

News From Bree

Middle Earth PBCD Newsletter - Issue 14, May '02

"Strange as News
from Bree..."

The Lord of the Rings, chapter 9

A Beginner's Guide

Parts 1 & 2 of an in-depth guide to MEPBM ...

by Jeffrey Dobberpuhl (with additional material by Colin Forbes)

Talk at the
Prancing
Pony...

page 1

"A Beginner's Guide"

page 2

New Games

page 3

"Fourth Age Nation
Set-ups"

Silver Screen

page 4

Hall of Fame
Who's Who

page 5

Bree Artwork
Credit Card payments

page 6

Riddle Competition results
Hall of Fame
Shelob's Web

page 7

"A Major Tolkien
Venture?"
Which SNA?

page 8

"The Fellowship Diaries:
part 1"

page 9

"The Mantle of Doriath"
From Out of the West
Stand-by positions
Face to face Games

page 10

'Flagship' Prize Quiz
(advert)

PART I - What is Middle Earth Play By Mail?

'In a hole in the ground, there lived a hobbit...' - *The Hobbit*

Middle Earth Play By Mail (MEPBM) is a complex game inspired by the works of J R R Tolkien, specifically *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. It was created by Game Systems Inc (GSI) and is currently moderated by MEPBM Games.

Although on the surface, MEPBM is merely a strategy game, there is more to it than that, including: character development, nation management, economics, diplomacy, and warfare. MEPBM has variants, set in either the year 1650, 2950 (War of the Ring) or the Fourth Age. There is also a 'mini-module' called Battle of the Five Armies. This discussion will focus on 1650 and 2950 games.

Each player represents one nation or political faction in Middle Earth. These players' nations interact with the game environment and rules solely through a number of characters, issuing two orders to each character per turn (such as 'March your army to Minas Tirith' or 'Talk to Smaug the dragon'). The characters' success in carrying out the orders,

combined with random events and the actions of the other 24 players, determines a player's ultimate success. The strategy comes into play by manoeuvring armies, assassins, wizards and heroes across the realm of Middle Earth.

However, a closer analysis reveals that MEPBM is as much a game of economics as it is of strategy. The successful player will often be the player who can accomplish the most with the fewest orders. For example, if two players each have eight characters, each player then has sixteen orders to issue per turn. The player who manages to accomplish the most with those sixteen orders will

be in much better standing in the game. Further, the game requires management of the resources of each player's nation. A nation can actually go bankrupt, and be run out of the game by lack of funds! Depending on how you manage your resources, the costs and sales prices of production (such as timber, food or steel) will fluctuate from turn to turn.

How it all works

At the start of the game, each player receives eight characters, representing heroes of that player's nation. By giving each hero up to two orders per turn, you manage and control your nation.

Each order has a varying chance of success. This chance is based upon, among other things, how talented a character is at doing the sort of action ordered, how difficult the order is to carry out, environmental factors (such as enemy actions and the economy) and of course, random chance. Even the simplest of orders can fail!

Obviously, the more characters you control, the more you can accomplish. How efficiently you use the available orders will directly increase the odds of successfully managing your nation. Therefore, it is very important that you write out your orders, review and revise your orders, and then re-read your orders before sending them in. It is not unusual for

such a review to reveal errors or better ways of achieving the desired goal.

All orders must reach MEPBM Games the day before the turn is run. This gives the moderator time to look through and spot any obvious errors - if he finds an error he will contact you, but only if the orders are received on time! If you fail to get your orders in on time, your turn will be 'Special Serviced'. A Special Service turn means that a predetermined set of orders is implemented, based upon the character's highest Skill rank. All characters will issue the order Refuse Personal Challenge, while Commanders will Recon, Agents will Scout Hex, Emissaries will Uncover Secrets and Mages



new games

Waiting List: When I get all 25 (or 24 for Gunboat) nations into the game I will allocate you your choice of nation from the list of nations that you have sent me - please send multiple nation choices. Upto 2 nation game: You can play one or two Aligned nations, or one Neutral nation.

Battle of the Five Armies (Bofa) [Game 4]

2week turnaround
Needs one more FP
[Game 4]

2week turnaround
Veteran or Beginners game - (Vet: ALL 1650 orders available): All nations available.

1650

[Game 134]
1week turnaround
Waiting List, Upto 2 nation game.
9 nations taken.
[Game 32]
2 week turnaround
Needs 5, 24 and one of 12,15 or 17 (very close to being filled).

Last Alliance

[Game 145]
Send me a list of 5 nations. Upto 2 nation game. Ask for details. 21 nations taken so far. Waiting List. **Four more players wanted!**

2950

[Game 234]
2 week turnaround
Has a DS available (then it's ready - list needed).

[Game 235]

2 week turnaround
Email game. Waiting List. 6 Nations taken.

1000

[Game 147]
2 week turnaround
We have 2 Any nations, taken so far.

Note please ask for variant games we can try to get you opposition for them if you are interested - mostly Grudge teams though - if I get 10 players for any single type of game then I will put it up for general availability below and push it.

Grudge Games we need opposition for:

1650: 1 World Championship team, Tommy (2wk), Mike B (1wk), GM team (12 players), Ulrik (12 players)
2950: None / GM team (12 players)
1000: Mark Seward
WoTR: None
Last Alliance: None

will attempt to Find Artifacts. Obviously, a Special Serviced turn is less than desirable.

Winning the game

There are two types of 'wins' in MEPBM.

First (and most importantly), there is a team win. This means that either good has defeated evil (no Dark Servant players remain in the game) or evil has vanquished good (no Free Peoples players remain in the game), or one of the two sides has successfully thrown the One Ring into Mount Doom - or alternatively given it to Sauron! Note that a Neutral player cannot win.

Secondly, there is an individual winner on any given team. You receive victory points based on how powerful your nation is compared to all the other nations. Victory points are *not* calculated on how successful a nation is in combat, how many enemies it has vanquished or how many enemy characters it has killed. The specific list of comparable victory conditions is Population Centers, Armies, Characters and Wealth. You will receive between 100 and 500 points for each of these categories. Additionally, each nation receives five Victory Conditions at the game start. These never change. Each condition successfully obtained, and maintained, by the end of the game adds 100 points to the nation's victory point total.

