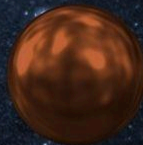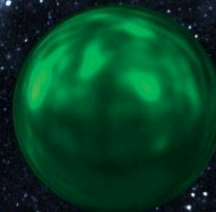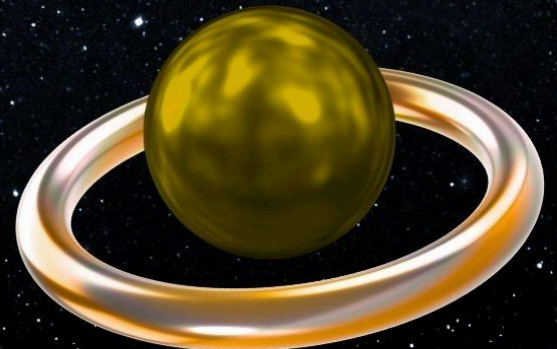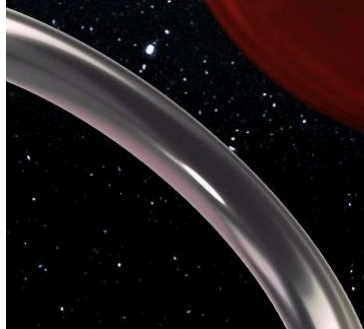# Cover

# THE BELTER GAME OF

# GOLGO

## BASED ON THE EXPANSE BY JAMES SA COREY
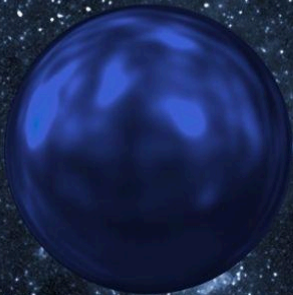
# Golgo In Universe Rules

# GOLGO: LOW / ZERO-G BALL GAME
## MODELED AFTER THE GAME DESCRIBED IN *THE EXPANSE* BY JAMES SA COREY

*"The Golgo table was set for opening throws; the first and second goals untouched and the field still empty…The game is played by throwing steel balls. [She] spun the ball. Opposition balls sprang out to hold her short, matching her spin and trying to co-opt her throw. Table registered, ending the throw; the marker appeared well past the field's half mark."*

*- Nemesis Games, Chapter 3*

## OBJECTIVE

Score points by launching steel balls (Golgos) through floating goal rings, yours or others'. Manipulate the low-g environment to steal, block, or combo your way to victory.

## COMPONENTS

### FIELD

- A concave or modular metal table suspended in low gravity.
- Contains obstacles: bumpers, spinners, tunnels, and magnetic zones.
- Optional: motion rig, vibration system, or rotating platform for extra chaos.

### EQUIPMENT

- 1 Goal Ring per team (color-coded)
- 2–3 Golgo Balls per player per round (steel balls, uniform size)
- Launchers (Pros use slingshots, "finger guns", or special gloves, but games we see in bars are usually hand-toss)

### PLAYERS

- 2–4 Teams (1–2 players per team)
- Games can be free-for-all or alliance-based.

### OBSTACLES

Every table has different obstacles, but some common ones are:

- **Bumpers**: Rubber protrusions from the walls of the field that bump back if bumped into.
- **Spinners**: Think of a really tiny revolving door or a merry-go-round
- **U Curves**: A U or C shaped piece that players can use in maneuvers.
- **Doors**: Holes in the bottom of the board with a vacuum suction that pulls balls that cross over too slowly into tubes. Your ball will pop up in a moment out of another door on the field. Which one? That's anyone's guess.
- **Corners**: Always come in pairs, close together. Easy to get trapped in.
- **Zones**:
  - **Green Zone**: The outermost zone is the Low Acceleration zone, you tend to have the most control here. It also is the least likely to see major gameplay.
  - **Yellow Zone**: The middle zone is where most of the obstacles are, and where the action most happens.
  - **Red Zone:** This area artificially enhances your acceleration. Passing through it

can give you a real boost. But be careful, it's next to the Dead Zone.
○ **The Dead Zone**, or **Dead Float** is a magnetized area at the center of the field that stops your ball dead in the air, leaving it on the float unless knocked back into play.

