

WHISPERS OF THE WOOD



FAME
SYSTEMS
INC.

PO BOX 160129 Miami, FL 33116-0129

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WORDS FROM THE WOOD

August is here and that means one thing--MY BIRTHDAY!! That's right, it's my birthday, the one time of year where I sit back and reflect on the years gone by, on the years to come, and on the fact that I'M ALMOST THIRTY!! THIRTY! It's one of those frightening milestones that, in my youth (ah, youth), I scoffed at with measured disdain (don't ask me what that means--I have no idea what UNmeasured disdain is, let alone measured disdain). I wake up at night, sweating from nightmares of huge, hulking, mechanical walkers, mile long tubes of DentuCreme and, of course, visions of not only being the Club president, but a client as well. So the only thing to do, in the year I have left, is to drink gallons and gallons of beer, hug the porcelain god, drag race on the freeway, and generally act in a way that has everyone around me saying, "Come ON, Stuart--GROW UP!" 'Nuff said.

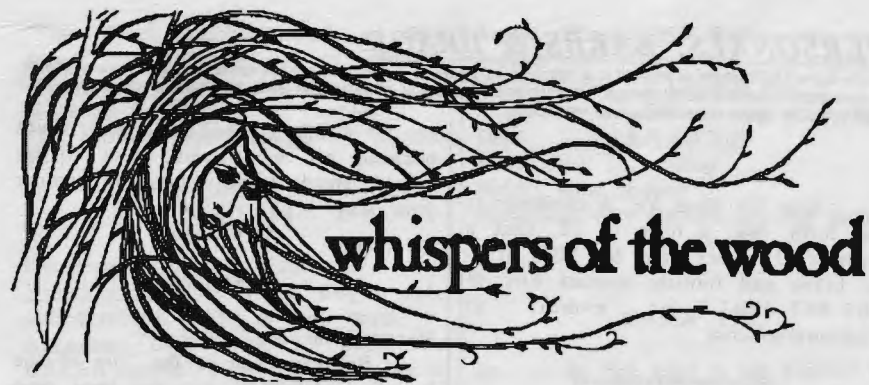
O.K., here's the scoop on ME-PBM Third Age, circa 2950. We will be accepting registrations at GenCon and AndCon, which take place in mid-August and mid-September, respectively. In other words, we will be accepting registrations this month! We do want to make all of you aware, however, that we probably won't be starting games until mid-September. So, registrations will be accepted, but the new games will not be mailed out until mid-September. This is all tentative at this time, but we fully expect to be able to meet these dates.

There will be a new rulebook for the new game and these rulebooks will contain the complete list of new artifacts and new nations. There will also be descriptions of the new nations, as in the current rulebook. For those of you who have commented on this in the past, there will be an index in the rulebook as well! This index will also be included in the 6th edition of the current rulebook. This index can be used for both versions of the game (with the exception of specific nation descriptions), as the page numbers for both rulebooks will remain essentially unchanged. There will also be some new charts in the back which will make referencing much easier. A new cover by Angus McBride is featured as well, so keep a lookout for these new rulebooks!

Some time in the near future, GSI will also have an Internet address available to those of you who use Internet. What does this mean? Well, it means that there will eventually be no charge for e-mailing turns to GSI through Internet (and we mean it this time!). As usual, questions and comments can be addressed to GSI through this address. We are also working on being able to e-mail turns OUT to you as well! Hopefully, we will have these services available before the end of the year, if not sooner. Keep your eyes and ears peeled right here for further announcements regarding these new services!

Another new service we will most likely have available before year's end is all-fax games, run weekly and/or bi-weekly. Since the fax call will simply replace the mailing costs, we will be able to offer this service at no extra cost! That's right, at no extra cost. Now how much would you pay? (Just kidding. I have an unnatural affinity for Mr. Popeil, that's all.) Again, keep watching this erstwhile column for further details.

It's time for game needs, but before we get to those, I would like to address those of you interested in team games. If you are going to be submitting a team for registration, please try and get ALL of the players and ALL of the money together and send it in one envelope. Otherwise, what could end up happening is we receive three team members' set-ups and then must wait for a fourth (or fifth team member) to send their materials in and the entire team



whispers of the wood

ALONG THE PATHWAYS

Words From the Wood.....	Inside Cover
EDITOR'S COLUMN	
Personals.....	1
COMMUNICATIONS.	
Strategy and Tactics: The Eothraim	6
STRATEGY	
The Name's The Thing	9
REFERENCE	
In Defence of the Realm	12
STRATEGY	
The Oracle Speaks	13
QUESTIONS	
Hall of Heroes	15
THE VICTORS.	

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Credits

Editor.....Stuart Taft
 Staff.....Jason Duerstock, Shari Berkey, Harold Ford,
 Michelle Heath, Gisela Perla, Lorraine Rivera, Sean Taft, Philip Varga, Anthony Vialon
 Publishers.....Pete Stassun & Bill Feild Jr
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PERSONALS: BARBS & BRAGS

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

GENERAL

Hear Ye, Hear Ye. A challenge is put forth. We, a team of 12, seek a team of 13 to face us in ME-PBM. If ye be brave and foolish, contact Eric @ 207-947-4891 or e-mail at Tolkien@aol.com

WANTED: Five tough, experienced players to play the ten Dark Servant positions (the "5x2" variant, where each player has two nations). We have five good players, all on Compuserve, all in it for the long haul, ready to play the Free Peoples. We are: Payton Turpin, Sheldon Campbell, David Ruzic, Jim Adams, and Rich Eisenman. If you're ready to enter the killing fields, contact Payton at CI\$ 70337,1627, by phone (203) 735-9930, or through GSI; and let the fun begin!

Middle-earth™ PBM

GAME 13

FREE PEOPLE'S VICTORY!
DEWEY DEFEATS TRUMAN!

