

The Red Book of Westmarch: The Official Council of Elrond Newsletter

Issue 1
August 2006

For the *Middle-earth
Collectible Card
Game* Community



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The Fellowship: COMMENTS FROM THE COE

Five Birds with One Stone: the Case for a New CoE Constitution

by Mark Alfano, Chair CoE

Greetings, MECCG-ers, and welcome to the maiden voyage of the new Council of Elrond Newsletter. We, the members of 2006-7, are working hard to revitalize both the CoE itself and the international MECCG community. Part of that goal involves connecting all players and collectors with common information and ideas and a sense of fellowship, and that is the role of this newsletter. Be sure to look for more CoE projects at <http://www.councilofelrond.org/>! In this newsletter you will find many articles for our different columns, listed at left. You can submit to the newsletter by following the guidelines on the last page. This article will be devoted to a direct address from the

Council of Elrond to you, our constituents. If there are any topics you think the CoE should address or explain, please feel free to write myself at mark.alfano@gmail.com.

The topic of this article is a number of justifiable complaints about the status of ME:CCG.

(1) Some national councils are totally defunct (e.g. Russia, France); others are isolated from the rest of the community (e.g. Poland); still others are disconnected from the contemporary understanding of the rules (e.g. Spain).

(2) The meta-game is becoming static: there

CONDUCT AND HOBBITSHIP

Sportsmanship and Take-backs by Jonathan "the Brown" Yost

Have you ever pondered what John Ronald Reuel Tolkien would think watching a Middle Earth tournament? Tolkien enjoyed card games like bridge and solitaire and I bet he also would have enjoyed this game we all love, but one aspect I'm sure he would have deplored is poor sportsmanship. One of the little known advantages of tournaments of a game like this, with its relatively small following and limited prize support, is the lack of appeal to those that seek to do

anything to win. I've found in my travels and many MECCG tournaments that almost all Middle Earth players are in it for the love of the works and the love of the game, not for the prizes or the glory of being crowned champion. If you've ever had the misfortune of playing a tournament with a large cash prize, you'll know what I'm talking about. Unfortunately in that situation, poor sportsmanship isn't just bad manners. To some, it's part of their strategy. It's a tactic to



GOLLUM'S GROTTTO: TIPS & TRICKS

Low-tech Counters to High-tech Decks

by Mark Alfano

PLAY OF THE MONTH

We Have Nothing to Fear But... Ourselves

by Ben Sorensen



We hates squatting decksses. Perhaps the worst offenders are [Fallen Radagast squatting at Weathertop](#) for wolves, animal factions, and barrow-blades on the one hand, and the [Red Hills](#) squatter deck on the other. Radagast's deck seems invulnerable because the company plays a Hiding card each turn, canceling all creatures played on them. They don't have much corruption either, so there's not much one can do. Heedless Revelry is an option, of course, but either way of playing it still allows the squatters to rack up at least a couple points per turn. Red Hills doesn't cancel attacks, but the characters are so strong (one reaches 11 prowess!) that creatures are nearly meaningless. In this case, too, Heedless Revelry helps a little, but the big trolls can usually still score two or more MPs per turn.

Two problems; one solution. All of Radagast's resources (War Wolf, War Warg, The Warg King, Wild Hounds, Barrow Blade) are playable at a Ruins and Lairs (R) site. Since Radagast doesn't have to worry about most environment problems like Snowstorm, Long Winter, Foul Fumes, he usually will not have any Twilights in his deck. This is where the low-tech counter comes in: Choking Shadow. The alternate effect of this card – available when Doors of Night is in play – transforms a (R) site into a Shadowhold (S). It prevents the play of all typical MP-resources at a site like Weathertop. Since Radagast will most likely have no Twilights, you are free to shut him down over and over. The moral of the story: if you're playing a Doors of Night hazard strategy, put 2 Choking Shadows in your sideboard (or in the bonus sideboard against fallen wizards).

