

WHISPERS OF THE WOOD



JIM PIGTAIN ©1995

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WORDS FROM THE WOOD

Well, there's so much happening in the news these days that it's difficult to know just where to start. You know what would help? A nice, tall glass of O.J. That's right, some nice, fresh O.J. in, say, a bloody sock. Yeah, that'd hit the spot just right. While I'm drinking this nice, fresh O.J. in a bloody sock, I think I'll hop in the old Bronco and head down Mexico way. Not that I'd be running away from anything, mind you. It's just such a nice day for a drive. You know what I'll need for my little drive? A nice pair of gloves. That'll make me look slick--I'd make a killing if I were a famous T.V. celebrity. Just have to watch out for any drug dealers who want to put me in the correct FRAME of mind. Can't be too careful, now. It sounds like fun--want to come along?

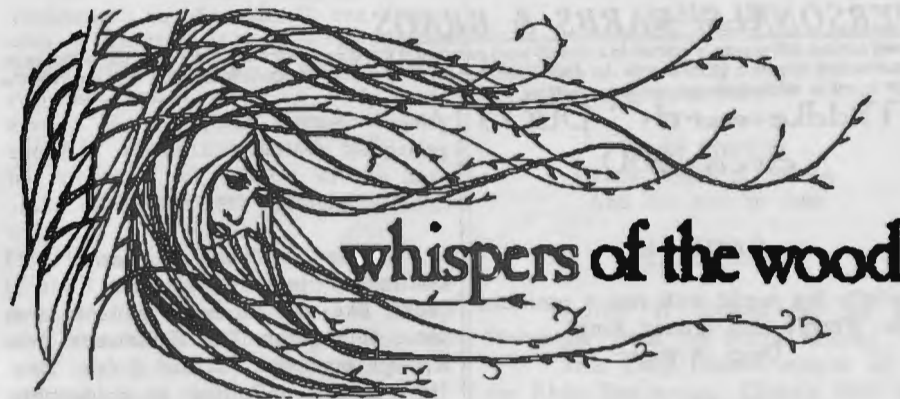
Not too much to talk about this month, so we'll get right to it. First, we'd like to say that the AOL conference we've been having every Tuesday night will no longer be held--unless we get some requests from you, the erstwhile players. We'd like to make this a forum for discussing ME-PBM, GSI, our future plans and any questions you might have. In order to do this, we'd like to include you in the discussions. So let's hear it--do you net surfers want to attend something like this? If so, let us know.

Next, it's time for a submission plug. We have been getting some very good submissions for this little rag, but we'd like to see even more! This is your opportunity to put down your little nuggets of ME-PBM wisdom in words--and you can get free stuff! For every strategy article written, the author is awarded a free set up in A NEW GAME!! That's right, Johnny, the prize for writing a strategy article is a free set up. Behind door number two, we have a free turn for every story &/or poem that is published. We want to make this an enjoyable and useful magazine and to do that, we need your help. So send in those hot little submissions you have sitting on your computer!

Lastly, we currently have a one week all email grudge game pending and they're looking for some worthy opponents. The team is proposing to play with a 5 man team each playing two positions, so this isn't your typical grudge game. If you have a team of 5 that would like a crack at playing a grudge team (each player playing two positions!), you can contact Glen Godard for details. His email address is GL Godard@AOL.com. His phone number is (505) 265-6100. Those of you who are interested should get into contact with Glen to set up the details.

As I said at the beginning, not much to talk about this month, so I'll bow out and let you get on to the reading. Until next month, remember to always keep your swords sharp and your wits sharper.

Stuart



ALONG THE PATHWAYS

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This Month's Cover: "Entering the List" by Jim Pigtain

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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 119

Awfully big world with just 4 positions left. Where's that dratted Ring?
Quiet Avenger

GAME 125

Contest of Champions

The stakes have risen. The One Ring has been found. Unfortunately, the Freeps found it. Showdown coming at Barad-dûr and this time it's for everything.

Zarendarger (15)

GAME 177

Sarkar,
Be sure to write your mommy a letter saying "Good Bye." The boys are on your trail.

Ice King

GAME 178

Greenwood is Free! Long Rider has reared his ugly head but it is skinned as he ducks back down. Onwards to Mordor and to finish this once and for all!

Zarendarger (4)

GAME 180

The nominees for this month's dunce award are:

The Haradwaith for losing 3328 troops at Isigir.

The Haradwaith for losing 4250 troops, 16 warships and 17 transports at sea.

The Haradwaith for leaving the Corsairs with a navy and 2600 troops.

And the winner is:
The Haradwaith.

Phew! What a game! 27 continuous turns of combat, but it looks like this arrogant snos/dreamer came out on top. The Haradwaith were a tough opponent, but had 1 fatal flaw. He was the definition of predictable. Oh, and Carlon, looks like I caught a few shadows.

Teldûmeir
Lord of Corsairs

GAME 181

Hallas,
Big mistake coming to Mordor. In the future, please bring more troops and more characters.

Carlon
Shah of all Harondor
Lord of Middle-earth

GAME 184

Ovatha II of Khand,
Your time grows short. Soon you will have moved on to the afterlife where, hopefully, your rewards will be greater. Enjoy it while you can.

Eoder
Iron Fist of the North

The mage gazed intently into his crystal ball.

"What do you see?" asked the Drifter, who was pacing slowly nearby.

