

WHISPERS OF THE WOOD



FAN SYSTEMS

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WORDS FROM THE WOOD

Welcome, everyone, to our special anniversary issue! For those of you who were not with us last month, we have a special treat for all of our readers. Just what is this, you ask? Well, it's the introduction of GSI's new mascot and marketing coup, Ollie the Orc! That's right, good ol' Ollie is a cute, curmudgeonly cuss who will snuggle with your child and then bite his ear off! He'll sit right along with the child's other toys from other companies and then, in the dark of night, he'll bludgeon them into submission! We even have a theme song for the lovable lunk. It goes something like this: O-L-L--Elephants love him--just like your kids! I-E-T--Teerific only begins to describe him! H-E-O-R-C!! We hope you'll come to love Ollie like we do (and we hope you will remember him around the holidays!) and take him into your home and your heart.

OLLIE



And remember--this is the only place where you can get licensed Ollie the Orc merchandise <gr>. Anything else you see out there is bootleg contraband, so report any suspicious characters. Ollie would!

O.K., folks, you asked for it, we finally got it. Beginning May 1st, GSI will be able to email ME-PBM turn results to those of you who are on-line!! That's right, we will be able to send your turn results through the NET! No more waiting for the post-person. No more "Snail Mail" delays. You get your results right on your (electronic) doorstep. In order to make ME-PBM turn results available to players via email, GSI can now produce a PDF file that is 'readable' using **ADOBE™ Acrobat™ Reader**. The PDF file will contain both the text and the graphics inherent in our ME-PBM turn results, including the character sketches and the maps! **ADOBE Acrobat Reader (v1.0 or v2.0)** is available (for **FREE!**) for use on many different computer platforms (Macintosh &

Unix, v1.0 for DOS & v2.0 for Windows) and will allow the receiver of the PDF file to view and print the file contents. System requirements for the ADOBE Acrobat Reader are listed below:

Macintosh:

- 68020 or greater Mac CPU
- MacOS 7.0 or greater
- 2 MB application RAM
- 1.5 MB hard disk space

Windows:

- 386 or 486 PC (486 recommended)
- Microsoft Windows 3.1 or greater
- 4 MB application Ram
- 2 MB hard disk space

DOS:

- 386 or 486-based PC (486 recommended)
- DOS 3.3 or greater
- 2 MB application Ram (4 MB recommended)
- 5 MB hard disk space

UNIX:

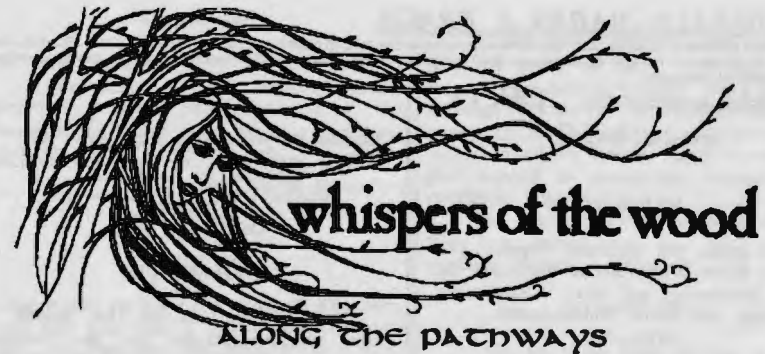
- no minimum requirements known

If the receiver of the email file does not have any of the above systems, yet is able to print a Postscript file, GSI can send a Postscript version of our turn results (instead of the PDF file). The receiver may not be able to 'view' the results, but they should be able to at least 'print' them.

The ADOBE Acrobat Reader is available (via download) directly from the ADOBE BBS @ 206-623-6984. Questions regarding the use of the ADOBE Acrobat Reader should be directed to: (voice) 206-628-2757, (fax) 206-628-5737, or on CompuServe (GO ADOBE). Ordering information for any of the ADOBE Acrobat Pro 2.0 products (Distiller, Exchange, Reader) should be directed to: 800-628-2320. Please remember, however, that we will not be offering this service until May 1st!! We will be happy to answer any questions (maybe run few tests.....) regarding the service but we will not be able to begin sending turns via email it until May 1st. Contact our office if you have any questions!

Now that have the email service will be available soon, GSI will also now be able to start some new games with a one-week turn around!!! Those of you with an all email and/or all fax team (that's right -- we can now support all fax games too!) should

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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.

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This Month's Cover: "After the Hunt" by John Kisse
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PERSONALS: BARBS & BRAGS

Every current GSI player is entitled to a free 60 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 (61-100 is \$2.00 etc.). GSI reserves the right to edit or refuse material deemed unsuitable.

Middle-earth™ PBM circa 1650

GAME 81

Concede, you impotent Freeps. The east has fallen, Mirkwood is ours, and the Misty Mountains are next. Crawl into your ships and leave Middle-earth!

Akhórahil

GAME 94

News excerpts from "The Light Side": Elrond reports Dendra Dwar's breakout army with Lamthanc sent back home singing "Dead Puppies Aren't Much Fun!" Greymist reports Jf Indúr and company backed around corner into a rogue company of his and left to a much better place.

The Long Rider has upped his kill total by one, but aren't the Easterlings his ally? OOPS!

Wanted ads posted in Mirkwood for werewolf--Dead Only! Reward see Noldo. The Naugrim report armies on the move. "They build them up and we knock them down."

This has been "The Light Side" of the news.

Radagasto reporting

Úvatha, mon ami, I do not know where you get your hope, but you should consult with your brothers. . . . As I have told you before, there is more than one way to skin a cat. . . . I must admit, you have been able to send more armies out of Mordor than we expected, but were it not for your dragons, they would not have gone very far.

Urzahil, do you have a major town left Nice little fight we had, I'm looking forward to our next.

Eoder
Overlord of Rhûn

GAME 100

As we conclude our 18th month, I bid congratulations to my allies Arthedain, the Dwarves and the Sinda, who have each helped keep the Éothraim alive and kicking, and punching, and clawing, etc. And to the last of the DS we of the Free coalition cordially invite you to DROP DEAD! Enough already! Soon there will be nowhere that we don't see. Your only success has been finding rocks large enough for you to hide under, until now. Soon we will have all 3 remaining Rings of Power and the One will not be far behind.

Uirdiks
The Éothraim Mage

GAME 103

In a Tent outside Dol Amroth
The medium began reading the general's fortune.

"The past . . . Ten of Swords. You fought a great battle with little risk?"

"Linhir city . . . burned it," explained Shogmog.

Another card flipped. "The present: You are attacking Dol Amroth. You are opposed by the Prince and The Fool."

He smiled. "Celdrahil."

"The future," a card turned to reveal the Ace of Swords. "You will soon come into the possession of a valuable dagger."

"That's bizarre! That's my future?"

"Apparently." She began stealthily easing a bejeweled Noldo dagger from its sheath. "I don't understand it either."

Rhys (18)

GAME 105

To General Lozol,

Welcome to the Dragon Lord's personal service entourage. Serve his minions well, like your kinsman Baranor, and you will be allowed to live. . .

Raugwath, for Khamûl,
Master of Moria and Mirkwood,
Second of the Nine

GAME 109

Long Rider? Or just Long Winded? You hide well and bite like a marsh mosquito. We have the ring and you should know this, unless you ignore rumors. I am taking another of your capitals. Shall we continue to play hide and seek or would you like to meet and have it out?