A similar solution presents itself in the case of the Red Hills deck. This deck is likewise unaffected by most environment hazards, so there is a very low probability of your opponent having Twilights. Unfortunately, not all of the Red Hills MP-resources are playable at a (S), but many are (Tempest of Fire, A Few Recruits, and Great Bats require a shadowhold, though Maker's Map and Blasting Fire can be played at a darkhold as well). Moral: if you're playing a Doors of Night hazard strategy, put 2 Awaken the Earth's fire in your sideboard. In addition, The Witch-King of Angmar can do the same thing to shadowholds, and he is worth playing for other reasons (to allow sideboarding, to prevent the play of the Ancient Black Axe, to protect a run to Mount Doom, etc.), so it's often worth your while to put him straight into a hazard deck versus minions. Note that Ben "Bandrobras Took" Sorensen has already constructed a [hazard deck like this](#). Tune in next time for converse tips: high-tech counters to low-tech, all-too-common hazards. ♣

On GCCG, I wanted to try out a new Fallen Saruman deck I had just made (that didn't try for the White Hand), and Jambo was up rather late. The first hints of trouble came during the draft, when Jambo pulled out Thrain for my Balin. I thought I was okay until we both revealed Rumours of Rings for a minor item. A race was in the air...

Things went downhill when he went first turn and used Rumours to get the Dwarven Ring of Durin's Tribe. Since the underlying premise of my deck was to use that Ring to untap a Minion Bree (Gold Ring, Untap, Secrets of Their Forging in the same turn), I was undone before my first turn! However, since my deck used wolf-attack sites to get its first Ring, I figured I had a chance.

First Turn: All Thought Bent to find a Gold Ring.

Second Turn: Played the Gold Ring at Ost-In-Edhil and a Wolf.

Third Turn: On the way to minion Isengard, got Rolled. No other Rings. I haven't drawn recyclers. Hand clogging commences.

Jambo gets the Dwarven Ring of Durin's Tribe on Thrain, controlling Thorin with DI. Pallando gets Cirdan. I've managed to nab a Wolf Faction and another Wolf Ally. I started with a Star Glass, which helped immensely, as he was running undead.

Jambo moves his company to the Old Forest for Bombadil. I've got Scimitars of Steel in play and hit him with man hazards, then Sell-Swords, Assassin, which kills Sam, wounds most, and taps the rest. Killing Cirdan and Pallando would have made it a close game at this point, but it was not to be.

I finally draw my Palantir of Annunias (to be combined with Focus Palantir to endlessly recycle Secrets of Their Forging or Voices of Malice). At this point, I'm pretty much lost but I'm determined to go out with style.

My Star-Glass is gone from corruption, so I put down Plotting Ruin and go to the Blue Mountain Dwarf-Hold (instead of the undead Cairn), where he's gone with Thrain and Thorin to play the Blue Mountain Dwarves. Unfortunately, by the time I get there, Gloin's tapped and cannot cancel the auto-attack, so I have to face it with Nain, my only untapped character. It's at the point where if I don't get the MPs this turn, I've lost all hope.

So here's the situation – my Dwarven company facing a Dwarven auto-attack and needing the weakest prowess character to stay untapped. I look in my hand and play the only boost I have – the Dwarves Are Upon You! Jambo could barely type for laughing at that point. I may have lost the MP battle, but I definitely won the style points. ♣

*from page 1

knock their opponent off guard and disrupt their thought process to gain an advantage. Like the root of all evil itself (i.e. money), tournaments with big prizes often bring out the very worst in people.

Yes, there are far more cheaters in other CCGs than in MECCG. But it is important to realize that MECCG players will often ask for little favors from you if they just made an incorrect play and want to change something. This is not cheating. I call this a “take-back.” The MECCG player who desires to win but also desires to be fair should have some guidelines for how to handle this situation. I’ve found most people share my views on this courtesy and allow a reasonable level of undos, take-backs, or changes in the order of past declarations. Obviously, no one would consider allowing something like tapping to support after a roll that just missed its target or something like that, but I’ve found a few to be so strict as to not allow anything to be taken back once tapped or revealed from hand, even a second later when nothing else has happened. I find this to be poor sportsmanship and I hope people embrace the allowance of reasonable levels of reversals.

