

Sample Dogfight

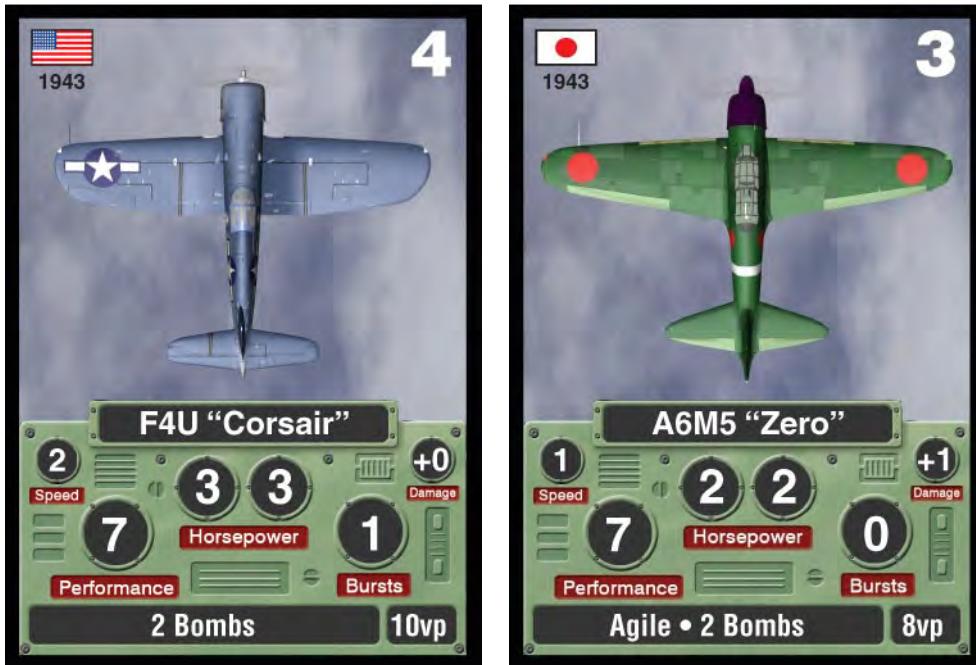
For those of you who have never played Down In Flames before – Welcome! For those of you who have played before, welcome back, and prepare for some huge improvements to the classic game!

Introduction

Down In Flames is a card game that simulates aerial combat on a very tactical level. This means you get to play through the combat maneuver by maneuver. The rules are easy to learn, but the game system offers many player decisions at every step. This is a game focused on putting you in the pilot's seat. The action is fast and furious and most dogfights can be resolved in about 15 minutes.

Set-Up

This sample dogfight will be between a US Marine F4U Corsair and an Imperial Japanese A6M5 Zero in the skies over the Pacific Ocean in 1943.



Let's start with a short pre-flight briefing to introduce you to the aircraft ratings...

Airframe – The large white number in the top-right corner of the card. When the aircraft suffers this many hits, it gets flipped to its damaged side and has reduced stats. When the plane suffers the hits shown on its damaged side, it's shot down.

The Corsair can take 1 more point of damage than the Zero.

Speed – The higher your Speed rating is, the better it is for you. A Speed advantage over your opponent gives you a better chance to maneuver against him.

The Corsair a 1 point Speed advantage over the Zero.

Performance – This is the maximum number of cards you can hold in your hand.

Horsepower – You get to draw cards at the start and end of your turn. However, you cannot draw a card if you would then hold more than your Performance.

The Corsair has better Horsepower ratings than the Zero.

Bursts – The number of weapon Bursts you can fire each turn. You fire bursts to inflict hits on the opponent.

Damage – A modifier to the number of hits each of your attack cards inflicts.

The Corsair has more Bursts than the Zero, but when the Zero hits, it scores more damage.

Agile – Agile is a special ability that allows an aircraft to improve its position in the dogfight. This will be demonstrated later.

The Zero is Agile, the Corsair is not.

Bombs – Not used in dogfight games. Bombs are used in campaign games to destroy enemy land and naval targets.

VP (Victory Points) – The point value of the aircraft. These points are used when selecting aircraft for a battle, and for scoring victory points at the end of the battle.

The Corsair is worth 2 more points than the Zero. In a normal game, we would give the Zero a superior pilot worth 2 points to even the battle.

Positioning

Our aircraft begin the game in a Neutral position relative to each other. This means that neither of us has a good position. To show this, we place our aircraft cards nose-to-nose.



That covers the aircraft, now let's talk about Altitude.

Altitude

Down In Flames (DIF) uses 5 altitude levels. From the ground up, they are: Very Low, Low, medium, High, and Very High.

Both players secretly select their starting altitude. Any altitude from Very Low up to Medium can be selected.

Both players reveal their altitude counters:

Corsair - **Medium
(-0/-0)**

Zero - **Medium
(-0/-0)**

Not a big surprise. This gives both aircraft flexibility to climb and dive as the dogfight unfolds.

Wingmen

The rule section that isn't here anymore.

At this point, the people who played the old game are asking, "What about wingmen?"

