

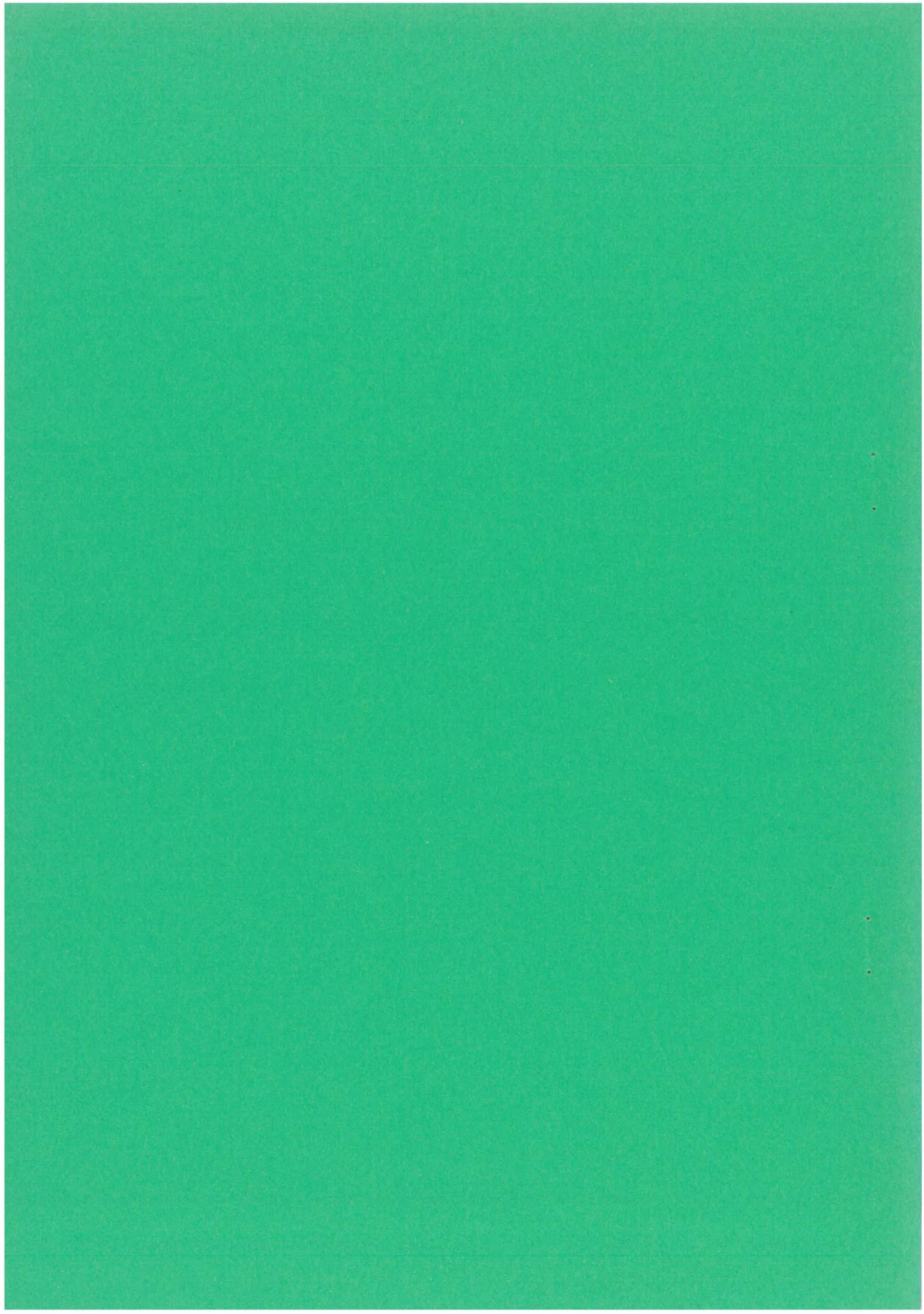
QUEENSLAND WORKMEN

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Editor

Gary Johnson

History Department

University of Queensland

s310362@student.uq.edu.au

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Cover Artwork: Vorpal Bunny of Doom by Julian Smith

Editorial

Hello, and welcome to the Queensland Wargamer! Yayyy!!!
(Cue theme to The Muppet Show.)

Whether you're a QUGS hack from before the sinking of Atlantis or a neophyte tentatively peeking between these covers for the first time, I hope you find this issue exciting, interesting and different. I certainly think it is! In fact, I award it the title "splendiferous"! What more could a magazine want? Maybe I'm going a little overboard, but hey, who cares?

And who am I, you ask? Why, I'm your friendly neighbourhood editor, Gary Johnson. I'm a postgraduate in the History Department studying Medieval Bishops. I prefer to play superheroic RPGs, especially Champions, and strategic-level wargames like Britannia and Diplomacy. I have designed a (badly flawed) play-by-mail game, enjoy watching Doctor Who and Blake's 7, and don't mind the odd game of chess. Finally, I have been a role-player since 1985.

Being a player ... there's a subject worth discussing in the next issue! After all, there's a lot I know now that I wish I knew back when I started. Last issue had several articles that discussed GMing and being a GM; the next issue can do the same thing for playing and being a player! Cool!

So then, this is the deal. Issue 48 will include a spotlight on being a player. I want contributions about anything to do with playing games, or being a better player, or even just short letters asking what you're doing wrong, etc. If you don't want to write about being a player, write about something else! I don't mind! The deadline for the May issue is Friday 18 April. That's two months away, so you all have plenty of time to put pen to paper and produce your masterpiece. In the words of a friend, "Git rae intae it!"

Farewell ... for now.

Gary Johnson

s310362@student.uq.edu.au

So you want to be published

Queensland Wargamer Submissions Policy

- 1 The Queensland Wargamer is a forum for members of QUGS to express their views and ideas on gaming. Any contributions that are in some way related to any form of gaming will be considered: reviews, rules suggestions, short stories, discussions of games or gaming, articles about history, mythology, philosophy, or whatever else tickles your fancy. We always need filler artwork for the Wargamer, so if any of you are artists, please consider helping out. Letters to the Editor are welcomed.
- 2 You will not be reimbursed for any contributions you make to the Wargamer. Sorry.
- 3 We are required by Clubs and Societies to meet some standards set by the Student Union. Sexist, racist and homophobic material is unacceptable, and will not pass the examination each Wargamer undergoes before being printed. Non-inclusive language (i.e. the generic "he") comes under this prohibition. Current editorial policy is to avoid sentence structures that require the generic first person (by recasting the sentence in the plural and by using proper nouns) and to alternate between "she" and "he".
- 4 The Wargamer is not the place to insult other people. Libelling and defaming people is not acceptable, and such material will not be printed.
- 5 If you submit material that debates or takes issue with points raised by other people, whether in the Wargamer or elsewhere, the Editor will extend the right of reply to the other party.
- 6 After you submit written material, it will be reviewed by the Editor, typed and formatted, and then returned to you if there are substantial or potentially contentious revisions. You can, if you want, revise this edited article, and resubmit it. This process will go on until both you and the Editor are satisfied with the article (or willing to let what's left of it see print). This could take a while, so please submit material well before the published deadlines for each issue of the Wargamer if at all possible.
- 7 The Editor may ask other people to review your submission, particularly if the submission discusses something the Editor is unfamiliar with or cannot fairly evaluate.
- 8 You are entitled to withdraw your submission at any point up to the time the Wargamer is submitted to Clubs and Societies for review (usually less than a week before printing). You retain copyright over anything you submit and anything that sees print.

What is Gaming?

The pastime that unites the members of the Queensland University Games Society (QUGS) is that they play and are interested in games. While most people are familiar with games such as Monopoly, Poker, and the like, they are often unaware of the scope offered by other types of games. What follows is a brief survey of some of the more popular branches of gaming.

Boardgames

Most of us are familiar with some boardgames. Many depend largely on luck, such as Monopoly. However, there are boardgames that focus on strategy and skill. Chess, Draughts, and Othello are good examples of the latter. There are also games that combine luck with skill, like Backgammon and Scrabble. Also, not all boardgames are serious "win at all costs" games: some are light-hearted and played for pure entertainment.

Contact person: Rebecca Wawiluk (3371 8225)

Wargames

The idea of a wargame is to simulate some form of conflict; often a historical battle or war. For instance, Axis and Allies lets the players fight out the Second World War. Many wargames are played on boards, and the board represents the area in which the conflict is set. It can be a detailed map, a simple depiction of the landscape, or something else again. The playing pieces represent the military forces available to each side.

Chess belongs, in a very abstract sense, to this category of boardgames. However, unlike Chess, other wargames usually allow you to move all your pieces in one turn, and whether or not your piece wins a battle usually depends on the role of dice. Wargames typically have a more complicated map and many more rules than chess, so planning your game strategy can be quite a challenge.

The articles "Triumph of the Rising Sun" and "The Battle of Jutland" are about wargaming.

Contact Person: Gary Johnson (3371 4325)

Role-Playing Games

A role-playing game (RPG) is very different to traditional games like chess and poker. The object of a RPG is to have fun and be creative, rather than to defeat your opponent. When role-playing, everyone can win.

Role-playing is somewhat like being in a play, but you get to choose your own part and you don't have to stick to a pre-written script. Each player in the game creates a character and then acts out the part of that character. One player, called the Game Master (GM) decides on the basic plot and setting of the adventure, and acts out the parts of all the people who aren't played by the other gamers. For all the players, this acting involves providing the dialogue for their characters, and also making decisions on what the character should do.

The GM has the extra duty of deciding whether the actions chosen by the players for their characters will succeed or fail. To ensure that this is done fairly and consistently, RPGs have sets of rules. However, only the GM need know what the rules are.

Most RPGs are designed for a specific setting, such as science fiction, heroic fantasy, modern-day horror, and swashbuckling adventure. There is a tremendous range of choices available to role-players.

The articles "Weally Wild Wages, er Mages" and "Coming Up Trumps" are about role-playing games.

Contact Person: Gary Johnson (3371 4325)

Collectable Card Games

Over the last few years, collectable card games have become very popular. They combine the best of two different hobbies, card collecting and playing card games. You are encouraged to make your own deck of playing cards from the many different cards printed for each game, introducing more variety into play than you get with the traditional card deck. Most games can be played with more than two players, although some are limited to one-on-one match-ups. Examples of collectable card games include Magic: the Gathering and Star Wars.

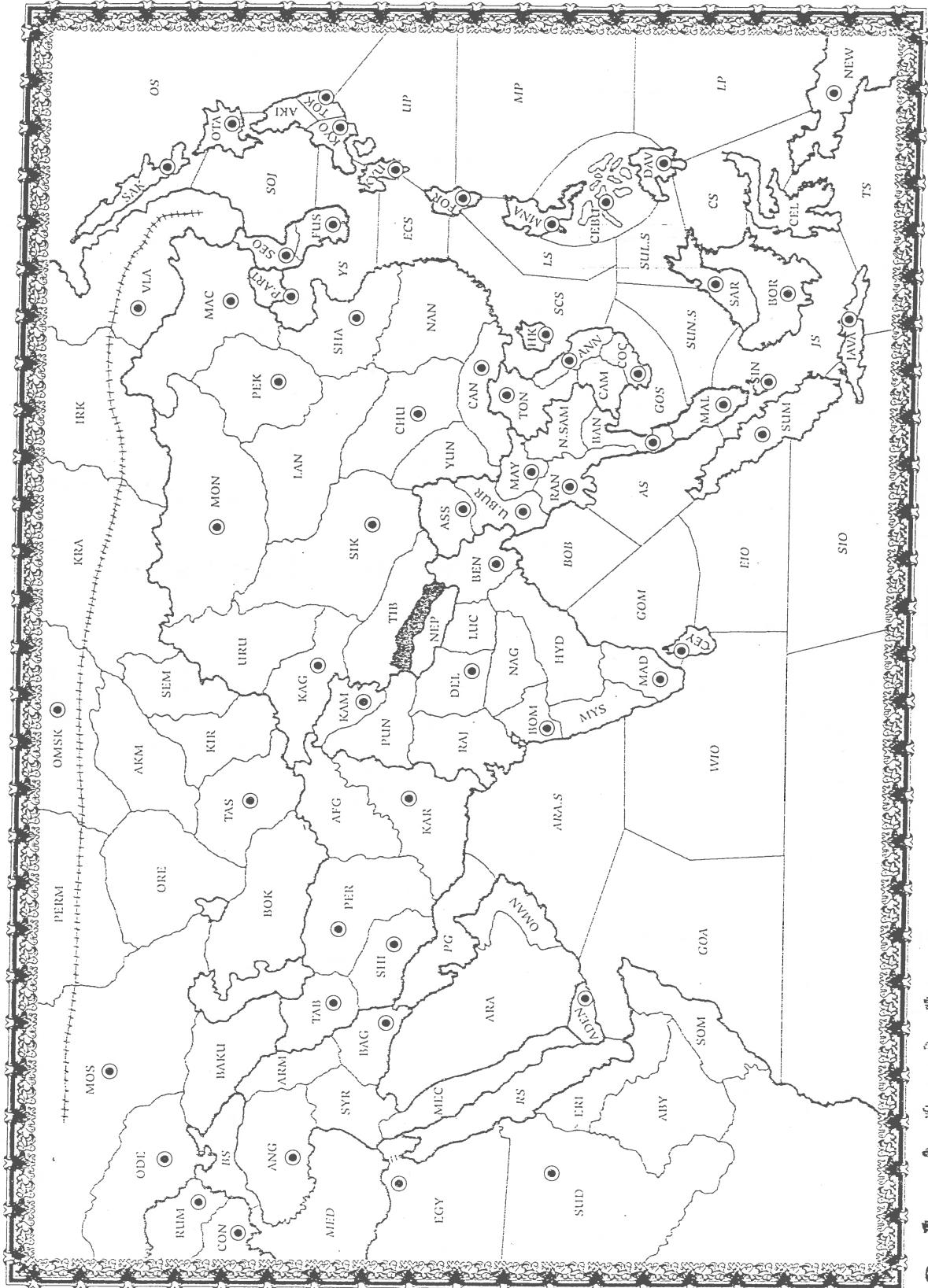
Contact Person: Travis Hall (3397 5118)

Play By Mail Games

Play By Mail (PBM) games are those games that are played by post. Players receive written reports from the referee that describe what has just happened, and players submit their own reports on what they want to do next. PBMs can simulate games of any other type, including wargames, boardgames, and role-playing games. The hobby grew out of Play By Mail Chess in the 1970s and has expanded into many different types of games over the years.

