

# WHISPERS OF THE WOOD



**GAME  
SYSTEMS  
INC.**

PO BOX 160129 Miami, FL 33116-0129

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## WORDS FROM THE WOOD

The new year is here and that can only mean one thing--the annual New Year's Resolutions. Here goes. I resolve not to stick my tongue on frozen metal flag poles. I resolve to quit trying to fly using telekinesis. I resolve to stop sniffing Liquid Paper. I resolve to stop calling Philip Michael Thomas' Psychic Hotline. I resolve to wear underwear. I resolve to eat with silverware. I resolve to stop sleeping with my Booby bear. And I resolve to stop making ridiculous New Year's Resolutions.

This is another announcement to let you all know that we have a new Internet address. This is to facilitate players who use Internet and allows us to send files without uuencoding the file. The new address is [gsi@ellink.com](mailto:gsi@ellink.com). If you are interested in setting your account up to receive files without uuencoding them, contact our office so that we can send you a test file. One point of note--we are not stopping the old method of sending Internet files. Some players have experienced problems reading files sent in the new format. This does not mean these players will have to stop receiving their email turns. We will continue to send the files in the old format if there are problems.

Speaking of email, GSI is currently working on setting up a World Wide Web page on the Internet. This will have information about the game such as nation descriptions, cost to play, email service and registration information. It will also contain reviews of the game as well as strategy articles printed in *Whispers*. We are still working on the details, so we do not know the exact date as to when this will be on-line, but we will continue to update you on the progress.

For those of you who may not have noticed, we also have a new copy of our House Rules and Procedures. This includes our new email address as well as some further clarification of some points. We ask that you take some time to review the new House Rules so that you are familiar with the contents. If you have not received a new copy, contact our office and we will be happy to send you a copy.

As you may or may not know, we here at GSI do not get many opportunities to play our own games. Being game moderators, there are difficulties in playing in our own games. Well, that has changed. A group of players have agreed to face us in a 2950 grudge match. We will be playing the Dark Servants, with the Neutrals divided among us. It's a 5x2 game, wherein 6 of their players will play 2 positions each and the same will apply to our side, with the extra neutral played by a 7th person. We will finally get to test our mettle in face to face action!

We would like to remind everyone about the changes we have made to the Dark Servant positions with regard to winter. We realize that winter can be a tough time for the Dark Servants and, as such, we have tweaked the positions so that it is not quite as tough to get through the season. So if you are holding off joining a game because it is winter, you may want to give it another shot!

Lastly, we have some special game needs to announce. There is currently a Free People grudge team in a one week all email 2950 grudge game waiting to match wits with a Dark Servant team. We also have a Free People grudge team waiting in a three week 2950 game--so those of you interested in picking up the mantle, in either a one week game or a three week game, should get in touch with us.

That's it for this month--see you all in thirty!

*Stuart*



## ALONG THE PATHWAYS

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### Credits

Editor.....Stuart Taft  
Assistant Editor..Michael Heckart  
Staff.....Yaman Battikhi, Milly Borja, Harold Ford, Valerie Garcia,  
Michelle Heath, Stephanie Jones, Sabrina McNeely, Anthony Vialon  
Publishers.....Pete Stassun & Bill Feild Jr

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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 13

Lord Marshall Pelendur addressed the citizens of Cardolan for the last time.

"After 4 years of war, only we still stand against Sauron!" Pelendur paused. "It is over; run for your lives!" Pelendur then disappeared forever.

### GAME 115

Comrades-in-arms:

Over 2 years of war . . . as winter approaches, inflation continues unabated, with sell prices as follows: Leather 541, Bronze 858, Steel 1287, Mithril 9728, Food 119, Timber 844, and Mounts 1765. A single character in almost any of my 73 population centers can support the whole realm, despite a deficit of over 81,000. Is this absurd or what?

Adûnaphel, Quietly Disgusted.

### GAME 125

Which Freep ate buttered corn, allowing the ring to fall off? The struggle continues and both sides are confident of victory. One side is in for a disappointment and it's not us.

Zarendarger (15)

### GAME 178

Inside Mordor now and boy is it nasty in here. Noldo and the Gondors lost many characters in here, including Elrond. My brave commanders march on knowing a dagger will claim them sooner or later. Before the dagger can strike, though, ashes will be what was

before Dark Servant pop centers.  
Zarendarger (4)

### GAME 184

The aide ran up to Mahrcared, a package wrapped in bright red paper with a green bow held gingerly in his hands.

