BATTLETEC #5
INCOMING!

Let me start out by saying I'm writing Issue #5 after a nice break. I hope you loyal readers didn't get discouraged when Issue 5 didn't show up for a good while. Things should get pretty much back on track around here, and you should expect an issue every 45 days or so. Right. Now let's get those keys plunking and send me some good stuff.

Unfortunately, after reformatting my hard drive, I accidentally deleted the reader mail I received after Issue #4. Anyway, this issue we take a look at the latest developments in Clan Ghost Bear's arsenal, do a thorough looking over of the Atlas BattleMech, and of course there are the usual combat scenarios found in 4th War and Small Unit Actions.

Round #2 of the Jaguar TOA comes at you with a MASSIVE battle in a mountain pass. This round, the 4th Dragoons get some unusual allies in their war with the 7th Jaguar Dragoons and the 44th Nova Cat Cavaliers. Small Unit Actions has an unusual battle on Solaris, and the 4th War takes the fighting into inner space with a water fight.

Opening Shots: Attack of the Boy-Scout Rules-Benders

[By 'Easter']

Well, we were all gathered around the hood of an '85 Astrovan (about 14 of us in all). Zach, a fat older scout and our usual GM for games like these, was introducing the game to us. All of us younger scouts were ignoring the oratory and crowding in for a closer look at the neat little 'Mech figurines set up in the box. They looked really cool, especially to eleven and twelve year-olds. They even fit the neat hex-shaped map board of the boxed set. When he finished his speech, we noticed that he was divvying out the 'Mechs to all of his older scout buddies.

I heard some names (*Battlemaster*, *Wolverine*, *Marauder*...) but they didn't mean anything yet. Finally, being the last in the line, I asked if there were any 'Mechs left. Zach looked down to the last record sheet in the box.

"Sure," he said, "this one's really good. It has a large laser...it's the most powerful weapon in the game..." Only after I learned the rules of the game did I discover that a *Shadow Hawk* couldn't just have a large laser grafted into its arm by writing it on the critical sheet. Meanwhile, happy with my new acquisition, I got into one of the departing vehicles and we set out on our trip. Our destination: Tennessee's Buffalo River in what would be a 50+-mile canoe trip.

Well, on the van we younger scouts, naturally grouped together, began comparing (and deciphering) our record sheets.

"I've got 'machine gun 200!" one boy said as he looked at his Crusader sheet.

"Yeah? Well mine can jump six," said another, "an' Zach says jump means fly!" I, of course, knew that I had them all beat.

"Well, I have a large laser."

Silence...total silence prevailed in the van. I think the driver even turned around to see if they were all still breathing properly.

"Wh-what's that?" some kid inevitably asked.

"It's the MOST POWERFUL weapon," I said with swelling pride. I just knew I was going to win. I knew just like a lazy kid just knows in the summer that he'll be an astronaut someday or play major league baseball. We spent the remainder of our two-hour drive in bargaining sessions to determine whose team I'd be on with my admired *Shadow Hawk*. So the

campsite was set and we'd all concluded that there was nothing else left to be done, so our scoutmasters let us run along to what they call "free time."

Translated into our terminology, this meant Battletech. So we took out our much-handled record sheets and found a nice red picnic table in the shade where Zach set up his game. He divided us into teams, the younger scouts had a *Griffin*, a *Wasp*, *Stinger*, *Crusader*, and, of course, a *Shadow Hawk*. Our opposition, the older scouts of course, had a *Battlemaster*, *Thunderbolt*, *Warhammer*, *Archer*, *Marauder*, and *Wolverine*. We knew we were going to win. As it turned out, we didn't know much.

On the first turn I jumped my *Shadow Hawk* behind a level 3 hill for cover. When the firing phase came up, Zach told me that I could "burn through the hill" with my large laser to strike the *Marauder* on the other side. So, I fired, rolled, and hit. I just knew that I'd killed it. Again, I didn't know much because the *Marauder* pilot only scratched off a measly eight points from his left torso. So my dreaded large laser isn't enough, huh? How about this... From there I proceeded to fire 10 LRM-5s over the hill from my LRM launcher using Zach's "arcing rules". He said that an LRM-5 was a missile launcher that could fire up to 24 5-point missiles. LRM-20s were much more dangerous, he told me. So I scored with some of those too, and the damaged *Marauder* *still* had more armor than my whole unscathed Shadow Hawk!

From there, we proceeded to take a sound thrashing. I don't think that there was a single functional mech left on the board. Well, not from my team at least. Machine guns ruled the day because Zach's rules allowed the machine gunner to fire up to 200 rounds of two-point ammo per turn. The *Marauder* had an AC/20 "installed" in its torso in the same manner as my large laser had been "installed." And since they won initiative every turn, "for having bigger 'mechs," they dealt damage before we did, or so we were told.

Well, after we'd put in a hard day of canoeing, we were back to our expenditure of "free time." This time, Zach and the others decided to take the lighter mechs. We didn't object at all, since having bigger 'mechs meant that we won initiative, right? Well, I chose a nice gray-plastic *Warhammer*. Our joys tuned sour when Zach told us that we were using different rules for initiative this time; we were rolling dice. The team that won went first. So, when we rolled a high roll, we assumed that we'd won.

"No," Zach told us, "Low roll wins and gets to counter move. This means we go last and fire first." So, not knowing the rules clearly, we went along with this. Next turn, we rolled the low roll. We still "lost." Every once-in-a-while he'd let us win just to appear like he was playing by the rules. We were just confused. But this game, we were introduced to a new tactic: Death From Above.

Under Zach's rules for DFAs, all damage was dealt directly to the target mech's head. So under the relentless assault of machine-gun-firing *Locust*s and *Phoenix Hawk*s, the AC/20 equipped *Marauder*, and the jump-attacks of *Wasp*s and *Stinger*s, our mighty heavies fell without firing but a few shots (and none of those hit, oddly enough).

We thought for sure that we'd win the next game since we now understood initiative, so we paddled hard all day long just so we'd get back in time to really stomp the older guys. This time, we discovered that they had a new creation; Peter, the Scoutmaster's son, had fashioned his own mech after the "rules" found in the back of the forbidden green book. This mech weighed 30 tons, carried

316 points of armor, ran 30 and jumped 20. Armed with ten machine guns and 1,000 rounds of ammo, he christened this beast "The Dragonfly." Needless to say, our morale, and our defensive line, broke yet again.

From there, determined to fight the right way, I saved up money for a $25 Third Edition boxed set, just like Zach's. I wasn't ever going to let them cheat again! Armed with my Level I rulebook, I became the referee of our games.

When they'd discovered that they couldn't play without playing fair (or tying me to a tree) they gave the game up and moved to other systems of games I didn't own. So, the moral of all this is to play fair, be a good sport, and don't tick off anyone too much bigger than you.

The Vehicle War-Book

[*This section highlights new vehicle designs being produced across holdings in the Inner Sphere and Clan space. Submissions to this feature should have a good background and fluff text to explain what purpose the vehicle serves.*]

NAME: Yamamoto Main Battle Tank

Technology Level: 2 (Inner Sphere)
Weight: 65 Tons   Crew: 5

Movement:
Cruise: 4
Flank: 6

Engine:	260 XL	10.0
Control:		3.5
Power Amplifiers:		0.0
Lift Equipment:		0.0
Heat Sinks: 10 single		0.0

Internal Structure: 6.5
Turret: 2.0

Armor: 14.0 Ferro-Fib (251pts.)

Armor Distribution
Front: 61
Sides: 55/55
Rear: 40
Turret: 40

Weapons & Ammo	WEIGHT	LOCATION	
PPC	7.0	(Turret)	
Light Gauss Rifle		(Turret)	
AMS	0.5	(Turret)	
LRM 5		(Front)	
LRM 5		(Front)	
SRM 2	1.5	(Rear)	
CASE	0.5	(Body)	
SRM ammo (50)	1.0	(Body)	
LGR ammo (16)	1.0	(Body)	
LRM ammo (24)	1.0	(Body)	
AMS ammo (12)	1.0	(Body)	

COST: $9,618,034
BV:
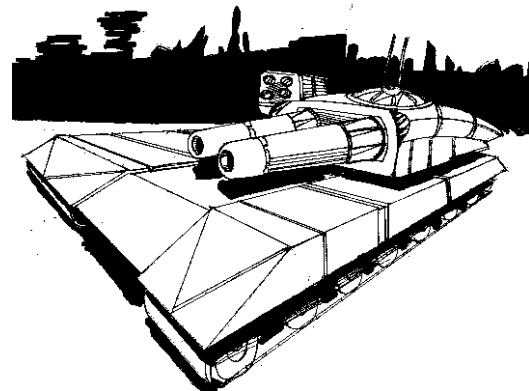
OVERVIEW:

The appearance of the *MacArthur* (described elsewhere in this issue) MBT in growing numbers among Clan Ghost Bear forces came as a shock to Rasaulhaug forces. Not only was the Clan using a vehicle in front-line fighting, the *MacArthur* combined deadly firepower with amazing speed.

Slip-Shod Productions, Inc. was under contract to the Kungsarme to produce tanks that met custom specifications. When battle-roms of the deadly new Clan tank were given to the design team at Slip-Shod, the factory immediately began to retool their Kungsarme production line. Less than five days after viewing the vids, the final specs for the *Yamamoto* MBT were distributed to the line foremen.

Detractors insist that this unheard of turn around time could only be attributed to the probability that a nearly identical tank must have been slated for release from Slip-Shod the coming year. Harold Krupp, chief engineer of Slip-Shod, denies these accusations, and those who know the man say that it is more than possible, given his genius for vision of design.

CAPABILITIES:

The *Yamamoto* was specifically designed to meet, engage and destroy the *MacArthur* MBT. To that end, Krupp and crew reasoned by that the best counter to the *MacArthur*'s speed was hard hitting, extreme range capabilities. Utilizing the new Martyr Tech Light Gauss Rifle technology allowed Slip-Shod to give the *Yamamoto* a range advantage on its specific enemy. Out-ranging even the clan-tech gauss rifle and ER PPC,

the Martyr usually allows the Yamamoto to get it one or two telling first-blows.

Flash-Fire Limited, a division of Slip-Shod, won the contract for the Particle Projection Cannon that sits sidecar to the light gauss rifle. This PPC is know for it's unusual green hue when fired, but otherwise acts as most old-tech PPC's in damage and range. A Burrows & Ives True-Trak Anti Missile System was added to counter the *MacArthur*'s LRM rack.

A highly unusual choice of two Doom-Bud LRM-5 packs was added to the tank's forward fire envelope. These launchers are unusual only due to the fact that they were included to use a specific tactic: Thunder sub-munitions. It was hoped that this tactic would allow the Yamamoto to slow down the faster MacArthur, making the clan machine easier to target while keeping the faster tank away from the minimum range envelope that is the Yamamoto's biggest weakness.

Mounting some of the thickest armor seen on a new tank, the Yamamoto can stand several hits even from high-damage clan weapons. A SRM 2 pack was added to the rear of the tank, and this is usually armed with Inferno rounds for quick anti-vehicle purposes. Even though CASE protects the crew compartment, the prospect of carry the highly volatile ammunition usually makes the Yamamoto's crew nervous.

Despite this, during simulated battles against various foes, several *Yamamoto* crews developed the tactic of using the infernos to start fires along their line of retreat. This often gave the *Yamamoto* superior concealment while denying the

cover the burning woods would have provided to the tank's pursuers.

HISTORY:

Test runs have proven the durability and ranged firepower of the Yamamoto, and several weaknesses as well. However, the machine received the go-ahead from the Kungsarme early in 3060. The Rasaulhaug military has deployed several of these tanks with raiding units operating within Ghost Bear territory.

As of this writing, reports are filtering in of a battle fought between *MacArthur* and *Yamamoto* MBT's is desert canyon terrain on Mannadorf's southern continent. We can only wait for the results of this engagement.

