

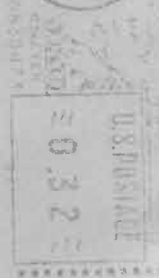
# WHISPERS OF THE WOOD



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

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# WORDS FROM THE WOOD

Ahh, it's football season once again, and here in Florida, land of the Dolphins, that means one thing--Jimmy Johnson!! That's right, His Royal Hairdo has brought his court to South Florida and we're all expecting major miracles. I mean, he IS Jimmy Johnson. Who cares if the Dolphins offensive line got beat by the Nursing Home All Stars? Or corners who can't cover a bed? Or linebackers who run the 40 in a little under a decade? WE HAVE JIMMY JOHNSON!!! That alone is enough to cause the opponents to capitulate on the spot. So watch out--Jimmy's coming your way!

We at GSI want you all to know that the new Fourth Age scenario is proceeding at a vigorous pace. The game should be ready for release to the public around late September/early October. A press release has been included in this month's issue, as well as a time line leading up to the period in which the game takes place. Registrations are now being accepted, so if you are interested, you should let us know. Flyers are being sent out with all of our turns which have a handy order form--you can use these easy to use order forms to register today! Since the game allows you to design your own nation, nation design sheets will be sent out to those who have registered as soon as we are ready to release the game. Now you can set up your nation exactly the way *YOU* want it to be. So get those registrations in soon!

Speaking of the Fourth Age, the new scenario was a subject of great discussion at our GenCon seminars. There were a number of playtesters in attendance and they were very enthusiastic about the game. Another special point of note about GenCon--Cliff Yahnke, a player in many games of ME-PBM, played in the national tournament for Middle-earth: The Wizards' card game and placed second! He almost placed first but the unfortunate demise of his wizard took him out of the final contention. He did win a trip to England to participate in the World Championship, however, so we wish him all the luck!!

Now for some new email changes--effective, 9/1/96, GSI will begin making a special "emailing" for all 1-week all-email games - on turn #1. This emailing will advise all players of what the email addresses are for each of the other players in the game. But, it will not reveal which email address goes with which player, nor with which nation. This will allow the players to remain fairly anonymous (should they wish) and yet also allow for more interaction between the players in email games - without the need for 3x5 cards!

Effective, 9/1/96, GSI will extend the turn due date deadline for all 1-week all-email games to include the morning of the due date. However, there will be the normal \$2 charge for such last-minute email submissions (same as for last-minute faxes) AND the email must be sent to our GSI@ELINK.NET address. Email sent to AOL and CIS will not be checked early and thus last-minute email submissions sent to those addresses may arrive too late. Email sent to AOL and CIS should continue to be sent so as to arrive at least 1 business day before the posted due date. PLEASE NOTE THESE CHANGES ONLY APPLY TO ALL EMAIL GAMES--THEY DO NOT APPLY TO ANY OTHER GAMES!!!!

Those of you who have checked out our Web page should go back around in a couple of weeks. We will be adding a new batch of articles to the Web page as well as information on the Fourth Age scenario. If you haven't checked out our Web page, you should take a look. It has information on the different nations in both scenarios, reviews, past *Whispers* articles and much, much more. The



## whispers of the wood

### ALONG THE PATHWAYS

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WHISPERS OF THE WOOD is a monthly publication primarily for the use and enjoyment of GSI players of STATE OF WAR and ME-PBM™. Subscription rates: \$15.00 for one year (12 issues) or \$25.00 for two years (24 issues). Individual issues cost \$1.75. GSI reserves the right to change these prices without prior notice of any type.

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This Month's Cover: "Welcome to Mordor" by Theodor J. Schwartz

Volume XIII Issue #6  
 Published by GAME SYSTEMS INC  
 September 1, 1996  
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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 103

Aaaack! I'm infested with Free!  
Alyria, Bondan, Killian, Raist, Amroth,  
Minastir, T'Sarriel, Tharudan,  
Bethlissien, Calendiriel, Culuriel,  
Hithmorion, Sulmith, Vagorian, Frillo...  
gosh, the numbers are down this turn.  
It's a sad day for Sauron when there  
are sixteen Free cities and major towns  
on the Fire King map. You'd never  
guess I'm the last Dark Servant, would  
you?

Rhys

### GAME 178

Ahh, at last, away from stuffy  
old Mordor! I have decided to spend  
the summer in the North. There are  
people to kill, places to rob, and towns  
to burn!

Sneaker (16)

### GAME 181

Was that a BIG dragon that the  
Cardolans had? Did he eat that Cloud  
Lord army? Not too many places left  
to hide. The Corsairs are windless.  
Only the wastelands for the CL. The  
free come for you Lanaigh.

Cardolan

### GAME 195

Its so nice to see the tables turn  
on the back stabbers. Only time will  
tell if a lesson is learned.

Khamul

\*\*\*\*\*

I like the way that I make you  
itch  
And all the reasons I give you  
to b\*\*\*h  
And how I make you wanna  
scream in pain  
And feel your life is just a  
LOSING GAME

I like the way that you let me in  
The way you look when the  
walls cave in  
I like the way that your stomach  
knots  
And how you cry for it all to stop

I like the way that you fool  
yourself  
And make believe there's  
nobody else  
I like the way that you stand in  
line  
And beg salvation from the  
empty skies

Here comes the RECKONING DAY

I like the things that you try  
to fake  
And your face when I see you  
break  
And that you say you will pray  
for me  
You realize you are prey for me

I like the way you stay on  
attack  
No matter what, I keep coming  
back  
And how you try to hold me  
down  
But you end up driven to the  
ground.

Megadeth

To the Liars and Connivers, you  
know who you are. See you in the  
next one. Cheers to my Allies,  
congratulations to you all. You made

this one of the best and strangest  
games ever. For sure we made  
history. And though you had to leave  
awhile ago, I give thanks to my friend,  
Lee. We've got each others back.

### GAME 201

The forces of the Dark Lord are  
few and ragged. Soon the last shall be  
vanquished. Let us not now lose sight  
of our objective. We must push on  
until final victory is achieved!