"What's this?" quizzed Mahrcared.

"Sire, a present from the Sultan of Harad."

Mahrcared opened the gift with eager anticipation. "What could it be?" he wondered aloud. Then a smile and a hearty laugh followed. It was what he had always wanted--Ji Indur's other ear.

High Plains Drifter.  
P.S. Ovatha -- just looks like hot air to me. Your antisocial actions caused your demise.

### GAME 188

Hey! Where have all the Freeps gone? I'm getting hungry for good ole Freep blood, and I can't seem to find an abundance of it anywhere. Come on guys, fight or are you going to keep cowering in the corners of Middle-earth like the cowards you are!

Ji Indur  
Royal Procurer  
Grand House of Sauron  
and all around pest

### GAME 190

News from Mirkwood: "Ouch, argh, thwack, hack, slash, Die you light-loving elf!"

News from Gondor: "Run away, our leaders are dead!"

News from Harad: "They had how many dragons?"

News from Rhovanion: "Hey where did all those elves come from?"

\*\*\*\*\*

Whoa! Behold the big Blind Sorcerer offensive of the war! Hey Ethacali, don't let Kardavan give you too much trouble. Those camp/towers are real nasty, aren't they?

B'racer (#8)

### GAME 191

To whomever is running the nation of the deceased Ji Indur - I will crush your pitiful army commanded by that lame brain Araudagul, then it's on to Kal Nargil. Think you can stand up to the onslaught?

Ovatha II  
Lord of the East

\*\*\*\*\*

Free Folks--

Obviously hopelessness in the East has led you to try to rebuild all 10 of your realms (not counting the valiant Easterlings) in the West, as you seem to have abandoned any attempts to vanquish Mordor, and Mirkwood is on the verge of Darkness as evil armies from many nations invade from many directions. Do you think to live long enough for Elrond to find and destroy the One Ring? Good luck, you'll certainly need it!

Mûrazôr, Undead & Kickin'.

### GAME 195

Again I see myself alone. One against eleven, fair odds. Be warned, dwarves go underground to come up under you. The Harad shall win in the end. Rather fitting. D.S. shouldn't place for their lack of play.

Legion.

\*\*\*\*\*

"I told you not to fish with dwarf meat." Carlon of the Harad leans over and drags Enion from the icy water.

"Aye, but you said naught of the hell beast that swims these waters!"

"You are lucky it only ate your ship."

"Ha! Your mirth is overwhelming. How far have we to travel?"

"Granting you do not get us lost again . . . 4 weeks."

Orillion Darkblade  
#23

### GAME 203

Dark Servants,

Would at least one of you even attempt to make this an interesting game? That rat up in Angmar just rolled over and died. I hope that the rest of you have more ability. But I have yet to see any . . .

### GAME 205

Khamule,

Better luck next game.

Blind Melon,

Don't worry, I have not forgotten about you.

Weak King,

Keep running your mouth and you'll get the butt whooping I gave Khamule. So shut up and wait your turn.

Dullblade,

"Army commanders can only be challenged by Characters with, or in command of, another army." Rule book, page 52.

Lord of Moria.

\*\*\*\*\*

Greetings Citizens,

Rejoice and have another cup of ale. Your savior has arrived. I am "The Prophet!" I am sure you are wondering why the Nazgûl are laughing. It is because they are not as smart as their master! Sauron, it has been documented, is shaking with fear due to my arrival.

"The Prophet"

P.S. Don't mess with the clergy!

## GAME 210

### PUBLIC NOTICE

The Corsairs of Umbar are taking bids for new sails. We are only looking for rugged canvas in either black or white. All interested parties please reply.

Teldumiër  
Speaker for the Corsairs

## GAME 212

"Sire, the peasants are revolting in the streets!"

"Yes, they are rather revolting, but they're mine."

"No, Sire, I mean they are rebelling, rioting."

This got Dendra's attention. "Who? Why?"

"It's the orc women. They were promised by Eothraim a sacking of our city--you know--rape, pillage, and burn."

"They want their homes burned?"

"Gets rid of the rats; besides, have you seen their homes?"

"They want their goods stolen?"

"Sire, they have nothing of value."

"Well, have our soldiers burn their homes and steal their belongings."

"What about the rape, Sire? They're going to want that."

"Oh, that's right. We're talking about orc women. Have our soldiers do that too."

"Sire our men would disband before following such an order. We need Eothraim men for that job. It's such an easy transition from horses to orc women."

High Plains Drifter.

