

Warning Order

ISSUE #71

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F&F ACW

BKC IV

BATTLETECH

WARMASTER ANCIENTS





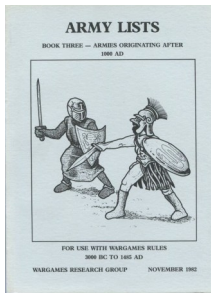
Warning order

W F H G S

For as long as many of us can remember, army lists have been a staple of miniature wargaming. Hate them, love them, curse them, etc., they have been a longstanding part of the hobby, for better or worse! They are the arbiter of what is fair or isn't, serve as artificial constraints on our scenarios, and definitely affect how gamers purchase and paint their miniatures as well. They are a force to be reckoned with, even if many do not use them at all!

When the hobby first got going, the primary focus was obtaining miniatures, painting them, writing rules (published rules were far and few between), making terrain, then trying to play a historical battle or playing a scenario that was close to history. No one thought to limit the number of Old Guard regiments in a French Napoleonic army or how many Tiger tanks were in a German counter-attack on the Eastern Front. Gamers just really never considered those things an issue.

When the hobby really started to emerge with commercial products in the 70s and tournaments be-



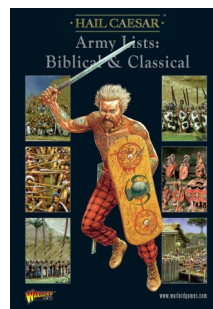
came a thing, you started seeing army lists. Go back to the hobby magazines from that era and on ads from gaming companies you would see figures, limited terrain, and lots of rules, but few army lists. Army lists existed for primarily Ancients and Renaissance in most cases. Some rules might have them included, but for the heavyweights in the hobby such as WRG Ancients, they came in separate books. This also started the rise of gamers choosing which army to paint by finding a list they liked and numerous articles rating the armies in the various lists.

Most gaming was still done by gamers in various groups who for example, would buy a copy of Laserburn, paint up some 15mm sci-fi figs, then run an attack on a spaceport. They would try to balance out the scenario, but using an army list at this stage was still a bit weird. That, however, was changing and you started seeing army lists for Seven Years War, ACW, Napoleonic, and more. Many rules started incorporating army lists or some kind

of limiting factors to prevent ahistorical situations.

Things, however, were changing. WRG for example, didn't just have one book of army lists, but multiple books for their sets of rules. There was a point at the end of the 70s and through the 80s where either rules had scenarios in them and no lists, or they had lists and no scenarios. Clearly there was a dividing line between those who wanted competition style games and others who fought the great battles of history or campaigns. Many of us of course had both, but there were a lot of questions about the lists.

Slowly, things started to go in the direction of army lists. Probably the biggest influence on this was when Warhammer 40K really started to emerge as the front runner in sci-fi miniatures gaming. Everything was based off of lists and it greatly influenced what faction you chose, which direction to go in terms of miniature purchases, and how you played your faction. Suddenly, army lists were the way to go and if you wanted your rules to succeed, they needed various army lists. (cont. on p3)



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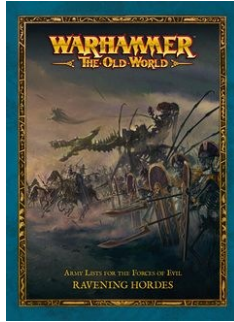
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Special points of interest:

- Several battle reports featuring *Battletech*, *BKC IV*, *Warmaster Ancients* (two battles), *Fire & Fury ACW*, and *Age of Eagles*.
- Two new *Engagements* scenarios.
- A look back at *West End Games* and what a gaming week or month would be "back in the day".

Army Lists: Friend or Foe (cont.)

(cont. from p2) Today, you would be hard pressed to find a set of rules without army lists! Nearly every set I've bought the last few years (Kampfgruppe Commander 3, Midgard Heroic, Hail Caesar 2nd ed., etc.) have army lists or they are available as a separate book. Boxed sets of figures that go along with many rules are configured to adhere to a specific army list and give you the basics. Using your list while knowing the weaknesses of your opponent's list is a big part of the hobby now.

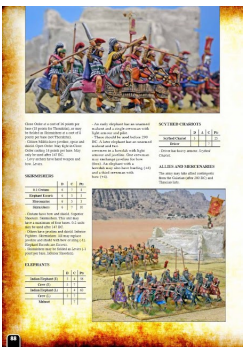


gamers to purchase your rules, then offer a boxed set with the prescribed units that they can just open up and play with. Many gamers will go this route, which explains the success of many game systems and why things aren't going to change! A new player tries their first game, then buys the rules and chooses a boxed set. No studying the army lists, figuring out what is what, etc. Just open the box and you're ready to go. It's easy to see why army lists are now a standard feature of many rules and at this time it appears that there is no going back.

The good thing about army lists is that they can serve as a guide for your collecting and painting a force for a particular set of rules. If you're creating an early Successors army for example, by buying/painting a few pike units, some elephants, heavy cavalry, etc., you will at least have what should look like a Successors army on the tabletop for that period of warfare. The rules also serve as artificial constraints in that your army can't be all pike phalanxes and agema heavy cavalry. Instead, you must make do like the commanders of the day and learn to utilize your militia, light cavalry, javelin armed skirmishers, and allies.

This is the beauty of the army list as it prevents gamers from taking a force composed entirely of King Tiger tanks!

The points systems and minimum/maximum that some army lists have are another constraining mechanism.

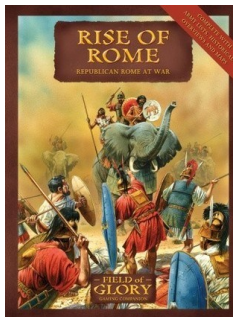


If you and an opponent are going to play Flames of War, Saga, or Warmaster on a given day, just agree on a points total, then bring along the units that according to the lists, should give a fairly equal battle. There will be eternal arguments about the numbers in the list, from points per units to number of attacks and saves, but that will exist with any set of rules.

For many manufacturers the ability to sell boxed sets to a fixed amount of points is a great marketing tool. Get

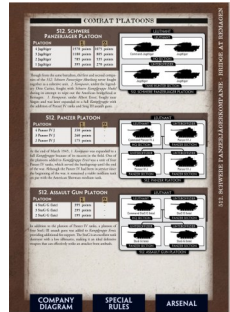
However, the question becomes, what are you really playing on the tabletop? Battles throughout history were rarely equal affairs. If you look at events such as Antietam, Omdurman, or even a special forces fight in the hills of Afghanistan, one side or the other had a numerical superiority. Not only that, the terrain wasn't always by choice of one or both of the participants, nor the weather that the battle was fought under. The time of day, quality of forces, how much artillery was available, etc., were usually not ideal. However, these battles did occur and no points system can reflect that.

The other issue with army lists is that they seem to be constantly "evolving". It's not uncommon that you purchase a set of rules (which may have lists in it or in a separate module), then you build a force for it. Sometime in the future a separate book comes out on a topic, such as East Front 1944 or Rome vs. Carthage, which you readily buy. You look over the lists and you realize that you don't have nowhere near the forces to play any of the scenarios or campaigns! The reason for that is that the original system went with a generic list while the modules/supplements based theirs off of actual battles. We won't even go into Games Workshop and their continually "evolving" army lists.



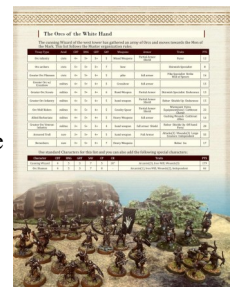
The one other issue that gamers complain about regarding lists is the time it takes to

build your army. Let's say that you're going to be playing BKC IV on the weekly gaming night and you may have 3-5 players, so your group settles on a so many points per side game. Someone from both sides then has to go down the lists for the era chosen, compare it to what they have or what others have, then keep adding and re-adding until you get to the desired amount that also reflects the minimums and maximums listed. If this doesn't put you off from playing the game, nothing else will! Now you could make a whole series of standard lists for your miniature collection or use programs like Army Builder, but it's never as easy as it first sounds.



What we're left with is an entire generation of gamers who have known nothing but equal points battles. Go to a WH40K, Age of Sigmar, Saga, Flames of War, etc., tournament and watch for a while. Whatever "scenario" (usually just a meeting engagement) they have set up is just a mechanism to get two evenly matched (at least in points) armies to face off in the middle of the board. Yes, this is where army lists have led us and while many clearly love it, a good number of gamers hate it as well. We haven't even mentioned that a lot of these lists get very little if any playtesting, which means new versions will be coming out to rectify problems.

In the end, it seems like army lists solve problems and at the same time can create problems! Some groups use them for quick scenarios or a late change of plans to get some armies out on the tabletop. Others treat them as life and death. The one thing that is not changing is that they are here to stay. With the rise of the tournament scene (the amount of professionally run tournaments continues to grow), army lists are front and center. Many long time gamers, however, still rely on scenarios such as rear guard actions, flank attacks, etc., that do not have equal point values, nor are they interested that things are equal. Playing the game is the important part as well as realizing that not all battles were equal throughout history. Army lists, however, keep "evolving"...



BKC IV: To The Rescue!

Battle Report

This scenario was based off of many battles on the Eastern Front in late 1944 where the German front had collapsed and the Russians were trying to eliminate various pockets of resistance. In this scenario, the Germans were in multiple groups, trying to reach the last known safe position in the area. Two Russian mech forces were maneuvering for a pincer attack to close off the escape route.

The Germans had the following forces:

- An infantry company (3 stands) and a Tiger platoon (1 stand) holding a village/road junction in the middle of the board.
- A relief force consisting of a company of Panthers and a company of panzergrenadiers with some support elements. This would enter at the far left of the board on Turn 1.
- Four escaping battlegroups; one with (3) Stug IIIs, another with (3) PZ IVHs, one with (2) Marder IIIs and two panzergrenadier stands, and the final group with a company of panzergrenadiers. All three would enter from random points on the right of the board on Turn 1.
- The Germans also had a battery of 105mm artillery in support. The German command ratings were 8s, except for two of the escaping battlegroups which were 7s.

The Russians had two mechanized forces which would enter from opposite



ends of the long side of the game board, within 6 inches to either side of the road:

- The first group had (4) T-34/85s (2) SMG stands, and (2) mech infantry stands w/trucks.
- The second group had (6) T-34/76s and (4) mech infantry stands w/trucks.
- The Russians also had (2) batteries of 122mm artillery on call, but their FAO was poorly rated.

The scenario had been designed for five players with the fifth taking a Russian force that would be chasing the fleeing German battlegroups. However, due to a late cancellation, we were left with only four players, so we had to come up with a unique way of depicting this. The solution was to have sort of a “red wall” that moved 8 inches a turn starting on Turn 2 from the left edge of the game

board. If this wall ever contacted any German stand it was assumed to be captured by the Russian follow on forces. This would put pressure on the German forces to continuously be moving and every command roll would be critical.

For every vehicle and/or infantry stand the Germans got off the board (except the relief force) they would score 5 points, giving a possible total of 85 points. The Germans would roll percentile dice and if the number was under the score, it would be deemed a successful operation. Maybe not the most fair set of victory conditions, but each side would be trying to increase/decrease the percentage.

The German relief force came barreling down the road towards the village, trying to help fortify the village while the fleeing battlegroups tried to make their best speed towards the village at the center of the board and safety. The Russian forces came on and positioned themselves to start engaging the German defenders in the village. The Tiger opened fire on the T-34/85s and this started a multi-turn gunnery duel which ended with the Tiger on fire, but not before it scores multiple hits on the T-34/85s.

In fact, this was the theme for the Russians most of the night. They would knock out German stands, but each time they grew weaker and weaker. The Stugs got intercepted by a small group of T-34/76s who already had their hands full with some of the Panthers. The Stugs had to make a run for it and quickly lost two of their number, but did score some hits with their return fire. The Panthers were doing their job by keeping the Russians busy, but the Germans (cont. on p5)





(cont. from p4) were being forced forward by the red wall, while the Russians just sat back and waited.

By Turn 4 things weren't looking great for the Germans. The Stugs were knocked out, the Marders kept blowing their command rolls and got captured, plus the Tiger in the village was on fire. The T-34/85s had taken a lot of hits and escape route was still open, but things weren't looking good. The Russian infantry on both sides deployed into the forest areas to block any German panzergrenadiers from going around them.

The Germans, however, still had some PZ IVHs and some panzergrenadiers and these swung around to the left to make their attack. A Panther and an SDKFZ 251/22 knocked out the final T-34/85 on that side of the board. The Germans rolled up and got into a nasty fight with

the Russian mech infantry, which included some close assaults, which the Germans repelled.

