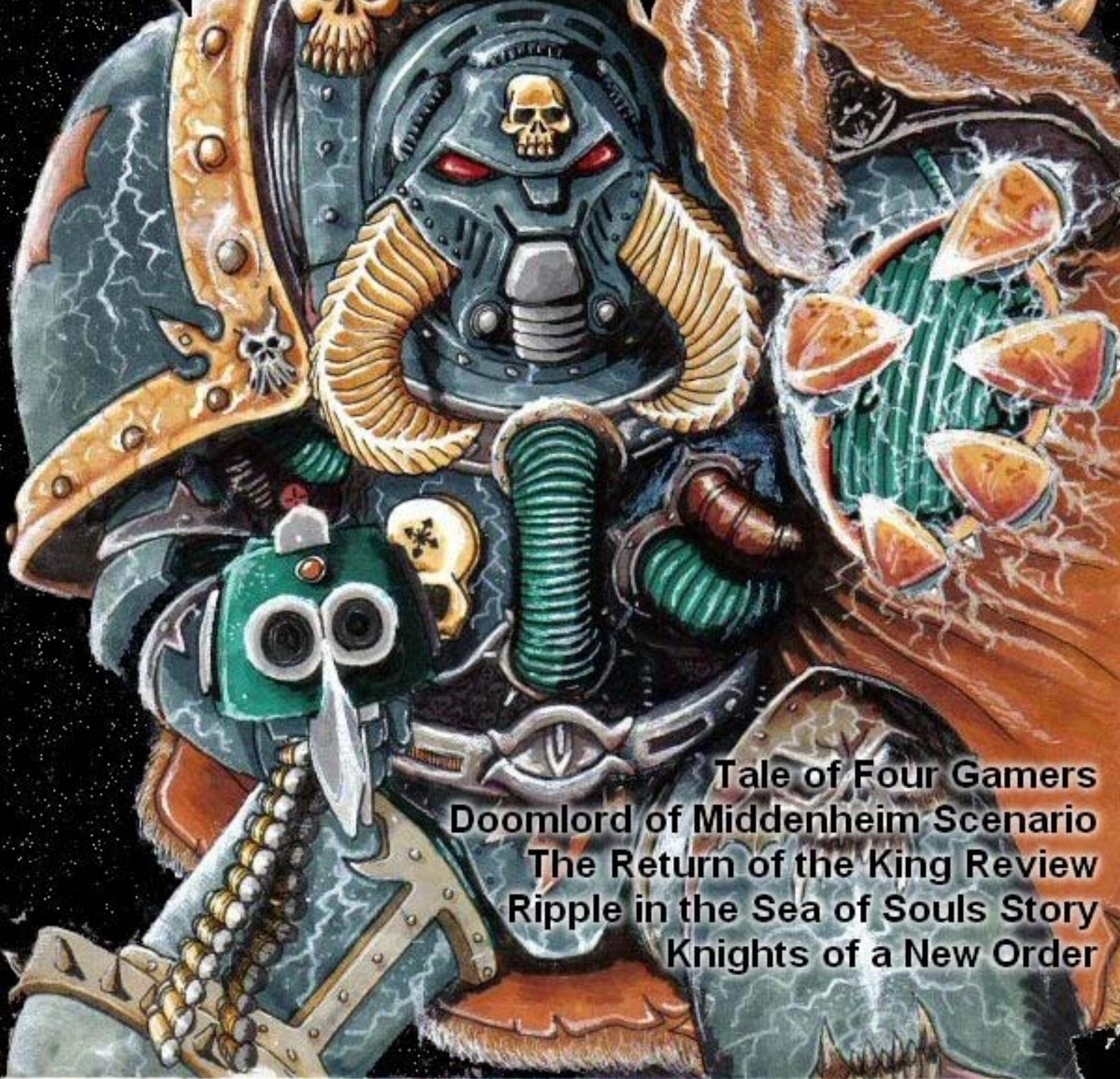


Issue 1

THE ORACLE



Tale of Four Gamers
Doomlord of Middenheim Scenario
The Return of the King Review
Ripple in the Sea of Souls Story
Knights of a New Order

A Word From Your Editor

Or two...

So here we are, at last. Through every horror imaginable (and some not), the first issue of The Oracle is out to the masses. For months, there has been speculation abounding the forums. What are those pesky vets saying about us? What about the kittens? Oh god, think about the kittens!

No, to some dismay, no kittens have been harmed...yet. What follows in these hallowed pages are articles and intel on the very games we love. From Man-o-War, to Lord of the Rings, we plan to cover every product Games Workshop has to offer, and even beyond- IK Warmachine, Confrontation, and many others. Don't feel displaced. We value your input. Are there Tactics for Wood Elves you desire to write about? A painted mini you want to show off? Is there a question you desperately want to have answered? Email us. There's a good chance it'll end up in print, and your name in lights (so to speak). We plan on having interviews, overviews, intraviews, and anything else you can think of that ends in "views". Battle Reports, reviews, commentary, and the occasional allusion to BDSM will keep your attention, gripping fervently as you grip the pages in sheer joy.

We will bring you unbiased opinions. We're not here to sell you anything, nor are we here to make you yell in the middle of a store. Just what you want to know, when you want it.

All of this, free for your pleasure. Distribute this all you wish. Litter the parking lot of the local mall. Spread the word across the endless bounds of the internet. The Oracle is here!

In Star Trek, the Redshirts were always first to die....coincidence?
- Heretic.
Portent Oracle Editor.

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heretic:



24, long into the throws of marriage and parenthood. My 2 main hobbies are so far apart, it's a wonder. On one hand, I build custom motorcycles, and on the other, I'm into Sci-Fi and Fantasy, specifically Warhammer and WH40k. I've been playing since about 1998. Started with Bretonians, moved over to Dark Elves. Then went into 40k. Collected a Space Marine Vanilla army, then moved on to Dark Eldar, Eldar, Chaos, Necrons, and Imperial Guard. Started getting deep into the fluff aspect, and since then I've found the fluff to be even more interesting than the game. Currently working on a new Bretonian force, as well as waiting until 4th Ed. to revamp my Chaos into something a bit more interesting. When it's ready, the Oracle will know.

Christine:



I came to the hobby at some time around 1988 but at that time was just messing around with Napoleonic soldiers that my late uncle had collected. One fateful day in 1992 however I came across a

copy of White Dwarf and the rest as they say is history.

My first army was Blood Angels during the days of Rogue Trader. Since then I have collected several ork waags, a squat horde, a tyranid swarm, traitor marines from 3 different chapters, black templars, imperial guard and most recently Tau. Or to put it another way I love 40k with a passion.

I've dabbled with most games systems on the market and am currently tinkering with Warmachine and Starsiege Rebellion in my spare time.

I can usually be found in the 40k Forums although I occasionally surface in random musings or other non-gw games. Currently I head up the Tale of 4 Gamers for Oracle so it's all my fault...

Aaron:



I'm 22, from London, England and I'm apparently the patron of this outfit.

I play most Games Workshop wargames and my main passions are Warhammer 40,000, Blood Bowl and Necromunda. My main claims to wargaming fame are that I once came top at the UK Grand Tournament (after 0 games and on alphabetical order...) and I wrote The Joke.

Away from wargaming my main passions are equally nerdy. I enjoy music, films, computing and watching my beloved Spurs finish mid-table in the English Premier League for yet another season.

I hope you enjoy the Oracle and if you don't - I blame Nick!

Anseur:



I can typically be found in the Random Musings forum on Portent, and doing the odd job for nick the tech priest. When I'm not on Portent I'm usually at work, where I do PC tech support for the Dixons group. My job here is the publisher. I put together all the articles you see after they have been approved by our Editor heretic.

Lord Lucifer:



Well now, how to introduce myself and make a good first impression, in the hopes that somehow you guys will disregard all the absolute crap I

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spout from here on in... Okay, brief history! Been in the hobby for about 10 years now, played most systems, currently focussing on Warhammer Fantasy and Lord of the Rings until 40K sorts itself out. I have amassed a vast army of Empire troops, in a delightful one-tone camo-grey colour scheme and also have smaller fledgling forces of Lizardmen, Dwarves, and Greenskins (not to mention my 40K Orkz and various other armies) I can normally be found stirring up in High Elf revision threads in the Fantasy forum, rambling incoherently in Random Musings, and waxing nostalgic in 40K Backgrounds.

My association with The Oracle is as one of the three Sub-Editors, chiefly involved as a Fantasy liaison (if you have any Fantasy-related submissions, I'm your man!) and the unofficial minister of Hobbit Affairs.

Now, considering there is a large portion of staff devoted to 40K working on the Oracle, I'm more than likely going to need a bit of enthusiasm with submissions from the Fantasy section of Portent in order to keep up. I look forward to working with you.

obrienjj



I'm usually found in the 40k and RM forums. I'm 26 and have been playing GW games since 1993. I started with Bloodbowl and moved to 40k and now I play several Chaos

armies. The story of the Horus Heresy has always appealed to me. I may build all of the traitor legions before I move on. I am one of the sub-editors for the Oracle. I will mostly be focusing on the 40k side. I hope you enjoy the e-zine.

Lavfluris:



Ten years ago, I saw a copy of White Dwarf 170 on the shelf in my local newsagent and like most of us, I was immediately drawn to the image of the Space Marine.

Since then I have been involved in almost all of Games Workshop's products. I have always played Warhammer 40,000 with the Ultramarines being my first army when their Codex was first released. I spent four years playing Warhammer with my Chaos, Undead and Wood Elves armies before moving solely back to Warhammer 40,000 and then Necromunda and GorkaMorka.

Since returning to Warhammer 40,000, I have collected a handful of armies including the Tyranids, the Emperor's Children and now the Thousand Sons. None of these armies were ever, or are not yet painted, a feat I am not really that proud of...

I can normally be found lurking on most of Portent's forums and now only post in Random Musings, Forum Comments and 40K Background from time to time. Much of my Portent time though is spent arranging the Portent Tournament, probably the most enjoyable events I have ever run.

And as one of the four luckless souls involved in the Tale of Four Gamers, you'll be having to put up with me for a few months to come.

Zeb

I have enjoyed Warhammer since my army service, ten years ago, a friend of mine brought with him a High Elf and a Dwarf army. Needless to say, I got hooked. I'm only into the fantasy aspect (including Mordheim) and have a pretty good sized Druchii army, I have sold off Dwarfs and Wood Elves and have a small High Elf force and an assembled (but not painted) Beast army.

I have recently started my own company, a company that makes profit of my other interest, Whisky (I'm a collector there too). I'm offering tastings for other companies as a consultant, and let me tell you, it's great to make money on a hobby.

But in the end, I'm a fulltime student of Geology/Ecogeology that turns 32 later this year.

Toddy



I'm a shaved monkey.

Finally, the proof that Elvis ain't dead, its...

The Return Of The King!

It could be said that it is because of J. R. R. Tolkien's Middle Earth fictions that Games Workshop exists. A half century ago, professor Tolkien, inspired by the meaningless scrawling of 'there once was a hobbit who lived in a hole' upon a student's exam paper (if I am recalling this correctly), penned *The Hobbit*, and the wholly successful and celebrated *Lord of the Rings* series, creating from various folklore origins something wholly new, what was to be known as the Fantasy genre.

A quarter of a century later, Games Workshop was conceived.

Pasty-faced geeks combined their two favourite obsessions, military recreations most notably set in a medieval period, and *Lord of the Rings*-style Fantasy, in a world roughly mirroring earth, in order to take advantage of the ranges of military and fantasy figures available at the time. Born of the labours of role-playing buffs, Tolkien fans, and military enthusiasts, a games system was created to let people indulge in a blend of semi-historical/semi-fantasy warfare.

Not long afterwards a Science-Fiction offshoot followed, and the two cores of the Games Workshop entity were set.

So it was rather a sense of home-coming, a sort of full-circle, when just over two years ago Games Workshop recreated the screen adaptations of *The Lord of the Rings* as a table-top strategy game.

Well, that's the history of it. So how did it really go?

