

# WHISPERS OF THE WOOD



**GAME  
SYSTEMS  
INC.**

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## WORDS FROM THE WOOD

January has flown by and that leads us straight into--February. February is one of those 'problem child' months, don't you think? It doesn't have as many days as the rest of the months, even on those Leap years when it gets that extra day. It's in the middle of winter, so the weather can be atrocious. And the holidays--President's Day and Valentine's Day--The former is only good if you work for the government, a bank or a school and the latter is only good if you have a significant other. Which I don't. And am very bitter about. Oh sure, I save money because I don't have to buy flowers or chocolate or any of those Valentine's Day gifts. But I can't really celebrate it, now, can I? What am I gonna do, send MYSELF something? I don't think so. And they don't even have a decent mascot for the holiday! A little guy with wings! What are you going to do? Nothing. I'll shut up now.

For those of you who are sending Personals submissions or who WANT to send Personals submissions, I heartily encourage you to do so. There's only one thing I ask: when you do submit material, PLEASE include the game number the personal is for, your player number and your name. If your personal does not include this information, there is a very good chance the personal will not be published, ESPECIALLY if it is over 40 words and requires your account to be charged. So submit all the personals you want--but please include this information to insure your submission is published.

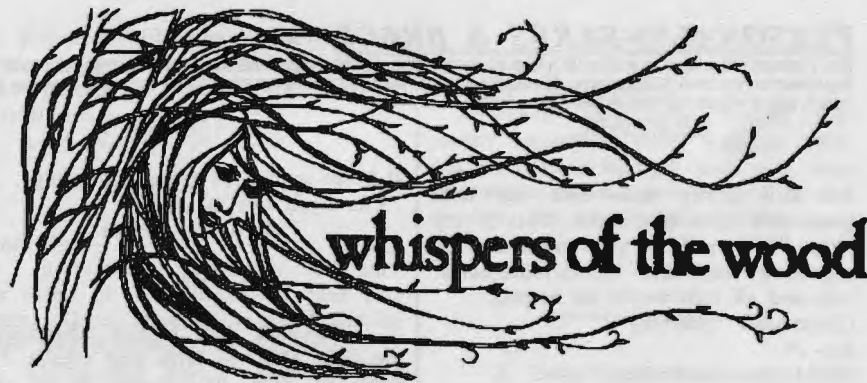
Now, let's say you have 12 or 13 friends who want to join a game together, but there's only one problem--there are only 10 players per side. No problem. You can run an ad in the general section of *Whispers* asking other teams to call you to set up a 25 player game between you. This is a way to pre-assign neutrals if you would like such a game. One team did that an issue or so ago and got half a dozen calls in a week. This also cuts down on set-up time, as you will already have all 25 positions filled and can get the game out faster with no waiting on another team. We have no problems setting up such a game so let us know if you wish to run an ad and we'll get it into the next issue.

Speaking of game needs, we currently have two Dark Servant teams waiting on Free People opponents. If you have a Free People team and want to get into a grudge game, send us those requests and we'll be happy to set you up. We're also looking for neutrals for all types of games, so those adventurous souls should send those requests off right away.

We're looking at changing the way we handle stand-bys. In addition to GSI contacting the players on the stand-by list, we'll be printing the positions we have available on the results messages. This will facilitate the process by letting those players who are interested in specific positions call us when those positions become available. The list will be continually updated so all you have to do is look on your resultsheet to see what is available. Thus, if you wish to pick up a Fire King position and you see it on the list, you can call us and, if it is still available, you can take over the position. We think this will make stand-bys much easier to handle. What do you think? Drop us a line and let us know.

Well, that's all for this 'problem child' month, so I'll talk to ya in thirty.

*Stuart*



### ALONG THE PATHWAYS

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## PERSONALS: BARBS & BRAGS

Every current GSI player is entitled to a free 40 word personal in this column each issue, for each game they're in. Submissions require a \$2.00 charge for each additional set of 40 words (41-80 is \$2.00 etc.). GSI reserves the right to edit or refuse material deemed unsuitable.

### GENERAL

I'm still pretty new with my first game still in single digits. This is my first PBM and I am interested in acquiring any info on Middle-earth. Any and all info would be helpful.

Christopher Scherrey

Au-14

86424 Dinkelscherben  
Germany

Middle-earth™ PBM

### GAME 4

The time is coming to end this war. It has dragged on for much too long. Beware my coming!

Scarimus

### GAME 13

To all Free Peoples:

So, which one of you issued the unsigned statement claiming the JMSOF was having "delusions of grandeur"? Surely Brytta, Orophim, Voronwë and Lindir now think otherwise! There is a label for those who issue such statements yet neglect to sign their name to them. Here's a clue: it starts with "C" and rhymes with "Howard". That is all.

DO.

(I believe you recognize my initials.)

\*\*\*\*\*

Wow, the Dark Servants have been riled up and are trying to hurt us. We're not worried! Their arrogance will be their downfall. We got weapons we ain't tried yet. And they hardly have any left.

The Free People's Quartet

### GAME 29

It keeps going and going and going . . .  
. Can I just buy that Ring?

H. Ashturg Perot

### GAME 31

Rhudaur has finally abandoned the fight after 44 turns and over 1 1/2 years of play. My thanks to all the goods and to the evils--they were lucky . . . er--just played together better. An enjoyable experience.

### GAME 35

Question: What is Goofy, Flakey and Droopy?

Answer: S. Gondor, Noldo and Dunlendings trying to take me out.

By that time they'll all be dead. Think about kids.

Harry the Horrible Harad

\*\*\*\*\*

Osgiliath is once again in the hands of the Dúnedain. The march from Arnor has been long, but at last I am attacking Mordor. Nazgûl beware!

Baaltrac

### GAME 43

Great Lord Uvatha--

Well, well, well . . . Lomelinde killed, Hargrog killed, Din loses his ring, a major town destroyed--all in one turn by the Woodmen! Napoleon was apparently right, better an army of rabbits led by a lion, than an army of lions led by a rabbit.

