

Star Fleet Warlord News

Issue #8

The Official Newsletter of the Greater Magellanic Cloud

March 1995

SFW HALL OF FAME UPDATE

Game	Winner	Corporation	Victory
H4	Team victory	Coalition team	Military
H5	Team victory	Coalition team	Economic
20A	Bruce Brand	Poseidon Combine	82 sites
22A	Tom Stenson	Yoopanese, Inc.	8 sectors
26	Mark Hall	Space Ghost & Co.	84 sites
27	David Schroeder	Future Tech I	90 sites
28	Brian Tobolski	Knights of the Cloud	84 sites
29	John Hanna	Get Sirius	89 sites
30	David Schroeder	Emerald Marauders	7 sectors

Games H4 and H5 were historical games. Game H4 was the fastest-running game and ended shortly after the Southern Federation and Western Romulan Corporations both fell to enemy fleets. The loss of the Federation (and the impending death of both the Hydrans and Kzintis) was too much for the Alliance to withstand. As for game H5, no Corporation had actually been taken out when the game ended, but the Coalition owned almost 50 more sites than the Alliance and victory was assured.

Games 20A and 22A were three-week games. Game 20A was the largest three-week game to date (with 20 players) while game 22A was the smallest (with 12 players). Both lasted about the same length of time—about a year and a half.

Games 26-30 were 50-player games. Game 26 was an Òall-NPCÓ variant, game 27 was normal, game 28 was Òall-wild,Ó game 29 was Òn-primary,Ó and game 30 was normal. Most of these were close games, with game 27 and 28Ós winners each only 4 sites ahead of their competition. John Hanna wins the Surprise Victory Award for taking over 30 sites in two turns, bringing game 29 to a quick conclusion. Also, David Schroeder joined the ranks of the multiple-game winners with two victories in less than two months.

For the playerÓs views on their victories in these games, watch for CaptainÓs Log #17, scheduled to be released in mid-1995.

NEW SHIP LIST COMING

Very soon weÓll be reprinting the SFW Ship List. The new list will include ALL the combat statistics for every ship in the game. We also plan to add a new statistic: Hit Points. In the current rules, HPs are equal to your shipÓs DF. However, by splitting the two into separate stats, greater ship variety can be achieved and the combat values of ships can be made to more closely approximate Star Fleet Battles. For example, the FRD in SFB has very few weapons, but would have a tremendously high number of hit points due to its sheer size. This could not be simulated in SFW when HPs and DF were one and the same, but in the new system, it will be more true to life.

The new list will also fix a few minor errors (such as the failure to include an ÒSÓ variant letter for the D-PSC) and some ships may also be added. Star Fleet Battles has expanded in the past year or so, adding many more ships (including the interesting Frax submarines, which have cloaking devices). Some of these may be added to SFW. There is also talk of making the Frax (sans their crew-5 special ability) and Seltorians available as primary races now that they have enough ship designs to make them viable. Their computerized Corporations would be replaced by new races, of course.

All of this is speculation, of course, but if you have any input on the procedure, let us know. More than likely, nothing along these lines will be decided before the next issue of Warlord News is published at the end of June.

AGENTS OF GAMING NEWS

Bruce Fiedler, longtime employee of Agents of Gaming, has left the company to pursue other interests. He remains Óon callÓ and will likely continue to work occasionally when Bruce Graw (the only other AoG employee) is out of town or at a convention.

Despite the reduced manpower, AoG remains committed to quality service. We will still process your turns on schedule and with the attention to detail youÓre used to. The only difficulties you might have is in reaching us by phone. Our office hours have tightened up noticeablyÑthe best times to reach us are now 2-5 in the afternoon on weekdays, and unpredictable hours on weekends. Of course, you can call any time (even during the evening), and if weÓre here weÓll answer. If not, please leave a message. Thanks!

THE DEMISE OF CHAINING

As many of you know, area terrain tends to be organized into chains (or sometimes spheres) on sector maps. You can see this by looking at any map and finding a cluster of similar area terrains (asteroids, dust, etc.) in a line or row. Spheres also appear and are usually made up of nebula or supernova hexes, plus the occasional dust cloud.

These chains are created by the galaxy generation routines, which start out by creating a starting hex of area terrain, and continue by copying that same terrain several times until the chain or sphere is formed. Up until now, that has resulted in every hex in the chain having the same prospecting valueÑand this can really add up when the starting hex has a gas pocket or other valuable terrain adding to its value. A typical gas pocket/asteroid field hex can be worth as much as 200 EPs, and when this gets duplicated 5 times, youÓre talking about a LOT of EPs crammed into a little tiny space.

