

# BEN HVRT

PDF Edition • A Cheapass Game for 4-8 players

*Welcome to Ancient Rome, a swinging town with a little something for everyone. You're a hot-blooded aristocrat with just enough inbreeding to make you a little defensive. And you've got a hundred Ducats burning a hot, round hole in your pocket. You decide that gambling is your thing. Gambling is fun. Gambling is easy. And it's also woefully unregulated. But it's not enough for you just to bet on the chariot races. No, you insist on having a piece of the action. So you buy your own chariot, outfit it with deadly weapons, and find the most ruthless chariot jockey west of the Steppes. You're convinced that the more money you spend, the more you will win. Which is, to a certain extent, true. Even if most of what you win was yours to begin with. But you don't have to blow your wad on the first race. Sometimes it pays to hold back, save your money, and try to win the next one instead. After all, there's a chariot race every night. And your Ducats just keep getting hotter.*

## This Game Comes With:

3 Board Sections, 80 Cards (arranged for pre-perforated business card sheets), and this Rule book. See page 4 for a snapshot of the complete board.

## You Will Also Need:

A distinctive 6-sided Die to represent each chariot, and a matching Lap Marker. (This marker can be anything; it just needs to match the chariot.) You also need a hundred Ducats for each player (pennies or Cheapass Money will work fine), and at least one more 6-sided Die for movement.

## The Game in Brief:

**Ben Hvrt** is a series of chariot races. The object of the game is to finish the series with the most money, which may or may not mean winning the last race. Before the game begins, players should agree on the number and length of the races they will run. There are some suggested series of races on page 4. Feel free to double any of these series, too.

Figure to spend about 10 minutes for each lap you plan to play, once everyone is familiar with the rules. If you're playing a longer series of races, you may want to break it up over two sessions.

Each race consists of two parts. First, there is an **Auction**, in which players buy cards to improve their hands, and simultaneously sweeten the pot for the Race. Then there is the **Race**, in which players run their chariots around the track and use their cards to try to gain the advantage.

Races can be from 1-6 laps, as agreed by the players before the series begins. One-lap races can sometimes be as short as two turns, so be prepared to hit the ground running!

## Before the First Race Only:

If this is the first race of the series, everyone should start with exactly 100 Ducats. Roll dice to determine who will be the first Dealer. That player shuffles the deck and deals a starting hand of 2 cards to each player.

Set the deck aside and make space for a discard pile beside it. After each race, shuffle the discards back into the deck. If the deck ever runs out of cards during a race, it is not replaced until the end of the race. In this case, players simply can't draw cards.

## Before Every Race:

Everyone must ante Two Ducats (2D) for each lap in the race. For example, if this is a 2-lap race, everyone antes 4 Ducats. This money goes into the pot, which is the open area in the middle of the racetrack. (You can also use a bowl.)

**Free Cards:** Every player is dealt 1/2 card for every lap in the race, rounding up, to add to their existing hand. For example, if this is a 3- or 4-lap race, everyone gets 2 cards for their hand.

**Auction Cards:** Next, the Dealer gives each player a stack of Auction cards, 1 card for each lap in the race. These cards go face down on the table, not into the players' hands. Don't look at these cards until you auction them off.

## The Auction:

Now the Auction begins. Players will try to buy cards to improve their hands, for the lowest reasonable price.

Starting with the Dealer, players will auction one card at a time. The player auctioning the card is called the "Auctioneer."

First, the Auctioneer reveals his card to all players. If he wishes, he can pay the "Q/S" (Quick Sale) price on that card, and keep it. That money goes into the pot. Otherwise, the card goes to Auction.

Starting with the Auctioneer, and proceeding to the left, players may either bid or pass on this card. To bid in the first round, a player must put one Ducat into the pot. If a player passes, he drops permanently out of this Auction.

After each round of bidding, the size of the required bid goes up by one. In other words, to stay in for the second round costs 2



Cheapass Games Historical Trivium:  
The idea for Ben Hvrt was suggested  
by James Ernest's Mother-in-Law.

Ducats, 3 for the next round, and so on. The last player who bids gets to keep the card.

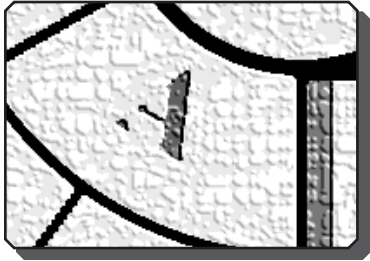
This style of bidding is particularly vicious, since only the last bidder will actually get the card, even though other players may have put money into the pot. There, you have been warned.

After the first card is sold, the player to the Auctioneer's left auctions a card, and so on. Proceed until all the Auction cards are gone.