Your pal, Woody

### GAME 56

Well Glenn, I know now not to believe your lies. Hope you feel proud

of yourself. Will this tragic turn of events really influence the outcome of who places in the top 3? Maybe, maybe not.

Zarendarger (25)

### GAME 61

Black Eye,

Rhovanian plains run red with the blood of over 10,000 of your lost souls. Alone, I have crushed armies from five different Dark Servants.

What will happen when the five Western Lords arrive? Dunland is no more!

Mahrcared

### GAME 66

I've returned. Noldo, your mouth needs to be scoured, South Gondor is afraid to fight and Sinda is playing peek-a-boo. Dwarves are huddled. The time is now. Prepare, kids, it'll be ugly.

Sheik Alaa Kiljayuman

\*\*\*\*\*

Rumor is that even some Dark Servants have been suffering unexplained fatal illnesses. I guess with a Nazgul for a friend you don't need any enemies.

\*\*\*\*\*

Winter has arrived in Middle-earth. Tens of thousands of cold and hungry soldiers march to battle, in every land heroes arise to combat evil. All nations have chosen, the die is cast. Let the last war begin!

Whitefire

### GAME 68

And lo, though Throkmau the Wym foolishly sided with the spineless Free of Rhudaur, the mighty Haradrim did defeat Sauron's foes outside Morannon, heaping their bodies high . . .

### GAME 70

Insolent Mordor-folk,

When you have fought five enemy nations at once, with no allies but your own strength and will, then you make idiotic comments about my bravery. No mere pack of wolves will have this crown.

King Tarondor

\*\*\*\*\*

A Dwarven curses team; who would've imagined? The sight fills our granite hearts with joy! Now let's see--who shall be our first victim?

Bain, Lord of Khazad-Dum

\*\*\*\*\*

Well, okay . . . we've all proven our ability to beat the snot outta each other. So when's somebody gonna hurry up and win?

Weary but still kickin',

Ovatha II

P.S. What does it take to beat N. Gondor? Nukes?

### GAME 71

I'm Baaaaaack! Come out, come out wherever you are.

That mean Ashturg guy

### GAME 74

Too Hard to Die? Too dumb to die may have been more appropriate! Get Real! Eleven on two is a rout. I take it back, that's not dumb it's pure stupid.

Selur Rodrom

\*\*\*\*\*

Fellow Servants of Sauron:

It appears not all of Middle-earth is ready to embrace the darkness. The light still shines (rather brightly too) west of the Mistys.

Hoarmurath

\*\*\*\*\*

Greetings Evil Foes,

We have lasted to Turn 22. I have a bet with myself to stay in until at least Thirty. This was my goal when I first heard everyone deserted me. I now am going to try for 40. Best of luck!

Never Ending Noldo

### GAME 77

The Forces of Light close in on the Blind Sorcerer--will they succeed? And who will be next?

The Blind Sorcerer will die the death of a thousand cuts as his population centers are taken one by one.

### GAME 78

Well, no reply to my internal audit? Free Folks should give it up!! I'm going back on you like your in-laws. Here it comes--"Unfamily Ties." South Gondor thanks for the gold!!

Mr. Freeze  
Ice Master

### GAME 80

The Dunlendings are now free of the Eye's dark taint, their armies blazing paths of glory across enemy real estate. My nation breathes easier, allies close on each side, now we march together to turn the tide.

Ensam Harskare (5)

\*\*\*\*\*

How many Free Peoples does it take to smash a Rhudaur and Witch-king alliance????

Well, we're not sure but the number is evidently over five!!!

(In Carn Dum Danzig yells "We're getting low on dwarfkebobs!!")

### GAME 82

Woodmen:

Getting a little desperate? It would have been better to let sleeping dogs lie.

Keeper of the Gate

### GAME 83

Help! I'm being attacked by Adûnaphel's armies on one side and the mail demon is preventing me from defending myself. If not for a missed turn, this invasion would have been stopped at Pelargir.

Baaltrac

### GAME 84

The Dunlendings have chosen evil, now battles begin.

The forces of light are committed to destroy Dunlending Kin.

While protesting their innocence, an assault on NG they did commence; thus, what happens next is merely just recompense.

Ensam Harskare (7)

\*\*\*\*\*

North Gondor stubbornly ignores my offers of peace, the meat of his kingdom now fills my belly, South Gondor scorns my attempt at friendship, offers me threat by the power of his allies and attacks Haradwaith(????!!), thus Cardolan falls under my shadow. My agents await to give you welcome to my realm, I am Dunlend.

### GAME 85

Uvatha,

You are a coward. While your heavy cavalry ride around threatening population centers (unsuccessfully), my armies stay hot on your trail. Sooner or later I will catch you and Caranthir will be avenged.

Tarondor

### GAME 86

Adûnaphel--

Hear Us--For crimes against your fellow Servants of our Dark Lord, you and yours are hereby cast out of the Council, your minions declared anathema. The sentence of the Council--Death. Let none show you mercy . . .

### GAME 88

Enion and his puppets; you talk a good talk, but you have yet to walk the walk. Arnor will soon belong to Sauron, Like Angmar and Minhiriath already do. Prepare to join your Cardolan neighbor.

El Murazor

### GAME 89

Hooves pound and hounds howl! Darkness floods Rhovanion and laps at Gondor's hills. Mirkwood shall be harrowed next and so the Iron Hills.

Dog Gerel

\*\*\*\*\*

South Gondor, thanks for the town. Dwarves, the roughly 24,000 gold will ease us through the winter. Woodboyz, don't do something you'll regret . . . If they die I'll just make more and they'll just keep stealing and stealing.

Frosty the Snowmen

### GAME 91

Lo Ho Lo Hum It's back to the capital with Glum. No Bain so much Pain and Sinda waiting to become lame. Well isn't sweet!! A chapter from Mordor's family values. No delivery charge. Expect it to arrive at any time.

