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

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For the *Middle-earth Collectible Card Game* Community

CONTENTS OF THE RED BOOK

1-2 | Fellowship
1-2 | Gollum's Grotto
3-10 |Dream & Scenarios
11-14 | Test of Form
15-17| Conduct&Hobbitship
18-19|Thoughts on Playfield
20 | Play of the Month
21-22| Wizard's Voice #119
23 | The Horn of Anor
24 | Riddling Talk
25 | Tournament Calendar

The Fellowship: Comments from the CoE

Participation

by Josh Hunholz, Previous Chair CoE

Anyone who has ever tried to keep a houseplant alive knows that unless you give it plenty of sunlight and water, the plant will most likely eventually die of neglect. A hobby can have some of the same results if we neglect it and don't put time and effort into keeping it active and alive. The hobby I'm thinking of is, of course, MECCG! So how can you help to keep this great game alive? Well, I'm glad you asked.

Participation is the most important way you can help to keep out game active. Go to national tournaments hosted by your local council. If your council isn't very active, you might consider offering to help host a tournament or two in your area. For those of you reading this from North America, the Council of Lorien is holding 4 events at Gencon this summer in Indianapolis, including the National Championship! If you don't know how to check with your local council, visit the Council of Elrond website to find an e-mail address and/or website for your nation's council.

Another great way to help keep our game going is to volunteer to run for a seat on the Council of Elrond, our world governing body. While it's certainly not hard or complicated work serving on the council, it is extremely important! Without the CoE, it would be much more difficult for the different national councils to stay connected with each other. It is also important to have a group like the CoE to oversee organizing

Gollum's Grotto: Tips and Tricks

Probabilistic Decisions in MECCG

by Mark Alfano

Many of us have come across the scenario: *should take the risk?* Although the details may differ, the question is the same. When is it worthwhile to make a risky play that will—if successful—win you the game but—if unsuccessful—lose you the game? Here are some typical situations:

First Scenario: I want to move my wizard all alone to the Old Forest, but my opponent used Revealed to All Watchers and showed me his…

Cave-Drake or Ambusher:
Go ahead, move. Here are the probabilities…
You kill the creature: 72%
The attack is ineffectual (you end up tapped without kill points): 11%
You get wounded but don't die: 14%
You die: 3%

Assassin:
... and you don't have Forewarned: Don't move. Here are the probabilities:
You kill the Assassin: 25%
The attack is ineffectual (you're tapped without any kill points): 19%
You get wounded but don't die: 42%
You die: 15%

... and you do have Forewarned is Forearmed:

(* "Fellowship" is continued here from Page 1)

the World Championships each summer, and to help keep an updated and accurate rules document (through the position of the NetRep). Currently, the CoE is looking for volunteers who are willing to run for the 2008-2009 session. Please visit the CoE forums for more information. While serving is a fairly easy task, it is essential to maintain the stability of this great game!

The last thing I wanted to write about is something I think a lot of us do anyway: recruitment! Recruiting new players is always important to keep the game alive, because inevitably, as in any hobby, some people will burn out or have to take a break for a while. Since this is a game, real life always comes first and things come up to force folks to step out of the gaming scene for a while. So we should be sharing our enjoyment and passion for this game with others, so that we can get new players (and some old players, returning to a game they thought was dead) to keep a strong base that will play the game. Now I don't mean you have to rent a booth at the local shopping center and sit there trying to convince people to play the game. But do share it with your friends, relatives, neighbors, or anyone else that is interested in games and you think would love the challenge and enjoyment of getting into MECCG! For me, this is easy. In addition to playing CCGs, I have been hooked on boardgames for quite a few years. So one night at our local boardgame group, I brought some challenge decks and taught some people how to play. Some of them found it too confusing, or they weren't interested, but I did get two people hooked! So just for that it was worth it.

By doing your part in keeping our game active, we will be able to enjoy this hobby for many years to come. The sad fact of out-of-print card games is that there is no company to help us market the game. But at the same time this gives us a chance to be more active, which is good. Play the game, share the game, help out with the game; that's how you can keep this going!

Gencon Events

This summer at Gencon (8/14 – 8/17), the Council of Lorien is hosting tournaments each day! For those of you in North America, come and enjoy 4 fun days of Middle Earth, as well as lots of other gaming. There will be prizes each day, including another Deadly Dart for each participant (a Chad Martin classic).

8/14 4pm: Hero Sealed Deck
8/15 4pm: National Championship
8/16 4pm: Lidless Eye Booster Draft
8/17 10am: National Championship Finals
8/17 10am: Challenge Deck Tournament (for everyone else)

(* "Gollum's Grotto" is continued here from Page 1)

Go ahead and move. Here are the probabilities:
You kill the Assassin: 72%
The attack is ineffectual (you're tapped without any kill points): 11%
You get wounded but don't die: 14%
You die: 3%

Corsairs of Umbar:
Don't move. Here are the probabilities…
You kill the Corsairs: 28%
The attack is ineffectual (you're tapped without any kill points): 14%
You get wounded but don't die: 49%
You die: 10%

Second Scenario: I want to enter a dragon's lair, but my only untapped character is the Lieutenant of Morgul. I have a Foul-Smelling Paste, so if he gets wounded but does not die, I'm OK. However, if he taps but doesn't get wounded, I get nothing. And of course, if he dies, I lose one of the most powerful characters in the game.

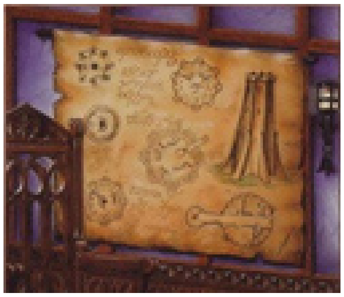
The correct decision depends on the dragon lair. The Caves of Ulund has an automatic-attack of only 13 prowess, while Gold Hill has an attack of 15 prowess. Irerock, The Longly Mountain, and Gondmaeglom are all in between those two, with 14 prowess

Caves of Ulund:
Stay untapped. Here are the probabilities for staying untapped…
You remain untapped: 42%
You get wounded but remain in play: 42%
You get wounded and discarded: 6%
You die: 10%
Here are the probabilities for tapping…
You remain tapped: 83%
You get wounded but remain in play: 12%
You get wounded and discarded: 2%
You die: 3%

Irerock / The Lonely Mountain / Gondmaeglom:
It depends on how badly you need the points. You should probably stay untapped, though. Here are the probabilities for staying untapped…
You remain untapped: 28%
You get wounded but remain in play: 52%
You get wounded and discarded: 8%
You die: 12%
And here are the probabilities for tapping…
You remain tapped: 72%
You get wounded but remain in play: 20%
You get wounded and discarded: 3%
You die: 5%

Gold Hill:
This time it's probably best to tap. Here are the probabilities for staying untapped…
You remain untapped: 17%
You get wounded but remain in play: 60%
You get wounded and discarded: 9%
You die: 14%
And here are the probabilities for tapping…
You remain tapped: 58%
You get wounded but remain in play: 30%
You get wounded and discarded: 5%
You die: 7%

If anyone wants an analysis of a different situation, email me!



DREAM CARDS AND OPTIONAL SCENARIOS

Battle of Five Armies

by Agustin Lozano de la Cruz

"So began a battle that none had expected; and it was called the Battle of Five Armies, and it was very terrible. Upon one side were the Goblins and the Wild Wolves, and upon the other one were Elves and Men and Dwarves".

*This is a MECCG scenario for two players, one of them must play a Hero deck and the other one must play a Minion deck (*see below for optional rules). Fallen Wizard and Balrog decks are not allowed.*

Special Rules

Each company may move only to a site in one of the following regions: Rhudaur, Wold & Foothills, High Pass, Redhorn Gate, Angmar, Gundabad, Anduin Vales, Grey Mountain Narrows, Heart of Mirkwood, Western Mirkwood, Woodland Realm, Southern Mirkwood, Northern Rhovanion, Withered Heath and Iron Hills.

Forbidden cards: Sacrifice of Form, Orc-mail, A Malady without Healing, Veils Flung Away, Many Secrets Buried There, Foul Fumes, True Fana, Long Winter, Snowstorm and any dragon manifestation but Smaug Roused.

Modified cards:
-Agents: playable as characters only, never as hazards.
-Bolg and Azog: it is possible to play them as minion characters.
-Cave Drake: counts as a drake creature.
-Remnants of old Robberies: can't be played on drakes or Smaug Ahunt or the auto-attack at The Lonely Mountain.
-Skin-changer: if it is played during Battle of Five Armies, you don't need to place Beorn in your hand afterwards.
-Tiding of Bold Spies: can't be played on a company moving to The Lonely Mountain.
-Drakes: Minion players get kill marshalling points for every defeated drake.

Factions: a player can recruit unique factions which can be played at any non-haven site located in one of the regions listed above.

Starting Companies: Hero characters start at Rivendell. Minion characters begin the game at Dol Guldur. A Hero player has an extra +5 general influence that cannot be used to control characters.

The Lonely Mountain contains one auto-attack only: Dragon, 2 strikes of 18/8. This auto-attack is also an at home Dragon manifestation. No hazard can target or modify such attack, but it is possible to play resources that cancel or modified it. Whenever a company enters The Lonely Mountain without defeating the auto-attack (unless the company manages to play Smaug Roused before the end of its site phase) Smaug Ahunt enters play as a long event (it remains in play until current player´s next site phase, but it is not treated as a long event for the purpose of playing cards that target it, such as Marvels Told). Meanwhile Smaug Ahunt (or Smaug Roused) remains in play, The Lonely Mountain has no auto-attack (but it contains a hoard yet) and it is not allowed to play Smaug Roused.

Victory Conditions: the player who scores more marshalling points after resolving the Battle of Five Armies (BFA) wins the game. BFA is called when:

1. Both players have exhausted their decks twice: BFA begins at the end of current turn.

2. If a player has exhausted his deck once and if he has got the Hoard of Smaug: BFA begins at the end of opponent´s next turn.

3. While in a tournament, if time is over, BFA begins at the end of the turn played by the player who didn´t start the game.

The Hoard of Smaug: a player gets the Hoard of Smaug when he plays Smaug Roused or if he manages to defeat one of the following: Smaug Ahunt, Smaug Roused or the auto-attack at the Lonely Mountain (if the player does so, he gets 5 kill marshalling points).

The Battle of the Five Armies:
1. Before BFA starts, each character must face a corruption check. The player who played last turn begins.

2. Each player´s characters form a single company that faces opponent´s company in Company versus Company Combat (CvCC). No card or effect can target such attack as a whole (cards like Concealment and Black Arrow have no effect), but cards that target each single strike are playable (cards such as Risky Blow, Halfling´s Stealth, etc). This CvCC is not located at any site. Ignore any restriction about companies composition (it is possible to have more than 7 characters, several leaders, Ringwraiths, etc).

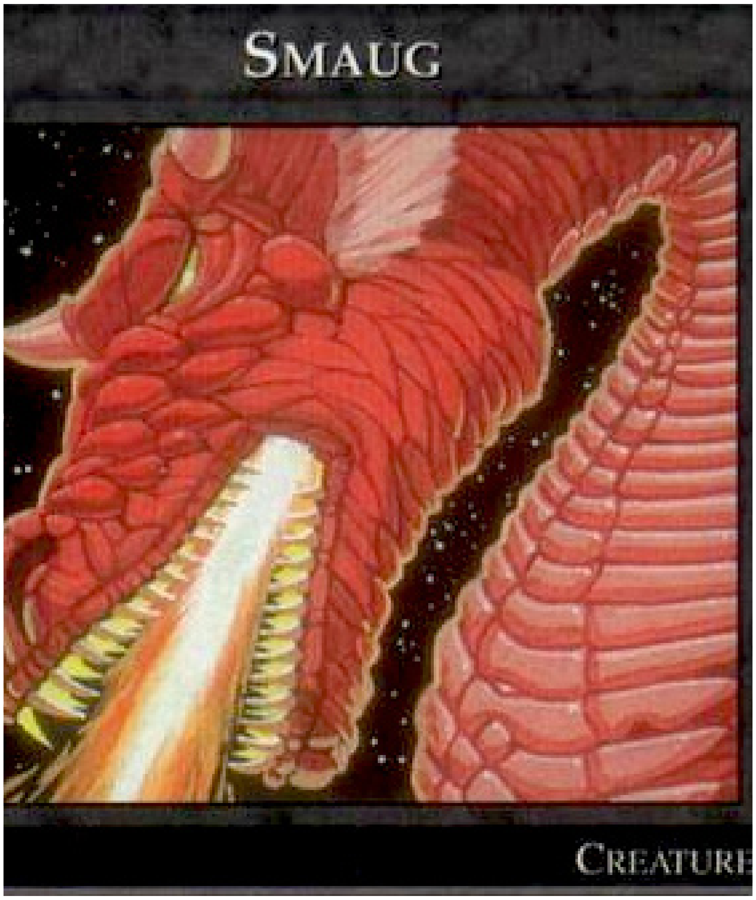
3. Characters keep same status (untapped, tapped or wounded) they had at the end of regular game. It is allowed to play cards or effects that modify such status.

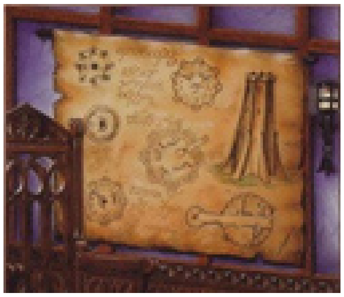
4. Each character has prowess +X, where X is your faction marshalling points (apply this modifier after any other prowess modifier). Last Alliance of Elves and Men and Great Army of the North count as faction marshalling points.

