

News from Bree

MEPBM Newsletter: Issue 21, Feb. '03

"Strange as News
from Bree..."

The Lord of the Rings, chapter 9

4th Age Nation Design

by Adam Waters

Talk at the Prancing Pony...

page 1

"Fourth Age Nation
Design"

page 2 - 3

New Games

Stand-by Positions &
Grudge Games

page 4

"Lord of the Rings Risk"

The Works of JRR Tolkien

page 5 - 8

Hall of Fame

page 6 - 8

Tolkien Miscellanea

page 9

"Battle of the Five Armies
diary, part 2"

Ian McKellen

page 10

Contacting the MEPBM
Office & Making Payments

page 11-12

"Building a Healthy
Economy - part 2"

page 12

News from
MEPBM Games

Welcome to Fourth Age MEPBM! This can be one of the most exciting and challenging of all the scenarios but also one of the most disappointing to first time Fourth Age players. Designing your nation is a great thrill and if done well can create a strong position with a lot of personality. But when done poorly can lead to a sudden and painful demise. What follows are some simple rules of thumb to help you build a solid nation for your first attempt at FA. There are no absolute guidelines to nation design and a wide variety of combinations can be successful, but these tips and hints will certainly help you build a sturdy nation that can survive in this competitive environment while you learn the ropes.

The advice in this column is designed for the 23 "normal" positions in the Fourth Age and isn't targeted at the North or South Kingdoms. These positions should only be taken by experienced players who are willing to make a commitment to playing thoughtfully and communicating well. A poorly played or dropped Kingdom can distort the game for everyone, and as a new player you should learn the ropes before tackling this larger challenge.

Basic Design Advice

The best nation designs encompass an entire strategy including all the variables:

- 1) Allegiance and Race
- 2) Special Nation Abilities
- 3) Character Assignments
- 4) Location
- 5) Popcenter Assignments
- 6) Starting Armies

The most important three are choosing sensible SNA's, taking good starting characters, and picking a strategic location. But all can be crucial to your nations success.

1) Allegiance and Race

These two factors are the first you should decide as they affect everything else. Race decides which 60 point characters you can assign cheaply, and allegiance where you can put your starting Popcens. The breakdown looks like this:

Men: 60 Emissaries, Free People, Dark Servants, or Neutral

Non-Human: 60 Agents, Dark Servants

Dwarves: 60 Commanders, Free People

Elves: 60 Mages, Free People

FP/DS: can place starting Popcens in Mountain Hexes

Neutrals: cannot

As a newbie, playing a FP or DS nation will give you instant access to allies and more information

but bring you enemies as well. Joining as a Neutral has the advantage of a more peaceful start, but you will lack some access to information about what's going on in the wider game. So long as you build a robust nation across the board however, it's okay to start as either Neutral or Aligned so don't worry too much about it.

2) Special Nation Abilities

Choosing your SNA's is the great magic of FA and possibly the most important part of the design process. Here is where you really decide the kind of nation you want to play. The most basic of distinctions are military vs. character based nations, though there is a wide spectrum in between. Not all the SNA's are equally useful, and the list below contains the most potent 15 or so broken down by focus:

Agent SNA's

+20 Kidnap/Assassinate
Scout Double
Agents at 40
Stealth
+20 Scout

Military SNA's

Hire Armies for Free
Commanders at 40
Fortifications at 1/2
Morale/Training bonuses
Challenge Bonus

Economy SNA's

Emissaries at 40
+20% Buy/Sell Bonus

Mage SNA's

Conjure Mounts
Mages at 40
Conjure Mounts
Teleport

Putting together a combination of SNA's that complement each other is the goal. Are you an agent nation of thieves and assassins? A bold and tough band of Dwarves from the Misty Mountains? Nuriag horsemen from beyond the East? Pick a set of SNA's that help you achieve your nation's goals and make sense together.

For example, a military nation will need a good economy to support those expensive armies. Instead of taking only military SNA's, you might want to take the 20% market bonus or 40 point Emissaries as well to help fund your war machine. Additionally, a super SNA for any military nation is Conjure Mounts. Cavalry move faster and punch harder than infantry, so depending on your location and objectives this might be a good choice. If you intend to be in the center of the fight and want to churn out troops quickly however, then Hire Armies for Free is the SNA for you.

Also try to take at least 1 "characters named at 40" SNA, as you'll be naming 7 characters over the first 7 turns. Agents at 40 is useful for just about everyone, so if you don't know what else to pick take that.

One common mistake to stay away from as a beginner is creating the Mage nation. Mages are the hardest characters to use effectively in FA so unless you know what you're doing, you're better off sticking to Armies, Agents, and Economies. More on this later.

new games

Waiting List: When I get all 25 (or 24 for Gunboat) nations into the game I will allocate you your choice of nation from the list of nations that you have sent me - please send multiple nation choices. Upto 2 nation game: play 1 or 2 Aligned nations, or one Neutral nation.

The following new games are filling up.

TA: 1650

[Game 80]

2 week turnaround
5 available.

[Game 119]

Three Week turnaround
9 available. Prisoners and many postal players involved. Up to 2 nation game.

TA: 2950

[Game 221]

2 week turnaround
2 nations available.

War of the Ring (2950 variant)

[Game 223]

2 week turnaround

Updated PCs and armies - designed by Richard Devereux. Pre-aligned 12v12. Cor/Kh DS, WW/Dun FP no Rhun

FA: 1000

[Game 45]

2 week turnaround
17 available

BofA

[Game 116]

Two week turnaround

Beginners game: 1 new player available. (Get in touch if experienced for a special deal here - all the game for cheap!)

Face to Face Game

Sometime in June - 10 available (8 if 2 GMs play as is likely). Probably a 2 and a half day event - Fri-Sunday. Latest count shows ten people coming - 8 more slots available. Book now to avoid disappointment!

Note please ask for variant games we can try to get you opposition for them if you are interested - mostly Grudge teams though - if I get 10 players for any single type of game then I will put it up for general availability below and push it.

Agent Nation	Dwarven Military	Human Cavalry
Stealth Bonus	Hire For Free	Agents at 40
Agents at 40	+20% Buy Sell	Emissaries at 40
Double Scout	Commanders at 40	Conj Mounts
	2 Artifacts	Commanders at 40

Some sample SNA combinations are suggested in the table above :

Hidden Popcenters, Artifacts, and War Machines

Stay away from hidden Popcens for your first game. The 10,000 SNA points is better used elsewhere. Plus the Kingdoms will both know where you are more or less, so it's not your safest buy. Unless you have a real tricky plan you're confident in carrying out, it's not worth it. If you do decide to hide your capital however, then don't take a starting army, as it will give away your location.

Taking the 2 artifacts for 4,000 points can be a toss-up. They're best for nations that intend some military action as they are often combat artifacts. 2 +750 point weapons is a common result, though I've seen players get 2 +2000 weapons with their pick., or even 2 command artifacts.

If you end up with an extra 1000 SNA points and have any military intentions, you might want to take 5 War machines. 1000 gold and no orders issued for 5 War Machines is a great deal, and you'll be glad you have them when joyfully burning down your enemies Town/Tower on turn 2.

3) Character Assignment

Now that you know who you are and your nation strategy, it's time to assign some characters. The goal here is to build a starting squad that complements your SNA choices and can carry out your plan for eliminating enemies and strengthening your nation. It's important to not only think about your first 8 characters, but also the 4 you can name right away, and even the next 3 after that. If you can articulate a flexible plan for what your first 15 characters will be then you're on the right track.

Emissaries! Emissaries! Emissaries!

Every nation in the Fourth Age needs to build itself a strong economy and the way to do this is with an effective Emissary force. Even an agent nation should get a minimum of 2 40 point Emissaries as soon as possible to build its economy. A military nation will want 3-5 Emissaries building camps full time. The camp limit gets hit quickly in FA, around turn 6, so speed is of the essence. If playing a human nation, absolutely take a 60 point Emissary to start. Other races should take a 50 Emissary as this affects starting Popcen loyalties. Don't neglect your Emissary corps. By turn 10 those who have failed to build their economies will fall hopelessly behind.

The Agent Game. If you're playing a non-human Agent nation, take one or two 60 point agents. These characters will be assassination ready on turn 1, which you'll love and your enemies will hate. Other good choices are 40 agents with 10 stealth especially for the Free People and Neutrals who can't buy the

Evil Agent Nation	Dwarven Military	Human Cavalry
60 Agent	60 Commander	40 Commander
60 Agent	40 Commander	40/20 Commander/Agent
20/20 Com/Agent	20/40 Com/Agent	30/40 Commander/Agent
30 Commander	20/30 Com/Agent	20/30 Commander/Mage
40 Commander	50 Emmy	40 Mage
50 Emmy	40 Emmy	60 Emmy
40 Emmy	40 Emmy	40 Emmy
40 Emmy	40 Emmy	40 Emmy

4) Location

Mountains! The biggest news about choosing a starting location in FA is that the FP and DS are allowed to place their beginning Popcens in the Mountains while Neutrals are not. This huge advantage of the allied nations should not be cast aside without good reason. Having your capital in the Mountains (without a road) means that no army can suddenly show up on your doorstep without having to first give you a chance to intercept it. Also, attacking armies must have food to move into the mountains, which translates directly into additional orders and gold your enemies must spend to attack you. This is a crucial defensive factor. Putting your Popcens out in the open Plains or on a road can be a costly mistake. In areas with easy access enemies can simply Force March their cavalry from well off your map onto your capital before you ever see them coming. This can lead to disastrous results and quick elimination. When choosing a starting capital location as a FP or DS think seriously before giving up your

cheap 60 pointers, as well as 20/40 Commander/Agents for company commanders.

Woe to be a Mage befuddled. In

FA the artifact numbers are randomized. Instead of being able

to Locate Artifact True the Ring of Wind on turn 1, Mages interested in artifacts have to hunt and peck blindly through the list to find those of value. Considering there are over 200 artifacts in FA, even a team of four 60 point mages will take over 25 turns to LAT them all. Additionally, as if this weren't bad enough, LAT frequently fails to return specific information about the artifact located resulting only in "A sword is located at 3912" or some such. Often players resort to casting Research Artifact blindly on the list to identify the ones they want before casting LAT.

For this reason, many players have given up entirely on Mages as anything other than Mount Conjuring devices in FA. In my opinion this is a mistake as Mages are still useful for tracking enemy Agents, scrying, and locating chance artifacts. But for most beginning players, designing a Mage heavy nation that neglects armies, agents, and the economy is a sure road to disaster. If however you are dead set on running a Mage nation focused on collecting artifacts, be advised to take Teleport, and put your nation very far away from any potential threats.