\*\*\*\*\*

Four neutrals have chosen the DSs while we have chosen for the FPs in this "team" game. I don't know how

the DSs managed to pull the wool over the other neutrals' eyes because it is very apparent to us that the FPs are the better organized team and will win the game. Being the Easterlings and joining the FPs is never really an ideal situation but since our declaration of intent (turn 8) we've had just 3 characters whacked. I really expected a more concerted effort by the DSs to make us "pay" . . . . but I guess they're just too hard pressed trying to prevent an over run of Mordor by the FP forces to worry about us pesky little Easterlings . . . . To the other neutrals, thank you for joining the DS team, at least this way the game might last a little longer . . . .

### GAME 94

Good-bye Neutrals and good riddance!

\*\*\*\*\*

The Night Hawks Cometh!!!

\*\*\*\*\*

"NEVER, never, never, never, never, never, never, never, never EVER quit!"  
Winston Churchill

The dogs of doom are howling. We fight to the death, even it's alone. A hex on the deserters, may they get bad gas pains.

Evil Eye

\*\*\*\*\*

Overheard at the liberation of Minas Ithil:

"Ah!! How wonderful to see the light of day once again after so many long weeks in the Fire King's dungeons. The liberation of Minas Ithil is complete! My men and I eagerly rejoin the battle against Sauron and his rabid carrion. Hail the Free People . . . victory is near!"

Gatherion, Master of the Garrison  
Guard

Town of Minas Ithil

\*\*\*\*\*

There was one classification of player that was left out: the spoiler. The country that should have been out, but has managed to stick around to reek havoc on his enemy, no matter what it costs him.

\*\*\*\*\*

Bad guys, please. . . at least groan when we kick you! Don't just lie there like scared rabbits.

\*\*\*\*\*

Lord Enion,

I have noticed our nation has a new flag flying at the capital. It does seem to look a lot like the flag on Gondor. I mean with the stars and the tree, and the black background and all. Who designed this wonderful new flag?

A Dunlendings peasant

#### GAME 96

We go, we go, we go to war;  
To Land of gloom with Tramp of Doom,  
With Roll of Drum, we come, we come;  
To Angmar with Doom we come!  
With Doom we Come, with Doom we Come!

Argeleb

#### GAME 97

Poor Northmen, poor, poor Northmen.  
It is kinda hard to run a nation with  
12 missing characters! Ha Ha Ha . . . He  
He He . . .

Havok

\*\*\*\*\*

Easterlings--

Beware the Witch-king and his lackeys. They intend to eliminate you in the end-game. Myself and a few others in Mordor don't approve, but

we can't stand against them in a character war.

\*\*\*\*\*

Arthedain and Cardolan hereby publicly announce our forgiveness of Rhudaur for her actions during the War of 1356. We welcome Rhudaur to the brotherhood of the Free and the Realm or Arnor.

King Argeleb II and Lord Hallas

#### GAME 99

At the court of Adûnaphel:

Oh my, where DID I put those cute little troops all dressed in silk. I want to play!

Sigh

#### GAME 100

In the heart of winter  
We hear the lonely wolves howl  
For their lost masters  
And we smile and sharpen our steel.  
Mahrcaed

\*\*\*\*\*

And then there were seven . . .  
Dig your graves now, Nazgul, before  
the ground freezes.

#### GAME 102

The time has come . . .  
The hoards are across the Anduin.  
Flee flee before the wrath of Sauron  
and his Lords  
Prepare, oh world, for the ending of  
days!

Mr. Heatmizer

\*\*\*\*\*

Over the Anduin and through Fangorn  
to Elrond's house we go!  
The Wraiths know the way  
to parry and slay

as west goes the Shadow!  
Ovatha II  
The Eleventh of Sauron

\*\*\*\*\*

Tarondor you wretch! I spit upon your deals!

Mr. Heatmizer

#### GAME 103

Thranduil,

I have not forgotten that you dared raise a hand against me! Do not celebrate your victories in Mirkwood overmuch--even the smallest candle seems bright when surrounded by darkness. Soon even it shall be extinguished.

Khamûl

\*\*\*\*\*

How best to stop a Free People's army?

"The Executioner's Solution--Cut off the head and the body dies."  
pg. 212 The Necromancer's Handbook

As taught at  
Ji Indur's School of Undertakings  
P.S. Rest in Peace (Pieces)

\*\*\*\*\*

The forces of Freedom sweep  
ever eastward after a brief stop in  
Angmar. Onward to Mordor and let us  
sweep clean Sauron's foul stain from  
our fair land.

Grumpy Bear

#### GAME 104

What do you mean it's over? I  
haven't even joined a side yet. Quick,  
send out the emissaries . . .

Haruth Ramam  
El and the Vaders

#### GAME 105

To all wing-dings on the Evil side . . .  
The Black Prince has cometh for  
Northern Gondor.

#### GAME 108

Oh where oh where has my army gone,  
oh where o where can it be?  
written for South Gondor  
by  
The Gondorian Bards

\*\*\*\*\*

In focal ground, ally with neighboring  
states;  
In deep ground, plunder.  
In difficult ground, press on;  
In encircled ground, devise  
stratagems;  
In death ground, Fight!

Sun Tzu

Gondors, I like that last bit, don't you?  
Helrazor

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Dark Lts:

It wasn't YOUR riddle!  
Nevertheless, well done. I reject your  
question--it's not a proper riddle. Oh  
well, as I exit this game I leave you  
with a riddle of your own: Little Nancy  
Etticoat/ In a white petticoat/and a  
red nose/The longer she stands/the  
shorter she grows.

Cardolan (5)

#### GAME 109

What! No more Rhudaur towns. With  
only the glow from Angmar to warm  
my nights, I can finally settle down for  
a long winter's nap.

Morning Lord

\*\*\*\*\*

Question: What marches to the sound  
of bagpipe and drum? The Dunlending

army marching to Mordor. Why? It has a very important Free Peoples Orc roast to attend on Mt Doom, and it doesn't want to be late.

#### GAME 111

Be it known!

Haradwaith promised peace, but then attacked a neutral nation. Do not trust these dogs! Any who aid them are my enemies! Any who fight them are my allies!

