

WHISPERS OF THE WOOD



**GAME
SYSTEMS
INC.**

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WORDS FROM THE WOOD

You know, I was thinking to myself the other day, what can I do to become obscenely rich on the scales of, say, a Michael Eisner? The one thing that kept coming back to me was **MARKETING**. There is no cute little mascot that I can exploit in the children's market yet is mature enough to appeal to the adult market (ala a certain big eared rodent employed by a certain company that asks the winning quarterback of the Super Bowl what they're going to do the next day--to which they reply "I'm going to the amusement park that paid me an obscene amount of money to endorse their park!"). So, being the shrewd, conniving business mogul that I am, I have come up with the next mascot to capture the minds of America and to be fought over in toy stores by rabid parents who want nothing more than to shut up their mewling kids. That's right, this is going to be bigger than Mickey, the Cabbage Patch dolls and the Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers put together. John Q. Public, I'd like to introduce you to--Ollie the Orc!!! Stay tuned to next month's column for more information.

First, I'd like to thank those of you who have responded to my request for new material for the newsletter. We have been pleased by the response. That's not to say we can't use more material--we can **ALWAYS** use more material. This leads me to the next subject, which is that we'd like to make the April issue a *Whispers* bonanza. This is both a celebration of GSI's 14 year anniversary and as a thank you to you, the reader, for making this mag what it is. What exactly does this mean for you? Well, the first thing is that all submitted personals up to 100 words will be **FREE OF CHARGE!!!** That's right, free 100 word personals to any and all comers. The second benefit is that we want to make this issue a biggie--20-24 pages--and all for the same low price! So get those pens, pencils and word processors a-scribbling. We want to make this a blockbuster issue, but to do so, we need your help!

This leads me to the next announcement, and that is, starting with the May issue, the limit for free words will be extended to 60 instead of the current 40. That's right, for all future issues, any personal submitted which is 60 words or under will be free of charge. Each subsequent 40 words will still maintain the \$2 charge currently being assessed. So send in those taunts, insults, barbs and brags, 'cause now you got more of them to work with!

I'd like to take this opportunity to talk to you about stand-bys. Those of you interested in being put on our stand-by list should write us and let us know you want to be included. We do print a current list of stand-bys on the result sheet, but these are often gone by the time you get the turn and make the call. This allows you to be contacted by our office when the positions become available. And remember, every stand-by position comes with two free turns and a copy of the initial information sheet, so what have you got to lose? If you are interested, contact our office and we will be happy to put your name on the list.

This is the spot where I usually tell you our game needs, but that has now been added to your result sheet, so I guess that's my cue to bid you all adieu. I'll talk to you in another 30. Until then, keep your swords sharp and your spells ready.

Stuart



ALONG THE PATHWAYS

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This Month's Cover: "Before the Throne of Saruman" by Thomas Lemont

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PERSONALS: BARBS & BRAGS

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

STATE OF WAR

GAME 85

"Dr. Sawdey...
Paging Dr. Dave Sawdey...
Please report to Maine immediately.
Your lunch is getting cold."

-M

Middle-earth™ PBM
circa 1650

GAME 20

Several weeks into year four and no end in sight. Congrats to all participants and best fortune to that doomed soul who first picks up The One Ring.

Murazor
The Old One

GAME 94

Nice move mon ami! This match has certainly been an interesting one and should continue to be. Roughly 6000 dead and both sides are barely scratched. Thousands more to fall this turn. Darkness is welling out of Mordor and the light SHALL be consumed!

Good hunting!
Din Ohtar

Those that kill with the knife, die by the knife.

Greymist

GAME 103

Sauron's hordes gleam brightly in the raging fires of Orodruin.
Casting long shadows into the West.
Gondor lies in ashes, stemming the tide of Mordor no longer...
Does the war at last grind to a dark end?

Rhys (15)

GAME 105

After briefly shining, the Light fades...Morthondost and Esgaroth fall to separate assaults, Dalemen fall to persuasive words, the last local Éothraim army is eliminated by hillmen. No worries in Mirkwood--time for trolls to trek south!
-Raugwath (#12)

GAME 109

The ring, the ring,
Give it to me
and to Mordor I will take you
to meet my Dark Lord for your reward.

Ūvatha
(Master of Shadows)

P.S. Stop your whining Dunlingers, the ring is a slippery thing and there is always a chance. Besides, I rather like this game. Give up? Never!!

GAME 115

"SHHH! Be vewwy vewwy quiet, I'm hunting the One Wing."

--Elwond Fudd

"He don't know me very well, do he?"

--Dun Bunny

Elrond,

Your sons are dead, along with your allies. Simply hand over your precious ring and bow to Sauron. Perhaps he will have mercy on you and kill you quickly. We, however, will not.

Khamûl

GAME 116

That's about a dozen dead in the last few turns (on both sides). Your stealth and artifacts have greatly aided you but I think I still came out on top. To prove it, my company will gladly meet yours in any hex you choose. How about it Noldo?

