



WHISPERS OF THE WOOD

GAME
SYSTEMS
INC.

PO Box 160129 Miami, FL 33116-0129

forwarding & address correction requested



WORDS FROM THE WOOD

It's November and that means it's the beginning of the holiday season. Yes, only 54 shopping days left until the Big Day, so get out there and buy, buy BUY!! It's never too soon to start your shopping. In fact, it's what makes this country so great--mass consumption! We invented malls so we have to know what we're talking about in the shopping arena. Sure, maybe we're not so great in math scores or general education, but we can outshop anyone on the planet! To quote Tom Lehrer--"Angels we have heard on high--tell us to go out and buy". And what, you may ask yourself, does this have to do with ME-PBM or anything else we do here at GSI? Well, nothing, actually. I just saw my first Christmas decoration and I'm feeling mighty depressed. Sorry. Now on to happier things.

We are proud to announce that the 5th edition of the rulebook is now available. Included in this edition are the new rules changes as well as many clarifications from earlier editions. The cost is still \$5 so if you wish to purchase this spiffy (yes, I did say spiffy) looking product, just let us know.

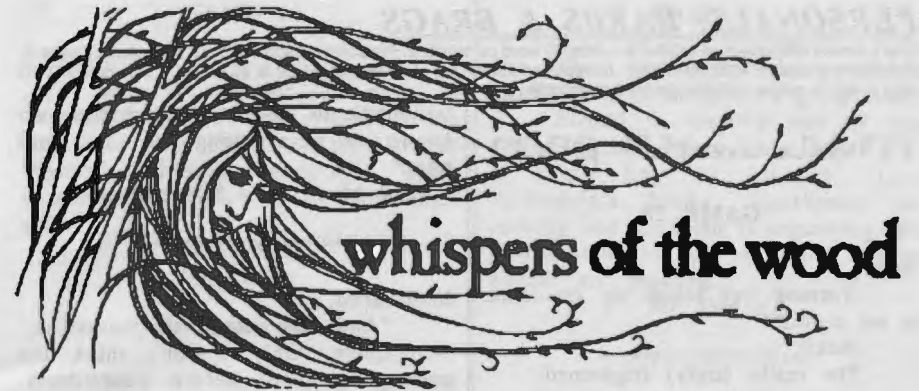
I'd like to talk a little bit about faxes (again) and proper fax procedures. First, when faxing in any turn, please make sure that the following information is included: Game #, player #, security code and YOUR NAME. Many people fax us turns and do not include their name on the turnsheet. We use this as a double checking procedure, so please include your name. The next item is what we will and will not accept by fax. We do accept turns, naturally. We DO NOT accept notes to other players--it is just too time consuming to cut up 25 notes and make sure they get filed, especially the morning the game is run. We also do not accept WHISPERS SUBMISSIONS--for the same reasons mentioned above. There is also a concern about security. Yes, security codes can be used, but many players give security codes to friends so their turns can be faxed and if a personal is over 40 words, the issue of money comes into play. So we do not accept faxed Whispers submissions.

Another subject I'd like to discuss, which is related to faxes (how's that for a segue?), is that of the emergency daytime contact number. When we say daytime number, we mean just that--a number where you can be reached during the day. There have been a number of times where we have needed to reach a player because of a problem with a fax or phone-in turn only to reach an answering machine at a home phone number. This does not do us or the player any good because, by the time they get home and receive our message, it's too late to do anything. We cannot hold off processing the game because we have to get the game out by 5:00 that day. If you cannot give out a work number, we understand that--but if you're at all able to give a daytime contact number, we ask that you do so.

Game Needs--We are still looking for 2 Dark Servant teams for grudge matches. If you want to enter with your friends, just let us know and we'll set you up. We're also filling a 3 week game as well as a new State of War game, so any interested players should send in those requests. We're also accepting names for those interested in an all-fax game. If we get enough interest by the end of November, we'll arrange the details. Until we know the interest is there, though, we won't know how much it will cost or any other particulars. Therefore, if you are interested, let us know.

That's enough for this month, campers. I'll talk to you next month!

Stuart



ALONG THE PATHWAYS

Words From the Wood	Inside Cover
EDITOR'S COLUMN	
Personals	1
COMMUNICATIONS.	
Hobbiton Square	8
FORUM	
Personalities to Play By	9
STRATEGY	
Personality in Middle-earth Play by Mail	13
STRATEGY	
To Destroy, Capture or merely Threaten.....	16
STRATEGY	
Observer	17
HEADLINES	
Hall of Heroes	18
THE VICTORS.	

WHISPERS OF THE WOOD is a monthly publication primarily for the use and enjoyment of GSI players of STATE OF WAR 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.

Credits

Editor..... Stuart Taft
 Staff..... Jason Duerstock, Keith Fast, Harold Ford,
 Michelle Heath, Gisela Perla, Loraine Rivera, Sean Taft, Anthony Vialon
 Publishers..... Pete Stassun & Bill Feild Jr

This Month's Cover: "Trouble at Sea"
 by Charlie McWhorter

Volume X Issue # 8
 Published by GAME SYSTEMS INC
 November 1, 1993
 Copyright GSI 1993

PERSONALS: BARBS & BRAGS

Every current GSI player is entitled to a free 40 word personals 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.

Middle-earth™ PBM

GAME 28

Ack,

Tormog has taken up residence in my capitol!!!

Ack!!

The really (truly) frightened Dunlendings

GAME 31

Hoarmurath's army of 800 cavalry was expected to have been crushed by a surprise sally from the defenders of the keep. A huge block from the wall crushed him after he attacked the city/keep.

GAME 35

It sure is nice to have things go well for once. Marl Tarma defeated Khamûl's last army in Mirkwood, I solved a riddle, and had an encounter with Galadriel. On to Mordor!

Baaltrac

GAME 37

Blind One,

You shall lose everything you've gained unjustly, for your cheating ways go not unnoticed. You shall be crushed by those you've scorned: Need I mention names? Just pick a name at random, and you're correct! Goodbye (sniff).

GAME 43

"From the dawn of time we came, moving silently down through the centuries, living many secret lives. Struggling to reach the time of the Gathering, where the few who remain

will battle to the last. No one has ever known we were among you . . . until now."