Angamaitë, Lord Admiral  
Teldûmeir, General  
Corsairs Nation (a Neutral)

#### GAME 112

Overheard in Gondor:

"Where has Tarondor gone to?"

"He seeks the White Tree."

"You mean, while the nation's under siege, the King's off on an herbal expedition?!"

"Scoff not, my friend. The Tree is hope, ever our strongest defense . . ."

\*\*\*\*\*

CRY HAVOC...

And let slip the DWARVES of war!!

Khamul: Don't you guys get it?!

The GOOD GUYS always WIN!

Shadowspawne

\*\*\*\*\*

BOOM...BOOM...BOOM...

Across the land . . . War drums sound .

. . . As young Dwarves march to WAR . .

. . and GLORY!

LORD BAIN I

#### GAME 113

The first 10 turns are over. The Nations of the First and Second are all but Gone with Dol Guldor and Mt Gram taken intact. The Treacherous Dunlendings have been crushed and eliminated. The Harad have been steamrolled. The Ninth along with 5 of

his at start minions are dead. The rebellious elf Celedhring and the crazed demon Duran have died head to head with King Bain. Angulion dies before the King of Arnor. Over 40,000 have died at Osgiliath and Minas Ithil with the enemy still held at bay. The Dog's dogs have died in the face of the Eothraim Lance. The Sinda crush the armies of Khamul and lead the spearhead into Morannon. The Noldo and Sinda collect many shiny trinkets. The Woodmen provide the W.P.A. (as we call it). Soon a blinding light will shine into Mordor and the filth there will be cleansed.

Signed the Warlords of Good--

Amroth, Bain, Elatar, Glorfindel and  
Tarondor

#### GAME 114

Overheard at the Sinda H.Q.:

"Well, I'd like to help you out, Mahrcared, but right at the moment, all my production is going into writing obnoxious note cards that I can't back up with actions. Mahrcared? Hello, Mahrcared . . . .? Operator, Mahrcared's been cut off . . . ."

We salute the Eothraim's bold strike, which failed as a result of non-support from his "team."

Gaurhoth

#### GAME 117

It's easy, Mûmakhôr, just throw in a peanut.

Enion the Wise  
of Dunland

#### GAME 119

As some of you are probably aware, Dunland recently went through some civil unrest. We are glad to announce that the rebels have been defeated and the Peoples Executive Committee is again in control.

Viva la revolucion!

Unity! Honor! Strength!

#### GAME 120

Fruitycakes--

Frankish knights my hinie. You sound like a bunch of weirdoes to me. "Form of wood mouse!" "Form of blabber-mouth!" Didn't your mother ever warn you not to interbreed with those dang hepatic, tin-pan juggling bears? Bleecck!!

Cheeky

#### GAME 121

Mahrcared, all your armies are gone, 4 of your commanders are gone. All this before turn 5. Is this a record or what? What else shall be gone?

Zarendarger (13)

#### GAME 122

When I get my hands on you Dragon Lord I'm going to gut ya, skin ya and turn you into a pair of boots

Grakius

\*\*\*\*\*

Orduclax has met his doom

Beside the Goblin Gate.

His arcane skill did not prevent

A most befitting fate.

He'll dine no more with Dragon Lord

On gold or silver plate.

At Dol Guldur the Goblins' gloom

will not attenuate.

Elrond

\*\*\*\*\*

Free People,

No help, no communication. And to think I was going to join you. The Arthedain's demise is due to this. I remain neutral for now, but the dark side is calling!

Rhudaur

\*\*\*\*\*

Overheard in Moria:

Can you believe our allies want us to help them?

#### GAME 123

Lizard Lord and Hag-King:

Nice original opening moves, I hope you brought plenty of body bags

...

Woody

\*\*\*\*\*

The gods will defend the just and honorable. As a prophet of my gods it is my duty to destroy first those who would destroy us. No one will stand against the storm from Khand. Free Peoples and Dark Servants pick your side carefully for the Easterlings have come.

\*\*\*\*\*

Witch King: You will be crushed!

Dragon Lord: Come and get me!

Long Rider: Pfftt!

Welcome to the Free Peoples, all Neutrals. We extend our hospitality.

And now, for something completely different.

Lord Bain I

#### GAME 124

Madness comes . . . and madness goes

An insane place, with insane moves

Battles without, for battles within

Where evil lives and evil rules.

Er-Mûrazôr

(My theme song, quoting Megadeth)

\*\*\*\*\*

The war has started! The armies of Angmar are on the move. There is no more time for indecision! Free Peoples of the northwest gather your strength together or die one by one at the lifeless grip of our hated foe!

Húrin

\*\*\*\*\*

To a renegade Vala he was slave.  
Got himself whupped by an Elvish babe.  
Knew a little 'bout rings, but the Noldor knew more,  
Only guy who couldn't swim on all of Numenor.  
Lost Mordor to a-viking Edain band.  
Got the Bane chopped off his very hand.  
Called by different names in different lands,  
Ya know we'll always call him--Sorehead.

Signed,  
Goodgulf and the Council of the Big, the Bold and the Beautiful

GAME 125

It has begun and Mordor's backdoor is secure. Now, if only Uvatha could go on the offensive, all is well.

Akhôrahil

\*\*\*\*\*

I am the Fire King!!  
The world awakens to the clarion's call  
Fire eyed tunnels disgorge their dark hordes  
The Barbed Lord's gaze burns west  
So begin the symphony of destruction!!

GAME 126

The Witch-king's capital falls to the Free Peoples!! On Turn 3 no less!!!  
The people of Arthedain dance in the streets, giving much thanks to our brother for his help.

\*\*\*\*\*

Hi Ho, Hi Ho . . . Hey, is that another Dragon Lord army?! Shucks, didn't they learn their lesson the first time?  
All right--HEY GUYS--PUT DOWN THE ALE AND PICK UP THE AXES! TIME TO KILL SOME TROLLS!  
Captain Threlin

GAME 129

As winter fades and springtime blossoms across the land, the hours of sunlight increase and the Forces of Light grow. And so the tide begins to turn as the Dark Ones scurry for their holes.

