



ROLLER BALL

Game design by Chris Rohan

Prologue:

It's the year 2018. Countries, no longer marked by borders, are at peace. Major corporations make global decisions that could not longer be trusted in the hands of politicians. Each of these corporations, like the Energy Corporation of Houston, from the major cities of the world sponsor Roller ball teams. The game, an invention that acts as both an outlet for the world's citizens and a panacea for the violence and wars that preceded the game. It is a brutal game, containing the bloodiness of the Roman Circus Maximus, combined with the strategy and team element of the former National Hockey and National Football Leagues. Two teams, completing with ten players each, use skates or motorbikes to encircle an enclosed banked track and battle for the possession of a heavy, steel ball. The object: to secure the steel ball in the opposition's goal. The players, modern gladiators, are protected with helmets, padding, and spiked gloves. The motorbikes tow players quickly around the track for a scoring strike, while running down any unfortunate opponent who may get in their way. The steel ball is fired...the mayhem begins...the world is at peace...or is it?

Design notes:

After reading about the upcoming release (2001) of the remake of Roller ball, I began to think about the Roller ball board game I created back in 1975 after seeing the original movie. I don't remember much about the game as it is a distant memory and was tossed away a long, long time ago. I do remember that it used two dice and had individual player cards for bikers and skaters. There was no track or movement of individual players, just results that stated 'pass', 'shoot', or 'ball lost to opponent.' Very primitive, but it was a good attempt for a mid-teenager. When I started to think about a redesign, I wanted to first set some objectives. The objectives were as follows:

- First, it had to have the flow and speed of 'real' Roller ball.
- There should be a track to show movement and give the feel of the game.
- A match should not take more than one hour to complete.

- It had to contain individual player cards for each player.
- The majority of the results had to come off the player cards.
- The player cards had to be easy to create.
- There will be no numeric values to represent the various skill levels.
- There should be different modes of play (i.e., playing offensively or defensively)
- It had to contain the violence and finesse of the 'real' game.

One of the aspects of the original game I do remember was that younger players had a better chance to get maimed or injured than a veteran player. I liked that idea, figuring an older player, over the years, had developed the skills to avoid attacks from opponents. With this in mind, players would be lumped into one of three categories: star, experienced, or rookie. This level, which can be increased in certain situations, will be of great importance when determining scoring, hard hits, penalties, injuries, possession, etc. (thus avoiding numeric values for ratings).

The first step is to determine the track layout. I used the 'zone' (or sections) concept that was apparent in the movie. The track, divided into twelve zones in which included two zones that are considered scoring sections. The ball must be in possession of an offensive player in the shooting zone before a shot may be attempted.

The next step was to determine card design. I decided there would be three types of player cards: Bikers, Skaters, and Catchers. I felt that I wanted all players rated for individual defense. Some players would be more aggressive than others, take more penalties than others, etc. So that led to the 'Attack' column to represent defensive ability. Next with my goal of the majority of the results on the players' card, I developed the 'Roller ball action' column. I came up with eleven results that would represent the typical play of a match. I chose eleven, because that is the number of results needed for two dice added together. The card creator randomly moves the results around to give each player a varied look (and, of course, varied level of ability).

The final section on each card would represent each type of players' specialty. Skaters will have a shooting section; Catchers will have a catching ability section (all Catchers use a generic Catcher Shooting column on the game boards); and Bikers will have a special section that leads to Coach's strategy rolls and mechanical checks. Also, each team has a coaching card that includes the coach's name, his rating and the team rating for Medical and Mechanic staffs (good, average, or poor).

As I developed the card makeup and the various card results, I started developing the game boards that drive the various aspects of the game. The firing of the new ball, shooting, rebounding, the battle for the loose ball, hard hitting, injuries, medical staff checks, penalties, coach's strategy (I wanted the coaches to choose the strategy, not me), and mechanical crew checks make up the charts to reproduce the chaos of Roller ball.

Game setup:

Lay out the lineup board in straight line. Use either tape or paperclips to join sections together. Place a 'timer' marker on the '20:00' square. You will make two passes through the timing line. (Game tip: try using a die for the timing marker. Use the '1' result for the first pass and '2' for the second pass.) Place the 'ball' marker in the middle until the ball is fired. Place a 'strategy' marker in each team's 'normal' box.