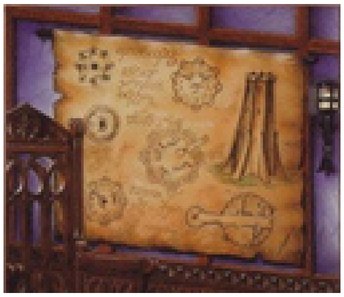
5. While resolving CvCC, treat your company as the defending company if you got the Hoard of Smaug. If no player got the Hoard of Smaug, treat your company as the defending company if you have less faction marshalling points than your opponent (or less total marshalling points if there is a tie; or make a roll and choose if there is a tie yet).

Tournament Rules: every player must construct a Hero deck and a Minion deck. When resolving starting roll, the player who rolls higher decides to choose alignment or to start the game playing his first turn.

Optional Tournament Rules: if you are not in the mood for constructing two decks (lazy you!), or maybe you are a rookie player who doesn't feel confident playing Minion, just play a Hero deck (anyway, keep in mind that you better should play different hazard decks). If both players have Hero decks only, BFA still takes place (in fact, as this story was told in The Hobbit, Free Peoples were about to fight against themselves because of the Hoard of Smaug).







DREAM CARDS AND OPTIONAL SCENARIOS

A Look At Tolkien's Middle Earth Play Style: Part 1

by Ben Sorensen

One wonders just how well the companies in the book would have done in the game, so I have taken it upon myself to put the events of the book in game terms. The following assumptions are made:

1) Hero Gandalf vs. FW Saruman.
2) 4 Deck "Campaign" Game (One Book Roughly Equaling One Time Through The Deck).
3) A sense of humor on the part of the reader.

Given the number of turns involved in a four deck game, we can expect both sides to need to focus on the One Ring as the quickest method of winning. However, dunking is hardly guaranteed. We can also expect to see some spectacular hazard combos.

The Starting Companies

The starting company for Gandalf consists of Thorin, Balin, Gloin, and various low-mind dwarves. Gandalf is set up to do a King Under the Mountain run his first time through the deck. He would probably have been better advised to take Thrain over Thorin, however, as a 7/8 Warrior/Ranger/Sage is a stronger character than a 5/8 Warrior/Scout/Diplomat. However, Thorin does give you the option of Lucky Searches, which may come in handy later.

Our Fallen Saruman company has Wormtongue, Hador, Raisha, and Gisulf hoping to pick up some Rings and the Scroll in Dragon Country. Hador has a Myrmidon and Thrall, Gisulf and Raisha have Open to the Summons, and Wormtongue has Thrall of the Voice.

The Game Begins

Gandalf rolls well and starts the game. The player draws Gandalf and Bilbo on the first turn, plays Gandalf, and moves his starting company to Bag End. Fallen Saruman however, is hoping to slow things down and plays a Doors of Night/No Way Forward combo. The Hero Gandalf player is woefully unprepared with Twilights—the game will likely slow to a crawl. He does, however, manage to get some Twice-Baked cakes at Bag End and Thror's Map as his free Minor Item.

Fallen Saruman's strategy becomes apparent next turn as he plays The Water's Tithe on Hador. Starting at the Ettenmoors, they move to Gondmaeglom to play a Precious Gold Ring. Gandalf as a hazard player puts Smaug at Home to the table—an odd choice for an At Home dragon for KutM. Tolkien should probably in this case have gone with Agburanar as a less difficult Dragon still allowing Greater Item play. Not only that, but Agburanar would enhance his ability to play further Unique Dragon Manifestations if he's going for Legendary Hoard. Gandalf puts down some Nazgul for later sideboarding. Some Secret Art of Flame gets the company into Gondmaeglom, where they play a Precious Gold Ring.

On the next turn, Gandalf's company is hampered by No Way Forward. He plays 3 x Hobbit Lore at Bag End (lucky draw) and puts Bilbo and Thorin under his DI. Unfortunately, he hasn't drawn any MPs. He does, however, have Sting, so he discards his Twice-Baked Cakes to move to the Ettenmoors. Fallen Saruman plays Choking Shadows on the site, followed up with attacks from Bert, Tom, and William. These are canceled by the Cock Crows x 3 (wow, Gandalf's got a fairly good hand). Upon resolving hand size, two Lucky Searches are drawn. Since the Ettenmoors are now a Shadow-Hold, the low-mind dwarves get through the automatic attacks, though several of them are wounded in the attempt, then Gandalf plays Lucky Search on Thorin, hoping for the Enruned Shield trick. Unfortunately, Thorin gets Orcrist, which helps him survive the strike afterward. Gandalf then attempts a Lucky Search hoping for the Enruned Shield, but unfortunately draws Glamdring. The Fallen Saruman player winces, as many of his iniital hazards are orc-based. However, he remembers that he also has some spiders and hopes to draw them soon. Bilbo taps and plays Sting.

On Fallen Saruman's next turn, his company moves to the Caves of Ulund. Gandalf hits them with the predictable Cave-Drakes, but Tormented Earth takes care of that. Raisha manages to defeat the strike from the automatic attack, and they play the Scroll of Isildur—Fallen Saruman is well on his way to finding the One Ring and getting his New Ringlord. Another character would have tapped to play Thror's Map, but Gandalf has already played this unique item. The Fallen Saruman player still hasn't drawn his avatar, and is beginning to wonder if he perhaps isn't in for a run of bad luck.

Looking at the wounded state of his company, Gandalf decides on his next turn to stop at Rivendell. Tolkien really should have stocked some Twilights in that first deck. Fallen Saruman plays 3 x River on Rivendell in hopes of getting his avatar drawn. Unfortunately, he still can't seem to draw into it. With the rest of his hazards, he plays Spider of the Morlat and Shelob, after which he puts a Lure of the Senses on Gandalf. Bilbo uses a Marvels Told to get rid of it.

On the third turn, Fallen Saruman's company heads down to the Gladden Fields to play another Precious Gold Ring. Gandalf plays Itangast Ahunt, which is canceled with a well-placed Concealment. At the end of the turn, Fallen Saruman has two Wizard's Tests, but still hasn't drawn an avatar.

Seeing that this is likely to be a short game, Gandalf taps to sideboard in the One Ring. He's included a couple of Precious

Gold Rings in the deck for some possible Dwarven Ring points by the end of the game, and moves to Goblin-Gate in the hopes of drawing one. Fallen Saruman uses Awaken the Earth's Fire, Minions Stir, and plays the Great Goblin. Gandalf is astonished that a player would put such a crap hazard in their deck even for 4-deck play. Tolkien obviously hasn't heard of "dump and run" in connection with dunking. Gandalf plays Biter and Beater! and kills the Great Goblin. The Fallen Saruman player winces at the kill MPs, but comforts himself with the thought that he should likely win soon. At the Goblin Gate, Gandalf considers playing a Precious Gold Ring, but decides to risk sending Bilbo down by himself to the Under-Grottos next turn. You've got to admit, Tolkien has a fondness for risky play.

The Fallen Saruman company moves from the Anduin Vales to Isengard. Still no Avatar. They do draw the One Ring. Gandalf wishes he had drawn into a Cave-Worm, and is now sweating.

Bilbo goes down to the Under-Grottos alone, while Gandalf and the others move to the Eagle's Eyrie using a Short Rest. Gandalf uses Wizard's Voice to give him enough DI to not have to worry about Call of Home. Gandalf manages to draw two Halfling Stealths, the One, and a Test of Form. Fallen Saruman fails to draw any Beorning Skin-Changers. He also doesn't draw his avatar yet, and is beginning to look at his deck strangely. Bilbo gets into the Under-Grottos by using Halfling Stealth x 2 and plays a Precious Gold Ring. Bilbo plays Test of Form, crosses his fingers, and rolls an 8—it's the One Ring! Bilbo happily takes control of it, and Gandalf's player gives Fallen Saruman the finger. Fallen Saruman chucks a hammer at the wall and starts swearing. Expressions like "wtf?" can be heard around Isengard.

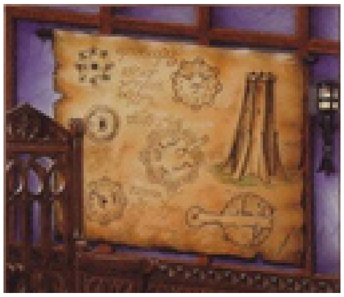
On Fallen Saruman's turn, he still hasn't drawn his avatar. He plays Forge-Master, then sends Hador to the Minion Himring (Gap of Isen, Enedhwaith, Eriadoran Coast, Elven Shores) using his other Water's Tithe. Unfortunately, he doesn't draw his avatar. His hand is clogging up. Gandalf, on the other hand, plays quite a few Nazgul perms, as well as Daelomin at Home for later HL increases.

Bilbo comes up, and Gandalf and co return to Goblin Gate to meet with him. Gandalf has another Wizard's Voice, which helps against Call of Home. Fallen Saruman manages to play four spawn, but in spite of all this card draw doesn't have his avatar yet.

Fallen Saruman sends Hador to the Grey Havens. Still no avatar.

Gandalf and Co move to Beorn's House. No MPs are available. Fallen Saruman is getting desperate to find his avatar.

Hador moves back to Minion Himring. Wormtongue and Gisulf go to attempt to Influence the One Ring away from Bilbo. Gandalf taps out Gisulf with Adunaphel and plays Beorning Skin-Changers. Fallen Saruman gives Gandalf an entirely different sort of finger than the one which Gandalf gave Fallen Saruman. Still no avatar.



Gandalf decides to split from the dwarves. Bilbo has 6 DI with the One Ring, and so can control Fili and Kili. Let's see, Bilbo has 5 Mind, Thorin 8, and Balin and Gloin 5 Each . . . that's 23 GI used! I think maybe Tolkien cheats. However, Fallen Saruman does not notice as he's too busy cursing out Gandalf for getting the One. Alternatively, it is possible that Thorin has a Gold Belt of Lorien somewhere, allowing him to have either Balin or Gloin as a follower. At any rate, Gandalf heads to Lorien while the rest head to Thranduil's Halls, figuring it to be reasonably safe. However, Fallen Saruman plays some Froth and Raged, Wake of Warred Giant Spiders and uses Flies and Spiders to take several characters prisoner. During the site Phase, Bilbo uses the One's Strike canceling ability to rescue captured dwarves, as the hazard player used New Moon/Gloom to turn Thranduil's Halls into a Ruins & Lairs. Fallen Saruman was hoping repeated canceling ccs (the cc is an active condition of the strike canceling ability of the One Ring and so must be made upon declaration. This flies in the face of traditional beliefs about Active Conditions, and will eventually lead to discarding a wizard not being an active condition of Sacrifice of Form. Unfortunately, the CoE will not modify that ruling until after Gandalf faces Durin's Bane at the Under-Gates. But I get ahead of myself.) With everybody rescued, the turn ends, Bilbo having passed all his ccs and the Fallen Saruman player tearing his hair out in frustration, still not having drawn his avatar.

Fallen Saruman plays Bard at Lake-Town and does some more card draw. Still no avatar. Gandalf makes a few suggestions to Fallen Saruman on deck construction. Fallen Saruman tells Gandalf precisely what he can do with his suggestions. Bard goes to Sarn Goriwing and plays Black Arrow.

Gandalf plays the White Council at Lorien since he has an MP lead. He replays Unexpected Party, which had been discarded through Prisoner-Taking. He also starts sideboarding in King Under the Mountain and Returned Exiles. Whether the extra MPs from the White Council were worth leaving his party is anybody's guess. He plays Legendary Hoard on Smaug at Home. Bilbo and Co head to Lake-Town while waiting for their combo.

Fallen Saruman, for lack of anything better to do, sends Bard back to Lake-Town. He still hasn't drawn his avatar, and his deck is down to only a few cards. Gandalf figures to get some mileage out of Legendary Hoard and plays Smaug on Bard. Bard plays Risky Blow, taps, uses Old Thrush, taps Black Arrow, and rolls two twelves. Gandalf's jaw drops in amazement, as his King Under the Mountain deck is now completely screwed. Fallen Saruman starts thinking about his backup MP plans, since 5 Kill MPs is a pretty good start. Still no Avatar, but uses Smoke Rings to sideboard in Necklace of Girion.

Thorin and Co head to the Lonely Mountain where they play Mithril Coat and the Arkenstone off of Legendary Hoard. No hoard items, as the Lonely Mountain is no longer a hoard site. Gandalf checks his sideboard, swears to himself, plays another White Council, and begins sideboarding in the necessary cards for a Return of the King/Anduril deck. He also starts considering the possibility of dunking with the One Ring.

Fallen Saruman sends Bard up to the Lonely Mountain, and Bard plays the Necklace of Girion. Still no Avatar.

Gandalf decides to try and influence the Necklace away from Bard, so has his company sit. He plays his last White Council and declares movement to the Lonely Mountain through starter movement, sidestepping No Way Forward. Fallen Saruman plays Choking Shadows+Minions Stir+Buthrakaur on the Lonely Mountain. By the way, Tolkien can't spell Buthrakaur. He keeps talking about "Bolg", but there's no hazard by that name! After which he unleashes all the orcs in his hand, plays Revealed to All Watchers, unleashes all the orcs in his hand, plays Mouth+Revealed, unleashes all the orcs in his hand. At the end of the day, Thorin and several of the low-mind dwarves are dead and Orcrist and the Arkenstone have been discarded. Bilbo is carrying the One Ring, Sting, and the Mithril Shirt. Gandalf is hoping that Fallen Saruman will not play corruption. Gandalf exhausts and brings in from the sideboard Aragorn, Reforging, Narsil, Anduril, and Frodo. Fallen Saruman has three cards left in his deck and still hasn't drawn his avatar.

Thus ends the first time through the deck, affectionately known as "The Hobbit." The next cycle through the deck shall be forthcoming, and will be called "The Fellowship Of The Ring."

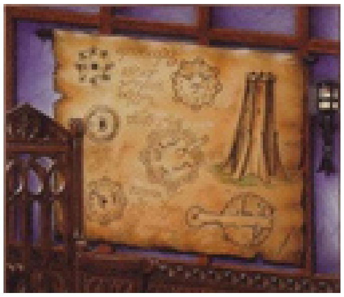
Second Time Through the Deck

Fallen Saruman knows that the bottom three cards are his avatar. He tries to bring Bard to Lorien, but Bard is stopped by Skin-changers. He sends Wormtongue and Gisulf to Edoras to attempt a Rohan squat. He brings Hador back to Isengard. Raisha also squats for the moment.