## GAME 216

The backs of the Free will be broken. A great fire burns in the heart of Mordor, causing powerful winds and smoke-filled skies that

block the sun. I am coming. You have been briefed.

Soulcatcher

## GAME 217

Thrár surveyed his troops and thought to himself, well, they may not be much now, but soon we'll be ready to march on Angmar. Just then a messenger approached.

"Bad news, sir. Enemy cavalry approaching, with Durkarion at their head." Slowly, a smile crept over Thrár's face.

"Ah, I see Múrazôr has decided to return the Belt of Durin. I did not realize that the Nazgûl were so polite."

\*\*\*\*\*

Silence fell upon the council as Elrond strode in.

"Greetings, friends. The first issue at hand is that of the thievery of artifacts rightfully belonging to the Free Peoples from our own lands."

"Fear not, Elrond," replied Erester. "In the name of Elbereth Gilthoniel we will not suffer these evils to go unpunished."

Middle-earth™ PBM  
circa 2950

## GAME 20

Dendra Dwar's house of Fertilizer special sales event! (Due to massive oversupply).

Dismembered Orc or Wolf 20% off

Burnt Ent 30% off

Evil Man 33% off

Free Man 40% off

Rotted Elf 50% off

Ripe Horse 75% off

## GAME 25

Khamul, I am coming for you! Beware! My son's army will destroy your piddly forces and I, Elrond, will crush your cursed spirit like a roach.

Elrond  
Master of the Arcane  
and all around good guy

\*\*\*\*\*

"Couriers!"

"Yes, General Ovatha?"

"Inform our allies that the Corsairs have joined the so-called Free Peoples, but that Khand's mighty chariots will soon avenge their victims and teach them the folly of their ways."

"At once, General!"

As the couriers raced away, Ovatha IV smiled. Perhaps the sea folk would prove tougher opponents, and actually fight back . . .

## GAME 26

Greenwood, for the moment, is secure. Rhûn and Gondor are blood fields. There is a crack in Mordor's armor. The battlefield is deadlocked but soon shall turn. No more neutrals, things are very interesting indeed.

Zarendarger (5)

## GAME 31

Dragon Lord . . . heard you were ailing . . . do the conditions of the Greenwood--er, Mirkwood--not suit you? Ah, well, perhaps it's for the best. Ever considered relocating?

Enion. Ah, poor, defenseless, slow little Enion. Bad choice, pal. Real bad.

Lastly, Tónn Varthkûr. You know what's coming. You can't protect ole' Kha-mule forever, not with your own stolen pop centers sitting, unprotected . . . Death is the sole reward for incompetence. And to

think . . . you Dork Servants would've had me for an ally?

North Gondor, Noldo, Silvan, other Free--thank you. Need anything?

Masque,  
Advisor to Hûz III and  
Bladewraith of the Rhûn Empire.

## GAME 37

Winter approaches. The ice caps of the frozen north plod slowly southward.

However, today in Umbar, the temp was a sunny 82 degrees!

Perhaps that now all the rum is gone, we should take a little boat ride, eh, mateys?

Sir Matteus - Dread Pirate of the Southern Seas.

\*\*\*\*\*

Attention Weaklings,

The shadow of the Dark Servants is about to engulf your feeble dominions. Give up now and we will have mercy on your doomed souls. We are the mighty NAZGUL! So cower behind the walls of your camps, towns, and cities while you can!! When we come you will truly know the meaning of fear, weakling Freeps!!!

- Aerethean

\*\*\*\*\*

Listening to the northern winds, we hear from the men of the woods that the DS are moving to war. The Blind Sorcerer has a powerful mage, called Jeff, the Malevolent Scribe. Well, this powerful mage states that he has spells 236, 240, 512, 242. We of the Noldo Elves have one thing to say. Come play in the woods, mage, and you'll eat an arrow down your big powerful mouth. Yum yum yum!

Lord Elrond

\*\*\*\*\*

To All:

Ho Ho Ho! Merry Christmas! Gee, it's cold here in Toronto--oh! That's right! Here I am in sunny West Harad, and boy, it's a beautiful 82 degrees out here--Sangarunya, get out of the pool! Come here!

Now listen, all of you frosties out there, let's HEAT IT UP! What's the matter, Helcent? Are you mad I stole your rum?

Matteus I

### GAME 43

Servants of Sauron,

Let not the arrogance of Aragorn prompt you to premature action or cause you alarm. He is the last of a dwindling lineage. The blood of his ancestors grows ever thinner and his eloquence is surpassed only by his foolishness. Glory to the one who slays the weak blowhard. The Heir of Isildur shall inherit his Fate.