The forging of the Ring

Well, to be quite honest, most gamers appear to have been rather indifferent to *The Lord of the Rings*. It hadn't really taken off within any of the established gaming clubs nearby, and there have been no tournaments of it. I suspect the case was much the same elsewhere in the world. Most gamers just passed it by.

When considering quite why this is, I think I can pin-point a few reasons, which have some validity to them.

Firstly, cost. Most of the LotR range is metal, whereas G.W.'s other core games are predominantly plastic, multi-part kits. With the Fellowship game, this meant that unless you were keen on owning an army of Moria Goblins, or the last alliance of *The Second Age* (go Númenorians!) your bank balance was going to take a serious dive. Even though the game sizes are comparatively small, with most miniatures available only in metal, a Mordor or Isengard force just wasn't feasible.

The Two Towers remedied this somewhat, making the army of the White Hand mostly an affordable prospect (unless you wanted a lot of Dunlendings or Wargs) and a wholly human army of cavalry a very interesting alternative.

Of course, with *Return of the King*, the situation just got a whole lot better. With full Gondorian, Mordor, Isengard, Rohirrim, Moria, and Elven forces fully affordable through judicious use of plastic core, and augmented by metal

specialist units (berserkers, Knights of Minas Tirith, Elrond Half-Elven!)

Secondly, the game system appears to be very simplistic. This criticism is right, but it shouldn't really be a criticism. The *Lord of the Rings* rules are rather more subtle than simple. It's like the game *Othello* (minute to learn, lifetime to master).

You can't simply play one small demo game of *Lord of the Rings* to judge it. It is a far more involving game than first impressions of the uninitiated may lead you to believe. Claiming initiative, knowing when to move and where, how to misdirect and feint without weakening any forces dedicated to achieving a set objective, dissecting enemy formations to help guarantee victory, sacrificing models, partnering your forces to cause maximum damage, and living long enough to fulfil the mission, all require a level of subtle thought. This can't be mathematically worked out like *Warhammer Fantasy*, given the free-form nature of *Lord of the Rings* (with your forces able to roam as much as you wish, you can't count combat bonuses and ranks to determine a winner).

The playing style is vastly different to other Games Workshop games, but the feel of it is just as good, in my opinion.

The other major difference in playing style is, this game is not a set competition. It is narrative and objective based. The fact that there is no 'default mission' encourages more of a thematic game, with less

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instances of the more unsavoury "Win At All Costs" behaviour that can crop up in other wargames. The atmosphere for Lord of the Rings tends to be, in my personal experience, friendlier.

Give the game a few more tries. There's nothing quite so nail-bitingly close and tense as playing the breakthrough scenario, where the forces of Good must break through the enemy lines and escape off the far table edge, on a shorter and less terrain-covered battlefield, or where victory comes down to the last remaining Elven archer sprinting to escape from the last remaining few Goblins. And nothing quite so hilarious as the tense but ultimately fruitless combats in the closing rounds of that mission (swing and a miss! Swing and a miss! FREEDOM!) Then, there was the problem of the rather limited scope of the game.

In the Fellowship, the choice of forces was rather limited, especially compared to G.W.'s other games. You could choose an evil force consisting of a couple of Goblins, a couple of Orcs, and a few Uruk Hai. Or, you could have some Númenoreans, some second age Elven warriors, and a few Wood Elves.

As a tactical narrative game it was brilliant, but as a full-blown wargame, the lack of large forces was simply crap. Too bland, too few options.

This was helped by the Two Towers edition, with large forces of cavalry, berserkers, rangers, and a plethora of other troops, to add that much more flavour to your troops. Now with Return of the King, things are expanding to a respectable size.

The forces of Good and Evil have a good range of troop options even if you restrict yourself to a certain

theme (Rohirrim, Gondorian, Lothlórien/Elven, Mordorian, Isengarder, Dwarven, Goblinoid, In Aid of the Fellowship, The Warriors of the Second Age, The Osgiliath Garrison, and much more).

And finally, the big problem. The Return of the King has been released. The third part of the Lord of the Rings series, where to from here?

Well, the good news is, G.W. isn't restricted to releasing ONLY games and items that feature in the film, and The Return of the King isn't the end of it. In fact, the Return of the King boxed set isn't even the end of the RotK! The size and scope of the final part of the Lord of the Rings series is quite an extensive thing to cover, and in order to do the best job possible, and make sure there is interest for a good deal of time to come, there will be expansions for this third LotR game (where we'll get to use the Knights of Dol Amroth, and the Citadel Guard!). Undoubtedly this will also mean the inclusion of the Haradrim with Oliphants perhaps, and a few other bits and bobs not yet included in the main rulebook for RotK, with all the associated scenarios.

Beyond the King-related work, there is also rather a large scope for expansion (in much the same vein as the Shadow and Flame expansion) and I have heard mention of a game for the Battle of the 5 Armies from The Hobbit.

Who knows, maybe it'll extend right to the very ancient mythology of Middle Earth, giving you the chance to face off against Morgoth? Pure speculation, or rather a 'Wouldn't it be nice?' thought, but, needless to say there's quite a lot they can do to keep this side of the hobby going for a fair few years still.

So all in all, there's no real reason

NOT to get into Lord of the Rings right now.

The Power of the Ring

Now as for the actual game itself, the Lord of the Rings strategy game has been well-honed by this point, with the more ambiguous sections in the rules explained more clearly and the rules now more concise and definite, covering more possibilities. The inclusion of rules for Banners is a positive, and they now become an excellent rallying point for your forces. The tendency of your troops to home-in on this most valuable piece of cloth, and fight their hardest there, is quite inspiring and fitting of the morale-boosting effects of banners.

Having the more complete collection of units and characters in the one tome is also a relief beyond measure.

Really, there are no irritating inconsistencies I've encountered with the rules yet that hasn't been cleared up, although my own personal experience isn't the most extensive in the world.

I think it is about time to discuss the strengths of The Lord of the Rings battle games.

A lot of this will sound like repetition from pointing out the 'weaknesses' done earlier. This is because the 'weaknesses' of the game are rather just points of difference that G.W. gamers are unfamiliar with, which are the games biggest drawback and greatest strength. It's something different, and I choose to see that as a good thing.

The game is much more free-flowing than Fantasy and 40K, having a more fluid nature. This is a

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result of a number of factors, such as each model being and acting as an individual with no required formation rules, and the non-static fighting thanks to being forced back... this is a big one actually. Sometimes, it tends to be notoriously difficult to kill enemies, but all you have to do to force them back is win a fight, which makes it harder to hold a tight defensive. The battle-line can bend and surge, and it's all very impressive if considered aesthetically. It just FEELS right.

A strong defensive position, faced with stiff opposition, can buckle under the strength of the assault, lose their beneficial formation, and be systematically destroyed. Counter to this, a foolhardy assault will simply rebound off a good defense, and then find itself on the defensive!

Well, it's a skirmish game. It is, in fact, a skirmish game with a brain. It works well in simple, logical rules that are easy to follow, and represents brilliantly a game that is roughly half-way between Warhammer and Mordheim. In fact, it is a far superior Skirmish game to Mordheim (although Mordheim is far and away the better campaign game, as it works on a progressive campaign system, the closest LotR officially has is a 'narrative campaign').

On this low-level, it does sort of make sense. Models run on their own, with relatively small forces engaging. Formations are adopted only if they are useful, and abandoned when unnecessary. The battle-lines can break and the careful arrangement of supporting

troops thrown into disarray, with heavy penalties when your own troops start tripping over each other while being forces back by their adversaries. Archers can make fighting retreats, turning to outright flight when the enemy approaches too close.

The shared turn format (I move, you move, I shoot, you shoot, we both punch each other up) makes the game feel a bit more 'real-time strategy' than the turn-based Fantasy/40K, and gives more of an air of desperate struggle for survival. The game completely lacks the annoying sense of "Okay, first I'll kick YOU in the nuts, then, if you don't fall over, you get to kick ME in the nuts, and then we'll just keep going till one of us falls down" combat that Warhammer, and 3rd Ed. 40K have. You no longer have to have the durability of month-old pre-chewed bubblegum to survive in combat. Being able to out-fight your opponent is just as important to your survival rate as being able to live through a smacking from a pointy stick in order to get your chance to strike back.

The simple rules are simple because they WORK. You would be hard-pressed to find contradiction in the rules. Simple, sometimes, IS better. Now, I won't say the game is better than Warhammer or 40K because the rules are simpler. Face it, sometimes we like the really detailed rules and complex game mechanics... sort of. But the fact that it is different to Warhammer is a strength.

Put it this way, the rules are simple and straightforward, easy to learn,

and hard to 'bend' (unlike the loophole-ridden core G.W. games). This all means that you really ARE playing your opponent and not the rules. How many Fantasy Khorne players have felt they were playing against their Frenzy penalties more than they were playing against their opponents?

The whole nature of the game itself is very different.

With Warhammer, the game came first, then the story was made to accommodate it. With Lord of the Rings, a brilliant story was first written, and then the game was made to accommodate that.

The result is a game that encourages entertainment over competitiveness. The bitter rules-lawyering doesn't hold so much in this game. It's a narrative, going on themes and backgrounds, inviting you to explore the works of Tolkien and immerse yourself in Middle Earth. For the gamer that likes winning most, this holds less appeal. But for those that really love background detail, the game has the best fluff ever written.

I guess, all in all, it's a more social, creative-aimed game, whereas Warhammer and 40K are the more competition-minded ones.

That about wraps up this not-so-brief look at some of the pros and cons of the Lord of the Rings games. Join us next month as I, your humble Minister of Hobbit Affairs, discuss 'theme' forces for your Lord of the Rings gaming.

~ Lord Lucifer

Ripple in the Sea of Souls

A short 40k story

by Chaoswithchains(aws)

The ravaged Imperial Battlecruiser fell away through the void of deep space, *like a bird crippled in midair*, thought Luther as he looked at the scene shown on the crystal display unit. Fires jetted out of leaks in the previously air-tight hull as trapped air was released and superheated, creating pins of light on the vast flank of the ship.

Luther turned his gaze from the display unit, observing as if for the first time the half dozen brother-marines that shared the claustrophobic boarding torpedo with him. Decked in ancient, deep red Power armour, none in their original form—they were blessed by millennia in the palm of the warp. All are from the most holy Word Bearer Chapter, the first to see the truth, before even venerated-Warmaster Horus.

In his mind he felt their minds and souls with his warp sense—the emotions, the fire of anger and bloodlust, the putrid sickliness of fear, the stirring warmth of anticipation. A latent psychic ability he had cultivated and exercised that had proved useful many a time. He grasped the shaft of his Crozius Arcanum, gifted to him when he served the False-Emperor. Now it was mutated and warped, its skull-symbol inscribed with most holy symbols of the Powers of Chaos.

"Powers of Chaos", Luther muttered to himself under his Skull faced helmet, contemplating the phrase so often used. There were no separate powers of Chaos, they were all different aspects of the same entity. As there were different facets that make up the human mind, so the warp has many different factions. At least,

that was his perception of it. There were many ways one could assess the ineffable warp, his perception may be nearer the ultimate "truth" than most of his brother-marines but maybe the warp was incomprehensible for the human mind, even one as enhanced and as experienced as Luther. *Was not the warp the sum total of every mind in the universe?* Anything that felt somehow reacted to the unkind universe it was born into had a voice, the sound of the screaming mind caused a ripple in the sea of souls. The mere mind of an ant would cause no more of a disturbance than a grain of sand dropped into an ocean, as an ant or other such insect did not worry or think, so its influence was mostly harmonious with the rest of nature. However the more advanced the mind, the more it was racked with worry, with doubt, and conflict.

Now each emotion caused a disturbance, a uniqueness, a difference, this created a sense of self, and so the disturbance became a crude, slumbering consciousness and as more humans voiced their opinions and emotions to the cold universe, so the disturbance grows until it becomes a storm. A mighty current that rages, echoing across the eternity of the warp until it becomes so loud that it screams itself into full awareness, and thus the Chaos powers were born, created from the screaming souls of man crying out at the unfairness of existence.

That was what they followed, the unified thoughts, beliefs and emotions of all creatures. The collective mind of the universe, truly an entity of total beauty and complexity, surely the only thing worthy of worship, of veneration.