Hador manages to kill some Corsairs through use of Bitter Cold. Fallen Saruman exhausts his deck, draws all three of his avatars, and rejoices. Unfortunately, We Have Come to Kill can't be used to bring in Wizards (and RW Followers are still being debated), so he'll have to wait until his next turn to play him.

Apparently, Tolkien doesn't care about corruption, as Bilbo is still carrying the One Ring, Mithril Coat, and Sting. Storing the Mithril Coat would be a wise move, as it will do absolutely nothing to save Bilbo's life while he bears the One Ring. Nevertheless, Gandalf and Bilbo move to Rivendell. Gandalf discards as many Dragon-Country resources as possible, since he won't be trying for MPs there any more. Fallen Saruman prays for a Lure of the Senses, but no such Lures are forthcoming.

Fallen Saruman plays his Avatar at Isengard. He sends Raisha to Minas Tirith in hopes of drawing the Keys of Orthanc and getting Isengard protected. Wormtongue squats at Edoras. Hador is waiting at Isengard to be sent to the Deep Mines. Bard again tries to move with the Necklace of Girion, but is stopped by Beorning Skin-Changers. Raisha arrives at Minas Tirith, and through a stroke of good fortune, draws the Keys of Orthanc.



Gandalf and Bilbo head to Bag End, with Gandalf sideboarding as much as possible. Fallen Saruman plays The Nazgul are Abroad, but Gandalf has most of the Nazgul in play as events.

Saruman plays Thrall at Edoras, searches for Fortress of the Isen with Keys of Orthanc, and sends Hador down while Raisha returns to Isengard. He taps to put Half-Orc characters in the discard pile. Bard attempts to move, but is sent back by Beorning Skin-Changers. Raisha arrives safely at Isengard. Hador arrives safely at the Deep Mines, but without any resources to play.

Gandalf leaves Bilbo alone at Bag End and heads to the White Towers. Saruman can't draw into any of his Assassins, and Gandalf makes it to the White Towers, where he plays Anduril. He notes that this would be two item MPs for Fallen Saruman if Man of Skill were in play.

Fallen Saruman taps and puts five Half-Orc factions in the discard pile. He sends Raisha down to join Hador. He plays Theoden at Edoras under Wormtongue's DI. During the site phase, Hador and Raisha manage some Delver's Harvests. Bard attempts to move once again and is stopped by Uvatha/Beorning Skin-Changers. Fallen Saruman plays the Minion Palantir of Orthanc after putting a Hall of Fire on Isengard.

Gandalf moves to Rivendell while tapped from the Reforging. Astonishingly, the Fallen Saruman player isn't using Beorning Skin-Changers. Or River. Weird. After safely bypassing some Cave Drakes, he arrives at Rivendell. Bilbo doesn't get attacked; where are the Assassins?

Fallen Saruman squats. He probably should have moved someone for the card draw, but he forgot about Bard. Gandalf unleashes some Assassins, but Gisulf and Wormtongue Ready them to His Will. During the site phase, Theoden plays Riders of Rohan, tapping Edoras. Hador and Raisha play the last Delver's Harvest.

At Rivendell, Gandalf stores the Reforging and plays Aragorn. He moves to the Isle of the Ulond while Aragorn moves to the Stones. Bilbo stays at Bag End, and does not get hit by Assassins. Gandalf wonders just what's in Fallen Saruman's hazard portion—nobody should be able to squat at a Free-Hold this long. Aragorn uses Many Turns to cancel some undead Fallen Saruman throws at him. He then uses Dodge to get into the Stones and play Narsil.

Fallen Saruman plays a Strident Spawn and War-Forges and puts Euog under his DI. Bard attempts to move, the rest squat. Hador and Raisha get hit by a Nameless Things, but they make it through tapped thanks to Tormented Earth x 2. And the end of the turn, Saruman plays Wizard's River Horses—Bilbo is no longer safe at Bag End bearing the One Ring. Euog plays a Blazon of the Eye (War-Forges). Saruman retrieves a Nazgul from the discard pile using the Nazgul Are Abroad.

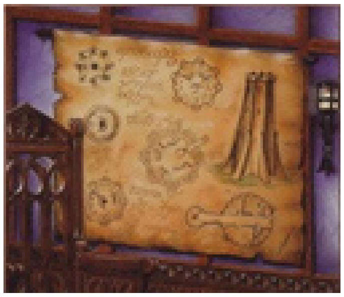
Gandalf returns to Rivendell. Aragorn moves to Bree. Bilbo plays Frodo and transfers the One Ring to him using Old Friendship. They're attacked by a Nazgul+New Moon, but Halfling Stealth cancels it. Fallen Saruman grinds his teeth and plays Bill Ferny as an agent, face down.

Fallen Saruman plays Great Army as a permanent event and then as a short event to get all his Half Orc factions in the play deck. He plays Doeth under DI. He plays Great Patron. Bard attempts to move. Gandalf uses Mouth/Skin-Changers to bounce Bard. He attaches Foolish Words to Theoden and Euog. Hador and Raisha easily outface a Cave Drake, but are once again tapped. During the site phase, Doeth plays Strange Rations, Hador and Raisha play 2 x Earth-Eater, and Gisulf plays a Noble Steed.

Frodo plays Sam under DI. Gandalf stores Narsil so he can untap. For some weird reason, he does not Reforge Anduril yet. Reforging Anduril would give Aragorn tremendous prowess as well as the ability to untap himself, which would surely come in handy at any time—there's really no point in delaying. Bilbo, without the One, moves to Rivendell. He still has the Mithril Coat and Sting. Fallen Saruman tries to play Chance of Being Lost, but Gandalf points out that Bilbo is, in fact, using Starter Movement. Saruman attacks Frodo and Sam with Nazgul+New Moon, but Concealment abounds. He uses An Article missing with Bill Ferny, but the resulting combat between Bill Ferny and Aragorn is a tie. During the site phase, Aragorn chooses not to enter Bree. Frodo plays Red Book for +2 DI vs. Hobbits.

Fallen Saruman plays an Ill-Favored Fellow and declares movement with Bard. Some Voices of Malice get rid of the Foolish Words. Everybody else squats. Gandalf has recycled a Skin-Changers with Unexpected Outpost and draws into it, bouncing Bard back to Lake-Town. He plays Heedless Revelry on Hador and Raisha, tapping them out. During the Site Phase, Theoden gets some Wild Horses, Wormtongue nabs a Noble Steed, Raisha plays the last Earth-Eater, and Euog influences some Half-Orcs. Gandalf should really be working his anti-FW sideboard more. Interestingly, Blind/Ire/Echoes are next to worthless in a 4-deck game because they'll be removed from play after being used. Likewise Dark Tryst except in the event of trying for an early dunk. At any rate Saruman's very close to a White Hand.

Gandalf decides that he's risked things long enough, and in preparation for the forthcoming No Way Forward moves to Lorien, leaving Bilbo at Rivendell. Frodo, with his 8 DI vs. Hobbits, plays Merry. Oddly enough, Fatty is making no appearance, despite being one of the most useful Hobbits overall. Gandalf plays Await the Advent of Allies on Bilbo, which is a neat exploit of card text. Tolkien's quite a rules guru. Fallen Saruman attacks with a Nazgul+New Moon, but Halfling Stealth solves that. Gandalf arrives safely at Lorien. Fallen Saruman plays No Way Forward.



Fallen Saruman plays another Ill-Favored Fellow and Saruman's Machinery. He's just about gotten all he can out of Edoras, and that company should likely move. He chooses to send Gisulf to Amon Hen. Bard attempts to move to Thranduil's Halls. Bard makes it to Thranduil's Halls. Gisulf arrives at Amon Hen. During the Site Phase, an Ill-Favored Fellow plays Strange Rations, Euog plays Greater Half-Orcs, Gisulf gets through the AA at Amon Hen and plays Ain't No Secret. At the Deep Mines, Hador is finally able to play a Vein of Arda. Fallen Saruman has a surprising amount of available MPs for a dunk deck. This suggests that his 40-card sideboard skimped on hazards—something that may ultimately prove his undoing.

Frodo brings Pippin into play, and his company is finally ready. He moves to the Old Forest, for some reason. It would have been quicker to move directly to Bree. Aragorn squats, as does Bilbo. Gandalf moves to Edoras. Saruman attacks Frodo & Co with a Nazgul; Sam plays Halfling Stealth. Somebody really ought to have played Bane to stop recycling, but perhaps it's too vital to both decks to be able to get things from the discard pile. During the site phase, Frodo plays Tom Bombadil at the Old Forest, and Pippin taps for a Dagger of Westernesse. Gandalf plays Shadowfax. Aragorn chooses not to enter the site.

Hador and Raisha go up. Saruman plays the White Hand for a whopping 6 MPs. He also plays a Sly Southerner, thus using up his 12 DI (4+3+2+2+1). Happily, the White Hand has given him a bonus to DI, though it's uncertain what he's going to do with it. Unfortunately, the entire company is still covert, which rules out CvCC. During the site phase, he uses Earth-Eater to play a Mechanical Bow from the Sideboard. With some lucky Rolling, Theoden plays Wild Horses. Saruman's GI is . . . let's see . . . Hador's got a Myrmidon, so that's 3, Raisha is 4, Wormtongue is 2 with a Forge-Master, Gisulf is 3, and Bard is 2. Saruman has 1 Free GI. Hope that doesn't come back to haunt him.

Gandalf moves to Isengard. Frodo & Co move to the Barrow Downs. Aragorn squats. Tom Bombadil gets through all hazards untapped, but doesn't kill any Nazgul due to low bc rolls. At Isengard, Gandalf attempts to play a Precious Gold Ring to protect against Rolled. Fallen Saruman points out that Fortress of Isen prevents the play of any card that gives MPs. Gandalf hits himself on the forehead, and Saruman laughs at him. Gandalf starts trying to think of ways to explain why he blew a turn at Isengard instead of trying to reach Frodo. At the Barrow Downs, Merry and Sam play Daggers of Westernesse. By the rules, it would be impossible for all four Hobbits to have Daggers. Tolkien cheats! Pippin taps to play Barrow-blade.

Hador stores a Vein of Arda. Saruman sends Hador and Raisha back down to the Deep Mines. For reasons unknown, he keeps Wormtongue and Theoden at Edoras. They should move to Dunharrow for some potential Mischief, but they squat. Bard moves to Beorn's House. Unfortunately, on the trip to the Deep Mines, Hador is killed by a Nameless Thing and Raisha survives, albeit tapped. Gandalf plays Chance of Being Lost on Bard, sending him back to Lake-Town. Fallen Saruman has to actively refrain from strangling Gandalf. During the Site Phase, an Ill-Favoured fellow plays another Mechanical Bow. Gisulf plays another Ain't No Secret.

Frodo and Co move to Bree. Gandalf moves to the Ruined Signal Tower. Aragorn is still squatting. Fallen Saruman plays Khamul, Tom taps to take the strike in the hopes of some Kill MPs. Unfortunately, Khamul survives. Fallen Saruman plays Stay Her Appetite, and Tom is unfortunately discarded. Gandalf moves to the Ruined Signal Tower, taps Shadowfax, and moves to the Worthy Hills. Bill Ferny attempts to use An Article Missing on Frodo. Frodo cancels the strike using the One Ring. Sam taps to play Bill the Pony.

Saruman brings Gisulf to Isengard, while his own company moves to the Dunnish Clan-Hold. He plays Plotting Ruin to move to the Minion Version. Wormtongue and Theoden are now at the Minion Version of Edoras, where Gold Rings are playable — interesting. Bard moves to Thranduil's Halls. Saruman's large half-orc party faces some Cave Worms, but emerges unscathed thanks to the Mechanical Bows and tapping for support. During the site phase, Saruman plays Riven Gate and Euog influences the Dunlendings. Gisulf at Isengard attempts to influence a Half-Orc faction, but fails. Raisha plays Gems of Arda at the Deep Mines.

Gandalf is worried about the hand clog produced by No Way Forward, and plays Crown+Echo+Enduring Tales to better manage his MPs, since a four-deck game is far more concerned with how many MPs you can squeeze out of a cycle through the deck than how swiftly you can cycle. Fallen Saruman is fine with this arrangement. Both companies move to Weathertop. Gandalf goes first, and Fallen Saruman uses Adunaphel to tap him. Gandalf uses Shadowfax's ability and moves to Rivendell. With a Hazard Limit of three, Fallen Saruman uses Witch-King+Morgul Knife+Fell Beast. Gandalf responds with More Alert Than Most, so Saruman directs the Witch-Kings sole strike to Frodo. Gandalf is out of cancelers, and Frodo is wounded, but the bc is only an 8. Frodo lives, but has a buttload of corruption. Gandalf has some Athelas in hand, but Weathertop does not allow for the play of minor items. Merry and Sam play Barrow-Blade.

Fallen Saruman & Co move to Isengard, as does Raisha. Wormtongue and Theoden squat. Bard delcares movement to Beorn's House. All arrive at their sites in safety. Euog influences some Greater Half-Orcs. Saruman's MPs seem to be slowing down.

Gandalf plays Boromir at Rivendell. Aragorn and Co move to Rivendell. Gandalf decides to let Frodo heal up and attempt to remove the corruption from the Morgul-Knife.

Saruman squats, with the exception of Bard, who moves to Lorien. During his turn, Gandalf plays the Will of Sauron+Song of the Lady. Saruman is astonished that Gandalf would include such a hazard in a deck vs. Fallen Wizards. Gandalf shrugs and smiles. During the site phase, Saruman & Co play another Greater Half-Orcs, a Liquid Fire, and an Orc-Draughts. Fallen Saruman shrugs apologetically.