Lords of Light

GAME 131

Lord Báin I has proclaimed that the Misty Mountains and Greenwood will be free. The stench of the Nazgûl's presence will no longer mar these lands. The heads of Mûrazôr and Khamûl will hang from the gates of Khazad-dûm for all to see.

Fulla III

\*\*\*\*\*

A proclamation from Tarondor, Twenty-Seventh King of Gondor:

"Glory there is to be found in our noble crusade. Honor to be Won. Free Lords of the Free, let your trumpets sing, let your hosts march, let the War begin!"

\*\*\*\*\*

Tarondor,  
Destroying the southern bridge will not keep me from staining your uniforms with my blood.

Adûnaphel

GAME 132

To Those Who Would Be Free!

A call to arms!!  
Gird thyself for War!  
Stoke the fires unceasingly!  
Ready your nations for dark times!  
Spread Light to those undecided!  
So speaks Hallas,  
Emperor of Cardolan  
Dark Ones . . . We Come!  
Shadowspawne

\*\*\*\*\*

NOTICE NEUTRALS

We will deal fairly with any and all Neutrals that will negotiate in good faith with us. We will not lie to you, and we trust you to do the same.

Either choice, GOOD LUCK!  
THE FREE PEOPLE (1)

GAME 133

Now the time has come to say good-bye to all our enemies, S-A-U-R-O-N gonna get your head.

\*\*\*\*\*

The summer sun has slipped away,  
The Air has an icy chill.  
Your Free Peoples are shuffling around,

As if they have no will.  
Darkness spreads across the land,  
Winter has begun.  
That time of year has come at last,  
The Ice King wants his fun.  
Lock your doors and hide inside,  
Pray someone will answer your call.  
Death, Destruction and Decay,  
Hoarmûrath wants it all.

The Ice Queen

\*\*\*\*\*

Darkness once again sweeps through the land. Again the cries in the night shriek out. Rivers run red with all who oppose us. The nightmare becomes a reality.

Long Live the Darkside  
Ren

\*\*\*\*\*

Help, I'm stuck with Schmendles!!!

\*\*\*\*\*

. . . I've got one more silver dollar, but I'm not gonna let 'em catch me, no. Not

gonna let 'em catch the Long Rider.  
Uvatha's Bards  
Trivia Quiz: Why is Uvatha called the Long Rider? (heh-heh)

\*\*\*\*\*

Slaughter their armies to the last foot soldier, run their cavalry to the ground. Hang each commander's head upon my battle standard for their demoralized people to see.

Throw down their defenses, spare not those that cower behind them.

Burn the elves from the wood, let not a single one live for I like a whisper on the wind, the commandment came, spoken to one, to be heard by all.

"Urzahil."

"Yes my master."

"My time has come again. Summon my Nazgûl and hand down this decree:

Let loose my dogs of war, destroy all those who oppose me. Hate them the most. Make the dwarven strongholds their crypts.

Show no mercy!

Go now my faithful minion, project my will to all corners of the Land!"

"As you say, my Lord."

". . . and Urzahil."

"Yes, All-seeing Master."

"Bring me my ring."

\*\*\*\*\*

Oh my!  
One of my victory conditions is the termination of 10 characters.  
Whatever shall I do?

Ji Indur

GAME 137

The doom of the Free Peoples has been foretold. Why fight prophecy? Surrender now!

Scarimus

Greetings to one and all.  
Neutrals--Please be advised that prolonged delays will not be tolerated by either side!

## Riders Of Night

Thunderous charge  
of cavalry steel.  
Prepare for the oncoming death,  
the enemy's here.  
They know no fear  
and are set to take our last breath.

The swirling masses  
of butchered flesh,  
hand axe and sword will have no rest  
Riders of night,  
Dark Servants of death,  
All is lost, we cannot resist.

Screams of pain,  
agony and despair.  
The battle done, the victory theirs.  
Black knights of Mordor,  
wolves of the Mirk,  
They'll slay you all, none will be spared.

Mitch Gunovsky

## Winners and Losers in Middle-Earth

by  
Tom Walton

Having played in Middle-Earth for over a year now, I've become interested in finding out just how balanced the game really is. Which allegiance is most likely to win? Which nations are the most powerful, and which are particularly

weak? Do the Neutrals wield too much influence, as some players claim? And was the change in agent orders really necessary to correct an imbalance?

Prior to this time, there was insufficient data to provide an informed answer to any of these questions. Opinions given by various players were based upon guesswork, hearsay, and complaint, often with little or no evidence to support anything the player said. Indeed, most players had no experience beyond the few games they happened to be playing in, meaning that they couldn't possibly identify any sort of pattern from their limited exposure to Middle-earth(though a few made some pretty good guesses).

With the December 1993 issue of *Whispers*, this has changed. Enough games have ended to provide a solid basis for establishing some general trends and to take a shot at answering these questions. Working off the numbers given by GSI for wins and nation placement, there's now a minimum amount of data to make this article possible.

### The Data

As of December, 31 games have ended, yielding a total of 93 possible winning nations (1st through 3rd placed). Of these games, 12 have gone to the Free Peoples and 19 to the Dark Servants, a ration of 39% to 61%. Given the assumption that each nation has an equal chance of taking one of these positions if all other factors remain equal, you'd expect any one nation to have placed about 3.7 times (25 nations among 93 possible winning slots).

Since the spread of data is still relatively small and subject to error, this operates on the premise that any nation which has placed 2-5 times is running about average. A nation which places 0 or 1 times is considered a 'loser', while a nation which places 6 or more times is a 'winner'. Nations break down as indicated below, with the number of placements following in parentheses:

### Free Peoples

Losers: Woodmen (0), Eothraim (1), and Cardolan (1)  
Winners: Noldo (7)

### Dark Servants

Losers: Dragon Lord (0)  
Winners: Cloud Lord (9), Long Rider (6)

### Neutrals

Losers: Rhudaur (0)  
Winners: Corsairs (11), Harad (9)

All other nations took a winning slot an 'average' number of times.