While you should not lose sight of the big picture (after all, it does no good to satisfy all five victory conditions if your team has lost the game), the victory conditions can provide a solid template for how to proceed on a turn by turn basis. For example, if a nation receives the condition 'Hold a population center named xxxx-ville at location abcd', then it may make some sense to plan on getting that population center in the grand scheme of things. That said, team play should always come first! Finally, if your nation manages to dispose of the One Ring, you will receive an additional 200 points.

Once the game is won, MEPBM Games will inform the players of various statistics that were achieved during the game. These statistics include most character kills, highest rank (for each skill) and highest challenge rank.

PART II - The Opening Moves

'...we who sit here, and none others, must now find counsel for the peril of the world' - Lord of the Rings, I

MEPBM is a team game. You must co-operate if victory is to be yours! While there is nothing to stop you pursuing your own individual goals and strategies, if your team does not unify against the enemy, it is more than probable that you will end up on the losing side. As a member of a team, you need

to contribute what you can: armies, characters, plans, resources. If the members of a team are willing to work with each other, their odds of victory will increase dramatically.

The first thing your team needs to do, upon getting the start up sheets, is to establish a method of easily contacting all the other players. The easiest and least expensive method is email. It is not uncommon for players to establish a special email account just for receiving MEPBM messages. Sometimes this can produce heavy email traffic: a prolific team can easily generate fifty messages a day! Another alternative is a community website where you can upload your turns for the rest of the team to review. More public, but important for players who have joined on their own, are the various messages boards (such as the one run at www.middleearthgames.com). Of course, there is always the phone or good old letter-writing! As a last resort, you can send notes through the game via Harlequin. Ideally these should be via email or on 3x5 cards - you'll usually only use these in a game you have joined as a Neutral. Speaking of Neutrals, if you are in a game where the five Neutral nations are not pre-aligned (Harlequin run both sorts of games) then it is vitally important to send a friendly message to all of the Neutrals! You start with a team of ten playing against another team of ten. There are five Neutral nations who can aid or thwart your plans for world domination - neglect them at your peril.

Forming a strategy

Strategic planning establishes your goals and is critical to the success of any team of players. Economics, military targets, intelligence gathering and espionage all need to be discussed by your team and agreed upon as soon as possible. Coordination by the players on achieving these goals and implementing the strategy, will increase the results and enjoyability for them all. Most campaigns have a beginning, a middle, and an end. The strategy set forth at the beginning will determine what stratagems are available during the rest of the war. Players of Pool will be familiar with the concept of a 'leave', in which you are less concerned with the shot you are taking, than with what the table will look like after the shot is complete. This is the mentality a team must take towards forming the initial strategy. You will find strategy discussions are much aided by referring to an up-to-date map. There are various utilities freely available via the Middle Earth websites which will allow you to keep track of the changing situation in Middle Earth. Often one person on a team will offer to co-ordinate this sort of thing and share the information with the rest of the team.

*For reasons of space only the first portion of Part II is printed in this issue of Bree - we'll carry on with the Beginner's Guide next issue! This full text of this article first appeared in **Flagship**, issue 94, and is reprinted here by permission. The next part has just been published in **Flagship 96**. (<http://www.pbmgames.com>)*



Fourth Age Nation Set-ups

A Player / GM viewpoint

by Clint Oldridge

On March 29th the trailer for the Two Towers was released on the big screen. So now that most of us have seen the Fellowship of the Ring, what can we expect from the second movie?

The Two Towers (the book) contains Rohirrim, Ents and, of course, a big nasty spider called Shelob. The movie, however, is a little more restricted in scope. This is due to the cutting of the 'Scouring of the Shire' from the third movie. Due to the little screen time Frodo and Sam would have in the third movie, Shelob has been cut from the Two Towers and moved to the beginning of the Return of the King. The Two Towers will hence focus on the war with Saruman.

Interesting to note is that the voice of Treebeard is being played by John Rhys-Davies, the actor of Gimli. The CGI for the ents will, in my opinion, make or break the Two Towers. Since they play such a crucial role an 'unnatural' looking ent will wreck the feel of the movie. I thoroughly enjoyed the CGI in the first movie (especially the Balrog), so I am sure they will get it right.... I hope...

Perhaps one of the more bizarre parts of the making of any movie occurs in the Two Towers. In the Battle of Helms Deep 10000 Uruk-hai storm the fortress of Helm's Deep defended by the Riders of Rohan and some elves (yes somehow elves got into the battle... maybe Legolas got his wish after all). How does a director create the sound of 10000 Uruk-hai? Peter Jackson went to a New Zealand versus England cricket game. In between innings he got on the loud speaker and asked the 25000 crowd to beat their chests and march on the spot. A war cry in Black speech was put on the big screen (used for replays) and 25000 New Zealanders yelled out their best morbeth. I can't wait to hear the results.

In Fellowship news the video/DVD is still due for august release and the special edition DVD with 30 minutes new footage plus a few other bits is due in November. The new scenes include the gift giving by Galadriel and some more scenes with Strider/Aragorn (not sure what).

The third ever game I played and first Grudge game was game 46 – a 3 way battle. There were many flaws with the game and our choice of set-ups but something I learnt was that players have a big difference of opinion on what makes a good set-up. Since then I have played in quite a few other FA games, and seen some choices that I have found somewhat amusing and some very cunning. With that in mind I have written some thoughts on what I consider good choices or at least points to consider.

Weaknesses of the 1000 scenario: Lack of strategic use of armies to start with – leaving the wargame at game start aspect at a minimum compared with 1650.

Hence Characters are very important. Economic situation similar to 2950 – i.e. weak. Small player base. Not suitable for very new players.

Strengths: Flexibility of set-up options. Variant games "easy" to develop. Development of the game is new from the very start – encouraging new tactics, and reducing the knowledge gap between new players and older players. Jaded players can often find a new lease of life here.