Frodo removes Morgul-Knife; next turn he will be able to heal. Gandalf plays Legolas. We have to wonder why Tolkien didn't go with Celeborn instead; same mind, but a 6/9 Warrior/Sage is much better than 5/8 Warrior/Diplomat. Oh, well. At any rate, Gandalf with his 3 x Hobbit-Lore and a transferred Red Book, controls Merry, Pippin, Sam, and Legolas. Frodo controls Boromir. Gandalf remembers that he can Reforge Narsil and promptly does so. Bilbo transfers Sting and Mithril Coat to Frodo. One is forced to wonder exactly why; taking that much corruption is downright foolhardy. They stay at Rivendell. Saruman begins playing Nazgul as permanent events.

Saruman plays Saruman's Ring and decides to send Raisha and Gisulf to Edoras after storing the Gems of Arda. Bard fails his roll to leave Lorien. At Edoras, Theoden cancels the automatic attack and Wormtongue plays Catch an Elusive Scent to allow Raisha to play a Bright Gold Ring. Doeth uses a Focused Palantir of Orthanc to put Catch and Elusive Scent back in the draw pile.

Frodo heals, and Gandalf plays Gimli. Frodo puts Gimli under his DI, and Aragorn puts Boromir under his DI. Gandalf decides to discard Bilbo since Await the Advent is gone. They move to Ost-in-Edhil, where Gandalf plays a Precious Gold Ring, muttering something about ". . . cheezy protected Wizardhavens . . ." Fallen Saruman plays Crebain, which is an easy kill MP for Gandalf. He begins to suspect Saruman of holding a large combo in his hand. Fallen Saruman points out that it would have been safer to keep the Precious Gold Ring in his hand, since Enduring Tales would allow him to discard it to the draw pile. Gandalf curses himself for a fool and asks for a take-back. Fallen Saruman laughs in his face.

Fallen Saruman plays Whispers of Rings and puts a Spirit Ring underneath it. Bard fails his Song of the Lady roll. Raisha moves back to Isengard, allowing Wormtongue and co to draw another Catch an Elusive scent. Apparently, Saruman's hoping to set up a long-term Ring Factory around Edoras. Gandalf plays Rolled, but Saruman merely discards a Mind Ring from his hand to the top of his play deck, smirking all the while. During the End-of-Turn phase, Saruman pulls a Wizard's Test and gives Raisha a Reviled Ring. This, unfortunately, takes her mind down to two, so she won't enable draw when moving any more. On the other hand, this frees up some GI for Fallen Saruman. With Hador dead, he's at . . . let's see . . . 2+2+3+2=9, so he's in much better shape, though he regrets losing Hador's sorcery ability. He takes the Bright Gold Ring back to his hand using Saruman's Ring.

Gandalf moves from Ost-in-Edhil to Moria. Fallen Saruman plays Snowstorm and laughs. Gandalf speculates on the nature of the union between Fallen Saruman's parents.

Bard makes his Song of the Lady roll. Unfortunately, Snowstorm is in play, so he can't move out of Lorien. Saruman sends Raisha back to Edoras, where a Catch An Elusive Scent combo gives a Bright Gold Ring to Gisulf. Doeth puts Elusive Scent back in the play deck.

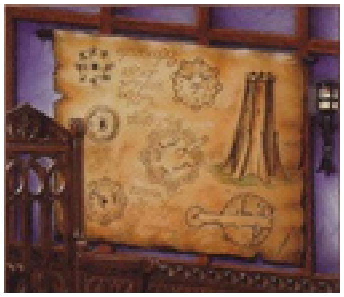
Gandalf moves to Moria. Fallen Saruman plays Reluctant Final Parting. There go Gandalf's ally MPs. Saruman plays Balrog of Moria. Gandalf doesn't want to face that AA, he wants to pull an Aiglos/Dragon Helm combo at the Under-Gates, using Ancient Stair, and Balrog of Moria just made it that much easier.

Bard missed his Song of the Lady Roll. Gisulf returns to Isengard; Raisha transfers her ring to Theoden. During the site phase, the Catch/Bright Ring combo again comes into play. Saruman tests the other Bright Gold Ring on Gisulf and Gisulf walks away with a shiny knew Oracle's Ring. Just in case Gandalf's thinking of Under-gates, he gets rid of Balrog of Moria.

Gandalf plays Ancient Stair and heads for the Under-gates. As a precautionary measure, he moves all followers out from under him. He tests the Precious Gold Ring and gets a lesser Ring. He gives the Lesser Ring and the Red Book to Merry, who makes Pippin a follower. Frodo is still controlling Gimli. Let's see . . . there's quite a mess of influence here, but clearly Gandalf does not have any followers on this turn according to the books. So, Frodo's at 5 mind, Aragorn's at 9, Merry's at 4 . . . we still have Sam and Legolas to worry about. That's 10 influence . . . no doubt about it, Tolkien definitely cheats. This whole problem would probably be resolved if Sac of Form didn't discard Followers. Oh, well. They head down to the Under-Gates, and Fallen Saruman plays Durin's Bane. Gandalf does Sacrifice of Form, which means on declaration he must be discarded and all his non-item cards. Goodbye, Hobbit-Lore! It also means that upon resolution, there is no longer an attack against the Wizard's company, as there is no Wizard in the company. Compare discarding Baduila in response to Withdrawn to Mordor. Withdrawn to Mordor can't put Baduila in the opposing player's hand once he's discarded because there isn't an agent there any more, even if there was on declaration. Though, the counter side argues that we need a resource wherein the active condition discards the very thing it needs to remain in play for its active condition. So we look at Dark Numbers, which says to discard in order to give +3 to a character in the same company. If it's discarded on declaration, the same thing happens—so I guess discarding the Wizard could be an active condition. Tolkien clearly plays it as an effect of the card, though, since Gandalf doesn't return to the Realm of the Valar until after the Balrog is dead. At any rate, that's 5 Kill MPs for the company. Fallen Saruman plays The Way Is Shut. Gandalf accuses Fallen Saruman of a Cheezy Haven-squatting Roadblock deck. Fallen Saruman points out that this would never have happened if Bilbo hadn't gotten lucky rolling for the One, and it's therefore Gandalf's fault.

Bard makes his Song of the Lady Roll. Raisha and Gisulf are doing the Fallen Saruman equivalent of a Mordor shuffle—relatively safe site mixing. Gandalf plays Lure of Nature on Bard, and he corrupts. Fallen Saruman threatens Gandalf with a gun. Saruman plays another Spirit Ring.

Gandalf plays Saw Further and Deeper. If we give a Red Book to Frodo, he can control Sam and Pippin. Legolas with a Lesser Ring can control Merry; that's 11. We still have Aragorn controlling Boromir . . . even with Saw Further and Deeper, I don't think there's any way to manage it. Tolkien's a worse cheater than half the people in the Nations Cup Tournament. He may even be a worse cheater than I am. They move to Lorien, where they play a Gold Belt of Lorien, which is insanely given to Boromir—I mean, Aragorn+Narsil+Gold Belt is a sufficient 6 DI. However, Aragorn plays an Elf-Stone, which will allow him to control Legolas, and that Lesser Ring can be given to Gimli, which would put things under the limit with Saw Further and Deeper.



Saruman plays Man of Skill. Saruman also plays another Spirit Ring with his Rohan shuffle. At this point, he also has managed all of his Half-Orc Factions.

Aragorn and Co move to Amon Hen. Fallen Saruman uses the exact same combo he used at the end of the last cycle through the deck. Only this time, he uses Waylaid, Wounded, and Orc-Dragged to take Merry and Pippin prisoner at the Glittering Caves. Boromir dies from the Orc attacks; the rest survive, although tapped. Gandalf looks seriously at dunking. Gandalf exhausts.

The MPs:

Gandalf:
C: 10
A: 0
F: 0
I: 23
K: 11
M: 0
Total: 42 (no more than half from any source)

Fallen Saruman:
C: 12
A: 0
F: 15
I: 19
K: 9
M: 19
Total: 73 (and might double factions)

They should be doing this on GCCG. It's a whole lot easier to keep track of MPs.

Here Ends The Fellowship Of the Ring. Stay tuned for more action when we go to deck three: The Two Towers!

TEST OF FORM: TOURNAMENT REPORTS

The World Champion's Tourney Report (2007 New York Worlds)

by Agustin Lozano de la Cruz

Thanks everybody for this great tournament, especially thanks Mark for helping me and my family at the airport and, of course, for organizing Worlds. It was a big time in the big apple, cause I had time enough to visit the city and to win Worlds! (Though I can't believe I won yet).

A few things about my Fallen Alatar deck: it is based on Eriador shuffle strategy (several moving companies using A short rest), but I tried to improve it playing FW instead of Hero. I chose Alatar cause he has 7 prowess, he has any ruins and lairs as home site, and he has 10 direct influence (so he can control two 5 mind characters).

Now, let me report my games at the finals:

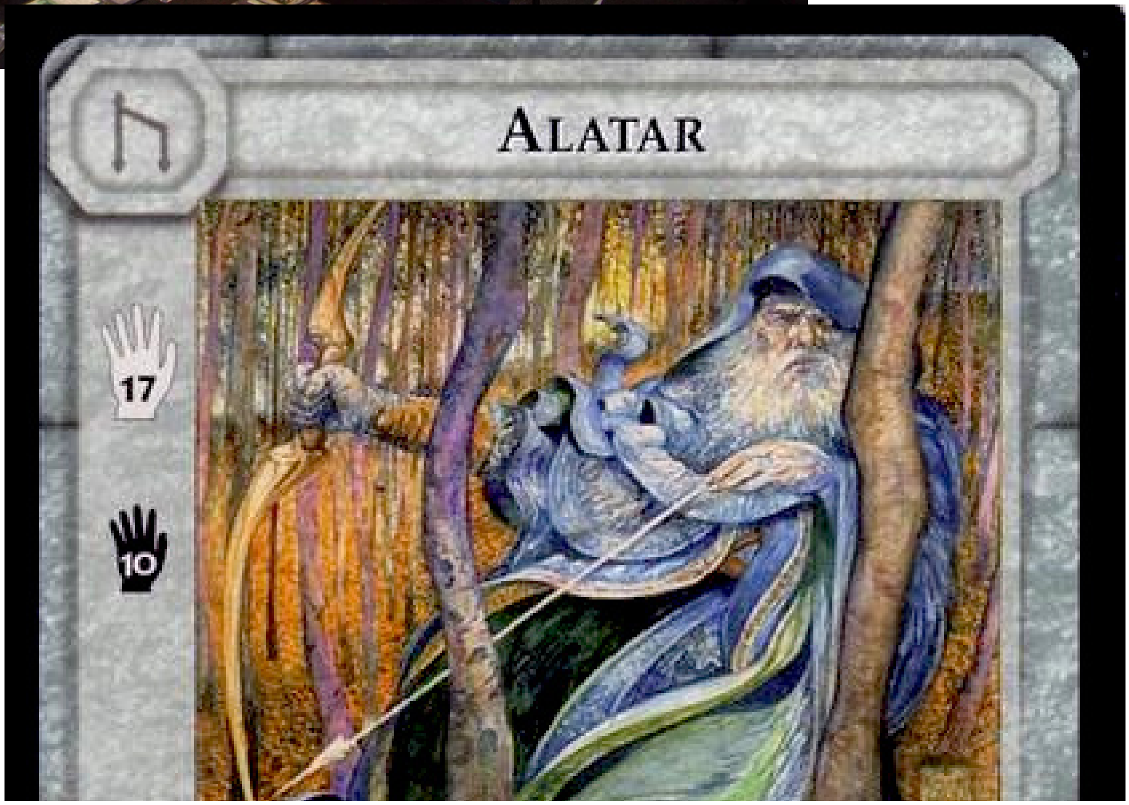
First round versus Mikko. He is one of the best players I know, so I'm ready for a hard game. He plays a Mordor shuffle deck, a deck I know quite well. I manage to play Golodhros face up in his first turn, lucky me. I also play An Unexpected Outpost to sb Stench of Mordor, the card I need to stop him. It's my first turn and he plays DoN and Snowstorm, but I play Twilight, just in time. Second turn, I draw and play Stench of Mordor (lucky me again) and sb another Stench playing my second outpost, but Mikko has his own Twilights, of course, and he discards Stench of Mordor during his site phase. Next turns both of us manage to play our resources, though Mikko is scoring less points because of my second Stench and a few Sellswords and Pukel-men. In my second last turn, I make a big mistake: Mikko plays Alone and unadvised on Gulla, who is controlling Tom Bombadil. I decide to tap Tom to cancel Alone and unadvised instead of playing Marvels told (really big mistake, but I didn't expect his next move). He has an agent face down, which is Elerina, so he plays Pilfer on Gulla and I lose 4 points. In spite of that I'm scoring more MPs than Mikko, especially when, during his last turn, he fails his attempt to play a faction. But my last turn is nearly a loss: Mikko plays The balance of things, Alone and unadvised and Roving eye on Fram controlling Orcrist, I discard The balance but I fail the roll, so Fram is discarded and I lose 6 points. My other main company faces Earcaraxe ahunt, I play Crept along cleverly but Mikko discard it playing Ire of the East. I have my second Crept in hand, so I can avoid the dragon attack finally, it was close. At the end of the game Mikko has 2 more MPs than me, but he has too many characters points, so it's a draw.

In the other game, Heiner scored 6-0 against Charles. I was afraid my next opponent could be Heiner, since he is a tough guy, really hard to beat, and I was still worried about my stupid mistake playing Tom. I wasn't ready to play a hard game versus Heiner, so I prayed for avoiding him until the last match. Luck was on my side again, and I faced Charles instead of my German buddy.