Luther's thoughts were interrupted by the vibrations of the Chaos Hulk growing larger and more violent, the metal rattled and vibrated in a crescendo that jolted Luther and his companions almost of their seats. It climaxed with a deafening roar and Luther's auto-senses blotted it out to prevent his ears from bleeding. The display screen flared white as the Warp-plasma cannon of Herald of Eternal Damnation spewed white fire over the flank of the Battlecruiser, stripping the hull of its beautiful decoration, leaving only mangled wreckage.

Surely the time has come to strike the Loyalist heretics, thought Luther. Their defense batteries are now reduced to molten droplets and tangled wreckage. He felt his primeval bloodlust rise inside him, as it always did. Luther reached inside himself and encouraged it to grow, they would serve him well soon. The Warp in the aspect of the ravaging hound, Khrono to many, would drink deep tonight.

The distorted chine echoed in his helmet as Brother-Seneschal Krithener announced his presence on the comm-link. "Brother-Chaplain Luther, the annotated time is upon us, the time of prayer and wait is over, thou shall strike as the modus operandi dictates. Souls unto Chaos."

"Souls unto Chaos!" choured Luther and his companions.

"We shall strike a mortal blow unto the pulsating heart of the loyalist vessel." Stated Luther to his companions. "Purging it of the unworthy

souls, we shalt possess its husk and animate its corpse".

"But that is in the future, as the Weaver of fate has revealed. First we must be with the imminent. Make our prayers to the gods that drive us, soon the Loyalist fools shall be blessed by the truth, and we shall strip the lies that cloud their souls as we strip their skin from their flesh."

Luther rose from his seat and delicately withdrew a glass vial containing the heart-blood of a captive Adepta Sororitas Sister he sacrificed exactly 3024 minutes before. Sprinkling a small amount on each of his Bother-Marines in the Torpedo-Fureor, Tupis, Contamino, Odiuous, Profantios and Annullon- he blessed each with a prayer to Chaos. "Masters of the light and dark, bearers of the truth, Lords of souls and minds. I devote this soul to thy service. The Raving Hound bring forth the rage in thy vessel, implant your burying wrath in his being, unleash a crimson tide in mind and act, let him be thy scythe for your most holy harvest. Weaver of fate, spin a glorious destiny for thy pawn, let the dark fire ignite his darkened soul with hidden power, let it burn with your glorious purpose. Prince of Sensuality, bestow thy joy and delight on your child, stimulate his soul with your caressing touch, let him know of the rapturous ecstasy of existence. And Lord of Decay, remind of their fate if they should fail, give thy toy the will to rebel against the fate of all mortal men, as their achievements and bodies decay to dust, let him offer you festering corpses and wailing souls innumerable to sate your bloated hunger. Life and death watch over thy servant, give him power, feed his faith. Bring forth his soul for thy glory." A shrill wail of the siren screamed as he blessed Annullon, the last and he seated himself and held onto the restraints. The whining grew and the lights flared red. The torpedo

jerked, and Luther almost felt his gut leaving his body as explosive bolts and ignition drive propelled the torpedo to its crippled prey.

Luther looked at the screen as the Battlecruiser rapidly grew larger, noting the small vapour trails that indicate fellow torpedoes racing to reach the stricken vessel. No stabs of laser fire left to meet the torpedoes and their deadly crew. *Good, thought Luther, being reduced to boiling ash was a meaningless way too die, the Gods did not reward such pointless waste, you should live long for your faith unless your death meant something.*

The Battlecruiser was so close Luther could examine the tangled wreckage of what remained of the outer-skin of the ship, the preliminary fire had achieved its anointed task. Luther tightly grasped his restraints as the Torpedo hit the Flank of the Loyalist ship.

The Torpedo screamed as it hit the wreckage and Luther's Auto-senses went into over-drive to abate the cacophony. The Marines were lurched and shaken savagely, almost ripping the restraints from their foundations. A faint murmuring filled the cabin, just detectable beneath the metallic wailing, as the Word bearers prayed to their Patrons. Luther's warp sense felt their warm, sickly fear being overcome by the coolness of resolution. He glanced at the screen but it was dark, save but a sense of conflict and movement and the flashes of the torpedo's power-field flaring off excess energy.

There was a final jerk as the torpedo slammed to a stop. The restraints moved up with a hiss of escaping air, the Marines struggled out of them, eager for the imminent slaughter. The light-runes above the exit flashed from the green of anticipation to the blood red of the harvest of the infidel. Luther's Auto-

senses buffered the deafening sound of the explosive bolts as they fired and the massive door of torpedo swung open.

Before it had stopped Fureor had jumped out onto the deck of the ship, crouching for a moment, like a predatory bird before it strikes its prey. Fureor had long been focusing his bloodlust, becoming an especially devoted servant of the ravaging hound, something that Luther encouraged. Concentration on one aspect of the Warp was not an undesirable thing, even if he himself avoided it. Fureor scanned both directions then raised and fired his plasma pistol at an unseen target, which screamed.

A clanking sound echoed down the grey and metallic corridor as Luther stepped out of the torpedo, imposing bulkheads sealed both ends. The corpse of the unfortunate victim collapsed against the far bulkhead, a large hole burned into his back, exposing shrivelled and charred organs. From his odd posture it looked like the fool had been frantically trying to escape, his effort was ended by Fureor's mercy.

Luther stared at the solid Plasteel bulkhead for a moment, as if meditating on how to overcome this impenetrable obstacle, when he turned to his congregation.

"There is not a problem that cannot be overcome by faith," he proclaimed, "Brother Annullon, attend."

The Marine strode forward from behind his Chaplain, dwarfing him with the bulk of his revered tactical-dreadnought armour, its ancient design warped by the caress of Chaos. He raised his chainfist, muttered a prayer to the Great Machine, and as the teeth gnawed at thin air a blue haze sprung up, surrounding the blade.

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The Veteran plunged his weapons into the solid wall of plasteel and the thin air was rent with screams as the blades and pseudo-metal met in joyous union, arcing electricity from the blade rendering the smooth surface. Annullon snared as the pitiful construct defied his will for a moment; Luther basked in the feeling fiery-heat emitted by Annullon's raging soul.

Annullon roared, a disturbing sound when formed by a deformed throat and emitted from distorted speakers, and violently junked his arm in the pattern of Chaos Undivided and Unified. He threw his bulk against the weakened bulkhead, which gave way. He stumbled through the crude eight-apexed star shaped hole into a larger corridor and swung his Reaper Auto-cannon at around at an unseen target.

Luther darted through and watched as a group of startled men carrying tools were hit by a burst of rounds from Annullon's weapon. They writhed for a moment, spraying flesh and blood; dancing like wooden puppets with wrenched strings. The veteran released his weapon's trigger and they fell in a crumpled heap. One escaped, at least in body. He was curled into a ball, frozen and pinned against the corridor's wall, his eyes and mouth wide in shock. He retched as he tried to vomit.

Luther and Annullon considered the man for a moment. Luther could feel the man's fear, it mutated the Immaterialium flow around his soul, making it almost sticky and sickly, an un-odourable stench. Annullon gifted him with the mercy of Chaos and Luther felt the final-scream of the soul as it's link with the Materialium was severed. He felt the fiery emotional-residue of Annullon's kills, as the veteran's soul resonated himself closer to that of the Ravaging Hound's.

Luther blessed him and strode forth, touching the rune of communication.

"Brother-Seneschal Krithener, we have penetrated the vessel, show unto us the true path." Luther voiced as though talking to an invisible companion.

"Follow thy soul," a harsh, distorted voice replayed, "Let the Weaver of fate reveal the way, his servants have summoned a beacon, a lamp in the darkness, pursue the light as a moth unto the flame."

Another softer voice then spoke. "The path is now paved, the future gains form from formlessness, uncertainty becomes certain."

Luther recognised this as Koszcey, the Tzeentch high sorcerer, one of the joint leaders of this multi-legion effort. He was almost the mortal incarnation of his master, a respected ally and occasional foe, and a scholar of Chaos whom matched even Luther in eminence. "Follow the way and we shalt unite before we plunge our hallowed blade into the heart and mind of this fated vessel".

"We have decreed to unite before the final strike," Krithener cut in. "The rendezvous is the very soul of the vessel." His voice raised in volume. "We shalt take their unholy temples and dedicate their blasphemous alters to the Truth, the true path leads through the sanctum of the unholy, unite there in body and soul Brother Chaplain, souls unto Chaos."

"Souls unto Chaos." Replied Luther, and severed the communication link. "Brothers", he said, turning to his congregation, "I seek the truth and the way, shield my body and soul as I meditate." In response the Marines moved silently into place, forming a wall of metal and flesh.

Luther closed his eyes and focused

inward. He recalled his Primarch, Father Logar, teaching him the technique centuries ago.

"To see the Warp you must see yourself." he had said. "For you are part of the Warp and thus the Warp is part of you. Know yourself and the Warp becomes clearer." Luther's mind eased with the memory and he felt his pulse and breathing relax. *Block out the Materialium and the senses associated with it; then the sense of the faint pulses of the Immaterialium became far superior. Like a blind man learns to tune his other senses, and thus finds darkness no obstacle.*

Luther could hear the noises, smells and feelings of the material world becoming fainter and fainter as he calmed and ignored his super-human senses, he concentrated on what was inside him and he felt his normally quiet warp sense raise with intensity and clarity. Faint feelings of emotions grow in texture, his other senses added to the sensation of the warp, sounds that could not be heard but vibrated his very being, scents that he could not smell but caused revolution and attraction. Luther felt himself drift in an intangible sea of unimaginable eternal infinity, so vast and everlasting that it would suck the sanity from any mind that tried to concentrate on it's whole.

Luther felt an amalgamation of sensations. He focused on it, and the indistinguishable cloud separated, revealing a mutating conflict of sensations becoming more acute then fall as its counter companion counteracted it. A blade of hot anger tempered and slowly cooled, calming to the natural rhythm of the surrounding Immaterialium. The cool calm of resolve and purpose overcame a faint sickly trace of fear. A *human soul*, thought Luther. And a faint, echoing voice whispered beyond hearing, ".human soul."

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My soul, he thought and the whisper, "my soul" echoed,

My thoughts, he contemplated, and refocused his attention as the whisper of his thoughts faded away.

How many of the pawns of the False Emperor-corpse had the marvel of knowing what they truly are? How many could feel and know their very soul? The fools denied themselves the opportunity to gain true spiritual knowledge, they submitted themselves to the teachings of their masters. Never thinking, never questioning what they were taught. They were domesticated beasts in a herd, insects in a hive, but unlike insects they had no excuse for being as they were. We had tried to teach them meaning and give purpose but the infidels had rejected us, surrounding themselves in the lies of the "Imperial Cult." Soon though we will slice through that veil of lies, we will show them the true nature of this existence.

Luther refocused his attention, allowing his Warp Sense to stretch out and probe the surroundings, scanning for a certain trace in the mists of sensations. He felt faint currents and ripples in the smoothing harmony and the discordant clouds of clashing sensations and faint whispers. *Human souls* thought Luther. He could feel variations in them, as none were identical but a few were harsher and hotter than others, which had a sicklier overtone. This distinguished the Word Bearers from the weak loyalists. The loyalists were close though, this was good.

Let them come, let them experience the truth.

Luther continued to seek through the Warp, lightly experiencing the sensations, until he felt a small but powerful feeling of total certainty. A cool feeling homogenised the clashing emotions, complementing

rather than conflicting with each other. *The Beacon* thought Luther and he paused for a moment as he meditated on its significance. The path is clear, and knew not through knowledge but through certainty itself.

This is the truth, for I have purpose and now I will undertake it.

He again scanned the calm and raging sensations for indication of the Loyalist positions, sensed a half dozen or so more intense than before, indicating the possibility that they were moving closer. Maybe not thought Luther, for the Immaterialium is not bound by the rigid spatial-temporal laws that bind the Materium.

