

News From Bree

Middle Earth PBCD Newsletter - Issue 12, October '01

"Strange as News
from Bree..."

The Lord of the Rings, chapter 9

Battle of the Five Armies

A Short and Bloody Struggle!

by Sam Roads

Talk at the
Prancing
Pony...

page 1 - 2

"Battle of the Five Armies"

page 3 - 4

"Surviving in a World of
Agents"

New Games

Tolkien Who's Who

page 5

"Gunboats on the Anduin"

Credit Payments

page 6

"Victory through the Eyes
of Evil"

page 7

"The Battle of Goblin
Gate"

Sending in Orders

Stand-by Positions

page 8

"Learning the Game"

Hall of Fame

MEPBM Games details

page 9

"Before you Play"

From out of the West
Pubmeets & Conventions

Stand-by Positions

page 10

Dragonmeet Advert

This game lasts only ten turns, allows no more than eight characters per nation and doesn't have any emissaries at all. There's no point treating this as anything but a short and bloody struggle – can you knock out an enemy nation before you blow yourself up?

The Goblins start with 6000 HI in the field and should be able to dictate the direction of the initial Dark Servant thrust. They have four Major Towns, many commanders and the ability to hire armies for free, so the main constraint on recruiting will be the upkeep on these forces. They can easily put one of the Free under immense pressure, and with the exception of Beorn's bear claws, will win most challenges. Bolg is the second best challenger in the game and his lieutenants are all 60 commanders, so there should be plenty of threatening opportunities.

The Warg Riders start with several potent cavalry forces and can do much to disrupt the Free army movements – the pickle to the Goblins' cheese. Longer term, they can conjure enough mounts to churn out 500 HC every turn and their position on the crucial east west road will enable them to strike just about anywhere. Their mages can also keep track of the Free artefacts and agents and their agents will be able to harry the important Free characters, possibly stealing the ring by the later half of the game. The Necromancer is the best mage in the game, and his Reveal Pop Centre could be a pivotal spell.

The Elves have the best agents and mages and a hidden capital. However, with only that single Major Town they have problems recruiting and, assuming the Necromancer is able to reveal it, a very precarious existence. Once their start armies have been whittled away, the Elves will have to work hard to stay potent, but the Free can't afford to lose their character support. Gwaithir and Ringlin are excellent mages and Legolas is a well rounded Noldo style agent.

The Northmen will be in trouble throughout the game – most of their pop centres are vulnerable and it

might be nigh on impossible to stop the Dark Servants from knocking out one of their fortified Major Towns. Yet they can fortify at half cost, enabling them to play with a fortress mentality – if they can survive the game they'll soak up the brunt of the assaults and give their allies much needed support. If the game has a best character, it is Beorn. He has the top challenge, good stealth and is the only character with Conjure Food, which could prove essential in late game attacks into mountains.

The Dwarves have an astounding economy capable of sustaining high tax levels, a good recruiting base and a large start army, however they are situated in the Iron Hills and it will take them some time to get involved in the battles around Mirkwood. They can strike into the heart of the Goblin territory, but if they don't give their allies support, they might find themselves down an ally. Bilbo has



the One Ring, which is a stealth artefact in the Hobbit environment. If Bilbo elects to train up, he will become deadly in the final turns.

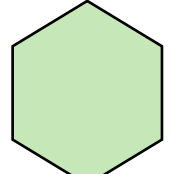
The Dark Servants start the game on the front foot, with potent, fed starting armies. They do have to consider protecting the Goblin's flanks, but otherwise can pick their targets and threaten or destroy at will. The Warg Riders are probably impregnable and can send small, deadly cavalry throughout the game to erode the Free economy and pin down the Elves and Northmen, who don't hire for free. If they can reveal the Elven fortress, the Free should have a hard time keeping the Elves in the game, otherwise its not impossible to destroy or threaten both Northmen centres.

To win, the Free must ensure that all three nations survive to the end game, without the financial aid which is common in other games of Middle Earth. With 24 characters to the Dark's 16, each turn should enable them to pull back, using superior information gathering to co-ordinate and eventually use their agents to sabotage or assassinate. The Goblin economy is precarious, but it will take a great coup to knock either Dark nation out of the game.

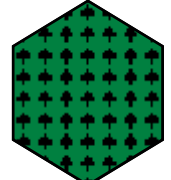
Colour map of the playing area overleaf ...