Caerion - Scribe for the Cloud Lord
P.S. To South Gondor,

Nice massacre at 3224. Got any more troops you want rid of?

Many thanks to: Elrond and Círdan (for artifacts), Amroth for saving Dragon Lord 25,000. General Gain and Ulbar shouldn't have drank the wine--R.I.P. Caranthir (tisk, tisk). Círdan, we have a present for you, come dance. Corsairs--500 troops--please. Éothraim down one major town, see y'all real soon, peasants.
Minions of the Abhorred One

GAME 117

Congratulations,

We thought we had you, but you really turned it around. The agents were just too much. Very well done.

(23)

GAME 119

Now that some FP's have dropped, this game has gotten interesting again. Oh well, their loss. So, anybody want to play with the market? Or shall we just bash each other's heads in? Either way, sounds like fun.

Da' Northmen

Well, it's finally over--and I finished behind Rhudaur; how embarrassing!

Thanks to my allies for all your support, and congratulations to the Dark Servants for a hard fought challenge. See you in the next life!

North Gondor

GAME 125 CONTEST OF CHAMPIONS

Where are the Northmen? Their armies I have not seen since my dragon munched on one a little while ago. Emissaries have been spotted but whose are they? Northmen??

Zarendarger

Bloody Toad,

How is your precious home in Mordor? Thanks for giving me time to heal my wounds. We will be seeing each other soon.

Grendel I

GAME 141

Free Peoples,

Your assault on Mordor comes a little too late. The Corsairs and Harad will follow the footsteps of the Duns and Rhudaur, collapsing under Sauron's wrath. Only the Easterlings have secured themselves a place in Sauron's kingdom.

Ūrzahil

GAME 142

So, it has come to this, but a few Free nations stand against the combined might of the Dark Servants. Arthedain, Noldo, Cardolan, Southern and perhaps still Northern Gondor. Die well, my enemies.

The Lords of the East

GAME 148

Freeps,

It's a good thing you convinced three neutrals to fight your battles for you; otherwise the game would be long over. Mirkwood has been cleared of its elven inhabitants; it seems they packed and moved to Dunnish territory.

Akhôrahil

GAME 151

Elves, Elves, Elves! A plague of stinking, pointed eared, mirthful, holier than thou Fairies. Tol Burûth is infested. But wait, here come the exterminators!

Selur Rodrom

GAME 154

Got problems with vermin? Free armies crawling all over your map? Our staff specializes in wiping out those huge, disgusting Eothraim and Northmen varieties that seem to be everywhere this winter. (Towns may be slightly damaged by treatment).

Rhys (15)

Tourist brochure. Mordor (excerpt)

*"Tomorrow, tomorrow and tomorrow,
Creeps from this petty place from day
to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted
fools*

The way to dusty death..."

Rhys (15)

GAME 158

Gosh, Ulfie,

If you spent as much time on your turns as you do on your historical romances, you might actually accomplish something in this game. Bet

your fantasy history cost a lot of real world gold, huh?!

Ovatha

Baltab's tongue was nailed to the front gate of the ruins of Dol Guldor. This was as much a warning of things to come as it was needed to stop Baltab's whining.

El & The Vaders
Sinda Lords

Ulf,

You talk the talk.

Can you walk the walk?

You keep talking.

We'll keep walking.

You know what we mean.

Why not shape up? Or drop now and avoid further embarrassment . . .

Angamaite

It is good to see that the Frees attack themselves as well as us. It makes my job all the more easier. Death to the Light! Long live the Darkside!

Dendra
The Iron Dog

"It is amusing," said Ren, blissfully inhaling the smoke drifting downwind from Barad-wath, "Dunland aids Sauron's cause more than our own kindred; present company excepted, of course.

"Aaah, Praise Sauron, how I LOVE the stench of smoked Troll flesh in the morning . . ."

"Can the Free ever hope to defeat us?" Hoarmûrath replied. "They cannot even discipline their own traitor, Ulf Dilan . . . It's pathetic; how do they think we got so much of our

information? Bwaaa, haa, haa, haaaaaa . . ."

GAME 161

Greenwood the Great is overrun! Though we have fought long and hard to hold it, the end is in sight--but we will take as many of Sauron's minions with us as we are able.

Ohtar
Warlord of the Sinda

GAME 165

Sauron lost another Nazgul
Hooray, Great Day!
Ûvatha's dead, the Dwarves had said the chase was such a hassle.
We're on our way
To take away his castle!
(That Southern Bard again!)

GAME 166

Well, it looks like the Shades of Madness are sadness to behold. They are a pitiful sight and wonder. I'll be glad to plunder and sunder them who scorned me.

Rot N Bart of Rhudaur & Dun

GAME 167

Easterling-

Your characters' blood runs thin and weak like tainted water. Having no starting characters must be a hinder to your aggressions upon lil' old me. It was a bad idea to attack the Cloud Lord.

Your New Lord

GAME 170

Pools of blood
flow like a flood,
from those that defy me
as they died without a scream.
Tarondor, Elatar, Celdrahil and more
are dead

and it is I the Free shall dread.