Your Good Enemy,
Uirdiks
First Marshall of the Mark

GAME 116

Talk is cheap!!! This war rages on and we will not quit until victory is ours. Sure we have lost some leaders, it's called the fortunes of war. You have also lost some which you don't mention. To refresh your memory, look at the town square of Shrel-Kain, where Dendra Dwar was slain by Arfanhil!! Look at the ruins of Mt. Gundabad, find the body of Angulion, assassinated by Dwarven agents!! Let me stop before I begin to talk too much, for we all know that "talk is cheap!"

Till the bitter end or an enlightened beginning,
Arfanhil

GAME 119

Khamûl was as mere lackey, and no great loss to the mighty Long Rider empire. Look for the One Ring all you want . . . Don't think Din Ohtar will let it fall into the Crack of Doom!

Lest anyone should think something loopy is going on here, I would like to inform my fellow players that the odd message in March (the second one) was supposed to be for Game 112, in which I played Northern Gondor as a stand-by. I just wanted to avoid any (unnecessary) confusion. Thank you.

The person playing the Northmen We now return you to the mindless mayhem already in progress.

GAME 122

"Do not weep, babe, for war is kind."

Grakius

GAME 125 CONTEST OF CHAMPIONS

Back for a second try at Morannon, eh Freep's? Noldo and Dwarves were crushed. The same shall be for Arthedain and Sinda. My brother the Dog Lord shall survive this latest attack.

Zarendarger (15)

GAME 128

To the Quiet Avenger--

Listen. What is that sound? It is the castle at Lugarlûr crumbling from the assault by dozens of war machines, newly built from sturdy northern timber shipped from Rhudaur, just to entertain you! Where next?

Angamaitë

GAME 132

Free People,

You boasted, bellowed, claimed that we were a bunch of incompetent fools. Well, it is turn 21, and we are still alive and kicking. We are outnumbered 2 to 1 and still we stand . . . Who is the numskull?

Khamûl
Alive and Taunting

GAME 141

Dear Gondors (Generic Opening Due to Confusion On Who Is Really In Charge)

Your friends and you both must feel pretty good about yourselves. You have taken my capital and stolen my gold, and even killed Commander Hooker (we still mourn her loss).

Well don't . . . There is a cold wind blowing and it's blowing your way and it's blowing your way HARD!!!

(16) The Berserker

In the beginning a fragile peace existed in the Northwest. A land shared by many nations, sundered Arnor (now known as Arthedain, Cardolan and Rhudaur), the Noldo and the Dwarves, and to the north, brooding in frozen Angmar, dwelt the foul Witch-king.

Into this peace did war intrude as first the men of Rhudaur shattered themselves upon mighty Angmar and were in turn consumed. Then did the great Alliance of men, elves and dwarves assault Angmar as the Noldo, Arthedain, Cardolan, Dwarves and Woodmen threw themselves into the fray. Cardolan and the Woodmen have died.

WHO'S NEXT?

Doombringer (11)
Lord of the North

GAME 142

Lackey: "Excellent news, Master!"

Overlord: "It had better be . . .!"

Lackey: "Um. . . Err. . . right. First, the hated Elrond was publicly gutted by Shabla the Slow of Harad."

Overlord: "That ought to teach those sneaky fairies a lesson. Send Shabla a wagon load of beer for her efforts."

Lackey: "Of course, sire. Second, we have procured the ring NENYA from the most icky Galadriel."

Overlord: "And it fits, too! I wonder if Sauron will let me be a Nazgûl too?"

Lackey: "After all you've done, sire, I'm sure his answer will be yes."

GAME 148

When old friends get together all else pales to insignificance.

War, Carnage, Famine, Pestilence and Death

More than 6000 Freeps hit the beach at Osgiliath. Surprise takes them to Minas Ithil. Then, surrounded, out of supply, outnumbered, out dragoned, out magicked and out agented, they lose their entire army and over half of their characters. Better luck next time, guys.

Corsair Sea King:

Where are your ships?

GAME 151

Kadida,

My brother, you shall be avenged! They will pay, they will pay! South Clowndor, Wood Wimps, Sindumb and Noldumb. We will take your capitals one at a time. After we do this, be men and drop.
Selur Rodrom

To the Nations of Middle-earth/From the Proud Peoples of the Éothraim:

Victory over the forces of Darkness is at hand! Many thanks to the Free Peoples for the troop and monetary support that has enabled us to capture or destroy over 9 major towns, including at least 6 capitals.

To the neutrals who jumped on the superior side, but have not captured a single enemy pop center, a curse of gout on your leaders as they grow fat on the toils of our brave horsemen!

Finally, to Selur Rodrom, whom our scribes have translated as "an odorous, sharp and biting wind which irritates, but accomplishes little," a pox on your assassins--their end draws near!

GAME 154

A Short Winter

"AAAAACCKKKK!" gagged the Nazgûl.

"That stupid groundhog did what?"

"Saw his shadow, O Great One."

The Nazgûl seized his placid servant and began shaking him. "You don't understand!" screeched the wraith. "We can't take another few weeks of winter! The treasury is dry! My agents are reduced to stealing piggy banks from Eothraim children!"

The servant paled in horror. "Eothraim children? But they . . ."

"I know that! Now kidnap that stupid groundhog and grill him! I don't care what it takes, just get a notarized statement from him saying he didn't see his shadow! Understand?"

Rhys (15)

GAME 155

Western Union Telegraph

To: Gothmog and Úrzahil

You came ripping through my territory, you and Úrzahil. But you forgot one thing when you came through.

To finish the job, I hope the dwarves in the Iron Hills teach you a lesson, because the history lesson is not over!

General Durobag

GAME 157

An Ode to the Center.

Whichever the game, the script's still the same! The east bank of Anduin tells much for the game!

From Minas Ithil to Calmiries, Tir Ethraid to Donlostir, straight battle's the game!

In 157, close battles raged from turn two through turn twenty. North Gondor just FOUGHT!

For 19 straight turns, battles were fought. When battles lulled, agents left our commands sans command and gold left--near naught!

Over 49273 Evil troops marched to battle North Gondor's militia and troops--45,873 were planted!

Tarondor won 16 straight battles, two challenges, two agents offered and four commanders taken--Still they took him for granted!

The end showed a "WIN" but others who marched far to war stood well above Gondor in final score;

Sinda Elves, the Greenwood freed soon on, rushed to our aid in darkest times stood first, earned well in WAR!

The QA dropped soonest to hold onto second, staying far south, while "sniping" quite well--Gondor was turns behind before we could harm him!

When at last, Dark's agents went silent and still, few remained to stop the tide--

North Gondor was again at sea AND in the heart of Mordor--

In letters large and clear was writ--
"To stay is to perish as had Fire King, Ice King, Dark Lieutenants, and the Dun, As Rhudaur and Harad, and Dog Lord WHO FOUGHT hard and long, but alone:

And Cloud Lord and Long Rider, whose hearts simply failed. Join, then, your Easterling Friend in flight!

Tomorrow starts the next fight!
Soon foe will be friend, but cheering for Dark--Middle-earth watch hard--Grey Beard's at large!

GAME 158

Again, someone has put words in my mouth.

Tarondor, Celdrahil, and Bain, your little incursion in Mordor will not be permitted to continue.

UIF, I heard a lot of good things said of you, I look forward to facing you on the field of battle.

To all the Free Peoples: Know that having the troika will bring your doom.

Hoarmûrath
the True Ice King

GAME 159

King Thranduil:

I'm shutting down your cookie operation. You're giving Lamthanc an upset stomach--it seems he can't decide which tastes better: the cookies or your troops.

Cookie Monster (18)

As the thousands of troll tourists are shown through the Sinda and Dwarf camps, towns and cities, they are reminded by Hoarmûrath's tour guides to thank the Gondors. For without their gold, none of this would be possible.