The Man on the Silver Mountain

Mahrcared,

"And now come the assassins," nice quote. Only I don't think the message got out before your death. Sorry to rain on your parade but I am the Cloud Lord.

Ji Indur

Six down,
Five targeted,
Five waiting

GAME 45

Ji Indur,

It's so like you to try and impersonate the Wandering Prophet; don't you have the imagination to think of your own alias? I know it's asking a lot, but if you concentrate . . . oh hell, it's hopeless.

Attila the Dun

GAME 56

Ji Indûr's realm has been silenced. Adûnaphel's realm is dying. Thus the Easterling hordes have wrecked havoc. Uvatha, your agents are a little late, there's nothing left for them.

Zarendarger (25)

GAME 60

LOST:

5000 dwarves, last seen partying at Barad Dur. Suspected armed, dangerous and inebriated.

GAME 61

Evil Eye,

There is no evil left alive in Taur-E-Ndaedelos. The Lords of Wood and Stone have eliminated the Lord of Wyrms. As I have always said, "Truth is stranger than fiction, and sometimes silly."

Mahrcared
High Rider

Why the hesitation in the allegiance change, Easterling? We know your true colours! Perhaps you still wish to negotiate after the thrashings you received.

Evil Eye

GAME 62

Hallas looked as one who had not slept in weeks.

"What shall we do?"

The man behind the throne said to Hallas:

"Even if we fall, if we fight well we shall have no shame when the Dagor Dagorath comes."

GAME 70

Come my allies--let us concentrate our efforts like a beam of heavenly light and reduce our enemy to ash! Beware foul wraiths . . . with this hammer I will smote the Dragon's skull.

Slayer of Ren and Hoarmurath,
King Tarondor

GAME 74

Before this game ends I would like to thank all the Free People (cowards), Neutrals (egomaniacs), and Dark Servants (self centered) for making this one hell of a boring game! Except for #10, #12, #16, #19 and #21. Nice going guys.

GAME 78

The Freenerds threw us a "slider" and we hit it for a grand slam.

Elrond is running out of pop centers to hide. Bain looks worse than a dumb boy in algebra class. Arthedain's broke, Northmen are choking and Cardolan is organizing this pitiful sight to behold? Burnt biscuit awards are pending.

Mr. Freeze

Daylight flees our shrieking hordes! As the Visigoths slobber in anticipation of destroying yet another civilization, the Hosts of Morannon write the menu for a Texas-style barbecue in Mirkwood. How do you like your horse?

Morbid Mike of Mordor

North Gondor is in seclusion like a nun. Arthedain is broke.

Northmen can't pass go.

Noldo is playing hide and seek.

Sinda, in a word . . . HELP!!

Dwarves are looking for Snow White.

Eothraim on a respirator.

South Gondor in search of ???

Woodmen are petrified.

Cardolan is leading this pitiful sight to behold. Burnt Biscuit awards are probable.

The Ice Master

Mr. Freeze

GAME 79

Greetings, o Dark Ones!

THPTPTPTPTH!!! The Ring is mine, and you can't have it. Na-na-na-NAH-na!

Some Neutral

P.S. Beg, Good Guys. Beg nice and sweet-like.

GAME 80

Damn!

They are using that old Hitler comparison again.

I hate it when that happens
Rhudaur Lives

GAME 81

To the Witch-King, Lord of the Nazgul-
We come in full array, and
with mighty allies against thee!
Hallas.

GAME 83

Free Peoples, and concerned friends of
the Cardolan,

It is useless to taunt the taunter
but it is refreshing to see some signs of
life out there.

I recommended an enema for
Cardolan's condition. Please look in on
him.

Jester

Adûnaphel,

It is nice of you to finally attack
undefended Pelagir, but I will put an
end to your southern invasion. Once
your other fleet is destroyed, I'll be
able to rest easy in regards to naval
invasions. Then the march east will
begin. My congratulations to the
agents that drove Rhudaur to
bankruptcy.

Baaltroc

GAME 86

Hey Woodmen--

Been watching Mirkwood lately?
Dwarves stopped cold east of Sarn
Goriwing; Sinda armies falling apart;
Eothraim towns falling one by one . . .
guess who's next? Yeah--your shape
shifting won't save you now . . . death
approaches.

Nine Old Wraiths

Let it be known: Erester's head
on a platter is worth 30K. Will
negotiate.

Hos Harf
Easterling Accountant
and General Hater of Erester

GAME 91

Easterlings,

Your dishonesty and betrayal
will soon cost you your position. The
Free Peoples cannot save you from
what we intend to do. By now, you've
already experienced the losses we can
inflict upon you.

Bosimytas Reval

One team to rule them all
One team to find them.
One team to bring them all
And in the Darkness,
Beat the snot out of them!

P.S. Easterlings, it's hard to be two-
faced without a head.

GAME 92

To whoever is besmirching my
good name with infantile messages
designed to annoy all readers: We are
not amused.

Mûrazôr

GAME 94

The flaming eye crackles with rage as
he glances at the stubs on his once all-
powerful hands. "Where are the
fingers?!" he screams in anguish. But
then, smiling that cute little smile of
his, "Aw, it's only a game?!"

Demosthenes

Go ahead, razz away, Northmen

scoundrel. I'll have my revenge!

Dendra Dwar

Lost & Found

Found: Several Dark Servant Artifacts.
Used once. (DROPPED) Owners should
inquire at 1614 Old South Road. Be
prepared to describe/identify your
artifacts. (I know that will be difficult
for some of you guys.)

Here come the dwarves. Where?
There! Why? To DIE!

Evil Eye

Tarondor,

Your arrogance astounds me! You
shall pay; if not with blood, then with
gold! 15325 and counting!

Ji Indur

GAME 95

Enough indecision. Hey Haradwaith:
Here I come!

Shhh!

GAME 96

Mûrazôr, we hear you. All who inhabit
Middle-earth hear you. You alone have
no ears.

You will face my blade if I must carve
my way through a hundred thousand
swordsmen to reach you.