Personally, I ask myself a few things when an opponent asks to take something back or go back a short ways in time to do something differently. First, have any cards been drawn or any dice rolls been made that could have influenced that course of action? Second, have I said, done, or played anything since that time that would cause a desire to do something differently? Lastly, was there an advantage to having things the way they were while the actions since have occurred? If the answer to those questions is no, then I happily allow a take-back and sometimes even regardless of cards drawn or rolls taking place that have no possible impact on the action requested. For example, someone forgets to roll to remove a hazard card during their organization phase and asks to go back and do it just after drawing for another company’s movement/hazard phase. It’s good sportsmanship to allow a roll standing, but what if it’s a sage and they say they meant to tap, but forgot. Perhaps they wanted to see if they drew a Marvels Told before committing to tapping. In that case, allowing a tap to remove after cards have been drawn is a judgment call and perhaps slightly above and beyond good sportsmanship, but to allow the roll standing is just common courtesy in my opinion.

In the end, everyone has to decide for themselves exactly what level of take-backs and reversals they allow and under what circumstances, but I hope everyone chooses one worthy of this great

great game, Tolkien disappointed watching the



work of art, this t and one that I wouldn’t be with if he were me play out.

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*from page 1

are no new cards, and so very few new strategies. Ten top-tier decks dominate the tournament scene. (3) Badly worded card texts and rules from the ICE-era are enshrined behind the current CoE constitution, which disallows all corrections and errata because it binds all change to the silent-tower list, populated mostly by lurkers. (4) Voter turnout for CoE elections is remarkably low; the silent-tower list is no longer the main place for communication about MECCG, and so lurkers are given a chance to vote while active players and collectors pass by. (5) Exotic prize support is running dry; tournament organizers in a given country are flush with local goodies, but most have never seen the stuff available elsewhere.

These are the main reasons why, as Chairman of the CoE, I have been pushing the Council to disband itself in order to create a new Council, with a new Charter. Let me explain....

The constitution of the new Council would have provisions to help struggling national councils. In fact, we may ask that each active national council send a voting member to the CoE, giving national interests a greater stake in CoE. This would bind the national councils both to CoE and to each other, increasing the sense of international community.

The new constitution would make it possible to introduce “Virtual Cards” along the lines of [the ones Joe Bisz and I recently concocted for North American Championships](#). At the present moment, CoE only acknowledges two statuses for cards and rules: “official” and “unofficial”. The new constitution would establish a middle category of “endorsed” cards and rules; these would include the crème de la crème of the bewildering array of dream cards, UEPs, scenarios, special decks (e.g. challenge decks, including the four new ones), sealed formats, and virtual cards. With their new status, “endorsed” cards and rules would pioneer the way for cool events with new meta-games and strategies. Though Worlds would always use the official rules for the main tournament, there would now be a host of important and fun events to play in for those players who itch whenever they think of the cutthroat level of competition at Worlds.

Certain cards are, simply put, badly worded. Examples include Sneakin’ and Paths of the Dead. Many players protest when their opponent makes a cheesy use of these cards. Well, why not make the kind of rules changes that the original CoE charter envisioned possible? Errata could be issued, for example, if two-thirds of active national councils approve it, as well as two-thirds of members of CoE.

Thank you for considerations of the CoE. If these ideas con- in favor of a constitution we hope to satisfactory



reading my on the status you find vining, vote new CoE in 2007 when arrive at a draft.



SAM'S GARDEN OF SIMPLIFIED RULES

Introducing the “Play and Examples” File, and a tutorial on hazard limits

by Joe Bisz

This has been a great year for the Middle-earth community, and it's only getting better. In addition to Spain hosting a very successful Worlds tournament and player participation on the meccg.net forums increasing, there has also been a new Virtual Cards expansion released for playtesting, this newsletter with all of its great columns, and finally, after two years of effort, the Play and Examples File.