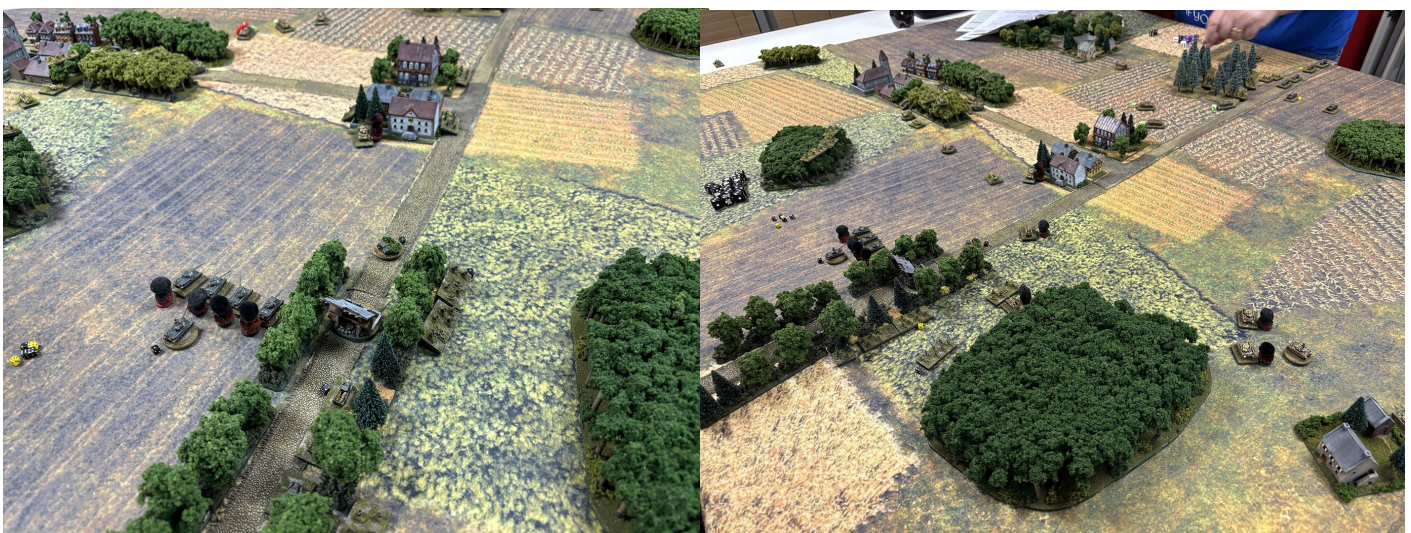
Now we were getting down to the end game. The Germans needed to break out into the open where the T-34/76s were waiting at long range across the board as they didn't want to expose themselves too much to the Panthers, who had already knocked out a few. Taking the village in the center seemed a remote possibility for the Russians, so the goal now was to kill as many German units as possible to lower the chance to win on the final die roll.

The Germans made a break for it, seeing their one and only opportunity before the door closed completely. The last PZ IVH was knocked out, but the infantry got through. The Russians were too weak by this time to pursue, so while the relief force covered, the five infantry

stands and one halftrack escaped for a total of 30 points. The Germans rolled percentile dice and came up with a 62, meaning that they had lost the game.

A very fun game with some desperate fighting! No one was really sure if the scenario was balanced or not, but things worked out better than we hoped! The good thing about using the "percentile dice for victory" system is that both sides have a chance, regardless of how many players there are, if forces are unbalanced, or you need to make last minute changes to the scenario.

In the future we could revisit this scenario and maybe add a chart that on certain die rolls both sides would get some extra forces, which would make things interesting. Also, more support units, artillery, and air attacks could be added to balance things out a bit more.



As a group, we've played BattleTech: Alpha Strike multiple times now, and so when a Boxing Day game was suggested, one of our members offered to run a larger-scale game. It would include mechs, tanks, infantry, artillery, turrets, and aircraft. The original plan was for 6 or 7 players, but we reduced it to 5 after a few people could not attend.

BattleTech, both as a game and as a fictional universe, has existed for around 40 years now. It has evolved over the years, and unlike the gorilla in the room (Games Workshop's 40k), it changes with an advancing timeline (from a game with stagnant technology, to finding the Helm Memory core, to Clan Invasion, to FedCom Civil War, Jihad, Republic, Dark Age, and now ilClan). It is a tale of sweeping galactic conquest, with a plethora of major and



ated, pressed into service to protect the world (in game play terms these would all be skill 5, as opposed to the normal 3 or 4 for clan warriors, either green or otherwise unfit for normal duty by clan standards). In a true hallmark of the changing landscape they would be supported by Clan Ghost Bear and a mercenary force consisting of Hansen's Roughriders (the Ghost Bears composed a star of mostly heavy and assault mechs, while the Rough Riders had their typical Assault/Heavy lance, both supported by a trinary of elementals).

In the ilClan setting, the Rasalhague Dominion (Ghost Bear/Rasalhague) has been riven by internal dissent despite its professed support of the ilClan. They were thus 'eager'



minor factions loosely patterned on Feudal Europe (the various houses act as feudal countries, Comstar was space AT&T, and the clans were a sort of Mongol Horde). The current setting is the ilClan era, set after the popular clix-based Dark Age/Republic of the Sphere.

The scenario for the day is drawn from some of the more current fiction. When Alaric Ward made his push on Terra/Earth, he stripped the Wolf Empire of pretty much everything, and those left behind are scrambling to hold it together. With the Hyper Pulse Grid largely offline, interstellar communications are slow, reducing the speed with which the FWL, House Steiner, or House Liao can capitalize on this moment of weakness.

The Wolves are thus a mixed bag of aged out Solahma (old/infirm warriors) and junior cadets who haven't yet gradu-

to be seen supporting the Wolves and get in their good graces. Further acting as a shock is the fact that the clans in this period have begun hiring mercenaries. This would be unthinkable to most folks familiar with the clans, but their time in the Inner Sphere is definitely rubbing off on them (Alaric Ward himself hired the Wolf's Dragoons for his march on Terra).

The Free Worlds League (FWL or House Marik) were all regulars, comprising a Heavy/Assault

Lance, Medium/Light Lance, infantry, and a reinforced vehicle lance (all skill 4), supported by a mixed company of 21st Centauri Lancers (2 lances of mechs, and a reinforced vehicle lance, all skill 3 as befitting their storied carrier and fearsome reputation for excellent gunnery).

Both sides had a single air support unit, while the clan side had turrets, while the inner sphere side sported a single artillery piece off board. Aerospace and artillery could both only be used on alternating turns (loading/firing for well off board, or the aerospace assets needing to set up for another attack run).

The table was a 10 by 4 setup with a bay/ocean on one end and a river running up most of the table. The seaport city held a genetic repository for the clan (seeking to rapidly grow numbers post invasion of terra), the main space port (in the middle), and the local power generation facility at the end opposite the city. The Wolves and their allies would need to hold the space port and power station while preventing the destruction of the genetic repository. The faction in control of the power station could turn it on or off, which would enable or disable the turrets, and also drop the gates of the city and space port.

Opening the match, the FWL moved forward tentatively while the 21st Centauri made a much more aggressive push up under cover on the opposite flank. The Wolves in the city elected to move out with both stars (over a couple turns) vs a defensive fight under the cover of the walls. Meanwhile, (cont, on p7)



Battletech: An Empire in Distress by Rob Coleman (cont.) Battle Report



(cont. from p6) in the center, the Roughriders played a much more conservative wait-and-see. Initial fire saw an out-of-position Ghost Bear Hellhound/Conjuror go up in flames to the combined weight of fire from a sizable portion of the 21st Centauri force, despite jumping and being in cover on the hill. This was to prove a bad omen for the normally redoubtable Ghost Bears, who would struggle to land hits all game. A problem further exacerbated by a couple of good turns with aerospace chewing them up from behind.

Meanwhile, on the other side, the Wolves drew first blood against the FWL, downing a Carronade thanks to a whole star moving up through the waters of the bay. The Wolf strafing run chewed up some infantry and a mech, but was otherwise only mildly eventful.

After about the 3rd or 4th turn, damage really started to accrue. The Ghost Bears were withering under continuous punishment from the 21st Centauri, helped not a little by the 21st's lightning-fast hover vehicles (including 4 Savannah Masters, which on paper don't look like much with 1 armor, 1 structure, and 1 damage, but they are dirt cheap with a 26" move and TMM of 4. Truly beastly for getting into rear arcs and redirecting the flow of battle). These would spend much of the game forcing the Roughriders and Bears to waste effort dealing with

them in the backfield, punching well above their weight class. None of them were game-breaking, but the speed, 4 TMM, and ability to get into rear arcs made for rough going for the defenders.

Things almost looked like they might switch up at one point as the Roughriders, not to be outdone, scored a critical hit on the first shot at a 21st Centauri Banshee and promptly scored a 12 on the critical

table, causing it to explode spectacularly in the middle of the field. It would make the 21st quickly reposition multiple units that were otherwise pummeling the Ghost Bears. The Roughriders would continue it by downing a Thunderbolt, a Savannah Master, a couple FWL units through judicious air strikes, and pummeling a couple of other 21st Centauri units.

Meanwhile, the FWL and Wolves were in a fight to the death. Each side pounded the other, chewing through mech after mech. In this, the lowly battle armor of the FWL would earn their weight in gold, chipping away at the Wolf mechs piece by piece. All the while, the vehicle lance made up the difference. The Wolverers, for their part, gave almost as good as they got. They chewed through multiple mechs, and almost managed to fold the FWL at a couple of points.

Eventually, the 21st crushed all of the Ghost Bears, except a plucky little elemental, and managed to shut off the turrets and drop the gates. It should be noted that the Bear Mammoth and Kodiak both finally get in the game, showing just how brutally impressive their firepower is by completely stripping the armor off a Sagitaire and taking down a Stalker (with the help of an elemental). Sadly, it was too little too late; the 21st had otherwise wiped the walls with them (perhaps there was still indecision on (cont. on p12)



Engagements 69: Storming The Port

Situation: Red has been conducting piracy attacks in the region and Blue has finally located their base. Red has been particularly elusive and the fear is that if an expedition is not launched soon, Red will change their base of operations and continue their piracy in the area. Blue quickly assembles a force and strikes out for the island, aiming to overwhelm the defenders and take control of the port.

Period: Suitable for large skirmish actions in the Colonial era, but could be used for medieval or even Seven Years War eras.

Table Size: 6 x 4, but a larger table could be used with more terrain added.

Terrain Notes: The port is mainly wooden buildings, but several stone ones should be mixed in. The port is ringed by a wooden wall with a watchtower and strong gate. The wall should have firing positions. There are several sections of jungle and those without roads should be difficult to cross. The hills should be steep near the crest and added to the jungle terrain should be nearly impassable for cavalry and/or artillery.

Scale: The scenario is designed for any scale, but if 28mm is used the table may need to be expanded to a 5 x 8. Units could be 20 figs each with The Sword & The Flame, smaller numbers of figs using other rules, or with something like Black Powder they would be units with multiple bases.

Red Forces:

- (3) units of pirates
- (3) units of allied natives
- (1) unit of Port militia
- (3) artillery pieces
- (1) unit of light cavalry

Set Up: All of Red's units begin on the game board. At least one unit must garrison the port, while the others may deploy anywhere on the roads across the island.

Red Orders: Defend the port until the end of the game (nightfall). Red's surviving forces can then slip away under the cover of darkness and set up operations on another island.

Blue Forces: Blue has rushed reinforcements into the area along with the local militia in order to defend the town and

the bridge.

- (7) units of infantry
- (1) unit of light infantry
- (2) artillery pieces
- (1) light cavalry unit

Blue Orders: Land your forces at one or two of the available beaches, then assemble to attack the port. The port must be seized by the end of the game (nightfall) or the pirates and their allies will slip away and live to fight another day.

Blue Set Up: Blue's forces may set up at one or two of the beaches on the map. If Blue selects only one beach, then half the force will begin on the beach and the second half will land on the second turn (congestion issues). Forces on the beaches can start in any formation.

Game Length: 12 turns

Special Rules:

- Blue has the first turn in the game.
- During set up, Blue will choose to land their forces at one or two of the beaches, noting this in secret. Once Blue has selected, Red can then place their forces on the board.
- One of Red's artillery pieces needs to be set up at the port.
- The port's defenses consist of a stockade type wall with firing posi-

tions and a tower. There should be up to three artillery positions within the defenses.

- Each turn, Blue rolls 2D6. For each die that is 4+ then Blue gets an additional artillery piece that can fire up to 18 inches onto the board from the coast (ship to shore bombardment).

Victory Conditions: Blue wins the game if at the end of 12 turns they have breached the port's defenses and are able to fire upon the area with the dock (thus preventing any escape during the night).

Variants: There are a large number of variants that could be added to this scenario:

- Give each side additional forces and allow Red to create additional fortifications and obstacles in the open areas near the port and farms.
- Have Red break their forces into a number of groups, then randomly determine where they are on patrol before the attack or to balance player experience with the rules.
- Allow both sides reinforcements after so many turns.
- Give Red one or two secret paths through the jungle/hills area.
- Extend the number of game turns so that Blue can develop their attack more fully.



Engagements 70: Take Back the Airfield

Situation: A surprise offensive by Red has caught Blue out of position. Although Blue's forces have fallen back and are bringing up reserves, Blue still holds a vital crossroads in the area. Red desperately needs to take this crossroads to shorten their supply lines, which have become overextended during this offensive. Red has recently taken the airstrip, so Blue needs to launch a counterattack to retake the airstrip or the force holding the village and crossroads will need to surrender due to a lack of supplies

Period: Designed for the WW2 and Modern periods.

Table Size: 6 x 4, but a larger table could be used with more terrain added.

Terrain Notes: The town is a combination of wood and stone buildings with a variety of large and small buildings. The wooded areas are light woods, but will limit movement. The hills should be treated as rough ground. There is a medieval type watchtower in the center of the hill which gives good visibility to the surrounding area. There are several farms in the area as well.

Scale: The scenario is designed for any scale, but if 28mm is used the table may need to be expanded to a 5 x 8. Skirmish forces are probably best, but other systems with larger units/scale could be used.

Red Forces:

Besieging Force

- (8) units of infantry
- (2) heavy weapons units (MGs)
- (3) mortar units
- (1) anti-tank unit (ATGMs ?)
- (1) battery of off board artillery

Airstrip Force

- (2) units of infantry
- (1) combat engineer unit

Set Up: The Airstrip force begins the game occupying the defenses around the airstrip. The Besieging force has two infantry units deployed on the board at start (observation force-roll for placement same as reserve forces). These two units can start in entrenched positions. The remaining forces are in reserve and will

arrive on Turn 1 according to die roll. Roll 1D6 for each unit and the number rolled is where it enters from the edge of the board at the marked number corresponding to the die roll.

