

FEATURE: The Highest-Paid Athlete in World History Lives Again on YOUR Tabletop!

This was a PLAAAY Games newsletter feature from June of 2020, written by Keith Avallone...

Do a Google search of “highest paid athletes 2020,” and you’ll see tennis star Roger Federer at the top of the list. Usually there’s a glut of soccer stars heading the list, but because of the global pandemic many of the world’s top soccer stars suffered lost wages, allowing the Federer to slip into the lead this year. Federer made just over \$106 million between June of 2019 and June of 2020. Following Federer are Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi and Neymar—all soccer stars. Hoops star LeBron James is the first North American on the list, he made just over \$88 million over the past year, (more than half of it through endorsements) The rest of the top ten: Stephen Curry, Kevin Durant, Tiger Woods, Kirk Cousins, Carson Wentz.

We live in an era of big-money professional sports, for sure. So it may surprise you that the highest-paid athlete in the history of sports isn’t playing a sport today. In fact, he hasn’t played for almost 2000 years! His name was Gaius Appuleius Diocles, a chariot racing star from Ancient Rome, who earned the equivalent of \$160 million a year over a career that spanned two decades and brought him an estimated net worth of between \$15 and 50 billion--that’s right, BILLION, with a “B!”

It’s been several years since Dr. Peter Struck, associate professor of classical studies at the University of Pennsylvania, found fifteen minutes of fame by coming up with these numbers and creating somewhat of a media firestorm by sharing his findings. A variety of news outlets picked up on the story. Here’s a nice summary and here’s another one. And here’s a scholarly article written by Robert B. Kebric that delivers tremendous depth and insight into Diocles and his career.

What I found most interesting, though, was the fact that despite his enormous career earnings Diocles wasn’t the winningest chariot racer in ancient times, nor was he even in the top three. But he had a knack for showmanship and was shrewd in choosing to participate in only the most lucrative events—which he usually won, often with great flair. His trademark was the last-lap come-from-behind victory, snatching victory at the last possible moment. In other words, he knew there was dollar value in showmanship as well as athletic ability.

Most of these chariot races were held at the Circus Maximus, a huge, oval-shaped stadium in Rome that could seat more than 200,000 spectators. It was said that any chariot race in which Diocles agreed to compete automatically achieved “featured match” status and delivered huge crowds. The poor and slaves could attend for free, assigned to the “cheap seats.” The wealthier class got the box seats with better views and spent much of the down time placing wagers on the upcoming races. Chariot racing had been around for several hundred years by the time of the Circus Maximus, having been added to the Olympic Games around 680 BC. By Diocles’ time (in the early 120’s and ‘30s AD), the sport had become well-established and wildly popular.

This leads to another aspect of chariot racing of which I was unaware: the existence of racing “teams.”

There were four main teams, each wearing a color inspired by one of the four seasons: Blue, Red, White and Green. In a typical race, each team would provide three drivers and the team members would work with each other to thwart the efforts of the other teams. Each team had up to 3 chariots in a race and they would often collaborate with each other against the other teams. However, the races that attracted the most interest were special, feature races in which ONE member of each team would compete. These were the races that Diocles specialized in. Over 1000 of his 1400 career wins were in these feature match four-on-four races, which were undoubtedly higher-paying.

FEATURE: The Highest-Paid Athlete in World History Lives Again on YOUR Tabletop! (continued)

The green team was, year-in, year-out, the top team (sort of like the New England Patriots of chariot racing!). The red team was typically an also-ran. Interestingly, though, Diocles spent most of his career racing for the red team. A couple reasons are put forth. First, he most likely got a more lucrative cut of the team earnings. Second, with the green team loaded with other charioteer stars, Diocles could participate in more of the desirable (big money) races by being the “big fish” on the “small pond” red team instead of having to share the four-on-four races with other green team members. Or, so the thinking goes.

Point being, we tend to think that money-motivation in sports is a recent phenomenon, but in fact it's been around for centuries!