Small Unit Actions

"You're off your nut!" the rough-looking fellow barked. A silence filled the smoky bar, and all eyes settled on the small booth. Most of the people in the tavern recognized Avis Perunnetti. His face was on every gambling license on Solaris 7, and few people on the gaming world held as much official power as he did. When a man like Avis yelled, it was usually wise to listen.

Three other figures were seated in the same booth as Avis, though most patrons would have been hard pressed to name any of them. Not that the dim light shining on the table between them allowed for much study of their features. What *was* apparent, however, was a distinct lack of concern among the other occupants in regards Avis's outburst.

Exceedingly long and thin fingernails were the only clue to the nationality of one of the shadowy figures, as he raised his hand calmly.

"Contain yourself, Avis. You must admit, House Kurita's *Panther* BattleMech is truly formidable, as light machines go. He did not mean to slight your House Steiner's *Commando* battlemech. The BattleMech of your parent nation has a respectable history, in its own right."

Avis gave the Capellan a scowl, before again taking his seat.

"Damn right, it does!" he grumbled. "Of course, I bet you think your Capellan *Raven* is just a little bit better than either of ours, though. Well?"
The smile that graced the Capellan's lips had tell-tail traces of pride, despite his attempt to act humble.

"If that it so, then I must concede it is because we Capellans designed it after studying both your and our esteemed Draconis patron's militaries in action."

"Pardon my defiance," the Kuritan now spoke up, "but I must refute your logic. The *Raven* can hardly be classified as a true BattleMech. Perhaps the label of reconnaissance 'Mech would be more appropriate. The *Raven* is hardly a threat to an experienced *Panther* pilot." The Capellan's expression soured, but before he could reply, the fourth person in the booth spoke.

"Well…I got to admit, the *Panther* packs some serious ranged punch, and the *Commando* is fast and a great in-fighter. The *Raven*...well, it's just a bigger, heavier *Commando*, really. Now, for all-around versatility, there's not much you fellows can really say when you compare your House's various designs to our *Valkyri*. I mean, come on…we can out-range any of you, we're nearly as fast, and we can out-jump all of your designs."

Avis barked a sharp laugh.

"Oh come off it…once a *Commando* got past your *Valk*'s missile umbrella, your 'Mech'd be taking a dirt-nap in no time."

"Your *Valkyri* would have a considerably difficult time even acquiring a lock on a *Raven*" the Capellan chided.

"A particle cannon could penetrate the armor on any of your mechs with but a single shot." intoned the Kuritan.

"Can't penetrate a mech like the *Commando* if you can't hit it…"

It was now the Federated Suns warrior's turn to intercede.

"Let's keep it calm, friends. We've all spent more time in 'Mech cockpits than most of the warriors who fight on Solaris these days. And we all know each of the machines has its own special role to play in our various militaries."

"Give us a break, Dristole. Everyone here knows you piloted a *Marauder*. You don't know 'jack' about using a light mech!"

"Oh Yeah?" snapped the Davion.

"Hai!"

"Xao!"

"Damn right, Fed-Rat. You're long past your prime."

"Avis-sama…you are not exactly…how do your kin put it…a 'summer-chicken'?"

"I'm young enough to whip YOUR butt, Toshi."

The Kuritan glowered at the Lyran official.

"Perhaps both of you would do well to remember that I was a House Liao champion. That makes me more of a threat to you than anyone present does." the Capellan chided.

The Davion warrior reached into his jacket and threw a wad of C-Bills on the table.

"I've had enough of the lip. You guys talk big…and I smell a wager…"

SITUATION:

Four extremely wealthy (and slightly patriotic) power-moguls of Solaris-7 have bet a considerable amount of C-Bills that their House's standard light BattleMech is top dog of the Light BattleMech class. Pooling their resources, the four have acquired their favorite light 'Mechs and purchased time in a Class 3 arena.

SETUP:

Each of the four players required for this scenario places one map of his choice on the table. Roll 2d6 for each player. The player with the lowest score places his map on the table first. The next lowest score must place his map either long edge to long edge or short edge (not corner tip to corner tip/diagonally) to short edge next to the first player's map.

This continues until all four maps have been placed. Each player positions his BattleMech on his House's home map in the corner hex directly opposite of the hex corner where all four maps meet.

Though each was once a formidable soldier or gladiator, all of these mechwarriors have seen better fighting days. Each now has a Gunnery Skill of 4 and a Piloting Skill of 5.

Mech Units:
Avis Perunnetti (Steiner)   COM-2D *Commando*
Erick Cromwell (House Davion) VLK-QA *Valkyri*
Toshi Ozzawa (House Kurita) PNT-9R *Panther*
Gow Feng (House Liao)   RVN-1X *Raven* *

[*For game purposes, the 4-crit ECM suite listed on the 1X's official record sheet used by the earlier Raven gives all other players a -1 hit penalty at all ranges, representing targeting and tracking difficulties (as read in the novels). This is not an official FASA© rule, but then*

again, there is no official rule I'm aware of in regards this rather heavy piece of ECM equipment. If anyone has an official rule on this item, let me know and I'll amend this scenario.]

VICTORY CONDITIONS:

The last mech standing wins. This is a Level 1-tech battle, with the exception of the *Raven*, so only munitions from that era may be used (although Infernos may be used in any non-Streak SRM launcher as per the BMR).

VARIATIONS:

House Marik is missing from the line up. Should players wish to make it a five-way battle, the Marik pilot should use a STG-3R *Stinger*, WSP-1A *Wasp* or LCT-1V *Locust* (NO ONE should be forced to use the 'M' *Locust*…) BattleMech, which starts in the centre hex where all four maps join. This scenario would also work equally with other tech levels.

Cutting Edge

By Bob "it don't fit the pattern!" Richter

[*From the desk of Star Colonel Devon MacArthur, 22nd Phalanx Cluster, Clan Ghost Bear*]

Ever since I took command of a Phalanx Cluster, I have had a lot more free time on my hands. I have capable execs, and my warriors can pretty much take care of themselves these days. Another bonus, the Ghost Bears do not have any enemies really capable of offensive action right now, so I do not have many battles to fight.

Given my lack of things to do lately, I have started getting in contact with some of my Sibkin. Grant "the Guillotine" is off on frontline duty in Alpha Galaxy, so I have been having some interesting conversations with my Sibkin in the civilian sector.

I had lunch with Samantha the other day. She is a scientist in the R&D department, and her MacArthur brains have done quite well for both her and our Clan there. We had an interesting conversation, going over old times in the Sibko (those many years ago…oh how thirteen years weigh on a warrior.)

She was telling me of some of our Clan's latest technical developments. One of them will really surprise warriors in the Inner Sphere as well as conservatives in the Clans. Samantha's division reviews old Battle-roms to develop new ideas and techniques. One thing kept coming up in reviews of our battles with the Draconis Combine. Their C3 systems allow them to coordinate effective supporting fire against our units, and the employment of these systems has been fatal to several of our units. Samantha considered our Clan's doctrine of cooperation and brotherhood, and realized that Ghost Bear warriors could make highly effective use of such a system.

Now, two years later, the Ghost Bear version of this highly effective coordination system is almost ready for deployment to the front lines. Samantha took the basic design from old Star League records, but she was able to add in our own advanced communications systems, miniaturizing the units significantly, she also caught on to the two basic disadvantages of the DC system. The loss of the central C3 computer could

knock out the entire network, making the carrier 'Mechs high-priority targets for opponents. Samantha's solution was to decentralize the network.

Part of the work she has done has also shielded the system against most ECM systems. Unfortunately, all of these improvements came at a small cost. Our version of the C3 network cannot link more than ten units at a time, limiting their use to Binaries of 'Mechs or stars of Fighters or Tanks. Elementals can find no use for this system, as their armor cannot possibly accommodate the bulky communications gear.

Another new development, particularly gratifying to myself, has been the *MacArthur* Main Battle Tank (MBT). This is gratifying for two reasons. First, because I am the commander of a Phalanx unit, and this MBT represents a shift in doctrine that may eventually see our like deployed on the front lines.

The second is that I was involved in the project's inception. In 3057, I led a small raiding party onto the Jade Falcon world of Wotan. We were almost unnoticed as we smashed our way through the defenders in the midst of the colossal clash between the Wolves and the Jade Falcons for that world. What we retrieved, among other things, were several Battle-roms, which quickly came under examination by our scientists.

Our scientists were highly impressed by the effectiveness of Lyran armor against Jade Falcon Battlemechs. Now, the Jade Falcons are not known for superior prowess, but even they should be able to mop the field with an armor unit. The Lyran *Rommel* and *Patton* tanks, however, accounted for themselves nearly as well as Lyran 'Mech units.

Scientists quickly realized that this had much to do with the vehicle's superior armor, and the fact that, unlike most inner sphere tank units, *Rommel* and *Patton* tanks were fitted out like a frontline unit…equipped with a fusion engine.

Thus began Project MacArthur (named, sadly, for an old Earth general, much as the *Rommel* and *Patton* had been, and not for my august bloodline.) The idea was to build a tank suitable for frontline combat duty. The first priorities were to fit it with an extra-light engine, and to build it on the sturdy frames used by the *Rommel* and *Patton* tanks. The new tanks were fitted with a Gauss Rifle as their main gun. The scientists saw it as a good compromise between the AC/10s and the AC/20s of the *Rommel* and *Patton* designs, with both heavy firepower and long range. A Ten-tube LRM system takes the place of the old 5-tube system on the Lyran tanks, and an Artemis system has been mated to that.

A Medium Pulse Laser now rides on the front of this monster tank, providing it with extra firepower should the fighting get close. Ferro-Fibrous armor allowed our scientists to improve the protection over what the original chassis enjoyed, as well as lighten the load somewhat and the extra-light engine increased its flank speed to an incredible 83.7 kph. Needless to say, I would love to see this thing in combat, and I may get the chance soon, as all of the first limited production unit has been assigned to the 22nd Phalanx.

The *MacArthur* is also modular enough to allow some modifications, and my technicians are already playing with a variation that trades the Gauss Rifle for a Large Pulse Laser. That should prove interesting.

One more jewel of ours is slightly more pedestrian. The *Panther* IIC, however, may prove to be the salvation of our rear-echelon forces in the near future. Not because it is an especially effective 'Mech, of course, but because it is already rolling off production lines on Alshain. When our forces took that world, we discovered an intact *Panther* battlemech factory.

As scientists had been rather impressed by this Kurita design, they decided to retool the factory only slightly, to produce a variant more compatible with our technology. The result was a *Panther* IIC. One of the reasons the retooling was carried out so fast is that little was changed. They replaced the Lord's Light 2 ER PPC with one of our more advanced weapons of the same type. The SRM system was upgraded to a Streak-6. We also installed Ferro-Fiber armor, Myomer Actuator Signal Circuitry, and an advanced Targeting Computer to help pilots hit distant targets with the PPC.

The net result is a very tough little thirty-fiver that can be a real headache for heavier 'Mechs. Its standard fusion engine and heavy armor make it especially long-lived on the battlefield, and its weapons complement, while not especially powerful, can still be effective.

The MASC system and the internal jump jets give the 'Mech a lot of maneuverability that a lot of other 'Mechs its speed simply don't have. It's also a 'Mech that can be rushed quickly to production to compensate for our shortage of equipment as compared to warriors. I received the first of these machines for my unit last week, and I am very pleased with them so far.