Red Orders: Hold the airstrip and if it is lost, counterattack to retake it by the end of the game. If at any time Red seizes the Y junction in the village it is an automatic victory for Red.

Blue Forces: Blue must create an assault force to retake the airstrip, but still maintain sufficient force to hold the village.

- (6) units of infantry
- (1) unit of heavy weapons (MGs)
- (1) unit of militia
- (2) mortar units
- (1) combat engineer unit
- (1) light armored unit (armored cars, LAVs, etc.)
- (1) battery of off-board artillery.

Blue Orders: Counterattack and retake the airstrip, then defend it against further Red attacks. A defense of the village must be maintained as well and loss of the Y intersection in the village is an automatic defeat.

Blue Set Up: Blue's forces may start anywhere in the village in any formation.

Game Length: 12 turns

Special Rules:

- Blue has the first turn in the game.
- Blue's infantry should be of a higher morale/skill grade than Red's forces.
- Blue's entrenchments around the village and airstrip are a mix of trenches, firing parapets, and gun positions that should give a favorable modifier for defense and melee.

Victory Conditions: Whoever controls the airstrip at the end of Turn 12 wins the game..

Variants: There are a large number of variants that could be added to this scenario:

- Allow Red the possibility of additional off board artillery batteries each turn to offset player experience or if Blue is able to retake the airstrip too easily.
- Give each side additional forces at the start. Allow both sides reinforcements (Blue's would need to be air-dropped or delivered by helicopter) after so many turns.
- Extend the number of game turns so that Red could use their entire force to attack through the hills.
- Give each side a number of airstrikes and minefields for Blue's defenses.

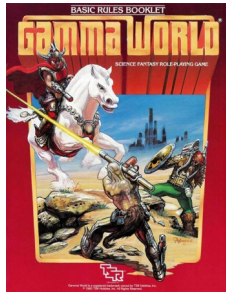


Memoirs of a Miniatures and Board Wargamer Pt. 58

RPGs, Miniatures, & Board Games

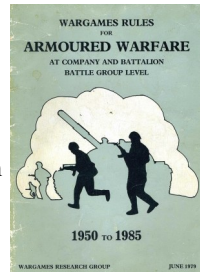
The late 1970s and early 1980s were one of the greatest periods of gaming in the eyes of many grognards. Even though by today's standards there weren't a lot of boardgames, miniature options, or supplements for role-playing games, we were usually gaming once or twice a week! It was one of those eras where everything seemed to come together, making it seem like there was so much to play that we would be paralyzed by choice. For today's gamer, that is certainly a reality, but back then, we had to pace ourselves!

It's been mentioned in these pages before, but back then, you had *time*. There were only 3-4 TV channels (some rich kids had cable), movies stayed in theaters for a year, video stores had limited selections, sports were only televised on weekends, and home computers were in their infancy. This gave you plenty of time after or before work to read rules, paint, plan games, and most of all, have gaming time, especially on the weekends. If you were really lucky and things worked out right, you could do a long RPG session on Friday, play a WW2 micro-armor game at the local store on Saturday, then a board wargame with



Miniatures was really interesting in that we quickly developed unwritten rules regarding what periods would be played with miniatures and what we would play using boardgames. For example, if the topic was WW3, then anything above the tactical level was board games such as GDW's 3rd World War and Victory Games Fleet series. If it was tactical then it was WRG, Challenger 2, Tacforce, or Harpoon 2. The same for ACW where playing games like Avalon Hill's Gettysburg or SPI's Terrible Swift Sword were way down the priority list when compared to getting a chance to play Johnny Reb, Rally Round The Flag, Stars & Bars, etc., with 15mm miniatures.

Looking back it was hard to say how those guidelines came about and how strictly they were "enforced". By enforced, that means everyone adhered to them pretty much right from the start! No one in our group or local gamers were heavy into Napoleonics or for that matter Ancients, so that probably enabled us to focus on just a few periods. The other contributing factor is that no one had gobs of money back then, so when we did a project there was a need to really coordinate the purchases.



At that time, things probably seemed complex to us, i.e., should we go with Stone Mountain or Heritage 15mm figs, should we use 20mm railroad buildings or get some of the new 15mm plaster cast ones, and which of these three sets of rules that are readily available should we use? Today this seems laughably simple and maybe many gamers would like to go back to those days! For ACW today there are scales ranging from 3mm to 40mm, boxed sets, 100+ sets of rules, and so many terrain options that you would need a second job to pay for them all!

The one weird period that we never quite came to consensus on was air combat. Miniatures games were and still are a popular topic, but back then we kind of waffled on this one. Several of us had 1/72nd scale aircraft for Mustangs & Messerschmitts, but that system took a lot of effort, not to mention space to play. Until we started doing Phantoms in the early 2000s, jet combat was strictly via board games such as GDW's Air Superiority, COA's The Speed of Heat, or AH's

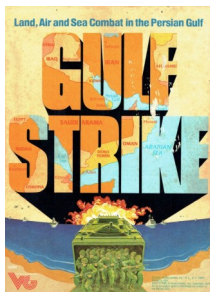
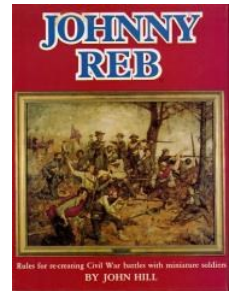
Flight Leader. Many in the group preferred playing the old Air Force and Dauntless games to playing miniature air combat.

So we spent a lot of our time gaming and thinking about games. The fact that we were able to seamlessly transition between RPGs, miniatures, and board games back then is pretty amazing. Today it's not often that you meet another gamer who does two out of the three and very few still do all three. We would go from different games to different games depending upon who was available, where we could play, and how long did we have to play. Every now and then we would get stuck in a theme, such as when the latest Starfleet Battles supplement came out or when someone found some maps suitable for a WW3 ground campaign, but we definitely mixed it up.

As we went into the late 80s and early 90s, RPGs had pretty much burned themselves out. We felt that we had seen it all (we had not of course), didn't want to face a balrog on the Bridge of Death for the 100th time, or design one more set of dungeon maps. Board games went into a funk where SPI, Avalon Hill, and GDW collapsed as well as the WW3 market when the Berlin Wall fell. Jobs, life, moving on, etc., all took a toll on our hobby time. There were infrequent games and a lot of talk about the good old days, but inside, everyone knew they were gone.

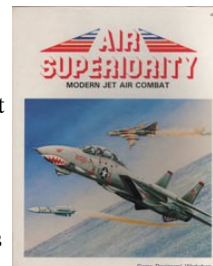
Today, the selection of board games is better than ever, with every kind of conflict catered for with beautiful components and faster playing systems. In terms of miniatures, pretty much anything you want in any scale is available if you have the financial resources. While RPGs are still around, they seemed to

have been supplemented by games such as Tainted Grail and Gloomhaven. Things are better today in terms of what is being offered, but I still wouldn't trade those gaming experience from the 70s and 80s for anything!



friends on a Sunday afternoon. Outside of work, there weren't too many other places to go!

Of course, this was the RPG era, or at least where it really got going. At first it was just Dungeons & Dragons, but then you saw Traveler, Runequest, Gamma World, Merc, James Bond, and many, many more. Most of us played RPG games and miniatures, with a few (including myself) who also played board games. There were epic sessions that would go all night and if there was interest, they would carry on to the next night. Elaborate maps, settings, characters, etc., were all available as gamemasters really poured their heart and soul into these sessions. Of course, mounds of candy bars and sodas were consumed!



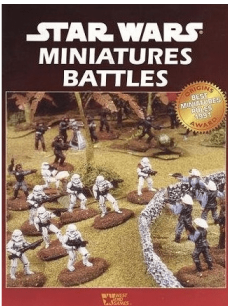
Blast From The Past Pt. 57: West End Games

One of the more baffling (and in a good way!) companies in the history of the hobby has to have been West End Games. Starting out in the late 70s, then really becoming a huge player in the 80s, they produced a wide range of RPGs, games, and war-games, many of which are still around today. Trying to figure out where they were going during this time was a bit of mystery to all of us back in the day, but they did have some noticeable successes.



top be used in forthcoming modules, and so on. Not here. Everything was detailed and so well laid out that the game booklets became the authority on the Star Wars universe! After all of these years it is still one of the more incredible things in the history of the hobby. How a relatively small company put out such a high quality product that lives on to this day is certainly an accomplishment.

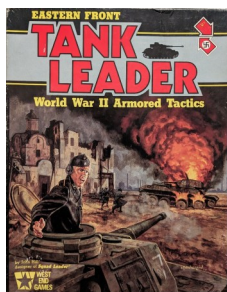
After a few releases West End Games really burst onto the scene in with Paranoia, an RPG about a near future society with multiple factions vying for and against a computer that runs the city. It was an instant hit and firmly placed West End Games into the hobby as a leader in RPGs. They followed up later with a Ghostbusters RPG, Indiana Jones, and even a Hercules/Xena RPG! They even had their own system, the “D6 system”, which was used in many of their products. RPGs would continue to be some of the main products that West End Games would produce over the years.



Of course, you can’t mention West End Games without mentioning their part in the Star Wars universe. Several years after The Return of the Jedi and just when you thought the Star

Wars phenomenon was dying down, along comes not only an RPG system, but several boxed games with miniatures! The success of this endeavor not only caught the hobby by surprise, but many of us gamers as well! Everyone we knew were huge Star Wars fans, so all of a sudden everyone had several packs of figs and we were playing tabletop battles with the miniatures rules.

The one thing that surprised many of us were how *in depth* the entire series was. We were used to many RPGs that had all kinds of lore, but there were all sorts of unexplained things, stuff left out



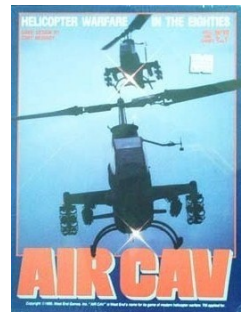
Of course, West End Games also did board wargames. These were hit and miss, but some of the successes still exit on the shelves of many gamers to this day. In terms of style, West End Games certainly had its own. The maps weren’t as detailed as SPI’s, the components weren’t as good as Avalon Hill’s, and they were more a competitor to GDW than anything else. What they did have was an interesting collection of games that you couldn’t really get anywhere else, which is what set them apart.

Naturally, every wargame company has to have a Gettysburg or Battle of the Bulge game if you’re to be taken seriously (still no idea why this is!), but they did have Killer Angels. They also did a Shiloh and Chickamauga game, but never really established themselves as the defining ACW series, which by that time SPI had with their ongoing GBACW series. All three games were fine, but a bit forgettable in the ACW genre.

Where they hit a home run was in the Warsaw Pact vs. NATO genre, which in the mid-80s was extremely popular. It was a crowded field with all of the SPI offerings, GDW, and others including miniatures rules. The first game was Air Cav, which was pretty popular, especially since it dealt primarily with helicopters taking on mechanized forces in a modern setting. While other games had scenarios with helicopters or featured them, there was nothing solely focused on their operations like Air Cav was. The other game was Air & Armor, which featured an entirely new command and control system. It quickly became the “go to” game for anyone wanting to play out a Warsaw Pact invasion of Germany.

The other area where West

End Games excelled was with the Ancients period, with Imperium Romanum II and Druid, both of which were heavily marketed in gaming magazines. Also, the Tank Leader series by designer John Hill were very popular as well. By this time West End Games was seen as a major player in the board wargaming hobby, even if they were not producing that many games. There were some misses as well such as Operation Badr, Against The Reich, and Fire Team. Not that they were bad games (well, maybe Operation Badr was), but there were already better games out there.



By 1990 the company was primarily doing RPGs and the last board wargame was Desert Steel in 1989. What followed after that were limited

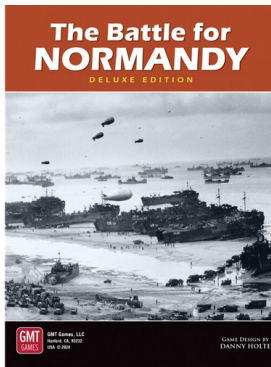
releases, rights taken over by various companies, then a few aborted attempts to make a comeback, including the Web & Starship Kickstarter, which did deliver a new version of that game. However, that seemed to be the last game and the rights and future are now in question. This seemed to be the end of many wargame companies who had success in the late 70s and 80s, but somehow could not push past into the 90s and beyond. Times had changed and gamers appetites had changed as well.

Today, many West End Games products live on. There is a recent version of Paranoia, the Star Wars books and figures are still highly sought after, and Compass is producing some of the games as well. Eastern Front Tank Leader has been in development for quite some time, but may finally see production in 2026. Air & Armor has been revised and in fact there will now be other games in the series, proving how successful that system was back in the day. Junta is alive and well with multiple versions still available.

For many of us, West End Games filled a need during the 80s and filled it well. Their games were heavily played and even though they did not survive, there are still fond memories for them.

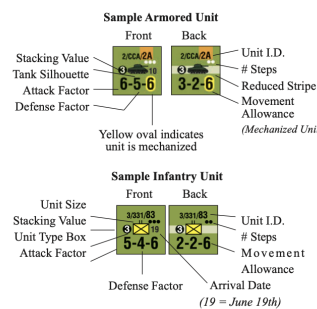


Back in 2009 I reviewed what at that time was a new monster game from GMT Games about the Normandy campaign called The Battle For Normandy. Later, there was a supplement that extended the campaign into August all the way to the Falaise Gap. At the time it was heralded as a playable monster and it was great for team play, even if the footprint is massive.



sized chunk of those are step losses and informational counters. Since it is a battalion level game (with some companies), each division is going to have its own stack of counters. There are a lot of divisions, so coming up with some way to organize everything is going to be a challenge.

