

WHISPERS OF THE WOOD



GAME
SYSTEMS
INC.

PO BOX 160129 Miami, FL 33116-0129

forwarding & address correction requested



WORDS FROM THE WOODS

Well,well, you know they say that everything comes to he who waits. Well, we've been waiting to see why we ever joined the Better Business Bureau (other than to make everybody feel better) and now we know. Apparently, people who are new to PBM are getting interested in ME-PBM and, what do you know, they're calling the BBB to check on our outstanding history. Good going, BBB! It's nice to know that 11 years of service is remembered by someone!

"Just the FAX ma'am!" Not quite the quote as I remember it, but it conveys the meaning. Now that we have finally installed the FAX line, those of you who need to send those late turns can do so. Fax turns sent to us will cost the same additional \$3.00 that call-in turns cost and they can be sent in during normal call-in hours (i.e. 6p.m. to 9.a.m. EST) WARNING!! Remember that all turns for a due date are due BEFORE that due date. Turns are run bright and early on the due date, so turns - even FAX turns - sent ON the due date will NOT be run! A word to the wise....Speaking about phone-in turns, please take note of these suggestions:

Don't forget your security code, game number, and player number!

Speak clearly and (especially for ME-PBM) SPELL OUT your Character ID's


Remember that phone-ins are for YOUR convenience. GSI cannot correct errors made in transcribing your phone-ins to a turnsheet! We try to be exceptionally careful, but the best way to send your turn is to send it in on time! And when you send it in, USE THE GSI RETURN ENVELOPE! These are sent to you with our address already printed with the correct bar code to insure speedy delivery to us. If you don't use it, you stand a greater chance to have your turn come in late!

Middle-earth is still growing at a very strong rate, in 2-week games as well as in 3-week games. So if you're interested in a slightly longer time to mull over your turns, send in your registration for the 3-week game!

As you know, Venom is the only game that was not created or designed by GSI personnel. Because of various suggestions that have come in from players over the years, we have decided to take Venom off the shelf and look into updating it and incorporating all of your suggestions. So, starting immediately, no further new games of Venom will be opened. I'll let you know what new and exciting changes have been made to it as we go along.

Finally, remember that if you get new friends to register for any of our games, make sure that they tell us that you referred them. It will win you a free turn for every new registration! Spread the word around!

Good Gaming,


Pete Stassun



ALONG THE PATHWAYS

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WHISPERS OF THE WOOD is a monthly publication primarily for the use and enjoyment of GSI players of EARTHWOOD, EARTHWOOD - THE SEA KINGS, STATE OF WAR, VENOM, AND ME-PBM™. Subscription rates: \$15.00 for one year (12 issues) or \$25.00 for two years (24 issues). Individual issues cost \$1.75. GSI reserves the right to change these prices without prior notice of any type. Back issues available.

Credits

Editor.....Harold Ford
Staff.....Richard Figueroa, Judith Heath & Michelle Heath
Publishers.....Pete Stassun & Bill Feild Jr

This Month's Cover: "Bounty Hunter"
by Amelia James

PERSONALS, CLASSIFIEDS, AND WHAT-NOTS. . .

Every current player in a GSI game is entitled to a free forty word submission to this column each issue, for each game they are in. Further submissions require a charge after the initial 40 words of \$2.00 per each additional 40 (41-80 words is \$2.00 etc.). GSI reserves the right to refuse material deemed unsuitable.

GENERAL

Anyone interested in the Play-by-Mail Player's Guild contact:

Chris Gorde
1510 S 93rd St
Tacoma, Wa 98444-4253

Middle-earth™ PBA

GAME 2

Evil forces and cities vaporize before us! Barad Dur is now renamed "Freeland". Soon Quiet Avenger and Haradwaith will flee before us whimpering as they go. Where is the Cloudwimp and the rest of the Dark weirdos? Speak Up!

GAME 3

Foolish Dúnedan of Northern Gondor, thrice now have your armies come to Minas Ithil, and thrice we have destroyed them! Now it is time for Osgiliath to fear our wrath. Tremble, and bow down before me!

Ren the Unclean

Uvatha: I'll be back. Dendra Dwar: Mordnnon is mine! Neutrals: The time of decision is rapidly approaching.

Baaltroc

Yoo-hoo! Tarondor! Have you seen Alandur lately? Last I saw, he was

having a beer with one of my assassins... Oh. Never mind.

Psycho-Pirate
Cloud Lord

Northmen,

Are you still sleeping easy at night knowing my assassins lurk in your cities? Or has our thieving caused your bankruptcy? There are so many ways to die...

Uvatha, Undisputed
Overlord of Rhovanion

GAME 4

The black hand has closed around the heart of Arthedain. Now it is time to finish the job I started against the Lords of Cardolan. I wish to talk to all followers of Sauron. Please drop a card.

Witch-King #11

In a three round exhibition match, the Quiet Avenger falls to Southern Gondor. How long will the Witch-King last? Odds are the match will be over by round five.

GAME 6

Dear Rick and Wendy Whiner, Judging from the notes I've received, nobody knows which side I'm going to join. So what? Sounds like I'm playing the position of a neutral pretty well. I'm still waiting for one side or the other to gain the upper hand. What a novel concept, eh?(see rule book)

PS - Elrond, your strategy of trying to scare me into going good has been unique. Fortunately for the Free Peoples, I am not subject to kneejerk reactions. Beating up on the evils would be much more effective.

