

Up to September 2003/08.01.2983

ARGENT FIRE

The Official Wolf Mercenary Units/
Classic BattleTech On-Line Periodical

In This Issue:
Introductions, Expectations
and Submission Guides
Inner Sphere Wars Review
Interview with MekTek

Volume 1/Issue 1

Inaugural Issue

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Volume I, Issue 1 Inaugural Issue Up to September, 2003/08.01.2983

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INTRO TO THE INTRO

Welcome to Argent Fire, the Official Armageddon Unlimited, and Wolf Mercenary Units, Classic BattleTech On-Line Periodical. There's not likely to be too much in the way of periodical here, to tell the truth, but rather this E-Zine will come out when an issue is ready. That might depend on you, though, and your contributions. After all, I can only write so much.

Now, why "**Argent Fire**", you ask? Well, I asked myself that same question, and came up with the following reasons: 1) It sounds cool; 2) Many authors have used it in the past and, from the definition(s) I've been able to find, they've actually used it correctly; 3) When someone thinks of weapons firing on a battlefield at night, and this is particularly true in Mech-Warrior and, I would imagine, a real BattleTech universe were there actually one out there, they would see a silver, or at least very bright light, especially from lasers. At night, color vision is brought to a minimum, black and white, and so people actually see argent when they look at bright lights and lit signs. The same is true of weapons fire, hence the name. So, without further complication, here are the definitions for the words, as found on dictionary.com:

argent

adj : lustrous gray; covered with or tinged with the color of silver; "silvery hair [syn: silver, silvery, silverish] n : a metal tincture used in heraldry to give a silvery appearance.

fire

n. : A severe test; a trial or torment. The discharge of firearms or artillery: *heard the fire of cannon*. The launching of a missile, rocket, or similar ballistic body. Discharged bullets or other projectiles: *subjected enemy positions to heavy mortar fire; struck by rifle fire*. Exposed or subjected to enemy attack. Splendor; brilliancy; luster; hence, a star.

There you have 'em, folks, the meanings of the words which are now the capstone of this E-Zine. Besides, they sound really cool together, and they are representative of the way Armageddon Unlimited, and her prior iterations, have lived since the units inception in 1985/3006.

Now onto the reason for this E-Zine: I started Armageddon Unlimited, in her previous forms and names, particularly as Equal Opportunity Destroyers, back in the middle of 1985 after I had read and played the original BattleTech boxed set. I have quite a history with this game, and I have worked hard to collect the books and keep accurate records. Well, with my divorce also went my books and most of my things, but not the information on the computer I am presently writing this article from. Oh, and I do intend to collect my old BattleTech stuff again, if it takes a lot of hard work to do it.

This E-Zine is NOT only for Armageddon Unlimited; no, I would like to see it done for the entire community of BattleTech and MechWarrior players. Yes, even Dark Age players are welcome here. However, Armageddon Unlimited, and all of the iterations leading up to the present existence of AU, will be documented here primarily. This game, and my unit in particular, have been a great love for me for nearly two decades, and I hope it will continue to be a love until the day I die. However, we all grow up, and we all come up with new and individual ways to express our old loves so we can grow with them.

I don't believe there's a single thing



wrong with a good hobby, even if it's as eccentric, well-developed, and as in-depth as the BattleTech universe is. On the other hand, I believe it's very good, something God intended, to explore our imaginations, the depths of our souls, to see what we're made of, and how far we'll go. Many of us are simply armchair generals that play the game as dullards, un-fascinated by the world as it steams full-bore around us, missing every good thing that comes our way. To some of us, it's a pastime, and that's all there is to the game; we don't play for the thrill of the kill or for how much tonnage we can drop in a single game. Rather, we play because it's something to do on a Saturday afternoon when the football game isn't on and we have no where else to go.

Then, there are those of us, such as myself, who have found a happy medium to all this madness. We live our lives, not letting the world steam around us, but not just taking the game as a pastime, either. We enjoy everything to the fullness we're supposed to, and play the game with a zeal many envy. Regardless of the type of warrior you are, you're definitely welcome here.

This E-Zine is designed to pass along information, not to broach arguments or bring on disagreements, talk about politics, religion, sex, drugs, or rock and roll. Argent Fire is for the short story author, the battle master with a tale to tell, and a place to get the latest news on Armageddon Unlimited, various units in the BattleTech, MechWarrior, and Dark Age universes, and the industry which produces the games. It's also a place to get a laugh from time-to-time.

Throughout FASA Corporation's BattleTech career various magazines were produced for the game, with the intent of entertaining, telling stories, and allowing the MechWarriors playing in FASAs marvelous and astounding universe a voice for their designs, their tales, their complaints, and their scores. Perhaps Argent Fire can become a free, and easily accessible on-line, version of that. Let's take it where it goes, and see what happens.

Now, the first volume of AF, I'm sure, will focus mainly on Armageddon Unlimited and her predecessors. That's ten issues. I'm hoping to produce a Field Manual for the unit –Lord knows I have enough material for it– and while I'm in production with that, waiting for FanPro to produce it, I will be chronicling some of the exploits of the unit in short stories, articles, designs, and some of the stats from the Field Manual, to be placed here. There will be items placed in AF that will not appear in the FM, and in the FM that will not appear here. In fact, there will be a lot in the FM that will not appear here, and you'll just have to buy the FM to get that other information. Either way, I hope you enjoy what we're doing here.

There are going to be two other sections to this aspect of the E-Zine, and then we'll actually get started with the first issue. The first is the **layout section**, which will describe to you the various parts of the magazine as it stands now. It's not to say these can't change in the future, but they're not likely to without stiff approval from our staff. Next will come some basic **submission guidelines** for the magazine. You want to write an article, submit a picture, please do, but be aware that I have ultimate veto, and placement, power. If I decide an image or article needs to be placed on the AF web site apart from the E-Zine, that's exactly what will happen. If that doesn't meet with your approval, please remember whose magazine this is; then, suck it up and drive on.

Layout

Argent Fire is being developed with the following sections in mind to begin with. As has already been said these can change, and might change, if there's a big enough cry for it, or the originator of the section is a really smooth talker.

Opening Volley – The editor's letter. This is where issues are met head-on concerning the E-Zine and any overt complaints people might have.

Bio-Feedback – Letters to the editor.

The Grapevine – This is unit and league general news concerning Armageddon Unlimited first, the league(s) she will be in, then league general news as it affects most units out there. No other unit specific news than Armageddon Unlimited will be here.

Battle ROMs – Articles about past battles, unit training and commentary from the training cadre. History –both unit and AU–, rules of engagement and warfare as well as upcoming training scenarios, and any variations to those, are also outlined here.

Intel – One to three articles per issue about AU, unit and personnel profiles, league works and information, new league and unit introductions, and finally links to new pages to visit.

BattleTales – One to three short stories, whether personal or combat BattleTech stories, which each may be strung out over the course of several issues. If the stories get to be too many or too long, a special anthology may be put out to get us caught up with the stories. Entire stories, not just continuations, would find their way into a special anthology E-Zine like that.

Event Calendar – This will be for anyone who wants to submit something for the calendar, not just AU. Conventions, league events, zone events, special intra-unit events, birthdays, anniversary's, dogs and cats living together, etc. Please submit your events three weeks to two months ahead of time for that event to be listed here. New events can become old news very quickly unless we continue to have submissions. So here's a suggestion: if you put in an event or more, please feel free to find out also if there are any missing articles or art, although art will likely go hand-in-hand with the articles. The faster we are able to fill the requirements of an issue, the faster your news can get out to the rest of the community.

Parting Shots – This is the closing portion with a goodbye and an expectation of things to come.

Now, each copy of Argent Fire is expected to fill about 30 or more, preferably more, pages before it's released. The initial three or four issues are likely to have less, but that's the initial figure we're going to shoot for. Regardless of the size, each AF issue will have an article for each of the sections listed above; whether that article is small or large is up to you if you write. See the ***submission guidelines*** just below.

Okay, you have the basic guidelines, now start writing articles. This issue won't be released until I've written an article for each section, and that's going to come as I put the Armageddon Unlimited Field Manual together. So, once you have this, you'll know that the AU FM is well on it's way. Good luck with your writing, and please submit your work when you have them ready. argentfire@wolvesau.net is where you can send them.

Submissions

Okay, writing for AF is not going to be impossible. In fact, it should be easier than a lot of other magazines.

Art – All art must be BattleTech-related and may be of 'mechs, personnel(in uniforms preferably), combat art and anything else BattleTech-related. Battlefields and pictures from conventions and screenshots from special events may also be included. Once you submit your art it becomes AF property and may be used and modified as we see fit; and paying you is NOT an option, as we simply will NOT be able to afford to pay you for your hard work except in recognition for other publishers. Don't let that prevent you from putting art with us, though; your name will be in the credits for the magazine, along with the page and name of the work for where it's been put.

Articles – You may write articles between 300 and 2000 words per article, and you may write as many articles as you want. No profanity, no overt sex, no extraordinary violence, and keep it related to the BattleTech universe, please? You may include your art, diagrams, screenshots, etc. Please use proper spelling and punctuation, sentence structure, syntax and grammar, especially when it comes to dialog. Keep in mind that once you submit anything to us it becomes AF property and may be used and modified as we see fit. Also, don't let those rules keep you from submitting or enjoying this magazine.

Whatever you submit to this E-Zine, which is used, is your own opinion and we are not responsible for any backlash you may receive as a result of what you write, so be careful. The same thing goes for us who are the primary writers and artists for AF; just because we say it does not make it law, more important or right than anything anyone else would say or believe. The primary writers of this E-Zine are Christian, but we will strive to maintain your dignity and allow you your opinion and right to choose. After all, our own core belief is that God has given us all the right to choose life or death, and it is not up to the writers of this E-Zine to tell you whether you're right or wrong; no, that's for God to do in the judgment.

For those of you who are worried about copyright infringement, don't. If we feel that something submitted to us steps over the line, we simply will not publish it in this FREE E-Zine. If you believe it steps over the bounds, please contact us, being respectful and showing common decency, and we will gladly change or delete the offending article or work of art and re-publish the E-Zine. However, it will be noted as a re-publish and a small explanation, as nebulous in detail as we can possibly get, concerning the original article and why it was changed, will be made to let our readership know that some stingy company has become tight-lipped about something they don't want us to know. If that's the case, give us the skinny, we will not pass it on to the community, and we'll be happy to let them be surprised, but we will release the submission afterward. The readership of this E-Zine loves BattleTech, or games/ entertainment involving mecha and BattleMechs, and alienating them through making us change an article for some stingy reason would be bad for your profit margin.

Advertisements – We have no problem hosting advertisements for units, leagues or even the manufacturers of the games we play. However, we don't pay for submissions and we will only accept donations, not contracted payment of any advertisements. This does mean that ads here are free, but we will limit ad space available whether you decide to donate or not. When submitting an ad, please make sure you make a full-page ad(if you feel that's necessary – see our ad toward the back for AU), a half-page ad, and a quarter page ad so we can fit your ad, in alphabetical order, with any others we may receive.

With your submissions, please make sure you have a legitimate email address so we are able to get hold of you if needs be. Please make sure you place it with or on the article, art, or ad you're hoping to submit with us, for every submission you make? Thank you, ahead of time

I do hope you enjoy this E-Zine, but I also hope you don't expect it to come out too often. Good luck in all your battles, be gentle with your allies, harsh with your enemies, and respectful to those in power above you.

~The Wolf

A SHORT NOTE

Armageddon Unlimited is designed to be a group, or club, for **ALL** people to enjoy; however, we hope a majority of our players will be confessing Christians, or otherwise curiously on their way to that point. So, for those of you, both Christian and secular, who question why we have the name Armageddon Unlimited –a controversial name for a Christian unit to be sure-, I assure you there is a reason.

