

18/12 - Reindeer Rivals

by Hans van Halteren



18 December 1995. Santa Claus is sitting at his desk, getting a little rest before the most hectic period of the year starts, when he is disturbed by a knock at the door. The head elf comes in and states that, well, the elves being the last remnants of the little people was a bit of a fib, actually they were extraterrestrial shipwrecks and, what do you know, now there's a ship from their home planet and they're leaving, no time for this year's work, they don't want to wait another two centuries, so it's been nice working with you and we have to get together again some time, goodbye. Santa, not being used to speed except when it comes to rooftops and chimneys, does not get the full picture until the elves are well gone. Then he panics.

Game Concept

Your transport firm is approached by Santa Claus as a candidate for a major yearly contract. On Christmas Eve he personally delivers to all households, but he needs others to prepare local depots from which to take the gifts. Right now, these gifts are in the central depot for the country and you must get them to the individual city depots. You will rent reindeer sleighs to transport them. This year you will be competing with other candidate contractors. The one who does the best job will get the contract.

Game Components

The rules (you're looking at them)

A playing board representing the USA (included)

A rectangular distance ruler (included)

A six-sided die (not included)

Small tokens in as many colours as there are players (not included)

Play money in denominations up to \$100 (not included).

Rules of the Game

Number of players. The game is suitable for 2-5 players. All players start the game with \$ 300.

Gifts. There is an infinite supply of gift packets in the central depot, marked with a D on the map. A gift packet taken out of the central depot by you (at the price of \$ 20) cannot be taken away by any other player. Each player has his own colour of gift packet to keep track of this. Each city on the map is marked with the maximum number of gift packets that may end up there. For each gift pack you deliver to a city you receive \$ 100.

It is not possible to drop further gift packets in a city that is already fully supplied. The game ends when all cities have been fully supplied.

It is allowed to move gift packets from the map back into the central depot. For each gift packet brought back you receive \$ 20.

Transport. Gifts can only be moved by use of sleighs. There are two kinds of sleighs:

- A big sleigh (rent: \$ 50 per turn) can transport up to five packets at a time. The distance it can move laden in a turn is indicated by the long side of the distance ruler. A big sleigh cannot end its move in a city.
- A little sleigh (rent: \$ 10 per turn) can move one packet at a time. The distance it can move laden in a turn is indicated by the short side of the distance ruler.

An unladen sleigh moves at infinite speed, so there is no need to count the distance to the loading point or from the unloading point back to Santa's headquarters.

Each turn you cannot spend more than \$50 on sleighs. You are allowed to spend less than \$50 on transport. You can even spend nothing and pass. For each sleigh rented, you select a stack of gift packets on the map (or get a new stack at the central depot) and move it to any new land position on the map within reach of the sleigh. You need not move the whole stack nor use the full capacity of the sleigh. You need not move the sleigh's maximum distance, but any leftover distance is lost as each sleigh may only make one move.

Rounds and Turns. The game is played in rounds. Each round each player gets one turn. The order in which the players get their turn is determined randomly anew every round. First a die roll determines the first player: one player rolls a die and counts to the left. The player in the position indicated by the die starts the round. If the die roll is higher than the number of players, roll again. After the starting player is determined, roll the die again. If the roll is even play passes round the table to the left; if the roll is odd it passes to the right.

If the last city becomes fully supplied, the remaining players in the round are allowed to use their turn. At the end of this round the game ends.

How to Win. The player with the most money at the end of the game wins.

Solitaire Variant

Try to supply all cities for the highest possible profit.

18/12 - Reindeer Rivals was specially created by Hans van Halteren for Han Heidema's Christmas Card #6 (1995).