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QUARTERLY

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 4

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FASA CORPORATION

MECHFORCE QUARTERLY
VOLUME 4, ISSUE 4

The ZEU-X *Zeus* record sheet is based off of the cover of *Maximum Tech*.

NOTE

Most of the contents of each *MechForce Quarterly* are created by *BattleTech* fans. By necessity, this information cannot undergo the same rigorous continuity checking as FASA's sourcebooks. Because we wish articles to appear as they are written, we make no attempt to bring them into line with the published continuity.

Unless otherwise stated, none of the material that appears in *MechForce Quarterly* is considered part of the *BattleTech* universe. Also unless otherwise noted, all game rules, weapons and equipment in the *MechForce Quarterly* are considered Level 3.
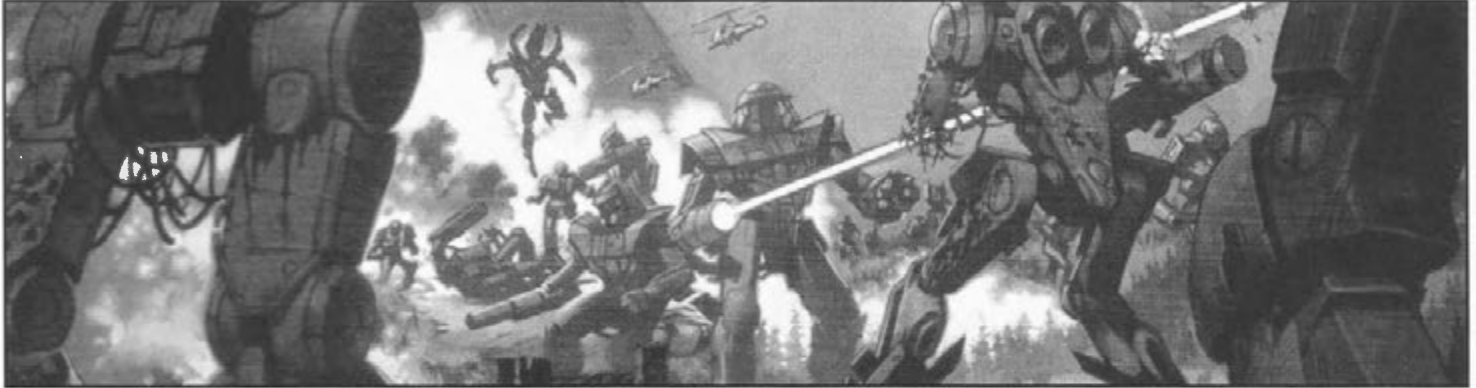
CONVENTION CALENDAR

ANY CONVENTION MARKED WITH AN ASTERISK (*) WILL HAVE AN OFFICIAL FASA BOOTH; COME AND MEET US. HAVE ANY FASA GIFT CERTIFICATES? YOU CAN USE THEM AT THE FASA BOOTH!

DATE	CONVENTION	LOCATION	CONTACT

June 18–20   **Blister Con**   San Antonio, TX   210-655-8030 • **astrocreep@usacomm.com**
Events: BattleTech Regional, Grand Melee, Gunslinger, Trial of Bloodright (NOT MechForce Sanctioned).

June 17–20   **Thunder Con**   Kansas City, MO   **jhinkle@kumc.edu**
Events: BattleTech Gunslinger (MechForce Sanctioned).

June 25–27   **Conestoga**   Tulsa, OK   918-663-5525 • **kqve20d@prodigy.com**
Events: BattleTech Regional (MechForce Sanctioned).

July 1–4   **Dragon Con***   Atlanta, GA   770-909-0115 • **www.dragoncon.com**
FASA Representatives: Meet Precentor Chi III Stacy Neilsen at the FASA Booth and learn FASA's new miniatures game, VOR: The Maelstrom.
Events: BattleTech games will be run.

July 1–4   **Origins***   Columbus, OH   800-529-3976 • **www.andonunlimited.com**
FASA Representatives: Meet Primus Bryan Nystul and Precentor Martial Randall Bills at the FASA Booth.
Events: BattleTech Open (MechForce Sanctioned—Hosted by FASA Corporation).

July 30–Aug 1   **Gamefest XXI**   San Diego, CA   —
Events: BattleTech Open, Grand Melee (MechForce Sanctioned). Also Crimson Skies.

August 5–8   **Gen Con***   Milwaukee, WI   800-529-3976 • **www.andonunlimited.com**
FASA Representatives: Meet Primus Bryan Nystul and Precentor Martial Randall Bills, along with most of the FASA staff, at the FASA Booth.
Events: BattleTech Open, Grand Melee, Gunslinger, Trial of Bloodright, MechForce Challenge and ToyTech (MechForce Sanctioned—Hosted by FASA Corporation). Also, Gamebase 7 will be running the following BattleTech games throughout the convention: Hole in the Wall; Marik's Revenge; Carnage Anyone?; Guard Duty; Scouts Out; When the 'Mechs Away, the Toads Will Play and much more!

Steptember 2–5   **Euro Gen Con**   Loughborough, England   **www.andonunlimited.com**
FASA Representatives: Meet Primus Bryan Nystul.
Events: BattleTech Open, Grand Melee, Gunslinger, Trial of Bloodright (MechForce Sanctioned—Hosted by MechForce UK) and more!

SURFING FOR 'MECHS ON THE INTERNET

Ah, I had an evening all to myself. No BattleTech, AD&D, or Axis & Allies games were scheduled; my husband was on a snowmobiling trip; and I had no desire to watch television. So . . . I did something fairly uncharacteristic, I decided to spend a couple of hours searching the Internet for various topics.

BattleTech came first, and I was amazed at the sites out there—definitely more than the last time I poked around. The quality was fantastic. I know how hard it is to design a web page (at least for me it's difficult), as I put together my own on the SFF Net. So I was very impressed at the various Clan pages, 'Mech pages, play-by-Internet pages, and the like. And I ended up spending more time than I planned just surfing through several of them.

One that caught my eye, but wasn't especially fancy, was The Free Rassalhague Republic page. Address: http://www.hut.fi/~pbuchert/frr/index.html.

It has a section listed with lots of planets, and you can click on any planet to get a good bit of background information on the system and its satellites. I checked out Grumium. The site is definitely worth a look.

Writing Sites

Frequently at conventions I put on writing workshops—either how to get published in the gaming industry or how to submit science fiction and fantasy short stories and the like to assorted publishers. To that end, I've put together a couple of handouts, one of which lists valuable Internet sites for writers. I figured that because so many MechForce members write, you might enjoy taking a gander at them, too:

For professional, semi-pro, and small market press publications, take a look at:

http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~mslee/mag.html. This site lists quite a few avenues for publications. And many links contain contact information and writing guidelines. It also contains a listing of assorted science fiction, fantasy, and horror publications and organizations.

Booktalk—
http://www.booktalk.com/ Agents, writing advice, manuscript markets, and much more.

Literary agent Andrew Zack's company—
http://www.zackcompany.com/ Excellent site filled with a variety of very useful links for authors. Also contains advice on getting an agent, and information about the current market.

General reference material—
http://www.geocities.com/soho/lofts/1498/ Assorted fiction techniques for novelists for genre, mainstream, and literary categories. Characterizations, descriptions, plots, themes, settings, publishing trends, resources, links to writers' clubs, newsletters, and chat rooms.

Mystery Connection—
http://emporium.turnpike.net/~mystery/index.html/ Advice for mystery writers. Lots of useful links.

Editor and Publisher Magazine—
http://www.mediainfo.com

Fiction writers' Resources—
http://www.ume.maine.edu/~wcenter/resource.html/ Includes several online dictionaries, thesauruses, foreign language dictionaries.

Writers'and Poets' Treasure Chest—
http://www.vabch.com/treasure/index.htm Writers' resources, contests, and lots of very useful links.

Recommended Books

And, while I'm at it, here's some books I recommend for writers: The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors and Publishers; Editors on Editing: What Writers Need to Know About What Editors Do; The Elements of Editing: A Modern Guide for Editors and Journalists; Copy-Editing: The Cambridge Handbook for Editors, Authors and Publishers; Words into Type; Writer's Guide to Book Editors, Publishers and Literary Agents 1998-1999; How to Be Your Own Literary Agent: The Business of Getting a Book Published; The Elements of Style; Kirsch's Handbook of Publishing Law; Webster's Tenth New Collegiate Dictionary; On Writing Well; Zen in the Art of Writing; Being a Writer; How to Write a Damn Good Novel by James Frey; How to Write a Damn Good Novel II by James Frey; Writing the Modern Mystery by Barbara Norville; The Art of Dramatic Writing by Lajos Egri; The Craft of Fiction by William Knott; How to Write Best-Selling Fiction by Dean Koontz; A Professional Storywriter's Handbook by Edwin Peeples; A Guide to Fiction Writing by Phyllis Whitney; and The New York Public Library Desk Reference (a really great tool for writers in almost any genre).

Write for MechForce

How about writing for MechForce Quarterly? I have a file drawer filled with good submissions. However, there are some topics I'm especially looking for:

* Material on fighting in cities and with varied terrain.

* Short fiction that has character stats or a scenario attached. Go beyond telling that great story—give us something we can use in our games!

* MechWarrior scenarios. I have nothing left in my file drawer on the MechWarrior game. Help!

* Convention advice and reports. Check on the one in this issue by Nadin.

* Articles about our MechForce chapters. What's your club up to?

* Advice on how to better use certain 'Mechs, infantry, AeroSpace fighters, and the like.

If you want to send submissions via the Internet, fine. My address is: Benzo@Netwurx.Net. HOWEVER—please, please, please in your attached files put your name and address. Or I'll be forced to delete them, just to be safe. You see, some folks have been sending me attached files without their names anywhere in the files. This does not make it easy to publish people, as you canít print articles if you donít know who wrote them.

Take Care,
Jean

JOURNEY'S END

THE COLORS' WAR AGAINST THE DEMONS

by Jason Schmetzer

September 21, 3058.
Calgary, Procyon.
Sirian Holds, Chaos March.

My breath caught in my throat as the floorboards creaked above me. I fought down a sneeze as dust settled on my face. Tightening the grip on my shotgun, I willed my heart to quiet its pounding for fear the Demons would hear it.

I nearly squeezed the trigger when a shot sounded from outside. As it was, I practically choked on the dust that fell when the Demons upstairs rushed out of the old house.

I didn't move, intent on listening. I heard them laugh as they discovered their prey. They congratulated themselves on eliminating the infidel. My hands twitched involuntarily, anxious to avenge the fallen innocent. I fought the urge down, though. I had no wish to become a martyr.

The Demons were still laughing and bragging when they boarded their APC and left, firing the top-mounted machine guns at deadly-looking stone walls and threatening street signs.

I waited an hour more before I crept from my hiding place. For a long while more I crouched over the body of the terrible, horrid 'infidel.' The ten-year-old's shirt must've condemned him, or maybe the fact that he was out in the middle of the night. His little white shirt, with its sun and sword imprint, pronounced his sentence.

Death by hand-me-down.

The Demons must protect the holy rule of Alisendar Gyrn.

Yeah, right.

It took me most of the rest of the night to get back to the Hole. The others had returned earlier, some with trophies. I never made it to my assignment; the Demons had kept me in hiding too long.

A true believer in the ëcell' theory, Leader had assigned us all colors as names when we joined. He said it was in case we were captured and taken to the Demon's Roost to be tortured. I heard it worked, too. Blue was said to have given up only colors before he died.

Sitting in my bunk, I watched as Green picked his way across the debris-strewn room. I shuddered, as I always did, when he met my gaze with his one emerald eye. Demons had taken his other eye a week past Demon Night.

Teal, he greeted me. I sighed, thinking of what the boys from C Company would say if they knew I was called ëTeal.' It could've been worse. I could be Pink.

Green.

The one-eyed man settled himself onto the floor opposite me. He grunted as his right knee bent and made a muted cracking sound. Yet another present from Gyrn's Demons. I knew there was a wicked scar under his fatigues.

Any luck tonight, Teal? he asked. I watched as he reached up under his patch to scratch at his ruined eye.

No. I ran into a pack of Demons halfway there. I sat up, tossing my legs over the side of my bunk. I brushed a hand through my hair. It came out full of brown hairs and dust. Bastards kept me in a house all night.

I looked down at myself, mentally cursing time. My waistline seemed to dip a little farther over my pants every week. Sit-ups didn't help either. I still did over a hundred every evening. It was age.

Me neither, Green said, bringing me back to reality. Target was gone when I got there. Seems the Devil threw a party.

Hmmm, I grunted. I remembered my first Demon party. Seven of them had come into my shop and used me as a club. I reached up to touch the jagged scar that escaped my receding hairline to circle my ear. It was my memento from Demon Night, the night Gyrn and his thugs, the Demons, had taken power on Procyon:

Green hefted himself up, good eye twitching back and forth as he scanned the room. Night, Teal. It didn't matter that it was nearly morning; some things never change, like the need for a little rest.

I lay down and rolled onto my side. Sleep came swiftly, although I'm not sure it was a good thing. I dreamed of shirts with suns and swords on them. Except in my dreams, the shirts were red. Bright red.

$*$ $*$ $*$ $*$ $*$

Teal.

I woke to Green's one-eyed visage. It was enough to put the needler at the head of my bed into his patch. He just smacked it away, irritated. Anger didn't enter into it; we were all too paranoid.

Get up. Leader wants to see us. He stood and moved to the door to wait.

I sat and pulled my boots on, reaching for my pistol belt as I stood. It was barely clasped before I grabbed my shotgun and ran to the door.

Let's go, I said, less than a minute after he had waked me.

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Leader was a heavyset man, with what was left of his hair turning gray. He was the only one among us to still have any clue to a past life—the insignia of the mercenary Jo's Fourth Cavalry still rode his shoulders.

Come in, boys, he said. It didn't matter to him that we were far from boys. I was nearing my fifth decade. I've got a mission for you. Your targets from last night have been reassigned. You two are going into the Roost. He watched us closely.

I had no idea what he was watching for, but whatever it was, Green probably showed it. He erupted, cursing and complaining. He shut up after a moment, though, when Leader caught his eye.

It seems that the Roost is being resupplied tonight. Food, medicine, and ammunition. Although the holy Alisendar Gyrn has prophesied the end of technology, the Roost is still fortified.

How do we get in?

You two get to become grain drivers. I'm putting you into a supply truck. Visit Red and get into Demon outfits. You'll get whatever else you need from the armory. You're top of the list, boys. Tonight you dance with the Devil, and tonight the Devil dies!

Or we do, I thought.

*   *   *   *   *

The old flatbed had to be a relic from colonization. It ran rough, it backfired, and its exhaust smelled worse than the Demons' death pits. We felt every bump in the road, too. Suspension was a concept not known by the old Irian.

We had all the right passwords, conjured from the tortured souls of Demons. We only had to torture the bodies for an hour. We almost enjoyed it; I thought of the ten-year-old kid.

We fell into a convoy headed into the Roost and drove right past the perimeter guards without slowing. I think Green was disappointed; he kept gripping his big Sternsnacht tighter and tighter.

Looking good, I said to him, as we were backing into a loading dock. We got out to supervise the unloading, cradling our rifles. No one questioned it. Demons were allowed weapons.

Frak, I breathed, watching the laborers carry the bags of grain off into the fortress. I very nearly opened fire right there, but I held back. You can kill the body or you can kill the head, and we were after the head.

Hands tight on our weapons, we followed the laborers into the Roost.

*   *   *   *   *

Spies had given us the layout of Demon's Roost some time ago, although the information had been rather worthless at the time. No one save Demons entered Gyrn's Procyon palace. It was only the rare supply convoys that got in.

Hence our sudden plan.

We walked along the corridor toward the lift. Gyrn's palatial suite was on the top floor. As we came to the lift, I pushed the call button, nodding to two Demons waiting beside us. Green's finger was twitching on his trigger. He was the most zealous of us in killing Gyrn's Demons.

I breathed a sigh when the lift pinged and opened. Adrenaline flashed through me when the Demons suddenly stepped aside and snapped up straight. Green and I took the hint and two monstrous men in Demon outfits spilled out of the lift carriage.

Oh, frak! Behind them came Alisendar Gyrn himself, the Devil. I stared, caught up in the sight of the man. Easily shorter than my hundred-eighty centimeters, he was balding and portly. What remained of his hair was wild, splaying like a thin web out over his head. He wore nondescript clothes, gray utilities. He

looked up to meet my gaze, and I found the source of his power.

His ice-blue eyes fairly glowed, projecting an electricity that jolted me. I snapped a little straighter, unconsciously. I hadn't stood that straight since basic.

*   *   *   *   *

The Devil continued on, barely sparing me another glance. I flattened against a wall as two more huge Demon guards followed him. My eyes crawled off their backs and speared Green. He stared back, wide-eyed with his one good one.

I moved a hand down my rifle, flicking off the safety. His eye followed, closing for a moment as I gripped the pistol grip.

My rifle came up before his head finished the short nod. Bracing against my shoulder, I fell to one knee and squeezed the trigger. I vaguely saw Green spin to our rear to cover the two Demons in the lift.

The muzzle of my rifle blossomed with orange flame, licking out to strike down with a holy power the Devil's two rearguards. They fell like logs, backs exploding in a red mist.

Alisendar Gyrn turned in time to catch a round in the shoulder, slamming him into one of his guards. The guard fell, cradling his unholy master. His companion got his big pistol out of his holster in time to catch the remainder of my clip in the chest. He fell back, finger clenched on the big auto's trigger. I was ejecting the empty magazine when the ammo caught me in the shoulder, twisting me around and slamming me to the floor. My rifle was gone.

