

By Mark Backhouse

A Mayan 'Rumble in the Jungle'!

APOCALYPTO

The 2006 film *Apocalypto* tells the story of a young tribesman called Jaguar Paw, who is captured by a Mayan raiding party and destined for sacrifice. His subsequent escape and dramatic pursuit by ferocious Mayan warriors is an exciting epic adventure and an enjoyable watch.

In one of the more memorable scenes in the film, Jaguar Paw and his fellow captives are taken to a Meso-American ball court. Having avoided being sacrificed by a rather fortuitous eclipse, and daubed in blue paint, the captives are released two at a time and told to run to freedom in the maize fields at the far end of the court. As they run across, they are used for target practice by Mayan warriors armed with a variety of weapons, and are finally dispatched by a warrior rather unfairly placed at the end of the court, before they can reach freedom.

I had always thought that this scene would make a rather fun 'beer and pret-

zels' game, and Guy's review of some rather tasty Mayan figures by Gringo 40's a few issues ago spurred me into action. I should add that this game is based completely on fiction. (Indeed, the *Apocalypto* film was condemned for its bloodthirsty depiction of mass sacrifice by the Mayans, which doesn't seem to be supported by the evidence.) The game, therefore, depicts the scene from the film, rather than attempting some politically correct revisionism.

PREPARING THE GAME

The game is played on a small dining-room table, just 2' x 3' in size (like the one in my front room). Keeping it simple, I used a green flocked mat as



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Mayan Warrior

the base. Unfortunately, I don't have a Meso-American ball court in the loft, but – having been inspired by Googling for relevant pictures on the internet – I found some scrap pieces of polystyrene, a polystyrene cutter, and some rather nice stone-patterned wallpaper offcuts. Ten minutes of cutting later, I had two reasonably symmetrical polystyrene sides for my court, which I covered with the wallpaper. The whole lot was painted a dark grey and then dry-brushed up with a lighter grey. While a little cheap and cheerful, my Mayan ball court looked pretty good on the table. At the opposite end of the table, representing the goal for the captives, were the maize fields. For these, I used several strips cut off a doormat with a rubberised base, and placed them in a 6" deep end-zone.

Finally, I got a handful of the new Gringo 40's Mayan figures for the shooters and the chasers. The victims were slightly harder to source and, having racked my brains for something suitable, in the end, I used some unarmed loincloth-clad Ancient Egyptian figures. Once painted blue, they looked passable. (Some unarmed Gringo Mayans or poorly-armed Aztec peasants might also do the job nicely.) If you wanted to play this out at a smaller scale, Black Hat Miniatures have some fantastic looking 15mm Mayan warriors, sculpted by Josef Ochman, and several ranges have



© Richard Lloyd

The archer takes aim at the fugitives.



Run blue man, run!

semi-naked unarmed figures that would make great victims.

THE RULES

This was the tricky bit. The game needed to be fast and furious. It required some sort of tactical thinking – but not too much! – so as not to become a simple dice-throwing exercise, but there needed to be an element of chance. To make the game more fun, I thought I would replace dice-shooting with a tiddlywinks system. I thought that, after a few beverages, this might be a bit more engaging than rolling dice! I had already picked up a big bag of small counters very cheaply at a wargames show, so – after a bit of play testing and a few more beverages and snacks for good measure – we were good to go.

Tiddlywinks

For the tiddlywinks element of the game, you will require a hard, flat surface, a few ‘winks’ (see sidebar), and a target area. The target area is circular, with four concentric rings inside one another (like a simplified dart board lying on its back). You can easily draw this with a pair of compasses or using an art program on the computer. The central ring has a 2” diameter and is labelled **Very hard**. The next ring is 4” in diameter and is labelled **Hard**. The third ring is 6” in diameter and is labelled **Medium**. The final ring is 8” in diameter and is labelled **Easy**.

Pings with the tiddlywinks should take place from around one metre away, but the exact distance will obviously be dependant on the space you have available. If you have a distinctly different distance, you might need to modify the size of the target!

The set-up

The captives and the chasers start within a 6” area at one end of the ball court.

At the opposite end of the table is the maize field. Captives are assumed to have won if they reach the maize field and are still alive. One chaser armed with a mêlée weapon may be placed anywhere on the table within 12” of the maize fields; he acts as a sort of back-stop to mop up any survivors. There should be several chaser models for every one captive, but the exact ratio is up to you. I would recommend two captive players per game, each starting by controlling a single captive, and one player controlling six chasers.

