



News From Bree

Middle Earth PBM Newsletter - Issue 3, April '99

"Strange as News from Bree..."

The Lord of the Rings, chapter 9

Talk at the Prancing Pony...

page 1

1650: Noldo Strategy

page 2

"Going Fourth II
New Games &
Harlequin details

page 3

Team Play by the Dark Side

What film?

page 4

What would J.R.R. have thought?

Drop-outs: a proposal

page 5

Fourth Age fiction:
part 1

Shelob's Web

page 6

Diary of a three way international Fourth Age grudge match

"From out of the West..."

GM comments

Recently finished games

1650 Strategy: The Noldo Elves

By Henning Rindbaek

When I first read The Lord of the Rings, I was completely fascinated by the elves. When I years later was introduced to this game I immediately "volunteered" to play one of the elven nations and ended with the Noldo Elves. My dreams had come true; I would save Middle Earth from the evil hordes of Sauron, with a little help from my allies. Elrond would wreak havoc upon the orcs and trolls of the Witch King and Dragon Lord's armies.

The Noldo Elves are strong in many points and quite well suited to a beginner being generally placed far from any enemies. The position has a reasonable good economy and the climate is mild most of the year. The characters are the best in the game, with only the agent side being a bit low.

All nations have some sort of weakness and so do the Noldo Elves, even though they are easy to live with. Your armies suck, they are some of the weakest in the game but they provide an excellent core for recruiting an "elite" force in Eriador. There is an awful long way to the enemy when your armies are to be used for more than ceremonial duties (if you want a chance to win the battle). And there is absolutely no way that you can use all the abilities of your characters each turn.

Characters

You have the most character points at the start of the game. You will have to decide early on which areas your characters will specialize in, since only one your characters is single classed and another is double classed, the rest are triple or higher classed. You also have some of the best emissaries at the game start. Unluckily they are also your best mages. Train them in both and you will have the potential for an emissary/mage team in the mid and end game, a very deadly cocktail for the enemy if the mages have learned curses. Your agents are a little low in start skill but they are born with a high stealth which offsets the lack in skill. The same agents are also quite good commanders and can also be used as such if the need arises.

Since you have such good starting characters they will be prime targets for the Dark Servants agents so keep them moving and stay at the most two turns in one hex unless you have an encounter then you should consider moving on since rumours run fast in Middle Earth these days.

You should also get into the artifact hunting fast and if you are unable to get to the prime artifacts tell your allies where they are since the Evil ones will also be chasing the same artifacts as you are! New characters should primarily be emissaries and agents since the nation is very well suited for a character-based game.

Military

As stated earlier your armies are very weak and will not be able to do much good in the initial battles. The best you can do is, to combine the navies in your capital; then recruit some heavy infantry.

The army at Imladris is another matter; it is too weak to be used alone but with a bit of fresh recruits and some coordination with your allies, it can be used to bring the Dragon Lord or the Witch King down.

You also possess a navy that can be the source of much fun. The fastest way to move troops from Eriador to the front is by sea. Unfortunately you only have a medium sized navy; suggest to Cardolan that you take over her navy saving her some money needed to pay the upkeep of her armies. An extra bonus is that the strength of the warships will increase after being manned by elves. This would make a navy of such a size that it only needs to fear meeting an enemy Corsair navy and give a carrying capacity of 4500 Infantry.

When Eriador is secured, swap pop centers with allies near the front to give them a safe backup capital and bring you closer to the slaughter of the foul orcs and trolls.

Economy

The climate in your part of the world is mild and not especially prone to change with the seasons. This and the fact that there are no immediate threats to your pop centers make it ideal to develop in. Another nice thing is that there is a very varied terrain which makes it possible to get whatever resources that you fancy.

You will very soon have a good economy so do not forget your allies. They may have lost pop centers or have armies so big that they need financial aid to keep up the recruiting. Support them with gold, artifacts and safe pop centers when needed. They are after all fighting the enemy for you, and when they fall the Dark Servants will turn their attention to you...

Diplomacy

There are two neutrals in Eriador and both have some pretty good armies. It is important to get at least one of these convinced of the benefits of being a Free People. Or at least to stay neutral, if you want to see an end to the Dark Servants in the area, within a reasonable amount of time. So get in touch with Rhudaur and the Dunlendings in turn 1 and see what they may want to join you in the battle for freedom.