The article "Keys of Medokh part two" is about play-by-mail gaming. Ω

Contact Person: Peter Fordyce (3371 1115)



Colonial Diplomacy

The Avalon Hill Game Company

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Triumph of the Rising Sun

A Game of Colonial Diplomacy

Gary Johnson

At the last QUGS Diplomacy Tournament, we played Colonial Diplomacy, the “game of intrigue in the era of empire”. However, this article is not about that game, in which my country (China) got caned. Instead, I’m going to regale you with an account of the very first game of Colonial Diplomacy I ever played, a game that I won playing Japan. But first, a brief description of the game itself.

Colonial Diplomacy uses the same rules as its parent game, Diplomacy. Thus, the game revolves around making verbal promises to other players that you don’t intend to keep and occupying supply centres on the board. There are some differences: you don’t necessarily control all supply centres within your country’s borders at the start of the game, Cebu counts as both a land and a sea area, and there are some optional rules that can have a significant effect on play. The Trans-Siberian Railway undeniably makes the biggest difference, although the Suez Canal is useful (unlike the Hong Kong rule). Unfortunately for the Russian players (a bad sign in itself), we decided that we wouldn’t use the optional rules in this game. The Railway would have helped Russia a great deal under the ferocious Chinese and Japanese attacks on Port Arthur and Vladivostok.

There are seven players in Colonial Diplomacy: Britain, China, France, Holland, Japan, Russia and Turkey. I had the good fortune to draw Japan when we allocated countries. Starting with a corner position was a welcome boon. It will also simplify this narrative, because I can completely ignore the fortunes of Turkey and Russia in the west, and gloss over British India. French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies will receive honourable mentions, but the main focus of this article will be the destruction of the Russian presence in the Far East and the slow march across China.

I started with three fleets, in Kyushu, Otaru, and Tokyo, and an army in Kyoto. China began with armies in Canton, Manchuria, Peking, Shanghai and Sinkiang. Russia had a fleet in Port Arthur and an army in Vladivostok. The far-flung British

Empire, which started with six (!) units, included fleets in Singapore and Hong Kong, while France began with three units in Vietnam. Far in the west there were three Turkish and three Russian units respectively, while the Dutch began with three units in the East Indies.

My initial goals were obvious: I needed to get rid of one of my two northern neighbours, and come to some sort of agreement with the Dutch and the French over the Philippines. I didn’t need to be a rocket scientist to work out that Russia had fewer units in the east than China, and had the only enemy fleet in the region. I decided to

The game revolves around making verbal promises to other players that you don’t intend to keep.

work with China to eliminate the Russian presence in our region, then turn against the Emperor of the Middle Kingdom. Also, the inexperience of the Russian player (it was her first game) didn’t inspire confidence. After a brief chat with all the other players, I was ready to write my moves for 1870, the first turn.

Looking at the map, I decided to collect the “free” (i.e. uncontested) supply centres at Sakhalin and Formosa. I extracted a promise that I could have Fusan from China, and Russia promised me both Koreas. My first moves were, obviously, to occupy the Okhotsk Sea in the north, and the Upper Pacific and Yellow Sea in the south. The Port Arthur fleet tried to come out, so I didn’t take the Yellow Sea ... but I did keep the Russians in port. China occupied Seoul as the

Vladivostok army marched west into Irkutsk. The follow-up in 1872 went like clockwork: I convoyed my starting army to Formosa, sailed into Sakhalin, and tried, successfully, to reach the Yellow Sea. China’s army in Seoul, supported from Manchuria, marched triumphantly into Port Arthur, seemingly achieving my first objective (no Russian fleets to contest the seas).

Britain can’t resist the combined assaults of her neighbours against the “superpower”.

However, I under-estimated the Russian player’s desire for revenge. Russia constructed a new fleet in Vladivostok, despite my pleas. In reply, I had to build another northern fleet, and I built a second army for my campaign on the mainland. China built another three armies, at Peking, Shanghai, and Sinkiang, and yellow counters covered China. Except at Canton, which had joined Hong Kong under British rule.

Elsewhere on the board, Britain expanded to ten units, despite losing Singapore. This happens in every game: as everyone expands into the neutral supply centres, Britain easily captures four or more, ensuring that Britain looks like a massive power on the board. However, this is more an illusion than reality, because with troops scattered from Aden to Hong Kong, Britain can’t resist the combined assaults of her neighbours, all united against the “superpower”. In this game, as in others, Britain was rapidly reduced to her Indian possessions in a few turns, struggling to hold the Punjab and Bengal against China and Russia while Dutch fleets threatened Ceylon and Madras. France took Thailand, the Dutch took the rest of the Indies, and the Turks expanded into Egypt and Iran. Russia, suffering from the same scattering of forces that afflicts Britain, took Tashkent.

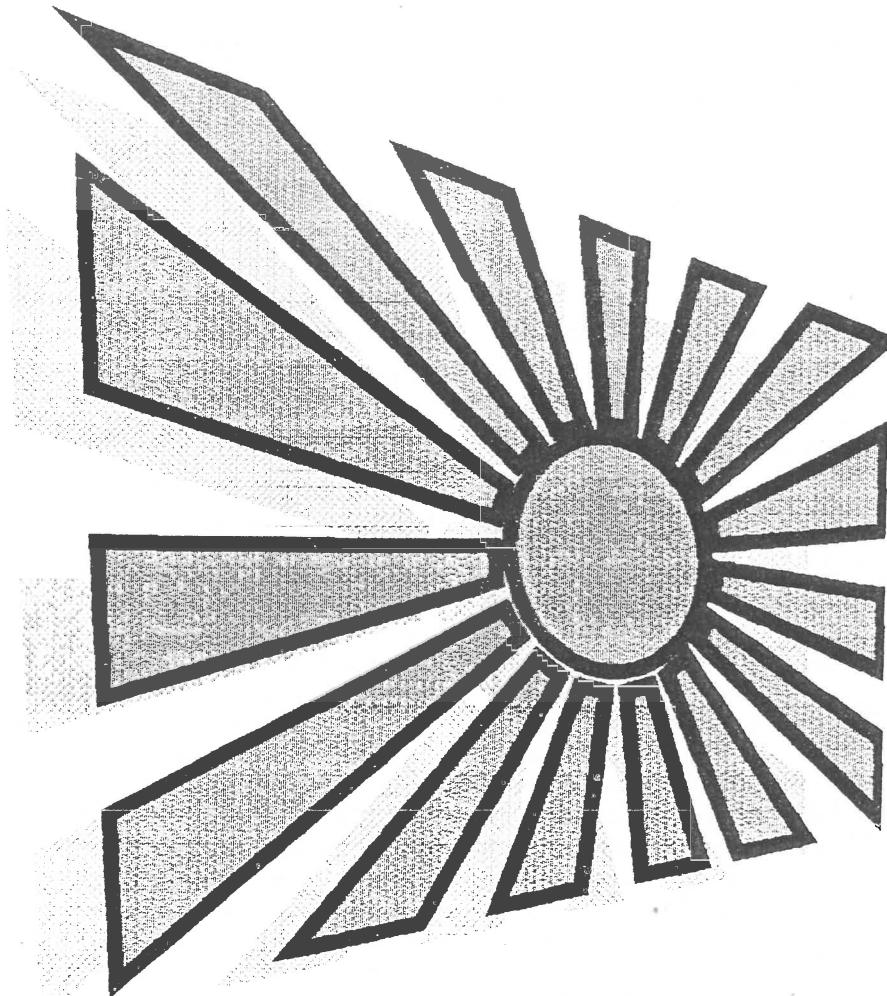
Looking at the board, it was clear that the Dutch were my rivals for the

Philippines, so we agreed to partition the islands. He insisted that he get both Davao and Cebu, which I wasn't happy with, but he had the strategic position and I had more important problems to overcome, so I agreed with his demand. This was the promise that I intended to keep for as long as possible, because I didn't want to fight the Dutch until I was absolutely ready. At this point, I was also still working closely with the Chinese against the Russians.

In 1874, I continued the war against the Russians. My new northern fleet moved to the strategically vital Sea of Japan, while the one on Sakhalin clashed with the new Russian fleet over the Okhotsk Sea. As my southern fleet sailed down the Pacific to the Philippines, past the army on Formosa, I convoyed my new army from Japan to Seoul, sealing Fusen off from the Chinese armies. China had continued to play his part, driving the Russian army from Irkutsk to Krasnoyarsk, thus isolating the Vladivostok fleet.

The time had now come to part company with China. 1876 was a "counting" turn: by my estimates, China might grow an extra two units this time, giving it ten units. I didn't like my chances of penetrating a cluster of armies that large! China was under pressure in the west, with Russian and British armies adjacent to Sinkiang, and a solitary army trying to hold Assam. Now was obviously the time: the British player asked me in front of everyone when I was going to stab China, and the Chinese player later told me he was hoping I would make the mistake of not attacking him until it was too late. Instead, I seized the moment, and with it, the game.

China was locked into carrying out its part of the war on Russia, so I could count on a free shot at China's soft underbelly, Shanghai and Port Arthur (both vacant). I took the chance, occupying Shanghai with my Yellow Sea fleet and Port Arthur with the army from Seoul. At the same time, I moved fleets to Manila and the east coast of Seoul. As a result, I gained a massive four supply centres, hurling myself into the lead for the first time. I was never caught for the rest of the game (though Turkey and Holland ran close for a while). Caught out, China dropped to seven supply centres, and was forced to disband the army in Krasnoyarsk. Everyone else grew, with the exception of Britain, who dropped



to eight centres and chose to vacate Hong Kong. The extra unit was more useful in India than it would be futilely defending the island against French aggression. Holland and I watched each other warily in the Philippines, and agreed to withdraw our units from the region. Once again, I had to accept his terms, and leave first. What did that little humiliation matter when I had another two fleets and two armies to prosecute the war in the north?

What did that little humiliation matter when I had another two fleets and two armies to prosecute the war in the north?

I expected that China and Russia would co-operate against me, and they proved me right. However, I had a tremendous advantage over both of them-I had the initiative, while they were forced to defend their current positions, afraid to attack in case they lost what they had. Still, they tried to get the Russian fleet into Seoul in 1878, without success. This meant that I finally got to move my fleet out of

Sakhalin and into the Okhotsk Sea. It also meant that I kept Shanghai, which was a pleasant surprise. My new fleets moved into the Sea of Japan and the Yellow Sea, while I left the Philippines for the Luzon Strait. With the East China Sea available for my Shanghai fleet to retreat into, and my armies on Japan champing at the bit to reach the mainland, I felt very pleased with my position. My fleets dominated the coast of China and Korea, my armies were ideally placed to be convoyed into action, and my enemies were as nothing to me. Holland had moved out of Cebu (though not Davao), so that was also going as planned. It was time to eliminate the Russian presence.

There was nothing Russia or China could do to stop me successfully convoying an army from Japan into Vladivostok come 1880. With nowhere to run to, the Russian fleet died, and with it the first of my enemies. For the rest of the game, Russia would be my buffer against the Turkish armies, and not an enemy to be destroyed. I convoyed my other Japanese army to Fusen, occupying it for the first time. For the second turn in a row, I tried and failed to capture Manchuria with

my Shanghai fleet: this time, China had the numbers to force me to retreat to sea. Rather surprisingly, my Luzon Strait fleet successfully waltzed into the South China Sea. I really had expected that France, with two adjacent fleets, would occupy the strategically vital area.

