



modern dispatch #115

Content Manager:

Charles Rice and Chris Davis



Layout:
Chris Davis



www.RPGObjects.com

Requires the use of the d20 Modern Roleplaying Game, published by Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

d20 Modern and Wizards of the Coast are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. in the United States and other countries and are used with permission

'd20 System' and the 'd20 System' logo are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and are used according to the terms of the d20 System License version 6.0. A copy of this License can be found at www.wizards.com/d20.

Airborne Legionnaire:

Advanced Class for Wizards and Wiseguys

Written by Mike Lafferty Art by Rick Hershey of Empty Room Studios

In the alternate historical setting of Wizards and Wiseguys, Magic is awakened in 1908 and drastically alters the history of the 20th Century. Along with the emergence of sorcery, portals have opened between our world and Faerie. Around these portals, markets and eventually towns spring up as mankind is eager to learn the ways of magic and buy the wares that the Fey offer. Most portals are temporary, only existing during the week of the full moon. A few are permanent however. On the European continent, there are temporary portals scattered randomly throughout various nations with only 2 permanent portals – one in Bavaria and one in Siberia.

The Great War sees the first military applications of wizardry upon the European continent. With its permanent access to the Bavarian portal, Germany has outstripped most other nations in magical development and has been able to devote much research towards the uses of magic in warfare – specifically improving their skills in Evocation sorcery. With its own portal in Siberia, Russia has had the same advantage, but its magic research is under the iron hand of Rasputin (under the auspices of the Czar). Eager to cement his position of influence within the Romanov power structure and loathe to share his newfound knowledge, Rasputin limits access to the Siberian portal to a bare handful. At Rasputin's insistence, Russia also refuses to share any research with allied nations. This results in Russia being unable to field an effective magical fighting force and the Central Powers being at a marked advantage at the onset of the Great War.



Each nation's research into the Arcane Arts is inevitably influenced by the personalities of the scholars who devote themselves to the study, as well as by the type and quality of instruction available from the Fey at portals that are located within its borders. While the Germans are able to focus on the school of Evocation, and Rasputin buries himself in the study of Enchantment, French mages excel in the practice of Necromancy and the British develop a proficiency in the practice of Illusion magics.

Fortified with German and Austrian combat mages, the Central Powers dominate the early years of the war. Their infantry pushes into Belgium and the Alsace-Lorraine region – attacking France from two fronts. After a series of withering defeats, British Illusionists and French Necromancers are able to halt the juggernaut of the Central Powers combat mages at the First Battle of the Marne in September 1914. With the Central Powers advance stopped, both sides settle in for what promised to be a long grim stretch of trench warfare.

However, 1915 brought 2 innovations that threatened to break the deadlock and deliver quick victory to the Central Powers. The first was the development of a “synchronization gear” that allowed a machine gun to fire through the turning propeller of an aircraft. This made the aircraft of the German air force vastly superior to their opponents. Additionally, the Imperial German Army had trained enough combat mages at this point for the generals to allow several squads to be reassigned to aviation duty. A second seat was retrofitted onto the Fokker and Albatros fighter planes to allow the addition of a combat mage as a sort of supernatural bomber and tail-gunner.

These two innovations decimated the ranks of the Allied air forces and allowed the Germans to provide crushingly effective ground support to their infantry. The Central Powers armies were moving again – and France looked to be on the verge of quick defeat..

With French and British air defenses weakened, zeppelin bombings become a deadly threat to both Allied military and civilian targets. French and British cities both lived in fear of nightly zeppelin attacks. In Berlin, the Central Powers began drawing plans for an invasion of England. In London, members of parliament openly call for the government to surrender.

With their army retreating, their squadrons of planes reduced to a mere handful and their allies faltering, the French Air Force (the Armée de l'Air) took a gamble and procured several prides of griffins from a Faerie trader at a portal near Marseilles. While French wizards had never been able to apply shielding spells to aircraft, they have no difficulty applying them to living creatures and this provided some measure of protection from the Central Powers combat magic and bullets. The Fey trader (actually, a sympathetic elf) also provided training in the art of griffin riding and aerial combat as well as agreeing to provide the Entente (Allied) Powers with a steady supply of various magic items (particularly wands and rings) that could be used with ease while engaged in airborne combat.