"Nothing. This damn thing is full of bright white dots and lines."

The Drifter strode over and slapped the ball sharply on its side. "Better?"

"Oh yea, here we go. I see Ji struggling over a book . . . it says

'dictionary' on its side. I see Duran with a handful of papers all saying 'funds overdue.' I see Ovatha rolling two dice and coming up with snake eyes. I see the Quiet Avenger wishing she had worked harder on preparing her armies. I see Mordor with a huge cloud of smoke from burning buildings over it."

"Anything else?"

"I see the Free nations of the west sending huge quantities of money and material in appreciation for the river of our nation's blood which has protected their realm for so long."

"Are you sure?"

"Ooops, must be one of those 1-900 fantasy lines breaking in on my reception again."

High Plains Drifter

GAME 186

Welcome "Carnage." I look forward to your feeble attempts at war. They should be a pleasant change from the inept armies we have fought (slaughtered) so far. Your agents have been disappointing as well. Though you have killed a couple of my followers, it is less than I would have expected. T'will be embarrassing for you when I end up with most kills, don't you think?

Nightspawn

Helcent:

You asked for it, now you've got it. The struggle for Mirkwood begins. It's a shame the elves have fled, my troops do so love their sweet taste on an open fire. Oh well. The Woodmen and Rhudaur will have to do. Bon Appetit.

Ûvatha
Lord of Rhûn

GAME 188

Celdrahil,

I'm coming for YOU!

Jí Indûr

Royal Procurer

Grand House of Sauron

And All Around Pest

GAME 190

Ovatha II looked up as the Messenger from the North entered.

"Sire, Lord Hesnef reports all of the Rhûn Sea secure. Captain Ney and Lord Nazrog have captured Rhubar. The Sinda Elves have been dealt with. They await further orders!"

Ovatha smiled a thin smile. "Tell my Lords that the West awaits them. Let them not disappoint the West!"

The unenlightened struggle to shore up their lands against our dark tide. Yet, the Iron Hills have fallen and Troll war cries echo beneath the withering leaves of Mirkwood. The tide rises, as one mighty defender follows another into the shadowy depths of death. Gondor weeps for her many fallen heroes and the treacherous Harad pay a debt of blood.

Ûrzahil

GAME 191

The Proud Nation of the Easterlings are still in the struggle against the vile and contemptible forces of Sauron. Though it is a tough spot, we will never give up, and we WILL see the Light shine all over Middle-earth.

GAME 192

"Sorrow filled him when his brother fell asleep never to wake again. Beaten, battered, and decimated with no help seen, he went on and stood for the last fight. As the killing

blow fell he heard a horn. Was it death or help coming?"

excerpts from the book of
"Gondorian Tales"

GAME 194

As of September 23 the Lord of Assassins, Jí Indûr, is officially married. To celebrate this grand occasion the grand executions of Taurnil and Thrar III shall take place at Kâl Nargil during the reception. All Nazgul are invited to attend this grand occasion.

Jí Indûr
Lord of Assassins

GAME 197

"These plainsmen are dropping like flies," growled the great War Troll Bulrakur, clearly annoyed at the lack of enemies to fight. He paused to pour himself a mug of frothy elf's blood (otherwise known as Barad-dûr Extra Old), before turning once again to his officers. "And what's more, their puny commanders flee at the first sign of danger! Who will face Thunder's Edge?"

The half-orc Kaldûrmeir, while a formidable warrior (and able tactician) in his own right, knew not to speak without permission. But a young Orc captain with yellow fangs muttered something about the Northmen.

"Snaga!" yelled Bulrakur, as his back-hand took the sub-commander in the mouth and knocked him right off his feet. Evidently the Olog war-leader was still miffed at the loss of Buhr Ailgra to Northmen treachery. At the same time, however, a wicked smile drew across his fanged face. "Kaldûrmeir! Take your warg-riders and burn the last of these Éothraim huts to the ground." He looked down at the young Orc (who was rubbing his jaw and spitting up blood, a mixture of fear and hatred in his eyes). "Get up! We're heading east!"

Hail Wormlord!

Bain, you are a short, fat, hairy, greasy, dirt-dwelling bag of puss! You have won at Caras Galadon but Goblin Gate still stands (and it is turn eight)!

Khamul
The Black Easterling

GAME 201

South Gondor sends its condolences to Sauron over the demise of Jí Indûr. Sorry, but he had to go!

Next stop? Who knows. When I figure that out I'll let you know.

Regards,
Celdrahl

GAME 203

Mûrazôr the loudmouth,

Doom comes swiftly for Angmar.

A fitting end for inept leadership.

Báin I

P.S. When you lose pop centers and don't take any, it means you are losing. Just thought I'd explain.

GAME 205

Back by popular demand:

Khazad-dûm productions is proud to announce the Dwarven world tour. Báin and the boys have already been through Nahald Khúdan, Lagauris, Nirnaeth, Kala Dulakurth and Dol Guldur. Coming soon to a Dark Servant population center near you!

Khamûl,

Thanks for the cards with the drawings. I understand that you just got an A+ in finger painting. Since you have decided to send me so many cards, I have decided to give you my undivided attention.

Bain I

GAME 209

Corsairs,

Your vile insults only reveal your true evil nature. You should have joined us! Now the wrath of Sauron is upon you. I doubt you will live to see the day when King Argeleb III dances into his own grave!