Fortune smiled on me at this point: although China had seven units and nine supply centres, there was only one province where China could build, limiting China to eight armies. Britain was now down to six supply centres, placing it equal last with Russia. I built another army at Kyoto, going out to a two centre lead over Holland and Turkey. Holland, by the way, had now vacated Davao, no doubt pleased with the obvious trust I was placing in him by moving my units well away from the Philippines. As we stopped for lunch, I was well placed for the second half of the game. My goal was now to eliminate China from the game, though time ran out before I could carry out my ambition.

In one move, all my armies had moved to the front line, and I hadn't lost any ground doing it.

After lunch, I took the opportunity to talk with the new Russian player, and we reached an amicable agreement to leave each other alone. My immediate problem was that my armies were poorly placed for expanding into China: one was trapped in Fusan behind a fleet in Seoul, and my initial army was still guarding Formosa against non-existent enemies. I needed to rearrange my forces in Korea while pushing on into Russia. In all this, I took advantage of the defensive mentality China had to adopt to stop me bludgeoning into Manchuria and Shanghai. I advanced from Vladivostok to Irkutsk, and convoyed another army from Japan to the formerly Russian city. The army on Formosa finally reached mainland China, slipping across the East China Sea to Nanching. However, the most satisfying part of the 1882 turn was the three piece swap I managed in Korea. The army in Fusan was convoyed to Port Arthur, while the army there moved to Seoul, which was vacated by the fleet for Fusan. All this under the nose of the Chinese army in Manchuria! In one move, all my armies had moved to the

front line, and I hadn't lost any ground doing it. An excellent outcome.

Elsewhere, other players were coming to pick over the bones of a dying nation. Russia was threatening the Chinese outpost at Kashgar, while France had decided to capture Canton rather than take the South China Sea. Britain and Holland had locked up around the south coast of India, with the Union Jack holding firm against the Dutch expeditionary forces. Far away, Turkey was attacking Odessa and Persia, just beginning to impinge on the periphery of my part of the board. And in the middle of it all, China sat there, slowly dying.

Chinese blood ran red in the streets of Peking in 1890 as the Japanese forces continued their inexorable drive into the Middle Kingdom.

1884 was another "counting" year, and I intended to take full advantage of my strong position. The army in Vladivostok crashed into Manchuria, destroying the defending army, while the southern army in Nanching was just kept out of Shanghai by determined Chinese resistance. In the far north, I began the lengthy process of relocating my Sea of Japan and Fusan fleets to the Pacific via the Okhotsk Sea. With another supply centre under my control, I built an army at Kyoto. Surprisingly, China expanded this turn, taking Upper Burma from the French with British help. I guess the Brits still remembered who won the Hundred Years' War! Holland built a second army to go with its eight fleets, and Russia shrank to a minuscule four supply centres, fewer than it started the game with.

Now that I held Manchuria, Shanghai was mine. My Nanching army finally swept all before it in 1886, the same turn my Irkutsk army pushed on to Krasnoyarsk and my Seoul army moved north to Vladivostok. I shipped the new army to Formosa via the Upper Pacific, shuffled the northern fleets around some more, and began to feel annoyed at the narrowness of the Pacific ocean. Of course, it hadn't seemed narrow before, but now I was starting to run out of room for my fleets, things had changed. With the

destruction of the Shanghai army, China was down to six units.

1888 saw the British sneak into Assam and take it from China, the Russians drive the Turkish intruders from Moscow, and France destroy the Dutch fleet in Bangkok. The most interesting thing I did this turn was walk into Annam, the central province of French Vietnam! I had noticed that France had moved in the last turn so that his forces could not defend Annam, and being the peace-loving imperialist that I am, I immediately convoyed my army on Formosa to the vacant province. That got a good reaction from the French player ... I built another two armies, taking my total number of supply centres to fourteen, three clear of Turkey and five clear of Holland. China had to disband another army, and sacrificed Canton to the overwhelming forces (both Japanese and French) surrounding it. France should have gone down a unit, but we miscounted by one, so his total remained level at seven. Both Russia and Britain rose by one, but they looked shaky.

Chinese blood ran red in the streets of Peking in 1890 as the Japanese forces continued their inexorable drive into the Middle Kingdom. I didn't capture Mongolia this turn, but with the Peking army destroyed, China couldn't possibly keep that province next turn. France did a deal with me whereby I vacated Annam and his Tongking fleet supported the army into Canton, which China didn't try to defend. The Chinese army in Upper Burma left before the bayonets of the French armies, sweeping into the vacant British province of Bengal. Russia held on to Moscow for another turn, but the writing was on the wall for the beleaguered defenders. This was the turn to break my long-standing agreement with Holland, and Japanese fleets drifted south into the Luzon Strait and the Middle Pacific, both part of the demilitarised zone. The Dutch player noted these acts of aggression, and announced that he would respond appropriately.

With time running out, 1892 was going to be the last turn. I decided to try and be clever this turn, and keep Annam for myself. France had only one unit next to Annam, so I moved my South China Sea fleet there, because even if France bounced me out of the province, I would retain control over it.

Unfortunately, the French player knew me too well, and didn't bother trying for Annam. Instead, France captured Canton, catching the Japanese army there unprepared. With no lines of retreat available, the Japanese were driven into the sea. This was the first Japanese unit destroyed in two decades of play, blighting our record and leaving Turkey the only country with a perfect record in this regard. However,

None could match the Japanese Empire, with seventeen supply centres.

our other gains this turn more than made up for this disaster: the Chinese army in Mongolia fled before the advancing Japanese armies, while Cebu finally fell under the control of its rightful owner. As a result, Japan built in all four home supply centres for the second time.

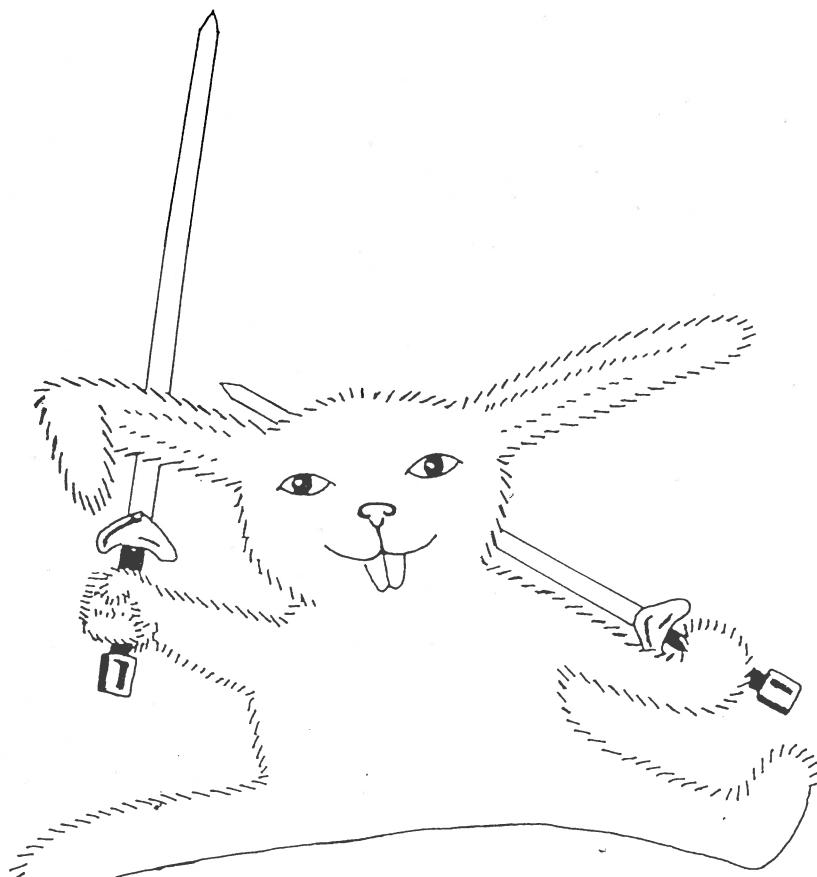
Britain reclaimed Bengal with French support, and the Chinese army there disintegrated. Another army in Langchow also dissolved, unwilling to face the hordes of Japanese soldiers sweeping down from the north. With a mere two supply centres (Sinkiang and Chungking), China was gone. Even Russia still had four supply centres,

controlling a band of territory from Omsk to Kashmir. Britain still controlled all of India, having kept out the Dutch fleets that battered at her southern shores. Holland was slowly declining, but I expect it would have remained steady at eight units for some time to come. France was prospering as China and Holland contracted in South-East Asia, rising to nine units (but only eight supply centres). However, none could match the Japanese Empire, with seventeen supply centres. A clear win to the new rulers of the Middle Kingdom. And it all began with a victorious war against Russia ...

My conclusions: Japan is a very good country to play. Your starting position is advantageous, your neighbours are individually weak (a Sino-Russian alliance would be a bit of a handful, however), and you have regional naval supremacy. China and Britain look like hard, unsatisfying positions, especially China. At least the British player gets to have a bit of fun early on, before settling down to try and hold India. In the game I've just described, China didn't do anything really wrong at any time (unless you consider taking a risk and trusting me to not attack in 1876 a mistake). China

just died slow and ugly, province by province, army by army. Turkey and Holland both look similar to Japan, with good corner positions and lots of free neutrals to scavenge. The jury's still out on France, which seems to have a tight, compact position which is easy to defend but hard to expand beyond. Russia is not easy to play without the Trans-Siberian Railroad in play, but Russia shouldn't have done as badly as it did in this game. The inexperience of the initial Russian player led to Russia being out of position and floundering without a clear policy in the crucial early turns. By the time Russia had a clear policy, it was reactive and defensive, neither of which win games of Diplomacy. Of course, being attacked by two countries from the very first turn didn't help either.

In short, Colonial Diplomacy is a great game, especially for those of you who enjoy Diplomacy but are tired of the limited range of opening moves available in the original game. There's a lot more room for strategic play (after all, the board is twice the size!), and the sheer scale of the game is awesome. It's a pity Colonial Diplomacy costs \$100, which puts it out of some people's price range. Ω



Coming up Trumps

... How to Take the Trick from Card Games

Travis Hall

Magic. Once this was a word much revered and respected among fantasy role-players, but today, the word holds much direr meaning for die-hard role-players and wargamers. Now the word conjures up images of the new breed of gamers, the card-gamers, with attention spans no longer than the twenty minutes necessary for their fix of cards and the gaming sophistication of a hyperactive kobold.

In 1993, Magic: the Gathering was released upon the gaming world. Within a year, its popularity was rivaling that of even the most popular RPGs. By the end of 1994, many other card games had followed in its wake, and though some have been successful, none yet rival Magic in popularity. Now the allure of the new games is seducing players away from RPGs and wargames. Collectable card games (CCGs) or trading card games (TCGs), as these games are called, present gamers with the option of many different and fun games, with much less work and less rigid time requirements than the more "traditional" games. It is now quite common to see a role-player sorting his cards during an AD&D session, more concerned with a new killer deck concept than the complex interaction of fictional personalities and heroic deeds in the current game. Some even believe that CCGs will mean the death of role-playing.

But gaming need not be like this. Certainly, CCGs are novel, and many role-players will decide they like or even prefer this new form of gaming. However, think how the wargamers felt when Dungeons & Dragons first came on the scene. At the time, many wargamers converted to the new form of gaming, but that did not mean they gave up their old hobby altogether, and I believe that today these forms of games coexist quite happily. Perhaps each hobby even benefits from its counterpart. So too, I believe, can CCGs coexist with other forms of gaming, and even be made to assist the older forms. I have met a number of role-players who first encountered the hobby through card gaming, and I myself like to take part in card games, although I was a role-player long before

I had ever heard of Magic. Certainly, the new hobby means we have to put with a number of annoying prats with nothing better to do than pester us about the power of their degenerate decks (even if the game of which they speak is completely foreign to us), but then, role-playing has produced twerps with nothing better to do than boast about the number of dragons their 37th level paladin-mages killed last session, so I reckon the hobbies are about even.

Enough of the cards versus role-playing debate. Whether CCGs spell the death of role-playing is something for the historians of the future to worry about, not the gamers of today. I would much rather spend my time playing better games, which leads to the question, how can cards improve role-playing games?

Some even believe that CCGs will mean the death of role-playing.

The first thought that springs to mind is the idea of card-based RPGs. There have been a number of RPGs which have used cards in their mechanics. Card-based resolution has a tremendous advantage in that the players can have a much greater degree of control over both their characters and the game itself by playing their cards. While each player must still rely on the luck of the draw to get good cards, careful play of those cards can maximise the character's chances of overall success. One game which uses cards this way is Lace and Steel.