## THE LANGUAGE OF THE DUNLENDINGS

By  
"Ovatha"

Previous articles in "Whispers" about the languages of the Middle Earth have, correctly, noted that Tolkien has said little about the Neutral languages. The evidence is thin but there is support for the contention that the Dunlendings should be considered as a sort of proto-Celtic people.

Firstly, some background. When the Romans evacuated their military forces from Britain in 425 AD, the native Celtic Britons were left to their own devices. The resulting power vacuum attracted the Saxons. These came first as raiders, then mercenaries, then settlers and finally as conquerors. During the next 450 years there was constant skirmishing and warfare between the Celts and Saxons. Slowly the Celts were expelled from the better agricultural land. Eventually the Celts were confined to Cornwall, Wales and Scotland, where they were pretty much reduced to a pastoral economy. As might be imagined, the Celts were hostile to and resentful of the "newcomers". The Saxons were very aware that not very far off was a frontier. On the other side of that frontier were warlike peoples ready to raid, steal sheep and burn isolated cottages.

Tolkien, of course, was a linguist and a Professor of Anglo-Saxon literature and language. He was intimately familiar with the Celtic/Saxon struggle.

Here is what Tolkien has said about the Dunlendings:

1. They were tall. So tall, in fact, that a very brave dwarf (at the battle of Helm's Deep) flinched away from engaging them in hand to hand combat. Outside observers of the British Celts, from Caesar to Giraldas Cambrensis have all commented on how tall the Celts were.

2. They were hillmen and pastoral with flocks. This would also describe the Celts of the Middle Ages.

3. They were aggressive and warlike. Also a noted Celtic activity.

4. The inhabitants of the hills of Dunland were a remnant of an older people. They clung to their old language. Also Celtic.

5. The Dunlendings were a remnant people who had dwelled in the dales of the White Mountains before being ejected from those lands by the Dunedain and Rohirrim. This would also parallel the Celts vis-a-vis the Saxons. Not surprising, the Dunlendings were unfriendly to the Dunedain and hated the Rohirrim.

6. Their land was called "dunland" and the word "dunn" had no connection to the Elven word "Dun" (west). Now "dun" is a Celtic word that means tower, or mound, or hill. It would certainly be reasonable to describe hill country using the term "Dunland".

7. The Dunlendings called the Rohirrim "Forgoil". This was translated by Tolkien as "straw heads" and refers to the blonde hair of most of the riders. The term "Forgoil" seems, to this author, to be a slightly Anglicized form of the Celtic words "fyne" (white) and "gheal" (pronounced 'gyal') which also means white. A not unreasonable description of pale men with light colored hair.

8. Tolkien says that Stoors, among the Hobbits, had adopted a language related to Dunlendish before they came north to the Shire. "They had a style that we should perhaps feel vaguely to be 'Celtic,'" according to the Master.

If it is accepted that Tolkien, the expert in Anglo-Saxon language and literature, viewed the Dunedain and the Rohirrim (with all those Saxon sounding names) were the protagonists in his epics, then it would follow that these would need an ancient human enemy. The quasi-Celtic Dunlendings would meet this requirement.

It would be completely within the spirit of Tolkien's epic and the GSI policy for a Dunlending player to name characters and places after Celtic root words. There are four surviving Celtic languages. Here are some suggestions using Highland Scots as a base.

Gaelic word// English equivalent// pronunciation aid

### CHARACTERS:

#### Commander Names:

Dream//Royal

Righe//King//ree

Banrigh//queen

Speireig//Hawk//sperag

Tuire//boar//torc

Ulbhaidh//wolf//oolu

Bhruic//badger//broc

Capull//horse

Claidheamh//sword//"claymore"

Choilich//cock//culuch

Iolaire//eagle//yulie

#### Useful Compounds:

Mna//wife//mra

Mac//son of

Mhoir//great

Nighinn//daughter//nee-un

Sean//old//shen

Bean//woman//ben

Dhaoine//man//doonu

**Emissary Names:**

Annaid//Mother

Mhanaich//Monk//mynach

Sagart//Priest//sagurt

Caillich//Nun or old woman

Bheoil//mouth//bial

**Agent Names:**

Mhadaidh//fox//myuch

**PLACE NAMES:**

Gaelic is incredibly rich in topographic descriptive terms. A single word can tell the size and shape of a hill, describe the slopes and what they are made of and tell if it is exposed to the wind. Here are some common terms that can be compounded into localities.

