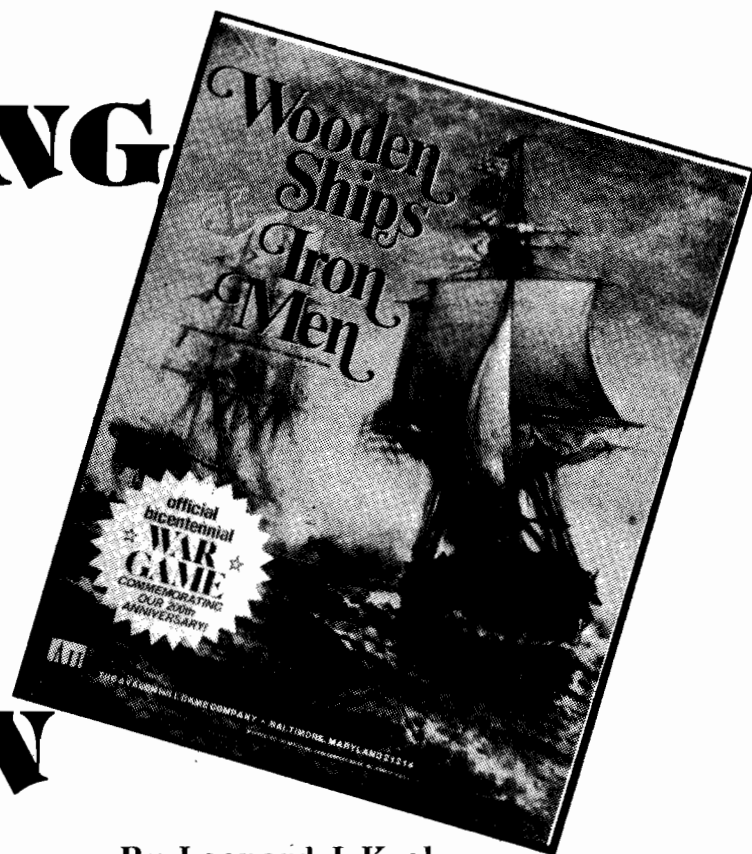


# RERIGGING WOODEN SHIPS AND IRON MEN



By Leonard J. Krol

One game that has stood the test of time is **Wooden Ships and Iron Men (WSIM)**. This author's favorite has been played time and again with the result being a worn out map and game box. There are few other games that can make this claim.

WSIM sparked an interest in this period of history, and further reading into the warfare of the time lead to disagreement with certain aspects of the game. These disagreements lead to some modifications which follow.

## MELEE

In the game as it now stands melees don't have the right 'feel'. They are too bloody and too quick. In one turn you can capture an enemy ship and probably lose most of your crew. In actuality, boarding parties had a most difficult time crossing from one swaying ship to another while enemy sailors were trying to kill them. The result was that captains preferred to pound the enemy into submission with their

cannons rather than risk the loss of most of their crew by boarding.

This is not reflected in the rules whereby if you have *any* edge in quality or numbers, it is an advantageous ploy in order to achieve a rapid victory. There is no penalty for losing most of your crew as long as you capture the enemy ship. In order to make melees more historically accurate we present the following:

1. One melee round per turn.
2. Crew strength for a melee determined on the **Crew Strength Melee Table**.

## CREW STRENGTH MELEE TABLE

	Sailors		Marines	
	OBP	DBP	OBP	DBP
Elite	5	7	6	8
Crack	4	6	5	7
Average	3	5	4	6
Green	2	4	3	5
Poor	1	3	2	4

3. If you have crews of differing qualities in a melee, you roll separately for each group.

Rule one takes the quickness out of the melee. Even with good odds it will take two or three turns to capture a ship, and while you are fighting on the decks, the opposing captain may have his cannon pounding your ship to pieces. This makes boarding a ship a more risky proposition, and one that will require some thought before being undertaken.

Rule three is a more realistic way of handling those melees wherein the sides have differing quality crewmen.

## MARINES

The marines had three primary functions aboard ship. They were assigned to protect the captain and other officers, they enforced regulations, and they were an elite, though small fighting force during boarding action battles.

Naturally, larger ships had more marines assigned to them. Based on the number of cannon the following amount are allocated:

### MARINE SQUARE ALLOCATION

GUNS	MARINES
120	10
108	9
96	8
84	7
74	6
60	5
48	4
36	3
24	2
12 or less	1

On a given ship, marines are of the same quality as the sailors. In other words, a green crew of sailors will have 'green' marines along with them. This is the normal rule, however, for campaigns, or selected scenarios, marine quality may differ from the sailors.