First off, I began Armageddon Unlimited while I was still secular and kept the name after becoming a Christian; in my attempts to change it to Fox' Blood and Blood Wolves the name kept reverting to AU. Recently I came into a personal quandary about the name, and Panzer-Shrek, whom you'll learn about as issues progress and you read his submissions to this E-Zine, aided me in coming up with an explanation for keeping our name, and I have modified –and shortened, hehe– it to be as follows: *Armageddon* is the final battle in the Bible between good and evil as well as an ongoing struggle in the here and now. In this mercenary unit we fight our enemies –which may only be the powers in charge of the military forces we may face-, normally seen as evil even if honorable, on an unlimited, or constant, basis. As well, in this constant fight *Unlimited* stands for our indomitably positive outlook on our successes –God's successes-, because “We can do all things through Him(Jesus Christ) who strengthens us”, and “If God is with us, who can stand against us?” That makes *Armageddon Unlimited* a force of spiritual warriors doing what we can to glorify the name of God in His Son Jesus Christ and bring the Truth and justice of the Lord to His enemies.

We take money(in game) as a mercenary unit, as a means of supporting ourselves, but money is not a point of worship for us or many of the members of our unit, rather it is a means to an end; in this case, the end is the destruction of our enemies and/or the enemies of our employers, the powers and principalities in charge of them.

OPENING VOLLEY

This E-Zine will not look too much like many other on-line, or real-life, productions. In fact, we're hoping to make sure it doesn't. As with all things some basic, recognizable, formatting will be required, but not too much.

In this inaugural issue of Argent Fire mainly only text, and almost entirely written by the current editor, me, will be prevalent. Hopefully, in future issues, there will be interviews, reviews and plenty of images for you to draw from for your own endeavors. Images have always made the magazine, and this one will likely be no different in that regard.

Now, the Opening Volley is designed to be a place where the editor's letter resides for each issue, where problems and controversies are met head-on concerning the E-Zine and any overt complaints people might have. So, let me lodge the first complaint.

There simply are not enough writers, artists or folks interested in this E-Zine, yet. I say yet, and I know my optimism is showing in a pessimistic world, but that's because I believe something can really be made of this E-Zine, but it has to be with your help and contributions.

I'll need formatting and authoring tips, graphics as well as setup options and suggestions. I will welcome them all at argentfire@wolvesau.net. Thank you, ahead of time, for participating in this E-Zine, even if it's just as a loyal reader and fan.

~The Wolf

THE GRAPEVINE



Since we're just starting out, this grapevine is going to be pretty small. Not a whole lot will be going into this initial issue except to introduce the Armageddon Unlimited Field Manual, Operations Manual and Argent Fire.

First, the AU Field Manual is a compilation of all the information I have been able to keep to make my BattleTech unit grow before, during and, hopefully, after the MechWarrior computer games began and have long gone. A while back—in fact several times in the past—I have contacted FASA Corporation about making my unit an official one. The response has always been the same: “Give us something we can publish, and there won't be a problem.” Well, I know FASA is gone, but BattleTech is still alive through WizKids, LLC with MechWarrior: Dark Age and Fantasy Productions of Germany with Classic BattleTech.

The Field Manual is my attempt to keep Armageddon Unlimited eternally alive in the BattleTech universe by establishing a history as grand as Wolf's Dragoons, as honorable as the

Eridani Light Horse, and as faithful as the Northwind Highlanders. It is also a technical guide to the gear of AU, the uniforms, personnel, contracts, battles and so much more.

It introduces the Wolf Family Mercenary Units, LLC through the eyes of a Wolf family descendant on Rochester who is working to put together the most comprehensive history he can, to honor his ancestors. Don't worry, it will be a story for the Dark Age, whether published or not, by the time I'm done with the whole thing.

The AU Field Manual will contain statistics for the 'mechs and equipment of the unit for both BattleTech and MechWarrior 3rd Editions so they can be utilized to replay battles the unit participated in throughout their history.

Finally, the AU Field Manual is intended for publication through Fantasy Productions. No, I have not taken the liberty of speaking to them as yet; I want to have the better portion of the Field Manual done prior to attempting to contact anyone in either WizKids or FanPro concerning publishing. If they don't care to take on the project and pay to publish it, I will attempt to gain permission to publish it myself electronically.

Unlike Argent Fire and the Operations Manual, the Field Manual is intended for purchase. Over sixty percent, in fact nearly all of the information someone would need to carry on the unit will be contained in those pages, not in the Operations Manual or Argent Fire.

Why would I work so hard to 'attempt' to publish something, you may ask yourself? I have been playing BattleTech running this same unit for nearly twenty years. I have been playing BattleTech longer than ninety-nine percent of the individuals in the world today who play the game religiously. Although I have not agreed with what took place in the computer games, particularly after MechWarrior 3, I have continued to play on-line. With the introduction of the mods –see <http://www.battletechmodproductions.com> –coming out of the woodwork these days, Armageddon Unlimited will have, once again, the ability to ride with the best. In short, this is a labor of love and, to a limited extent, an obsession and it must be done, even if no one but me ever enjoys the work.

* * *

The Armageddon Unlimited Operations Manual is to be the mainstay for our unit, the rules and regulations, the uniforms and means of advancement and the rest of what makes AU what it is!!

I intend to form a community, a club if you will, similar to Starfleet International (<http://www.sfi.org>), complete with by-laws, a charter and regulations for everything required of a club like this. Starfleet International's by-laws are going to be my compass for developing the club. Whether or not it will be a pay club I don't know right now, but I'm hoping it will be larger than anything we've had in the past, either in this unit or the BattleTech community as a whole.

This club is going to take a while to get started, but once it does weekly meetings and monthly newsletters will be held on and, hopefully, off-line in centralized locations to discuss the history and progress of this unit in the BattleTech universe. SFI has a system whereby fans of the popular Star Trek television programs are able to get together in any time-line they wish to, whether it be Enterprise, The Original Series, Mid-Generation, The Next Generation, DS9 or Voyager, and I intend to allow, and encourage, the same thing for Armageddon Unlimited and other units of the BattleTech universe.

A club for AU will be a nebulous thing, whereby general BattleTech can be discussed and not simply AU and her predecessors. All of the games which have been designed and played for BattleTech, including the board game, the computer games and all of the various mods that are being designed, can be played in this club, whether against one another or against those in other clubs. Hey, modders, take a look at us as beta testers.

For the on-line aspect of AU all of the computer games will be allowed to be played, and we will do what we can, with the money from the Field Manual –if there is to be any– and that which comes from the support of the club fans, to build a server for the various games to be played. If you have old games for Mech Commander and MechWarrior, keep hold of them and be ready to play them again; they're not dead, just sleeping.

Finally, Armageddon Unlimited, through the Field Manual, will be advancing into the realms of MechWarrior: Dark Age as we struggle to build our own mercenary unit within that new universe. What that unit will be called, how it will be built and where it will go are to be a direct result of the actions of the members of AU.

* * *

What you need to know about Argent Fire for the most part you've already read, especially in the section Intro to the Intro from page two of this E-Zine. If you need to know anything else, if questions need to be answered, please feel free to email me at argentfire@wolvesau.net and I will answer as promptly as I am able.

Hopefully, Argent Fire will become a great resource for the on-line, and off-line, BattleTech and MechWarrior communities, a supplement and aid to the folks at FanPro who are putting out Classic BattleTech now that FASA is gone and a source of joy for those who like to read excellent articles and stories and see wonderful BattleTech art.

* * *

Alright, now that all of that is out of the way about this issues Grapevine, let's wrap it up.

WE NEED HELP!!!
And lots of it.

If you want your name in lights, you will have to do some of the work to get that done. I'll be more than happy to give you all the recognition you can handle for an awesome piece of art or a wonderful piece of literature, whether it be technical or prose in nature. If you want to help with the Manuals or with Argent Fire, feel free to visit our home base at <http://www.wolvesau.net/HowlNet>, scroll down a bit until you see the forum section called Writing the Books... and the three forums below that.

Then, when you can't get in to see anything for the Operations and Field Manuals, register with us and tell me you want to see what I need done so we can advance these projects. You'll have to email me a return on the non-disclosure agreement I send you, but then you'll be in. The non-disclosure agreement is to protect not only my intellectual property and twenty years of hard work, but also to protect anything you, and many others, do for the Manuals, or Argent Fire, in the way of intellectual property.

You can write and draw for all of them if you want to, but you must be made to understand that no money will be made from this for you or anyone else. No one gets paid, including me, but you will be able to add Argent Fire to your portfolio and take it with you into jobs and places that wish to look at you for your talent. That's not much compensation, unless it helps you get that job.

~The Wolf

BATTLEROMs

This section is supposed to contain articles about past battles, unit training and commentary from the training cadre. History –both alternate units and AU–, rules of engagement and warfare and upcoming training scenarios are also outlined here.

In the future you will see maps and scenarios for BattleTech and MechWarrior RPG games as well as postings from the on-line community about particularly astounding battles which have taken place, and more. Interviews with players on and off-line, real and game persona's, and articles concerning the mods being produced, the future of Classic BattleTech and MechWarrior: Dark Age, and much more, will be here. In this issue I'll begin with a small bit of history from the Armageddon Unlimited Operations Manual concerning the birth of the unit as Wolf's Cavaliers in 3006, particularly of the man who began the unit, Jeremiah Wolf. I hope you enjoy.

~The Wolf

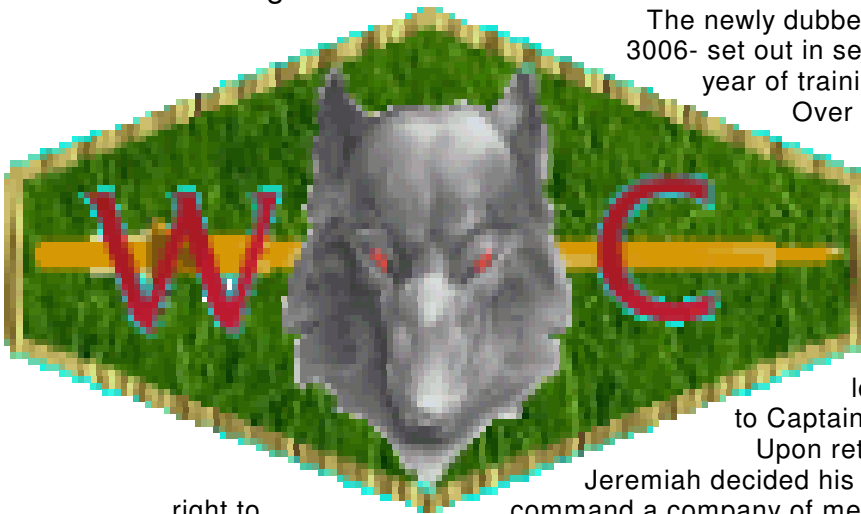
Jeremiah Wolf

The founding father of our unit was born on March 19, 2964 on the planet Rochester near the border with the Draconis Combine. A short home life as a youth and a long, distinguished career in the Armed Forces of the Federated Suns as a gentleman officer and a Battalion Commander by the end of his service marked this mans life in the honorable annals of military history. Jeremiah completed his tour in the AFFS in 3002 as a Battalion Commander in the 1st Robinson Rangers and moved on to begin his own mercenary unit.

Jeremiah Wolf separated from the Armed Forces Federated Suns(AFFS) in late September 3002 and, as a civilian, traveled to the planet Anywhere on the Periphery side of the Lyran Commonwealth. Anywhere was a haven for all manner of BattleMech marketing, and usually cheaper than any other planet in the Sphere; the only problem being its' horrible location. With his money he bought transport and a light company of ' mechs, returning to Rochester by July 3006, where he began to recruit and train personnel for what would become known as Wolf' s Cavaliers.



Raising The Cavaliers



The newly dubbed Wolf' s Cavaliers-as of July 29, 3006- set out in search of contracts in 3007, after a year of training and organization on Rochester.

Over the course of the next four years the Cavaliers performed in two well-met contracts for parts raids into first Marik, and later Kurita, space. Over half of what was taken by the Cavaliers was sequestered by the ranks of the unit, and reports reflecting what would be given over to the liege

lord of the contract were submitted to Captain Wolf.

Upon returning to Rochester in early 3011,

Jeremiah decided his eldest son David had earned the right to command a company of medium ' mechs, and allowed veteran mechwarrriors to be placed at the controls and under David' s command. David would be allowed to negotiate his own contracts for his company although he would serve in a few more contracts with the Cavaliers as a spare defense company.