Luther almost gasped as he briefly felt a burning, almost spiritually painful resonance of pure anger and rage brush alongside his soul. A rage so concentrated that even Fureor's bloodthirsty soul felt pale in comparison. It was indeed the pattern the fanatics of the Raging Hound attempt to duplicate, it was the beat they try to match. Luther followed the wake of the sensation with his sense, it's sleek form curved and twisted through the currents of the warp, riding the waves of disturbance created by sentient minds and their corresponding soul. The sensation was a definite entity, although intelligence would have no meaning to one such as itself.

Luther noted that it only flowed on ripples of a certain oscillation, a singular emotion to which it was tuned; the entity's very existence was quintessential to it. *There was a name for that entity* thought Luther, and the hallowed name was Daemon. Luther felt the daemon ride a hot emotion-wave from a nearby soul, drawing close and entwining like a constricting serpent. *A child of Khrone* thought Luther, judging by its affinity to rage and anger. He felt the daemon suddenly strike the

soul, driving inwards along the path of anger, trying to warp the core of the being. The soul deformed slightly, and resonated with the Daemon's essence for a moment, rippling away a numerous variety of emotions. The soul soon reattuned itself to a steadier, more harmonious pattern and the daemon recoiled, the soul's presence in the Warp was too weak, the Materium threshold too strong. The retreating Daemon twisted it's essence in a loop and struck again but the soul resisted, the resonance was weaker and the daemon again recoiled. Maybe sensing the futility of persisting or maybe scenting a stronger source of emotional affinity, the daemon uncoiled from the soul and slowly slithered along the threads of anger and rage, gently testing each soul in turn.

Suddenly the Daemon surged forward towards Luther, and he readied himself for the divine sensation. Luther's soul burst a flame as the entity plunged through the standing waves of conflicting emotion and struck at his soul. A feeling of total fury engulfed him, a supreme need to destroy, to rage to devastate, to crush and shred the universe to oblivion, yet even this would not quench it. In the Warp, Luther's soul screamed and as the ripple spread in the Sea of Souls an echo of a billion souls screamed back.

No reason, no doubt, thought Luther as the sensation cooled and subsided, allowing sentience to shine clear once again. A feeling that ascended beyond mere purpose, where need, desire, and duty became one. The holy passion of anger and the exaltation of destruction, this was the Truth of Humanity and it was glorious.

Luther felt the Daemon withdraw from his soul as it deresonated with the entity. It coiled in its retreating path and struck again, but the sensa-

(Continued on page 12)

tion was far muted, even as Luther welcomed the burning stimulation. *Time, mused Luther, a paradoxical entity, it seems that at once it was plentiful. Why with Chaos you had all eternity to serve and live, however in every moment, in every day, in every year it was limited, never enough to complete a task to its totality.*

Even now it was dripping away, like life-blood from a wounded heart. *How I would love to meditate and commune with the daemon,* thought Luther, so much that could be revealed and learned. However now is not the moment, that was a duty to be accomplished in future, during meditation in the sacred chambers of the Temple of Glorious Damnation. Now it is time for the anointed task, for Chaos and Humanity.

Luther started to focus outward, concentrating on the sensations that he had omitted. The extremities and abstractions of the Warp faded, and mundane reality flooded the senses. Fuzzy visions and sounds slowly gained clarity. Luther saw a blur of large red objects slowly come into focus, forming into the Terminator armoured backs of Profantios and Annullon. The circle of ceramite and plasteel still surrounded him, immobile as millennia old statues. "Brothers," stated Luther to his companions, "the true path is clear and it is glorious indeed, the blood of the false loyalists shalt run freely. Be alert, for I have sensed their feeble souls. They are near."

Profantios and Annullon parted, allowing Luther to stride forward, drawing his Bolt pistol from his right thigh-holster. The Marines fell into step behind him, with Tupis and Contamino performing the ritual of subsistence on their bolters, releasing and reinserting the ammunition clip while muttering prayers to the Great Machine. *A sensible precaution* thought Luther, for the Warp is ultimately one with the Ma-

terium, an influence on one has an influence on the other and the Gods may favour the brave- or even the insane- but not the careless.

Luther advanced near the sealed metallic door. As he did so, he felt brief disturbances in the natural swirling currents of the Warp, a faint trace of conflict, of intertwined heat and cold, tainted with pulses of stickiness. A human mind. He paused and raised his bolt-pistol. Before it was horizontal the metal door parted down the centre and the two halves swung upwards through the ceiling. Luther stared into brown eyes. The pupils expanded in shock, the face of a man confronting a terror from legend. Loyalist. *Enemy.* Time decelerated. The grey uniformed man swung his lasgun upwards and Luther pulled the trigger on his bolt pistol.

The bolt exploded in the man's left shoulder, ejecting a spray of blood, flesh and bone, he fell backwards, his eyes staring into infinity, focusing beyond this world.

In the warp Luther felt the man's soul flare with a spectrum of emotions and sensations and then dissipate into the eternal Immaterium. Time accelerated.

Two more Guardsmen surged forward and the air with rent with the crack of bolters as Tupis and Contamino opened fire. The soldiers fell, chunks of flesh blown out of their corpses. The remaining guardsmen retreated, trying to find cover in the barren corridor, one aimed his lasgun. As Luther dodged to the left the violet beam of light glanced across his shoulder pad, melting the arcanic decoration. Luther heard a hissing whine. A discharge of hot gas, thought Luther, Odious' Plasma gun. His auto-senses darkened as the blinding glare of a ball of light, shining like a miniature sun slammed into the guardsman's stomach. The man's

mouth and eyes opened in a gargling scream as his now exposed organs bubbled and charred, he fell and writhed face down on the now blood soaked floor, vomiting violently. Luther sensed his writhing being matched in the Immaterium, as the soul twisted and contoured the Warp Flux into a heady sickness. *Such is the Power of death,* thought Luther, *the most holy form of worship, even the mind-slaves of the False-Emperor know this but in their perverted beliefs it has become a twisted mirror of the truth.*

"Bring forth the bane of they that tremble" he commanded, "Shaken the heretic vermin from their holes!" Tupis and Contamino holstered their Bolters in synchrony and withdrew two small metallic cylinders from their belt. Skillfully, they released the catch and threw them through the door.

Luther turned his left shoulder towards the door as his Auto-senses buffered the deafening dual-blasts which reverberated and shook the corridor, spraying Luther with metal shrapnel. He turned back and before the corridor had stopped vibrating he strode forward, moving surprisingly fast for such a large bulk.

Luther started to recite an ancient and most-holy battle hymn, "Whom dwells within shadowed depths?" he chanted

He pressed a switch on his Crozius Arcanum and a shimmering blue haze surrounded the symbol of a serpent entwining a screaming skull with protruding spikes. "And installs fear beyond death?"

As Luther leapt forward into the smoke that obscured the corridor, he heard another body leap to the right of him, and from the burning signature in the Warp he guessed it was Fureor. Luther's auto-senses showed the red, orange and yellow thermal

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trace of the blood flow of the three remaining Imperials beyond the smoke and fumes. They appeared to be pulling back in shock and confusion. He gazed at them and his voice raised in a crescendo. "At whom's name doth the heretic's blood chill and hearts fear?" He could feel the rage and bloodthirst raise inside him, calling in baying howls, warping the Immaterium into a sharp and furious heat.

He launched himself at the closest loyalist, through the thermal haze he saw the man's head jerk up as he sensed the presence of the Word Bearer. Too late.

"And whom whispers dark truths and secrets to the sleeping ear?" Shouted Luther as he charged out of the smoky cloud, the loyalist gaurdsman's face became a mask of terror, his soul oozed sickly fear in the Warp. He stumbled backwards and tried to level his lasgun.

"**CHAOS!**" screamed Luther as he smashed his Crozius downwards in an arc, the guardsman instinctively jerking his lasgun upwards, parrying the stoke. The gun exploded in a flare of blue light and a deafening thunderclap. The man was almost thrown to the ground stumbled as he tried to regain his balance.

"**CHAOS!**" roared Luther again and backhanded the guardsman with such force that he slammed against the corridor wall, gasping desperately for air.

"Exalted and glorified!" he chanted as he flicked the switch on his weapon, lowering the Aura of Power while simultaneously smashing his left elbow into the guardsman's face, sending a jet of blood from his shattered nose.

"Supreme and Divine!" Luther continued, as he drove the central spike of his Crozius Arcanum into the man's abdomen, wrenching it up violently he ripped a bloody slash from stomach to neck, revealing a visage of writhing, wet organs.

"For Chaos!" chanted Luther as he holstered his unneeded bolt pistol. "The Truth," he continued in a quieter tone, cupping his hand, "The Meaning," he stated as he drove his hand into the man's chest. The guardsman stared at Luther, eye's wide with pain, incomprehension and questioning.

Luther stared straight back into them and paused for a moment, examining the feel of the man's soul; ridden with burning agony, sickly fear and cold, empty uncertainty. Then he clenched his fist and jerked

his arm back out, ripping the man's still-beating heart with it. He raised his fist and the life-blood trickled down his arm. He had not turned from his fixed stare with the man and watched as the pupils dilated and the gaze stared beyond Luther and into eternity. In the warp the soul exploded like a supernova, bathing Luther in sensations of emotions simultaneously burning hot and freezing cold. "For Humanity." Stated Luther almost as if answering the man's final question.

Luther tuned and saw Fureor panting as his chainsword's roar slowed and softened. Hacked and decapitated corpses lay strewn around him. He could almost taste the salty heat of Fureor's bloodlust as it pulsed to burning levels during the kills. The rest of Luther's congregation started appearing out of the slowly clearing mist.

"We must make haste for the weak flesh of the false herd shalt surely clog our blades whist we gorge ourselves unto an eternal stupor." He stated, "Onwards!"

Luther stepped over the mutilated corpse of a former guardsmen, his footstep causing a crimson ripple in the spreading pool of blood.

The Tale of the Four Gamers

(Reloaded!)

When we started throwing ideas around for the Oracle (at that point simply known as the Portent magazine) one idea that I raised was of doing a tale of four gamers article. Now if you weren't around for White Dwarf 218 then you probably don't know what I'm talking about, suffice to say you missed a classic series. Robin Dews came up with the idea of running a series which followed 4 gamers collecting an army in stages. Over the course of five months these gamers would buy, paint and fight with their armies till they had each collected a 2000 point strong army for Warhammer.

The concept was simple, each month they were given a set amount of money to spend (£50 in the first month and then £25 each month after) and they used this as they deemed fit to collect their army. Along the way there were photographs and reports of how it was all going, and why they had chosen what they had. The end comprised of an apocalyptic battle using all four gamers armies, and some competitions to see who had the best general, who had the best-painted army, and many other fields.

In short it was good fun, an interesting read, and showed that it was possible to collect a nice looking army... just the kind of series the Oracle needed!

Having decided we would run a series inspired by this, we ran a quick trawl of the Veterans, in search of volunteers. We found a lot of interested parties, and even once the requirements were tightened (Warhammer 40k and that you had to live in the UK), we still managed to get enough volunteers to start the ball rolling! Bonza!

Having enough volunteers, we now had to decide on the rules... and in the spirit of the original came up with the following guidelines:

- All armies must be finished, ready for the Portent Tournament
- The first month each person could spend £60 on their army. After this, each month there was a budget of £30. (The price increase reflected the rising costs of collecting the hobby since the original series had taken place.)
- Any money not used would carry over to the next months budget (so landraiders and monoliths etc. could be bought).
- Everything that was used with the

exception of modelling materials and books was to be bought out of each gamer's budget. (This meant that we would all be banned from using our bitz boxes, so that anyone could recreate the armies in the series).

- Figures and components could be purchased from anywhere-providing they were Games Workshop figures. Thus, it was hoped that we would see figures being bought from sources outside the usual GW stores such as e-bay and independent retail stores.

With all the rules laid down everyone was ready to go, dreams of conquest filling their heads, and with that I shall pass you across to the four gamers who are going to be collecting, building, painting and playing. This issue is intended to act as a guide to what's going to be happening and introduce you to all the key players in the series, showing you why they decided to chose the armies they did and collect their thoughts as they start work on THE TALE OF THE FOUR GAMERS (reloaded!)

Christine Moore

Tale of Four Gamers Editor.

