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p.49

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ALEXANDER
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ON WHO IS
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HIM.
'O ZEUS HAVE
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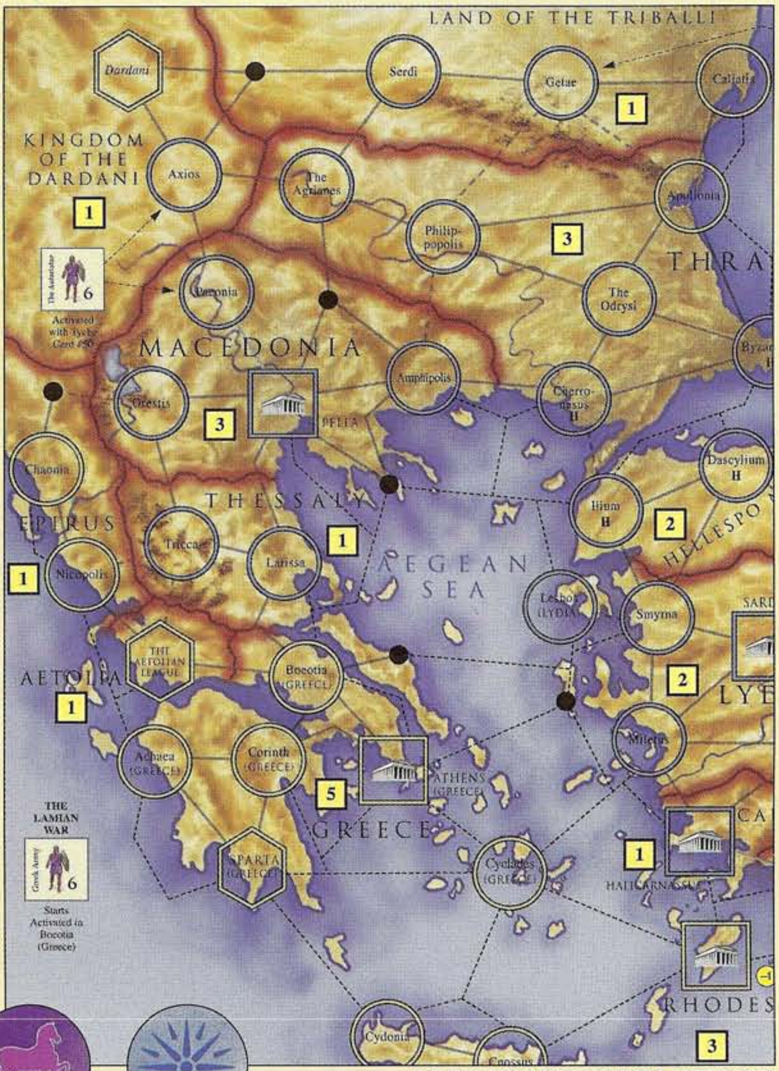
LAND OF THE TRIBALLI
Dardani
Serdi
Getae
Callatis
KINGDOM OF THE DARDANI
Axios
The Agrianes
Apollonia
Philippopolis
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Lesbos (LYDIA)
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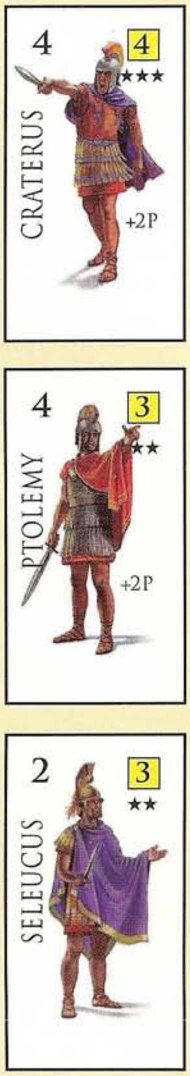
THE AETOLIAN LEAGUE
AETOLIA
Boeotia (GREECE)
Achaea (GREECE)
Corinth (GREECE)
ATHENS (GREECE)
GREECE
SPARTA (GREECE)
Cyclades (GREECE)
HALICARNASSUS
RHODES
Cydonia
Cnossus
Activated with Tyche Card #50
THE LAMIAN WAR
Greek Army
Starts Activated in Boeotia (Greece)
1
3
2
5
6

PORTION OF MAP SHOWN AT 50% ACTUAL SIZE

SAMPLE GENERALS:


4
4
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CRATERUS
+2P
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3
★★
PTOLEMY
+2P
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3
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SELEUCUS

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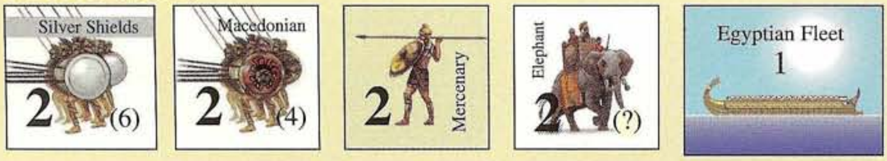
Silver Shields
2 (6)
Macedonian
2 (4)
Mercenary
2
Elephant
2 (?)
Egyptian Fleet
1

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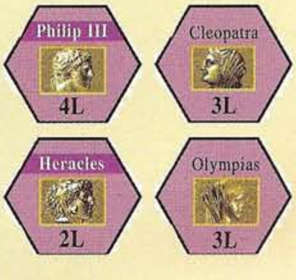
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11
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✓ before skirmishing. The weapon type drawn is not playable this round. All subsequent rounds are entitled to Guard Reinforcement.
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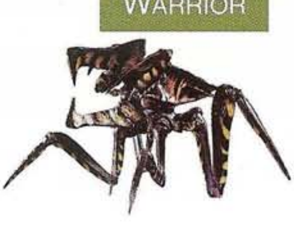

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GENERAL

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THE AVALON HILL PHILOSOPHY

Part 179

The Obsolescent Gamer

It was just the most thrilling convention yet.

No matter what coverage is given to AvalonCon, the offices of *The GENERAL* will receive complaints. If no coverage is provided, still there will be complaints. Given this lose-lose situation, what's an editor to do? How is it possible to please such a diverse magazine readership? Some of you never want to hear a word more about AvalonCon, others crave the deepest details, and still others find the format not balanced to the right level of coverage of their favorite events. In 1996, I provided a three-part summary (including one on Juniors events) of as many events as were reported to me—which didn't fit into one issue of the magazine. I found it inadequate (in that details were minimal), yet overwhelming (in that AvalonCon has so many events that the whole summary is hard to digest). I pared it to what I thought was the absolute minimum, yet I still received reader complaints that it took up too much space (which should have been devoted to game strategy articles).

Determined to continue to propound about the hobby's best gaming convention, I returned to my office in August, and sent out the usual letters reminding game masters to send me summary material. As time-consuming as the effort was in 1996, it looked like 1997 would be worse—fewer submissions, slower responses to requests, very uneven material. I concluded one thing from the situation—GMs are just as interested in playing the games as the rest of you. The competition, comradery and plaque count the most. A summary blurb is a lower priority. Perhaps after many years of volunteerism, GMs are coming to believe that this great convention has to be experienced to be believed, and that preaching to the converted serves little purpose, while the skeptics won't read anyway. As much as I'd like to believe that many a participant cares to hear what happened in the final rounds after he or she was eliminated, does that justify printing these summaries for others to read?

With volume 31, number 6 stuffed with material to the point of having no series replay, and with many GMs delinquent with their responses, I opted in September to publish only the list of champions and photos. Now, as the weather turns cold and thoughts of conventions are replaced with holiday preparations, I realize that my task is no easier. Therefore, instead of sinking into the dead-of-the-winter blues, let us redefine the task. I'll personalize the report. This will jilt a few gamers who were off playing in a different dimension than I (seemingly in the same time and space, but not exactly), but this report will have a few more juicy details about individual events—details which may tell you something about the experiences people have at the convention. Rather than distill the whole convention into an inedible mass, I provide in the article on page 24 a smorgasboard of my activities, with the caveat that much more happened than met my eyes. I offer it for the curious—for the tentative ones who still haven't taken the plunge—and for those who like to remember and relive a few of the convention's moments.

A great many of you will skip the AvalonCon report. After all, the gaming industry of today is more into gigabytes, sound cards and RAM management than the thrill of human competition (computer game sales in millions versus boardgame sales in thousands). Many readers are happy to play their games in the midnight glow of their monitor, rather than search to fit human players and playing time into their busy lives. Call me an obsolescent gamer, but I fully understand the tyranny of hardware capitalism. While my brain remains sound—and some might say improved from 1992—my home computer is considered defunct (has been for some time, from the point of view of playing games). Computer gaming has dwindled to less than five per cent of my hobby time (and dependent upon borrowing equipment). The thrill of the unpredictable, but adaptable, human opponent still holds the greatest allure for me.

I consistently buy on the technological cutting edge and then hold as long as the equipment remains viable before buying again. As a certified penny pincher, I don't let the industry tell me that I should upgrade constantly (spending $1000/year to be able to play the latest and greatest game). From a work point of view, my 1992 PC still manages (and is finally depreciated by IRS standards). Sure, I could have benefitted from

➤➤➤➤➤ *(Continued on p. 58)*

Arachnid Strategy

By J.C. Connors

The Arachnids of *STARSHIP TROOPERS* are always working at a disadvantage. Bugs are completely ineffective at long range, and even when the bugs are *mano a mano* with a trooper, the MI will usually manage to kill it before the bug has a chance to attack. Many Arachnid players will find themselves charging headlong at the troopers hoping a few bugs break through to get a kill or two. This is a desperate strategy that rarely works. Even if a bug does manage to get an unlucky trooper, the tremendous loss of bugs will cripple the Arachnids for the rest of the scenario.

All-out "bug charges" have their place in *STARSHIP TROOPERS*, but the bugs must time them perfectly. Timing and positioning are the keys to bug strategy. Oftentimes, a game of *STARSHIP TROOPERS* will be over in less than five turns. Even though the bugs get constant reinforcements, the short nature of scenarios often make these reinforcements ineffectual. Arachnid players can never afford to waste their hordes on anything less than a well-timed, full-scale, combined attack of Warriors, Hoppers and Tankers.

THE FIVE-YARD STAND

Bugs should never recklessly charge the MI. In good movie fashion, the bugs should take a cinematic pause before their attack, scream a fierce battle cry, and then charge headlong into the humans.

In game terms, this means stopping five hexes away from the troopers. If a trooper is not within your Warriors' movement range, stop five hexes away. Trooper fire is very inaccurate at this range, and your bugs will probably be able to strike the troopers on their next movement. You can usually hover with most of your bugs at this range until they are all in position to attack. When they are all in range, attack mercilessly from all sides. Every trooper should have a bug on him.

Never, ever, position a bug two hexes from a trooper who can see him. The MI will waste your bug at that range. Tankers are the only exception to this rule, because their fiery spray can hit troopers from this range.

CLIFFHANGING

If the troopers are on the high ground and your bug holes are on low ground, move your bugs in the valley and hug the edges of the cliffs. Whether preparing for an attack, or simply driving to another position, stay close to those cliffs. Warriors can usually catch up with the troopers from these cliffsides, even considering the movement penalty. Hoppers have no problems at all operating from below the cliffsides (often jumping behind the troopers, possibly into a low-ground valley adjacent to a trooper).

This strategy must be altered when the troopers are on the low ground and the Arachnids are on the high ground. Hexes adjacent to the edge will draw fire. Stay away from an edge hex to keep your bugs out of attack range. In situations like this, ignore the terrain and stick to the "five-yard stand" tactic.

HOPPER TACTICS

With high speed and an excellent defense, Hoppers are the deadliest weapon in the bugs' arsenal. Their seven-hex movement ability makes it tempting to attack with them alone, launching them before the arrival of slower Warriors and Tankers to attack a trooper. Generally, this isn't a smart tactic (unless you can receive no other reinforcement and the bug holes are conveniently placed). Without the Warriors to absorb MI firepower, the great defense value of a Hopper won't save it. Instead, wait for the Warriors to get into position. Then use your Hoppers to attack with them.

When choosing the Hopper's target, pick either the deadliest MI (usually Nuke or Sugar) or the weakest (Carmen and Zander—"fleet and MI don't mix"). Always try to use your two Hoppers together to threaten a single opponent. The advantage of picking a target like Nuke is that the Hoppers are more likely to withstand a trooper counterattack, because Nuke can't fire at close range. When the troopers see their vital unit endangered, they'll open fire on the Hoppers. With some luck, one of your Hoppers will survive the burst to kill Nuke. Even if both Hoppers are killed, the troopers will have wasted enough firepower to allow some of your Warriors to survive and pick them off.

Picking a weak target is also a smart tactic. Trooper players are more likely to ignore the weaker MI and concentrate firepower on the Warriors endangering their better units. This almost guarantees the Hoppers a quick kill. It doesn't take many losses to cripple the troopers. Plus, this leaves your Hoppers around for a second assault.

TANKER TACTICS

Troopers fear the plodding Tankers. With a tough armored shell, Tankers can usually walk right up to the line of troopers without much fear. Though a Tanker has a high defense value, never allow more than three troopers to get a shot at one. Even if it means sacrificing a Warrior or two in a suicidal rush to draw trooper fire, don't let your Tanker make too many saving rolls.

Try not to give the MI a chance to knock one out from a distance. Like all of the other bugs, Tankers should stay five hexes from the troopers. Because of their slow movement, Tankers usually can't get immediately into striking range from this distance. Launch a massive assault with your Warriors and Hoppers, while your Tankers follow in the rear. The main assault will give the Tanker the time to close with the MI. Furthermore, the Tanker should be able to hit a trooper with his fiery spit from a two-hex range.

HEAD HOPPERS VARIANT

In the movie "Starship Troopers," the Hoppers had the unnerving ability to swoop down and use their razor-sharp legs to decapitate a trooper. This deadly tactic is difficult to emulate in the game because Hoppers (like all bugs) must stop before they attack.

Try this variant. Hoppers may try to decapitate a trooper on the move. In order to do this, the Hopper may not have moved during the bug movement phase. During the bug attack phase, the Hopper moves over the hex of the trooper and continues to move, landing on an unoccupied space. The Hopper attacks the trooper (as if at a range of one hex) as it flies by, costing an extra movement point to conduct the attack. If the attack hits and the trooper fails its defense roll, the trooper's head falls to the ground severed from his body. Any trooper that did not fire in the trooper attack phase may fire a single round at such a Hopper at any one point along its flight path. Any trooper which did not fire and is also the target of a Hopper's flying attack can fire two rounds, but in so doing does not get a defense die roll when the Hopper attacks. Any trooper covering his buddies against flying attacks shouldn't be thinking of ducking, anyway!

Firepower Effectiveness
(percentage chance of killing target)

Attack	Defense Value:				
Value	5	4	3	2	1
5 @ 1 roll (grenade)	14%	28%	42%	56%	69%
4 @ 1 roll	11	22	33	44	56
2 rolls	21	40	56	69	80
3 rolls	30	53	70	83	91
4 rolls	38	63	80	90	96
3 @ 1 roll	8	17	25	33	42
2 rolls	16	31	44	56	66
3 rolls	23	42	58	70	80
4 rolls	29	52	68	80	88
2 @ 1 roll	6	11	17	22	28
2 rolls	11	21	31	40	48
3 rolls	16	30	42	53	62
4 rolls	20	38	52	63	73
1 @ 1 roll	3	6	8	11	14
2 rolls	5	11	16	21	26
3 rolls	8	16	23	30	36
4 rolls	11	20	29	38	45

Jam Probabilities

Nuke	2.8%
Other Weapons	
@ 1-2 rounds	—
@ 3 rounds	2.8
@ 4 rounds	4.2
Grenade	16.7

SERIES REPLAY

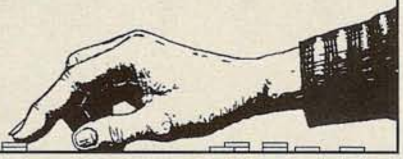
STARSHIP TROOPERS:

Battle 6

Troopers: Christopher Lawrence

Arachnids: J.C. Connors

Neutral Commentary: Stuart K. Tucker



This series replay covers Battle 6 from the new STARSHIP TROOPERS *game based on the movie. The action of this battle isn't seen in the movie, but is typical of the action on Planet P. Plasma bolts have knocked down a drop ship carrying very important psychics (VIPs). A retrieval boat is sent to the scene (the Green Squad), but dares not lift off in the proximity of plasma bugs. A nearby squad of the Mobile Infantry (the Black Squad) is sent on foot to the rescue, with the role of nuking the plasma bugs and helping save the wounded from bugs popping out of the ground. The goal of the Arachnid player is to kill the VIPs or destroy the retrieval boat and functioning drop ship.*

The rules of the game are introduced in stages, allowing play of battles without mastery of every rule. For this replay, Chris and J.C. opt to use all game rules (most importantly including jams and split fire).

PRE-GAME COMMENTARY

TROOPERS

I hate this scenario. I hate plasma bugs. The only good thing about this mission is the lack of tanker bugs. Although the black sub-colony is closer than I could have hoped, I'm glad to see that J.C. hasn't set his plasma bugs on the nearby high ground. The longer he delays moving them forward, the longer I have to prune down his forces. I plan to keep Green Squad stationary, guarding the wounded VIPs, while rushing Black Squad toward them as quickly as possible. Time to move out. On the bounce!

BUGS

My plasma bugs are my greatest strength and greatest vulnerability. With an amazing long-range attack, the plasma bugs are capable of causing immediate casualties to Chris' troopers. They are also far more reliable than the hordes of warriors and hoppers who are usually destined to die just a few feet from a trooper. The plasma bugs are the key to this scenario.

Looking at Chris' setup, I opt to keep my bug holes close to the high ground. My warrior bugs will probably be mowed down fairly quickly given all the trooper firepower that Chris has at his disposal (including an ungodly Drop ship cannon). My dead warriors (as reinforcements) need to be able to jump right back into the fray. Bug holes positioned farther away would cause them to be a full turn from the high ground.

With my bugs in place, I see two radically different strategies. Knowing that plasma bugs are the key, I can use them either offensively or defensively. The offensive plan would see them leap onto the high ground and barrage the trooper's from medium to long range—good odds in my favor. However, since the troopers always fire first, there's a good chance of Nuke being able to wipe out one of my plasma bugs before it could cause a casualty. That's not a chance I want to take, so I decide on a more conservative plan.

Bug victory is all about timing. Charging a few of my Arachnids at the troopers will undoubtedly fail. Charging all of the bugs at the troopers will cause a quick bug victory. I realize that my plasma bugs are no exception to this rule. Rather than leaping into attack positions by themselves, I decide to inch them along the sides of the canyon to get them into short range from the wounded psychics. Once there, a full assault of warriors, hoppers and plasma bugs will overwhelm the Mobile Infantry (MI). The fact that there are no tanker bugs to lead the assault is much lamented!

NEUTRAL COMMENTATOR

Despite Chris' desire to choose the battle based upon which scenario his MI could win, we decided to tackle Battle 6: The Crash Site. This battle puts half of the troopers in the role of rescuing the other half, all under the fire of plasma bugs. It's a nasty but exciting situation, but by no means pro-bug. The MI gets the firepower and defensive cover of the retrieval boat and drop ship. Furthermore, the plasma bug arriving in the R sector may find few targets without climbing the main plateau, putting it dangerously close to the ships' guns. The biggest advantage is that they can post the green plasma bug on the distant plateau near R1 and lob a series of scattered shots in the direction of W1. This necessitates that the MI disperse his setup to avoid giving the missed plasma shots a high probability of hitting adjacent targets. It is tempting to ring the MI together near W1, using the destroyed drop ship and the retrieval boat as movement barriers to protect a flank. This must be carefully weighed against the risks of concentration in the face of plasma fire.

The second key for the MI is getting Nuke into a firing position that will quickly protect the forces being rescued. While MI can trade blasts with plasma bugs, never miss an opportunity to drop the nuke shot on a cluster of warriors.

Given the large MI firepower arrayed against the bugs, J.C. will have to orchestrate his waves of warriors to maximum effect. After the initial onslaught, the bugs will be primarily relying upon plasma shots. I advocate rushing Nuke as he moves towards the rescue area. A warrior rush of the retrieval zone can be blown away if done too soon, while the MI still have significant firepower. It is best to soften the MI up with plasma shots, while moving under cover of the ravines to positions that will threaten Nuke's group. As long as Nuke is operational, the bugs will be in big trouble in this battle.

SETUP COMMENTARY

Chris chooses to set up his W1 forces behind the smoke of the downed drop ship. He wisely splits the two wounded bodies apart, but concentrates the rest of the force. I'd recommend that Chris split up these Green Squad troops in the first movement phase, just in case the plasma bugs take to the high ground.

J.C. has spread his forces around the setup locations in an appropriately ambiguous manner, disguising his true intentions. Each plasma bug can move several directions toward high ground.

TURN 1

Black Squad troopers move west, hugging the crater rim. Green bugs move south toward the plateau. Black bugs split into two forces. One, consisting of the hopper and two warriors, moves onto the plateau at a range of five from the troopers. The others move west under cover of the cliffs.

The exposed black bugs come under fire. One trooper at a time designates target(s) and fires rounds (rolling a six-sided die for each attack round), followed by the target rolling a saving die for each hit. Attack phase notation will be in this form: R#(#) (range number, attack value in parentheses)= #,# (die roll values and effects), s=#,# (defender's saving die rolls and effects).

Dizzy vs. near warrior R6(1)= 6,4 (miss).
Shujumi same warrior R5(1)= 5,5 (miss).
Sugar vs. hopper R8(1)= 1,2,5 (1 hit), s=3 (save).
Johnny vs. hopper R5(1)= 3,3 (miss).
Drop ship splitting fire, vs. hopper R6(3)= 5,5 (miss); vs. near warrior) R6(3)= 4 (miss).

TROOPER TURN 1

As planned, I rush Black Squad toward the retrieval boat without fear of bug attack, while Green Squad holds in place. I would normally move both squads together, but this battle requires me to guard the immobilized psychics (curse you, Doogie Howser). As it is, I hope brain bug J.C. will order an attack with the green warriors, trapping them between my two squads.

I can't remember a more ineffective turn of trooper fire. Did we leave the ammo on board the drop ships? If my poor luck continues, this should be a brief game.

BUG TURN 1

The drop ship is far too dangerous a target. Its cannons can blow apart bugs reliably within medium range, and I don't want to risk my plasma bugs that close to Nuke. It is a far better strategy to destroy the retrieval boat, which would leave Chris wondering whether my next target would be the wounded psychics or the drop ship.

I'm very tempted to pop up my black plasma bug on to the high ground to get a quick shot at Nuke. However, I don't want to endanger my plasma bug that fast. Nuke would have about a 50 per cent chance of hitting me, and then, if I survived, I'd have the same to hit him. Not great odds. I choose the high ground hex adjacent to W6 for my black plasma bug. It may take a while to get there, but if I can coordinate my combined attack, the green troopers don't have a chance.

Good thing Chris' aim is lousy. With a little bit of luck, a hopper next turn will take out Nuke and end this battle real fast. If not, my hoppers will be back next turn to leap right back into position for another attack.

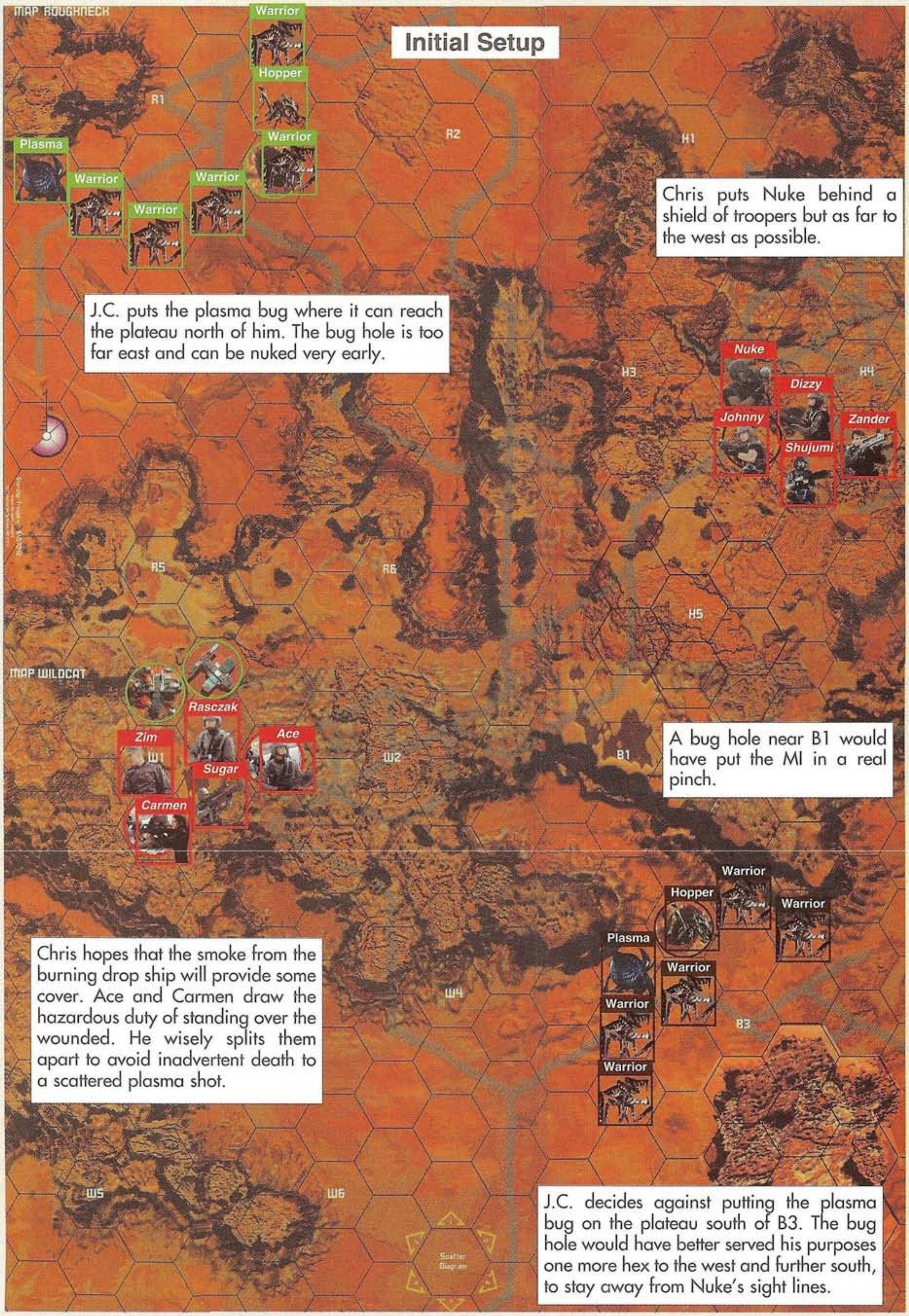
NEUTRAL

Chris kept a tight formation with his rescue forces and moved toward the wounded in the retrieval zone, being sure to keep Nuke away from any slopes where he could find himself under attack with no help from his backside.

J.C. missed a golden opportunity to rain plasma down on the compact retrieval zone. The retrieval boat doesn't block line of sight (LOS) and the scatter of a missed shot is very likely to hit something valuable—like a wounded body. His move of the green plasma bug south is a big mistake. It'll take way too long to reach high ground; in the meantime, he'll miss many an opportunity. On the other hand, the MI must take out the plasma bugs to win, so perhaps J.C. is playing for the long term, hoping to have the plasma bugs in a position to support each other. His movement of black bugs indicates that he'd like to get the black plasma bug into accurate range of the retrieval zone. This too may be a mistake. The concentration of MI in the retrieval zone could be hammered even from the B3 plateau.

J.C. "sticks out a hip" by placing two warriors and the hopper on the plateau. These are at a distant range and will probably survive MI fire. It looks like J.C. is preparing to rush Nuke's group.

As it turns out, the MI can't find the range. The attacks against the hopper were at low kill probabilities (23, 16 and 44 per cent, see the firepower effectiveness table on page 6), as were those against the lead warrior (21, 21 and 33 per cent). Although Chris has some reason to complain, at least he doesn't lose anybody as a result of these misfires.



Initial Setup

Chris puts Nuke behind a shield of troopers but as far to the west as possible.

J.C. puts the plasma bug where it can reach the plateau north of him. The bug hole is too far east and can be nuked very early.

A bug hole near B1 would have put the MI in a real pinch.

Chris hopes that the smoke from the burning drop ship will provide some cover. Ace and Carmen draw the hazardous duty of standing over the wounded. He wisely splits them apart to avoid inadvertent death to a scattered plasma shot.

J.C. decides against putting the plasma bug on the plateau south of B3. The bug hole would have better served his purposes one more hex to the west and further south, to stay away from Nuke's sight lines.

TURN 2

Again, Green Squad holds, while Black Squad moves toward it. Nuke moves to the plateau's edge where he can target the green bug hole.

The hoppers jump next to Nuke, while two black warriors attack the other end of Black Squad. One green warrior takes advantage of the smoke to edge closer to the wounded, with only Carmen having a sight line for a shot. The rest of the green and black warriors snuggle into ravines close to the retrieval zone.

Drop ship splits fire, vs. near hopper R3(4)= 6 (miss); vs. far hopper R4(4)= 4,4 (two hits), s= 5,5 (kill).
Ace vs. far black warrior R5(1)= 4,5 (miss).
Shujumi vs. same R1(4)= 2,4 (two hits), s= 2,4 (kill).
Dizzy vs. black hopper R2(4)= 4,4 (two hits), s= 2,2 (save).
Zander vs. same R2(3)= 1,3,3 (three hits), s= 3,3,5 (kill).
Zim vs. near black warrior R6(1)= 1,1,3 (two hits), s= 4,4 (kill).
Carmen vs. green warrior R3(1)= 4,4,4,6 (miss, jam).
Nuke vs. green bug hole R7= 11 (plugs hole). Blast effect: Warrior s=2 (save).

TROOPER TURN 2

Green Squad continues to hold its ground and Black Squad is moving forward at top speed. Stationary troopers gain an extra die in combat. Thus, I prefer to advance by squads, leaving sufficient forces with "overwatch" duty. Separated as the troopers are, however, doesn't leave me with much choice but to push ahead with Black Squad, so all but Johnny move. I position Nuke where he can take a shot at the green bug hole. Plugging that will significantly improve my odds (by stopping green bug reinforcements).

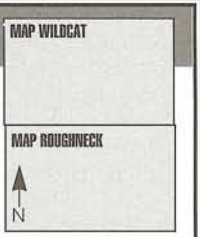
Success! The bug attack on Black Squad is easily repulsed, and Nuke manages to blast that bug hole. Killing the two hoppers raises my morale considerably, particularly since the green hopper is out for good. I think J.C. may have erred here by not waiting to hit me in force. He will attack Green Squad next turn with seven warriors, but as they still won't have the support of the plasma bugs or the losses from this turn, I think I can hold them off.

NEW BATTLES FOR *STARSHIP TROOPERS*

By J.C. Connors and Christopher Lawrence

The first question you may ask about the battles below is "where is Battle 13?" We've posted that one exclusively to our Web site: www.avalon.com. We plan on putting additional battles on the Web site and in *The GENERAL.* Send us your ideas.

BATTLE 14: MASSACRE AT PORT JOE SMITH



BACKGROUND: Hoping to live in peace with the Bugs, and ignoring Federal warnings, Mormon settlers established Port Joe Smith in the Arachnid Quarantine Zone. The presence of the humans on a planet colonized by the Arachnids led to an Arachnid raid on the settlement.

Black Squad: *Rasczak* and four unarmed colonists (Defense Value 1) on or adjacent to a Building or Listening Post.

Green Squad: *Sugar* and four unarmed colonists on or adjacent to a Building or Listening Post.

Black Colony: 1 Hopper, 2 Warriors, 1 Bug Hole on or adjacent to R3.
Green Colony: 1 Hopper, 2 Warriors, 1 Bug Hole on or adjacent to B4.

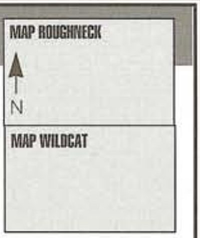
VICTORY CONDITIONS: Each turn starting with turn 5, the Trooper player rolls a die. On a 4-6, a Retrieval Boat lands to rescue the remaining colonists. The Bugs win by killing all the colonists before the boat arrives.

Before the Bugs set up, the Troopers should place the following cutouts:

- *three 3-hex buildings next to B6, W4 and R2.*
- *three 1-hex listening posts next to B5, B3 and W6.*

In this scenario, these hexes provide +2 to defense and block sight lines. Bugs may not enter.

BATTLE 15: EARS THAT HEAR



BACKGROUND: The assault on Planet P is in full swing. In order to track the underground movement of the Bugs, the Mobile Infantry is establishing listening posts across P. Can the Troopers prevent a Bug surprise attack?

Black Squad: *Nuke* (6 rounds), *Johnny, Dizzy, Shujumi* on or adjacent to W6.

Green Squad: *Rasczak, Zim, Sugar, Ace* on or adjacent to W3.

Black Colony: 1 Hopper, 1 Tanker, 4 Warriors, 2 Bug Holes.
Green Colony: 1 Hopper, 1 Tanker, 4 Warriors, 2 Bug Holes.

VICTORY CONDITIONS: The Troopers must establish and maintain two-man listening posts at R4, H4 and B4, and must close existing bug holes. A listening post is considered to be in operation if a Trooper is on the post's hex and another Trooper is in an adjacent hex. Any other result is a Bug victory.

Before the Troopers set up, the Bugs should place the following cutouts:

- *3-hex boulder field, one hex on W1.*
- *7-hex lava field next to B3 and B5.*
- *4-hex boulder field, one hex on H5.*

During the Bug Reinforcement phase, the Bug player rolls a die for each quadrant having no listening post (except W). On a 1 or 2, a hole is placed on a random drop zone in that quadrant.

BUG TURN 2

Needing to distract the Black Squad, I send four bugs to their deaths. Chris needs to feel threatened. Plus, if I can take out a trooper or two, it could make a big difference later.

My plasma bugs continue to get into position. It's too late to change their strategy, which is unfortunate because now Chris knows that they won't be in firing positions for a few turns. I can see that my warriors crawling along the cliffsides are making him nervous. In a turn I'll have the Green Squad troopers almost completely surrounded.

Whatever I thought about the drop ship cannons before is doubly reinforced. I need to stay far away from those things! One bug hole is gone. Fortunately, a hopper is the only permanent casualty at this point. While that hurts my bug's mobility and chances to catch Nuke off-guard, my warriors are in a perfect tactical position to eliminate Green Squad.

NEUTRAL COMMENTARY

Chris gets conservative with movement, letting Johnny stand to gain an extra attack roll (but his other firepower deflects the attack without Johnny's ammo). Nuke moved one hex to view the green bug hole from a range of seven (showing the folly of placing that bug hole anywhere but to the extreme SW).

J.C. decided to rush at Nuke with both hoppers while two warriors hit the rescue party from the south. This may be premature, but with Nuke sighting the green bug hole, he didn't have much choice. I fault his placement of the hoppers, however. They could have attacked Nuke from below (using the cliffs for cover). Only Dizzy would have had a shot (and with a LOS to only one of them). Chris did not adequately flank Nuke, but he got away with it this time.

Meanwhile, J.C. used the cover of smoke from the W1 drop ship to move closer to the wounded. Only Carmen had a LOS on the warrior, but I question this. He should have awaited the arrival of the black warriors for a simultaneous rush. This warrior, if he survived, would not get a melee attack until next turn anyway. On the other hand, Carmen jammed her carbine, lifting J.C.'s spirits. Of course, the four-dice roll was used to up the odds in what is a fairly tough shot for the carbine at range 3 (38 per cent chance to kill even with four attack rolls).

Chris killed the hoppers, saving Nuke from death. Good thing, too—otherwise this battle would be over. He split fire from his most effective weapon, the H4 drop ship, managing to kill the green hopper. One of Zander's three hits finally killed the other hopper. Zim and Zander both nearly jammed their guns, too.

Nuke, with a breath of relief, let loose a shot on the green hole and plugged it. The nearby warrior saved himself from blast effects. Apparently J.C was holding back that warrior to keep a trooper from standing on the bug hole to plug it. However, he could have guarded against this and been in a safer place at the same time. He lucked out here. J.C. was left with no melee attacks and a plugged hole. Things are not looking great. It is hard to fault him for rushing Nuke; his bug hole was threatened. However, had he not rushed, he would still have the hopper for his big wave attack next turn. The lack of a plasma bug on high ground really hurt. The MI was in a tight formation which made this kind of mutual fire support deadly. J.C. had to soften up the MI or at least scatter them a bit before trying to rush them. He is playing into Chris' strongest position—where both squads and the drop ship create a deadly ground for the bugs.

TURN 3

Carmen's weapon repair roll (6) fails. Black Squad moves forward, with Shujumi holding in the overwatch role this time. The bugs launch their wave assault against the western side of the retrieval area, while the plasma bugs inch forward closer to their high-ground destinations.

Shujumi vs. nearest black warrior R6(1)= 2,4,6 (miss).

Zander vs. same R4(1)= 1,1,5 (two hits), s=4,5 (kill).

Johnny vs. northern green warrior R6(1)= 1,5 (hit), s= 1 (save).

Ace splitting fire, vs. western black warrior R3(2)= 1 (hit), s= 5 (kill); vs. southern black warrior R3(2)= 1,1 (two hits, jam), s= 1,1 (save).

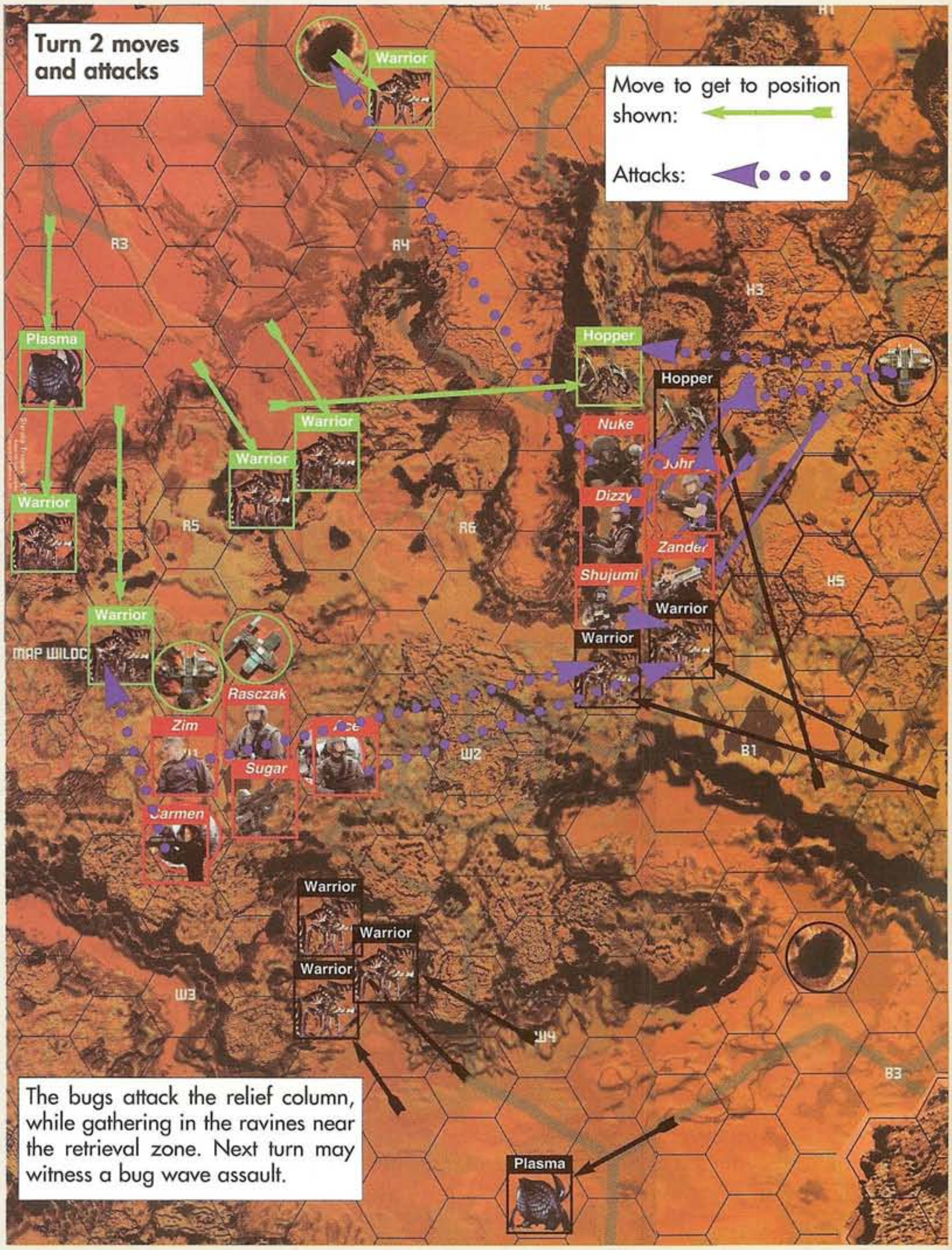
Rasczak vs. southern green warrior R2(1)= 3,5,5,6 (miss). "Shoot off a leg and a warrior is still 87 per cent effective!"

Zim splitting fire, vs. same R1(4)= 2,3 (two hits) s= 4,5 (kill); vs. other adjacent warrior R1(4)= 4 (hit), s=6 (kill).

Sugar vs. southern black warrior R2(4)= 1,4,5 (two hits), s= 6,6 (kill).

Dizzy vs. northern green warrior R5(1)= 2,5 (miss).

➤➤➤➤➤ *(continued pg. 30)*



Turn 2 moves and attacks

Move to get to position shown:

Attacks:

The bugs attack the relief column, while gathering in the ravines near the retrieval zone. Next turn may witness a bug wave assault.

No Guts, No Glory

By Michael Welker

Ten hut! Now listen up, you people! Any Star Marine worth his weight in body armor would eat a bug to be in your baby shoes. We've got big trouble and we're the only people in the parsec with enough firepower to handle the situation. Her royal highness, your beloved Princess Ryan, has been abducted. We have orders to rescue her within 15 Terran days, otherwise the navy will make this sector of space uninhabitable for eternity. Do you understand me! I can't hear you! GOOD!

We have intelligence reports on the forces protecting their bounty, as well as this really nice looking map of the most likely routes to her holding place. The Princess is in the heart of Yamaguchi's Citadel. We will insert a team at Drop Zone Alpha, battle our way to the Citadel, and rescue Princess Ryan. We shall collect intelligence along the way as to the exact location of the Princess. Our superiors have ordered our immediate insertion. We must rely upon the weapons here aboard the *Schenectady*, but the generous use of field promotions has been authorized. The marine who rescues the Princess will get 30 days R'n'R, a 100,000 credit combat bonus, and a juicy promotion.

Let me draw your attention to the details of the mission. We have 24 trained Marines, but only a smaller force will be inserted on the planet surface, with the remainder in reserve on the *Schenectady*. The ranking Marine on the surface will call the shots. Each of you should exercise your abilities with caution, because we will have only limited opportunities to regroup and refit. If you get caught without weapons, suffer insurmountable casualties, or cannot advance without undue risk, the ranking Marine on the surface needs to order a regroup. This will cost us time but enable us to insert a fresh unit.

Realize that half of the Marines have values of 2, while a third have values of 3 or 4. Two Marines are outstanding with values of 5 or 6. Our highly-trained officers round out our complement—let's keep them away from the firefights, so that they can use their brains and coordinate communication and fire support (Dispatches). As you can see from Table 1, not every Marine is qualified to use all the resources available to us (more on that later).

Flexibility in command and control will be a critical asset for our eventual success. Successful skirmishes will be amply rewarded. Table 2 shows the promotion points (PPs) we expect to allocate, if resistance is as expected. More PPs are available when more Marines are fielded. You'll gain these depending on the results of each skirmish.

You should expect varying degrees of enemy opposition, a variety of skirmish environs and some nasty enemy traps. The Republic's Black Guard is protecting the Princess, but our drop zone is far enough away from the Citadel to allow us an opportunity to look for the easy paths to our goal.