Jf Indûr

This has been a public service announcement from the Cloud Lord Intelligence Agency, have a sleepless night and a most unpleasant tomorrow.

GAME 175

Dark Servants,

The sand sure is hot inside Mordor. I appreciate the Fire King's help by laying his troops on the ground for us to pass over, but the smell is as stifling as the heat. This is Nurumuri!

Celdrahil

GAME 178

Pah!!

Argeleb, mayhaps thou should do more idle things. Mayhaps not. Doth it truly matter, in light of thine utter insignificance? Do as thou would, Argeleb, for I have more important things to do than to trifle with mere insects such as thineself!

The Sinda hide like the cowards which they are. In Cerin Amroth, they shall hide no more!! The Free Peoples are all cowardly mongrels, and I shall yet flay the skin from each of these dogs!

The Master so hath willed it.
I shall make it so!

Er-Murazor
The Witch-King
Lord of the Nazgul
Dark Master of Angmar
Chief Servant of Sauron
Eternal Bane of the Free Peoples

GAME 181

Here we come again,
Same old stomp again,
Marching down the avenue,
When we get there you'll be through!

I'll be glad, how about you?
Doubt it!

Khazad

South Gondor, you are the epitome of all that is pathetic. Perhaps you should personally challenge characters of your own skill level such as, oh say, pudgy purple dinosaurs (whose name escapes me) or small children.

Quiet Avenger

GAME 182

From the Towers of Osgiliath, Northern Gondorians cheer in the hard fought victory. Outnumbered by the Ice King four great armies of Northern Gondor attacked the enemy fearlessly. Our armies were victorious, but more enemies loom over the horizon.

Northern Gondor

GAME 184

And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. Hey Easterlings! I can't find this guy. Have you seen him lately?

High Plains Drifter

GAME 185

Dragon Lord,
Can you hear them?
Hiho, Hiho
It's off to work we go
With orcs to prey
And trolls to slay
Hiho, Hiho Hiho Hiho

Durin the Deathless

GAME 186

If the Dragon Lord's actions are meant to confuse and amaze their enemies then they have succeeded. I only hope you survive long enough to explain

these tactics of yours! As for the Witch-king... 'nuff said!

Nightspawn,
The Eyes of Mirkwood

In this year circa 1650, Middle-earth is once again feeling the strain of war between the forces of Good and Evil. This Third-age will be sorely tested by the strong arm of Sauron the Great, as he seeks the piece of his essence that gives him his full power. **THE ONE RING.**

As if this were not bad enough, the realms of Gondor, Harad and Corsair have been fighting an internal battle that has weakened all of their powers. The Corsairs now control Umbar which was the landing sight of Numenor's mightiest King, Ar-Pharazon the Golden who humbled the power of Sauron at the end of the Second-age. Many want this city to be their own, not least of all the Corsairs, but Sauron wants it the most.

To Angamaite and Teldumier I say, save your haughty, arrogant statements for the children around your fires. Use your actions in the world of men, for no respect can be gained from idle threats. Your contention in the fate of this land is in question, as your boasts fuel old fires in the hearts of men and beasts alike.

I fear that if your present course of action is not constrained then someone with a bigger bite than your bark will rend the flesh of Umbar, and have the right to be called Umbardacil destroyer of Umbar. This has been fated. In the coming years your doom awaits. Many want a part of you, as you have enemies on all sides. Choose quickly or Dragons or Elves will, as you would say, "splat you".

GANDRIA
Fate of Eru

News flash: Cadet Waulfa slaughters Regent Duran's army at Sarn Lothduin! All that energy must have come from local fauna because they fought with great confusion. Danndee to be executed for his poor showing. Send some more troops north D.L., we are waiting for you!

Jaxom, First of Mirkwood

The Witch-King has been defeated and Arnor is once again united. If I were you, Khamule, I'd start looking for a new line of work...

King Hallas

GAME 188

A riddle for the Free pig dogs--
The more there is of it--The less you see, what am I?

If you don't know now, you will!

Jí Indûr
Royal Procurer
Grand House of Sauron

GAME 190

Rhudaur waits...
In the wastelands of Angmar
Dark hordes stir.

A bloody moon rises over Arthedain
As the Dunedain rally their people to war.

Yet in Cameth Brin, divided councils
Hold Arfanhil's legions in check.
Rhudaur waits...

Rhys (24)

Some say fear is taught,
Some say it is inherited,
I say it is simply known,
When you meet me!

El & The Vaders

The Light shall shine throughout Middle-earth. The forces of evil shall be destroyed. The Dark One will be banished forever!

Selur Odlon

Middle-earth™ PBM
circa 2950

GAME 7

Free Peoples,

What resistance! The Riders have already collapsed, and your armies die from agents instead of battles. Time is on our side, and Sauron will prosper.

The Mouth of Sauron

GAME 8

Is anybody out there? Of course, the good are probably cowering behind their walls and are too busy weeping and wailing to post any messages here. After NG's cowardly attack on an undefended pop center they fled to their citadel, burning their bridge behind them. Of course, thousands died while fleeing the vengeance of Mordor. A precursor of things to come!

