

# News from Bree

Middle Earth PBM Newsletter - Issue 18, September '02

"Strange as News  
from Bree..."

The Lord of the Rings, chapter 9

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## Player & Team Rating Tables

There has been a lot of discussion on the mepbmlist concerning ratings for players. We've taken a look at this and also the emails sent to us on the subject. Here then are some ideas.

Please discuss and give feedback on what we can do to change it (what changes you would make and what you would keep the same), what you think of it (good or bad), what is unclear and needs improvement and anything other feedback you think useful. We have in mind 4 ratings: **Valar, Maia, Istari and Ainur**. Note you don't need to do anything to get these ratings, we'll do all the work...!

**Valar** - this is based on similar ratings found in other games such as chess. The quality of both teams is taken into account, as is the split of the neutrals. If this rating became popular, it would have a very profound balancing effect on the neutrals, it would be rare to get games where one side is too strong and the game ends too quickly.

**Maia** - designed to be like experience points. This will show how much experience you have at playing Middle-earth. It gives more points for winning than for losing, it also gives more points if you play with other more experienced players.

**Istari** - individual success, based on ability to place well at the end of the game. This follows GSI's Victory Points system, rewarding those who are not only on the winning team, but who have achieved their five goals.

**Ainur** - a rating for Grudge teams. This rewards Grudge teams who win without losing too many nations along the way.

Each of these ratings will be updated at the end of a game. For scoring purposes the last player that ran that particular nation will be counted. (This means that a player who runs a nation, then stops AND another player takes over, will not be counted for any of these ratings).

This also means that if you are in more than one game your rating could well be different by the end of the game. In these cases it is always your newest rating that will be used. So if you start one game with 1,500 points and then lose 50 from another game when the game ends you will have to use 1,450 as your 'original rating'.

Any games which start with less than 20 positions will count for less and so only earn 1/2 points. Each rating will also alter as time goes on to show a true status of active players. The updated ratings will be sent out to players and added to the website each month. As time passes, players who have not played recently will find their scores dropping, whilst active players will remain at the top of the tables. After each month your scores will be modified as follows:

$$\text{New Rating} = [0.98 \times (\text{Original Rating} - 1500)] + 1500$$

E.g. A rating of 1850 will be modified down to 1843 after one month and down to 1836 after two months

$$\begin{aligned} \text{New Rating} &= [0.98 \times (1850 - 1500)] + 1500 \\ &= [0.98 \times 350] + 1500 \\ &= 1843 \end{aligned}$$

(1500 is the average, or the start rating. We will give people approximate ratings when we start doing this. We'll discuss these approximate ratings in a different article.)

The following pages explain each rating as we envisage them. There's quite a bit of maths involved, so you might want to take it rating by rating and think about each before looking at the next. There are also plain English equations and examples, which should help.



# new games

## Valar Rating

There is no change in your rating if there was a draw, if you won the game you add the change, if you lost the game you subtract the change.

$$\text{New Valar Rating} = \text{Original Rating} + \text{Change}$$

Where;

$$\text{Change} = 45 + (\text{TotLose} - \text{TotWin})/150$$

*Definitions:* **TotLose** = Total of the Original ratings of the Losing team, **TotWin** = Total of the Original ratings of the Winning team

Neutrals that do not change allegiance are counted as losing players for their rating adjustment, but not for the total of the losing team's rating.

*Example*

The Free Peoples win on turn 30 with 11 players on their team. The losing team (DS) had 13 players on their team before the inevitable drops. One Neutral dropped and was not taken up.

**Waiting List:** When I get all 25 (or 24 for Gunboat) nations into the game I will allocate you your choice of nation from the list of nations that you have sent me - please send multiple nation choices. Upto 2 nation game: play 1 or 2 Aligned nations, or one Neutral nation.

### **Battle of the Five Armies (Bofa)**

[Game 4]

2week turnaround

Beginners game - (Vet: ALL 1650 orders available): 4 Nations taken. (Please note FP have been upgraded).

**1650**

[Game 66]

2week turnaround

19 available. Waiting List game.

**2950**

[Game 239]

2 week turnaround

Email. Waiting List. 11 nations available.

**1000**

[Game 40]

2 week turnaround

Probably going to be a Normal game (ie one nation per allegiance allowed +20% kid/ass). 5 FP, 4 Neutral, 4 DS taken so far. 12 more nations needed.

[Game ??]

2 week turnaround

Also we're planning a NKA game - please get in touch. 19/20 taken with some variant rules.

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

### **Grudge Games we need opposition for:**

**1650:** None

**2950:** Darren Morris

**1000:** None

**WoTR:** None

**Last Alliance:** None

**World Championship:** None

**Check out the Front sheet / turn email for all the latest news on positions available!**

### **Free People (winners) have a rating of:**

<u>Nation</u>	<u>Original Rating</u>
Wood	1450
NortM	1550
Eothra	1200 (got knocked out on turn 5 but still counts)
Arth	1300
Card	1500
NortG	1524
SoutG	1544
Dwarf	1700
Sinda	1800
Noldo	1000
<u>Harad</u>	<u>1200</u>
<b>Total (TotWin)</b>	<b>15768</b>

### **Dark Servants have a Rating of:**

<u>Nation</u>	<u>Original Rating</u>
WitchK	1290 (died on turn 8)
DragL	1100
DogL	1400 (dropped out two turns before the end of game)
Cloud	1050
BlinS	1784
IceK	1800
QuieA	1500 (new player so given default Provisional rating of 1500)
FireK	1600 (ran the Fire King and the Long Rider)
LongR	1600
DarkL	1856
Cors	1900
Dunl	1243
<u>East</u>	<u>1542</u>
<b>Total (TotLose)</b>	<b>19665</b>

Rhudaer was Neutral throughout the game so counts as losing. We'll come to that one later.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Change} &= 45 + (15768 - 19665)/150 \\ &= 45 + 25.98 = 71 \text{ (round to nearest)} \end{aligned}$$

So the Dwarf's new score is:  $1700 + 71 = 1771$ , and the Blind Sorcerer's new score is:  $1784 - 71 = 1713$

Note - The Rhudaer player, who remained neutral all game loses 71 points. His previous rating does not impact on the calculation. The Fire King and the Long Rider's score is affected only once despite the fact that the player is running two positions.