### MUSKET FIRE

1. Only marines have muskets.
2. Muskets have a range of one hex.
3. After all cannons have been fired, the muskets are fired. Cross index the number of marines firing with the die roll on the Musketry Table.

### MUSKETRY TABLE

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	2
2	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	2
3	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
4	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
5	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
6	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3

Elites and Crack, add one to the die roll.

Green and Poor, subtract one from die roll.

If grappled or fouled, add one to die roll.

If firing at an OBP, add one to die roll and double results.

### CREW LOSSES

When a ship takes a crew loss, to determine which box (sailor, marine or officer) is to be checked off you consult the Crew Losses chart. If the losses were by cannon fire, muskets, and then melee, you would roll three times. Once for each type of combat loss. Roll one die.

### CREW LOSSES CHART

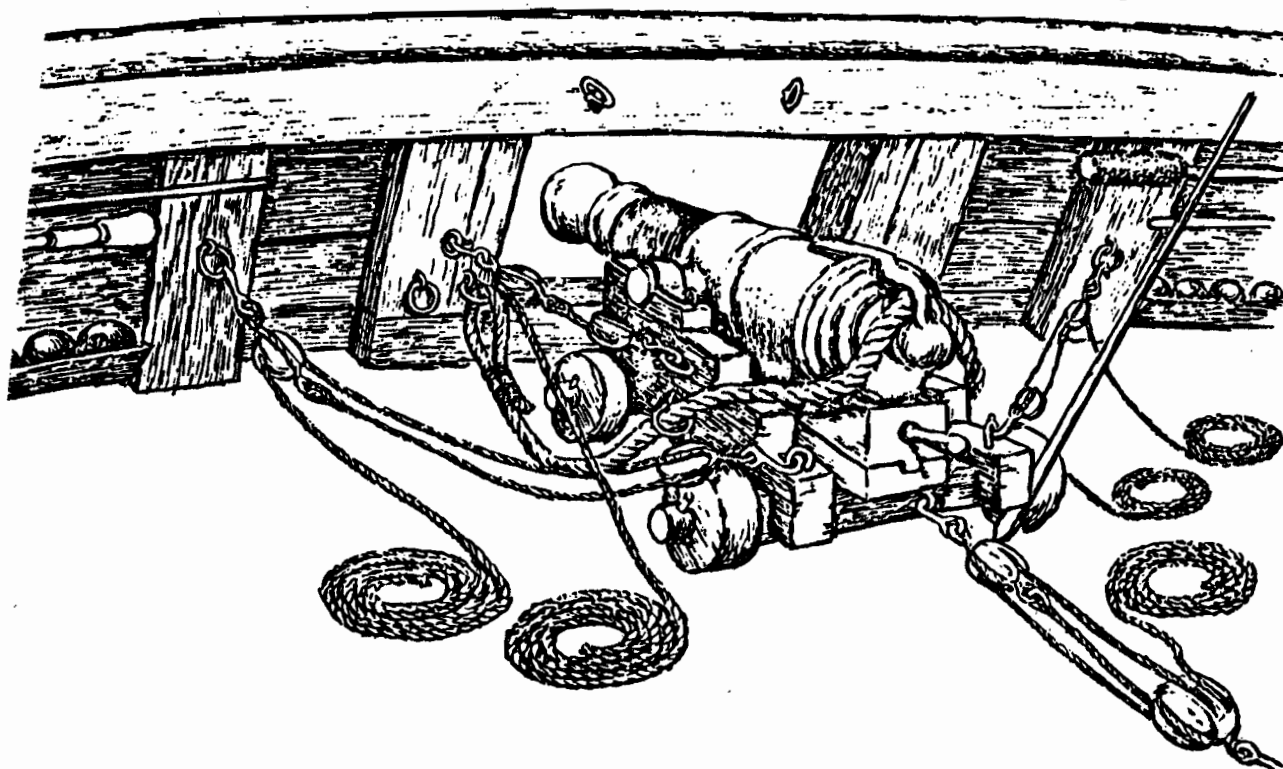
Type	Cannon/Melee Die Roll	Musket Die Roll
Marine	1	1-2
Sailor	2-6	3-6

*In addition to this roll; also roll two dice achieving the following results:*

Captain	2-3	2-3
Commodore/Admiral	11-12	11-12

If an officer is not present or has already been killed, forego this dice roll.

