from the Red zone, this play is worth 2 points for the Shooter's Team.

Other cards can be played between the Shooter and the Shot, including Blockers, New Shooters, extra Balls, and Special Effects. All of these are described in detail below. Only those cards that fall *between the Shooter and the Shot* have any effect on the success of the play. Cards outside this area are illegal and may be penalized as fouls.

## Card Types

Every card has a different function in this game, and some cards work differently in different places. Here's a list of all the cards and where they go.

With the exception of *Player* cards, the ownership of cards *doesn't matter* once they are in play. Balls, Shots, and Special Effects have the same value in any stack, no matter who is shooting.

### Court Cards

The 24 court cards create the playing surface and describe the five zones into which all other cards will be played.

**Red and Blue Zones:** you can play Shooters in your *opponent's* Red and Blue zones, but not in your own. Successful plays in the Red and Blue zones are worth 2 points.

**Green Zone:** The Green zone is a shared zone in which both Teams can play Shooters. Plays in the Green zone are worth 3 points.

### Player Cards

Player cards are the most versatile cards in the game. Every card lists the Player's name, position, and six Shot and Block Values. The *order* of these numbers down the side of the card corresponds to the *location* of the zones on the court, with the Red Shot at the top and the Red Block at the bottom. Look at a Player card while looking at the court and you'll see what we mean.

**Shooters:** If a Player card is played directly on top of a court card, that Player is the *Shooter*. Every legal stack begins with a Shooter.

It's a *foul* to play a Shooter in a zone from which you can't legally shoot, namely the Red and Blue zones closest to you. If you do this, every card above the Shooter is ignored, but your opponent scores 2 points. (See False Start, under *Fouls*.)

**Blockers:** If a Player from the Team *opposite the Shooter* is anywhere between the Shooter and the Shot, that Player is a *Blocker*. Her Block Value will be subtracted from the Shot Value of the play. Multiple Blockers can block a play, but multiple copies of the *same character* will count only *once*. (Example: A Shooter is blocked by one copy of Player A and two copies of Player B. Players A and B both block, but Player B's Block Value counts only once.)

**New Shooters:** If another Player from the *same Team as the Shooter* appears in the middle of a play, that Player is a *New Shooter*. A New Shooter restarts the play and cancels all cards beneath it, including all Blockers, Balls, and Special Effects. *Exception:* If the Player card is the *same character* as the Shooter, the new Player is *ignored*.

Like any other card, a New Shooter must appear between the original Shooter and the Shot.

## Balls

Balls come in three colors, matching the zones. Balls are the second part of a complete play.

If the color of the Ball matches the color of the zone, the Ball adds +2 to the Shot Value of that play. There is no bonus (or penalty) for using a Ball of a different color.

Any Coach can play a Ball on any stack, as long as it appears between the Shooter and the Shot. If multiple Balls fall into the same play, only the most recent Ball (the one on top) counts.

## Shots

Shot cards are the third essential part of a complete play, and must be played *after* the Shooter and the Ball. A Shot is the last card in a legal stack.

Shot cards usually have different Shot Values in each zone. The border color of a Shot card tells you which zone it's *best* in, but you can play any Shot anywhere. You can even play a Shot on your opponent's Shooter, which you might do if your Shot will make the play fail.

Once the Shot is down on a complete play, no more cards can legally be played on that stack. If someone plays cards on top of a legal Shot, the card atop the Shot is a foul. Cards above *that* card are not further penalized. *No* cards played after the Shot have any effect on the play.

## Special Effects

Special Effects can appear inside complete plays, anywhere between the Shooter and the Shot. They have an effect *only if the play is complete*, no matter what they might imply. If a play is incomplete, you *ignore* all the Special Effects in the stack.

Special Effects can change almost any aspect of a complete play, such as Shot Value, the point value of the Shot, or even the Players involved in the play.

Special Effects describe exactly what they do. Like other cards, you read Special Effects in the order they were played, bottom to top. Some may even *cancel* previous Effects in the same stack.