What is the Play and Examples File? You know all those COE Rules Digests buried online, hopelessly un-searchable and never moved to the CRF? Remember the clarifications buried in rulebooks and Dark Minions Inserts? Well, I have collected a vast amount of these rules and interpretations and put them all in the Play and Examples File, and if that wasn't enough, listed long examples to explain the finer details, point by point, and the document is fully searchable. Also, the document has been reviewed by many of the game's best rules judges, and as of Version 3.0, the Play file is “approved and recommended” to the Middle-earth community through the judge certification program. Wondering about the tricky ways Paths of the Dead can be played? Not sure how attacks on a non-creature card work? Do you know exactly what “immediately” means? It is the hope of the Council of Elrond that players who are caught in the labyrinth of rules confusions will find relief by reading the file as needed. Start reading the Play file online at meccg.net on the [Rules forum](#) or the [Judge Certification](#) forum.

For the rest of my article, with a little inspiration from the simple hobbit ways of Sam, I'd like to break down for you some of the most complicated timing mechanics in this game (or at least try!). I will be mostly quoting from the Play file, so this should give you a good idea of what you'll find inside those page too!

The topics I'll cover are: declaration and resolution of a card, and the related topic of hazard limits. There has recently been a new interpretation of the way hazards resolve. Well, not so new to the Europeans, but new to most Americans. So pay attention!

Resolution

There are four states a card or effect can be in:

- 1) Not yet declared (a card in hand or effect on table)
- 2) Declared but not resolved (also called “played”) (opponent may respond at this point, and then you take turns responding, until nobody wants to

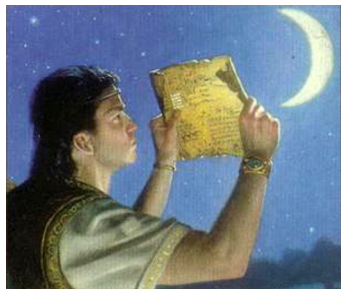
respond)

- 3) Declared and resolved
- 4) Declared and fizzled

- For example: An example of *not yet declared* would be if I had River in my hand and was wondering whether it was worth playing on my opponent's company of two untapped scouts and one untapped ranger. Once I made up my mind and placed it on the table, I am *declaring* the play of the card River, but it hasn't resolved and taken effect yet, and this gives my opponent a chance to play something in response, such as a Many Turns and Doublings to lower the hazard limit. If neither my opponent nor myself play a card in response to the River, the River is considered *resolved*, and all of its effects take place.
- Another example: Hazards like Reluctant Final Parting have effects that are triggered by passive conditions and so they resolve slightly differently. Once I place Reluctant Final Parting on the table, I am *declaring* its play, and if nobody responds to it, the card will *resolve* when its chain-of-effects ends. Once it resolves, it immediately sets up an effect which might become triggered by a passive condition [COE 74]. If my opponent did have an ally that met the conditions of Reluctant Final Parting, the effect of Reluctant Final Parting would become automatically *declared* (but not resolved yet). My opponent could now respond to the effect being declared by *declaring*, for instance, a Marvels Told targeting Reluctant Final Parting. If neither player responded to the Marvels, the Marvels would *resolve* first, discarding Reluctant Final Parting. Now the effect of Reluctant Final Parting should resolve, but the hazard is no longer there, so it fizzles and has no effect.

Hazard Limit (and an example using Many Turns and Doublings)

The CRF says: “You check the hazard limit at declaration and at resolution. At declaration there must be no more hazards declared than the hazard limit. At resolution there must be no more hazards resolved than the hazard limit.” This means you must have fewer hazards declared than the hazard limit in order to *declare* a new hazard. You must have no more hazards declared than the hazard limit in order to



TEST OF LÖRE: TOURNAMENT-LEVEL AND FUN DECKS

The “Complete” Resource & Hazard Strategies Taxonomy, including Kris van Beurden’s deck *A Short Game* by Mark Alfano

Are you sick of playing 3 Risky Blow, 3 Marvels Told, Orcrist, Glamdring, and Wormsbane? Would you like to play a high-interaction deck that scares your opponent out of his pants? Does your opponent snore when you play Cave-Drakes and Sellswords? Well, your worries are over! Now you can easily discover the myriad alternative strategies -- resource and hazard, hero and minion -- available in the MECCG universe. All you need to do is follow [this link](#) for resources and [this one](#) for hazards, and new horizons will unfold before your very eyes.