Soon French spellcasters were trained as griffin riders and the new Calvary of the Sky (Calvaire du Ciel) took to the French skies, the last hope of their desperate nation. Although not as fast as the Central Powers planes at top speed, their combination of defensive spells, magical firepower and maneuverability made them a force to be reckoned with. They had a dramatic impact from the moment they entered service. On one memorable night, July 28, 1915, the air cavalry downed 8 German zeppelins and 30 fighter escorts in a 4 hour time span. Expert at overwhelming and grounding the feared zeppelins, they also proved effective at negating the air support provided by German combat mages. Over four weeks of extensive combat in the summer of 1915, the griffin riders of the Calvary of the Sky

single-handedly turned the tide of the war, halting the unstoppable Central Powers and saving France from almost certain defeat. (This also has the unfortunate effect of returning the war to a state of stalemate and trench warfare.) Several more prides of griffins were purchased and some are transported across the English Channel along with a contingent of trainers to assist the British. [Griffins are found in the SRD, along with the rules for using them as mounts.]

Kaiser Wilhelm II responded by ordering the Imperial German Army Air Service (Luftstreitkräfte) to begin the immediate creation of their own airborne legions. Unfortunately for the Central Powers, the Fey traders at the Bavarian Portal did not have access to griffins. The best they could offer in terms of airborne mounts were wyverns – barbarous, draconic creatures. Fierce and savage beasts, wyverns had an unfortunate tendency to kill would-be riders. Because of this issue, they could never be deployed in as great numbers as the allied griffins and do not help regain the initiative as Central Power generals hope they would. [Wyverns are found in the SRD, along with the rules for using them as mounts.]

The mounts in this setting have been purchased from traders at Faerie Portals and are allegedly already trained. The Imperial German Army Air Service found out quickly that even “trained” wyverns could turn on their riders. A Wand of Charm Monster quickly became standard issue for wyvern riders. At the GM's discretion, a wyvern that becomes spooked may turn on its rider. A DC 25 Handle Animal check will be required to placate the wyvern. A Diplomacy check may be substituted for this.

A mount can fight while carrying a rider, but the rider cannot also attack unless he or she succeeds on a Ride check. At the GM's discretion, other magical creatures (hippogriffs, howlers etc) could be used as mounts. See the SRD for full rules about having a magical creature as a mount.

Famous Airborne Legionnaires

Charles Nungesser (French - 43 victories)

Nungesser had volunteered for the air service in 1914, before the introduction of griffins. He was denied and entered the ground cavalry – specifically, the 2nd Hussars. He acquitted himself very well, bravely charging a German staff car – killing 5 officers and capturing the vehicle. He was able to parlay this victory into an appointment in the French Air Force at about the time the first griffin pride was purchased from the Faerie Portal at Marseilles. During his initial week of training, he took his griffin up without authorization and became one of the first riders from the Escadrille de Griffin (Griffin Squadron) to score a kill, downing a German Albatros fighter plane. As a result, he was simultaneously sentenced to eight days in the stockade and awarded the *Croix de Guerre*.

Nungesser has been credited with creating the stereotype of airborne legionnaires as flamboyant, hard-living, reckless, womanizing rogues with a strong disregard for military formality and discipline. He was known to show up for morning patrol in a tuxedo, often with his date from the previous evening still on his arm. He was a frequenter of the brothels of Paris and spent as much time or more there as he did in the air. Legend has it that he was a patron of Mata Hari, and, suspecting her espionage, would tantalize her with wild (and wholly fictional) stories about platoons of giant, bullet-proof cyclopean warriors the French Army had procured from the Marseilles portal.

A man of black humor, he had the barding for his griffin done up in black and grey with a skull and crossbones, funeral candles and a coffin as

decorations. His distinctive adornment made him instantly recognizable to his enemies.

One example of this renown was when, late one night in 1917, a German spy plane buzzed Nungesser's aerodrome, dropping a formal printed invitation to a duel that was addressed simply: "To Monsieur Skull and Bones." Unfortunately, the duel was a set up for an ambush. When Nungesser arrived at the specified place and time, he was met by 2 German wyvern riders and 3 Albatros biplanes. According to his own unverified report, Nungesser downed both wyverns before the planes fled in fear. Nungesser did not return unscathed however – he had broken both legs and had a cracked skull. This was nothing unusual for him, and he was back on duty after 3 months in the infirmary. (It has been said by his detractors that Nungesser spent as much time in the hospital as he did in the air or Parisian brothels combined.)

This outcome was typical of Nungesser's career – he was often injured but proved very hard to kill. He survived both the Great War and the Dragon War. He disappeared in the early 1920s while trying to cross the Atlantic on the same griffin he'd ridden throughout both wars. He was never a great navigator and some questioned why he'd undertake such a difficult adventure. For weeks after his disappearance, the French press, unwilling to report the loss of a national hero, refused to acknowledge his death and engaged in baseless speculation that he had flown into a mid-ocean Faerie portal or was living among natives in a South American jungle.

