

Mizerka

This popular Polish game was shown to me by Michał Wojwoda of Łódź.

It is a three-player game using a standard 52 card pack, the cards in each suit ranking as usual from ace (high) down to two (low).

The game is played clockwise. Any player can deal first and the turn to deal passes clockwise. In each deal the player to the dealer's left chooses among the six possible contracts. Each player must choose each contract once, and after 18 deals, when everyone has played every contract the game ends.

The possible contracts are: clubs, hearts, spades, diamonds, no trumps and mizerka. In the first four the aim is to win tricks, with the named suit as trumps. In "no trumps" the aim is to win tricks, but without a trump suit. In mizerka there are also no trumps, but the aim is to avoid winning tricks.

The dealer deals the cards one at a time into four piles - a hand for each of the three players and a talon. After six cards each have been dealt, the deal pauses and the player to dealer's left must select the contract on the basis of his or her first six cards. After the contract has been announced, the deal is completed, so that each player has a hand of 13 cards and there is a face-down talon of 13 cards.

The player to the dealer's left may now discard any number of unwanted cards and replace them by drawing cards from the top of the talon. Having drawn replacement cards you are not allowed to discard any further cards. The player to dealer's right may then discard any number of cards up to the number of unused cards remaining in the talon and replenish in the same manner. Finally, if there are any cards left in the talon (which is unusual) the dealer may do the same. No player is obliged to discard any cards at all - you may play with your original hand if you wish to.

The player to dealer's left now leads to the first trick. Players must follow suit if possible. A player who has no card of the suit led may play any card. There is no obligation to trump or to overtake. The trick is won by the highest trump played if any, or otherwise by the highest card of the suit led. The winner of a trick leads to the next.

Each player has a quota of tricks to make, and scores according the number of tricks they win more or less than their quota. The quotas and scores are as follows:

Player	Trumps or no trumps		Mizerka	
	Quota	Score	Quota	Score
Left of dealer	7 tricks	Each trick above quota scores +1 Each trick below quota scores -1	1 trick	Each trick above quota scores -1 Each trick below quota scores +1
Right of dealer	5 tricks		5 tricks	
Dealer	1 trick		7 tricks	

The scoresheet looks like this:

					NT	Miz	
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Player A							
Player B							
Player C							

In the left-hand section an "X" is marked to show the contracts that each player has chosen. The cumulative scores of the players are kept in the area to the right.

Example. Suppose that in the first deal player A chooses hearts as trumps and wins 5 tricks, B and C winning 4 tricks each. Then A loses 2 points, B loses 1 point C wins 3 points. In the second deal player B plays a mizerka and wins 2 tricks, C wins 6 tricks and A wins 5, so that B and C each lose a point and A wins 2 points. The scoresheet would then look like this:

					NT	Miz	
Player A		X					-2 0
Player B						X	-1 -2
Player C							+3 +2

The scores always add up to zero, and the the score after all 18 hands have been played indicates how much each player has won or lost.

Software

You can download a freeware Mizerka program from [Thanos Card Games](#).

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