

# WHISPERS OF THE WOOD



**GAME SYSTEMS**  
**INC.**

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## WORDS FROM THE WOOD

I am proud to announce the newest entry into the myriad horde of collectible card games--I call it Tragic: The Blathering. In the game, each player plays an insane gamer who is obsessed with a collectible card game. Every minute of every day is spent obsessing over this card game and all conversation eventually ends up revolving around the game. All interaction with other people is only in the interest of getting more cards. The objective of the game is to see who can spend the most obscene amount of money to get those few cards which are deemed "rare." And finally, the winner is the one who DOESN'T blow an entire year's pay to get a couple of flimsy little pieces of cardboard. What do you think--the next "BIG THING"?

Okay, the first order of business is to announce that, due to popular (or unpopular, as the case may be--and it usually is) consent, games starting in the fall and winter months will not be in such dire circumstances when the game begins. A number of players stated that starting a game in the winter was a significant challenge because of the economic disadvantage of the season. GSI has taken steps to alleviate this problem in both scenarios, so that it becomes easier to manage when starting in the winter. We aim to please!

I'd like to offer my apologies to anyone who showed up for the AOL conference and found that we were not there. I was held up by busy circuits and didn't get to the site until 9:15, by which time no one was left. I was here in the office trying to log on for 25 minutes before I got on-line. We're going to try it again this month on September 12th, so we'd love to see you there. Come on by and have a chat with us here at GSI--it'll be just like a good old fashioned hootenanny!

Well, our GenCon experience was a richly rewarding one. Our two seminars were well attended and covered a variety of interesting topics. It was nice to finally match some faces to those voices I hear on the phone. A special thanks goes out to Scott Ahern and the Ripon College Gaming Society. They remembered my birthday and got me a really cool card and birthday present, which I greatly appreciated. Thanks a lot, guys and gals--now I get reminded of my impending mortality every morning (grin). I had a great time and want to thank everyone who came by the booth to say hi.

Some of you may have noticed that our paper has changed. This new paper is recycled stock which we use to try and be a little kinder to our friends, the trees. We do use a fair amount of paper and we figured we'd do our part for the environment. It's just one more step GSI is taking to try and make the world a better place to live. O.K., my soap box is now put away.

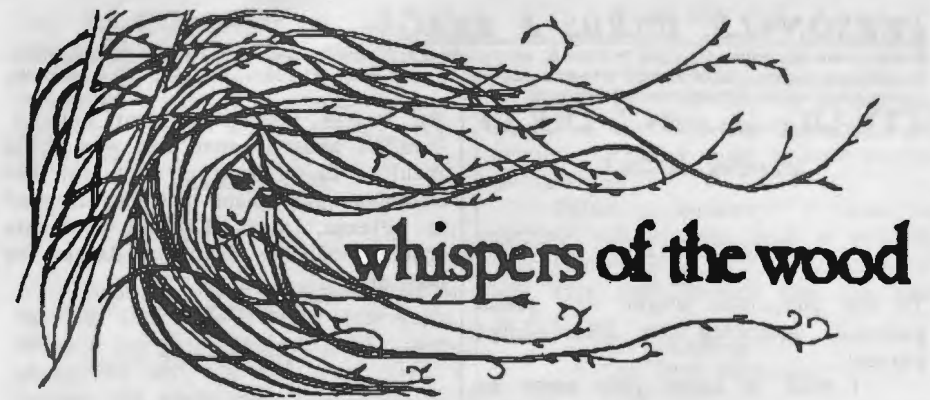
Normally we don't give game needs here, but we have some special cases we thought worth mentioning. First, we have a 3 week 1650 game which is just about ready to go out. All we need are a few more players and that game will be in the bag. Next, we have all-email games filling in both scenarios, so those of you on the net who want double the fun in half the time should send us those requests. Lastly, we have an all-email 1650 grudge game looking for a Free People team. If you have access to email and have a grudge team ready to go, let us know and we'll be happy to set you up.

I've come to the end of the column; I've got nothing more to say.

I'm finally free to leave the computer; To go outside and play!

See you in thirty.

*Stuart*



## whispers of the wood

### ALONG THE PATHWAYS

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This Month's Cover: "The Ring" by John Kissee

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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

To the obnoxious player who sends personals attacking the Dunlendings player:

I wish to know your name so that in all my future games I may treat you as my Arch Enemy. You have no humility, dignity or honor! My possible loss in this game is due to lack of unity and not to any ability you feel you possess.

\*\*\*\*\*

200 weeks of warfare, and for what, Lord Marshal Pelendur wondered? Only he and Findulas III remained of the 8 who embarked on this war. Allies--only the Duns remained, or were they destroyed as well? Only 2 things kept Pelendur going: REVENGE and HONOR. Sauron must be impatient with his remaining "Dark Servants, Pelendur thought.

### GAME 66

It is now turn 66 and I am reminded of something said by Robert Lynd:

"A short and decisive war is one of the most ancient and dangerous of human illusions."

The Cloud Lord  
aka  
Clark Kapelka

### GAME 125 Contest of Champions

Buhr Ailgra has become a meat grinder. 6 Woodmen, 2 Noldo, 1 Dunlending and 1 Sinda have died in

the last 4 turns. I've lost only 2. Waulfa's army is gone and now so is Waulfa. Enion escaped but not the Cardolan agent team that just dropped in. Please, meet Khamûl and his cohorts. <GRIN> There's a dagger for each of you.

Zarendarger (15)

### GAME 165

Free Fools!

Seek not your friends who sought to invade the Havens! Maben, Branghlas, Aslania, Eldeltor, Khathog, Celdrahil, Falin, Adeyn, Gizmo, Azaghal, Dancu and Langhr are already dead! The remainder die on this fortnight! When this bloodletting is done, we come for the masters who sent them.

Teldûmeir

### GAME 167

Well, well. After 20+ turns of inaction, the Quiet Avenger stirs at last. Although our expectations match his prior record.

The Light shines brighter as the Dark wavers. Mordor is broken and overrun by Free Peoples. The endgame begins.

\*\*\*\*\*

Now the Dark Servants flee to outposts beyond Mordor like rats leaving a sinking ship. Pest control is on the way.

Cooter

### GAME 178

Murazor II,

Real original, taking a dead Nazgûl name. What a long title for nothingness. Angmar is no longer in your grasp. Your pop centers are scattered along the hinterlands of the

map. Yes, I know where you hide, little one! All your banter amounts to nothing except to show that you are an infant! By the way, how many crayons did you break while writing your tantrum?!

Zarendarger (4)

### GAME 181

Neutrals still fighting the wars of the DS. Harad's evil heart is revealed. What a fun place Mordor is. So many things to see and do. Sure glad I brought the whole clan.