## GAME FLOW

### Goal Toss

- Each team throws their goal ring onto the field. Goals must land within on the far side of the Half Mark, from your team's perspective.
- Short throws are penalized and re-tossed.
- Floating, bouncing, or rebounding is allowed, so long as your goal settles on the far side of the Half Mark.

### Golgo Toss

- Players launch balls one at a time in rounds.
- For 2 teams: alternate throws.
- Once a ball has been thrown, other teams can throw balls to "block".
- For 3+ teams: throws happen in paired simultaneous turns:
  ○ e.g., Red & Green, then Blue & Yellow, etc.
  ○ Simultaneous tosses resolve in real time. Mid-air collisions are legal.

After all teams have tossed their balls, scoring is resolved. Goals and balls that drift during play are scored based on final resting positions.

# Scoring

- Standard Goal: Your ball passes through your own goal = +1.
- Stealing a Goal: Your ball passes through another team's goal = +1, and the goal's owner loses –1 (effectively stealing a point).
- Combo Goal: If one toss passes through multiple goals, score as above +1 for each additional goal.
- Double/Triple-Dipping: If your ball passes through the same goal more than once in a single toss, score as above +1 for each additional pass.
- Borrowing a Goal: If your ball forces another team's ball through a goal, you gain +1.
  ○ Normal scoring still applies to the ball that was forced through.
  ○ Stealing rules apply if the borrowed goal belonged to another team.
  ○ If you force your own teammate's ball through your team's goal, they score the +1 for a standard goal as well, but this is called an Assist, and is not technically "Borrowing".

## WINNING

- First team to reach a target score (e.g., 10–15 points), or
- Highest score after X rounds or time limit
- Ties are broken with a sudden-death toss: one ball per team, one shot, no retries.

