SNOWMAN MELTDOWN

a game of battling blow dryers
for the piecepack
and an Icehouse set or piecepack pyramids

(a.k.a. Snowman Meltdown Holdup Hoedown)

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[version 0.5, 2002-09-08]

2-4 players
Approx. 60 minutes

Note:: This game requires both a piecepack, and either an Icehouse set, or two sets of piecepack pyramids. Visit http://www.piecepack.org/ to buy a piecepack or learn how to make your own. Visit http://www.looneylabs.com/ to buy an Icehouse set. Visit http://www.tjgames.com/pyramids.html to download printable piecepack pyramids.

The Story

Far out in the Oort Belt of our solar system swings a most peculiar comet. Unlike most comets, which are simply balls of dirty ice, this one is a patchwork of colourful, tasty ices - Cherry Red, Lime Green, Lemon Yellow, Blue Raspberry, even Black Licorice. For another thing, every 23,000 years, as the comet nears the Sun, the comet melts just enough for a race of intelligent snowmen to arise from the Slush.

Well, "intelligent" may be overstating the case. Each species, or "flavour" of snowman is bent on just one thing: exterminating all snowmen of other flavours. Their choice of weapon? The hand-held blow dryer.

It's a small comet, and the snowmen can walk all the way around it, on paths carved out over millions of years. But sometimes they get stuck in traps laid by other snowmen. Fortunately, they can make a withdrawal at the local ATM, then pay a penny or two to ride the Oort Funicular out of the trap, or off the well-worn paths on the comet's surface. If they can get the pennies they need by mugging opposing

snowmen, so much the better!

Eventually, despite the coin-operated force fields scattered liberally around the comet, only one flavour of snowman will be left. But as the comet approaches the Sun, even the victors will melt down and return to the all-encompassing Slush. Never fear; the very same snowmen will arise again to fight the very same dim-witted battles, in 23,000 years...

(Why snow-*men*, you ask? You don't think snow-*women* would behave this way, do you?)

Summary

Players move "snowmen" (stacks of pyramids), around a 4x4 board made of piecepack tiles. The tiles specify the directions and distances the snowmen may travel. When players land on a tile containing opposing snowmen, they must melt one down or mug one. If the mugger's victim capitulates, the mugger receives a coin that he can use to alter his movement or defend himself with a force field; otherwise, the victim is melted down one piece. Some tiles act as traps; if all your pieces are trapped, they melt, one by one. The winner is the last player with any snowmen left on the board.

Setup

1. Each player chooses a piecepack suit and takes all coins of that suit. She also takes four small, four medium, and four large Icehouse pyramids that match her own piecepack suit, or all 12 piecepack pyramids of her own suit from *two* sets of piecepack pyramids.
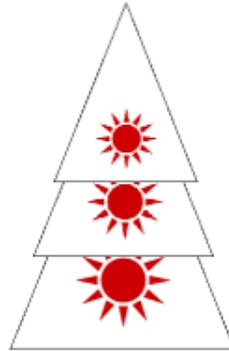
PIECEPACK SUIT	ICEHOUSE COLOUR	SNOWMAN FLAVOUR
Suns	red	Cherry Red
Arms	blue	Blue Raspberry
Crowns	green or yellow	Lime Green or Lemon Yellow
Moons	black (see below)	Black Licorice

Most older Icehouse sets contain four colours: red, green, blue, and yellow. If you have the Black Ice expansion (which contains black and clear pieces), you can use black pieces for Moons, but if all you have is the basic set, you can use red for Suns, blue for Arms, green or yellow for Crowns (depending on your piecepack set), and the remaining colour (yellow or green) for Moons. Newer Icehouse sets are sold one colour at a time. If you bought purple, orange, white, and clear Icehouse pieces just to be different, you'll have to improvise, wise guy.

If you are using piecepack pyramids instead of Icehouse pieces, the suits should match perfectly.

2. Remove all 3s and 4s from the piecepack tiles and set them aside. This will leave 16 tiles consisting only of nulls, 1s, 2s, and 5s.

3. Shuffle these 16 tiles and place them randomly, suit-side-up, in a four-by-four grid, with all tiles facing the same way. Either the top or the bottom of the board may be considered north by any player; it makes no difference.

4. Each player builds four complete snowmen of his own flavour. You build a snowman by placing a small piece on top of a medium piece on top of a large piece, as in the diagram below. (Icehouse pieces only come in three sizes; piecepack pyramids come in six. If you are using piecepack pyramids, use A, C, and E pyramids to build two of your snowmen, and B, D, and F pyramids to build the other two.)

A Cherry Red snowman built from three piecepack pyramids.

5. Each player puts her four snowmen on the four tiles of her own flavour.

6. Players roll dice; the high roller goes first. Play then proceeds to the left.

Turn Summary

Your turn consists of the following phases (see below for more details):

1. Remove any force field you have created from the board, and deposit the coin with which you created it in the Bank.

2. Move one snowman of your own flavour according to the suit and number of the tile it is on. If you cannot or will not move, you must "melt down" one of your snowmen.

3. If your snowman lands on a tile with an opposing snowman or snowmen, either "melt down" or "hold up" one opposing snowman of your choice on that tile.

4. Optionally pay to create a force field around a tile containing one or more of your snowmen.

Movement

Tiles determine how snowmen travel as follows:

1. The suit of the tile determines which one of two direction the snowman can travel in, according to the following table:

Suns	north/south
Moons	east/west
Crowns	northwest/southeast
Arms	northeast/southwest

2. The value of the tile determines how many spaces a snowman can travel. For example, a snowman on the 2 of Suns can travel two tiles north or two tiles south. However...

3. In some cases, it is possible to change the value of the tile you are on. (You do not change the tile itself, merely count it as having a different value.) For example...