King Crimson, Overlord
of the Corsairs

GAME 8

In the stillness of the night, a blood-curdling cry tears through all of Middle-Earth. Beware, all ye Free Peoples, for it is the hunting cry of the Nine.

Akhorahil, The Blind
Sorcerer

GAME 9

You goodie-goodies shall quail in fear as I unleash my legions of assassins. None of your towns are safe from my dark agents.

Cloud Lord

GAME 12

Middle-Earth News Flash:
Free Peoples throughout the land rejoice as the combined forces of Northern and Southern Gondor flood into the lands of Mordor destroying all who resist them.

Hail, Lords of Endor!

The Easterling realm strongly intends to join the Dark Servants. Dark Servants, do not lapse in your tasks! Fellow Neutrals-join the front ranks of the Evils rather than becoming the pawns of Gondor!

Ovatha II

To those who serve Sauron:

Dying time is here. Anyone anywhere, anytime. So speaks Hand Harry vacationing at the hot springs in Mordor.

GAME 13

We Dunlendings have turned Good, not Evil! When we grow stronger, we will assist the nations of light in dispersing the Darkness of Mordor and Angmar. Our hearts are ready and our hands are forging the weapons of victory.

Enion

Attention all Nations of Middle-Earth:

In my capacity as the Messenger of the Nine, I hereby extend our warmest welcome to the Rhudaur nation as they join the ranks of the Dark Lord. We also offer our farewell to the Eothraim and the Northmen as they pass from the realm of Middle-Earth. Hail Sauron!

Uvatha, the Horseman,
Ninth of the Nazgul

Gothmog stood atop the broken galenhouse and surveyed the fanatic horde before him. "You smell that smell?...You smell that SMELL!!" The horde groaned in answer. The smells of burning wood and dead horses permeated the air. "It's the smell of victory...Sack the city." Gothmog reflected upon what had transpired. The capture of the Eothraim capitol would please Sauron. A wicked smile slowly cracked across Gothmog's face at the thought of Sauron being pleased. Gothmog turned his eyes westward into the forest known as Mirkwood. Suddenly, an evil and blood-curdling laugh broke forth

from Gothmog as he thought of cleaning the woods. A cleaning of all that is good...

GAME 14

"Good Morning Mordor"
The Easterlings

Come on, Summer. Come on,
Summer. Come on, Summer. Come
on, Summer. (Boy, is it cold up here!)
Psycho-Pirate, Witch-King

I'm sure glad I brought a gas mask
with me, It sure smells in Mordor!
We'll have to wipe out those foul
orcs soon or my troops will die from
asphyxiation!

Mahrcared

GAME 15

Goodbye Celdrahil. Your stay was
much too brief. Such is the fate of
all who oppose the Lidless Eye. Free
Peoples, your doom is nigh!

GAME 16

Does anyone out there (other than
the Corsairs) want to see the Harad
win this game?? I thought not.
Surely Good and Evil can agree on
ONE thing. You take half, we'll take
half and we'll get rid of this guy!
Get out now, Corsairs. Harad is going
down, don't let him drag you down
with him. There is no need. Death to
Haradwaith!!

GAME 18

Dragon Lord: Your time is done.
Witch-King: Hit and Run? Kentucky
Fried Nazgul: Nice card. Show
yourself in the light of day. All who
threaten me. Come out and play.
Beoraborn, Bear King of the Woods

GAME 19

The Haradwaith are accepting
proposals from the Free Peoples and
dark servants. Which side shall
almighty Haradwaith decide to join?
It's up to you.
PS- To the Free Peoples of GAME #3,
Squish the Witch-King like the bug
he is and don't commit the same
mistake I did.

Zarendarger

I, Marl Tarma, of the nation of
Arthedain, bid thee greetings in the
name of my lord, King Argeleb II.
Free Peoples, please contact me.
Dark Servants, prepare to die.

Marl Tarma,
Minister of Defense

GAME 21

Dear Elves:

Thank you so much for your
help. Now I can turn south and
settle old scores!

Dandy the Dunlendings

The King of Gondor hereby invites all
nations to send envoys to Minas
Arnor to discuss our future
relationship. This includes the Dark
Servants as well.

Baaltroc

The evil stinking presence of the
Dragon Lord must be removed from
Mirkwood, but I cannot deal with
him alone. Come to my aid
Woodmen, Dwarves and Eothraim!
Neutrals are invited to join in
victory. Rally around the Sinda!

Amroth

STATE OF WAR

GAME 73

Those who oppose, enjoy the
sleep of death imposed. He walks in
your dreams.

Sandman, A Division of
Hard Harry Enterprises

GAME 75

Those who oppose, enjoy the
sleep of death imposed. He walks in
your dreams.

Sandman, A Division of
Hard Harry Enterprises

GAME 76

Now that peace rules in the West, I
am opening up some of the
parklands to tourists. Interested
Governors can take a peaceful, fun-
filled two-week vacation for a mere
\$5mm.

