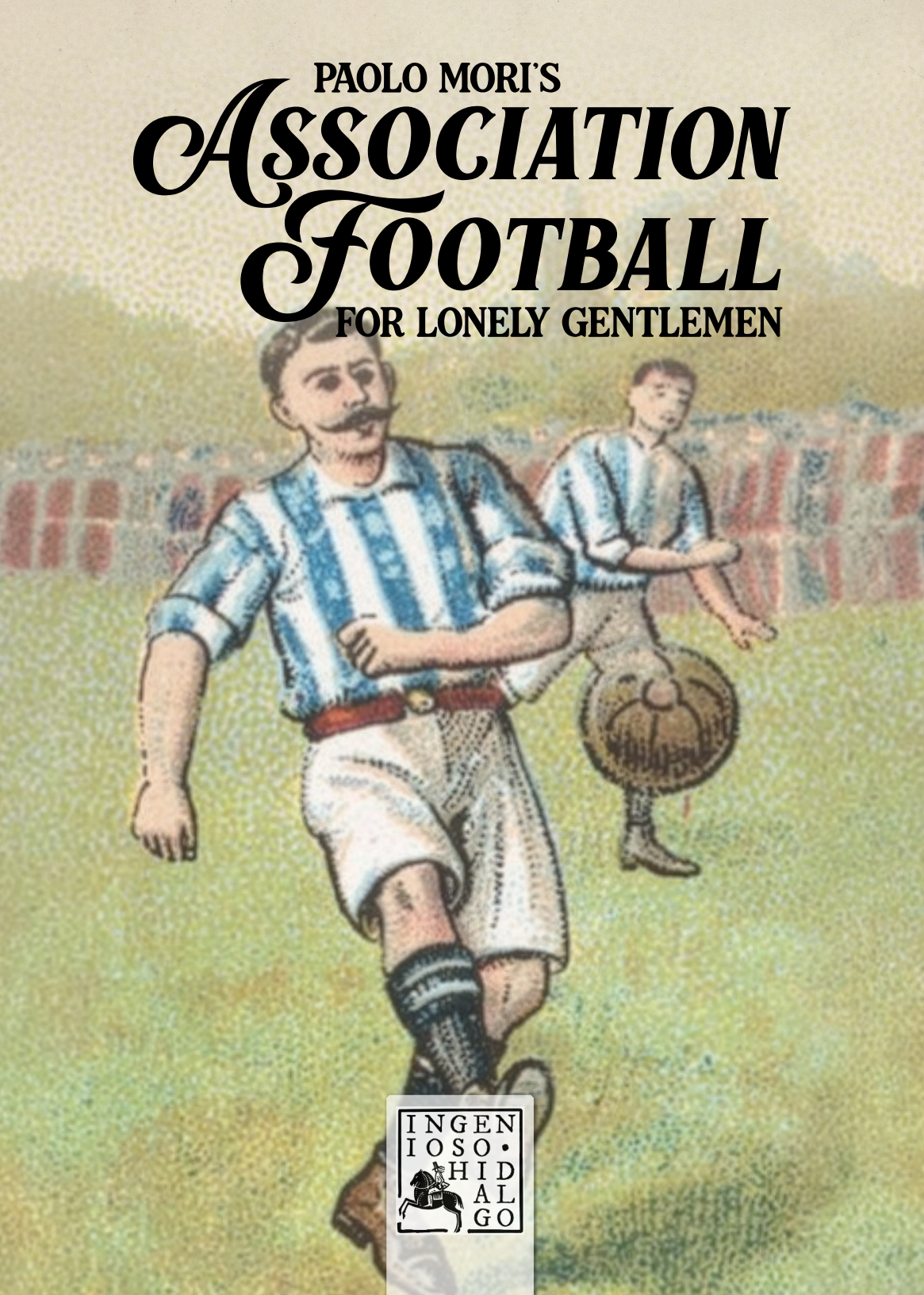
PAOLO MORI'S

ASSOCIATION FOOTBALL

FOR LONELY GENTLEMEN



INGENIOSO HIDALGO

"Un giocatore lo vedi dal coraggio,
dall'altruismo, dalla fantasia."

