

STARLETTER #57

The Official *Star Fleet Battles* Newsletter

November 1988

THE "NEW" STARLETTER

As noted in Starletter #56, Task Force Games has assumed publication duties for Starletter. If you already had a subscription, it will be fulfilled by Task Force. When your subscription expires, send your resubscription (see page #4 for rates) to Task Force.

This issue brings you an exciting new scenario and a very interesting new ship. This format will continue for the time being; we may do something special from time to time in a different format, perhaps an F&E scenario or two ships or whatever.

If this is your first issue of Starletter, we hope that you find it useful and entertaining and choose to subscribe.

SCANNERS REPORT

TWO NEW PRODUCTS MOVING INTO IN RANGE!

Two new *Star Fleet Battles* products are in development:

★ UPDATE #2 will be a compilation of material previously published in Nexus and Captain's Log, including: FD10-15 Drone Module, FP8-10 Plasma Module, R14 Lyrans Democratic Republic, D22 Energy Balance Due to Damage, D15 Ground Combat, D16 Advanced Boarding Party Combat, UN1 Bargantine Campaign, all of the Nexus scenarios, and the ship rules from SSD Books #7, #8, and #9. All material has been updated with the latest addenda. This will assist new players who can't find the necessary back issues of Nexus and Captain's Log, or who don't want to buy 48 pages of magazine for 2 pages of rules. In addition, UPDATE #2 includes over three dozen new ships and three new SSDs, including the Andromedan Viper, the WYN Barracuda, and the Klingon ISF E4V escort carrier. Price of the 64-page supplement will be \$7.95. It should be on its way to the stores by the time you read this.

★ CAPTAIN'S LOG #7 should appear in February. Contents and delivery date were unavailable at press time.

A BIT OF ADDENDA

Makes the game go better! Here is some recent addenda we thought you might find useful. All of it will appear in Captain's Log #7; we just wanted you to have it a little sooner.

(G7.54a) The shuttle must have an opportunity to make an HET breakaway maneuver (G7.55) before it can be destroyed. If the ship is scheduled to move, the shuttle can make the breakaway out of the normal Order of Precedence.

(G16.5) All SFGs, regardless of the ship they are mounted on, are destroyed by the second phaser hit scored on them. The SFG on the D5A replaces the two FX phasers; the SFG on the C7A replaces two of the four forward phasers.

(G23.5a) The rule in CL6 assumes that the ship is outside of the ESG headed into it. If the ship is inside the ESG headed out, the shield away from the generating ship takes the damage.

(S4.32a) Photon torpedoes may have up to 2 points of overload energy at WS-III.

CL6 TOURNAMENT RULES

The Kzinti TC *does* have double drone control.

The Andromedan T-bomb *can* be set for any size; it doesn't have to be set for *all* sizes.

Orion ships can have fusion beams in the wing mounts.

The reference to rule C13.311 should be to C12.311.

Delete reference to passive fire control under the EW section.

BATTLE ORDERS

CONVENTION AND TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

Effective immediately, Starletter will become the primary source for announcements of upcoming conventions. (These announcements will no longer be carried in Captain's Log, although it will continue to publish reports of tournament winners.) To get your convention announcement into Starletter #58, it must be sent to ADB, c/o Task Force Games prior to 26 Dec 1988.

• 3-5 February 1989: Warcon-89. SFB, D&D, Harpoon, many other games. Appearance by Larry Bond, designer of Harpoon. \$8 pre-reg; \$10 at door. Info: MSC NOVA, Memorial Student Center, PO Box J-1, Texas A&M Univ, College Station, TX 77844.

• 31 March to 2 April 1989: I-CON VIII, SUNY, Stony Brook, Long Island, NY. Many gaming events including large SFB patrol tournament. Info from Aaron S Gorfein, I-Con Headquarters, PO Box 550, Stony Brook, NY 11790.

JOINT CHIEFS OF FLEETS

ITEMS UNDER CONSIDERATION

Starletter has presented ongoing rules debates for public comment since #47. Your comments are welcome but must be typed, and each case must be on a separate page (one page per case) with the case number and your name and address at the top.