I managed to roll over onto my back when a hand grabbed me by the collar and dragged me into the lift. I saw Green punch the basement button, pointing his rifle out the door. Just before the doors closed, his underslung grenade launcher belched. A blast rocked the car, but the doors held as the lift fell for the basement.

I sat propped against a corner, clamped a hand over my shoulder, cursing in words I hadn't muttered since basic. Green looked down at me. I stared back.

Did we get him, Green? Please tell me I didn't take one for nothing.

Green slammed a fresh clip into his rifle. I saw him take one in the shoulder. That grenade should've gotten him, too. He looked haggard, but excited. I bet he'd been waiting to open up on the Demons since we got into the truck. Where do we go from here?

I staggered cursing to my feet, pounding the wall of the car in pain. Green looked at, an eyebrow raised. I didn't know you could do that in the street.

Shut up.

I figure we can get back to the garage from the basement, he said.

I pulled my Python auto from my belt, leveling it at the doors. Let's find out. The doors pinged and started to slide open.

A Demon forced his way in, pushing the up-button before the doors were even all the way open. Someone has attacked the master, he said, not even sparing us a glance.

I know, I said, shooting him in the back. He fell between the open doors, his body keeping them open. We stepped out, leaving him against the doors. No one would follow from that direction.

We ran, or hobbled as best as I could manage, down the corridor toward the freight elevator. We came across a group of Demons facing the other way, and Green got them all in the back with his rifle. We boarded the elevator and pushed the button for the garage.

The doors opened to chaos.

Explosions rocked the building, and I was amazed to the several BattleMechs outside. All were flying House Marik eagles on their chest, but they were killing Demons so I didn't complain.

We need to get out of these uniforms, I said, shedding my belt so I could pull the black Demon trousers off. We wore our laborer clothes underneath.

An empty cargo hauler came rumbling up, a starved laborer driving. It screeched to a halt, the side door bursting open. We climbed in, Green nearest the door.

We have to get out of here, the driver said. He had maybe three teeth. His eyes were so wide I had trouble understanding what was keeping them in their sockets. We crashed through the remains of the gate, while the man screamed in joy.

Then an armored foot appeared on front of us, and the last thing I saw was the purple Marik eagle.

*   *   *   *   *

I awoke slowly, painfully aware of every part of my body. It hurt to move my eyes, much less open them. I tried to open my mouth and found I had a mouthful of glass. At least that's what it felt like. I fought to get my eyelids open, cursing silently.

Leader stood over me, smiling gently. Easy, George. You've had a rough time of it.

It took me a moment of moaning to realize he had called me by real name. I looked around me, cursing again from the pain in my neck. People lined the beds on either side.

George? Leader, I thought we   He cut me off with a hand. It's over, George. He's gone.

Excitement swept through me, practically erasing the pain. We got him? Me ën Green, we got him? I tried to lean up on one elbow, but the joint didn't quite remember how to bend.

Leader shook his head. No, George. He survived your shots. The Sirian Lancers have him. They're holding him over for trial. I could see the anger smoldering in his eyes.

I tried to feed it. Trial? Not execution? My own anger was hollow, surprisingly.

Yes, trial. The Sirian Colonel says she couldn't shoot him, he surrendered.

Tell her to bring him here! I'll take care of the monster myself! *If I could lift an arm*, I thought.

I know you would, George. I know you would. He looked away for a moment, then stood to go. It's over, George. I just wanted you to know. We can go back now.

Go back to what? His back stiffened, but he did not reply. He went out the door without looking back.

Go back to what? I repeated softly. No one replied. I didn't think anyone ever would.
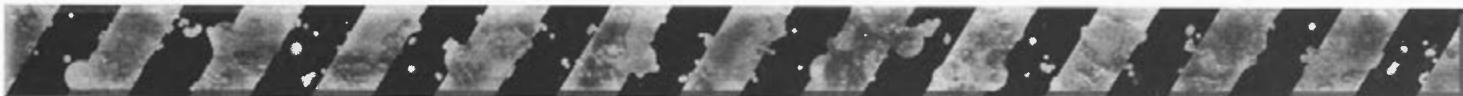
MECHWARRIOR, THIRD EDITION

Ever since we announced that the *MechWarrior, Third Edition* (*MW3*) roleplaying game was coming this summer there's been a lot of speculation about what it will be like. Well, you need speculate no longer! In this article I will outline the concept of *MW3* and answer some of the questions that have come up about this latest version of the *BattleTech* universe RPG.

Previous editions of *MechWarrior* have come off as mere add-ons to *BattleTech*, not as "real" role-playing games. The books' brisk sales indicated that people liked *MechWarrior*, but after years of correspondence and convention seminars it was clear that most fans valued those books for their useful source material about the universe; few actually played the game.

MechWarrior, Third Edition was designed to be a full-fledged sci-fi RPG. The BT universe is a vast place filled with action, intrigue, romance, treachery, adventure, and all the other elements that make for great roleplaying. However, I think that in previous editions we failed to capture that feeling and deliver it to the player. This time around, my intention was to present the game to the player in such a way that he is pulled into the *BattleTech* universe, whether he is a long-time *BattleTech* fan or a brand-new reader who just picked up *MW3* as his first contact with the universe.

This concept is kicked off with an original short story by *BattleTech* novelist Loren Coleman entitled "By the Numbers," which takes readers to the back-alleys of Solaris VII and captures the feel of what an *MW3* adventure can be like. In the book's color pages, rather than the traditional character archetypes, we present a grand tour of the Inner Sphere in the form of a scrapbook. Images from each of the Great Houses, the Periphery and the Clans illustrate the people, places and things that make each of them unique, including uniforms and insignia for the military-minded player.

Continuing this trend of putting the player "in" the universe, the character creation system has been redesigned from the ground up to incorporate the universe and each character's own story into the game. Players start by choosing an Affiliation for their characters from among the Successor States, the Clans or the Periphery, each offering its own unique advantages and disadvantages in the creation process and game play.

With the Affiliation as a starting point, the player moves on to the Life Path, where his character is taken through the various stages of life, earning Skills and special Traits as he goes along depending on the choices he makes. For example, you might decide your character from the Draconis Combine was born into an upper-class trading family, but fell in with the wrong crowd, eventually joining the yakuza. Each of these stages would offer different abilities to your character, and different opportunities for where to go next. At each stage, randomly-generated Events punctuate your character's background with extraordinary highs and lows (but have no fear of the die rolls ruling the process; there are plenty of opportunities to re-roll or choose your destiny so you can play the character you *want* to play).

As for the game system itself, my priority was to create a flexible and simple system that reflected the kind of adventure genre represented in the *BattleTech* novels, whether it meant keeping old game mechanics around or not. As it turned out, *MW3* is a completely new game, although actions are still resolved by rolling dice against a target number with certain modifiers applied to it, so the transition shouldn't be very difficult. (In this respect, the system is not unlike *BattleTech*, but of course a bit more comprehensive since *MW3* simulates more kinds of situations.)

The most noticeable difference will be that actions are resolved using ten-sided dice rather than six-sided dice. A 2D10 roll was chosen because it generates a wider range of results, allowing characters to have a wider range of Skill levels. If I stuck with the 2D6 system, characters would only be able to have a narrow range of Skill levels like in *BattleTech*, and I wanted there to be more variation available for *MW3* characters than Green, Regular, Veteran and Elite. *MWII* essentially "topped-out" at Skill Level 6. In *MW3*, characters can be rated from 0 to 10 in each of their Skills.

(In case you were wondering why I didn't just use 3D6, I felt that the bell curve was too flat. In other words, 3D6 rolls generate lots of mid-range results but very few highs or lows. I wanted good and bad results to be more common to allow for more spectacular successes and failures than 3D6 would allow.)

Well, I could run off at the mouth (or in this case, the keyboard) about *MechWarrior* all day, but my space is running out, and I think you get the idea by now of what to expect in the new edition. To sum up, it's an all-new game anchored more firmly than ever in the exciting *BattleTech* universe, and I hope you all enjoy playing it as much as I enjoyed putting it together!

THE RANGER COMPANY

USING A LITTLE C3
TO GET THE JOB DONE

by Bryan Cochren

Way back in MechForce Quarterly Vol. 3, Issue 1, Mike Nelson wrote a piece extolling the virtues of the C3 Computer-equipped Ranger Company. Bryan took the advice to heart and assembled his own Ranger Company for use in his BattleTech campaigns.

After building and using the company in several fights, against both the Clans and Inner Sphere, I have concluded that Mr. Nelson definitely hit the proverbial nail on the head with C3. Here's a list of the 'Mechs in my company and their capabilities.

All of the 'Mechs are constructed using Level 2 Inner Sphere Technology Base.

RECON UNIT
SPR-3-NX Sprint, 40 tons

The *Sprint* uses its extreme speed to maneuver close to the enemy, providing targeting information for its larger brethren. With a top speed of 130 kph and a jump capacity of 240 meters, the *Sprint* can outmaneuver all but the fastest 'Mechs, jumping behind them and launching a devastating spread of SRMs at the enemy's unguarded back. The Streak-SRM's targeting computer allows the pilot to take even the most difficult shots, as it will not fire before obtaining a target lock. With a Guardian ECM suite and 7.5 tons of FerroFibrous armor in its defensive repertoire, the *Sprint* is fully capable of staying on the battlefield as long as its larger compatriots.

I use two SPR-3-NX *Sprints* in my Ranger Company against Inner Sphere fores, three against the Clans.

SCREEN UNITS
FLS-8KX Flashman, 75 tons

The *Flashman* is definitely one of the most underrated 'Mechs. And while it did not fit my criteria perfectly, slight changes made it an ideal screen unit. The arm-mounted large lasers have been replaced with ER large lasers for extra range. The center torso-mounted large laser has been removed in favor of five jump jets. Removing tonnage to add four additional double heatsinks and an additional rear-facing medium laser helped. The *Flashman* is more maneuverable than the Clan *Mad Cat*, and while a stand-up duel between the two would be folly, wise usage of *Flashman*'s jump jets may allow a shot at the enemy's rear armor.

I use FLS-8KX *Flashmans* in my company as screen units.

VTR-10X Victor

This altered *Victor* is really a compromise between the earlier and later versions. It retains the 9K's EndoSteel internal structure for added tonnage, and I have supplemented that with double heatsinks. The VTR-10X makes an interesting range swap between energy and projectile weapons, switching the Gauss Rifle for an older model AC/20 with an ample 20 reloads. The medium pulse lasers and SRM-4 have been replaced with an ER large laser and a medium laser in the left arm. This model also features CASE for the AC reloads and another 3.5 tons of armor. A Gauss Rifle for an AC/20 may seem like an odd swap, considering the Gauss' excellent range and damage. However, the purpose for a screen unit is to protect the weapons' carriers, not to participate in long-range bombardment. The ER large laser provides this model's long-range punch, and can be used up close, as it has no minimum range, which is the Gauss Rifle's only downside. Besides, the Gauss Rifle just doesn't have the same scare factor as an AC/20. I've sent *Zeuses* and *Grasshoppers* running with a *Hunchback*, just because they were afraid of my little ol' AC/20.

I use two VTR-10X *Victors* against Inner Sphere enemies, and one against the Clans.

WEAPONS UNITS
BNC-5X Banshee

The BNC-5X *Banshee* is really a stripped-down, long-range BNC-5S. By removing all the short-range weapons, I was able to add extra heatsinks, a C3 Slave unit, jump jets, and additional armor and ammo. The one thing I was unable to add that I really wanted was MASC. If I had only been able to add the Myomer Acceleration Signal Circuitry, this 'Mech would literally be the equal of a *Gladiator* Prime. Oh well, you can't win them all. The BNC-5X is very good at what it does. With a Gauss Rifle and two ER PPCs, it can dish out heavy damage at extreme range. In close fighting, the *Banshee* can be just as deadly. Its punch and kicking attacks can cripple enemy 'Mechs quickly, and a full-speed charge can destroy a lighter 'Mech in one fell swoop.

I use three BNC-5X *Banshees* in my company.

BRG-X-ALPHA Barrage and BRG-X-PRIME Barrage

The *Barrage* is an Inner Sphere 'Mech with two configurations. The Ultra AC/5 in its left torso is a fixed weapon with 20 reloads. The *Barrage* is slow, with a max speed of 56.4 kph. But the addition of jump jets makes it very maneuverable for a 'Mech its size. The presence of jump jets on a 100 ton 'Mech often surprises your enemies, which is an added bonus. Use the jump jets to stay at extreme range (19-21 hexes). With the Alpha variant, I suggest firing only the energy weapons in a turn that you jump. The *Barrage* is the C3 Master Unit carrier for my company, and I use three of them—one Primary and two Alpha variants.

The *Barrage* Primary carries twin LRM-20 and LRM-5 batteries on its arm (both equipped with Artemis IVs), allowing it to fire indirectly from hiding. With a dozen reloads for each of its launchers, it is in danger of running out of ammo, but I have never had that happen in a game. Consider the proliferation of ER large lasers and PPCs in my company, so one 'Mech running out of ammo isn't that big a deal.

The Alpha variant is much less ammo dependent, but its weapons are all direct-fire. In addition to the Ultra AC/5 in the left torso, this version carries a massive Gauss Rifle with 16 reloads in its left arm, and an ER large laser paired with an ER PPC in the right arm.

ARENA TIME

NICHOLE FACES AN ARCHER WITH STRINGS ATTACHED

by Susan Huntsman

December 8, 3058.
Solaris City, Solaris VII.
Lyran Alliance

Nichole slid the cooling vest over her T-shirt and shorts. In battle, the vest was necessary to help her cut the intense heat generated by the huge battle platforms called BattleMechs. The bulky weight felt almost comfortable, like an old friend, like a faded pair of jeans that had been worn to threads.

Feeling somehow bolstered, she glanced at the WHM-6R *Warhammer*, Lover's Kiss. It gleamed in the bright morning light. The newly-painted 'Mech sported the Cordwainer colors of red, green, and silver. Nichole thought the colors somewhat garish. Many stables sported clashing colors. It made the 'Mechs stand out for people in the stands. For Solaris combatants, color didn't matter. It wasn't difficult to spot the huge behemoths you were pitted against. Every 'Mech was equipped with standard visual sensors as well as a wide range of thermographic, seismic, and electromagnetic sensors.

Looking across the compound, Nichole noted her opponent's 'Mech. The ARC-2R *Archer* was identical to the one she battled under the Solaris River many months ago—except this one wasnt equipped with torpedoes and wasnt lying in ambush. The pilot was the twin brother of the man she killed under that river. Wonderful. The media had no way of knowing the hatred that consumed Ricky Bowman for Nichole D'Courtney. The news services had, however, built up the battle as a grudge match between stables. Even so, the battle was strictly a second-class match, not important enough to take place in one of the major arenas.

She scanned the huge walls surrounding the Class 4 arena. The place barely qualified for the tonnage of 'Mech they were bringing into combat. The stadium was old, the ground severely pockmarked from centuries of matches. In fact, the owner of the arena valued the marks. In a stadium that had none of the high-tech features that were so popular, the holes caused by missiles, lasers, and exploding 'Mechs created a challenging terrain.

Several members of the Cordwainer Stables had warned her about unstable ground. It wasn't unusual for the earth to shift under the weight of the BattleMechs. Knowing this, Nichole had run through several simulator battles, entering different variables each time. Never one to approach a conflict lightly, she knew that this combat would be close and violent.

The odds makers and bookies were against her. She was considered a long shot, an underdog. After all, she was supposed to be a rookie pilot who suffered a debilitating ailment. Nichole grinned grimly to herself. She knew she wasn't a rookie. And she wasn't Nichole. Suffering from amnesia, she wasn't sure exactly who she was. The vid-disk she had obtained several nights ago said she was Jasmine Ludlow. Some of her memories seemed to match that background, but still she was uncertain. That information had been seemingly, and perhaps too conveniently, dropped into her lap. Shaking her head, she pushed the thoughts away. Time enough later to dwell on who she might be.

She waved at Katterina Markov, another 'Mech pilot for Cordwaineris stable. The two had become good friends over the past few months. Kat had short, jet-black hair which curled softly around her face. With vid-star looks, many overlooked the hardness around her eyes that reflected the pain of losing too many friends in battle. Nichole didnt overlook it.

Well, it's about time, Nichole whispered as she walked toward her 'Mech.

You be careful, Nic, Kat warned. Something doesnt feel right.

Something's afoot, aye? I'll keep on my toes. Winking and giggling nervously, Nichole scaled the ladder to the cockpit, moving with the grace of one long-accustomed to such a climb. She slid into the command couch, relaxing in its cool comfort. It wouldn't be long until heat washed through it, making it seem like a furnace. She snapped the cooling vest into the coolant supply, and the cold fluid that pumped into the coils made her shiver slightly. She strapped on her neuro-helmet and tuned into the arena frequency. Flipping several switches and speaking the commands attuned to her voice, the 'Mech hummed to life. Consoles flashed as Nichole followed the checklist and made certain all systems were operational.

Solaris Control crackled to life over the com-unit. Cordwainer Five, proceed to circle the perimeter of the arena. Nichole knew what to expect. Bowman in the Archer would circle the outside wall—they'd be out of sight from each other. When they reached the randomized gate, the mountainous doors would swing open, and the battle would be joined. The procedure gave an element of surprise to each encounter.

Roger that, Control. Nichole maneuvered the towering giant. A sudden panic filled her, but she pushed it aside and considered it a momentary case of jitters. She reminded herself that a pilot who didn't feel fear was cocky and likely to err. Fear was a good thing in small doses—it kept you on your toes.

A loud grinding noise came from the gate in front of her, the metal on meta! was audible without the use of the external audio pickups. The sound sent shivers up her spine.