Place the starting players on the lineup board with the visiting team is on top and the home team below. The usual alignment is three bikers, five skaters, and two catchers. You may employ a third catcher at the "skater 5" position. Place the remaining players (with the coach card on top) in the bench section.

Dice:

In most cases, two dice are roll and added together. There will be a few instances where only one dice is used. You'll be instructed when to use two dice or one.

Game Timing:

Move the timing marker one space each time a 'Roller ball action' roll is made. There will be some situations where a result on a game chart states to move the clock on time increment. These are the only instances the timing marker is moved.

Penalty Timing:

When a penalty is called, place the guilty parting in the 'penalty box'. Use a marker to keep track of the penalty time. Don't forget to move the penalty timer each time the game clock moves. An alternative is to record the penalty time and when the appropriate time elapses, set the player free.

Random Player chart:

Just below the track is the Random Player chart. Some results on the game boards make reference to a random player. Use these charts to determine which player is involved. Also use this chart to determine which Biker a skater will catch a ride with.

Substituting Players:

Roller ball uses the same free substitution that hockey used. You may change any number players only when you have the ball. The only exception to this rule is the current ball handler. You can't change the player in possession of the ball.

There may be some situations where the Coach's Strategy chart specifies a player change. Follow the instructions on the chart.

Also, be aware that some players may not be eligible to return until the next new ball. Try to keep these players separate, so they will not return to the match 'early'.

Starting play (a.k.a. firing the ball...):

First, roll two dice to determine in which zone the ball will end up. Refer to the numbers just outside of each section on the track. As part of the home track advantage, there is a chance that the ball may start off in the home teams shooting zone. **Important note: A shot may be taken any time a home team player picks up the ball in the shooting zone.**

Next roll two dice and refer to the 'ball fires' chart. Follow the descriptions listed in the chart. In most cases you will refer to the 'Catching' section of a catcher. Roll two dice and refer to the event that is in the dice range. The four basic events are as follows:

1. **BALL PICKED UP.** The catcher picks the ball up and is in control (credit catcher with a caught ball). Roll two dice and refer to the catcher's 'rollerball action' section.
2. **BALL MISSED.** Catcher fails to pick up ball. Ball is controlled by opposing catcher. If no opposing catcher is present, the catcher who missed the ball gains control. Credit controlling catcher with a caught ball.
3. **BOBBLED-LOOSE.** Roll two dice and consult the BOBBLED-LOOSE chart.
4. **GUTTERBALL.** Ball is not handled and rolls into gutter. Restart play with new ball. Advance the game clock one time increment (15 seconds).



Roller ball Action On Skater/Catcher Cards:

Once a player is in control of the ball, roll two dice and refer to the player's 'Roller ball action' section of his card. Move the clock, one time segment for all rolls on a player's

'Roller ball action'. The following are the eleven possible results on the Skater and Catcher cards:

1. SKATE TO SHOOTING ZONE. The ball handler dodges the opposition and skates to the shooting zone. If a skater, roll two dice and refer to the skater's 'Shooting' section. If player is a catcher, roll two dice and refer to the generic "catcher's shooting" chart.
2. HANDOFF TO NEXT PLAYER. The player has handed the ball off to an adjacent player. Switch the possession marker to the player to the left or the right of the current ball handler. For example, if Skater2 has the ball, and a *Handoff To Next Player* result is rolled, he hands the ball to either Skater1 or Skater2 (coach's choice). Please note: Catcher 1 may hand off to Catcher 2 or Skater 1. Skater 1 may hand off to Catcher 1 or Skater 2.
3. HANDOFF TO ANY PLAYER. The current ball handler hands the ball off to any teammate (skater or catcher). He may not handoff to a biker.
4. HANDOFF-MOVE ONE ZONE. The current ball handler hands the ball off to any teammate (skater or catcher). The new ball handler moves one zone with the ball. Note: If the ball is handed off in the shooting zone, the new ball handler does not have move one zone, he may remain in the shooting zone to attempt another shot.
5. ATTACK BY BIKER. The current ball handler is attacked by a random biker. Roll one die on the Random Biker chart (on track board) to determine which biker will attack ball handler. Roll two dice and refer to the biker's ATTACK section of his card.
6. ATTACK BY DEFENDER. The ball handler is attacked by his defender (that is, the opposing player). Roll two dice and refer to the skater's ATTACK section of his card.
7. SKATE ONE ZONE or SKATE TWO ZONES. The player in possession skates the appropriate number of zones (one zone or two zones). Move the track marker one or two spaces (be sure to move in a counter-clockwise direction). Once the ball reaches his team's shooting zone, he may attempt a shot. An important note here is that Zone movement from Action results do not have to be exact. Once the shooting zone is reached a shot may be attempted. For skater's, roll two dice and refer to the player's SHOOTING section. For Catcher's, use the CATCHING SHOOTING Chart to determine the shooting result.
8. FIGHTS OFF DEFENDERS. The player fights off opposing players. There is no track movement. Continue the action with a new 'Roller ball Action' roll.
9. SKATE TO BIKER. The current ball handler rides in tow behind a random biker. Roll one die on the Random Biker chart (on track board) to determine which biker the ball handler will ride behind. Roll two dice and refer to the biker's 'Roller ball action' section of his card.
10. LOSE BALL TO OPPONENT. The current ball handler loses the ball to his opponent. If there is no opponent (i.e., due to penalty), he retains possession of the ball. Continue play as normal.