In the first turn, all of the captives get a chance to run. Roll 3D6 and translate that into inches. (I hope you roll high – you’ll need it!) The Mayan warriors stand around laughing for a bit and readying their weapons; they’ll get their chance to do something next turn.

In each subsequent turn, you should follow this process:

Phase 1: Planning. The captives each choose a strategy they will carry out in that turn and write it down in secret. They may weave **right** or **left**, go **straight** ahead, or **dive** on the floor. Writing only the initial letter will do, to speed up play. The Mayan player, in the planning phase, must choose one warrior to take a shot at the captives. He may be armed with an atlatl (javelin-throwing device), a staff-sling, or a bow. They should also secretly choose who they want to aim at and which way they want to aim. They may choose to aim to



Mayan warriors by Andrew Taylor.

© Andrew Taylor

WHAT IS TIDDLYWINKS?

When I wrote this article, I assumed (incorrectly) that tiddlywinks is universal. However, Jasper (my boss! Ed.) was confused, as his childhood in the Netherlands had clearly not been as misspent as mine had been in Britain! So, for all our non-British readers, here is a quick explanation.

Tiddlywinks is a game in which you lay a ‘wink’ (a small round plastic disc) down on a hard surface (e.g. the tabletop) and ‘ping’ (propel) it forwards by pressing down on its rear edge with another ‘wink’, held between the thumb and forefinger. This makes the original wink spring forwards across the table. Normally, you would aim to ‘ping the wink’ into a pot to score points. Any thin, round plastic gaming counters will do, although it helps if they are slightly thinned around the edge, as this somehow makes them easier to ping forwards.



Will the chaser intercept the runner?

the **right** or **left** or **straight** ahead, or to **delay**. Again, just the initial letter will suffice.

Phase 2: Reveal. All players reveal their planning choices. The captives move first. For a straight, left or right choice, the figure is moved 2D6" and may move in the appropriate direction along their frontal 90 degree arc. If the captive has chosen to dive, the figure is placed on the ground where they started the turn.

A captive can attempt to run into a Mayan warrior and knock him off his feet. This is a pretty reckless manoeuvre, but the captives are desperate! They are allowed one attempt, and it is classed as a **Hard** shot. Note that the captive gets no weapons bonus and gets a single ping of the tiddlywink. A successful attempt knocks the Mayan warrior off his feet and the figure loses his turn in phase 4. In phase 5, he can get to his feet and move as normal in the following turn. A failed attempt to knock down a Mayan warrior means that the captive must stop directly in front of him, the Mayan may attempt to club the offending captive for his overconfidence.

Phase 3: Shooting. The chasers need to compare their aiming direction with the movement of their quarry, to establish their chance of hitting. This is achieved by consulting the following table:

CHASER / CAPTIVE	LEFT	RIGHT	STRAIGHT	DIVE
LEFT	Easy	Hard	Medium	Hard
RIGHT	Hard	Easy	Medium	Hard
STRAIGHT	Medium	Medium	Easy	Hard
DELAY	Hard	Hard	Hard	Easy

The chance of hitting denotes the difficulty of the ring you are required to get the tiddlywink inside to score a hit. The target captive is wounded and is automatically knocked over, unless he is hit by an atlatl, which results in an automatic kill. If the shooter manages to achieve one ring smaller than the required score, this is an automatic kill shot and the captive is removed from play.

The different weapons also affect the accuracy and speed of the shooting:

- **Atlatl:** You must ping one tiddlywink. As long as you hit, this counts as an automatic kill.
- **Staff-sling:** You must ping one tiddlywink. When it stops, you must ping the same tiddlywink again. The location of the second landing is the result that stands.
- **Bow:** You must ping two tiddlywinks in quick succession in your shooting phase, at one greater difficulty rating, instead of a single tiddlywink.

Phase 4: Chase. If any figures are wounded or on the ground, the chasers come into play. The chaser player must move one chasing figure 2D6" towards

the nearest downed or wounded figure. If he comes into contact with him, he finishes him off with a bludgeon to the head or a sharp-bladed stone knife across the throat. If, at the end of their move, any captives are on their feet and within 3" of the chaser with the m el e weapon, the chaser may make an additional ping with a tiddlywink. He requires an **Easy** hit to dispatch the victim.