Due to Jeremiah' s leadership and tactical prowess gained by participation in many skirmishes and large battles against the Draconis Combine during his service to the AFFS and in the Cavaliers, he was not only able to keep Wolf' s Cavaliers from annihilation on several occasions, but also managed to add an extra company over the course of the unit' s first contract. The material came from sequestered salvage, increasing stock dividends, the right contracts -chosen by "The Wolf"-, and the will and loyalty of Wolf' s Cavaliers' personnel.

May 3015 saw Wolf' s Cavaliers increased to a Battalion and two Companies, and larger contracts for a unit that had increased itself almost five fold over the course of eight years. By this time, Jeremiah Wolf had made enough Land Grants, Title, and favor with the Prince for himself that he could trade it all to have a world specifically for Wolf' s Cavaliers. Based off a survey done by ComStar in 2838 that Jeremiah had purchased, he was able to buy a little known planet named Waterworld. Unfortunately, the upkeep required by the world made it necessary to open Waterworld to deep ocean mining and desalinization efforts to help provide the Inner Sphere with water and important raw materials.

This was lucrative to the point where Jeremiah could not only maintain the world but could build her industry at an astonishing rate as well; in fact, he increased the size of the Cavaliers from two battalions to a full regiment. The contracts became more lucrative as the unit and her reputation grew.

In December 3021 Jeremiah' s wife, Mercedes, was killed in a car accident on Rochester, plunging him into unrecoverable depression. By the end of 3022 Jeremiah had all but relinquished command to his son, David, and he died on 19 May 3023 in the dark early morning rain fighting against the Capellan Confederation' s Death Commando' s. Some believe he did it to himself on purpose, and based on the clinical reports of his mental health from that time, he may very well have done just that.

See, that was relatively painless, wasn't it? There's more, and it will be introduced to you bit by bit as this unit, and our E-Zine, comes along. Stick around, it's bound to be a decent ride. However, we'll need your help to really get things going.

~The Wolf

BIO-FEEDBACK

This area of the Argent Fire E-Zine will be dedicated to your letters. I know, normally the Letters to the Editor are concentrated within the first few pages of most magazines; however, for us that's not good enough. There's more important business to take care of than answering everyone's letters. Don't get me wrong, your letters are important to us, but our unit operations are more important, and it's better to put these in the middle to break up the E-Zine a little bit and put us into the more community-oriented works such as BattleTales.

The reason this section is called Bio-Feedback is because that's what a MechWarrior feels from their 'mech as they lumber along at varying high speeds and in various treacherous conditions, especially combat. Now, we're not going to fight you with words here, and we're likely not to entertain flames from you either. However, we are here to answer for making this E-Zine, our unit and, hopefully, the BattleTech community as a whole, better than what it's been.

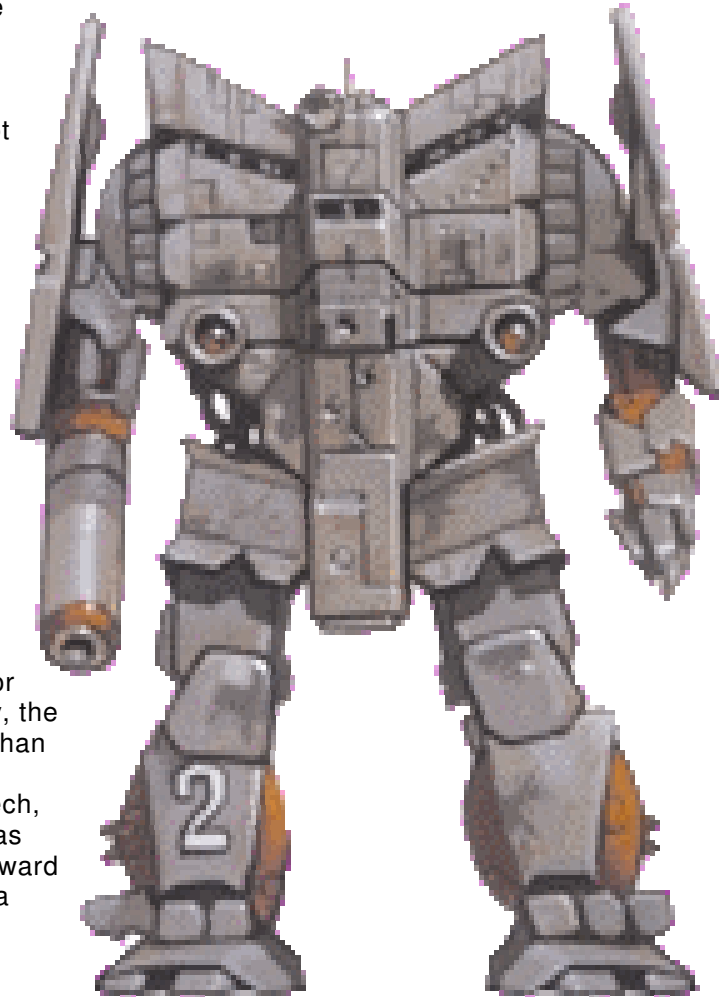
On that note, the game of BattleTech, especially through its' on-line presence, has begun what seems to be an endless downward spiral, like a modern jet aircraft caught in a tailspin. Now, don't get me wrong, what WizKids and FanPro, collectively and individually, are trying to do with Dark Age and Classic BattleTech is admirable. However, what's needed in the BattleTech community is a return to honorable combat and the input and work of the masters of BattleTech who have been extant since the game came out and those who came by their knowledge and desire for the game honestly.

Those who play on-line couldn't care less what the history of the game is, they simply want to play and that's not good enough for me, frankly. Perhaps I'm the only one who's noticed this trend, and perhaps I should just let things develop the way they are, except for the simple fact that those who don't care, and the veterans who don't care to teach the newbs to know better, are allowing this degradation of a work that has been in progress for twenty years, and it's ruining the game for those of us who still care.

Come on, folks, think about this for a minute. If you had worked at writing a novel for so many years –we'll say four years– would you want all of your hard work to be dismissed, or would you prefer it was allowed to live on, proliferate through the reading community, and become much more than you ever expected?

Well, by about the mid-'90's I know that's where BattleTech was. The Clans had been introduced and sales of BattleTech products were on a seemingly constant rise; skyrocketing. However, with the introduction of MechWarrior 2 for the PC, the board game began to go downhill rapidly in sales as individuals switched to playing on the computer in minutes something that used to take hours on the table.

Many of those veterans have begun to return to the board game, some never left it and many others, newbs, are being introduced through MechWarrior: Dark Age and Classic BattleTech by those same veterans. It gets old when all you can do is turn and burn(circle of death; whatever you call it; I call it a pain in the butt), jump-snipe and you're blowing your opponent away so quickly and with all the same techniques you begin to become numb to it.



Tell me I'm wrong? The computer has only so much appeal before something else needs to be sought, and played. Besides, in the computer games what many people, especially newbs, call tactics is really only a bad excuse for the same garbage I mentioned above. Again, tell me I'm wrong!?

Back to the original purpose of this section, hehe. Bio-Feedback is for you to place your emails in our in-box for us to review and answer. I'll give three pages to this section each publication, unless there are a bunch of particularly pertinent questions and then we'll expand the section for that particular issue. Of course, if there aren't three pages worth of questions, such as it is with this issue, obviously we won't go that far. :-D

Bring on the email; we'll enjoy reading and answering them. Make sure your question is clear, not mud, and please don't swear extensively at us. None of us will be partial to that sort of thing. Thank you ahead of time for not being an idiot. Please keep your emails to 500 words or less? Thank you.

~The Wolf

INTEL.

This section will be for articles about Armageddon Unlimited(the present), BattleTech units in general, what's happening in the leagues and the BattleTech industry, new leagues and units introduced and new pages to visit.

Well, for starters, if you want to have a whole lot of pages to visit, go to <http://www.wolvesau.net/#Links> and take a look for yourself. Another excellent place to look for links, which can be found in our own links drop-downs is at <http://www.skye-rangers.net/links.htm>. Finally, for official Classic BattleTech links, go to http://www.classicbattletech.com/Battletech_Links.html for the best in BattleTech resources. I could go on forever with these links because the people who build/are building these sites are versed in BattleTech and what it really means to play and enjoy the game and, subsequently, make the best sites BattleTech has to offer. Jordan Weisman should be very happy with his baby and how happy it's made many of us.

Inner Sphere Wars

Now, I'm supposed to be introducing certain things in this new section, and in this issue you'll be treated to what I know about Inner Sphere Wars, which you can find at <http://www.comstaterminal.com>. ISW is a league, more than a league, up and coming. They are preparing, as we speak, for their Gladitorial release, which means you can fight in MechWarrior 4 gladiator style, whether it be one-on-one or more. By the end of the summer we should be seeing the Planetary release to the game which will complete the three parts of ISWs setup: Solaris, Gladitorial and Planetary.

Okay, to allay some of the confusion, here's the skinny. ISW is a self-contained-on-your-computer interface which will allow you to move around in the BattleTech universe, re-created by the ISW programming team in marvelous detail, and conduct business as a single MechWarrior or as part of a MechWarrior unit. You will have an individual bank account which will track your C-Bill earnings and life expenses, your computer will keep track of the condition of your 'mech(s) as well as where you are and what you're doing. By the time the planetary game is released you'll also be able to challenge, wager for or against yourself or someone else, and launch into a game of MechWarrior 4: Vengeance.

What makes this league different from any other league out there? Why do they have to use MechWarrior 4: Vengeance? What happened to EA launching their own updated version of Multi-Player BattleTech 3025?

All excellent questions, folks. What makes ISW different from other leagues is what is tracked and how it affects not only you but those around you. As in MPBT 3025 which I never, unfortunately, had the good fortune to play, strategy, tactics and logistical know-how will be crucial to how the game is played, indeed to winning. If you run out in the middle of a field with the express idea of killing everything you see, you and your team are going to bite it. However, if you use some real tactics and attempt to save your 'mechs while defeating the enemy, you'll have a much cooler time in ISW. This means you players, and not just the command staff, SHOULD be individually responsible for your conduct and how you treat your unit's 'mechs.

They are using MechWarrior 4: Vengeance because it's relatively current, it's readily available and Microsoft has granted them permission to use the source code from

the game to make the interface work. It means more money for Microsoft and a good beginning for ISW. Later on, as the game universe develops, the programmers of ISW may make their own version of the MechWarrior, and/or BattleTech, game for their clients. However, there has to be more ambition from the gaming community in general, and the BattleTech community in specific, to allow this change to come about.

Electronic Arts, as late as 1999, had planned to launch a new, updated, version of Multi-Player BattleTech (MPBT) into the gaming community (Kesmai's original baby). Their market research, however, suggested that –and this is most likely because of uncaring, untrained newbs in the gaming community– there was a lack of interest in current game-play circles for the current iterations of on-line BattleTech, aka MechWarrior and Mech Commander.

I can't say I disagree, but that's because we veterans –and I'm as guilty as anyone else– have failed to instill a sense of historical accuracy and pride into the newbs, who probably couldn't care anyway. So, the MechWarrior gaming community is going to hell in a handbasket on fire from re-entry heat, in other words pretty fast, and interest from veterans, especially old-timers like me, has fallen by the wayside as a result of a bunch of wise-acre kids who think they're better than anyone else but have no honor, and only want to play to kill. (Sorry about the run-on sentence there, folks; that soap-box keeps finding it's way under me for some unknown reason^ø).

At any rate, Inner Sphere Wars is already shaping up to be far better than MPBT ever was and, perhaps it will be inviting to the veterans to get away from the little kids (and you don't have to be below the age of 20 to be a little kid) who only want to kill, maim and destroy and could care less about logistics, strategy and tactics. On the other hand, if little Timmy gets money from mommy and daddy to come and play the game, maybe the veterans will pick themselves up and do the right thing in teaching the newbs what it's really all about instead of allowing them to just stride right over the vets.

Do I have to have cable to play? How much will this cost? What are my responsibilities? Where do I sign up?

No cable. All you need are the basic requirements of the MechWarrior 4 computer game.

