

WHISPERS OF THE WOOD



John Woody

**GAME
SYSTEMS**

PO BOX 160129 Miami, FL 33116-0129

forwarding & address correction requested



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.

Middle-earth™ PBM
circa 1650

GAME 45

The Bastille has been stormed!
All political prisoners will be freed!
Down with the butchers! Mordor's
reign of tyranny will soon end.

Círdan

GAME 66

Lord Unclean! The Arthedain are
knocking on the North Gate!

Your Fieriness! South Gondor is
knocking on the West Gate!

King Badbreath! The Woodmen
just moved in next door!

Hey Ren! Why are the other
Ringwraiths running out the back
door?

GAME 100

Hey! Anyone seen a shiny ring?
Ornate? Well crafted? That says
"Sauron loves Morgoth forever" inside?
Uirdiks

(the Éothraim mage)

PS Anyone can look! Anyone else want
to help?

GAME 103

Wanted

Bodyguards for Fire King leaders. High
pay. Please provide reason for leaving
previous employment beside death of
previous employer. Agent rank
beyond 60 apparently a must. Apply
in person at Barad Ungol. Double
agents need not apply.

Rhys (18)

GAME 119

Frustrated by Long Rider agents
at Tol Burath, the Free armies turned
south. Can I survive this onslaught?

Quiet Avenger

GAME 124

"Burn! Burn!" Ren cackled as
camp Imdorad crackled, and Aivnec
basked in the heat. Lord Donner's
army was broken, the last obstacle in
our return to Minas Anor . . . There is
no king in Gondor--but soon will be!

Flamebring

GAME 125

In the beginning, you Free
Peoples had the advantage of us. Now
in the middle game, we Dark Servants
have evened the score. It's nine
against nine. What will come next? . . .
Darkness.

Zarendarger (15)

Sinda--

Hoarmûrath will be avenged.
Prepare to die.

Gaurhir

GAME 142

Lackey: They know that they are
beaten, sire. Even now they send
tearful pleas to our camps to dissuade
us from our warlike course.

Overlord: Have any listened?

Lackey: Umm . . .

Overlord: Impale the traitors as an
example to the rest.

GAME 145

Overheard in a dark alley at Aglarond:
"I'm crushing your head, I'm crushing
your head, you dirty, sweaty
Gondorian."

GAME 158

Our story so far:

1. Rhudaur, with Corsair and Easterling
lackeys, join game as highly
questionable "Neutral Team."
Immediately order all players to obey
wishes.

2. Unimpressed, Dunland attacks.
Enraged, Rhudaur screams, "How DARE
you! Don't you know who I AM!? I'm
really, really good at this game!"
Immediately loses two armies and a
Major Town. Great bully, lousy general.

3. As Dunnish huge army moves
against his unprotected capital,
desperate Broggha joins Free Peoples
and begs kings of Arnor for protection.
So much for "Neutral Alliance."
Although officially Neutral, Dunland is
obviously eventually going Free, so
calls off attack, sends army off to
Angmar to fight Mûrazôr.

4. Seeing that he and Duns are now on
same side, and Dun armies are off
fighting Bad Guys, Broggha seizes
chance to counterattack. In
egomaniacal fury, actually asks other
Free Peoples to stop fighting bad guys
and attack Duns. Hysterical laughter
ensues. Finally gets Corsair lap dogs to
sail halfway around Middle-earth, a
thousand leagues from any Bad Guys
or hostile Harad, to fight his battles for
him. (Surprise!)

--To Be Continued--

GAME 161

"Hey, Kadida! Whatcha got there?"

"Nehrion's head."

"Cool. Who's Nehrion?"

"Was a Gondorian agent. I figger it'll
make a good ashtray fer his
Cloudiness."

"It is better to give than to receive . . ."

(Snicker) "'Tis the season to be jolly!
Yep."

Arthedain--Thanks for the Palantír!
Haven't you figured out by now,
Fornost Erain is a dangerous place to
live?

Haradwaith--Your attack on our ally
will not go unpunished. . . . the wrath
of the Dark Lords is terrible indeed!

Jí Indûr

GAME 167

Imladris has been partly
avenged--the Witch-king and Rhudaur
have fallen. Soon the Dragon Lord will
follow.

GAME 172

This is the easiest game I've ever
played. Can no one challenge us? Ho-
hum, it's nap time again.

Dendra Dwar

GAME 176

Yikes, what a dull game. Not a
single nasty-gram for three issues.
This isn't a grudge game, it's
Woodstock revisited!

A Neutral

GAME 177

Adûnaphel,

Remember a man's (woman's)
word is his (her) bond. Now it's
personal . . .