**EXAMPLES:**

Raptor's Nest = Nidspeireig or Suidheiolaire  
Lowland Town = Clachancoire or Bhailemachair

Aimhne//river//avin

Aileach//stony place

Aisre//pass//ashir

Aonach//market place//oon-ach

Atha//stream

Bhaile//town//balu

Beag//little//beg

Blar//plain

Carse//agricultural land

Clachan//hamlet

Nathrach//serpent//na-hir

Saighe//bitch//saree

Uruisg//human monster//oorushe

**Mage Names:**

Bheithir//monster or  
thunderbolt//be-hir

Bodach//specter

Chait//cat

Clamhan//buzzard//clavan

Cnamba//bones

Coille//forest

Crom//crooked

Dour//water

Drochaid//bridge

Easg//marsh

Fuar//cold//floor

Gharaidh//wall or dike//garu

Gill//ravine

Howff//home

Iosal//low//ess-ul

Knock//a small round hill

Loch//lake

Luib//a bend//loob

Machair//plain//machir

Mhoid//meeting place

Nid//nest//ned

Pend//archway

Rath//fort//ra

Ross//peninsula

Tolbooth//prison

Acair//anchorage//akir

Ailein//meadow//alen

An//well

Ard//height

Auch//field

Bhaid//cluster of trees

Bathaich//shelter//ba-hach

Beinn//mountain

Both//house

Cill//church

Cluain//pasture//cloo-ain

Coire//valley

Cuith//pit

Druim//ridge

Eas//waterfall//es

fail//cliff

Fuaran//cold well

Gart//enclosure

Giuthas//pine forest//geoo-us

Innis//island

Killie//hardwood forest

Leith//half//leh

Losg//burnt ground

Lynn//pool of water

Meoir//small stream//mer

Mhuilinn//mill//mooylen

Ochter//upper or high

Phris//brush

Rathaid//road//ra-ud

Sneachda//snow//shneche

Uamh//cave//uav

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bill, Pete, Stu, Harold, and all the other wonderful people at GSI whose names I can't remember or don't know,

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!!!

No, that's too trite.

I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks for another year of superlative game mastering. Playing in your Middle-earth game is a blast and I know that the players don't convey that message to you often enough. I suspect most of your calls go something like this, "I was special serviced & I sent my turn in 1 week before the due date." , "What do you mean my character died in that encounter? I gave the correct response." , "How come my agents ALWAYS go last during assassinations?"-- you get the message.

Well, this message is different. I have been playing games with GSI for over 13 years and as best I can recall, there have only been 2 errors on turn input for myself or my allies. That's pretty amazing considering that I have easily over 1,000 game turns with you guys. Keep up the good work.

Every time I call the office, I am greeted courteously. To me that is as amazing as the turn input efficiency. Given that most of your phone calls must be from irate customers, it's pretty remarkable that I have never been abused by a member of the GSI staff after you guys had received a nasty call. I don't know how you keep your cool when irate players call, but just keep doing what you have been doing.

There's another thing I like about you guys. Even though I have been playing with GSI for 13 years and know Bill and Pete fairly well, I KNOW that I'm not cut any slack. That tells me that the game mastering is impartial. I would have bailed out long ago if you guys had cut me or anyone else any slack.

Let's not forget the promptness with which you send your turns out. **THERE IS NO COMPANY IN THE PBM BUSINESS WHICH SURPASSES YOUR TURNAROUND EFFICIENCY.** 'Nuff said.

So from one of the many who enjoy the fruit of your handiwork, thanks again for another great year. It is with great expectation that I look forward to 1996.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

James Rousselle

## HONOR AMONG THIEVES

by  
Bill Tallen

"They march well," growled Zaal with a curl of his lip, "but see how thin that front rank of veterans, and how the file closers wield the flats of their blades to keep order among the ragged striplings behind. Their fathers feed the crows at Osgiliath."

Glowing red in the last rays of the sun, bright against the looming backdrop of the Mountains of Shadow, great clouds of dust roiled up from the

advancing phalanx of Gondorian footmen. Along the shore, their skirmishers kept pace, their attention split between the ranks of white-eyed trolls before them and the quiet menace of black-flagged ships anchored just beyond stone cast offshore.

From the ramparts of Bar-en-Tinnen, thin cheers rose from the townsmen, urging their countrymen on into the great battle about to be joined.

On the greatest of the ships, wallowing heavily in the swift current of the Anduin, Zaal eyed the impending collision with a sneer of anticipation.