Introduction to a Tale of 4 Gamers:

Dal'yth Task Force

Collecting a Tau army by Christine Moore

When I started thinking about collecting an army in time for the Portent Tournament, there were two that stood out in my mind. The first was the technologically advanced Tau with all the images of Japanese Mecha shows I'd watched when I was younger, and the promise of flaming railgun shaped death. The second force was that of the Necrons- having just seen Terminator 3 again I could imagine these machine constructs advancing across the battlefield in a silent silver wave of killing machines.

I spent the next week wandering around, muttering, "Necrons or Tau?" under my breath. Both had their advantages, the Tau being inherently 'cool'... after all they had big battlesuits and bigger guns! They also lent themselves to a clean paint scheme which nevertheless favored lots of highlighting and shading, a style which I have a particular fondness for. Meanwhile, the Necrons had the advantage of being (A) expensive points wise and

(B) extremely easy to paint quickly (a major consideration when painting to a deadline).

For a while I was seriously considering collecting Necrons and had started planning conversions using the relatively new Khemrian skeletons boxed set, but there was one stumbling block left in my path - the guns.



Above: This Tau Fire Warrior was Christine's inspiration.

Now for the record I love to convert stuff, anything in fact gets converted sooner or later if it's in my grasp long enough, and what I felt my Necrons would need- purple rods in their guns. Queue a quick search of the Net and some questions in Portent, and it looked pretty grim. It seemed impossible to do what I wanted (at least not in the UK) and so feeling slightly dejected I started looking at Tau again.

Now I'm going to blame my eventual choice of army on one figure (shown in the photo), I saw this paint scheme and immediately thought, "wow!" Tau didn't have to have dodgy camo schemes and look like they had come from Operation Desert Storm (or Operation TELIC if your being current). Instead, they could be things of beauty. With that my mind was set- Tau it would be, and soon as I had chosen a sept (Dal'yth) the fun had begun...

~ Christine.

Tale of Four Gamers Editor.

Daemonhunters

By McHaggis

Hi, I'm Mc Haggis, whether or not that name sets off a series of nerve signals in your brain is not important at this time. What is important, however, is that I'm going to start a Daemonhunters army right in front of your eyes like a magic trick done by David Blaine, though I hope to make it look more like Paul Daniels (the trick that is, not the army).

Throughout this report you will read references to violence, swearing, and mild drug use as well as hypocrisy, madness, and slight-to-major beardyness/cheese. Hopefully that should act as a disclaimer to slow the tide of hate filled emails that you'll send me, which incidentally I will not look at in any way, shape, or form. In fact, if you disagree with

me to the extent that you wish to comment on my article, please note that the email address will not work. However, if you want to send praise of a job well done, it should function fine.

To summarize the train of thought that lead me to the Daemonhunters; my main 40k army these days are

the Necrons. Slow and shooty with a crippling lack of close combat punch, but mighty tough to make up for it. At first, I wanted to do a fast army. Painting Whitescars didn't interest me, so naturally the thought of Ravenwing became much more appealing. I had a think about the Ravenwing as a stand-alone army, and realized it was for a tournament, so I chose Daemonhunters. Actually that's not entirely the reason, though it is mighty close. I have had a picture on my desktop for several months now of a Golden Daemon Grey Knight painted up in NMM

(non-metallic-metallics for those 'not in the know'), I've never painted NMM before but it looks more challenging than black with codex grey highlights. Besides, what would make a more entertaining article than me failing and snapping the fragile paint brushes in my shaking, sweaty hands. (apart from getting kangaroos drunk and setting them free in a school.)

So Daemonhunters it is then; slow and combaty with a crippling lack of shooty punch, though mighty to... Hold on.

At the end of this venture, in the ultimate act of reality TV, you will see four people attempting to fight it out with their completed 1500pt armies like modern day gladiators in a specially constructed pit, cheered on by a raucous crowd of ruffians in a orgy of violence while lap dancers sing our praises. (if you're scared, it's ok. We all are. -h.). Only time will tell if this is takes place or not, that's the thing with reality TV.

- *McHaggis*.

Imperial Guard

By Neil Todd (A.K.A. Toddy)

Deciding which army to collect for this Tale of Four Gamers was quite tough for me: Did I re-collect an army I'd done previously, or go for one of the (few) armies I didn't already own. In the end, a flash of inspiration decided for me.

That flash was a memory of the Portent Roadtrip which we'd embarked on in summer '03. At the time, anticipation was high for the new Cadian plastics, but nobody had any. Except me. So we chopped up my beautiful new sprues and made ourselves a diorama of an imaginary Portent regiment. That regiment will be my new Army!

So, Imperial Guard it shall be. An army I'd never collected before, which was a bonus. But not normally an army you'd choose whilst on a budget, and my budget was very real and very strict, set as it was at £180. This will be a sterling test of planning and foresight.

The Guard have always seemed like quite a good army for other people to have - that is, I like the look of them, but could never be bothered to collect them myself. Far too

much infantry, after all. But such reservations were cast aside when I remembered the sheer amount of firepower they could A) bring to bear, and B) soak up, being one of the most numerous forces out there.

This, plus the idea of "tanks", lots of 'em, was well enough to convince me that my Flash was a good one. On to the actually nitty gritty then. When taking that budget into account (Along with the unhappy fact that I don't get to use my staff discount), It was clear to me that the sheer number of models I needed meant that conversions (and my plan to use the old Van Saar gangers

from Necromunda as infantry) went quickly out of the window. I decided to limit myself to just basic boxed sets, with the odd Mail Order to get the exact model I needed.

I decided to concentrate my force on infantry, with vehicles really just being there as a supporting crutch if it all got just a bit too hot for the regular grunts. This will probably fly straight out of the window when I realise I need 1500pts, and only have £20 to get it with. As a starting philosophy, it's not too bad.

~ *Toddy*.



The Horde of Change: A Thousand Sons Army

By Simon Tull (A.K.A. *Lavfluris*)

PART ONE - TZEENTCH'S CALL

I have never found deciding upon a new army an easy prospect. Normally, I narrow my choices down to two or three armies and then choose one of them after weeks of pawing through the relevant codexes. What makes this new army different from any other that I have collected is that not only do I have to collect the army in regular instalments, but also I would have to make it worthy of the Portent Tournament.

Of the armies that I would like to collect, the Flesh Tearers and the Thousand Sons have always been the most prominent. The tragic blood flaw of the Flesh Tearers and their fall to the brink of destruction has always drawn me to these Space Marines. And equally, the rejection of the Thousand Sons by the Emperor for mastering fell sorceries and the Rubric of Ahriman's legacy

evoke an strong sense of power around these Chaos Space Marines. Both armies rely on two completely different strategies to achieve victory.

Fast armour and deadly attacks are the mainstay of the Flesh Tearers, whilst the Thousand Sons rely heavily upon their sorcery and firepower. In these ways, both armies operate in a completely different manner to my beloved Emperor's Children, so either would provide a new learning experience for me. There are no similarities between the two armies, although both armies would allow me to devise striking colour schemes and conversions. After much difficult decision making, the Thousand Sons will be unleashed upon Portent.

With an army finally decided upon, my next decision was how I would field it. Thousand Sons armies find their strength in sorcery and

firepower. With this firmly in mind, I am going to comprise my army around a solid block of Thousand Sons supported by Sorcerers and their powers. Some variety will be added with all manner of Daemons though the army will be predominately selected around the Thousand Sons. There will almost certainly be a Defiler somewhere in my army, as the opportunity to field one for the first time is just too good to pass down.

I have always admired the colour scheme of the Thousand Sons, so how I would paint my army was relatively easy to decide. My models would be painted in the same bold blue and gold that the Thousand Sons are renowned for. Because of the limited amount of money I could lavish upon my army each month, the conversions I wished to make will only appear on the character models in my army.

- *Lavfluris*.

The Doomlord of Middenheim

By Lord Lucifer

In the 2,500 years of its reign, the Empire has withstood many dangers, threats to the safety of its people, with little respite. In times of unity, and in times of anarchy, it has been the spirit of kinship and a resigned determination to live that has defined Sigmars people, Sigmars Empire.

Not the least of these threats, the minions of Undeath are always eager to bring ruin to the living. Sigmar himself threw down the first and greatest Necromancer in the year 15 of the Imperial calendar. Woe that it was not the last time the Great Necromancer has had a hand in the hardships of the Empire.

50 Years after the death of Emperor Mandred Skavenslayer of Middenheim, there was no Emperor, and war between Stirland and Talabecland was still periodically waged. This was the beginning of a time of woe for the Empire, as old political and blood-ties weakened, support and vigilance eroded, and the strength of the Empire waned. In its very heart, corruption was blossoming in the Empire. It would be a time of weakness that would last over a thousand years. It was in this time that the talented, if eccentric, wizard Dieter Helsnicht took up his studies of the ancient realm of Morgheim, whose borders stretched from the south to the border Princes and the southernmost lands of the Empire. In particular, his interest was drawn to the sorcerer-king Kadon. In order to learn more of this enigmatic lord of old, he resolved to travel to the fallen realm, and there learned many things, and heard the dread whisperings of the return of Nagash, the Great Necromancer,

the Lord of Undeath.

For was it not for Nagash's Black Crown, Kadon never would've risen above the station of a lowly tribal shaman. For centuries nestled upon the brow of the Lord of Undeath, the crown had begun to absorb the malign thoughts and designs of Nagash, and soon possessed a cruel intelligence of its own.

Dieter continued his travels, southward unto the Cursed Pit of Nagashizzar. What cruel fate befell him there is not known, but when he returned to Middenheim, Dieter was a changed man. His hair whitened prematurely, and his skin drawn and pale, the very look of ill health that would not be so kindly received in the Empire that half a century earlier had been brought to its knees by the most vile and potent plague yet seen in the world, the Doomlord of Middenheim was born. Sick and evil rumours sprung up around Dieter almost immediately upon his return, tales of cruel and unnatural rituals practiced at dead of night. Though some may have dismissed this as superstition, given the poorly condition of the old wizard, in this case they were wrong.

The High Priest of Ulric decided to confront the man over these tales, and with a company of Knights, arrived in time to disrupt a magic ritual that would have allowed Dieter to raise all the dead buried within the walls of Middenheim. With foul curses upon his lips, Dieter took to the skies on the back of a great Manticore, fleeing from Middenheim and Ulrics holy wrath. This was not the last the Empire heard of the Doomlord, though. Although a twisted man, Dieter was

well prepared for all eventualities, and had secretly built in the Forest of Shadows a fortress, secluded and safe from prying eyes. Laboriously he rebuilt his strength and toiled away at his evil plot, meticulously planning for decades while the Empire slowly decayed from the inside. Soon all who had known Dieter had died, or become too addled with years to recall him, and no-one recalled him when a dark tide of pestilence and death spread through the forest.

Orcs and Beastmen fled from this unnamed evil, and the road to Erengard could no longer be travelled in the comparative safety with which it had been used in years before.

Though at this time the Empire was somewhat divided (though not nearly as much as it would in centuries to come), Einrich Moltke, the Elector Count of Nordland, acting on good will to his people, determined to cull the Beastmen and Orcs making travel impossible.

Immediately he immobilised his standing army, and made way down the road to Erengard, crushing all before him with a practiced skill. Deeper and deeper into the Forest of Shadows he struck; cutting down warbands of the Children of Chaos and the greenskins as they fled, little knowing that he was being led into a trap.

As the army was arrayed for the march along an ancient path bordering the Lake of Woes, his army was ambushed by a horde of Undead.

The Undead were too numerous,

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and the Army of Nordland unprepared, and within little time the Nordlanders were all but annihilated. Though many men died fighting to the last, more still fled from the field, some even attempting to cross the Lake of Woes, only to be pulled under the surface and drowned by legions of zombies lying in wait under the water.

By fortune, or determination, Einrich Moltke managed to fight his way clear of the Undead. Together with his personal retinue of Pistoliers, they regrouped at the village of Beeckerhoven on the Middenheim-Erengard Road.

With his army in tatters, all lost to him, the situation was desperate for the Count. With only the small garrison he had left at Beeckerhoven to guard the army's line of communications, and what scattered survivors of the attack remained and made it out in one piece, Einrich grimly prepared for the inevitable follow-up attack.

