

Star Fleet Warlord News

Issue #13

The Official Newsletter of the Greater Magellanic Cloud

Early 1997

SFW HALL OF FAME UPDATE

<u>Game</u>	<u>Winner</u>	<u>Corporation</u>	<u>Victory</u>
H6	Team victory	Alliance	Military
H13	Team victory	Coalition	Economic
H16	Team victory	Alliance	Military
H17	Team victory	Alliance	Economic
H20	Team victory	Coalition	Default
H24	Team victory	Coalition	Military
43	Todd Kagan	Galactic Zookeepers	99 sites
44	Michael Bogdan	Savage Norsemen	7 sectors
45	Todd Kagan	Weststar Resources	8 sect, 97 sites
46	Art DeLaura	Klingon Peace Corps	81 sites
47	Dan Kagan	Strider	7 sect, 80 sites
48	Todd Maslyn	What Was That?	7 sectors

Game #43 was closer than it appeared. Todd Kagan went 19 sites over the 80-site limit in a single turn, but still nearly lost to Tony Rousmaniere's Phoenix Rising Corp with 6 sector bonuses and 67 sites. Bob Wise's APS Inc. came in a close third with 5 sectors and 66 sites.

Game #44 was also fairly close, with Mike Bogdan at 76 sites and a seventh sector in Y183. Gene Malin's Corellian Star Corp came in second with 56 sites and 5 bonuses, while Ty Johnson's Rapist Braineaters were just a sector away from this with 56 sites and 4 bonuses.

Game #45 was the 'Blowout Game' using the last of the old Revision 7.4 ship lists. Several odd variants were in force as was a special victory condition of 100 sites or 8 sector bonuses. It turned out to be a nail-biter between two very close competitors, who also happen to be brothers. Todd Kagan just barely caught the 8 sector victory in Y195, while his brother Dan Kagan's Strider Corp broke the 100-site limit at 108 on the same turn. However, sector bonuses beats sites, so the game went to Todd. No one else was even close.

Game #46 (the first using the new 7.5 ship list) was yet another close game which could easily have gone to any of several other players had it continued just one more turn. When Art DeLaura snuck over the limit in Y183, he left four other players in striking distance behind: Andy Smith's Ninja Fish (62 sites), Andy Taylor's Herd of Irrelevance (62 sites), Bob Scurfield's Duvet Technicians (56 sites), and Ray Hildebrand's Hard Radiation (52 sites). Interestingly, the first three of these four are players from Great Britain.

Game #47 was another victory for the Kagan brothers, with Dan covering both victory conditions exactly and narrowly defeating three other excellent players (Ty Johnson's Rapist Braineaters with 6 sectors and 71 sites, Mike Bogdan's Savage Norsemen with 4 sectors and 70 sites, and Brian Duff's Cobra Ki with 5 sectors and 56 sites).

Finally, Game #48 (which just ended) was also close, but between just two players, winner Todd Maslyn and Ken Cole's Abandoned Corp with 4 sectors and 70 sites. This 'wild sector' game had no other real competition.

Unfortunately, space restrictions prevent a complete discussion of the numerous Historical Games which ended this time around, except to note that the Alliance scored a respectable number of victories (finally). In case you're wondering, the 'default' result for H20 occurred because the Alliance team dropped out (without telling us) after just a few turns. The other team was compensated with free turns in game H25, which is now in progress.

TELEPHONE TAG!

In their never-ending wisdom, the phone company has decided to change the Dayton area code. Effective immediately, our area code is now **937**, not 513. The old area code will remain in effect for a while, but you might as well get used to the new one now.

In related news, Agents of Gaming has installed a new dedicated fax line, (937) 237-3150. The old system (with the fax switching box and the annoying second ring) has been eliminated, and no fax will answer the 233-6886 number (which should be used for regular calls). We apologize for any short-term confusion caused by this change, but it should prove a great improvement in the long term.

GOODBYE, DOUBLE-TURNS!

In all the years SFW has been running, the one element which draws the most complaints has been the double-turn. In case any of you don't know what that is, it involves deliberately holding back your turn until everyone else has run, then sending your next two turns in as quickly as possible so as to run two turns to your opponents' one. Properly done, this can devastate an opponent as one turn everything seems fine and the next a fleet has taken out his Home Office! (Note, of course, that in order to do this a player has to give up a double turn to his opponents, but while risky, it isn't too dangerous because his enemies aren't planning for this ability and generally aren't aware they can take advantage of it.)