GAME 37

Noldo,

We know you are leading the remnants of Cardolan and Arthedain, but it will not stall your demise. The "Golden Horde" is advancing quickly, and will soon crush you, and your puppet kingdoms, under foot.

Unnamed II

I think I need to move south because all my towns seem to be cursed. Heads up Corsairs, I'm coming your way.

Arthedain

GAME 43

Haradwaith:

Braggart, you at the "top of the heap." Certainly it was not your own doing and soon you will realize this. The brothers and your northern friend can not help you now.

GAME 66

Gentlemen and Lady,

The war years have been long and weary. Elrond, you and your brats will be found. Things are starting to get interesting.

The Cloud Lord

GAME 70

To the Free Lords who speak of spilling rivers of blood . . . that your blood?! Gothmog awaits with his hordes, but sees no enemy troops--perhaps the thousands of cowards who fled (when their leaders suddenly died) will return?

Zúhtar

GAME 72

Free Peoples,

Is there any real point in continuing this game? Just wondering (because I see none).

Naurmegil

Cloud Lord (50+ kills and counting)

GAME 89

Overheard at a Dark Servant Convention

"My Lord, the Freeps won't quit."

"Fine. Then we slay them as they stand."

We're off to kill the Free Peoples
The foolish Free Peoples of Middle Earth.

GAME 94

Overheard on the Ash Plains . . .

Telumhtar: . . . but they're only scared rabbits hiding in their holes!

Alandur: BEWAARRRE! Those be KILLER rabbits! They be vicious beasts with TEETH that'll rip your throat out and CLAWS that tear your heart from your chest . . . and they'll . . . they'll . . .

Telumhtar: Oh shut up, you old fool!
MEN . . . prepare to flank! ATTACK! . . . ATTACK! . . . ATTACK!

[. . . flank, charge . . . charge, flank . . . surround . . . flank . . .]

Telumhtar: . . . RUNAWAY! . . . Runaway! . . . runaway!

Dunsul: Where's #@*%\$ Argirion and that Holy Handgrenade?!!

(Monty Python: Holy Grail)

GAME 95

Free Peoples:

The Dark Servants are despicable opponents. One of them was so despicable, he even assassinated Sindarella.

Thranduil

GAME 99

OK, Gothmog just lost a challenge to a 37 emissary . . . How utterly sad (though utterly typical of the Dark Lieutenants).

Naurmegil
Long Rider

GAME 103

Arthedain: So much for Caras Galadhon.

Sinda: Illinde and Bethlissien won't escape.

North Gondor: Tir Limlight lost . . .

South Gondor: OK, so my army died. Oops.

Dunlending: I'm waiting . . .

Noldo: What Noldo?

Easterling: Gov Rathow, moving target.

I defy you all.

Ren

GAME 110

So . . . the Fire King is out. I salute his nation, and all others who stayed in this game that would not end. Good gaming, and may your next game be more exciting!

Signed,
Haruth Ramam

GAME 112

Rejoice, thee Elves
Remember Elrohir

[Urzahil, Skargnakh, Vader, Tormog, Dendra Dwar, Trahern, Drurganda, Ji Indur]

From these
Never shall you fear
For their souls
Were claimed by Elrohir.

Rejoice, thee Elves
Remember Elrohir.

Refrain from a new ballad sung at the Summer Celebration in Rivendale. DS names are replaced during the singing by a single drum beat.

Well Don, Noble Son
Elrond

Now that the Harad are done dealing with those "Course Hairs" down south, I wonder if they'll help the Free Peoples clear out those "Asp Holes" in Mordor?

Then again, we're pushing the limits of good taste as it is . . .

GAME 115

Lost and Found

Would the owner of Tormog please claim him and remove him from my pop center. He's beginning to scare the trolls.

GAME 117

Hoarmurath,

I liked your dragon so much I decided to get one of my own. Mine flies and breathes fire. Does yours?
Enion

GAME 118

Cloud Lord,

7 kills and 2 hostages. How are you doing?

Long Rider

GAME 119

Hmmmm . . .

Ever feel like you were getting the business end of a really nasty tag-team?

I hate when that happens.

GAME 121

Last month ARTHEDAIN, CARDOLAN and NORTH GONDOR died.

This month WOODMEN, SOUTH GONDOR and NOLDO ELVES will die.

Not a boast. A FACT!

Zarendarger (13)

GAME 122

Keep your allies close. But keep your enemies closer. Right Dog Toad!

Grakius

W.N.M.C.

P.S. I have Dragon Lord Boots and a Rhudaur hide coat. Witchy-Poo? Do

you have a broom to clean this mess up? Don't get up. I'll get it myself!

GAME 124

Witch-king:

Time is on my side!

My "theme song," quoting the Rolling Stones.

Húrin Thalion
Arthedain High Command

Do it if you dare

Leaping from the sky

Hurling through the air

Exhilarating high

See the earth below

Soon to make a crater

Blue sky, black death

YOU'RE off to meet MY maker.

"And your little dog, too."

Mmeûgraadzeôtrh

GAME 125 CONTEST OF CHAMPIONS

MORDOR is under siege? So far there's only this lost DWARVEN army in the mountains. Give us a moment and you will see a real siege.

Zarendarger (15)

Having recovered Dilgûl from the Long Rider, Éoder felt quite pleased with himself. He even decided to stay in town for a victory celebration. Dîn Ohtar, however, crashed the party.

Executive order: No more parties until we win!

Baaltrac

Grendel, looks like ya got a little too close to the oven. Didn't your mom tell ya to stay away from fire? I just hope that my wolf riders don't get too fat off all the horse jerky you left

around.

The Crimson Toad
Fire King

GAME 136

Free Peoples,

You have failed. Your drive into Mordor has been thrown back. Sauron's minions are victorious! Now the tide has been turned. Now our armies shall come forth to take back what is rightly ours . . . Everything!