Francesco De Gregori

Designer's notes

What you hold in your hands is a game with a long history behind it... perhaps too long. It began as a pastime during the 2020 pandemic, and although it defied all the conventions of the modern games market, I always stubbornly believed that sooner or later I'd like to see it published... so much so that I had to set up my own publishing label to do it myself.

It is undoubtedly a strange game, in which the focus is not so much on the managerial aspect of running the club, but rather on its ability to generate stories. Yes, there will be choices to make, but there will also be plenty of moments when you'll feel at the mercy of events, and unspeakable defeats that you'll witness from the sidelines without being able to do absolutely anything about them. And you know what? That's exactly how I wanted it to be. When you lose control, a game's narrative potential increases.

The feel is inevitably old-school – and the game's aesthetics certainly don't hide that! – and it gives a nod to the old sports games of the 1970s, where the appeal lay in recreating entire leagues, regardless of who won or lost the matches.

As if that weren't enough, it's also a rather 'unpolished' game. Although I spent far too much time on it, you'll likely find yourself wondering how a particular skill works, or how to handle a specific situation. The answer is: do as you please. No one – hopefully – is watching you play. It's just you, your players and the little-but-great story you're about to tell.

GAME OVERVIEW

In Association Football for Lonely Gentlemen, you take on the role of Secretary - Manager of a fictional British football club in the early 20th century.

You will guide the club through a series of seasons, trying to win promotion to the First Division and to lead it to the League title and the National Cup.

Each season you will face new teams. Every League match is decided by drawing dice from a bag, rolling them and making use of your Footballers' Skills. Between matches you will be able to sign new Professionals and face unexpected challenges and opportunities.

You will record your results and achievements in your League Journal, which at the end of the game will tell the story of the highs and lows of your career.

GAME COMPONENTS

- 1 Team Board
- 1 Midweek Events table
- 1 Teams Generator leaflet
- 33 Professional cards
- 5 green Team dice
- 5 red Opponent dice
- 1 white Home die
- 1 black Event die
- 1 cloth bag
- 24 Skill tokens
- 6 Indisposed tokens
- 2 Defence markers
- 2 Score markers
- 1 Support marker
- 1 Balance marker
- 1 Midweek Events marker
- 5 League Journals
- 1 pencil
- This rulebook

GAME ELEMENTS AND TERMS

The Team Board

The Team Board is used to keep track of your club's performance during each match and throughout the season.

The left area of the board is used to manage your team. It contains:

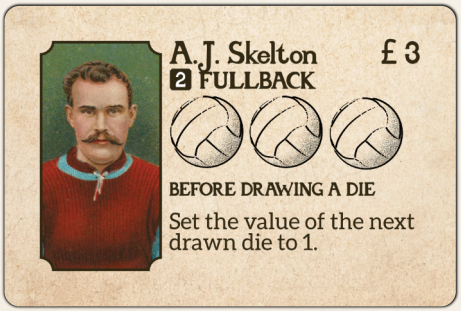
- 11 Footballer spaces
- the Support track
- the Balance track
- the Available, Active and Exhausted Skill token spaces
- the Indisposed tokens space

The right area of the board is used during matches. It contains:

- the Defence tracks of the two teams
- the Score tracks of the two teams
- the Match track, where the drawn dice are placed
- the Unused dice space
- the Match Events table

Footballers

At the beginning of the game, your team consists of 11 amateurs, pre-printed on your Team Board. From the very start of the first season, however, you will be able to sign Professionals with different Skills and place their cards on your Team Board.



- Each Professional card shows:
- An illustration, taken from Ogden's "Famous Footballers" series of cigarette cards from the early 1900s.
- A name. This does not match the real footballer in the illustration.
- The Footballer's role: Goalkeeper, Fullback, Halfback or Forward.
- A number from 1 to 11. It represents the Footballer's preferred position on the pitch, and it is also used to choose Footballers at random during the game.
- A salary, from £1 to £4.
- From 1 to 3 Skill slots, each showing 1 or 2 ball icons. The number of slots is the number of times the Skill can be used during a season; the ball icons show how many Skill tokens each use costs.
- The Skill text, made up of a timing and an effect.

Professionals can be signed at the start of each season and at the end of the first half. Their cards are placed over the amateurs pre-printed on the Team Board, or replace other Professionals (see "Signing and Releasing Professionals").

Skill Tokens



Skill tokens represent your team's condition: the opportunities you will have to use your Footballers' Skills.