## Maia Rating

*Definitions*

RatNew = New player rating

RatOrig = Original player rating

TmAv = Your team's average rating at game end (worked out in the same manner as the Valar ratings)

Score = Score for the game where S = 4 Win, = 3 Draw, = 2 Loss

EndTurn = Generic turn number the game Ended

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## EMAIL LIST

Check out the websites (above) for  
more information.



# Bree artwork

News from Bree would like to  
acknowledge the work of **Anke-  
Katrinn Eissmann** - this issue's  
featured artist. Anke-Katrinn is a  
talented German artist who tends to  
depict Tolkien based subjects  
not often covered by other (better  
known) artists.

View more of Anke-Katrinn's  
work at ...

[http://fan.theonering.net/rolozo/  
collection/eissmann/](http://fan.theonering.net/rolozo/collection/eissmann/)

and ...

[http://elfwood.lysator.liu.se/loth/a/  
nanke/anke.html](http://elfwood.lysator.liu.se/loth/a/nanke/anke.html)



# news from Bree

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

**Editor: Colin Forbes,**  
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**RatNew = RatOrig + (TmAv/RatOrig) x Score x EndTurn**

e.g. On turn 30 Dark Servants win. Their Average Rating is 1400. If I am a winner on that team and I went into the game with a Maia rating of 1250, my new Maia Rating would be:

$$\begin{aligned} &= 1250 + (1400/1250 \times 4 \times 0.30) \\ &= 1250 + (1.12 \times 4 \times 5.477) \\ &= 1250 + 25 \text{ (rounding nearest)} \\ &= 1275 \end{aligned}$$

If I were on the losing side (FP) with the same start rating (and the average FP team rating was 1600) then my new Maia Rating would be:

$$\begin{aligned} &= 1250 + (1600/1250 \times 2 \times 0.30) \\ &= 1250 + (1.28 \times 2 \times 5.477) \\ &= 1250 + 14 \text{ (rounding nearest)} \\ &= 1264 \end{aligned}$$

## Istari Rating

Victory Points refers to the final score of each player, including those gained through completion of individual victory conditions. No points are scored by players on the losing team.

Position on the winning team, 1 = 1<sup>st</sup>, 2 = 2<sup>nd</sup> etc

**New Istari Rating = Original Rating + Victory Points / (Position +2)**

E.g., Original Istari rating of 1250. I came 5th on the winning team, with 1050 Victory Points. My new Istari rating would be:

$$\begin{aligned} &= 1250 + 1050 / (5+2) \\ &= 1250 + 150 \\ &= 1400 \end{aligned}$$

BOFA also has a slightly different VP scoring system, 1000 for a Total Victory, 500 for a Major Victory, 250 for a Minor Victory.

## Ainur Rating

Grudge game – a Grudge Team is defined as any group of players which has at least 5 members of the same team as played together before. It also has same designated Team Co-ordinator. Members can come and go as long as 5 players of the original team remain.

If you make a change to a team roster between games you lose ( C x C ) points, where C = number of players changed. This means you lose 1 point if you change 1 team member on the roster, 4 points if you change 2, and 25 points if you change 5 etc.

Two examples of Grudge teams: Sam Roads' 'Team GM', or Ben Shushan's 'USA1'

Grudge games can occur across the spectrum of gaming formats, with a minimum of 10 nations filled a-side. Many players will never play a grudge game because they prefer different formats, so they need not worry about Ainur ratings.

There is no change in your rating if there was a draw, if you won the game you add the change, if you lost the game you subtract the change.

The Ainur rating is applicable to the team, **not** the individual players.

GruOrigLose = Original Grudge rating of Losing team

GruOrigWin = Original Grudge rating of Winning team

ActWinNtn = Number of Active nations on winning side at game end

NumNtn = Number of nations per side at game start

**New Grudge rating = Original Grudge rating + Change**

**Change = 60 x ( GruOrigLose / GruOrigWin) x ( ActWinNtn / NumNtn)**

E.g. Winning Grudge team has an original rating of 1500, losing team of 1450. It started as a 12v12 game and the winning team lost 4 nations by the end of the game so ended with 8 active nations.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Change} &= 60 \times ( 1450/1500 ) \times ( 8/12 ) \\ &= 60 \times ( 0.97 ) \times ( 0.67 ) \\ &= 39 \text{ ( rounded to nearest )} \end{aligned}$$

So the winning team would walk away with a new rating of 1539 points and the losers would skulk off with a new rating of 1411 points.

News from Bree has been contacted by James Amberson who would like to see articles that focus on strategy for a specific nation for a given short-term problem. This seems like a possible starting point for a sort of Problem Page - thus Auntie Galadriel! Have a read through and feel free to make some suggestions to the following problem ...

*In the 2950 scenario, the Silvan Elves have a camp at 2915. I have been trying to figure out how the Silvan player might be able to prolong the life of the camp. It makes a nice harrasment point for raids on Dragon Lord and others. At game start, the camp is surrounded by enemy armies, any one of which could show up and smash the recruitment army there into little bits, and then take the camp. The Silvan player has some options here: he could just pack it in and run away, abandoning his own camp on turn. He could solicit help from other nations (Rohan, Sinda). Or he could just sit there and wait to see what happens. I'm sure other situations are also possible, each with its own set of consequences.*

We'll print a selection of the answers next month. In the meantime, if you have a poser you'd like to see answered, why not write in? Anonymous contributors welcome!

## Flagship

Bi-monthly, not-for-profit, magazine covering PBM and a wide variety of other gaming (including computer games, web gaming, tabletop roleplaying & boardgames).

For subscription info, visit... [www.pbmgames.com](http://www.pbmgames.com)

We welcome comments from everyone, not just subscribers: all comments received go into a hat and may win the writer a free copy of the magazine! Send your thoughts on Middle Earth to: [carol@pbmgames.com](mailto:carol@pbmgames.com)

# Terrorism & Tikka Masala

## Part 2: A planning problem ...

by Richard Devereux

Hundreds of leagues to the south, Kionid the Easterling harangued the remnants of his army. "The time for open warfare is over - now is the time for subtlety. Disband, ere the enemy find us, and follow me, when the time is right, to the Promised Land overflowing with milk and honey, free housing and social security benefits. There we shall multiply and become strong again!"