Adûnaphel
Quiet Avenger

P.S. I brought plenty of earthworms for your last meal.

GAME 212

Like children you have cowered in the Dark! Once again you swarm over the passes, defiling our lands with your vile stench! Come step into the light so that you may once and for all be cleansed of your misery!

Elrond Greyhaven

"First, we take Morannon . . . then we take Durthang!"

Line from a popular Éothraim folk song (originally sung by the warrior-bard Leonardia Kawain)

The factory was churning out dog food at an incredible rate. Dendra was impressed.

"Did we go get all these horses from Eothraim?"

"No Sire, they delivered."

"Really? Ask them if they'll send a pepperoni and elven pizza with the next batch."

The Howling

GAME 215

It begins. From their vantage point in the far southern bay of Umbar, the Corsairs watch the drama unfold. Which way will they drift? Only time, and the councils of the other nations, will tell.

Middle-earth™ PBM
circa 2950

GAME 20

Overheard at Minas Tirith:

Akhôrahil: "Gonna build a boat, it's a gonna float . . ."

Minion: "Master, this is harbor, not port."

(thwack)(thump)(yelp!)

Akhôrahil: "So start collecting Timber, idiot!"

sniveling Minion: "Yes Master--they will be done, thy mills will run . . ."

Akhôrahil: "I know it will take awhile--but I WILL sail the open seas once again . . ."

GAME 25

Spread the word. Bad tidings for Bad People. The Flames will take you all.

Noble Noldo--

It seems your eastern allies have crumbled. After withstanding Úvatha's efforts, the residents of Rhûn lost heart upon the arrival of my kinsmen and the hordes of Góthmog and his minions. Do your elven sisters and brothers fight on? I do hope so . . . conquest is more fun when the victims fight back.

General Ovatha IV of Khand

Khamul,

The world is NOT as dark and safe as you might think and hope.

Elrond

Lord of the Arcane.

GAME 26

Evil never learns. Another small Dragon Lord army has popped up. My army destroys it. Ice King army left without a struggle <grin>. Now fireball breath makes threats about coming north. Well little guy, bring it on!

Zarendarger (5)

GAME 28

Woodmen, Sinda Elves, Northmen and North Gondor defeated. Khan Easterlings and Dunlendings out. White Wizard active but not talking. Rhûn having fun. Silvan elves dying and Dunadan a distant memory. Riders struggling to survive. The Free are doomed but it'd be nice to at least hear their death cries. Come, speak out!

Helcent

Caras Amarth--

Warlord Bolg gazed upon the battlefield where 300 Silvan Heavy Infantry perished, while he did not lose a single troll! He turned to his commanders. "Double rations of elf stew for the trolls, and tell the village that unless they want to join 'em in the pot, they had better open the gate."

GAME 31

First rule of Neutrals: Never sell out for gold. You can't keep it! As you are now finding out. At least the Rhûn were wise enough to downgrade before showing their colors. As for the Khand, they are finished. . . For the remaining neutrals, whatever offers and counteroffers are made, know this: we will treat you as allies, not commodities, as the Free have done.

Helcent

GAME 35

Northmen,

Extremely pathetic opening move. Thank you for raising the morale and training ranks of my army. Dîn Ohtar wants to tell Bard I "Hello and, ultimately, good bye."

Üvatha

The Long Rider
Ninth ring of the Nazgûl

GAME 37

A call to the peoples of the Free World:

Though times seem dark, the servants of evil must be resisted. Only by presenting a unified front may we keep the lands free of their foul taint. A call to arms must be issued: the armies of truth must march. The followers of Sauron must fall. Only with the destruction of their lands in Mordor will we be truly free of the taint of evil.

All neutrals, surely you must understand that the powers of darkness will only use you to achieve their foul aims. They shall manipulate you to do their fighting against us, and then, when you are weakened, they will turn on you and enslave your lands and peoples. Only by fighting the oppression can you truly be free to determine your own destinies. I call upon you to join with us in the defense of our lands and freedom.

Finally, a note to you slaves of Sauron: your armies shall never be allowed to run across our peaceful lands, pillaging and destroying at will. We shall resist and fight you until the end, bringing your cities and fortifications down, stone by stone. Your armies will end, laying in pools of their own blood, weapons and armor laying uselessly by the broken bodies of your troops. The powers of light and freedom shall prevail.

I send these words to inform and notify all of our positions and desires.

The Lord of the North
and Protector of Rhovanion,
Bard I

Don't go into the woods today,
It's not a safe place to play!

The forest is very dark,
the bushes have briars,
the flowers have thorns,
the animals have claws,
and teeth and horns.
Beware of the animals,
or feel their scorn.
Hear their roar!
Lions and Dragons
and Bears, oh my!
Stay out of the woods today,

It's a dangerous place to play!
Where fiendish elves lurk in the shadows, stalking their prey with bows and arrows.
Don't go in the woods today.
It's not a safe place for you to stay!
So the Dragon Lord just ran away,
Maybe you'll live one more day!

Tyeann Corrella

GAME 38

As the leaves fall and the days grow shorter,
So shall many Free fall and their shadows grow shorter.
While all the time decay shall prosper and the nights grow longer
Now evil will grow and our reach will grow longer.

Dark Jester.

The Darkness Defied

By
James Vigil

Third Age 2950, outside the main gates of the Town of Osgiliath in Northern Gondor...