Celdrahil  
King of Gondor

### GAME 205

One little, two little, three little  
Noldo! Three little Noldo gravestones!  
Orillion Darkblade

### GAME 215

This is not the end,  
This is not the beginning  
of the end,  
It is however-  
the end of the beginning!  
Sir Psycho

\*\*\*\*\*

To All Nazgul and Corsairs:

Don't knock yourselves over  
patting each other on the back for  
what you believe to be a brilliant  
military campaign. Even complete  
morons can achieve the upper hand  
when 5 FP nations drop on turn 2.

A battle weary, but determined FP

### GAME 216

Uvatha chuckled. Over 2000  
Eothraim lancers dead, leaving half of  
his army alive and clamoring for more!  
Now Gaerdae's small army would die-  
and unless Gaerdae had a powerful  
ally, the town ahead would shortly be  
Uvatha's village! Indeed, a special  
treat awaited the elves, for Uvatha's

ancient ally, Uruial, had his own scores  
to settle here...

\*\*\*\*\*

My treasury appears to have  
developed a leak!

(25)

### GAME 218

The dark still makes its  
desperate pleas to bring allies to their  
side. Alas, they are too late. They  
have threatened and bumbled their  
way through this war, alienating every  
neutral. The dark cannot last much  
longer.

### GAME 221

Brotha did ya forget ya name  
Did ya lose it on the wall  
Playin tic-tac-toe  
Yo, check the diagonal  
Three brothers gone  
Come on  
Doesn't that make three in a row  
Anger is a gift  
FREEDOM..

Rage of "The Prophet"  
P.S. Don't mess with the clergy!

### GAME 222

I believe it is time I moved  
south. The air is unpleasantly fresh,  
the woods an unsightly green and the  
locals always seem to be carrying  
torches when they visit.

Khamul (12)

\*\*\*\*\*

Hmmm, time to rain on  
someone's parade.

Cloudshape (14)

### GAME 228

Will the mighty armies of the  
Free Peoples Liberated Front conquer  
Mordor? Or will they be stopped at

Morannon? Only time will tell. 15 vs. 4 is an awesome challenge for even the stoutest of nations. The test is at hand!

Orillion Darkblade

### GAME 230

War Bulletin

Announcing the third battle of Osgiliath. Will there be a fourth? It's the Fire King's turn- again. Will Grasty's huge army appear on time? No. That army has already made their final appearance.

Chronicler of North Gondor

\*\*\*\*\*

Welcome to Osgiliath,

Lords of Fire and of Ice, come and taste the Gondor's wrath. Eat some gall and pick your lice.

Chronicles of North Gondor

### GAME 231

Women (even Nazgûl) don't belong on the front. Sauron should of Known better. One more DS nation destroyed.

1 Pig

P.S. If we can only improve the market? Rhys? Well how about a little inflation?

\*\*\*\*\*

Somehow devouring the Northmen around Rhûn isn't going too well. eh Uvatha? Eleven turns and only Rhubar and Dilgul to show for it despite Blind Sorcerer support. You're sans fleet, and I'm moving against both...

Rhys

P.S. Influencing Lest, an unfortified town. is particularly brilliant. Gosh, I wonder if my armies can get there once it falls?

### GAME 237

Greenwood has awakened and set forth hordes of irritating munchkins to torment all Mordorians. The tactic-free mind of the Witch King has proved to be amusing. Meanwhile the Dragon Lord, polite as he may be, is almost out of time. He stepped in a nest of little bearded guys and now has run back to his cave to recover. Unfortunately his home has been infested and he's all out of Dwarf-off!!

Orillion Darkblade

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Mr. Dwar,

You have once again failed to pay your neighborhood insurance fees and I am forced to remove you from the umbrella of my protection. I would suggest you install fire sprinklers!

Da Godfather (6)

\*\*\*\*\*

Report to the Council:

Sirs, we have taken Mt. Gundabad and Kala Duulakarth, and have retaken Carad Galadhon. Our armies even now attack Dol Guldur. To the West all the Witch-king population centers and Goblin-Gate have fallen, except for Carn Dum and Mt. Gram, which should fall this fortnight. The Dark Servant armies have been driven from Greenwood and westwards. To the south Morannon and Durthang lay in ashes. We have done well in our first four months, but we must continue the attack to achieve final victory.

Lord Darklighter (1)

### GAME 239

I'm not mad. I'm not upset. I am ticked to no ends. I plan to slowly torture every pointy ear freak on the planet. And Ted Bundy will lead the strike.

Famine

### GAME 241

Let this be your answer foul filth of the north. You want us to ally with you but you treat us as children and slaves. With no promise of aid or incentives of gain, you would expect us to conquer all the armies of the free for you! For this insult to the nation and honor of Rhudaur there can be only one answer. We will have our reward, we will take it from the burning towns and villages that claim Murazor their overlord.

By the way, you have bitten off more than you can chew. As we gnaw at your soft underbelly, watch what will happen to your armies in the west. Can you say, "Bye, Bye?"

\*\*\*\*\*

Lengthening shadows played across the devastation on the battleground as the sun sank toward the western mountains. Trolls picked their way among the fallen, scavenging what they may, as a group of goblins made sport with the remains of Hathaldir's head; several mages were healing wounds; and close by, orcs under the command of Captain Uklurg readied for the assault on Minas Ithil.

From behind a huge boulder stepped a tattered, wet, vigorous Vinyaran, commander of the now vanquished North Gondorian army. In defiance born of grief for his lost comrades, Vinyaran shouted out a challenge to the Fire King's forces. Skargnakh came forward to accept the challenge carrying the mace called Ongrum, still glowing from battle. As soldiers gathered into an enclosing ring, those closest calculated the odds at roughly even. The combatants warily circled each other and with defiant yells rushed together wielding their weapons of destruction. A long and protracted battle ensued, during which neither warrior was able to fatally wound the other, although many a mighty blow landed on both

men. In a sudden flurry of feints, disengages and thrusts, Vinyaran sensed an opening and drove his weapon into Skargnakh's body, killing him instantly. Shocked silence fell over the gathered crowd and it was evident that Vinyaran had also suffered grievous bloody wounds in the fight. Shrieks of rage and cries of revenge erupted as the circle closed upon Vinyaran.