Many players have contributed to this project, and all deserve our appreciation -- even those who only said “I’d like to do something like this kind of deck... can you help?” This article, which in the future will be devoted to the in-depth exploration of a particular deck from the taxonomy, lauds one such player this month by focusing on his deck. The man of the hour is Kris van Beurden, and his deck is entitled *A Short Game* (take a look at the deck before reading further).

Kris’s deck is incredibly fast and powerful. Its aim is to exhaust in three (yes, only three!) turns and call the council immediately. Why? Well, a number of reasons. Against One Ring opponents, such play forces the dunker to attempt to play Cracks of Doom on his third or fourth turn (depending on who went first). Against fallen wizards, *A Short Game* is likely to exhaust before the badbeard can play all his stage cards, leaving the unlucky wizard with only 1 Marshalling Point per card in at least some categories. And against minions, the deck can keep up with the speed of even such monstrous decks as the [Return of the Faithless Stewards](#).

To play Kris’s deck, you only need **three rares**: Return of the King, The White Tree, and Tom Bombadil, though of course you will probably want a few more for your hazard portion. But perhaps simply looking at the deck list online doesn’t give you a proper idea of its potential.... The opening company is Aragorn with Cram, Beretar with Cram, Oin, and Haldir. That may seem more or less standard, but what happens next is the trick: each character heads off in his own direction -- Aragorn to Isengard, Haldir to Cameth Brin, Oin to the Old Forest, and Beretar to Bree. Without playing any Short Rests, that gives you only 6 cards, but if you play 1 Short Rest, you receive 13 cards. With two Short Rests, you will draw 20, and with all three you bring to your hand a whopping 27 cards! What’s more, if you manage to play Master of Esgaroth as well, then one of the characters can

move again, drawing even more cards.... The mind boggles at the possibilities.

In any case, Beretar’s only job is to play the Rangers of the North. Either Oin or Haldir should pick up Tom Bombadil. And Aragorn (joined eventually by Saruman, whose home site is Isengard) snatches a Sapling of the White Tree. At this point, you can use the boys in Eriador to kill creatures (a cave-drake is surprisingly easy prey with a single character and a Risky Blow). Only the latter company is relevant later: they next head to Minas Tirith, where the King Returns, the White Tree is planted, the Palantir is brought out and aligned, and Saruman meets by chance a 3-MP character.

It may not seem like much, but that’s already 10 character points, 3 faction points, 3 ally points, 2 item points, and 7 miscellaneous points, which comes out to a grand total of 25 -- just enough to call the council. With a good draw, you can do this easily in just two turns! With an acceptable draw, the barrage of points is launched on turn 3. Of course, if you need more points later, you need only look to the sideboard for Nenselde or the Knights of Dol Amroth.

There are a number of other subtleties to the deck, which Kris would be happy to explain to you if you run into him on GCCG, but the overall plan is now clear. If you still think it seems weak, the only solution is to give it a try. Kris did, and he won [LURE 2006](#)!

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LORE OF THE RINGS: TOLKIEN THE AUTHOR

Arachnomania in Middle-earth

by Wolfgang Penetsdorfer

I am starting with a column that gives insight into Tolkien's life and his works, given the topic is not totally alien to our beloved card game.