The last of the thunderous cheers of his troops washed over Ecthelion like a cresting wave. His prancing steed neighed mightily as he reached the gates of Osgiliath. He swept out his sword and gestured to the Gondorian troops atop the tower above. Again, the cheers of the massed infantry rose to the heavens, as the black and gold banner of the Witch-King was torn from the flag staff and burned. Then, fluttering in the breeze, the White Banner of the Stewards rose once again over the town. Another roar from thousands of joyful throats.

Nearby, soldiers labored to pare away the slogan of the Witch-King nation etched into a brazen sign above the gates:

OBEDIENCE IS FREEDOM.

These words were branded and scratched onto walls all over the town. It would take days to remove them all. But the work had begun.

Ecthelion turned to address his victorious troops:

"Soldiers of Gondor! Again, for the second time in the past year, you have removed the stain of tyranny from Fair Osgiliath. The Free Peoples look to us as the bulwark against the Great Enemy. Once again, you have proven worthy of that trust."

He continued on, more gravely:

"Yet, our task has but begun. Our presence here is now known to the enemy. We must prepare to meet the foe and fight as we never have before. We will soon advance into yon Black Land itself."

Just then a rider spurred up from the east. It was Torondil, a veteran Gondor scout, dusty and worn. He dismounted and ran to Ecthelion. Stopping before his liege lord, he bowed. The Steward gestured for him to speak.

"My Lord, I return from scouting the Crossroads of the Kings. A host approaches, black-clad and fell. They fly the banner of Barad-Dur itself," said Torondil.

Ecthelion paused and his face grew stern. That could only mean troops of the Dark Lieutenants - the household troops of Sauron himself. This was grave news. Unlike the rabbles led by the Ice King and Fire King, these troops were usually well-armed and armored, accompanied by fearsome leaders, and possessed of high morale. "What is their number, Torondil?"

"Much less than we, my Lord," said Torondil. "But..." His eyes strayed to the dust at his feet.

Ecthelion saw the scout was hesitating. What could be holding him in such fear? "Speak, we must know what we face."

Torondil looked around him. The troops were too far away to hear him whisper. "Lamthanc, my Lord."

Ecthelion blanched. "You are sure of this, Torondil?"

The scout looked bleakly into the eyes of the Steward. "Yes my Lord. I saw him from afar. It could be none other."

Ecthelion dismissed Torondil and bade him take some well-deserved rest. He paced, alone again. A Great Wurm of Morgoth! Ecthelion knew that everything had changed in an instant. Plans for an advance were now replaced by thoughts of survival.

He was aware that many eyes were upon him and he looked up.

The men had not heard what Torondil had said. But they saw the effect of his news on their leader. Ecthelion could see the concern and anxiety on their faces. He could not keep this from them. Yet, how to avoid a panic? This army, unlike the veterans under Lord Baranor, was comprised of recent recruits. They had yet to see battle - much less fight a dragon. But what could he say? There was little time. Always there was too little time.

The silence and eyes bore down on him. It seemed in his despair that they came together in his mind as one. Faintly, then more clearly, like a black mist, it arose. It flickered into being and grew. A great red eye, burning into him like a searing flame. Gloating, malicious laughter rang in his ears. He felt himself falling, choking.

No! He shook himself free with a start. Sweat poured from his brow and his breath came in gasps. He felt the touch of a hand on his shoulder. It was his counselor, Urion, who had come up when he saw his lord was distressed. Urion looked at him with concern.

Ecthelion met Urion's glance. The old man had been his counselor for many years. Ecthelion thought back. Yes, many years and many trials. And yet they were still there. Gondor still stood.

And it would stand. Ecthelion felt his strength returning. He knew what he must do.

He looked down and was aware he still held his sword in his hand. Slowly and deliberately he put it back into its scabbard. He faced the troops and their commanders. In a loud and firm voice he began to speak:

"Soldiers of Gondor. Battle is nigh! The foe marches on us from the East. And he has brought with him a great beast of evil - the Dragon Lamthanc."

Shouts and cries arose from the troops. Commanders turned and barked orders, but it was clear that this news had struck deep fear in many. Some stood mutely, their weapons now held loosely, trailing in the dust, their faces pale. Others clutched their gear more tightly, their faces tight and drawn, determined to appear brave.

Ecthelion knew the moment had come and he must rise to it or they were all lost.

"Soldiers of Gondor. You come of ancient lineage. Never forget that in your veins runs the blood of Hurin and Barahir. Your hearts beat with the strength of your forefathers, Isildur, Anarion and Elendil.

"Ever, the Darkness has clutched at us. Ever have we thrown it back. Your sires faced these great foes with valor. You are free men because of their sacrifice. Do not be ashamed before them! Embrace the fear! Seize it! Take it, and forge it into a sword of iron! A sword of wrath!"

Ecthelion drew his sword, and all eyes followed it as he held it high, flashing brilliantly in the morning sun.

"The savage foe nears! Do you not hear the Trumpets of Orome calling us!? Today we shall write deeds of valor in the blood of our enemies! I shall lead you on this field. And I will not leave it while breath is in me.

"Onward to battle! For the families and homes you guard! For the hope of the Free Peoples! For the honor of your ancestors! Onward to victory!"