I have only played Lace and Steel a few times, but on those occasions I found the unusual mechanics of the game quite a refreshing break from the standard dice-based procedures. Lace

and Steel is a fantasy RPG set in a pseudo-seventeenth century European society, one without the Wars of Religion that dominated the historical sixteenth century. Much of the game makes use of dice rolls, as in most other RPGs, but combat is handled through the play of cards from a deck specifically designed for the game. Each card has a suit (either Swords or Roses) and designates a region of attack (*high*, *low* or *middle*) and an attack value. To fight, both attacker and defender play a

... players feel that they are in control of their characters' actions ...

card face-down. If the defender guesses the region wrong, he gets no defence against the attack. The defender will also take damage if his card's value is too low. There are some cards like *party* which help the defender, since it can be very difficult to guess which region will be attacked. Only one attack is made each round, with one character retaining the initiative and the attack until certain results occur, and the situation is reversed. This leads to a string of attacks one way, then an abrupt turnaround, making combat ebb and flow pleasantly.

These mechanics have the great advantage of making the players feel they are in control of their characters' actions, something often lacking in games like AD&D, where success or failure often rests on the roll of a die. A character's combat prowess is reflected by her hand size and draw rate, and injury reduces the hand size, but how the player plays her cards has a significant effect on the results. Some players will point out the down-side: for example, you cannot attack high unless you hold an appropriate card. Some do not like this restriction, although others do not mind it so much. Another problem with the game is that cards only affect combat (in several forms), not non-conflict skills, so the elegant mechanics are wasted when the players are not interested in combat.

Incidentally, combat includes verbal combat, the fine art of skewering your opponent on a sharp tongue instead of a pointy stick. The cards dictate the effectiveness of taunt or insult, and how well the character reacts to them, although players are encouraged to make the appropriate remarks to go with the cards. It is even possible to

engage in verbal and physical combat simultaneously, with two duelists taunting each other at sword-point. Overall, Lace and Steel is quite a good game, although the limited use of the cards is rather disappointing.

The much more recent Dragonlance Fifth Age/Saga Rules System does much more with its cards.



The Saga rules assign the most heroic and noble qualities to the lowest cards.

In this game, all the mechanics are handled through card play. The game comes with a special deck of cards, each numbered from 1 to 9 in nine suits, plus the 10 of Dragons. Among other things, character creation is handled using the cards. The player is dealt twelve cards, which are assigned to the character's eight attributes, plus wealth, quests, nature and demeanor. Each attribute has both a score and a code, depending on the card assigned to it. The score is the number on the card, and dictates the character's natural ability in the area, while the code is based on the suit of the card as it relates to the attribute's suit. The same suit gives an A, a related suit a B, the same general category a C, an unrelated suit a D, and a Dragon, which is never nice to have and not related to anything, an X. So, for example, a character with 3A strength is physically quite weak but knows well how to apply what he has, while a reason of 8D indicates natural intelligence, but no formal education.

there is rarely any real chance of failure, and that knowledge may lead to a lack of tension and drama

Every card has one or two descriptive words written on it, which come into use when the card is assigned to nature (what the character is really like) and demeanor (how the character is perceived by others). Neither suit nor number is important here. Some would say this encourages min/maxing, for would not the lowest cards be assigned here? True, but the game makes use of this fact by assigning the most heroic and noble qualities to the lowest cards, thus encouraging the creation of characters who will get along well together and display the qualities most desired for gaming. The wealth card obviously indicates the starting finances of the character, while quests measures how experienced the character is when the game begins. During the course of the game, the character will earn more quest points, and the more quest points a character has, the more cards the player has in hand, ready for use in play.

Action resolution follows the standard format of playing a card, adding the attribute the action is based on, and, if the card played is a trump (that is, of the same suit as the

attribute), turning over an extra card from the deck to increase the score further. Of course, if the new card is also a trump, the process continues. If the resulting total is high enough to meet the difficulty numbers determined by the rulebook and GM as required, the character succeeds. These rules are simple and elegant. However, there are some difficulties. The Saga Rules System has no skills as such, and the large degree of player choice means that no PC is ever likely to fail when success is really important. There are several alternative resolution methods that can be used when the standard procedure seems less than entirely appropriate. Firstly, each card has an "aura colour". Low cards are white, high cards black, and cards in the middle red, indicating good, bad, or indifferent results. This mechanic is good for determining results when none of the character's skills will help. Also, the descriptive words on the cards can be used to determine success, a method especially appropriate for role-playing situations. If Sir Galen is attempting to inspire the local Solamnic Knights, his player might find the One of Swords ("Courageous and Inspiring") much more beneficial than might otherwise be the case. This range of resolution methods is a great boon to the discerning GM (I myself favour the idea of often not even stating which method is to be used). However, the mechanics are very rudimentary and need a thorough reworking to be of proper

Your character can perform a single devastating and highly dramatic attack.

use. The ability codes are a good idea, but have little effect on the game, and the odds of success are all out of whack (for instance, an ordinary person has about a 7 in 9 chance of picking a locked door). Still, the Saga Rules System is worth a look just for the ideas about card mechanics.

One of the problems with the mechanics of the previous two games is that they give so much control to the players. This is limited in Lace and Steel because the cards only apply in certain situations, but then the game reverts back to standard dice mechanics, and there is a considerable inconsistency in game play. In the Saga Rules System, there is rarely any real chance of failure, and that knowledge

may lead to a lack of tension and drama in game play. Perhaps what is needed is a system in which cards play an important part, but do not give such an overwhelming advantage. One system that does this is Torg.

Torg is set in the Earth of the "Near Now", what could have been or might yet be tomorrow, in which our world has been invaded by the people of other realities. England and parts of western Europe have been transformed into a realm of dark fantasy by the evil Uthorian, the USA is plagued by primitive lizard people and dinosaurs, the Middle East is dominated by an Indiana Jones-style pulp reality, and Indonesia is part of the gothic-horror reality of the mastermind of the invasion, the Gaunt Man. The PCs are either heroes from Earth or inhabitants of the invading realms who believe that the people of Earth should be free from oppression by the Gaunt Man and his High Lord followers.

The play of a card naturally inspires the player to describe the specific and heroic act being performed.

As for Torg's game mechanics, actions are resolved by rolling a d20 (with open-ended re-rolls on 10s and 20s), reading the result through a table to find a modifier, and adding that to the character's relevant attribute or skill score. This system by itself is no better or worse than any other dice-based mechanics, but there are also the cards. Every player begins the game with a hand of four cards. While you can do anything without needing to play a card, the cards can be played to give a specified bonus whenever a character really needs to succeed. *Adrenaline* cards give bonuses to actions based on strength, agility, or toughness, *presence* to perception or charisma, and *willpower* to mind or spirit. *Supporter* allows your character to give a bonus to any other character's action through whatever means of assistance is available, and *drama* gives a very large bonus for a given action—but if you can save it till the end of the adventure, it is worth three possibilities (experience points and karma points rolled into one). There are many other cards, each with a different effect.

In combat, the cards cannot be used from the hand. They must first be played into the player's pool. Every

time a character performs a successful action, one card is played into the pool from the hand. The cards are also used in a second way in combat. Each round, a card is flipped from the deck. That card says whether the heroes or the villains have the initiative and can act first, and may introduce a special effect like *flurry*, which allows all characters on that side two actions instead of one for that round. The turned-up card also presents certain "approved actions". Any player who takes the hint and succeeds in an "approved action" gets to draw an additional card into her hand. Once the right cards are in the pool, it's time to act. By bidding your time, your character can eventually perform a single, devastating, and highly dramatic attack.

Out of combat, there are the subplot cards. When one of these cards is played, the character becomes involved in an adventure subplot. The *romance* subplot has the character become romantically involved with an NPC (this card does not affect other PCs, thank goodness), the *nemesis* card turns a baddie into the personal enemy of the PC, and so on. Each subplot adds to the drama and story of the game, and incidentally earns more possibilities for the character.

As you can probably see, the cards add a lot to Torg. The players have an extra degree of control over their characters, and the play of a card naturally inspires the player to describe



The romance subplot card has the character become romantically involved with an NPC.

the specific and heroic act being performed. The cards regulate the flow of the adventure, leading to an intense, dramatic game that is openly cinematic in tone. They even serve to encourage

better tactics than "I hit the bad guy," which is so often seen in RPGs. Torg can be played without the cards, though I see no reason to do so, since they add so much to the game. For a completely different way of using cards in a role-playing game, there is also the Everway system. Everway is completely different to the previously examined games, as it attempts to draw the focus of the game away from the mechanics. It is perhaps a systemless as a game can get, while still having something in the rulebook. Everway does not use cards with numeric bonuses or combat

Everway attempts to draw the focus of the game away from the mechanics.

options. Instead, it uses cards to inspire the players. In Everway, each player picks five cards from the assortment of fantasy art cards provided with the game (or from the additional cards in the collectable Companion set). These cards depict scenes from the character's life, people the character has known, or even the character itself. The player then uses the cards to tell the character's story. A very simple set of statistics is used to describe the character in numeric terms, but the cards tell us what the character is really like.

As for mechanics, the game comes with a Fortune deck, a set of 36 cards obviously inspired by the Tarot. To resolve an action, the GM turns up a card from the Fortune deck, and uses his knowledge of what the card means, what the odds of success are, and how the result will affect the adventure plot to decide what the result is. Yes, that's

right, the GM chooses the result. For example, if a character is fighting an ogre, and the card that comes up is the Phoenix reversed (upside-down, which changes the card's meaning), indicating destruction, this probably bodes ill for the character. However, if the Lion is played, indicating "the body prevails", the character's physical prowess may well be great enough to seriously damage the ogre this round. It should be noted that this system requires a good GM, one the players feel they can trust, for the game is almost without mechanics. However, the cards do wonders for the atmosphere and feel of the game.

The last major card-based RPG I have played is Castle Falkenstein. This game is set in a fantastic steam-age parallel Earth, though the setting is only slightly unusual—it is really just a slightly more modern fantasy RPG than is normally the case. However, all actions are resolved using an ordinary deck of playing cards, not dice. All actions fall into the purview of one of the four suits: clubs for physical actions, spades for social actions, and so on. To perform an action, the player plays any or all of the four cards in her hand. All cards of the correct suit count their value (jacks are 11, queens 12, kings 13, and aces high at 14), while cards of the other suits are worth only 1. The value of the cards played are added to the value of the relevant skill (between 0 and 12), and the result compared to a target number set by the GM. Often, the target number is set by a similar process of card play carried out by the GM. This system is very simple, easy to use, and doesn't need a special deck. However, the GM must be very careful

and not let important situations, such as the climax of an adventure, hinge on a single skill category. If this is the case, the best play for almost any action is to play your entire hand, and the results come down to pure luck.

So, what if none of these games are quite your cup of tea? Well, they do demonstrate some of the principles of using cards in role-playing. As I see it, there are three major ways in which card play can be incorporated into RPGs: as game mechanics, story aids, and play aids.

Card-based mechanics have the attraction of getting the players more intimately involved with the actions of their characters. Players must choose which cards to play, and success or failure rides on their choices, rather than the roll of a die. However, in some systems this choice can be too great, and the players can decide to succeed all the time, or at least only fail when it doesn't matter. Thus, when using card-based mechanics it is important that the players not know what cards will generate success in a given situation.

Yes, that's right. The GM chooses the result.

The real difficulty in using card-based mechanics is that there are very few games which use them. If you wanted to run a game based solely on card-based mechanics, you would have to either put with the rather underdeveloped systems currently available (and there aren't many more than those I have described) or make your own. (A note: neither Torg nor Everway is underdeveloped, but Torg is not truly card-based and Everway is, well, different.) Making up a game from scratch is a real hassle, especially if you just want to experiment with some new ideas, and card-based mechanics, while having advantages, are probably more trouble than they are worth.

A good compromise is to use cards as an addition to the basic system. This is the way Torg works. Let the cards give bonuses, to increase the PCs' chances when they decide they want better odds, but allow actions to occur without the playing a card. One way in which this could be done is to make a set of cards describing special bonuses appropriate for whatever game system you prefer. For AD&D, these could range from +1 on an attack roll to automatically making a saving throw.



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Then, whenever a PC does something notably heroic, or a player role-plays exceptionally well, or whatever else you wish to encourage in your game, the player could draw a card. Perhaps the players could start each adventure with a hand of cards drawn from the deck. If you don't want your players to know for certain that they are getting some advantage, leave some of the cards blank, so they never know when the special cards will come up.

This system requires a good GM, one the players feel they can trust, for the game is almost without mechanics.

If designing or modifying a game system does not suit your purposes, it is possible to use an existing system. While designed for its own game world, Torg could be converted for use in a fantasy, space opera, or any other cinematic genre. Since it is designed to handle several different genres, Torg should convert with relative ease. However, it does not have the detail to match a game developed to suit any one particular genre, and some of the mechanics are designed specifically for its own setting, so take care. In theory, the Saga Rules System and Castle Falkenstein are both capable of handling a variety of fantasy games, but both systems need some development in themselves.

The second area in which cards might enhance a role-playing campaign is that of the story. In other words, when a certain card comes up, the plot of the adventure heads in a certain direction. For example, when playing Torg, players may play subplot cards, involving their characters in some personal subplot, and expanding and enhancing the basic storyline. The extra input into the plot of the game can be a great hook to keep the players interested. If you like the idea of a set of cards for spicing up the mechanics of the game, plot-twist cards are easily worked into the deck. Simply make some of the cards affect the plot, rather than give bonuses to game mechanics.