Uvatha

GAME 141

"Lord Murazor, Elkhorn is coming, Elkhorn is coming!!"

"Good. I needed another trophy."

Doombringer (11)

Hoarmurath,

I've allowed Gorthog to escape and return to your kingdom. In the future, please equip your agents with better artifacts. It will make them more effective, and besides, if there is one thing I could use, it's some really good artifacts.

Osric

GAME 142

Overlord: Well, do they know of our plans?

Lackey: By now, undoubtedly, sir.

Overlord: Good! This should definitely get the attention of our enemies!

Lackey: Is that wise, sir?

Overlord: (Pause) No; but who cares . . . it's gonna be fun!

GAME 143

Hey Dean, don't come too far south or you'll meet me, the Cold Cut

King, and you don't want that!
The Crimson Toad
Ice King

GAME 148

Heard somewhere outside of Mount Gram:

Seammu: So there you are, you gutter rat. Did you think you could escape my network? Step forward and taste my blade.

Gontran: With pleasure, you dirty dog.

SLASH

Seammu: That was too easy.

GAME 151

Contemptuous greetings to Death's Door! All your sniveling will not stop the flash of Eothraim steel and the mighty Gondorian counterattack. Already the Northern Gate of Mordor is breached and Osgiliath retaken. Mirkwood is now Greenwood.

Celdrahl

GAME 154

At the Army Encampment outside Scari

Pochak snarled in disgust. "So, the bearded rat Fulla moves to take Lest behind me?" Eyes narrowed. "Very well . . ."

"Warriors! Slay until every soul in Scari has been driven into the darkness beyond!"

Bonfires washed the night sky with an eerie Crimson glow. Two figures stood within the fire light speaking softly in measured words.

"Tell the first Captain of Angamando that the Wainriders are ready to strike."

GAME 158

Khamûl and Celedhring where are you? Why do you hide as your nation crumbles? Your armies are destroyed, Goblin Gate has fallen and Dol Guldur is next. My mounts shall soon feed upon ground dragon-meal. May your death be as terrible as your generalship.

Mahrcared

GAME 159

Things that make you go Hmmm. The Crimson Toad and Dendra Dwar on the Dark Servants.

Free Peoples should go home.

Doombringer (11)

Ooopp! North Gondor, I'm getting mighty tired of tripping over yer toy armies . . . Geesh!

The Crimson Toad
Gothmog

(P.S. Eothraim, don't ya just hate me? Grin)

GAME 160

Free Peoples,

I'm sorry to say that you have already lost! You have forgotten that the only chance you have is to crush us with your military. But you've forgotten to recruit! Start another game now!

Ji Indur

hA, Ha, hA . . . !Ook AT 'Em rUN!

Um . . . Imperial Grand Poobah Ren, those are our troops.

WhAT?? wELL, You tELL Them HOmE IS weST . . . tHEy sTUPiD, THEy BELIEVE yOU.

nAUrmEgIL tHE unCIEAn
pS--chARGE!!!

GAME 163

A new game. Only 120 targets to start with. Shouldn't take too long.

Bring me their heads.

Doombringer (14)

GAME 165

Ride westward mortal men, to leave a trail of burning towns, weeping widows, and empty treasuries.

Uvatha

GAME 166

A new dawn breaks upon a game destined to end Dark. The shades will be pulled down and the world will rejoice. Naurmy screams as the Gray rat nibbles him away to nothing.

The Voice of Sauron

WHAT???????

Whadda ya mean we're "the good guys"?????

Geezzzz . . . if that don't just ruin the day.

Naurmegil

The Real Gondor

Shades of Gladness . . . yuck!
make that the SHADES OF MADNESS

Strategy & Tactics: The Eothraim

by
Aaron Cox

Many nations in ME-PBM have lots of options which will lead to a successful completion of their game. However, a few nations seemingly have more drawbacks than strengths. One of the nations that accrues many early put-outs in the game is the Eothraim. It is not that the plainsriders are particularly weak, but rather that many players do not recognize all of the strengths and weaknesses held by this nation and work within those confines to achieve an appropriate strategy in eventually succeeding as a winner. This article is written under the assumption that an individual player has found himself playing this position without the assistance of an allied partner. Keep in mind a well-formulated team can usually combine their strengths to offset individual nation weaknesses, but an individual doesn't have the same advantages as a team does.

The Eothraim's single biggest advantage is the strength and mobility of its armed forces. Within its region of the game map, it is second to none in power. With a manpower of 6000 cavalry, it easily outshines the individual forces of the Dog Lord, Dark Lieutenants and the Long Rider. Five separate cavalry forces lend not only strength to its foci of attack, but provide a mobile source of manpower which can reach far beyond its own tiny map area.

The second advantage of the Eothraim is its population centers. Among their FP allies, only Northern Gondor surpasses the Eothraim in total number of major population centers. Coupled with numerous camps which provide large sources of food, leather and mounts, the plainsriders have a workable economy in which to grow.

The two largest disadvantages of the Eothraim are, amusingly, their biggest advantages listed above. Five major towns cannot support 6000 cavalry for long on a 40% tax base. As Mahrcared is the only commander of the nation who can reliably increase the taxes, there is little chance that he will begin the game within the capital. Unless Mahrcared returns to the capital, it may take weaker commanders numerous efforts to raise the tax rate substantially. Thus, a player may quickly find his nation in steep financial difficulty if the huge economic deficit is not solved in a hurry. The second largest disadvantage is that the poorly fortified pop centers are major towns which are targets who need to be protected from the marauding hordes of greedy Dark Servants.

