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Starletter #42 through #46 contained the First Generation X-ships. These are available for 25¢ each and one stamped self-addressed envelope, but the designs are obsolete as they were revised at Origins. Other back issues are not available.

ESTIMATED RELEASE SCHEDULE - STAR FLEET BATTLES - 1987

Released in 1987: SSD #9, Nexus #16; Reinforcements #2; Tournament Book; Miniatures: Rom SkyHawk+SeaHawk, Kzinti Tug, Orion Slaver, Andro Conquistador+Python. Nexus #17 was released 5 June and the Tactics Manual on 3 July.

AUGUST: CLog #5; **SEPT:** Nexus #18; **NOV:** F&E Total War; **DEC:** Nexus #19.

You can order from Games on Call (1-800-874-7907) (In Texas, 806-358-3270), 2201 S Western #50, Amarillo, TX 79109. Ask for their free 1987 BUYER'S GUIDE.

TOURNAMENT BOOK RELEASED BY ADB; UPDATES ANNOUNCED

The Tournament Book has been released by ADB as a stapled set of SSDs and rules (rather than a bound booklet). The cost is \$2.50 (US, Canada, APO, FPO; \$5 overseas-airmail). We can only accept US funds. Only ADB sells Tournament Books.

The following rules updates have been announced: Ships cannot start cloaked. The passive fire control system is used only when the rules require you to do so, not voluntarily. The ISC rear torpedoes have standard arcs. Klingons have special arcs.

TACTICS MANUAL REACHES PUBLICATION

The long-awaited Star Fleet Battles Tactics Manual was released on schedule at Origins 87 in Baltimore. This 96-page book is the most comprehensive compilation of tactical advice ever published for any adventure game. The TM is divided into six departments: POWER & ENERGY (Basic Energy, Reserve Power, Reading Enemy Power); FIREPOWER (Basic Combat, Firing Arcs, Mizia Concept, Disruptors, Phasers, Shields, Non-Violent Combat, Overloads, Range, Drones, MW drones, Anti-drones, Scatter-Packs, T-Bombs, Maulers, Plasma Torps), MANEUVER (Basic, Docking, Gorn Anchor, Erratic, HETs, Formations, Oblique Attack, Kaufman Retrograde, Emergency Deceleration, Tactical Maneuvers, Terrain), FOREIGN (Tactics for all races), CLASS (Shuttles, PFs, PFTs, Carriers, Fighters, Bases, Convoys), and SPECIAL (Mines, Damage Control, Cloak, SFG, Boarding Parties, Tactors, EW, TacIntel, Monsters, Probes). Contrary to previous plans, the Nexus material was not reprinted but was absorbed into entirely new articles. Less than one page of the TacMan is a direct reprint; the rest is all new material! The Tactics Manual is also the most heavily illustrated SFB product ever released. It is available NOW in your store (or from Games on Call).

JOINT CHIEFS OF FLEETS: ITEMS UNDER CONSIDERATION

The Joint Chiefs of Fleets began consideration of several proposed rules changes at their annual meeting at Origins 87. For your information, and to invite public comment, the cases under consideration are listed below. If you wish to comment on one of these cases, you may do so if your input conforms to the following specifications: It must be typed. Each case must be on a separate page with the case number at the top. No more

than one page of comments can be submitted for each case. You can include suggested solutions or may limit yourself to comments on the proposals under consideration. We will make an effort to keep you up to date on the progress of these cases.

CASE #87-001 CLOAKING COSTS: Some ships (notably the SparrowHawk series) cannot reload their weapons and move at moderate speeds while under cloak. It has been proposed to lower the cloaking cost of this ship by 10-20% to provide sufficient power for cloaked operations. Other costs may also change.

CASE #87-002 T-BOMB BALANCE: Analysis shows that many groups do not use Transporter Bombs because they are too unbalancing. Various proposals of a game-balance nature are under consideration. Changing the BPV cost has not been considered with favor by the JCF. The current working proposal is to eliminate the hidden placement of T-Bombs by transporter and to limit each ship to 4 instead of 12.

CASE #87-003 EMERGENCY DECELERATION: The game originally had rules stating that only Federation ships could use Emergency Deceleration, rules which have been carried forward to the current Commander's Rev-0/1 edition. The designer (i.e. Steve Cole) has long felt that this was a mistake and has tried, by various means, to eliminate it from the game. When the Designer's Edition was replaced by the Commander's Edition, it had been planned to delete the rule, but opposition by some members of the staff resulted in the famous "3-point compromise" which allowed other races to use it if they paid a penalty. However, the problems with (S3.3) made that rule section unpopular, and effectively perpetuated the "Fed's Only" approach. Recent staff debate has resurrected the issue and resulted in a deletion of the "Feds only" clause being included in the (as yet unpublished) CL5 addenda. Debate on this issue has been furious (NO decision is yet final), and some elements of it are repeated here:

* *Why change it? Who needs all of the uproar in the rules that this will cause?* Because the N-17 survey showed that half of the players are using the Feds Only system while the other half are using the Anyone system. The result is that scenarios, ships, and rules tested under one system work differently under the other, creating two radically different games, both called Star Fleet Battles. A definite decision, one way or the other, will actually reduce uproar, not create more of it.

* *Then why not go back and make the Feds Only policy the only correct system?* The Feds Only approach is illogical because Emer Decel is the only race-restricted item in the entire SFB game system which is not a physical object.

* *It will unbalance the game to change it.* Game balance is already suffering from the "two games" problem. Playtest groups have been instructed, for the last three years, to assume the availability of Emer Decel in their playtesting. This was specifically used in testing the PPD and Web Caster. Various complaints about these weapons have been traced directly to the non-use of Emer Decel by the groups complaining that these weapons don't work properly. The Web Caster is far more effective when the enemy can't decel; the PPD is more effective when the firing ship can. Both weapons were tested and balanced WITH EmerDecel and do not work as predicted when it is not used.

* *It will let anyone use a wild weasel.* True, and why shouldn't they be allowed to? Anyway, wild weasels are shown in the Tactics Manual to be a suicide maneuver. Also, the Klingons have few shuttles and the Romulans already have cloaks.

* *It isn't fair to the seeking weapon races.* In case no one noticed, the Klingons and Romulans are seeking weapon races and the Feds Only approach isn't fair to them.

* *It's the Fed Advantage.* All races get advantages, why take away this one from the Federation? Then shall we dispense with 8-channel scouts and SWAC shuttles? How about prox-photons?

* *Fed ships are just built better!* They why do they have the turn mode of a cow?

CASE #87-004 X-SHIP PLASMA TORPEDOES: The Romulan, Gorn, and ISC commanders have proposed that First Gen X-torps should take 3 points of phaser damage to each point of warhead loss, with Second Gen X-torps taking 4 points.