We can be sure that the enemy will do everything in its power to prevent the rescue. Our intelligence personnel have

➤➤➤➤➤ *(continued pg. 37)*

TABLE 1

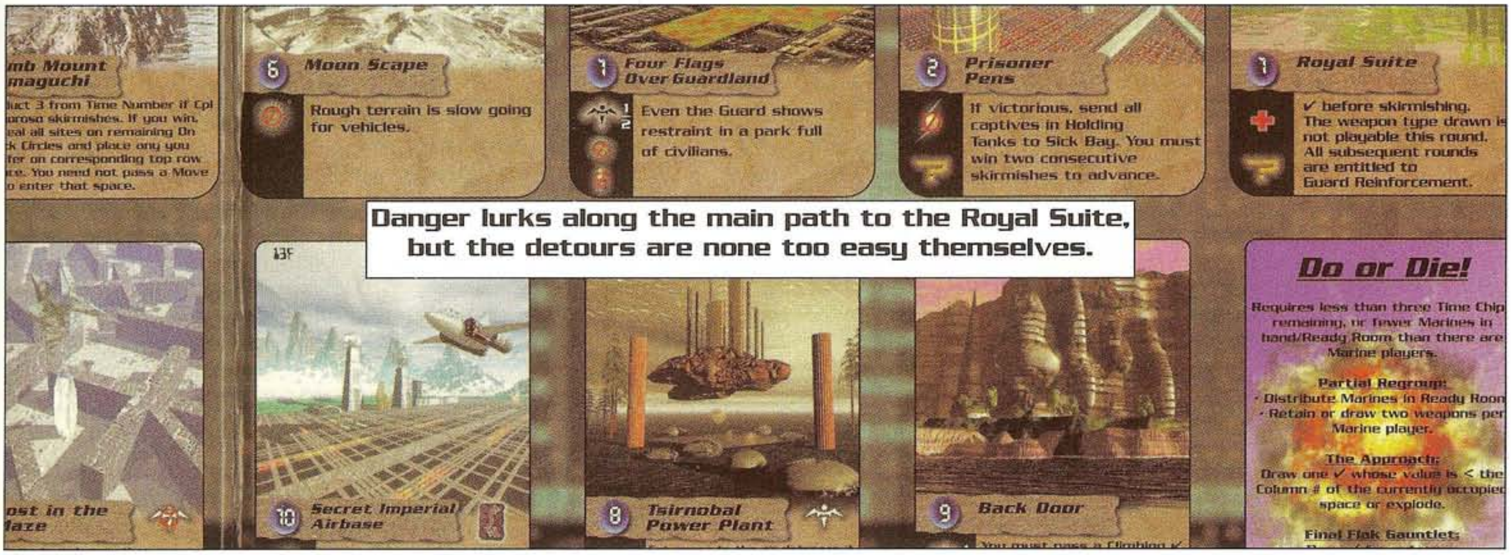
Dispatch Type	Number of Cards	Proportion of Cards
Guard Only	6	10.0%
Marine Only*	32	53.3
Guard or Marine	22	36.7
Total	60	100.0

*including two shuttle Dispatch cards

Marine Rank	Number of Usable Non-Shuttle Dispatches	Proportion Usable
1	4	7.7%
2	6	11.5
3	8	15.4
4	10	19.2
5	12	23.1
6	14	26.9
7	16	30.8
8	18	34.6
9	20	38.5
10	22	42.3
11	24	46.2
12	26	50.0
13	28	53.8
14	30	57.7
15	32	61.5
16	34	65.4
17	36	69.2
18	38	73.1
19	40	76.9
20	42	80.8
21	45	86.5
22	47	90.4
23	49	94.2
24	52	100.0

TABLE 2

	Promotion Points Per Guard Faced				
No. of Players	0	1	2	3	4
6	22.9%	20.0%	14.3%	28.6%	14.3%
5	25.8	22.6	16.1	32.3	3.2
4	30.8	26.9	19.2	19.2	3.8
3	40.0	35.0	20.0	0.0	5.0
2	40.9	31.8	22.7	0.0	4.5
1	38.1	33.3	23.8	0.0	4.8


mb Mount
maguchi
6
Moon Scape
Rough terrain is slow going for vehicles.
1
Four Flags Over Guardland
Even the Guard shows restraint in a park full of civilians.
2
Prisoner Pens
If victorious, send all captives in Holding Tanks to Sick Bay. You must win two consecutive skirmishes to advance.
1
Royal Suite
✓ before skirmishing. The weapon type drawn is not playable this round. All subsequent rounds are entitled to Guard Reinforcement.
13F
Do or Die!
Requires less than three Time Chip remaining, or fewer Marines in hand/Ready Room than there are Marine players.
Partial Regroup:
· Distribute Marines in Ready Roon
· Retain or draw two weapons per Marine player.
The Approach:
Draw one ✓ whose value is < the Column # of the currently occupied space or explode.
Final Flak Gauntlet:
ost in the
laze
10
Secret Imperial Airbase
8
Tsirnobal Power Plant
9
Back Door

Danger lurks along the main path to the Royal Suite, but the detours are none too easy themselves.

Letters

Kudos for ZOC, etc.

Kisner's joining of forces with *The GENERAL* is an added plus for readers. I am quite pleased to see intelligent reviews of games published by Clash of Arms, Decision Games and The Gamers. I most definitely think there is a place for reviews and tips for strategy-based computer games. Moscatello's treatise on *MASTER OF ORION II* was certainly appreciated. While I would not want to see *THE GENERAL* turn into *Computer Gaming World*, I must say I am extremely happy with the recent broadening of horizons the magazine has taken.

—Ed Caylor, Hampton, NH

The articles on the other games are interesting and give a broader perspective on the whole industry. Your new strategy makes good business sense and hopefully will help to keep our hobby alive. I look forward to receiving my issues and I read them from cover to cover—even the articles on games that are not of interest to me, just because they are written well.

—Charles Ellsworth

I thought this issue (volume 31, number 5) looked good and had a nice balance. My favorite has to be the return of *ZOC*, as it is always fun to read about games that you don't get to see in the local shop (if you have one).

The letter from Alzenshi shows that if you play *ASL* for too long, you forget there are other games. I liked the letter on the first time AvalonCon experience. This was me five years ago and I'll come back every chance I get. The gaming experience at AvalonCon is the best there is. Everyone who is a gamer should come and see what it is really all about.

—John W. Clere, Kentucky

I was in constant debate with myself as to whether some of the changes in the magazine were for the better, if this magazine is to survive into the next century as a foremost publication of the wargaming hobby. Clearly, though, the trend is toward computer gaming, and I agree that the magazine must appeal also to the next generation of the wargaming public. Can it appeal to both the *board* wargamers as well as the computer game players without succumbing to the "robbing Peter to pay Paul" syndrome? *The GENERAL* is first and foremost a magazine for board wargamers. There are a plethora of computer game magazines in the market, but how many board wargaming magazines exist today that are top notch and outclass all others? There are none that I have read that can ever equal the quality and finesse that *The GENERAL* carries with it. I wouldn't mind paying extra for a page expansion to ensure that computer material doesn't upstage board wargaming.

—Alfredo M. Battaglia, Jennings, MO

As long as most of the magazine is about Avalon Hill products, I am more than happy to see other games reviewed. In fact, I welcome articles about board games from other companies, since I have a stronger interest in board games than computer games.

—David Brooks, Memphis, TN

Achtung Writers

I have played Avalon Hill games since I was about twelve years old (almost 21 years ago), and I currently own around 50 games and associated modules with a small number from other lesser companies. I have just become computer literate and have acquired *OVER THE REICH*. Superb!!! I love this and I am very surprised that *The GENERAL* has not covered this game in any depth. I must say that I enjoy the new magazine look—after being very apprehensive about the change. Please, please, keep it centered on boardgames, new and old. Thanks for all the gaming pleasure you have given over the years (your games are quite expensive over here but well worth the money). Keep up the good work.

—Gary Barr, Belfast, N.Ireland

I, too, am surprised that I haven't been flooded with articles on this superb wargamer's game and its sequel, ACHTUNG SPITFIRE. I guess players are still very absorbed with it. When you come up for air, send me articles!—SKT

The German Wave

Thank you for all the effort you put into the magazine. I've enjoyed them very much, because they are full of strategy tips, replays and variants. Personally, I love coverage of non-wargames and would support more of that. I have also enjoyed historical articles.

My main misgiving about your company is that it, too, is caught up with topics of violence or money-making. Take for example *PRINCESS RYAN'S STAR MARINES*. The game truly does intrigue me because of the need to cooperate as well as compete. However, I will never buy it because I don't think it is a game that my wife and our circle of friends would really enjoy. The trouble is the subject matter. Again, it's run-and-shoot, *Star Wars* type of affair. We're not kids anymore and this kind of subject is not appealing. Why not think of another game where there is a tension between cooperation and competition where the subject matter is more interesting? Mind you, I recognize that games need elements of conflict to be interesting. . . I find it dismaying when you get reader comments complaining that you are not focusing enough on wargames. Well, those wargame grognards may be the most vocal, but I believe you'll be shooting yourself in the foot if you listen too much to them. Other adult gamers are turning to the imaginative German type of abstract game and I think it would serve you well to try to reach out to that audience.

—Togu Oppusunggu, Brooklyn, NY

Kudos to the AH staff on the release of *TITAN: THE ARENA*. It is very popular right now with the members of our game club. We had three 4-player games going simultaneously at last Saturday's meeting. Most members thought that the fantasy free-for-all was the perfect thematic realization for this kind of card/betting game. They also thought it should make a good "crossover" hit with the general gaming public looking for a superior family/social game. Easy to learn, and chock full of tough, fun decisions on each and every turn. I hope AH considers publishing more of these "German-style" card/board games.

—Charles Bahl,
The Quake Coast Game Club, San Jose, CA

Gaming Innovation

Thank you for producing excellent games at great prices! The games that have really caught the attention of my family and friends have been *WE THE PEOPLE* and *HANNIBAL*. This game system is the best to come along in years—a major development in playability, competitiveness and realism. I can only hope that the system is being applied to other great campaigns such as the Civil War, Napoleon and Frederick the Great. The simple mechanics allow players to concentrate on turn strategy. No two games are alike. We find that more often than not, the outcome hangs in the balance until the very end.

—Mark Gray, Glenwood Springs, CO

QUARK
LAPTOP
STALINGRAD
LAPTOP REFERENCE
Adobe ILLUSTRATOR
c>warcraft

Fight Like A Man, Not an Orc

Crafting Your War Effort in *WARCRAFT II*

By Mark G. McLaughlin

Your army is marshaled. Big knights on even bigger chargers, both straining at the bit, cluster around behind a mass of burly foot soldiers clad in burnished steel armor. A troop of elven archers, their long blond locks streaking out beneath their plumed helms, capes fluttering in the breeze, cock their arrows in anticipation. Lightning crackles from the wands of wild-eyed mages while a holy glow emanates from the golden paladins by their side. Mighty bolt-throwers creak at the strain of holding back their giant arrows, while dwarven demolition squads ready the fuses on their powder barrels. The anticipation builds as flapping wings and crowing cries of the giant Gryphons urge you to rush forward against the slathering, drooling orcs, ogres, goblins, berserkers, skeletons, dragons, death-knights and demons of the evil horde. A fleet of wooden warships bristling with antique bombards and escorted by armored submarines is coming up the channel. The holds of the transports following behind are filled with longbow-wielding rangers eager to take on the cannon towers and arrow platforms that protect the harbor wherein lie the foundries, shipyards, oil refineries and other buildings that make up the enemy fortress city that has grown like a blight on the land.

WarCraft II (Tides of Darkness) keeps all the good things from the first game, but goes several steps farther. It adds many more kinds of buildings and unit types, including flying scouts, fire-breathing dragons and the gryphon rider (a dwarf with exploding throwing axes mounted on a really big eagle). There are also sailing ships armed with cannons (destroyers, battleships, juggernauts, transports and submarines) and a long list of new ground units, most of them with magic abilities.

As in the original game, most of the units and scenarios in *WarCraft II* mirror each other. The two top magic types on each side (human mages and paladins, orc ogre-mages and death-knights) have similar powers, yet each has its own unique spells that are available only to that side. Spells, like special weapons and other improvements, require the establishment of key buildings and the expenditure of resources to research those advances.

BE A BUILDER, NOT A RAIDER

The *WarCraft* system requires a player to invest time and resources in creating a base of operations. This base will grow into a medieval town, complete with farms, blacksmith shops, lumber mills, barracks, shipyards, etc. This is more than just a "SimCity" set up; it is the key to victory. How you allocate your initial pool of limited resources will set the tone for the game, and will determine not only if you can win, but how long it will take you (and, conversely, on how many times you might have to go back to a saved game). Although seemingly plentiful, the resources on the map get used up very quickly. You have to manage your resources intelligently.

The computer plays a "raiding" game. It sends individual or small groups of units in frequent and annoying attacks on your patrols and your towns. You can usually kill every single one of these units each time, but they will take out a few of your people and destroy some of your buildings. This is a war of attrition which your computer opponent can win, because it has people and resources to waste. It doesn't cheat, but it simply starts with more stuff than you do (cities and fortresses are already built).

TRAPPING THE RAIDERS

The best way to deal with raiders is to set traps for them. The best traps involve towers. For less than it costs to build a normal foot soldier, you can build a Scout/Watch Tower. Although this has no weaponry, it has the highest armor factor in the game. For the price of an Archer/Axe-Thrower you can upgrade the Tower to a Guard Tower. These have arrows. The Guard Towers have more armor and can take more hits than almost any other unit. In addition, they have a longer sighting and firing range than any ground or sea unit. They are repairable (at no cost in resources). They can even be fixed by peasants while under attack.

Guard Towers work best in pairs or even triplets on the perimeter and at choke points (defiles, channels, mountain passes). The towers will buy you time to marshal mobile reinforcements to back them up. They can

WarCraft II by Blizzard Entertainment
System Requirements: MS-DOS 5.0, Windows 95 or Windows 3.1, Super VGA graphics, 33 MHz 486, 8 mb RAM, Hard Drive, CD-ROM (double speed highly recommended). Supports the major sound systems. Mouse preferred but may be played with Keyboard. Supports modem play. Easy scenarios take under two hours to play; more difficult scenarios may require four hours or more.

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🖥 🖥 🖥	AI Ability
H H H H - -	Realism
♥ ♥ ♥ ♥	Excitement
👁 👁 👁 👁 👁	Artistic Appeal
↻ ↻ ↻ ↻ ↻	Replayability

Rating icons range from one (wretched or ten years behind the state of the industry) to five (top 10% of industry). Four is good, three is passable (middle of the road for the industry) and two is not great (bottom third).

also provide cover for your Archers/Axe-Throwers and artillery (Catapults, Bolt-Throwers or Spell Casters). Your foes waste their energies chipping away at the Towers, while you pepper them.

Cannon Towers pack much more wallop than Guard Towers, but they have two drawbacks: 1) they are overly costly and 2) they can not shoot up.

ARMS FOR SHIELDS

While towers make the best defense, farms actually make the best walls. They take a lot of punishment and draw the computer like flies to honey. The farms grow food (which you need to support units) and you can hide bowmen/axeman behind them to fire as the enemy advances. A peasant or two can repair the farms as fast as the enemy damages them.

BUILDINGS ON THE ATTACK

Architectural advances come in two forms. The most obvious is to create buildings that support each other and provide the materials, resources, research base and prerequisites for the next type of advance. That advance can be the creation of or improvement of existing units or the acquisition of magic knowledge. Some buildings are also "force multipliers."

The second way to advance through architecture is to build your way forward. When you put together an attack force, the second wave (and sometimes the rear rank of the first wave) should include at least one or two peasants. The peasants can build a simple farm to act as a shield for your units, or they can build towers to provide you with covering fire to deal with a counterattack. Occupation of key points on the perimeter of enemy towns will always draw the computer forces into a counterattack (such as along the path to a gold mine). Find these points, set up towers within range of them, and then send one man into the enemy town as bait. Keep your hand on the mouse and the move command, because he will have to run to stay ahead of the crowd. Do not stop and fight with him—the farther he runs, the farther the computer will follow. With a pair of towers and such archers, you can set up a shooting gallery. The computer will keep throwing troops at this as long as it can.

ATTACK IN ECHELON

The computer has creatures and resources to waste and can afford to attack in piecemeal, "banzai" charges. Its favorite method of defense is to keep units clumped around a key site and, when you come within sight of them, those units will launch a vicious counterattack. You should learn from this slaughter not to fight this way. You can turn this to your advantage by laying a trap.

Unfortunately, there are times and places where you can not use this because of the terrain, path of approach or density of enemy forces and buildings. This is especially true when you make a landing under fire on an island or beach that is being swept by their towers, catapults and archers. In this kind of fight, you must carve out an area for yourself. It is no different than a river crossing or amphibious landing in modern war. Use long-range weapons and naval/air bombardment to sweep an area. They then move off to the flanks to intercept enemy counterattacks, while you set up in the middle. If you can, this middle ground is the best place to put a tower or two. You can then set up the shooting gallery trap.

TOWERS IN THE HEART OF DARKNESS

The cheapest, easiest and most effective way to deal with an enemy town is to build your own Guard Towers and Cannon Towers right in the heart of that town. These towers will fire continuously and automatically at every building and unit in their range. You can build them and leave them to do their duty while your army is elsewhere. While the towers slowly blast and batter away, your army can search for enemy units or smash the buildings that lie beyond the range of the towers. The towers also act as a fall-back position (providing covering fire) should an enemy counterattack come from an unexpected or unexplored quarter.

DEALING WITH THE UNKNOWN

As in many games of this type, most of the map is shrouded in black. As you move and explore, more of the map is revealed. As soon as you leave the area a gray shadow passes over it. You see buildings and terrain, but will not be able to see any enemy units or their movements unless someone or a friendly tower is there to watch.

Use the patrol command (pick a unit and set it to march back and forth to keep an eye out for the enemy). Flying machines can also be set to patrol a wider area. The best system, however, is to establish a line of pickets. Small groups or at least pairs of units should be spread out to cover a broad area. The pickets have to be backed by mobile forces to respond to a threat, or the picket line will be breached and the enemy will rush upon you. A good picket line will give you a breather to harvest, build and marshal a main force for a key strike.

ONE BIG BLOW

You can never afford to attack in penny-packets or small groups. Your losses will be heavy and, most of the time, your attack will fail. By the time you have regrouped and raised another army, any damage you did to the enemy position will either have been repaired or replaced, and new enemies will be ready and waiting. To prevent this, strike hard with as big a force as you can muster. Resist the temptation to strike with a small, tough group. Waiting is well worth the time. Get a big force together, advance, set up a shooting gallery trap, build up a little more, and then go for the kill.

THE SHORT LEASH

Your units are not terribly smart. If they see an enemy, they will charge him. This can undo your position. Your knights will rush headlong to engage in hand-to-hand combat, and as the enemy flees they will follow up. They will usually follow up into the kind of trap you should be setting for the computer. Suddenly it is Agincourt all over again, with your knights lying in the dust. The footmen are no better or smarter, just slower. Even the Gryphon riders and battleships will seek to close with the enemy.

Fortunately, you can give the "stand ground" command to units. This glues them to one spot. It prevents reckless charges but can be fatal if they come under fire and thus cannot respond. This command is best used on the reserve units that you want to hold back from the battle or for those men guarding a gateway, defile or other narrow path. They will need to have someone or something provide covering fire, however, or else they will get picked off by enemy missile throwers or magic users.

USING RANGED WEAPONS

A catapult, for example, out-ranges every tower on the map, but only by one or two spaces. As there are no spaces marked on the map, you have to gauge the distance by trial and error. Instead of giving a unit an attack order, move it one step at a time towards the enemy. As soon as it is in range, the unit will start shooting. In this manner you can use a catapult to blow away a tower or two at no loss to yourself. The enemy will send a counterattack force to hit the catapult, so you will need to have units standing by to provide cover.

Only battleships/juggernauts have longer ranges than archers and axethrowers. Destroyers at the shore will find themselves under a withering fire from infantry, while battleships can stand off and blast away with impunity. No ship, however, can out-range a tower. One tower can beat one ship. Only a massive bombardment by three or more ships will do the trick.

STRIKE GROUPS

Air units (Gryphons/Dragons) move fast and hit hard, but do not have staying power, and tend to respond slowly to commands to disengage. They also have an annoying tendency to hit each other with friendly fire.

Use lots of air units, either in one long, spread-out line or in numerous small groups. To move the units in line you have to move each piece separately to avoid clumping (tedious and problematic). Usually you will move flying units in pairs or triplets, with other "squadrons" off to the side for support. While one squadron bombards a target, move another to patrol its flanks to intercept enemy units.

Magic users are best used in even smaller groups. A single magic user sends in a blistering rain of death with a fireball, death coil, whirlwind, blizzard or any other long-range spell. He must then immediately run to safety, as the computer will rush him. A magic user in a second line can provide covering fire, but it is best for regular troops or towers to do that job. One of the best "covering fires" is the Polymorph spell. A human mage can use this to turn any enemy into a pig (or sheep or seal or whatever the main type of innocent critter will be found in the scenario). This is particularly gratifying when used on a death-knight, ogre-mage or dragon. Unfortunately, it requires almost all of the 255 magic points a magic user can store up, and there is a chance it will not work against a really strong dragon.

SPELLS AND DEMOLITIONS

The most powerful spell of the game is, in my opinion, the "Healing" spell of the Paladins. Human Paladins, though mighty warriors, are best used as doctors. They are the M.A.S.H. units of the game (no such skills exist on the Orc side). Build a bunch of them, set them up in a safe, open space, and send wounded units back to them to heal. The Paladins regenerate their magic at no cost, and every six points of magic they use brings back one hit point to the wounded unit.

Paladins also have a good offensive spell: Exorcism. This power is really of use only against skeletons and death-knights, neither of whom can take much punishment anyway. Let your regulars deal with the undead—the Paladins are better as doctors than killers.

Death-Knights, Ogre-Mages and Mages are more offensive spellcasters. The Human Mage spells of fire-shield and invisibility are best used to sneak one of your people deep behind their lines. Unfortunately, casting a fire-shield or invisibility spell on a dwarven demolition squad causes its powder barrel to ignite. Poof. No more demolition squad!

Death-knights can raise the dead and make them into skeleton warriors, but this is almost a waste of their powers. The skeletons die easily. Death-knights are better used to unleash whirlwinds and Death coils. They can, however, cast an "unholy armor" protective spell on a unit. This is especially useful if an Ogre-mage is nearby to cast a bloodlust spell to make a unit extremely vicious in combat. Add a haste spell to this combination and you can create a swirling demon of destruction.

Speaking of demons, they are the one unit in the game that only the computer can create (unless you use the map editor to build your own scenario). They appear in a few scenarios, but always on the Orc side and then only if the computer is the Orcs. They fly, they move pretty fast, and they can cause a good deal of damage, but they die easily to flames and missile fire. They do not range very far from where the computer places them. Their mission seems to be to guard dark portals, tombs and other resting places of arcane interest.

THE CHEAT CODES

WarCraft II is not impossible to win. Almost every scenario has two or more paths to victory, and these are usually fairly obvious. Unlike some games that force you to find one solution, *WarCraft II* almost never dictates your strategy to win.

For those players who get frustrated, cheat codes exist. These codes should not be used in the campaign games, because if you win with a cheat code your victory screen labels you as a "Cheater." These are best used in the stand-alone scenarios where you are either frustrated or just want to get finished. They allow you to explore those scenarios to see if you really want to play them.

Table 1: Support for the Real-Time Challenged

(aka "Cheat" Codes)

Code	Effect
It is a Good Day To Die	your units and buildings are invulnerable
Glittering Prizes	gives you a large amount of gold, oil and timber
On Screen	reveals the entire map and all units present
Make It So	Immediately builds chosen building/unit
Unite the Clans	grants you victory NOW

To Use These codes hit the Enter key. A "Message:" line will come up at the bottom of the screen. Type in the appropriate code and hit enter again. WARNING: Use of any cheat code reduces your victory level to that of "Cheater."

SPEAKING SILLY

If you click on a piece it acknowledges you with a "yes, my lord" or "what is it" voice reply, and then you move it. My seven-year old showed me that if you keep clicking on that piece it will keep talking. The more it talks, the ruder it gets. Each unit on each side has a unique string of about a dozen dialogue sentences. The deeper you get into the conversation, the more unpleasant they become. Peasants get confused. Soldiers get edgy. Magic users get angry. Ogres burp and fart, elves tell you to "quit touching me!" and sailors get seasick. My favorite of all, however, are the two demolition squads. The dwarves (all of whom have bad Scottish accents) are particularly nasty while the goblin sappers are like Munchkins on helium. They say things like "Wheeeee," "I got a bomb," and "Kaboooooooom."

Name me one other computer game where your soldiers talk back to you? Even if it wasn't a great game (which it is), I would like it just for the conversation. These little guys have spunk and character.

Table 2. WarCraft to MoreCraft Games in the WarCraft System

Title	Topic	Scenarios per Side	Publisher
WarCraft	Original game (land units only)	10	Blizzard
WarCraft II (*Tides of Darkness*)	Second game (land, air and sea units)	14	Blizzard
WarCraft II Expansion * (*Beyond the Dark Portal*)	Additional story line and scenarios	12	Blizzard
*WarCraft Battle Chest**	All three for one price	36	Blizzard
*MoreCraft for WarCraft II**	200 levels, 8-player modem, tips	not reviewed	Microforum Software
*W!Zone for WarCraft II**	more scenarios	not reviewed	Wizard Works
*W!Zone Retribution**	more scenarios/battlegrounds	not reviewed	Wizard Works

**WarCraft II* required for use.

GOING FOR THE THROAT

The Nasties of *TITAN: THE ARENA*

By Mike Welker

Here, Mr. Welker gives us a different slant (from my own found in last issue) on how to play this recent hot seller. As you can see from comparing the two, we have a difference of opinion about some aspects of the strategy surrounding the secret bet.—SKT

On the day I bought this gem (at AvalonCon '97), I played it ten times. Our group at home regularly plays *AGE OF RENAISSANCE* or *SETTLERS OF CATAN*, but after we are done, someone always says, "Hey, we have some time for *TITAN: THE ARENA*." Out the cards and chips come, along with poker faces and the beginnings of monster imitations. As of this writing, we've probably played the game 40 times. This sample witnessed a wild array of twists of fate, with no two games ever playing the same. The distribution of winnings was about even across the players. The beauty of this game is its sheer compactness coupled with potentially infinite combinations of player interactions.

THE LUCK OF THE DRAW

Every game differs because your particular hand of eight cards is one of millions of possible card combinations. The flow of cards played, discarded, and drawn to fill hand capacity creates yet more diverse outcomes. This means an important skill to exercise is counting the cards. This is easier than it sounds, considering that the last played card of each surviving creature remains visible on the table. If you keep track of the cards that get buried, you will have a good idea what cards are yet to be played.

Keeping track of all creatures can be tedious, especially at first. As the rounds proceed and fewer of your creatures survive, counting gets easier. The benefit of knowing the unplayed cards is obvious. However, do not count on unplayed cards alone. Remember that the Troll can pick up a visible Troll card, a Unicorn can switch any creature's cards, and the Warlock allows players to dump unwanted cards. Along with the Spectator cards, these factors make it hard to count on a forced play of a card on a Creature.

SPREAD THE RISK

If you place multiple bets on one creature, you are inviting the wrath of your enemies. They'll see the opportunity to kill your creature as a sure way to reduce your victory points. This is the equivalent of drawing a big bull's eye on that poor Creature. However, concentration of bets isn't so bad when one of the bets is your secret bet. If your secret bet is revealed, you often become the Backer. The key to revealing the secret bet is timing. A general rule of thumb is to keep the secret hidden until you believe that you can protect your Creature. Our group has different opinions, but we think two or three high-value Strength cards is a minimum for protecting the multiple bet after revealing the secret bet.

By far, the better strategy for betting is to get cozy with the other players. If you spread your bets so that other players will lose victory points to hurt you, this will obviously make them think twice. You also gain the potential advantage of appearing in league (at least for a while). Later, near the end game, you might want to kill a creature with your own bets revealed, as long as the leading players lose more than you.

TIMING

The game moves faster at the fourth and fifth rounds than at the first and second. In fact, in some cases, you may not be able to play a card in the fifth round. Other players may systematically pounce on your unprotected Creature. The key to protecting yourself from this peril is reducing the likelihood you will be out of the loop, so to speak. You may need to prolong a previous round (for example, by playing Strength cards on top of visible cards). This will slow down the filling up of the empty slots. In another case, you may want to use a Creature's power so that a previous round ends more quickly.

HANDICAPPING THE SECRET BETS

Our group favors a secret bet when a first round hand has several (often three or more) of the Creature's Strength cards. The real issue is one of long-run uncertainty about the likelihood of survival. The following Creature-by-Creature analysis is based on the results of our latest playings. As you read the survival rates given below, remember that 37.5 per cent of the Creatures survive each game. The trick with the secret bet is to back a Creature that beats the average. Obviously, survival rates may depend greatly upon the idiosyncracies of your group.

Troll (survival rate of 35 per cent): The Troll is not a great secret bet. The first round play is a problem, because the power can only be used if the Warlock has just discarded a Troll Strength card. In later rounds, the ability to retrieve revealed Strength cards helps protect him. However, this can be difficult to accomplish if the Backer only has low Troll cards and the empty slots are filling up quickly.

Dragon (20 per cent): Players don't seem to like that fiery breath. Its power leads to late game uncertainties. Any secret bets on the Dragon must involve an ability to protect him with at least a few high-value Spectators and Dragon cards.

Titan (45 per cent): His ability to view other player's cards, coupled with the snatch-away choice, makes him strong and versatile in assessing enemy hands. This is especially helpful in the late game.

Unicorn (40 per cent): The Unicorn is weak at the start, but has the ability to "teleport" other Creature cards. This makes it strong and therefore likely to holds its own. A secret bet on the Unicorn is our group's second favorite.

Ranger (60 per cent): This is our group's favorite secret bet, not to mention my wife's favorite first-round bet. The three-card draw helps to build resources for protecting the Ranger or other bets (especially a secret bet on another creature). In several games we have played, multiple secret bets have backed the Ranger, which boosted the survival rate. The late game is a problem, though, because the Ranger's power to draw is not as likely to help (you may discover you are filling your hand with dead Creatures' cards).

Warlock (45 per cent): Our group tends to have multiple secret bets on the Warlock. The ability to drop powerful Strength cards helps you avoid a forced play that would probably save an enemy's bets. Our group always sees a lot of jockeying to become his Backer.

Cyclops (35 per cent): The Cyclops can create temporary weaknesses at crucial moments in the game. This is helpful especially in cases when the next player is forced to play a card which might favor your distribution of bets. Our group has tended to kill the Cyclops early, usually in a sort of "neutral" killing (no open bets on it at the time).

Hydra (20 per cent): Never place a secret bet on the Hydra. Players' fear the multiple strike ability greatly. This motivates their ambitions to do it in as quickly as possible.

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ALONE IN OUTER SPACE

Solitaire Variant for *STELLAR CONQUEST*

By Charles E. Duke

In the galaxy far, far in the future, let it not be forgotten that a vast number of computer strategy games trace their ancestry to STELLAR CONQUEST. *Many of the early computerized galactic conquest games mimicked it. Unusual for board wargaming,* STELLAR CONQUEST *produced the aura of fighting an unseen enemy under conditions of extremely limited and constantly outdated intelligence in which technology drives war success and population growth requires expansion. In short, it is a tense game of cat and mouse among human opponents (face-to-face or by mail), but a wistful flop for those who largely play their games solitaire. Rather than forking over vast sums of money for a computer (and frequent upgrades), Mr. Duke offers a boardgame solution.—SKT*

One of *STELLAR CONQUEST*'s most fascinating features is its "fog of war" (or should I say "nebula of war"?). It is challenging to be completely in the dark about your opponent's forces, defenses, population and intentions. Gathering intelligence is mandatory, costly, and part of the fun.

All this is small consolation, however, for the not uncommon gamer who must rely primarily on solitaire play due to lack of live opponents. He's dying to play *STELLAR CONQUEST (STC)*, but the solitaire player will usually find that he has built all four empires in a very similar manner. Conflicts are dull. Will the Red Empire invade the Yellow Confederation next turn, where, and why? Red has death stars, Yellow doesn't. You feel guilty if you don't strengthen Yellow for the upcoming assault, and you also feel guilty if you arm Yellow and deprive Red from a probably deserved surprise attack. Furthermore, intelligence gathering seems pointless in a solo game unless you follow the mind-boggling policy of making an empire act only upon what it is supposed to know. Now let me see, did Green discover three turns ago that Red already has fighters?

This article presents a system that controls most of the political and economic decision-making in *STC*. You still move ships around, decide on strategy and tactics during conflicts, transfer colonists, etc. As you take each empire's turn, you should use it as fairly as possible (just as you do when you try to use both sides efficiently while playing *ASL* or *THE RUSSIAN FRONT* solitaire). Now, however, you may be restrained by that power's current policy. For example, you can't use its forces to attack a neutral neighbor unless the politicians declare war.

GENERAL RULE VARIATIONS

The following general rules variations can be used in both solitaire and multi-player games.

Planet Shields. Developing and building planetary shields is a primary strategy in the normal game, but in a solitaire game the appearance of invulnerable planets may lead to boredom (a problem that plagues multi-player games as well).

In this variant, planet shields may be attacked as if they were fighters. As long as the shield is up, bases and population on the surface may not be attacked, but bases may fire against the attacking ships. If the attackers get five or more hits in the same *round* of combat, the shield overloads catastrophically and is destroyed. Surface forces may then be attacked in subsequent rounds. If the attackers score three or four hits in the same round, the shield receives a damage point. An accumulation of four damage points will destroy the shield. One or two hits in a round has no effect. However, if no hits are scored in a given round of combat, the shield's generators may be used by the defenders as a tractor beam in an attempt to disrupt (and destroy) one attacking ship, using the death star column of the Attack Table. If no hits are achieved against the shield in two consecutive rounds of combat, the attacker must call off his assault and the battle ends. At the end of each battle, damaged shields are fully repaired. Destroyed shields remain destroyed and must be rebuilt.

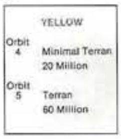
Scouts. In a solitaire game, unarmed scouts quickly become worthless. I find the changes below make starfleets more varied, interesting, and balanced, even for multi-player games.

In this variant, scouts are small warships which may fight. They hit colony transports on a die roll of 1-2, other scouts with a die roll of 1, and corvettes or missile bases on a two-dice roll of 10. The hit probability against scouts is also modified: missile bases and corvettes hit them with 1-3, fighters and advanced missile bases with 1-4 and death stars with 1-5.

Population Growth. Allow Minimal Terran planets to increase population at the rate of one for every 15 million. Fractions of population smaller than the number required for growth may still grow by one if you roll less than or equal to the fraction. Roll one die for Terran planets, two dice for Sub-Terran and three dice for Minimal Terran. For example, a Subterran planet holds 27 million souls. Normally, it will produce two million new colonists for its 20 million base, while the seven million leftover is sterile. Now, if you roll seven or less with two dice, a third million will be produced.

SOLITAIRE VARIANT DEFINITIONS

Power. Each of the four sides in the game.



Claims. Every time that a power explores a star for the first time it "claims" it as its territory. Note this by giving the star's card to the power (as a sort of deed of ownership). A star remains claimed by a power until a negotiation or treaty mandates that it must be transferred to another power. Star cards are kept by a power even if an enemy militarily conquers the star during a conflict. Conquered colonies are considered to be friendly territory currently under enemy occupation. A planet may be colonized only by the power which holds the corresponding star card (either through exploration or via peace treaty). Otherwise, normal conquest rules apply.

Border Star. A friendly star is a border star relative to an enemy if it is closer (or as close) to an enemy star as any other star that is as close to the friendly star. Stars closer to the enemy, but which are on the far side of the enemy, are consequently not close enough to the friendly star. For example, Hydrae borders Aurigae, Sadir and Alcor, but not Lupi. Lupi borders Aurigae, Scheat, Lacaille and Sadir, but not Draconis. Draconis borders Canopus, Almach, Scheat and Lacaille. Scheat and Lacaille are both closer to Lupi than Draconis, preventing Lupi from bordering Draconis.

BEGINNING THE GAME

Set up the game in the normal manner. Each power determines its initial spending independently. All powers will automatically spend 15 points to buy three-hex speed. The remaining ten points are invested in research determined by the Research Priority Table, using the peace column. Roll two dice to determine the chosen class and then roll two dice to determine the chosen research level. If more than one research title remains at that level, then determine which is chosen according to an odd/even die roll.

Research Priority Table

Research Class
(sum of two dice)

	Peace:	War:
2-5	Speed*	Technology
6-7	Weapons	Speed*
8-12	Technology	Weapons

*If maximum speed (8) has been achieved, give priority to technology class during peace, to weapons class during war.

Research Level
(sum of two dice, +1 if at war)

2-5	Lowest unfinished level
6-8	Highest possible level
9+	Highest level related to owned predecessor (otherwise highest possible level)

The particular research title of the appropriate level is determined by odd/even die roll if necessary.

PRODUCTION ROUTINES

In every production turn, after diplomatic events have been determined, each colony calculates industrial output, builds colony transports and spends on equipment and research independently, but according to the overall economic priority determined for its power. Start with the most recent colony and proceed to the oldest colony of the power.

Colonization Policy. Under certain conditions, each unbesieged colony's first priority is to emigrate colonists, buying the necessary transports to send them to another planet claimed by the power.

The planet nearest to a below-capacity mineral rich planet will emigrate enough population to fill the mineral rich planet to capacity.

All non-mineral-rich planets colonized above 80 per cent of capacity will emigrate enough population to fully utilize the population bonus.

During peace, all Terran, non-mineral-rich planets colonized to 50 per cent of capacity will emigrate enough population to fully utilize the population bonus (but never reducing population below 20 million).

After a war victory, all Sub-Terran, non-mineral-rich planets will emigrate half of their population plus the population bonus to Terran planets newly evacuated by the losing power.

Economic Priorities. Roll a die once for each power (not each colony) to see how the higher authorities have decided to invest the remainder of their industrial points at their colonies. Consult the Economic Priority Table. The result indicates the area to receive priority at each colony. The priority area utilizes at least 50 per cent of the colony's remaining industrial output. After conducting that spending, the next remainder is divided as evenly as possible between secondary and tertiary expenditures (with the secondary focus getting the benefit of any uneven split caused by item prices).

Economic Priority Table

(roll one die, +1 if in truce or incident, +2 if at war)

	Priority	Secondary	Tertiary
1	Factories*	Research	Weapons
2-4	Research	Weapons	Factories*
5+	Weapons	Research	Factories*

Note: Weapons are ships (including scouts) and bases. If all research items have been acquired, research spending goes towards weapons.
*If industrial tech is still not available, output goes into research.

In the case of weapons, buy as many of the most costly ship or base as possible with the funds. Then, allocate the remaining weapons spending toward cheaper ships and/or bases to fully spend the minimum.

In the case of research, all spending goes toward finishing a partially-completed research item before a new one is started. New research is determined by the Research Priority Table (see above).

For example, Red has a Terran planet on Alcor which has a population of 50 million (planet has a capacity of 80) with 5 factories. Red is at peace. The Alcor planet grows to 60 million and must emigrate 12 million to gain the full population bonus of four million (costing 16 of the planets 65 i.p.'s for the transports). Red rolled a 5 for an economic priority of weapons, so at least 25 i.p.'s must be spent on weapons. Red buys one mandated fighter, plus one missile base and one scout (27 i.p.'s). The remaining 22 i.p.'s are divided between research and factories, resulting in the building of two factories and the expenditure of 14 i.p.'s on Red's current research priority.

TRANSPORT POLICY

During movement, colonists are moved in transports to a habitable planet claimed by the power which fulfills the earliest condition set forth below and is within command range and within four turns of movement. If a destination doesn't have the capacity to accommodate all of the colonists, divide the transports among separate task forces with different destinations as necessary.

1. Mineral rich planet, colonized
2. Mineral rich planet, uncolonized
3. T planet, uncolonized
4. T planet, colonized < 50%
5. T planet, colonized < 75%
6. ST planet, colonized < 75%
7. ST planet, uncolonized
8. MT planet

DIPLOMATIC ROUTINES

The general diplomatic situation among the powers is affected by the particular stage of the game.

Neutrality and Incidents. Unless a power is involved in limited or total war, it is considered neutral. All powers enter the game neutral and remain so until diplomatic events in stage III or later alter that circumstance. Misunderstandings, political blunders, clashes and border disputes are incidents and are not considered to be a war for any purpose, although they may lead to one.

Stage I: Expansion. In this stage, powers are settling into the sector. At first, each doesn't know that other powers exist, and even when an encounter occurs it tends to be peaceful. There is no need or desire for conflict. This stage lasts until the last star on the mapboard has been claimed by a power.

Ships may not be sent voluntarily towards a star that has already been claimed by another power. If ships are already on the way when the star becomes claimed by another power, the ships must continue to their destination. Then, after surviving exploration risks, if no enemy ships are present, place the latecoming ships in an adjacent hex with a new destination. If enemies are present, roll two dice and consult the Encounters Table.

Encounter Table

(sum the roll of two dice)
2-10: Peaceful Encounter. After an exchange of greetings and knowledge, place the arriving ships in an adjacent hex with a new destination.
11-12: Misunderstanding. Shots are exchanged! Fight one round of combat, then place surviving arriving ships in an adjacent hex with a new destination.

Stage II: Growth. The powers have defined their turf, and although disputes may arise, generally speaking they are satisfied with developing what they already possess. There is little need for looking over the neighbor's fence. More or less peaceful relations exist. This stage lasts until the combined population of all powers first reaches or exceeds 600 million.

On every production turn, calculate population growth for every colony of every power, and sum the total to determine the stage of the game. Then, roll two dice and consult the Diplomatic Events Table and

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Grand DUNE

By Alan Arvold

As one of the nine players who joined Mr. Arvold several years ago at GenCon to play this appealing variant, I can attest to its superiority over playing with the various expansions and variant article rules as they were written. Although many "purists" will defend the elegance and balance of a six-player game, the politicking in a nine-player game is truly enriching and, in my opinion, more representative of the turbulent and dangerous galaxy portrayed in Herbert's novels. As in that construct, nobody can win the nine-player game without allies. Efforts to get DUNE *reprinted (perhaps the new collectible card game will spark consumer interest in this elegant boardgame) are not likely to produce an all-in-one package, so the expansion modules and this variant will remain vital accessories to our cult. If you do not have the modules, snap them up.—SKT*

One of the longest-surviving cult games (remaining popular despite the fact that it has been out of print for some years) is the game *DUNE*. Based on the science fiction novel by the late Frank Herbert, this game can still be seen in tournaments at various wargame conventions around the country every year. At the height of its popularity in the mid-1980s, the game spawned two expansions, *SPICE HARVEST* and *THE DUEL*. These expansions greatly enriched the main game but for various reasons did not catch the interest of players who like the parent game. One reason was that they increased the playing time of the average game (making tournament use difficult). Another reason is that the variant powers which were introduced in magazine articles (the Lansraad, the Bene Tleilaxu and the Ixians—see *The GENERAL*, volume 26, number 1, and volume 18, number 5, and *Heroes*, volume 1, number 1) were not integrated into these expansions. Finally, *THE DUEL* has rules that effectively inhibit its use, causing players to discard the expansion from the game. Often, however, you will find players adding to their game the new treachery cards that were included in the expansion modules.

This article brings into one grand system the three variant powers and the two expansions in a more playable format.

EQUIPMENT

Extra cards and leaders are provided on the insert of this magazine. However, when a War of Assassins is declared in a game with more than six players, you will need to add a second deck of Dueling cards from *THE DUEL*. Alternatively, you must limit each player to holding no more than three Dueling cards.

MAIN CHARACTER LEADERS

In Section VII of the *THE DUEL*, it states that if the main leader of the owning players faction is killed in battle whether on Dune, in a Kanly Duel, or in a War of Assassins, the owning player and his faction are out of the game. Such a rule leads a player to keep from using his main leader in anything but a last ditch battle at which point he is probably losing the game anyway. Also, this rule is not literarily accurate, as far as the *Dune* novels are concerned, where factions carried on despite the death of their main leaders. Liet Kynes, the leader of the Fremen, was left to die in the desert by the Harkonnens halfway through the first novel. His death did not cause the Fremen to break up or dissolve. On the contrary, the Fremen went on to do bigger things under the leadership of Paul Muad'Dib. When the Baron Harkonnen was killed in the battle of Arrakeen towards the end of the first novel, his nephew Feyd-Rautha assumed leadership of what was left of the Harkonnen faction. (He lost it to Muad'Dib in a Kanly Duel a few pages later.) When the Reverend Mother Mohiam was executed at the end of the second novel, the Bene Gesserit order did not dissolve or lose their influence. When the Emperor Shaddam IV died in exile on the planet Salusa Secundus, his daughter Wensicia Corrino carried on the fight throughout the third novel using espionage, occasional Sardaukar uprisings and an assasination attempt on the children of Muad'Dib (which failed), in hopes of getting her son Farad'n on the throne to restore the Corrino dynasty. The point of the matter is that when the main leader dies, the faction continues on.

Alter Section VII of the rules for *THE DUEL*. If your Main Character Leader is killed in battle on Dune, in a Kanly Duel, or in a War of Assassins, your faction is not out of the game. You still maintain your holdings and all spice in your possession. However, your faction will lose certain advantages and/or have certain limitations laid upon it (see below). These advantages will be restored and the limitations will be removed only when the Main Character Leader is revived from the "tanks." A player may revive (for the usual cost) his Main Character Leader on any turn in which he has at least one Leader alive. If a player has only his Main Character Leader left alive, then he may start reviving his other Leaders at the rate of one per turn.

When all of the Leaders, including the Main Character Leader, of a faction are in the tanks at the same time, that faction is out of the game. All of that faction's tokens are removed from the board and all treachery cards are discarded. The Harkonnen retain captured Leaders.

Organizations such as the Bene Gesserit, the Lansraad and the House Corrino each have many contenders for the top leadership position when it becomes vacant. Thus each faction will have an internal succession war to fill the seat. In *DUNE*, this means that the player's faction has many smaller factions within the main one which are not acting as a unified whole. This in turn brings on restrictions and causes advantages to be lost. Edric is a third stage Guild Navigator who is the manager of Guild operations on Dune and in the surrounding space. In the event of his death, local Guild operations suffer disruption but not at a catastrophic level. The smugglers and lower level navigators take more than their share of the spice, using the disruption as a cover for their embezzlements. Baron Harkonnen holds all secrets to himself. While some of his lieutenants, such as Feyd-Rautha and Piter DeVries, may know some of those secrets, they are usually the same few secrets that the Baron will share. When the Baron dies, knowledge of traitors in his pay and of how to get extra weapons (treachery cards) is lost and can not be regained until the Baron is brought back to life. Paul Muad'Dib is the gifted individual who gives the Atreides faction its advantages. When he dies, all of those powers go with him and will not come back until he is brought back to life. Liet Kynes is a leader who brought all of the Fremen sietches together as a united whole. When he dies, various Fremen groups go back to their sietches. Only when Liet Kynes is brought back to life will the Fremen again have a fanatical leader to whip them up into a religious frenzy and transform the war into a Jihad. The Ixian Inquisitor coordinates the operations of all Ixian military forces. When she dies, the various military units act in an uncoordinated fashion and various Ixian functionaries embezzle spice into their own private fortunes.

Each faction's advantages are reduced whenever lacking its Main Character Leader in the following ways.

Fremen. If Liet Kynes is dead:
- Token revival isn't free, but instead costs two spice per token (to the spice bank).
- Fedaykin counters on the board are treated as regular troops. Fedaykin in reserve are placed in the tanks.