It should be mentioned that chariot racing was extremely dangerous to both drivers and horses—they often suffered serious injury and even death. There were very few rules. You could whip and lash your opponents, or try to pull them from their chariot. Once out of the chariot, a driver could easily be trampled, or dragged, caught in his own reins. In the events with larger fields, there were often spectacular crashes that left the racing surface littered with debris. Unlike NASCAR, races were not stopped to clear debris—the remaining competitors would simply have to navigate around the wrecks—fans came to refer to them as “shipwrecks.” Often this caused even MORE chaos and destruction, with some races becoming more of a “survival of the fittest” than a test of speed and skill. That's what makes Diocles' career even more remarkable: he retired from racing in good health after two decades of competition. That was atypical of most charioteers, who either saw their careers ended by injury or death, or gave up the sport before suffering it.

For those who'd like to get a taste of Diocles' chariot racing skill, we thought it would be fun to create a special set of chariot racer cards that could be used with the RED WHITE & BLUE RACIN' game materials. We've made cards for 32 “all-time great” charioteers, whose careers spanned the first five centuries AD. About a quarter of the drivers are based on the actual numbers of real-life charioteers: Diocles, Pompeius Musclosus, Flavius Scopus, Fuscus, Aurelius Heraclides and Publius Aelius Gutta Calpurnianus. Another half-dozen or so are based on less well-known drivers whose exploits are only tangentially mentioned in the ancient records.

To fill out the set, we created cards for prototypical drivers of a less-accomplished skill level, representing that lower tier of competitors many of whom would meet their demise during races, as mentioned above.


We also created a set of four venue cards in which you can hold various kinds of chariot races. There are three cards for the Circus Maximus, the most popular or racing venues. You can run four-horse, four-chariot races, or four-horse, twelve-chariot races, or six-horse, four chariot “show” races (which were Diocles' specialty). The Hippodrome venue provides an alternate four-horse, twelve-chariot venue.

You'll use the standard RWBR game process, with a couple of adjustments, spelled out on a brief rules page.

POMPEIUS MUSCLOSUS
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■ * * * *

REFLEX *STAR
CONTROL * SMART
SKILL * HEAT


 FAST START: 11
ESCAPE: 10

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

PORPHYRIUS
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■ * * * *

REFLEX *STAR
CONTROL * SMART
SKILL * HEAT

 FAST START: 10
ESCAPE: 11

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

GAIUS APPULEIUS DIOCLES
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■ * * *

REFLEX† *STAR
CONTROL† *SMART
SKILL† HEAT

 FAST START: 9
ESCAPE: 11

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

† Add star (*) on final turn.

FLAVIUS SCORPUS
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■ * *

REFLEX STAR
CONTROL SMART
SKILL *HEAT


 FAST START: 11
ESCAPE: 10

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

FUSCUS
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■ * *

REFLEX STAR
CONTROL SMART
SKILL * HEAT


 FAST START: 10
ESCAPE: 10

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

AURELIUS HERACLIDES
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■ *

CONTROL SMART
SKILL * HEAT

 FAST START: 9
ESCAPE: 9

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

PUBLIUS AELIUS GUTTA CALPURNIANUS
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■ *