Battle of the Five Armies starting map

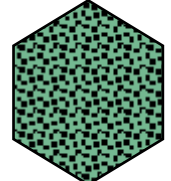
Legend



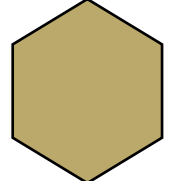
Plain



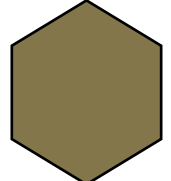
Forest



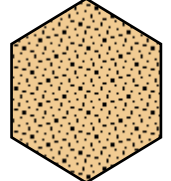
Swamp



Rough



Mountain



Desert



Ford



Bridge



Major River



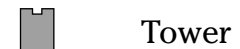
Minor River



Road



Hidden Pop. Centre



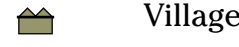
Tower



Camp



Fort



Village



Castle



Town



Keep



Major Town



Citadel



City

Free People



Elves



Northmen



Dwarves

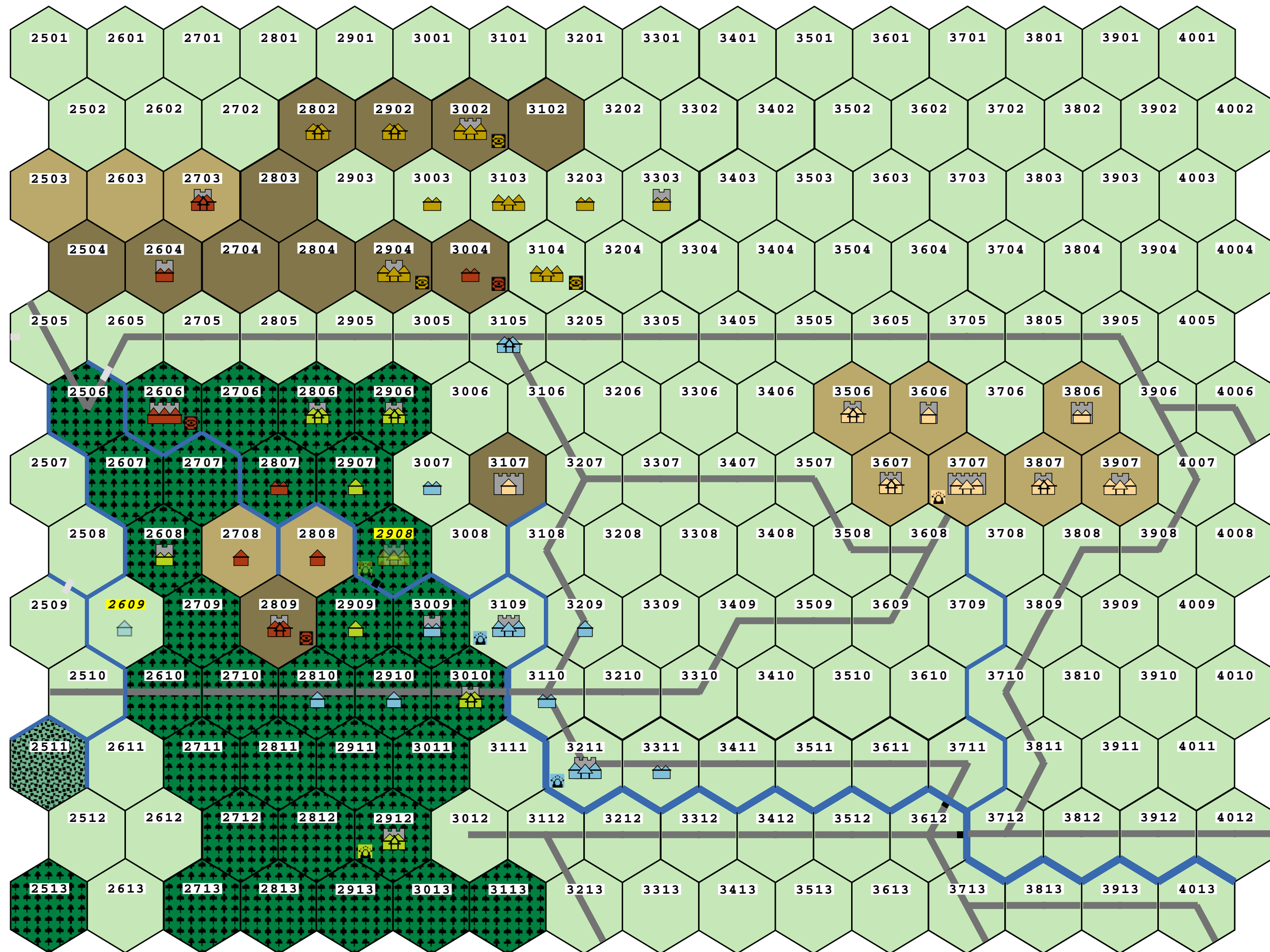
Dark Servants



Goblins



Warg Riders



Surviving in a world of agents

by Michael Peters

Battle of the Five Armies

Okay we have done a couple of play tests now - so are there any players who would like to take up a position (randomly allocated unless you are playing in a team of 3 or 2) in the Five player - Battle of the Five Armies scenario? (You can put a list of preference for nations if you want but if I can't fill a nation then I'll put you in randomly). Nations: Goblins Warg Riders are DS, Elves, Dwarves Northmen are FP.

Rules and .pdfs (and colour map - with each nation individually coloured) on the website. We welcome feedback on this game after playing if at all possible (still in play test stage). (Note there has already been some excellent feedback here so we have made the game a little simpler for all and minor changes - check out the website).

Bofa: Game 7 2wk turnaround game: 10 turn game: 1 Nation left

T.A. 1650

[Game 90]

(2 week) Nations available: 2, 5, 6, 12, 17, 22, 23

[Game 91]

(2 week) New Grudge: Needs 2 Neutrals and 1 DS team of 10 - any takers? (Send me a list for Neutrals) [Game 131]

(1 week) Start 1/10: Send me a LIST of nations - when I get to 25 players I will allocate the positions - 12 positions taken so far (Note 95% of players get their 1st choice) This is now a 2 nation game (ie you can choose 2 nations to play of the same alignment [not for Neutrals]. You are still able to play one nation if you want to.)

T.A. 2950

[Game 223]

(2 week) Nations available: 1,3, 6, 8, 15, 17, 18, 20 - Email only game

F.A. 1000

[Game 142]

(2 week) All available - 1 nation per allegiance allowed +20% kid/ass.

Grudge Games

Opposition wanted for ...

1650: 10 player Team Nick Nicolau (FP), 1 team of 10 Jon Phipps (FP)

2950: 1 team 10/12 Any alignment 1 wk Ben Shushan, 1 team 10 Perry

1000: 1 team of 9-12 player team (any alignment - most formats accepted) David Ruzic

The king sat upon his throne and glowered. Enemy agents had successfully assassinated several of his kin last week along with Masador, the last of his great generals. Worse, Masador's army had scattered with his death, wreaking havoc upon his carefully-laid plans. "What are we going to do?" asked his chancellor. "Send out our own agents and retaliate!" hissed the king. "But our top agent has only a 31 rank, only three of our leaders have agent ability in any case," countered the chancellor. "Fine," growled the king. "Have our commanders locate agents among the lesser nobility, swear them into service to the Crown, train them, and THEN send them out to retaliate! Hoarmurath and Jí Indûr will be very sorry in fifteen to twenty turns when our agents begin smashing them into rubble..."

