

News from Bree

MEPBM Newsletter: Issue 23, June '03

"Strange as News
from Bree..."

The Lord of the Rings, chapter 9

Victory Points

Meaningful or Meaningless?

by Gary Aswegan

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News from Bree Riddle
Competition - win prizes!

One of the very first things you see on a Middle-Earth Play-By-Mail turn are the total Victory Points (VPs) your nation has accumulated in the game. Most players interested in knowing how well they are doing in an active game look at this number and consider a score between 1100 and 1400 to be doing well. However, there is more to be gained looking at these numbers.

Setting aside individual Victory Conditions, as they provide no active game information, I asked myself do VPs provide any valuable information about the opposition? Once I looked at what VPs represent I had my answer. VPs are derived from four categories: Population Centers (Pops), Armies, Characters (CHARs) and Wealth (GOLD).

Your total is your individual standings in each of the four categories, as compared to all other nations. At times your total score is easily broken down into the four categories. For example, if you have 400, 500, 525, 550, 575, 633, or 667 Victory Points there is only one combination of numbers in the 4 categories to get that score. (all using 100 in 3 of the 4 categories) Below is an example of getting categorical points in place:

With 633 VPs, you are running 5th (333 points) in one of the 4 categories and 11th or worse in the other three.

To determine where you are running 5th you must look at the VPs of your team and compare. Using the process of elimination, find out how well you are doing compared to the rest of your team in the four categories. Is there one or more categories you

rank 5th or better? If so, you may have just found the category that yields the 333 points.

Sometimes making a best guess based on the information at hand is all you can do, however, with practice and comparing VPs turn after turn you may eliminate most of the guesswork. The following is this writers' best information on how VPs are assigned to

the four categories:

Gold = Current gold reserve taken from the Miscellaneous information on your turn sheet.

Characters = Total skill ranks of all CHARs: ignore Stealth, Health, and Challenge bonus factors. (Character support cost may be substituted as this is 20x the skill point total)

Pop Centers = Assign a value from 1-5, camp being lowest (1), and city the highest (5). Then multiply each pop's loyalty by this factor and add up the total for all Pops.

Army = This is the most difficult category to score. The quickest solution is to use a combat simulation and compare all same-team armies. Do not use army support costs for an estimate of "army value." Army

Commander, climate, terrain type and presence of a population center are widely debated as likely factors figuring into the "army value" so try calculating an "army value" using these numbers as well as dropping them out. After all, it seems strange that something like where the army currently is factors into a value for VP consideration.

To determine the categorical breakdown for everyone on your team start with the easy VP scores like 400, 500, 525, 550 and 575. Determine which category is highest by comparing on-team scores, and note that any other players on your team doing worse in the lower categories should be scoring 100 in that category. In other words, if you can break down



etfeliche2003



Middle Earth
PBM Games

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.

FA: 1000

[Game 49]

2 week turnaround

5 positions available. Variant game with upto 2 nations per player. Rules at www.kendallweb.com/mepbm/3waygrudge.html or from keith@dendallweb.com

TA: 1650

[Game 91]

Two week turnaround

10 positions available

[Game 97]

Gunboat 2wk 10 players needed (2 nations each player). [30/5] - Sam will be playing.

TA: 2950

[Game 227]

2 week turnaround

18 nations available.

[Game 48]

2 week turnaround

20 nations available 1D 8N 3F and one to decide taken

BofA

[Game 107]

Two week turnaround

Beginners game: 2 experienced. (Get in touch if experienced for a special deal here - all the game for CHEAP!!!!!!!)

Face to Face Game

June 22 w/end (Fri mid-aft until Sunday) - 4 available. (Some players will no doubt double up but we want to keep that to a minimum).

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.

Contact MEPBM Games for the latest details!

someone with 500 VPs and see that they are 11th or worse place with 10,000 GOLD, 11,000 in CHARs and a 500 troop HI army you can determine that players with less gold, less CHAR upkeep expense and weaker troops score 100 in those categories. This especially helps with nations which scores points that don't give away any of the four possible VP scores. (For example, 1100)

Once you have a good idea of how your team breaks down in the 4 categories, you are able to identify some interesting bits of information. Say you are playing a Fourth Age game with 24 nations (one is un-played) and you have deduced what each players standing is in each of the four categories. You should see "gaps" in the top ten of each category. The "gaps" are the other (enemy) players.

What good is this information? Well say you discover that out of your 12 friendly nations you have seven of the top 10 spots under the army category including first through fifth place. Does

this give you any insight into what type of military defense you can expect? What about gold stores? If you are playing the Free Peoples you can usually expect to have a better economy, but how much better? Using VPs you can deduce, a range or a maximum gold possessed number, for what Dark Side nations have in the bank. Useful information if you are thinking of driving market prices down with mass sells just before a CHAR naming turn.

Most game strategies for TA and FA will become even more effective if VP information is studied, in fact some strategies could even be dictated by VP information, such as market manipulation or mass army assaults.

Whether looking for that information edge in a Fourth Age game or just merely checking on how much of an advantage getting 4 out of 5 neutrals gave one side, Victory Points should no longer just be seen as a number reflecting your progress, but as an added key to strategy initiation as well as a little peek into what the enemy is doing.



Gurthang: Good or Evil?

by John Choules (aka: JCC)

Gurthang – The Black Sword, was carried by Turin during the First Age of Middle Earth. As Gurthang pertains to Middle Earth Gaming, it is artifact #169 in 2950 and 1650 games. As artifacts in Middle Earth go, Gurthang is one of the most powerful. Rated as a battle artifact of +2,250, one of the four highest in the game. As if that isn't enough, it also gives access to the Spirit Mastery List.

I contend that Gurthang in Middle Earth Gaming should be a 'good' artifact not an evil artifact. The game data I have shows it as evil, however, when reading Unfinished Tales by J.R.R. Tolkien and the Silmarilion by the same man, it doesn't add up.

A little more history is needed here on Gurthang to help make my case. As I stated previously, Gurthang was carried during the first age by Turin, Son of Hurin. He was one of the Edain who lived in Beleriand. Turin, played a principal roll in the fall of the Elven City of Nargothrond. His father Hurin, played a principal roll in the fall of Gondolin.

Most of all about Turin is, the curse placed upon him by Morgoth! Hurin, had been captured in battle by Morgoth and was the only one who knew the way to Gondolin, the hidden elven city. Morgoth tried many ways to make Hurin reveal the location of Gondolin, but Hurin refused his efforts. Until finally Morgoth cursed the family of Hurin, saying: "Behold! The shadow of my thought shall lie upon them wherever they go, and my hate shall pursue them to the ends of the world."

I will not relay the whole of Hurin's and Turin's tales here but, suffice it to say that Morgoth's curse was very real. Turin became known as "fey" by the elves, as did his mother and sister. Their lives were short and fraught with hardship and sorrow. However, for most of Turin's life he fought against the servants of Morgoth and he killed many of them.