REFLEX * STAR
SMART

SKILL


 FAST START: 8
ESCAPE: 10

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

MARGELLUS ANNALIS
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■ *

CONTROL SMART
SKILL HEAT

 FAST PIT: 7
ESCAPE: 9

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

FELIX ARIDIUS
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■

REFLEX

SMART
HEAT

SKILL * HEAT

 FAST START: 6
ESCAPE: 8


©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

KRONUS
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■

REFLEX * STAR

SKILL HEAT

 FAST START: 9
ESCAPE: 7

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC


JUNIUS ROMANUS
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■

REFLEX
CONTROL

HEAT

SKILL

 FAST START: 8
ESCAPE: 9


©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

LINUS ITALUS
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■ * *

REFLEX
CONTROL

HEAT

 FAST START: 7
ESCAPE: 6


©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

VALERIUS QUINTUS
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■

REFLEX SMART

SKILL


 FAST START: 6
ESCAPE: 8

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

BEATTUS RALLA
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■ *

REFLEX
CONTROL SMART

 FAST START: 7
ESCAPE: 9


©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

FAUSTUS JANUS BARBA
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■

REFLEX
CONTROL

SKILL

 FAST START: 8
ESCAPE: 10

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

CYRUS ALBUS
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■ *

REFLEX STAR
CONTROL SMART
SKILL HEAT

 FAST START: 7
ESCAPE: 8

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC


PRIMULUS NICABAR
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■

STAR

CONTROL

HEAT


 FAST START: 6
ESCAPE: 7

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

CORNELIUS DECEBAL
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■

REFLEX STAR
CONTROL

 FAST START: 5
ESCAPE: 9


©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

EMILIAN NATTA
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■ *

REFLEX

SMART

 FAST START: 8
ESCAPE: 8

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

CALRICE CINNA
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■

REFLEX
CONTROL SMART

 FAST START: 7
ESCAPE: 6


©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

CATUS MAGNUS CYPRIAN
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■ *

REFLEX STAR

HEAT

 FAST START: 6
ESCAPE: 8

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

BRUTUS TARQUIN
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■

SMART
HEAT

SKILL

D FAST START: 5
ESCAPE: 10

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

CASSIUS IGNATIUS NERVA
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■

SKILL HEAT

C FAST START: 7
ESCAPE: 7

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

JUSTUS ACHILLEUS
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■

CONTROL
SKILL

D FAST START: 6
ESCAPE: 9

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

CLAUDIUS AGRIPPA
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■

CONTROL SMART

B FAST START: 5
ESCAPE: 7

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

CATO STOLO
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■

STAR

SKILL

HEAT

C FAST START: 4
ESCAPE: 6

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

TITUS BESTIA
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■ *

STAR

SKILL

HEAT

D FAST START: 6
ESCAPE: 8

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

CLETUS ALBERTUS
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■

SKILL HEAT

D FAST START: 5
ESCAPE: 6

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

FLAVIUS AMBROSIOUS
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■

CONTROL
SKILL

D FAST START: 4
ESCAPE: 8

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

DOMITUS CADMUS TRIO
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■ *

STAR

CONTROL

E FAST START: 6
ESCAPE: 7

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

PHILO PATRIN
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■

SKILL HEAT

D FAST START: 5
ESCAPE: 4

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

OCTAVIUS ATTICUS
RWB&G Chariot Racing

■■■■■

REFLEX

SKILL

E FAST START: 4
ESCAPE: 9

©2020 PLAAAY Games LLC

CIRCUS MAXIMUS

FOUR CHARIOTS • SIX HORSES

Elongated Oval Track • Rome, Italy
Feature Race [7 turns]

ESCAPE [NC]



METALLIC Dice **RACE CAM Results**

2	STAR	† Use SKILL for final four turns
3	CONTROL	
4	REFLEX	
5	SMART	
6	SKILL	
7	STAR	
8	CONTROL	
9	HEAT	
10	TROUBLE	
11	REFLEX†	
12	SKILL	

Red White Blue & Green RACIN'
©2020 PLAAY Games LLC

CIRCUS MAXIMUS

FOUR CHARIOTS • FOUR HORSES

Elongated Oval Track • Rome, Italy
Feature Race [7 or 12 turns]

ESCAPE [+1]



METALLIC Dice **RACE CAM Results**

2	CONTROL	† Use STAR for final four turns
3	SKILL†	
4	REFLEX	
5	HEAT	
6	STAR	
7	SKILL	
8	SMART	
9	CONTROL	
10	TROUBLE	
11	REFLEX	
12	HEAT	