SNAs: The favourite choices of players appear to be loosely;

COST	#	DESCRIPTION
7000	1	Scout/recon at double normal skill rank.
2000	4	Challenge rank bonus (a character special ability) more likely
7000	5	Stealth rank bonus (a character special ability) more likely
6000	8	Buy/sell orders receive 20% market adjustment.
6000	9	New emissaries start at rank up to 40 (Order #734).
4000	10	New mages start at rank up to 40 (Order #737).
6000	11	New agents start at rank up to 40 (Order #731).
3000	12	New commanders start at rank up to 40 (Order #728).
7000	21	New armies hired at no cost.
4000	23	Can learn lost "weakness" spell.
4000	24	Can learn lost "conjure mounts" spell.
4000	25	Can learn lost "conjure food" spell.
6000	30	Can learn lost "teleport" spell.
12000	31	Kidnappings/assassinations at +20.

All others are rarer choices. My advice: make maximum use of your 20,000 points spent here – my preference is to have a specialised nation – which maximises the use of Naming characters @40 for the character classes, and then tying in the SNA (eg agents @40, with stealth bonus, double recon for example – racial and alignment choices to be used for maximum benefit – so agents @60 for DS). Note if you choose Stealth of Challenge Rank then I have found that between 1/3 and 1/2 of characters name have this ability. Your starting 8 characters have it as well – but I have found no correlation for which character gets it.

Starting funds available:

SNAs	20,000	Troops	12,000
PCs	8,000	Characters	6,000

Starting reserve 25,000

Total	71,000
-------	--------

Troops: Probably the most saving to be done here on funds available. 100 MA cost 100 gold – giving you nearly 12,000 gold to play with for character naming, and PC creation and upkeep costs for these and armies.

PCs: Generally spend all (or near enough) on PCs – the extra camps or upgraded PCs (if you are an army nation) is very much worth it.

Characters: – same as PCs – 200 points upgrades you from 30-40 character.

SNAs – 4,000 for two artefact items is good value for money. Anything more or less is probably uncost-effective compared with getting a better SNA. This

leaves 16k spent across your 4 SNAs – two biggies and a small SNA is often my choice.

Location, Location, Location

Locations of choice have to be Mordor – the mountains are virtually impregnable, but on the other hand it is a popular location. The mountain hex in the Sea of Rhun, and 2430 are also popular for safety reasons – hardly anyone can get to you – but that means you cannot get to them. One thing to plan is "spiking" – when you create your set-up your capital hex is the most important – but plan your spike (town) if you are going for a military attacking nation so that it is usable when fighting. If you don't intend to use much military (most nations end up with a need for at least a small military presence in the game) then protect your town (and village).

Characters

Your 6,000 to spend are probably the 2nd most important choice (after SNAs) and describe your nation – it's plans and what it intends to do. You do have a plan don't you? Tied in with the SNA choices I like to choose characters that help me build up the strengths of my nation, and using 600 points for 40 rank characters to reduce some of the weaknesses inherent in every nation.

(Two commanders @40 give me good downgrading options and mean that I can avoid this added expense later. 3/4 Ems means a good base and then I can choose Mages or Agents as my main aspect of my nation. For more militaristic nations Commanders @40 never hurts, so I reduce the numbers of Commanders I start with – without hurting my recruitment).

who's who A look at the major characters in the LOTR: #5 Legolas

Aliases: Greenleaf

Date of Birth: ?

Race: Sindarin Elf

Height: around 6 feet or more

Date of Death: n/a

Physical description: Tall and fair, bright eyes, hair color is debated, some say dark, others say blonde, sufficient evidence as to either is not available. He wore the attire of the Silvan elves of Mirkwood, chiefly green and brown.



Biography: Sindarin elf of the woodland realm, in the year 3019, Legolas journeyed to Rivendell to sit on the Council of Elrond, and was chosen to represent the Elves in the Fellowship. In Lorien, Legolas and Gimli became close friends, a friendship that lasted the rest of their lives. Legolas' keen sight and archery skills were his greatest asset to the Fellowship. After the Breaking of the Fellowship, Legolas went with Gimli and Aragorn in search of Merry and Pippin, and fought in the battle of Hornburg. He eventually went to Gondor, and fought in the Battle of the Pelennor Fields; while in Gondor, he had his first glimpse of the sea, and was overcome by a deep desire to sail from that moment on. After the War of the Ring, he journeyed with Gimli to visit the Glittering Caves and Fangorn Forest. In the Year 120 FO, after the death of Aragorn, Legolas sailed over the sea, taking Gimli the dwarf with him, the last of the Fellowship.

News From Bree
welcomes all
endgame reports!

bree@timeuyrm.co.uk

If you are going heavy military – warmachines are very cheap to buy and have a big impact. The small army sizes mean that they are in danger of being lost in battle.

Mage nations. Conjure Mounts has to be the most popular spell in the game by a long chalk. And rightly so. Used as a resource for cavalry armies and for market selling. Count in the effect of having to learn the spell and the cash cost though (costing valuable orders and funds). Setting up your Mages with the spell at game start helps reduce this.

Emissary nations: I have seen a lot of players swear blind by the Em@40 SNA. I am personally not a big fan of this. For 600 points you can buy Ems at game start, get them to do a 520/550 order at your capital and create camps straight away. This gives you a firm economic base for your nation to do whatever you want. I generally choose 3/4 Ems costing 600 each and have regularly found that my nations have an excellent economic base and often superior to that of Em@40 nations that rely on finding them. (The race is on for camp building – turns 4-7 the camp limit is regularly hit!) Gaining an Em ranked 60 is good for your loyalties as well and should not be underestimated.

Command nations: Not just for heavy military nations - @3000 for the SNA it's very cheap and gets you some excellent characters ideal for downgrading, challenging, army commanding.

Agents: Players love agents. Ag@40 for 6,000 it's expensive but probably worth the investment. But for 600 points you can get a 40 rank agent capable of stealing gold from enemy camps (and there are almost always ones within easy reach) and later of assassination.

Multiclass: I am not a big fan of multiclassing Characters at game start. Invariably I spend 3,000 points on 3x1k characters (@60), and 3,000 points on 5x40 characters. This leaves me some 2,000 points to spend elsewhere. Often another 1k character is useful (upgrading a 40 rank character). I hardly ever go for 30 rank and 50 rank characters – they seem uncost-effective. Same for the 10 or 20 rank characters (stealth excepted).