Something to be remembered when attempting this, though, is the fact that adventures will have to be designed to take into account the possibility of card play. During one game of Torg, I searched in vain for an opportunity to use my *romance* card, not realising for

some time that the adventure did not include a single female NPC. (There was the woman-shaped monster which tried to rip my face off, but I don't think it counts.) If you are using a specially designed deck, one way to overcome this problem would be to remove any cards from the deck which are not likely to produce compatible results.

Or perhaps a certain adventure could be designed as a number of events played in random order. As a highly sophisticated example of this, I once ran an adventure based on a game of Tarot. Yes, that's Tarot as in the fortune-telling cards, but the cards were historically used as a game before being used to tell fortunes. The adventure revolved around one PC being forced to play a game for his soul. Being a trick-taking game, each claimant on the soul (there were four, including himself) would play a card to the trick. Each card played indicated a new person, event or circumstance which would expand on the adventure's plot, and the other players would strive to overcome the challenges presented by the cards. While normally the highest card played would win the trick, in this game, the winning of the trick would be determined by the play of the

The use of a fortune-telling deck can be wonderful for handling plot twists.

adventure, thus allowing the other PCs to influence the game even as the game influenced their situation. It made for a very interesting adventure, though it was difficult to run. While this may be a little far out for most games, it is much simpler to have an adventure based around a fortune-teller's reading, or to distribute plot cards to the players and see how they think the game should go. [Lace and Steel suggests that GMs draw two tarot cards and use them as inspiration for an adventure. Ed.]

The use of a fortune-telling deck can be wonderful for handling plot twists. Another good way to incorporate these ideas into a game is to sit a fortune-telling deck on the table and periodically (whenever you as GM think a twist is called for) turn over a new card from the deck and let that card inspire you. Perhaps the Devil comes up—obviously the forces of evil attain some great victory, and come after the PCs with renewed vigour.

Maybe the Two of Cups (indicating love) is flipped, and a PC-NPC romance is sparked. Use whatever the card means to you as the GM.. Everway encourages this sort of play, for every action turns up a card, and perhaps the card means more to the GM than just the resolution of the current action. As an example, in an Everway game I ran, one character attempted to pick a lock on a chest. I turned up a card which indicated betrayal, but didn't see a way to apply it to the actual lock-picking. So I let the character open the chest and reveal rather grisly evidence that the adventure's major villain, the Sorcerer Queen, had been betrayed by her undead minion. This plot twist had not been part of the original adventure, and was completely spur-of-the-moment material, but it worked beautifully.

A warning—when incorporating plot twists not under the control of the GM, you *must* be prepared to improvise. No amount of preparation will prepare you for all possibilities, and sooner or later the players or the cards will throw something completely unexpected your way. If you are unsure about this sort of thing, try using plot cards as a sideline to the main action before attempting to make them a central part of an adventure or campaign.

Possibly the simplest use of cards in a role-playing game is as play aids. This consists of using the artwork on the cards as a visual aid. Find some cards with appropriate artwork, and rather than describing what the players see, show them the card. This is great for NPCs. Good fantasy art can describe a whole personality or set the mood just right. When the players see this person in front of them, they know instantly what they are dealing with, and the image of this person will remain with them for the rest of the campaign.

When using cards this way, make sure everyone gets a good look at the card. Pass it around and let it sit on the table while the character is present. The next time the character is encountered, sit the card on the table and the players will remember the character. Do not hold the picture up in front of your face while playing the character. That just looks silly and muffles your voice. Be careful when choosing artwork for this purpose. Unless you are deliberately running a chauvinistic campaign, avoid the pictures of women in chain-mail bikinis

and the like. Portraiture is great for NPC pictures, because portraits focus attention on the people depicted, and not on what they are doing. Action scenes are best saved for portraying action rather than people. Most importantly, always use appropriate artwork. Don't show players a picture and say, "It looks something like this, but I'm changing a few things." You are better off describing the scene from scratch than doing this.

Pictures of scenes are good for important places. Again, try not to use action scenes. If the castle shown in your picture is currently being assaulted, players may assume that the castle is normally in a state of siege. If you must use an action scene, save it for when the scene should naturally occur in an adventure. No matter how good the picture is, do not force the plot just to show off the picture. If the scene doesn't come about, save the card for another day.

Collectable art cards (cards with pictures) can be bought and used for this purpose. If you keep your eyes open, quite cheap cards can be found. If you have a few friends who are also interested in the cards, it is possible to buy boxes of cards, each providing

about three complete sets of ninety cards and some leftovers for around \$20. Split between a few people, this is much cheaper and more useful than many available role-playing supplements. Art cards are available in a number of genres, including fantasy, science fiction, cyberpunk, conspiracy, superheroes, and more. For the real fans, there are even card sets associated with popular TV shows such as The X-Files, Star Trek and Babylon 5.

Try using plot cards as a sideline to the main action before attempting to make them a central part of an adventure.

Another possibility is to use cards from CCGs. Some of the less popular CCGs can be bought for ridiculously low prices, and the art is quite acceptable in many cases, though the pictures are often smaller because part of the card is filled with game text. Whichever option is taken, however, care must be taken to avoid artwork which cannot be used in your game. Some cards have pictures cut from larger pictures, and these always give

the impression of some important action taking place just out of view. Other pictures will not have the tone you wish to use in your game (cartoonish art in a dark fantasy game, for instance). Try to get a look at some of the cards before buying, if at all possible.

By now, most readers should have started to see some of the possibilities afforded by cards in role-playing games. This article, despite its length, has merely touched on the subject. Like just about everything else in the world around us, cards of various types can be put to good use by a GM, and can help provide fun, exciting games. Maybe cards are not what we are used to in our role-playing games, but I doubt they will kill the hobby, and as the maxim says, "That which does not kill me, makes me stronger."

*[Cards can also be used as props, especially when a card is an important part of the plot. For example, in *Live and Let Die*, an adventure for the James Bond 007 RPG, the PCs will find several Tarot cards, and showing them to the right NPCs will change the way those NPCs react to the PCs. The set comes with copies of the cards the characters will find, so that the players can see what they look like. Ed.]* Ω

Comment

Gary Johnson

I found Travis' article very interesting, and it seemed a thorough introduction to card-based RPGs. However, there are some aspects of card-based gaming that do not seem particularly desirable to me, and I will briefly outline some of my objections in the following paragraphs. Please remember that these are my opinions and my preferences, and I don't believe that other people are obliged to obey my decrees. What I want to do here is point out some of the potential negatives of using cards in gaming.

Firstly, I freely admit that I am one of those gamers who feels limited by Lace and Steel's system of using cards for combat. Indeed, I am not comfortable with any game system that sets out to limit the control I can have over my character's actions. From Travis' descriptions, it appears that many of the card-based games do just this. Why, for instance, do I need to

have a subplot card in my hand before I can suggest to the GM that a particular plot development or twist would be nice? Why can't I aim high if I only have cards that allow attacks below the belt? To put the shoe on the other foot, why do I have to let my player turn an NPC into a personal enemy or a romantic partner? I applaud the way in which some of these games try to encourage improvisation and player involvement in the plotting of an adventure, but I dislike the way the cards limit this involvement at the same time.

An advantage that dice-based mechanics has over card-based mechanics is that the odds of success are much easier to calculate when you use dice. While some of the card-based games have reasonably even probability distributions for each card (Castle Falkenstein, for instance, is the same as a d14, except that you re-roll if the die

comes up 1 and you have a 3 in 4 chance of having to ignore what you roll and count the die as a 1 anyway), holding cards in hand makes it a statistical nightmare to predict what

Relying on random results to direct the course of an adventure can be fun, but it can also be a pain if you want something in particular to happen to your players.

sort of results are possible. This has the effect of making the results of actions much more random, and some of the systems (Torg, for instance) encourage this by the cumulative benefit you gain from playing several cards at once. This randomness takes away my sense of being in control of my character's destiny: what happens to Reginald?

Horace Mellor depends more on what cards are in my hand than on what Reggie actually does and how well he does it.

You could reply that the draw of the cards parallels how lucky or unlucky your character is. Thus, when Reggie fails to pop Herr Schmidt one on the jaw in the name of King and Country, it's not because he's suddenly a bad boxer, but because fate conspired against him. He slipped, or mistimed his punch, or Herr Schmidt ducked. That may be fair, I say, but what if the GM wanted Reggie to knock the dastardly Hun out? Relying on random results to direct the course of an adventure can be fun, but it can also be

a pain if you want something in particular to happen to your players. "Well, I'll play every card in my hand for a total bonus of ... five?" "You hit Schmidt and knock him senseless." "But I would have barely hit a barn on that result!" "Yeah, well ..." (sound of paper being shuffled around)

Some players don't mind blatant GM intervention in the mechanics of a game. However, I prefer it when the semblance of normality is preserved, and the GM fiddles things quietly, so I don't notice or can't tell for sure. A very random system (and it can't be denied that cards are more random than dice) makes it harder for GMs to cover up the incriminating evidence. It

can be difficult enough when you're just dealing with dice: when players can save up cards for better results, stacking the chances against you, or when players just don't have the cards they need, stacking the chances in your favour, obtaining the "right" results can be next to impossible. In my opinion, the GM's judgment is capable of deciding when things should and shouldn't go a PC's way. Building this variation into the way the game mechanics are resolved detracts from the GM's ability to control what is happening and what will happen. At least when the GM decides to fudge the results, there's usually a good reason! Ω

In Reply

Travis Hall

A thorough introduction to card-based RPGs? I sort of thought this was a tiny peek at the idea. Now, a few more pages ...

One way in which card-based game mechanics do not differ from dice-based mechanics is that there are thousands of different ways to use the resolution methods available. Some of those groups will work better for some games, genres, styles, groups, GMs, and individual players than for others. I do not advocate card-based mechanics are a game basis superior to other methods. However, the feel and style of the games are interesting enough that many gamers may like to at least try such games.

Gary asks why he should need a subplot card in his hand before suggesting a particular plot development to the GM. However, I am yet to see the dice-based game rules that state that the player can make any plot suggestion to the GM. The obvious reply is that the rules do not restrict such suggestions in dice-based games. That's right, and the rules do not restrict such suggestions in card-based games either. By all means, suggest plot twists independently of the cards. Torg, the only game I have played with subplot cards, merely introduces an extra means to suggest subplots to both GM and player. These cards may well suggest a subplot that neither the player nor the GM would otherwise have thought of. Some of the most notable episodes I have observed or

participated in during my years of role-playing have come about through random occurrences, often strange die rolls. Why not allow the cards to provide even more opportunities for fun?

Torg goes out of its way to encourage varied action and this makes combat far more interesting.

Of course, sometimes the subplot cards make unsuitable suggestions. If this is the case, they can be ignored. If players draw subplot cards that do not interest them, they don't have to play them. On the other hand, the GM can veto unsuitable subplots. The Torg rules state that the GM may award the

PC a possibility (which is sort of a consolation prize for the player's display of interest) and remove the subplot card to the discard pile, where it will play no further part in the game unless the players manage to cycle through the deck. In no way do these cards limit participation in the game. They merely provide a few extra ideas. Those ideas can be used, thrown away or added to at the discretion of the players and GM.

As for restricting a character's actions, the only game I discussed which did this was Lace and Steel, where you need a *high* card to aim for the head in combat. It could be argued that this is reasonable, since in a real combat situation you rarely have much choice over shot placement, but that

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does not change the fact that some players feel uncomfortable with such restrictions. Everway imposes no restrictions whatsoever, but the others all encourage players to vary their actions, depending on the cards. The strength of the encouragement depends on the game. I did find it a problem in Castle Falkenstein, where having cards of the correct suit is extremely important. In the Saga Rules System and Torg, it is entirely possible to do whatever you like. In fact, Torg goes out of its way to encourage varied actions (principally through the approved actions) and this makes combat far more interesting. Suddenly, characters try to trick or outmanoeuvre enemies instead of just hitting them with the most effective attack available. Even so, if a PC just wants to plug away with whatever his preferred weapon is, he can do so.

Gary seems very worried about the increased randomness introduced by card-based mechanics. In his example, Reggie fails to knock out Herr Schmidt due to the bad cards held by his player. So how about this scenario? "I'll roll my d20 for a bonus of ... two?" "You hit Schmidt and knock him senseless." "But I would barely have hit a barn on that result!" "Yeah, well ..." (sound of paper being shuffled about)

Is that really any better than the card-based version? The problem is not one of card-based mechanics, but one of any system that uses randomisation to produce results which are not entirely predictable. Really, what we are talking about here is not cards versus dice but dramatic versus simulationistic. That is, should the system take into account the desired plotline and outcomes (dramatic) or just accurately model the campaign world (simulationist), and to what extent, since most games will be a shade of grey in between. That is a debate for another day, I feel. However, let it be noted that there are steps that can be taken to reduce the problem, and many of those work in both dice and card-based games. Finally, if you feel extremely strongly about the importance of following a plotline, perhaps Everway is worth another look, as it presents some unusual ideas along those lines.