Game Rules:

C3c:

This system acts like a standard C3 system, except that it has no central component and can only incorporate ten members. Conventional ECM suites cannot jam it (though an Angel may jam it if using level 3 equipment)

Tonnage: 2
Critical Slots: 2

MacArthur MBT:
Tonnage: 65
Movement Type: Tracked

Cruise Speed:5
Flank Speed: 8

	Components	
Engine: 325 XL Fusion	12.0	
Control		3.25
Heat Sinks: 10	0.0	
Internal Structure		6.5
Turret	1.5	
Armor 269 Ferro-Fibre		14.0

Armor Displacement:
Front	58	
L/R Side		53/53
Back	45	
Turret	50	

Weapons/Ammo/Equipment
Type	Location		Tons
Gauss Rifle	Turret	12.0	
LRM10	Front	2.5	
Med. Pulse Laser	Front		2.0
Flamer	Rear	0.5	
Artemis IV FCS	Front	1.0	
Ammo (GR) 24	Body	3.0	

Ammo (LRM) 12	Body	1.0

Panther IIC

Component		Tonnage
Tonnage: 35	35	
Internal Structure	3.5	
Engine: 140	5.0	
Walk: 4		
Run: 6[8]		
Jump: 4		
Heat Sinks: 10[20]	0.0	
Gyro:	2.0	
Cockpit:	3.0	
Armor Factor: 119	6.5	

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head	3	9
Center Torso/(rear)	11	15/7
R/L Torso/(rear)	8	11/5
R/L Arm	6	12
R/L Leg	8	16

Weapons & Equipment	Location	Critical	Tonnage
ER PPC	RA	2	6.0
Streak SRM 6	CT	3	2.0
Streak Ammo (15)	LT	1	1.0

'Mech of the Month

AS7 ATLAS

When the TRO:3025 hit the shelves, one mech really scared the hell out of players. That was the *Atlas*. Not only did it look like the Grip Reaper in metal, you just couldn't get over all the masses of little circles that represented its armor on the record sheet. Observers at a game convention would ask you what the *Griffin* was, and you'd show them your armor diagram.

Then you'd show them your enemy's sheet and all the *Atlas* armor therein, and even a non-player who'd never fired a PPC in his life

would say 'Jesus…he's got a lot more than you…"

Low-armored *Warhammer*s and *Marauder*s were very common back then…enough that players held the *Atlas* in awe, and many actually followed the TRO fluff about assault mechs being extremely rare, so they'd give you a frown if you wanted to play one.

Now days assault mechs are much more common…usually as common as medium mechs for some playing groups. And a few assaults actually pack MORE armor than the *Atlas* (307 for the *Thunderhawk* and *Pillager*, to name two). The *Atlas* has again returned to rare use, mostly because there are better-designed assaults out there, even if you include the new 3050 *Atlas's*.

The first real assault mech to give the *Atlas* a run for its money came with the *Wolf Dragoons* sourcebook, in the form of the excellent MAD-4A *Marauder II*. The *Imp* and *Shogun* also threatened the *Atlas*'s position as king of the assault mechs. The TRO: 3025 original printing said that a well-designed assault mech was bad-ass, but most assault mechs were not well designed. This seemed pretty accurate, though the *Atlas* seemed to break out of this mold in most respects.

3025 VARIANTS:

AS7-D:

Perhaps this paragraph should be called 3025 VARIANT, as there is only one *Atlas* design in operation during the 4th Succession War. Baring the 'Mechs mentioned above, and perhaps the 3025 *Banshee* 'S' and the standard AWE-8Q *Awesome*, there are few mechs that stand much chance of surviving a toe to toe bout against an AS7-D *Atlas*. Mech like the *Battlemaster* are fearsome, but

just don't have the armor or staying power required to challenge this machine.

The AS7-D is an assault mech in the purest sense, mounting incredible armor and many short range weapons systems, perfect for ratting out entrenched mechs and armor. The cornerstone of this mech's assault capabilities is the massive AC/20 housed in the AS7-D's right torso. In the 3025 era, no other weapon instilled such terror, the AC making the *Atlas* one of the few decapitators of the 3025 generation of battlemech.

It may be precisely a lack of head-snuffing weapons in 3025 that made the *Atlas* so ferocious. Only the *Victor* and *Hunchback* battlemechs possessed similar one-shot kill potential. Fighting the *Atlas* usually meant you were in for a long, drawn-out battle of armour attrition.

Augmenting the devastating AC are a pair of arm-mounted medium lasers and a crit-seeking SRM 6-pack. The 20 heat sinks (a rare number any 3025 mech) allow the AS7-D to fire all its front-facing short range weapons and run with impunity.

Not that you're going anywhere very fast. None of the *Atlas*-class BattleMechs are exactly imbued with gazelle-like grace and speed. (One gigantic 3025 game I hosted in the basement lasted three weekends…the *Atlas* saw all of two rounds of combat, the rest of the time trying to reach the city maps in the middle of the game table).

Of course, being a 100-ton assault 'Mech, speed is hardly the primary factor to base 'Mech design around. Attacking the AS7-D in close from any direction is dicey, as the mech sports twin medium lasers firing to the rear. Most BattleMechs carry at least one weapon able to outdistance a medium laser (surprise-surprise…the other two head-chopping BattleMechs of 3025 DON'T…), and the *Atlas* is no exception.

A large LRM-20 rack allows the AS7-D to return fire at long range, which is fortunate, for the 'Mech's real weakness, lack of multiple heavy-hitting ranged weapons systems, often means the *Atlas* pilot is forced to run the entire game to bring his primary weapons-envelope on line. With enough LRM ammunition to last the length of a standard game, the AS7-D will remain a threat to nearly all the units that it faces.

With so many heat sinks needing to be placed in the body, the *Atlas* enjoys some protection in the form of fairly unimportant critical slots next to more vital ones. Most notably, the empty head slot is filled with a heat sink. The arms also place a heat sink next to the medium laser stored in each. This, with the abundance of arm actuators, means you have a great chance of keeping the lasers burning till someone pop's off your arm.

Another great benefit: having usable hands means you can punch and club your foe (when's the last time you actually saw someone in one of your games use a tree as a club?). A 20-pt. club attack following a blast of AC/20 will rock the biggest clanner's world.

One major problem with the AS7-D (most of the *Atlas* BattleMechs, really) is the grouping of 3 ammo slots in the left torso. True, these are near a lot of other non-explosive crits, but having three ammo in one location is just asking for trouble. Losing the left torso also kills the long range firepower of this brute. This is actually more plausible than the armour suggests, as the rear side torso armour of all Atlas models is a mere 10 pts., while it's front side torso armor has a whopping 32 pts (maybe a shift of two points would make the rear armor passable at 12).

At \$9,626,000 & 1,557 BV, you spend a lot of cash for a high range BV (High BV for 3025, anyways). However, the mere presence

of this leviathan adds more to its value than suggested. Watch a typical game of regular players sometime where the Atlas is featured on one side. The Atlas often has a 'bubble' around it where players refuse to enter willingly. This intimidation factor can be used to good effect to herd slower heavy 'Mechs…you're also sure to draw ranged fire as the inexperienced enemy will treat you as a big threat, even if your still two turns away from AC range.

TACTICS:

Although it's called an 'Assault' 'Mech and certainly fits the image in most people's minds, the *Atlas* actually serves better in the defensive role, where the 'Mech can be kept from waves of ranged fire. If you need something guarded, and the terrain requires the enemy to come in and fight to win, there aren't a lot of 3025 'Mechs that will fill the bill as well as an AS7-D.

If you *must* attack, make sure your other forces don't out-strip the *Atlas* in a sprint across the field, at least while time permits. The *Atlas* that is allowed to keep pace with its allies will have a much greater value in the game than one that's wandering like an orphan in the woods while its light and medium allies are getting their flabby buttocks kicked.

The Atlas is big and scary in appearance. Use that to your advantage. Herd slow heavy and assault 'Mechs into areas they fight poorly in. If you can close with ranged fighters like *Marauder*s and *Warhammer*s, you'll kick the drek out of them and make them fight at the ranges their PPC's and AC's suffer. Of course, smart players will seldom let you get that close, if they can help it…after all, a *Warhammer* walks backwards almost as fast as an Atlas can run.

Later years offer significantly more threat to the AS7-D. The older *Atlas* is outgunned by the many Gauss laden heavy and assault mechs found throughout the 'Sphere. And battle armor presents a newer and very deadly threat, as the *Atlas* can usually be caught easily by most battle armor. Leg attacks by these adversaries can cripple an *Atlas*'s mobility and turn the 'Mech into little more than a limping 30-foot target.

Standing in water to cool is much more viable in 3025 than later eras. With the 4 heat sinks placed in the feet, the AS7-D can vent a great deal more heat and becomes totally heat efficient with its forward arc weapons (and face it, a grinning deaths-head 'Mech rising from a watery bog is a kick-ass image).

S&S: Although it's slow and lacks truly deadly ranged attacks, the AS7-D will turn any other 3025 into lots of expensive fodder faster than the AC can fire. If you're guarding an objective, or need a steady mount to transport someone through a hot zone without a time limit, the Atlas fills the bill admirably. Stay out of open terrain fights, though, or you'll find yourself being sniped to death (unless drawing fire was part of your brilliant plan…)

3050+ Variants:

AS7-K:

While there were some great improvements with new technology for the Atlas 'K', they were offset by some serious flaws. The role of the AS7-D was totally reworked into a new mech that attempts to excel at ranged combat. The head-chopping ability was maintained, and is even more lethal due to the great range of the new gauss rifle. Each arm's medium laser was traded in for the white-hot ER-large laser, greatly

increasing ranged firepower. Unfortunately, the single heat sinks were kept, making the AS7-K's use of this extra firepower impractical.

Twin medium pulse lasers replaced the standard rear-facing models, though the loss of range the mediums provided seem more of a handicap than can be compensated by the pulse's hit bonus. Perhaps the worst trade off is the use of a XL engine, which greatly reduces the 'Mech's life span. Coupled with the fact that a huge amount of crits in the right torso are taken up by a volatile gauss rifle, one good shot to the rear right torso of this mech will spell doom for the AS7-K. But at least you've got CASE in both torsos.

To top it off, the crit slot in the head is empty. One would have though placing 1 of the Gauss Rifle's tons of ammo, or perhaps a leg's heat sink, would have been feasible. If you lose the right arm, you effectively lose the gauss rifle, as both tons of ammo are stored there. An AMS in the left arm seems unusual for its location, but can engage more missile attacks due to its wider firing arc than an AMS located on a torso.

Something had to be sacrificed for the heavy weapons upgrades, and that something was the SRM 6. This has dampened the close assault power of the AS7-K, as you won't be firing both ER large lasers together most likely. At least they kept the LRM-20 pack.

At $22,576,000 /1649 BV, you're paying a hell of a lot more for a machine that is only marginally better BV-wise than the older AS7-D. The leftover cash from purchasing two of the older 'Mechs more than makes up for the increased range of the head chopper on the 7K, as you can load out a few hovercraft to go hunting with the big 'Mechs..

TACTICS:

The AS7-K is designed to fight at range, and that seems to have narrowed its value of use considerably. Having masses of armour going to waste as you sit a mile back seems a shame. But that's basically what your going to do with the 7K. Even so, the punch of this *Atlas*, averaging a respectable 35 pts if you want to stay cool and fire only one ER-large laser., cannot be ignored by enemies.

S&S:

A lacklustre BattleMech of questionable improvement over the older *Atlas*. There are better assaults that are cheaper (the *Highlander*, *Emperor* and *Awesome*, to name but a few).

AS7-S:

One of the few later 'Mechs of the *Atlas* series that radically improves on the older 'Mech, the AS7-S should be the *Atlas* you take in most circumstances. The 7S takes advantage of double heat sink technology and best of all lacks a XL engine. The weapons profile keeps much closer to that of the older design, being nearly identical.

Additional pairs of Streak SRM-2 launchers were hammered into the design, allowing you the versatility of using infernos on the SRM 6rack and normal ammo on the Streaks, with virtually no loss in damage potential. The old medium laser pair still guards your rear.

On the downside, there are a few problems with the 7S. We see the old 3 crits worth of ammo in one location again. Worse, each leg also holds a ton of explosives, threatening to blow your legs out from under you at an inopportune moment. And there's no CASE to prevent the stuff from spreading and

devouring your mech. And then there's my personal peeve, the empty head crit slot.