Roller ball Action On Biker Cards:

Once a player rides in tow on a biker, roll two dice and refer to the biker's 'Roller ball action' section of his card. Move the clock, one time segment for all rolls from the 'Roller ball action'. The following are the ten possible results on the Biker cards:

1. RIDER HANDS BALL OFF. The current ball handler hands ball off any player. The new ball handler is still riding behind bike. Roll for new action on biker's card.
2. RIDE TO SHOOTING ZONE. The biker, with the player in tow, rides to the shooting zone. The player in tow may attempt a shot. If a skater, roll two dice and refer to the skater's 'Shooting' section. If player is a catcher, roll two dice and refer to the generic "catcher's shooting" chart. If a goal is scored on the shot, credit the biker with an assist.
3. RIDE TWO ZONES, RIDE THREE ZONES, or RIDE FOUR ZONES. The Biker (and the skater in tow) ride the corresponding number of zones (two, three, or four zones). Move the track marker the proper number of spaces (be sure to move in a counter-clockwise direction). Once the ball reaches his team's shooting zone, he may attempt a shot. Again, an important note here is that Zone movement from Action results do not have to be exact. Once the shooting zone is reached a shot may be attempted. For skater's, roll two dice and refer to the player's SHOOTING section. For Catcher's, use the CATCHING SHOOTING Chart to determine the shooting result.
4. ATTACK BY BIKER. The player in tow is attacked by the opposing biker (i.e., the bike that is opposite the bike the player is behind). Roll two dice and refer to that biker's 'Attack' section.
5. ATTACK BY SKATER. The player in tow is attacked by a random skater. Roll one die and refer to the random skater chart on the track board. Once the attacker is identified, roll two dice and refer to the attacker's 'Attack' column.
6. ROLL BALLHANDER ACTION. The player has let go of the bike and is again skating on his own. Roll two dice and refer to the ball handler's 'Roller ball action.'
7. SPECIAL CHART. Roll one die and refer to the biker's SPECIAL section. If the result is COACH'S STRATEGY or MECHANIC CHECK, roll two dice and refer to the appropriate chart. For the 'Reroll for action' result, roll two dice and refer to the 'Roller ball action' section as normal.

8. BALL LOST TO OPPONENT. The current ball handler loses the ball to his opponent. If there is no opponent (i.e., due to penalty), he retains possession of the ball (roll two dice and refer to the Biker's 'Roller ball action').



Skater's Shooting:

Whenever a player is in control of the ball in the shooting zone, he may attempt a shot.

Note: Some Rebound results will sometimes be the exception (having you roll for new action rather than the shooting).