Before each League match, you will move a number of Skill tokens (from 0 to 3) from the Available space to the Active space. Active tokens are spent to use your Footballers' Skills, by placing them on the Skill slots of their cards or spaces.

During the season, some tokens – removed from Footballers' cards or spaces, or for other reasons – end up in the Exhausted space, where they cannot be used. Exhausted tokens return to the Available space only at the end of the season.

Use your Skill tokens wisely: their number is limited both in a single match and over the whole season!

The Dice and the Bag



There are 12 dice in the box:

- The 5 green Team dice: you roll them to try to score goals.
- The 5 red Opponent dice: when you roll them, you risk conceding a goal.
- The white Home die: it counts either as a Team die or as an Opponent die, depending on which team is playing at home.
- The black Event die: when it is drawn during a match, an event occurs that may favour either team.

At the beginning of each match, you put a number of these dice in the cloth bag. During each match, you usually draw and roll 6 of them.

Indisposed Tokens



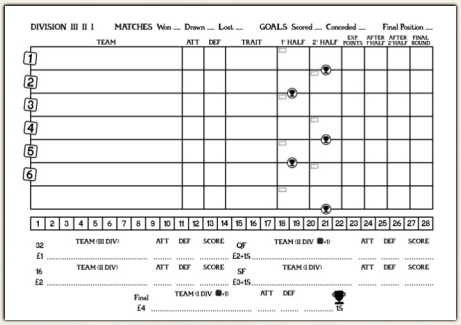
During the game, you place these tokens on your Footballers to show which of them, through injury or for other reasons, will be unable to take part in the next matches. A Footballer with one or more Indisposed tokens cannot use their Skill.

If at any point you are required to use more Indisposed tokens than are available, use only those available.

The League Journal

In the box you will find five League Journals: folded sheets on which you record your matches and your career.

The first page holds your club's details: name, year of foundation and sponsor, a drawing of the kit, Attack and Defence ratings, the Preseason Preparation Actions, and some space to note comments and key events of your game.



The two central pages contain the four League tables, one per season. Each table is laid out as follows:

- At the top are spaces to record the current division and, at the end of the season, the key statistics.
- In the centre is the table itself, with one row for each opposing team, in the order in which you will face them. From left to right, the columns contain: the team name, its Attack rating, its Defence rating, its Team Trait (if any), the score of the first-half match and of the second-half match, the Expected Points (updated after each match of the

first half and of the second half of the season) and, finally, the final points after the last round of the League.

Below the table is a row of numbered boxes, used to record the points you earn during the season.

Further down is the National Cup section, with spaces for up to five opponents.

The fourth page, "Career Achievemens", lists the objectives you can achieve over the seasons, and will allow you to assess how well you have performed.

Once you have used up your League Journals, you can print new ones from www.ingeniosohidalgo.com (look for the online resources on the game page).

Support



The Support track on the Team Board shows the level of support from the crowd and your team's overall morale. You gain or lose Support by winning or losing matches by a wide margin, by progressing in the National Cup, through your League position at the end of the season, and through Midweek Events.

The position of the Support marker on the track has several effects:

A. Gate money. Your Gate money (the money you collect from home matches) is the amount shown on the last ticket icon reached by the marker.

B. Skill tokens. When the marker reaches a space with a Skill token, take the token and immediately add it to the Active space. If the marker later moves back behind that space, put the token back on the track, taking it from the Active space or, if there are none there, from the Available space. Skill tokens unlocked in this way are also moved to the Active space at the beginning of each following season.

C. Home advantage. When the marker reaches this space [icon], the Home die counts as a natural 6 in your home matches, without being rolled.

Balance

The Balance track shows your club's financial resources. Your main source of income is the gate: the takings from matches at your ground. Your main expense is your Footballers' salaries, which must be paid when they are signed and at the beginning of every season. Midweek Events and Preseason Preparation Actions can also bring in or cost you money.

You can never spend more money than you have.

GAME SETUP

1. Take a League Journal and a pencil, and record your club's details:

• Write your name and choose a name for your club.

• If you like, colour in the kit and add the year of foundation and the main sponsor. This has no effect on the game, but it will help you immerse yourself in your club's history!

• Write "2" in the boxes for your team's Attack and Defence ratings. These ratings may change during the game.