Belgarath of Arthedain

GAME 97

Broggha spoke:

"We come here, young survivors
of a deadly plague: strong, eager,
ambitious. We come here to join
together, to bring the blood feuds to an
end, to decide upon a course of action
which is best for our peoples."

Dear Mr. Ozzymodo,

We are pleased to hear that you
plan to vacation in beautiful
Arthedain. No doubt you've heard of
the excellent time that Mr. Ashdurbuk
Zalg had in his earlier visit.

Yours,

Alquawen

President, Arthedain Chamber of
Commerce

From the Diaries of Ozzymodo:

Digging, digging in the dirt all
day. But it will be worth it. When I
find the Staff of Earthmastery, I will
be the Master of the Earth. And then
all will kneel before the might of
Ozzymodo! Digging, digging . . . What's
this? A riddle?

Our Lord Haruth Ramam declares
himself Emperor of the South and
rightful ruler of all lands from Umbar
to Khand. Corsairs, Quiet Avenger,
Easterlings: Submit to his will or be
destroyed like Cardolan.

Haradwaith

GAME 98

By Order of

His Illustrious Majesty
Ovatha II, Emperor of Khand
Heir of Rhûn and Rhovanion

By vote of the Grand Council, the
Empire of Khand and its allies shall
henceforth join our efforts to the
servants of the Lidless Eye. We shall
drive the Dunedain and their hapless
lackeys back to the obscurity from
whence they came, and reclaim what
was ours.

Emperor Ovatha II
Viceroy Tros Hesnef
Chancellor Gorovod

Free Peoples,

Well, last month you guys talked up quite a victory for yourselves. Why then did you call me up a few days later and say your side couldn't win and was therefore dropping out (to a man)? You brag about the number of pop centers you have taken, yet all of us continue to grow and thrive (Killing Murazor does not knock position 11 out of the game). Meanwhile we continue to roll over nations--Northmen, Eothraim. Your side has failed to communicate with the neutrals (most like with each other as well) and they therefore have been swayed to our side by superior diplomacy, communication, and skill (though I doubt your side would understand those big words). Either stay in for the duration or get out now so that none of us waste any more time and money. Both sides have done more than their fair share of talking, but it seems we are the only ones who can and will back it up.

Naurmegil
Blind Sorceror
Leader of The
Shades of Madness

To All Free Peoples:

When a character issues a promise to see to the downfall of the Dark Servants, that's role playing. When a player threatens to drop their position in hopes of improving their chances of winning, that's childish/unsportsmanlike/underhanded behavior. If the Dark Servants lose, it will be because we were defeated and NOT because of your poor attempts at deceit.

PLAYER #19

GAME 99

Adûnaphel:

Oh my, that Teldûmeir is so big and strong. I wonder if he'd be

interested in a personal alliance.

Purrrrrr

I sure wish you silly folks in Arnor would hurry up and do something about Angmar. Mûrazor's ugly military is really draining our coffers.

Thanks.
Yours Truly,
The Emperor of Gorgoroth
Sauron's Little Darling

GAME 100

Rot N Bart is still neutral today and issues the following statement:
"To be blunt, I haven't decided. I have yet been given a reason to turn in either direction. The Corsair and I await a reason."

Rot N Bart of Rhudaur

GAME 101

Rumor has it that the Northern invaders into Mordor were scared stiff as the armies of Push-ups, Drumsticks and Fudgesicles descend from Durthang. Later, they were buried by an avalanche caused by the army chanting "We're Mister Cold Miser . . ."

The Dark side's play so far is pitiful. Hint: "Dark Forces" does not mean to play with your eyes closed. Are we that good or are you really that bad? (Except Dog Lord, well played!)

Dwarrowdelf - Dwarves

GAME 102

As Gurthlug surveys the dead FPs at Barad Ungol, she thinks, "Amazing how the Free People will send their young to die for nothing. Oh well, at least the troops will eat well this week."

Gee, for a grudge match you weanies of Goodness and Light haven't got much to say! Liven it up! Or sit back and watch as I take a flamethrower to this place.

Mr. Heatmizer

Urzahil,

It must be nice to have a slave nation like the Fire King, who foregoes all possible actions from which he could benefit, just so he can defend Mordor while you go out and take things. What a shame it is that he bungled it. Bye-Bye Barad-Dur.

King Tarondor

GAME 103

The Conquest of Minas Ithil
Gondor said that it couldn't be done
But Ren with a laugh replied,
"O foolish one, it can be done--
No one's really tried!"
Armies marched in as Ren watched with a grin;
His legions, they went right to it.
They tackled the thing which couldn't be done--
And they couldn't do it.
(Borrowed and modified without permission from unknown author)
I hate forts. -- Ren

The words of a King are as an oath:

An oath may not be broken, and
it shall pursue oathkeeper and
oathbreaker to the world's end!

Thus, Macbeth has sealed the
fate of Rhudaur!

So-called Gondor kings,

Go away, or I shall taunt you a
second time.

Adûnaphel

GAME 105

Famous Rhûn Proverb

A Northman ordered tea in an Eothraim restaurant and it was brought with two fortune cookies. The message in the first cookie read: "You will repel a vicious attack by hostile forces." The second message read: "Disregard previous message."

Black Rook

GAME 106

A question asked at the Oracle of Dunland:

Ten of Good, Ten of Evil

Five whose ways are not yet known.

What will they give, what will they offer?

An account, a check or a personal loan?

As the Frost of Winter approaches

The mighty Anduin bows to the North Wind.

As the Chill of Doom strikes infidel hearts

Sauron brings them to their knees!

The Elements have begun their battle,
And the Dark Lord . . . his Crusade.

#16

Hallas, Hallas, I knew him well,
Horatio.

Unity is the key that unlocks the door
to success.

The Oracle of Dunland

GAME 107

Darkness shall consume the light.

GAME 108

Dunland, Rhudaur:

Declare for good by turn 6 or I will crush you one by one.

Cardolan

Hello, Hello . . . Is there anybody out there?

Just nod if you can hear me!

Is there anyone at home?

Gondorian Bards

Noldo - Car 54 where are you?

Evils - Are you guys gonna send file cards, or what?

Overheard at Mt Gundabad . . .