Atreides. If Paul Muad'Dib is dead:
- The Kwisatz Haderach may not be used. Note: Paul Muad'Dib is also killed when the Kwisatz Haderach is blown up in a lasegun-shield explosion.
- Treachery cards can not be previewed.
- The top card of the Spice deck cannot be previewed.
- You may not force your opponent to show you any element of his battle plan nor allow your allies the same privilege.

Harkonnen. If Baron Harkonnen is dead:
- Only one of the four traitors picked at the beginning of the game may be used. The Harkonnen player must record which traitor is the active one at the time the Baron is killed. That active traitor must be a revealed one if any have been revealed. The others are inactive.
- You may not pick up the extra treachery card when you buy one.
- You may not randomly select one leader from a loser of a battle for any purpose.

Guild. If Edric is dead:
- You must take your move when it occurs in sequence.
- Your allies must pay one spice for each token shipped to a stronghold and two for shipment to a non-stronghold.
- All spice paid for shipment of tokens of your allies are paid to the spice bank.

Emperor. If Emperor Shaddam IV is dead:
- All spice paid for treachery cards goes to the spice bank.
- Sardaukar counters on the board are treated as regular troops. Sardaukar in reserve are placed in the tanks.

Bene Gesserit. If Reverend Mother Mohiam is dead:
- Your faction loses the power to coexist with other factions in the same territory. All tokens on the board are treated as normal tokens.
- You may not ship one token free with another faction's shipments.
- You may not "voice" an ally's opponent.

Lansraad. If the Speaker of the Lansraad (see insert) is dead:
- You lose the power to influence the other major powers during the revival/movement and battle rounds.
- You lose the power to restrict non-sietch territories to other major powers.

Ixians. If the Inquisitor of the Ixian Confederacy (see insert) is dead:
- Your tokens may only move one territory per turn.
- You may not receive your automatic ten spice per turn. They are considered to be lost.
- The Inquisitor cannot be revived for free.

Bene Tleilaxu. This power does not get a Main Character Leader. The only change to the Bene Tleilaxu rules is that they may not make traitors of Main Character Leaders who are revived from the tanks. Having no leaders, the Bene Tleilaxu may not participate in Kanly duels and Wars of Assassins nor may they threaten any player with Kanly. They do not get dueling cards.

When using the Bene Tleilaxu variant, only the Fremen, Harkonnen, and the Atreides players have to pay the Bene Tleilaxu to bring their Main Character Leader back from the tanks. The other factions pay their spice to the spice bank to bring their Main Character Leaders back from the tanks.

HARVEST FOR NINE

The following rules apply *THE SPICE HARVEST* expansion rules to the Ixians, the Lansraad and the Bene Tleilaxu.

Ixians. If the Ixians are the Manager, all Harvest card values that the Ixians draw are increased by 50 per cent (fractions rounded down). For the record, the home planet for the Ixians is the planet Komos, better known as Ix.

Lansraad. If a Dune Manager is relieved of his duties, the Lansraad may block the appointment of the new Manager. In this case, then it is the second player to the right of the old Manager who becomes the new Manager. The Lansraad may not block the automatic appointment of the Fremen to the Dune Manager position brought on by the appearance of a Worm in the Harvest Deck. For the record, the Lansraad has no home planet, but their main headquarters is on the planet Kaitan which is also the seat of the Imperial Court.

Bene Tleilaxu. The Bene Tleilaxu may get their ten spice like everybody else does in the module. They may give spice to one or more other players before the players determine who will be the first Manager in return for future considerations during the normal game. Any spice left over at the end of the Spice Harvest "section" of the game does not have to be turned in; instead, it is the spice with which the Bene Tleilaxu start the normal game. The Bene Tleilaxu do not receive any spice during harvest distribution nor do they bid for any Access cards. For the record, the home planet for the Bene Tleilaxu is the planet Tleilax.

NEW TREACHERY CARDS

Semuta Drug—used as a poison weapon. This weapon is played in a battle normally and can be blocked by a snooper. If not blocked, it does not immediately kill the opposing leader. Instead, it reduces the fighting strength of the leader by one. The Semuta card remains with the leader after the battle, unless the leader is killed. At the beginning of each following game turn, that leader's fighting strength is further reduced by one until the turn reaches zero, in which case the leader is sent to the tanks and the Semuta card is discarded. Such a leader is revived normally and at full strength. Leaders who have a Semuta card on them lead battle and duel at their reduced strength. When the drugged leader is killed, the winner of the battle collects only the amount of spice equal to their current reduced strength at the time of death.

Semuta is a powerful narcotic derived from the Ellaca Drug. One dose causes permanent addiction. The drug causes the addict to slowly lose his or her abilities as the addict spends more and more time in drug-induced euphoria. Addicts do not die from the drug itself but from deprivation of food, sleep and other necessities that the addict denies himself.

Stone Burner—used as a special weapon. This weapon, played normally in battle, automatically kills an opponent's leader and all of his tokens in the territory, plus the friendly leader. Both players may use shields to protect their leaders against a stone burner, but all of the opponent's tokens are still removed to the tanks. A player who uses a stone burner in battle still loses the number of tokens he dials for the battle. If a lasegun/shield explosion occurs in the same battle, the lasegun/shield explosion takes precedence, destroying all leaders, tokens and spice in the territory. *Optional rule:* Unless a Karama card has been used in the same battle to prevent Atreides prescience, Paul Muad'Dib is not affected by the blast of the stone burner.

A stone burner is a small nuclear device which is used to bore through solid rock. While not a very powerful explosive device, it emits a particular radiation over a wide radius, which permanently blinds any unshielded person, thus neutralizing any force in the vicinity of the blast. In *Dune Messiah*, Paul was so blinded, but used prescience and the eyes of his children to function.

CLARIFICATIONS

All but the Ixians, Guild and Tleilaxu are assigned dots. These three take permanent seats at the table to fix the treachery card bidding order. The Guild fights in the same order in which it moved. The Guild can not move before the Ixians, who always move and fight first.

When the Atreides are in the game, the Atreides player may either use the Kwisatz Haderach counter or the Main Character Leader disc once during the battle round of each game turn. He may not use both during the same battle round. The Kwisatz Haderach counter may not be used in a Kanly Duel. Exception: The Main Character Leader and the Kwisatz Haderach counter could be used in multiple battles in the same territory during a battle round, but only one or the other could be used in a particular battle.

In the situation in which both the Bene Tleilaxu and another player declare the same leader a traitor at the same moment, the Bene Tleilaxu claim takes precedence. Leaders can not be declared as traitors when they are in a Kanly Duel or a War of Assassins as fighters or supporters.

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CONTRACTING THE EXPANSION

By Stuart K. Tucker

Sometimes it is hard to find the time or opponents to play the full-fledged game of *DUNE*, with all of its expansions and variants. Even with the time, differences in player knowledge may lead to unsatisfactory imbalances. Yet, you'd like to use more than just the Treachery cards from the expansion. Here are a few suggestions to make more palatable the use of these extra goodies.

ACCESS VARIANT

While *THE SPICE HARVEST* module adds an enjoyable dimension to *DUNE*, it adds considerably to the playing time. You can "spice up" your play of the game without adding much to the playing time by altering the use of Access cards in *THE SPICE HARVEST* to establish a variable setup. No longer do you have to start each game in the same setup locations, nor do you have to take the time to play through five spice harvests to alter the setup. This variant has the advantage of allowing players to initially jockey for their stronghold starting positions, while only adding a few minutes to basic game playing time.

Ignore rules IV through V.3 of *THE SPICE HARVEST*. Instead, shuffle the Access card deck and deal an equal number of cards to each player (but no more than five cards with six or fewer players and no more than four cards with seven or more players). The Bene Tleilaxu receives none. The Emperor then draws one extra card. The Atreides player then may pick a random card from any other player, giving that player a chosen card from his own hand. The Harkonnen player may decide to receive two extra cards, but in that case must draw a card randomly from the Harvest deck. If that card is a worm, he forfeits and discards his Access cards, including the extra draws. The Fremen player then openly selects one of the discarded Access cards and adds it to his hand.

Play then proceeds immediately to "IV. 4) Trading" and continues as described in the rules of *THE SPICE HARVEST*. After all players have placed their tokens in strongholds they have won (and negated tokens into reserve), the Fremen may place additional tokens on False Walls West or South, as long as he retains at least ten tokens in reserve.

Players should beware taking all of their Access points as Spice, as this may open the way to a first turn victory, especially by a Guild player using a Karama card to stop one shipment. Early stronghold access, no matter how risky, should not be undervalued.

INFLUENCE RESTRICTIONS

The Lansraad powers, as published, upset the delicate balance of the game. The following changes bring the powers into better balance.

- Restrict the use of the Influence advantage such that it can not be used to order the same player to hold in place in two consecutive turns.
- Change the Influence advantage *during a battle round (1.b.)* to affect the Bene Tleilaxu alone, who thereby cannot spring their traps.

The Lansraad does have Influence over the Ixians.

The Lansraad remains a potent player to be watched carefully in a game using alliance rules. At least with this rule, he can't bludgeon one player out of the game, though the every-other-turn use of Influence against one player can still be a mighty inducement to join the Lansraad in alliance.

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Thus, our experience says to bet on the Ranger, Titan and Warlock to generate the best chance of attaining victory. However, take this advice with great caution. You must get the right cards and count the cards. You have to watch the distribution of the bets (as well as play order tied to that distribution). Finally, you have to play the game over and over again to get an intuitive feel for what card or cards need to be played at the appropriate times, especially to change the chances of a round ending.

TITAN: THE ARENA comes in a small package and has the right price. Our group's experience with it has been nothing less than repeated joy. We heartily recommend it even to the die-hard grognard. It'll play out in a lunch hour, and it brings the wife and kids into the hobby.

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AT THE KIOSK

By Alan Applebaum

Swiss Elimination

Alan Applebaum is a well-known hobby name. His writings have graced the pages of The GENERAL *and other hobby publications numerous times. He is a top competitor, and a regular GM. Alan and I have been friends and rivals since AvalonCon '91. Alan has been my sharpest critic, yet his input remains more than welcome.—Glenn E.L. Petroski*

A gamemaster (GM) for a face-to-face tournament faces a number of challenges in planning the event.

- Each player should get a chance to play at least a few games,
- the format should reward skill as much as possible,
- the tournament must fit into a predictable time slot,
- odd numbers of players must be handled,
- players leaving and showing up unexpectedly must be handled,
- the final standings should be definite (avoid ties in final rankings), and
- players should neither be rushed nor forced to wait many hours for a game.

No format will solve all these problems. At AvalonCon, I have run five two-player tournaments: *WAR AT SEA* four times and *BREAKOUT: NORMANDY* once. The format I will describe below is a result of the lessons learned in those five tournaments. It is far from perfect, but I think it is about as close as you can come given the limited time available for a face-to-face tournament.

Swiss elimination (Swiss Elim) is a combination of the Swiss system and single elimination. A Swiss system is a tournament in which all the players play a fixed number of rounds. Each round, each player is matched against a player who has the same win-loss record. At the end of the fixed number of rounds, the player with the best win-loss record is the winner. In some Bridge and Chess tournaments, each player is required to play all the rounds, but in a wargame tournament this is neither practical nor necessary.

Swiss Elim begins as a Swiss System, but after the Swiss rounds are completed, the top four players (or eight, for a very large event) play single elimination rounds to determine the winner. Swiss Elim seems to combine the best features—and avoid the worst—of both Swiss and single elimination.

Number of Rounds. Ideally, you should schedule enough rounds so that a player who loses a game still has a chance to qualify for the semifinal. Otherwise, the event suffers from one of the major defects of Single Elim—namely, that players who lose in the first round have no chance to win the event. Unfortunately, the only way to guarantee that every player with only a single loss will qualify is to play an unacceptable number of rounds. The best compromise is to ensure that most of the one-loss players will qualify. I recommend the same number of Swiss rounds as you would need for a single elimination tournament—that is, four rounds for 9-16 players, five rounds for 17-32 players and six rounds for 33-64 players. For the elimination round qualifiers, the tournament will be one or two additional rounds, which can be scheduled at the players' convenience. For example, assuming no tied games and no dropouts, if you have 32 players, after five Swiss rounds, one person will be undefeated, five will be 4-1, ten will be 3-2, ten will be 2-3, five will be 1-4, and one will be 0-5. Your four semifinalists for the elimination rounds include the undefeated player, plus three of the five players who are 4-1. Therefore, you will need a tie-breaking mechanism.

With enough Swiss rounds, you have created a tournament in which any player losing an early round will have a better-than-even chance to win the tournament, if he wins the rest of his games. That should be enough incentive to keep most people playing until they have two losses if they are at all serious about the game. If you have to advance someone with two losses to the elimination rounds, that's fine too—he will be a deserving champion if he beats the competition in those rounds.

Length of Round. Probably the toughest part of running a Swiss system is that, with a few exceptions, no one can start a round until all the games in the previous round are done, because, unlike in single elimination, the pairings for each round cannot be done without the results of all of the games of the last round. In order for the system to work, you must either allow enough time for even the slowest players to finish, or be willing to adjudicate games. If you are running three games per day, you must limit the rounds to five hours each. If your game does not lend itself to adjudication, you are going to have a difficult time. Be sure to have a committee of three (including yourself and two known expert players, if possible) to adjudicate games so you don't have to bear the entire responsibility.

My toughest challenge as a GM using Swiss has been to impress upon players the need for a strict time limit. Hourly time announcements may be of marginal use, but in practice, you have no means of enforcing a time limit unless the game is one that lends itself to the use of a chess clock. Even then, few GMs could provide one for all players. One suggestion is to make the first round or two longer than your "standard" round, on the theory that the slowest players are the inexperienced ones who will only play a round or two. I generally don't impose any time limit on the semifinals and final. However, you cannot afford to accommodate the slowest players at everyone else's expense.

Choosing Sides. Next up is the question of how sides are chosen. Generally, there will be a consensus among experienced players of any wargame that one side or the other is favored using the standard victory conditions. Don't try to assign sides. If you are lucky, your top players may get to play each side approximately the same number of times. However, generally one or two players will get the favored side for most, if not all, of their games. The GM can ensure that each player gets the side he wants through a simple, elegant mechanism: the auction. This "free market" approach is preferable to attempting to adjust the victory conditions yourself to create game balance.

Almost all modern wargames have some kind of point system for determining victory. The players "bid" points if both want the same side. Without such a point system, the players can "bid" forces instead, within reason. This can be done incrementally, or through a single "blind" bid. With the incremental system, the option passes back and forth. In a blind bid, each player writes down a single bid. The blind bid can give one player a huge and unnecessary windfall. Either way, you should record the bids for each game, so that each player can see what his opponent did earlier in the tournament.

Pairings. Everyone plays someone with an identical win-loss record, if possible. You start by pairing the undefeated players. If you have an odd number of undefeated players, one of them is paired against a player with one loss. If you have an odd number of one-loss players remaining, you pair the last one with a player with two losses, and so on.

With regard to matching people with identical records, the traditional, hard-boiled approach is to match the presumed best player against the presumed worst player. The advantage of this system is that it preserves the key matches between the best players until the end of the Swiss segment, so that they don't knock each other out of contention early, allowing an unknown player with a weak schedule to sneak through to the elimination rounds. I freely acknowledge that some may regard this as a disadvantage, not an advantage. The major disadvantage is that the early matches will be mostly one-sided affairs that discourage the newer or marginally interested players.

The reverse approach is to match best against second-best, third against fourth, etc.

This may annoy some of the top players who may feel either that they shouldn't be handicapped with a tougher schedule, or that the elimination rounds will be anticlimactic because all the key games will have been played early. Most weaker players will appreciate a few games at their own level, however, and some top players may even be glad to know early in the tournament whether they are going to do well so that they have the option to play something else. Reasonable people can differ, but I think a tournament is more exciting for players and spectators alike if the top players face each other at the end. The whole issue is much less significant for Swiss Elim than for straight Swiss, because, in a Swiss Elim, the semifinals and finals will be climactic anyway.

For a game with a short history (or suspect player ratings) a random draw is as good as anything. However, if you are going to take player strength into account to make the pairings, you need to rate the players. Now that game-specific AREA ratings exist, they are a reasonable method of rating players as long as they cover at least ten or so games. Personally, I prefer to use past tournament performance, primarily because AREA ratings have a heavy PBM component or may reflect someone preying repeatedly on a small number of weak opponents. A third method, possibly the most controversial, is to ask the top tier of players to rank the top half of the field by secret ballot (each player excluding himself, of course). I would say this is the most accurate method for a game with a long history, but takes extra time. Some GMs, instead of using the pre-tournament ranking, match players within by Swiss Points accumulated at that point in the event (described below), but this too is a time-consuming exercise.

Odd Number of Players. I believe that if a bye is needed, the lowest-ranking player in the lowest score-group should get it. I believe fairness requires that a bye be treated as a win; players should not be penalized through no fault of their own. Giving the free win to the lowest-ranked player is less likely to affect the standings of the top finishers. A better solution is to have a volunteer available to even out the field (if that is you, be sure to have assistant GMs handle situations involving you).

A related problem is that, at wargame tournaments, people tend to come and go without warning. You must make it clear to your players that if they are not present within a few minutes of the announced starting time for a round, they will be presumed to have dropped out. Similarly, if someone walks on after the first round, or skips a round and returns later, he should play only if there is an odd number of players without him.

Breaking Ties. Personally, I am content to be tied for fifth, sixth, seventh and the like, without worrying too much about it (and the AvalonCon prize structure treats fifth through eighth alike, so within the same prize level the GM may just decide not to break ties). However, ties for the last qualifying position for the elimination rounds are a serious problem. If you have just two players who are tied for the last qualifying position who have played each other already, its easy—the head-to-head winner advances. If you have twice as many tied players as positions (for example, four players tied and two positions available) or two players who haven't played each other, the best answer is to add a playoff round for the tied players before the semi-finals and finals.

However, often you won't have time for that, or you will have three players tied for one or two qualifying positions. If your game has "points" you can break ties by giving out Victory Points (VP) for each game. For example, in my *WAR AT SEA* tournaments I required a player to win by 2 Points of Control (POC), after adjusting for the bid, to get the maximum 10 VPs for tournament ranking. A win by 1 POC gained 8 VPs while a tie gained 5 VPs. *WAR AT SEA* was not too well suited to this form of tie-breaker because a win by exactly 1 POC was such a rare event that ties among contenders were rarely broken. Other games like *BREAKOUT: NORMANDY*, with a VP scale that only goes in one direction, also have some trouble with this method—you can measure by how much someone "beat the bid," but this may work asymmetrically to favor one side or the other. The more points in the game, the better the system works because players with equal win-loss records are more likely to have differing VP scores.

Another method is "Swiss Points," whereby players with tougher schedules will rank ahead of others with identical win-loss records but weaker schedules. Rank would be determined by the total win-loss record (or just win record), of either all their opponents, or just their victims. This method should be used only as a last resort, because the strength of competition is not in a player's control. Also, a player's skill is being measured over too short a period of time. In any case, any Victory Point or Swiss Point tie-breakers should not allow a player with a worse win-loss record to finish ahead of a player with a better win-loss record.

Nuts and Bolts. Plan to arrive at the game site early, especially if using player rankings to establish matches. When players begin to arrive, hand them an entry slip, which should ask the players for their name and address (you should already possess their ranking). Write the player ratings on the slips and sort the entry slips in order of player rating. Each player gets a number indicating his relative rank (the top-ranked player is Player 1, the second-ranked player is Player 2, etc.) After all the players with ranking have been entered, assign succeeding player numbers to unrated players at random. Then write the names on your master chart in player number order.

As each game result comes in, transfer the win-loss or VP results to your master chart. Fifteen or twenty minutes before the end of the round, circulate among your players and adjudicate any games still in progress. Ideally, at least five minutes before the start of the next round, you should have all the results. At the pre-announced time for the next round, you call the roll of all players who gave you a result in the last round.

Once all the Swiss rounds have been completed, the top four players play Single Elim. If exactly two of the four have played each other, split them up for the semifinal. Otherwise, you should reward the player with the best Swiss record by pairing him against the player with the worst Swiss record of the four, or let the top qualifier choose his opponent from among the other three.

Well, that is how it is done. All of my tournaments have run fairly smoothly, everyone gets to play as many rounds as they want, anyone can quit whenever he wants, no one gets assigned a side he doesn't want, and skill is rewarded to the greatest extent possible.

—Alan Applebaum

Thank you, Alan.

At your service,
Glenn E. L. Petroski
6829 23rd Avenue
Kenosha, Wisconsin 53143-1233
Home phone: 414-654-5044
Em: GELP@Juno.com

LADDERS REPORTING IN:

ADVANCED THIRD REICH: Michael Reffue wants to know if there is sufficient interest for an email competition. Contact him at 6800 NW 39 Ave. #392, Coconut Creek, FL 33073 or 954-570-7755 or mreffue@icanect.net.

AGE OF RENAISSANCE: This is Jared Scarborough's game. He really wants to put together a pbm competition in this one. Who is interested? Jared Scarborough, 1 Scarborough Road, Payson, IL 62360-9743.

EMPIRES IN ARMS: Experienced GM searching for players to begin a new game. Lance Jones, 3095 Robbiedon, Memphis, TN 38128 or 901-372-7890 after 6pm CDT.

GANGSTERS: John Pack is looking for some "Untouchables." Believes that he can run a competition either pbm or email. Bring your long-range squirt guns! Contact John at 1216 E. Tamara St., Sandy, UT 84094-4039 or 801-523-0571 or JPACK@sisna.com.

THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN: BJ Bjorum hands over the pbm ladder to Larry Earhart, 1111 Bagby, Suite 2020, Houston, TX 77002 or 281-261-9504. Most of you know that BJ has struggled with a myriad of personal tragedies over the past two years. We all salute him and pray that his situations will abate in the near future.

Unlimited *CIVILIZATION*: William Lentz has taken over organization from Jared Scarborough. Still searching for enough interested parties to put together a few pbm games. William D. Lentz, 104 Pulley Road, Havelock, NC 28532-2526 or 919-447-8246.

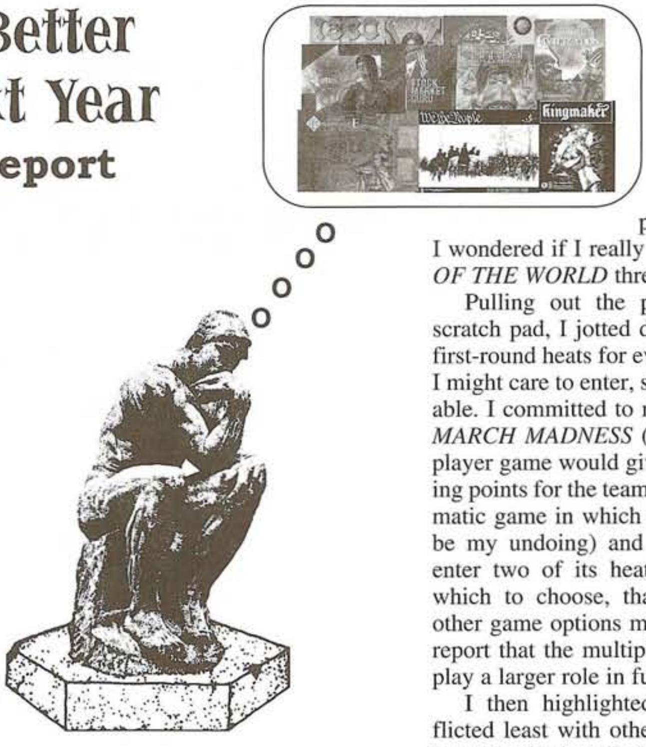
VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC: John Pack has an e-mail competition up and running! Contact John at 1216 E. Tamara St., Sandy, UT 84094-4039 or 801-523-0571 or JPACK@sisna.com.

★

It Doesn't Get Any Better Than This...Until Next Year

The AvalonCon '97 Report

By Stuart K. Tucker



Well . . a plaque or two would be nice, too.

I always approach a convention with a certain amount of foreboding. I have had such great experiences in the past, that I try to be realistic and expect a few things to go wrong. The typical convention has dealers' rooms (maybe nothing of interest will be for sale this year). It has auctions (maybe the prices will be outrageous or the whole collecting thing will be falling on its face). It has boardgame tournaments (maybe my favorites won't be offered—or worse, the convention will be overrun by non-boardgamers, and no games will be offered). Yes, the typical convention offers so many things that quality control is a real issue. For the dabbler, it usually works out fine in the end.

AvalonCon is not the typical convention. Opening up the pre-registration form, you will not find mention of dealers and auctions. You won't even find some of your favorite games (we forgive those who don't buy exclusively from Avalon Hill). You won't be wondering which hotel is closest to the convention center, arena or other featured hotel which at a typical convention harbor the three-ring circuses that big conventions have become. You will be pleasantly surprised by the modest room cost and the centralized location of all events within a single hotel.

Most astounding of all, however, is the number of board game events at AvalonCon—each with no limitations on the number of entrants and no ticket price. Over 100 different events are offered over a five day period. Astoundingly enough, they are all run by volunteer game masters (GMs) who show up and stick with their events. Did I mention that there is no event price? One registration price covers all. That means convention-goers can rush around and enter as many events as they can, without worry about price or being bumped out of the tournament by entry limits. All you have to do is show up on time.

From past experience, I knew that attending AvalonCon'97 would also mean playing in well-attended events—none of this "ghost event" stuff you sometimes see at other conventions. My favorite game events usually gather 25-70 participants, ensuring a pleasurable time playing games. The GMs show. The players show. The space is well managed to ensure reasonable room and tables for each event. AvalonCon emphasizes the game-playing environment of your dreams. Here, you get a high concentration of people who want to play the same games as you. That's entertainment.

Still, I approached AvalonCon'97 with a little apprehension. Having not chosen a central focus in advance, I was still in a quandary as to which of the many events I should attend. In a way, this is an advantage of AvalonCon. For other conventions, I typically pre-register months in advance, and, by the time of the con, I am often not in the mood for the particular event for which I purchased a ticket. At least at AvalonCon I can change my mind, rush to a room by an event start time, and still get to play. I find this aspect of AvalonCon very appealing.

So why worry? I am still kicking myself for not volunteering to be a GM. By being greedy and wanting to play in events more than running them, I unwittingly allowed the most egregious of errors to happen: my top two priority events were offered at the same time. Now, mind you, I try to play in a dozen or so events at AvalonCon. Missing one is not exactly the end of the world. Nonetheless, I refused to decide between *DUNE* and *HANNIBAL: ROME VS. CARTHAGE* until the last minute (still hoping an alternate reality would kick into gear). The choice was so difficult, I nearly decided to "punt" and play *EMPIRES IN ARMS* for five days straight instead (something that I've always wanted to do). I nixed that idea due to the job. I am the standby GM in case disaster or delinquency befalls an official GM—a remarkably underworked role at this convention. In fact, for two years running, no event has gone without an official GM and only once have I had to depart a game (a pickup one at that) midstream to go fill in (and that was simply to teach beginners during the hour before the event).

Yes, I could count on lots of playing time. The question was what *not* to play. The choices were so delectable. In the end, I made the strategic choice to enter many short events and to emphasize the kinds of games that my gaming group at home doesn't play (sports, for instance). Truth be told, I planned my convention around losing. In this manner, I wouldn't go through the heartache of playing well for half a tournament, but losing long before getting "into the money." If I were to win a multi-round tournament, I'd end up playing far fewer games and probably be sick of the game I played repeatedly. Of course, I am a glutton for plaques and would continue playing any game which met with victory. However, I can remember many a previous convention where I wondered if I really wanted to play *HISTORY OF THE WORLD* three times in 24 hours.

Pulling out the pre-registration form and scratch pad, I jotted down the starting times of first-round heats for every short and sweet event I might care to enter, should a time slot be available. I committed to my team members to play *MARCH MADNESS* (on the theory that a two-player game would give a better chance of scoring points for the team than a multi-player diplomatic game in which name identification could be my undoing) and consequently planned to enter two of its heats. With four heats from which to choose, that really didn't limit my other game options much at all. (I am happy to report that the multiple heat format is likely to play a larger role in future AvalonCons.)

I then highlighted those events that conflicted least with others and seemed to be reasonably high priorities. Thursday morning events turned out to be in the most conflict (few having alternative heats to attend), but I was already in a quandary for that time slot (*DUNE* vs. *HANNIBAL*). I tossed overboard any hope of playing *CANDIDATE, MAHARAJA* and *KINGMAKER* and searched for alternative time slots for the other games. That put *TYRANNO EX* in direct conflict with one heat to *AGE OF RENAISSANCE* and the other heats were a no go, too. I wanted the rubber match with Bruce Reiff in *FOOTBALL STRATEGY* and had to teach the new rules of *STOCK MARKET GURU* (limiting the choice of heats, yet again, and removing the chance to play *REPUBLIC OF ROME*). Given the late-night schedule of sports games, I was going to have a tough time fitting *TITAN: THE ARENA* in the schedule if I didn't give it priority, so I locked myself into its Thursday night heat, leaving time to hit the *PRO GOLF* circuit at 11pm. Six games in two days, and I was just rolling up my sleeves. Let's see, what happens if I win anything in those days? Fortunately, the finals for each seemed to be at manageable times later in the weekend (usually Sunday morning).

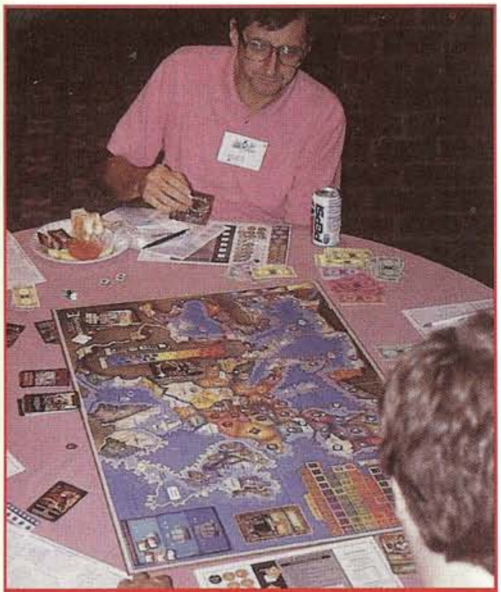
Friday was the big day for two heats of *MARCH MADNESS* and anything else that fit in between or after (maybe some *AIR BARON*, maybe *CIRCUS MAXIMUS*, possibly *DECATHLON*). Then, I received the call. A good old friend wants to swing by to see me and an out-of-town friend at one spot, so dinner it was. Dinner? Who eats a sit-down dinner at AvalonCon? I haven't in four years straight. Hah! This can be pushed into the more appropriate "midnight snack" dash to the local IHOP. So, I lose a little sleep—I doubt I'll notice amidst the rest of the planned sleep deprivation. Have I mentioned that I usually corral some friends after the formal events for a little pickup play around midnight? That reminds me. Always, always bring a reliable alarm to AvalonCon.

Saturday's schedule would probably accommodate *WE THE PEOPLE, PAY DIRT, WIN, PLACE & SHOW* and *SLAPSHOT.* If all went as planned (that is, defeat in everything), then Sunday was open for *GUERILLA* (got trounced in that last year) or, better yet, *DINOSAURS OF THE LOST WORLD* (playing with my six-year-old daughter had given me a greater appreciation for the game system for adult play). Somewhere amidst all this, I'd hold a meeting with some playtesters and make myself available for breakfast meetings as necessary. Sleep, you ask? The plan called for about five-and-a-half hours a night. Very doable, although my *WE THE PEOPLE* game would probably suffer significantly, coming so late in the convention.

All in all, I turned in a registration sheet to Don for about 15 games. At that, I had great regrets about a number of events which didn't fit. No doubt, I'd be lucky if 80 per cent of the plan came off as scheduled.

WEDNESDAY

While my experience with *AGE OF RENAISSANCE* at Origins the previous month made me wonder if I wanted to play with anybody less experienced at the game, I kept to schedule and hit it as well as *FOOTBALL STRATEGY.*



Serious thought is given to rebuilding civilization in the AGE OF RENAISSANCE.

AGE OF RENAISSANCE (106 entrants)

A total of 24 tables of six players each saw the rising tide of western civilization triumph during the tournament's initial three heats. A semi-final round then narrowed the field from 36 (including 16 second-place finishers) to six finalists.

In the final, opening bids were clustered in the two-to-three range with a single zero. Mike May, the defending champion, quickly concluded deals with Paris, played by George Sauer, and London's Brent Mingo. Meanwhile, the Italian powers failed to reach agreement on who would take Crete. Genoa bounded into an early lead, soon to be pounded mercilessly. It was then London's turn to be hammered, following a successful reach around the Iberian coast to North Africa, coupled with a wool payoff. The Black Death soon descended on merry England.

Unusual moves saw Paris reach the Mediterranean through Belgrade and London fail to advance beyond a Galley 6 until the game's final turn. At the approximate halfway point, Venice had occupied the Black Sea along with Hamburg, while Genoa and Hamburg shared the E. Med.

By turn 6, London had the most advances, but lost a War and was hit with Civil War. Genoa found his hand full of leaders with little money available and so heaved them all overboard, leaving each unprotected from Patronage (Note: Genoa's Misery ended up being 1000—holding the cards would have meant Chaos). This allowed George Sauer's Paris to turn his marginal lead into a decisive win with 1761 Victory Points. Defending champion Mike May came in second with 1508. Bret Mingo's London was third with 1191, followed by Stephen Koehler's Venice at 925, Nick Anner's Barcelona at 911 and Phil Mason's Genoa at 346.

FOOTBALL STRATEGY (32)

Okay, nobody used the Flair Pass to nail defending champion Bruce Reiff in this year's tournament. However, Bruce did accept Stuart Tucker's first-round challenge and they sat down for their third meeting of their *FBS* careers (the grudge match). Bruce ate up the clock with his vaunted ball-control offense, but it was Tucker's aerial offense and his repeated use of bombs on 2nd or 3rd and short that prevailed by providing the field position necessary to kick four field goals and march to an 18-3 victory. Tucker's euphoria carried him to a nine-point lead against fellow Baltimore League member, Bill Cleary, only to have an unbelievable blocked punt and a crucial third down call allow Cleary to pull out a 23-22 squeaker. Cleary managed to blow away his other competition to go to the semi-final against another Baltimore Leaguer, Paul O'Neil (who had also scored easy victories). O'Niel scored an impressive 37-21 victory to earn the bid to the final.

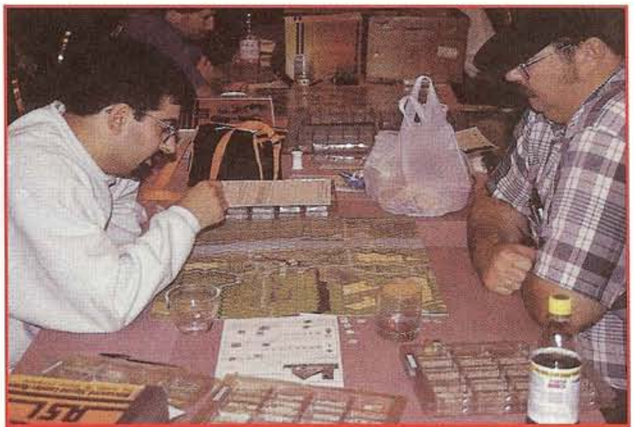
In the other heat, Dave Terry survived close games including a 10-9 victory over Jim Vroom to get to the semi-final. George Holland snuck past Don Greenwood 21-17 in the first round and then rolled up impressive victories on the way to the semi-final where he crushed Terry. Holland couldn't put together yet one more 33-point performance, succumbing to O'Niel 20-17 in the championship game. This makes two years in a row that a Holland has lost in the final.

After a meeting with playtesters of a sports finance game at eleven, followed by a relatively early bedtime, my day was complete: 1-2 for the day, and no advances to finals to schedule.

THURSDAY

Okay, I snored a bit and my roommate is a light sleeper. No big deal. I know a fair number of gamers at this convention, so without much ado, I arranged a few bed swaps to ease my roommate's plight for the rest of the convention, while tying up with a room of people who keep the same hours as I—we all turned on the afterburners at midnight and logged hours at a few non-Avalon Hill games in the hallways. We also joined the *TITAN: THE ARENA* craze. Every convention has its "newest thing," but this one truly bowled over participants. The first set off the presses arrived on Thursday and were sold out long before Saturday morning. Every hallway was occupied by sets of four and five people playing quick hands of the game between tournaments. In the end, the formal tournament of *TITAN: THE ARENA* was the convention's largest (126 entrants), but that was less than half of the games of it being played. I get ahead of myself.

The morning brought the moment of truth. With much anguish, I decided to try to back up my pro-Carthaginian boasting and entered *HANNIBAL.* Play of the greatest multi-player political/military game of all time (*DUNE*) would have to await some other time. Besides, I had to challenge one of my new roommates to see if either of us could get the *HANNIBAL* plaque (he almost won it last year). Of all the tournaments, this was the one I most wanted to win. I have never yet tired of playing the game repeatedly, because each time it has a different flavor, due to the strategy deck. Karsten and I split up and headed to different ends of the huge pack of players registering with the GM standing on the chair (if at all possible, we wanted to meet each other in the final). If necessary, I'd work out a deal with the GM to fulfill my demonstration obligations for *STOCK MARKET GURU.*



The ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER tournament forged ahead without me, attracting 81 entrants.

HANNIBAL (52)

This year's expanded tournament length allowed full games to be played in each round. As a result, most of the bidding was for control of the favored Romans. Nonetheless, Hannibal and his cousins won plenty of the games. A number of first-round Carthaginian winners had bid for control of Hannibal, a practice they stopped when they saw opponents giving them PCs for playing Rome against them. Using published rules errata, the death of Hannibal did not bring games to an abrupt end. Many Roman players thus faced the task of surviving against very daring and desperate attacks by Hasdrubal and his many successors. Despite some creative tactics by Carthaginian players, the early death of Hannibal usually led to slow, but definite defeat.

The championship game between James Doughan and Martin Sampler came down to a close province count at the start of turn 9, with Hannibal well-entrenched in Gallia Cisalpina facing Scipio Africanus and the endless reserves of Roman troops (in fact, except for a minor aberration in Etruria, PCs on the board looked much like they do on turn 2 of a typical game). Rome could expect to easily reclaim Etruria. Carthage had to worry about a major move into Spain. Alas, the Roman player was dealt a hand of strategy cards without naval movement ability. Deciding

A room stuffed with eager players takes instruction from GM Mark Hall. Soon-to-be champ, Peter Staab listens at far right.

against a long trek to Spain along the coast, Sampler did the only option remaining: repeated assaults against Hannibal in which both players received about the same number of cards (around 16). Battle after battle resulted in no weaknesses in Hannibal's tactical plans, leaving Doughan in control of Gallia and eight provinces in Spain and Africa necessary to win by the narrowest of margins.

STOCK MARKET GURU (18)

This newly-released revised version of *STOCKS & BONDS* caught a few players unprepared for the expanded ways to win. Hall-of-famer and one-time *STOCKS & BONDS* champion Ken Gutermuth was seen shaking his head after losing in the first round; "Buying on margin is no longer *the* way to win this game." Indeed, each preliminary game dealt with extremely different business cycles. Nathan Kilbert narrowly won his game with growth-oriented stocks, despite the hyper-inflationary climate which was shelling out over 16 per cent earnings per year to bondholders (who shrewdly kept plowing interest earnings back into bonds, even during bull markets). At another table, interest rates plummeted to low levels and stuck, preventing potential bondholders from earning money on bond price fluctuations as well as interest. In this game, the stocks were more actively traded, and a number of players were nailed by business failures along the way. Stryker Oil gamblers at every table found few opportunities for big profit, although the occasional partial position in Stryker helped a number of players with fortunate timing during Stryker's unusual countercyclical ups. In the final, Debbie Otto was the Wall Street guru who showed Kilbert, Danny Robinson and John Quarto how to use stock tips. The game's designer was seen leaving with a smile after losing his first round game, but finishing with nearly quadruple his starting cash. According to SEC records, none of the players learned the hard way the penalties of getting caught using insider information for their trading.

TITAN: THE ARENA (126)

The first heat Wednesday drew approximately 20 people, many of which were unsure what this card game entailed. By heat three and four, the participants topped 50 in each heat, some coming back for a second time. It didn't seem to matter whether people won or not. The prevailing factor was that everyone had fun! In the end, a fierce game of five players ensued from the 25 final round players to determine the grand prize winner. The players were so engrossed in the game that on more than one occasion the players forgot to wield the power of the creature they backed or forgot to draw after playing (right Ken?). Congratulations to the victor, Peter Staab, for his narrow win.

PRO GOLF (65)

Occupying the usual raucous Friday night, overstuffed Salon F slot, this tournament gathered another strong crowd of dice magicians. To make it to the final foursome, contestants played a round at Pebble Beach and a round at Augusta. Nothing worse than a score of "-7" earned entry into the final.

The final featured one round of the skins game (hole winner taking the points of accumulated unwon holes)—with enormous, green, foam dice. Bruce Reiff birdied the first hole for the lead. Then nobody could win the next seven holes. With eight points and near certain victory up for grabs on the ninth hole, Reiff eagled. However, Mike Metcalf also eagled to deny the points. With ten points on the line at the eleventh hole, Reiff again eagled, but Metcalf came through with his own eagle. Meanwhile, Ken Guttermuth and Dave Metzger, who spent a number of these crucial holes in sand and water, saw victory in their grasp. At the thirteenth hole, Metzger's birdie was enough to claim the accumulated twelve points and victory. Guttermuth finished out the round claiming a handful of holes, thus pushing the spectacular-shot-hitting Reiff and Metcalf into third and fourth.

I managed initially to win in *HANNIBAL*, but success did not last long. Early in my second-round game, my Hannibal lost unexpectedly in a battle with no place to retreat. I managed to extend the game to the final turn (largely through daring use of Hasdrubal and H. Gisgo), but by the start of turn 9, the Carthaginians clearly had no chance to recover enough provinces. I was only slightly relieved to hear of a similar fate for my friend in his third-round game. At least, the Carthaginians won the championship game.

With the print run just beginning for *TITAN: THE ARENA*, our early heats were caught a bit off-balance (not enough decks and not enough tables for the arriving entrants). We squeezed into the room tighter than the survivors of the *Titanic* and I bowed out of a game to become a rules teacher. Tough luck—"I coulda been a contenda."

What can be said about *PRO GOLF*? I went for the green. After missing the cut for the skins game by two shots, I trundled off to bed satisfied yet again with my performance: 1-3 for the day, no finals.

FRIDAY

With no good news reported by my teammates (Boys on the Hill), the pressure to do well was acute. I'd have to devote myself to a second heat of *MARCH MADNESS* if I didn't make the final four via the morning heat. It looked like I might not get out of Salon F that day.

MARCH MADNESS (47)

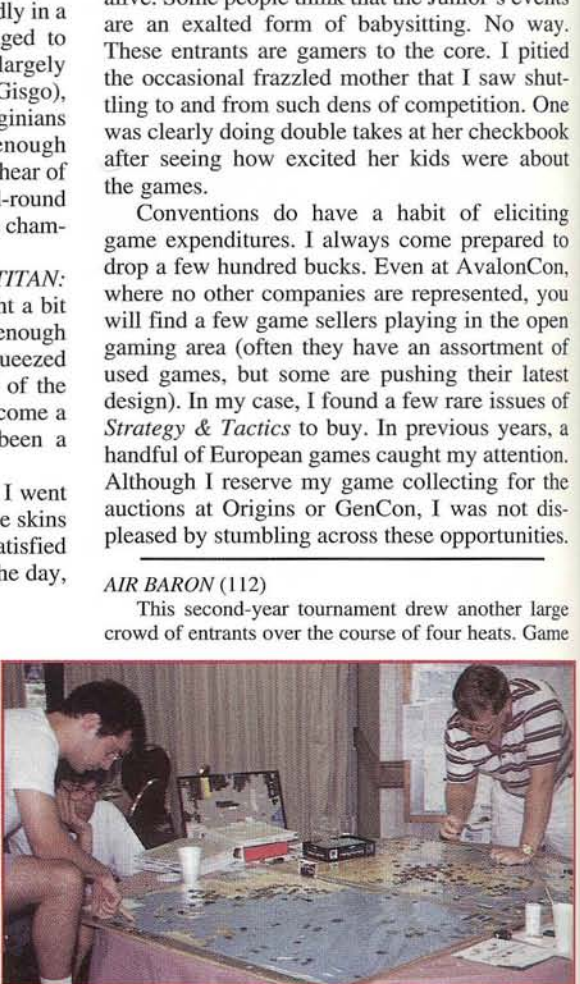
The feminization of basketball fandom continued at AvalonCon. Inspired by the recent printing in *The GENERAL* of the 1997 women's final four (and perhaps a few televised women's games), Carrie Lewis learned the game from her husband and charged into the tournament with a fully-steamed fast-break that caught a number of veterans by surprise. She emerged victorious from the talent-rich first heat with the first bid to the final four championship round. Michael Metcalf won the second heat and Bruno Passacantando won the third (foreclosing both efforts by defending champion Joe Diminnie to enter the final four). The competition for the final spot brought together four new hopefuls and twelve losers from previous heats (hoping to get lucky from low draft slots). Editor Stuart Tucker's promising second effort fell upon the rocks when his opponent's final timeout against his Duke 1990 team engineered a 16-point swing to win the game. One-time champ Bruce Reiff's second effort was more fruitful, gaining him the final spot. In the semi-final game, Carrie Lewis' cinderella team finally fell. Bruce Reiff defeated Bruno Passacantando for his second *MARCH MADNESS* championship.

Meeting with enough success in the morning heat to miss an *AIR BARON* heat, I sat around in Salon F playing *TITAN: THE ARENA* with all the other sports game also-rans, awaiting the mid-afternoon heat. Then, a worried Don Greenwood snagged me for a duty—time to go teach the kids how to play *PRINCESS RYAN'S STAR MARINES*. A growing mob was gathering before the Junior's event starting time. Arriving just moments before the game's designer, we dove into the most promotion-hungry pack of marines you could imagine. Kid's game? Huh. These boys and girls would eat some playtesters alive. Some people think that the Junior's events are an exalted form of babysitting. No way. These entrants are gamers to the core. I pitied the occasional frazzled mother that I saw shuttling to and from such dens of competition. One was clearly doing double takes at her checkbook after seeing how excited her kids were about the games.