Hallas

\*\*\*\*\*

Notice:

All characters of South Gondor and Sinda captured in the areas of Umbar and South Gondor will be decently executed due to their local holdings. Captured characters of other Free nations shall be publicly "fixed" and then keel hauled.

You should have bargained.

Angamaitë

### GAME 184

"My deepest apologies, sire," stammered the somewhat distraught aide.

"What is it now?!" growled the heavily hungover voice of Mahrcared.

"It seems the army has marched SE instead of NW. Our captive Ingar claims we are currently at the village of Tir Harn."

"Well, light up that firewood so we don't get lost again."

"Sire, that is the village."

"Funny, looks like firewood to me."

And thus goes the story of how the children of Éothraim were given back their matches.

High Plains Drifter

### GAME 186

"Nightspawn"--

The time for shaking is coming. Death travels with me these summer months. She will move against you in the fall.

Princess Arfanny: I will be visiting your people, and it will be sooner than you think. I promise it will have more impact than you care to handle.

Carnage  
The New Nightmare

\*\*\*\*\*

It seems only the Easterlings have the courage to continue the struggle in Mirkwood. Where are the legions of the Dog Lord? The mighty cavalry of the Long Rider? Carrion eaters, all! Even the mighty Jí Indûr stoops to picking the pockets of the dead at Carn Dum. Well, if Mordor won't come to us, then . . .

Helcent

### GAME 188

The time has come to release the black horde onto Middle-earth. Let no man or elf say they weren't warned, Beware! Jí Indûr is coming!

### GAME 190

The young woman smiled inwardly . . . Yes, she had them now. The earlier awkwardness of the crowd was gone, replaced by the steady hum of people preparing to act.

"Well? How can you remain idle? How can you flee into the hills? You must fight! Fight alongside us, as true sons of Arnor!"

The crowd roared.

Rhys (24)

### GAME 191

Ding Dong,  
The Nazgûl's Dead!

Which old Nazgûl?  
The Wicked Nazgûl!  
Ding Dong,  
Jí Indûr is Dead.  
Ballad sung in the taverns of Khand

#### GAME 192

Northern and Southern Gondor, you have won the first few skirmishes, but now I, Ren the Unclean, will win the war and make examples out of all Free People who enter Mordor. Heed my words, for I have spoken.

Ren the Unclean  
Fire King  
Eighth of the Nazgûl

#### GAME 194

Active, competent opponents (with only 2 exceptions), how refreshing!

Cooter

#### GAME 195

It seems I am the Witch-king replacement. The Cowardlans and Arthepains throwing their forces against me (to their demise)! Now the little Dwarves are playing tag and brag while the cute Sinda Elflings pretend they're tough.

The Woses I encountered have my respect, but so far none other has earned it. I tip my hat to Din Ohtar . . . . . A glorious victory!!!! Well done!

Well, four armies against mine seems fair enough considering that's the only way for "Free Plague" can survive. By the way . . . . . I now have a fleet.

Orillion Darkblade  
Voice of the Dunlendings

#### GAME 199

Squeak!!!  
Thump! Thump!  
Squeak!!!  
Thump! Thump!

"What is that?!!!!!"

"I think you should see for yourself, my Lord."  
Squeak!!!  
Thump! Thump!

"Why is a Northman hanging from my ceiling?"

"The soldier who brought it said that Sauron enjoyed the soul but refused the body."

"Well . . . . . I dare not refuse a gift from my Master. Cut it down, stuff it and put it in the hall with the rest of our friends' trophies."

"Yes my Lord!!!!!"

"Soon I shall have to find a city for his trinkets alone!"

Orillion Darkblade

#### GAME 200

"My Lady, this is a most perilous task. Nobody knows what lies in this area."

"That is the point. I hereby charge you with finding that out. You are not to return until you finish."

"And if I do not return?"

"We shall send another. And more, if necessary, until our curiosity is satisfied."

#### GAME 203

Very elegant, Mûrazôr, but it was a trap, and now you will pay the price of ignoring me. The problem with teamwork, or course, is that it works both ways . . . .

As for you, Khamûl, you weren't quick enough, and despite your powers, your days are numbered.

And puppy king? Keep your pets on a shorter leash.

Greenfather  
Woodmen #1

#### GAME 205

Greetings to all nations of Middle-earth. The Harad are a growing power who wish to be neutral until the time is right for choosing a side. I have received emissaries from almost all of

the Dark Servants and only one from the Free People. Do the Free People not want my allegiance??

Carlton  
Shah of Harad

#### GAME 209

An open letter to all Neutrals,

Do not be fooled by the light of the Free. Its fire will soon fail in a sea of perpetual darkness. Join us and your lives will be that much prolonged. But do not hesitate, for the night creeps even while you sleep.

Adûnaphel  
Dark Queen of the South

\*\*\*\*\*

Dark forces stir, Evil awakes.  
The plague is over.

I am responsible and many more shall die.

Mûrazôr

Middle-earth™ PBM  
circa 2950

#### GAME 25

"Couriers!"

"Yes, General Ovatha?"

"Ride to all corners of Khand. Let the tribes gather their warriors. We ride to WAR!"

"Yes, General . . . ."

"What?!"

"Whose banner do we take up?"

"The Eye, of course! The Dark Lord rewards his followers well, while the Free speak foolishly of 'peace' and 'joy.' (Yech) Now Get Going!!!!"

\*\*\*\*\*

If you miss Swithwulf: don't fret. You'll be joining him soon enough. What's the plan, Saruman?

Cooter

\*\*\*\*\*

The Noldor stand ready to purge the world of the evil Sauron. Will nobody challenge us? Free Peoples, let us know what your needs are, we will do all that is possible to aid you. Neutrals, don't let cozy words from the black horde influence you. Sauron is full of falsehoods.

Elrond  
Master of the Arcane

#### GAME 26

The siege of Dol Guldur continues; will that place ever fall? Yes, but in time.

Ûvatha, Akhôrâhil and Jí Indûr have all targeted the Northmen for destruction. Do they not realize that we would never let that happen? Elf and Dwarf will save the Humans.

Zarendarger (5)

#### GAME 28

Greetings to all, and Well-Met to some!

As a Public Service Announcement I would like to encourage everyone, including you who are Free (but not for long), to begin submitting your personals in this column and also to start sending notes out. Turn 8 is past and I still haven't received a nasty-gram yet! Finally, to my DS brethren--Thank you for your activity (you know who you are) and to the rest of you--DO SOMETHING!

