

# WHISPERS OF THE WOOD



**GAME  
SYSTEMS  
INC.**

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## WORDS FROM THE WOOD

The first order of business this month is to announce the birth of William B. Feild III. That's right, our erstwhile game designer had a baby--with the help of his wife. In any event, he is now the proud father of his new son. The baby was 20 inches long and weighed 6 lbs 10 oz. and was born October 13. Congratulations, Bill. Best wishes to your family.

Now that our new scenario has now kicked off, we are very excited and hope that you feel the same way. One point of note should be taken, however: for those of you sending in hand-written turnsheets, **PLEASE** distinguish clearly which version of the game the turn is for. Since we have a couple of early games still going in 1650, this will help us clearly identify which game the turn is for. A simple 1650 or 2950 on the turnsheet will suffice--just make sure it is in a prominent spot.

We will be starting (or have started) to use some slightly different return envelopes. The major difference is that there will be a place to write down the game #, player # and return date for the turn inside. This will help to speed up the morning process and allow us to get the turns in the mail sooner, resulting in a faster turn around for turn travel. If you would fill out this information when mailing in your turn, it would make our jobs easier and that, in turn, will lead to your getting your turns sooner. Can't ask for much more than that.

O.K., a little blurb concerning personals: when mailing in personals, especially those mailed in either without a turn or with a different turn than the game the personal is for, please include your **NAME, GAME #, PLAYER # and SECURITY CODE!!** We have been receiving quite a number of "anonymous" personals--i.e., personals with only a game #. We can not accept these blind personals, as we do not know who sent them and so do not know if he has submitted other personals. Personals over 40 words, especially, must include a security code so we know the player wants his account charged for the submission. The best bet is to include all of the above information on your personal: Name, game #, player # and security code. This will eliminate any questions and will assure your personal being run.

This month also brings us the first game to end with the disposal of the One Ring. That's right, Game #77 ended with the Dark Servants returning the Ring to Sauron and truly claiming Middle-earth for their own (see the Hall of Heroes for details). Congratulations to the players in this game for being the first to end the game in this fashion. Speaking of Ring activities, another game nearly ended with the One Ring, but events conspired to thwart that attempt. Seems the Ring is popping up all over the place. One must be careful with omniscient, willful artifacts--but that doesn't mean it can't be done!

Game needs once again. We are still filling a State of War game and need players to pick up the challenge of contesting the Federal Government for leadership of the new Union. In ME-PBM 1650, we are looking for both Free People and Dark Servant teams--that is, 3-5 man teams. The easiest and quickest way to be put in one of these games is to list choices for both sides--that way, we can put you in no matter what the needs. In ME-PBM 2950, we need Free People and Dark Servant teams for both team games and for grudge games. We also need 2 three-week Free People grudge teams. This is a good way to see what the new nations are like, so those of you interested should contact us immediately. Well, that's it for this month. I'll speak to you again in thirty!

*Stuart*



whispers of the wood

## ALONG THE PATHWAYS

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WHISPERS OF THE WOOD is a monthly publication primarily for the use and enjoyment of GSI players of STATE OF WAR and ME-PBM™. Subscription rates: \$15.00 for one year (12 issues) or \$25.00 for two years (24 issues). Individual issues cost \$1.75. GSI reserves the right to change these prices without prior notice of any type.

### Credits

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**Editor's Note:** GSI neither confirms nor denies the accuracy of any figures or the efficiency of any strategies published herein.

This Month's Cover: "The Duel" by John Kisse

Volume XI Issue #8  
Published by GAME SYSTEMS INC  
November 1, 1994  
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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.

Middle-earth™ PBM  
circa 1650

### GAME 13

Dear Quiet Avenger,

The fact that evil is about to win doesn't mean you can leave your capital unprotected from destruction.

Lord Marshal Pelendur

### GAME 27

Dark foes,

You have been worthy opponents. Many mighty have fallen on both sides. But the time is near for the Light to shine. We salute the many who fought with honor.

Argeleb II  
El & the Vaders

### GAME 43

Khamûl,

The time of reckoning will soon be upon us. Since you lack the one thing even our enemies had--HONOR--Why not just go sit in a corner and pout like a good little Nazgûl?

Angulókë Umbar

### GAME 66

To all those still kicking and to those who are still being kicked:

You have fought the good fight.

It is time to "Go gently into the night."

Or we will drag you kicking and screaming.

Your choice.

Cloud Lord

\*\*\*\*\*

A veil of chaos shadows  
Mirkwood blood-red, as a dozen

teeming armies of the Light and Dark swarm back and forth through the shifting trees and mists. Beyond, a bloody battle rages at the gates of Mordor. Phase II begins.

Whitefire

### GAME 94

My, my, my, now who are the quiet ones?! It's 6 vs 2. C'mon guys . . . we're waiting!

Evil Eye

### GAME 100

Úvatha

Your bull-headedness is the only indication of your ability. Anyone can run, but only the strong can fight and only the best can win. Sorry, but you can't fight and you won't win! So run, rabbit, run!

