

WORDS FROM THE WOOD

June is here and, at the time of this writing, I have one thing to say---GO PANTHERS!!! That's right, there's ICE hockey here in South Florida and, if I do say so myself, we are KICKING BUTT!!!! So much so that people in more traditional hockey towns (re: Philadelphia) are in denial and saying how the Flyers are the better team and that we don't know anything about hockey here in Florida. First, we won the best of seven series, so we are the better team. End of conversation. Second, maybe we don't know as much as those all knowing, all seeing fans and media in Philadelphia, but it doesn't change the fact that we KICKED THE FLYER'S BUTTS!!!! Of course, we have to get past Pittsburgh, but that's a subject for next month's column.

O.K., it's time to talk about the 2950 Contest of Champions. Everyone knows that we are setting up a 2950 Contest of Champions; what you don't know is that we have just made the deal even better. If you apply by 7/1/96 and you are accepted into the game, you will receive a FREE SET UP OR TWO FREE TURNS for the Contest of Champions game (this is not applicable to ANOTHER game--only for the Contest of Champions). Let me repeat that for those of you who may have missed it: If you apply by 7/1/96 (that means that we have the application in our office by 7/1/96) and you are accepted into the game, your set up will be free of charge or you can get two free turns. Now you have no excuse not to apply. So what are you waiting for? Get cracking!

Now that June is here, that means that July is just around the corner and July means Origins. As mentioned last month, GSI will be attending both Origins and GenCon this year. Origins is now right around the corner and we want to let you know about the seminars we will be holding. The seminars offer us an opportunity to discuss ME-PBM and, of course, the new Fourth Age scenario. The Origins seminar will be held on Friday, July 5th at 6:30 PM. It is event #434 and it will be hosted by Bill Feild and Peter Stassun. The GenCon seminars will be held on Friday, 8/9 and Saturday, 8/10 at 8 PM. We'll give more details next month. We will have a booth set up at both conventions and yours truly will be attending GenCon, so come on by and say Hi. We look forward to seeing you!

The Fourth Age playtests are now both up and running. The action is fast and furious, hot and heavy and total mayhem has ensued. The second playtest just began and the first playtest has been going for a little over a month. It's looking good and we will let you know when the game is ready to be released. Stay tuned for more information.

For those of you who are on the Net, you may want to check out our Web page. Even if you checked it out earlier, we have made some improvements and it's worth taking a gander. We have nation descriptions (for both scenarios), reviews, information and old Whispers articles. If you missed any of those because you didn't have a subscription, this is the place to look! The address is: <http://www.gamesystems.com>. Now you have no reason not to check it out!

Speaking of the Net, we currently have a 2950 one-week all email game which is about half filled. The turn cost for the all email games is \$5.50, and you get all the action in half the time. Those of you who are interested should email us or send in your registration so you can be placed in the game.

That's about all for this month, so we'll talk to you again in thirty!

Stuart



ALONG THE PATHWAYS

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This Month's Cover: "In The Grip Of Darkness" 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.). Submissions should be in by the 15th of the month prior to the publishing date. GSI reserves the right to edit or refuse material deemed unsuitable.

Middle-earth™ PBM
circa 1650

GAME 190

...Gurthlug, Kemo Kai, Darkhawk, Dal-Karga, Ji Indur, Darkmoon, Gontran, Nazrog, Forest, Hos Harf, Dogbreath, Krunak, Kaldurmeir, Leardinoth, Quick wind, Braveheart, Delagurth, Kav Makow, Ovatha II, Tros Hesnef, Feagwath, Tormog... Is it my imagination, or is the road to Mordor paved with bones?

Rhys, Rhudaur

GAME 195

Gothmog was found in Khazad-Dum. Above him, written with his blood, was found a warning. "Only death awaits those who chase the sun!!"

Orillion Darkblade

GAME 197

One day in the North Kingdom...

"Sire! A dispatch from the capital. We had 40K in gold stolen from the treasury."

"What? Who do we have guarding the store, Larry, Shemp, and Curly?"

"Sire, Larry and Curly are stealing from OUR enemies. Shemp is looking for new allies."

Unhappy Rulers of Arthedain

GAME 199

"Nobody's home in Mirkwood. They all must have gone to Arnor! Well... a hunting I will go... Hmhm...hmhm...hmhmhm..."

Orillion Darkblade

GAME 205

All the Nazgul stood in a stunned silence, on the walls of Morannon.

Finally Ren said, "Wow!!! That was the most amazingly, tragic attempt at an assault I have ever witnessed!! No wonder they're losing!"

No one disagreed.

Orillion Darkblade

GAME 209

In a cave, somewhere in the Misty Mountains, a man and woman huddle over a small fire.