Manfred von Richthofen (German - 80 victories)

The son of Prussian nobles, Richthofen learned to ride and hunt in protected game forests at an early age. His early military career in the cavalry on the Russian Front was unremarkable and he was transferred to the

Quartermaster Corps in early 1915. This displeased Richthofen immensely and he wrote the Emperor a letter stating: "I have not gone to war to collect eggs and cheese."

His family called in a few favors, and Manfred Richthofen, and his brother Lothar, were both reassigned to the second class of German wyvern riders who were training at an air base near the Black Forest. Manfred's experience riding horseback made him a natural. After a few false steps (including one that landed Richthofen in the hospital for a week), he bonded quickly to his wyvern and mastered the finer points of aerial combat just as fast. He saw action first in early 1916 at the battle of Verdun. Soon afterwards, Oswald Boelcke, a noted German commander, took an interest in Richthofen and had him transferred into his own unit. Boelcke's squadron was attempting to contain the Allied advance in the trench battles of Somme. Although the skies over Somme were controlled by the effective and highly organized Allied griffin squadrons, it was heard that Richthofen would begin to earn his reputation as a masterful and methodical adversary. Under Boelcke's tutelage, he racked up 12 kills by November of 1916.

In early 1917, Richthofen scored his 16th kill. He was awarded the Pour le Mérite (the Blue Max) and promoted to captain of his own squadron based at the aerodrome at Douai, France. Richthofen recruited the best wyvern riders he could get into his unit and decorated their wyverns in blood red barding. The long list of victory and penchant for daredevil flying made them darlings of the patriotic German press (who were eager for any positive news to divert attention from the bloody horrors of trench warfare). A Berlin newspaper dubbed the squadron "Richthofen's Flying Circus" and the name stuck. It was during this time that a reporter gave Richthofen the nickname: "The Red Baron."

After the bitter winter of 1916, the Flying Circus was able to fly daily patrols and began executing

the revolutionary group tactics that Richthofen had designed during the slow cold weather months. The effects were alarming: the squadron took down 80 Allied planes and griffins by March of 1017 – with Richthofen upping his personal kill record to 36. He treated his defeated opponents with an unusual sort of respect, often purchasing elaborate headstones for their gravesites. He also had a German silversmith



cast a tiny silver cup engraved with the date of each victory (and when possible – the name of the downed pilot). He displayed the cups in a trophy case in his aerodrome.

Allied pilots and riders were obsessed with killing Richthofen, but he evaded their attacks and ambushes throughout 1917, racking up 68 kills by the end of the year and evading many attacks and ambushes.

On April 21 of 1918, Richthofen's luck ran out. He led his squadron in an ambush of a allied patrol of 15 griffin riders and 5 warplanes. One of the largest and most dramatic dogfights of the war ensued, with over 40 wyverns, griffins and planes engaged in a frantic, twisting, aerial combat for most of an hour. A soft-spoken Canadian griffin rider, Captain Roy Brown, saw Richthofen attacking one of his wingmen. To protect his comrade, Brown maneuvered his griffin directly behind the Red Baron and unleashed a bolt of lighting from a standard issue RAF wand. Perhaps distracted by the whirling melee or by the target in front of him, Richthofen took the full brunt of the attack and fell, unconscious, from his wyvern.

The modest Brown never claimed credit for the kill. Richthofen's remains was recovered by a platoon of Australian infantry. The British Armed Forces claimed the body and buried him with full military honors.

Airborne Legionnaire Advanced Class

Hit Die

The Airborne Legionnaire gains 1d8 hit points per level. The character's Constitution modifier applies.

Requirements:

Base Attack Bonus: +8

Dexterity 13

Skills: Ride 4 ranks OR Pilot 4 ranks, Handle Animal 4 ranks.

Action Points

The Airborne Legionnaire gains a number of action points equal to 6 + one-half his character level, rounded down, every time he attains a new level in this class.

Class Skills

Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Listen (Wis), Jump (Str), Spot (Wis), Navigate (Int), Tumble (Dex), Ride (Dex), Handle Animal (Cha), Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Profession (Wis)

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All the following are class features of the Airborne Legionnaire prestige class.

Bonus Feats: At 3rd, 5th and 8th, the Airborne Legionnaires gets a bonus feat. . The bonus feat must be selected from the following list, and the Airborne Legionnaire must meet all the prerequisites of the feat to select it: Blind-Fight, Brawl, Combat Expertise, Dead Aim Improved Brawl, Improved Feint, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Strafe and Survival.