Conclusion

This is a team game so talk with your allies, especially your neighbours. Get in touch with the neutrals and hear their demands, then discuss these with the team, then strike a bargain and keep it. Then decide how you will use your characters and keep the important ones moving, a small company could be a good way to move these around, and still be able to use two skill-improving orders each turn. Decide what you want from your armies, but remember; if they have to die they must die well, do not retire them; attack the Dark Servants and take some enemy troops with you to soften up the enemy for the other Free People.

Most of all "be flexible", there are twenty-four other players each with their own goals and plans, so evaluate once in a while and adjust your plans to the changing situation.

new games

1650

Game 14

Nations Available:

1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 15, 16,
17, 18, 21, 24, 25

Game ?

There is a German 1650 team who want to play against others - pre-aligned or otherwise. Any takers?

2950

Game 23

Nations Available:

All positions available, except the Sindar!

1000

Game 46

We have a side for the Neutrals - 9 players - and I would like to field a team from Harlequin for any of the DS or FP's side (we may have to play more than one position). So we need 7 more please....

contacting harlequin

Post:

340 North Road, Cardiff,
Wales, CF4 3BP

Tel:

01222-625665

Fax:

01222-625532

E-mail:

harlequin.games@dial.pipex.com

E-mail list

send an email to

majordomo@listbox.com.

Leave the subject empty but in the main body of the text write:

subscribe whispers

Going Forth II

By Gavin Kenny

This month I'm going to concentrate on where to locate your nation in fourth age. This is itself a tricky proposition since you are never guaranteed to get the location you ideally want. Minimise the risk of being 'bumped' by sacrificing that extra camp for a guarantee on that prime piece of real estate.

The choices of starting position will vary depending on your nation allegiance, nation abilities and your overall goals. If you want to launch an all out offensive against one of the Kingdoms there are better places to choose. If you want to quietly build up an emissary nation, then I would not suggest picking popular spots like the heart of Mordor. I will break my commentary down by region.

Mordor

A perfect location for a FP or DS team to start. There are many gold producing hexes and nice safe mountain retreats. A good team based around here could either attack the South Kingdom, or form a nice alliance to go on out and dominate the rest of Middle Earth. I would hesitate to recommend neutrals starting here due to that fact that they could be on the wrong end of an uneven fight. There are two prime very safe mountain spots for a FP or DS in southern Mordor at 3329 and 4028.

Rhun & the Iron Hills

There are a couple of interesting areas, starting with the old Long Rider capital at 4215. This is relatively safe, but you would need to get some armies in the field to protect your outlying pop centres from attack from Mordor. Neutrals may prefer to prevent others starting here by choosing the safe woodland (4413) to the east of the Sea of Rhun. This provides defence from attack and can see attacking armies coming your way. The third location, at the cross-roads at 3712 is an ideal location in a team game to block attackers coming out of Mordor to the north. However it is very exposed, has a poor economy and so may be less than ideal.

An article written for GSI stated that the Iron Hills would be a popular location. I agree it is a little less exposed than the plains of Rhovanian, but I feel that there are better places to start. The climate is poor and although you are unlikely to be hit early on, the hills afford little strategic defensive value.

Mirkwood

Mirkwood is the ideal location for neutrals to start. It is a nasty location for attacking armies to get into with the mixed forest hexes providing great cover. Armies move slowly so the nation has plenty of time to get agents / armies into place to meet the threat. Ideal places are around Sarn Goriwng or around 2912. The converse problem is that if it is hard for attackers to get in, then it will be difficult for you to move your armies out. Also you will have a sluggish economy with little chance of gold.

Fangorn

If tucked under the mountains a home in the Fangorn Forest is nice and safe if a little difficult to move armies out from. The economy will be reasonable, but not spectacular unless you went further out into the open ground containing hills and rough hexes. A capital around 2317 will give a reasonably secure position and is not likely to be too popular.