Sooner or later, everyone finds himself in the unfortunate situation of having large numbers of enemy agents crawling like lice over his population centers. Perhaps your agents aren't good enough to square off against them, or perhaps you just don't have enough agents to protect everyone. Your leaders are threatening to get mowed down like grass, and you're getting frustrated. What are you going to do?

Typically, the solution is to begin mass-producing agents of your own, or start mass-producing them as soon as the game begins. The problem with this is that not everyone can afford to run an agent-rich nation. Having hordes of agents has the consequence of NOT having other character types which may be needed just as badly. (Having great agents doesn't help if a huge army shows up on your capital and burns it to the ground.) But if you don't create the agents, won't your leaders get slaughtered later in the game? - Not necessarily!

First, if you are not going to run an agent-rich power, or perhaps even if you are, you need to resign yourself to losing some characters sooner or later. These suggestions will keep you around in the long-term as a nation when enemy agents begin wiping out your leaders, but they don't help any particular leader very much.

Character Numbers

Maintain the maximum number of characters at all times. If you lose a character, replace her immediately! A sure route to death is to lose characters faster than you can replace them. One advantage of having as many characters as possible, at minimum, is that the enemy will have more leaders to mow down before they can drive you out of the game. For example, if the enemy only has one good agent at your capital, and you have two or three good commanders, those commanders, those commanders can create command/agents faster than

the enemy is going to be able to kill them off. Attempt to anticipate losses and replace a character the turn on which he dies. As the "Name Character" orders come after challenges, executions, battles, and assassinations; and it doesn't take a whole lot of foresight to guess that Jí Indûr and friends and friends are going to kill off your army commander this turn; go ahead and attempt to name a character now. If you're wrong, and didn't lose a character, then you're in for a pleasant surprise in any case.



Character Abilities

Give all new characters agent ability, and most command ability. If you think you are going to be on the receiving end of an agent war, make certain that every character you create has some agent skill, and that a good many have at least some scrap of command skill. The purpose of the agent skill is not really to attempt to guard anything--it's to ensure that the character will escape from being held hostage sooner or later. If all your characters have agent skill, enemy agents will have a hard time hanging onto them if they succeed in a kidnapping. Eventually, they'll give up kidnapping your leaders and will just assassinate them, which is good for you--dead bodies can be replaced, hostages can't!

There are two reasons for giving a character command skill. First, any character with command, however little, can name new characters and replace those that you lose to enemy agents. Second, if you aren't fighting an agent war against your foes, and you are still a target for their agents, it's probably because you're cranking out armies to throw at them. Even a ten point commander can raise troops!

Don't concentrate your characters

There are exceptions to this, (such as emissary companies) but in general, scatter your characters. That way, if a company of nine 90+ agents show up there's only one character, maybe two, for them to kill off--the rest of their agents are wasting their time. If you

who's who

A look at the major characters in the LOTR: #4 Gollum

Aliases: Smeagol, Trahald, Slinker, Stinker

Date of Birth: 2430 T.A

Race: Hobbit of the Stoor strain

Height: between 3-4 feet, when not hunched over

Date of Death: 3019 T.A.

Physical description: Drastically changed from his original hobbit form by the power of the One Ring. Black skin, thin wispy hair. He had large pale green eyes which shone like lamps in the dark and apparently aided him in keen night vision. He was withered down to a lean frame of skin and bones, but very strong. He was extremely quick, and could hear the slightest sound from a great distance.



Biography: Smeagol's original name was Trahald, the Anglicized equivalent of which is Smeagol. Smeagol was born in the year 2430 to a fairly prominent family of hobbits of the Stoor strain near the Gladden Fields. In the year 2463, the day of Smeagol's coming of age, he went fishing with his cousin Deagol. While fishing, Deagol saw something glittering under the surface of the water, dove in after it, and came up with a glittering gold ring. Before even knowing the qualities of the beautiful ring, Smeagol's desire to own it overtook him, and he murdered his cousin for it.

Smeagol soon developed many undesirable qualities, like stealing, eavesdropping, and being sneaky whenever he had the opportunity. It was these qualities which got him banished from his household. Cursing his bad luck and his family, he eventually made his way to a gloomy den underneath the Misty Mountains. Living in darkness, he grew to hate the light of the sun and moon, but the moon he would tolerate. Smeagol stayed there for many years until he was

only lose one or two characters per turn, they're easy to replace and you can keep ahead of the deaths. If you concentrate your characters and lose ten leaders on a single turn, you're going to have a much harder time replacing them.

What about army commanders? Don't you want backup commanders? Well, not necessarily. If you don't have thousands of very good agents, and you send an army into enemy territory late in the game, you can almost count on getting killed. I consider this sending a commander on a "suicide-run" and try not to have anybody I care about losing too much in charge. Sticking a backup command/agent with the army generally slows down the death of an army by a single turn--one turn to kill the backup commander, and one to kill the commander, so I generally backup and army commander only when I absolutely must have the army survive during the extra turn. It's also important to remember that they have to know who's in charge of the army to follow it and kill it. So try to surprise your enemy by having your army "appear out of nowhere" on his population center (and create the army in an out-of-the-way place, off of their maps). Hopefully this will be the first they know of the army, and it'll take two turns for them to wipe out the commander (one to bring agents onto the scene and another to assassinate).

During those two turns you can burn the first population center and move to and burn a second population center; which means the army has accomplished its purpose in any case. Besides, they won't know how many backup commanders you have and they may send nine or ten agents to accomplish what a single agent could have, and all those extra agents have wasted an order. Other tactics include transferring command to a new character (so that they cannot "scout and follow" you), moving evasively, and generally running away from the area where they last saw your army.

Note that backup commanders are very useful if you aren't under much agent pressure, such as if the enemy doesn't have more than one or two agents to throw at your army, or earlier in the game, when the assassins aren't quite so good. Putting dozens of characters with an army as backup commanders can sometimes be as useful as none at all, if you have the time and orders to spend this way. Then your backup commanders can scout for characters following your army, guard your commanders, and attempt to assassinate the agents before they assassinate you!

Keep Moving!