It has been discussed, but I'm sure is subject to change, to charge all members of ISW \$10.00(US) per month for the right to use and play in the interface. I agree wholeheartedly with this price because there are many other games out there which have had half this amount of work done which charge more (see text-only games). Not only that, but these guys are really busting their tails, living real lives on top of doing the programming for this, to complete this on a loose but substantive time table.

The responsibilities you will have in the game are bound to be relatively low when you first start out. The five houses and the beginning five, official-only-please, mercenary units have already been chosen and set up for the most part. The original house and merc rulers from the original MPBT will remain the house and merc rulers, with a few possible exceptions. Don't be disappointed, this has been done on purpose so some modicum of the BattleTech universe according to ISW can be preserved. This is going to be both a hindrance and an aid to ISW as a whole. Personally, I think the aid will be more important in that you will have the right people in the right places who will do the right things to keep not only their units, but ISW as well, running like a top; primarily because many of them are BattleTech old-timers like me and they actually care what happens to ISW and their individual units.

However, as you move and grow within the unit, proving yourself an able commander or logistics individual, you'll be granted higher rank and more responsibilities to perform. If you don't want the responsibilities and simply want to play, I'm sure you can do that as well.

As far as signing up to be in Inner Sphere Wars, go to <http://www.comstaterminal.com> and take a good look around.

There is more information contained in a well-written interview at BattleTech Mod Productions here:

<http://www.battletechmodproductions.com/smag/smag05/smag05.shtml> . I hope you enjoy this article and get excited about ISW as much as I did?

My feelings about ISW... To be quite honest with you, I'm not entirely sure EA was wrong in their assessment about the drop-off in interest in the on-line BattleTech games. However, if they were, indeed, wrong then ISW not only has a chance but if word

spreads quickly enough and to enough circles, it MAY pull people away from pay games like Fighter Ace, on-line strategies and even from games like EverQuest, Asheron's Call 2 and Star Wars Galaxies. Again, this could be good for the BattleTech community, and my best hopes and wishes go to ComStar and his team of top flight programmers for completion and implementation of this excellent service.

On a final opinionated note: if there would be some way to get all of the various league heads, say ISW and War! Online, to agree to form one massive multi-player league which allowed the utilization of multiple BattleTech and support gaming platforms for space, infantry and 'mech combat, that would be the absolute best someone like me could ever hope to be able to play. Allow multiple gaming platforms per unit based on minimums for that unit to carry the game and then allow them to duke it out in a realistic fashion, ie- borders do NOT change based on the win or loss of a single planet deeper into someone's space, program a map like ISW is doing with the combined functionality of multiple league maps, and allow for a complete economy, not just combat and movement of forces for combat, and you would have the ultimate killer league. One league would do the trick if some fat heads could be set aside for the greater good of the community. Imagine units with enough members to actually form a regiment, or cluster, if all personnel were to stand in ranks for a count.

Muwahahahahaah!

~The Wolf

MekTek MekPak

Recently Argent Fire was able to have an interview with the individuals producing one of the next big things for MechWarrior 4: Mercenaries, the MekTek MekPak. This Pak will introduce several new 'mechs, maps and a few weapons to the new which are part of BattleTech Lore, but have not been used or seen since MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries was popular. AFs questions will be in italics and, unless stated otherwise, Whitefeather's (the PR guy for MekTek; aka MT here) answers will be in regular text. Without further adieu, the interview.

AF: Rumor has it that you may be considering porting your MekPak back down to the level Vengeance is at; is this true? Why would you do that?

MT: There are no plans to make the MekPak work with any older versions of MW4. It is being built for MW4: Mercenaries and will only work with MW4: Mercenaries. This is partially due to the amount of work and time it'd require to make another patch for each version of MW4 and that Mercs is built slightly different but enough that'd almost mean we'd have to do everything again.

AF: Is this expansion project meant for community download or will you be charging for this? You would be well within your rights to charge, but is your aim to make money with this, or enhance the BattleTech community through your contribution, or both?

MT: The MekPak will be available for download for free, as we have no intention of charging for it. This project is being done for three basic reasons. 1) Many of us simply enjoy this type of work. 2) Many of us will enjoy these changes just as much as the rest of the community, as many of us also play MW4 regularly. 3) Because we like how it affects the community and enjoy the feed back we receive.

As for the legality of charging? We'd probably have to jump through a few too many more hoops than we like before that'd happen.

AF: Kudo's to Verybad and PuG for their excellent artistry and attention to detail on the 'mechs introduced in your own review, particularly the Marauder. How many man-hours did it take to produce all of the various angles, panels and colors for the Marauder? And the other 'mechs you intend to release?

MT: **VeryBad**: Modeling each mech only takes a few hours, texturing them can take a much longer time however, I'm working on mech #8 right now in fact!

AF: For the appreciation of our readers, how many estimated man-hours would you put on the entire project, all individuals who have worked on this included?

MT: This is really a difficult question to answer. It really depends on what you mean by man-hours. Jehosephat would say it's taken us a couple of years to get to this point. That is of poking around at the game and studying it through our various other projects.

As for this project itself? Well we began this specific project in probably late May or even early June. Everything made specifically for this project was done after then.

The above question will give you the man-hours for the models. I believe it takes just as much

time to get the model into the game properly as it does to create it. Though as we develop better ways to do this, it becomes much quicker. I've seen one day turn around time on mechs getting into the game once the model is received. That is compared to our first mechs which took days or even up to a week to get proper.

This also does not count out the time spent discussing various aspects, each mech, weapon, etc. This in itself would equal days of man-hours.

VeryBad: I've put in a few hundred hours so far.

EvilCow: 50 hours on writing/ debugging/enhancing various tools. Many, many hours on the weapons spreadsheet to find the best balance possible before the beta test. I don't know exactly how many hours but it is something I do every day since project start. Less than 10 hours physically adding weapons inside the game. This project shares my free time with another important MekTek product, the MW4-Monitor.

AF: In your review we have seen six of the eight 'mechs to be produced for the MekPak expansion: Avatar, UrbanMech, Blood Asp, Marauder, WarHammer and Strider, and a seventh has been introduced individually in the Stalker. Seven of the eight have been introduced and all of them from FASA Technical Readouts; would you care to elaborate on the eighth 'mech to be added to the MekPak?

MT: The eighth mech is one which we originally named the Lion, but I believe will be renamed to the Ares due to an online poll we placed. Yes, it is a design of our own creation. This is really just something for ourselves because we felt it'd be fun to do and we know some of the community will find it nice to have something brand new as well. However, this mech will be designed to fit into the game as seamlessly as possible and will be just be like any other mech in the game.

Here's a little blurb on the story VeryBad came up for its design:

"Based on the Bushwacker and the Cougar. The Lion was almost completed when several key scientists working on its design were captured in a Trial of Possession for the program by Clan Novacat. The Novacats finished the engineering portion of the program on Irece, and the Mech is now entering service with them. The Jade Falcons still have copies of the design, but it is not in production yet with them.

"The Lion combines mobility with firepower as an effective strike mech. It is as mobile as any medium, more than most, and still packs a heavy punch due to its heavy lasers and advanced missiles. It sacrifices long range on the primary variant for in close striking ability and enhanced mobility. Warriors in the field are expected to favor this mech for trials, as its capabilities exceed other mediums to date. However commands should be careful to not overestimate the mech, for while it possesses the speed of a lighter mech, and firepower equivalent to many models heavier than it, its armor is not any thicker than other mediums, and the primary variant is quite vulnerable to excessive overheating. Trinary and Binary Commanders with this mech in their command are expected to review its capabilities with mechwarriors assigned to it thoroughly in order to avoid wasting valuable clan resources."

VeryBad: 8th mech is indeed the Ares, its been somewhat controversial because its not a Microsoft/Fasa/ Hasbro/FanPro mech, but I think it will win people over 😊

AF: On the MekTek web site I have found and downloaded a killer screensaver of 'mechs which have obviously been re-done in startling detail with very realistic environments and poses. One of the 'mechs I was unable to identify; it is blocky with two large barrels on the right side and one on the left and is pictured several times in the screensaver. Is this to be the final 'mech added to the MekPak, and can you tell us anything about it?

MT: I believe what you are referring to is a screensaver containing both work by myself (WhiteFeather) and another of our staff, Zakua. Mostly it is some of our older stuff as the screensaver has been around for some time. The mech in question, I believe is one of Zakua's creations which he designated the Argus MKII. Something he designed off of one of the pictures in the MW4: Vengeance manual... or at least got the idea for it from that.

There are no current plans to add this mech into the game, as there are no plans to add any other custom mech into the game other than the Ares above. However, this does not mean that it is not possible, but I really wouldn't know at this time. I can say that it'd likely have to go through some changes in order to work with the game.

AF: Why did you choose to add only eight 'mechs to the MekPak?

MT: Only? No one said only. We're just starting with 8 because it felt like a good number at the time. =-)

AF: With the reintroduction of the WarHammer into the MechWarrior saga of games through your MekPak, was there a sense of nostalgia concerning the MechWarrior 2 games which inspired you to bring it back? Was it simply because the WarHammer is a killer 'mech? Or both?

MT: Both. We like the mech, its a cool mech, and we know it'll be a popular mech. Also, this may be the last best chance for anyone to use this mech in a MechWarrior game.

Out of the selection pot, this is one that just had to go in. Both of them for that matter.

AF: One of the primary concerns of the BattleTech community, if not the MechWarrior community, is that weapons are balanced and as close to correct as possible for the game. Will the weapons of the MekPak be balanced according to the statistics of the original BattleTech game weapons, if not dead-on stats-wise? (ie- Will a PPC which does ten points and a Clan ERPPC which does fifteen points in the board game remain accurate, according to that ratio, for the MekPak?)

MT: We will not be changing the game to follow BTech stats. Briefly this was discussed and it was quickly decided that we would not.

At the moment we're simply trying to add more to the game, not make a new one. Once we finish this project we may go on to mod the game more heavily and make a BattleTech mod or who knows what else. At this time, however, there are absolutely no plans to do this now or in the future.

Some existing weapon stats may be tweaked, however. This' d really only be on weapons hardly used such as Long Toms and MRMs. Also there may be some almost insignificant fractional changes to weapons like pulse lasers. Yet, these are still all mostly experimental and there is a lot to be determined in beta testing.

AF: It has been said that you're sticking as close to the original BattleMech statistics given from the various sourcebooks and Technical Readouts, produced by FASA Corporation before it's demise, as possible; is this true? Further, is it true for ALL of the 'mechs in the game, or just the ones you're re-introducing?

MT: As was said above, at this time there are no plans to make a new game out of MW4: Mercenaries. We are designing the mechs to emulate how the DEVine (original DEV team) originally designed their's to fit into the game. That is, we take the TRO stats and come up with the basic design and try to determine a roll for it to fill in Mercs then tweak it to fit into the game as seamlessly as possible.

VeryBad: I think the Mechwarrior game stands on its own, it' s not BattleTech, and BattleTech numbers don' t work in a real time environment. We' re going for feel rather than slavishly adhering to a turn based game.

EvilCow: The TRO is a starting point, everything will be balanced according to current game stats. The top priority is to balance weapons and mechs for a real time game.

AF: I have been a BattleTech fan for a very long time and my opinion concerning MechWarrior 4 is that it is Heavy Gear with the names, textures and designs of BattleTech slammed together. The 'mechs do not have the proper speeds, weapons do not have proper statistics and armor does not have correct values by the ton or half-ton. IMHO this makes for a VERY unbalanced game. For those MechWarrior players and, more importantly, the old BattleTech players who have fallen away from the game for the very reasons mentioned above, what are you doing to secure the future of BattleTech in the way of play balance and true King of the Battlefield status for large 'mechs like the Atlas and Daishi?

MT: MechWarrior games have always been deviants from BattleTech in their final outcome. Even when they tried to follow closely, they did not come across correctly. If you look at MW3 which actually follows the stats very close, you find that the kings of the battle field are not as you would expect. ER small lasers, UAC20, Medium Mechs, SSRM... not right at all. This was partially due to poor net code, but also due to poor translation from a turn based game into a real time game. Things like how well a mech handles are not really defined in BattleTech in terms that can be translated into realistic measurements. Thus light mechs could stop on a dime in MW3 and make sharp turns rather than slow down at a slow pace and have to always make wide turns while moving or stop almost completely to make a sharp turn then take a minute to get up to speed again. MW2 had issues with Jump Jets where you could literally fly for extended periods of time. And what does happen when a mech loses its leg?