CASE #87-005 WEB DAMAGE: To recap, the Tholians complain that their triple-web base defense is so invulnerable that no one will attack them, and they never get to have any fun. One idea is to allow weapons to fire at the web and weaken it. Another idea is to allow some percentage of weapons fire (perhaps 100 - 2xStrength) to "burn through" the web and hit the Tholian ships behind it. Another idea is to have the maintenance cost of web go up based on how many ships are stuck in it and how much energy they are expending against it. A fourth idea is to leave the rules alone and tell the Tholians that they aren't, after all, a major race.

CASE #87-006 LYRAN ENERGY CRISIS: A formal proposal was presented in Starletter #56. Committee review and staff playtesting is now under way. We hope to present the new rule in Starletter #58. Note that Update #2 includes a "power pack" refit for the trimarans that solves their chronic power shortage.

CASE #88-010 FUSION BEAMS: A proposed rules change (allowing them to be held for 1 or 0.5 points; overloads cannot be held, but held beams can be overloaded) was made in Starletter #56 and is now being playtested.

IN THIS ISSUE

• REVISED RULE (G7.9). See page 2. A completely rewritten edition of this complex rule. We'll have more revised rules in future issues, but not in every issue.

• PLAYTEST SCENARIO: We will have a new playtest scenario in most issues. This issue we have a short but exciting fighter raid on a convoy; see page 2. See the playtest report instructions on page 4. You too can be an SFB playtester!

• NEW SHIP: The Romulan RoyalHawk is one of the new ships in Update #2, but is only a listed variant. Starletter subscribers get the advantage of a complete SSD. The RoyalHawk was designed to field the R-torp in larger numbers to counter the Gorn CS. RH entered service in Y175. Design by Ronald Spitzer.

RULES YOU CAN USE

Some rules from *Star Fleet Battles* are so confusing (and so laden with Addenda) that they generate more questions than any others. In this first issue of the "new" Starletter, we would like to take the opportunity to provide a completely re-written edition of one of these infamous rules. The Committee reviewed a new draft of this rule which designer Stephen V Cole had developed. Adjutant Steve Patrick assisted in the final editing.

(G7.9) RESTRICTIONS ON A UNIT WHICH IS HELD IN OR TOWED BY A TRACTOR BEAM

A unit being tractoried (by a friendly or enemy tractor beam) is under certain restrictions defined herein. The holding unit is not affected by this rules section (excepting his movement cost).

(G7.91) A unit being tractoried (i.e. held in a tractor beam) cannot fire its direct-fire weapons or plasma torpedoes, or use its tractor beams, against any ship except the holding unit. Note that this restriction applies to "ships" and not "units" so the unit can fire at shuttles and seeking weapons (but not PFs). This firing (and tractoring) restriction (G7.91) is ignored if the tractoring unit is equal in size class to or smaller than the tractoried unit *and* if the two units are not on the same side.

(G7.92) A unit being held in a tractor beam cannot use erratic maneuvers (C10.24).

A friendly ship using EM cannot be tractoried unless it drops EM and cannot adopt EM while held in a tractor.

If an enemy ship performing EM is grabbed by a tractor beam, all effects of EM stop immediately. If the enemy ship is later released or breaks free, the effects of EM resume. The external tractor is an overriding condition in addition to the ship's normal EM condition. If the enemy ship drops EM or adopts it, this takes effect but the effect may not be realized until the ship is released.

(G7.93) A unit being held in a tractor beam can use tactical maneuvers, HETs (G7.36), or its normal turn mode (C2.46n) to control its own facing. The holding unit cannot control the facing of the held unit.

(G7.94) RESTRICTIONS ON "LAUNCHED" UNITS

(G7.941) A unit being held cannot launch fighters, shuttles, or PFs; such a unit could not drop a pod, pallet, or warp pack. These units do not have the power to escape from the tractor beam. While a fighter in space can break a tractor beam (G7.55), a fighter cannot escape from the shuttle bay of a tractoried ship because there is insufficient space to complete the maneuver. See also (G7.98).

(G7.942) Units can "escape" (D21.4) from a ship held in a tractor beam because the explosion of the primary unit has weakened the tractor.

(G7.943) A unit being held in a tractor beam cannot launch seeking weapons except at the holding unit. This is because those weapons lack the power to escape the tractor beam, but if they are moving toward the holding unit, they don't have to break away from the beam to reach their target.