GAME 178

Mûrazôr, you are a long winded
fellow who makes no sense. How do
you like my idleness? Maybe I should
do more idle things . . .

Zarendarger (4)

GAME 181

Cursed Seadog,
We need you not,
Save your pompous attitude
for someone who knows
the meaning of fear.
As you shall!
Dark Raven

Khamûl,
It is time to play, and play we
will . . .
Bain I

GAME 183

Ice Kings come. Ice Kings go.
Too bad he'll miss the show!

Gothmog slain! Bolvag, we'll detain.
On the Dark Lieutenants, it starts to
rain.

Free Peoples

GAME 184

What is that foul smell? Could it
be the flea-bitten, worm infested flesh
of that yellow mutt from Mordor?
Perhaps it is caused by slimy Dark
Lieutenants trying to slowly ooze from
pus-filled pits. I'll freshen the air.
High Plains Drifter

GAME 186

Greetings,
I will be a major contender in
the fate of this land. I will accept all
offers. If any nation makes the
mistake of trying to bully me, you will
be met with all my nation has to bear.
Make no mistake, I will be splatting
someone. Pray it isn't you!
Corsairs

GAME 188

Welcome to the grand contest! I,
Jí Indûr, greatest of Sauron's disciples,

greet you. To all Neutrals, choose well,
for Sauron doesn't forgive or forget. To
the Free pig-dogs, I look forward to
mounting your heads upon a pike.

Join the Dark Servant Protection
Agency
(Neutrals only need apply)

Protects against sieges, army
combats and sometimes assassinations
by Dark Servants. To apply, just
declare your allegiance to Evil and
deposit 5000 units of gold in the
nearest Dark Servant Pop Center.

Also included is a Dark Servant
button, a Dark Servant cape and a Dark
Servant club (for hitting people over
the head because they laugh at you for
wearing the button and the cape).

Finally, you get the non-existent
CD--"The Nine Nazgûls and that Other
Nation's Leader" translated from the
Black Speech of Mordor for the first
time. On this CD, you'll hear such hits
as:

1. All I Want For Christmas Is
My Two Free Turns
and

2. The Twelve Days Of Christmas,
Dark Servant Style

Note: Listen for Sauron, Himself,
singing the line "Five Dead Things."
Thank You and Good Gaming.

Fatally Yours,
The Ice King, Frostbearer
High Accountant for the Dark Servant
Protection Agency
And All-Around Mean Person

Middle-earth™ PBM
circa 2950

GAME 4

So, jackals, you have disregarded
the warnings of four neutrals and
conquered a potential ally out of greed

and cowardice! Well dogs, we have a
treaty with your one time allies and
will destroy you for your folly!
Sangarunya

GAME 7

The Chronicle

Out of these Storms,
steps a new hero:
Lokchinevar.
The bane of the Dark Forces,
He shall rise and lead
A solidified Free Peoples
to destroy the Dark heroes.
So sing the Bards
of a hero named Lokchinevar.

GAME 17

Elrond Claus and his elves were
busy preparing for Christmas. For the
Free, we were giving out artifacts and
for the Dark Servants, we went around
and sang out-of-key Christmas carols.

GAME 20

Friends, Enemies, Neutrals, Hail:
A new game
A new era
A new place for
Darkness to reign.
Doombringer.

The Case for Low Tax Rates

by
Bradford Fisher

For many players of Middle-earth, the potential tax revenues of their
starting population centers is a target too tempting to be ignored. "Do it,"
whispers part of you--"raise the tax rate to 70%. You want to be a military
power, don't you?" Dreams of enormous armies, tax-funded agent companies,
and cash grants to the "Save the Éothraim" Foundation run through your head.
And why not? After all, you need that extra army . . . don't you? I have yet to
have a single experienced ME player suggest lowering, rather than raising, taxes.
Is the idea of lowering taxes to 39% that crazy?

Advantages of high taxes

High taxes can result in large surpluses and may provide a nation with a
great deal of monetary flexibility in character creation, buying supplies from the
market, and creating characters. For some nations, high taxes make a great deal
of sense; particularly nations such as the Witch-king and Dragon Lord. These
nations need large militaries to fight the Free and cannot spend the time
worrying about going bankrupt at the same time. Nor are they likely to keep
many of their population centers for very long, in any case. Among many of the
Free (and some Neutrals), a case can also be made for higher taxes. A 10%
increase in taxes yield huge increases in revenue due to their broader tax base,
which can then be plowed into military forces needed to crush the Dark Servants
or bottle them up inside Mordor.