Helcent,
Scribe to the Fire King

GAME 10

Mûrazôr: What do my brethren report?

Lord Marshal: The enemy has responded as expected. And what of the unaligned nations?

Herald: Our embassies go well, while the enemy seems to feel them unnecessary. Their arrogance will be their downfall.

GAME 11

We, the people of Harandor, remain neutral in the conflict between the Dark and the Light. Few emissaries from either allegiance have bothered to visit us with words of friendship. Until such time as a concerted effort is made to convince us of either side's cause, we will remain neutral. But be ye warned!! The nation of the Corsairs will not continue to sit idle. We grow in strength daily and will unleash our forces on those we deem as threats to our prosperity if relations are not established.

Sangarunya

GAME 20

Be prepared, as your actions speak volumes and words little. You have given us no respect and soon we will return the favor.

Sirith Gor

GAME 21

As the Free draw up battle plans and form magical strategies, we invite all neutrals who desire to have a great time for the next 3 years to join our side. We pledge to you friendship, teamwork, and dead Nazgûl!

GAME 22

The land explodes in Middle-earth as the Light and Dark struggle to gain an advantage. Saruman watches all very closely, then slips out of his tower, chasing whispers of an ancient Ring.

GAME 23

Who comprise the Hand of Sauron?
Dendra Dwar,

A thumb in the eye for the Dwarves;

To point the way to the downfall of Men;

Unclean Ren,

To show what we think of the Elves;

Ji Indur,

To wear the Ring of Power;

Adunaphel,

To demonstrate our class.

Together, a fist to smite Lord Sauron's foes.

Dog-gerel, Bard of Morannon

GAME 25

The struggle of our time has begun. The Forces of Light stand ready to defend the dream against the nightmare of the forces of darkness. Free Peoples, I'm ready to aid; Neutrals, join us in eradicating the evil stench.

Elrond

To my Brethren:

Greetings! I'll be happy to work with you to defeat the Freeps. In the meantime, let us all realize that threatening the neutrals will only most likely cause them to make the wrong choice. Neutrals: Don't make a choice prematurely. Imagine how powerful a united block of 15 nations would be. Please feel free to contact me.

-Lord Ren the Unclean

"Find my ring...

Bring it to me...

Eliminate any.....problems.....you may have along the way.

The Mouth of Sauron
-Dmentd-"

Nation #23 can be reached at
Dunlord@Ferret.Com

The Woodmen MIDDLE EARTH PLAY-BY-MAIL

circa 2950

By

Jeff Holzhauser

Introduction

The much maligned Woodmen can be a very fun position to play. They get bonuses to stealth and challenge ranks, which are excellent advantages for somebody wishing to play a character based game. They see military action in the early game and agent and emissary activity in the mid and late games. Assuming they survive the early turns, they have a safe base to work from, and are usually dismissed as a threat by cocky Dark Servants. And, as an added bonus, the unpopular Woodmen are yours for the asking.

This article is designed to help the Woodmen survive the early game and put them on the right foot for the mid and late games.

Caveat Lector

I am currently playing the Woodmen in my first and only game of the 2950 scenario. I have only played about five turns and I have not seen any of the Dark Servant setups for the scenario. Please keep in mind these limitations to my knowledge, and realize that they have obviously shaped my vision of strategy for this position.

The Woodmen

First of all, you're poor, damn poor. The Woodmen tax base (at 60%) is 10,500, exactly equal to your starting expenses. Obviously, you're going to recruit troops and increase your number of characters and their skill rankings. Therefore, you'll have a deficit.

Secondly, your characters are good for the long term, but not very useful immediately. All eight have command ability and at least one other skill, three have emissary 20, and two have agent 20. Seven have stealth 15.

Finally, your positioning is good. The only Dark Servants near you are the Dragon Lord and the Witch-King. The Witch-King will probably be busy in the west, so your first priority is the Dragon Lord.

General Strategy

Your major problem in the early game is cash flow. While nearly every starting position is strapped for cash, you can do almost nothing to improve your position. Competition for placing camps will be intense in the early game, and you start with no emissaries above 20 and no commanders over 40. There are also no Dark Servant pop centers that you can capture easily, and your two camps (which would be easy to improve) are both unfortified and within one force march of the Dragon Lord capital. These factors put you in a worse financial position than any other nation (although I haven't seen them all).

Your strategy should be centered around eliminating the threat from the Dragon Lord while you still have your surplus of starting cash. Once your

surplus is gone, you will not be able to maintain an army worthy of the name. There is no way for you to maintain an army large enough to take Dol Guldur until you can reduce the fortifications. Your short term goal is to eliminate the offensive power of the Dragon Lord, not to knock him out of the game. Therefore, you must aim to eliminate both the Dragon Lord armies as soon as possible.

In order to do so, you need the help of at least one of the Elven positions. In my game I have had no contact from the Silvan position, and know no details of their setup, so I have not considered them as a potential ally. Working with both the Sinda and Noldo is obviously preferable, but Sinda is more important to you than Noldo. Rohan will also be able to help with the elimination of the Dol Guldur army (armies are named in italics).