Seeking weapons launched at the tractoring unit must be launched facing that unit and must move directly toward it by the shortest possible route.

Note that as suicide shuttles and scatter-packs are seeking weapons, they cannot be launched except if targeted on the holding unit. These seeking shuttles, being unmanned, could continue to function in the stress of the tractor field where a pilot could not. Weapons released from a scatter-pack can only be targeted on the holding unit.

While on the board, such seeking weapons as described herein will be carried with the two units while they are moving under (G7.36). Those weapons cannot be rotated (and are not considered to be held) unless tractoried separately.

Note that this section (G7.943) does not apply to plasma torpedoes (which cannot be tractoried); see (G7.91). Note also that despite similar titles "anti-drones" are direct-fire weapons and are not drones, hence they are not restricted by this rule.

(G7.95) A unit being held cannot transfer power to any other unit

including the towing/holding unit (unless 'docked', see for example C13.41, C13.55, C13.952, and R1.10B4).

(G7.96) The systems (including shields) of the two units joined by a tractor beam are not combined by virtue of the tractor link. Those systems may be combined if the rules so provide, for example if the units are docked as in (C13.0) or (G14.0). Tractor beams will often be a prelude to or a part of a docking arrangement, but it is the docking, not the tractor beam, which creates any combination, and not all forms of docking do so.

(G7.97) The holding unit automatically has a lock-on to the held unit for purposes of direct-fire weapons, even if the holding unit subsequently shuts down its fire control (D6.142) or the held unit cloaks (G7.99). A unit held in a tractor beam may be fired at separately by enemy units. If destroyed, the unit explodes as in (D5.0).

(G7.98) A unit being held in a tractor beam cannot launch a WW due to (G7.94). This is why plasma-armed ships strive to achieve the "Gorn Anchor" (in which the target is held in a tractor beam when the torpedoes are launched). A unit protected by a WW cannot be tractoried; see (J3.45).

(G7.99) A unit which is cloaked *and* which has an established tractor link to another unit (i.e. is holding another unit in a tractor beam, having maintained a tractor beam established before the cloaking device was activated under D6.142, or is itself held in a tractor beam) can be locked-onto by any other unit with active fire control; see (G13.43).

Such observing units, except the holding unit, will still have the range penalty (G13.32) and fire adjustment (G13.344) when firing at the cloaked unit. This is due to the fact that the tractor beam forms a "giant arrow" pointed at the units. A unit which is holding a cloaked unit in a tractor beam (but not one held by the cloaked unit) suffers no range penalty and fires at the cloaked unit normally; it does not roll to retain the lock-on (G13.311) but retains it automatically.

This rule (G7.99) does not apply to a tractor beam used to hold two units in a docked configuration.

PLAYTEST SCENARIO

(SP463.0) TANG-CHI! (*Jeffrey L Moore, New Jersey*)

During the opening stages of the General War, the Kzinti attempted to disrupt the Klingon offensive by a series of fighter strikes on supply convoys. This scenario depicts one of the more typical raids, by the 3167th fighter squadron from the carrier *Claymore*, on a Klingon convoy in Y169. The Kzinti pilots called "Tang-Chi!" (forever victory!) as they roared to the attack.

(SP463.1) NUMBER OF PLAYERS: 2; the Klingon and Kzinti.

(SP463.2) INITIAL SET UP

KLINGON ISF: 2 large freighters, one each in 2117 and 2218.

4 small freighters within 6 hexes of 2115.

2 G-2s within 12 hexes of 2117.

All ships speed 4, heading B, freighters WS-O, others WS-I.

KZINTI: 12 AAS enter from any map edge.

(SP463.3) LENGTH OF SCENARIO: The scenario continues until all Kzinti units have been destroyed or have disengaged.

(SP463.4) SPECIAL RULES

(SP463.41) Use a floating map.

(SP463.42) All AAS have type-IM drones.

(SP463.43) No fighters have warp booster packs.

(SP463.44) Freighters cannot disengage by acceleration; see (R1.5) and (R1.6). No more than two shuttles from the freighters can be on the board at any one time. (The captains fear losing them.)

(SP463.45) The Klingons cannot self-destruct any ships.