These issues are still there. Partially due to the technology and partially again due to a lack in realistic terms to translate a turn based game into a real time game. A project to try and do this within the confines of the MW4 engine could take a long time and would even have the potential of having as many flaws as the previous incarnations of MW. Right now, we want to give and add to something we know works and has a following.

As it stands, our only plans are to add more content to MW4: Mercenaries, to a game that many people love for itself. Any changes we may or may not do would come after this as a separate project.

VeryBad: It' s the most balanced of the Mechwarrior games to date, just look at the server stats to see that while there are favorite weapons still, they aren' t as thinly spread as in MW2, MW3. Quite frankly, BattleTech, the PnP game is highly unbalanced, you can make the perfect mech with Clan Large Pulse lasers, and a Targeting Computer, in level one play, you can beat anyone with medium lasers. A well balanced game allows players to win in a variety of ways; Mechwarrior does this, it will allow even more ways to win after our expansion.

EvilCow: What are proper statistics? It would be fun to have all weapons reload in the same time like on the board game. In a real time game there are far more variables than in the board game so the BT board game values do not apply. Few things: reload times, projectile travel time, impact knock, visibility, lack of random spread (nobody wants random spread in a FPS), lock time for missiles, lag effects, maneuvering skills and so on.

AF: Are you making the 'mech design portion of the MekPak to resemble what actual BattleMech design, circa MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries and MechWarrior 3, should look like?

MT: We' re designing the mechs to fit in with the designs already in MW4.

VeryBad: This is Mechwarrior 4, not Mechwarrior 2 or Mechwarrior 3. I don' t understand how those are considered what mech design "should look like" and MW4 isn' t.

AF: With the release of the MekPak are we going to see a new campaign setting for single players? If so, can you give us any of the story-line you're intending to use, or are using, to move that campaign along?

MT: No, we have no plans to extend on the single player mode of MW4: Mercenaries. Despite whether or not it' s even possible, it' d be a project of a massive scale in and of itself. Not to mention it' d be composed of files of very large size and they would add up quickly.

If you are looking for campaigns or even maps in general you should really look to groups like Alpha Strike or MercStorm who specialize in such things.

AF: One of the major problems FASA Interactive sees in the MechWarrior series of games, and the reason why they are not, yet, producing MechWarrior 5 or anything along those lines, is that the single-player campaigns and on-line play tends to stagnate after a while unless new maps and campaigns can be introduced to keep players interested. To this end they released a statement explaining that the MechWarrior franchise was not dead but they would have to come up with new and interesting ways of keeping players hooked into the BattleTech universe. My first question on this topic is: what will the MekPak introduce to keep apathy in the MechWarrior community at bay?

MT: You like hard questions, don' t you?

Anyway, since we can' t predict the future, all I can say is that by adding new content, it will give the community something new to experiment with, play with, and just check out. The best part is that it won't require a huge download. A hefty one, but you' ll get all this content at price of what it' d take to download one large map or less (give or take... hard to determine actual file size at this time. Currently our Alpha is 11.3 MB I believe).

This will be enough to tide people over for sometime. Just think about how much time you spent on each Mech Pack checking out the new mechs and weapons. How enthusiastic they are taken and how well they are incorporated into the community is really up to the players. If you try to make use of them and support the work, then the effects will be good and fuller. It's really all up to you.

VeryBad: new mechs and weapons. Apathy will come back within a week of our release I am sure 😊

AF: Next: What are your thoughts, opinions and feelings concerning FASAs statement about that apathy, and what do you believe can be done about it?

MT: I am not so certain apathy is the correct term. If anything I believe it is apathy from the developer' s end that translates into what appears to be apathy in ours.

An example would be when Vengeance first came out, they continued to release maps based off of existing terrains in the game. These were accepted and are still used to this day (with some help from us

=-) *shameless plug*). There are still plenty of unused terrains and parts of terrains in Vengeance and even more with Black Knight and even more with Mercs. The files sizes for these maps, based on stock terrain, are not large and are easy to set up. If they had continued to release them, there would still be demand for them. This is even evident in the fact that NBT has a map pack made by MercStorm using stock Mercs terrain and is used widely in that league and on their open servers.

Beyond that, MW4 is limited by its technology. Custom maps are not widely accepted because of their immense file size, lack of quality in the tools publicly released, and MW4 doesn' t have an internal system to handle them. This goes with game types, skins, sounds, or anything else that can add content to the game.

So I don' t see it as apathy on the player' s side but as a lack of support from the developers. If it was apathy the mech packs would never have sold, nor would have Mercs.

AF: I sit corrected, Whitefeather. Thank you for clearing that up.

AF: Finally: What suggestions would you make to FASA, Cyberlore, MicroSoft and any other MechWarrior and BattleTech franchise companies that would allow them to advance the game and keep their players happy?

MT: You must understand a few things from Microsoft' s side first. It is easy to say they should

make the game as easily modifiable as Half Life or Unreal Tournament. However, Microsoft is limited by their original contracts to make these games. By law they can only allow certain content in the game and they are arguably liable for anything added to the game with their tools.

However, this does not mean they can't do nothing. First off, they need to devise new technology and build the game to support these things. Make maps that are a quarter their file size and make the game automatically download and install them on the fly. Do the same for game types... instead of just seeing "Custom Game Type", display what it is. Improve the scripting code. Add better server controls and functions.

They could even go so far as to regularly add mechs to download without creating incompatibility. Or if they don't want to do it, give the tools to someone like MekTek and have us add new mechs and they could officially support them.

There's a lot they could do. When they say they don't have the technology it makes me wonder as every other game I see is already doing this at its most basic levels.

AF: Concerning the current time-lines of Classic BattleTech and MechWarrior: Dark Age, tell me which you prefer and why?

MT: Personally I like the classic story line better. It feels more involved and more real. The Dark Ages doesn't feel the same to me. BattleTech always felt like a sort of medieval time to me, so having a dark age on top of that doesn't make sense. That and those industry mechs are just corny. The designs of those saws and such don't seem realistic at all, even for what they were supposedly originally designed to do. Just rubs me wrong.

However, I know some of our staff do enjoy Dark Ages a lot. Both XFracture and MechTech are the founders of MechXF which is a Dark Ages resource and news site. They've done some pretty cool stuff for the game.

VeryBad: I like the 3025 era. Clan invasion was fun too.

AF: If you were to make a movie concerning the BattleTech franchise, and based on your previous answer, what would you do with the movie in the way of story, animation, cinematography, etc.?

MT: Wow... let's see. I'm probably not the best person to ask this question as I've never followed the Battle Tech story line very closely.

I'd probably baset on the invasion of the Clans, right around when they first attack. Play both sides of the story from the Clan perspective and the IS so that you get a little feel of both. I'd try not to encompass the entire universe and story line in a single movie, but let the feel of something much larger show through. I'd also be careful not to get to caught up in a single unit or person though so that you don't feel it's too small.

I think live action could be done, but it'd have to be a huge budget film. I would not want it to be anime because I'm not a fan and it's just over done if you ask me. However, computer animation could be really cool. Just needs the right look and feel.

Verybad: pron! bowchika bow wow!

AF: Hehe, do what?! ☺

AF: What are your feelings on the current status, as you see it, of the BattleTech/MechWarrior community? Is there anything you would change to make it better?

MT: I got involved in the MechWarrior community when I started playing MW2: Mercs. It was much smaller then and the players were typically much more involved with BattleTech lore. There were unspoken rules that everyone followed because of flaws in the game (such as you wouldn't shoot at a mech until it was ready to fire back, or wouldn't abuse certain bugs like Jump Jet tapping). With a much larger community these rules go out the window or become a little ridiculous (no chain firing????). However the MechWarrior community is still unique. No other game that I know of has leagues like MW does. Sure other games have a few ladders but none as many as we nor as involved. And no other game has anything like our planetary leagues, period.

The only thing I can say is that in future MW games I'd hope that the developers remember this and support what these leagues do. I know when MW4: Mercenaries came out many leagues were facing some difficulties because of lack of support in the game for what they do.... No norespawn, not many maps and all were small, etc.

VeryBad: The Mechwarrior community is too afraid of change, and yet they want new things (eg. they want new weapons, but they don't, they want new mechs, but they don't.) The Mechwarrior community is extremely conservative in relation to change.

AF: Are there other, third parties involved in this project and what level of continuing support have they offered once the MekPak is released?

MT: No third parties have been directly involved in this project. All work has been done by ourselves. However, everyone we've contacted in regards to this project has given us kind words.

AF: Will there be a centralized place where players can come for support once the game is released and also for new maps, 'mechs, etc.?

MT: Everything MekTek creates and links to our mirrors will be available through our site and our forums are always open for support.

AF: Will you keep the chassis coming for older 'mechs, to be introduced as updates and patches, such as was done when MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries was popular?

MT: We have more than 8 mechs planned, if that is what you are asking.

AF: Is there any way folks in the MechWarrior community can contribute to the design of this MekPak if they wish?

MT: Directly? Probably not. However, we do read our forums and various forums throughout the community. If you are discussing an idea and we see it and like it we may implement it. Submitting ideas to us directly doesn't do much good though.

Other than that, we plan on doing a thorough beta test on both bugs and game play issues. When the time comes we will release information on how to become a beta tester.

AF: Do you have anything you would like to add in explanation concerning the MekPak, MekTek or any other related subject for the BattleTech/MechWarrior Community?

MT: Just remember we're doing this when we can and as we can. That and don't put too much in stats we put out just yet. Everything is subject to change and this is why we try not to tell you our plans in advance... they may change.

AF: Thank you all very much for your time.

This interview was originally planned to be done in two or three rounds of question and counter-question. Time and circumstances have taken that from Argent Fire so we could, instead, get the best in BattleTech community news out to you.

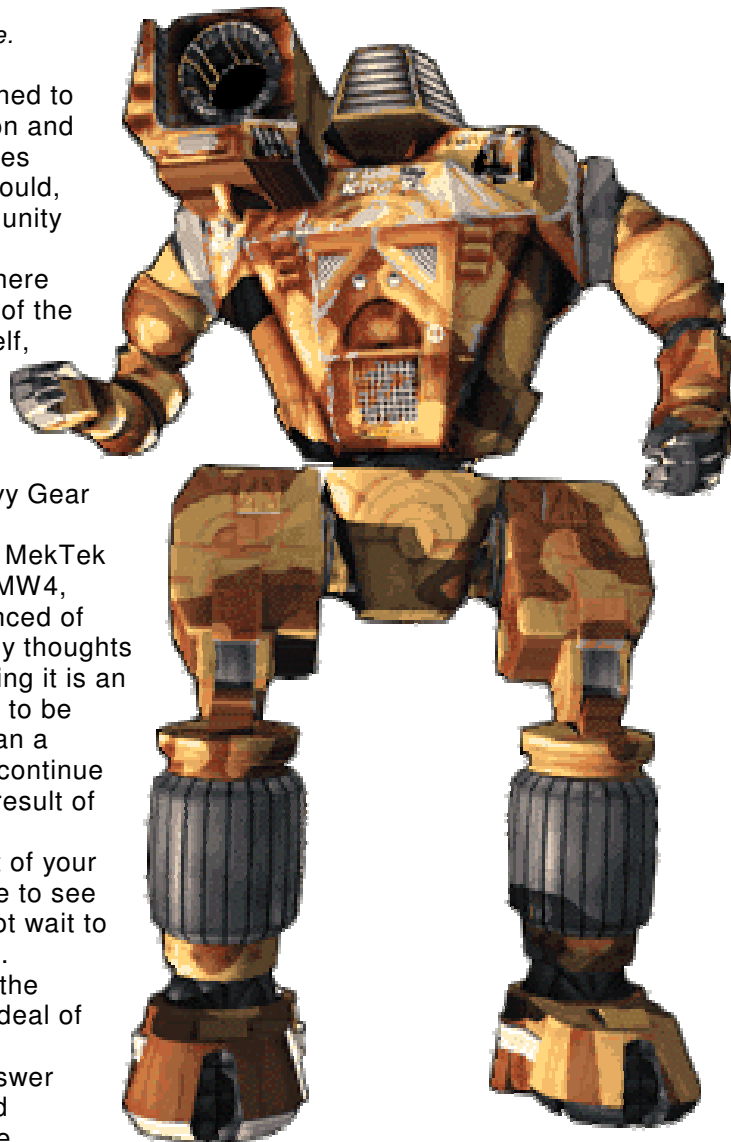
So you all may be made aware, there are still 'subversive' elements in and out of the MechWarrior community, to include myself, who still stridently disagree that MechWarrior 4 is even remotely close to a decent version of BattleTech, and that if making the game more balanced requires that it become a version of Heavy Gear in and of itself, it is not worth playing.