Governor of Kansas

GAME 77

I now have two heads mounted on
pikes outside my Capitol. Who's
next?

Ivan the Terrible, Czar of
Wisconsin, Legions of Death

EARTHWOOD - THE SEA
KINGS

GAME 39

Oh great sorcerer and mighty High
Elves, you can no longer run and
hide your puny forces from the
unstoppable tides of the mighty
mutant wizards. We will conquer all
and become the Sea Kings.
Beware all in Middle Earth PBM the
mutant wizards will soon expand

our kingdom throughout all of
Middle Earth also. The Enchantress
Hot Stuff, has spoken.

GAME 40

Gnewt Rocknee was an honorable
opponent. He fought bravely and
well but could not win alone or with
those he had as allies. He earned the
respect of

The Voice of Reason

GAME 41

To: Samwise
From: King Micron
Many a fool has proclaimed himself
wise. But just saying it doesn't
make it so. But do not take my
words wrong. It was probably an
oversight. The Athian player is #9
not #12 as you previously reported.
I have no quarrel with you but if
you want to take on 10000 of my
con points I might be persuaded to
grant your wish.

Lord of the Athians

Rangers,
Your city was far removed
from where I expected, but at last I
found you. It's pay back time!
Conjuror

EARTHWOOD -
ORIGINAL

GAME 220

I thought it was about time I paid a
visit to you, Wizard, to return the
favor of all the house calls you
made to me. Hmmm, this is such a
lovely city, I think I'll stay...

Tyr

GAME 225

Dear Sniffles,

Sounds great! We'll winter in the mountains and summer in the forest. When do you want to get married.

Sweetly Yours,
Sandy

GAME 226

To all who remain, We have entered the home stretch, To my opponents,

Prepare to die! To my allies, A toast to another victory.

Arintine, The Original
Party Animal

GAME 227

"Beware! Circle of blood alliance has been found to be players 2, 9, 14 and 22. They have already claimed themselves as winners of the game. Players unite and destroy this wretched alliance! They must be eliminated!"

Characters, Encounters and Neutrality

by Christopher Dexter

Since the playtesting of Middle-Earth PBM began I have gone from confused beginner to experienced addict. When each turn arrives, I spend literally hours studying the turn results, gathering information from other players, calculating army movement, and finally deciding what I will do with each Character. And until my next turn arrives, I am both excited and fearful of what will happen to my Characters.

The Characters of each nation are the tools by which everything is accomplished in the game. The problem for the new player is how to use all the characters as effectively as possible. The following suggestions are what work for me:

1. Create dual-skilled characters instead of single-skilled. Dual-skilled characters will always be able to use both orders to do something important for your nation. No order is "wasted" because he or she has already issued an order for their particular skill. Create characters where one of their skills is either Command or Mage. These skills are the best to have for Personal Challenges if they are continuously improved along with whatever other skill is chosen with it. Creating characters with either Command or Mage skill will produce

the following combinations: Command/Emissary, Command/Agent, Command/Mage, Agent/Mage, and Emissary/Mage.

2. Create the maximum number of Characters as you are allowed to do so. The more Characters a nation has the more orders can be issued to improve that nation.

3. Keep the newer Characters at the Capital. One reason is to build up those skill ranks while the higher skilled characters accomplish things elsewhere. The second reason is that there is always business to be transacted at the Capital. Items always need to be bought, sold, or transported to some population center. Newer characters can make themselves useful transacting business while they work to bring up their ranks.

4. Have at least two Mages in each army, one equipped with offensive spells and one with defensive spells to aid your army in combat. Mage power makes a very big difference in battles.

5. Have a couple Mages learning and casting Lore spells to find artifacts, locate foreign characters, learn foreign characters' skill ranks, etc.

6. Have a Company or several Characters wander around the map in hexes that are unpopulated. Encounters are found this way and they can be beneficial if they are handled wisely.

So far in Middle-Earth PBM, I have come across three types of encounters. The first type always came as a result of searching for a particular artifact. A path or cave was found and upon investigating the encounter the Characters arrived in an area where all time had ceased and before them appeared a riddle. The riddle needs to be answered correctly. The answer must fit all the lines of the riddle because several answers may seem to be right with only some of the lines. A correct answer reveals an artifact, and an incorrect answer causes everything to fade away. Getting a correct answer to the riddle may take incredible research through works of J.R.R. Tolkien and all the other suggested supplemental materials. Which is why collecting these books and materials is highly recommended if a player desires to do well in this game.

The second type of encounter was an ominous run in with a dragon. My character decided to explore Mount Erebor and walked right into a black dragon's lair. The dragon asked for my character's name and awaited my response. Looking over several options with a friend who has read "The Lord of the Rings" over ten times, he quoted to me something Bilbo remembered as he had his conversation with Smaug which was that, "It is not wise to give your name to a dragon." So, stating my character's name was out, and in time I eliminated most of the six or seven other options and settled on 'acting meek'. The result was that my character used flattery on the dragon which pleased him and caused him to laugh. My character chose that moment to take off for home, but as

she left, the dragon threatened that he would kill her very soon.

Since then I've thought that perhaps I could have given the dragon some other nation's Character's name. Perhaps the dragon would have worked some evil magic on one of them.