Keep companies, characters, and armies moving. If you hang around in one place for a turn or two, it becomes very likely that agents are going to show up and kill you off. On the other hand, if you keep your characters moving and your armies jumping around, they're going to have a much harder time slipping a knife between your ribs. Try to be unpredictable!

Other tricks of the trade ...

Scout for characters. If you're moving an army into a rough spot, or if you're trying to protect a company, scout for characters. You'll probably discover who's around, and then you can plan accordingly.

Get agent help from your allies. If your own agents aren't great, and you need to know what you're getting into, whistle up assistance from the agent powers on your own side. They'll probably be glad

to help!

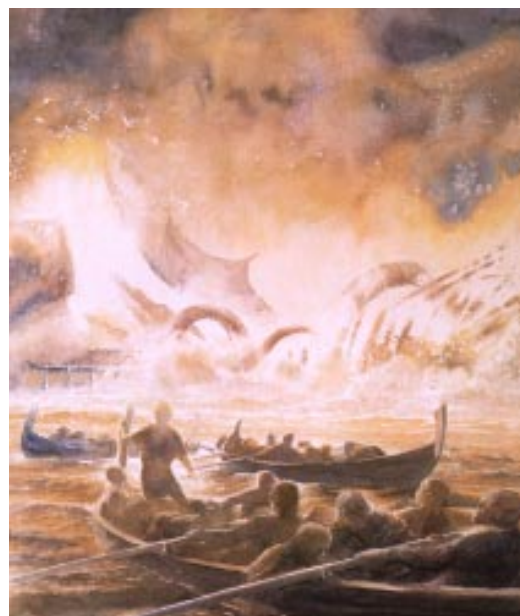
Naturally one solution to dealing with agents is to do unto them before they do unto you. This includes double-agenting them before they can assassinate your emissary, issuing a personal challenge, and judicious use of curse-squads. I've also heard that spreading rumors can stymie scouting attempts, although I do not know the truth of this . . . but if they don't know who you are, they can't kill you!

Enemy agents may also attempt to clear you out of your capital. Ways around this include bringing in a horde of agents of your own to clear them out, waiting for them to leave then bringing home one of your many scattered leaders, or to simply move the capital. Note that an ally can transfer by caravans the gold you need to move the capital after any and all gold thefts have taken place. Likewise you can move a character to the current capital and order the capital to relocate on the same turn, before enemy agents get a shot at assassinating your commander. If you do this, it's probably a good idea to have several characters already waiting at your new capital location to create characters immediately. If your foes are stealing the gold you need to create characters with, consider having your allies transfer a huge sum of gold all at once--the enemy agents will have a difficult time stealing it all before you can create several characters.

Conclusion

All of these suggestions are just that--suggestions. There are always circumstances in which you should not follow them. A great deal depends on the volume of agents being used against you, how important it is to win any particular battle, and how good the enemy agents are. The key is to remember that if they have a large number of highly-skilled agents, the more you concentrate your characters the more you risk. It is possible for a non-agent power to thrive in a world of agents, but watch your back!

The king looked at the report and smiled. Though he was the last of the original leaders of his nation at the war's start, and though most of his current leaders were of the third and fourth generation, the war was at last tilting in his favor. The heroine Narab Kolandu, Masador's granddaughter, had just reported sacking the enemy city and slaughtering its inhabitants. And though she had little of her grandfather's skill, she would grow better with time . . . assuming she lived that long.



unexpectedly visited by Bilbo Baggins, who found Smeagol's ring near the water where he had left it accidentally.

After the "theft" of his "birthday present", Smeagol found the strength to venture out and pursue the Ring. He wandered far and wide until the year 3017, when he was captured by Sauron. This is how Sauron found out about the name of Baggins. Soon after he was captured by Aragorn, who turned him over to Gandalf, but managed to escape during an orc raid, immediately setting off in search of the Ring. He managed to catch up with Frodo and the Fellowship near the West Gate of Moria, following them through, and betraying them to the orcs.

Following them through Moria and Lorien, Smeagol was captured by Frodo and Sam near Eryn Muiil, after which he faithfully led the pair to Cirith Ungol, and seemed to be changing his ways. In Cirith Ungol though he revealed his true nature, betraying Frodo and Sam to Shelob with the intention of finding the Ring in their discarded clothing. His plan did not work out as intended, and he had to set out after the Ring once more.

He caught up with Frodo and Sam at the foot of Mount Doom, where he was cast down by Frodo, and stayed by Samwise out of pity. Frodo was eventually overcome by the power of the Ring at the edge of the Cracks of Doom, where once again he was accosted by Smeagol, wrestling for the Ring. In the struggle he managed to bite off Frodo's Ring finger and recovered the One Ring. In a dance of mirth and excitement, he lost himself and fell into the Cracks of Doom, thus fulfilling the quest.



CREDIT payments

Payments to **Middle Earth PBM Games** not Harlequin. 5% charge for UK Credit card payments & you can pay directly through our website (World Pay [WP] will appear on your statement). You can also set up a monthly payment with us for a SET amount taken from your credit card at the beginning of each month. Ask for more details if interested. If your account is low funds there will be an administration charge of £1 for the first turn, and 50p for subsequent turns on Low funds.

Gunboats on the Anduin

A 1650 Variant

by Chris Courtiour

Love playing Middle Earth but just don't have time to chew the cud with nine other players and assorted neutrals? Bored with having to list every sneeze your character makes to a team captain. Do you feel that your individual skill as a player is becoming irrelevant, as teams need to become more and more centralised and controlled to win? Are you sick of trying to convince an Eothraim player not to disband their starting armies because they cost too much and in Fourth Age, upon which they are the worlds leading expert, so they assure you, you don't need starting armies? Are you tired of being harassed by the same 'expert' to follow their crass master plan? Hate all contact with the rest of the loathsome human race? Do you want the ultimate test of your playing rather than diplomatic, coercive and organisational skills? Then how about this?