There was silence for a long moment. Then a roar. Swords leaped out of scabbards, spears clashed on shields, and the eyes of thousands of men glinted with new hope and rising anger. Men now looked to the East and shook their fists in defiance. Companies began to form and sergeants barked orders.

Ecthelion's shoulders sagged as he realized what he had done. It was sometimes the duty of a leader to send men to their deaths. He would never get used to it. They would now fight this battle. Most, probably all, would die. Perhaps even he. The Steward of Gondor put his sword back in its scabbard. Would it be enough?

He turned to his commanders and swiftly began issuing orders to turn the army towards the looming Mountains of Shadow.

Far off on the East road, keen eyes could now see dark masses approaching. The glint of steel. And beyond, hinted at only to the most far-sighted, stalked a nightmare.

TIPS ON RUNNING AN EFFICIENT CAPITAL

by
Greg Shaffer

Running an efficient capital will allow you to accomplish more as a nation. If you are doing more with your orders than the enemy is doing with theirs, you should be winning the game. Keeping your capital activities efficient not only allows you to get the most out your capital orders, but it also allows you to have fewer characters at the capital. Instead, these same characters can be going on

the offensive against the enemy, building up the forces and holding of your nation, training their skills, or avoiding agent strikes at the capital.

USE SINGLE-CLASSED CHARACTERS

It is usually best to accomplish your capital orders with your single-classed characters, while your double or triple classes characters do their work in the field. The single classed characters at the capital can do what is necessary with their one skill order, then use their second order for miscellaneous capital orders. Meanwhile, the double and triple classed characters outside the capital are getting full use of their skills instead of doing capital orders.

DO WHAT YOU CAN OUTSIDE THE CAPITAL

Several traditional capital orders can sometimes be accomplished from outside the capital, often at no inconvenience to you. This frees up orders at your capital for other important priorities, or allows you to send characters out of your capital to do more productive things.

Market Sells and Buys. Often there is enough product to satisfy your economic needs laying around in your individual population centers where you have characters. For example, say you have three commanders (with no other skill ranks) sitting around recruiting outside your capital with nothing very productive to do with their second order. Take a look at what product is in the stores at these locations; chances are, you might be able to have one or more of them sell enough product to save you some capital orders this turn or in a later turn.

As a corollary, when sending (or receiving) economic aid to allies in the form of product, send it (or have it sent) to a convenient but secure location outside the capital so it can be sold from there, saving capital orders. If for some reason you become unable to sell the product from that remote location, you are still able to issue the order to sell it from your capital. However, if you have your allies send the product to your capital, your only option is to sell it there.

Transporting Supplies. Whether consolidating your own supplies (such as gathering supplies for recruiting heavy cavalry with food, armor and weapons) or sending supplies to allies in need of help, chances are you may be able to accomplish some of this with characters who are sitting around outside the capital - with one or more single classed characters who have nothing better to do with their second order, and just so happen to have enough product in their population center stores.

This also works well if you are consolidating the same product in two or more locations. For example, say you want to recruit cavalry at two different locations, but your mounts are scattered all over Middle-Earth in small amounts. Let's say you have a 40 commander at one recruiting base, and a 30 commander 20 agent at the other. Don't waste two or more capital orders to gather your horses! Have one character at your capital issue a 947 (nation transport) order to get all of your mounts to the first recruiting base, the one with the 40 commander. Then the 40 commander can use his second order as a 948 (transport by caravans) to relay half of the mounts over to the 30 commander 20 agent. Note that since the 948 order occurs after the 947 order, this can all be accomplished in the same turn.

This "relay" of product also works well for sending product to allies when the desired product is scattered in small quantities in all of your population

centers. Use a 947 (nation transport) to consolidate your supplies at the location of your 40 commander, then that commander can relay some or all of it to your ally with the 948 (transport by caravans) order.

PLAN YOUR MARKET SELLS CAREFULLY

Much has been said about managing the market in previous articles, so I won't mention the obvious stuff such as selling when a product's sell value is higher than usual, and not bothering to make several market sells where one will do.

Sell Your Most Plentiful Product First. In general it is better to first sell those products which your population centers will replenish (in terms of market value) the most quickly. By market value, I mean the product's worth to the market in terms of gold, not the actual numbers of the product. This way, your population centers can be replenishing that product quickly while you sell the other products during the next turn or two. This will help you keep from running out of product to sell or use for other purposes. All it takes is a quick glance at your "expected production" amounts, an educated guess as to what the products will be worth on average, and some quick math.

If, on the other hand, you go against this rule of thumb and sell your least produced (in terms of market value) products first, and then sell your most heavily produced products on the second turn, have nothing much left to sell on the third turn because you haven't had time to produce much more. This may force you to waste several capital orders selling small amounts of multiple products.

There are two additional reasons for selling your most highly produced product first. First, if you allow your largest stockpile of product to build instead of selling it, it may not help you later if the market limit keeps you from selling much of it. Secondly, if you sell off all of your lesser products first, you may put yourself in a situation where you need to sell your "big producer" two or more turns in a row. This may net you less gold if your "flooding the market" with this product helps to drive its sell value down after the first turn. This is especially true when you are selling large amounts.

Sell What You Won't Need Later. In general, some products are needed to run the affairs of your nation, and others were meant to be sold. Keeping the right products in store will save you some "purchase from caravan" orders later. A good rule of thumb is to, where possible, save your mounts (for cavalry), steel for armor and possibly weapons), and timber (for war machines, fortifications, ships, bridges, and ports and harbors). These are three products which nations often have in short supply.