"Hold!" The command was given in a voice so quiet that one standing nearby should not have been able to hear it over the din. Yet so fraught with terrible authority that it bore into every mind, freezing every creature in its tracks. The crowd parted like a flowing, living curtain as Ren the Unclean effortlessly glided through with Captain Uklurg striding by his side. The Nazgûl recovered Ongrum from the still clutching hand of Skargnakh and delivered it to Uklurg. Turning a cold, despising gaze upon Vinyaran, Ren spoke in sibilant tones.

"It seems you have pressed your challenge after all. Skargnakh accepted and we shall honor that, though I would that I had been at hand, as you would have joined your miserable lackeys in death. None here shall bother you for now, but go while you can. If I find you after we have taken Minas Ithil, you will beg for death ere I am finished."

With that, the Nazgûl turned and swept back through the gathered throng of human and non-human, drawing his minions with him. Vinyaran was left alone in the shadow of the boulder he was leaning on for support. He rested for a brief while, gathering his strength. From across the valley came the sounds of combat.

The forces of the Fire King waged a victorious campaign for possession of Minas Ithil in the dwindling late afternoon hours. The local militia was quickly and ruthlessly overcome and the new town saw the slaughter of many loyalists. The fortifications were overrun but not destroyed and the

remaining populace greeted their new masters with greatly varying degrees of enthusiasm.

Once he had satisfied himself that all open resistance had been crushed, Ren returned to the battlefield in search of Vinyaran. After vainly searching among the dead, Ren lifted his gaze to the Western mountains. "Skargnakh must go unavenged for now, but we shall meet again for a final time."

Toiling up the mountain, Vinyaran was filled with sudden cold dread. Making his way over to a protected outcrop of rock and looking down into the valley below, he saw the lone dark figure of the Nazgûl turn and return to Minas Ithil. Vinyaran took advantage of the protecting rocks to rest and, after a time, was roused by a distant rumbling. Across the valley he saw a great army leaving Mordor, headed toward Gondor. In the last fading light of day, the banners of the Cloud Lord were just discernible. Despair welled up within Vinyaran. He knew it was not possible to reach Osgiliath in time to warn them of their peril.

After total darkness had fallen and Vinyaran continued his upward climb, he became aware for the first time since his battle with Skargnakh, that he no longer carried with him the Palantir of Osgiliath. The rocks echoed his cry of anguish as he went on with the burden of yet another defeat.

The inhabitants of Minas Ithil were up well into the night as the soldiers celebrated their victory. A particularly disagreeable looking goblin, wearing a much too large Gondorian helm, stumbled into The Silver Chalice. The tavern was bursting at the seams and the little goblin had great difficulty pressing his way through the crowd for a mug of mead. A raucous trio of trolls staggering toward the door knocked the goblin off his feet and under a table.

When Izzug, for that was his name, gathered his senses, he noticed

with some consolation that the long table he laid under ran the length of the room. He crawled around and over feet and heavy boots to the wall and then slid along the wall till he came to a curtained doorway. A serving wench passed through just then, affording Izzug a glance at a laden table around which many officers were seated. The curtain was just closing as a cloaked figure slipped through from the main room.

A large orc looked up from the table. "Ho, Nazog, there is room here by us. What skulking has kept you so late from our revels?"

The agent, a close associate of Commander Uklurg, produced a shining gold object bedecked with jewels from a large pouch under his cloak. It was in the shape of an open sided pyramid with a crystal sphere suspended by no visible means in its center. As the sphere slowly rotated, glowing mists of various colors swirled within.

Nazog smiled at his companions' stunned silence. His eyes narrowed and shone a dark red. "Tomorrow I return to Barad Ungol to unlock the secrets of the Palantir."

Rheo

Chronicles of the Third Age

#### GAME 242

At last... a noisy game with people that have big mouths, pens, and imaginations. Warning: I make as much noise as you do!

#### GAME 245

Attention Middle-Earth shoppers, we have a wonderful selection of Dark Servants up on the chopping block. Come pick yours before they are all gone.

The mighty, mighty Free

\*\*\*\*\*

All the Eothraim have gone to war!! Leaving only children to guard the walls... that's when the dragon came for dinner.

Orillion Darkblade

#### GAME 247

Haradwaith said what about my mother? Bring me his head!

Sir Psycho

Middle-earth™ PBM  
circa 295Q

#### GAME 25

"Oh Father, what am I to do now? All our allies are gone, the dark ones swarm towards us like flies. Shall I fight to the last man to save the land? Or should we join our brethren over the western seas? Help me father, I need your guidance."

Glorfindel looked to the stars, saw a falling star streaking towards the west and knew that he would follow.

#### GAME 26

The Free Peoples are winning the war for Rhûn. What is our prize? Camps and Ruins of what was once a beautiful place. Mordor has been breached and Harondor is in flames. We look forward to Autumn.

Zarendarger

#### GAME 33

Come on Freeps. Not bad but if you want to put us out you'll have to do a little better. See ya on the battle field or in the shadows. Till the end.

Stormbringer

#### GAME 48

To All Dark Servants:

Hide in the shadows

Tremble in fear

Be it known

Stormbringer's here

#### GAME 49

Does our nation actually have any other allies in this fight, or have you run to hide amongst the forests and fields? If you simply wish to quit, then do so, otherwise a word from you would go a long way for us all.

Aragorn of the Dúndan

#### GAME 50

Hey Southern Gondor I haven't heard any boasts lately. Are things not going so well? Ovatha did you thank the Freeps for influencing your bad decision? Do you think any of them are in a position to help themselves let alone you. You will see the error of your ways while curfews run you into the dirt.