Uirdiks

### GAME 109

Hey Din,

Sorry you were never able to make the party. I collected the gold for it from your capital the turn it was revealed, so don't worry about missing the games. The Dark Lieutenants came in last followed closely by the Dragon Lord in most characters dead. Huz's head was on display as an example of what happens to traitors. (I did enjoy serving the Easterlings a cold dish.) Are there even three Dark Servants left?

Party Animal,  
Uirdiks

### GAME 112

For Hire-- Harad Barbarian  
Emissaries: You pay 'em, we sway 'em.

Harad Barbarian Assassins:  
You pay 'em, we slay 'em.

Harad Barbarian Gladiators:  
You pay 'em, we play 'em.

PS: To all Mordor tater heads: C'ya,  
wouldn't want to B'ya!

### GAME 115

Sauron's lidless eye sweeps the forest of Mirkwood. The Woodmen desperately hold on, as a deadly sickness falls on their realm. The Sinda have already fled to Valinor, leaving the nations of men to fend for themselves.

Grendel I

\*\*\*\*\*

Remaining Free Peoples.

Do not waste time attempting to resist the inevitable. It is not too late to die with honor rather than being crushed by the rising tide of our armies. It is a cleansing wave which will rid Middle-earth of you forever.

Enion

### GAME 124

The Blind Sorcerer has cut a path of destruction through what used to be Éothraim territory. Slowly, Akhōrahil's eyes focus on North Gondor. Yes, that is the way . . . . . for now.

### GAME 125 CONTEST OF CHAMPIONS

Rhovanion is ablaze! All shudder under the storm. It's high time for Mordor to break out and bring the war to the Free Peoples.

Zarendarger (15)

\*\*\*\*\*

By the Dark Gods, there is fight left in the Free. I pray thee thou has come in for a long visit. I don't get very many visitors except for Mahrcared.

Everybody look, Winston's back.  
Dendra Dwar,  
Miracle Maker

\*\*\*\*\*

Haradwaith's seduction by Sauron may have turned the tides temporarily in the Dark Servant's favor, but the light still shines in the hearts of the Free.

Grendel I

### GAME 130

Where once the bold, majestic stallions ran free across the green and rolling plains . . .

NOW WOLVES AND WARGS AND  
WARHOUNDS HUNT THE CHARRED  
REMAINS OF RHOVANION.

For a time the great wood was alive with light and the sweet sound of life . . .

NOW THE DARK CLOUD OF SAURON  
BRINGS DEATH TO MIRKWOOD AND  
THE GREAT EYE LOOKS TO THE MISTY  
MOUNTAINS

13

### GAME 133

Well, well, well.

Looks like we have been smote like sheep. As the rats run from our ship, Úrzahil can be heard muttering over his fiddle, "That's the last time I grudge with green players."

See you in the next one

D-Man

### GAME 136

I must say it was interesting for what it was worth. For my very first game of play!

And congratulations to the Free People, you will (soon) have your lands back.

Akhōrahil the Wizard

#### GAME 141

Northern Gondor and the Northmen fall to Sauron's might. The Duns and Corsairs rush to replace them. The Easterlings now bolster our noble ranks, while the poor Éothraim have unexpected guests crash their housewarming party in the west.

#### GAME 142

Lackey: Sire, the Free have stopped their futile attempts at retaking Buhr Waldmarh.

Overlord: Good! We have taken their best and emerged victorious! They are exhausted. Their reserves, gone! Call up our reserves and release the offensive!

#### GAME 146

"Well," Carlon says, "the Corsairs will pay for killing Haruth. Our army will sack Umbar at dawn and lay it to waste . . ."

#### GAME 147

Another one, another one bites the dust.  
Score yet another victory for Darkside! Capture Warfinger. Death Telumehtar.

#### GAME 148

War rages on as the Easterlings and Haradwaith are accepted into Sauron's ranks. The Elves have fled across the seas, while the Duns are blinded by the light, destined to be trampled with the rest of the Free.

Grendel I

#### GAME 151

The Cloud Lord and the Long Rider working together. Heads will roll! Freeps, be afraid. Be very afraid! Also,

it is very foolish to steal from a thief, Temogen. I know the name and I know the nation!

Selur Rodrom

#### GAME 152

Mûrazôr,

Your days are numbered! Carn Dûm, Mt. Gram, Cargash, Eldanar, Angsul and Shedun have fallen. Morkai and Kala Dulakarh will fall next turn. It is the dawn of freedom in Angmar.

Argeleb II

P.S. I see you, Mûrazôr.

#### GAME 154

You Northmen multiply like rabbits! I'll send you some carrots.

Ovatha

\*\*\*\*\*

Overheard at a campfire by Ag'tha Xy:

"So, how do you like yours done?"

"I like them golden brown on the outside and warm and soft on the inside. How about you?"

"I think they're best when you catch them on fire and watch them burn until they get a black coating on the outside."

"Well, we won't have any left for smores if Smaug keeps eating the elves raw."

#### GAME 155

I heard a rumor that the famous Easterlings have gone bye bye. But the Witch-king and his friends are taking out the real famous Sindas. Don't get your hopes too high! You can run but you can not hide (DS).

#### GAME 158

Darkness eclipses Rhovanion.

The day of the Dog is at hand.

I come next to Rhûn (Ruin?).