Maneuvering the huge seventy-ton 'Mech onto the battlefield, she noted that there were plenty of people in the stands today. The red, green, and silver of her Warhammer clashed with the purple, orange, and white of the Archer.

Let's start this, she hissed.

Then, suddenly, Nichole's 'Mech began to shut down. Someone at Solaris Control must have accidentally hit the kill switch. BattleMechs that fought in the arenas at Solaris were fitted with a radio-activated shutdown switch. The purpose was simple—if one or both of the opponents were caught violating the rules of engagement, Control could shut down the 'Mechs. It also prevented overzealous combatants from letting their fights spill into Solaris City. The shutdown frequencies were highly classified. And when her 'Mech didn't power back up, she decided it wasn't an accident after all.

Hitting the panels in front of her, she howled in frustra-

tion. At the same time, missiles arched toward her *Warhammer*. The LRMs bounced off her armor, inflicting minimal damage. In this small arena, the missiles didn't have enough time to arm. However, Nichole knew Bowman's other shots would be hot-loaded.
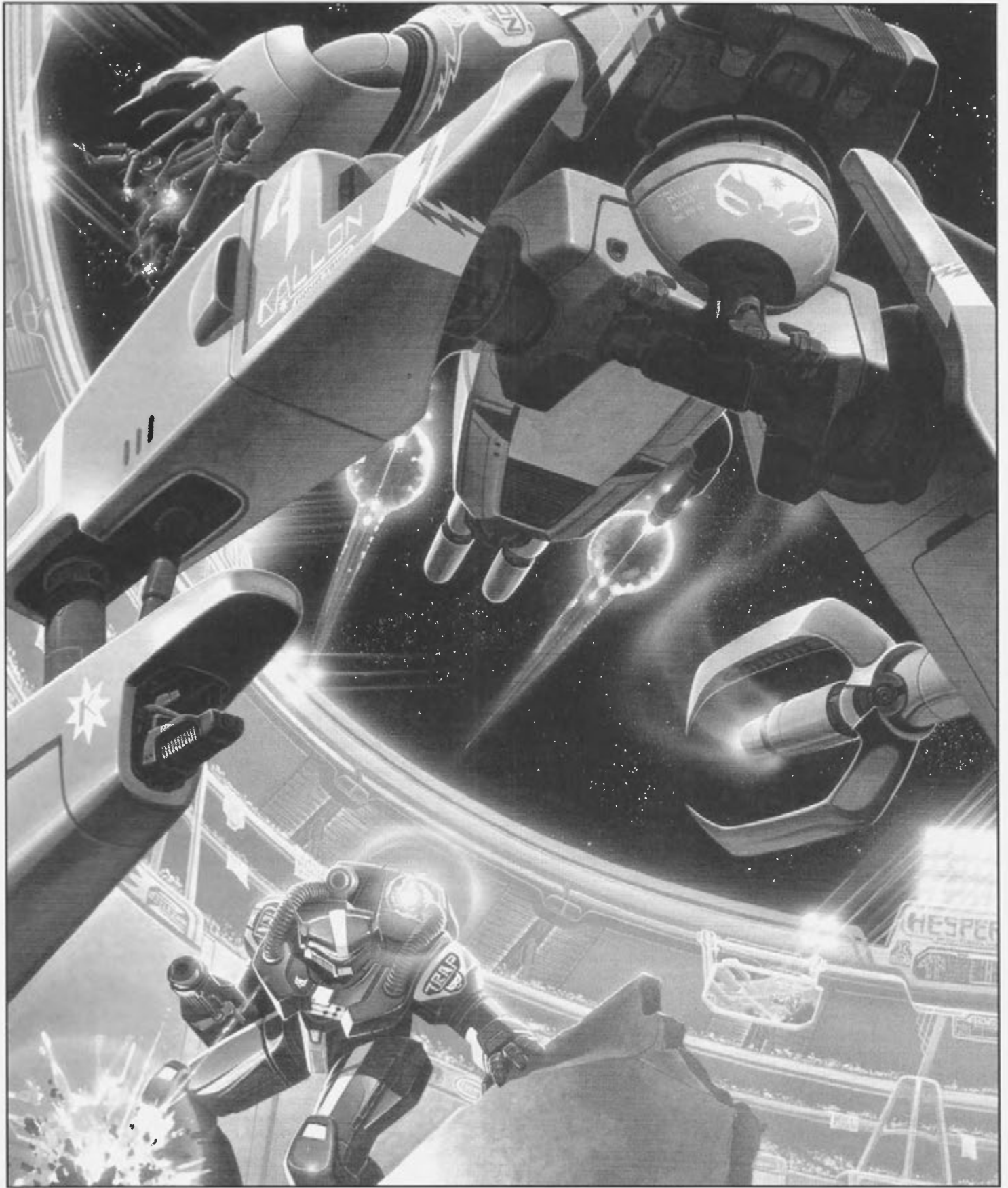
Control! Static filled her ears. She was being jammed. The person who executed this debauchery planned well. She took a deep breath in a failed attempt to cut her fear. She sucked in her lower lip, closed her eyes, and tired to remember how to disarm the kill switch. There was a way. . . .

Two Diverse Optics Type 18 lasers burned into her *Warhammer*. Hot metal rivulets ran down in twin streams. The 'Mech shuddered. Without power, the 'Mech was soon to fall if the assault continued. The gyro that helped the *Warhammer* stand and move would not function without the energy the VOX 280 power plant supplied.

The combat was going to be shorter and more deadly than Nichole had anticipated if she couldn't get this bucket of bolts moving. Reaching under the com panel, she pulled out several wires.

A sudden memory surfaced.

Her fingers moved as if they had a will of their own, and her hands snaked under the panel and tweaked a small switch located there. As she counted the ten eternal seconds it took the power plant to hum to life, she hoped Bowman wouldn't push the heat on his 'Mech. But that wasn't to be. The *Archer*'s laser whistled and a magenta glare struck out with a blinding light, followed by two flights of LRM 20s from the Doombud launchers. Armor boiled and flew away, and dust and dirt catapulted high into the air as the Warhammer went down with a loud crash.

To the crowd, the situation seemed hopeless. But there was a collective gasp as the lumbering *Warhammer* levered itself up. Actuators whined and growled as the Lover's Kiss fought for and found a purchase in the loose soil. The awed crowd cheered as the wounded 'Mech assumed an upright position. Righting a downed *Warhammer* was long believed to be one of the hardest maneuvers that a pilot could accomplish.

Nichole knew she had the *Archer* dead to rights now. The 'Mech was running too hot after the last volley it launched. She triggered her targeting interlock circuit C. The Lover's Kiss thrummed with power as seven weapons discharged their loads. The Holly short range missile launcher belched out a loud retort, accentuated by two Sperry Browning machine guns. Ruby light streamed from two Martell medium lasers, followed by the sanguine light of the two smaller magna lasers. An intense warmth washed through the cockpit as the *Warhammer*'s heat sinks flared to life.

The *Archer* staggered under the brutal assault, but remained standing. It was an excellent fire support 'Mech. Its LRMs could reach out and deal serious damage to its enemies at long range. In close combat, however, it fared worse. The LRMs so advantageous at a distance were cumbersome and unwieldy up-close. Equipped with four medium lasers, it had no real short-range capabilities.

The *Warhammer*, on the other hand, had a good mix of long- and short-range weapons. Its two Donal PPCs made it a threat at a distance, and its mix of smaller weapons made it a formidable opponent up-close. It was by far one of the most powerful and deadly 'Mechs to be placed into battle by the Inner Sphere.

The *Archer* retaliated, and missiles swarmed around the *Warhammer* like gnats. The damage to the gladiatorial giant seemed to roll off like water. The damage board in Nichole's cockpit told another story, though. The armor on the 'Mech's left torso was paper thin.

She inhaled, thumbed the controls, and let loose with another sortie of weapons. The lethal package cut into her opponent with a vengeance. A medium laser seared its way across the center torso of the *Archer*. Finding a weak spot, it bubbled and boiled its path into the belly of the enemy 'Mech.

Bowman's 'Mech teetered under the onslaught. The laser's intrusion into the delicate gyro and engine compartment made keeping the *Archer* upright impossible. It stumbled, then slammed into the ground, sending a spray of dirt into the sky.

When the last of the dust settled, the Warhammer stood above the downed Archer, PPC aimed at the cockpit. The hatch opened, the pilot struggled out, and he waved his hands in defeat.

Later that evening in the Pelican, fellow 'Mech Jocks from the Cordwainer stable clustered around Nichole.

You sure milked the crowd. Even had me going for a minute. This came from Markus, a black-haired, brown-eyed MechWarrior. It takes a lot of guts to let an *Archer* nail you, then when all seemed lost to turn the match around. I don't think I could have done it.

Nichole nodded vaguely and looked for a way to escape. She spotted Travis the bouncer sitting in the corner. Excusing herself, she threaded her way through the packed bar toward the big man and plopped down on the seat next to him. If this is the fame a minor battle gets you, I don't see how the ranked warriors can stand it, she grumbled.

Travis smiled. Some enjoy the glory, you can see it in their faces. Others, they're just doing it 'cause they're bored. Or 'cause they have something to prove. He shrugged. So, you gonna tell me what really happened?

Nichole stiffened. She considered all the things she could tell him, all the things that Solaris Control would want her to say. I was asked not to talk about it, she said in a mocking official tone. Then, in a quiet voice, she spoke conspiratorially. It's under investigation.

The bouncer nodded. Someone's out to get you.

Seems like there's a long line of someones. Only they might be at an advantage. They might know who I really am.

CONVENTION REPORT

RUMBLE AT ORCCON 99

by Nadin Abbott

Orccon is one of the largest conventions on the West Coast. It is a Presidentís Day weekend tradition for those of us who live in the Southern California area. It is not the size of the massive ORIGINS or GEN CON Game Fair, but it is *our* convention.

Orccon '99 BattleTech Tournament
From left to right: Bryan Nystul–BattleTech Developer, Jeff Klein 2nd Place, Markus Lindhar 1st place, Nadin Abbott

Gamers came from as far away as Arizona and as close as El Segundo. They were here to play Warhammer 40 K, Magic the Gathering, and Legend of the Five Rings, among others. BattleTech was also present—and in force. Besides the two official games in the miniatures room, and the one in the Board Game room there were others:

Luddin Entertainment put out scenarios starting at eight in the morning and ending at two the next morning every day. Scenarios ranged from capturing the flag to an assault on an HPG by the Wolfís Dragoons.

People definitely came to play, and they had a good time.

Other events were offered by a group called DP 9, not related to Dream Pod Nine, the producers of Heavy Gear. They had a game that included BattleSpace Elements and BattleTech Elements. Players seemed to have fun, and that is what counts.

Indeed, players come to cons to have a good time and learn a new game or two.

Now to the official games report. MechForce North America wanted to hold the Regional and a Grand Melee. There was one problem that we, as the GMs, did not take into account:

MechForce is not that large in Southern California. Hence, we didnít have enough members to be able to hold the event. Never ones to despair, however, we held a general grand melee, actually two of them. Six players participated in each, and they had a great time. In the first, they used Clan Mechs, any Clan 'Mech. Galahad Is dominated the field and did extremely well. At the end, the winners—well at least the first two—got their photos taken with Bryan Nystul, line developer, and myself.

The second game started at eight in the evening. The field was six players, and all used Inner Sphere gear. One of the players took a *Phoenix Hawk* PXH-1 in a field of 3060 machines. He proved that good tactics and knowledge of a 'Mech would win even with superior firepower on the other side of the field. He took third place, and we all were happy. It was two in the morning when things wrapped up, and I needed to get some sleep. At that point I did not care who killed whom.

During the convention, my husband demonstrated Crimson Skies, while—in between playing games of BattleTech—I demonstrated BattleTech to new players. Crimson Skies was a hit among convention-goers, who took their characters and bought their copies of the game from the FASA booth.

BattleTech was also a hit among new recruits, some of whom played the demo just to play "without heat" and with 3025 exclusive 'Mechs.

The Field Manual: Warden Clans was released at the con, which meant that all those new 'Mechs and tech were now tournament legal. We had to read up on them fast, just in case. Players did not take any of the new toys, thankfully, but they could have. And I had no way to tell them no. Hence, we asked our questions about the gear and made sure we understood it before play began. Thanks Bryan!

Well, that is in a nutshell what happened. We had fun at the con, and we would like to thank the folks at FASA for a great booth and support. Hopefully the seeds planted at Orccon will grow into a very strong MechForce presence in Southern California. And Bryan, thank you for demonstrating VOR at the last possible minute at the con. Great game, and we look forward to it.

The Growlers had a good lunch, and the Union got away . . . woohoo!

COMBAT DROP

HOLDING OFF THE CLAN WITH BATTLE ARMOR AND PRAYERS

by Gerald Hall

Two pairs of ex-Clan OmniFighters swooped low over the city, massive pods attached to their wings. Outwardly, they looked identical to dozens of other fighters sweeping the planet and engaging the invading SLDF forces. Inside, they were much different.

Their wing pods didn't hold weapons. Rather, inside were nestled Inner Sphere Battle Armor infantrymen, waiting to be deployed over their target: the capital city of this Clan world.

The IFF codes that the captured OmniFighters used had been obtained by intelligence-gathering vessels over the past few months in preparation for the final assault. They served the vessels well as they drew closer to the city. A final dive was made before leveling out over the capital.

The Clan defenders had no idea what was happening when the pod doors suddenly slid open and scores of Battle Armored infantry poured out. Parachutes slowed the menís descent and were jettisoned shortly before landing. The men came to ground on rooftops, alleys, parks . . . everywhere in the city.

The main body of the SLDF force was on their way, but this lead force had the job of causing as much damage and confusion as possible among the Clan defenders. Each Battle Armor suit carried a BlastPack missile launcher and demolition packs, and each man intended to use the weapons against Clan OmniMech and Elemental forces. Other packages were dropped with the Battle Armor—more ammunition, powerpacks, missiles, demolition packs, and armor patches. Each canister had a location beacon so that the SLDF troopers could find the supplies.

Find them. And use them.

The battle raged for almost two days amid the buildings of the capital city before SLDF 'Mech and conventional forces were able to relieve the surviving SLDF armored infantry. The stories of bravery and sacrifice were inspiring. Here is the tale of one small group of Battle Armored infantry that landed and then found themselves fighting together for a terrible forty hours before their backup arrived.

*   *   *   *   *

Corporal Renald Evans sat quietly inside of the drop pod along with his fellow infantrymen. Wrapped around him was his Battle Armor suit, a David-class armed with a Slingshot gauss type primary weapon. It was loaded: a Model 102 BlastPack detachable missile launcher with two long range missiles with Thunder warheads, two standard satchel charges and two accelerated satchel charges, and more. His suit was being supplied with oxygen and power by umbilical cords leading from within the drop podís interior. He felt like a child in a womb.

Renald sensed that the OmniFighter had entered the planetís atmosphere when he started to feel vibrations within the pod. Occasionally he could also feel the stresses of high-G maneuvers. The minutes passed, crawling like hours. Then the pod doors swung open and the automatic drop mechanisms began to spill armored infantry out like seeds blowing in the wind.

As Renald dropped, he felt a slight tug as the umbilical lines which had been providing his Battle Armor suit with power and air popped free. He was on his own now. Almost as quickly as he fell out of   the drop pod, Renald felt his parachute yank him upright only a few hundred feet above the city rooftops. He scanned the air to see dozens of other armored forms floating down around him. A few had already detached their parachutes and were descending the final distance on their jump jets. A few heartbeats later, Renald fired his jump jets, detached his chute, and headed toward a small group of SLDF armored infantry that he had seen land nearby.

His suit was responding sluggishly in the air due to the extra weight of the BlastPack, so Renald was anxious to find a safe landing spot. A large rooftop with three other SLDF armored infantry was where he selected. The landing was a little rough, but without incident otherwise. And he and the other three found a door down from the rooftop.

They clambered into the belly of the tall, gray building. It looked like some sort of administrative office center from the equipment and layout. Renald opened his suit visor and called out. "I'm sure glad you were up there waiting on me. I certainly didn't want to find myself all alone out here. Corporal Renald Evans from the 1st St. Ives Lancers, 3rd Battalion, 1st Armored Infantry Company. What about the rest of you?"

A dark face peered out from within a Longinus armored suit helmet. The man inside had a big smile that could be seen even with his visor down. His Battle Armor suit was festooned with extra supplies like powerpacks and demolition charges, and he moved with the grace of someone born to be weighted down. with gear. His right arm had been fitted with a powerful anti-Mech laser while twin short-range missile launchers rose over his shoulders.

"Welcome to Huntress, Corporal Evans, the dark face finally answered. I'm Private Harold DiLiso with the 4th Free Worlds League Guards. Looks like the rest of my company got scattered all over the place 'cause I don't recognize anyone else here. In any event, glad to see all of you as well."

The other two Battle Armor troopers were from the 41st Armored Infantry Company, 5th FedCom Guards RCT. Both were women, relative rarities in the newly formed Inner Sphere armored infantry units. They had not been bred for size and strength like their female Clan counterparts. Instead, they earned the right to wear their powered armor suits through hard work, courage and perseverance.

One was fairly chatty: "We spilled out of the drop pod pretty heavily since the OmniFighter carrying us took a hit just as it released us. It was only sheer luck that we were near each other when our chutes deployed and we saw Harry land on this rooftop. By the way, my name is Julie Stoddard and my friend here is Su-Li Armstrong. Weíre ready to fight and are loaded for bear."