Kionid the Prophet set off alone to prepare the way for his followers. His first stop was in North Gondor where he narrowly escaped being executed as a spy for no better reason than he wore a turban. Kionid the Prophet suffered much as he made his way towards the Promised Land. People mocked his dark skin and strange garb, calling him "rag-head" and asking if he was going to open a curry house.

Cut to the far northwest. Zoom in on a lonely Dunedain farmstead, surrounded as far as the eye could see by open fields and rolling hills. No other sign of human presence intruded on the tranquil landscape, and that was exactly how Rustic liked it. Until one morning...

"What the hell is that?" roared Rustic. He had opened the bedroom curtains to see a tower of scaffolding rising in the neighbouring field. Up and down it scampered a busy dwarf, singing an INFURIATINGLY catchy tune: "Bob the builder, can you fix it, Bob the builder, yes we can."

"Good morning," Bob greeted the farmer striding towards him. "Have you come to invite me for a nice cuppa tea? I'm just about ready for a nice cuppa tea."

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" Rustic bellowed, despite the fact that his nose was almost touching the dwarf's.

"You don't have to shout - I'm not deaf. I'm building a new city."

"A what?" exclaimed Rustic. "You're having a laugh. Anyway, you can't build there, it's green belt."

"Actually I can. Here's the compulsory purchase order, authorised by the UN security council, no less."

Rustic sat down with a bump on a tree stump which this time yesterday had been a flourishing oak tree. This was his worst nightmare. "A city, you said?"

"Yes, and a very nice city it'll be too, if I say so meself. Look at the plans: houses, shops, stables, parking lots for chariots..."

"Chariots?" exclaimed Rustic. "We don't have any \*\*\* chariots!"

"Ah, but them Easterlings do. The city is for them, you see."

"WHAAT!!!" Rustic's nightmare reached apocalyptic proportions. Recovering himself, he stormed off, yelling, "We'll see about this. I'm going to the very top - I'm going to see Aragorn himself!"

"No chance of that cuppa tea then?"

"Look," Aragorn explained, "we have a dwindling and ageing population and a low

birthrate and we have a war on our hands. We actually NEED immigrants, especially ones who will raise an army and fight on our side."

"I don't believe this," exclaimed Rustic. "You expect me to put up with a new city being built on my doorstep, not only is that city going to be populated by a bunch of smelly rag-heads, but they are going to be charging around in chariots shooting arrows and waving swords!"

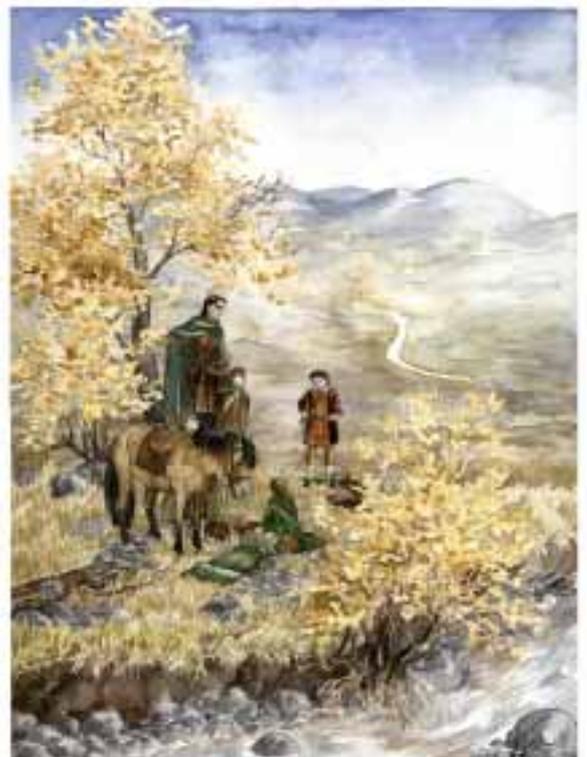
"Be grateful they are not bringing a herd of mumakil with them. The best thing you can do is visit and be nice to them. They are very hospitable to their friends, and their food," a faraway look came into Aragorn's eyes, "I foretell that one day chicken tikka masala will be the most popular dish in the land."

By the time Rustic got back home, it was dusk and the building site had grown to a town. Might as well see what's going on, he thought, and strolled over. Following the sound of laughter and a strange, complex but delightful aroma, Rustic pushed open a door. The light from scores of candles flickered on snowy-white tablecloths and ghostly red-and-gold flock wallpaper.

"Hey, Rustic, over here!" called a familiar voice. Bob the Builder plonked his tankard of Kingfisher down on the table. "Rustic, meet Kionid, the proprietor of this excellent establishment - boss of the whole town actually. Kionid, meet Rustic, the sum total of your local trade!"

After a few tankards of Kingfisher and a chicken tikka masala, Rustic decided that rag-heads weren't too bad after all. Rustic married Kionid's daughter and they lived happily ever after on chicken tikka masala and the kama sutra.

If only....



## stand-by positions

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

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

**BoFA** Veteran NM - e  
**1000:** One - Evil (1), South Kingdom (E-N)  
**2950:** Quiet (m -P), Dark (m), Rhun (m,m)  
**1650:** Dog (m), Harad (m-sort of aligned), Harad (E, N)

**CHECK OUT THE FRONT SHEET/TURN EMAIL FOR ALL THE LATEST NEWS ON POSITIONS AVAILABLE!**



## payments

Payments to **Middle Earth PBM Games** not Harlequin. 5% charge for UK Credit card payments & you can pay directly through our website (World Pay [WP] will appear on your statement).

You can also set up a monthly payment with us for a SET amount taken from your credit card at the beginning of each month. Ask for more details if interested.

If your account is low funds there will be an administration charge of £1 for the first turn, and 50p for subsequent turns on Low funds.

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

### Breaking news ...

Payments can now be made via **NOCHEX**, **PayPal** opr by direct bank transfer. See page 11 of this issue of Bree for further details.

# The Fall of Minas Ithil

One of the Snagas scratched at the doorpost, cringing, wringing his hands in anxiety.

"What is it?" called the gruff voice from within.

"The master wishes to speak with you Captain.

He is awaiting your presence in .... "

Not even Captain Uklurg dared to keep his master, Ren the Fire King, waiting. He quickly brushed past the Snaga who had brought the message and ran up the stairs to the throne room.