There is a variant to that particularly savage board game Diplomacy called Gunboat. In addition to the normal seven players, there is a moderator who secretly and randomly assigns the nations. Without any communication at all the players write their orders and pass them to the moderator who reads them out thus keeping each players identity hidden. The art of the game, which works well with experienced players, is to communicate your intentions by the moves made upon the board.

What I propose is a Gunboat version of 1650 in which there is no communication whatsoever between any players at any point during the game and all players' identities remain secret until the end of the game. The only available information would be that a nation was still alive and the victory point tallies on the turn report and possibly a nom de guerre. There are a number of problems and questions that would need to be addressed most of which I hope are covered below but should provide a fascinating variant even for those not fleeing communication.

Here are the problems as I see them. What about Neutrals? Who is going to play the Woodmen or similarly challenged nations? How will the game end and victory be determined? What about people finding out the id's of other players and communicating. What if someone goes on holiday and can't put in a turn?

In order for the game to work I believe the pre-aligned nations system used for the World Championships with forts on 4217 and 1910. This system assigns Corsairs and Rhudaur to the Dark and Dunland and Harad to the Free. Easterlings are not played and their population centres and fortifications are removed. Additionally each player would need to run two nations teamed up as laid out

below. This is crucial as the weaker nations are virtually unplayable without a 'buddy' to shore them up or complement strengths and weaknesses. Using my suggested pairings also means that whilst one area may be quiet, another will almost certainly be active and keeping up interest.

The pairings are as follows. Arthedain/Harad – Played well, both nations can be very powerful but both are under threat from the start. Definitely an all action position! North Gondor/Dunland – The closest pairing geographically, Dunland can provide the 'character' depth lacking in North Gondor, a secure

building area whilst having to keep an eye on events to the north. South Gondor/Woodmen – South Gondor has the wealth and strength to support the Woodmen through the dark times ahead. The sheer power of the South Gondor position should compensate for the weakness of the Woodmen. Dwarves/Northmen – The Dwarves are crucial partners for the exposed Northmen, providing both military and economic backup whilst helping out elsewhere. Sinda/Cardolan – The varied Sinda position should provide adequate compenstion for the dull Cardolan start up. Noldo/Eothraim – Great characters, miles from anywhere and safe position along with rubbish characters, in the thick of it and exposed position.

Fire King/Quiet Avenger – Hopefully, one or the other won't be too stamped on with a mix of good armies from the FK and, medium term, good characters from the QA. Dark Lieutenants/Rhudaur – Dark Lieutenants should provide the characters and back up capital required for out on a limb Rhudaur. Dragon Lord/Corsairs – One of the more exciting, if challenging, combinations. Ice King/Long Rider – Crucial back up for the Ice King with useful maps and strong agents. Blind Sorcerer/Witch King – The Blind Sorcerer has the security the Witch King lacks with a strong Mage taint for the whole position. Cloud Lord/Dog Lord – This should keep the Cloud Lords attention on Mordor along with providing a strong army/character mix.

There are possible variations but I feel these give the best balance of geography, strength, characters and armies. There is not a position that does not have some great positives.

The game would end after fifty turns or if one side has a five to one player advantage. Without a fixed game end there would be an interminable battle of five nations versus three or some such. Individual victory would be established by either the average of the two nations victory points with an eliminated nation counting as four hundred points. Team victory would be determined by the total of all of a sides active nations victory points other than the points for victory conditions. If there



were a ten percent or less margin between the sides then an honourable draw would be declared otherwise the highest scoring team would be the victors. All players identities would be revealed at this point.

The game would have to be run on trust between the players. Whilst it would OK to say you were in the team, discussing which your position is and it's play, specifically with others in the game, would destroy the whole point of it. My assumption is that those who would want to join would be happy to do so on that basis and try to avoid hearing gossip, which did come to them. Even knowing who is playing what position can affect others play. Players would also have to be clear about not attacking each other. No stealing, assassinating or influencing from players on your side however annoying finding their camp where you have moved is! If you can't keep to that then do not play.

The final problems are illness and holidays along with dropouts. Both require some GM input. Drop outs would have to be handled by the GM's asking discreetly around. For long breaks, perhaps a basic

turn written by another ME playing GM to keep the position ticking over would work. Perhaps a small fee for the writer would make it more attractive.

This game should be a real test for experienced players of pure playing skill rather than your ability to organise a team and convince neutrals to join you. Put yourself in any of the positions and consider how you would have to play it without the communication and co-ordination and I hope you will begin to see the challenge. You don't only have to second-guess the enemy; you have to do so with your own team. I can't guarantee this variant will work but it has some very strong possibilities.

I understand that a lot of players won't like the idea of Gunboat on the Anduin, but if you do, contact Clint referring to this article. I think randomly assigned positions would be best but if people have preferences or nations they won't play these can be factored in. If there are eleven others out there or possibly even nine with the vision and the guts lets get to it!

Victory through the Eyes of Evil

by Greg Shaffer

The servants of Sauron stood in grim satisfaction, surveying their expanded kingdoms. Corpses of Men and Elves and Dwarfs, always too many Dwarfs, littered the courtyards of every evil town that dotted the countryside. Still, something was missing. Somehow the Nazgûl had been robbed of their glory, if not of their success. This had been too easy. Was this the best the Free Peoples of Middle Earth could do? Why did only the Dwarfs strike any fear into the heart of evil?

Hoarmurath muttered in confusion, why did the Elf Lords think they could stop running, to move unprotected and to predictable destinations, to where evil thieves and assassins could seize them and their items of power? In response, Akhorahil asked, why did the Elf nations neglect the lost artifacts, allowing Sauron's agents to have them all? What were the Elf powers doing in this war? Had they abandoned their allies, to flee Middle Earth and sail to the West?

Khamul pondered, did the Free residents of Mirkwood believe they could cease mobilizing armies of consequence, and not face my wrath? Why did they contest me for towns and villages, allowing my armies to destroy their larger settlements instead? Likewise, Adunaphel asked aloud... why did the Free Peoples ignore, or irritate, their neutral neighbors rather than courting them?