Indeed, they were loaded for bear. Both women were armed with standard issue FedCom Battle Armor suits with a heavy anti-Mech laser fitted to the right arms of the suits. However, both Battle Armor suits also carried BlastPack Model 103 detachable missile launchers which carried two long range missiles each. Their missile load-out was even more unique since

they, like Renald, carried Thunder munitions which enabled them to drop an instant minefield out to the missiles' maximum range. The two women also carried extra powerpacks and a full load of accelerated satchel charges for an extended battle.

"What's that big box on your chest, Renald?" It was Su-Li. She had a soft, pretty voice.

Renald had almost forgotten it himself in the excitement of the drop. "It's a directed effects anti-personnel charge, like the one that OmniMechs carry on their legs sometimes. It doesn't have much effect against a 'Mech, but I can detonate it against lightly armored infantry. In the forward arc, it can be devastating. The bad part is that I can only use it one time, then it's gone. So I have to be very choosy about when I use it."

An explosion rocked the building, and Su-Li rushed to the closest window and carefully peered outside. "It looks like we have a Koshi snooping around out there. Wait a minute. . . . I see what he is hunting for." She quickly explained that in the alley near the back of the neighboring building an SLDF armored infantryman was dragging what appeared to be a resupply drop container. Unfortunately, the Smoke Jaguar OmniMech had picked up the movement on his sensors and had headed over to investigate.

"We have to do something to stop that OmniMech!" Su-Li spat. "Besides, we need those supplies, too, if we're gonna to last 'til the main invasion force comes in."

Renald joined her at the window and made a quick decision. "Okay. But the only way we're gonna save both the supplies and the 'grunt' out there is to take out that OmniMech. He tightened the grip on the sill. Julie—you, Su-Li, and myself will head for the roof and use our Thunder missiles to lay a quick minefield between the Koshi and those supplies. Harold, when you hear us, you fire your main weapons at the Clanner's head—including your SRMs. Everyone, drop your missile packs immediately after firing and prepare to jump onto that Koshi's head if our first salvos down take him down first. Let's go!"

* * * * *

Once everyone was in position, Renald, Julie, and Su-Li quickly popped up over the parapet of the roof and fired six Thunder missiles directly in front of the Koshi. A pair of explosions erupted at the OmniMech's feet as he stepped on two of the mines. The Koshi stopped and turned to see where the missile smoke trails led. As it started to raise one of its weapons toward the offending roof, Harold stepped in front of the window and fired his SRMs. The Koshi was nailed in the chest and the upper left arm.

At the same time, a pair of laser beams fired by Julie and Su-Li also hit the Koshi in the chest. But the most telling shot was from Renald's Slingshot. The hypervelocity gauss projectile hit the Koshi in the head. The supersonic crack of the hypersonic slug of steel and tungsten echoed along the surrounding buildings almost as loudly as the explosions from the missiles that had been fired moments before.

The Koshi staggered for a moment, but began to steady himself. It fired a salvo of missiles at the building, just as Harold fired his own laser. Like Renald's shot, Harold hit the Koshi in the head, and let out a whoop to congratulate his own marksmanship. With much of the OmniMech's head armor already destroyed by the Slingshot's hit, the laser had to have seriously wounded the MechWarrior inside, because the Koshi

staggered for only a moment more before falling to the ground.

"We got him!" Julie shouted.

Julie and Su-Li jumped down beside it. They could see heavy damage to the OmniMech's head and chest. However, they could not tell the condition of the Clanner inside—until they walked close enough to see the trickle of blood leaking out of the shattered canopy of the Koshi. The Clanner had been hurled into the jagged edges of the canopy when the OmniMech fell. Julie and Su-Li stood there silently for a moment before Renald called out to them.

"C'mon! We've gotta get those supplies inside before some of this guy's friends show up."

Su-Li and Julie ran toward the building where the other armored infantryman and the supply container were. The man had taken cover when the first couple of explosions shattered the windows above him. He peered out when he heard the sound of broken glass crunching under Julie's and Su-Li's armored boots. He was quick to acknowledge them.

Fellow SLDF troopers, he said, his voice craggy. It looked like his entire armored suit was covered with bandoleers, although DCMS kanji could still be seen on his suit's forearms. The hilt of a vibro-katana protruded above the back of his suit between the folded stub wings. "It is certainly a relief you guys showed up. I thought for sure I was a goner when I heard that OmniMech marching in.

Others in your unit? It was Su-Li.

He shrugged. I've no idea where my squad commander is. He was the only one with any weapons that could make a dent in a 'Mech from a distance. I've only got a Blazer and lots of grenades and demo charges. By the way, I'm Michael Takashi. I just happened to spot that supply container floating in, so I figured that I would stash it for resupply. It is just a bit too heavy for one trooper to carry by himself, even someone in a Kage BattleArmor suit."

Once inside, the three opened the supply container and began to pull out its contents. As they emptied the case, the most needed items were moved up the stairs. It took more than an hour to get everything important settled into the fourth floor office that Renald and Harold were using as a command post.

Julie was pleased with their efforts. Ren, Harold, we've enough supplies to keep us going for a week. About twenty heavy-duty military standard power packs, a solar recharger, short and long range missiles, ammo for all of our slug-throwers, jump jet fuel, armor patches, food, water. . . ."

"A gag for you?" Su-Li commented dryly after standing behind Julie for several moments.

The troopers laughed loudly at Su-Li's comment. Julie had a sour expression for a few seconds before smiling and joining in the laughter.

Michael chose that moment to hook up with them again. Here's another load of ammo and food. I also found something else of interest in the supply pod. They included a gripstock for use with man-pack SRMs. Since I don't really have anything fitted to my Kage suit that can hurt a 'Mech at a distance, this will enable me to help out when the big boys come into range. A few of the short-range missiles have inferno warheads as well. They will be most useful, but I decided to put those on the roof only so that we don't burn down the entire building around us if they take a hit."

"Good idea," replied Renald.

A series of explosions echoed in the distance. Michael snatched up a twin tube man-pack SRM launcher and ran back to the rooftop to see what was going on. When he returned a few minutes later, his report was not what the rest of the armored infantrymen wanted to hear.

"I can see at least a dozen pillars of smoke throughout the city. Obviously there's heavy fighting going on down there." A howl of a fighter passing overhead could be heard over Michael's voice as he continued to report. "The Clanners are using some fighters for ground support, but some of our own fighters are beginning to give them a hard time up here. I can see some vehicles in the distance heading our way from the northeast. They look like heavy trucks, but I can't tell what's

inside of them. Friendlies? Enemies? Who knows? I'd like to go out about a kilometer or two and get a little better look at what's coming our way."

Renald nodded. Go ahead, but be careful. We need everyone working together if we are going to stay alive long enough for the rest of our forces to get here and relieve us."

"Hai! They'll never even know where I am," Michael replied.

Renald turned his attention to Julie. "Are you fully reloaded?"

"Sure thing! What do you want me to do?"

"Load up your BlastPack again and head up to the roof to act as a lookout. The rest of us will continue scouting out supplies and setting up shop here. I want to know if any more Clanners come by."

"Roger that!" Julie said, as her bulky Battle Armor suit, made even larger with the missile launcher reattached to its back, angled its way through the door and toward the stairs. She got to the roof just in time to see Michael unfold the stub wings of his Kage suit and jet in the direction of a stretch of nearby buildings.

*   *   *   *   *

Nearly an hour passed before they had a clue that Michael was still alive. A column of flame erupted from a street in the distance. Barely, Michael's Kage suit could be seen leaping from building to building in a zigzag evasive pattern. The twists and turns brought him closer, and he was only a few rooftops away from Julie before he broke radio silence.

Light infantry, he gasped. About two companies by my guess. It appears that they were coming this way to set up defensive positions against any possible invaders. They didn't have any Elemental suits among them. All that I saw were standard body armor, infantry weapons, along with some manpack missiles and heavy infantry support weapons. Before I left, I decided to leave them a couple of 'gifts'." Michael lifted his now empty missile launcher. " I fired a couple of inferno rounds into the lead trucks. Apparently, one of the trucks was carrying munitions 'cause it blew up right after I hit it with a missile. I also fired my Blazer and threw about a dozen grenades into the mass of infantrymen while they were looking for cover. That should keep their heads down for a little while."

"But now they know someone's over here," Julie replied.

"Maybe, he returned. But there are far fewer of them to do anything about it." He and Julie made their way to the fourth floor, where he replaced his expended power packs with recharged ones and picked up more grenades from the reserve stocks that had been in the supply canister.

Harold was glued to the window. He could see a number of secondary explosions erupt from where Michael had been, but less than an hour later, dust from moving vehicles could be seen coming closer to the building.

Michael had already gone back out toward the approaching vehicles. About ten kilometers to the southwest, a column of smoke along with sporadic explosions could be seen, evidence that other SLDF troops were fighting Clan forces there.

"Let's start moving some of the supplies to the neighboring building so that we don't lose everything if this building catches fire, Renald suggested over his link. Julie and Su-Li, I want you both to move to that building over there and set up good firing

positions. We may have to leave here in a hurry and I want our flanks covered. Take whatever you might need—missiles, grenades, extra powerpacks. Michael, If you get a chance, scout ahead of us while harassing those light infantry.

You got a plan for us?" Harold asked as he edged away from the window.

Renald nodded. We're gonna give these Clanner's a very bloody nose before we conduct a fighting retreat toward that column of smoke to the southwest. Those have to be more of our people out there. People who will need our help just as much as we need theirs.

Renald finished reloading his BlastPack missile launcher with long-range missiles. Half of his Slingshot gauss weapon ammo bin had been reloaded with cluster ammunition for use against lightly-armored infantry. Michael had already reported that there were at least two Stars or 250 light infantry troops still out there, coming toward the SLDF troopers' position.

It seemed like dozens of missile contrails and hundreds of tracer rounds were streaking skyward from the streets surrounding the building that Renald spotted Michael jumping to. More explosions erupted from the streets as Michael returned fire with inferno missiles, grenades, and Blazer fire. For what seemed like an eternity, the firefight continued between Michael and the Clan infantry below. But Michael's lofty perch soon got too hot as the building beneath him caught fire. He unfolded his stub wings and tossed the last of his grenades before jumping back toward his fellow armored infantrymen.

Clan infantrymen were working their way toward where Michael was headed, unaware they were walking into a trap set by heavily armed Battle Armor troops. Michael had already reloaded, recharged as well as repairing the half-dozen minor hits that he had suffered while harassing the Clan convoy. He took his position on a third building across the street so that he could contribute to the ambush's crossfire.

More than fifty Clan infantrymen had entered the killing zone when Renald gave the word to open fire. Short-range missiles equipped with inferno warheads were fired by both Harold and Michael—at their maximum range to cut off the advance force of Clanners from the main body. Long-range missiles fired by Renald, Julie, and Su-Li destroyed several trucks. Still, the ambushers were at a significant disadvantage. Their primary weapons were mostly anti-Mech lasers. Only Renald with his cluster ammo and Michael with his Blazer were properly equipped to fight large numbers of infantry.

After Julie and Su-Li launched their long-range missiles, they quickly ducked down to reload. Then they fired their high-explosive rounds into groups of Clan infantry before reloading again.

Dozens of short-range manpack missiles arced skyward in an attempt to strike back at the armored snipers on the rooftops. One after another buildings caught fire, including the ones that the SLDF troopers were using.

"We have to get out of here now!" Renald called over his link. "Harold, grab all the equipment that you can carry and head for the street opposite the main fighting. Julie, cover Harold from the roof top."

"Roger that!"

The last of the long-range missiles were fired by the SLDF troopers before the BlastPacks were jettisoned and left behind.

Renald heard the sounds of movement—likely masses of Clan infantrymen within proximity of the building. He started to put down much of the supplies that he had been carrying, then peered out the door.

"Hold up a second, Harold, Renald whispered over his link. I have a little problem to deal with." He swallowed hard, then stepped out into the street.

*   *   *   *   *

There were more than fifty Clan troopers moving carefully toward the building. Julie and Su-Li were in the midst of reloading and couldn't act for the moment, but Michael was still firing from another building. The Clan infantrymen hesitated for a moment as they saw Renald step into view. A tempting target. However, by the time the Clanners raised their weapons Renald had managed to trigger the anti-personnel charge.

One second there was a crowd of Clanners on the street. The next, the only one on his feet was Renald. Blood painted the sidewalks and walls, and Renald fought to keep from retching. Through the gore, he spotted movement a little more than thirty meters away. A few survivors. No need to shoot them, he quickly decided. They were no threat.

"Let's get out of here!" Renald clipped over the mike, as he quickly picked up the remaining supplies and began to run to the southwest. Harold followed as Julie and Su-Li fired the last of their long-range missiles at a few clusters of Clan infantrymen. Then they dumped their BlastPacks and hurried after the men. Michael was the last of the group to leave. He took advantage of the enhanced maneuverability of his Kage suit to catch up with the rest of SLDF armored infantrymen.

All of the Battle Armor suits had taken some damage from the small arms and manpack missiles of the Clan infantry. Fortunately, none of the armored suits had been penetrated. The five armored infantrymen paused for a few minutes. Hunched down in a small alleyway, they exchanged expended powerpacks for charged units and put armor patches over damaged sections of their suits.

"Looks like we won this one," Harold commented dryly.

"Yes, Renald agreed. But we can't afford to 'win' any more battles like this one. We lost all of our remaining missiles, the recharger, and at least half of everything else that we didn't fire at those grunts. We don't have any more missiles. All we have are lasers, satchel charges, a few grenades."

Michael cut in. "At least I managed to pick this up from what was left of one of the Clan infantrymen. He hefted an automatic grenade launcher with his right hand. This will help us some."

Harold grunted. Some. I suppose. But Ren's right. We have to be careful from this point on. Make every shot count. We achieved our mission of disrupting the Clan military. And we got them to chase us. Now we have to stay alive long enough for the rest of our troops to bail us out. We stay on foot as much as possible. If we can join up with more SLDF troops, then our chances of survival get much better.

Renald eyed everyone, then pointed southwest. Let's head out.

The five SLDF armored infantrymen slowly made their way down alleyways and through burned out buildings toward the muffled sounds of explosions and gunfire. They slept a few

hours in an abandoned building, then pressed on.

Twice the troopers ran across a site where SLDF armored infantrymen had fought and died. The second location was where Michael found a fallen Thor and four destroyed SLDF Battle Armor suits. It looked like the Achileus had swarmed over the *Thor* near a cluster of buildings, firing their weapons but doing little damage. Then one of SLDF troops must have placed a satchel charge in the *Thor*'s knee covering and blown apart the OmniMech's leg actuators. The *Thor* had to have kept fighting though, because the Battle Armor suits had been blown apart by 'Mech-caliber weapons.

Another night huddled together found them salvaging power-packs from destroyed SLDF Battle Armor suits and captured Clan energy weapons. The few contacts the small group made with Clan forces cost the armored infantrymen even more ammunition, but they had been able to escape before heavier Clan forces could arrive. Now they were low of food and water as well as munitions.

What're you doing, Julie? Michael edged close.

Praying, she answered. Praying we'll get out of here alive.

Just then a tremendous explosion rocked a nearby building, and Michael edged away to play scout. He returned a few moments later.

"We've got friendlies fighting a couple of 'Mechs and some Elementals over there. The two 'Mechs look to be a *Viper* and a Dasher. Maybe one or two squads of friendly Battle Armor out there. There's no way for me to tell for sure. It's too dark. I don't know how long those grunts are going to last, though. Michael stared at Renald.

"So we help them, Renald answered. Get your satchel charges out. We'll use this building as cover so we can work our way in close to the larger of the two 'Mechs. Then we'll rush him from behind and blow his legs out from under him. After that, try to get in behind the smaller 'Mech and blow his rear armor away before the Elementals can get turned around and come after us. Everyone ready?"

A series of tired nods.

"Look out guys, here comes the cavalry!" Julie said as she moved forward toward the *Viper*.

Harold followed her, darting behind large chunks of rubble as they got closer. The others were close behind, watching as the Clanners continued to fire at their original target, unaware of the threat to their rear. Julie was within a few meters of the *Viper*'s left leg when a chance turn by the Clan 'Mech allowed him to see Harold. The *Viper* quickly pivoted and fired a large pulse laser.

"AAAAAAHHHHHHHHEEEEEEEE!" The laser tore through Harold's battered armor and incinerated him.

Die Clanner! Renald shouted as he fired his Slingshot from behind the cover of another chunk of rubble. He hit the Viper in the rear torso, and managed to buy Su-Li and Michael some time. They ran in close and clambered up the Viper to plant their satchel charges within the chinks in the 'Mech's armored legs. Renald continued to provide covering fire as they skittered away.

A series of explosions ripped apart the knee joints and leg actuators of both of the *Viper*'s legs. The 'Mech fell on its back—hard—barely missing crushing the three armored troopers who had crippled it. The *Viper* flailed its arms in an attempt

to swat its tormentors, but the three troopers leapt on the *Viper*'s head and dug in with their powered claws.

The *Dasher* turned, but couldn't fire for fear of slaying the Viper pilot. Renald faced no such compunctions, however, and fired his Slingshot at the *Dasher*, nearly penetrating the OmniMech's armor with the hypervelocity slug.

"Renald, keep the *Dasher* occupied. We'll take care of the rest," Su-Li called over the link.

She, Julie, and Michael took advantage of Renald's cover fire, clambering up the *Dasher* and attaching the last of their satchel charges to the OmniMech's legs. A few seconds later, a pair of explosions neatly amputated the *Dasher*'s legs—but not before the *Dasher* hit both Julie and Su-Li with missiles, heavily damaging their Battle Armor suits.

Now Renald's battered troopers had gotten the attention of a Point of Elementals. Things were looking grim.