This has proven itself unbalancing. If a player has something like it in his home sector, five ships can generate the equivalent of four or five turnsÓ income in a single turn! WhatÓs more, a veteran player, knowing the above from experience, will use this hidden game feature to jump to an early lead over new players.

With all of this in mind, we removed terrain chaining from the game before the start of game #36. Rows and spheres of similar terrain still appear, but the prospecting value of any hex in this chain is no longer related to any other hexes in the same chain. Point and area terrain combinations still add their prospecting values together (so a GP+AF will still be worth a lot of cash), but an adjacent AF in the same chain will be worth only what you would expect to get out of a normal asteroid field.

Since chaining was a function of the game generator program, it could not be removed from existing games. The following games still possess prospecting chains: 31-35, 29A, 34A, X2, and H1-H12. Any game numbered 36 or later, or historical games H13 or later, will no longer possess the chaining feature. We hope this helps to balance the game better for all players.

IN THIS ISSUE...

The theme of this issue is Listening Posts. Check out the fiction by Loren Schneider on page 2, then continue with the LP tactics and suggestions throughout the rest of pages 2 and 3.

Note the change to the IR order described on page 3. This takes effect as of 1 April 1995 in all games of Star Fleet Warlord. The reasons for this change should be obvious to everyone whoÓs ever had a site taken away by a listening post rebellion.

LINGERING DOUBT

by Loren Schneider

Captain Bertrande Mieszkiewicz waited patiently for the report he'd requested nearly a full minute ago. "Yassczk" oozed the Hydran, urging him to wait just another few moments.

The dashing young captain's thoughts turned to the status of his new command. A recent Academy graduate, he'd found himself on a waiting list longer than a Kothoran sun eel for a ship assignment in Star Fleet. Luckily, a classmate's uncle had a seat on the board of X Corp, one of the Corporations competing for exclusive rights to exploit a quadrant of the Greater Magellanic Cloud. One thing led to another, and, weeks later, Mieszkiewicz's commission was bought out by X Corp. Now, less than a year after graduation, he found himself on the bridge of this old (but well-crewed) Federation Scout's captain!

Many senior Star Fleet officers that had suffered the reduction in force following the downsizing of the great fleets wound up serving in the new "corporate" navies. Lucky was the RIFed junior officer to obtain *any* rating on *any* ship. Mieszkiewicz attributed his good fortune (besides knowing someone who knew someone) to his prowess at small-ship tactics in the flight simulators. He'd actually published several articles in noted tactical journals. However, the lingering doubt that his service record might have been confused with his father's, Bertrand E. Mieszkiewicz (a highly decorated Star Fleet captain), still tugged at vulnerable parts of his ego. Still, one had to rely on his own merits.

"Downloading the ship scan to your viewscreen now, sir," said Ensign Wyciskalla, the communications officer, interrupting Mieszkiewicz's reverie and forcing his mind back to the present.

The first assignment for the scout *Inquisitoribus*, recently gated in from the Milky Way, was to investigate the cause of the apparent communications failures between the X Corp's Home Office and several recently acquired outposts. Additionally, rival Corporation fleet movements had to be monitored. Bertrande took a moment to go over the scan report, raising an eyebrow as he did so. "Well, well, well, what do we have here?" he exclaimed as several anomalies quickly manifested themselves. "I can see the nature of the communication problem is a lack of equipment and personnel on our outposts!"

Several icons representing rival Corp ships (as yet unidentified) littered the screen, several of them obviously occupying the now-silent outposts. "Intensify the scan on 12-1501!" Mieszkiewicz barked.

"Yassczk" oozed the Hydran.

"From their signature, it looks like they're Quickshop boys, sir," a young weapons officer named Alecknavage remarked. "One ship on each site."

This was a good assumption, Bertrande thought with a nod. He had been briefed fully on the situation in sector 12 before gating in. Months early, Quickshop Incorporated had performed illegal sector scans on X's home sector. This made it a necessity to keep an eye on them, which was why the *Inquisitoribus* was here.

"Tightbeam communique inbound, sir," Wyciskalla announced. "Sir, it originates from 12-1501! I didn't know we had a listening post there!"

Neither did I, Mieszkiewicz thought, but he didn't need to mention that. Obviously X Corp's admirals didn't want certain secrets revealed to the lower echelons. "On my screen NOW!" he commanded.