2. Open the Team Board and place it in front of you.

3. Place the Midweek Events table next to it, and place the Midweek Events marker on it.

4. Shuffle the Professionals cards and place the Professionals deck face down next to the board.

5. Place the Score markers on the "0" space of the two Score tracks.

6. Place the Support and Balance markers on the marked starting spaces of their tracks.

7. Place 21 Skill tokens in the Available space.

8. Place 3 Skill tokens on the three spaces of the Support track that show a Skill token icon and have not yet been reached by the marker.

9. Keep the other Skill tokens off the board, within reach.

10. Place the 6 Indisposed tokens on the Indisposed tokens space.

11. Put all the dice in the Unused dice space.



PREPARING A SEASON

Opponent Teams

To prepare a new season, first circle your current division in the top-left corner of the first empty League table. In a new game, you start in Division III.

Next, determine the seven other teams in your division. Each team has a name, an Attack and a Defence rating and, sometimes, a Team Trait: a small special ability that changes the rules of the game.

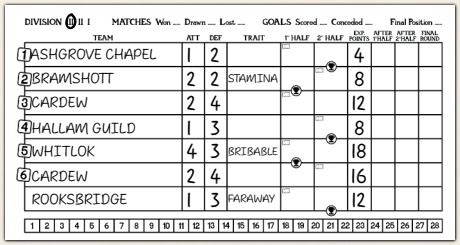
If this is not your first season, some of the teams in your new division come from your previous season:

- If your team was promoted, it is joined by the highest-placed of the other teams from the previous season.
- If your team was relegated, it is joined by the lowest-placed of the other teams from the previous season.
- If your team stayed in the same division, it is joined by the three other teams that were neither promoted (the top two) nor relegated (the bottom two).

In case of a tie, draw lots. Copy the name, ratings and Team Trait of each of these teams into the new League table, in the same row they occupied the previous season.

Use the Teams Generator leaflet to generate the remaining teams. Choose the table for the division you are about to play in, roll the black die and the white die for each opposing team, and record its name, Attack, Defence and any Team Trait in its row.

Once the seven opposing teams are set, assign each of them its Expected Points: the number of points that team is expected to earn during the season, to which you will add the points it earns in its two matches against your team. Add up each team's Attack and Defence ratings and, going from the lowest to the highest total, assign the following values: 4, 8, 8, 12, 12, 16, 18. Ties are resolved by assigning the lower value to the team in the topmost row.


DIVISION (I) II I MATCHES Won ... Drawn ... Lost ... GOALS Scored ... Conceded ... Final Position ...

	TEAM	ATT	DEF	TRAIT	1ST HALF	2ND HALF	EXP. POINTS	AFTER 1ST HALF	AFTER 2ND HALF	FINAL RANK
1	ASHGROVE CHAPEL	1	2				4			
2	BRAMSHOTT	2	2	STAMINA			8			
3	CARDEW	2	4				12			
4	HALLAM GUILD	1	3				8			
5	WHITLOK	4	3	BRIBABLE			18			
6	CARDEW	2	4				16			
	ROOKSBRIDGE	1	3	FARAWAY			12			

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

Team Traits

Some opposing teams have a Team Trait (see the corresponding column of the League table) that changes some rules of the game. Remember to apply it when you play against that team!

Preseason Preparation

At the start of each season, you may invest your resources to improve a specific aspect of your club. On the first page of your League Journal, you may tick one Preseason Preparation

Action that has not been ticked yet, and apply its effect. If the Action has a cost, you can only choose it if you can afford it.

Signing Professionals

At the start of each season

1. Reveal three cards from the Professionals deck (six at the start of the first season!) and place them in front of you.

2. Sign any number of them, following the rules in the box "Signing and Releasing Professionals". You may also move Professionals already in your team to other spaces, or release them.

3. Pay the salaries of all the Professionals in your team – both new signings and those remaining from previous seasons – by moving the Balance marker back by the total. If you cannot afford all the salaries, you must release Professionals until you can.

4. Place the revealed cards you did not sign in the discard pile.



A. Hollis doesn't match his number space, so a Skill token is placed on the leftmost slot.

Signing and Releasing Professionals

You can sign, move and release Professionals at the start of each season and at the end of the first half.