Sinda: While Sinda's starting cash flow is worse than yours, they start with an emissary 70, a commander 60 and a hidden camp to improve, so they are in a better financial position. The main goal of the Sinda is the elimination of *Dol Guldur*. To do so they need to maximize recruiting from the first turn. They need to split their army in Lorien (after recruiting 400 heavy infantry), so that they can recruit 700 a turn. You of Sinda should maintain a watch on *Dol Guldur* to monitor its size. At the right moment, Sinda will march in, possibly with help from you or Rohan, and eliminate *Dol Guldur*. After the Dragon Lord armies are destroyed, Sinda should maintain a force of about eight hundred heavy infantry in Caras Galadhon. If the Dragon Lord tried to start a new army, Sinda can move in with 1200 vs. 800 and eliminate it.

Another useful trick is having the Sinda send an agent to steal gold from you at 2613. This will both increase the Sinda's rank more quickly than guarding, and put him in a position to attempt to eliminate a Dragon Lord commander, as 2613 is a tempting target. The Sinda should also make a camp available for you to steal from, once Beorn and Grimbeorn are over 30.

Noldo: Obviously, the Noldo are not as involved in the affairs of the **Greenwood** (The Woodmen should never say M__wood) as the Sinda. Nonetheless, a close cooperation with the Noldo can be very helpful. First of all, they can keep you aware of Witch-King activities in the west. If Murazor is not going after the Noldo or Rangers, watch out! Secondly, if the Noldo are not preoccupied with the Witch King, they can provide an army to help with your attack on Goblin Gate, possibly allowing a capture. Furthermore, if the Sinda are non-cooperative, the Noldo could eliminate the Goblin Gate army, leaving all of your troops available for *Dol Guldur*. The agent strategy outlined for the Sinda will also work with the Noldo.

Rohan: I have assumed that Rohan will eliminate the Dragon Lord camp (and possibly army) at 2518. This will be done by any Rohan with a pulse. Beyond that, Rohan may be able to help you at Dol Guldur, but they will probably be busy in the east. You should also encourage Rohan to take the Long Rider village at 3017, to remove the military threat from the Long Rider.

The First Turn

You have two armies: *North* (2711) and *South* (2508). The first turn, both recruit 400 heavy infantry. Meanwhile, raise taxes, and create an emissary 30. Send your two best challenge rank characters to 3108 and 2405, they will encounter spirits, and hopefully bring in some much needed cash. Make your

character (Waulfa, unless he started with a special ability) the secondary commander in the *South* army. Send a commander emissary (20) to 2405 and recon. Make sure that Beorn and Grimbeorn get in a guard order.

Turn Two

South recruits 400 heavy infantry, splits (leaving Waulfa or whoever in charge of 100 light infantry in the new army *Capital*), and moves NW, NW, NW. *North* recruits 400 heavy infantry and moves SW, H, H, H, H, NE. This will intercept the Dragon Lord *Goblin* army (2409) if he is patrolling. As near as I could tell, the Dragon Lord starts with 200 men in Goblin Gate, so *Goblin* could have, at most, 600 men to *North's* 900. Note that *Capital* is left in the command of your worst character, as it will be only 100 men for a while, and if the Dragon Lord moves in, you could lose the character.

Meanwhile, the new emissary names another emissary and moves to 2405. Finish raising taxes, if necessary, and downgrade the Dragon Lord, if possible. Have your command/emissary at 2405 try to place a camp, and recon again. You need to recon from this space every turn, to monitor the Witch-King's actions. Be sure to have Beorn and Grimbeorn guard again, and if you have an emissary 20 at 3108, try to place a camp there too. Also, sending somebody to recon Dol Guldur would be a good idea, but it can wait, if necessary.

Turn Three

If *Goblin* was not patrolling, both *North* and *South* are at 2508, recruit 400 heavy infantry, merge them (preferably under Beoraborn) and force march SW, SW, NW into Goblin Gate. If *North* has already defeated *Goblin*, disband whatever's left of it and go in with just *South* (+400 new recruits). If available, the Noldo army from Rivendell can join the fun. At any rate, it is essential that you get either Elrond or Galadriel to come to Goblin Gate at this point. You don't have the strength to capture the fort (unless Noldo has contributed a good sized army), so you will defeat *Goblin* and then hang out, threatening while Elrond and/or Galadriel Influence Other. You should be able to liberate Goblin Gate from the foul clutches of Sauron (a little demagoguery never hurt) within a couple turns. After you do, the elves should give it to you (if they ended up in control), as you need the money more than they do.

If there isn't one there yet, have both emissaries try to place a camp at 2405. Keep trying at 3108. Beorn and Grimbeorn guard again. Your other agent 10's with stealth should be developing that agent skill whenever possible. If you haven't done it yet, downgrade the Dragon Lord. If you have, you also need to downgrade the Witch-King, Long Rider, and Cloud Lord, so get to it.