Conventions do have a habit of eliciting game expenditures. I always come prepared to drop a few hundred bucks. Even at AvalonCon, where no other companies are represented, you will find a few game sellers playing in the open gaming area (often they have an assortment of used games, but some are pushing their latest design). In my case, I found a few rare issues of *Strategy & Tactics* to buy. In previous years, a handful of European games caught my attention. Although I reserve my game collecting for the auctions at Origins or GenCon, I was not displeased by stumbling across these opportunities.

AIR BARON (112)

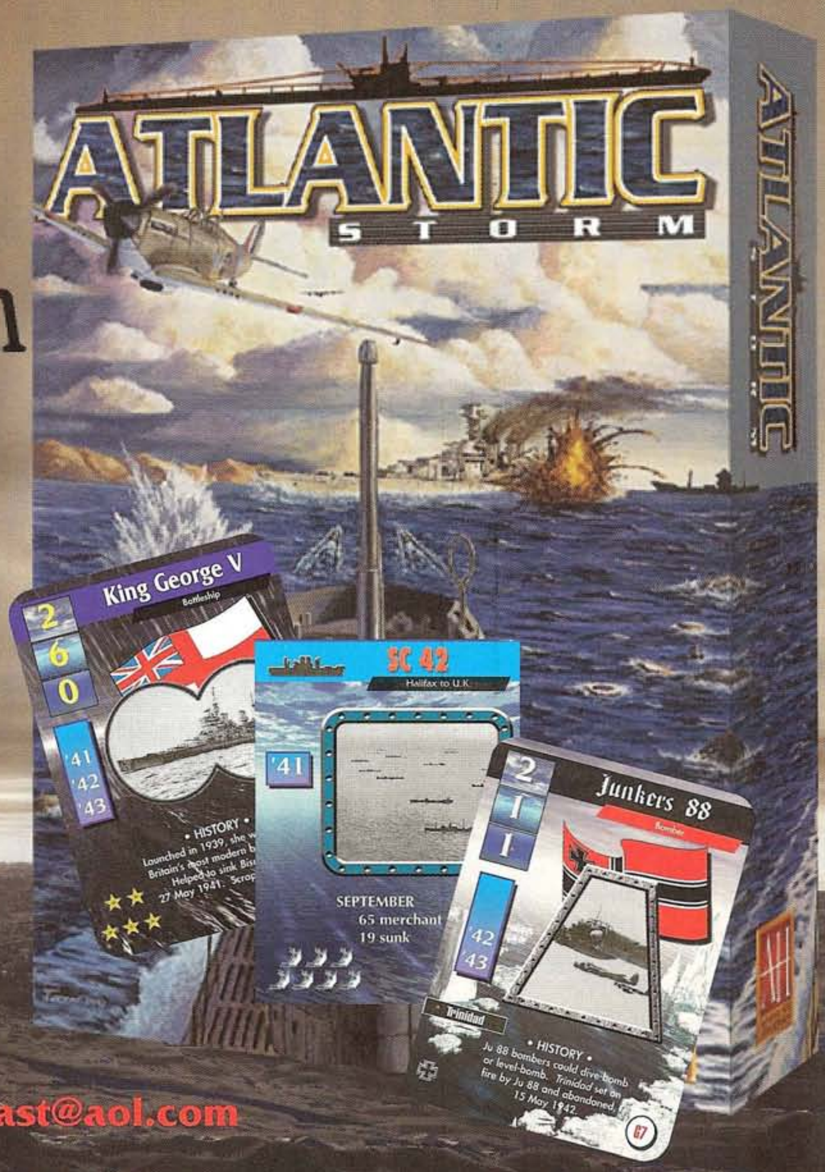
This second-year tournament drew another large crowd of entrants over the course of four heats. Game



Engaged in a different form of madness, these players tackle Global War in *ADVANCED THIRD REICH/ EMPIRE OF THE RISING SUN*.

Even On Calm Days They Expected an Atlantic Storm

Visit one of the fine stores listed below to get your hands on this challenging, easy to learn non-collectible card game.



ATLANTIC STORM
King George V
Battleship
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Halifax to U.K.
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SEPTEMBER
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1
'42
'43
Trinidad
• HISTORY •
Ju 88 bombers could dive-bomb or level-bomb. Trinidad set on fire by Ju 88 and abandoned 15 May 1942.
87

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winners in each heat advanced to the semi-final round. Defending champion Jack Jaeger was denied victory in both heats he entered. This year saw a number of father/son rivalries surviving into the semi-final round. The 22 semi-finalists met on Sunday morning to play the final two rounds in quick succession. In a raucous final round, James Garvey's persistence yielded victory. Not only did he gain his berth into the semi-final round in heat four, after three previous failures, but he also adopted the conservative, JFK hub strategy in the final, letting others battle over the tough-to-hold ATL and DFW hubs.

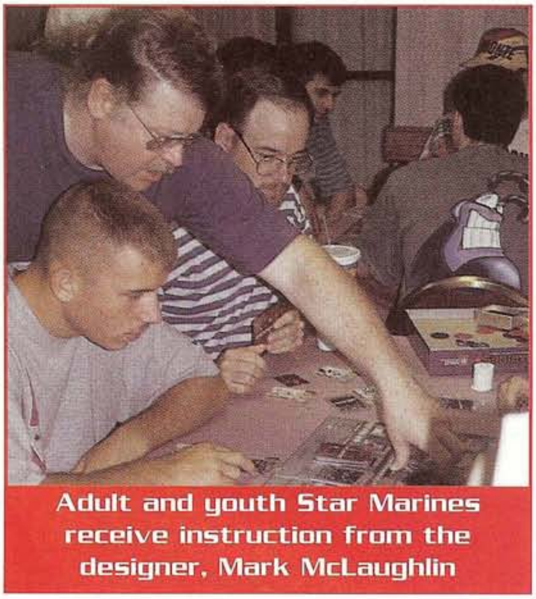
PRINCESS RYAN'S STAR MARINES

More than 70 gamers played in the Adult and Junior's tournaments. Like the Marine card deck, one-third of which is made up of female Marines, girls accounted for about a third of the gamers in the Junior's tourney. About a dozen of the kids who played in the Junior's tournament were veterans (participated in the AvalonCon'96 demo). First place went to Brad Garman, who led the Marines to victory in both rounds. Second place went to Adam Clark, while Erica Kirchner was third, both of which led victorious Marines in one round and had played the Guards in another round.

Several of the juniors came back on the second day to play in the regular tourney. The field of 38 players was beaten by John Ellsworth. Christopher Bodkin placed second, while Brian Kirchner, Stephen Sheddon and Jeremy Billones rounded out the top five. Honorable mention goes to Christina Hancock as the most enthusiastic marine, and to Verity Hitchings, as the most bloodthirsty, yet surprisingly cheerful, marine (her team of marines also suffered the highest casualties while defeating the Guard). In the true "It's Better That Way" spirit, Deborah Osborne remained cheerful and helpful, despite playing in two games where the marines were slaughtered.

TITLE BOUT (24)

Sluggers dominated the bouts this year, with few fights lasting the distance. One of the biggest surprises in the course of the event was Ken Good's George Foreman scoring a first-round technical knockout over David Anderson's Joe Louis. However, Foreman's "stamina" showed as he lost a first-round TKO to Jeff Henckels' Sonny Liston. Henckel went on to win his semi-final bout with former tournament champ Terry Coleman. Meanwhile, the other semi-final featured two former champs, Bruce Reiff and Ken Gutermuth. Reiff's Mike Tyson scored a first-round TKO over Gutermuth's Rocky Marciano. The final between Reiff's Tyson and Henckel's Liston managed to run into the fourth round before Tyson won by TKO. Later, Reiff was seen biting his plaque (outside the ring).



Adult and youth Star Marines receive instruction from the designer, Mark McLaughlin

Having missed the afternoon heat of *MARCH MADNESS*, I decided to play a few pickup games of *TITAN: THE ARENA* in the hallways and then go out to dinner with a friend and fellow game designer, thereby missing the *TITLE BOUT* and *CIRCUS MAXIMUS* tournaments that evening. I returned to find a midnight pickup game of *Railway Rivals*, where I managed to blow race leads in the final two die rolls more times than I'll live down. Take a hint, don't let me roll for you on any joint runs we may ever share. Day's score: 4-4, no finals.

SATURDAY

Getting up was beginning to tax my roommates at this time, but the competitive juices started flowing over breakfast. For team and honor, I decided to skip the *WE THE PEOPLE* tournament and enter the fourth and final *MARCH MADNESS* heat. If I had time, maybe I'd make the final heat of *AIR BARON* that afternoon. Being a former *WIN, PLACE & SHOW* champion and having the dubious honor of having "The Stuart K. Tucker Memorial I Got Pucked Award" renamed for me for *SLAPSHOT*, my evening plans seemed solid.

However, fate always throws you a twist. Once again, I did well enough in *MARCH MADNESS* with the 1990 Duke team to be drained from the experience—but not well enough to make the Final Four. I also missed the *AIR BARON* start. Quick, what's up next that will finish before *WPS*. My colleagues informed me that two short events beckoned: *AUCTION* and *ORIGINS OF WW II*. Alas, I said, I knew the rules to neither—fostering a spontaneous outbreak of game teaching combustion. In a matter of minutes, I was primed to play *AUCTION*. Gleefully, I dashed off to the event.

WE THE PEOPLE (40)

Forty-seven per cent of the games in the double-elimination tournament resulted in an American win. Thirty-seven per cent were British wins while fifteen per cent of games played were drawn. Slightly more than half of the British wins were caused by the capture of George Washington, although most of these occurred during the first round. The average bid of PCs given to the British player in order to play the American side was 2.8, increasing as the contest progressed to the later rounds.

Thomas Drueding, the 1996 *HANNIBAL: ROME VS. CARTHAGE* champion, prevailed as the British over GM Jim Falling in the final round game which lasted through the 1782 War Ends card. The other top players were Brian Mountford, Peter Fecurka, Marvin Birnbaum, Chris Rice, Mike Lochtefeld and Nicholas Anner. Brian Mountford made an impressive AvalonCon debut by taking third place with a 5-1-1 record in his first-ever tournament.

AUCTION (16)

Scheduled opposite the *ACQUIRE* tournament this year, attendance was halved. Tournament newcomer Stuart Tucker proved that you don't need to be too tired to memorize the cards to lose this game—managing to make five successive miserable sales rolls (three rejected and two at 25 per cent value) in his first round game. In the meantime, 1996 champ, Bruce Monnin was able to wrap up a first round victory at another table before Tucker's dice stopped tumbling. The final also featured expert art connoisseurs Bruce Reiff, Marilyn Koleszar and Ken Gutermuth. Despite his deceptive poker grin, Monnin did not have the quick victory nearly dealt to him this time, and then suffered when he lost needed items to the Collector. Reiff and Koleszar managed to collect items whose matches were near the bottom of the deck, giving Hall-of-Famer Gutermuth a chance to do something about his kaleidoscopic initial deal—an opportunity he exploited well to claim his second *AUCTION* plaque.

WIN, PLACE & SHOW (15)

A veteran group of race-fixers tried to outwit a few newcomers to the tournament in this two-round affair. The newcomers all managed to lose a few too many bucks on Daily Double bets that had no chance among the sharks at the tables. Nonetheless, several newcomers managed to come out of the first round with first or second place (two players from each preliminary five-player game advanced). Jim Bell pulled ahead at one table on the basis of sound betting on the favorites in the first four races. Stuart Tucker managed a spectacular comeback on the back of Mona Lisa in the sixth race, falling a few dollars short of second (but gaining entry into the final due to the departure from the tournament of the second-place player). At another table, AvalonCon veteran (but tournament newcomer) Jim Garvey, having been alerted to the race-fixing he could expect to see in the first two races and packing a copy of Tucker's Speed Figures, managed to stay in the money and get into the final along with veteran John Coussis and Hall-of-Famers Ken Gutermuth and Bruce Reiff.

A convention of the people, by the people, and for the people, AvalonCon provides plenty of opportunities for fun for players of all ages.

The final quickly turned into a rout, when John Coussis hit it big in the first four races, piling up more than a $100,000 lead. Meanwhile, wiley Reiff, Gutermuth and Tucker gave new meaning to the phrase "the jockey is maneuvering his horse," managing to find ways to foil the anticipated bets of each other. Jim Bell and Jim Garvey looked on in puzzlement, but stayed clear of the horse banging, and held second and third place going into the fifth race. With Coussis so clearly ahead, Reiff (the 1996 champ), Gutermuth and Tucker, thinking alike, piled their last bucks on Cockroach (10-1) across the board. Tucker, after placing his bets, had but $500 remaining with which to own a horse in the final race. Coussis, recognizing the desperate situation of his opponents, knew that he had to try to bet in a similar manner in order to keep them from catching up. Not knowing whether to bet the favorite or the longshot, he split his money on the two (not usually a win-

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By Sunday, my dreams of winning plaques were quickly dissipating.

ning proposition, but this time a good way to not lose much of his huge lead).

In that fifth race, Cockroach is actually a better bet than appears on quick glance. If the racing pace is slow, he can hit the turn on the inside lane and may benefit from his low-probability bonus at the same time. Furthermore, the three horses with apprentice jockeys can get tangled in the turn. Sure enough, the owners' boxes were full of people chanting for "five," the 'Roach's bonus number, which obligingly came up in three of the first four rolls, allowing the 'Roach to crush the field. Suddenly the game was a game again, as the three lagging players cashed in betting tickets for $70-90,000 each. Coussis' hedging kept him substantially ahead, but the sixth race could now sink him.

As the horses for the sixth race were being bought, Tucker kept up the illusion with his chat that, of course, Mona Lisa was the only bet in town in the sixth. Coussis, wanting to ensure a fair running of her, bid for ownership, but then let Tucker take her for $10,000, thinking he'd jockey her well. Garvey and Coussis bet her across the board, but with conservative levels of cash. Gutermuth, too, fell for Tucker's ruse and bet fully on Mona Lisa. Into the backstretch, all looked true-to-form, with Reiff and Gutermuth realizing that they probably weren't going to win enough more than Coussis to close the gap, but doing all they could to keep their horses from tangling. Meanwhile, Tucker had gambled on another long shot, Hannibal (8-1), which isn't a great horse, but has the most probable bonus number and a very fortunate moving order that can get a lucky entrance into the final turn along the rail to save ground. Going into the final turn, Tucker had Mona Lisa hug the rail, seemingly to save ground and crush the field on the stretch. However, it was clearly a foolish gamble, which failed—as Tucker had long planned—with Mona Lisa getting hung up behind the pack and losing precious running speed. Hannibal gained the necessary bonus number in the stretch and, to the shock of the other players, won the race. When the count was done, it turned out that Tucker's maneuver had wrecked the chances of most, but left him a few thousand short of second place. John Coussis and Jim Garvey let out sighs of relief when Mona Lisa still managed to finish in the money, to earn them the necessary bucks to win the tournament in first and second place, respectively. Through maneuvers and extraordinary luck, this final transformed from a boring rout into one of the most exciting in years.

Winners and losers alike walked away with a better understanding that in horse racing, you are betting against other bettors more than you are betting on a particular horse. Who says sports games don't involve warfare?

SLAPSHOT (106)

The sleepy late-night Saturday crowd gathered for another stab at being the largest tournament of the year. The event was opened hilariously by Keith Hunsinger's humorous reading of the rules, a birthday singing and the official unveiling of the newly-named Stuart K. Tucker I Got Pucked Awards. (Alas, Stuart having been "pucked" repeatedly throughout the convention at a wide variety of games, was busily engaged in scoring his only points of the convention: drinking a glass of Port with an out-of-town guest. Rumor has it that his teammates are looking for a new fourth after his abysmal failures at *MARCH MADNESS* this year.) Dan Metzger won the plaque, surviving the final round game against Mike Garton, Ray Stakenas, Bruno Wolff, Verity Hitchings, Mark Bailey, Mike May and Dan Dolan, Jr.

After the roller-coaster games of *WIN, PLACE & SHOW*, my "dinner date" friend finally showed, and I lamentably missed the start of the *SLAPSHOT* tournament. Feeling myself coming down with something, I turned in for what was to be a miserable night of sickness. Day's score: 3-5, including one lost final.

SUNDAY

With no invitations to a final round, I was still determined to take one more shot at a plaque. I decided to pass on *GUERILLA* (which I've only played twice). I walked slowly off to *DINOSAURS OF THE LOST WORLD*, where the no-longer-eligible-to-be-juniors opponents tolerated my occasional dashes to the bathroom.

GUERILLA (36)

The would-be dictators vied for top honors in a two-round tourney. This year saw a complete reversal from the previous year's tournament. The dominance of the guerilla factions was evident, as they won all the first round games. The second and final round was played with three chits each of the government and guerilla factions. A mere four victory points in the final game decided first (Gordon Rodgers) and second place. If only John Sonderman had played one less atrocity on Nicholas, the results would have been decided in his favor. So goes war. Sean Cousins, 1996 champ, was eliminated in the first round at the hand of Gordon Rodgers.

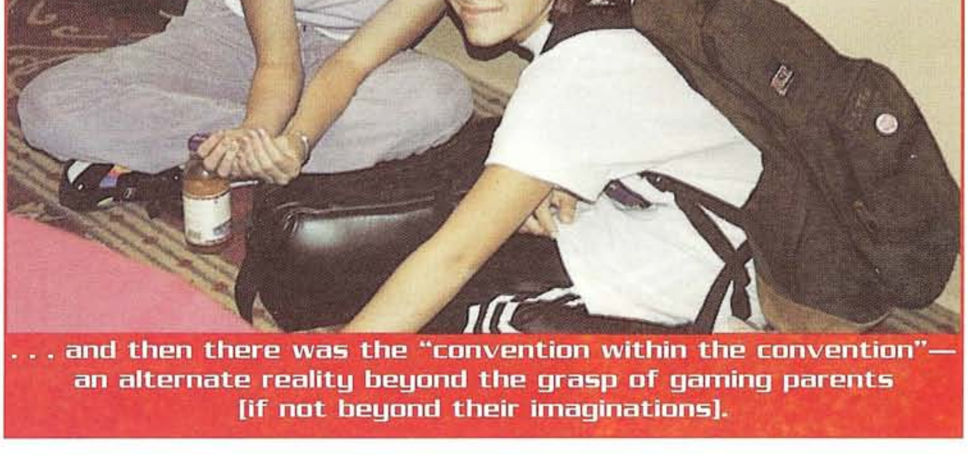
DINOSAURS OF THE LOST WORLD (20)

Having been turned onto this excellent game by officemates, editor Stuart Tucker ventured onto the dangerous plateau in the weary Sunday morning hours. Little did he know that his young competition entered this game after years of tournament experience and top-notch preparatory "home" work. Tucker's preliminary game proved that John Poniske, Jr. could equal the feat of his father (who beat Tucker in *WE THE PEOPLE* at AvalonCon'95). In this game, Poniske used a daunting stack of Dinosaurs to keep a gun-shy front-runner from getting to her exit route. Tucker racked up the points necessary to leave the plateau for victory, but found that Poniske had scooped up all the easily-found exit items. Poniske adeptly kept the focus of attention away from his come-from-behind point scoring and won, despite Tucker's repeated efforts to blunder into events that might find the final exit item (buried as the penultimate card in the deck). Poniske went on to win the plaque in the final against Robert Navolis, Devon Ginnard and Michael Dwyer. Maybe the adults can get into the finals against the Junior tournament graduates next year!

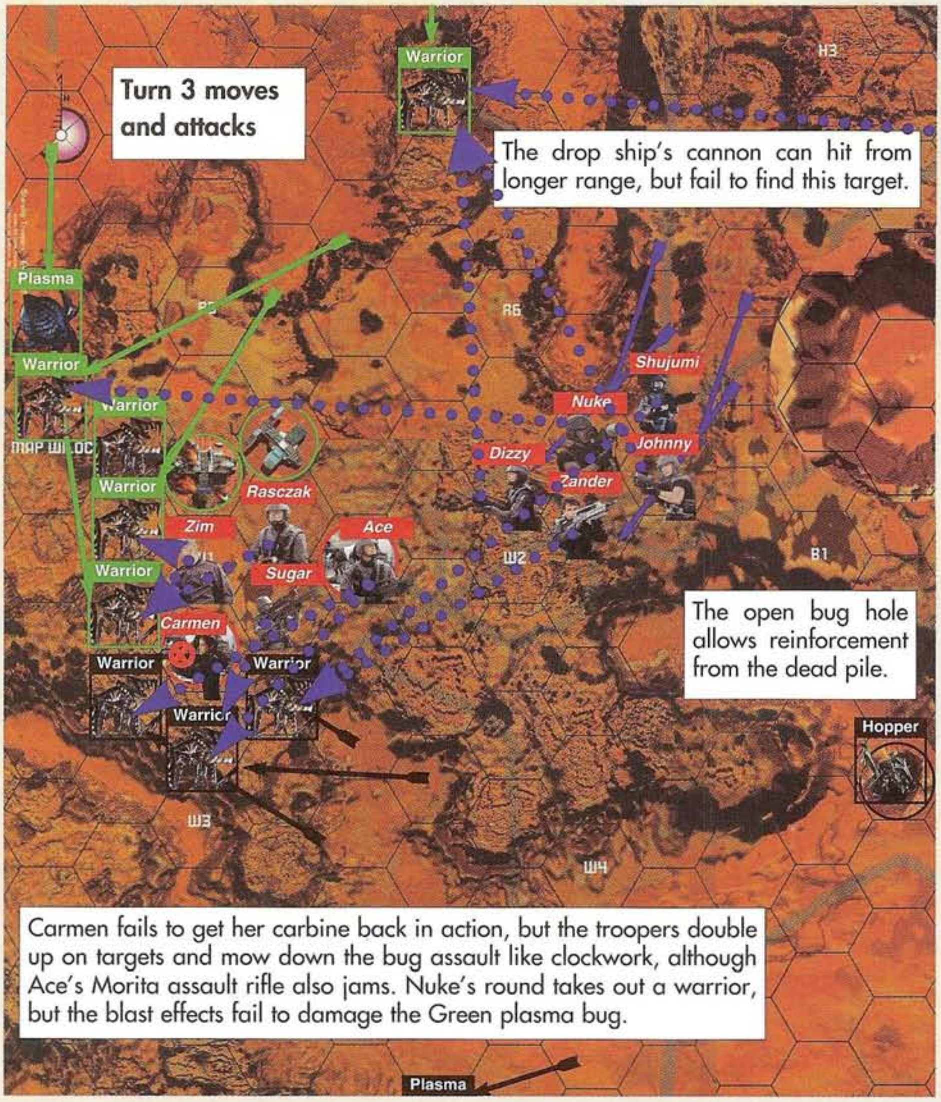
That left nothing but the door-prize drawing and the lamentations of the losers. . .

Not quite. Despite my ailing stomach, another pickup game or two of *TITAN: THE ARENA* beckoned that afternoon. It would be a tough drive home that evening, but little did that weigh against the long, 359-day wait for AvalonCon'98. Ending with a combined record of 9-17, with no plaque to show for the effort, I achieved my convention objective of having a blast.

I certainly logged plenty of preparation time for *TITAN: THE ARENA*. That is one tournament about which I need have no foreboding in 1998. This time, I will arrive at the tourney with a deck and teach my opponents through the school of hard knocks. Sorry friends, get outta my way—I'm overdue for another plaque. ★



. . . and then there was the "convention within the convention"—an alternate reality beyond the grasp of gaming parents [if not beyond their imaginations].



Turn 3 moves and attacks

The drop ship's cannon can hit from longer range, but fail to find this target.

The open bug hole allows reinforcement from the dead pile.

Carmen fails to get her carbine back in action, but the troopers double up on targets and mow down the bug assault like clockwork, although Ace's Morita assault rifle also jams. Nuke's round takes out a warrior, but the blast effects fail to damage the Green plasma bug.

➤➤➤➤➤ (from p.10)

Nuke vs. western green warrior R7= 7 (kill); Blast effect: Plasma s= 5 (save); Warrior s=1 (save).

Drop ship vs. northern green warrior R7(2)= 1,3,4 (hit), s= 1 (save).

TROOPER TURN 3

There is potential for casualties here, as Carmen's carbine is jammed and she will most likely be surrounded by bugs. I still don't think I should move Green Squad, preferring to gain the fire bonus. If I can hold out another turn, the bugs will be spent. Hurry up, Johnny!

I may not be able to hit at long range, but I more than make up for it in close quarters. Five warriors rush up and five warriors fall. Zander is the man, twice taking out bugs at long range. I'm sure J.C. is wondering when he will be able to roll some melee attacks. The plasma bugs are moving closer, though, and I don't trust my luck to hold once he starts dropping plasma down on my troopers.

BUG TURN 3

I immediately see the drawback of my original plan. My plasma bugs are still not in place for firing, and yet all of my warriors are hiding under the cliffsides ready for the assault. The fact that Carmen has her weapon jammed makes the green troopers all too tempting a meal. If I can reduce trooper firepower here, my warriors may be able to get to one of the wounded, which would take the burden off of my plasma bugs (and leave Nuke a target).

After seeing fire effects like that, I have to say that those troopers were a lot more experienced than my brain bug imagined!

NEUTRAL COMMENTARY

Chris wisely didn't move Shujumi in case the bugs rushed Nuke again. Carmen failed to unjam her weapon. She still had the positive role of standing over the wounded body to keep it from being squished by the onrushing bugs, but she was likely to receive the brunt of the attack. Oddly, Chris failed to have any trooper take cover under the wings of the retrieval boat. If the bugs break through, this error could cost him later in the battle.

J.C. indeed rushed Zim and Carmen's end of the rescue zone. His move of the plasma bugs finally made it clear that he planned on using plasma from the W5 promontory to nail the rescue zone. The green plasma crept onto the plateau on the same turn, making for a dicey situation for the VIP wounded, as Nuke could only fire at one plasma per turn.

Zander, from long range, took out one of the threats to Carmen. Chris experienced another gun jam, but not before Ace took out another warrior. Sugar was Carmen's last chance and made his hit count. Zim's split fire amazingly finished off two bugs. Chris' worst shots happened on the least important part of the battlefield. Nuke hoped that a scattered shot or the blast effects would get him a plasma bug, but failed.

J.C.'s wave has been decimated. It is up to the plasma bugs now. He has a few reserve bugs to shield them, but he'll be hard pressed now as the MI goes over to the attack, having successfully merged his two groups. The jams won't hurt Chris much now that the main wave of bugs has been repelled. J.C.'s strategy now rests on raining accurate plasma blasts on the wounded while playing the game of "evade the bug hunters." The W5 promontory is an excellent ground for this, as it will take awhile for Chris to cover it with effective fire. Nuke will need a lucky shot. I still think J.C. blew the battle early by not climbing the R1 plateau. Chris hasn't paid the usual price for remaining so concentrated. Now the only price he is paying is that he hasn't covered the W5 promontory well.

TURN 4

Part of Black Squad takes up positions covering the bug hole. Carmen unjams her weapon, but Ace fails. The hopper jumps to attack Nuke from the cover of the ravine. Both plasma bugs reach high ground from which they threaten the wounded.

Johnny vs. hopper R1(4)= 2,6 (hit), s= 5 (kill).
Drop ship vs. green plasma R12(1)= 4,5,5 (miss).
Rasczak vs. eastern green warrior R3(1)= 1,1,1,2 (three hits, jams), s= 4,4,6 (kill).
Sugar vs. black plasma R7(1)= 3,4,6 (miss).
Zim vs. green plasma R3(2)= 3,4,6 (miss).
Carmen vs. same R3(1)= 1,5,6 (hit), s= 5 (save).
Shujumi vs. same R5(1)= 4,5 (miss).
Dizzy vs. same R6(1)= 4,5,6 (miss).
Zander vs. black warrior on hole R4(1)= 1,2,4 (hit), s= 5 (kill).
Nuke vs. green plasma R8= 8 (kill); Blast effect: warrior s= 2 (save).

Note: post-mortem analysis reveals that this shot was illegal—LOS being blocked by the smoke of the retrieval boat. Of course, the outcome might not have been affected much, as Nuke could target the black bug instead and have an easy time in turn 5 running down the green plasma bug. Nonetheless, a word to the wise, check on your opponent's LOS.

Black plasma bug vs. Ace/wounded R7= 8 (kill).

TROOPER TURN 4

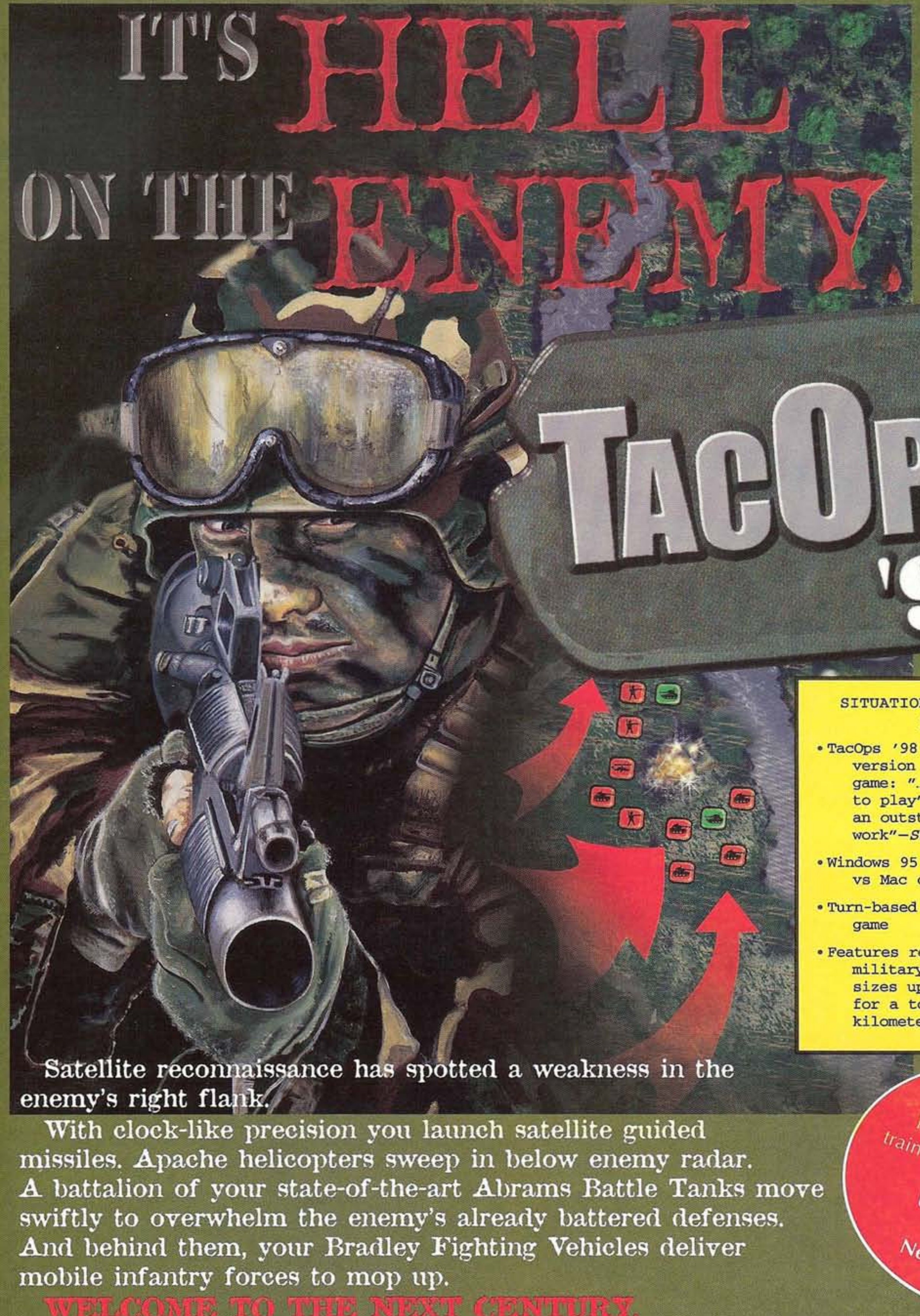
It is time for Black Squad to earn its pay. Nuke moves to cover both the remaining bug hole and the plasma bugs, leaving Zander and Dizzy to cover him. Johnny heroically jumps down into the ravine, poised to rush to the bug hole if Nuke fails to close it. Green Squad is recovering from the bug attack, and can hear the ponderous steps of an approaching plasma bug...

Zander riddles the bug guarding the bug hole, clearing the way for Johnny to rush forward to plug the hole. This leaves Nuke free to take a shot at a plasma bug, which disappears in a satisfactory nuclear glow. However, a VIP is now R.I.P. as J.C. trades shot for shot, turning Ace and the wounded psychic (bye-bye, Doogie) into hot plasma.

After all my withering fire, the bugs are still in this game.

➤➤➤➤➤ *(continued pg. 33)*

THIS IS WAR IN THE 21ST CENTURY.



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AH GAMES OF STRATEGY

WINDOWS '95

Mac OS

CONTEST #184—Sound Advice

One of the drawing points of this magazine is its excellent strategic advice. Now, it is time for a pop quiz on how well this advice has been absorbed by readers. This contest asks you to identify the games to which the following quotes from past issues of *The GENERAL* apply. If you don't recognize all of them, don't feel bad—some may be red herrings, false quotes intended to throw you off. In the lines provided, either write "False" or identify the correct game in which to utilize the advice.

1. Whenever possible, attack into lands containing monuments, capitals and cities.

Game:

2. Good Russian play at the outset is a study in how to retreat from the weak +1 TEM areas to better defenses closer to the river.

Game:

3. Unless your crew is unhappy, you should not declare Debauchery and Revelry.

Game:

4. Placing a PC here assists in preventing a British middle-states invasion.

Game:

5. First, it is generally not a good idea to roll to reduce your infantry cost to "2" until the German has reduced his to "1."

Game:

6. At some point in the beginning or middle of the game, a player should buy the one shield he can carry in his ship's hull.

Game:

7. To avert loss of morale, subordinate the Master of Horse to the Dictator before calculating the TK number.

Game:

8. Poor leaders should be sacked immediately and sent somewhere where they can't hurt anybody; I usually reserve Bonham (Texas) for this purpose.

Game:

9. Plan your political status as carefully as you plan your campaigns.

Game:

10. Once these Task Forces have been generated, you can insert these tiny units into the ZOC of German units, thus denying them the opportunity to make use of their maximum potential movement on any given turn.

Game:

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Send entries via email to ahgeneral@aol.com or mail to:
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6. So that as many ads as possible can be printed in our limited space, we request that you use official state and game abbreviations. Don't list your entire collection; list only those games which you are most interested in playing.

Across Five Aprils—A5A, Advanced Squad Leader—ASL/SL, Afrika Korps—AFK, Age of Renaissance—AOR, Air Baron—ABN, Air Force/Dauntless—AFD, Assassin—ASN, Battle of the Bulge—B(yr.), Blackbeard—BKB, Blitzkrieg—BZK, Breakout Normandy—BKN, Britannia—BRI, Circus Maximus—CMS, (Advanced) Civilization—ACV/CIV, Colonial Diplomacy—CDP, D-Day—D(yr.), Diplomacy—DIP, DUNE, 1830, Empires in Arms—EIA, Empire of the Rising Sun—ERS, Enemy in Sight—EIS, Firepower—FPR, Flat Top—FTP, Fleet Series—#FT, Flight Leader—FL, Gangsters—GSR, Geronimo—GER, Gettysburg—GBG, Gladiator—GLD, Guadalcanal—GDC, Guerilla—GUE, Hannibal: Rome vs. Carthage—HRC, Here Come the Rebels—HCR, History of the World—HWD, Hitler's War—HWR, Kremlin—KRM, Kingmaker—KGM, Knights of the Air—KTA, London's Burning—LBG, Luftwaffe—LFW, Machiavelli—MAC, Maharaja—MAH, Magic Realm—MRM, MBT, Merchant of Venus—MOV, Midway—M(yr.), Napoleon's Battles—NPB, PanzerBlitz—PZB, Panzergruppe Guderian—PGG, Panzer Leader—PZL, Princess Ryan's Star Marines—PRG, Rail Baron—RBN, Republic of Rome—ROR, Richthofen's War—RFN, Roadkill—RKL, Roads to Gettysburg—RTG, The Russian Campaign—TRC, Russian Front—RFT, 1776, Siege of Jerusalem—SOJ, Starship Troopers—SST, Stellar Conquest—STC, Stonewall's Last Battle—SLB, Stonewall in the Valley—SIV, Stonewall Jackson's Way—SJW, Storm Over Arnhem—SOA, Tac Air—TCA, Advanced Third Reich—A3R, Third Reich (4th ed.)—3R4, Thunder At Cassino—TAC, Titan—TTN, Titan: The Arena—TTA, Trireme—TRI, Turning Point: Stalingrad—TPS, Tyranno Ex—TYX, Up Front—UPF, Victory In The Pacific—VIP, War and Peace—W&P, We The People—WTP, Wooden Ships & Iron Men—WSIM, Wrasslin'—WRS.

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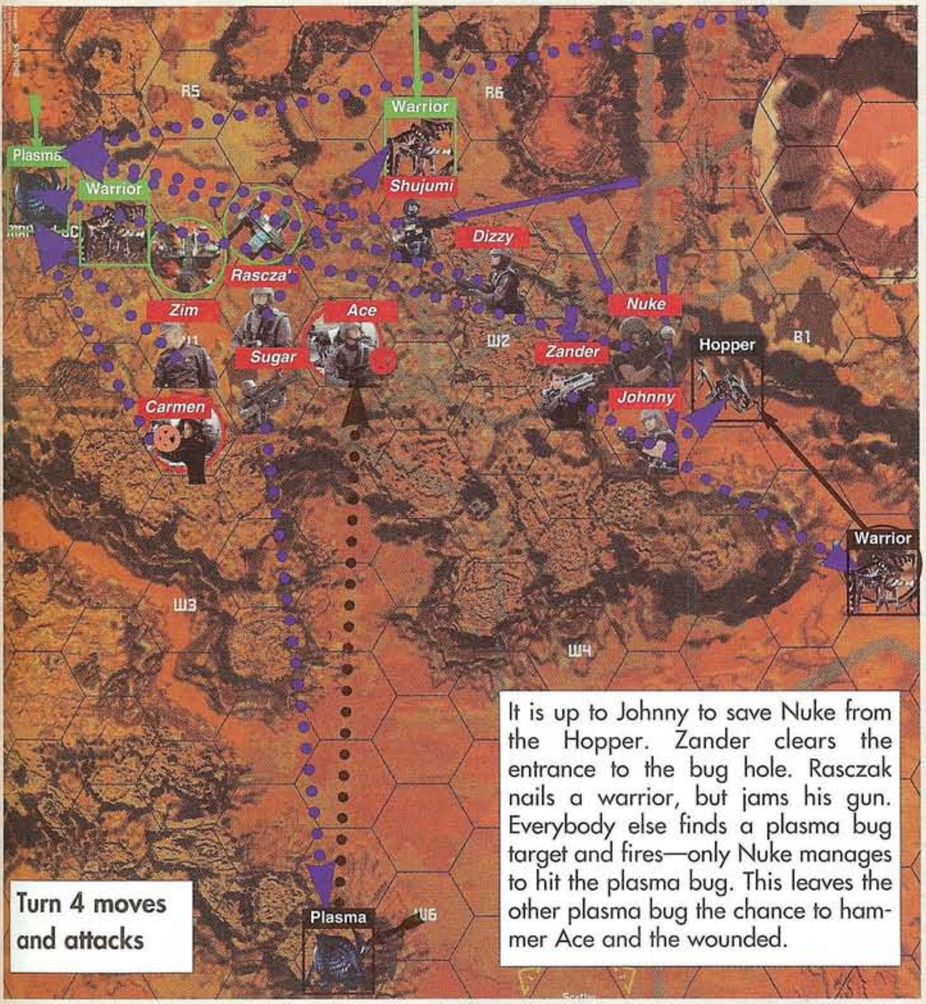


It is up to Johnny to save Nuke from the Hopper. Zander clears the entrance to the bug hole. Rasczak nails a warrior, but jams his gun. Everybody else finds a plasma bug target and fires—only Nuke manages to hit the plasma bug. This leaves the other plasma bug the chance to hammer Ace and the wounded.

Turn 4 moves and attacks

→→→→→ *(from pg. 30)*

BUG TURN 4

All is not over yet. I need to quickly move my plasma bugs into position. If they survive the trooper's next attack, I can kill both wounded psychics with ease. I see a fantastic opportunity: my remaining hopper can leap from his bug hole to position himself between Johnny and Nuke, with no fear of allied fire. If Mr. Rico can't blow that bug apart, Nuke is doomed, which may guarantee my plasma bugs another turn.

Johnny proves himself worthy of the standards of cinematic heroism. The hopper is dead, and one plasma bug is out of play. I retain some optimism—a bug victory isn't totally impossible here, and Chris' hot dice are bound to even out sometime. My remaining plasma bug has no trouble picking a target: the wounded psychic.

NEUTRAL COMMENTARY

Chris moved Nuke to a position where he could plug the black bug hole and cover the high ground where the plasma bugs moved. In so doing, he left J.C. a better opportunity to take out the wounded in the rescue zone. Nuke could have been moved closer to the rescue zone to ensure a better chance of hitting the plasma bugs when they gained the plateau. This could come back to haunt him. Even more of a problem is his positioning of Johnny and Zander around Nuke. The high ground blocked Zander's line of sight to the low ground below Nuke two hexes away from Zander. This could have been averted by positioning Johnny in that other low-ground hex next to Nuke, thereby ensuring that Chris would have two troopers protecting Nuke from a hopper attack from below. He also could have put Zander on the exact opposite side of Nuke to achieve the same effect. Both J.C. and Chris seemed a little confused about the line-of-sight rules, which are very significant in this game—the spine of a high ground hex blocks LOS to the low ground.

Carmen, with the benefit of the extra-turn modifier, repaired her jammed weapon. This was one more nail in the coffin, signifying the end of any bug hopes to rush the wounded bodies with warriors again. J.C. must now rely upon the plasma bugs to get the job done. His strategy has been to maneuver the plasma bugs under cover of the slopes and into positions where they would get high probability shots at the wounded bodies. As he moved his bugs onto the plateau, J.C. put Chris into the moment of the most severe crisis.

In this game, a seemingly little failure can lead to big disaster for the MI. This battle scenario is particularly unforgiving for the MI. Much rests on the shoulders of Johnny's ability to save Nuke from the hopper (56 per cent) and Nuke's ability to nail each plasma bug without a missed shot (56 and 66 per cent respectively). All-in-all, the situation was none too good for the troopers despite having met with considerable fire success in previous turns. Fortunately for Chris, his key shots hit.

J.C.'s black plasma bug hit one of the wounded, putting pressure on the MI to take it

ASL Submissions

We are looking for articles about *ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER* for publication in *The GENERAL* and the *ASL Annual.* As a rule, we anticipate that the broader or more introductory articles would go in *The GENERAL*, while the more intricate or more detailed (and probably longer) articles would go in the annual. Articles intended specifically for publication in *The GENERAL* should be mailed to Editor, *The GENERAL,* 4517 Harford Rd., Baltimore, MD 21214. Information on submission procedures is also available via email to ahgeneral@aol.com. Other *ASL*-related articles should be mailed to Editor, Multi-Man Publishing, Inc., 309 Chase Hill Ct., Severn, MD 21144 or via email to bcyouse@erols.com. Multi-Man Publishing will continue to assist the Editor of *The GENERAL* and all articles submitted for one publication will be considered for use in the other.