"Now those northern scum will see what wages their treachery earns from her Ladyship!" Zaal spat over the lee gunwale. "A fit end to this stillborn expedition," he muttered softly to himself.

On cue, his swarthy lieutenants chuckled and snorted, hiding the furtive glances of uncertainty that passed among them. One of the youngest, newly raised from the ranks, as yet unschooled in the ways of the Captain's staff, plied his tongue when he should have held it.

"But Captain, the boys are eager for a fight! Let those apes dull the Dunedain blades, but then let us land on their flank and finish them! What a fine chance! And does not our honor demand that we fight this day?"

A low mutter and a stirring and clanking of arms spread from the open hatch at his feet through the deep hold below. Zaal flushed at the aide's impertinence, but before he could cuff him to the deck, an icy voice froze them all where they stood:

"Fools! What honor would you have? The honor of the dupe, the tool, the blade in another's hand? Or the honor of the grave?"

None dared glance on the fell speaker, materialized behind them as if from the thin streamers of evening fog off the water, a lithe form cloaked and hooded in black, darkly ornamented. None but two: Zaal himself, Captain of Adûnaphel's fleet, who knew his hide was yet too valuable to be nailed to the yardarm; and the young complainant, slow still to comprehend the depth of his error and the one course open to him that promised a future in which to refine his wisdom.

"But my Lady," he stammered, "look! Are those not the very banners that invaded our own lands only a few weeks gone? Though they limped home in no great triumph, their insult has not been repaid!"

The idiot's lost his mind, wondered Zaal silently. No, he swiftly and shiveringly corrected himself. No, that's next. How can even youth's hot blood inure him to the chill that makes me dumb and sick with foreboding?

"Lady, let us have at them! All this long cruise we've hungered for a chance to sink steel into these curs! So proud, so full of themselves, so high and mighty they are! And now, look--in our hands lies their fate and the outcome of this field! Our allies ashore are outnumbered and cannot stand without..." His voice finally faltered, then choked to silence as though a hand closed about his throat.

"Go then, foolish pup," hissed the dark form unmoving, "and find your honor -- or stay rather with your Lady for schooling this night. Your choice."

Ashen-faced, trembling, the young fool clenched and unclenched his fists. His eyes rolled and spittle flew. A sour odor wafted on the breeze as he voided upon the deck. Then with a wrenching cry, he broke free of the invisible bonds that held him and plunged over the rail into the swift waters below. Striking out with the sinews of youth and the madness of despair, he pulled for the bank.

Ashore, Gondorian soldiery rose out of the reeds, pointing and calling out in astonishment. As the bedraggled swimmer staggered through the sucking

mud, five of them closed on him empty-handed, prepared to grapple him if need be.

But with a last surge forward, the latest and most promising of Zaal's lieutenants tugged his cutlass free and laid about him with the fury of one who has lost all hope and seeks only death. And death he had, swiftly, from the gleaming short swords of the three who evaded his first wild charge. He slumped forward and lay still under the plunging blades.

Zaal sighed and shivered, and half turned with lowered eyes for the instructions he knew would follow.

"Up anchor, Captain," the low voice whispered. "My brethren have gotten themselves in deep here, and we will not spend ourselves to succor them." Through the deep gloom under her hood, where only the eyes flashed like the moon on midwinter's ice, the smile could only have been of Zaal's imagining. "If we have more young hotheads in our service, assure them that glory and plunder beyond their weak minds' reckoning await us closer to home. South, Captain. Clear the river's mouth by daybreak."

Zaal nodded with a jerk and turned to shout the watch aloft, as his staff scuttled from underfoot. When he turned back, the quarter-deck was empty, swept by a sudden swirling gust that raised his hackles and chilled the sweat on his brow.

## The Oracle Speaks

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

### MIDDLE-EARTH PBM

**Q** It seems that if a nation has an easy time placing camps at the beginning of the game, it'll continue to experience such good fortune throughout the game. Conversely, a nation which runs into difficulty placing camps early on seems to experience problems later as well. Is this a function of game mechanics, or is it just a run of luck approaching the odds of winning the lottery?

**A:** Just luck, but obviously good emissaries affect the chances and this benefit may continue throughout the game.

**Q** When threatening a pop center with two armies from the same nation, does the required troop number need to be in each army or do the two armies "combine" for the necessary number to threaten?