Ice King

Give up evils. You have lost your chance. By not supporting the Witch-king and Rhudaur, you allowed the Free People to eliminate a two front war. Now the tide rolls back to Mordor since the Arthedain, Cardolan, Noldo, Dwarves, Woodmen and Duns can give you their undivided attention.

North Gondor out? Too bad, but he did his duty and he will be avenged.

Yes, Scorba, orcs are very tasty.

GAME 161

Dispatch from Lord Grasty:

"Boss--Crushed Blinder's 800 footmen and captured Barad Harn as ordered. Huge Noldo navy now in harbor! (Lord Elladan commanding.) Orders?"
Reply:

"Use all means possible to hold out--cavalry arriving soon! Cloudy"

GAME 164

Dear White Council,

Having fought the good fight the time has come to sail west, leaving Middle-earth behind. We joined too late! Live long--prosper well--fight on--die bold!!

Thranduil

P.S. These PUTZES can be beat! VICTORY!

GAME 165

There goes another Nazgûl,
Good-bye, don't cry!

Dendra's gone, we sing this song,
Of how he now feeds the mackerel
And his head now sways

From Gondor's standard like a tassel.

The Southern Bard and
The Mordorland Headhunters

GAME 166

The Shades of Madness have been pulled down . . . FOREVER! That's right, no more Shades of Madness. Game 166 has seen the pitiful play by the self-claimed best of Middle-earth. A poor showing for any team, they allowed Minas Anor to fall on turn 10! Truthfully, the number of dead/prisoner Shade characters exceeds 50. We lost count after that. It is a good thing this was their last game; opponents should provide at least some challenge. And to the Shades I say: "You may excuse yourselves when courtesy makes its demands upon you.

Mithnyano

The Ballad of Rot N Bart

I've risen in this game today
To a tower of power beyond anyway.
To those Shades of Pitifulness
Whose play so far hasn't hurt me
For it's I who beat them with glee.
First N Yawndor who was asleep
And scorned the Game of Champions
Yet he was defeated like wet dandelions.
Now his twin S Clowndestdor
Who said I was unimportant
However he doesn't know what's in store

As his army comes down towards me.
I'll beat him and lay at his feet
The sign of my legacy:
Son . . . Quit while you're behind
Before I beat your Bee-Hind.

Rot N Bart of Rhudaur & Dun

GAME 167

Goblins make nasty smelling speed bumps for elven heavy cavalry.

The Easterlings shall rise again; next time Hoarmûrath won't be so lucky. Let's see--Witch-king gone, Dragon Lord gone, Quiet Avenger gone--who is next? Sorry Cloud Lord--it is too late to save the west part of Mordor. Harad--make up your mind soon or we'll make it for you. Soon the armies of Light will rush in like a flood and all the agents, dragons and gold stolen won't make a difference. Nazgûl fingers aren't enough to plug the holes in Mordor's walls. It is time to go orc hunting. Safari to Mordor planned in the spring.

GAME 168

Hail Gondor!

Your ships are shattered and scattered. Your armies are routed and flee. Your heroes lie dead by our hand; and your cities welcome the Black Banner of the Havens.

I have returned!

The Pirate King
Dol Amroth 4-1-1651

GAME 172

A new South Gondor with a few new results. Except this one attacked but soon saw his folly as his commanders fell like flies to the expert Cloud Lord and Long Rider assassins. Run and hide, Freeps, because we come for you and it will be ugly. It will take more than a few armies to defeat us and our minions, you cowardly scum. Just ask the Northmen, Eothraim, Cardolan, Sinda Elves and the

Woodmen. Oh, you can't, can you? They're all dead now. Time to finish off these so called mortal and elven scum.

The Cloud Lord

I, Ren the Unclean, have closed the door into Mordor (the west door, at least). The time is soon at hand when I will sun in Minas Anor.

GAME 173

Winter ends, Spring comes, and the final battles are about to be fought. Driving the Dark Forces from Middle-earth. Gone are the Witch-king, Dragon Lord, Dog Lord, Fire King, Dark Lieutenants, Cloud Lord, Haradwaith. Dropped are the Easterlings and the Corsairs (may a fellow player lost to cancer be remembered). Duns and Rhudaur join the Free Peoples. Ice King and Long Rider are questionable. The Blind Sorcerer remains as the last powerful foe to be vanquished.

Be forewarned, Dark Foes, you shall not last till Summer. Dragons, curses, nor hiding shall save you from the combined attack coming your way. Already armies of four Free Peoples march unopposed inside Mordor.

The Free Peoples

GAME 176

The war rages on!!! Rhudaur goes evil and pays the price. The hillmen have been seen heading south to a "promised land" within Mordor. A message from Mûrazôr to Broggha was intercepted by Sinda agents and it stated "It won't be long, see you in Mordor! Thanks for the 'one turn' breather, it really didn't help."

Mirkwood has already been cleared save for Mt. Gundabad which shall soon fall as well. The Iron Hills have been a dwarven safe haven for some time and the Northmen lazily tan themselves on the beaches of Rhûn while their armies dominate the area and ride into eastern Mordor at will.

The plains of Rhovanion are still contested by the respectable Dendra Dwar and sly Gothmog. But the Dog Lord armies are no more and Gothmog's army runs to survive. The mighty Eothraim have already invaded Mordor and still control Rhovanion.

The western door of Mordor is controlled by King Tarondor after the death of Ten the Unclean and the fall of Barad Ungol. The servants of Sauron tremble at the might of Gondor, as they ask themselves "How can we stop them?"

The Morannon has been shut and no forces of Sauron can venture forth, or dare not venture forth!!!

The tide will not turn in Sauron's favor this time. The Free Peoples will show the Dark Servants the way of the Light, even if we must use the torch!

Terribly yours,
"The Big T"

GAME 177

The pitiful Dwarven army near Londaroth shall soon be destroyed. Look to Moria.. It shall soon fall.

Hoarmûrath
The Ice King

The south follows Sauron. Frees, your time has passed. Live in fear.

GAME 178

Another road bump. Wonder who I killed this time? Mûrazôr, you have something here. Just keep sending small armies at me, now there's a nice Nazgûl. Oh, I see Dancu is not with the program.

Zarendarger (4)

GAME 180

Rhudaaur,

Perhaps the battle of Caras Fornen will remind you that it is not too late to turn from this course.

GAME 181

The Shah of Harondor is prepared. Who stands with me? Which banners will fly next to mine in alliance, and which will be trampled beneath the feet of my Mûmaks?

Carlton
Shah of Harondor

GAME 182

Attention--Free Peoples:

Please contact Cardolan ASAP. I am conducting a survey to find out which FPs are still in the mix. Include info on current situation.

GAME 184

Drums echo through the night and the air hangs heavy with the smell of smoke and rotting corpses. Children cry over the slain bodies of their fathers while their mothers wished their husbands weren't stationed so far away.

Mahrcared to the Easterling mayor: "1500 brave souls lost, and for what? Your leaders are fools for not joining us in purging the evil. Make sure each and every one receives a decent burial."

"Sire, thank you for your concern for our brave warriors."

"Warriors?! Burn the bodies of those drunken tramps. Bury the horses, you damn fool!"

High Plains Drifter

Ovatha II,

You have begun a war that will never win. While Dilgul may have fallen to your greasy Easterling hordes, I know that your losses were severe. Already Nazrog has passed into the great void, wallowing like a stuck pig in his own blood, while his army fled in terror.

Make no mistakes. I am coming for you, Ovatha II of the Easterlings. Rest while you can.

Eoder
Iron Fist of the North

GAME 185

Dear Good Guys:

Is there any of you left out there?