Gary feels that card-based mechanics are more random than other mechanics. In fact, I can and do deny that cards are more random than dice,

because the play of cards is chosen to at least some extent. However, I believe Gary means that card-based mechanics are more unpredictable than dice-based mechanics. There is a difference between randomness and unpredictability. In some ways, card-based games are more unpredictable than dice-based games, but in other ways they can be more predictable.

In particular, the GM does not have the control over the game that she might have in other game systems, because the cards give a certain amount of control over the game to the players. Thus, the game will be more unpredictable from the GM's point of

the game can be perverted into something other than what the GM intended. On the other hand, if the players do not abuse their power, the extra input from the players can build upon the GM's original ideas, and the game can become much greater than was originally intended. Gaming enjoyment becomes a matter of cooperation.

In a card-based game, the GM will often be better off attempting to understand his players' reactions to the situations presented and to try and predict what they will do. In the Saga Rules System and Castle Falkenstein, the games in which this problem might



Characters try to trick or outmanoeuvre enemies instead of just hitting them with the most effective attack available.

view. However, the players know what cards they hold, and so can see a little of how the game may proceed. Thus, the game becomes more predictable from a player's point of view. This can be either a boon or a bane to a game, depending on the players. If the control given to the players is too great, and the players choose to abuse that power,

arise, the players are much more likely to misjudge the situation and refuse to use their good cards than to lack them in the first place. In Torg and Everway, the mechanics are such that the question does not really arise, while Lace and Steel only uses cards for combat, and it should not be difficult for the GM to fight to lose without ever

making an illegitimate play or the players ever knowing for sure. In fact, in any game in which the GM has the opportunity to play cards, she should be able to play to lose and thus avoid ever having to fiddle at all.

In any game in which the GM has the opportunity to play cards, she should be able to play to lose and thus avoid ever having to fiddle at all.

A far greater problem arises when the players decide they don't like where the GM's plot is going and refuse to be railroaded. The power given to them by the cards can make it quite difficult for the GM to force a plot. Thus, card-based games work best when the GM is willing to allow the game to wander

from a predetermined plotline and the players are allowed some input into where the story takes their characters. The GM should definitely allow for the possibility that good play-for it will be good play that leads to this-will allow the characters to succeed when the GM expects them to fail. However, this is where the greatest advantage of the cards-the increased control given to the players-becomes the greatest disadvantage of the cards. Players must come to understand that their characters' success or failure depends heavily on themselves, and that they must play well for the game to succeed.

Cards will not improve-the-play-of every game or campaign. There are ways in which GM fiddling can be allowed in card-based or card-modified systems, but due to the degree of choice allowed, it is often either not necessary or left up to the players, with their

greater influence over the game than is the case in dice-based games. Of course, players must understand their responsibility to use and use correctly the power given to them. Card-based games do not work particularly well when the players are more interested in hearing a story than playing a role-playing game. Also, they will work better in some games than in others. I would never consider switching my regular AD&D game to a card-based or card-modified system, because they do not encourage the style of play I am attempting to produce in that game. Like anything else, cards must be used correctly to produce a good game. Even so, there are many different ways to use the cards, and they may well be worth considering the next time you want something a little different. Ω

Comment

Gary Johnson

Well, a reply longer than the comments! What's more, a reply that usefully clarified some of my questions about particular card-based game mechanics, and that corrected my poor use of "random" to "unpredictable", a very good substitution. However, there were a few things that struck me as I read Travis' reply, so and I'll mention them here in passing.

From what Travis has written, it seems that subplot cards in Torg are a source of experience points (possibilities) and a prompt for our imaginations. I presume that players who initiate subplots without playing a card also get possibilities for their time and effort (if they don't, it's very unfair), which means the second function is more important than the first. While this is a fair reason to have subplot cards, I can't help but wonder whether a list of suggested subplot categories wouldn't do just as well. After all, if a player wanted to choose one at random, they still could. Still, subplot cards sound interesting.

In the frequently repeated case of Reggie and Herr Schmidt, Travis has missed the point I was trying to make. My complaint was that the GM had less control over the conditions under which the bout of fisticuffs was taking place, a principle that Travis agrees with further on in his reply. If Travis had corrected my use of "random" to "unpredictable" at this point, and not a paragraph later, this confusion would not have arisen. By the way, I agree with Travis that using random number generators like dice and cards to resolve actions leads to results that have to be explained away by special effects. In some systems, a good boxer can never automatically hit an opponent, no matter what the difference in skill between the two of them. When using some RPGs, you have to explain away poor results as accidents, or bad luck, or flukes, or whatever. No problem here.

One thing that Travis does (I presume) inadvertently is create an impression that card-based games are better than dice-based games because the game mechanics encourage players

to describe and carry out complex combat manoeuvres and to interact more with NPCs. This is not true. Champions, for example, also encourages players to "try to trick or outmanoeuvre enemies instead of just hitting them with the most effective attack available." Also, most RPGs tell players that they get more experience points if they role-play well and interact with NPCs. Travis is rightfully emphasising that some card-based games encourage these things, but the way he phrases his sentences implies that he believes all dice-based games don't. It's true that some don't, but many of them do, and it's worth keeping this in mind. The difference between card- and dice-based RPGs is one of game mechanics, not of gaming principles like being involved in what's happening, describing what your character does, and having a fun time.

In conclusion, I fully agree with Travis that card-based games are interesting and worth considering. While they aren't my cup of tea, they could very well be yours. Let us know what you think of them. Ω

Keys of Medokh part two

Peter Fordyce

What follows is a translation of a journal written by an unknown advisor to Borin Silverrock, warlord of Clan Silverrock, a Dwarven tribe. The journal chronicles the second year of the reign of Borin Silverrock, which preceded the start of the Second Chaos War.

Assessment of the First Year

A review of Clan Silverrock had been carried out at the end of Borin Silverrock's first year as warlord. The Clan contained eleven towns, three forts, and four shrines.

Monthly taxes totalled 13464 crowns (the universal unit of currency), and the excess iron and stone mined each month could be sold for some 40000 crowns. Clan Silverrock was self-sufficient in all commodities except corn and wood, but the regular shortfalls in these commodities were being met by trading agreements with our allies in the Queensland Alliance. (It should be noted that the majority of advisors to the various Warlords came from places called Queensland, New South Wales, and Western Australia, and that alliances had formed along these lines.)

In the first year of his reign, Clan Silverrock had all but conquered the Kobolds to the north, and now Borin's attention was turning towards the Halflings to the southwest, whose advisor belonged to the N.S.W. alliance. The Queensland Alliance had local superiority over the foe, and Clan Silverrock had 104000 Dwarven warriors under arms in 345 regiments and 62000 mercenaries in 153 regiments. The time for State of Origin had well and truly arrived.

Year Two, Month One of the Reign of Borin Silverrock

At the start of the month the Warriors of Belchanun (the Halflings we were fighting) spent a large sum of money on bribes to the Independent Humans of the south, trying to sway them against Clan Silverrock. The bribes were largely successful, and 42000 Human mercenaries (104 regiments) left our armies. This was not good. However, our armies were still capable of carrying out punishing raids on the capital of the Dark Warriors of Khar (T13) and on the closest Halfling town (T16).

The tribal Champion, Mort the Serpent, starting exploring a new ruin. There, he found valuables worth 13000 crowns. As usual, Mort's companions died in droves, and another four individuals died this month. Clan Silverrock also obtained a manuscript of knowledge describing advanced leather production techniques from one of our allies.

Year Two, Month Two of the Reign of Borin Silverrock

Under the direct command of Borin Silverrock, the capital of the Dark Warriors of Khar (T13) was captured this month. At the same time, modifications were made to the fortifications of our own capital, allowing us to protect a larger civilian population, and thus converting it from a town to a city. Finally, a new town (T12) and a new fort (F4) were finished this month. As a result of these expansions, the tribe was now so large that it was recognised by all as a kingdom. Borin was crowned as King by priests in the council chambers of the conquered town.

The Clan contracted four Human Assassins (all capable of helping a Champion explore ruins) on the open market run by the Malakai. [The Malakai are an ancient race that manage a trading network spread across the world. They trade in common commodities like iron and corn, in precious gems, in manuscripts of knowledge, and in maps. If you want to ship things from your tribe to another, they will transport most things, for a price of course. You can also advertise for individuals with particular skills or abilities through them. Like any economy, the price of commodities or the amount of wages set by an individual's contract depends on current market conditions (i.e. supply and demand).]

Flanx, the Andaluziak Ranger, once again complained that its wages were too low! [Andaluziaks are powerful magical beings who will work for tribes in exchange for gems.] Borin decided to increase Flanx's wages by 50%.

A few skirmishes occurred between our forces and the remaining armies of the Dark Warriors of Khar. Elsewhere, a force of Dwarven warriors and Drow mercenaries (8000 in all) were decimated by the Human mercenaries who had left our employ last month. Borin vowed that, no matter what it might take, he would eventually destroy the Human city that had provided the mercenaries in the first place.

Year Two, Month Three of the Reign of Borin Silverrock

A representative of the Malakai's Guild of Merchants visited our capital, offering 8800 crowns (the equivalent of roughly half our monthly taxation revenue) to help increase the Clan's wood production in exchange for a favour in the future. We already owed the Malakai two favours, but decided to accept the money anyway.

We transferred some money to another tribe in the Queensland Alliance so that they could carry out expensive research that would benefit the entire Alliance.

An unexpected disaster occurred this month, as Mort the Serpent met an unfortunate end in his Champion's League bout. Every month, the Malakai run a Champion's League, where pairs of tribal champions fight each other. Borin didn't pay much attention to these fights because he thought they were a waste of time. Usually, nobody is permanently injured, but this month three Champions died, including Mort. Without a Champion, nobody could explore more ruins. As a result, Borin left strict instructions that future Champions were not to get themselves killed.

Our surveyor found two more gem deposits, one of which was ideally placed for a productive mine. Despite the prospect of more gems, Flanx left, claiming that the offered wage rise was inadequate. However, we can make do without the ungrateful bastard anyway! ... Honest.

As part of our Alliance's plan to cripple the Warrior of Belchanun's economy, our forces raided another Halfling town (T15).

Year Two, Month Four of the Reign of Borin Silverrock

We sent 60000 crowns to the Independent Humans to try and persuade them to turn against the Halflings. The tribe was mostly unsuccessful.

It was obvious that by the end of the month the Halflings would lay siege to one of our towns (T6). Borin ordered the civilians to help increase the size of the fortifications there, and also called up the Home Guard to supplement the regular army. He also called off a second raid on the Halfling town (T15) because there was a neutral army nearby. However, the garrison formed into a field army for some reason and came out to fight. Half of the 4000 Halflings were killed by the axes of the raiding party, and the other half were killed by the reinforcements sent to help the raiders.

Year Two, Month Five of the Reign of Borin Silverrock

Finally, a good month. We captured a town (T14) off another Halfling tribe, this one in the north. These Halflings were already down to a few towns. Also, their town had been built where I wanted to build one.

One of our forts (F4) was converted into a gem mine. We started extracting 24 gems a month there.

About 100000 Minotaurs (257 regiments!) were hired as mercenaries for the war against the Warriors of Belchanun. We heard that the Human mercenaries had been hired by the Halflings, so these Minotaurs would be a welcome addition to our armed forces. Our allies had started asking for more help against the Halflings.

Year Two, Month Six of the Reign of Borin Silverrock

We hired three Loremasters (the least experienced of magic users) and four surveyors this month. The plan was to have three of the surveyors search for gem deposits while the fourth started training in our city. [Cities are large enough to attract Guild Training Halls, where individuals can train and improve their skills.] Likewise, two of the Loremasters were to protect two regiments of soldiers from spirits and other evil creatures as the troops explored a ruin, while the third was to start training. Hopefully, in the future we would have some fireballs in our battles!

Our armies captured the Halfling town to the west (T15). Our Minotaur mercenaries relieved the siege of our town (T6), plowing into the rear of the Halfling army besieging it, killing over 25000 Human mercenaries. Borin was heard to say, "This is like being paid to drink ale."

Year Two, Month Seven of the Reign of Borin Silverrock

We opened a second gem mine (F5) this month, and started finding 58 gems a month.

Borin decided that we needed to extend and improve our maps, assuming that at some time in the future he would need to dispatch forces to places far away from the Kingdom. Wanting to be prepared, he gave orders that set the cartographers in motion.

This month, the Lesser Gods began to consider who should be their High Priests. In order to ensure that Clan Silverrock were pious, and that they were seen to be pious by Dunhaladeen, the God of the Dwarves, Borin had money spent on religious festivities. [High Priests are chosen from very pious tribes with large shrines full of Blood Guard. Blood Guard are warrior-priests trained from birth to fight the forces of Chaos.]

Year Two, Month Eight of the Reign of Borin Silverrock

Another representative from the Guild of Merchants came to the capital, offering 10300 crowns in exchange for a favour. While the monthly taxation revenues had now reached 28690 crowns, the sum we were being offered was still substantial. At this stage, owing another favour to the Malakai couldn't hurt, and we took the money.