**A:** The two armies would "combine" for the purposes of threatening.

**Q** When attempting to threaten a population center, do war machines help out other than counting as 25 troops?

**A:** No, they count as just 'more troops' to help the threaten.

**Q** Can a pop center be successfully threatened with less than the number of troops required as given in the rulebook?

**A:** Yes.

**Q** Is the number of troops required to conduct a successful siege roughly based upon the number required to threaten the pop center?

**A:** The numbers are similar, but not necessarily the same.

**Q** Is the 'force' needed to threaten a population center based upon numbers of troops or strength points?

**A:** The 'force' is based upon the quantity of troops, not the type or quality.

**Q** Do dragons or NPCs aid in threats/sieges?

**A:** No. Only troops are considered for these purposes.

**Q** Can a nation 'defend' a pop center owned by an ally if the defender has 'Friendly' relations with the ally? Or will the army stand by while the enemy burns the pop center?

**A:** Unless orders are given to attack, the ally will not automatically defend the pop center like the owner would. To be involved in the combat, the ally would have to initiate an attack.

**Q** Do latent artifacts help to protect the target of an assassination attempt? For instance, is a 50 rank mage with a 30 rank mage artifact treated as 50 or 80 for purposes of assassination?

**GSI does not divulge this information. The only thing we can say is--try it and find out!**

**Q** Which is easier, assassinate or kidnap?

**A:** Assassination. It is easier to get in and stick a dagger in someone's ribs than it is to get in, knock the target out, truss them up and then sneak away.

**Q** Are some skills more effective at protecting against agent attacks than others? For example, might a 60 point commander be a harder target to assassinate than a 60 point emissary?

**A:** No. Skill level plays a part in how difficult it is to assassinate a character, but individual skill classes have no effect.

**Q** Assume you have two 50 point agents. Is it more effective to have both guard a single character than to just have one of those agents guard that character?

**A:** Yes. The enemy agent would have to get through both guards, as opposed to just the one guard.

**Q** Are two 40 point agents guarding a single character: A. More effective than a single 80 point agent? B. Less effective than a single 80 point agent? C. About as effective as a single 80 point agent?

**A:** The answer is B. Two 40 point agents are *generally* less effective than a single 80 point character, but that isn't always the case.

**Q** Does Stealth increase the effectiveness of 'Guard' orders?

**A:** Yes.

**Q** If a character has stealth, is he less likely to show up on another player's pop center report?

A: Yes.

Q Are characters with high skill ranks more likely to show up on another player's pop center report than characters with low skill?

A: Yes.

Q Can an army, or specific troops, be put on maneuvers more than once in a turn (by different commanders)?

A: Yes, and by reviewing the discussion in the rulebook about characters with an army you can determine how this can be done.

Q Does army morale go up when an army commander increases in rank?

A: No, not as a result of the commander's rank increase. Morale is normally increased only as indicated in the rules.

Q When attacking an enemy army (not the population center at one of their fortified population centers), will they receive a constitution bonus from their fortification? Does the attacking army have to overcome the fortification?

A: The answer to the first question is 'Yes'. The answer to the second question is 'No' - because the enemy army would be gaining a defensive bonus because of certain available defenses associated with the fortifications - not the actual fortifications themselves.

Q When defending against an enemy attacking army that is at their own population center (i.e. when you are planning to siege their population center and they attack you), does the attacking enemy receive the constitution bonus from their own fortifications?

A: Yes, if combat occurs in a hex with fortifications which are owned by one of the involved armies, then they will receive the bonus because they are still using the available defenses associated with the fortifications, even though they might also be attacking.

Q Is there a way to capture/destroy a fortified population center without war machines (and without sieging, threatening, using emissary orders, etc....)?

A: Yes, you can capture/destroy a population center using an army without war machines. The war machines are a **BIG** help, but not absolutely necessary.

Q Can armies of different nations combine to attack?

A: Yes, but the armies are **NOT** joined. They simply can meet at the same place and attack on the same turn.

Q If a navy is at a harbor/port, and the harbor/port is removed/destroyed, what happens to the navy?

A: The navy is not directly affected by the lost harbor/port. The navy can remain in the hex as long as it wishes. It can even, if the terrain is 'shore', anchor ships and go ashore. However, if the navy moves away from the hex, and the terrain is not 'shore', then the navy can not return to the hex. Only an army would be able to enter the hex until the harbor is restored.

## The Hall Of Heroes

Game # 177: The Dark Servants: #22, #17, & #15.