### The Balance of Power

It seems apparent from an analysis of the economic, military, and character strengths of the allegiance nations that the Free Peoples have a definite advantage over the Dark Servants. Regionally, they're much stronger than their opponents in all aspects except for characters, and here a disparity exists only near Mordor. Considered: the four Free nations around Mordor

(Gondors, Eothraim, Northmen) are economically and militarily just as powerful as the eight Dark Servants they face. In Mirkwood and Eriador, the Free so badly outgun the Dragon Lord and Witch-King that victory in the face of competent opposition is laughable for these two positions.

Yet despite the advantages the Free possess, they manage to win the game only 39% of the time. This can't be attributed to incompetence or exceptional Dark Servant play; there must be some aspect of the game which favors the Dark Servant nations. This is even more apparent when you take into account the fact that a nation like the Witch-King scores a winning position just as often as most other nations do, despite being surrounded by enemies and isolated from the rest of Mordor.

What is the mystery factor? A number of players claim that Dark Servant agent advantages in combination with their artifacts unfairly tip the game away from the Free. As the Cloud Lord has scored the second-highest number of wins overall, there may be some evidence to back this up. Yet if this is true, why aren't the nations most likely to suffer from agent attacks (again, the Gondors, Eothraim, and Northmen) all losers? Perplexing, to say the least.

If I were to hazard a guess (and a guess is all it is), I'd say that agents are indeed the primary reason for the preponderance of Dark Servant wins. GSI, with its inestimably much better information, saw fit to make changes to the agent orders; this seems to indicate that they too believe this to be at least one of the determining factors in the imbalance of victories between the allegiances.

#### The Losers

The losers among the nations of Middle-Earth include the Woodmen, Eothraim, Cardolan, Dragon Lord, and Rhudaur. Of these nations, the Woodmen, Dragon Lord, and Rhudaur have yet to place in the game. This suggests that these nations suffer some drawback serious enough to preclude an average chance of taking 1st, 2nd or 3rd place.

While the Dragon Lord position lends itself to easy criticism, the others do not. None of the four are by any means helpless in comparison to their opposition, nor do they have identifiable weaknesses. The Woodmen, for example, have no nearby enemies except for the Dragon Lord; once this Dark Servant is driven from Mirkwood, they can enjoy a peace dreamed of only by neutrals, with plenty of room to expand. The same can be said of Cardolan; this nation is often spared the direct and brutal attention of the Witch-King and his potential allies, yet has only managed to place a single time. Arthedain, on the other hand, is the prime target of Angmar; even so, that nation has managed to place four times.

Arguments have been made that the Eothraim are particularly susceptible to attack by Mordor. This is true, but the same can be said for the Northmen. Why then are the Eothraim losers and the Northmen not? Why also has Rhudaur alone of the five neutrals never managed to take a winning position?

No easy answers suggest themselves. I can only point out which nations seem to be particularly disadvantaged; others will have to suggest explanations for these results.

#### The Winners

The winners among the nations of Middle-Earth include the Noldo, Cloud Lord, Long Rider, Corsairs, and Haradwaith. Unlike the losers, it's fairly easy to see why these nations often surge to the fore. Protected from direct enemy

action by isolation or neutrality, all of these positions have the time to build upon their particular strengths and jump into the fray after many other nations have taken a savage beating.

There are some interesting anomalies. Note that among the allegiance players, the two of the three winning nations are almost completely character-oriented; only the Long Rider could (with some stretch of the imagination) be called a 'military nation'. In fact, the winning nations that truly qualify for this distinction are both neutral, and both are located in the same general area.

The question is, do isolation and/or neutrality really count for that much? The Easterlings have the exact same advantages as their neutral neighbors, as does the Blind Sorcerer with respect to the Cloud Lord and Long Rider; yet neither of these nations are winners. Again, some other factor or factors must be at work to give these nations an edge.

#### The Neutrals

Having played a neutral nation six times, I've heard more than my share of whining over how 'powerful' the neutrals are, and that they place in the game far too often. Let's take a look at these complaints.

Since there are five neutrals in the game, you'd expect that they'd take about 20% of the winning slots on average. In truth, the neutrals garner closer to 30% of these slots; somewhat higher than average, but certainly not high enough to set off any warning bells. In fact, considering that neutrals often remain intact in terms of their resources during the opening moves of the game, and spend the initial turns building up these resources rather than expending them against the enemy, you'd reasonably expect them to last longer than other nations and so reach winning positions more often. But even these numbers lend no credence to the claim that the neutrals are 'always winning the game'.

The primary complaint concerning neutrals (other than the ludicrous insistence that they shouldn't exist at all) is that they affect the balance of power between the allegiances far too much. This is rather easy to disprove. In a recent survey of 34 games with 170 neutral positions, the allegiance chosen by 102 of these neutrals was reported as follows (others had yet to change allegiance or had dropped the game prior to changing allegiance):

<u>Nation</u>	<u>Reported</u>	<u>Free Peoples</u>	<u>Dark Servants</u>
Corsairs	18	8 (44%)	10 (56%)
Haradwaith	20	10 (50%)	10 (50%)
Dunland	20	15 (75%)	5 (25%)
Rhudaur	23	13 (57%)	10 (43%)
Easterlings	21	9 (43%)	12 (57%)
Total Free Peoples:		55 (54%)	
Total Dark Servants:		47 (46%)	

Note: Information on 27 of these games was provided by Jeremy Richman, a long-time veteran of ME-PBM.

You'll note that all of the neutrals except the Dunlendings tend to break out relatively evenly among the allegiances, and that among neutrals overall there seems to be a slight tendency to favor the Free Peoples. If neutrals had as much sway upon the game as some claim, their power should result in a balance of games won that stands close to even between the allegiances. Yet we know from the data that the Free win only 39% of the time; clearly the neutrals aren't affecting this, other than perhaps in letting the Free win more often than they would if there were no neutrals in the game at all. In other words, any affect the neutrals have on the game is usually minor (there are obvious exceptional instances, e.g., when all five neutrals go to one allegiance) and doesn't appreciably alter the balance of power between the allegiances.