Two common solutions to the Eothraim troubles for many players appear to be the options of going on the offensive and the utilization of the special "Conjure Mounts" ability of their mages. Junk the notion of using mages to cast the mounts spell to earn good money on sells. This is because mount prices, as do almost every product on the market, drop considerably as the game progresses in the early stages. A reasonable turn 3 sell price may be a generous 12 gold. Thus, assuming a 35th skill mage produces 175 mounts at a price of 12 gold, the nation will only earn 2,100 gold on that action. When compared to the total Eothraim 25,000+ gold deficit per turn, relying upon a 2,100 gold income is a quick way to perish under the strain of an economic burden. Additionally, as a commander who can recruit, move armies, pick up food, and conduct nation sells, his talents are under utilized when conjuring mounts. Since Uirdiks is the only Eothraim mage, more mages would need to be hired to support continued sells of conjured mounts. However, as the plainsriders are often beset by enemy agents, Eothraim guards and traveling emissaries who create camps are better justified

as newly hired characters than mages are. Even a couple of new plains camps will earn as many mounts as Uirdiks could create, and still produce additional products in terms of food and leather.

Another common solution to Eothraim economic woes is to go on the offensive. This is not my recommendation, but let us explore the potential of the action. Some of the targets for the Eothraim are Dol Guldur at 2715 (in conjunction with Dwarves, Woodmen, or Sinda armies); Thuringwathost (3120); Carvarad (3621); an eventual advance to Durthang (3122); Lug Ghurzun (3822); Morannon (3221); or a backdoor assault upon Mordor. Each of these attacks have merit, but they also have drawbacks. For instance, a long march to Lug Ghurzun or the backdoor of Mordor will prevent those attacking Eothraim forces from 1) holding off potential invaders of its own territory, and 2) will not suffer troop losses until the pop centers are taken, requiring constant funding for several turns by an economy that absolutely cannot support them that long. Short term goals of Carvarad and Thuringwathost will aid somewhat in reducing the manpower glut, but the newly conquered villages will not provide enough income to compensate for the vast numbers of remaining troops.

The target of Durthang is also usually unfeasible. A quick advance to Durthang requires a bit of luck to avoid marching Dark Servant armies along the road north of Thuringwathost. If the Eothraim do not get stopped by the Dark Servants before mounting an attack on Durthang, then the Dark Servant forces have likely slipped around behind the advance of the plainsmen and pose a huge threat upon their own lightly defended fortifications. Conquering Durthang, reducing it to a town, will not keep the Eothraim in the game when their own major towns fall to invaders whom they failed to stop. Gaining a single town while losing major towns is not an even trade.

Dol Guldur and Morannon are fortified as keeps. It is sad to say that only if all five cavalry forces of the Eothraim are used can they *guarantee* to take the walls of a totally undefended major town/keep. If there is any defending icon at the major town, then there is no guarantee that the Eothraim could take out the keep. Thus, these are poor targets for conquest in the early stages of the game.

Many allies will urge the Eothraim to march to Dol Guldur to purge the pop center of armies so that the other Free People can take the Dragon Lord capital. However, it does not serve the individual Eothraim player to conduct such an attack as any Dragon Lord armies that will threaten his nation are likely to be reaching his own pop centers at 2912, 3012, and 3113 via Mirkwood at the same time the Eothraim cavalry reaches 2715. Thus, the Eothraim player has exposed his entire western front by ignoring the potential of the Dragon Lord armies as his cavalry marched south of Mirkwood and west along the road.

One crucial element is that the Eothraim player must permit his allies to assume portions of their own responsibilities. In other words, allow the Northmen, Dwarves, Woodmen, and Sinda to fight their own early battles. An Eothraim player has his own substantial difficulties that must be overcome before he can effectively strike on offense. If after the first turn, you discover that you've been saddled with inexperienced or non-cooperative Northmen, Sinda and Dwarf players, then send a cavalry force to support the combat along the Sea of Rhun. Use your weakest force to support them, as it will not actually need to win the fight against the Long Rider. Your sole purpose should be to weaken the enemy so that he will be unable to take your own major towns, and hopefully even the Northmen undefended pop centers, so as to prevent the Dark Servant from recruiting near your territory. The forces of the Northmen starting in the east nearly break even with the Long Rider, so only incompetent allies

who do not recruit or assist each other at all are the Eothraim's biggest threat along the eastern front in the early stages of the game.

Having examined the potential attack sites, let us review alternative actions. Remember the huge deficit of the Eothraim mentioned earlier in this article? The primary objective of the Eothraim must be to reduce his deficit to a workable amount where sales of goods will support any future endeavors. This is best accomplished by engaging the five starting forces in turn 1 combat, so that two goals are accomplished simultaneously. First, troops are lost which reduces continued expenditures of costly manpower, and secondly, that the invading enemy forces are encountered and demolished, preventing the losses of your own major towns which allow for your continued existence in the game. While most nations can launch offensive attacks, the Eothraim are one of the few who must play defensively in the early turns. This is because there are numerous cavalry forces within quick reach of the poorly fortified Eothraim major towns, not only will some major towns fall to the enemy, but their horrible economy suddenly becomes even more grave.

There are various ways in which to encounter the Dark Servant Mordor armies. Usually, the Northern Gondor towns along the road stretching from 3116 to 3716 are looked upon as juicy targets for invading enemies. It is best to run three armies along that stretch of road and a fourth army between 3112 and 3116, perhaps even stepping through the camp at 3217, then finishing back to the 3112 if you desire to recruit more men into an army. By finishing at all three towns of 3116, 3316, and 3716, you are likely to encounter more than one Dark Servant beginning army. Your fifth army has several possibilities available to it: to head to the capital to raise taxes; to set up for an attack on Carvarad; march to Thuringwathost; lend support to the Northmen at Dilgul; or be a fifth army patrolling the 16th row road. If you remain paranoid about perhaps not meeting with any armies as you defensively patrol, then another option is to send one or two of the patrollers down the road to 3120 to fight. You can be reasonably assured of running into somebody or something along there.