Harad & the Desert Wastes

By far and away the best economic powerhouse region is Haradwaith. Moreover it is in a good position to move up and attack the South Kingdom. The island at 2430 and the forest areas around the Havens of Umbar are both perfect for a naval nation. This region may be crowded though, so unless you are good at negotiating or are starting with friends in this area, it could be a potential early battlefield.

The desert edges along Southern Khand are another good out of the way spot. An agent / emissary position would be suitable for the corner, but assuming the area is not crowded at game start this is never going to be good for an army nation unless you have friends further north who can exchange pop centres. The economy will be strong, but the map might end up a bit dull.

Dunland & the Misty Mountains

There are some nice spots in Dunland that would go ideally with a friendly North Kingdom. The economy is reasonable and your map could be very useful. A nice naval position could be created at 1517 with the bonus of timber on site to help build more boats. A camp with a tower could block the bridge if the North Kingdom was not friendly and the bridge brought down if necessary. Another good naval spot is at 1321. Also a location in the hills and rough to the west of the Misty Mountains is strategically very interesting.

The southern Misty Mountains can be a great spot to start a FP or DS nation. With good solid defence afforded by the mountains your armies can span out either side of them to hit your unwary neighbours. Good relations with the North Kingdom would be an advantage here since together you could conquer most of Dunland. Your economy will be reasonable, although not spectacular and your map will be very illuminating. A suggested capital location would be 2117 which also gives a good view of the Gap of Rohan.

Arnor & Angmar

In terms of the climate this is not a great area to start in. The area around the old Rhudaur capital at 2008 is a prime spot for a nation with lots of nice hills and rough and mixed forest. A nice quick attack against the North Kingdom could take out 1407 or 1609 before the Kingdom really began to wake up. In conjunction with other nations attacking the North Kingdom around here could be a very strong opening gambit. A pop centre guarding the northern pass next to Goblin gate could also be a very useful tactical location.

The Blue Mountains

A good location for a naval or agent nation. The area is still magically warm, so the economy will still be fair. With lots of terrain types there is plenty here for all allegiances. If you want a more army orientated battle position however I don't suggest this area. Additionally the map won't give you a brilliant view.

The White Mountains

There are tons of nice potential gold producing hills & rough hexes there which will provide for a strong economy. Your map may be mostly sea, but if you go inside the mountains it is relatively safe. 1227 is very defensible in this regard and may be a good neutral position. However 2023 will give a better map and is reasonably safe, though more exposed to the South Kingdom.

I also would like to contribute to the LOTR-Film-discussion in the News from Bree. I have heard nothing of it before. At first, which company plans the film and who's the director?

About the actors, I have some different opinions than Travis. He seems to think that British actors are the worlds best - partly true, but don't forget the others! Jeremy Irons is clearly a nope for Aragorn! Much too slim and subtle. Let him shave and play Elrond (who was completely forgotten). For Aragorn, I see Kevin Costner or, still better, an unshaven Harrison Ford, with Kevin playing Boromir, then. Sean Bean is ok for Eomer.

But now for the big point. Sean Connery is Theoden, a king, not a Wizard, no doubt there. Which leaves Gandalf open for...Patrick Stewart! Yes, with long hair and beard! Only that he is too small...let's do some CGI-Tricks there!

About most other positions, I could agree with Travis. Let them have Brad Pitt dye his hair blonde and be Legolas, so that we can get our girl-friends into that movie! Rowan Atkinson as Wormtongue could be a real surprise, but he would have to act very, very carefully not to drown the cinema in laughter at his mere appearance. I rather think of Gary Oldman (remember him in 5th Element?), or, really weird - Jim Carrey.

Such people would probably be very costly, but that's not what we are talking about, because the movie is anyway doomed to be one of the most expensive works of cinema history if the important characters are played by good actors and if the special effects should be up to date, Industrial Light and Magic, for example.

Bernd Luehrsen.

The film is being made in three parts (just like the book). It will be directed by Peter Jackson who is pledged to making a film that will capture the excitement he felt as a child when first reading LOTR. It is being shot in New Zealand with unknown actors in all the lead roles, but cameo appearances by more famous faces. Sean Connery will not be in the film! More next issue...

