Losing Loadum – A Late Renaissance Card Game
For any number of players using a standard 52 card deck.

History
Losing Loadum (or Loosing Lodum or Lodam) can currently be traced back to at least 1586 where it is mentioned in the Earl of Leicester's household account book. In 1591 it is mentioned in John Florio's *Second Fruites to be Gathered of Twelve Trees*. The 1653 English translation of Francois Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel* lists a game called "losing load him", whereas the original French from 1535 lists "à qui gaigne perd". This translates roughly to "who gains loses"; a description which fits this game, but does not positively identify it.

This reconstruction is based off of the rules found in Francis Willughby's *A Volume of Plaies* written around 1665 but unpublished until 2003. This is the only known description of how the game is played.

Background
Losing Loadum is a trick taking game whose object is to avoid taking tricks which contain loaders - the only cards worth points. When a player collects 31 or more points worth of loaders he is "out." The loaders and their point values are:

Ace	11	King	3	Jack	1
Ten	10	Queen	2		

All other cards are worth nothing.

There is a trump suit in the game, but it is kept hidden at first (see game play for details).

When played as a gambling game. Every player puts in an equal stake and the last player remaining in the game wins everything.

Setup
At the start of the game, each player will get three counters. Each time a player goes out, he will lose one counter. When a player has lost all their counters, he is eliminated from the game. There is no way to get additional counters. For a faster game each player can start with fewer counters. I recommend starting with only two counters for your first game.

An equal number of cards are dealt to each player but not all the cards. For example, if there are four players they will each get 12 cards (with four cards left over); if there are five players they will each get 10 cards (with two cards left over). On subsequent hands as players are eliminated, each player will get more cards. The remaining cards are left face down in a pile.

Play
The player to the dealer's left (the eldest hand) begins the first trick by playing any card. The remaining players, in order around the table, must each then play one card of the same suit. Only if a player has no cards of the suit led may she play another card. Playing off-suit when she still has cards of the suit led will cost the player all of her counters and eliminate her from the game.

The first time someone plays off-suit, that person looks at the top card of the leftover pile. The suit of this card is trump for this hand. The suit is announced and then the card is returned face down to the pile. The trump suit is only revealed this one time during the hand and it is up to the players to remember what suit it is. When playing off-suit, players are not required to play a trump card as is common in some trick taking games.

The winner of the trick is the player who played the highest trump card or, if no trumps were played, the player who played the highest card of the suit led. Aces are high followed by the King, Queen, Jack, 10, 9, etc. down to the 2. The winner collects all the cards played in the trick and then starts the next trick.

When a player has collected 31 or more points worth of loaders she is out and must turn in one counter. Once a player is out, the hand ends, all cards are collected, the player to the previous dealer's left becomes the new dealer and a new hand is dealt. If the hand reaches its natural end (all players have played their last card), then the player with the most loaders is out. When a player loses her last counter, she is eliminated from the game.

Once the hand has ended, so long as there are players still in the game all the cards are collected and a new hand is dealt. The last person left with a counter is the winner.

Additional Rules and Concepts
Challenging – If a player suspects that another player has gotten 31 or more points already, then that player may be challenged. The challenged player must show his loaders to see if they total 31 or more. If they do, he is out. If they do not, then the challenger is out. A player may challenge someone after he has gotten 31 points himself, to show that the other player should have gone out before him (and if the challenge is successful, that player will be out, but the challenger will not). Either way, only one person will be out and the hand will end.

Swallowing – Swallowing the trick is when there is a trump card in the trick, but a player does not realize it and takes the trick that should have been won by the trump. The player of the trump will no doubt gladly let someone else claim the trick (and any loaders it may contain).

Guarded – A loader is said to be guarded when a player has a low (2, 3, etc.) card of the same suit in his hand.

Exchanging – When a player has a loader that is not guarded, he may try to exchange it with another player. To exchange a card a player must ask if anyone would like to trade "A coat for a coat" if the card is a Jack, Queen or King, or "A card for a card" if the card is an Ace or Ten. Do not say what card or which suit – but if both cards in the trade are of the same suit the trade is cancelled and the cards are returned to their original owners. To keep the game moving, exchanges should only take place between tricks.

About the Reconstruction
In the original text, Willughby writes "When the cards are dealt round, they play as at Ruffe without turning up trumpe". In this reconstruction, I am assuming that he means just the trick taking part of Ruffe, since in his rules for Ruffe he writes "As soon as the ruffe is showed and proved to be as manie as hee said it was, they begin to play…"

Willughby does not say exactly what happens when a player goes out, but I believe that the Challenge implies that the hand does not continue. Why risk challenging someone if not to show that the hand should have ended earlier and that you were not the first person out.

I state that the game is for any number of players because it is possible to play this game with up to 51 players (Although it would be very difficult, and until you get down to 25 players whoever is dealt the highest trump card will be out.) A more realistic limit might be 2-12.

Willughby does not say when an exchange can or can not take place, so my first instinct is to let them happen whenever somebody wants to try. In the reconstruction I've limited exchanges to between tricks, but it would be interesting to see how allowing them during the tricks would change the game play.

Sources
Willughby, Francis, *A Volume of Plaies* (c. 1665). Published in 2003 by Ashgate Press under the title "*Francis Willughby's Book of Games*"
Ghory, Imran. *Dating Period Card Games* webpage. http://bits.bris.ac.uk/imran/games/cards.html via the Internet Archive (www.archive.org)
Bald, R. C. "Leicester's Men in the Low Countries," *Review of English Studies*, 1943, p 395-397.

Reconstruction By
    Michel Wolffauer (mka: Mike Knauer)
    mike@knauer.org
    http://www.knauer.org/mike/sca/classes/
    Last updated: 8/20/2006