Commanders.

Most important for the military nation, but everyone should have one or two 40 point Commanders to raise taxes and do Downgrades. A military nation might want to have 6 or more characters with command skill out of the first 12, and doubling up with Commander/Agents is always a good idea.

Some simple 8 character setups that complement the SNA examples above would be:

stand-by positions

Drop-outs available - don't forget you get a **free turn** for taking these up!

E [Early] = 0-10 turn,
M (Midgame) = 11-20,
L [Late game] = 21+,
[A= Aligned if a Neutral, N= not aligned if a Neutral]
P = Postal and Email game,

BoFA None
1000: None
2950: None
1650: None
Gunboat: 3x2 (m)

grudge games

Grudge Games we need
opposition for:

1000: None
1650: Steve Johnston (DS12),
Michael Kamine,
Mike Hostetter,
Ben Shushan
2950: Nick Cody

Check out the front sheet / turn email for
all the latest news on positions
available!

FLAGSHIP

THE MAGAZINE FOR GAMERS

Bi-monthly, not-for-profit, magazine covering PBM and a wide variety of other gaming (including computer games, web gaming, tabletop roleplaying & boardgames).

For subscription info. visit...
www.pbmgames.com

We welcome comments on games from everyone, not just subscribers: all comments received go into a hat and may win the writer a free copy of the magazine! Send your thoughts on Middle Earth to: carol@pbmgames.com

News From Bree

We're looking for strategy articles to publish in these pages. More material on fourth age would also be welcome as there is a Fourth Age Special being planned.

If you feel inspired, please write to ...

bree@timewyrm.co.uk

Mountain advantage and plopping down in the middle of the Plains somewhere.

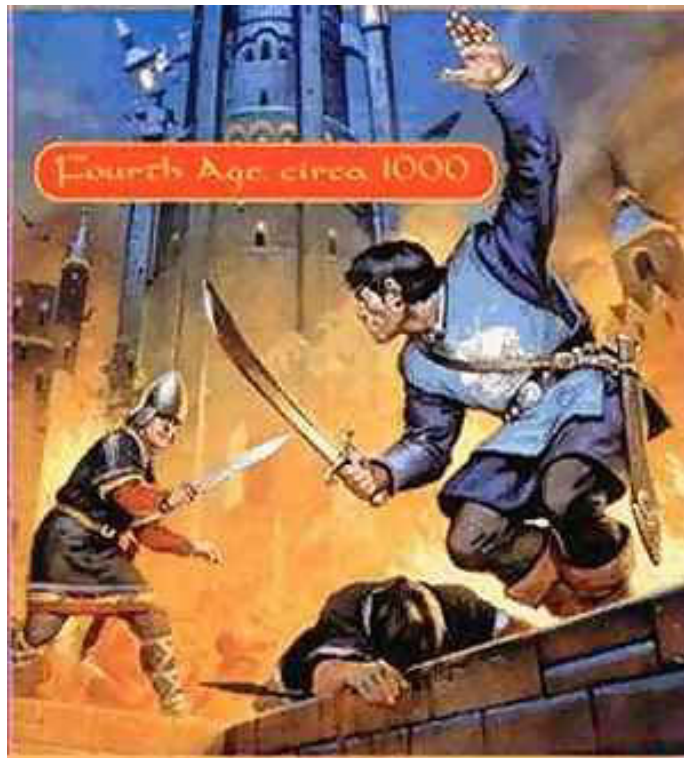
Locate by Design. Beyond that, what area of the map you choose to play in should enhance your nation design. The main question is do you want to be in the thick of things, or on the edge. If you've picked strong military capabilities and plan on burning your enemies to the ground with armies, then you want to be near enough to the action to give them a trouncing. Nothing's worse than marching your slow old Heavy Infantry four turns to your enemy's capital. Personally I don't have the patience to wait 2 months to get there, and usually when I do he's recruited up enough troops to stop the assault dead in its tracks.

Bearing that in mind, places that tend to see the most action in FA are Mirkwood and the Eastern edge of the Misties, all across the Isen Gap, around the Sea of Rhun, and Mordor. Places where you are unlikely to find a lot of enemies near by include either of the Far West peninsulas or the South West tip of South Harad. But remember! This is the Fourth Age where anything goes, so don't be surprised to find an unpleasant neighbor wherever you end up!

If you're mostly a character based nation that's not looking to mix it up on the battlefield or are looking for a slow growth home you need to find yourself a niche. This doesn't have to be the ends of the Earth, it just has to be safe from military assault. Again, if you're a FP or DS: start in the Mountains! Some great places for this are the Misty Mountains behind Fangorn or Lorien, the South East corner of Mordor, or the deep Angmar valley around 2206. The backdoor of the South Kingdom around 2023, and all the western White Mountains, make good locations as well for getting out of the way. Look for locations that restrict possible avenues of attack: Rough or Forest hexes along a Major River, or hexes that back onto Mountain hexes for example.

Neutrals have it a bit harder, which is only fair, as they probably won't have anybody attacking them for the first few turns. And on location they can get the best of both worlds by starting out of the way and coming to the action. By taking the time to build up militarily a neutral can march a long way in a hurry with a decent cavalry army. And stocking it with food and war machines can make it a devastating force. So playing a military nation in a more out of the way location like Southern Khand for example, makes more sense for a Neutral than an allied nation. Nevertheless neutrality is a great mantle of protection at the beginning, so if you want to go right into the heart of the map as a Neutral then go for it.

Terrain and Climate. Other things to note when making your location decision are the climate and terrain. Remember that those frozen northern wastes will be polar much of the year and hence have very poor production. This will directly impact your economy, which might not be a big deal if you're an agent nation, but will definitely keep you from raising



huge expensive armies and put you at a long term economic disadvantage to more southern nations. Terrain will affect the types of production you get. Mountains and Rough produce the most gold, Plains leather, food, and mounts. A great economy can be built with Rough hexes as these offer the most diverse production, and the wealth of Khand and Harad is famous for it. If you can't take Mountain hexes, take Rough, you won't go wrong.

Insurance. As for insurance it's a real gamble and gives no guarantee of getting your first choice. The popular locations tend to be popular every game so if you're dead set on taking the island in the Sea of Rhun for example, go ahead and buy the insurance, but make back-up plans in case you don't get it. Frankly, there are enough interesting places on the map that one should be able to find three that make sense, but if your design concept calls for a specific location you might want to take insurance and cross your fingers.

Big Brother knows where you are. One other thing that all players of FA should know is that both the NK and SK start the game with all the nations starting locations. What they see on their turn 0 report is a 7 hex Scry Area of everyone's capital. So even if you choose to place your capital at 4401 thinking nobody will know where you are both Kingdoms will know. And soon your enemies will also know, so pick a location that has strong strategic and defensive value, not one that you think is safe because it's unseen.

5) Popcenter Assignments

Two common Popcen assignments players choose are:
1 additional camp, 1 Fort, 2 Towers
or
2 additional camps, 2 Towers

If you're a beginning FA player I highly recommend you take the first option and place the Fort on your capital. It's expensive yes, and will cost you a camp, but the added defensive value is undoubtedly worth it. With a MT/F you should be able to defend yourself through the first six turns even with two enemies as immediate neighbors. On the other end of the spectrum,

The Works of J.R.R. Tolkien

Looking back through my emails over the last year, I noticed that a couple of people had enquired about other books by Tolkien: by which I assume they meant works other than *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Another email arrived along these lines a week ago, so here's a complete list of the works of JRR Tolkien replete with ISBN numbers etc. Most good bookshops should stock these - MEPBM Games have a link to at least one such shop on their website.

Principal Works

The Hobbit | Published: 1937 | ISBN: 0395177111

The Lord of the Rings | Published: 1954-55 | ISBN: 0395193958

The Silmarillion | Published: 1983 | ISBN: 0618126988

The Fellowship of the Ring | Published: 1987 | ISBN: 0618002227

The Two Towers | Published: 1987 | ISBN: 0618002235

The Return of the King | Published: 1987 | ISBN: 0618002243

Stories of Middle-Earth

The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien | Published: 1981 | ISBN: 0618056998

The Road Goes Ever On | Published: 1967, 1978 | ISBN: 0395247586

A Tolkien Compass | Published: 1980 | ISBN: 0345288556

Unfinished Tales | Published: 1980 | ISBN: 0345357116

The History of Middle-Earth

The Book of Lost Tales, Part I | Published: 1984 | ISBN: 0345375211

The Book of Lost Tales, Part II | Published: 1984 | ISBN: 034537522X

The Lays of Beleriand | Published: 1985 | ISBN: 0345388186

The Shaping of Middle-Earth | Published: 1986 | ISBN: 0395425018

The Lost Road and Other Writings | Published: 1987 | ISBN: 0395455197

The Return of the Shadow | Published: 1988 | ISBN: 0395498635

The Treason of Isengard | Published: 1989 | ISBN: 0618083588

The War of the Ring | Published: 1990 | ISBN: 0618083596

Sauron Defeated | Published: 1992

taking no fortifications is often a fatal mistake and the extra gold will really do you no good when you're dead.

If you've picked a good defensible nook to locate your capital, consider placing a fortified town, village, or camp in a location that further restricts access to you. Every turn you can delay an invading enemy is one more turn of recruiting you can take before facing him. Also consider that you may need to recruit from your town if heavily pressed so keep it within reach. Generally a tighter bunching of starting Popcens does better defensively than spreading yourself across seven hexes.

Improving Popcens at nation setup isn't worth it unless you have a specific reason for doing so, like recruiting armies as fast as possible. It's better to improve them after the camp limit is reached, or only to help your military game in the first few turns. A classic human nation play is to use that 60 Emissary to bump up the capital to a City/Fort on turn 1 making it proof against anything less than about 3,500 Heavy Infantry. If you can afford the 10,000 gold this makes for a powerful start.

6) Starting Armies

Again, complement the rest of your setup with your starting army choices. Whatever you do though, take a starting army. Having no army is a mistake. You'll want one if for no other reason than to protect your capital from Emissary attack, not mention regular defense. As for what troops to choose, don't be stingy! Especially as a FP or DS. Neutrals can go light on starting troops, but for an aligned nation, unless you are certain of getting a secure starting location you'll want something more than the minimum 100 Men at Arms. 400 Light Cavalry is never a bad option as it gives you a lot of options on how to split the army, has great movement, and is enough in itself to blast a village or even an unfortified town under the right conditions.