Urzahil could not understand why the Gondors had called off their huge and fearsome early invasion of Mordor, just in time to save Barad Dur and the rest of the unfortified, poorly defended interior of Mordor. Ji Indur laughed aloud and wondered why the Free Peoples had attempted to invade him instead, much later and in lesser strength, from the south – what an inviting prospect! Meanwhile, Ren the Unclean contemplated why the Gondors had rebuilt the bridge at Osgiliath, without first preparing adequate forces, just in time to allow over 10,000 Orcs and Trolls into the beautiful citadel at Minas Anor.

Uvatha and Ovatha could not fathom why not a single Free allied army came to prevent the destruction of the Northmen. Dendra Dwar failed to comprehend

why the Free allies allowed him to conquer the Eothraim without sending armed relief. Enion wondered why, given ample time to react, the Cardolan nation did not save itself, or recruit the help of allies, to prevent the fall of the Cardolan capital to the Dunlending invasion.

Why did the Free do nothing to reduce the dark servants' courting of deadly dragons? Why did the Free support Sauron's nations, and Sauron's war efforts, by allowing the evil ones to continually sell their goods to the market at high prices? Why did the Free allow the dark servants to secure all of the curses magic, only to collapse before it could be used against them?

Why, why, why? To rob the evil ones of a glorious conquest?

Standing atop the battered, but steadfast walls of Carn Dum, still his capital city despite all that had happened in Angmar, Murazor was possessed with a sudden insight. It had happened this way because the Free Peoples were crippled by fear of Sauron and his servants from the beginning. Then they had lost all hope, and only despair remained. All as it should be.

Murazor suddenly shattered the top flagstone of his tower wall with his fist. He did this not in anger, but in wicked glee...

With thanks to my allies in ME60; it was truly a well-coordinated team victory. The abrupt drop by the remaining Free nations allowed the Noldo Elves to place amongst us Dark Servant winners in the top 3. A few "honorable mentions," as voted by the DS team:

- * *Most feared enemy: The Dwarfs*
- * *Least feared enemy: The Noldo Elves*
- * *Most generous financial aid: The Ice King - Hayden Leach*
- * *Best team player: The whole team! Votes were widespread.*
- * *Most resilient underdog: The Witch King - Frederic Jansen*
- * *Most innovative player, best military play, best character play, best diplomat, best overall strategist: The Dragon Lord – Greg Shaffer*





Gandalf

(A sketch by Angus McBride)

SENDING IN ORDERS

- 1: Always send orders by **post** or **email** if at all possible. Faxed orders are much more prone to errors since inevitably there is a loss of clarity and definition.
- 2: Ignore the fact that the GM won't process the game until the morning after the deadline printed on the order sheet. **Send your orders in on time** and you'll find a large proportion of obvious errors you may make (eg confusing 605 and 610 orders) will be picked up by the GM, who will then contact you to clarify the matter.
- 3: Please **always put the game number and nation number in the subject line of your email**. Also please make sure that the main body of the email has your name, account number, game number, security code and nation number. If you are sending a diplo we only require this information in the subject line and information as to what you want to send on to the recipient. It speeds things up for us if you can include as much detail concerning your question or problem. We very much appreciate this.
- 4: **Format of orders:** Please send your turns in by email in a plain format or using an attachment such as .txt. Please don't use any html or .xls formats. We can accept some .doc files, but experience shows that many mailers interact with the format to make it hard to read, so we only accept the simplest formats. We do not accept other formats. If you are not sure how to send your turn in such a manner, please get in touch and we'll help.

The Battle of Goblin Gate

by the Dwaven bard Anon.

Bitter the fight at Goblin-gate,
Blows were strengthened there by hate.
Three thousand Dwarves did Thelor follow,
Tramp and song rang through the hollow.
Lord Ohtar led the Sindar force,
Two thousand followed his prancing horse.
Beneoracer and Beoraborn
Led two thousand Woodmen as warriors born.

Urgubal hatched such cowardly plan
As only his dark heart could scan.
"Isolate the Dwarves!" he said.
"Then when all the Dwarves are dead,
The Elves and Woodies will not matter.
Their puny force we will soon scatter!"
The Dragon lord was not alone.
Came Arfanhil with heart of stone,
And five thousand Rhudaur men
To Goblin -gate, but not back again.

The Dwarves marched in the army's van,
When according to Urgubal's plan,
Arfanhil ordered the attack:
"Kill the Dwarves! Let none get back.
Kill the Dwarves! Ne'er mind Elves and Men,
Time enough to take them when
The Dwarves are dead. Onward, men!"

The Dwarves saw their foes and charged them hard,
Bones and armour split to shards,
Gory hammer and red battle-axe
Thru Rhudaur's ranks cut bloody swath.
Tho' axe and hammer took their toll
Goblins, evil men, and trolls
Surrounded Thelor's Dwarves, their plan
To wipe them out ere any man
Or elf, could come to their aid.
Such was the foul plan they laid.

Hindered by the rough terrain,
Elves and Men, too slow they came.
Ohtar, Beneoracer and Beoraborn
Heard the distant Dwarven battle-horn.
They urged their troops to greater speed,
"We must reach the Dwarves in their dire need!"

Thelor roared, "Form shield-ring, and hold it fast!
No foe shall break it, and at last
The Elves and Woodmen will get here."
The Dwarves obeyed him with a cheer.
The Dwarves closed ranks around their lord,
The ground they gave was slick with blood.
Evil Men, and orcs and trolls,
Fell 'neath axe and hammer blows.

The Rhudaur men could not break thru,
That ring of steel and bronze held true.
But as the Rhudaur men fell back,
Forth stepped the dark mage Orduclax.
Raising up his hands on high,
He called a tornado from the sky,
Hurled it with a mighty blast
At where the Dwarven ranks stood fast.
The tornado struck with noise like thunder,
Split the Dwarven ranks asunder,
Hurled them high into the sky
To fall upon cruel crags and die.