This announcement was brought to you Ren the Unclean and the Sauron Service Council

\*\*\*\*\*

Bard I, Northman--K.I.A.  
Koldana, Northman--K.I.A.  
Northman nation succumbs to Despair.  
Fiarlion, Silvan Elf--K.I.A.  
Mephistian, Silvan Elf--K.I.A.  
Charon

## GAME 29

Rotnbart is in 2950, to some it isn't nifty.

While the FP think they are ahead, If I was Dun I would plan to be dead. Why Why?? You ask??

His word is good as a fat boy missing his cream pie dessert.

So without delay I will throw him in the bay, along with his buddy S-MOUTH-dor. I was wondering why my scouts came

back with knots in their hair. The hot air was to blame.

So with all the intros done my jingle will end this milk run.

Rotnbart is here today, Middle-earth is where I play

All of these folks who try to say Hooray

They haven't seen me deal their dismay.

I will be Santa and do in the FP with a HOHOHO

Then burnt biscuits will be issued to those who are left as a hoe.

Rotnbart of Mordor

## GAME 31

Northman and Dwarven army defeated, Dilgul in ruins. Northmen beset on all fronts. Khand Easterlings flex their muscles in the south. Mirkwood burns. Carnage at Osgiliath, death toll rises. Now this is the way war should be!

Helcent

\*\*\*\*\*

The commander looked over the charred and burning battlefield. Corpses and dead horses were strewn everywhere but mostly they were of the enemy. The commander smiled

and said to his aide: "That will teach them to fear the sons of Bôr!"

## GAME 33

Dear Stormbringer,

I find it interesting that all 10 Dark Servants deny being you. Which Free People are you? Neutrals take note of this deception--when you offer them your hand, you will also be offering them your back. The stabbing will surely follow.

Akhôrahil

\*\*\*\*\*

Elves to the left of me,

Elves to the right of me,

Elves . . .

Well, at least I got rid of some of 'em.

Now I only have six hostile neighbors.

\*SIGH\* It's not easy being an epitome of evil . . .

\*\*\*\*\*

Enemies of the Light!

While my northern cousins have been spilling blood for some weeks now, this marks the first southern blood to be shed in this war. Be warned--this is but the merest first trickle that soon will be a tidal wave washing your filth clean first from Mordor and then all of Middle-earth!! Grab your rubber orky, Ren--I have your bath already drawn and boiling.

Prince Celdrahil (yes!!!)

Awakened in Gondor

P.S. Don't go too far, Dendra--I have a flea dip with your name on it!

## "A Soldier's Tale"

by  
Gary Drebit

This is not an old tale, but a true one. I know, I was there.

Working in the mines of Mordor was not a happy life for me. I wanted the smell of fresh air and the feel of grass beneath my feet. For a Troll, this is uncommon but not unheard of. Many of us wished we were farmers or herders but were not. We are miners; producing bronze or steel, sometimes mithril. It is well known that our land is barren and will not produce the crops that we would enjoy like our neighbors to the west. A group of us tried to start farms in the rich bottom land and our farming community was just starting to grow, our fields were just starting to produce, when they came.

I have heard of him; from Minas Anor, "The Prince-Regent", "The next King of the Northern Gondor Empire, Regent Telumehtar." The Heavy Cavalry, 900 strong that he led, rode over the crest of the hill with flags waving and drums beating; as if we were an invading army. As the elected leader of our group, I tried to explain that we were simple farmers. That we were willing to pay taxes to his King. But he did not listen. He could not see past the texture of my skin or the slur of my common speech. It still makes my blood hot to remember his face uttering those words, "This is not your land and you, and your kind, have no right to be here. Go now!"

"But Sire" I begged, "our crops are just about ripe and a year of work will be ruined." "Do not worry about the crops" he stated. "They will feed the good people of Northern Gondor. Now leave before we set the torch. Tell your King that we will not tolerate this type of encroachment onto our land." With my child crying in my wife's arm, I gathered what little I could as they watched and urged us to be quicker. We loaded the cart with what we could in the time they had given us. I was sorry to leave the plow behind but when the scarred faced sergeant saw that it was molded from steel, they wouldn't let us take it. We started to make the journey back to Durthang.

The mood of our city, and our Great King, was already changing when we arrived. The people no longer wanted to be locked in the prison of Mordor. Poor food, poor economy, and poor conditions were all caused by North Gondor. No longer were we content to live on the "reserved land." The Kingdom of the Fire King had already made war against North Gondor capturing the town of Minas Ithil, a town that they claim was theirs many lifetimes ago. I also heard a rumor that our Great King, Hoarmurath, also sees the injustice of the way land is divided and was calling for a great army to move against North Gondor. I remembered my embarrassment in front of the Prince-Regent Telumehtar. I remembered the Northern Gondor sergeant telling me to leave my plow. I remember kissing my wife good-bye as I joined the Heavy Infantry of the Ice King.

We marched to Osgiliath the next day and arrived at the morning mist. I could also see the banner of the Fire King as well from our camp. I could not tell if this was the army from Minas Ithil or a fresh unit. They looked as fresh as we did and hungry for a fight. There was no time to rest or eat before the horn sounded to form our attack line. War is funny in the sense of what you remember from a battle. Don't ask me how many Northern Gondors I killed, for I do not have a number, but there were many. What I do remember was the Northern Gondor Naval ship, full of troops, watch as we sacked Osgiliath. There

was no time for spoils as our Commander moved our force to their capital city, Minas Anor.

We arrived later that night and lit our fires. Not only to warm ourselves in the cool night air but also to show our large numbers to the city militia. Although I'm a simple Troll and not schooled in war, I believe the tactic was to instill fear of our size in the enemy. In the morning I was nudged awake by Killum, one of my recent friends. "We're going to die" he said.

"Don't be stupid" I replied rolling over to my side to look in the direction he was staring in. My heart almost stopped when I saw the army filing out of the city gate. It outnumbered us 2 to 1 and they had Heavy Cavalry units, something we did not. Before I had time to say or react to anything, the sound of the battle horn filled my ears. Again we moved into our attack line. I said good-bye to Killum, for he was right; we were about to die. My only regret was not kissing my wife one last time and that the Northern Gondor army facing us was led by that bastard, Prince-Regent Telumehtar. I braced myself for the attack that would send me to my god but instead, one of our Knights rode to the front, just ahead of our Commander. His armor was pure black and without a mark on it. I didn't remember seeing him at Osgiliath, for I would have remembered.

"A challenge was issued, a challenge" was whispered through our ranks. Prince-Regent Telumehtar rode forward to meet our Knight. He looked confident and smiled with his other Officers until he saw the size of the challenger.

"Your blood will be at my feet" our Knight shouted as our troops started to bunch up to get a better view.