"Fire, Fire on the Mountain . . ."

Congratulations to the Dragon Lord for his failure to threaten my camp.

Way to go!

Beoraborn

Lord of the Wood

"Why must you go my love?"

"Our homelands are threatened once again sweet Saryon. We cannot allow The Darkness to be cast upon our hearts."

"Take care my love!"

"Watch to the east past the towers of Osgiliath. If the smoke from Mordor burns pure and white you will know that we still fight. If the smoke burns black as sin, seek passage to the west as all will be lost."

He turned from her and rode slowly to his command, not wanting to look back. She stood transfixed amongst the moving army and watched him go, ignoring the sound of thousands of boots as the Men of Gondor marched off to war.

"Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad with power."

Weirdstone

GAME 109

Southern Gondor stands resolute and ready. The armies of the Dark Servants will crash upon our lances like waves upon the headlands, receding in shattered pieces. Soon, the threats of Sauron will only be recalled in the tales which are told to fighting children.

Celdrahil

Arise servants of the Light. The cold hands of the evil ones has once again been felt in Middle-earth. Let us unite and destroy our enemies.

Tarondor

P.S. Let's keep the lines of communication open.

GAME 110

The Nations of the Corsairs and of the Haradwaith are proud to announce their formal alliance. Any infringement upon the sovereignty of one of the aforesaid nations will be considered an attack on both and reprisal will be swift.

GAME 111

Hear me Men of the West!

In the name of the Dread Lord Sauron, I claim all lands between the Gwatno and Baraduin Rivers. Flee Westerners, The Red Eye is upon you!

The Inslaved of the Shadow

GAME 112

Other Neutrals:

Ever get the feeling you're in a grudge game?

Haruth Ramam

GAME 114

From the Book of the Eye:

" . . . and in all the land, from the Great Sea to the mountains, from the frozen north to the Harad wastes, there was only death, and dust, and desolation, and the howl of the wolf. "

Gaurhoth

GAME 116

The Shadow spreads

Beware White Light

For you shall fall

When you feel our might!

Hobbiton Square

An open forum for the exchange of ideas and opinions.

I would like to express my appreciation for the new alterations in Middle Earth PBM. Everyone should have received word by now, via the ME-PBM Rules errata and Me-PBM Changes on your results sheet. The changes concerning agent and emissary orders were wise and justified. There definitely needed to be greater risk added to the offensive agent orders, and I think assassinations-at-will will decrease significantly. One musn't think that agents will play less of a role in the game; assassinations and theft will always be skills of high demand, greatly affecting the war's outcome. But now agents will be even more precious because they can actually have a chance to guard an army commander without being totally disregarded by the good or mediocre assassins. The truly great agents will continue to have success, but at least there is a finite number of that quality! And concerning other changes, I agree wholeheartedly that a citadel should be more difficult to sabotage than a tower-- who could disagree with that? The increased effectiveness of scouting is also needed and well-appreciated: it makes for more exciting play, which is what the game is all about, right?

These changes should set lights off in the minds of any astute Free Peoples player; agents can now serve a defensive function! use them or suffer the consequences.

I also like the changes made to the results sheet. The idea that one should see the portrait of his/her challenger is simple, yet very enhancing. Glad someone thought of it!

Nick Cody

The new format is great! It makes faxing turn copies to friends less expensive and is a lot easier to read! As a dedicated Evil player I am looking forward to see how much the new agent rules change the play of the game. I think they were a good idea. The goods will not have any excuses now, will they? And the sword cuts both ways.

Clark Kapelka

I like the new turn sheet format. It's easier to read and it doesn't take up so much file space

Tom Walton

Personalities to Play By

by Tom Walton

(with thanks to David Foreman)

In ME-PBM as in any other game, players tend to develop distinct styles of play which distinguish them game after game. Knowing how a particular person plays gives you an advantage in predicting their actions, as well as their responses to certain events. Such knowledge also allows you to decide whether or not that person can be trusted in a particular situation, and just how far this trust can be extended.

In an effort to categorize these styles, I've provided a number of different entries which long-time gamers will no doubt readily recognize among the people they've encountered. It should be made clear that most players fall into a combination of these categories, not strictly adhering to any one of them.

I like to thank David Foreman for allowing me to shamelessly plagiarize his original article on the topic, which appeared in the Free People Press in May of 1993. The categories from 'Despot' to 'Jester' are entirely David's creations, taken word-for-word from that article. It was David's mastery of the written word which inspired me to add the style-types which follow his own.

The Despot - The Despot rules, or attempts to rule, with an iron fist. He is inflexible, approving of no plans but his own. These players do well when playing with rookies who need a leader. They rule strong nations, drop the game when things go badly, and get along with other leaders poorly. When acting as the leader of a team game, these leaders are effective . . . for awhile. The problem with the Despot is his inflexibility. If the opposition learns to predict the Despot's strategy, the team is doomed, as that strategy will not easily change. More importantly, when the opposition figures out which nation the Despot controls, that nation is targeted for destruction. The resulting distractions make his leadership shaky at best.

The Monarch - The Monarch rules by guile and daring. He frequently participates in flashy activities and takes calculated risks. These gambles result in a player whom others want to follow. People like to follow a winner. Once the Monarch gathers his followers and begins to direct the actions of others, he can be a dangerous enemy. His vulnerability is reputation. A few setbacks resulting in ineffectiveness can break down his followers' confidence, splitting the alliance.

The Facilitator - This player doesn't lead, he floats. He is the first to provide money or material for the other nations. He may be introverted with characters and armies, avoiding expansionist plans. Others do his fighting for him gladly, as he bankrolls them and provides metals, food, and other materials to support the campaign. Facilitators are useful in games where nations coordinate and plan their activities long in advance. They are vulnerable to agents, as they need lots of characters in their capitol to do all that facilitating. Facilitators can quickly be eliminated by sneak attacks, as they frequently have small armies at home (you have to have a surplus to be a good facilitator). Facilitators don't usually win, as they spend their resources helping the team rather than expanding their nation.