(SP463.5) VICTORY CONDITIONS: Use the Modified Victory Conditions, but ignore all ships except the freighters, which are worth 10 BPV (small) and 20 BPV (large). The Kzinti must score 5 points to win. (The small amount of damage will be enough to terrify convoy commanders and delay supplies.)

PLAYTEST REPORT FORMAT

For your report to be useful, it must be typed (computer graphics are ok) and in the following format. Put each ship (or scenario, or rule) on a separate page. List your name, address, and phone number on every page. List all playtesters who played the scenario or ship at least once.

REPORTS ON SHIPS

1. List the Race, Class, and Project (900-series) number.
2. What mission is this ship intended for? Is it suitable for that mission? Why or Why not?
3. How many times did you test the ship in one-on-one duels? What ships did you test it against? What were the results?
4. How many times did you test the ship in squadron or fleet battles? Describe the fleets or squadrons used. Did the ship perform its intended mission adequately?
5. Does the ship have any hidden flaws? Are power, speed, shields, and weapons appropriate? Is the Sensor/Scanner track typical for that race? Is the ship recommended for publication?

REPORTS ON SCENARIOS

1. List the title and SP control number (e.g. SP601).
2. How many times did you play the scenario? How many times did you play it to completion?
3. Is the scenario unbalanced? To what extent, and toward whom?
4. List any of these terms that apply to the scenario: fun, boring, predictable, stupid, silly, one of the best, just another scenario.
5. Is there a "trick key" that can unlock the scenario and cause it to fall apart? If so, describe it, how it happens, why that is bad, and what you suggest we do about it.
6. List any proposed changes you think should be made.
7. Should this scenario be published? Immediately? Whenever there is space? In conjunction with something else?

REPORTS ON RULES

1. List the rule number and the issue of Starletter it was in.
2. Ask any questions about how it works or what it means.
3. List any conflicts with other rules.
4. List any game balance effects or changes in tactics that will be caused by this rule.
5. List any mistakes or typos you found in it.
6. Indicate anything that could be made more clear by an example or further explanation.

NEXT ISSUE OF STARLETTER

The next issue of Starletter will be mailed in mid-January 1989, bringing you more exciting material for the Star Fleet Universe.

PUBLISHER'S INFORMATION

STARLETTER is written by Amarillo Design Bureau and published by Task Force Games, 14922 Calvert St, Van Nuys, CA 91411; Telephone 818-785-0315.

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SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

Subscriptions to Starletter cost \$5 for six issues (one year) in the US, Canada, APO, and FPO. Issues are mailed by First Class mail. Overseas subscriptions are \$10 for six issues and are sent by Air Mail. All payments must be in US funds. All checks must be drawn on a US bank and have magnetic code numbers on the bottom. International Postal Money Orders are acceptable.

BACK ISSUES

Back issues #47-#56 are in the older 1-page format. They will be available until 1 July 1989 for 25¢ each, plus a stamped self-addressed envelope with one first class stamp for each four back issues ordered. Postage to Canada is 30¢ for each four back issues. Overseas airmail postage is 45¢ for one back issue or 90¢ for each four issues. No foreign stamps, please. (All prices are in US funds.)

All of these issues have JCF cases, plus:

#49: Prototype (P16) Comet rules.

#50: Prototype (G94) Armor and (G95) Barracks rules.

#51: Prototype F&E Stasis Field Generator rules.

#54: WYN Mako War Destroyer SSD

#55: Prototype (G96) Landing pad rules.

Earlier back issues are not available. All material in those back issues has been published in later Star Fleet products or dropped. Back issues #57 to date are in the current 4-page format and are available through TFG's spare parts department.

TASK FORCE GAMES SPARE PARTS

Spare parts are available for all Task Force products. Contact Task Force at the above address for a price list. All TFG products are available by mail directly from the company. Write and ask for a catalog of available products.

SFB ON GENIE

The very popular Star Fleet Battles bulletin board has been moved to the GENIE computer network. Star Fleet is Category 10 on Page 805 Menu item #1. Ask your local computer dealer for info on how to register on GENIE. The computer system provides overnight access to the staff and rapid answers to SFB rules questions. Available for downloading are new SSDs, rules, and scenarios. Ongoing discussions of new rules proposals give you a chance to express your feelings before the product is printed.

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