Dendra, The Iron Dog

\*\*\*\*\*

Prince Celdrähil,

Mûrazôr dies to Bain, Angmar is won, Pochak falls futilely attacking Minas Tirith, Hoarmûrath's army is lost in Lorien--forever, Dog Lord loses horde at Buhr Waldmarh--

Can all that be seen from Kâl Nargil?

El & The Vaders

\*\*\*\*\*

The Dragon Lord and Witch-king

Sent spies throughout the land.

Unhappy is the news they bring.

For doom is close at hand.

The mountains fall

And rivers bubble.

Sauron's in a lot of trouble.

Arthedain Chronicler

\*\*\*\*\*

I shall lead Sauron's hordes against the traitor Dunmen. None shall usurp my place. And Enion is mine alone.

Slyafel

\*\*\*\*\*

My sincere thanks go out to Jí Indur, for all of his artifacts, and for his (former) capitol, now the home of 7,000 orc hating freedom fighters. Ren could learn a lesson from Jí on generosity and hospitality. Then again, I think he's about to . . .

#7 Celdrähil

#### GAME 166

Before the first autumn leaf fell, both Gondors leveled against me. Very well. But let all be warned, my steel is bitter and my sword honed. They know not what they do.

From

Baby Wolverine

#### GAME 169

Let it be known:

Dwarven ale for all,  
Including those DS types so  
Brave as to request it.

The Dwarves, Arthedain and  
North Gondor are all now 21.

After the war ends, party in  
Moria.

Swampman Ruzzaren Kor Nadkuz  
PS: Witchy Poo, for shame--1700+  
troops killed by a TOWN!

#### GAME 172

Commander Grasty stands  
outside of Pelargir with a smile on his  
face. Then out of the distance he spots  
3 North Gondor armies emerge. All he  
has to say is, "Damnit Jim, I think  
we're dead!"

Finally the Freeps are fighting  
back.

The Cloud Lord

\*\*\*\*\*

Once upon a time, not so long ago,  
Woodman commanders Waulfa and  
Beoraborn stood poised outside Dol  
Goldur and Goblin Gate. But they are  
now in chains thanks to those pesky  
Dark Servant agents.

Jí Indur

#### GAME 173

Fall is upon us and that is what  
the Dark Servants are doing. Din Ohtar,  
Only Big Boys can assassinate. Try  
again in spring after training and  
remember your wounds as a lesson. By  
the way, what happened to ALL of  
your armies and navies? Fire King, you  
need to move faster, your failure at  
Minas Ithil will cause your allies to  
withdraw and come defend you. A  
bird told me you are new to ME-PBM,  
so Tarondor will not kill Ren. (He can,  
you know.) However, I will remove  
you from Barad Ungol. All Neutrals.  
We are willing to help you any way

we can. But, stealing from our pop centers is considered an Act of War. I have sent every neutral a card, only two have responded. Duns and Harad, you NEED to respond. My allies are not very patient. Thank you, Corsairs and Easterlings. Gothmog, I hope you and the Dark Lieutenants don't think that will work.

Tarondor

#### GAME 175

Rhudaer has joined the Witch-king in a quest to restore the lost kingdom of Arnor--under new management!

Greywolf of Rhudaer

\*\*\*\*\*

The race for freedom begins. May the purity of light blind the feeble eye of Sauron. Neutrals, we offer you the chance to rule yourself than to be a slave to Sauron's desires.

Grendel I

#### GAME 179

The Dark has already come together except for a few. Neutrals, watch how the Dark comes. For if you're with us you share our glory. Without us, your doom comes. To the F.P.: Beware the Witch-king leads. To my Brothers: Our victory!

The Witch-king

## Middle-earth™ PBM circa 2950

#### GAME 4

Hear ye, hear ye:

Be it known that the nation of the Corsairs will entertain all requests for our allegiance. Both sides know me as a steadfast ally and a dangerous opponent. Deal fairly (dramatic pause) and bid high!

#### GAME 5

Yet again the Great Stage is set  
All pieces in position  
All forces prepared.  
Sauron has returned  
And we, his Lords, set  
About the tasks of victory.  
Darkness falls, the curtain rises,  
Act I begins.

Helrazor

#### GAME 7

The dark eye of Sauron again observes Middle-earth, and he laughs at his enemies' "strength".

"Rise, My minions, and snuff out the fluttering light once and for all."

Grendel I

#### GAME 8

The Khand Easterlings consider all nations neutral. We will hold council with any that would care to.

## Neutrals Have More Fun

by  
Tom Walton

(Editor's note: The "win" figures for each nation are somewhat dated, as this article was written earlier this year.)

Having played four of the five neutrals six times now, I thought I'd offer up an analysis of each of the individual positions for those of you who've yet to play one and thought you might like to try your hand at it. Being neutral is often great fun, as it allows you to watch the war progress and take advantage of opportunities as they arise. Best of all, you don't get stuck with an allegiance of people you may not like or get along with; as a neutral, you can choose the allegiance which best suits you.