"Everyone, scatter! he hollered into the link. We can't do anything else here. Go . . . go . . . go!"

Michael jumped to the roof of a nearby building and fired on the Elementals that were advancing on Julie and Su-Li. Renald continued to provide fire support with his Slingshot gauss weapon, but was sweating hard and worrying when his ammunition would give out.

One Elemental, then another, was struck down by the combined fire of Renald's squad. Still, other Elementals continued to advance.

Michael looked around to find an Elemental on the roof almost within reach. He grabbed for his vibro-katana and swung just in time. The vibro-katana sliced off the Elemental's right arm—along with the heavy machine gun mounted on it. The Elemental fell back, black sealant oozing. Michael used his Blazer this time, cracking open the Elemental's faceplate and ending that threat.

Su-Li and Julie were down, felled by a pair of point-blank shots from advancing Elementals.

Fall back! Renald shouted, hoping Michael could hear.

The air was suddenly filled with a harsh buzzing.

Fall back!

The buzz grew louder and became a deafening roar. Air support! A quartet of Pinto VTOLs dropped four fresh squads of Battle Armor troopers. The sounds of missiles and lasers were added to the cacophony.

The Elementals fought the fresh SLDF troopers to the last man, while a pair of Karnovs landed at a nearby clearing—a decimated parking lot. More SLDF infantry, mostly foot and jump, poured out of the Karnovs, along with medical personnel.

As the night wore on, the exhausted and wounded BattleArmor troopers came out from their final defensive positions and were evacuated to the Karnovs, along with those troopers who had recently fallen.

The medics were able to save Su-Li, but Julie died.

The rest of the SLDF force had landed successfully and relieved the advance force of BattleArmored infantry. Those same infantry had accomplished their mission, but at a terrible cost. Renald and his fellow infantrymen now were going to rest and recover from their ordeal.

But it would be a brief rest. Another mission against the Clanners was already being planned.

BATTLETECH®
FASA AND MECHFORCE® TOURNAMENTS 2.0

These rules (version 2.0) supersede all previously published BattleTech tournament rules, including those published in the MechForce Manual® and MechForce Manual, 2nd Edition. These rules will be used for all official FASA and MechForce tournaments.

FASA sponsors two basic types of tournaments. The FASA-sponsored tournament allows players to run any type of BattleTech game, using any rules. A player organizing this type of tournament receives gift certificates from FASA for his tournament and can advertise his tournament as an official FASA tournament. The MechForce-sanctioned tournament requires players to use the tournament rules on this sheet. In addition to FASA gift certificates, a MechForce-sanctioned tournament provides BattleTech pins for each player who participates in the event, and a free, one-year MechForce membership for each of the top three players.

In addition, the Regional BattleTech tournament is a MechForce sponsored event that uses the same rules as the BattleTech Open. Each MechForce region holds one Regional BattleTech tournament per year. The location and judges for each Regional are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis; contact MechForce Operations for details. FASA reserves the right to impose certain requirements in order for players to qualify to run a Regional tournament.

BATTLETECH TOURNAMENTS OVERVIEW

1. All BattleTech tournaments will be fought using the Level 2 rules published in the *BattleTech Master Rules*™ as well as any additions posted on the FASA website.

2. Only FASA-published BattleMech® and vehicle record sheets may be used in BattleTech tournaments. These sheets appear in four volumes: *BattleTech Record Sheets: 3060*™, *BattleTech Record Sheets: 3055 & 3058*™, *BattleTech Record Sheets: 3025 & 3026*™, and *BattleTech Record Sheets: 3050*™. In addition, any BattleTech record sheets for 'Mechs® or vehicles containing only Level 2 equipment that appear in subsequent FASA publications may be used (such as the *Field Manual* series, *BattlePack: Fourth Succession War*™, and so on).

At the tournament organizers' discretion, any 'Mech or vehicle for which a record sheet has been published in any MechForce publication worldwide, that adheres to the construction rules found in the *BattleTech Master Rules* and that contains only Level 2 equipment, may also be used.

Immediately prior to game play, once a player has chosen his forces and laid out the maps, each player must declare the type of ammunition his units are carrying (LB-X cluster, Artemis IV-compatible missiles and so on)

Note: All 'Mechs enter each tournament with their full ammo complement.

3. All tournaments (except the Grand Melee tournament) will be fought using any two BattleTech mapsheets as found in *BattleTech Map Sets*™ 2, 3, 4, 5, *BattlePack: Fourth Succession War* or *BattleForce 2*®. In addition, any BattleTech mapsheets provided in subsequent FASA publications may be used. The following rules do not apply to the Grand Melee tournament. For rules for that tournament, see Grand Melee.

Note: Because they are designed to be used in pairs and have unique elevation levels that do not match other maps, the Large Mountain and Deep Canyon maps included in *BattleTech Map Set 5* cannot be used in tournament play. The remaining BattleTech mapsheets are legal for tournament use.

At the same time that he chooses his forces, each player also will select one map from the official BattleTech maps published by FASA, to use during game play. Immediately prior to beginning game play, both players roll 2D6. The side with the higher result places his map first using any orientation. The opponent player then places his map using any orientation. The only restriction for map placement is that both maps must line up side by side—their long sides together—not end to end, and they must be face up—i.e., the blank underside of a map may not be used.

At the beginning of play, both players roll 2D6. The side with the higher result chooses one of the four edges of the map from which his force will enter the game. The opposing player will enter on the opposite edge.

Note: This may result in a player's force entering on an opponent's map.

The edge on which your forces enter the map is considered your "home" map edge; the opposite edge is your opponent's "home" map edge. Each BattleMech or vehicle may move onto the board either Walking, Running or Jumping—in the case of vehicles, Cruising or Flanking—with the first full hex on the map being the 'Mech's or vehicle's starting point for the Movement Phase. In tournament play, only full hexes are considered legal for use. Players may not move into, through, or end their movement in a half hex.

4. For the BattleTech Open tournament, we recommend skill levels of Piloting/Driving 5 and Gunnery 4. However, both sides must have equal Piloting/Driving and Gunnery skills. For the Gunslinger, Trial of Bloodright and Grand Melee tournaments, Piloting and Gunnery skills depend on the Battle Value of the 'Mechs each player has chosen to use during the tournament. See the Gunnery/Piloting Table (Gunslinger/Trial of Bloodright/Grand Melee) for more information. A partial list of all legal BattleMechs and vehicles with their Battle

Values appears in the *MechForce Manual*; a complete list of FASA-published 'Mechs and vehicles appears in the revised edition of *Maximum Tech*™. New 'Mechs and vehicles will be listed in the MechForce Quarterly and will be included on a master list on the FASA website. The judge of each individual tournament may modify the players' Piloting/Gunnery skills to help expedite the game. However, in the case of the BattleTech Open, the Piloting/Driving and Gunnery skills for both players must remain equal.

GUNNER/PILOTING TABLE
(Gunslinger/Trial of Bloodright/Grand Melee)

Battle Value	Gunnery	Piloting
1–300	0	0
301–400	0	1
401–700	1	1
701–800	1	2
801–1,100	2	2
1,101–1,200	2	3
1,201–1,500	3	3
1,501–1,600	3	4
1,601–1,900	4	4
1,901–2,000	4	5
2,001–2,300	5	5
2,301–2,400	5	6
2,401–2,700	6	6
2,701–2,800	6	7
2,801+	7	7

5. Because certain types of equipment consistently bog down BattleTech games, those equipment types cannot be used in tournament play.

Banned equipment:

- All C^3 equipment
- All artillery weapons
- All non-standard munitions (except for LB-X cluster, Streak, ATM munitions or Artemis-compatible missiles)
- All **Level 3** rules and equipment (as published in various BattleTech products such as *Maximum Tech*™, as well as in various MechForce publications worldwide).

Note: Players may use BattleMechs carrying the banned equipment, but that equipment does not function.

6. Special Case Rules: Players may not use the Accidental Fires and Intentional Fires Special Case rules. All other Special Case rules that apply directly to BattleMech or vehicle combat, and fall within the rules of the individual tournament, are in effect.

Note: The Auto Eject on all 'Mechs is considered Disabled.

7. Players may not use sheet protectors and grease markers. Sheets should be marked legibly so that the judges may review the record sheets if necessary. Opponents have the right to view each other's record sheets.

8. Players must use standard six-sided dice when playing tournaments. No specialty dice, such as The Armory®'s BattleTech dice, may be used. The judges may choose to disallow ALL players' dice and instead supply dice to all players.

9. Each player is required to bring his own materials. This includes dice, pencil, appropriate BattleMech and/or vehicle record sheets, maps and any other material the player deems necessary to play BattleTech.

10. All players participating in BattleTech events are expected to display good sportsmanship. The judges of any BattleTech tournament reserve the right to eject any player from a BattleTech tournament for unsportsmanlike or disruptive behavior.

11. All players participating in BattleTech events are expected to finish those events. Because of the way BattleTech tournaments are scored (especially the BattleTech Open), it is important that every player finish the tournament for which he has registered. Abandoning a game midway through the event shows unsportsmanlike behavior and, more importantly, it can irrevocably damage your opponent's chances of advancing in and/or winning that tournament. If a player does not finish a tournament—for example, by walking away in the middle of a game or failing to finish all three rounds of the BattleTech Open—the judges can choose to ban that player from any future FASA-sponsored BattleTech tournaments, including any BattleTech tournaments for which a player might already be registered. In addition, if that player is a MechForce member, his or her membership will be assessed a penalty of 50 promotion points.

BATTLETECH OPEN

1. The *BattleTech* Open tournament is comprised of three rounds of play. This tournament requires an even number of players, with a minimum of six players. Each player will participate in all three rounds of the tournament. The winner

of the tournament will be determined according to the Ranked Battle Scoring formula found in the *MechForce Manual*. Each player will start the tournament with 1,000 points.

Additionally, at the tournament organizer's discretion, a fourth and final round, using any Level 2 technology base, may be added.

2. During each round of play, each player will control a lance of four (4) different 'Mechs and/or vehicles—you cannot play with fewer than 4 'Mechs and/or vehicles. Each player determines the exact composition of his forces. However, the total tonnage of the lance can be no less than 140 tons and cannot exceed 250 tons.

Note: You cannot use VTOL or Naval vehicles.

3. The BattleTech Open is designed to determine the "best" player in the tournament. This player should be able to succeed regardless of 'Mech, vehicle or technology base: therefore, each round will be played using a different technology base. In addition, no 'Mech or vehicle variant may be used more than once during any of the three rounds. For example, if the player moves onto the battlefield in Round 1 with a HBK-4P *Hunchback*, that is the only time he may use that variant. In Round 2, however, he may use a different variant of that 'Mech (HBK-5M, for example), or an entirely different 'Mech, if he so desires. In other words, if a player participates in all three rounds of the tournament, he will use 12 different 'Mechs/vehicles and/or variants.

Additionally, at the tournament organizer's discretion, further restrictions on unit choices may be applied.

Round 1: Level 1 Inner Sphere only
Round 2: Level 2 Inner Sphere only
Round 3: Level 2 Clan only

4. The judges will choose opponent pairs by randomly assigning players to each other as they register. Larger tournaments, such as those held at the Origins® and Gen Con® conventions, may require modifications to that rule. Each round, players will face a different opponent, so that no two players compete against each other more than once.

5. The judges will determine the length of each round. We recommend, however, that no round exceed four (4) hours, and that there be a break between each round to allow for final damage calculations and other necessities.

6. If any player's 'Mech or vehicle leaves the field, whether under its own power or because of its opponent's actions, that 'Mech or vehicle is considered destroyed.

7. If a player concedes the round he is currently playing, whether because he has to leave early or he no longer wishes to participate in that round, he loses that round. Both sides consult the Ranked Battle Scoring to determine the status of their 'Mechs and/or vehicles in their current condition. Regardless of the status of either side's 'Mechs or vehicles, the player who did not concede the game wins that round.

Note: If the judges feel that a player is abusing this clause, they reserve the right to eject that player from the tournament. Additionally, because this situation can irrevocably damage the remaining player's chances of winning this tournament, if the remaining player is willing, one of the judges may finish the game in place of the conceding player.

8. At the end of each round of the tournament, each player should consult the Ranked Battle Scoring section of the *MechForce Manual* to determine the winner of the round, then help his opponent fill out the Battle Report Master form of the *MechForce Manual*. This form must be turned in to the judges. The judges use this form to determine the winner of each round and the overall winner of the tournament.

Note: The judges should provide these forms, but players may also bring this paperwork.

GUNSLINGER TOURNAMENT

1. The BattleTech Gunslinger tournament is a single-elimination tournament. This tournament requires 4, 8, 16, 32 or 64 participants to avoid one or more players receiving a bye.

2. For each round of play, each player must choose a different 'Mech chassis—not a variant or alternate configuration—using the Level 2 Inner Sphere technology base. The individual player may choose the tonnage and type of BattleMech.

3. The judges will choose opponent pairs by randomly assigning players to each other as they register. Larger tournaments, such as those held at the Origins and Gen Con conventions, may require modifications to that rule. The tournament will then proceed using standard single-elimination rules; the winners move on to the next round while the losers are eliminated.

4. The judges will determine the length of each round. We recommend that no round exceed one and one half (1 1/2) hours, and that there be a break between each round.

5. If a player's 'Mech leaves the field, whether under its own power or because of its opponent's actions, that 'Mech is considered destroyed.

6. If a player concedes the round he is currently playing, whether because he has to leave early or he no longer wishes to participate in that round, his 'Mech is considered destroyed.

7. At the end of each round, the winner of each game will be the player whose BattleMech is not destroyed. See page 38 of the *BattleTech Master Rules* for the definition of a destroyed 'Mech. If both 'Mechs remain operational—or both 'Mechs are destroyed in the same turn—the winner will be the person who inflicted the most damage, according to the ruling of the judges.

TRIAL OF BLOODRIGHT

1. The BattleTech Trial of Bloodright or Bloodname tournament uses the rules for the BattleTech Gunslinger tournament, with the following exceptions.

2. This tournament has a maximum of 32 players.

Note: If a Grand Melee tournament is also being run, one slot of the Trial of Bloodright tournament should be reserved for the winner of the Grand Melee tournament.

3. For each round of play, each player must choose a different OmniMech chassis—not an alternate configuration—using the Level 2 Clan technology base. No second-line BattleMechs are allowed. The individual player may choose the tonnage and type of OmniMech.

GRAND MELEE

1. The BattleTech Grand Melee tournament is a free-for-all tournament that can accommodate any number of players.

2. Each player chooses an OmniMech using the Level 2 Clan technology base. No second-line BattleMechs are allowed. The individual player may choose the tonnage and type of OmniMech.

3. The judge of the Grand Melee tournament should use whatever mechanic he deems necessary to ensure a random placement of all units. Units are placed at the very edge of the board, at an equal distance from the other units, in the first full hex of the map edge.

4. The judges determine the length of the Grand Melee tournament. If a Trial of Bloodright tournament is also being run, keep in mind that the winner of the Grand Melee tournament fills the final slot in the Trial of Bloodright, and schedule both tournaments accordingly.

5. The number of map sheets used depends upon the number of players involved in the tournament and is determined by the judges. We recommend four (4) mapsheets or a number of mapsheets equal to half the number of players.

Note: All mapsheets for this tournament should be the standard *BattleTech* mapsheet found in the *BattleTech* box set and *BattleTech Map Set 2*.

6. If a player's 'Mech leaves the field, whether under its own power or because of its opponent's actions, that 'Mech is considered destroyed.

7. If a player concedes the round he is currently playing, whether because he has to leave early or he no longer wishes to participate in that round, his 'Mech is considered destroyed.

8. Because of the potential number of players involved in the Grand Melee, the judge is responsible for fairly determining Initiative. For example, the judge may create two identical stacks of numbered cards before coming to the tournament table. Prior to game play, the judge gives one card from a single stack to each participant in the Grand Melee, then removes the same unused numbers from both stacks. He then shuffles the second set of cards and draws the top card, announcing the number drawn. The player with the corresponding number moves his 'Mech. After each turn, the judge reshuffles the numbered cards and play proceeds in the same manner.

Note: The judge may also use this system for initial placement of units.

Judges also should time each player's move to give each player equal time and to keep the game moving. We recommend no longer than one (1) minute per player.

9. Every Clansman who enters the Grand Melee has one goal in mind; to be the last standing. Winning the Grand Melee will gain him the final slot in the Trial of Bloodright, and gives him the opportunity to earn a Bloodname. Because a Clansman can win no higher honor than a Bloodname, there are no friends, no alliances and no holding back once the Grand Melee has begun.

If, at any time during the Grand Melee tournament, the judges feel that a player or players are not playing by the spirit of this tournament—for example, teaming up with friends and not firing on each other, not firing on available targets, and so on—the judge can enforce the following rules to help simulate the Clan mind set in the Grand Melee tournament.

• Each player MUST fire every turn on the easiest and/or closest target to which he has a valid LOS, under the following two conditions:

• A player does not have to fire any weapons that use ammo.

• A player does not have to overheat his OmniMech when firing. However, he must come as close as possible—including the heat generated during the Movement Phase—to the maximum heat dissipation capabilities of his OmniMech.

10. At the end of the Grand Melee tournament, the winner is the player whose BattleMech is not destroyed. See page 38 of the *BattleTech Master Rules*, for the definition of a destroyed 'Mech. If more than one 'Mech remains operational, the winner is the person who inflicted the most damage, according to the ruling of the judges. Larger tournaments, such as those held at the Origins and Gen Con conventions, may require modifications to that rule.