The basic sections of the rules, i.e., movement, combat, etc., are actually fairly easy to get into. The length of the rulebook is mainly for the invasion part of the game along with running large campaign games. There's nothing too difficult here, but it will take a few turns to get the sequence of play and how things interact. The playbook with the scenarios is also well done. Each scenario has its own order of battle and the examples of play really help one to understand the game.



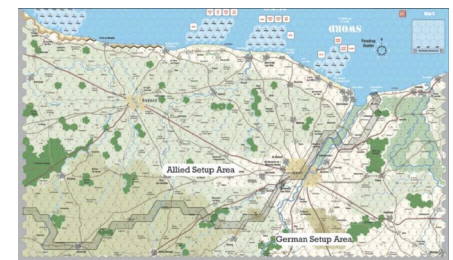
After many years, the latest edition of The Battle For Normandy has finally arrived. Not only do you get the original game, but the expansion is now included along with numerous changes. Over the years on both CSW and BGG there have been all sorts of discussions about maps, units, etc., which have resulted to changes to the various components.

Speaking of components, you get quite a few! To start off with, there are seven 22 x 34 maps, most of which are backprinted. The reason for that is to make some of the scenarios and smaller campaigns work, so you need to use a variety of maps for the play area. This is a great way to save on costs by having the maps do double duty. Then you have a number of displays for air allocation, combat tables, step losses, time tracks, and more. Everything that you will need to play the smaller scenarios as well as the entire campaign is designed to help you along. This will definitely increase

naval support is involved. When you attack you need to ensure success as the supply points are going to run short on some turns.

If you choose to do the invasion scenarios or the full campaign, then there are breakdown units for the airborne divisions (they get scattered) and beach landings. In fact, the night of June 6th and the initial beach assaults is a game all by itself! Whether gamers want to get into this kind of detail or simply play scenarios where all of this had already occurred is up to them. At times it can seem like a lot of work that might have been handled by just placing units on the beach and rolling for some step losses.

With three turns per day and battalion sized units, we're talking about a gigantic game if you play the entire thing. Fortunately, there are smaller, one map scenarios and shorter campaigns to choose from. From the titanic mechanized battles of Operation Epsom to the operation to surround and take Cherbourg, there are plenty of options outside of the full campaign. If you're not playing the campaign and even if you have things fairly well organized, picking out the right units for each scenario is going to take some time. The system is pretty basic, but the overall game is so huge that at times it seems more complex than it really is.



Is this the ultimate Normandy game? While there are some competitors out there, for a multi-map experience this game would be hard to beat. I think gamers need to make a decision if they want a one mapper like Normandy '44 or really get into the weeds and fight over multiple maps for three months of simulated time. There is very little to complain about with this game, but the sheer size of it can be a bit off putting. If you're looking for a detailed campaign on the subject, then this would be a good choice.



the footprint, even for a single map scenario and the full campaign will definitely need a few tables!

On to the counters and there are a lot of them! Nine counter sheets equates to around 2500 counters, although a good

At it's core, The Battle For Normandy is a classic hex and counter type game. All units have a movement allowance, there is a terrain effects chart, stop when entering an enemy's zone of control, etc. Combat is in terms of step losses and retreats, so this is not a game of pushing each side back and forth according to a lot of DR results on the combat table. Each combat will usually involve step losses, so at some point units will be down to remnant markers (and there are literally hundreds of them provided-a subtle hint about the game system), so they will need to fall back and take replacements. Ground will be given up when units are destroyed or can't take another loss.

There are some interesting rules added onto the core system. For example, it's +2 MPs to leave a zone of control unless you have a unit stay behind (rearguard, hold the area, etc.). For combat, if you are in a clear hex, farmland, or any open area, you must attack the enemy. This causes a radical departure in thinking, so you really have to prepare your attacks in advance. On top of that, the Allied forces have to pay supply points for each combat and for how much artillery, air, and/or

This subject has been brought up before in this magazine, but it's probably time to revisit this topic once again. Many of us have a lot of older games from Avalon Hill, SPI, and others that we still like to play from time to time or at least have plans to play them again at some point. The issue is that many of these games have graphics that time has passed by. That's not to say that they are bad games, but rather the maps, counters, rules, etc. are a bit outdated in comparison to today's games.

Take for example, the blue and pink colored counters from Avalon Hill's Afrika Corps, Bulge, and D-Day games or the drab olive and deep red of SPI's Battle for Germany counters. The maps also have barely any color at all, so you have these weird colors on top of a map that doesn't do much to inspire you to play the game again! However, if you like these games and know how to play them without doing a deep dive on the rules, there is the urge from time to time to take them down from the shelf and get in a play or two. You open the box and it's 50/50 if you want to go on or not.

Fortunately, there are a lot of options out there right now that offer upgrades and they can vary greatly not only in quality but in price as well. For example, there is an entire series of counters from John Cooper, which are sold separately on Ebay (used to be under the user Louis XIV) and some of them are sold through Camelot Games. These have a somewhat "plastic" feel to the counters, but once punched and clipped, they look awesome on even the older maps and really pop during gameplay. There are sheets for The Russian Campaign, Third Reich, Starship Troopers, D-Day, and many, many others. If you would like to upgrade your Avalon Hill games this is a great place to start. The prices vary greatly where some upgrades are less than \$20 while the 4-5 sheet sets for something like Third Reich



can set you back \$40.

John Cooper also has his own site where there are free upgrades for Avalon Hill's France '40 and Blitzkrieg games including new maps and upgraded counters. There is also a SPI graphics library which would be helpful in designing your own counters as well as some helpful advice on creating your own.

Camelot Games also have many, many sets of counters for Avalon Hill and SPI games. They carry replacement sets for War at Sea and many other games, as well as updated versions. The quality varies from set to set as does the price, so be forewarned that some of these can be more than the game itself! They also have physical components for many of the upgrades that appeared in the pages of The General magazine, so if you don't like printing and making your own, they have some of those sets ready to go. This would include things like the France 1940 set for Panzer Leader and the Cyprus expansion for the Crete game. Camelot also carries Panzer Leader and Panzerblitz map boards.



Yet another resource is War-games Vault/Drive Through RPG, which has all kinds of wargaming rules, magazines, ASL material, and wargames. Naturally, you have to print many of these yourself (they do offer a printing service), but the prices are pretty reasonable for many of their offerings. There you will find things like a Vietnam variant for Panzer Leader as well as Pacific island battles for that same system. In fact, you can spend days just looking through that site and finding all kinds of ways to spend your money!

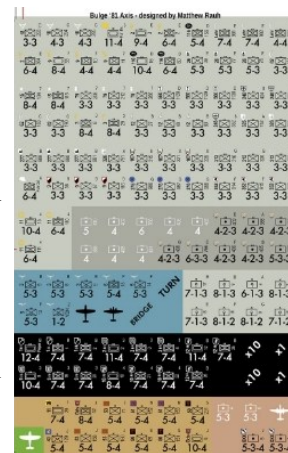
Still another is Limey Yank Games who have a variety of reworked counter sheets, including many from Kerry Anderson, which can upgrade some great games from the 70s and 80s. There are

also new designs for the old SPI Gondor and Sauron games, plus entirely new sheets for the classic War of the Ring game. Again, these are well done components, but the prices can vary greatly, so it will mainly depend upon how badly you want these upgrades.

Boardgame Geek, or BGG as it is affectionately known, is a great source for upgrades. From a beautifully reworked map for the SPI Arnhem game to revised cards and counters for many other games, there is a lot to offer. The great thing is that all of it is free! The bad thing is that you will usually have to print these things yourself, then craft the upgraded parts. While some things such as rules are fairly easy, creating cards and the right sizes of counters can be a challenge. Speaking of rules, many of the older games have revised rules that incorporate years of errata, additional magazine article information, and re-formatting to make things easier to find or to learn the game.

Also, don't forget places like Print 'N Play Games, Gamecrafter, Litko, and others who offer game parts. There are all kinds of tokens, markers, cards, etc., that can be used to enhance any game or set of miniatures rules. Other places like Etsy and Ebay offer all kinds of storage solutions, upgraded parts, variations on miniatures, and more.

In summary, if you like some old games, but wish that they would in some way compare to today's games, there are options for you! However, the amount that you might want to spend could be prohibitive. If you paid \$15 for Third Reich, then want to upgrade it for \$40 + shipping, the option is definitely there. Many of these upgrades look great and are hard to pass up. They won't affect the game play in any way, but they will look better!



Battletech: An Empire in Distress by Rob Coleman (cont.) Battle Report

(cont. from p7) backing the iClan in this star).

In the middle, the Roughriders were down a Warhammer, and their Merlin (a true zombie that just wouldn't go down as it reached its last structure pip, surviving 2-3 critical rolls with no effect occurring) was shot up. The 21st were contesting the space port, and still had several fresh mechs and vehicles, but most of their big guns were in bad shape, while 3 elementals, the aforementioned Merlin, a Highlander at almost full health, and a full health Ostrac were all threatening to move in and go round for round with the speedier, but much lighter 21st contesting the port.

That brings us to the gorefest outside the city. The FWL forces, despite heavy losses, were clearly coming out the winner and were pushing into the city. Since some people had to leave, we declared

the Free Worlds League the winner. It had been costly, but the Wolves were run off. The Roughriders had more than earned their pay, holding the line long enough for the retreating forces to escape to their dropships under heavy fire. Only time will tell if the Wolves have learned from this and will be prepared for round 2.

Overall, everyone had a great time. Alpha Strike is great for bigger battles such as this, and it is more open to optional or advanced rules as the users determine. The scenario itself seemed balanced, as with 3 or 4 more successful hits from the Wolf/Bear players, the game could have seen things go quite differently. It was fun and different to not have the Clans be one of the top forces. We even managed a round of air combat that badly shot up the 21st Cen-

tauri air support, sufficient to degrade its attack run and stall for the Wolves. Lastly, it just looks good. Good terrain can make or break a game, and it was fun having the extra-large map to throw down all sorts of things: cities, villages, even a monorail. It may not be everyone's cup of tea, but we've never had a bad game, and it is easy to pick up and run with the cheat sheet. This makes it a perfect game for off-nights or large scenarios, as it is easy to lay out a fun and compelling scenario that folks enjoy without a substantial portion of the game bogged down in looking things up. Alpha Strike has breathed new life into the very crunchy game of BattleTech, and is well worth a gander if you are familiar with BattleTech but don't want to spend all afternoon reading charts.



It all began when I was searching for 28mm Etruscan figures and came across a blog post featuring Agema, Aventine, and Gorgon Miniatures who had Etruscans in their figure lines. Not having heard of Gorgon I entered it into the search field and the first hit was Amazon. I was skeptical that they actually carried these, but I clicked on it anyways. This led me down a rabbit hole that I wish I had not ventured into!



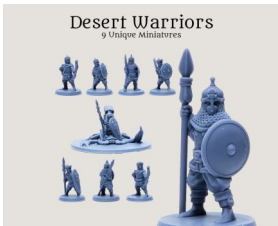
that. Tired of your old 80s style Heroquest figures? Guess what? There's all kinds of incredible upgrades available. Thinking of finding some new opponents for your 10mm Fantasy War-master armies? There's several companies offering those, too.

Simply put, if you can think of it, then there are probably figures for it, especially if the topics are fantasy and science-fiction. I'm not even talking about the boxed sets that you see for some games, but all kinds of third party and independent manufacturers as well. In fact, just a short visit to Etsy will show you a bewildering number of figures, buildings, and game upgrades too numerous to count. The only thing holding you back is how much do you want to spend on these things.



No, they did not have Gorgon Miniatures, but they did have miniatures of fantasy gorgons! Not only that, there were images of other products, boxed sets, and so on for fantasy figures. Clicking on a few more led me to more game systems, more boxed sets, and so many single figures it defied description. Going back to the original search page, then clicking on the image links led to more and more pages for every kind of miniature figurine imaginable.

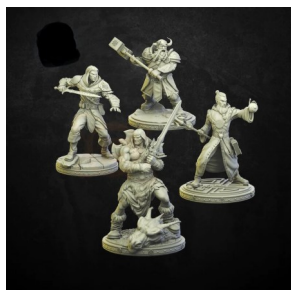
In fact, it seemed like there was no end to it and one could simply spend all day coming up with ideas for new periods to game!



ideas for new periods to game!

Now I was not so naïve to think that miniatures were that limited, but to the extent to where the hobby has gone is a bit breathtaking when you consider everything. Just as late as the mid 90s it seemed like there were plenty of figure manufacturers. You had Old Glory, Essex, and Foundry for 28mm along with a fast growing Games Workshop. In 15mm there were Old Glory with their 100 figure bags, Essex, Stone Mountain, and others. Then there was GHQ with their micro-armor and 1/2400 ships. You couldn't always find the esoteric stuff and had to search through magazine ads for unusual periods, but if you played the main periods, then there were plenty of figures to paint.

Today, the width and breadth of the figure side of the hobby is simply astounding. Want to create a 28mm fantasy army based upon Saracens, but with a scorpion theme? Sure, there's figures for



There are two issues to start with here; first, is the cost, and second, is the quality. If you want something special, in most cases you're going to pay for it. I was recently looking at an off manufacturer for a 28mm cavalry unit and for 12 horses/riders plus shipping it was going to be around \$90. Nowhere near Games Workshop prices, but for historical periods this is getting up there. Other boxed sets, selections of units in various scales, and some of the more interesting 28mm buildings were investments and not merely hobby purchases! Kudos to those who can afford anything and everything, but most gamers I know can't.