The Rogue - The Rogue doesn't lead, and doesn't want a leader. He's the one you accidentally assassinate at your capitol because he 'dropped in' without warning you. He's the one who has 250,000 gold in reserve, but doesn't provide

help to a bankrupt ally. He recently dislikes conversation of any kind except through 3x5 cards. The Rogue likes to hide behind other people's armies and have a good time. Rogues like to play neutrals because of the freedom. When a Rogue maneuvers properly, he frequently wins, because his obligations are self-centered. He gives up no strength for the team, and therefore retains a good deal of his vigor. Of course, given a bad placement (the Dragon Lord or the Eothraim come to mind) the Rogue may be an asset, as they take care of themselves, and self-preservation in those positions is good for the team. Watch out for Rogue allies, as they tend to drop at bad moments, take your pop centers by emissary action, and challenge/assassinate your artifact-laden characters late in the game.

The Sage - The Sage owns up-to-date lists of all the artifacts, has heard about every encounter in existence, and has a continuously updated collection of nation setups. Every player of ME-PBM should know a Sage or two, as they are indispensable when an obscure fact is needed. Sages are known for playing a solid, if conservative, game. They sometimes spend orders on trivia gathering, but don't make mistakes involving knowledge.

The Diplomat - Diplomats like to share all sorts of information, make suggestions, trade materials, work out joint missions, etc. Most players fall into this category. Diplomats like to lead and follow, depending on the situation. Diplomat leadership is based on missions, rather than a complete game.

The Chamberlain - This personality is the hardest to define. The Chamberlain leads by suggestion, never forcing but always pressuring his allies into action. The difficulty in dealing with a Chamberlain is that his suggestions are useful, well thought-out, and correct. So why shouldn't you follow those suggestions blindly? Because the Chamberlain's skill lies in making logical suggestions that benefit him as well as you. As a result, a skillful Chamberlain can indirectly control several nations, each of which participates in logical missions that directly or indirectly help the Chamberlain. Chamberlains frequently win, since they can harness the resources of several nations, thus saving their own.

The Jester - The Jester is a fool. Although we, as gamers, always hope for strong, competent allies, reality says that we will run into a Jester from time to time. The Jester misses turns (without remorse), makes grand plans and never implements them, and lies poorly. The tragedy of the Jester is that he rarely holds his own against the enemy, and can break your alliance when expectations are not realized.

The Chameleon - The Chameleon is a player capable of changing his style of play in response to the game, current circumstances, or the people he's dealing with. Such a player will often present a different face to each of his allies depending on which he believes to be the most appropriate to achieving his goals. The Chameleon is very flexible and hard to predict, since he can and will alter his style of play to adapt to new developments. While the Chameleon can be a useful ally and often proves capable of getting others to do what he wants, his unpredictability makes him less than trustworthy. Chameleons are most often found in Neutral positions.

The Manipulator - The Manipulator is a more vicious form of the Chamberlain. He throws loyalty to the wind in order to fulfill his desires, subtly directing the

actions of allies, neutrals, and enemies alike. The Manipulator will lend a helping hand when he deems it appropriate, but will sabotage his cohorts without remorse should they interfere with his plans. This is a player who anonymously provides critical information to the enemy if he thinks an ally is becoming too powerful, in an effort to inhibit that ally's rise to the top. The Manipulator is difficult to root out, since he rarely takes overt action against supposed friends and often appears to be consistently stalwart and loyal. Possibly the most dangerous player type there is, the Manipulator often wins games because of his masterful play of ally against enemy (you have to be good to be a Manipulator).

The Role-player - Role-players are gamers to whom the goal of winning is secondary to the style of play and personal objectives. A Role-player will define his nation's interests and attitudes prior to the start of the game, then act according to these guidelines when developing and executing strategy. These players make dangerous enemies, since self-preservation and ultimate victory might be of minor concern to them. The weakness of this player type is that once you've discovered the guidelines by which he operates, you can predict his actions. Role-players make good team members when playing in a position that requires daring and self-sacrifice, but rarely win the game.

The Purist - A more obnoxious form of the Role-player, it seems to many that the Purist's primary objective is to make the game less enjoyable for you and your teammates. The Purist is the guy who continually corrects your pronunciation of game-world terms, has a stroke if he runs into an elf named 'Fritz', and refuses to even consider the idea of dwarvish cavalry. Purists are easy to spot, since they're completely devoid of a sense of humor, and seem to think it their moral obligation to make sure everyone plays the 'right' way. Since the Purist is often an excellent Sage, stroking his ego can result in obtaining a treasure-house of information - so long as he doesn't find out you named your last dwarven commander 'Dopey'. Purists often lose the game, since they actively omit options which violate their sense of what 'belongs' in Middle-earth. Only good on a team if they don't play a critical position.

The Info-Hog - The Info-Hog is always found in combination with another player type. This is the guy who sends you 3x5s every turn asking for information, but never provides you with any. He often knows things about enemy nations which could prove critical to your campaign, but refuses to tell you what he's learned. The Info-Hog is the bane of new players, since he won't even provide basic game knowledge (e.g., who owns what towns in that area) to his allies. Rather than trying for victory by skill, the Info-Hog plays upon ignorance to gain points, willingly allowing members of his allegiance to stumble into disaster. This player is easy to spot after a few turns, and simply refusing to communicate unless there's an even exchange of knowledge often frustrates him into changing his style (at least briefly). Not a good team player, very good for a Neutral position.

The Warrior - Akin to the Role-player, the Warrior is more interested in play than in victory. Such a person lives for excitement, and like the Monarch is often daring and bold. Virtually fearless and utterly undaunted by poor odds, he seems to relish the game more the worse things become. To the Warrior, the thrill of the fight is everything, especially when the struggle seems hopeless. The Warrior's weakness is that he generally proves uncontrollable and will often

pick a fight without consideration of the possible consequences. Also, these players tend to drop the game once victory is assured and things become dull or, if playing a neutral, might even switch sides to win the excitement of play. These players are best suited to front-line positions which remain in battle over the entire game: the Gondors, Eothraim, the Ice King or Fire King, etc.