Turn Four and Beyond

Your financial situation will vary, depending on how much money you found in the spirit encounters, the weather, and your success in placing camps. By now or within a couple of turns, your reserves will be exhausted. At that point you will have to disband all but your *Capital* army. If you still have money, you can send whatever is left of your army to help at Dol Guldur.

After the Dragon Lord armies are destroyed, you can settle down for the long haul and concentrate entirely upon character development. The 2950 Woodmen are in no position to be a military power.

Beorn and Grimbeorn should become primarily agents. Once one of them reaches a skill level of around 30, you can fill your fourth character slot with another agent. You should place your best commander (other than those two) as the secondary commander in *Capital*. Then double train him (Army Maneuver and Troops Maneuver) every turn. Having a good commander never hurts, and even if you never field another real army, you can use him to post camps. Your emissaries should create camps in the two towers pointed out above, then improve them to villages. After the Dragon Lord is defanged, you can improve your starting camps, too.

Since you start with eight commanders, you should never need to create any more. You are in a good position to concentrate on agents and emissaries. With your potential bonuses to stealth and challenge ranks, you can field great agent and/or emissary companies. If you are cooperating at all with Sinda or Noldo, you should rely on them for any of your mage needs.

Other Points

Don't forget the hidden Dragon Lord pop center at 2809. You need to get one of the elves to reveal it, then you or Silvan can take it. If you wait long enough, you can take it with emissaries. You should try to have it revealed reasonably early though, as the Dragon Lord could upgrade it and recruit a good sized army relatively quickly.

If the Witch-King goes for you, you are in trouble. On the other hand, you should be assured of help from Noldo. If you are attacked by an aggressive Dragon Lord and Witch-King you will be reacting to their moves, so you cannot plan a strategy ahead of time. If you are attacked by both, don't panic. Armies are very small in 2950 and you have two fortified major towns. You should not be eliminated before their armies are weakened by your forces, or destroyed by your allies.

The excellent strategy articles written by Brian Mason in recent months have outlined strategies assuming that the player receives limited or no cooperation from allies. If the 2950 Woodmen receive no contact or no cooperation from their allies, I recommend dropping the position, and trying again in a different game. Let's be realistic. The Woodmen are a fun position to play, and are in a good position to be a power in the late game, but they cannot and should not go it alone. Except for the first few turns, the Woodmen nation is designed for a support role. That requires allies to work with and support. I don't think it would be any fun to play the Woodmen without good communications. You, of course, may disagree.

The Oracle Speaks

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

MIDDLE-EARTH PBM

I was recently eliminated from play because I went bankrupt; I had a 38,000 revenue, a maintenance of 14,000 (giving me a +24,000 surplus), a

tax rate of 100% and a gold reserve of 7,000. I also bought 17,000 food (at a price of 2). How could I go bankrupt if I'm operating with a surplus and the program won't let me buy more than I have in reserve?

The key to this question lies in the sequence of events (p. 109 of the rulebook). What happened in your case is that you bought your 17,000 food, with a cost of 34,000 gold. According to the sequence of events, you receive your production/revenue at step #4, and then your buys come at step #5. Consumption of maintenance comes at step #7. Thus, you received your revenue at step #4, giving you a total reserve of 45,000 gold (38,000 + 7,000). At this point, your buy order went through, taking 34,000 from your reserve and giving you a total of 9,000 gold in reserve. When the time came to pay your maintenance of 14,000 gold, there was not enough to cover the expense; at this point, your tax rate was increased to cover the deficit. This is what caused you to go bankrupt. So yes, it is possible to bankrupt yourself by buying above your means!! If you want to do this, you might want to make sure your tax rate is low enough to handle the increase.

With regard to season changes, how do I know when the season change takes effect?

The season changes follow the normal season changes as they occur in the "Real World." Any almanac can tell you what day the season officially changes. To that end, GSI has implemented a message which will be generated giving players at least a one turn warning when the season change is about to take place. This will be printed in the "Nation Messages" section of your turnsheet, so watch for it!

I am a little confused when it comes to multi-player combat and how these battles are resolved. Can you give any examples?

O.K., here's one for you. There was a battle at 3028, where the Cloud Lord owned a fortified town. There were armies in the hex belonging to the Quiet Avenger, the Neutral Harad, Northern Gondor, and the Sinda had a navy. Here is how it works out: the Sinda attacked all enemies. The Harad defended, the Quiet Avenger attacked the Sinda and Northern Gondor gave a capture Pop Center order. The Sinda, Quiet Avenger and Harad fought and Northern Gondor and Harad fought. The Sinda and Harad are destroyed. The Quiet Avenger and Northern Gondor split the food. Northern Gondor then attacks the Pop Center and wins. The key here is that the Quiet Avenger does not automatically defend because the Pop Center is not his--thus, he is cut out of the battle for the Pop Center.

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.

The Night Before Sauron

by
Charles Mosteller

'Twas the night before Sauron
And throughout Middle-earth
Not a Nazgûl was stirring
Which filled us with mirth

Our young one was snuggled
All safe in his bed
Then life sprang in Angmar
And then there was dread

Er-Mûrazôr some called him
The Witch-King yet others.
He has risen to butcher
Child, father, and mother.

