

Interview of Holger Janssen, Rules Sensei and European Championship 2000 organizer

Words collected by NetRunnerFrance

NetRunnerFrance : Hi Holger. Can you present yourself ? Where do you come from, how old are you, what is your job, what are your hobbies, are you married, etc. ?

Holger Janssen: I was born in Bonn, Germany, in 1971. Now I live in Uberlingen in South Germany at the lake Konstanz where I work as development engineer in an aviation company. Apart from Netrunner I play other games as well with a special interest in conflict simulation games. My sport activities include basketball, rowing, cycling and skiing.



NETFR : How and when have you known Netrunner ? Do you practice other games as well ? If so, what are you three favorite games (and why) ?

HJ : When I was studying in Aachen a friend introduced Netrunner to me in 1996 even before it was generally available. He got a playtest because he did some Magic translation for WotC. At the start Netrunner was quite popular even with the magic players. Intending to play a trading card game more intensely I decided to go with Netrunner rather than Magic because of my greater interest in science fiction. I did not regret it so far.

At the moment my favorite other games are board games: Path of Glory, a strategic card driven game on the first world war, Age of Renaissance, a multi-player card driven development/trade game, and some other games. One can see I have a weakness for card driven games with a strategic touch.

NETFR : Why do you like (or love) particularly this game ? What are, from your point of view, the pros and cons ?

HJ : As a card game it has the benefit of short playing time and different situation in each play-through. A nice aspect of Netrunner are the two different sides of the game. Most need to be mastered and feel quite different. Most players seem to understand or like the Corp better but I prefer the challenge of the Runner.

The bluffing part especially on the Corp side not only with the cards on your hand but also with your installed cards is one of the main reasons for the fun of sealed deck. Concerning the hole pool of cards Netrunner of course has the same problems as other trading card games. Some cards will always be more efficient than others and therefore reduce the number of useful cards. Constructed play need continuing challenges which means more cards. Sadly there are quite a lot players who don't like to spend their time at home constructing and therefore play only sealed deck. Luckily this is a very good format with Netrunner which I prefer too.

NETFR : It's almost one year that you are Runner Sensei. How did you come to that position ? What do you think of this position (the up and downs) ? What is your strategy (if we may use this word) to clear up the rules ? How do you think when you make a rule update ?

HJ : Well, somehow this happened. When the TRC was looking for a new Rules Sensei Rabbi contacted me and asked if I would do the job. I answered if the players think I can manage it I will try. So finally I got appointed. I had answered most of the rules questions in Germany before and probably got known from responding on the netrunner-l.

The downside of the position is a lot of work at certain times and not always the silent agreement of all players. Ups, hmm, you can interpret the rules as you like. :)

At the moment I try to stay consistent with all the rulings made before. This is not always possible as you might have noticed. And I try not having to correct my too often. I think I will do a rules update sometime but there is no timeframe yet.

NETFR : Have you still the project of re-writing the rulebook ? Do you have a deadline ?

"... I prefer the challenge of the Runner ..."

HJ : Did I ever have this project ? So probably, no. Do you think that this is necessary ?

NETFR : A lot of players are asking for a new official Run Flow Chart, to clear up the run timing. Do you think that the new RFC made by Emmanuel could become official ? If yes, how and when ?

HJ : I agree that Sparky's runchart needs an update. I will check the new RFC and then I can approve it for the TRC. If and when it will make it to the WotC webpage is another question.

NETFR : What have you thought of the European Championship ? Do you plan to make one for 2001 ? From our side, we propose to organize it in France. Does that sound ok to you ?

HJ : The intention was to have a big tournament with players from all over Europe attending. I did not want to restrict players by doing qualifiers because I think we need everyone who likes to come. One other reason was the obvious lack of a world championship. With at least 20 players from France, Netherlands, Belgium and Germany I think we have achieved my aims. I hoped for some players from the UK and some more from Germany but for a first try I think the turnout was okay. I would be happy to have a European Championship again next year though I hope someone else steps up to organize and run it. Otherwise I will probably do it again in order to avoid the fate of the World Domination this year.

One reason I picked GenCon this year was the quite central location concerning the active countries in Europe. But Paris might be an alternative especially when you want to run it. :) I guess we should do some advance planning for the next Euro so that we can discuss these points with interested players.

"... I would be happy to have a European Championship again next year (...) Paris might be an alternative ..."

NETFR : What about the World Championship ?

HJ : I would have liked to have one. But as always you need someone to run it. Lukas Kautsh did a great job last year but you can't expect him to do it every year. As a player of course he also wants to play in a big event like that. The same applies to me, see above. So the problem is to find some volunteers. But most of the time those who finally step up are the players one would like to compete with. :(

NETFR : How do you see the future of Netrunner, taking into account that WotC has stopped the game support and production ? Would you allow proxies ?

HJ : Stopping the support is no problem I think. Before classic we had lots of tournaments and two world dominations without the hope for new cards. Now we have them and when WotC finally gives up we want to leave the game ? I don't agree. I see no reason for the TRC to stop and the player to not continue playing tournaments. Stopping production is a bigger problem because we will eventually run out of cards to give to new players and to do sealed deck tournaments with. So I guess yes I would allow proxies sometime. So there are other ways to supply sealed deck tournaments with cards. We will have to think about that when needed.

"... I see no reason for the TRC to stop and the player to not continue playing tournaments ..."

NETFR : We would like to attract new players. How would it be possible without new cards in stock, and with the unlimited format ? Would you accept an alternative format as a second official constructed format ? What would be this format (1/10; unlimited for commons and uncos, and limited for rares, ...) ?

HJ : Concerning new players the limited supply could become a problem. We should think about ways to reduce the amount of cards needed for certain events. Supplying your own cards for sealed deck might be a possibility. Concerning formats I think there is a need to limit ourselves. You in France have already played a lot of your 1/15 format and in UK there are further restrictions to the restricted format. But again I don't think it is my duty to decide about or approve official tournament formats. That may be a neglectance on my part. I think there has already been suggested a committee to discuss this. Generally I tend to rather stick to the basis but one should always give new ideas a try. For example we tried a kind of sealed draft lately which was quite fun though it did of course take more time for drafting and constructing than normal sealed.

NETFR : You built an internet site. Can you describe it in a few words ? How many hours do you spend on it each week ?

hours do you spend on it each week ?

HJ : The main reason to build the site was that I wanted to do my own ranking list because of the lull on Mathias' part. Links to other sides, member list of my city grid and tournament info of my region were obvious additions. Further more I included some articles gathered on the net. With my appointment as Rules Sensei came the addition of the rulings section. But this is not quite finished yet. Time for updated depends mainly on the number of tournament at the moment. When there is a tournament the ranking list and tables need and update. The aim is to be in the same situation with the rulings once too. Otherwise i very seldom change something.

NETFR : Thanx Holger