Red White Blue & Green RACIN'
©2020 PLAAY Games LLC

CIRCUS MAXIMUS

TWELVE CHARIOTS • FOUR HORSES

Elongated Oval Track • Rome, Italy
Standard Race [12 turns]

ESCAPE [NC]



METALLIC Dice **RACE CAM Results**

2	SKILL	† Use SMART for final four turns
3	REFLEX†	
4	CONTROL	
5	HEAT	
6	SKILL	
7	SMART	
8	TROUBLE	
9	REFLEX	
10	STAR	
11	CONTROL	
12	STAR	

Red White Blue & Green RACIN'
©2020 PLAAY Games LLC

HIPPODROME

TWELVE CHARIOTS • FOUR HORSES

Oval Track • Olympia, Greece
Standard Race [12 turns]

ESCAPE [-1]



METALLIC Dice **RACE CAM Results**

2	REFLEX	† Use STAR for final turn.
3	SKILL	
4	STAR	
5	CONTROL	
6	HEAT	
7	TROUBLE	
8	REFLEX†	
9	SMART	
10	SKILL	
11	STAR	
12	HEAT	

Red White Blue & Green RACIN'
©2020 PLAAY Games LLC

RED WHITE BLUE & GREEN Chariot Racing

Welcome to ancient times and the violent world of chariot racing--we're calling it "RED WHITE BLUE & GREEN Chariot Racin'!" You'll use the basic rules set of our stock car racing game, with these adjustments..

- 1) There's no BOTTOM group in twelve-chariot races; There's no BOTTOM or MIDDLE group in four-chariot races.
- 2) There are no PIT turns in any races.
- 3) Races are Seven or twelve turns in length (fewer drivers, fewer turns). Each turn represents a complete lap around the venue.
- 4) PROBLEMS are only generated by "triples," and automatically end the race for the chariot and driver--there's no REPAIR roll.
- 5) DUELS are different in four-horse chariot races: when DUEL is called for, instead of using the DUEL chart printed on the game board, use odd/even, where odd=driver in 3 and even=driver in 2 to challenge the lead driver (box 1) in the TOP group. In twelve-horse chariot races, use the normal procedure (one chariot per box in the MIDDLE group). On FEUD/FUME results, you can ignore or use poetic license!
- 5) Chips can only earned by winning DUELS, but they are used the same way as in the regular game.
- 6) TROUBLE is resolved same as with the regular game, by rolling on the driver's ESCAPE rating. However, a failed ESCAPE puts the driver in peril. You'll roll on his SURVIVE (letter grade) range to see if he escapes serious injury or death and survives to race another day: A (2-11); B (2-10); C (2-9); D (2-8); E (2-7); F (2-6).
- 7) SHIPWRECK Rule: instead of removing driver cards of "collected" chariots, turn them face down on the game board. If these "shipwrecks" are called upon as DUEL participants, treat it the same as TROUBLE, requiring all active drivers to roll for ESCAPE. Shipwrecks can't challenge, obviously, but if a challenge roll "targets" a shipwreck, use the driver's ESCAPE rating to resolve. Successful challenge, swap places per normal rules.

There's no RACE WEEK procedure. To begin the race, shuffle face-down the cards of the drivers you're using for the race. Flip them face up and roll on the "fast start" range of the top driver. If successful, that driver becomes the leader and you place the remaining drivers based on trophy symbols..

For twelve-chariot races, GOLD drivers are placed in the highest available position in TOP group; SILVER drivers are placed in lowest available position in TOP group or HIGHEST in the MIDDLE group; BRONZE drivers are placed in the highest available position in MIDDLE group; drivers with no symbol are placed in the lowest available position in the MIDDLE group.

For four-chariot races, just determine the leader and place the other three drivers in the top three boxes of the TOP group, any order.

Let us know how your races go, and if you have any questions, comments, suggestions or ideas--we're always happy to hear from you! The e-mail address is info@plaay.com.