Less useful products which are better to sell include: Leather, which is useful for cavalry, but most nations produce more than enough leather for the mounts they have in supply. Food, depending on your army's needs - remember troops don't always need to be fed! Bronze, which some players use for armor or weapons. Bronze of course isn't nearly as good as steel, so it may be worth more to your economy than to your troops. And finally, especially sell mithril, which is worth far too much to your economy to bother putting on your troops!

Here's another reason to first sell what you won't need: In general, most nations need the same sorts of things. As the game progresses, nations are likely to buy (or at least not sell!) what they need, such as mounts or timber or steel. The demand for these products will make them become more and more

expensive than the other products. If you have saved the expensive products, you can sell them at a great profit in case of an emergency.

Also, in some cases, the market may be so forbidding that many nations cannot reasonably purchase what they would like to. If you have saved the right products since the beginning, you could find yourself in a favorable situation. For example, you could find yourself comfortably recruiting heavy cavalry with steel armor while your enemies recruit only unarmored heavy infantry, because they didn't have the foresight to save their mounts and steel and the prices became way too high!

MISCELLANEOUS

Stranded Characters. Do you have a character stranded in the middle of nowhere with nothing to do (e.g., your army just disbanded and wasn't on a population center, or you were just released from hostage status, or GSI <read: you> miswrote a movement order <grin>)? Remember that some orders occur after movement. Have the character move to your capital (or other population center) and do a 947 (nation transport) or 948 (transport by caravans). This will free up one of your capital orders to accomplish something else.

Extra Capital Orders. Do you have a character at your capital without anything very useful to do, but you don't want to move the character away from the capital just yet (perhaps because you'll need a lot of capital orders next turn)? Have the character transport one of your products to where someone can sell it from outside the capital next turn--saving you a capital order when you'll need it. Or pick a product which is stockpiled in your forward, vulnerable areas (i.e., population centers likely to be captured by the enemy soon) and transfer it to a safer area, so you can sell it instead of your enemies. Or look ahead to something you might need later in the game, such as upgrading or downgrading relations with a nation you are not currently coordinating closely with (or against).

Relocating the Capital. In some cases it may be an "efficient" move to relocate your capital if it is likely to come under attack by armies or agents. Capitals are obviously not very efficient when half of the orders fail due to sieges or character deaths! A prudent 25,000 gold spent now could allow a later 25,000 sale to succeed where it might have failed (to use the least of examples).

Hopefully this article will help your characters to attain the status of prosperous, deadly and conquering "dudes to be reckoned with," instead of a bunch of capital dwelling bureaucrats!

Zaken's Bad Day

by
David Rossell

I should have become a mage like gran'mama told me to, thought Zaken for the third time in what was quickly becoming the longest night of his life. Mages sit around. They read. Maybe cast a spell. Nice and safe.

But nooooo. I had to see the world, have adventures. Now I'm stuck in this barbarian encampment, surrounded by vicious horses and their bloodthirsty keepers.

The moon reappeared from behind a cloud and he slipped into the concealing shadow of a tent.

Sure. If Indûr orders me to infiltrate the Rohan camp and kill commander Erkenbrand. Easy for him to say. He can turn invisible. He stalks nice, safe infantry commanders. Zaken rubbed the rapidly expanding bruise on his right leg. I get the cavalry. Someone could have told me that these damn horses were trained to kick intruders first, ask questions later.

Clouds drifted back over the moon. Time to move.

"Woah . . ." Thump. Zaken tried to melt into the ground, while he silently uttered every curse he knew.

"What was that?"

"It came from over there."

Two Rohan sentries sprinted into view. Zaken glimpsed light glinting off their long swords before burying his head in the mud and concentrating on just lying still; and creating new permutations on the curses he had just exhausted.

"Don't see anything. Maybe someone slipped going to the latrine."

No, Zaken thought. Someone slipped *on* the latrine. Stupid barbarians. Who in their right mind lets horses wander around a camp where people have to walk?!

"Well, let's finish our rounds." And the morons walked off. Zaken cautiously lifted his head. Their horses make better sentries than their people do, he thought. Zaken carefully counted to one hundred, then slowly, cautiously stood.

Of course the leg would stiffen more while I was laying down. He tried not to gasp as he limped along toward the commander's tent. He staggered up near the wall of a nearby tent and looked around the corner.

Ah, I'm in luck. No guards. No torches. Best of all, no horses. 'Bout time my luck started to change. Zaken drew his dagger and held it inside his cloak to keep it from catching any stray light. Deep breath. Slow. In. Out. Good. Just do this, just get out of here, and you can go back to Kal Nargil and drink orc booze until your leg doesn't hurt anymore. In. Out. Relax. Okay, gogogo!

Zaken did his best shuffle/sprint into Erkenbrand's tent.

"Shitok! Woah . . ." Thump. "Aarghh!" Zaken screamed as his dagger, oh so carefully concealed, stabbed him as he landed flat on his face after tripping over some corpse someone had left lying across the doorway.

"What was that?" asked someone from the darkness of the tent. Whoever it was, Zaken thought through the curses and pain flashing through his head, he had a gravelly voice that sounded like it had a broadsword attached somewhere.