The Minotaur mercenary army tried to move to a Halfling town (T16), but ran into small Halfling armies along the way and stopped to fight. It started to look as if our armies might have to clear the entire area, league by league, before we could reach the towns of the Warriors of Belchanun.

The silly Champion went and died fighting in the Champions League again. Borin started wondering how intelligent Champions were in general. He made a bet with his advisors that if someone was silly enough to volunteer to

be the next Champion, the new Champion wouldn't be smart enough to count his wages.

Year Two, Month Nine of the Reign of Borin Silverrock

We spent 100000 crowns this month upgrading several of our commodity-producing techniques to the cutting edge of Dwarven research. [First you have to pay to research the technological advance, then you have to pay to apply what you have learnt.]

As a gift of friendship, we gave a large quantity of leather to the Independent Humans. The gift worked, because they now considered us their allies. Borin's secret plan was to buy off the Humans until the Halflings were conquered, and then come back for the Humans. Not all of Clan Silverrock's Elders agreed with Borin's gift, arguing that we should be hostile to the Humans for their past offences against us.

It seemed, from the actions of the Halfling forces, that their advisor had left for safer lands. Without an advisor, the Halflings would be predictable [i.e. follow default orders]. They had been reduced to three towns, and had approximately 100 regiments left in the field. Their Human mercenaries had been bribed to leave their current employers (later, they would be hired by one of our allies). By comparison, allied forces in the region numbered about 530 regiments.

Year Two, Month Ten of the Reign of Borin Silverrock

A member of Clan Silverrock was chosen as High Priest of Dundhaladeen this month, substantially increasing our power and prestige.

Our Minotaurs captured another Halfling town (T16). Since our allies were besieging the Halfling capital, this left only one Halfling town to take care of. The rest of the Queensland Alliance had agreed that we would get the last town, because we needed to increase our wood production, and the region was ideally suited for that task.

To facilitate troop movements within the Halflings' territory, Borin organised a formal declaration of alliance between the tribes attacking the Halflings. This allowed the allied tribes to fight together if attacked, to move through the same places at the same time, and to not worry about accidentally attacking each other. To make sure that our peoples wouldn't oppose this alliance, we made sure to give a large amount of various commodities to each other, convincing the masses that we were friendly trading partners.

Year Two, Month Eleven of the Reign of Borin Silverrock

Huge sums of money were spent this month. A total of 330000 crowns were used to upgrade production techniques, while 150000 crowns were spent on obtaining new equipment for an army of 40 regiments.

To pay for all this, 36000 units of iron were sold, netting Clan Silverrock 540000 crowns. By now, Borin was selling

commodities in bulk only, and not worrying about monthly sales.

Someone has spent a fortune buying contracts for Dwarven spies and assassins. This has sent the reserve price for their contracts through the roof (72000 for a spy, 100000 for an assassin). Clan Silverrock's spies and assassins heard about these rich employment contracts and demanded that their wages be increased or they would leave. Borin said to let them go, as he wasn't going to pay those sort of wages. We started wondering if this was some type of economic warfare, and if it was directed at us.

By now, all of the High Priests of the Lesser Gods had been chosen. The Blood Guard now asked that the Lesser High Priests choose one of themselves to rule over the rest. Of the six High Priests, three belonged to tribes in the N.S.W. Alliance, two to our alliance, and one to the W.A. Alliance. It was the last one that we sought to have elected to the highest office.

Year Two, Month Twelve of the Reign of Borin Silverrock

Unfortunately, our efforts were in vain, as a High Priest from the N.S.W. Alliance won the election.

We continued to spend and spend. This month, another 130000 crowns were spent to continue the production upgrades.

The commander of the local Malakai trading post had been passing the occasional confidential report to us in the past. To ensure that such reports would continue to be forthcoming, a gift of 9000 crowns worth of iron was made to the commander.

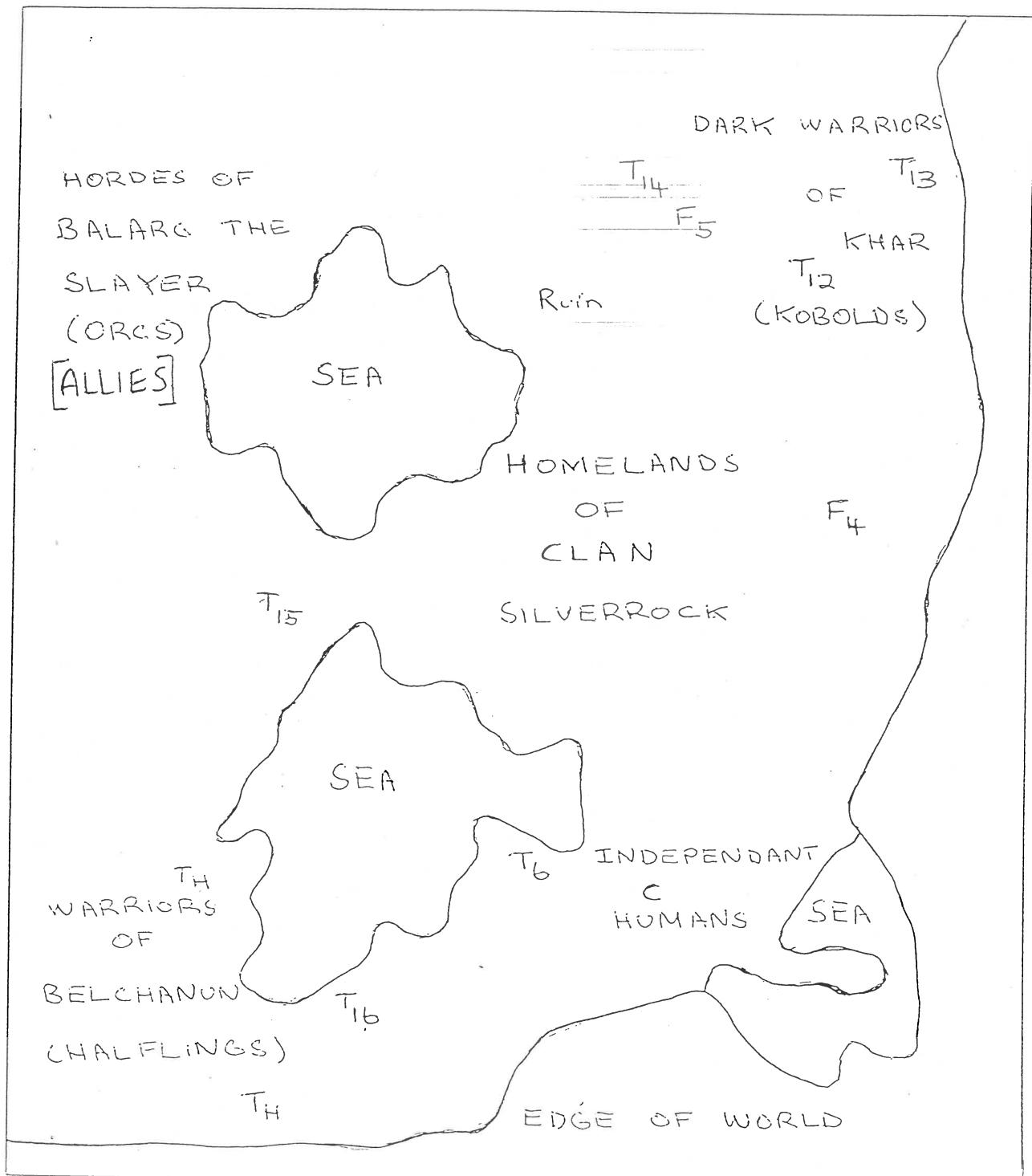
Clan Silverrock was now the most powerful Dwarven tribe in the land. We were recognised by all as being the unofficial Overlord of the Dwarven Race.

Assessment of the Second Year

Throughout the year, Clan Silverrock raised troops every month. By the end of the second year of Borin's reign, there were 230000 Dwarven warriors in 767 regiments, as well as 100000 mercenaries in 257 regiments.

Urbanisation and settlement had continued according to plan. We now had five cities and eleven towns, as well as two gem mines, seven forts, and five shrines. The tax base had more than tripled to 45600 crowns per month, but more importantly, we were selling 350000 crowns worth of iron every month. The mines were now providing 792 gems a month. Our production had improved so that we were now producing a surplus in every commodity except stone, which we were using to fortify and expand our settlements. We were stockpiling our surplus in preparation for the coming Chaos Winter, when the undead hordes of evil will return to try and overwhelm everything.

The Kobolds of the north-east had been completely wiped out, and the Halflings to the south-west had been reduced to one town. The only military operations Borin was planning for the next year were to mop up the remaining Halfling forces and to capture the Independent Human city in the south-east. Otherwise, he intended to stay at peace so that the Kingdom could prepare for the imminent war against Chaos. Ω



The Homelands of Clan Silverrock
and Surrounding Areas

The Battle of Jutland

Peter Mackay

Several years ago my wife, a doctor, accepted a commission in the Royal Australian Navy and was sent off to HMAS Creswell for a training course, the Short Service Officer Course, known throughout the service as the Short Socks. This was a motley bunch of doctors, nurses, dentists, chaplains and other scoundrels (i.e. lawyers) learning the rudiments of drill, mess etiquette and basic naval traditions in the space of nine weeks.

I was left behind with the offspring and we visited her every couple of weeks. Towards the end of the course she handed me a list of essay topics and asked me to write one for her, having a greater love of the navy than she. (I might point out that high standards were not expected of the students—one-chap copied his history of the navy out of a recruiting brochure and received a commendation.) So there I was, faced with an open field and a wife who knew nothing of naval history. I ask you, what else could I do but submit the following?

Examine the Battle of Jutland. What conclusions can be drawn?

Jutland is a small island in the South Indian Ocean where, in the autumn of 1932, one of the most significant modern battlefleet actions was fought between the fleets of Italy and Japan.

Jutland, so named for its central peak which is oddly (almost obscenely) shaped, was settled by the French late in the Nineteenth Century, at a time when Greece and other minor European powers were snapping up the last few colonial tidbits. The population is remarkably chauvinistic and contributed an annual brigade to the French cause during the First World War. The island, at the time of the battle, was beginning to recover from a severe manpower shortage and was a popular stop for cruise liners.

At the time of the Vienna Crisis, it became necessary for the contributing nations to make a show of extending their various spheres of influence in order to strengthen their hands at the later conference and hopefully derive a position of power from the treaty to be signed thereafter.

Accordingly Italy sent forth a “flag-showing” squadron of four modern battleships and an aircraft carrier to visit far-flung European colonies, in blatant imitation of the United States’ “Great White Fleet” of several years before. As they approached Jutland, where a ball and open day were scheduled, lookouts reported a number of ships approaching from the east.

This was the Japanese Fifth Battle Squadron, consisting of two battleships, an escorting destroyer or two and a number of support vessels. The Japanese, busily scouting out anchorages, facilities and targets for the

“Greater Co-Prosperity Sphere”, had selected Jutland as a recreation port to mark the end of a week of exercises.

As the two fleets identified each other, there was a flurry of activity on the bridges of the Japanese and Italian flagships.

The two nations, nominally allies at the end of the First World War, were now nominal enemies through the interplay of shifting alliances and the League of Nations’ stance on the Ethiopian Intervention. Normally this state of affairs was of little consequence, as the two countries had no direct contact. What little trade there was continued through intermediaries, if the paper conflict was observed at all. However, encountering a well-armed enemy fleet could not be shrugged aside. Long-range radio communication with superiors being unavailable at that time, the two admirals fell back on their standing orders, which dictated the speedy engagement of hostile forces.

The Japanese Admiral Harpoon, quickly taking note of the disparity in force, decided not to anchor and instead altered course to pass behind the island, hoping to escape once out of sight of the Italian fleet. However, while the speedy modern warships were able to interpose the bulk of Jutland, the oilers and support vessels trailed behind and attracted the attention of the Italians.

The Italian flagship, Spatlaese, led the Grappa, Crouchen, and Eagle in line-ahead pursuit around the curve of the island, with their minor vessels following.

Jutland, being but a small island, was not ideally suited to the intended

Japanese plan, and as the two fleets circled the central peak, the respective flagships almost simultaneously sighted the slowest of the enemy ships, bringing up the rear of the battle-lines. A strange situation now ensued with, in each case, a fast modern battleship out of sight of all opposition except for a slow, unarmoured, and essentially unarmed fleet auxiliary.

The first shots of the Battle of Jutland were fired in defiance by the Italian oiler Chianti Napoli. At the extreme range of the 3 inch stern gun, the Italians opened fire on the huge grey super-dreadnought bearing down on them. There was no doubt as to the outcome, once the Kirin returned fire with a salvo of ten 13.5 inch armour-piercing shells. The sound of heavy naval gunfire boomed across the water, sounding the death-knell of the tanker, which veered out of line and slowed to lie dead in the water, a helpless target for the succeeding Japanese battleships.