Colin

Perhaps I am foolish to think I have something to say about ME-PBM, since I have only played 5 turns. On the plus side, I have read several articles and listened to current players talk about their successes and failures in other games. So, in response to the call for articles, I decided to put forth my ideas about Team Play and find out what others thought of them.

My basic thesis is that true team play by the Dark Side should give them significant advantages over the normal every nation for itself style of play. My assumption is that all ten players are primarily concerned with a team win, and willing to trust each other with full information and reliable debt payment at least into the middle game. In the opening moves, there are several critical activities that must occur for the Dark Side to emerge into the middle game with a strong position. Victory conditions should be ignored for at least the first ten turns. Keep a record of who provides what, but focus on what is needed for group success.

First, the basic principles of character development and economy building must be followed for all players. Most of this has been covered in separate player articles. My personal preference is to lean towards extra emissaries. More emissaries means more camps/villages that give resources necessary to build armies. The Dark Side is woefully short of population centers, and with inferior armies, can't count on capturing more than they lose. Of course, more emissaries means fewer of other characters, so those other characters must be used to the utmost.

Coordinated use of resources is also important for the Dark Side because of their weaker economies. Rather than buy from the market, they should transfer resources to each other. The Dog Lord and Long Rider can and should conjure as many mounts as possible. They will use some themselves, and can transfer extras to other front line nations such as the Dark Lieutants while those rich in leather can provide them the means to build Heavy Cavalry. In the early turns, since all Dark Side economies are negative, it is critical for each nation to raise 30,000gp in resource sales per turn. These should continue until every nation has 100,000gp in reserves. This approach will build cash reserves and prevent massive price deflation that some games have seen. It also means that your first few turns of recruiting will likely be Heavy Infantry without metal weapons or armor. The payoff in flexibility and lack of panic selling is great in later turns.

Information is critical. With all the Dark Side maps together, much information is available about the location and plans of the Free Peoples. Plotting everything on a master map can help a great deal in understanding the trends of the game, and observing targets of opportunity. Scouting for each other and exchanging rumours also makes a difference.

The borders of Mordor must be guarded against superior armies. Coordination of major attacks is critical. Dribbling in several small armies on successive turns is much less effective than moving in a single mass all at once. This principle is especially important in the 3024-3124 battlefield. Having the Dog Lord or Long Rider keep a large cavalry force with an able commander north in Rhovanion can be distracting to the Free peoples. Such forces should avoid enemy armies when possible since their purpose is to capture population centers (threatening is better than capturing), and keep significant forces chasing them.

Key assassinations of enemy commanders in the early turns should be especially effective, as few backup commanders are available in these moves. To maximize

the likelihood of success, the agent artifacts need to be placed with the best agents, without regard to which nation starts with which artifact. A 15 point agent artifact in the hands of a newer agent of the Cloud Lord (skill of 45 say) means that their assassination skill is at the 80 level, which should be good enough for most any Eothraim leader who is not guarded. That same artifact in the hands of a 35 point agent of (say) the Dog Lord only gives a skill level of 50, which is not likely to be successful. Transfer those agent artifacts to where they are most needed, without regard to nation. The Cloud Lord can steal enough to pay you back. Don't send the agents to the major battlefields as those will have backup commanders and guards. Go to the widely scattered armies that would otherwise tie down two or three of your armies trying to contain them. When you know the name of an enemy commander, an agent can move to their current location and Scout Army, follow to get in place for a kill the following turn.

Giving aid to the Dragon Lord and Witch King to prevent their early elimination is also crucial. The Dragon Lord is especially vulnerable if the Free Peoples decide to concentrate forces on him. By turn 4, he should have an emissary in Mordor ready to receive a backup capital. A swap with the Long Rider of 3329 for 3822 works well. It gives the Long Rider a recruiting center for Cavalry while providing the Dragon Lord with a secure backup city. The Witch King is also a challenge. It is difficult to get armies that far north, so the Dark Side must rely on agents. Getting several good agents in the area has the potential to make significant differences. However, the Neutrals can play a large role in this area, just as they do in the far south. The Witch King may also need a backup capital in Mordor if both the Dunlending and Rhudar go for the Free Peoples. Similarly, if the Corsairs and Haradwaith both go for the Free Peoples, the Quiet Avenger is in trouble. The Easterlings also swing weight in the far southeast and northwest. Neutral negotiations are such an involved topic that I will omit it here and hope that someone will write an article giving experiences and details.