Another player told me that one of his characters walking through the mountains found a large valley that was filled both length and breadth with a giant red dragon. I'm sure the sight made him soil his armor.

The third type of encounter I've found was that a traveling character saw a burning tower whose flames were unbearably hot. I was given the options of running into the tower to see if anyone was alive in there, waiting for the flames to die down and then go in, or searching around the area. Well, since the flames were "unbearably" hot, I felt that taking the first option would be foolish. I decided to wait until the flames died down and then investigate. Well, the flames never died down, so my character got bored and left. I now believe that he should have searched around instead.

Now, I have also heard a rumor that there is an artifact guarded by a large group of giants in a mountain hex. They should only be approached by a company of powerful characters. This encounter should prove to be, in fact it does exist, a very unique and challenging situation.

Another unique and challenging situation is the playing of a neutral nation in Middle-Earth PBM. I purposely took on that challenge recently mainly to experience it and to see how much information I could receive from both the Free Peoples and the Dark Servants. At first both sides courted me with many phone calls and notes encouraging me to join with them or to attack some nation. They also wanted me to act as a double agent to obtain information from the other side without their

knowing. Some nations even sent me their turn zero printout in exchange for mine and that taught me a lot in respect to how powerful some of my neighbors were in comparison to the nation I controlled. But, the fun was short-lived in that both sides grew weary of trying to get me to join their side. The phone calls gradually stopped coming as both sides began not to trust me because I still remained neutral. I concluded that a

neutral nation must choose what their allegiance will be when they realize that the courtships are over and when they also see which side will give them the most support and protection in future play. In my case, I was completely surrounded by Free nations and found them to be more strategically intelligent than were the Dark Servants, therefore I joined the Free Peoples.

Tales of Middle-earth PBC

Khand Amu

by Tom McCillen.

It wasn't necessary to count up the numbers to evaluate the situation, you could see it in the eyes of the newly recruited archers. It was something beyond fear, beyond despair, it was a resolve as tough as the desert grit that caused those deep set eyes to be deeply lined in a perpetual squint. Earlier perhaps, many of those eyes had indeed widened in surprise, or perhaps terror, as the hills near the river had blackened with the arrival of the enemy, many thousands strong. but now the stoic resolve of the desert warrior had returned. At Khand Amu, the Variag would make their stand.

None of us knew what had brought about the Dark Lord's obsession with the destruction of the Peoples of the East, but clearly His Servants now pursued their objective with a fanaticism past all rational thought. Ignoring the activities of the Free Peoples, the riders and the Lieutenants had been attacking our remote towns and villages, the Cloud Lord's assassins had been busy in our capital, several other armies trekked across the wasteland toward us and, most terrifying of all the Dark Lord himself had, in one evening obliterated our main field army, and note the Sorcerer was coming to Khand Amu.

And once again we would be ready. The wild free people of the desert would not accept servitude, we would not beg for our lives. We would not be forced to kneel with a knife at our throats. It was much better to die in the field with our swords in our hands.

Our deployment was typical of the desert peoples. The newly raised units of archers set up in a screen to the front of our center. Our light cavalry wings, each 500 strong, extended far into the plains on each flank. Lord Ovatha and the solid ranks of heavy chariots occupied the center, standing as steady and unbreakable as an outcrop of granite. By contrast, the enemy had not a single mounted warrior. Their screen was vast - thousands of skirmishing swordsmen to their right, as many archers on the left. Behind them, on the right stood the massive phalanx of close order infantry armed with huge bronze swords, to their left, a teeming mob of ill disciplined rabble, probably slaves. Both sides' plans were obvious from their deployments. The sorcerer, (and Akhorahil was undoubtedly present, even though he had placed nominal command with one of his doltish minions, presumably so that he could concentrate on his dark magic)/ intended to pin us with his

overwhelming abundance of skirmishes, then refuse the dubious troops on his left and attempt to smash through with a great oblique attack of the heavy swordsmen. Our plan was to outmaneuver both flanks with our light cavalry, to which the enemy had no effective counter, then, with the enemy fragmented, disordered, and facing several directions at once, sweep them away with the fanatic charge of the chariots. It was a good plan, and ordinarily would have given us confidence even though we were outnumbered by over two to one. However all of our commanders were well aware that the greatest strength of the Sorcerer lay not in strength of arms, but rather in the black robed mages who could destroy entire divisions without raising a weapon.

At this point, to our horror, great Lord Ovatha rode slowly, alone out beyond the front of our lines on his mighty dun stallion Bhazad Khan. Clearly our Lord intended to give challenge before that vast enemy host, yet he was the sinew that held our army together, the reason we were willing to make our stand before this terrifying enemy, and if he were to be cut down we would soon be slaughtered where we stood, and somewhere in that throng stood the Great Sorcerer himself.

Our lord was not given to the taunting, mocking challenges favoured by our enemies; in a calm clarion voice he simply cried out " I desire to see the face of the commander who dares to enter my lands. I desire to cross swords with him, if he will." There followed a noisy stirring throughout the enemy ranks, an anticipation that their despised general must answer, for surely he could not suffer grievous loss of face at the very moment of battle, or if not he, surely Akhorahil himself would step forward to deal with this mortal. But, indeed none responded to the challenge, and our hearts filled with pride, and an even

greater resolve not to show cowardice before the great commander who now wheeled his horse back to take his place at the front of our lines.