Disadvantages of high taxes

There are several problems with high taxes. First, higher revenues tend to result in increased expenses. This may get to the point of negating the entire reason for raising taxes in the first place. This is a psychological point, but it is still valid. Who hasn't been tempted to leave huge garrison forces at home "just in case"? I am currently playing against a Southern Gondor player who has kept an elite force of 3000+ Heavy Cavalry at home for over twenty turns now. With his large revenue base, there is little reason to use adapt a "use it or lose it" philosophy, so it sits at home and molders with little gain for the Free. Conversely, the conflicting desires to maintain a large army to protect myself from the Gondors and the necessity of avoiding huge deficits drove my nation into an activist, aggressive, and ultimately useful, military posture.

Decreased loyalties are a very real problem for kingdoms with high tax rates. Aside from the loss of recon maps from loyal major towns and cities, its population centers become vulnerable to mass emissary assaults, fail to detect foreign characters, and become difficult to upgrade. But the main problem with the resulting low loyalties fall on the nation's ability to create and maintain new camps early in the game. Even a few turns of dropping loyalty will rapidly vaporize its new camps unless one stations emissaries there to maintain them (preventing them from creating new camps, which in turn reinforces the need to maintain high tax rates).

An often overlooked problem with high tax rates for the Free and a Free Haradwaith is the indirect impact of high taxes upon the market. High tax rates by kingdoms with broad tax bases tend to result in huge gold reserves, which in turn hold up market prices. These high market prices then finance the armies the Dark Servants are fielding against the Free.

Advantages of low tax rates

Loyalties slowly increase at all of a kingdom's population centers with lower tax rates. Creating and maintaining camps is far easier with a low tax rate. I have created and maintained camps with loyalties of 6 and 7 without characters present. In addition to providing products to sell on the market, these camps may be upgraded later (as the loyalties slowly drift upward) to provide a broader tax base. Higher population center loyalties also provide room to absorb blows to loyalty from enemy emissaries, enemies capturing population centers, and increasing tax rates. Higher loyalties also help population centers resist threats.

Low tax rates provide a nation with a built-in "buffer" between its reserve and bankruptcy if fiscal problems occur due to poor planning or unforeseen disasters. They also force one to economize and trim expenses wherever they are not essential.

Disadvantages of low tax rates

Low taxes require constant attention to keeping deficits and costs down. Low tax rates also tend to be self-perpetuating. Once embarking upon a low-tax strategy, numerous unfortified camps will force keeping rates low. This can be a problem if the deficit becomes a problem due to low market prices or unforeseen disasters. Raising taxes risks vaporizing the very camps that are preventing the deficit problems from being any worse than they already are!

Conclusion

Maintaining low tax rates in Middle-earth is not an impossible task, nor is it without benefits for the nation which chooses to pursue it. While I cannot recommend it for every nation in Middle-earth, the potential rewards are worth considering, particularly from nations which would not gain much revenue from high taxes in any case. Likewise, a nation adopting a high-tax policy should be careful to avoid or minimize the potential pitfalls that accompany them.

The Bitter End

by
Joe Willis

This is a different type of strategy article than the ones normally found in this newsletter. It's about those games where drops of teammates, good play by your opponents, or inferior play by your allies have left you in the predicament of having a strong nation or a strong desire to continue but having few or no allies.

First, think of agent play. Agents can help your cause a great deal by removing army commanders at opportune times, stopping emissary actions, reducing or preventing thefts &/or damage to your fortifications, etc. If your nation is one that is weak on agent skill, I would suggest the use of the Bribe-Recruit order to secure those characters of other nations (same allegiance) that are no longer in play. Use of the Reveal Character True and Locate Artifact True can be used to locate these characters. Furthermore, you can shore up any skill that is lacking by using these methods. You will also want to locate as many agent and stealth artifacts as you can. It is easier than you might think to steal artifacts, and your agents will be more effective.

Another thing to consider is picking up your out-of-play allies' pop centers. This is an easy order for your emissaries because of the favorable relations. Try to get these pop centers as soon as they become available. Collect as many as possible down to camp level. I personally only go after camps in mountain hexes, as they are more likely to produce gold and mithril. Any camp in a strategic location is worth consideration, though. Try to keep as large an economic base as possible, because this will be crucial to your survival.

Next we will touch on communication. Contact between you and your remaining allies is very important. You will need to coordinate very closely because mistakes, like "I thought your army would be there this turn!", can be deadly for your nation. Already being in a vulnerable spot, crucial economic and military support are badly needed. If you are the last or one of the last declining nations of your alliance left, you should consider contact with the enemy. Your worthy adversaries are much more worried about their victory point totals than they are about you. Troop movements, locations of characters, and economic rewards, for example, can be available with skillful and discrete diplomatic play.