Let me say this, I am sorry that Wingmen were ever included in the old game. They were without a doubt, the most exception-filled rule mechanic I have ever had appear in a final game design - bar none. If you look through the old game rules, you'll see that wingmen created a rule exception just about every time they were mentioned.

Examples...

The rules would explain how Position worked – except wingmen never held a position.

The rules explained how Bursts limited the attack cards you could play during your turn – except wingmen didn't have a burst limit.

The rules explained how action cards could be used to change altitude – except they didn't work that way for wingmen.

The rules explained how positioning gave you extra Bursts – except for wingman – or even when shooting at a wingman.

The rules explained how altitude affected aircraft ratings – except if you were a wingman, at which point none of that applied and you needed a whole new rule section.

I'll stop at that, but there's more. Really.

So why were wingmen ever included, and how could they so easily be ripped out of the game?

The whole idea behind wingmen was to give players a couple new cards at the start of their turn. That way, they wouldn't be stuck with the cards they had left over from their last turn. That's it. How it developed into the overblown rules monster that it did is beyond me.

So how did such an integral part of the game, covering pages of rules, get replaced? Easy, aircraft now have 2 Horsepower ratings. You get to draw cards at the start, and end, of your turn. Ta-da! If only I had thought of this 15 years ago.

This change also has a secondary cool effect. In the old game, aircraft were squeezed into a Horsepower scale of 1 to 3. Now, aircraft can have: 1/0, 1/1, 2/1, 2/2, 3/2, and 3/3. This doubles the number of available Horsepower ratings and adds a new level of distinctness to the aircraft.

Back to the dogfight...

Action Cards

The Action card deck sits in the middle of the table for all players to draw cards from. Each player is now dealt a number of action cards equal to his aircraft's Performance rating. In this case, both players are dealt 7 cards.

I don't know which cards the opposing player was dealt for his Zero, but I was dealt:



Every Action card has a title along its left border. When you play a card, you announce its title so everyone knows what's going on. This also instills fear in your opponents when you play powerful cards.

Every action card has a “Maneuvering” rating from 0 to 4 in its top left corner. This is used to adjust your aircraft’s position so you can better shoot down your opponents, and stop them from shooting you down.

Most action cards have an “action” section toward the bottom. This text describes what the card will do for you when played during your turn.

Most action cards have a “React To” section at the bottom. The card can be played to cancel any one of the cards listed in this section.

For example: If the opponent plays an In My Sights card, you could cancel it by playing any card that lists In My Sights in the React To section.

The players randomly determine who goes first – and the Corsair does.

That’s it for set-up. Once you’ve done it a few times, all this can be done in about 2 minutes.

Duration

All dogfights have a maximum duration of 6 rounds. This means each player will get to have 6 turns before the game ends. Of course, if all the planes for one side are shot down before then, the game ends sooner.

Sequence of Play

A player performs the following steps during his turn:

- Draw Cards
- Adjust Altitude
- Speed Comparison
- Play Cards
- Discard Cards
- Draw Cards

1st Turn – Corsair

I now go through the steps in the Sequence of Play.

I can’t draw cards because I am already holding cards equal to my performance.

I can now choose to adjust my altitude. I can stay at Medium, dive one level to Low, or climb one level to High. Since a plane can only play cards against aircraft at its same altitude, I’ll stay at Medium.

I will be playing cards against the Zero, so I now compare my Corsair’s Speed to the Zero’s Speed. I have a 2, and he has a 1. This gives me a 1 point advantage which means I get a free Maneuvering 1 attempt to play against him. This is not a card from my hand.

I say, “I have a 1 point Speed Advantage, so I’m attempting to Maneuver on you by 1.”

He replies, “Tight Turn,” and plays a Tight Turn card.



This is a valid card play because Tight Turn lists “Maneuvering” as one of the cards it will cancel in its React To section.

I then search my cards for a card that lists Tight Turn in the React To section.

I declare, “Yo-Yo”, and play a Yo-Yo card.



He decides not to play a card, and says, “Go ahead and maneuver on me.”

All the cards played are discarded, and he rotates his aircraft so its side is facing my nose.



I am now “Advantaged” on him, and he is now “Disadvantaged” to me. This means I get 1 extra Burst to fire at him, and he cannot fire at me.

I now enter the Play Cards step of my turn.

Remember how every action card also has the ability to be used as a Maneuvering card? I now play my Scissors card and use its Maneuvering 1 ability, and declare, “Maneuvering for 1.”

The fact that the card is a Scissors card is unimportant. Since I am using its Maneuvering ability, it is declared, and treated, as a Maneuvering card.



Design Note: In the old game there were dedicated Maneuvering cards. This lead to major problems because maneuvering is vital to the game, and drawing Maneuvering cards was left to chance. In the new game, players have many more maneuvering options and this greatly improves the flow of game play.

He plays a Tight Turn to cancel my Maneuvering card, and declares “Tight Turn.”



I declare, “Tight Turn” in response and play my Tight Turn.

He responds by playing a Scissors Of his own.

I could respond with a couple different cards, but choose not to. I need to start damaging him, and I don't want to use up all my cards.

We discard all the cards, and both aircraft remain positioned as they were.