"Alarm! Guards!" came the cry from the corpse, which seemed to be rising and drawing some sort of blade.

"I thought we were the only ones to use undead," Zaken mumbled as he desperately rolled underneath the tent wall, groaning in pain from the horse-bruise and dagger wound.

A torch flared inside the tent. First thing to go right all night, Zaken thought. They just lost their night vision. Better get out of here while I still can. Before they rouse the horses.

The Hall Of Heroes

Game #94 - Free Peoples: #10, #2, & #9

A murky sky hung suspended over the forests surrounding Rhûbar. Cold rain poured down in torrents, as if to wash the land bare of the evil that had so recently roamed free. Sauron's servants had been dealt crushing defeat after crushing defeat at the hands of the Free Peoples of Middle-earth. Musing over the miserable hand that fate had dealt her, the rogue agent known simply as "Fast Hands" cursed under her breath. Since the fall of the Easterling empire, her life had been hellish. She had eluded her pursuers for nearly three months now, though they had gotten closer daily. As a result of the past weeks' rain and the close proximity of her pursuers, her meals had been cold and her bedroll colder. The ensuing cough that she had developed had not made matters any easier. Sweat poured from her brow, though she felt cold. Dream and reality had faded into one, and in her few lucid moments she realized that she had The Fever. Huddling low and shaking violently, she tried hard to focus her thoughts. So hard . . .

An inhuman growl was the first thing that alerted her to the cougar's presence. She stumbled to her feet and whirled, barely keeping her balance. The cat was crouched to pounce, tail swishing and a thin yowl pouring from its throat. Wild-eyed, her hand shot to the slender blade at her hip.

" . . . doesn't have to be this way," Gildor of the Noldo called to her, the magical bow known as Romoquenáro trained on her heart. "You are ill. Surrender yourself and let the healers help you . . ."

Still that incessant yowling. Why didn't the cat just kill her? Then it began to crawl forward, taut haunches low to the ground and hypnotic yellow eyes locked on hers. It was stalking her. Yes, stalking her . . .

Bow lowered, Gildor edged forward, his free hand extended palm-up. She had such a vacant look in her eyes. Could this be the local village idiot and not the last of Sauron's vile servants?

The cat turned, distracted. Sensing her only opportunity, Fast Hands whirled and ran. If she could just make it to the gorge . . .

"Wait!" Gildor called to her. She was bolting straight toward the edge of a cliff . . .

She was almost there . . . almost there . . . and then she was falling . . .

Final standings are as follows:

#10 - Noldo Elves
#2 - Northmen
#9 - Sinda Elves

Top Dark Servant: #25 - Easterlings

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Urzahil/Dark Lieutenants: 181
Highest Net Commander Rank - Aravan/Noldo Elves: 152
Highest Net Agent Rank - Din Ohtar/Long Rider: 129
Highest Net Emissary rank - Osantha/Woodmen: 120
Highest Net Mage Rank - Urzahil/Dark Lieutenants: 100
Most Mithril - Noldo Elves: 3854
Most Artifacts - Noldo Elves: 27
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 26

Congratulations to the Free Peoples!

The Hall Of Heroes

Game #158 - Free Peoples: #24, #9 & #25

A lone figure stood in the glade, gazing at the cloudless sky. The calm tranquility of this place, he mused. So quickly it has forgotten. Striding purposefully toward the half-destroyed buildings, he prepared to enter the ruins of Durthang. He abruptly stopped, thick brown robes whipping in the breeze. Gauntlym was a man very attuned to nature, and as such his senses were very keen. He could see nothing out of the ordinary amidst the rubble, nor did he hear anything . . . That was the problem. No birds. No squirrels. No mistake, there was a large predator about. Closing his eyes, he summoned the words of power and began to recite them in a deep, rumbling drone. When the spell was cast, he crept with absolute silence toward the huts, readying his staff while he walked. The low, snuffling whuff of air was followed immediately by the appearance of a rather large wolf, who looked at him in wonder. Of course you can't smell me, Gauntlym thought. His spell had masked scent and sound. Growing uneasily, the wolf wheeled and trotted back into the ruins. Following, the wilderness-mage observed both the wolf's motive for leaving him unmolested and Gauntlym's own reason for coming. Broken bodies carpeted the ruined streets and there were wolves everywhere, reaping the harvest. Despite the carnage, Gauntlym had to smile. The rumors were true. Urthang lay in ruins, and the Free were victorious.

Final standings are as follows:

#24 - Rhudaur
#9 - Sinds Elves
#25 - Easterlings

Top Dark Servant: #16 - Ice King

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Orduclax/Dragon Lord: 210
Highest Net Commander Rank - Waulfa/Woodmen: 132
Highest Net Agent Rank - Tormog/Dark Lieutenants: 80
Highest Net Emissary rank - Chilperic/Woodmen: 110
Highest Net Mage Rank - Orduclax/Dragon Lord: 170
Most Mithril - Ice King: 612
Most Artifacts - Sinda Elves: 17
Most Kills - Dog Lord Corsairs: 3

Congratulations to the Free Peoples!