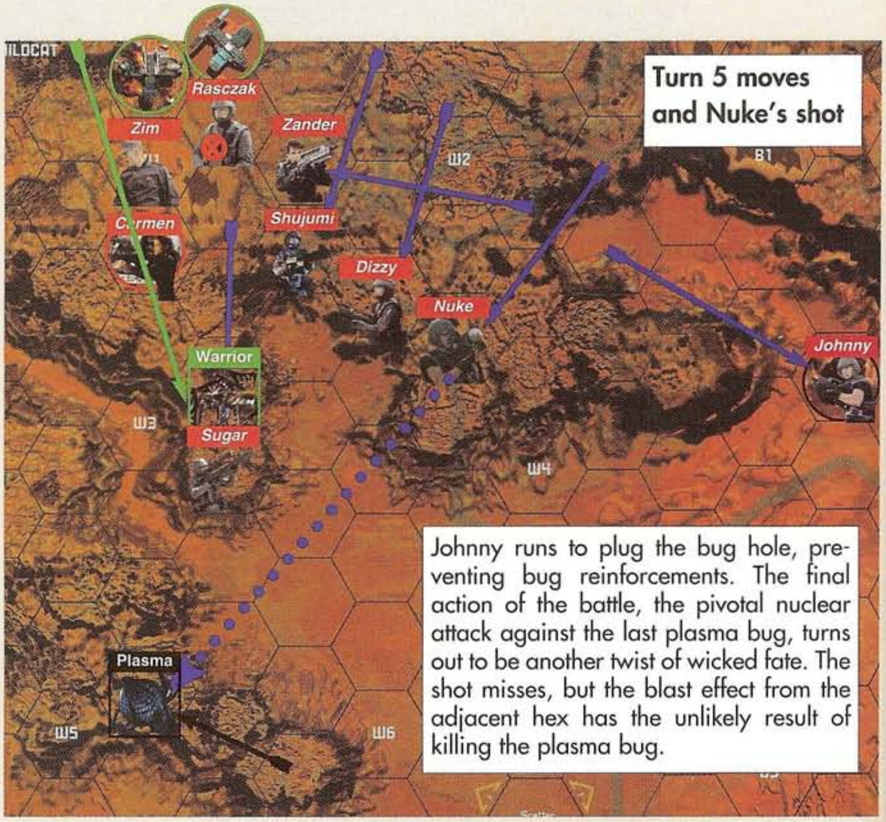
TEAM TOURNAMENT STANDINGS

1. **Pillage, Then Burn:** S. Pfeiffer AOR 0, D. Gantt BRI 8, Emery UPF 8, E. Anderson PXB 0=8 [212]
2. **Men in Black:** Byron Stingley TPS 6, Michael Arrighi WTP 0, Joe Bellas HCR 7, Jeffrey Otto RTG 0=13 [91]
3. **Team Black Bear:** A. Lewis MOV 2, C. Lewis PGF 0, S. Cousins RKL 8, P. Mason AOR 2=12 [291]
4. **St. Paul's Rejects:** J. Pack GSR 2, M. Backstrom HWD 1, S. Packwood 776 6, N. Pack RBN 1=10 [261]
5. **Team Doily:** D. Greenwood BKN 0, S. Greenwood F15 7, R. Pfeiffer ADV 0, B. Cleary FBS 2=9 [158]
6. **Team Delaware:** T. Hitchings WAS 8, K. Hitchings TYX 0, V. Meconi GBG 0, W. Rohrbeck WSM 1=9 [99]
7. **South Jersey Game Knights I:** T. DeMarco ADV 0, D. Wagner BRI 0, T. Stokes CMS 2, K. Welsh SQL 6=8 [191]
8. **Reservoir Dogs:** J. Tracy ASL 1, M. Fagan DUN 7, P. Barcafer BRI 0, J. Doughan BKN 0=8 [161]
9. **Bunker Boys II:** D. Metzger WSM 7, D. Metzger HWD 0, M. Metzger WZQ 0, P. Maloney EIA 0=7 [166]
10. **Bunker Boys I:** M. Bailey SLB 0, P. Gaberson HRC 0, J. Metzger ACV 0, D. Metzger A5A 7=7 [94]
11. **Missouri Gamers:** G. Moss ACQ 1, R. Schilb FSE 6, J. Jacobs BRI 0, K. Small VIP 0=7 [66]
12. **JOMMS:** J. Ohlinger CDT 1, J. Lux ACQ 0, K. Rothstein ABN 1, M. May AOR 4=6 [294]
13. **AHIKS Europe:** M. Cowles BKN 0, T. Oleson ANZ 6, N. Frydas W&P 0, H. Gratz GBL 0=6 [101]
14. **Bent Bayonets:** A. Kaplan TRC 0, C. Stapp WAS 0, D. Zimmerman GBG 0, K. McCarthy B91 6=6 [75]
15. **Koleszar Plot:** M. Koleszar AUC 1, L. Koleszar MOV 2, J. Koleszar GUE 0, S. Koleszar TTN 2=5 [166]
16. **Old Guard:** T. Scharmark B81 0, R. Heller B91 1, J. Beard AFK 2, R. Beyma TRC 2=5 [72]
17. **Game Knights:** B. Crenshaw AOR 1, S. Crenshaw MOV 1, C. Lopez RBN 2, R. Sands HWB 0=4 [310]
18. **Body Bags:** S. Koehler DIP 0, R. Carpenter DUN 0, A. Kutzy HWD 1, E. Rothenheber TTN 3=4 [224]
19. **Fellowship of the Plaque:** K. Wojtasczyk TT2 0, J. Levine HWB 0, T. Dunning RBN 4, N. Anner BRI 0=4 [211]
20. **Hitchhikers:** L. York WSM 1, J. Schufeldt ACV 0, T. Vanderpluym 830 3, S. Scott MMS 0=4 [104]

★★★★★

64 teams took part. The scores for the remaining teams ranged from 0 to 3 points. The number of entrants [in brackets] served as a tie breaker. Players who failed to pre-register automatically scored 0 regardless of standing in individual event.

out next turn. This was another crucial decision point. J.C. had another option. He could have targeted Nuke at range nine. The odds were low, but then again, so were his odds of getting off two successful shots on the wounded. Nuke will move to a range of six next turn and probably put an end to the game. J.C.'s shot on Nuke at range nine could have ended his biggest threat and give him time to nail the wounded while the MI mounted a rush of the plasma bug with their Moritas. The plasma bug has excellent survival odds against moving men firing Moritas. In all probability, J.C. would get off his shots on the wounded in turns 5 and 6. J.C.'s strategy has been to go for the high-odds shots on the wounded rather than taking out Nuke or using scatter shots to nail some MI, so I wouldn't argue that he should change horses midstream. I mention this option to note that in this scenario, the bugs can deal the MI a very effective blow by threatening Nuke with both plasma bugs simultaneously. Fortunately for J.C., his hopes remain alive as he hits the first wounded target.



Turn 5 moves and Nuke's shot

Johnny runs to plug the bug hole, preventing bug reinforcements. The final action of the battle, the pivotal nuclear attack against the last plasma bug, turns out to be another twist of wicked fate. The shot misses, but the blast effect from the adjacent hex has the unlikely result of killing the plasma bug.

TURN 5

Black Squad moves south to support Nuke and take low-odds shots. If he fails. Johnny plugs the bug hole to prevent reinforcements. Rasczak fails to unjam his weapon. Sugar runs south to get a closer scoped shot. The green warrior moves on Sugar in case both Nuke and the plasma bug miss their targets.

Nuke vs. black plasma bug R6= 5 (miss and scatters). Blast effect: plasma s= 6 (kill).

The game ends instantly with the death of the last plasma bug. The troopers load up in the retrieval boat and fly to safety with no fear of being shot down by a nearby plasma bug. Having saved one VIP, they declare victory.

TROOPER TURN

One last warrior is lingering around the retrieval boat, forcing me to split my troopers again. Johnny closes the black colony bug hole, while everyone who can be spared from guarding the wounded rushes after the plasma bug. It's do or die!

I'm not sure whose luck is worse, mine or J.C.'s: I manage to miss a "sure" shot with the nuke, but J.C. manages to fail a "sure" save after the scatter. How's that for a Hollywood ending?

BUG TURN 5

Not many options for me here. I'll optimize my shot at Carmen, and send my last bug on a suicide run at Sugar.

He missed! Oops, no he didn't. Sigh.

NEUTRAL COMMENTARY

Johnny ran down to occupy the bug hole and stop bug reinforcements. Sugar moved towards the plasma bug to get a better shot, in case the nuclear shot failed. The retrieval boat acted as a nice movement barrier to help shield Nuke as he moved closer. J.C.'s warrior couldn't do much at this moment.

As it turned out, Nuke missed, but as has been the luck of J.C. in this battle, the blast effects on the adjacent plasma bug managed to kill it anyway (only a 17 per cent chance of that misfortune). Chris is saved from having to take desperate shots with his Moritas. The MI cleared the battlefield of plasma bugs and the rescue mission was a success. Troopers and wounded alike piled into the retrieval boat and dusted off.

POST-GAME COMMENTARY

Christopher Lawrence (Troopers)

I think J.C. committed his bugs piecemeal, allowing me to deal with them in small groups rather than as a solid wave of chitin and pincers. Even then, I was very lucky to escape with only one casualty. Had he been able to inflict one or two losses before bringing up his plasma bugs, I would have been hard pressed to defend the VIPs at the end. As it was, it still made for an uncomfortably close battle decided by the last roll. Like I said, I hate plasma bugs.

J.C. Connors (Bugs)

Despite my bugs proving to be little more than cannon fodder, I felt that bug victory was close at hand. Unfortunately, Chris' die rolls bested my own, and always kept victory a turn away. I still feel that my strategy was sound, though there were small problems with it. I severely underestimated the drop ship's cannons, which made my four-bug rush at Nuke a futile attack. If those hoppers had lived to join my rush at the jammed Carmen, I might have been able to take out enough troopers to kill one of the wounded psychics with a warrior.

I never really considered moving a plasma bug to the far high ground areas (the 10-hex high ground piece or the corner of R1) to bombard the green trooper squad. While that might have caused the green troopers to spread out, the vulnerable plasma bug would have quickly become a target for Nuke. With both of my plasma bugs in play until the bitter end, the bugs always had a chance of seizing victory. Chris's Roughnecks won this time, but there are always more bugs waiting for him.

NEUTRAL COMMENTATOR

The aftermath looked bad for the bugs: only Ace and one wounded were killed. However, the result was far closer. J.C. failed to take advantage of Chris' early concentration by getting the plasma bugs to high ground early. Of course, the flip side of that is that J.C. did rush his plasma bugs into good ground for the turn 4-5 situation in which J.C. had a reasonable chance at victory. J.C.'s strategy was solely focused upon the plasma bugs taking out the wounded and doing it in the surest way he could see. There is nothing wrong with that. In fact, had the LOS rules been fully enforced, Nuke might have missed a shot and the battle could have turned out differently. The lesson for the MI is that pillars of smoke can hurt as much as help.

You have to take advantage of situations presented to you. Here, an alternate bug strategy would have had a better chance: take out the MI with scattered plasma shots and keep the plasma bugs far separated so as to necessitate more movement by Nuke to take them both out. Such an approach probably would have left one or both of the wounded alive for a long time. However, it could have given the bugs the numbers advantage they needed to make multiple wave assaults by the warriors more devastating. Furthermore, the two bug holes might have remained open for a longer time, as Nuke would have had to take out the plasma bug threats first. The battle might have dragged on with Nuke and one plasma bug dead and the warriors bugs threatening the wounded while the MI were forced to rush the second plasma bug with Moritas. I prefer this latter approach, particularly when the MI bunch up like Chris did. To me, such would have been a better "combined arms" approach for the bugs. And bugs have lots of arms!

➤➤➤➤➤ *(from pg. 18)*

any successive table so indicated. This may alter the diplomatic stance of one or more powers. Then, continue with the production routine at each colony and the normal sequence of play.

Stage III: Tension. The colonization of planets is almost complete. Powers begin to look elsewhere for room to expand. Clashes and conflicts become common. This stage lasts until the combined population of all powers first reaches or exceeds 1200 million.

As in Stage II, roll dice and consult on the Diplomatic Events Table, but apply a "+2" during stage III.

Stage IV: Empire. There is little space to grow within each power's borders. Conquest is a must. Dreams of "Empire" infect every power's leaders. This stage lasts until the end of the game.

As in Stage II, roll dice and consult on the Diplomatic Events Table, but apply a "+4" during stage IV.

Diplomatic Events Table

(sum of two dice, +2 in Stage III, +4 in Stage IV)

2-8	Peace talks
9	Political Blunder
10-11	Border Dispute
12-13	Limited War
14+	Total War

Peace Talks. If any war currently exists, roll two dice and consult the Peace Talks Table. If no war currently exists, peace continues.

Peace Talks Table

(sum of two dice, +1 per neutral power and +2 if war is limited)

2-5	Failure—War Continues
6	Truce
7+	Peace Treaty

Truce. Hostilities cease. Powers may not attack each other or move forces into star systems that the enemy currently controls or besieges. Star claims are not exchanged. In the next production turn, do not roll for diplomatic events. Instead, peace talks resume. Roll again on Peace Talks Table.

Peace Treaty. Determine which side is the winner by counting success points (see War Success Table). Subtract the loser's points from the winner's to yield the success point differential. Then, look up the peace terms on the Peace Terms Chart.

War Success Table

	Success Pts.
Conquest of:*	
T planet	12
ST planet	8
MT planet w/minerals	6
MT planet	3
Barren, minerals	4
Barren	2
Star with no planets	1
Destruction of:	
Planet Shield, Death Star	4
Advanced Missile Base, Fighter	2
Missile Base, Corvette	1
Scout	1/2

*You receive success points for conquest of planets if the star system was totally conquered.

Peace Terms Chart

(success point differential in parentheses)

Stalemate (0-10): Both sides must evacuate any enemy stars they occupy as soon as possible.

Marginal Victory (11-25): One star among those conquered by the winner is annexed. The ceded star must be the one that is closest to a friendly star (choose randomly if equidistant), regardless of military conquests during the war. If two or more powers are on the victorious side, give the star to the one that you feel contributed most to victory. If no star was conquered, the loser must give away a star anyway. The victor's ships and population must depart any other stars of the defeated power. The loser must do likewise vis-a-vis the stars of the victorious power.

Substantial Victory (26-50). As in marginal victory, except that two stars are annexed. If the victorious side has two powers, each receives one system.

Decisive Victory (51+). Same as above, except that half (fractions rounded up, with a minimum of three) of conquered stars are annexed. In addition, the loser does not evacuate his colonists—they remain as slaves. Planet defenses are destroyed, but factories are confiscated by the winner. If two or more powers were victorious, each gets a roughly equal share of the annexed stars.

Annexation of Stars. Transfer the star card, establishing a new claimant to the planets. Colonists in the annexed system remain in control of the loser, but are evacuated. Transports must be built and all population must leave. No emigration bonus occurs. The industrial output of the annexed planets cannot be spent on any other purpose in this production turn. Planet defenses and factories are destroyed before departure.

Political Blunder. A squabble over some minor issue (the extradition of a criminal, mistreatment of citizens of one power by authorities of the other, excessive import taxes, etc.), cause an incident between two randomly determined powers.

- If the powers are currently enemies in a war, there is no further effect—the war continues.
- If the powers are currently allies in a war, one of them (randomly determined) feels insulted by the other and makes a separate peace, becoming neutral (implement the effects of Stalement on the Peace Terms Chart).
- If one of the powers is at war and the other is neutral, the latter joins the war against the former.
- If both are neutral, the incident forces a clash.

Clash. Each involved power may conduct one raid per turn against any star system of the enemy. Take forces from any one friendly star (a maximum of five ships, including no death stars) and move them towards the target star system. It reaches the destination during the same turn, or the raid cannot be conducted. One or two rounds of combat may be fought (but a planet should not be bombarded or conquered). Then, the raiders are placed in an adjacent hex with their original base as their destination. Keep a tally of the sum of the number of raids conducted by both sides and the number of ships and missile bases destroyed. This is the Tension Number. On the next production turn, just before rolling on the Diplomatic Event Table, roll two dice. If the result is two less than the Tension Number, limited war ensues. If the roll is equal to or one less than the Tension Number, the incident continues. If the result is greater, the incident ends.

During a clash, raids should be conducted whenever the power is able. However, you are free not to conduct a raid if it would be suicidal. You should use each side to its best interest. For instance, a weak power may perceive that it is to its advantage to keep the Tension Number low—even to the point of not firing back at enemy raiders—to avoid the risk of an escalation to war. Only light reinforcements should be sent to the area.

Border Dispute. A randomly determined power claims that a border star of another power (also randomly determined) is its God-given, manifest destiny, historical and universal real estate.

- If the powers are currently enemies in a war, the war continues.
- If the powers are currently allies in a war, the owner of the disputed star feels disappointed with his ally and switches sides, becoming an ally of the former enemy. The former enemies (now allied) must depart any of each other's stars that they may have conquered.
- If one power is at war and the other is neutral, the latter joins the war against the former.
- If both are neutral, a border dispute erupts. Choose at random one border star that the first power is claiming (if there are no border stars due to a lack of common borders, treat this event as a Political Blunder and conduct a clash). The claiming power may attack the disputed star system in an attempt to conquer it, but other enemy stars may not be invaded.

The defender may counterattack in the disputed star, but may not attack other enemy stars. In other words, conflict will be limited to the star system that is the cause of contention. In the next production turn, before diplomatic events, roll two dice, adding two to the result if the star is under the claimant's control (i.e., conquered) and consult the Dispute Resolution Table.

During a border dispute, control of the star system should be fought for vigorously. Moderate reinforcements may be sent to the area.

Dispute Resolution Table

(sum of two dice, +2 if star conquered by attacker)

2-8	Arbitration
9-10	Incident Continues
11+	Limited War Ensues

Arbitration. If the attacker conquered the star, he annexes it. Otherwise the original claimant keeps the star system, while the forces of the attacker must leave during their next movement phase and do not fire upon other ships until then. The incident ends.

Limited War. Determine randomly two powers to be affected.

- If both are already involved in any war (as allies or enemies), there is no effect.
- If one is at war and the other is neutral, the latter joins the war against the former.
- If the two are neutral and a war is already occurring between the other two powers, each neutral will join one of the sides in that war.
- If all powers are neutral, limited war erupts between the two. During limited war, both sides may invade border stars of the enemy, but may not escalate by invading other stars. If the power has an ally, it may attack enemy stars on its ally's border, even if they would not be considered border stars in relation to itself. Allied forces may stack together.

Keep track of losses of bases, shields and ships during a war, as this will be used to determine the peace terms in the event of the signing of a peace treaty.

Total War. Determine randomly two powers to be affected.

- If both are already in a total war (as allies or enemies) no effect.
- If both are already in a limited war (either as allies or as enemies), it becomes total.
- If one power is already at war and the other is neutral, the latter joins the war against the former, and limited war becomes total war.
- If a war already exists between the other two powers, each neutral will join one of the sides in that war, and limited war becomes total war.
- If all powers are neutral, total war erupts between the two determined powers.

During total war there are no limitations. Any enemy star may be invaded. Fight as you see fit.

Keep track of losses of bases, shields and ships during a war, as this will be used to determine the peace terms in the event of the signing of a peace treaty.

Total conquest. If a power is completely annihilated militarily (no free population left during a production turn), the war ends (in relation to the losing power). The victor immediately annexes all the conquered stars (exchange star cards). Any surviving ships of the vanquished are replaced by similar ships of the winner's color. If there are two or three winners, they share the spoils. You may distribute them evenly, or in proportion to each power's contribution to victory, as you see fit. ★

➤➤➤➤➤ *(from p.11)*

rescue. Our intelligence personnel have gathered data on the enemy which is summarized in Table 3. We have substantial probability of facing two or three traps (S Guard cards) between each of our regroups. Every time the enemy reinforces a skirmish, our situation gets tougher. We need to try to keep the odds in our favor by looking for ways to negate the arrival of the many Guard reinforcements (either via location analysis or use of the special abilities of on-site Marines).

TABLE 3

Proportions of Guard Characteristics

No. of Players	S Guard	Rein	Hide	Casualty	Kill	Hold
6	17.1%	37.1%	28.6%	20.0%	25.7%	14.3%
5	19.4	38.7	29.0	19.4	25.8	12.9
4	23.1	42.3	34.6	11.5	23.1	11.5
3	30.0	50.0	45.0	5.0	20.0	5.0
2	27.3	45.5	45.5	9.1	18.2	9.1
1	28.6	47.6	42.9	9.5	19.0	9.5

The table shows that the strongest and weakest characteristics of the Guard vary according to the number of Marines we send to the surface. For instance, in a large-sized rescue attempt, Casualty and Hold characteristics are at a maximum, while the S Guard, Reinforcement and Hide characteristics are minimized. A smaller rescue attempt would involve S Guard and Reinforcement characteristics at their maximum, with Casualty and Hold characteristics minimized.

As you win skirmishes, the *Schenectady* will relay mission support information (Dispatches) to the field leader to assist with your next goal. All Dispatches are usable to call in fire support. We expect that 90 per cent of them will also have additional possible benefits, depending upon the situation and a particular Marine's ability to use the information. As we expect you to be involved in between ten and 18 skirmishes, the actual application of the Dispatches will depend on skirmish circumstances.

One more item before we embark—look over the overall map. It shows the direct route and flanking routes. As you will note from studying the map, some locations are favorable while others are to be avoided, especially if our resources are waning. However, realize that there is always a chance we'll hit unexpected terrain. Our experts have identified 32 additional sites we may be forced to encounter, depending on luck, the resistance we face, and so on. My advice is to view this map with a skeptical eye. Marine intelligence may not be keeping up with current events, pals. Our basic expectation should be that our map will be wrong around half of the time (more so on the flank routes). We can also expect the Guard (which knows this planet much better than us) to try to force us into unfavorable corners.

This concludes my general overview of the critical factors in this rescue attempt. Once you hit the surface, boys and girls, everything will depend on what leads to each skirmish, the number and timing of regroups and the interaction of the on-site commanding officer with the troops. Are you ready? I can't heeeeeeaaaar you! GOOD! We have a mission to accomplish. For honor, for Earth, for the Princess. Move out. Move! Move! Move!

★

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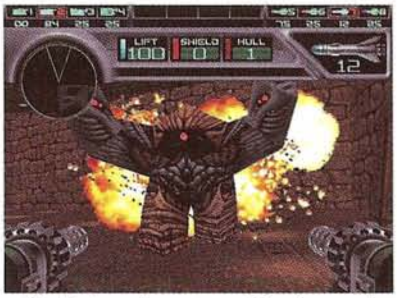

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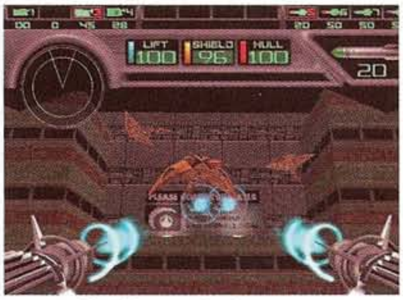

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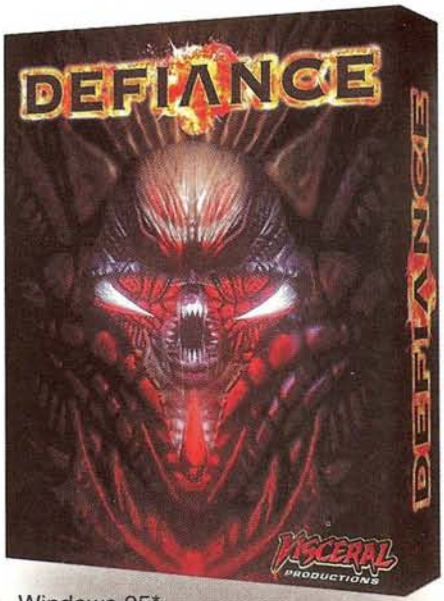

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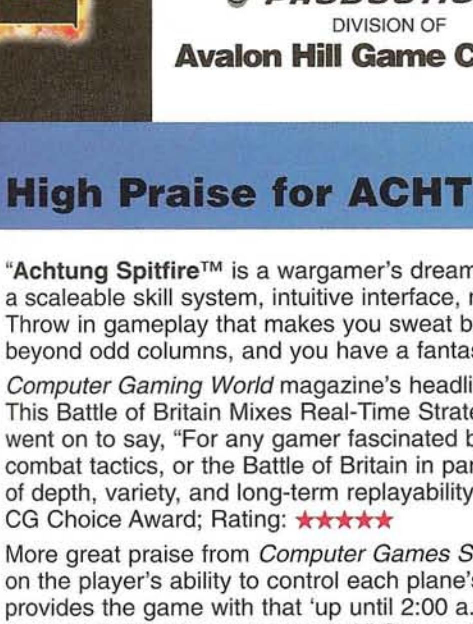

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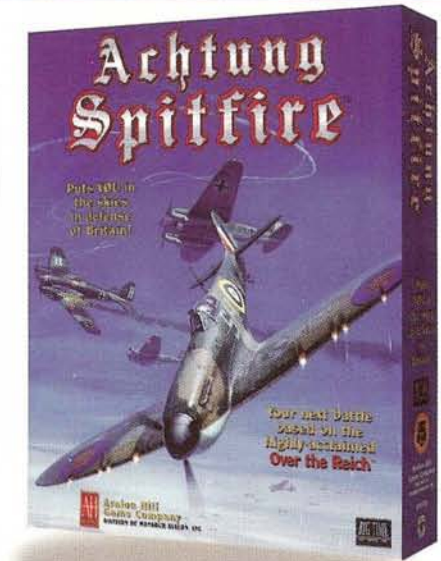
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TEN TACTICS AND TIPS FOR

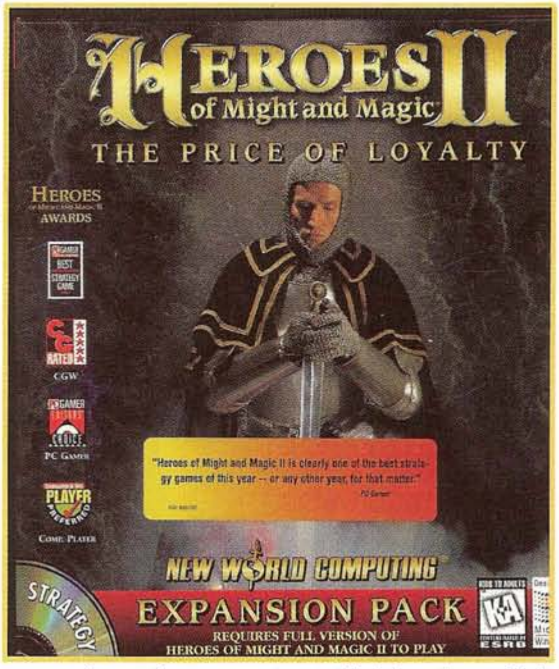
Heroes of Might & Magic II

By Rick Moscatello

You know a game is good when the market supports release of a sequel, and that sequel has an extended life span on the hard drive of game testers. Rick provides more of his topnotch advice for Heroes addicts.—SKT

1. THE LONG MARCH

The first thing to know is that heroes have movement points, but armies "stacked" with a hero do not. This means that a hero can march his full movement, transfer his army to another hero, and that hero can move his full movement, and transfer repeatedly. This is critical in the early parts of the game, where it makes sense to hire a "gopher" hero, especially Barbarians, who tend to move faster than other heroes, to ferry armies out to the generals in the field. Hire the gopher at the beginning of the week when you get reinforcements for your armies, and make sure the field general is one turn's movement away. Then the gopher can resupply the general, who can immediately use the larger army. This is far superior to marching the general back to the castle, hiring the army, and marching the general out—a two turn delay that can be critical. Even if you never get any other use out of the gopher, he can at least carry any cursed items you accidentally pick up.


HEROES II
of Might and Magic
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HEROES of Might and Magic II AWARDS
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2. YOU MUST HAVE GOLD

Time and again, you'll find yourself wishing you had more gold. You will never, ever, wish your hero was just one level higher. So, when you get the choice of "gold or experience" from those chests lying all over the place, take the gold. In the same vein, whenever you capture a castle, make sure to give it a statue, which increases income by 250 gold—build one, and it pays for itself in five days! Getting as many Marketplaces as you can stomach is also a good idea, since you will often find yourself with no gold, but plenty of resources like wood and ore. Upgrade your villages to castles (again, they pay for themselves in about a week).

3. DEFENSIVE CASTLE TRICKS

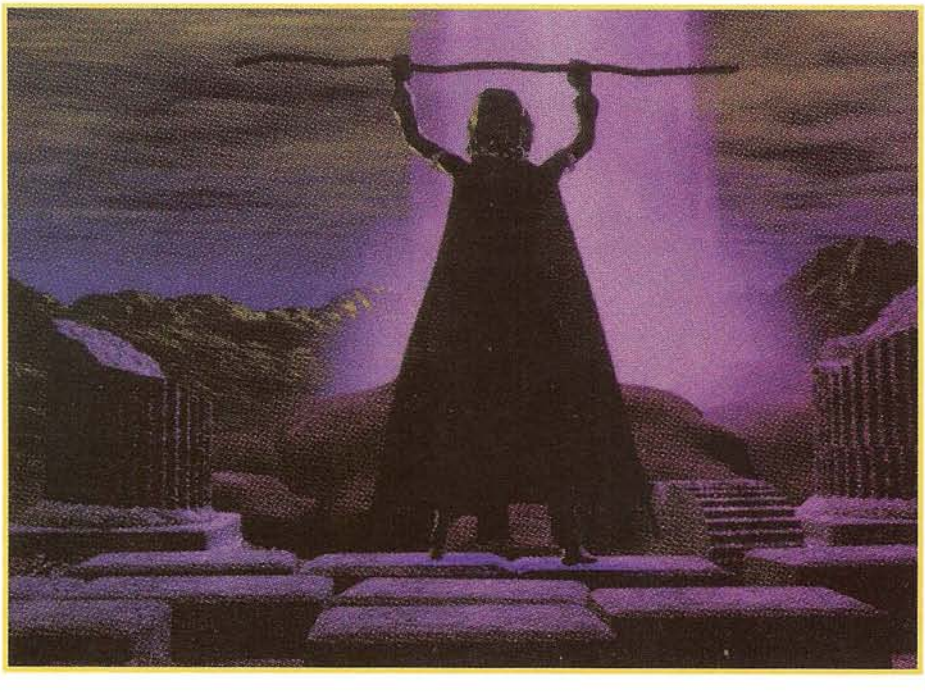
Never buy a "captain of the guard" for your castle—his stats are crummy, and you'll find yourself fighting him when you take the castle back. Hire a hero instead, because the hero will have better stats and come with a minute army. When defending a castle, prolong the battle as long as possible—the catapult that comes with your castle (or more of them, if you can afford it) will turn the tide eventually. Every enemy unit killed is one less that you'll need to kill to retake the castle. Try not to leave available recruits in your castle, since the computer will hire them if it wins. If you are worried about morale loss from mixing forces, you can always assure that the lower slots are units of whatever type you want. Select the unit, a band of five archers, for example, then select an empty slot. A screen will come up asking how many archers to put in the empty slot (say one). Not only does this give you complete control over what forces defend the castle, you can often trick the computer into blasting a minimal unit—there is nothing like watching one archer catch a 125-point lightning bolt, while eight Crusaders stand nearby. The computer loves range units, making them ideal for this tactic.

4. OFFENSIVE CASTLE TRICKS

You want to take castles quickly. That usually means lots of air units and spellcasting. All other things being equal, a really powerful non-spellcaster can defend against a mediocre spellcaster. Divide your air units into two groups, so you can close with the rangestrikers as fast as possible. Range unit combat abilities are halved in close combat, so this is an excellent method of "halving" an opponent's forces.

5. CATCHING THAT ELUSIVE HERO

Unfortunately, computer heroes will run away when losing, especially when they have nifty magical items. However, a hero can't run away when he's in a castle (curiously, castles are not the place to be when your army is weak). So, if the hero you want to catch has a decent army under him, vacate your castle, leaving behind few, if any, forces to recruit, and let him take it. Then counterstrike, and you catch yourself a nice hero, as well as his bag of nifty magic items.



6. ENDLESS ARMAGEDDON

Chain Lightning, Armageddon and a small family of other spells can devastate an army. A good trick for thinning out a large hostile army near one of your castles is as follows. Get a good mage and give him an army either with just enough in it to survive a mass damage spell, or with magic-resistant creatures like dwarves or dragons. In the case of dwarves, fill all the slots with dwarves, since their 25 per cent magic resistance applies to each slot/stack (not each dwarf). March your mage out and attack. Cast your Armageddon spell, then select "surrender." Pay the price, which should be low because you have such a small army. Then rehire the mage at the nearby castle, and repeat. In the case of Chain Lightning, you want a fast creature like a Phoenix. March in, cast Chain Lightning, retreat, and repeat. This is a little expensive, but an excellent method for draining away the gigantic forces that computer opponents accumulate.

7. BLITZ

The main computer advantage is that its castles produce units more quickly than yours. If your castle produces four Hydras per week, that same castle, when controlled by the computer, will produce about six. The same goes for every creature produced at the castle (depending on selected skill level). Combined with the gold bonus that computer players get, the computer can easily overwhelm you in no time at all. This means that the best strategy in this game is different than, for example, in *MASTER OF ORION* where you build up your forces, invest resources wisely, and then overwhelm the computer. In *HEROES*, you need to push out immediately, and take castles from the computer before it produces anything. Try to let the computer take a neutral castle, and then capture the castle at the beginning of the week—you'll get to take advantage of his production before he gets a chance to recruit. If you have two castles and he has two castles, you run the risk of being deluged with hostile forces. Make it a three-to-one situation as quickly as possible. Another plan is to let the computer players attack each other. Once they've exhausted their oversized armies, you'll have a much easier time.

8. THOSE AWFUL UNDEAD

If an army has one undead unit in it, morale gets crushed, unless it is composed entirely of undead. This means that when you are about to lose an undead castle, you should keep some undead units available for recruitment. The computer invariably hires them, giving him an unhappy army, making your retaliation much easier. Most undead are slow and squishy. Thus, letting the computer buy undead is irresistibly effective. Bone Dragons are the exception—never "let" the computer buy these.

9. WIZARDS RULE

You want spellcasters. If you are forced to buy a non-spellcaster, you may as well blow the 500 gold to give him a spell book, except perhaps for the first week or two of the game. Once you get a decent mix of second-level spells, a spellcaster (non-Knight, non-Barbarian) has so much fire-

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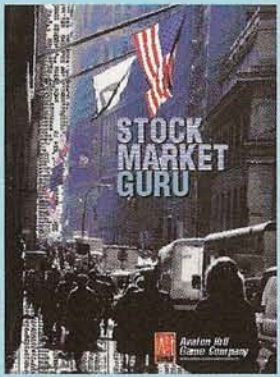

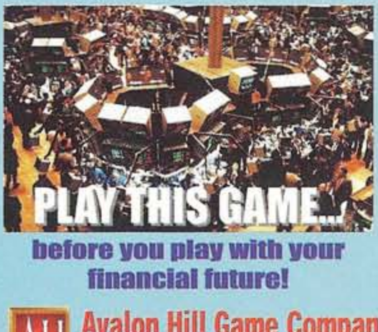

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power that a non-spellcaster or neutral army has no chance of winning without taking outrageous casualties.

10. QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY

A horde of weak creatures will get smashed by a small force of decent creatures. No matter what type of castle you have, you are better off saving your gold to get better creatures. A horde of Goblins isn't as good as a few Cyclopes. The following formula can be used to determine the relative value of a given creature: Gold Efficiency = (expected damage) times (attack modifier versus defense value of 6) times (hits) times (defense modifier versus an attack value of 6) divided by (gold cost to hire). The modifiers versus attack and defense are given on page 55, namely, a ten per cent bonus when you are above the number, and a five per cent penalty when below. For example, for a creature with an attack of 7, its attack modifier would be 1.1.

Attack Skill
Defense Skill
Spell Power
Knowledge
9
8
1
1
Pathfinding
Archery
Navigation
Leadership
Logistics
Advanced
Basic
Basic
Expert
Basic

Although tnis formula doesn't take into account special abilities or speed, it gives an appropriate weight to the value of hit points—creatures with high hits have tremendous combat usefulness, because they heal instantly at the end of each battle. Clever players quickly maneuver their creatures in a way to make special abilities useless. Speed is generally only an issue for the player who has the one fastest creature in the battle, since getting that all-important first spell off is about all that speed accomplishes. Having high hit points is the best defense against spells. The expected damage for archers that shoot twice is doubled, naturally, and the expected damage for double-attackers like wolves and Paladins was increased, for purposes of this calculation by 50 per cent. It probably should be a bit more than that for Paladins, and a good player will try to get something else to attack the wolves' target first, so the target won't be able to counterstrike against the wolves' low defense.

As you use this formula on the castle creatures, some trends pop up. Let's look at the GE of the Knight's creatures:

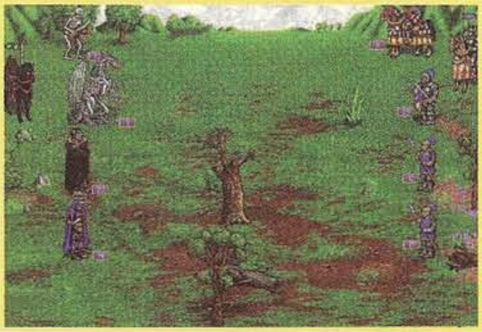
Peasant	0.019
Archer	0.111
Ranger	0.166
Pikeman	0.286
Veteran Pikeman	0.306
Swordsman	0.633
Master Swordsman	0.633
Cavalry	1.210
Champion	1.290
Paladin	3.656
Crusader	2.850

Note how the gold efficiency of the Crusader is below that of Paladin—the Crusader's small increase in hits is hardly worth the nearly double cost. Similarly, the Master Swordsman isn't better, on a gold efficiency basis, than the Swordsman. Still, the "high end" creatures have much greater efficiency than the ones on the low end. As we shall see, the GE of a peasant is the lowest in the game—you simply cannot win using only peasants.

Let's look at the Sorceress:

Sprite	0.032
Dwarf	0.270
Battle Dwarf	0.240
Elf	0.189
Grand Elf	0.214
Druid	0.460
Greater Druid	0.470
Unicorn	1.350
Phoenix	3.840

Here is one case where not taking speed into account might be misleading, since the Battle Dwarf is twice as fast the "basic" dwarf. Still, this won't be an issue in a fight where most things fly or where there are no rangestrikers. Rangestriking is something that is valuable against some neutral forces (i.e., slow, non-rangestriking) and nearly useless elsewhere. The ratings here are considerably lower than for the Knight—once the Knight gets into close combat, much of the value of the Sorceress' units drop. Comparing GE between Phoenix and Sprite, one Phoenix will smash 50 Sprites, even though they have the same gold value.



Let's look at the Wizard:

Halfling	0.054
Boar	0.214
Iron Golem	0.513
Steel Golem	0.594
Roc	0.693
Mage	0.630
Archmage	0.704
Giant	3.825
Titan	3.840

The Wizard is even a better deal than the Knight. Because the Golems are so efficient, you certainly get a better deal on your upgrades here than with the Knight's forces. Note that 10,000 gold worth of Titans (two of them) will be a fairly even match for five Giants (10,000 gold worth of Giants), at least in a straight slugfest.

The Barbarian has some of the toughest units, but let's see if they are efficient purchases:

Goblin	0.048
Orc	0.120
Orc Chief	0.204
Wolf	0.360
Ogre	0.792
Ogre Lord	0.842
Troll	0.500
War Troll	0.576
Cyclops	3.533

As anyone who's played the game enough can tell you, Trolls are usually not a good bet, and massed wolves and ogres can do a number on units that have the same gold cost because they are more efficient. Doing the math, a 300 gold-point Ogre will expect to beat a 300 gold-point Master Swordsman in 6 attacks whereas the Master Swordsman won't kill the Ogre unless he gets 7 attacks. Comparing the gold efficiencies, the Ogre wins around 56 per cent of the time—while the Swordsman's speed can be the winning factor, there's no reason to expect the Swordsman to get his seventh hit before each has taken his sixth hit—the Ogre must do worse than average for the Swordsman to win. The Cyclops has the second lowest efficiency rating of the "top" units (ahead of the Crusader), but it is also the easiest to get.

Now let's see what a joke the Necromancers are:

Skeleton	0.084
Zombie	0.143
Mutant Zombie	0.143
Mummy	0.350
Royal Mummy	0.350
Vampire	0.430
Vampire Lord	0.440
Lich	0.430
Power Lich	0.520
Bone Dragon	6.037

Yes, Necromancers have the best wimp creature: Skeletons are much more efficient than Peasants or Goblins. Yet, all the stuff in the middle is pretty lame, more so when you consider how slow everything is—speed is a more significant factor when *nothing* is fast. Mercifully, the Bone Dragon is both efficient and relatively easy to get. Still, the Necromancer is a vulnerable castle, triply so when the anti-undead spells are available.

Finally, we look at Dragons:

Centaur	0.053
Gargoyle	0.177
Griffon	0.333
Minotaur	0.938
Minotaur King	0.965
Hydra	1.160
Dragon	5.200
Red Dragon	6.140
Black Dragon	7.080

Warlock is easily the strongest castle type—a few Dragons can destroy most armies, even when lead by a neophyte Knight. While gathering the resources to produce Minotaurs can be tough, they are often overlooked as a "boring" creature. Even in low numbers, they have sufficient speed and firepower to defeat moderate groups of smaller creatures. Only Knights have a better "second-best" creature, and it takes awhile for the Knight castle to get them.

Finally, we come to the neutral creatures. Looking at their GE is a bit misleading, since their best value is in the early game, where an influx of even weak creatures, regardless of efficiency, can be a boon. Rogues have a respectable rating of 0.060, which puts them ahead of everything but Skeletons. Nomads have a nice 0.385, not enough to make them critical except when none of the medium creatures are available. Genies have a massive 3.096 rating—no wonder that a few of these at the beginning of the game can cause an easy win. Medusas have a rating of 0.773, which makes them a fine complement to an otherwise lackluster force. Neutral creatures almost always bring morale down, so you should avoid them when you are producing better creatures in your castle.

In general, the top creature for each castle is a far better "buy" than the lower creatures. Each category of creature is usually an improvement over the previous. Whether playing against the computer or other players, if you get access to the top creature before your opponents, you should press your advantage as quickly as possible.

LAGNIAPPE

Down here in New Orleans, we have a fine tradition of "lagniappe," which basically means giving just a little more than promised. So, even though I promised ten tips for playing *HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC II*, here's a secondary skills cheat sheet. Whenever a hero goes up a level, you get a choice of two skills; if you just can't tell what to pick, use this alphabetized list to pick the skill with the higher rating:

Archery	7
Ballistics	9
Diplomacy	1
Eagle Eye	3
Estates	14
Leadership	12
Logistics	13
Luck	10
Mysticism	5
Navigation	4
Necromancy	6
Pathfinding	8
Scouting	2
Wisdom	11

Diplomacy is only a good skill if you can get "Expert" in it. Unfortunately, none of the character classes have a decent chance of doing so until they advance many levels, at which point there won't be enough neutral forces around for it to matter. Unless you feel lucky, you should avoid it.

Scouting is totally useless in the end game, because you can always see any area that you've "cleared" anyway.

Eagle Eye can be a lifesaver if you are getting hit with a powerful spell (the fact that Eagle Eye will teach it to you after the battle, ten per cent of the time or so, is pretty dubious). If you are winning, you don't need it, and if you are losing, you won't have an army to take advantage of the spell.

Navigation is nice, but 95 per cent of what happens in the game takes place on land. You already move quickly at sea even without Navigation, and it is a better deal to hire a Sorceress (who starts with Navigation) to explore that odd sea area.

Mysticism provides a slight increase in the trickle of magic points you get every turn, but this is of little value, as magic wells are common on every map in the game. Even if you have "Expert" Mysticism, you'll find it is a good idea to go back to a castle and sit a turn, even if no wells are around, instead of sitting in the open for a dozen turns waiting to get spell points back.

Necromancy is usually crummy. Free skeletons usually just drag the morale of your army down, unless it is all undead. Only a Necromancer should take Necromancy.

Archery is also a feeble skill, but any bonus to attack is something that you'll be certain to get use out of sooner or later.

Pathfinding is usually worthwhile. Without it, you run the risk of dragging your way through a desert or something. Expert Pathfinding is only a good idea when you are on a map loaded with bad terrain.

A character with decent Ballistics will topple castle walls with surprising speed. This skill is most important in the early game, when you don't have great creatures and spells.

Luck is always nice, since there aren't many battles where you won't want to double the damage that your troops inflict.

Wisdom is mandatory, although sometimes not getting it in the first few turns doesn't hurt. Access to high-level spells can mean the difference between a huge army devastated by Chain Lightning and an easy win for you.

Leadership is much better than Luck, because high morale increases the chance that your army moves again (and gets another chance at being Lucky). A few bonus moves in the early part of the battle can easily turn the tide.

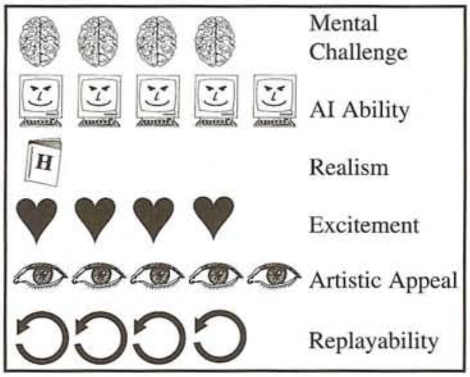
Logistics is incredibly useful, because often you will be forced to use one medium army to defend against three or more large computer armies. Successful use of "interior lines," together with Logistics, will make defense easier. Being able to move quickly on the attack is even more fun.

Estates pays for itself. Whenever you find a hut or something that teaches this wondrous "skill," hire a hero every turn and march it out to learn Estates. After ten turns, the heroes will pay for themselves, and generate a steady income.

★

HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC II by New World Computing

System Requirements: 66 MHz, Win95, 8 mb RAM, 55 mb of HD space and a double-speed CD-ROM. You might get by on a slower computer, but I recommend a faster CD-ROM. New World games are always more about fun than realism. Bonus kudos to New World for making a game that is, as near as I can tell, bug-free.



Rating icons range from one (wretched or ten years behind the state of the industry) to five (top 10% of industry). Four is good, three is passable (middle of the road for the industry) and two is not great (bottom third).

Raiders and Rivets

Nuts-and-Bolts Tips for *THE GREAT WAR AT SEA*

By Charles Bahl

THE GREAT WAR AT SEA by Avalanche Press could have taught Churchill and von Tirpitz a thing or two about their own navies. Prior to the First World War (aka The Great War), both the First Lord of the British Admiralty and the Secretary of the German Navy anticipated an apocalyptic final reckoning between their two formidable fleets—a fight that never took place. Even the battle of Jutland, where the British Grand Fleet and the German High Seas Fleet finally squared off against each other, was far from the decisive naval contest both sides had envisioned. As it turned out, battleships—those huge floating capital expenditures—were just too valuable to risk in mortal combat. As a result, most of the surface naval action of the First World War consisted of small engagements between fleets of limited size. It was a war of raiders and interceptors. *THE GREAT WAR AT SEA (GWAS)* makes this admirably clear. If von Tirpitz had been able to play *GWAS* before the conflict broke out, he might have had a clearer picture of what was coming.

Avalanche Press intends to issue *GWAS* in three volumes that cover essentially all the naval engagements of the First World War, plus a few prewar and hypothetical scenarios as well. The first of these volumes covers the Mediterranean. Its fifty scenarios make a comprehensive survey of this often-overlooked theater of operations. The Mediterranean was the domain of the commerce raider, where small fleets would suddenly appear, sink a few vulnerable merchantmen, and depart as quickly as they had arrived. This kind of naval warfare made for many intriguing strategic situations.