Man: "We are the last?"

Woman: "Yes, none survived the attack."

Man: "Then all is lost."

Woman: "Perhaps, but that is no reason to wait for death to find you."

Man: "Aye, we should seek sanctuary from Elrond. It would be best to travel by day though. The 'Hunters' prowl the night."

Woman: "It will be nice to see land not tainted by Mordor."

Orillion Darkblade

Merkel you perky weasel! You thought you could assassinate one of my commanders. Well it cost you your life!

GAME 212

Dendra stared at the sight in the town's square and what a sight it was. A man with one shoe (and it was purple), yellow pants, a tattered red shirt, and a bright green hat (on backwards of course) was riding up and down the square, hands in the air

--on a donkey, not a horse--yelling, "All is over. Your side is doomed."

"Who is that masked rider?"

(Did I fail to mention he wore a red horse mask?)

"He swears his name is Helrazor but he refuses to identify his nation. He was seen a few hours ago eating mushrooms growing on the walls of the keep."

"Are the people nervous?"

"No, sire. The people understand what has happened at the sea of Ruins. They have heard of our powerful new allies. Even the single copper fortune teller on skid row can see such a strong vision as our eventual victory. Perhaps the loss of characters and population centers has driven the poor fool mad? Maybe it's just his diet. We have received word that the evilly challenged nations have been starving their populace and the man has consumed every item, with any form of biodegradable matter, within reach."

"Well, invite him to dinner in the palace and we'll feed him... to the dogs."

High Plains Drifter

GAME 215

South Gondor:

Terms of surrender- immediate and unconditional.

Any delay will result in the prolonged torture of your citizens and soldiers upon their capture, instead of slavery and immediate death.

Sir Psycho

GAME 223

From the castle walls, a few guards listen to their lord's speech.

"What's he going on about now?"

"Something about 'faith' and how the righteous will conquer."

"Ha! I don't doubt it! With the assassins and that sorry excuse for a jailer. It's a wonder they haven't hung him by now."

"Well, the day is still young."

Orillion Darkblade

GAME 231

Greetings Citizens,

Our glorious leader, "The Prophet," has decided it is in the best interest of the Corsairs if they join the cause of the Free Peoples. Sauron's servants seemed uninterested in having the greatest naval power ever on their side. So our support is going elsewhere. But let it be known that "Free Peoples" is a title only, with this naval power.

The Prophet

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

GAME 239

"I am disappointed with the ten of you!" Sauron scolded his Nazgûl, deep within Mordor. "Therefore I am giving four of your kingdoms to my latest creations: Death, War, Famine, and Disease. The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse."

Yes citizens, it is true. The Four Horsemen have been released. How long will it be before the end arrives?

Middle-earth™ PBM
circa 2950

GAME 28

QA army destroyed. Ji Indur assassinated slowly the reek of evil is being pushed back. Soon the balance will shift and the DS will be on the defensive.

GAME 30

Would those Free People still remaining please contact the Noldo.

GAME 37

The Battle was over. No one was left. Both navies lay at the bottom of the Bay of Belfalas.

Commander Vargaelas sat in his mansion in Umbar, sipping mead and thinking. The rash of thefts in the capital and other towns also weighed heavily on his decision.

"If the situation does not change, we will have no other choice but to withdraw."

Matteus I

GAME 38

"Mistress, we're lucky to have survived the pirates' attack on our capital. If not for their own stupidity, they surely would have dealt us a crushing blow."

"Yes, Regent, I believe you're correct. I've been very lax in our military development thus far, but I'll not make that mistake again. Has all been made ready?"

"Yes, Mistress, with help from Úvatha & Ovatha IV, our cavalry has been refitted and is prepared to march. All that remains is a destination."

"Why, the Havens, of course. We must properly thank those cutthroats for pointing out our weakness. Let the silent desert winds soon carry the pounding of Southron hooves. And let the Corsairs take heed of the one thing all good sailors know: beware the calm before the storm. Or more appropriately: the Quiet before the thunder!"

Adûnaphel
Dark Angel of Harad

GAME 43

"Lord, word of our success in slaying Jí Indûr has spread quickly amongst our allies. We've already received messages of congratulations from Beorn, Elrond & Aragorn II, with others arriving daily."

"Send them all kind thanks, but remind them that the war is just beginning. True, the Lord of Assassins is dead, and our forest is now free with the fall of the Dragon Lord. But Mirkwood is only the first foothold in the struggles to come. And before all is done, many will fall on both sides."

"Lord, are you concerned that you are now a prime target for the vengeful blades of Evil?"