Second round versus Charles Jenkins. He is playing the same Balrog deck he played on Saturday, when we faced each other and I won 4-2. He knows that my deck is hard to stop, so he decides to hit my only big weakness: the Wizard. First, when Alatar is alone (but not unadvised) in Ost-in-Edil, Charles plays a Rain-drake which is Crepted along cleverly. Later, he tries to CVCC Alatar's company twice. In his first attempt, poor Ulkaur rolls snake eyes when entering Barrow-downs and is discarded. His still strong company wounds Fram and a wolf, but they are not killed. During his last turn he tries again, but now Alatar is ready to play Vanishment. 6-0 win for my guys. Meanwhile, Heiner have beaten Mikko 4-2, which means that our final game will be THE final game.

Third round versus Heiner. He had predicted on Saturday that we would face each other in the last game, and he was right. He is playing a FW Radagast deck staying at Weathertop, based on a deck designed by his friend Patric, as far as I know. My hazards can barely hit his company, cause he plays Hiding each turn. I need to play faster than him in order to win, especially if I manage to play resources I know we both have (like Warg-king or Tom Bombadil) before him. Heiner is playing a hazard deck versus minion (Dwarven travellers, Elf-lords, Arthadan rangers…) that really hits my companies. At least they attack as detainment, but since Alatar is my wizard, if I get more than 7 stage points I'm gonna be in big trouble… My characters get tapped easily but, since I have 3-4 different companies and I can use Crams and We have come to kill, I manage to play enough points anyway. Time is over and it's my last turn: I must play Orome Warderers to get full MPs (in that way I'd have more than 7 stage points and his creatures will attack as non detainment) or I must join my characters in a single company to get full MPs through Join the hunt, which is already in play. Finally I choose not to play Orome Warderers and join companies at Weathertop. In that way I could play some MPs and support Gulla's final corruption check, the dwarf has 3 points because he is bearing Durin's axe. Alatar plays Wild hounds, my only faction, but there is an on-guard Heedless revelry that taps my entire company. I play And forth he fastened on Alatar to untap him, but I'm not sure if it's better to play one more wolf or to keep him untapped til corruption checks. I play the wolf cause I guess Heiner has unique cards in hand that I have in play and, who knows, our game could be a draw and Heiner could win the tournament. At the end of the game I have 2 or 3 more MPs than him, but I need to pass a cc of 3 with no supporting characters. So I roll, and here comes the most exciting moment of the game: my first damned dice hits the table showing 1, the other one is rolling away for a few seconds. Everybody is looking and holding his breathing, I am about to die in a heart attack. Finally, the second dice shows 6, so I become World Champ, shocked.

A few minutes later Mark is distributing prizes and I get The One Ring, yesss, my precioussss, it'sss mine! Then it's time to say goodbye, it's the end of our new yorker Fellowship. I hope to see you soon guys, thanks everybody for keeping this great game alive!



TEST OF FORM: TOURNAMENT REPORTS

Worlds Tourney Report (2007 New York Worlds)

By Jonathan Yost "Tythis"

Here's my tournament report of the World's semi-finals. But first off... thank you Mark for an amazing event and for putting so much time and effort into it. Also, thank you to all the people in attendance... everyone was very nice and had great sportsmanship.

My first game was against Birk, who was playing a red hills type Balrog deck. I had never faced a deck like that before and was very worried as the game began. I got very lucky however and got my wizard in my opening hand. All the cards that game seemed to come up just right. On my 1st hazard turn, I drew my precious for example. Birk had stinker in hand on turn 1, but unfortunately couldn't play it. My hobbits went to the under deeps and Birk came after me with the Balrog, tuma, wulag, burat, and a scrub troll. Again, the cards came up just right and I had just enough concealments to not get slaughtered. At one point, I drew up an Orc Mail at the very end of my turn and was able to play it right before I would have been otherwise slaughtered. In following my hobbits, I was also able to play 3 or so Nameless Things on his Balrogs company, which finally ended up killing 2 of the trolls. On the last turn, I tossed a futile heedless on his 8 and 9 mind trolls and with amazingly lucky rolls, tapped them both. This blocked either an item or ally and I ended up having one of my categories double, which put it at a 6-0.

My second game was against Brian Min. He had massive corruption on his characters and several woundings by turn 3. I also wasted one of his turns with a skin-changer as he was trying to get back to a haven with half his characters wounded. It's amazing the scrolls were still on table by the end after several corruption checks in the 4-6 range on Thorin. That game was probably the fastest I've ever exhausted and I was able to call the council on turn 5. I went first, so Brian started his 5th and last turn in Lorien, still with several corruption cards scattered around. He didn't draw the cards that would get him to Mount Doom and thus conceded, but I had a final hand stacked full of hazards anyway.

Game 3 was against a Mordor faction type deck played by Mikko. Again, a deck I've heard a lot about, but never faced. I had a lucky first hazard turn against him and was able to kill Shagrat with Landroval (2-strike 12/6 eagle hazard creature). Turn 1 is the only time that deck walks through a shadow land, so it was the only time that or the elf lords would be any good. With an Uvatha, I ended up playing it twice, but the second character got lucky with a push on a roll of 8. He started laying down a lot of agents, so I naturally sideboarded in a withdrawn to Mordor. I ended up getting it into hand right before the pilfers began, but it was futile anyway since he had a blind to the west ready for it. Thus, Bilbo was pilfered and I was down to 3 in that company. Next turn, another was pilfered and I was down to 2 characters. The next turn, I got some great luck and he rolled a 3 on the pilfer of my 3 mind hobbit and I was spared from having to consider stacking 2-3 items on Fatty. He was also playing snowstorm, but both my companies eventually made it through the woods. Although the pilfers were painful, I was still able to rack up around 12 points in items and probably 10 points in allies. My hazards slowed him down a bit with Foolish Words and Nazgul detainments attacks. It was enough to give me a slight point lead and I ended up winning 4-2.

At that point, I had 16 Points and figured the competition would get pretty rough. My next 2 games were against those who eventually took 1st and 3rd place in the end.

Game 4 was against Agustin. My first mistake was not killing Adunaphel on turn 1 when he dropped him against me. I wanted an extra card by killing it later when I was at 8 or less cards, but it ended up tapping my only ranger and stopping me for a turn at a river. Later, there was 2 rivers against that company, again stopping them. Those little stoppages chocked my hand and I was going through my deck very slowly. Meanwhile on the hazard side, I was throwing tons of corruption checks his way, but he was rolling though them all. Eventually I corrupted 1 or 2 guys on multiple checks of 6 or 7 with the balance of things out, but it wasn't enough to slow him down significantly. Toward the end, he went to play a Mischief for 2 points and call the council with 26 points, but he was 1 stage point shy of mischief and thus 1 MP shy of the council. That was great luck for me because I hadn't gotten my Legacy of Smiths out yet and my 3-4 items were worth 8-9 less than they should have been, plus I had several allies and a faction to play. Just missing the council gave me 2 more turns since he went first and I barely got legacy down. Even with that effort, I was quite a bit shy of his MP total and it was squarely in a 2-4 loss territory. Without that though, I think it would have been a 0-6 loss.

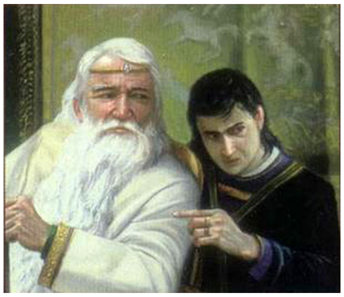
Game 5 was against Charles playing a Balrog deck. Turn 1 was horrible and he tossed back-to-back Nameless Things on my poor hobbits. I can handle 1 no problem and 2 fairly easily late game when I have some items and stage cards out, but 2 on first turn is *not good*. The second one ended up killing Bilbo and Fatty. Your first thoughts while reading this is probably "oh no, -2 points for Bilbo dying". Fortunately for me however, the current interpretation of dead characters for fallen wizards is that they are a source of MPs and thus worth 1 point for fallen wizards. This is a bit too literal of an interpretation for my tastes, but my Bilbo was none-the-less worth 1 point for being eliminated.

I decided to risk 1 more body check as I entered the site. If no

9+ was rolled (a 72% chance), then I could have healed my hobbit with paste and gotten him a 10 body with the mithril coat. Unfortunately, luck was against me and he was eliminated too, leaving just poor Gulla. He grabbed the coat and later Orcrist, but unfortunately fatefully corrupted from an alone an unadvised. I should have known better than to move him and I should have waited to get protection. I had 2 Marvels/Voices remaining in my thin deck and should have sideboarded in a 3rd, but failed to consider that option. I tried to move him to my wizard for help at the council, but it ended up costing me the game. Had Gulla lived, it would have been a tie due to the wellinghall squat and my wizard grabbing plenty of allies and a few faction. A tie would have put me in the finals. With him gone however, went 9 points and doubled Charles' item points, which made it a solid 0-6 loss.

And with that, I placed 6th, but I beat Bill so it was all good Razz. Apparently I also ended up having the highest "strength of opponent" total. My opponents went on to take 5th, 4th, 2nd, and 1st in the semi-finals if I remember right. It was some rough competition for me in that one.

Again, thanks everyone who was there. Thank you Birk, Birk's lovely wife Uli (not sure how to spell that), Wolfgang, Heiner, Chris and all the other German speakers who helped me work on my German. Thank you Joe and Carrie for letting Alicia and I stay with you. Thanks everyone for great sportsmanship and some very fun games. And most of all, thank you Mark for the great weekend.



CONDUCT AND HOBBITSHIP

What Does it Mean to Win? My Experience at MECCG North American Nationals 2007

by Joe Bisz

So my experience at North American Nationals in August 2007 was better than I hoped. The first, but least important thing to say is, I won the tournament. I won Nationals! But I need to give this victory a lot—a *lot*—of context.

First of all, because of the big turnout at Worlds 2007 in New York City, there was hardly anyone there—none of the big players were attending Nats—and in the end only 4 and half players (one drop-out) competed in the 3-round Nationals. However, the interesting thing is that I anticipated this, and debated with myself long and hard about what kind of deck to bring. At first I had merely decided to bring a "new deck" that wasn't as silly and broken as my Worlds deck. But there was something really unsatisfactory about this solution—it seemed to me that I was probably win the tournament unless some rogue player showed up and hit me with something unexpected.

Win the tournament? But that's a good thing, isn't it?

Not necessarily. Now listen to this: soon after having these thoughts, I played a friend at my house. He was using the Gandalf challenge deck. I was using my "new deck." He lost of course, and at the end, he commented that it wasn't a good playtest for me because of course nobody at Nationals would be using such a weak deck. That got my brain turning...

What if, what if, given the fact that there would likely be *zero* strong players at Nats, I could win North American Nationals with a *challenge deck*? With the limited site selection, no minion adjustment, limited sideboard, all characters in deck, everything? I would have to play at the very top of my game, hold onto just the precise hazards in the whole deck that could hurt my opponent (and the possible one or two weak ones from the sideboard), then hit him with them, in multiple, on one turn. Man! This actually scared a little bit, because I wondered if I could do it... then the scare, the chance of a loss encouraged me. Because, if I could handicap myself and still win, I could tell myself that the victory had meaning.

And, using the Gandalf deck, that is what I did. And for the majority of the games, it was actually tough!! The hardest game, ironically, ended up being against another challenge deck player: the Saruman deck. We were pretty close in points when suddenly, my Aragorn corrupted on a three. That meant no Return of the King for me… Then my opponent played Rangers of Ithilien, a faction in my own hand. I thought hard and fast, trying to figure out not only if I could still *win*, but if I could get a 6-0. After analyzing different options (I still had a faction in play, but he had two, the other of which was Knights of Dol Amroth, and little free GI), including the most obvious ones of sticking to the plan dictated by other resources in my hand, I decided to be a little more novel: I sent Faramir with Narsil after the Rangers; sideboarded in a copy of the Knights, and sent the Wizard after them (it became his task for the remainder of the game), saving all resource helpers for their companies, moving away a dummy company with a similar site path to lure out his hazards, etc. To both of our astonishment, I successfully recruited both factions away from him—and doubled faction points to win the game, 6-0.

I won Nationals, and got my ring. But did I *really* win?

What does it mean to "win" a game, anyway?

Consider, for instance, the myriad of circumstances that might contribute to a usually formidable opponent's deck not performing as well as it usually does. If you win in total marshalling points, have you still really *won*? On GCCG or in-person, losing opponents will almost always say (so will I, if I've lost), "Man, if you hadn't corrupted Beorn that last turn… if I could have just rolled higher than 5 for one of your body checks… if I could have just gotten my Wizard before turn four… " but do most of us ever really stop to hear them out, and actually think, *Wow, they're right? It was mostly luck that I won that game. I shouldn't feel as good about it as I do right now…*

We don't bother to give deep attention to the message behind their (sometimes) completely justifiable complaints—that the game was not a perfect field of competition, that our victory should be seen less as a true victory, and more as the natural result of a certain set of conditions, even surer than rolling a pair of dice one time and coming up with a seven. Of course not; we feel good. We pat ourselves on the back. We tend to feel that the win is the perfect arbiter not only the game, but of ourselves, our skills. Such a "win"—even if it is by a single marshalling point, even if it is a tie going into the council and someone corrupts on a check of *two*!—feels well-deserved, like the god of games just came down from the clouds, touched you with his staff, and spoke, "You have done exceedingly well, my child."

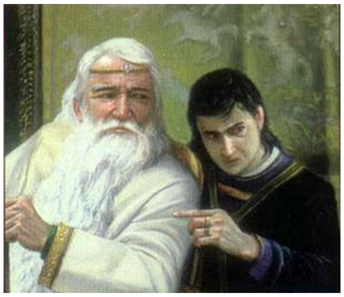
The question of what does a win mean widens even more when you consider quality of opponent. Some people obviously get excited beating on newbies, or even defeating experienced players who are simply not that competitive and have no wish to be. If you're ever observed a Magic the Gathering tournament, or even our noble GCCG in the wee hours, you know what I mean. An example. Two experienced players, Todd and Bill, begin a game, and Todd tells Bill that he just "threw this deck together last night" and that he “really hopes that they have a great game,” ‘cause this is the only two hour window he has off the entire week—he’s got to get back and take care of his kids. Lastly, right after the dice are rolled determine who goes first, he tells Bill “Good luck! Hope your deck works well for you”—and he *means* it. Needless to say, Bill whips the pants off of Todd with a well-tuned deck Bill’s been designing secretly in his basement laboratory for years, and *Bill feels really really good* about the victory. Somehow, all of the mitigating factors that Todd announced are politely ignored by the ego.