For the first time in months, the sound of battle is absent from Middle-earth. Now the only sounds are those that come from the slave camps, where the "Free" Peoples of Middle-earth toil endlessly to the great amusement of their captors. The Cardolan put up a good fight, but the Haradwaith acquired power along with the evil, and succeeded where so many others failed . . . Sauron will have a ring for Christmas.

Final standings are as follows:

#22 - Haradwaith: 2200

#17 - Quiet Avenger: 2175

#15 - Blind Sorcerer: 2134

Top Free People: #5 - Cardolan: 1250

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Akhōrahil/Blind Sorcerer: 283

Highest Net Commander Rank - Aeron Siey/Dark Servants: 170

Highest Net Agent Rank - Rauch/Cloud Lord: 92

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Eleonore/Quiet Avenger: 95

Highest Net Mage Rank - Akhōrahil/Blind Sorcerer: 229

Most Mithril - Blind Sorcerer: 2525

Most Artifacts - Dark Lieutenants: 21

Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 36

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game # 202 - The Free Peoples: #22, #8, & #23.

Sensing that victory lay in the hands of the Free, three of the five Neutral nations joined the cause of the Light. Of the remaining two, the Corsairs languished in the grip of indecision until the very end, and the foolish Rhudaur chose to die alongside Sauron's minions. Now the Free reign over Middle-earth, most notably the Haradwaith in the South, the Dwarves in the North, and the Dunlendings in the West. All hail the might of the United Free!

Final standings are as follows:

#22 - Haradwaith: 1625

#8 - Dwarves: 1375

#23 - Dunlendings: 1342

Top Dark Servant: #17 - Quiet Avenger: 767

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## The Hall Of Heroes

### Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves: 211  
Highest Net Commander Rank - Gaerdae/Noldo Elves: 139  
Highest Net Agent Rank - Aerandir/Noldo Elves: 130  
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Miranda/Rhudaur: 88  
Highest Net Mage Rank - Elrond/noldo Elves: 192  
Most Mithril - Dwarves: 1639  
Most Artifacts - Noldo Elves: 18  
Most Kills - Dunlendings: 5  
Congratulations to the Free Peoples!

Game # 5 - The Free Peoples: #25, #4, & #3.

The crisp November wind whipping through his hair, Ovatha IV of Khand stood atop a small plateau, gazing across the plains where he made his home. The skies to the north were blackened by the great flocks of carrion birds drawn to the carnage of yesterday's skirmish. Turning from the macabre feast, he regarded his men as they prepared for the day's ride ahead of them. Packing the spoils of war atop their sturdy steppe ponies, they joked with each other despite the tremendous weight of the tense days behind them. It was this unwavering courage that had made a victory for the Light possible, he thought. The Nazgûl were no more, and Middle-earth was finally free.

Final standings are as follows:

#25 - Khand Easterlings: 2050  
#4 - Dúnadan Rangers: 1834  
#3 - Riders of Rohan: 1833

Top Dark Servant: # 15 - Blind Sorcerer: 500  
Highest Challenge Rank - Galadriel/Sinda Elves: 217  
Highest Net Commander Rank - Elladan/Dúnadan Rangers: 152  
Highest Net Agent Rank - Tabaya Kas/Khand Easterlings: 85  
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Hazodin/Dwarves: 109  
Highest Net Mage Rank - Galadriel/Sinda Elves: 166  
Most Mithril - Northmen: 2187  
Most Artifacts - Dúnadan Rangers: 26  
Most Kills - Northmen: 5  
Congratulations to the Free Peoples!

## The Hall Of Heroes

Game #15 - The Free Peoples: #7, #24, & #8.

The strain of war has been lifted from Middle-earth. No more shall the peasants choke on the thick, black smoke from their own fields. The lapdogs of Sauron have been killed or exiled, and all has returned to peace. The Empire of Southern Gondor has risen to eclipse its own former glory, even that of the days of old. With the aid of the White Wizard and the Dwarves, Southern Gondor has succeeded in making Middle-earth free. Final standings are as follows:

#7 - Southern Gondor: 2250  
#24 - White Wizard: 2134  
#8 - Dwarves: 2017

Top Dark Servant: #17 - Quiet Avenger: 775

### Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Saruman the White/White Wizard: 228  
Highest Net Commander Rank - Duinhir/Southern Gondor: 167  
Highest Net Agent Rank - Hildifons/Dunlendings: 121  
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Dawklynn/Dunlendings: 108  
Highest Net Mage Rank - Saruman the White/White Wizard: 186  
Most Mithril - Northmen: 1641  
Most Artifacts - White Wizard: 19  
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 1  
Congratulations to the Free Peoples!