With that it began. The enemy rolled stubbornly forward, straight for the center of our formation. Our cavalry started to snake around both flanks, but on our right the archers extended their flanks and held us at bay with a great hail of arrows. Suddenly the Old One stepped to the front and began a slowly oscillating, rhythmic movement in time to his almost inaudible chanting. Huge boulders of ice appeared from the air, and leapt across the void between our armies, crashing into the archers and scattering them like antelope before a lion. At the same time a black mage was heard in that same sector screaming a dark curse that few among the living had heard, causing many of those cavalry men on our right to pitch forward and die in convulsing agony. These however were Variag, and despite their hatred and fear of magic the survivors continued on their mission. The slaves were clearly not inspired to fight, especially for a craven commander, and as they became encircled he knew it would not take long to break them. Lord Ovatha ordered the High Mage forward, and silently pointed at the slaves. The High Mage and our Lord had been through countless battles together, and no more need be said. The mage held out his hands, fingertips fully extended, and sharply spoke but two words. Streams of fire coursed into the already shaken ranks of the enemy and the entire wing broke and ran. The remnants of our cavalry on that side moved in to roll up the flank, when, though the dust obscured our view, we knew that a second dark mage had made his presence known, since from somewhere within the enemy formation wide streaks of hoar frost spread out toward us across the beaten grass, and many of our front rank horsemen were frozen where they

stood, as solid and lifeless as the mountains of Mordor on the horizon. This second terrible event was too much for even men to endure, and they finally broke in terror.

While the situation on our right thus ebbed and flowed, on the left the sturdy dark swordsmen and our heroic heavy chariots relentlessly closed for the decisive attack. Their screen withdrew, our cavalry turned their flank, causing them to halt and form an uneven sort of square, in which they braced for the assault by the 600 heavy chariots of Lord Ovatha's personal retinue.

The chariots picked up speed, rumbling over the even ground as inexorably as a sheet of lava, and it appeared that they were certain to carry the day, when, as we approached to no more than 70 yards from the enemy, a chilling wave of absolute terror swept through our minds, as the enemy formation parted slightly and the Great Blind Sorcerer himself finally made his appearance. His shrieking chant split the air like a mattock through thin ice, and immediately not less than 100 chariots crashed to the ground, horses

and riders alike writhing in the torture of their final breaths. We still hit home, and fought like titans, but with our impetus gone the clumsy vehicles had no chance of breaking into the solid ranks of the enemy, and after perhaps twenty minutes of the unequal struggle we were driven off. With the failure of the great charge, our army evaporated, except for small groups gathered around the remaining commanders.

Still, through the field was lost, we had accomplished a good deal. The Sorcerer's army had suffered grievously, and was now in no condition to follow up with an attack on the town. We had also bought enough time for General Huz, force marching to our support, to arrive that very evening and take up the defensive perimeter. Clearly the struggle would be renewed once the Sorcerer gathered the still powerful remnants of his shattered army together. But, for now, the Dark Lord had once again been put on notice that conquest of the Variag would be difficult, costly, and painful, and the flag of Lord Ovatha still flew over the towers of Khand Amu.

**** MORGUL ****

by Scott Atkinson

Let this accounting record for all time the Chronicle of the Final Days of King Morgul the Solemn and the Tribe of the Macendians.

And so it was in the final days of the reign of Morgul the Solemn that the king, being long in the tooth for the race of men and having produced no male heirs by any of his three queens, did befriend a young warrior, one Alexander by name.

This youth of 24 summers was both powerful in bearing, yet also regal in his demeanor. The King, yearning for a son on whom to bestow his kingdom, (for so must it be by tradition long held), befriended this

bold young adventurer and set to teach him all his lore, both in combat and warfare and statecraft. The young warrior lord grew adept at arms beyond the skill of the fiercest member of Morgul's Royal Bodyguard. However, his young mind was not yet disposed to the solemn discipline required in diplomacy and statecraft.

The young lion was most anxious to put to use his martial education and was soon sent with a troop of men to quell a tribe of wild hill men rebelling against Morgul's domination. In a lightning like victory in which Alexander slew the wildmen's chieftain in front of most of his

followers, he succeeded in not only breaking the back of the rebellion but managed even to recruit some 300 of the tribesman as his followers. This was indeed the beginning of his moral bankruptcy. He sent the Macendian Squadron back to Yumuri with the message for Morgul that he was out to seek conquest, fame and plunder and would return to Yumuri a powerful prince, worthy at last of the great honor Morgul would do him.

Alexander adventured far and wide across the broad land and attracted many fell creatures into his service. Trolls and Ogres eagerly joined the ranks of this fierce warrior. Fairies thronged to this tall and youthful warrior, fair as any of the old gods of legends. Wildmen and troops of the tough horsemen of the plains freely joined the ranks of this charismatic young lord.

And as his power grew his fame spread north and west and reached the ears of the eleven lords in their dark forest lairs. The king of the Dark (Drow) Elves had long been a friend and ally of the lord of the Forest Elves, their acquaintance stretching back hundreds of years to their adolescence. Of late they had jointly entered into an alliance with the Gnomes of Hitg and with Morgul the Solemn, Lord of the Macendians.