Many that were killed by Turin were killed when he had the Black Sword in hand. Additionally, wherever the sword was in battle, fear was struck in the hearts of Morgoth's followers. His greatest accomplishment as a hero, in my opinion, and his ultimate downfall was the killing of the Great Worm Glaurung, who was the destroyer of Nargothrond! The sword used to strike the fatal blow was Gurthang!

Those that would say Gurthang is evil would probably point to Turin's sins. He was, at one time, the leader of a band of rouges and thieves. His decisions and influence helped lead to the fall of Nargothrond. He married and conceived a child with his sister, all be it without knowledge of her as such. His fits of anger that lead to the deaths of friends at his hands or at the hands of others. Most notable were the killings of Beleg and Brandir, people that had befriended him.

But, once again, Gurthang proves that it cares for those innocent lives and does not rejoice in their killings by it in Turin's hand. I put forth the following dialogue as proof. "Turin drew forth his sword, and said: 'Hail Gurthang, iron of death, thou alone now remainest! But what lord or loyalty dost thou know, save the hand that wieldeth thee? From no blood wilt thou shrink! Wilt thou take Turin Turambar? Wilt thou slay me swiftly?'"

And from the blade rang a cold voice in answer: 'Yea, I will drink thy blood, that I may forget the blood of Beleg my master, and the blood of Brandir slain unjustly. I will slay thee swiftly.'

Gurthang, good or evil? I say good!

Notes

The main source of information for this article is "Unfinished Tales", by: J.R.R. Tolkien and Middle Earth Gaming data.

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: Neutral Team nation (m), Good (e), Good (m)
2950: None
1650: Art (m), NG (m), SG (m), WK (e)
Gunboat: 1x2 (l), 1x2 (m), 1 (l)
(Please note past turns for all these nations are available)

grudge games

*Grudge Games we need opposition for:
1000: None
1650: 1 neutral needed
2950: Chris M (10)*

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

FLAGSHIP NEWS

Flagship would like to apologise to readers for a delay in publication of issue 103. Unfortunately the editor, Carol Mulholland, fell and broke her wrist. Normal service will be resumed shortly.

Flagship welcomes 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

Artwork in issue 23 is predominantly by Felix Sotomayor. We're looking for strategy articles to publish in these pages, especially 1650.

If you feel inspired, please write to ...

bree@timewyrm.co.uk

Agents: Too powerful?

by Richard Devereux

I'm not saying this just because the Free characters in ME 10 are getting slaughtered. I wrote on this subject in the old Allsorts NL, and haven't changed my opinion. The vast majority of ME games are won by the Dark Servants. The reason is simple: if the game goes the distance, the DS, and particularly the Cloud Lord, can churn out so many super-agents that they can kill and kidnap with impunity. Any that are captured by guards escape the following turn, any that are Doubled can be Countered, or redoubled by allied emissaries.

I don't object to assassins as such. They have their place to play in the game like any other characters. What I do object to is the way their sheer NUMBERS dominate the midgame and decide the endgame. No nation in history, mythology or fantasy ever churned out agents of such power so quickly and in such numbers as the Cloud Lord can in ME. CL can name agents at rank 40, plus 20 to assassinations/kidnaps, plus the chance of stealth.

NO other nation in Middle-earth can name new characters capable of carrying out Hard orders from the second they are named! This is unfair on ALL other nations, not just the Free. It unbalances the game. Moreover it pushes the Cloud Lord to produce just one type of character. Those characters may be a game-winners, but when you have such HUGE advantages, is playing the position really that much fun? So you win a game playing Cloud Lord, big deal. Win a game as the Woodmen, then you have achieved something!

I suggest CL should name agents at 30 not 40, with plus 10 not 20 to assassinations and kidnaps, but still with the chance of stealth. This is the same level of advantage when creating new characters that other nations have.

Secondly, something should be done to inhibit the way in which companies of up to 9 of assassins can be deployed to hit up to 9 targets in a single pop centre. Again, this has no justification in history, mythology or fantasy. Assassins were and are SOLITARY killers. Show me a single instance where assassins operated as a group. I don't think the word assassin is mentioned ONCE in all Tolkien's writings. So where is the justification for a gang of up to 9 of the bastards in the ME game?

I am against making rules that say: you can't do such-and-such; this irritates players who want to know: why not? It's more intelligent to make rules reflect history/mythology/fantasy. So what can be done to make assassins behave in a realistic, solitary manner? Remember, this has to be entered on a computer program!

How about:

1) Only a nation's highest-ranking agent can attempt an assassination/kidnap? This is explained very



easily: the top guy takes precedence. Yes, this is true in criminal fraternities as well as government agencies! 2) Only one assassination/kidnap order per nation per turn? Explained very simply by the need for secrecy, plus the intelligence and logistic resources needed to get the assassin to the right place at the right time, and to make sure he was not intercepted! Or... 3) If a company moves onto an enemy pop centre, the chances of one or more members of the company getting discovered could be multiplied by the number of people in the company. Those discovered should be arrested by the local militia (with appropriate chance of escape to a neighbouring hex next turn). Of course the chance of discovery should also be influenced by the loyalty of the pop centre, and any fortifications (therefore guards). So a pop centre with very low loyalty would offer little or no resistance, but a fortified capital city would be realistically well guarded! 4) Allow mages to cast a one-shot Warding spell on a pop centre, or Guard spell on a character. Such spells would have to be renewed each turn to be continually effective, would only be as strong as the mage's skill rank, and therefore an assassin/kidnapper who was skilful enough or possessed an appropriate artifact would still get through to complete his mission.

On a related subject, the Steal gold order should be chucked out altogether. It is ludicrous that a thief, or even a number of thieves, can steal enough gold to cripple a nation's economy. As for training your agents by having them steal gold from your allies' pop centres, what real-life ally would allow that? Stealing artifacts from enemies is one thing, stealing tons of gold quite another.

Summary: the Dark servants win too often. This is due almost entirely to their superiority in agents. My suggestions are intended to restore balance to the game. If you've any comments or better ideas, send 'em in!

Hall of Fame

Game 95 Gunboat Special

US Gencon

US Gencon we are turning up and having a stall at US Gen Con (Indianaapolis) this year. Myself and Stu will 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. :-)

23rd July - Sun 27th July Clint and Stu will be at US Gencon in Indianapolis. After that Clint will have a short holiday - probably in New York - do any players want to meet up there?

Game Winner Certificates

GWCs revisited - we're now sending out GWCs for any games that have ended from April '03 onwards. With it you should get a certificate, a badge (coloured as follows - FP Silver, DS Gold, Neutral Bronze; Red background for 1650, Green for 2950, Purple for 1000 and Black for Bofa) and a small card appropriate to your nation (or nations). None of the above have any in-game value but provide you with plenty of bragging rights. Player response to the badge is that they're great! :-). Before you ask we WON'T be sending them out for before April '03 - sorry.