The other thing is the quality of the miniatures. I've been burned before by some 3D printed miniatures or things that when they arrived didn't look like the photos on the web site! Not to mention that many of these figures have no painted versions in the Google image searches. That's not always a bad sign, but you

probably want to tread carefully. It could also work the other way, where some cheap figures with average photos show up at your doorstep and they're actually great when painted.

Another interesting

part of this is the limited availability aspect of all of this. I've blundered across several Kickstarters for figure sets where I would have liked to have ordered those figures. Gone. They fulfilled (or sometimes didn't fulfill) the orders to the backers, then that was the end of the figure line! If you needed more units or some extra figs you may be out of luck. Back in the day, if you saw Ral Partha had out some 28mm Zulus you were pretty sure that in a year or two if you needed more they would still be around. Not today. In some cases the same figures might not be available again next week!

Is this a crisis for the hobby or something to worry about? Probably not, unless you just bought a huge set of miniatures from an unknown company, then might need

some more at some point from them! Can the hobby support all of these figure manufacturers? Probably not. The good thing here is that very, very few companies are getting rich off of selling miniatures, so most people get into this aspect of the hobby to fill a need, knowing full well that they might not get even a handful of sales. With 3D printing, web content creation tools, file hosting, etc., it is far easier to share your designs or sell your products than ever before.

Finding what you need, however, could be a challenge. Continually checking all of the Kickstarter projects, Facebook pages for various rules/periods, Ebay, Etsy, and more to find something you may need could consume a lot of your time! Then, when you find something there are questions about actual quality, how will they look painted up, and what are the odds of ordering more in a few months? Basically, the hobby has created a monster and gamers are the enablers. While it lasts we should all enjoy it and order whatever you need. After all, gamers are notorious for buying and hoarding miniatures! Just don't be shocked that when you finally get to that project and need more figs, they're gone.



After a group discussion about how long it takes to set up historical battles and that we never seem to be able to match the actual maps, we decided to do a quasi-historical battle. This would be very similar to the first day of Gettysburg, but not quite the same thing or with the same limitations on the commanders. The idea was to get back into Fire & Fury ACW as it had been a while, plus get in a good sized battle in around 4 hours.

This has been mentioned here before, but doing historical ACW battles is pretty tough. For one, the terrain is very hard to reproduce unless you have at least an 8 x 5 table (we usually have a 6 x 4 available) and then you need a wide variety of terrain to try and make it look close. The issue there is that you never seem to have enough roads, railroads, fence lines, etc., to match some of the maps. On top of that, trying to replicate the hills, counters, and river/road networks is a challenge. If the battles have a ton of forest, then that creates issues as you have to continuously move it to get the figures through. Now if you have an 8 x 5, set up time, and can leave the game set up for two sessions, then that opens up a lot of possibilities.

We like the Fire & Fury rules, so we went with the basics and just enough terrain to give the right impression. The Confederates would enter from one side on Turn 1, then the remainder would come in from the side on turn 4-5. The initial defense would be from Buford's division with some of Wadsworth's division already on the field. For the Confederates, Heth would lead the attack with Pender's division following behind. The Confederate artillery was assumed to be posted on hills off board and could be



used for bombardment up to the Union held ridge, but if Union troops were within 4 inches of a Confederate attack, the artillery could not be added in.

Naturally, the first part of the battle was Heth trying to push through the Union cavalry, who employed good historical tactics in firing, falling back, firing again, and so on in an effort to get to the wooded ridge more or less intact. The Confederates, however, had some good sized brigades and weren't going to let some cavalry hold them back (sound familiar?!). The cavalry firepower, however, was quite substantial and the Confederate forces began taking a lot of stand losses. However, by this stage of the game there were far more Confederates on the tabletop than Union forces.

The rest of Reynold's corps started to arrive and went into action near the ridge. The Union artillery moved out quickly and was soon in action against Pender's advance. One issue that was to be found was that the Union artillery got out a bit

too far in front, so when Ewell's attack came in from the side it was relatively unsupported and not in the best place to meet the new axis of attack. The Confederates kept piling in troops fast and furious, keeping the pressure up on that side of the board. This allowed the other Confederate forces to continue their attack towards the ridge without the fear that the defending Union troops would be reinforced.

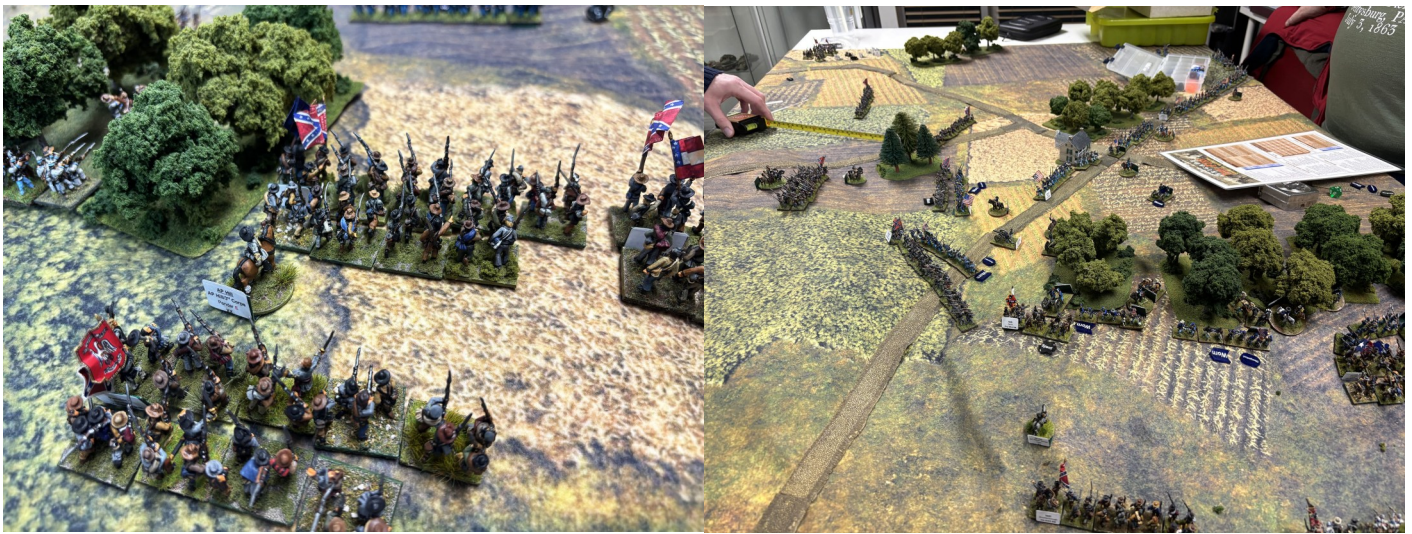
By this time the leading Confederate forces had taken some serious casualties. Two complete brigades were shattered and many others were now worn, which would have an effect on the next few turns. However, they still had a lot of stands in the remaining brigades and



while the Union forces had not taken as many casualties, they were forced to fall back and form a defense line on the forested ridge.

Ewell's forces and the oncoming Union troops were soon engaged in a series of attacks and counter-(cont. on p17)





(cont. from p16) attacks. The Confederates had managed to force the Union reinforcements to deploy a bit earlier than they had wanted to, leading them to become fairly spread out along the road. The Confederates kept searching for a weak spot and extended further down the board. This meant that the entire front line of the Union forces was engaged and there were no reserves behind them.

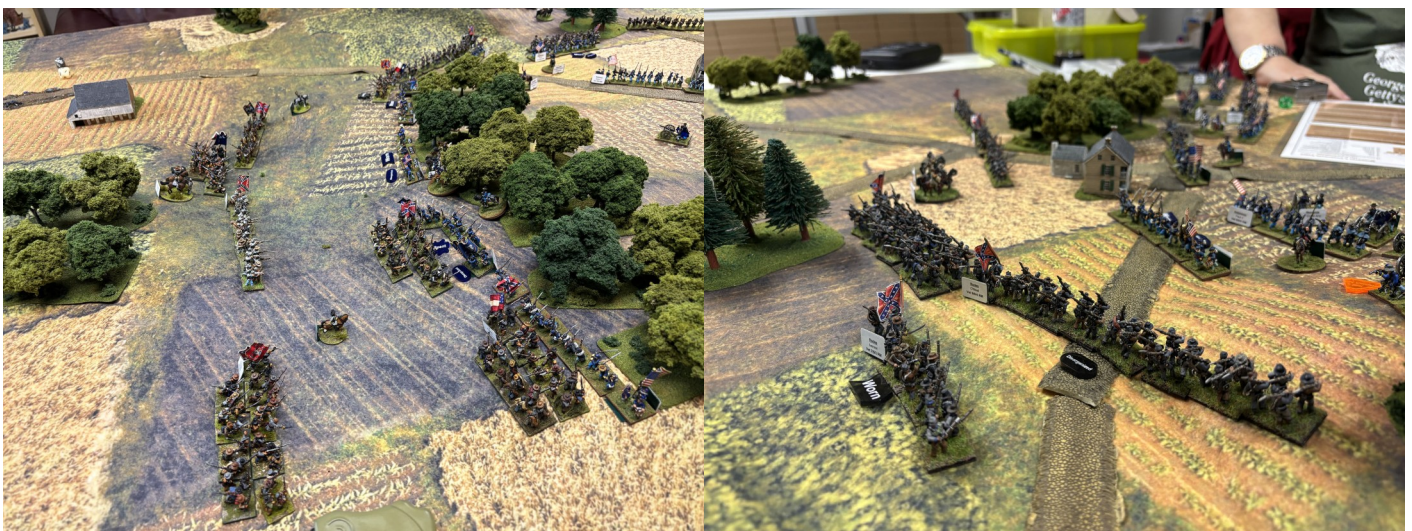
Back on the other side of the board, the Confederates renewed the attack against the ridge. As they advanced they came under a blistering fire, but they were doing damage as well with their return fire. Several of the Confederate brigades went disorganized, which stalled the attack, but you could see the forces assembling for the final push that would make or break the game. If the Union could hold this back they stood a good chance of winning the game.

Ewell's forces overran the Union front lines as several units had taken a beating, plus had been hit by charges multiple times. The Union got over some fresh troops to fill the hole, but now the front lines were shaped like a giant horseshoe and one break at any point would probably cause a rout.

When the final Confederate attack went in, there was a bit of luck involved. The Union defensive fire was not that good and two of the leading attacking brigades weren't even scratched. This allowed the Confederates to start out with several die roll advantages and they pushed the Union forces off of the ridge and back down the other side. One attack was stopped, but the other two went forward. The Union could not reorganize their forces during their turn and when the two leading Confederate brigades pressed on, they plowed through the Un-

ion forces and the defense was split. With forces to their front and back the Union side called it a day as they would have to withdraw from the field.

Although it could be called "Gettysburg Lite", the scenario worked out pretty well. By limiting the historical terrain and focusing on the situation, both sides could concentrate on just playing the rules without worry about the terrain issues or if it was historical enough! I think that there is a lesson to be learned here for all gamers in that sometimes you just want to play a period and have a good battle, which is what happened here. Trying to do ultra-realistic terrain and exact forces can be enjoyable at times, but more often than not it creates an unneeded level of frustration! I'm sure that we will return to this period shortly and try another "not historical" scenario.



Over the past decade or so, there have been a lot of what are known as “big box” games, complete with miniatures, tokens, play aids, booklets, hordes of cards, and more. While some are completely forgettable and get lost in the noise that is the current state of the board gaming hobby, there are some titles that stand out from time to time. Our group does enjoy these kinds of games every so often, particularly since many of them are quite involved and are similar to wargames and RPGs in their own way, which is near and dear to us.



Tainted Grail: The Fall of Avalon

First up is Tainted Grail, which from the very start of opening the box looks pretty impressive. There is a deck of large, tarot sized cards that serve as locations or kind of a map. Then there are card decks for the characters, various encounters, random events, chapters, and more. On top of that there are tokens, cubes, markers, player boards, and an adventure journal that is as thick as a book. Finally, there are the character miniatures and three Menhir, giant stone statues that power the land, along with time dials that fit in the miniatures. In terms of components, these are state of the art and you get a lot for the money.

It would take too long to explain here, but basically Arthur and his knights came to Avalon a long time ago and mankind established towns, villages, etc. However, things are starting to fail and the land is becoming unstable, with the Menhirs losing power. Your job, along with your fellow characters, is to venture out and

figure out what has gone wrong and how to fix things.

Not quite a RPG, but not a wargame either. You venture forth, encountering creatures and villages, solve riddles, get stuck with side quests, and try to improve your combat and diplomacy skills. The combat system is pretty interesting (card based) and there are many, many decisions each day in terms of where to go, how much time to spend, obtaining food, and so on. The amount of time that was spent on the lore in the game is amazing. From the backs of the location cards to the adventure journal, this must have taken years to write all of this.

If there's any problems with the game it would be that you're going to need to play once a week for a year to complete the game! This might be a bit much for most gamers, but it is an interesting system in a unique setting. Also, the game is quite involved and it would help greatly if someone had played before or at least run a few rounds solo to figure things out. There are also all kinds of expansions currently available.

Rising Sun

Another Eric M. Lang game, similar to Blood Rage, which is something that we enjoy playing now and then. Rising Sun is an area control game set in a mystical warring era in Japan, where each turn you plot a strategy, create/break alliances, place miniatures, then have multiple options to proceed into combat. There are only a few turns, but a lot is happening each turn and the situation can change suddenly. With a 90 minute to two hour play time, you can get into the game quickly and it won't go on and on.