Messengers were immediately dispatched to Middenheim and Kislev, calling on reinforcements, while the rest of the troops fortified the city, awaiting whatever fate would come.

The following scenario is written to represent the battle of the Lake of Woes, where the house army of Einrich Moltke was slaughtered, and Dieter Helsenicht finally revealed his opening gambit.

Overview:

The Undead army is intent on destroying the Empire force as quickly as possible. The quicker they die, the more the Empire will know to fear the name of the Doomlord!

The Empire... is screwed really.

Outnumbered and outpositioned. The only choice is to fight your way out. Most importantly, the Elector Count **MUST** escape from the clutches of the Doomlord!

Armies: This battle is a 'historical' scenario, and as such can only be fought between the Undead, and the Empire.

The Empire must have at least 1,500 points to make the game somewhat interesting.

The Undead may have up to twice the number of points that the Empire has, although if the Empire chooses a force of 1,500 points, it is suggested that the Undead limit themselves to 2,000 points given the rather helpful scenario rules.

The Empire army may not use a Steamtank, nor may it use Flagellants, Handgunners, or Crossbowmen. No artillery may be used, as this is a mobile army intent on hunting down roaming Orc and Beastman warbands, not laying siege or defending a city. Also, given that this battle happened over one thousand years before the current setting of Warhammer, the forces of the Empire weren't **QUITE** so technologically advanced, thus only **ONE** unit of Pistoliers will be used, and **MUST** be present, and all Knights have Heavy Armour rather than Full Plate Armour (use Dogs of War Heavy Cavalry with Barding to represent Knights).

The Empire army must also be led by Elector Count Einrich Moltke of Nordland, whose rules will be included later in this article, and may include no other Lords, nor may it include Wizards or Engineers. The Undead army must be led by Dieter Helsenicht, whose rules are shown later in this article. No other necromancers may be taken.

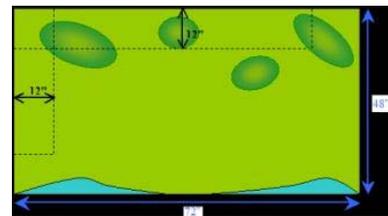
No Vampires are allowed.

Therefore the only characters available are Wights and Wraiths.

The Undead army is chosen from the Vampire Counts list, but may not include the following in this scenario:

- More than one unit of Ghouls
- Bat Swarms
- Black Knights of Grave Guard
- Banshees
- Spirit Hosts
- Black Coach
- More than one unit of Fell Bats

Battlefield:



The game is played on a 6 foot by 4 foot table.

On one long edge is The Lake of Woes, which is impassable terrain.

The opposite long edge is to be covered with hills, woods, crags, and other natural terrain features. Between the two long edges the table should be fairly bare, with little, if any, terrain to break up the open ground.

Deployment:

The Empire army deploys on one of the short table edges, no closer than 12" to either of the long edges, and within 12" of the short edge. The units deploy facing the short table edge the deployment zone lies on.

The Elector Count **MUST** be deployed with the one unit of Pistoliers, and further units deploy abreast of this unit to either side, so that the Pistoliers are in the very middle of the Empire army.

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The Undead player then deploys his army within 12" of the long edge that is covered with hills and woods as shown on the map above. The army may deploy no closer than 12" of either Short edge, and may not deploy within their own charge range of any Empire unit (so Dire Wolves cannot be deployed within 18" of Empire troops, Skeletons cannot be deployed within 8") Huntsmen cannot Scout in this scenario, having been caught off-guard whilst pursuing a Beastmen warband.

Who Goes First? The Undead have the first turn.

Length of Game: The game lasts until Einrich Moltke makes it off the opposite short edge (the one he DIDN'T deploy on) or until he is killed.

Special Rules: Ach! Zombies! - Dieter Helsnicht laid many preparations for this battle, performing rituals to increase his magical focus, studying many ancient texts, taking elixirs to fortify his mind, and also to hide a large number of Zombies in the Lake of Woes.

If an Empire unit breaks from combat and comes into contact with the edge of the Lake of Woes, it is automatically destroyed, the poor men being dragged under the lakes surface and drowned.

Also, each turn the Undead player rolls a D6 and places a 'unit' of as many zombies as the number rolled in base contact with the Lake. If the unit numbers at least 5 models, it can be used in that turn as a normal undead unit returning to battle after pursuing off the table edge. If the Undead player does not roll 5 or higher, or chooses not to bring the unit into play yet, he can wait until next turn and roll another D6 to add to the unit before choosing to bring them into play, or wait another turn

and increase their size again. Only one unit can be formed at any one time, a new one cannot be started until the previous one numbers at least 5 models and is brought into play. These units, if not yet brought into play, can still be added to with the Invocation of Nehek, or can be shot at by Imperial troops, but cannot be affected in any other way, and likewise does not affect any other units until brought into play (they do not prevent march moves for example)

Victory Conditions: This game is the first game in a 3 game campaign, following the history of Dieter Helsnicht. The result of this game affects the games to follow.

If Einrich Moltke is killed, or flees off any table edge other than the short edge opposite the Empire Deployment Zone, then the Empire loses and the Campaign immediately ends, counting as an Absolute Victory for the Undead.

If the Empire army wipes out the Undead army, and kills Dieter Helsnicht, then the campaign ends immediately and the Empire is crowned Absolute Victors.

If the game progresses as it's supposed to, and the Elector Count makes it off the short table edge opposite the Empire Deployment Zone, the campaign can progress to the next two games, which is, of course, the whole point of the campaign/scenario itself.

Special Characters:

Dieter Helsnicht, the Doomlord of Middenheim 450points

Dieter is a level 4 Necromancer with all the associated stats.

As Dieter has benefited from the tutelage of Nagash himself, his knowledge of necromancy is vast,

more so than even the most powerful necromancers in the Old World. To show this, Dieter knows ALL the Necromancy spells, and with the aid of his bone-casting talismans, may cast The Invocation of Nehek, and Vanhels Danse Macabre as many times in his magic phase as he wishes, provided he has enough power dice.

Also, when casting the Invocation of Nehek, if Skeletons are summoned, Dieter adds +1 to each dice rolled to determine how many Skeletons are raised.

Dieter has not yet fully gone over to Undeath, bearing still some of the vitality of the living. As such, he suffers no wounds for having lost a combat.

Dieter carries the Rod of Flaming Death... and back then, it retained more of its original power. Once per magic phase the staff may be activated. A flaming missile with a range of 24" and causing D6 strength 4 hits spews from the staff. A unit taking at least one casualty from the staff must take a panic test. Finally, Dieter carries an assortment of charms that allow him to channel more magical power, and so adds +1 Power Dice to his total, meaning that the undead army, whilst Dieter is alive, has a total of 7 Power Dice to cast spells with.

Einrich Moltke, the Elector Count of Nordland 285points

Einrich Moltke has the same stats and rules as an Elector count, with the following equipment/Special Rules

Runefang - see Empire Army Book
The Crown of Nordland - the Crown of Nordland is a jewel of shining inner light that has been part of Einrichs family for many generations. Currently it is set in his helm, and appears to be a potent

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token of good luck. Grants a 5+ ward save and renders the bearer immune to the effects of Necromancy and Dark Magic Determined - These are dark days for the Empire, and many of its people have seen struggle and hardship enough for a lifetime. Einrich and his unit of Pistoliers are completely immune to psychology.

Einrich rides a barded warhorse, carries a shield, and wears Heavy Armour which, combined with his Crown of Nordland, grants him in total a 1+ armour save.

Feel free to modify this scenario as you see fit, as it is not as important as the last two, being included more

to set the scene and for a sense of completeness more than anything else.

Join us next month for the second instalment in the series, Death on the River Salz!

- Lord Lucifer

The Future Of Warhammer 40,000

By Brusilov.

The title may be deceiving, for it is not the purpose of this article to discuss the future of the game, but rather the future of the universe itself. Indeed Games Workshop seems decided to take the grim future into new directions.

In fact for several years now it would appear the development team has abandoned the relatively static setting we all know and love for a more dynamic storyline. This radical change, if it is confirmed, could change the face of Warhammer 40,000 forever.

THE OLD DAYS: 40K AS A SETTING

From the moment it was created, more than 15 years ago, the universe in which Warhammer 40,000 is set seemed as unchangeable as stone. One can argue that on the contrary the background saw many modifications, but they had more to do with a transformation of the vision of certain races and armies, an increase of the quantity of information available, rather than true evolution of the universe.

Eldar evolved from mere pirates and mercenaries into the dying race we now know, Tyranids no longer have Zoat ambassadors, Squats have dis-

appeared altogether, for better or worse, Ork imagery has become more barbaric and savage, especially with the latest edition... However, as said, all those are changes in the races themselves, not so much an ongoing story.

One cannot deny that the 40K universe is rich with legends, prophecies and other stories. From the birth of the Star Child, to the Rhana Dandra, from the Quest of Cypher to the fabled return of the Primarchs, from the C'tan Great Work to Arhiman's machinations, there are literally dozens of plots that contribute to make the background so rich.

However, none of those stories are to be resolved. They may find a solution in a far away future that is beyond the scope of the game, leaving the reader and gamer to imagine the consequences. Indeed many of those plots are so galaxy shattering that their accomplishment would change the face of the 40K universe forever.

Most additions to the background concern the appearance of new threats rather than the progression of history. The Tau have been around for several centuries, but have only recently become a serious threat to the Imperium due to their

massive expansion in the Eastern Fringe. Tyranids have been part of 40K since the days of Rogue Trader, the Hive Fleets Behemoth, Kraken and Leviathan only help to describe the story of their invasion. The Necrons have more to do with the origins of the universe than with its current state even if they labour in secrecy to complete their plans, a work that will not come to its conclusion until many more years.

If one so wishes he can use special characters, such as Cypher, Arhiman, the late Eldrad Ulthran, or even the mighty Deceiver to play a chapter in those stories but it appears clear none are to be resolved. And this might be for the best.

RECENT TRENDS

For a couple of years now Games Workshop has been slowly moving away from their classical approach of the universe into something more dynamic.

It started slowly with the Ichar IV campaign. There the fate of a world was decided and Hive Fleet Kraken was splintered under the onslaught of the Imperial war machine. However the consequences for the universe remained small. The Hive Fleet has dispersed and plagues the

entire Ultima Segmentum.

The next step was the 3rd War of Armageddon. There, Games Workshop implied that the result of this massive world campaign would change the fate of many. As they said, "the destiny of a thousand worlds hangs in the balance." However the conclusion was disappointing, maybe because neither the Imperium nor the Orks managed to gain a clear victory on the sands of Armageddon. The invasion was repelled but countless Orks still plague the Ash Wastes of the planet and threaten the security of billions. Warlord Gazghkull Thraka himself is still alive; he could very well come back for another round at some point in the future. Yet one cannot deny that Games Workshop made efforts to make the universe more dynamic.

Drawing from these experiences the Eye of Terror campaign seemed entirely aimed at deciding the future of 40K. From the very beginning the development team stated that the results would have a great influence on how the universe would look like in coming years: the Imperium triumphant, crushing its enemies, or new dark ages, not heard of since the dreaded times of the Horus Heresy? It may be too early to decide whether they delivered on their promise but the results appear encouraging.

The Cadian Gate has been breached although Cadia itself still holds. The forces of Chaos are spilling from the bale Eye of Terror. Many sectors lay in ruins and Abaddon seems

triumphant. Yet it seems the Imperium held the line, although just barely.

From the sound of it, the future of 40K seems very gloomy and darker than it ever was. Yet one cannot help but wonder if this will really change anything.

OF THE DANGERS OF THE STORYLINE

Indeed the example of Arhiman's fate is enlightening in this matter. The Thousand Sons Sorcerer aimed to gain access to the Black Library. In an effort to do so he kidnapped Inquisitor Czevak, Eldar specialist and one of the few human ever allowed into this fabled place of forbidden lore.

He then unleashed his Rubric Marines in the Webway to force his way to the Library itself. Yet his plans were thwarted by a combined effort of the Harlequins and the Eldar of Ulthwé. Despite his obvious failure it seems as if Arhiman nonetheless gained some favour.