I already mentioned that agent artifacts should be put in the hands of powerful agents, especially those of the Cloud Lord. There are many lost artifacts at the beginning of the game. Efforts to locate these should be started as early as possible. The exact characters doing the locating will vary, depending on initial spells, but by turn 3, there should be several Locate Artifact True spells cast each turn. With the new locate rules, I don't know what it will take to find the best artifacts, such as the Ring of Wind, but it won't hurt to put some mage artifacts on those doing the locating. Other characters should be out finding the artifacts, again without regard to nation. It is important to keep agent artifacts out of the hands of the Free Peoples, as their absence delays the need to guard your commanders by several turns.

Don't mess up your orders. One might think that obvious, but even experienced players have been known to get burned. A common error is making errors with map directions such as mixing up East and West. Another easy error is to put a percentage for Transport by Caravans (948) instead of the number of units. When the recipient sees 91 mounts instead of 1500, you may lose a battle because of this one. Finally don't miss your turns. If the mail is delayed and your most vulnerable position gets a Special Service, it can ruin your whole plan.

One final thought: in all your plans, think long term. Assuming you have competent opponents, this game is one of attrition and economics. Strategic development can make all the difference if you don't let yourself get knocked out early.

Drop-outs

We've all played in games where one of our team, for some obscure reason, decide they don't want to play on. I'm sure we can both think of people who are notorious for doing this and I think its about time something was done about it.

Lets face it, it isn't fair on the rest of the team if someone drops an important position, leaving the team weak in some area.

I want to propose a 'tax' on players, in that when they start a new game, a 10 non-refundable levy is charged. This could be used to pay for turns, for instance, beyond turn 10. This would guarantee at least a bit of committment.

Adrian Beattie

This is an interesting suggestion and obviously some way of deterring players from dropping out needs to be found. That said I'm not sure that Adrian's suggestion would work - it might even end up putting off players from starting up in new games!

That said, people new to the game are particularly prone to this, perhaps this is something which could be looked at - ideas anyone?

Colin Forbes



News from Bree

My thanks to everyone who has sent articles - it has not proved possible to fit them all in this time. I am still looking for more though, and in-game messages would be most welcome!

Please try to keep your articles to about 1100 words (or shorter), otherwise I may have to edit you severely!

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What would J.R.R. have thought?

by William Chasko

Would JRR have turned up his nose at ME-PBM, or would he have embraced it? I think his creative side would have been simultaneously tickled by the ingenuity of creating a 25-player game and horrified at the inevitable mechanistic quality of a 100% computer moderated game.

Let me say up front: I LOVE ME-PBM! I plan to play it for years to come. It is by far the best PBM game I've ever played! That said, let me now say that there is one quality of the game that beautifully recreates the atmosphere of the Trilogy: the epic confrontation between good and evil. I know players who refuse to play the DS as a matter of moral principle! They have read and re-read Tolkien and they *hate* Sauron and all his works. They'd rather undergo a full IRS audit than play the Dog Lord (maybe that's going too far...). There are other players who revel in the *badness* they can express while playing the servants (BWAH, HA, HA, HA, ha, ha.....). The game reflects well the apocalyptic quality of the historic confrontations between the elves and Angmar found in the Silmarillion.

But, in some other respects, great and small, the game falls short of Tolkien's vision. Being one who paid great attention to details, JRR would have appreciated an Arthedaini character named Argeleb II, but I think he would have taken exception to many omissions in the game.

First, there are hardly any hobbits! I know, hobbits were few and far between in any age of Middle Earth, but hobbits figure so prominently in "The Hobbit" and the trilogy that at least one hobbit character (presumably an Arthedain) seems appropriate. Some fearsome relative of Bullroarer Took with ranks of 20/10/10/0 and maybe a 40 stealth? With wounds healing twice as fast as normal?

Another omitted element which I would have greatly enjoyed would have been the inclusion of the great steeds of the trilogy: Shadowfax, Snowmane, Arod, Hasufeld - where are they? These legendary mounts could provide both combat and movement modifiers to characters.