Okay, that's it. If you're still feeling a bit lost, I recommend reading the other beginners guides on the Harlequin website, and especially back issues of Mouth of Sauron to learn more about the game. Otherwise have fun designing your nation, and I'll see you on the battlefields of Middle Earth Fourth Age!



Boardgames Corner: LotR Risk

by Simon Moon

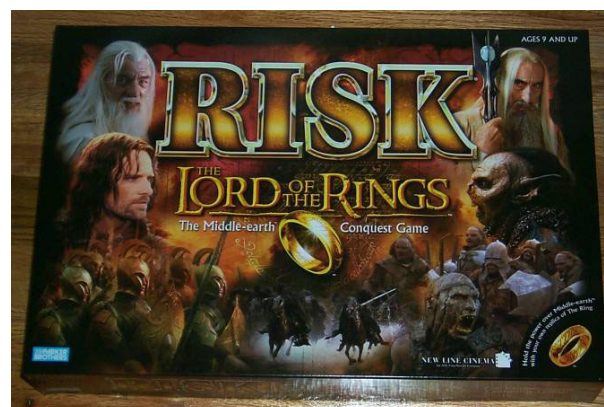
Halloween day last year saw Parker Brothers' Middle Earth Risk arrive on store shelves. Being a big fan of the original Risk as well as Risk 2250 in more recent times, I had very high hopes for his one. Unfortunately the result is a bit of a mess and fails on many levels, coming across as a greedy rush job to capitalize on a hot license.

The basic core of the rules will be familiar to anyone who has ever played Risk. The core combat rules are the same with the added complications of leaders, fortresses and limits on the sizes of attacking armies. Territory cards are collected to turn in for additional units and the map features the same country and continent bonus system.

The game board is a tad small. It seems an attempt to retain the look of the hand drawn maps of Tolkien while at the same time moving everything about slightly for gameplay purposes and adding color to differentiate areas. A legend on the side of the map shows the bonuses collected for controlling complete areas yet, irritatingly, lacks the corresponding color legend that every single version of Risk until now had featured. Sea routes connect a couple of the port cities. The Fellowship, represented by a gold ring (did you ever think to see a mass produced one ring?), moves across the board during play, ending the game when they move off of the map. The alarming indicator here is that the game board ends at the Dead Marshes. Both the sea routes and the route of the Fellowship simply wander off the game board. This is a strong indicator that an "expansion" is already in the works. If they plan one for each movie you're looking at \$150 for what will ultimately be one complete game.

The counters are moderately detailed with the "evil" armies looking quite a bit better than the "good" armies. It doesn't help that the evil armies are in red and black while the good armies are stuck with fluorescent lime and lemon yellow, making them a colossal eyesore. Other than quick lip service in the rules, the whole notion of good and evil has zero relevance to the game other than determining starting territories. There is no alliance or cooperation between good or evil players, and no optional rules with the game to provide means to play this way. Perhaps these will be in one of the "expansions".

The game also includes a deck of Adventure Cards that provide goals during gameplay as well as special tactical effects or bonuses. These are well done and add a lot of fun to the game. It appears that this deck was where most of the design team's time was spent.



The Fellowship's movement across the gameboard seems little more than a missed opportunity. There are cards that hinder them that can be played to delay the end of the game but other than that they have zero effect on gameplay. No bonuses or penalties as they pass through your area; no reason for good to want them to win, no reason for evil to want them to fail.

"Missed opportunity" is really the phrase that best sums up this game. There are several good innovations here that just aren't executed well. This one needed another month or two and I expect that we'll be seeing a host of house rules for it to bring it more inline with what wargamers were hoping it would be.

| ISBN: 0395606497

Morgoth's Ring | Published: 1993 | ISBN: 0395680921
The War of the Jewels | Published: 1994 | ISBN: 0395710413

The Peoples of Middle-Earth

Published: 1996 | ISBN: 0395827604

Children's Stories

Bilbo's Last Song | Published: 1992 | ISBN: 0679827102

Letters From Father Christmas | Published: 1977, 1991 | ISBN: 061800937X

Mr. Bliss | Published: 1983 | ISBN: 0395329361
Oliphant | Published: 1989 | ISBN: 0809243539

Short Stories

Farmer Giles of Ham | Published: 1950, 1978 | ISBN: 0618009361

The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth | Published: 1953 | ISBN: 0048200158

Tree and Leaf | Published: 1965, 1989 | ISBN: 0395082536

The Tolkien Reader | Published: 1966 | ISBN: 0345345061

Smith of Wooton Major | Published: 1967 | ISBN: 0345336062

Poems and Stories | Published: 1980 | ISBN: 0048231746

Finn & Hengest | Published: 1992 | ISBN: 0261103555

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight | Published: 1998 | ISBN: 0345277600

The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses From the Red Book | Published: 1963 | ISBN: 039508251X

Other Works

The Annotated Hobbit | Published: 1988 | ISBN: 0618134700

The Monsters and the Critics | Published: 1997 | ISBN: 026110263X

Tales from the Perilous Realm | Published: 1998 | ISBN: 0261103431

J.R.R. Tolkien: Artist & Illustrator | Published: 2000 | ISBN: 0618083618

Collector's Editions

The Hobbit, Illustrated Edition | Published: 1997 | ISBN: 0395873460

The Hobbit, Collector's Edition | Published: 1973 | ISBN: 0395177111

Lord of the Rings, Collector's Edition | Published: 1974 | ISBN: 0395193958

Lord of the Rings, Centenary Edition | Published: 1991 | ISBN: 0395595118

Pictures By J.R.R. Tolkien | Published: 1984 | ISBN: 0395285232

Hall of Fame

Game 88 (1650) ends in Free Victory

Player (Sinda) report: Game 88 ends on turn 33 with a Free victory. The Corsairs and Easterlings went Evil. The Duns and Rhudaur went Free.

This was one of my favorite types of Middle Earth games. That is for two reasons. Firstly; It was a mage versus military game, which I find particularly interesting. The mages won this one when Elrond threw the One Ring into the pit at Mt. Doom. Secondly; I shows that old age and a bag of dirty tricks can still sometimes win against youth and ability.

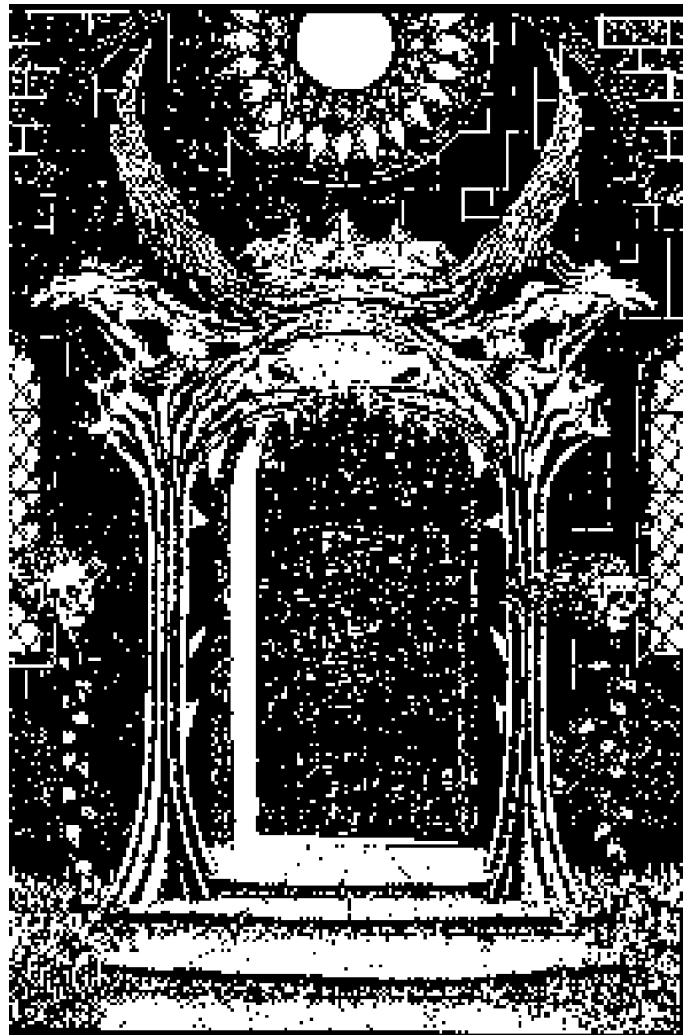
A salute to our noble DS foes. They played an excellent military game. The top three Free players were: Paul (The Shadow) Sacco, King of the Noldo; John (Croc Hunter) Strachan, Chief of the Rhudaur Hillmen and Tam (Nevada Gambler) Reeve, King of Arthedain. Good game guys!

Game 51 (1650) ends in DS Victory

Game 51 started with the rather unusual call for an experienced player to take on the position of Dragon Lord to shepherd a team of untried and untested DS "Newbies". The team was made of some who had no experience of Middle-earth Play by Mail; some returning to the game after some years away (when GSI (who are they?) ran the game); and some who had played the Spanish version of the game where English is not the usual language. The international flavour was further spiced by the addition of one of the neutral players (also a newbie) from Belarus!

This report is written from the perspective of the Dark Servants who, as the victors, have earned the right to write (or re-write) history! So there!!

As the call for an experienced player to fill the Dragon Lord and act as team co-ordinator had been made public, it was expected that the FP would devote their initial efforts to the elimination of this position, leaving the rest of us leaderless, and up a certain creek without the proverbial paddle. Our efforts concentrated on reducing this threat by concentrating on enemies in Rhovanion where forces from the IK, LR, DoL, and DrL were in evidence. The LR played a particularly good game, managing to put the Northmen on the defensive by placing armies which could threaten a number of population centres. The DrL also played a very aggressive early game, burying the Eothraim capital on turn 3. When everyone else swooped upon the Eothraim, the horse lords collapsed on Turn 7, surviving a little longer than their weaker neighbours the Woodmen who collapsed a turn earlier. The Easterlings (yes, another newbie), who was himself the victim of an unprovoked Dwarven attack, quickly joined the cause



allowing the DS to overrun the Northmen capital on Turn 7 and defeat the Dwarves armies who began to arrive piecemeal – far too little and far too late to be effective. (Well, they do have short legs and can't walk that fast!). By the end of the game, the Long Rider had swept the Iron Hills of any and all Dwarven presence.