His crew hurried to complete the scan as the information appeared on the captain's viewer. The message had been truncated, the LP having used a squeeze technique to code the transmission in a delta-wave burst. Whoever had sent the message knew what they were doing to avoid source detection; Quickshop probably suspected nothing. However, the coding did not lend itself to easy interpretation, as delta-waves were severely distorted by many natural phenomena. The resulting message appeared as background gibberish.

"Navigation, what type of site is 12-1501?" Bertrande asked.

"Molten ore, sir," snapped Broughton, the veteran nav officer. Broughton had served nearly 20 years with Star Fleet, nearly all of it on a

GSC; consequently, he knew navigation like the back of his hand. No doubt he had memorized the entire layout of the sector, and maybe the whole quadrant for all Mieszkiewicz knew.

"Comm, apply a P-algorithm designed to compensate for delta-wave variation through a metalloid gravitational well, to include K-factors relating to any moons. Run the message through the algorithm until the P- and K-factors align."

"Aye, sir."

"Science, where's that new scan?"

"Yassczk" oozed the Hydran oozed incomprehensibly.

"Algorithm enabled, sir," Wyciskalla announced.

SIXTEEN INBOUND HOME, read the deciphered transmission.

Sixteen? The scan showed only one enemy ship. Mieszkiewicz studied the latest scan carefully. It did look a little fuzzy... "Comm, download the algorithm to science. Science."

"Yassczyk" came the reply, and Bertrande realized it was already done. Sometimes it seemed as if the crew could read his thoughts even before he thought them!

The enhanced scan immediately snapped up on the visual, showing one enemy ship in orbit and fifteen more hiding in the molten ore's gravitational well!

"Comm."

"Transmitting now, sir!"

"Very good," Mieszkiewicz sat back and relaxed slightly. The Home Office would have plenty of time to prepare a hot reception for these Quickshop boys! Without this advance warning, the enemy fleet would have certainly surprised the Home Office.

"Sir, the new duty roster awaits your approval, and we need to go over the new benefit package with the crew," commented the XO. The old nagging doubt about his worthiness as a captain disappeared as Mieszkiewicz buried himself in his duties.

USING LISTENING POSTS

Listening posts, or LPs, first become available in Y170. They are not found in the rulebook, but are a technology which develops during the game. As the above story illustrates, they can be quite useful for information-gathering, and have other abilities as well.

The initial description of listening posts states that they cost 50 EPs to create, and the order to make one, **LP**, is issued as a miscellaneous order. When LP is issued, all fortifications are dismantled, all fighters/PFs are deassigned, and all officers are returned home (as if you had issued the Unfortify Site order on the site). The listening post (actually more of a stay-behind guerrilla force) is then set up and begins operations. Note that once this is done, you cannot fortify the site again or the LP will be destroyed.

In order to use the LP to full effectiveness, it is necessary to allow its site to be captured by another player. That's the whole point of a listening post. If you create one and the site never gets conquered, it is of no use (except for peace of mind). Some players LP all the sites in their home sector (just to be safe), but if you are not being invaded, this is a waste of good EPs. Instead, choose sites which are in danger of being lost or which are frequently being traded back and forth between you and an enemy.

Once created, an LP provides a report to you at the start of every turn. This report lists who owns the site, the fortifications present, and the number of uncloned ships in the hex. In addition, if the fortifications are large enough to make a scan, the LP will make a ship scan for you (even if the site is owned by another player), and this will take place without the owning player's knowledge.

The LP is capable of nullifying the effect of fortifications for defense purposes if you attack the site. If your opponent builds a base there, and your ships (not another Corp) attack, the fortifications provide a DF of 1 (this also nullifies the effect of weapons officers and marine majors). Fighters, PFs, Ace Pilots, and ships at the site still provide their benefits.

LISTENING POSTS, continued...

Upon building a listening post, you learn about several new orders which apply only to your LPs. These orders are listed below, in order of usefulness.

IR (Incite Rebellion)

This is the most effective use of a listening post. IR allows you to rebel a site back to your control, so long as it is not defended by more than a few fortifications or at least one ship. If the site has no fortifications at all and no ships are guarding it, the rebellion will be automatically successful!

Of course you can see the advantages of this order. Even if your opponent conquers your site, you get it back immediately and you don't even have to have a ship in the area! Keep in mind, though, that this still counts as having conquered the site on your current turn, so you still have to wait the required one turn delay before it can be fortified.