Where is the traditional elven-dwarven enmity? The only reflection of this I have ever heard of in the game is a comical tale of a lone dwarf following a Sindar company around for turn after turn, failing every time he issued JOIN COMPANY. And what about the enmity of dwarf for horse? Dwarven cav is not prohibited in the game; indeed, it must be formidable given the dwarven advantage of force march without penalty.

What about the palantiri? In the game, palantiri give you nothing but "Scout Area". It's clear from the trilogy that they were once used for communication from one palantir site to another. It's also clear that late in the third age, with palantiri in the hands of Sauron and Saruman, the palantiri were dangerous to use and the information they gave was often ambiguous and not at all limited to facts about armies.

But leaving all these relatively minor considerations behind, I think JRR would have been most miffed at the preponderance of military and economic factors in the game over character actions and encounters. Consider: what do you send your rank 50 mage into harms way to obtain? Why a +2500 combat sword for your army commander, of course.

To the best of my knowledge, not one of the games to have ended so far featured the One Ring (*Editor's note: I'm sure some games have ended this way - has anyone been in such a game?*) Rumors I hear suggest that the ring has only even been picked up once or twice, and the character who had the Ring could not hold on to it for more than one turn. The Ring has never once made it back to Barad Dur!

Despite the former potency of agent actions, and the nifty stuff mages can do, the focus of the game remains on the military action. Character action can be decisive in bringing down a nation, but usually it is the onslaught of armies which eliminates positions. How many positions have been wiped because they lost there last viable capital? How many have been eliminated because they went bankrupt? Now, how many have been eliminated because all of their characters were killed?

Look at the focus of most articles; they concentrate on military operations and how best to build your economy. Character actions are secondary. I think JRR would have preferred a game where the desperate actions of two lonely, tired, hungry hobbits could determine the outcome, and not somebody's 5,000 man ST/ST heavy cavalry army. Come to think of it, I might prefer that myself; but, I don't know - I like the game as it stands so much...



shelOB's weB

Middle Earth on the Internet

This issue I thought it might be worthwhile taking a look at some of the broader Tolkien-related sites on the web. You would be amazed at the sheer number of Tolkien nuts out there! I've picked on three sites of potential interest (also broadly representative of what you can find in web-land)

The Tolkien Archive

www.tolkien-archive.com

This has just about everything you will ever need to know about the works of the Professor.

There's loads of Middle Earth stuff, including race histories, family trees, pictures, various essays and texts - and even audio files of Middle Earth related music and the spoken word!

SDGeard's Site

www.ozemail.com.au/~sdgeard/tolkien.html

Less informative than the Tolkien Archives, but run with a great deal of enthusiasm. There's loads of stuff to look at and even a discussion forum (though be warned, this is the sort of place you hang around if you're after a discussion about the origin of wraiths or the linguistics of Middle Earth).

The Gondor & Arnor page

www.micds.pvt.k12.mo.us/stud_fac/faculty/jhoughto/jrrt/cover.htm

Proof that some people really take things far too seriously....

Next time I'll update the list of MEPBM related sites as well as looking at some more general Tolkien web sites (believe me, there's a whole world out there...) If anyone knows of some cool (or embarassingly cringeworthy) sites out there, let me know!

Fourth Age Fiction: part 1

by Dave Tomley

The day dawned bright and clear, if cool, sun glinting off the towers of Goldberg, the dark red flag of the Golteck's hanging limply from the mast at the top of the castle.

Leonora surveyed her army, 2400 Easterling footmen surrounded the city, the seven war machines (she had wanted 100 but the resources were just not available) all poised to batter the main gate. Her men were young and inexperienced but they would fight well. Word told her that morale in the city was poor, she hoped the report was right since she did not think she could defeat an army of 10,000 zealous peasants guarding the walls.

The High Mage Lanstorm, no mean commander and tactician himself, had accompanied her army, along with some of the more famous mages of the Curunir. He told her that the auguries were favourable and that their battle magic would help carry the day. She hoped he was correct, those were bloody big walls.

She watched as the High Mage strode out to the city gate under the banner of challenge, his wife Xanthia accompanied him, along with her aid Leander; normally she would have gone herself, but now was the perfect time to give Leander a taste of real combat.