This meant that the FK and DkLts, with some assistance from the IK and DoL were left to defend the Ithil Pass and Fortress Mordor. By Turn 2 Minas Ithil had fallen (a dramatised report of which has already been published in 'News from Bree') and the FK armies marched on to ensnarl a combined force of 12,000 NG and SG troops at Osgiliath on Turn 5 in any traffic warden's nightmare. A heavy defeat here meant that the FK could not adequately maintain the defence of the Ithil Pass and the Dk Lts reserve were called forward. This did not allow for sufficient strength to divert the counter-attack. A number of NG armies broke into Mordor supported by SG troops who defended Osgiliath from harrying raids from the IK and DoL. Barad Ungol was destroyed, two lucrative gold producing camps of the IK and one of the Dk Lts were destroyed, an IK town captured and another CL town due to fall before the game ended. A fine effort in co-ordinating agent action by both the LR (who alone kidnapped three FP characters) and the CL blunted the majority of the multiple attacks that were launched against the breached Fortress Mordor. Nevertheless, the damage was considerable.

Tolkien News

Serbian TV station broadcast 'bootleg' Lord of the Rings

A Serbian TV station is in trouble after allegedly screening a bootleg version of *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* videoed in a cinema. Angry fans who tuned in to the poor quality pirate version say their enjoyment was ruined. TV channel Enigma showed the copy of the film just weeks after its European premiere. Fan, Ivan Solic, 21, said: "I have been waiting for ages to see this film, and then it turns up on telly. I was going to take my girlfriend to see it, but she can't be bothered going now." The TV channel is likely to face legal action from the Association of Film Distributors of Yugoslavia and Yugoslav anti-pirate association.

Oscar Nominations

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has nominated *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* in six categories, including Best Picture, Art Direction, Sound Editing, Visual Effects, Film Editing and Sound.

TT Movie Success

As of February 3rd *The Two Towers* surpassed the enormous \$313 million gross in the USA taken by its predecessor, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, one year ago. The film continues to post strong numbers from week to week, and is still the number one film in Canada, where it has earned \$50 million more quickly than any other in history. In the UK the film has passed the £55 million (c\$90m) mark.

Beowulf Translation

The New York Sun followed up on confusion over reports of the "supposed discovery" of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Beowulf* translation by talking to the source, Wheaton professor Michael Drout, with interesting results. Most importantly for Lunch readers, Drout says that the Tolkien estate does not have a publisher lined up yet. Drout doesn't expect to have his work completed until this summer, so contrary to earlier stories, "There's almost no way this will be a 2003 publication." He and the estate are proposing the project as two books, with the prose translation and Tolkien's line-by-line comments in separate volumes. And Drout indicates the translation was long known to be among the Tolkien papers; it's the Tolkien essay lecture 'Beowulf and the Critics' that he discovered in the collection. I suspect that means we should look for this book in 2004, perhaps from a major university press.

In the south, things were well for the DS. The QA (a newbie postal player) had initiated an unprovoked attack against both Harad and the Corsairs on Turn 1! Diplomats from both nations bristled at this flagrant flouting of protocol by a member of the DS team and both seemed on the verge of declaring from the FP by Turn 3 unless efforts to control this particular loose canon were not implemented quickly and decisively. The DS announced that any aggressive move against the QA by Harad or the Corsairs would only be seen as an act in defence of their own national interests and not as an act of war against the DS. Den Tempesta decided to drop this position (this game wasn't for him) and the threat of a secondary conflict, which we fervently hoped would not entangle these two powerful neutral nations in the greater conflict (on the wrong side) was avoided. After a bad start, strong efforts in improving diplomatic relations from what had been a really bad start began. These finally resulted in the Corsairs declaration for the DS on Turn 8 with a combined invasion by both the Corsairs and Harad against SG on Turn 9 at a time when the pressure upon the interior of Mordor was most acute.

In the north the Witch King (a newbie) held off the mounting pressure from Arthedain and from Cardolan. Fumbled diplomacy on our part meant that Rhudaur (played by a very experienced player) declared from the Free on Turn 2 and all thoughts of any hope in Eriador quickly faded. However, Rhudaur's efforts turned towards the Dragon Lord (see above) and his armies were poised to capture/destroy Dol Guldhur on Turn 6 when it was suddenly announced that his nation (the first of the FP casualties (along with the Woodmen)) had collapsed!! Surely the agents of the CL and the DrL were not that effective in organising a fifth column within Rhudaur? Could it be that the Freeps had neglected their new found and quickly won ally? ("Act in haste, repent at leisure" my lord Broggha!) With this major threat negated, did the DS dare hope that the WK could hold out? As an isolated new player mistakes in the north were made. Angulion was defeated in a personal challenge by Glorfindel and the Pectoral was captured and used to assist the Noldor in creating gold producing population centres in the Blue Mountains. Finally, Murazor himself was assassinated on Turn 9, as the Ring of Impersonation had been collected by the FP and was being used to good effect. The FP bearer of the Ring of Wind was unable to withstand the storm into which he had stepped. The Cloud Lord snuffed out his particular candle at the same time. Maybe that was what plunged the FPs into darkness and defeat!

The game ended rather unexpectedly the day before our Turn 10 orders were due. We received a message from ME Games that so many FP nations had collapsed that it was not worth continuing the game! This spoke of some lack of co-ordination in the FP camp, some of which had been leaked to us. Neither the Harad, nor the Corsairs were tempted by the veiled threats and coercive tactics adopted by the FP during the very early game. This greatly assisted us in persuading them to join us – despite QA I's maverick manner.

It was hoped that processing of Turn 10 would allow for the capture of Dol Amorth by 3,400 Harad troops where only 100 SG troops had been left in defence. Pelargir would have been influenced away

by a combined CL/BS emissary team whilst another two SG population centres would have fallen to the continued incursions of the CL's cavalry and the Corsair invasion. Nevertheless, the IK, DoL, FK, and DrL all formed a "beggar's banquet"; each pleading for gold to stave off collapse. Not even the largesse of the CL, who had supported the DrL throughout, could meet this demand. At least one (if not more) of these unhappy quadruplets would definitely have gone on the next turn, whilst the WK fully expected to make his last stand at Carn Dum, anticipating a fall in military defeat. Money never seemed a problem for him after he took up the QA position on Turn 3!

Dramatis Personae

Witch King - Chris Mayse
Dragon Lord - Colin Forbes
Dog Lord - Simon Lumb
Cloud Lord - Sam Quier
Blind Sorcerer I - Colin Forbes
Blind Sorcerer II - Sam Quier
Ice King - Scott Landis
Quiet Avenger I - Den Tempesta
Quiet Avenger II - Chris Mayse
Fire King - Ian Doyle
Long Rider - Ricard Pitarque
Dark Lieutenants - Jordi B Covas
Corsairs - Tim Dvoskin
Easterlings - Dave Nicholas
Haradwaith - Rollin Robert

Lies, Damned Lies and Statistics

1st Place: Corsairs (1,867 points)
2nd Place: Haradwaith (1,817 points)
3rd Place: Easterlings (1,484 points)
Wooden Spoon: Witch King/Dragon Lord/Fire King (400 points)

Best of the Losers

1st Place: Noldo Elves (1,033); best challenger, emissary and most artifacts
2nd Place: Sinda Elves (1,000)

Who says it's not an Elven conspiracy?

Game 37 (1650) ends in DS Victory

In ME37 I played the Noldo Elves. The team was made of about 50% new players but there were good veterans in the positions of Dwarves, North Gondor and Eothraim and Woodmen. This was very good for the team as there were people in each theatre who could give advice and coordinate, and they did just that.

This game only lasted about 10 turns but the DS did not quit until turn 13. I think the key to our winning had little to do with strategy and mostly to do with communication. We recruited 4 or the 5 neutrals (corsairs never aligned) and the team kept in touch every turn. I got the PDF from every player every turn.

Turn 1 Din Ohtar showed up in the Eoplex and was killed in personal combat on turn 2, giving us all of the LR's agent artefacts. For the most part we/I lost the race for every top artefact. The key events were when Rhudar sided with the FP on turn 6, leading to the end of the WK by turn 8 and the clearing of the DrL from Mirkwood just after that. I do not recall the DS ever recruiting a Dragon. The Dwarves had 2 and I picked up on as well. The Easterling joined us about turn 6, or so and ran huge cavalry armies into the back side of Mordor. I am most proud of the fact I/ Noldo

Two Towers

Factoids

The problem with computers

When filming the battle of Helm's Deep the makers used a computer programme called Massive, where each person has its own "mind", making it far easier to generate huge battles, because each person can be allocated a "side", and will then react/fight accordingly, in a variety of different styles (depending on the circumstances they find themselves in), rather than having to create/program each army member individually. The first time they used this for the battle of Helm's Deep, the defenders of Helm's Deep ran away.

Barmy Army

To get the cheering and shouting for the Orcs at the battle of Helm's Deep, the producers recorded the crowd at a New Zealand/England cricket match.

Double-take

In Helm's Deep, when women and children retreat to the caves, look closely at the kids. They're the same actors as the Hobbit kids listening to Bilbo's story of the trolls at his birthday party in 'Fellowship' - in fact they're the children of director Peter Jackson.

Throwing stones

The first man to throw a stone at the orcs coming up the bridge in the Helms-Deep scene is director Peter Jackson.

In reverse

While one of the most accomplished horseback riders of the fellowship, Viggo was united with a horse who tended to kick into reverse gear in busy shots. As a result, much film was wasted re-taking scenes in which Aragorn backed right into the crowd he was trying to escape from.

Odd Contacts

Grima Wormtongue's eyes are not the same colour, because he has a light blue contact in his right eye, and no contact over his left eye, which is a different shade of blue. He and the costume designers just thought he looked weirder with only one contact in. His eyebrows have also been shaved off.

built a hidden city in the middle of Mordor. But none of this mattered as for the most part our armies were unopposed after turn 10.

The lesson of this game is communication, without it the DS didn't stand a chance. Every neutral said they hear from the DS on turn 1 and that was it.

Congratulations in particular for good play to Paul Quin (Eothram/South Gondor), John Phillips (Arthedain, Peter Basset (Dwarves). On the DS side, kudos to the Corsairs.

Game 34 (1650 Grudge) ends in FP Victory

Eoder, leader of the Northmen had reason to smile. He was on the way with the entire Northmen fleet to Buhr Waldmarh to celebrate with all the armies and leaders of the free people of Endor. Saurons forces had surrendered, his armies disarmed and scattered and the Ringwraiths fled. The war had been won... But the darkness was waiting... It would return again.