"I will send you back to Sauron!" the Prince-Regent shouted back. I could only see the top of his helmet as my view was getting worse. There was a loud crash of armor and shield, and then another before a large gasp was heard from the troops of North Gondor. Suddenly, our attack horn was sounded and our line ran forward screaming and shouting in victory.

"The Prince-Regent, their Commander, is dead" someone shouted. "Long life and good praise from Sauron, to our Knight" another screamed. In my staggered, blind running I came upon the spot that the challenge took place. Our Knight was not to be seen but the blood tramped corpse of Prince-Regent Telumehtar was still there. As I had said before, I don't remember much about battles but I do remember spitting on what remained of the Prince.

"It's not enough" I thought, as I ran to catch up with the rest of my company.

## *ME 2950 Slow Starting or Slow Starters?*

By  
Larry Bundy

The common complaint about ME 2950 seems to be the reduced military and economic status that creates boredom for the more action oriented player. I confess that I felt that way as well in my first exposure to ME 2950 (Fire King, started in winter...nuff said). However, as I acquired more information through friends, etc., I kicked myself for all the opportunities I had missed.

By turn nine of my Dark Lieutenants match I assassinated four characters, influenced a town away, and am presently attacking the Sinda capital with the Dog Lord. In my Long Rider match, I have beaten two small armies, destroyed a village and two towns, lost two villages and assassinated one commander, all by turn four.

I do not credit these results with any great stratagems on my part but rather as a result of good info from my team-mates. My gains in those matches can be overcome by aggressive enemies and are not inherent to those two nations. I believe that ME 2950 can be a very exciting milieu to play providing that communication and aggressiveness are your highest priorities.

You need your allies' maps and scouting more than ever. Your armies are too small to fight any but the least defended pop centers and knowledge of their location and condition is vital. In ME 1650 most camps and villages were snubbed but in 2950 they are often the difference between survival and bankruptcy!

Early aggressive play is both the key to victory and enjoyment of this scenario. True, you will be on the edge of bankruptcy or military elimination for the first ten turns or so, but, so what! The gains are more than worth the risks involved. Besides, why spend all that money if you forego that knot in the pit of your stomach or that steely taste of anticipation while awaiting the arrival of your turn results?

To fully experience 2950 we must put away our natural tendency to build our nations up to 1650 standards and work effectively with what we have. Re-learn artifact and character management to improve our military and utilize our nation's strengths because they play a far more prominent role than in 1650. Those weaknesses you perceive in your nation also exists in your enemy's nations. Exploit them to the max.

I have no doubt that a high level of struggle and aggression can be maintained by most nations in 2950 indefinitely. Those players who find the start "boring" are still mired in circa 1650 concepts and must shed those concepts in order to give this a fair try. Anyway, that's my humble opinion. Any who disagree may feel free to blast away. I love a good fight!

## **Standby vs Transfer--Assuming a Position in ME-PBM**

Many players have asked GSI to explain the difference between a "standby" appointment and a "transfer" appointment for position replacements in Middle-earth PBM, and why a player might be declined for such appointments. The question is a good one because these two methods of acquiring control of a ME-PBM position are similar yet importantly different.

A "transfer" appointment for a position is usually initiated at the request of the current controlling player. This typically occurs when the current player is unable to continue participation, yet wants to see his/her efforts in the game continue, usually to ensure the continued success of their team in the game.

However, position transfers are subject to the approval of GSI. This approval process is intended to ensure that our basic game policies (see your House Rules and Procedures) are not violated by intentional (or unintentional)

abuse of those policies. Any violations found will force GSI to decline the proposed player for the position transfer and result in GSI suggesting an alternate player be proposed. When approved, please note that all transfer positions are appointed "as is" and without any free turns.

The review of such transfer involves looking at several possible violation areas. However, we are typically looking for instances where the proposed player is playing (or has already played) in that game, where the addition of the proposed player will result in an alliance in the game that is larger than permitted (two for single-player games, five for team games), or where possible questions of actual neutrality can be raised for Neutral positions. These are not the only areas, but most declined transfer of positions are due to the above concerns.

The only exception to the above is applied in grudge games. In such games, we tend to be more lenient with regard to position transfers since the teams need to be very coordinated and frequently the team concerns outweigh the individual player issues. However, a player will still not be allowed to play two positions in the same game unless such practices were allowed by both sides at the beginning of game play.

A "standby" appointment for a position is usually initiated by GSI, but can be at the request of the current controlling player if they have no one in mind to transfer the position to. This typically occurs when a player is unable to continue participation and contacts GSI, or when a position has been inactive for 3 consecutive missed turns, in which case the inactivity is assumed.

During the first 12 turns of the game, GSI will consider a standby player as soon as the position is determined to be inactive - this can occur right away if the player contacts GSI, or after 3 missed turns ('special service' turns do count as 'missed' turns). Next, if (in the opinion of GSI) the position is viable and needed to maintain allegiance balance in the game (i.e., not Neutral), then the position will be solicited for a standby player.

GSI maintains a list of such players and can contact them by phone, and posts the list of available standby positions on each turn's resultsheets. Furthermore, players are welcome to contact GSI directly to see what positions are available for their consideration. As a result, standby positions rarely stay on our lists more than a week.

Please note that all standby positions are appointed "as is" and without disclosing the game number (unknown until the first turn actually reaches the player), but does come with two free turns (and a Nation Information Sheet) to enable the player to determine (at no risk to themselves) if the position is viable for them.

The only exception to the above is applied in grudge games. In such games, we typically contact the grudge team leader and ask them if they wish to secure their own replacement. If they do, then matters are handled pretty much just like a transfer of position. However, a player will still not be allowed to play two

positions in the same game unless such practices were allowed by both sides at the beginning of game play.

Please note that GSI may not circumvent the rights of the controlling player to determine the fate of their position. This means that if the current player is not available or uncooperative, then GSI may have no choice but to allow the full compliment of missed turns to expire before action can be taken with regard to a replacement player. Also, if a position is appointed, either transfer or standby, and the new player has not played in ME-PBM or that scenario before, then the necessary rulebooks and maps will be required to start play.

We hope the above descriptions will clarify how GSI handles instances of position replacement. We try very hard to ensure that these replacements occur smoothly, and as swiftly as possible, while at the same time ensuring that all players will continue to be allowed to play and enjoy the game as fully as GSI can allow.

The Emissary: More than Just an Economic Tool  
by Greg Shaffer

Abstract:

Recent articles in Whispers implied that the Mage is the most underrated character in Middle-earth. The emissary character class is not only underrated, but is often used with poor efficiency and little imagination.