For 1,000 points you can get a 60 rank character or a 20/40/20 character (300/400/300). Building up characters is fun – but I see them often as a means to an end not an end in itself. (Maybe not a popular view!) :)

I think this covers your nation set-up sheet in a broad sweep. I hope to give some examples of nations, and their uses in future.



Hall of Fame

Game 48 - Fourth Age

by Bernd Luehrsen

This game ended in turn 31 with a Free People victory. Since history is said to be always written by the winners, well, I'll do my very best...

It started as a three-team-game with the North-Kingdom-Alliance neutral, South-Kindom-alliance DS and the FP with 9 nations while the others had eight each. The neutrals started in Eriador, the area west of the Misty Mountains and North of the Gondorian Mountains. The DS settled in Gondor, Harad, Khand and the south-western part of Mordor, while the FP occupied the rest except the northern regions, with three nations in Mordor, four in Mirkwood/Fangorn, and one each in the Iron Hills and at the Sea of Rhun.

Right from the beginning, there was heavy conflict between the two Kingdoms, each supported by their local allies. But it was quite clear that there would be war between the DS and us very soon. When the war came, I asked the neutrals for a truce, but their leader Dave Tomley told me that a war at two fronts was the nature of the game. The neutrals gave us some more time before they attacked over the pass of Goblin Gate, but by turn six we were fully engaged with their forces.

I will now try to give an account of the game from my point of view and then follows a short description of every FP nation.

My setup was meant to be an allround-emissary-agent nation to support the military frontline with resources and characters. Unfortunately, the frontline was at my backdoor and I had to go military

myself very soon.

My location was in the south-east of Mordor and I thought this to be remote, but I soon learned that it was in fact the center of the action for some time. Looking at my first turnmap, I knew that this game would be very interesting, but also probably very short for me. I had three DS as close neighbors and a fourth not far away. On turn two, I also gathered that some (if not all) of them had SNA "hire armies at no cost", because there were no less than seven DS army icons on my map, even at villages.

After some thought, I realised that my chances to survive would lessen the further the game would go on – after having improved all their pop centres they could have simply overrun me with their masses of troops. So a truce was no option and I prepared for war, improving my capital and backup to cities a.s.a.p. My advantage was that both of them were in the mountains and easy to defend. In turn four, the first battle was at hand, and I was able to hold them off for some time. But by turn eleven, they finally had captured both capital and backup, and without the help of my teammates, the game would have been over for me.

But by then I could draw upon the help of my allies, both the agent-nation and the weakness-nation had their squads ready where I needed them. Thus, the DS pop centres were repeatedly "visited" and they had grave losses of characters, armies and gold. Military support was also arriving from the northern part of Mordor and by turn 14, the DS were asking for a truce, since their war against the neutrals seemed not to go very well, either.

Bree artwork

News from Bree would like the acknowledge the work of **Amelia James** - this issue's featured artist. You'll notice the higher standard of the original artwork compared to that used in MEPBM turn sheets. Note that MEPBM Games are not at fault here ... see Clint's "From Out of the West" article on page 9. Check out more of Amelia's Middle Earth artwork at ...
<http://ajames.home.mindspring.com/>



credit payments

Payments to **Middle Earth PBM Games** not Harlequin. 5% charge for UK Credit card payments & you can pay directly through our website (World Pay [WP] will appear on your statement). You can also set up a monthly payment with us for a SET amount taken from your credit card at the beginning of each month. Ask for more details if interested. If your account is low funds there will be an administration charge of £1 for the first turn, and 50p for subsequent turns on Low funds.

Note that CC payments are accepted in the following currencies: UK£, US\$ & AU\$ as well as some other currencies.

I was very reluctant to agree on a truce, for the reasons described above. Why should we now let the DS recover to attack me again? And the benefits the team would have had in other regions of the map were not substantial, either. So I stated some demands to regain my lost pop centres, but the DS disagreed and even after I had cut the demands down refused my proposal. So the war went on and two turns later, the DS dropped. By then I was reduced to half of my pops, had lost about 7000 hi and five characters, but I was alive. It took me some time to recover but then I was able to support the other front that now was far away from me with some troops and characters, because now it was us against the Neutrals.

In the north, they repeatedly intruded Mirkwood and did some damage to our pop centres. But the combined effort of the FP nations in that area drove them out. After their tasks was fulfilled in the south, both weakness- and agent-squads concentrated on the Neutrals in the Grey Mountain area and were successful soon.

The well-organised artefact-hunt payed off and we were in possession of the Ring of Wind and several lesser agent and stealth items. The Neutrals for a while controlled large parts of Southern Gondor and even captured Minas Tirith with great effort. After some time, we drove them out with combined character and army attacks.

They seemed not to be able to draw enough troops to stop our growing forces, and meanwhile we had developed strong economies such that gold was no problem for any of our team. The Gap of Rohan fell and we crossed the Misty Mountains. The agent and weakness-squads caused great losses, and although the Neutrals too had some good agents, they were not nearly as successful as ours.

In turn 31, they conceded victory to us. Here is our team in numerical order:

3 *Glass Hammer* played by *Sam Roads*, location *Sea of Rhun*

Mage/Weakness nation, also did a lot of artefact research. Had 31 kills combined weakness and challenges. Very effective and teamlike, didn't give a damn for own victory points.

#4 *Tleilaxu Tygers* played by *Clint Oldridge*, location *NE Mordor*

Meant to be an Agent/Stealth nation, but had to go military as well. Great economy, giftet much gold and many pops to teammates. Did a lot of scouting for our agent and weakness squads. Very good agents in the late game, 19 kills.

5 *Naglar* played by *Andrew Hay*, location *Fangorn Forest*

Mage/Artefact hunting nation. Was unfortunately located close to the front and had to hire lots of troops, lost his capital to the neutrals. Was involved in a lot of fighting around the gap of Rohan. Andrew also did a very good job keeping our artefact and character lists.

6 *Galadrhun* (myself, see above)

7 *Old Race* played by *Marcus Mauermann*, location *SE Mirkwood*



Military Nation with agent support. Highly involved in the fights in Mirkwood and in the Gondor area, held the most strategic pops of our team. Did a lot of our military coordination. Good economy, large armies, good emis and agents.