*Example: Human Pyramid* makes a play worth five more points, and *Double Shot* doubles a play's point value. Depending on the order they were played, these two effects can result in a 2-point play being worth 9 points (*Double Shot* first, then *Human Pyramid*) or 14 points (*Human Pyramid* first, then *Double Shot*). In both cases, the play must succeed to actually score.

Effects that change the *zone* of a play can only move it to another zone that's legal for the Shooter, and there doesn't have to be a blank court card in that zone. Basically, they work like you'd think.

## Buzz

The *Buzz* card is always the last card in a Coach's deck. Playing the *Buzz* signifies the transition from the *fast round* to the *scoring round*.

When you toss the *Buzz* into the court, the quarter ends immediately. No other plays are legal, though if the opposing Coach was *playing* a Shot at the time of the buzzer, that Shot is legal.

If you feel you're winning the quarter, you will sometimes stop playing cards and just "burn" to your *Buzz* card. This is legal if you turn over each card in your deck one at a time, but you can't just grab the *Buzz* from the bottom and play it!

## Scoring

After either Coach plays a *Buzz*, stop playing and score the quarter. The order in which you score the stacks makes no difference to the outcome.

As you go, check for fouls (listed below). Then check each *complete* play (Shooter, Ball, and Shot) to see if its total Shot Value is 10 or more, and award points if it succeeds. (2 points for plays in Red and Blue zones, 3 points for plays in Green.)

*Hint:* You can put cards from the piles you score into "score piles" to track each Team's points. Set the other cards aside, but be sure not to put *anything* into either Team's *discard pile*. This is important because some Special Effects refer to the cards in a Team's discard pile, and those cards had to be discarded during the course of play.

After scoring, reshuffle your decks (remember to put the *Buzz* cards on the bottom) and play the next quarter. At the end of four quarters, the Team with the highest score wins.

## Fouls

A *foul* is any card played in an inappropriate location. Fouls usually happen due to careless play, but sometimes they are intentional, and some Special Effects can even create fouls during scoring! A foul card played by one Team will result in points for the other. Some foul plays are mentioned in the card list above, but a complete list follows.

**False Start:** Any card played *on a court card* that isn't a legal Shooter is a foul. Every card on top of *that* card is ignored, and the opposing Team scores points equal to the value of a play from that zone (3 points in the Green zone, 2 points in Red and Blue). This is true *even if that Team couldn't make a legal play in that zone*.

**After the Shot:** A card played on top of a complete play (*on* the Shot card) is a foul. Every card on top of *that* card is ignored. The opponent

scores 1 point for the first mis-played card only.

**Early Shot:** A Shot card played after a Shooter but *without a Ball* is a foul. That Shot card is ignored, but the play *can* continue from this point. The opposing Coach scores 1 point for the mis-played Shot card, even if the play is incomplete.

*Note:* Special Effects that steal points or change who gets them, such as *Interception*, *never* affect foul penalties.

## Scoring Examples

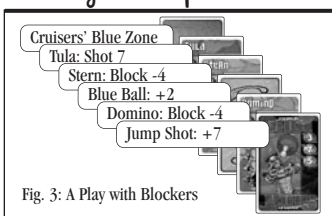


Fig. 3: A Play with Blockers

**Figure 3** shows a complete play with Blockers. This play is in the Cruisers' Blue zone.

Tula's Shot Value in the Blue zone is 7.

Subtract Stern's Blue Block Value of 4.

Add +2 for the Blue Ball.

Subtract Domino's Blue Block Value of 4.

When you add the *Jump Shot's* Blue Shot Value of +7, the play's total is 8, which is not enough to succeed. **This play, although complete, fails.**

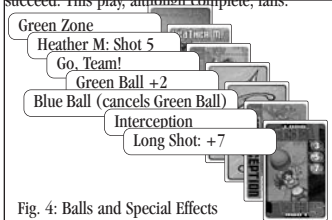


Fig. 4: Balls and Special Effects

**Figure 4** shows a complete play with multiple Balls and Special Effects. This play is in the Green zone.

Heather M.'s Green Shot Value is 5.