Role. Each Professional has a role (Goalkeeper, Fullback, Halfback or Forward) and must be placed in a space in the matching row of the Team Board, covering the amateur pre-printed there or replacing another Professional (who is released).

Number. Each Professional also has a number (1 to 11). If you place o move a Professional in a space with a different number, you must immediately fill the leftmost Skill slot of their card with Skill tokens taken from the Active space. If you cannot, you cannot place that Professional in that space.

Covered amateurs. When a Professional covers an amateur space, any Skill tokens on that space are moved to the Exhausted space. A covered amateur can never be used, not even when the Professional covering them is Indisposed.

Salaries. At the start of the season, you pay the salaries of all your Professionals together. At the end of the first half, you pay the salaries of new signings immediately.

Releasing. Released Professionals go to the discard pile. Any Skill tokens on their cards are moved to the Exhausted space.

Active Skill Tokens

Move from the Available space to the Active space as many Skill tokens as have been unlocked on the Support track. At the beginning of the game, this is 1 Skill token, since the Support marker starts beyond the first Skill token space

Preparing the Match Bag

Take 1 green Team die and 1 red Opponent die from the Unused dice space and put them in the bag.

MATCH SETUP

A season consists of fourteen League matches – seven in the first half and seven in the second half of the season – plus one to five National Cup matches. The Cup is a knockout competition, so your run ends with your first defeat.

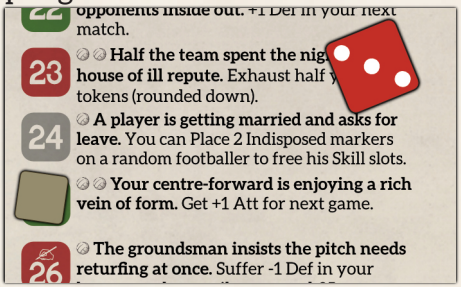
Before each match, follow these steps:

1. Reset the match. If this is not the first match of the season, move all the dice on the Match track to the Unused dice space, and move both Score markers back to the "0" space.

2. Remove Indisposed tokens (League matches only). Remove one Indisposed token from each Footballer who has one or more, and put it back on the Indisposed tokens space.

3. Midweek Event (League matches only). Draw a die from the bag and roll it. Advance the Midweek Events marker by that number of spaces, then place the die in the Unused dice space.

- Move as many Skill tokens as the number shown next to the Event from the Available space to the Active space. If there are not enough Available tokens, move only those available.
- Read and resolve the Event. Events with a grey number are always resolved. Events with a green number are not resolved if you rolled a red Opponent die, and Events with a red number are not resolved if you rolled a green Team die. If you rolled the white or the black die, every Event is resolved.
- If the Event shows the ✍ icon, write its effect in the Notes section of your League Journal. These Events have permanent effects and can happen only once per game.



A red die has been rolled, so the green even is not resolved, but 2 Skill tokens are now Active.

4. Collect Gate money (home League matches only). If you are playing at home (there is a ticket icon in the Score box of the match on the League table), increase your Balance by the amount shown on the last ticket

icon reached by the Support marker.

5. Set the Defences. Place the Defence markers on the spaces of the Defence tracks matching your team's and the opposing team's Defence ratings.

6. Fill the bag. Do not empty the bag before a match! The dice left in it represent the energy spent or saved in previous matches, and add to those you put in for this match.

- Put the white Home die and the black Event die in the bag, if they are in the Unused dice space.
- Add as many green Team dice as your team's Attack rating, and as many red Opponent dice as the opposing team's Attack rating.
- If there are not enough dice of one colour, reduce the other team's Defence by one for each missing die: reduce your opponent's Defence by one for each Team die you cannot add, and your own Defence by one for each Opponent die you cannot add.

If there are still six or more dice in the Unused dice space (that is, six or fewer dice in the bag), add pairs of dice – one green and one red – to the bag until fewer than six dice remain in the Unused dice space.

Example. Simo's team (Attack 2, Defence 3) is playing against Thurleig Road (Attack 4, Defence 1). There are already 1 Team die and 2 Opponent dice in the bag. Simone adds two Team dice and three Opponent dice. As she would normally have to add another one, she instead reduces her Team defence from 3 to 2.

7. Footballers' Skills. If any Footballer in your team has a "Match setup" Skill, you may use it now (see "Using Footballers' Skills").