...

That was three weeks ago. Now, Uklurg looked down from the heights of the Ephel Duath upon the sparkling lights of Minas Ithil marvelling at the grand plan unfolding before him.

An army of more than 5,000 troops from the Urgdug, Uruk-Ongrum and Uruk-Gashavir had been given to him to capture Minas Ithil. Now it was time to bring the plan to fruition and issue the orders that would seal the fate of the inhabitants of the peaceful, unsuspecting town. Uklurg pulled on his sturdy plumed helm, masking his already grotesque features with the demonic faceplate attached to the helm that denoted his rank and seniority; a personal and treasured gift from the Fire King.

The plan required that the greatest use of stealth be made. The army was broken up into numerous smaller companies with instructions for company commanders to site their troops in the hills and valleys overlooking Minas Ithil and rendezvous with Uklurg in the burial grounds at the foot of the face of Rammor Gond

The plan was bold and fraught with risk. Uklurg was relying on untrained troops and junior officers to negotiate the torturous tracks in the Ephel Duath; and to muster in predetermined positions at a predetermined time. The journey was dangerous as the area was known to be inhabited by many foul beasts seeking refuge in the hills under the shadow of the Dark Lord's realm, whilst there were many hidden shafts venting poisonous gasses from the bowls of Middle Earth along the winding trails. Uklurg maintained contact with his men, using the self same Snaga Orcs he had so previously despised whilst in barracks. How one's opinion can change in such a short time.!

Whilst high in the mountains overlooking the Ungol Pass, Uklurg looked down with his keen night sight and noted the movements of a body of wolf-riders moving through the pass between Barad Ungol and Minas Ithil. Yes, that will be the wolf-riders promised by the Dog Lord. My master has told me that they will serve as the bait for the trap that he has set.

Indeed, he could see them howl and chafe at their lot as he looked down upon their positions from his lofty eyrie above Minas Ithil. He mused on the nature of their leader, a female Orcish Commander, feisty and ripe for mating he thought, as he moved away from the briefing given to his junior commanders to take up his own position before the battle. He had met her earlier that night. She was intelligent enough to guess her role in this battle from the dispositions of the troops around

her and did not seem pleased.

"What folly is this, that the Fire King sheeks to washte the wolf-riders of the Dog Lord in this nonshenshe? My lord shall hear of this and will not be pleased at the frivolous ushe of hish troopsh in your battle"

The scent, combined with her fashionable speech impediment caused by perfectly neglected lower fangs distracted Uklurg for a moment. She was nearing heat. He wondered how her riders could control their lust. Maybe they were neutered. He had heard that some masters preferred this to encourage obedience. Ren did not approve. He said that it made his troops more docile. He did not want docile troops.

"I will inform the Fire King of your concern! He is just over there should you wish to make the complaint in person".

Uklurg pointed to a tented area where the personal standard of the Fire King could be seen against the rising moon. Gurthlug blanched at the thought of personally bringing her grievance to the attention of one of the Ulair; even one as junior as the Fire King. She snorted and jerked the reins of her mount moving away from the big slobbering Orcish Captain. She had sensed his interest in her, and did not reciprocate. The great Bull Orcs did not meet her tastes. Her troops howled their protest, but not even they dared disobey the orders of their own Commander so near to the presence of one of the Ulair.

Uklurg thought how interesting it would be to capture her and bring her to heel. What would she be like in his harem?

His attention was brought back to the here and now. The omens were good. The flames of far off Orodruin cast an eerie light silhouetting the dark grey mountain peaks to the east. The flames beneath the mountain had erupted and the earth trembled in anticipation of the blood sacrifice. The spirits could sense that the Fire King was about to offer them a bounteous harvest.

Lord Caranthir had recently brought a small army (an Artargen) of Gondorian troops to defend Minas Ithil, where he noted the presence of Gurthlug and her wolf-riders. Caranthir was not aware of the larger force hidden in the shadows of the valleys and the heights, and seemed confident when he ordered his troops to advance upon the Wolf-rider camp.

Gurthlug waited until the Gondorians had reached the agreed point then dispersed her riders in an attempt to encircle Caranthir. The disciplined Gondorians formed a circular shield wall, well-versed in the tactics adopted by the wolf-riders of Mordor to counter the futile attempts to break into the wall. Usually, the Targaen waited for a weakness to appear in the enemy ranks when their superior weapons and training could overcome their adversaries in close combat. But the expected charge did not come. The wolf-riders circled the shield wall, gesticulating and howling wildly; more venting their own frustration than in working themselves into a battle frenzy. Some, unable to control their emotions, hurled their mounts at the Gondorian shield wall and were quickly despatched. There seemed little co-ordination in their attacks, made by individuals and small groups and all too easily destroyed - until the sky burst forth in magical lights and the valley echoed to the sound of enchantments and sorcerous

# the secret Diaries

## Part 7: Peregrine Took (Pippin)

### Day one

Was out pilfering vegetables when bumped into Sam and Frodo. Had a nice little roll around with Frodo in corn before was forcibly removed by Sam. Must have word with Frodo about letting servants get overly familiar and grabby.

Fell down hill. Merry v. disappointed that he broke his carrot. After he found one that was just the right shape, too.

### Day two

V. nice in Rivendell. Sick of rooming with Sam though. Constantly sopping wet and reeking of strawberries. Also tired of elves mistaking me for unusually lifelike lawn ornament.

### Day three

Joined Fellowship of Ring for a lark. Everyone v. nice except Legolas seems a bit testy. Yesterday held me upside down over crevasse until I admitted he was the prettiest elf in the Fellowship. Did not feel like pointing out he was only elf in Fellowship, as crevasse was very deep.

### Day seven

Has been twenty-five days since met Aragorn and he has not yet washed his hair. Is really starting to bother me.

### Day nine

Sam all wrong about Boromir. Really very nice man. Invited me to go for a walk with him tonight and said he would let me blow his Horn of Gondor. Can't wait.

### Later that night ...

Always thought blowing the Horn of Gondor was supposed to summon armies of the West?

Apparently not ....  
... V. educational, all the same.

### Day eleven

V. dark in mines of Moria. Still sort of a relief as means Boromir cannot corner me and complain how Aragorn is insensitive, stuck up git with hobbit fixation. Pot calling kettle black if you ask me. Aragorn obviously way into Frodo, however. Sam will kill him if he tries anything.

spells. The Gondorians quavered before such unseen magics - but nothing happened!