8 *Norvencor* played by *Mathias Bergolte*, location *SW Mirkwood*

All-out military nation, was placed close to the neutral front and suffered heavily from their attacks. Hired troops wherever possible and was able to fight them off time after time. Also used his emis well. Invaded their territory and did a lot to break the resistance. He also did a very good job keeping the map, which was a lot of work.

9 *Hospodars* played by *Holger Wenke*, location *NE Mirkwood*

Our Agent nation. Very effective, sent his squads where we needed them. Had 37 kills at game

end, held both the RoW and the RoC and some lesser ag-arties.

10 *Here's mine* played by *Kasper Ambeck-Madsen*, location *Iron Hills*

Mage/Artefact hunting nation. Also had good emis and some large cavalry armies. Unfortunately, Kasper got bored after the DS gave in and dropped. Mathias (#8) took over and utilized the nation to good team effort. Held the most artefacts at game end.

11 *Mountain Guard* played by *Brian Thorsbro*, location *NW Mordor*

Classic dwarven military nation. Very good commanders and challenge ranks. Huge armies which dominated Gondor. Needed some support, but a very good job for his first game at all.

All in all, this victory was due to our good team work and coordination. It was great fun and I'd like to thank all my allies. I am looking forward to see some of them in FA 144 (as well as our former enemies around Dave Tomley). At last, the final standings:

1:	Galadrhun	1967	(<i>Bernd Luehrsen</i>)
2:	Old Race	1733	(<i>Marcus Mauermann</i>)
3:	Tleilaxu Tygers	1517	(<i>Clint Oldridge</i>)

Feel Inspired? Want to write for Bree? Then contact the editor:
bree@timewyrms.co.uk

contacting the mepBm office

UK: Office A, 340 North Road,
Cardiff, Wales, CF14 3BP
TL: 029 20913359
*[dial code 011 44 2920 for US players,
10am-6.30pm UK time (BST - British
Standard Time); 5am-1.30pm (EST)]*
FAX: 029 20625532
EM: me@middleearthgames.com

USA: PO Box 280, Medford,
OR 97501-0019, USA
Phone & Fax: 541-772-7872 (10-
5pm weekdays) (fax24hrs)

AUSTRALIA:
PBM Enterprises, PO Box 278,
Emerald Victoria, Australia 3782
Phone & Fax: +61 3 5968-5652

WEBSITES
www.middleearthgames.com
www.harlequingames.com

EMAIL LIST
Check out the websites (above)
for more information.



shelob's web

*This time we concentrate on Tolkien-
based games of all kinds ... Just click
any of the links (whilst online) to take
you to the site!*

Tolkien-based Games
[http://www.spowers.net/Tolkien/
tolkien-games/](http://www.spowers.net/Tolkien/tolkien-games/)

*There are more than 100 games
listed here and you can search for
the ones you are interested in by
means of several different criteria.*

<http://www.tolkiengames.com/>
*Nice looking up-to-date site which
includes info on Tolkien console
games for a variety of platforms.*

[http://www.tolkiencollector.com/
game.htm](http://www.tolkiencollector.com/game.htm)

[http://www.faqs.org/faqs/tolkien/
games/](http://www.faqs.org/faqs/tolkien/games/)
*Computer games (including reviews)
plus list of Tolkien MUDs.*

[http://txe.swa.com/games/
tolkien.htm](http://txe.swa.com/games/tolkien.htm)
*Mostly concentrating on the
collectable card game.*

Which hobbit are you?
[http://www.chriswetherell.com/
hobbit/default.asp](http://www.chriswetherell.com/hobbit/default.asp)

Riddle Competition

Who has won free turns, my precious?

I set you riddles one plus three.
What is their secret mystery?
The answers lie in just one tome.
Pick the right one and you're home
And dry, my preciousss!
Have a go and be tenacious!

In the shadows, I've been a thief.
Of calamities, I've seen the chief
From whose unassailable wealth
I stole a jewel which I kept by stealth
And kept secret till direst need
To keep it safe from Dwarvish greed.

A: Bilbo Baggins

Beneath grey skirts I do hide
Amidst the spurs that do not ride.
Atop a mound of treasure golden
By shadow-thief I was stolen.
I came unto my final rest
On the breast of he who loved me best.

A: The Arkenstone

I rise alone, no company
Save for he who dwells within me.
From my skirts he does arise
When he requires a sacrifice.
My flanks are spurred, but I travel not.
Desolation surrounds this spot.

A: The Lonely Mountain

Beneath the skirts that cover all
Dwell I in my conquered hall.
Of calamities the greatest,
Wearer of the diamond vest.
My armour's like a tenfold shield.
That's the last clue that I yield.

A: Thorin Oakenshield

The Winners

Congratulations to the three people who got all four riddles correct. Clint will be in touch with details of your prize.

*Jeremy Lock
Stu Busbee
Stephen Allen*

Five people were close, but not close enough, only getting three correct answers. Most common mistakes were to answer *The One Ring* for the second riddle and *Smaug* for the last.

*Franklin Gingrich
Brian Hancock
Mike Bateman
Tom Jaggard
John Simpson*

(Turn to page 10 for more Tolkien questions!)



The Hall of Fame

Game winners, losers and honourable mentions

Game 228 - The Khand Speak

Itana surveyed the battlefield. Much had happened, only six fortnights into the war. The Long Rider had lost his two villages and his mountain town. Now the armies of the Khand had burned the town of the Blind Sorcerer and were at the chokepoint of eastern Mordor. The slave fields of Nurn lay before them and a motley rabble of dog lord troops were all that stood in their way. A falcon flew in with news. It appeared that the Blind Sorcerer had hired an army in Urlurtsa Nurn - a desperate attempt to stall the inevitable. The war council was convened. Kionid spoke first: "Should we battle the dog lord? If we do not they may hold us here. Sooner or later those fools will send their cursers to battle our armies instead of picking off heroes in our capital one by one while their homeland burns! Some day they will realize that the Khand are made of sterner stuff than they can imagine; with every fallen leader two rise to replace them!"

Itana paused. "They will rush us, and the forces of the Blind Sorcerer will march along the Sea to delay us. We will ignore the rabble and march through

the desert. We are on a mission of vengeance now." As the Dog Lord troops swarmed towards them the Khand warlords raised their scimitars and rode into battle. A scant fortnight later they stood at the walls of the Blind Sorcerer stronghold of Urlurtsa Nurn. A grinning scout reported back. "It is empty. They have left to chase us!"

