

THROUGH THE SEASONS WITH A DICE ROLL!

# SEASONS

A GAME WHERE LUCK IS VERY IMPORTANT

When I learned the ... basic concepts of SEASONS I was very curious to test it a.s.a.p.: a game that combine a phase of "card draft" (like 7 WONDERS), a "resource collection" with dice and the use of cards to generate special action (as in "MAGIC") should have a certain appeal, I thought.

So we rushed SEASONS on our gaming tables and we tested it a few times: unfortunately I must admit that this IS NOT MY GAME and the final note at the end of this review will explain my disappointment. If the game had a play time of, say, 30-45 minutes (like 7 Wonders) probably my note could have a couple of points more, but between novice players you have to consider about 2 hours to play Seasons, and even after 4-5 games the playing time is surely over the 60 minutes written on the box. Probably the 60 minutes target may be reached after many more games, knowing by heart all the cards and most of the best combos, but unfortunately I surrendered after 5 test

and I think that I will not return again to this game. Please note that this is my personal opinion and that some of the other players involved in our test liked the game instead so this it is only a question of "tastes".

All that said I have now to justify this bad opinion and of course I will do after having explained how the game works. Usually I never write reviews on games that I do not like as I stop playing them after the first or second game and therefore I do not have enough experience to judge them. But Seasons has a wonderful rating on BGG (7,73 at the time of writing, in October 2012) and some of my friends (old players of MAGIC) were enthusiastic about it.

Inside the inviting box of Seasons we find a "round board", used to show the passage of time (four seasons of three months each) and the selling price for the different resources (they vary in each season). A second board is used to keep track of the Victory

Points (VP – called "crystals" in the game) and we all agree that it is too small for this task. Each player has an individual board used to keep track (with the help of three wooden cubes) of the collected resources, the maximum number of power cards that the player may have in front of him and a "bonus track" that may give some advantages to the player in exchange for the loss of VP at the game's end.

20 big "season dice" in four colors (Blue for Winter, Green for Spring, Yellow for Summer and Red for Autumn) will be used to show which and how many resources are available every turn and how much the turn marker will advance at the end. Every die has a different combination of icons and

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*A game with too much luck for my taste, but for which I can see why others might like it and will like it.*

the availability of the different resources changes from color to color: for example you may find more green "Earth" resources in the green dice than the other colors, and so on. Four sets of cardboard round tokens represent the four different resources (red Air, blue Water, yellow Fire and green Earth) and the player will pick up them following



the dice results and/or the card powers. A few round tokens are used to keep track of the "reserve" cards for the second and third "year" of play (more on them later).

Finally there are two sets of 50 POWER CARDS that are the real heart of the game as they are used to change its course with their effects and to collect VP. They are divided in two categories: "magical items" (purple symbol) and "familiar" (orange symbol). Each card has a name and shows the cost (in resources and/or VP) to play them on the table, its effect and the VP (called Prestige Points in the game) granted at the game's end.

The game has three levels: beginner, intermediate and advanced. The difference is determined by the number of different cards that are used: the "beginner" level uses only some of the cards from 1 to 30 and the set-up is fixed for each player (9 selected cards); the "magician" (intermediate) level uses all the cards from 1 to 30 and a random distribution of 9 cards to each player; the "arch mage" (advanced) level uses all the cards (including the more complex one between 31 and 50) and the usual random distribution of 9 to each player. The unused cards form a reserve deck.

The game starts with a draft phase: each player looks at his 9 cards, selects one of them and passes the other to his left neighbor, then a new card is selected and so on until everybody has again 9 cards. Now each player must divide his cards in three mini hands of 3 cards each: the first 3 cards are used on "year nr.1"; 3 more cards are added at the beginning of "year nr.2" and the final 3 cards are taken at the beginning of "year nr.3".

Set up is finished: the turn marker is placed on the first case of winter and a first player is decided: he takes the five blue dice (or less if the number of players is 2 or 3) and throws them on the table. Then he selects one of the dice, followed clockwise by the other players: the fifth die is not taken but the number of "pips" printed on his face under the icon (from 1 to 3) will indicate the number of cases that the turn marker will move at the end of the present turn.