The enchantments continued - and still nothing happened!!!

An arrow fell in the centre of the circle, then another, and another and another and another, ... until hundreds filled the sky in a maelstrom of pain, blood and death. Many unsuspecting Dunedain felt the searing heat of the black arrows of Mordor as they pierced armour, flesh and bone. Caranthir ordered every alternate trooper to place his shield on top of his neighbour. The height of the shield wall was doubled and the impact of the arrow storm negated as numerous arrows embedded themselves in the Gondorian shields. Then was heard the pounding of many feet as Stone Trolls emerged from the gloom advancing like a tidal wave upon a small rock in the sea. The hearts of the stout Gondorians wavered, but they held fast, until the first creature reached the shield wall and smashed his way in with one powerful blow. Orcs, Trolls and slaving Wolves quickly filled the empty space in the centre of the Gondorian position. Caranthir fought bravely slashing to the right and left as he realised the position

was lost and attempted to form a rearguard to allow those most hard pressed to leave the field and fly westwards to the gentler vales and the safety of Ithilien.

By some miracle, the Orcish tide slackened. The Orcs were too intent on hacking the dead bodies of their hated enemy to notice that some still stood and had retained some form of order, although many brave men lost their lives that fateful night before the walls of Minas Ithil. Caranthir ordered a fighting withdrawal and managed to leave the field, pursued through the rock strewn valley by wild and berserk Orcs hurling themselves from the tops of boulders and trees in an attempt to kill yet one more Gondorian countryman.

Uklurg could see that the Gondorians' were broken and turned his attention to Minas Ithil where the bulk of his forces had been held in reserve. The town was surrounded. Ladders had been prepared earlier for the assault. Uklurg regretted that he did not have siege engines with which to batter the walls. The signal was given and a host rose from the darkness like a vast apparition of glinting metal and blackened armour hurtling towards the walls of the town protecting the petrified and abandoned townsfolk.



## From out of the West

Well here goes with another one of those, soon to become distressingly familiar, rambles. Inspired by no less a mighty phrase than 'Ed can you write something for Bree this time'. So fresh from my recent holiday, to Paris and Bordeaux, I should probably regale you with some funny anecdote about the French. But instead I'll complain about the price of a pint of Guinness which at 6 Euros (about \$6 or £4) meant I didn't get to drink much and so I had to blame the AZERTY keyboards for the mistakes in my turns (not that there were that many - well none that mattered anyway) .

Hopefully now that I've fully recovered from the shame that those small errors engendered I can at last move on with my life, or at least start a new game. Yes, Clint has finally managed to get me into a Gunboat

game which means a fresh look at the map, to see which nation can see which hexes, which nation is allied with which. How do I get the players to send me gold, attack at the right time, in the right direction, how do I persuade my opposition that they don't really want those popcentres, artifacts etc. Well I guess that's what it's all about but it looks really tough to work out what anyone will be doing - I could do with more information but do I have time to gather it? At least no one will know whether the first nations knocked out were my fault (at least until the end of the game by which point people will have hopefully forgotten about it) which means that I can finally experiment with all those tactics that my previous team mates have said were too risky, hurrah.

Edward

### Day thirteen

Caught Legolas waxing soles of Aragorn's boots, thus explaining why Aragorn keeps collapsing into his arms. Tricky elf.

Aragorn still hasn't washed his hair.

### Day fourteen

Gandalf dead. Everyone morose. In attempt to cheer up Fellowship, Legolas took off all his clothes and performed scenes from Silmarillion: The Musical. Everyone still morose. Legolas ponced off to have 3,000-year-old elf prince sulks.

### Day fifteen

Lothlorien v. pretty. Accidentally walked in on Gimli taking a bath. Now understand what Gandalf meant about there being scarier things than Orcs. And was that Aragorn hiding under all the bubbles? May have nightmares for weeks.

### Day sixteen

Aragorn washed his hair. Hurrah. Maybe it really was him under all the bubbles.

### Day twenty

Boromir wrote me a poem. Merry says I am leading him on. Of course, Merry also says I cry like a girl. Merry a total bastard most of the time, actually.

Poem not very good. Did not rhyme. Feel slighted.

### Day thirty

Told Boromir I did not feel ready to commit, so he went and got himself shot by Orcs. Honestly. Humans so oversensitive sometimes.

Have been kidnapped by Urukhai. Not very friendly types. Merry says we may have to shag our way out of captivity. Suspect Merry looking forward to it, useless wassock. Orcs v. smelly. Suddenly miss Boromir.

# Hall of Fame

## 2950: Game 221 (by Andrew Jones)

Adunaphel completed her survey of Forlond's stores, and was returning to the town hall, when Zokhad appeared from the shadows.

"What are you doing here?" she snapped "Did I not order you and your minions east?"

"Yes, your grace, you did, but word has arrived from the Misty Mountains. The Noldor have surrendered.

The war is over; we have won."

"What? But, it cannot be. My plans are not yet complete. I have three Nazgul more to eliminate to assure my ascendancy..."

"Not to worry, your grace. I am certain you stand first among the Nine, er, I mean the Five that remain."

Adunaphel(#7) did finish first, and Hoarmurath (#6), Akhorahil (#5), and Ji Indur (#4) all died, raising her from #7 to #4. But did she really help engineer their demise? I guess we will never know for certain, but given the overall cooperation by all the Dark Servants, I'd have to say not.

Quiet Avenger - Andrew Jones - 1733

Dog Lord - Ulrik Bisgaard - 1575

Witch-king - Stuart Taft - 1509

Corsairs - Jon Shushan - 1425

Dark Lieutenants - Timothy Minnig - 1425

Khand Easterlings - Brian Porter - 1150

Long Rider - William Minnig - 1142

Fire King - William Flynn - 1108

Ice King - Mark Woodsmall - 1075

Cloud Lord - Vassilis Manologlou - 1058

Dragon Lord - Iain Watson - 900

Blind Sorcerer - Namgyal Dorje - 750

The final standing were impressive for the Dark Servants, twelve of the top thirteen, and doubly so when you consider that the White Wizard lost three cities, two major towns and a town on the very last turn, knocking him all the way down to 400 Victory points. Another turn or two and the Dunlendings would have fallen from his twelfth place as well. And just what did Saruman and Enion do to incur the combined wrath of the Dark Servants? It is a long and twisted tale.