If a card goes completely around the table with no one bidding on it (unlikely, but possible), that card goes straight into the discard pile.

After the Auction is over, players have the chance to trade and sell their cards.

Then, let the race begin!



### The Chariot Race:

Your 6-sided die is your chariot. To begin the race, players put their chariots on the lettered squares behind the Finish Line, starting with the player to the Dealer's left, and proceeding around the table.

Players place their Lap counters on the "I" circle, signifying that they are on lap 1.

The number on top of each chariot die is called its "Speed." Speed is a carryover from the chariot's previous move. For a fair start, chariots in the front rank (spaces A, B, C, and D) begin with a Speed of 1, and chariots in the second rank begin with a Speed of 2.

If you want to race more than eight chariots, you can start the 3rd rank with a speed of 3, and so on.

### Moving the Chariots:

On each turn, the player whose chariot is in the lead moves first, followed by the player in second place, and so on. Once everyone has moved their chariot, the turn is over.

If two chariots are next to each other, the "leader" is the one on the square with the most advanced leading edge. If the front edges of both squares are dead even, then the chariot closest to the center lane is the leader. For an example of how these movement rules work, take a look at the order of the eight starting letters. This is the order in which these chariots will start the race.

To move a chariot, roll the movement die. Add the number on the die to the Speed of your chariot, and move that total amount. You can move any direction you like, except directly backwards, from one square to any other square which shares at least part of an edge with it.

You can't move through another chariot, and you can't stop on the same square as another chariot.

You don't have to take your full move if you don't want to.

After you have moved your chariot, your Speed changes to the number you rolled (or the modified roll, if cards were played). Turn your chariot die now to reflect its new Speed.

Even if cards affected your roll, your final Speed can't ever be more than 6 or less than 1.

An example: A chariot with a Speed of 3 rolls a 5. That chariot

will move 8 spaces this turn, and then its Speed will change to 5. Move the chariot die 8 spaces, then turn it so that "5" shows on top.

Each time a chariot crosses the Finish line, advance that player's Lap counter to the next Lap circle. If you're running a 1-lap race, you really don't need the Lap counters. If you're running a longer race, remember that the winner is the first person to *finish* that lap (for example, a 3-lap race is won as soon as a player moves his counter from III to IV).

Players who have finished the race disappear from the track, and can't play any more cards or otherwise participate in the race. Keep running the chariots until there is a first-, second-, and third-place winner. Places after this don't matter unless there is a penalty for coming in last, as in the Caligula Series (Page 4).

### Playing your Cards:

Obviously, without some way to improve your odds, this race would be almost entirely luck. As it stands, it's still mostly luck. But at least you can fool yourself into thinking otherwise.

There are 80 cards in the Ben Hvt deck. All of these cards will tell you exactly when and how you can play them. Here are some terms you will need to know:

**Events:** Events are unusual occurrences which happen once and are discarded.

**Move Cards:** These cards affect a player's move. They actually change the value of the movement roll, as if the new number were now showing on the die. These cards take effect in the order they are played, so if the roll begins at 4, and an "Add 1" is played, followed by a "Move 2", the roll is changed to 5, and then back to 2. The resulting roll is a 2. Playing those cards in the opposite order would result in a roll of 3. Like Events, Move cards are single-use cards.

**Improvements:** You play these cards only during the Auction (i.e., before the race begins). They remain on the table, and improve the quality of your chariot.

**Drivers:** These are like Improvements, but you can only have one Driver at a time. If you play a second Driver, discard your old one. (A chariot without a Driver card is assumed to have an ordinary driver.) "Retiring" a Driver means discarding him.

The "**Quick Sale**" (Q/S) price of a card is the amount you can pay to keep it from going to Auction (see the Auction section).

The "**Maintenance Cost**" is an amount you must pay to keep a Driver or Improvement at the beginning of a race. This cost is often affected by the length of the race. If you do not pay this cost when the race begins, discard the card.

"**You Are Passing Another Chariot**" means a chariot is on an adjacent square, but not directly in front or behind you, while *you are moving*. The passing chariot must be ahead of, or at least tied with, the chariot being passed.

"**Choose to Roll an (X)"/"Next Roll is (X)"** means the player casts an imaginary movement die covered with X's. It still counts as rolling a movement die, and can still be affected by Move cards.

### After the Race:

After the race ends, divide the pot into six piles. The winner gets three shares of the pot, the second-place finisher gets two shares, and third place gets one. If there are leftovers, they are distributed as evenly as possible, with preference for the winner's piles.

For example, if the pot contains 70 Ducats, each share is 11 or 12. The winner gets 36, second place gets 23, and third gets 11.

You keep all your unplayed cards from race to race, as well as your Drivers and Improvements.