1650 grudge game 34 between the Danish Dynamite team and Team Guy Roppa where:

Free people:

Woodmen, Sinda, Duns: Tommy Sonne Larsen
Northmen, Eothraim, Dwaaaaarfs: Jeppe Skytte Spicker
Arthedain, Cardolan, Noldo: Per Bovbjerg
North Gondor, South Gondor, Corsairs: Christian Rasmussen

Dark servants:

Witch King, Cloud Lord: Guy Roppa
Dragon Lord, Rhudaur: Mike Bateman
Dog Lord, Long Rider: Michael Bisgaard
Blind Sorcerer, Fire King: Rene
Ice King: Nick Blanchard
Quiet Avenger: Ian Wood
Dark Lieutenants: Ulrik Bisgaard
Harad: Duncan Spalding

Turn 1-5: DS agents successfully disband a large part of Eo start armies. The entire Dog Lord cavalry and Long Riders eastern armies are defeated by NM armies only managing to reduce two towns (4015 and 4017) to camps and 4217 to town which Sinda threatens back after two turns on DS hands. NG takes the 2924 - 3024 and 2927 - 2928 bridges down early to be able to concentrate on Harad. And concentration on Harad there where. The combined forces of NG, SG and Corsairs attacked Harad managing to capture the entire Northern Harad. FP wins the artifact hunt by claiming Tinculin, Elenruth, E Mare Vardo, RoC, Collar of Might, Blue Ring and Gurthang with DS only getting RoW. Unfortunately the DS by luck manage to steal Elenruth turn 7 increasing the pace of them fielding curse mages.

Turn 6-10: DS manage to take the remains of North Harad back and take control of the area. A huge dwarven army marches west instead of east, saving Dol Guldur another 7 turns. A massive FP army are defeated at Dol Guldur turn 9 with the help of two dragons, the only time the DS really gets the advantages of dragons. Ulf Dilan the FP dragon slayer kills the first wrym, Klyaxar, turn 9. Khuzadrepá slays Ulf Dilan turn 10, delaying the FP dragon extermination with 4 turns.

Turn 11-15: The FP campaign is stopped in South Harad by a good playing Harad and QA. They actually turns the war and manage to take Heavens

of Umbra with the help of Lamthanc turn 12. Noldo agent Finarfin assassinates Goldwin Frec turn 11 at Lurg Gurzun, disbanding LR army, Emis takes 3822 turn 12. Dol Guldur falls to Sinda/Duns/NG turn 13 and Dragon Lords presumed backup of Obermarl is taken with Emis, presumably knocking DrL out. A well playing Art/Car captures 2006, Rhudaurs capital and slams a small force against Carn Dûm turn 13, knocking Rhudaur out and bankrupting WK. Corsairs dumps evil artefacts in the sea turn 13, among them The blue ring and Gurthang. Amroth takes over the dragon slaying. He fells Itangast turn 14 and Ando-Anca turn 15. 4000 Eothraim HC with 81 warmachines burns Morannon to the ground turn 15 and moves to Durthang. The Nazgûls surrender. The war is over.

Reasons why FP won

Good control of market (low prices)

Concentrating on few DS nation at a time

Won (curse) artifact hunt

0 economy. No gold reserves only when naming characters. Naming many characters when naming. Limits the DS steal gold possibilities.

Updated map, info on DS agents and curse mages each turn

Good cooperation, meeting for each turn and will to sacrifice for the good of the whole (free side :-)

Why DS lost

Doing insufficient damage with starting armies, especially around Rhun sea and on the plains

Not using dragons much

Poor cooperation?

Loosing battleground everywhere except in the south.

by Jeppe Skytte Spicker on behalf on the Team Danish Dynamite.

Game 83 (1650) ends in FP Victory

Amroth gazed out over the green cover of Mirkwood. Beneath him lay his homeland in peace, warmed by the rays of the rising sun. He was tired and a grave wound in his shoulder made him sit down on a boulder. His sword "Anguriel" was still in his clenched fist. The huge red body of the ancient Wrym known as "Smaug" lay motionless some distance away. It had taken almost an hour for the ancient serpents heart to stop beating after Amroth had driven "Anguriel" into his body. He looked back and up at the spires of the Misty Mountains. He smiled. It was about time to head back Cerin Amroth to compose a great epic song that could inspire generations to come, of the downfall of Sauron's minions and the freeing of Endor.....

Let me start this report out with the word.... "Incredible". For the first 10 turns, all of the FP team had thought or even directly said, that game 83 was a sure loss. Some of the reasons that people said this should be mentioned:

Turn 1 to 10: First of all. The team was more or less entirely made up of newbies, mostly people with less than 5 ended games behind them. Only the starting NG player was experienced (sorry guys if I overlooked anybody :-). Secondly, we completely and 100% failed *miserable* in controlling the market. The DS was playing us like a, yeah a....., erhh... whatever. The point is, that we saw prices at 7 for leather turn 4, and 10 for steel for something like turn 3 to 8. Turn 10, during winter where the prices:

Sell Prices: LE: 8 BR 14 ST 17 MI 222 FO 2 TI 15 MO 35.

This of course resulted in WAY to many DS armies running around and MANY of the DS MT/capital in the very early game improved to cities an no DS nation where under pressure.

Ten things you always wanted to know ...

1. JRR Tolkien was born on 3rd January, 1892 in Bloemfontein, South Africa. He moved to England with his mother when he was three years old.
2. His father died when he was four, and his mother when he was 12. The orphaned Tolkien and his brother went to live with their Aunt in Birmingham.
3. Tolkien served in the army during the First World War, and suffered shell shock afterwards.
4. His first academic teaching job was at the University of Leeds, where he was a reader, and later a Professor of English Language.
5. Tolkien was great friends with C.S. Lewis, the author of the Narnia novels.
6. Lewis was one of a number of friends who read the manuscript of *The Lord of the Rings* as it was written, and made helpful comments to Tolkien. This group became known as the Inklings.
7. Publishers Allen and Unwin turned down the book at first. Only after Tolkien had suffered several more rejections did one of the Unwin family take another look at it, and this time agree to publish it.
8. The first two parts, *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Two Towers*, were published together in 1954. The final part, *The Return of the King*, arrived in the shops a year later.
9. The 'prequel', *The Silmarillion*, which tells the ancient history and legend of Middle-earth, was published posthumously in 1977, four years after Tolkien's death.
10. The filming of all three parts of *The Lord of the Rings* in New Zealand took 15 months, cost \$300 million, and required the services of 15,000 extras playing the parts of Orcs, goblins and other creatures.

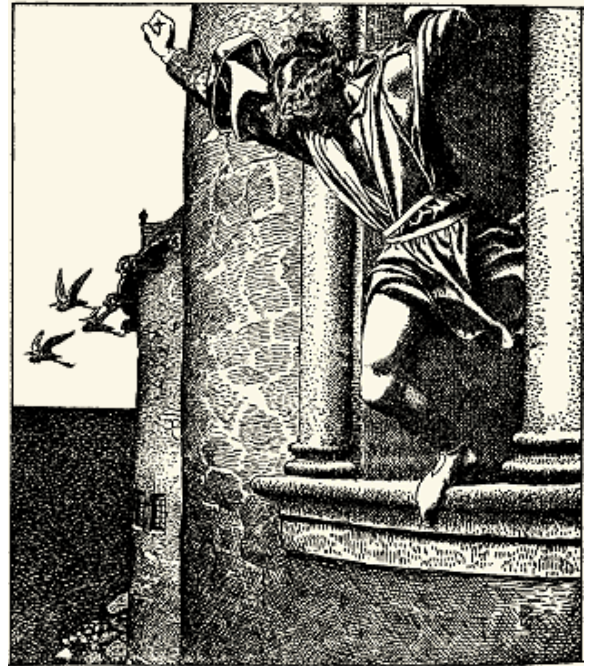
Send in your questions

Do you have any questions about Tolkien or his works? Send them in to News from Bree and we'll try to answer them!

Thirdly, we were beaten by the DS in the artefact race, only managed to pick up RoC (Collected by a still neutral Duns :-). Lastly, the FP came off start with some very lame moves (that newbies makes, I guess :-). The great opening move came from the Sinda (that would be myself). Othar sailed the entire southern navy to 3024 and challenge commander Baltab of the IK. Stupid move. Of course did IK have Khathog in that army with all his starting artefacts. Result: Sinda lost Othar, 1400 troops, 20 WS and 10 transports :-/ At the same time, we were on the back foot at Ilithid pass. NG had lost 3024, 3124 and 3028 turn 4 to the starting armies of IK, FK and CL. Northmen also had a very poor start (extra poor because the NM player SS'ed a couple of times) with a pretty severe ass whooping from LR and DogL. NM was close to knockout around turn 5-7. But the position was taken over by a good playing Arthedain, who turned the boat around for the Northmen nation and managed to get it back on track (well at least alive). At the same time, we managed to screw up just about all good relations with the neutral. The team suggested that somebody else than me handled dialog with the Dunderlings after our mail correspondence headed into a direct path to certain war (Eothraim and myself suggested that we just started invading the "sucker" for his insults :-). But for some strange reason, Duns DID declare free turn 6 (he mentioned something about the game being over turn 10 if he didn't :-) and in the Duns, the FP got a very experienced player and an important agent nation. Not to mention our first neutral. We were pretty certain from an early start that Rhudaur would go DS and so he did turn 4. Harad appeared to go free around turn 4-5, but we kind of lost contact with him and Corsairs approached us and told that he would like to go free and if we did not get Easterlings too, the game was beyond as good as lost. But we did. I don't know if this was out of pity or a feeling that their money would have been lost otherwise.

Turn 11 to 20: The tides in game 83 started from this point on to change. Of bad things should be mentioned, Arthedain lost Argeleb in an overrun by WK (manage to salvage his artefacts though). Good stuff: Tharudan assassinated Khamul and sabotaged the keeps at Dol Guldur and Morannon. Noldo and Sinda agents disbanded a large (HC ?) LR army assembling @ 3822 and killed two 60+ mages. (Had swapped this with DrL for Obermarl) The combined forces of Arthedain, Cardolan, WM and dwarfs managed to knockout Rhudaur and cut WK down to one MT @ 2004. WK wasn't knocked out until around turn 33. I guess this was the result of a well playing WK. Something strange happen in the late tens. For some reason, the dwarf, NG and the WM player decided to drop just when things were looking good. The were taken over by Noldo, Cardolan and Sinda. The first DS nation to leave us was Dragon Lord turn 16. Easterlings emis took Obermarl and with no backup DrL was out. This was the first evidence to us that the DS did not seem very cooperative or helpful to each other, since some of the other DS nations had plenty of backups. Harad and Rhudaur followed DrL into oblivion turn 18.