<u>Nation</u>	<u>Wins</u>	<u>Free People</u>	<u>Dark Servants</u>
Corsairs	11*	2 (20%)	8 (80%)
Harad	9	2 (22%)	9 (78%)
Dunland	4	3 (75%)	1 (25%)
Rhudaer	0	-	-
Easterlings	4	1 (25%)	3 (75%)

\*placed second in one game, but failed to declare prior to game end.

The information here confirms the breakdown given above. If neutrals did have a great deal of influence on the outcome of the game, they'd tend to win in numbers equal to their rate of declaration for either side. Yet aside from Dunland, most neutrals win the game only when fighting for the Dark Servants; they most often lose the game when they declare for the Free Peoples!

What does this suggest? The impact that any one neutral has on the chances of an allegiance winning the game is much smaller than generally believed. However, for three of the neutrals, joining the Dark Servants provides benefits that often allows them to take victory; for Dunland, these benefits are provided by the Free Peoples. In other words, declaring for the right allegiance is worth much more to the neutral than it is worth to the allegiance.

### Conclusions

Many questions on the 'whys' of victory and defeat can't be answered by an analysis of the data--only offered up for thought. Few things can be said with certainty:

-some nations win out of proportion to the average nation; others lose more often than they should.

-even under the old agent rules, the Dark Servants weren't unbeatable. Far from it, in fact.

-a competent Free Peoples team won't win the game every time, despite their advantages in economic power and the regional disparities versus the Witch-King and Dragon Lord.

-nations that one might expect to be losers (e.g., Northern Gondor, Northmen, Witch-King) were not, suggesting their strengths are fairly well proportioned for the opposition they face.

-neutrals aren't winning the game vastly out of proportion to their numbers.

-the effect that neutrals have upon the balance of power among the allegiances is much smaller than previously thought, and tends to even out both across games and in individual games.

This article can only tell you what's happening with respect to the questions initially proposed, not the reasons behind the results. I leave interpretation of the 'whys' up to my fellow gamers, and invite criticism and commentary. However, I'd ask that all criticism of the results be based upon the data, not upon unsubstantiated personal belief or experience, or upon the anecdotal experiences that begin with "well, this happened to me in game such-and-such once...".

Until Ren the Unclean takes a bath,  
Tom Walton

### *Good and Evil - Parallels from Another History*

by  
Chris Terrell

It has been argued over and over that the good side is stronger than the evil and vice-versa. Effective arguments have been presented for both sides, claiming various strengths (economic, military, character, etc.) give a definitive edge to one side over the other. After reading all of this and studying the game myself, I have come to the conclusion that neither good nor evil are inherently better than the other, that in fact it is in the hands of prudent players that games are decided. This is not to claim that each side does not possess distinct advantages over the other. They certainly do, but it is the realization of these differences and how a player uses their inherent strengths that decides which way the game shall tilt.

Where, then, are these differences and how can they best be used? In reviewing our own history one can find a striking parallel from the U.S. Civil War, which upon close examination bears a striking resemblance to the fantasy world of Tolkien. In 1861 South Carolina claimed its "constitutional" right to secede from the Union, and along with ten other neighboring states set out to establish an independent nation. These Southern states, though lacking in arms, factories and natural resources, nevertheless very nearly won a four year war against a much larger, economically stronger opponent. To compensate for a lack in these basics required ingenuity and resourcefulness from the Confederate leadership, which was obtained by utilizing the advantages the Union did not possess.

Following Bull Run in '61 both sides concentrated on building up well trained armies. The Union, being larger and wealthier, accomplished this task much faster. In Middle-earth (hereafter as "ME") the setup is much the same. The Evil nations find themselves heavily outnumbered and without the resource

base of the good side. What the evil side possesses in abundance is a wealth of strong characters centrally located and well protected. Robert E. Lee realized this inherent advantage also and constantly sought to use his centralized power and superior generals to pick off a divided or poorly positioned enemy. By working together against one opponent while defending the passes of Mordor the evil side can do exactly the same by concentrating their armies and employing their agents and emissaries to quickly wear down one opponent at a time. Only by a coordinated effort is this possible (which Lee realized after the blunders of his subordinates during the Seven Days), so the evil side must act in concert to make up for a slow economic start. Second Manassas, Chancellorsville, and Fredricksburg all provide excellent examples of a smaller army defeating a larger, better equipped one when fighting on suitable terrain under chosen conditions.

Naturally, the South did not win the war, and in fact it should have ended much sooner had the Union used their military might better in the early stages of the war. Here is where I feel the Good player in ME can best utilize his initial advantages. In '62 George McClellan marched an army in excess of 100,000 men to the gates of Richmond in the heralded Peninsular campaign. Instead of using his vast advantage in numbers (which his spies led him to believe the Rebs had) McClellan instead hesitated upon reaching his objective, relinquishing the all-important initiative to Lee. This is a mistake the good side in ME cannot afford to make. At the start of the game the good side has a large advantage in manpower which should not be held back in the early turns. McDowell complained before Bull Run that his troops were too green to fight yet, but Lincoln wisely urged him on, recognizing that the rebel troops were no better trained than his. Had the Union generals in the east been as prudent as those positioned in the west the war could have come to a much quicker conclusion. The Good players' advantages are based in their large economies and armies. Even though the best characters are located in the relative backwash at start up, the armies are strong enough to hopelessly bottle up Mordor, properly managed. It is imperative that the Eothraim, Northern and Southern Gondor act quickly and as one gigantic unit so that this can be accomplished rapidly. Wearing down Mordor early presents just one more obstacle for the Evil side to overcome in their uphill battle.

In conclusion, I feel that the most important advantage in ME-PBM is cooperation. When one side coordinates its efforts together against a mass of individuals, the results are predictable. Although establishing a dialogue can be an annoying troublesome process, it is essential to a winning strategy that it be sought early and used regularly. In every victorious army there is a sound line of communications, the very essence of military strategy itself.