"I would expect no less. But if they come for me with the intent of dealing death they will be sorely disappointed. For they will find instead that Death is waiting for them, just as he did for Jí Indûr. And if they don't come, then Death will not wait, but will instead pursue. The Nine especially, have evaded his touch for too long. It's time for Sauron's dogs to pay!"

Thranduil
Lord of the Nandor

GAME 49

Public Notice:

All properties south and/or west of the mouth of the Anduin River are hereby claimed by the nation of the Corsairs.

Sangarunya

Reward: 15000 gold
Wanted: Dead or retired

Uvatha a.k.a. the 9th Nazgul
a.k.a. the Long Rider

Payment upon verification
Rhadaghasto

GAME 50

To all Free:

Elrond has gone insane! He threatens his fellow allies. He has mad elf disease! If anyone knows of a cure for his affliction, please contact Aragorn II of the Dunedain. I can be found fighting the Witch-king by

myself at 1510.

Strider #4
P.S. Thanks alot, Elrond!

So the Corsairs have gone Dark Servant. I guess this game will be interesting after all.

Hello QA- is anyone home?
S. Gondor

The battle for Mirkwood has begun! The Free fight the evil known as the Dragon Lord. He made the first move, that will be his last!

Beorn

Quote: Fight, my people, not for yourself but for the future, not for yourself but for our children, not for yourself but for freedom!!

Beorn

GAME 52

To Úvatha, slave of Sauron the Accursed:

Seven rings the Dwarves shall regain, though the path be littered with darkness and pain. Our rings were taken by treachery and stealth, so come from Mordor to meet your death. Come from your warrens

beneath the gathering shadows to fight in the bright sunlight. Come, slaves, with treachery and despair, for our hearts will never fail. We will continue to fight and avenge our fathers, through the gathering darkness and beyond all hope.

Thorin Oakenshield

Erestor peered into the glowing depths of the Palantir. Faded images suddenly came to life, and the orb grew and pulsed suddenly.

A great red unblinking eye faced Erestor, out of the depths of Mordor! Erestor calmly slid the leather casing over the Palantir. This information has well worth the mental struggle.

Erestor-Lord of Elves

GAME 53

Bain,
Beware of the coming tide of death!!!

Earl William

Sauron wants some Free pig butts kicked, so it's a good thing that I'm here, 'cause you know what Lord Sauron always says: "Never send a mouse to do a Rat's job."

Mickey Rat

Use of Metals in ME-PBM -- An Economic Analysis

by
Sheldon Campbell

Introduction

When do you use that 2000 units of steel to armor troops, and when do you sell it? If, as is often the case, your military power is limited by your finances, this question becomes a purely economic one. Does it cost less to raise and maintain fewer troops with metal arms and armor, or to raise and maintain more troops (of equivalent fighting power) in wood/none and sell the metals? To answer this question, it is necessary to answer three more specific ones:

1. How many metal armed/armored troops is equivalent to N wood/none troops?
2. How much more does it cost to raise and maintain the extra troops?
3. How much are the metals worth?

If you can answer these specific questions, then you can decide what to do with your production.

How Many Armed/Armored Troops Equal N Wood/None Troops?

A counterintuitive axiom of military theory states that the fighting power of an army rises with the *square* of the number of troops. This is best demonstrated, in ME-PBM terms, by example. Take an army of 1000 HI, with wood weapons, morale 50, training 50, and led by a c50. Call this a standard army. Ignore terrain, climate, and tactics. The strength of this army is 4,875 and its constitution is 10,000. Take a second army (army B) with the same parameters except with 2000 troops -- twice as many. What happens in combat?

Turn	Standard Army			Army B		
	#HI	Strength	Constitution	#HI	Strength	Constitution
1	1000	4875	10000	2000	9750	20000
2	disbands			1512	7373	15125

Army B, with only twice the troops of the Standard army, destroys it while taking slightly less than 25% casualties. Actually, without the rule stating that an army disbands at <100 troops, the Standard army would inflict *exactly* 25% (one-fourth) casualties on Army B. Therefore, Army B must be four times stronger than the Standard army. This seeming paradox may be less puzzling if you realize that adding troops increases *both* the strength and the constitution of the army. Fighting Power (FP -- sorry, DS players) could then be defined simply as:

$$FP = STR \times CON$$

This makes it straightforward to calculate the equivalent in extra, unequipped troops, of adding arms or armor to an army. Adding bronze armor to the standard army increases the con by 30%; therefore, increases the FP by a factor of 1.3. The troop equivalent of this is the square root of 1.3, or 1.14. Therefore, 1000 HI in bronze armor are equivalent to 1140 troops in none. Does this work out?