The challenges were delivered. The Golteck Mage Noltep delivered a flowery speech from the safety of his tower, declining the offer. It was the same speech he had used last week. The Skargnakh spy Silion also declined Leander's challenge, perhaps he was not as big a fool as they all thought.

Then out stepped a sandy haired youth. "Who challenges the mighty Morodon, emissary of the Goltecks?"

"I" replied Xanthia.

"A woman? Ha! Go back to your cooking bitch."

"The precepts dictate that you must accept or refuse." replied

Xanthia, unpeterbed. "Choose Morodon."

"Very well, die sorceress!". Morodon launched himself at Xanthia, daggers clutched in white knuckled fists. She danced aside easily weaving a spell of armoring to protect her new

robes. Morodon danced round her dodging the minor incantations she threw at him.

"Is that the best you can do?" he screamed.

"Finish it." spoke the High Mage.

"As my husband commands!" replied Xanthia with a sly wink. Morodon exploded, showering everyone with blood, bone and gore.

"Damn!" thought Xanthia, "Too much essence". She casually flicked one of Morodon's fingers off the hem of her blood splattered robes.

"I wonder if I have got time for a bath before the battle?" she muttered outloud.

The pleasantries done with, Yeogi Lanstorm signalled his battlemages to begin the spells of deflection and blessing. He motioned Leonora to advance.

"Here goes!" though Leonora - "Charge lads".

She heard the slap and boom of the war machines hurling their loads against the stout city gates. Arrows rained down, but bounced off the magical barrier above her army. "Maybe these mages are useful after all." she pondered.

The gates still stood when she arrived, "Oh well" she thought "time to do it the old fashioned way." "RAMS!" she bellowed.

After an hour of pounding the gates were finally starting to look shaky, when suddenly chaos erupted.

The magical shield wavered and collapsed and once again arrows rained into her unprotected ranks.

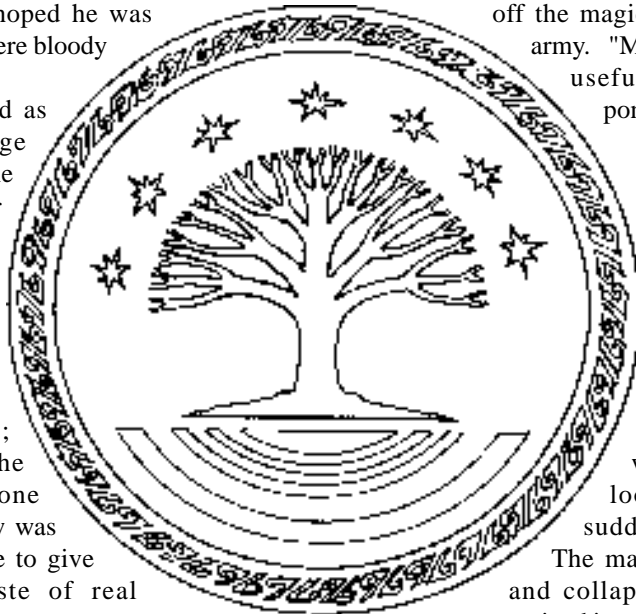
Naphtha and fire quickly followed and men fell screaming all around her, like human torches.

"Retreat" she cried. Enough was enough. So much for battle magic.

Later that day she counted the cost of the failed assault. Over 1000 men dead and barely a scratch on the city. Leonora shook her head in dismay. The High Mage had shouted at her for retreating, but his heart wasn't in it. He too was bitterly disappointed. About the only things that could go wrong now were enemy reinforcements or assassins. That could wait for tomorrow.

She had no intention of assaulting the city again without more troops but she lay siege anyway. No point in letting them get a good night's sleep! The High Lord had sent his two best "men" into the city at day break. With luck they would do better than the army.

To be continued...



the finishing post

Games recently ended

1650

Game 1

This game has recently finished with a storming victory for the evil side again with JOhan Granksvist (Corsairs) taking a narrow victory on 1625 vps, the Cloud Lord (Alan Spicer) and Witch King (Steve Marlow) in the running following on 1467.