MATCH RESOLUTION

The Match track has six spaces, each representing about 15 minutes of play.

To start the match, shake the bag and draw a die:

- **Team die:** an attacking move by your team. Roll it: if the result is higher than the opposing team's Defence, you score a goal and advance your Score marker by one space. Then place the die on the leftmost empty space of the Match track.
- **Opponent die:** an attacking move by the opposing team. Roll it: if the result is higher than your team's Defence, they score a goal and their Score marker advances by one space. Then place the die on the leftmost empty space of the Match track.
- **Home die:** it counts as a Team die or an Opponent die, depending on which team is playing at home (check the ticket icon in the current Score box of your League table). Then proceed as above.
- **Event die:** something happens. Roll the die and resolve the

matching effect in the Match Events table on the Team Board. Then place the die on the Match track.

Keep drawing and resolving dice one at a time in the same way.

Using Footballers' Skills

Every Footballer in your team, amateur or Professional, has a Skill that can be used during a match or, in some cases, during Match Setup. The Skill text tells you when it can be used.

To use a Skill, take the number of Skill tokens required (one or two) from the Active space, place them on the leftmost empty Skill slot of the Footballer's card or space, and resolve the Skill.

A Skill can be used only if the Footballer has an empty Skill slot and you have enough Active tokens. Within these limits, you can use as many Skills as you like, even more than one on the same die roll.

Natural 1s and Natural 6s

A 1 rolled on a Team or Opponent die is always a miss, and cannot be modified in any way by Footballers' Skills.

A 6 rolled on one of these dice is always a goal and cannot be prevented. In addition, every 6 is re-rolled, so a single die can score more than one goal. Each re-roll of the same die counts as a separate roll.

END OF THE MATCH

When the sixth die has been placed on the Match track, the match is over.

1. Write the final score in your League Journal. For simplicity's sake, always write your team's goals first, even when you played away.

2. Tick 0, 1 or 2 boxes on your League points track, for a defeat, a draw or a win.

3. Update the Expected Points of the team you have just played, in the column for the current half of the season: write the previous value increased by 0, 1 or 2 points, depending on whether that team lost, drew or won the match.

4. If your team won by three or more goals, gain 1 Support. If it lost by three or more goals, lose 1 Support.

DIVISION II MATCHES Won ... Drawn ... Lost ... GOALS Scored ... Conceded ... Final Position ...

	TEAM	ATT	DEF	TRAIT	1ST HALF	2ND HALF	EXP. POINTS	AFTER 1ST HALF	AFTER 2ND HALF	FINAL ROUND	
1	ASHGROVE CHAPEL	1	2		3-1		4	4			
2	BRAMSHOTT	2	2	STAMINA	2-2		8	9			
3	CARDEW	2	4		1-2		12	14			
4	HALLAM GUILD	1	3		4-0		8	8			
5	WHITLOK	4	3	BRIBABLE	3-3		18	19			
6	CARDEW	2	4		1-0		16	16			
	ROOKSBRIDGE	1	3	FARAWAY	2-1		12	12			

X X X X X X X X X X 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

After the first half, Simo had picked up 10 points, with 4 wins, 2 draws and one defeat.

NATIONAL CUP

Some Score boxes of the League table show a small cup icon below them. After playing that League match, and before moving on to the next one, you

must play the next round of the National Cup (unless you have already been knocked out!).

The section below the League table shows the five Cup rounds in order. For each round:

1. Collect the round bonus. Immediately increase your Balance and Support as shown to the left of the round you are about to play:

- Round of 32: £1
- Round of 16: £2
- Quarter-Finals: £2 and 1 Support
- Semi-Final: £3 and 1 Support
- Final: £4 (plus 2 Support if you win the Final)

2. Generate the opposing team with the Teams Generator table for the round:

- Round of 32: Division III
- Round of 16: Division II
- Quarter-Finals: Division II, adding 1 to the black die
- Semi-Final: Division I
- Final: Division I, adding 1 to the black die

There was no space for the opposing team's Trait, so you will have to remember it!