TACTICS:

With a weapons load-out almost identical to its parent mech, the same tactics apply. However, you no longer have to worry about heat build up with all your forward weapons, even while running, so don't bother with the stand-in-water tactic. $9,954,000 /1688 BV keeps the commanders happy, as the purse strings are not really stretched to buy the newer 7S.

S&S:

A fairly worthwhile upgrade over the older 7D, since the price is very close and the weapons damage is higher. If you don't mind having ammo in the legs and an empty co-pilot slot, take the 7-S brute for a ride.

AS7-C:

C-3 systems make for interesting fights, and though I think the C-3 is a bit over-powered, it is a valid piece of Level 2 equipment. Thus it comes as a surprise that there really are very few stock 'Mechs that are published using this very powerful item.

The AS7-C is really just a 7K that's dropped a medium pulse laser and added a C-3 Slave to the head and an extra heat sink to the centre torso. This may not seem like much of a trade-off, but the flexibility brought to a company of 'Mechs by any single additional slave unit vastly improves the value of this 'Mech over the 7K.

At $22,960,000/1650 BV, this is a prime example of how the BV system does not take into account the true value of C-3 systems. This 'Mech is but a single BV over the 7K, and the price is very close as well.

TACTICS:

Since it's the same mech as the 7-K at heart, use it the same. Your shots should be noticeably easier most of the time with the 7-C, however, thanks to the C-3 network.

AS7-CM:

A poorly designed attempt at a Master C-3 carrying assault 'Mech, I almost choked when I saw where they put the C-3 Computer on this nag of an Assault Mech. What designer in their right mind would put the most valuable piece of equipment perhaps in the 7-CM's entire lance into an arm? (he he ok…so maybe someone might argue that you increase the ability to use the C-3's TAG function, but that kind of comment will cause players at a convention to perform an 'assault' of their own on your egg-shell thin cranium…).

Weapons selection is close to the 'K' and 'C', though they had to drop a ER-large laser to free up weight for the C-3. But the C at least put something in the head. $25,176,000 /1975 BV makes this hayseed 'Mech a pricey mistake.

TACTICS:

Stay back and do your job of guarding your lance's C-3. Even your massive armor won't stop them from coming at you from your left flank once they know where the C-3 is contained.

S&S: Ugh. Buy a *Naginat*a…they fight better at range, cost half as much, and have sensible C-3 placement.

Clan Variant:

AS7-D (C): Even though this deadly clan field upgrade comes in six tons under the old AS7-D, there's no comparing the two combat wise. First appearing as a lift-kit for the *Atlas*

in '*The Battle for Twycross'* scenario pack (still my personal favourite), the AS7-D (C) mounts nearly double the true close-ranged firepower of the 7-D.

At least once you take into account its lack minimum range for the clan tech LRM, the Streak 6 rack, and the double burst from an Ultra AC-20. If you forego the double burst, the 20 singles allow you to fire all the big stuff and still not take a movement penalty next round. That's a damage potential averaging 54 damage…as high as 62 if you roll hot with the LRM's. That's frightening at any tech level.

CASE and no XL, and 3 tons of Ultra 20 ammo, means this walking fortress isn't going to die quickly…or alone. The increased range of the Streaks and the Ultra 20 give you a longer range over the Inner Sphere mech, too. At $10,520,000 /1887 BV, if you could find one to buy, it'd be well worth it. Luckily for the clan garrison forces, money is no option.

TACTICS:

Essentially the same weapons as the 'Mech it replaces, the (C) should be used the same way, though the longer weapons ranges listed above might mean you can surprise typical players who think their safe at 10 hexes. CASE makes this assault survivable, so don't be afraid to get in there and mix it up even when outnumbered.

S&S: At least the Clanners got it right when they tweaked the 7D. Now what could they have *really* done with those other six tons?

House Rules:

The AS7 has a few notable abilities that could be used in home rules. The Communications system allows the *Atlas* to send and receive as far out as some jump-ships might orbit. This can have almost the same effect as the Command Consul, though the effects would be +1.

In addition, players might wish to treat the LRM-20 as 4 LRM-5's. The *Atlas* player would state how he wishes to use the LRM prior to firing it. This would allow the *Atlas* pilot more chances to hit a particular target, and follows the fluff text about how the LRM-20 actually launches a series of 4 bursts of five missiles each.

Stories of *Atlas* BattleMechs picking up Locusts and throwing them down with one hand are seen in several articles. To represent this great physical strength, *Atlas* 'Mechs can be considered to have twice their normal lighting strength, allowing the machine to lift 20 tons.

OVERALL RATINGS (from 1-10)*:

AS7-D	=	**8**
AS7-K	=	**4**
AS7-S	=	**6**
AS7-C	=	**5**
AS7-CM	=	**5**
AS7-D (C)	=	**7**

[******Note that this rating is based on an over-all comparison of 'Mechs from a similar tech era. Also bear in mind that the rating applies to 'Mechs of roughly the same weight class. A '6' rated 'Mech of heavy design might or might not be a match for a '6' rated medium mech. The number rating from this gazette is not meant to replace BV, but to provide the reader with some feel of how the 'Mech stacks up when comparing its inherent strengths and weaknesses*.]

The 4ᵗʰ War

The Hauptman let a long billow of smoke escape his lips as he studied, through half-

closed eyelids, the junior officer sitting across the rosewood desk. Even combat-hardened veterans squirmed under the Hauptman's gaze. It was the pale blue of the man's eyes…they gave his angular face a wolf-like quality. People felt he could look straight through them. The Lyran officer's gravely voice completed the impression.

"Ok. From the top, Leftenant. Just what the hell happened out there?"

The young officer jumped at the words, but didn't meet his superior's gaze.

"Well, sir…we entered the objective sector right on our time-table. The Drac HQ had stopped transmitting about the same time we triangulated its location. Sure enough, they built it in the delta, like Spec Ops Intel figured."

The Hauptman began to pace around the desk, then stopped and stared out the window. Troops were marching on the parade grounds, but he paid them no heed, taking another drag off his pipe.

"Go on."

"The swampy terrain in the delta was god-awful…but we humped it like we were taught, and managed to keep some semblance of a combat formation. Kirggy...err...Pvt. Kirigan was on point. We'd just hit a wide channel of the delta, when the Pvt. got hit. His *Commando* just exploded right there on the shore."

"That's when the first *Monitor* fired on your unit?"

"Yes sir. It opened up from its hiding spot in a large section of wetlands grass…you know the kind, sir…about 10' tall and thick as jungle. We never even saw the boat 'till it blasted Kirggy. The Boss…um, that's what we call Hauptman Lomack…he ordered us to sink the *Monitor* as fast as possible, but the boat took off up the channel."

"And he ordered you to pursue the craft?"

"Yes sir. In fact, he took the lead. That's when the second *Monitor* ambushed Hauptman Lomack."

"And that I when your commander was killed."

"Yes sir. His *Wolverine* took both barrels to the spine."

"Where upon you took command, being the senior officer. Is this correct?"

"Yes. They weren't my normal lance mates, since I was on special assignment as heavy fire support, but they didn't give me any guff when I took control. We managed to pour enough fire into the second *Monitor* to send it to the bottom of the channel. The other one didn't return."

The Leftenant shifted in his seat, an action noted by the older officer. *Good. Fear can spark memory better than comfort*.

"We continued on with the mission…what else was there to do? We were just a bit more cautious of the other tributaries. The vector we got showed the HQ was just ahead. We rounded a turn in the channel and that's when we saw the ocean. "

"And that's when you knew the base was an aquatic command post."

"Yeah…I mean yes sir. Who'd have thought the Capellans would have a drink-base? The *Monitor*s had done some good damage to the rest of the troops, enough that Sgt. Coeval's *Phoenix Hawk* and Pvt. Green's *Centurion* weren't going for a swim any time soon."

"I assume you mean they had too many breaches in their armor to enter the water."

"Exactly so, Hauptman. If they had entered the water over waist level, Mandy would have suffered immediate engine shut down. Her torso armor was, well…just gone.

"And all Green had that could effectively engage underwater was a medium laser…his AC would have filled with water, too, since it

had no armor as well. He'd be worse than useless as rear guard or point man. I felt it was better for him to guard our escape route."

"So, you entered the water alone, a single *Warhammer* BattleMech, carrying out a solo strike on a submerged base which may or may not have been defended by an unknown # of enemy combat units. And then what?"

"I found the base, nestled in among a coral trench. The floor was sandy, but surprisingly firm as I approached it…fish all over the place. I was in pretty deep…its funny, you can hear a BattleMech make strange noises underwater…sometimes it sounds like a groan when your armor starts to stress with the pressure. Other times, it's like-"

"Spare me the atmospheric embellishments, Leftenant. Just tell me what happened."

The young man didn't look up. He was entranced in the memory of the mission.

"Well, the place was tiny, really. It was no taller than my '*Hammer* and didn't look too sturdy. I knew a few well-placed shots would cause the thing to suffer structural collapse. Right before I reached optimum PPC underwater range, I saw a big shape…and I mean big… loom up behind the command center. It was a *Neptune*."

"Yes…the submarine."

"Yeah, it was a sub, alright. Before I got another ten meters, its front bays opened and a spread of torpedoes popped out, leaving their telltale bubble trails. Hell, a mech's bad enough in a water-fight…but a *Neptune*? They may be slow on the surface, sir, but in the water a sub can literally run rings around a mech.

Anyway, I braced for impact…not a whole lot of choice. The torpedoes shook me like a rag doll in a rott's mouth. The sediment and sand from the explosions blocked our sight for a moment…enough time for me to regain the '*Hammer*'s balance and head for shallower water. Of course I never would have made it. The *Neptune* would have ripped through my back armor long before I hit the beach."

"And what action did you take in this seemingly impossible situation?"

"I used my assets to my best advantage. I found a place in the coral drumlins that would require the *Neptune* to come in close. He wasn't buying it. We both knew he had a hell of a lot more air than I did. He took his time and sent a few more torpedoes my way. One breached my right arm and flooded the PPC there. But I had already made up my mind.

I 'm not a coward, sir. I've even displayed what some people might call courage from time to time on the field of battle. But Mandy was in a class by herself. She didn't hesitate when I told her my plan, even when she knew it would probably kill her."

"What was the your solution?"

"I had Green lay down as much of a barrage as he could on the water's surface near the sub. The momentary distraction seemed to work long enough…with the *Centurion*'s LRM's going off, and heavy AC rounds ricocheting off the surface, the sub commander *had* to stop and evaluate the new threat.

I used that brief moment to make a wading dash through the shallows…well, a hurried walk at least…by the time he realized what was going on and gave pursuit, I could see the surface just a few feet above my 'Mech's canopy. The *Neptune*'s C.O. was ballsy, I'll give him that. He brought that big fish in closer to the shore than I would have dreamed possible. Close enough to finish me. He leveled out just below the surface, to give his gunners optimum planes for firing the torpedoes on dead reckoning.

That's when Mandy dropped out of the highest peak her jump…brought her *Phoenix Hawk* straight down with both feet close together, like a bolt of steel lightning. Her '*Hawk*'s feet instantly flattened the coning tower of the sub and pierced the *Neptune* like some damn giant spear gun. I couldn't tell if she was laughing or screaming the whole way down. It was the most bizarre moment I've ever witnessed in combat, sir."

"She DFA'd the Sub?" For the first time in his career, the Hauptman was at a complete loss for words.

"She sure as hell did, Hauptman. Bravest thing I've ever seen. She crushed the bridge and drove the Neptune down hard enough to wedge it into the sandy bottom. She died, of course. Her 'Mech shut down and had become hopelessly meshed with the sub's shell. Not that it would have mattered. Apparently the impact broke her neck."

The Hauptman stared at the now silent Leftenant for an uncomfortably long time. Finally he spoke after taking a long puff on his pipe., but his voice seemed almost gentle.

"And after the Sgt.'s successful execution of your…'solution'…you reentered the water and destroyed the base?"

"Yes sir. That's it. That's all there is to report."

"Very well. You're dismissed, Leftenant. Report to the chow-hall and get some dinner."

