

Great Finds!

In het IJspaleis *(The Ice Palace)*

Article by Fred Horn

Sometimes surfing the Internet may be well worth the time invested.

A few years ago I stumbled, doing exactly that on my computer, upon a Dutch auction site that was completely unknown to me (it no longer exists) where some "LOTS" were mentioned as "GAMES." Of course I was highly interested and went to those specific items, but my interest quickly faded when I saw the minimum starting prices for these diverse "LOTS!" In my opinion these prices were too high in relation to the items presented.

Only one item had a starting price that was much lower than all the others, and taking a closer look at the offering the text about the item explained it all:

"Spel in losse onderdelen. Zwaar beschadigd. Voor liefhebber om te restaureren."

"Game in parts. Heavily damaged, For lovers to restore."

But still the beginning bid was too high for such a bunch of cardboard, paper, and other 'rubbish' that was, in my opinion, presented in the picture.

Thus I decided to contact the auction house about this particular "LOT." It turned out that this specific item was now in its third listing and the auction house believed it just wasn't going to sell so they asked me what I was willing to pay for it!



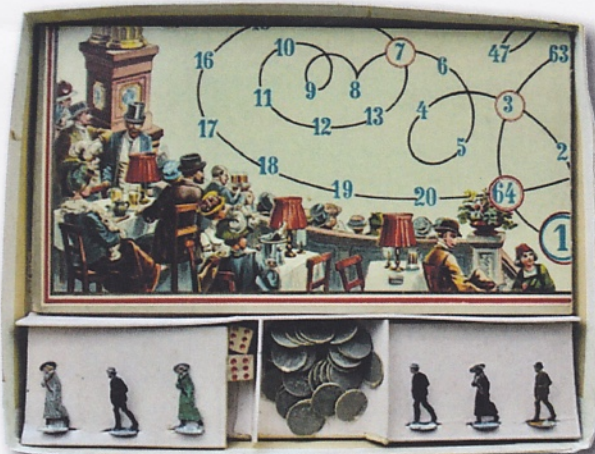
"Fifteen Euro," I said, "and that is my final offer!" To my astonishment they accepted my proposal and with the extra payment for delivery, the package arrived within a week.

Being curious I immediately opened the box and yes, the text the auction house had written was truly right. Inside was a mixed array of cardboard pieces, something that looked like the lid of a box, another cardboard one that appeared to be the bottom of a box, some loose material, and all kind of pieces of paper spilled out the package. Only the board was in really good condition as well as the tin figures and the dice.

What was a new feature for this type of race game that I had never seen on an earlier dated game was the use of diverse 'crossing places' with a number in a circle, for the Hazard or Luck places.

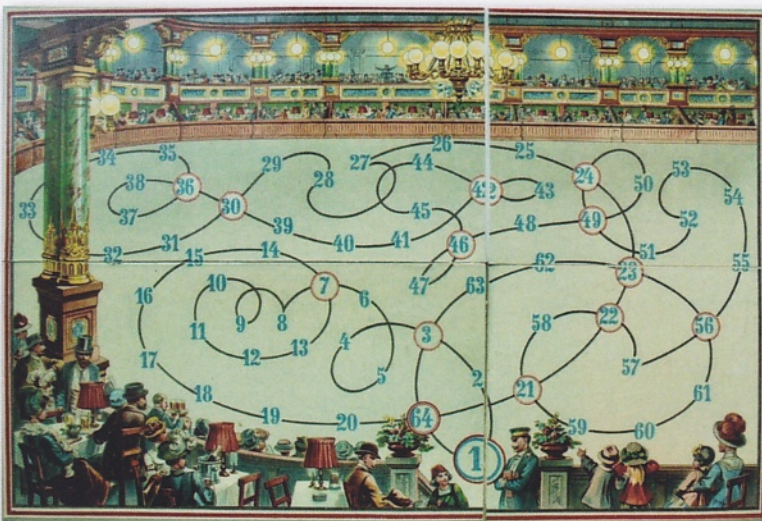
And to my surprise not only was the board in mint condition but the pawns—tin figures of the skaters—were all present and like new! However, that indeed couldn't be stated for what was in the rest in the box.

Because I am familiar with these type of game boxes that allowed me to solve the "puzzle" where to use the different strokes and pieces of cardboard and paper. Much was missing so I had to replace the lost parts with identical cardboard and paper. But it was worth the effort. Look at the result after more than 10 hours of work:



And the picture (printed on paper) at the upper side of the box lid was again glued on the right place. Nearly all the sides of the lid were missing, but the small part that was available gave me the necessary information for the cardboard I had to use to fix it and to also restore the lid.

It is difficult to see in the first picture (opposite page) but the name of the game in Dutch—IN HET IJSPAALIS—is a print on a separate piece of paper which is glued in the same location as the original text in German. This could be the only indication for the publisher of this game because in my collection an identical way of putting the Dutch name on the lid is for games of the firm "Schmidt & Romer Leipzig."



What a wonderful picture of an ice skating rink on the opened board—really an ice palace, as the title of the game promised. On the board there was a track to "skate along" over the 64 places on the ice (very much like a variant of the GAME OF THE GOOSE.)

Besides that, the used letter type for the rules (glued to the inside of the lid) may be of assistance because it is identical to that used in the "Schmidt & Romer" games. The box type for this game was pretty normal for games before 1880 but it was still used for expensive games after that date. My guess is this game is from between 1875 and 1880.

Besides the interesting subject (ice skating) and the wonderful detailed picture giving a beautiful insight of its time, the game itself is not that interesting! It is a simple 'race game' with, as stated before, ONE new feature (the crossings). But this feature is in fact only used for a simple 'extra' as the rules explain:

In het IJspaleis.
Het getal deelnemers is onbepaald. Elke speler betaalt aan de kas een bepaalden inzet en krijgt een steen om daarmee naar gelang der geworpen oogen op het plan voort te schuiven. Het gooien geschiedt om de beurt. Elk kruisingsnummer is van een rooden kring omgeven. Wie op een even kruisingsgetal komt, mag daadteijk twee nummers voort rukken en krijgt een speelmerkje uit de kas; op de onevene kruisingsgetallen moet hij echter een nummer terug en moet daarenboven 1 merkje als straf betalen. Wie No. 64 het eerst bereikt, of daar voorbij komt, wint het spel en den inhoud der kas.

In the Ice Palace

The number of participants is undefined. Each player pays a certain stake to the pot and gets a stone(?) (sic. pawn) to shuffle along the board according to the thrown eyes. Throwing is one after another. Each crossing-number does have an outside red circle. He who ends upon an even crossing-number goes directly two numbers ahead and receives a play chip out of the pot; upon the odd crossing-numbers however he has to return one number and has to pay, as a penalty, one play chip. The one who first reaches No. 64, or goes over it, wins the game and all what is in the pot.

N.B.—1 The rules do not say anything about how to handle the situation when two players end on the same spot: is it allowed or not?

N.B.—2 Also the use of the crossing-points is unclear. Can you end upon it when you are on the higher numbers? For example: do you have to play first: ... 6 – 7 – 8 ... and thereafter: ... 13 – 7 – 14 ??? or do you continue after 13 with 14 ???

My final conclusion was that I had purchased for my collection a game that is terrible when playing and is unclear in its rules, but showed a lovely insight picture of life and society at the end of the 19th Century. AGPI