Please reply.

Send answers to:

Durin the Deathless
King-Under-the-Mountain
Lard of the Khazâd

GAME 186

Northern Gondor,

You will learn that the mountains of Mordor are a very, very sad and lonely place to die.

Ahkôrahil

GAME 188

Sailing on the Sea of Nurnen,

When we're in the mood--
Every hex in just one turn, an'
Twice if we've got food!

Sailing with our eyes closed,

Still we can't get lost . . .

(Excerpt from "The Blind Mage Blues")

Hey Freeps:

Where are your vaunted armies? Are they at home taking care of the women folk? Obviously, that's the only thing they're good for. You've already lost and just don't know it yet.

Jî Indûr

Royal Procurer
House of Sauron
And General Pest

GAME 190

Arfanhil gazed at the man speaking at the other end of the council table, and sighed. Long winded fool lived for council meetings. I think this, I think that. Bah! I wish he'd quit using elvish words to try to sound refined. He rolled his eyes. How many times have I told him that *Namirith* means "peanut-butter" and not "great"?

"PADDRO!" he interrupted.

"Yes?"

"Any Free armies attacking?"

"Uh, no."

"Dragons or Wizards?"

"No."

"Letters?"

"Ummmm . . ." The room gasped.

"Cardolan and Arthedain actually wrote?"

"Ummmm . . . no."

"Whew! I about had a stroke
Nothing to discuss then. Meeting
adjourned."

Selur Odlon,

Noldo Rules?

Be careful, elf, when you claim
lordship.

Free nations are not elf fiefdoms.

Neutrals serve who they want.

When you meet Sauron

We will see who rules

Sirith Gor

Here we are Turn 4 already. Dragor Lord, do you need a band aid or a casket? Witch-king, you're next! Free Peoples communicate, communicate communicate! All neutrals need to hear from everyone of us every turn! Rodron and the Woodchuck kicking butt every turn! Evils, your butts are in serious danger. Call 911 now because there is a madman walking the streets of your towns. Dwarves, Dwarves, Hello! A carc with just an address ain't gonna cut it. H Hawaiian elves.

Selur Rodrom

How strange it is that few and far between have been the Good Emissaries to the court of the Mighty Easterlings. Are the Goods so content and secure that they feel no need to seek our aid? No gifts have been offered! No messages have been sent! It would seem that they have no desire to have us as an ally! To those

two that have sent messages, we thank you for the overture. Some follow through would be nice. To those who have not, perhaps an apology and/or gifts is in order.

To the evils that have talked to us, your initial proposals are being considered. However, key nations have still not contacted us. We find this disturbing as well. Flowers are nice.

For now, we are neutral to all, with advice to any who seek our wisdom. Death to all who attack, provoke or oppose us. Hopefully soon all the nations of Middle-earth will contact us. All hail the glory of our Lords Tros Hesnef and Ovatha II.

GAME 191

The neutral nation of the Easterlings send greetings to everyone. We take our neutrality seriously and will not initiate hostilities against anyone, but will defend all of our people.

Ovatha II
Crown Prince of the
Royal Easterling Blood

To the Elves, Dwarves, Woodmen and Men of Arnor, Angmar sends greetings. You have a formidable coalition of nations--can it stand firmly together, sharing glory and defeat alike? Angmar stands ready to meet you!

Be prepared!
Mûrazôr

The Easterling Peoples will not be bullied or threatened. We will choose what side to join by the honesty of all communications.

Ovatha II
Speaker for the Royal House of the East

To the Woodmen:

You should never have left your tree houses, for you have stirred the

wrath of Angmar, and now must pay the cost! While your warriors visit Mt. Gundabad, their homes are not safe . . .

Zûlkhôra
Mûrazôr's Favorite

GAME 192

Free Peoples:

We must communicate to survive. Good can only win out if we work as a team. I can be reached at Compuserve #75562,1513 or by card.

The Northmen

GAME 193

King Argeleb II scanned his troops within Fornost Erain. He stood in front of them and said:

"With the Dûnedain blood that flows through our veins, we will restore Arnor to its former glory. Carn Dum shall be the first to feel our wrath!"

Middle-earth™ PBM
circa 2950

GAME 10

Spring is here!!!

It brings with it sorrow for the Rangers. Elladan has passed on to Ea. His mortal body slain by an unjust blow from Tormog. Tormog will get his just due! Evil pop centers flock to our banner. Their gold overfills our treasuries. And their agents are packed like sardines in our prisons. The Corsairian fleets destroyed!

Ancient Corsair brothers, join us! We are the good, our hearts can forgive! Join the tide of good and be there when Sauron is sent to the void forever!

Mowbray

GAME 24

To the pathetic "Free":

The sins of the fathers shall be visited on the sons. Then will you be free, the only freedom for you being death.

Kain

GAME 25

Hail, Fellow Rulers of Endor!

A polite warning--building population centers to my east (43/44 column, from 27 row southwards) will be considered an act hostile to Khand unless arranged with me first . . .

Ovatha IV of Khand

I found it! I found it! Oh, heck, it's just the Ring of Wind. I wonder what it's good for.

Do you know, Jf Indûr?

Elrond

The Khand Easterlings thank the many realms who have sent envoys to our realm, but do not yet choose to declare their allegiance to either side. No threats, no bribes--just as we prefer! Simple reason will decide our stance . . .

GAME 26

Alive and well in my first venture into 2950. Mirkwood is my home and all

Strategy and Tactics: The Dragon Lord

ME-PBM, c. 1650

by
Greg Reid

Ever since I was a little kid, my heart always went out to the underdog. I cheered on the adventures of Luke Skywalker and the Rebel Alliance, rooted for the United States in Olympic hockey, wished for the Cubs to win the World Series... you get the picture. As a natural offshoot of that, my heart goes out to the underdog positions in the game. And there is pretty much no greater underdog in ME-PBM, c. 1650, than the hapless Khamul, better known (in the game, at least) as the Dragon Lord.

So why does the Dragon Lord always have such problems? Let's start off with a look at how Khamul's nation compares with the others in Middle-Earth (taken from Tom Walton's "Allegiance Comparison Tables" in issue #3 of the (now-defunct) Email magazine, The Mouth of Sauron):

evil shall be vanquished. This will take time but we Elves have plenty of time.

Zarendarger (5)
So it begins, war yet again . . .

My armies issue forth, the battles have been joined, the spread of Darkness has begun. I plot not quietly but with sword, and with flame. The only light to be seen when I am done will be that from your burning populous. Watch closely, oh Leaders of the West, as Gondor is crushed before your eyes. The first step in conquest? Nay. I'm talking Genocide, and I intend to take you all to Hell with me!

Ren the Conqueror

GAME 27

Dragon Lord,
I'll be your huckleberry!
Woodmen

"Once more unto the breach!"
Grakius

	<u>Total place</u>	<u>Among Dark Servants</u>
Tax base	16th	2nd
Resource base	23rd	10th
Combat strength	tied for 17th	8th
Character points	2nd	1st
Artifacts	3rd	2nd

Overall, the Dragon Lord's production is pretty shoddy, mostly because of the developed state of most of his population centers. His only two real producers (a village and a camp) are both above the --05 range on the northern half of the map, meaning that they have lousy weather year-round. (Furthermore, he can expect to lose these almost immediately due to their extremely vulnerable state.) Total average production for the Dragon Lord that is not modified for climate (taken from "Population Center Development" by Brian Mason in issue #2 from The Mouth of Sauron) would be as follows:

leather	bronze	steel	mithril	food	timber	mounts	gold
446	425	186	15	1432	300	115	2794

Problems:

I could probably babble for days about the untenable position that the Dragon Lord is in. However, we'll stick to the basics.