The Drow Sovereign had been coerced into both treaties by his more Machiavelian peer and cared for either pact less than much at all. But the Forest Elf lord was insidiously clever and highly skilled in the dark side of statecraft. Both mistrusted the Gnome, but they mistrusted Morgul even more for he was old in years as reckoned by men and wise far beyond the ability of his race.

And Morgul did much to further this mistrust. Though he didn't realize it, by raising a large army and seizing first the Ruin of Fornost to the east, and then occupying the Ruin of Yenqua to the south, and even as word of his newest conquest still buzzed through

the royal houses of Miramar and Escobar, news came of a force of Macendians moving into the central plain seeking the ruin of Amorth. The Drow lord coveted Amorth and railed against Morgul and his ever increasing empire. His Mentor the Forest Elf monarch agreed that before long his strength would become greater than both elven kingdoms combined. But the Devious Sylvan elf had a plan. . .

The messengers found Alexander's camp in uproarious celebration. A group of wildmen and weremen had fallen upon Mezor, the capitol city of the Anorocians, and destroyed it utterly. All the inhabitants were to put to the sword and the city was looted and occupied. They found Alexander doubly drunk, both on the heavy spiced mead favored by the Macendians, and on the victory over the Anorocians won by his henchmen. The Ambassador from the Forest Elf king was generous with his praise of Alexander's generalship and prowess of arms and the young warlord was seduced by the honey-coated words of flattery lavished by the elven ambassador. He told of the great respect with which elven kind held Alexander, and how he was the type of powerful and decisive young leader that the humans of the south needed. After all, weren't the peasants of Mezor already working under the rule of Alexander with no loss of vigor or dedication? And hadn't Morgul the Solemn himself recognized the qualities of greatness and leadership in him and sought to make him Morgul's own heir apparent?

Well, went on the Sylvan elf envoy, why wait for Morgul's demise? Yumuri was meant to be his now, why not take it now? The elves would surely support Alexander in this - and with the trust Morgul had in him, the Ambassador went on, surely Alexander could take him by surprise.

And so it went all through the night. The Ambassador talked and talked. And Alexander drank and

thought, and thought and drank. And when the sun's red glow smeared the eastern horizon, he had made his decision.

Bright pennants fluttered from the towers and gaudy banners adorned the battlements of Yumuri as Morgul made ready to welcome Alexander after his long absence from the proud capitol of the Macendians. Two weeks earlier word had come that Alexander was coming to Yumuri to see the king and to pick up a finely wrought suit of armor and a sturdy river craft to allow him passage across water obstacles. Also a group of undead beings, raised to serve Morgul, were to be presented to Alexander as a gift.

And true to his message, on the 14th day his army crested the hills to the west of the city and started down into the plain. Morgul was overjoyed to see his adopted son and rode out onto the battle plain with eight bodyguards and his gift, the troop of 42 undead beings. On the walls were 128 of Morgul's finest troops, armed with 20 ft. dress parade lances with large black and silver battle pennants attached and carrying ceremonial daggers. The rest of the city was already celebrating. All the gates were flung wide to welcome Alexander and his legion.

The slaughter was swift and terrible to behold. Morgul was slain

outright, cleaved through the chest by a crushing blow from Alexander's wicked double-bladed battle-axe. His body guard and attending undead were also quickly overwhelmed and destroyed.

Even as the Garrison on the south wall stared with disbelieving horror at the foul murder of their king, troops and the Red Black adorned horsemen of Alexander were bolting through the open gates. As the fight ebbed and flowed about the courtyard and approached the gatehouse, a strong squadron of fierce Ogres led by Alexander himself, poured from the open gates and onto the main concourse.

The end came soon afterwards. The shrieks of pain and terror lingered on well after midnight. But these were soon replaced by the drunken revelries of Alexander and his brutal henchmen. Alexander had won another swift and decisive victory. But at what price to his moral character and to his immortal soul? And the Forest Elf King in his far woodland citadel smiled with satisfaction as he looked over the shoulder of his wizard who was scrying the devastation of Yumuri. Now he would proceed with his next act of foul and treacherous betrayal, the ambush of the Warlock at Alcazar by 600 Forest Elves sent to "bring a tribute of gold and safeguard your city."

The Gnomish Ploy

by Robert W Brady Jr.

In the games that I have played in, I have seen various methods tried by players to take and to hold cities. These include very limited variations of the "overwhelming strength" ploy, where a player simply masses for an attack, initiates it and then merely has another city to maintain. His enemy, then, masses for an attack, initiates it, and then has another city to maintain.

What results is a war of attrition that can drag on for months.

The Gnomish Ploy is based on the age-old Roman premise that the idea behind any attack strategy should be to leave the enemy helpless and unable to retaliate. To do this requires actually less troops and involves more than one city. It was tested in one of the Earthwood games and proved true in a war with the Dark Elves.

You see, once the game is under way, the average player has more than one city. To take it away from him then is to sting his side without injecting venom. He will still be with a city in which he may recruit troops, produce armor and, eventually, strike back. As well, he can hurry and siege this newly lost city at random intervals, losing all numbers of troops perhaps and making it all the more difficult for the opposing player to maintain that city until the offended player can take it back.