Stormbringer

## 1996 Press Release

# MIDDLE-EARTH PBM™ FOURTH AGE

Scenario to be released soon!

The new Middle-earth PBM Fourth Age, circa 1000 scenario will offer players some very interesting and much-requested game options. The premise behind the new scenario is that the Reunited Kingdom (the realm established by Aragorn after the War of the Ring) has split into the "Twin Kingdoms" - a North Kingdom and a South Kingdom. Other fledgling Mannish nations are on the rise to contest the power and rule of these two kingdoms, and isolated realms of Elves and Dwarves (Free Peoples), and even enclaves of Orcs and Trolls (Dark Servants) have come forth to challenge the 1000 year rule of Men.

- 2 players each customize and control one of the Twin Kingdoms
- 23 players design their own Nations
- Choose your own Nation Name and Homeland
- Choose your own Allegiance and Race
- Choose your own Special Nation Abilities
- Choose the locations for your initial Population Centers and Fortifications
- Design your own initial Characters
- Design your own initial Armies and Navies
- Artifact Numbers/Names/Locations are randomized from game to game
- New Artifacts, New Encounters, New Riddles, and New NPCs
- New Game Orders - Build Roads, Move Map, Influence Market
- Neutrals are a viable Game-Winning Allegiance
- Aid or attack ANY Nation you choose - Good, Evil, or Neutral
- All Games will end by Turn #52 (or sooner)
- Every Game to start and play completely different

## Fourth Age Time Line

F.A. 1	The Eldar begin to depart
F.A. 2-32	The Eldar abandon the Tower Hills and the surrounding locales
F.A. 6	Shire is made a Free Land, under protection of the Northern Sceptre, and is off-limits to Men
F.A. 15	Rebuilding of Annúminas begins
F.A. 63	King Éomer of Rohan passes away
F.A. 100	Moria still abandoned
F.A. 120	King Elessar (Aragorn II) passes away. Eldarion becomes King of the Reunited Kingdom. Legolas and Gimli depart for Aman, marking the final passing of the Fellowship of the Ring
F.A. 121	Queen Arwen passes away
F.A. 264	King Eldarion passes away. Elessar II becomes King of the Reunited Kingdom
F.A. 300-500	The Men of the West establish major overland trade links with Peoples of the East. Dorwinion and Khand rise in power
F.A. 400-450	Reilmether, East of Mordor, rises in economic power
F.A. 408	King Elessar II passes away. Elendil II becomes King of the Reunited Kingdom
F.A. 432-864	Last major Eldar migration through Lindon. Avani groups supplant the Eldar in many of the more guarded enclaves of Northwestern Endor. Other Elven sites are abandoned or given over to Men
F.A. 440	Relerindú-by-Belanthir is declared a Free Port and becomes the chief trading center of central Endor
F.A. 552	The aged Elendil II abdicates the throne of the Reunited Kingdom in favor of his eldest son, Isildur II
F.A. 696	Rather than abdicating the throne of the Reunited Kingdom, Isildur II grants his son lordship over the North Kingdom
F.A. 700	Isildur II passes away. Anáron II becomes King of the Reunited Kingdom. Núriags sack Relerindú-by-Belanthir
F.A. 701-712	The First River War. The Variag-Núriag-Nurniag alliance, known as "the Collusion of the Úsievrim," conquers the Chey lands and all of eastern Rhûn
F.A. 750	After the Lords of Umbar declare the waters off the Harad Coast as the Umbarian Sea, the Kingdom of Gondor faces an economic crisis
F.A. 752-775	The Sail War. The Kingdom of Gondor struggles against the Umbarians. The Haradrim side with both belligerents. Gondor ultimately prevails, but the conflict serves to create disharmony among the peoples of the North and South Kingdoms
F.A. 775	Anáron II is murdered after crushing the Umbarians near Linhir. Arathorn III becomes King of the Reunited Kingdom
F.A. 783-800	The Second River War. The Collusion of the Úsievrim is abandoned as civil war rages across central Endor. The Variag-Núriag-Nurniag triad collapses, with each party becoming the focal point of rival "successor alliances."
F.A. 799	Anáron III perishes in the Red Plague. His young son, Beleg II, becomes King of the Reunited Kingdom and moves to stabilize the volatile southern frontier
F.A. 800-1000	Great mannish migrations create turmoil throughout Endor
F.A. 800	Battle of Ethir Hamen. North and South Kingdom naval and land forces crush a large army composed of Umbarians, Variags, Haradrim, and various mercenary groups from southwestern Endor. Serious losses by the North Kingdom - the result of the furious ambush that opened the battle - contribute to a considerable weakening of the North Kingdom. Beleg II is hereafter known as "Hyarmendacil III."
F.A. 843	Hyarmendacil III passes away. His son, Eármil III becomes King of the Reunited Kingdom
F.A. 915	Eármil III further divides the administration of the Reunited Kingdom. The former realms of Gondor and Arnor are hereafter called the Twin Kingdoms. Eármil III's two sons - Telumehtar II and Eámur II preside over the North and South Kingdoms, respectively
F.A. 950	Eármil III passes away. Telumehtar II becomes King of the Twin Kingdoms. However, Eámur II challenges his brother and assumes the throne of the North Kingdom
F.A. 953	Telumehtar II marches on the North Kingdom. Eámur II's brief reign ends. Telumehtar II orders Eámur II into exile on the northernmost of the Isles of the Dead That Live
F.A. 1000	Telumehtar II and his three young sons are all murdered. There are no direct heirs. Eámur II returns from exile to become King of the Twin Kingdoms. The Men of Enedwaith, Minhiriath, and Eregion declare themselves independent
F.A. 1001	Eámur II is forced to take his own life. South Kingdom oligarches tighten their rein on both political and economic matters by electing Valamir the Younger as Steward of the South Kingdom. Despite the fact that Eámur II's son, Arvedui II, is crowned King and reaches his majority later the same year, Valamir acts as the de facto overlord of the South Kingdom
F.A. 1001-1020	The sundering of the Twin Kingdoms. Arthedain is reestablished as the North Kingdom disintegrates. The Shire remains a Free Land
F.A. 1020	Amlaith II, a distant kinsman of Telumehtar II's wife Barúthien, becomes King of the North Kingdom. He declares the Shire a "royal protectorate" and embarks on a program aimed at consolidating the fragmenting North Kingdom
F.A. 1020-1050	Despite Amlaith II's good intentions, the Shire folk seek Elven aid in order to construct a Girdle of the Shire. Their embassies to the Sindar and Avani of Lindon are only modestly rewarded. While protected by strange weather patterns, the Shire remains vulnerable to any persistent intrusion
F.A. 1072	Valamir the Younger becomes the Ruling Steward of the South Kingdom when the childless King Arvedui II passes away
F.A. 1092	Amlaith II dies while on campaign near Bree. Valamir the Younger passes away later the same year. Valamir's son, Targon, becomes the Ruling Steward of the South Kingdom
F.A. 1092-1099	The Great Eriadoran War. Amlaith II's son, Eärendur II ("the Great"), claims a series of great victories over the chieftains of Cardolan and Minhiriath (Valros and Púil)
F.A. 1100	Eärendur II proclaims himself King and thus reestablishes the North Kingdom. Targon declares himself King of the South Kingdom and issues a declaration of war against the North Kingdom
F.A. 1728	Círdan the Shipwright captains the last of the White Ships to leave Mithlond.