Either he had a still unknown agenda he managed to complete or at least further or Games Workshop is trying to minimise the impact of his failure. If, as I believe, the second theory is the correct one it does not bode well for the future of 40K. Indeed Games Workshop needs to accept the consequences of the results of events they organise, otherwise people will be wary of their claim they want the fans to play a part in determining the future of their universe. It is obvious that this

claim has partially mercantile origins, to catch people's attention and make them want to play (and buy) because the destiny of their universe is in their hands. I have nothing against this, but I wonder if Games Workshop will deliver on its promises.

More importantly I am worried about the possible lack of direction. If you are writing a story you need to have a path in which you want to take it. Stories have a beginning and an end. To me it seems as if Games Workshop is flying blind.

They have all those great legends and prophecies to use, many of each are contradictory, but they do not want to use them for it would require a complete overhaul of the background if any came to fruition. Therefore Games Workshop has to carefully balance between the necessities of keeping the universe stable for the sake of the game especially and the fans' desire to see great events unfold.

Maybe Overfiend Andy Chambers does have great plans for the future of Warhammer 40,000 but as of now it seems to me the more the universe changes; the more it remains the same. We shall have to wait and see until the next edition is released. Supposedly the results of the Eye of Terror campaign will be taken into account in this new background. For now, there does not appear to be much of a difference however.

- Brusilov.

Knights Of A New Order

By Zeb

With a new armybook out the expectations usually are at a high. This time it's no different, new models have been seen at Games Day's and other events and rumours about changes have made an impact on forums all around the net.

The change's that has been done to the army is in my opinion really good ones. There is the 'column' (formerly known as the lance), the Blessing received a major overhaul, as did the virtues and to my great surprise the 'fluff' got a facelift as well.

Let's start with the easy things. The Lance formation was horrendous to calculate how a bolt thrower pierced ranks and that all on the sides could fight through out a prolonged combat, and no flanks. I think we all can agree on that it was too powerful. Now, with changes, it's even more powerful on the charge but in a prolonged combat it's much worse. It now has flanks, the guys on the side can't fight in the second round, and they can't allocate hits against characters in the first round, and can't fight if it's charged in the front. But what is the gain? Well, a better easier game, and it will take tactics to use it right. Bretonnians won't be a no-brainer army to play anymore. But an improvement for the Bret players is the bigger sight arc. And that's something to remember for an opponent.

Then the Blessing, it's now toned down, vs. shooting. But it now benefits Bretonnian Knights, and their steeds, in close combat. It's also lost on individual basis, units and characters can lose them by themselves, and not the whole army at the same time as it was before...

Virtues, they are paid for with your magic item allowance, and they will increase your fighting ability (most of the time). Gone are the days of the glorious counter charge! And here is where you go to get your knights to fight on foot.

Then to the fluff. The whole Warhammer World has become a darker place, as have Bretonnia. The separation between knights and commoners has been given a greater distinction. It's a step towards the Role Playing fluff, interesting to say the least. Knights are still noble but use (and maybe abuse) the commoners in everyway possible. It makes the book an interesting read from an outsider's view as well.

The Knights, Knights and more Knights.

There is still the possibility to make an army with three, or more, elements of knightly units. All units with a terrible punch, but with the new column rules, stubborn and unbreakable units will help tear this army apart. Add some fast cavalry units to draw out charges, and to expose the long flanks and counter charge. With the new rules for the Blessing it can really be interesting for the Bretonnian player.

Also, even with the new column rules, it's still quite easy to lock down Bretonnian knight units. Add a weakened blessing vs. shooting this might not be a good idea. Knights Errant and Mounted Yeomen can handle these, usually, small units of opposition but it will also mean less other heavier knights. And both these units have

some 'interesting' rules making them difficult to use, and the Mounted Yeomen is a special choice too, competing with Questing Knights, Pegasus Knights and the Grail Reliquae / Battle Pilgrims for slots.

Thing is, if you back your knights up with either small horse elements or cheaper infantry units, you will probably end up with a really good army. Just remember to charge things that won't flee or that aren't really hard to break.

The Flying Circus

If the mentioned stuff isn't for you, you do have the option to field an almost all flying army. If you mount your General on a Pegasus you lift the 0-1 restriction on the Pegasus Knights. There is just one problem, they aren't moved to core, and you still need three Core units in a 2000 pt game. Knights of the Realm are +1.

There is another problem; you can't join characters with flyers. Still the Pegasus Knights benefit from US 2 (each) and 2 wounds. Add some attacks to this, and you will definitely break, or destroy, any opposing warmachine crew, shooters or fast cavalry unit.

But to stand up against another cavalry unit, that's a little more difficult, same goes for a solid block of infantry. Even if you hit them in the flanks, Pegasus Knights don't get a banner, can't be joined by characters and, since they are flyers, don't negate ranks... So even if the army is cool, it might not be the best

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on the tabletop.

Revolutionary Wars

If you love hoards, you do have an option to field such an army. With Men at Arms, Bowmen, Grail Pilgrims, Mounted Yeomen as your main units and a small unit of Knights of the Realm (the only armour your revolution could find to give some good fighters), add most of your characters on foot. With the small base cost of the infantry units, you do have the option to include quite a few of them. With at least 60 flaming arrows and two trebuchets you will force your opponent to come to you. One unit that is 'Stubborn' and benefits from 'Hatred' (if you have one knight with the grail wow), in the centre of your battle line, is indeed something to anchor your battle line with.

Add the 'defensive stakes' for your bowmen. Flyers and fast cavalry will have a little more hard time in

taking out your line.

One small problem (for me anyway) is that it's a bunch of models to paint...

Magic

I know there have been screams about getting a 'Bretonnian Lore' to add some flavour to the army.

Well, gone are the days that the Damsels and Prophetesses went to Altdorf to study magic, now they are lured into the forest and learned magic by a mystic Lady.

And the lores they can chose to have are Beast and Life, add Heavens if you go for a Prophetess (lord level).

There is a bunch of nice character full gadgets to add, for personal flavour or magic boosting, which will really help your army out.

Conclusions

After reading the book, but without any playing, with or against, Bretonnia I can only say that the book is a huge improvement over Ravening Hoards and the update in White Dwarf, as it should be.

It's also an improvement to the game, with good, simple special rules. That gives you and advantage but also some drawbacks.

The best part is that you can do different armies of Bretonnia, not just the same old one!

I don't feel that it's a overpowered book, or that it's that much of a power army (that it used to be). All in all, I believe that it's fair and that GW has done a great job. It will take time to get used to play against, but would it be fun if there weren't any challenge?

- Zeb.

When Dwarfs Go Bad

(And get even worse taste in hats...)

Chaos Dwarf Teams in Blood Bowl

By Aaron

Games Workshop has produced a number of excellent wargames over the years but Blood Bowl is quite possibly my favourite. To misquote a comedian by the name of Simon Pegg - "It's a subtle blend of lateral thinking and extreme violence". In this article, I would like to introduce tactics for one of the less popular teams - the Chaos Dwarfs. The advice contained within this article is based on the current edition of the Blood Bowl rules, though I am sure that most of my gems of wisdom

would apply to any version. It is available in some stores, through mail order and from www.bloodbowl.com in the form of a free download. If you have never tried Blood Bowl, and would like a novel and fun wargame then I suggest you check it out.

The Players

Chaos Dwarfs are my favourite team in Blood Bowl. In fact, they

are pretty much the only team I have ever played with. The reason that I love them so much is that they combine huge, bearded walking hats



with sneaky, backstabbing greenskins. What more could you want in a Blood Bowl team?

Chaos Dwarfs

Chaos Dwarfs are the bedrock of any Chaos Dwarf team and the perfect line of scrimmage blocker. What they lack in speed, they make up for in sheer staying power. Armour 9 is very useful, but what gives them the edge is the excellent combination of *block* (an essential skill for *any* blocker), *guard* (excellent against agile teams like amazons and skaven) and the *thick skull* physical trait.

When on the defensive, I like to field five of these crazy little dwarfs. Due to their lack of speed, where you set them up is critical and my preference is to set three of them up on the line of scrimmage and one on each of the two flanks. Using one on each flank is particularly useful against running teams, who will usually try and break down one of the sides, more often than not. If they do manage to break through, it is very unlikely that a Chaos Dwarf in the middle of the line of scrimmage is going to be able to dodge out and then catch up with the break-away runner. At least if they are on the flank and out of the action, they might have a small chance of doing so.

An alternative is to play with four Chaos Dwarfs, with three in the line of scrimmage and then one 'floater' in the centre of your own half to catch anything that breaks through your front line.

When on the offensive, Chaos Dwarfs have fewer uses. They often cannot keep up with play, their agility of 2 means that picking up the ball is a nightmare and throwing the ball is a near-guaranteed turnover. This leaves Chaos Dwarfs with

three main roles; punching a hole through your opponent's line, protecting the ball carrier, and back-up if your opponent manages to get the ball (*Nuffle be damned!*).

In terms of skills, Chaos Dwarfs benefit from the usual blocker skills. As they already have two of the most important blocker skills, they can move straight onto some of the more fun and exotic ones. *Guard* is an excellent skill to stop hard-hitting teams rolling down your line of scrimmage and *mighty blow* can be useful for keeping your opponent's blockers on the floor.

If you are lucky enough to roll a double, *dodge* is a superb skill when being blocked, whilst *diving tackle* can also be a fun skill to surprise your opposing coach with.

Hobgoblins

There is no beating around the bush - Hobgoblins are the filler for the team. Got a position that you cannot find anyone else to fill? Use a hobgoblin. They might not be particularly good at anything, but they have adequate stats to fill any position in an almost acceptable manner. With movement 6 and agility 3, it will be the Hobgoblins who will be doing most of the running and ball-work for the team. Whilst your Chaos Dwarfs pummel anyone within reach, these guys will run around collecting the ball and driving up field.

The other advantage with hobgoblins is that they are very cheap. At 40,000 gold pieces each, you can afford to use them in a disposable manner. If one dies or gets sent off then it is no big loss, so feel free to use them to foul anyone who is down or to act as a barrier between your ball carrier and your opponent's biggest, meanest blitzer.

Hobgoblins can only take general skills normally but this still leaves them with a good array of skills to choose from. *Block* is a good skill to give any player and allows you to fill in the gaps if one of your Chaos Dwarfs has to leave the pitch. *Sure hands* is useful as it will be the hobgoblins who will be handling the ball most of the time and is an almost essential skill for any hobgoblin that gets a stat increase in either agility or movement. The other obvious skill for hobgoblins is *dirty player*. As already mentioned, a sent off hobgoblin is no great loss and fits in perfectly with the nature of hobgoblins! *Kick* can also be an interesting skill and is less of a waste on such a cheap player who does not need to be near the line of scrimmage initially.

For doubles, passing and catching skills can be helpful if you want to catch your opponent off-guard, whilst *dodge* is useful for pretty much any player - especially ball carriers. One of my favourite 'sneaky play' skills is *hail-mary pass*. Although it is unlikely that anyone will be able to catch the pass, it is excellent for wasting time when you are winning against slow teams. Watch your opposing coach's face when you fling the ball deep into his half with only a few turns to go and his team has to trudge all the way back to collect it!

Bull Centaurs

Bull Centaurs are a new addition for 4th edition and a very welcome one too! With relatively high movement (along with *sprint* and *sure feet*), high strength, and impressive armour, these guys make excellent blitzers. The only problem with Bull Centaurs is their lack of the *block* skill, which will hamper their effectiveness at first.

At 130,000 gold pieces, Bull Cen-

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taurs are not cheap. However, including one is a great boost to the team when getting the ball off the opposing team, and for punching holes through your opponent's defense.

The first skill for any Bell Centaur should be *block*. This should help your Bull Centaur stay on his feet long enough to make an impact on the game. After that, blitzer favourites such as *break tackle* and *strip ball* make excellent choices. If you are feeling daring, then *sure hands* could help turn the Bull Centaur into a ball-carrier. Trying to stop a Bull Centaur with the ball can be very daunting!

On a roll of a double, other blitzer-centric skills such as *dodge* and *diving tackle* can be very helpful too.