Still, I see where the members of MekTek are coming from in their arguments that MW4, especially Mercenaries, is the most balanced of the MW games to date. Perhaps even my thoughts and feelings towards the game, considering it is an FPS, with many more degrees of physics to be considered than a board game, rather than a Tactical Board Game, can be swayed to continue in the BattleTech community as a direct result of their arguments for the game.

Good work, folks! I hope the rest of your development comes easily and we're able to see this work of art soon. Personally, I cannot wait to get my hands on a stock Marauder, hehe.

A massive thank you goes out to the MekTek guys because they took a great deal of time out of their busy schedules and development, out of personal time, to answer the myriad of questions I asked here, and moreso because of their hard work on the MekPak. It is wonderfully appreciated. ☺

~The Wolf



BATTLETALES

This section is supposed to be for personal or combat short stories submitted by you, the fans of BattleTech. These stories can be continued between issues, if necessary, and if there become too many parts to an individual story, or more than three issues worth of one story, an anthology will be started.

When writing your stories, please try and think about how your characters are carrying out their dialogue? An exorbitant amount of blunt swearing, or any swearing for that matter, will be edited to pieces, to where it's no longer your own story, or will be rejected with notes to tell you to change the story if you still want to get it published.

That being said, I'm gonna begin a story here based on Jeremiah Wolf's training at the New Avalon Military Academy between 2980 and 2984. Hopefully my writing skills are as good now as they used to be. Why do all military story series begin in training someone? Hehe

“Opposition Forces” By Paul L. Emerson aka The Wolf

New Avalon Military Academy
New Avalon, Federated Suns
August 21, 2983; Local Summer

“GET UP LADIES!!!” an extraordinarily rough voice screamed into the blackness of the excellent dream Jeremiah was having as he laid in his ‘rack’ in the Officer’s Bay at NAMA, the top Military Academy in the Inner Sphere.

“I DON’T HEAR ANYONE STIRRING, SISTERS!!!” the same grating voice pounded on Jerry’s nerves and made his heart beat an extremely fast tattoo. He knew he had to stir, but the dream seemed to have the best of him at the moment, so real-world movement at all was nearly impossible.

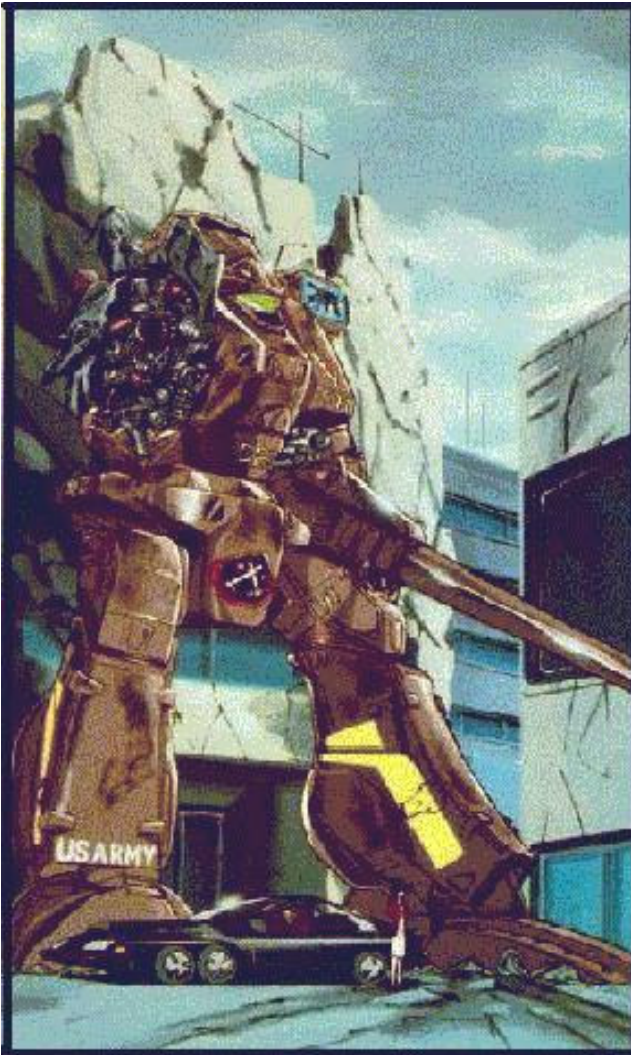
Of course the Drill Sergeant didn’t care if he had any motor function or not. Jerry was falling suddenly and slammed into a rock face somewhere but, by God, he was now awake. The Drill’s boot laces were hard against his face as he lay there unmoving, barely identifying the laces before he attempted to turn himself over to face the ‘old man’, Drill Sergeant Clement D. Brown, the worst nightmare any person could ever desire not to face.

“Wolf, how many times am I going to tell you to get up, boy!?” It wasn’t actually a question, Jerry realized, but more of a command, one Jerry endeavored to obey with all the zeal he could pour into his muscular frame. He was young, square-jawed and rock-hard muscled as he drew himself to the best position of attention he could possibly muster. Brown’s face was the perfect representation of what used to be known, on Terra in the late 20th early 21st century, as a dog face. The problem was, this morning the dog face began to look meaner by the split second as Jerry’s still aching body refused to allow him to stand completely upright.

Unfortunately today was going to be a very hard one for him, one he had paid for last night with six too many beers at the Officer’s Club in the non-training and indoctrination section of NAMA. Today would represent his pinnacle in ignorance thus far and Drill Sergeant Carrie pointed that out with a night-stick to the back of his thighs. Jerry’s body decided to work at that point and he straightened completely up. Now, if he could just get his eyes to completely focus and keep his stomach in check after last night’s rare steak and Lyran-style fries, along with the gallon of beer he’d drunk, then all would be well, except for the PT he was about to be put through.

Brown turned away from Jeremiah Wolf and Drill Sergeant Lamar J. K. Carrie chuckled openly because he knew what was coming next. Unfortunately, so did the rest of the crew in the sixty man bay, as evidenced by the mild groaning even Jerry could hear before Drill Brown even opened his mouth to bellow:

“Cadet Lieutenant Jeremiah Wolf, here,” and for emphasis he pointed his beating stick into Jerry’s chest, pushing him back against Drill Carrie, which was bad news in itself, “has a difficult time getting out of bed in the morning. His breath wreaks of alcohol



and O-Club steak and fries, which I happen to enjoy on a weekly basis, and he can't even seem to stand up straight!

"Cadet Lieutenant Jeremiah Wolf has cost all of you the next weekend leave we wanted to give you because of this classes overall performance thus far. However, your performance is now in question and, after my report to the Kommandant, I'm sure you may have to forfeit your weekend leaves until you get your PHASE BACK! Yes, ladies and gentlemen," Drill Sergeant Marcia C. Warren had been standing next to the achievement standard for Wolf's class the entire time, and she yanked off the Red Phase banner from the eight foot tall standard, replacing the flag-laden stick in its' stand afterward, as Drill Brown continued, "you have lost Red Phase. That means you're in second, or White, phase all over again!" More groaning sounded from the thirty-eight people left in the bay after nearly 32 months of intensive study, training and testing as the Drill Sergeants went into action in unison.

Two hours later, the floor drenched, breakfast gone and tired MechWarrior Officer Candidates all over the place, stretched to the four

winds just for the coolness of the tile there, the Drills left. Wolf's class had been properly smoked and, if they were in the same shape he was in, they were starving and in a great deal of pain. Unfortunately, lunch would not be for another four hours and, by that time Wolf, achy and sore as he was, felt sure he would be dead.

He raised his head enough to look around and see if anyone were retrieving their NAMA class knife to off him. Instead, he saw a bunch of his classmates laying there puffing so hard they couldn't move.

Then the laughter began.

He had heard this kind of laughter before, but there was no maliciousness or hatred to it, just good hardy laughter and, one by one, the rest of the class joined in on the joke, however private it was. Jerry had been a slow starter in the class, although he was getting better, really. Gathering all of the strength he possibly could he sat up and leaned over the top of Derek Martin's forehead, sweat dripping into the other man's hair.

Derek was a huge man with the disposition of a teddy bear and combat prowess that belied his size; he and Jerry had become best friends, and he was laughing, too. Jerry didn't get it, however, and he attempted to get Derek's attention to ask why everyone was laughing, but the big man could not make himself stop. When he finally did get the man to calm down a bit, Derek answered him:

"It's no joke, Jerry. Everyone's laughing because this is a huge game, man. All a big mind-screw. You have to take all of this with a grain of salt; a mind game."

"But, I got tossed out of my rack by Carrie, straight onto Brown's boots, which you know are his pets..." Derek rolled over and smiled widely,

"It doesn't matter, man. I got rolled out of bed, too, and so did half the class before you got hit. We watched you hit the boot laces, and we know that you're not the

only one Brown picked on; however, you only saw what happened after you woke up, not before. Brown's got a hard-on for you, son," with this he patted Jerry on the shoulder, "like you're his pet or somethin'. Funny, though, you don't have the floppy ears I always pictured a dog havin'," and with that the class began to giggle and guffaw again.

"So, no one's mad at me?" Jerry asked as he looked around.

"Jerry," Sam Waterston began, "You have got to be the biggest elephant-eared dope in the Sphere. You truly are a dummy, aren't you?" Jerry hung his head at the haranguing and shook off what Sammy was saying.

"I only look as dumb as you are, Sammy," said completely without malice, which made people laugh that much harder.

Cadet Captain Mark Hardenberg was the first off the floor a moment later and began to call for everyone to start working to get the bay cleaned up, showers to be taken and preparation to be done for marching to the 'mech simulators for that day. Within twenty-three minutes, which was the length of time left of what the Drill's had given the class to get to formation, the floor had been patted clean, the shine returned in the spots that needed it with the buffer and everyone in ranks dressed in coolant vests and NAMA Fitness Training shorts and tops, with practice neural helmets under their left arms.

Drill Sergeant Brown took the report, once the unit was called to attention, from Hardenberg, and Brown subsequently turned and, saluting for effect, gave the report to Captain Jerome Fathers. The Captain was anything but a father, had no children and used the training classes that passed through as punching bags for whatever anger he had. Something about being left to a training unit while the Third Succession War was being fought.

"You may release them to travel, IN FORMATION, to the BattleMech Simulator station at Pogogi Hill, Drill Sergeant Brown." The Captain had been very quiet, except for the part about remaining in formation, and Drill Brown saluted, the Captain returning his salute, to release the Drill Sergeant to his duty of getting the training class to Pogogi Hill.

The problem about going to Pogogi was that the class had been scheduled at Sim Building One, a few blocks away, for their training. Instead, Pogogi was five miles away and, at a forced march in the already eighty-five degree temperatures, they would have to skip lunch or carry an MRE, or Meal Ready to Eat with them. It was definitely turning out to be a rough day.

New Avalon Military Academy, Pogogi Hill BattleMech Simulator Three

New Avalon, Federated Suns

August 21, 2983; Local Summer

Jerry Wolf stood in the steadily rising heat of the early morning wondering, for the millionth time, why he had come to NAMA in the first place. 'Oh, yeah, I keep forgetting, grandpa got me an appointment here and dad forced me onto the DropShip. Duh!!!' and he nearly slapped himself in the forehead.