## BAIT

By  
Jeffery A. Dobberpuhl

Silverleaf awoke from his daydream as if cold water had been dumped on him. His breath came in fits and his body was caked in sweat. The daydream was the same one he'd had before. He'd been tracking a hideous goblin through the woods when suddenly the goblin's trail was lost. All is calm. The forest is unnaturally still; at least there should be birds chirping, leaves rustling. But now, nothing. Then, without warning, the goblin leaps from behind a tree and slams an axe into Silverleaf's skull. But that horrible image is not what breaks his trance. It is the goblin's hideous voice shouting "You die, elf!"

The problem for Silverleaf was that he actually was tracking a goblin through the woods. His quarry was an enormous brute riding an equally enormous wolf. No matter that Silverleaf had caught glimpses of the goblin through the trees; no matter that in the soft forest floor the wolf's paws left tracks a even blind elf could follow. Silverleaf could not catch the goblin. This chase had already gone on for two days. During that time, Silverleaf caught himself slipping into the cursed vision again and again, awakening only to "You die, elf!"

Normally, when elves and goblins pass each other in the woods, their hatred for each other consumes them. They fight: one or both dies. But this goblin refused to face his tracker. Surely, he could not be unaware of Silverleaf's presence. Perhaps, more than his instinctive hatred of goblins could, curiosity over the goblin's strange behavior, combined with a need to be free of the daydream, compelled the elf to continue on; to pursue his elusive foe to this encounter's ultimate resolution.

The sun began to set on the second day of tracking the goblin. Silverleaf was becoming worried. He had never before been to this part of the woods. They were getting close to where the woods would stop, and the dark, grim mountains would begin. Elves seldom, if ever, travel to the mountains. This was partly because the mountains contained nothing the elves could not barter for or obtain elsewhere. It was also partly because the mountains were difficult to cross, even for the nimble elves. But, even if the elves would not admit it, they did not visit the mountains mostly because of the nasty, terrible things lurking in their caves, things best left undisturbed.

Silverleaf paused by a large oak and pondered what he should do. His dilemma was a two-edged sword. On one side of the blade, the goblin was moving towards a goal. Whatever mischief he was up to undoubtedly needed to be stopped. But the other side of the blade cut an equally deep swath of reason. The mountains were uncomfortably close and there was no guarantee Silverleaf would survive the encounter. Besides, the goblin's "mission" probably was nothing more sinister than just heading back to its warren.

Silverleaf considered his choices and neither seemed the best course of action. His mind was clouded. It was as if there was something amiss. Then it struck him. The wolf tracks stopped at the roots of the oak with no signs of continued passage.

Silverleaf slowly pulled his enchanted sword from its sheath. The sword hummed with power as its magic-runed blade caught the evening sun. His eyes darted left, then right, searching for danger. A slight rustling from behind was all the warning the elf had. He whirled, bringing his sword up just in time to

stop an axe from cleaving his ribcage. Before him stood his prey. Before him was the goblin.

It was a massive, foul creature: all muscle. A blood-stained chainmail vest over a crude animal skin shirt covered his chest; his skull was adorned by an iron helmet with the horns of a hideous beast imbedded in it. The goblin wielded a mighty, iron axe in each of its brick-like fists. One axe had just clashed against Silverleaf's sword as the other swung at Silverleaf's head.

"You die, Elf!" shouted the goblin.

"Not today, defiler!" Silverleaf spat back, and with a blindingly fast twist of the wrist, pulled his sword up and blocked the axe stroke. The magic of the sword absorbed the force of the blow. The goblin grinned an evil grin and took one step back.

"You are clever, elf, and lucky," grunted the goblin, "but also foolish. You should have not followed me on my fishing trip. You should have stayed at home eating berries and making more elves for me to kill on a different day."

Silverleaf sneered at the goblin. "You are the foolish one. I was just thinking that I should head home and leave you alone. You have sealed your fate. However, I cannot let you live and so we must fight to UNGH!"

Silverleaf was flat on his face, the wind completely knocked out of him. It felt like a wine barrel had been dropped onto his back. He wondered why he could barely see, and there was dirt in his mouth. Then he realized that while he was talking to the goblin, the wolf had somehow gotten behind him and slammed full speed into his back. Incredibly, the wolf was just sitting on him. He felt his magic sword being kicked out of his hand. Stunned as he was, Silverleaf could not even struggle as the goblin tied him up.

The goblin tossed the dazed elf onto the wolf's back as if the elf's were nothing more than a bedroll.

"Who are you? What do you want of me?" gasped Silverleaf.