I trust these tips are useful. I should know, for I have had the unfortunate experience of being in this situation more than once... it can be rough! But there is the special satisfaction of bugging the be-Jesus out of your opponents. Besides, if you are smart, patient, and lucky enough, you might just pull that off in a one in a million shot! A legend would be born; tales of your glory would fill

the countryside, passed down from generation to generation till the end of time.... Well, at least you will gain the respect that comes with holding on to the Bitter End.

REVISED
Sample Army Combat Algorithm

Army versus Army combat is a complicated action. For each combatant:

To compute Army strength/constitution:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>A) Compute the Ideal Troop Strengths.
B) Compute the Base Troop Constitutions.
C) Compute the Average Troop Modifiers and average.
D) Compute the Average Army Modifiers and average.
E) Compute the Base Army Troop Strengths by multiplying the Average Troop Modifier(%) by the Ideal Troop Strength for each troop type.
F) Compute the Army Troop Strength by summing the Base Army Troop Strengths for each troop type.
G) Modify the Army Troop Strength by multiplying the Average Army Modifier(%) by the Army Troop Strength.
H) Modify the Army Troop Strength by comparing the tactics chosen for each Army and multiply the Tactic vs. Tactic Modifier by the Army Troop Strength.</p> | <p>I) Modify the Army Troop Strength by determining the relations toward the respective Nations for each Army and multiply the Relations Modifier by the Army Troop Strength.
J) Modify the Army Troop Strength by adding any points for offensive combat spells that have been cast.
K) Modify the Army Troop Strength by adding any applicable points for combat artifacts that are used.
L) Compute the <u>final</u> Army strength by adding 50 points for each war machine with the Army.
M) Compute the Base Army Troop Constitutions by multiplying (100% + Armor Rank Modifier (%)) by the Base Troop Constitution for each troop type.
N) Compute the Army Troop Constitution by summing the Base Army Troop Constitutions for each troop type.
O) Compute the <u>final</u> Army Troop Constitution by adding any points for defensive combat spells that were cast.</p> |
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Changes to the 'End Game' of ME-PBM

A number of players have recently expressed some concern over games that seem 'never to end'. We felt that these observations were well-founded and warranted some review. Our findings follow:

Such games can occur when one (or at most two) players are not actively trying to win the game, but rather are simply trying to out-wait the players on the opposing allegiance. We still feel that the One Ring VC (Victory Condition) allows most of those games (as described above) to come to a timely termination, but that there are still a few games where the end can be delayed for some time due to 'stalling' on the part of the losing side.

However, monitoring the actions of individual players in such games, or changing the VC's to force such players out of the game, is not only impractical, but also arguably unfair to those not stalling and also expensive and difficult to implement in practice.

Therefore, we feel that the best action is not to change the VC's of the game, but rather to encourage the use of the ones already existing, in order to bring such games to a timely end. To that end, we have made the acquisition of information

about a nation's capital easier as the game moves toward the end game.

There are four orders that can acquire such information (505, 585, 635, & 940/432) and all of these should reveal this critical information more readily as the game progresses. This does not 'end the game' in cases of players 'stalling'. However, the enhanced ability to locate and attack the capital (enhanced even greater when there are more nations to work against the 'lone wolf') should allow for a more rapid termination (but only later in the game) since the loss of a nation's capital, even only once or twice, and even if there are others PC's available, frequently is enough to cause the loyalty to drop so low across the board that the nation finds that continuing is nearly impossible.

GSI will continue to monitor and review games that seem to follow the 'stalling' course and determine if the above changes will suffice or whether other actions remain necessary.

Thanks again for the input! We are trying to make the game fun and challenging for as many players as possible, and for as long as possible. We want you to enjoy ME-PBM!!

Place Names

by
Brian D. Mason

Many of the geographical features on the Middle-earth Play-By-Mail map are well known. However, some of them are less familiar. This is not an analysis, per se, simply a listing of geographical features by their proper name and identifying them by hex location on the map. This may add spice to the game, or it might give you some ideas for naming population centers. After all, it's a good bit more colorful to arrange a rendezvous for the passing off of an artifact by saying "I'll meet you in the southernmost Eyrn Vorn" rather than saying "I'll meet you at 0916."

Table 1. River Names: Rivers are identified by pairs of hexes marking both ends of a river. Those appearing on the map but which are not identified herein are not known. All names given are from Middle-earth Role Playing materials published by I.C.E.