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FIRST TIME AT THE CONTROLS

THE BEGINNINGS OF A TRUE MECHWARRIOR

by Nadin Abbott

Nalgering Academy.
Tharkad.
Lyran Alliance.
Training Fields.
June 19th, 3059.

"Listen up! Today most of you will experience the thrill of piloting a BattleMech for the first time. You'll be using the Crockett behind me, or one of its cousins. There'll be an experienced pilot with you to take over in the event things get out of hand. I know you're familiar with the initialization procedures—both in the classroom and in the simpods. These machines are cold. You'll have to get into them and turn them on. One mistake in the correct sequence and the onboard computers are programmed to shut the 'Mech down. And that means you'll have to start from the beginning. Any questions Cadets?"

Master Sergeant Andrew Doherty paced the tarmac, fully expecting the cadets to ask him something—anything. But Doherty knew his students were excited. And after a few silent moments it was obvious they were too excited to open their mouths.

"All right. Doherty squared his shoulders. Johnson. Anderson. Andrade. Front and center. You'll be the first lucky people to log hours for the Cadet class of 3062. Get your gear and get in there!"

The three cadets snapped to, picked their neurohelmets off the tarmac, and pealed away their jumpsuits, revealing their cooling shorts and T-shirts. The cold air stung them, and they started to shiver.

It was cold. Then again, it was always cold on Tharkad.

They jogged quickly toward the 'Mechs. The silent machines dwarfed the technicians standing at their sides. At thirty meters tall, the 'Mechs had more firepower than any conventional armor company of the Twentieth Century. They could level a city block in ten seconds flat. But the true *power* of the machines was hard to comprehend for the older teens.

Guadalupe Andrade climbed up. The cold metal rungs felt smooth to her young hands. She sensed her shoulders tire midway, the muscles were starting to burn. The neurohelmet pinched her neck. An awkward piece of equipment, it covered her head and restricted her movements. She didn't know how her father managed this—the equipment then was supposedly worse.

Her father, *Hauptmann* Avaricio Hortensio Andrade, was the first to become a MechWarrior in the Andrade family. She heard the story many times while growing up. Her father captured the family *Centurion* along the Marik lines. Now it was up to Guadalupe to prove that she was worthy of the title of MechWarrior.

The young woman entered the confines of the cockpit and sat on the forward command seat. The MechWarrior behind her lifted up his face shield and met her gaze. "Cadet Andrade, commence initialization procedures."

"Yes, Sir." Guadalupe's luck. She got stuck for her first drive with *Kommandant* Hurst, a surly officer who was transferred to the academy after losing both legs and his 'Mech to the Clans. Officially he was dispossessed, more machine than man. His voice was generated by an artificial larynx, which made him sound distant and cold. The cadets called him—behind his back—"Borg," a term from an ancient video show.

Hands sweaty and forehead damp, Guadalupe began the procedure. They were given the security code to release controls. First things first, she said to herself. Security check and then release the gyro controls—after connecting to the 'Mech through the cables on her neurohelmet.

Nausea washed over her. The simpods were programmed to replicate some of it, but the actual nausea of being connected was worst than she expected. She took a deep breath. The medical technician at the side of the cockpit, now on a cherry picker, monitored all her vitals.

Some Cadets washed out at this point.

Guadalupe blinked several times and exhaled slowly. Her head finally cleared. The medical technician gave a thumbs up, and the cherry picker was moved away. Guadalupe glanced to the 'Mechs on either side of hers. Neither of her classmates were being taken away in a stretcher.

So far, so good.

Another deep breath, then she turned on the heat sinks, only one third of them, as she'd been instructed. The cold liquid running through her vest gave her the chills. Guadalupe noticed that Hurst was also having the same problem. That was funny, "Borg" getting cold.

Then she turned on the engine core. The machine slowly came to life, humming under her. The next step was to make sure that the gyro was not revving. Good. She unlocked the 'Mech's limbs and then turned the next set of heat sinks on.

Time to take the Crockett for a spin.

The radio crackled to life. "Gold one, this is Control. You are cleared."

"Gold one, Control. Acknowledged."

"Route downloaded into your navigational computer. Good luck. The field is open."

"Affirmative, Control." Guadalupe noted that the route showed on her navcomp. It was a simple one, straight with a couple of turns. It displayed the gunnery range where she was supposed to fire the ER Large Lasers mounted on this behemoth. The target was a mock-up of a *Black Hawk*, and she was to fire at full power.

"Take us out, Cadet." Hurst's voice sounded like gravel shushing in the bottom of a pail.

"Yes, Sir," Guadalupe replied. She eased the throttle forward, the 'Mech came to life, and it started to walk. Each step sent shivers down Guadalupe's back. Each step also felt like a small earthquake. Despite the cold, she was still sweating. This wasn't going to be easy. Sir?

"Go ahead, Cadet."

"Why don't the simpods reflect the jarring?"

Hurst gave a short laugh. "Once you perfect your piloting, the sensation will not bother you. After a while, you won't even

notice it. He paused. I asked the same question, too, my first time out. I had a trainer Crockett.

The eighty-five-ton machine continued to move under Guadalupe's control. Within a matter of minutes, the classroom was far behind. Then came the first bend in the road.

Andrade's hands were sweaty-slick with nervousness, but somehow she managed to push the left side pedal, making the 'Mech turn, ever so slowly. Then she almost lost it.

Hurst took control. "Cadet, do not push so hard on the controls. These machines are difficult to maneuver as it is. If you force it, you will fall. Try again." The voice, ever so artificial, sounded almost concerned.

Andrade nudged the pedal this time, managing the turn with little problem. The hint of a smile crossed her face, then her expression turned instantly serious as the radar came alive. A target was shown, just at the edge of the field. She followed the bearing indicated, and after a good ten minutes visually spotted the target. It was the simulated *Black Hawk*.

She stifled a giggle. It was actually a scrap of old hover cars made to look like the silhouette of a 'Mech. It was a target though.

"Weapons free, Cadet," Hurst said. "Advise the range master."

"Gold One to Control. Permission for weapons free."

"Copy Gold One. Range open. Weapons free."

With that, Guadalupe edged the *Crockett* forward until it was in a straight line with the simulated *Black Hawk*. She lowered his crosshairs and stabbed the controls just a little too fast. The coherent beam of light hit the ground barely meters away from the *Black Hawk*.

"You would have alerted him, and he would be turning at you with lasers flaring, Hurst observed. Stay where you are and fire without moving."

Guadalupe complied, lowering the targeting crosshairs over the form and concentrating. Without moving the machine, it was easier to target. She thumbed the controls and a heartbeat later scored a hit on the right leg of the enemy machine, cutting away a large section of armor.

"Good. Now try again while you move this crate—slowly."

The Cadet pushed the throttle ever so slightly and tried to keep the targeting crosshairs on the form. So far so good, she whispered. Guadalupe took a deep breath, hit the controls again and scored another hit.

Hurst seemed satisfied. As we leave this section of the field, try to keep the 'Mech running north, while you target northeast. In other words, effect a diagonal pattern.

Sounds simple enough, Guadalupe thought. However, deep down she knew it wouldnít be. Still, she followed the Borg's instructions and somehow managed to hit the target, this time melting armor off the right torso.

"Take us home, Cadet." Hurst was making notes. Advise the range officer."

"Aye, Sir. Gold one to Control. Leaving the range."

"Copy Gold one. Range is closed."

The rest was easy, and her marks were high. Sleep came fast that night. Guadalupe had fired on a 'Mech in simulated action. But in the morning she realized she was not close to facing a live target. Years of training were still ahead of her.

Nalgering Academy.
Tharkad.
Lyran Alliance.
Training Fields.
July 25th, 3059.

The Cadets were in formation for final instructions. Today they were to complete their first solo flights. There would be no instructors riding in the back seats of their *Chameleon*s. If anything went wrong, it would be on their shoulders to correct the situation.

If they fell, it would be due to their own ineptitude.

And If they managed to impress somebody. . . .

Of course, the instructors were not going to go easy on anyone. If a 'Mech fell, the Cadet would have to repair the damage and weather the poor marks.

Guadalupe Andrade looked forward to piloting the 'Mech without "Borg" watching her every move. True, the old man had never been overtly critical of her performance. In fact, he was helpful. Guadalupe found herself enjoying his electronically-assisted banter. However, she wasnít about to admit that to her barracks mates.

After waiting for what seemed like most of the day, she was called to board one of the 'Mechs. It was already damaged, and she made sure that the tech noted that in his datapad. The young tech just grinned stupidly at her.

Guadalupe climbed in. The large transplex cockpit was open and inviting. She strapped herself in, then put on the helmet and readied herself for the nauseous sensation of her inner ear interfacing with the 'Mech gyro. Before initiating the 'Mech, she touched the cross hanging on a thin chain around her neck. "Madre de Dios, cuidame," she whispered. The tech closed the canopy.

She initiated the 'Mech, following the sequence and flawlessly succeeding. Then she stared at the navigational computer. It was a tough course, but she knew she needed to complete it on her first solo trip. She eased the throttle forward, accelerating to 68 kph. The machine felt almost nimble compared to the *Crockett*. Then again, the *Crockett* was an Assault 'Mech, larger and bulkier.

Once she entered the course, she realized why many of her friends had fallen on this particular section. The techs and the range master had put many an obstacle in the way to force them to jump. She approached the first barrier—a pile of junked cars—and pushed her jump jets while keeping an eye on the altimeter. She rose in a plume of reaction mass and flew over the vehicles. Now the trick was to land without falling. She thought about flexing the 'Mech's legs, just like she did while jumping, but she didn't have time. Her 'Mech landed off-balance, the weight on its left leg. She threw the arm out to keep it from falling.

Guadalupe was rattled, but other than a few bumps and bruises she seemed to be all right. Unfortunately, she managed to damage the Mech's left arm. She registered the dent in the armor and grimaced.

That'll be a few hours with the techs repairing this, she muttered. She sucked in her lower lip and gripped the throttle. Let's move.

This part of the course was supposed to be a running track. She accelerated the machine to its maximum speed of 95.9 kph, and concentrated on not falling.

All of a sudden it started snowing.

Wonderful. A slick tarmac.

Guadalupe felt her heart race, and in the back of her mind she heard her father's voice. "Piloting a 'Mech should not be done with brute force." Imagined or real, she took the words to heart and lessened her grip on the controls. Piloting the machine became easier, and it was responding faster.

She wasn't graceful with the machine. But navigating the snow-slick tarmac wasn't beyond her, and turning wasn't as much of a problem. Guadalupe stayed on the straight road as long as possible. Then, with only minor difficulty, she turned the *Chameleon* thirty degrees to the right. The targets ahead were silhouettes of tanks. Even though she was looking forward to facing the Clans, she knew that she could potentially face Inner Sphere forces—and tanks were still a mainstay of many militaries, especially in the Chaos March.

She lowered the crosshairs over the form of a Zhukov and fired. Armor melted from the side of the target, and Guadalupe cracked a smile. She was indeed getting the hang of this. Then came the hard part of the course, a ninety-degree turn at full speed, followed by a jump over a 'Mech trap. She pressed the left pedal. Go light on the controls, she reminded herself. Somehow she managed to make the turn, though she started to skid.

Sucking in a deep breath, she punched the jump jets and the 'Mech left the ground. New snow rose in a vapor cloud behind the machine, practically obscuring it in white mist. The pilot kept her eyes on the target—and slowly, and with an almost surprising amount of grace—brought the 'Mech down with folded knees. She allowed herself another smile. Her scores should be quite good for this first solo flight.

The last part of the course was bringing the 'Mech home. Guadalupe took the machine to the 'Mech Barn just as the local star was starting to set over the mountains. She eased the machine into the cavernous bay and was directed by the techs to the parking stall. She was instructed to back it in, a maneuver that students normally weren't asked to perform.

She brought the machine to a full stop and listened to the computer announce that the hookups were on. Then she began the shutdown procedure. First, secure all weapons, she mentally lectured herself. Next, lock limbs. After she secured the gyro and took the helmet off, she realized how tired she felt. Her limbs hurt, as if she had spent hours in the gym.

"Very good Cadet Andrade." *Kommandant* Hurst was standing on the platform. He met the gaze of the young Cadet. "We might make a MechWarrior out of you." He showed her the evaluation sheet for the first solo flight—the score was 93.2%. "Good, but not perfect. That near fall will cost you some time with head tech Andrew. Do not give the man a hard time."

"A Clanner Sir?" Guadalupe asked.

"Indeed. The cadet with the best score gets to work with Andrew—and hopefully learn something from him. He is somewhat finicky, a perfectionist at heart. And, Cadet Andrade, he is the reason why I am missing my legs. His 'Mech did that to me."

She arched her eyebrows, begging for more information.

Andrew has refused, so far, to test out as a Warrior. I suspect it is, at least in part, because he disabled me." Hurst made an electronic clucking noise in his throat, then pointed to a *Black Hawk* that was being worked on. "That was his ride. We captured it and we have been working on it for some time. Been trying to wrest its secrets.

I will be honored to work with him, Sir.

Hurst continued, Andrew knew just slightly more than you when he graduated from his sibko. It was enough to keep his 'Mech running in the event a disaster struck. Now, through trial and error, he can keep most of these machines running."

Nalgering Academy.
Tharkad.
Lyran Alliance.
Training Fields.
July 25th, 3059.

A young Cadet jogged toward Guadalupe. "Hey 'Lupe, what did Hurst have to say?"

"Nothing much."

"Com'on. Fess up, 'Lupe. He had to tell you something. Now. Or in the days before. He told you something that made you do so well. Share it. I only scored seventy percent.

Barely enough to qualify, she knew. *Kommandant* Hurst served with several units during the Clan war. He shared some of his experience. I listened closely." She would have said more, but she spotted the head tech coming her way. She nodded to acknowledge him. "*Kommandant* Hurst asked me to report to you, Sergeant Andrew."

"Aye, that he did Cadet, came the clipped reply. We have much work to do. Your 'Mech was damaged. You did well, though."

The two worked on the 'Mech and talked long into the night. The Clanner shared with the young woman as much as he could about the Way of the Clans. When the sun rose the next morning, the *Chameleon*'s armor was fully repaired.

Guadalupe walked from the bay more tired than she could ever remember feeling. But something in her had been awakened, and now she had some insights into the enemy she was going to fight some day.
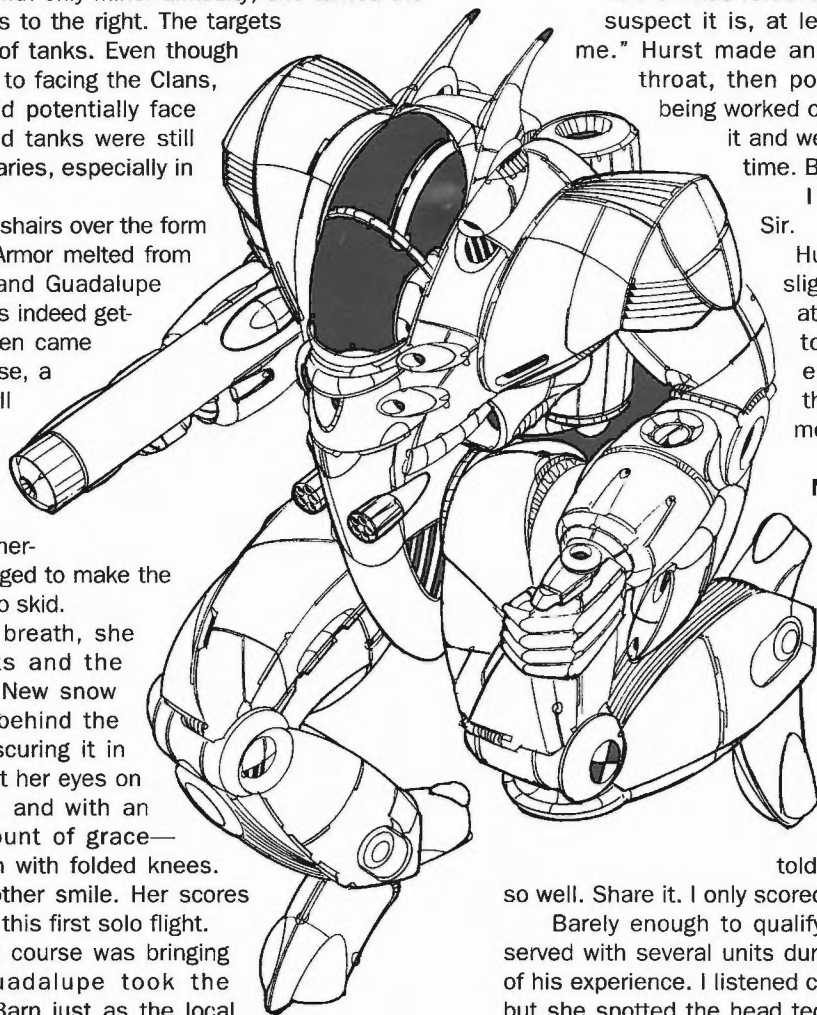
TACTICS

A PRIMER FROM
THE ALBION ACADEMY

by Nadin Abbott

Albion Academy.
Crucis March
Federated Commonwealth,
September 13th, 3058.

Colonel Stark entered the Auditorium and stared at the audience. He was an experienced field officer, yet his palms were sweaty. He'd rather be in a cockpit facing down autocannon shells and PPCs. Oh well. He pulled his uniform shirt down once again. Colonel Stark hated public speaking even more than he hated the Clans.

The young faces followed his every move.

"Maneuver warfare is the secret of modern combat, he began. To keep mobility means to keep initiative over the enemy. 'Mech jocks all over the Inner Sphere are slowly learning this lesson. Problem is, how do you keep momentum? You achieve this by smart feints and counterfeints. You push where the enemy least expects it, or you push at its weakest point in the line. On the other hand, you pull back and regroup when the enemy has pressed you to the point that your line is in danger of collapsing. Of course, every barely-wet-behind-the-ears-lieutenant can recite this. Listen up, and what you learn today might save your life and those under your command."