# Regulation Golgo Table

CORNERS

HALF
MARK

U CURVES

DEAD
FLOAT

SPINNERS

DOORS

BUMPERS
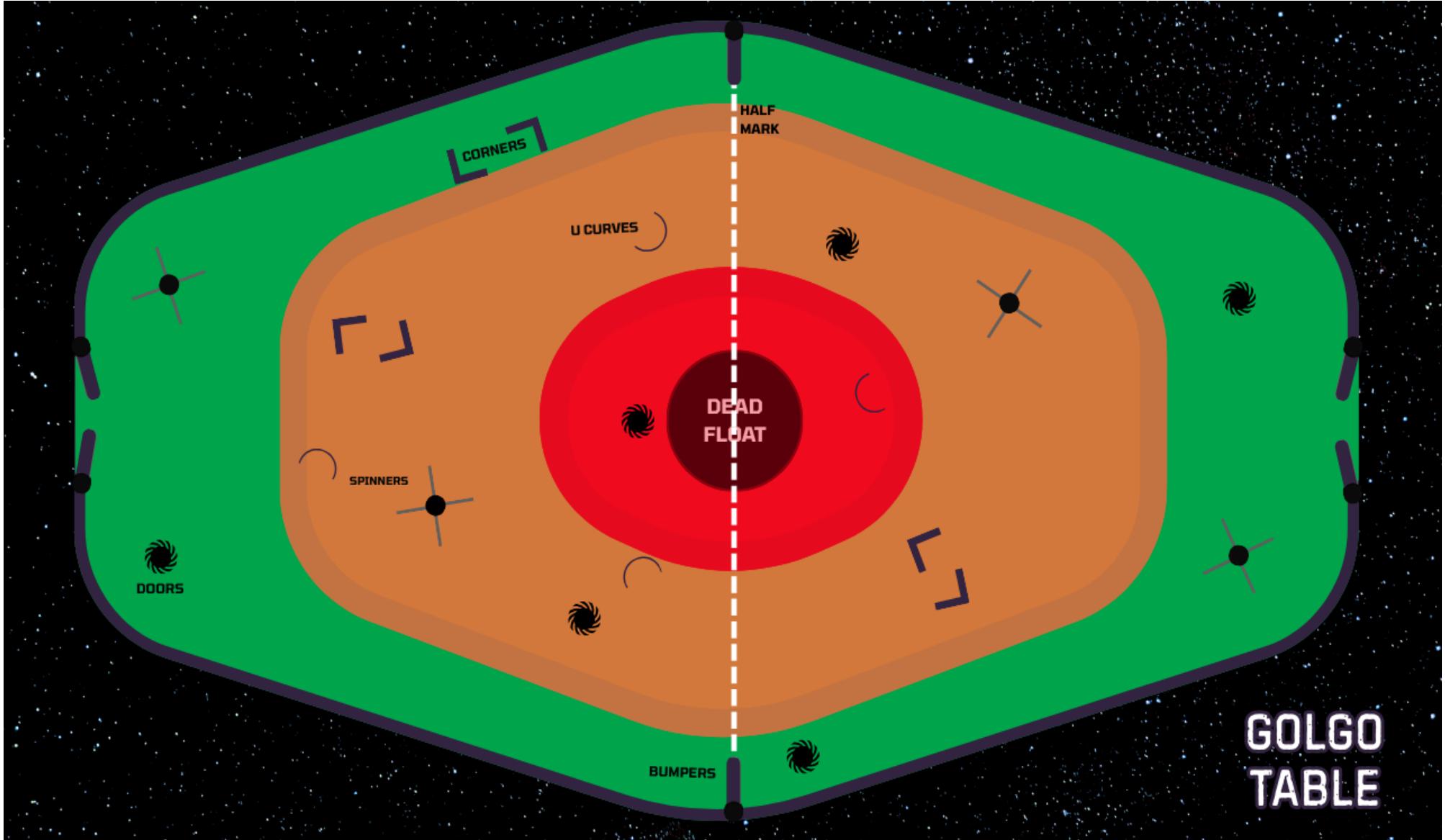
GOLGO
TABLE

# Variants

# VARIANTS

## CORRIDOR RULES

All the rules as base Golgo, but played with whatever balls/rings are available in open hallways. The balls for Corridor rules tend to be bigger and The boundaries are a lot more lax and a ton more variant house rules. Think playing street basketball vs playing on a court.

**Same core principles apply:**

- Throw your goal into the corridor at the start.
- Take turns or toss simultaneously, depending on players and chaos level.
- Score points by getting balls through any goal — preferably your own.
- Steal points if you score through an opponent's goal.
- First to X points or most after a set number of tosses wins.
- Major Differences
- Loose Boundaries
- Balls that bounce off walls or drift far may still count.
- Out-of-bounds is a group decision — or ignored entirely.
- Fewer Obstacles
- No built-in bumpers or magnets — but clutter is fair game.
- Floating debris can act as makeshift obstacles.
- Bigger Balls = More Contact
- Expect more collisions, slow rolls, and lucky deflections.
- "Airball" rules are common: if it drifts for too long, someone just smacks it.

## SHIP RULES

This is Golgo stripped to its essentials. Played in narrow passageways, duct tunnels, or the occasional unused storage container. It's the kind of game two bored belters play between shifts, using whatever's handy: a bent washer for a goal, a steel bolt for a ball, and a sealed airlock corridor as the field.

### Setup & Gear

- Players: 2 (occasionally 3 in chaotic messes)
- Field: A straight or slightly curved corridor, duct, or narrow hall, no bigger than a few meters long.
- Gear: Totally improvised
- Goals: anything ring-shaped (a clamp, socket, washer)
- Balls: bolts, bearings, chunks of metal
- Hands or, rarely, homemade launchers

### Gameplay Changes

1. Toss/Flick to Start Each player tosses their goal down the corridor to begin. If the goal bounces too far, you can call for a "soft reset" and re-toss by mutual agreement.