The host of Rhudaur howled their glee,
Charged again, now sure of victory.
The Dwarves still standing were too few,
Tho' their blades ceased not to chop and hew.
Three thousand Dwarves that day did fall,
Thelor, wounded, last of all,
Save for Boing, his young page,
Who, fired up with battle-rage
Bestrode his lord with borrowed sword,
And roared defiance at the dark horde.

The bloodied Rhudaur host closed in
To finish off the bold stripling.
Suddenly with deadly hiss
Elf-bolts struck, and few did miss.
Elves and Woodmen arrived at last,
Marching up the mountain pass.
The Rhudaur army then fell back,
No guts to stand a fresh attack.
Half their host stayed on that hill,
Half their host lay dead and still.

Urgubal was now dismayed,
By his Rhudaur friends betrayed.
The Elves and Woodmen, fired with hate,
Stormed the walls of Goblin-gate.
Thru caves and tunnels, with spear and sword,
They slaughtered all the goblin horde.
They scattered torches thru the town,
And burned the place down to the ground.
Thus were the fallen Dwarves avenged
And Goblin-gate brought to an end.

Boing helped Thelor to his feet.
"This victory is far from sweet,"
The Dwarf-lord said from bitter heart.
"For Khazad-dum let's make a start.
This victory I care not to share
With Elves when all our dead lie there."



ORC & troll names

Hey all,

Just wanted to pass this info along - if you are playing a DS and you end a character with one of the following suffixes, you will get an orc or troll picture. The suffixes are: guk, mog, luk, rog, urg, urk, uruk, lug, hai

However, there aren't a lot of DS pictures to go around - only 3-5 different pictures - for all of the suffixes listed above. Just so you know, in case you get repeats.

Hope this proves useful!

Stuart



Bree articles

I would be very interested in hearing from players re: playing "frontline" nations - Dragon Lord, Witch King, Dog Lord, North Gondor etc

In addition, how about articles on Military strategy, camp placement, and / or suggested plans to optimize character development for various nations.

At least one player has contacted me asking for views on bridges. Is it better to destroy them early in the game and how does this impact FP and DS teams.



contacting the mepbm office

Post:
340 North Road, Cardiff, Wales,
CF14 3BP

Tel:
+44(0)29 20913359

Fax:
+44(0)29 20625532

Email:
me@MiddleEarthGames.com
*please do not use any other
address!*

Websites
www.middleearthgames.com
www.harlequingames.com

E-mail List
Check out the websites (above)
for more information.

Learning the Game

Thoughts by a Newbie ...

by Philip Vincent

There has been a lot of questions and answers on the Chat pages lately on what is the best way startup in MEPBM. Well here are my thoughts.

Firstly you need a game that has lots of action. It keeps your interest and you get to learn an awful lot. Secondly, you need a position that is a little out of the way, not crucial to your team, so you can make a few mistakes but not die by it. Thirdly, you need to run the position by yourself, getting advice from your fellow players but not expecting any either. Lastly have a realistic goal.

I think the perfect position is the Quiet Avenger in the 1650 game. Why? Well it's got it all.

Plus #1 You are pretty small and weak. Everyone ignores you, the Freeps, the Harad and Corsairs - no one really believes you are a threat. You get to your own thing, start thinking 5 turns out immediately, you'll probably be able to do most of these.

Plus #2 Your map is in the middle of Rough Hexes, the only place to make camps for varied resource production, plant camps and see what I mean, good, varied production.

Plus #3 You get to learn diplomacy very very fast. You need to talk Harad & Cors to joining you - it's a good experience that is essential for a long term player. This will also make your fellow DS happy, and you really get to contribute to the team with this.

Plus #4 You get some really neat Characters that

you can develop. You can name Emmy's and Comm's at Rank 40. No artifacts of any real worth - no one will bother you about your startup arties. Its also got Agents and Mages as well for learning the ropes.

Plus #5 Your fellow DS leave you alone, so do the Freeps, the Neutrals want to talk because you are the key in making a decision on whether they go DS or not. You really get to control your destiny without everyone telling you what to do. They really are too busy, apart from getting money from you.

What about combat? Well your in this position to learn the ropes you need to learn game mechanics, production effects, speed at which Characters develop, learning different spells, their usage, reacting to encounters, etc etc etc - it's a lot, combat only complicates it. I recommend learn the mechanics of the game first before going to a more combat orientated role. Combat really is a small aspect of the game - nobody ever won a war without an economy to back it up did they - late in the game you may well get to play the economic support to your team - you certainly do for the first 10 turns.

What's my goal? Well I say make it easy, try and last until Turn 10 - everything after that is a bonus. You will learn a lot from other players in those ten turns and they will rely on you, yes you, for crucial gold, timber, steel. For the first ten turns you get to do it all, and take a quiet role (pretty good pun huh!) and learn. Still worried about Combat, wait until after Turn 10 you'll get plenty of it.



A Middle Earth Christmas

Face to Face and Online games planned!

Christmas looks like being a hectic time here at Harlequin Towers. By popular demand we will be running both a face-to-face game here in the Harlequin offices, and also an online email game.

The Email game would start on Thursday 27th December through to Saturday 29th December. Turnaround would be two hourly, starting at 11am UK time and ending at 8pm. It's probably not possible to do it any faster than that as we need about an hour to input, process and print, allowing half an hour to email. It may not be possible to get enough done, in which case a Battle of the Five Armies scenario would be the way to go - obviously this would be a lot faster to play and process.

This game would be in addition to the game running here - the date of which is to be arranged. Thursday 27th is a possibility, though one group of people have said they would prefer the 28th, whilst others would find the Saturday better as they have the day off work. Let us know what days you can manage and we'll see what can be arranged.

Clint



Turns still need delivering at Christmas ...

pubmeets & cons

Provisionally we are aiming to have a weekend game of ME in **Copenhagen**. 19th Jan start, pubmeet in the evening of the Sat, and finish late Sunday. Please get in touch if you are able to make it.

Dragonmeet

Please take a look at the flyer attached at the back of Bree. Although Harlequin will not be there in person, there will be quantities of MEPBM material at the Flagship stand - come along and give us your support!



stand-by positions

Drop-out positions are available as listed below - don't forget you get a free turn when taking these up!