Player Rating System

We've nearly got the Player Rating System coded and now we need to work out the various initial ratings for everyone. Rather than go into a majorly complex system we just need a little bit of information from all the players so that we can set the initial ratings close to accurate. (Note, even if you want to opt out of the rating scheme it would be very useful for us to have the information anyway - it won't be published but will be helpful for us).

- 1) How long (in years) have you played the game for? Eg 4 years.
- 2) How many games have you been a member of the team that won the game? Eg 6 games total won.
- 3) How many Grudge games have you been a member of the team that won the game? Eg 1 Grudge game won.
- 4) Your name and account number: Eg Clint Oldridge 108974

Dragon Lord / Corsairs

by Mike Sankey

November 2001 and a new scenario concept is put forward - Gunboat. Standard 1650 12v12 (pre-aligned) with each player taking 2 nations. The twist however is that not only do you not know who your team mates are but as there is no diplomacy you would be very much on your own. Sounds good - well I thought so. After 12 years or so of team games I thought it would be a new challenge so I put my name down and find myself starting in the first gunboat game.

I had elected for Dark Servants and got one of my first choices Dragon Lord/Corsairs. Other DS pairings are Fire King/Quiet Avenger, Dark Lieutenants/Rhudaur, Ice King/Long Rider, Blind Sorcerer/Witch King, Cloud Lord/Dog Lord. FP pairings are Arthedain/Harad, North Gondor/Dunland, South Gondor/Woodmen, Dwarves/Northmen, Sinda/Cardolan, Noldo/Eothraim.

Turn 0

As luck would have it Dragon Lord started with 1 mage with locate artefact and 1 with research artefact. This would give me a head start in the artefact hunt. Figuring that everyone who had an early cast would go for Ring of Wind first I decided to leave this and track it later. I would instead go for 2 curse artefacts followed by the major mage artefacts and minor agent ones. With a wealthy second nation (Corsairs) I could make up any deficit with Dragon Lord with gold transfers. Whilst I would expect to lose Goblingate early I was hopeful of retaining Dol Goldur for a while figuring the lack of co-ordination would benefit me here. However I would move a commander early to 3822 just in case and a command emissary into Corsair land to receive some additional centres just in case.

My plan with Corsairs would be to pile military pressure on the Harad from the start and hope Quiet Avenger does the same.

The biggest problem I could see would be the lack of intelligence and not knowing what was happening elsewhere. All I could see was what was on my map. I therefore decided that I would maintain my own intelligence files. I would record pop centre changes I know about and update a master map every turn. I would maintain a list of all artefacts and where they are or who holds them as a result of my locates. I would also keep a list of new character names as I found them. This was important as players are only allowed to take offensive action against identified enemies. I also decided I would do plenty of recons, scouting and uncovering secrets to gain as much info as possible.

Turns 1

All Corsair navies move to 2136 so I can combine them next turn. Both nations put their tax up to 60% but Dragon Lord loses a camp to the loyalty

drop. Both nations name a new commander and Dragon Lord name a new emissary as well. Dragon Lord moves an army onto the NG town at 2617. One of my mages learns locate artefact true and immediately casts it to get the location of Tinculin (+40 mage and curse artefact). Dragon Lord is under pressure as recon map from Goblingate shows FP army adjacent (no doubt the Dwarves) and a Dwarf army has arrived on my northern village. Corsair map shows that QA and Harad will fight a battle at sea just off Harad capital. Also shows a QA navy has landed on a northern Harad town.

Turn 2

Disaster for Dragon Lord. My move out of Goblingate with my army to block the Dwarves failed as he moved first. However not only the Dwarves have arrived but also a Northmen army - more than overkill. Worse a huge Eothraim army arrives at my capital and even with the bulk of my starting army here if he has all his starting cavalry I will lose it. However better news in the south. My combined Corsair navy (60 warships and 23 transports) overruns a Harad navy 1 hex off his capital and lands there with 5000 troops. I am unopposed! The map also shows QA destroyed the Harad town in the north so Harad is now under pressure. Dragon Lord finances are now ropy. I lost my northern village and have a deficit of 17K and face the loss of two MTs. I did take 2617 from NG however, which is now my village. Dragon Lord names both an emissary and a command/emissary whilst Corsairs names an emissary. Dragon Lord mages learn a second locate artefact true and I successfully cast on the locations of both Gurthang (+2250 sword with curses) and Ring of Curafin (+30 agent). Another mage teleports to location of Tinculin and gets the encounter.

Turn 3

I take the Harad capital although he moves in with an army to oppose my force, which stayed to pick up its ships. My map shows QA has landed at Harad town adjacent so he is under pressure in the south. I am thankful that QA player appears aggressive which will be the death of Harad. Corsairs name another emissary and sends 20k gold to Dragon Lord. Interestingly Corsairs gets a nation message showing Tharudan of Sinda has encounter at Ring of Curafin location where a Dragon Lord mage has just teleported to. News for Dragon Lord not so good. Goblingate fell to the Dwarves as expected. At my capital Eothraim had 5700 cavalry so it fell as well. My capital relocates to 3822 and whilst I have no commander there yet one is half way there. My population centre roster looks horrendous. Just the MT at 3822 my hidden town at 2809 and my captured village at 2617. Still as compensation my last (very small) army destroyed a Woodmen camp and my deficit is down to just 6k and with the cash received from the Corsairs I can get through next couple of turns. On the artefact front the news is better. I picked up Tinculin, moved mages onto locations of both Ring of Curafin and Gurthang and got

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more information.



payments

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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! This issue's featured artist was **Anke-Katrin Eissmann**

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locations for Collar of Might and Nazguaga (both +30 mage artefacts). The map also shows the first 2 DS armies from Mordor to the SE of Mirkwood.

Turn 4

Corsairs are still on a roll. At the ex Harad capital my navy commander kills the Harad army commander in challenge (which destroys his army) and I successfully move to his next MT along the coast where I am unopposed. The QA has apparently destroyed the Harad town adjacent and moved to another town. Also my map shows in northern Harad that a DS army has arrived at 2730 where the forts have been removed. Rumours show Nimrodel of Sinda has a second turn of encounter at a hex in the far north. Wonder if this is ROW or a curse artefact. Corsairs name another emissary and send another 24k gold to Dragon Lord so he can hire armies, create camps and name more characters. I also transfer my MT at 2339 to Dragon Lord emissary who has arrived in area. Dragon Lord now has a safeish backup. Dragon Lord actually gets its first 2 camps down this turn and one of its emissaries actually gets an encounter with the Dragon Aivnec. As I am hiring a new army at Sarn Goriwing this turn it will go there as I decided to disband my very small field army to release the commander to head south. I decided I wanted a small seed army for my gifted MT so that I could remove harbour, up its loyalty (the commander I released had emissary rank) and prevent hostile emissaries having a go. A Sinda army arrives at my village at 2617 – easy come easy go. At Ring of Curafin encounter I get a riddle. My mage however stays and challenges Tharudan who unfortunately had already left. I will answer riddle next turn and hope Sinda have not moved fresh character in yet to answer it. Also get riddle for Gurthang encounter and have moved 2nd character in. Move characters to locations of both Collar of Might and Nazguaga. Get a locate on Collowhesta (+ 30 stealth).