As the game dynamics can be changed so much by turn 3, any published strategies concerning later turns will be of little use, so this article will refrain from discussing such speculations. Neither does this article address what you should do with the three commanders that do not begin as army commanders. This is to encourage your own individuality in choosing to create new characters, conduct nation sells, or hire entirely new heavy infantry armies at your discretion.

The defensive posture outlined in this article will not earn you any accolades as a great master strategist because you're basically trading your armies against the enemies to maintain a status quo. These strategies will not even assure you of ultimate victory at game's end. What it does do, though, is to maintain your stronger tax base in comparison to your foes by protecting your major towns from attack, thereby keeping you in the game much longer. Since you are in the game to be a winner, this means that you must stay active and safe from invasion.

In order to be competitive with your allies, you will still need to hire multi-classed characters in order to outshine the Elves, generate productive emissaries to out produce Southern Gondor, and maintain several armies to protect your important pop centers and to launch your own invasions with. Never ignore the long-term goals of potential growth as a nation, and never allow yourself to be beaten by strategies that overextend your abilities.

THE NAME'S THE THING: Names in Middle-Earth PBM

by
Steven Stelter

Against all the lusty debate about conquest and strategy that has thundered across the pages of *Whispers* in the past, the topic of selecting names for Middle-Earth PBM characters and Population Centers seems downright puny. But nowhere is the magic of Tolkien's world felt so strongly as in the characters who populate it and the places where they dwell, and much of their appeal lies in their carefully-concocted names, for Tolkien was a philologist and understood the power of words. So quit snickering.

Designing names for my characters and Population Centers is one of the great joys I receive from playing Middle-Earth PBM, and over the years I've come up with some rules of thumb I employ for name generation. I thought I'd share some of my notes with the *Whispers* readers, so that players who also strive for a Tolkienesque flavor to their playing style can benefit.

(I should mention here that this article is specifically directed at the T.A. 1650 scenario for Middle-Earth Play-By-Mail. However, most of what is mentioned here can be applied to the T.A. 2950 scenario as well.)

PART I: Character Names

Characters are probably a nation's most visible asset, so it's worth a little effort to think up a good name...and it *does* only take a little effort.

For inspiration, there's no better place to start than right at the source: Tolkien himself. A quick glance at *Lord of the Rings*, *The Silmarillion*, or *Unfinished Tales* will yield dozens of heroes and villains of all types from whom you can model your own characters' names. In some cases, you can even transfer characters directly from the pages of Tolkien's novels. Even though *Lord of the Rings* is set 1400 years after the time of Middle-Earth PBM, many of the denizens of Middle-Earth (most notably the Elves) are immortal, or at least extremely long-lived, and there are several characters mentioned in *Lord of the Rings* who could have been alive in T.A. 1650. Other historical personages of the time are hinted at in the timelines and genealogy trees of Tolkien's books.

THE FREE PEOPLES

The nations comprising the Free Peoples represent a huge diversity of races and cultures, but many of them share a common trait: the use of the Sindarin dialect in the creation of personal names. Names such as "Elrond" and "Pelendur," as well as many others seen in Middle-Earth, are Sindarin in origin. Since Sindarin names are so prevalent among so many of the Free Peoples, a word on designing names of this format is in order, starting with which nations are most likely to use them.

Naturally, Sindarin names are very common among the Elves, both Sinda and Noldo, but they are also often seen in human nations with a strong Dúnedain background: Northern and Southern Gondor, Arthedain, and to a lesser extent Cardolan. Some general tips:

◦ There is a quick and dirty way for you to give any name a Sindarin feel without knowing a word of Elvish. Male names in Sindarin generally possess one of the following suffixes: *-dil*, *-dir*, *-dur*, *-gil*, *-hil*, *-hir*, or *-tur*. Female names often end in *-wen* or *-iel* (typically *-rieh*). You can give a Tolkienesque flavor to just about any name by sticking one of these suffixes onto the end.

◦ If you seek more depth, *The Silmarillion* contains an appendix that lists dozens of Sindarin root words and syllables, which can be easily strung together to form names. For example, the syllables *mor* ("dark") and *loth* ("flower") can be combined to create the name *Morloth*.

◦ The letters *k* and *x*, and the *sh* construction, never appear in Sindarin. Neither does the letter *z*, except in very archaic dialects (from whence the name *Urzahil* was derived).

Now, some specific ideas from the writings of Professor Tolkien. A lot of characters mentioned or implied in Tolkien's writings are already represented in Middle-Earth PBM: Gandalf, Elrond, and Shagrat, to name just a few. But there are many more that aren't. Here are some:

Arthedain

Arvegil (male). The genealogies in *Lord of the Rings* mention that King Argeleb II was succeeded by his eldest son Arvegil. Arthedain players looking for a good name for a new commander could include Arvegil in their character lineup.

Northern and Southern Gondor

Gondor seemed to have a particular habit of recycling the names of important citizens over the centuries. Names like Boromir and Faramir appear multiple times throughout Gondorian history. With this in mind, you can freely plunder the names of any Gondorians mentioned in Tolkien's works, with the rationale that they had a namesake who lived in T.A. 1650. Gondorian characters (all male) mentioned in *Lord of the Rings* and *Unfinished Tales* include: **Adrahil**, **Anborn**, **Beregond**, **Bergil**, **Borondir**, **Damrod**, **Derufin**, **Dervorin**, **Duilin**, **Duinhir**, **Forlong**, **Golasgil**, **Hirgon**, **Hirluin**, **Ingold**, **Iorlas**, **Mablung**, and **Targon**.

In addition, Gondor seemed fond of reusing the names of heroes of the First Age, so crack open your copy of *The Silmarillion* if you have one.