Turn 21 to 36: The DS good economy started to show again. DogL managed to move all over Rhovania and capture almost everything. His armies were finally stopped at Eoplex and his nation collapsed



upon itself. To us it seemed he had stretched to long. Dog Lord collapsed turn 25. After this it was 13 against 8 so it was over a matter of time. DrLt turn 31 and WK turn 33. I guess FK and IK were dead too turn 36, the turn of the end of game 83. Amroth hadn't actually killed a dragon yet at turn 36, but it is CERTAIN he would have if the game hadn't ended

Game 83 ended with a full FP team of thirteen players but not all nations were in good shape all along. NM never really fully recovered from its mistreatment in the start until Arthedain took it over. Eothraim were pretty hard pressed, first by DogL, later by FK emissaries. Easterling were also viciously attacked by BS and CL, the later succeeding in taking 4133 turn 30. But the FP nation who took the most heat must have been Corsairs. From a mighty empire including Harad's old lands and armies filling three pages in his pdf, Corsairs were by the combined effort of a good playing QA and IK knocked back to three MT and 3 characters when things were worst (turn 33-ish). QA were so dedicated in gnawing Corsair's behind that it did not come as a surprise when a ScoChar at 3034 revealed the QA commander "Zpank Klintzass" J

Game 83 FP team

Northmen/Arthedain: Carl Birch
Eothraim: Christian Rasmussen
Cardolan/North Gondor: Peter Clinch
South Gondor: David Everett
Dwarfs/Noldo: Simon Dunsterville
Sinda/Woodmen: Jeppe Skytte Spicker
Corsairs: Clint Oldridge
Dunlendings: Paul Sacco
Easterlings: Ian Harris

I am pretty convinced that the main thing that won game 83 was team play. During this 1½ game 5064 mails were sent via the FP83 mail group. All members were always ready to help with money, armies, characters etc, and all players communicated.

I probably forgot lots of stuff and legendary moves made by my teammates. I just want to finish this summary with thanks to friend and foe in game 83. Thank you for making this, my second game of MEPBM, a great, memorable one.

Jeppe Skytte Spicker Sinda/Woodmen game 83

Gandalf Speaks

Sir Ian McKellen has once again updated his e-book (his replies to fan mail) and here are some of the questions and answers...

Q: I am currently watching LOTR fellowship for the 14th time. On the bridge of Khazad-Dum the music is the best piece of music ive heard ever. It brought a Huge grin to my face when Gandalf returns with The Riders of Rohan. Where the riders all people or where they Digital?

A: Yes I think I may have smiled as Gandalf stages his various returns to the fray. I think the bulk of the riders were digital although I remember quite a few of us on the Helm's Deep set.

Q: We are two ladies from Chicago, Illinois and we saw you in LOTR and thought you were great. We are also X-men fans, you and Patrick Stewart make the perfect team. Will we be seeing any future LOTR conventions that you will be attending? This is a weird question, but do you drive your own car? Cate asks because usually famous people have a driver.

A: I enjoyed ComicCon in San Diego a couple of seasons back . No plans for a return visit. Returning to London after a few months away I have sold my car and am seeing how public transport and taxis manage these days. I have walked the half hour to and from rehearsals for Dance of Death each day this week. But I am not averse to being driven by a chauffeur, one of the perks of acting in movies.

Q: Were there any moments as an actor, when you had difficulty connecting with Gandalf? Any scene that perhaps was particularly challenging?

A: I don't recall a scene I didn't understand emotionally but some of the action episodes were daunting because of the mix of special effects and acting. e.g. the fight at the Orthanc tower between the two wizards.

Q: Are you at all concerned about the suitability of the Trilogy for children? The gruesome Uruk-Hai and the Balrog gave the film its classification. Would you have preferred the film to be less violent so that children could watch as well.

A: Considering the screeches and wailing that can emanate from young theatregoers thrilled by a Christmas pantomime in UK (which may feature, ogres, giants, wicked step-mothers and the like), it is surprising that other very young children can so relish the violence and arching story of war which is at the heart of Lord of the Rings. I have met five year olds who have seen both films over and over. I wonder, though, how they were smuggled past the ticket-taker?

Battle of the Five Armies

Head to Head: Part 2

by Jeffery Dobberpuhl & Scott Moyes

Turn 2 - First blood

Jeffery A Dobberpuhl: Dark Servants - This game is intense. The designers have done a great job of putting both sides into a cat and mouse environment. But since the cats are 900-strong cavalry armies and the mouse is a 3000-strong dwarf army, this is nail-biting stuff.

My plan of keeping my armies together is starting to unravel as the enemy begins to block some of my movements. None-the-less, I am feeling more 'together' than I gather my foe is. This last turn, I did not lose a single army and crushed a couple of my foes. Plus, I managed to wipe out some of my enemies' population centers. That has to hurt! The bad news for me is that I have 1200 elves sitting at Sarn Goriwing, and they don't look happy. The worse news is that the dwarf 3000 strong heavy foot army decided to go north. I have 400 steel clad lads and a major town facing this foe. It looks grim.

Overall, though, I think I'm in better shape. I should wipe out almost all of the major elf starting population centers this turn and next. This will mean very little elvish economy available to support elf warriors. My next foe will definitely be the northmen. *The Goblins:* The Goblins' battle report was awesome! Page after page of information detailed all the glory of my major victories over my foes. It was really fun to read through and see the turns I worked on so hard turn into stories. At least three enemy armies were destroyed.

This turn, I focused on consolidating my forces. In the north, I took all my extra commanders and put them in population centers to hire more armies. I need to take down that Dwarf juggernaut! Then, I moved armies, even though they didn't have lots of troops, into the path of the dwarves. With luck, I will block the dwarf army and give me more recruiting time. In the south, I found a path open to an unguarded Northmen Major Town. Goblins love to pillage, so I gave the orders to charge in. I will have to wait and see if the Northmen can stop me!

The Warg Riders: The Warg Riders are doing great! The Necromancer easily defeated his foe and now stands poised to capture my first elvish town. I decided on capturing instead of destroying because I really believe I can hold the town. Next turn, I will move next door and try to capture or destroy another town. This will leave just the hidden elvish capital at 2908.

I discovered that Bilbo moved to the south part of the map, near 2913. I don't know what this move is about. I know he was at 3207 last turn because I got a message saying gold was stolen and that li'l thief is my number one suspect! Gollum managed to haul off a tidy sum of gold and will move to 2912 to pilfer what he can next turn. Further, I decided to use my best character tracking spell, *locate character true*, to see if I can pinpoint Bilbo next turn.

As to Sarn Goriwing, I'm wondering if it was worth trading population centers with the elves. I'm guessing it was because I have more population centers than the pointy ears do. Anyways, I moved two armies into the hex. Hopefully I will catch and destroy that elf army!

Scott Moyes: Free Peoples - "How bad is it, Burglar?" Thorin Oakenshield said behind his long beard which was soaked with small droplets of ale.

"Again, as last time, most of what you wanted to happen, happened. First the bad news: the Elves were mauled along the Northern Road in both places. The Necromancer then moved to the town of Kelume. This, too, shouldn't stop him. It's his next move that is going to be the decisive one. Smart money is that

he'll move east to the town of Tuilindo, but then again he could move either southwest to the Warg Rider village, or worse yet, southeast to the Elven camp of Ere Linden. After destroying Hen Gwerion, Captain Krunak of the Warg Riders went northwest to the Elven camp of Tol Pantir. The failure to block this army by the Lords Thranduil and Ohtar is dire beyond belief."

The Elven leaders hung their heads as the thought of their slaughtered people hung before their eyes. The evil ones didn't take prisoners.

Bilbo went on, "Commander Camthalion and his 800 Heavy Infantry finally arrived at Buhr Edhel, but there isn't a Buhr Edhel anymore. 400 Trolls under the Goblin leader Angulion burned it to the ground, there were no survivors."

Rage, and some tears were evident on the Northmen leaders. They had friends at Buhr Edhel: well, no longer.

"But that's not all. The Northmen armies under Swiftwulf and Girion II were manhandled by two Goblin armies under Duran and Ogrod and a Warg Rider army under Rashkuk. It wasn't even close, their numbers were too great. Now the Dwarven army commander Bombar will meet the Goblin Captain Ogrod and the Warg Rider Commander Rashkuk at the same place. Regent Duran moved his army southeast and is directly east of us. Poor Fili is there with only 300 Heavy Infantry: he'll be crushed."

Thorin looked at the map. He could see that the evil ones were slowly surrounding them. He knew that the riches of The Lonely Mountain were what they were after, and of course, they only lived to kill. He wondered how the creator of those creatures could live with himself, knowing he forgot to give them a conscience. Then he thought again, and he knew Sauron made them, and the Dark Lord hasn't ever had a conscience.

"Well, we do have Regent Dain II and his 3000 Heavy Infantry army at the Goblin Major Town of Lag Agul. But, your move was guessed. And the Goblins have two small armies under Angulion and Rogrog there. My guess is that they're both 400 Trolls apiece." Bilbo wound up his brief.

Thorin then stood up and walked to the front of the assembled leaders. "There are more evil ones than ants on a hill, but we have to continue to battle as best we can. The looks on your faces tell me that we should bring Dain south, but that is the advice of desperation."

"Well, Thorin, that's all and good. But the Elves are desperate! It's our people the evil ones are slaughtering. The Dwarves are safe to the east in the Iron Hills. Your women and children aren't the ones being murdered, it's ours," the Elven leader stood and screamed at Thorin.

Thorin didn't flinch, he stood taller (which is quite a feat for a Dwarf) and spoke clearly and in a reasonable tone, "Hear me, it is not for lack of compassion that I speak of the other way to do battle with them. You see, I have been battling these Goblins and Warg Riders for a long time and I know how they work. The Goblins are the key, take out all their leaders and they will run like frightened children. Dain is poised to do just that. I propose that he take Lag Agul and then instead of moving south, he move northwest to the Goblin Major Town of Valaina. Dain should take both easily. We have Oin, who's already at Lag Agul, hire an army and this one will move south. After Dain takes Valaina, he then moves again northwest to the Goblin capital of Yalumea. If, and I repeat, *if* Dain can do this, the Goblins will be no more in the north. Bombar will move to Valaina and he will hire an army there. Gloin is at Iron Hold and he's going to be moving 1200 Dwarven Heavy Infantry as fast as he can to aid us. I only hope he'll be in time. Meanwhile, we move the defeated army commanders of both the Elves

contacting the mepbm office

UK: Office A, 340 North Road,
Cardiff, Wales, CF14 3BP

TL: 029 20913359

[dial code 011 44 2920 for US players.
10am-6.30pm UK time (BST - British
Standard Time); 5am-1.30pm (EST)]

FAX: 029 20625532

EM: me@middleearthgames.com

USA: PO Box 280, Medford, OR
97501-0019, USA

Phone & Fax: 541-772-7872 (10-
5pm weekdays) (fax24hrs)

AUSTRALIA:

PBM Enterprises, PO Box 278,
Emerald Victoria, Australia 3782
Phone & Fax: +61 3 5968-5652

WEBSITES

www.middleearthgames.com
www.harlequingames.com

EMAIL LIST

Check out the websites (above) for
more information.