Turn 5

The Corsairs navy takes 2nd Harad MT and I move a large Corsairs army (3400 troops) onto his final MT in the south where I am opposed by a Harad navy. Map shows QA destroys 2nd town and moves onto final Harad town in south visible to me. In north 2730 has fallen to DS and there are DS armies on 2 Harad towns. By next turn Harad will be virtually destroyed. My Corsairs mage moves to location of Nazguaga to answer any riddle. Dragon Lord hires army at new capital and further 2 commanders arrive as backup. Loses village to Sinda as expected. My army from Sarn Goriwing moves out onto Northmen MT at 3109. As expected dragon Aivnec goes into army. Whilst I only have 600HI I am unopposed. I want to test if the Dragon will help me destroy the MT even though I don't have the strength. I am not sure if the Dragon fights against pop centres and this will be a way of finding out for future games with a throw away army that would not last long anyway. Next turn reveals that the attack is not successful and the army is destroyed although the commander survives. Dragon Lord picks up both Gurthang and Collar of Might and gets riddle at Nazguaga location. Riddle for Ring of Curafin has disappeared so Sinda must have answered it first and must now have the artefact. I move a mage to location of Collowhesta and get locate on Anguriel

(+2250 sword). The DS armies seen on Dragon Lord map previously have now disappeared.

Turn 6 – Turn 10

Things settling down nicely now. All remaining centres of Harad are taken and recons reveal that QA, Dog Lord and Cloud Lord were the other armies involved in taking Northern Harad. My forces take his last MT at 2732. Corsairs capture some Harad ships putting my combined navy on 76 warships and 31 transports by move 10. Corsairs have also picked up Anguriel and Nazguaga with the mage Meriot now on 136 challenge and managed to downgrade to hated to all enemies. Another MT is passed to Dragon Lord along with gold but with all my captured centres I have a healthy + 7k per turn surplus. Corsairs have a full character roster including new agents and so far have lost no characters. Plenty of camps have been placed and the limit has not yet been reached. I have taken the precaution of putting a tower on a camp 2 hexes along the road east from my capital to stop the surprise cavalry raid from off my map. I have also removed all my harbours except on my capital. Dragon Lord is now also doing OK. Despite having Sarn Goriwing revealed and captured by the Sinda on turn 7, leaving me no centres in Mirkwood I now have 3 MTs and a host of newly placed camps. My capital in Mordor has had its fortifications upgraded to a fort and has a defending army. I have also placed an early warning camp 1 hex to the east where any attacking armies must halt before moving into the mountains This will pay dividends next turn as a huge Northmen and a Dwarf army have arrived there giving me the opportunity to move my army out of the capital next turn to block them. My two gifted MTs in the far south have a seed army on with a command/emissary upping loyalty. I have downgraded to 7 out of 12 enemies and have just a small deficit at -4400 gold per turn – easily manageable. Dragon Lord has so far lost only one character, Wodurishak assassinated at Sarn Goriwing. I have picked up more artefacts including Collowhesta and have located but not yet picked up several others. I have even located two minor mage artefacts to having been picked up by Sinda and Cardolan. My mages are now safely in a moving company allowing me to prentice and research leaving just 1 mage to chase after artefacts. After the shaky start Dragon Lord position is looking sound despite the close proximity to my capital of the enemy armies.

Turn 11 – Turn 15

A period of consolidation for Corsairs. Camp limit is reached on turn 11 so emissaries switch to improving camps to villages. My best emissary moves in to main Dragon Lord company so that all eligible characters can be doubled. Pick up 2 artefacts – Headband of Slaeg (to be passed to Dragon lord) and Foam Cleaver. However I lose an emissary answering a riddle on an artefact encounter. There are a couple of riddles that do kill you if you are the wrong allegiance. Corsair agents are now roaming Southern Gondor stealing and with a stable economy I am able to send regular gold to the Dragon Lord. By turn 15 the mighty Corsair navy is back at the capital and has built back to 4000 troops half of which are steel clad heavy cavalry. They will be able to sail out soon and my next target will be Southern Gondor. Dragon Lord is also doing well. My efforts to defend my capital are successful. On turn eleven my capital army successfully moved out to block the Dwarves. The Northmen had retired his army presumably to pick up more food. By turn thirteen the

Middle Earth Online

Press release

LOS ANGELES, Calif., May 9, 2003 – Vivendi Universal Games, Inc. (VU Games) announced today that it has entered into a production agreement with Turbine Entertainment Software Corp. to develop “Middle-Earth Online,” a massively multiplayer (MMP) game to launch in 2004. The game will be developed as part of VU Games’ long-term agreement with Tolkien Enterprises to create interactive entertainment based on J.R.R. Tolkien’s epic novel “The Lord of the Rings.”



The 3D role-playing game (RPG) will immerse players in the Middle-earth world where they will choose their identities from a cast of archetypal Tolkien characters, form kinships, build race-specific dwellings, explore the landscape, craft unique items and weapons, and perform myriad other activities to bring the world-renowned fantasy realm to life.

“We are extremely excited to be working with a world-class developer like Turbine. Their track record and proven expertise in building, launching, and supporting massively multiplayer games is exceptional, making them the right partner for a franchise as beloved and well-known as J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*,” said Jim Wilson, EVP Product Development, Vivendi Universal Games. “Together, our goal will be to bring the vision and spirit of the literary works of J.R.R. Tolkien to life in ‘Middle-Earth Online.’”

More information about “Middle-Earth Online” can be found at www.lordoftherings.com/meo



Northmen had arrived adjacent to my capital again with 3700 troops and I had to assume this turn he would have the food to advance. By then I had upgraded the capital to a city/fort. Still I moved 1200 steel clad heavy infantry out and they successfully blocked his move onto the capital. I also doubled his army commander. On turn 14 knowing my 1200 HI would be defeated by his 3700 troops I decided to play the block again by refusing and defending the hexside to my capital. I figured that he would try to move with out fighting as he would need all his numbers to take my capital. I guessed right as my double report on turn 15 confirmed he refused and tried to move onto my capital which I of course had blocked, so as turn 15 ended his army still faced my 1200 I hex from my capital and even if he fought next turn and then moved, I would by then have another 1000 steel clad HI on my capital and with his losses he would not have enough force to take it (even if he still had enough food to move). I figured I was safe. My mages had now all reached the early 60s in rank so within another 2 or 3 turns I could start learning curses. As I now had the artefacts I needed I switched locate efforts to tracking. I confirmed Ring of Curafin on a Sinda character. Ring of Wind was located to an unknown character but when I got the rumour of that character assassinating a Southern Gondor character the next turn I was happy it was in DS hands. I also located Elenya to a Cloud Lord character. Whilst Dragon Lord was running a 12k per turn deficit I could cover this from Corsairs. I was now more than happy with the Dragon Lord position and reckoned that within the next 5 turns I would be back on the offensive.