The game opened much as expected, but it soon became apparent that the Corsairs, Dunlendings and White Wizard had formed an alliance against both the Free Peoples and the Dark Servants. Their form of diplomacy did nothing to endear them to the Dark Servants, even though they did manage to eliminate the Dunadan Rangers. The question of eliminating them went from if to when very early. Many times during the course of play one or more nations demanded the Dark Servants attack the White Wizard, but until the elimination of the Gondors was nearly complete, cooler heads prevailed.

The Dark Servants recruited the Khand, and managed to gain the Corsairs' support only after the original player dropped out. So from the Dark Servants' perspective, we had a team of twelve. What happened with the original Long Rider and the Rhun Easterlings remains largely a mystery to the Dark Servants. About all we can say for certain is that the Free Peoples

destroyed the Rhun Easterlings and the Long Rider dropped by turn 8. We found a replacement player for the Long Rider, but the position was in really bad shape. Why this happened is even more of a mystery. Some speculated that the Long Rider and the Rhun joined together, but at least one mutual acquaintance denies this, and if they had, I for one would have expected them to fare much better.

The Dark Servants first signal victory was the three Kings and Dark Lieutenants capture of Osgiliath(3024) on turn 6, which enabled Dark Servant forces to cross the Anduin for the first time. Despite the subsequent destruction of both Anduin bridges, from this point on the Free Peoples proved unable to completely clear the west bank of Anduin of Dark Servant forces and recruiting bases. About the same time, the Dunlendings and White Wizard apparently attacked the Rangers, which left the Witch-king free to focus on northern Mirkwood. So the fighting there took place entirely in the initial Free holdings, which made effective defense that much more difficult. The Neutrals' move also made it possible for the Dragon Lord to hold onto Goblins-gate(2409) the entire game, which still astounds me.

Another Dark Servant signal victory was the Dog Lord capture of Edoras(2321), the Riders capital, on turn 15. While this move did not eliminate the Riders, they were so weakened that they were no longer considered a threat. Their neutralization effectively isolated the Gondors, allowing the bulk of the Dark Servants to focus on them alone.

Around this time the original Corsair player dropped out and the Dark Servants recruited his replacement. This sealed Gondor's fate both by adding the Corsair forces to the Dark Servants and by freeing the Quiet Avenger forces from having to guard against a hostile Corsair. Within a turn or two the southern Anduin bridge was restored and the raiding in Gondor escalated into a multi-national invasion.

Unexpectedly, turn 18 witnessed the only major Free People capture. The Sinda managed to pull together enough troops and war machines (80 or so) to capture Dol Guldur(2715). They didn't hold it long, and soon thereafter were driven from most of Lorien, but it was a commendable effort. At this point, effective Free resistance rapidly disintegrated. Free People major towns or capitals fell about every turn for the rest of the game: Maethelburg(2508) on turn 16, Pelargir(2927) on turn 19, Aradhyrmd(2908) and Dol Amroth(2227) on turn 20, Azanulinbar-dum(3707), Buhr Widufiras(2711), Caras Galadhon(2514), Minas Tirith(2924) and Linhir(2527), the new Riders capital, on turn 21.

With Gondor subdued, and multiple avenues of approach available for attacks, the Dark Servants now attacked the White Wizard and Dunlendings, taking five major towns and cities from the White Wizard in the two turns before the game ended, including Angrenost(2219), which was by then a City/Citadel. While the military successes are much easier to quantify and appreciate, what went on behind the scenes had at least as much, if not more, impact on the results

## News From Bree

*We're looking for strategy articles to publish in these pages. If you feel inspired, please write to ...*

[bree@timewyrm.co.uk](mailto:bree@timewyrm.co.uk)

**Endgame reports  
always welcome!**

# Laminated maps

We're looking to create a Laminated 1650 map with all the PCs (at game start on it) A2 size (around half the original size map). (Saves around £20 a map).

Would anyone be interested in that? It's Oystein's map (check out the website for a version of this map it is not Oystein's map which has 25 colours for the separate nations and a movement plot but should give you the idea).

I suspect it would cost around £15.00 - the more players we get the cheaper we get them and can pass that saving onto you.

We would also consider producing sheets for each nation.

- 1) Perforated paper/card so that you can rip them off and place over the map to show changes of PCs
- 2) Plain paper that you can cut up and blue-tak to (Stu can't recall the US version of this - the bits that you can stick things onto other things with which are flexible like chewing gum - "wall putty" ...) [:-)]

We would produce: 1-25 nation sheets, 1 for unknown, one for DS, one for FP, one for terrain. You can just buy them from us - once again not sure what the cost would be! [:-)]

We're looking into the price of these at present but I suspect that they might be too expensive.

- So I need to know who wants
- 1) Just a 1650 A2 laminated map.
  - 2) The card to go with the map.

# advice for yahoo users

This may help web based Yahoo users who are having trouble sending Automagic turns as attachments.

- \* Go to [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)
- \* Click the Sign In button to log in.
- \* Click the email icon at the top.
- \* Click the Options button
- \* Click Mail preferences. Scroll down to Forwarding
- \* Select 'Forward as Attachment'

of game 221. Consistent teamwork among the Dark Servants was the most important. Agents, emissaries, and mages supported and were themselves supported by the Dark Servant military efforts.

Thanks to generous economic cooperation among the Dark Servants, no position suffered from a lack of funds, and most were able to maintain a full or nearly full slate of characters throughout the game. And the market moved according to Dark Servant desires virtually every turn. And of course, the Dark Servant agents made their mark. The Cloud Lord alone accounted for 42 kills, almost 2 per turn, along with many key fortifications and armies. Other nations agents accounted for many more kills and untold amounts of gold. Again, an impressive team effort. Thanks to all for a fun game!



**1650: Game 131** (by Dan Newman)

This game flirted with victory and defeat on every level, through military invasion, emmy attack, sudden bankruptcy, untimely drops, and relentless team effort.

If you are part of another game while reading this and your side is losing, take it as an omen not to give up. If you're winning, read in it the phrase whispered to triumphant Roman generals on parade: all glory is fleeting.