Turn	1140 HI			Standard Army + Bronze		
	#HI	Strength	Constitution	#HI	Strength	Constitution
1	1140	5558	11400	1000	4875	13000
2	652	3178	6520	572	2788	7436
3	373	1818	3730	328	1599	4264
4	213	1038	2130	188	916	2444
5	121	590	1210	108	526	1404
6	disbands			disbands		

These armies are essentially equivalent.

The ratios of equivalent armies don't vary by troop type. They're listed below for each type of armor, weapon, and for common armor/weapon combinations.

L=leather, B=bronze, S=steel, M=mithril, A=armor, W=weapons

Army	Str	Con	FP (millions)	FP/Standard	Troop Ratio (TR)
Standard	4875	10000	48.75	1.0	1.0
LA	4875	11000	53.63	1.1	1.048
BA	4875	13000	63.38	1.3	1.140
SA	4875	16000	78	1.6	1.265
MA	4875	20000	97.5	2.0	1.414
BW	5250	10000	52.5	1.077	1.038
SW	5850	10000	58.5	1.2	1.095
MW	6600	10000	66	1.354	1.164
BA/BW	5250	13000	68.25	1.4	1.183
SA/SW	5850	16000	93.6	1.92	1.386
SA/BW	5250	16000	84	1.72	1.313

Note that even in the best plausible case (steel weapons and armor), 1000 fully equipped troops are only worth 1386 wood/none troops. Also note that you get considerably more fighting power using metals for armor than for weapons.

How Much Do the Extra Troops Cost?

The extra cost of maintaining more troops depends on how many more troops you have to maintain, the troop type, and how long you expect the army to survive. The formula is:

$$C = (TR - 1) \times T \times M \times D, \text{ where:}$$

C = total cost

TR = troop ratio, from table 1 above

T = number of troops maintained

M = maintenance cost/troop/turn

D = duration of survival in turns

T and M are easy to determine using the table above and the information on maintenance costs provided by GSI. D must be estimated from the strategic situation, and is a source of uncertainty. Finally, this simple approach fails to account for the possibility that extra recruiting time (and hence maintenance costs, and orders) may be needed to raise an equivalent army without equipment.

How Much Are Metals Worth?

There is no general rule for knowing what metals will sell for in future turns. A decent general approach is to assume you'll need to sell within 5 turns and take the highest price the metal in question has sold for in the last 5. Be alert, though for predictable trends either up or down in prices; market crashes

or spirals. In the first 20 turns or so prices tend to be stably low, and on the whole that's the period of the game where recruiting is likely to be limited by economic factors.

Where is the Break-Even Point?

The break-even point for arms and armor lies where the cost of the extra troops equals the cost of the metals used to equip them. The cost of the extra troops is:

$C_t = (TR-1) \times T \times M \times D$, where:

C_t = cost of extra troops

TR = troop ratio, from table 1 above

T = number of troops maintained

M = maintenance cost/troop/turn

D = duration of survival in turns

and the value of the metals is:

$C_m = T \times V$, where:

C_m = value of the metals used

T = number of troops

V = average value/troop of the metals used to equip them

V is estimated as above. For troops with mixed weapons and/or armor, just use a weighted average of the metals used for each troop.

To find the break even point, setting $C_t = C_m$, we get:

$T \times V = (TR-1) \times T \times M \times D$

since T is a multiplier on both sides of the equation, it can be eliminated, and we get:

$V = (TR-1) \times M \times D$

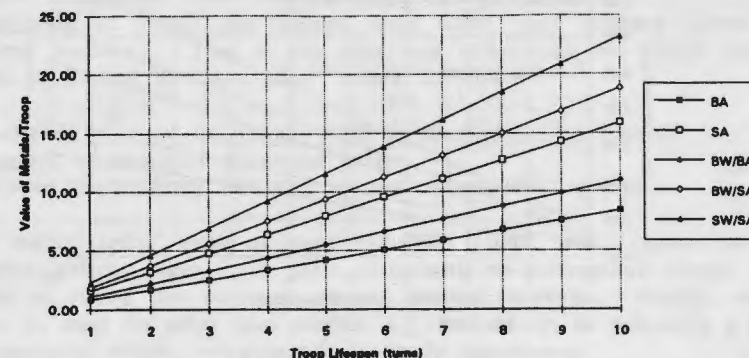
For any particular troop/armor/weapon combination, TR and M are constants, so the break even point can be calculated given any value of V (metals value) or D (expected troop lifetime).

With an estimate of metal prices, the ability to calculate the expected cost of extra troops, and the information on fighting power above, it's possible to assemble tables for each troop type relating the cost of equipped troops with that of wood/none troops. The graphs for a range of duration of troop survivals and metal prices are below for major troop types and armor/weapon combinations.