Even if we lose a game and beat ourselves up about not making the right decisions in tapping for this or that river or wasting a marvels told, if we go on to *win* a second game where we are faced with the *same* decisions and still made the *same* poor judgment call yet eek out the win anyway (probably through no fault of our own), we will completely ignore these errors in judgment this time and instead rest happy, listening to the angels in our head sing our praises. And if we’ve done well in a game—and by done well I mean played superbly, the Platonic ideal of a perfect game—and *still* end up losing the match, we tend to feel bad about the whole experience. I’m not saying all players do this, but by and large the “win,” like a test score, is a difficult-to-reject assessment of self-worth. This is what I mean about the “win” being the true arbiter of a game… *instead of actual moment-to-moment performance.*

I suppose I should add, briefly, that the whole conundrum of what to do with a “win” gets further complicated when you consider that there are players who win—yes, even first-place champions!—who DO beat themselves up for their performance, often for the misplay of a single card, even though they’ve “won” the game. They simply feel that they made too many mistakes, or that their usually skilled opponent must have had a bad day, or that the win doesn’t make up for all the other losses in their life. In this case, the “win” is not functioning highly enough as a symbol of achievement.

To recap, the question asked in this article so far is, “What does a win mean?” I am going a strange answer to that question, an answer which is not meant to be funny or condescending. When we’re talking about a win for oneself, the answer is: anything you’d like it to mean.

The reason why such an answer can work well, can even be quite profound, is because the answer doesn’t work at all—it offers nothing up—unless every winner individually assesses for himself or herself what were the components of skill desired to be tested in that game. Were they adequately tested? What was the opposition? What were the outcomes? In other words, be aware of what it is that you’re bringing to the game.



But if you’re someone who: A) often wins at games to the point that you’re frequently bored, or B) someone who doesn’t win a lot but wishes you could take winning games a lot less personally and seriously, or C) someone who gets occasionally uncomfortable with your own competitive upsurges, especially after your friends politely tell you for the hundredth time that they’re not going to play RISK with you any more because it’s worse than watching you drink, or D) just someone looking for a more positive playing experience overall, I have some suggestions:

1) Compete against yourself.

What’s the ultimate goal? If gaining the respect and admiration of your peers or making your spouse cry doesn’t do it for you any more—that is, the reward doesn’t make you truly happy or it’s simply unattainable for you given your skill as a player—then this suggestion should work. Sure, it might call to mind those ribbons they gave you in grade school for “Most Improved!”, but there was a good reason behind those ribbons: we can only get better at something by conscientiously working at it. What greater sense of accomplishment can there be than to give yourself a difficult task (a crossword puzzle, a new and frustrating deck design, a novel) actively work on it, and triumph? Personally, this is the number one reason I play games.

2) Play to lose.

Seriously. Go into a game, and tell yourself, “I fully intend to lose this game.” Then, start playing some really crazy combos, taking risk after risk after risk, really letting yourself go. The game-loving part of your brain will say, Man, that felt good to forget about winning for a while! That was a *really fun game*! The analytical part of our brain will record the results of these risky trials and either learn something new or confirm that they were, indeed, insane actions, and you can stick to your boring conservative style in future serious games. I’m not sure if I’ve ever played to lose, but now that I’m writing about it, it sounds kinda cool! (By the way, this is about the only game-approach to that will totally piss off a hard-core, uber-competive gamer type, should you ever unfortunately find yourself across at table from one. With your repeated utterances, *Hey man, I am just playing to lose!*, you are stripping away their moment of the glory).

3) Handicap yourself.

You wouldn’t play Tomb Raider on “Easy” level for months, would you? If you want your wins—or just your moment-to-moment plays—to feel as unique and rewarding as possible, you need to ratchet up your level of competition by inventing obstacles for yourself to conquer. (Yes, handicapping yourself is one of the first steps towards the philosophy of self-competition.) At the very least, if there’s a noncompetitive or newbie player on GCCG who wants to play a game, tell yourself there’s no reason to break out your Wolfiegast deck. (Save one: you’re itching to do some playtesting on it right now. If that’s the case, *ask* your opponent if it’s okay to play it, and then *apologize* when you beat him with it.) If you’ve mastered the art of a game or the power of a certain deck type, so that you can snooze and still not lose, you may fall into a pit where you are learning nothing, and you will not evolve any further in the game without handicapping yourself. But if you are playing a weaker deck, or a format with more obstacles, etc. it forces you to be *very creative*, which can actually make you a *better player* and teach you *more advanced skills*, and your performance will show off to everyone (and yourself!) the rawest aspects of you that made you good to begin with.

4) Compliment your opponent's successes.

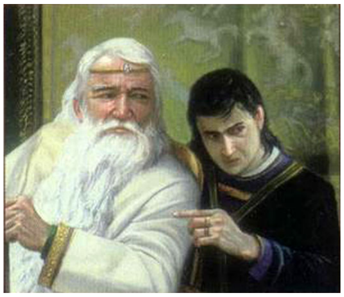
Such as when he or she performs a particularly dazzlingly play… *especially* if that play directly hurts you. Why on earth would you do that?? First of all, rather than focusing on whether you are losing, it makes you focus on what in the game is fundamentally fun: the judgment calls, the often breathtaking reenactments of story and combos, the opportunity to test your mettle against another human mind. Second, and related to this, is that taking the time to compliment your opponent can make you feel less bad about getting screwed. Sometimes an opponent might take the slightest action—like playing a Smoke Ring or Dark Tryst twice in one turn—and a nervous player will instantly get frustrated, thinking, *Man he's drawn up that card already! I can't stop him, I'm never going to catch up and win this game!* Fear (often caused, as in the above, by exaggerating the state of the game in your opponent's favor) can be a serious impediment to having fun but also to giving you a respectable chance at winning, and complimenting your opponent makes you shift your emotions from this dangerous center of being. Finally, compliments will make your opponent feel good too, make him respect you more, and ultimately contribute to a better game playing experience for everyone.

Creating a better game playing experience is especially imperative in a game community where players have, for years, been leaving in droves, and the ones that are still around might need to be strongly enticed to play (free beer, anyone?). However, this loss to our great game can also be a strength: I almost never meet anyone anymore who still plays MECCG purely to win. What happened to all of those players? They left MECCG for games that possessed greater prizes and, arguably, greater pubic glory. The ones that stayed are so loyal, so loving, that they count it a blessing if, in the three hours a week they have leftover after work, family, and a semblance of a social life, they can give it all over to MECCG. Isn't that amazing?

If you really like competing in games, you might be reading the above and thinking, *I would never do any of this stuff, it would completely kill the spirit of the competition!* I have to disagree with you there. Look, I like competitive games about as much as the next guy. The question then becomes: are you still playing a competitive game if you're having thoughts like in the above, a game that can still present you with valid feelings of victory? I believe it does; though it certainly expands the commonly understood notion of competition. And, personally, I can't tell you how rewarding it is.

Oh wait… I just did.

I should mention that the stars continued to shine during my trip to Nationals! I also played in a MECCG Challenge Deck tournament (3 rounds), which was very fun, and had more players participating, and I won that. Then I played in a MECCG Hero Sealed Deck tournament (3 rounds), and I won that. Since the tournament was held at a national gaming convention (GenCon), I could partake of other games as well, so I found and played in an X-Files beginner's tournament (2 rounds), and won that. Then I played in a Magic the Gathering Booster Draft 10th Edition Tournament (6 rounds), and won that...



Not only did I take first place in every tournament, I also won *every round of every game*, so I was completely undefeated in all games during my time at GenCon!

(Then I was afraid to play any more games on the last day, because I didn't want to upset my streak! So I enjoyed a nice hour of Battlestar Galactica Role-playing, and left as soon as the Cylons broke out the anti-infantry guns.)

Wow! I was most surprised by my Magic-playing, because I haven't played a Magic Tournament in at least 6 years. But it just goes to show that winning doesn't have to be about the deck—it can be about your spur-of-the-moment construction skills, and gaming abilities that are translatable to any game.

And it would be unfair of me to end this article without admitting:

All those wins felt good.

THOUGHTS ON THE PLAYING FIELD

Incomplete Information

by Mikko Vihtemäki

All card games are games of incomplete information. This is a big difference between MeCCG and for example strategic board games. Without complete information, you won't be able to make the optimum choices all the time, no matter how good a player you are. However, you do receive a lot of information during a game of MeCCG. You get to see what cards your opponent plays, where his companies move, and how he handles certain situations. Additionally, good players are able to make educated guesses about their opponent's deck. All this information can be used to your advantage in various ways, and that might very well win you the game.

Knowledge of the Enemy

The main sources of information are your opponent's cards. Just from his starting company you should be able to determine, at least to a degree, what kind of a deck he is playing. Once you figure that out, all decisions regarding your opponent's plan become much easier. Also be sure to pay attention to the cards he plays, and especially to the cards you get to see that he has not played yet. Even if they are still in his play deck, he will get to them eventually. Don't forget to follow where his companies are located. Most decks tend play resources within one area of Middle-earth, so you should be able to prepare for your opponent's next move.

You will get information when your opponent makes decisions, for example in combat. If a character is important to him, he will almost never put that character willingly into harm's way. Then you should of course try to get rid of that particular character when you get the chance. If you are not familiar with your opponent, the way he plays the game will give you an idea about how tough a player he is. If he tends to make sloppy plays which you think could have been handled better, he might be a prime target for red herrings (*more on this later*).

Because the information we receive is incomplete, we sometimes need to fill in the gaps. Experienced players do this well because they have played, or at least seen someone play, most decktypes at one time or another. Using hints and clues they pick up, experienced players can put the puzzle together very fast, gaining the upper hand. Only innovative decks are relatively safe from these educated guesses.

Records Unread

Most decks interact with the opponent only through hazard play. These are good, solid decks for beginners as they won't need to worry about too many things at once. But with these decks it is essential that you figure out what hazards you can stop your opponent with, and then execute their play to perfection. Otherwise you will need to out-score your opponent, and while this is sometimes possible you should not count on doing that.

A few decks are designed to interact with the opponent constantly, be it with influencing, CvCC or some other means. So in addition to hazard play, these decks are able to stop your opponent's plans during your turn as well. Of course you need to use the available information to your advantage again, like which character you should influence away first. These decks are a bit harder to play, because with them you need to plan not only the hazard play, but your own turns according to what your opponent is doing as well. In capable hands these highly interactive decks can perform very well.

The last decktype is a mixture of both of the above, and perhaps makes the most of the information you are given. Sometimes interactive decks become nearly useless because of a bad match-up since they are incapable of changing their game accordingly, and will end up losing the marshalling points race. With mixture decks you can focus more on your own game or on stopping your opponent's plans, whichever will give you the best result. However, the more choices you have to make in a game, the more likely it is that you make a mistake. In tight games one mistake can cost you the match. That's why players using mixture decks need to carefully consider all the available information, so they can make the right decisions time after time.

All Thought Bent upon It

Planning is key. Once you figure out what strategy you want to try to beat your opponent with, you can start sideboarding cards and preparing. Many times the plan involves multiple cards or even multiple turns. Try to avoid making plays that contradict with your main plan. For example, if you've been setting up to go influence Aragorn II to your side with your wizard, it would be a rather poor play to kill Aragorn II with a Cave Worm. If this happens, you have wasted some sideboarding and/or held on to certain cards unnecessarily.

Of course you can't be too obvious about what your goal is, or your opponent will be prepared to counter your efforts. This applies to both hazard and resource play. A little misinformation can go a long way.

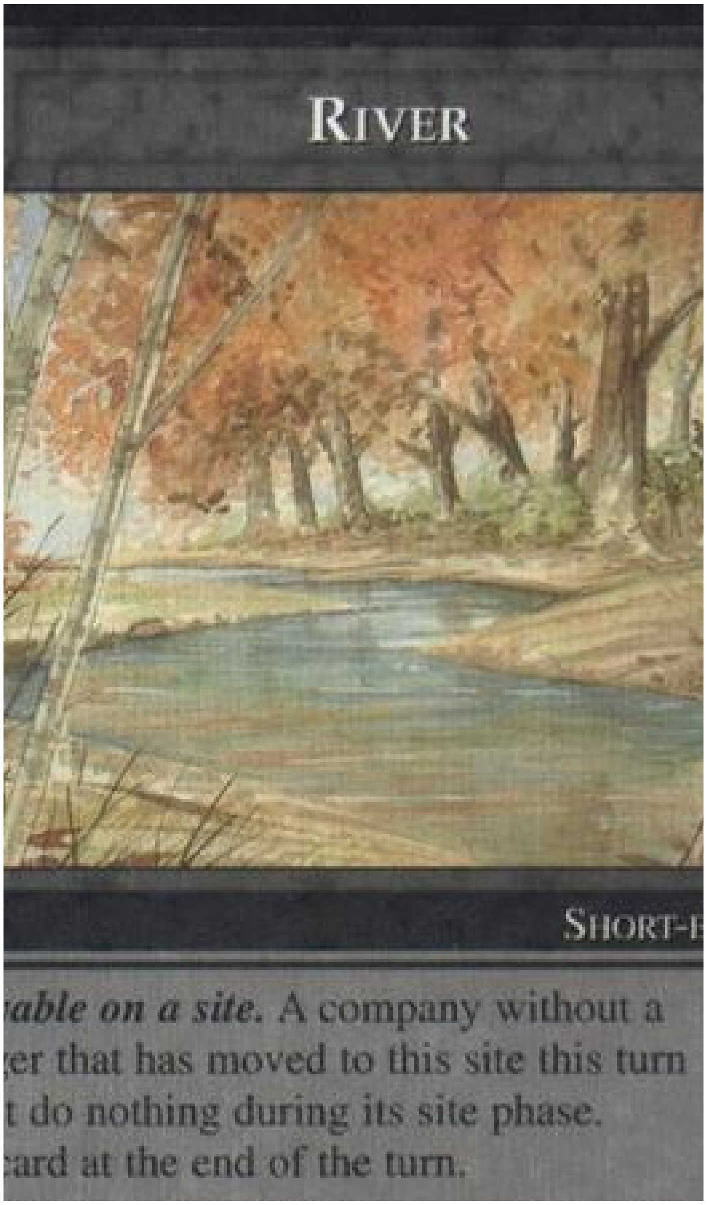
Trickery

This is where expert play begins. Once you feel comfortable collecting information, you can start sending false signals your opponent's way. If you can fool your opponent into thinking one thing while you are doing another, it can be a game breaker. You can try to do this with all decktypes, against any level of players, with both hazards and resources.