This article will begin by touching briefly on the more obvious benefits of making emissaries. Towards the end of the article, however, I hope to shed light on some of the less commonly used emissary abilities, and perhaps to convince some players to hire emissaries past the point of merely surviving economically.

Introduction:

Why emissaries? Well, for those of you who insist on playing ME-PBM to win, let's examine the four primary victory conditions.

Population Centers: Emissaries are the quickest way to improve the number and size of your population centers.

Wealth: Emissaries have more to do with wealth than any other character class.

Armies: By using emissaries to create an economically powerful nation, you can support unbelievable numbers of troops.

Characters: Most worthwhile emissary orders give a skill increase of 1 to 10 points, making emissaries competitive for building a strong character base. Additionally, an economically powerful nation is sure to always be able to hire characters as soon as they become available, and will also be able to hire as many multi-classed characters as desired, adding to the potential for character growth.

Additionally, emissaries can help with some of the individual victory conditions. They can transfer, influence away, or rebuild population centers which your nation covets. Also, emissaries can place mountain camps for those nations wishing to hoard mithril.

Finally, remember that nations are eliminated from play either by bankruptcy or by losing their last remaining major town or city (not counting those players who give up and quit). Rarely, if ever, does a nation get eliminated from play because all of its characters are dead or held captive. Emissaries can help you to make sure that you will neither go bankrupt nor run out of major towns and cities. They can also be used to help make your enemies go bankrupt and run out of major towns and cities (by influencing away their holdings).

I think you will see that emissaries are beneficial regardless of whether you are in the game to win as an individual, to win as a team, or just to have fun!

#### Which nations should hire emissaries? When? How many?

Obviously, some nations should place more importance on emissaries than others. Some nations make 40 point emissaries, which is an obvious benefit (Quiet Avenger, Northmen). Other nations are faced with a strong likelihood of being driven out of their original holdings (Dragon Lord, Eothraim, Rhudaur). These nations are faced with three options: 1) Become disheartened and quit the game, ruining it not only for yourself, but also for your allies; 2) Draw resources from your allies, which not only deprives them from those resources, but makes them less effective as they spend orders supporting you; or 3) Continually rebuild yourself elsewhere with emissaries to frustrate your enemies again and again.

Still other nations hire armies for free (Fire King, Cardolan) and have the possibility of creating and improving countless population centers all over the world in very strategic, unexpected places (e.g., off-map hexes one turn's march from an opponent's capital). At these locations, these nations can hire and recruit armies very effectively at no initial cost (other nations can do this too, at the slight cost of hiring an army). In my opinion, it is criminally negligent for either of these two nations to not be a powerful emissary nation.

And, of course, all nations can benefit from economic growth, but some need it more desperately than others (Eothraim, Dragon Lord, Woodmen).

Even nations which need to focus on other characters, such as the many Dark Servant nations with agent-making advantages, should consider making emissaries early in the game. Emissaries are powerful additions to agent companies (see "Double Agents" below). Agents with extra orders can also issue "Scout Population Center" (a miscellaneous order), alerting your (or your ally's) emissaries to enemy population centers with low loyalties. If you make 40 point agents but don't start with any, make sure you have one agent at the start, but consider hiring the rest of your initial characters as emissaries. Then on turn six when you've trained an agent up to 40, focus mainly on agents thereafter.

Another reason for making your emissaries early is because this is the best time to train them into productive characters. Most other characters can train themselves up just as easily in the early or late game. However, the best way to train up an emissary is to place camps every turn for a 1 to 10 skill increase, which also obviously benefits your economy when it is most needed, early in the game (and continues to support your economy throughout the game). Later in the game camps may become increasingly difficult to make, to the point that a

newly hired 30 (or even 40) point emissary would not become productive for a long time and would be a waste of resources.

The two nations which can create 40 emissaries (Northmen, Quiet Avenger) would of course be wise to create one emissary at first, and get that emissary up to 40 points by turn six when more characters become available. Meanwhile, other needed characters can be made, such as 3 agents for the Quiet Avenger (who starts with plenty of command and mage skill, but could use more agents to benefit from the double scouting).

Multi-classed emissaries can also be beneficial. Emissary/commanders perform well as company commanders for either agent or emissary companies. They could train themselves up by recruiting and improving loyalties at the same time, graduating to placing camps and improving population centers, then eventually to commanding a company as skills increase.

Emissary/mages can accomplish similar emissary orders while doing mage activities as well. Also, if they are in a company, they can perform mage duties and place camps at the same time.

Emissary/agents can be extremely effective, although they may take a long unproductive while to train up to an adequate level. See the section on double agents.

#### Camp Placement:

Whispers has already published articles on camp placement, so I'll just make a couple of notes here. Using newly hired emissaries with skill ranks in the low 30s to hire camps is a gamble because at this skill level the emissary might succeed in making the camp, say, 50 percent of the time. Also, of course, the camp will have low loyalty. If the gamble works, it is very beneficial because the emissary gets a great skill increase and is likely to continue to be successful and both place a lot of camps and improve the emissary skill quickly. However, if the emissary fails it gets no skill increase, making the next attempt just as likely to fail and again get no skill increase.

If you don't like gambling, the surest (and most conservative) remedy would be to improve your population center loyalties (an automatic skill increase of 1 to 5) until the emissary rank is in the high 30s or so, using the spare order for capital orders or whatever. A good "middle of the road" approach would be to have half of your new emissaries out trying to make camps, and half of them getting the sure increase by improving loyalties. Whichever of your camp-placing fail for a couple of turns can be replaced by the emissaries who have trained themselves up the safe way, and the unlucky emissaries can go back to your capital to improve its loyalty and get back on track.

As an aside, I believe that improving loyalties is generally a waste of time other than for the purpose of training up brand new emissaries for a couple of turns only. The only other good reason I can think of for improving loyalties is if you have a population center in danger of degrading (and don't want to deal with it by reducing your taxes).

One enjoyable part of wandering around placing camps in the wild is that you are more likely to have encounters than most other characters. This can be interesting or beneficial, but it is also sometimes deadly. I would suggest that if you have an extremely important character who happens to have emissary rank (e.g., Elrond), and you want to use the character's emissary skill for placing camps, then put the character in a company. This not only frees up an extra order for the important character (because someone else is issuing the movement orders), but it also allows another less important character in the

company to step up and react to any deadly encounters in place of the important character (even if your company only has two characters).

Speaking of encounters, dragons are likely to be encountered in certain mountainous areas such as the Misty Mountains (north and south of the Dwarves' capital at 2212) and the Withered Heath (the two mountain spurs in the extreme north). I find it extremely negligent for any Dark Servant team to not occupy every single hex in these areas with camps as soon as possible. Not only can the dragons be recruited into armies, but they will also improve your loyalties, making it easy to improve these population centers later. Mountain havens are great places to build up a nation, because they are harder to reach with armies, and because many of these areas are not on anyone's map.

