A playing-card version of the fantasy strategy game by Gareth Mottram

PURPOSE OF THE GAME

MOVE, STACK, ATTACK OR PACK TO WIPE OUT YOUR ENEMIES, CAPTURE KINGS AND INVADE STRONGHOLDS

You move your suit of cards around the playing area individually or in stacks to take your opponent's cards. If you take their king or reach their back line with your king, the game stops and you earn bonus Victory Points to add to the value of the cards you have taken.

Game Components (for 2 players)
- 2 suits of normal playing cards (hearts and spades) – 26 cards
- 8 stronghold cards and 6 row marker cards (use the other suits from a normal deck turned face down)

PREVIEW/SUMMARY RULES

Setup: Choose and pull out a suit (hearts or spades) then set up the borders of a 4x8 play area with the remaining cards. Remove your King and Ace (**Squire**), shuffle your suit, layout 8 of your cards face up in front of your back row marker cards (**stronghold**). Place your King and Squire anywhere on your stronghold (first mover lays first – see next). Lay your remaining cards face-down off-board (**reserves**)
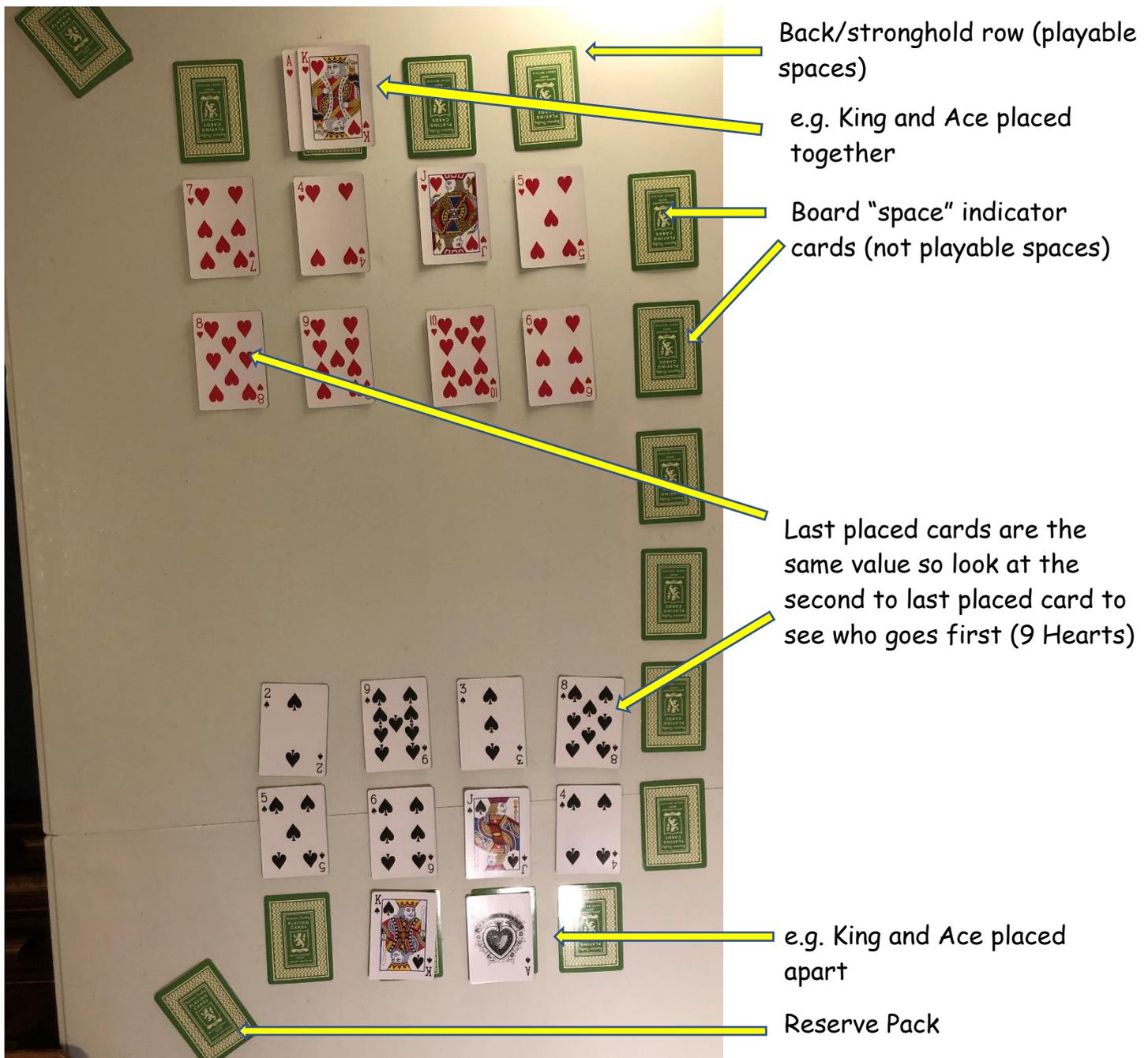
Alternate Turns: Highest **melee ability** (face value) of the last cards laid goes first (Face cards [**Royals**] = 10, Ace =1). Choose one action from:
- **Move**: One card or stack up to the maximum rate orthogonally – Royals max. 3, number cards max. 1 (stacks limited to the slowest card unless Royal splits off). Royals can move through friendly cards as long as the move does not (even temporarily) exceed the space maximum (see stack).
- **Stack**: Move a card(s) onto a friendly card(s). Maximum 3 cards or 25 melee ability (see Attack). Can now move as one unit. Number cards can be dropped onto spaces the stack passes over, allowing Royals to **split off** (carry on). **Royal Rider:** A Royal can stack with an Ace and still move up to 3 spaces.
- **Attack**: Move your card or stack onto an enemy card or stack. Highest melee ability (card face value, Royals = 10, Ace =1) wins. Stacks add up each of its card's melee abilities. Losing card(s) removed from play. Exact draw => all cards removed from play.
- **Pack**: Place top card from reserves face-up anywhere on your stronghold row (inc. if stacks or attacks)