Turn 16 – Turn 20

Interesting turns. Corsairs lands 5000 troops from navy at Southern Gondor capital with war machines and takes it unopposed. My army rampages through Southern Gondor taking 3 towns and another MT. I also elect to split the army into two with cavalry in one and infantry in another. By the time I hit his second MT a Corsairs cavalry army has also arrived but I take the centre as I have the larger force. My next two moves with my cavalry has the QA army following the same movement path. The only SG army I spot on one of his centres is eliminated when the Corsair agents get their 1st assassination kill. My finances are well supplemented by taking thousands of gold from him each turn. Dragon Lord fights two more combats just outside is cavalry army and then the Northmen army who has now halved in number and run out of food retires. I track him moving back as his commander is doubled and although I chase him with an army I run out of food as well so don’t catch him. Dragon Lord mages continue to improve. By turn 20 2 have full curses and a 3rd is on sickness. I have evidence that Noldo is tracking me as his agents appeared on one of my centres the turn after my mage company was there. However as I move every turn I am not worried. The Dragon Lord map is now showing DS armies again approaching Eothraim territory. Uncovers have revealed the collapse of Witch King, Rhudaur, Dark Lieutenants, Woodmen and Northern Gondor. As I have also devastated the positions of Harad and Southern Gondor I am happy that our side is even or possibly has the upper hand.

Turn 21 – Turn 25

Corsairs completes conquest of Southern Gondor taking all remaining centres apart from one taken by Dragon Lord emissaries and one taken by Quiet Avenger. Southern Gondor offered no resistance and it was only at his last centre that I was attacked by a large Sinda army which was defeated. By turn 25 I have moved all my forces in the area (2 armies and a huge navy) onto the Sinda MT at 2535. Sinda has only a small force here and as QA has also arrived with two armies the decision is not in doubt. I do ascertain that Pelegir is now under Dog Lord control and as I recruit an Ice King character as a double agent I know he is still in. Also on turn 25 a company of Arthedain and Harad characters are reported on one of my centres in ex Harad territory. I track this company with a Reveal Character True spell for the remainder of the game. Dragon Lord curses team is now complete with 3rd mage learning curses and also being joined by Corsairs mage who also has learnt curses. I kill a Northmen emissary in challenge with my top mage. If he had refused he would have been my first curses kill anyway. I am fairly secure with my mages. I have a full curse squad with 1 spare and secondary agent ranks mean I can spot enemies as I scout every turn (at double rank). I am routinely tracking Noldo and Sinda mage artefacts to track their mages and am tracking the Ring of Curafin. This is still on an unknown character but as he is spending time on Sinda centres I am reasonably sure Sinda still have this. I uncover that the Duns have collapsed. Dragon Lord has 2 new MTs thanks to building up 1 from camp in Mordor and taking a town from Southern Gondor and improving it for the other. I am building up a centre as well at the east edge of Mordor and already have 2500 troops there. I will soon be able to counterattack Mordor. My map shows that DS armies have taken all but 1 Eothraim MTs in Mirkwood. My Northmen double agent has revealed a setback for the Long Rider capturing Uvatha in combat.

Turn 26 – Turn 30

On turn 26 Corsairs took Edhellond from Sinda and as a stroke of good fortune one of my characters was wounded whilst guarding my navy commander by the holder of the Ring of Curafin. My Dragon Lord turn also revealed a rumour of him trying the assassination. So I now had confirmation that he was an emissary (almost certainly Sinda) so there was now no barrier to my targeting him in the future. Previously I couldn’t have targeted him without a confirmation that he was enemy. The Harad/Arthedain company continues to plague me taking several centres and assassinating one of my lesser agents. However I have some emissaries follow them around and I retake every centre (usually the turn after). Meanwhile my navy captures the Sinda fleet giving me a strength of 96 warships and 41 transports. I load up with 5000 steel clad troops, 30 war machines and sail towards Cardolan. Dragon Lord goes on offensive moving emissaries and mages with agent support into Mirkwood. I continue to track enemy characters and the Sinda agent moves onto 2616 the turn my mage company lands on 2715. What a stroke of luck. He becomes my first curse kill and I follow this up by immediately moving into the hex and picking up the Ring of Curafin – a major coup. I would keep this till the end of the game. I get a second kill removing a Woodmen army from 2711 and take one of the ex Eothraim MTs from Sinda. DS armies are now in northern Mirkwood and the Sinda city at 2908 is revealed by one of my unknown teammates. I also

Middle Earth online (cont)

Middle-Earth Online is the first Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game based on The Lord of the Rings. This epic storyline expands the Fellowship's quest and takes players to the far corners of Middle-earth. Players can select the path of the battle-worn warrior or a more simple life of crafting and harvesting. No matter the path, adventure, fame, and fortune await all in Middle-Earth Online.



Game Features Include...

Playable races include Elves, the race of Man, Hobbits, and Dwarves.

An in-depth character creation system allows the player to design a unique individual from a variety of faces, hairstyles, clothing, armor and more.

Through game advancement, players can purchase upgradeable race-specific dwellings.

Ally with other players to form Fellowships and wage war for or against the Dark Lord Sauron.

A PC CD-ROM game, Middle-Earth Online will be available late 2004.



manage to double a Cloud Lord agent. By turn 30 I have 3000 HI ready to move out from Mordor to attack the Northmen. I also have an encounter with the Werewolf Caran and decide to react Attack with my best mage. The result is good with him killing the beast, learning a lost list spell (conjure food) and getting 24k in gold. I also uncover that Southern Gondor has collapsed.

Turn 31 – Turn 35

The Corsairs navy sailing north reaches the first Cardolan town on the coast to find it owned by the Fire king. Undeterred I sail up river to reach 1614 to find that owned by the Quiet Avenger. I split off my troops and they head north towards Arthedain territory. They are initially stopped by a Harad army several hexes north but I kill the commander in challenge and press on north. 2 turns later after meeting 2 separate Quiet Avenger armies on way I arrive at Bree to find it a Harad MT. I will take it easily with the forces I have. Meanwhile my ships sail back towards Southern Gondor to replenish. At the FiK town on the coast I find a Cardolan army has arrived. I don't have enough troops in the navy to help defend so use my backup to challenge and kill the Cardolan commander. In Southern Gondor territory a Cardolan army is landed from ships. I assassinate the army commander and the ships on turn 35 lay off the North Harad coast. I have built up another cavalry army at the former Southern Gondor capital and push 1600 steel clad heavy cavalry over the mountain to 2421. I find it is owned by the Dog Lord but an army of the Sinda under Ohtar is also present. We fight and Sinda is also 1600 HC in steel but with better training so wins. He goes onto attack the centre but as I killed most of his troops he bounces off the walls and his army and commander is killed. In Mirkwood Corsair emissaries take a couple of Sinda towns and retake Dol Goldur (the former Dragon Lord capital) which was a Sinda MT. Dragon Lord is having equal success. Emissaries take a former Woodmen MT and I retake Sarn Goriwing from Sinda. My mages take out 5 Sinda and Northmen characters (3 with curses, 1 challenge and 1 assassination). My army out of Mordor takes the Northmen capital at 4013 and then moves across to Mirkwood. Economy is now so good that Dragon lord is now supplying Corsairs with gold. On the intelligence front I confirm that an artefact previously held by a Sinda mage is now held by the Dog Lord. I reckon, based on this, and on the characters of his I have killed in last few turns, not to mention the centres I have taken, that Sinda will be in serious trouble. I continue to track the Noldo mages and when they stay within a hex or so of 3221 for 3 turns running I decide to have a go. On turn 35 the Dragon Lord curse team moves to 3221 to find it an Arthedain village. However I track the Noldo mages and they have moved to 2913 – a previously unidentified city in Mirkwood. As a FP icon has appeared on the Eothraim MT at 3113 I decide to land my curse team in between them and hope they stay put. Turn 36 is going to be interesting.