In most games at some point camp placement becomes nearly impossible (though it can become possible again, so try from time to time if you like). By this time, your emissaries should be trained highly enough to accomplish other things. . .

#### Improving Population Centers:

There is more to this than the obvious benefit to your economy. Improving camps placed in strategic areas can provide invaluable and unexpected recruiting bases. And, improving your population centers benefits your military conquests in two ways: One, by providing more revenue to support your troops. Secondly, by providing more places to recruit from (and more theaters to recruit into, if you've been imaginative in your camp placement). This is especially important for nations which start the game with limited recruiting bases (e.g., Long Rider).

Improving population centers can also provide you with relatively safe places to relocate your capital in unexpected or remote areas. There are even a few areas which are unassailable by armies, navies, or both. There are also many locations that are possible, but darned inconvenient to attack with troops and even characters if the location is remote enough.

Another common but wasteful (in my opinion) tactic is that of using companies to improve population centers. This is usually done by having the lower level emissaries train themselves by boosting the loyalty of the population center, and having one of the better emissaries improve it. The idea, I think, is to make it easier to improve the population center while also training the lower level emissaries.

I think this is inefficient for several reasons. If you've made your emissaries early and trained them by making camps, they should be powerful enough to start improving population centers without having a cast of characters as assistants. The many camps you've created can all be improved. If you're eager to improve your larger population centers to towns, major towns, and cities instead of just improving camps to villages, keep these two scenarios in mind:

1) You *could* use all of your emissaries in a company to attempt a single larger population center increase (which may or may not gain you more revenue than making several smaller increases). This would give a good training increase to one of your emissaries, and a small increase to the rest.

2) Or you could have *all* of your emissaries raise camps to villages for a turn or two, which would increase all of their skills to where they could improve villages to towns for a turn or two. Then your emissaries are powerful enough that each and every one of them can improve population centers to major towns or cities each and every turn for the rest of the game, even if these population centers have mediocre loyalties. The benefits of patiently but aggressively

building emissary skill far outweigh any benefit from trying to get ahead economically in the short run.

This is especially at issue for the Dark Servants, who don't start with any major towns and are tempted to get paranoid about short-term economic matters. However, the better Dark Servant emissaries should be using the Middle-earth's two emissary artifacts (which start in the hands of the Dark Servants) to make towns into major towns each and every turn from now until forever. When one nation runs out of towns, transfer the artifact to another nation. This should allow the Dark Servants to create viable capitals faster than the Free Peoples can destroy them.

#### Influencing Enemy Population Centers:

I am of the opinion that influencing enemy camps and villages is a waste of time with the possible exception of very important locations such as camps with known massive gold production, road blocking fortifications, or dragon populated areas.

I am also of the opinion that using emissaries alone, taking several turns to take a small population center, is not only dangerous but is a waste of time unless you know for a fact that you can succeed in a single turn and you have nothing better to do than utterly devastate your enemies by taking a camp or village away from them.

It is also wasteful to use emissaries against defunct nations to gather their holdings "before anyone else gets them" when you have active enemies nearby who are just as vulnerable to the 525 order. This is true unless you know for a fact that the defunct nation has extremely low loyalties. Personally I would love to see my enemies spend turns influencing away an inactive nation's holdings instead of attacking me.

Instead of plodding along like this, steadily wasting the resources of your nation for little gain, try having some imagination with your emissaries! If you're a Free People about to land at the Morannon (3221) with an army, don't let them predict your movements and assassinate or kidnap all your army commanders in hex 3222 (Carach Angren)! Send an emissary company to 3222 on the same turn and move right through the fortified population center (new yours) the next turn!

If you are a neutral, or just gained a neutral as an enemy, chances are not everyone has downgraded with you yet. Go emissary their holdings away from them right from underneath their army! The 525 order clearly states that only armies who "consider your nation an enemy" can prevent you from influencing away their holdings.

Have your (or an ally's) agents with spare orders do "scout population center" on enemy holdings to find out where some of the easy (or difficult) targets are.

Follow a powerful agent company around from time to time, entering a hex that previously had armies recruiting in it. Suddenly your enemy not only finds himself relieved of several characters and an army, but of the population center as well (at no loss of troops to you)! This is very significant when you're faced with the task of relieving an enemy of a population center with lots of fortifications - it would take many troops and war machines (which means many resources and many character orders) to do the same thing that a good emissary company can accomplish in a turn or two. This is also sometimes the only way to remove a stubborn enemy from a population center which is placed where it can't be attacked with troops.

If you have enough combined emissary skill (or a multi-national company) you can even try this at an opponent's capital. In any case, combine your emissaries to take cities, major towns, and towns; not camps or villages.

#### Recruiting Double Agents:

I firmly believe that this is one of the most unappreciated orders in the game. Mage-oriented players routinely spend orders each and every turn (Reveal Character, Reveal Mission) to get information which is only part of what having a double agent has to offer. Getting a double agent only takes one order, and then the information just keeps coming until the character dies, is re-double agented, or is counter-espionaged (which few players bother to do). Admittedly, it can be harder to get a specific character you are wanting to track double-agented, and most emissaries can't double-agent very well early in the game.

However, double agenting has several other benefits as well. By learning what orders a character has issued, you can gain all sorts of information you weren't even looking for. You could learn the location of an enemy's capital, their best agent company, or a hidden recruiting base. You could learn a lot about an enemy's strategy, style of play, and the state of affairs in that nation. You could find out when the nation goes out of play or misses a turn. You could find out that a nation just sent all of its mounts and leather to a certain hex, that they just made 50 war machines, are about ready to repair a bridge, or that they lost all their ships at sea and you have free reign over the waters. The potential wealth of information, and what you can do with it, is unbelievable.

Another benefit of double agents is that they won't try to harm your nation. If a double-agented emissary or agent shows up where your characters or population centers are, then you can rest assured that your opponent is wasting valuable time doing little damage to you.

#### Double Agents: How Can I Get Me Some?

The problem is in obtaining the double agents in the first place. This is one reason why I suggest that even the heavily agent-oriented nations make some emissaries. Putting a powerful emissary or two in an agent company allows you to go into a hex where you'll know who the opponents are (from your scout for characters). You can take your pick of which ones to kill and which ones to double agent, both to gain the information source and to protect your characters (the double agent order comes before any enemy characters try to assassinate or kidnap you).