Though Lord of the Nazgûl
He came not alone,
As orcs down in Mordor
Sang a horrible song.

Khamûl, He's the Dragon Lord
Who arises in Mirkwood
To wreak direst evils
Upon all of the Good

The Dog Lord's in Mordor
Dendra Dwar is his name.
Once his war-dogs start
marching
Life won't be the same.

Jî Indûr, the Cloud Lord
Who steps like the night,
The King of Assassins
Fills our children with fright.

He walks without eyes
Though he certainly sees.
Akhôrahil the Nazgul
The Blind Sorcerer he be.

Hoarmûrath, the Ice King
Who's feared by us all.
A touch of pure chill
As his enemies fall.

Adûnaphel is the Seventh
Of the Nazgûl it's said.
The Quiet Avenger is cometh
To hunt for your head.

The Eighth is the Fire King
Called Ren the Unclean,
Whose resurgence to life
Is a sign of the end it would
seem.

The Long Rider, Úvatha
Whose reach knows no end,
The last of the Nine
And one of the Ten.

Lieutenants of Sauron
Warlord and Mouth,
Úrzahil and Gothmog
Arise in the South.

They sweep in upon us
And dread takes us all.
Horrible shrill laughter
As the sentries do fall.

Death is upon us
And the shadow grows long.
For we have grown weak
While Sauron's grown strong.

Ask not for whom
The bell will soon toll,
The death knell is sounded
For young and for old.

The last I remember,
The last I recall,
Sauron had risen
And then that was all.

The shadow now covers
All of Middle-earth.
Moaning and weeping
Hath replaced what was mirth.

One Ring to rule them,
One Ring to find,
One Ring to bring them,
And in the darkness bind.

"Merry Christmas, Master!!"

The Hall Of Heroes

Game #58 - The Free Peoples: #22, #7 & #1

The hearts and souls of the Free rest easy tonight, and one thought is in everyone's mind--"The One Ring is destroyed! Sauron is eradicated from Middle-earth, never to return!" A new era begins under the leadership of the Haradwaith, Southern Gondor and the Woodmen. The Harad, in reaching the top position, has accumulated the highest number of victory points that can be achieved--2700!! Congratulations on a game well played. Final standings are as follows:

#22 Haradwaith - 2700

#7 Southern Gondor - 2300

#1 Woodmen - 1567

Top Dark Servant: #23 Dunlendings - 1441

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Shabla/Haradwaith: 202

Highest Net Commander Rank - Bondan/Arthedain: 115

Highest Net Agent Rank - Tasha Yar/Haradwaith: 136

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Shamara Katub/Haradwaith: 111

Highest Net Mage Rank - Shabla/Haradwaith: 174

Most Mithril - Dwarves: 1336

Most Artifacts - Haradwaith: 44

Most Kills - Dunlendings: 17

Congratulations to the Free Peoples!

Game #72 - The Free Peoples: #8

The Dwarves, with considerable help from Arthedain, have pushed Sauron and his lackeys from Middle-earth, finally ending the Dark One's reign of tyranny. The Free nations now begin a new age of enlightenment. Final standings are as follows:

#8 Dwarves - 2000

#22 Haradwaith - 1983

Top Dark Servant: #22 Haradwaith - 1983

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Beoraborn/Dwarves Rashid ed-Din/Cloud Lord: 171

Highest Net Commander Rank - Araudûgûl/Cloud Lord: 125

Highest Net Agent Rank - Rashid ed-Din/Cloud Lord: 215

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Temujin/Cloud Lord: 130

Highest Net Mage Rank - Ashburgûl/Dog Lord: 117

Most Mithril - Arthedain: 1318

Most Artifacts - Cloud Lord: 28

Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 67

Congratulations to the Free Peoples!

Game #112 - The Free Peoples: #10, #5 & #4

Under the leadership Noldo, Cardolan and Arthedain, the Children of the Light have put a lance in the Lidless Eye, blinding Sauron forevermore. Sleep is much easier knowing the Dark One no longer haunts the dreams of the Free. Final standings are as follows:

#10 Noldo Elves - 2167

#5 Cardolan - 2034

#4 Arthedain - 1983

Top Dark Servant: #16 Ice King - 700

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Ringlin/Sinda Elves: 236

Highest Net Commander Rank - Glorfindel/Noldo Elves: 185

Highest Net Agent Rank - Megwen/Sinda Elves: 135

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Argeleb II/Arthedain: 118

Highest Net Mage Rank - Ringlin/Sinda Elves: 211

Most Mithril - Southern Gondor: 2158

Most Artifacts - Noldo Elves: 33

Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 28

Congratulations to the Free Peoples!