4. A snowman on a tile of its own flavour may *optionally* add 1 to or subtract 1 from the value of the tile before moving. (The same effect can be had by paying a coin on a tile not of your flavour; see below.) This means that...

5. Null tiles, having a value of zero, are normally "traps" for snowmen of an opposing flavour, but "move 1" tiles for snowmen of the same flavour. Similarly, tiles with a value of 1 can be "move 2" tiles if they are of your own flavour, and so on.

6. The board wraps around, so that if your snowman is at the northern (top) edge of the board and travels one tile north, he will land on the southernmost (bottom) tile of that column. A similar rule applies to the other edges.

7. You may pay exactly one coin of any suit and value to the Bank (that is, take it out of the game) to add 1 to or subtract 1 from the value of the tile you are on before moving. Thus, an opposing 2 tile becomes either a 3 tile or a 1 tile. An opposing null tile becomes a 1 tile.

8. If you subtract 1 from a 5 tile of an opposing colour, it becomes a 4 tile, which permits you to wrap around the board and attack a snowman on the same tile. On the other hand, subtracting 1 from an ace tile just makes it a null, which means your snowman can't move.

9. You may pay exactly one coin to the Bank on your turn to travel one tile in any direction you choose.

Holdups and Meltdowns

1. To hold up a snowman, order its owner to pay you one coin. If she can't or won't, then melt her snowman down one size.

2. To melt down a snowman, remove the bottommost Icehouse piece from his body. If his body had three pieces, it melts down to two pieces; if two, it melts down to one. If it had only one piece (a "head"), it melts away completely; remove the single piece from the board.

3. You do not have to hold up an opposing snowman on the tile you land on, but may melt one down

immediately instead.

Force fields

1. You may pay exactly one coin to the Bank on your turn to defend one of your snowmen with a force field. As the last phase of your turn, take one of your coins and place it on a tile that contains at least one of your snowmen. No opposing snowmen may travel to a tile while you have a force field there, but they may move over and past that tile.

2. At the beginning of your next turn, remove the coin and pay it to the Bank.

3. You may create at most one force field at a time, but you may create a force field on the same tile multiple turns in succession.

Getting stuck

1. If you cannot move or do not wish to move, you must melt down one of your own snowmen (your choice) by one size on your turn.

2. If you take three consecutive turns without landing on a tile with an opposing snowman, you must melt down one of your own snowmen (your choice) by one size on your next turn, instead of moving. On the turn after that, you may move normally, but the three-turn "clock" begins again.

Game End and Winning

The last player with at least one snowman on the board wins.

Strategy Hints

1. Players should probably sit so the board is either right-side-up or upside-down to them; otherwise, game movement may become confusing. As long as you are facing either the top or bottom of the board, the tile directions will work correctly. That is, a Crowns tile specifies that you can travel northwest or southeast. Your northwest is southeast for someone facing you, and vice versa.

2. It is possible to take arithmetic short cuts. For example, a 5 of Moons will let you travel either five tiles west or east, if it is not your flavour. Moving five tiles west on a wrapping 4x4 board is the same as moving one tile east, and vice versa.

3. If you're at the edge of the board, and you get confused about how to travel two tiles northeast (say), make the moves separately; that is, first travel two tiles north, then travel two tiles east, or vice versa.

4. Travel from a 2 tile in either direction will normally end on the same tile. Therefore...

5. If the 2 of Crowns and the 2 of Arms are placed two squares apart diagonally during setup, they form a trap for players of other flavours. Travel from one will always end on the other.

6. Toward the end of the game, you may be able to force your opponent to melt down, by blocking her movement with a well-placed force field.

7. The game is much enhanced by shouting the following things:

   ○ "I've got a blow dryer and I'm not afraid to use it!"
   ○ "Your money or your slush!"
   ○ "Don't mess with me! This thing is set on DRY, not FLUFF!"
   ○ As you melt an opponent's snowman down to just his top piece: "Now that's how to get a head in life!"
   ○ When refusing a hold-up: "MELT ME!" (There is a ruder retort having to do with the function of blow dryers, but we thought it best to omit it from this family game.)
   ○ And, of course, in your best Margaret Hamilton voice: "I'm melllttttiiiinnnggg..."

   It also helps to say these things in a progressively squeakier voice as your snowmen become smaller and smaller.

Credits

This is the first game ever developed that combines a piecepack with an Icehouse set, as far as we know.

Original concept: Ron Hale-Evans.
Development and rules write-up: Ron and Marty Hale-Evans.
Graphics: Ron Hale-Evans (snowman); Marty Hale-Evans (logo).
Playtesters: Bob Wilson; Meredith Hale; Karl Erickson and Chad McDaniel; Karen Deitrick, Mark Purtill, and Tim Schutz. Special thanks to Roland Steiner, who made a cartload of suggestions.

History

0.5, 2002-09-08: Rules added for playing with piecepack pyramids. Missing diagram inserted. What creative capitalization? "Roland Krieger" corrected to "Roland Steiner" (sorry, Roland!), and "Meredith Wilson" changed to "Meredith Hale" in Credits. More playtesters added. Roland thanked profusely.
0.4.1, 2001-12-2: Reference to diagram not actually contained herein removed. Creative capitalization added. - Mesomorph Games.
0.4, 2001-11-15: Holdups optional again. All payments are one coin. Movement optional. 3 turns without landing on opponent and you melt. Strategy hints and rule clarifications. New playtesters.
0.3, 2001-10-25: Force fields added. Holdups are not optional. You melt if you don't move, even if you can move. All tiles face same way.
0.2, 2001-10-11: Tiebreaker added: trapped snowmen must melt.
0.1, 2001-10-08: Original playtest rules.

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