The wolf snorted a "whuf", the goblin said nothing.

"I said, what do you want of me?" Silverleaf demanded as he got his wind back.

The goblin glanced over his shoulder. "You're bait."

"What?"

"Bait. When you go fishing, you need the right bait. For perch, you need worms. For pike, you need perch. For gruska, you need pike."

"So what does that have to do with me?"

"For dragons, you need elf."

"That's insane!"

"You mean that's something you wouldn't do. I've been trolling these woods for a week trying to get an elf to follow me. I'd have caught you sooner, but I didn't want to cart you all the way to the mountains." Having said all he was going to say, the goblin cut off further debate by conking Silverleaf on the skull with the flat of his axe, knocking the elf unconscious.

Slowly, and painfully, Silverleaf came to his senses. He hurt. He felt like he had been tossed off a cliff, head first. He tried to move, and found it curious that he could not. He opened his eyes. It was night and he was tied to an oak tree in front of a large, dark cave. Then he remembered everything that had happened and was afraid. Something moved inside the cave. He heard a snort and a sniff from the darkness, and then a scuffling noise, like giant fish scales on granite. Silverleaf stared, unbelieving, into the mouth of the cave. The wolf was nowhere around; but there, sitting on the top of the cave, was the goblin! It kind of made sense in a crazy sort of way. The night breeze was blowing Silverleaf's scent into the cave, and carrying the goblin's further up the mountain.

The scraping grew louder. Two yellow strips of light appeared in the cave air; the eyes of the dragon catching the moonlight. A single, ivory claw, as big as Silverleaf's leg, emerged from the cave. Then the entire dragon, impossibly fast, was out of the cave and barreling towards the elf. Silverleaf barely caught a glimpse of its onyx scales as the goblin leaped onto the dragon's back.

For the rest of his days, Silverleaf never did recall the details of the fight. It was too brutal, too ferocious. At one point, the dragon's tail smashed into the tree, missing the elf by a hand's width, snapping the trunk. Silverleaf somehow slid the ropes free of the shattered tree trunk, alive and free only by a miracle. Then, just as the elf had worked himself free, the fight was over. The dragon was dead. Silverleaf stared at the goblin, bloodied, battered, but very alive.

"Get out of here elf. I don't need you any more. I'm still going fishing, and now I've got the bait I need."

Silverleaf's courage was replaced by madness. He would not, could not stay to see what prey a goblin needed a dead dragon to fish for. Instead, consumed with fear, he ran away. He was not worried about daydreams anymore. The reality was far, far worse.

### Communication and Coordination in Strategy Wargaming

When I first started playing a certain other fantasy wargame over 15 years ago, the plan was simple. "There they are! Get 'em." The hack-and-slash method worked beautifully. Simple right? Wrong. However, it opened up a new avenue of ideas and possibilities. Even now I still enjoy running off on a wild tangent and creating mayhem (while listening to my party members scream "You're gonna get killed!" or the ever popular Homer Simpson expression "Doh!")

All through every genre of game I've played from space starship combat to vampire politics has had basic factors of success that are nothing more than common sense. Most revolve directly around the fact that relationships with other players in the same game will directly influence the degree of goals attained. So, here are some points to ponder.

#### I. GET AS MANY GOALS ACCOMPLISHED WITH ONE TASK AS POSSIBLE.

Hire army, move army, attack town. Easy logical progression. This is one of the earliest lessons I learned as a strategy gamer. If a player can recruit, gain power, resources, money, points, and defeat his enemy all in one swoop, go for it. Should you be coordinating with someone and need to transfer them gold (as an example) instead of simply transferring it, have that nation come steal it. This goes for anything. The faster you can gain experience and strength over your enemy, the farther ahead you'll be in the end.

#### II. PREDICTABILITY IS THE ENEMY'S TOOL.

Many times I have gone to gaming sessions to play against very intelligent and clever people only to see no originality and the same dull tactics used over and over. Not to say that proven methods won't work, but rather your enemy will probably know what you are up to and plan around your movements with some counter-tactic of his own. No other statement applies more to this situation than Murphy's Rule of Combat #12: If the enemy is in range, so are you.

If you are an avid reader of classic military doctrine and technique, or just some weird nutcase, then Sun Tzu's 'The Art of War' is a great primer. His army

commanders were trained to think logically. What ever you can do to make the other side react to your movements sets you up to accomplish the goals you have planned while they have to chase your armies all over the board and waste resources. If you play the music and they dance, it's all over.

#### III. TEN HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE.

I some times amaze myself with the amount of useless information my spongy grey matter contains, but I will certainly admit that there are things I have no clue about their meaning. Luckily I live with two other gaming fanatics, Keith and John, and between the three of us we can usually come up with a winning strategy. I like to sit and think about what the best possible route to winning will be and plan several turns ahead. Keith will do what will benefit him during the turn, taking advantage of present situations. Meanwhile John is crunching numbers and filling the gaps in both our strategies. He also checks our turnsheets for paperwork errors which we make often enough. This not only cuts our response time by 1/3, but also allows us to take advantage of the sets of ideas. There is no shame in asking for help or opinions.

You may not decide to take the advice, but it may give you an idea to better further your own ends or catch something you didn't see the first time around. Hence the need for communication. Long-distance calls can be expensive, and net time can wreck a credit rating or paycheck. A letter still costs less than a soda. Plus, you can transfer a LOT of information on a single sheet of paper.

#### IV. PLAN AHEAD.

The future is never predictable, but can be influenced. Army movement, character action, and encounters are all influences. This goes hand in hand with accomplishing as many goals at one time as possible. Your nation at this point in time may have the resources to field a 10,000 man army, but two turns from now you'll be broke. By that time it will be too late to build a tax base on your own to cover the deficit. This not only scraps any current campaigns but also draws resources from allies who have to cover the bankrupting nation. A little thinking and forethought will keep the proverbial ball rolling (hopefully over the other side.) Personal organization goes a long way.