The Hall Of Heroes

Game #124 - The Dark Servants: #25, #20 & #14

Sauron's top lieutenants, led by the Easterlings, the Dark Lieutenants and the Cloud Lord, have brought victory to their Dark Lord's feet. All of Middle-earth trembles when their names are mentioned, for they are the new overseers of the land. Final standings are as follows:

#25 Easterlings - 2150
#20 Dark Lieutenants - 2000
#14 Cloud Lord - 1850

Top Free People: #24 Rhudaur - 1017

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Gorovod/Easterlings: 172
Highest Net Commander Rank - Gothmog/Dark Lieutenants: 142
Highest Net Agent Rank - Artemis Entreri/Cloud Lord: 178
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Aturax/Long Rider: 95
Highest Net Mage Rank - Gorovod/Easterlings: 164
Most Mithril - Corsairs: 1145
Most Artifacts - Cloud Lord: 20
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 33

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #143 - The Dark Servants: #16, #25 & #21

Sauron's voice persuaded the neutrals and the Easterlings and Corsairs, led by the Ice King, were instrumental in silencing the song of Eru. The Lidless Eye now stares on a Middle-earth devoid of the Free. Final standings are as follows:

#16 Ice King - 2100
#25 Easterlings - 1983
#21 Corsairs - 1867

Top Free People: #4 Arthedain - 750

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Círdan/Noldo Elves: 175
Highest Net Commander Rank - Dancu/Cloud Lord: 150
Highest Net Agent Rank - Jí Indûr/Cloud Lord: 115
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Arden/Easterlings: 102
Highest Net Mage Rank - Mûrazôr/Cloud Lord: 136
Most Mithril - Easterlings: 1254
Most Artifacts - Cloud Lord: 25
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 18

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #144 - The Dark Servants: #12, #14 & #16

Misery is the bread and suffering the butter as Sauron has brought the Free to their knees. The Dragon Lord, the Cloud Lord and the Ice King led the Dark forces in their march to trample the light and now rule in their Master's name. Final standings are as follows:

#12 Dragon Lord - 1917
#14 Cloud Lord - 1733
#16 Ice King - 1567

Top Free People: #7 Southern Gondor - 933

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Celedhring/Dragon Lord: 196
Highest Net Commander Rank - Ashdurbuk Zalg/Dragon Lord Haruth Ramam/Haradwaith: 121
Highest Net Agent Rank - Khamûl/Dragon Lord: 157
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Uhura/Rhudaur: 86
Highest Net Mage Rank - Mablen/Dragon Lord: 160
Most Mithril - Dwarves: 1113
Most Artifacts - Dragon Lord: 27
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 31

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

The Hall Of Heroes

Game #146 - The Dark Servants: #15, #13 & #19

Darkness spreads throughout the land and the sound of orcs and trolls feasting on their hapless victims pervade the land. Sauron has rewarded his most faithful--the Blind Sorcerer, the Dog Lord and the Long Rider--with stewardship of his domain. Final standings are as follows:

#15 Blind Sorcerer - 1900
#13 Dog Lord - 1583
#19 Long Rider - 1508

Top Free People: #10 Noldo Elves - 917

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Hoarmûrath/Ice King Stepper/Blind Sorcerer: 163
Highest Net Commander Rank - Stepper/Blind Sorcerer: 118
Highest Net Agent Rank - Gimbatul/Long Rider: 106
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Wyllom/Dwarves: 88
Highest Net Mage Rank - Hoarmûrath/Ice King: 146
Most Mithril - Noldo Elves: 499
Most Artifacts - Blind Sorcerer: 24
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 30

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #157 - The Free Peoples: #9 & #5

The Sinda and Cardolan rode at the forefront of the forces that brought the Light to every mountaintop and every valley of Middle-earth, chasing the Shadow from the land and wiping the evil minions from the battlefield. Final standings are as follows:

#9 Sinda Elves - 2017
#17 Quiet Avenger - 1733
#5 Cardolan - 1675

Top Dark Servant: #17 Quiet Avenger - 1733

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Argeleb II/Arthedain: 184
Highest Net Commander Rank - Argeleb II/Arthedain: 181
Highest Net Agent Rank - Feliz/Arthedain: 161
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Briard/Dog Lord: 88
Highest Net Mage Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves: 126
Most Mithril - Dwarves: 312
Most Artifacts - Arthedain Noldo Elves: 15
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 11

Congratulations to the Free Peoples!

Game #171 - The Free Peoples: #23

The Neutrals were a force to be reckoned with, as the Free swept the Dark forces with the help of the Dunlendings. The Haradwaith and the Corsairs, although undeclared, managed to put their nations among Middle-earth's elite. Final standings are as follows:

#23 Dunlendings - 1392
#22 Haradwaith - 1933
#21 Corsairs - 1425

Top Dark Servant: #14 Cloud Lord - 725

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Argeleb II/Arthedain: 184
Highest Net Commander Rank - Argeleb II/Arthedain: 181
Highest Net Agent Rank - Feliz/Arthedain: 161
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Briard/Dog Lord: 88
Highest Net Mage Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves: 126
Most Mithril - Dwarves: 312
Most Artifacts - Arthedain Noldo Elves: 15
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 11

Congratulations to the Free Peoples!