Red herrings are used to distract your opponent from what he should be focused on. For example, if you have a company moving to a Ruins & Lairs site but are feeling unprotected, you might send a lone, expendable character to another R&L first, hoping that the opponent wastes his Rain-drake on that character. Red herrings tend to work best on the less experienced players, while good players might see right through them.

Trapping is used to influence your opponent into making bad decisions, then taking advantage of that. Like if a company is moving with Tom Bombadil, try to make your opponent use Tom's ability on something secondary, then make your main play when that company is vulnerable. Trapping works well against good players, because many times the play they make is the correct one with the information they have, and that is what you are counting on.

Bluffs require finesse to pull off. If in late game you have a faction in your hand that you are not going to play anyway, and are in fact planning on going to a totally different site type your next turn, you might "accidentally" drop that card face up on the table, and then quickly pick it up. Now your opponent might fall for it and keep the wrong kind of creatures in his hand, giving you a free pass to get more MPs.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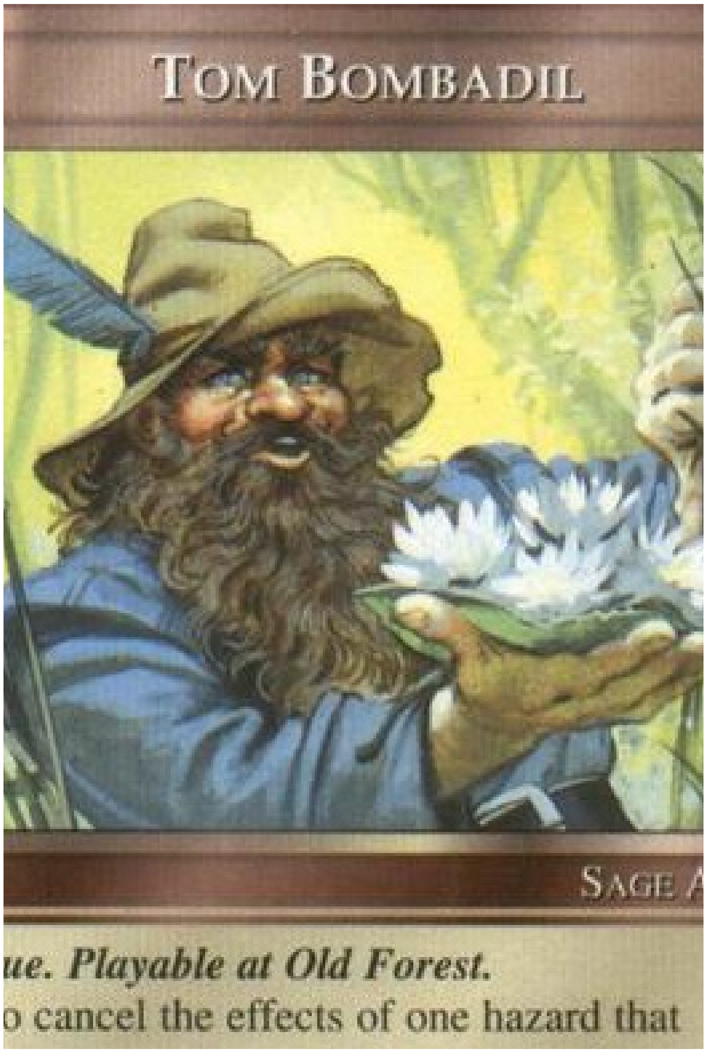
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PLAY OF THE MONTH: GAME REPORTS

March Virtual Cards GCCG Tourney

by Bandobras, Frodo, and Marcos

What follows are a series of short chronicles from three different players about their games played using the Virtual Card Expansion in the March 2008 GCCG Virtual Cards Tournament. How about joining us in the next tournament?

Virtual Thoughts from a Virtual Intellect

So far, it's been a positive experience. I'm overjoyed to see people breaking out of old molds and trying some different avatars. The biggest joy is seeing different RWs being used. Also, having to worry about corruption and body checks on Fallen Saruman instead of GI thanks to Never Refuse allowing an active non-warrior avatar has been a refreshing challenge. Minor items are becoming very worthwhile (play Marcos' KuTM deck or my Hero Alatar hunt-happy deck). Creature hazard strategies are becoming viable and strong as opposed to the generic "lots of events" strategies. As I said, a positive experience all around.
--from Bandobras Took

Forgot to mention that today I finally played a successful dragon combo using the new Half an Eye Sleeping (V) on Btook for the first time! I've played the deck 14 times now and only today did any really good combos came out of it. 1) Played Itangast on Summons 2) Itangast attacks 3-character Fallen-wizard company with Snaga (V) moving to Lake-town with a Mischief on it 3A) I play Dragon's Breath 3B) I play Subtlety of Guile 3c) I play Dragon's Curse. My god, that's two attacks, and of course I had to lower Snaga's new body! Even so, it would have been almost a do-nothing attack if he had just one concealer. And for it to be this cool, i needed a fire-breather! AND... he only got one guy killed in the end…! I also played my beauty Gimli and Legolas (V) deck versus Marcos, who moved 2 RW followers and the Witch-King constantly using Forced March, got The Iron Crown at Iron Hill Dwarf Hold (funny; do they make iron or something?) and then tried to play the Fury of Iron Crown on me just for spite! Man! He really killed me with Orcs pumped up by Scimitars, and The Great Goblin (V) captured Gimli (yikes!), but I played a lucky Marvels on him.
--from joe bisz

Marcos's Virtual Tourney Report

1º round vs Nico:
My deck was a great army of the north using snaga V as cannonfoder to protect me from Automatic attacks, possible plant attacks, etc. He was discarded after several bcs but he did a nice job. My RW was indur, he was suposed to play aiglos, dragon helm, some tech items and cave trolls... but indur was such a sucker that he showed up in the final 15 cards. Vastor's wolves gave me some troubles the first turns... Concerning my hazard portion, i played a mix of awakened plants + some grab bag events that worked pretty and stopped his dunadans and fell khamul to do their stuff and i think i doubled factions...

2º round vs Joe:
This game ended up 29-17 for a 5-1 victory for myself. I played a different deck and give WKU a try. It was a very fun game. WK traveled all over the northeast of middle earth unleashing his powers and playing some factions/items. Btw, the king got his crown lately on the game. 2 lieutenants scored the haven factions while the RWs went for the other 2 factions that made my great army. Joe travelled all over Eriador in the first turns trying to avoid orcs and he did pretty well until last turns (halbarad did the best job here with marvels and master of wood water and hill). Then, legolas, bard, halbarad and annalena were killed and gwaihir discarded because of the death of annalenna. Gimli was prisioner during less than 5 minutes at goblin gate until halbarad marveled the great goblin. I had 2 chances to kill Joe's wizard and gimli survided though he was wounded almost the entire game...

3º round vs Bernd:
This was a very important game because at this point i had 12 TPs and he has 11 TPs. It was a pretty close game until the final turns when his characters were wounded by some orcs and he wasn't able to play more resources. He didn't managed to tap his tower raided many times so my orcs hit hard (though they only killed peath). Bernd's big mistake = turn 2 shelob's lair, tower raided can't be tapped there. Marcos's best play = khamul the RW ties an attack from an elflord at 19 prowess by rolling a 10 in WK's company. I don't really know when i made the crack between our score, but we ended 33-22 for a 5-1 in my favour and almost the victory in the tourney.

4º round vs Agustin:
Agus needed to 6-0 me to tie my TPs, so i tried my best to get at least 1 TP. My deck did the same as the other matches... Hold on the first turns and then unleash an orc rain or 2 the last turns when his characters ended up wouded (or killed). Move of the game: Long Grievous Siege on ice orcs played last turn to put rangers of the north back to Agus's hand and double my 9 faction points. Final result: 38-18 (6-0)

Regarding the cards themselves:
-WKU, TRT, Indur Unleashed, all Plant cards, Snaga, IDBT, The Great Goblin (i'm a bit surprised that i've played it more as a creature than as an event) worked just brilliant, i don't have any complain about...
-Dwar unleashed, adunaphel unleashed, under-deeps hero strategy, minion corsairs strat, open to the summons, half an eye, reforging + german promo, anduril: nice cards, but nothing really surprising to do with them. [*Editor's Note: Most of these cards were substantially revised in the newest edition of Virtual Cards]
Thanks for playing! --from Marcos

WIZARD'S VOICE: THE COUNCIL OF ELROND RULES DIGEST

RULES DIGEST #119

The COE Rules Digests are the official rulings of the COE NetRep and are arrived at with great deliberation (and sometimes debate). In this column you will find the latest COE Rules Digest as of publication. You can find all Rules Digests at the Meccg.net forums under Rules Questions.

[NetRep] Official MECCG Rulings Digest #119

1) Joe Bisz wrote: "I asked: "I have moved a company to a haven, and I choose not to combine it with the original company there during the site phase. On my next turn during the organization phase, can these two companies join each other? Can two companies join each other, than split again, then join and split, indefinitely?"

You answered that they could NOT join during the org, and that they could NOT join and split indefinitely. I assume based on our conversation that they therefore actually CAN join during the org? Also, would a more precise ruling on the second question be: "A single character can only join one company and split from one company during the organization phase" ?"

I ruled incorrectly in the previous digest. The answer to your first question is "Yes". The answer to the second question remains "No". You cannot just keep splitting and recombining. This would allow you to untap any haven as long as you had two characters at it. If you split, you cannot rejoin. I don't want to say either yes or no to your proposal. I'm not sure it's necessary to choose.

2) Joe Bisz wrote: "I know that if a resource player plays a card during the organization phase that creates an effect during the m/h phase, like Secret entrance, SE's effect is the first thing announced during the m/h phase, and that the hazard player may respond with hazards like Choking Shadow before SE resolves. Does this mean if a player taps Promptings of Wisdom during the org, he must declare its effect during the m/h, and such a declaration may be responded to (for instance, with Skinchangers)?"

The use of Promptings of Wisdom does not create an effect with delayed declaration. This is because its effect does not depend on the site or site path of the company.

3) Joe Bisz wrote: "A) Must Lure of Power be revealed before the roll for the faction is made? B) Since Balrog Onguard rules says that non-creature cards can only be revealed if "The company plays a card that potentially would tap an untapped site," I assume this means that Lure of Power could never be revealed at a tapped site if a player is playing a faction there?"

A) Yes.

B) You assume incorrectly. The question is not whether the card might tap this site, but whether it *would* tap *a* site. So, for example, playing a Noble Hound at a tapped borderhold, Snaga Hai at a tapped shadowhold, or Secrets of Their Forging at minion The Worthy Hills all allow the opponent to reveal his on guard card.

4) The question has arisen whether a player can use initiate actions that affect the entire attack after strikes have been assigned.

Both the resource player and the hazard player may take actions during the strike sequence that directly affect the prowess of the strike -- *even if such actions also have other effects, except those otherwise forbidden (e.g. changing the number of strikes, altering strike assignment).*

5) The question has arisen whether a player may use resources during his opponent's turn when facing an attack from Traitor or Hounds of Sauron.

A player may use resources that affect attacks/strikes during his opponent's turn if he is facing an attack from Hounds of Sauron or Traitor. Note that this overturns CoE 15 but extends CoE 110.

6) The question of a possible difference between influence attempts and influence checks has again been raised.

The terms 'influence check' and 'influence attempt' are strictly synonymous. Any card or rule referring to one refers to both. Note that this overrules CoE 52.

7) Marcos asked <http://www.meccg.net/dforum/viewtopic.php?p=19560#19560>at meccg.net whether heroes had any way to avoid losing their allies if those allies fail the roll for Stay Her Appetite. The answer turns on the question whether detainment attacks can be defeated. It was pointed out that the MELE rules only specify that detainment attacks *by creatures* cannot be defeated, and some thought that this lacuna meant that detainment attacks by *non-creatures* (e.g., Stay her Appetite, automatic attacks, agents against minions, etc.) *could* be defeated.

The inference is invalid. A careful review of the MELE rules shows that these rules *never explicitly say how to defeat a non-creature attack – whether it is detainment or non-detainment*. Nevertheless, the rules presuppose (e.g., when they talk about defeating dragon factions) that a non-creature attack may be defeated. We therefore extend the rule for defeating attacks by non-detainment *creatures* to *all* attacks. *A non-detainment attack is defeated if and only if all of its strikes directed against a company are defeated.*

8) Ben pointed out that the text of the minion site Carn Dum specifies "Special: Unless this site is a character's home site, a non-Orc, non-Troll character may not be brought into play at this site." He asked: "Do abilities (e.g. Witch-King, Khamul, They Ride Together, Black Horse, Uvatha) which allow the play of RW followers override Carn Dum, or is my most recent Bag End mission deck completely stuffed?"

These abilities do override Carn Dum, but since the Bag End mission is so slow, your deck is probably stuffed anyway.