In the past, it has seemed impossible to get rid of this tactic, simply because our game is designed in such a way that turns *must* run in a sequential fashion. Changing the programming so all turns run simultaneously is impossible without a total redesign. Plus, there are new problems which arise when such a system is used (such as what happens when the fleets of more than two players occupy the same hex simultaneously), and besides, players *want* to be able to be late if they need to. In the middle of 1996, however, a new solution occurred to us, and this has finally been implemented. The solution: Eliminate day cycles, and run each game in a single day!

How does this work? Easily. Every Corporation is now assigned a *sequence number*, which is a 4-digit nonsequential integer. The game then runs on a particular day of the week, on a two-week cycle. Thus, for example, Game #53 runs on every other Wednesday, and Game #54 will run on every other Thursday.

This seems simple so far, but the crucial element comes in when a player is late. If this happens, that Corporation's sequence number is automatically increased so that it is now last in the ordering scheme, and will run last thereafter. If you think about it for a minute, you'll see that it now isn't possible to double-turn a player intentionally any more! If you delay your turn on purpose and everyone runs their turns, and you then send in two turns quickly, you'll still run after them all when the following turn is executed! The only thing you'll accomplish by trying this is that you'll give everyone else a free double-turn on *you*.

It should be noted that it's still possible for double-turns to appear (as you may have realized) but you won't be able to plan for them, which is the whole point. Understand also that if your turn is two weeks late or more, it will be waived (you won't get a printout or be charged any money, but your Corp will still generate income as if it had run a turn with no moves or orders). The old four-week grace period is now reduced to two weeks. If we didn't do this, you would still be able to run planned double-turns, which we don't want around any more.

ANNOUNCING BABYLON 5 WARS!

Agents of Gaming is now working on a new project, Babylon 5 Wars! This is a space combat board game based on the popular syndicated science-fiction show Babylon 5. This effort marks our first attempt to expand outside the play-by-mail market, and should begin appearing on the scene in March of this year (starting with a boxed starter set and pewter miniatures for the basic fighters and starships).

To help with this effort, AOG has incorporated and now has several new faces (or voices) you may encounter if you call or visit. Rob Glass, the B5W Project Manager, is a computer artist and technical writer, and might be found answering our phones in the evenings. Kelly Lofgren, a longtime player of SFW, is a computer engineer and database expert who plans to help write a B5W play-by-mail game later this year. Finally, Phil Lacefield, a computer repair technician and salesman, is being trained to run turns and manage the office while the rest of us are out of town at conventions. Bruce Fiedler, who ran turns daily from 1991 through 1994 and occasionally in 1995 and 1996, will continue to do so on a limited basis in 1997 and beyond.

AOG plans to continue expanding in the future, but we won't drop Star Fleet Warlord, and we won't slack off on our customer service (which we view with a certain touch of pride). However, since our phones are being manned by several newcomers, please be patient with us. As always, if we make any errors because of this, we'll be happy to correct them for you!

Further information on Babylon 5 Wars can be found on our web page. See page 4 for data on how to get there.

ESPIONAGE FOR FUN AND PROFIT

One often overlooked feature of Star Fleet Warlord is the Espionage order (ES), which becomes available in Y170. The order is not in the basic rulebook, but is explained on your Y169 turn so you can use it thereafter. There is also a counter-espionage order, EC, which appears one year sooner. These orders can be very useful for gaining tidbits of info on your nearby opponents (or denying such data to your enemies).

GENERAL NOTES ON ESPIONAGE

Before entering into a discussion of these orders, it's important to understand just what they actually are. EC, the counter-espionage order, must be used each turn to be effective. It costs 20% of your current stock value at the time it is issued (so if you have Reversed Orders ON, you can save a little bit of money). Once set, it remains active until your *next* turn runs, then it is turned off. To be effective, it must be used every turn, costing your Corporation money and a valuable order slot. For this reason, it is not often used, especially later in the game (as it is much more important earlier on).

The ES (Espionage) order is directed towards a particular enemy Corporation, and costs some percentage of their stock value to pull off. Information-gathering is automatic unless they have EC active, in which case it fails (and sends a message to the target that you tried to spy on them). If you spy on someone in this way, and it isn't countered, they get a note saying they were spied on between turns, but not by whom (and not what information they learned).

The different facets of the ES order are discussed in more detail below, but in general they are best used early in the game while targets' stock values are low. At a minimum, you can find out the name and address of the owning player so you can send them a letter or call them for diplomatic purposes. You might also surprise them with the "You were spied on between turns" message and get them to waste some money for several following turns on EC orders, which aren't important to you at that point because your espionage has already gone off! Sort of like closing the barn door after the horses have escaped.