<u>Hex Location</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Alternate Name</u>
0808-0909 to 0806-0905	Lhun	
1013-1014 to 1108-1207	Branduin	Brandywine
1219-1319 to 1713-1714	Gwathlo	Greyflood
1713-1813 to 2107-2108	Mittheithel	Hoarwell
1910-2011 to 2208-2209	Bruinen	Loudwater
1714-1813 to 2213-2112	Glanduin	Swanfleet
1321-1322 to 2119-2219	Angren	Isen
1821-1722 to 1921-1822	Adorn	
1625-1726 to 1923-3023	Lefnui	
2225-2325 to 2123-2223	Morthond	
2224-2325 to 2424-2524	Ringlo	
2324-2424	Ciril	
2527-2627 to 2524-2624	Gilrain	
2626-2627 to 2626-2726	Serni	
2728-2829 to 2406-2505	Anduin	
2928-2929 to 3129-3130	Poros	
2828-2927 to 2725-2825	Sirith	
2926-2925 to 2825-2824	Eruil	
2722-2620 to 2118-2218	Onedlo	Entwash
2521-2420 to 2321-2421	Snowbourn	
2516-2617 to 2216-2315	Limlight	
2515-2514 to 2313-2312	Celebrant	
2415-2314 to 2315-2314	Nimrodel	
2511-2510 to 2411-2410	Sir Ninglor	Gladden
2406-2405	Langwell	
2405-2505	Greylin	
2833-2734 to 3432-3533	Harnen	
4013-4012 to 3107-3108	Celduin	River Running
3711-3712 to 3608-3708	Carnen	Redwater
3008-3109 to 2505-2605	Forest River	
2708-2808	Enchanted River	

Table 2. Bridge and Ford Names: Bridges are identified by two adjoining hexes. Some of these locations are identified as fords rather than bridges, as during the 1400+ years that pass from the time period of ME-PBM to the epoch of these maps, some deterioration has doubtless taken place.

<u>Hex Locations</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Alternate Name</u>
1211-1212	Sarn Ford	
1209-1309	Bridge of Stonebows	Brandywine Bridge
1909-2009	Last Bridge	
2109-2209	Ford of Bruinen	Ford of Rivendell
2020-2120	Fords of Isen	
3129-3130	Crossings of Poros	
2510-2610	Old Ford	

Table 3. Mountain and Hill & Rough Names: Mountains are large ranges with beginning and ending hexes being identified.

<u>Hex Locations</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Alternate Name</u>
<u>Mountains</u>		
0703-0608	Ered Luin	Blue Mountains
0811-0813	Ered Luin	Blue Mountains
1804-2104	Mountains of Angmar	
2304-3102	Ered Mithrin	Grey Mountains
2006-2207	Ettenmoors	
2205-2219	Hithaeglir	Misty Mountains
1321-2824	Ered Nimrais	White Mountains
3107	Erebor	The Lonely Mountain
2809	The Mountains of Mirkwood	
3221-4221	Ered Lithui	Ash Mountains
3122-4226	Ephel Duath	Mountains of Shadow
<u>Hills & Rough</u>		
1005-1108	Emyn Uial	Hills of Evendim
0711-0912	Tower Hills	Far Downs
		White Downs
1506-1609	Weather Hills	
1609	Amon Sul	Weathertop
1311-1510	Barrow Downs	South Downs
1406-1508	North Downs	
1324	Druwaith Iaur	
1227	Andrast	Ras Morthil
1725-2124	Pinnath Gelin	
2620-2919	Emyn Muil	

Table 4. Island Names: Islands are rare. There are only three "true" islands. While 2721 appears to be an inland island, it actually represents the delta of the Onedlo at its confluence with the Anduin. It should be a marsh hex rather than plains.

<u>Hex Location</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Alternate Name</u>
0203	Himring	Himling
2430	Tolfalas	

Table 5. Forest Names: Forests are common, but many are unnamed.

<u>Hex Location</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Alternate Name</u>
1014-0916	Eryn Vorn	
1409-1310	Old Forest	
1908-2109	Trollshaws	
2506-3115	Taur e-Ndaedlos	Mirkwood
2218-2418	Fangorn	Entwood
		Ambarona
		Tauremorna
		Aldalome
		Tauremornalome
2622	Firienwood	
2823	Druadan Forest	

Table 6. Wetland Names: Swamps, Fens, Bogs (although I believe the current P.C. term is Wetlands).