Half grudge match (nothing official, but with several experienced players on each side who knew each other and coordinated well) and half madhouse, this one-week game began with heavy FP army pressure on Mordor. The DS held the pass with difficulty, dropping the bridge while making thin gains in Rhun.

Then the neutrals split - Rhudaur and Easterlings for the FP, Harad and Corsairs for the DS, with the Duns eliminated early. The quicker buildup and

declaration by FP neutrals gave their side a strong second wave of attack by turn 15.

The next several weeks were grim for the DS, but a forced bankruptcy on the Easterlings secured the backfield at last while the Harad and Corsairs rolled across Gondor. Their excellent military play paralleled an FP balance of defense and pillage, led by Arthedain, the Eothraim, and the Dwarves.

The game already had the other classic highlights (crippling agent waves from the Cloud Lord, Woodies, and Sinda; and inspired defense by the Dog Lord, Dark Lts, North Gondor, the Fire King) along with plenty of surprises, including the Cardolan army materializing in lower Khand and the Rhudaur emmy squad running wild in Mordor.

The Dragon Lord, South Gondor, and Woodmen were down, the Northmen and Witch King displaced, and by turn 30, nearly every nation had faced a serious capital assault.

Then the third and final FP push came as a lightning strike - agents and emmy teams took the secondary line of fortified pop centers just as armies invaded Mordor from the North and West (with the bridge restored to Osgiliath), and they sped across the front to quickly capture two capitals, eliminating the Ice King and sending the rest of the DS scrambling.

But their armies were eliminated soon after, largely by a mix of agents and mages, and the FP character assault (one turn saw 19 characters at Luglurak and another dozen in the adjacent hexes) ended in a decisive DS gain that led several turns of character and pc dominance.

Why did the DS win? It's hard to point to one answer. The FP attribute their folding in part to being unable to replace the Sinda/Dwarves, which certainly made a difference, as did the challenges for the DS on that front: four Witch Kings, four Long Riders, three Ice Kings. Other factors were clearly essential for the win -- the Harad/Corsairs strength, the Cloud Lord's agents, the curse squad and emmy teams - but this game was so close that even early strategic

decisions held the balance.

I know why we didn't lose - any of us, on either side, at several earlier points. We were stubborn.

Dan Newman  
Game 131, 1650 one-week  
Qt Avngr/Blnd Sorc

## Dramatis Personae

Harad/Corsairs II	Wade Frost
Cloud Lord/Dog Lord	Paul Roberts
Drk Lts/Fire King	Luis Gambarte
Long Rider IV	John Briggs
Witch King IV	Mick Horne
Ice King III	Rollin Roberts
CorsI/WK III/LR III	Brad Brunet
Arthedain/Cardolan	Scott Nolan
Noldo/Eothraim	Jim McIsaac
Rhudaur	Thomas Huckenbeck
Nmen/SG	Darren Heyward
Dwarves/Sinda	Will Frankenhoff
NG	Ed Merrick

I shall this day unfold to you my knowledge of the Istar as they are called in the Quenyan tongue or Ithron in Sindarin. In our tongue they are called Wizards !

The Heren Istarion (Order of Wizards) belonged solely to the Third Age and departed with the last of the Eldar who left the lands of Middle Earth when their kingdom's began to diminish after the destruction of the One Ring (as is told in the Return of the King). No-one, save maybe Cirdan, Elrond and Galadriel learned who they truly were or from where they came.

The Istar first revealed themselves in the form of men, aged and well travelled, yet hale in body. After 1000 years of the third age had passed Men began to notice them and considered them men of Kindred race. The Istar never showed their powers or purpose but proved to be learned in many secret arts in magic and lore. They meddled in all things and sought ever to confront the shadow of Sauron. After a time men became aware that they never passed away but through many lives of men they lived on, maybe only growing older in appearance. Therefore as the age grew on Men began to fear them and think of them as Elves.

Yet neither thought of their descent was true, for they had come out of the Uttermost West. Emissaries they were, from the Lords of the West (the Valar) sent over the Sea to hinder the growth of Sauron's shadow. This was known only by Cirdan, Guardian of the Third Ring, master of the Grey Havens.

Five Chiefs of this Order were known in the North of Middle Earth (where still dwelt hope with the Dunedain and the Eldarin remnant). The first to come was arrayed in White, with raven hair. His fair voice and great skill of hand caused all to regard him as the Head of the Order. This White Messenger became known as Curunir, the Man of Craft, by the elven-race and by the Men of the North as Saruman. He was deemed the wisest and of higher rank in the Blessed Realm than the other Istari. But he became proud and sought ever for greater power, particularly with that of the One

### 700 - Forget Spell

Most mages never learn their maximum number of spells, but, if you get too low a casting rank on one you really want, Forget it and try again (note: you can Forget and Research it again on the very same turn...Research Spell is 705..).

### 705 - Research Spell

You CAN research 2 spells in one turn. Often, players will attempt a "double tap", but researching a Prerequisite spell, and the higher level spell on the same turn. This will only work 50% of the time, though. The computer processes all 705 orders in random order, regardless of which one you typed up first! Thus, it may attempt the higher level spell first, conclude that you do not know a prerequisite, and fail. It will then attempt the other 705 and succeed. Unless you are desperate, do one a turn.

### 710 - Prentice Magery

The automatic mage training order. Until you have decided your mage is to play a very specialised role in the game, issue the 710 order at every available opportunity.

Mages are the least appreciated character in the game. Often relegated to specific roles (this guy casts this spell, that guy picks up artefacts, etc). It also takes longer to train mages up to useful skill levels because they do not have average and hard orders that give them greater increases. Also, between Spell Casting Rank and Mage Rank, mages have 2 factors involved in their success instead of the usual skill rank only, and artefacts seem to be used in one situation and not another. Time and experience will teach you exactly how mages work in the different situations. Best advice I can give at this point is to ASK advice or specific questions of veteran allies or other players on either the [mepbmlist@yahoo.com](mailto:mepbmlist@yahoo.com), or [www.pbmforum.com](http://www.pbmforum.com). I think mages are unappreciated essentially because they are much more complicated to use correctly than the other characters...

### Character Naming – 725, 728, 731, 734, 737

Unless your nation has a special skill to name character at skill level 40, all your characters will come with 30. While agents, emissaries, and mages can only name similar characters, commanders can name any kind of character, and multi-classed characters using the 725 order.