The "Ploy," then, is to hit more than one city at the same time. With player races, it is impossible for large garrisons to be maintained for lengthy periods of time, unless it is indeed late in the game, or unless the player is willing to forgo any increase in his city level, security, etc. An average garrison, then, when an attack is possible is about 250. A force of 400, assuming attack factors and such are equal or approximate, can knock out such a city with some loss and maintain it weakly. If the player were to have to maintain this city afterwards, obviously he could not.

Therefore, in the Gnomish Ploy, one hits all of the player's cities at the same time, with armed forces of about 400. Surely, once the game is under way even the weakest of players could field at least one such army. When fighting against the Dark Elves, armies of 600 were used, and three races cooperated to take out three cities. We were victorious on all fronts, because we were not expected and because our attacks were so devastating that the allies of this race were afraid to attack. The race to whom the attack was delivered was unable to harass our cities, because his morale was already lowered so greatly that he could not hope to meet us in battle. Remember, in any taking of a city, the morale of the opponent drops as well, so that he is less able to fight. Many times, without his cities, a player will have a

morale of less than fifty, because he had to fight to get them.

This brings in another facet of the Gnomish Ploy, in respect to warriors and wizards. Surely, they are the hardest to deal with in this respect, because their garrisons are higher and because they need not pay their troops. This ploy then, must be preceded then by spy work.

Races always have a very finite number of troops. These troops are left in the cities or the group, and this is where the weakness lies.

If the Troops are located predominantly in the cities (if the number of NPC's in the cities are particularly high) then the strategy must be an extended siege. In the games after # 20, the NPC in the city must eat. Therefore, they can be starved out relatively quickly, especially if some spy work is done to sabotage the food stockpiles after the siege has begun. Groups brought to lift the siege are often useless, because they will be too small to deal with a sieging force and because the sieger (if he is a race) will have the added protection of armor. Of course, there is the possibility of a character finding large numbers of NPC's, and those within the area of his or her prospective cities would have been found already. The character must search for the NPC's in areas farther away, and that allows the attacker more time to siege.

Obviously, the Gnomish Ploy will work better against a race than against a character. Races cannot reproduce outside of cities, and NPC's are not as great a help to them. In addition, the Gnomish ploy does not take into account a counter-strategy to a race doing the same thing to the attacking player during a prolonged siege. If the attack is quick, then the attacked loses all. He is weakened, his morale is low, and that of the attacker is high.

If he is given time to react, however, then he can counter attack in the same fashion. He can possibly raise

the numbers of his garrisons (if his gold stock piles are high) and enlist the help of allies to raise the siege.

It is hoped firstly and for most that those employing the Gnomish Ploy will do so with intelligence. Remember, the ploy also depends on the fact that all of an opponent's cities can be hit at the same time. Few players indeed will rush to the aid of a city-less ally, but many will rush to save the player's last city. As well, a player must be sure that his "home cities" (those he has started with before the ploy is used) are strong when the ploy is

Strategies and Tactics for Attacking and Defending

by Hugh Tuller

Playing EARTHWOOD could get confusing at many points, specially when it comes to deciding what combat city assault and defense tactics to use.

Since I have been playing EARTHWOOD, I have made some mistakes when it comes down to combat. Looking at the Combat Tactics Chart in the EARTHWOOD rule book you can summarize that on the most part the best tactics to use are Ambush, Flank, Fork, and Surround. When you are confronting an enemy force, anticipating an enemy force is the name of the game. If you think your enemy is going to use Fork of course you should use Surround. Remember NPC's always use the same tactic (unless they are traveling with another players group), so if you meet up with a bunch of Giant Spiders who use Ambush as their tactic, Giant Spiders will always use Ambush.

The Hit and Run tactic is good to use against a superior foe which you have to limit down in strength - like when they are on their way to attack one of your cities. Since most people (with any amount of intelligence) do not use Head-on

used. Otherwise, he may well possess a slew of weak cities, and be taken out in some other fashion by a third player who has been sitting back, waiting for two enemies to attack each other so that he can step in and destroy the winner. This is not uncommon, and is seen in the Anorocian player especially. He can indeed afford to sit back, wait and let the world ruin itself while he builds.

I, King of Gnomes, wish you who read and intend to employ this plan the best of luck.

tactics, Hit and Run could be a good tactic, but watch out for Fork tactics.

When assaulting a city the worst thing you could do would be to besiege it, unless you know the whereabouts and strengths of all your enemy's groups. Only then should you even attempt a siege! If your enemy's groups are very weak, but his garrison is strong then you might want to try a siege. At this time you must send a spy to that city and attempt to steal the city's treasury. This will cut down the money to his garrison and not allow the gold to reach the city, but be careful of any allies your enemy might have. Things won't look too bright for you if an enemy group twice as large as yours shows up and asks to play.

I always say if you're going to attack a city, attack it. Send a large group over and take it and take it quickly. Then you could either take the gold, food and armor or attempt to keep it.

To defend a city is again a guessing game. What tactic do you think your enemy will use? You should always keep a large group outside your city at all times. This

can deter an attack even before it begins. An enemy will have to fight your group first before it can attack your city (which is only logical), then he must still attack your walls and then your garrison.