<u>Hex Locations</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Alternate Name</u>
1509	Midgewater	
1714	Nin-in-Eilph	
2820-2822	Nindalf	Wetwang
2920	Dead Marshes	

Table 7. Lake and Inland Sea Names

<u>Hex Locations</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Alternate Name</u>
1107	Nenuial	Lake Evendim
4113-4317	Sea of Rhun	
3926-3728	Sea of Nurnen	

Table 8. Simple Place Name Descriptors: There are also various descriptors which pop up in many population center names, for example:

Name	It Means	Example
Minas	Tower	Minas Anor
Sarn	Small Stone	Sarn Lothduin
Cerin	Mound	Cerin Amroth
Erain	King	Fornost Erain
Bar	Dwelling	Bar-en-Tinnen
Tir	Watch Over	Tir Anduin
Cirith	Cleft or Pass	Cirith Dunrandir
Nan	Valley	Nan Requian
Ceber	Stake	Ceber Fanuin
Ost	Fortress	Celeb-Ost
Dol	Hill	Dol Guldur
Barad	Tower	Barad-Dur
Tol	Island	Tol Buruth
Eithel	Well	Eithel Thurin
Annon	Gate	Annon Baran

The Oracle Speaks

Got a question about your game you can't seem to find an answer to? Ask the Oracle!

Address any questions you may have about your game to "The Oracle Speaks". Printed inquiries may be signed or anonymous but please include your name and game number when submitting.

A compendium of ME-PBM Questions

Q: The rulebook states "artifacts must be used by issuing the appropriate order, in the turn..." - But order #205 indicated a combat artifact remains in use until something happens to change the situation. Which is the case?

A: An artifact will remain 'in use' once it has become 'in use'. If a character obtains an artifact, and does not currently have one 'in use', then one (the most powerful) will be selected and used. If a character obtains a new artifact, and one is currently 'in use', then no change will occur. If the new artifact, or any other is desired to be the one 'in use', then #205 must be given. If a character loses an artifact, but another is still in their possession, then one (again the most powerful) will be selected.

Q: How does the "Combat Bonus" for artifacts and spells affect Personal Combat? Naval Combat?

A: The "Combat Bonus" value is translated into values for:
 Personal Combat = value/50 (i.e. a 500 bonus becomes 10)
 Naval Combat = value/100 (i.e. a 1000 bonus becomes 10)
 The "Combat bonus" for spells does not affect Personal Combat.

Q: At what tax rate does the loyalty rank become affected, either adversely or to our benefit?

A: The exact range of values is NOT revealed. However, at certain tax rates the loyalty rank is assured of going down or up by a fixed amount. However, the intermediate tax rates can result in either a slight decrease, or a slight increase, or no change at all in the loyalty rate.

Q: My nation spends more money than it makes in income. How can I fix it? Is this fair?

A: Third Age, circa 1650 is a period of recovery and bold plans. This means that some nations have been suffering and are trying to return to a position of power. Others have grand plans to acquire new holdings and strength. In either case, this expansion takes wealth. Thus, it will be up to the nation's leaders to continue these grand schemes/recovery or curtail their nation's growth. Many nations face this dilemma. Suggestions for methods of increasing wealth can be found on page 21-22 of the Rulebook.

Q: My nation has a special ability that allows me to create new (Commanders, Agents, Emissaries, or Mages) at a rank of up to 40. What order can I use to gain this advantage?

A: The only way to take advantage of this ability is to use the "Name New Character As (Commander, Agent, Emissary, or Mage)" order (#728, 731, 743, or 737) and with a (Commander, Agent, Emissary, Mage) that already has a rank of 40+. The "Name New Character" order (#725) can not be issued to take advantage of this ability.

Q: My nation has a special ability that allows me to create new (Commanders, Agents, Emissaries, or Mages) at a rank of up to 40, but all my (Commanders, Agents, Emissaries, or Mages) have a skill rank of 10. What can I do to still gain this advantage? Is this a problem?

A: At this time in the Third Age, many nations are suffering, or just recovering from the Great Plague. This means that many former heroes have perished. Therefore, although your nation may have the historical ability to create such skilled characters, you will have to train your current characters to a skill rank of 40+ to gain use of this advantage. Many nations may find themselves in this situation.

Q: What information do I have to provide on the turnsheet for my character orders?

A: Careful attention to the character orders and the additional information required will make for fewer errors and more enjoyment. There is a space on the turnsheet for you to indicate the order number and/or order code for each of the orders you wish your characters to perform. Note that you do not have to give both the order number and order code, but it frequently enables both you and GSI to avoid making costly errors when the order instructions are entered. The order type is also optional, but again it also frequently enables you to avoid issuing two skill orders of the same character.