The Wildcats' *Go, Team!* will make the play worth 1 more or 1 less point if it succeeds. (This is up to the Wildcats to decide.)

Add +2 for the Green Ball, but...

...then forget that bonus, because Team Sport played a Blue Ball that replaces the Green one.

Team Sport's *Interception* says Team Sport will get the points if this play succeeds.

Add +7 for the Green Shot Value of Team Sport's *Long Shot*. This makes the total Shot Value 12. Team Sport would get 3 points for this play, but because of *Go, Team!* the Wildcats Coach subtracts 1 point. **Team Sport gets 2 points.**

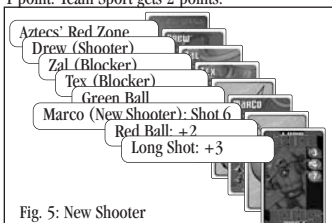


Fig. 5: New Shooter

**Figure 5** shows a complete play with a New Shooter. This play is in the Aztecs' Red zone.

Drew is the first Shooter, who is blocked by Zal and Tex. There is also a *Green Ball*.

The Cavaliers then play Marco, who (being on the same Team as the first Shooter) becomes the *New Shooter*. All cards below Marco are ignored, including the Ball. Marco's Red Shot Value is 6.

Add +2 for the Red Ball.

Add +3 for the *Long Shot's* Red Shot Value, for a total value of 11. **This play succeeds.**

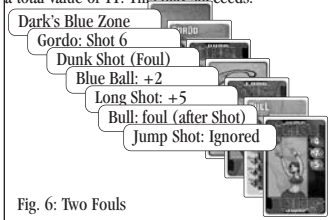


Fig. 6: Two Fouls

**Figure 6** shows a complete play with two fouls. This Wildcats' play is in The Dark's Blue zone.

The play has a Shooter (*Gordo*), a *Blue Ball*, and a Shot (*Long Shot*) for a total Shot Value of 13. This play is complete and will score 2 points.

By mistake, the Wildcats Coach played a *Dunk Shot* before the Ball. The Shot is ignored, but The Dark scores 1 foul point for the error.

Also, The Dark's Coach played *Bull* after the play was complete. The Wildcats' Coach scores one foul point for this. Cards played on top of *Bull* are ignored, so the Wildcats' last card, the *Jump Shot*, does nothing. *Note that the Early Shot penalty for the Wildcats' Dunk Shot would have hurt the Wildcats even if the play wasn't complete.*

## Basic Strategy

It's hard to incorporate a strategy guide into the last few paragraphs of a rulebook. For serious strategy hints, you should check out the Fightball Web site, at [www.fightball.com](http://www.fightball.com).

Basically, Fightball is a game of percentages. Because you don't have time to analyze every card and every play, you must make plays based on best guesses. Playing something, even when you're not sure, is usually better than playing nothing!

It's important to know the strengths and weaknesses of your Team, as well as your opponent's. Every Team has unique tricks that are easy to foil, but only if you know what they are!

**Fightball™** was designed by James Ernest and Mike Selinker, illustrated by Eduardo Müller. **Fightball** is © and ™ 2002 Cheapass Games and James Ernest Games, Seattle WA, all rights reserved. Any similarities herein to existing players or teams is purely coincidental. Playtesters included Paul Barclay, Brandon Bozzi, Josh Fischer, Anthony Gallela, Richard Garfield, Mark Gottlieb, Robert Gutschera, Rob Heinsoo, Jessica Kristine, Elizabeth Marshall, Rei Nakazawa, Stan!, Teeuwynn Woodruff, and the Cheapass Games Guinea Pigs. Design and coloring by James Ernest. Visit [www.fightball.com](http://www.fightball.com)! Basketball original design by Dr. James Naismith. Peace. We out.