The young man stood, saluted and executed a smart military about-face, happy to be leaving the office. Alone with his thoughts again, Hauptman Baron Coeval stared back across the quickly darkening parade ground, a single small tear leaving a damp path down his weathered face…

SITUATION:

During the opening phases of the 4th Succession War, House Steiner's initial thrust sent many Kurita units reeling in retreat. Some units, however, met unexpectedly coordinated resistance. This was usually the result of key command posts that were missed in the Steiner forces initial attacks. Many of these command posts were hidden, making attempts to neutralize them very difficult. On the planet Last Stop, one such command post went undetected in a marshy delta that exited into the sea.

A reinforced scout lance of the 24th Lyran Guards was sent to find and silence the Combine post, as it was thought that the hidden HQ was responsible for the difficulty the Guards were experiencing in making headway against the tenacious Kurita defenders.

Not wishing to draw attention to the site, and since mech assets were needed on the front lines, the Combine command left only three watercraft to defend the well-concealed facility. A pair of *Monitor Naval Vessel*s and a *Neptune*-class submarine was concealed in the delta and under water in a coral ravine near the base.

When the base suffered a transponder malfunction that caused the coded messages to bleed into other communications frequencies, the Steiner Listening Posts managed to triangulate the location of the base within a mile, and the waiting Steiner lance moved into action.

SETUP:

Lay out two of the FASA swamp/delta maps long end to long end. The map where the delta opens into large water should be the southernmost map.

The Defender sets up first, hiding his *Monitor Naval Vessel*s in any water hex, or hex that has a riverbank touching it. These vehicles use the standard hidden unit rules. The defender also places a Level 1, 1 hex Medium building in any level 2 or level 3 water hex that is NOT part of the delta channels (IE it must be placed in the open water hexes at the very south of the map).

A *Neptune*-class submarine also guards the structure, and may be placed anywhere within 4 hexes of the HQ, though it must start at the lowest depth in that hex, and is revealed if it moves at all, even underwater. The attacker enters the board from the north on Turn #1. All non-water hexes use swamp rules for movement bog-down rules to see if units get stuck.

NOTE: *It is highly suggested that the vehicle rules from Maximum Tech ® be used if possible.*

ATTACKER:

The Attackers are elements of the 24rd Lyran Guards, on special assignment to locate and destroy a hidden DCMS Command Post. They have an additional heavy 'Mech as fire support for this mission.

Alpha Lance,/2nd Company/3rd Batt./24rd Lyran Guards

Hauptman Vincent Lomack (4/5) WVR-6R *Wolverine*
Sgt. Mandy Coeval (4/5)   PXH-1 *Phoenix Hawk*
Pvt. Eric Kirigan (4/5)   COM-2D *Commando*
Pvt. Amos Green (4/5)   CN9-A *Centurion*

*Leftenant Ben Dover (4/5)   WHM-6R *Warhammer*

(*Temporarily assigned to lance as fire support)

None of these units may use ballistic or missile weapons underwater, since they were not expecting underwater action and thus they were not loaded with torpedoes

DEFENDER:

The defenders are watercraft assigned to Sector 32 of the Trodheim Swamp, garrisoning an underwater H.Q. This garrison unit acts as auxiliary units to the more glamorous House Kurita line units.

Tai-I Neekuma	(3/4)	*Monitor Naval Vessel*
Tai-I Tanaka	(4/5)	*Monitor Naval Vessel*
Sho-Sa Riggs	(3/4)	*Neptune*-Class Submarine

Victory Conditions:

The Attackers win a decisive victory if they destroy the HQ and lose two or fewer 'Mechs. They win a marginal victory if they destroy the command post and lose 3 or more 'Mechs. Any other result is a loss.

The defenders win a decisive victory if they destroy all BattleMechs, the command post survives, and at least two vehicles survive. They win a marginal victory if the command post survives and less than two vehicles survive. If the command post is destroyed, there can be no victory for House Kurita.

Campaign CORNER:

[*The following is #2 in a series of battles actually fought in my house campaign. Forgive any major deviations from 'official' sources you may find. The current series deals with a Trial of Annihilation we played out among the Smoke Jaguars.*]

Broken Hope Pass, Turtle Bay
Smoke Jaguar Occupation Zone
5 December, 3058

'*This man is not what I expected*.' The thought flashed through Star Captain Torc's mind yet again as he studied the Inner-Sphere mercenary. Torc had though, like most Clansmen and Crusaders especially, that a warrior who accepted money to fight was not truly a warrior at all. Several Clans, Clan Ghost Bear in particular, treated mercenaries even worse than they did the Clan bandit caste.

Torc had seen the results of Clan brutality regarding mercenaries more than once, and he'd never felt guilt or even pity when his Dragoons engaged them. This mercenary in particular had special interest for Torc, however. He was the commander of The Dirty Dozen, and the Star Captain's 4th Jaguar Dragoons had met these exact warriors more than once on the field of battle.

Despite winning his battles against the elite Inner-Sphere sell-swords, he had never been able to completely destroy them. The man stood with one foot leaning on the right angle joint of his towering *Marauder* BattleMech, evaluating Torc just intently as the clan leader slowly approached. Though warriors in the Clans were young by human standards, the age of most Inner Sphere warriors still came as a shock to Torc.

Colonel James 'Jimmy' Richards had silver highlights on his temples, and small bits of white flecked his goatee. But he cut an impressive figure of a man, none the less. Torc approached within half a dozen feet, neural-helmet tucked under one arm. He paused for a moment, staring off into the hills behind the older warrior, to where the remainder of the Inner-Sphere BattleMech Company waited.

Two tracked tanks, lacking turrets of any kind, sat waiting near the southern-most tip of the mercenaries' hill. Although the machines were rather flimsy compared to a BattleMech, the many holes that were launch tubes perforating their front showed that they packed easily as much or more firepower that a similar weighted 'Mech could generate.

Apart from Torc's command star, another 23 OmniMechs and 2nd line clan BattleMechs stood opposite the Inner Sphere force, forming a wide arc that crossed a goodly section of the plains between the mercenary's hill and a similar terrain feature half a mile behind Torc.

The mercenary commander reached up and grabbed the thin cigar from his mouth, flicking ashes into the weed-strewn clay that formed the floor of the earth on which they stood. He made no move to speak, merely stared at Torc. There was nothing in that gaze that resembled friendship, nor was there what could be truly called hatred. '*Acknowledgment. That is what I see in this man's eyes. And perhaps respect.*' Torc thought.

'*Does he see the same in my eyes? For surely it must be there as well as anything else he fathoms. Both of us see each other as warriors, and acknowledge the other's skill, for we have tested the other many times in combat. It is a credit to his profession that he maintains composure, considered all he has lost in our previous encounters. I am amazed he even acknowledged the hyper-pulse message.*'

The mercenary colonel now stood on both feet, and offered his hand. Shocked, Torc hesitated for what must have been an uncomfortably long time for the Inner Sphere warrior. After a moment, the Clan warrior reciprocated the custom.

"Star Captain Torc, I presume." He said, with a slight smile.

"Colonel Richards…it is strangely comforting to see the face of my nemesis

among the warriors of the Inner Sphere. In truth, I am surprised you are here."

The colonel's hand went back to the comfort of his hip as he took another drag.

"I'd be lying if I said I was here out of the kindness of my heart," He laughed " but I *am* a professional soldier. You're offer was too interesting to pass up. If your people valued money as we do, you'd understand."

"Ah. Money…yes, I understand its use among a people that are without the caste system. I trust the offer of salvage appeared as lucrative as currency."

"IF we DO win, it will be more than any mid-sized unit I personally know has earned." The colonel moved away from his mech and Torc walked besides him.

"I had a bit of a time getting some of the lads to go for this. They really don't like you clansmen…especially the Smoke Jaguars. And I think you know why."

Torc nodded as he walked.

"It is understandable. I am sure many of the warriors that fell in our frequent engagements still hold fresh places in the hearts of your warriors. If it is any consolation, I held no malice and only the greatest respect for your unit's fighting skills. They fought like the Jaguar."

"My men are soldiers for hire first, Captain Torc. I'd be lying though, if I said they don't hold a grudge. But even they know a good deal when they see it. When I told them I'd received an offer from YOU, they all looked shell-shocked. None of us have ever heard of any clan, especially a crusader clan, hiring mercenaries. The fact that it was the Smoke Jaguars, and the 4th Dragoons to boot…well, you could have heard a pin drop."

The two men stopped and gazed off to the mountain pass half a mile to the south. Even from here, the narrowness of the canyon was obvious. It opened out like a stone funnel onto the plains where the two units stood.

"I assume you chose this particular site for a reason, Torc?"

"Aff, colonel. The canyon the 7th will come through is too narrow for them to come at us with any speed. They will have difficulty navigating the narrow neck of the pass with more than one or two OmniMechs at any time." Torc turned and pointed to where the Dirty Dozen stood.

"Where your men are assembled, they will have a clear shot down into this valley", He looked at Richards's face. "I have seen your warrior's skill at ranged attacks. Never have I seen its likes before. Either within the Clans or Inner Sphere."

Richards frowned at the compliment. Then spoke.

"Captain, I can understand how the pass can work to my men's advantage, but I don't see how your unit can gain by it. Won't you be using your clan's rules of dueling?"

Torc shook his head.

"No, Colonel. This is a Trial of Annihilation. The 7th Jaguar Dragoons and the 44th Nova Cats will engage us with everything they have. Savagely, colonel. There are no rules of Zellbrigen in such a trial."

"That sounds like a pretty tall order to defend against, Star Captain. I don't enjoy the idea of being targeted by massed clan firepower."

"That is why the 4th will bear the brunt of our enemy's initial thrust. Your men will have several moments of firing without fear of reprisal. "

"They're not just going to ignore us."

"No, but to the 7th and 44th, the objective of this Trial is to destroy the 4th Dragoons. And they also will undoubtedly view your unit as less honorable targets. In any instance, if

things go badly, your men will have the best opportunity of escape."

The Inner Sphere warrior regarded the clan leader with something akin to growing admiration.

"You're not planning on fighting to the last 'Mech, are you, Torc?"

The clan warrior did not meet the mercenary's gaze, though his face took on a hard look.

"This *is* a Trial to the last warrior on either side, colonel. But if there is anything I have learned in my battles with your kind, it is that there is no honor standing your ground and being slaughtered, when there are other options. We are greatly outnumbered overall in the trial. Only a fool, or perhaps a Jade Falcon, would try to defeat his enemy in a stand up fight when so outmatched. '

"That is why I have spread this Trial out, so that the enemy, who is not forbidden from making bids, will weaken himself to the point where we have a chance to win. Although they may voice anger at your presence here, the dishonor they would feel in losing to mercenary warriors will keep them from breaking their bids.

At least, that is what will happen if I have judged the enemy commanders that we will face correctly. Yesterday, the 4th defeated our enemy in the Northern Hemisphere, so it appears I have been at least partially accurate in my assessment."

"I hope the hell your right, Star Captain. If you're wrong, we won't live long enough to tell you about it. There's one more question I have."

Torc turned after a moment of silence to face the mercenary.

"Does the 'Why' really matter to you?" Torc asked.

"You have to admit, Star Captain. Your actions are about as unclan-like as anything I've seen. I've heard of free-born warriors making they way through the Inner Sphere to fight as mercenaries or even as gladiators on Solaris…but never a line-unit."

A smile graced Torc's mouth, something that almost never happened, even in victory.

"Among my people, it is considered disgraceful to question authority. Members of a lower caste may even be executed for it. I have done things in my career that would no doubt shock and appall you, a seasoned warrior. And never had I given it any thought. I am not the original leader of this unit, colonel. There was another, though he is long dead. He taught me the meaning of true honor. Not just a warriors' honor, but that of a human being."