That action would have been bad as the Simulator Building Three Pogogi Hill Drill Instructor charged through his safety brief with scan interest in whether or not anyone caught anything. Besides, Jerry and the rest of his classmates had heard the same speech from Sim One's Drill a thousand times in the last nine months. Don't walk under the simulator pods, don't touch any moving parts, don't stare over the Drill Sergeants shoulder, keep your back against the wall and your butt on the floor while your classmates are fighting the phantom enemies. No horseplay, no foul language, keep silent and still.

Today, however, was far different from other days he had participated in the simulators. Today he was going into combat with eleven others of his classmates; today they had computer-generated and controlled AI targets to shoot at and destroy. The difference between AI before and AI today was that the safety lockouts and special instructions were being removed. Jerry was excited and highly motivated, if yet tired from the morning smoking by the Drills and then the forced march to get here. Lunch was being provided off the tailgate of a hover transport but would be cold by the time he finished his run with his 'company' in the sims.

The next part of the briefing was actually for a mission and would be similar to what Armed Forces Federated Suns officers would get before an engagement with any opposing force, so Jerry listened intently:

“Upon primary enemy contact, which means your Magnetics Scanners, Infra-red Detectors and/or your Battle Computer are going nuts, the good officer will ensure that his best people are toward the enemy and his worst, or not so great,” the Drill nodded, looking in the direction of certain cadets, “people will be in the back for support. Fan out and allow your enemy to believe you’re going to attempt to surround them. Once they start trying to turn a flank, and it doesn’t matter which one it is, close the trap and meet them head-on.

“Some of you will attempt alternate tactics and that’s fine as long as the tactic works. If you do something unusual and get screwed up in the simulator we’re going to smoke you and your entire lance. Am I understood?”

“Hoo-RAH!!!” sounded from the collective crew of classmates. Once the Drill had completed his safety and mission briefings he began immediately to assign teams. Jerry was going to be on Cadet Captain Hardenberg’s Recon Lance as second to Derek, whose points were about eight above Jerry’s on the list. He was assigned a Jenner while Derek came equipped with a formidable Panther. Both ‘mechs massed thirty-five tons, but the Particle Projection Cannon mounted on the Panther made for great long distance. Derek could make the enemy mad before Jerry and the other Recon Lance mates could even see them and that wasn’t cool because Derek was hot tempered and too eager to get himself killed. In fact, Derek had died so often in simulators that the only reason he was ahead of Jerry in points was a result of his excellent marksmanship. On average Derek used large weapons of all kinds to hit all sizes of targets and normally score a kill first try. Unfortunately, once the rest of the enemy lance spotted the assailant, they would come after Derek with a vengeance and he couldn’t keep his ‘mech standing upright after moderate to near-heavy damage to a single body location, any location. That normally made for a quick simulated death for Derek and Jerry would have to take over or, otherwise, step in to fill his place.

Jerry hoped today would be different.

The first ‘company’ to participate against the simulated enemy got wasted within four minutes time. Weights and classes were matched evenly, the ‘company’ had an opportunity to configure and get used to the configurations of their ‘mechs before entering the arena of battle, and then they simply got wasted. The first sign they were going to lose came when the ‘Captain’ of the ‘company’ couldn’t get her ‘Lieutenant Lance Leaders’ to agree on a plan of action. She wanted to try something different and they were afraid of getting smoked. Before they could even fire off a shot in anger the AI dropped on them like ravening wolves and ate them up like soup sandwiches. Oh, the individuals who were good at shooting and driving gave their best, although they overheated in panic fire and lost footing when multiple AI ‘mechs wolf-packed them. The ‘officers’ were the next to go because they had the larger ‘mechs, hence greater firepower. Finally, the rest of the ‘company’ fell back in disarray and were destroyed running like cowards.

After the unsuccessful run of the first ‘company’ it was time for Cadet Captain Hardenberg to get his company up and ready. Some maintenance was yet to be performed on the pods where hot-shot stupid pilots had tried to juke and jive their way around the battlefield, but that would be completed within the next several minutes and it was time to get seated and ready to rumble. From several feet away Jerry was able to smell the stench of a thousand cadets before him sitting in the sim pod he was about to get into.

“Vamanos,” Derek tried to tell Jerry in very broken Spanish as he hit him on the shoulder. Jerry never understood why Derek did that before each mission along with giving his best homey face, but Jerry felt that was his way of psyching himself up for ‘mech combat and why he always hit the battlefield a touch on the overconfident side, and died.

“Yeah, yeah,” Jerry threw back at him along with a look of disgust at having to use this, obviously, outdated simulator which stunk like it had aged a thousand years and maintained every single musty, nasty and sweaty smell which had ever lingered in its’ direction. He looked back from his friend to the pod and wished he’d thought of something smell-good he could have thrown in there to have explode all over the place. However, he also knew he would be adding his own sweat to the sweat which had accompanied the simulator for at least fifty years, and somehow that made things a little bit better to tolerate.

He sat down in the command couch of the simulator and placed the small electrode studded leather helmet on his head. He worked the coolant line from the floor catch through his vest loops and into the top of his vest, just below the collar and raised goose-bumps as the coolant immediately began to flow through the coolant jacket he'd been issued upon entering NAMA. Next came the commo-net wires he would plug into the right side of the leather mock neural-helmet. Static hissed and popped for a half-second, nearly deafening him, and then he heard all manner of excited voices talking about how things were going to work, ideas for what to do better than the Drill Instructor had suggested. For a split second Jerry believed that he was already missing the fight; however, the Drill came over the commo and told everyone:

"Shut your pie-holes and listen up!" A few more seconds of hurried conversation went on and then silence filled the air. "Make sure your coolant lines are secure. Heaters are built into the floor which are not like the new pansy simulators you've been driving for the last nine months. This heat will kill you if you're not secured properly, just like in real 'mech combat, boys and girls. As well, the retraction mechanisms in the floor for those hoses have a tendency to jerk you around a little, and if they jerk and you're not secure your pod will shut down immediately and, if you're not already dead from the heat, you and your lance mates will be dead by the end of the day because I will smoke you until you die.

"Mr. And Mrs. Anderson," the Drill mocked, "We're sorry to inform you your son is dead because he didn't have his coolant hose plugged in all the way and he died of the heat built up by his simulated PPC.

"Sounds pretty damn stupid, doesn't it, kiddies? So, make sure your hoses are plugged in properly and cinch your helmet chin strap tight so your commo cords aren't slapping you in the face while you're driving this fancy handy dandy stinkin' stupid simulator. If I am clear to everyone, then by the numbers double-click your ICS so I'll know. We don't go unless I count a baker's dozen of double-clicks."

One by one, starting with Hardenberg, the 'company' of thirteen clicked off and then things went dark. Jerry waited for his eyes to adjust and, just as they did his computer loaded and bright simulated sunlight filled the 'mech sim pod. It was a beautiful day in the neighborhood and Jerry was getting ready to take a stroll when the chatter increased. Hardenberg called out a standard delta left flank and advance, and Recon Lance fell in to the right and behind the Command Lance at a range of about five hundred meters from their most outstanding 'mech, a Shadow Hawk from the looks of it.

Jerry looked around more and, having heard only his part of the briefing and assignments, wondered why the Drills would allow for medium and light 'mechs when all they had trained in to this point were light 'mech simulations.

He didn't have much time to worry as a large laser shot skimmed right over the top of the forward, or head, pod on the Jenner. A one-third bubble looking piece of flimsy metal, the Jenner's bird-like design and out-front head made that the first and most likely target for an enemy to choose, which left no wonder in Jerry's mind about what his opponent had been firing at.

Mindlessly, Jerry remained where he was supposed to, eagerly waiting for a weapons range report and lock by his SRMs and Medium Lasers. Sweat formed on his brow and his armpits began to sting with newly formed perspiration, and he hadn't fired a single shot as yet. It began to bother him that he had been given a short range 'mech only and then been reigned in to the same speed everyone else in the 'company' had. It made him a sweet target and, apparently, the enemy realized it as well, as three 'mechs turned in the Recon Lance's direction and opened wide with everything they had.

Jerry's 'mech's right leg and left torso were the first casualties, each taking a medium laser hit when medium lasers shouldn't have been able to fire at this range. However, of all the shots fired at the Recon Lance, only those two hit him immediately. One of the enemy 'mechs went down as well. A Thunderbolt took a PPC shot from Derek and immediately hit the dirt. However, in the exchange, Derek's Panther became the first casualty, taking multiple LRM and large laser hits, exploding the SRM ammo in his torso and sending simulated fire through the top of the 'mechs head.

"It's up to you, now, Jer," Lawrence Vormain spoke softly, knowing what had happened was going to happen eventually, and then he disappeared in a puff of smoke next to Jerry's 'mech.

"Okay, I assume command..." Jerry started to get out just as Hardenberg's Wolverine exploded in a ball of flame, taking the Dervish right next to him with it. Jerry thought for a few crucial moments silently about the next move he was going to make. Then a report came through from the Medium Lance about the 'Lieutenant' there being splashed by multiple fire, and it suddenly fell to Jerry to lead the remaining six 'mechs to defeat the enemy. He quickly assessed the enemy strength and found that four of them had been destroyed as well, already better than first 'companies' defeat.

"This is Cadet Lieutenant Wolf, and I am assuming command as the next senior member in the chain of command for our class in this simulator rotation. Delaware, Jermaine and Foulders, you're my Command Lance. Daygars and Fischer, you're our heavy hitters and I want you on right and left flank, respectively. Begin a slow withdrawal but do not run. Foulders and Jermaine, you're to back up Daygars and Fischer," all the while Jerry's commands were being complied with, the 'company' moving without confusion, afraid as they were, pouring fire into the enemy.

Daygars and Fischer were the two in class closest to one another as friends because of their knack for reading one another, whether it be about women or 'mech fights, and they both picked the same 'mech, an overblown Griffin, to plink to death. Within thirty seconds their Dervish and Centurion brought down the Griffin.

This did nothing to stop the AI advance. In fact, the AI started the 'mechs under it's control at a dead run toward the cadet combatants.

"Calm, folks, here they come," Jerry spoke gently.

In the control booth outside the main simulator chamber, Drill Sergeants Brown, Carrie, Warren and Carstairs, the Simulator Drill Controller, stared in amazement as Jeremiah Wolf employed the only strategy ever designed by which the AI could be defeated. It had been designed to show cadets why you should never rush into combat, but rather preserve your 'mechs and personnel if you're able. However, it had been used three times to splash the enemy, including this time. One time before it had failed, thirty-three years ago, the first time. Improper combat techniques were used in conjunction with the maneuver, and the Cadet Captain had washed out the next day after failing to see why his techniques didn't work when he had the AI opponents in his hands.

Jerry Wolf, on the other hand, seemed to be allowing them to come in instead of seeking cover. His idea was to draw them tighter together and allow them to choose individual targets like a regular commander would and go to town while backing each other up. This would pull them up tight and then Jerry could finish way-laying them by combining firepower with three 'mechs against one, which meant two 'mechs were being worked on at one time.

Before the AI ever came within one-hundred meters of Jerry Wolf's company, one more of his 'mechs had fallen and two more of the enemy. It had been an even exchange and Jeremiah Wolf kept the plan intact despite the loss of the firepower from that 'mech.

Comm chatter remained at a minimum while the opponent came in, no signs of doubt or distrust. Perfect order seemed to reign on the field under Wolf's tutelage. Then both sides ran out of ammo for all ballistic and missile systems, which is when Jerry closed the trap, stopping the command lance 'mechs and allowing the friendly flanking 'mechs to surround the enemies right and left flanks. This brought confusion to how the AI would react to multiple dangerous targets around them when they were programmed to select the most dangerous target the AI would be concerned the most with.

"Cease fire!" called Jeremiah Wolf to his people; they had been nearly enemies earlier that morning, but as the afternoon came on they were now his people. They had won, only the formalities needed to be executed now. "Opposing commander, I am Jeremiah Wolf of the Armed Forces Federated Suns New Avalon Military Academy Training Detachment Bravo and I am calling for your immediate surrender. No harm will come to you or your people and you and your equipment will be repatriated immediately on release from custody."