The main disadvantage of IR is that it requires a miscellaneous order to issue. Normally you won't have just one LP out there, but many, and issuing a lot of IR orders will detract from your ability to build ships (a critical issue during the middle game). Thus, you will probably want to buy orders on the turn before you expect to have to incite a lot of rebellions.

Typically, you will want to use this order when you are fighting in a hotly contested area. Continually rebelling sites back to your control keeps your opponent from gaining any income from them. IRs are also useful near the end of the game when you are fighting to get and keep as many sites as you can (this strategy was the cornerstone of John Hanna's recent victory in game 29). Finally, LPs can also be useful when sites are menaced by those annoying space monsters and pirates. They won't leave their ships on your sites for long, and you get them right back when they depart and you need never risk a ship.

NOTE: As mentioned above, LPs cannot be rebelled if an enemy ship is present on the site. This is a change to the rules which takes effect 1 April 1995 in all games of SFW. This change corrects certain complications which arise from a ship being present over a site it does not own.

Instigate Burglary (IB)

This is basically a RAID order performed by your listening post instead of a ship. If fortifications are less than 200 points, success is automatic and the site is raided (note that ships present at the site have no effect on success). The chance of success is 80% for 200-299 points of fortifications, 60% from 300-399, 40% from 400-499, 20% from 500-599 and 0% at Starbase level and above.

In addition to this, the IB order lets you specify a ship type which will raid the site. The player owning the site gets a message that a ship of that type performed (or attempted to perform) the raid. In this way the presence of your listening post is not revealed. Note that you can specify ANY race and class you like (even a ship class that doesn't really exist) although using an illegal ship to make a raid (such as one with a speed less than 4 or one which has not yet become available) will give away your LP's presence to the enemy. Most players choose cloakable ships, Orions, space dragons, or ships known to be operated by a different Corp who also has a presence nearby.

Burglaries are good ways to guarantee income from any listening post (assuming it has no fortifications). Of course, if the site has been recently raided, a burglary will fail. Burglarizing a site marks it as raided, so any ships attempting to raid before the owning player runs his next turn will also fail (thus, burglarizing your own sites can frustrate your opponent's raiding attempts).

Instigate Sabotage (IS)

This is a seldom-used order which only becomes useful when your opponent applies a large amount of fortifications to one of your listening posts. If this happens, IR and IB orders become impossible to use and the

only other thing you can do to the site is attack it with a fleet (knowing its fortifications provide no DF).

The sabotage order lets you send an amount of EPs (minimum 50 points) to the site in the form of explosives. The amount of fortifications destroyed will be equal to 110% to 150% of the EPs you send (randomly determined at the time the order is issued). For example, if you sent 300 EPs, you could do from 330 to 450 points of damage.

If damage exceeds fortifications by at least 50 points, the site will be devastated! (This is actually a disadvantage if you plan to follow up the sabotage with a rebellion order.) Note that if you know the site has no fortifications, an IS order with the minimum amount of EPs (50) will automatically cause devastation, but this is normally only done as a last resort scorched-planet policy.

One use of this order is to destroy fighters and PFs guarding a site. Since a site cannot support more than 1/20th its fortification level in fighters and 1/50th its fortifications in PFs, you can use sabotage to destroy not only fortifications but these items as well if your opponent has assigned a lot of them to guard the site. You will want to do this normally only as a prelude to invasion (either yours or an ally's).

The presence of fortifications, ships, officers, fighters or PFs at a site does not affect sabotage attempts in any way.

Standard LP Strategies

Use listening posts to keep sites out of the hands of your enemies (or the monsters/NPCs). Keep your income steady with burglaries on sites which are hotly contested. Sabotage fortifications built by your opponents, destroying their automatic scan network and weakening their sites to make attacks on them more likely to succeed.

Using LPs creates a kind of second front operating in the background of the ship-to-ship combat. If you use a LP on your enemy, he will start using them on you. Many players don't think about using LP strategies until another player reminds them, so try to keep your LP usage secret as long as possible.

When the game is nearing its conclusion, issue IR orders on all your LPs, just in case they get conquered between turns and your opponent doesn't leave a ship behind to guard them.

Remember, nothing forces you to use listening posts. If you don't have the EPs or don't feel the need, don't bother. For every 3 listening posts you create, 2 of them will probably never be necessary. Keep that in mind.

Dealing With Enemy LPs

OK, so you know a lot about LPs and how to use them, but what happens if your opponent turns the tables and employs these tactics on your Corporation?