-- Dragon Lord population centers are far out of reinforcement range of one another. In the Mirkwood theater (where the Dragon Lord has his armies) he only has one town and two major towns. Even in Mirkwood, intervening Free forces pretty much make it impossible for these towns to reinforce one another. Given competent play, the Dragon Lord can expect to lose Goblin-Gate within the first five turns. In addition Nahald Kudan and Lag-auris will probably be lost to rampaging Dwarves in the early game and there really isn't a thing the Dragon Lord can do about it. Even Lug Ghurzun is in danger if the Northmen and Eothraim are winning the war in the Rhovanion, or the Easterlings go Free.

-- The Dragon Lord's armies are but average in combat capability. "Well, most nations are average in combat capability," you will say. Yes, but most nations are not being faced by four other nations at game start. Two of those nations (the Dwarves and the Eothraim) are militarily superior to the Dragon Lord to such a point that either nation could probably defeat the Dragon Lord on its own. With the opposition coordinating their efforts, Khamul's demise is a near-certainty.

-- The Dragon Lord has some extremely powerful characters. Unfortunately for him, those characters are mages, which could quite possibly be the least useful character class in the game. For the most part, their characters that do have other skills are best at mage.

-- Not only is the tax base small, the resource base is also tiny. Most of the Dark Servants have a pitiful tax base, but can at least sell resources to make up their huge deficits. The Dragon Lord lacks even this option.

Your position's advantages are brief. Your mages are extremely powerful. For the most part, your character's challenge ranks are far superior to the characters of the positions around you (with the exception of Bain I, who has the Dwarven Ring of Power (curse his name)). You also have the second-highest tax base out of the Dark Servants (not that this means much). That's about it.

So, what to do?...

A Study in Desperation

The Dragon Lord has to play every turn as if it could be his last, because it very well may be. You're outnumbered and outgunned. If you become out-thought, your demise is certain. So go for the gusto, roll the dice, and take your chances. Only with a lot of luck do you have any chance with this position.

I don't like writing down turn-by-turn moves for positions, as I consider a flexible strategy with a few salient points more worthwhile. These moves are all for setting the Dragon Lord up in the early game (the first ten turns).

The Military Situation:

The first thing you do is raise your taxes to 80%--or maybe even higher. You need the cash. A lot. Your characters are expensive and you're going to be needing your treasury for camps and character generation, not to mention army maintenance. Don't worry about losing Lag-auris to the lower loyalty; it's undefendable anyway. All your other pop centers are fortified (and thus won't degrade).

Go on the offensive immediately. As soon as you get your setup in the mail write down the orders that will be necessary to cause your biggest army to issue forth from Dol Guldur. Your army at Goblin-Gate should go on the offensive as well as soon as it, too, can leave behind a recruiting army.

Recruit like crazy. 400 heavy infantry a turn at each of Goblin-Gate and Dol Guldur is a must. You're surrounded by massive armies of the Free and you'll need those troops just to contend with their starting forces. Once you get your camps set down, well-timed sells will keep you from going bankrupt. Send the recruiting armies out as soon as your slash-and-burn or threat forces get defeated in battle. If you go bankrupt, so what? Without those troops you're to go down in flaming smoke anyway.

You'll need to take some population centers. As wonderful as it would be to burn them all, doing so would just reduce the amount of time that you could fight the Free, as your treasury would run out that much sooner. However, a good rule of thumb is only take the population centers within two hexes of Dol Guldur. Any further out than that and you probably won't hold it long enough to gain any real benefit.

Threaten as much as possible. If you're lucky, when you get your setup Duran will be heading up the army at Dol Guldur and thus can lead the rampaging forces. None of your other commanders can threaten with as good a chance of success. Threatening makes sure your army remains in the field longer to harry the Free and forces them to divert efforts to chasing it down.

And along those lines... do NOT, repeat do NOT, get into a pitched battle with the Free Peoples (unless you get a dragon). Avoid their main armies like the plague. The more you fight, the more your forces die, and the less room you have to exercise your tactical genius and out-flank the Free while they're, say, marching towards Dol Guldur or off sacking Goblin-Gate. Their armies WILL be bigger than yours, and they WILL defeat you in a pitched battle. If they've split their forces, catch the smaller ones and eat them piecemeal, but still avoid their main armies if you can.

Don't worry about having sub-commanders in most of your armies. This flies in the face of conventional wisdom, but none of the Free near you have agents that can assassinate your characters, and ideally you won't encounter another army anyway. If you do RfsPers (unless Celedhring or Duran are there) and pray that an unlucky roll doesn't kill you. You can't afford to make sub-commanders and in all likelihood your commanders will be required to lead the two armies in the field and the two armies that are at home recruiting.

Targets of opportunity:

Militarily, your best short-term target is the Sinda in Lorien. His armies near Dol Guldur are pitiful and are pretty much the only forces that you can actually beat. Of course, the two cities he has near you are hidden, which will require you to have your mages learn "Reveal Population Center". This probably won't be a problem; your mages are your strongest characters. Take 2514 (you might hold it for awhile) and burn 2413 (you can't hold this; it's right in the shadow of Moria).

A Woodmen blitz is possible, but I dislike this for several reasons: Woodmen armies can beat yours in a pitched battle, attacking the Woodmen allows the Sinda to build up in a city that's two hexes from Dol Guldur, and the Woodmen is usually pretty likely to drop anyway, making a blitz unnecessary. Furthermore, if you knock out those two cities in Lorien, it's unlikely that the Sinda will take them back for a long time. On the other hand, if you give the Sinda time to recruit, they'll send armies of 5000 heavy infantry out from Caras Galadon and make you regret your mistake. Attack 2514 as soon as someone learns "Reveal Population Center".

In the initial attack, beating up on all the little pop centers around Dol Guldur is advisable until you learn Reveal Pop Center. You've got plenty of targets (such as the Northern Gondor town at 2617). Take this stuff and keep it, ideally by threat; you'll have plenty of targets to burn later. The choice of targets for your Goblin-Gate army is a little more difficult. If you really feel the need to smash the Sinda hard, striking at Caras Galadon is probably a good idea, although you'll need to do some fancy footwork to avoid being caught by the Dwarves marching to Goblin-Gate. Otherwise, you could go to Rivendell and capture it. Stay there and recruit. Force the Dwarven main army to come after you. It'll slow down the attack on Dol Guldur for quite a bit. (Of course, this move is only feasible if Rhudaur is neutral or evil.)

Building Productive and Powerful Middle-earth Characters

by
Jeffrey L. Zaugg

Introduction

A key to successful play in Middle-Earth PBM games is the development of powerful player characters. Many positions in the game begin with powerful characters or characters with the potential to become powerful, and many positions have weak characters with the potential to become dead. For those nations with weak characters or those nations who had the misfortune to get their strong characters killed, here are some insights and possible strategies to build productive and powerful characters.

Productivity

The productivity of a nation's characters depend on how many orders and how well they can execute them. The efficiency and productivity of characters are often related to the number of skills and their level of development. Multi-class characters have the potential to improve your nation's productivity, but without proper planning they may become ineffective. When creating new characters, it is important to assess their potential and plan their development.

Single Class Characters

One advantage of a single class character is that they can develop rapidly, since they can concentrate all their energies on one specific skill. This can be beneficial at the beginning of the game, when the acquisition of higher skill ranks can help to insure the success of crucial orders. They are also good to have around to give those miscellaneous orders that crop up from time to time while running a nation. However, a drawback to the single class characters that they are limited to only one skill order, which often throughout the game cannot be used due to the lack of some prerequisite. Often these characters end up issuing meaningless miscellaneous orders for this same reason.