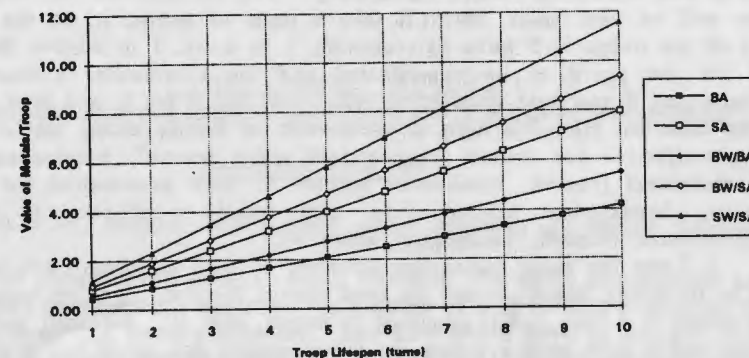
For each line, the portion of the graph above the line (short troop life span, high prices) represents the zone where using metals for arms or armor is not cost-effective; the portion of the graph below the line (long troop life span, low prices) represents the zone where using metals for arms or armor is cost-effective.

Note that for weapon/armor combinations, it's the sum (combined cost) of both the weapons and armor that's graphed on the vertical axis.

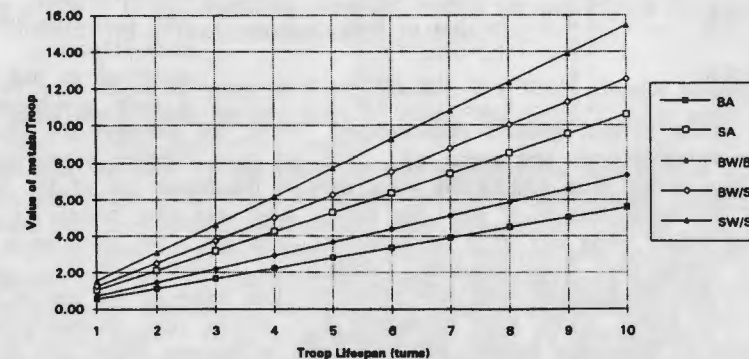
Heavy Cavalry

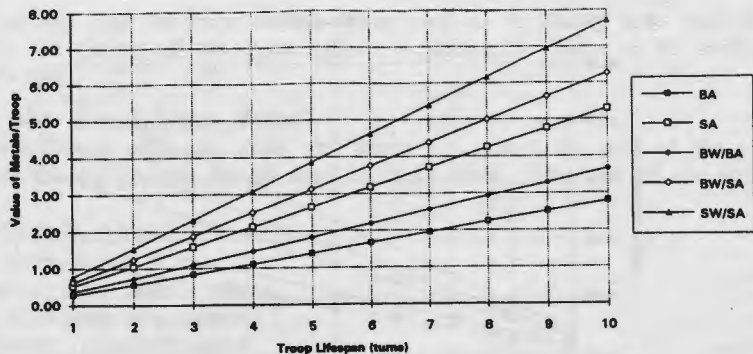


Light Cavalry



Heavy Infantry





Examples & Discussion

1. You're playing the Woodmen early in the game, recruiting HI at 2711 to send to Dol Guldur one turn's move away. You estimate that the life span of the army will be very short, but it'll take 6 turns to recruit it, so the average life span of the troops is 5 turns (3 recruiting, 1 to move, 1 to destroy the pop center and for the guard to be assassinated and the commander kidnapped). You estimate that if you hold onto bronze you could sell it for 3, and steel for 4. Look at the table for HI. It's right at break-even for bronze armor (cost=3), just short of cost-effective for bronze weapon/steel armor (cost=7, break-even around 6), and steel/steel (cost=8, break-even around 7), very economical for steel armor (cost=4, break-even around 5.5), and wildly profligate to make them bronze/bronze (cost=6, break-even about 4).

2. Later the same game your economy as well as prices have improved and you're recruiting heavy cavalry to send toward Mordor. You've improved the pop center to a city, you're planning to recruit 2000 HC, but with your tough guards and a little luck avoiding the curses squads you could last 4 or 5 turns inside Mordor. You estimate average life span as 8 turns, best bronze price as 6, and best steel price as 10. What happens now?

Weapon/Armor Cost	Break-even	Conclusion
BA	7	cost-effective
BW/BA	8.5	not cost-effective
SA	13	cost-effective
BW/SA	15	marginal to bad
SW/SA	16	a poor investment

Note several general observations. First, the stronger the troop type, the more valuable arms and armor are. You get more fighting power adding 60% to the con of HC than adding the same 60% to the lower con of HI, but the armor uses the same amount of steel for both. Also, use your metals for any kind of armor before using any of it for weapons. You get a lot more bang for the buck from armor than from weapons. Armor and weapons are least valuable when prices are intermediate; with low prices the sale value is too low to make up the fighting power, while with extremely high prices your recruiting is no longer limited by economic factors and you need to squeeze every last bit of fighting power out of your troops.