The Drills sat stunned in silence for several seconds. Jeremiah Wolf had been an underachiever to this point in his academic studies and simulator training alike. However, this early afternoon a leader had been born, and every Drill on base would show their respect from that time forward.

"Roger that, opposing commander Wolf. Well played Cadet Captain." Jerry smiled at the change in Academy rank and closed his eyes slightly as the simulator lid popped open, allowing a great deal of the hot air out and the bright lights of the main

simulator room in. He slowly opened his eyes to allow them to adjust; as they did, Drill Sergeant Brown's ugly face came into focus and Kay believed, based on the look, that he would get smoked yet again.

"In all my days here I've never had a cadet beat that scenario, much less be in a position to offer a surrender to anyone before. Good work, Wolf. You're the new Cadet Captain of your class."

"Thank you, Drill Sergeant," Jerry said as he left the pod. Meeting Hardenberg on the deck below the simulator pods, Mark took the Cadet Captain pip from the right side of his own neck and, shaking his head in continued disbelief, pinned it in the same spot on Jerry's tunic. "Thank you, Mark, I appreciate that you're not sore about this," Jerry explained as Mark pumped his hand hard.

"Sore, hell! I've never seen anything like that. If you ever need someone to serve under you as a Lance Commander, you let me know, sir." Both men smiled and walked out of the simulator building to the chow truck for some much needed sustenance.

~The Wolf

EVENT CALENDAR



First off, welcome to Argent Fire, the Official Armageddon Unlimited Periodical. Truth be told, we're planning to put out issues as they are written, with a general plan of having six a year, if possible. However, we're not making it on any really set schedule, just as they're written; therefore, *periodical* is being used pretty loosely. I do apologize if this offends anyone, but I have run AU into the ground before by trying to schedule things that shouldn't have been scheduled; rather, I should have gone with the flow and now, since this is a project and a hobby rather than a job, that's how I'm doing it. I just wonder if that will change anything or... well, there goes my cynical side again ☺ .

This section of the E-Zine is designed for anyone who would like to post events, whether of their own making or someone else's. Personally, I would appreciate a full months warning for new events which are being scheduled; however, we'll deal with two weeks if necessary. Just be forewarned that with such short notice, even a month worth, since our E-Zine is noted to come out every other month, your event may not be broadcast through us in time to do any good. However, we may gain enough artists and writers in the future

to make this E-Zine more popular, therefore it will come out faster. Don't count on more than one issue per month, however; I simply do not have that kind of time on my hands.

On to the calendar portion, folks. There will not be a grid calendar like some other magazines have; rather, we will have a text calendar, and you can find the general date or event you're looking for simply by reading. Thank you, again, for your patronage.

~The Wolf

The following is a general list of items marked for completion by May of 2004. So far, we're on track with completion, even ahead of schedule with some things, although we are behind on others. As events are listed here, as requests come in to list those events, they will be removed from the calendar once they are completed.

What you're receiving in this first issue of AF is the general layout I have made for completion of the Armageddon Unlimited Field Manual, AU Operations Manual, web updates for the AU site and, finally, Argent Fire's issue schedule. All of these dates are subject to change in future issues:

May '03

- AU FM – Introduction
- AU Web Update
- Eridani Light Horse Web Site Construction(off-site; for ISW) (Update as necessary; find a web update aid!!!)

http://www.wolvesau.net/E_L_H/ELH_Home.htm

- AU FM – Wolf's Cavaliers – Contract 4 – 5
- AU OM – Welcome Letter, Introduction & Basic History
- Argent Fire – Volume 1, Issue 1 – Opening Volley, The Grapevine(Introduce AU Field Manual, Ops Manual, and Argent Fire as requiring aid to complete them) & BattleROMs

June '03

- AU FM – Wolf's Cavaliers – Contract 6 – 9
- AU OM – Unit Structure & Operations, By-Laws & Charter (NOTE: These are to be worked on over a longer period of time than a single month and may be completed by several writers), Publish to Web Current
- Argent Fire – Volume 1, Issue 1 – Bio-Feedback, Intel (Introduce ISW) & BattleTales
- AU Web Update (Reintroduce Bio Pages)

July '03

- AU FM – Wolf's Cavaliers – Contract 10 – 11
- AU OM – Training Requirements(multiple game platforms) and don't forget the By-Laws and Charter
- Argent Fire – Volume 1, Issue 1 – Event Calendar & Parting Shot, Publish to Web(After moving to new server space)
- Introduce AU, ELH, and Argent Fire(need writers and artists) around web

August '03

- AU FM – Equal Opportunity Destroyers – Basics & Contract 12
- AU OM – Rank and Advancement, Participation & Leadership and don't forget the By-Laws and Charter, Publish to Web Current
- Argent Fire – Volume 1, Issue 2 – Opening Volley, The GrapeVine & BattleROMs
- AU Web Update
- AU Stage 2: Begin recruiting, if necessary, towards Phase 3.

September '03

- AU FM – Equal Opportunity Destroyers – Contract 13
- AU OM – Strategy & Tactics and don't forget the By-Laws and Charter
- Argent Fire – Volume 1, Issue 2 – Bio-Feedback, Intel & BattleTales

October '03

- AU FM – Equal Opportunity Destroyers – Contract 14 and the Waterworld Tragedy
- AU OM – Uniforms(Dress, Combat & MechWarrior) and don't forget the By-Laws and Charter & All else we develop during this time
- Argent Fire – Volume 1, Issue 2 – Event Calendar & Parting Shot, Publish to Web

November '03

____AU FM – Shadow Blade – Basics & Contract 15 – 16
 ____AU OM – Completion of proofing, art insertion(?), Publish to Web – AU OM
 Released as-is citing periodic changes as the unit moves and grows
 ____Argent Fire – Volume 1, Issue 3 – Opening Volley, The Grapevine, BattleROMs & Bio-Feedback
 ____AU Web Update

December '03

____AU FM – Shadow Blade – Contract 17 – 18
 ____Argent Fire – Volume 1, Issue 3 – Intel, BattleTales, Event Calendar & Parting Shot, Publish to Web

January '04

____AU FM – Armageddon Unlimited – Basics & Contract 19
 ____Argent Fire – Volume 1, Issue 4 – Opening Volley, The Grapevine & BattleROMs
 ____AU Web Update

February '04

____AU FM – Armageddon Unlimited – Contract 20 – 21
 ____Argent Fire – Volume 1, Issue 4 – Bio-Feedback, Intel & BattleTales
 ____AU Stage 3: Recruiting, Trials, Command Structure, Unit Structure and League Hunting completed; begin combat operations in all Regiments

March '04

____AU FM – Armageddon Unlimited – Contract 22 – 23
 ____Argent Fire – Volume 1, Issue 4 – Event Calendar & Parting Shot, Publish to Web

April '04

____AU FM – Current Events and Introduction to Dark Age unit
 ____Argent Fire – Volume 1, Issue 5 – Opening Volley, The Grapevine, BattleROMs & Bio-Feedback
 ____AU Web Update
 ____MW: DA Web Site Construction(hopefully a kit will be available by now)

May '04

____AU FM Completion of proofing, art insertion(?), making sure ALL AU resources have been tapped for completion of this manual, and selling to WizKids/ FanPro for Classic BattleTech
 ____Argent Fire – Volume 1, Issue 5 – Intel, BattleTales, Event Calendar & Parting Shot, Publish to Web
 ____AU Web Update
 ____Begin Construction of AMG/ MFOL League and Unit Repository
 ____Brand Spankin' New BattleTech To-Do List including Other Projects..., below

Other Projects on my Mind for BattleTech

MechWarrior: Dark Age RPG (Including: Introduction & Character Generation, Skill Use, Personal & 'Mech Combat Rules and Examples, Gear & Weapons Availability & Acquisition, GameMasters Section & Drama Rules, Eventualities, etc.)

You're all more than welcome to contribute to the above list and AF will endeavor to make sure your information is put out to the rest of the community in a timely manner.

~The Wolf

PARTING SHOT

This is the final section, before any advertisements or special pages which might be placed in later issues, of the magazine. This is our goodbye for the current issue of this E-Zine and expectations for the unit, the next AF issue and last, but not least, the BattleTech community as a whole.

In case you have yet to tell I am passionate about BattleTech and keeping it alive. I think it's unfair that a LOT of people out there are ruining something that is as special as BattleTech. Why do I feel it's so special? Because, next to Star Wars, indeed better than Star Wars, BattleTech has been a constantly developing, ever-forward project that has lasted several real years at a time for around four years of BattleTech time and vice-versa; yet, it has always advanced. If there's any way to keep it that way, I say we do it!

Well, kids, time to wrap this up. It's been real, it's been fun, but it's not riding a camera on a gauss rifle round, is it. hehe

What we're trying to do in the next issue is a mystery to me as yet, simply because I don't know what I'm going to write from time-to-time. Okay, the Intro to the Intro is for this issue only and won't inhabit next issue. Opening Volley, indeed many of the sections presented here, as well as formatting changes as necessary, will be prevalent in issues to come until we're completely comfortable with how this is being done. If you like something, or not, tell us about it and suggest changes. Otherwise, suck it up, soldier, and drive on. ☺

For The Grapevine, if you have a unit or league you want introduced in the BattleTech community, an article about what's happening in the BattleTech community in general, etc., ad nauseum, please tell us about it. BattleROMs will have the next section of history concerning AU, things you'll be able to expect from both the Field and Operations Manuals, and we'll continue with the history until we're finished with what's going into the Ops Manual for history. The history contained in the AUFM, however, will be much more detailed.

BattleTales will likely continue to concentrate on Jeremiah Wolf as he moves through his AFFS career and into the realm of mercenary dreams, and making those dreams come true. If anyone would like to write that section, please feel free to email me and I will set you up with the basic story premise I would LIKE to see as well as the pertinent sections, if applicable, of the AU Field and Operations Manuals so you can write a more informed contrivance (get out the dictionary, ladies, and look it up for yourselves if you don't know it! ☺).

Finally, to the BattleTech community as a whole, especially Christian Men Online (whom we'll have an interview for, God willing, in the future; <http://www.icehouse.net/cmonline/>) and all of the leagues this unit has ever played in (more interviews, hehe), which includes MaxTech 3058, The Flaming Sword, Net BattleTech, Starlance, MGO Network, and last, but certainly not least, the Astral Dominion League. For those leagues I didn't mention, AU either has not played there OR I don't remember us playing there. Thank you, anyway, for all of your hard work and dedication in keeping the BattleTech community alive. You make it possible for me, and many others just like me, to keep dreaming that BattleTech may yet truly live in real-time, if not real-life, and that just because of a few punks and jerks it is NOT dead, and won't be as long as we're around.

Thank you.
~The Wolf



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UNIT/RESOURCE LISTINGS

This is the place we list all of the unit web pages in existence. If you have a web page to submit here, please feel free to email them to argentfire@wolvesau.net and we'll get you taken care of by the next issue.

MechWarrior: Dark Age

MechXF – A wonderful resource for Dark Age

<http://www.mektek.net/~mechxf/>

Leagues

Inner Sphere Wars – A MechWarrior 4 Mod

<http://www.comstarterterminal.com>

Maps & Missions

Alpha Strike – Produce MechWarrior maps and missions

<http://www.alpha-strike.net/>

MercStorm – Community based support for MechWarrior 4: Mercenaries

<http://www.mercstorm.com/>

Producers

BattleCorps – A pay to read fiction site for Classic BattleTech

<http://www.battlecorps.com>

BattleTech Mod Productions – Document various mods which are coming out for Tech

<http://www.battletechmodproductions.com>

Fantasy Productions – Producers of Classic BattleTech

<http://www.classicbattletech.com>

Inner Sphere Wars – A MechWarrior 4 Mod

<http://www.comstarterterminal.com>

WizKids Games, LLC – Producers of MechWarrior: Dark Age

<http://www.wizkidsgames.com/mwdarkage/>

Unit Listings: Mercenaries

Armageddon Unlimited Primary Web Site

<http://www.wolvesau.net>

Christian Men Online(CMO) – A Christian Mercenaries group

<http://www.icehouse.net/cmonline>

Skye Rangers Primary Web Site – A MechWarrior Game Club

<http://www.skye-rangers.net>