Double Class Characters

Double class characters generally are slower to develop higher skill ranks. However they can develop as rapidly as single class characters depending upon their skills and wise management. They are more productive than single class characters in that they may give two separate skill orders, thus maximizing their potential. This type of character often works well in a company.

Triple Class Characters

Triple class characters are next slowest at developing their skills. Since there are only two orders available per turn, you must choose which two skills to develop each turn. This may cause the character to have one high skill with two mediocre ones. However, there are possible ways to develop the third skill indirectly, increasing the character's potential. This type of character can prove to be quite versatile with the proper training.

Quadruple Class Characters

If chance has it that the GSI computers smile upon you, and you obtain a quadruple class character, you have obtained an invaluable resource. However, quadruple class characters are the slowest and most difficult to develop due to the multitude of possible orders they may perform. They usually become the best at one or two skills and mediocre in the rest. They are on the other end of the spectrum from the single class character in that they may issue productive orders anytime.

Skill Classes

Command

The command skill is one of the more important skills, even if you are operating as a character nation instead of a military one. The command skill is required to perform most of the nation orders (at least the important ones), military operations, and control of companies. Without characters with command skill, it is difficult to remain in the game. For these reasons it is important to have a surplus of command skill within your nation. The command skill works well for single class characters, but limits their overall productivity. Double class characters with command as one of their skills work well for company commanders or backup commanders in an army. This gives them the opportunity to use a second skill within the company or army. I also consider command skill to be the perfect third skill class for a triple class character, since it can be improved indirectly when the character is in an army with a commander training it.

Agent

The agent skill is probably the most versatile skill available in the game. It can be easily developed due to the few prerequisites required for most of its orders. It works well as a major skill for double and triple class characters. Characters with agent skill are probably the most effective tool for instilling fear into your opponents, more than any other character skill in the game.

Emissary

Emissary skill is the most important skill in the game when it comes to your nation's economy. It also plays a small part in your nation's espionage efforts. Single class characters with emissary skill are effective in developing your nation early in the game, but their small number of miscellaneous orders reduces their effectiveness later on. Emissary skill works well as one of the major skills of a multi-class character.

Mage

Mage skill is probably one of the harder skills to develop due to the character's need to be at one of your nation's population centers, but it can be one of the most beneficial. Through mage skill, hidden information is obtained, military operations are supported, and fear instilled in your opponents. Mage skill is probably the only skill that is highly productive for a single class character, since it can give two skill orders per turn as opposed to only one for the other individual skills. Characters with mage skill may also do well as multi-class characters, but they take even longer to develop than other multi-class characters with the same number of skills. This is due to their need to research spells.

Development Strategies

It should be understood that strategies vary from game to game, player to player, and nation to nation. There are as many different strategies as there are players in the game, and very seldom does your nation face the same situation twice. The following are some strategies, which may or may not fit into your current style of play, but can be used to develop your characters' full potential.

Companies

The use of companies can be an effective and productive way to develop your characters' skill ranks, especially those with emissary or agent skills. Companies with characters having agent and/or emissary skills, can be used effectively to guard, influence and upgrade your own population centers (defensive companies), but when the skills of those characters improve they can be moved into companies to perform agent and emissary orders against other nations (offensive companies). These companies are even more effective when the commander for the company has a secondary skill associated with its purpose. Using multiple companies, characters can be moved from defensive companies to offensive companies as their skills develop. Another strategy is to develop multi-functional companies, such as emissary/agent or agent/curse companies, to further increase those character's abilities to inflict damage on the enemy. These companies can use all character classes, but double class characters are the most efficiently used in them. Companies may also be used as a way to protect mages as they research and develop their skills. There is always the possibility of placing these developing mages in a defensive company.

Armies

Armies are the only place where command skill improves. The good thing about this is that a character with the army does not necessarily have to issue a command order for their skill to improve. Since the commander of the army trains it, any other character with command skill receives some benefits. This makes a perfect training ground for the triple class characters with command skill who can receive the indirect improvement of their command skill while developing their other two skills. It is also a good place to develop double and single class characters, since they can issue command orders and increase the rate of their improvement. Emissary and mage skill do not usually develop well in an army, unless the army is stationary for long periods of time to allow for influencing of population centers or prentice magery. However, in combat, mage skill can prove to be an invaluable resource to any army, if the proper spells are known.

Conclusion

To develop characters to their full potential, there is a need to exercise patience. Throughout the game, there are countless times when advantages may be gained by using one or more of a developing character's skills. In this way many multi-class characters never grow to their full potential, since they were required to perform their duty and never returned to their training. Then when the time came to try to develop their skills, they were too valuable performing their first skill. With the proper planning, character's skills can improve together, making them more productive and a greater asset to your nation. I realize that opponents and strategies vary from game to game, and that some of the ideas that have been presented may not work in every situation, but that is what creates the challenge. Good Gaming.

GSI NEW GAME POLICIES

Many players have inquired about what considerations go into our position placement when setting up a new ME-PBM game. This question defies a simple answer and brings into focus several important, related issues. We'll discuss all these issues in an attempt to clarify our policies and procedures and, hopefully, to help you or your team in making the right choices.

We start many different types of ME-PBM games: single-player games, multi-player (or team) games, and grudge games. Single player and grudge games are available in either two or three week turn-arounds. We'll explain what the criteria is for each.

Generally, a single-player game will consist of players joining by themselves. In some cases we'll permit two players to join together in such games, but we usually separate these players geographically (or by allegiance) so that the potential cooperative advantage is minimized. Furthermore, one of the two players is usually new to ME-PBM. In rare cases, we might permit three players to join together, but only if each plays a nation with a different allegiance.

A multi-player game will consist of players joining in teams of three to five (i.e. teams of 3,3,4=10, 5,5=10, etc). In some instances we might place a single player, or a two-player team, in such games in order to balance out the ten nations for each side (i.e. teams of 3,3,3,1=10, 4,4,2=10, 5,4,1=10, etc). In such cases, those players are usually more experienced players and/or previous game winners. The reason for the five-player limit is to ensure that no 'team' on one side is able to dominate simply because of its size. Teams of six to nine may split into separate games or they may split into separate teams on separate sides of the same game, but they may not play in the same game/side.

A grudge-game will consist of ten players, joining as a team, facing a similar ten-player team. Positions can be pre-selected by the team. In rare cases, and only in grudge-games, we might allow one player to play two positions in order to complete the ten-player team. GSI takes care of securing the necessary five Neutral positions.

Our primary concern with regard to new games is ensuring, to the best of our ability, that each game starts fairly for ALL players in the game. We recognize that we can not always do this because we do not know the exact strengths and abilities of each player, nor (in 'team-type' games) do we know what the player interactions will be like.

However, there are some things that we can do to ensure that abuses do not occur. In the two team-type games there is considerable attention paid to the Neutral positions. It is important to avoid allowing one 'team' to insert a 'ringer' into the game. It's for this reason that we're reluctant to discuss how soon a pending game will start. Thus, if we seem reticent to reveal how soon your game will start, it is not because we don't want to tell you, it's just that we feel that protecting the integrity of the game is of primary importance.

Furthermore, how much should GSI do to ensure that a Neutral is neutral? What should we expect from a player that requests to play five Evil positions and/or a Neutral? or vice versa? Is that player really neutral? Because Neutrals are supposed to be neutral multi-player game position requests may NOT include Neutral positions, only positions on

one side or the other. Furthermore, we do not permit teams of Neutrals in excess of size two. This is to ensure that even if some Neutral team has made up its mind ahead of time which side it would join, the remaining (majority) Neutrals are available to be persuaded to balance the allegiances. Generally, if two Neutrals do join together, they will not be assigned geographically contiguous nations.