Weapon Proficiency: Airborne Legionnaires are proficient with all simple and martial weapons.

Flyby Attack: Beginning at 1st level, while flying upon his aerial mount, an Airborne Legionnaire and his mount both benefit from the Flyby Attack feat. They may attack before, during, or after the mount's move.

Table 1: Airborne Legionnaire Advanced Class

Level	Bab	Fort	Ref	Will	Features	Def	Rep
1st	+0	+0	+0	+0	Share Spells, Flyby Attack	+1	+0
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+0	Aerial Defense, Empathic Link	+1	+1
3rd	+2	+1	+1	+1	Bonus Feat	+2	+1
4th	+3	+1	+1	+1	Evasive Action	+2	+1
5th	+3	+2	+1	+1	Bonus Feat	+3	+2
6th	+4	+2	+2	+2	Enhanced Maneuverability	+3	+2
7th	+5	+2	+2	+2	Mounted Spellcasting	+4	+2
8th	+5	+3	+2	+2	Bonus Feat	+4	+3
9th	+6	+3	+3	+3	Extended Empathetic Link	+5	+3
10th	+7	+4	+3	+3	Improved Aerial Defense	+5	+3

Share Spells: Beginning at 1st level, at the Legionnaire's option, he may have any spell he casts on himself also affect his mount. The mount and his Legionnaire can share spells. The mount must be within 5 feet.

Aerial Defense: Beginning at 2nd level, whenever an Airborne Legionnaire's flying mount is required to make a Reflex saving throw, the Airborne Legionnaire may substitute his own Reflex saving throw, if his bonus is greater than the mount's.

Empathic Link: Beginning at 2nd level, the Legionnaire has an empathic link with his mount out to a distance of up to 1 mile. The mount cannot see through the mount's eyes, but they can communicate empathically. Because of the limited nature of the link, only general emotional content can be communicated.

Evasive Action: At 4th level, the Legionnaire can make a Ride, Pilot, or Tumble check to lessen the damage dealt by a successful attack. If the check result exceeds the attack roll, the damage is reduced by half (round fractions down, minimum of 1 point of damage). The Legionnaire can make an evasive action check once per round.

Enhanced Maneuverability: At 6th level, the Airborne Legionnaire can increase his mount's flying maneuverability rating by one ranks, so that a maneuverability rating of clumsy becomes poor, poor becomes average, average becomes good, and both good and perfect become perfect. At 8th level, this ability improves so that the cavalier increases his mount's rating by 2 ranks (maximum is still perfect).

Mounted Spellcasting: At 7th level, the Legionnaire does not need to make a Concentration check to cast a spell while riding a flying moving mount.

Extended Empathic Link: At 9th level, the Airborne Legionnaire's Empathic Link with his mount improves. It now has an unlimited range.

Improved Aerial Evasion: At 10th level, an Airborne Legionnaire's mounted Aerial Evasion ability improves. He and his mount still take no damage on a successful Reflex saving throw against attacks such as fireball, but now only take half damage if they fail their saving throw.

Typical Equipment for a Wyvern Rider (ie Central Powers Airborne Legionnaire): Leather pilot's jacket, knife, military issue pistol (use Colt M1911 stats from MSRD), exotic military saddle (wyvern), helmet, goggles, Broken Arrow Tattoo, Spell Resistance Tattoo, Wand of Fireball (3rd) (50 charges), Wand of Charm Monster (50 charges), Ring of Feather Falling.

Typical Equipment for a Griffin Rider (ie Entente (Allied) Powers Airborne Legionnaire): Leather pilot's jacket, knife, military issue pistol (use Colt M1911 stats from MSRD), exotic military saddle (griffin), helmet, goggles, Broken Arrow Tattoo, Tattoo of Body Adjustment, Tattoo of Spell Resistance, Tattoo of Feather Falling, Wand of Web (3rd) (50 Charges), Wand of Lightning Bolt (3rd) (50 Charges), Ring of the Ram.

Note: Magical items can exceed the spell limitations outlined in *Wizards and Wiseguys* for factions in this time frame.

Open game license

OPEN GAME LICENSE Version 1.0a

The following text is the property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and is Copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc (“Wizards”). All Rights Reserved.