The Dwarves

Durin V (male). Tolkien didn't provide the complete birth and death dates for all the Durins, but *Unfinished Tales* mentions a Durin III ruling Khazad-dûm in the Second Age, and *Lord of the Rings* notes that Durin VI was around in T.A. 1900. One could reasonably theorize that Durin V was alive in T.A. 1650, when Middle-Earth PBM is set.

Sinda Elves

Finding names for Elves is fairly simple, not only because many of them use the Sindarin form, but also because you can pull many Elven characters right out of the pages of Tolkien's books. Because Elves are immortal, it's likely that many of the Elves mentioned in *Lord of the Rings* were alive in T.A. 1650. Notable Elves from that work are listed here.

Legolas (male). Son of Thranduil, Prince of the Elves of Northern Mirkwood, and one of the major personalities of the War of the Ring.

Haldir (male). One of the guards of Lothlórien.

Rúmil (male). Brother of Haldir.

Orophin (male). Brother of Haldir.

Galion (male). Thranduil's butler (he's mentioned in *The Hobbit*). Probably didn't play a major role in Middle-Earth history, but if you like the name, go for it.

Noldo Elves

Arwen (female). Daughter of Elrond and future Queen of Gondor.

Galdor (male). An Elf from the Grey Havens.

Lindir (male). One of the Elves of Imladris (Rivendell).

NEUTRALS

Unfortunately, Tolkien didn't go into much detail about the names and dialects employed by the peoples represented by the ME-PBM Neutral nations, and few if any characters from these nations were named in his writings.

However, it can be noted that both Rhudaur and the Corsairs possessed a weak Dúnedain heritage (Rhudaur from its days as a part of Amor, the Corsairs from their Black Númenórean ancestors), so characters with Sindarin names would not be out of place there.

DARK SERVANTS

Sauron's minions mostly consisted of Orcs and evil Men, and there aren't many hard and fast rules for naming them. Orcs spoke their own harsh tongues which varied from tribe to tribe, and Sauron's human servants generally carried the names of whatever country they came from. As a rule, anything suitably guttural will work.

However, some of Sauron's human minions are renegades from Free Peoples nations, often Gondor or Amor. Such characters, as rare or as common as you would like them to be, would carry names of the Sindarin style mentioned above.

Some Orc characters are named in *Lord of the Rings*, and if you like you can bring them to life in your ME-PBM nation. There is some controversy over whether Orcs, like Elves, are immortal or simply long-lived. I don't know the answer, but my feeling is that if Shagrat is represented in Middle-Earth PBM as a character, we can do the same with the other Orcs named in *Lord of the Rings*. These include:

Azog (male). A great Orc-chieftain of the Misty Mountains. **Note:** Because Middle-Earth PBM names must be at least five characters long, you'll have to add something to the end. I used "Azog the Great" in one game as the Dragon Lord.

Bolg (male). Azog's son, and another Orc-warlord of the North. **Note:** Again, you'll need to attach something to Bolg's name to meet the five-character requirement: I suggest "Bolg son of Azog."

Grishnákh (male). A cunning Orc from Barad-dûr.
Goffimbul (male). An Orc-captain from Mount Gram.
Gorbag (male). An Orc-leader who served in Minas Morgul (previously Minas Ithil).
Lagdûl, Muzgash, Radbug, Ufthak (male). These four Orcs were all mentioned briefly in *Lord of the Rings*. Not much is known about them except for their names.

Finally, if Tolkien's abundant writings and your own imagination are not enough to inspire you, I recommend any of the countless games and supplements written with Middle-Earth as a setting. These games are often full of NPCs with names that carry a real Tolkien flavor.

ICE's comprehensive **Middle-Earth Roleplaying Game** certainly stands at the top of the list; its adventures and supplements are full of original characters hailing from all regions of Tolkien's world. **MERP** is especially applicable to the **Middle-Earth PBM** player because many of the supplements for that game are set in the T.A. 1650 period. I regularly plunder names from the *Gorgoroth* sourcebook when playing a Dark Servant.

Also worthy of note is Interplay's series of *Lord of the Rings* computer adventure games. These games are chock full of NPCs of all stripes, and in my view, Interplay did an excellent job in giving them names with a good Tolkien feel. Sinda and Noldo Elves players might take a particular interest in Volume I of the series, which is set largely in Rivendell and Lórien.

Part II: Population Centers

This section is all about selecting suitable names for your **ME-PBM** Population Centers. Like characters, Population Centers are a fairly conspicuous aspect of your nation, so it's worth your while to come up with some good-sounding names, even if only to keep the other players entertained. Here are some tips.

Sindarin Names Revisited

Like characters, many settlements in Middle-Earth bear Sindarin names. Even Dark Servant fortresses often follow this pattern. For instance, "Dol Guldur," "Barad-dûr," and "Durthang" are all Sindarin names -- by the way, note the use of the Sindarin syllable *dur* ("dark") in all three.

Again, the *Silmarillion* appendix is a good place to find Sindarin root words. For example, you can string together the words *beleg* ("mighty") and *groth* ("cave") to make the name *Belegroth*, a good name for a Population Center located in the mountains.

Keywords to keep in mind: Names of cities and fortresses often begin with the word *Barad* ("tower") or *Minas* ("tower"). Almost as popular are *Dol* ("hill"), *Amon* ("hill"), and *Cirith* ("cleft"). For Population Centers located on the coasts, you might find the Sindarin syllable *lond* ("port") useful. Finally, many Population Center names end in *-ost* ("fortress") or *-rond* ("roof," "chamber").

Geographical Locations

You can also name Population Centers after geographical sites located in that hex. Middle-Earth is full of noteworthy mountains, islands, and fields which are not owned by any particular nation, and whose location in **ME-PBM** can be estimated down to the hex. Here are some geographical sites after which Population Centers can be named.