There are many spiders in the middle-earth tales, some of them quite prominent. Ungoliant is the one who is incited by Morgoth to destroy the trees of Valinor that gave light to the world. In The Hobbit there are the Great Spiders of Mirkwood, that brought Bilbo and the dwarves into a dangerous situation. Then there is Shelob in The Lord of the Rings, who lies in wait for Frodo and Sam at Cirith Ungol. She is also known as a descendant of Ungoliant and as the ancestress of the Mirkwood spiders; thus she is the genealogical link between the very first spider Ungoliant down to the lesser creatures we all know. Finally also the tale of Roverandom is not devoid of spiders: masses of them are living on the moon, where they are chasing the moon beams and devour everything that encounters them.

So one might think that Tolkien has a love for spiders, since his use of those creatures extends beyond having some scary monsters in a thrilling tale.

SPIDERS IN MYTHOLOGIE

All over the world spiders take an important role in the myths of various cultures. Best known to us is probably the tale of the girl Arachne, who has dares to challenge Athene for a duel at the loom. After the woman has won, the goddess became enraged in such a manner, that she transformed her into a spider, so she is able to pursue her artistic skill for all eternity.

The Myths of the Hopi Indians know a spider woman called Kogyangwuti. She servant to the earth creating sound, motion and life on it and also filling it with meaning and purpose.

There are other indian tales telling of a spider, who brought fire to the world, or who gives shape to all things and holds them together with her net.

Dream catchers have become very common during the last years in our sleeping rooms. They are rooted in an indian legend, where a man, who is haunted by evil powers in his sleep, is instructed by a spider to build a dream catcher, which will watch over his sleep letting the good dreams pass through only. ¹

In the mythology of India the spider's web is a symbol for Maya, the divine power that both sets up and shapes the world. One presupposes the other continually. Thus in the middle of the web there is a spider, stylized to a horizontal eight, a symbol for infinity. The radial-symmetric designed web corresponds with the cosmic order, in the middle of which the spider as a weaver keeps alive this order and cares for its onward renewal.

In the Norse (northern Germanic) mythology there are the Norns: three females, who are weaving the fates of all livings. Urd² is responsible for starting the thread of life (reflecting the past), while Verdandi³ weaves the individual pattern of life into the thread (the presence), and finally Skuld⁴ cuts it in due time (the future).

There is another spider woman in the myth of Atlantis. After the downfall of the continent it is her task to lead the inhabitants to a new home.

Finally there are oceanic legends speaking of a god Nareau, who appears in two different manifestations: on the one hand as an old spider, who creates, and on the other hand as a young spider who shapes.

So far this rather rough overview over some myths, which shows, that the spider as a mythological figure is known to a very large extent among all sorts of cultures. Some recurring motifs are eye-catching, such as the spider being a woman with creative power. ⁵

Of course there are two sides of every coin. Especially during the middle ages the spider becomes demonized as a sort of witch animal. One might think that a female creative power does not fit Christian patterns. ⁶ The superstitious belief in central Europe tells of women who are able to change into spiders carrying off virgins used for ritual sacrifices. Also the Anglo-Saxons know of impish spiders.

In the Japanese mythology there is a gigantic spider demon who is defeated by the fabled hero Kintaro.

This negative picture of spiders is also used in modern psychoanalysis. Thus Sigmund Freud takes the spider as a symbol for the devouring womanliness, that lures and excites, but then prevents thriving. The very same idea was used before by Friedrich Nietzsche, calling God a spider.

SPIDERS IN MIDDLE-EARTH

We may assume with a safe conscience that Tolkien was aware of most of those traditions about spiders in mythology. Also his idea of creating a sort of modern myth was fundamentally based on transforming conceptions of reality, that have been reflected in myth and legend, from the past into the presence.

However, having a first glance at spiders in Middle-earth, it is hard to find any parallels between them and any mythological ideas as described above. Of course no one expects Tolkien just to copy or plagiarize. On a second glance we will find, that his idea of spiders is a true mythological one, mixing characteristics and habits of real spiders with qualities and attributes ascribed to them in various legends.

Let's have a first look on his biography, which is also often taken as a proof of Tolkien's attitude towards spiders. It is known that he was bitten by a tarantula when he was still a baby in South Africa. For Michael Coren, a biographer of Tolkien, this was the very reason for his arachnophobia, which is reflected in his works.