The Egotist - The Egotist may or may not be a good player, but he'll go to great pains to let you know that he's an expert - and you're not. The kind of player that can incite violence in even the most placid of allies, the Egotist's attitude is so repugnant that most people will go out of their way to avoid him. These players are the 'veterans' who look down upon new players, the guys who regularly insult the skill or ability of others and disparage any strategy but their own. The Egotist is convinced that he alone is good enough to win the game, and that all others should rightfully defer to his wisdom. Bucking an Egotist can be dangerous, as he'll respond by defaming your character and convincing others to refuse you aid, all in an attempt to force your defeat and so 'prove' just how 'stupid' you really are. Egotists make lousy team members and are sometimes wiped out by their own allegiance. The Egotist is most often found in combination with the Despot, Sage, or Scoundrel. Avoid the Egotist if at all possible; you don't want to be the target of his anger.

The Scoundrel - The Scoundrel is the scum of gamers. These are the players who regularly lie, cheat, and steal, preying upon their allies just as often as they do upon their enemies. To the Scoundrel, loyalty to anyone but himself is a foreign concept, and a refusal to conform to his expectations or comply with his demands is regarded as a personal affront. These players will stoop to personal insults, carry grudges from game to game, and many times do more damage to their own allegiance than to the enemy. A Scoundrel can be your worst nightmare, as he may (among other things) purposefully throw the game if he can't win; his attitude is "if I'm going to lose, then everyone will lose". Scoundrels regularly make it onto black-lists and are just as distasteful in person as they are in play. Like the Egotist, these gamers are sometimes targeted for destruction by their own allegiance. If you run into a Scoundrel, attempt to force him out of the game before he can damage you and your teammates; there's no reasoning with him.

The New Guy - They're crazy people, no doubt about. Sometimes silly, sometimes dangerous, the New Guy can strike fear into the heart of even the most seasoned veteran- because you've no idea what he's going to do. These players, unaware of the 'game wisdom' older hands operate by, will often try things which no experienced player in their right mind would even consider - and sometimes they succeed. Watch the new player closely; he could be the one to shatter your plans (and your nation) at the most unexpected moment. (with thanks to Michael Robinson)

I might add another classification, more of a reaction than a player type, which might strike a sympathetic chord in some of you:

The Avenger - The Avenger is a player who's out to have fun, pure and simple - until he runs into the Jester, Egotist, or Scoundrel. Upon encountering these obnoxious souls, the Avenger loses all sense of reason and makes it his personal business to drive these idiots from the game. From the Avenger's point of view,

he's paying good money to enjoy himself, and isn't obligated to PUT UP WITH ANY CRAP! Avengers are often secretly cheered on in their efforts by players of friendly and enemy nations alike.

The point is fairly simple. Living on the edge of bankruptcy? Call a Facilitator for aid. About to launch a major campaign? Enlist the Warrior in your efforts. Can't figure out a riddle you've run into? Drop the Sage a line. Once you peg a player's style, you can use that knowledge for your own gain while avoiding diplomatic blunders that could knock you out of the running.

Personality in Middle-earth Play-by-Mail

by
Ian Keane

"We were experimenting with theories of regressing mental awareness, when Celedhring of Dol Guldur entered the chieftain's longhouse. As the evening was well advanced, many of the adepts in the company had already achieved a mystical state of consciousness. Big Bear's face bore a tranquil smile, wreathed with lavender smoke from a pipe stuffed with powdered mushroom caps. Now and again he'd giggle for no apparent reason. Benny was lying under the table, having earlier been ambushed by a feral chair. Though he'd given battle gamely, the chair had been too quick, and at last he had succumbed to its terrible grip. Ozzie was lying on top of the table, the bruise on his forehead testament to his successful attempt to bounce it off the roof tree in a leap from the fireplace mantle. Wolf, who'd bet he couldn't do it, was muttering darkly into his tankard, while 'Ric and Little Bear loudly discussed the levitational properties of mead. "Kelly slipped into the chair next to Wolf, produced a silver flask from beneath his dark cloak, and poured the contents into Wolf's cup. Where a few drops spilled onto the table, smoke began to rise. Wolf tossed the stuff down in a single gulp, then genteelly burped into his sleeve, causing his tunic to catch fire. I doused the flames with the rest of my ale, then passed Kelly a flask of that stuff Little Bear brews from fermented goat's milk. Kelly began telling traveling goblin jokes, and presently we all fell to singing . . ."

from *Fear and Loathing in Maethelberg*, by Finnian

It seems to be a generally accepted truism that the Dark Servants positions are character oriented, while the Free Peoples are geared toward economics and military strength. Treated in the abstract, in terms of relative strengths and weaknesses, this is true. In a game of chess, a queen is more valued than a pawn, and those of us who play the game rarely trouble over the personalities of the pieces.

I think it's fair to state that, in a game of this sort, most of us are looking for an extra dimension to the traditional board game. ME-PBM would not be nearly as popular as it is were it not for the atmosphere, and the immense wealth of character personality provided by Professor Tolkien in his books. Several commentators have floated the opinion in past issues of WOTW that the histories of the various nations and the personalities of the characters should

have no bearing on play, as ME-PBM is not a role-playing game. This is certainly a valid approach to the game, but I cannot help feeling it is overly narrow.

GSI has troubled to put the characters into the system, and even to provide portraits. Many of these characters are drawn directly from the pages of Tolkien, or from the ICE modules. These touches add to the enjoyment of the game (mine, anyway) and, with a little imagination, can take us a great deal further. ME-PBM may not be a role playing game, but character development and personality can still play a part.

This having been said, how do we apply it to the game in general, and to the Free Peoples in particular? After all, as others have pointed out in these pages, the most powerful characters are monopolized by the Dark Servants and the elves. Dark Servant specialists are especially fond of playing this up, seemingly captivated with the role of the dark and fearsome nemesis able to inflict pain on their enemies at will, ruling subjects that cower before them in abject submission. As impressed as I am with their awful majesty, I'd rather deal with easier going, less self-inflated characters. That, of course, is a matter of personal style.

Back in Maethelberg, we start the game with a pair of competent army commanders and a crew of very raw agents, emissaries and magi. Nor do we possess a single artifact. Are we doomed before we start? Hardly. Chess players know that a pawn in the right place can be more valuable than a queen; moreover a pawn may, through timely advancement, be graduated to a more powerful piece. So it is with characters in ME-PBM. With every battle, action and encounter, my characters have gained a bit more personality along with their advancement in skill. Losing one is a wrench.