We have file cabinets, a laminated map, the computer, and tons of office supplies that help immeasurably. However, the one expense that has more than covered its own cost and to us can be worth its weight in gold is a \$1.49 index card file that we keep everyone's information in for all our games, and that's quite a few.

Seek the knowledge you need. It's readily available and usually free.

-Reverend Ludicrous Wack

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address for the Web page is: <http://www.gamesystems.com>. So now you have no excuse!

That about wraps it up for this month--and for those of you who may be wondering, I'm a huge Dolphins fan, and I even welcomed Jimmy. It's just the media hype is a little too much for me. So Go Fins!! See you in thirty!

*Stuart*

## The Hall Of Heroes

### ME-PBM circa1650

Game #180 - The Dark Servants: #18, #10 & #1

Ren the Unclean sat on his throne, his leg swinging lazily over the arm. He looked on his wall, where the leaders of the insolent Free hung. One's entrails coiled on the floor beneath his feet, while the other gleamed wetly, his skin flayed from his body in Ren's dungeons. Soon, the other Nazgûl would arrive, and they would all bow to him. He earned this position through his planning and execution. Looking at the Free on his wall, he chuckled at the pun. It felt good to be Sauron's proxy. Final standings are as follows:

#18 Fire King: 1833 - Michael R. Johnston  
#10 Noldo Elves: 2300 - Robert J. Koger  
#1 Woodmen: 1750 - Harry D. Hunter Jr.

Top Free Peoples: #10 Noldo Elves: 2300

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Shoglic/Cloud Lord: 253  
Highest Net Commander Rank - Thranduil/Woodmen: 144  
Highest Net Mage Rank - Shoglic/Cloud Lord: 208  
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Kendra/Dunlendings: 126  
Highest Net Agent - Akishka/Cloud Lord: 140  
Most Mithril - Noldo Elves: 4331  
Most Artifacts - Cloud Lord: 28  
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 47

Game #195 - The Dark Servants: #22, #12 & #17

A reign of fear and terror has now been ushered into Middle-earth. The Dark Servants, led by the converted Haradwaith, the Dragon Lord and the Quiet Avenger, have blotted the Light from all the land and no one now opposes their twisted desires. Whereas once they were restricted to those that served them or were captured in battle, now the entire world was their playground. There will be much suffering to make up for thwarted desires. Final standings are as follows:

#22 Haradwaith: 2217 - David Herron  
#12 Dragon Lord: 2117 - Richard J. Mah  
#17 Quiet Avenger: 2100 - Robert W. Kerley

Top Free Peoples: #8 Dwarves: 1025

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Elrond/Dwarves: 198  
Highest Net Commander Rank - Daonglas/Dunlendings: 120  
Highest Net Mage Rank - Úrzahil/Dark Lieutenants: 175  
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Khamûl/Dragon Lord: 125  
Highest Net Agent - Turkulon/Dark Lieutenants: 113  
Most Mithril - Dark Lieutenants: 3942  
Most Artifacts - Blind Sorcerer Dark Lieutenants: 22  
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 30

Game #203 - The Free Peoples: #2, #24 & #3

Manwë, leader of the Valar, sat on his throne and smiled. His brethren's progeny, the hated Sauron, was at last defeated. Sauron's Servants lay broken and scattered, their taint erased from Middle-earth. The Northmen, Rhudaur and the Éothraim earned a special place in his heart, as their actions were instrumental in bringing about Sauron's defeat. Middle-earth had entered a new age with unlimited possibilities. Final standings are as follows:

#2 Northmen: 1817 - Gregory C. Thorne  
#24 Rhudaur: 1775 - Larry L. Livingston  
#3 Éothraim: 1633 - Michael R. Welsch

Top Dark Servant: #20 Dark Lieutenants: 1200

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## The Hall Of Heroes

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Beoraborn/Woodmen: 204  
Highest Net Commander Rank - Beoraborn/Woodmen: 180  
Highest Net Mage Rank - Ringlin/Sinda Elves: 175  
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Del Imat/Rhudaur: 97  
Highest Net Agent - Tharidan/Sinda Elves: 148  
Most Mithril - Northmen: 1187  
Most Artifacts - Noldo Elves: 20  
Most Kills - Éothraim: 11

Game #208 - The Dark Servants: #25, #13 & #24

Burned flesh and burned wood mixed together in a scent that made Ovatha II very happy. His legions were finishing up the last of the business in sacking Mithlond-West and the destruction and fear they caused was like music to his ears. Turning to Dendra Dwar and Broggha, the other two leaders who helped him reach his position as Sauron's voice in the world, he spoke.

"This place is mine. I will rebuild it in my image. Anything else is fair game. Let the Reign of Ovatha II begin with a symphony of terror and death!"

The other two leaders smiled, plans already forming and tortures already being assigned. It was their world now, and the Free would know no mercy. Final standings are as follows:

#25 Easterlings: 2083 - Clorinda Trujillo  
#13 Dog Lord: 1867 - Dina M. Comeau  
#24 Rhudaur: 1750 - Douglas W. Pentecost  
Top Free Peoples: #10 Noldo Elves: 1342

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Shogmog/Fire King: 167  
Highest Net Commander Rank - Bulrakur/Dog Lord: 135  
Highest Net Mage Rank - Morarthdur/Blind Sorcerer: 128  
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Úrzahil/Blind Sorcerer: 95  
Highest Net Agent - Nazog/Fire King: 113  
Most Mithril - Blind Sorcerer: 4279  
Most Artifacts - Blind Sorcerer: 20  
Most Kills - Fire King: 12

Game 236 - The Dark Servants: #11, #22 & #5

Múrazór stood in his citadel in Angmar and cast his gaze across Middle-earth. It was now his, his and his brethren's. They fought hard to achieve this end and, in the end, their perseverance prevailed. The Free capitulated, recognizing Sauron's Servants as the powers in the world for the next age. Múrazór's Master was a tough taskmaster, but he rewarded those who served him well. Now, Múrazór intended to collect that reward. Final standings are as follows:

