Battle of Jutland:

Involving some 250 ships and 100,000 men, this battle off Denmark’s North Sea coast was the only major naval surface engagement of World War I. The battle began in the afternoon of May 31, 1916, with gunfire between the German and British scouting forces. When the main warships met, British Admiral John Jellicoe maneuvered his boats to take advantage of the fading daylight, scoring dozens of direct hits that eventually forced German Admiral Reinhard Scheer into retreat. Both sides claimed victory in this indecisive battle, though Britain retained control of the North Sea.

There were two major phases of the battle. At 4:48 p.m. on May 31, 1916, the scouting forces of Vice Admirals David Beatty and Franz Hipper commenced a running artillery duel at fifteen thousand yards in the Skagerrak (Jutland), just off Denmark’s North Sea coast. Hipper’s ships took a severe pounding but survived due to their superior honeycomb hull construction. Beatty lost three battle cruisers due to lack of antiflash protection in the gun turrets, which allowed fires started by incoming shells to reach the powder magazines. Beatty after this initial encounter turned north and lured the Germans onto the Grand Fleet.

The second phase of the battle started at 7:15 p.m., when Admiral John Jellicoe brought his ships into a single battle line by executing a 90-degree wheel to port. Gaining the advantage of the fading light, he cut the Germans off from their home base and twice crossed the High Sea Fleet’s “T.” Admiral Reinhard Scheer’s ships took seventy direct hits, while scoring but twenty against Jellicoe: Scheer’s fleet escaped certain annihilation only by executing three brilliant 180-degree battle turns away. By the full darkness at 10:00 p.m., British losses amounted to 6,784 men and 111,000 tons, and German losses to 3,058 men and 62,000 tons.