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.

Note that CC payments are accepted in the following currencies: UK£, US\$ & AU\$ as well as some other currencies.



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!

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

and Northmen south to hire more armies. With the distance the Warg Riders have to travel, and Dain taking the Goblin recruiting centers away, we just might survive. Remember, this is for my life. too."

All the leaders looked around. Clearly they didn't like gambling with their people, but they could see the logic behind it. They all nodded at Thorin...

Turn 3 - Dire straits

Jeffery A Dobberpuhl: Dark Servants - I'm not sure, but I think my plan is working! So far, I have only lost two major towns, and I believe the elves are down to just their capital. In the meantime, I'm poised to take out two Northmen major towns in the next turn or two.

The scenario sure puts you right in the action. It's fun to maneuver your armies back and forth over the different terrains. Depending on the army you have, foot or cavalry, and depending on what the terrain is you are moving in, you get varying amounts of movement per turn. This map has a *lot* of different terrains to play with: mountains, roads, plains, rivers, forests, hills and combinations thereof. As it is, the Elves managed to have one of their biggest armies escape me down off a mountain, leaving me to face just their smaller army.

The Goblins: The Goblins have really gotten into an interesting position. They are pinning an enormous dwarf army up in a mountain chain. I am rotating commanders from the front lines to the rearward recruiting centers, hiring more armies, and throwing them into the mix. In the meantime, my opponent is doing great at sending smaller blocking armies at me, keeping me from putting my full strength on the dwarf army.

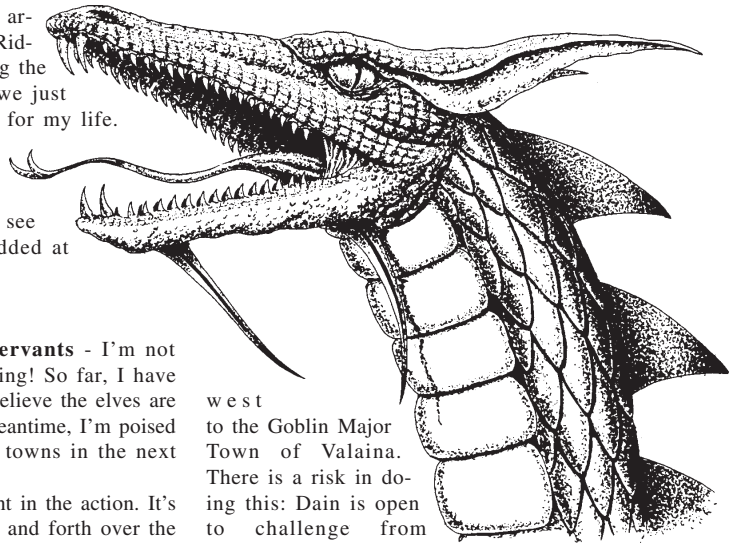
The Warg Riders: My continued tracking on Bilbo appears to have paid off! I now have Gollum in the same hex as Bilbo, and Gollum will be trying to steal his ring back. "My Preciousssssssss ..." I hissed as I typed *that* order!

In the meantime, the Necromancer is going to try to burn the last elf town outside of the capital, then move back to his lair for more troops!

I did note that the Wargs are running out of money. This means I *have* to start burning off more troops or capturing more enemy territory. If you don't have enough money to pay your nation's expenses, you lose the game via bankruptcy!

This is a great, nail-biting game. It's still *very* early and I have no idea how it will turn out.

Scott Moyes: Free Peoples - "Well, the Dwarves are now blooded, and things are falling in place. Although not quite as well as hoped. Bilbo, you were right, the Necromancer did go to Tuilindo," Thorin said as he went through the reports. "Dain did take Lag Agul but the Goblins rushed another small army there, so Dain will have to fight, but this time he'll move immediately northwest. He'll do this because if he plays it safe, the Goblins could wear his army down and our goal of taking out the Goblins will go by the wayside. By the way, that has got to be their plan. Also, to take as many of our population centers as they can and hope that we go bankrupt. I feel that if they can take out all of our well trained veterans, then they'll march on the Lonely Mountain. It's a good plan, but they can't know our resolve. But they can see our general plan, especially with Dain ignoring our southern plight and moving on the offensive. Now, if the Elven agents can sabotage the fortifications at Yalumea and Thlach, the armies will have an easier time taking those Major Towns. Bilbo, take a break, I'll start with the Dwarves and give a general outlook of what happened and what our plans are. First, Regent Dain is at the town of Lag Agul along with Regent Bulrakur of the Goblins with a small army, Dain will crush this army, but as I said earlier, he'll move north-



west

to the Goblin Major
Town of Valaina.

There is a risk in doing this: Dain is open to challenge from

Bulrakur, and even so,

Dain is no pushover and should win. Oin is also there and he'll round up an army to hold for enough time to get around 1000 Dwarven Heavy Infantry and then he'll move south. Fili is moving northwest of Lag Agul to Valaina to begin getting ready for Dain. Hero Gloin is marching quickly west with 1200 Dwarven Heavy Infantry. Captain Kili is recruiting at the town of Naugrim, but I believe a Warg Rider army is heading towards the Iron Hills and Kili will move to intercept. He'll only have 600 Heavy Infantry, but the army moving east has already been whittled down a bit. And of course, I have 300 Heavy Infantry here and I'll round up around a hundred more soon. And that is the Dwarven report."

It took awhile before the Elven leader came forward, he was going over the reports from the Elven scouts and the maps laid about. Finally he said, "The Elves didn't fare as well. Even though Regent Thranduil took Sarn Goriwin, the Warg Riders moved an army there, and it should be close. As you said earlier, Bilbo was right; the Necromancer is at the Elven town of Tuilindo, it also will fall. How many Elven lives must be lost, Thorin, before you see that offense is not good unless you also have a strong defense? Anyway, Commander Camthalion is again on the Northern Road with 800 Elven Heavy Infantry and he faces two Goblin armies, a small one under Captain Anglach and a large army under Commander Gashbuz. Lord Legolas is at the Elven Camp of Tol Pantir with 800 Elven Heavy Infantry and he'll move northeast to the Northmen village of Buhr Gasug. Lord Ohtar is at the Elven Camp of Erelinden with 568 Heavy Infantry and he'll move northeast past Tuilindo, hopefully catching up with the Necromancer. Argaldor will hire another army at Crug Abarr and Lindal will attempt to sabotage the fortifications at Yalumea, although the latter is a very risky mission for Lindal. He isn't as well trained as he should be for this mission."

"No one is ready for this war, my lord Elf," Thorin said quickly.

The Northmen representative moved to the front of the spacious hall and began his summary. "Not much happened. Regent Bard, with 800 Heavy Infantry is at the Elven Camp of Tol Pantir with Lord Legolas and also will move to the northeast. Hero Koldana is at the Northmen Camp of Amon Gastal with 215 Heavy Cavalry and 400 Heavy Infantry and also will move northeast. These two armies are with the Elves in trying to trap the Warg Riders' starting armies. Beorn will hire an army at Esgaroth and Girion will hire an army at Nuath. The only plus for the Northmen is trade hasn't been interrupted yet. This is a facet of this campaign that we need to continue to exploit. We need to keep the market saturated with our goods so that the Evil ones can't make enough money to support their armies."

The representatives from the three nations stood, looked at each other, nodded and began drafting the necessary orders.

This article first appeared in Flagship issue 101 and is reproduced here by permission. (www.pbmgames.com)

Building a Healthy Economy: Part 2

by Marc Pinsonneault

How Much Gets Produced?

Rule 1: Population centers at the start of the game produce significantly more resources than those created during the game.

Rule 2: The production algorithm appears to be very simple.

I computed the averages and looked at the ranges of production for the different resources in the different terrain types. For all resources

both the average production and the range of values were different in

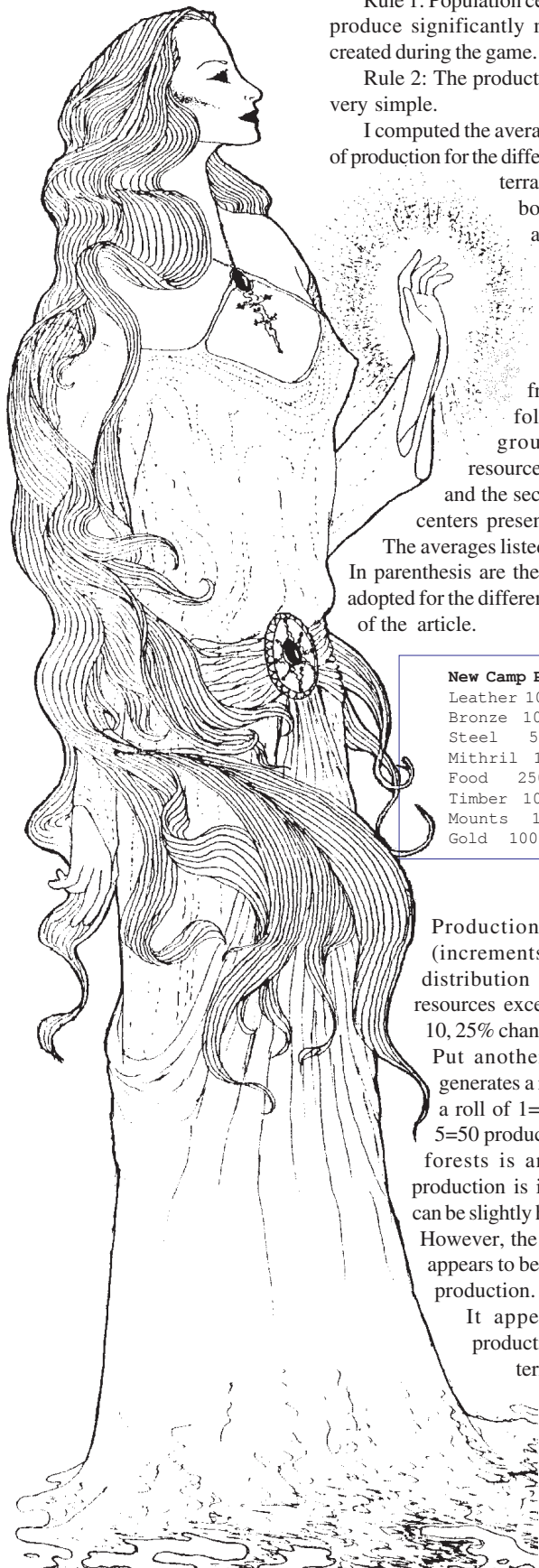
game start population centers than in newly created population centers.