On the other side of the island, the Italian van then opened fire on the elderly Japanese freighter Saki Maru, which promptly burst into flames and exploded.

Over the next two hours the two fleets circled the island at their best speeds, chewing up their slower and crippled opponents as they fell behind. The tankers and storeships were the first to go, followed in good time by the slower and older battleships. The ex-RN light carrier Eagle, attempting to cut a corner, ran straight up onto a reef and was pounded by the Japanese each time they passed. To this day the shoal is known as Eagle Rock and the rusting remains shelter rich reserves of lobsters.

A brave attempt by the Japanese destroyer Konga to overtake the Italians failed when the enemy cruiser Crouchen, lagging behind with a ruptured boiler, demolished the lighter ship with two torpedoes, only to be picked off in her turn by the oncoming Akaga.

Eventually, as ship after ship fell out of line, the contest became a test of speed between the modern battleships, each striving to outpace the others. By 17:34 the only ships remaining battleworthy were the two flagships, Kirin and Spatlaese, each of which had vanquished a succession of lesser opponents.

With all but the opposing flagships out of action, the result of the battle hinged upon the skill of the gunnery teams. As the Kirin and Spatlaese settled down to a one-on-one gunnery duel, the importance of quick teamwork and accurate spotting became critical. On the Italian ship, the Fire Observation Officer (FOO), from his post high on the foremast, observed the fall of shot and passed control orders to his spotting-top crew, who calculated individual turret bearings and elevations. The Italian FOO, Commander Pico, was about to achieve

his destiny in an act which would make him the object of naval comment throughout the world.

Pico, hitherto a man of indifferent skills, gave the order for rapid salvo fire on the Japanese ship. Observing that the first salvo fell short, he increased the gun range, seeking a "straddle", a combination of under and over shots guaranteed to cause a high percentage of target hits. As the officer with the best observation, Pico was also tasked with the job of reporting enemy fire and estimating the point of impact so that appropriate avoiding actions could be taken if possible. As the splashes of the Italian salvo subsided, the Japanese guns blinked once as they sent ten heavy shells flying towards the Spatlaese.

Commander Pico, catching sight of the shells of the salvo as they reached the apex of their trajectory, calculated that they would land directly on his position on the Spatlaese, and promptly voided himself. A second or so later most of the shells passed through the ship's masts and exploded harmlessly in the sea beyond. One shell impacted the spotting-top mainstay and exploded after the armour-piercing fuse's six-second delay. Luckily the shrapnel caused only minor casualties, but the blast from the mid-air explosion stripped away cloth and other loose objects from exposed positions around the upper works. The huge battle ensign, the Admiral's last signal hoist, and the spotting team's uniforms were shredded by the shock. The FOO's faeces rained down upon the bridge, speckling the immaculate Italian uniforms of the officers.

Admiral Martini, his navigating officer and their aides and assistants promptly hurried below to change their uniforms and renew the battle in clean linen. Though these officers were largely killed when a 13.5 inch shell from the next salvo exploded in the ward room, the

dazed but vengeful Commander Pico maintained his post and directed the flagship's fire with almost inspired brilliance. Salvo after salvo rained down upon the hapless Japanese Kirin, silencing the remaining gun turrets and starting a fire in the superstructure.

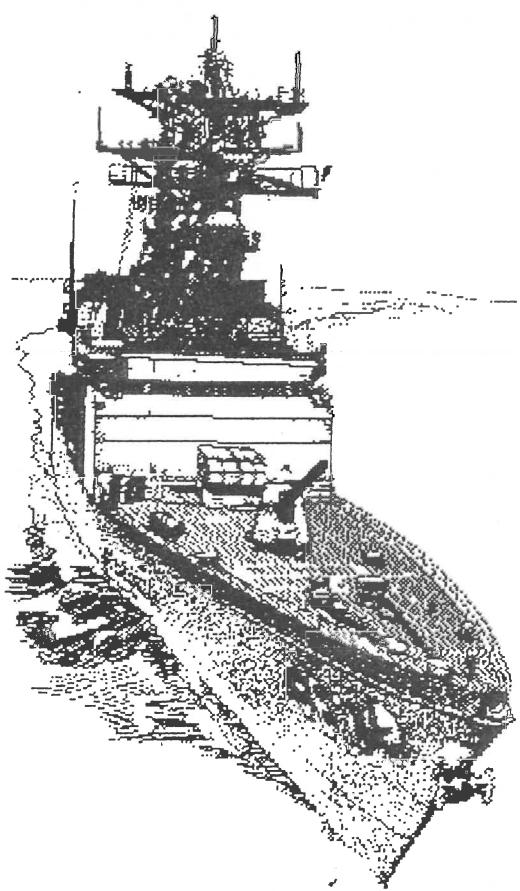
Admiral Harpoon wisely ordered his flag captain to break off the action on receiving damage control reports. As Jutland sank below the horizon in the gathering darkness, he set a course for the neutral port of Honolulu in the Pacific, where he, his ship and his crew were interned for the duration of the conflict.

Though the Italian fleet had been severely mauled, indeed decimated, they retained possession of the battlefield and the resulting newspaper reports enabled the Italian government to press for reduced ceramic imposts at the conference. Though this trade treaty was set aside during the Second World War, and remains in abeyance to this day, the episode was seen as a diplomatic coup throughout Europe.

The most significant lessons learnt from the Battle of Jutland were important in the great clash of arms only seven years later, though thankfully for the security of the Free World, neither Japan nor Italy followed up these conclusions, preferring to follow more orthodox and conservative methods of warfare. Oddly enough, this is a common characteristic of latter-day conflict, where the veterans of past wars, usually risen to command ranks such as Admiral or General, will endeavour to refight their previous battles, ignoring the vital lessons of the opening actions. Here is a case where the more flexible doctrine will often prevail at the expense of superior force or moral superiority.

One of the most important conclusions, therefore, is that senior officers may be safely ignored unless they possess recent battle experience. In fact, there is a good case for the policy of eliminating all officers over the age of forty on the declaration of war and immediately (so as to gain from maximisation of training time) "bumping up" all junior officers two notches in the rank structure.

Less vital conclusions are threefold: (i) selection of leave ports may affect the destiny of nations; (ii) a stern chase is not necessarily the longest chase; (iii) when the FOO shits, wear it. Ω



Weally Wild Wages, er Mages

Simon Gallimore

The Wild Mage (from Tome of Magic) originally appeared in the Realms shortly after the Time of Troubles and since then wild magic has spread to many different worlds. Since that time many new wild magic spells have appeared and some of these (but not all) are presented below.

Please note that all of the following spells belong to the school of wild magic and as such can only be used by wild mages as described in the Tome of Magic.

Willy's More Surges

(Alteration)

Level: 1
Range: 0
Components: V, S
Duration: 12 hours
Casting Time: 1 turn
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

This spell increases the caster's chance of getting a wild surge on the level variation's table by +5%. After checking for any level variation, the caster should roll percentile dice to see if there is a wild surge. There is a base 5% chance of a wild surge modified by +5% for every Willy's More Surges affecting the caster at that time.

Willy's Double Surge

(Evocation)

Level: 2
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: The caster
Saving Throw: None

Whenever the caster gets a wild surge after rolling on the level variation's table, two wild surges result instead of one. The caster rolls twice on the wild surge table and both effects occur. For example, if a wild mage casts a magic missile and gets a wild surge, they would roll twice on the wild surge table. This might result in the target falling in love with the caster and the caster falling in love with the target. If this spell is used with Hornung's Surge Selector then the caster rolls three times on the wild surge table and chooses two of the effects. Willy's Double Surge lasts for twelve hours or until one surge for every three levels of the caster has been affected.

The material component is a piece of wood that has been struck by lightning at least twice, which is consumed in the

casting. Persistent rumours of a fourth level variant, Willy's Triple Surge, has not been reliably confirmed, and even Willy admits that a Willy's Quadruple Surge would be "a little too silly."

Willy's Even More Surges

(Alteration)

Level: 3
Range: 0
Components: V, S
Duration: 24 hours
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: The caster
Saving Throw: None
This spell increases the caster's chance of a wild surge by +10% for every Willy's Even More Surges that is affecting the caster. This spell is cumulative with Willy's More Surges.

Teleport Who Knows Where

(Alteration)

Level: 4
Range: 0
Components: V
Duration: Instantaneous
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: The caster
Saving Throw: None

This spell teleports the caster in a random direction for a random distance. The direction is determined by a d8 roll (1=north, 2=north-east, 3=east, etc) and the distance is 10d100 miles. The caster will always arrive in an open space (no chance of arriving high or low) but may arrive in the middle of an ocean or volcano. Obviously some risk is involved.

Willy's Random Polymorph

(Alteration)

Level: 5
Range: 100 yards
Components: V, S
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: 1 creature
Saving Throw: Neg

This spell is a curse that randomly polymorphs the unfortunate victim into another form at the beginning (dawn) of every day. The victim is initially allowed a save versus polymorph to completely avoid the effects; if the save is failed then the victim will polymorph into another form at the beginning of every day until the magic is removed by a dispel magic, remove curse, limited wish or wish. No abilities of the new form are gained and the victim can still speak (if the form allows speaking) and retains all knowledge and abilities. No system shock roll is needed.

The wizard's reincarnation table is used to determine the race the victim assumes at the start of each day.

Summon Outer Planar

Visitor

(Conjuration/Summoning)

Level: 6
Range: 50 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

This spell randomly grabs a creature from one of the outer planes, specified by the caster, and causes it to appear at a point within 50 yards of the caster. The creature is not in any way under the control of the caster and has no idea who summoned it. The creature can take any actions it likes, but is unlikely to be happy at being summoned. The creature is automatically returned to its home plane after one turn.

The material component is a piece of hair from a psionicist whose primary discipline is psychoportation.

Stormy Weather

(Conjuration/Summoning)

Level: 7

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 3d4 hours

Casting Time: 1 turn

Area of Effect: 4d4 square miles

Saving Throw: None

This spell causes a heavy storm complete with: thunder, lightning, rain and a moderate wind to appear in the area of effect d10 rounds after the spell is cast. After the storm has passed, the weather then returns to what it was before the spell took effect.

The material component is a butterfly that is kept in a container until the spell is cast at which point it is released. Ω

The (in)famous Willy is one of the few wild archmages and inventor of many of the spells presented above. Spells in *italics* can be found in *Tome of Magic*, while spells in **bold can be found in this article. All other spells are in the *Player's Handbook*.**

Willy the Wild Mage

20th Level Male Human Wild Mage

STR: 9

DEX: 13

CON: 16

INT: 18

WIS: 8

CHA: 11

Armour Class: 10

Hit Points: 54

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

Languages: Common, Undercommon, Elvish, Faerie Dragon, Sprite.

Age: 39

Height: 6'1"

Weight: 178 lbs

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, staff, darts, sling.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Read/Write (Common, Elvish), Riding (land based), Spellcraft, Religion, Herbalism.

Magic Items: None (see below).

Spells: Cantrip, 5 *Nahal's Reckless Dweomer*, Continual Light, ESP, 2 *Hornung's Baneful Deflector*, Magic Mouth, **Willy's Double Surge**; *Alternative Reality*, Dispel Magic, Fly, Suggestion, 2 **Willy's Even More Surges**; 2

Evard's Black Tentacles, **Teleport Who Knows Where**, 2 *There/Not There*, *Unluck*, Advanced Illusion,

Chaos, 2 Conjure Elemental, **Willy's Random Polymorph**, Wall of Iron;

Chain Lightning, Geas, **Summon Outer Planar Visitor**,

Reincarnation, *Wildshield*; *Hornung's Surge Selector*, **Stormy Weather**, 2

Teleport Without Error; 2 *Hornung's Random Dispatcher*, *Wildzone*;

Mordenkain's Disjunction, Wish, Wildfire.

Chain Contingency: Triggered by Willy saying "I'm bored". Triggers off 3 *Nahal's Reckless Dweomer's*.

Contingency: Triggered by Willy saying "I'm really bored". Triggers off a **Teleport Who Know Where**.

Willy casts the following spells at the beginning of each day: Cantrip,

Willy's Double Surge, 2 **Willy's Even More Surges** and *Hornung's Surge Selector*.

Willy has rather pale skin with long white hair and a long white beard. He usually wears a splotched white robe that is always badly in need of a wash (so is he for that matter).

Although his adventuring days are mostly over, he does wander around looking for an interesting time and some fun companions. He will try anything once as long as it promises to be fun and exciting. If things don't turn out as exciting as promised, he has been known to conjure up elementals and then forget to concentrate on them. He also tends to use Wall of Iron and Chain Lightning in combat without regard to who else is in the way (if they die they can be reincarnated anyway). Willy has also been known to leave Evard's Black Tentacles lying around.

Willy is, however totally convinced that magic items are going to take over the world (he used to believe that trees were in league with the magic items until a friendly ape priest using a speak with plants spell managed to convince him that the trees were actually on his side). He will therefore destroy magic items whenever possible and will try to persuade others to destroy their magic items (using Geas and Suggestion if necessary). Apart from that Willy is mostly sane. Ω