Although *GWAS* has only eight pages of rules and is simple to learn and play, it is quite different from most naval wargames with which the reader is likely to be familiar. The following article attempts to give the beginning player a smattering of advice—strategic or tactical simple-to-remember tips that can be employed to your benefit during a game of *GWAS*, even under the pressure of an incoming broadside salvo. I don't pretend that the list is close to being complete. Although I believe that these tidbits of advice have wide applicability, you will discover that some do not pertain to specific scenarios and that others should be followed at your own peril in certain situations. *Caveat lector.*

CONSERVE YOUR FUEL

First of all, I recommend always playing with the fuel rules. They require a minor bookkeeping effort, but are well worth it for the extra possibilities they add to any scenario. In many scenarios fuel, or the lack thereof, can have a major influence on your strategic decisions. The basic rule of thumb for fuel expenditure is: "Don't move two sea areas in a single turn unless you absolutely must." Probably the worst thing that can happen to a ship, next to being sunk, is running out of fuel. Two-area moves eat up your precious coal at six times the normal per turn rate. If you are careful and have thought far enough ahead, you can always refuel.

Staying in port for a few turns is usually a disaster. Not only is valuable time wasted, but your opponent will know exactly where you are and will either attack you in port or make it difficult for you to escape. Given these rather nasty repercussions, under what circumstances should you make a two-area move? Here are five of the most important reasons to make such a move: 1) you have more fuel on board than you could possibly ever use (unlikely in most scenarios); 2) you must sprint out of a blockaded port; 3) you can escape from a nearby enemy fleet or fleets; 4) you are short on time (for whatever reason); and 5) you can close quickly on an enemy fleet.

At the beginning of the game, while you are making your mission assignments, assess your fuel needs. Try to set up an overall strategic fuel plan. This is easy for such missions as transport and bombardment, since the routes for these missions must be preset before the game begins. But it is even possible to get a good idea of the fuel allotments for raiding and intercepting fleets. The time used to carefully assess your fuel requirements will be time well spent.

SEARCHING FOR MERCHANTMEN

If you are playing with the fuel rules, you can make the most efficient use of your coal by expending only a single movement factor per turn when rolling on the Merchant Location Table (MLT). This is because the table is pegged for a higher rate of return when using one movement factor to search. For example, on the level-four density column, you will average .66 merchantmen sunk per fuel point when you expend one movement factor, as opposed to only .19 sunk when you expend two movement factors.

Do not, however, follow this conservative approach blindly. It obviously does not apply to level-one density, since no merchantmen can be sunk when expending only a single movement factor on the level-one column. Also, it does not apply when time is a crucial ingredient to your success or failure. The MLT is obviously set up so that you can risk more fuel in order to speed the acquisition of victory points (VPs). If you are short on time, you must expend extra fuel in order to scrounge up the required VPs before the scenario's end. As in all things, assess your goals and your chances of achieving them. If you can afford to be profligate with fuel, by all means fire up the boilers.

DON'T SEEK BATTLE

I'm sure you don't want to hear this. You purchased *GWAS*, after all, for no other reason than to experience the sheer joy of lobbing a few hundred shells at enemy battlewagons. However, discretion is the better part of valor. Sailing in harm's way is a very unsure enterprise, and the results are often unexpected. In fact, the tactical combat rules of *GWAS* emphasize just how uncertain a naval battle really is. In addition, you may not be able to bring your enemy to battle in the first place. Finding an opposing fleet is difficult enough. Preventing it from running away is also tough. Therefore, if at all possible, seek victory by some means other than battle. Put all you efforts into seeking combat only if there is no other way for you to beat your opponent.

Avoiding battle is even plausible in those scenarios where you are cast in the role of an interceptor with a strong fleet at your disposal. As the intercepting player, you might take it for granted that victory lies exclusively in destroying the other fleet (carefully check the victory conditions). There are usually several ways for the intercepting player to win. You might get a victory simply by thwarting your opponent's plans. You might be able, for example, to deflect an enemy convoy off course or frustrate a coastal bombardment. Assess your options. Winning without fighting should at least be given a second look.

FLEE A BATTLE

You probably don't want to hear this either. Having previously said that you should only seek out battle for a very good, if not a game-winning, reason, you should also be ready to escape from a battle in which you are already embroiled. Ninety-pound weaklings, who stick around to see how their fist fights turn out, spend most of their time in the hospital. The same thing can be said of admirals armed only with tertiary guns. When you are involved in a battle, learn to make an intelligent assessment of your chances. If you are significantly weaker than your opponent, do not be ashamed to run away. It will only get worse if you hang around. If you have the upper hand in the engagement, stay put for the fireworks, and pursue the enemy fleet when he attempts to escape.

The most difficult judgment call comes when your fleet is about equal in strength to that of your opponent. In this case, you might stick around, just to see how the shells fly. Remember that up to five rounds of combat can occur during the tactical phase. That means that you can sustain an incredible amount of damage before you know it. If things start to go badly for you, you may not be able to escape from such a situation with much of a fleet. Keep that in mind any time you feel like firing off your big guns.

Sometimes it is not easy to determine the dominant antagonist in a particular naval battle. As a simple general rule you can sum the victory point values of the ships in your fleet and compare the sum to that of the opposing fleet. Although destroyers are essentially second-strike weapons (*i.e.*, their torpedoes can be fired only after gun damage has already been assessed), they can be quite deadly against unescorted larger ships, especially if two or more destroyers can gang up on each capital ship. In such a circumstance, you can safely double the value of each destroyer when determining whether you should fight or run.

SEARCH THE CHOKE POINTS

As mentioned above, it is always difficult to find an enemy fleet. It is hard enough to find fleets that have predetermined routes assigned to them (*e.g.*, transport and bombardment fleets). Locating a hidden raiding fleet makes you quickly realize just how much water the Black Sea really holds. If you think you can find a raiding fleet by cruising around in the middle of the sea, think again. You can, however, usually narrow the perimeters of your search. Restricted search areas are "choke points." To help you discover a scenario's choke points, you should first consult the victory conditions. By examining the goals that your opponent must reach in order to win, you can often discover exactly where you need to search for his fleets. Here's a very simple example. Let's say your opponent must, in order to win, dispatch a raiding fleet of speed 1 from Constantinople to Batumi. In a scenario that lasts 24 turns, the possible paths that the Central Power fleet can follow will be severely limited, since it will take him at least 22 turns to reach his objective by the shortest possible route. If you cannot send a fleet to intercept him at Batumi, send one to intercept him in an area that he must transit.

Unlike the simple example above, the choke points normally arise from a more complex combination of the various competing goals of each player. However, if you spend some time analyzing the interaction of these goals, the most likely choke points will usually reveal themselves. Choke points are usually found around ports, along shipping routes, along straight-line paths between ports, in restricted waters like straits and the passages between islands, and around vulnerable, on-map fleets.

PLAY YOUR OPPONENT, NOT THE BOARD

One of the tried-and-true commandments of chess is to play the board, not your opponent. *GWAS*, however, turns this classic precept on its ear. Unlike chess, *GWAS* does not provide perfect information about an opponent's disposition of forces. For example, because the location of a raiding force is usually unknown (except at certain key moments during the scenario), the intercepting player is forced to second guess his opponent at every opportunity. If one knows anything about the enemy's style of play, use it to advantage. Is he the type to move quickly and sail directly to his objective, or is he more slow and circuitous, taking a winding course to confuse the issue? Does he normally seek out the higher victory point objectives, or does he go for the cheap ones first?

In Scenario 8, for example, an Allied player with a more "direct" personality may head his raiding fleet straight for Zonguldak and the Central Powers' major sea route between there and Constantinople. A more devious player may head either west or east to the minor sea routes skirting the Black Sea. This is just a single simple example. There are dozens of ways to psyche out your opponent, and in turn, equally many methods by which he can play mind games with you. You risk ignoring the psychological aspects of play to your own detriment. *GWAS* has been devised as a game that rewards deception and counterdeception. ★

? ? QUESTION BOX ? ?
MACHIAVELLI ('95 ed.)

ERRATA FOR 3.2 Control of provinces with their cities for all purposes, including victory, is determined only "at the start of the Spring turn" (not "at the end of any turn"). Change the phrase in each of the four paragraphs of the rule.

4.3 With an enemy in the province and a friendly garrison in the city, is the city in friendly control?
A. No, control of the city goes hand-in-hand with control of the province.

ERRATA for 4.3 To clarify, the fourth bullet should read: "If one player has a garrison unit in the city while another player has a military unit in the city's province, no one controls the province and its city. Remove any control marker that may have been in the area."

8.5 May a player both disband and build in the same province in the same Spring?
A. No. Disbandment takes place after all builds, so that no army may be replaced by a fleet or vice versa. The disbandment rule does not allow you to skip the garrison stage to convert a unit.

9.3 What is "adjacent" when it comes to bribing a garrison? Do you have to be in the same province as the city?
A. No, the bribe may be done from the same province or from the province adjacent to the one containing the city.

10 A rebellion has been brewed inside Genoa city, allowing Florence to force Milan's army in Genoa province to retreat. Can the Milanese army retreat into the city?
A. No, the Milanese army may not retreat into a location held by a rebellion. The rebellion is "relieved" and removed at the end of the turn (after retreats are conducted).

10 If a rebellion unit is placed in a fortified city, does that unit support liberating units advancing into the province?
A. Yes.

14 Do "two strength" special units count as a single support? Can it be cut by a single advance?
A. No, only one of its strength points is cut by a single advance, the other support remains intact.

ERRATA New Rule 16.5 Ducat Borrowing Phase
The Ducat Borrowing Phase contains two steps: First, loans that are due must be repaid or the default penalty is applied. Second, new loans may be borrowed. This sequencing prevents players from taking out new loans to repay loans that are due in the same phase. Note: all money borrowed in a single phase for the same duration is part of the same loan.

ERRATA RULE 17.1 Control of provinces (along with their cities) is transferred at the start of the Spring turn (as stated in 4.3) and is no different when determining conquest of a player. To simplify, rule 17.1 should state "If you control no provinces in your home country at the start of a Spring turn, your are eliminated." Furthermore, "To conquer another player's home country, you must control all provinces in that player's home country at the start of a Spring turn." This change does add the requirement of conquering home provinces containing no cities.

Beach by Beach

Strategy in *BREAKOUT: NORMANDY*

Part 2: Gold, Juno and Sword

By Alan Applebaum

Here we continue Alan's in-depth strategic analysis (Part 1 is found in volume 31, number 6 of The GENERAL*).—SKT*

GOLD BEACH—STRATEGY

According to the Allied plan set forth in Part 1 of this article, the Gold Beach group must take only Bayeux to achieve its "par." Any further progress into Foret, Tilly, Villars or Balleroi should be regarded as a bonus. The German should be content with making the Allies spend two or three impulses taking Bayeux. The German is in good shape, if Balleroi, Tilly and Foret are all adequately defended at the time of the loss of Bayeux. The German should prefer a defense in depth to an all-out defense.

The British should avoid the trap of heading down the Verson-Evercy corridor. Aunay-sur-Odon, a Bocage area, is easily defended, as is Bourguébus (an unbridged river defended by the 12th SS). Any spent British units in Verson and Evercy are vulnerable to counterattack. The Allies cannot afford to enter areas with terrain effects modifiers (TEM) of "+1" without overwhelming force, because a small force risks unit losses to a German counterattack. Any impulses available are better spent elsewhere, as the Verson-Evercy corridor may yield no victory points (VPs), while it is guaranteed to cost a lot of supply and spread the British thin, at least until reinforcements arrive on June 9. An Allied plan to surround Caen is doomed to fail against any competent German defense.

GOLD BEACH—BRITISH TACTICS

The initial amphibious assault here, as described by Maly, seems to be best and almost universal—attack with the three infantry regiments of the 50th Division, even against interdiction. This "+2" attack has a healthy 44 per cent chance to clear the beach against the spent Arromanches CA, and has only a 24 per cent chance of losing the battle. Even an outright loss is no disaster, because only three units are disrupted and 8 Armor still gets to attack at 7-6. As indicated previously, the Advantage should never be used on this beach. With both 8 Armor and 56 Infantry available to exploit, the capture of Bretteville and Villars or Tilly is a real possibility. The beachhead is quite safe from counterattack, even if all amphibious assaults fail, because the German 21 Pz/192, the only serious threat, is two areas away.

If the beach falls on the first assault, the German will presumably move 21 Pz Flak and PAK into Bretteville on Impulse 0. If 8 Armor doesn't move on Allied Impulse 0, the German may blow the Gold-Bretteville and Juno-Bretteville bridges, putting a big crimp in the British plans (but a follow-up assault on Omaha against a fresh 352/xx is more urgent for the Allies). A conservative course of attempting to seize the bridge before entering Bretteville seems best. If 8 Armor overruns Bretteville without seizing the bridge, it has two MF left to advance into Villars or Tilly, but this is a pipe-dream at 5.4 per cent. Even if it works, the German may eventually sprint into Bretteville, cutting off supply to 8 Armor. Stick to clearing Bretteville. The German doesn't have the units to garrison both Villars and Tilly against 56 Infantry. The German's only hope in this position is to blow both bridges out of Bretteville (25 per cent). Therefore, the Allies should use the 8 Armor in a 7-5 attack after a successful seizure of the Gold-Bretteville bridge. The Allies need only contest Bretteville on June 6. If this fails, the German line is too short and easily defended, while both Gold and Juno remain exposed.

Maly is too pessimistic about the difficulty of taking Bayeux once the entire Gold assault force is ashore and fresh. The solution is to slide the Canadians over from Juno, hit Bayeux with air bombardment (and, if that fails, Corps Artillery on June 8) and attack with an attack value (AV) of at least 15 (Armor, two regiments of the 50th, two Canadian regiments, two divisional artillery, two divisional integrity bonuses and air support). If Bayeux is defended with only two spent units, the defense has a defense value (DV) of 7, even with the Gold-Bayeux bridge German-controlled. The attack at 15-7 (+8) has a 76 per cent chance to take the area and a 66 per cent chance for an overrun. British corps artillery may also be available, and an additional British infantry unit or two may join the attack across the river or through Port-en-Bessin.

The British have one other job which cannot be ignored. They must try to force Panzer Lehr to move on June 7. This means that clearing Bretteville may have a higher priority than assaulting Bayeux. If Lehr is permitted to move to Zone C, refit free, and regroup to Aunay sur Odon, the Germans have a much easier time stabilizing the center and improving their supply position significantly.

JUNO BEACH—STRATEGY

Juno is more of a liability than an asset to the British, even when cleared. Its forces can mount only a 12-AV attack into Caen, even in clear weather. It is risky to make a full-division assault from Juno into Bretteville or assist with the capture of Bayeux until Caen is contested, and by then the Germans will probably have garrisoned Tilly and Villars well enough to prevent their capture without a concerted effort by the British on June 8, and probably not even then. It may seem tempting to advance through Bretteville into Verson and Evercy, but as mentioned above, this too is a dangerous trap for the British. In sum, the Canadians are best used to assist the British in taking Bayeux, as described above, or as a backup force to assault Caen, as described in the discussion of Sword beach below.

JUNO BEACH—CANADIAN TACTICS

On June 6, Juno is almost exactly analogous to Gold. The initial wave is a "+3" assault (assuming no successful interdiction) with the three Canadian infantry units. If the assault wins or stalemates but does not clear the beach, 2 CA can assault accompanied by 3 CA/xx, because it is not a Mandatory Assault. Nevertheless, 3 CA/xx is not disrupted if 2 CA loses the assault, because it is not participating in the assault.

The British should not spend an entire impulse capturing Douvres with 2 CA. This unit should be used in Bretteville, unless impossible due to blown bridges. Douvres is best taken from Sword in conjunction with an assault on Caen, as set forth below.

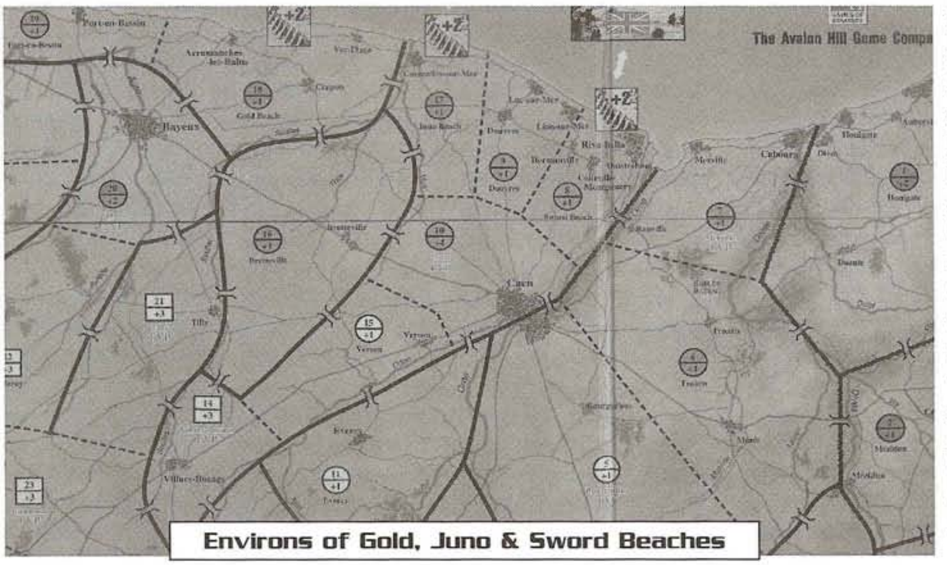
If necessary, the Canadians can be used to assault Caen on June 7, but this should be attempted only if assault from Sword fails or is impossible.

If the German garrisons Tilly and Villars, I suggest that you only try to take them if something has gone wrong with the basic plan and you need them. Perhaps Utah is shut down, or the 12th SS got a weather change and cleared Merville. With only 1

VP to recover under the plan, a prolonged assault on Tilly or Villars may be the answer—but not as late as June 11, when German reinforcements will make these areas invulnerable. If these two areas are equally well defended, you should prefer Villars to stretch the German front.

GERMAN TACTICS—GOLD AND JUNO

In most cases, you need only a simple plan for June 6. If either beach falls on Impulse 0, 21 Pz FLAK and PAK have to go to Bretteville, as Greenwood notes. If neither beach is cleared, the German may decide to gamble on Impulse 0 by attempting to blow both bridges from the beaches into Bretteville, a 26-to-10 chance. If it works, 21 Pz/192 is freed to attack a beach. Bretteville may not fall for a long time. On the other hand, if one bridge remains standing and a British armor unit gets an overrun on Gold or Juno on Impulse 0, Bretteville falls and the two remaining fresh British point units may get to waltz into Tilly, Villars or both. Consistent with my aggressive German/conservative Allies theory, I think the bridge-blowing gamble is worth it, particularly if the Germans have the Advantage to use to re-roll the demolition attempt which failed, or both the Gold and Juno amphibious assaults failed so that the Impulse 0 British attack on either beach is only at 7-6.



Environs of Gold, Juno & Sword Beaches

If Bretteville is contested, blow all the bridges leading out of it. The best time to blow bridges is when the Allies contest, rather than control, an adjacent area. Your odds are high and the Allies cannot repair it on the same impulse in which they clear it (unless they take a Double Impulse). They can't overrun out of the contested area. With the bridges blown from a contested Bretteville to Tilly and Villars, you have a little breathing space and don't have to move Panzer Lehr on the first impulse of June 7.

The idea in Bayeux is delay, not victory. This means a garrison of exactly two units, including 1 FLAK. The German could add more units to the defense at the risk of losing three or more units in an impulse and the total collapse of the central sector. This would depend on whether Panzer Lehr arrived on the scene in good order and in time. As Bayeux is five areas away from Zone C, Panzer Lehr will have a hard time assisting without a weather change. An overrun into empty areas is devastating, but the loss of additional units and multiple Sunset DRMs may be worse. If the Allies are having average luck, the only realistic German defense (absent a weather change) is blowing the bridges into Bayeux and falling back to the Tilly-Balleroi-Foret line.

Start Panzer Lehr in Zone C—don't think about it, just do it. In an ideal world, some or all of Panzer Lehr can be moved to Zone D on June 7, refitted free, and regrouped into Aunay sur Odon that night. Yet, more often than not, Bretteville will fall on June 6 or early on June 7, and most or all of Lehr will have to march the "Trail of Tears" in clear weather from Zone C through Thury-Harcourt, Aunay, Villars and Tilly. There is nothing Lehr can do from Zone B that can't be done better by "Big Black"—the 12th SS and its friends. I would not follow Greenwood's suggestion to move Lehr Flak ahead of the rest of the group to provide a screen against air interdiction on the following turn. This uses an impulse, and may require a supply depot all to itself to refit, just to reduce the air interdictions in one area by 50 per cent.

Greenwood's suggestion of moving disrupted units off board for a free refit is somewhat dubious, as well. If the unit is disrupted on June 7, it regroups to a zone on the night of June 7, becomes spent on the night of June 8, becomes fresh on the night of June 9, and can move back to the action on June 10 (subject to air interdiction). Having moved, it is spent and won't be fresh in its new position until dawn on June 11. Assuming the Germans can't afford to refit the unit with a depot, they can surely find a better use for a disrupted unit than putting it totally out of action for three full days. The "Free Refit" substantially benefits only those units which move from zone to zone or fail an assault out of a zone.

The German faces an excruciating decision when, on the first impulse of June 7, Bretteville has fallen to the British, either Tilly or Villars are vacant, the Omaha-Trévières bridge is not blown, and the Germans own the Montebourg-Ste. Mère-Eglise bridge. If the German moves Panzer Lehr, the Americans may clear Ste. Mére or overrun Omaha and Trévières while scoring a "hat trick." On the other hand, not covering Tilly and Villars is totally suicidal, because the British will pour through the gap. To avoid this dilemma, if Bretteville is contested or lost on June 6, the German should move 30 Infantry and 752 Infantry from Coutances as far toward Caumont as possible on June 6, from which they can regroup into Tilly and Villars. If they get disrupted along the way, they may provide just enough defense to prevent the British from taking Tilly or Villars on the first impulse of June 7.

SWORD BEACH—STRATEGY

The Sword assault force provides the British with their best offensive group—14 AV after the Artillery lands. The Sword group is charged with the tasks of taking Merville and contesting Caen. Although Merville is an easy prize on June 7 (assuming the Allies won the amphibious assault on Sword), priority should be given to a maximum assault on Caen. Until Caen is contested, both Sword and Juno remain vulnerable to German counterattacks. British advances past Merville should be viewed with suspicion, despite the possibility of achieving a breakout. The 12th SS and the Zone A reinforcements on June 8 and 9, along with the Le Havre Battery, are more than adequate to defend against any advance beyond Troarn, while threatening to counterattack.

SWORD—BRITISH TACTICS

Sword, like Omaha, is not favored to fall on June 6. The stakes are high, because Caen may become impossible to contest, if the Germans have an extra day to prepare. Also, the British paratroopers in Merville start to become vulnerable if they can't be reinforced from Sword. The longer Caen is uncontested, the greater the danger of a weather change leading to a devastating German counterattack on Sword or Juno, with bombardment support by 21 Pz/xx out of Caen.

Assuming that both German units on Sword are spent by bombardment, but the Merville artillery remains fresh following the 3-3 attack by one of the British paratroopers, the Allies should send all of their available units into the amphibious assault. If all six units survive coastal interdiction, the 13-8 assault yields a solid 44 per cent chance to clear the beach of two spent units (as opposed to a 34 per cent chance with the Ranger left behind). If a couple of units are spent or disrupted by German coastal fire and the assault becomes closer to even money, the extra unit is very significant. An exploiting Ranger lacks the required MF to advance into Merville against a fresh unit anyway, and capturing Douvres is of minimal importance at this stage. Leaving an infantry unit behind is even worse, because it reduces the initial assault by two AV. A second wave beach assault is unattractive here, because the spent Oustreham CA defends at 6 DV even without the fortification bonus.

If the Merville CA is spent or disrupted by the British paratroops during the night of June 5/6, it's a closer question whether to assault the beach with all units, because a Ranger can now exploit into Merville if Sword is cleared. Nonetheless, I still favor the conservative approach. Taking Merville on June 6 is good but not necessary. You can't really exploit beyond Merville (usually a bad idea anyway) until you contest Caen, because Sword will be too vulnerable, and the Sword force is the best British force to contest Caen. Merville can wait as long as German artillery attacks are not weakening the paratroops to the point where they may be driven out or destroyed. The German cannot afford to reinforce Merville significantly because of the low TEM.

As long as you win the assault, all Sword units will be fresh on June 7, because the Germans have no artillery in range. Make sure 3/xx gets ashore on June 6. Very early on June 7, bombard Caen with ETF. If one of the German 5-6-5 units remains fresh (as probable), Caen defends with at least 10 DV. You don't have the time or resources at this point to capture Caen. Overrun the beach and exploit into Caen. Your attack has only 12 AF, because the Rangers lack the MF to join the overrun attack. You should leave one Ranger fresh on Sword for defensive purposes. The other Ranger can enter Douvres or, if the Merville CA is spent, attack there. As the attack into Caen is only "+2" or "+1," you may lose—be prepared to use the Advantage. If you assault Caen before Omaha, as I recommend, you can regain the Advantage via the "hat trick." If the British lose the assault on Caen and lose the re-roll, you are in a fair amount of trouble, but could still be saved by an assault from Juno. If you successfully contest Caen, you are right on schedule.

After the ETF bombardment, I disagree with Maly's suggestion to bombard a fresh 5-6-5 unit in Caen with the air unit or 3 CA/xx prior to the assault. The air unit will probably fail in Caen and is best used against Bayeux, while 3 CA/xx will fail 44 per cent of the time and uses an impulse. If the Germans already had the Advantage, however, a "conservative" extra round of prep fire is reasonable.

If ETF flipped all units in Caen (a 34 per cent chance against three fresh and no spent units—the most common defense), life is good. The defense of Caen is reduced to seven and cannot be improved to more than eight. Moreover, you can now attack with the Rangers after overrunning Sword, and the German can only absorb eight steps. Your threatened 14-7 attack has a 34 per cent chance to take Caen, virtually guaranteeing victory in the game. The German must reinforce. As a little added bonus, the 27 Armor now has enough MF to overrun Sword, pass through Douvres and join the overrun assault on Caen. If you like, a unit can peel off to assault Merville following the Sword overrun, saving an impulse. If the German leaves you a 20-25 per cent chance to take Caen with a double impulse, you should try it, but realize that failure means that Bayeux and Merville (both vital) will be safe for at least one more day and possibly two.

Once you have contested Caen, follow Maly's advice and regroup all but three units out of Caen. If you don't have Douvres, you may have to leave your armor unit in Caen to prevent German armor from moving out of Caen through Douvres onto a beach. Go back to Sword and take Merville on June 8, or go to Juno to help defend the Bayeux-Bretteville region. It is no tragedy to wait for the June 9 reinforcements to take Merville. Wait until you have overwhelming force, or until all three British paratroopers are fresh for defending the area. By June 9, the British will probably be facing an impenetrable line consisting of Caen, Bocage areas and the Verson-Evercy "trap," so the British June 9 reinforcements won't have much else to do anyway.

This is about all you can ask of the Sword force. An attempted advance through Troarn is fraught with danger. Groups of one, two or even three spent British units are vulnerable to counterattack in low TEM areas. Once the Zone A reinforcements arrive on the evening of June 8, Houlgate is pretty much impenetrable. By June 8, Big Black will be hanging out in Potigny, ready to punish any indiscretion. A breakout to the east is a pipe dream with the Le Havre battery ready to pulverize any British units foolhardy enough to enter Houlgate or Mezidon.

If Sword is still contested on June 6, your best use of air supply is probably Merville, even though you need a "5" to refit a spent unit and a "6" to refit a disrupted unit. Merville, Pont l'Abbe and Ste. Mére are likely to be the only areas on the board containing Allied units which cannot be refit from depots on June 6. The Merville units are the only ones in immediate danger. If the 6/6 glider is the only fresh unit in Merville on June 7, Merville is very vulnerable to bombardment by 711/xx. An average bombardment roll at "+3" leaves Merville with two spent and one D2 unit and a defense of four DV. With only seven steps to absorb, Merville now offers the 12th SS group a 13-4 attack in overcast weather with a 76 per cent chance to clear the area and a 66 per cent chance for an overrun. In either case, Merville will probably be German for the rest of the game.

One could argue that using air supply in a free area is more efficient since each unit has a two-thirds chance to refit on a completely clear day. If this is a concern, the Allies should calculate their expected reserve supply level before attempting air supply to determine if successful air supply will enable them to buy an additional turn. If so, that probably outweighs the chance of strengthening Merville. Later in the game, when you can supply all units from depots, it's probably best to use air supply in free areas only.

SWORD—GERMAN TACTICS

The German's best hope in this sector is to prevent the British from contesting Caen. This is usually hard to do, but every reasonable effort must be made. On June 6, move 21 Pz/125 to Bourguébus and attempt to move 21 Pz/22 there as well. If Sword looks like it will fall on June 6 or 7, retreat 716/736 into Caen if its undisrupted status can be preserved. In any event, 716/736 should leave during the night, to avoid permitting a Sword-Merville "hat trick" on June 7.

The extra fresh units in Caen at the start of June 7 are huge. They just about guarantee that ETF's bombardment on June 7 will not flip both 21 Pz/125 and 21 Pz/192. If you can get five units in Caen fresh on June 7, one of which will absorb three bombardment factors, you are probably going to be defending Caen with 11 or 12 DF even after ETF bombards. Since the British Corps Artillery can't fire on June 7, if the Allies want to further "prep" Caen they have to use either 2 TAF (44 per cent chance to flip another non-Armor unit) or a Divisional Artillery (55 per cent chance). The Allies can't afford to spend impulses on moves with an even chance of success.

Big Black starts in Zone B. If an impulse is available, Big Black may prepare to enter the action by moving its two artillery units and the Flak unit into Potigny on June 7, regrouping to Troarn. This provides plenty of artillery for either bombardment or support of an assault into Merville on June 8 and a partial flak screen for a clear-weather attack. I would send the Flak to Bourguébus to provide cover for units reinforcing Caen only if Caen were seriously threatened. In keeping with the "aggressive German" philosophy, I want the Allies to be constantly worrying about defense. However, beware of attacking Merville while ETF is fresh. It will be Big Black's last significant action of the game if you do. If you clear Merville, it may be worth it. Otherwise, you have weakened the entire sector, possibly permitting the British June 9 reinforcements to destroy large numbers of German units, if not additional VP areas.

If a big assault on Merville is not feasible, the Germans should be careful about reinforcing it. A second unit may help save the area temporarily, but it's a low-priority move. Three units would be offering the British a three-unit kill. You can't really afford the units from Houlgate or Troarn until June 8 or 9. A defense in depth is always better than a loaded defense in a low TEM area that will probably fall anyway.

COMPENSATION FOR THE GERMANS?

Although I believe that the Allies are favored, their advantage is far from overwhelming.

Random Results. The limited number of impulses available makes each Allied failure extremely costly. The randomness of combat results works against the Allies. On virtually every day, at least one high-odds attack will fail and throw the Allied plan off schedule. Finally, large attacks are risky because all units become disrupted if they lose, even if they attacked with overwhelming odds. Small attacks not only risk failure but may provide counterattack targets.

On the other hand, the Allies have more supply and units than they need. Time is their only shortage. One example of this was described in Part 1 in the discussion of Utah Beach. If the Germans reinforce Ste. Mère-Eglise, the US player can't really do much about it directly, but can shift resources away from Utah. Similarly, if a contested Omaha or Sword Beach contains a mixture of fresh and spent Allied units, your best course may be to ignore that beach for the rest of the day rather than make an attack which is not certain to succeed. As long as you have some fresh units, the German is not likely to keep you spent permanently. If you wait until the following day when all your units will be fresh, you not only guarantee success on the beach but may wind up equal to or ahead of where you would have been by attacking the day before, because you get a better overrun. Overruns are to be treasured, because they effectively double the value of the units involved for a turn. The availability of overruns means that the schedule for the Allies is not quite as tight as Greenwood and Maly suggest. If the Allies were planning to take an area on a particular day but merely contest it, they may be able to "catch up" by overrunning it the next day. This has the paradoxical effect of allowing the Allies to shrug off bad luck at certain points in the game.

Weather Changes. This is the biggest German advantage in the game. Even if no weather change actually occurs, the threat of one will seriously limit Allied options, particularly on the early turns. A weather change early on June 7, before Lehr and the 12th SS group have moved, is particularly devastating for the Allies. The Germans have all kinds of delectable options: blowing the British out of Merville, charging through an uncontested Caen onto Juno or Sword, or simply spreading reinforcements across the entire front to stabilize the defense. This weather change would be a good time for the Allies to use the Advantage for a re-roll.

The threat of counterattack means that the Allies must beware of leaving an all-spent force in a low TEM area throughout the game, because losing an area while also losing units is a crushing blow. In many circumstances the extra MF required to enter an area containing a fresh unit may be the only Allied defense against a crushing counterattack. If Caen is uncontested, for example, the Germans can reach Juno and Sword all the way from Zones B and C against spent units, but not against fresh units.

Another good German tactic in cloudy weather is to contest an area behind the Allied front line to hinder Allied re-supply efforts. The British must be wary of overextending their lines with futile forays down the Verson-Evercy corridor or into Troarn. Similarly, US forces must avoid fatally weakening Ste. Mére while attacking Carentan.

Short Days. Short days are another bane of the Allies' existence, but the game mechanics work to somewhat compensate for them. Frustratingly for the Allies, clear and cloudy days alternate beginning on June 8, so that the Allies can generally use their supply advantage on clear days only to lengthen cloudy days.

However, do not lose sight of the fact that the Allies are guaranteed two air bombardments and four additional impulses if the day started on Impulse 0, with only a 3 per cent chance of getting less than five impulses. By restricting themselves to high-odds attacks in the early impulses of the turn, the Allies ensure that they will have accomplished most of their goals for the day, even if it ends early. Also, if a short, clear day occurs, the 2-to-1 Allied supply advantage will enable them to regain some of the lost impulses on a later turn. The Allies should at least plan to use their air bombardments early in the day to take the three-unit kills.

GENERAL TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Greenwood and Maly provided much sound, general advice about how both sides should handle their forces tactically. I would like to make a couple of additional observations, however.

Initiative. BREAKOUT: NORMANDY (BKN) is more similar to Chess than most other wargames in that you do not move all your forces on your turn, but only one group at a time. This establishes an "initiative." The player making threats has the initiative; the player responding to threats does not. The initiative can be held by either player or by neither player (for example, late in a day when neither player has a credible threat. Even though the Allies are always the attacker in the strategic sense, the Germans move first each turn. Yet, the Allies usually begin the game (that is, Impulse 0 of June 6) with the initiative because the German must respond to a threat—namely, British exploitation through Bretteville. If both the Gold and Juno initial assaults fail, the Allies are in danger of losing the initiative. If the follow-up assaults fail as well, the Allies have lost the initiative, because the German can pursue his own agenda with no need to respond to an immediate threat.

The threat creating the initiative need not involve an attack—for example, if the Germans threaten to blow a key bridge and have a high probability of success, the Allies must respond by crossing the bridge immediately, even if they would rather bombard first.

As long as the Allies maintain the initiative, they can keep to the schedule set forth in the "basic plan" and should be able to acquire 10 VP by June 12. Therefore, the German must aim to take the initiative away from the Allies. One of the key advantages of a weather change is that, even if the Germans have no devastating attack to make immediately, they may be able to seize the initiative by making successful bombardments. Sometimes the Germans can force the Allies to activate an area at an inconvenient time. For example, if 101 NW is fresh in Pont l'Abbe on Impulse 0 of June 9, and the German can afford to start the day with a bombardment of the 82nd Airborne contesting the area, the Germans will have the initiative for at least one impulse by threatening to clear the area with an assault. The Allied player, having cleared Ste. Mére, wants to bombard Carentan before launching an assault, but because he must activate Ste. Mére to reinforce Pont l'Abbe, he may be hustled into making an attack on Carentan at much lower odds than he hoped.

As in chess, the best way to seize the initiative is to make a move that accomplishes two tasks—defending against a threat and making its own threat. If your opponent has made a minor threat, you may be able to seize the initiative by ignoring his threat and making a bigger one yourself.

You keep the initiative by generating a threat on each impulse. If possible, you want to create two major threats in one impulse, only one of which your opponent can defend, much like a fork move in Chess.

Allied Mistakes. The most common subtle Allied mistake is becoming distracted from the easiest path to 10 VP and changing priorities. I believe that the "distraction" factor accounted for the fact that the Germans won a majority of the games at AvalonCon'95, even though they "bid" less than 10 VP in most cases.

Another subtle Allied mistake is giving up the Advantage too easily. The most important uses of the Advantage are to prevent your opponent from re-rolling your big rolls or to re-roll his big rolls. The worst use is to re-roll your bad assaults. If you make an unexpected, game-winning overrun, you don't want to lose it to a re-roll. On the other hand, losing a single assault (other than the initial assaults on Omaha and Sword) will rarely merit a re-roll no matter how big the attack was (unless you have an obvious way to regain the Advantage). After the first two days, the Germans should have their forces organized well enough that it will be difficult to regain the Advantage by killing units. Thus, giving the Advantage to the Germans may amount to conceding a VP.

Another tempting Allied mistake is to try to make "efficient" attacks—that is, attacks with less than the maximum force available, in order to save supply and maintain additional threats. In general, this is a losing tactic. The Allies have enough time to accomplish their goals, if they can limit their failed moves to approximately one per day. They do not have enough time to be making marginal moves (55 per cent or even 66 per cent chance of success) on a regular basis. Assaults which are expected to clear an area but fail to do so are extremely expensive, even if the assault "wins," because supply must come from outside the area at two supply points per unit. Also, bridges bordering the contested area cannot be repaired unless adjacent to a friendly area. Throw in that extra unit to raise the odds. The Allies really do have more than they can use. On most days, the Allies will run out of impulses before they have made all reasonable moves. The "saved" units may be wasted. With a "+2" or "+3" Sunset DRM in hand, however, the situation changes and the Allies can shift to making smaller attacks, because they can now afford to lose some assaults.

German Mistakes. Most of the more subtle German mistakes fall into one of two categories: trying to defend an area with too many units or getting overactive in trying to counterattack. A good German player must cultivate the art of knowing when to cut and run. Take additional CPs in the form of retreats to evacuate a contested area except for one hapless D2 unit. Then, blow the bridges surrounding the area (only "1"s fail), and live to fight another day. The German has lots of units, but not where or when he needs them. He really needs to avoid getting units killed in this game. You should have no qualms about giving up 9 VPs without a fight as long as you have a clear idea about how you will prevent the Allies from getting that tenth one.

My second category of German mistakes seems somewhat contradictory in light of my earlier advice that the Germans must take some chances. However, I'm probably more conservative than Maly or Greenwood with the Germans on June 6—I rarely find myself counterattacking (or even reinforcing) beaches in clear weather. However, I'll consider an even-odds counterattack with a single unit, when there are no emergencies that need to be managed. Multiple-unit German attacks should be avoided except at high odds, because failure disrupts multiple units. The German, unlike the Allies, needs units for defense and has supply problems.

It is futile to launch a campaign of low-odds bombardments of fresh Allied units undertaken in clear weather in the faint hope that an Allied-held area will eventually be weakened enough to counterattack following a weather change. This uses impulses and supplies that the German cannot afford. It is much better to wait for the overcast weather to arrive, and then make bombardments that will compel an Allied response. In any case, the German should always look at the localized nature of his supply usage. A bombardment by an artillery unit in a region of the board that will not see any other action uses only one supply point, but requires use of a depot to refit. In practice, the unit may remain spent for several turns if all depots are needed elsewhere.

Defense of the Front. Unlike hex-map wargames, *BKN* features areas of irregular size and shape, with (for most practical purposes) no stacking limitations in each area. Therefore, each player should give attention to shortening his front whenever possible, as this increases the number of units available for defense of each area. The classic example of this is the British contestation of Caen, which shortens their front by two areas. Similarly, the Americans need to contest Foret de Clerisy as well as Isigny so that they need not garrison Trévières, Columbières and Omaha Beach. On the German side, you should be more reluctant to abandon an area if your line will be lengthened, but cheerfully retreat from an area if you will thereby shorten your line.

Double Impulse. This is the "wonder weapon" of the campaign. The Allies should use it in only three instances: when it provides a reasonable opportunity to take Caen, when the Allies can blow a hole in the German line in two places, and where part of the front line is a contested area which has vacant or very weakly defended areas behind it. In this last case, the first impulse is used to assault and clear the contested area from another area. The second impulse is used to exit the formerly contested area into the empty German rear. In all three of these situations, the use of the Double Impulse should be a game-winning move if successful. Otherwise, the Advantage is too valuable to risk.

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

As game master of the *BREAKOUT: NORMANDY* tournament at AvalonCon'95, I advised players not to use cards or chits instead of dice to resolve assaults and bombardments (an optional rule). After seeing the large swings of luck created by dice in many of the games, I have changed my mind about this. While cards/chits permit card counting, the balancing of the luck factor weighs heavily in favor of this option.

BREAKOUT: NORMANDY is one of Avalon Hill's finest designs. I have not played any other game which combines so well playability, excitement, analytical depth and realistic military "feel" into a four-hour game.

★

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Chris Perleberg, and Rick Stuart.

Here's an explanation of how ZOC scores a game's complexity and general quality:

COMPLEXITY

Rather than use a subjective rating, we have opted to 'count' the components in two areas and equate the sum of their square roots with the game's rough complexity. The Size score will usually be lower than that for System, and this is intended; we believe that the 'physical size' of a design is easier to deal with than its 'intellectual size.'

GAME REVIEW ABSTRACT

In each of the following GRA categories we use an ascending subjective scale of 1-5:

'Look' is rated on aesthetic grounds.

'Utility' rates the component design's impact on ease of play.

'Rules' are rated for completeness and organization.

'Game' scores the fun and replay value.

'Simulation' rates realism and nuts-and-bolts detail.

'Innovation' scores inventiveness, novelty, and new combinations of old ideas.

'Solitaire' rates the degree to which solo play is possible.

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ZONE OF CONTROL

Nr. 11

The book and the game. We are, almost all of us, interested in both. But do we view narrative history and games as involved in an exchange, an interplay, a dialogue? No, we understand, do we not, that games come from books, not vice versa. Game titles proclaim this. A fair smattering have been named after histories, but no military historian has ever named his work after a wargame.

Most wargames do lean heavily on written history for facts and analysis. The games are original nonetheless. It's because of their medium. Historical tomes often include much in the way of statistics — gamelike numbers — but even then they use descriptive prose to elucidate relationships. The game designer uses prescriptive prose, logic and numbers for the same end.

But despite appearances, wargames usually do not quantify. What I mean is, when a designer accords a unit a combat strength, the historical judgment involved is not necessarily based on counting men and rifles. This holds true even if it's an artillery unit and the designer arrived at the number by counting tubes and making an appropriate division. It is the *division*, not the earlier counting, that matters. The designer is making a power judgment, which is a form of value judgment, a statement as to what will happen when a player does something with the unit.

Wargames embody assumptions as to the nature of what we call history. Narrative tends to view events in a fundamentally different way: as things that happened, as opposed to things that are about to happen. Wargames do not see a past, only alternative presents.

This way of looking at things applies to all past events, big and small, not just whole eras. Individual moments are the atoms of history. To designers and players each atom is pregnant with possibility, and that possibility is history. Written history, in contrast, has traditionally concerned itself with just two things: establishing facts and trying to determine the relations between facts; the latter is what we call historical causation. Wargames and written history both recognize that not everything is possible. What games do that is special is also recognize that not everything possible is equally so.

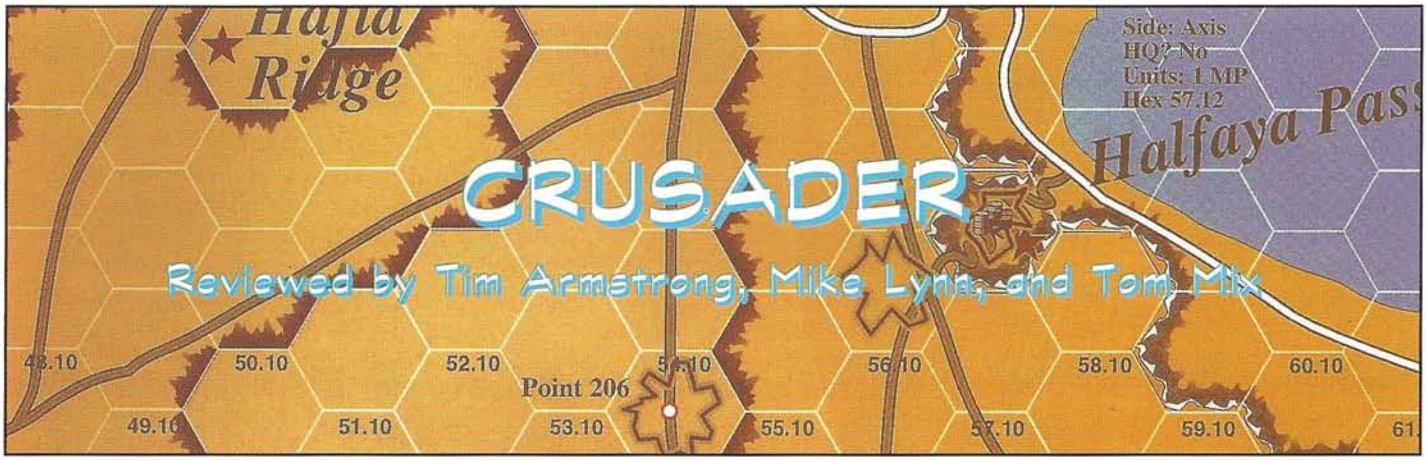
Military history instructs us in the workings of leadership, and the terrible eagerness most men have to be led. Such lessons are of value, for the social sciences do not conduct controlled experiments. Wargames, which study relative degrees of possibility, contain an element that is absent from written history: randomization or chance. That is why game designers are uniquely able to take the analysis of events a step further, to serve as a control and crosslight on written history. Take this passage from Joe Balkoski's design notes to *STONEWALL IN THE VALLEY*:

"I came to the surprising conclusion that the history books do not really deal adequately with the key grand strategic issues of the Valley campaign... In my final analysis, although Jackson consistently outmaneuvered his opponents and defeated them on the battlefield, I'm not sure that he accomplished the gigantic strategic victory in the Valley that historians give him credit for."