1. SHOT AT GOAL. The player takes a shot at goal. Roll two dice and refer to the Shot at Goal chart under the appropriate column (Star, Experienced, or Rookie).
2. S.O.G. (O or A). The player takes a shot at goal if either team is playing offensive strategy or if shooting team has a player advantage (i.e., opponent has less men on the track due to penalties). If either team is playing normal or defensive strategy, the ball moves one zone and any defensive player has control.
3. S.O.G. (NOT D). Player only takes shot if either is not playing defensive strategy or his team is short handed. If either team is playing defensively or the shooting team is short handed, the ball moves one zone and any defensive player has control.
4. ATTACKED. Attacked is the same as the ATTACK BY DEFENDER action result. The ball handler is attacked by his defender (that is, the opposing player). Roll two dice and refer to the skater's ATTACK section of his card. The only difference is that a player will make another 'Shooting' roll if the result is 'missed hit'.
5. LOOSE BALL. Roll two dice and refer to the 'Loose ball' column.

Attacks by players/bikers :

When an attack is made, roll two dice and refer to the 'attack' section of the aggressor. In most cases it is the opposing player (i.e., the home Skater1 is guarding the visiting Skater1, and vice versa). There is a dice range associated with the five possible results. They include:

1. **JAR BALL LOOSE.** Hit knocks ball loose. The ball moves one zone and any defender takes control of the ball.
2. **MOVE ONE ZONE.** Attempted hit is ineffective. Player moves one zone with ball. This one zone move must be made. It will sometimes cause the ball to move moved out of the offensive team's shooting zone. This represents the defense tightening up in front of their goal. The team must circle the track before shooting again.
3. **HARD HIT.** Hard hit by attacker. Roll two dice and refer to the hard hit chart. There is a separate hard hit chart for Skater/Catchers and for Bikers. Be certain to use the proper column based upon the attacker's experience level.
4. **MISSED HIT.** Attempted hit misses, but ball handler remains in the same section. Roll for new 'Roller ball action' if attack was from the 'action'. If shooting, make a new shooting roll.
5. **PENALTY.** There is a possible penalty on the play. If the penalized player is a biker, refer to the Biker Penalty Chart. If the penalized player is a skater or a catcher, refer to the Skater/Catcher Penalty Chart (be certain to refer to the proper column based upon the penalized player's experience).

If it is unknown which player should be credited for injury/kill, credit it to the opposing player. In a rare event the identity of a player is unclear, use the Random player chart on the track section.

Scoresheet:

Keeping records is important for the success of any league. It allows for the quantitative evaluation of the players and their roll in the history of the game. The following is the description of the information contain on the game score sheet:

UNIFORM NUMBER. Enter the uniform number of the player. The uniform number is the numeral in the upper right-hand corner of the player's card.

PLAYER. Enter the player's name.

POSITION. Enter the player's position. You may use abbreviations: B for Biker, S for Skater, or C for Catcher.

PLAYED IN MATCH (or IN). Check this box, when a player enters the match.

OUT OF MATCH (or OUT). Check this box when a player is out for the remainder of the match.

SHOTS ATTEMPTED. Credit a player with a shot attempted if he scores, has a shot blocked, shoots wide, fumbles or drops the ball attempting a shot.

SCORED. Record the goal number from the corresponding entry in the scoring summary section of the scoresheet.

ASSIST. One Assist may be credited on each goal. Credit the player who either passed the ball last or took the initial shot if a goal is scored on a rebound. If a goal is scored while in tow of a biker, credit the biker with an assist. You may have to keep a mental note of the last player to pass the ball if a series of rolls occurs before a goal is scored.

PENALTY. Record the letter from the corresponding entry in the penalty summary section of the scoresheet

HITS. Credit a player with a hit if an attack causes an opponent to loose possession (i.e., drop) of the ball. The hitter's team does not have to gain possession to be credited with the hit.

OPP. INJ'D (or OPPONENTS INJURED). Credit a player with a 'Opponent injured' if a hit causes the player to be removed for the remainder of the match (and beyond). Short-termed injuries for the duration of the period, to next ball, etc, do not count.

CATCHES. Credit a player with a catch if he gains possession of the newly fired ball. This includes gaining possession from the successful rolls from his Catching section, automatic possession from an opponent's miss or from a chart result.

INJURY. Make note of any injuries suffered by the player.

HITS. Credit a player with a hit if the player's hit causes an opponent to lose possession of the ball.

SCORING SUMMARY. Enter the Period (PD), time of the goal, uniform number of the players credited with the goal and assist(s). Enter the score in the V (visitors) and H (home) columns.