Best,

Mark Alfano
mark.alfano@gmail.com
Official Council of Elrond Netrep
*Prepared in collaboration with Mikko Vihtemäki (NetRep Team), and Brian Min, Manuel Cabezali Romero, Konrad Klar, and David Barton (NetRep Advisors).

ME:CCG
Council of Elrond:
World Governing Body

Rules Questions

Moderators: None

Users browsing this forum: None

Council of Elrond Forum Inde

Announcement: Guidelines for Rules Que

Sticky: [JCP] Wacho's CVCC Tutorial

Sticky: Common Rules Deviations in Spai

Sticky: [JCP] Kris's Tutorial Game

Sticky: [JCP] Hazard Limit Reduction Tut

Sticky: [JCP] Passive Conditions Primer

Sleeves

Legendary Hoard

Elf-Song General Influence question

Nobody's Friend and Inner Cunning
[Goto page: 1, 2, 3]

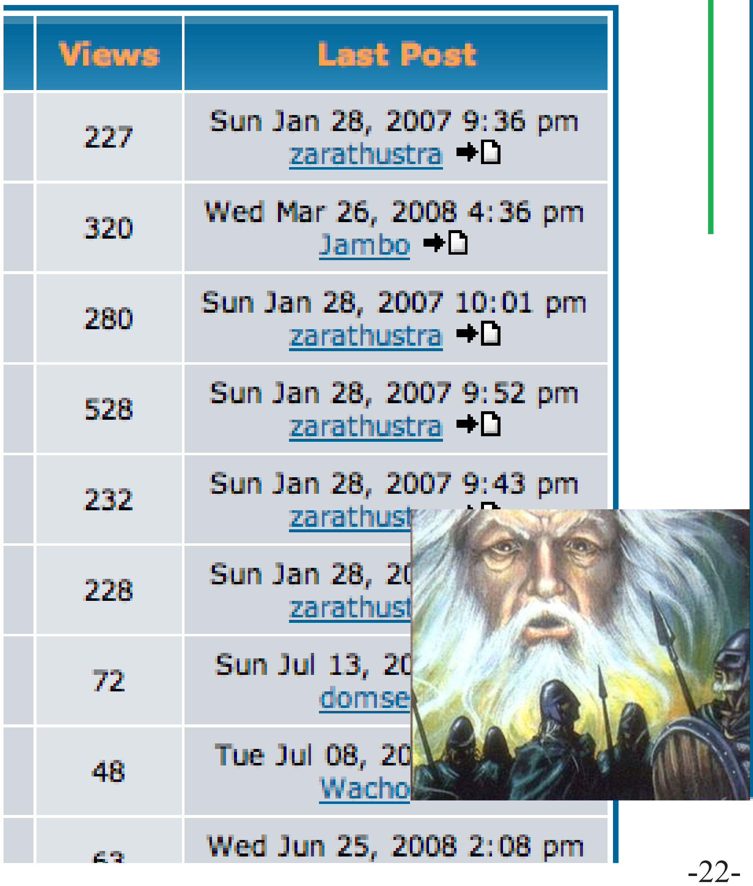
Secrets deeply buried

Lidless Eye/Bade to Rule

Exile of Solitude

The Great Hunt

Drughu at half-ruins



Views	Last Post
227	Sun Jan 28, 2007 9:36 pm zarathustra
320	Wed Mar 26, 2008 4:36 pm Jambo
280	Sun Jan 28, 2007 10:01 pm zarathustra
528	Sun Jan 28, 2007 9:52 pm zarathustra
232	Sun Jan 28, 2007 9:43 pm zarathust
228	Sun Jan 28, 20 zarathust
72	Sun Jul 13, 20 domse
48	Tue Jul 08, 20 Wacho
63	Wed Jun 25, 2008 2:08 pm

THE HORN OF ANOR: CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS FOR PROJECTS

by the EDITOR

In this column the COE will blow its bugle and call for volunteers for projects. We hope that you will find a project that meets your creative interest, so you can be a fuller part of the Middle-earth community and watch our game change for the better.

If you are already working on a project, and you'd like to advertise your project here and scout for helpers, please email the Editor and we'll send out our spies for you!

++A few hearty dwarven HUGS to those who answered the call last issue for Worlds 2007 helpers and Virtual Cards Developers! ++

Call for: GCCG Developers!

There are 3 calls regarding GCCG:

1) Wigy is looking for someone with developer skills who can compile a new version of gccg from the source code for Mac OSX. You don't need to know Macs, or even OSX—you simply need to know how to compile source code. TIME ESTIMATE: 5-15 minutes, perhaps more depending on your skill.

2) Someone who will implement card sounds in GCCG, like the sounds in NETMECCG.

3) Someone who will work on getting the card titles (in white font) to appear over the cards in the Game Play screen, just like the card titles appear over the cards in the Card Library. This should make playing the game easier on the eyes. Help the community enjoy its favorite game!

Contact: Wigy <tommmi.ronkainen@gmail.com>

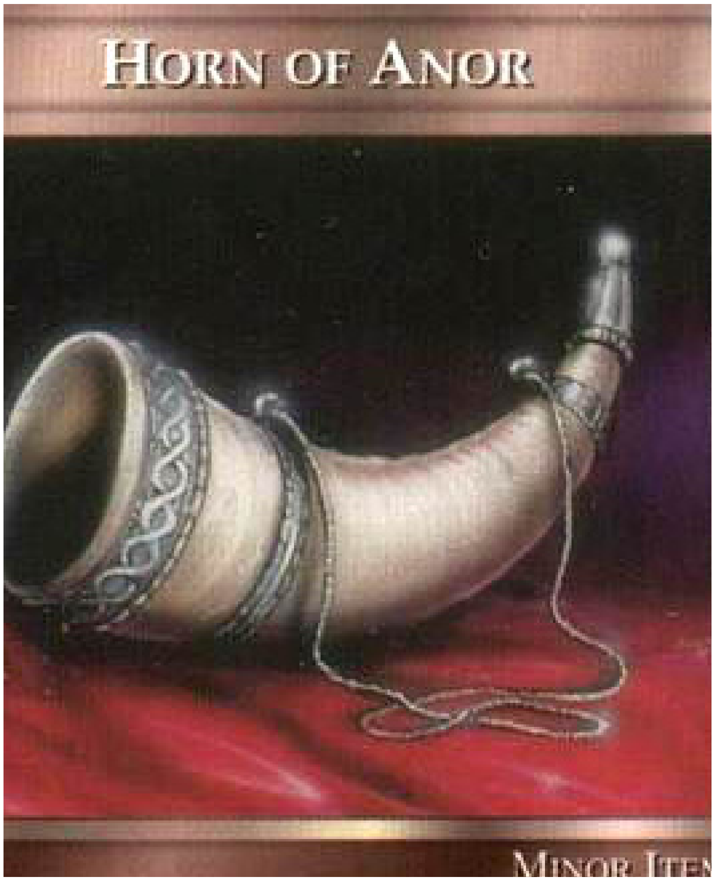
Still Blowing a Call for: Judge Certification

COE Chair Mark Alfano is running the "Judge Certification Program" where players work on a rules-related project, like a sealed deck tutorial, and are then given a quiz by a high-ranking Rules Judge. If the player passes, the player can move up to the next level of Rules Judge starting with Level 1. The main goal (hopefully not a "mission impossible") is to someday create a Unified Rulesbook. Interested? Contact: Mark Alfano (mark.alfano@gmail.com) so that he can allow you access to the Judge Certification Forum and you can see what projects have been done.

Still Blowing a Call for: Assistant Editor

The Editor of the Red Book Newsletter, Joe Bisz, is **STILL** desperately looking for an Assistant Editor to help him. Unfortunately, this last issue was delayed nearly a year because of the workload and other problems. Contact: Joe Bisz <joebisz@verizon.net>

Will you answer the call??



RIDDLING TALK

"Make an Original Minion Deck" Riddle

by Mark Alfano

&

"The Most Efficient Site for Factions" Riddle

by David Barton

LET THE RIDDLE GAMES BEGIN

No one answered Mark's riddles from our last issue, so we are repeating them again for you here! What's the matter, nobody knows how to make a deck anymore? We double-dare you to do it!

We also have a brand-new riddle at the end.

Riddle #1 by Mark Alfano mark.alfano@gmail.com

Minion versus minion games tend to be boring, right? Yes, because there are only a few strong deck types, a few strong avatars, and most decks use the same 10 MP-resources (the Lieutenants, Ice-Orcs, Orcs of Gundabad, Orcs of Dol Guldur/Moria, Thong of Fire, The Arkenstone, Ancient Black Axe, Regiment of Black Crows).

Your Challenge: We are soliciting deck lists for minion vs. minion games, Open format. The lists should include everything about the deck: pool, characters in deck, resources, hazards, sideboard, and a few paragraphs on how to play it.

Decks will be judged on three criteria:
(1) Originality: have we seen its like before?
(2) Power: could it win versus a cheezy Balrog deck?
(3) Innovation: does it use the same boring resources as most other minion vs. minion decks?

Riddle #2 by Mark Alfano

Think it's impossible to make an original minion deck that's actually GOOD? Hmm, maybe you're right. That's why we invented the Virtual format, after all.

For Riddle #2, your challenge is to create a Virtual format minion vs. minion deck using the new Virtual cards effectively and in an interesting way. Follow the rest of the rules for Riddle #1. Best deck (by our judgment) wins.

Riddle #3 by David Barton <dbarton@temple.edu>

For each alignment and type of avatar (Hero, Balrog, Ringwraith, Fallen-wizard), figure out:

1) Which site allows the play of the greatest number of factions?
2) Which site allows the play of the greatest number of faction MPs? (This means total, for all factions playable at the site. You may consider one or two helper cards, such as Gatherer of Loyalities, when answering this question.)

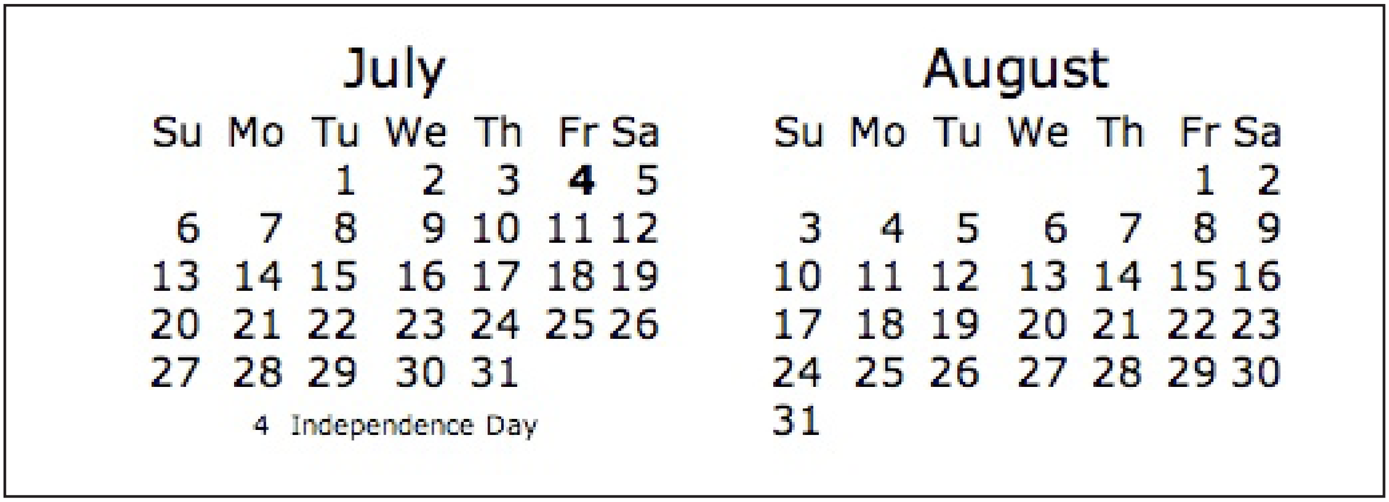
RULES FOR THE RIDDLE GAMES

Can you guess what we got in our pocketsses? If you can, be sure to email the author of the riddle (the person whose name is next to the riddle) at the email address indicated and to refer to the riddle number. The first person who emails the author with the correct guess(or the best guess) wins!

At the end of each year of newsletters, we will calculate who has won the most Riddle Games, and that very wise person will be declared the Riddle Game Champion ("Luckwinner") and receive a special prize!

Would you like to submit a riddle? Please do! Send one to the editor at joebisz@verizon.net. We'll provide a Riddling Talk pin prize. If you can provide an additional prize, we'd appreciate it.

The Shire Season: Tournament Calendar



July

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		

4 Independence Day

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						

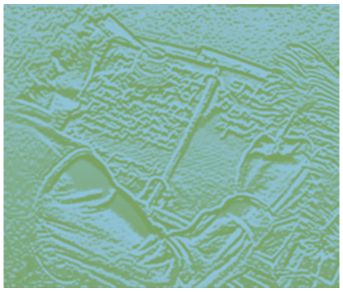
July

- WORLDS 2008 is happening in Antwerp Belgium on July 24th through July 27th! (http://www.councilofelrond.org/forum/viewforum.php?f=34)

August

- Argentinian Nationals will be held August 16th to 17th. See the COE Forums.
- North American Nationals will again be held at Indy GenCon, August 14th through 17th. See the COE Forums.

The Red Book of Westmarch
Issue 3 Blossom-Spring 2007
Editor: Joe Bisz
www.councilofelrond.org/forum



I'm sure we've all noticed that there hasn't been a new Red Book for over a year now. That's partly because the Editor is swamped and has no assistants, but also because of changes in layout software that caused lost time. If you really like the newsletter, your best bet to see more issues is to volunteer some time by joining the Staff. Contact me for more details; and thanks!

The Red Book is always looking for more articles about MECCG or Tolkien. We try to fit articles into already existing columns, and you don't have to be a Council member to submit. I'm also looking for reviews of Tolkien products, like games. 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! To see our Submission Guidelines, which include 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=39. Email the editor: joebisz@verizon.net.