3. Play the match as a League match, with these exceptions:

- Do not remove Indisposed tokens before the match.
- Do not roll on the Midweek Events table (so you get no new Active tokens!).
- Neither team is playing at home: you do not collect Gate money, and the white die counts as a second Event die.
- If the match is still a draw after the sixth die, keep drawing dice from the bag until one team scores. Stop drawing when only one die is left in the bag: it is needed for the next Midweek Event. If the match is still a draw at that point, roll a die: on a 1–3 you score a goal and win; on a 4–6 you concede a goal and lose.
- At the end of the match, write the score in the National Cup section of your League Journal. Do not tick League points or update Expected Points. You still gain or lose 1 Support if the match is won or lost by three or more goals.

This is a simplification: Cup matches were actually replayed until one team won. Replaying them here wouldn't be much fun.

Choosing a Footballer at Random

When a Midweek Event or a Match Event tells you to choose a Footballer at random, reveal the top card of the Professionals deck and apply the effect to the Footballer in the space with that card's number (1 to 11). If the effect cannot be applied to that Footballer, apply it to the next eligible Footballer in ascending order (11 is followed by 1). Then place the revealed card in the discard pile.

End of the First Half

After the seventh League match, new Professionals offer their services.

Reveal three cards from the Professionals deck. You may sign one or more of them, paying their salaries immediately, even though it is mid-season. You may also move and release Professionals (see the box "Signing and Releasing Professionals"). Place the revealed cards you did not sign in the discard pile.

END OF THE SEASON

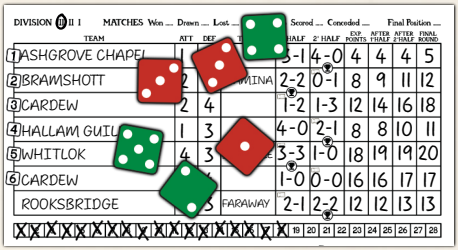
After the fourteenth and final League match and the last National Cup round (if you are still in the Cup), the season is over. Follow these steps.

League Last Round

The last round of the League may hold some surprises. Roll six dice and, for each die, give 1 point to the team whose number matches the result (the number to the left of the team name in the League table). The team in row 7 gets no points in this phase: its last-round match was against your team, and you have already played it.

Write each team's total points in the last column of the League table.

For a more realistic last round, no team can be given more than 2 points in this phase: re-roll any excess dice.



Simo is level on points with Whitlock, who picked up two points on an unlucky final day. Having lost both head-to-head matches, he has to settle for third place.

Final League Position

Compare your points with those of the other teams in your division to determine your final League position. If two or more teams are level on points, compare the points earned in their head-to-head matches, then the goals scored in those matches. If they are still level, draw lots to decide their positions.

Record your position, together with the other season statistics, in the top section of your League table. Then gain money and gain (or lose) Support as shown below:

- 1st +2 Support, +£4
- 2nd +2 Support, +£2
- 3rd +1 Support, +£2
- 4th +£2
- 5th –
- 6th –1 Support
- 7th –2 Support
- 8th –3 Support

Promotion and Relegation

If your team finishes first or

second, it is promoted to the division above (unless it is already in Division I).

If your team finishes last or second to last, it is relegated to the division below (unless it is already in Division III).

If this is not your last season, also take note of the other promoted and relegated teams.

Season Record

Go to the section for the current season on the "Career Achievements" page of your League Journal, and tick the boxes next to the objectives you achieved during the season.

Season Reset

Move all the Skill tokens on Footballers' cards and spaces, and all those in the Active and Exhausted spaces, to the Available space.

Remove all Indisposed tokens from your Footballers and put them back on the Indisposed tokens space.

Empty the bag and move all the dice to the Unused dice space.

Do not reshuffle the Professionals deck or the discard pile, and do not move the Midweek Events marker.

NEXT SEASON

If the season you have just played was not the fourth and final season of your contract, prepare the next one (see "Preparing a Season").

Saving the Game

If you do not have time to continue, you can easily save the game. Take a photo of your Team Board showing the position of your Footballers, Skill tokens, and Balance and Support markers. Leave the dice where they are, in the bag or on the board. Keep the Professionals deck in order, and keep the revealed cards separate from the discard pile.

END OF THE CONTRACT

At the end of the fourth season, your contract – and the game – comes to an end.

Now it is time to take stock. Add up the points from each season and write the total at the bottom of the "Career Achievements" page of your League Journal.

But honestly, who cares about points? Can a story of passion and heroic deeds really be reduced to a mere score?

Find out about the real people behind the footballers' faces on the New York Public Library's website.

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