When Should I Ignore This Nonsense?

This analysis of metals use applies only when your military power is limited by your economy. That is the case less often than one might think. Recruiting can be limited by many other factors, including:

- the need to defend yourself desperately with as much force as possible
- a limited number of available command orders
- the need to keep the military initiative against a weakened opponent

In the 'market spiral' stage of many ME-PBM games, which occurs late in the game when nations have built their economies to outrageous levels, the market can be so strong that economic factors become irrelevant. Finally, when an army is to be used for other than combat, e.g. threatening, or defending a pop center from emissary action, using metals is rarely appropriate.

The Oracle Speaks

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

MIDDLE-EARTH PBM

Q. Will spell #244, Fearful Hearts, help when attacking an enemy population center?

A. No. Fearful Hearts only affects army combat. The spell description says that "The spell temporarily reduces the morale of any enemy armies in that hex by 10-20 points during combat." The key word here is morale. Since there is no morale for population centers, this spell will not affect population center combat.

Q. Will it help when threatening an enemy population center?

A. Again, the answer is no. Actually, combat spells do not affect Threatens at all, since there is no actual combat taking place.

Q. An army of mine faces an army of South Gondor at a North Gondor population center. What order do I write for my army to attack the South Gondor army and capture the North Gondor population center?

A. You would not be able to do both on the same turn unless the South Gondor army attacked you. The 230 order would allow you to attack all enemy armies but you would not attack the population center. The 255 order would allow you to attack the population center and any armies of the same nation but you would not AUTOMATICALLY initiate combat with other enemy nations' armies. If the South Gondor army attacked you and you gave the 255 order, then you would be able to accomplish both. Otherwise, you would have to issue one order the first turn and then issue the other order the following turn, OR have two armies present, each giving the requisite order.

Q. I have a commander in command of a navy with 300 HI and 18 warships and 7 transports. I have another character with command/emissary skill located in the same hex (which has a city with a port). I would like the navy commander to execute order 355 (TrTrps) and transfer 200 HI to the commander/emissary. I would like his second order to be 830 (MovNavy), the result being that the first commander sails away with 100 HI and the second character stays in the city with 200 HI. Is this possible?

A. **NO. The 355 order does not allow an army to transfer troops to a character UNLESS the character commands (or is with) an army/navy. The 765 (SplArmy) would allow you to do this as long as the navy is able to anchor ships.**

Q. If this is possible, then: How many Warships and Transports would each character have?

A. **As augmented above, the navy commander who split the army would not transfer any ships. Thus, the character receiving the transferred troops would have no ships. Neither the 765 order, nor the 355 order, transfers anything in terms of ships and/or items in the baggage train, except the 765 moves a proportional amount of food as part of the split.**

Q. I also have another character located in the same hex and would like him to join the navy before it sails away. What order would I use?

A. **Before the navy sails, the order to use would be 785 (JnArmy). After the navy sails and lands, the order to use would be 870 (MovJoin).**

Q. Here is my situation: I have an army with no food in it sitting in one of my ally's population centers. He has raised his relations with me to friendly but I am still tolerated with him. Is it possible for me to buy food directly into my army at his pop center? Can I buy the food into his population center stores, and then transfer it into my army? Or is there some other way to do this?

A. **There is no way to purchase food for an army at another nation's population center--period. If there is already food in the population center, you can TRANSFER the food into your army, but that would be taking directly from the population center's stores. You could purchase food at one of your own pop centers and then transfer it to that population center, but the food would appear at the population center when the transfer takes place--at order 948, which is almost the end of the turn. If you did this the turn before, then you would be set.**

Q. I was looking over the 635 order (Interrogate Hostage) and found it a little conflicting. In the prerequisites it states: "Hostage character is held by character OR by character's nation in a pop center." However, in the description to the right, it says that the interrogation can only take place IN a population center of the questioner's nation. My question is--can an agent interrogate a hostage anywhere as long as he is the one holding the hostage or does he have to be in one of my population centers?

A. **Your agent can interrogate any hostage they hold wherever they wish. The "OR by character's nation in a pop center" means that any character with agent skill can interrogate the hostage at that pop center as long as the hostage is imprisoned there. Otherwise, only the character holding the hostage can interrogate him.**

Q. Regarding the secondary powers of some artifacts: if an artifact gives access to a spell list, does holding the artifact allow any mage from that nation to learn the spells or does each mage have to hold the artifact personally to have access to that spell list?