"Our people exist to fight, and in ways, that is the most honorable thing one can expect. But to fight without a cause is shameful…a waste of materials and manpower that was considered anathema to the vision of Nicholas Kerensky. The former leader of the 4th knew this. That is why he requested, and was happily granted, dominance of what you would label malcontents. We have a word for it among the Clans: Dezgra.

He fashioned the worst of all the Jaguar warriors into what is perhaps the finest Jaguar unit in many generations of our clan. When our command learned of this, they sent the Dragoons on the most dangerous of missions. But the 4th has always prevailed when it counted the most, and so our reputation began to outweigh our inherent disgrace.

Star Colonel Lyndel had always towed the line, but his objection to the destruction of Edo, on this very planet, destroyed any burgeoning respect for the unit. Those of the truest Crusader sentiment demanded we be relegated to garrison duty, assigned the use of what are considered obsolete BattleMechs.

The colonel demanded a Trial of Refusal, and we won the battle at considerably long odds. But the upper echelons of command were hardly finished. Using the most disgraceful of tactics, deception, the Dragoons were sent on a mission that would guarantee its destruction, one way or the other. Lyndel saw the ruse for what it was, and that is when he made all of his plans know to us. How we managed to survive and return from that mission still eludes me.

It was obvious to me at that point that the leadership of Clan Smoke Jaguar had lost the vision the Kerensky's had so reverently entrusted to us. Unfortunately, Lyndel was killed in his attempt to win a Blood-Name, though he managed to kill his opponent in the final round. Command fell to me after I defeated another among us who was also in line for the now-vacant leadership.

I found, while packing the colonels belongings, a holo-disk with my name and the name of the Star Commander I defeated. Lyndel intended to see the fruition of his plans even from beyond the grave if necessary, and I have followed those plans. We do not intend to return to the clan, should we win this Trial. Before you ask the reason why we did not leave without a battle…well, that of a human being might overshadow the honor of a warrior…but it is honor none the less. And these *are* warriors we face. Not innocents like at Edo."

The colonel looked flabbergasts.

"Where will you go?"

"That remains undecided. It will surely be somewhere in the Inner Sphere. But that is a goal far from here, along a difficult path. There is every chance we will fail, but I intend to make our former brethren pay for their atrocities, acts that have driven us from our clan.

I found it only fitting that some small amount of honor be returned to the name of the Smoke Jaguar, on the very planet our honor was taken from us."

Broken Hope Pass-6 hours later

Colonel Richards keyed his tac-com once again, opening a direct feed to his men.

"All right, people. The 4th's point-guard just sent a priority-red tight-beam. Looks like the Nova Cats and enemy Jaguars are on the prowl. Look's like the 'Cats are taking a turn at leading the assault after the 'Jags botched it up north. Remember, we concentrate on 'Mechs as they come out of the box. Leave those who get past our designated kill-zone for the 4th."

As he spoke, a *Koshi* OmniMech with a large red '4th' on its right shoulder-joint burst from the mouth of the canyon at full sprint. The machine nearly lost its balance on the broken ground at the valley's mouth, but the pilot kept the machine upright. In less than ten seconds, the small 'Mech crossed through the line of the gray-spotted 'Jaguars assembled on the valley floor below.

"Ok, one last check of Network coordination systems. Havelock, how do you read me?'

The midnight-black *Wraith*, looking small from this height, turned and waved its arm back toward the rest of the 'Dozen. Lieutenant Havelock and Sergeant Spalding, in his *Phoenix Hawk*, had taken up positions relatively close to the mouth of the pass, far to the left of the 4th's line.

"I read a direct beam to you guys", Havelock responded. "Just make sure you guys shoot what we target. His nervous laugh betrayed the unease and excitement the

Wraith pilot felt. He had front-row seats to what promised to be a spectacular light show.

"Don't worry your head about that. You tag 'em, we bag 'em." A voice broke in. Richards grinned. Vero's *Gunslinger* would most likely get the first kill, with its paired gauss rifles. Two more 'Mechs of Havelock's scout lance were hiding a ways behind the 4th's battle-line, in the only cover the valley offered. They reported linking in and clear, and the rest of the unit did likewise.

Torc's comment about accuracy had been correct, but there was more to it then his men's skill. They were all good pilots, a few could be considered elite, but it was the Command, Control and Communications Network that was responsible for the facts of Torc's opinion.

The C-3 Network allowed his unit to use each other's targeting telemetry, effectively bringing the enemy much closer for firing purposes. Richards almost felt a little guilty not telling Torc about the network, but the Jaguar commander was still a potential enemy, and the colonel did not wish to give up an edge should his warriors and Torc's meet as enemies again.

"Colonel Richards, this is Star Captain Torc. You have undoubtedly seen the return of our scout. He reports line-of-sight contact with our enemy. They are seconds behind him. Are your warriors ready?"

"They are, Captain." After a moment he added "Good hunting, Star Captain."

"Aff, colonel. And you."

A pair of dark gray OmniMechs bolted out from opening of the twisting canyon, barreling in toward the waiting defender's line.

"Have at 'em!" Richards shouted. Before he finished the sentence, the heavy and assault 'Mechs of the Dirty Dozen's other two lances opened up with every thing they had. The closest enemy OmniMech, labeled '*Ryoken*' by the Network, received the hail of gauss slugs, particle beams and cluster rounds. The *Ryoken* had only started to achieve a target lock, when its pilot saw the wave of death approaching.

Four particle beams arrived a split second before just as many gauss slugs hit the medium machine, all impacting on the left side of the quick 'Mech. Most of a flight of 60 long-range missiles from the 'Dozen's *Salamander* found their marks, followed by what seemed an endless wave of missiles and smoke that led back to the 'Dozen's vehicle contingent.

Unbalanced by the barrage, the machine hop-stepped to the left and the pilot fought a hopeless battle against momentum and gravity. The machine hit the ground and plowed a ten-meter trench of earth through the tough clay.

The other machine, a *Dragonfly*, dodged and darted through the firestorm, clearing the kill-zone of the Inner Sphere 'Mechs with armor intact. Unfortunately, its speed proved no match for the waiting line of enemy OmniMechs. Though there was a distinct dislike for the use of Inner Sphere 'wolf-pack' tactics among the 4th's warriors, none hesitated when Torc gave the word to fire.

As impressive as the opening salvo from the mercenaries had been, one could hardly deny the effect of more than twice that many OmniMechs firing at the same time. Many of the 4th's weapons missed their mark as the agile machine bucked and dodged, but the sheer volume of fire doomed the enemy OmniMech. The *Dragonfly*'s medium pulse lasers and SRM were still out of range when the machine fell, an arm and opposite leg blasted loose from the crippled clan 'Mech's torso.

The colonel breathed in with a small pang of regret, as he saw the badly damaged and out-gunned *Ryoken* start to struggle to its feet. He keyed the microphone again.

"Finish it up."

Another salvo of fire erupted from the Inner Sphere's position, blowing the *Ryoken* up and out of its trench, literally ripping the 'Mech apart.

"Hate to break up the party, colonel, but here comes the rest of the Jaguars." Havelock sent.

From his advantage point, Richards could see what looked like an endless line of enemy OmniMechs, a snake-like procession that was nearly pushing each other over in their attempt to get at the waiting enemy in the valley beyond. A few of the faster machines bolted out ahead of the main column, and the Inner Sphere 'Mechs rained down death and destruction, but there were so many targets that many escaped hits and rushed the 4th's line.

A *BlackHawk* bolted past the *Wraith*'s position where it hugged the hill, and Havelock poured pulse energy-quarrels into the back of the Nova Cat machine, followed a split second by the large lasers of the nearby *Phoenix Hawk.*

Smoke boiled out a slash in the *BlackHawk*'s rear torso, but the deadly OmniMech did not go down. The squat machine brought its right arm around and lashed back at its tormentors with half a dozen medium lasers, slashing jagged, blackened furrows in the legs of the *Wraith* as Havelock jumped the machine up and back to the *BlackHawk*'s right.

A luckless *Goshawk*, knocked prone by the massed fire aimed at the mouth of the pass, fell victim to its fellow clansmen as a pair of *Daishi* assault OmniMechs stepped on the medium machine, driving it a meter into the clay and crushing its torso. Unmoved or simply uncaring, the pilots of the *Daishi* continued their charge out into the open field.

A star of Nova Cats attempted to flank the 4th's battle-line, crossing into the hills near the left of the pass's mouth. When they had committed to the act, three 'Dragoons OmniMechs vaulted the hills and landed in the rushing Nova Cat formation's rear. The lead *Hellcat* sent 7 medium pulse lasers into the rear of the trailing *Fenris*, setting off an ammo explosion that blossomed into a fusion reactor detonation.

The white fire of the fusion blast engulfed another *Dragonfly*, which in turn erupted, destroying an adjacent *Thor (*).* The resulting concussion ravaged the armor of the 4th's two closest Omni's, but they remained in the fight. Torc's *MadCat* paced the line of his formation, sending bolt after bolt of particle energy into the attacking 'Mechs. Swarm munitions almost went haywire trying to pick the closest tragets in the mouth of the pass.

The *Warhammer*-IICs, *Marauder*-IICs and *Daishi*s of the 4th pummeled the advancing 'Mechs, but were beginning to take losses of their own. The mounting enemy's size and number were starting to tell…

[**This actually happened in the game, as we were using the engine explosion rules from the Tactical Handbook.*]

SITUATION:

Star Captain Torc chose a mountainous terrain for the second battle in the Trial of Annihilation. Broken Hope Pass was cut millions of years past through some of the roughest terrain on Turtle Bay. Declaring Safe-Con for the 7th and 44th, the attacking units behaved exactly as predicted,

performing a combat drop on the reported location of the 4th, treating the 4th as if they were bandits and ignoring the honorable offer of Safe-Con.

There was considerable agitation among the 7th's warriors when they discovered the 4th was not where they were supposed to be. They had left a clear trail where they had gone, however…through the pass known as Broken Hope. The first Nova Cats and Smoke Jaguars to exit the far side of the pass were in for a rude shock: Inner Sphere mercenaries were assisting the 4th.

SETUP:

Lay out five BattleTech maps with as shown. ↑N
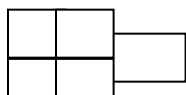
The Eastern-most map should be turned over so that the white hexes show. Or four Ishiyama map sections if these are available, set so that only one section of the map link to another in a 4-map chain. If using the white side of a map, that map, only the center two hex rows of this map may be used, and LOS exists to the valley only on the last four hexes at the western edge of this map.

The remaining four maps should be as follows: the middle two maps should each have at least one large hill and few trees. To represent the twisting confines while using the white back of a map, limit fire into or out of the eastern map's West Side to 7 hexes. The western-most maps should have smaller hills and regular amounts of trees. In any event, it should take at least several rounds to get all the attacking 'Mechs onto the east board's far edge, since only one 'Mech may occupy a hex.

ATTACKER:

The attackers are elements of the 44th nova Cat Cavaliers and the 7th Jaguar Dragoons. They enter the eastern map on Turn #1, though it may be several turns before all of the units finally make it onto the map. Note that several of these units are not front-line OmniMechs, and represent BattleMechs that were stationed close enough to reach the Trial in short order. None of the attackers are prohibited from using massed fire.