Itana roared with laughter. "Burn it!"
Another falcon came in, and the news was good.

Minas Morgul lay in ruins. Urig to the south stood poised over the Adunaphels major town, soft and vulnerable with a scant few defenders. And the Northmen stood ready to sack the mountain stronghold of the dragon lord to the east. Mordor was in flames, and all that remained in eastern Mordor were scattered camps. The heart of the kingdom of the Dark One surrounded them, ripe for the torch. And the mighty fleet of the Corsairs had more than met its match from the brave sailors of Southern Gondor.

Onwards men! The Easterlings will repay the debt from their mistakes in earlier ages!

Itana Ovan, warlord of the Khand

which sna?

Popular Last Alliance set-up choices

Just thought I would give out some information on a recent LAS game's set-ups. Artifacts: 52 for 25 players

Number of players	SNA
7	Scout/recon +20
1	Scout/recon @50 (dwa)
5	Challenge Rank
2	No morale loss ForcMar
2	W/out food gain morale
8	+20% buy/sell
4	Em@40
3	Ma@40
4	Ag@40
6	Com@40
2	Train @20
2	Train@25
1	Train@30
3	Fort 1/2
2	New morale 40
4	770 no cost
2	Uncover @40
5	Conj Weakness
7	Conj Mounts
2	Conj Food
1	Summon Storm
1	Teleport
1	Warship @5



Bree articles

Thanks to everyone for wiring endgame reports - keep them coming in! However it would be nice to have some articles on Military strategy, camp placement, and / or suggested plans to optimize character development for various nations.

I would be very interested in hearing from players re: playing "frontline" nations - Dragon Lord, Witch King, Dog Lord, North Gondor etc

At least one player has contacted me asking for views on bridges. Is it better to destroy them early in the game and how does this impacton FP and DS teams?

Clint has suggested a number of topics for interesting articles - check the MEPBM List for details.



Batman Books Announces "Major Tolkien Venture"

by L. Ron Creepweans

NEW YORK, April 1, 2002... Today Batman Books proudly announces that they have reached agreement with the Tolkien Estate to authorize a certain major fantasy writer, identified only as T— B—, to do a 21-book rewrite of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* for a "solid" eight figure advance.

"Thanks to the smash success of Peter Jackson's new film, the *Middle Earth* franchise is hotter than ever," said Batman editor Daniel Sharcroop. "We felt that now was the perfect time to correct the primary flaw of the original trilogy, which was its extreme brevity."

"Certainly, for its time, the original *Lord of the Rings* broke new ground in book packaging," continued Sharcroop. "Until J.R.R. Tolkien, modern publishers never thought of breaking up a single big novel into three pieces. But today, three books simply aren't enough to satisfy the average reader's appetite for total immersion in an alternate world based loosely on medieval Europe. Fantasy fans expect more, much more, and we're going to give it to them in spades."

According to B—, the first book, *Escape From the Shire*, will be roughly 800 pages long, and cover the first five chapters of *The Lord of the Rings* (which from now on will be marketed as *The Lord of the Rings-TOT*, for *The Original Trilogy*).

B— said that the additional pages would give him a chance to "flesh out" some of the characters mentioned only in passing, or who were left out of the original trilogy entirely.

"Another crying need that has remained unfulfilled up until now is the lack of more characters to market as action figures," said Sharcroop. Co-marketing for *Escape From the Shire* alone will include no less than 72 new action figures, including every attendee of Bilbo's 111th birthday party, as well as the complete Sackville Baggins.

Another flaw of *The Lord of the Rings-TOT* was the relative scarcity of magic items to market as accessories.

"A magic sword and a magic ring? What kind of woefully under-equipped fantasy expedition is that?" said Sharcroop. "In the new, improved series, every single character will have their own magic item, weapon, and piece of clothing, though most will be sold separately."

Though not all volumes had been outlined, B— indicated that some future books had already been named.

"In the *Mines of Moria* and *The Battle of Helms Deep* are two that we know for sure," he said. "It's going to be exactly like the original books, only with a lot more sex," said B—, who indicated that Frodo would be meet an elvish girlfriend in Rivendell. "And much, much longer."



Sharcroop indicated that the new books would also form the basis of their own media tie-in deals, including a TV series, *That Darn Hobbit*, currently being pitched to the WB. "When you're talking about a steamroller media franchise, the sky's the limit."

"This seemed like the best way to keep my father's legacy alive," said a representative of the Tolkien estate, "Especially since I've run out of his notes, rough drafts, outlines, fragments, fragments of rough draft outlines, and laundry lists to publish."

The spokesman also said that T— B— was the perfect collaborator for the project. "We had considered T— G— for the job, but finally decided to go with B— due to his proven track record at slavishly imitating my father's work. Thanks to this deal, that work will be made even more accessible to a whole new generation of fantasy readers. Plus it will earn me a gigantic wad of cash."

Batman and the Tolkien estate are also finalizing a deal with supra-major fantasy author R— J— to do a 75 book rewrite of *The Silmarillion*.

The Fellowship Diaries

Aragorn and Legolas



The Secret Diary of Aragorn Son of Arathorn

Day One: Ringwraiths killed: 4. V. good. Met up with Hobbits. Walked forty miles. Skinned a squirrel and ate it. Still not King.

Day Four: Stuck on mountain with Hobbits. Boromir really annoying. Not King yet.

Day Six: Orcs killed: none. Disappointing. Stubble update: I look rugged and manly. Yes! Keep wanting to drop-kick Gimli. Holding myself back. Still not King.

Day Ten: Sorry no entries lately. V. dark in Mines of Moria. Big Balrog. Not King today either.

Day Eleven: Orcs killed: 7. V. good. Stubble update: Looking mangy. Legolas may be hotter than me. I wonder if he would like me if I was King?

Day 28: Beginning to find Frodo disturbingly attractive. Have a feeling if I make a move, Sam would kill me. Also, hairy feet kind of a turn-off. Still not King.