## *Night of the Assassin*

by Cormic:  
Joint Mordor Special Operations Forces spokesman

Night fell across the lands of Middle-earth as the second year of the war dragged on. In the village of Elgaer, a light easterly breeze blew in moisture from the Sea of Rhûn. While the citizens of the small fishing village prepared for sleep, one particular visitor prepared for a hasty departure.

Cloaks, trousers, blouses and other necessities of disguise were strewn across a small room located in the second story of one of the town's three inns. The room's occupant rushed about his quarters and hurriedly threw clothes into a small coffer. The light streaming in through the small window outlined his lithe, tall frame and accented his angular face and pointed ears. He was Tharudan, a seasoned servant of the Sinda nation and he had definitely overstayed his welcome.

He had known that his coming here was a risk. He and his bodyguard had arrived in disguise about a month ago and had spent the time conducting minor acts of espionage against the holdings of the Ninth Nazgûl. It was to that particular Nazgûl lord that the citizens of Elgaer currently owed their allegiance.

For a short while, it had appeared that the Ninth Nazgûl's nation as a whole would fall. Sinda, Noldo and Cardolan armies had overrun his population centers and crushed his armies. Additionally, several of the Nazgûl's servants had been slain, a few by Tharudan himself. But then the news came that the Ninth's agents had been spotted near Mordor. That revelation had opened a window of opportunity for the Sinda nation to conduct unresisted acts of sabotage and espionage at locations near to the Ninth Nazgûl's capital. It was for that reason that Tharudan and his bodyguard Orophin had come to Elgaer.

But earlier that day his companion had discovered some frightening information. The most feared assassin in Middle Earth, the Wraith who followed the orders of the Ninth Nazgûl and, it was rumored, of the Evil Eye himself, had arrived in Elgaer. This news meant only one thing. The Eves' presence had been discovered and reported to the Nazgûl ruler. Time was therefore of the essence as the two Sinda raced to leave the village before the dreaded Dark Servant agent discovered their exact whereabouts.

Tharudan buckled his sword belt around his narrow waist and slammed shut the lid of the coffer. He picked the small chest up by its handles and headed for the stable where Orophin was already readying the horses. Upon reaching the exit, he was thrown backward as the door was violently kicked off its hinges and into the room.

He landed at the foot of the bed as the coffer fell into his lap. Struggling, he freed himself from under the chest and rose to face the doorway.

Standing in the doorway, silhouetted by the faint light of the hallway lamp, was a black garbed figure. The figure's hood was drawn up but Tharudan's sharp elven eyes could see that the face inside the hood was peculiarly translucent with two red, glowing eyes. The figure spoke.

"Tharudan of Sinda," the intruder began in a voice that sounded quite hollow, "you have become quite a nuisance to my master and it is time that you pay for it."

As he spoke, the figure raised his left hand to point at Tharudan. As it did so, the Elf could see a glint of gold from a ring that adorned the third finger of that translucent hand. The intruder was a *Ringwight*, the bearer of one of five Lesser Rings given to Men. That fact removed all doubt as to the intruder's identity.

"Y-You.." the Elf stammered, "Your..."

"There is no need for introductions, Tharudan of Sinda", the Wraith interrupted, "We both know who I am and what I have come to do".

Tharudan knew what he must do. His right arm flashed across his body, reaching for the slender, magical, elven sword he wore on his left hip. In the space of a heartbeat, he had drawn the sword and aimed a backhanded slash at the assassin.

The assassin's weapon moved even faster. The dark blade of the Morgul knife sliced through the air to intercept the Elf's attack. The elven sword fell to the floor - Tharudan's right hand was still tightly wrapped around its hilt.

The elven agent gasped in surprise and pain as he clamped his left hand over the remainder of his right forearm, furiously attempting to slow the fountain of blood that now poured from the fresh wound.

"I had thought this would be much more difficult", gloated the assassin, "you disappoint me, Tharudan."

Words suddenly formed in the Elf's mind, forming into lines of magical verse. He released his hold over the wound, raised his good hand to point at the assassin, and opened his mouth to release the spell.

The intruder spun out of the way, his dark cloak brushing against the spell caster's face. Unknown to Tharudan, the hem of the cloak was weighted and lined with razor blades. The Elf felt a sudden stinging sensation on his neck but he chose to ignore it and concentrated on uttering the magical phrase that would render the assassin into a harmless pile of ash.

Tharudan's eyes opened wide in horror. Instead of words, only a rushing gurgling sound came from his mouth. He put his good hand to his neck and felt the warm wash of blood that poured from the fresh wound in his throat. A wave of nausea forced him to his knees.

He looked up at the dark-robed assassin. The Wraith casually raised his wicked Morgul blade to strike. At that point, Tharudan began to wonder if the legends were true. It was said that elves were immortal and that, in lieu of dying, they were merely transported into a higher plane of being.

That thought, and any others he may have had, ended a moment later in a blazing flash of pain as the assassin's knife plunged into him.

The Ringwight bent down over the body and wiped his blade clean with the Elf's blouse. After that was done, he stood and replaced the knife in its scabbard. He then wrapped his cloak around himself and headed for the exit. The night was still young and the Wraith had one more elven trespasser to visit.

## The Hall Of Heroes

Game #56 - The Free Peoples: #7, #10 & #3

The Song of the Free rings out in triumph across Middle-earth! Sauron and his vile Servants have been erased from the land once and for all, creating a safe haven for those who follow the light. Final Standings are as follows:

#7 South Gondor - 2350

#10 Noldo Elves - 2067

#3 Eothraim - 1783

Top Dark Servant: #12 Dragon Lord - 600

### Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Uvatha/Long Rider: 154

Highest Net Commander Rank -Elatar/Northern Gondor: 134

Highest Net Agent Rank - Gildor/Noldo Elves: 144

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Erester/Noldo Elves & Ulwarth/  
Southern Gondor: 91

Highest Net Mage Rank - Ringlin/Sinda Elves: 106

Most Mithril - Noldo Elves: 1169

Most Artifacts - Noldo Elves: 26

Most Kills - Ice King: 11

Congratulations to the Free People!!