On the EC front, if you are really concerned about being spied on (perhaps you know a tough or vindictive opponent is nearby, or maybe you're just paranoid), you should start using it early, as soon as it's available (Y169) and use it for the next three to five turns until you can no longer justify wasting an order slot on it. Besides which, at this point during the midgame it isn't that important if people learn a little bit of info about you with an ES order. If they wanted data on you, they will have already spied on you before now (and failed) and thus probably won't try again.

Note that in Historical Games, the ES and EC orders become doubly important. Your opponents know where you are, and would love to know a lot more info about you if they can get it (such as your Home Office's position). EC is much more important in this case and should probably be used more often.

ESPIONAGE INFORMATION LEVELS

The ES order can be used to learn 12 different types of information at a cost equal to a percentage of the target's current stock. A discussion of each of these follows.

1. (20%) Tells the target's player name, address, and phone number (if activated), plus any personal information he may have listed. This is a cheap and effective way to learn the names of the players around you in Y170 without actually having to meet them first. The diplomacy which follows can be far more valuable than the pittance you spent to get the contact data. Besides which, you can probably tell the player that you spied on him to gain this info and they're unlikely to have too much of a problem with that.

2. (20%) Tells some basic info about the Corp, such as their current EP levels, what's in their optional item stockpiles, and their stock value. This information is not particularly useful, although if you're planning an attack on someone you might want to see if they have any spare EPs laying around which they could use to build a huge defense fleet in a single turn.

3. (20%) Reports the target's average income and the number of sectors they own. You can probably get a good idea of their income by watching the Best Corps Lists, but watching an opponent's sector count can give you advance warning if they are approaching game-winning levels. Some players, knowing they are listed on the "Approaching victory" list if they cross the 4-sector limit, will hold at 3 sectors until they are just about ready to make their move. You can keep an eye out for these players if they appear high on the Income List but don't show up on the Most Sites or the Approaching victory lists.

4. (20%) Shows the exact sectors owned by a player. There are many cases (particularly in Historical Games) where this could be useful. You might want to disrupt a powerful opponent's drive for victory and need to find a sector to attack in, for example. In a Historical variant, you can see how your opponents chose to distribute their sectors between players (e.g., sector 40 can be given to either the Kzintis or Northern Feds) and get an idea of which Corp will be an income powerhouse. This can clue you in on the opposing team's long-term plans.

5. (20%) Shows the types of ships owned. Some races fight other races well, and it might be nice to know what races your opponent is using. This ES code will break them down by type (and incidentally tell you exactly how many ships the target has). It can be quite helpful in discovering if you should be worried about cloaked Romulan attacks, for example.

6. (20%) Lists the Corps the target is defending against or allied with. This is helpful in two ways, telling you simultaneously if your opponent is worried about you (he'll be defending against you if he is) or if he is honoring an agreement (and has allied with you). A player defending against you, or not allied when he said he would be, is probably considering you his primary target, and you should be worried.

7. (40%) Shows the day cycle number (or, in Game #53 and beyond, the sequence number) of the target Corp. This is very useful in determining when that player's turn runs in relation to yours. In newer games, you can also determine if a player's turn ever runs late (his sequence# will change, becoming much higher) or if you should be worried about him getting two turns on you if you are ever late!

8. (40%) Shows the location of the target's Home Office. This is the most often used espionage code, especially in Historical Games. It's normally used when planning assaults, especially when the target's map has not yet been acquired (although, if there is more than one HO possibility, it can pick out the true one for you). Some players even go so far as to use Scan Hex (SH) orders to find a clear path into a sector all the way to the Home Office, making an assault without ever having to scan the sector!

9. (40%) Breaks down the number of sites owned (by sector). This is something of an improved #4, and is normally used to find out which sectors a particular person is active in. It can help spot players who are trying to sneak up on a victory by maneuvering into a position to capture several sectors in a single turn—such players will have 6 or 7 sites in multiple sectors without actually owning the full bonus (and thus staying off the Best Corps lists).

10. (150%) This one shows the precise location of every site owned by a Corporation. It's quite helpful for information purposes, primarily because it lets you position ships across borders to make runs for sites before you have the required sector maps. Another excellent use for this is on dead Corps (note that their stock is considered to be 25 for purposes of this order) so you can pick and choose among the leavings of their former Empire.

11. (75%) This combines the first six ES codes above. The amount of information gained (and the diversity of data) is well worth the price. In addition, you can use it early in the game against nearby players to get an idea of the level of competition you're facing (and you can then tell them you spied on them just to get level 1 information—they won't know any different).