First off, this is a game that cries out for a storage solution from Folded Space, Broken Token, or any of the other companies who sell specific sets for these games. You get 10 miniatures per faction (five factions), plus an assortment of monsters. Each faction has different figures for the Dai-myō, Shinto, and warriors, which really makes the game

unique. The beautiful map board, cards, tokens, and more really adds to the game's feel. The monster figures in particular are pretty incredible, most notably the dragon and some of the ogre like creatures.

While there are some similarities to Blood Rage, especially with the area control/battle aspect, the combat system and making alliances part of the game are something you don't see anywhere else. The game is played over three turns (spring, summer, and autumn), with the final season being winter, where scores are added up. Each turn (season) begins with a Tea Ceremony, where players form alliances for that turn. This is followed by the Political Mandates phase, where a player chooses to harvest, recruit, marshal, train, or betray. Each player can perform the basic attribute of the mandate, but allies get bonuses.

Recruiting troops, sending Shinto (priests) to appeal to the kami (gods), moving figures to do battle, or choosing cards that give bonuses provide the players with so many options that it can seem overwhelming at times. Once 7 political mandates cards have been played, it's on to battle. Each side adds up their strengths, then adds coins in secret to combat options, which creates a total strength. The winner destroys all of the opposing figures and collects rewards, but you can win by losing as well!

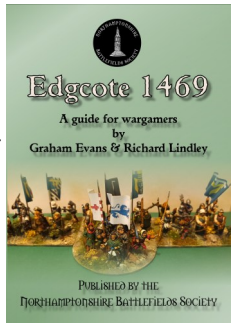
We were surprised by the depth of the game and how many paths to victory there are. It would take, however, quite a few plays to come up with a good strategy for each clan. With the various card sets, different gods, etc., you could play this 20+ times and not see the same thing twice! This leaves the question about how many times would your group play this? A very fun and interesting game, but it would take a lot of plays to get good at it.



Quick Reviews

Edgcote 1469

As has been noted in these pages over the last few years, good information about the Wars of the Roses is hard to come by. On the surface it would appear that there are plenty of rules, figs in all scales, terrain, etc., but what flags were used, which personalities were at which battles, and even accurate orders of battle are hard to find. If there were an entire series of books such as Edgcote 1469 the problem would be solved!



Graham Evans and Richard Lindley have provided a detailed examination of the battle in a format specifically created for wargamers. Not only are there great pictures of miniatures, but all of the historical information that you've been craving, along with a set of quick play miniatures rules. The amount of detail on who was there, how did their flag look, and what forces were present is worth the price of the book alone.

The miniatures rules would be great for a convention game or fast play battle, but my guess is few gamers with existing armies would use them. Overall, this is a great book that is worth the price and it's a shame that there isn't one for every WOTR battle!

Folded Space Rising Sun Insert

Game inserts have been discussed in these pages before, but with the recent spate of big box games with tons of components, they are a helpful tool. For many of these games, the amount of cards, tokens, and miniatures can make storage as well as set up feel overwhelming, so a storage solution is the answer. Folded Space offers a wide variety of inserts for many of the popular board games and they come as a stack of puzzle pieces on sheets. The material is sort of a foam core type, but once assembled is pretty sturdy.

Depending upon the size of the game, assembling all of the boxes can take a few hours, but once done this will greatly ease set up and take down for these type of games. They aren't cheap, however, and this will add to the original cost of the game.



Hail Caesar: The Pyrrhic Wars

Yet another supplement for Hail Caesar, which expands greatly upon the army lists in one of the earlier books. This one concerns Pyrrhus, who was a legendary commander in Macedonia, famous for winning battles, but at a pretty high cost that eventually doomed him. Not only that, but Pyrrhus fought pretty much everyone under the Mediterranean sun! This includes the Successors, Carthaginians, Syracuse, and various Italian and Greek coalitions. The book covers the entire history of the period, including features on the various commanders.

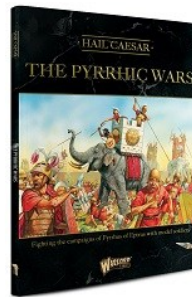
The army lists are of course the most important part of the book. Here you will get greatly expanded lists for the Macedonians, various Successor forces, Syracuse, Carthage, and more. That the lists are detailed there can be no denial. The issue is whether or not many gamers have all of the units listed and my guess is probably not, especially if you built your forces according to the previous army lists before this book came out. From just a few readings you can see that ordering and painting up more units to match the lists will be in the future of many gamers!

There are also around a dozen scenarios, which are welcome indeed. The issue here is how many gamers and/or clubs are going to have the forces listed? Even if they have been scaled back a bit, there are a lot of units needed for most of the scenarios. On top of that, who has armies of Samnites/Oscans and Illyrians? Probably something to inspire future projects, but many of these scenarios seem out of reach for most gamers. Also, a Hail Caesar campaign system, particularly for this era is badly needed.

The book, however, is well done and contains a wealth of information.

7 Wonders: Architects

If you're looking for a quick game either to thwart down time in another game, can't find anything else to fill the last hour of game night, etc., then 7 Wonders:



Architects might be the solution. Each player chooses one of the world's great wonders and tries to build it, using a series of cards for resources, military strength, and scientific/cultural advancement. There are so many paths to victory that it would be hard to describe here, but players have a wide variety of options to think through as they play. You can be up and running with this game in just a few minutes and an entire game will hardly last more than 30 minutes or so. Highly recommended.

Ace of Aces Powerhouse Series

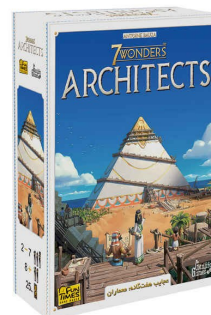
Who remembers the old Ace of Aces game from Nova Games back in the day? Probably one of the most clever gaming innovations in the history of the hobby, especially for dealing with air combat. Basically, each player has a book that represents one British or German World War One aircraft. Each page presents you with a view from your cockpit,

showing where the enemy aircraft is in relation to your position.



At the bottom of the page are a series of maneuvers where you choose one, tell your opponent the page number, you flip to that page number, then look at what maneuver you choose. It will list a page where both of you end up, showing the new positions! Very easy to do and then you score damage points based upon the range that you fire at. I remember back in the day playing in some 4 and 6 player games, which while a lot of work were pretty fun.

This new edition has beautiful color pages in much larger books. There are a lot of advanced rules as well as some nice tokens that are used for damaged, low ammo, etc. A very nice package that is worth every penny. A long time ago they had multiple books for different aircraft, a man to man combat game, and a Western series if I recall right. Hopefully they bring all of those back!



Another Warmaster Ancients battle that takes us to the frontier of India and the Seleucid Empire. This would be a 2,000 points per side battle, which is pretty much every Indian unit that we have! For the Seleucids it would be a much different list than what we usually see in these pages. Both sides would start 30 cm from the table edge as we only had a few players this night and wanted to get into the action right away.

A few comments on the Seleucid army list. Usually there are the standard pike units, an elephant unit, Thorkites, Imitation Legion, and of course plenty of cavalry. This list, however, was a bit "heavier" than most, meaning less cheap units and more points spent on hard hitting, quality units. This means that there would be one elephant unit, three units of heavy and Guard cavalry, pikes, Galatians, and plenty of archers.



There were some cavalry battles on both flanks during the 3rd turn. On the left the Indian cavalry charged into the Seleucid heavy cavalry and did pretty well. Despite losing a unit, they damaged their opponents and a second charge damaged the other Seleucid cavalry unit. At this point that seemed to be a fair exchange, although the Seleucid cavalry did charge into the Indian archers and infantry on that side, inflicting a lot of hits before being driven back. On the Indian right flank, the large number of Seleucid horse archers kept failing their command rolls, meaning that the outnumbered Indian cavalry was able to stick around longer than they should have been able to.

In the center the Indians were having real problems getting everything organized for an attack. Units and brigades kept failing command rolls, not to mention that the Indians were temporarily losing the skirmisher and archery exchanges. Every time things looked favorable a volley of arrows would disorganize an infantry unit, then it would clog up the movement of others. Later in the game the Indians would gain the upper hand in the skirmisher and archer separate war they were having, but the damage had been done. The Seleucids were advancing and the Indians were forced to react.

By the start of the 5th turn, the Seleucids were ready to launch an attack with the Galatians, their archers were hammering the front line Indian units, and the mass of horse archers was bringing to bear a lot of shots on individual Indian units. All of these things did some serious damage to the Indian archers and infantry, forcing them to (cont. on p21)

then the center was just brigade after brigade of archers backed by infantry. The elephants were spread out in the center to quickly move to either side and there were enough units to form a reserve brigade as well. The secret to the Indian army is to get your forces out quickly into the center of the board, then start throwing them into attacks. You'll have quite a few units getting eliminated, but you'll damage the opposing forces so much that your second wave of attacks will finish them off and win the day. At least that's what has worked in the past!

Both sides did pretty well on the first turn, moving out about 80% of their commands. The Indians had one brigade that pretty much refused to move the first few turns while the

Seleucids had a huge pike brigade that sat for quite some time in the center. Both sides had gone for a more cautious strategy, with cavalry on the flanks and the heavier units in the center. The Indians started to have traffic congestion issues, with several brigades simply unable to move as the brigades in front of them had failed their command rolls. By the end of the second turn the Seleucids were in pretty good shape (except for the lone pike brigade sitting in the center) and seemed poised to launch an attack on the Indian flanks. The 3rd turn is where things got going.



Also, there would be several light cavalry units to screen their heavier brethren. A little less infantry than usual, but still a hard hitting army.

The Indians are of course...the Indians! Never has a more average army walked the face of this earth! 12 infantry and 8 archer units (all unarmored) formed the core of the army. The cavalry units were again, pretty average, but they did get a save of a 6, which is at least something! There were two units of elephants, and both heavy and light chariots this time. The main issue with the Indian army is that they are pretty average in everything and not enough commanders.

The Indians deployed with the cavalry and one unit of chariots on each wing,





(cont. from p20) start launching attacks to regain the momentum.

For the Indians it was time to really get going. The elephants moved out to the attack, supported by several infantry units who took up supporting positions. The Indian archers and skirmishers finally survived a turn of Seleucid shooting and got ready for the big offensive by knocking out several Seleucid units. By the end of the 6th turn it looked like things were turning around for the Indians and they might pull this out after all.

The Seleucids, however, were doing some damage of their own. The horse archers literally destroyed a unit by rolling a huge drive back number, then launched a series of attacks on the Indian cavalry. One of the pike blocks moved up to attack and was met with fierce resistance, losing two units for the price of

three Indian units. When the 7th turn started the Indians were feeling pretty good about things. However, that was about to change.

The Indians started a general offensive by sending forward everything in reach of the enemy. The Indian heavy chariots went in, the two elephant units, some of the remaining Indian cavalry, and finally, several infantry units. Unfortunately, they rolled poorly! Despite some initial damage, the Indians were driven back and the Seleucid counterattacks held them at bay. Indian losses were piling up fast and by the start of the 8th turn the Indians had already lost 12 units and the Seleucids just 5.

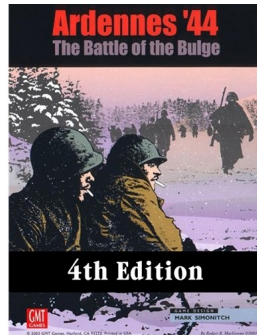
The Seleucids decided it was now or never and they went forward, picking off damaged and separated Indian units. Even where they lost a unit or two, the

Indians lost more. By the end of the 8th turn the Indians had hit their break point and there was no hope of another round of attacks doing enough damage to the Seleucids to force a draw. With that the game was called as a Seleucid victory.

The traffic congestion and command issues in the first few turns doomed the Indian attack. Unable to get things sorted out, the Seleucid skirmishers and archers made the Indians pay a heavy price. The large number of skirmish horse units caused the Indians issues as they had no real response to this. The Seleucid list for this night at least seemed perfect for dealing with the Indians, even though it had been designed to take on Roman foes! Overall, it was a fun game with a lot of opportunities for both sides. Even with just three players we finished a huge, 2000 points per side battle in 3 hours.



Several years ago as Mark Simonitch's 19XX series got rolling along with Ukraine '43, Normandy '44, and Ardennes '44, I decided to try one of these games and like most gamers, chose the game about The Battle of the Bulge. I gave the game a glowing review, but that was close to 20 years ago! Now with the 4th edition having recently arrived, it is perhaps time to go over this again.



If you've never played a game in this series, then there are some unique concepts that will take a few turns to get into. The first is what is called the "ZOC Bond", which prevents enemy units from advancing/retreating into hexes between your own units. There is also extended and tactical movement, giving units many options that they don't have in other

game systems. Finally, the combat system introduces disrupted/broken, shattered results depending upon how far a unit retreats. This adds an interesting element to combat along with a Determined Defense and Firefight tables, which are for attackers and defender who want to press the issue. Fortunately, all of these ideas are presented clearly and are fairly easy to grasp.

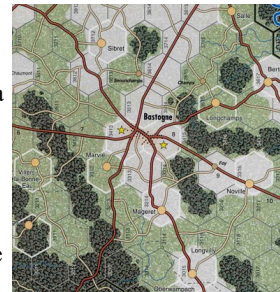
With any Bulge game there are several questions that usually have to be answered. Can the Germans replicate their initial attacks and breakout? How do you handle the action on the flanks of the main attack (usually off board), and do the Germans have a realistic chance of success? Many games will have scripted openings or severe limitations placed on both sides to effectively recreate the actual battle. In reality, the Germans had very little chance of success and the Allies would have had to make some serious blunders for the operation to have succeeded.