Nova Cat Forces:
[The numbers in parentheses are Gunnery/Piloting Skill Levels]

Elements of Gamma Striker Galaxy
1st Trinary (The Flaming Fists)
(Some units have been bid away)

Command Super Nova (minus Elementals)
Star Captain Picard (2/3)	*Behemoth*	
MW Wesley	(3/3)	*Cauldron Born* 'A'
MW LaForge	(3/4)	*Nova Cat* Primary
MW Troi	(2/3)	*Black Hawk* 'A'

Gamma Star
Star Com. Ryker	(2/3)	*Daishi* 'Widow-maker'
MW Calloway	(2/3)	*Nibori-Nin* 'B'
MW Ro Laren	(3/3)	*Vulture* Primary

Omega Star
Star Com. Data	(3/3)	*Daishi* 'A'
MW McNight	(3/3)	*Naga* 'B'
MW Ogawa	(2/4)	*Gladiator* 'A'

Nova Cat 2nd Trinary (The She-Devils)
Comamnd Star
SC Jill	(2/3)	*Mad Cat* Primary
MW Kelly	(2/4)	*Ryoken* 'A'
MW Stephanie	(2/4)	*Daishi* 'A'
MW Hellen	(3/3)	*Thor* 'C'
MW Dawn	(2/5)	*Dragonfly* 'A'

Support Star Rho

Star Com. Kristi	(2/5)	*Daishi* Primary
MW Andrea	(2/3)	*Supernova*
MW Marie	(2/5)	*Rifleman IIC*
MW Emily	(2/3)	*Viper*
MW Corey	(3/3)	*Mad Cat* 'A'

Attack Star Phi

Star Com. Michelle	(2/3)	*Behemoth*
MW Mystah	(2/4)	*Viper*
MW Mellinda	(2/4)	*Warhammer IIC*
MW Amanda	(2/3)	*Ryoken* 'B'
MW Jennifer	(3/4)	*Thor* Primary

Elements/Reinforcement Star (EnterTurn #8)

Star Com. Jerro	(2/3)	*Masakari* Primary
MW Finnigan	(3/4)	*Super Nova*
MW Otter	(3/4)	*Vulture* 'B'
MW Grinch	(3/4)	*Gladiator* 'A'

Elements of the 7th Jaguar Dragoons:

Super Nova Alpha (minus Elementals)

Star Capt. Vural	(1/3)	*Daishi* 'C'
MW King	(2/3)	*Mad Cat* 'A'
MW Johnson	(2/3)	*Masakari* 'C'
MW Vicious	(2/4)	*Masakari* Primary
MW Gyro	(2/4)	*Ryoken* 'B'

Alpha Hammer:

Star Com. Killroy	(2/3)	*Ryoken* 'B'
MW Billyboy (?)	(3/3)	*Phantom* 'C'
MW Jiggly	(3/5)	*Pouncer* Primary
MW Razy	(3/4)	*Fenris* Primary
MW Jingle	(3/5)	*Puma* Primary

Alpha Anvil:

Star Com. Anjina	(2/3)	*Man O'War* 'A'
MW Juno	(3/3)	*Daishi* 'A'
MW Bravo	(2/4)	*Black Hawk* Primary
MW Galaleo	(2/3)	*Black Hawk* 'A'
MW Byron	(2/3)	*Viper*

Defender:

The defenders are elements of the 4th jaguar Dragoons and the Dirty Dozen Mercenary Company.

They set up prior to Turn #1 in the following manner: the 4th sets up in a straight battle line at least 12 hexes away from the western-most edge of the east map, on either of the two center maps. Alpha Claw sets up anywhere on the southern center map using 'Hidden Units' rules. Star Captain Torc may be set up anywhere on either map, as long as he starts within five hexes of the main Jaguar line.

The Dirty Dozen set up anywhere on the north-most center map. The *Wraith* and *Phoenix Hawk* from the Recon lance must set up within 10 hexes of the opening that leads into the eastern map. The other two 'Mechs from this lance, the *Huron Warrior* and *Clint*, may set up anywhere on the map using 'Hidden Units' rules, as long as they are *at least* 15 hexes away from the eastern map. The SRM Carriers may be set up with 'Hidden Units' rules anywhere within 5 hexes of the 'Dozen's hill.

' The Dirty Dozen ' Mercenary Company:

(All BattleMechs are modified (some more than others) to accommodate C-3 Components. Most of these designs have official C-3 counterparts in the *TRO: 3060.* Feel free to use these if you don't wish to take the time to modify existing sheets.)

SAPPHIRE LANCE

Colonel James Richards (1/1) **MAD-4A Marauder-II**
[Richard's Marauder has dropped 10 of its 29 heat sinks and replaced the remaining 19 with double-strength units. The PPC's have been upgraded to ER variants. A master C-3 unit sits in each side torso]

Lieutenant Vero (2/3) **GUN-1ERD Gunslinger**
[Replace one medium pulse laser with a regular medium laser. Add a Slave to the right torso]

Pvt. Alberto (3/4) **PPR-5S Salamander**
[Replace one medium laser with a Slave to the right torso]

Pvt. Smith (3/4) **PTR-4D Penetrator**
[Replace one medium pulse laser with a regular medium laser. Add a Slave to the right torso]

ONYX LANCE:

Lieutenant Parish (2/4) **Rifleman IIC**
(Salvaged) [Replaced one large pulse laser with a clan ER-medium laser. Add a C-3 Master to the right torso]

Sgt. Horner (3/4) **WHR-7M Warhammer**
[Replace one Streak SRM-2 with a Slave unit. Add 4 pts of armor to each leg.]

Pvt. Amotto (2/3) **BZR-9L Berserker** [Replace the Large Pulse Laser with a Clan large Pulse Laser, add a Slave unit to the left torso.]

Pvt. Dobbs (3/3) **HBK-4H Hunchback** [Add Endo Steel to the 'Mech, CASE in the torso housing ammo, and remove the small laser and install a Slave unit in the head. Upgrade the medium lasers to pulse lasers, and 4 pts of armor to each leg.]

EMERALD LANCE:

Lieutenant Havlock (2/3)   **TR-1Wraith**
[Replace a medium pulse laser with a standard medium. Add a Slave Unit to the *Wraith*'s right torso.]
Sgt. Spalding (3/3)   **PXH-3M Phoenix Hawk**
[Replace the AMS and ammo with a Slave Unit to the *'Hawk's* right torso. Add 4 pts. of armor to the legs.]
Pvt. Jenkins (2/2) **HUR-WO-R4L Huron Warrior**
[Replace the Large Laser with a C-3 Master Unit in the '*Warrior*'s RT]
Pvt. Potter (4/5) **CLNT-2-3U** Clint [Replace a medium laser with a Slave Unit in the *Clint*'s head.]

COPPER LANCE (VEHICLE SUPPORT)

Sgt. Owens	(3/4)	*SRM Carrier*
Sgt. Zuken	(4/5)	*SRM Carrier*

4th Jaguar Dragoons

ALPHA COMMAND STAR

Star Captain Torc	(0/0)	*MadCat 'A'*
MW Stilleto	(2/3)	*Marauder IIC*
MW Fozzy	(3/4)	*Daishi 'A'*
MW Dlake	(2/4)	*Daishi 'S'*
MW Reece	(2/4)	*Ryoken* 'A'

ALPHA ASSAULT:

Star Com. Bill	(2/3)	*Battlemaster 3W*
MW Bosha	(2/3)	*Stalker IIC*
MW Plumb	(2/4)	*Stalker IIC*
MW Trash	(3/3)	*Masakari 'C'*
MW Druppi	(2/4)	*Warhammer IIC (SJ)*

ALPHA POUNCE:

Star Com. Barkley	(2/3)	*Koshi* 'A'
MW Hooter	(3/4)	*Shadow Cat* 'A'
MW Jabba	(3/4)	*Shadow Cat* 'A'
MW Bull	(2/4)	*Puma* 'A'
MW Chigger	(3/5)	*Fenris* 'D'

BRAVO COMMAND STAR:

Star Com. Pyra	(2/4)	*Rifleman IIC*
MW Twist	(3/4)	*Rifleman IIC*
MW Doeth	(1/2)	*Masakari* 'C'
MW Kruger	(2/3)	*Crusader IIC*
MW Crush	(3/4)	*Crusader IIC*

BRAVO PURSUIT:

Star Com. Stone	(2/3)	*Ryoken* 'A'
MW Hawk	(3/4)	*Ryoken* 'A'
MW Nova-Cat	(2/3)	*Mako* Primary
MW Crumb	*(3/4)*	*Mako* Primary
MW Tumor	(2/4)	*Black Hawk* 'S'

BRAVO CLAW:

Star Com. Acex	(1/1)	*Hellcat* Primary
MW Jones	(2/2)	*Hellcat* Primary
MW Axe	(2/3)	*Thor* 'B'

Victory Conditions:

This is a Trial of Annihilation. The last surviving 'Mech, or the last 'Mech on the board should one side retreat, wins. Historically (on the game table in my basement), the 4th and the DD retreated, dealing out massive damage before retreating to the last battleground (for next issue). The 7th and 44th paid a horrendous price for the pyric victory. 28 of the attacking units were destroyed, while 9 of the 4th's OmniMechs suffered a similar fate. 7 of these warriors died due to cockpit destruction.

Four of the Dirty Dozen's units lay shattered, including the two SRM Carriers. Even though the defenders did massive damage, attrition started to take its toll when Torc ordered the withdrawal to Claidonia Space Port, for the final show down with the enemy.

Some of the mechs used in this scenario were customs on both sides. I have replaced these on the Nova Cat and 7th Dragoon's side with mechs of similar tonnage or close capability. Those customs used by the 4th are detailed below. The *Mako* appeared in last issue's opening scenario.

Special Equipment:

NAME: HellCat (Grey Wolf) OmniMech
TONNAGE: 75
TECHNOLOGY LEVEL: Clan - Level 2 (Omni-Mech)

Equipment		Mass	
Internal Structure: -		EndoSteel	4.0
Engine:	375 XL	19.5	
Walking MP:	5[10]		
Running MP:	8		
Jumping MP:	0		
Heat Sinks: 15(30) - Double		5.0	
Pod Space:		24.5	
Gyro:		4.0	
Cockpit:		3.0	
Armor Factor: 231 FF		12.0	

		Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head		3	9
Center Torso/(rear)		23	36/10
R/L Torso/	(rear)	16	24/8
R/L Arm		12	24
R/L Leg		16	32

Weapons/Ammo	Location	Critical	Tonnage*
Fixed:			
MASC	LT	3	3.0

ENDO	RT	2	---	
ENDO	RA	5	---	
FERRO	LT	2	---	
FERRO	LA	5	---	

Primary:

Med. Pulse Laser	LA	1	2.0	
Med. Pulse Laser	LA	1	2.0	
Med. Pulse Laser	LA	1	2.0	
Med. Pulse Laser	RA	1	2.0	
Med. Pulse Laser	RA	1	2.0	
Med. Pulse Laser	RA	1	2.0	
Med. Pulse Laser	H	1	2.0	
ER-Small Laser	CT	1	0.5	
ECM Suite	LT	1	1.0	
TARGETING COMP	RT	3	3.0	
DHS	RT	2	1.0	
Jump jet	RL	1	1.0	
Jump jet	RL	1	1.0	
Jump jet	CT	1	1.0	
Jump jet	LL	1	1.0	
Jump jet	LL	1	1.0	

BV: 3,000

A:

ER Large Laser	LA	1	4.0	
ER Large Laser	RA	1	4.0	
ER Medium Laser	H	1	1.0	
ER SMALL	CT	1	0.5	
STREAK SRM 6	LA	2	3.0	
STREAK SRM 6	LT	2	3.0	
STREAK SRM 6	RA	2	3.0	
STREAK SRM 6	RT	2	3.0	
Streak Ammo (30)	LT	2	2.0	
Streak Ammo (15)	RT	1	1.0	

BV: 2358

B:

LRM 20	RT	4	5.0	
LRM 20	LT	4	5.0	
Med. Pulse Laser	RA	1	2.0	
Med. Pulse Laser	RA	1	2.0	
Med. Pulse Laser	LA	1	2.0	
Med. Pulse Laser	LA	1	2.0	
ARTEMIS IV FCS	RT	1	1.0	
ARTEMIS IV FCS	LT	1	1.0	

AMS	H	1	0.5	
LRM Ammo (6)	LL	1	1.0	
LRM Ammo (6)	RL	1	1.0	
LRM Ammo (6)	RT	1	1.0	
AMS AMMO (24)	CT	1	1.0	

BV 2512

C:

ER PPC	LA	2	6.0	
ER PPC	RA	2	6.0	
ER Small Laser	LA	1	0.5	
ER Small Laser	LA	1	0.5	
ER Small Laser	LA	1	0.5	
ER Small Laser	RA	1	0.5	
ER Small Laser	RA	1	0.5	
Targeting Computer	RT	3	3.0	
TAG	H	1	1.0	
2 DHS	RT	4	2.0	
1 DHS	LT	1	1.0	
1 DHS	CT	1	1.0	
1 DHS	LL	1	1.0	
1 DHS	RL	1	1.0	

BV: 2694

D:

Ultra AC/20	RT	8	12.0	
ER Large Laser	LA	1	4.0	
ER Large Laser	RA	1	4.0	
ER Medium Laser	H	1	1.0	
ER Small Laser	CT	1	0.5	
AC Ammo (15)	LT	3	3.0	

BV: 2138

(** No lower arm/hand actuators on ANY variants.*)

OVERVIEW:

The *Hellcat* (Grey Wolf among the Clans) is a Smoke-Jaguar OmniMech designed for fighting the Inner-Sphere on its own terms: Up Close. The 'Jaguars, grudgingly impressed with the speed and firepower of Clan Wolf's Timber Wolf design, used that famous mech as a base design for the *Hellcat*. Physically, the closest description an Inner Sphere warrior might give is that the Hellcat resembles a *Mad Cat*,

minus the telltale missile pods. What might look like a *Vulture* Primary's arms are also seen on the *Hellcat*.