#11 Witch-king: 1150 - Tim Huiatt  
#22 Haradwaith: 1533 - William W. Parker  
#5 Cardolan: 1267 - Wes Fortin  
Top Free Peoples: #5 Cardolan: 1267

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Dúran/Dragon Lord: 180  
Highest Net Commander Rank - Dúran/Dragon Lord: 152  
Highest Net Mage Rank - Celedhring/Dragon Lord: 129  
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves Anglin/Dark Lieutenants: 81  
Highest Net Agent - Carrog/Dark Lieutenants: 80  
Most Mithril - Blind Sorcerer: 786  
Most Artifacts - Dragon Lord: 15  
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 11

## The Hall Of Heroes

### ME-PBM circa 2950

Game #6 - The Free Peoples: #4, #1 & #8

Adúnaphel stood in the hall of the Dúnadan Rangers, her shame and degradation flaming through every nerve in her body. It was one thing to lose to the Free. It was quite another to be brought before the cursed Aragorn in chains, like a lowly animal or slave. With Sauron's defeat, her world came apart. The Free had been chasing her all over the world, led by the Rangers, the Woodmen and the Dwarves. Now they had her and she must suffer these humiliations. There was nothing left but the slim hope of escape . . . and revenge. Final standings are as follows:

#4 Dúnadan Rangers: 2067 - Mark Jackson

#1 Woodmen: 1967 - John J. Borkowski

#8 Dwarves: 1966 - Glen A. Kading

Top Dark Servant: #17 Quiet Avenger: 775

#### Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Galdor/Noldo Elves: 256

Highest Net Commander Rank - Éomer/Riders of Rohan: 120

Highest Net Mage Rank - Galdor/Noldo Elves: 256

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Galadriel/Sinda Elves Amburlin/Quiet Avenger

Cryssa/Dúnadan Rangers Aivnec/Woodmen Same/Dúnadan Rangers Voioq/Quiet Avenger: 100

Highest Net Agent - Vrantega/Northmen: 160

Most Mithril - Dwarves: 2393

Most Artifacts - Noldo Elves: 23

Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 38

Game #23 - The Free Peoples: #10, #4 & #6

Elrond sat at the head of the new Council of the Free, those nations who were responsible for casting the Evil Eye from Middle-earth. In all of his days in the land, his attention was always on Sauron, on how to slow him, on how to defeat him. Now that it was accomplished, he was at last at peace. His journey to the Undying Lands was soon approaching. He looked at Aragorn and Ecthelion II, the appointed leaders who were to rule after he departed Middle-earth, and he knew the land was in good hands. They were staunch allies and stalwart rulers, men who would carry on what was started with Sauron's defeat. He could rest easy knowing they would carry on after him. Final standings are as follows:

#10 Noldo Elves: 2400 - Joseph B. Correia

#4 Dúnadan Rangers: 2083 - Brian F. Brown

#6 Northern Gondor: 1901 - James Vigil Jr.

Top Dark Servant: #17 Quiet Avenger: 775

#### Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Elboron/Dúnadan Rangers: 251

Highest Net Commander Rank - Elboron/Dúnadan Rangers: 201

Highest Net Mage Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves: 127

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Galadriel/Sinda Elves Elrond/Noldo Elves: 100

Highest Net Agent - Shalisha/Dunlendings: 135

Most Mithril - Northmen: 3110

Most Artifacts - Dúnadan Rangers: 24

Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 3

## The Hall Of Heroes

Game #25 - The Dark Servants: #14, #25 & #13

Ji Indúr had the whole of Middle-earth in his palm and he liked it. His name was feared and despised by the Free and he was the one domineering factor which led the Dark Servants to their destruction of the Free. Ovatha IV and Dendra Dwar had a hand in the victory, true, but it was Ji Indúr who caused the Free to tremble in abject cowardice. He tasted victory and it was sweeter than Elrond's blood. Final standings are as follows:

#14 Cloud Lord: 2300 - Clifford F. Hall

#25 Khand Easterlings: 1900 - Ernest S. Hakey III

#13 Dog Lord: 1684 - Robert Lepper Jr.

Top Free Peoples: #10 Noldo Elves: 1549

#### Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Tónn Varthkúr/Dog Lord: 184

Highest Net Commander Rank - Tónn Varthkúr/Dog Lord: 135

Highest Net Mage Rank - Urdrath/Khand Easterlings: 141

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Xana the Bold/Khand Easterlings Ufogil/Cloud Lord: 96

Highest Net Agent - Múrya Ovan/Khand Easterlings: 134

Most Mithril - Cloud Lord: 1496

Most Artifacts - Cloud Lord: 29

Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 43

Game #28 - The Free Peoples: #24, #5 & #22

Saruman the White watched as Thranduil and Húz III, his chief lieutenants in the Free People victory, approached his throne. Between them they held Úrzahil, the leader of the last surviving Dark Servant nation. His mouth curled into a smile as they brought the bedraggled Mouth of Sauron before him. He stood and addressed the two leaders.

"Thank you, gentle sirs, for bringing this rabble to my court. You have performed admirably and executed your duties flawlessly. I am in your debt. Now if you will leave the scum with me, I must get to my duties."

"What is it you wish to do with this one?" asked Thranduil.

"That is my concern. I have many mysteries to unlock. This one will help me immensely . . ."

Final standings are as follows:

#24 White Wizard: 2134 - Stephen F. Keller

#5 Silvan Elves: 2067 - Richard F. Mehl

#22 Rhûn Easterlings: 1875 - Tara I. Silva

Top Dark Servant: #20 Dark Lieutenants: 1158

#### Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Ringlin/Silvan Elves: 237

Highest Net Commander Rank - Bugrug/White Wizard: 120

Highest Net Mage Rank - Ringlin/Silvan Elves: 237

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Saruman the White/White Wizard: 100

Highest Net Agent - Niarlin/Silvan Elves: 114

Most Mithril - White Wizard: 2690

Most Artifacts - Silvan Elves: 31

Most Kills - Dog Lord: 9