Caradhras (2211). The peak marking the western end of the Redhorn Pass through the Misty Mountains.

Erebor (3107). The Lonely Mountain; uninhabited in T.A. 1650, but later the dwelling place of the Dwarves -- and later, of Smaug the Dragon.

Erech (2122). An ancient hill once inhabited by the Wild Men.

Fanuidhol (2311). The eastern peak of the Redhorn Pass.

Himling (0203). A small island in the far North.

Northern Gondor

Long ago, Gondor had built six beacon-towers along the northern edge of the White Mountains. Population Centers of Northern Gondor could be named after any of these. Their names and estimated locations are: **Halfirien** (2723), **Calenhad**: (2723 or 2722), **Minrimmon** (2722 or 2723), **Erelas** (2723 or 2722), **Nardol** (2724 or 2723 or 2823), and **Eilenach** (2823).

Other sites of interest in Northern Gondor, along with their probable hex locations in **ME-PBM**, follow.

Amon Hen (2620). The Hill of Sight.

Amon Lhaw (2720). The Hill of Hearing.

Cair Andros (2923). Actually an island in the Anduin between hexes 2923 and 2922.

Cormallen (3023, 3022, or 2922). A field in Ithilien.

Lossarnach (2925). A village or town near Minas Tirith (née Minas Anor).

Southern Gondor

The *Atlas of Middle-Earth* mentions a Population Center named **Tarnost** in a location that in **ME-PBM** would be around hex 2525.

Again, I can't recommend ICE's **Middle-Earth Roleplaying Game** highly enough to those seeking inspiration for names of Population Centers. I've found Karen Wynn Fonstad's book *Atlas of Middle-Earth* quite helpful as well.

A Final Note

One last bit of naming advice that applies whether you're naming people or places: Never underestimate the simple and subtle power of the accent mark (') and the circumflex (^). One of these babies over the occasional vowel gives an exotic look to any name...though *bê cârêfûl nôt tô ôvêrûsê thêrn*. See you in Middle-Earth!

In Defense of the Realm

In building a strong nation, several factors are important. Much has been written about the strength of armies, the costs to maintain them, the benefits of single and multi-skilled characters, the advantages and uses of various characters of each skill combination. But even though neither characters nor armies can exist without the common people in the population centers to support them, little has been written regarding the benefits and disadvantages of different population center combinations. While the position each nation finds itself in will alter the best balance of population center/fortification just as it alters the optimal mix of character skills (single and multi-skilled), it is my hope that the following discussion will give some insight into the situation you find yourself in.

First, an analysis of the general population center position each alliance finds itself in: The Dark Servants tend to start with fortified major towns and a few camps. In terms of income, this leaves them with lower tax production than the Free Peoples. However, few Free Peoples' agents exist early in the game with the skill to steal gold from a fortified major town, so this income can be relied upon. The camps, on the other hand, produce no tax revenue, so they are not a likely target for a Free Peoples' agent. The Free Peoples' agents are more likely to be guarding their own characters and population centers from the Dark Servants' agents.

The Neutral nations tend to have more towns and major towns, thereby producing more tax revenue. This also leaves that revenue more vulnerable to low level agents, unless the neutral nation spends all of its funds before the enemy agents can steal from them.

The Free Peoples have more towns and villages than the Dark Servants, thus more income. But the towns and villages are also easier to steal from, and they make larger, more interesting military targets than the camps of the Dark Servants. Thus, like the neutral nations, the income they do have is more likely to be stolen.

So, where should you place your new camps? What kind of defense, if any, should they be given? Below is a chart adapted from the rules:

Size of Population center/fortification	Gold to create empty hex	Timber to fortify this level	Percent of resource production rate	Income at 50% tax	Cost to maintain	Base loyalty	Defense w/loyalty & fortifications
Camp	2000	0	100	0	0	30	260
Camp & tower	3000	1000	100	0	500	30	1560
Camp & fort	6000	4000	100	0	1000	30	8060
Village	6000	0	80	1250	0	40	700
Village & tower	7000	1000	80	1250	500	40	2100
Village & fort	10000	4000	80	1250	1000	40	9100

Village & castle	15000	9000	80	1250	1500	40	14700
Town	12000	0	60	2500	0	55	1550
Town & tower	13000	1000	60	2500	500	55	3100
Town & fort	16000	4000	60	2500	1000	55	10850
Town & castle	21000	9000	60	2500	1500	55	17050
Major Town	18000	0	40	3750	0	75	4375
Major Town & tower	19000	1000	40	3750	500	75	7875
Major Town & fort	22000	4000	40	3750	1000	75	14875
Major Town & castle	27000	9000	40	3750	1500	75	21875
Major Town & keep	35000	17000	40	3750	2000	75	32375

Now that you know the costs of the population centers you will build, both initial and ongoing, you may clearly assess what level of population center you need.

Most common is the need to provide income to avert a budget deficit. For a mere 30,000 you can use emissaries to create five villages on unclaimed hexes, increasing your income by 6250 with a tax rate of 50%, not to mention the products these villages bring to your nation.

Sometimes there is a more specialized need, such as slowing down enemy army movement along a certain road through a mountain. If you just want to delay your enemy for a turn, a camp with a tower is the least expensive. However, a large enough enemy army might not be stopped. A village with a tower or fort gives the added benefit of net income as well as the power to warn you that something untoward comes your way. Either will slow the enemy army for a turn to allow you time to react.

The latest in Capital security is to ring your Capital with Villages defended by Forts. Recruiting power is excellent. It is a brave enemy who attacks this seven hex metropolis!

But perhaps you are the paranoid one. You fear that one or several of your enemies has actually *played* your position before! You want a new backup capital that they will never know is there. For you, there can be but one choice. Find an out-of-the-way hex that you believe to be on no one's map. Create a camp, improve it regularly to a major town, if you are truly paranoid, place a keep there. Now, let your enemies try to run you from the game. They will not even know where to target you!