1. Definitions: (a) “Contributors” means the copyright and/or trademark owners who have contributed Open Game Content; (b) “Derivative Material” means copyrighted material including derivative works and translations (including into other computer languages), potation, modification, correction, addition, extension, upgrade, improvement, compilation, abridgment or other form in which an existing work may be recast, transformed or adapted; (c) “Distribute” means to reproduce, license, rent, lease, sell, broadcast, publicly display, transmit or otherwise distribute; (d) “Open Game Content” means the game mechanic and includes the methods, procedures, processes and routines to the extent such content does not embody the Product Identity and is an enhancement over the prior art and any additional content clearly identified as Open Game Content by the Contributor, and means any work covered by this License, including translations and derivative works under copyright law, but specifically excludes Product Identity. (e) “Product Identity” means product and product line names, logos and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts; creatures characters; stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses and special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, equipment, magical or supernatural abilities or effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product identity by the owner of the Product Identity, and which specifically excludes the Open Game Content; (f) “Trademark” means the logos, names, mark, sign, motto, designs that are used by a Contributor to identify itself or its products or the associated products contributed to the Open Game License by the Contributor (g) “Use”, “Used” or “Using” means to use, Distribute, copy, edit, format, modify, translate and otherwise create Derivative Material of Open Game Content. (h) “You” or “Your” means the licensee in terms of this agreement.

2. The License: This License applies to any Open Game Content that contains a notice indicating that the Open Game Content may only be Used under and in terms of this License. You must affix such a notice to any Open Game Content that you Use. No terms may be added to or subtracted from this License except as described by the License itself. No other terms or conditions may be applied to any Open Game Content distributed using this License.

3. Offer and Acceptance: By Using the Open Game Content You indicate Your acceptance of the terms of this License.

4. Grant and Consideration: In consideration for agreeing to use this License, the Contributors grant You a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free, non-exclusive license with the exact terms of this License to Use, the Open Game Content.

5. Representation of Authority to Contribute: If You are contributing original material as Open Game Content, You represent that Your Contributions are Your original creation and/or You have sufficient rights to grant the rights conveyed by this License.

6. Notice of License Copyright: You must update the COPYRIGHT NOTICE portion of this License to include the exact text of the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any Open Game Content You are copying, modifying or distributing, and You must add the title, the copyright date, and the copyright holder’s name to the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any original Open Game Content you Distribute.

7. Use of Product Identity: You agree not to Use any Product Identity, including as an indication as to compatibility, except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of each element of that Product Identity. You agree not to indicate compatibility or co-adaptability with any Trademark or Registered Trademark in conjunction with a work containing Open Game Content except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of such Trademark or Registered Trademark. The use of any Product Identity in Open Game Content does not constitute a challenge to the ownership of that Product Identity. The owner of any Product Identity used in Open Game Content shall retain all rights, title and interest in and to that Product Identity.

8. Identification: If you distribute Open Game Content You must clearly indicate which portions of the work that you are distributing are Open Game Content.

9. Updating the License: Wizards or its designated Agents may publish updated versions of this License. You may use any authorized version of this License to copy, modify and distribute any Open Game Content originally distributed under any version of this License.

10. Copy of this License: You MUST include a copy of this License with every copy of the Open Game Content You Distribute.

11. Use of Contributor Credits: You may not market or advertise the Open Game Content using the name of any Contributor unless You have written permission from the Contributor to do so.

12. Inability to Comply: If it is impossible for You to comply with any of the terms of this License with respect to some or all of the Open Game Content due to statute, judicial order, or governmental regulation then You may not Use any Open Game Material so affected.

13. Termination: This License will terminate automatically if You fail to comply with all terms herein and fail to cure such breach within 30 days of becoming aware of the breach. All sublicenses shall survive the termination of this License.

14. Reformation: If any provision of this License is held to be unenforceable, such provision shall be reformed only to the extent necessary to make it enforceable.

15 COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Open Game License v 1.0 Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

Modern System Reference Document Copyright 2002, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.; Authors Bill Slavicek, Jeff Grubb, Rich Redman, Charles Ryan, based on material by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, Peter Adkison, Bruce R. Cordell, John Tynes, Andy Collins, and JD Wiker.

System Reference Document Copyright 2000-2004, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.; Authors Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Bruce R. Cordell, based on original material by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.

Modern Dispatch #115 2007, RPGObjects; Author Mike Lafferty

open gaming content

Designation of Product Identity: The following terms are designated as product identity as outline in section 1(a) of the Open Gaming License: Modern Dispatch, Darwin’s World, Blood and Guts, Blood and Fists, Blood and Vigilance, Blood and Circuits, Blood and Relics, New Tortuga.

Designation of Open Gaming Content: The following sections of *Modern Dispatch #115* is designated as open gaming content except for terms defined as product identity above. All illustrations, pictures, and diagrams are Product identity and property of RPGObjects™.

The Airborne Legionnaire Advanced Class is open content. The remaining text is closed content.