A few of the students shifted in their seats for a more comfortable position. One in the back row covered a yawn with his hand.

"My job is to teach you about open ground warfare. You know, the kind of fighting where you can see flat for kilometers on end. In fact, it is so flat that if you see anything rising above the horizon you better magnify it. Chances are it is the enemy. Assume that he has seen you as well. That way you avoid nasty surprises. These wastelands are sometimes called deserts, at other times called lava flows that have cooled down, or arctic wastelands. Each type of environment has its problems, but all share one thing in common—hiding your moves from an enemy force is close to impossible, and Blake be with you if your GPS fails."

Colonel Stark took a sip from a glass of water before continuing. "And Blake be with you if the High Command decides to drop you into the line and you are a *Hunchback* pilot! Not all 'Mechs are created equal. In this kind of terrain you need to have good long_range fighters. The preferred 'Mechs in this environment are those with Gauss Rifle platforms and PPC platforms, and with long_range missiles as fire support. 'Mechs that fulfill this role include the *Caesar*, *Atlas* 7-K configuration, and the old Star League *War Dog*. *Dervish*, *Apollo*s, *Trebuchet*, and *Salamander* BattleMechs can easily provide fire support. Though the *Atlas* has other problems, such as the lack of mobility in the field."

Some of the students began furiously scribbling notes. This gave the colonel some measure of satisfaction.

"Formations in the field are critical. When deploying your lance for combat, remember that there are basic formations that will allow lance mates to protect and cover each other. The most basic formation used by junior officers in the field is a line. MechWarriors will advance in a single line at the speed of the slowest unit. The hope is that all 'Mechs will reach the long-range capabilities of their longest-range weapons at the same time. The theory here is that they will be able to drop a single enemy 'Mech by massing fire when weapons are declared free, or when the target first enters maximum range. However, experienced officers understand that this is seldom the case."

The colonel went on to explain that variations on this line formation are Echelon, Left or Right formations. These formations are good when a 'Mech with reasonable speed and range takes point. Once combat begins, the rest of the lance can wheel into position. There are advantages to this formation—mainly the lack of exposure to initial fire by the rest of the lance. If the enemy decides to mass fire on the point 'Mech, it will be severely damaged or destroyed. This will reduce overall unit effectiveness and moral. "One of my favorite formations is the V or inverted V. They offer the most flexibility in the field. In the V formation two relatively faster 'Mechs march forward of their two partners and engage the enemy at long range. Once they receive critical damage they fade back, allowing the other two 'Mechs to take over the main fight while giving fire support to their lance mates. 'Mechs, such as the new *Apollo* and the old *Catapult*, will be able to fulfill this role very well."

What about the inverted V formation? It was a young woman in the second row.

"It has a different function, he answered. In this formation the two side 'Mechs are faster. Their role is not to necessarily to engage, but to flank. This will give the enemy commander multiple threats. When well executed, you should have the enemy encircled between two combat elements. This can lead to an easy victory, or even elimination of an entire enemy group."

Are there other optimal formations? This question came from somewhere in the back.

"One I favor, the Diamond Formation, combines the best of the previous two. It is, in open terrain, the most practical for patrolling units. The front 'Mech will keep moving forward, while the two flankers will move slower while scanning the outside of the formation. The base should be your slowest unit, and it will determine the pace of patrol speed. That 'Mech is also responsible for bringing up the rear. This formation offers a secondary advantage. If anybody should surprise the line and jump in the middle, all 'Mechs will be able to fire on it, and at least one 'Mech will be guaranteed a rear shot."

He paced the front of the room, noting that practically everyone was busy taking notes. When they had caught up to him, he took another drink and spoke a bit slower.

"Someday some of you will command companies. The basic formations that I just went through will be very useful in handling your charges in combat and patrol. Of course, you could bring your dozen 'Mechs in a V or inverted V formation.

At this tactical level this might be more of a problem than an advantage. I see some of you are nodding. That is good. You certainly can enter the field in an in-depth V formation. This works particularly well if you expect to be able to concentrate firepower. Your first lance enters the field in a V formation, your second in a box or diamond formation, and your third in another V formation. From there, each combat element can cover the rest— while the rear element, which should be your fire support, can bring its weapons to bear. You see, modern warfare is maneuver warfare. In an open field your weapons of choice are long range platforms.

He explained that the best tactical formations will not help if the enemy has range over you, and that your forces must be moving at all times. Mobility is your friend, and standing still means you are asking to be shot." Colonel Stark moved away from the podium and after ten minutes of answering questions left for his hotel. These men and women were young. At least they were being taught what he never quite learned while in the Academy. War changed forever in 3049 at the Rock. He just hoped that teaching these Cadets was not an education that was too little, too late.

THE 5TH SUCCESSION WAR CONTINUES...

—COMPILED BY PRECENTOR MARTIAL RANDALL N. BILLS

Dateline: 31 March 3051
—Excerpts from transcripts of a recent ComStar news broadcast from Hilton Head Island, Terra

It appears that like the Fourth Succession War, this Fifth Succession War has seen unprecedented border action for the first year, but has recently lapsed into a lull, as troops rest and reorganize. Whereas hundreds of worlds changed hands last year, the past three months have seen only fifteen worlds conquered. Unfortunately, instead of a lasting peace, I fear this is simply the quiet before the storm.

In other news, the ComStar Explorer Corps has been diligently searching for the Clan homeworlds, and they believe that they have finally found them. In our next telecast, we hope to include information about the rest of the Clans, and whether we can expect to see them invading the Inner Sphere in the coming months.

Let's go to our reporters from around the Inner Sphere.

—Excerpt of transmission from Sarmaxa
<Reporter> The continued success of the offensive against the Confederation by Leftenant General Richard Darr has led many to believe that he will remain in this capacity, unless he suffers a stunning defeat. Though only the world of Sarmaxa was taken in the last three months, this puts him one jump from the world of Capella; a perfect staging area from which to launch an attack that would be devastating to the moral of the CCAF.

—Excerpt of transmission from Armaxa
<Reporter> The viewers will remember our previous interviews with Hauptmann William Hall, and he has graciously accepted our request for another interview. What does this attack mean for the Federated Commonwealth?
<Hauptmann William Hall> The conquest of Armaxa is simply a prelude to the fall of the final world of the St. Ives Compact, St. Ives itself. With the Compact brought to heel, we will be able to divert our resources to other fronts, especially the Draconis Combine, where we have lost so many worlds.

—Excerpt of transmission from Holt
<Reporter> I am here with Hauptmann Carl Szczerski, whom the viewer will recognize from our coverage of the invasion of the Taurian Concordat. He is now part of the spearhead still driving into the Free Worlds League. Hauptmann, do you think the FedCom campaign's activity in this area will increase in the coming weeks?
<Hauptmann Carl Szczerski> Holt was a difficult fight but in the end, the FWLM simply could not stand against us. As for our targets for the coming weeks, I am unable to discuss that information at this time.
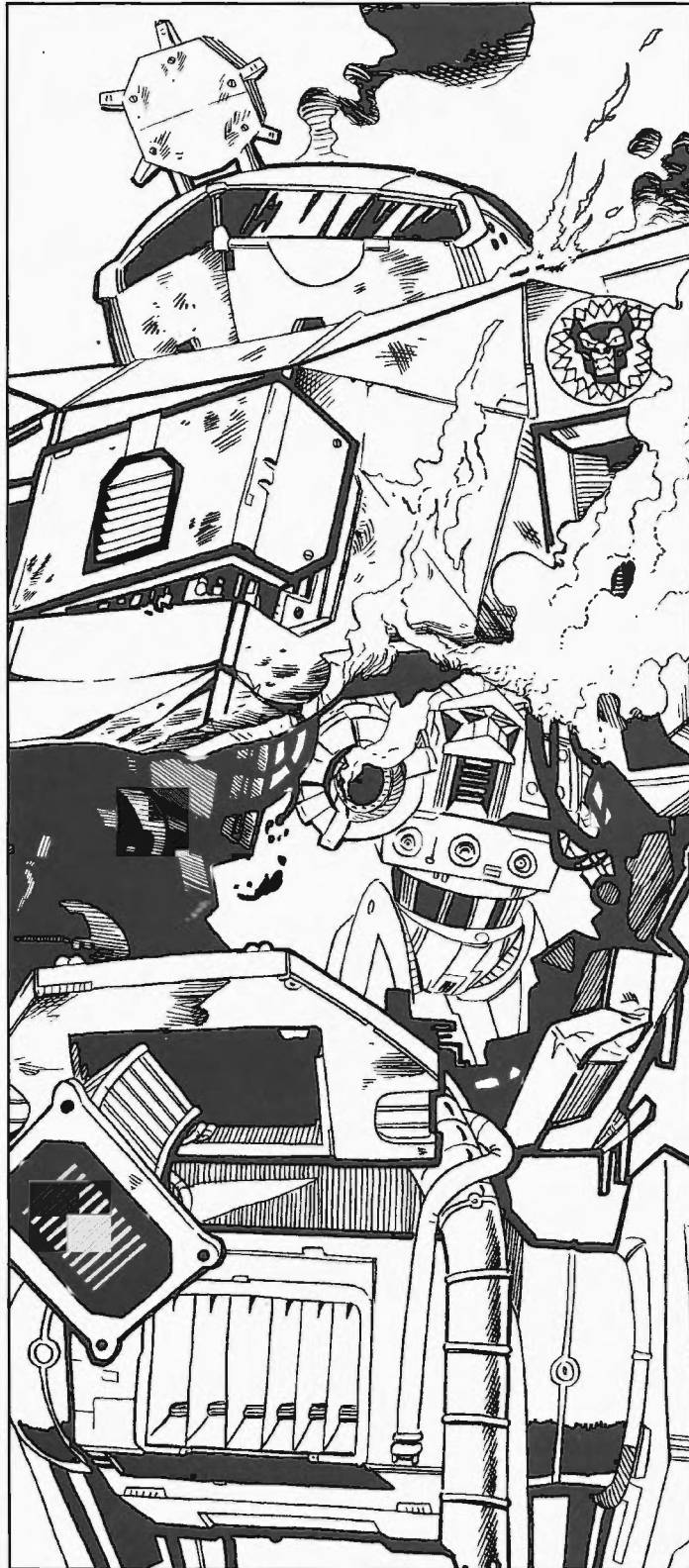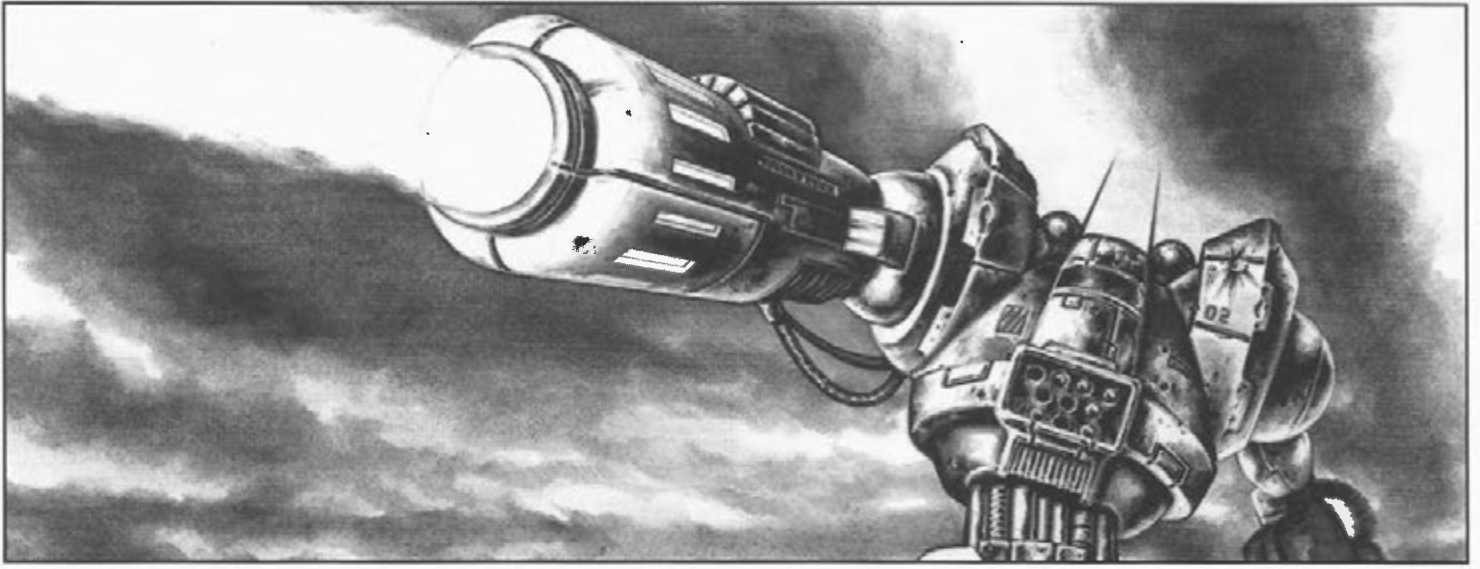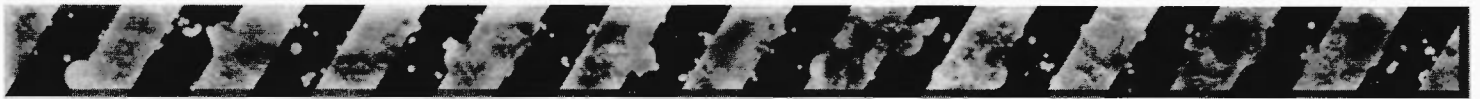
—Excerpt of transmission from Kanata
<Reporter> Though he is not with me at this time, Star Corporal Edward Williams-Wilken of the MAG, was quoted as saying, "The fall of another world (Kanata) to the Magistracy is additional proof that the Periphery states are superior. Long live the Magestrix!

—Excerpt of transmission from Talitha
<Reporter> This reporter has been trying to contact anyone in the military on the recently conquered world of Talitha, but I have been barred from the LAAF command post, and my contact, Hauptmann David Low, has not returned any of my calls. I can only assume that this secrecy is a prelude to a larger invasion of their "lost half," the Federated Commonwealth.

—Excerpt of transmission from Greeley
<Reporter> Our top news story remains the unbelievable success of the Outworlds Alliance in the continuing conquest of Combine (Sinope) and Federated Commonwealth (Broaddus, Stratford, Milligan and Greeley) worlds. Though Preceptor Carl Amedio was not available for interview, his previous talks with this reporter have left no doubt in my mind that the Inner Sphere has completely underestimated this small Periphery state. A mistake, it appears, they have yet to learn from.

—Excerpt of transmission from Rochester
<Reporter> In the final month of 3050, many viewers will recall that Tai-shu Rich Cencarik was appointed to the post of Gunji-no-Kanrei of the entire Draconis Combine Mustered Soldiery. Considering the stunning successes of the Tai-shu against the Federated Commonwealth, taking over forty worlds in a nine month period, great things were expected. And yet, only the worlds of Lucerne and Rochester fell to the Dragon during the first three months of 3051. What has happened, some may ask? Has the Tai-shu lost his nerve now that he sits on Black Luthien, away from the front lines? Has the Gunji-no-Kanrei lost the stomach for conflict? Hardly. This reporter warns against such words, for I feel that as throughout the entire Inner Sphere,

these past few months are simply the lull before the storm, and that the Pillar of Steel will soon come calling on FedCom worlds, and there will be nothing to stop them.

—Excerpt of transmission from Virentofta
<Reporter> Like my previous interview with Wolf warrior Robert Binkley on Skandia, I have used ComStar's neutrality to meet with Star Colonel Steve Massey of Clan Blood Spirit. Having taken the place of Clan Smoke Jaguar, what are your intentions?
<Star Colonel Steve Massey> Is it not obvious? Having taken Virentofta, Bjarred and Schwartz, we will soon carve up the rest of the Draconis Combine. Though I respect them for their honorable conduct, they are surrat Inner Sphere warriors, and so must be defeated.

—Excerpt of transmission from Outreach
<Reporter> I recently spoke with Captain Thomas Ropers, who had this to say about mercenary work in the wars that are currently engulfing the Inner Sphere:
<Captain Thomas Ropers> Throughout history, there have always been those who have denigrated mercenaries as money-grubbing expatriates. But the last few months have shown that though mercenaries may fight for money, they can and do fight as valiantly as any House unit. Across the Inner Sphere, many border worlds were held firm against incursions by other Houses through the efforts of mercenary units, not House units. The next time a House regular curses us "money-grubbers," they should think on that.

●   ●   ●

The map on the next page represents the current state of the Fifth Succession War as of 31 March 3051. These results were tallied by factoring MechForce member participation in ranked battles and the total number of members in each affiliation group. The gray-shaded areas represent sections of that affiliation's territory that have fallen to an enemy.