This analysis comes from my own experience and the experience of others who've played. They're too numerous to mention here, but I thank them all for their input. The initial stats are determined as follows:

**Tax Base** is the total revenue of the nation at a 100% tax rate, not including any native gold production.

**Resource Base** is found by dividing the percentage production of each hex (found on the pop center table in the rulebook) by 20%. Thus, a camp is worth 5 points, a town 3, a city 1 (the camp produces 5 times as much from the hex as a city would). It doesn't take into account climate, which could affect the figures quite a bit.

**Initial Forces** gives a rough estimation of the attack/defense strength of starting armies. Defense strength includes armor, but attack strength isn't modified by training, command ranks, weapons, or morale (these figures change too fast and might even be different depending on what leader ends up with what army.).

**Character Points** are simply the total skill points of all the characters added together. The 'random bonus' that later games see isn't included.

**Win** means that the nation has taken 1st, 2nd or 3rd place in a game.

The numbers in parentheses next to the figures rate the nation in comparison to other neutrals (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.).

#### The Corsairs

|                   |               |     |
|-------------------|---------------|-----|
| Tax Base:         | 60,000        | (2) |
| Resource Base:    | 16            | (5) |
| Initial Forces:   | 29,000/26,000 | (5) |
| Character Points: | 530           | (1) |

#### Advantages:

--Excellent tax base. The large Corsair tax base is further enhanced by the fact that almost all of their population centers are moderately fortified. This, along with the high initial command ranks of many of their characters, gives them a good chance of raising taxes to a decent level (70% or 80%) early on without fear of pop center degradation.

--Excellent character base. The best character set among all the neutrals (and better than many non-neutrals), all of the Corsair characters are double- or

triple-classed; seven of the eight have a command rank of 40 or better. The Corsairs also possess one superb mage.

--Good defensive position. Concentrated in large fortified population centers in a small, centralized location, Umbar is extremely difficult to reach by land. Rough terrain combined with the fact that the region only has one road allows the Corsairs to easily block or impede armies attempting to march on them. In addition, the presence of ports and harbors at almost all their pop centers give the Corsairs the ability to defend their turf with their entire army, moving from one end of the nation to the other in a single turn. Furthermore, the Corsairs have six major towns which can act as back-up capitols, making conquest of the nation very difficult.

--Good offensive strike capability. The Corsairs have the largest navy in the game, and are easily capable of defeating any single player on the open seas. Better yet, they start with a transport capability in excess of 5,000 men, allowing them to make quick attacks against enemy nations without the warning that a land approach would provide. This capability is further enhanced by the fact that the Corsairs can build ships for half the timber cost that other nations must pay, and that they can sail across the open seas without fear of getting lost or running into storms.

--Isolation. Again, the position of Umbar allows it to remain relatively isolated from the action early in the game. It takes a great deal of force to knock the Corsairs out, force that neither allegiance can afford to spare during the first dozen or so turns; and such a force must either march to Corsair territory by the difficult and time-consuming land approach, or brave the massive Corsair navy (which, no doubt, is getting bigger with each passing turn). Of all the Neutrals, the Corsairs are no doubt safest from military assault at the start of the game.

#### Disadvantages:

--Weak army. The Corsairs start with one of the weakest armies in the game. Adequate for defense from enemy forces foolish enough to attack them early on, it's barely capable of taking out a hardened target such as Vamag (and that's assuming the enemy doesn't bother to defend it). However, the abundance of command characters and major towns allows the Corsairs to rectify this problem in just a few turns, so this weakness is short-lived. Even so, neighboring nations generally have little to fear from the Corsairs in the early turns of the game.

--Poor resource base. The Corsairs produce little in the way of resources, meaning that they must either put down a number of camps immediately, or buy what they need from the market. So long as prices remain low, this isn't a problem; but if prices rise, the Corsairs can find themselves with too little gold to purchase the items they need to build more ships or equip their troops.

--Naval losses. The loss of Corsair ships, especially transports, can spell disaster for this nation. Without lift capability, the Corsair army must either march to the target (something which will no doubt take turns to do), or wait for more transports to be built. Worse, the Corsairs can't afford to engage in any serious naval battles, so long as they remain neutral or if they commit to the Dark Servants. While they outnumber any single Free Peoples nation in terms of

threat rather than a combat force, sailing into battle only when the situation absolutely requires it. It would be prudent of the Corsairs to start building additional warships as soon as possible, unless they intend to join the Free Peoples.

--Only one port. The Corsairs have only one port. This means that should the port be captured or sabotaged, their ability to build more ships is lost until another port is constructed. Considering the rather large price tag attached to this endeavor, protection of the port is paramount unless, again, the Corsairs intend to join the Free Peoples.

--Dispersal of forces. The Corsair armies and navies are in four different locations, meaning that at least one turn (and usually more) needs to be wasted in consolidating forces (especially the fleet). This also delays the use of the characters commanding those forces.

Evaluation: In my opinion, Corsair strengths far outweigh their weaknesses. Of all the neutrals, they're capable of remaining isolated and separate from the war that rages across Middle-earth for the longest period of time. Short-sighted nations that make the mistake of invading them will soon learn just how difficult it can be to take (or hold) Corsair pop centers. And their characters, given ten or so turns, can be trained up to levels surpassing even those of many of the allegiance players.