And so, when Guntram died, the Woodmen characters gathered at Maethelberg to honor him with a memorial wake, a portion of which is recorded above. This man had faced werewolves in Mirkwood, scouted the dread fastness of Carn Dum, camped beneath the stars with the tragic minstrel Daeron, and met his doom in the fire of the greatest dragon of the age. Surely the career of such an adventurer should not pass unmarked! The Dragon Lord's master artificer Celedhring was in the area at that time, and decided to drop in on the gathering. He soon joined into the general festive spirit, despite Waulfa's lamentable resistance to poison.

Army units can also develop personality, every bit as much as characters. Unlike the Dark Servants, Free People start with decent armies and the means to maintain them. These units take on the aspects of their commanders and develop their own personalities, similar to the legions of ancient Rome, or the British regiments of the 19th century. Thus, one might field a unit of Beoraborn's North March Borderers (heavy infantry), Waulfa's Green Company (archers), or Osric's Horse (light cavalry). Waulfa's Rangers were wiped out to a man early in the game; Waulfa himself suffered capture and torment at the hands of the Regent Dancu, but survived to escape, bearing with him the unit colors. The colors have been hung from the rafters of the longhouse at the Carrock, and the soldiers who served them will not be forgotten.

This attitude does have some practical application. I will not go into overmuch detail here, as the scope of this article is style rather than strategy. Conventional wisdom has it that units should be burned as quickly as possible. This may be true for most of the Dark Servants, who lack the resources to support such units, but it is unwise policy for the Free People. Consider that every military unit on the board is undefeated so far, as defeat in battle means death. The longer your unit lives, the greater its esprit (morale) and battle

experience (training). Hired armies start green and dispirited (10 in your morale and training ranks). The better alternative is splitting an existing army, and even then you lose morale (maximum is 30). As the quality of your troops increases, so does your flexibility.

On a cautionary note, keep your troops moving! Try not to leave an army in a single location any longer than one or, at most, two turns. Stationary troops and their commanders are targets, and predictable. Your armies are far better employed against enemy population centers than against enemy armies. Let the enemy chase you around in his own territory--while he is doing that, he's staying out of yours. Every turn they will get a little stronger. Troops in garrison will soon be fodder.

Another interesting facet of the game are the population centers. Some of these are well established in Middle-earth history. Minas Anor, the Carrock, Dol Guldur, Rivendell, and many others are places of legend. Others are familiar only to the players of the ICE modules, or are names invented by the players themselves. As with their characters, players tend to exercise some imagination or research (or both) in choosing new names for the population centers they create. Taking the trouble to learn and use these names adds to the spirit of the game. It detracts from the atmosphere of the game when you refer to "that city/fort at 2908" during your discussions and meetings, instead of elven "Aradhrynd".

On the personalities of the players, the less said the better. Individual playing styles vary widely and wildly, dependent on the player's attitude towards gaming in general, and Middle-earth in specific. Many players advocate, as I do in this article, a particular approach to play, and to the concept of sportsmanship. There are players who select positions based on a particular ethical philosophy, while others are less earnest with regard to the side they are on. Some will go so far as to vilify those who view the game differently. It is not my intention to take a stance as to whether a specific gaming style is superior to another; obviously, I think highly of the particular approach that I am outlining here. I would simply point out (risking the charge of banality) that the game would perhaps be a bit too predictable if everyone played it in the same way. All of this may not seem terribly practical, but it is a hell of a lot of fun. Like everyone else, I'm in this game to win; and yet, were that was *all* I wanted, I'd as soon play chess.

To Destroy, Capture or merely Threaten

by

Christopher Dexter

(Reprint from a previous issue)

'Some Tips on Population Center Combat'

So now you've got a powerful army you put together with extra commanders, some mages and various troop types in large numbers; and you've decided to go thrash upon the enemy to make them sorry that he/she ever thought of getting into this game. Well, there are some things that you should take into consideration before you go out to make the other players fear and tremble when they hear your name.

The first is that when you give the order to "Destroy" a population center, it is not only that population center you are destroying. That population center is not going to let you come in, tear it apart and kill everybody there. They are going to fight back, and if there are any fortifications, they are going to fight even harder. So, you are going to lose troops while destroying the population center. As you lose troops, your army gets smaller, and because it does, you are awarded less victory points on the turn that follows, and, of course, your ability to attack other population centers and enemy armies is diminished. All you get out of it is a couple of points of command rank for your commander, and increase in your army's training and morale, and a pile of ruins that used to be a population center. Perhaps some may get overwhelming joy by sending a 3x5 card to the vanquished foe with a message that boasts of great destruction, but really that player loses more than they gain.

The order to "Capture Population Center" accomplishes the same thing only that the population center is not brought down to ruins, but is reduced by one size. Now, if there is an enemy army targeted population center, then issuing any of the above orders will cause your army to do battle with them as well. Which means that you lose more troops and may mean that you won't even have enough troops left to be able to attack the population center.

The least painful way to take a population center is to use the "Threaten" order. If your army has enough troops combined with War Machines to threaten the "Population" center (see Rulebook pp. 22-23), then essentially what happens is that the Commander says, "Surrender to us and no one will die!" Then your army goes into the city, takes down the enemy flag, hoists up your nation's flag; and then the troops meet the mayor, visit the taverns, do a little shopping, see the sights, kiss some fair maidens, insult some ugly ones and then they're off to the next place of conquest. As a result, you haven't lost a man, the Population Center then produces for you rather than for its former owner and it all adds to your victory points. No deaths, no loss of armor or morale, everyone has had a good time, How much better can it get?!

So if you want all other players trembling at the mention of your name, have them tremble because you can take their cities and keep right on going without losing a man.

OH DEM CRAZY DRAGONS

Culgor, trying very hard to prove that Fate is not the only personage of note to have a reputation as fickle, was rumored to have joined both the Witch-king and the Dragon Lord. The scuttle butt has apparently gotten under Culgor's scales, as he was heard to say, "At least they're all on the same side!" While this neither confirms nor contradicts the rumors, we at the Observer have only this to say: Touchy, Touchy!!