The best way to stop an enemy LP is to destroy it, and the best way to do that is to replace it with one of your own. A site can have only one listening post at a time, and since you can use the LP order on a site during the same turn you conquer it, this is a simple task to accomplish. Of course, you have to pay 50 EPs to do it, but it's a small price to pay to keep your opponent from rebelling or burglarizing your sites.

Another way to destroy a listening post is with the IH (Investigate Hex) order. This order costs 25 points to issue and an additional 75 to destroy any listening post if one is found. (The cost differs slightly for minor sites or Home Office sites.) This price makes the IH order too expensive to issue unless you have already fortified your site significantly. Applying an LP to a fortified site wastes 75% of the fortifications' value, so IH would be more cost-effective, and avoids the possibility of sabotage later.

If you are worried about an opponent rebelling a large number of LPs, and you don't have the orders or EPs available to make them into listening posts yourself, the simplest strategy is to just place a small ship on each site to protect it and enforce your will. This won't stop a burglary or sabotage, but at least you keep the site for victory purposes!

NEW CREDIT CARD POLICY

Agents of Gaming has accepted Mastercard and Visa charges for turn fees in the past, but we have been adding a 5% fee to all such transactions. This policy has come to an end. From 1 April 1995 onward, there will be no additional fee charged to credit card users!

If you're interested in paying by credit card, ask for a credit card authorization form. Once you have sent in the completed form, your account will be flagged as a credit card user, and whenever you are about to drop to a negative amount of funds, a new credit card transaction will automatically be issued. You can set the charge amount to any level you choose, with a minimum charge per transaction of \$30.

Ask for an authorization form with your turn today! We'll send one to you at no charge. (Note: Players who already have a form on file with us need not reapply.)

MORE GAME VARIANTS

In previous issues of the Warlord News I've described some game variants, such as wild or NPC games, express games, undead games, and the like. Some didn't go over to well—the proposed "pairs game" never attracted more than a few pairs, and the undead game didn't completely fill up with 50 players (we started it anyway with only 32). We like to use these different variants because they keep the game fresh and interesting. Here are a couple of new ones you might see appearing in the near future:

Timeshift Game: This game begins in Y175, about the middle of the General War. Ships available in Y175 or before are available for the Initial Build. Loans are NOT available, but players will begin the game with 50 EPs in their treasury instead of 300. All orders which become available in Y175 or before are available from the start of the game. Note that in this variant PFs appear almost immediately, and virtually all of the ship designs will become available eventually.

No Prospecting Game: This variant concentrates on starships and sites, and leaves prospecting out of the equation. No prospect orders are allowed by anyone. Fleets rule the galaxy as players will be far less likely to split forces up for any reason.

No Supply & Demand Game: Both standard and extended supply and demand are turned off. Ship prices never change, and buying more than one of the same type of ship does not penalize you in any way. However, you can only pick ONE primary race! Basically, pick the ships with the best statistics for their price, and buy them exclusively (there's no reason not to).

ASK THE GALACTIC COUNCIL!

If I send an Andromedan mothership into the Graveyard of Ships with satellite ships linked to it, what happens? The satellites stay behind. Only ONE ship can go into the Graveyard per Corp per game. (Of course, like many other rules, random events do provide exceptions...)

How exactly are the "First Corp to Own 2 Sectors" and the "First Corp to Kill Another Corp" awards executed? I'm sure I accomplished one or the other before my opponent. The computer keeps a record of who accomplishes these goals in any given turn. The announcement is then made NEXT turn, so if you see the announcement on the same turn you do one of these things, it's obviously too late. If two people accomplish one of these goals on the same turn, the computer picks one player at random to receive the award (it does not relate at all to which Corp moves first in the turn, which would be too great an advantage to players with low day cycle numbers).

What determines what Corp is the "most powerful" as shown on the Top Corps Lists? "Power" is your total raw attack factor throughout all your forces. Sum the AF of all your ships, plus whatever optional items they are carrying. Do not include bonuses for crew, officers, prime teams, terrain, racial benefits, etc. Use the basic attack factors only. Most Defensive is calculated similarly but uses DF instead of AF.

How, exactly, does Guido repossess your ships? If you don't pay back the last EP you owe Guido on turn 15 (Y180), he will begin by taking two ships at random at the start of your next turn (before Income Phase, i.e., before you can move your ships or issue orders). If you don't pay it back on that turn, he takes four ships on the next turn, and if you don't pay it then, it's six, then eight, and so on. He'll take ANY ship (be it frigate or battleship, combat ship or warp gate) at random, without regard to its cost, location, crew level, size, or usefulness to you. In other words—pay back your loan on time!

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