In all, the Corsairs stand in the perfect position to build themselves up while remaining virtually ignored by the allegiances. At the same time, neither allegiance will dare to irritate an astute Corsair player, since his nation's might will be growing by leaps and bounds with each turn that passes. If you like playing a position that wins a lot, this is the one for you.

Wins: 11 As Free Peoples: 2 As Dark Servant: 8 As Neutral: 1\*

Overall Rating: 1

\*Corsair failed to declare before the end of the game.

#### The Haradwaith:

|                   |        |     |
|-------------------|--------|-----|
| Tax Base:         | 82,500 | (1) |
| Resource Base:    | 37     | (1) |
| Initial Forces:   | 30,000 | (4) |
| Character Points: | 290    | (5) |

#### Advantages:

--Large tax base. The Haradwaith have one of the largest tax bases in the game, second only to Northern Gondor. In the hands of a neutral with the option of remaining out of the war for quite some time, this tax base becomes an enormously powerful tool capable of raising large armies, placing staggering numbers of camps, creating multi-class characters, buying up market stocks, and so forth. Having played the Haradwaith twice, I found that this advantage counted for more than any other edge one might obtain in the game (characters, artifacts, etc.). A large tax base can be used to make up for almost any shortcoming, especially if the nation has a dozen turns to build itself up even further.

--Good resource base. Unlike the Corsairs, the Haradwaith also start with a good resource base. With the placement of just a few camps, the Harad player will find that he produces more resources than can be consumed even if he

raises large numbers of troops. This means that Harad has far less need to buy off the market than other nations do, and that he can afford to use excess taxes to purchase and sell in order to manipulate market prices. Combined with his tax base, Harad can become entirely self-sufficient with resources to spare.

--Can raise armies at no cost. As if the Harad needed yet another way to save money, the nation can raise men-at-arms armies at no cost. This means that the nation can whip up an army in the target area immediately after a commander arrives, without having to set aside gold for the task. A definite boon both in defense and long-range offensive operations.

--Fair lift capacity. The Harad fleet is generally capable of winning a naval battle, and shouldn't be matched against a foe without cause. However, the lift capacity of their transports is in excess of 3,000 men; this allows the Harad to put down a decent-sized army in nations normally out of reach. Used widely, these transports can provide critical support to other offensive operations.

--Lots of neighbors. The Harad are close to a number of nations, providing ample targets of opportunity for their soon-to-be-massive armies. This gives the Harad a number of options and leaves them in the enviable position of being able to pick and choose his fights.

#### Disadvantages:

--Division of territory. The Harad nation is divided into two territories separated by the Harnen river. Lacking a nearby bridge, this means that Harad must rely upon their relatively small navy to shuttle around his forces. If he loses this navy, his nation will essentially be divided into two smaller nations incapable of providing defensive support to one another. This division also results in some real logistical headaches, requiring that the player be skilled at planning turns in advance for all military operations.

--Too many harbors and ports. The majority of Harad pop centers have harbors or ports, allowing an ocean-going enemy a number of choice landing sights. Since fortifications among most Harad towns are pitiful at best, an enemy who lands can do a great deal of damage before Harad can respond. It's critical that Harad players destroy most of their ports and harbors early on, certainly before going to battle if they intend to declare for the Dark Servants.

--Lousy character set. Strapped with one of the worst character sets in the game, Harad characters are easy prey with respect to agent actions and challenges. While Harad can generally replace any character it loses, a massed assault by either allegiance can result in a large number of deaths each and every turn. This is further exacerbated by the fact that Harad starts with no artifacts and can't reasonably expect to obtain any good ones in the early game.

--Poor starting army. Harad is particularly susceptible to early conquest if faced with the combined forces of an allegiance. Should either the Free Peoples or the Dark Servants mount a major campaign in the first few turns, Harad will fall before it even gets off the ground. A lesser strike can cripple the nation irreparably, turning it into a minor power (certainly an option for Southern/Northern Gondor, the Cloud Lord/Quiet Avenger, etc.).

--Rough terrain. The rough terrain in Harad acts to slow the advance of enemy armies approaching by land. It also slows Harad armies down, telegraphing their moves to all who can see. Worse, it makes it difficult to respond to invasion at opposite ends of the kingdom, especially if the navy is lost.

Evaluation: Despite the difficulties inherent in effectively coordinating this nation, Harad is one of the best nations to play in the game. Often safe from attack early on due to the preoccupation of the neighboring allegiance nations, the Harad player can afford to raise large numbers of troops while at the same time working to expand his already bloated economy. Given a dozen turns, Harad can become an unstoppable powerhouse and the most powerful nation in Middle-earth.

Again, this is a good nation to play if you like to win. However, it's not recommended for new or inexperienced players.

Wins: 9 As Free Peoples: 2 As Dark Servants: 7

Overall Rating: 2

#### Dunland

Tax Base: 37,500 (4)

Resource Base: 30 (3)

Initial Forces: 43,000 (3)

Character Points: 370 (3)

#### Advantages:

--Fair character set. Dunland has a number of fair characters, several of which are multi-classed. In addition, Dunland starts with two excellent mages and can easily jump into the artifact hunting game right off the bat, something that isn't an option for many other nations.