This argument is rather weak, especially since we have a letter from Tolkien to W.H. Auden, where he states, that his remembrance of this event is existing only because of other people telling him about it. He even likes those little creatures, and whenever he finds one in the bathroom, he helps it to find a way out into freedom. Also for Tolkien as an author it was very important to create stories totally disengaged from his personal situation and interests.

Of course the subconscious is not to be neglected, and it may have had some influence to a certain degree. Still it's much more reasonable to assume, that Tolkien as an expert in myths of all sorts wanted to create his own mythological spider figure. It had to be decided if his spider would play a positive or negative role. I couldn't find any explanation, but obviously he accepted the prevailing opinion of his time and surrounding: spiders are loathsome, evil and causing horror. Especially for The Hobbit these attributes came in handy and he used them on full purpose.

Above all it is Ungoliant, who embodies many aspects of a mythological spider appropriately, while as such she meets the requirements of the story. Her gluttony is insatiable, when she consumed the light of Laurelin and Telperion. Her deadly venom is capable of poisoning the trees incurably,

after all a creation of Yavanna, not the least among the Valie. There are not many besides her that have been able to imbue Morgoth with fear. Besides the Dark Enemy it is mainly her who brings sorrow to the world. She is known for leading a life in solitude, because she prefers her own company above all creatures in the world. Since we know about her offspring, there had to be some male partner once. But speaking of spiders the idea of having devoured the male after mating is close at hand. It may have been similar with Shelob (though never mentioned in the books).

Many spiders are active at night preferring the darkness. This characteristic was suitable, since destroying light was the predominant feature of Ungoliant and the moon spiders in Roverandom. On the other hand light, especially when having its origin in the prime light of the Two Trees, is their worst enemy: it is neither Sams heroic vigour nor the blade of Sting, but the Phial of Galadriel, filled with the light of Earendil, that made Shelob give way and thus vulnerable. Another convenient characteristic of Shelob is infiltrating her victims with a poison of a special quality, that makes them seemingly dead. Ideal for Tolkien to create some climax in the storyline.

NAMES AND THEIR MEANING

Tolkien was a true master of inventing names. Creating a new word for something has to meet many requirements. Of course there has to be a meaning of the word. The sound of the word has to match the meaning of it. While the word has to be alive within the larger context of a language, it may not be just a synonym. While the invented name tells you something of what it names, it should also hide something and thus make the reader curious to learn more about it. Ideal is a mixture of both the languages of reality and the languages of the created fiction. Finally the invented word must follow to a certain degree the grammar of the language. We know the names of two spiders: Ungoliant and Shelob.

To find a translation of Ungoliant is rather difficult. "Ungol" means "spider" in Sindarin⁷. But there is also a Quenya word "ungwe", that describes shadow, darkness. Thanks to an older script we know, that the name "Ungoliant" is a development of "Ungweliant" or "Ungwe Liant". Now it is interesting, that "Liant" means spider in Quenya. The exact translation into Sindarin would be "Delduthling". So it is most likely, that "ungol" was never a genuine Sindarin name for spider, but that the Quenya "Ungweliant" was taken as a loanword. However, the name of Ungoliant reflects "spider" and "darkness".





SARUMAN'S PALANTIR: THOUGHTS ON THE PLAYING FIELD

New Strategies for the Virtual Cards at NA Championships
by Mark Alfano

In preparation for North American Championships in Princeton, Joe Bisz and I created a set of 39 “Virtual Cards.” Virtual Cards are a way to produce expansions for the Middle-earth card game without publishing new physical cards. Essentially, we have taken 39 existing cards and invented new game texts for them that have utilize completely different strategies and open up the possibility of brand new deck types. Since these card texts exist in a downloadable document on the internet, they are called “Virtual.” Have you ever wanted to play Pirate as a Minion player? Ever dreamed of defeating Sauron by keeping the One Ring and using force of arms? Well, both these decks are possible now. Think that Sauron and the Balrog are too powerful? Wish you could do something more about squatters and Fallen-wizards? We’ve added some cards that might come to your aid. This is an unofficial expansion to MECCG—it is not a released set. However, it is our hope that this side event will generate lots of player feedback on these cards from playtesting, so that in the future an official expansion to the Middle-earth game can be seriously contemplated. If you are interested, check out <http://www.meccg.net/nachamps06/> for the card texts and [the forum page](#) for discussion.