Capabilities:

In its Primary configuration, the *Hellcat* is pure meanness, incorporating MASC with a monstrous 375 XL engine and jump jets, it possesses unprecedented speed and maneuverability. 7 medium pulse lasers provide the bite up close when mated to the *Hellcat*'s targeting computer. The designers noted some Inner-Sphere mech's ability to arm-flip, and so they added this useful tech to the *Hellcat*. The Primary variant excels in city fighting, mounting either an active probe when attacking or an ECM suit when defending in such terrain.

The 'A' variant is an excellent fighter at all ranges. This version seems to owe its configuration to the *Timber Wolf* D. The 'B' variant of the *Hellcat* is the support version, mounting a pair of LRM 20's and Artemis Fire support. A quartet of medium pulse lasers ensures accurate fire against anyone who decides to come in close. Mounting energy weapons and a targeting computer, the C variant is useful for prolonged operations away from supply lines.

When hunting medium class 'Mechs, the 'D' variant is the *Hellcat* of choice for most 'Jaguar pilots. Its limited weaponry makes tackling heavy and assault 'Mechs very dicey in the 'D' pilot, but for its assigned role, the Class 20 Ultra auto cannon is usually crippling in one salvo. Elusive light and medium 'Mechs and bigger units can be speared with the ER large lasers at a safer range.

[NOTE: If using level 3 tech, the Watchdog system replaces the Active Probe or ECM.]

Deployment:

This machine is seen primarily among the 4th Jaguar Dragoons, who are almost never seen in battle without it.

Battle History:

The 4th Dragoons have used *Hellcat*s in many battles vs. Kurita units. In every battle, the machine has accounted for at least two kills, using its MASC and jumping to leap behind a Kurita assailant and arm-flip for a shot at the Draconis 'Mech's rear armor.

NAME: CRD-3 (C) Crusader IIC
TONNAGE: 70
TECHNOLOGY LEVEL: Level 2 (Clan Refit)

Equipment	Mass

Internal Structure: - EndoSteel		3.5	
Engine: 280		16.0	
Walking MP:	4		
Running MP:	6		
Jumping MP:	0		
Heat Sinks: 14(28) - Double		4.0	
Gyro:		3.0	
Cockpit:		3.0	
Armor Factor: 211 (Ferro-Fibrous)		11.0	

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head	3	9
Center Torso/ (rear)	22	34/8
R/L Torso/ (rear)	15	22/8
R/L Arm	11	20
R/L Leg	15	30

Weapons / Ammo	Location		Critical Tonnage
LRM 20	LT	4	5.0
LRM 20	RT	4	5.0
Medium Pulse Laser	LA	1	2.0
Medium Pulse Laser	RA	1	2.0
Streak SRM 6	LL	2	3.0
Streak SRM 6	LL	2	3.0
AMS	H	1	0.5
Artemis IV	RT	1	1.0
Artemis IV	LT	1	1.0
LRM 20 Ammo (12)	RT	2	2.0
LRM 20 Ammo (12)	LT	2	2.0
SRM Ammo (15)	RT	1	1.0
SRM Ammo (15)	LT	1	1.0
AMS Ammo (24)	RT	1	1.0

OVERVIEW:

First encountered on the Steel Viper world of Jabuka, the *Crusader IIC* was an unpleasant surprise for Inner Sphere mercenary raiders. Not just a field upgrade, this machine, like the more common *Shadow-Hawk IIC* and *Griffin IIC* mechs, is a completely new design, superior to it's parent machine in nearly every way.

Capabilities:

While the *Crusader IIC*, like other second-line refits, has had ts weight altered, the Vipers have kept the *Crusader*'s purpose very close to the original combat role. The CRD-3 (C) is first a missile support mech, equipped with massive dual LRM 20 launchers mated to the Artemis-IV missile system. Streak technology ahs been replaced the older,

inefficient SRM-6 racks, and Pulse technology has been added to the already-excellent laser systems.

While the *Crusader IIC* is no more maneuverable that it's inner-sphere counter part, it runs much cooler in combat, packs a greater supply of missiles and its impressive armor, Anti-Missile System and lack of an extra-light engine guarantee this design incredible durability and an excellent combat-life.

Deployment:

To date, the machine has confirmed sightings among the Steel Vipers, Clan Wolf, Jade Falcons and the Nova Cats.

Battle History:

The Inner Sphere got its first taste of this machine on the Steel-Viper world of Jabuka. Elements of the Black-Hole Mercenary Regiment's 2nd Company, "Sons of Thunder", were conducting guerilla raids against the Viper garrison of Tulogwa. Luring the Vipers second-line machines into a forested pass, the Son's support lance, consisting of *Archer*s and *Trebuchet*s, picked the oncoming machines labeled as *Crusader*s for their first target.

Disarray met astonishment as the clan machines weathered a storm of LRM's that would have annihilated Inner Sphere *Crusader*s, closing to the IS machines. Once in close, the superior clan tech proved fatal to the support lance and effectively ended the Black Hole Bandit 'Mech's attempts at completing their mission. Ironically, for once clan tech was effectively used in a fashion it was not designed for, close-in fighting.

Variants:

The only know variant removes the anti-missile system and ammo and adds an ER-small laser to the head and another heat sink. This design is totally heat efficient.

NAME: STK-3 (C) Stalker IIC
TONNAGE: 85
TECHNOLOGY LEVEL: Level 2 (Clan Refit)

Equipment		Mass	
Internal Structure: - EndoSteel		4.5	
Engine:	255	13.0	
Walking MP:	3		
Running MP:	5		
Jumping MP:	0		
Heat Sinks: 19(38) - Double	9.0		
Gyro:		3.0	
Cockpit:		3.0	
Armor Factor: 263		16.5	

	Internal Structure	Armor Value	
Head	3	9	
Center Torso /(rear)		27	42/12
R/L Torso /(rear)	18	25/11	
R/L Arm	14	28	
R/L Leg	18	36	

Weapons /Ammo	Location	Critical	Tonnage	
ER Large Laser	LA	1	4.0	
ER Large Laser	RA	1	4.0	
Medium Pulse Laser	CT	1	2.0	
Medium Pulse Laser	H	1	2.0	
LRM 20	LT	4	5.0	
LRM 20	RT	4	5.0	
Streak SRM 6	LT	2	3.0	
Streak SRM 6	RT	2	3.0	
Artemis IV		LT	1	1.0
Artemis IV		RT	1	1.0
LRM 20 Ammo (12)		LT	2	2.0
LRM 20 Ammo (12)		RT	2	2.0
SRM Ammo	(15)	LT	1	1.0
SRM Ammo	(15)	RT	1	1.0

OVERVIEW:

The *Stalker* was the most common of assault 'Mechs prior to the Exodus. It goes without saying, then that great many went with General Kerensky when he departed known space. Know for making relentless, if somewhat slow, advances, the *Stalker* was highly adept at engaging the enemy at every range. This led to the *Stalker* being versatile, but hardly a threat to the more mission-based designs, which could out-class the *Stalker* at whatever range they were designed to fight at. While it packed a large amount of weaponry, it could hardly fire all the weapons on board without fear of immediate shutdown.

Capabilities:

Unfortunately for the Inner Sphere, The *Stalker IIC* suffers none of these design flaws, save lack of speed. Mounting a pair of extended range large lasers and a dual LRM-20 rack powered by Artemis IV guidance, the *Stalker IIC* possesses ranged fire power few 'Mechs can match. The danger just gets worse when a unit closes with the *Stalker IIC*...twin streak 6 racks and a pair of medium pulse lasers add to the carnage suffered by any enemy of the *Stalker IIC* faced while closing with this deadly machine.

Deployment:

These machines are as common in clan garrison clusters as they are in Inner Sphere armies. Every clan uses the *Stalker IIC*.

Battle History:

Stalker IIC 'Mechs saw intense action during Operation Bulldog, and there is at least one account of these machines engaging each other among Nova Cat and Smoke Jaguar forces during the operation. Several mercenary units have captured *Stalker IIC* s during raids into Jade Falcon and Steel Viper space. Several are rumored to be among the Clan Wolf in Exile forces on Arc Royal.

Variants

There are no known variants of this 'Mech…either the clans don't wish to tinker with a successful design, or they feel the machine is not worth resources that would be better used refitting or redesigning new OmniMechs.

BATTLEMASTER

The BLR-3W Battle Master appeared in '*Inbound*', an MECHFORCE-U.K. scenario pack that offered battles from BattleTech fiction. This 'Mech is designed around the Red Corsair's refitted *Battlemaster*. An excellent design well worth a look, and the scenario pack ain't that bad, either...

NAME: BLR-3W Battlemaster
TONNAGE: 85
TECHNOLOGY LEVEL: Level 2 (Clan Refit)

WALK: 4
RUN: 6
JUMP: 0

ENGINE: 340XL	13.5	
GYRO:	4.0	
HEAT SINKS: 24 (48)		14.0
INTERN. STRUCTURE: [ENDO]	4.5	
ARMOR: 262 pt.[Normal]	16.5	

H:	9
CT/(R):	40/14
ST/(R):	28/8
ARM:	28
LEG:	36

WEAPONS/EQUIPMENT	Weight	Location
ER-PPC	6.0	RA
ER-PPC	6.0	RA
Large Pulse Laser	6.0	CT
Medium Pulse Laser	2.0	LT
Medium Pulse Laser	2.0	LT
Medium Pulse Laser	2.0	RT
Medium Pulse Laser	2.0	RT
ER-Medium Laser	1.0	H
ER-Medium Laser	1.0	LT
ER-Medium Laser	1.0	RT

BV: 2482

Variants:

'*Inbound*'' listed a Nova Cat variant that weighs 75 tons, has a 5/8 move, and replaces the ER-PPC's with ER-Large Lasers. Run's a bit hot, but a *Battlemaster* moving that fast *must* look cool.

PARTING SHOTS:

Well…we've made it through what's turned out to be a semi-important milestone…a fifth issue! As always, I take this opportunity to ask for contributions, especially interesting scenarios. If you're not much of a writer (As if *I* was?), just send it in with a few details and I'll try to adlib (not butcher) your exciting battle (no mail-bombs, please!).

Next Issue, we run the risk of fan hatred when we review the Warhammer BattleMech. It's about time we did a column that allowed fans to voice some of their ideas. (Optional Rules for things like mine fields getting a free crit check on a leg when they get stepped on…come on, feet get blown off by mines all the time in the novels…)

A special thanks to those who contributed to this Issue: nice work guys. Keep it coming and we'll lead the way into the new millennium with whatever it is that makes

BattleTech so kick-ass special! 'Till next, may honor sharpen your steel, MechWarrior!