--Varied terrain. Dunland has all terrain types within its borders, so careful camp placement can result in satisfactory production of all goods. With proper planning, Dunland won't be 'shorted' items due to a lack of acceptable terrain within range of its emissaries.

--Excellent climate. Most Dunland hexes are mild year-round, meaning that Dunland doesn't suffer the 'winter blues' that almost all other nations in Middle-earth are subject to. This also gives the Dunland player excellent opportunities to post or place high-yield camps from the start of the game, regardless of the season.

--Nation advantages good. Dunland can name 40-point agents and has a x2 bonus to all scouts and recons. Excellent if Dunland decides to go on the warpath, fair if it decides to get into agent actions.

--Centralized location. Dunland's major population centers are located within a small, easily defended area nestled up against the Misty Mountains. This allows Dunland the opportunity to leave less forces at home when mounting an offensive. Better still, Dunland's regional map covers the only approaches to this core area, vastly reducing the chance of being unpleasantly surprised.

--Neighbors occupied. While Dunland has many neighbors, it's quite likely (except in a team game) that they'll otherwise engage with immediate enemies

for some time to come. This gives the Duns the ability to build unopposed within their territory without fear of immediate attack.

### Disadvantages

--Lousy capitol set-up. Dunland has only one poorly fortified major town; the lack of a backup capitol means that a large enemy force has the ability to blow this nation out of the water in a single turn. Worse, this town is located astride the road that connects Cardolan and Northern Gondor, an unpleasant position if the Duns go evil.

--Isolated from Dark Servants. Dunland's position adjacent to three Free Peoples nations and within easy reach of others (care of that road mentioned earlier) virtually forces the position to go good to avoid destruction. This is especially true if the Free Peoples are winning in Eriador against the Witch-king, or if Rhodaur goes good; else Dunland can expect a very difficult time that in all likelihood will end in the nation's conquest.

--Mediocre economy. Despite Dunland's good production, initial tax base is only moderately decent (about the same as Cardolan's but less than one-third that of Northern Gondor). If Dunland opts to go evil, this lack will play a large part in any conflict with its Free neighbors, who can easily outbuild the Duns.

--Few fortifications. Most of Dunland's pop centers aren't fortified. This limits the tax rate in the early game, as high taxes have the possibility of resulting in pop center degradation. Fortifying these pop centers is a costly affair for a nation with little spare cash.

--Dragons in mountains. While a number of Misty Mountain hexes lay just next door for easy exploitation, dragons plague these hexes constantly. Unless and until the Duns go evil, these dragons will destroy the camps as quickly as they're placed, most likely eating the brave emissaries in the process. Thus, camp placement in the mountains as a neutral or Free Peoples must be limited to the southern mountain hexes near Gondor.

Evaluation: Dunland is a fair nation to play if you've been around a while, since most aspects of the position are solid. However, Dunland's isolation from the Dark Servants is a serious factor to any player who wants a choice in declaring for an allegiance but still wants the opportunity to win the game. Unless the Free opposition is particularly lousy, or Dunland is left alone for far longer than can be expected, the Duns will have a very difficult time pursuing a career as Sauron's next Lieutenant. For this reason, I rate Dunland 4th out of five neutrals.

However, Dunland is perhaps the easiest nation to play in Middle-earth. With varied terrain, an unchanging climate, the lack of a navy, and the ability to remain at peace for a dozen or so turns, the nation is perfect for the first-time player. If you're new to Middle-earth, I heartily recommend taking Dunland for your first or second game.

Wins: 4 As Free Peoples: 3 As Dark Servants: 1  
Overall Rating: 4

(To be continued next issue)

## Strategy and Tactics: The Dwarves

by  
Brian D. Mason

Because of the at-start military power (both in troops and in combat artifacts) of this position, there are many options which can be exercised. What follows is a plan, but by no means, the plan.

In the following strategy for the dwarves there are two critical needs: One to maintain a very effective fighting force in two theaters, and two, to somehow improve the position and get a back-up capitol. On the first point, the two areas are, first, in and around the Dwarven capitol and to the East on the plains of Rhovanion. To protect the Dwarven capitol, an aggressive action must be initiated east of the Misty Mountains against the Dragon Lord and elements of the Witch-king. Following the development of this fighting force, the armies to the east should be combined into an effective battle group to engage the forces of the Dog Lord, Long Rider, and Dark Lieutenants in coordinated efforts with the Eothraim and Northmen. Emissaries are needed to develop camps in profitable and preferably secure locations (Dimrill Dale and in and around the Blue Mountains), and then improve one of the Blue Mountain population centers into a major town. As the initial attack is delayed somewhat to maximize the size of the fighting force, adequate time is given to utilize all combat artifacts.

Turn 1: Bain takes over command of all armies at Moria. All bronze transported to Moria. Tax rates increased to 70%. All combat artifacts put into use. The Barak-shathur (3607) and Azanulinbar-dum (3707) move onto Nahald Kudan (2809). The Kheled-nala (3916) army begins moving north, as I consider this location currently undefendable (as a side note, I also consider Zarak-Dum (2004) undefendable). The plan of reorganizing forces in Rhovanion far to the north might generate opposition from the Eothraim or Northmen. If you have active, reliable allies in those two, there is no reason that the reorganization can not take place at Kheled-nala. However, given the initial unpredictable nature of allies, I favor an Iron Hills build up as the location is more secure.