Following the order number/code, there is space for you; to indicate any and all additional information specified for that order. The additional information should be entered in the sequence listed in the rulebook for that order, ensuring that the type of additional information is carefully adhered to.

Q: Does it make any difference in what sequence I list my character orders on the turnsheet?

A: Yes and no. All character orders, regardless of the sequence they are listed on your turnsheet, are randomly shuffled and sequenced by order number for purposes of order execution (Bid orders are then sequenced by the amount of the bid as well).

However, the sequence that character orders are listed on the turnsheet can make a difference. If you instruct your character to perform two skill order (which is not permitted!) in the same turn, the second character order listed will be considered the 'duplicate' and thus ignored. This is because, in most cases, players list their most important character orders first, regardless of the actual sequence in which they will be executed.

Q: I am confused about the turn sequence. Can you move a character and then have him perform an action? Or vice versa?

A: All orders are executed in the sequence determined by the order number. Thus, you could have a Commander train his army (#435), and then move (#850). But, you could not have an Emissary move (#810) and then influence (#525) - the #525 goes before the #810. The character could move and then on the next turn issue the order to attempt to influence.

(CONTINUED FROM THE FRONT COVER)

And don't forget, each article garners a free game setup and each story gets you a free turn. So how about it?

O.K., game needs . . . wait, we have a new system to let you know what our game needs are. If you will take a look at your most recent result sheet, by the section where we announce our stand-by positions, you will see a section which lists our current game needs. This will be continually updated so that you will have a new list every two weeks. For those of you who are interested in getting into a game and want to know the fastest way to get into one, just take a gander at your turn. No more waiting for this hack to tell you what we need--it's right there for you every turn!

That about does it for this month, so I'll talk to you in thirty! Until then, keep those artifacts safe and keep the Balrogs away from the swamp gas.

Stuart

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State of War-Game #83

The Nuclear Nomads, led by the Governor of Texas, have eradicated all opposition and have claimed the United States as their own. No one could stand before the juggernaut of their forces--not the opposing governors nor the Federal Government. Washington DC was the last bastion of the Feds and not even the revered capital could withstand the onslaught. Congratulations to all in a victory well deserved!

ME-PBM-Game 28 - The Dark Servants: #18 & #25

With the last of the Free eradicated from Middle-earth, Sauron's banner now flies in every country and his will goes uncontested. The Fire King and the Easterlings rose to the top in the service of their Dark Master and now rule the land in his name. Final standings are as follows:

#18 Fire King - 2067

#25 Easterlings - 2050

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Eläemir/Corsairs: 225

Highest Net Commander Rank - Gothmog/Dark Lieutenants: 120

Highest Net Agent Rank - Tûlmir/Corsairs: 128

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Bävire/Corsairs: 130

Highest Net Mage Rank - Eläemir/Corsairs: 180

Most Mithril - Long Rider: 2497

Most Artifacts - Corsairs: 50

Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 3

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #84 - The Dark Servants: #23, #19 & #14

The parade of Free captives before Sauron's throne is overseen by the agents of the Dunlendings, Long Rider and the Cloud Lord. Because of their efforts, the Evil Eye now rises in place of the sun, allowing Sauron to gaze across his new domain. Final standings are as follows:

#23 Dunlendings - 2450

#19 Long Rider - 2200

#14 Cloud Lord - 2150

Top Free People: #7 Southern Gondor - 1184

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Dayshôn/Dunlendings: 174

Highest Net Commander Rank - Araudâgûl/Cloud Lord: 155

Highest Net Agent Rank - Dayshôn/Dunlendings: 153

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Angûlion/Dunlendings: 127

Highest Net Mage Rank - Dayshôn/Dunlendings: 153

Most Mithril - Dunlendings: 3567

Most Artifacts - Dunlendings: 36

Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 47

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #107 - The Free Peoples: #21, #10 & #1

Freedom spreads its wings and soars above the newly emancipated nations of Middle-earth. The Corsairs, the Noldo Elves and the Woodmen ride the victory flight as the leaders in the destruction of the Dark forces. Men laugh, women weep and children play in a world now free of Sauron. Final standings are as follows:

#21 Corsairs - 2450

#10 Noldo Elves - 2200

#1 Woodmen - 1984

Top Dark Servant: Cloud Lord - 1733

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Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Úrzahil/Cloud Lord: 295
 Highest Net Commander Rank - Camel/Cloud Lord: 168
 Highest Net Agent Rank - Taurion/Cloud Lord: 129
 Highest Net Emissary Rank - Khuzedrepa/Cloud Lord: 115
 Highest Net Mage Rank - Úrzahil/Cloud Lord: 237
 Most Mithril - Cloud Lord: 2782
 Most Artifacts - Cloud Lord: 33
 Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 43

Congratulations to the Free Peoples!