Turn 36

I take 1409 from Harad and start moving supplies there to resupply my army. My navy continues to sail back to Dol Amroth. Tracking of the Arthedain/Hard company shows it heading back home no doubt panicking about the DS activity on his doorstep. My army from 1409 heads for the Arthedain capital at 1407 to find it held by the Quiet Avenger. Cardolan

navy is still offshore off Northern harad. I figure he tried to land but couldn't because of the lack of a harbour. I none the less place an agent on the Quiet Avenger village at 2632 which is the only place he can land. Dragon Lord's Mirkwood army lands at Eothraim MT at 3113 and is opposed by Eothraim army. My curse team lands adjacent at 3013 and my locates reveal that the Noldo mages are still at 2913. I have struck gold. I spot Ji Indur of Cloud Lord and Dendra Dwar of Dog Lord on my MT at 3012 and my Cloud Lord double agent is also here. My emissaries take a Cardolan MT at 2617 and move onto 2913 which I confirm is a Noldo city. Instead of influencing I will attempt to double the Noldo characters.

Turn 37

My northern Corsairs army moves back to 1409 to pick up food and construct war machines. The Harad/Arthedain company arrives and whilst this is a bit concerning I am confident that the commander with 4500 troops will resist any assassination plus my backup can double his best assassin. My navy arrives back at Dol Amroth where I can pick up food. The Cardolan navy off Northern Harad still hasn't moved so I will move out to engage. (Has Cardolan given up I wonder) In Mirkwood my army destroys the Eothraim and takes the Eothraim MT at 3113. My mages have great success. Assuming the Noldo tracked me I use 4 mages to curse Elrond so that if he gets one of mine first I would still get him. The 5th mage puts a curse on Cirdan. My company at 2913 fails to double any Noldo characters but as they all remained doubled to Corsairs he obviously didn't try anything against me either. I stole a mage artefact off Cirdan and my attempt to steal Vilya (+ 50 mage) was unsuccessful as it was not carried by any character in the hex. As I had confirmed through a locate that Elrond carried it in the hex it could only mean that Elrond was dead and his artefacts were now on the ground. I would move all my characters into the hex next turn to pick up artefacts and deal with anyone that remained. Next turn would however prove to be the final turn. Clint write to the DS players between turns to advise that we now hold 4 to 1 player advantage so the game will end next turn. I suspect the recent attacks on the enemy have forced several nations out or throw in the towel. Perhaps the death of Elrond was the last straw.

Turn 38

Last turn arrives and my 2 nations take 2nd and 3rd place after the Quiet Avenger. The game end stats show 9 DS nations still active. The 3 eliminated I had already picked up by uncover secrets (i.e. Dark Lieutenants, Witch King and Rhudaur. The victory points for the Free showed only Northmen, Dwarves and Noldo with points above 400 (around 800 each) but all way short of the next active Dark Servant. For the last turn I did pick up all Elrond's artefacts moving back onto 2913.

I was more than pleased with my final standings. I had lost just 3 characters in the game (2 for Corsairs and 1 for Dragon Lord) and ended with a full character roster for both nations. I had survived the initial onslaught against the Dragon Lord and had been instrumental in destroying both Harad and Southern Gondor. I had retaken my holdings in Mirkwood plus extra. Of course the game had been frustrating at times especially arriving at centres to find an ally had already taken it or arriving at the same time as an ally. Still overall I was happy with the game format and whilst it will not stop me playing team games I was impressed enough to decide I will enrol in another gunboat.

Lord of the Rings Tabletop Battle Game

by Ben Williams

Games Workshop is a very interesting company. I have met many of their fine employees and have played a few rounds of The Lord of the Rings Tabletop Battle Game with them as well, among these encounters one trait has always been predominantly strong: dedication. These guys are the best there is at what they do, and while often times these detailed miniatures are expensive to buy, the Lord of the Rings Tabletop Battle Game brings quality Lord of the Rings Gaming to your gaming table, with a little Gollum on the side.

Who wouldn't want an inch and a half Gandalf the White to roll a few die against an Orc or two. This game brings to life every character from PJ's The Two Towers in perfect miniature form. This set breathes miniature reality into scenarios directly from the film, and some created by Games Workshop to simulate battles that may have taken place during transitions and travel. The Rule Book included with the Two Towers Boxed Set goes into detail how to set up, and play through Scenarios like Scour-



Quiet Avenger / Fire King by Bryn Lloyd

Like many games of Middle Earth, the cut 'n thrust of the early rounds was the telling factor; a mopping up exercise finally delivering victory on turn 39. The review that follows therefore concentrates on the first 10 turns.

I joined the game as the QA and FK – my third choice pairing. The initial game plan was as follows: crush the Harad, hold the Ithil pass, and bring the military of both nations together to bare against NG along the vale of Ithilien, but, having to work in tandem with my allies in this 'silent' game would prove interesting...

The Two Knights Attack

As the QA I decided to be bold; an attack against the Harad would give the Corsairs the confidence to attack too – they would see DS icons on Harad pop centres. On the other hand the QA starts with a meagre military and the close proximity of the Harad fleet and army @2734 was a major concern.

Enjoying the naval aspect to MiddleEarth I decided to use my two fleets, however small and suicidal that may have been! Some maths determined that the navy @2135 could potentially destroy 3 towns and so this is what I decided to do: concentrate on knocking out the Harad towns, leaving the large major towns for the Corsair fleet. Transferring an additional 150 LI was key to this success. Perhaps I could also join my fleets together? – Mutual movement to 2632 would do this, and moving along the north bank of the Harnen may avoid any Harad fleet heading for Lugarlur@3034. Additionally I would attempt to pull all harbours down: 3034 of utmost importance. The army @2135 meanwhile would recruit HI ready for the push against 2535. Adunaphel and Melazar would form company together, 520, and return to create a 40 emissary and start that ball rolling.