E = 0-10 turn, M = 11-25, L = 26+

1000: Three (e.e, m)

2950: Silvan (l), NGond (l)

1650: Wood (l), Dwarves (e), Sind (l), Witch (e), East (m)



artists

News from Bree would like the acknowledge the work of the following artists, published in this issue.

p1 - Alan Lee

p3 - map by Oystein Tvedten

p4 - Angus McBride (*Gollum*)

- Alan Lee (*Fall of Smaug*)

p5 - Abe Papakhian

p7 - Angus McBride (*both*)

p6 - David Wyatt



news from Bree

My thanks to everyone who has sent articles. I am still looking for more though! Please try to keep your articles to about 900 words (or shorter), otherwise I may have to edit you severely! I'm particularly keen on reports for the Hall of Fame.

Editor: Colin Forbes,
2A Guinea Street, Exeter, Devon
bree@timewyrm.co.uk

Before you Play

by Brad Brunet

Be advised that MEPBM is a multiplayer Wargame. While there are various aspects of the game that can be used in a role-playing sense, the balance between those 2 gaming styles has tilted heavily towards Wargame. This is because of the sheer volume of knowledge and game information so readily available with new communication technology.

What does that mean?

While there is yet an Individual Winner, that player must be a member of the winning Team. The most successful nation is WWII couldn't have accomplished their feats without close coordination (communication, information sharing, etc) with their various allies. D-Day was NOT organized via bi-weekly postcards between world leaders!

What to expect

As a member of an allegiance, your allies want to talk! They will expect a commitment to see the game through, and a willingness to share and compromise. Most players will want the team set up on an email group to communicate and upload all players' turn reports for all to share! Emails may fly, replies expected quickly... It may seem like a lot at first! Players will bombard each other with plans, strategies, ideas, requests, questions. Some are more demanding, others may seem intransigent or downright authoritarian! Be Prepared! Most though, are decent enough chaps (as most people are...) more than willing to recall when they too felt overwhelmed by it all. You'll find all types of personalities in our game, but you'll always find an understanding ear ready to offer help, ideas, advice and support.

The closer the 10 (+ neutrals...) players on a team are able to coordinate the better. Ever tried to find consensus among 10 strangers from all over the world? In 5 days?!? It can be quite difficult! But that's some of the fun. Intra-team diplomacy is often forgotten as most people will have conflicting priorities most of the time.



From out of the West

Latest News from MEPBM Games!

Just when I thought things would start to calm down we get an influx of ideas, projects reaching fruition and lots, lots more. We would like to welcome the Australia and New Zealand main land to the fold. The film's approach means that we're looking for places to advertise so if you know any appropriate places please contact us.

The MEPBMList recently came up with a new look at Victory Points - if you have any thoughts on this prickly subject they would be most welcome. If we can get it so that there is a system that reflects the game most players seem to play then that would be excellent.

The end is in sight with the Accounts program, we're bringing in minor modifications for this, and working on the various other programming projects that we have.

How to deal with it all

Be honest about your knowledge and experience level. Ask honest questions. Don't take things the wrong way or personally, if you aren't sure, and subsequently, don't react too quickly (wait before hitting "Send"!) if you feel slighted right away. Misunderstandings happen in stressful situations, and we're playing with lives and the fates of Nations here! Best advice, of course, is to have a healthy sense of humour!

Always remember: just as you'll never seem to have enough characters/orders to accomplish all your goals, you can never please all the people all the time! Pick as many orders as possible that please as many people as much of the time as possible! As your game grows, you'll be able to distinguish between another's personal requests, greater team needs, and your own personal desires.

Where to start

Find yourself as much information as you can! Bookmark the following websites:

www.middleearthgames.com The company's site. From there, link to Communicate with Players and it will lead you to either the company email list, or the internet Message Boards. You'll be able to find your new team-mates there somewhere!

www.middleearthpbm.co.uk Bobbin's MEPBM site is a must! It has just about everything that is known about how the game works. If you ever need to know something to get you through your next turn, chances are you'll find it here!

www.lorestone.com facade's site is great reading also! Nation strategy articles and other game articles, written by facade and other guests.

Welcome to ME Games Middle Earth PBM and Good Gaming!

With a face-face game early next year planned for Copenhagen (20th Jan weekend), and possibly one in the UK if there are enough players it's all looking fun and somewhat hectic (ah well didn't want a holiday anyway!). Stu is with us for another year, a quick bribe to the home office no doubt helped there. :-)

A quick reminder, we can run most styles of games IF there is a player base for it. The Battle of the Five Armies is something that we hope to use to bring new players into the fold, via an easy learning curve, but we can do most things if there is support from you all. Keep the articles and thoughts coming into Bree and don't forget: "Have fun and help make it fun for others".

Clint



Middle Earth
PBM Games

The event that takes games to a higher level!



**DRAGON
meet
2001**

Saturday

1st December

10 am – 10 pm

Kensington Town Hall,

Hornton Street

London W8

closest tube:

High Street Kensington

Special Guest

John Kovalic of Dork Tower, Murphy's

Rules and Chez Geek fame

Boardgames, cardgames, strategy games, miniatures, role-playing, wargames, trading-card games, LARPS and live-action, play-by-mail, murder-mystery: Dragonmeet 2001 will have the biggest choice of games and gaming London's ever seen.

- ◆ Play official demonstrations of the latest releases
- ◆ Enter competitions and prize tournaments
- ◆ Visit trade stands or bid for rare auction items
- ◆ Meet well-known designers, writers and artists
- ◆ Bring your own games and find new opponents
- ◆ It's serious gaming with a great atmosphere!

There's no other games event to match it!

Admission: **£5** in advance, **£6** on the door
(student, unemployed or OAP: £3.50/£4.50)

Get the latest info on games, tickets, helping out and more at www.dragonmeet.com

If you've got any specific questions about the event, email us
at info@dragonmeet.com, or call 020 7738 8877

The world's greatest games in the heart of London