Steel Viper

Jade Falcon

Diamond Shark

Wolf

Ghost Bear

Blood Spirit

Nova Cat

Free Rasalhague
Republic

Draconis Combine

Lyran Alliance

Outworlds
Alliance

ComStar

Federated Commonwealth

Free Worlds League

St. Ives
Compact

Periphery
Independent

Magistracy
of Canopus

Taurian Concordat

Capellan
Confederation

Not Pictured: Word of Blake, Mercenaries
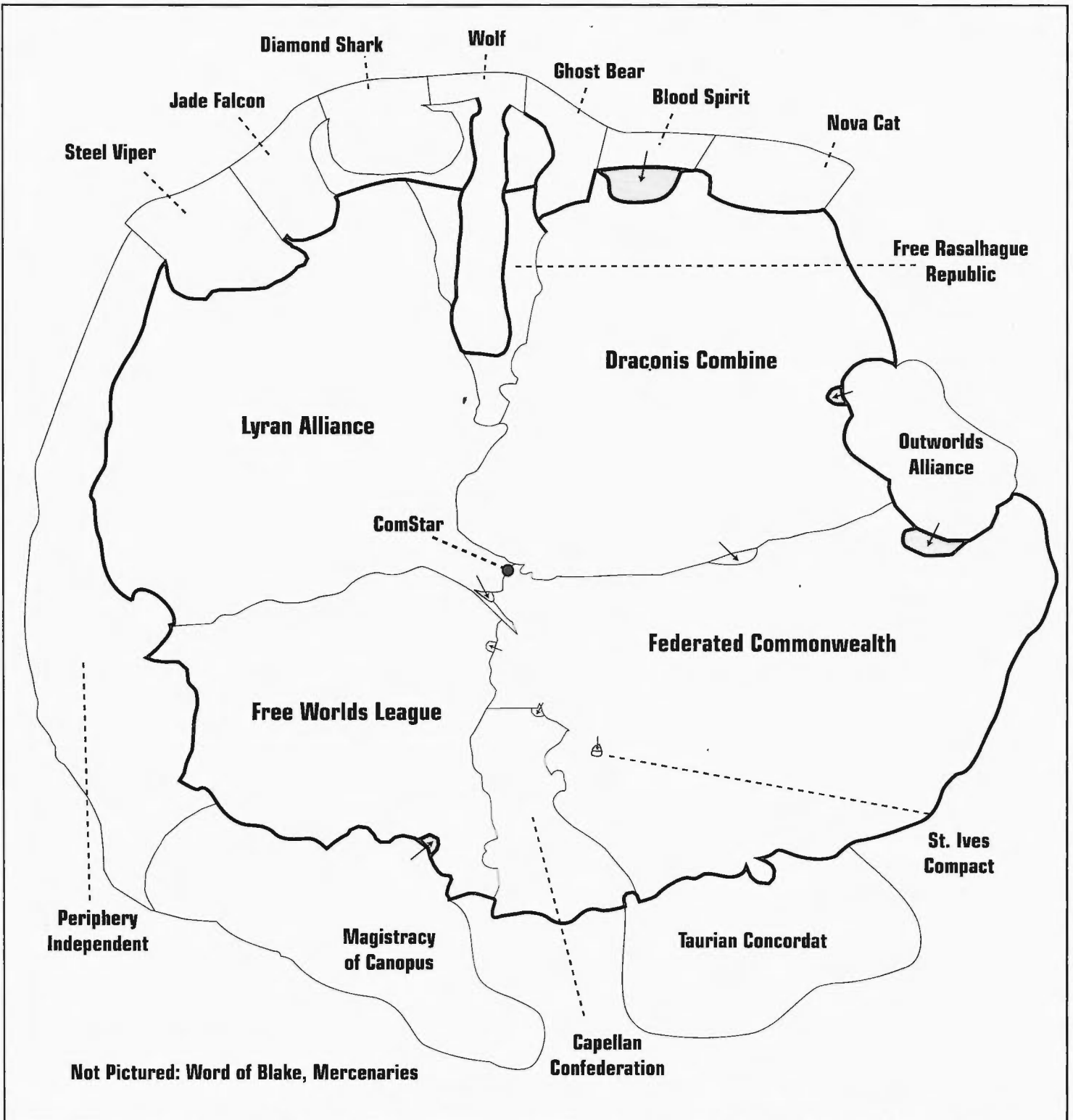
THE STATE OF THE WAR IN THE MECHFORCE UNIVERSE
DATELINE: MARCH 31, 3051

MECHFORCE TOP 50

The following list includes the top 50 ranked players in MechForce, including their ranks and affiliations, as of March 31st, 1999.
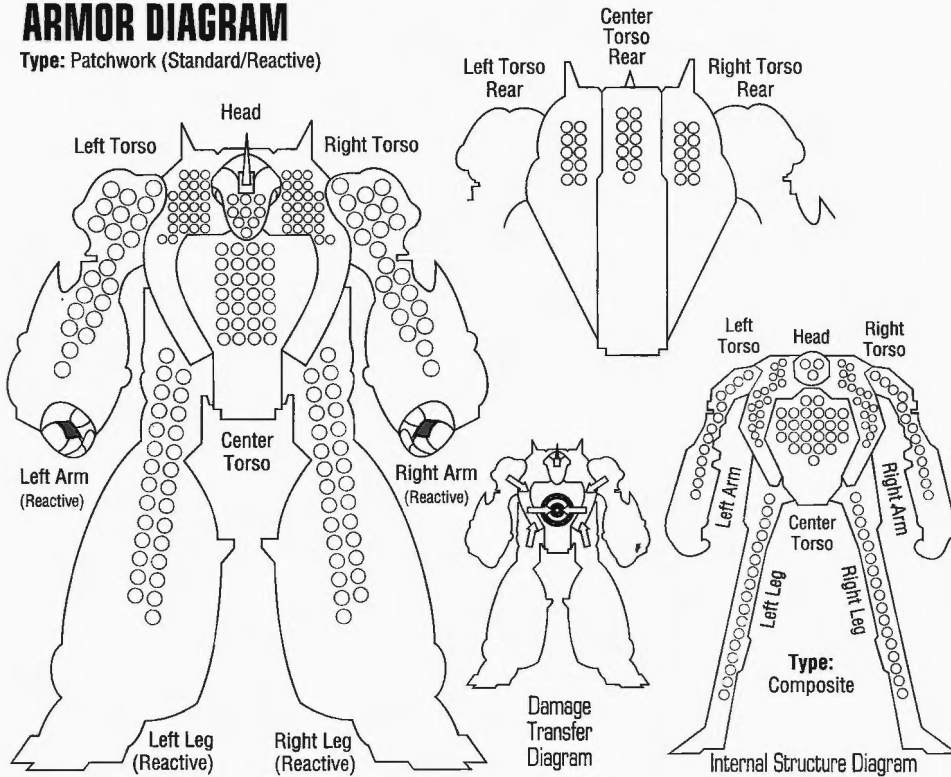
NAME	RANK	AFFILIATION	STANDING
Rich Cencarik	Tai-shu (Gunji-no-Kanrei)	Draconis Combine	2874
Steve Massey	Star Colonel	Blood Spirit	2166
Thomas Ropers	Captain	Mercenary	1909
Larry A. McClanahan	Nova Captain	Diamond Shark	1831
Richard Darr, Jr.	Leftenant General	Federated Commonwealth	1772
Dave Barton	Captain	Mercenary	1614
Carl Amedio	Preceptor	Outworlds Alliance	1603
Bob Legro	Star Captain	Fire Mandrill	1456
Loren Coleman	Subcommander	Capellan Confederation	1329
William Ransdale	Nova Commander	Ghost Bear	1297
Greg Swanson	Sergeant	Mercenary	1287
Christoffer Trossen	Commander	St. Ives Compact	1275
David Low	Hauptmann	Lyran Alliance	1275
Jacques Zarbatany	Subcommander	Capellan Confederation	1250
Reid Wilson	Nova Commander	Diamond Shark	1250
William Hall	Hauptmann	Federated Commonwealth	1250
Carl Szczerski	Hauptmann	Federated Commonwealth	1245
Christopher Smith	Subcommander	St. Ives Compact	1228
Bryan Nystul	Nova Commander	Ghost Bear	1209
Buster McCall	Sho-sa	Draconis Combine	1195
Terrence Haas	Acolyte X	ComStar	1189
Rick Remer	Nova Commander	Coyote	1189
Robbie Turner	First Leutnant	Lyran Alliance	1178
M. Jason Trent	Star Commander	Ghost Bear	1177
Rhonda McClanahan	Star Commander	Nova Cat	1176
Solomon Goren	Leftenant	Federated Commonwealth	1157
James "Spider" Welch	Acolyte X	ComStar	1152
Edward Williams-Wilken	Star Corporal	Magistracy of Canopus	1151
Peter Grubb	Leftenant	Federated Commonwealth	1148
Jeff Smith	Star Commander	Ghost Bear	1139
Brian Gruber	Subcommander	St. Ives Compact	1128
Barbara Turner	First Leutnant	Lyran Alliance	1117
John P. Lynch	Corporal	Mercenary	1117
Rick Cox	Corporal	Mercenary	1116
Michael J. Shields	Star Commander	Wolf (in Exile)	1101
Tim Croyle	Leftenant	Federated Commonwealth	1093
Mark Swanson	Star Commander	Wolf (in Exile)	1089
Jim Grimmett	Star Commander	Steel Viper	1088
Shea Medlicott	Corporal	Mercenary	1081
Dan 'Flake' Grendell	Adept I	Word of Blake	1074
Brian Golightly	First Leutnant	Lyran Alliance	1061
Andrew Dryanski	Leftenant	Federated Commonwealth	1060
Jonathan Miller	Star Commander	Nova Cat	1057
Robert Speicher	Corporal	Mercenary	1057
Carl Oates	Acolyte I	ComStar	1054
Derek Manchester	Star Commander	Ghost Bear	1052
Robert Kautz	Assistant Force Leader	Capellan Confederation	1052
Bill Martina	MechWarrior	Periphery Independents	1052
Scott Peterson	Sergeant	Free Worlds League	1050
Joseph Wade Bichiere	Assistant Force Leader	Capellan Confederation	1046

LEVEL 3
BATTLETECH®
BATTLEMECH RECORD SHEET

ARMOR DIAGRAM
Type: Patchwork (Standard/Reactive)

Head

Left Torso

Right Torso

Center Torso Rear

Left Torso Rear

Right Torso Rear

Left Arm (Reactive)

Center Torso

Right Arm (Reactive)

Left Leg (Reactive)

Right Leg (Reactive)

Damage Transfer Diagram

Type: Composite

Left Torso   Head   Right Torso

Left Arm   Right Arm

Center Torso

Left Leg   Right Leg

Internal Structure Diagram

Mech Data

Type: ZEU–X Zeus	Tonnage: 80
Movement Points:	Technology Base:
Walking: 5	
Running: 8	Mixed
Sprinting: 10	
Jumping: 0	

Weapons Inventory

Type	Location	Heat	Damage	Min.	Short	Med.	Long
1 MRM 30	RA	10	1	-	3	8	15
1 LB 20-X AC	LA/LT	6	20	-	4	8	12
1 ER Med Laser (C)	LT	5	7	-	5	10	15
1 ER Med Laser (C)	CT	5	7	-	5	10	15
1 C3 Slave	CT	-	-	-			

Ammo Type	Rounds
LB 20-X AC	15
MRM 30	16

Total Heat Sinks: 11 (22)   Double
OOOOOOOOOO O

LRM Status ☐ Standard   ☐ Hot-Loaded
Auto Eject ☐ Operational   ☐ Disabled

Critical Hit Table

Left Arm
1. Shoulder
2. Upper Arm Actuator
3. Lower Arm Actuator
1-3 4. Reactive Armor
5. Reactive Armor
6. Reactive Armor

4-6
1. LB 20-X AC
2. LB 20-X AC
3. LB 20-X AC
4. LB 20-X AC
5. LB 20-X AC
6. LB 20-X AC

Left Torso
1. XXL Engine
2. XXL Engine
1-3 3. XXL Engine
4. XXL Engine
5. XXL Engine
6. XXL Engine

4-6
1. LB 20-X AC
2. LB 20-X AC
3. LB 20-X AC
4. LB 20-X AC
5. LB 20-X AC
6. ER Medium Laser (C)

Left Leg
1. Hip
2. Upper Leg Actuator
3. Lower Leg Actuator
4. Foot Actuator
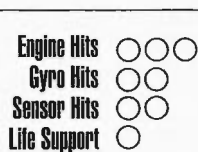5. Reactive Armor
6. Reactive Armor

Head
1. Life Support
2. Sensors
3. O Cockpit
4. Command Console
5. Sensors
6. Life Support

Center Torso
1-3
1. XXL Engine
2. XXL Engine
3. XXL Engine
4. Gyro
5. Gyro
6. Gyro

4-6
1. Gyro
2. XXL Engine
3. XXL Engine
4. XXL Engine
5. ER Medum Laser (C)
6. C3 Slave

Engine Hits	OOO
Gyro Hits	OO
Sensor Hits	OO
Life Support	O

Battle Value: 1,507
Cost: 84,196,201

Right Arm
1. Shoulder
2. Upper Arm Actuator
3. Lower Arm Actuator
1-3 4. Reactive Armor
5. Reactive Armor
6. Reactive Armor

4-6
1. MRM 30
2. MRM 30
3. MRM 30
4. MRM 30
5. MRM 30
6. Roll Again

Right Torso (Case II)
1-3
1. XXL Engine
2. XXL Engine
3. XXL Engine
4. XXL Engine
5. XXL Engine
6. XXL Engine

4-6
1. CASE II
2. Ammo (LB-X) 5
3. Ammo (LB-X) 5
4. Ammo (LB-X) 5
5. Ammo (MRM) 8
6. Ammo (MRM) 8

Right Leg
1. Hip
2. Upper Leg Actuator
3. Lower Leg Actuator
4. Foot Actuator
5. Reactive Armor
6. Reactive Armor

Warrior Data

Name: _____
Gunnery Skill: _____ Piloting Skill: _____

Hits Taken	1	2	3	4	5	6
Consciousness #	3	5	7	10	11	Dead

Name: _____
Gunnery Skill: _____ Piloting Skill: _____

Hits Taken	1	2	3	4	5	6
Consciousness #	3	5	7	10	11	Dead

Heat Scale

25	-5 Movement Points			Heat Overflow
24	+4 Modifier to Fire		50	SHUTDOWN
23	Ammo Explosion, avoid on 6+		49	-9 Movement Points
22	Shutdown, avoid on 8+		48	+7 Modifier to Fire
21			47	Pilot Damage, avoid on 12
20	-4 Movement Points		46	Shutdown, avoid on 20+
19	Ammo Explosion, avoid on 4+		45	AMMO EXPLOSION
18	Shutdown, avoid on 6+		44	System Failure, avoid on-10+
17	+3 Modifier to Fire		43	-8 Movement Points
16			42	Shutdown, avoid on 18+
15	-3 Movement Points		41	+6 Modifier to Fire
14	Shutdown, avoid on 4+		40	Ammo Explosion, avoid on 12
13	+2 Modifier to fire		39	Pilot Damage, avoid on 10+
12			38	Shutdown, avoid on 16+
11			37	-7 Movement Points
10	-2 Movement Points		36	System Failure, avoid on 8+
09			35	Ammo Explosion, avoid on 10+
08	+1 Modifier to Fire		34	Shutdown, avoid on 14+
07			33	+5 Modifier to Fire
06			32	Pilot Damage, avoid on 8+
05	-1 Movement Points		31	-6 Movement Points
04			30	Shutdown, avoid on 12+
03			29	
02			28	Ammo Explosion, avoid on 8+
01			27	
00			26	Shutdown, avoid on 10+

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Killing Fields   5754 $5.99   Jun

Chancellor Sun-Tzu Liao has launched a carefully crafted war with the hope of reuniting the renegade St. Ives Compact with his own Capellan Confederation and bringing the Compact under his control. But as months of combat turn to years, the Capellan death toll begins to weigh heavy on Sun-Tzu's soul; the realization that he may win only a Pyrrhic victory has begun to tarnish his brightest dream.

By Loren Coleman. Part 2 of the Capellan Solution.

Field Manual: ComStar   1714 $20.00   July

The powerful organization known as ComStar has controlled the flow of information and technology across the vastness of space for more than two hundred years. This sourcebook for BattleTech describes the military doctrine, traditions, tactics and battle histories of their military division, the Com Guards, including new 'Mechs and equipment unique to ComStar and the Word of Blake splinter group. Also provides information on units of the new Star League, including the Eridani Light Horse and Clan Nova Cat.

MechWarrior, Third Edition   1715 $25.00   Aug

Get out of the cockpit and into the adventure with the all new, updated MechWarrior, the science-fiction roleplaying game set in the explosive BattleTech universe. Players take on roles such as spies, fighter pilots, smugglers, and of course, MechWarriors.

Revised with a completely new game system, this edition features fast-playing rules and colorful fiction that brings the vast BattleTech universe to life.

Ghost of Winter   5767 $5.99   Aug

All his life, Sturm Kintaro wanted to be a MechWarrior. Now, he is one—untested in combat, but eager to show his prowess and get transferred away from the backwater planet Kore. He is about to get a bigger opportunity than he ever wanted, as a band of interstellar pirates launches a surprise attack and takes control of the planet. After the rout, Sturm finds himself stranded in the frozen wastes of Kore with no 'Mech, no help and no hope...

The first MechWarrior novel for BattleTech, written by Stephen Kenson.

RAL PARTHA BATTLETECH MINIATURE RELEASES

June
Tai-sho
Cobra
Great Wyrm
Men Shen

Mech Commander Box #1

This boxed set contains four revised 'Mechs, based on the original designs: Uller Loki, Hunchback IIC and Masakari.

MechCommander Box #2

This boxed set contains four revised 'Mechs, based on the original designs: RVN-3L Raven, JM6-S JagerMech, CN9-A Centurion and AS7-D Atlas.

July
Hydra ProtoMech (5 per blister pack)
Atlas (remake)

BATTLETECH PC COMPUTER GAMES

MechWarrior 3   Jun

The long awaited sequel to MechWarrior 2 will begin shipping in June by Microprose. It's gonna be huge!