Uruial stepped out of his usual complacency and sided with Dendra Dwar and his Kanine Korps. When asked about his decision to come down into the world of . . . well . . . bipedals, Uruial was quoted as saying, "I wanted to show that there was bite behind THIS bark."

In a pact guaranteed to strike fear into Free People denizens everywhere, Khuzadrepa has thrown in with that Master of Mayhem, Erennis of the Cloud Lord. At a news conference proclaiming Khuzadrepa's allegiance, Erennis said the new act will be called "Snake and Bake."

BLOOD, GUTS AND GLORY

In a team-up rarely seen in Middle-earth, Throkmau and the Dwaithohir Eagles fought alongside those diminutive denizens of the mountains, the Dwarves, in their battle against the Neutral alliance of the Corsairs and Dunlendings. The marauding saurian and the ravenous raptors evened the odds against the greater numbers of the dwarves' opponents and wholesale destruction was the order of the day. All sides were destroyed in the conflict and property values around the battle sight have plummeted, bringing a new meaning to the term 'scorched earth policy'.

The Dwaithohir Eagles were also seen aiding Cardolan forces against the armies of the Dunlendings. Again, the Observer neither confirms nor contradicts rumors about the Eagles' distaste for the Dunlendings. Unfortunately, the aid did Cardolan little good as the Duns wiped out their forces despite the aerial advantage.

Throkmau made his presence known once again in a conflict between the Dragon Lord and North Gondor. The Dragon Lord lived up to his namesake and utilized Throkmau's destructive abilities to even out the odds, which favored the forces of the Free. The fighting was fast, furious and fatal, as the armies dragged each other down into oblivion. We wish we could give you more on this fast-breaking story but a lack of survivors makes this particularly difficult.

Arthedain had their hands full trying to meet the Witch-king on the field of battle, especially since the skies belonged to Mûrazôr and his Double Dragons, Aivnec and Nimanaur. The air support spelled doom for Arthedain, who could not counter the fire-fights with the dragons. Though they held their own for awhile, the day belonged to the Witch-king.

The
Hall Of
Heroes

Game #3 - The Dark Servants: #18, #19 & #22

Sauron's thundering laughter rolls over the broken remnants of the Free forces as his lieutenants bask in their dire victory after 53 turns. Final Standings are as follows:

#18 Fire King - 2200
#19 Long Rider - 2167
#22 Haradwaith - 2117

Top Free People: #8 Dwarves - 1125

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Haruth Ramam/Haradwaith: 199
Highest Net Commander Rank - Haruth Ramam/Haradwaith: 155
Highest Net Agent Rank - Maðrlóth/Long Rider: 130
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Urzahil/Dark Lieutenants & Enwë Kaessonger/Long Rider: 119
Highest Net Mage Rank - Morlammen/Long Rider: 143
Most Mithril - Fire King: 10148
Most Artifacts - Dark Lieutenants: 29
Most Kills - Long Rider: 38

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #33 - The Dark Servants: #20, #22 & #14

The shrieks of their foes' souls in eternal torment wafts over the darkened land and bathes the Dark Servants in the bath of victory. Final Standings are as follows:

#20 Dark Lieutenants - 2017
#22 Haradwaith - 1950
#14 Cloud Lord - 1883

Top Free People: #9 Sinda Elves - 1275

The Hall Of Heroes

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Thranduil/Sinda Elves: 201
Highest Net Commander Rank - Marl Tarma/Arthedain: 158
Highest Net Agent Rank - Dudannis/Noldo Elves: 148
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Slydnach/Sinda Elves: 114
Highest Net Mage Rank - Shabla/Haradwaith: 127
Most Mithril - Cloud Lord: 2541
Most Artifacts - Dark Lieutenants: 24
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 18

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #42 - The Dark Servants: #22, #19 & #25

The Dark Servants sit atop Mount Doom and cast their gaze across the Light-less land they now rule, reveling in the destruction of the hated Free. Final standings are as follows:

#22 Haradwaith - 1900
#19 Long Rider - 1883
#25 Easterlings - 1850

Top Free People: #10 Noldo Elves - 1325

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Elrohir/Noldo Elves: 168
Highest Net Commander Rank - Ashdurbuk/Witch King & Gothmog/Rhudaer: 130
Highest Net Agent Rank - Dîn Ohtar/Long Rider: 146
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Carrog/Rhudaer: 93
Highest Net Mage Rank - Malezar/Quiet Avenger: 114
Most Mithril - Long Rider: 1741
Most Artifacts - Rhudaer: 22
Most Kills - Dunlendings: 20

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

The Hall Of Heroes

Game #49 - The Free Peoples: #9, #6 & #7

The voices of the Free lift to the sky in glorious harmony, singing the praises of those who were responsible for the eradication of the foul taint of Sauron. Final Standings are as follows:

#9 Sinda Elves - 2150
#6 North Gondor - 1842
#7 South Gondor - 1700

Top Dark Servant: #15 Blind Sorcerer - 975

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Elrond/Sinda Elves: 183
Highest Net Commander Rank - Argeleb II/Arthedain: 151
Highest Net Agent Rank - Vorroch/Dunlendings: 118
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Daonghlas/Dunlendings: 102
Highest Net Mage Rank - Elrond/Sinda Elves: 135
Most Mithril - Blind Sorcerer: 2022
Most Artifacts - Sinda Elves: 34
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 15

Congratulations to the Free Peoples!

Game #90 - The Dark Servants: #22, #21 & #11

The Dark Servants stamp their foul taint over Middle-earth and claim the land as their own. Final standings are as follows:

#22 Haradwaith - 1775
#21 Corsairs - 1617
#11 Witch-king - 1200

Top Free People: #7 South Gondor - 1050

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves & Celedhring/Dragon Lord: 165
Highest Net Commander Rank - Báin I/Dwarves: 113
Highest Net Agent Rank - Dîn Ohtar/Long Rider: 112
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Angûlion/Witch-king: 85
Highest Net Mage Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves: 121

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!