2. Narrow Space = No Room for Fancy Plays. Straight throws, banks, and subtle curves are more common than wild rebounds.

3. Body Block Tactics = With so little space, blocking becomes the main tactic. You can park a ball in front of an opponent's goal to force awkward angles or stall scoring.

4. Physical Interference = Legal or Not?House rule: is mid-air deflection by a player's hand or arm legal? In some crews, it's allowed Others treat it as a foul and allow a penalty shot

5. Airball Rule = If a ball drifts too long without landing, anyone can boop it back into play

**Scoring**

- Same as core Golgo
- First to 5 or 7 points wins (or just play 'til someone's called back to work)
- Style Points: If a ball hits 3 or more surfaces before scoring, it counts for double points

## WELWALLA/TERASH (THRUST) RULES

In thrust/spin gravity, or planetary settings, Golgo loses its low-g ricochet vibe and becomes more grounded, literally.

### Key Gameplay Differences

### 1. 2D Playfield

The playing field is flat on the bottom but can be in a rounded or modular "tub" with various obstacles on the sides and floor of the field. That, or like Corridor Rules, there is no set boundaries to the field.

### 2. Table Tilt and Popups

Due to gravity, Welwalla Rules players tend to use more obstacles and "popups" on their fields, allowing balls that land on the field a chance to pop back up. They tend to play with tilting tables, like some pinball tables, so each player can try to affect the flow and keep their balls moving. In Wellwalla Rules, the name of the game is momentum.

### No floating goals

Once tossed, goals cannot physically move on their own, although some house rule variants say that if you hit another team's ring, you get to re-toss it. Sometimes Goals lie flat on the floor, other Golgo sets have the rings on a stand to mimic them floating in low-g.

### 3. Throw Mechanics

Balls are rolled, slid, flicked, or tossed (underhand preferred) onto the field from a designated distance.

### 4. Tactical Defense

Instead of chasing combos, players now focus on positioning and blocking. You can "bodyguard" your scored ball by placing another nearby to block incoming shots.

### Scoring

- If you are playing with stands holding your rings vertically, most of the scoring stays the same as regular Golgo.
- If your rings are lying flat, the scoring changes a bit
  - Ball in own goal = +1
  - Ball in another team's goal = Steal 1 pt from another team.
  - If your ball shares a ring with one of theirs (Goal lying flat), you effectively score twice and they don't score.
  - Knock a ball out of a ring before resolution (Goal lying flat) = Deny that team their point
  - No combo multipliers — all scoring is 1 per goal

# Expanse RPG Rules & VTT Assets

# GOLGO Minigame
*Designed to be compatible with The Expanse RPG by Green Ronin Publishing*

Should you and your table want to play Golgo in The Expanse RPG, or as a separate minigame for the heck of it, you can use your Virtual Tabletop of your choice with these **VTT Assets**.

## Opening Toss

- **Roll:** 1 Player form Each team throws their first Golgo rings onto the field.
  - 3d6+ Dexterity (Throwing)
- **Result:** Your roll sets the Goal Target Number (GTN) for your team's ring. This is the target you're trying to meet to earn points through that Goal. if using the VTT, You and the GM will select a location on the VTT based on how high the roll was.

## Drive and Reaction Tests

**Drive Test:** Your initial roll to try and hit your goal/make your play.

- Roll: Dexterity (Accuracy) vs GTN of your goal, or TN of a non-goal target.
  - Describe your throw and how you use terrain/obstacles—GM may adjust TN, grant advantage, or add momentum.
    - Passing: Beating the TN/GTN advances the play. Rolling doubles allows a stunt. Scoring is not guaranteed—reactions may still interfere.
    - Failing: Missed rolls leave the ball in an unhelpful position for allies.
- Momentum & Direction: Passing through zones builds Momentum, which adds to your Drive Score (DS = roll + Momentum).
  - Unless a stunt or obstacle alters it, balls travel in a straight line.
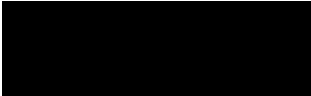- Goal Scoring: If you meet your GTN and no one blocks/deflects, you score.