Do not let your group stray from your city even a hex, because an enemy can move into your hex,

Lord Cabot's Revenge

by Scott Rives

Krill approached me and said "The King has received some distressing news from your brother Lord Morin. It seems that your brother's army was completely wiped out by a horde of undead. Only Lord Morin escaped".

After I recovered from the shock I became angry. If it wasn't for my present assignment I would have gotten revenge on these undead creatures. I knew that I must follow the king's orders which were to take the city known as Salamanca. This city was located within the grassy plains of Linden. A vile creature named the Sorcerer owned this city and I was somewhat concerned about fighting a magically endowed creature. They always had some trick up their sleeve.

My King had spies investigate this Wizard and it was determined that several creatures followed and obeyed his every command. Among these creatures were trolls and undead. I realized that I could have revenge after all. Besides, one undead is as good as another as long as they are dead or alive or

and take your city before you can do any thing about it until next turn. Then you might be able to destroy his group, but your walls are back to level 6 and you have to pay another 4000 gold pieces to get them back up to level 5.

Remember, don't get caught with your pants down!

whatever. We arrived at Salamanca early in the day. On the fields surrounding the city was a large army, 253 trolls and 109 undead are what the spies reported. I specially noticed that the sorcerer himself led these creatures. I knew that I would not have an army in reserve as in Amorth, but I was too angry to care.

Krill approached my tent and my aid escorted him in. I was waiting for battle tactics from the King.

"Does our King have a plan" I asked. Krill reported "Yes my Lord, King Thornfist has ordered us to surround the Sorcerer's army and fight until it has been destroyed or until half our army has fallen".

I thought quickly. If half of my 300 men fall, I won't have enough men to hold this city. I decided I would not lose that many if possible. "Thank you Krill, tell the King it will be done". My men were ready. I had organized the battle plan and now spoke to them one last time. I realized for some it would be the last time ever.

DECEIT KILLS

by Chris Chen

Ragnor, King of the Dark Elves, smiled. It was the year 0014 and through brilliant means Ragnor had finally completed his dealings with

the Amazoians, the only remaining neutral race in EARTHWOOD. Now Ragnor had set himself up as a leader of the Rakku alliance,

possibly the most powerful alliance in EARTHWOOD. At this very moment his legions were steadily marching towards Snuvelton, capital of the Halflings, and center of the Drantos alliance (consisting of five of the most powerful races in EARTHWOOD). But Ragnor was not afraid for one member of the Drantos alliance was actually a spy for Ragnor and with the solidifying of the treaty with the Amazoians nothing would stop Ragnor from ruling EARTHWOOD...

Flavius, leader of the 3rd army of the Drakku alliance was worried, and as he stepped out of his tent he worried even more. Snuvelton, capital of the Drantos alliance had fallen before him, thousands of warriors and beasts fought to take Snuvelton and it did fall. But after the pillaging of Snuvelton and slaughtering of the loyal Drantos population, Flavius brooded. Snuvelton, famed capital of the Drantos alliance had fallen too easily. True, thousands had lost lives and even now the lands next to Snuvelton were naught more than red blood. But, in the back of Flavius' head he wondered, could the so-called spy who had given all this "valuable" information about the Drantos alliance be lying?

Flavius trailed off into deep thought while his men rejoiced...

Ragnor was elated! He had just received the news of the fall of Snuvelton as a base of operations! From there he would be able to take Gladring, Hitg, and Salamanca, Eastern outputs of the Drantos alliance, and then with cities Ragnor could base troops at Snuvelton without fear of Easterly attack and push the attack westward until Ragnor conquered Earthwood! A breathless messenger disturbed Ragnor's pleasant thoughts of conquest and Ragnor reminded himself to have the messenger flayed. "Sir", the messenger gasped, "Our city is being attacked by an estimated 7000 troops of the Drantos alliance! We will never be able to defend ourselves properly with the loss of the troops that went on the Snuvelton campaign!" Gone was Ragnor's elation. No one knew of the attack on Snuvelton which diverted needed troops from this city except for his closest allies! No, wait.. his closest allies and the spy... Why? Ragnor asked himself. No time for thought, Ragnor had to get out of his city to another base of operations, he had to give up his capital. But Ragnor would return, he would get revenge on the Drantos alliance... and the spy...

The Hall Of Heroes

Earthwood-The Sea Kings

GAME 38 - In 33 turns The Agents of Chaos demolished all that opposed them in the waters of the sea. The alliance consisted of players #1, 16, 18 and 24 and using their skills and strategy were able to out maneuver their opponents. Hat's off to this valiant group.

State of War

GAME 71 - In only 21 turns the alliance of the Nuclear Nomads over powered the Feds and took control of the nation. They used their strength and might to wipeout all of the opposition on their way to victory. This alliance consists of players #13, 15, 17 and 19. Congrats to these avengers.

Venom

GAME 20 - In 37 turns, after the dust cleared there was only ONE who remained standing. The lone warrior goes by the title of Narthos, Demigod of Beggars. In one round of final combat he managed to destroy all of his enemies and become a true Demigod. Congratulations on a job well done.