Game 116

This three week game joins the throng - with evil once again winning - and the Corsairs (Bruce Johnson) taking the individual victory by a massive margin (2200vps) - the Doglord 2nd with 1250 vps (Rob Randall) and 3rd Witch King, (Ian Harris).

Game 6

Another game finish in quick succession. Although Colin Forbes playing the Haradwaith had a commading lead being Neutral he failed to change allegiance on the last turn leaving the way open for the Long Rider on 1508 points to win, the Easterlings on 1300 and the Dark Lieutenants 3rd on 1267. Congratulations from the Italian team were passed on.

2950

Game 204

A victory for the Cloud Lord, Gianluca Meluzzi, congratulations!

Fourth Age

Game 41

The only recent Good win for the Noldo (the Northmen only 43 points behind) in the presence of David Slatter. You see Fourth Age games do end...

Game 40

The first FA game over here I believe - has finally (turn 35 only though) finished. Mike Sankey (North Kingdom) comes in first on 2150 points, closely followed by Andy Wright on 2000 for another evil win. Colin Forbes comes in the placings again on 1967 pts.

I would love to see a Neutral win for this game - anyone care to oblige? :-)

A Diary of a Three Way International Fourth Age Grudge Match

Staring...

Europe as the 9 Neutral Nations
Canada as the Good North Kingdom with the 7 Dwarves

America as the Evil South Kingdom and its 7 Goblins (Orcs with heads between their legs)

Turn 1: Preparation

And so it came to pass that the Kingdoms grew apart from each other. Those in the South began to look to the old teachings of Sauron in the hope of gaining more power and they associated with dark forces. Orcs, Goblins and other foul creatures became regular visitors to the towns of the South Kingdom and its tribal allies. Banes which had been hidden since the end of the Third Age were eagerly sought.

In the North things were not much better, the Elder races were once again beginning to influence the workings of men. Elves and Dwarves, each with their own agendas offered items of power in return for their own needs being met, chief among these being access to the Mithril which both prized so greatly.

The true men of Middle Earth were appalled by this apparent regression towards the divi-

sions that had seen suffering in Middle Earth through three ages. Appeals were made to both Kingdoms and their misguided allies to stop before the inevitable conflicts began.....but nobody listened.

The final straw came when both Kingdoms, in their final act of unity, declared that the mountains of Middle Earth were restricted zones, access by warrant. It was a blatant attempt to weaken the remaining Neutral peoples and force them to choose a side, but the leaders of the nine remaining tribes met in secret and a plan was developed. The Neutral nations agreed to the plans of the Kingdoms but demanded ridiculous amounts of compensation. This was rejected and the arguing began. In the end the only concession gained was land rights for three of the Neutral nations. The Kingdoms celebrated their success and poured scorn upon the Neutral chieftains. If only they had seen the smiles upon the faces of the Neutral negotiators as they rode to their secret meeting place.

Soon all would be in place. All other races would be wiped from the face of Middle Earth (except maybe those nice Hobbits) and peace could be given the chance that it deserved.

From out of the West

We wants you to come to the convention my preciousss...

Don't forget that the Flagship Convention is up and coming - details on your front page. You should have also received a Flagship ratings sheet. Please spend a moment to fill it in and send it on as it is often what encourages players to join although word of mouth is best.

As per usual your hard work to make the game great and the newsletter equally awesome is much appreciated. Every kind word makes our job that much more pleasurable (and vice versa of course!) Have fun and I hope to meet some of you at the Flagship convention in London.

I feel that the game is growing from strength to strength. We will be targetting the old players who have left the fold after the Convention. (I intend to get a Beginners game organised for Flagship - probably 2950 as it is more sedate - any offers to be a Mentor for the newbies?)

If you have any good ways of getting new players into the game - contact details, societies that might be interested, Student Unions etc then please get in touch with some details.

Finally, Harlequin games would like to play the worst of the Rest. We would like to create a Fourth Age game with us on the one side - and two other sides as well. Obviously this would make it hard to input the orders. I would be



New ways of dealing with Shelob...

1: Send in the Hamster!

interested in players opinions. We could keep one GM back to do the orders and problem solving but would prefer to play as a team if at all possible.

Other than that I want to play Middle Earth again.... pretty please my preciousss!

Clint

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