**Blocking & Deflecting (Reaction Tests)**

- After every drive, opponents may roll a drive check to block or deflect.
- Compare Blocker's DS vs Thrower's DS:
  - Blocker wins & Drama Die > Thrower's: Thrower's ball is Deflected. Blocker takes control, deciding its new path (possibly scoring).
  - Blocker wins but Drama Die ≤ Thrower's: Block succeeds, but both balls stop.
  - Thrower wins: Block fails.
  - If Thrower's Drama Die > Blocker's, the Thrower Deflects, seizing control of the Blocker's ball.
  - Otherwise, the Blocker's ball becomes a dead float (non-goal object), and the Thrower's ball continues normally.
  - Tie (DS equal): Higher Momentum decides the outcome.
- **Stealing a Goal**
  You can also use a reaction roll to bear your opponent to their goal. Beat the GTN and exceed the Thrower's DS and you will score before they do.
- **Borrowing a Goal**
  Meet/beat the GTN using another team's ball you control through a deflection. A Ricochet stunt can set this up.

## Maneuvers

Declare your intent before rolling, clearly listing your target. Take note of what Zone your target

is in, and what zones you want your ball to pass through to build momentum.

| Zone | Goal Target Affect | Effect on Momentum | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Green Zone** | No Penalty | No change (Momentum stays the same) | Safe, controlled play. |
| **Yellow Zone** | +1 (G)TN | Passing through = +1 Momentum | Builds moderate speed. |
| **Red Zone** | +2 (G)TN | Passing through = +2 Momentum | Big boost, risky acceleration. If bested, you could get knocked into the Dead Zone. |
| **Dead Zone** | ███████████ | Momentum = reduces to 0 | Ball stalls; only moves if knocked. |

## Movement and Visualization

- Balls move straight until they hit a wall, obstacle, or another ball.
- Only stunts (like spin) or interacting with the environment can change their path.
- GM places obstacles so players can use them strategically.
- In reactions, state your target and at what point of their throw you are aiming to interrupt.
- Failed rolls usually drift off or stop in the wrong zone.

## Obstacles / Non-Goal Objects

**Base TNs for all Non-goal Objects:** Making a called shot for a Wall (or another non-goal object) to force a bounce depends on what side of the Half-Mark the wall/non-goal object is on. If it is on your side of the Half-Mark, it has a base TN of 10. If you are aiming for the farside of the Half Mark, the base TN is 12. Unless using the **Ricochet** Stunt, all bounces off walls or obstacles are assumed to have the steam force as before, so would stop short of clearing any Targets higher than the initial roll.

- **Doors**: Upon a failed roll that puts you near a door, roll an additional d6, on a 1-2 you fall into a door. The GM will roll 1d6 to see where on the board your ball pops up.
- **Corners**: Upon a failed roll that puts you near a Corner, roll a d6, on a 1-2 you get stuck bouncing indefinitely between the corner pieces. Your ball stays there even after the board is cleared, and if freed, comes into play the next round (doing this on purpose is called *Banking* and is a Stunt).
- **U-Curves:** Making a called shot for an U-Curve +3 to the Base Target Number (so 13 for your side of the Half-Mark, 15 for the farside), but if successful hit will give you an additional +3 to your Momentum and allows you to change your direction mid-throw.
- **Bumpers:** Bumpers can be a hindrance or a help depending on how they are used. Much like a U-Curve you can make a called shot (+3) aiming for a bumper/driving someone into a bumper. Hitting a bumper, sends your ball flying in the opposite direction mid-roll.
- **Spinners:** Spinners can be a hindrance or a help depending on how they are used.