Many players ask whether or not it is fair to put new players in games with experienced players. ME-PBM is somewhat unique with regards to its 'team' focus, even in single-player games. This means that it is beneficial for your 'side' to do well first (else your side can not win) and your 'nation' second (so your nation can win). This means that it is usually beneficial for 'veterans' to help out those that are new so that their side will do well. Granted, veterans will not give away all their hard-earned secrets, but then again some secrets should be 'earned'.

The net result of this benefit is a tendency toward faster learning times for most new players, as opposed to playing with other 'rookies' where most would be destined to make the same mistakes and learn everything the hard way. Thus, GSI generally tries to place a comparable number of veterans and rookies in games where this is a concern.

So, how can you (or your team) get started the best?. Although GSI can not guarantee any position requests except those accompanied by 'Game Winner Certificates', several factors will contribute to both a fast start as well as receiving positions that you prefer to play.

1) Please provide (at least) 4-6 position requests. We will do our best to satisfy as many of the first choices for each player as possible. These can also be in the form of 'negative' requests (i.e. not to play certain positions). Furthermore, if you would like to try either allegiance (usually leading to a faster start), then give choices on each side. If you would prefer a Neutral (they seem to start fastest!), then indicate your preferences among those five.

2) Teams should send in all their new game requests together. This avoids having one slow player delay the entire team's new game. As above, if your team will play either side, provide preferences for both allegiances (but no Neutrals).

3) Grudge-game teams should be very sure that they will get along throughout the whole game. More than one grudge game has ended because one team 'broke up' as opposed to being defeated 'fair and square'.

4) Many teams would like to hedge their chances of victory by selecting 'blocks' of positions that share some fundamental advantage (usually geographic proximity, but could be other factors). This would probably be a fun game for them if they could get those positions, but it would not be fun for the others in the game. Therefore, to ensure that ALL players start with as fair a chance as possible, GSI can not honor such blocks of position requests. Simply list the preferences for each team member, independent of what positions the others receive.

5) In order to minimize the time it takes to start new games, GSI can not guarantee (although you may request) specific 'due dates' for new games. Additionally, GSI can not allow a player to 'wait until a position becomes available'. If no alternate positions are specified, then the player risks receiving a position that is not to their liking.

6) Although 'Game Winner Certificates' do permit selection of particular positions, if used to join with a team, be aware that the usual restrictions still apply with regard to the composition of the team positions.

GSI appreciates the needs and desires that are associated with new games. We would like every player to receive just the position they want and for every game to be perfectly balanced. However, we know that is not possible. Remember, the primary concern on the part of GSI with regard to new games is that we want to ensure, to the best of our ability, that each game starts fair for ALL players in the game and that the wait for game start be minimal. This often means that we are forced to implement policies that limit the flexibility for individual players in exchange for maximizing the potential for ALL players.

Enjoy your gaming!!
GSI

Middle-earth PBM 'End Games'
The Strategy of Winning or Stalling when the end is Near
by
Christopher Dexter

An 'End Game' is usually identified as the part of any game where there is usually an indication that a player or side of players has an advantage and where the choices become more limited. Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines 'end-game' as, "...the stage of a...game after major reduction of forces; also: the final stages of some action." (Tenth Edition, p. 381.) In the February issue of "Whispers of the Wood", G.S.I. indicated that concern had been expressed about games that were too lengthy. After reviewing the issue, G.S.I. claims that some of the long games are due to "stalling", or when "players are not actively trying to win the game." (Whispers, February 1, 1995, p. 7) I currently play in one of these lengthy games (currently 87 turns at this writing), and I wouldn't consider any of us to be "not actively trying to win the game." Perhaps some players out there do not have any idea how to handle an 'End Game'.

When opposing sides in a game of Middle-earth PBM play well enough to avoid a quick win or loss early in the game, they arrive at the point where only the better players are left. Though one side may have an advantage, the two sides are still even enough to prevent a speedy win. The advantage may shift back and forth between Free Peoples and Dark Servants as each tries to capitalize on the mistakes or misfortunes of the other. If neither side develops a proper strategy to eliminate the enemy, then the game could drag on indefinitely. Of course, there is always the option of finding the ONE RING and casting it into the midst of hex 3423, but if the searching Mages keep coming up empty-handed then some of the following strategies may help.

Search Out The Enemy Capitals and Major Towns

Yes, this was mentioned in the February '95 issue of Whispers and I will not repeat the wisdom it shared, but I wanted to make an observation concerning what it had to say. Toward the end of the fifth paragraph of the half page article the writer penned the following, "... since the loss of a nation's capital, even only once or twice, ... frequently is

enough to cause the loyalty to drop so low across the board that the nation finds that continuing is nearly impossible." (Whispers, February 1, 1995, p. 7) My observation is that the above situation can be dealt with. In the aforementioned game in its 87th+ turn, I and my fellow teammates have lost our capitals several times, definitely more than once or twice, and we still survive! How? In an article that I had previously published in Whispers entitled, "Companies", I suggested an Emissary company of nine emissaries who pump up the loyalties of pop-centers. Early in the game I put this company together and had them pump up loyalty on pop-centers that were getting low on loyalty. I keep doing this in addition to improving the size of my pop-centers and have always had backup capitals with sufficient loyalty to keep me in the game.

To remove a player who may be doing the same things to keep him or herself in the game, their capital and major towns must all be taken to force their elimination. As many members of the same allegiance as possible must participate to be effective. Ordinary 'one on one' invasions may work, but often do not. Hit the nation in force until no other Capital or Major Town can be located and/or it is learned that their nation has collapsed.

Hunt Them Down and Kill Them

Keep a list of enemy character names that do the worst damage to your side. Develop a Curse Squad with your best Mages and the appropriate artifact(s) that grant access to the Spirit Mastery spell list. Have Mages cast the Locate Character/Artifact True spells on the enemy character your allegiance feels should be disposed of. Then send the best agents and cursing Mages to take him or her out. If this can be done on a grand scale, it forces the enemy to keep each character moving to avoid being assassinated or cursed. In other words, they either die or start running. That puts them on the defensive and hopefully is a start to turn the tables on the enemy.

Stalling until you can gain the advantage

In any game or competition, if you are the underdog, you try to get the upper-hand. If you have the upper-hand, you try to win. In the 'End Game', the main object is to play smart and hopefully smarter than your opponents, so that if and when they make a mistake, you can take advantage of it and pull ahead. So, if the going gets too tough...*play dead!* More often than not, your opponents will turn their attention to your more active teammates. Take advantage of this time to rebuild lost armies, characters, and pop-centers. Avoid conflict of every kind to give the illusion that you may be out of the game. Then, when you are ready, jump back into the fight.

The disadvantage to this strategy is that your enemies may not be fooled and waste no time in finishing you off. If this happens, take it as a loss and register in a new game of Middle-earth PBM.

(CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER)

contact GSI to see about the availability of such games. We will accept Grudge games (teams of 10, or full games of 25) for such one-week games immediately and start games as soon after May 1st as we have games ready. Those of you who do not have access to the net or a fax machine can still try the one-week games, but the US mail may make this unreliable. Just think--all the ME-PBM action in half the time!