For financial reasons, players sometimes want as cheap a character as possible. It is possible to name a character with only 10 skill points. Using the 728, 731, 734, or 737 orders appropriately, you can designate 10 skill to the new character being named. You cannot do that using the 725 order. If, for example, you issue 725 and only designate 10 emissary skill, the computer will automatically assign the remaining 20 skill, and it will be defaulted as command skill. Also note, if your character has 24 emissary rank and issues the 734 order, it can only name a new emissary



at maximum 24 skill (can, of course, designate the new character at any skill level below that, minimum 10).

### Movement Orders – 810-870

Be very careful with movement! Army and navy movement is especially rife with pitfalls! Again: if unsure, ask! Send your proposed orders to an experienced player to verify! Movement is fraught with such peril, and is so drastically important, it is the one thing you want to guarantee, before all else. Read the tables, calculate foodless movement accurately (round up!), and triple check your map for terrain, bridges, fords, etc.

### Scouts and Recons – 905-935

Information is power. Each order gives different types of information that can be useful: who has troops around and how many, the loyalty of population centres, map information, etc. The Free People should use the Palantirs (scrying artifacts) to find the Cloud Lord and

Ring. He was corrupted and was cast down. Being utterly humbled, he was slain by the hand of a subject and his spirit left Middle Earth forever.

It has been written that at a counsel summoned by Manwe the Istari were chosen, each at the bidding of one of the Aratar. Curunir was chosen by Aule for the task assigned him. At a later time was sent to Curunir, Aiwendil, called in Middle Earth Radagast the Brown, at the will of Aule's wife, Yavanna. Radagast was to look out for all Yavanna's creation, but having become enamoured of this creation he forsook his Task. He was of much less power and wisdom than the other of his Order and his presence in Middle-Earth was dispised by Curunir.

Sent also were the two 'Blue Wizards', Alatar and Pallando. Alatar was sent at Orome's bidding. Alatar took Pallando as a friend. Little is known of there rôle in Middle Earth. They disappeared into the East and not seen in the West again.

Last to arrive was Olorin. He was chosen to be the third and sent at Manwe's command, though Olorin himself did not deem himself worthy of the task. Third he was in calling but Varda believed him to be not third in the Task. He came in the guise of an old man cloaked in Grey, a staff he carried with him. Cirdan saw his arrival and perceived who he was. He gave him the Red Ring one of the Three Elven Rings of Power. Gandalf (Elven wight with a Staff) he was named among the Men of the North, Tharkun (Staff man) to the Dwarves, Incanus (northern spy) to the men of the south and Mithrandir (Grey Pilgrim) by the Elves. Most of what else is known of Olorin is recorded in the Lord of the Rings.

These are the Istari, spirits of the 'angelic' order of the Maiar, sent to Middle Earth to defy the rising Shadow of Sauron. Only one remained true to the Task, Olorin. And thus it is that he is not Third among those sent but the highest of the Order in his purposes.



Blind Sorceror armies in the beginning, and then anyone who has one should use them to hunt down the off map areas for pops, icons, etc. When agents are travelling in a company, say a theft squad in training, the thieves should each Steal and issue a scouting order (unless they're stealing from major centres, and they prefer to be safe and refuse challenge/steal...). You will get a clearer picture of your world, and you never know what may be useful! When a commander is travelling, across the map, try and have him go via aread you'd like to Recon...

**Transport Orders – 947,948**

From the capital, you can 947 any amount of your entire national reserves + production of one product to any of your population centres (say, to stock up mounts for cavalry, etc). From any population centre, you can 948 any amount of that pop's reserves + production of one product to any other unhidden population centre on the map (make sure you get the hex right!). This way, using two orders, you can 947 something to your capital, and 948 it to another hex (this is how you'd send an ally product). You can only 947 from your capital, so you cannot send your entire nation's production of steel to an ally from your camp.

Note that 947 deals in percentages, while 948 deals in the exact number of the product (some buy/sell orders work the same way – read the rules carefully!).

If you want the same product stocked up in 2 different pops, you can either issue 2 947's from your capital, sending 50% to each pop, OR, if you only have the 1 spare capital order, 947 it to one pop, and have a character there 948 from that pop a certain amount to the other pop! I've 325 – sold 50% of my leather, then 947 – transported 100% (the rest) to one pop, then had a guy there 948 some of the same thing to a third pop!

Remember that the caravan's will take 10% off the top. If you have 5000 steel at a pop and you 948 3000 to another pop, the receiving pop will get it's 3000, and the 10% will be taken over and above that, leaving the first with 1700. Else, if you tried to 948 all of it, the 2nd pop would only get 4500, the 10% being removed. When you 947 then 948, you lose the 10% TWICE! Be careful of this if you promise you ally exactly 10,000 timber for a new bridge, and end up shipping him 9567 instead!

It's late, and about 8 months since I first started this listing, which was originally destined to be a personal web site! (It still might...?). I'm tired. I hope you find some of this information useful! If anyone has any comments, criticisms, or corrections for me, please feel more than welcome to reach me at pbmnoot@yahoo.ca.



**FLAGSHIP RATINGS SURVEY**

Flagship, the most widely-read PBM magazine, runs an ongoing poll rating all PBM games for different qualities. We'd like to ask you to help non-players get a fair assessment of our games, by sending your opinions - good, bad, or mixed - to Flagship. Please feel free to rate other games as well. If you wish to add comments about the games you play, these can be printed in Flagship's Rumours from the Front section. All ratings received by November 1st will go in the prize draw.

The categories are all from 1=low to 10=high.

- ANTICIPATION: 1=who cares when the turn comes; 10=my world revolves around each turn.
- GM QUALITY: 1=goes out of his way to abuse me; 10=deserves Nobel prize.
- DEPTH: 1=easier than breathing; 10=needs several lifetimes to crack.
- INTERACTION: 1=no diplomacy; 2=a letter is an extreme rarity; 10=dozens of calls / letters each turn.
- VALUE FOR MONEY: 1=total rip-off; 10=grossly underpriced.

YOUR NAME (essential):  
YOUR ADDRESS (essential):

YOUR RATINGS (all must be filled in please):

GAME NAME	GM	Anticipation	GM Quality	Depth	Interaction	Value for Money

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