The point right now is not agreeing or disagreeing with Balkoski's thesis. (My sense is that he is correct: many things — such as Jackson's untimely death and early war politics and propaganda — led people to exaggerate the *effect* of Jackson's remarkable victories.) The point is that the design process led him down new avenues by allowing historical facts to speak for themselves. When facts speak *sans* mediator, as they do in games like this, which are steeped in primary sources, the subject is liberated from a prison, not of words, but of assumptions.

The lesson of all of this, at least for me, is that just as war is too important a thing to leave to presidents and generals, the past is too important to be left to historians.

— John A. Walker



CRUSADER

Reviewed by Tim Armstrong, Mike Lynn, and Tom Mix

It's been twenty years since good ol' SPI hoodwinked us into thinking *Campaign for North Africa* was the Holy Grail of realism. Ever since, many gamers have continued the quest for sim-perfection; this summer quite a few finally found it in *DAK* from The Gamers. Despite all of this monster's obvious merit, most gamers are more likely to enjoy a standard-sized entry that's part of the same company's *Standard Combat Series (SCS). Crusader*, largely unnoticed when it debuted alongside dazzling *DAK,* is far less weighty but designed to be enjoyed no less fervently by the fun-loving crusaders among us.

Unlike the many games that rely upon arcane procedures to reproduce the fog and chaos of war, here they're a natural outgrowth of the situation. *Crusader* can keep it simple because both sides have the tanks to strike fast, but neither has manpower enough for anything approximating a solid front. The game's homespun mechanics are a stark contrast to straight-laced and scholarly *DAK* (as much a dissertation as a game) by the same designer, Dean Essig. Whatever the reasons, *Crusader* stands out for allowing players to concentrate on the *game*, not the rules. The end result, to steal an apt description from the designer's notes, is "a swirling knife-fight of armor in the desert."

WANT THE BACK ISSUES?

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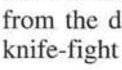
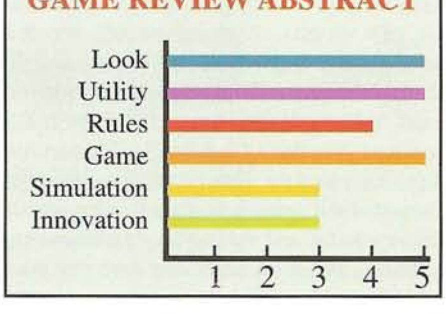


During historical Crusader, Britain's Eighth Army meant to strike a decisive blow. Thirteenth Corps (consisting of the 2nd New Zealand Division, 4th Indian Division, and 1st Army Tank Brigade) would drive along the coast road to break the siege of Tobruk. Meanwhile, 30th Corps (7th Armored Division, 1st South African Division, and 22nd Guards Brigade) was to destroy the Afrika Korps' ever-dangerous mobile divisions.

Rommel, taken by surprise, reacted in his usual way: by punching back relentlessly. The fight's decisive moment came when the Desert Fox pressed toward Egypt's border. By then Eighth Army was on the ropes, battered by a vicious one-two of appalling tank losses and the threat to its rear. But a funny thing happened: General Auchinleck didn't panic. He cooly calculated that the Axis forces must be in even worse shape, and resolved not to throw in the towel. When the dust cleared, it turned out to be Rommel who had taken it on the chin. Crusader eventually forced him to abandon Cyrenaica and the garrisons of Bardia, Sollum, and Halfaya Pass. The timing of the fight's final bell is noteworthy: 7 December 1941.

GAME REVIEW ABSTRACT



Four scenarios cover all or part of this three-week affair, and our matches have all been nail-biters. You'll have to take my word that *Crusader* is fast-and-furious. A nagging question remains: does it come close to filling the Grail of simulation? Depending upon your perspective, the cup is either half full or half empty.

Far from a technical study, *Crusader* doesn't even try to examine the nuts and bolts of maneuver warfare. Just a passing look at logistics, command and control, limited intelligence, and unit interactions. Gamers interested in such devilish details are far better served by far more complex designs, such as the aforementioned *DAK* (which includes a Crusader scenario).

Crusader may not be the omega of simulations, but is still faithful to history. It mirrors the psychology of the desert war especially well. Africa was not the same as Russia, where commanders usually had the luxury of solid lines. In addition to the desert's legendary logistical nightmare, that open southern flank was the stuff of which bad dreams are made. With this in mind, Rommel made his sprint toward Egypt. His sights weren't set on any conventional objective; his target was the mind of his rival, Aucklineck. The logic was simple: make the enemy believe he is losing, and the battle is won. With its emphasis on the attack and holding initiative, the design can indeed be nerve-racking. It lets players imagine the worst — and act accordingly.

In our inaugural game, the battle began with an assault on the Italian position at Bir el Gubi, a crossroads about 45 miles due south of Tobruk. The situation looked grim for the defenders (who were quickly surrounded on three sides) until the Axis committed the bulk of its armored reserve into this sector. Soon it was the British troops that were surrounded!

At this point in the game, things looked grim *for both players*. From Rommel's command post, the British right wing, which had quickly bypassed Hellfire Pass and was driving along the coast to relieve Tobruk, looked a juggernaut. With all reserves locked in the death struggle at Bir el Gubi, enemy Thirteenth Corps was flying through the screen that now lay in tatters. A miracle would be needed to hold the line.

That miracle came in the form of an Allied player transfixed by Thirty Corps, which seemingly faced complete annihilation. And so in our re-telling of history it was Aucklineck who blinked first. He sounded retreat, then sent up a flare for emergency reinforcements (a few extra brigades) to stabilize things. When it was over, the German player confessed to having been on the verge of doing the same thing — snatching defeat from victory due to the enormous mental strain of non-linear warfare.

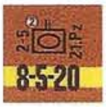
CRUSADER, the fifth game of the *SCS* series, plays differently from its predecessors because games in this series are all different by design. A wafer-thin series rulebook is all that ties the five together, and *CRUSADER* is typical with its several pages of "exclusive rules" that flesh out the particular event. The two most interesting rules concern themselves with unit reconstitution and Rommel himself.

Unit reconstitution will give people pause. The rule seems more at home in *COMMAND* than in a game from those grognards in Homer. Unit reconstitution handles replacements without pencils or markers. Whenever a unit (other than single-steppers and non-stepping static types) is lost in combat, a die is rolled. If the roll is a '1,' the unit is permanently eliminated. Any other roll is the number of game-turns later the unit will reappear at reduced strength (except for German units, which, for better game balance, come back full-strength).

It's not so much the concept as the absence of modifications (for presence of zones of control or lack of supply) that is bothersome. In fairness, Essig addresses these concerns in his design notes, and does makes a strong case. And whether completely realistic or not, reconstitution works so well that I'd like to see it used in future *SCS* games. Specifically, it reflects the natural ebb and flow of battle. It does not take great imagination to envision the shattered cadres grabbing forty winks and a hot meal behind the lines, and then being tossed back into the meat-grinder.

In this particular case, the rule also prods the German player (whose reconstituted units return at full-strength, remember) to take an aggressive stance. Essig's notes rationalize granting one side a certain structural indifference to high casualty rates by citing evidence of the German army's battlefield resiliency, but mainly it's a game-balancing ploy.

Directing this oh-so resilient army is Erwin Rommel, whose military career has been romanticized by historians and gamers alike. Whether or not you completely believe the legend, who can deny having felt the pull of Rommel's goggles on his face as the the 21st Panzer is ordered into the breach? Here Rommel is portrayed by the only leader counter in the game. He can fly faster than a speeding bullet (up to forty hexes in the famed Storch airplane) and is impervious to lead projectiles (Rommel cannot be killed or captured). Our super-hero's powers don't end there. Rommel gives his stack a positive shift on both attack and defense and the capability to move and fight in the exploitation phase (even non-mechanized units). Properly used, Rommel can make a *very* big difference in the campaign.



CRUSADER strives for classical balance. And I'm not just talking about the scenarios, all of which are handicapped to give each side an even chance. With familiar rules concepts and modest complexity, here's a game that we all want to play that we actually have time to play… and then switch sides and play again.

ANNOTATED SEQUENCE

Air Determination Phase
A die is tossed and a table consulted to generate air points. Initially, Allied airpower has the edge, but the modifiers even out later on.

Allied Player Turn
Movement: Pretty tame, with only the phase's overrun combat noteworthy. Resolved just like regular attacks, overruns can be made with just one moving stack. As is always the case, overruns are a great way to clear a path for units moving later in the turn.

Barrage: Artillery and air units bombard enemy units, applying various modifiers for terrain and spotting units. Results can be disorganization (which halves the target's factors and zeros-out its ZOC) and steps lost.

Combat: Yes, units that overran earlier *can* attack again. Table is odds-based, with both step-loss and retreat results. Only exploit-capable units may advance beyond the defender's hex.

Supply: Units are supplied by tracing a path to mobile headquarters or fixed supply sources (some range restrictions apply). The simple logistics help put the "standard" in *SCS*.

Exploitation: To be eligible to operate in this phase, a unit must be exploit-capable and not in an enemy ZOC. Such units can both move and conduct overruns.

Disorganization Removal: Allied units that are currently DG'd are reorganized automatically.

Axis Player Turn
Same as the Allied Player Turn.

End Turn Phase
Time marches one space on the turn record chart.

CRUSADER
Size 2.2 • System 4.5
Solo "Gd"

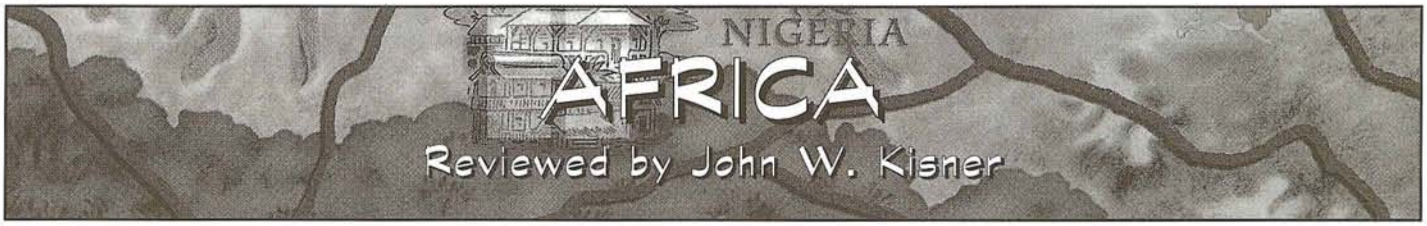
SCALE
2 days per turn
5 miles per hex

PUBLISHER
The Gamers, Inc.
500 W. 4th Street
Homer, IL 61849

DESIGN & GRAPHICS
Dean Essig

COMPONENTS
One 22 x 34" map, 280 counters, 8-page series rulebook, 16-page exclusive rulebookand a double-sided player-aid card.

PRICE: $38



AFRICA

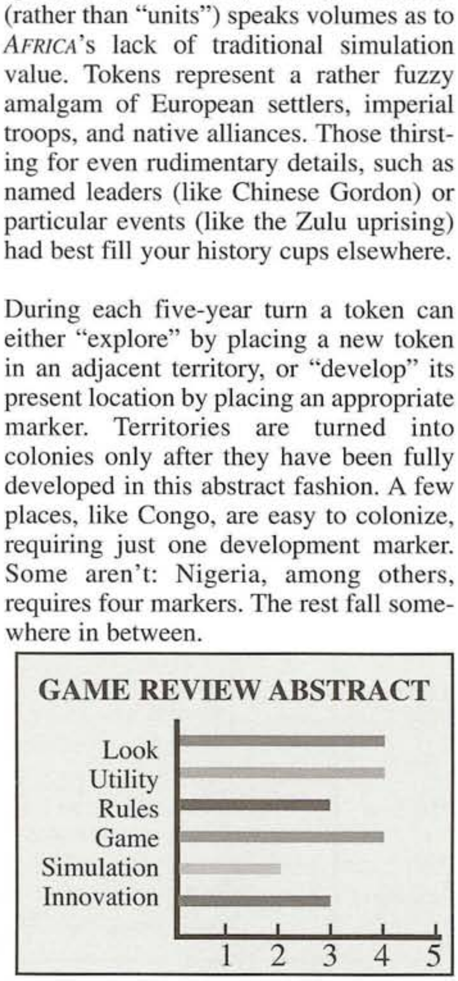
Reviewed by John W. Kisner

I lost my best friend during a game of *DIPLOMACY*. There was probably more to it, but in my mind that double-cross — that *lie*, as he always called it — caused us to drift apart. I've been careful to keep my word, and so my friends, ever since. That's why I was reluctant to play this French import, brought stateside by Clash of Arms. While the mechanics are quite different, at *AFRICA*'s heart is all the backstabbing darkness of *DIPLOMACY*.

The typical two-hour session begins innocently enough for *AFRICA*'s three to six players. Each directs the colonial ambitions of one European state, starting with just a single token placed along the coast. The continent is divided into 32 territories, and victory goes to whoever builds the most colonies from 1880 to 1914.

More in tune with the spirit than the specifics of the era, use of "tokens" (rather than "units") speaks volumes as to *AFRICA*'s lack of traditional simulation value. Tokens represent a rather fuzzy amalgam of European settlers, imperial troops, and native alliances. Those thirsting for even rudimentary details, such as named leaders (like Chinese Gordon) or particular events (like the Zulu uprising) had best fill your history cups elsewhere.

During each five-year turn a token can either "explore" by placing a new token in an adjacent territory, or "develop" its present location by placing an appropriate marker. Territories are turned into colonies only after they have been fully developed in this abstract fashion. A few places, like Congo, are easy to colonize, requiring just one development marker. Some aren't: Nigeria, among others, requires four markers. The rest fall somewhere in between.



To mark a colony, the controlling player(s) plops down a pretty cool building figurine that's about 1" square. After this, the colony is safe: control cannot change. The period of danger comes before, when up to five other players try to push their way into *your* territory. Security can only be found in each turn's diplomacy phase, a frenzied eight minutes dedicated to secret and public negotiations. After negotiating, players record plans for development, exploration, and the posture to be adopted, Peace or War, with regards to each rival power. Later, when written orders are simultaneously executed, life-long friendships may be put to the test.

Lying, even to friends, is essential because of the unique way in which diplomatic posture resolves conflict and relates to the problem of colony-building. As to the latter, even if fully developed, a territory that contains tokens at War with one another cannot be made into colonies. Regarding the former, *AFRICA*'s limit of one token per player per territory prevents stacking to concentrate strength. Absent a numerical superiority, hostile tokens coexist indefinitely. Only shifting diplomatic tides can break the deadlock and sweep a territory clean of the enemy.

Conflict resolution requires neither CRT nor dice. Traditional randomization gives way to a pair of simple comparisons. When just two tokens are in a territory, they coexist unless it's a Peace-War situation, in which case the pacifist token is destroyed. In all other cases, a token is destroyed when tokens at War with it in that territory outnumber those at Peace. Sometimes the result is *all* tokens destroyed; usually one or more survive, protected by an alliance.

Given a combat methodology in which the only variables are in secret diplomatic postures, it isn't hard to understand why the question is not so much *whether* as *when* lies will be told. Illustrating this is the game during which my France worked closely with England to jointly develop northern Africa. For a long time we stood at Peace with each other and War with everyone else. Many an Italian or German token found itself odd-man out in the face of this united front — it was great fun! But however successful, the alliance could not go on forever. Only one player can win, you see, and splitting victory points (for shared colonies) with an eventual rival gets old in a hurry. I remember muttering something about remaining allies for at least one more turn… and then carving up the English like Christmas hams after making a deal with an erstwhile enemy, Italy.

A backstab is perhaps more painful in *AFRICA* than in other games of this genre. Imagine how the English player felt: his Peace posture protected my duplicitous French from harm even as his own tokens faced oblivion (due to my switch to War) from coast to coast. There's a lesson to be learned: do unto others first. The trick, of course, is to lie only when it really counts.

The classic novel *Heart of Darkness* tells of the "dreams of men, the seed of commonwealths, the germs of empires" that were lost on the voyage upriver "into the mystery of an unknown earth." In *AFRICA* we know the terrain but run a greater risk: losing friends. It can be great fun, though, if you're willing to take that chance.

AFRICA
System 2.6 • Size 2.2
Solo "Poor"

SCALE
thousands of square miles per area
5 years per turn

PUBLISHER
Tilsit Editions/Clash of Arms
The Byrne Building#205
Lincoln & Morgan Sts.
Phoenixville, PA 19460

DESIGN
Francis Pacherie

GRAPHICS
Le Lion Vert

COMPONENTS
One full-sized mounted map, roughly 300 counters (of various shapes and sizes), 22 colony figurines, rules in French and English, and a pad of order sheets.

PRICE: $54

WATERLOO MOODS:

MONET'S HAYSTACKS AND MONT ST. JEAN

by John Setear

The following article is part of the reason why ZOC #3 went out of stock. We don't intend to make reprints a regular part of this section, but my recent move to a new house has curtailed hobby time enough to make this seem the ideal moment to share Mr. Setear's essay with a wider audience.

The essays in ZOC typically examine the choices made by a game's designer: the sequence of play, the combat or movement values of units, and so forth. But our first — and sometimes our deepest — impression of a game typically comes not from its words, but from its pictures. The box art catches our eye before we read the description on the back. If we buy the game, we examine the map and counters before we plunge into the rules. Some would dismiss graphics as superficial. This is literally true, of course, but I would argue that, at the very least, graphics are *profoundly* superficial. The map and counters aim to capture our heart, after all, while the rules and tables are only after our intellect. Choices made by graphic artists influence our impressions of a game and its historicity. Toward a better understanding of this influence I offer this essay.

We think of a plot of land as constant — ancient, weighty, immovable. But walk the same piece of land over and over, and you see how much it can change. From season to season, flowers and leaves appear, and then fall away. The snow blanket grows and shrinks during the season when the foliage is constant by its absence. From day to day, a piece of land shifts with the cloud cover from gloomy pessimism to sunny promise. From hour to hour, the light, and with it all the terrain, changes from the harsh near-white of noon to the sentimental reds of dusk and then the deep, deep blues of night.

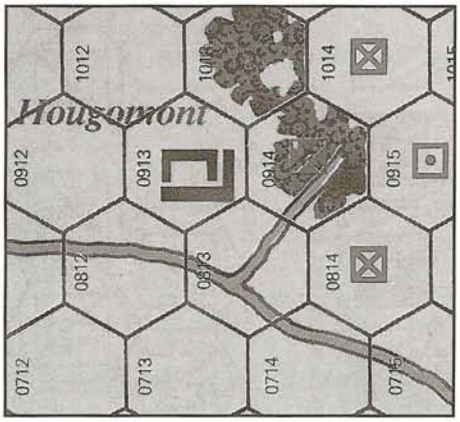
The best artistic examples of these phenomena that I know are two sets of paintings by Claude Monet. Near the end of the 19th Century, he painted the cathedral of Rouen from the same spot, but in a different light, over and over. Monet did the same with a set of haystacks in the French countryside — a less ambitious arrangement of natural materials by human hands, but one no less powerfully immortalized by subtle shifts in oils from painting to painting. Through Monet's exquisitely sensitive eye, the viewer sees that the "same" object painted from the "same" vantage point in the "same" medium is really many objects with many moods.

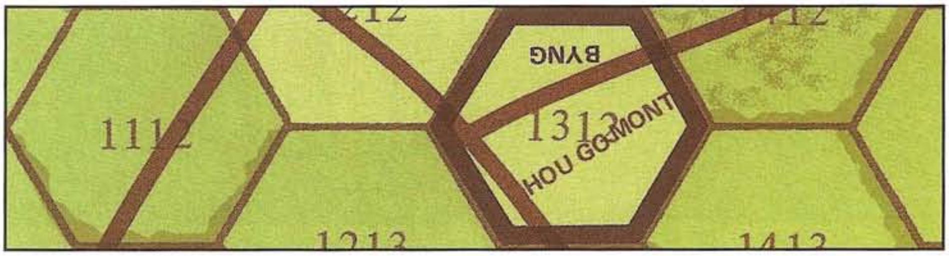
The Waterloo battlefield in Belgium is about 200 miles northeast of Monet's haystacks and cathedral. The gently rolling terrain of that battlefield has been largely preserved as it was in 1815, and the contemporary visitor may walk, in many lights, the same ground that boot and horseshoe churned into mud on the mid-June day that closed an era. If you examine Waterloo, not in person but with a board wargame, the counters and map will not change with the season or position of the sun. Nonetheless, if you take the look with a series of wargames, then the same terrain can take on different characteristics with the shifting illuminations chosen by the graphic artists who construct a game's counters, maps, and box. Like Monet's studies of man's creations, these studies of man's destructive side show that the same battle or campaign treated in the same medium can convey very different moods.

This essay is a guided tour of five games focused on the battle of Waterloo. I omit the operational-level games that allow treatment of the campaign as a unified whole, such as Clash of Arms' *L'ARMEE DU NORD*, SPI's classic *NAPOLEON'S LAST BATTLES*, and the various editions of the "block" game *NAPOLEON*. I also omit *HOUGOMONT* by XTR, which appears to be the only game focused on just a piece of the struggle near Mont Saint Jean. More importantly, I leave to others the consideration of how the five render the order of battle, the distinctive aspects of the Imperial Guard, or the struggle of horse against square. I focus instead on the choices made by graphic artists in creating the game maps and counters. Each game's mapsheet presents the battlefield in a different light. Each map combines with its counters (and even, sometimes, with the box art) to create a distinctive historical mood. These lights and moods are at least as subjective a matter as the "correct" emphasis in a game's rules, and so I do not attempt here to decide which is the "right" mood. My intention is rather to bring to the forefront the relevant choices, the way they combine to create an historical mood, and the fact that such choices are subtle and important enough to deserve consideration as something beyond mere appearances.

We begin our tour with a game intended for the beginner: the 1979 version of *NAPOLEON AT WATERLOO* (SPI). The map has all the sunny simplicity of a brightly lit afternoon. The playing area contains just four terrain types — a faint buff for clear terrain, bright yellow roads with grey borders, steel-grey overhead views of buildings, and classic bright-green forests — as well as small, unit-typed squares showing the starting positions of the French (in bright blue) or the Anglo-Allies (in bright red). A grey border limiting the edge of the playing surface to full hexes, and the presence on the mapsheet of all the necessary charts and tables, adds an air of precise self-containment.

As far as historical mood goes, *NAPOLEON AT WATERLOO* is a kind of archetype. Where are you in the long march of time? Hard to say. You've got a crossroads, a few woods, some counters, and an odds-ratio CRT. One side is blue; one side is red. The counters use NATO-style unit-type designations (though with pleasant white lines stretching from one corner of the counter to the other, rather than the usual symbol-in-a-box). The various typefaces on the map and play aids are clean and vaguely modern. The graphic choices entice and assist beginners to play the game, but not to imagine a particular struggle in a particular era.





Yaquinto's 1980 release, *The Thin Red Line*, is a dramatic contrast: the graphics of the game seem not merely to focus the gamer upon a particular era of battle, but to draw you right into the titular thin red line of infantrymen deployed behind a ridge just south of Mont St. Jean.

This specific historical mood is largely the result of effective counter design. The counters in this game are not the standard 1/2" square, but are 1/2" x 3/4" rectangles. When deployed in line formation, the infantry counters are therefore about 150% wider than the usual counter, though of standard depth. This simple physical representation of a line is enhanced by three more subtle graphic choices. First, the hexes are twice as wide as in the standard game — an inch-and-a-quarter across, rather than the standard 5/8" (or the oversized 3/4" hexes that we have become used to in *Command* games) — and thus cover roughly four times the area. Because of this, a unit in line, with its standard counter depth, when pressed against the front of its oversized hex seems woefully exposed. Second, every Anglo-Allied infantry (and cavalry) counter has a thin, light-blue border along the long front side, a placement that, by reducing the red field, still further reduces the sense of depth. Finally, infantry units have in their center a tiny, colorful flag of the appropriate nationality — Union Jack, French tricolor, the Dutch-Belgian tricolor variant, and so forth — while cavalry and artillery have only black, generic symbols (crossed swords and a dot, respectively). As a result, the player's eye tends to trace out the line of colorfully accented infantry units before turning to the supporting arms of horse and gun carriage. The prominence, as well as the precariousness, of the "thin red line" is thus subtly imprinted on the player's mind by the game's graphic artists.

The counters also include several 3/4" square counters to represent infantry squares that, like all the counters in the game, are about double the usual thickness. The overall result is a wonderful physicality to the formations as deployed on the map that one could never achieve with the usual small hexes, square counters, and use of markers to denote formation.

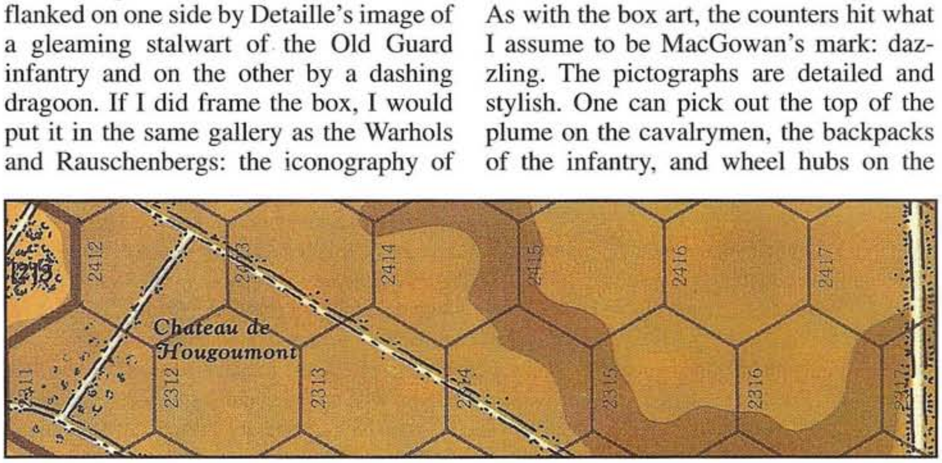
The thick brown roads and general greenness of the map have captured the Belgian countryside in the mud and lushness of the hours after a rain — although the large hex numbers and clumsy black outlines of the chateau hexes undermine one's confidence that this effect is intentional, as does the fact that the green chosen for Prussian units tends to look a little nauseating against the greens chosen for the map. In any event, the combined effect of French and British counters upon the map is inspiring. In addition, the physical representation of line, square, and column makes it plain that the game represents the action of a particular (i.e., late muzzle-loading) era.

GMT's *The Battles of Waterloo* covers not only Mont Saint Jean but also Quatre Bras, Ligny, and Wavre. The box art clearly gives the battle of Waterloo pride of place; however, only Mont Saint Jean has its own banner on the front, and only that battlefield receives a three-dimensional map treatment on the back.

You could practically frame the front box art, with its gorgeous red-to-yellow background and its triptych of Napoleonic icons: Napoleon himself in the center, flanked on one side by Detaille's image of a gleaming stalwart of the Old Guard infantry and on the other by a dashing dragoon. If I did frame the box, I would put it in the same gallery as the Warhols and Rauschenbergs: the iconography of Pop Art. Just as Rauschenberg subtly changed and simplified RAT-A-TAT-TAT! and other comic-book frames that he copied, Rodger MacGowan's box subtly brightens and simplifies the central icon of military art that he has chosen for his front cover. The original, by Delaroche, depicts a glowering Napoleon, deep in shadow, lit only by fading light from a window and perhaps by a fire: grey eyes in the shadows, a grey greatcoat, black boots. MacGowan's version is Napoleon in a flash photograph: a brilliant white waistcoat, bright blue eyes, and an aqua-blue greatcoat. Delaroche's background moves from purple-black to pure black; MacGowan's background from light to dark purple. I should note that we have the strongest possible evidence that MacGowan chose this brighter Napoleon deliberately: he has also done a version of this very same painting for Avalon Hill's *THE STRUGGLE OF NATIONS* that is much darker. On the Avalon Hill box, Napoleon's eyes are black, and his greatcoat looks almost like a piece of carved charcoal. Tellingly, the soldiers sharing the box are no parade-ground dandies but a wonderfully evocative mass of weary grognards — even their dog is so bone-tired that it too shuffles along, stoop-shouldered.

The choice of colors for some of the unit identifications on the counters display the same peppy Modernism: orange for the French II Corps, bright blueberry for the French III Corps, grape for the French IV Corps, and a cool yellow for the French II Cavalry Corps. The trio of horses on a Recovered marker are black shadows galloping out of a white background like some ultra-high contrast Bergman trick, and the markers for Disorder and Rout are so stylishly functional that they could only be from the less-is-more 20th century.

As with the box art, the counters hit what I assume to be MacGowan's mark: dazzling. The pictographs are detailed and stylish. One can pick out the top of the plume on the cavalrymen, the backpacks of the infantry, and wheel hubs on the

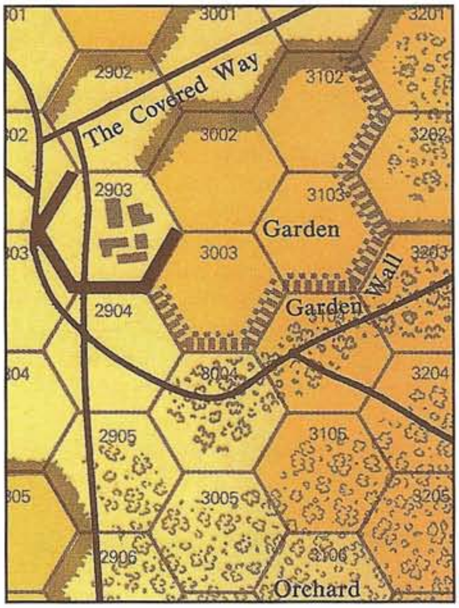


artillery pieces. Each army has its stunning flag on every counter: a reversed version of the Iron Cross for the Prussians, a diagonal blue-white-blue pennant for the Anglo-Allies, and the tricolor for the French. An exception to the tricolor's employment is made for the Imperial Guard, whose special treatment on the box art carries through to their very own counter design: a deep blue background with yellow lettering, and a flag based not on the tricolor's rectangles but the diamond-design battle standards of La Grande Armee. Taken as a whole, the game portrays the involved units not merely in the clear sunshine of a clear mid-morning, but in that light as brilliantly reflected off neat arrays of polished bayonets and cuirassiers.

The map, a Mark Simonitch and Joe Youst production, is a much more restrained affair. Appropriately so, for the vivid pictures of the counters require a quiet frame if their dazzle is not to result in show-blindness. The basic hex colors are muted yellows or browns, with grey hex borders and generally unobtrusive terrain features — thin white roads with broken borders, village hexes where the buildings occupy only a small fraction of the relevant hex, cultivated-hex markings that are just skippings of green, and ridge hexsides that blend nicely but discernably with the elevation scheme. Forest hexes are indicated by a pattern that subtly fills the hex. It is the units, not the ground over which they fought, that provide the spectacle and the historical distinctiveness here.

Both outside and in, this is a game in which graphic choices contribute to an image of Napoleonic struggle as gleaming spectacle. The box art is bold, the counters dazzling, and the map subordinated to the spectacle of the counters.

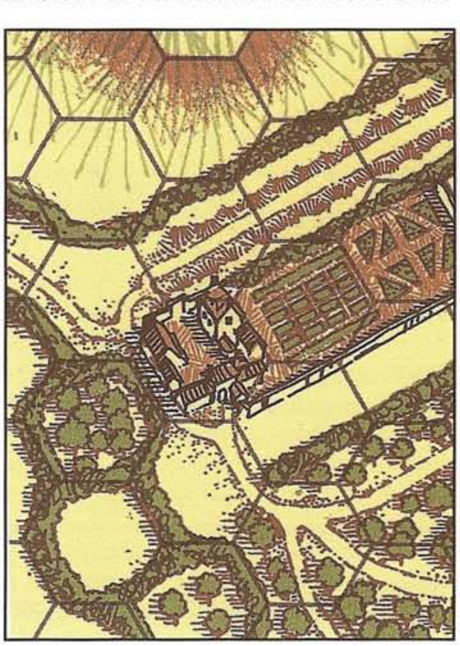
The 1983 TSR reprint of SPI's Wellington's Victory displays dissonance, not harmony, among box art, counters, and map. The box cover is a dramatic, tightly focused rendering of the brief moment when a handful of brave men struggled on each side of an open gate at the Hougomont chateau. Open up the box, and you see a sprawling, four-map treatment of the battlefield. The scale is a detailed 100 yards per hex, but the hedges and villages are highly abstracted. The elevation levels are the dominant feature, denoted by full-hex browns and yellows so bold as to reduce the prominence of units laid atop them. This may be just as well, as the colors of the counters in the TSR reprint are marred by an unfortunate return to the days of Avalon Hill's *WATERLOO*: pastel pink for the Anglo-Allies, and pastel blue for the French. (The Prussians are, fortunately, a palatable blue-grey, not the fruity green of *Waterloo*.) The box wrap kitchily refers to "a dark, titanic struggle from the days when men were men;" the map, typefaces, and associated tables say "a graphically integrated abstraction of battle." The counters just say "I don't get no respect." If you want this game, look for the original SPI version; you'll give up the flashy box art, but at least you'll get understated, flat-finish counters in return.



A glorious unity of graphic purpose characterizes Clash of Arms' four-map, 100-yards-per-hex *La Bataille de Mont Saint Jean*. The map presents a bird's-eye view, not the artificially colored satellite photography effect of *Wellington's Victory*. Each village consists of individually rendered farms, homes, and churches in three-quarter perspective. The forests are no overhead circles of generic trees, but rather several parts deciduous trees to each part of darker evergreen, with a brown-green forest floor thrown in for good measure! The large, beautifully hand-scripted names for towns and buildings hearken back to the pre-steam age. Indeed, the background color of the map as a whole manages to evoke the faintest rose of nostalgic twilight.

The counters reflect the same concern for the individual personalities of the units involved as the map does for each hamlet it portrays. The dizzying variety of the period's military uniforms leaps to life in these counters, which generally mimic the belts and facings of the units involved. The Scotch have tartans; the silver breastplates of the cuirassiers are right there on the counter; leaders or aides-de-camp sport their badges of rank. To take a particular example, the I Corps of the French Cavalry Reserve, with six different counter patterns for its eight combat units: (1) a cobalt-blue upper field with silver buttons and black lettering, a silver-and-red banded belt, and a white lower field (1st Hussars); (2) a scheme identical to the 1st Hussars except with gold, rather than silver, buttons (5th Hussars); (3) a pink upper field with gold buttons and black lettering, a red-and-gold banded belt, and a white lower field (4th Hussars); (4) uniformly deep green with white lettering, except for a red belt and facing (1st and 2nd Lancers); (5) a deep-green upper field with a red stripe across a white facing, a white belt, and a white lower field (11th Chasseurs); and (6) deep blue upper and lower fields separated by a white belt, with white lettering all around the white-field facing crossed by a slash and centered ball of shot (for the two horse artillery units).

The counter details are often historically evocative in other ways as well. The front of a *La Bataille* counter has two large numbers in the bottom of the field, representing strength and movement. In many a game, a simple hyphen would separate the two, as, in fact, do some counters involved in *La Bataille de Mont Saint*



JEAN. But many do not, and the alternative symbol is always of historical (and sometimes also of functional) interest. The French Imperial Guard has a Napoleonic crest in this space between the strength and movement numbers, while units of the British guard have an elaborate "R" signifying their direct connection to their rex. The Prussian Jaeger companies bear a tree. Some Brunswickers display the death's head symbol that would later have a much more chilling connotation. Lancer units have crossed lances. The military band of the Old Guard (yes, there's a counter for its mounted band) has a sixteenth note. (This unit is connected, by the way, with perhaps my favorite example of chrome — or should I say brass? — in wargaming: French units within 4 hexes of the band receive a favorable modifier when attempting to rally.)

Even the typefaces for the lower field of the counter vary, this time by army, rather than from unit to unit within an army. The choices evoke the national personalities in contention. The Prussians use a quasi-Gothic script; the French a Roman script of some flair; and the phlegmatic Anglo-Allies display a very sensible, if still Roman, font. (The fact that the standard Prussian and French infantry units have the same upper-field coloring, a choice reflecting a historical similarity that affected the course of the campaign at least twice, makes this differentiation in typeface more than purely ornamental.)

The designed illumination of maps and counters is a clear, but not a dazzling, light. One can observe in it much detail, both of topography and human personality. That light is tinged with nostalgia for a bygone era of quiet villages and splendid uniforms, rather than focused on the fury that erupted when men in those uniforms marched across those countrysides.

The box art completes the picture by providing ample evidence of the fury of combat: A wave of Prussian troops assaulting Plancenoit, with men shouting and shells bursting. Its black border and dignified typeface indicate a more restrained view of war than the riot of colors on the counters. The choice of a relatively obscure painting, and one of the Prussians at that, indicates the expertise and self-confidence of Clash of Arms. (The covers of Waterloo games tend to concentrate on the struggle of the French with the Anglo-Allies, not on the equally crucial action involving the Prussians. In fact, I know of only one other cover that even includes a Prussian.)

Of equal importance, the box art subtly reinforces the general graphic perspective. The view in the painting on the cover is that of a soldier as he glances towards the comrades on his flank — not, as is more common, toward the enemy. The overall strategy seems aimed at placing the player within the lines of battle; not, as in so many other games, above those lines in some non-existent aerie of high command. The Napoleonic soldier, after all, was surrounded by a grand but often confusing palette of uniform colors, painted upon a usually gentle but suddenly lethal landscape. So too with those who venture into the counters and map of *LA BATAILLE DE MONT SAINT JEAN*.

The graphic designers who brought to life the games of Waterloo discussed here have produced quite different moods: cool abstraction, distinctive physicality, dazzling color, nostalgic immediacy, and so forth. They have done so by making certain choices about the thickness of lines, the styles of typography, the colors used on counters or the map, the grain of patterns for terrain types, the style of the box art, and so on. Many of these choices will affect only subliminally, and that's as it should be. Look closely, though, and your appreciation of the Waterloo games in your collection — indeed, of your games on any topic — will grow with the realization that each captures and creates an historical mood all its own.

ZONE SIX AWARDS, 1998: YOUR VOTE COUNTS!

We at zoc have decided to restart the tradition of collecting reader feedback in order to publish a game rating chart. Veteran subscribers will notice a subtle shift in methodology: no longer do we ask you to rate *every* new game you've played. No, with our much wider distribution in the pages of *The GENERAL*, a simpler approach seems prudent. This time all we want from you are two short lists — is that too much to ask? For your trouble you'll receive a chance to win a prize and a guarantee of something almost as valuable: the knowledge that your votes will be reflected in the next Zone Six Awards.

The two lists we request are:

1) Recent Favorites. This list should consist of no more than six wargames you've played in the last twelve months that you would recommend to fellow subscribers. List the complete title and the game's publisher (and also the year published if you can). Please adhere strictly to all of these requirements!

2) All-Time Favorites. This list, also of no more than six titles, should be of your favorite wargames of all time. Yes, I feel your pain: it will be tough to winnow a collection that spans several decades! You don't have to have played these recently, but try to honestly list the ones you treasure most.

Keep in mind that what we're trying to do is come up with a list of the best "paper wargames." That means you'll waste your vote by listing games like *MONOPOLY* or *EUCHRE*, the computerized *STALINGRAD*, or the latest edition of *JOHNNY REB*. At the same time, even though Zone Six Awards are limited to the paper format, it is okay to vote for non-traditional wargames — like the card-game *TANK COMMANDER* or the comic-game *NUCLEAR WAR*.

Those of you who follow the rules given above, and who also remember to put their name and address on their lists, will have a chance to win one of six complete sets of zoc that will be given away in a random drawing. (Yes, #3 is officially out-of-print, but I've decided to give away part of my private stock in this promotion. Am I a nice guy, or what?)

To be counted, mail your lists no later than June 1st, 1998. Send them to Stuart K. Tucker, *The GENERAL*, The Avalon Hill Game Company, 4517 Harford Rd., Baltimore, MD 21214.

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➤➤➤➤➤ *(from p.5)*

an upgrade here or there along the way, but not appreciably. Work software upgrades represent little more than "Profit, version 7.0," while usually making little meaningful change in functionality. My PC still performs 95 per cent of the work tasks it should, because work software is fundamentally not tasking computer capabilities today the way game graphics do. However, before 1992 was finished, my PC no longer operated computer games available in stores (when virtually all non-CD ROM games ceased to be marketed).

The focal point of my hobby is interaction with other game players. Consequently, I have never been willing to plunk down hard cash to upgrade a PC for gaming purposes alone. Netware and enhanced modem capacities may soon change all that. However, the 1992-1997 Computer Epoch featured solitaire play of graphically appealing games with inadequate artificial intelligence. That wasn't my hobby. I hope poor AI is soon replaced by challenging artificial opponents and that network gaming becomes more affordable for the common gamer. I want to be able to analyze the game system and input elements, thus drawing the appropriate conclusion about their historical lessons. Boardgaming has always been more adaptable to simulation and learning (unless you regularly debug, alter code, and compile your own computer games).

On the other hand, significant *convention* expenditures (for travel, room and board) I deem to be acceptable outlays to enhance my enjoyment of my gaming hobby. The players at AvalonCon have become friends (for which there is no price). The time is well spent. The entertainment value is astounding. There is no better place to validate your hobby pursuits. Conventions even provide competition on directly-connected computers, with ready opponents willing to battle you head-to-head in your free moments.

My report is offered simply as a testimonial to one aspect of this entertaining hobby of ours. Fortunately, the competitive, thinking angle of gaming will never become obsolete, nor will its participants. Only the equipment will. —SKT

★

Firing from the Hip

By Mark G. McLaughlin

For my birthday, I bought myself *Imperialism* by SSI. It is like *Civilization*, but set in the 19th century, with big armies, big fleets, less micromanagement and an excellent diplomacy system.

Do not be scared when you read the box. It says it requires 100 MB on the hard drive, but that is not true—it took up barely 25 MB. It requires Direct X 5.0, but you can load that from the CD-ROM disk itself. The rule book appears daunting, but seven tutorials teach you the basic things you do (develop, build, trade, parlay, move armies/navies, and fight). Install it, then print out the read me file (it corrects some errors in the rule book, especially for the tutorial), and then play each of the seven tutorials (the book gives you a play-by-play). Then read the rule book.

Do not waste your time on the random map games. They are just random map worlds of made-up continents with country names like "Zimm" and "Deneb." Your country on that map is small and you start from scratch. It takes a long time to build up to the good part of the game.

Go instead to the scenarios (1820, 1848 or 1882). I recommend 1882, because you can be either Britain or Germany on the eve of the great naval arms race that led to the Great War (WW I). You get lots of stuff at start; most of your railroads and depots and ports are already built. Your transport and factory network is started. You have a small military. Moreover, you play on a map of Europe, so geography is familiar (you do not waste time looking for the province of Twil in Zimm).

It takes a couple of hours, a couple of reversions to saved gaves (it autosaves each turn) and some experimentation at first, but the game is marvelous. It has the best diplomacy options I have ever seen, right down to the trade and embassy operations akin to *PAX BRITANNIA* and the trade subsidies, boycotts and bribes of a human game. You can make deals and track how major and minor countries perceive you. You can figure out who makes what you need to buy most.

The production network is really neat—determining where resources go to build up industry or goods for selling, or train workers, or recruit soldiers. You can upgrade things or invest in new items.

Naval combat is semi-abstract—you build a fleet, decide what ships go into it, set a level of aggressiveness, and put it somewhere to blockade a harbor, set up a beachhead, patrol for enemy fleets, or defend your own harbor. You do not command the fleet in battle, but at least you give it some parameters to operate.

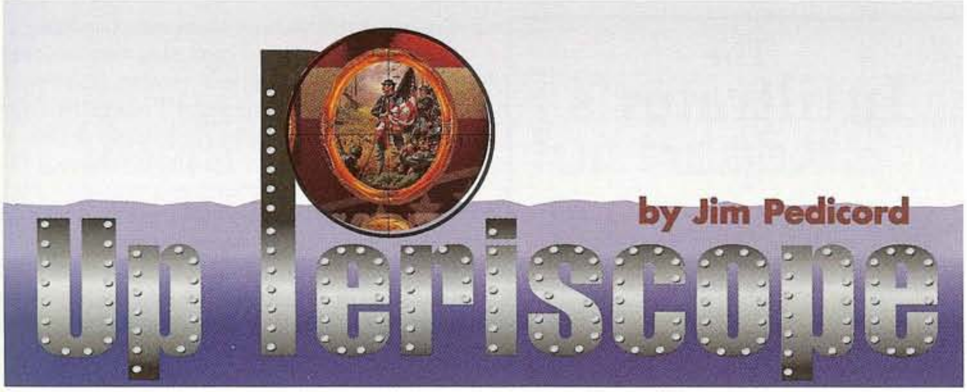
Army combat is tactical. As you would expect from the period, artillery dominates, with heavy artillery ruling. Infantry exist mostly to die (unless you build many of them and use them in human waves to give the enemy more targets than he can hit). Cavalry exists either to draw fire (which they are very good at doing) or for the *coup de grace*. Generals blow bugles and boost morale. Units are regiments (which get medals if they survive a victory). Losses are partial, with recovery based on time doing nothing. In each of the three basic periods of the game (1820s, 1850s and 1880s) you get nine types of troops, but in the 1880s you can start upgrading to WW I-style troops (rail guns, tanks, machineguns).

Imperialism (not in real time) gives you a lot of food for thought. The AI is very good on the trade and diplomatic front. Militarily, it tends to spread itself a little thin, but always buys the military upgrades. If it is losing, it attacks with the provincial militia/territorial forces while retreating the mobile units. The militia dies, but by coming out of the trenches, it can try to kill your best units while buying time for your regulars to retreat. When you see the enemy militia leave the trenches, that is a good sign you have won. If it thinks you are losing, it will counterattack with better units to try to keep your from getting away with light losses. All in all, the computer is craftier than it appears on the tactical matrix, and is especially smart with trade/diplomatic deals.