Winning: Game stops when either a King is killed, or a King reaches the enemy stronghold (back row of face-down cards). You receive 20 bonus points for either condition. Add this bonus to the total melee abilities of all cards you have taken to give your total **Victory Points**. Highest total VP wins.

SETUP

1. One player takes all the hearts, the other takes all the spades.
2. Use the rest of the pack (diamonds/clubs) face-down to mark out the edges of a 4 (wide) X 8 (long – between players) area. (See diagram) The 4-wide row of face-down cards in front of you represents your **stronghold** – playable spaces for either side. The 6 row markers are not playable spaces.
3. Each player takes out their King and Ace then shuffles the rest of their pack.
4. Each player lays out their shuffled cards, face up, in 2 rows of 4 cards just in front of his/her stronghold row. Laying out should run from left to right, closest row first for both players, then second row etc (i.e. you can't choose which position to place each of your cards in).
5. The player who's last card has the highest value (picture cards = 10) will go first. If it is a tie, look at the 2nd to last cards placed etc.
6. The first player places his/her king and ace anywhere on his/her stronghold row. They can be separate or in the same space (Stacked – see below). The second player then does the same.

Back/stronghold row (playable spaces)

e.g. King and Ace placed together

Board "space" indicator cards (not playable spaces)

Last placed cards are the same value so look at the second to last placed card to see who goes first (9 Hearts)

e.g. King and Ace placed apart

Reserve Pack

HOW TO PLAY

7. The players take alternate turns. They can perform <u>one</u> of the following actions on their turn:

- **Move**: move an individual card or stack into a clear space <u>or</u>
- **Stack**: move an individual card or stack onto another friendly card/stack <u>or</u>
- **Attack**: move an individual card or stack onto an enemy card/stack <u>or</u>
- **Pack**: add a card to your stronghold row from your reserves pile.

MOVE

8. **Individual Number Cards**
    a) can move one space forward, backward or to either side (no diagonals).
9. **Individual Royal Cards**
    a) (King, Queen, Jack) may move up to (and including) three spaces to the front, behind or either side (no diagonals) *{This increased rate reflects their mounted status}*
    b) They may repeatedly change direction (e.g. an L or zigzag shape) during their move.
    c) They may pass through friendly cards or stacks (see below) subject to stack maximums (see below)
    d) They cannot ride through an enemy card or stack – they have to attack (see below) if they want to move onto an enemy-occupied square.

STACK

A stack is simply allied cards stacked on top of each other (but laid so all individual values are shown)

10. **Forming a Stack**
    a) An individual card or stack simply moves onto another allied card or stack.
    b) Stack Restrictions
        o No more than 3 cards in a stack {*Only so many warriors can fight in one space*}
        o The maximum total melee ability (see below) of a stack is 25 {*Great skill needs room to work!*}
        o A maximum of one Royal may be in a stack {*There's not enough room for two horses in one space*}.

11. **Moving a Stack**
    a) All cards in a stack can move together in the same direction – this only counts as one turn.
    b) A stack can move one space forward, backward or to the side. They can only move one space even if they have a Royal with them. *{He/she has a horse, but the infantry doesn't!} Exception: See splitting off (below)*

12. **Picking Up and Splitting Off from a Stack**
    a) A Royal (picture card) may form a stack with a number card or existing (2 number card) stack and immediately move that stack 1 space **IF** the Royal has enough movement points left (i.e. it only had to move 1 or 2 spaces to form the stack).
    b) This follows the "**original mover**" principle – the movement of any stack is always limited to the remaining movement allowance of the card(s) that began the movement.
        e.g.1: if a Ten moves its 1 space to stack with a Five, that is the end of the move. Even though the Five has not used up its move, the *original mover* (Ten) has no more movement left.
    c) One or two cards can move off a stack during their turn. Two cards splitting off must go in the same direction.
    d) Royals that split off from a stack have a number of options:
        • The Royal splits off from a stationary stack to move up to its usual 3 spaces.
        • The Royal splits off from a stationary stack with a number card then "drops" it after 1 space (its maximum) and moves on for a further 1 or 2 spaces.
        • The whole stack can move 1 space and then the Royal splits off for a further 1 or 2 spaces.