Day 30: In Lothlorien. Think Galadriel was hitting on me. Saucy wench. Nice chat with Boromir. He's not so bad. Took a shower. Yay! But still not King.

Day 32: Orcs killed: none. Stubble update: subtly hairy. Legolas told me that a shadow and a threat had been growing in his mind. I think Legolas might be kinda gay. Nope, not King.

Day 33: Orcs killed: Countless thousands. V. good.

Boromir killed by Orcs. Bummer. Though he died bravely in my arms, am now quite sure that he was very definitely gay. Not so sure about Gimli either. RIP Boromir. Still not King, but at least Boromir seemed to think I was. Might however have been blood loss.

Day 34: Frodo went to Mordor. Said he was going alone, but took Sam with him. Why? My God, is everyone in this movie gay but me? Not so sure about me either. Still not King, goddammit.

The Secret Diary of Legolas Son of Thranduil

Day One: Went to Council of Elrond. Was prettiest

person there. Agreed to follow some tiny little man to Mordor to throw ring into volcano. Very important mission - gold ring so tacky.

Day Four: Boromir so irritating. Why must he wear big shield like dinner plate all the time? Climbed up Caradhras but wimpy humans who cannot walk on snow insisted we climb back down. Am definitely prettiest member of the Fellowship. Go me!

Day Six: Far too dark in Mines of Moria to brush hair properly. Am very afraid I am developing a tangle. Orcs so silly. Still the prettiest.

Day Ten: Gandalf fell into shadow. In other news, I think I am developing a spot on my nose. V. serious situation, as Elven spots likely to last for 500 years or more. Still prettiest, despite blasted spot.

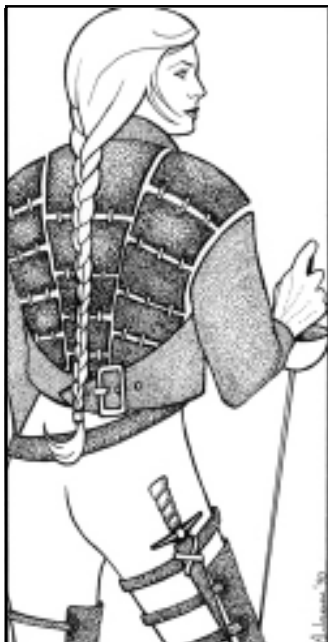
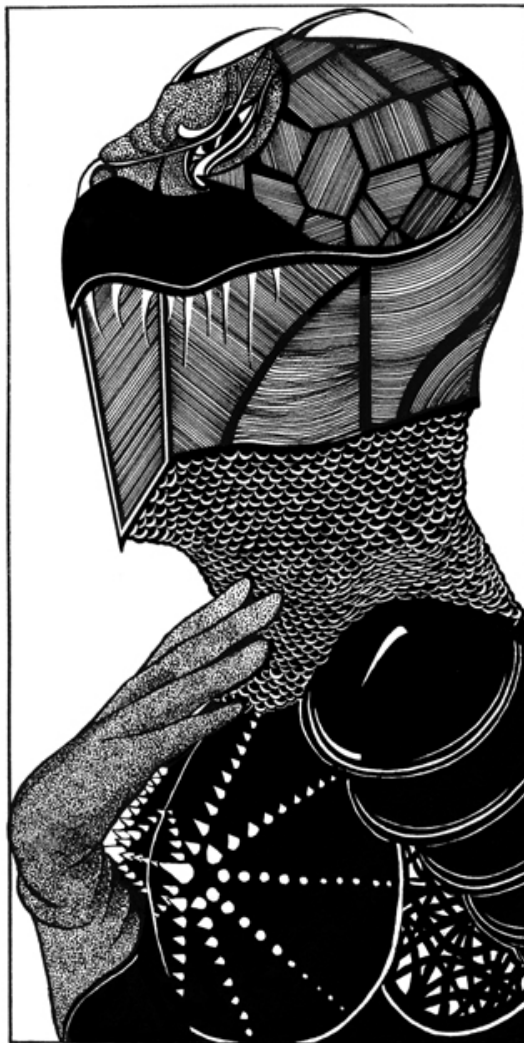
Day Eleven: In Lothlorien. Suspect Galadriel may be prettier than me. Also, am quite sure she copied my hairstyle. I was wearing that same look at least 1,000 years ago. Silly bint. She was most annoyed that I used her mirrored fountain to take a nice bubble bath. I choose to ignore her claim that my hair clogged her drain. Not one strand of my hair has fallen out in 800 years, why would it start now? Still prettiest by far.

Day 30: All this paddling about in boats is hell on my complexion. Aragorn obviously starting to find Frodo strangely attractive. Sam will kill him if he tries anything. Still the prettiest.

Day 33 : Boromir tempted by Ring. So tedious. Cannot be tempted myself, as already have everything I want i.e. perfect hair and a butt like granite. Have been getting

very strange letters from someone calling herself "Stacey" who wants to do obscene things to my elfhood. Fortunately have super-duper elf vision so can run away if I see her coming.

Day 35: Boromir dead. Very messy death, most unnecessary. Did get kissed by Aragorn as he expired. Does a guy have to get shot full of arrows around here to get any action? Boromir definitely not prettier than me. Cannot understand it. Am feeling a pout coming on. Frodo off to Mordor with Sam. Tiny little men caring about each other, rather cute really. Am quite sure Gimli fancies me. So unfair. He is waist height, so can see advantages there, but chunky braids and big helmet most offputting. Forsee dark times ahead, very dark times.



face to face games

UK Game: We're planning a Cardiff game **July 26th (Fri) - 28th (Sun)** Clint writes ...

Okay, I have 24 players and have allocated nations as per requests. On the day if players want to swop nations that is fine with me. I have now taken the deposit from your account. - Note the game will not run after the day - unless I hear from lots of players otherwise :-) So with that in mind unless there is anything else I will see you in July... I have 12vs12 1650 game.

Is anyone going to the UK FTF game able to give a lift to a player in the Cheshire area? If so get in touch with Clint

US game is a no go though - can't get enough definites or replies so better than flog a dead-horse I'll bury it for the time being. Maybe we can resurrect it as a different version or have a team of 12 play across the Atlantic over a w/end? Would anyone be interested in that?



stand-By positions

Drop-outs available - don't forget you get a free turn for taking these up...