Game #108 - The Free Peoples: #4, #22 & #2

The war against the Shadow was going well but similar wars in the past did not eliminate the threat of Sauron. There was only one way to eradicate Sauron once and for all, and that was to throw the One Ring into the Crack of Doom. Ringlin, a Sinda Mage, stood at the Crack, sweat beading his face. The One Ring throbbed and seemed to twist in his hand. A strange twinge pulled at his mind, seeming to whisper just beyond the range of his hearing. With a shudder, Ringlin realized what was happening and stepped forward. He lifted the Ring high and whipped his arm forward, watching the small metal band disappear in the fiery earth. There was a great roar and the mountain shook to its very core. The minions of the Dark Lord cried in fear as their Master felt his power crumble. Free hearts throughout the land rejoiced, for they knew: THE ONE RING HAS BEEN DESTROYED! SAURON IS GONE FOREVER!! Final standings are as follows:

#4 Arthedain - 2350
 #22 Haradwaith - 2150
 #2 Northmen - 2067

Top Dark Servant: #14 Cloud Lord - 1100

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Beoraborn/Woodmen: 226
 Highest Net Commander Rank - Sarkar/Arthedain: 180
 Highest Net Agent Rank - Sementa Stonger: 123
 Highest Net Emissary Rank - Blacktongue/Dark Lieutenants: 109
 Highest Net Mage Rank - Nimrodel/Sinda Elves: 148
 Most Mithril - Northmen: 1513
 Most Artifacts - Woodmen: 30
 Most Kills - Northern Gondor: 16

Congratulations to the Free Peoples!

Game #138 - The Dark Servants: #17, #21 & #22

Sauron's whispering in the dark brought the Corsairs and the Haradwaith into his fold. Led by the Quiet Avenger, these three nations administered their Master's will in crushing the spirit of the Free People. Sauron's revenge is complete and he screams defiance at the gods who would force him from Middle-earth. Final standings are as follows:

#17 Quiet Avenger - 1883
 #21 Corsairs - 1867
 #22 Haradwaith - 1850

Top Free People: #4 Arthedain - 833

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Celedhring/Dragon Lord: 208
 Highest Net Commander Rank - Úvatha/Long Rider: 149
 Highest Net Agent Rank - Camara/Cloud Lord: 120
 Highest Net Emissary Rank - Kruxtogg/Witch-king: 115
 Highest Net Mage Rank - Celedhring/Dragon Lord: 158
 Most Mithril - Dog Lord: 1596
 Most Artifacts - Dragon Lord: 20
 Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 20

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

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Game #139 - The Free Peoples: #8, #9 & #6

The Evil Eye has been lanced with a spear of Light, bringing the Dark Lord and his minions to their knees. The Dwarves, Sinda Elves and Northern Gondor led the forces of the Free which finally eliminated the taint of the Shadow from the land and insured that future generations of Free children would grow up without the fear of Sauron. Final standings are as follows:

#8 Dwarves - 2400
 #9 Sinda Elves - 2217
 #6 Northern Gondor - 1800

Top Dark Servant: #12 Dragon Lord - 600

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves: 247
 Highest Net Commander Rank - Báin I/Dwarves: 149
 Highest Net Agent Rank - Tintalle/Sinda Elves: 115
 Highest Net Emissary Rank - Glorfindel/Noldo Elves: 89
 Highest Net Mage Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves: 207
 Most Mithril - Dwarves: 1921
 Most Artifacts - Sinda Elves: 29
 Most Kills - Dwarves: 10

Congratulations to the Free Peoples!

Game #160 - The Dark Servants: #13, #17 & #11

The minions of the Dark Lord feast on the carcasses of their defeated enemies as their dread lords, the Dog Lord, the Quiet Avenger and the Witch-king, high in Sauron's favor for leading the charge against the Free, sit on the thrones fashioned just for them as part of their reward by Sauron. Final standings are as follows:

#13 Dog Lord - 1800
 #17 Quiet Avenger - 1517
 #11 Witch-king - 1367

Top Free People: #7 Southern Gondor - 875

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves: 165
 Highest Net Commander Rank - Bulrakur/Dog Lord: 134
 Highest Net Agent Rank - Alquewen/Ice King: 109
 Highest Net Emissary Rank - Curuben/Dark Lieutenants: 88
 Highest Net Mage Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves: 122
 Most Mithril - Dwarves: 1576
 Most Artifacts - Dog Lord: 15
 Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 6

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!