Big Guys

With the relative cheapness of Hobgoblins and Chaos Dwarfs, it is very tempting to take a big guy in your Chaos Dwarf team. Although big guys can make excellent additions to the team, they also come with their own drawbacks, so consider whether you need one carefully before making the investment.

Minotaurs

Minotaurs, like any big guy, can be a big risk. Although they are capable of hitting the opposition very hard, they are equally capable of producing a very quick turnover for your opponent.

The main problems with Minotaurs are that they have the *wild player* trait, meaning that they must always go first, and that they do not have the *block* skill. Despite having an impressive strength of 5, the lack of the *block* skill means that it is all too easy to roll a result on the block

dice that leaves the shaggy oaf on the floor and your opponent with the ball.

On the plus side, Minotaurs make excellent blitzers. Including the *horns* bonus, they have strength 6 which means, even with a couple of assists, your intended target will end up with a mouthful of turf most of the time. *Frenzy* can also be a big help but watch out for positions that leave your Minotaur exposed without support.

Like most big guys, Minotaurs should have no problem causing enough casualties to gain increases at a decent rate. The first and most essential skill is *block*. Once your Minotaur has *block*, it should find keeping on its feet a whole lot easier. Ideas for skills past *block* are *break tackle*, *strip ball* and *tackle*. If a double is rolled, *dodge* is always an excellent skill to help when being blocked. *Stand firm* is handy if you want to put your minotaur on the line of scrimmage or take part in 'the cage'.

Trolls

I must admit to having a disliking for taking Trolls. Personally, I feel that Minotaurs fit the background of the Chaos Dwarf race far better. In addition to this, I find that Trolls are good at one thing and one thing only - blocking. Although they perform this job admirably, Chaos Dwarfs are an acceptable substitute and I would rather spend my valuable gold on filling the positions that the Chaos Dwarf team cannot usually find a player type for.

Star Players

Hthark the Unstoppable

Better known as Hthark the Unpronounceable in my gaming group for

his silly name. Hthark must rank as one of the best star players in the game. He has almost everything you could want in a player - high movement, great strength, impenetrable armour and an impressive list of skills. Hthark makes an excellent player for the line of scrimmage but, like other Bull Centaurs, he is even more impressive as a blitzer. Using his *break tackle* skill, he can take advantage of even the smallest gap to tackle the opponent's ball carrier or to score that all-important touchdown. Although picking up the ball can be difficult with agility 2, once he has it he certainly lives up to his name - truly unstoppable!

The only downside to Hthark is that he is so superb in every respect that he will often stifle the development of the rest of your team. With Hthark getting the majority of the star player points for his casualties and touchdowns, the rest of the team tends to suffer.

Zzharg Madeye

At first glance Zzharg looks like a good buy. Armed with a blunderbuss, who could possibly resist hiring him for a game of Blood Bowl? Using the blunderbuss to fire the ball the length of the pitch, Zzharg fills the vacant position of passer in the Chaos Dwarf team. However, with agility 2, Zzharg will struggle to pick up the ball and, even if he does, there needs to be someone on the end of the pass to take advantage of it - very unlikely and very risky.

Add this to his high cost, and the high likelihood of him getting sent off, this makes him a purchase for only the richest of teams.

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The Roster

The starting roster is very important for any team. There will never be the perfect line-up and subtle balances have to be made, based on who your regular opponents are and what style of game you wish to play. I usually go for the same starting team every time.

My usual starting roster for a league is:

5 Chaos Dwarfs @ 70k gp each = 350k gp
 5 Hobgoblins @ 40k gp each = 200k gp
 1 Bull Centaur @ 130k gp each = 130k gp
 1 Minotaur @ 110k gp each = 110k gp
 3 Rerolls @ 50k gp each = 150k gp
 Fan Factor 6 @ 10k gp each = 60k gp
 Total = 1,000k gp

This gives the team 12 players for your first match, and with the price of hobgoblins, you will probably be able to hire a 13th player after a game or two. The alternative is to buy an apothecary for your Minotaur and Bull Centaur instead of the first new player - it really all depends on how many hard-hitting teams you face on a regular basis. Whilst 3 re-rolls is not as high as some teams, it should provide adequate protection for the worst of gaffs. If you need more at a later date then 100,000 gold pieces is a lot of gold but better than most teams, and you could always give your Minotaur the leader skill if you roll a double!

I like a high fan factor. I certainly feel that it is better to have fan factor 6 and 3 re-rolls than fan factor 1 and 4 re-rolls. Not only does it give you higher gate receipts, it also helps on a lot of the kick-off table results. Never under-estimate how large an effect these events can have

on the game!

Chaos Dwarf Plays

Chaos Dwarfs are very much a hard-hitting, running team. Without any dedicated throwers or catchers, and a very slow team in general, a throwing game is only recommended for the most cavalier and lucky of Chaos Dwarf coaches.

Players tend to fall into four categories when playing with a running team; blockers, blitzers, linesmen and ball carriers. Chaos Dwarfs and Hobgoblins, with the *block* skill, fill the blocker position splendidly. Bull Centaurs and Minotaurs are decent blitzers with their relatively high movement and strength. Hobgoblins are respectable linesmen and also perform the role of ball carrier in most Chaos Dwarf teams. If you have the right mixture of these player types then the game of Blood Bowl becomes a lot easier for the coach.

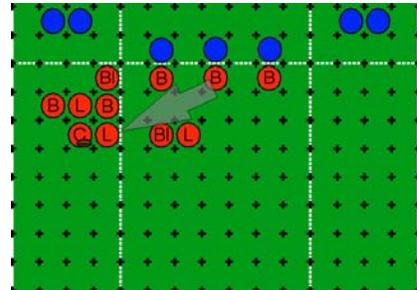
The Cage

The cage is an old and trusted tactic for any hard hitting team. The basic idea is to surround the ball carrier with players to stop the opposition from getting to the vulnerable chap in the middle, before starting to roll down the pitch.



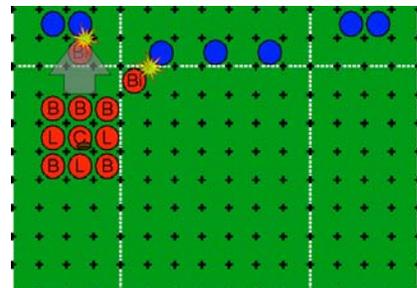
Step 1: Setting up the cage (Key: Bl = blitzer, B = blocker, L = linesman, C = ball carrier)

The play starts with the ball carrier picking up the ball and setting himself behind some of his team-mates, ideally your team's blockers. This could be behind the line of scrimmage, but down one of the flanks is usually preferable as it means your opponent can only attack from one direction.



Step 2: Forming the cage

Other players on the team then start forming the cage around your ball-carrier, with the toughest players on the most vulnerable corners for added protection.



Step 3: Pushing down field

Finally, the cage begins to roll down the field. This is the trickiest part of the play. Whilst getting into the cage formation is relatively straightforward, getting the opposition out of the way can be less so. Use free-roaming blitzers to knock obstructions out of the way. The Minotaur comes into his own in this role, as the *frenzy* skill allows him to keep pushing if the initial blitz fails to knock over the target.

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When close enough, the cage can open and the ball carrier can be released for the touchdown.

Ignore The Ball!

Another popular tactic for hard-hitting teams is to almost ignore the ball completely. This can be an excellent and bloody tactic against the punier teams like elves, skaven and most human teams. The first targets are usually the most vulnerable players on the opposition's team, like catchers and throwers. With these guys gone, your opponent will have a much harder time scoring breakaway touchdowns. With the pace of your opponent's team gone, there is suddenly less need for depth in formation and you can push players up to gang up on the remainder of the team.

Once a sizeable proportion of your opponent's team is on the ground or on their way to the nearest hospital, it should be a simple stroll down the pitch for a touchdown.

Smash and Run

Against very slow teams like Dwarfs and Undead, a Chaos Dwarf team with enough Hobgoblins and Bull Centaurs can sometimes attempt to make a break for it down one of the flanks, forming a mini-cage.



Step 1: Get the ball and push down one of the flanks.

As with the regular cage play, the tactic starts with the ball carrier driving behind a few of his teammates.



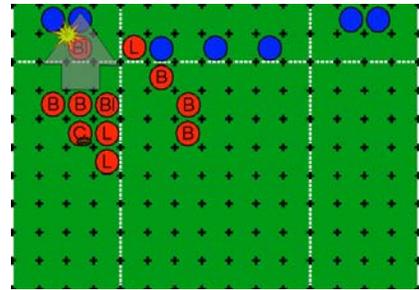
Step 2: Form the cage

Slow and clumsy teams will have great difficulty getting around the back of the cage, so it may be left open.



Step 3: Forming a second barrier

This will free up players to harass your opponent's team. Forming a second barrier around the cage will create more problems for your opposing coach. They can either try and smash a way through this barrier, using their one blitz action for the turn, or they can attempt to dodge through the net - unlikely considering their low agility!



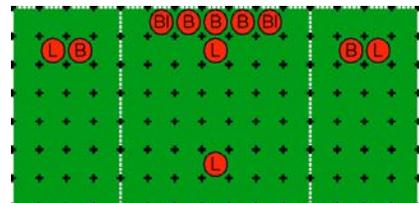
Step 4: Rolling up the pitch and scoring

Once formed, you can start rolling down the pitch. Again, use your blitzers to take care of unwanted obstacles in the way.

Once you are sure that your opponent cannot catch up with your ball carrier, you can open the cage and amble in for a touchdown!

Defense vs. Hard and Slow Teams

When playing other hard-hitting teams, the main battle takes place on the line of scrimmage. If you can get an upper hand in this area of the pitch, you have a good chance of scoring and ultimately winning the match.



Defense set-up vs. hard and slow teams

Playing against a slow team, most of your players can be focused on the front line. Even if your opponent does manage to break through your lines, catching up with the break-away party should not be a problem with your hobgoblins and blitzers.

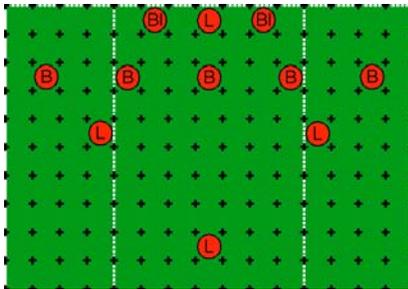
The main headache when playing hard and slow teams is your opponent rolling down your line of

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scrimmage. There are a variety of ways to stop this. Players with guard to give the person being blocked some help, or positioning a high strength player at each end of the line of scrimmage. Either way, it can still be very tough and usually requires quite a bit of luck.

Defense vs. Weak and Fast Teams

Against faster teams, your defense has to be a lot deeper. The idea here is to throw a net over your entire half of the field, meaning that anyone running in-between your players will have to make a lot of dodge rolls. The more dice they have to roll, the more likely they are to fail.



Defense set-up vs. weak and fast teams

The areas to watch out when playing weak and fast teams are the flanks. It only takes a small gap for a wily opponent to score. With many runners having a high agility and the dodge skill, all those Chaos Dwarfs with tackle are vital for your defence. I like to set them up in the second row and make sure that there are no alleys that are tackle-free.

Do not forget to keep at least one player in deep reserve to make that last mad dash to catch the ball carrier or block any catchers that make it into your end zone!

Conclusions

And that wraps up this article on Chaos Dwarf teams in Blood Bowl. I hope that I have shown that Chaos Dwarfs are one of the more interesting Blood Bowl teams, despite having one of the most limited rosters. They might not be able to play the throwing game at all and their running game is not much better, but they do have an interesting mix of rock-hard and disposable players.

Of course, this is only my opinion

on how to play Blood Bowl and there are far better tacticians out there. Have a search around the internet and you should be able to find far more devious and cunning plays to bamboozle your opponent with.

Good luck,

~ Aaron Tunney

Following the 2003 rules review, the rule for the wild animal skill has changed. Instead of having to move the Minotaur first, he may move at any time- but will only make any action apart, from a block, on a roll of a 4+ first. This sadly ruins his ability as a blitzter. Luckily, he can now use assists so he makes an excellent blocker. Still, I would rather have a blitzter...

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BEING A MEMBER OF THE
PORTENT FORUMS...



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