After dividing the pot, shuffle the discard pile back into the deck, and start the next Auction. The winner of this race becomes the Dealer for the next Auction.



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## Notes:

This game is recommended for 4-8 players, but if you want to play with only 2 or 3 players, try using 2 chariots each. Figure all the numbers as if each chariot was one player; this means that players' hands will be twice as large as normal, players must ante once for each chariot, etc. Drivers and Improvements get assigned to individual chariots, not to individual players.

Try to remember what cards were bought at Auction. Also, you can use the cards you hold as a powerful threat, without ever having to play them: "I've got the Carpenter Ants, don't mess with me."

You can even pay people to play cards. If you think you can win the race, don't be afraid to throw your money around: "Hey, Joe. I think Grace needs that Orngutan."

Please, don't play for real money. It's far too easy to cheat, and unless everyone understands the rules in exactly the same way, you will get into major arguments when there's live cash at stake. If you want a good sense of gambling without the actual money, agree to keep score over a series of games. (There, you have been warned.)

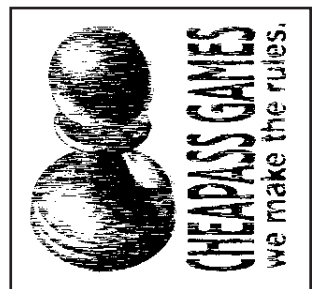
Oh, and because of all the card interactions it's almost certain that you'll have questions about some combinations of cards we've never thought of. We try hard to make sure this doesn't happen, but it still does. Be satisfied with your own solutions and please don't bug us for the "right" answer. If it's not in these rules, there isn't one.

## History:

Ben Hvrt was created in 1996 as part of Cheapass Games' first catalog of games. Other games in the first year included Kill Doctor Lucky (still our #1 board game), as well as Bleeding Sherwood, Before I Kill You, Mister Bond, Get Out, and Huzzah!, all of which are now out of print.

Released in small quantities in December of that year, Ben Hvrt was an immediate cult hit. When publishers say "cult hit," they mean that a few people liked it a lot, but it wasn't a great seller overall. Owing to the game's limited but fanatical popularity, it was a very tough decision to take it out of print in 2001.

This edition of Ben Hvrt is essentially identical to the original game in cards, rules, and board design. Since designing Ben Hvrt, James Ernest has designed more than 50 published games, and has won an armload of Origins Awards for game design and graphic design. He continues to publish games through Cheapass Games as well as other companies who are brilliant enough to recognize his obvious genius.



### About Cheapass Games:

We here at Cheapass Games are aware of two basic facts about games: they cost too much, and they are, at some level, all the same.

If you ignore the clever shapes they come in, the cheap little plastic pawns are an interchangeable part of most of the board games in your house. So are the dice, the money, the counters, and just about every clever spare part. These parts can account for as much as 75% of a game's production cost, and that cost gets handed to you.

If you had your choice, you'd probably invest a little money in one good set of gaming paraphernalia instead of twenty crappy ones, and then just buy the new part of every "new" game. Yet most game companies insist on selling you the whole package every time; it's a little like bundling a VCR with every videotape.

Cheapass Games come packaged with the bare essentials: boards, cards, and rulebooks. If you need anything else, we'll tell you. And it's probably something that you can scrounge from a game you already have, or buy at a hobby store for less than we'd have to charge you for it.

And, once you've got a collection of pawns, dice, counters, and money, you can use the same ones for every Cheapass game. We've standardized our designs so your gaming toolbox will last.

To learn more about Cheapass Games, visit our double-secret website at [www.cheapass.com](http://www.cheapass.com).

### BEN HVRT ©1996, 2003 Cheapass Games

Graphics, Layout, and Game Design: **James Ernest**. Assistant Design: **Jeff Vogel, Dave Howell, Paul Peterson, Kathy Ice, many well-fed guinea pigs**. Thanks to: **Glenn Elliott and Elizabeth Monahan**



*Some possible games: These numbers represent the number of laps in each race in the series.*

<b>Basic Race:</b> 1,2,4	<b>Jupiter Series:</b> 1,2,4,6	<b>Julius:</b> 2,3,4,5	<b>Augustus:</b> 2,2,2,6	<b>Mercury Series:</b> 1,2,3,4,1,2,3,4
<b>Hercules:</b> 1,2,3,4,5,6	<b>Saturn Series:</b> 2,2,4,2,2,6	<b>Rose Derby:</b> 4,3,2,1,6	<b>Iris Derby:</b> 3,2,1,4,6	<b>Caligula Series</b> X,X,X,X,X*

*\*Caligula Series: Each race is 1-6 laps, rolled before each Auction. The last-place finisher in each race loses all his cards.*