I have 2 Bursts, 1 for my Corsair's inherent Burst rating, and 1 for being Advantaged. I have an In My Sights 1 Burst for 1 Hit and an In My Sights 2 Bursts for 3 Hits. Right now, I don't have enough Bursts to fire both, so I'll play the In My Sights 2 Bursts for 3 Hits.



It only takes 3 hits to flip his plane to its damaged side, so this is a serious attack against him.

He plays an Ace Pilot. Ace Pilot cards are rare in the deck and very hard to cancel. Only another Ace Pilot will cancel an Ace Pilot.



I do not react and I discard my In My Sights card.

At this point, I could attempt to maneuver on him again with my In My Sights card, but I'm going to save it for later.

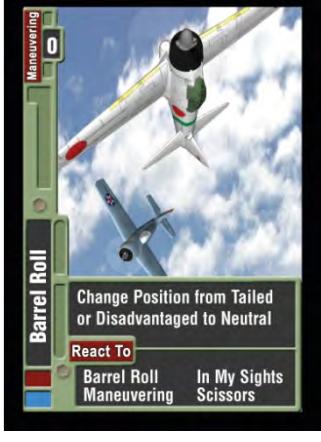
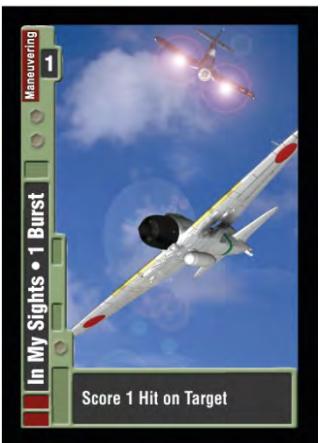
This ends the Play Cards step of my turn.

I can now choose to discard any of my cards. Since I only hold 3 and my right-most Horsepower will allow me to draw 3, I will still not be in excess of my 7 performance, so there is no reason to discard.

I then get to draw 3 cards for my horsepower. I draw:



I now hold in my hand:



This ends my first turn. At this point, things are looking good. I have a handful of cards and I'm Advantaged on him.

1st Turn – Zero

My opponent now conducts his first turn. Here's a reminder of the Sequence of Play:

- Draw Cards
- Adjust Altitude
- Speed Comparison
- Play Cards
- Discard Cards
- Draw Cards

Since he is only holding 3 cards, he gets to draw 2 (his left-most Horsepower number). He now holds 5 cards.

He then attempts to throw me off my Advantaged position by climbing during his Adjust Altitude step. He declares he is climbing to High altitude, swaps his Medium counter for a High counter, and discards 1 card. Any time you climb a level you must discard 1 card. This represents the loss of speed an aircraft experiences when climbing.



Note the “-1/-0” on the counter. This means aircraft at High altitude draw 1 less card at the start of their turn.

I now have a tough choice. I can stay at Medium and lose my position, or I can follow him. If I follow him, I'll have to discard 1 card for climbing, and 1 more for only being Advantaged. If I were Tailing him (my nose to his tail), I wouldn't have to discard the extra card.

I choose to follow him to High and maintain my position. I swap my Medium counter for a High, and discard a Vertical Roll and Barrel Roll.

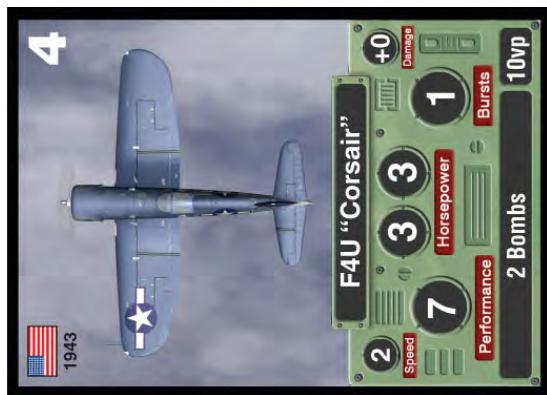
He then compares Speeds. Since my plane is faster, nothing happens.

He then starts playing cards by playing an In My Sights card and declares “Scissors.” How can he do this? Remember his “Agile” special ability? If a plane is Agile and Disadvantaged, it can play 1 card during its turn as if it were a Scissors to attempt to change its position from Disadvantaged to Advantaged.

I react by playing a Scissors.

He reacts with a Yo-Yo.

I don't have any cards that will react to a Yo-Yo. The cards are discarded and we shift the planes so he is now Advantaged on me.



Not good!

He now has 1 Burst (0 for his aircraft, and 1 for being Advantaged). He plays a Tight Turn on himself and declares that it will give him +1 hit with his next attack this turn. Since he is playing it on himself, I cannot react to it.



He then plays his last card, an In My Sights 1 Burst for 1 Hit. However, the card is more dangerous than it seems. It will do 1 hit, plus 1 hit for his Zero's Damage bonus, plus 1 more for the bonus gained from the Tight Turn. He will actually inflict 3 hits with his 1 Burst.

I react by playing a Barrel Roll.

He has no cards left and cannot react.

He does not discard.

He draws 2 cards.

This ends his first turn. I need to get something going soon, or he's going to cut through my cards and start inflicting damage.