As the FK the strategy was simple: as per, recruit, recruit, recruit! With a twist in the tail I decided to name my first 4 characters, all emissaries! – I didn't want the FK being self-reliant on the QA and this was the only way to realistically expand the position.

Turn 1 results were excellent, all things considered. At 3034 a new multi commander was named and the harbour was pulled down, just as the Harad fleet from 2734 arrived. Phew! The Harad army was also on its way: currently @2934. Ingar's navy from 2135 made it to 2632 (and with extra food) and Gargal's navy from 3034 intercepted Haruth's @2733. The Harad, clearly, were going for the jugular! So, one QA navy successfully through, with likely mutual annihilation @2733 and the 2nd Harad navy out of harms way and unable to beach its troops. Ha! Herumor, though, failed to remove the harbour @2135 and this proved to be the case until it no longer mattered...Not to be underestimated though, is that the Corsair map would have shown the DS icon @2632, DS and FP icons @2733 and no FP icon @2734! Meanwhile, at home in Mordor, Uklurg was sent to Ithil and two 30 emmies were signed up.

Turn 2 was even better! Ingar destroyed the town @2632 and picked up the ships, only to have the remaining north Harad army turn up! Tee hee! At 2733, Gargal decimated Haruth Raman's forces

but was overwhelmed himself and lost – the Harad navy took huge losses and were never seen again! But, even better, the Corsairs turned up @2734 uncontested, and possibly overran the remaining Harad navy. This was definitely worth the loss of Gargal. I would like to think that this act was precipitated by QA offensive strategy, but no doubt it was due more to Corsair planning and Harad foolhardiness. The Harad navy @3034 remained – it obviously tried to land troops and hadn't reconnoitred the area, and the Harad army under Carlon arrived. Alone though, it would only scratch the surface. For Raymond E. Feist fans, the infamous Ashim Ibin Al-Tuk was named; a straight 40 commander. The FK meanwhile, captured Ithil@3124 and named the 2 additional emissaries.

By turn 3 it was clear that we had already gained the upper hand in Harondor, partly by sound decision making but moreover by some poor play by our rivals: why leave 2734 unprotected and why continuously attack @3034 for no gain? But this is what happened: for about 3 turns Carlon's army attacked the QA army @3034, which was destroyed and re-hired. Eventually when the starting Harad army had whittled itself away enough, the newly hired QA 400 hi @3034 was the bigger. This was like the continuous loop in Matrix2; but instead of getting better each time, the Harad just got worse! Ingar sailed to 2634, destroyed that, then marched to 2635 and destroyed that: 3 towns for a starting army of 300LC, 450LI, 300MA. Not bad. With the Harad stuck in a rut @3034, I was able to recruit 400HC and ship them out to 2835, meeting up with Ingar's 64, 96, 64 and finally capture the last Harad town south of the Harnen by turn 6. Turn 7 these armies were ready to set sail again and help take Northern Harad, capturing 2833 and meeting up with the CL, while from 2135, all infantry, including 2400 hi were dutifully disbanded when they turned up @2535 only to discover that the Corsairs had already done the job! Doh! Nevermind...the cavalry were split to Ashim who rushed east to the N/S road. Rumour also had it that the CL was busy @2631...better get my skates on!

Northern Gondor and the defence of Mordor

Meanwhile the FK was under some immense pressure in the wake of a huge 7,600 strong NG army under Tarondor (7,730 hi equivalent!). Thanks though to some inept play by their human controller, they thankfully only attacked my FK troops @3124 twice leaving the CL unmolested. Eventually after 2 turns fighting he saw the error of his ways, attacked everybody and won, only for more FK armies to breach the gap. Finally Tarondor was defeated; only to be replaced by a huge SG army. Hindsight dictates though, that fortunately the art of synchrony was not a skill our adversaries possessed in great quantity...

Okay, the SG army proved to be more stubborn than it's NG predecessor and had it not been for Ji Indur and pals I may have been entertaining *that* army at the gates of Barad Ungol, but, that is as far as it would have got, for the pass had been secured with some well-received QA timber: and a city/citadel was not long in the making J.

It is by this stage, turn 10, that Harad was no more in the south – but no doubt her Arthedain friends had procured her a safe hold 'up north'. "We shall meet again!"

Attention was now turned to North Gondor, jewel in the crown of Middle Earth. In a quick summing up: the QA was well on the way with emissaries, the ball having started with Adunaphel naming the first E38,

ing of the Westfold, When Wargs Attack, Ambush in Ithilien, Helm's Deep, and Gandalf's Confrontation with Saruman at Isengard! Games put one player as the Free People's player against another player as the Forces of Darkness each with set goals and objectives, often beyond simply killing your opponent.

Game play in the Lord of the Rings Tabletop Battle Game consists of rolling dice to determine the outcome of conflict between hero's and minions. You're able to employ Archery, Stealth, and Brute Force against your foes attempts at completing their objectives, with scale miniatures modeled directly after the designs used in Peter Jackson's The Two Towers. With the stats presented in the rule book plenty of strategies come up to thwart your friends!

Overall the Lord of the Rings Tabletop battle game is a direct way to feel the battle of the Lord of the Rings on your table. Many are intimidated by the price of the Starter Set but compared to other such Miniature Games the Two Towers Boxed Set is only \$40.00 US compared to as much as \$75.00 for other Miniature games. The Boxed set includes 12 Plastic Riders of Rohan (Spearmen, Bowman, and Swordsmen on Horseback) and 20 Fighting Uruk-hai (With Pikes and Swords), plastic terrain ruins for a quick and easy setup for play, a set of dice, and the Lord of the Rings Two Towers Guide Book which features plenty of details on painting, terrain, game play, and images from the Two Towers. Try out scenario's from the guide, or try out a few of your own with the Lord of the Rings Tabletop Battle Game!



Jug Rijesh@3533 was pumping out HC – 300 then 400 per turn and the FK had settlements strewn right along the spine of the Misty Mountains: 2414 even improved to a MT with Ren The Unclean recruiting HI. The FK had 17 pops to the QA 24.

Turn 11 to 16 saw some real stiff fighting and perhaps, the final nail in the coffin of the FP... Turn 11: the QA captured 3028 and moved on 3026, both Ingar and Ashim instrumental. Turn 12: the CL protected 3028. Turn 13: FK recaptured Ithil. Turn 14: the big push on Minas Anor: QA/FK/IK all arrived through 3024 which was IK owned. Despite the absence of communication we are all working as a team – it is interesting that each player, through experience, knew what the next intended target was – although I suppose that we were only following the most logical progression. Turn 15: the NG army @2924 is defeated and the QA emmies turn up; meanwhile the FK under Lurtz headed north, encountering resistance from a threat to Imdorad@2622 and discovering that in fact Calmirie is DogL owned! Additionally, QA HC from 3533 push on Pelagir only to discover that it too is DogL owned! – They have been fighting there for the past 2 turns.