e.g.2: If a Queen (move maximum of 3) moves 1 space to stack with a Six (move maximum of 1), that new stack can move on 1 space as the original mover (Queen) still has 2 moves left. Further, the Queen could then drop the 6 and move on 1 final space.

e.g.3: Similarly, if a Queen + Six existing stack moves 1 space to stack with a Three, the Queen could then drop the Six (which has used up its 1 space movement allowance) and take the Three on one more space. The Queen could then drop the Three and move on 1 final space.

e.g.4:
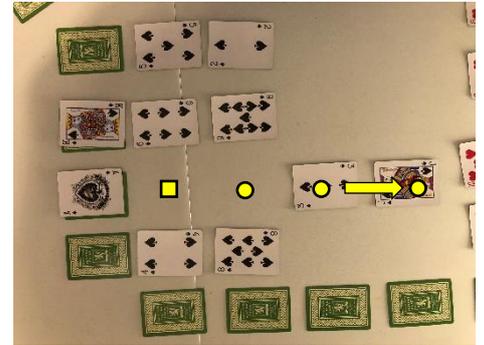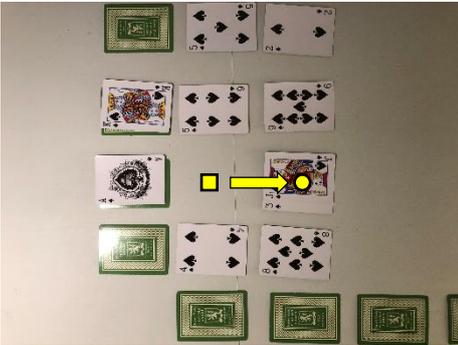
1. The Jack (original mover) moves 1 space to stack with the Three.	2. The new stack moves on 1 space as the Jack still has 2 moves left and the Three has 1.	3. The Jack drops the Three (as it has no more moves left) and carries on 1 more space using up its last move.

13. Royal Rider
A royal rider is a special case of a stack.
   a) Any Royal and Ace may stack and maintain the Royal's movement rate of 3 spaces {this represents a small, lightly armed squire riding/fighting pillion with a Royal}
   b) The Ace does, however, count towards a stack maximum (i.e. one other number card may stack with a Royal-Rider. If a third card is in the stack, that third card does **not** get the extra movement rate as well.
   c) Apart from the movement allowance, normal stacking rules apply to royal rider (e.g. splitting off).

ATTACK

14. Attack
To attack, your card or stack simply attempts to move onto an enemy card or stack within movement range.
   a) Battles are resolved immediately – highest total Melee Ability wins (see below).
   b) The losing card/stack is removed from play and the victor stays on the attacked space.
   c) If the combat ability totals are equal, all cards on both sides are killed and all removed from play.

15. Melee Ability
   a) The number cards are worth their face value in melee ability regardless of suit. Aces are low (1 point).
   b) The Royals - King, Queen and Jack {prince} cards have a melee ability of 10.
   c) The melee ability of a stack is simply the sum of all its cards' individual melee abilities.

WINNING

16. Game End and Bonus Points

The game finishes when:

    a) A king is defeated (and removed from the battlefield as normal) = **20 Bonus Points** <u>or</u>

    b) A king (alone or in a stack) reaches the opponent's stronghold row = **20 Bonus Points**

    c) NOTE: It is possible for an opponent's king to be defeated on its back line by the enemy king. If this happens, all bonus points apply.

    d) Occasionally, it might appear there is a stalemate position e.g. Neither king can be realistically trapped by the other side and neither king can reach the opposing back line without being killed. In this case, the game stops and there are no bonus points awarded.

17. Winning and Victory Points

    a) Once one of the Game End conditions has been met, simply add up the melee abilities of all the enemy cards you have taken plus any bonus points. This gives you your total **Victory Points**.

    b) The winner is the player with the most Victory Points.

Whatever Next?

Optional and Extension Rules

There are several optional ways to extend and modify the Battle Ace game (using standard decks of cards). I'll release my ideas at some point on my Battlecards Facebook group. I would be delighted to hear any suggestions and feedback on the game there as well. Here's a taster of optional rules to come:

- **Campaign Rules**: Players agree to play a set number of games in a campaign. Victory points from each game are totalled for both players – highest total wins.
- **Bloodbath**: Take out the two empty rows between the army starting positions – see how quickly the killing starts!
- **Joker**: The joker is a magical doppelganger and can take on the melee ability of any non-royal including the squire's (Ace) Royal Rider ability.

Unleash the Pack!