*E [Early] = 0-10 turn,
M (Midgame) = 11-20,
L [Late game] = 21+.
[A= Aligned if a Neutral, N= not aligned if a Neutral]*

1000: None
2950: NGond (m), SGond (m),
Fire (e - P), Long (e - P),
Rhun (e - P), Khan (l)
1650: Quiet (1w-l), Long (1w-l)



news from Bree

My thanks to everyone who has sent articles. I am still looking for more though! Please try to keep your articles to about 900 words (or shorter), otherwise I may have to edit you severely!

Editor: Colin Forbes,
2A Guinea Street, Exeter, Devon
bree@timewyrm.com

The Mantle of Doriath

An underused artifact?

by Brad Brunet

This is in response to an email requesting articles on certain topics listed, one of which is regarding the Mantle of Doriath and it's possible uses. I am not much of an article writer, and haven't played enough Free to get in enough good ideas, but I thought I'd forward some thoughts ...

Defensive uses

Hide targetted MT's. Once (as a previous FP Rhudaur) had a new agent assigned the task of the Mantle. He bounced around from safe camp to safe camp, guarding, until he was needed. Then, he'd move/hide and refuse/move the next turn. Large armies would end up sitting on an "empty" hex wasting money and food. I hid the Northmen capital, a couple different Eothraim MT's, and Osgiliath in this manner. Once my agent guarded his way up to good stealing levels, he'd switch with a newbie. Never did they try and steal the thing, must have cost them a tonne of time and frustration!

Mordor

Hide a camp the turn it's created. Pump it up to a city. Dump a good commander there, and he can hire, then recruit and move a threatening army out before the DS can react. Many ideas for a Mordor icon

appearing out of nowhere: Threatening army, dump as much product as possible to create an HC army with metals and war machines. This would require more characters, guards, etc, but, for example, the NW Free have nothing better to do if WK goes south. Also a good trap. Besides agents, send a curse squad to an adjacent hex the turn after the icon appears - when you'd expect retaliation. This can be attempted with a camp, but there's too good a chance the DS would send a recon in first to ascertain whether this is a legitimate threat or just such a ruse/trap. Best to pump to city and set a trap too!

Offensive uses

Hidden pops, in my experience, do not report foreign characters. Send in a couple good challenge characters, a good scout, and hide an enemy capital. The scout then guards the character with the Mantle from steals, while the powerful characters kill off the weaker of the enemy who are probably doing sells, etc.

Similarly, a "hider" and a guard can go in to hide a capital of an enemy being pressured, just on the off chance that that is the very turn allies try to send him gold. Can bounce around a couple enemy capitals doing that, if so desired. Risky, but if successful, can actually knock the nation out via bankruptcy! (Dragon, Witch...)



From out of the West

Latest News from MEPBM Games!

Projects, Inland Revenue, some more projects and a few more interesting titbits on the list and we're all a bit war weary at the office at the moment. So for fun we've started designing some PBM games - the ones we'd like to play! :-) I'll probably chat more about it all on the list, but for now I would be interested in how long your ideal game would take to play. (Just idle curiosity at present, it might develop into something in a year or two though).

- 1) In time for the game to finish (eg 1 year, 15 months, 2weeks that sort of thing).
- 2) Number of turns this would take.
- 3) Depth of play - ie how long it would take to plan and write up a particular turn (for example I like to spend 2-4 hours on a particular turn, Sam likes half an hour that sort of thing).

We've looked into getting the images and fonts upgraded, and the scanner working, and lots of other boring computer stuff. At present this is still outside our scope but we have some plans for a nice new look for the game when we get the projects we're working on sorted out. Talking about them they are going very well. We've got Automagic working nicely now,

and MEOW and ANOTHER generic program well on the way to completion. We've got a Turn reader and exporter of information to a nice graphical Map - looks good (still in development and play test stage). Then some more game aids in development. All busy, busy, busy.

So with the suprising success of these what would I like to see in the future? FTF US to work - looks not on (although the UK one is looking the best so far as far as player numbers is concerned). I would like more Fourth Age players - the game is much better with some house rules I think. Maybe some interesting easy scenarios to create would be fun as well. Bofa has slowed down on take-ups but still great fun - just got whomped in a game but survived as the Elves. :-)

Maybe, just maybe, I'll get a holiday this year... well can but dream... :-)

Clint



Middle Earth
PBM Games

Flagship

The World's leading Postal and Email Gaming Magazine

WIN A FULL YEAR'S FREE SUBSCRIPTION

**When you sign up for a trial two issue subscription at the special price of
£7 / US\$12 / EUR 12 / AUS\$20 / CAN\$18
starting with issue #97**

... but it won't be easy !

You'll need to answer the following questions correctly ...

- 1: What was the name of Wormtongue's father?
- 2: What was Aragorn known as until his 21st birthday, when his true lineage was revealed to him?
- 3: Who said: "There my heart is; but it is not my fate to sit in peace, even in the far house of Elrond."
- 4: Which ancient Hobbit clan had a lot to do with Dwarves?
- 5: What is the name of Orome's horse?
- 6: What is the name of the Maiar who guides the moon?
- 7: Who were the three eagles that rescued Sam and Frodo from Orodruin?
- 8: Who said: 'Begone, foul dwimmerlaik, lord of carrion! Leave the dead in peace'?
- 9: Who are the three Ents remaining that walked the forest before the darkness?
- 10: Who said: 'I am not a tree root, sir.'

The names of those who get all ten right will go into a hat, and the winners will be drawn at random.

First Prize is a Year's FREE subscription to Flagship (6 issues)

Second Prize is 6 months FREE subscription to Flagship (3 issues)

Third Prize is two FREE copies of Flagship (issue #96 and the forthcoming issue #97)

There will also be ten runner's up prizes of FREE sample copies (issue #94's MEPBM special whilst stocks last)

**To get your trial subscription send a cheque (payable to FLAGSHIP in UK funds)
along with your name and address to:**

Flagship MEPBM Competition, 2A Guinea Street, Exeter, Devon, EX1 1BS

Alternatively submit your answers when you sign up on our website?

www.pbmgames.com/promotion.php

Competition closes on June 1st