Ardennes '44 is something of a mini-monster in terms of board war games. The box contains two 22 x 34 maps, several sheets of counters, set up displays, a rule book, and finally a play book. As with all games in this series, you do get some fine looking components and pretty good value for the money. The counters are of the larger variety and while there is a lot of information on them, they work well with the game system. The play book is pretty helpful in that there is a two turn play through, which is great for those trying the game for the first time. Simply use the German set up as described and roll your own attacks!

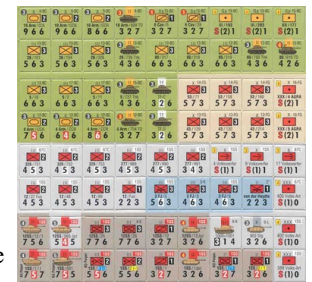
With Ardennes '44, the initial attacks will usually go well, but don't be surprised if several aren't as successful as hoped. The Germans have powerful formations, but unlike in many Bulge games, they aren't in the front lines on the very first turn! Historically, they joined in on the afternoon of the 16th or that night, which is the case here. In terms of the flanks, the Allies have to allocate units to overcome the defense strengths of

various access points. If they can do that, then yes, the Allies can counterattack into the flanks of the German offensive. Finally, can the Germans win? The answer to that is yes, but it will take some luck.

The reason for that is that you really don't know how many of the attacks will go. A determined defense here or there, incredible advances after combat, or merely the position of various traffic markers will make or break the German offensive. There are several small things in the game system that can greatly affect the pace of operations. The first is the use of traffic markers, where the Allied player puts out six of these, then rolls for two of them to be taken off, making it a random affair, but it can slow down the German advance or keep vital roads open for exploitation.



The other things are the terrain, where forested roads, bridges, etc., can force players to really study their avenues of approach and where to attack. Then you have Night markers for both side which allow some stacks of units to move and fight at night, but they have to be designated during the PM turn and sit still for that turn to qualify. If playing the optional rule where there is an 18 factor limit for attacks, then things get even more challenging for the German side. With everything put together, all of these little things could add up to victory or defeat,

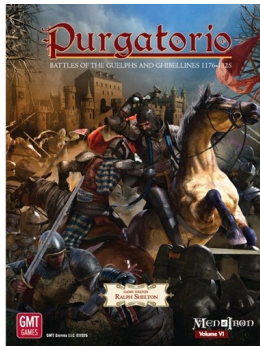


The two maps are definitely works of art, showing just how difficult the terrain is in that area of Europe and how it will affect a German attack. The 4th edition has yet more map changes in an effort to make these the most historically accurate maps in any Bulge game. Any empty space on the edges is taken up by holding boxes for the game's various markers, which is something that many other games should do. The set up displays are helpful, but not really necessary since most counters have turn info on them and the German set up areas are marked on the map.



In summary, this is probably the best Bulge game I own and have ever played. Trying to get the German forces through the initial defenses, then down the spider's web of roads is a challenge. Likewise for the Allied side where trying to plug gaps and hold vital crossroads requires constant attention. The combination of terrain, interesting units for both sides, blocking positions, traffic markers, etc., all add up to very chaotic situation in a game system that is fun to play. Will this game ever be topped? It might happen, but for now it's my #1 Bulge game.

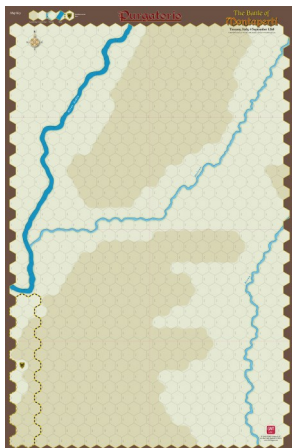
One of GMT's more popular series is Men of Iron. Based somewhat off of the Great Battles of History series (GBOH), Men of Iron focuses more on the Medieval and Renaissance era, plus it plays a bit faster. Purgatorio is volume 6 in the series and features the following battles:



- Legnano 1176
- Cortenuova 1237
- Montaperti 1237
- Benevento 1266
- Tagliacozzo 1268
- Campaldino 1289
- Zappolino 1325

The games in the series have fairly standard components, namely several maps, a few counter sheets, two reference cards, a time/flight display, scenarios, and a set of rules. In comparison to other GMT Games they seem a bit "bare bones", but it seems to get the job done. As with most Ancient and Medieval battles, there isn't a lot of terrain on the maps! There is a map for each battle and some sheets have two on the same side. The counters are of the larger variety and differ from game to game in terms of colors, but here everything is in either purple or yellow. The different commands are delineated by colored stripes and different leaders, so many of the same combat units can be used in each battle.

The rules by this time are pretty tight and have few questionable areas. There are plenty of examples plus special rules for the various games are in different colored boxes. This enables gamers to get pretty quickly into how things are going to work, plus if you are playing a specific



boxed game you know to read the separate colored boxes for that game. The scenario book has the exclusive rules, some great set up maps with the units on the maps, plus more information. Not the most spectacular components that you will come across, but they are functional and do the job.

This is one of those gaming systems where you aren't quite sure how it's going to play until you either play it yourself or watch a video on the game play itself. All of a sudden, things begin to click and the various rules start making sense. Coming up with the right tactics, however, can take a few games. While some of the games had some fairly large battles, most in Purgatorio are small to medium sized affairs, which makes learning the game system much easier. Also, you don't have to play the prior games in the series, so you can purchase Purgatorio and start right with that.

The game is governed by the use of leaders, who are rated for their initiative, command range, and charisma (adds a modifier to combat if stacked with a unit). You pick a leader, roll a D10 and if it is equal or under his initiative rating then his command is activated. Each unit can then move and/or shoot, which can give each side some interesting tactical decisions each turn. Charge range is around 2 hexes, so if you moved a long way, then charge at the end, there is a negative modifier for that.

Once you've completed the activation of a command, you can then try to activate another leader in your army. This is not easy to do, as most leaders have a rating of around 3 on a D10. If you do roll the require number, that command is then activated and you can keep rolling for leaders, even going back to one you moved earlier in the turn (no leader can do back to back activations). If you fail on your activation roll, then

the opposing side can activate any leader on their side. As one can see, the action flows back and forth, with each side usually activating one command, then the other, with the occasional double activation. You can also try to seize initiative, but again, it takes a pretty low roll, and if you fail the opposing side can activate any leader.

Combat is a multi-step process. Look on the combat matrix and cross index the troop types, which usually give a +/1 modifier. After that you go down a list of modifiers that cover if the unit is disordered, leader present, flanked, etc. You then roll a D10 and the results range



from no effect to disorder to rout. When a unit routs it is placed near that command's standard and you can spend an activation to rally routed units. In some instances a unit can be so successful that it can advance and continue its attack. Shooting is simply counting the range, applying a modifier or two, then rolling the die to get a result. Routed units count for "flight points" and when a side reaches their limit for the battle, they lose.

While it sounds challenging, you soon remember all of the modifiers and combat goes by pretty quickly. What you're left with are units all over the place in various conditions (normal, disordered, and routed), no solid lines, and getting things sorted out might take an activation or two. This creates a free flowing game of battles all over the map. You can easily play most battles in 2-3 hours, so this is the perfect game (and series) if you like the era and are pressed for time.

There are some issues, mainly the activation system is a bit luck based and depending upon how things are progressing, some commands might not do much for the entire game. It's a small issue, but it could become frustrating for some players. The system continues to evolve and by this time is pretty solid, with more games coming out in the future.

Age of Eagles: Duel in the Peninsula

Battle Report

With only four of us this evening, we went with a fictional battle in the Peninsula, set during the 1809-1812 period. There were 10 objectives (4 villages, 3 hills, and 3 forests), although we could never logically explain why the forests would be an objective! Needless to say with both sides coming in from opposite ends of the board, the race to get to the magic number of 6 to ensure victory by the end of the night would be on.

The French side had the following:

- (3) divisions consisting of (2) brigades each. Most had 9-11 stands, so these were some sizeable brigades, but only 6 in total.
- (1) fairly large cavalry brigade.
- (3) batteries of artillery plus (1) corps level battery.

The French had a powerful force, but would be dangerously spread out with only 6 infantry brigades. The one cavalry brigade was a threat to the British since they didn't have any at all, but the British firepower would probably negate any advantage. The artillery would have to be positioned to support the main attacks and prevent themselves from trying to be everywhere at once.

The British and Portuguese force consisted of 11 infantry brigades, which sounds like a lot, but several of them were only a few stands each. There were a few larger brigades, but in total they were roughly the same amount of infantry stands as the French. While the British did not have any cavalry, they did have 6 batteries of artillery and Wellington, which is a huge advantage.



Both sides surprisingly opted to spread out their attacks, trying to take and/or defend as many objectives as possible. This meant a long, long line of British and Portuguese brigades across the table. The French would make their attack down both flanks and in the center, but the brigades would be more of a compact mass, trying to knock out a few British brigades quickly to give them the advantage for later in the game.

That the British would get the initiative most of the time was expected, especially with Wellington's +2 and the French overall commander being a -1. This would make it hard for the French to go twice in a row to get any momentum or finish off damaged and disordered enemy brigades. During the first few turns both sides moved forward cautiously, not knowing what the real plan of their opponents might be! There were some long range artillery barrages, but the French were getting ready to launch their first attacks while the British seemed content to take the objectives within range of their initial deployment.

The battle really started with an attack on the French right followed by a counterattack in the center-right. The French pushed in fairly well, but were forced back, then came on again. Just as it looked like the French might cut a hole in the British lines, Wellington rode over and deployed two batteries of artillery to stem the tide (the only downside of having Wellington is that only he can place artillery batteries!). The French were checked, but moved up in preparation for another attack.

Over on the French left, the French moved in for the attack and had some initial success, mainly due to their weight of numbers at any point of attack. However, the more numerous British brigades kept counterattacking, driving the French back to their starting line. The cavalry



brigade actually survived a round of fire inside of charge range and just for a moment it looked like the French were going to collapse the British right and win the day. However, it was not to be. The British survived the attack, then moved to hunt down the French cavalry through turn after turn of rifle fire. (cont. on p25)





(cont. from p24) On the far French right an attack went in, driving the British out of one village, then the next. The British were losing a lot of stands on this side of the field, but so far there weren't any disasters. The French and British player on this side kept taking turns having good and bad die rolls! Just when things looked great a bad die roll quashed any momentum and when things looked dire a great roll saved the day for another turn! The French, meanwhile, were getting ready for a major attack in the center where the Portuguese got a little too far out in front of the main army.

The French attack went in, knocking the Portuguese back behind their supports, but the charge was checked by some good rifle fire. The British were now hitting the French attack with their better firepower along with artillery. The

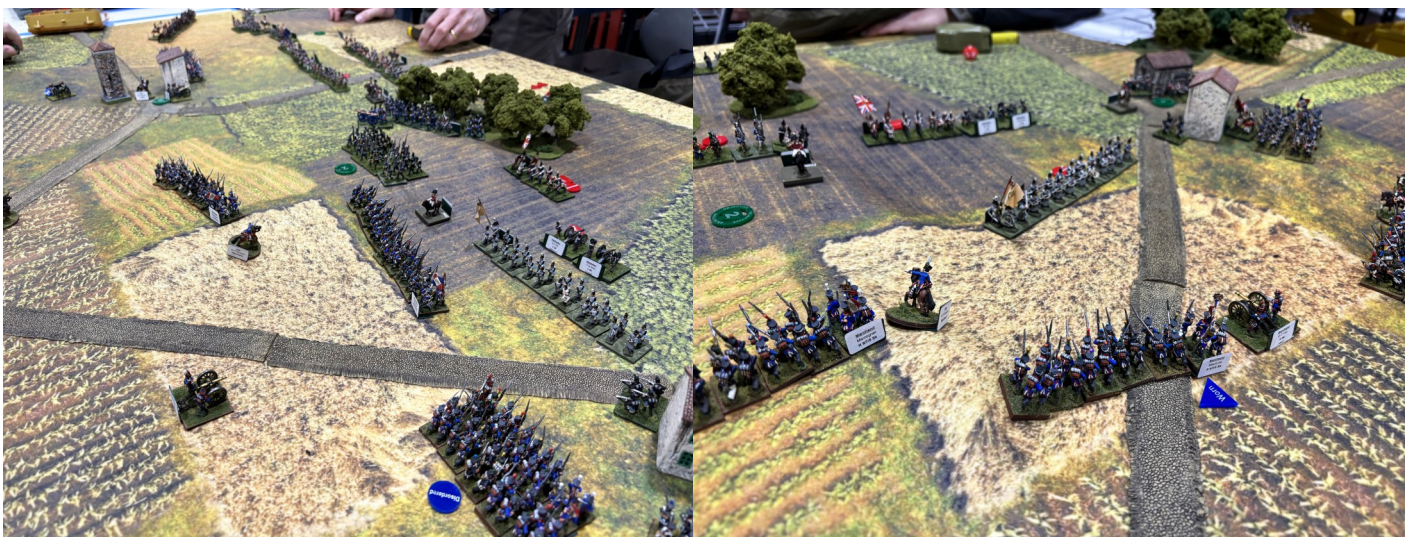
French just needed initiative just once during this time, yet they only achieved it once in the entire game! This was a common theme and each time the French pushed they came close to a breakthrough, but could not close the deal.

On the French left the French came on again, but were met by the British firepower and stalled. The British counterattacked and in a series of bloody battles, the French started to lose ground. The flexibility of the smaller British brigades really showed through here, maneuvering to keep up a constant pressure on the wounded French brigades. If the French were going to achieve victory it wouldn't be on this flank.