Resource production from camps falls within the following ranges. The first

group of numbers for each resource is for newly created camps and the second group is for population centers present at the start of the game.

The averages listed are across all terrain types.

In parenthesis are the average production values adopted for the different resources in the remainder of the article.



New Camp Production		Game Start Production	
Leather	100 - 400 Avg. 254 (250)	100 - 550 Avg. 361	
Bronze	100 - 300 Avg. 205 (200)	100 - 470 Avg. 255	
Steel	50 - 150 Avg. 101 (100)	50 - 330 Avg. 165	
Mithril	10 - 30 Avg. 17.8 (17.5)	10 - 50 Avg. 33	
Food	250 - 1250 Avg. 748 (750)	250 - 2610 Avg. 1180	
Timber	100 - 400 Avg. 251 (250)	100 - 720 Avg. 356	
Mounts	10 - 50 Avg. 29.2 (30)	10 - 130 Avg. 63	
Gold	1000 - 2000 Avg. 1520 (1500)	1500 - 3800 Avg. 2372	

Production is in increments of 10 (increments of 100 for gold). The distribution appears to be flat for all resources except mithril (50% chance of 10, 25% chance of 20, 25% chance of 30).

Put another way: for mounts DGE generates a random number from 1 to 5; a roll of 1=10, 2=20, 3=30, 4=40, and 5=50 production. Special production in forests is an exception. Even gold production is in increments of 10, and it can be slightly higher than the above ranges. However, the average special production appears to be close to the average normal production.

It appears that the amount of production does not depend on the terrain type; the average food

productions in newly created forest, hills/rough, and plains camps, for example, are 730, 748, and 765 respectively; statistically identical.

Game start

population centers have higher production with a wider range. Note in particular the gold production, which not only has a higher average but also a higher minimum.

Climate Zones

Your actual production will be less (in some cases much less) than the amounts listed above. Some of this will be because your population centers are larger than camps, but the most important reason is climate. There is a superb Mouth of Sauron article on climate in ME PBM by Brian Mason (issue#35, available on the Internet). I will rely on their basic work and fill in the climate boundaries more accurately with the data I have on hand. I have chosen food and gold production as representative resources and show the minimum, average, and maximum production for each.

Zone I (Severe tundra)

Polar/Polar/Polar/Polar
10%/10%/10% (soft goods)
30%/30%/30% (metals)
Food : 75/75/75
Gold: 450/450/450

All except mountains: hex rows 01 - 03

Mountains: 0703, Misty Mountains from hex row 03 to 2307/2407.

Zone II (Tundra)

Severe/Cold/Cool/Cold
20%/40%/80% (soft goods)
40%/65%/100% (metals)
Food: 150/300/600
Gold: 600/975/1500

All except mountains: below zone I through hex row 05

west of the Misty Mountains (0405-2105) and hex rows 07 east of the Misty Mountains (2507-4407).
Mountains: 0604, 0605, 0606, 3107, 2809, 4215; Misty Mountains 2308/2408 through 2019, 2219; eastern White Mountains, 1923 to 2824.

Zone III (Cold Continental)

Cold/Cool/Mild/Cool
30%/70%/90% (soft goods)
60%/90%/100% (metals)
Food: 225/525/675
Gold: 900/1350/1500

All except mountains: west of Misty Mountains below zone II through 0807-1007, 1008-1608, 1709-2109, 2110, 2111; east of Misty Mountains below zone II through 2410-4410. Mountains: Blue Mountains, hexes 0607-0813; western White Mountains, 1324 to 1822, all Mordor mountains except Barad-dur(3423), southeastern mountains 4434 - 4436.

Zone IV (Continental)

Cold/Mild/Warm/Mild
30%/77.5%/100% (soft goods)
60%/90%/100% (metals)
Food: 225/581/750
Gold 900/1350/1500

All: East of Misty Mountains below Zone III to north

News from MEPBM Games

UPDATE TO ACCOUNTS With each turn you should now receive in the main body of the email a list of your last 10 transactions with us. This should enable you to keep a track of any charges made to your account and get back to us should there be a problem. Also we are now able to send out at the end of each day an email informing you when we have added funds to your account and a warning should your account be low.

RULEBOOK 1st draft is nearly done on this. We're looking to upgrade the rulebook. Is there anyone out there that is interested in contributing to this project? We're hoping to help new players into the game with examples of orders, some tactical advise and basic economy, army, character, Pop Centre management. Feel free to get in touch if you feel you are able to help here or just want to know more. We've got permission to use appropriate quotes from "the Lord of the Rings" and "the Hobbit". Around 3 or 4 paragraphs in length, giving a reference (book and chapter). Feel free to send in your favourite quotes and we can add them into the rulebook. Note NOT the other books only LotR and tH. We have a fair bit of work done for this now - anyone else want to contribute?

US GENCON

We're very likely to be turning up and having a stall at US Gen Con this year. Myself and Stu should be the people there, but we could really do with a couple of helpers so if you feel that you might be suitable for this get in touch and we can organise a deal for you. :-)
Dates are 4days around the w/end of 20th July.

FTF WEEKEND IN JUNE

Okay we're making provisional plans for the FTF sometime in June in the UK. For those interested please tell me when you are free (more choices the better). W/end June dates are: 1st (Sun), 8th, 15th (Fathers Day if that is relevant), 22th, 29th

Please put in order the dates that are most available to you. 3 day event - (ie Start Friday afternoon). Usual cut rates, with a deposit in the coming months (I'll sort that out when I know dates and numbers).

Zone	Leather	Bronze	Steel	Mithril	Food	Timber	Mounts	Gold
I	25/ 25	60/ 60	30/ 30	5/5	75/ 75	25/ 25	3/ 3	450/ 450
II	50/100	80/130	40/ 65	7/11	150/300	50/100	6/ 6	600/ 975
III	75/175	120/180	60/ 90	10/16	225/525	75/175	9/21	900/1350
IV	75/194	120/180	60/ 90	-/-	225/583	75/194	9/23	900/1350
V	225/225	200/200	100/100	-/-	675/675	225/225	27/27	1500/1500
VI	225/231	200/200	100/100	-/-	675/694	225/231	27/28	1500/1500
VII	200/231	160/190	80/ 95	-/-	600/694	200/231	24/28	1200/1425
VIII	200/200	160/160	80/ 80	14/14	600/600	200/200	24/24	1200/1200
IX	250/250	200/200	100/100	-/-	750/750	250/250	30/30	1500/1500

Summary table of minimum/average production in different climate zones.

of the White Mountains, across the plains of Rhovannion (to 2120-2720, 2922, 3021, 3020, 3119-3919, 3918-4418.)

Zone V (Mild Continental)

Mild/Mild/Mild/Mild

90%/90%/90% (soft goods)

100%/100%/100% (metals)

Food: 675/675/675

Gold 1500/1500/1500

All: West of Blue Mountains, hex rows 06-09; west of Misty Mountains below zone III through to the rows immediately above the White Mountains and west of the gap of Rohan (1324/1423, 1422-1822, 1921, 1920-2020, 2119).

Zone VI (Warm Continental)

Mild/Mild/Warm/Mild

90%/92.5%/100% (soft goods)

100%/100%/100% (metals)

Food: 675/675/675

Gold 1500/1500/1500

All: Below Zone IV through the Anduin river valley from 2421-2721 through 2925-3025.

Zone VI (Subtropical)

Mild/Warm/Hot/Warm

80%/92.5%/100% (soft goods)

80%/95%/100% (metals)

Food 600/694/750

Gold 1200/1425/1500

All: South of White Mountains and west of Mordor, through Corsair region. Below White Mountains and Zone V through 2439-2436, 2535-3235, 3234, 3333, 3332-3432, 3531-3631.

Zone VII (Desert)

Hot/Hot/Hot/Hot

80%/80%/80% (soft goods)

80%/80%/80% (metals)

Food 600/600/600

Gold 1200/1200/1200

All: South of other climate zones, includes interior Mordor and 3423.

Zone VIII (Special)

Warm/Warm/Warm/Warm

100%/100%/100% (soft goods)

100%/100%/100% (metals)

Food 750/750/750

Gold 1500/1500/1500

Special: hex 2209 and the

five Lorien hexes (2413,2513,2414,2314,2514.)

Climate is clearly very important for production. For most purposes you can divide the map into four climate bands: the frozen north (I and II), the zones with low winter production (III and IV), the high-production zones (V, VI, VII, IX) and the hot desert (VIII). The north (zones I and II) is virtually useless for soft goods production and has only mediocre (zone II) to poor (zone I) metal production. Zones III and IV have good three-season metal and soft good production, but (especially for soft goods) experience a sharp production drop in the winter that you should be prepared for. Zones V, VI, VII, and IX are the best overall. Zone VIII produces lower resources than the above, but not by a large factor; furthermore, the stable winter production is an asset for dark servant players who are otherwise badly affected by winter.

Final Notes

There is little data here on desert production, and some input on that would be very useful. If anyone has any climate information that contradicts what I have here I'd appreciate it so that I can correct the info. Finally, this would not have been possible without a lot of pdf files from allies and foes in game 87, along with several others who generously shared their game data. Marcus Chesnut, Joe Mertz, and Greg shared data from the recently ended game 90. Larry Aue, David Chapin, Rick Ghan, Olaf Hesebek, Zack Lukjan, David Novak, Ralph O'Connor, Ben Shushan, Jonathan Shushan, Steve Smith, Brett Spangler, Phil Swiderski, Jason Vafiades, Ken Wickes, Joe Williams, and Tom Woerstman gave data from game 87. I also cribbed some info from teammates in games 85 and 88, notably Michael Lazar, Joe, and Greg; Nancy Farrier and Jeff Dobberpuhl responded from the net.