For similar reasons, I suggest putting one agent in an emissary company mainly for scouting purposes. This is both to identify potential double agent targets, and to find out if your emissaries need to refuse challenges and get out of the area. If the coast is clear, you know that they can do something else with their orders, and the company commander can do more than just refuse challenges and move the company. The agent can also scout population centers (a miscellaneous order) as you arrive, letting you know whether you can hope to get the population center on the first turn of influencing (and then move on!) or if you need to stay in the hex for more than one turn.

#### Transferring Population Centers:

Emissary skill can be used to strategically transfer population centers around with allies. Apart from providing backup capitals when needed, this can provide valuable recruiting bases, economic assistance, or safe havens. For

example, the Cloud Lord has neither the orders nor the priority to recruit at many of its towns inside Mordor - but the Fire King could greatly benefit from using these for additional recruiting and for economic assistance. It is also much more efficient to give an ally in need of economic help a spare town or two and be done with it, rather than spending orders every turn transferring gold or supplies to them.

Another example: if Cardolan and Arthedain eliminate the Witch King, why not have Northern Gondor give these nations a town or major town or two closer to Mordor so these nations can make a difference up front sometime before the fourth age!? Northern Gondor often can't hope to recruit at all of its holdings anyway, which opens these population centers up to conquest by the enemy. Better to give population centers away to allies than enemies.

A third example: the Eothraim, commonly targeted heavily by agents, could benefit from having a new capital somewhere in an unexpected place, even if the Eothraim major towns aren't in immediate danger from armies. The economic assistance could work wonders for the Eothraim as well.

#### Miscellaneous Benefits of Emissaries:

1) If you've just driven the Haradwaith out of the game, capturing 6 cities, 4 major towns, and 5 towns from the poor player, chances are most of the remaining population centers have loyalties which are pretty low. Your emissaries might be able to pick up some decent population centers, one per turn per emissary, without loss to your armies and before your enemies can get them. However, as I stated earlier, I believe this is a waste of time unless you know the loyalties to be quite low, the location is very strategically important, or you happen to know that the Haradwaith just shipped 10,000 mounts and 20,000 leather to a certain population center (from one of your double agent reports!). Again, it is generally more efficient to spend your orders doing harm to someone who is trying to harm you in return.

2) Only emissaries can bribe/recruit characters into your force. If a nation like the Dragon Lord is driven out of the game, it would be a terrible detriment to the Dark Servants if they didn't have the emissaries to pick up these massive characters.

3) Emissaries are also the only ones who can raise harbors and ports. If you've blown all your harbors for protection's sake, or lost them in combat, or fear to place yourself in the path of enemy agents, *but* you still need to rebuild a destroyed navy, then try building a port at a population center that didn't exist at game start and is off everyone's map. No one would know, until it is too late, that the "nation without a navy" (you) was suddenly once again dominant in the seas.

4) Finally, the usually worthless "Uncover Secrets" order does, once in a while, tell you something interesting - such as whether another nation is in or out of the game.

As a parting shot, remember that if you don't make enough emissaries, your enemies (and your allies) will have all of these unreciprocated powers over you!

## The Hall Of Heroes

Game #100 - Free Peoples: #4, #9, & #8

Sunlight glinting off the tallest spires, the kingdom of the Arthedain has once again risen to the former heights of prestige and glory that it had once known. Bolstered by the support of the Sinda and the Dwarves, the Arthedain have swept all traces of evil from Middle-earth. The shadows have lifted, the battles have ceased, and Sauron has been vanquished. For now . . .

Final standings are as follows:

#4 - Arthedain: 2350

#9 - Sinda Elves: 2217

#8 - Dwarves: 2167

Top Dark Servant: #19 - Long Rider: 983

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Argeleb II/Arthedain: 256

Highest Net Commander Rank - Argeleb II/Arthedain: 230

Highest Net Agent Rank - Farret/Sinda Elves: 125

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Glimfor/Éothraim: 125

Highest Net Mage Rank - Malbeth/Arthedain: Uirdik/Éothraim: 199

Most Mithril - Sinda Elves: 3883

Most Artifacts - Arthedain: 28

Most Kills - Dwarves: 19

Congratulations to the Free Peoples!

Game #105 - Dark Servants: #12, #11, & #24

Gazing down from a high stone balcony, Khamûl reflected on the shadowy depths of the fishpond. In the shallows, silvery minnows schooled like fallen slivers of purest moonlight. Much like the Free Peoples that had once troubled him so, he mused. How they had resisted! At this thought, his features creased in a rare smile. The horrible deaths of Uirdiks and Mahrcared had been all the more satisfying, given their ceaseless toiling against his every effort. The school of minnows, no doubt following the lead of one of their more guileless members, began to drift toward the center of the pool that had come to represent so much to the Dragon Lord. In the depths something stirred, and the sudden movement of a murky shadow was the only warning given before the surface exploded in a shower of crystalline droplets. Jewels of water and frantic minnows rained back to the surface of the pond. Ah, thought Khamûl. Such is life.

Final standings are as follows:

#12 - Dragon Lord: 2250

#11 - Witch-king: 2050

#24 - Rhudaur: 1967

Top Free People: #3 - Éothraim: 925

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Morlammen/Long Rider: 186

Highest Net Commander Rank - Raugwath/Dragon Lord: 136

Highest Net Agent Rank - Dfn Ohtar/Long Rider: 118

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Chandradai/Dark Lieutenants: 108

Highest Net Mage Rank - Morlammen/Long Rider: 166

Most Mithril - Rhudaur: 2154

Most Artifacts - Dragon Lord: 23

Most Kills - Corsairs: 13

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

## The Hall Of Heroes

Game #109 - Free Peoples: #8, #1, & #3

In a cold, dark cavern deep beneath the surface, the sound of a distant chant and the ring of steel-shod boots on stone grew louder. A huge spider skittered across the cavern floor, fleeing the cacophony of a troupe of heavily armed and armored dwarves as they marched in tight formations across the underground cave. They bowed a dwarven victory chant in rolling, basso voices, and marched with pride in their step. At the head of their army stomped Regent Dwalin, resplendent in glittering mithril armor and toting a massive warhammer. At the rear of the baggage train, a wheeled cage was pulled by stout dwarven warriors. Óvatha himself hissed at any who drew too near, promising a painful death in his gaze alone. The Free had triumphed over Sauron's lapdogs and the Dwarves, Woodmen, and Éothraim were the most directly responsible.