12. (20%) This one appears in Y174, not Y170 with the rest of the ES order codes. When you use it, you get a display of the target Corp's exact rankings in Income, Power, Ships, and Fortifications. While the top Corps usually appear in the basic lists you receive each turn after this point, medium- and low-level ones generally don't. If you know in advance how powerful a particular enemy is before diplomacy begins, you know whether to bargain with them from a position of strength, equality, or weakness. Just keep in mind that the listed values are as of the end of the *previous* turn, not the current ones, and might change in the interim.

WHAT ARE THE BEST CORPS' LISTS?

We get this question a lot, so here's the straight answer. Best Corps' lists begin appearing in Y173 or so. There are twelve of them, of which you'll get at most six (unless you issue the 50-EP Buy Lists order, BL, which is explained during play). Additionally, a thirteenth appears only during End-Of-Game Reports.

Highest Income: This simply lists the total income *from sites only*, with all resources lumped together into a single number. For example, a Corp with an income of 200 PE, 250 OR, 300 DC and 350 FP would have a value of 1100 for Highest Income calculation purposes.

Most Powerful: This list calculates the total combined attack factor of all ships, including optional items like fighters, drones and PFs. The effects of crews, legendary officers, and terrains are not calculated into this (just raw combat power).

Most Defensive: The same as above except the defense factor is used, not attack factor.

Most Ships: The total number of ships owned. Decoys, cloaked decoys, and logistics bases are not counted, but obsolete Warp Gates do count.

Most Fortified: The total fortifications on all sites you own. Fighters, PFs and other defenses don't count.

Most Bases: The total number of bases owned. The type of base does not matter, so a player with 10 base stations will be listed higher than someone with 9 starbases. Combine this with Most Fortified to get an idea of how diverse a player's fortifications are (i.e., how much he has on his Home Office versus other sites). A person with a high Most Fortified and low Most Bases probably has a lot of stuff on his HO.

Most Sites: This simply lists the players who own the most sites, as advertised. Note that minor sites aren't included in this calculation, just major sites.

Best Crews: The best average crew levels. To determine this, add the crew levels of all ships together, and divide by the total number of ships. Assume a minimum of 10 ships for this calculation, so a dead Corp with just a few ships left in the game isn't as likely to appear on this list (though they often do anyway). Speed-0 ships like decoys, logbases, and obsolete Warp Gates aren't counted in this average for any purpose.

Least Visible: The most useless list, this one shows the Corps with the highest percentage of cloaked ships. Sum the cloaked ships and divide by the total number of ships; again, assume a minimum 10 ships and don't count speed-0 ships. This can be useful for noting Romulan fans, and also to find out who got that weird random event last turn that cloaks everything out.

Best Bargains: Shows the ship classes with the greatest percentage difference between their original cost and their current cost. For example, a ship with a current price of 150 and a base cost of 200 would have a 75% Best Bargains level. This is very useful for determining what ships to buy, and what races aren't being played by very many players.

Busiest Sector: This list simply shows the sectors with the most ships in it. Read the list from left to right, not up and down, so the #1 and #2 sectors are on the top left and top right of this chart, respectively. This list can be quite helpful in finding out if a huge war fleet (other than your own) is near your space.

Most Prospectable: This one lists the best places where prospecting income can be found. The total prospecting in the sector (not counting supernovas) is summed and used to form this list. Of course, this could be in just a few places or spread evenly through the sector, but you have no way of knowing just from this list. As with the Busiest Sector list, read this one from left to right.

Most Kills: This list appears only in End-Of-Game Reports and shows the players with the most ship kills during the game. All kills are recorded, including monsters, pirates, decoys, and ships of dead Corps. There is a chance this list will soon replace the Least Visible list—let us know if you would like us to do this!

ASK THE GALACTIC COUNCIL!

Q. I just saw an Orion Scum (997) ship in a negative energy field! I thought NPC pirates and monsters didn't go into those terrains! What's going on?

A. This is one from the Weird But True Department (Gene Malin, Chairman). It's true that monsters and pirates don't plot moves into NF terrains (or several other kinds of terrains, for that matter). However, they aren't smart enough to plan ahead for Stargate or Weak Space movement, which *could* take them into such terrains! Naturally, if the ship or monster isn't listed as being immune to the resulting terrain, it will be affected like any other ship. Thus, an NPC pirate which moved into a negative energy field through a Stargate would have its warp drained like anyone else (and would never move faster than speed-1 for the rest of the game). Carrying the example further, if the SG's target hex had been a supernova, the pirate ship would have been destroyed!

Q. I noticed that the first two digits of my Corporation number are the same as the sector I'm in. Is this just coincidence or is it the same for everyone?