In final analysis, what you choose to build up is up to you. You know your needs and plans. I have provided the accounting. Now that you know the cost, figure the benefit for your nation. Your emissaries await your orders.

Legate Silvertongue

The Oracle Speaks

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

MIDDLE-EARTH PBM

IF A CHARACTER HAS AN ENCOUNTER, WHY CAN ANY CHARACTER IN THE HEX REACT?

Actually, not just any character present in the hex can react to the encounter. Any character in the hex that is not with, nor in command of, an army/navy may react to the encounter.

The reason why 'almost' any character present in the hex may react is partly to capture more reality, and partly to allow more simple/flexible game mechanics. Most players would like to make the case that if they have more than one character in a hex, then those characters *could* be travelling together (certainly this would be likely in the case of a company). Furthermore, if an ally also had a character present, then the same case could be made, and the player could tell that ally of the encounter. Perhaps the ally would prefer to have their character react to the encounter, rather than the character that had the encounter. However, characters in the hex that would not be likely to be travelling with the character that had the encounter (i.e. enemies characters) would not normally be present and thus would not normally be aware of (and thus not likely to react to) the encounter, unless somehow the enemy character was aware of the presence of the encounter from rumors or previous knowledge. In such cases, the enemy character could be present and react as well, sooner or later.

The rules require that only one character is 'forced' to react to the encounter (the one that actually gets the encounter report), but by allowing almost any character present to react to the encounter, the rules capture more of the above-mentioned 'reality'. All the characters *could* get reports of the encounter, but there really was no need to advise each character redundantly. Furthermore, by allowing almost any character present to react, this allows the player who has a company (or other characters present) to select the character(s) that they feel are most qualified to react to that encounter ("perhaps a mage would be best for one encounter, and an agent for another"; "perhaps my best character should handle this encounter..."), or most expendable!

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.

(continued from inside front cover)

ends up waiting longer than if we had all of the players and money at one time. O.K., so we are currently filling two 3-week games of ME-PBM--a regular game and a grudge game (which is awaiting a Dark Servant team--anyone interested should contact us.). Those of you needing a longer turn-around should let us know. We are also looking for some Free People teams, for grudge and team games, so those of you 'good at heart' can contact us.

That's all there is for this month, so I'll see you same time next month.

Stuart

The Hall Of Heroes

Game #62 - The Dark Servants: #14, #22 & #21

The Dark Servants have raised the banner of the Lidless Eye and claim Middle-earth for their Lord. The strong sit by their Master in triumphant glory while the weak go to the slave pits.

Final standings are as follows:

#14 Cloud Lord - 2183
#22 Haradwaith - 2150
#21 Corsairs - 2050

Top Free People: #10 Noldo Elves - 1450

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Ulrac/Cloud Lord: 240
Highest Net Commander Rank - Ulrac/Cloud Lord: 218
Highest Net Agent Rank - Indahl/Cloud Lord: 134
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Arulian/Cloud Lord: 98
Highest Net Mage Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves: 150
Most Mithril - Fire King: 1588
Most Artifacts - Cloud Lord: 39
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 22

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #82 - The Dark Servants: #21, #19 & #14

Sauron's dark desire has been fulfilled by his loyal servants as their will, unopposed by the forces of Light, is enforced throughout Middle-earth. The foul contract made with Sauron has come to fruition as they now rule the land. Final standings are as follows:

#21 Corsairs - 1900
#19 Long Rider - 1800
#14 Cloud Lord - 1558

Top Free People: #8 Dwarves - 992

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Úrzahil/Dark Lieutenants: 213
Highest Net Commander Rank - Drurgandra/Long Rider: 149
Highest Net Agent Rank - Dîn Ohtar/Long Rider: 147
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Karak/Dark Lieutenants: 108
Highest Net Mage Rank - Úrzahil/Dark Lieutenants: 173
Most Mithril - Blind Sorcerer: 2293
Most Artifacts - Long Rider: 21
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 22

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

The Hall Of Heroes

Game #99 - The Dark Servants: #22, #17 & #21

Sauron has accomplished what HIS master, Morgoth, could not--the eradication of the forces of Light from Middle-earth and total dominion over the land. He rules from Mt. Doom with his chief servants at his side. Final standings are as follows:

#22 Haradwaith - 2100
#17 Quiet Avenger - 1500
#21 Corsairs - 1333

Top Free People: #23 Dunlendings - 1750 (can not place because position is expired)

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Celedhring/Dragon Lord: 262
Highest Net Commander Rank - Gothmog/Dark Lieutenants: 144
Highest Net Agent Rank - Köfl the Slippery/Dark Lieutenants: 160
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Khamûl/Dragon Lord: 91
Highest Net Mage Rank - Celedhring/Dragon Lord: 202
Most Mithril - Dwarves: 1399
Most Artifacts - Blind Sorcerer/Dark Lieutenants: 14
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 10

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #126 - The Dark Servants: #25, #17 & #18

Led by the "reformed" Easterlings, the Dark Servants have won the day for their dark Master. The Free now serve as dinner for the troops of the Lidless Eye and the dark yoke of slavery rests on the followers of Light. Final standings are as follows:

#25 Easterlings - 1917
#17 Quiet Avenger - 1517
#18 Fire King - 1450

Top Free People: #10 Noldo Elves - 800

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Mûrazôr/Witch-king: 145
Highest Net Commander Rank - Ashdurbuk Zalg/Witch-king: 103
Highest Net Agent Rank - Erennis/Cloud Lord: 117
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Armand/Cloud Lord: 95
Highest Net Mage Rank - Mûrazôr/Witch-king: 115
Most Mithril - Easterlings: 278
Most Artifacts - Cloud Lord: 18
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 11

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!