If all the marines are killed, then all crew losses are taken from the sailors. If the boarding party is made up of only one type of crewmen, then all the losses are taken from that group.



## FULL SAILS

Since it takes time to change sails; this decision has to be made in advance. For this reason you must **write that you are changing sails when plotting movement.**

Further, when sailing at full sail, or when changing sails more sailors are needed to handle the ship and they are more exposed to enemy fire. For this reason, if you have full sails, or are changing from full to battle sails, or from battle sails to full sails **double all crew hits.**

## HULL HITS

1. For every five hull hits, one sailor square is subtracted, and treated as a loss.

2. If fifty percent of your hull squares are lost your ship's speed is reduced by one in all attitudes.

3. If all hull squares are checked off, your ship sinks.

The first rule reflects the fact that these men are trying to patch up the ship, bail out water, and doing any task that will keep the ship afloat. If the ship has taken fifty percent hull hits it is more than likely to have taken some hits below the water line and would be lying low in the water, unable to sail as fast as before. Naturally, if all the hull hits are marked off the ship will sink. Normally, it will strike its colors before this happens.

## CARRONADES

Carronades are small cannons that are situated on deck, and are more versatile than the normal, heavier cannons. They are quite effective in clearing the decks of your opponent's ships of personnel. They had a larger bore, enabling them to fire more grapeshot than a normal cannon. Be sure to keep track of what type of shot they are using during the course of the battle.

Carronades can have different types of ammunition and for the normal types, use the standard rules of play. However, if carronades are loaded with grapeshot you should double the number of gun squares available. Two Carronade squares loaded with grapeshot are now worth four. Further, on a Ship of the

Line, carronades can fire grapeshot at grappled, or fouled enemy ships on the second (or later) turns that they are together. However, they may only do this if they have a DBP.

## MORALE

Whether or not a ship strikes its colors depends on a number of factors such as crew quality, casualties, leadership, and the condition of the ship.

In order to determine whether a ship will strike its colors, or rally and fight on you must:

1. Check morale when a ship has a fire aboard, or lost more than half its hull squares, or lost one crew section and has taken any sort of damage.

2. After all melees have been resolved, and all attempts to rally ships have been made, you roll for morale. Roll one D6 and add or subtract modifiers. If the result is 10 or greater, the ship strikes its colors. If the ship has lost all of its guns, or all of its mast squares, it will automatically surrender. To obtain modifiers, check **Morale Modifier Table.**

### MORALE MODIFIER TABLE

Unit/Situation	Modifier
Elite Crew	-2
Crack Crew	-1
Green Crew	+1
Poor Crew	+2
Excellent Officer	-2
Average Officer	-1
25% of hull destroyed	+2
50% of hull destroyed	+4
75% of hull destroyed	+6
Fire	+5
Each Crew Section Elim.	+4
Rake	+4
Cannot return fire	+4

These modifiers are cumulative, including the officers' modifiers which may be added together as long as there is more than one officer present and alive.

## RALLY

After melee, but before checking for morale, you may attempt to rally a ship that has struck its colors if the following criteria are met:

1. The ship's not been boarded.

2. It is not on fire.

It must have a captain, or commodore, or admiral present and living.

To rally such a ship you roll one die and add and/or subtract any modifiers. If the result is equal to/or less than the crew multiplier used in melees, the crew rallies.

## RALLY MODIFIERS

Unit/Situation	Modifier
Excellent Officer	-2
Average Officer	-1
Friendly ship closer than opponent	-1
Not under attack	-1

## FLEET MORALE

Rarely are battles fought to the last man. One side surmises that the cause is lost and attempts to leave the field of action. The following tables represent this fact.

### FLEET MORALE POINTS

Size or Status	Points
100+ guns	8
80-90 guns	6
50-79 guns	4
28-49 guns	2
27 guns or less	1
Squadron Flagship	6
Fleet Flagship	20

Total all the points. Your preservation level is 25% (rounded up) of the total. In a fleet of eleven 74's and one 80 with two squadron flagships and one fleet flagship, the total will be 82 points. The preservation level will be 21 points. In this fleet if four 74's, one of which was a squadron flagship, were sunk or captured, then the fleet would have gone over the preservation level, and would have to retire.