Turn 2: Relations downgraded with Dragon Lord. All bronze transported to Moria. An emissary is created. The Barak-shathur and Azanulinbar-dum capture Nahald Kudan. The Barak-shathur moves toward Erebor. The Azanulinbar-dum army moves onto Lag-auris (3103). Five hundred heavy infantry (bronze/bronze) recruited at Moria.

Turn 3: All bronze transported to Moria. Another emissary is created. First emissary into Dimrill Dale. The Azanulinbar-dum destroys Lag-auris (while this and the previous moves against the Dragon Lord are very limited, they serve three real purposes: One, they reduce overall Dragon Lord loyalty and production; second, they reduce the morale of the Dragon Lord player; and third, they greatly increase the morale of the east armies). The Barak-shathur moves on Erebor. The Kheled-nala army reaches Azanulinbar-dum. Five hundred heavy infantry (bronze/bronze) recruited at Moria.

Turn 4: All bronze transported to Moria. A commander created. Third emissary is created. First emissary creates a camp and moves into the North Downs. Second Emissary also moves into North Downs. Relations downgraded with Witch-king. Camp posted at Erebor. Five hundred heavy infantry (bronze/bronze) recruited at Moria.

Turn 5: All bronze transported to Azanulinbar-dum. Two camps created in North Downs and move into Blue Mountains. The third emissary moves into

east armies consolidate. The next will join on the following turn and heavy infantry will begin to be recruited here to increase the size of this army (as of turn six it will be 3600). Five hundred heavy infantry (bronze/bronze) recruited at Moria for Bain's army, which now numbers 4700 heavy infantry. It moves off Moria and towards either Goblin Gate or Dol Guldur, depending on prevailing conditions.

At this point, the west army is very strong and can do effective damage to the Dragon Lord. The east army is posed to recruit and is also prepared to do damage in Rhovanion against targets of opportunity. Several camps have been created, and more will be soon in the relatively secure region in the far west. Camps are placed in mountain, hills/rough, and forest; this allows for production of gold (for the economy), metals (for troops) and timber (for fortifications at new camps).

### The Oracle Speaks

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

#### MIDDLE-EARTH PBM

**When moving evasively or without food, what is the movement cost of the "home" order?**

"Home" movement always costs 1 movement point, no matter any other extenuating circumstances such as lack of food or moving evasively. Essentially, your men are spending one day in that spot, so there are no penalties for staying in one place. The 4/3 rule when moving without food does not apply because the army is not actually moving, so the food can be gathered as the army remains stationary. When moving evasively, essentially the evasive movement was done when the army entered the hex. No other movement points need be expended to stay in the same hex-the army has already moved evasively.

**Can a company commander use order #780, Transfer Command, to transfer command of a company to another character with command skill? Can he use it to transfer command to another company commander? How about to a character from another nation?**

The answer to the first two questions is yes. A company commander can transfer command of his company to either another character with command skill or another company commander, thus combining the two companies under one commander. Command can not be transferred to a character of another nation, even if that nation has friendly relations to your nation and vice versa. It is one thing to have a character join a company commanded by another nation. It is quite another to hand over command of an entire company of characters.

**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 Hall Of Heroes

Game #7 - The Dark Servants: #19, #13 & #20

In a contest lasting 81 turns, Úvatha, Dendra Dwar and Úrzahil finally dragged the Sinda down, bringing their Lord the victory he so long desired. As Sauron's most powerful servants, their reign will be long and glorious. Final standings are as follows:

#19 Long Rider - 2500

#13 Dog Lord - 1967

#20 Dark Lieutenants - 1950

Top Free People: #9 Sinda Elves - 1733

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Voisiol/Long Rider: 270

Highest Net Commander Rank - Durkarian/Long Rider: 175

Highest Net Agent Rank - Burmak/Dog Lord: 140

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Macadala/Long Rider Disralac/Long Rider

Danag/Long Rider Ninath/Dark Lieutenants Grismak/Dog Lord

Ilana/Sinda Elves: 100

Highest Net Mage Rank - Voisiol/Long Rider: 270

Most Mithril - Dog Lord: 8996

Most Artifacts - Long Rider: 34

Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 25

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #37 - The Dark Servants: #25, #21 & #19

Kav Makow and Angamaité, having thrown in their lots with the Dark Lord, have, along with Úvatha, led His Servants to the conquest of the pathetic Free. The war drums beat to their cadence and the feet of the conquered march to their tune. Final standings are as follows:

#25 The Easterlings - 2450

#21 The Corsairs - 2250

#19 Long Rider - 2067

Top Free People: #10 Noldo Elves - 1266

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Ovatha II/Easterlings: 255

Highest Net Commander Rank - Ovatha II/Easterlings: 240

Highest Net Agent Rank - Spider/Easterlings: 191

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Thuringwethil/Easterlings: 150

Most Mithril - Corsairs: 6854

Most Artifacts - Easterlings: 43

Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 7

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #77 - The Dark Servants: #24, #11 & #20

Celedhring of the Dragon Lord stood at the crack of Mt. Doom. In his hand, the One Ring pulsed and danced to a magical tune only it and it's master, Sauron, could hear. Celedhring slowly raised the glowing artifact and shouted, "Lord, I give you back your power. I give you back your legacy. I give you back your glory!"