But then there is a death blow! Or at least potential death blow... “The Morannon has fallen” – a combined Eothraim/Sinda force having destroyed all but the fortifications. Shock and Awe! Fortunately the FP armies there were not able to make further in-roads into Mordor – an interception of 1200 FK HC stopping that, but perhaps arriving a turn too late? The size of those armies must have been absolutely huge – especially given that the fortifications were left intact! When my emissary team turned up a turn later the camp/citadel @3221 read: “Dogs’ Cemetery” –!!! – But fortunately, little do they know that the DogL is having good success elsewhere. Phew! In fact the size of the Sinda force alone is only realised when considering that after Morannon’s fall it is intercepted 3 times: by 1200 FK HC @3221, by 1400 FK HI @3222 and by a combined FK/IK/BS force @3323 which finally overwhelmed it. Thus, the only real threat to Mordor, posed by the FP was stopped dead in it’s tracks. And finally, by turn 16, Minas Anor was taken by one hit! Ha!

The NW and the demise of the Free

The following turns saw some well coordinated mopping up operations in Gondor: North Gondor fell first followed by South Gondor. As the QA and FK my concentration was now the NW: Dunland, Cardolan and then Arthedain were my primary targets, although the Dwarves put up some unpredictable stiff resistance.

With this aim in mind, I needed to recruit troops closer to the fighting and to inform my allies. The former I accomplished by building Freawull@1922

up to a city and stocking it with leather, mounts, steel and timber and by building Lag-Fangorn@2414 up to a MT, only to have the Dwarves overrun it, nearly killing Ren and to build up Walaran@1917 captured from the Duns (1817 was not there when I arrived). The Former was QA owned, the latter being FK – and in this respect the QA location was never uncovered and therefore more effective. And from 1922 HC can force march fed to Tharbad@1614. Primary emissary target number one was therefore to secure 1715 re-build the bridge. This was done right under the nose of the Cardolan player who never even twitched!

Informing my allies about which direction I was going was the harder bit. I decided that I would inform the Corsair player, who being fleet-bound and sharing the leader board with me would perhaps be more effective. The DogL player had already progressed to Calmirie@2421 so perhaps would have logically moved in that direction anyway. How to inform the Corsairs? I decided to send them 23 of a commodity – why 23 they would consider and perhaps identify the player number as the reason. Whether that worked or not, the Corsairs did turn up @Tharbad1614 after I had captured it and were constantly on the tails of my cavalry from Metriath@1513 to Fornost Erain@1407.

Continuous recruitment of 500 HC in ST/ST from 1922 and FK troops from 1917, coupled with increasing emissary action from 3 squads and a curse squad eventually resulted in the capitulation of the Cardolan and then Arthedain – with most pop centres falling to my emissaries, including some old WK and RH one’s – elimination fall-out no doubt!

The one bug-bear though was the Dwarves! Not only did they capture 2514 which I had cosseted slowly and built up to a city with 93 loyalty, but they also put the spanner in the works at Walaran@1917 putting an end to my FK recruitment from there. In fact, the Dwarves were so annoying that on turn 37 I planned for the downfall of Kharzadum@2212 – 2,700HC, in ST/ST with 27,000 food and 52 war machines were ready at Tharbad@1614. I even bought a further 1000 mounts for 32K gold, recruited more HC and was waiting one more turn when disaster struck and the key commander was assassinated: the only assassination on the QA position all game. This army had no back-up and was actually becoming an army with 3 commanders when the wretched order went through! Doh!

However, the Dwarves never looked that far beyond their perimeter, because I had continued to recruit from 1922 and because just NW of the Dun position we had all but captured the FP settlements – and only when I was on top of the Dwarven ones’ at Belegost@0812 and Zagragathol@0811, did I suspect, that they knew of their team’s demise. And so, a turn later we all heard the good news from Clint: the first ever Middle Earth Gunboat was over; it was a DS win! Thanks to all – especially Corsairs in delivering the death blow to Harad and CL and IK for helping defend the Ithil pass.



Riddle Me This

News from Bree is proud to present a **Midsummer Riddle Competition!** Below you will find ten cunningly devised riddles, waiting for you to decipher them. All competition answers should be sent to News from Bree, 2A Guinea Street, Exeter, Devon, UK, EX1 1BS or by email to bree@timewyrm.co.uk. Please do not send your answers to the Middle Earth Office, they will only forward them to me and they have enough on their plate as it is :-)

All entries to arrive by 1st July please.

The good news is that there are several prizes to be won, including free turns, One Ring keyrings and free issues of Flagship magazine (maybe some other stuff as well). The answers, along with the names of the winners, will be published in the next issue of Bree. In the event of a tie-break situation the names will be randomly drawn out of a hat (seriously, it will be an actual hat).

Have fun!

#1) Three things of beauty beyond compare
Golden objects, rich and fair
Entombed within transparent walls
Under the earth in Dwarven halls

#2) Rounded with the shade of pitch
It lies at end of path
A waypoint set by him who stands
Upon the Argonath

#3) This is a halfling's passion,
It might even be a vice
If you should try to take these
Then that halfling won't be nice
You see them in the morning
Where they weren't the night before
But halflings don't ask whence they come
They simply ask for more

#4) It gathered dust in a corner of the Shire
It glimmered though coated with dead marsh's mire
It stopped the pole arm of the great orc chief
It was a kingly gift from a so-called thief

#5) Twenty-two set out from Rivendell
Four fled from the Dwarrowdelf
Many drove eighteen into the Black Pit

#6) Once there were 8 leaves of Lorien
One drifted over the falls
One was cast down by the wayside but found
One went to Isengard's walls
Two went in fear to the darkening East
While three hasted westward to war
Each season the leaves in Lothlorien fall
But seldom it's leaves fall so far

#7) A moon with a thousand stars it seemed
When light was caught it brightly gleamed
An heirloom lost for years but found
By him who left without a sound
He gave it away to make amends
He gave his part to save his friends
But scorned he was and turned away
But few days after Durin's Day

#8) One day he stood adorned with lights
And looked down on a sight
A thing of greatest evil there
In Middle Earth, a blight

He wondered why the thing was here
But sadly never knew
For suddenly the thing was gone
But where? He had no clue

One day he died under the sky
And wondered as he fell
Why wicked men would kill him
Then he slept there in the dell

One day his friends returned
And bitterly they grieved that day
For they were those who took
The evil thing so far away

Who was he and what was it?

#9) I have a round body with several eyes
My mortal enemy's name is Samwise
In Ithilien Gollum heard rumour of me
And I promise I'm not who you think me to be

#10) But twice within a hundred years
Had any heard his voice
He filled their hearts with dread
The little people had no choice

They armed themselves and rallied forth
Dismissing fear of fire or foe
For when they heard his voice, it stood for
Danger, death and woe

His first call was to warn of
Lupine threats o'er Baranduin
The second was beyond them all,
Black heralders of ruin.

Who's voice am I speaking of?