Phase 5: Recovery. Any figures on the ground may get to their feet. Any wounded figures will move 2D6-2" every time they move. If they are wounded twice, the penalty is doubled to -4" per movement phase. If they are wounded a third time, the penalty is doubled to -8", meaning that they will be lucky to move at all! A fourth wound will finish the captive off.

OTHER OPTIONS

Dice option

You could play with dice if tiddlywinks seems too silly for you. Each time you shoot, roll 2D6. A score of 9 or more is needed for an **Easy** hit, 10 or more for a **Medium** hit, 11 for a **Hard** hit, and 12 for a **Very hard** hit.



The weapons:

- **Atlatl:** You throw two darts. As long as you hit, this counts as an automatic kill.
- **Staff-sling:** You throw two darts. If you fail to get the hit score required, you may re-throw one dart.
- **Bow:** You have two attempts to throw two darts at one greater difficulty rating to hit.

The chaser is knocked down!

The weapons need to change a little as well:

- **Atlatl:** You roll 2D12. As long as you hit, this counts as an automatic kill.
- **Staff-sling:** You roll 2D6. If you miss, you may re-roll one of your D6.
- **Bow:** You shoot twice. Roll 2D6 twice, at one greater difficulty rating.

Darts option

For those of you lucky enough to game in a pub – or who just have a really cool man-cave! – darts can also be used. Each time you shoot, throw two darts. A score of 40 or more is needed for an **Easy** hit, 50 or more for a **Medium** hit, 60 for a **Hard** hit, and 80 for a **Very hard** hit. (Depending on your darts prowess, these figures might need to be amended dramatically!)



A fierce Mayan war chief.

The Little Wars variant

In a homage to H.G. Wells and the early wargamers of the twentieth century, you could just ping the tiddlywinks at the figures. The earlier tiddlywinks rules for different weapons apply to this version. A hit on a figure indicates a wound, while a figure knocked over counts as a straight kill. Not for the faint-hearted, this one! Make sure you have given them a good coat of varnish first!

WINNING THE GAME

The chasers continue to play until a captive manages to make it to the end zone alive. If both of the initial captives are killed before they reach the end zone, play again and add one more captive figure. Keep a tally of the number of captives killed before one escapes. After a while, this will become pretty unmanageable for the chasers, regardless of how accurate your shooting is.

Once a captive escapes, swap sides. The person (or team) of chasers that kills the most captives before one escapes is the winner.

GOING DEEPER INTO THE JUNGLE

Of course, the film does not end with Jaguar Paw's escape. Once in the fields, the odds are more in the captive's favour. I would suggest doubling the length of the table and, after the maize fields, filling the rest of the table with jungle. Once in the jungle, all shooting should be reduced to 12". The chasers may miss out their shooting (Phase 3) to move all of their warriors 3D6" instead each turn.

Wild jaguars, swarms of bees, and tapir traps should all be thrown in for good measure, using markers in the jungle

area. I would recommend twelve markers, spread around evenly and turned upside down, so that nobody knows what is underneath them. Make three of them blanks and divide the remaining nine amongst the three types of dangerous obstacle. Any figures moving within 6" of these obstacles will be attacked by them, as if it were a shooting attack. The Mayan warriors here are at a disadvantage, for no other reason than it is more fun that way!

Jaguar: Your opponent pings one tiddlywink. An **Easy** hit is required to savage a Mayan warrior; this counts as an automatic kill. A **Hard** hit is required to savage a captive; this only causes a single wound. Once the jaguar has been activated, remove the counter from play.

Swarm of bees: Your opponent may ping one tiddlywink for every figure, be it friend or foe, within 6". An **Easy** hit is required to sting a Mayan warrior, forcing him to run 3D6" away from the jungle area. A **Hard** hit is required to sting a captive, causing a single wound.

Tapir trap: The captive knows where these are, so, if they move within 6" of the counter and it is revealed, the trap is no danger. If a Mayan warrior activates the counter, the captive player may ping three tiddlywinks, requiring at least one to be a **Medium** difficulty hit. If this is achieved, the targeted warrior is killed outright.

In the extended game, any captive who makes it to the end of the table and is still alive is the winner.

Mark had been saving up his original tiddlywinks idea for a Napoleonic game. With luck, we may see this in a future issue. We included a dice variant for those who might consider tiddlywinks to be a little silly. (Some might argue that playing with toy soldiers is pretty silly, in any case!)

Models by Gringo 40's. Individual models painted by Richard Lloyd and Andrew Taylor. Scenic models painted by Martin Oaff.