The French kept pushing on the right and were soon threatening the British center. The two middle French brigades, however, had taken a beating and were

unable to continue the attack. The British were also down a lot of stands, but the French left was a lost cause at this point, so the game was called. After adding up the objectives the British had won a narrow victory 6-4!

A fast, but fun game that went about three hours, once again demonstrating that you don't need to do historical battles all the time. Sometimes fictional encounters set in a period that everyone likes is just the right thing as it was this night. Both sides had their chances and both tried to maximize their advantages. As many Napoleonic gamers already know, the Peninsula can generate some interesting contests. We've resolved to do this a bit more often, especially since it helps us remember the rules! Hopefully the next battle will feature a Spanish contingent that will add a bit of variety.



WMA: Egyptians vs. Assyrians

Battle Report

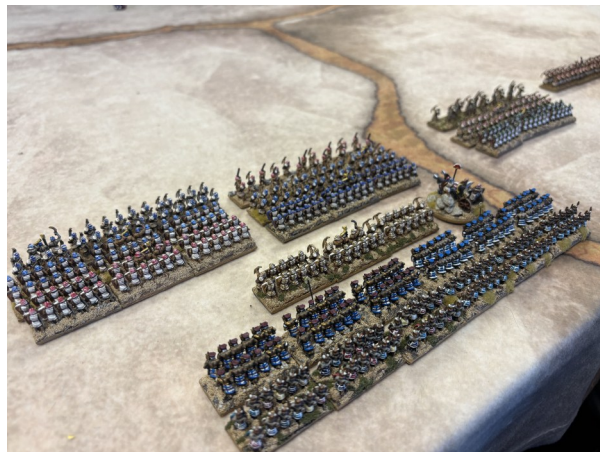
It has been quite some time since we did a Biblical era War-master Ancients game, but after too many games involving either the Imperial Romans or Seleucids, we felt it was time for a change. The Egyptians and Assyrians were dusted off, the army lists looked over, and it was time for something a bit different.

We had roughly 1650 points for each side, which would still be a pretty good sized game since both sides had a lot of cheap units. It would also be an interesting clash as the Assyrians had armor (save of 6 for most units), so fewer units than the Egyptians. The Assyrians also had two units of heavy chariots (think ancient panzers!) and a unit of cavalry. The Assyrians were definitely outnumbered, but had higher quality units plus the save factor. They only had a



was well over half of the Assyrian army against the Egyptian right flank. The Assyrians kept moving to their left, then the next turn moved a bit more, and again the turn after that. We started calling it the Assyrian “semi-circle of death!” With their right flank protected by several units and the Egyptians so far away that they couldn’t reach any Assyrian units for a few turns, the Assyrians focused on the Egyptian right flank.

The Egyptians put up a fierce resistance and even counterattacked a few times, but to no avail. The amount of skirmisher as well as archery coming at them softened them up for the infantry attacks. While the Egyptians moved up reserves and even succeeded in pushing back the Assyrians on that side a bit, the Assyrians came back with even more units and finished off the Egyptians. By the end of the 6th turn the Egyptian right flank was in tatters, with just the remnants of some units barely hanging on. The Assyrian focus now shifted to the Egyptian center.



archers, infantry, and mercenaries were put in between with the idea of using their quantity to wear down the Assyrian infantry in the center. The trick would be to minimize the losses to the Assyrian heavy chariots, which get a devastating 18 dice when they charge! With each Egyptian infantry unit only getting 9 dice back it would be an attritional battle that the Egyptians might be able to afford.

The Assyrian strategy was not apparent at the start, but once the Egyptian right flank failed on its first move, then the Assyrians put their plan into action. Figuring that one flank of the Egyptians or the other might have problems, the Assyrians were going to move to the center and the opposite flank. This would not only negate the Egyptian

break number of 9, so they were a bit fragile.

The Egyptians had a lot of units; 8 regular infantry units, 6 units of archers, 4 mercenary units, a unit of Marines (the best troops in the army), several units of skirmishers, plus 6 chariot units and two units of chariot runners. With a break point of 13, the Egyptians could afford to lose some units along the way to victory. The biggest problem was that only the chariots had saves, but they were also skirmish type units with only two attacks.

The Egyptians set up with a group of three chariot units on each flank. With their speed and skirmish ability, they could probably tie up various Assyrian units on the flanks. The skirmishers,

numerical advantage, but put their attacks on a much more defined front. Once the Egyptians figured this out, the trick was then to move units in and try to prevent this from occurring!

Except the Egyptians were definitely having issues with moving their units. During the first four turns the Egyptian right flank moved exactly three units! The center was having issues as well, which meant for the first several turns, it

With the Egyptian left mired with command issues, the Assyrians lined up their heavy chariots. The Egyptian center finally started moving out to engage and several battles broke out around this position. The Egyptian mercenary brigade moved up to fill any holes as they waited for the heavy chariots to charge, which they eventually did. Entire Egyptian units seemed to vanish under the chariot’s wheels and the reserves were rushed to fill the gaps. Despite losing three entire units, the Egyptians were able to inflict some stand losses and were holding on to the center. (cont. on p27)





(cont. from p26) Now it was getting down to desperation time for the Egyptians. With a break point of 13 and now having seen 9 units eliminated while the Assyrians were still around 3, meant that the Egyptians needed to change the math quickly. Some units on the Egyptian left finally got moving and launched attacks on the extreme Assyrian right. The die rolls, which had been favoring the Assyrians most of the night, now really came into play! In two combats the Egyptians scored 4 hits out of 24 dice while the Assyrians scored 13 out of 18. Disaster! The Assyrians quickly followed up, destroying two Egyptian units for the loss of one Assyrian unit. Victory was almost at hand for the Assyrians.

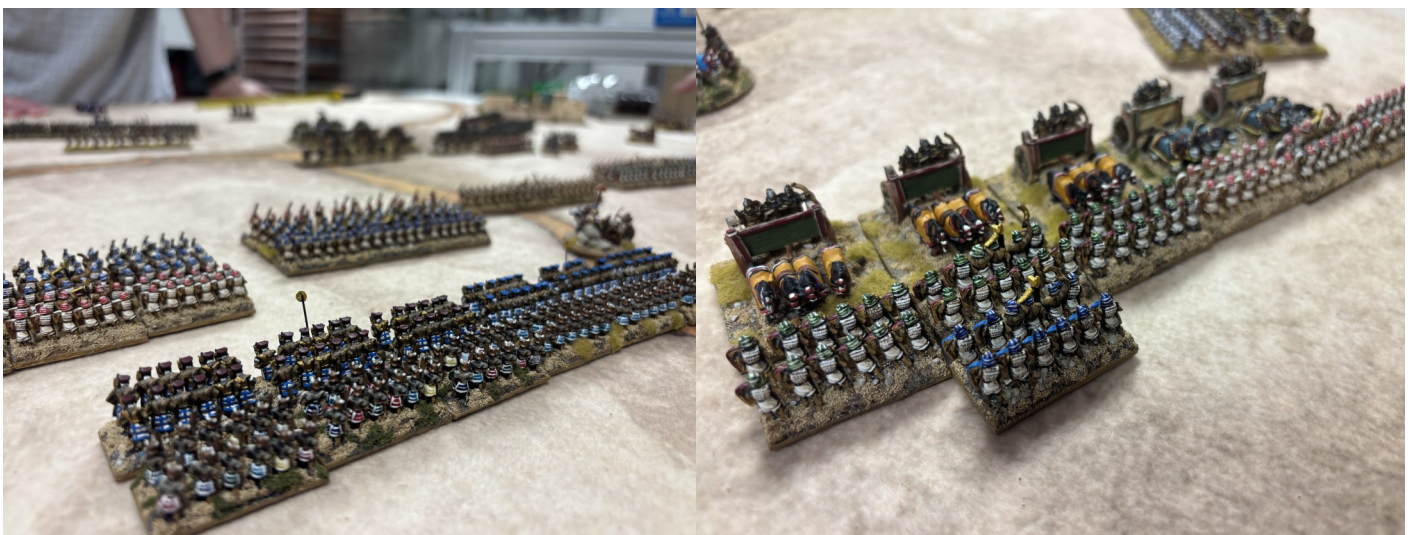
The Egyptians looked around and saw that they still had plenty of fresh units...in all the wrong places! They quickly

formed some new brigades and went in again, with the same disastrous results that they had experienced all night. While the Egyptians were causing casualties, it was mainly a stand or two here and there, while the Assyrians were wiping out entire units. There was one final push by the Egyptians in the center and the left, but this ran into a wall of Assyrian infantry and the counterattack was stopped. The Egyptians had hit their break point of having lost 13 non-skirmish units while the Assyrians were only at 5 of their 9. With that the game was called as a decisive Assyrian victory.

The Assyrian strategy was greatly helped by the Egyptian left simply refusing to move for most of the game. The commander on that side failed on the first roll an astounding 7 out of 10 turns! The Assyrians had the perfect strategy for this

and shifted their attack to a smaller front and overwhelmed the Egyptians at the point of attack. The Egyptians tried to respond, but units went in piecemeal and got hammered. It also didn't help that the Egyptians only had two successful saving rolls all night!

While the game was fun and went almost three hours, you can see where critics of the Warmaster and Hail Caesar game systems have a point. Having an entire command barely move the entire night was pretty frustrating and it really skewed the game. Luckily there were other commands for the player so they weren't bored, but it was a perplexing problem. We discussed a house rule to give failed commands (especially on the first try) a +1 each turn just to get things moving. We'll see if we can come up with some other options for the future.



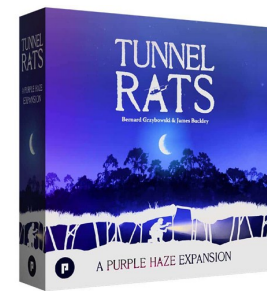
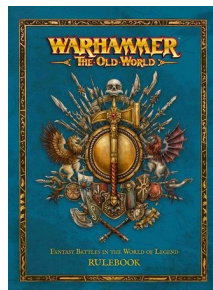
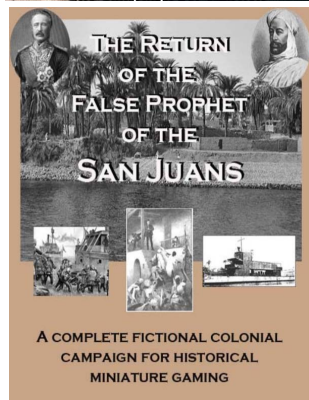
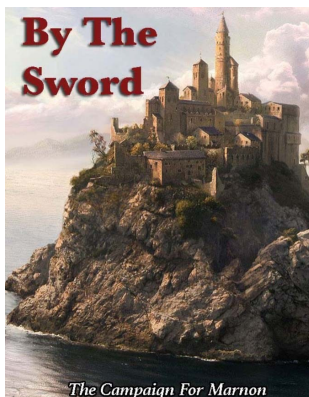
WASATCH FRONT HISTORICAL GAMING SOCIETY

Meets every other Friday night in the SLC, Utah area. We play a wide variety of games in 1/300th, 10mm, 15mm, and 28mm, including Hail Caesar, Age of Reason, Age of Discovery, Age of Eagles, Fire & Fury, General de Brigade, Warmaster Ancients/Medieval, TSATF, Phantoms, Mustangs, Battlegroup Panzergrenadier, Saga, Ronin, DBA, BKC4, board wargames, and more...

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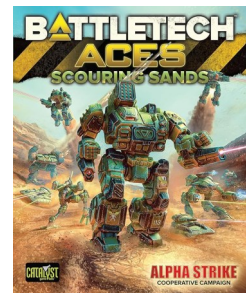
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We've all heard about what are called "lifestyle games", which would include *Advanced Squad Leader*, GMT's *A World at War*, probably *WH40K*, and others. Basically, you burn, sell, or give away all of your other games and just play that one game! Where "back in the day" you might own *Harpoon* and some ship miniatures, another gamer had some SPI games, and yet others had *D&D*, *Traveler*, etc., additional supplements to games were far and few between. Your group played a small rotation of games and would add to it gradually, with everyone really scrutinizing each purchase. You would never think of playing the same game or set of rules each and every week. True, we did play a lot of *Starfleet Battles* and multiple *D&D* sessions, but they were usually broken up by other games.

With today's hobby, however, game companies are certainly trying to get you to commit to a "lifestyle game", which is hopefully something that they make! Many of these games are quite involved, so it's not like they're producing a scenario pack or some extra counters to extend a campaign an extra year for a WW2 game. These are full fledged boxed additions, which make a pretty involved game even more involved. For example, *Tainted Grail: Fall of Avalon* and *Purple Haze* are both pretty in depth games which would take you multiple gaming sessions to get through (if you ever do successfully). Now there are more and more boxed sets so that basically you could just play those once a week for an entire year. The new *Battletech* is similar with so many card sets, miniatures, boxed expansions, etc., that you could play every gaming night and still not see everything after a year.



Is this where gaming is going? You buy a boxed set, play it, like it, then buy the next 5-6 boxes and play for 4-5 years and ignore everything else? I saw this with *Gloomhaven* where after 8 straight sessions we could see that it would take another 50+ sessions without even considering *Frosthaven* or any of the other add-ons. In this case, we decided that we had seen enough and moved on to other things. It was fun and interesting, but there's so many games out there yet to try or revisit that we felt we couldn't do this forever. I recently saw some *Warhammer Old World* gamers who were not interested in trying anything new. For them, that one system was their "lifestyle" (and with the high costs it probably is all they can afford!). We've had this for quite some time in the hobby, but today it looks like there are more and more games trying to convert you to their "lifestyle" and it's not going to stop anytime soon.