Game #167 - Free Peoples: #9, #7 & #10

Reclining in his bedchambers, Regent Ashlonde silently recounted the progress they had made. Though Thrunduil and Amroth were both dead, the Free had triumphed over Sauron's lickspittle, the Sinda leading the way. Today had seen the execution of the last of the Dog Lord's men. Dwarf had himself become dog food long ago, and only his followers had remained. Most of them had died quietly, but there were exceptions. Lucky Bob, for example. When they had strung him up from a tree, the branch had snapped under his weight. So they'd thrown him off a cliff. Lucky Bob wasn't lucky enough to suddenly devolve into a pigeon, and that was that. Rasputin, though, was another matter. They'd hanged him, poisoned him, shot him full of arrows, drowned him . . . nothing had worked. Ashlonde grinned as he admired the incredible shine on his boots. A lifetime sentence of servitude in place of his original sentence of death. Ah, well, at least he was assured of always having well-shined boots . . .

Final standings are as follows . . .

#9 - Sinds Elves
#7 - South Gondor
#10 - Noldo Elves

Top Dark Servant: #13 - Dog Lord

The Hall Of Heroes

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Úrzahil/Dark Lieutenants: 224
 Highest Net Commander Rank - Glorfindel/Noldo Elves: 138
 Highest Net Agent Rank - Jf Indr/Cloud Lord: 133
 Highest Net Emissary rank - Daldane/Woodmen: 98
 Highest Net Mage Rank - Úrzahil/Dark Lieutenants: 200
 Most Mithril - Dunlendings: 2346
 Most Artifacts - Noldo Elves: 29
 Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 35

Congratulations to the Free Peoples!

Game #179 - Dark Servants: #22, #25 & #17

Bright light gleamed from the chandelier on the elaborate dining hall below. The doors to the nearby balcony were thrown open and it was here that Haruth Ramam and Carlon had chosen to entertain their guests. Tros Heseuf, Adúnaphel, Úrzahil, and Ovatha II had joined them for a victory banquet. The cool summer air carried the screams of the evening's entertainment long before the frantic dwarf scrambled into view. Carlon's hunting dogs came around the corner then, right on the dwarf's heels. He stumbled, and had no time to regain his footing. His dying screams quickly ended in a gurgle. Haruth Ramam's men came into view below, tying the next dwarf to a wooden post and placing an apple atop his head. Adúnaphel hefted the bow known as Night-piercer, putting an arrow inches above the terrified dwarf's head and calling for the next apple. "Life is good," quipped Carlon, at which they all laughed uproariously.

Final standings are as follows:

#22 - Haradwaith
 #25 - Easterlings
 #17 - Quiet Avenger

Top Free People: #8 - Dwarves

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Shabla/Haradwaith: 207
 Highest Net Commander Rank - Dain II/Dwarves: 140
 Highest Net Agent Rank - Nenarglin/Sinda Elves: 127
 Highest Net Emissary rank - Drakur/Dark Lieutenants: 102
 Highest Net Mage Rank - Shabla/Haradwaith: 170
 Most Mithril - Dwarves: 2261
 Most Artifacts - Dwarves: 20
 Most Kills - Quiet Avenger: 10

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #20 - Dark Servants: #15, #11, & #13

Like a vile tide, the servants of Sauron have surged forth to completely cover all of Middle-earth. The Nazgûl have successfully murdered or enslaved all that were left of the once-proud Free Peoples, and no hope remains. The Dúnadan Rangers tried mightily to prevent this horror, but in the end could not hope to resist the dark masses. Combined with the armies of the Witch-king and the Dog Lord, the overseers of the Blind Sorcerer's empire spur on the Free People slaves with the cruellest of whips . . .

Final standings are as follows:

#15 - Blind Sorcerer
 #11 - Witch-king
 #13 - Dog Lord

Top Free People: #4 - Cloud Lord

(cont'd)

The Hall Of Heroes

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Mûrazôr/Witch-king: 249
 Highest Net Commander Rank - Dancu/Witch-king: 162
 Highest Net Agent Rank - Eoponine/Witch-king: 133
 Highest Net Emissary rank - Cykur/Witch-king Angûlion/Witch-king Kâng Gor/Blind Sorcerer Gamble/Dog Lord Gimlit/Dog Lord Lâng Gor/Blind Sorcerer: 100
 Highest Net Mage Rank - Mûrazôr/Witch-king: 200
 Most Mithril - Dog Lord: 2256
 Most Artifacts - Dog Lord: 22
 Most Kills - Dog Lord: 30

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #21 - The Dark Servants: #24, #20 & #21

Saruman stood at the top of his tower at Orthanc, looking over the landscape to the south. This land was now his. The struggle was worth it. He now sat at Sauron's side along with Úrzahil and Sangarunya. Why had the decision been such a tough one at first? No matter what the Free promised, there was no comparison to the choices that serving Sauron posed. He had power, wealth, and plenty of new "volunteers" for his magical experiments. As for his plans to take Sauron's place, well, he had all the time in the world, now

Final standings are as follows:

#24 White Wizard - 1850
 #20 Dark Lieutenants - 1716
 #21 Corsairs - 1650

Top Free People: #5 Silvan Elves - 525

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves: 174
 Highest Net Commander Rank - Bulrakur/Dog Lord: 109
 Highest Net Agent Rank - Dîn Ohtar/Long Rider: 114
 Highest Net Emissary rank - Saruman the White/White Wizard: 92
 Highest Net Mage Rank - Encalion/Dúnadan Rangers: 129
 Most Mithril - White Wizard: 2226
 Most Artifacts - Dark Lieutenants: 20
 Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 6

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!