Some of the new decks are obvious, e.g., virtual Morannon lets you use the One Ring to kick Sauron’s ass, and Horns, Horns, Horns allows you to reenact the muster of Rohan. Others stand out less on the surface, though they could be just as powerful in the right deck. Here is a list of just a few of the decks I would be excited to see on Friday during the Virtual Card Tournament of NA Championships:

Hero Decks

- (1) Underdeeps deck with Ancient Stair and Wondrous Maps;
- (2) Alert the Folk, Armory, Rebuild the Town, Bard;
- (3) Legolas, Gimli, Annalena, Oin, 3x Crept Along Carefully;
- (4) Fair Travels in Dark, Fair Travels in Shadow, Tower Raided;
- (5) Ent-Draughts, Elrond or Galadriel or Thrain, Fireworks, Armory/Jewel of Beleriand;
- (6) Alliance of Free Peoples, Army of the Dead, Token of Goodwill;
- (7) Wandering Wizard with virtual Vanishment.

Minion Decks

- (A) Lieutenant of Morgul, Taladhan, Snaga; Smart and Secret, Diversion, Well Preserved, Freeze the Flesh;
- (B) Black Numenoreans, Black Horse, Umbarean Corsairs, Usriev of Treachery;
- (C) Open to the Summons, Baduila, Euog, Baugur – a covert Balrog company with two leaders!

Fallen Wizard Decks

- (I) Fallen Saruman, First of the Order, Never Refuse, Shameful Deeds, Lotsa Spells;
- (II) Fallen Gandalf, Narya, Heart Grown Cold, Plotting Ruin, Smoke on the Wind, Burning Rick Cot and Tree;

Hazard Strategies

- (a) Crebain, Dwarf of Waw, the Riddle Game;
- (b) Withered Lands, Fever of Unrest, Half an Eye Open.

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The Shire Season: Tournament Calendar

August

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

September

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

August

🏹 Gaming at Gencon, August 11th

🏹 MEECG North American Nationals, August 25th through 27th (<http://www.meccg.net/nachamps06/>)

September

🏹 Christian Jentgens will be hosting the **Swiss National Tournament** on August 27th.

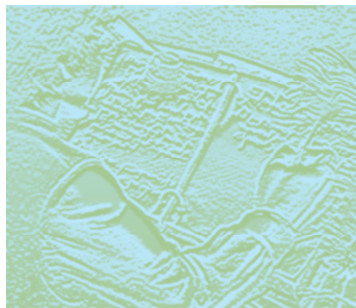
🏹 The Nordic Cup will be held the 9th-10th of September in Stockholm, Sweden. It is organized by the Swedish Council of the Variags and the Finnish Council of Barad-dûr. (<http://www.meccg.net/dforum/viewtopic.php?t=1875>)

The Red Book of Westmarch

Issue 1 August 2006

Editor: Joe Bisz

www.councilofelrond.org



That's all folks! But The Red Book is always looking for more articles about MECCG or Tolkien. We try to fit articles into already existing columns, such as our ethics (Conduct and Hobbitship) column and Thoughts on the Playing Field column, and you don't have to be a Council member to submit. One community member submitted to the column "Play of the Month," and described a particularly unbelievable moment in his MECCG game. Submission is not a guarantee of publication. All submissions, letters, and correspondence to The Red Book may be edited and published unless the piece says otherwise. We also welcome letters to the editor! For length and format guidelines and more detailed descriptions of our columns and the kinds of pieces we're looking for, please go online to <http://www.councilofelrond.org/forum/viewtopic.php?t=7>. Email the editor: joebisz@verizon.net.