An ear-splitting howl burst forth as the shadow-cloaked figure of Sauron rose from the crack. In a voice ominous and dreadful, he spoke. "Whole. Whole! At last I am WHOLE!!! Well done, my faithful. Well done to all of you. I am pleased. Now all the world will know my wrath! My power! My VENGEANCE!! For Sauron is whole once again, and all of Middle-earth trembles!!"

Final standings are as follows:

#24 Rhudaur - 2300

#11 Witch-king - 2100

#20 Dark Lieutenants - 1967

Top Free People: #25 Easterlings - 867

## The Hall Of Heroes

### Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Celedhring/Dragon Lord: 253  
 Highest Net Commander Rank - Gothmog/Dark Lieutenants: 170  
 Highest Net Agent Rank - Ji-Indur/Cloud Lord: 135  
 Highest Net Emissary Rank - Angelica/Rhudaur: 99  
 Highest Net Mage Rank - Celedhring/Dragon Lord: 190  
 Most Mithril - Rhudaur: 1066  
 Most Artifacts - Witch-king: 26  
 Most Kills - Ice King: 15

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

### Game #110 - The Free Peoples: #10, #25 & #21

Led by Elrond and the Free People converts Ovatha II and Angamaitë, the Dark hordes were turned aside and broken by the armies of the Light. The blight of Sauron has been eradicated and the hearts and souls of the land rejoice in freedom. Final standings are as follows:

#10 Noldo Elves - 2017  
 #25 Easterlings - 1950  
 #21 Corsairs - 1784

Top Dark Servant: #14 Cloud Lord - 950

### Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Ji Indûr/Cloud Lord: 195  
 Highest Net Commander Rank - Meneldir/Arthedain: 154  
 Highest Net Agent Rank - Dudannis/Noldo Elves: 143  
 Highest Net Emissary Rank - Morgolad/Cloud Lord: 102  
 Highest Net Mage Rank - Ji Indûr/Cloud Lord: 140  
 Most Mithril - Easterlings: 1094  
 Most Artifacts - Noldo Elves: 22  
 Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 21

Congratulations to the Free Peoples!

### Game #129 - The Dark Servants: #21, #19 & #25

Hot blast-winds of destruction blow over a scorched Middle-earth and the corpses of the Free swing from stunted trees. This land bears the mark of Sauron and his servants, led by Angamaitë, Úvatha and Ovatha II, dance with malicious glee. Final standings are as follows:

#21 Corsairs - 1700  
 #19 Long Rider - 1650  
 #25 Easterlings - 1633

Top Free People: #7 Southern Gondor - 1175

### Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Gastmorgath/Blind Sorcerer: 180  
 Highest Net Commander Rank - Tarondor/Northern Gondor: 126  
 Highest Net Agent Rank - Din Ohtar/Long Rider: 94  
 Highest Net Emissary Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves Angûilion/Witch-king: 80  
 Highest Net Mage Rank - Gastmorgath/Blind Sorcerer: 180  
 Most Mithril - Easterlings: 519  
 Most Artifacts - Witch-king: 12  
 Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 14

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

## The Hall Of Heroes

### Game #137 - The Dark Servants: #21, #25 & #24

Sauron's whispers have lured the leaders of the Corsairs, Easterlings and Rhudaur to his side. With their help, the Lidless Eye now shines in place of the sun. Middle-earth shall ever dwell in the Shadow. Final standings are as follows:

#21 Corsairs - 1717  
 #25 Easterlings - 1350  
 #24 Rhudaur - 1308

Top Free People: #6 Northern Gondor - 1050

### Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Úrzahil/Dark Lieutenants: 179  
 Highest Net Commander Rank - Bondan/Arthedain: 128  
 Highest Net Agent Rank - Khamûl/Dragon Lord: 106  
 Highest Net Emissary Rank - Gazelle/Rhudaur: 102  
 Highest Net Mage Rank - Úrzahil/Dark Lieutenants: 143  
 Most Mithril - Dwarves: 1686  
 Most Artifacts - Noldo Elves: 17  
 Most Kills - Dragon Lord: 14

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

### Game #140 - The Free Peoples: #7, #23 & #10

Dawn breaks over Middle-earth in the glorious afterglow of victory. Led by the stalwart South Gondorians, the battles fought by the Free struck true and have ushered in a age. Sauron is broken and his taint is banished. Long live those blessed by the Light! Final standings are as follows:

#7 Southern Gondor - 2167  
 #23 Dunlendings - 1633  
 #10 Noldo Elves - 1500

Top Dark Servant: #19 Long Rider - 733

### Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves: 170  
 Highest Net Commander Rank - Ashdurbuk Zaig/Witch-king: 114  
 Highest Net Agent Rank - Gontran/Cloud Lord Volog/Long Rider: 102  
 Highest Net Emissary Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves: 82  
 Highest Net Mage Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves: 124  
 Most Mithril - Dunlendings: 1836  
 Most Artifacts - Noldo Elves: 16  
 Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 11

Congratulations to the Free Peoples!