For those of you reading Whispers of the Wood for the first time, or for those who are joining us after an absence, we hope you enjoy what you read! We are in the process of contacting players on the net who have written some very good strategy articles and stories there and we hope to use that material in future issues of Whispers. If any of you are interested in writing something for inclusion in Whispers of the Wood, we are always looking for material to use. And if we use your submission, you get some nifty stuff! If we print a strategy article you write, you will receive a free setup in a new game. Stories and poems will garner you a free turn in the game of your choice. Remember, the success of this magazine is predicated on material that you, the players, submit. So if you are a budding author, send in that material!

Finally, Middle-earth is truly gaining an international flavor. We now have companies running ME-PBM games in England, Australia, Italy and Spain. We are including the companies' addresses so that our players overseas (or their friends) can contact these companies if they so desire.

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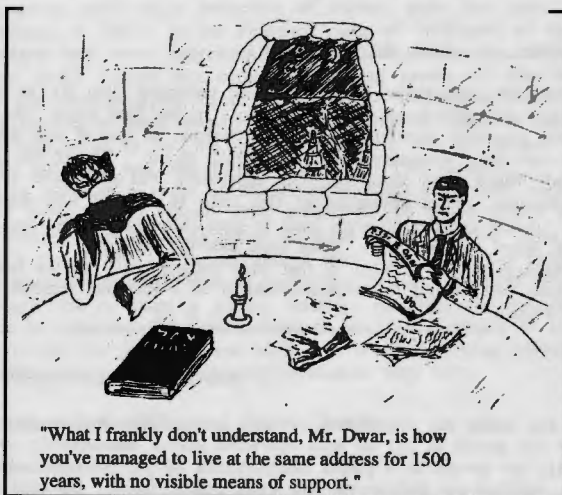
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"What I frankly don't understand, Mr. Dwarf, is how you've managed to live at the same address for 1500 years, with no visible means of support."

The Hall Of Heroes

Game #35 - The Dark Servants: #15 & #12

Naldurgarth, of the Blind Sorcerer, felt the One Ring pulsing in his hand. He was torn, torn between returning the Ring or keeping it for himself. Finally, self preservation won out and he hurled the Ring into the dark recesses of Mt. Doon, hoping his Master would remember who returned the artifact. Suddenly, there was a great roar and the mountain shook to its very core. The land for miles around trembled as great fissures divided the plains and dark thunderclouds approached. Great fires leaped from the summit, lightning crackled through the skies, and heavy rains fell. The minions of the Dark Lord cried in ecstasy as their Dark Lord began his rule in earnest. The cry was heard in the minds and hearts of all the Dark Servants. . . SAURON HAS THE ONE RING!!!!

Final standings are as follows:

#15 Blind Sorcerer - 2208
#23 Dunlendings - 1984
#12 Dragon Lord - 1917

Top Free People: #23 Dunlendings - 1984

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Gildor/Noldo Elves: 271
Highest Net Commander Rank - Araudagol/Cloud Lord: 195
Highest Net Agent Rank - Abagrut/Dragon Lord: 140
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Adunaphel/Blind Sorcerer: 125
Highest Net Mage Rank - Gildor/Noldo Elves: 176
Most Mithril - Cloud Lord: 6981
Most Artifacts - Cloud Lord: 31
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 66

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #75 - The Free Peoples: #4

The Light shines bright and the Light burns strong as the Free Peoples have brought the Light to all corners of Middle-earth, wiping out the Shadow and leading the land to a new era of Free rule. Nimrodel assures that Sauron will never again rise, as she holds the One Ring and will make the trip to Mt. Doom to see its destruction. Final standings are as follows:

#4 Arthedain - 1783
#22 Haradwaith - 2500

Top Dark Servant: #22 Haradwaith - 2500

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Nimrodel/Arthedain: 242
Highest Net Commander Rank - Mari Tarma/Arthedain Echorion/Cardolan: 150
Highest Net Agent Rank - Gorlim/Arthedain: 121
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Manari Akaji/Haradwaith: 130
Highest Net Mage Rank - Nimrodel/Arthedain: 235
Most Mithril - Cloud Lord: 500
Most Artifacts - Dog Lord: 22
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 31

Congratulations to the Free Peoples

The Hall Of Heroes

Game #114

Sauron's minions have spread throughout Middle-earth, dominating the land for their Dark Master. Under the tutelage of their most powerful leaders, the Fire King, the Blind Sorcerer and the Easterlings, the Dark Forces now spend their time turning the fair lands foul, remaking Middle-earth in their Master's image. Final standings are as follows:

#18 Fire King - 1733
#15 Blind Sorcerer - 1733
#25 Easterlings - 1709

Top Free People: #10 Noldo Elves - 858

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Akhórahil/Blind Sorcerer: 225
Highest Net Commander Rank - Pochak/Blind Sorcerer: 156
Highest Net Agent Rank - Dín Ohtar/Long Rider: 139
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Galadriel/Dark Lieutenants Ecleudra/Blind Sorcerer: 96
Highest Net Mage Rank - Akhórahil/Blind Sorcerer: 177
Most Mithril - Blind Sorcerer: 2447
Most Artifacts - Cloud Lord: 25
Most Kills - Ice King: 22

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #128 - The Free Peoples: #4, #2 & #24

Led by two nations in the West, Arthedain and Rhudaur, and one nation in the East, the Northmen, the Free Peoples squeezed the life out of the Dark Servants and ran them out of Middle-earth forever, leaving the land free of Sauron's taint. Final standings are as follows:

#4 Arthedain - 2050
#2 Northmen - 1834
#24 Rhudaur - 1833

Top Dark Servant: #17 Quiet Avenger - 1217

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Elrond/Arthedain: 224
Highest Net Commander Rank - Seammu/Rhudaur: 121
Highest Net Agent Rank - Vengeance/Rhudaur: 110
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Rigel/Rhudaur: 94
Highest Net Mage Rank - Elrond/Arthedain: 169
Most Mithril - Rhudaur: 784
Most Artifacts - Arthedain: 26
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 10

Congratulations to the Free Peoples!

The Hall Of Heroes

Game #130 - The Dark Servants: #14, #11 & #23

Sauron's mirthless laughter echoes through Middle-earth as his minions, led by the Cloud Lord, the Witch-king and the Dunlendings, bring him the heads of his enemies to hang in his trophy room. Now the land will truly know that his rule is absolute! Final standings are as follows:

#14 Cloud Lord - 1899
#11 Witch-king - 1775
#23 Dunlendings - 1717

Top Free People: #4 Arthedain - 1225

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Celedhring/Witch-king: 234
Highest Net Commander Rank - Araud&ó1/Cloud Lord: 162
Highest Net Agent Rank - Erennis/Cloud Lord: 120
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Úrzahil/Dark Lieutenants: 109
Highest Net Mage Rank - Celedhring/Witch-king: 164
Most Mithril - Arthedain: 312
Most Artifacts - Cloud Lord: 24
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 19

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

2950 Game #13 - The Dark Servants: #21 & #23

In the first game of the new era, the Dark Servants, with considerable help from the Neutrals, have crushed the Free under their steel-shod boots. Sauron's will now holds sway over Middle-earth. His Shadow blots out the Light and his Lidless Eye sees all. Final standings are as follows:

#21 Corsairs - 1817
#23 Dunlendings - 1450
#25 Easterlings - 1442

Top Free People: #10 Noldo Elves - 1100

Top Neutral: #25 Easterlings - 1442

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Galadriel/Sinda Elves: 205
Highest Net Commander Rank - Aragorn II/Dúnadan Rangers: 115
Highest Net Agent Rank - Jí Indóir/Cloud Lord: 163
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Ang&ó1ion/Witch-king: 86
Highest Net Mage Rank - Galadriel/Sinda Elves: 156
Most Mithril - Dunlendings: 169
Most Artifacts - Noldo Elves Dog Lord: 11
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 6

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!