Final standings are as follows:

#8 - Dwarves: 2350

#1 - Woodmen: 2250

#3 - Éothraim: 1867

Top Dark Servant: #19 - Long Rider: 1075

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Beneoracer/Woodmen: 261

Highest Net Commander Rank - Beneoracer/Woodmen: 197

Highest Net Agent Rank - Kella/Dwarves: 100

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Meave/Dunlendings: 125

Highest Net Mage Rank - Elrond/Sinda Elves: 176

Most Mithril - Dwarves: 5025

Most Artifacts - Dwarves Sinda Elves: 32

Most Kills - Dunlendings: 18

Congratulations to the Free Peoples!

Game #161 - Dark Servants: #25, #11, & #20

Chuckling gleefully, Tros Hesnef reclined in a plush throne in his recently-constructed tower. Stretched out before him on a stout oak table was a carefully-sketched map of all Middle-earth. Having recently been coronated Emperor of the East, he fawned over the map much these days. Sauron had promised him much in return for his aid in conquering the Free, and Tros Hesnef had indeed been well rewarded. The only remaining Free Nations were the Dunlendings and the Noldo, and they lived in fear . . .

Final standings are as follows:

#25 - Easterlings: 2300

#11 - Witch-king: 2017

#20 - Dark Lieutenants: 1917

Top Free People: #23 - Dunlendings: 750

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Shoglic/Cloud Lord: 258

Highest Net Commander Rank - Ashdurbuk Zalq/Witch-king: 145

Highest Net Agent Rank - Hugar/Dark Lieutenants: 106

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Desparado/Easterlings: 92

Highest Net Mage Rank - Shoglic/Cloud Lord: 223

Most Mithril - Dunlendings: 2503

Most Artifacts - Cloud Lord: 24

Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 33

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

## The Hall Of Heroes

Game #166 - Dark Servants: #11, #20, #15

In a show of resolve typical of the Free Peoples, Celdrahil did not resist or beg for mercy as he was led onto a high wooden platform by Múrazór's slaving guards. He did not flinch at the sight of the headman's block, did not react to the people's lunatic screams for his blood, the sound of stone on steel as the headman sharpened his axe, or anything else. Much to the dismay of the guards, his eyes remained open even as the blade descended, and he died nobly. As droplets of blood spattered on the surrounding ground, a great and terrible thing happened. Slowly at first, the ground began to tremble. Amidst the crowd's cries of terror and confusion, the tremors grew in magnitude, throwing everyone to the ground and shaking the wooden stage to pieces. The last bastion of good on Middle-earth had fallen, the last hero had died. All was lost . . .

Final standings are as follows:

#11 - Witch-king: 2083  
#20 - Dark Lieutenants: 1867  
#15 - Blind Sorcerer: 1792

Top Free People: #7 - Southern Gondor: 500

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Bulrakur/Dog Lord: 231  
Highest Net Commander Rank - Bulrakur/Dog Lord: 206  
Highest Net Agent Rank - Tormog/Dark Lieutenants: 118  
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Ulrac/Witch-king: 107  
Highest Net Mage Rank - Ashburgn0l/Dog Lord: 167  
Most Mithril - Dark Lieutenants: 683  
Most Artifacts - Dog Lord: 21  
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 21

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

ME 2950

Playtest Game #2 - The Dark Servants: #21, #12 & #14

With a bang of the gavel, the meeting of Sangarunya and his closest advisors, aides and lieutenants ended. As everyone else stood and filed out of the room, he remained, lost in thought. From the reports he'd just received, everything was going well. With the help of the Dragon Lord and the Cloud Lord, all of the Free had been exterminated but one: the Northmen alone managed to elude him still. Reminded by the ever-present warmth, Sangarunya glanced down at the platinum ring that adorned his left ring finger. To most it seemed a petty bauble, but the huge black sapphire that it supported held the souls of the remaining nine Free Peoples. Every now and then, a light flashed through it, as if a reflection of the light. But Sangarunya knew the truth: it was all that was left of it.

Final Standings are as follows:

#21 - Corsairs: 2400  
#12 - Dragon Lord: 2350  
#14 - Cloud Lord: 2050

Top Free People: #2 - Northmen: 1075

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Celedhring/Corsairs: 242  
Highest Net Commander Rank - Gaskbuz/Dragon Lord: 139  
Highest Net Agent Rank - Carrog/Corsairs: 87  
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Varnack/Cloud Lord: 96  
Highest Net Mage Rank - Celedhring/Corsairs: 180  
Most Mithril - Cloud Lord: 2930  
Most Artifacts - Dragon Lord: 23  
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 31

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

## The Hall Of Heroes

Game #11 - Dark Servants: #13, #17, #21

An unnatural shadow looms over all of Middle-earth; the heroes have died and the Dog Lord, with the help of the Quiet Avenger and the once-neutral Corsairs, has proven victorious. The once Free Peoples of Middle-earth are simple slaves now, and live in fear of Sauron's minions. Children cannot play outside, farmers barely receive enough of their own produce to survive, and Sauron's control is complete.

Final standings are as follows:

#13 - Dog Lord: 1975  
#17 - Quiet Avenger: 1917  
#21 - Corsairs: 1850

Top Free People: #9 - Sinda Elves: 650

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Bulrakur/Dog Lord: 179  
Highest Net Commander Rank - Bulrakur/Dog Lord: 154  
Highest Net Agent Rank - Angacor0/Long Rider: 106  
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Pukah/Dark Lieutenants: 92  
Highest Net Mage Rank - Galadriel/Sinda Elves: 162  
Most Mithril - Quiet Avenger: 2385  
Most Artifacts - Noldo Elves: 19  
Most Kills - Dog Lord Cloud Lord: 12

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #22 - The Free Peoples: #6, #24 & #4

Ecthelion II looked over his war torn land and sighed. All the blood, all the pain, all the suffering endured by his people: he shook his head wearily. It was a mighty burden on his soul, but one he shouldered proudly, as the dreaded Dark Lord was finally a threat no more! Together with the brave Rangers to the north and the conversion of Saruman to the Light, the Free were finally able to shed the dark cloak of fear spread over the land by Sauron and his minions. The Nine lay broken on battle fields and the Mouth was wired shut. Ecthelion II could finally sleep in peace as a new era dawned in Middle-earth.

Final Standings are as follows:

#6 - Northern Gondor: 2200  
#24 - White Wizard: 1875  
#4 - Dúnadan Rangers: 1750

Top Dark Servant: #19 - Long Rider: 825

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Galadriel/Sinda Elves: 230  
Highest Net Commander Rank - Aragorn II/Dúnadan Rangers: 147  
Highest Net Agent Rank - Din Ohtar/Long Rider: 107  
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Saruman the White/White Wizard: 85  
Highest Net Mage Rank - Galadriel/Sinda Elves: 176  
Most Mithril - White Wizard: 1144  
Most Artifacts - Northern Gondor: 24  
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 1

Congratulations to the Free Peoples!