A retiring fleet will attempt to disengage from the battle. It will make no attempt to grapple and will

form only defensive boarding parties for melees. It will fire only at the rigging of enemy ships in order to restrict their ability to pursue. And if the retiring fleet is able to get six or more hexes from the enemy, it must put up full sails. When they are ten hexes away from the nearest opponent, they are removed from the board.

### SHIP'S OFFICER

The following chart is a system for determining the quality of your captains and admirals. The numbers under the headings are the die rolls for that particular category of crew.

	Excellent	Average	Poor
Elite	1-3	4-6	---
Crack	1-2	3-5	6
Average	1	2-5	6
Green	---	1-4	5-6
Poor	---	1-3	4-6

Poor quality captains may rally ships, but they have a modifier of zero. As with all these charts, this chart is optional. Rather than use it, one might agree to have the same quality of officers for both sides, or in order to effect play balance, one could vary the officers. In a campaign game, officers can go up in quality if they are victorious over equal of superior opponents.

### SHIPS AFIRE

Fire was a major hazard on sailing ships. During a battle fire could easily start, and if not quickly extinguished could destroy the ship. To incorporate this into the game the following table should be substituted when checking for a critical hit after you have shot at the hull:

1. Fire I
2. Fire I
3. Fire II
4. At a range of 3 hexes or less, all crew and gun hits are doubled.
5. Fire II
6. Steering damage (one die) a throw of 1,3,5, and turning ability is reduced by one (1). Ships that have only a one turning ability, may subtract two crew squares in order to make the turn. This loss of crew is a permanent one.
7. Same as #4
8. Fire III
9. Anchor cable severed.
10. Same as #6.
11. Fire III
12. Fire IV
13. Same as #9
14. Fire IV
15. Fire V
16. Fire V

A fire burns until it is extinguished, or until it destroys all the hull squares, or until the ship explodes.

After melee, and before morale checks, you may attempt to extinguish the fire.

You must organize your crew as though it were a boarding party. During the melee phase you roll on the **melee resolution chart** with the resultant number being the number of levels the fire goes down. For example, 10 *average* crewmen are assigned to put out the fire. You roll a three, and the result is a one on the chart. A Level III Fire would then become a Level Two Fire, and in the case of a Level I Fire, it would be extinguished.

### Turn Sequence

#### Melee

Attempt to extinguish fire

Damage from the fire

Check for explosion

#### Rally

Morale check

Note the delay in attempting to extinguish a fire. It isn't until a subsequent turn that you may attempt to extinguish it, so there is a chance that a burning fire will cause an explosion before you are able to organize a fire fighting party with which to extinguish it.

### EFFECT OF FIRE

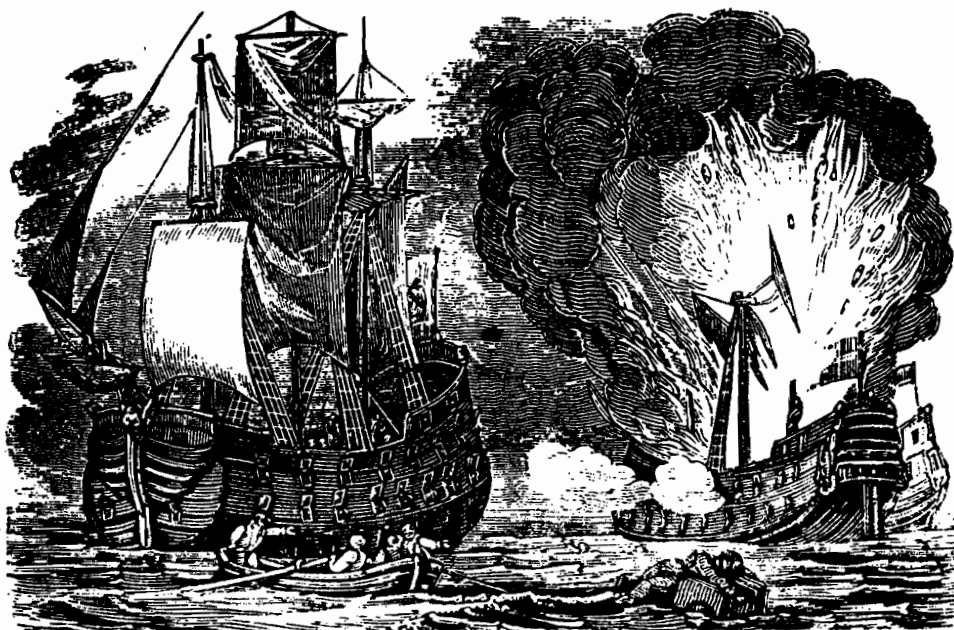
#### Hull

	Squares	Rigging	Crew
Fire I	1	0	0
Fire II	2	0	0
Fire III	3	1	0
Fire IV	4	2	1
Fire V	5	3	2