The first player performs his season die actions: he increases his summoning gauge (the number of cards that he may play) if a "star" is printed on the die and collects resource tokens or one new card as indicated on the die. If the selected die has a "circle" around the printed icons the player may sell resources to the bank, earning VP as indicated on the round board for that resource in that season (for example and "earth" re-

source in winter will guarantee 3 VP, etc.). The player may also play a card from his hand on the table (just in front of him) if he already has the required resources/VP to spend.

Cards may be used in three ways: every turn, if they have a "permanent" symbol; every turn "upon activation" (spending resources or VP) if they have an activation symbol; or just once if they have a "play when enter" symbol. If necessary players may also activate the special bonus that they have available on their individual boards: trade two resources for two different ones; add one resource to the sales; add one point to your summoning track; draw two Power cards (select one and discard the other). The first "bonus" will cost you 5 VP at the game's end, the second 12 VP and the third 20 VP: you may use always the same bonus or any combination of them, one per turn.

The other players do exactly the same actions and the turn ends moving the turn track 1-2-3 cases (as indicated by the pips on the fifth die). Then the FIRST PLAYER marker is passed left-wise and the game goes on as we have already seen. When the token passes the last Autumn case and re-enters the Winter season for the first time the players take the 3 extra cards for "year nr 2" in their hands. When it passes the year end for the second time the last 3 cards are added to the hand and when it passes for the third time the game ends.

As you have already understood to be competitive in Seasons you must know very well all the cards and their effect (as it happens in MAGIC) as you must select the best possible combo during the draft phase: if you have too many useless cards you will not get the best bonus and you will surely lose, even if you may draw some extra cards during the game. Unfortunately also those extra draws are subject to lady luck and too often our table was remarked by someone crying "hurrah !!!" when getting some good cards or "porcaccia xxx ..." when poor cards were discovered.

You also need good dice rolls during the game in order to take the right resources at the right moment: unfortunately the "better" dice results are selected by the first or second player, so you are obliged to take what they leave to you ... but "of course" when you are the first player the infamous Murphy's Law will guarantee that you will never get the right results. So sometimes players may only look at the opponents building good combos and/or attacking them without any possibility to react until lady Luck will come to the rescue. Being a

doctor engineer I learned something about the "probability laws" and I know that on the long run luck tends to be well distributed, but what statistics do not say is the if you pass the first half of your game with bad dice and therefore you cannot play your best cards you will never recover even if luck comes back in the second part of the game!

And Seasons unfortunately is one of those games where luck is so important. As I said at the beginning this could not be a real problem if you spend only 30-40 minutes per game and then, probably, you would like to immediately have your revenge, but when I must spend 80-90 minutes under the inconstancy of luck I do not have any will to start everything again!

SEASONS of course has his own "good points" for players that like this kind of games: most of my friends were more than happy to search for gaining super "combos" and give great damage to their opponents and I do not forget that a lot of enthusiast players voted SEASONS on BGG, so ... I leave the game to them without a cry and I search for something more suitable to my tastes. ☑

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## INFORMATION

**Designer:** Régis Bonnessée  
**Artist:** Xavier Gueniffey Durin  
**Price:** ca. 35 Euro  
**Publisher:** Asterion 2012  
[www.libellud.com](http://www.libellud.com)

PLAYERS:  
2-4

AGE:  
14+

TIME:  
90+

## EVALUATION

Fantasy card game  
 With friends  
 Version: it  
 Rules: de en fr it pl  
 In-game text: yes

### Comments:

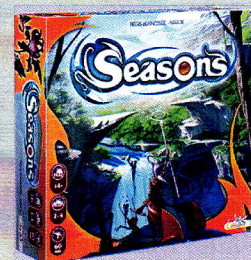
Good basic mechanisms \* Implementation too chancy for me \* Playing time too long for the chance element \* If you do like that you will play a good game

### Compares to:

Magic

### Other editions:

Asmodee, Germany, Libellud France, Rebel.pl



My rating: ★★★★★