A. **Each mage would have to hold the artifact personally in order to be able to learn the spells on that particular list. Holding the artifact does not allow any mage from a nation to learn the spell.**

Q. If an artifact gives access to a specific spell, can any character cast it or only a mage?

A. **If the artifact gives access to a specific spell, then any character can cast that spell.**

Q. If any character can cast the spell, what order would he use?

A. **He would use the order that a mage would use to cast the spell; i.e. if he had access to the Teleport spell, he would issue order 825 with the additional information of 314 and the hex he is moving to. The artifact would also have to be 'in use' to cast the spell. [Note: to research a spell from an artifact (giving access to a spell list), the artifact does not have to be 'in use'.]**

Q. If an artifact gives access to Teleport, which category does that fall into?

A. **If the artifact gives access to the Teleport LIST, then only a mage would be able to learn the spell; if the artifact gives access to the Teleport SPELL, then any character would be able to cast it.**

Address any questions you may have about your game to "The Oracle Speaks". Printed inquiries may be signed or anonymous but please include your name and game number when submitting.

The Wyrn

by
Mitch Gunovsky

A howling gale, full of dread
Ominous clouds, let no light shed
Frozen peaks, dark mountain den
The beast resides, deep within.

And now it stirs, the gargantuan old
Upon its horde, of magic and gold
Clawed and winged, it's power awakes
Scaled and fanged, with hunger that aches.

Deep gulfs of air, perched above at height
Testing the wind, now prepared for flight
Soaring on high, master of the sky
All below tremble, the Wyrms is nigh.

Sleepy little village, in the woods below
What'll hit them, they won't ever know
Screams of terror, panicked and despaired
Filling its great belly, none were spared.

Satisfied, and with no more to do
A check on its treasure, long overdue
Last look around, took all it could save
Laughed a little, and returned to its cave.

Upon its return, laden with loot
Something's amiss, the track of a boot
The warrior turned, to smell the new reek
To see the scaled head, mouth opened to . . . speak?



If Nazgûl had a sense of humor

The Hall Of Heroes

Game #172 - The Dark Servants: #12, #13 & #24

Celedhring looked out of his tower and saw Jf Indûr, Din Ohtar and Ren arriving with their personal guard. He already knew the news they were bringing. The war was over and the Servants of Sauron had won. Celedhring heard his servant Maben calling, requesting him to have audience with his guests. Soon, the second and third most powerful of Sauron's servants, Dendra Dwar and Broggha, would be arriving as well. Celedhring stood quietly for a moment, reflecting upon the events of the past. He twitched Nanya and Narya nervously, the two of the three elven rings of power that were on his left hand. Yes, the war was finally over, but realistically, it was over long, long ago. Celedhring wished it hadn't ended so soon. He was more interested in obtaining the third ring of power from Gandalf, who had eluded his clutches more successfully than either Elrond or Galadriel had.

Maben called once more, advising the arrival of Dendra Dwar and Broggha. Celedhring turned and moved swiftly to the door, cracking a faint smile, knowing his Master would nevertheless be pleased. Final standings are as follows:

#12 Dragon Lord: 2400

#13 Dog Lord: 2050

#24 Rhudaur: 1817

Top Free Peoples: #7 Southern Gondor: 1383

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Celedhring/Dragon Lord: 367

Highest Net Commander Rank - Tônn Varthkûr/Dog Lord: 170

Highest Net Mage Rank - Celedhring/Dragon Lord: 299

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Tor Mitari/Rhudaur: 124

Highest Net Agent - Idril Celebrindal/Long Rider: 153

Most Mithril - Cloud Lord: 1950

Most Artifacts - Dragon Lord: 30

Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 34

Editor's Note: Celedhring's challenge rank of 367 sets a new record for Highest Challenge Rank, surpassing the old record of 348. Congratulations!!

Game # 184 - The Free Peoples: #5, #7 & #9

Hallas sat at the council table with Celdrahil and Thranduil. Soothing music wafted from a Sinda lyre, played by one of Thranduil's capable scouts. A fresh breeze blew through the open windows and dust motes danced, as if in time to the music, in the shafts of sunlight that cut through the windows. An excellent vintage from Celdrahil's vineyards sat before the rulers whose daring and bravery led the Free to the defeat of the Dark Servants. Yet the usual enjoyment Hallas may have derived from these luxuries was offset by the ominous presence of the prisoner kneeling before them. Mûrazôr still had a chilling effect, even in defeat.

Hallas stood, facing the Witch-king, his implacable enemy through all the years of conflict. "Mûrazôr, for your heinous acts of brutality, torture and wanton destruction, you are hereby sentenced to the death you should have suffered long ago. No more will you or your Master trouble this Land. The nations of Middle-earth can now start to rebuild their homes without fear from the Dark. Only your death will assure us your foulness will not rise again. Thus speaks the Council of the Free." Hallas sat and, raising his goblet with the other two rulers, drank long and deep. It was done.