My favorite line: the Defense Minister (adviser screen) pops up to tell you that enemy fleets are in the sea zone off of your capital and that you have no ships there. He advises you to build or move warships to the threatened area and "in the meantime, I will be retiring to my country estate, deep in the interior." How is that for personality?

SSI has done it again.

★



Up Periscope

by Jim Pedicord

Jim Pedicord is a freelance writer who can be contacted at jimrp2@aol.com.

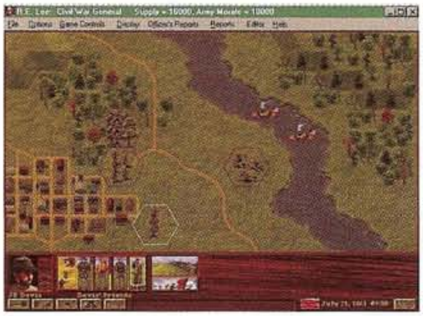
The sights are set on the US Civil War with two games now available covering the bloodiest war in US history.

Sid Meier is a name synonymous with strategy games, being the originator of such classic computer games as *RAILROAD TYCOON* and *CIVILIZATION*. He now moves into the wargaming arena, covering the battle of Gettysburg with *SID MEIER'S GETTYSBURG!* by Firaxis. *GETTYSBURG* is a real-time game with the battle playing out directly in front of you. Battles are shown from an overhead view and fought on a regiment level over the three days of the actual battle (July 1-3, 1963). Scenarios range from actual historical battles to many alternative history engagements, all taking place near the famous battlefield. Individual scenarios are available for short sessions, and a loosely-linked campaign is included for longer game play. A nice randomized scenario-building feature makes for good replay capability as well.

The scale is relatively small, mainly because of the real-time angle, but the game does not turn into a reflex-dependent battle. Strategy is the key and is very well done. Combat itself is relatively simple with unit movement consisting of a basic mouse click and drag technique with varying commands present to set up formations and types of attacks (line or column formation, charge or retreat). Various voice responses from your units give you a good feel for how the battle is progressing. Battles are contested over lush graphical backgrounds complete with farmhouses, trees and buildings. Victory conditions are based on securing specified terrain objectives. Various skill levels plus commanders with personality traits combine for numerous combinations of play.

Overall, this title gives a great balance between serious strategy and entertainment. Complete with challenging computer play, multi-player and network capability, and a great look at some of the battles within battles during Gettysburg, this is another Sid Meier winner.

CIVIL WAR GENERALS 2: GRANT, LEE & SHERMAN from Sierra looks at the Civil War from a much broader perspective, using a turn-based system and giving players access to a multitude of battles. Players may enter almost every battle in the war from either side and also can play extended campaigns, ranging from geographical areas such as the western or eastern fronts to the entire war itself. To top it off, a full-fledged scenario editor lets you create new versions of historic battles or your own "what if" situations.



Game play is geared around the generals and commanding officers with morale and supply as the key elements in the game. Units are brigades and regiments, with the actual number of men and morale influenced by battle results. The game provides a wide assortment of troops, ranging from normal infantry and cavalry to engineers and gunboats. Each scenario is turn-limited with victories and defeats being determined by the amount of objective hexes taken by each side. Graphics are from an overhead view and show a wide variety of terrain, all taken into account when attempting to move or attack. The campaign scenarios are knit closely together, with the effectiveness and morale of troops carrying over to each new scenario (if they survive). Between battles, new weapons and ammunition may be purchased to improve the troops. Battles are calculated affairs. A variety of commands such as digging in or changing formations may be given to the troops.

To close out the package there are Civil War re-enactment movies sprinkled throughout the game as well as an historical reference guide on the CD. For someone who wishes to partake in various battles throughout then entire war, *CIVIL WAR GENERALS 2* is a great game to accomplish this.

Turning to more recent history, SSI has released the long awaited sequel to the critically acclaimed *PANZER GENERAL* , appropriately titled *PANZER GENERAL 2,* first in the *Living Battlefield* series. Sporting new maps and graphics, this sequel improves on the original, but does not stray from that overall fun and simplicity. Battles can be fought from one of the 30 scenarios, five campaigns or ones constructed using the scenario builder. Interestingly, a new front has been added (America), where theoretical tank battles may be waged. Battles run the gamut from Leningrad to Tobruk.

Game play is very similar to the original with simple point and click routines used to maneuver units and attack targets. Victory conditions are based on victory objective hexes occupied at the end of the scenario. Units have normal wargame values which are used to calculate the outcomes of battles and movements. Most standard wargame principles are included (zone of control, supply, spotting, etc.), wrapped in an easy-to-use interface with concise menus and windows. Prestige is an important element in the game, with this morale feature helping to determine supply capability.

A great game to introduce people to the world of wargaming, *PANZER GENERAL 2* is also a nice change of pace for the experienced wargamer as well.

SONAR BLIPS

Blue Byte has released *INCUBATION*, a turn-based, tactical game reminiscent of the classic *X-COM*. Taking place on an alien planet, you are placed in charge of a squad of marines attempting to fight off mutated creatures who are attacking a human settlement. Action and movement points determine what your marines can do. Graphically amazing, especially with a fast, 3D-enabled machine, it provides over 30 missions to challenge you, with more appearing on the Blue Byte web site.

MAN OF WAR, from Strategy First and distributed by Virgin Interactive, is a strategy game putting you in command of the great sailing ships of the 18th and 19th centuries. Turns are preplanned. After plotting, the player jumps to a first-person perspective where you view the battle as it unfolds. Large scale battles of up to 150 ships are possible, and a scenario editor lets you design your own naval battles.

Interactive Magic has released the second in their GREAT BATTLES series, *THE GREAT BATTLES OF HANNIBAL*. It has more large-scale battles than the first title in the series and many new additions and improvements to the game engine, including an undo feature, group attacks and plenty of elephants. A great deal of reference material from that time period is also included on the CD.

Finally *TACOPS 98*, a revised and updated version of the *TACOPS* military strategy game by Major I.L. Holdridge will be published by Avalon Hill. One of the most realistic and accurate modern wargames, it will be a repackaging of the original game, scenarios and expansion disk with additional maps and new scenarios. Planned updates are also in the works.

★

Volume 31, Number 5 introduced two new features, the *Zone of Control* section and the *Up Periscope* column. Both drew considerable praise from readers, although it was the boardgame reviews which pleased the most, to the point that many readers listed the whole section as one of the top three articles in the issue. Congratulations to *ZOC* editors John Kisner and John Walker for a fine beginning. The series replay once again received numerous votes, despite (or perhaps due to) being very short. The *ASL* fans sent their feedback in great numbers (the Chicago guys voting early and often for Louie Tokarz's article). Bruce Monnin's excellent article on *HISTORY OF THE WORLD* was fourth, but will be considered for the volume's Editor's Choice Award anyway, given that voting on the *Zone of Control* section seemed to represent votes for the boardgame review phenomenon more than for any specific article within it.

The issue as a whole received a mediocre 5.0 rating (weighed down by a number of "terribles" from readers not interested in computer coverage, advertisements and diminshed focus on TAHGC games). Typical comments were "I really like the new format," "best issue in a long time" and "I like the mix of articles." This praise was leavened by detractors saying that the magazine is too diversified—trying to do too much. As they say in the movie industry, the proof will be at the box office and video store. Thus far, we are encouraged by subscriptions and renewals.

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The games recently played by the most respondents were *ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER, HANNIBAL: ROME VS. CARTHAGE, PANZERBLITZ* , *HISTORY OF THE WORLD* and *STALINGRAD for computer* (*World at War* series).

Michael Tsuk (Arlington, MA) is the winner of the feedback drawing and wins a one-year subscription extension.

★★★★★

Congratulations are due the designers, developers, testers, artists and others involved in the production and distribution of Avalon Hill's boardgame line. In 1997 they were all hits, according to *Games* magazine's December 1997 Buyer's Guide to the best 100 games of the year. *PRINCESS RYAN'S STAR MARINES* captured the title of Best Strategy and Conflict game; also recommended in that category are *AGE OF RENAISSANCE* and *TITAN: THE ARENA*., while *STOCK MARKET GURU* made the list in the Family Strategy category.

The Infiltrator's Report

★★★★★

In November, number 15 of *Vieille Garde*, the official bulletin of the French Wargame Academy, sent us the Old Guard 1996 Award—their award for the Best 1996 Foreign Product—for *HANNIBAL: ROME VS. CARTHAGE*. Meanwhile, old-time favorites, *SQUAD LEADER, DIPLOMACY* and *KINGMAKER,* remain atop the list of best boardgames according to the Leeds Wargames Club, sponsor of the United Kingdom's largest game show.

★★★★★

STARSHIP TROOPERS: Prepare for Battle, the new game by Ben Knight based on the movie, shipped in the last week of October. *SUCCESSORS: The Battles for Alexander's Empire* , a multi-player wargame by Richard H. Berg and Mark Simonitch, shipped in late November. *ATLANTIC STORM*, a multi-player card game on WW II naval convoy battles by Ben Knight, should be available in January.

★★★★★

TAHGC has acquired the worldwide publishing rights to the *TacOps* computer game system of Major I.L. Holdrige. The 1998 version will run on Mac and Windows95 or WindowsNT. The new CD will include new scenarios and maps, plus revisions of previously published ones. *TacOps* will remain focused on contemporary and near-future tactical level operations and will retain the no-nonsense user interface which appeals to the military market. Major H's goal is to offer long-term support to this computer title as added incentive to buyers seeking the multi-year availability and support that is critical for training simulations.

★★★★★

Contest #182 ("Once More into the Breach") turned out to be more confusing than intended. The difficulty revolved around misconceptions about control (perhaps fostered by divergence from the rule regarding receipt of income). Some entrants simply assumed that by converting the Florentine army into a garrison, control was retained. In this view, victory was assured for the outnumbered Florentines. However, receipt of income from a city and control of a city are defined differently in the rules. Control of a city and province go hand in hand as fully defined in rule 4.3. Facing an enemy army in the province, a friendly army in the city does not sustain control of the province/city (in fact, neither power controls the province/city). In the Spring, the control marker is removed and Florence would have control of no home cities. (Had Florence survived as a power from some other reason, then the unbesieged garrison in the city *would* provide its income to Florence—just as the enemy army in the province would yield the provincial income—see rule 8.2.)

Consequently, contestants had to keep the enemy out of the province of Florence (or recover control of another home city). The enemy moves are outlined in the volume 31, number 6. Due to the ambiguity in the rules, however, all contestants converting Army Florence into a garrison or bribing either Army Bologna or Army Pistoia are considered winners. Furthermore, to clear up the rule ambiguities and the implications of control for victory, conquest and unit adjustment, we provide errata and clarifications in this issue's question box on page 43. Who says contests are a waste of time?

★★★★★

Contest #183 ("Hot Zone") put contestants in the position of maximizing the point differential scored by the Arachnids over the Mobile Infantry in the 1970s game *STARSHIP TROOPER*. If you know the game well enough, you quickly deduce that only two possible answers exist and they revolve around how to direct the fire of the "E" Heavy Weapons unit. The other units have no choice: line-of-sight and terrain preclude choice by the other units. Without unit E, the Arachnids fire at the Retrieval boat with 4-1 odds (one-third chance of destruction, bagging 12 points—three points per stranded MI for the Arachnids). It is appealing for unit E to fire at 3-1 odds at the Platoon Sargeant and his carried WIA buddy. This will usually net one KIA and pin the other until the boat is gone, giving you four points. Unit E can double the chances of the attack on the Retrieval boat by joining the attack on it (5-1 odds). With a two-thirds chance of scoring 12 and only a one-third chance of giving up four points, the Arachnid player averages a gain of 6.67 points. The alternative (of shooting 3-1 at the PS & WIA and 4-1 at the boat) yields an average gain of a shade under 4.5 points. Concentrate fire on the boat. The water-filled bags can be digested in due time.

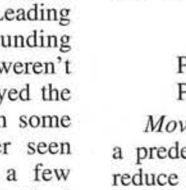
ALIEN METAMORPHOSIS

Variant Rules for *ALIENS*

By Stuart K. Tucker

Those of you who loved this game or can't find it (it is out of print) may want to check out the new version of STARSHIP TROOPERS*—different bugs and weaponry, but similar exciting action. "Sir, is this going to be a standup fight or another bug hunt?"*

With the release of another movie sequel, why not break out your old copy of Leading Edge's *ALIENS* for another heart-pounding escape? My friends and I did, but we weren't satisfied that the original game portrayed the movie well enough and came up with some minor modifications. Have you ever seen Vasquez survive after popping off a few grenades in Ops? Now you can. Are you tired of those light-weight pistols failing to serve a good purpose? Now you can hope to stick one up the mouth of a nearby alien. Don't you feel that carrying an incapacitated Marine should harm your aim a bit? After over 30 viewings of the movie, the discrepancies trouble the purist.



As fine as the game *ALIENS* portrays the movie, the connoisseur will appreciate these changes.

Hasty Shots. At the moment an alien enters a Marine's space, the Marine may squeeze off a point-blank hasty shot. Aim is affected by the weight of the weapon.

1. Pistols use the Aim 2 line, Range 1 column.
2. Pulse rifles and Shotguns use the Aim 1 line, Range 2 column.
3. Flame units use the Aim 1 line, Range 3 column.
4. Machine guns use the Aim 1 line, Range 5 column.

The usual acid spray takes effect in the space of the alien's attack.

Carrying Marines. A Marine carrying an incapacitated Marine must add three to firing die rolls (except for Hasty Shots—the advantage of the second pair of eyes over the shoulder helps in that case).

Grenade Effects. Before checking the normal Effect chart, see if the alien or Marine is hit. The alien in the target spot is automatically hit. Aliens one or two spaces away from the target spot must roll on the unwounded Burke card Aim 1 line to see if they are hit (and killed). Marines one to eight spaces away from the target spot must roll on the unwounded Burke card Aim 2 line to see if they are hit. If a Marine is hit, use the effects shown in the Grenade Table Effect (Marine) column. *Example*: Vasquez fires a grenade at range 3. It kills the targeted alien, but kills adjacent aliens on a 2 or less, and wills aliens two spaces away from the target on a 0. Vasquez must roll a 5 or higher to avoid being incapacitated.

Weapon Handling. Unload actions must be consecutive. Reload actions must be consecutive. In between unloading and reloading, other actions may be taken. It costs no actions to drop a weapon. It takes two actions to acquire the weapon from an incapacitated Marine in the same space.

Action cost:

	Unload	Reload
Pistol	1	2
Pulse Rifle	2	2

Movement Sequence. We have always used a predetermined Marine movement order to reduce coordination in the heat of battle. An alternative is a randomized sequence. At the start of each Marine turn, all Marines in combat resolve their melee attacks. Then, take the cards of non-incapacitated Marines and those not in combat or grabbed. Taking care to keep the wounded sides correctly up, shuffle these cards and move each Marine one at a time as revealed from the top of the deck. After all have moved, any grabbed Marine that has been freed may then move.

Reactor Room. Randomly place the Marines by rolling dice as if placing aliens, but add five to all rolls of 0-4 to keep the Marines distant from the exit. Then, give the Marines a free move parallel or away from the exit at the start of the game.

Ripley, What Are You Doing? In the reactor room scenario, on the turn in which the Marines take their second casualty, Ripley begins to move the APC to rescue them. Count 12 turns down the turn track to mark the arrival time. The APC bursts through the exit (use the Ripley card to mark it) three spaces deep into the room (killing anything in its path). Marines now exit the scenario by moving onto the card representing the APC. Aliens get one move to jump onto the APC before it departs. The first attacks Ripley through the windshield (Ripley adds two to melee value). If Ripley is grabbed, the APC doesn't depart. It takes two actions for another Marine to become the driver. Marines get Range 1 shots at any aliens on the APC card with them. Any alien not killed or stunned may attack any Marine on the APC.

Operations Room. In the operations room, aliens get three move actions, not four. Ripley may not move until she has shot three times with the pulse rifle. Then, Newt and Ripley may enter the passageway to the door.

Air Ducts. The explosive effects of a grenade double in range due to the nature of the passageways. Thereafter, the target location of the grenade blast costs three move actions to enter.

★

WHISPERS . . .

. . .The biggest news of the year has to be the astounding announcement that Wizards of the Coast has been granted a patent on aspects of the "trading card game method of play" by the US Patent Office (US Letters Patent 5,662,332). Soon, they'll be tapping the shoulders of the "me-too" companies for royalties—especially the ones which can't afford patent lawyers...Despite rumors of its demise, Spearhead games expects to continue production, but it has slowed production in the absence of dedicated management. If the company is sold, prepublication orders for *THUNDER OF HONOR* will be honored...Columbia Games is now supplying the public and retailers directly, which apparently has earned the displeasure of Chessex (a major game distributor)...Task Force games is apparently in negotiations with Amarillo Design Bureau over the fate of the *Captain's Logs* series (idle for the last two years). . . Decision Games plans to release in February 1998 a non-collectible card game on the Battle of the Bulge, called *NUTS*...Parker Brothers' *LIONHEART* (with big plastic toys and all) was shipped in November... Avalanche Press expects to put out *AIRLINES* in early 1998. Their volume two for *THE GREAT WAR AT SEA* will cover the North and Baltic Seas and should be available in March 1998...Rio Grande's *MEDICI* is expected in late March and *EL GRANDE* in June...Clash of Arms expects to release *WAR WITHOUT MERCY* in January. Their *La Bataille* series will next feature a new edition of *MOSCOW*, and *ORTHEZ*. They expect to release in 1998 a *Battles of the American Revolution* game on Brandywine/Germantown as well. *OPERATION SHARK* shipped in November...GMT's *JUGURTHA* and *PHALANX* (*Great Battles* modules) went to the printer in December. Designer Richard Berg is working on a campaign system covering the ancient world (presumably with an interface to GMT's *Great Battles of History* series). GMT is also planning *VICTORY*, a Napoleonic version of *GLORY*. . . Fat Messiah has put out a solitaire game, *LAST FRONTIER: THE VENUSIAN INCIDENT*, in which the player boards a crippled lab ship hurtling toward orbital re-entry, using his squad to rescue the crew from an alien horror. They also released a game called *SHAPESHIFTERS*, for 2-4 players, in which players take on different forms to crush their opponents...Ral Partha has released a fast-playing fantasy miniatures game, *BATTLESTORM*. . .

...**In computer strategy gaming news**...New World's *UPRISING* has been released...Blizzard was expected to release *STARCRAFT* by the end of 1997...In the fall, Interactive Magic released *SEVEN KINGDOMS*, a real-time game in which a player takes an emerging historical civilization from a modest village to conquest of the world. They are busily working on *GREAT BATTLES OF HANNIBAL*, for release this winter...In March 1998, Interplay plans to release Flatline Studio's *ALIEN INTELLIGENCE*, a real-time strategy game with simultaneous land and space combat... Impressions (division of Sierra On-line) released *CIVIL WAR GENERAL II* in October...SSI plans to release *SOLDIER'S WAR* in 1998, a turn-based game depicting individual US soldiers with over 40 actions possible by each. SSI also secured the exclusive worldwide rights for the computer version of Larry Bond's *Harpoon*^{4}, based on the award-winning miniatures game system. Their *Steel Panthers III* is also available, now scaled to 200 yards per hex…MicroProse is developing *Star Trek: The Next Generation: Birth of the Federation*, a turn-based multi-player strategy game of space exploration, expansion and tactical combat. They shipped in November their Sci-Fi/Fantasy expansion worlds for *Sid Meier's Civilization II*, and plan a multi-player version called *Ultimate Civ II*. —SKT

Firefight

Use only short, controlled bursts. Hit the weak spots and move out.

This column is dedicated to voicing gamer concerns about how the computer wargame genre can improve. I wish to generate short, constructive criticism from this magazine's readers *intended to help advance the computer game design process. Readers, mail me your comments (better yet, email them to AHGeneral@aol.com). —SKT*

1830 and *ADVANCED CIVILIZATION* are my favorites, because they are great games. Talonsoft's *Battleground Waterloo* has so much minute simulation that the game moves too slowly and the AI is weak. That's why *1830* is so great—the AI is so hard to beat. Computer manufacturers should concentrate on finding elegant games and creating sophisticated AI.

—Togu Oppusunggu, Brooklyn, NY

A note to those subjected to fire: take solace that you hold ground worthy of a fight.

★

CONVENTION CALENDAR

Please submit announcements at least six months in advance of the event to ensure timely publication. Feel free to e-mail information to ahgeneral.com

PrezCon '98
Feb. 26-Mar. 1, 1998, Charlottesville, VA

This fifth annual event sponsored by THe GAMe PLACe is held at The Double Tree Hotel (1-804-973-2121). It features a variety of multi-player boardgames, some two-player games, card games and miniatures, including demonstration for beginners. Registration before February 5th is $25; no event fees. Write PrezCon, P.O. Box 4661, Charlottesville, VA 22905 or call 804-961-6953.

Cold Wars 1998
March 6-8.1998, Lancaster, PA

Held at the Lancaster Holiday Inn Host Resort (717-299-5500), this miniatures convention, sponsored by the Historical Miniatures Gaming Society, will have as its theme this year the air war of the Great War. Write Cold Wars 1998, P.O. Box 5094, Herndon, VA 20172-1996 or email a co-director at dluff@erols.com or avatar@wam.umd.edu.

ENLIGHTMENT '97
March 7-8, 1998, Hunt Valley, MD

This dedicated *AGE OF RENAISSANCE* conference promises three rounds of the most intense multi-player action short of AvalonCon at the Hampton Inn—less than a mile from The Hunt Valley Inn. AvalonCon-style plaques and swiss pairings. $20 registration. For more information, write Don Greenwood, 1541 Redfield Rd., Bel Air, MD 21015.

1998 Midwest Open
March 7-8, 1998, Kenosha, WI

This *VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC* tournament will be held at the Days Inn at I-94 and State Rte. 50 (414-857-2311) and features six rounds of open swiss-style, AREA-sanctioned competition for five prizes. Pre-registration is $20 by February 21st. Write Glenn E.L. Petroski, 6829 23rd Ave., Kenosha, WI 53143-1233 or call 414-654-5044 or e-mail GELP@Juno.com.

Little Wars 1998
March 13-15, 1998, Rosemont, IL

This wargame miniatures convention will be held at the Ramada Hotel O'Hare (847-827-5131). Write Harold Johnson, 315 Hakins Rd., Lake Geneva, WI 53147 or call 414-248-3625.

March Madness '98 ASL Tournament
March 13-15, 1998, Overland Park, KS

This third annual ASL convention in Kansas City is sponsored by Kinetic Energy Products and is a six-round, Swiss style tourney with special prizes for best novice and intermediate. Pre-registration is $15 before March 1st, or $20 afterwards. Write Mike Reed, 16200 W. 143rd Terrace, Olathe, KS 66062 or call 913-780-1297.

Egyptian Campaign 1998
March 27-29, 1998, Carbondale, IL

This 11th annual convention is held on the campus of Southern Illinois University and features special guests, boardgames (including *DIPLOMACY*), card games, role-playing, auction and miniatures contest. Write S.I.U.C. Strategic Games Society, Office of Student Development, 3rd Floor Student Center, Carbondale, IL 62901-4425 or call Joel Nadler at 618-529-4630 or email ECGamCon@aol.com or visit www.siu.edu/~gamesoc.

ASL Scandinavian Open 1998
April 3-5, 1998, Copenhagen, Denmark

This will feature a 5-round, swiss-style tournament, with choice of three scenarios in each round. Write Michael Hastrup-Leth, Husumgade 19, 4.Tv, 22 Copenhagen, Denmark or e-mail hastrup@image.dk.

1998 ASL Open in Chicago
April 24-26, 1998, Burr Ridge, IL

This seven-round tournament features computerized pairings using Chicago-style scoring and includes a team tournament. Scenario list provided to pre-registrants. Shuttles to Midway and O'Hare. Registration is $15 but $18 after March 1. Write Louie Tokarz, 5724 W. 106th St., #2E, Chicago Ridge, IL 60415 or call 708-857-7060 or email MGLouie@aol.com. Web page at member.aol.com/HymesC/WCW.html.

Havoc XIV
April 25-26, 1998, Ayer, MA

BCBoston Inc.'s 14th annual wargame convention will be held at the Fort Devens Gymnasium. Write Peter Mancini, 200 Bedford Rd., Apt. 17A, Wobrun, MA 01801 or call 617-933-9975

GameFest '98
May 1-3, 1998, Timonium, MD

The Games Club of Maryland will host their first annual convention, with a strong focus on Avalon Hill boardgames. Organizers are seeking interested GMs. Write Gamefest, 9 Augusta Wood Court, Reisterstown, Maryland 21136 or E-mail gamesofmd@aol.com or visit www.rtgames.com/gamefest.

Montreal ASL Festival
May 2-3, 1998, Montreal, Quebec

Held at the Downtown Days Inn (1-800-567-0880), this con is limited to 28 players and features 4-5 rounds with choice of 3 scenarios/round. Point scoring like at ASL Open. Prizes to top two players. Registration is $15. Write Michael Rodgers, 5187 Beamish, Pierrefonds, Quebec, Canada H8Z 3G4 or phone 514-620-5757 or email Michael-Rodgers@compuserve.com.

Tachy~Con
June 5-7, 1998, Orlando, FL

The FUN Florida Science-Fiction Convention will be held at the Adam's Mark Hotel at Florida Mall (800-444-ADAM) and will feature guest authors, 24-hour programming and gaming, panels, auction, dealers, workshops, contests and more. Registration is $20 before April 1st; $25 afterwards. Visit http://www.ao.net/~tachycon or write tachycon@ao.net or P.O. Box 3382, Winter Park, FL 32790-3382 or call 407-628-1454.

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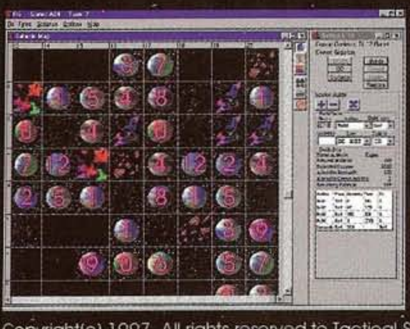

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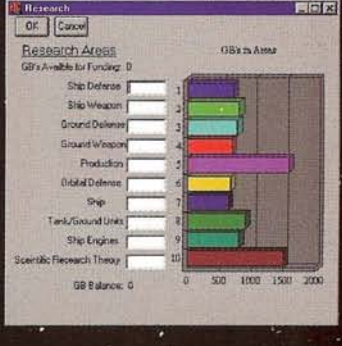
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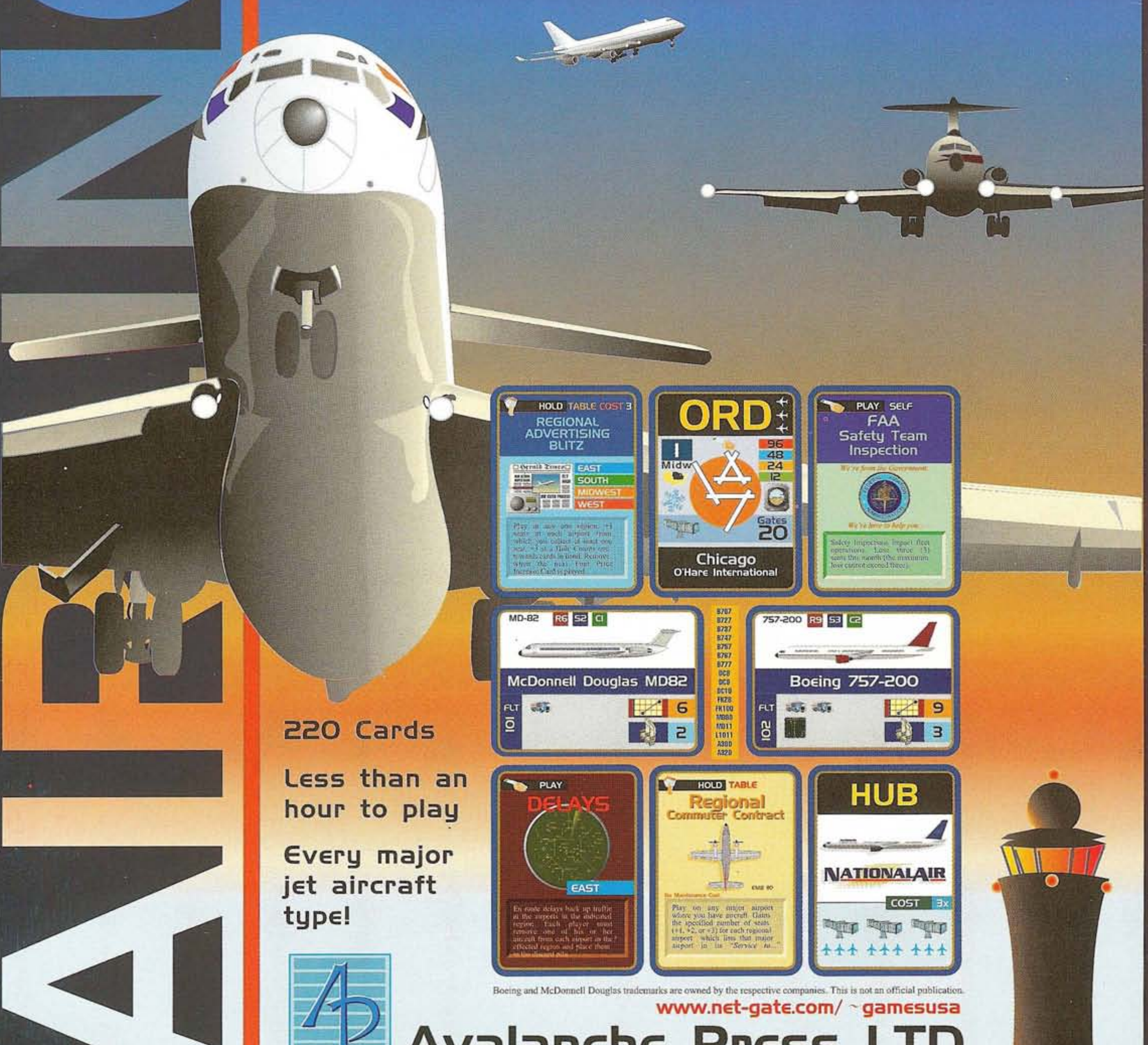
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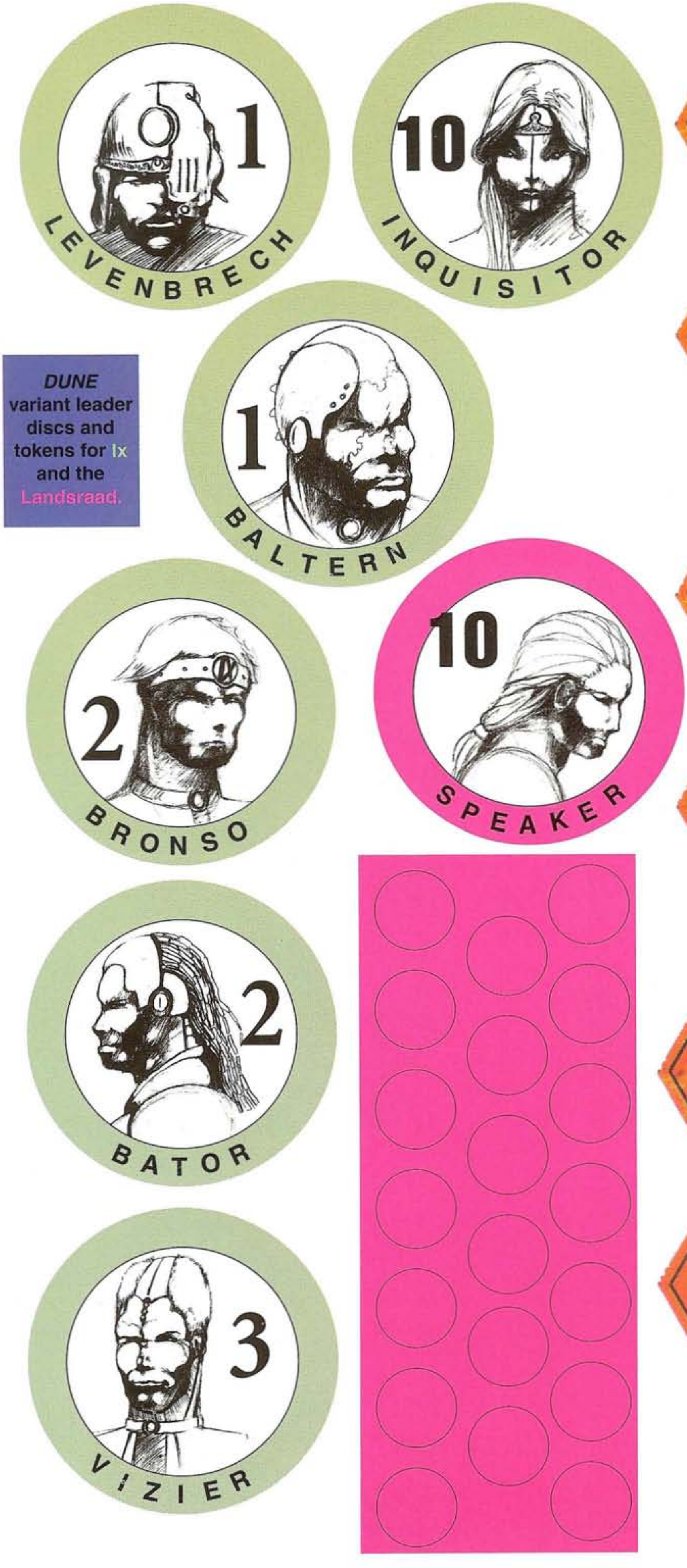
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BALTERN
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BRONSO
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BATOR
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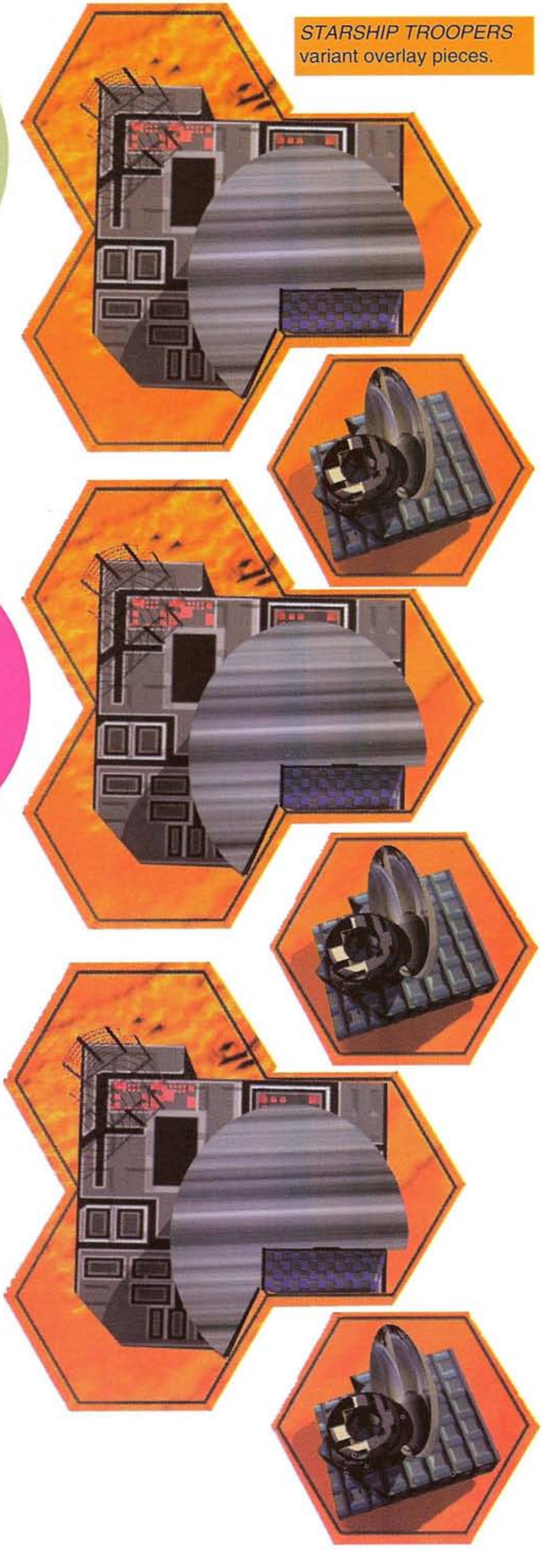

Dear Reader,

It has been over two years since we last surveyed our readers. The results were extremely helpful. Your answers led to many of the new features and our new look. The changes have resulted in an increase in our circulation, our subscriptions and our subscription renewals. All answers that you provide are confidential and no personal information will be shared with anyone. We look forward to seeing the results of this survey and urge you to participate.

---

1. Do you read any magazines about boardgames, history, or strategy? Check all that apply:
   ☐ American History ☐ America's Civil War ☐ Aviation History
   ☐ Command ☐ Dragon ☐ Duelist ☐ Fangoria ☐ Fire & Movement ☐ Games
   ☐ Inquest ☐ Military History ☐ Moves ☐ Pyramid ☐ Shadis
   ☐ Starlog ☐ Strategy & Tactics ☐ World War II ☐ Other:

   ____

   ____

2. How many people, including yourself, read your copy of *The General*? ________

3. What types of games (excluding computer games) do you play? (check all that apply)
   ☐ Card games (non-collectible, excluding games like Bridge, Pinochle, etc.)
   ☐ Collectible card games ☐ Diplomatic games ☐ Family games ☐ Fantasy games
   ☐ Finance games ☐ Historical strategy games ☐ Live-action role-playing games
   ☐ Military simulation games ☐ Railroad games ☐ Role-playing games
   ☐ Science Fiction ☐ Trivia games ☐ Word games

3a. In question 3, above, circle the two types of games you play most often.

4. My favorite boardgames can be played in the following amount of time: (select one)
   ☐ 1 hour or less ☐ 1 to 2 hours ☐ 2 to 5 hours
   ☐ More than 5 hours ☐ Extended play over 3 or more sessions

5. Even if you chose 3 or more hours in questions 4, do you think that all games should include a quick-start version that can be played in 1 to 2 hours?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ It doesn't matter

6. How many board games do you purchase each year?
   ☐ 1 to 4 ☐ 5 to 8 ☐ 9 to 12 ☐ more than 12

7. Which of the following sources do you use to obtain information about boardgames?
   ☐ Browsing in stores ☐ Colleagues, Friends ☐ Game Magazines
   ☐ History Magazines ☐ Salespeople ☐ Internet ☐ Contact the company directly
   ☐ Other

8. Do you own a computer? ☐ Yes ☐ No

8a. If no, do you plan to buy one?
   ☐ within the next 6 months ☐ this year ☐ no plan to buy

9. What kind of computer do you own?
   ☐ 486 ☐ Pentium 100 or less ☐ Pentium higher than 100 ☐ Pentium II
   ☐ Macintosh ☐ Macintosh/PowerPC

10. How much RAM (memory) is in your computer? _______ MB

11. Does your PC have a CD-ROM drive? ☐ Yes ☐ No

12. Do you access the Internet? ☐ Yes ☐ No

13. If no, how likely are you to begin using the Internet within the next 6 months?
☐ Very likely ☐ Somewhat likely ☐ Not very likely
☐ Not at all likely ☐ Don't know

14. Do you play computer games? ☐ Yes ☐ No

15. If yes, Which of the following types of computer games do you play regularly (check all that apply)?
☐ Real-time strategy ☐ Turn-based strategy ☐ War/Military ☐ Adventure
☐ Role Playing ☐ Sports ☐ Simulators (like flight,. car sim's, etc.) ☐ Puzzle ☐ Education
☐ Gambling ☐ Action/Arcade ☐ None

16. Have you played on-line games via email or the Internet? ☐ Yes ☐ No

17. If no, how likely are you to start playing computer games on-line within the next 6 months?
☐ Very likely ☐ Somewhat likely ☐ Not very likely
☐ Not at all likely ☐ Don't know

18. How many computer games do you purchase each year?
☐ 1 to 4 ☐ 5 to 8 ☐ 9 to 12 ☐ more than 12 ☐ none

19. What computer magazines do you regularly read:
☐ Computer Gaming World ☐ Strategy Plus ☐ PC Gamer
☐ PC Games ☐ Next Generation ☐ Home PC ☐ Boot ☐ Computer Life
☐ PC Computing ☐ Windows Magazine ☐ Computer Game Entertainment
☐ None ☐ Other:

____

20. Which of the following sources do you use to obtain information about computer games?
☐ Browsing in stores ☐ Colleagues, Friends ☐ Computer Magazines
☐ Computer Gaming Magazines ☐ Television ☐ Internet
☐ Newspapers/News magazines ☐ Salespeople ☐ Other:

____

21. What is your age?
☐ Under 18 ☐ 18-24 ☐ 25-34 ☐ 35-44 ☐ 45-54 ☐ 55+

22. Please indicate your gender. ☐ Male ☐ Female

23. Please check your approximate total income before taxes
☐ Under $19,999 ☐ $20,000-$29,999 ☐ $30,000-39,999
☐ $40,0000-$49,999 ☐ $50,000-$59,999 ☐ $60,000-$74,999
☐ $75,000-$99,999 ☐ $100,000+

24. What is the highest level of education you have attained?

☐ High school graduate ☐ Attended college ☐ Graduated college
☐ Post graduate study ☐ Post graduate degree

25. Which category best describes your occupation?

☐ Chairman, President, CEO ☐ Director, Dept. Head, Manager
☐ Other administrator ☐ Science, Engineer, Tech. Specialist
☐ Professional/Educator ☐ Clerical ☐ Laborer
☐ Other employed ☐ Semi-retired ☐ Retired

26. Overall, how satisfied are you with *The General*?

☐ Very satisfied ☐ Generally satisfied ☐ Not very satisfied

Thank you so much for helping. It is very important for us to know as much as possible about our readers. Fold this form in half so that our return address is exposed and tape both open sides.

Please use this space to make any comments about *The General.* Tell us about things you'd like to see more of or what you'd like to see less. You can even say what you'd like to see Avalon Hill produce. Only you can tell us how we can serve you better. Thanks again for helping with the survey and thank you for any comments you make here.

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The very thorough manual, which is on the CD, is accessible from within the game. If you love detailed wargames **TacOps Classic** is sure to please.

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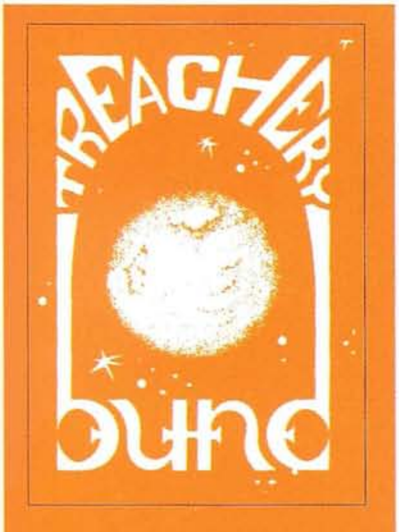

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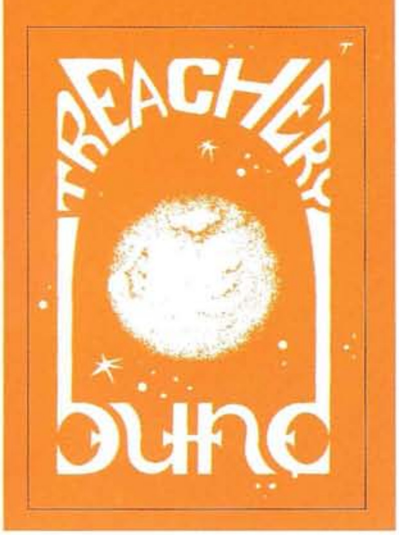

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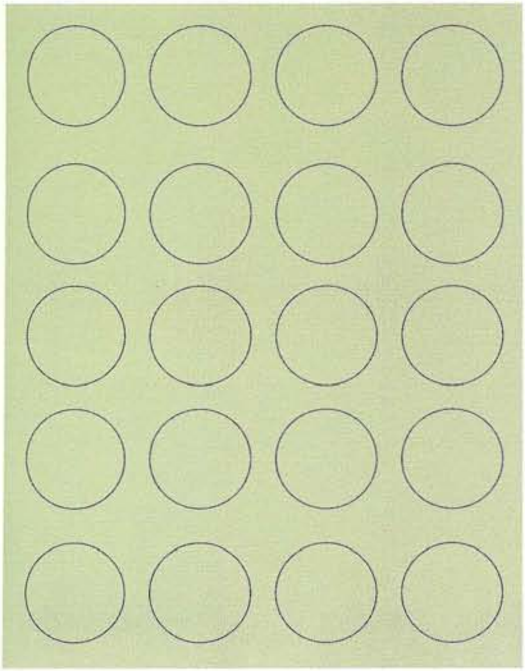

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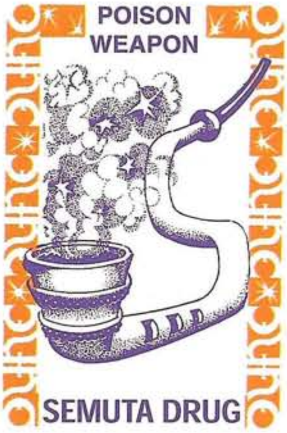
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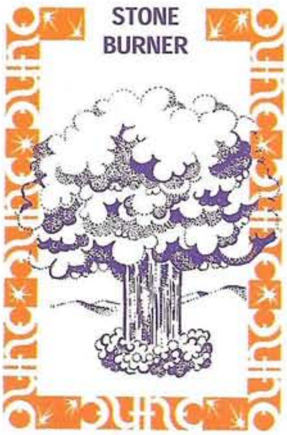
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