### CHANCE OF EXPLOSION (2 dice)

	Die Roll
Fire I	2
Fire II	5
Fire III	7
Fire IV	2,7
Fire V	4,7

Even if a ship has struck its colors, the crew must still endeavor to extinguish the fire. On a struck ship, all crewmen are assigned to extinguish the fire, and they must fight the fire until it is either extinguished, or the ship perishes. Marines may be assigned to join in with the sailors in fighting the fire. However, unless they (the marines) are the only survivors, they may not fight the fire unless at least one section of sailors is already engaged.



## HEATED SHOT

Heated shot was used for the express purpose of causing fires either in the rigging or on the decks.

Heated shot may only be used by cannons in fortifications. It takes two turns to reload the cannons firing heated shot. Use the same modifiers as cannons using double shot.

On any turn which you are hit with heated shot and a five is rolled on the CRT, a Level I Fire has broken out.

## SOLITAIRE PLAY

If for one reason or another you are going to play the game solitaire, this system will enable you to do it.

After you have written your movement orders, roll on this chart:

### Ship's Speed Straight course?

1-2	1-3
3-4	1-2
5-7	1

If the die roll is in the range on the line next to its speed, then the ship will travel on a straight course. If not, then roll on the following chart to determine when it will turn during the movement phase.

Ship's Speed							
Die Roll	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1	1T	2T	3T	4T	5T	6T	
2	1T	2T	2T1	3T1	4T1	5T1	
3	1T	1T1	1T2	2T2	3T2	4T2	
4	T1	1T1	T3	1T3	2T3	3T3	
5	T1	T2	1T1T	T4	1T4	2T4	
6	T1	T2	1T1T1	1T2T	T5	1T5	

When it is time to turn, the ship will turn toward the enemy. If there are enemy ships on both sides, the direction is your choice.

During the Change Sail Phase roll one die and add to the number of hexes between ships. If the sum is eleven, or more, the ship will put up full sails.

## BATTLE COMMAND CONTROL

Commanders had a difficult time controlling ships in a sea battle. The only means of communication was by signal flags. This limited the length of the message, and the flags were very often obscured by the smoke from the cannons, or the fires from the ships.

In this battle, the fleets will be divided into squadrons. A squadron will consist of at least two ships and no more than six ships. A commodore will command a squadron. An admiral will command two squadrons.

The player will be an admiral or a commodore. Make a counter with a flag (Admiral) or pennant (Commodore) on it. This ship will represent the one you are on, and this is the only ship over which you have absolute control.

When you are traveling in formation you only need write orders for the flagship. On the flagship's log you write 'Line Ahead' (LAH) or 'Line Abreast' (LAB). On a 'Line Ahead Course', the ships will travel in a straight line, and turn on the hex on which the flagship turned. For 'Line Abreast' all the ships will turn at the same time. Therefore, on an order saying, "2L2" all ships move forward two, turn left, and then move forward another two hexes.

If you want a ship to move independently, you must see if it has received your signal. The maximum range for signals is twenty hexes. If one ship has fired its cannons, roll two dice. If the result is between two and eight inclusive, then the ship had seen the signal. If both ships have fired their cannons, then the signal is seen on a roll of two to six inclusive. If the ship does not see the signal then it stays in formation. However, if it has already broken away, use the random movement chart used in solitaire play.

In larger scenarios, the orders are sent between the flagships of the various formations. If the signals

are not received, use the random movement chart again.

At the beginning of a battle you should decide the chain of command. Thus, if the leading admiral is killed, the second in command may instantly take over.

As was often done during the age of sail, a frigate was placed outside the line of battle for the expressed purpose of relaying signals to the rest of the fleet. Therefore, in the game, if any ship can see the signal, it may relay that signal to any other ship within view.

With these rule changes you are faced with a myriad of problems and choices. Will the fleet see the signals? Can your crew put out the fires before the ship explodes? Will the marines have the ability to repel borders? Can the officers handle the burden of command? Will the crew remain stalwart under the strain of battle? And finally, will the rest of the fleet flee while you are in the midst of battle leaving you alone and outnumbered.

Facing these difficulties now recreates battle conditions during the Age of Sail.

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