A. Actually, you've noticed one of the hidden secrets of SFW. In most games, you'll find this correlation is true for every Corp except the pirates and monsters (994 and above). For example, Corp#435 would be in sector 43, and Corp#5 would be in sector 00 (the two leading digits are zeroes). There used to be a random event which let players change their Corp# and escape this setup, but it was deleted about a year ago. Oh, it should be noted that a special game variant exists where Corp numbers and sector numbers do not match—it's called a Scrambled Sector Game. DH-games are of this type, as are any other custom game which requests this feature.

CONVENTION ALERT!

Agents of Gaming is planning to attend several gaming conventions during 1997. The primary purpose of these trips will be to publicize Babylon 5 Wars, but we'll be happy to talk Star Fleet Warlord there as well (though we won't be running games—we tried that once, back in 1991, and it did *not* work!). Look for us in the AOG Booth (the one with the Babylon 5 Wars display) at each of these cons!

Agamemcon (March 1-2, Costa Mesa, CA): A Babylon 5 convention in which we will (hopefully) offer the first elements of B5 Wars for sale.

GAMA Trade Show (March 25-28, Reno, NV): A trade show for the gaming industry, in which we will meet with distributors and retailers, but will not sell products. Have your local store send a representative!

GameFest 97 (April 4-6, Calgary, AB): Canada's trade show for the gaming industry. Unlike the GAMA show, we'll be selling products as well as demonstrating them.

Origins (July 17-30, Columbus, OH): A combination gaming convention and trade show! Find us at booths 420 and 370 across from WW and next to WotC.

Gen Con (August 7-10, Milwaukee, WI): The gaming convention of the year! We'll be there for certain with demos and hopefully most of the miniatures for B5W. Watch for it!

UPCOMING GAME ANNOUNCEMENTS

GAME #54, scheduled for an early February start, will be a Nomad Game (the same sort of game type used in Game #49). In this type, there are no Home Offices at all! Every sector is a wild sector, and contains one of the really nasty monsters, as well as a pirate base. You'll start with a Warp Gate as usual, somewhere near the middle of your sector (in an empty hex) with 1000 EPs, not 300; however, loans aren't available, and since you don't have an HO, you won't have that 100 EPs coming in every turn like you're used to. Since you don't have an HO, you can only buy ships at Warp Gates, and if you lose them all, you can't build ships any more! Thus, we recommend you buy at least one extra WG during your build (perhaps two). Losing all your WGs and other ships is the only way to get knocked out of this game completely, as you have no Home Office to lose.

GAME #55, which will start in March, will be a Timeshift Game with a +5 turn timeshift (meaning the game starts in Y170, not Y165). Other than this relatively minor change, there are no other alterations to this game. Of course, we should note that since you start after the ES order already comes out, you'll need to use an EC order on your first turn if you want to avoid having someone spy on you. (You could do it on the build, also, but no one is going to know your Corp# to spy on you before Turn #1 is over.)

GAME #56, on the distant horizon, will be a Good Event Game. In this variant, everyone gets a good random event every turn (but you don't get to pick which one you get). There's no need to use the EV order at all, ever! This variant will almost certainly replace the past Event Game format (in which players could choose their events from a prepared list), except in custom games. There are just too many events which were too powerful when players could select them in advance—and while we can delete events, we'd have to remove so many that the entire game variant became meaningless.

CATCH US ON THE WEB!

Agents of Gaming's World Wide Web page location has moved. The new location is: <http://www.agentsofgaming.com>.

Follow the links to SFW to find out about upcoming games (we try to keep the page updated at least monthly), to send Email directly to AOG, and even to fill out an Initial Build Form online! (Note: For some reason we can't receive emailed copies of the build form from the web. It always arrives blank. You can, however, fill it out on the screen and send a printed copy to us.) You can also find various helpful files available for download, including the latest House Rules, the credit card authorization form, and every back issue of the Star Fleet Warlord News!

PUBLISHER'S INFORMATION

THE STAR FLEET WARLORD NEWS is published twice annually (usually during the first and third quarters, though additional issues may be printed as needed) by the Agents of Gaming, and is copyright © 1997 Amarillo Design Bureau. Each issue costs \$1 (\$2 for overseas readers) except for those players currently active in any game of STAR FLEET WARLORD, who receive each issue free. Subscriptions are not available due to the infrequent publishing schedule.

We need submissions! The last issue was delayed for several months (and the printing schedule changed) due to the lack of material. Mail all submissions to: Agents of Gaming, P.O. Box 31571, Dayton OH 45437-0571. Thanks!