Much like a U-Curve you can make a called shot (+3) aiming for a spinner/driving someone into a spinner. Hitting spinner, sends your ball flying a random direction determined by GM or die roll.

## Golgo Stunts

- **Strategic Positioning:** 1-3 SP can be spent to increase your GTN on an Opening Throw, representing placing it in a difficult spot to reach.
- **Assist**: 1-3 SP can be spent to add an equal number to your teammate's next throw, your ball in a position to give them an assist.
- **Put Spin on the Ball:** 2 SP can be spent to put a spin on the ball, allowing the thrower to toss the ball in a curve instead of a straight line, potentially avoiding obstacles, zones, or an opponent's trap.
- **Ricochet**: Cost: 3 SP to force a bounce off of a wall or the back of a corner. This bounce allows a new roll to aim for another Target/Goal. You can stunt again off of the new roll.
- **Banking a Ball:** Cost: 4 SP, intentionally trap your ball in a set of corners. Your DS sets the goal your teammate must hit if they try to release it back into play. Once released, you can roll again that turn.
- **Knocking/Nicking a Goal:** If you do not meet a GTN, but a) come within 3 pts of meeting the GTN and b) rolled doubles, you can spend 3 SP to have your ball collide with the outside of the goal - moving the targeted goal, even if it's not yours, (this will be done by rolling another goal toss and establishing a new GTN for that Goal).

**Stunt Combo Bonus**: Stunts Cost 1 less if you stunt on a secondary or tertiary roll that is itself the result of the Ricochet stunt.

## Resolution Phase

GM tallies up points based on outcome (see scoring), resolves any remaining collisions, and updates score. The Field is cleared for the next round of throws.

## Scoring

- **Standard Goal:** Your ball passes through your own goal = +1.
- **Stealing a Goal:** Your ball passes through another team's goal = +1, and the goal's owner loses –1 (effectively stealing a point).
- **Combo Goal:** If one toss passes through multiple goals, score as above +1 for each additional goal.
- **Double/Triple-Dipping:** If your ball passes through the same goal more than once in a single toss, score as above +1 for each additional pass.
- **Borrowing a Goal:** If your ball forces another team's ball through a goal, you gain +1.
  - Normal scoring still applies to the ball that was forced through.
  - Stealing rules apply if the borrowed goal belonged to another team.
  - If you force your own teammate's ball through your team's goal, they score the +1 for a standard goal as well, but this is called an Assist, and is not technically "Borrowing".

## Winning the Game

- First to reach a target score (typically 20 for amateur games, but much higher for professional games)
- Highest score after an agreed amount of rounds is another way folks play.

# Design Notes

# Design Notes

This project was a blast to work on. It was part puzzle, part homage. I wanted to take a few moments to explain the logic behind how I approached creating my version of Golgo, the elusive and chaotic game from The Expanse that we've all been thinking about for the past 10+ years, right?....Right?.

At the core of the design were three key pillars:

## 1. Canonical Plausibility

Every clue the authors left about Golgo needed to be included somehow. The text may be sparse, but what exists is evocative. From scattered mentions in Caliban's War and Nemesis Games, we learn that:

- Golgo is played on special tables by opposing teams.
- It involves steel balls and floating goal objects.
- There are complex mechanics like "borrowing goals" and co-opting throws.
- Gameplay results in "sudden violent movements", suggesting fast-paced interactions and reactive elements.
- The field includes distinct zones, as well as terms like "half mark," "drive," and "goals untouched," implying a formal, spatial structure.

From these glimpses, I distilled the key ingredients: teamwork, spatial strategy, chaotic momentum, and a few deeply odd terms that needed plausible rules.

The rule, that *"Goals are said to be 'borrowed' when the defense deflects the drive"*, was especially fun to interpret. My solution: treat it as a mechanic where you can score by proxy, forcing another team's ball through a goal. This not only preserved the strange phrasing but also added tactical depth.