[continued]

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Final Standings are as follows:

#5 Cardolan: 2250
 #7 Southern Gondor: 2017
 #9 Sinda Elves: 1650
 Top Free Peoples: #11 Witch-king: 925

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Elrond/Northmen: 189
 Highest Net Commander Rank - Orcir/Dark Lieutenants: 118
 Highest Net Mage Rank - Béawyn/Northmen: 137
 Highest Net Emissary Rank - Thranduil/Sinda Elves: 101
 Highest Net Agent - Shabla/Haradwaith: 110
 Most Mithril - Cardolan: 573
 Most Artifacts - Sinda Elves: 15
 Most Kills - Haradwaith: 6

Game # 200 - The Free Peoples: #23, #22 & #4

Enion stood on his balcony, watching the sunset turn the sky a brilliant orange and pink. His councilors had questioned his judgment in turning toward the light, just as Haruth Ramam's councilors had questioned his own decision. He could not ignore the atrocities the Dark Servants inflicted on the population, however, and it was this more than anything else that swayed his decision.

Now the battle was over. It was a difficult thing to accept, after the long years of battle, but it was really over. Sauron's servants were either dead or rotting in a jail cell and their foul hordes were scattered to the corners of the land. Along with Argeleb II of Arthedain, he and Haruth Ramam led the forces of the Free against the Lidless Eye and now were victorious. At last he would rule his country in peaceful times. Final standings are as follows:

#23 Dunlendings: 1967
 #22 Haradwaith: 1725
 #4 Arthedain: 1766
 Top Dark Servant: #16 Ice King: 900

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves: 245
 Highest Net Commander Rank - Báin I/Dwarves: 159
 Highest Net Mage Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves: 199
 Highest Net Emissary Rank - Ulfang/Ice King: 107
 Highest Net Agent - Lomëllindë/Long Rider: 120
 Most Mithril - Haradwaith: 650
 Most Artifacts - Ice King: 16
 Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 25

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Game #217 - The Dark Servants: #23, #17, & #21

A black cloud has covered the sky in Middle-earth, announcing to all the dominance of Sauron and his loyal Servants. Free armies lay scattered and broken across the land and the heads of their generals and leaders rested on pikes on the gates of those same Servants. The Light has been perverted to shadow and the Free howl in anguished torment. Enion, Adónaphel and Angamaitë ride at the head of the procession traveling to meet with their Master. They will hand Middle-earth over to their Dark Master and, in his name, rule all. Final standings are as follows:

#23 Dunlendings: 1500
 #17 Quiet Avenger: 1383
 #21 Corsairs: 1350
 Top Free Peoples: #10 Noldo Elves: 1075

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Bulrakur/Dog Lord: 192
 Highest Net Commander Rank - Bulrakur/Dog Lord: 167
 Highest Net Mage Rank - Erester/Noldo Elves: 145
 Highest Net Emissary Rank - D'Karta/Dunlendings: 93
 Highest Net Agent - Tempest/Cloud Lord: 115
 Most Mithril - Dwarves: 271
 Most Artifacts - Noldo Elves: 17
 Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 11

Game # 24 - The Free Peoples: #23, #6, & #2

Hoarmûrath and Akhórahil stood with their hands shackled and their heads bowed. Their master certainly won't be happy with these two, thought Enion. He looked over at Ethelion II and Bard I and smiled. The three of them had led the Free Peoples in their fight to defeat Sauron. The battle had gone well and now they led the united Free in starting the rebuilding process. But first, there was the business of disposing of these two.

"As penance for crimes against the Free Peoples of Middle-earth, I sentence you, Hoarmûrath and you, Akhórahil, to servitude for life. You have spent almost all of your unnatural lives working against our people and enslaving them. Well, now the tables are turned. You will now spend the rest of your days as slaves, doing the menial work that is required to rebuild our nations." The two Nazgûl screamed as the horror of their situation hit them. Some days it was great to be alive, thought Enion. Final standings are as follows:

#23 Dunlendings: 2050
 #6 Northern Gondor: 1650
 #2 Northmen: 1600
 Top Dark Servant: #16 Ice King: 875

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Elrond/Northmen: 171
 Highest Net Commander Rank - Boromir/Northern Gondor: 102
 Highest Net Mage Rank - Goromil/Northern Gondor: 136
 Highest Net Emissary Rank - Cadfael/Northmen: 86
 Highest Net Agent - Zildana/Northern Gondor: 131
 Most Mithril - Dwarves: 259
 Most Artifacts - Northern Gondor: 30
 Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 3