## 2. Readability & Visualization

I wanted this version of Golgo to feel like something you could watch, or even imagine yourself playing. If a fan reads these rules, they should be able to picture a match unfolding beat by beat.

This influenced everything from layout to naming conventions. For example:

- The Red, Yellow, and Green Zones give a clear sense of where the action happens. Green is calm, Yellow is the chaotic core, and Red is risky acceleration near the Dead Zone, a magnetic trap.
- The obstacles (bumpers, spinners, U curves, doors, corners) were directly inspired by the descriptions of sudden player movements and the table reacting to gameplay. Some come straight from pinball, while others echo a classic Expanse line and add unpredictable dynamics.

### 3. Layers

Golgo had to be fun, not just for readers of this fun little thought experiment, but for Belters in-universe. Why else would so many of them play it?

That meant creating rules that:

- Feel like they evolved organically across different habitats and ships.
- Reward cleverness, improvisation, and teamwork.
- Can be hacked together with spare parts or played formally on any of the big stations.
- Would be a visually interesting spectator sport.
- Contained meta-references to the larger world of The Expanse.

This is why you'll find multiple variants, each tailored to a different kind of setting:

- Corridor Rules are scrappy and chaotic, the "streetball" of Golgo.
- Ship Rules strip things to the essentials, two bored engineers, a washer, and a bolt.
- Welwalla/Terash Rules reimagine the game in thrust gravity, changing the physicality of play and introducing table tilt mechanics for momentum control.
    - This is also the version we can most likely play at some point here on Earth. Although, I'm probably not going to try my hand at building a real Golgo field anytime soon.

Each variant reflects the conditions of life in the Belt, and how games evolve based on context. Special shoutout to Redditor u/No_Tamanegi for inspiring me by asking if the game had "Roski Rules," which sent me down the rabbit hole of variants.

### Inspiration

The big mechanical breakthrough came when I was watching this year's *Jelle's Marble League*, specifically the bocce-style event. Something about the movement, targeting, and physics unlocked the way Golgo could feel. From there:

- The floating rings became movable, borrowed partly from bocce's movable pallino and partly drawn from the symbolism of rings as things you pass through. A not so subtle hint at what is to come in the wider world of The Expanse.
- The goal toss phase gave players agency from the very first moment, setting the tone for chaos or control.
- I leaned into pinball mechanics and zero-g physics to simulate the frenetic energy the books imply.

Eventually, I used Canva to sketch the mock Golgo table you see in this document, which pushed me to refine how the obstacles would actually interact. I had to look at a few pinball machines for inspiration, but for the most part the Bumpers, Spinners and U-Curves were easy enough to incorporate. The "Doors and Corners" were the last major obstacles to lock in, and

the most fun to solve. I knew I wanted them there, but couldn't find a good way to make it work. I tried putting in mini mazes on the field to represent the corners, but that made the field too cluttered. I tried little boxes with doors scattered across the field, but that looked goofy and didn't seem very fair to have inescapable traps like that.

In the end the "Doors" ended up being a trapdoors into a tube system under the field that captured the hesitation I wanted players to have around them, and the idea that you don't know what's on the other side.

The "Corners" ended up being two right angle blocks that sit close enough to trap someone in a back and forth ricochet loop if they are unlucky enough to hit it doing too fast I wanted it to be dangerous and evoke Miller's warning, while also being potentially escapable and/or used to a clever belter's advantage.

In the end, I kept it simple, trusting that players (both in the world of the Expanse, and the ones playing along at home) would have more fun making their own strategies.

## Final Thoughts

Golgo was never meant to have clean edges. It's a Belter's game. Half-sport, half-brawl, all improvisation. I hope this design captures that feeling while giving us fans of The Expanse something new to explore, argue about, or even try playing.

It was, and continues to be, a delightful little side project. What a fun way to spend the last couple of days. If you have any ideas on how to improve this or build upon what's already here, please reach out to me. I love to collaborate.

Anyway…bye.

- **JMRoaming**